

# SPACEWATCH

the newsletter of the Abingdon Astronomical Society

## MAIN Meeting

11th May 2026

AGM and  
'Royal Observatory Greenwich 1881 to  
1939'

Dr Lee Macdonald (History of Science  
Museum, Univ. of Oxford)

and contributions. Your images will be particularly appreciated.. Please send any news, observations, photos, etc. to:  
secretary@abingdonastro.org.uk.

## NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting for 2025/26 will take place on Monday 11 May 2026 at All Saints' Methodist Church Hall, Dorchester Crescent, Abingdon at 8.00 p.m., and will be followed by talk by Dr Lee Macdonald (History of Science Museum, Univ. of Oxford), 'Royal Observatory Greenwich 1881 to 1939'.

### Agenda

- 1 Apologies for absence
- 2 Minutes of the previous Abingdon AS AGM (held 12/05/2025)
- 3 Matters arising
- 4 Presentation of Committee's report
- 5 Presentation of Treasurer's report and Adoption of accounts
- 6 Membership fees for 2026/2027
- 7 Election of officers
  - i) Chairman
  - ii) Secretary
  - iii) Treasurer
  - iv) Publicity Officer
- 8 Election of other Committee members (between one and six in number)
- 9 Any other business

### NOMINATIONS FOR ELECTIONS TO COMMITTEE

Nominations are sought for the posts of Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, Publicity Officer and between 1 and 6 other committee members.

Under the Constitution of the Society, the "candidates for election shall be proposed and seconded by ordinary members of the Society and the nomination, including the candidate's signature, submitted in writing to the Chairman at least four weeks prior to the Annual General Meeting"(para.

## EDITORIAL

Welcome to the May edition of Spacewatch.

As most know by now, Owen Brazell, our friend and chairman, died in a road traffic accident on Monday 16th March. Owen's family arranged a memorial service in the Wolfson Room at Jodrell Bank on 24th April, with music, tributes and poetry. Several from the Society struggled through slow moving motorway traffic to attend. A group photo is included later in this issue.

Our first meeting this month begins with our AGM and continues with a talk from science historian and Society member Dr Lee Macdonald on the Royal Observatory Greenwich 1881 – 1939.

The AGM is your chance to hear how the Society is run and to comment on that and suggest improvements. We are also looking for people to join the Committee and, in particular, we seek a Chair. We are also looking for someone with experience in Microsoft Word to edit Spacewatch. This is not an AGM to 'sit on your hands'. To misquote John F Kennedy, "Ask not what Abingdon AS can do for you – ask what you can do for Abingdon AS"!

The recent weather has been kinder to our imagers and I am grateful to Roland Gooday and Charline Giroud for submitting images.

The acting editor of "SpaceWatch" is Chris Holt, who would very much appreciate your stories

10.3.3). Ordinary members are all those who are not honorary members or affiliated members.

The Constitution goes on to say that, “in the event of there being no candidate for the election of an officer of the Society, or fewer than ten candidates for the election to the Committee, the Chairman may accept nominations given at the meeting” (para. 10.3.4).

**Chris Holt, Secretary, Abingdon AS**

## REPORT OF LAST MEETING

April’s meeting

### **Astrophotography using remote and robotic observatories:**

Peter Goodhew FRAS is a known name among astrophotographers.

You can find out lots about him and his astrophotographic achievements on his [www.imagingdeepspace.com](http://www.imagingdeepspace.com) website, but the evening’s talk was ‘Astrophotography using Remote and Robotic observatories.’

Remarkably, this journey did not really kick off until he retired 11 years ago. He had always fancied astrophotography, and he did build an observatory with a 4.5” refractor at home, which he still has. However, he lives in Chiswick, near to high buildings and under the Heathrow flight path. He linked up with Olly Penrice, who had retired to set up an observatory in France for remote users, but did not have space for Peter. Olly told him of a site in central Spain, some way north of Seville, where he has two 6” refractors on the same mount and a C14.

This talk was perfect for those of you who fancy remote astrophotography, because he went through loads of different options, locations and drawbacks.

What to look for:

— Sites that are protected: you have your own roof, which means that your scope can protrude above its site and you can see much lower to the horizon. This also means you have control of your scope against the weather. If you have a dew shield you can continue imaging even if there is 100% humidity and the rest of the site is closed down.

— Sites which have good tech support; remember you may be thousands of miles away! 24 hour tech support is best; there are four people at his site. If you want to visit you may not have anywhere nearby where you can stay. (The Starfront site in Texas is such a case; you have to rent a camper van to stay up there. You can’t even store any kit there.)

— Sites which are on a different time zone and enable you to do daytime imaging from home. Chile sounds good, but watch for sites that are run by solar power. Days of bad weather may mean the site can’t function for a while because of no power. Chile has loads of extra VAT requirements, even if you’ve already paid VAT on everything, even the shipping. (Morocco is also a bit crooked when it comes to getting kit through customs...and watch that Saharan dust that can coat your stuff there, as well as the extremes in temperatures up in the mountains.)

Make sure you test your kit before it gets shipped out, and that it can be installed with all documentation clear and cabling labelled. This makes sense for insurance purposes. Make sure the kit is the best you can afford, with a webcam to keep an eye on it. (Even have backup kit available if you’re a long way from your site.) Make sure you get alerts if something goes wrong, or sudden storms, power failures, etc. Peter has Starlink backup if land cables get damaged (by farmers, JCBs, etc...).

Some information regarding tech advice: use Windows remote desktop or Chrome desktop, Any Desk Teamviewer. Google Drive Sinology NAS network storage (he has 16Tb worth, which can collect stuff simultaneously from scopes observing at the same time). He uses windows update blocker to avoid any software updates (if it’s working, why fix it?). He shuts everything down completely each time he finishes.

Remember also that there are various rental/shared rental options, such as SkyGems, Telescope Live, iTelescope. Do your research.

## What's up for May 2026

Steve Creasey and Cristina Garcia Pozuelo Sanchez

On April the 24th six of us from Abingdon Astronomical Society (Ian, David, John, Roland, Cristina and myself) attended the celebration and memorial of Owen Brazell's life at the Jodrell Bank Observatory. The memorial was held in a function room with a view straight out to the large radio telescope dish (a sight I know Owen would have, and probably had appreciated).

It was a very moving celebration, with many friends and family taking turns to recount their own stories of Owen, many of which were amusing, with several common themes.

Ian Smith, our acting chairman, gave a very moving account of what Owen meant to him personally and to us as a society, we were all sat there with tears in our eyes.

Owen could quite often be construed as a glass half empty kind of a person, the sky was never clear enough, the seeing wasn't good enough, the comet wasn't high enough or bright enough! But he would still always enjoy the observing or Seestar imaging session despite the conditions.

He was also never afraid to say what he thought, no matter how inappropriate the moment. I can recall dozens of times he would say something from the back of the room during someone else's talk, or talk to the person sat next to him during a presentation.

Owen was a very sociable person, despite his sometimes grumpy persona. He was well known, liked and respected throughout the Astronomy community. I know how much he enjoyed the social side of our Society, whether it was passing on knowledge at outreach events, chatting in The Spread Eagle pub after the main and beginners meetings or the Christmas get together at The Pack Horse, which I know he especially enjoyed. None of these things will be the same without him and I know he will be missed by lots people for many years to come.

I know Cristina and I do and will miss him greatly!

May 2026 hosts two full moons — a situation that arises when the lunar cycle (approximately 29.5 days) fits twice into a 31-day month. In May 2026, we'll get an extra full Moon – one on 1st May and another on 31st May. That makes May 2026 the month of the blue Moon.

Typically, we see 12 full Moons a year, one on average falling neatly into each calendar month. But the two calendars don't precisely match up. A calendar year contains around 11 days more than the number of days in 12 lunar cycles, so eventually the difference makes itself known.

It's then that we get two full Moons within a calendar month, and this has led to the informal meaning. A blue Moon is the second full Moon in a month.

**Mercury** is too close to the Sun to see at the start of the month, however, from the 19th Mercury starts to become more visible, moving away from the Sun in the evening sky, with greatest eastern elongation occurring on June 15.

**Venus** will be prominent in the evening sky throughout May 2026, shortly after sunset. It will appear in the western sky, gradually setting a few hours after the Sun. Around 14 May 2026, Venus reaches its highest altitude of the evening apparition, offering optimal viewing conditions.

Because Venus's apparent magnitude is very bright at -4.3, it will be easily spotted even in moderately light polluted skies.

**Mars** – Rising around 03:30 UT on the morning of the 12th, Mars will be a tricky target in the dawn sky. It starts to get easier to spot as we get towards the end of the month, rising around 02:56 UT on the 28th.

**Jupiter** – Shining brightly at mag -2 in the constellation of Gemini, Jupiter is still well positioned for the first half of the month, setting at 01:30 BST on the 3rd, however the planet will be setting earlier each night, eventually setting just before midnight on the 31st.

**Saturn** – Rising just before the Sun at the start of the month in the constellation of Cetus, this won't be a good time to observe Saturn, however Saturn is rising earlier each day, slowly moving away from the Sun, rising around 03:20 BST on the 28<sup>th</sup>.

**Uranus & Neptune** – Uranus is too close to the Sun to be observed this month

Rising just before Saturn, Neptune, currently in Pisces, will become better positioned as we go into May. Neptune rises at 04:44 BST on the 3rd and 03:05 on the 28th

## Meteor Showers

### *Eta Aquarids*

Also sometimes spelled as Eta Aquariid, the meteor shower is usually active between April 19 and May 28 every year. In 2026, the Eta Aquarids will peak on the night between 5-6 May.

The radiant, the point in the sky where the Eta Aquarids seem to emerge from, is in the direction of the constellation Aquarius. The shower is named after the bright star of the constellation, Eta Aquarii.

The Eta Aquarids is one of two meteor showers created by debris from Comet Halley. The Earth passes through Halley's path around the Sun a second time in October. This creates the Orionid meteor shower, which peaks around October 20.

Comet Halley takes around 76 years to make a complete revolution around the Sun. The next time it will be visible from Earth is in 2061.

On the night of 5-6 May in Oxfordshire, you can expect to see up to 50 meteors per hour, there is always the possibility of a lot more.

## Comets:

Unfortunately, Comet C/2025 R3 (PanSTARRS) is now lost in the evening pre sunset sky.

### ***Comet 10P/Tempel 2***

Visibility Window: Early northeast/late night sky from Northern Hemisphere in May leading into July and August, becoming easier to see as summer approaches.

Brightness: Around magnitude 7–8 during late May; bright enough for binoculars or small telescopes, but not naked-eye visibility.

Best Viewing: Focus on the constellations Aquarius and Capricornus. Peak visibility for Northern observers occurs in early August, but late May evenings may provide glimpses with optical aid.

**M58** – An intermediate barred spiral galaxy, 68 million lightyears away in the Virgo constellation

**M61** – An intermediate barred spiral galaxy, 52.5 mly away in the Virgo cluster of galaxies

**M90** – An intermediate spiral galaxy, 60 million lightyears away in Virgo

**M91** – A barred spiral galaxy, 63 mly away in the Virgo cluster

**M98** – An intermediate spiral galaxy, 44 mly away in Coma Berenices

**M99** – A grand design spiral galaxy, 49 mly away in Coma Berenices

**M100** – Another grand design spiral galaxy, 55 mly away, one of the largest and brightest galaxies in the Virgo cluster

**NGC 4147** – A Globular Cluster, 60 thousand lightyears away in Coma Berenices, discovered in 1784 by William Herschel

**NGC 4361** – A Planetary Nebula, 2.9 thousand ly away in the constellation of Corvus

**M68** – A Globular Cluster, 33590 ly away in Hydra, discovered in 1780 by William Herschel

Clear Skies

Steve and Cristina

## **BORROWING THE SEESTAR**

As many of you will know, the Society now owns a Seestar 50 telescope, which is available for members to borrow.

It is small, extremely portable, easy to store, and easy to use via a free downloadable app on your smart phone.

Unlike traditional telescopes, you cannot look through the Seestar. It is used to take digital images that are downloaded to your phone (which you can then download to a PC, etc. for image processing if you so desire).

Apart from an off/on button physically on the telescope, all commands and instructions go through the phone app.

Apart from needing your own smart phone, everything you require is supplied.

You need no experience of either using a telescope or image processing to use the Seestar as it does virtually all the work for you automatically. However, there are plenty of user options if you want to play around with it.

There are two main requirements if you want to

borrow the Seestar.

The first is you have to have been a member of the society for the past 18 months, and the second is you have to leave a deposit of £50.

The money is fully refundable as long as you return the Seestar in the same condition as you received it.

You can borrow the Seestar for two calendar months (longer if nobody else has asked to borrow it) so you get plenty of time to take lots of images.

If you are interested in borrowing the equipment contact me at [bobdryden@ntlworld.com](mailto:bobdryden@ntlworld.com)

Bob

#### UPCOMING MEETING NOTES

**18<sup>th</sup> May 8pm Beginners' Meeting in the Main Hall. Talks to include 'Local galaxies' and 'Setting up an equatorial mount'**

**Observing evenings: There will be no further in-person or virtual observing evenings this season.**

**Mailing List: we have now moved to a new mailing list on groups.io called**

**[abingdonas@groups.io](mailto:abingdonas@groups.io)**

**This mailing list requires approval from the List Owner, before subscriptions are finalized.**

**This mailing list is for email discussions of astronomical topics and the exchange of messages, notices of meetings and events organised by Abingdon Astronomical Society and others, and astronomical news between members of Abingdon Astronomical Society.**

**The new Groups.io group (i.e. list) has a st Homepage at <https://groups.io/g/abingdonas/> Group membership is primarily for current and/or recent members of Abingdon Astronomical Society. Those who are permitted to join the Group but do not become members of Abingdon Astronomical Society nor have been recent members may, in due course, be removed from this Group.**

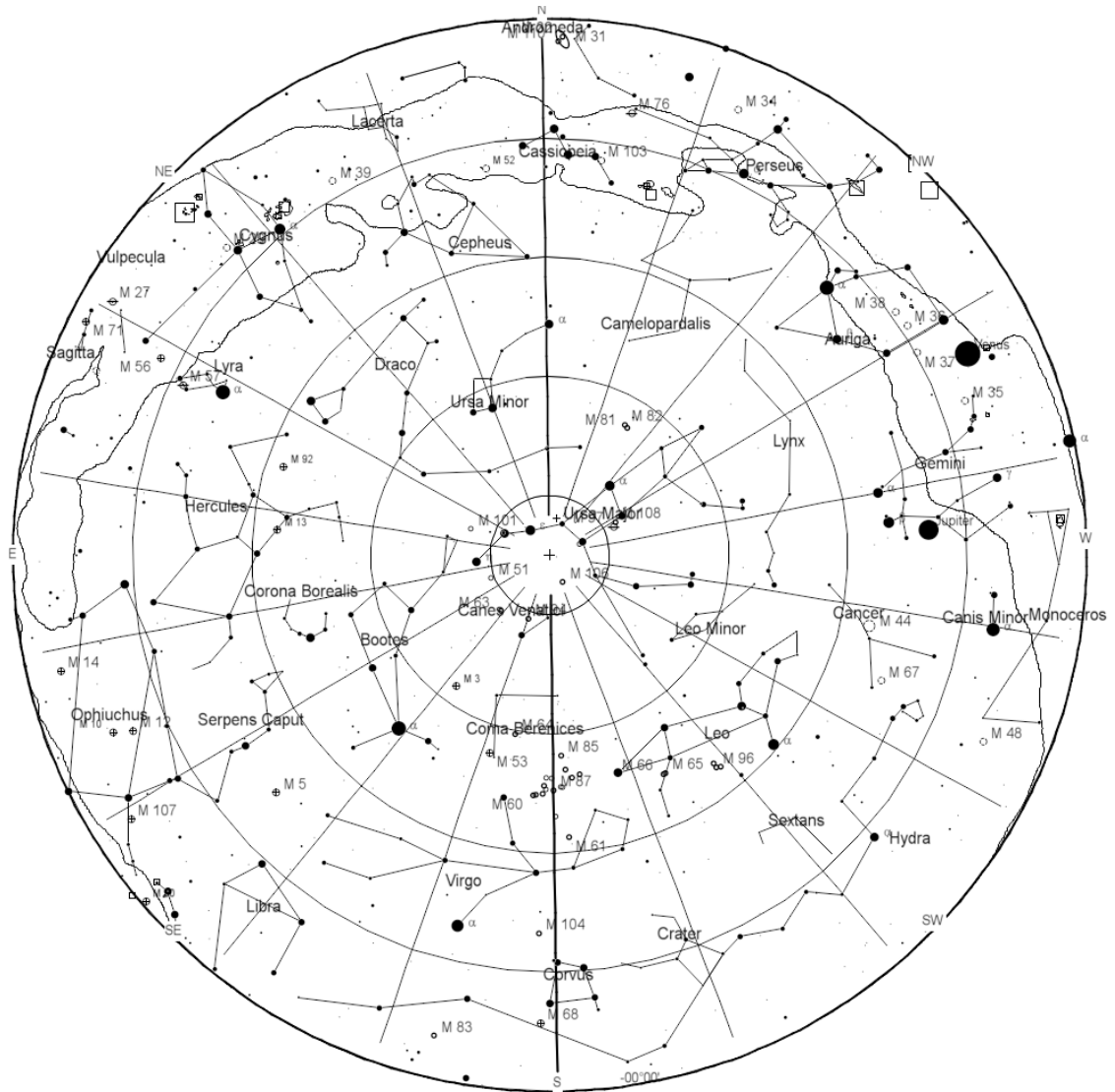
**The Group is not listed in the Groups.io directory but, currently, once found the archived messages will be visible publicly.**

**We have also setup a new WhatsApp group for real time announcements of astronomical/ meteorological (NLC, Auroral) phenomena. The group is open to all members of the society. To join leave your mobile number with any member of the committee and you will receive an invite to join.**
































**We also operate two Facebook groups so you can also keep in touch with the society through those.**

# STAR CHART

The night sky at 10 pm (BST) Friday 15th May 2026



**MOON PHASES MAY 2026**

Moon phases and solar and lunar rise and set times for May 2026						
Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1  ↑ 20:52 ↓ 05:00	2  ↑ 22:07 ↓ 05:17
3  ↑ 23:18 ↓ 05:40	4  ↑ --:-- ↓ 06:10	5  ↑ 00:21 ↓ 06:52	6  ↑ 01:12 ↓ 07:48	7  ↑ 01:51 ↓ 08:53	8  ↑ 02:19 ↓ 10:06	9  ↑ 02:39 ↓ 11:22
10  ↑ 02:55 ↓ 12:39	11  ↑ 03:09 ↓ 13:57	12  ↑ 03:21 ↓ 15:17	13  ↑ 03:32 ↓ 16:39	14  ↑ 03:45 ↓ 18:07	15  ↑ 04:01 ↓ 19:40	16  ↑ 04:21 ↓ 21:15
17  ↑ 04:52 ↓ 22:45	18  ↑ 05:37 ↓ 24:00	19  ↑ 06:42 ↓ --:--	20  ↑ 08:04 ↓ 00:53	21  ↑ 09:34 ↓ 01:29	22  ↑ 11:02 ↓ 01:52	23  ↑ 12:25 ↓ 02:09
24  ↑ 13:44 ↓ 02:22	25  ↑ 14:59 ↓ 02:33	26  ↑ 16:13 ↓ 02:44	27  ↑ 17:27 ↓ 02:55	28  ↑ 18:41 ↓ 03:08	29  ↑ 19:55 ↓ 03:24	30  ↑ 21:07 ↓ 03:44
31  ↑ 22:13 ↓ 04:12	Times in BST					

**Beginners Meeting Talks 2025/26**

Date	Long Talk	Speaker	Long Talk	Speaker
SEP 29th	Whats Up	Dan	Eyepieces	Owen
OCT 27th	Jupiter	Ian	NEO	Bob
NOV 24th	Xmas Meal			
DEC 1st	First Telescope	Ian	Orion	Owen
JAN 26th	Brown Dwarfs	Dan	Intro. To Solar System Imaging	Chris Pickford
FEB 23rd	The Science in Space films	Cristina	Messier Marathon	Owen
MAR 16th	Observing Planetary Moons	Bob	Weather Apps & websites	Chris
APR 27th	Artemis II	Cristina	Naming Astronomical Objects	Dan
MAY 18th	Local Galaxies	Dan	Setting Up an Equatorial Mount	Chris
JUN 15th	Solar Eclipses	Bob	Putting Together a Mobile Imaging Rig	Ian

**Recent images from members**



Cristina, Steve, David, Roland, Ian, Clare and John at Jodrell Bank



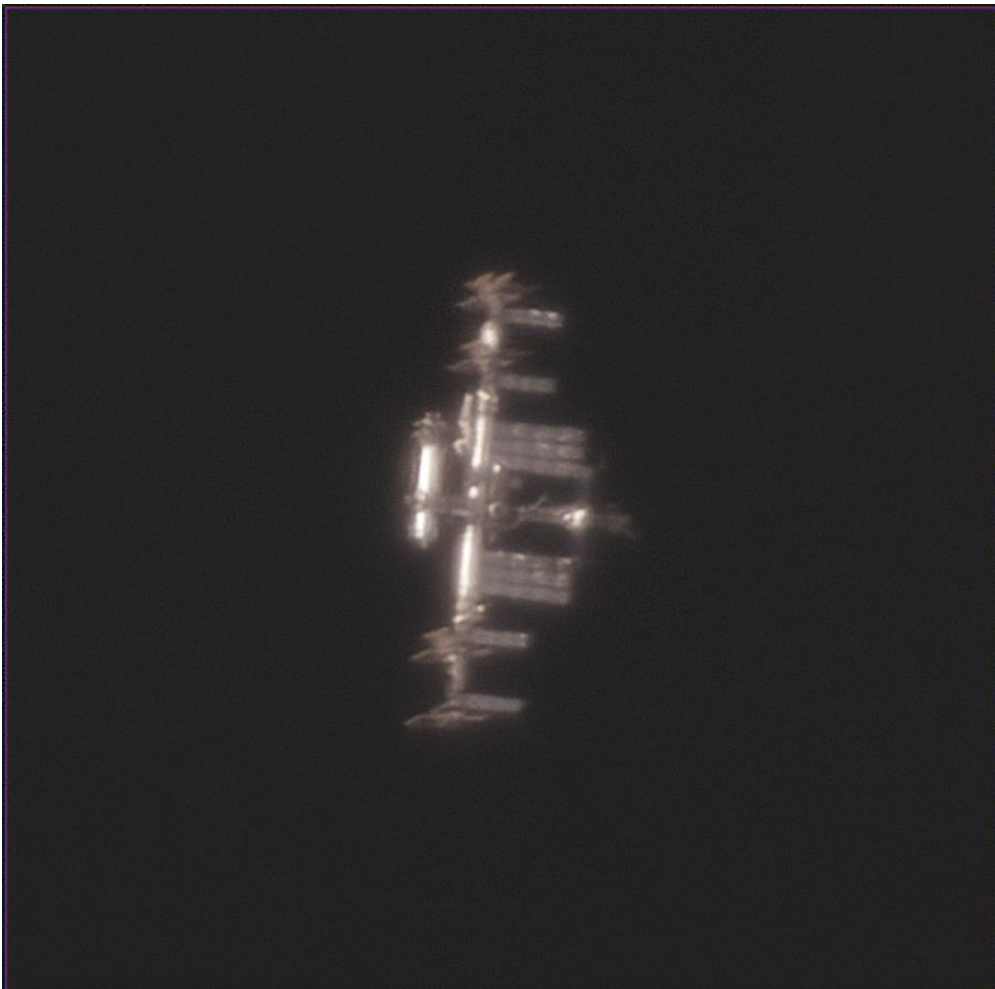
Leo Triplet M66, M65 and the Hamburger Galaxy, NGC 3628 (Image: Roland Gooday)



Spiral galaxy M100 in Coma Berenices (Image: Roland Gooday)



The Pinwheel Galaxy M101 in Ursa Major (Image: Roland Gooday)



The ISS at 06:10 on 26th April (Image: Charline Giroud)