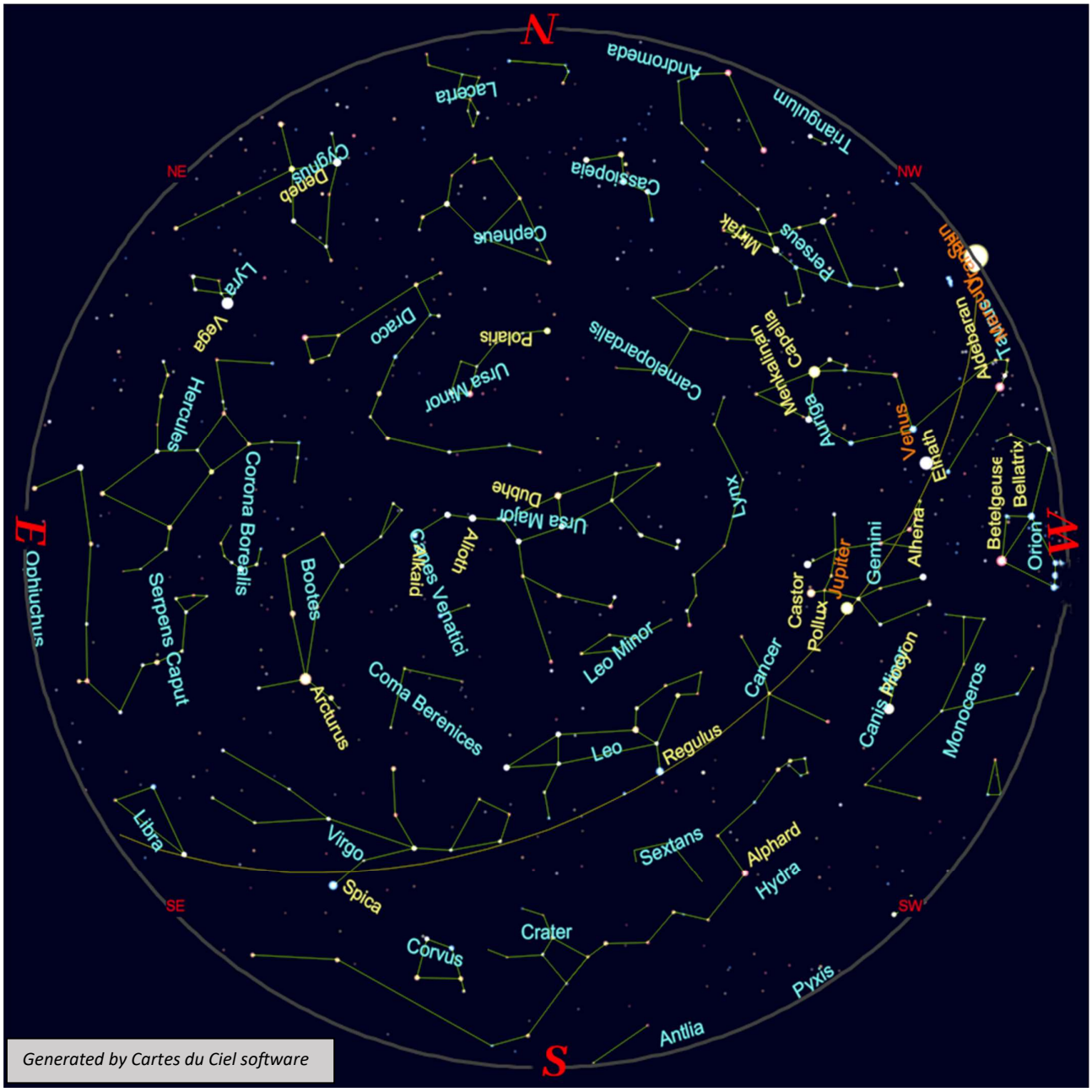
The Night Sky in May 2026

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 15/05/2026.
The orange line is the ecliptic.
We are looking SOUTH (as shown at the bottom of the chart) at the constellations Libra, Virgo, Leo, Sextans and Hydra, with the constellations Bootes, Leo Minor and Cancer 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 summary to look out for this month:

1 Micro Full Moon
4 Moon close to Antares
7 Moon near Antares
18 Crescent Moon close to Venus
19 Crescent Moon between Venus and Jupiter
20 Crescent Moon and Jupiter in conjunction
21 Venus just above Messier 35 Shoe Buckle Cluster
21 Perton Library Astronomy Group meeting 7pm
16 Moon
22 Venus highest altitude
30 Jupiter between Pollux and Procyon
31 Micro Full Moon

The phenomena of the month : May 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	
2026 05 01	18:23	FULL MOON
2026 05 04	04:01	Close encounter between the Moon and Antares (topocentric dist. center to center = 1.3°)
2026 05 04	23:30	Moon at apogee (geocentric dist. = 405839 km)
2026 05 06	01:00	Meteor shower : Eta Aquarids (50 meteors/hour at zenith; duration = 38.0 days)
2026 05 09	22:11	LAST QUARTER OF THE MOON
2026 05 10	01:00	Meteor shower : Eta Lyrids (3 meteors/hour at zenith; duration = 11.0 days)
2026 05 14	15:24	SUPERIOR CONJUNCTION of Mercury with the Sun (geoc. dist. center to center = 0.2°)
2026 05 15	04:00	Venus at its perihelion (distance to the Sun = 0.71842 AU)
2026 05 16	21:01	NEW MOON
2026 05 17	14:48	Moon at perigee (geocentric dist. = 358075 km)
2026 05 18	11:00	Mercury at its perihelion (distance to the Sun = 0.30750 AU)
2026 05 18	15:37	Comet 141P-D Machholz at its perihelion (dist. to the Sun = 0.807 AU; magn. = 10.4)
2026 05 19	03:03	Close encounter between the Moon and Venus (topocentric dist. center to center = 1.9°)
2026 05 21	01:23	Close encounter between Venus and M 35 (topocentric dist. center to center = 0.7°)
2026 05 22	15:25	CONJUNCTION between Uranus and the Sun (geoc. dist. center to center = 0.2°)
2026 05 23	12:11	FIRST QUARTER OF THE MOON
2026 05 24	23:14	Beginning of occultation of 79 Leo (magn. = 5.39)
2026 05 25	00:21	End of occultation of 79 Leo (magn. = 5.39)
2026 05 31	09:45	FULL MOON

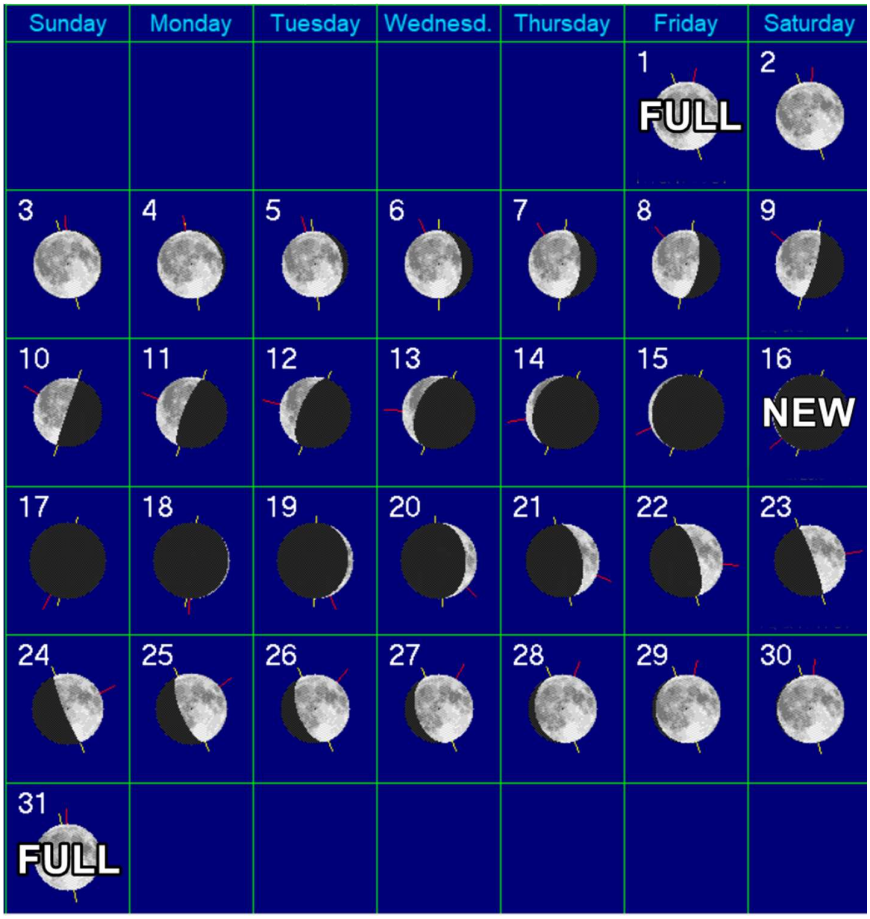
Generated by Cartes du Ciel software

AI IN ASTRONOMY

You won't be surprised but may not always consider that machine learning tools are being used more and more to find events and objects in the sky. One main area is the discovery of exoplanets, using a particular algorithm. AI models will be useful in the continuing search for life on Mars and will also be used in the new Vera Rubin observatory being built in Chile.

THE MOON

Lunar Phases this month



This month we have two Full Moons, and we need to talk about these.

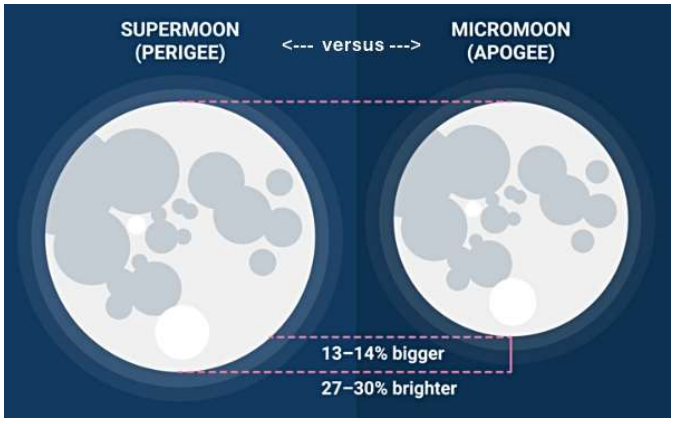
The first is usually called the Flower Moon and is on 1 May.

Last month's Pink Moon heralded the beginning of spring, but this month blooms start to get going properly. Other names for the May full moon include the hare moon, the corn planting moon, the budding moon and the milk moon.

The second full moon in May is called a Blue Moon (defined as a second Full Moon in single calendar month), and it isn't coloured blue despite what you might read in some media) on Sunday 31 May.

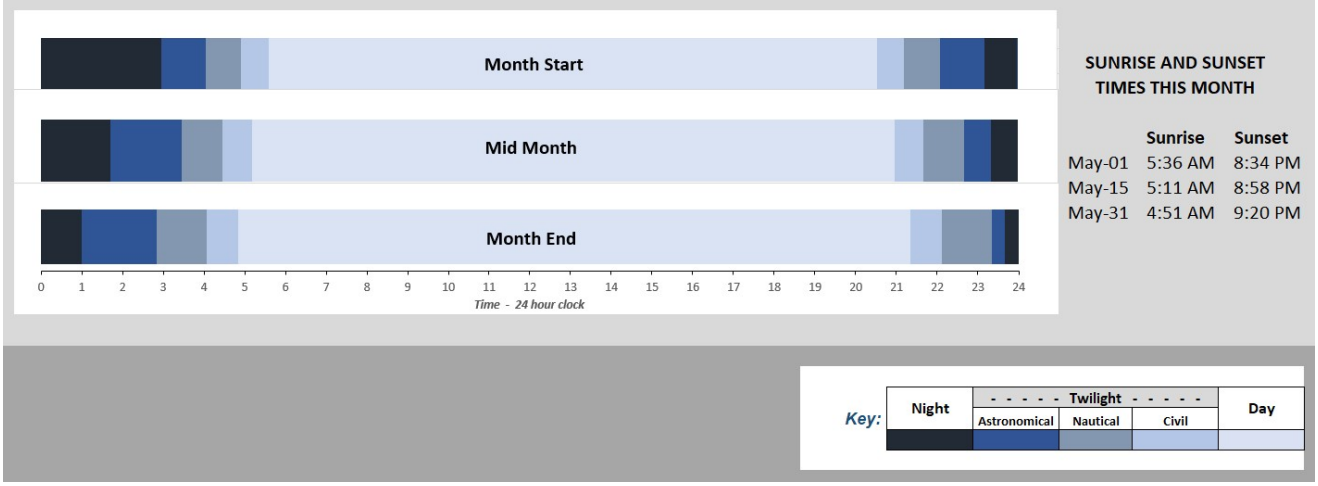
This one is also a "Micromoon". This is when a Full Moon or a New Moon coincides with apogee, the point in the Moon's orbit farthest away from Earth, so the Moon may appear smaller.

The Moon orbits Earth in an elliptical path, which means one side of the path is closer to the Earth than the other. The point in the Moon's orbit closest to Earth is called perigee, while the point in the orbit farthest from Earth is known as apogee. The average distance between Earth and the Moon is 382,500 kilometers or 237,700 miles. When a Full Moon or a New Moon occurs around apogee, it's called a Micromoon, Minimoon or Apogee Moon.



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.



METEOR SHOWERS

Eta Aquariid meteor shower
The Eta Aquariid meteor shower is active between 19 April and 28 May 2026, peaking between midnight and dawn on 6 May 2026.

From the UK it is low in the sky so not ideal observing conditions. Have a look in the late evening, the waning gibbous Moon will not have risen until just after midnight so will not interfere. The shower is associated with debris from Comet 1P/Halley, last seen in 1986 and not due again until 2061.

Lyrids meteor shower - update from last month
The Lyrid meteor shower peaked on the night of 22 April but viewing conditions in Perton weren't very good and despite taking 200 photos the author had no luck.

The next night was better and a single Lyrid was captured, but none seen visually.

How did you do? Please tell us if you had any success.

PLANETS THIS MONTH

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

As summer approaches we are not favoured with great planetary observations.

	Planetrise/Planetset, Fri, 15 May 2026			
Planet	Rise	Set	Meridian	Comment
Mercury	Fri 05:14	Fri 21:07	Fri 13:09	Very close to Sun, not visible
Venus	Fri 06:42	Fri 23:51	Fri 15:17	Good visibility
Mars	Fri 04:23	Fri 18:14	Fri 11:18	Difficult to see
Jupiter	Fri 08:54	Sat 01:19	Fri 17:06	Fairly good visibility
Saturn	Fri 04:04	Fri 16:33	Fri 10:18	Average visibility
Uranus	Fri 05:33	Fri 21:30	Fri 13:31	Extremely difficult to see
Neptune	Fri 03:47	Fri 15:55	Fri 09:51	Very difficult to see

Data from timeanddate.com

Mercury is in Taurus in the NW at a low altitude of 7.5°, still a morning planet until after superior conjunction on 14 May when it will start to return to the evening sky.

Venus is in the WNW in Gemini, shining brightly at mag -3.8 at a maximum altitude of 18° and will be well placed for viewing during May. On the evening of 18 May the planet will just SE of a 6%-lit waxing Moon. Watch Venus as it moves towards Jupiter over the course of the month.

Mars is in Pisces, shining at mag +1.2 but is unlikely to be seen this month in the bright morning sky.

Jupiter is in the W in Gemini at a maximum altitude of 35° shining strongly at mag -2.0 and still stealing the show in the evening sky. On 20 May during daylight hours a 19%-lit waxing crescent Moon will be very close, and stays close by as evening falls.
As the month progresses Venus will start to close ranks with Jupiter leading up to their conjunction on 9 June.

Saturn is in the E in Cetus shining at mag +0.8 at a maximum altitude of 7°, a morning planet. On the mornings of 13 and 14 May it will be close to a waning crescent Moon.

Uranus is too close to the Sun to be seen, solar conjunction is on 22 May.

Neptune is not visible this month.

International Space Station (ISS)

Forecast time for evening visible passes this month

Date	Mag	Transit time	Start Time	Start Alt.degs.	Start Az.	High point	End Time	End Alt.degs.	End Az.
07-May	-1.4	00:05	22:14	10°	S	10°	22:14	10°	S
08-May	-1.7	02:20	21:28	10°	SSE	11°	21:30	10°	ESE
08-May	-3.4	03:45	23:02	10°	SW	40°	23:06	36°	SE
09-May	-3.0	05:59	22:15	10°	SW	30°	22:21	10°	E
09-May	-3.9	04:01	23:51	10°	WSW	71°	23:55	51°	ESE
10-May	-2.5	05:24	21:27	10°	SSW	22°	21:33	10°	E
10-May	-3.8	06:17	23:03	10°	WSW	62°	23:09	13°	E
11-May	-3.6	06:33	22:16	10°	WSW	51°	22:22	10°	E
11-May	-3.9	04:24	23:52	10°	W	77°	23:57	41°	ESE
12-May	-3.9	06:06	23:04	10°	W	76°	23:11	15°	E
13-May	-3.8	06:42	22:17	10°	WSW	71°	22:23	10°	E
13-May	-3.9	03:54	23:53	10°	W	65°	23:57	52°	SE
14-May	-3.9	05:30	23:06	10°	W	73°	23:11	20°	ESE
15-May	-3.8	06:43	22:18	10°	W	77°	22:25	10°	E
15-May	-3.4	03:12	23:55	10°	W	43°	23:58	43°	SSW
16-May	-3.6	04:49	23:07	10°	W	54°	23:12	27°	SE
17-May	-3.7	06:24	22:19	10°	W	65°	22:26	12°	ESE
17-May	-2.3	02:22	23:56	10°	W	24°	23:59	24°	SW
18-May	-2.9	04:06	23:08	10°	W	33°	23:13	26°	S
19-May	-3.2	05:47	22:21	10°	W	43°	22:26	14°	SE
19-May	-1.4	00:56	23:58	10°	WSW	12°	23:59	12°	SW
20-May	-2.0	03:09	23:10	10°	W	18°	23:13	17°	SSW
21-May	-2.3	05:05	22:22	10°	W	25°	22:27	13°	SSE
23-May	-1.4	03:17	22:24	10°	WSW	13°	22:27	10°	S

you can also install these apps to check for passes

Android:
ISS Detector
Satellite Tracker

IOS:
ISS Spotter

Forecast times for evening visible passes are shown above, there are a lot of early morning passes that give a clear sky should be visible - check the Heavens-Above website for details and latest forecasts.
[source: https://www.heavens-above.com/]

There are quite a lot of morning passes, so again for you early birds here is a list:

Date	Mag	Transit time	Start Time	Start Alt.degs.	Start Az.	High point	End Time	End Alt.degs.	End Az.
01-May	-2.0	01:38	02:14	24°	ESE	24°	02:16	10°	E
01-May	-3.9	05:29	03:47	21°	W	76°	03:52	10°	E
02-May	-3.9	03:57	03:01	55°	SW	71°	03:05	10°	E
02-May	-3.7	06:42	04:35	10°	W	65°	04:42	10°	ESE
03-May	-2.9	02:23	02:15	41°	ESE	41°	02:17	10°	E
03-May	-3.9	06:13	03:48	14°	W	73°	03:54	10°	ESE
04-May	-1.4	00:49	01:29	16°	E	16°	01:30	10°	E
04-May	-3.9	04:40	03:02	35°	W	77°	03:06	10°	E
04-May	-3.3	06:26	04:36	10°	W	42°	04:43	10°	SE
05-May	-3.8	03:03	02:16	67°	ESE	67°	02:19	10°	E
05-May	-3.7	06:36	03:49	10°	W	54°	03:55	10°	ESE
06-May	-1.9	01:21	01:30	22°	E	22°	01:31	10°	E
06-May	-3.9	05:07	03:03	25°	W	65°	03:08	10°	ESE
06-May	-2.6	05:37	04:38	10°	W	24°	04:44	10°	SSE
07-May	-3.9	03:15	02:17	71°	SSE	71°	02:20	10°	ESE
07-May	-3.1	06:08	03:50	10°	W	33°	03:57	10°	SE
08-May	-1.5	00:47	01:32	16°	E	16°	01:33	10°	E
08-May	-3.5	04:14	03:05	32°	WSW	42°	03:09	10°	SE
08-May	-1.8	03:06	04:41	10°	WSW	13°	04:44	10°	SSW
09-May	-1.3	00:27	00:38	10°	W	13°	00:39	13°	W
09-May	-1.2	00:16	02:21	12°	ESE	12°	02:22	10°	ESE
09-May	-2.3	02:28	03:55	18°	SW	18°	03:57	10°	S
10-May	-1.2	00:17	01:27	10°	W	12°	01:28	12°	W
11-May	-3.3	02:33	00:40	10°	W	48°	00:42	48°	WSW
12-May	-1.4	00:34	01:29	10°	W	14°	01:29	14°	W
13-May	-2.9	02:16	00:41	10°	W	36°	00:43	36°	WSW
15-May	-2.1	01:35	00:43	10°	W	22°	00:44	22°	WSW
17-May	-1.3	00:30	00:44	10°	W	12°	00:45	12°	WSW

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
11-May-26	Jacco van Loon	Mysterious matter in interstellar space
08-Jun-26	Paul Fellows	Once around the moons of Pluto
26-Sep-26	Wolverhampton Astronomical Society 75th Anniversary Celebration - W'ton Science Park	

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.