

2011 September 02 – from Percy K

What a fantastic start to our meetings at our club. Kicking off with an excellent talk by Nick Howes about Comets. I found this very useful considering all the recent activities regarding Garradd. It was great to see all the familiar and some new faces at the club.

It was nice to be able to see the comet during the break. Thank you to those who came and had a look my binoculars. Shirley, I think you had a good time looking through and asking lots of questions. Nick Howes also looked through and imparted some very useful information regards imaging the comet. Thank you Nick.

Bob Chambers and I decided it was a promising night for observing. So, we decided to head out to Cookham Dean Common to observe.

Bob brought along his Vixen 20x80mm binoculars. I had taken my favourite TS 25x100 binoculars Both binoculars are straight through viewing. Bobs bins were sat on a very stable and strong Slik tripod with a crank gear to adjust the height of the bins. Very nice Bob. My bins were perched upon my Manfrotto medium load capacity tripod.

We drove upto the observing site straight after the meeting. We grabbed the opportunity of clear skies and gave the pub a miss. I am still amazed how good the site is.

We parked up and decided observe from the common and not from the parking area. This was a wise decision as it gave us a tad more protection from the lights of the passing traffic and the dust blown up.

We took it in turns looking through both binoculars and comparing the views attained. I really did like the sharp wide field through the 20x80 Vixen. Bob really did enjoy the sharp higher power through the TS 25x100.

The skies were partially clouded, yet offered lots to see as the clouds moved about. The milky Way was clearly visible. The visible magnitude was around 4.5 This was determined by looking at the Little Dipper.

Given the type of instruments we had at our disposal, we chose to view at some of the bright Messier objects and others that were within grasp.

Listed below are some of objects that were viewed and enjoyed. Some of the objects were looked at for extended periods for comparison of equipment used and detail perception.

Comet Garradd was quite amazing and bright. The comet was superimposed against CR399 or commonly known as the "Coat Hanger". It was easily found near the famous double Albireo in Cygnus.

I did suspect there was an elongation from the coma on a westerly trail. I looked for this tail after looking at Tim's fantastic image back at the meeting, thank you Tim. Bob was not sure about the elongation. I hope I didn't imagine it. Anyway, it was lovely sight. The colours of the stars within the "Coat Hanger" were quite distinct.

We did look for the M101 Supernova inspired by Tim announcement at the meeting, thank you Tim.

I suspected I viewed it through the TS 25x100, but was not entirely sure. Maybe next time I shall bring a scope with me.

We conducted a mini Messier run at a leisurely pace and no pressure and the goal was to enjoy it.

Here they are:

M71, M29, M57, M56, M13, M92, M15, M27, M11, M81, M82, M101, M51, M34, M31, M32.

Some of the other objects viewed were the Owl cluster NGC 457. The double open cluster NGC 884/869 in Perseus.

We must have been observing for around 1 1/2 hours, Jupiter was placed quite nicely above the tree-line.

We both managed to view some dark markings around the equatorial region. This was seen better with the higher magnification. There was a thin cloud cover in front of Jupiter. This helped with the contrast. Without this cloud cover, Jupiter would have been far too bright to discern any detail. We did manage to see one of the satellite's get occulted by the gas giant.

Bob spent a few moments looking at his new found friend I introduced him to M34. I tried looking for M76 (the little Dumbbell), too faint for the big bins.

I even looked for NGC 6229, a globular in Hercules. I should have taken my star atlas with me. I guess, I would have bagged it with the big bins. Never mind, next time.

We packed up around 23:40hrs. We concluded it was a very fruitful night of observing. Thank you Bob. It was brilliant!!

Hope some of you can make it next time.

Regards
Percy

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