

## Friday 11<sup>th</sup> May 2018 'The Radio Cosmos'



For most of us radio astronomy is something of a blank area in our experience, unlike optical astronomy that we can relate to through our own use of telescopes. So it was a delight and a rare opportunity to hear about current research being undertaken by Dr. Nick Wrigley at Jodrell Bank in Cheshire. It turns out that by using the powerful tool of radio interferometry coupled with cutting edge processing software it is possible to learn about the life and death of stars of all sizes in all types of galaxies across the universe. This is a panoramic vision on a grand scale that seems to be telling us its life is now "over the hill", distinctly middle-aged, if the number and intensity of radio emissions

from active galactic nuclei are anything to go by. It is good to know that following the instructions in an old Ladybird book of experiments to demonstrate electromagnetism can lead an eight-year old to eventually become a research scientist in the invisible but very real world of radio waves. David Woodward (former Chairman Shropshire AS)

## Weekend 25<sup>th</sup> & 25<sup>th</sup> February 2018 Kidzfest

Two days, 16 hours, over 8000 young people below 14 and what do you get? Five SAS members smiling through the mayhem, building and testing straw rockets, describing the anatomy of the telescope as well as illustrating what can be seen in the night sky. A constant stream of enthusiastic stargazers, young and old, visited our stand at the Telford Kidzfest 2018 event. What can one say apart from its hard work but re-warding? These young people are the astronomers and astrophysicist of the future.



## Saturday 16th September 2017 Merfest

An enthusiastic group of members spent the day promoting the dark art of stargazing. Lots of talking and drinking tea took place in-between solar observing. As part of the 'country pursuits' festival it was enjoyed by all even if the cloud cover halted the stargazing as dusk fell.



## Saturday 26th August 2017 Attingham Park Summer Camp

The annual summer camp organised by the National Trust at Attingham Park attracted over 70 eager beavers of all ages. Five society members turned up to share some stargazing after dusk. We did in fact set up appropriate equipment to search for sunspots late in the afternoon. We were lucky amid lots of discussion on how we could use telescopes to view the sun. White, orange and green views were on offer together with an H-alpha telescope. Following a baked potato to keep us warm we switched to stargazing. The moon provided a magical target for the younger viewers with Saturn providing that 'wow' moment before we retired for the evening.



## Wednesday 23rd August 2017 Welshpool U3A Astronomy Group Summer Gathering



The annual gathering saw a number of new members to the group who brought their telescopes along for guidance and help. As well as solar viewing the focus of the day was 'space flight'. John introduced and explained the rocket equation while Steve led a practical investigation using film canister rockets. A sunny day and rural setting allowed for a very productive group meeting.

## Saturday 12th August 2017 Perseid Watch @ Nipstone Rock

Scores of enthusiastic stargazers gathered under a cloudy sky full of expectation of catching sight of some spectacular meteors. There was scepticism at the local weather forecast as it looked as if the cloud was set in for the night. However on cue at 10.30pm they parted to reveal a clear sky, well at least until the moon rose high enough to wash out most of the sky. During that hour we were treated to some 'wow' sights as the little grains of debris from the comet Swift-Tuttle hurtled through the atmosphere. The 'Milky Way' classified dark sky offered plenty of opportunities to view these special events. We were treated to telescope views of Jupiter and Saturn through holes in the dispersing clouds, together with tours of the main constellations, while devouring the BBQ fare. A big thank you to Shropshire Wildlife Trust for the invitation to such a conducive observing sight and providing tasty burgers.



As potential stargazers gathered in the visitors reception to claim their soup the clouds started to clear. SAS members set up their scopes and paraphernalia, as the smoke of the camp fire wafted across the field, whilst chatting with anticipation of an almost cloudless sky. Slowly the group gathered to listen to an enthusiastic story teller who entertained until the sun set. Following a short presentation of what stargazers do, we turned our attention skywards. Jupiter and its moons put on a show followed by a clear Saturn being available for many first timers. As the sky darkened the summer triangle revealed itself alongside many other bright constellations. Unfortunately a near full moon washed out many sights but did not dampen any enthusiasm. As the glowing embers of the fire dimmed we did manage to find our nearest galaxy before we ended another successful night.

## Saturday 5th August 2017 Stars & Stories at Dudmaston Hall

4:30pm saw the usual culprits congregate at Rodington village hall to prepare to welcome members and guests for the annual social event. Thanks to the ever present Stan Courtney and his telescope, early birds were treated to views of our nearest star together with a number of clear 'sunspots'. Discussion followed as to why and how we could view the Sun through a telescope. At 6pm prompt chairman, Peter Gunn, welcomed the assembled stargazers and invited them to 'attack' the vast array of appetising food that was brought along as part of the 'bring & share' feast. Well fed and watered and with little motivation to move, committee member John Thatcher adopted the role of Quizmaster. Although light hearted, but with a number of challenging questions the competitive nature of the teams soon emerged. The usual rewards of Mars Bars, Galaxies and Starbursts gave the winners a sugar rush. The evening concluded with a navigation activity presented by Steve Szwajkun. Teams were invited to construct a sextant out of CDs and Lego. They then had to use their creations to identify on a world map their location. Let's just say I am glad we have GPS these days? After an enjoyable and entertaining evening the room cleared in the evening twilight unlike the clouds.

## Saturday 15th July 2017 Summer Social at RVH

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## Saturday 24th June 2017 - Meole Brace Fun Day plus Solar Observing at Carding Mill Valley

The volunteers of the SAS were split today between two public events. Chairman Pete led a band of three additional members at the annual 'fun day' at the Meole Brace Science College in Shrewsbury. Over 1000 youngsters brought their parents and guardians to explore and participate in the many activities on offer including viewing a sun spot through specialist equipment.



## Saturday 13th & Sunday 14th May 2017 - Shropshire Kidsfest

The Society was invited to participate in the second Shrewsbury Kidsfest hence a willing band of volunteers set up on the Friday afternoon ready to do some solar observing and promote the Society over the weekend. In this we were very successful over two long and often sunny days with large crowds and much interest shown in what we do. Not only did we distributed a lot of information aimed at children but we talked to many parents about joining us, naturally stressing what a friendly bunch we are! We also had several requests for our outreach activities with youth groups which we hope will be followed up. How many potential members will take the next step of actually getting into their cars and making it to Rodington remains to be seen but we are sure the existing members will give them a warm welcome (if they haven't already done so).





