

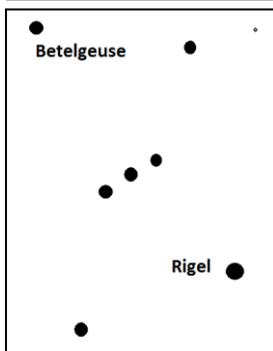
Astronomy in the Two Dales

March

Spring is here! On the 20th of March the Vernal equinox occurs at 22.45 GMT. The word vernal comes from the Latin ver meaning spring and equinox from the Latin for equal night, as the day and night of the 20th are each about 12 hours long. In Roman mythology this was the time when the Goddess Ceres finally rescued her daughter, Persephone, from the clutches of Pluto, god of the underworld.

But Ceres is also the name given to a dwarf planet that orbits in the asteroid belt beyond Mars, and a NASA probe, called DAWN, will rendezvous with it in May. By coincidence another probe called New Horizons is also approaching Pluto, so if you have access to the internet visit the website <http://www.nasa.gov/missions> and click on these mission names for more details.

The two bright planets visible in the evening this month are Venus setting in the western sky, and Jupiter rising in the eastern sky. As you might expect in March, some of the winter constellations are also still to be seen. When the sky is going dark, you might like to look for the constellation Orion, called the Hunter, in the South West. The diagram below shows where you can find two famous giant stars in this constellation. Their names are Betelgeuse and Rigel, and they are 667 and 78 times the size of our Sun respectively. One is a red super-giant and the other a blue super-giant, but can you see which is which?



Orion

Stay Safe: Never look directly at the sun, and never look in its direction when using binoculars or telescopes. If going out after dark, wrap up warm and make sure someone knows where you are.

Sun	1 st	14 th	28 th	Moon	1 st	14 th	28 th
Twilight starts	06.22	05.51	05.15	Rises	13.41	02.23	11.34
Sunrise	06.58	06.26	05.51	Sets	04.37	11.01	02.36
Sunset	17.44	18.09	18.36	1 ST Quarter	27th	Full	05th
Twilight ends	18.20	18.45	19.12	3 rd Quarter	13th	New	20th