

As befits being near the Spring Equinox, perhaps, the March meeting saw a welcome return to warm weather and clear nights with even Venus appearing out of the twilight. The speaker for this meeting was John Stapleton, who had come all the way from Torbay Astronomical Society, to talk about "Amateur Astronomy – Why do we do it?"

John took us on a tour of what inspires us to be in cold dark fields, freezing our bits off, what we do there and what can we make of our hobby / obsession. A lot of us are inspired by either TV shows and films (perhaps from our childhood), events - like the moon landings in John's case (or Gagarin going to space in my case) – or by people. John reminded us about Patrick Moore, the great inspirer of so many British amateur astronomers but also noted individuals who inspired him in his youth. It's always the hope that when we get a child's "Wow" looking through one of our telescopes that that may be an inspiration to be at least interested in the sky and its exploration.

John then looked at what inspires us to actually do some of the different things we do as amateur astronomers. We can be inspired by the beauty of what confronts us or simply be amazed at the huge variety of objects in the sky. Some are inspired to deep-sky observing while some are attracted to the planets, sun or moon. John showed some examples of what people from the Torbay Society have achieved. All in all, John reminded us of what got us into this great hobby of ours and a great thanks to him (and to Ray his driver for getting him to Norton sub Hamdon!).

Following the break and a welcome cup of tea, Terry gave his usual look at the month ahead (see below) with the potential excitement around Comet 2026A1 on 4<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> April. Bud had put his old 5" refractor onto his mount to take some images of Jupiter which he has made into a movie showing the rotation of the planet and the Great Red Spot passing across the face of the disk. Lots of observing time (and even more processing time) went into that sequence. Bud has also managed "first light" on his new SkyWatcher HAlpha telescope and he showed some images of prominences and spots on the sun. Ian also showed some sunspots but these were taken using a phone camera through the eyepiece of his Personal Solar Telescope (PST). Not so much detail perhaps as Bud's but equally challenging. Terry has been to Australia (and even made it back despite the Ben and Don show in the middle east) and showed some images taken with his little S30 "smart scope" of the southern hemisphere.

The speaker at the next meeting, on April 15<sup>th</sup>, will be David Strange from the Lorman Lockyer Society speaking about – fittingly enough – Norman Lockyer. David has been to the society a number of times but has, surprisingly, never spoken about Norman Lockyer, the discoverer of helium in the sun (with a very interesting life story). We look forward to seeing you then.

# Upcoming Events

## Planets

Venus is slowly emerging from the twilight in the west after sunset and should be visible (with a clear horizon) when it gets dark (at around 19:30 GMT).

Mercury is in theory visible in the morning sky at the start of civil twilight but will be very low and not get bright until the end of March

Mars is still near the Sun.

Jupiter still dominates the evening sky and is due south as it gets dark but is now setting by 4am GMT (by 3am BST by the next meeting).

Saturn has disappeared into the evening twilight and will re-appear (in the morning) around the end of May.

Uranus is still below the Pleiades and should be visible in binoculars.

Neptune has disappeared with Saturn into the twilight.

## Comets

Periodic comet C/29P Schwassmann–Wachmann 1's outburst (on 9<sup>th</sup> February) has expanded and faded. It could still outburst again! It's still below Leo and just south of the celestial equator.

C/2024 E1 Wierzchos has faded but still shows a curved tail/

Kreutz group sungrazer C/2026 A1 MAPS will pass the Sun on 4<sup>th</sup> April at a distance of 160,000 Km from its surface. It's currently brightening in the evening sky (but very low so not really observable) but **may** brighten to daylight visibility on 5<sup>th</sup> April (it could just as easily break up!). The best time for observation will probably be 7<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> April after sunset when the head will be below Venus with a tail heading up and to the left. Fairly inevitably for comets, it seems, the view will be better from the Southern Hemisphere.

## Constellations

Pegasus has started to set by the time darkness falls with Andromeda following by 10pm. Orion and the surrounding constellations are past the meridian when it gets dark. Leo is already 30 degrees altitude in the east with Arcturus rising in the ENE. By midnight BST, Orion has set with Jupiter (and Gemini) descending due west. The spring stars of Leo, Boötes and Virgo will be in the South and East. By the next meeting, Orion will be low in the west as it gets dark and we'll really be into Spring!

## British Summer Time

The Spring Equinox is on 20<sup>th</sup> March at 14:46 (GMT)

The clocks go forward 1 hour on Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> March.

## Upcoming Meetings

Apr 15 David Strange *Norman Lockyer*

May 20 Ask the Panel

Jun 17 Hugh Allen *Reaching Across the Gulf of Space: The life and work of Sir William Huggins*

Jul 22 James Palmer *Approaching the Stars - single image shots to short exposure astrophotography*

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

# **2026 Programme**



## **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**

**Jun 17 Hugh Allen Reaching Across the Gulf of Space: The life and work of Sir William Huggins**

**Jul 22 James Palmer Approaching the Stars - single image shots to short exposure astrophotography**

**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.**