



Lewes Astronomical Society

Newsletter
February 2026



LAS Membership

The LAS is a friendly and inclusive community for anyone with an interest in astronomy and space science. Our membership spans all levels of experience from complete beginners to professional astronomers, all united by a shared curiosity about the Universe. We now have 152 members, making us one of the largest regional astronomical societies in the UK in terms of our membership.

We meet on the first Wednesday of most months at the Subud Centre in Lewes, where our programme of talks covers a wide range of topics related to astronomy. Guest speakers and society members alike contribute to our programme of talks, with plenty of opportunity for questions and discussion.

You don't need to be a member to enjoy our events. Visitors can attend our monthly talks for £4 each, and we hold several free events each year. However, we'd love to have you join us as a member! The £15 annual membership fee includes access to all our monthly talks and much more. For more details about our society and how to become a member, please visit our website at www.lewesas.org.uk or contact our Membership Secretary, **Judith Pyett**, at membership@lewesas.org.uk.

South Downs Dark Skies Festival

The South Downs Dark Skies Festival takes place from Thursday 12th to Sunday 22nd February, with events listed at www.southdowns.gov.uk/dark-skies-hub/dark-skies-festival.

To celebrate the 10th anniversary of this festival, the LAS will be at the Gun Brewery Taproom from 7:30pm to 9:30pm on Saturday 14th February.

Come along and enjoy an evening of stargazing and star lore. The perfect way to celebrate Valentine's Day!

Using telescopes and binoculars, we plan to explore the highlights of the winter sky. LAS committee member **Jason Wye** will also give a short presentation about the Greek legends of some of the constellations, including a famous love story, especially for Valentine's Day.

This event is free to attend. You can book a table or simply turn up on the night. The address is Gun Brewery, Hawthbush Farm, Gun Hill, East Sussex, TN21 0JX. Please DO NOT use this postcode; use Google Maps instead to find the correct location. It's a great venue - really good beer and a dark sky!

For more information, please visit www.gunbrewery.co.uk/star-gazing-evening.



Astronomical Sketching Workshop

The LAS has arranged a sketching workshop hosted by astronomer and space artist **Sally Russell** on Saturday 28th February from 2:00pm to 4:30pm at the Subud Centre in Lewes, BN7 2DS.

Have a go at drawing astronomical targets using materials suitable for use at the eyepiece - traditional graphite pencils on white paper, and white pastels on black paper.

The workshop will start with a presentation including specific examples to illustrate the techniques involved, plus information on the practicalities of sketching at the eyepiece. This will be followed by a hands-on sketching session working from a choice of suitable photos of the Moon, the Sun, planets Mars and Jupiter, plus example deep sky targets.

Sally will be on hand throughout to provide help and guidance. No previous drawing experience is required, and all materials will be provided.

Tickets are only £10 each. Please email our Secretary, **Jane Penny**, at secretary@lewesas.org.uk to book. Tickets are limited for this special event, so please book now to avoid disappointment.

Lewes Space Day

We're delighted to invite you to Lewes Space Day on Saturday 21st March.

An afternoon of astronomy talks, with a cafe/bar and book seller, at the All Saints Centre in Lewes, BN7 2LE.

We're delighted to have the brilliant communicator and space scientist **Prof Lucie Green** headlining the event, along with **Dr Steven Banham**, **Dr Eva-Maria Mueller**, and **Dr Penny Wozniakiewicz**.

This event is open to the public and free for kids and students. Tickets on sale at www.ticketsource.co.uk/lewesspaceday

A single talk is only £4, but tickets reduce by 50p each for each additional talk you attend. So it's £4 for one, £7 for two, £9 for three, and £10 for all four talks. That's fantastic value for money.

LAS members get a discount, so one talk is £3 and it's £6 for all four talks. Look out for the discount code in your emails, or ask the committee.

The event opens with a musical comedy performance from local legend **John Hinton**, who is hugely popular with kids. Tickets for his show are £5.

If you have any queries, please contact our Outreach Officer, **Dr Kate Land**, at outreach@lewesas.org.uk, who has organised this amazing event.

Hope to see you there!



LEWES SPACE DAY

Saturday 21 MARCH | All Saints Centre

Cafe and Bar | Family Friendly | Bags of Books
From £4 per talk | £15 for the day | Children FREE

Lucie Green | John Hinton | Steven Banham
Eva-Maria Mueller | Penny Wozniakiewicz

www.ticketsource.co.uk/lewesspaceday



Organised by Lewes Astronomical Society
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by Lewes Town Council Communities Grant Scheme



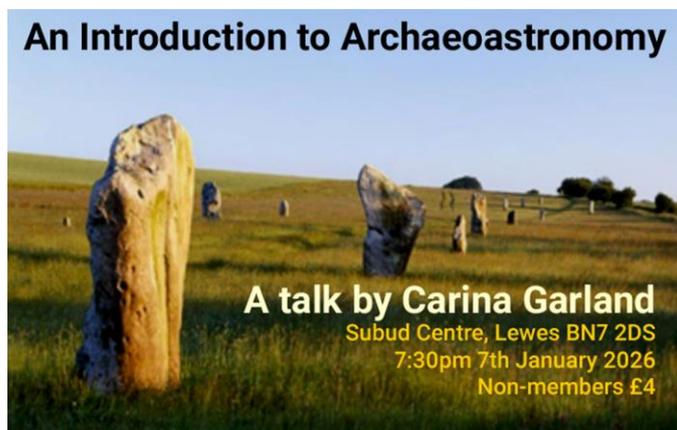
CURIOSITY
SUSSEX





Previous Meeting

On Wednesday 7th January, PhD researcher and LAS committee member, **Carina Garland**, gave an *Introduction to Archaeoastronomy* at the Subud Centre in Lewes.



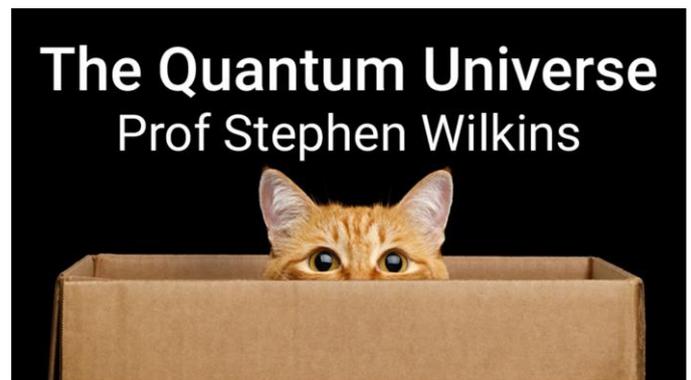
Ancient monuments throughout the world are aligned with the positions of the Sun, Moon, and possibly the stars at specific times and dates in the calendar. Carina explained about the celestial alignments of two major archaeological monuments from British Prehistory.

The ability to determine key dates in the calendar year is thought to have played a pivotal role in the development of ancient cultures dating back to Neolithic times. It enabled early peoples to establish agricultural cycles, helping them transition from nomadic lifestyles to permanently settled communities.

If you missed it, Carina is giving the same talk to the Eastbourne Astronomical Society on 7th February. See www.eastbourneas.org.uk/lectures.

Next Meeting

On Wednesday 4th February, the LAS President, **Professor Stephen Wilkins**, is giving a talk about the *Quantum Universe* at the Subud Centre in Lewes.



Quantum physics is a fundamental theory that describes the behaviour of nature at and below the scale of atoms.

Celebrating 100 years since the initial developments in quantum physics, the United Nations proclaimed 2025 as the *International Year of Quantum Science and Technology*.

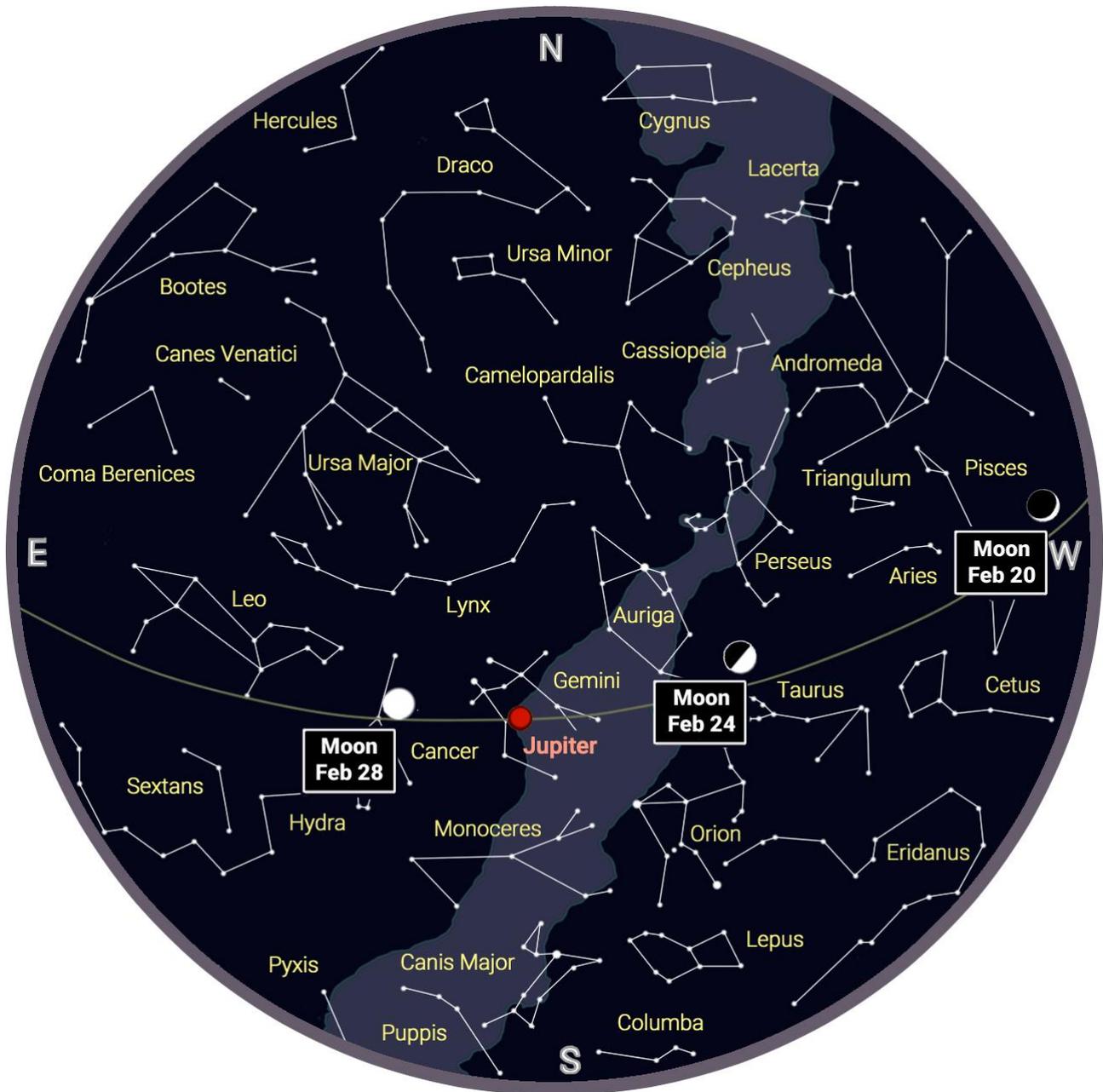
In this talk, Stephen will introduce how quantum physics is essential to our understanding of the Cosmos.

Complimentary refreshments will be available. Everyone is welcome, non-members £4. Doors open at 7pm. The talk begins at 7:30pm.

The postcode for the Lewes Subud Centre is BN7 2DS. All the municipal car parks are free after 5pm in Lewes, with the nearest being in Brook Street.



Night Sky Guide for February 2026



The chart shows how the night sky will appear at 10pm at the start of February, 9pm mid-month, and 8pm at the end of the month. The position and phase of the Moon are shown for the 20th, 24th, and 28th of the month. The centre of the chart represents the point directly overhead, known as the Zenith, and the edge around the chart represents the horizon with the directions for North, East, South and West indicated.



February begins with a Full Moon, which will be close to the beautiful Beehive star cluster in Cancer — a lovely sight in binoculars. The Moon will then skirt past bright stars such as Regulus in Leo during the early hours of the 3rd and Spica in Virgo during the early hours of the 7th, pairing with these celestial landmarks as it wanes over the week.

A major attraction this month is a planet parade at the end of February. Around the 28th, you will be able to see six planets lined up in the western sky just after sunset: Mercury, Venus, Saturn, Jupiter, Uranus, and Neptune. Jupiter will be the brightest and easiest to spot with the naked eye, while Uranus and Neptune will require binoculars or a small telescope. The planets form a gentle arc rising from the horizon, offering a rare chance to see so many worlds in one view.

Around the 19th February, Mercury reaches its greatest elongation from the Sun, making this one of the best evenings to catch a glimpse of the elusive innermost planet, shining low in the western sky after sunset. On the same evening, a little higher up, the slender crescent Moon will lie close to Saturn.

If you are up for a challenge, try to spot a subtle phenomenon: the zodiacal light. In dark skies about an hour after sunset late in the month, you may see a faint, pyramid-shaped glow caused by sunlight scattering off dust in the inner Solar System.

*Star chart by Sarah Carson
Text by Paul Whitmarsh*

Seeking Advice?

Do you own or want to buy a telescope or binoculars, and want to know how to get the most from the equipment or what to buy? Then join one of our monthly meetings or come along to our next stargazing evening on Friday 27th March at Barcombe Village Hall, just a couple of miles north of Lewes. We will be happy to help you.





Supermassive Podcast

A new Supermassive podcast episode was released on 29th January. **Izzie Clarke, Dr Becky Smethurst, Richard Hollingham,** and LAS Chairman **Dr Robert Massey** in a Q&A special.
<https://shows.acast.com/67af33c006ec54e1d2363808/697aa01b3718a16ceb070ac0>

Astronomer Royal

Professor Michele Dougherty was on Radio 4's Desert Island Discs on Sunday 1st February. She was appointed Astronomer Royal last year – the first (and long overdue) woman to hold the post in its 350-year history. You can hear the broadcast on BBC Sounds at www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m002qrfh

European AstroFest 2026

The European AstroFest 2026 conference will be held as usual at the Kensington Conference and Events Centre in London on Friday 6th and Saturday 7th February. Buy tickets at www.europeanastrofest.com/book-tickets.

Urban Astrophotographer

A man who takes pictures of galaxies millions of light-years away from his home in Bristol urges more people to try astrophotography. His photos are being projected onto the walls and ceiling inside Bristol Museum on selected dates until 7th March. See BBC News at www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c2e1m22enjzo

