

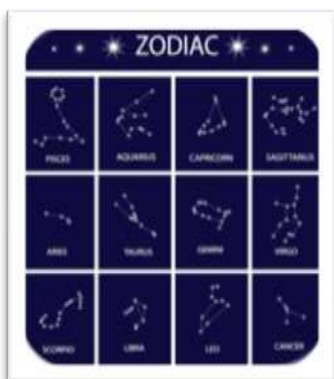
Issue: April 2017



>>> **Ayrshire Astronomical Society Newsletter**

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Forthcoming Events:

15th May

AGM Meeting



Next Meeting:

24th April

At Prestwick Academy

Guest Prof. Lindsay Fletcher

Cosmic Calendar for the next month:

April is a good month to view and image Jupiter which came into opposition on the 7th April. Here are the best times for the rest of the month to view the Great Red Spot which should then lie on the central meridian of the planet:

20th 23:38 23rd 21:07 25th 22:45 27th 00:23

30th 21:53

25th April

Mars passes between Hyades and Pleiades one hour after sunset. If clear, a nice photographic opportunity.

Moon phases for May 2017

3rd First quarter

10th Full moon

19th Last quarter

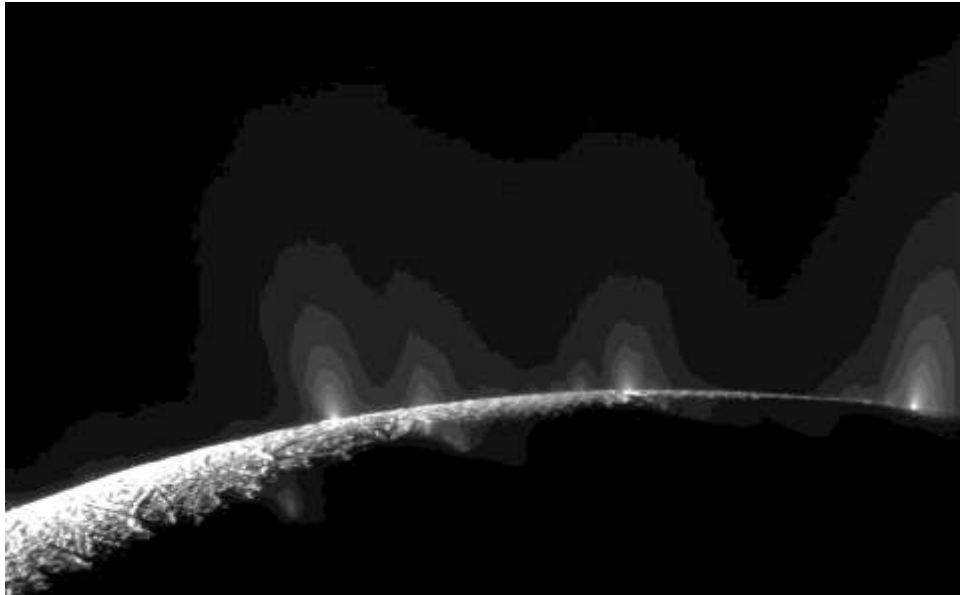
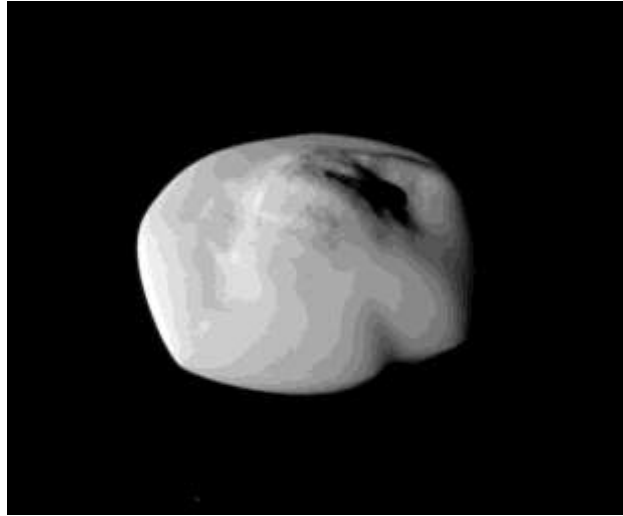
25th New Moon

News

Cassini snaps best ever image of Saturn's 'flying saucer' moon Atlas.

This is an unprocessed image taken by the Cassini spacecraft on the 12th April.

It brought Cassini within just 7000 miles of Atlas at its closest approach. .



Plumes near the south pole of Enceladus

Life on Enceladus

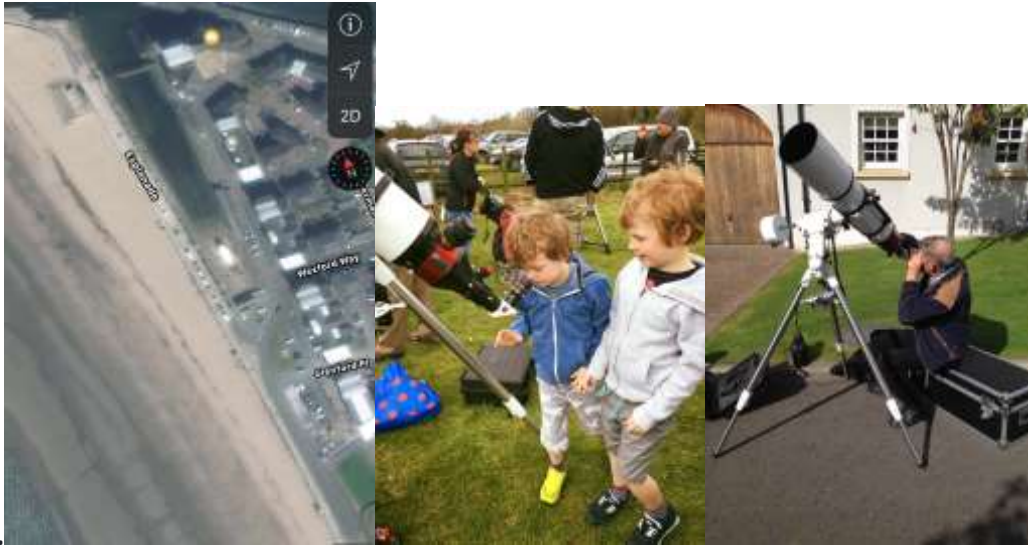
NASA finds more evidence that the ocean of Enceladus could support Alien life. Scientists found that hydrogen molecules are spewing from the moon, which suggests hot spots on the world's hidden ocean. The hydrogen has been found in icy water that periodically erupts through the moon's crust. It may mean there are special underwater hot spots in this subsurface ocean, where frigid water is interacting with heated rocks. These hot spots could be perfect places for small organisms – bacteria, for instance – to thrive.

Events: Past and Forthcoming

21st and 23rd April: Public Solar outreach

If the weather is nice, Isabelle will set up the solar telescope at the South Harbour between **11am and 3pm**

Between the entrance of Glenford Place and Wexford Way is an ideal paved area.



6th and 7th May

Isabelle is exhibiting some of her space related artwork at the Art Exhibition at the **Stair Community Centre, Trabboch**– open 10 am to 4pm. KA5 5HT will take you there using SatNav. As you drive on the A70 past Coynton then Coalhall, there is a small B730 turn off after Coalhall (passing under the bridge) to the left and follow that for about a mile.



Come and have a look! Isabelle will be there all day on the 6th and on the 7th until 1pm

7th May

Cars on campus, Saint Joseph School, Kilmarnock

President's Word

A Missed Opportunity

Some of you will have guessed from the entry in the last newsletter that I was away on holiday in hot and sunny location at the time of the last meeting. In fact I was sitting in some 30+ deg C, almost on the same longitude as here, but 4 degrees south of the equator. What a way to see the stars! T shirt and shorts, hot, not raining and great views, if a little spoilt by the high humidity. Still one puts up with these things!

It was strange to see Orion on its side, the moon upside down and the plough languishing on the horizon with Cassiopeia nowhere in sight. It was really difficult to recognise things but at least you could try every night. Anyway so where was the missed opportunity? Well, on arrival attached our first hotel we spotted a banner type notice just off reception advertising an astronomy evening with the local astronomer at the observatory on the roof of the hotel - hmmm! Interesting! But what's that? €20 per person?? Have to think about that and get more data. So we enquired and didn't really get a satisfactory answer other than "we will need to contact the astronomer". So, knowing that we would return to the same hotel later in the holiday we just let it go and got on with the holiday.

Anyway a couple of weeks later we returned to the same hotel. By this time the weather had changed a bit and although hot, it was also very humid and cloudy, so the astronomy didn't really look like a go although there were some good clear evenings. Well, two days before departure the client relations department invited us to "drinks and canapes". Not one to miss something for free, especially considering hotel prices, we accepted and turned up ready to hammer the free rum and whatever cocktails.

So there we were admiring the sea view over our free drinks when we were approached by a gentleman who was "wishing to speak to an English couple about astronomy". So, once engaged in conversation it transpired that he was the astronomer who ran the observatory and was in fact the only professional astronomer on the islands. Of course he was impressed to meet "El Presidente" and we spent the next hour or so chatting astronomy (and consuming free rum cocktails). The missed opportunity? Well it transpired that when he knew that an astronomer was staying at the hotel, he would normally arrange for free use of the observatory AAAHHH! Typical of course that it was cloudy that night and we were leaving the day after. Still we had a good chat that night and also the following night as we waited to leave. We exchanged contact details and of course promised to keep in touch and for next time we were there. Unfortunately there isn't likely to be a next time with so many other places to visit. So if you fancy the Seychelles and stay in Beau Vallon, we have the contact details.

AGM

Next month we have the AGM and it's earlier in the month than our usual date so make sure you don't miss it. If you would like to stand for any office or just be on the committee please let Angela know as soon as possible. All post are open and any member can put themselves up for election so don't worry about putting noses out of joint and don't be shy. For the AGM, following the success last year, we are planning a similar even with a buffet and a film to follow the formal business of the AGM. Needless to say, to qualify for the buffet you need to attend the AGM, so I look forward to seeing you all and hope that you enjoy the evening.

Dates for your Diary.

We will be attending cars on campus at Saint Josephs School, Kilmarnock on the 7th of May so please come along and give a hand. It's a good day out with lots of classic cars and other exhibits to see.

Isabelles' Solar Corner

Chichén Itzà

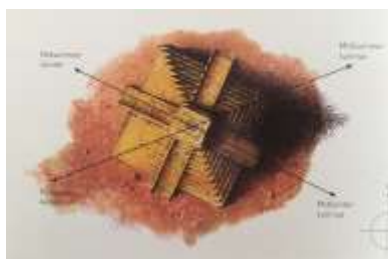
The Sun – Light of our lives



A significant focus of modern pilgrimage for people interested in Maya astronomy lies in the eastern part of Mexico, Chichén Itzà.

At the heart of Chichén Itzà, the nine tiered step pyramid of Kukulcan is 24m high. A staircase runs up the centre of each of the pyramid's four sides; at the top is a two-storey temple. The 91 steps of each staircase, added to the top platform (4x91 +1) total the 365 days of the Maya year. The square base of the pyramid is oriented to all four solstice directions: the northwest face is aligned to midsummer sunset; the southeast face to midwinter sunrise; and the diagonals to midwinter sunset and midsummer sunrise.

What draws visitors in their thousands is an effect of light and shadow on the northern staircase at the equinoxes – the so called 'equinox hierophany' (holy appearance). Onlookers see the setting sun cast a shadow from the terraces of the northwestern corner of the pyramid onto the western side of the balustrade of the northern staircase. At the climax of the display, the sun illuminates a continuous zigzag running from the top of the pyramid to its base, where the balustrade terminates in the head of an enormous snake that is also bathed in sunlight.



Aurora Group

The Aurora group is up and running, no new Aurora sightings last month. If you want to join, contact Robin for more details at the next meeting or any of the committee members.

Fancy a little quiz? Here are some clues about a scientific person. Can you guess who it is?

Answer from March: Charles Darwin

Good luck with this one:

I am a British Astronomer and Composer of German origin.

I was born in 1738 in the Electorate of Hanover, part of the Holy Roman Empire

I am one of 10 children of my parents Isaac and Anne Ilse

Myself and my brother were oboists in the Hanoverian Guards Regiment

After the defeat of the Battle of Hastenbeck our father sent us to England to seek refuge

My name adapted slightly to the English language.

I met Rev John Mitchell who sparked my interest in mathematics and astronomy

My early observational work focussed on finding double stars – and it was later on, through exactly this focus I discovered a planet.

AAS Library

Open for business!

THE LIBRARY IS A RESOURCE FOR MEMBERS -PLEASE SUPPORT IT AND MAKE USE OF IT

The Library list is also available on the website under “links” and can be downloaded



The library is now full up - if you would like to obtain a list or borrow an item

– contact Alex at the next meeting or give him a call on 01563 520887.

Unfortunately Alex does not have email, however messages via library@ayrastros.com will reach him the old fashioned way after a short delay but please contact him directly if at all possible.

THE LIBRARY IS WAITING FOR YOUR CALL!! There are a lot of interesting items to borrow.

And finally..... some lame jokes this month !! 😊

Q: How does one astronaut on the moon tell another astronaut that he is sorry?

A: He Apollo-gises.

Q: Where does an astronaut dock his spacecraft?

A: At a parking meteor.

Q. What should you do if you see a green alien?

A. Wait until it's ripe!