

For October's meeting the talk was given by Kate Earl, chair of Wessex Astronomical Society, on the subject of Prehistoric Astronomy. This looked at the way that these "primitive" societies were well versed in the sky and the movement of the stars, moon and sun and used their observations to keep alive and enrich their societies.

She told us how the Torres Straits islanders would use the constellation of the Shark (using the stars we know as The Plough) to tell them when to plant and to avoid swimming when sharks would be about! Polynesian sailors would use a host of methods to get from island to island including the stars and the sun. The ancient Egyptians used star alignments to get accurate E-W and N-S lines for their buildings including the pyramids. Closer to home, Stonehenge was used to recognise the solstices to carry out the rituals required to make the sun start its northward path again.

An entertaining and informative tour through the skies as seen by our ancestors who were by no means primitive when it came to the skies.

After the break, Terry ran through some upcoming events and showed some images of Southern objects including mosaics of the Magellanic Clouds and a timelapse of Neptune and Triton over 7 clear nights. Bud explained his absence last month while in sunny California and his blagging technique at Palomar Observatory which got him a tour around the 200" telescope!

Next Meeting

November 15th Brian Fraser The Space Shuttle

Upcoming Events

Planets

Venus bright and high in the morning sky

Will be occulted by the moon 9th November from 9:30am (GMT!)

Should be visible in binoculars and well away from the sun

Mercury near the sun. Will appear into the evening sky in November

Mars too close to the sun

Saturn past its best but still prominent (and by itself!) south at around 21:30BST

Jupiter rises as it gets dark. Heading towards opposition on 3rd November

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

BST -> GMT Sunday 29th October

Outreach

A Brownie group in Yeovil wants to do an astronomy evening next year. Anyone interested in helping? Contact me for details.

Chard School are running a Stargazing Evening on 11th January (brr!).
Are we able to support?

Already arranged

St Margaret's School, Tintinhull
Thursday 23rd November
Near full moon Saturn & Jupiter visible.

Redstart School, Chard
Tuesday 30th January 2024
No moon, Jupiter near meridian. Saturn low West
Uranus & Neptune visible as M42, M45, M31, etc

Stockland Primary
Monday 5th February
Same as for Redstart

Telescope Available

Glenda Willis in Bridport has a small telescope - Free to a Good home. It's only a 4 ½" reflector but Bushnell is a reasonable make for this size of scope. Contact me if you're interested.

