



April to July 2011



Issue 9

Edited by John Murrell

Special points of interest:

- SAGAS Summer Meeting to go ahead on Sunday 3rd July 2011 at Christ's Hospital School, Horsham.
- SAGAS Annual General Meeting on Saturday 16th April 2011 (see page 2)

Inside this issue:

Chairman's Piece 2

Membership 2
Changes

Make your own 4
Planisphere

Visit The Solar 4
System

SAGAS Summer Meeting to go ahead !

Thanks to [Horsham Astronomy Group](#) we will be having a Summer Meeting in 2011.



The meeting will take place on **Sunday 3rd July 2011** at Christ's Hospital School Horsham..

The event has to be held on that Sunday as it is the only day the facilities are available between the end of the school term on Saturday and the start of Summer Lettings on Monday.

Thanks to Horsham AG for volunteering to organize and host this meeting.

The event is still being planned but it will be an all day event with a selection of lectures plus other events such as Solar Observing and a model Solar System in the grounds of the school.

Travel to the venue should be easy as it not only has a large car park it has its own railway station. (Christ's Hospital Station is on the Horsham Line and served by Southern Railway)

More details including how to obtain tickets will be published on [SAGASonLine.org.uk](#) as they become available but please reserve the date in your diary now.



2011 Isle of Wight Star Party was a success by Dr Lucy Rogers

Isle of Wight Star Party 3-7th March, 2011

Three nights of observing and one evening of interesting and entertaining talks were enjoyed by astronomers attending the annual Isle of Wight Star Party. The event was held between 3rd and 7th March 2011, at Brighstone Holiday Centre.

"As ever, I had an amazing time at the Isle of Wight this year," said Iain Melville, who has attended all four IOW Star Parties. "We had a a near perfect celebration of practical amateur astronomy, with Thursday night and Friday night being clear well into the early hours. Both nights were cold, with our equipment ending each night with a healthy layer of ice encrusted upon it, but Friday offered calmer conditions wind-wise, although we were in agreement that transparency was better on the Thursday."

Continued on page 3

Editorial – John Murrell

I wish to apologise for the shortage of content in this issue however only one contribution was received. I find it difficult to believe that with 25 member societies with a total membership of over 1,000 astronomers that nothing of significance has occurred and that there are no budding authors out there willing to contribute to your newsletter.

I hope that you manage to contribute something for future editions—I know the next newsletter editor (to be appointed at the AGM) will be grateful for your contributions.

Please send your feedback to newsletter11@SAGASonLine.org.uk

Chairman's Piece – Phil Alner – Acting Chairman SAGAS

Saturday the 16th April is the date for the next quarterly SAGAS meeting. Within this meeting we will be holding our Annual General Meeting and as usual the membership have the opportunity to select the members of the committee that will guide SAGAS through the coming year.

For this to happen of course we need **nominations** for individuals from the membership to fill **all** the committee posts.

The Committee is made up thus:-

Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary who are the executive committee and shall each be a delegate of a different Society.

and up to 5 others including :- FAS representative, Webmaster and News letter editor.

We will be seeking a reference, from the nominee's society to be supplied for each of the executive officers and the Webmaster. Because of this nominations will need to be **received before the 12th April**. Please send them to:

Chairman09@SAGASonLine.org.uk

Nominations for the other posts can be taken on the day although it would be desirable to have confidence that these will be forthcoming.

Please take advantage of nominating members for your future committee.

We are indebted to Horsham AS for offering to host the SAGAS summer meeting at short notice.

Please support this event that takes place on Sunday 3rd July 2011.

SAGAS Membership changes

Welcome to Edenbridge & District Astronomers who joined SAGAS at our last meeting in January.

They have decided to have their on-line presence on Facebook rather than a web site. They can be found at <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Edenbridge-District-Astronomers/123432501050683> .

They are holding observing evenings and presentations to attract astronomers in their local area.

A link to their Facebook page as well as the sites of all the other SAGAS society members can be found on our website at www.SAGASonLine.org.uk.



Where are you going to observe the 2012 Transit of Venus from ?

**The SAGAS
AGM is on
Saturday 16th
April 2011.
We need your
societies
nominations
for the
Committee**



**What are the benefits to
SAGAS members ?**

**Look at the 15 benefits for
£15 on our website**

**Don't forget we have Dis-
play Boards & a Moon
globe for loan to member
societies**

2011 Isle of Wight Star Party was a success (from page 1)

He continued "Saturday was largely cloudy and offered a chance for us to kick back with a few beers and enjoy a relatively early (2AM) end to proceedings. Sunday night was teasing us with the promise of some clear skies, but it turned out to be a better evening for observers, with good transparency and excellent seeing on offer. However,



things were over too soon for us as we had to be packed for the morning, and we made the call at about midnight to start packing up. True to form, it was all-clear til dawn from 1:30AM but by then we had had enough and had turned in in anticipation of the journey home the next day, which involved a 1 o'clock ferry."

Viewing highlights included views of M17 and M16 before dawn and some very good views of the bright globulars M3, M4 and M5. For deep sky observer Owen Brazell, one of his highlights was the Planetary IC972/Abell 37 in Virgo which he saw for the first time from the UK. He said "I also had a very nice high power view of NGC 3242 in Hydra showing lots of structure, lots of new galaxy observations in Virgo and some nice galaxies in Leo Minor which I had not targeted before."

Over one hundred people attended the event this year, with some astronomers travelling over 200 miles from towns such as Macclesfield and Norwich to take advantage of the dark skies and low southern horizon the island offers. The comfort of a heated chalet and wonderful cooked breakfasts, served at the astronomer-friendly hours of 10-11, was also a draw for many. The site also has facilities for camping, and a few hardy souls took this option.



Daytime activities included visits to observatories on the island, Trade stands, astro-jumble and a guided tour around Ventnor Botanical Gardens, where many Mediterranean plants thrive in the mild micro-climate.

Many thanks again to all the supporters of the event, particularly Opticron (UK distributors for Vixen), Springer Books, Ian King Imaging, Modern Astronomy, Astronomy Now Magazine, Astronomia, Astronomy for Everyone, Astroparts, BC&F, The British Astronomical Association and David Hinds.

Images courtesy & Copyright Richie Jarvis more at <http://www.deepsky.org.uk/astro-imaging/misc/star-parties/2011-03-07-isle-of-wight-star-party>

The date for next years Isle of Wight Star Party has been set as 22nd - 26th March 2012 - see www.iowstarparty.org for more details.

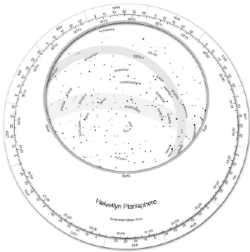


Dr Lucy Rogers
CEO
Isle of Wight Star Party

Make your own Planisphere – John Murrell

Following the BBC promoting the use of Planispheres in their January Stargazing Live event it has become very difficult to obtain Planispheres. Also while they are available for a few latitudes if you travel further afield they no longer show the sky correctly. I recently discovered an alternative—make your own. The Eddington Astronomical Society who meet in Kendal have an interesting page on their website at <http://www.eas-online.org.uk/planisphere.html>. This page has three key files—a booklet ‘Helvellyn-booklet.pdf’ that tells you how to make your own planisphere as well as instructions on how to use it. There are also two PostScript (.PS) files one for the disc and one for the mask. The secret to adapting the files for your own location are in this booklet. In simple terms all you have to do is to download the two PostScript files and then edit the PostScript in the files using a plain text editor such as Windows Notepad or Wordpad. The edits are fairly simple—all you have to do is to change the latitude & longitude in the file and then resave it as a text file but with the suffix ‘.ps’. You can then send the PostScript files straight to your printer if it is postscript compatible. If it is not you can install a program called GhostScript which converts PostScript Files to PDF files. Ghostscript is freely available on the web and may already be available on your computer. You can then print the PDF file using Acrobat as normal.

THE HELVELLYN PLANISPHERE



Thanks to Eddington Astronomical Society for making this information available on the web.

Places to Visit – The Solar System - John Murrell

If you want to get a good idea of the scale of the solar system and just how insignificant our home planet is visit the Scale Solar System Model in Otford in Kent. The model was built as part of the millennium celebrations and has models of the planets in the positions they were in at the start of 2000. The Sun and inner planets are in the local recreation ground with the planets beyond Mars being placed at various places in the Village.



Pluto which was still a proper planet in 2000 is located in nearby fields down a footpath that can be somewhat muddy in wet weather.

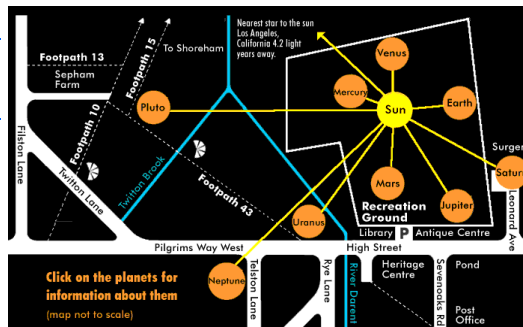
The model also includes the nearest stars but you will need your passport as they are located overseas. I will not spoil the secret of telling you where but be prepared for a big hit on your credit card and several days of travel.

More details on the model including the location of the models of the nearest stars can be found in the Otford Parish Council & Heritage Centre but this has limited opening hours.

Combine the visit with a lunch in a local pub or restaurant and it makes a good day out. There is a local car park but it gets quite busy later in the day, there is also a local train station.

More details are on their website at <http://www.otford.org/solarsystem/index.htm>.

And at <http://www.vamplew.co.uk/otford.html>



Images courtesy of Otford Solar System



Make your own Planisphere or use as part of a project for outreach activities

SAGAS Summer 2011 Meeting - can you bring a Solar Telescope or other material to the meeting ?



The Solar System Model at Otford, Kent. Well worth a visit

**SAGAS - The Southern
Area Group of
Astronomical Societies**

See Contact Details on our website
at
www.SAGASonLine.org.uk
E-mail: Newsletter11@SAGASonLine.org.uk

sharing the same sky



SAGAS – The Southern Area Group of Astronomical Societies exists to allow astronomical societies to share their experiences both good and bad for the benefit of other societies. and their members. The quarterly business meetings also provide networking opportunities for committee members. More details are on the '15 benefits for £15' link on our website.

SAGAS also holds an annual Summer Meeting to encourage society members to meet and provide individual & group networking opportunities.

We are on the web @ :
www.SAGASonLine.org.uk

Keep up to date with events and News in the SAGAS area.

SAGASoffLine is published every 3 months to coincide with our General & Summer Meetings, as a result we can only publish events that have long timescales in this newsletter.

Up to date information on what is going on is on our website at www.SAGASonLine.org.uk key events of interest to the whole of SAGAS are featured on the front page where possible.

Our website also has an on-line calendar linked from the front page. This is intended to show all the events that are happening in our area with each individual society entering their own events and the SAGAS webmaster on behalf of our committee entering SAGAS & regional events. At present Croydon & Farnham events are in the calendar as well as SAGAS events. For some reason Google Calendars have taken a dislike to Guildford AS and is refusing to allow them to enter their events but we hope to get that fixed soon.

If your society events are not listed you need to ask the SAGAS webmaster to grant your representative access so you can upload your events.

In addition to the SAGAS Summer meeting mentioned elsewhere in this newsletter Wadhurst AS are organizing a talk on Astronomical Imaging by Don Goldman who is the CEO and designer of Astrodon Filters. This will take place on the 12th May 2011, more details are in the entry in the SAGAS calendar at <http://www.sagasonline.org.uk/SAGAS-Calendar.htm>.

John Murrell

Webmaster09@SAGASonLine.org.uk



For the latest news visit
www.SAGASonLine.org.uk