

# Ayrshire Astronomical Society Newsletter December 2014



Please send articles to [newsletter@ayraastro.com](mailto:newsletter@ayraastro.com)

## **MERRY CHRISTMAS AND A HAPPY AND PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR**



No doubt Santa has been inundated by traditional letters up the chimney, the more modern Tweets and Facebook requests together with endless pleading emails for no end of expensive and exotic astronomical hardware – well, I have done my bit in stressing the old boy out! I hope that you have done the same and that having been (mostly) good boys and girls this last year you will be rewarded. If not well you can always treat yourself in the January sales.

Thanks to you all for attending and contributing to the Society this last year and I look forward to seeing you at the Christmas meal and in the New Year.

Graham

### **Next Meeting and Topic**

The next meeting is on the 26<sup>th</sup> of January when the speaker will be our very own Paul Cameron – from the world renown “Darvel Astroshed”. We have all seen Pauls astronomical images (and a few others – say no more!!) and wondered how we can achieve such great results – well, Paul isn’t giving away those secrets in this talk but he will be describing how to make a simple “Barn Door Camera Mount”. Unlike the shoe cam mount, Paul tells me that you don’t actually need a barn door for this project so make sure that you come along and find out how to get started in astro imaging.

### **Loudoun Hall Feedback Sought**

You may recall that the November Newsletter had this very same section seeking feedback on the new venue – no? Well, here it is again as I have had absolutely NO feedback to date!! We have had several meetings in Loudoun Hall now and it would be very useful to get some feedback on the new venue. For example; Is it a great improvement and the absolute best? or Do you prefer the old location? is parking an issue? Are the stairs a problem? Are the toilet facilities adequate? Is the room layout satisfactory? Is the fact that the entrance door is on a latch and buzzer system a problem? Please let us have your views positive or negative let a member of the committee know or just email your comments to [president@ayraastro.com](mailto:president@ayraastro.com).

## Object of the Month – an Idea

I (Graham) had a telephone call from one of our Members a few days ago – just a general catch up which was nice - but amongst the chat he put forward what I think is a great idea for a series of short talks. You are all familiar with the excellent “Object of the Month” talks that Nick delivers, well this idea suggested that a similar talk could be done on a piece of astronomical equipment , say a the spotting scope or a collimator or a type of eyepiece. The idea is for a short practical “hands on type of talk” rather than a whizzy Power Point Presentation. This is the sort of talk that anyone could give with a bit of research, as they can choose the topic and the depth of cover. In addition it could be delivered as an interactive talk with the audience adding their knowledge during the talk. Lets me (or any committee member) know what you think about this idea. Better still volunteer to give a talk – no one will eat you!



## January Skies:

### Deep Sky

All the old winter favourites are now appearing in the winter sky- those big constellations full of little fuzzy objects- so get out the binoculars and scopes and have a good look around as we should get a few clear skies soon! With the dark skies and the winter objects come the deep sky astro imaging objects – yippee! Let’s have some members astro- images for the web site and Facebook and don’t forget the possibility of the imaging section in the Members Night planned for May. Send them to [photos@ayrastrom.com](mailto:photos@ayrastrom.com)



### The Planets

Most of the planets are remain poorly positioned in January with the exception of Jupiter which is in western Leo, presenting itself in the late evening and early morning. At magnitude -2.4 it will give a good viewing. Saturn is also begins to appear in the pre dawn skies along with Venus and Mercury.

### Alex’s Space



Astronomers must be the only people who are glad when the dark winter nights return! So, tonight, if the skies are clear wrap up well, forget the telescope and binoculars, take deck chair or similar, go outside make yourself comfy and gaze up at the night sky. Take in the immensity of it all, try and identify the constellations and the brightest stars – enjoy what you see – it costs nothing to make friends with the Universe.

We observe the Universe from the deck of a giant spaceship speeding through the Cosmos. Spaceship Earth is not, however, an ideal observing platform, it wobbles and spins all the time as it hurtles through space at 30 kilometres per second on its annual trip around the Sun. Did you know that since the former planet Pluto was discovered in 1930, the Earth has made 84 orbits of the Sun, but poor old Pluto has yet to complete a single orbit? In fact it will not accomplish that feat until the year 2178!! – yes, the Plutonian “year” is 248 Earth years long. I recon the shops on Pluto won’t sell many calendars.

Before I head off into the sunset, here is something to ponder while tucking into your Christmas fare --- Why is the Miss Universe beauty contest always won by a female from Earth?



Hmm! I wonder?

Merry Christmas and clear skies to you all, 

Alex Baillie

## **And Finally**

If you have not yet paid your subscription, please do so by the end of December if you wish to remain a Member. If you cannot make it along to the Christmas meal, then please send your cheque to Derrick Oldfield at 11 Springvale Park, Ayr