October’s meeting was scheduled to be our annual observing evening with Saturn and two comets in the sky but, unfortunately, behind a thick layer of clouds! We had, of course, foreseen this eventuality (who doesn’t in Somerset!) and we had a number of “Gadgets and Gizmos” presented by members.

Pete Adshead used his 10” reflector to show how he sets up for visual observing or for astrophotography. He has a tiny Windows computer attached to the mount which uses a travel router to talk to his laptop or iPad (or both, as he demonstrated). This allows him to control the system using the NINA software (which can control the mount, cameras and all sorts of other bits of kit). It was great to see how seamless the process can be!

Bud showed his home built belt driven focuser and its attendant control box. He needed a remote focuser to avoid the wobbles produced by trying to manually change focus at the high magnification he uses for planetary and lunar observing. A DC motor, a neoprene belt and some pulleys later and he had a working focuser! The control box (it really is in an Amazon cardboard box!) has a simple polarity reversal circuit board giving fairly clean DC current to drive the focuser in or out. Quite a lot cheaper that purpose built remote focusers.

Terry, on the other hand, showed his new toy which is a Seestar S30. He’d bought this with the intention of using it either abroad or in the properly dark skies of his native West Wales, rather than lugging a 5” scope with mount and a DSLR camera. The S30 does reasonable solar pictures, not quite so good lunar ones but surprisingly good deep sky pictures even in alt-az mode. All in all, a surprisingly good small package.

Ken Honour took the minimal focuser one more step than Bud with a very simple circuit which reverses the DC current to drive his ZWO electronic focuser (which doesn’t come with a hand control which costs some £43 on top of the focuser itself). The most expensive items in this project were probably the box itself and the connection cable!

After the break, we had images from Ken including a new (to me) picture of NGC6883 in Cygnus which is nominally an open cluster but has lots of nicely coloured nebulosity. Ian had some pictures taken with his phone of the sun and moon which were surprisingly sharp and well balanced considering it was a phone camera. Terry had a small number of images of some planetary nebulae, comet 3I/ATLAS and the obligatory sequence of NGC6729.

This was followed by his look at the skies for the up-coming month (see below) with some emphasis on comets SWAN and Lemmon which should be visible in a (clear :-) evening sky.

Next Month’s speaker on November 19th will be Heather Johnston of Exeter University who will be talking about “The rise and fall of the giant planet occurrence rate”. We hope to see you there.

Upcoming Events

Planets

Mercury is near the Sun and isn't observable from our latitudes.

Venus is still bright low down in the East as it starts to get light (06:30BST). It will rise later and later as the month progresses and will only be visible in a twilight sky by the next meeting.

Mars is too close to the sun for observation and will be for the rest of the year.

Jupiter now rises at around 23:00BST and is very bright in the morning sky. It's still moving westward in Gemini from night to night but will reach its stationary point around 14th November. It will then start retrograde (eastward) motion before opposition in January 2026.

Saturn is still fairly bright below Pegasus. It's very much the brightest object in that part of the sky. The rings are still very thin and it won't be a great sight for a few years!

Uranus is just below the Pleiades in the morning sky. It should be visible in binoculars.

Neptune and Saturn are quite far apart now but will start getting closer again for another conjunction in February 2026.

Comet 3I ATLAS is now in Virgo and will become visible (in theory) in our morning sky by the end of October. It will be reasonably placed by the next meeting but will be very faint!!

Comet C/2025 R2 SWAN is now visible in our evening sky.

Comet C/2025 A6 Lemmon is easily visible in binoculars. It's currently in Canes Venatici and (just) circumpolar. It's probably best observed at around 06:00BST for the next few days. It will head southward rapidly and not be visible in the morning after about 21st October. It will stay in the evening sky until early November but will be quite low by then.

The geometry of Earth, Jupiter and its moons allow double shadow transits of the moons for the next few weeks.

Oct 22nd Io and Europa 23:56 to 1:47 UT.
Oct 29th Io and Europa 02:32 to 03:41 UT.
Nov 5th Io and Europa 5:08 to 5:34 UT (each side of the disk).
Nov 21st Io and Callisto 01:32 to 03:47 UT (with the GRS)

Clocks fall back to GMT in the morning of Sunday 26th October.

Upcoming Meetings

Nov 19 Heather Johnston *The rise and fall of the giant planet occurrence rate*
Dec 17 Arthur Davis lecture and Christmas Social
2026
Jan 21 Bud Budzynski *Albert Einstein*
Feb 18 Brian Fraser *Exploration of Mars*
Mar 18 John Stapleton *Amateur Astronomy: Why do we do it?*
Apr 15 David Strange *Norman Lockyer*
May 20 Ask the Panel

Events

Tintinhull Youth Club Tuesday 25th November 18:30-20:00 (TBC)

Manor Court Friday 23rd January 2026

Redstart School Thursday 29th January 2026

2026 Programme

2026

Jan 21

Feb 18

Mar 18 John Stapleton Amateur Astronomy: Why do we do it?

Apr 15 David Strange Norman Lockyer

May 20 Ask the Panel

Jun 17

Jul 22

Aug 19 Mark Hardaker Astronomical Planning and Recording - How to Get the Most Out of your Hobby

Sep 16 Gadgets and Gizmos Evening followed by Observing Session

Oct 21

Nov 18

Dec 16 Christmas Social and members' short talks

CADAS meetings start at 7:30pm and last about 2 hours including a break for tea/coffee and cake. We meet at the Village Hall in Norton-sub-Hamdon, TA14 6SF. See http://www.cadas.net/ for further details.