
Journal

of the

Nottingham Astronomical Society

June 2026



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Thursday, June 4th
Nottingham Emmanuel School
Gresham Park Road,
West Bridgford,
Nottingham, NG2 7YF

7:45pm (doors open at 7:15pm)

This evening we welcome

Paul Money

who will be speaking on

**Atmospheres of the
Solar System**

Chairman's Message, June 2026

Dear Members,

Thanks to everyone who came to the great 80th Birthday party at the observatory. It was a great event and a fantastic display of memorabilia organised by Richard. We got through quite a lot of Pims and cake - many thanks to Chris for hosting the refreshments table. The weather was excellent - perhaps too much, but anyway, plenty of sun is to be welcomed.

Another thanks goes out to all the "stars" who gave presentations of various stars at the Plumtree meeting - it was all very fascinating. Last month our visiting speaker told us all about meteorites and their place in scientific research. Next month we have the return of Paul Money who will be talking about the atmospheres of the solar system planets.

Best wishes to everyone,

Julian
NAS Chair

Sky Notes

June 2026



Compiled by Roy Gretton

All times given below are in British Summer Time

PHASES OF THE MOON

Phase	Date
Last Quarter	June 8 th
New Moon	June 15 th
First Quarter	June 21 st
Full Moon	June 29 th

This month the Moon is closest to Earth on the 14th, and furthest on the 28th.

THE PLANETS

Mercury will be an evening object throughout this month. Greatest eastern elongation will occur on June 15th, when the planet will be 24.5 degrees from the Sun.

Venus will be a brilliant object in the western/northwestern sky throughout this month, shining at magnitude -4 or brighter and not setting until midnight. On the evening of June 9th it will pass very close to Jupiter (magnitude -1.9), but to see this conjunction you will need to be in a spot with a low western skyline, and look out at about 10:30pm, when the pair will be just ten degrees above the horizon.

Mars will be an inconspicuous magnitude 1.3 object with an angular diameter of 4.4 arcseconds in the constellation of Aries, rising at 3 am in mid-June.

Jupiter, which has been a brilliant presence in the constellation of Gemini throughout the past winter, will be disappearing into the sunset glow by the end of this month.

Saturn, shining at magnitude 0.8, is close to the border of Cetus and Pisces, and will be rising at about 2 am in mid-June.

Uranus and **Neptune** are early morning objects, always in a bright sky and difficult to observe this month.

METEORS

With its lack of true darkness, June is not the best time of the year for observing meteors, and there are no major showers during the month.

DIARY DATES 2026

Monthly Meetings of the Nottingham Astronomical Society

1. Meetings at
Nottingham Emmanuel School
Gresham Park Road,
West Bridgford,
Nottingham, NG2 7YF

Held on the **FIRST Thursday** of each month (**unless otherwise stated**)
except **August**

Doors open at 7:15pm for 7:45pm start.

*These events are normally centred around a talk by a visiting speaker,
except Quiz Nights, etc, when NAS members provide the activities.
Normally we have a **Helpdesk** open at each meeting.*

Date	Topic	Speaker
4 th June	Atmospheres of the Solar System	Paul Money
2 nd July	The JWST (<i>To be confirmed</i>)	
Saturday 1 st August	Annual Summer Barbecue at the Observatory (members and their guests only)	
3 rd September	Ten Things you might not know about the Milky Way	Paul McMillan University of Leicester
1 st October	Racing the Moon's Shadow	Mike Provost

2. Social and Practical Astronomy Meetings at the Burnside Memorial Hall, Plumtree

Church Hill, Plumtree, Nottingham, NG12 5ND
Held on the **THIRD Thursday** of each month from **7:30pm**

*These meetings are of a more informal nature, providing opportunity for
members and guests to share their hobby over a cup of tea or coffee,
as well as listening to a short talk or discussion*

The next meeting will be on **June 18th**

Social and Practical Astronomy, Plumtree, May 2026

The **May** Plumtree was a great success and saw ten members each give a five minute presentation on a star of their choice. The variety of stars we learnt about, and what we learnt about each was most diverse. We all loved the evening and it went without a hitch. Thanks to Julian for chairing and to Leigh for fixing everyone up with a microphone. Chris our amazing secretary made a yummy cake as can be seen here.

The stars and their speakers are in the table below and a picture of all speakers can be seen on the following page; I do apologise for the quality of the photographs.



Aniket	Sirius
Paul	HD 140283
Diya	Canopus
Andy	AR Scorpii
Joe	Betelgeuse
Neil	Gamma Cassiopeiae (Tiansi)
Sam	Delta Cephei
David	La Superba
Ross	Gaia BH3
Leigh	R136a1
Julian	iPTF14hls

Joe was stuck in the USA watching a rocket launch but we are hoping he'll give us a talk on his star and/or his trip to the USA another time.

Thanks to all our speakers who clearly had gone to a lot of time and effort into researching their star and preparing their presentations. We will certainly be doing a similar event in the future.

The topic for the **June** meeting is yet to be confirmed. Diya is going to be talking about some of the mythology associated with the stars in **July** and Neil Mudford is talking on radio astronomy in **August**. Brian Griffin is going to give us a talk about the building of the observatory in October. In September the Plumtree meetings will be 10 years old which is hard to believe as I remember driving around lots of villages halls with Fred looking for a suitable venue and it only seems like yesterday. I'm not sure what the September meeting will be yet.

If you have any topics you would like to see covered at Plumtree or have a topic you'd like to share with the group, even if just for a few minutes, do let me know.

James Dawson

helpdesk@nottinghamastro.org.uk



Trip to Leicester University's Observatory

The British Astronomical Association (BAA) held a meeting in Leicester on Saturday 23rd May 2026 at the Phoenix Arts Centre in the centre of Leicester. I had been invited to talk on Mercury's sodium tail and had a 30 minute slot... For anyone who sat through the 90 talk I gave at Plumtree in April, you'll be pleased to know I re-wrote the talk from scratch and did manage to finish on time! Picture of me to the right giving my talk. The meeting was a great success with lots of fascinating talks, mostly on amateur topics.



On the Sunday, Paul Abel who is a lecturer in Leicester and who had organised the event, opened up the university's observatory in Oadby for people to go and have a look around. As it is just 40 minutes away by car I decided I would go back on the Sunday and have a look at it, and see if there were any ideas I could take away for our own observatory. I had know from Brian Griffin that our observatory was based on the plans from which Leicester's observatory had been built.

It was uncanny how similar to our observatory it is, which is a daft thing to say as they were build from the same plans, but the bricks, the blue bricks, the grain silo-type dome, the shutter, the low door, the dome rotation wheels etc were all just so like ours! I meant to measure it, but I think it is slightly smaller than ours.

Their observatory originally had an English equatorial mounting, but this had been removed some years ago, though the taller column still remains inside the observatory.

The telescope there now is a Planewave 20" Ritchey-Crétien design, controlled by a large Paramount equatorial mount.

Paul Abel showed us Venus and Mercury in daylight though the seeing was very bumpy so neither could take much magnification though the phase of both could be seen.

Unlike our observatory, there is no false floor. This does mean that to look through the eye piece one is required to go up some steps. In the day time and in daylight conditions this is fine, but one of our concerns in Nottingham has always been in the dark, when dew is starting to form, this is less safe for anyone unsteady on their feet or unaccustomed to the venue.

Two pictures from the observatory are on the following page.

James Dawson



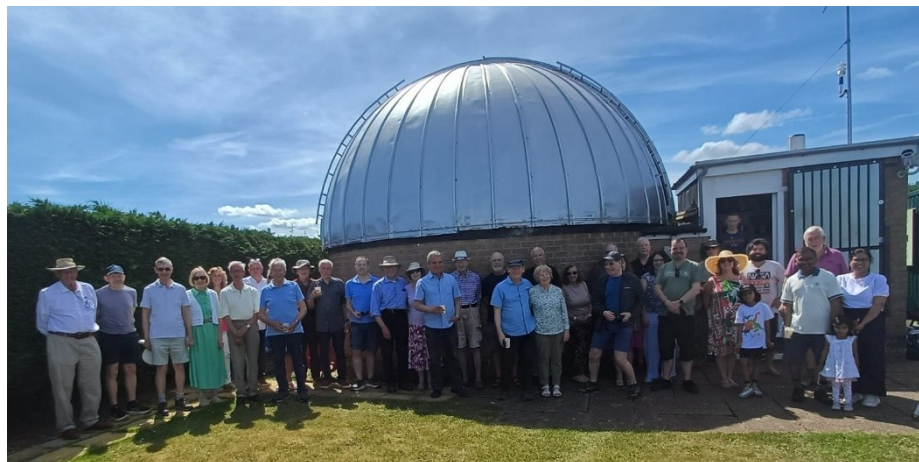
Leicester University's Observatory

Paul Abel (BAA's Venus and Mercury Section Director) at the telescope with Sandra Brantingham (BAA's Aurora and NLC Section Director) below.



NAS 80th Anniversary Celebrations – Saturday 23rd May 2026

To celebrate 80 years since the formation of Nottingham Astronomical Society the committee organised a party at the observatory for members and guests to celebrate this very special anniversary. The event attended by over 40 people in glorious unbroken sunshine, even allowed for a spot of solar observing courtesy of Sam Boote's telescope.



Chris Sneddon, our secretary, made a wonderful cake along with a glass (or two) of Pimm's. Thanks to Chris for all her hard work preparing the refreshments to keep us all hydrated.

Our guests of honour were former President Pat Fountain and Graham Shepherd a member of the society back in the 1960s. Pat was instrumental in the building of the NAS observatory back in the 1980s. Pat kindly brought along his copies of documents relating to the observatory, including the original blueprints which were based on designs for the Leicester University observatory at Oadby. It was so nice to hear Pat's recollections of how the observatory was built, including bending the steel beams to make the dome! An up-to-date photograph was recreated of an image of the first site meeting following the signing of the observatory lease. The original image left was taken on 17th June 1981, the group consisting of (left to right) Pat Fountain, Brian Griffin, Tony Carroll and Robin Gray. And the photo on the right a taken on 23rd May 2026 with two of the members instrumental to building our wonderful observatory Brian Griffin (left) and Pat Fountain (right).



A special 80th anniversary day edition of the NAS journal was produced which included a reflection from NAS Journal Editor Roy Gretton. Roy picked out some of his favourite news items from his time editing the Journal. It also included some pictures of the event and a reprint of the December 1946 edition of the NAS Bulletin (the early name given to our Journal), Issue 5. The oldest known copy of our monthly Journal. A copy of the special 80th anniversary day edition Journal can be found on our website at

<https://nottinghamastro.org.uk/nas-80th-special-anniversary-edition-of-the-journal/>

To mark our 80th anniversary an exhibition was curated in the observatory dome containing images and artefacts from the society archives, the first time all these documents have been brought together in one place.

Highlights included our oldest surviving document, the original account book listing the founding members of the society. On loan from the Society for the History of Astronomy, an original copy of the Journal of the British Astronomical Association, containing an article in Volume 61 issue 4 pp. 114-116 (1951) an article from our 5th President A J Ashmore detailing the history of the first five years of the society.

Other items in the exhibition included an original copy of the oldest known surviving edition of the NAS Bulletin from December 1946. Membership cards from the late 1950s and early 70s. A selection of images from our photograph archive adorned the dome.

The first section of the exhibition with images of our early history included an article from former President Alan W Heath published in the Nottingham Observer in June 1967. Curious objects included the Police report card issued following a break-in to the observatory in June 2002. The plaque marking the opening of the observatory on 13th May 2006 which had been lost for many years completed the display.



Pictures of past famous speakers giving talks to the society included Sir Patrick Moore who talked in April 1961 about Astronomy in Russia. Professor Luci Green, 5th December 2019, on Voyages to the Sun, Probing our nearest star. Professor Jim Al-Khalili, 4th February 2021, The World According to Physics, held online during the Covid-19 Pandemic. Professor Dame Jocelyn Bell Burnell, 6th December 2018, Transient events in astronomy – or things that go bump in the night.



A segment of the dome was dedicated to images documenting the construction of the observatory. Starting with a photograph of the lease signing ceremony on 4th December 1980. Images through the 1980s show the digging of the foundations, brick laying, bending the steel channel used to create the dome. Finally an image of a crane brought over from Cropwell Bishop lifting the dome aloft and placing it onto the building on 15th September 1984.



Thank you to all who helped make the event possible and those who attended to mark this special 80th anniversary of our society.

Richard Severn

Treasurer and Membership Secretary

The Nottingham Astronomical Society: E - SERVICES

Whether or not you are a NAS member, you can keep up to date with details of the Society's

NAS on Facebook

You are welcome to connect with other members and friends of the NAS on Facebook by going to:
<http://www.facebook.com/nas.org.uk>

NAS on X

The Society has an X account at <https://twitter.com/NottinghamAstro>

NAS Journal e-mailing list

To register for your monthly e-mailed link to the NAS Journal, just e-mail
membership@nottinghamastro.org.uk

You don't have to be a Society member to take advantage of this service.

If you happen to change your email address, please remember to inform the Society by emailing us at membership@nottinghamastro.org.uk

Caesar and Sosigenes

When **Julius Caesar** came to power in ancient Rome the calendar was in something of a mess. The cycle of months failed to match the agricultural seasons to such an extent that by 46 BC the discrepancy amounted to nearly 10 weeks. Caesar therefore commissioned the Alexandrian astronomer **Sosigenes** to sort things out and establish an enduring calendar. From his observations Sosigenes realised that a year was equal to roughly 365.25 days, and proposed a new system in which most years would be 365 days in length, but an extra day would be added to every fourth year (a “leap” year). Thus was established the Julian Calendar, which remained in force for over 1500 years until the Gregorian Calendar was introduced to correct for the fact that the length of a tropical year is nearer to 365.2422 days than 365.25 days.

Years later, in Gilbert and Sullivan’s *The Pirates of Penzance*, the Pirate King sings

“For some ridiculous reason, to which, however, I have no desire to be disloyal,
Some person in authority, I don’t know who, very likely the Astronomer Royal,
Has decided that, although for such a beastly month as February
Twenty-eight days as a rule are plenty,
One year in every four his days shall be reckoned as nine-and-twenty”

...thus mistakenly blaming an English astronomer for the creation of leap years!

Fittingly, Julius Caesar and Sosigenes have adjacent lunar craters named after them:

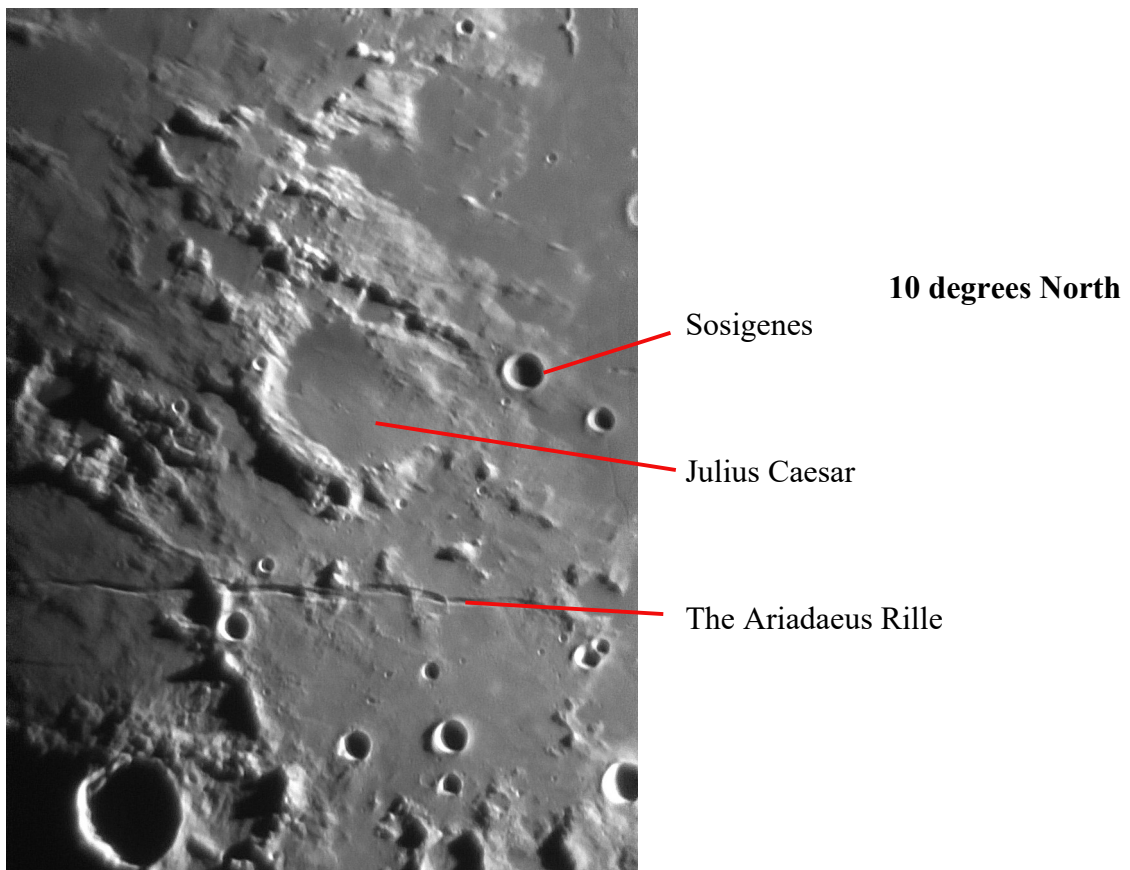


Image obtained using a Canon 700Da camera at the f/10 focus of a Celestron C11 SCT on April 23rd, when the Moon was 6 days 9 hours old.

Roy Gretton

**Images taken with a Samsung Galaxy S
through a Vixen 30 x 125 Binocular Telescope**

nPAE Dave captured these images on April 26th.



Mizar and Alcor



Jupiter and the Galilean moons



A 9 day-old Moon

Advertisements

For sale

Celestron NexStar 6SE SCT and accessories

The following standard accessories are included:

- visual back
- star diagonal
- 25 mm Plossl eyepiece
- red-dot finder
- tripod
- full instructions
- original cardboard boxes (if you want them)

The following additional accessories are included in this package:

- Bob's Knobs collimation aid (already fitted)
- Celestron dew heater band (already fitted)
- Celestron aluminium dew shield with cover
- Farpoint Bahtinov mask
- Geoptik pack-in bag for transporting the scope and mount

Price £795

More photos available. Inspection welcomed. Free delivery within a reasonable distance.

Sam Boote sam@boote.myzen.co.uk or at Society meetings



ASTRO-JUMBLE SALE

★ SATURDAY 19TH SEPTEMBER ★

Dear Astronomers,
Do you have a telescope, eyepiece or anything Astro you'd like to sell, if so then you can sell it at our Astro Jumble Sale.

Melton & District Astronomical Society are holding a one day Astro Jumble Sale at

TILTON ON THE HILL VILLAGE HALL
Oakham Rd, Tilton on the Hill, Leicester LE7 9DB

What3Words: [narrates.professes.muddy](#)

You can sell anything Astronomical on your table from books to telescopes so long as its Astronomical then you can sell it.

We will also looking to have a few stalls from local Astro sellers but the aim is to help amateur astronomers sell their unwanted gear which we all accumulate over time and find a new home for your precious equipment and may be even find a bargain or a item you've been looking for years.

★ EVENT DETAILS ★
 ⌚ Set up from 8.30am on the day
 🚪 Doors to the public open at 10am
 ⌚ The event will finish at 3pm
 🍷 Refreshments on sale too!

★ TABLES ARE £20 ★
 Which includes a £10 deposit of which the deposit will be refunded on the day of the Jumble Sale.
 ⚠️ If you don't turn up on the day then you will lose your £10 deposit and your table fee.

TO BOOK A TABLE OR TO FIND OUT MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CALL SIMON ON 07766 446132

BUY, SELL OR BROWSE - EVERYTHING ASTRO!

Dear Astronomers,

Do you have a telescope, eyepiece or anything Astro you'd like to sell, if so then you can sell it at our Astro Jumble Sale.

Melton & District Astronomical Society are holding a one day Astro Jumble Sale at Tilton on the Hill Village Hall. Oakham Rd, Tilton on the Hill, Leicester LE7 9DB

What3Words: [narrates.professes.muddy](#)

You can sell anything Astronomical on your table from books to telescopes so long as its Astronomical then you can sell it.

We will also looking to have a few stalls from local Astro sellers but the aim is to help amateur astronomers sell their unwanted gear which we all accumulate over time and find a new home for your precious equipment and may be even find a bargain or a item you've been looking for years.

Set up from 8.30am on the day and doors to the public open at 10am. They'll be refreshments on sale too. The event will finish at 3pm.

Tables are £20 which includes a £10 deposit of which the deposit will be refunded on the day of the Jumble Sale.

If you don't turn up on the day then you will lose your £10 deposit and your table fee.

To book a table or to find out more information please call Simon on 07766446132.

Kind Regards,

Simon Brown

Melton & District Astronomical Society

Nottingham Astronomical Society

Affiliated to the **British Astronomical Association**
Member of the **Federation of Astronomical Societies**
Supporters of the **Commission for Dark Skies**

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Holly McNiven

Aniket Mahapure

Meetings

Our formal meetings, often with an illustrated talk by a guest speaker, **normally** are held on the first Thursday of each month (except in August) at:

**Nottingham Emmanuel School
Gresham Park Road,
West Bridgford,
Nottingham, NG2 7YF**

Doors open	7:15pm
Meetings start	7:45pm
Meetings end	9:15 pm

These meetings are open to the public, and visitors are welcome to attend, subject to a charge of £5 per meeting for adults (£1 for concessions).

Annual subscriptions 2026

Individual	£40
Family (maximum of two adults, and children/students living at the same address)	£55
Under-18s and full-time students	£5

Subscriptions become due on 1st January. Half-price subscription is charged if joining after 30th June (minimum subscription £5).

Please make cheques payable to:
Nottingham Astronomical Society.

If you would like more information about the **Nottingham Astronomical Society**, or would like to become a member, please contact membership@nottinghamastro.org.uk or speak to any NAS committee member at one of our regular monthly meetings.

The Nottingham Astronomical Society

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