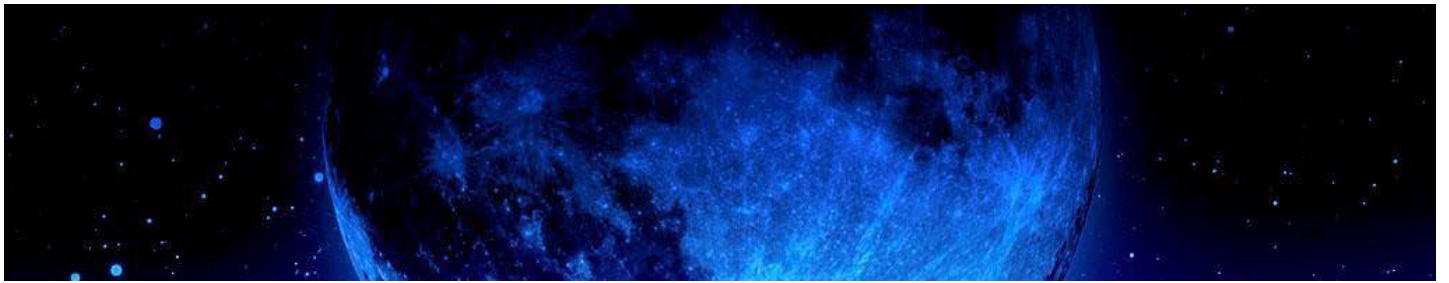




Lewes Astronomical Society

Newsletter
March 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 160 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 a few free events each year. However, if you join as a member, you can enjoy all the benefits of membership, including admission to all our monthly talks. For more details about joining our society, please visit our website at www.lewesas.org.uk or contact our Membership Secretary, **Judith Pyett**, at membership@lewesas.org.uk.

The Gun Brewery & Taproom

As part of the annual South Downs Dark Skies Festival, the LAS held a free family-friendly event at the Gun Brewery & Taproom on Saturday 14th February, at Gun Hill near Golden Cross.

Being Valentine's Day, the event attracted a large audience of about 160 people. The sky was stubbornly overcast, so only the bright planet Jupiter could be observed through the clouds using our telescopes.

Fortunately, LAS committee members **Dr Robert Massey** and **Jason Wye** were on hand to deliver several slideshows during the evening, so it was a successful event with excellent beer!

Spring Equinox

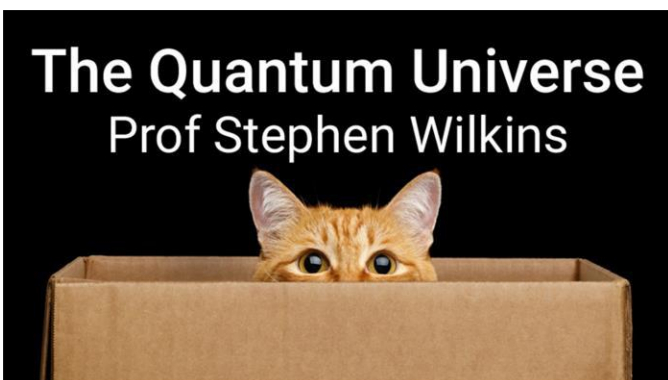
In the UK, Friday 20th March sees the Spring Equinox, also known as the Vernal Equinox, when the hours of daylight are roughly equal to the hours of nighttime, 12 hours each across the entire globe.

At 2:45pm, the Sun will be directly above the Earth's equator, as it moves from the southern to the northern hemisphere. This marks the start of astronomical spring. For everyone south of the equator, where the seasons are reversed, the event will mark the first day of autumn. See www.wikipedia.org/wiki/March_equinox



February Meeting

On Wednesday 4th February, the LAS President, **Prof Stephen Wilkins**, gave a talk about the *Quantum Universe* at the Lewes Subud Centre.



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 explained how quantum physics is essential to our understanding of the Cosmos. This event attracted 94 people, our largest audience to date at a monthly meeting!

Thank goodness we moved to a bigger venue at the start of this season. Although Lewes Town Hall had served us well, the maximum capacity of the lecture room was 80 people.

Lewes Space Day

On Saturday 21st March, we're proud to present an afternoon of astronomy talks, with a café and licensed bar, at the All Saints Centre in Lewes, BN7 2LE. Bags of Books will be selling a range of space-themed books.

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 **Prof Stephen Wilkins**.

This event is open to the public. Tickets are free for kids and students but these must be booked with one paying adult.

A single talk is only £4, but tickets reduce by 50p for each additional talk you attend. LAS members also get a discount. Look out for the discount code in your emails, or ask a committee member.

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

Weather permitting, our solar telescope will be set up in the grounds of the venue for freely and safely viewing the Sun.

If you have any queries, please contact our Outreach Officer, **Dr Kate Land**, at outreach@lewesas.org.uk, who has organised what promises to be an amazing event. Tickets are on sale at www.ticketsource.co.uk/lewesspaceday



Please note a late change to the programme shown on our flyer below. **Dr Penny Wozniakiewicz** is no longer able to attend the event. The 3.30pm session will instead be presented by **Prof Stephen Wilkins** from Sussex University talking about the amazing discoveries of the Webb Space Telescope. If anyone would prefer a refund for this session, click on "manage my booking" in your confirmation email.



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
in partnership with Curiosity Sussex, and supported
by Lewes Town Council Communities Grant Scheme



CURIOSITY
SUSSEX



March Stargazing Evening

Weather permitting, our next stargazing evening is on Friday 27th March at Barcombe Village Hall, near Lewes. This is a free event from 8pm to 10:30pm to which anyone can attend. We will set up our telescopes in the car park at the venue. Visitors are welcome to bring along their own telescopes. If you would like guidance setting up your telescope, we're happy to help.



Clocks Go Forward

Don't forget that the clocks skip forward from 1am to 2am on 29th March. We lose an hour as we change from Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) to British Summer Time (BST), also known as Daylight Saving Time (DST). The evenings will become noticeably lighter at the end of March. The clocks will revert back to GMT on 25th October.

Although originally a wartime measure, daylight saving has remained a lasting feature in many countries.

April Meeting

On Wednesday 1st April, LAS member **Richard Butchers** is giving a talk about the rocket scientist *Wernher von Braun* at the Subud Centre in Lewes.



Wernher von Braun (1912–1977) was the German man mainly responsible for the V-2 rockets launched against the allies during the second world war. In the final days of the war, von Braun and his group of rocket scientists surrendered to the American army. Subsequently, he became the leading figure behind the NASA rockets that took mankind to the Moon. He had been a Nazi Party and SS member who utilised slave labour from concentration camps, making his legacy controversial.

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 March 2026



The chart shows how the night sky will appear at 10pm at the start of March, 9pm mid-month and, because the clocks go forward on the 29th March, also 9pm at the end of the month. The position and phase of the Moon are shown for the 22nd, 26th, and 28th March. 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.



This month, we say goodbye to the constellations of winter, with Orion and Taurus setting in the early evening. They make way for the constellations of spring (which starts on 20th March), headed by Leo, Virgo, and Coma Berenices.

We will leave behind the nebulae and star clusters of the winter Milky Way. Instead, we will be able to look far beyond the edge of our own galaxy, towards a multitude of other distant galaxies. Incredibly, it is only just over 100 years ago that these faint smudges of light were recognised as stellar systems in their own right.

If you want to try to spot one of these distant “star cities”, then with binoculars and a dark sky, look for Messier 81 and Messier 82 above the head of the Great Bear, Ursa Major. They are just visible as two faint smudges of light, and are 12 million light years away, so if you manage to spot them you are seeing how they were 12 million years ago.

If you own a telescope or a smart scope, take a look at the rich galaxy fields in Leo, Virgo, and Coma Berenices.

Closer to home, there are planets visible in the evening sky.

Jupiter is high in the south around 9pm. On Sunday 8th March, about 30 minutes after sunset, brilliant Venus is low in the west and, with binoculars, Saturn is in the same field of view, as they are only about two Moon-widths apart.

On the evening of Sunday 29th March, the day that the clocks change to BST, the bright star Regulus in Leo will be occulted by the Moon as it passes in front of the star, starting at around 7:20pm and reappearing around 8:20pm. Regulus is bright enough to be seen close to the Moon, so start watching at about 7pm. Binoculars will allow you to follow Regulus as it approaches the bright lunar limb, and see it emerge from behind the Moon an hour later.

*Star chart by Sarah Carson
Text by Paul Whitmarsh*

Harvey's Brewery Tour

In our effort to support local businesses, we are now selling tickets for our annual tour of Harvey's Brewery in Lewes. This oddly popular event takes place from 6:15pm on Wednesday 1st July. Tickets are limited and can be purchased at any of our meetings. £12 for members and £15 for non-members. Strictly adults only.



Supermassive Podcast

The Royal Astronomical Society's *Supermassive Podcast* is the UK's leading space podcast. It is hosted by **Izzie Clarke, Dr Becky Smethurst, Richard Hollingham,** and LAS Chairman **Dr Robert Massey.**



All episodes, including this month's latest offering, are available on many popular podcast platforms. You can find the podcasts on Spotify at open.spotify.com/show/1nykBLhdQDT5IWAXLJm48l

Astronomer Royal

Professor Michele Dougherty is President of the Institute of Physics and Professor of Space Physics at Imperial College London. She was appointed **Astronomer Royal** last year – the first woman ever to hold the post in its 350-year history.

She was featured on the BBC Radio 4 programme *Desert Islands Discs* last month. The programme is available at www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m002qrfh



Many space experts have been cast away over the years including NASA's Dr Nicola Fox, the astronomer Carl Sagan and the astronauts Tim Peake and Chris Hadfield. You can hear their programmes if you search through [BBC Sounds](http://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds) or the [Desert Island Discs website](http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b002qrfh).