



STAR GROUP NEWSLETTER

No 4 - July 2014

WHAT HAS STAR GROUP BEEN DOING?

STAR Group has had a variety of interesting sessions over the Spring and Early Summer Period and I have just realized that our session on Monday 7th July will be our 12th Monthly Session. This will mark the end of our first year of existence.

In February I introduced the interesting study, by **Marcus du Sautoy**, of Numbers and their relationship with our everyday world in a session called **THE CODE – Prediction**.

We presented our own results of the “**Jelly Beans in the Jar**” Experiment showing the “power of the crowd.” This was based on the BBC TV Series called **THE CODE**.

He demonstrated how much of what we do is predictable - governed by mathematical formulae. He also entered the strange world of “chaos theory” and showed how difficult it is to predict events that are governed by chaos (like, for example, the weather).

Then in March – **Brian Fernley** kindly agreed to give a talk called “**The Videographers Secrets - Revealed**”.

In this session Brian charted the history of the moving pictures from their very early beginnings to the present day. He illustrated the talk by editing

footage taken at February's "UK&D U3A Open Meeting" to produce a five minute film telling the story of that meeting.

In April – **John Orton** kindly agreed to speak to us about the [TELSTAR Satellite Communication Experiment of 1963](#).

He was involved in the programme to provide the MASER Amplifier for the Goonhilly receiving station and will concentrated on this aspect of his talk.

In May – We had no meeting as our normal day fell on a **Bank Holiday**.

On Monday 2nd June **Paul Roebuck** gave a presentation entitled '[Rocks and Minerals](#)'. This session included an extensive display of various examples and samples of rocks, minerals and fossils that he had collected over the past 37 years.

Paul is an Inorganic Chemist by Profession and he had categorised them by their chemical composition. It is extraordinary to think that the exhibits that he brought with him were only a small subset of his full collection.

He added extra interest by inviting members of the group to bring in interesting examples of stones that they had for discussion.

ANY INTERESTING VISITS?

Following on from our very successful visit to **Jodrell Bank** last October (an item that was noted in Summer Issue of “**Third Age Matters**”) we went on an evening of Stargazing to the **Observatory at Keele University** on Tuesday 21st January. We were also giving an insight of some of the various astronomical projects that are ongoing at The Keele University Observatory.

Unfortunately the weather was so bad that night that we couldn't even see the clouds for rain.



Saturn in all its glory

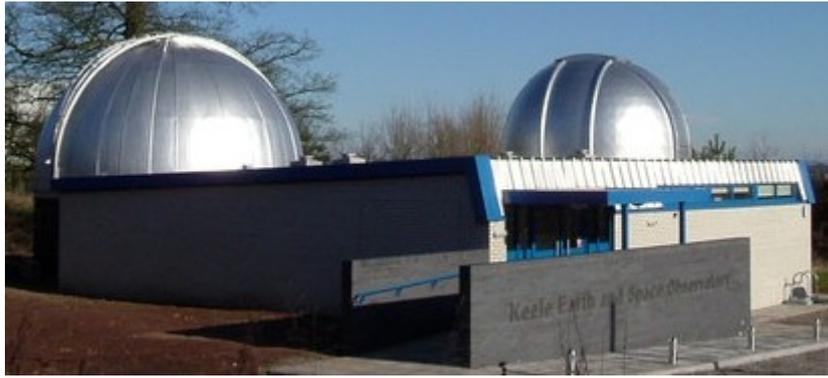
This is part of Keele University's "***Seeing the Universe through Telescopes Program***" that is linked to the BBC Series.

We were given a tour of the observatory including its large telescope dating from 1874 and its even larger research telescope.

We learnt something of the history of the observatory and its telescopes and there was a very interesting discussion about many different astrological bodies in the universe, from black holes and exploding stars to planets that orbit around other stars. We were also given valuable information and advice for those who were considering buying either a telescope or binoculars.

The guided tour explored the possibility of life elsewhere in the universe. But due to weather we were unable to make any observations of our own.

Although the rain stopped us from enjoying the view through the telescopes everyone enjoyed the evening and thought that the help and courtesy of the volunteers at Keele were superb.



Keele University Observatory

We then followed this up, on **Tuesday 3rd June** with a very interesting trip to **THE DEEP** in Hull. It is billed in their own advertisement as ...***the place where **Biology and Oceanology meet.*****



Clownfish in a Sea Anemone

The Deep tells the amazing story of the world's oceans through stunning marine life, interactive displays and audio-visual presentations. There are specialists available to answer questions. This is a natural environment of sea-life showing the different species at each depth.



Gentoo Penguins

As an education and conservation charity, The Deep is dedicated to informing visitors about the world's oceans and the challenges they face. We had a very interesting talk from one of their Scientific Staff before we went on the tour around the exhibits.

STAR GROUP SESSIONS FOR 2014

On Monday 7th July Simon Harris - Conservator at British Geological Survey (BGS) and colleagues will give a talk on their work and current projects and ask if anyone would like to help them.

The main focus will be about the ongoing BGS project to digitise tens of thousands of thin sections of rocks and minerals which are stored in Keyworth and Edinburgh, and how anyone can get involved in helping make the project a success.

On Monday 4th August Geoff Mason (no relative) will give a talk entitled "[The German Parachute Mine](#)". A history of the magnetic mine and its mechanism. This includes a view of actual mechanisms and it will chronicle the failure of magnetic mines and how the Germans found another military application.

Please note that if anyone has any ideas that they think would be of interest for future Sessions then please contact Chris Mason on Tel: 0115-846-0821 or e-mail at christhedad@hotmail.co.uk.

If you are suggesting someone other than yourself can I ask you to discuss it with the “nominated” person first to ensure that they are in agreement and are prepared to lead one of our sessions.

Then either include their contact details in with your suggestion (e-mail address and phone number) or ask them to contact me direct.

For full details of events for 2014 refer to the STAR Group Program.