

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2024

The Society has had another exceptional year, with an excellent range of speakers for which we must thank Shirish and Ron Johnson, Matt Graydon, and myself.

We began in January with Martin Howe, our very own member talking about 'Defending the Earth from Asteroids'. It was a fascinating talk all about the Chicxulub, Barringer, Tunguska, Peekskill Asteroid and meteor impacts, how Theia shaped the Earth and Moon and how Phaethon might shape it in the future. It covered the damage they do to the earth and what we can do as human beings to combat most of these asteroids in the future with kinetic impactors & the dark mission ETC. All we need now is Superman!. What a fabulous way to start the year with great attendance and with Ron Johnson giving with the weather statistics for the previous year.

In February we listened to David Arditti give a talk on Observing the planets. I learned a lot from David such as the best time to see the planets in Spring, what telescopes are used to observe and on the opposition of all the planets.

In March we had Nick James talk on comet. It's amazing how comets impact our lives even though we don't know it, and to capture a comet is very hard thing to do. I know because I've actually gone out with binoculars and tried to find a few without any luck. It's amazing that comet Mcnaught was such a bright spark in our sky, with it's dusty tail providing such a sight to see. I must admit I did see one comet, Hale-Bopp, when I was very small. The recent comet Tsuchinshan-Atlas was very spectacular in October.

Our next Speaker, Sarah Matthews, unfortunately could not attend due to illness, so with only a days notice, Martin Howe came to the rescue. He gave us a spectacular talk on the perspectives of Astrophotography, describing how to image Lunar and Solar Eclipses and on how to image the ISS passing in front of the Sun.

In May we had Iavna Prencic talk on Planetary and Lunar Imaging and she showed us a fantastic family portrait of the whole solar system. She then explained how she got the wonderful Images and what processing software and cameras she used.

In June we had Dr Lilian Hobbs talking about 'Left in Space'. We humans have left 413,000 lbs of waste on the moon - what an incredible amount. 60 Space Vehicle, 3 lunar moon buggies, 2 Golf balls, and believe it or not 96 bags of poo. Phooey.

In July we had George Seabroke back again giving us an update on the Gala spacecraft. He gave an explanation on how much data the mission had collected, and on how it would take 60 Years to get through all the data without a break. I would have a numb bum, certainly by the end of that. What surprised me the most is that to date Gala has unearthed 3 black holes, in our own Galaxy which I find astonishing.

In Sept we had the Picnic at Headley Heath, ah no sorry, the picnic was cancelled due to Cloud Cover and rain.

At the September meeting we had Martin Lumm talk on the star of Bethlehem. It turns out that Christmas is not due until March, so happy Christmas and Happy Easter. Lol. It was

apparently moved from March to December to match the pagan Festival. It is also thought that the star of Bethlehem was a Nova that lasted for 70 nights.

In October we had Micheal Foulkes talking about Herschel's Planet. He gave an interesting talk on Uranus and on how William Herschel discovered the planet in 1781. He initially thought it was a comet, but later it was discovered that it was actually a planet. He originally named it Georgium Sidus after King George the third, but it was later called Uranus after the Greek god of the Sky.

In November we welcomed our final speaker of the year, Professor Andrew Coates who gave us a talk about Mars and Habitability on icy moons. It was a most fascinating talk about looking for life on Mars, Enceladus and Titan and what they're actually doing with the Rosalind Franklin mission now planned for 2030.

It was a wonderful way to end the year on a high.

This sadly brings to us to the people we have lost this year. Richard Etherington, a long time member of the Society, and Professor Iain Morrison who was our patron for the last 12 years and a good friend of the Society.

I would like to give a big thank you to Professor Andrew Coates for kindly agreeing to be our new Patron.

I must thank all my fellow committee members for all their hard work and support and who make my job such a joy to do.

School Space for the use of the school.

An excellent job by Steve for keeping our Accounts for last year and observing sessions.

John Davey for his splendid work on Janus.

Peter for all his help in the Secretary role, for continuing to develop our website and arranging all the visits with the school. Unfortunately most of the events Peter had organised had to be cancelled due to bad weather.

Ron Johnson for continuing the Maurice Gavin Observatory project.

Martin and Suzanne for their hard work on the exciting Nonsuch walk project we are trying to organise with the Nonsuch Park management committee.

Thanks to Ron Johnson, Martin, Shirish, and Peter and I for organising speakers for 2025.

This year we have had such excellent speakers, with talks ranging from a massive Star menagerie, the new space race and solar system, up close and personal with the sun our local Star, formation of planet systems, pioneering women astronomers and dark energy surveys. I am so looking forward to next year.

Ron Canham delivered all the Sky at Night sessions earlier in the year which were most informative, interesting and fun, and of course thanks to Martin, Ron and Shirish for taking over these sessions.

Let us not forget Gary Walker who helped the committee on many occasions with tables and chair set up.

Finally, may I wish you a Merry Christmas and a wonderful New Year with lots of new exploration to do.

Anita King EAS Chairperson