



Lewes Astronomical Society

Newsletter
August 2026

LAS Newsletter: August 2026

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1 Introduction

Welcome to this month's issue of the LAS Newsletter, and thanks to all the members who have contributed to it in various ways. Catherine Jackson has stepped down as LAS Treasurer, and Paul Miller will be taking on this role. The LAS Committee would like to thank Catherine for all her work over the last year and we look forward to working with Paul in the 2026/27 season. Memberships for the 2025/26 season expire on 31st August 2026. Join now for just £18 to enjoy full membership benefits until 31st August 2027. For more details, see www.lewesas.org.uk/membership.

2 Recent events

There was no LAS **Subud Centre** meeting in July, which was a fairly quiet month for the LAS, although some individual members were observing and imaging as usual, despite the lack of really dark skies at this time of year. Thanks to Judith Pyett for the following report on the Harvey's Brewery visit.

2.1 A behind-the-scenes visit to Harvey's Brewery (1st July)

On Wednesday 1st July, 30 members and guests of the Lewes Astronomical Society swapped telescopes for tankards as they enjoyed a fascinating evening at Harvey's Brewery in the heart of Lewes.

Our guide for the evening was Hamish Elder, one of Harvey's directors, whose infectious enthusiasm and encyclopaedic knowledge of brewing made the tour both entertaining and enlightening. From the moment we stepped through the brewery doors, it was clear that Harvey's is far more than just a brewery — it is a living piece of Sussex history.

As the oldest independent brewery in Sussex, Harvey's has remained in the hands of John Harvey's descendants since 1790. More than two centuries later, members of the seventh and eighth generations of the family continue to oversee the business, preserving traditions while embracing modern brewing techniques.

Brewing itself is almost as old as civilisation. Humans have been making beer for thousands of years, and the oldest known brewing recipe dates back nearly 3,900 years.

Despite today's sophisticated equipment, many aspects of brewing at Harvey's remain reassuringly traditional. The brewery combines locally grown hops with locally malted barley, a touch of crystal malt, and its own distinctive strain of yeast, carefully nurtured for more than 60 years.

Perhaps the most remarkable ingredient, however, is the water — or liquor,

as brewers call it. Drawn from an aquifer beneath the brewery after spending more than 30 years filtering through the chalk of the South Downs, it is naturally rich in minerals that give Harvey's beers their distinctive character. Stored in a reservoir at the top of the brewery tower before use, this unique liquor is so influential that even if another brewery followed exactly the same recipe, the finished beer would still taste noticeably different.

Along the way we discovered why copper remains an important part of the brewing process and how the fermentation temperature shapes the flavour and quality of the beer poured into your glass.

No brewery tour would be complete without sampling the finished product, and Harvey's did not disappoint. We rounded off the evening by enjoying a generous selection of beers, freshly drawn from the casks and served in the brewery yard as the summer sunshine lingered into the evening.

It was a memorable visit that offered a fascinating insight into one of Lewes' best-known landmarks and a centuries-old craft that continues to thrive in the heart of our town.



3 Upcoming events

See <https://www.lewesas.org.uk/events> for details and updates on upcoming LAS events. There is no LAS Subud Centre meeting in August. As regards the partial solar and lunar eclipses in August, see also [section 6.1](#).

3.1 Falcon 9 lunar impact (5th August)

At about 7:35am BST on 5th August, the upper stage of a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket is predicted to hit the [waning gibbous Moon](#) at about 5,400mph, close to the crater [Einstein](#) and near the western visible rim of the Moon. Weather permitting, telescopic observers might see an impact flash, and some evidence of a debris plume. For further details, see [this webpage](#) (thanks to Steve Ward for spotting it) on the website [earthsky.org](#). Interesting sidenote: the uncrewed NASA spacecraft [Lunar Orbiter 3](#) was deliberately crashed into the lunar surface in the same general area at the end of its mission in 1967.

3.2 Partial solar eclipse (12th August)

A [solar eclipse](#) (source [theskylive.com](#)) will occur on 12th August, with more than 90% of the Sun's disk covered at the peak as seen from the Lewes area. See [Iain Todd's article](#) on the BBC Sky at Night website for an overview, including the path of totality and — *as should always be emphasized given the risk of serious eye damage* — safe methods for viewing the eclipse.

The website [heliora.app](#) shows an animation of what will be seen of both solar and lunar eclipses from a specified location (in the UK or abroad), based on a local terrain model. For viewing this solar eclipse, coastal locations between Brighton and Beachy Head with an unobstructed west to west-north-west horizon are suitable. Weather permitting in the early evening of 12th August, the LAS will hold a free public solar eclipse event on Seaford seafront, in the area around [Martello Tower No.74](#) (the Esplanade, Seaford), a small round tower with a cannon on its roof ([what3words ///lyricism.diver.bandaged](#)), which is part of the Seaford Museum of Local History.

Committee members will hand out special eclipse glasses, set up the LAS hydrogen-alpha solar telescope, and bring a kitchen colander, which acts as a "pinhole camera array". Equipment will be set up and ready by about 6pm BST, and some members will stay until the eclipse ends shortly after 8pm (for more precise timings, see [section 6.1](#)).

Public toilets are close to the Martello Tower and are open until dusk. Free car parking is plentiful between the Tower and the southernmost end of the seafront. There are half-hourly direct trains to Seaford from Brighton and Lewes, taking just under 20 minutes from Lewes and about 35 minutes from Brighton, with connections to Eastbourne and London services at Lewes. Regular buses run along the coast between Brighton and Eastbourne via Seaford; the fast 12X service is recommended, getting on and off at the stops near Seaford Library. Walking to the Martello Tower from the railway station or Seaford Library bus stop takes about 15 minutes.

3.3 Perseids meteor shower (12th/13th August)

Only a few hours after the solar eclipse is the peak of the [Perseids meteor shower](#), best seen in dark skies after 11pm over the night of 12th/13th or the next night (see [this link](#) for observing tips). According to this [list of 2026 meteor showers](#) from the [Royal Observatory Greenwich](#), the Perseids at their peak could have up to 150 meteors per hour, the highest potential rate of any shower in 2026 (although the Geminids could have up to 120 per hour at the peak, and occur during the much longer, darker nights of December).

3.4 Landport Residents Association Picnic, Lewes (26th August)

The LAS will have a stand at the *Eridge Green Annual Community Picnic*, an event organized by the Landport Residents Association, which starts at 4:15pm and ends at 8pm. [Eridge Green](#) (what3words [///define.metro.flagpole](#)) is a street in the Landport area of Lewes (between the A2029 Offham Road and the River Ouse). For this event, Eridge Green street will be closed to traffic from its junction with Lee Road to its junction with Horsfield Road.

3.5 Partial lunar eclipse (28th August)

In the early hours of 28th August, a [lunar eclipse](#) (source [theskylive.com](#)) will occur; from Lewes, it will be partial, i.e. some but not all of the Moon's disk will be in the *umbra* (darkest part) of the Earth's shadow. Nonetheless, only a small fraction of the Moon will be outside the umbra when the peak occurs at 5:12am BST. The Moon will set, still in eclipse, at about 6:15am. See this [general guide to lunar eclipses](#) from the [Royal Museums Greenwich](#), explaining the different types of lunar eclipse. No formal LAS event is planned for this eclipse, but some LAS members might try to see it. Coastal locations between Brighton and Beachy Head with an unobstructed view of the south-south-west to west-south-west horizon are suitable for viewing this eclipse.

3.6 Astronomy Festival 2026, Herstmonceux (28th–30th August)

The LAS will have a stand at [this annual festival](#), held over the late August Bank Holiday weekend at the [Observatory Science Centre \(OSC\)](#), located on the edge of the [Herstmonceux Castle](#) estate, a few miles inland from Pevensey and Eastbourne. See the last bullet point in [section 4.2](#) for what life was like on this site in its astronomical heyday. For background on the site and its history, see [this OSC video](#) (note that contrary to what is said near the end of that video, the future of the OSC is now secure for the time being, as the OSC and the site's owners Queen's University of Canada have more recently negotiated a new ten-year lease).

This festival is one of the biggest and most popular astronomy festivals in the UK. It involves talks by visiting speakers, displays of equipment by

telescope producers, stands from local astronomical societies (including the LAS), an astronomical quiz, and (weather permitting) evening observing sessions in some of the domes on the Friday night and Saturday night.

The festival starts in the early afternoon on Friday 28th August (the same day as the partial lunar eclipse described in [section 3.5](#), but the Moon sets at about 6.15am BST) and ends in the afternoon of Sunday 30th. [Tickets](#) are available for the whole festival, or parts of it. On-site camping is possible, and some overnight accommodation might be available at [Bader Hall](#) on the nearby Bader College campus. Festival attendees not staying at Bader Hall would need a [separate ticket](#) from the Castle barrier hut (on the road near the Observatory) to visit the main Castle estate, unless they stay on public footpaths that have a view of the Castle.

LAS Committee members Ian Whiteley and Paul Whitmarsh are volunteers at the OSC. Ian also plays a big role in helping to organize the Festival's visiting-speaker talks, and LAS members who attended last year can report that he did a great job of introducing the speakers in front of a big audience.

Paul produced the stunning image of the Veil Nebula in [section 7.5](#), using his own personal telescope from inside Dome D of the OSC. That Dome houses the historic [13-inch Astrographic Refractor](#) (see also [this article](#) on a website by Graham Dolan and John Cooper). Ian has used the 10-inch finder scope attached to the 13-inch to show celestial objects to members of the public. Components of the 13-inch, including its objective lens, were used to image the positions of stars close to the visible rim of the Sun during the 1919 solar eclipse from Sobral in Brazil, thereby providing evidence [to support Einstein's General Theory of Relativity](#) (article from the OSC website).

3.7 Subud Centre meeting (2nd September)

The first [Subud Centre](#) meeting after the summer break opens at 7pm; from 7:30pm, Greg Smye-Rumsby will talk on "The Flat Earth Conspiracy" (for further details, check <https://www.lewesas.org.uk/events> later on).

4 This month's topic links

This section lists a small selection of interesting links.

4.1 Links from the WhatsApp feed

Those who posted the links are credited in brackets:

- [The quantum brief](#) (Gerard F.): introduction to a Yale University Open Course on quantum mechanics, by Professor Ramamurti Shankar.

- “[What the heck are neutrinos?](#)” (Robert M.): a recent episode of the [Supermassive](#) podcast.
- The website [spaceweather.com](#) (Paul W.): provides regular updates on solar activity, aurora alerts, fireballs, meteors, and so on.
- [ESO Article](#) (Jane): on the threat to astronomy from satellite mega-constellations and orbiting mirror-illumination and data-centre systems.
- [Ultra-black coatings for satellites](#) (Robert M.): article on the RAS website about research at the University of Surrey on one measure that might help to reduce the reflectivity of satellites.

4.2 Other links

Some links not from the WhatsApp feed are as follows:

- Article on [some key telescopes in astronomical history](#): by [Wayne McGraw](#), aka the [Garden Astronomer](#).
- The website [sky-tonight.com](#): a daily guide to what is visible currently or coming up soon, with information about the Moon and Sun, planets, deep-sky objects, bright stars, and so on; free to use and ad-free.
- [Sky Tonight Android smartphone app](#) (unrelated to sky-tonight.com): a new smartphone app (free with ads, or premium without), with a focus on what’s coming up each night or in the near future.
- “[Memories of astronomy back in the day](#)”: article on the [Society for Popular Astronomy](#) website, in which geophysicist, astronomer, and educator [Professor Stuart Malin](#) describes astronomy at the Herstmonceux site where the 2026 Astronomy Festival (see [section 3.6](#)) is being held, and at the former [Radcliffe Observatory](#) in South Africa.

5 Monthly person: John Flamsteed (1646–1719)

John Flamsteed was born on 19th August, 1646, at Denby, near Derby in England, and died on 31st December, 1719 (see [this online biography](#) and [this article](#)). Flamsteed was in effect the first [Astronomer Royal](#) at the [Royal Observatory Greenwich](#), although that title was not used initially. He measured many star positions very accurately, but was reluctant to publish them, becoming involved in disputes with Newton and with Halley (who eventually published 400 copies, 300 of which Flamsteed managed to destroy).

For a roughly 20-minute audio biography of Flamsteed’s life and work, listen to [Chapter 7](#) from the free online LibriVox audio recording of the book [Great Astronomers](#) by Robert Stawell Ball (1840–1913).

6 The night sky in August 2026

Thanks as always to Paul Whitmarsh for the lookahead guide, and to Sarah Carson for the star chart. All times referred to are local UK times, i.e. BST.

6.1 Lookahead guide

The chart in [section 6.2](#) shows how the night sky will appear at 11pm at the start of August, 10pm in mid-month, and 9pm at the end of August. The position and phase of the Moon are shown for the 20th, 24th and 28th. Venus remains a bright evening object throughout August, sitting low in the west. In the morning sky, Saturn and Mars are already visible, and Jupiter begins to emerge late in the month.

With the return of darker evenings, the Summer Triangle, formed by Deneb, Altair and Vega stands high overhead and acts as a helpful guide to many of the northern summer constellations.

On 12th August, we will experience a deep partial solar eclipse, with the Sun about 91% eclipsed at maximum. Locally, the eclipse begins at 6:17pm, reaches maximum at 7:13pm, and ends at 8:06pm. If you are in parts of Spain or Iceland, you may be under the track of totality.

A solar eclipse happens when the Moon passes between the Earth and the Sun. Although the Moon is slowly moving farther from Earth, its apparent size is still very similar to that of the Sun, so it can cover the bright photosphere and reveal the delicate chromosphere as pink wisps around the edge of the Sun during totality. Here in Lewes, we will only see a partial eclipse.

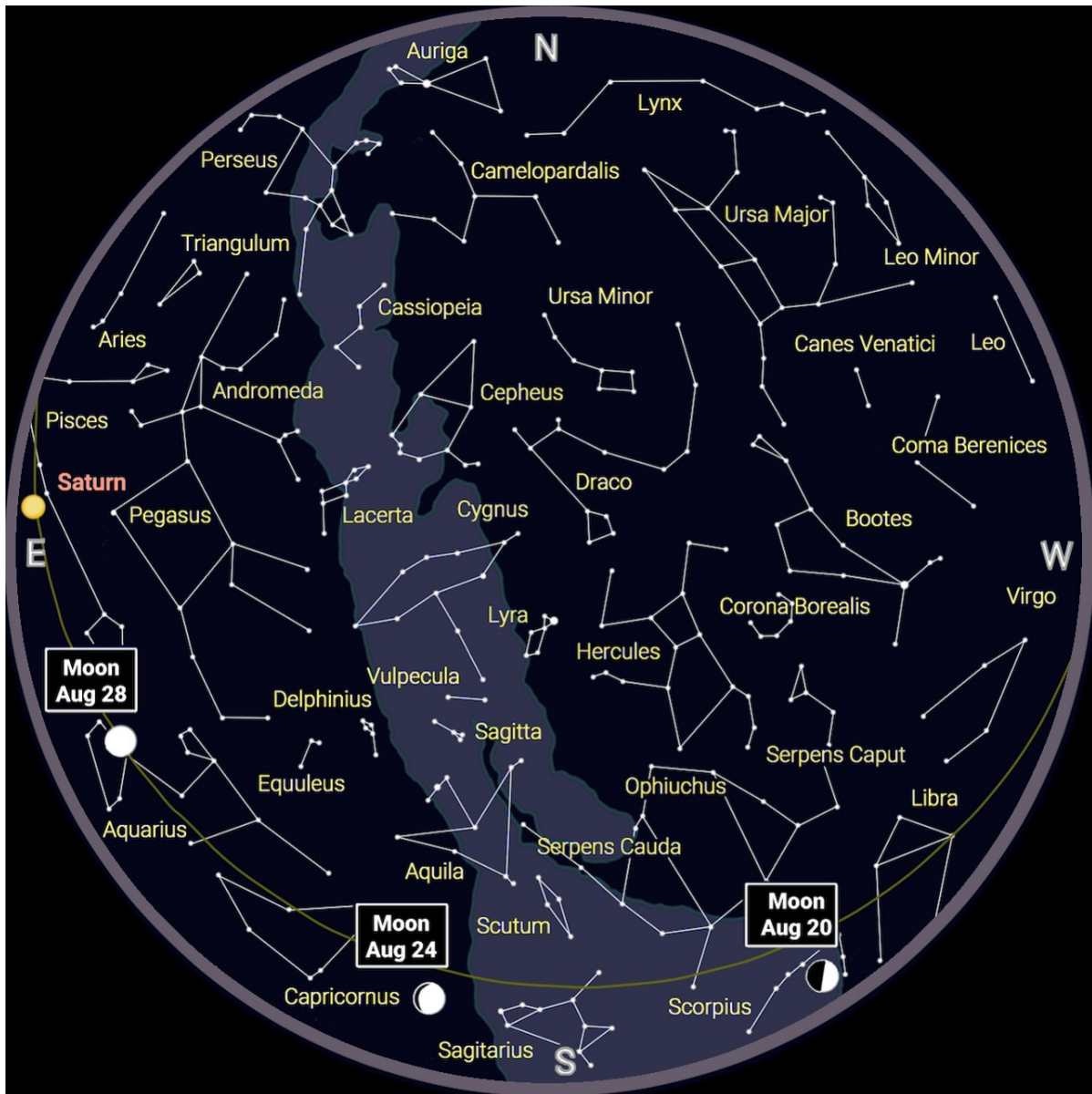
It is never safe to look directly at the Sun, even when most of it is covered. One simple safe method is to face away from the Sun, hold a colander above your head, and look at the pattern of shadows on the ground. Each hole will show a tiny crescent where the Moon is blocking part of the Sun.

The Perseids reach their maximum on the evening of the eclipse, the night of 12th/13th August. With a New Moon, this is an excellent year to look for these colourful, bright and fast-moving meteors. Many will be visible from Lewes town, but for the best view, head somewhere darker, lie back, and look toward the north-east from 11pm onward.

The month ends with a flourish. On 28th August, a partial lunar eclipse will turn the Moon a deep red. The penumbral phase begins at 2:23am, with the darkest part of the eclipse running from 3:33am to 5:12am. The Moon sets while still in eclipse, making this an early but memorable sight.

6.2 Star chart

Refer back to the lookahead guide in [section 6.1](#) as required.



7 LAS image gallery

7.1 Solstice Sun going down in the red (Michael van Doorn)



Lovely, unusual image, taken through Mike's spotter scope from Malling Hill in Lewes, not long before the Sun sank below the horizon.

7.2 Moon and Venus conjunction (Steve Ward)



The Moon and Venus here look a bit like a banana hanging from a firefly. Several LAS members saw this beautiful conjunction on 17th June 2026.

7.3 Noctilucent clouds (John the Lightning Tamer)



From [Ditchling Beacon](#), near Brighton, one of several sites that have led the [South Downs National Park](#) to be designated as a [Dark Sky Reserve](#). See this [BBC Sky at Night guide](#) on noctilucent clouds.

7.4 Splinter Galaxy, NGC 5907 (Roy Marriott)



Discovered by William Herschel; see [this article](#) from [constellation-guide.com](#).

7.5 The star 52 Cygni and the Veil Nebula (Paul Whitmarsh)



Black-and-white from Dome D, Herstmonceux. See [52 Cygni](#) and [Veil Nebula](#).

7.6 Moon and Venus at sunset over Newhaven (Taylor Hughes)



View from Seaford; zoom in for Venus, down a bit then right from the Moon.

7.7 Bust of Flamsteed at Herstmonceux Castle (Chris Taylor)



In the formal gardens behind the Castle, next to a large equatorial sundial. See [section 5](#) for more on John Flamsteed, the first Astronomer Royal.