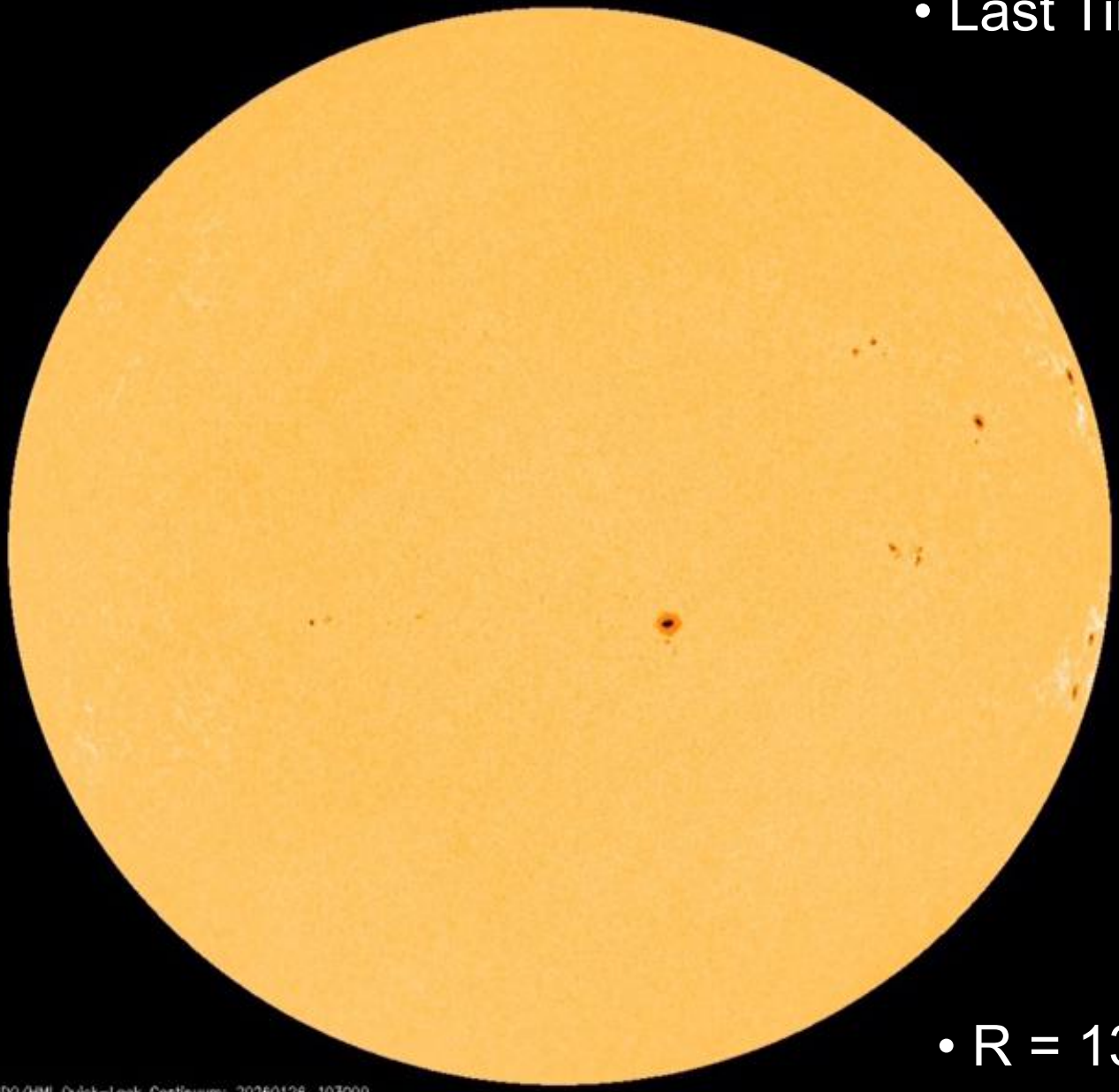
What's Up?

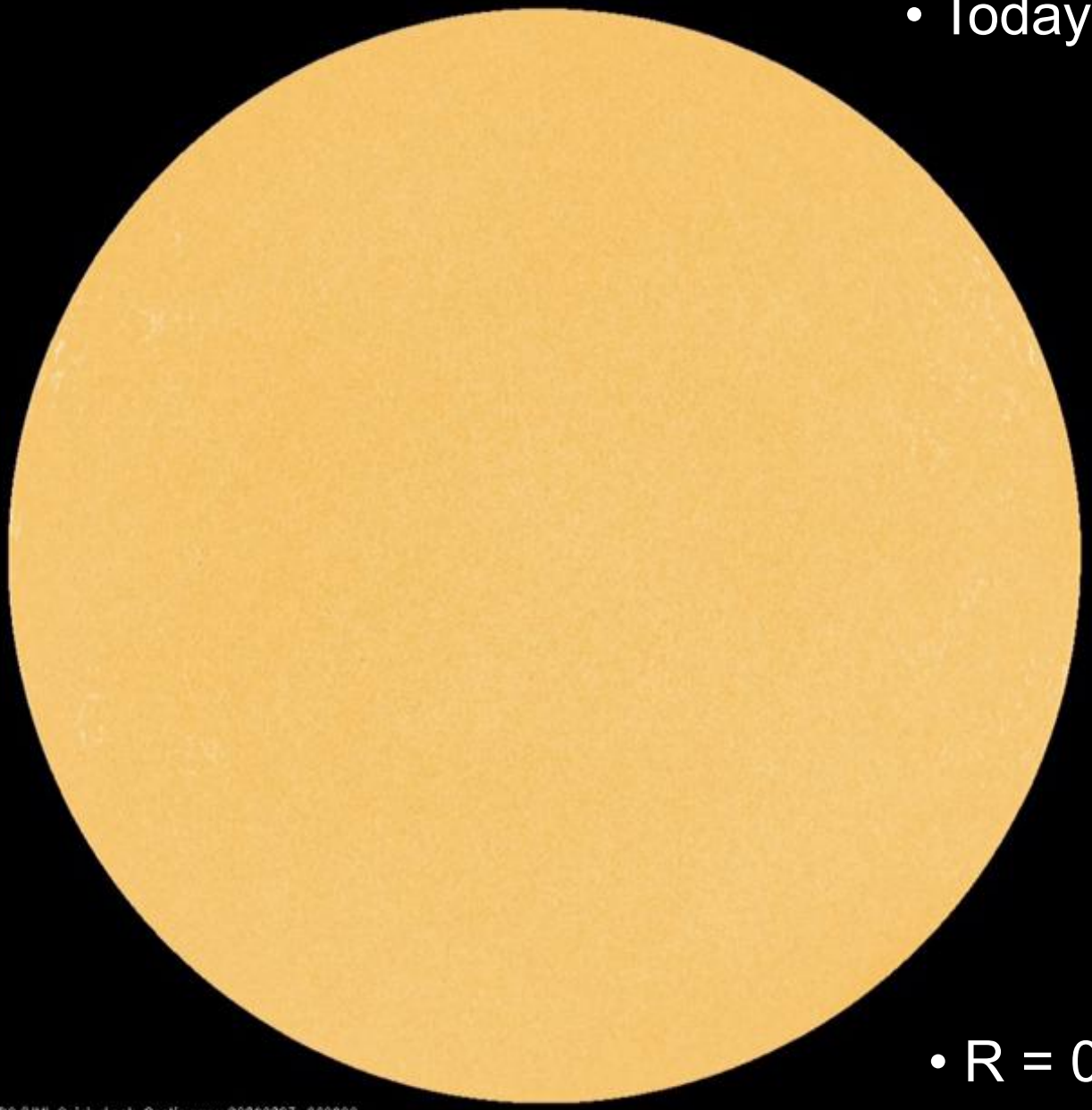
2026 February 23 to March 23

Bill Barton, FRAS



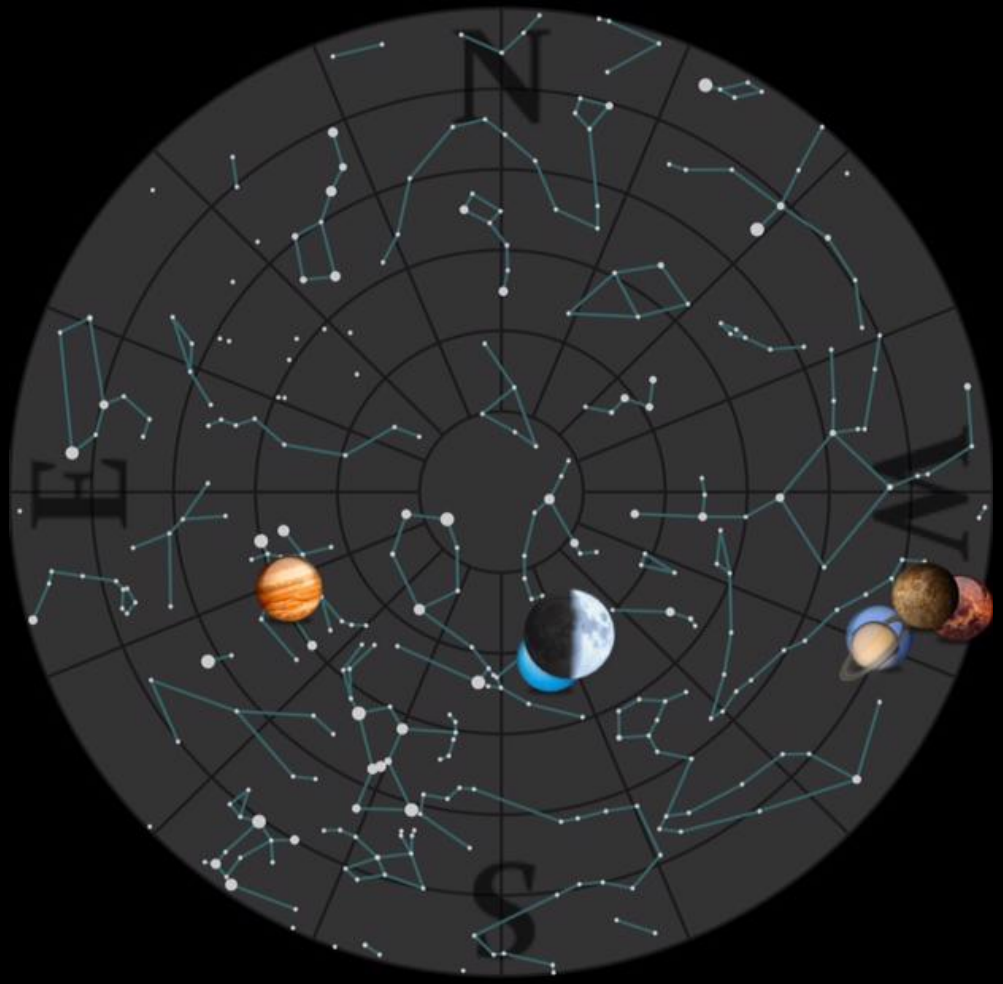
- Last Time

- R = 131



- Today

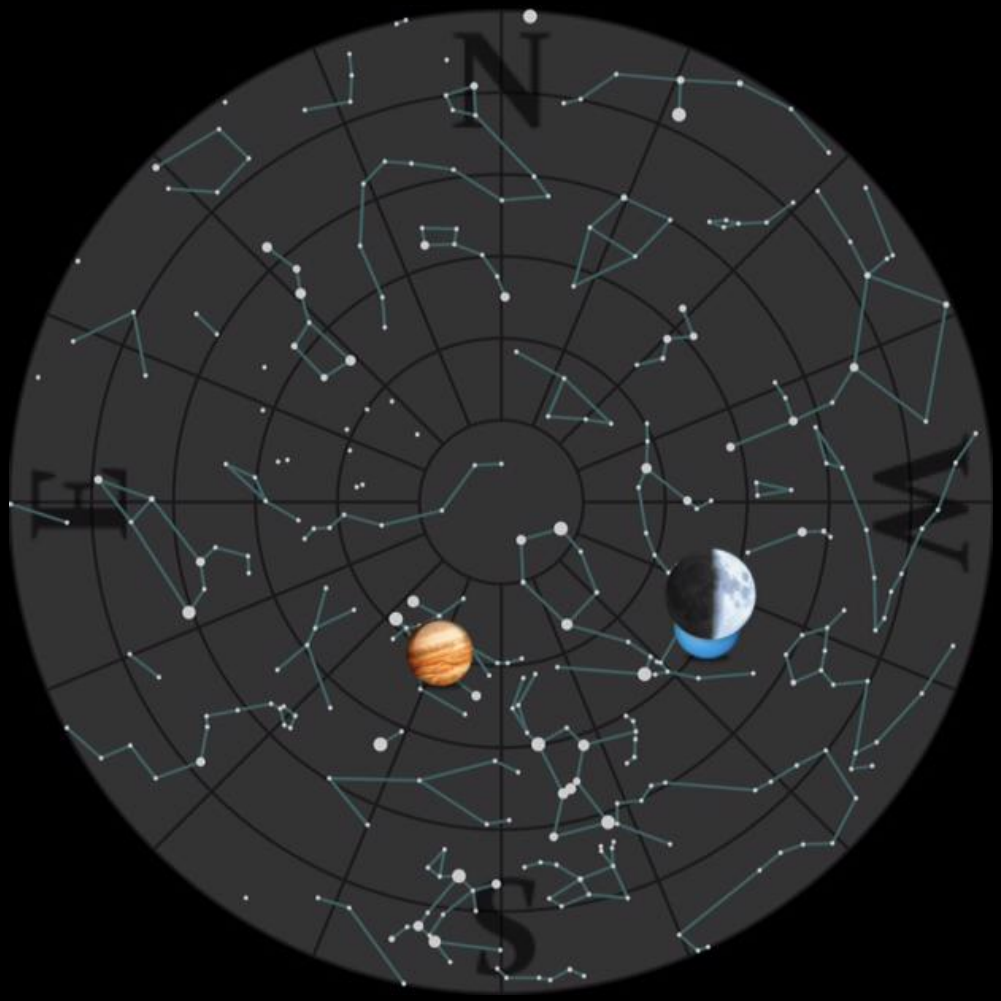
- R = 0 (!)



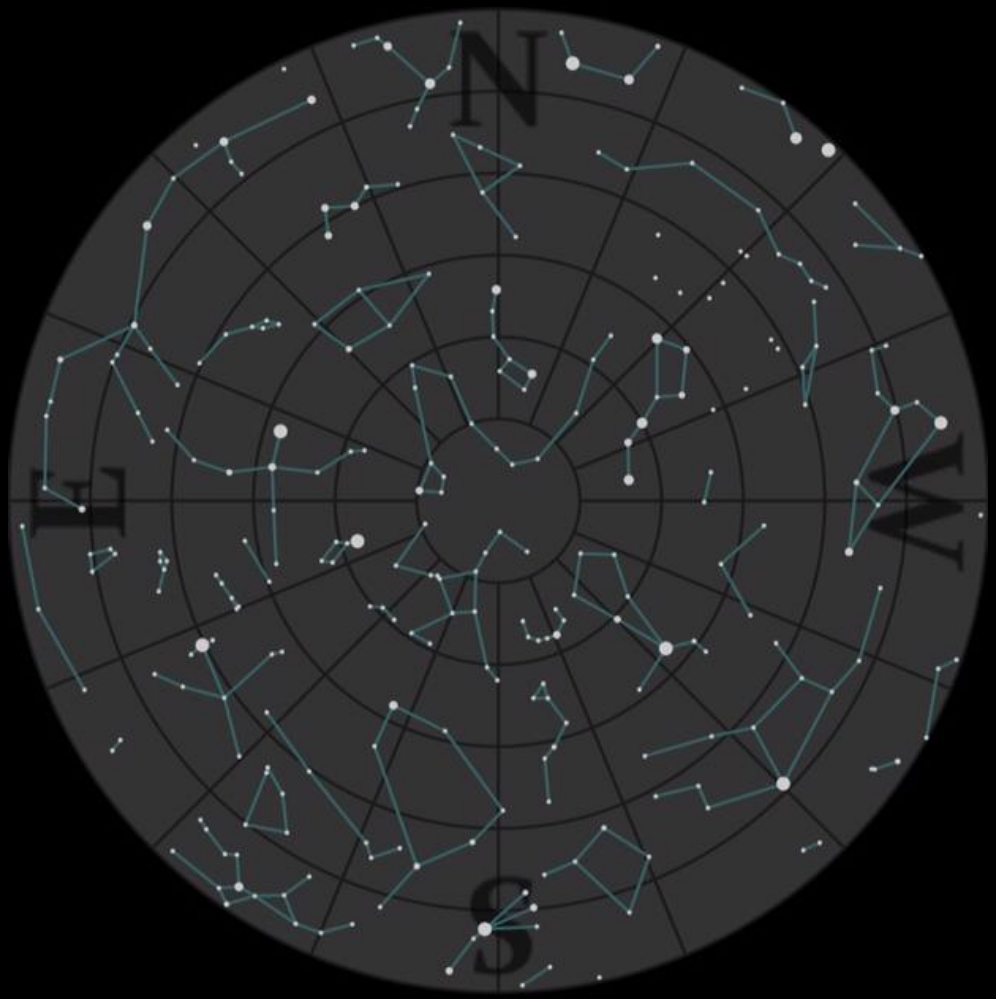
Planetary Parade

Venus (18:25)
Mercury (19:05)
Neptune
Saturn
Moon
Uranus
Jupiter

Sun (17:25)
setting times
(in brackets)



- The Sky 20:00 Tonight



- The Sky 06:00 Tomorrow

Inner Solar System

- Sun
  - Declination increasing, equinox March 20
  - Last sunspot max., 2024 October, next min., 2030?
- Mercury
  - In the evening sky, greatest elongation February 19 (18°), currently 17°, inferior conjunction on March 07
  - Today, rise 07:10, transit 13:00, set 19:00
- Venus
  - Following superior conjunction on January 06, in the evening sky, greatest elongation August 14 (46°), currently 12°
  - today, rise 07:20, transit 12:50, set 18:20

Earth

- Time
  - 00:00UT ≈ 10:15ST today
  - Equinox, March 20, BST starts March 29
  - Today, sunrise 06:50, transit 12:10, sunset 17:20
  - End of period, sunrise 05:50, transit 12:00, sunset 18:15
- Moon
  - 🌓First Quarter, 24 (tomorrow)
  - 🌕Full, March 03 (‘Worm or Sap’ Moon), eclipse, not visible from UK
  - 🌗Last Quarter, 11
  - 🌑New, 19
- Meteors
  - None of note this period

Outer Solar System

- Mars
  - Next opposition February 19, 2027. Today, rise 06:40, transit 11:25, set 16:15
- Jupiter
  - Opposition January 10, conjunction July 29. Today, rise 12:30, transit 20:40, set 05:00
- Saturn
  - Conjunction March 25, opposition October 04. Today, rise 07:50, transit 13:45, set 19:40
- Uranus
  - Conjunction May 22, opposition November 25. Today, rise 09:30, transit 17:20, set 01:10
- Neptune
  - Conjunction February 20, opposition September 26. Today, rise 07:45, transit 13:40, set 19:40

Comet

- C/2026 A1 (MAPS)
  - discovered 13 January 2026, Kreutz sungrazer
- 04 April 2026 will pass within 99,000 miles of the Sun (0.0057AU)
- Great Comet of 1843
  - perihelion, 0.00553AU, seen one degree away from Sun
- Great Comet of 1882
  - perihelion 0.0077AU, visible in daylight

OASI Events

- Recorded Lecture Meeting
  - Monday 16 March, from 20:00
    - ‘Massive Stars and Supernovae’, Thomas Haworth

- In Person Lecture Meeting
  - Friday 20 March, from 19:45
    - St Augustine’s Church Annex
      - ‘A Centaurus A Case Study’, Nik Szymanek

OASI Outreach Event

- Star Party
  - Saturday 28 February, 18:00 - 20:00
    - Christchurch Mansion

    - Event Sold Out!

Local Societies Events

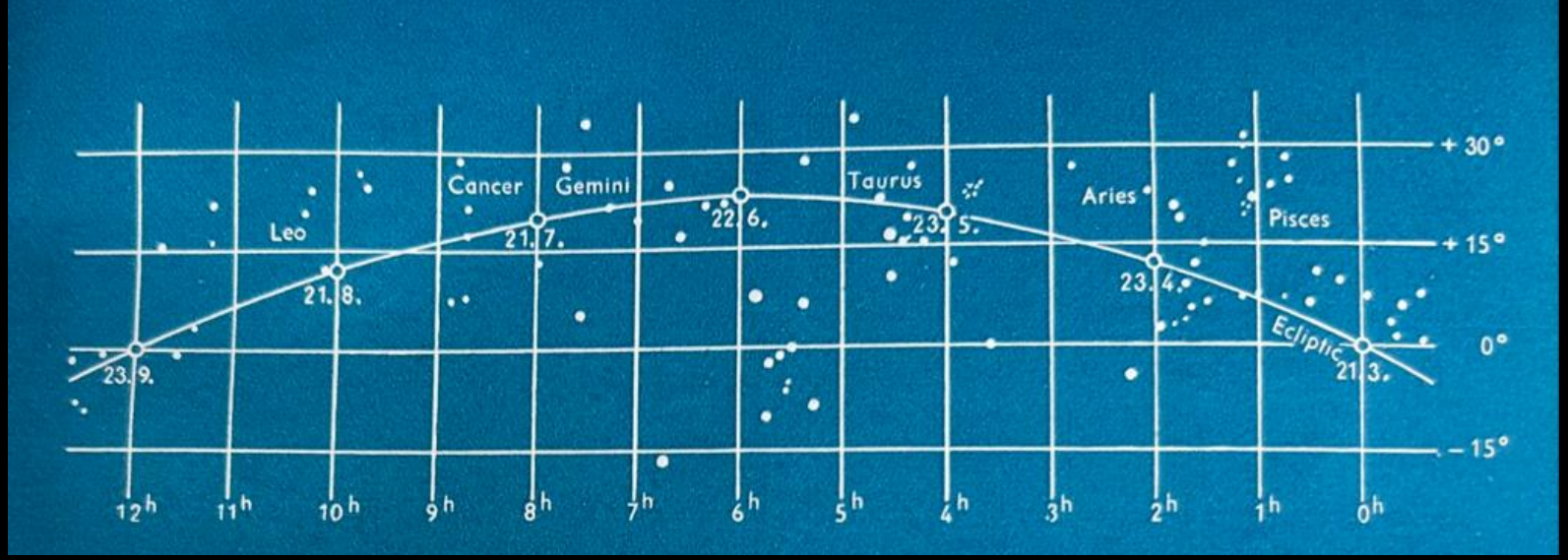
- DASH (Darsham Village Hall, 7:00pm, Sundays)
  - March 08, observing meeting
  - March 12 & 13, outreach event at NT Dunwich
  - March 22, ‘Gaia Update’, Dr George Seabroke
- SAS (Cavendish Memorial Hall, 7:30pm, Tuesdays)
  - February 03, Jupiter, John Rogers
- AAA (Whepstead Village Hall, 7:30pm, Wednesdays)
  - March 04, Open Cluster Evening
  - March 18, Astrophotography Evening
- DAG (Diss)
  - Informal on FaceBook & WhatsApp

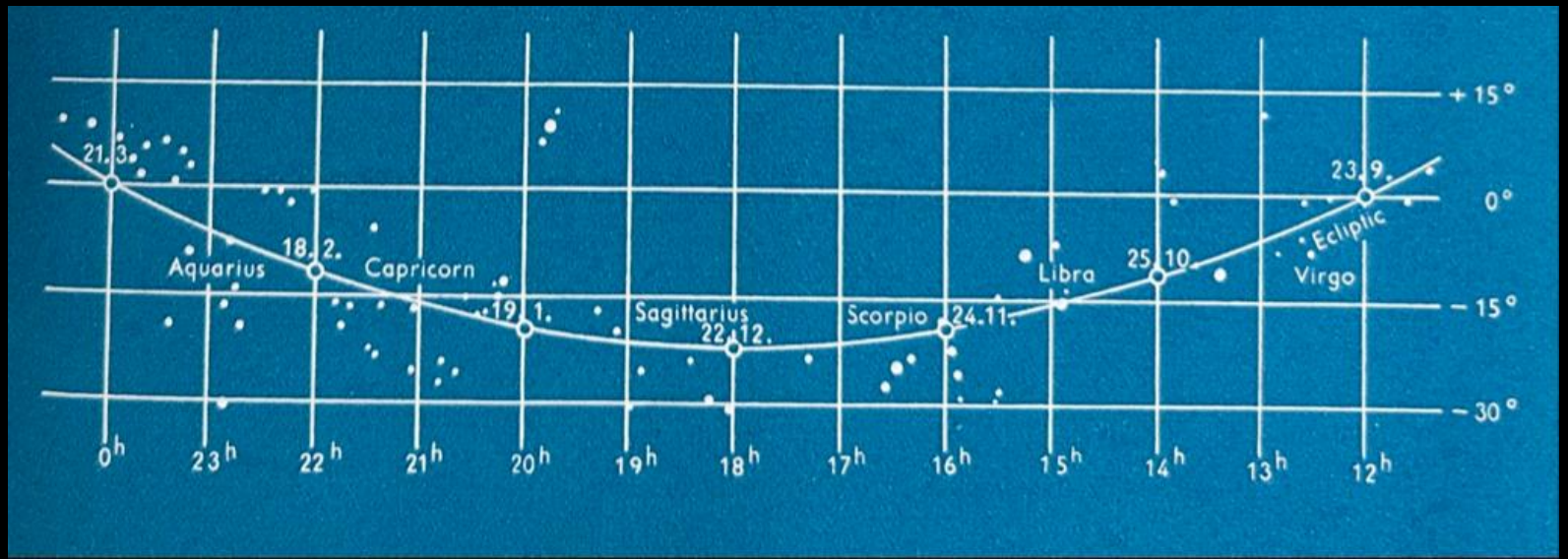
Stars

- Apparent brightness → magnitude scale
  - 1st magnitude, (22) brightest
  - 2nd, (71)
  - 3rd, (190)
  - 4th, (610)
  - 5th, (1929)
  - 6th, (5946) faintest visible to unaided eye
  - etc etc, telescopic

Moon

- closest natural celestial object
- orbits Earth once a ‘month’
- obscures more distant objects, Sun and Planets
    - Question: how many 1st magnitude stars can the Moon occult?
    - More or less than 12?


+ 30°
+ 15°
0°
− 15°
Leo
Cancer
Gemini
Taurus
Aries
Pisces
Ecliptic
23. 9.
21. 8.
21. 7.
22. 6.
23. 5.
23. 4.
21. 3.
12h
11h
10h
9h
8h
7h
6h
5h
4h
3h
2h
1h
0h


+ 15°
0°
− 15°
− 30°
Aquarius
Capricorn
Sagittarius
Scorpio
Libra
Virgo
Ecliptic
21. 3.
18. 2.
19. 1.
22. 12.
24. 11.
25. 10.
23. 9.
0h
23h
22h
21h
20h
19h
18h
17h
16h
15h
14h
13h
12h

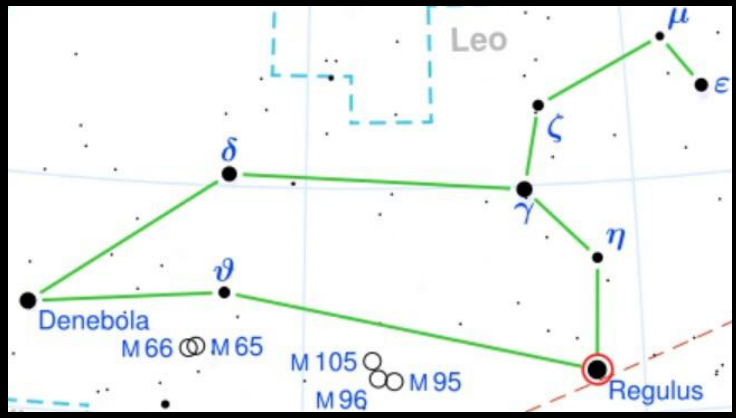
- Answer:- four
    - Aldebaran (α Tauri)
    - Spica (α Virginis)
    - Antares (α Scorpii)
    - Regulus (α Leonis)

    - also
        - Hyades
        - Pleiades (Messier 45)
        - Crab Nebula (Messier 1)
        - Beehive Cluster (Messier 44)
        - M8, M20

Lunar Occultation

- Moon
  - First Quarter, March 25, Full, April 02

- Sunday March 29 (BST in operation)
  - Moon, age 09 days, rise, 15:20
  - Sunset, 19:20, civil twilight end, 20:00
  - Moon south, 22:40



  - Regulus (α Leonis), mag +1.4
    - Disappearance at dark limb, 19:15
    - Reappearance at bright limb, 20:21