

Edited by Robert Shanks



Welcome to the newsletter of the Blackburn Leisure Astronomical Society. Previous news articles can be found [here](#). A newsletter index has now been added to make looking back even easier!

Please continue to use the BLAS web space. If you wish to write an article and/or publish your work for reference from this newsletter please send files to the editor. If you are having difficulty uploading images, please bring it to the attention of the site owner via email.

Club News...

The last Club meeting was held on the 24th Feb 2020. 217 visitors have been recorded for January and February already this year. These include Hedon Cubs, Rainbow nurseries and Cubs and Scouts from Market Weighton and Elloughton.

Friday March 7th saw a visit from Withernsea, Hedon & Bridlington Camera clubs (right) for an insight into Astronomy and Astro photography.



A display stand and talk was put together to support the Hull & East Riding Astronomical Societies 1 day "Back to Basics" public engagement workshop held in conjunction with the British Astronomical Association this month.

The BLAS committee are busy perusing funding this year for Radio Astronomy equipment, security fencing, a new access roadway, a new mount for Meade telescope; carpets and chairs. One club viewing night has taken place this year.

Two members of the York Astronomical Society also visited BLAS on Thursday Feb 20th to see our domes and display facilities. BLAS hopes to collaborate with YAS on future projects.

The inclement weather of the last few months has taken its toll on the access road to BLAS but thanks to the work completed on dome 2 roof it is weathering well. Members are recommended to use the car park and walk as standing water has made the grass very slippery. When walking please also take care as gravel track has several pot holes and watch your eyes on the Hawthorne hedge next to the foot path. It is scheduled for cutting. Your attention is also drawn to the societies Risk Assessment which is pinned up in the observatory.

A film night was held on Tues Feb 18th showing [Apollo 11 \(2019\)](#). Next club night will feature a talk by Graham Bate. A presentation by the editor on why Neil Armstrong was selected for the first lunar landing attempt is also coming soon.



Radio Astronomy plans in terms of an art of the possible, what we can achieve and why we are doing it, have been uploaded to the website. See Radio Astronomy Plan 2020 [here](#). This information is being currently being used to formulate funding proposals. The club would like to thank John Russell's wife for commandeering the dining room table to begin work on an Hydrogen line antenna (left).

Thanks to Eleanor Russell (no relation) you can now also join our BLAS Facebook page! If you use Facebook please "like" the page. [Meteor shower dates](#) have already been added. Stay tuned for more Radio observations!



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Other News...

Whats happened to Betelgeuse?

Reports are abound that [Betelgeuse](#) appeared somewhat dim to the naked eye in January, prompting some to enquire what was happening to it although one school of thought is that it is due to dust cloud cover and brightness is expected to return. George King plans to take a series of photographs in the upcoming months to observe any brightness changes.

The BBC have recently released a free comprehensive guide to our Moon written and compiled by Pete Lawrence which can be downloaded [here](#) and provides plenty of Lunar areas to observe and photograph.



The Royal Astronomical Society is planning events throughout the year to emphasise the best time to view our closest neighbour Mars, click [here](#) for details.



Glaciologist Dr Anna Hog from the University of Leeds gave a fascinating insight last week into what space satellites, equipped with RADAR since 1978 are revealing to us about Glacial formation and degradation and the effect on oceans and climates of mother Earth. The presentation included several animations based on real data. Anyone interested in the satellite data can visit GloVis website for free open source data.

Please note that if you were planning to go to the Practical Astronomy Show which on the 21st of March at the Kettering Conference and Exhibition Centre, it has been re-booked to the 26th September. Further details can be found [here](#).

Obituaries

Without doubt, man would not have walked on the moon without this woman who sadly passed away in February.

[Katherine Johnson](#) (born Creola Katherine Coleman and also known as Katherine Goble) was an American mathematician whose calculations of orbital mechanics at NASA were critical to the success of crewed spaceflights including calculating trajectories, launch windows, and emergency return paths for Project Mercury spaceflights, rendezvous paths for the Apollo Lunar Module and command module on flights to the Moon. Her calculations were also essential to the beginning of the Space Shuttle program, and she worked on plans for a mission to Mars. Amongst her lifetime awards are the Presidential medal of freedom and congressional gold medal. Thank you Katherine RIP.



February 19th also marked the passing of British astronomer, Professor, broadcaster & presenter [Heather Couper](#), CBE. Heather made many TV guest appearances on channel 4 as well as radio and also served as President of the British Astronomical Association from 1984 to 1986. [Asteroid 3922](#) is named after her. RIP Heather.