

Betelgeuse

Monthly newsletter of the East Oxford Astronomy Club
Issue 4: May 2026



from *BBC*

Artemis II

Moon Musings

from Betelgeuse Theatre

Natty Mark Samuels

Editorial

Great to see the **ARTEMIS II Crew** complete their mission and return safely. I had a couple of flashbacks during the Orion return. As it came hurtling down, it took me back to the scene in the 'Man Who Fell To Earth,' with the capsule containing **Bowie**, on its downward trajectory. The second flashback concerned the period after splashdown, waiting for Orion to open. I had a similar feeling of euphoric expectation, waiting for **Mandela** to walk out of Pollsmoor Jail. I celebrate the four who went further than anyone has gone before and all those who made it possible.

We hear of American, Chinese and European contributions to lunar research and future residence, but what of African input? **Africa2Moon** is a mission to put the first radio telescope on the Moon. This is a collaborative endeavour, between the Foundation for Space Development Africa, SANSA – South African National Space Agency – and SARAO: South African Radio Astronomy Observatory.

Thinking again of the recent mission, got me thinking of the Moon and the thought of human life there. Some of this thinking is expressed in Moon Musings: part one. These musings are part of **Betelgeuse Theatre**, a new initiative for astronomy education: for workshops and performance. To further enhance accessibility to astronomy and its enjoyment factor, I've put together a play, dialogues, chants, poetry, monologues and role play - more pieces will be added, as well as music – into an educational package. More about this can be seen on the Betelgeuse Theatre page of the website.

The first of the three pieces from Moon Musings, recognises the solitary existence of our satellite. The second – interspersing humour and pathos – speaks of the possible consequences of human residence on it. The third places a spotlight on **Neil Armstrong**.

Look out for developments, as NASA administrator **Jared Issacman** – with Trump support - is on a mission to have Pluto returned to planethood. Which means we might see some tussling between **NASA** and the **IAU (International Astronomical Union)**, the global astronomy body that oversees definitions and naming. After all, Pluto is the only planet discovered by an American; **Clyde Tombaugh**, in 1930. The story of a poor Kansas farm boy – his parents couldn't afford to send him to university – who became an astronomer of international renown.

Recommended book: Moons - Anna Gammon-Ross
Royal Greenwich Observatory

Recommended YouTube video: We Finally Find Out Why Charon is Broken
Astrum

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I

"High tide
Or in low tide,
I'll be by your side."

Those words resonate with me, partly because I'm the one who generates the tides! But I think of my Martian cousins, Phobos and Deimos. True, Deimos is drifting slowly away, but they've still got each other. Or Io and Europa, two of my Jovian cousins. Sometimes Io finds himself in the middle of rivalry, tug-of war variety, between Big J and Europa, but that's how family interaction goes sometimes. And look at Galatea and Despina, out there where its distant and cold, but surrounded by the rest of the Neptunian family.

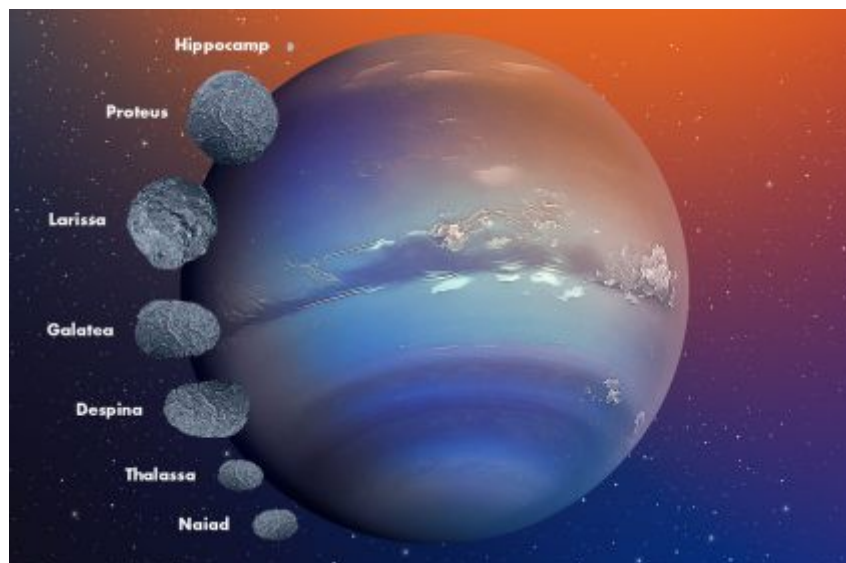
When I listen to those lyrics, I'm happy for my distant cousins, wishing them the best. But occasionally, those words generate a wave of loneliness, which passes over me and is gone: though I know it will return. Like the innocent one held in solitary confinement; or the teenage runaway, her first night on the street. Yes, I know of life down there. We get all kinds of transmissions up here, bringing knowledge of you; from satellites, orbiters, probes, telescopes, space walk conversations, radio signals and so on.

Sometimes, I wish there was someone to share the limelight with. You can't imagine the pressure I'm under! Those tides have got to be regular, so I've got to keep on moving. No time to dilly-dally round here. I'm the recipient of a sacred commission, so the cycles of life can continue.

Anyway. I think the writer of the verses above and below, must have known deep loneliness too; I think he must have put great value on true companionship, as he sings...

"High seas
Or in low seas,
I will be your friend."

Lyrics from *High Tide or Low Tide*, by Bob Marley: 1973



from *Orbital Today*

Neptune and seven of the satellites

II

Heard they're coming up here, touchdown time again. Hope they take some of their junk with them and refrain from depositing any more. I mean, am I some kind of celestial landfill?

There's me, offering so much, so where's the balance? Where's the reciprocity? For example, I offer the fisherman a daily cycle. Give light to lovers, as well as the teller of tales. I'm some kind of icon for the astronomer; enduring image for photographer and painter. So much I give them and what do I get in return? Municipal dump! I fear the dumping ground will grow.

So in time to come, I will say farewell to tranquility, when they come up here, permanently: the miners are coming. Who will enforce peace, when the battles begin? A poet will write 'The Titanium Tragedies:' and the headlines will state "Helium 3 Horrors."

Although loneliness comes in sometimes, I'd rather have that, than the companionship that I sense is coming.



from *Facebook*

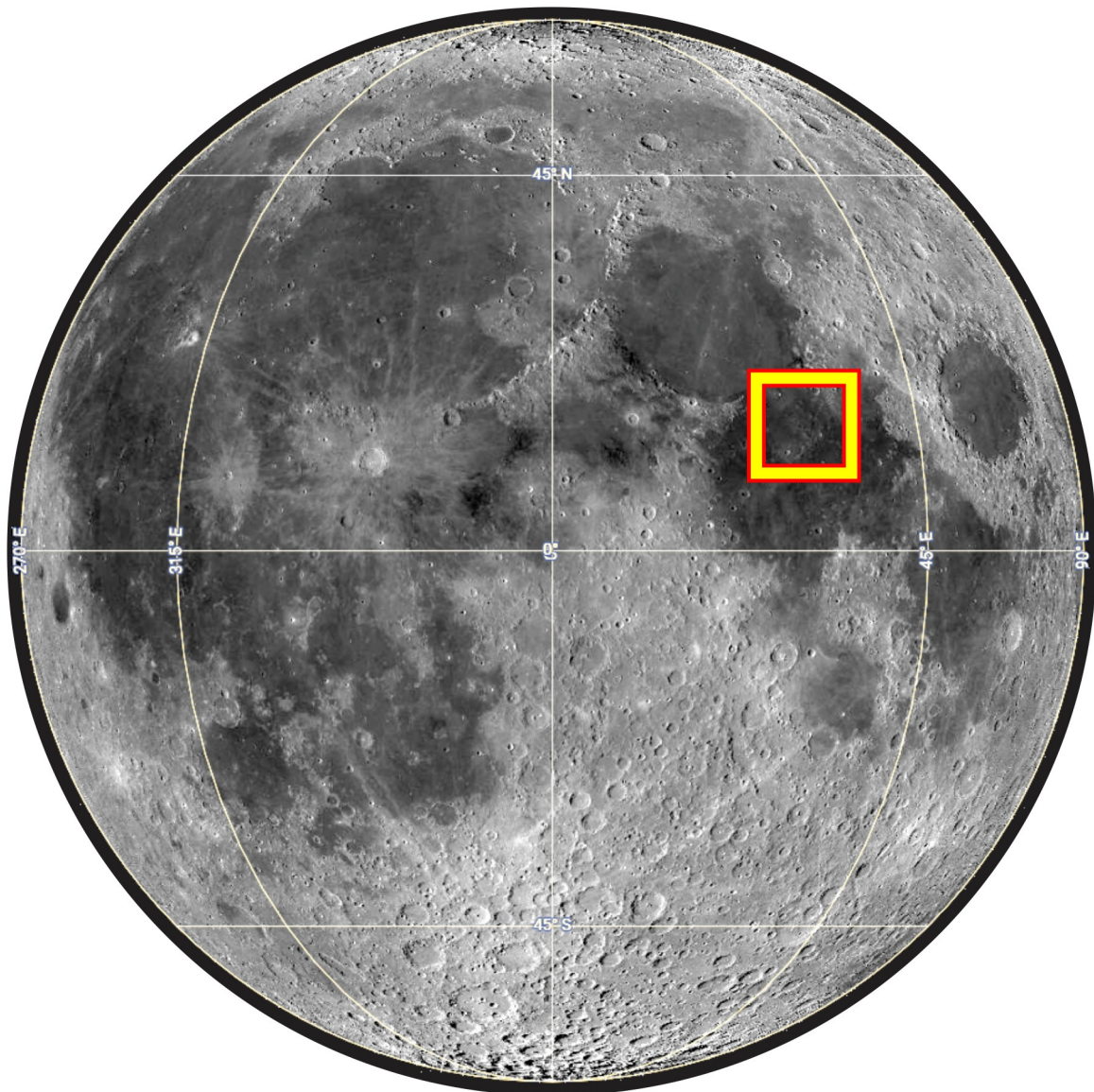


from *Creative Exiles*

III

Neil seemed cool. He showed me no disrespect. Left a few tools around the place, like their "shoddy workmen" do; some scientific instruments, like the discarded aids of a physicist, in need of a sabbatical. And shit! They left a bag full of shit and piss here! I mean, come on! That's what I'm talking about. Things don't quite balance out between them and me: things are kind of one-sided. Come on people, you got to do better by me. If I sent a lunar spirit down to them, she wouldn't leave a bag of faeces, in the middle of a city high street! Anyway, enough of that. And seeing as it was the first mission, I can offer a little understanding as to why items were left behind; less so for the debris of the later missions.

Yes, Neil seemed cool. Right after splashdown, he could have begun the route to either becoming a lauded researcher, or NASA administrator, but I heard he became a teacher. That's the impression I got of him, from our brief encounter: eager to share knowledge. Heard he was an easy-going, not a limelight-kind of guy. When I think of his presence, it's apt that when he stepped on me, that he walked on Mare Tranquilitatis: the Sea of Tranquility.



from *Lunar Registry* - **Mare Tranquilitatis**

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Community Astronomy: East Oxford

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.

FIRST TUESDAY OF EACH MONTH: 7-8PM

**Room P107
Leys College
Blackbird Leys Road and Cuddesdon Way
Oxford
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Open to all twelve plus. Those under 18 must be accompanied by an adult.

A once monthly newsletter

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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*