

### **Kirkcudbright DSP talk**

In April, Andy Sawers FRAS gave a talk at the Kirkcudbright Dark Space Planetarium entitled "Twenty Amazing Things About Space".

It ranged from the fact that the Andromeda Galaxy would appear six times the size of the Moon (if only our eyes were big enough to see it) to the extraordinary discovery of planet Neptune in 1846, mathematically predicted by Urbain Le Verrier who told German astronomers where to look for it.

Also, did you know that a cheap watch keeps better time than the Sun? Andy will be talking again at the DSP later this year. See <https://www.darkspaceplanetarium.org/>



### **Brendan Owens on Mars**

On April 24<sup>th</sup>, Brendan Owens, Astronomer Emeritus for the Royal Observatory Greenwich who works at Research Ireland as an Education and Public Engagement Manager, joined us on-line with his presentation on "Our Fascination with Mars".

Brendan, ably assisted by his cat, gave us a fascinating evening covering more or less all we have learned about the red planet so far and looking forward to possibilities for the future. His delivery was stimulating and engaging and we had time for a full question-and-answer session at the end.

This was our first online event using our new Zoom account and, guided by Andy Sawers, it went very well indeed. We were very pleased to welcome a few new GFAS members at the event and are very grateful for the accommodation and facilities provided by Newton Stewart Golf Club.

Brendan's book "Mars: A beginner's guide to exploring the Red Planet" is perfect for anyone eager to learn more. It includes the historic, cultural and scientific background and the exploratory missions – it is packed full of stunning images. Available in eBook and print formats.

### **May's Solar Session abandoned, clouds won - sun none!**

We had planned a sunspot spotting session for the morning of Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> May, but sadly the cloud cover was so complete then that the sun didn't get a look in. We're fairly used to clouds preventing us from stargazing on any given winter's night, but not to be able to see the sun on a May morning is really disappointing. We did, however, try again in June, see Page 2. Thanks again to the Belted Galloway Visitor Centre in Newton Stewart for letting us set up in their car park.

**GFAS Membership:** We always welcome new and returning members, especially juniors who join for free. Subs remain at £15.00 Adult, £25.00 Family, £0.00 Juniors or Students in full-time education. Just email [members@gf-astro.org](mailto:members@gf-astro.org) for a form or download a form from the website.



### **Galloway Forest Astronomical Society**

Registered Scottish Charity SC035033.

Chairman: Antony Berretti Secretary: Jayne Davis

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Fb page: [@GallowayForestAstronomicalSociety](https://www.facebook.com/GallowayForestAstronomicalSociety) / Fb Group: [@gfas chat](https://www.facebook.com/gfaschat)

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## **Another Zoom session: Mary McIntyre**

Oxfordshire-based amateur astronomer Mary McIntyre (<https://marymcintyreastronomy.co.uk/>) joined us via Zoom on the evening of Friday 9<sup>th</sup> May to deliver her talk “Constellations: from Mythology to Modern Day”, telling us how humans have studied the night sky since the dawn of time and covering some of the constellation mythological stories from around the world, how the constellations were named and some of the superstitions surrounding astronomical events. Mary also told us how we view constellations in the modern day and some of the interesting things that reside within them.

This time we were set up in “The Hut”, otherwise known as the Newton Stewart Centre, using our portable 150 inch screen and our 4K projector. This was our second full-scale Zoom presentation and the first time using the big screen, the 4K laptop and HDMI projection and sound. Amazingly, everything worked well and Mary’s rapid-paced and most informative presentation went off faultlessly.

In part two of the evening, Doug Snell gave a short slideshow on Exoplanets (planets that orbit other stars), their discovery, identification and characterisation.

## **Solar day 2**

After our unsuccessful attempt at Sunspotting in May, we tried again at the summer solstice, Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> June, in the morning in the Belted Galloway car park once again. Despite the early clouds, we had a great morning seeing some fabulous sun spots. It was a pleasure to meet passers-by intrigued by what we were up to, as well as friends old and new who had travelled some distance to join us.

An especial surprise was the visit of astronomy writer Geoffrey Lindop from Lockerbie, <https://novelo.com/profile/AstroGeoffrey>, author of “Dark Sky at Night, Tourists’ Delight”, wearing a magnificent planet-themed tie! Geoffrey is shown in the photo together with GFAS astronomer Hunter McCall beside Hunter’s usual setup of an 80mm refractor with a Herschel wedge for safe viewing of the sun.

Thanks to the Belted Galloway Visitor Centre for allowing us into their car park.



Above: Geoffrey Lindop and Hunter McCall

Left: some GFAS members and visitors at the Summer Solstice sunspotting event



## **Coming up! Movie Night with U3A Wigtownshire Astronomy Group**

On Monday July 14th at 7pm the Newton Stewart Cinema will be showing a special public screening of Stanley Kubrick’s great sci-fi classic, **2001: A Space Odyssey** - in association with GFAS and the Wigtownshire U3A Astronomy Group. A feast for classical music lovers too. Members should check their email for details!

It’s amazing to think that Kubrick and Arthur C Clarke produced this movie in 1968 - 57 years ago! It’s even more amazing to think about the breadth of the ideas covered by it. **Solar system exploration** - ongoing ever since. **Artificial intelligence** - one of today’s greatest areas of development, with all the benefits and hazards it implies. **Voice activation** of computers - routine, just ask Alexa! The **Jovian Moons** as a planetary system - of course! **Alien superintelligences** guiding humanity - not so much, as far as we yet know ...

**Newsletter Articles** Please send us your astro news! We consider all contributions to our newsletters and we always acknowledge the source of anything we use. Just email us any original astronomy items for consideration.

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