

## Astronomy in the Two Dales

### September

September, the ninth month of the year, named after the seventh month of the old Latin calendar, which became obsolete in 153AD, when Christmas was in November and New Year was in March, confused? You will be!

The new moon is upon us on the 1<sup>st</sup>, the best time to view the Milky Way and any faint deep sky objects such as galaxies or nebulas, there is also a solar eclipse on this day BUT only visible from Africa.

The full moon arrives on the 16<sup>th</sup>, known as the harvest moon, so gather your marrows and head for the nearest church and all this is followed by the equinox on the 22<sup>nd</sup> as we head into autumn and the return of longer nights.

The planets are all performing in the southern sky, with Venus and Jupiter setting in the west by 9 pm and Mars and Saturn setting in the south west by 11.30 pm. Neptune, that distant blue ball, is at its closest approach to earth, however a large telescope will be required to see it, as it is  $4.50 \times 10^9$  km away from the sun. Mercury is also visible to very careful observers on the 28<sup>th</sup>, as it is at its farthest position away from the sun, and visible in the east just before sunrise. **DO NOT LOOK THROUGH TELESCOPES OR BINOCULARS AT THE SUN!**

The perils of space flight have finally been revealed, studies into astronaut health showed that travelling beyond the earth's atmosphere greatly increases the risk of cardiovascular problems with almost half of the Apollo astronauts having died from cardiovascular disorders. Considering the health of these people before they left earth and the medical care they have received since returning from deep space missions, the rate of death is 4-5 times higher than someone who stayed on earth. This is because of the effect of exposure to deep space radiation.

This is one of the main reasons why the Russian space agency refused to send men to the moon, believing that the health risks were too great as lead shielding would be too heavy for a rocket to carry out of earth's orbit, and with nothing to protect the people inside a capsule from interstellar radiation, the Russians believed that a manned trip to the moon would be a death sentence.

These new findings present much difficulty for the future missions that hoped to send manned craft to Mars, will the crew arrive safely or will they end up being cooked like a tin of ham on their six month journey? What ever happens to the future of space flight and in particular, manned missions, the days of just building a rocket without thought for crew safety and survival are well and truly over, as ignoring this medical evidence which then led to the death of anybody on a space flight would be the equivalent of murder.

So if any of you have signed up for the SpaceX mission to Mars and you suddenly find yourself getting a request to provide yourself with lead lined under garments, perhaps it is time to think again.

P.S I would like to thank all the people who have supported me after the untimely death of my sister, your friendship and kindness will not be forgotten.

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