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JERSEY ASTRONOMY CLUB

SIR PATRICK MOORE ASTRONOMY CENTRE,
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ST. BRELADE

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NEWSLETTER

MARCH

Next Meetings – Visiting Speaker and Club Night

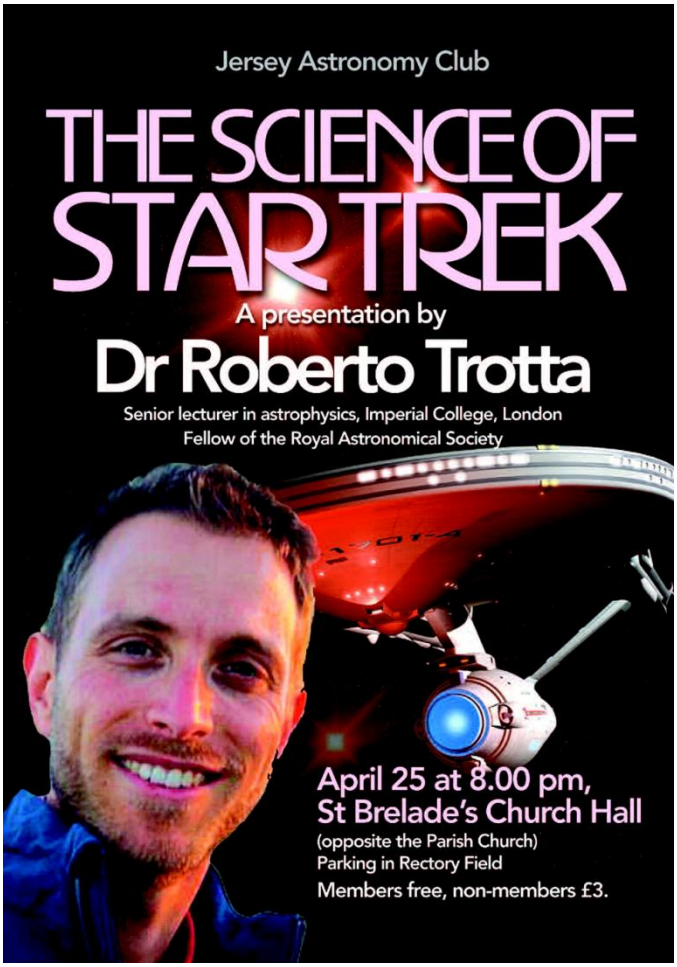
Monday, 14th March at 8.00 at the club house. In a change to the scheduled talk, Tony will be giving a presentation of astronomy in the news.

If you have not posted your membership dues to Simon, please bring a cheque to the next meeting. Emails were sent out last month to members on the email lists.

For your Diary:

Monday 25th April, 8.00, at St Brelade's Church Hall, opposite St Brelade's Church.

Dr Roberto Trotta is coming to speak on "The Science of Star Trek"



Dome News

Neil will be having regular Monday night viewings if the night is clear. The platform is now in place, so no more going up a rickety old ladder to see the stars and planets!

Wi-Fi Available

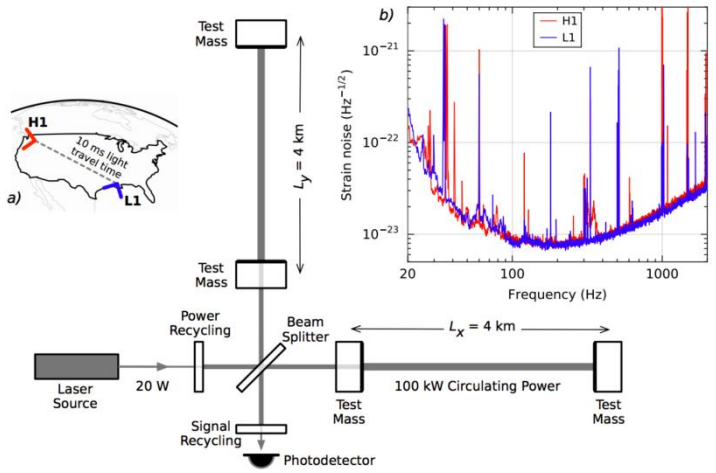
We now have a 4G Wi-Fi router so we can access online astronomy sites and remote telescope feeds when the sky is cloudy.

Gravitational Waves

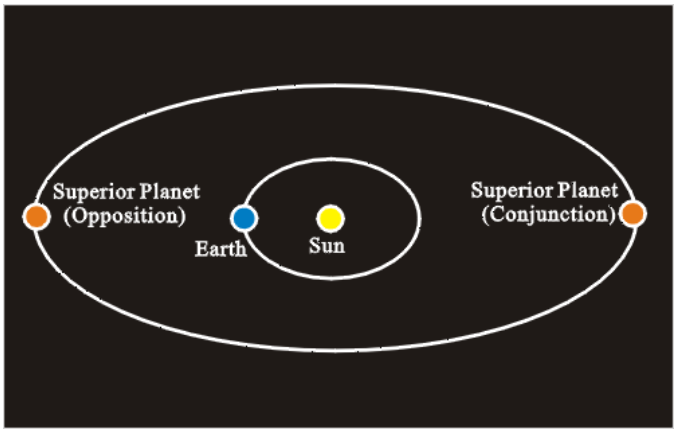
Einstein's General Theory of Relativity (GR) was published 100 years ago. It was a completely revolutionary way of understanding both the force of gravity and the structure of the universe.

GR theory made certain predictions of effects that could be observed with accurate enough instruments. Within a few years, his predictions about light bending as it passed a heavy object (like a star) were observed, and that gave credibility to the theory.

However, the prediction by GR that there could be gravitational waves has proven to be far more elusive, only being detected now, a century after the theory was published, by the Laser Interferometer Gravitational Wave Observatory (LIGO.



Night Sky gazing in March



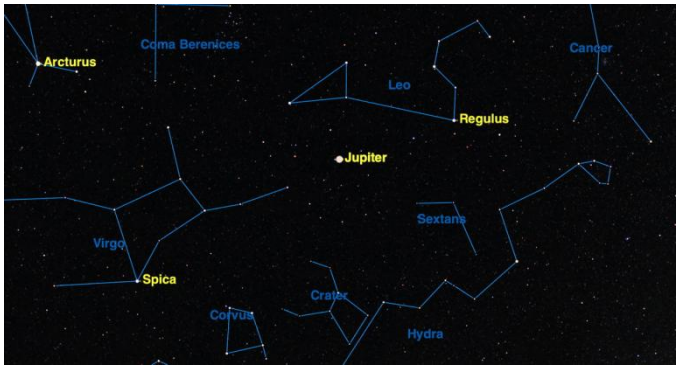
The Earth in its faster, smaller orbit around the sun swings in between the sun and Jupiter on March 8, 2016. This marks Jupiter's opposition, when it appears opposite the sun in Earth's sky.

Jupiter is now the brightest object in the night sky with the exception of the moon and the International Space Station.

There's no difficulty telling the difference between Jupiter and the space station, because Jupiter appears stationary, while the orbiting laboratory moves across the sky rapidly, taking about 5 minutes to cross.

Our nights are falling rapidly later as the Sun moves 12° northwards during March to cross the equator at the time of the vernal equinox on the 20th. Our evening sky, too, is changing quickly – Orion stands in the S as darkness falls on the 1st but is sinking in the SW by the month's end.

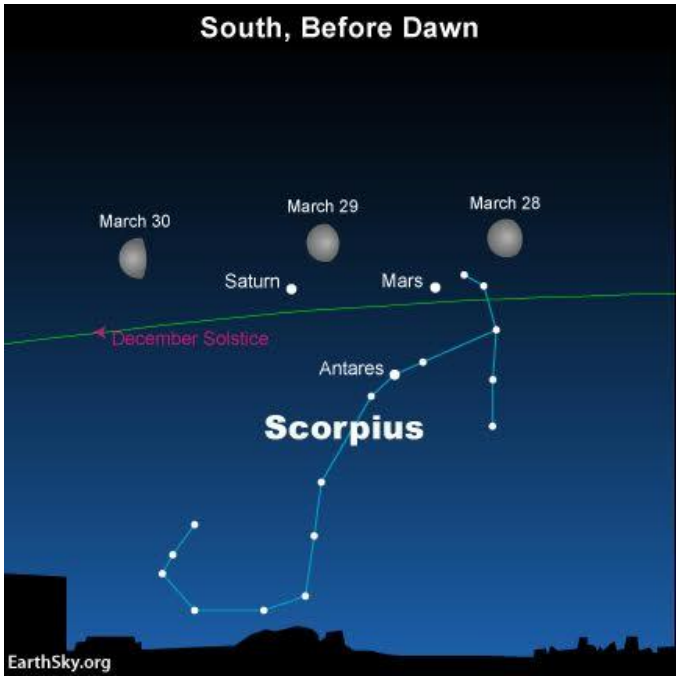
The Moon lies below Leo's leading star, Regulus, on the night of the 20th and is even closer to the conspicuous planet Jupiter on the next night



Jupiter is currently located in the southern part of the constellation Leo, the lion. The planet is about a third of the way between the bright stars Regulus in Leo and Spica in Virgo.

To Leo's left is the huge constellation Virgo, which contains many more galaxies than it does stars. Its brightest star, Spica, represents a sheaf of wheat in the hand of the virgin, a harbinger of spring.

Above Virgo is the constellation Boötes, which contains Arcturus, the third brightest star in the sky, outshone only by Sirius and Canopus.



Mars is not as bright as Venus or Jupiter. However, Mars will double in brilliance in March 2016. Mars rises in the east quite late at night from mid-northern latitudes all month long.

From either the Northern or Southern Hemisphere, Mars (and nearby Saturn) are best viewed in the morning hours. Look for Mars and Saturn to be highest up in the sky just before dawn's first light.

Europe misses out on both eclipses this month. The more interesting one by far is the total solar eclipse on the 9th whose path of totality crosses Indonesia before sweeping eastwards and northwards to an end-point N of Hawaii. A lunar eclipse also passes us by.