

# PUBLIC OPEN EVENINGS AT THE INSTITUTE OF ASTRONOMY

## WEDNESDAY 25<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2009

Institute of Astronomy

Cambridge Astronomical Association

<http://www.ast.cam.ac.uk/public/>

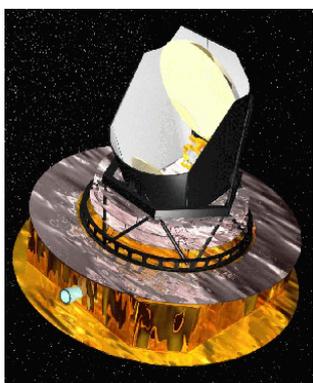
<http://www.caa-cya.org/>

Sadly this marks the end of our Wednesday observing season. There's only the **Moonwatch** evenings left between now and the start of next season in October 2009. We hope you've enjoyed coming along, even though the weather hasn't been very kind to our observing ambition!

If you have any suggestions for our next observing season – for example, of something you'd like to hear a talk about – now is the time to email Carolin with your ideas on [csc@ast.cam.ac.uk](mailto:csc@ast.cam.ac.uk).

Some dates for your diary! Entrance is free to both of these events, *no need to book, everyone is welcome*.

- ⇒ **Moonwatch** nights on **Friday 3<sup>rd</sup>** and **Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> April**. As part of the celebrations of the **International Year of Astronomy** we'll be joining in the national Moonwatch week with our own evenings dedicated to observing the Moon and Saturn. Each evening there'll be a half-hour talk about the Moon starting at 7.15pm, followed by observing if the weather is kind to us.
- ⇒ On **Friday 24<sup>th</sup> April** at **7.30pm** we will have a public talk from **Jonathan Fay** all about **Discovering the Universe with the World Wide Telescope**. The World Wide Telescope is an initiative from Microsoft that allows anyone to browse the Universe from the comfort of their own laptop. Combining up-to-date images from space- and ground-based telescopes with features such as expert guided tours, it is a project that can both inspire and educate anyone from the complete novice to the informed amateur. Not only is our guest speaker the lead scientist on the WWT project, but he is also an enthusiastic amateur astronomer. Come along and find out more about what the World Wide Telescope can do for you!
- ⇒ On **Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> April** at **7.30pm** we will have an evening of **Poetry and Space** – this is the event that had to be postponed from February due to the snow. Astronomers **Jocelyn Bell Burnell** and **Paul Murdin** will be in conversation with the poets **James Fenton** and **Maurice Riordan**, with readings from the book *Dark Matter: The poetry of space*



While we're off-air, watch out for the launch of an Ariane rocket planned for the end of April, which will be carrying two major new satellites from the *European Space Agency* into orbit.

Several of the astronomers in Cambridge will be working on data from the **Planck satellite**. This telescope is designed to observe the radiation that filled the Universe immediately after the Big Bang, which we now detect as the Cosmic Microwave Background. The instruments will have greatly increased sensitivity and spatial detail over previous missions, and the principle aim of the mission is to differentiate between predictions of competing cosmological theories about the early Universe.

The **Herschel satellite** is a telescope operating in the far-infrared and submillimetre wavebands, and will be used to study a wide range of cosmic objects – from the most distant galaxies in the early Universe, to the chemical composition of atmospheres of planets and moons in our Solar System. It will have a mirror 3.5m across, the largest mirror launched into space so far.

The **Cambridge Astronomical Association** are having their monthly speaker meeting this **Friday 27<sup>th</sup> March** at **8pm**. The speaker will be **Luke Barnes** revisiting the theme of **Life in a fine-tuned Universe**. If you missed his talk at the open evening a couple of weeks ago, you're very welcome to go along and hear the slightly longer version this Friday. It's also worth noting that they have their **50<sup>th</sup> anniversary lecture** by **Prof Rob Kennicutt** who'll be describing his **Hot Results on Cool Galaxies: The Hidden Universe Revealed** at 8pm on **Friday 17<sup>th</sup> April**. Both talks will be held in the lecture theatre at IoA, and everyone is welcome to attend; if you're not a member of CAA you will just be asked to contribute £1 towards costs.

The **International Space Station** is now officially the second brightest object in the night sky after the Moon – even brighter than Venus! – since the new solar arrays were deployed last Friday. There is now almost an acre of solar panels providing the full power to the ISS. There are just a few more chances to see the (new improved brighter) International Space Station – with Space Shuttle attached – for yourself in the next week. The times to see it from

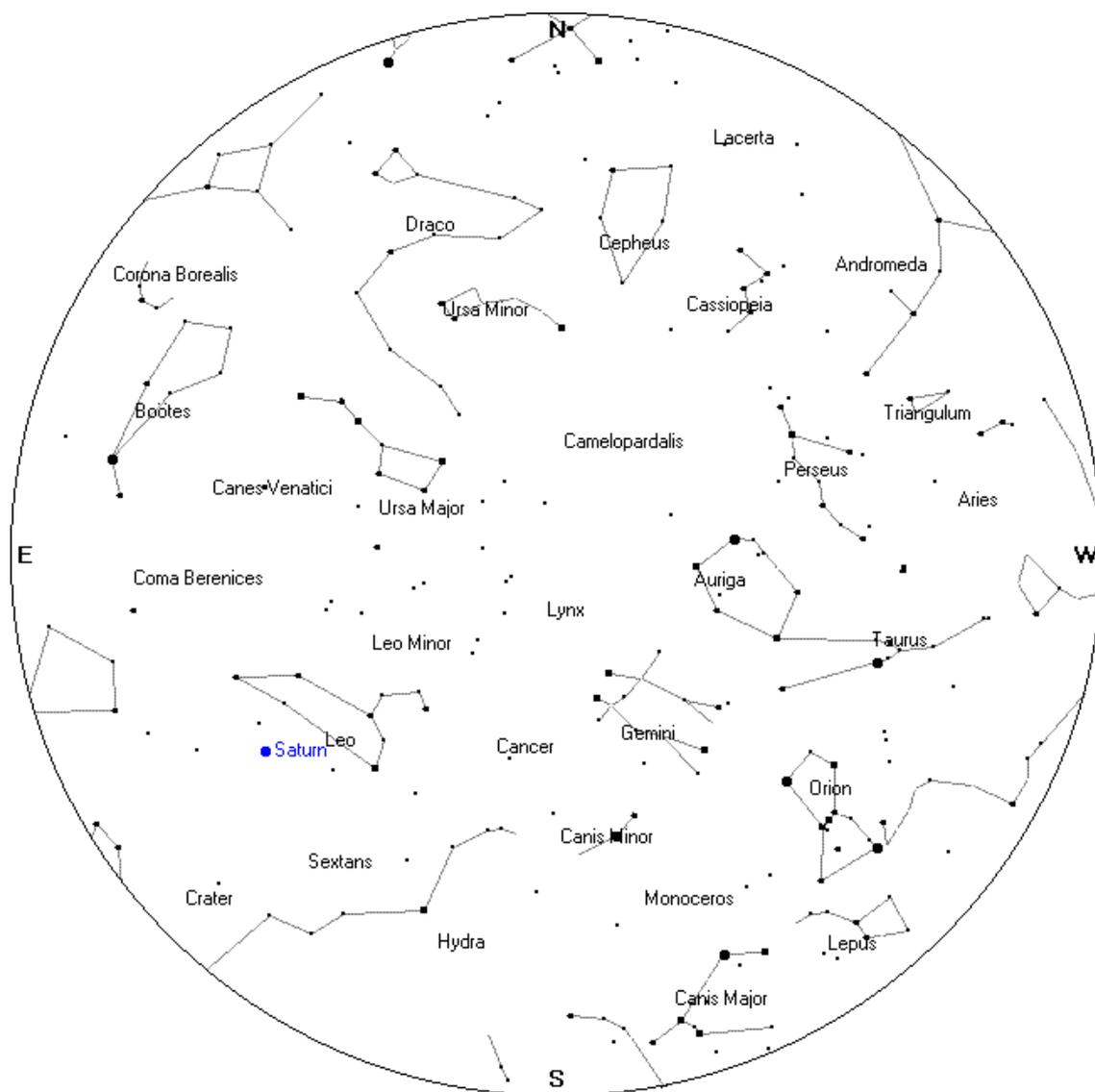
Cambridge are in the table below; if you live outside of the city, you can refine the exact times for viewing from your location by logging on to [www.heavens-above.com](http://www.heavens-above.com)

Date	starts			At max altitude			ends		
	Time	altitude	direction	time	altitude	direction	time	altitude	direction
26 March	19:59	10	W	20:01	42	SSW	20:02	34	SSE
27 March	18:49	10	W	18:52	67	SSW	18:55	10	ESE
28 March	19:14	10	W	19:17	40	SSW	19:20	11	SE

Many thanks to those of you that helped Vickie Curtis by filling out a questionnaire for her last term – she is a student from the Open University who’s studying our open evenings as a case study for her MSc in *Science and Society*. She now has a short supplementary survey with some follow-up questions, and would be very grateful to any of tonight’s attendees who could spare a few minutes to answer them via a SurveyMonkey. Follow the link directly to it from our public open nights homepage at [http://www.ast.cam.ac.uk/public/public\\_observing/](http://www.ast.cam.ac.uk/public/public_observing/)

### THE NIGHT SKY AT 8PM ON 25<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2009

To use the map, hold it above your head to match the sky...  
 Sky map courtesy of <http://www.heavens-above.com/>



The **Moon** is new, and so not visible for a couple of days. It will make a nice thin sliver of a crescent low in the Western Sky after sunset by the weekend.

**Saturn** is up, easily visible to the East after about 8pm.

**Venus** is no longer observable in the evenings, as it is too close to the Sun.

So finally, just to wish you all well over the summer, and thanks for coming along to our public open evenings, particularly our ‘regulars’. Don’t forget to keep an eye on the website <http://www.ast.cam.ac.uk/public/>, as that is the best source for up-to-date information about any public outreach activities we’re organizing. In particular, we plan to start up again in early-to-mid October, and hopefully all the bad weather and building work that have plagued us this season will be a dim and distant memory...

Clear skies to you all... Carolin