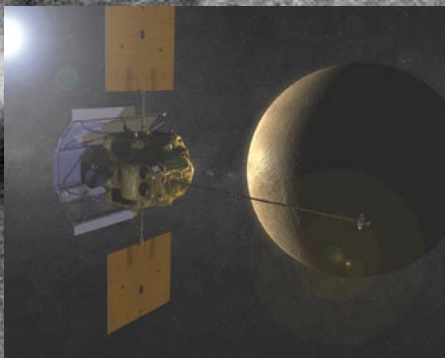


2002



NEXT MEETING
THURSDAY, 21st May 2015
THE ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY OF HARINGEY
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www.ashastro.co.uk

SOCIETY NEWS

MEETING VENUE

Music Block, Ashmole School, Southgate, London N14 5RJ.

The day for meetings is usually the third Thursday of each month. The exceptions are August, when we do not hold a meeting, and this now currently applies to the July and December meetings, though that may alter in the future.

However, in case of changes it is always advisable to double-check the dates below.

Doors open - 7.30pm : Main speaker - 8.00pm : Finish - 10.00pm sharp!

For more on this, and general meeting information, also check the website:
www.ashastro.co.uk. Latest update: May 2015.



More on the re-launched ASH Facebook page, and how to access it - see the next page

OBSERVING EVENINGS

Regarding any changes to Observing Evening meetings, this is a continuing message to let Observing Officers Jim Webb or Alister Innes know your mobile phone number, and if not already on the list, your email address; emailing to observing@ashastro.co.uk reaches both of them. The Facebook page will now also be used.

2015

May 21st : Jim Webb : "MESSENGER R.I.P."

June 18th : TBA

July and August : No meetings these months

September 17th : *Jerry Stone : "The Race into Space"* TBC

October 15th : including AGM

November 19th : *Observing Evening* TBC

December : No meeting this month

COVER:

The last ever image from MESSENGER as it hurtled towards the surface of Pluto on 30th April 2015.

Inset - an artist impression of the probe as it approached the planet.

Photos: NASA



Find us on
Facebook

For up-to-date information, we are now using that 'necessary evil' - Facebook. Note as this is an Open Group you do not have to be a member of Facebook to read posts and messages, you just need some form of Internet access.

Go to : www.facebook.com/groups/ASHastro/

However if you want to 'interact' (ie post messages), you have firstly to join Facebook, then on the ASH Facebook page, ask to join our Group, and you will get 'signed up'. So far we don't have that many members - and some of those aren't even members of the Society, though no problem with that. However a few more would be good!

SOCIETY NEWS MEETING ROOM



We currently meet on the first floor of the Main Music Block at the School. This is the two-storey building, next to our original room, the original Music Room. This is marked with the X in the photo on left, (and although it is demolished, the site is currently being redeveloped with a new structure). We hope a first floor will be suitable for all, as there isn't a lift. If anyone feels they will have difficulty, please let the Chairman know. Contact details on back page.

MEETING PREVIEW

21st May : Jim Webb : "MESSENGER R.I.P."

30th April saw the end of a four-year long mission to study the smallest planet in the Solar System, Mercury. The space probe MESSENGER - it stands for MERcury Surface, Space ENVIRONMENT, GEOchemistry, and Ranging - finally ended its studies by being crashed into the planet's surface at a speed approaching 8,750 miles per hour. But in those four years, we learned a lot. Jim will be taking us through just what is new about what can safely be said is the Solar System's most elusive planet. Plus, hopefully, a brief condensation of what you should have got that month... **March 20 - Redux**. This will include both the Solar Eclipse of that day and a round-up of what occurred the three days of this year's Stargazing Live on BBC-2, featuring the visit by Apollo 11 astronaut Buzz Aldrin.

MEETING REVIEW

16th April : Mat Irvine : "March 20 - Redux" - Not

Your Editor was due to give this talk last month, but was stuck on the M1 for approaching 2 hours after 'an incident' (still somewhat unexplained???) on his way down to Southgate, so unfortunately it had to be cancelled. However those there, with some ingenuity, managed to get Internet connection and instead listened to the very entertaining play first broadcast on 30th April on BBC Radio 4. Titled 'The Far Side of the Moore', this tells a fictionalised, though overall very accurate, version of the saga of getting The Sky at Night onto television. Written by Sean Grundy and directed by Dirk Maggs, it starred Tom (Rev.) Hollander as Patrick, doing a very, very good impression of the World's Most Famous Amateur Astronomer.

CHAIRMAN'S QUARTERS



Recently, I was doing some work in Kazakhstan! *Borat* country, you may say. It's interesting how stereotypes develop. My work was at Nazarbayev University in the Capitol, Astana, where it could have been said that it is the place where Kazakhs, "*Make learnings to better tractors than their neighbours*". So it became time for, "*Cultural learnings of Kazakhstan for make benefit glorious nation of UK*". The reality was (not surprisingly) much different. Those who speak English have a good understanding of using the language. Also, no thick moustaches and most of the locals have a Mongolian / Asian appearance, look very happy and smile a lot. Sacha Baron Cohen didn't do much research!

Kazakhstan is a remarkably large country – nearly the area of Western Europe, with a population of nearly 18,000,000. Its old capital was Almaty, near the Kyrgyzstan / Chinese border, but has now become Astana which is much further north. This is a city of astonishing redevelopment and modernization. New blocks of flats are being built everywhere and a huge space is being prepared as an exhibition space for "EXPO 2017". What is striking, on the buildings, is that there is a tradition for rooftops to be painted blue – a feature which stands out on the skyline. Also prominent are splendid mosques around the city – the majority of the population are Muslim, of a Sufi persuasion (more spiritual than Sunni or Shia). Unfortunately (for me), Astana is over 1,000 miles from Baikonur Cosmodrome – if it was much closer I would have stayed an extra couple of days just to visit it. Kazakhstan is currently preparing for 60th anniversary celebrations for the Cosmodrome, which was founded on 2nd June 1955.

The base was initially used to test Inter-Continental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs) and, in August 1957, actually launched the world's first ICBM – capable of delivering a warhead to the USA. It was later expanded to carry out spaceflights. Their chief rocket engine designer, Sergey Korolev, was instrumental in the shift to space travel and designed their best engines – still in use today. His main ambition was space travel and after the success of the ICBM test, two months later he was allowed to launch Sputnik 1, the world's first artificial satellite. After a few more satellite launches, Korolev began to look at the Moon as his next target. Two years after Sputnik 1, he oversaw the launch of Luna 3 (initially called 'Lunik 3'), which returned the first pictures of the far side (not the "dark side", as they would not have been able to take any pictures!) of the Moon. (*Sorry Pink Floyd - Ed*)

Before the Moon shots, in 1958 Korolev was already thinking about manned space flight and was planning the means for doing this. After some political resistance, Yuri Gagarin was launched into Earth orbit in April 1961. Two years later, the last of the series Vostok 6, orbited Valentina Tereshkova – the first woman in space. Two years on, he launched the two-man Voskhod 2 which carried Alexei Leonov – the first to perform a spacewalk. In early 1966 Sergey Korolev died during surgery. Although he had much opposition from the Soviet authorities; rivalry with co-workers and lack of advanced technical backup, Korolev put Baikonur on the map of technical achievements and major firsts in the history of human spaceflight. Despite having been 'beaten' to the Moon by the American space initiatives, the Cosmodrome continued to achieve impressive feats, including setting up the first space station, Salyut 1 in 1971.

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Baikonur was returned to Kazakhstan in 1991 and is now being leased by Russia for its space launches. With the ending of NASA's Space Shuttle, the Cosmodrome is now the only launch site for Russian spacecraft sending supplies and crews to the International Space Station.

Some photos from my visit on the next page - and see you at the meeting *JIM*

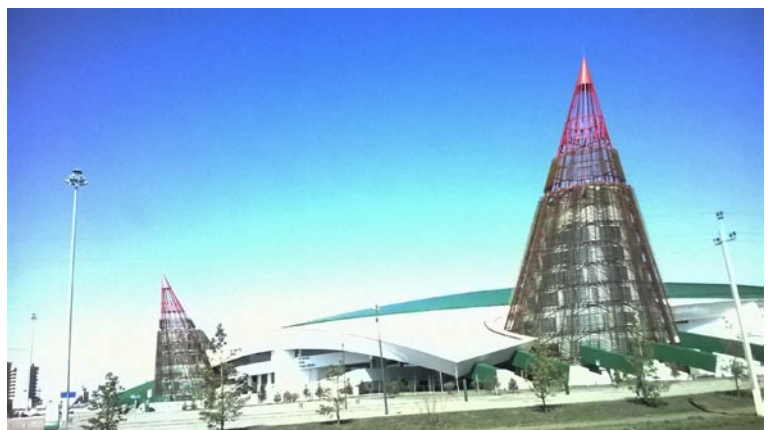


Some views of Astana from Jim's visit.

above: Nazarbayev University,
right : the Astana-Baikonur building
below : a mosque



left : one of the 'blue roof' buildings,
below : the new Sports Stadium



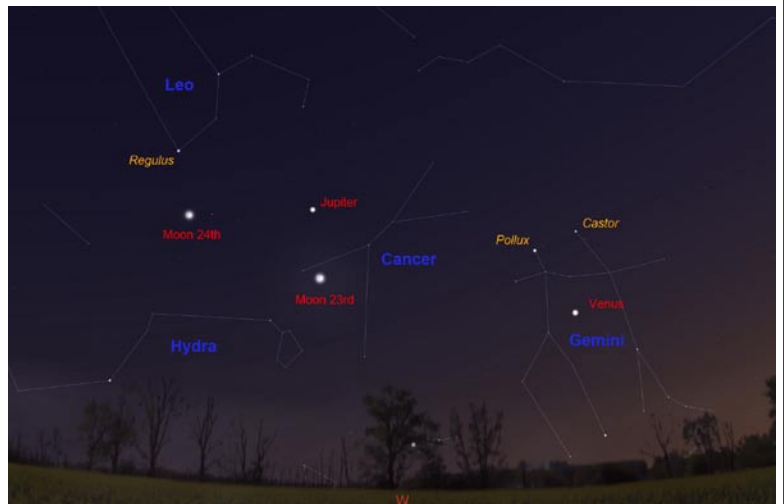
THE NIGHT SKY : THE PLANETS May - June 2015

MERCURY : Visible about an hour after sunset a few degrees west of the Pleiades Cluster, it rose to its highest point in the sky on 7th May. The brightness is falling from magnitude -0.4, at the beginning of May, to +3.0. It will disappear into the Sun's glare around the 20th, and is at inferior conjunction on 30th May, moving into the morning skies. One-day old Moon close on 19th May. Last day Moon, before new, will be close on 15th June.

VENUS : Shining very brightly in the western sky, very difficult to miss. Currently in Taurus, but moving into Gemini, passing Epsilon Geminorum on 16th May. The planet will reach greatest elongation from the Sun on June 6th, brightening from -4.2 to -4.4 during this month and as it does so, its angular size increases from 16 to 22 arc seconds while its illuminated phase shrinks from 67% to 53%. On 21st the new crescent Moon will be to the lower left of Venus, itself lying below the stars Pollux (left) and Castor (right) in Gemini. On the 22nd it will have moved over to the left.

MARS : Now finally sinking into the setting Sun's glare, and disappearing from view. In conjunction with the Sun on 14th June.

JUPITER : Somewhat past its glorious best, but still prominently stands out in the south to south-west at nightfall. The brightness drops slightly from magnitude -2.1 to -1.9 whilst its angular size falls from 38 to 35 arc seconds. Jupiter spends the month in Cancer in its eastwards progress towards Leo. It reached 90 degrees east of the Sun on May 4th, and there should be excellent views of the Galilean satellites. With a small magnification the equatorial bands in the atmosphere should be easily spotted, plus the Great Red Spot and the Galilean moons. Moon close on 23rd and 24th May - see right.



SATURN : On 23rd May reaches opposition when it be due south at 01.00 BST/midnight UT. The planet will consequently be visible for most of the hours of darkness. Moon to the north on 5th May.

URANUS : Moon to the north on 15th May and 11th June.

NEPTUNE : Moon to the north on 9th June. The planet is stationary on 12th June.

THE MOON



New 18th April
New 18th

First 26th
First 25th

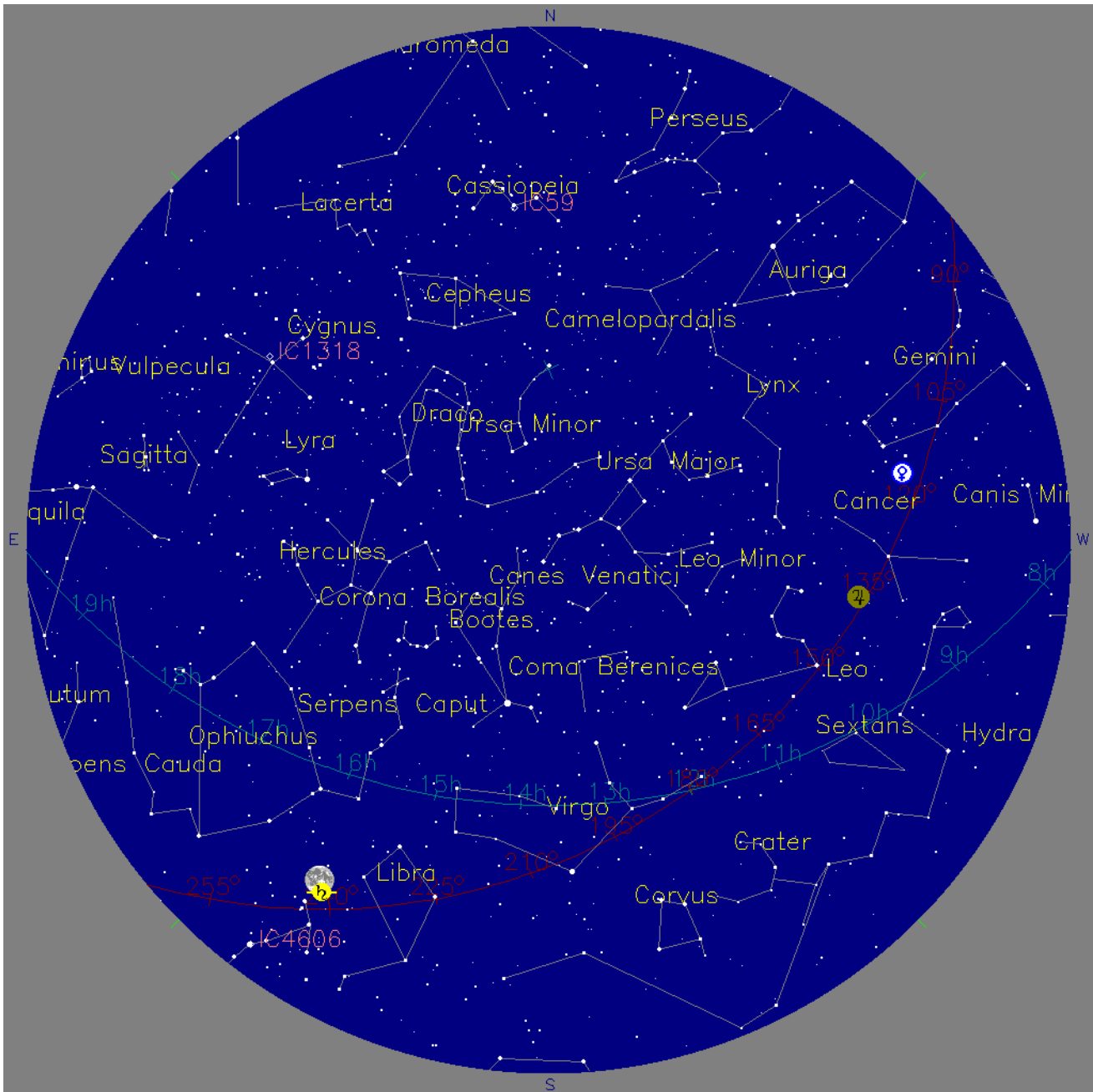
Full 4th May
Full 2nd June









Last 11th
Last 9th

New 18th
New 16th

THE NIGHT SKY : MAP

1st June 2015 : 21.00hrs GMT- UTC / 22.00hrs BST



KEY	
 MERCURY	 SATURN
 VENUS	 URANUS
 MARS	 NEPTUNE
 JUPITER	 PLUTO



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SECRETARY: Charles Towler : email secretary@ashastro.co.uk

TREASURER : Kyriakos Voskou : email treasurer@ashastro.co.uk

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY: Alister Innes : email memsec@ashastro.co.uk

EDITOR, P.R.O. and VICE-CHAIRMAN (and current WEBMASTER) : Mat Irvine
: email editor@ashastro.co.uk [www.smallspace.demon.co.uk]

GENERAL MEMBER : Mitchell Sandler

GENERAL MEMBER : Nicholas Lucas

GENERAL MEMBER AT LARGE : Gary Marriott

GENERAL INFORMATION : info@ashastro.co.uk

OBSERVING INFORMATION : observing@ashastro.co.uk



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