



## September 2012

### Events list

Sat 15 September: Annual Starbeque at the Millshield picnic site, Derwent Reservoir, followed by deep sky observing

Sun 16 Sept: **Speaker:** Graham Darke –  
The Search for Extraterrestrial Life;  
New moon

Sun 30 Sept: Full moon

Sun 07 October: Beginner's Class –  
Telescopes: Choosing and using them

Wed 10 – Mon 15 Oct: Kielder Star Camp

**All** Society events are free, are held in the Washington WWT facilities, and evening meetings start at 7:00pm unless otherwise noted. Please bring a torch and warm clothing to any night-time observing sessions. All observing sessions are dependent upon favourable weather and may be subject to cancellation.

**Editorial address:** Dave Newton, New Hartley Cosmodrome,  
13 Alston Road, New Hartley, Whitley Bay, NE25 0ST  
Tel: 0191 237 0355

### Editorial

Dear members and friends,

Welcome to the first issue of SAS News for the new observing season. Apologies for this issue being a brief bulletin rather than the usual magazine-style offering, but the summer has turned out to be surprisingly busy, and the autumn is shaping up the same way too. Personally, I've been spending a lot more time up at Kielder Observatory and it's been a great experience so far. Later this month I will also be running an astronomy course at Astley High School in Seaton Delaval, which will keep me out of mischief and maybe even gain some new recruits for the SAS.

For the Society, our observing season starts with the Starbeque at Derwent Reservoir on the 15<sup>th</sup>, followed by the Chairman's Lecture on the following evening, Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> September. Hope you can make it!

I've hope you had a good summer and have an even better autumn season ahead.

- Ed



## THE DARKE SIDE

*Society Update* with Chairman  
Graham Darke

### Another new season beckons

Summer's just about gone now (apparently it sneaked in and out through the back door) and we can once again look forward to darker skies. September sees a return to normal meetings after the summer break. Some of the events which the Society was involved in over the summer are reported below. September sees a starbeque on Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> at Derwent and I hope to see a few of you along at that. I shall be talking about the search for extra-terrestrial life on Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> at the first lecture meeting of the new season.

### Newcastle Green Festival – Leazes Park, Newcastle 12.00pm to 7.00pm Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> June

The Society exhibited at this event on Sunday 3<sup>rd</sup> June. The solar telescope was taken along and despite generally poor weather I am informed that a few gaps in the clouds did allow some observing of prominences.

### Transit of Venus 6<sup>th</sup> June

"Nothing ventured, nothing gained" so they say! A thoroughly British transit was witnessed by all early on the morning of 6<sup>th</sup> June. Despite the lucky charm of having Look North weather presenter Hannah Bayman in attendance, the stubborn clouds and mist just wouldn't lift in time for the final stages of the transit just after sunrise. There was a really good turn out from the SAS members despite the forecast and we were joined by the Institute of Physics. Although this was the last chance for us all of us to see a transit of Venus, we can look forward to a transit of Mercury in 4 years time which takes place at a more civilised time of day, you'll no doubt be pleased to hear.



**Above:** The transit of Venus, as viewed from somewhere NOT in the northeast!

**Summer Benker Night – Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup>  
June – Grey Horse, East Boldon**

We had a good turn out of members for this event and I even turned up late after receiving a flurry of texts asking where I was! Attending to my flock..... We shall do it all again in December.

**Summer Day Trip – Jodrell Bank Radio  
Observatory Cheshire – Saturday 14<sup>th</sup>  
July**

We had 20 people make the trip to Jodrell Bank for what was a most enjoyable day out. The scale of the radio telescope was awe inspiring. I think our speaker was one of the most enthusiastic people I've ever met, good on yer Eric! We will definitely do another trip to somewhere of astronomical interest next Summer.

**National Glass Centre**

The Society was invited to attend an astronomy fun day at the NGC in Sunderland on Sunday 12<sup>th</sup> August. There were 4 astronomy related exhibitions taking place at the NGC over this summer and it was good coverage for us to be invited along. We took solar telescopes along for roof top observing and Jennifer from the Institute of Physics came along to lend a hand with stick and paste alien activities for the young ones! Sadly, there wasn't much interest in any of our talks although it was a nice sunny day and people preferred to be outdoors.

**Perseid meteor shower – Saturday 11<sup>th</sup>  
August**

The peak of this year's annual Perseid meteor shower occurred on the above Saturday night and the phase of the Moon was not too restrictive either. With this in

mind, we had an early starbeque/meteor watching night at Derwent Reservoir. There was a great turn out of members and friends and I counted at least 28 people. The food and chat were good and we had the added bonus of being able to hold a genuine Olympic torch. One of the torch bearers who ran a leg of the torch relay through Sunderland, Claire Paczko, brought her torch along and on the eve of the final day of the Olympics it was a really nice touch.

**Nissan Family Fun Day**

As I write this, the Society has one final summer engagement coming up and that is Nissan's family fun day on Sunday 26<sup>th</sup> August. We are exhibiting and taking solar scopes along to that. A report will follow in next month's newsletter.

[**Editor's note:** The Nissan event was a great success by all accounts, with in excess of 8,000 guests keeping the brave SAS volunteers rushed off their feet! Future events with Nissan are on the cards as a result of the tremendous response.]

**Stay up to date**

Keep up to date with all society developments on the website [www.sunderlandastro.com](http://www.sunderlandastro.com) and why not sign up for the news group. Also check out our Facebook and Twitter pages.

Clear Skies,

*Graham*

