

“ $\Omega > 1$ ”

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

November 2017.

Our sincere apologies for the late posting of the October “Sky-Notes” on the Club Website. The first issue that was forwarded at the end of September is still circulating somewhere in cyberspace and there was a bit of delay in posting the reissue. We hope this did not spoil your observing.

Our heartiest congratulations to Sheridan Williams on being awarded the BAA’s “Lydia Brown Award”. The award is made “in recognition of meritorious service to the Association in an honorary capacity over many years”. The presentation was made at the recent BAA AGM held on 25th October.

Forthcoming Meetings.

OUAC Clubnight.

The next OUAC “Clubnight” is on Tuesday 7th November.

BAA meetings.

Details of BAA meetings at: www.britastro.org

Highlights of the Month.

5th & 12th Peaks of the **Taurids** meteor shower which is active throughout the month.

13th Very close conjunction (0.3°) between Venus and Jupiter on 13th. Very low in the ESE dawn sky. **Take great care if sweeping with binoculars as sunrise is not far away.**

17th Peak of **Leonids** meteor shower. Moonlight does not interfere!

24th Mercury reaches Greatest Elongation E (22°).

Mercury is difficult to spot low in the SW evening twilight.

Venus low in ESE dawn sky.

Mars is slowly gaining height in the E dawn/predawn sky.

Jupiter reappears low in ESE dawn sky mid-month.

Uranus is well placed for evening and early hour observation.

Neptune is well placed for evening observation.

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 their website and download it and the associated user manual.

1. The Solar system.

**Note all times shown are UT.
Add one hour when British Summer Time is in operation.**

Earth.

Aurora.

Long hours of darkness improve 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.

ISS.

The ISS makes a series of morning passes during the first half 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 -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. Add to your “favourites”.

Sunrise and Sunset.

Bedford.

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

Date.	Rise.	Transit.	Set.
01	06 ^h 57 ^m	11 ^h 45 ^m	16 ^h 33 ^m
08	07 ^h 10 ^m	11 ^h 45 ^m	16 ^h 21 ^m
15	07 ^h 22 ^m	11 ^h 46 ^m	16 ^h 10 ^m
22	07 ^h 34 ^m	11 ^h 48 ^m	16 ^h 01 ^m
29	07 ^h 45 ^m	11 ^h 50 ^m	15 ^h 55 ^m

Produced using “Starry Night Pro”.

The Sun.

Observing.

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.

Currently (late October) low activity.

If you have or have access to observe in h-alpha the rewards are much greater.

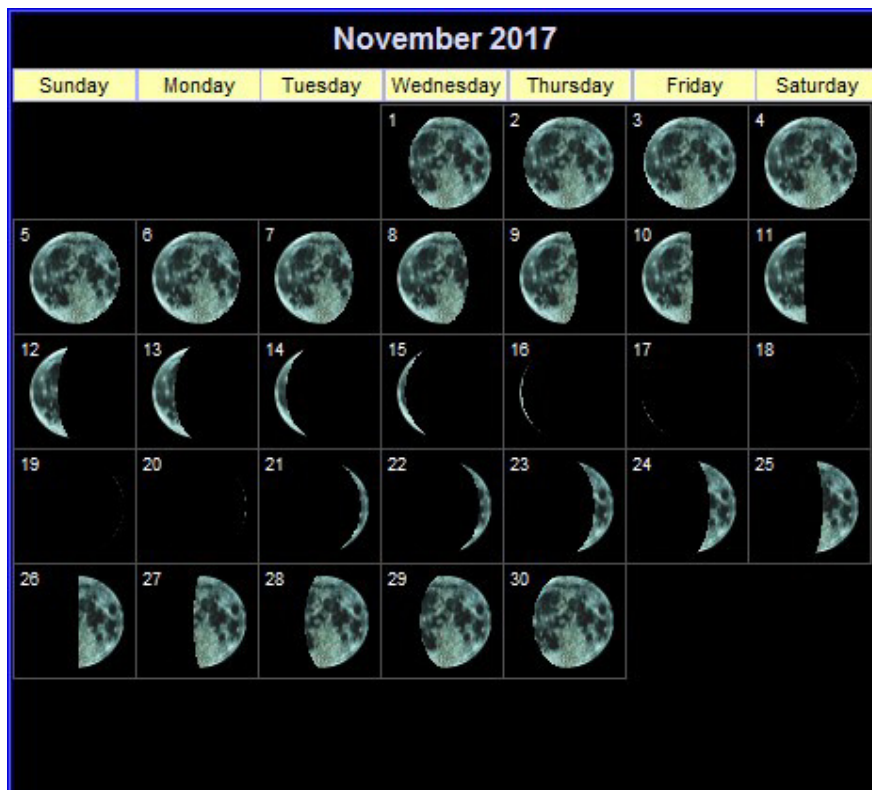
Keep in touch with the Solar Dynamics Observatory satellite at <http://sdo.gsfc.nasa.gov/>

Add the “Spaceweather” and the “Soho Lasco C3” websites to your “favourite” websites.

The Moon.

Phases:

Full	04 ^d 05 ^h 23 ^m
Last quarter	10 ^d 20 ^h 10 ^m
New	18 ^d 11 ^h 42 ^m
First quarter	26 ^d 17 ^h 03 ^m



Produced using “LunarPhase Pro”.

The Moon continued.

Apsides:

Perigee	06 ^d 00 ^h	Diameter. 33' 04"	Distance. 361,437km.
Apogee	21 ^d 18 ^h	Diameter. 29' 55"	Distance. 406,130km.

Observing.

For northern observers:

- The waxing crescent Moon is not well placed.
- The waxing gibbous Moon is well placed.
- The Full Moon is very well placed.
- The waning gibbous Moon is very 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. The Moon provides an excellent target if you are starting out on astronomical photography and/or imaging.

Imaging and Observing Opportunities.

On 16th and 17th try locating the very thin crescent Moon very low in the E dawn skies **before sunrise**.

On 19th and 20th try locating the very thin crescent Moon SW evening twilight **after sunset**.
If you can take images of the above so much the better.

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. Enter details in your observing log.

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

The Planets.

Mercury.

Continues a poor evening apparition for northern observers as it hugs the SW horizon.

Greatest Elongation E (22°) on 24th.

3° S of Saturn on 28th. Very difficult in SW evening twilight

Wait until the Sun has completely set if sweeping with binoculars!

Moon close on 19th and 20th.

Date.	Mag.	Dia.	Phase.	Rise.	Transit.	Set.
01	-0.41	5.0''	0.92	08 ^h 29 ^m	12 ^h 41 ^m	16 ^h 54 ^m
24	-0.30	6.8''	0.62	09 ^h 50 ^m	13 ^h 22 ^m	16 ^h 54 ^m
30	0.00	7.7''	0.42	09 ^h 42 ^m	13 ^h 18 ^m	16 ^h 54 ^m

Venus.

Low in ESE dawn sky.

Very close conjunction (0.3°) with Jupiter on 13th. Take great care if sweeping with binoculars as sunrise is not far away!

Moon close on 17th.

Date.	Mag.	Dia.	Phase.	Rise.	Transit.	Set.
01	-3.9	10''	0.96	05 ^h 17 ^m	10 ^h 43 ^m	16 ^h 09 ^m
30	-3.9	10''	0.99	06 ^h 52 ^m	11 ^h 11 ^m	15 ^h 29 ^m

Mars.

Slowly gaining height in the E predawn sky.

Moon close on 14th.

Date.	Mag.	Dia.	Phase.	Rise.	Transit.	Set.
01	+1.8	3.9''	0.97	03 ^h 46 ^m	09 ^h 42 ^m	15 ^h 38 ^m
30	+1.7	4.2''	0.95	03 ^h 36 ^m	08 ^h 56 ^m	14 ^h 15 ^m

The Mars **Curiosity** and **Opportunity** rovers continue their explorations returning excellent data and images.

Mission details and progress are on the appropriate NASA websites.

Jupiter.

Reappears low in ESE dawn during second week of the month.

Very close conjunction (0.3°) with Venus on 13th. Take great care if sweeping with binoculars as sunrise is not far away!

Moon close on 16th.

Date.	Mag.	Dia.	Rise.	Transit.	Set.
13	-1.7	31''	05 ^h 58 ^m	10 ^h 52 ^m	15 ^h 46 ^m
30	-1.7	31''	05 ^h 12 ^m	09 ^h 59 ^m	14 ^h 47 ^m

Saturn.

Almost lost in SW evening twilight at the end of the month.

3° N of Mercury on 28th. Very difficult in SW evening twilight. **Wait until the Sun has completely set if sweeping with binoculars!**

Moon close on 20th.

Date.	Mag.	Dia.	Rise.	Transit.	Set.
01	+0.5	15''	10 ^h 58 ^m	14 ^h 55 ^m	18 ^h 51 ^m
30	+0.5	15''	09 ^h 18 ^m	13 ^h 13 ^m	17 ^h 09 ^m

Even though the spacecraft is no more don't forget to visit the Cassini mission websites at <http://saturn.jpl.nasa.gov> and <http://ciclops.org>

Uranus.

Located in Pisces and well placed for long hours of observation.

Moon close on 3rd and 30th.

Date.	Mag.	Dia.	Rise.	Transit.	Set.
01	+5.7	3.7''	16 ^h 01 ^m	22 ^h 53 ^m	05 ^h 50 ^m
30	+5.7	3.7''	14 ^h 05 ^m	20 ^h 56 ^m	03 ^h 50 ^m

Neptune.

Well placed in the SW for early to mid evening observation.

At mag +13.5 Neptune's largest satellite Triton provides a good challenge for 8" telescopes under favourable sky conditions and when Triton is at max elongation E or W of Neptune. Use a high magnification - x200 or greater. Use "Stellarium" (Freeware) or similar software to determine favourable E and W elongations.

Moon close on 26th and 27th.

Date.	Mag.	Dia.	Rise.	Transit.	Set.
01	+7.9	2.3''	14 ^h 50 ^m	20 ^h 10 ^m	01 ^h 35 ^m
30	+7.9	2.3''	12 ^h 55 ^m	18 ^h 16 ^m	23 ^h 36 ^m

Dwarf Planets.

Ceres. Located in Cancer about 6° NE of M44 at the beginning of the month. Mag +7.4 brightening to +7.0 during the month.

Eris. A mag +18.7 target located in Cetus.

Haumea. A mag +17.3 CCD target located in Bootes, about 5° W of Arcturus. Becoming lost in WNW evening twilight.

MakeMake. A mag +17 CCD target in Coma Berenices. Low in the E predawn skies.

Pluto. Mag +14.5 object located in Sagittarius. Sinking into the early evening SW sky.

Asteroids. (Approx mag +10.5 or brighter).

- Vesta (4).** A mag +7.5 object located in Virgo. Reappears low in SE predawn sky about 4° NE of Venus at the beginning of the month.
- Iris (7).** Located in Aries. Mag +9.6 just past opposition on 30th October.
- Herculina (532).** Located in Eridanus. Mag +10.4 at opposition on 2nd.
- Nysa (44).** Located in Cetus. Mag +9.6 at opposition on 3rd.
- Isis (42).** Located in Taurus. Mag +10.4 at opposition on 17th.
- Massalia (20).** An approx mag +9.5 object located in Gemini. On the night of 16th/17th from a track across central England, including Bedford and MK, it is predicted to occult a mag +9.2 star about 01:30 – 01:35. The occultation may last approx 45 seconds depending on your location. Useful article in the November issue of *Astronomy Now*.

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.

Comet 24P/Schaumasse. A morning object moving from Leo into Virgo during the month. On 3rd it will be just south of the “Leo Triplet” of galaxies M65, M66 and NGC3628. It reaches perihelion on 16th. Approx mag +10.5 throughout the month.

Comet 62P/Tsuchinshan. A morning object following a similar track to 24P (see above) as it moves through Leo. On 11th it passes between Galaxies M105 and M96. Approx mag +12.

Comet 2017 O1 (ASASSN). A circumpolar object moving from Camelopardalis into Ursa Minor towards Polaris. Predicted to be 8th to 9th magnitude so may be visible in binoculars from a dark site.

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 **Taurids** continue activity during November. Double radiant with two peaks on 5th (S) - ZHR = 10, and 12th (N) - ZHR = 10. Slow meteors with “bright events” possible.

The **Leonids** are active from the 15th to 20th with narrow peak activity on 17th 19^h, ZHR = 20. Very favourable as Moonlight does not interfere.

There are always **sporadic** events and the chance of a brilliant fireball. The latter should be recorded and reported. See earlier note for using Iridium Flares as magnitude comparisons for “Bright Events”.

Near Earth Objects.

Please refer to www.spaceweather.com for updates.

Eclipses.

No Eclipses this month.

2. 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. Well placed for evening observation. Minima at “social hours” occurs on 13^d 22.0^h and 16^d 18.8^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.

Omicron (\omicron) Ceta, Mira. Slowly brightening from +9.3 when at minimum in September.

2.2 Double Stars of the month.

Gamma And. See notes below.

Gamma Ari. See notes below.

Struve (Σ) 326 Ari. See notes below.

Alpha Cas. See notes below.

Iota Cas. See notes below.

Eta Cas. See notes below.

Sigma Cas. See notes below.

Delta Cep. See notes below.

Struve (Σ) 2816 & 2819 Cep. See notes below.

Struve (Σ) 2840 Cep. See notes below.

8 Lac. Quadruple system. See notes below.

Eta Peg. See notes below.

Pi^{1&2} Peg. See notes below.

57 Peg. See notes below.

Zeta Psc. See notes below.

35 Psc. See notes below.

51Psc. See notes below.

Iota Tri. See notes below.

Struve (Σ) 239 Tri. See notes below.

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

Andromeda (And).

Gamma (γ) Almach (2.2, 5.1) is a fine double star. The brighter component is golden-yellow with its companion a greenish-blue. Arguably second only to Albiro in Cygnus.

NGC205 (**M110**) (8.0) eg. A satellite galaxy of M31 visible as an elongated "smudge" in small telescopes.

NGC221 (**M32**) (8.2) eg. A satellite galaxy of M31. Visible as a fuzzy star in small telescopes.

NGC224 (**M31**) (3.5) sg. The Great Andromeda Spiral Nebula. Increasing aperture reveals more and more detail although increasingly smaller areas of the galaxy fill the eyepiece. 8" telescopes should reveal NGC206 as a hazy patch. It is a large area of star formation. 12" scopes will reveal one or two of M31's large population of globular clusters.

NGC404 (11.9) lg. Located 6' NW of β And. The 2nd magnitude star tends to drown the faint glow of the galaxy. Use high power to push the star out of the field of view for best results.

NGC752 (5.7) oc This large open cluster is located about 4 degrees south of γ .

NGC891 (10.1) sg. Located about 3 degrees east of γ is seen almost edge on. Bright central bulge. Moderate apertures will reveal a narrow dust lane bisecting the long axis. A fine object.

NGC7640 (12.5) sg. Seen nearly edge-on.

NGC7662 (8.6) pn. "The Blue Snowball". Rather small making it difficult to distinguish from nearby faint stars. High magnification on an 8" telescope will reveal an elliptical ring with a dark centre. Large apertures will show a faint second outer ring of nebulosity and the 13th magnitude central star.

Aries (Ari).

Gamma (γ) (4.8/4.8 separation 7.7") ds. Fine equally bright bluish-white pair of stars. Accidentally discovered by Robert Hooke in 1664 while searching for a comet.

Lambda (λ) (4.9/7.7 sep. 37.4") ds. Wide pair of pale yellow and pale blue stars.

Struve (Σ)326. (7.6/9.8 sep. 5.9") ds. Beautiful orange and dull red pair of stars.

NGC772 (10.3) sg. Located almost 2° ESE of γ .

NGC877 (11.9) sg.

NGC972 (11.4) sg.

Cassiopeia (Cas).

Alpha (α) (2.2/8.9 sep. 64.4") ds. Fine orange and blue pair. Part of a multiple system.

Iota (ι) (4.6/6.9/8.4 sep. AB 2.5", AC 7.2") ts. Beautiful white, yellow and blue triple system.

Eta (η) (3.4/7.5 sep. 12.9") ds. Superb gold and garnet pair. The colours are very subjective. What do you see?

Sigma (σ) (5.0/7.1 sep. 3.0") ds. Bluish white and yellow pair in a superb field.

NGC129 (6.5) oc.

NGC147 (9.3) eg. A satellite galaxy of M31.

NGC185 (9.2) eg. A satellite galaxy of M31.

NGC278 (10.9) eg. Located a few degrees SE of NGC185.

NGC457 (6.4) oc.

NGC581 (**M103**) (7.4) oc. Fine object.

NGC7654 (**M52**) (6.9) oc. Fine rich cluster.

NGC7789 (6.7) oc.

IC1805 (6.5) oc.

IC1848 (6.5) oc.

Cepheus (Cep).

Delta (δ) Cephei, 3.5 to 4.4 over a period 5.37 days, is the prototype for the Cepheid class of variable stars which because of their period-luminosity relationship has lead them to being used as "standard candles" in measuring distances to nearby galaxies. Pale blue +6.1 companion.

Mu (μ) Cephei 3.7 to 5.0 approximate period 755 days is a semi-regular variable star. It is more 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.

Struve (Σ) 2816 ts (5.7/7.5/7.5, sep 12"/20"). Fine triple with Struve (Σ) 2819 ds (7.4/8.6, sep 13") in same field. All contained in the large, sparse and nebulous open cluster IC 1396!

Struve (Σ) 2840 ds (5.6/6.4, sep 18"). Very fine greenish/bluish pair.

Open clusters - NGC188 (8.1), NGC6939 (7.8), NGC7510 (7.9), NGC7762 (10.0). Planetary Nebula NGC40 (10.7).

Spiral galaxy NGC6946 (8.9) in the same 1° field as oc NGC6939. Two types of object for the price of one!

The faint reflection nebula NGC7023 and emission nebula IC 1396 provide a challenge to the observer. A dark clear sky is essential.

Lacerta (Lac).

Struve (Σ) 2876 (7.8, 9.3 sep 11.8") ds. Fine blue and white double.

Struve (Σ) 2894 (6.1, 8.3 sep. 15.6") ds. Yellow primary, blue secondary.

Struve (Σ) 2902 (7.6, 8.5 sep. 6.4") ds. Yellow and white double.

8 Lacertae = Struve (Σ) 2922 (5.7, 6.5 sep. 22.4") Multiple star. Brightest four components are white/blueish white. Has been described as a poor open cluster.

O Struve (Σ) 475 (6.8, 10.8 sep. 15.5") ds. White primary with faint blue companion.

BL Lacertae (14 to 17). Prototype for class of quasi-stellar object (QSO).

Pegasus (Peg).

Eta (η) 2.9/9.9 separation 90.4". Binocular object. Yellow and blue components but telescope required to see colour of secondary. Herschel's "Pendulum Star" - tap telescope gently for the effect.

Pi⁻¹/Pi⁻² (π^{-1}/π^{-2}) 5.6/4.3 separation 7'). Fine binocular object. Pi⁻¹ is a multiple system with 4 companions of 10th to 12th magnitude.

51 Pegasi (5.5). Identify this star for interest as the first sun-like star discovered in October 1995 to have an "exoplanet". The planet was original named "51 Pegasi b" but in December 2015 following a process of public nomination the IAU announced the winning name was **Dimidium**.

57 Pegasi. 5.1/9.7 separation 32.6". Beautiful orange primary with blue companion.

NGC7078 (**M15**) (6.3) gc superb object.

NGC7331 (9.5) sg. Seen almost edge on.

About half a degree south is the fascinating group of galaxies "Stephan's Quintet". The brightest member of the group is NGC7320 (12.7).

Many happy hours can be spent wandering around "The Square" to locate many moderately bright galaxies. Use a star atlas such as the excellent "Sky Atlas 2000" to plan your journey.

Continued on next page.

Pisces (Psc).

Alpha (α) (4.2/5.1 sep. 1.5") ds. Requires a large aperture telescope using high magnification to split this pair of bluish-white stars.

Zeta (ζ) (5.6/6.2 sep. 23") ds. Fine white and yellow pair of stars.

35 (6.0/7.6 sep 7.6") ds. Fine yellow and blue pair.

51 (5.7/9.5 sep. 27.5") ds. Glorious bluish and greenish pair of stars.

65 (6.3/6.3 sep 4.4") ds. Fine matched pair of pale yellow stars.

Wolf 28 (12.3). Van Maanen's Star. One of the few white dwarf stars visible in amateur telescopes.

NGC128 (11.8) sg. Brightest of a group of five galaxies.

NGC488 (10.3) sg. Elongated halo with brighter core.

NGC628 (**M74**) (9.4) sg. Seen face on and hence low surface brightness.

NGC7541 (11.7) sg. Elongated oval with bright core. 3' to the SW is NGC7537 (13.0)

Sculptor (Scl).

Unfortunately this constellation never rises very high for UK observers so that only brief opportunities are presented to track down some deep-sky gems which unfortunately are not seen at their best even from a dark site. I have taken declination -30° as the southern limit for objects. This is almost the declination of the first magnitude star Fomalhaut (+1.16) which will give you a marker as to how low these objects are even at their highest when due south. The suitable observation window is thus fairly restricted!

NGC24 (11.5) sg. Located about two-thirds the way between NGC253 and β Cet.

NGC253(7.1) sg. Seen highly inclined to our line of sight. Increasing magnification reveals mottling due to dust lanes. Head south for the best view of this gem.

NGC288 (8.1) gc. A loose globular which resolves readily with high power. The South Galactic Pole is about a 1° to the SW.

NGC613 (10.0) sg. Elongated and fairly bright.

Triangulum (Tri).

Iota (ι) (5.3/6.9 sep. 3.9") ds. Fine contrasting yellow and blue pair of stars.

Struve (Σ)239 (7.0/8.0 sep. 13.8") ds. Fine pale yellow and pale blue pair of stars.

NGC598 (**M33**) (5.7) sg. Viewed face-on and hence has a low surface brightness making it an elusive object. A good test for sky conditions using binoculars. From dark sites and under good seeing conditions it is just visible to the naked eye and vies with M31 as the most distant object visible to the naked eye. With 8"+ scopes try to locate the vast star cloud NGC604.

NGC672 (11.6) sg. A bright barred spiral galaxy seen somewhat edge-on.

NGC925 (12.0) sg. Steeply inclined to our line of sight makes it fairly bright. NGC598

P.V.H.