

“ $\Omega > 1$ ”

“Sky-Notes” of the Open University Astronomy Club.

June 2016.

Forthcoming Meetings.

OUAC.

The next “Clubnight” is on Tuesday 7th.

Please note that with the normal Summer Break there will be no “Clubnight” in July and August. We restart on Tuesday 6th September.

BAA.

Full details of this and other BAA meetings at: www.britastro.org

Other.

Saturday 18th June.

Webb Deep-Sky Society Annual Meeting.

IOA, Maddingley Road, Cambridge.

Full details at www.webbdeepsky.com

Highly recommended!

Highlights of the Month.

- | | |
|--|---|
| Mercury. | Very low in the E dawn sky reaching Greatest Elongation W (24°) on 5 th .
Poor apparition for northern observers |
| Venus | Superior Conjunction on 6 th . Follow progress on the SOHO website. |
| Mars. | Just passed Opposition. |
| Jupiter | Prominent object moving into W evening twilight. |
| Saturn. | At Opposition on 3 rd . |
| The Summer (Northern Hemisphere) Solstice occurs on 20 th . | |

Recent Events.

If you have any images and/or reports of recent events please contact Sheridan so that he can put them on the Club website.

If you wish to present them at a “Clubnight” meeting please contact Sheridan or myself before the meeting starts.

Software.

A very useful item of Planetarium software is “Stellarium” and it’s FREE! Go to the website and download it and the associated user manual.

1. The Solar system.

Note all times shown are UT.
Add 1 hour to convert to BST.

Earth.

Summer (Northern Hemisphere) Solstice 20^d 22^h 34^m

Aurora.

Short hours of darkness limit the opportunity for observing potential aurora.
Keep tuned to the www.spaceweather.com site for updates.
Subscribe (free) to the UK AuroraWatch website to receive alerts.

Noctilucent Clouds.

Scan the NW sky about an hour after sunset and the NE sky an hour before sunrise for possible displays. The clouds are distinctive by their silver-blue appearance and very photogenic.

ISS.

Continues a series evening passes during the first ten days of the month.
Go to the “spaceweather” website and click the “Flybys” button and follow the instructions to set-up forecasts for your location. Alternatively go to the “Heavens Above” website and set-up for your location. Add to your “favourites”.

Iridium Flares.

These satellites produce short lived “Bright events”. Some are very bright in the order of magnitude -8. Take a wide-field image of with an exposure of 20 – 30 seconds to capture an event. Regular observing of events brighter than magnitude -4 will provide useful practice for estimating the magnitude of very bright meteors and Fireballs.
Go to the “Heavens Above” website and set-up for your location for predictions.

Sunrise and Sunset.

Bedford.

Latitude 52° 6.9’N Longitude 0° 28.1’W

Date.	Rise.	Transit.	Set.
01	03 ^h 47 ^m	12 ^h 00 ^m	20 ^h 13 ^m
08	03 ^h 43 ^m	12 ^h 01 ^m	20 ^h 20 ^m
15	03 ^h 41 ^m	12 ^h 03 ^m	20 ^h 24 ^m
22	03 ^h 41 ^m	12 ^h 04 ^m	20 ^h 27 ^m
29	03 ^h 45 ^m	12 ^h 05 ^m	20 ^h 26 ^m

The Sun.

To prevent permanent damage to your eyes avoid looking at the Sun directly and never with binoculars or a telescope unless special (expensive!) filters are used. The safest way is the simplest – project the image of the Sun onto grey or white card. Take care if using telescopes with any plastic components. Short projection times only as damage may result. If in doubt – don't!

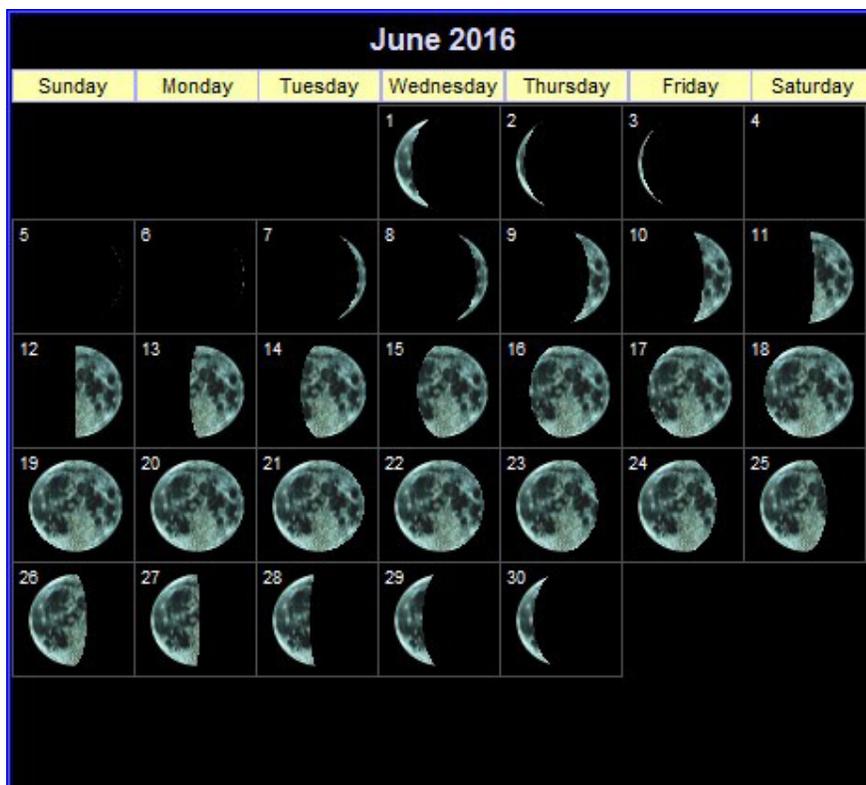
If you are able to observe in h-alpha the rewards are much greater.

Keep in touch with the Solar Dynamics Observatory satellite at <http://sdo.gsfc.nasa.gov/>
Add the “Spaceweather” and the “Soho Lasco C3” websites to your “favourite” websites.

The Moon.

Phases:

New	05 ^d 03 ^h 00 ^m	
First Quarter	12 ^d 08 ^h 10 ^m	
Full	20 ^d 11 ^h 02 ^m	Coincides with the Solstice (22 ^h 34 ^m).
Last Quarter	27 ^d 18 ^h 19 ^m	



Produced using LunarPhase Pro.

Apsides:

Perigee	03 ^d 11 ^h	Diameter. 33' 05"	Distance. 361,141km.
Apogee	15 ^d 12 ^h	Diameter. 30' 30"	Distance. 405,019km.

The Moon continued.

For northern observers:

The waxing crescent Moon is very well placed.

The waxing gibbous Moon is becoming less well placed.

The Full Moon is not well placed. It occurs within hours of the Solstice.

The waning gibbous Moon is less well placed.

The waning crescent Moon is well placed.

Observe the regions along the terminator (sunrise and sunset on the Moon) where the low angle of the Sun highlights lunar topography. A basic lunar map is all you need to get started. *Sky & Telescopes* "Lunar 100 Card" is another good starting point. If you are starting out on photography and/or imaging the Moon provides an excellent target.

Lunar Occultations.

Unlike the gradual disappearance of a planet (small disc) a star vanishes instantly demonstrating that it is a point source of light as viewed from the earth. For all occultation events start observing 10 to 15 minutes before the predicted time to identify the required star and to allow for slightly different time if you are not at Greenwich. Use an accurate watch to record the time that *you* observe the occultation remembering that times are UT not BST. Disappearance is behind the dark limb (DD) of the Moon unless otherwise stated. Enter details in your observing log.

Further details of occultations can be found in current *BAA Handbook* and monthly periodicals such as *Astronomy Now* and *Sky at Night*.

Opportunities and Challenges.

On 3rd and 4th (very difficult) try locating the very thin crescent Moon very low in the NE dawn skies **before sunrise**.

On 6th (difficult) and 7th try locating the very thin crescent Moon in the NW evening twilight **after sunset**.

If you can take images of the above so much the better.

The Planets.

Mercury.

Not a favourable morning apparition for northern observers and unlikely to be spotted very low in ENE before sunrise.

Greatest Elongation W (24°) on 5th.

Moon close on 2nd.

Date.	Mag.	Dia.	Phase.	Rise.	Transit.	Set.
5	+0.56	8.2''	0.38	03 ^h 02 ^m	10 ^h 24 ^m	17 ^h 47 ^m
22	-0.79	5.8''	0.77	02 ^h 47 ^m	10 ^h 54 ^m	19 ^h 02 ^m

Venus.

Not observable.

Superior Conjunction on 6th.

Its progress may be followed on the SOHO website.

Date.	Mag.	Dia.	Phase.	Rise.	Transit.	Set.
-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Mars.

Just passed Opposition (22nd May) so available for observation and/or imaging throughout the short hours of darkness although its low declination does not favour northern observers.

Reasonable disc size so make the most of observing/imaging opportunities.

A wide-field image will capture Mars, Saturn and Antares in the same field.

Moon close on 16th & 17th.

Date.	Mag.	Dia.	Phase.	Rise.	Transit.	Set.
01	-2.0	19''	0.99	18 ^h 58 ^m	23 ^h 01 ^m	03 ^h 08 ^m
30	-1.4	16''	0.93	16 ^h 39 ^m	20 ^h 44 ^m	00 ^h 54 ^m

The Mars **Curiosity** and **Opportunity** rovers continue their explorations and return excellent data and images from the Martian surface.

Mission details and progress are on the appropriate NASA websites.

Jupiter.

An early evening object presenting a fine aspect in southern Leo.

Heading into evening twilight so make the most of the few weeks to observe and/or image.

Moon close on 11th.

See BAA *Handbook* and/or monthly periodicals details and for other satellite phenomena.

Date.	Mag.	Dia.	Phase.	Rise.	Transit.	Set.
01	-2.0	37''	-	11 ^h 41 ^m	18 ^h 22 ^m	01 ^h 08 ^m
30	-1.9	34''	-	10 ^h 04 ^m	16 ^h 39 ^m	23 ^h 14 ^m

Saturn.

At Opposition on 3rd so available for observation and/or imaging throughout the short hours of darkness although its low declination does not favour northern observers.

Fine aspect with the rings wide “open” and presents an excellent target for imaging.

It is well worth visual observing and imaging around the days of opposition as the rings appear much brighter – the “**Seeliger effect**”. The reasons for the phenomenon are complex involving backscatter of sunlight, polarization and interference effects.

A wide-field image will capture Mars, Saturn and Antares in the same field.

See BAA *Handbook* and/or monthly periodicals for satellite phenomena.

Moon close on 18th.

Date.	Mag.	Dia.	Phase.	Rise.	Transit.	Set.
01	+0.0	19”	-	19 ^h 58 ^m	00 ^h 11 ^m	04 ^h 19 ^m
03	+0.0	18”	-	19 ^h 50 ^m	23 ^h 58 ^m	04 ^h 11 ^m
30	+0.1	18”	-	17 ^h 54 ^m	22 ^h 04 ^m	02 ^h 18 ^m

Don’t forget to visit the Cassini mission websites at <http://saturn.jpl.nasa.gov> and <http://ciclops.org>

Uranus.

Emerging low in E predawn skies at the end of the month.

Moon close 1st & 29th.

Date.	Mag.	Dia.	Phase.	Rise.	Transit.	Set.
01	+5.9	3.4”	-	02 ^h 01 ^m	08 ^h 48 ^m	15 ^h 34 ^m
30	+5.8	3.5”	-	00 ^h 09 ^m	06 ^h 57 ^m	13 ^h 48 ^m

Neptune.

Emerging low in the SE predawn skies.

It is occulted by the Moon on the 25th/26th but unfortunately for UK observers it is rising at the time.

Moon close 26th.

Date.	Mag.	Dia.	Phase.	Rise.	Transit.	Set.
01	+7.9	2.3”	-	00 ^h 54 ^m	06 ^h 16 ^m	11 ^h 38 ^m
30	+7.9	2.3”	-	22 ^h 56 ^m	04 ^h 22 ^m	09 ^h 44 ^m

Dwarf Planets.

- Ceres.** Emerging into predawn skies at end of month. Mag +8.4 to +8.1. Keep in touch with DAWN website.
- Eris.** Emerging into predawn skies at end of month.
- Haumea.** A CCD target located in Bootes.
- MakeMake.** A CCD target in Coma Berenices.
- Pluto.** A mag +14 CCD target in Sagittarius. Heading towards opposition on 7th July.

Asteroids. (Approx Mag +10.5 or brighter).

- Vesta (4).** Not observable as too close to the Sun.
- Flora (8).** Located in Ophiuchus east of Saturn. Mag +9.4 at opposition on 11th. Passes 10' S of globular cluster NGC6356 (+8.2) on 9th and N of gc M9 (+7.8) on 11th. Note the gc's are within same 1° field so a series of images over a few nights around opposition will capture an interesting record of its motion through this field. The first peak of the Ophiuchids (see below) occurs on 10th. With Saturn available for imaging events in this area may be worth getting up early for. If clear!
- Interamnia (704).** Located in Sagittarius. Mag +10.4 at opposition on 18th.
- Eleonora (354).** Located in Serpens Cauda. Mag +10.7 at opposition on 26th.

Charts and details of asteroids one month either side of opposition are available at:

http://britastro.org/computing/charts_asteroid.html

See also the *BAA Handbook* and/or monthly periodicals.

Comets.

No "bright" comets at present.

Charts and details of selected comets are available at:

http://britastro.org/computing/charts_comet.html

See also the *BAA Handbook* and/or monthly periodicals.

Meteor Showers.

The **Ophiuchids** are active from mid May to July with two peaks of activity on 10th June, ZHR = 5, and 20th, ZHR = 5. Weak activity and best seen by southern observers.

The **June Lyrids** are active from 11th to 21st with peak activity on the night of 15th/16th, ZHR = 8. Following high activity in the 1960s rates rapidly declined. Not now well observed so with a New Moon on 16th will be worth observation (if clear!) to ascertain current rates.

There are always **sporadic** events and the chance of a brilliant fireball. The latter should be recorded and reported.

Near Earth Objects.

Please refer to www.spaceweather.com for updates.

Eclipses.

No eclipses this month.

2. The Deep Sky.

Abbreviations used.

M = Messier object (Shown in **bold**).

NGC = New General Catalogue. IC = Index Catalogue (Extension of the NGC).

ds = double star. ts = triple star. ms = multiple star. vs = variable star.

gc = globular cluster. oc = open cluster. pn = planetary nebula.

en = emission nebula. rn = reflection nebula. sg = spiral galaxy.

eg = elliptical galaxy. lg = lenticular galaxy. ir = irregular galaxy.

pg = peculiar galaxy. snr = super nova remnant. ly = light year.

The magnitude of an object, excluding double, triple, multiple and variable stars, is shown in brackets e.g. (6.5).

All magnitudes are + unless otherwise shown.

2.1 Variable Stars of the month.

Beta (β) Persei, Algol. Range 2.2 to 3.4, period 2.7 days. Becoming less well placed for observation as Perseus sinks into the NW by late evening. A Minima at “social hours” occurs on 12^d 22.2^h.

Delta (δ) Cephei. Range 3.5 to 4.4, period 5.37 days. The prototype for the Cepheid class of variable stars. Their period-luminosity relationship has led them to being used as “standard candles” in measuring distances to nearby galaxies.

Mu (μ) Cephei. Range 3.7 to 5.0, approximate period 755 days. A semi-regular variable star famous for its striking red colour being fittingly called “Herschel’s Garnet Star”. It is the reddest naked eye star visible from the northern hemisphere. Its colour may show signs of variability.

2.2 Double Stars of the month.

Epsilon Boo. See notes below.

Xi Boo. See notes below.

Nu Dra. See notes below.

Alpha Her. See notes below.

Kappa Her. See notes below.

Alpha Lib. See notes below.

Delta SerCp. See notes below.

Alpha Sco. See notes below.

Beta Sco. See notes below.

Alpha UMi. See notes below.

2.3 This Month's Constellations - Double Stars/Star Clusters/Nebulae/Galaxies.

Bootes (Boo).

Noted for the first magnitude star Arcturus, distinctly orange, which at magnitude -0.04 makes it the fourth brightest star in the sky (Sun excluded).

Kappa (κ) ds. 4.6/6.6; separation 13.4". White primary with bluish secondary.

Xi (ξ) ds. 4.7/7.0; separation 6.6". Yellow and reddish orange pair.

Epsilon (ε) ds. 2.9/4.9; separation 2.8". Contrasting yellow and bluish pair.

Mu (μ) ts. 4.3/7.0/7.6; separation AB 108.3", BC 2.3". A = yellowish, B = yellowish, C = orange.

Iota (ι) ds. 4.9/7.5; separation 38.5". Yellowish primary with bluish secondary.

Pi (π) ds. 4.9/5.8; separation 5.6". Fine pair of white stars.

There are few bright star clusters, galaxies or nebulae to locate.

NGC5466 (9.1) gc. Although fairly large its low surface brightness object makes this a difficult object in small telescopes. Locate M3 in Canes Venatici and move 40' east.

NGC5248 (10.2) sg. The brightest galaxy in Bootes. Bright round hub surrounded by oval haze. Excellent target for large telescopes (12"+) from dark sites.

NGC5660 (11.8) sg. 1° NW of the brighter NGC5676 which should be located first.

NGC5676 (10.9) sg. Bright nucleus surrounded by slight haze.

NGC5669 (11.2) sg. About 1° SE of NGC5676. Barred spiral seen almost edge-on.

Corona Borealis (Cor).

An easily recognized attractive circlet of moderately bright stars.

Two variable stars of interest are the R CrB and T CrB.

R CrB is normally around 6th magnitude remaining almost constant for even periods of years. However it can abruptly plunge to 14th or 15th magnitude and then slowly recover to the norm, often with "relapses". Well worth a nightly check.

T CrB is a recurrent nova. Normally about 10th magnitude it can suddenly brighten without warning and reach magnitude 2 or 3 as in 1866 and 1946. Lesser "outbursts" occurred in 1963 and 1975. Another well worth monitoring.

Zeta (ζ) ds. 5.1/6.0; separation 6.3". Blue and green pair.

Sigma (σ) ds. 5.6/6.6; separation 7.1". Pale yellow and deep yellow pair.

Struve (Σ) 1932 ds. 7.3/7.4; separation 1.6". Close pair of yellow stars.

Draco (Dra).

Alpha (α) Thuban. Although only a third magnitude object, 5000 years ago Thuban held the distinction of being the Pole Star. Its designation alpha is strange as it is only the seventh brightest star in the constellation.

Mu (μ) ds. 5.6/5.7; separation 1.9". Pair of white stars.

Nu (ν) ds. 4.9/4.9; separation 61.9". Pair of bright white stars.

Psi (ψ) ds. 4.9/6.1; separation 30.3". Pair of yellowish stars.

16 & 17 ds. 5.4/5.5; separation 90.3". Pair of bright white stars.

40 & 41 ds. 5.7/6.1; separation 19.3". Pair of pale yellow stars.

Struve (Σ) 2155 ds. 6.8/10.1; separation 9.8". Pale yellow and blue pair.

NGC4236 (9.6) sg. Seen almost edge and low surface brightness makes it a test for moderate apertures.

NGC4319 (11.9) sg. Elongated haze with prominent core. A Quasar, Makarian 205 (14.5) lies 40" to the south.

Draco continued.

NGC5866 (**M102**) lg. Elongated object. One of the missing Messier objects.

NGC5907 (10.3) sg. Thin needle of light. A fine edge-on galaxy.

NGC6503 (10.2) sg. Distinctly elongated.

NGC6543 (8.1) pn. The Cats Eye Nebula. Bright small disc with greenish tint. 11th magnitude central star. Draco's "Showpiece object".

Hercules (Her).

Alpha (α) ds. 3.5/5.4 separation 4.7". Orange and blue. The primary is a semi regular variable 3.1 to 3.9 approx period 90 days.

Gamma (γ) ds. 3.8/9.8; separation 41.6". Unequally bright pair of yellow stars. Part of a triple system.

Delta (δ) ds. 3.1/8.2 separation 8.9". White primary with bluish-purple secondary. Part of a multiple system.

Kappa (κ) ds. 5.3/6.5; separation 28.4". Fine pair of yellow stars. Part of a triple system.

Mu (μ) ds. 3.4/10.1 separation 10.1". Yellow primary. Secondary 1" wide pair of red stars. Part of a quad system.

Rho (ρ) ds. 4.6/5.6 separation 4.1". White pair. Part of a triple system.

56 Herculis ds. 6.1/10.6 separation 18.1". Fine contrasting orange and blue pair.

100 Herculis ds. 5.9/6.0 separation 14.2". Matched pair of white stars.

NGC6205 (**M13**) (5.9) gc. Arguably one of the outstanding objects in the northern hemisphere. Just visible to the naked eye from dark sites it appears as a fuzzy blob in binoculars. It stands high power well and the outer edges begin to resolve into individual stars in a 4" (100mm) telescope. Increasing aperture brings greater rewards. Lord Rosse and others using the 72" at Birr Castle in the 19th century observed three dark rifts radiating from the centre. Later visual observers confirmed these. However with the advent of photography the rifts disappeared. In the 1950's the late Walter Scott Houston in his "Sky and Telescope" column revised interest in the "propeller". Responses indicated that visibility of the rifts depended on a careful balance of aperture and magnification. Today a dark sky is probably a key factor.

NGC6207 (11.6) sg. 40" to the NE of M13 and in the same field as a low power widefield eyepiece. This moderately bright galaxy is often overlooked due to the spectacular blaze of the much closer globular cluster.

NGC6210 (9.3) pn. Located about 4° NE of beta (β) Her.

NGC6229 (9.4) gc. Located about 7° NW of M13 and well worth locating and imaging.

NGC6341 (**M92**) (6.5) gc. Slightly fainter and smaller than M13 this globular cluster deserves equal attention. It starts to resolve in a 6" telescope at high power and becomes increasingly impressive with increased aperture.

The area around M13 contains a number of faint galaxies requiring a large (12"+) telescope to explore. Identity of the objects can prove interesting as some are wrongly labelled on some charts and catalogues.

Abell 2151. The Hercules Galaxy Cluster.

Libra (Lib).

Alpha (α) ds. 2.8/5.2 separation 231.0". White and yellow pair easily seen in binoculars.

Delta (δ) vs. 4.9 to 5.9 period 2.33 days. Algol-type eclipsing binary. Fall to minimum takes six hours.

Mu (μ) ds. 5.8/6.7 separation 1,8". Pair of white stars requiring high power and good seeing to split.

HN 28 ds. 5.7/8.0 separation 23.0". Beautiful bright orange and red pair. Fine object for small telescopes.

Struve (Σ) 1962 ds. 6.5/6.6 separation 11.9". Fine matched pair of yellow stars.

NGC5812 (11.2) eg. Circular halo with stellar nucleus.

NGC5878 (11.5) sg. Thin oval haze with stellar nucleus.

NGC5897 (8.6) gc. Diffuse halo with poorly concentrated core.

NGC5898 + NGC5903 (11.4/11.1) sg + sg. Visible in the same field of view 5898 has a round halo with slightly brighter nucleus whereas 5903 is elongated halo with a stellar nucleus.

Ophiuchus (Oph).

Barnard's Star. (9.5). Located at R.A. 17h 58m Dec. +04° 41m. A red dwarf with the largest proper motion of any star in the sky as seen from the Earth.

Lambda (λ) ds. 4.2/5.2 separation 1.5". White and pale yellow pair. Part of a quadruple system.

Omicron (\omicron) ds. 5.4/6.9 separation 10.3". Fine contrasting pair of orange and yellow stars.

Rho (ρ) ds.5.3/6.0 separation 3.1". Close pair of blue stars.

NGC6171 (**M107**) (8.1) gc. Granular texture with brighter core in small apertures.

NGC6218 (**M12**) (6.6) gc. Outer reaches resolved in medium apertures showing with a small core.

NGC6254 (**M10**) (6.6) gc. Granular halo with bright core. Outer reaches resolved in small apertures.

NGC6266 (**M62**) (6.7) gc. Bright off centre core with fainter halo.

NGC6273 (**M19**) (7.1) gc. Small bright globular. Outer reaches begin to resolve in small apertures.

NGC6333 (**M9**) (7.9) gc. Large bright core. Nearby is the dark nebula Barnard 64.

NGC6356 (8.4) gc. About 1° NE of M9. Requires large apertures to resolve.

NGC6402 (**M14**) (7.6) gc. Requires large aperture to resolve. The most distant of the Messier gc's.

NGC6572 (8.1) pn. Fine bright greenish object.

NGC6633 (4.6) oc. Large, bright but loose open cluster well suited for small aperture.

Scorpius (Sco).

Alpha (α) Antares ds. 1.2/5.4 separation 2.9". Red-orange primary with fainter greenish companion. Difficult to split requiring very good seeing conditions.

Beta (β) ds. 2.6/4.9 separation 13.6". Blue-white primary with pale blue companion. Fine object for small telescopes.

Nu (ν) 4.3/6.8 separation 2.3" ds. Pair of white stars requiring good seeing conditions to split.

NGC6093 (**M80**) (7.2) gc. Fine object unfortunately not well seen from the UK.

NGC6121 (**M4**) (5.9) Fine globular unfortunately not well seen from the UK.

NGC6405 (**M6**) (4.2) oc. Unfortunately from the UK it is difficult to observe as it briefly creeps above the southern horizon.

NGC6475 (**M7**) (3.3) oc. Another fine object. Unfortunately like M6 it is difficult to observe from the UK as it briefly creeps above the southern horizon.

Serpens Caput (SerCp).

Beta (β) ds. 3.7/9.9; separation 30.6". Pale yellow primary with blue secondary.

Delta (δ) ds. 4.2/5.2; separation 4.4". Fine pair of yellow stars.

5 Serpentis ds. 5.1/10.1; separation 11.2". Yellow primary with reddish secondary. Situated in same field as M5.

NGC5904 (**M5**) (5.8) gc. Splendid object which stands high magnification.

NGC5921 (10.8) sg. Faint oval halo with bright core.

Ursa Minor (UMI).

This faint, small kite shaped constellation lies between Ursa Major and α UMi, Polaris the Pole Star. Polaris marks the end of the tail.

Eta (η) at magnitude 4.9 is often used as a convenient test of sky conditions.

Alpha (α) Polaris ds. 2.0/8.2; separation 18.4".

Pi-1 (π^1) ds. 6.6/7.3; separation 31.1". Yellow primary with white companion.

h (Herschel) 2682 ts. 6.7/9.7; separation 26.3". White primary with two blue companions.

PVH.