

Nene Valley Astronomical Society

STARGAZER

OCTOBER 2026



Caldwell12 – The Firework Galaxy

Taken By Paul Blackman

Caldwell 12 Was Discovered By William Herschel in 1798 and lies on the border of the constellations of Cepheus and Cygnus

and is about half the size of our Milky Way Galaxy.

It is named The Firework Galaxy as ten supernova have been observed within it's spiral arms since 1917.

www.neneastro.org.uk

Forthcoming Meetings

All meetings held at Chelveston Village Hall, Caldecott Road, Chelveston NN9 5AT at start at 8pm. Doors open from 7.45pm. Please use the entrance doors at the rear of the building (the front door is locked for security purposes).

Monday 5th October

Club Night Meeting
Admission £3.

Monday 19th October

'Astro-Photography Update & Smart Telescopes' by Dave Eagle
Admission £6.

Monday 2nd November

Club Night Meeting
Admission £3.

Monday 16th November

'Latest Updates From The Mars Science Laboratory' by Cesca Willcocks.

Committee Members

Chair

Vacant

Vice Chair

Steve Williams

Secretary

Kevin Burton
enquiries@neneastro.org.uk

Events Co-Ordinator

John Wynn-Wernick

Membership Secretary

Paul Blackman
members@neneastro.org.uk

Treasurer

David Jones

Newsletter/Website

Steve Williams
newsletter@neneastro.org.uk

Committee Member

Paul Jamison

Observing Evenings

Our October observing evenings are scheduled to be held at Chelveston Village Hall on the Friday evenings of 9th, 23rd and 30th October from 8pm provided that they are clear and offer at least a chance of observing. Observing takes place at the far end of the car park. Please note that we do not have access to the inside of the hall on observing evenings, therefore you may wish to bring your own refreshments. To confirm that observing will proceed, we will send out a message via the groups Whats App (to join this please speak to Paul Jamison) and aim to also post confirmation on our website at neneastro.org.uk/observing. Due to other organisations booking the hall there will be no observing on either the 2nd or 16th October.

Meeting Review

At our meeting on 21st September, we welcomed the return to the society of Mike Frost, director of the Historical Section of the British Astronomical Association.

This year Mike spoke to us about Erwin Freundlich, the German physicist who for part of his career worked with Albert Einstein.

Freundlich was born in 1885 and studied Mathematics and Astronomy at the University of Gottingen from where he obtained his PhD. He became an assistant at Berlin Observatory where he met Einstein. During an expedition to verify general relativity using a Total Solar Eclipse in 1914, he was briefly detained by the Russian Authorities, during which time he missed the eclipse.

Returning to Germany, he was engaged in the construction of a solar observatory at Potsdam, which Mike showed images of that he had taken during a visit.

Shortly after the Potsdam observatory had been constructed, Hitler came to power in Germany and Freundlich having Jewish connections was forced to flee to the University of Istanbul for a short period, followed by an appointment as Professor of Astronomy at the University of Prague.

Unfortunately, both appointments were short lived, as by 1938, the Germany occupation of Czechoslovakia had begun. On the recommendation of Arthur Stanley Eddington, Freundlich took up an appointment at the St Andrew's University in Scotland, however his family were left in Prague. Mike then told the story of how his family were rescued and brought to join him in Scotland.

On his retirement in 1959, Freundlich returned to Germany and was appointed Professor at the University of Mainz. He died in 1964 and has a lunar crater named after him.

Our thanks to Mike for another fascinating evening.

Steve Williams

The Solar System This Month

New Moon 10th October
Full Moon 26th October

The Sun despite rapidly losing altitude this month, is still worth monitoring on a regular basis as some reasonable sunspot groups are still visible. The Sun was however completely spotless back on 19th September for a day and only a handful of very small groups were visible at the end of September. A sure sign that we are now declining from solar maximum.

Mercury reaches Greatest Eastern Elongation on 12th October, however it remains largely lost, very low in the western evening twilight. It is therefore unlikely to be seen at all.

Venus passes through Inferior Conjunction on 24th October and is not visible during this month. Our closest neighbouring world will become visible again in the morning sky next month.

Mars rises amongst the stars of Cancer just after 1am by mid-October. It continues to slowly brighten (up to first magnitude) and breaks the 6-arc second diameter this month. Best views will be had when the planet is higher in the sky in the small hours of the morning. Mars passes M44 the Beehive Cluster on the morning of 12th October which should make for a nice viewing/imaging session.

Jupiter lies to the east of Mars in Leo and consequently rises around an hour later. Like Mars, it is best observed when it reaches higher elevation in the couple of hours leading up to dawn.

Saturn reaches opposition on the 4th October and is visible above the eastern horizon as evening twilight fades. It can be found on the border of the constellations of Pisces and Cetus. With the rings continue to gradually open up now, the planet is once again regaining its glory. Look out for Titan (Saturn's largest Moon) either side of the planet around 5th, 12th, 21st & 28th October.

The Evening Sky This Month



The above chart from Stellarium shows how the evening sky looks on October 1st at 10pm, October 15th at 9pm and October 31st at 8pm.

The earlier darker evenings during October, can mean that the stars rotation appears to stall. The constellations of Hercules, Lyra, Cygnus and Aquila still remain high up in the West for a good part of the evening, offering several hours of observing before descending.

The southern aspect of the sky is dominated by the faint zodiacal constellations of Capricornus, Aquarius and Pisces. Even though they lack bright stars, these constellations do contain a wealth of deep sky objects and are worth exploring. Targets in Aquarius include M2, a magnitude 6 globular star cluster. NGC 7293 the Helix Nebula, a magnitude 7 planetary nebula, NGC 7009 the Saturn Nebula, a slightly fainter planetary nebula at magnitude 8 and M72 a globular star cluster of magnitude 9. Meanwhile Pisces offers M74, the Phantom Galaxy, a face-on grand spiral, NGC 488 another face on spiral galaxy as well as NGC 524, the Lenticular galaxy. All of these can be located in small telescopes as well as imaged through Smart scopes.

Overhead this month, we have Cepheus and Cassiopeia, the latter of which contains numerous open star clusters to explore. Mid-way up from the southern horizon we find Pegasus and Andromeda. If you have a clear southern horizon, then see if you can spot the star Fomalhaut, the southernmost first magnitude star you can see from the UK. Fomalhaut lies in the constellation Piscis Austrinus (the southern fish) and is about 25 light years distant.

Round towards the east, we find Auriga and Taurus, heralding even longer (hopefully clear) nights over the coming months.

Uranus rises mid-evening ahead of its date with opposition next month. It can be found in the constellation of Taurus, roughly mid-way between the Pleiades Star Cluster and Aldebaran at magnitude 5.6.

Neptune has just passed opposition at the end of September and remains well placed throughout October evenings amongst the stars of Pisces. At magnitude 8, a pair of binoculars or a telescope will be needed to observe it.

Meteors – October is often said to be the start of the Meteor Observers Year, with meteor showers active from now through until January.

October kicks off with the Draconids, active from the 6th to the 10th, with maximum activity on the 9th. Although not a significantly active meteor radiant, the Draconids can at times produce very high rates for a very short period. They are typically slow moving meteors, so with maximum at the time of new Moon, they are worth watching for.

A more active meteor shower, the Orionids, are active from 2nd October through to the start of November, but are best observed on the nights of maximum on 21st/22nd October. The radiant, to the north-west of the star Betelgeuse, does not rise until 11pm, so you will have to be watching in the early hours of the morning to give yourself the best chance of seeing them. The bright gibbous Moon sets around 1am, so will not interfere with early morning observing.

Contributions for the next edition of Stargazer are welcome from all members and can be sent to Steve Williams via newsletter@neneastro.org.uk

Members Observations



The Perseus Double Star Cluster
Imaged By Steve Williams using a Seestar S30 on 24th September. 90 minutes worth of 20 second exposures.



M31 – The Andromeda Galaxy
Imaged By Steve Williams using a Seestar S30 on 24th September. 180 minutes worth of 20 second exposures.

Greetings from Eastbourne!

It is now almost 2 years since I left Northamptonshire to move to East Sussex. Once I had my new hip, I started investigating the astronomical societies in the area and joined the Eastbourne Astronomical Society. The Society was formed over 40 years ago and meets monthly on a Saturday evening. We have 2 retired professional astronomers as members and a number of members who are very well informed on all matters of astronomy, particularly imaging.

At last October's AGM I raised a few queries and before I could run, I was co-opted onto the committee. Due to the ill health of our Chair, I now find myself Speaker Organiser for the Society. This is a job I used to do for NVAS but alas my contacts are too far away to travel to Eastbourne except Mike Frost whose sister lives here! Meeting on a Saturday evening is also not the best time to tempt speakers in February. But I am learning and looking at the many surrounding astronomical groups for inspiration.

Since being a member I have assisted in number of public observing events which have been attended by up to 200 people on suitable nights and we have a full programme for 2026/27 plus other outreach activities to engage children. At the recent partial eclipse on 12 August, I helped the Society to give out 300 pairs of eclipse glasses to the public on Beachy Head and we had our telescopes available for those interested. It was a lovely day for the observation and hundreds of people managed to see the event until the sun sank into the sea.

Herstmonceux observatory is nearby and we had gazebo at the recent 3 day Astronomy Festival. In 2027 we will be assisting the BAA holding their Annual Conference in Eastbourne On 29 May. So I am pleased to tell you that I am still active with astronomical events plus I have dark skies over the sea to observe.

Wishing NVAS all the best

PETA JELLIS

The International Astronomy Show 31st October 2026

Free Entrance And Parking
Open 9AM Till 4PM.

Come And See All Your Astro Venders
And Much More

Enjoy Dinner Or Snacks And drinks Hot Or Cold
Menu To Be Announced Soon

The Sports Connexion, Leamington Road,
Dunsmore, Coventry, CV8 3FL

More Details On Our Website

www.ukastroshow.com

You may have seen the information recently circulated to FAS societies about our upcoming event with NASA astronaut Doug Hurley, but as you're relatively local to Cranfield I wanted to get in touch directly as well.

On Saturday 7 November, The Armchair Astronaut is bringing Doug to Cranfield University for our Autumn Space Social.

Doug has an extraordinary human spaceflight story. He flew three Space Shuttle missions, including piloting STS-135, the final flight of the Space Shuttle programme, before later commanding SpaceX Demo-2 — the first crewed orbital flight launched from the United States since the Shuttle retired.

The event isn't simply a lecture. Doug will be speaking about his experiences followed by a live, unscripted audience Q&A, and attendees will also have the opportunity to meet him during the afternoon.

As Nene Valley Astronomical Society is relatively close to Cranfield, I'd be enormously grateful if you would consider sharing the event with your members. I'm very happy to provide ready-to-use text and artwork if that makes things easier.

More broadly, I'd really like to start building stronger links between The Armchair Astronaut and local astronomical societies. Our focus is human spaceflight rather than observational astronomy, but ultimately we're all trying to engage people with space, share knowledge and encourage the next generation.

If there's ever anything we can do together in that respect, my door is always open.

Thank you for your time, and hopefully we'll have the opportunity to welcome some of your members to Cranfield in November.

Best wishes,

Rowland Lindill

Founder

The Armchair Astronaut

<https://www.TheArmchairAstronaut.co.uk>