



As you all are aware by now, 2009 is the *International Year of Astronomy*, so please forward what your society is/has been doing to celebrate this event. Send contributions to the email address below or through the SAGAS website.

[Newsletter09@sagas.online.org.uk](mailto:Newsletter09@sagas.online.org.uk)

**ASTRO-FEST 2009**

This was held, as is usual, in February at the Kensington Town Hall and despite the current economic downturn, it was well attended. SAGAS secretary John Axtell attended and has supplied some photographs of the event.

Alan Chapman, as always, gave one of his splendid talks and chose a subject that was very topical, a talk about Thomas Herriot.

*Alan Chapman Picture John Axtell*



*Patrick Moore, Gary Hunt & Reg Turnhill Picture John Axtell*

Also in attendance were Patrick Moore, Gary Hunt TV Broadcaster and regular on the *Sky At Night* programme, and Reg Turnhill famed for his publications on unmanned and manned spaceflight. Two of the three pictured above are into their eighties and still going strong!



*Wendell Mendell From NASA Picture John Axtell*

Representing NASA was Wendell Mendell who spoke on spaceflight past, present and future.

As well as a good variety of speakers there were also many trade stands and static displays, both days were extremely well attended. Thanks go to the organisers at *Astronomy Now* magazine.

*Old & New Telescopes Display Picture John Axtell*



## **INTECH TELESCOPE AMNESTY**

**21<sup>st</sup> January 2009**

**Phil Alner - Chair, Cody AS**

The *Cody Astronomical Society* and some other societies attended the telescope Amnesty held at the *INTECH Science Centre & Planetarium*, Winchester, Hampshire. The weather was very poor on this evening! Therefore the visitors had only the display stands and telescopes to look at. Fewer societies supported the event this year, which was a pity because more “experts” were required.

For this event, Jenny Shipway, who runs the Planetarium ([JennyShipway@intech-uk.com](mailto:JennyShipway@intech-uk.com)) set up a separate “Experts’ advice area” for visitors to ask the amateur astronomers present to help them with any aspect of practical astronomy and telescopes. Unfortunately, only three “Experts” volunteered to man this area.

Gordon Lloyd (*Cody AS*) was one of them. He set up his own telescope focussed on the roof (not much fun!) and had other aids to help people. He reported a constant queue of people for about an hour and three quarters! Some brought their own telescopes for advice and help in adjusting, pointing and using them. Gordon felt that several people gave up and wandered away because there were too few “experts” to assist all the people who came. Advice was also given to join local societies and persevere with astronomy.

Jenny (*INTECH*) is now planning a daytime, Saturday astronomy event, probably on 4<sup>th</sup> April. Details to follow. *Cody AS* will support this and we urge societies to help again.

Graham Bryant said that *INTECH* had an event for teachers the following day on how to present astronomy to children.

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**MOONWATCH WEEK**  
**28<sup>th</sup> March – 5<sup>th</sup> April 2009**  
**Worthing Astronomers - Jan Young**

The newly formed group and member of *SAGAS*, *Worthing Astronomers*, based in Sussex, [www.worthingastronomers.org.uk](http://www.worthingastronomers.org.uk), set up telescopes for sidewalk astronomy on every clear night of *Moonwatch* week on Worthing seafront. Out of nine nights only two were clouded out and there was an average of twenty to thirty people passing by every night who wanted to look at the Moon and Saturn and even M42, all of which had the desired WOW and aaaaaah!

One gentleman returned on another night complete with telescope that had sat in his garage for years and wanted to know how to use it, another told his

friend down the road who came down and several families returned for a second or even third look.

A small flyer was printed out to give to people which gave a brief outline about *IYA 2009*, a small explanation on who *Worthing Astronomers* were and details of the website included should anyone want to sign up for membership, which has happened. No one could foresee so many clear nights, normally when an astronomy based sidewalk or open evening is planned it is lucky if there is one clear night! It is planned to repeat this exercise for the *Moonwatch Week* in November. *Worthing Astronomers* also hope to set aside at least one night a month during the summer to set up telescopes in the same place, hopefully with the same result.

Publicity was minimal, a flyer stating the dates, time and where, was placed in the local Public Library, in a bookshop with a notice-board on its stairs and a shop promoting Men’s Gifts. A response was got from all three.

*Moonwatch Week Sidewalk Astronomy Picture Jan Young*



*Moonwatch Week Sidewalk Astronomy Picture Jan Young*



*Moonwatch Week Sidewalk Astronomy Picture Jan Young*



## 100 HOURS OF ASTRONOMY IYA 2009 EVENT

[www.100hoursofastronomy.org/index.php](http://www.100hoursofastronomy.org/index.php)

One hundred hours of astronomy took place 2<sup>nd</sup> – 5<sup>th</sup> April. The website, above, lists various events worldwide that took place with an astronomical theme during those hours. At the time of writing it is still being updated so check it out regularly.

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## SAGAS MEETING South Downs Planetarium, Chichester 17<sup>th</sup> January 2009 14.00hrs

The first meeting of 2009 was well attended and the committee were pleased to welcome the newly joined *Richmond and Kew AS* to the group.

*Anthony Seal R&K AS Picture John Axtell*



There was a warm welcome to Graham Bryant as Chair of the SAGAS committee.

*Graham Bryant HAG Picture John Axtell*



The new committee 2009 were voted in, the same as 2008 except with Jan Young replacing John Stapleton who had stand down due to work commitments and the addition of Graham Bryant as committee chair.

A warm welcome was also given to David Inman from the *Foredown Tower Astronomy Society*, this being formed by a group who used to meet at the Foredown Tower in Brighton. They too have recently joined SAGAS.

*David Inman Foredown Tower AS Picture John Axtell*

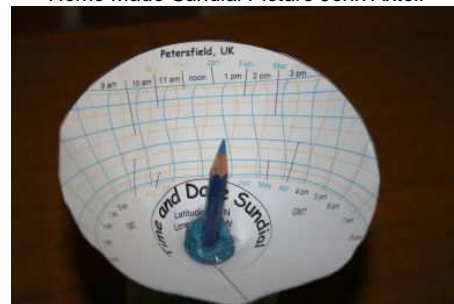


The after-break talk was given by Gordon Lloyd of *Cody AS* demonstrating a home made sundial with a base of a coffee mug, measuring devices from rulers and even a small planetarium!

*Gordon Lloyd Cody AS Picture John Axtell*



*Home Made Sundial Picture John Axtell*



*Planetarium Picture John Axtell*



**ISLE OF WIGHT STAR PARTY  
BRIGHSTONE IOW  
26<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> March 2009  
Dr. Lucy Rogers – Chair Vectis AS**

The Isle of Wight's dark skies attracted astronomers from as far as Birmingham and Cambridge to the Isle of Wight Star Party. The event, which was held at *Brighstone Holiday Centre*, Military Road, Brighstone, between Thursday 26th and Monday 30th March, 2009, proved very successful.

*Telescopes During Daytime Picture Madeline Paterson*



The location offered almost 180-degree southerly views across the Channel, and, combined with ensuite rooms and a great cooked breakfast offered by *Brighstone Holiday Centre*, even island astronomers were tempted to stay on site. On all four nights the clouds parted to give wonderful clear skies.

*Looking For The New Moon Picture Dr Lucy Rogers*



The new Moon was an early target and many of the attendees appreciated the chance to compare the views of Saturn and The Great Orion Nebula

*Delegates Observing Picture Stephen J Griffiths*



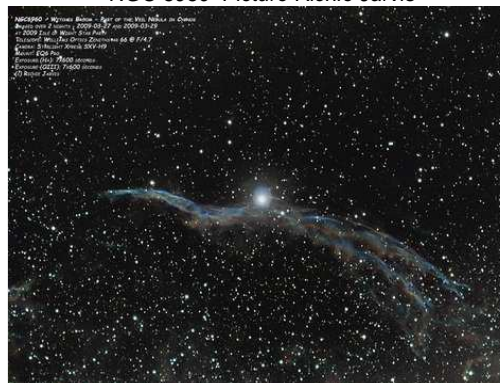
(M42) through different telescopes, ranging from an 18 inch Obsession Dobsonian to a Meade ETX 90. Distant galaxies, such as M6, M7 and the Lagoon Nebula (M8) were seen by some for the first time from the UK.

*M13 Picture Richie Jarvis*



Wonderful astro-images of the Witch's Broom (NGC6960, part of the Veil (nebula) and the Rosette nebula were also taken.

*NGC 6960 Picture Richie Jarvis*



The warm tea and coffee room, lit with a red bulb, was very useful, and helped to keep the astronomers going all night, every night. Sky Quality Meters were used to officially record just how dark the skies are, and, with a maximum of 21.3, it was confirmed that the island does indeed have some of the darkest skies in the south of England.

*Stars And Chalets In Red Light Picture Dr Lucy Rogers*



Professor Ian Morison from *Jodrell Bank Observatory* also attended the Star Party with four of his own telescopes. He combined the trip with the wonderful talk he gave at *Vectis Astronomical Society's* monthly meeting on the Friday evening, which Star Party delegates were also invited to attend. The talks Ian and others had offered to give at Brighstone in case of bad weather were not required this year, but it was great to have them in reserve.

Four astronomical traders (*Island Planetarium, Astronomia, Astroparts* and *365 Astronomy*), were represented with stock ranging from GPS GOTO telescopes to bespoke astronomical equipment. Thanks are due to these companies and others, including *Widescreen Centre, Orion Optics, Springer, Astronomy Now Magazine, BC&F, David Hinds* and *First Light Optics*, who provided prizes for the main raffle. Thanks are also due to the *British Astronomical Association, the Society for Popular Astronomy* and *STFC* for providing information and items for the welcome packs. On the Saturday, many of the telescopes were set up during daylight hours, so everyone could admire the kit and question the owners about the advantages and disadvantages of their particular setup.

There was also an excellent visit to the ex-rocket testing site at the *Needles New Battery* (Highdown), run by *the National Trust*, with a talk by a rocketman - one of the men who was involved with the secret rocket testing programme

*Delegates At the Needles New Battery Picture Dr Lucy Rogers*



[www.theneedlesbattery.org.uk/](http://www.theneedlesbattery.org.uk/)

Seven SAGAS societies were represented, and thanks are due to *Springer* and *Astronomy Now Magazine* for providing the prizes for the free raffle for attendees who were also members of a SAGAS society.

The Star Party was run by the Isle of Wight's *Vectis Astronomical Society (VAS)* in association with the *Southern Area Group of Astronomical Societies (SAGAS)*. Many thanks to all those who helped out and took part, in particular thanks to Stephen J Griffiths, Bill Johnston, Brian and Sue Curd and Brian Bond. More information about the Star Party is available on [www.iowstarparty.org](http://www.iowstarparty.org).

Next year's Star Party is in the planning stages and there have been requests for an Astro-jumble, so start sorting your kit out and put aside those unwanted items for next March. See you there...

*NGC2236 Picture Richie Jarvis*



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## SAGAS DISPLAY BOARDS

The display boards pictured below have been purchased for member societies to borrow if required and of course for SAGAS to display notices at events attended by the committee. Contact one of the committee if your society wants to use them

They are portable as they can be dismantled for transportation and are ideal for displaying notices when attending an event.



## **DATES FOR YOUR DIARY**

**Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> April 2009** 14.00hrs *South Downs Planetarium*, Chichester. Ordinary SAGAS meeting, with guest speaker Dr Keith Strong, *NASA*, title of talk - 'The Sun's Role In Climatic Change'.

**Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> July 2009** SAGAS summer meeting hosted by *Nitelife* and will be in Portsmouth, details to be announced on the SAGAS website.

**24<sup>th</sup> July – 28<sup>th</sup> August 2009** *Sussex Records Office*, Chichester. Exhibition dedicated to Thomas Harriot  
[www.westsussex.gov.uk/ccm/content/libraries-and-archives/record-office/whats-new-at-the-record-office.en](http://www.westsussex.gov.uk/ccm/content/libraries-and-archives/record-office/whats-new-at-the-record-office.en)

**Friday 11<sup>th</sup> – Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> September 2009**  
*Herstmonceux Astronomy Fair*, Herstmonceux Science Centre with camping facilities for the hardy.

**Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> October 2009** 14.00hrs *South Downs Planetarium*, Chichester. Ordinary SAGAS meeting.

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## **SPEAKERS**

Please be aware that there is a list of people willing to talk to small societies such as those belonging to SAGAS. Please email Jan on the address below for details. Also, please don't hesitate to send in recommendations to the same address.

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## **'SAGAS OFFLINE' NEWSLETTER**

### **CONTRIBUTIONS WANTED**

Please send in anything that your society is doing, be it an ordinary meeting or something special.

Everything is welcomed including suggestions of what YOU want to see in the newsletter.

Closing date for contributions 21<sup>st</sup> June 2009

See you all at the next meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> April 2009 and I wish you all Clear Skies and A Happy Easter. Until the next issue.

Jan Young  
Editor SAGAS Offline

[Newsletter09@sagas.online.org.uk](mailto:Newsletter09@sagas.online.org.uk)  
or from the direct link on the SAGAS website  
[www.sagasonline.org.uk](http://www.sagasonline.org.uk)

WISHING YOU ALL A  
HAPPY EASTER



