

# 2002



**NEXT MEETING**  
**THURSDAY, 17<sup>th</sup> November 2011**  
**THE ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY OF HARINGEY**  
**VOLUME 40 : ISSUE 1 : NOVEMBER 2011**

# SOCIETY NEWS

## MEETING VENUE :

**Ashmole School, Southgate, London N14 5RJ.**

The day for all meetings is usually the third Thursday of each month. The exceptions are August, when currently we do not hold a meeting, and December, when the Christmas Meet has always traditionally been held during the second week. However, in case of changes – and there have been a few over the last year or so – it is always advisable to double-check the dates below.

**Doors open - 7.30pm : Main speaker - 8.00pm. Finish - 10.00pm**

## 2011

November 17<sup>th</sup> : Roy Goldsmith : “The Mediaeval Arab Astronomers”  
December 8<sup>th</sup> Christmas Party and Guiz VII

## 2012

Preliminary dates for the first half of 2012

January 19<sup>th</sup>  
February 16<sup>th</sup>  
March 15<sup>th</sup>  
April 19<sup>th</sup>  
May 17<sup>th</sup>  
June 21<sup>st</sup>  
July 19<sup>th</sup>

## IMPORTANT NOTICE

Some may have realised that the Society's website is down and cannot be accessed. We are aware of this and are currently working on it, but it is unlikely to be back up again for a week or so, certainly in anything like a 'full' version. However it gives us that excuse to do the needed update, so when it reappears it will be in a new form. The URL (the web address) *may* also change, but it will be similar.

Because of all this, the direct ASH emails are also not working (the ones that run <abc@ashastro.org.uk>), so will not get through. For the moment use the ones for Jim, Charles or myself, as listed on the back page. Note you can use <ash@smallspace.demon.co.uk> and <editor@ etc> to me, as well as to my name.

**STOP PRESS** by the time you read this the URL **www.ashastro.co.uk** should be up and running and will have, at the very least, a home page.

### COVER

**Arab astronomers, illustrated in this wood-cut, as an introduction to this month's talk by Roy Goldsmith.**

## SOCIETY NEWS

We meet in what was up until last month, the Music Room at Ashmole School. (And previous to that, it was the Curriculum Support Building - and still noted as such in the map.) This is the low building, (in the centre of the photo), just past the Performing Arts Centre and opposite the main entrance to the technology block.  
(PS - we are not sure what its role is now??)



### **MEETING PREVIEW : November 17<sup>th</sup>**

#### **Roy Goldsmith: "The Arabic Astronomers"**



Having dealt with Chinese and Medieval astronomy, Roy Goldsmith return to the Society for the next meeting to continue his story of the ancient astronomers, with a look at what the Arabs were doing.

To be precise, this is really Islamic Astronomy, as many of the practitioners were not strictly speaking, 'Arabs', but the term seems to have entered the general language.

The astronomers of the time were highly advanced, far more so than the Greeks, and much of what was done then, still remains in astronomy today, with perhaps the most obvious example being in the names of stars.

*Mat Irvine*

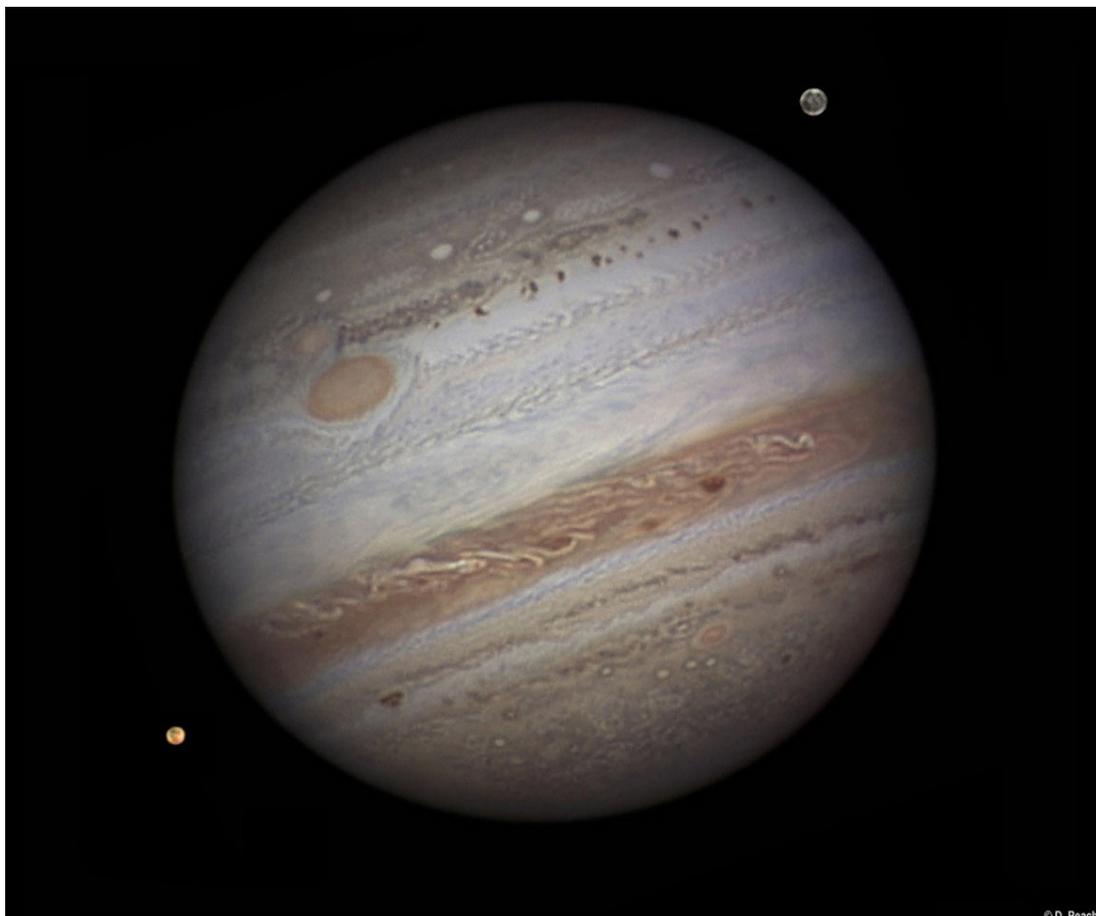


### **MEETING REVIEW : October 20<sup>th</sup> AGM and Jim Webb**

The meeting began with the dissolution of the current Committee at which point Gordon Harding (as the most senior member present) took over the meeting for the elections. He asked the membership if there were any nominations for any posts. As there

were none, he took the rather unusual step of asking the membership if they would like to vote in the existing Committee, on mass, with one vote. This was agreed and the Committee was voted in unanimously with no abstentions. Gordon then continued with the financial report, pointing out that our biggest current expense is the magazine postage. It was recommended that we can cut costs by folding the magazine in half and sending it out at the 'small letter' rate. It was also suggested that the membership fees go up, but that will not be for a while yet. Another suggestion was to adopt the model other societies have of there being a nominal entrance fee for every guest speaker talk. These will be discussed in future Committee Meetings. Ashmole Academy has introduced a new policy of not allowing non-school people (like us) to use any AV equipment which as far as we are concerned means the video projector. As a result the Society will be buying its own projector for use in future meetings.

I then continued the meeting by showing a set of topical video clips and images from space. The video clips included movies of the Moon's surface taken by the Japanese Kaguya orbiter and a short piece on "what really happened to that falling satellite" - an American "Beagle's About" style show of a mock NASA satellite landing on someone's car and catching people's reactions, especially when a truck full of "Men in Black" turn up and take the satellite away.



The showing finished with images including a wonderful picture of Jupiter by Damian Peach, taken in Barbados with a 14" reflector. This picture showed not only exquisite detail of the planet but there was also detail on the two moons Io and Ganymede! Not surprisingly, it won best image prize at the Greenwich Royal Observatory Astronomy Photographer of the Year competition.

The evening was going to end up actually looking at Jupiter ourselves, but rolling cloud took care of that so some of the membership retired to the Waggon Pub for a drink - an activity which hopefully may become an after-meeting social tradition! *Jim Webb*

# CHAIRMAN'S QUARTERS



Normally this page concentrates on astronomical or space topics. This one is more of the different part of our planet variety – namely Greece, where I am writing this. As our Editor is not subject to political concerns or D-Notices I'm going to do a Galileo and describe what I see and hopefully not get excommunicated.

Greece is screwed – to a brick wall in a strait jacket! People of all walks of life are painting this picture for me. There is total mistrust of the political system – the whole government is the butt of regular extreme satire on many TV channels (oddly, ones now owned by German firms!). Prices of basic goods in supermarkets are much higher than in the UK – I heard one lady complaining about her “21 wash” washing powder costing her 20 Euros! Even locally grown fruit and vegetables are nearly on par with the UK. Yet simultaneously, wages are being cut left right and centre, restaurants are having to go into ‘price wars’ just to get the trade in and jobs are anything one can get their hands on. Washing car windscreens is now not the domain of migrants; the locals are getting in on the act but, interestingly, doing a *very* professional job. Tsimiski Street in Salonica (the local equivalent of Oxford Street) is full of shops (many of which are now shut down or can't be bothered to open due to lack of trade!) offering up to 60% off their goods. Greek manufacturing has been EU legislated to virtual extinction and fruit (just about the only remaining viable export) has to be sold around Europe at knockdown prices. So, with very little actual income, Greece has been forced (dare I say even... blackmailed) by the EU powers to borrow large amounts of money, in order to survive, yet with no realistic hope of ever being able to pay it back.

This outcome was glaringly obvious within two years of Greece having been pushed into the Euro (the country didn't actually qualify, economically, to join but for whatever reason the French and Germans insisted). Now, even if Germany were to buy the whole of Greece, the capital raised would still not be enough to pay off its debt. And, of course, it is never in the interests of the current banking system for individuals (let alone a whole nation) to pay off their debts in a lump sum (or at least a very short period of time) because of the loss of that lovely interest on the loan. The result is that more loans, stretched over a longer time become necessary, prolonging the net suffering of local populus. This level of discontent has given rise to many strikes, some of them national, which has affected much of the infrastructure. Many have resorted to ‘strike-by-not-working’ – a novel twist whereby you turn up at work (say the Post Office) but don't open up. In Greece, if you turn up at work you get paid regardless of whether you actually do anything, whereas by staying at home (or going out picketing) you don't get paid! 28<sup>th</sup> of October is “OXI” day (pronounced “ochi” – “ch” as Scottish “loch”) – a national holiday to celebrate the day when the Greeks said “NO” (ὄχι means “no” in Greek) to the invading Italians in WW2. This is highlighted with many military parades and other celebrations. High level politicians came to Salonica to attend the parades with the result that there were massive demonstrations and the parades never happened! Unheard of since the end of WW2. As an aside, many are now saying that with the level of German ownership of Greek businesses, the Germans have now achieved what they could not during WW2!

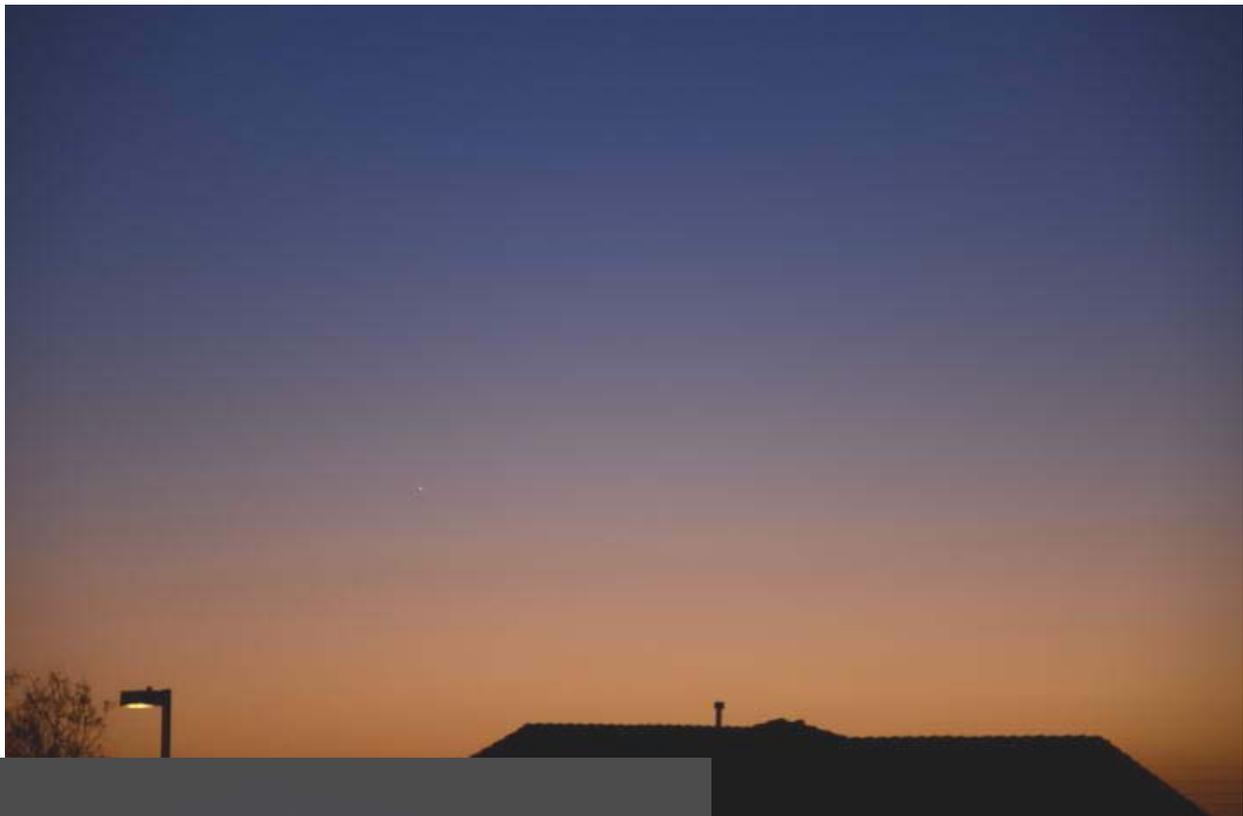
My take on this? In Classical Times the Greeks were a disparate bunch of people – the Spartans, the Athenians, the Ionians and so on. When the Persians tried to invade, on mass, the Greeks united and, despite appalling losses, ultimately pushed out the invaders. This resulted in the ‘Golden Age’ of Greece. It may be the time for history to repeat itself and for the Greeks to take a stand against the untenable monster that the Euro has become and break away, forging new alliances. After all, the Franco-Germanic economic model for running a country may not be the best for the Mediterranean economies. Bring back the Drachma?

See you in December

JIM

# ***SKY VIEWS***

Some planetary views taken while in the southern US States last month. Venus was becoming visible, although - as now - it was still very low down and difficult to spot. However the more southern latitudes than the UK and the clearer skies, helped. Mercury was also there, at around  $1^\circ$  (two Moon widths) and at about 4 o'clock from Venus, but no amount of digital processing brings out the elusive innermost planet.



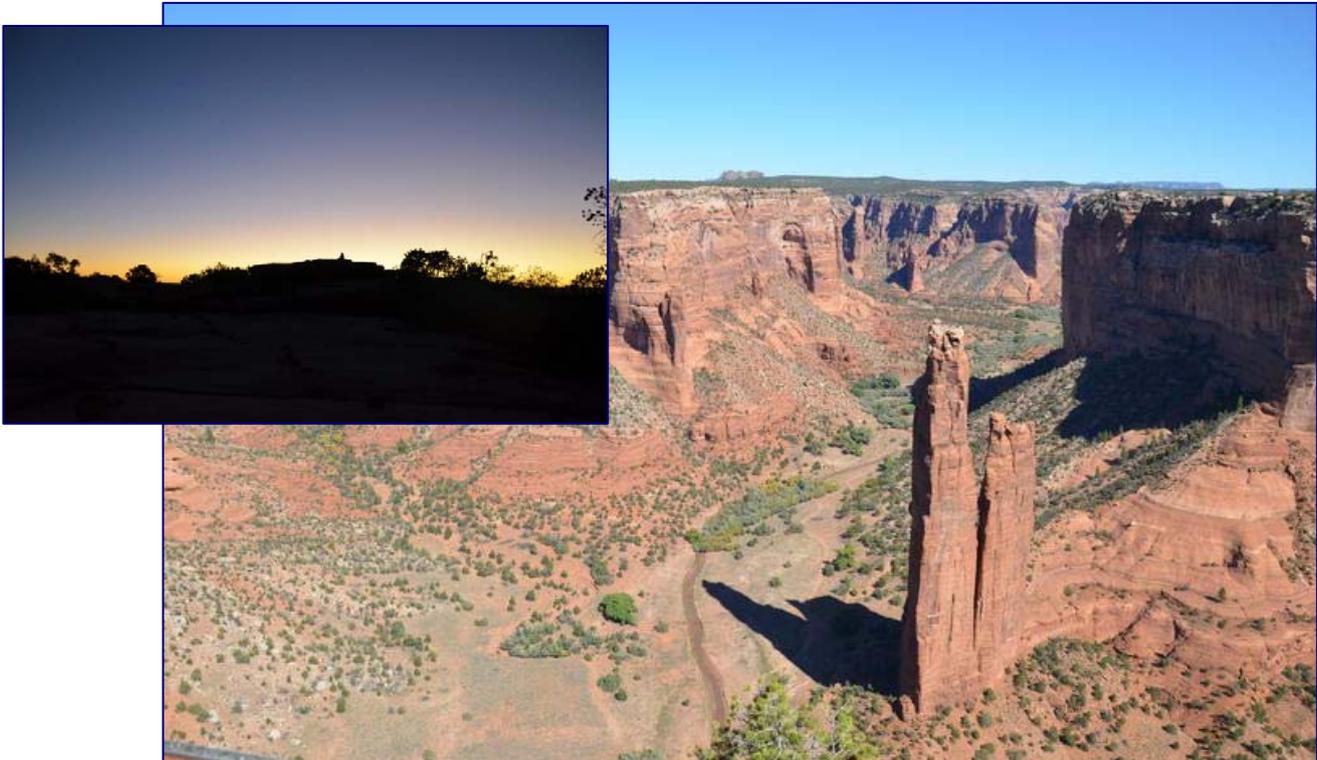
Venus, above taken 17<sup>th</sup> October just north of Phoenix, Arizona around 20.20 Mountain Time (GMT/UT minus 6 hours, as Arizona doesn't observe Daylight Saving Time.)

Above the Moon and Jupiter, taken 13<sup>th</sup> October in northern Arizona.

Right the same pair taken early the following morning, showing the way the orientation moves through  $90^\circ$  overnight.



And in the same area, the Navaho Nation area in the north-west corner of Arizona, I took the opportunity to visit the Canyon de Chelly (pronounced "shey"), one of the US National Monuments. Besides obviously be a geographical feature of the Earth, and 'the Earth' is an astronomical object', (!), it is also here as the walls feature many petroglyphs - rock carvings - that show what is generally taken to be 'astronomical events' .



Above Spider Rock, the most famous feature in the Canyon de Chelly. (It's where the Spider Woman lives...)

Inset, a view across the Canyon at dusk showing the incredibly clear skies.



Above and right, two sets of petroglyphs on the walls of the Canyon de Chelly that feature 'circles'. These *could* be representations of astronomical phenomena?

# The Night Sky : November - December 2011

## THE PLANETS

**MERCURY** : Greatest eastern elongation, 23°, was on 14<sup>th</sup> November. Still visible in the evening skies, but very low down, so you need a very clear horizon. Moon very close on 26<sup>th</sup> November.

**VENUS** : In the evening skies but, similar to Mercury, low down. Moon close on 27<sup>th</sup> November.

**MARS** : In the morning skies, in Leo and close to Regulus. The magnitude is increase throughout November as the apparent diameter grows to six arc-seconds in diameter. By December, it will be seven arc-seconds, which is the best appearance for 2011. Better opportunities will still have to wait until March 2012. Moon close on 19<sup>th</sup> November and 19<sup>th</sup> December.

**JUPITER** : reached opposition on 29<sup>th</sup> October. At magnitude -2.8 it is the most conspicuous object in the night sky, (needless to say, bar the Moon!), helped by the fact that the giant planet passed perihelion - closest point to the Sun - in March, so is at its brightest. Rising in the early evening in the south east, it is visible throughout the night and frankly you would be hard pressed to mistake it for anything else. At maximum altitude it will be at 52°, at magnitude -2.7, which makes the seeing far better than if it was close to the horizon. This is the highest for observers in the UK since 2003. Moon is close 6<sup>th</sup> December.

**SATURN** : Now in the morning skies in Virgo and bear the bright star Spica. The rings have been well placed for viewing this year, even in a small telescope. Moon close on 22<sup>nd</sup> November

**URANUS** : In Pisces, around magnitude 6. Moon close on 4<sup>th</sup> December.

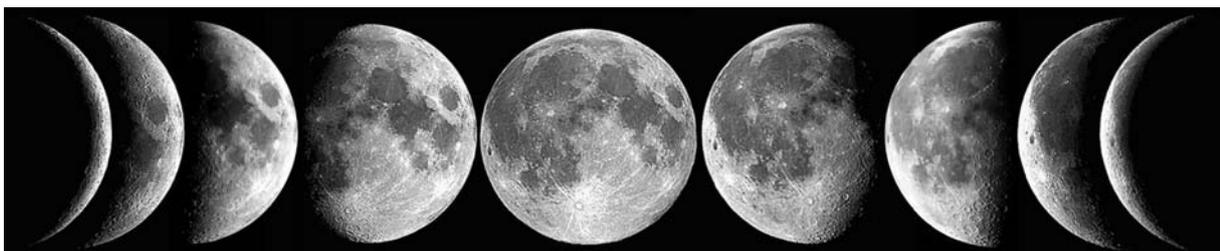
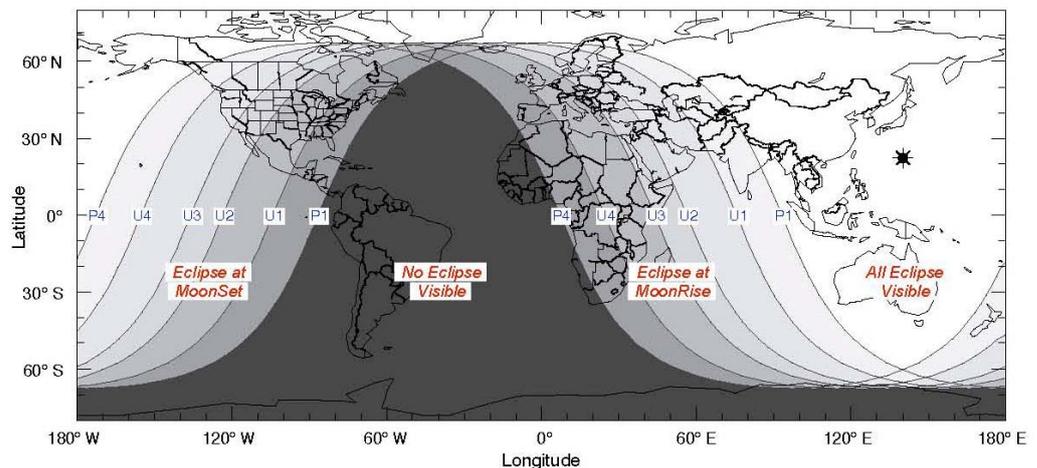
**NEPTUNE** : In Aquarius, around magnitude 7.8. The Moon is close on 1<sup>st</sup> December.

## METEORS

Geminids peak 14<sup>th</sup> December

## THE MOON

There is a total; eclipse of the Moon on 10<sup>th</sup> December, but totality will only be seen from Asia and Australasia. North America Africa and Europe will only get partial stages.



NEW 26<sup>th</sup> October  
NEW 25<sup>th</sup>

FIRST 2<sup>nd</sup> November  
FIRST 2<sup>nd</sup> December

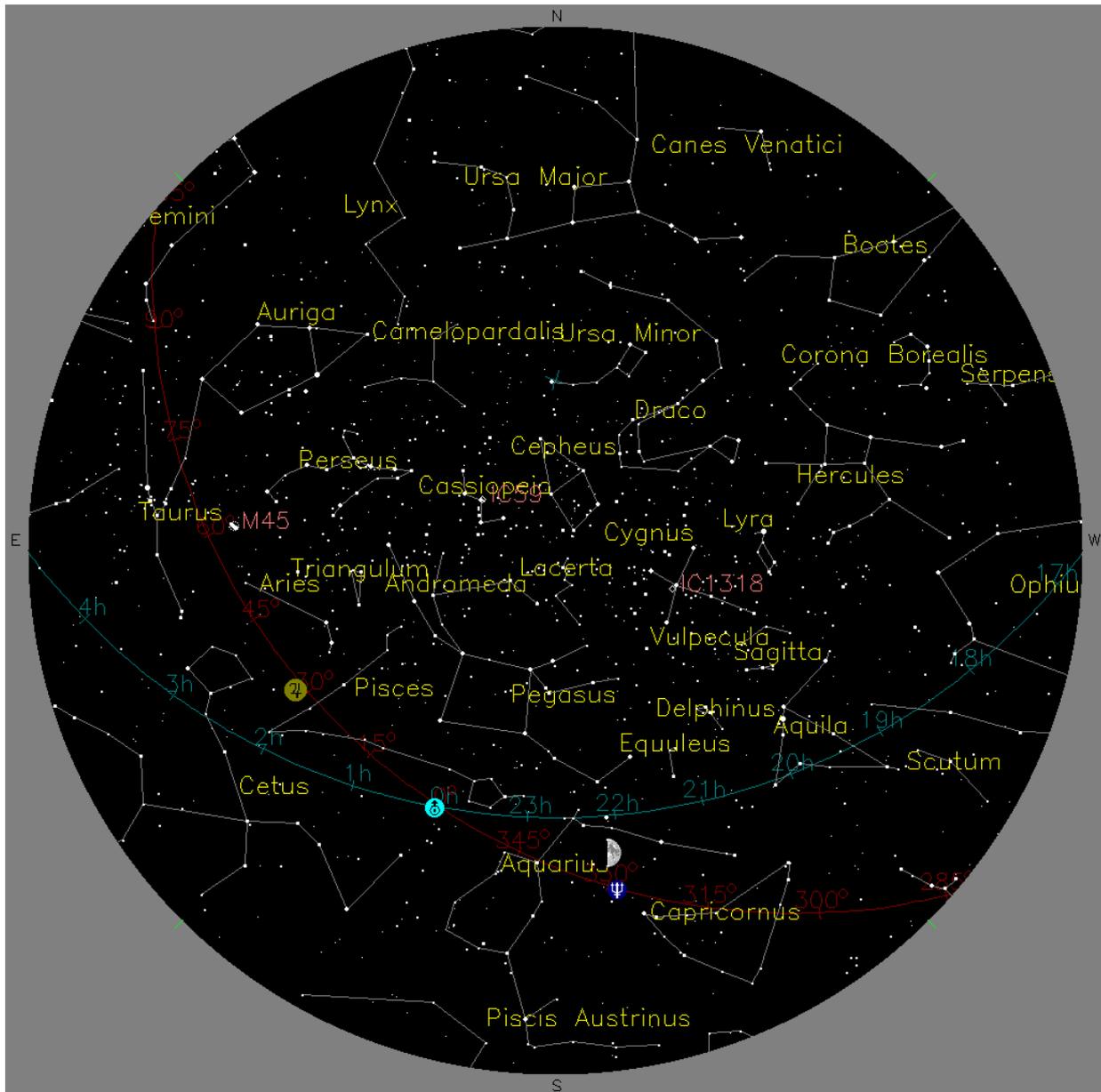
FULL 10<sup>th</sup>  
FULL 10<sup>th</sup>

LAST 18<sup>th</sup>  
LAST 18<sup>th</sup>

NEW 25<sup>th</sup>  
NEW 24<sup>th</sup>

# THE NIGHT SKY : November - December 2011

As of 1<sup>st</sup> December 2011, 18:00:00 GMT/UT



KEY	
 <b>MERCURY</b>	 <b>SATURN</b>
 <b>VENUS</b>	 <b>URANUS</b>
 <b>MARS</b>	 <b>NEPTUNE</b>
 <b>JUPITER</b>	 <b>PLUTO</b>



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### NEXT MEETING

THURSDAY 17<sup>th</sup> November 2011

THE SOCIETY'S WEB SITE : [www.ashastro.co.uk](http://www.ashastro.co.uk)

**A reminder that the [ashastro.org.uk](http://ashastro.org.uk) website is currently down, as are the ASH email addresses. Use those as detailed above.**