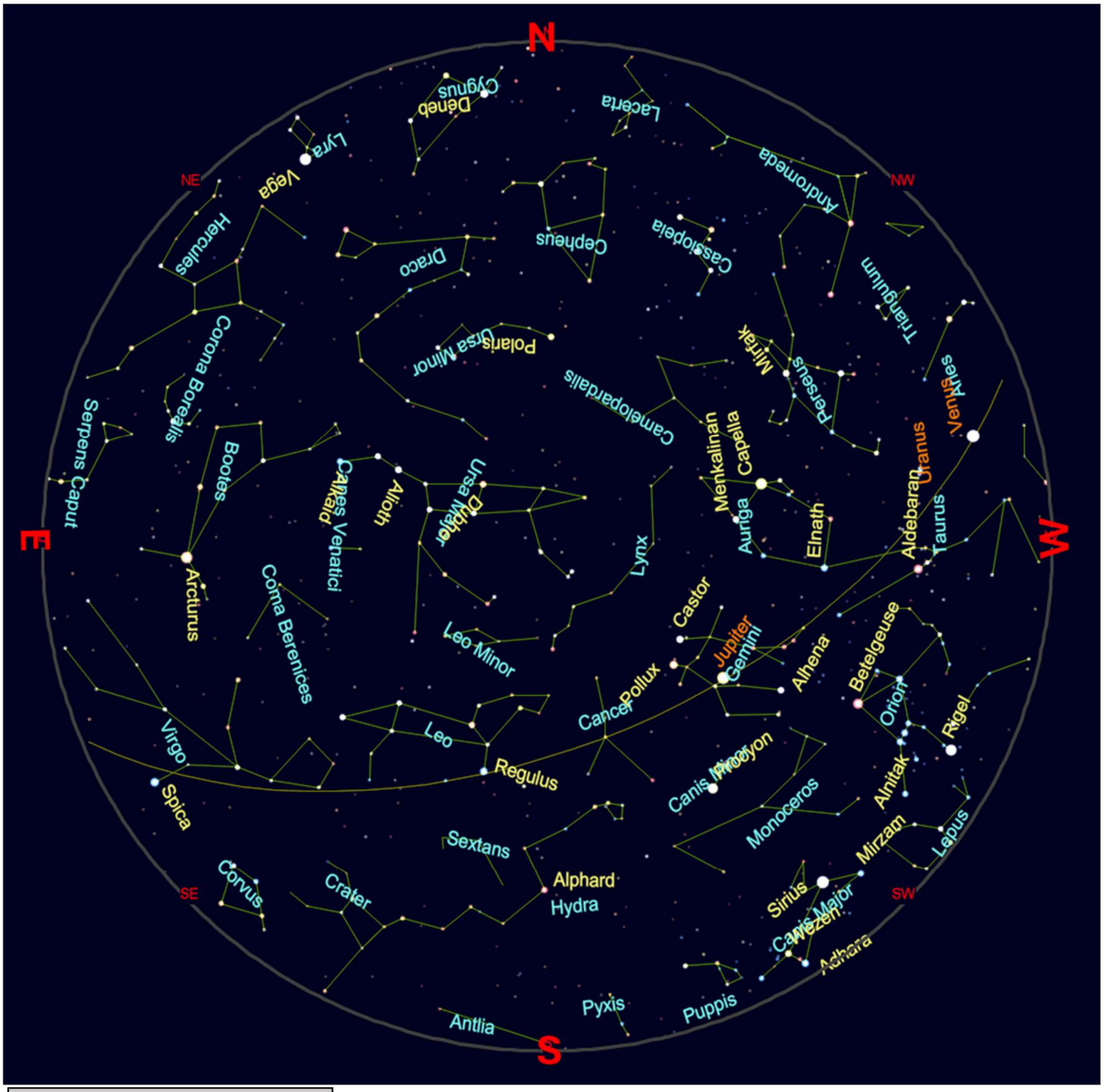
The Night Sky in April 2026

Monthly Guide

compiled by Doug Bickley



Generated by Cartes du Ciel software

The chart is based on location 52.6° N, 2.2° W (Perton, Wolverhampton) @ 21:00 on 15/04/2026.
The orange line is the ecliptic.
We are looking SOUTH (as shown at the bottom of the chart) at the constellations Virgo, Leo, Cancer, Gemini and Orion, with the constellations Coma Berenices, Leo Minor, Auriga and Taurus overhead.
***TO USE THE CHART - hold it so that the direction you are facing is at the bottom** – the lower part of the chart shows the sky ahead of you and the centre of the chart shows the sky directly over your head.*

Events to look out for this month:

2 Full Moon
3 Moon close to Spica
7 Moon near Antares
19 Crescent Moon above Venus and Pleiades (evening)
16 Perton Library Astronomy Group meeting 7pm
17 New Moon
22 Lyrid meteor shower peak
22 Moon and Jupiter in conjunction
23 Venus close to Uranus (evening twilight)
24 Venus and Uranus in conjunction
26 Moon near Regulus

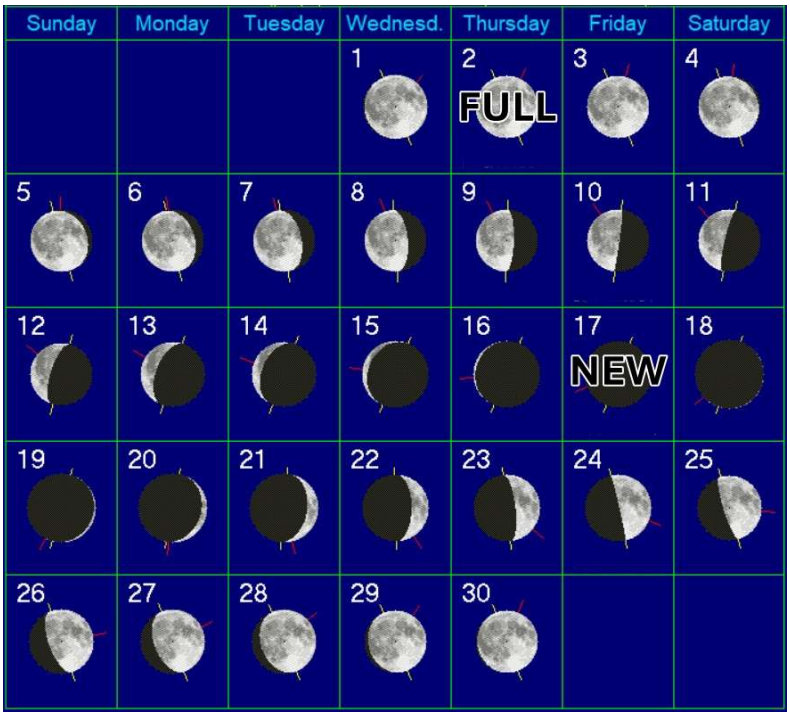
The phenomena of the month : April 2026

Times are given in daylight time for PERTON (2° 11' 53" W, 52° 35' 26" N, zone Z).

	Date	Hour	Description of the phenomenon
	yyyy mm dd	hh:mm	
1	2026 04 02	03:12	FULL MOON
2	2026 04 02	23:51	Close encounter between the Moon and Spica (topocentric dist. center to center = 2.3°)
3	2026 04 03	18:00	GREATEST WESTERN ELONGATION of Mercury (27.8°)
4	2026 04 04	11:00	Mercury at its aphelion (distance to the Sun = 0.46670 AU)
5	2026 04 05	08:14	Opposition of the asteroid 26 Proserpina with the Sun (dist. to the Sun = 2.483 AU; magn. = 10.5)
6	2026 04 07	09:32	Moon at apogee (geocentric dist. = 404970 km)
7	2026 04 10	05:52	LAST QUARTER OF THE MOON
8	2026 04 13	06:26	Close encounter between Mars and Neptune (topocentric dist. center to center = 0.3°)
9	2026 04 17	02:51	Close encounter between Mercury and Neptune (topocentric dist. center to center = 1.3°)
10	2026 04 17	12:52	NEW MOON
11	2026 04 19	06:47	Close encounter between the Moon and Venus (topocentric dist. center to center = 3.6°)
12	2026 04 19	07:57	Moon at perigee (geocentric dist. = 361630 km)
13	2026 04 19	13:08	Opposition of the asteroid 13 Egeria with the Sun (dist. to the Sun = 2.544 AU; magn. = 10.2)
14	2026 04 19	23:21	Close encounter between Mars and Saturn (topocentric dist. center to center = 1.2°)
15	2026 04 20	12:31	Close encounter between Mercury and Saturn (topocentric dist. center to center = 0.5°)
16	2026 04 20	23:47	Close encounter between Mercury and Mars (topocentric dist. center to center = 1.7°)
17	2026 04 21	23:40	Close encounter between the Moon and M 35 (topocentric dist. center to center = 3.0°)
18	2026 04 22	20:41	Meteor shower : Lyrids (18 meteors/hour at zenith; duration = 9.0 days)
19	2026 04 23	01:20	Close encounter between the Moon and Jupiter (topocentric dist. center to center = 2.6°)
20	2026 04 23	02:25	Beginning of occultation of 57 Gem (magn. = 5.04)
21	2026 04 24	02:23	Close encounter between Venus and Uranus (topocentric dist. center to center = 0.8°)
22	2026 04 24	03:32	FIRST QUARTER OF THE MOON
23	2026 04 25	21:24	Beginning of occultation of 27-nu Leo (magn. = 5.26)
24	2026 04 25	22:16	End of occultation of 27-nu Leo (magn. = 5.26)
25	2026 04 26	02:46	Close encounter between the Moon and Regulus (topocentric dist. center to center = 0.7°)

THE MOON

Lunar Phases this month



Full Moon is again early in the month and this one will be called a Pink Moon, rising in the UK on April 2, 2026, at 03:12 BST.

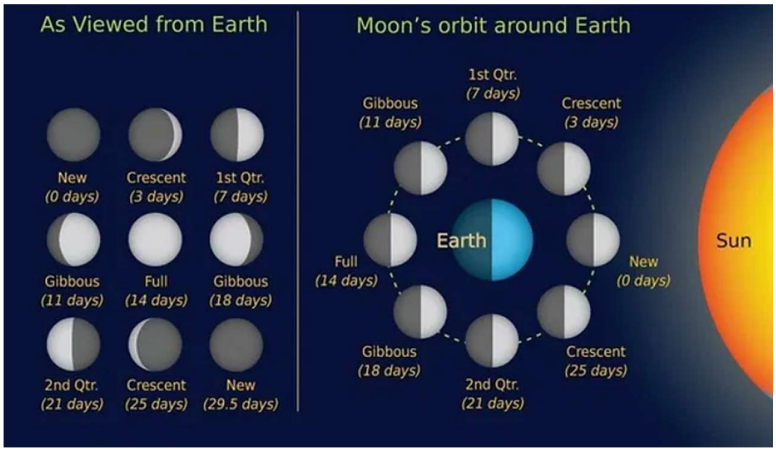
Named after the North American pink windflower that blooms around this time, this moon symbolises growth and heralds the beginning of spring. These themes are common among its other names, including Breaking Ice Moon (Algonquin tribe), Moon When Ducks Come Back (Lakota tribe), and Budding Moon of Plants and Shrubs (Tlingit tribe), as well as the Celtic Seed Moon and Anglo-Saxon Egg Moon – or Milk Moon if Easter has already passed.

This is also the Paschal (relating to Easter or the Passover) full Moon for 2026, the full Moon that determines when Easter falls, which is the first Sunday after the first full Moon after the vernal equinox, which in 2026 is the 'Pink Moon' of 2 April. That's the system decreed by the Roman emperor Constantine at the Council of Nicea in 325 AD, and it sounds easy enough to understand! Except that the formula may not necessarily be astronomically correct, but that's another long story!

Did we talk about Moon phases before?

Well there are eight phases in a lunar month: four primary and four intermediate phases. A Moon cycle, or a lunation, is the time the Moon travels through its lunar phases.

Half of the Moon's surface is always illuminated by sunlight, and as the Moon orbits Earth, it changes how much of the lit side we can see.

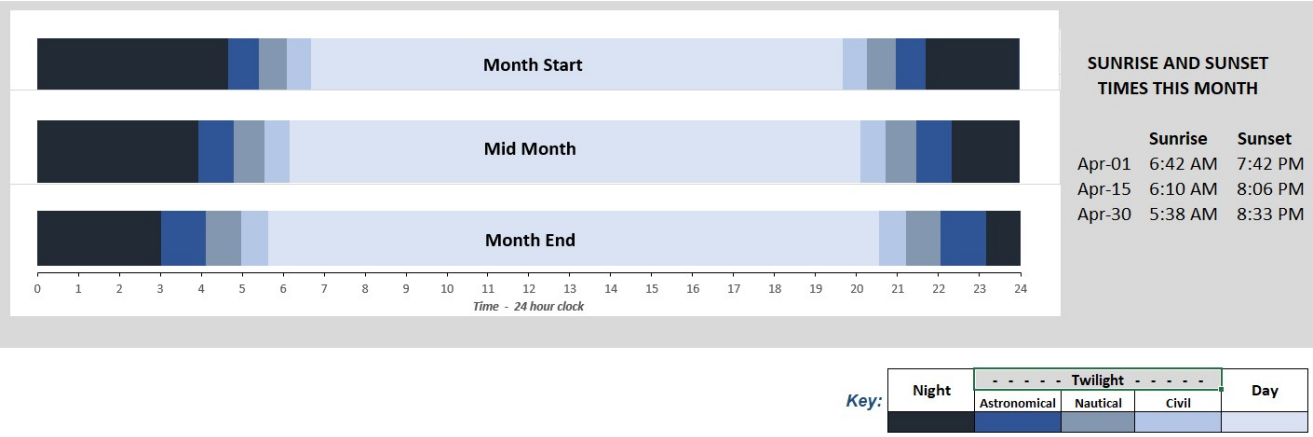


- New Moon - the first phase of the lunar cycle, when the Sun, Moon, and Earth are aligned, and so the moon is not visible from the Earth as it doesn't receive any sunlight.
- First Quarter - when the moon is in this phase it has travelled through the first quarter of its orbit and from earth is half-illuminated, which is why many times this phase is also referred to as a Half Moon.
- Full moon – when the Sun and Moon are on opposite sides of the Earth and from our point of view on Earth, the Moon is fully illuminated in the sky.
- Last Quarter – like the First Quarter, but the Moon has travelled three-quarters of its orbit.

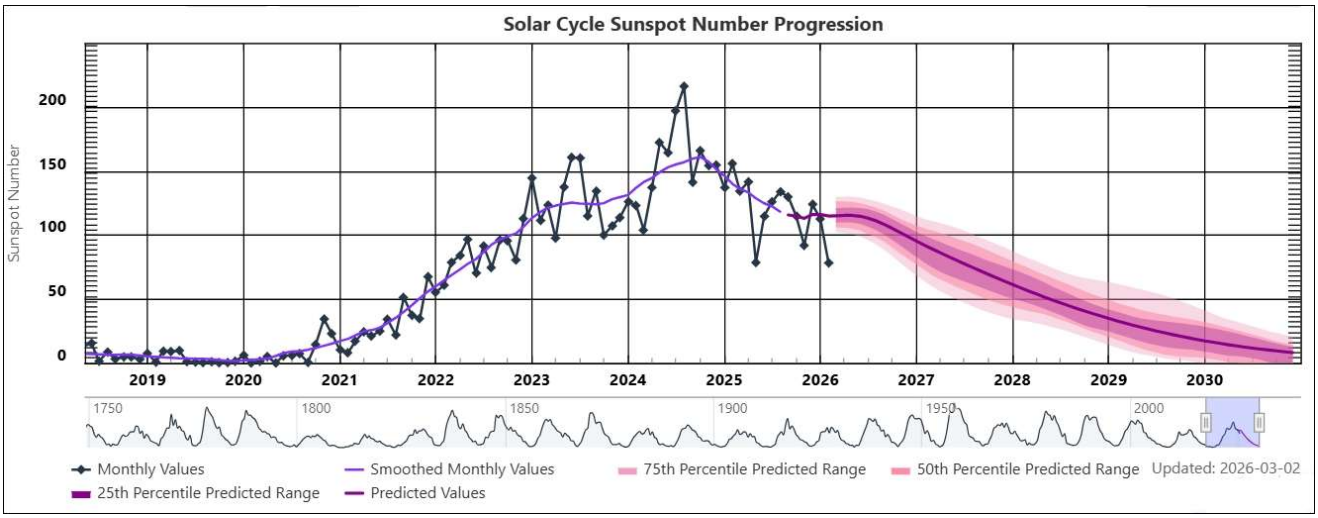
In between are Intermediate Moon Phases. When the moon is Waxing it means that it is getting more illuminated, and when it turns to Waning, the illumination is decreasing. The Crescent Moon is a thin, less than half illuminated shape, while a Gibbous Moon is more than half illuminated but not fully circular shape.

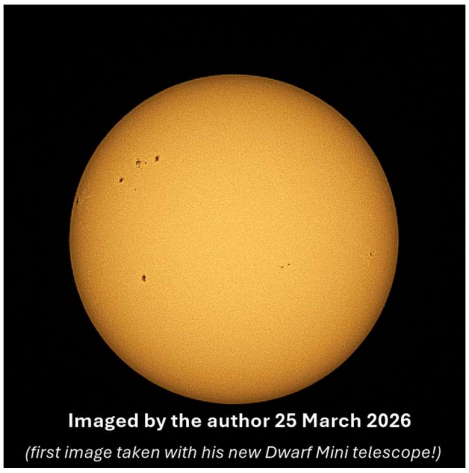
THE SUN

Graphical format showing sun rising, setting and twilight linked to an online data source (time-ok.com) to show twilight zones more clearly. Location is set at Wolverhampton UK.



The Sun has been producing significant solar flares and coronal mass ejections (CMEs) in the early part of this year, leading to frequent Northern Lights (aurora borealis) displays.





The Sun is currently in its peak activity phase of Solar Cycle 25.

Further strong solar storms and potential aurora sightings are expected throughout April 2026, so look out for aurora displays.

(Image shown in visible light not Ha so no flares visible)

PLANETS THIS MONTH

Here's my usual summary table showing planetary observation opportunities based on mid-month data:

	Planetrise/Planetset, Wed, 15 Apr 2026			
Planet	Rise	Set	Meridian	Comment
Mercury	Wed 05:48	Wed 17:32	Wed 11:39	Difficult to see
Venus	Wed 06:58	Wed 22:26	Wed 14:41	Fairly good visibility
Mars	Wed 05:44	Wed 17:59	Wed 11:51	Very difficult to see
Jupiter	Wed 10:30	Thu 03:03	Wed 18:47	Fairly good visibility
Saturn	Wed 05:56	Wed 18:12	Wed 12:04	Extremely difficult to see
Uranus	Wed 07:26	Wed 23:18	Wed 15:22	Difficult to see
Neptune	Wed 05:44	Wed 17:48	Wed 11:46	Extremely difficult to see

Data from timeanddate.com

Not a great month for planetary observations. During spring, the ecliptic forms a steep angle with the western horizon at sunset, which means the evening planets are elevated and on the face of it well placed.

Mercury is still in Aquarius, a dim mag +0.4 morning planet. Poor positioning means that it won't be seen this month.

Venus is in the WNW in Taurus, shining at mag -3.8 at a maximum altitude of 13° and a now a bright evening planet. On the evenings of 18 April a thin waxing crescent Moon is close to the E and the Pleiades to the N, and on 19 April the Moon will be in conjunction with the Pleiades and Venus just to the S. On 23 April Venus will be close to Uranus to the SE of the Pleiades.

Mars is currently in Aquarius, a mag +1.2 morning planet but unlikely to be seen this month.

Jupiter is still in the SW in Gemini at a maximum altitude of 52° shining at mag -2.2 and still giving a good show. On 22 April a 37%-lit waxing crescent Moon will be very close by to the north but they will both be only about 20° up.

Saturn is still in the W in Pisces shining at mag +0.9 and is badly placed for observing this month.

Uranus is still in the W in Taurus, shining at mag +5.8 at a maximum altitude of 20° in the evening sky. On 23 April, mag -3.8 Venus will be close by to the north. By month end it will be very difficult to see Uranus.

Neptune is still in the SW in Pisces shining at mag +8.0 as usual in the same area of sky as Saturn, and is unlikely to be seen this month.

International Space Station (ISS)

Forecast time for all visible passes this month

Date	Mag	Transit time	Start Time	Start Alt.degs.	Start Az.	High point	End Time	End Alt.degs.	End Az.
19-Apr	-1.0	01:51	05:11	10°	SSE	11°	05:13	10°	ESE
21-Apr	-1.8	05:19	05:10	10°	SSW	22°	05:16	10°	E
22-Apr	-1.5	03:57	04:24	11°	S	16°	04:28	10°	ESE
23-Apr	-1.2	01:08	03:38	11°	SE	11°	03:39	10°	ESE
23-Apr	-2.8	06:19	05:11	10°	SW	38°	05:17	10°	E
24-Apr	-2.4	04:49	04:24	17°	SSW	29°	04:29	10°	E
25-Apr	-2.1	02:56	03:38	21°	SSE	21°	03:41	10°	E
25-Apr	-3.5	06:40	05:11	10°	WSW	60°	05:18	10°	E
26-Apr	-1.3	00:53	02:52	13°	ESE	13°	02:53	10°	ESE
26-Apr	-3.3	05:26	04:25	19°	SW	48°	04:30	10°	E
27-Apr	-3.0	03:45	03:38	34°	S	37°	03:42	10°	E
28-Apr	-2.2	02:03	02:52	24°	ESE	24°	02:54	10°	E
28-Apr	-3.7	06:03	04:25	15°	WSW	69°	04:31	10°	E
29-Apr	-1.0	00:16	02:06	11°	E	11°	02:06	10°	E
29-Apr	-3.7	04:27	03:39	36°	SW	59°	03:43	10°	E
30-Apr	-3.2	02:51	02:52	44°	SE	44°	02:55	10°	E
30-Apr	-3.8	06:42	04:25	10°	W	77°	04:32	10°	E

you can also install these apps to check for passes

Android:
ISS Detector
Satellite Tracker

IOS:
ISS Spotter

All visible passes are shown above.
As always check the Heavens-Above website for the latest forecasts.
[source: https://www.heavens-above.com/]

METEOR SHOWERS

Lyrids meteor shower

The Lyrid meteor shower will be active between 16-25 April and will peak on the night of 22 April. While the meteors will be visible all across the sky, following their path backwards they will appear to originate from the constellation of Lyra, the lyre, which contains the star Vega, hence their name.

The Lyrid meteor shower is associated with long-period Comet C/1861 G1 Thatcher. It is the oldest recorded meteor shower still visible today, and was first recorded in 687 BCE.

ARTEMIS II

Keep your eyes out for news of this mission to take four astronauts take part in a 10-day fly around the far side of the Moon and back to Earth again.

As I write the Artemis II SLS (Space Launch System) rocket and Orion spacecraft have arrived at Launch Pad 39B after an 11-hour journey from the Vehicle Assembly Building at the agency's Kennedy Space Center in Florida. NASA teams are gearing up for the final stretch of prelaunch preparations ahead of launch possibly as soon as Wednesday 1 April. The early April launch window includes opportunities through to Monday 6 April.

PERTON LIBRARY ASTRONOMY GROUP

The group meets on the third Thursday of every month of the year at Perton Library from 7pm to 9pm. No subscription, no need to book, all free, just drop in at any time during the evening.
(Location WV6 7QU or on what3words ///saints.empty.stands)
The group is a relaxed and friendly gathering with the occasional talk.

We are particularly suited to beginners who very often bring their telescopes along for advice on how to set up, and we have experienced members who can help with this. If the skies are clear we do try to do some observing with library and member equipment.

WOLVERHAMPTON ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY LECTURE PROGRAMME

The Wolvas annual subscription remains a bargain at £10 per annum and you can sign up now our website www.wolvas.org.uk and pay your subscription, preferably by bank transfer.

We put together a yearly 16 lecture programme and some of this year's programme is shown below.

The host location for our live talks remains the University of Wolverhampton in the city centre. Access and facilities are excellent - details are available on the Wolvas website. Lectures in person or online will only be available to paid-up members of the Society. Members will receive regular emails with invitations to the Zoom sessions and reminders of the in-person lectures.
Non-members may attend the talks live for £2 on the door.

Our lecture season has now resumed for the 2025/26 season.

Here is a list of the upcoming lectures, please keep an eye on our website for updates and also synopses of the individual talks:

13-Apr-26	Simon Holbeche	The Women who discovered what stars are made of
08-Jun-26	Paul Fellows	Once around the moons of Pluto

As well as our website we will be posting details of events on social media, so keep an eye on our Facebook (https://www.facebook.com/wolvasuk) and X *[Twitter]* (https://twitter.com/wolvasuk) pages for the latest news.