

The last meeting of 2023 was our usual Solstice Social which invites short talks by members as well as a bring and share buffet.

The now traditional Arthur Davis lecture given by Terry this year used a set of Arthur's slides to illustrate some unusual early telescopes. Some of the telescopes produced in the mid 17th century were exceptionally long – 100s of feet – to try to get around the chromatic aberration of early lenses. These were replaced by reflectors at the end of the 1600's but there were still some unusual designs. Even William Herschel's larger telescopes used a slightly tilted primary mirror to bring the light to a focus near the edge of the tube and he looked down the tube with an eyepiece in his hand (I'd have dropped it!). Most of our telescopes these days are very much either a fork mounted Reflector or a German Equatorial mounted refractor or reflector. There are other designs starting to creep in, though. Maybe one for another time.

Bud gave a taster for his January talk on the Palomar telescope and observatory. We look forward to his videos with interest!

Jim had a short story about how his grandson realised that we were all made of star-stuff. Lovely story, Jim. We could do with more of those!

Ken had some nice images of some of the winter objects and moved into a description of one of the largest Black Holes known.

After the break to demolish the buffet, Terry had a few images of some of the Winter lollipops from down south as well as some of how Venus moved past Spica in the early December morning skies. He also managed to capture **one** Geminid meteor on the last of 135 images. Sometimes you do have to kiss a lot of frogs...

Bud and Viv had another quiz which combined some musical questions as well as the more typical astronomy and space questions. Thanks to both of them for putting this quiz together.

Next Meeting

17th January. Bud will show us some of his videos of the guided tour he managed to blag around the Palomar Observatory.

Upcoming Events

Planets

Venus and Mercury are visible in the morning sky in the South East. Venus is passing through Scorpius and heading quite rapidly in towards the sun. Mercury will probably be at its best around the 8th to the 12th.

Mars is still too close to the sun but is trying to reappear in the morning sky

Saturn past its best but still prominent. It's now past the meridian when it gets dark in the evening

Jupiter dominates proceedings in the evening sky and is now setting by about 2:30 am

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

Outreach

St Margaret's School, Tintinhull

Thursday 23rd November

Surprisingly, we got lots of breaks in the cloud to allow us to see Saturn, Jupiter and the moon

To come in 2024

Chard School Stargazing Evening on 11th January from 5 pm

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

Manor Court, Chard

Thursday 15th February. 6 for 6:30 start. Saturn will be gone but 1st Quarter moon will be near Jupiter.