



Galloway Forest Astronomical Society

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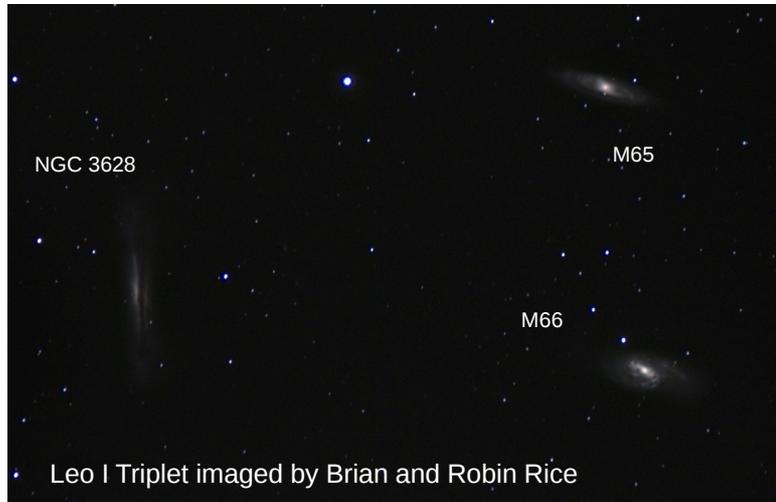


Visit to the SDSO, Wednesday 15th March

A group of 8 members and friends visited the SDSO as planned and had a good experience, even being able to do some observing with the 20" telescope in the dome during a break in the cloudy weather. The last 2km of the road up to the observatory is unsurfaced and quite rough so care needs to be taken when approaching the site at night. The SDSO actually has two observatories on the site, the dome seen here and a sliding-roof observatory housing a smaller telescope that can be uncovered and aligned more quickly than the big one. A very worthwhile visit.

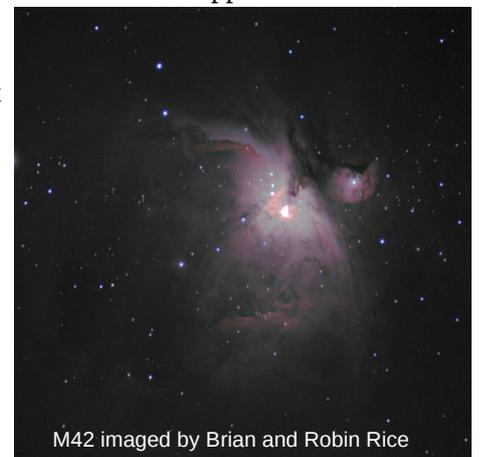
Tennis Club meet, 3rd edition, 25 March

We got clear skies at last on the 24th and 25th March. Brian and Robin did some astrophotography on the 24th and we were able to arrange a "wildcat" meet at the tennis club on the 25th with seven members able to turn up. Jupiter was a prominent object with the four Galilean moons in a beautiful straight line, Europa below Jupiter on the left and Io, Ganymede and Callisto above right. We were also able to see a range of double stars, the Hercules cluster and, of course, the Andromeda galaxy. We didn't try any photography. The image on the right is from Stellarium for 11:00 pm on the 25th and illustrates what we could see quite closely – we had difficulty seeing the bands on Jupiter.



The Leo I triplet of galaxies was imaged on the 24th. The picture shown has been cropped from a stack of 35 images.

Brian and Robin also shot the Orion nebula, M42, on the 24th, this time stacking 18 images to produce the final result shown on the right.



On the 25th we were delighted and honoured to have the company of Andy Sawers, our only London-based member, chairperson of the 300-member Flamsteed Astronomy Society at the Royal Observatory and National Maritime Museum in Greenwich, no less! The Flamsteed is named for the first Astronomer Royal, John Flamsteed, 1646 – 1719 AD, appointed "King's Astronomical Observer" in 1675 and laid the foundation stone of the Greenwich Observatory that year. Andy has our grateful thanks for most graciously contributing nearly all the material for page 2.

Upcoming event: visit our stand at the Newton Stewart Initiative "Mayfayre" in Dashwood Square, Newton Stewart on Saturday 27th May from 10:00am. We'll have at least one telescope, some StarTrackerVR virtual reality headsets and lots of heavenly Stargazing information. Juniors join free!



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Registered Scottish Charity SC035033.

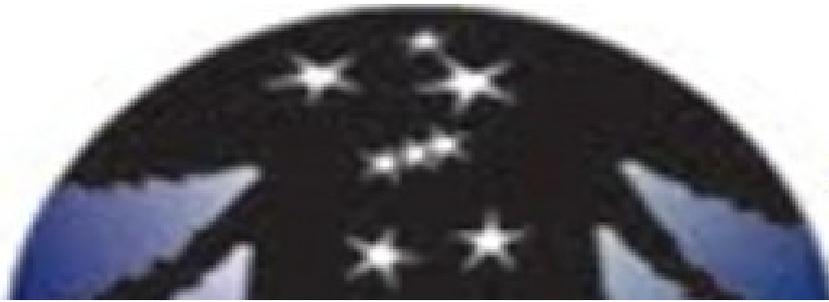
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Page 2 has been kindly contributed by Andy Sawers, GFAS member and Chair of Flamsteed Astronomy Society, <http://flamsteed.info/> following his visit to our wildcat meet at Newton Stewart Tennis Club on 25th March.

“Having been a London-bound member of GFAS for a couple of years, I was beginning to wonder if I'd ever manage to time a visit to Galloway at the same time as a GFAS observing evening! Fortunately, it all came together on 25th March when we met at the Newton Stewart Tennis Club on a beautifully clear night. From Greenwich, where I'm the current chair of the Flamsteed Astronomy Society, the orange light-polluted skies rarely allow us to see very much at all unless imaging. What a treat it was to see so much in a pitch-black sky over Newton Stewart - even with a few LED streetlights blazing away!”

“Seeing the Beehive Cluster was a 'first' for me, and it's always a pleasure to see so many more than just the 'seven sisters' in the Pleiades. The Orion Nebula is a popular object for astrophotographers but, again, it was an absolute joy to see it myself through one of the telescopes. And I never tire of seeing the Galilean moons: the Tycho/Kepler/Galileo era is my favourite in the history of astronomy. I took a few long-exposure photos on the evening, giving a rather ghostly appearance to those who were there but showing just what a great viewing night it was.”



Looking north over
Benyellary House



Looking ENE over the tennis pavilion roof. Although we are just west of the dark sky park boundary in a town, the LED street lighting makes simple stargazing perfectly possible.

GFAS has plans to use the site as its main base in future, in collaboration with Newton Stewart Tennis Club.

“I also sent a couple of photographs taken in Monreith in February of the International Space Station tracking from right to left, low across the sky. The photo shows the ISS shooting under Orion after having flown over the Pyrenees.”

The village of Monreith lies in the far south-west of the Machars of Galloway peninsula, overlooking the Irish Sea, Luce Bay and the Mull of Galloway, and is about 20 miles outside the Galloway Forest Dark Sky Park. The skies are good and dark nonetheless, as this great photo showing the Pleiades, Taurus, Orion, Sirius and the ISS clearly demonstrates. Many thanks, Andy!



2016-2017 Subs now very seriously overdue

Adult and/or family members who have not yet paid their subscription fee for 2016-2017 are asked to pay up now!