

Astronomy in the Two Dales

July

At the time this is being hastily written , to meet the deadline of he who wears shorts , the final Astronomy Watch on Reeth green has just occurred and we would like to take a moment to thank all the people , an estimated 200 of you , who braved the chilly weather and bracing winds to support the 3 days of astronomy. Whilst the weather may not have been perfect , the planets Venus , Jupiter and Saturn did their best to provide us with something to look at and while the poor seeing conditions prevented observation of some of the more exotic deep sky objects , some stars appeared for us to view .

We would also like to thank Marcus Grover , from Grovers optic shop , who risked getting blown back to Northallerton by 60 mph winds as he set up his stand on the green.

In July there is a conjunction of Venus and Jupiter that will be visible in the evening sky. The two bright planets will appear to be extremely close together , appearing only 0.3 degrees apart. Look for this impressive sight in the western sky just after sunset , before they disappear behind the hills.

There is also the Delta Aquarids meteor shower. This is an average shower that can produce up to 20 meteors per hour at its peak. It is produced by debris left behind by comets Marsden and Kracht. This will be visible from July 12 to August 23 and peaks this year on the night of July 28 and morning of July 29. Unfortunately the nearly full moon will block out all but the brightest meteors , however some of the brightest will still be visible. The meteors will be seen in the constellation of Aquarius , so look in a south easterly direction but can appear anywhere in the sky.



This month we shall take a look at one of the easily recognisable groups of stars , the Plough. The Plough is composed of the seven brightest stars of the constellation Ursa Major , so the technical term for the Plough is an asterism. In our part of the world it is sometimes referred to as the butchers cleaver and Charlies Wain or Charlies Wagon. The Plough is made up of the following stars Dubhe ,Merak ,Phecda , Megrez , Alioth , Mizar and Alkaid . Mizar has a close companion called Alcor , if you can make out the 2 stars with the naked eye , then you would qualify for training as an archer in ancient times.



