



Galloway Forest Astronomical Society

Newsletter #4, January 2014

Stargazing Live event a great success

The re-formed society's first public event was a "street stargazing" evening in conjunction with the BBC2 Stargazing Live series last week.

We used Blairmount Park in Newton Stewart for this event and it turned out to be an excellent venue now that the Newton Stewart street lighting has been almost completely changed over from yellow sodium vapour lamps to white LED lights giving much less glare. The venue was based on the football pavilion and our thanks go to Newton Stewart FC for their kind hospitality on the evening. Viewing conditions were good, with a clear dark sky.

Around 50 members and visitors turned out and were able to see good images of the the Moon with its craters and maria. A little later on Jupiter came into view, clearly showing the coloured bands and all four Galilean moons. The moon was too bright to observe the milky way, though, so a slide show using members' photographs taken previously was put on (in relays!) inside the pavilion and this allowed visitors to take a break from the frosty conditions outside.

It was especially encouraging to see a good number of youngsters turning up between the ages of 2 and 16. The very youngest ones were perhaps more interested in the biscuits than the telescopes, but many were already knowledgeable and skilled observers. This has given us a lot of confidence in the future of the society.



Fundraising

We applied to Dumfries and Galloway Council and to The Holywood Trust in Dumfries for some financial help for the costs of the Stargazing Live event and to enable us to buy some items of astrophotography equipment for the observatory. We learned very recently that our bids have been successful and that, between the two bodies, we will receive grants covering all that we requested. This is very good news indeed and we are very grateful to both the Holywood Trust and to Wigtown Area Committee of Dumfries and Galloway Council for their interest and support. We hope to have a cheque-presentation meeting with the Holywood Trust in due course.

The big fundraising effort this year will be to secure funds to relocate the observatory from Glenamour to a new site in or near the Dark Sky Park. We are exploring possibilities for new sites and once we have identified some potential locations we will start collecting cost estimates and making new applications for funding.

As always, any suggestions or offers of help from members and friends of the society will be much appreciated by the committee.

