

Betelgeuse

Monthly newsletter of the East Oxford Astronomy Club
Issue 6: July 2026.



Natty Mark Samuels

Editorial

When I think of ancient astronomers, like **Eudoxus** and **Aristarchus**; planets and celestial features from Greek mythology; pioneering lunar missions and more recent ones – such as **Artemis** - of Hellenistic nomenclature, it's a surprise to me, that only in 2026, a Greek has been chosen to join the **ESA** astronaut programme. **Adrianos Golemis**, is a doctor who has worked for ESA as a flight surgeon, researching astronaut health on long-term missions; he is expected to go into Space within the next two years.

We refer again to Greece, when we think of the **Summer Triangle**, because of **Vega**, one of the brightest stars in the evening sky. Orpheus played the lyre – Vega is in the **Lyra constellation** - beautifully, enhancing the life for one and all. Treat yourself and go out to **Chistlehampton Hill**, to take in the full glory of this asterism, which includes **Deneb** from Cygnus (Swan) and **Altair**, from Aquila (Eagle).

Talking of Chistlehampton Hill, one of the books I picked up recently from the Blackwell's treasury, is **Stargazing Around The World**, by **Valerie Stimac**, which introduces Dark Sky sites across the globe. It's like a tour of the national parks, from **Uluru-Kata Tjuta National Park** in Australia, to **NamibRand Nature Reserve**, in Namibia. Other countries featured include South Africa, Chile, Iceland and Canada. The designated dark sky locations nearest to Oxford, are the **Brecon Beacons** in Wales and **Exmoor National Park**, in Somerset and Devon.

One of the featured sites is **Jokulsarlon**, in aforementioned Iceland. Which brings me to the circular that the **East Oxford Astronomy Club** received. The circular spoke of a cruise, commencing in Dundee, going through the Shetland Isles, Iceland and Greenland. As well as astronomy workshops and talks during the thirteen day journey, the main feature of the cruise is to see the **Solar Eclipse, Perseid Showers** and the **Northern Lights**.

Finally, it gives me great pleasure to introduce **Thomas Azdajic**, at twelve years of age, the youngest member of the club; featured with his grandfather on the front cover of this issue. At the second session he came to, the club members gave the first reading of a one-act play – part of **Betelgeuse Theatre** – entitled **Senegal to Uranus; a country, a planet and Shakespeare**. During the interludes of chant, he gave beatbox accompaniment. Yes! A perfect example of the Betelgeuse Theatre mission. I feel proud to offer him his first publishing opportunity, with this informative, engaging article, **Time with Papa Tom**. Reading the piece, you sense that being a science writer is a future option for him. I give thanks to him for his contribution; and to his grandfather, for the inspiration.

Recommended reading

Johannes Kepler and the New Astronomy – James R.Voelkel

Recommended video

The Darkest Skies In The World: Stargazing in NamibRand Nature Reserve, Namibia
Travel Bucketlist

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Time with Papa Tom

I still remember the cool evening in March when I stood outside looking at the full moon through my telescope.

I was examining Oceanus Procellarum, also known as The Ocean of Storms, and it was quite beautiful. I also looked at the crater, Tycho, and the three seas: Tranquillitatis, Serenitatis, and Fecunditatis.

I used a small beginner Gskyer telescope. My grandfather who was with me, I call him Papa Tom, has a bigger and older telescope than mine, a Celestron (203x2030mm) that he bought in 1972. He used to work at NASA in the 1960s and he knows a lot about observing the night sky. We used his telescope to view Jupiter and its four Galilean moons, The Orion Nebula, and Betelgeuse. He pointed out that Betelgeuse is a red supergiant. I first noticed that it is the colour orange and that it pulses. What amazes me is that it is 10-20 times the mass of our sun!

As an earthbound stargazer, I also learnt about the annual seasons, time, and weather patterns. Stargazing also teaches me to appreciate the beauty of our own planet, to look up at this extraordinary universe, and to realise just how lucky we are to be able to explore space.

©Thomas Azdajic, 2026.



from *Wikipedia*

Hans Lippershey

maker of the first telescope, 1608.

Valles Marineris

We all like the stories of the one or ones who persevere, whether they be in folktale or real life, more so the latter. He, she or they, go through all the ups and downs, haven't learnt that perseverance carries a sense of triumph. So I like to hear the Viceroy's singing...

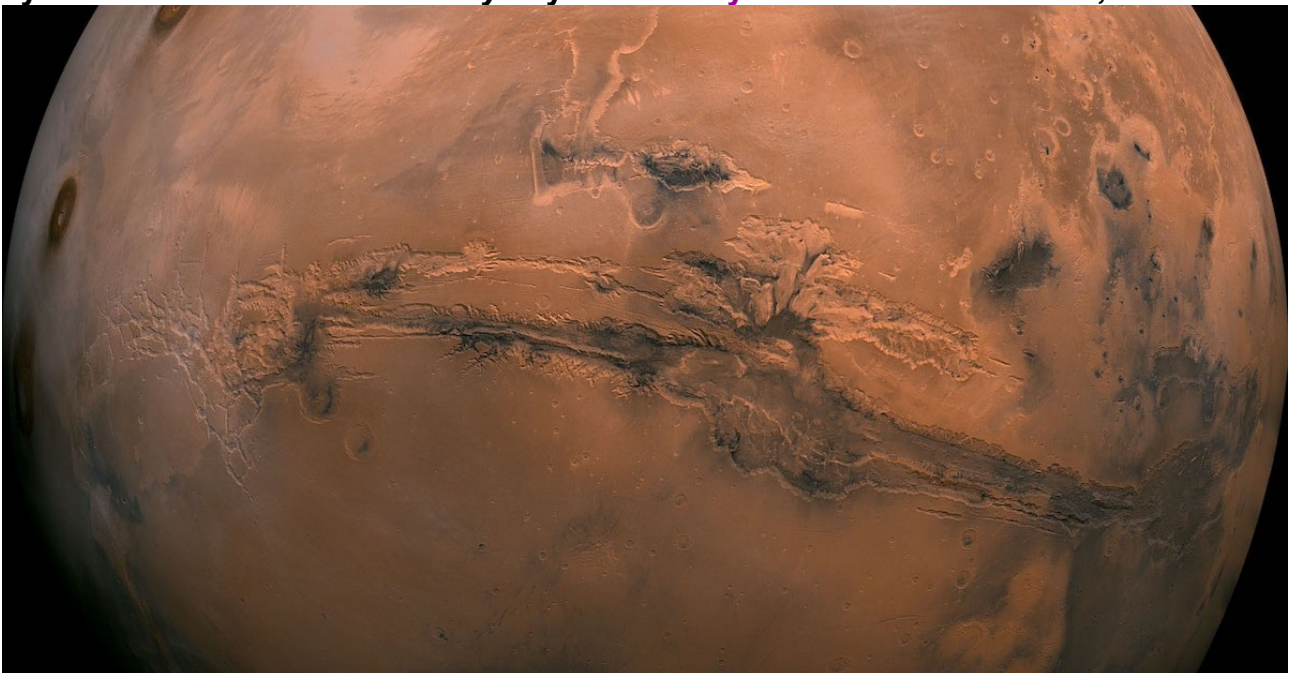
*Over hills and valleys,
Brother I will trod.*

I know Jamaica has got its hills and valleys, but nothing down here, compares to the Valles Marineris, located on Mars. Two thousand five hundred miles in length, it is five times as deep as our most famous chasm. It wasn't discovered till 1971, so that's why the Grand Canyon was so named, and its gargantuan cousin got Valles Marineris: biggest canyon in the solar system.

Mars has thousands of craters and I think of the great number of musicians Jamaica has produced; as well as producers, engineers, studios and of course, singers. And each went through their own experience in the music business; so some stepped aside, while others continued on their personal vision. Up another hill and into a valley; how will things go in this valley? Another studio, another producer.

Whatever they went through, I give thanks for the beautiful introduction, when they chant, "trodding on," like a mantra to waken the weary man. And there's Radics, tight as ever, Flabba dreaming on a bassline. Yes, giving thanks to Wesley Tinglin, Bunny Gayle and Daniel Bernard for some of the sweetest harmonies ever heard. Something we can carry with us, to lighten the load a little, whenever we face another vast expanse of Valles Marineris, that we have to cross. Trodding on.

Lyrics from *Over Hills and Valleys* by the Viceroy's: Brethren and Sistren, 1983.



from *My Modern Met* Valles Marineris

The Mustard Chant

One minute they classify you as a weed; next minute, you're in the plant celebrity bracket. How does it feel, to finally getting the recognition you naturally deserve? Now, I know you're part of the Brassicaceae Crew, from the Mustard Fraternity, but should I call you Thale Cress or Mouse Ear?

Arabidopsis,
I could give you a kiss:
First mustard to blossom in Space.

Now, we all know that 1982 was your big year. Well, I'm sure you've had other great years; but that was the one in which two Russian astronauts grew you aboard the Salyut 7 spacecraft. We're trying to grow an array of plants, such as the intention for berries, but you're the one, the very first: astronomers and botanists salute you.

Arabidopsis,
I could give you a kiss:
First mustard to blossom in Space.



from *Wikipedia*

Salyut 7

Both **The Mustard Chant** and **Valles Marineris** are a part of Betelgeuse Theatre. Mustard Chant comes from *Egusi Chant: Celestial Horticulture*. Valles Marineris is from *Rastronomy: the night sky through roots reggae*.

Community Astronomy

East Oxford Astronomy Club

Learn about the celestial objects; how they were formed, where they reside, how they interact. The pioneering astronomers, past and present. Space programs, telescopes and observatories. Folklore of the skies and cultural astronomy.

Third Tuesday of each month from September 15th: 6-7PM

Room P107

Leys College

**Blackbird Leys Road and Cuddesdon Way
Oxford
OX4 6HN**

Open to all twelve plus. Those under 18 must be accompanied by an adult.

A once monthly newsletter: *Betelgeuse*.

For further information please contact

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The problem is, most people believe that real science is too difficult and complicated for them to understand. But I don't think this is the case...most people can understand and appreciate the basic ideas if they are presented in a clear way without equations, which I believe is possible and which is something I have enjoyed trying to do throughout my life.

Stephen Hawking: from *Brief Answers to the Big Questions*