

As Christmas Tradition dictates, the December meeting was our annual Social Evening with a proper early celebration spread at the interval. Before the indulging proceeded, however, we had a number of short talks given by members.

The first was the annual Arthur Davis talk based on slides bequeathed to the society by Arthur who was one of its founder members. 2024 was the 20th anniversary of the Transit of Venus in 2004 which was well observed by most of the audience on that warm June morning. Terry went through the dynamics of the transit and the infrequent occurrences. The next one won't be until 2117 so we've been very fortunate to see one during our lifetimes. Arthur's slides clearly showed the progress of the dark disk of the planet across the sun's disk and even some plage areas near the limb.

This was followed by short talks by Pete and Ian and then Jim set us a little talking point for the interval based on Eratosthenes's measurement of the circumference of the Earth.

After the repast – and thanks to everyone who bought all that wonderful food – we had images from Terry and Bud (with the sad story of the damage done to the famed LadderScope by the various storms) followed Terry's Upcoming Events (see below).

Keeping the best till last, Bud and Viv had prepared an entertaining quiz where all the answers had at least a slight astronomical association. Congratulations to the winner and runner up who received small prizes.

As ever, a good evening of chat and emphasises that an astronomical society has to be a social event as well as being astronomically interesting.

Upcoming Events

Planets

Venus is now in full darkness in the west until 19:30. Its movement northwards (to better visibility) is quite rapid. It'll be at greatest elongation on January 10th but won't reach maximum brightness until February 14th

Mercury may be visible in the morning near Antares for the next week or so. Elongation on December 25th.

Saturn is still reasonably bright in the evening sky until after 22:00. It will start to get closer to the sun in January. There will be a shadow transit by Titan on December 22nd and another on January 7th (in progress when it gets dark).

Saturn will be occulted by the crescent moon as it gets dark on January 4th. Reappearance at around 18:30

Mars is now up by 19:00 but moving away from M44. Opposition is on 2025 January 16th. It's quite small in a telescope this year. It'll only be about 15" diameter compared with 24" at its closest approach in 2018.

Jupiter was at opposition on December 4th and is visible pretty much all night.

Uranus near the Pleiades

Neptune west of Saturn in Pisces

Winter solstice at December 21 09:20

Quadrantid meteor shower morning of January 4th

Upcoming Meetings

Jan 15 2025 Speaker to be arranged

Outreach

Manor Court School Friday 2025 January 24th

Redstart School Thursday 2025 January 30th.