

September's meeting was planned as our annual observing evening. This time, unfortunately, the weather didn't cooperate and we were completely clouded out. Annoyingly, it started clearing up as we were leaving and it was clear as a bell by the time I got home to Crowcombe. I suppose we should be grateful that we did have such a good session last year!

We had, however, planned the first half of the session to be our "gadgets & gizmos" evening for members to do a show-and-tell on things that help them in their astronomy.

Terry showed the virtues of the simple dew heater band. These are heated bands that warm up the front optical surfaces to prevent dew – tiny electric blankets really. The amount of heating is controlled by a simple device which is itself powered by either a battery or (for observatories) a 12V power supply. This controller can be more sophisticated and his remote observatory dew heaters are controlled by the computer which allows any level of heating to be set.

Gordon showed the workflow of converting a RAW – practically blank - image from iTelescope.net to a colourful image of the "Fighting Dragons" nebula (NGC6188). He went through the initial linear stretching process required to tease the image out of the background and the subsequent colour overlay and matching. This is followed by a non-linear stretch which brings out the fainter portions of the image while holding back the brighter areas.

Terry also showed his Excel based observation logs. These date back to 2001 and allow almost immediate recall of observations by object name, telescope or by exposure. This is very useful in working out what the ideal exposure would be for any object and telescope combination. He showed how lookups can be used to get alternative names for objects and how highlighting is used as reminders for follow up.

After the break, Ken had some very nice narrowband and broadband images and Terry showed some of the planets and the (inevitable) time-lapse of NGC6729's latest outburst.

Following a quick look at the planets for the next month (see below), the announcements included a possible outreach opportunity with Crewkerne beaver scouts and a telescope available for sale (though this has now been sold).

# Upcoming Events

## Next Meeting

Oct 18th Kate Earl Prehistoric Astronomy

## Planets

Venus bright in the morning sky until about 6am

Mercury low South East at 6am for the next few days

Mars too close to the sun

Saturn still a bit disappointing with rings closing and still low (26 degrees on the meridian)

Jupiter rises about by 9pm heading towards opposition on 3<sup>rd</sup> November

Uranus (near Jupiter) and Neptune (near Saturn) visible in telescopes

## Outreach

St Margaret's School, Tintinhull

Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> November

Near full moon Saturn & Jupiter visible.

Redstart School, Chard

Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> January 2024

No moon, Jupiter near meridian. Saturn low West

Uranus & Neptune visible as M42, M45, M31, etc

Stockland Primary  
Monday 5<sup>th</sup> February  
Same as for Redstart