

Edited by Robert Shanks



Happy Easter & welcome to the newsletter of the Blackburn Leisure Astronomical Society, the one stop shop for news, future projects, events, visits, lectures and general communications. Please see our website of members photographs and Publications at the link below.

Remember the observatory is open almost every Friday evening, and often on Tuesdays and other times by arrangement. In general as per the BLAS moto 'If it's clear we'll be here !'

Last meeting

The last BLAS meeting was held on the 25th of March. Tim Old gave a presentation update on Mars exploration, and paid tribute to the remarkable engineering work of the Opportunity, Curiosity & Insight Martian rovers and their teams. Opportunity in particular was an outstanding mission. The rover itself outlived its mission specification of 90 solar days and lasted 5021 solar days ! Curiosity photographed two [Martian solar eclipses](#) last month and Insight continues to uncover our understanding of our nearest neighbour. Thanks to Insight, the latest Martian weather report from the red planet can be obtained from [here](#).

The meeting also discussed the Chinese [Chang'e 4](#) Lunar rover expedition.

BLAS Outreach

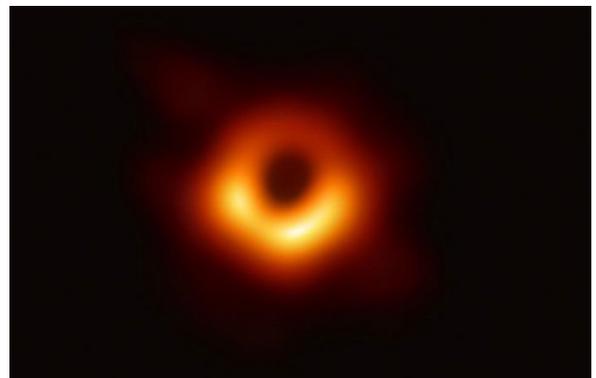
The BLAS Astronomy for Beginners learning sessions intended for members and non-members are progressing well and attended by adults and children ranging from 7 to 70 years old.

On 22nd & 29th of March, the Brough and Elloughton Scouts received talks in support with their astronomy badges.

Being Easter weekend, April the 19th saw 25 members of the caravan club turn up after they parked on the Blackburn Leisure fields. An impromptu introductory talk was given and both scopes were set to work on full moon observations and binocular sessions outside.

Einstein Was Right !

This newsletter could not be released without referring to news that astounded the Astronomical world this month. A photograph of a black hole. Only visible because Albert Einstein's theory of [General Relativity](#), predicted that space-time itself would be warped around it by the large Gravitational forces causing light itself to be bent around it. This remarkable feat of achievement by the [Event Horizon Telescope \(EHT\) project](#) saw some 200 astronomers work on gathering over a [Petabyte](#) of data from 8 radio telescope observatories around the world. Each telescope had to be corrected for distance and movement and synchronised to incredible accuracy. The data gathered from the sensors was so massive, that despite modern high speed data communications, it could not be networked via internet. Instead, the data had to be collected on a series of hard disk drives from every observatory and shipped to a central facility in Germany for correlation. The stunning optical picture will undoubtedly open up a new chapter in Astronomy for years to come. Rest in peace Albert Einstein. We wish you were here see this...



The visualised radio telescope data from black hole at the heart of M87
(Courtesy of the EHT project)

For publication in this newsletter and general feedback, please contact Bob@5150time.co.uk
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HERAS News

Helen Marshall has had a request from the University of Kent Centre for Astrophysics and Planetary Science (CAPS). The University have requested help with their project entitled Hunting Outbursting Young Stars (HOYS). The project aims to measure the brightness of young stars in selected young clusters/star forming regions in multiple optical filters over 20 years. Given weather constraints they aim to do this as a collaboration of amateur astronomers from the UK, Europe and from across the globe. The light-curves gathered will be used to study multiple aspects of the formation of stars and planets and aims to characterise the structures in accretion disk around the young stars in unprecedented detail and to study the mass accretion history of stars.

So far [54 people/observatories](#) are actively participating in the data taking for 21 targets. More detail is available [here](#). This is a real chance for BLAS to contribute to cutting edge Astronomy and will be discussed at next meeting. The project facebook group can be found [here](#).

The West Yorkshire Astronomical Society is also hosting an event below. See Helen Marshall for further details.



Saturday 4th
May
2019

Time:
10am - 3pm
Location:
The Rosse Observatory, Carleton Rd
Carleton, Pontefract, WF8 3RJ

More info and to book: Head over to <http://www.astrocourses.co.uk>
Price: The cost of this workshop is £28 per person including lunch
Any questions: Call 07740844639 or email astrocourses@outlook.com
Find us on Facebook: Here <https://www.facebook.com/astrocourses>

Telescope Repair

The Meade LX200 mount needed emergency surgery last month after losing position. The fault was traced to a simple loose gear wheel on the azimuth motor output shaft which caused the telescope to lose position. The telescope was successfully repaired and re-trained to correct position.

How old is the name 'Ultima Thule' ?

As we know Kuiper Belt Object (486958) designated 2014 MU69 was named 'Ultima Thule' in 2018 from classical and medieval literature and metaphorically describing "a distant place located beyond the borders of the known world" and became the subject of the New Horizons NASA probe flyby.

Last month, I asked the question *When did science fiction become science fact ?* after a reference to 'Ultima Thule' was seen in a Sci-Fi classic "Space 1999" series 1 episode from 1975, predating the naming of the actual object by some 44 years! Since last month however, David Kitching has found reference to 'Ultima Thule' in the black and white film "Heavens Above" starring Peter Sellers from 1963 in which Sellers, who plays a vicar, interviews a British Astronaut. The newsreel clip in this film pre-dates the naming by 47 years! So precisely how old is the name 'Ultima Thule' ? Well the plot thickens! If you can find an earlier reference then please email the editor.



1963 Advert for the film "Heavens Above" and real Ultima Thule

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