
Marcham
ASTRONOMY
15th April 2026

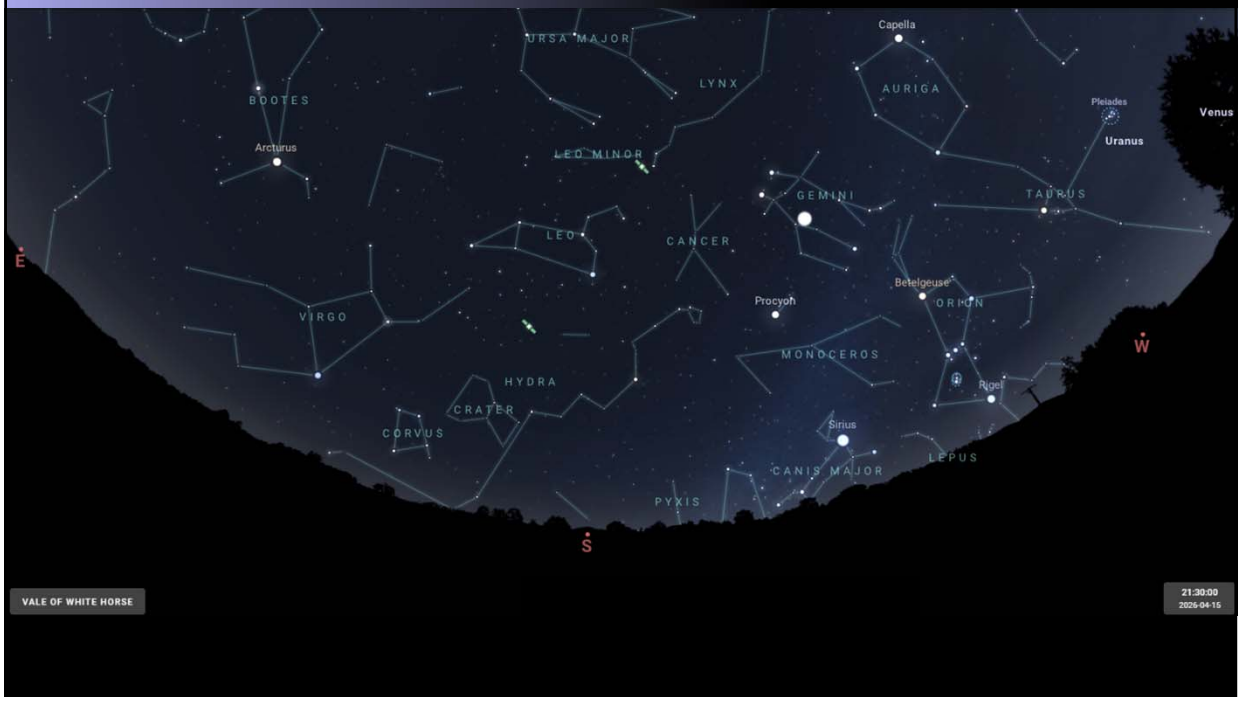

Our March Meeting

Tonight: Year 4 - Meeting No 32

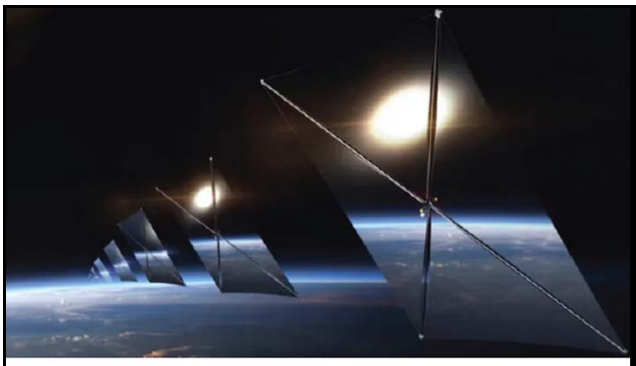
- The sky tonight
- Recent news, sightings and Members' Matter
- Feature: "*Observing techniques since 2020. (Before and After)*" – Tim Haymes, Steeple Aston
- Forward look

The sky tonight (19:30)**:** stellarium-web.org

The sky tonight (19:30)**:** stellarium-web.org



In the news…



Reflect Orbital hopes to deploy 50,000 mirrors above the Earth

Plan to light Earth at night with space mirrors angers scientists

A US start-up wants to 'sell sunlight after dark' using satellites with giant mirrors, but astronomers warn of disastrous consequences

Rhys Blakely, Science Editor

Tuesday March 17 2026, 11.05am, The Times

British astronomers have expressed anger at a US company's plans to illuminate the Earth at night using tens of thousands of mirrors mounted on satellites, warning that the scheme would be "disastrous" for science.

Reflect Orbital plans to launch a constellation of satellites with mirrors to redirect sunlight to the ground, creating beams of artificial "moonlight" over selected areas.

They argue that this could extend working hours for infrastructure projects or provide emergency lighting after natural disasters.

Astronomers said the scheme would have profound consequences for the night sky. Each beam could be about four times brighter than the full moon, while scattered light would pollute areas beyond the intended target.

Five Lighting Principles for Responsible Outdoor Lighting

DarkSky

Illuminating Engineering Society

Responsible outdoor lighting is

1 Useful	**Use light only if it is needed** All light should have a clear purpose. Consider how the use of light will impact the area, including wildlife and their habitats.	
2 Targeted	**Direct light so it falls only where it is needed** Use shielding and careful aiming to target the direction of the light beam so that it points downward and does not spill beyond where it is needed.	
3 Low Level	**Light should be no brighter than necessary** Use the lowest light level required. Be mindful of surface conditions, as some surfaces may reflect more light into the night sky than intended.	
4 Controlled	**Use light only when it is needed** Use controls such as timers or motion detectors to ensure that light is available when it is needed, dimmed when possible, and turned off when not needed.	
5 Warm-colored	**Use warmer color lights where possible** Limit the amount of shorter wavelength (blue-violet) light to the least amount needed.	

Rev. 08-2023

Jordan, pictured in 1995, was at the forefront of analysing data from the Hubble Space Telescope

Professor Dame Carole Jordan obituary: leading astrophysicist

Formidable scientist who pioneered the study of the solar corona and became the first woman to lead the Royal Astronomical Society, dies aged 84

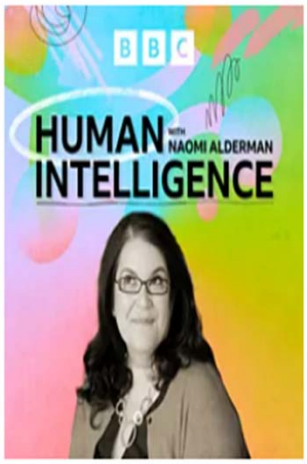
Wednesday April 01 2026, 7.00pm, The Times

One of her main contributions was her work on solar UV spectra with Skylab, a space station that orbited Earth from 1973 to 1979, which helped to develop understanding of helium-like (2-electron) ions.

She was made a FRS in 1990. Six years later she became one of the first female professors of astronomy at the University of Oxford, and was head of its Rudolf Peierls Centre for Theoretical Physics from 2003-2008.

After being made a DBE in 2006 for her services to physics and astronomy, the newly appointed Dame Carole Jordan interrupted a speaker when she was introduced as such at a function. “Dame Commander,” she corrected them. “I like the Commander bit.”

This willingness to speak her mind made her a formidable authority in the use of spectra to analyse plasma, which forms over 99% of observable matter in the universe.



Radio 4 · 15 Jan 2025 · 14 mins

Series 1

Teachers: Mary Somerville

Human Intelligence ›

Play Bookmark Subscribe

Available for over a year

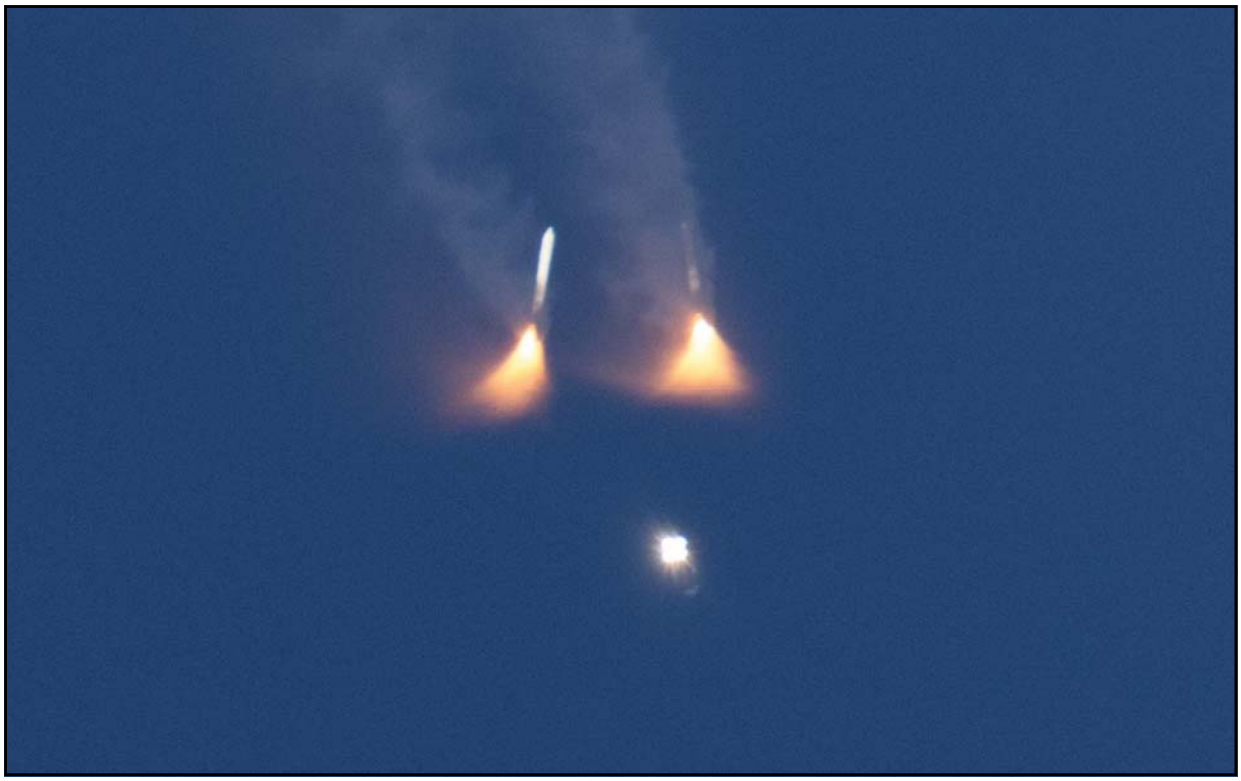
Born in Jedburgh, brought up in Burntisland, Fife. Self-taught Latin, Greek and algebra. Maths tutor to Ada Lovelace. In 1836, she wrote that difficulties in calculating the position of Uranus may point to the existence of an undiscovered planet (Neptune). A main-belt asteroid, Somerville crater on the Moon and an Oxford college are named after her.

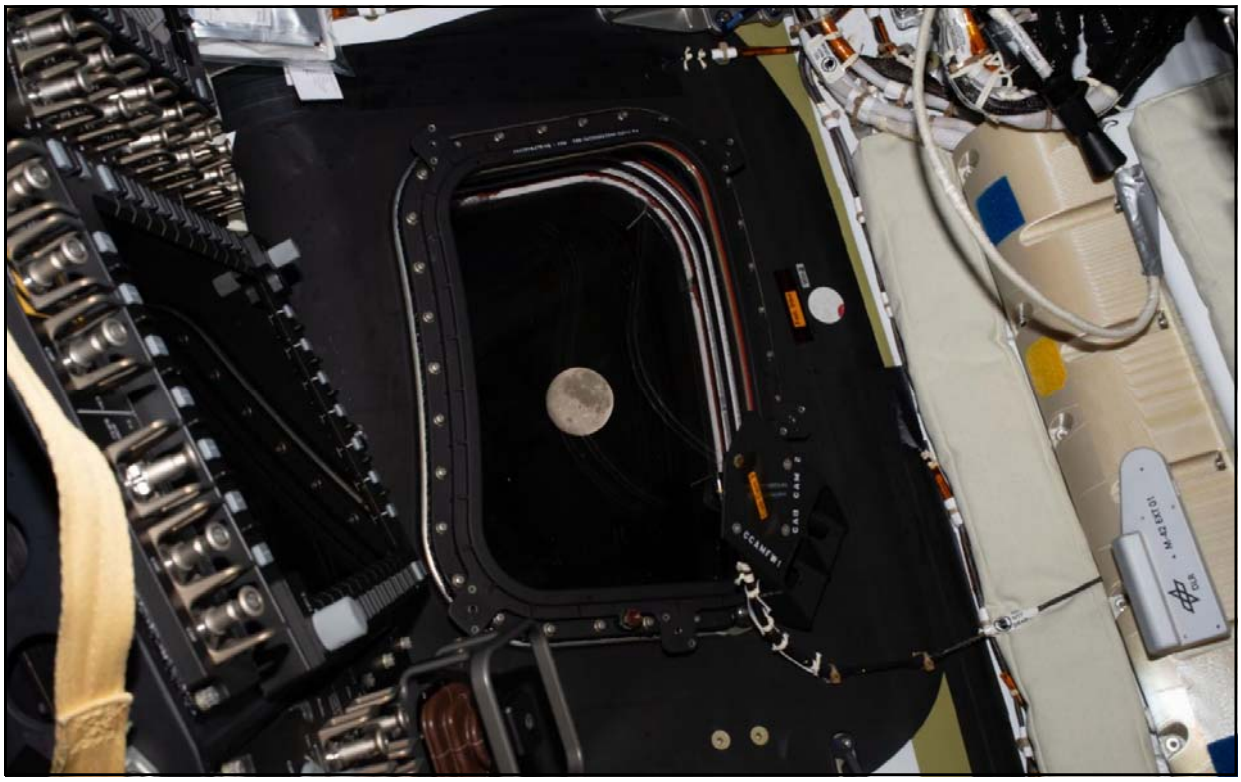
via Rosemary Harwood

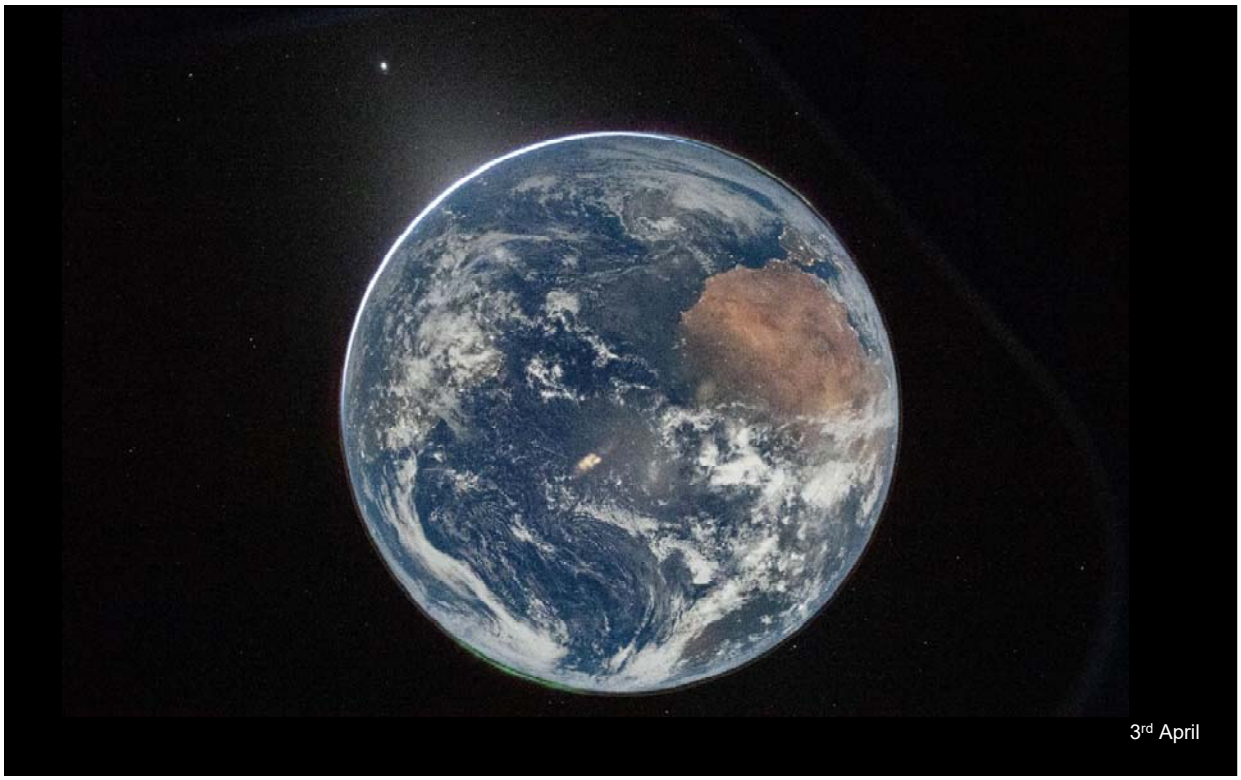
Mary Somerville (1780-1872)

In 1835 she and Caroline Herschel were elected as the first female Honorary Members of the Royal Astronomical Society.

Cape Canaveral: 1st April

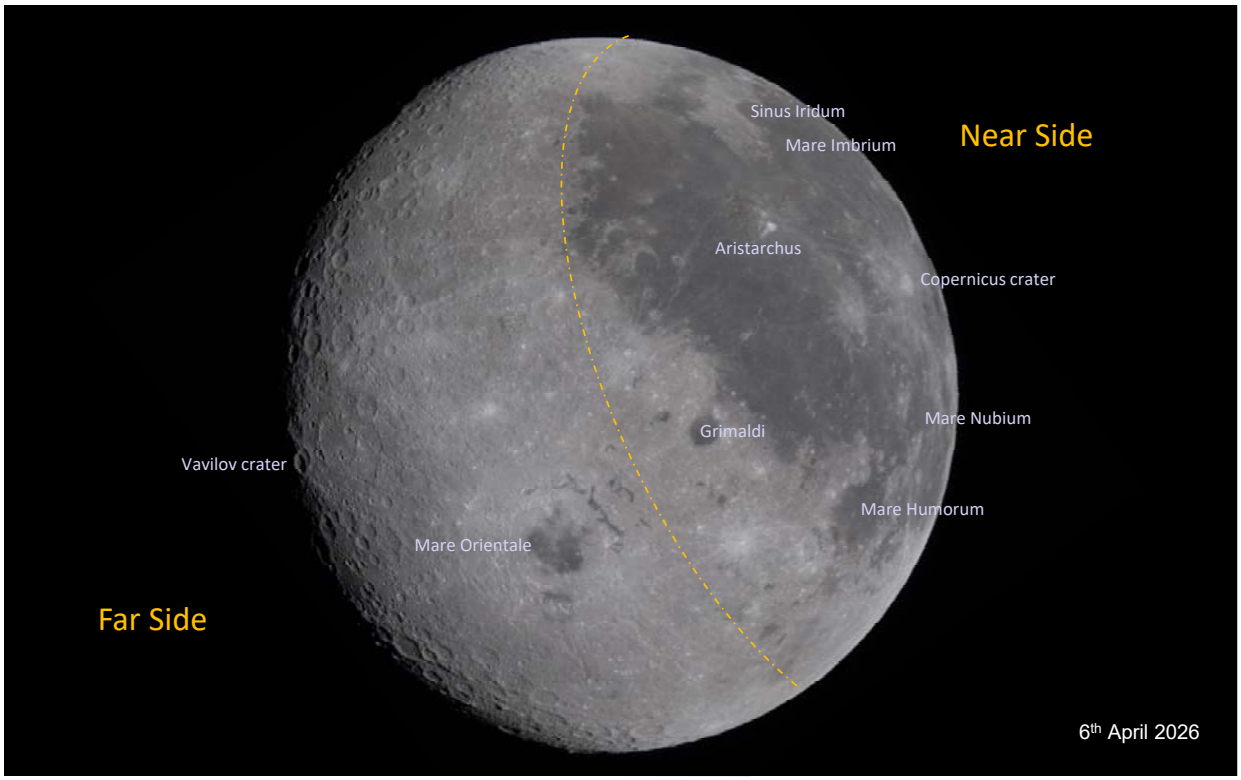


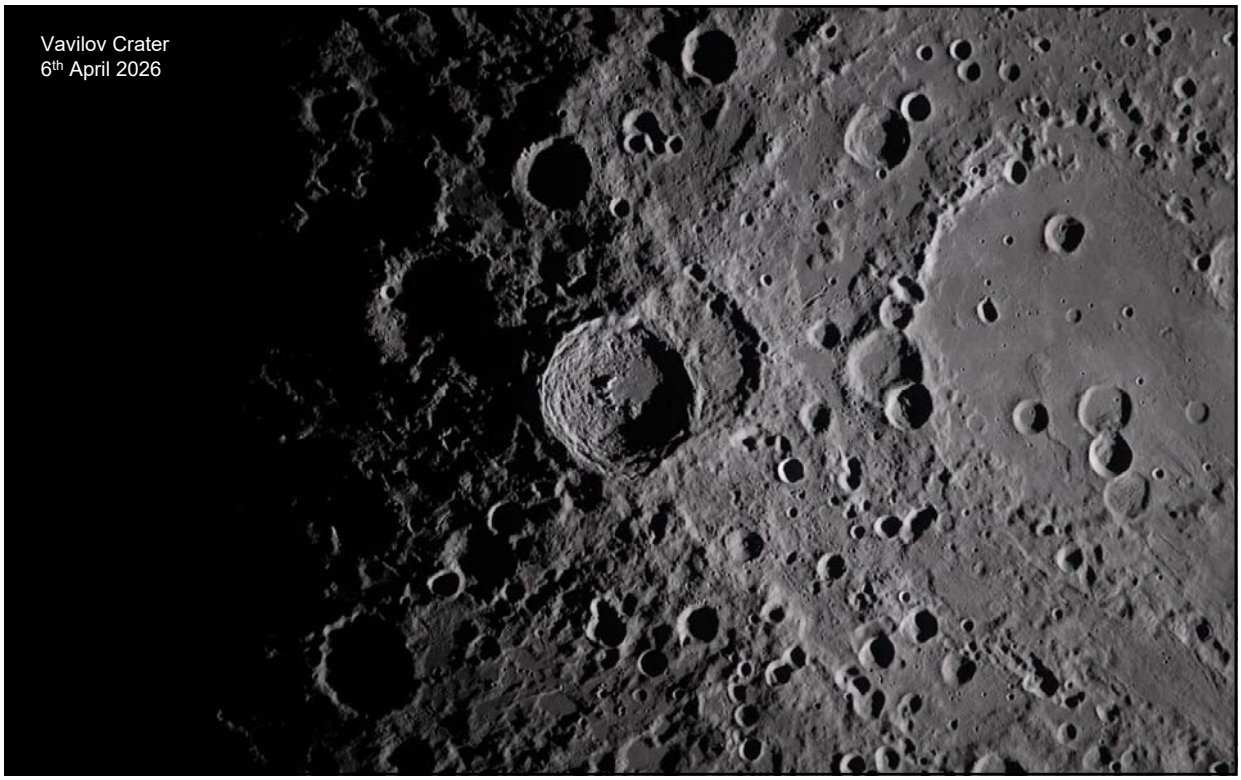




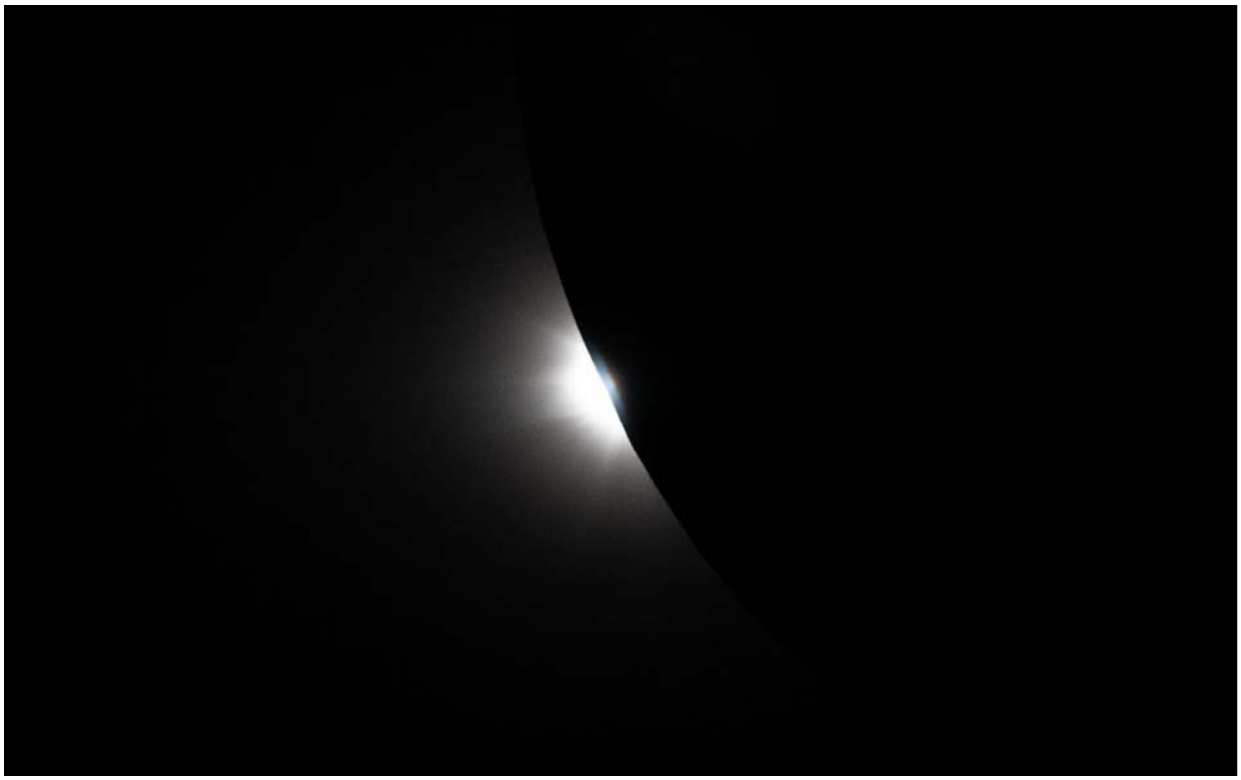
3rd April

6th April

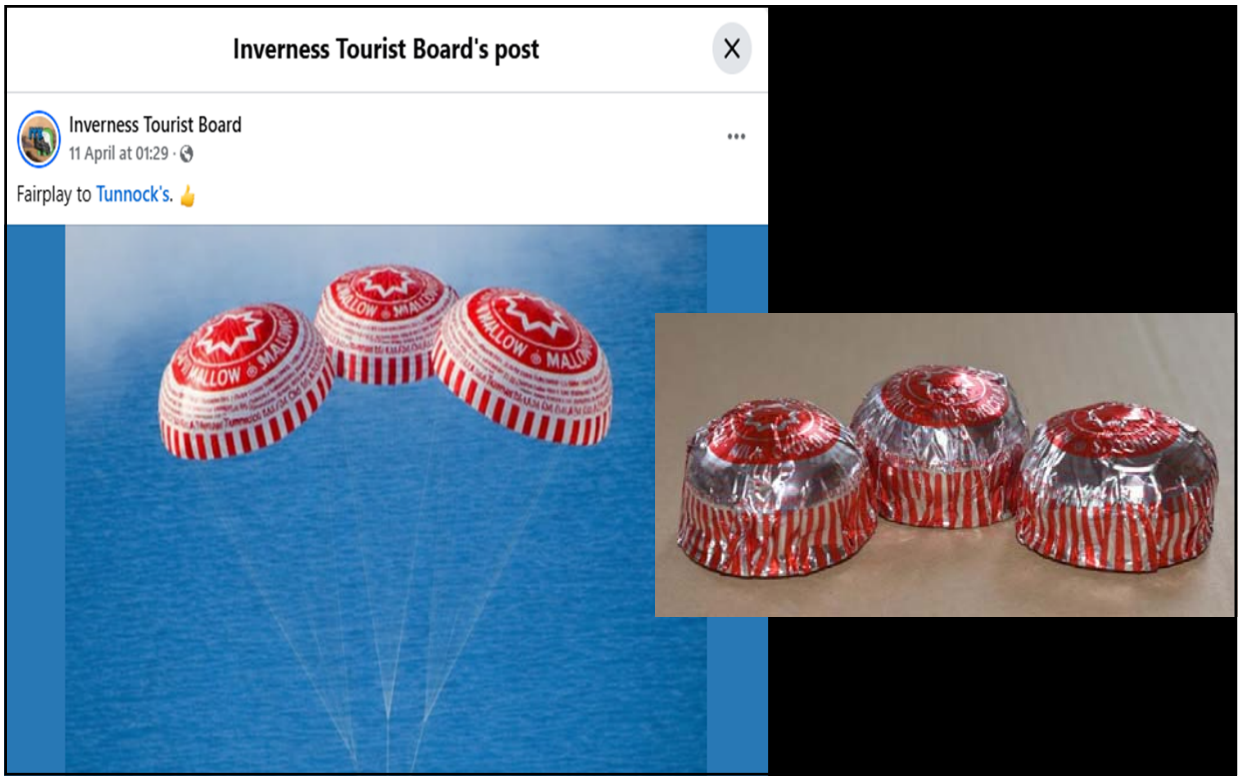

Sinus Iridum
Mare Imbrium
Near Side
Aristarchus
Copernicus crater
Grimaldi
Mare Nubium
Vavilov crater
Mare Humorum
Mare Orientale
Far Side
6th April 2026


Vavilov Crater
6th April 2026


NASA



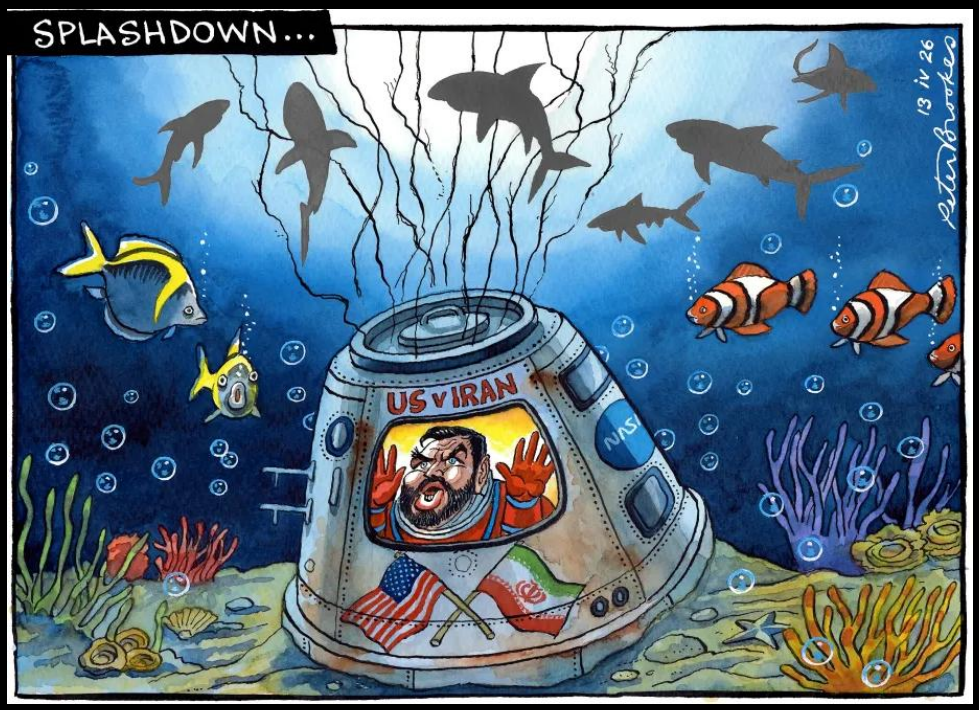
11th April 2026



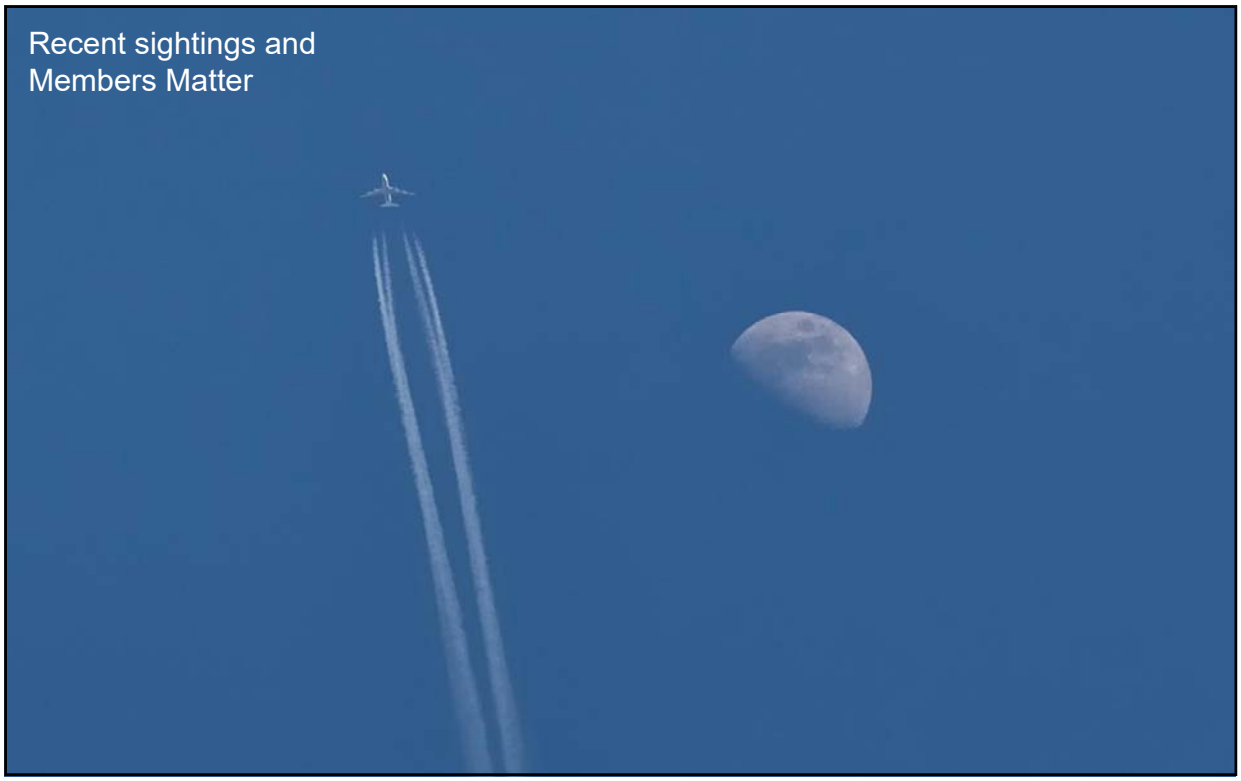
Times cartoon: Morten Morland
3rd April

Times cartoon: Peter Brookes
4th April

Times cartoon:
Peter Brookes
13th April



Recent sightings and
Members Matter

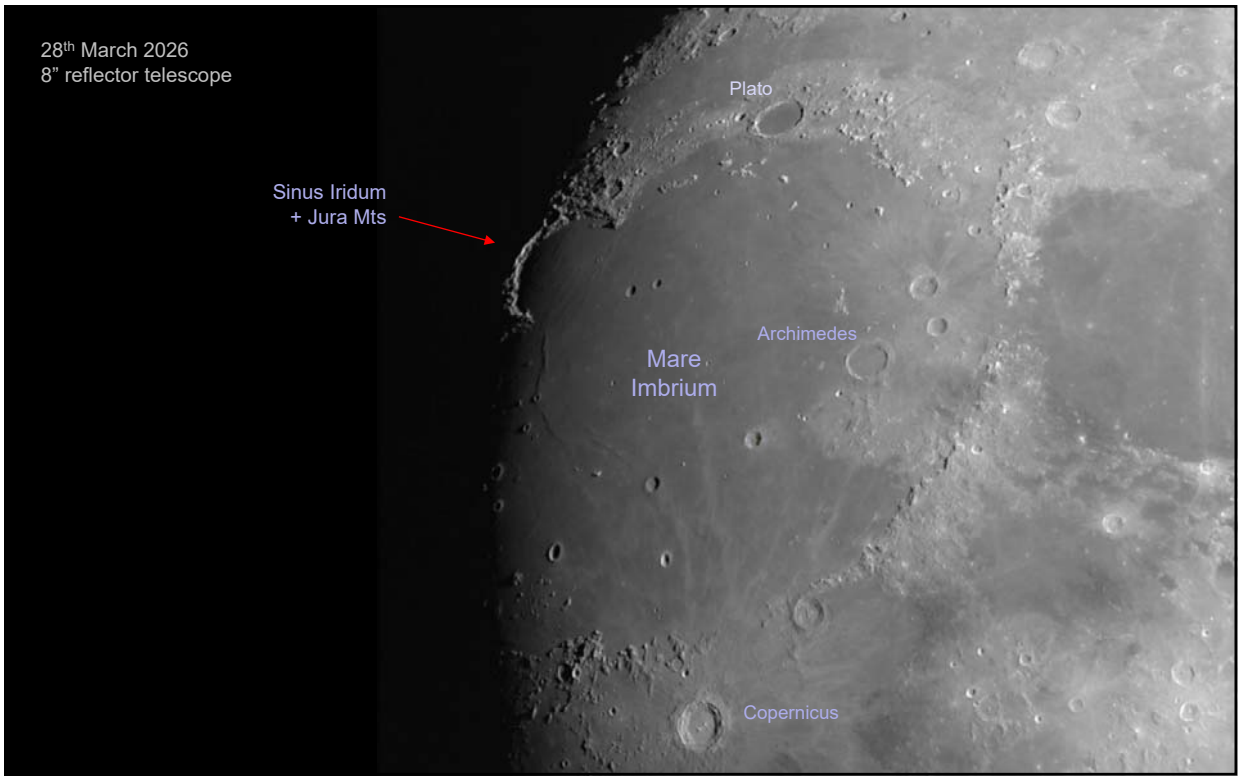


Alison Campbell
21st March 2026


21st March 2026 19:37
500mm lens

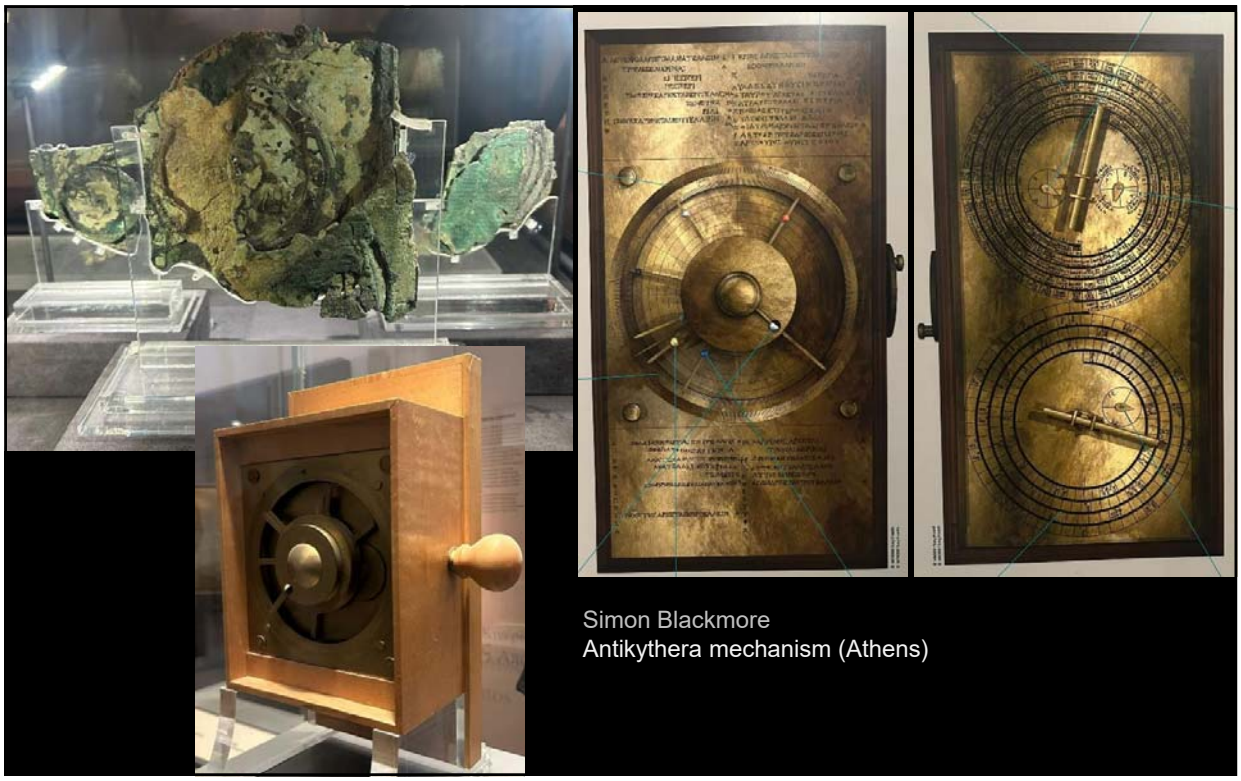

21st March 2026 19:36
500mm lens


28th March 2026
8” reflector telescope


28th March 2026
8” reflector telescope
Plato
Sinus Iridum
+ Jura Mts
Archimedes
Mare
Imbrium
Copernicus

Simon Blackmore
25th March 7:56pm
Athens

Simon Blackmore
23rd March
Cycladic figurine “Stargazer”
c.4360-3500BC
(Athens Museum)



Simon Blackmore
Antikythera mechanism (Athens)

Simon Blackmore
31st March

…includes discussion of GPS and GNSS systems.


Simon Blackmore
1st April

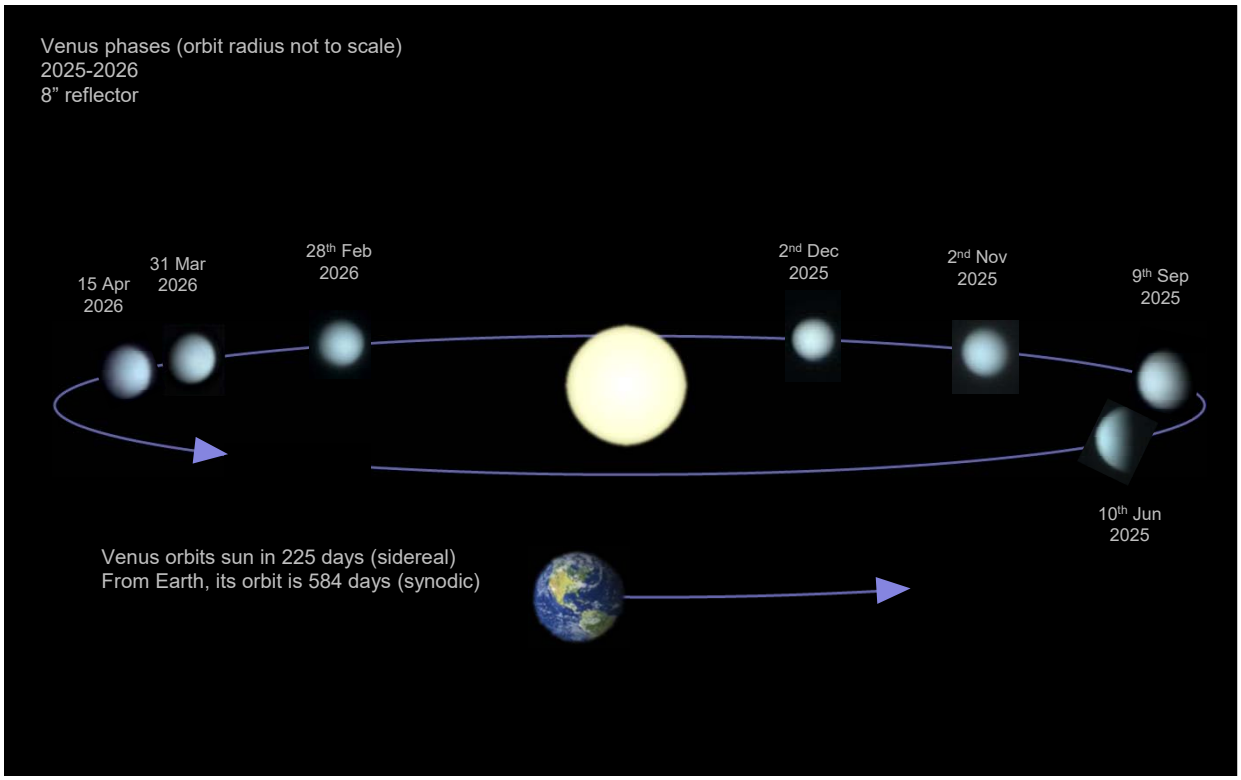

31st March 2026 19:42
200-500mm lens

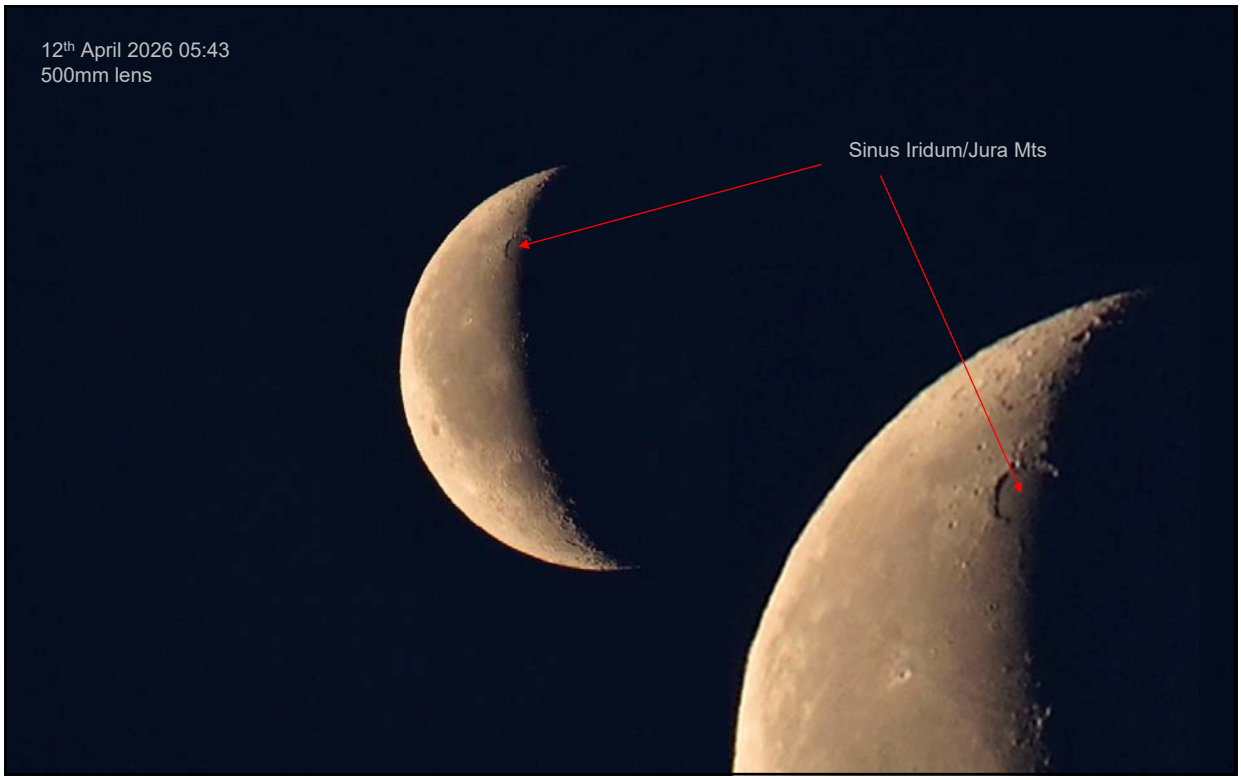

31st March 2026 22:35
500mm lens


Crab Nebula – M1
21st March 2026 20:48
8" reflector


Whirlpool Galaxy – M51
13th April 2026 22:38
8” reflector


Venus
5th April 2026 20:23


Venus phases (orbit radius not to scale)
2025-2026
8" reflector
15 Apr 2026
31 Mar 2026
28th Feb 2026
2nd Dec 2025
2nd Nov 2025
9th Sep 2025
10th Jun 2025
Venus orbits sun in 225 days (sidereal)
From Earth, its orbit is 584 days (synodic)


12th April 2026 05:43
500mm lens
Sinus Iridum/Jura Mts

Tonight's Feature

"*Observing techniques since 2020. (Before and After)*"

- Tim Haymes

Looking forward…

What to see in the coming month

April

- 19th: Thin crescent Moon above Pleiades and Venus (evening – W sky)
- 20th: Spring Equinox
- 24th: Uranus and Venus in conjunction (within 1°) late evening around 22:00 in NW sky

Planets visible: (Me), V, J, U Moon: Full: 2nd Apr New: 17th Apr

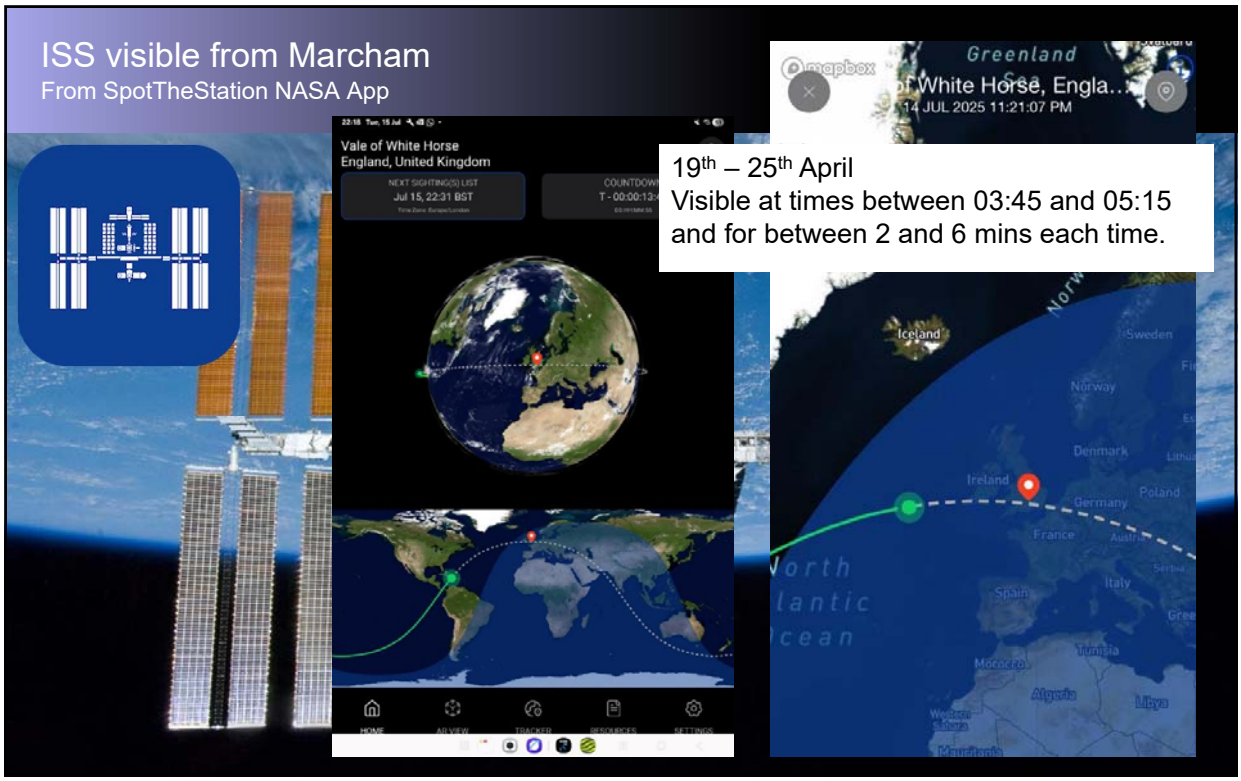
May

- 1st : Apogee Full Moon ("*Micromoon*")
- 20th, 21st : Venus near M35 cluster ('*Shoebuckle Cluster*')
- 19th: Crescent Moon between Jupiter and Venus
- 22nd : Venus at highest altitude

Planets visible: (Me), V, J, U Moon: Full: 1st May New: 16th May

ISS visible from Marcham

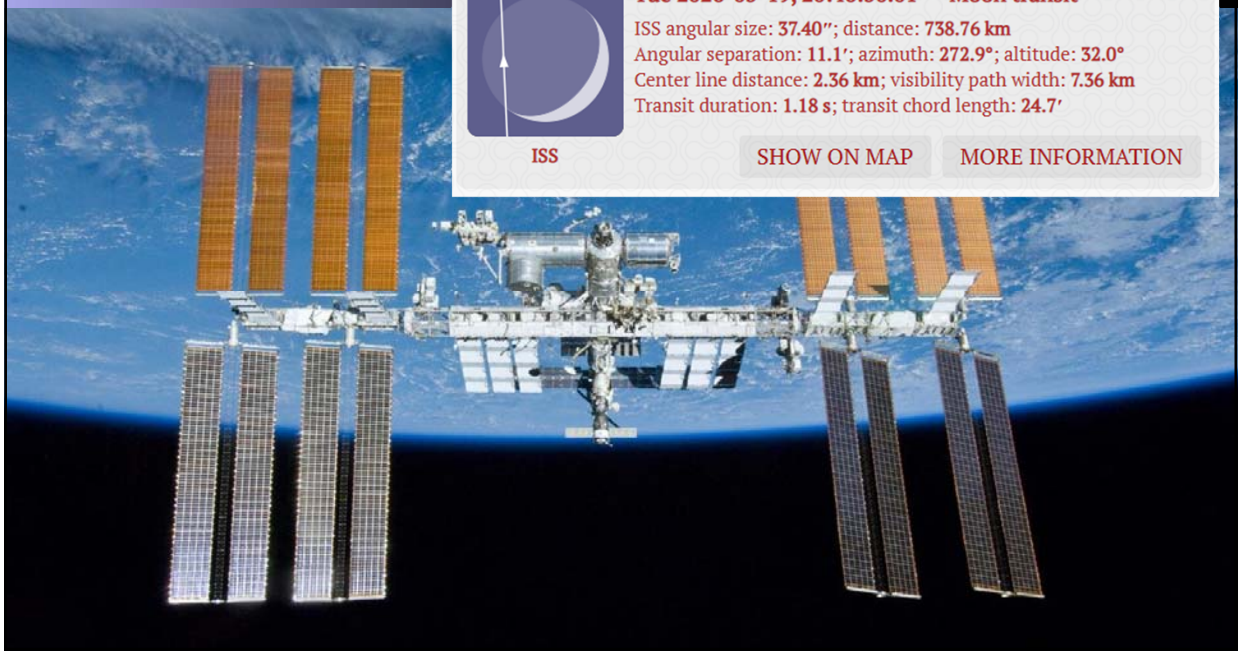
From SpotTheStation NASA App



19th – 25th April
Visible at times between 03:45 and 05:15
and for between 2 and 6 mins each time.

ISS transits visible from Marcham

transit-finder.com



Big Marcham Weekend 2026 - 9th May

Some volunteers needed to help cover our stand

Future meetings…

Last meeting of the 2025-26 season:

- May 13th: *"Robotic exploration of asteroids, Comets and KBOs"*
  – Jon Pineau, Stellar Solutions

We resume with a new programme on 16th September

Wednesdays at 7:30pm

Marcham ASTRONOMY

Trips at the proposal stage

Day trip by train to Bath – Sept/Oct

- Herschel Astronomy Museum (guided group visit)
- + a second venue (e.g. Roman Baths/Jane Austen house)

Day trip by train to Greenwich Observatory

- Depending on interest

Note costs of entry – in both cases

WhatsApp Group

Marcham Star Gazers – 21 members

- Sharing images with other group members
- Alerts: what's happening now
- Notify last-minute telescope sessions

Marcham Star Gazers
WhatsApp group