

At last, a reasonably warm night for “summer” of 2024 for our July meeting. The talk was given by Ian Coster who has recently joined the club. His passion is observing double stars and he told us why and how he observes them and the scientific contribution he’s able to make.

He started off with a short history of the first known double stars and early catalogues and then how he got interested in double stars. They’re reasonably easy to find but still provide a challenge for observers. There is also a large variety of doubles; colour contrasts, multiplicity greater than 2, wide & close pairs, short & long orbital periods, and pairs which are nearly identical & others which have very different brightnesses.

He showed us some images of some of the brighter and easier doubles including Albireo, the Trapezium and Castor. He concluded with some of the more obscure, “neglected”, doubles which are not routinely observed. He’s been able to add pairs to the Washington Double Star Catalogue (<http://www.astro.gsu.edu/wds/>) and measure the orbit of neglected pairs.

Though most of us have observed double stars at some time, Ian’s dedication is exemplary and perhaps we should all have a gander at some more of these little jewels.

After the break, Terry did his usual Upcoming Events (below) followed by some images. Comet Pons-Brookes is fading rapidly and there were images of its evolution over the last few weeks. Terry also had some images of the Barnard Dark nebulae he’s been photographing lately along with a full cycle of NGC6729 including a very late secondary outburst. He also had a few images of the Noctilucent Clouds of 28th June despite the challenge of setting the camera to f/25!

The talk at next month’s meeting will be by John Chuter on The BAA archive. John is the BAA archivist and has interesting articles in each edition of the BAA journal so it will be great to see how this archive has been set up and used.

Upcoming Events

Two more days of no darkness!

Planets

Starting to see them coming out of the morning twilight, though it is an early start! At around 3:30am BST at start of twilight:

Saturn is a fine 30 degrees high in the South.

Mars is 15 degrees high nearly due East near the Pleiades

Jupiter is lower down and further North but much brighter.

Uranus and Mars are still close together for the next couple of days.

Mars will be very close to Jupiter ($\frac{1}{2}$ degree) around 15th August

Venus & Mercury on the evening side of the sun but still too close to be seen (yet!)

Comets

Comet 12P Pons-Brookes has faded

Comet 2023 A3 (Tsuchinshan-ATLAS) is not brightening as fast as promised and may be falling apart. **Very** low in the west after sunset

Perseids 12th August. Moon sets 23:00

Noctilucent Clouds

Some very intense Noctilucent cloud displays all the way south to Italy! It's towards the end of the season now but worth looking North about 60-90 minutes after sunset and before sunrise (if you're up looking for the planets!).



Upcoming Meetings

Aug 21 John Chuter The BAA archive

Sep 18 Gadgets and Gizmos Evening followed by Observing Session

Oct 16 Adrian Denning

Nov 20 Brian Fraser Unmanned Lunar Landings

Dec 18 Christmas Social and members' short talks