

Where to Find Us



Club Meetings and Information 2020

Presidents

Bill Leslie
Tim Schroder

Committee

Pete Sherman (Chairman)
Richard Oakley (Secretary)
Stuart Brooks (Treasurer)
Donna Williamson (Events)
Mick O'Donnell (Membership)
Kevin Stocks

Contact emails for the above are on the website

www.sigma-astro.co.uk

 [SigmaAstro](https://www.facebook.com/SigmaAstro)  [sigmaastro](https://twitter.com/sigmaastro)

SIGMA generally holds its meetings on the first Friday of each month (unless otherwise stated) at Lhanbryde Community Centre (Robertson Road, Lhanbryde, Moray, IV30 8QQ). As well as having excellent meeting facilities, the Centre is ideal for routine observing either during or after meetings, with only minimal light pollution.

For more serious observing, particularly of deep sky objects, we also have access to a dark site at Easterton Airfield, Birnie. These dark site sessions are well worth attending as there will often be an expert on hand with a large telescope, and many deep sky objects can be seen that would otherwise be obscured by light pollution.

Observing sessions for members are held on Friday and Saturday evenings from September through to March, subject to volunteers'/experts' availability and observing conditions; location and opening is advised by email and through Facebook.

SIGMA also conducts 'Outreach' to bring astronomy to schools, and groups, though this too depends on volunteers' availability. Details on how to contact SIGMA can be found on our website.

Membership

Membership is open to everyone and children's membership is free, but a parent or guardian must accompany them if they're under 16 years of age. You can 'try before you buy' as the first meeting is free. So do come along and join us.

Rates

£24 Ordinary
£12 Student (*over 18 in full time education*)
£18 Concessionary (*over 60s may apply for this - please contact the Membership Secretary for information*)

Membership is renewed in full (*unless there are extenuating circumstances*) in January. New members joining during the year will pay a pro-rata fee. The first meeting is always free.

Affiliated Clubs/Societies

SIGMA membership gives you affiliated membership of both *Highlands Astronomical Society* and *North Ronaldsay Astronomy Group*. You are welcome to attend their monthly meetings and events. Members of these clubs/societies are also welcome to attend SIGMA meetings and events. (*Note this does not confer voting rights.*)

All information correct at time of publication. E&OE.

****Doors open 7pm for 7.30pm start****

Come along and join us - your first meeting is free.

Issue: 0219

Friday 10th January 2020

The Pyramids, the Stars & the Playboy Connection

Dr. Howie Firth - SIGMA

The story of Jane B. Sellers who developed interpretations of Egyptian archaeology in terms of ancient astronomy, including eclipses. She was able to travel extensively to study and observe through having been an investor in the start-up of Playboy magazine and a friend since schooldays of its founder, Hugh Hefner.

Friday 7th February 2020

Is the Earth Flat After All? The Hologram Universe

Maarten De Vries - Highlands Astronomical Society

In 1981 Stephen Hawking stated that information inside a black hole is lost forever. It took 28 years for Leonard Suskind, founding director of the Stanford Institute for Theoretical Physics, to prove him wrong, and in doing so discovering that the universe we live in can be described as a hologram. In this talk Maarten will explain, using easy to understand concepts, what the fuss was all about and how the absurd idea that we live in a hologram universe provides the methods that are now widely accepted by those who study cosmology and quantum mechanics.

Friday 6th March 2020

The Search for Life in the Universe

Prof. Charles Cockell - University of Edinburgh

For the first time, using robots and telescopes we are on the verge of getting some sort of idea about whether we are alone in the Universe. In this talk we'll take a tour of these distant worlds and new missions and consider the prospects for life elsewhere.

Friday 3rd April 2020

Bringing a Piece of Space Down to Earth

Dr. John Davies - Royal Observatory, Edinburgh

Near Earth Objects have been of especial interest since the realisation that an asteroid impact probably wiped out the dinosaurs. Two spacecraft are currently in orbit around different asteroids - each hoping to return a sample to the Earth in the next few years. John will explain what an asteroid is, where they come from, how the sample missions are progressing and briefly mention a future mission which will be the first attempt to deflect an asteroid as a dry run for the day humanity may need to do this for real.

Correct at time of publication. SIGMA/Guest Speakers reserve the right to change a talk/venue - these will be updated on the website and Facebook

Friday 1st May 2020

The Frontiers of Astronomy

**Dr. Robin Catchpole - Institute of Astronomy,
Cambridge University**

The frontier of our knowledge stretches from our Solar System, to the creation of our universe. The frontier posts are marked by questions; Is there life elsewhere? Where were the elements made? How was our galaxy made? What are Black Holes? What is Dark Matter? What is Vacuum Energy? How did our Universe begin?

Friday 5th June 2020

SIGMA's 20th Anniversary! (plus AGM)

followed by

The Path to the Planets, the Road to the Stars

Dr. Howie Firth - SIGMA

It's now almost 50 years since the last human footprint on the Moon. Maybe sometime in the next decade we will return - but what about Mars and beyond? Will we ever explore much of our own Solar System, let alone reach the nearest star? Howie says that the dream of exploration is so deeply built in to us that we have to try - and there is hope.

Friday 3rd July 2020

Scottish Dark Skies

David Warrington - Scottish Dark Sky Observatory

The Story of The Scottish Dark Sky Observatory
and

BAA Speaker - TBC

Details of this talk not available at time of publication -
full details will be advised on our website.



The British Astronomical Association Summer Meeting

Saturday 4th July 2020

Venue: Moray College UHI, Moray Street, Elgin. IV30 1JJ

Full day public event looking at Suns, stars & Solar systems.

Pre-booking is required.

BAA/SIGMA Members £4.50 Non-members £6.00

Under 16's £4.50 Lunch available £8.50 each

britastro.org/meetings/2020

www.sigma-astro.co.uk

Friday 7th August 2020

An Update on the Solar System

Graham Young - University of Dundee

Grahams' favourite topic is the solar system and photographing planets, asteroids, comets, the Moon and Sun - including of course special events like eclipses and transits. From 1976 to 1984 he produced a photographic Lunar Atlas using the 10 inch refractor at the Mills Observatory in Dundee, and has recently returned to lunar mapping.

Friday 4th September 2020

Finding Planets Around Other Stars

Prof. Ken Rice - Royal Observatory, Edinburgh

Just over 20 years ago, we didn't know of any planets outside our Solar System. We now know of almost 4000, and the discovery of new ones continues apace. These planets are known as extrasolar planets, or exoplanets. Ken will discuss how we find them, what we know about them, and the prospects for the future of this exciting research area. In particular, when can we expect to detect an exoplanet that might have conditions suitable for life?

October 2020 (Date TBC)

SIGMA Stargazing and Equipment Night - a joint club night and public observing session.

See many of the wonders of the local night sky (*weather permitting*) and talk with local astronomers.

Friday 6th November 2020

Ice Giants

Pauline McRae - Highlands Astronomical Society

Very little is known about the Ice Giants. What we do know, comes mostly from the Voyager 2 mission. With advances in experimental techniques, computer modelling and observations with advanced telescopes, we are gradually learning more about our outermost two planets. This is the story of what has been discovered so far and how they may be important in understanding the formation of solar systems.

Friday 4th December 2020

Christmas Quiz

SIGMA Members and your Families

Bring along the family for a night of fun, questions and mince pies to end the year. There will also be the usual Christmas raffle.