

Edited by Robert Shanks



Welcome to the late December newsletter of the Blackburn Leisure Astronomical Society, the one stop shop for news, future projects, events, visits, lectures and general communications.

In the words of Jim Lovell aboard Apollo 8 on Christmas eve 1968 after loss of signal going around the moon... 'Please be informed there is a Santa Claus.'... & from me a happy new year to you all.

Last meeting

At the November BLAS meeting, Tim Old covered current projects in spaceflight, including Curiosity, its instruments, its continuing mission and route across the Martian surface. The Insight Mission was also covered and a live TV broadcast of the asteroid landing success.

Andy Russell MSc, CEng, MIET, gave an overview of what is potentially achievable in Radio Astronomy at BLAS which promoted discussion around possible future projects, costs and potential collaboration with other groups. His presentation is now available on the BLAS website [here](#).

The December BLAS meeting took place earlier than usual on Friday 21st December and provided a review of 2018's events which will be covered in next month's newsletter.

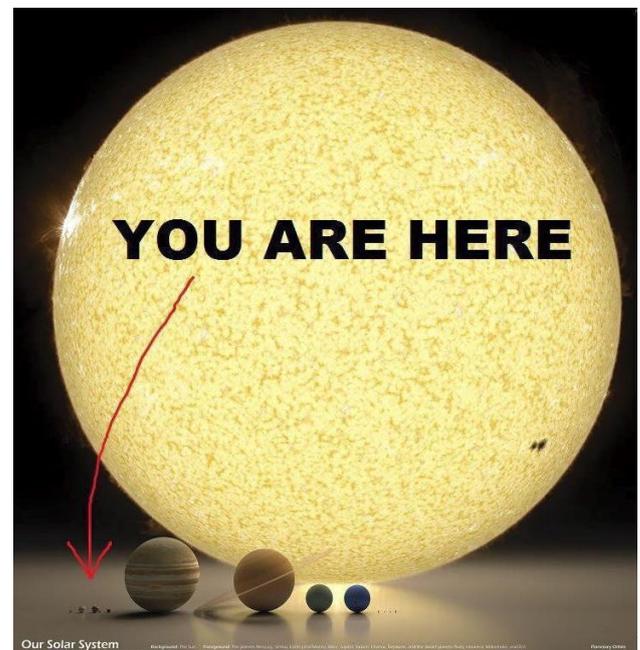
The next meeting will Monday 28th January 2019.

New Equipment

A final item of equipment purchased by the grant from Elloughton cum Brough council donation has arrived. We have obtained a star diagonal which is an angled mirror or prism used in telescopes to allow viewing from a direction that is perpendicular to the usual eyepiece axis. It allows more convenient and comfortable viewing when the telescope is pointed at, or near, the zenith (i.e. directly overhead). The star diagonal enables the old 5-inch Cassegrain telescope to be brought back into service – so all of our telescopes are now ready for action.

Visits

On Dec 7th BLAS hosted the Swanland and North Ferriby Beavers. The latest series of BLAS tours begins with a presentation of where we are in our solar system and beyond.



The Withernsea Camera club also visited last month. Both groups thoroughly enjoyed their respective visits and have responded with their thanks.

2019 Membership Subscriptions

Please note that subs are now due for 2019. To smooth process, members are encouraged to download and print their membership application forms for 2019 by following the link [here](#) and bring them along with payment in January.

Edited by Robert Shanks

2019 Program of Works

Just like your own house, the BLAS Observatory always requires on-going building maintenance. A non-exhaustive list of things to be done in the forthcoming year includes fitting of the new sky door to dome 1; repairs to roof leaks in dome 2 as well as internal & external paintwork. Please come along and help out where you can.

General

A Lunar eclipse is predicted to take place on Jan 21st 2019.

A reminder that Louth born NASA Astronaut Michael Foale CBE, PHD, will be giving a lecture at Hull Universities Middleton Hall on January the 18th. BLAS were privileged to meet him during a City of culture lecture in 2016 and found him to be a particularly inspirational person, especially to the younger generation. [Tickets](#) are selling fast but a few remain.

BLAS Christmas Dinner

The annual BLAS/HERAS Christmas Dinner will be held on Friday 1st February 2019 at the Blackburn Leisure club.

HERAS News

Hull & East Riding Astronomical Society lectures now take place at the Civic Hall, 1 Market Green, Cottingham HU16 5QG.

Contact Helen Marshall or visit www.heras.org.uk for further detail of other forthcoming events.

Spaceflight Then & Now !

Who can forget one of the most iconic pictures in history taken by the crew of Apollo 8 on Christmas eve 1968, a photograph that changed the perception of our world for ever. Click [here](#) for the story in the Astronaut's own words.

Earthrise

December the 13th 2018 saw Virgin Galactic's SpaceShipTwo, VSS Unity, safely return to Mojave, CA after her maiden spaceflight paving the way for commercial space travel. Well done to Richard Branson and his team. Footage of the flight can be seen [here](#).

Virgin Galactic's SpaceShipTwo, VSS Unity