

# 2002



**NEXT MEETING**  
**THURSDAY, 16<sup>th</sup> February 2012**  
**THE ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY OF HARINGEY**  
**VOLUME 40 : ISSUE 4 : FEBRUARY 2012**  
[www.ashastro.co.uk](http://www.ashastro.co.uk)

# 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.

**NOTE - as below - the Meeting information is also on the NEW website:  
[www.ashastro.co.uk](http://www.ashastro.co.uk)**

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

## 2012

**February 16<sup>th</sup> Mat Irvine : “Space - As It Should Have Been”**

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>

*August – no meeting this month*

*September 20<sup>th</sup>*

*October 18<sup>th</sup>*

*November 15<sup>th</sup>*

*December 13<sup>th</sup> – Christmas Meet and Guiz VIII*

## IMPORTANT NOTICE

Currently we have TWO ASH websites running, in some form or another. The original is still under [www.ashastro.org](http://www.ashastro.org) (*not* .org.uk), but this is not being updated. The new version is under [www.ashastro.co.uk](http://www.ashastro.co.uk). Note three of the links - to Meetings, Magazine and About are now active. The Magazine link now has some back issues there - these will be added to when time allows!

We may decide to move back to the URL, .org.uk, (which is still available), or may stay with .co.uk. However whichever is decided, what you put into your web browser, will 'point' to whatever is correct. However the original direct ASH emails are not working, so will not get through. For the moment use the ones for Jim, Charles or myself, as listed on the back page. Eventually we hope to re-establish the ones with the <ashastro> in the name.

: Ed

### COVER :

What a space launcher ought to look like! Well according to artist Ralf Klep who painted this for the cover of *Colliers Magazine*, in March 1952. What if Project Apollo never happened, would our ways into space look like this? It's all somewhat academic as Apollo obviously did happen – and magnificent achievement it was. But if it hadn't? Next meeting your Editor and Vice-Chair, Mat Irvine, explores some alternatives.

*Image courtesy of the Bonestell Estate and Ron Miller*

## SOCIETY NEWS



We meet in what was the Music Room at Ashmole School. (And previous to that, it was the Curriculum Support Building - still noted as such in the map.) This is the low building, (centre of the photo-right), just past the Performing Arts Centre and opposite the main entrance to the technology block.



### MEETING REVIEW :

#### February 16<sup>th</sup> : Mat Irvine : “Space – As It Should Have Been?”

It's a somewhat sobering thought to realise that the Apollo Missions - magnificent achievements that they were - were really a dead-end. This is especially emphasised by the fact that the last mission, Apollo 17, was 1972, and that was it; human crews have not been back since. Personally I have to put the blame fair and square on President Kennedy as it was he who said in that speech of 1961, “We will put a Man on the Moon by the end of the decade...” At that point the Americans were still putting a lone man into low Earth orbit, and the ideas of Lunar travel were, if not in the far future, certainly in the medium - there were other priorities. But their President had given the American aerospace companies an ultimatum, so ways had to be found to achieve this goal ‘within the decade’. Consequently plans that were reasonably well established had to be put on long-term hold, if not abandoned all together, and Project Apollo was born.

But what if President Kennedy had not made that speech in 1961? Instead the ideas that were being proposed on the way “Space - As It Should Be” - had gone ahead? This talk looks at many of the plans that such scientists and engineers, such as Wernher von Braun and Willie Ley, plus visionary artists like Chesley Bonestell and Rolf

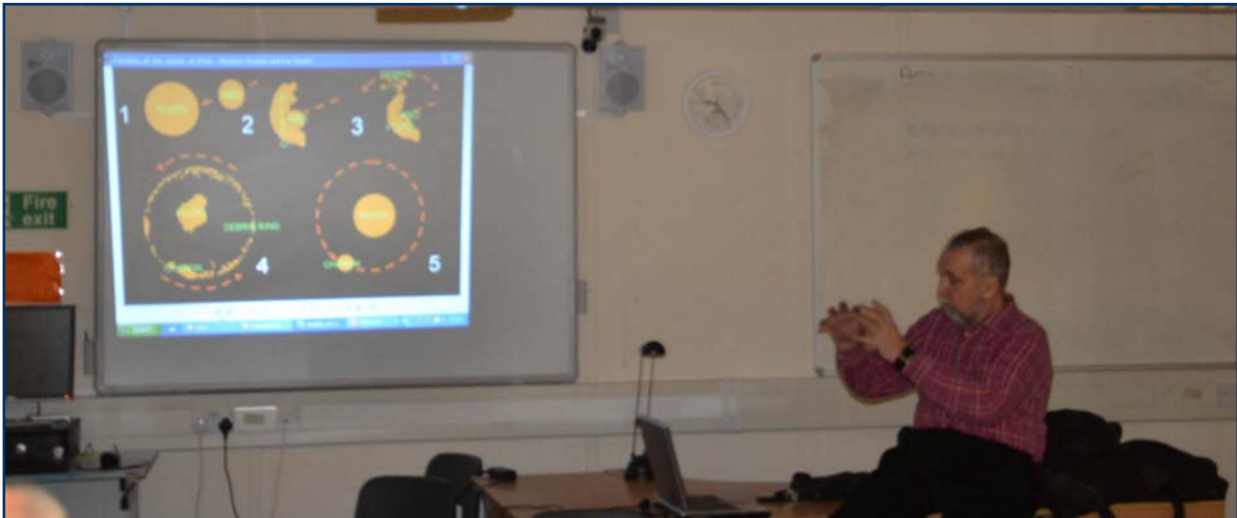
Klep were proposing, and featured in special issues of Collier's magazine form as early as March 1952. If these had happened, “Space - As It Would Have Turned Out”, would almost certainly have been completely different.



For this February talk, your Editor delves into one of his favourite subjects and the way spacecraft could very well have looked - if Apollo had not happened.



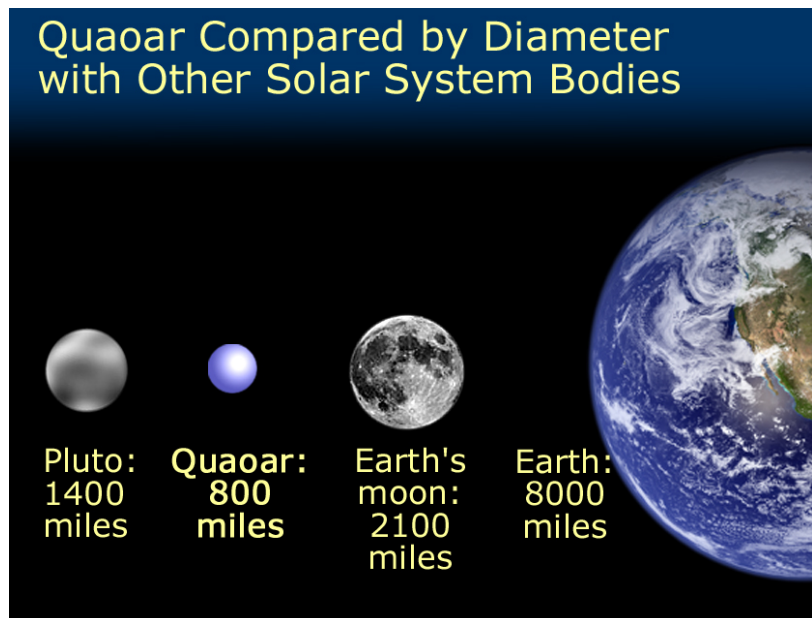
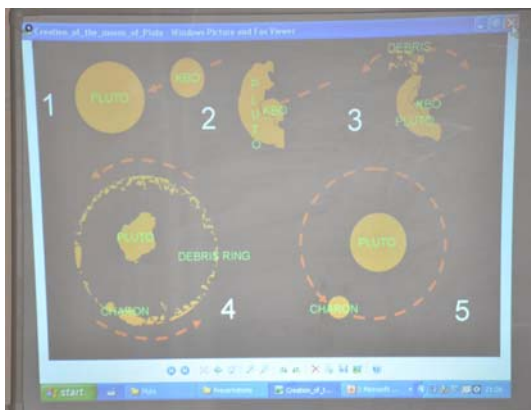
## MEETING REVIEW : January 19<sup>th</sup> Roger O'Brien : "Quaoar and Other Thingies"



Roger gave us one of his always interesting talks, even if your Editor with the video projector nearly didn't turn up due to delays on the Motorway!

Quaoar was discovered on 4<sup>th</sup> June 2002. It was the largest 'new' Solar System object discovered since Pluto in 1930. The discoverers were Chad Trujillo and Michael Brown of the California Institute of Technology, who had studied images acquired by the Samuel Oschin Schmidt

Telescope at the Palomar Observatory. It is the region of the Solar System outside Neptune's orbit, populated by bodies generally lumped under the term TNO – trans-Neptunian objects. Quaoar is around 1250 km / 800 miles in diameter and this makes it around the size of Charon, Pluto's satellite, and the largest object so far found in this outer region. Since then similar objects have been found such as Varuna, but this is smaller at around 900 km diameter.



Incidentally how do you pronounce Quaoar? Apparently the accepted way is "Kwa-war"!

*Left maybe how Charon – and other TNOs - were created? One TNO smashing into another – in this case Pluto itself.*

Mat Irvine

# CHAIRMAN'S QUARTERS



Successfully completed my recent trip to the USA; watched the obligatory amounts of American TV and marvelled at the adverts. Much of the adverts' style I had seen before but never really paid that much attention to. One style is "*Do you suffer from so-and-so Syndrome/Disease/Condition?*" If you wish to learn about medical conditions galore – watch these adverts, they're an eye opener! They then continue, "*We'll help you sue these S.O.B.'s who were responsible for this and get you loads of compensation (which you are rightfully due!)*". OK, the adverts maybe don't use that exact terminology, but the essence is there. Maybe I'm being over-critical, but who pays for the huge American scale legal fees and covers the costs of these very expensive adverts once the compensation is paid out?

The other style of advert that fills me with amusement is the 'drug peddling'. These go in the lines of: "*Are you feeling depressed? Take 'BLATSO, the medication that will relieve you of all your symptoms... etc.'*" At this point, cue smiley sufferer followed by up to 45 seconds of rapid and very bland, but informatively voiced, notification of all the known (generally horrendous) side-effects that this medication can cause, then finish off with 'smiley' saying "*I feel so good now!*". It's scary the power drug companies have over people who see potential harm as an 'acceptable risk' to perpetuate a life style which is probably the cause of the problem in the first place.

On the other hand, it was very pleasant to see American TV doing some major re-runs of the spectacular BBC series 'Planet Earth' – this time with Sigourney Weaver doing the voice-over. Then there were the, now *de rigueur*, zombie movies being aired, (hmm... maybe 'streamed', as much of the TV, in California at least, appears to be digitally on cable), though how such slow-moving virtually brainless creatures could ever take over the Earth is beyond me! We even got old black and whites of "The Saint", starring Roger Moore.

Primordial documentaries (both Stateside and here, for that matter) are the ones that fill me with much wonder and mirth. These documentaries of events millions and billions of years ago are often presented with an apparent air of certainty which goes beyond the realm of even hypothesis. I'd probably refer to these as 'pure speculation'. Some things we can know. Many dinosaurs were big, very big. There were also small ones. This we can tell from the bones. What they did, what colour they were, how or how fast they moved, their mating displays (the world is your oyster on this one!) and much more, is pure speculation based on 'informed' imagination. Many popular notions are based on tiny bits of 'forensic' evidence that may or may not apply to a whole species. My own pet hypothesis on how dinosaurs moved is based on the idea that birds are their descendants. Many modern birds bob their heads back and forth, while walking, to maintain their balance. For all we know, Tyrannosaurus Rex bobbed his head, pigeon style, when walking – that would make interesting TV! And what wiped out the dinosaurs? Even the Chicxulub asteroid impact event is now – yet again - under scrutiny.

Going further back to origins of life – well there's a minefield! Of course, it had to come from outer space where it is cold and chemical reactions take place very slowly. It couldn't really originate in vast amounts of Earthy boiling water (very fast chemical reactions here - millions of times faster than in outer space!) with all the necessary ingredients and catalysts floating about! The 'unfortunate' simplicity is that we just weren't there to see it, therefore all we can do is just speculate and guess!

See you at the next Meeting.

*Jim*

## SKY VIEWS Moon & Venus



Here we have the conjunction of Moon and Venus on 25<sup>th</sup> January - but worlds - or at least continents - apart. Top and left are from your Editor's back garden; right from your Chairman - at that point, in San Francisco!



## Isn't Life Strange?



Your Chairman supplied this image, left, also taken in San Francisco, that he felt needed a wider audience, along with the caption,

"We know that there are dirty snowballs but isn't NASA taking it a bit too far?"

Which reminded your Editor that when in Houston, a good number of years ago, he spotted - and



photographed - a number of businesses that obviously seemed to want to celebrate

the largest employer in the area...

So (right) it's "cheers" to that!



# The Night Sky : February – March 2012

## THE PLANETS

**MERCURY** : Reached superior conjunction on 7<sup>th</sup> February, moving back into the evening skies, low down in the west. Moon close on 25<sup>th</sup> February, with Venus and Jupiter

**VENUS** : Still in the evening skies, very prominent in the west in Aquarius. Very bright at -4.1 magnitude. Jupiter is approaching Venus over the next few weeks. The crescent Moon close to both, and Mercury, on 25<sup>th</sup> February.

**MARS** : In Virgo at magnitude 0.2. but moving to Leo, reaches aphelion on 15<sup>th</sup> February. Rising earlier in the evenings as the month progresses. Moon close on 10<sup>th</sup> February and 8<sup>th</sup> March

**JUPITER** : At magnitude -2, it is the almost the most conspicuous planet for most of the night, only outshone by Venus. Moving west as the month progresses and approaches Venus. The Moon close to both (and Mercury) on 25<sup>th</sup> February, closest to Jupiter on 27<sup>th</sup>.

**SATURN** : Now in the morning skies in Virgo, magnitude 0.7, near the bright star Spica. The rings are opening up, with the angle increasing by a degree or so. Moon close on 13<sup>th</sup> February and 11<sup>th</sup> March.

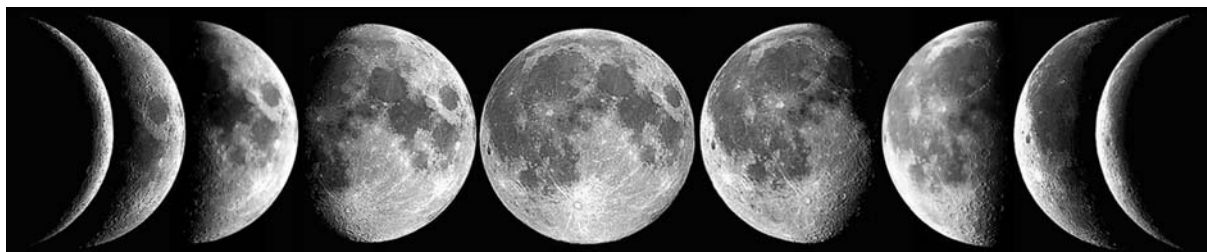
**URANUS** : In Pisces, around magnitude 6. Moon close on 24<sup>th</sup> February

**NEPTUNE** : In conjunction with the Sun 19<sup>th</sup> February.

## METEORS

Next major shower is the Lyrids April 22<sup>nd</sup> . .

## THE MOON



NEW 23<sup>rd</sup>  
NEW 21<sup>st</sup>

FIRST 13<sup>th</sup>  
FIRST 1<sup>st</sup> March

FULL 7<sup>th</sup> February  
FULL 8<sup>th</sup>

LAST 14<sup>th</sup>  
LAST 15<sup>th</sup>

NEW 21<sup>st</sup>  
NEW 22<sup>nd</sup>

There will be an annular eclipse of the Sun by the Moon on 20<sup>th</sup> May, but only for observers in China, Japan and ending up over some southern states of the USA. Here it will cross south Oregon; north California, into Nevada; south Utah; north Arizona; New Mexico and finally Texas.

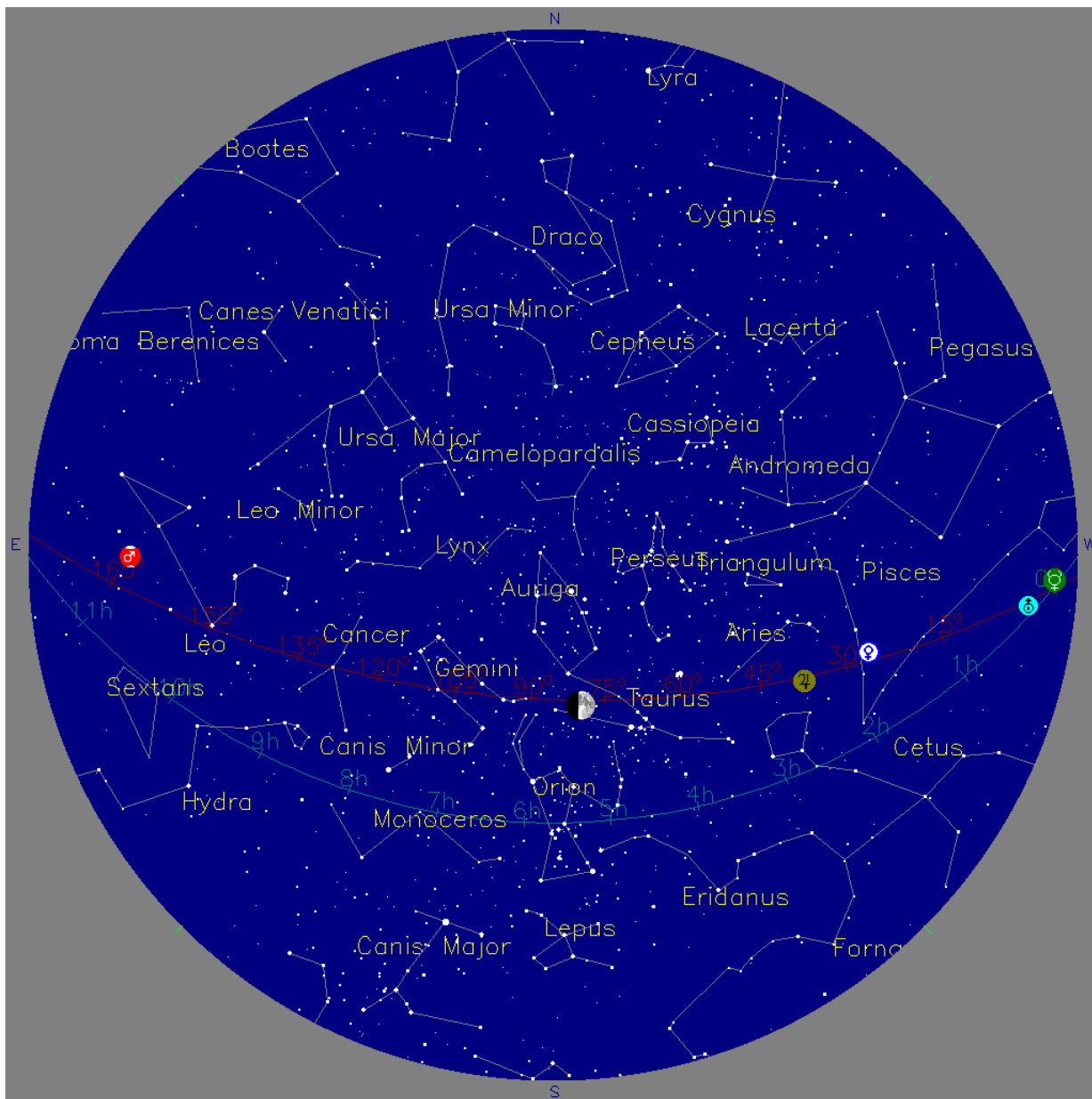
*Image shows the 2003 Annual Eclipse taken by Jerry Workman from Iceland*













# THE NIGHT SKY : February – March 2012

As of 1<sup>st</sup> March 2012, 18:00:00 GMT/UTC



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 16<sup>th</sup> February 2012

THE ORIGINAL SOCIETY'S WEB SITE IS : [www.ashastro.org](http://www.ashastro.org)

THE NEW ONE - UNDER BETA TEST : [www.ashastro.co.uk](http://www.ashastro.co.uk)

However use the emails as above for the present time