

There was a tremendous turnout for the second meeting of the new season on Monday 4th October. 44 people in total attended the annual beginner's night. Many of these were first or second time visitors. The speaker for the evening, Andy McCrea, was on top form, and everyone thoroughly enjoyed themselves. It was especially good to see one of our long established members, Simon Sloan, making the long trip up from his home for the meeting.

Andy started off by running through some of the main constellations in the sky, offering clues to the audience, who had to try and identify them. It would probably be a good idea not to mention which constellation a certain previous prime minister reminded us of!

Andy then moved on to discuss equipment, emphasising the usefulness and importance of binoculars, and recommending that everyone invest in a planisphere. He warned about buying cheap telescopes, especially from newspapers and certain websites, and noted that many of these advertisements made totally unrealistic claims about magnification.

He then went on to discuss telescopes in general. He described the different types of telescope available, how they worked, and what the observer could realistically expect to see with them. He made recommendations about books, magazines and other equipment.

A short question and answer session followed, before most people moved outside to have a look through a couple of big telescopes. Many thanks to Brian, Ralph and Mark for bringing their scopes along. Several of the newcomers had also brought their scopes, and some of the more experienced members were able to provide some advice and guidance as to their use. Most of the viewing was of Jupiter, and there were many ooh's and aah's as everyone had a look at the giant planet. It was approaching 11.00pm before the session finally broke up.

We hope that this very successful night will whet the appetite of all the beginners present, and that they will continue to come along and learn more about this great hobby, and perhaps attend some of the organized observing sessions run by the society.