

Blwyddyn Newydd Dda to all and Happy New Year to all the locals ☺ . January 2025's meeting was hampered by fog and some of the regulars didn't manage to get Rudolph hitched up in time but we did have a number of new visitors and prospective members, so welcome to all.

The talk this month was given by Bud on the subject of the Search for Aliens, and our prospects of ever finding any. We had an introduction on aliens in popular culture and science fiction which took us onto aliens in science fact.

The prospects of finding life on the other planets in the Solar System was looked at and there are probes on their way to the icy moons of Jupiter to see if life may exist there. This was followed by the chances of life on planets outside the Solar System. Whether life exists or not, the prospects of actually physically meeting them for tea and biscuits depend on someone or something travelling vast distances so – unless the light barrier is somehow broken – is vanishingly unlikely.

After refreshments (and thanks to all who helped with the washing up) we had some images from Ken and Terry. Ken has set up his scope to do some planetary imaging and his first results on Venus, Jupiter, Saturn and Mars were shown as well as some of the moon. Terry had some of the moon and Venus a few nights ago as well as some of the planets taken from Australia. There was also one of comet 2024 G3 which has just gone around the sun and may be visible from the southern hemisphere in the next few nights.

Terry then did a review of the highlights of 2024 and the prospects for 2025 (see below), There's lots to look forward to in 2025 and let's hope for some cloud (and fog) free skies.

2025 Highlights

Venus, Saturn, Jupiter and Mars will continue to put on a good show in the evening until the end of February. This is the much vaunted "Parade of Planets" which seems to have hit the popular press. There is no "best date" though the BBC website has posited February 23rd. All the planets **will** be in the evening sky on that date but Mercury and Saturn will be very low down and not easily seen without a telescope or binoculars.

Mercury will be close to Venus around March 13th and at evening elongation on April 21st.

Venus very close to Saturn for a week around January 18th. It will head into the twilight at the end of March and will reappear in the morning sky around mid May but not be great until end of July. It won't be in the evening sky again until February 2026.

Mars will be at opposition on January 16th and - in theory - be visible until September but will be quite hard in the twilight after mid June. The moon will be very near on February 9th.

Jupiter will be visible until mid May and reappear in the morning in mid July. It will be very close to Venus in the morning sky on August 12th. No opposition in 2025. Opposition is in January 2026.

Saturn's ring plane crossing is on March 23rd but it will be too close to the sun by then. More Titan shadow Transits on January 23rd and February 8th in the evening sky followed by some actual transits of Titan in the autumn of 2025. Saturn's opposition is on September 21st.

Uranus at opposition November 21st and stay near the Pleiades.

Neptune will be close to Saturn early August and should both be in a binocular field of view. Try it on August 12th as well as the Jupiter & Venus conjunction! Opposition on September 23rd.

Total Lunar eclipse on the morning of March 14th starting 05h but the moon will set before totality.

Partial Solar eclipse on Saturday March 29th. 10h-12h (GMT) Maximum at 10:47 with about 45% covered.

Another Total Lunar eclipse on the evening of September 7th but this time totality is over before the moon rises at 19:46 (BST)!

The Perseids on August 12-13 will have a waning near full moon.

Upcoming Meetings

Feb 19 Andrew Ciavarella *The Discovery of the Milky Way*
Mar 19 Richard Kilbey *Captain Cook and the Transit of Venus*
Apr 16 Professor Chris Lintott
May 21 Ask the Panel
June 18 Kate Earl
July 16 Tim Whetherell
Aug 20 TBA
Sep 17 Gadgets and Gizmos followed by Observing Session
Oct 15 TBA
Nov 19 TBA
Dec 17 Arthur Davis lecture and Christmas Social

Outreach

Manor Court School Friday 2025 January 24th
Redstart School Thursday 2025 January 30th
South Petherton Junior Thursday February 13th