Monthly Night Sky Guide – June 2013

Thanks to all those who came up and said 'Hi' and looked through our Solar Telescopes at the St Georges Day Fete. It was a great event, and something which will hopefully grow as the years go by. For those of you that missed our nearest Star in all its glory, we had about 50% cloud. In the clear patches, we could clearly see the solar gasses leaping from the surface. Which reminds me that the next Astronomy in the Pub event will be a solar event. Come along and have a look – I will put a reminder in the Chailey News a month before.

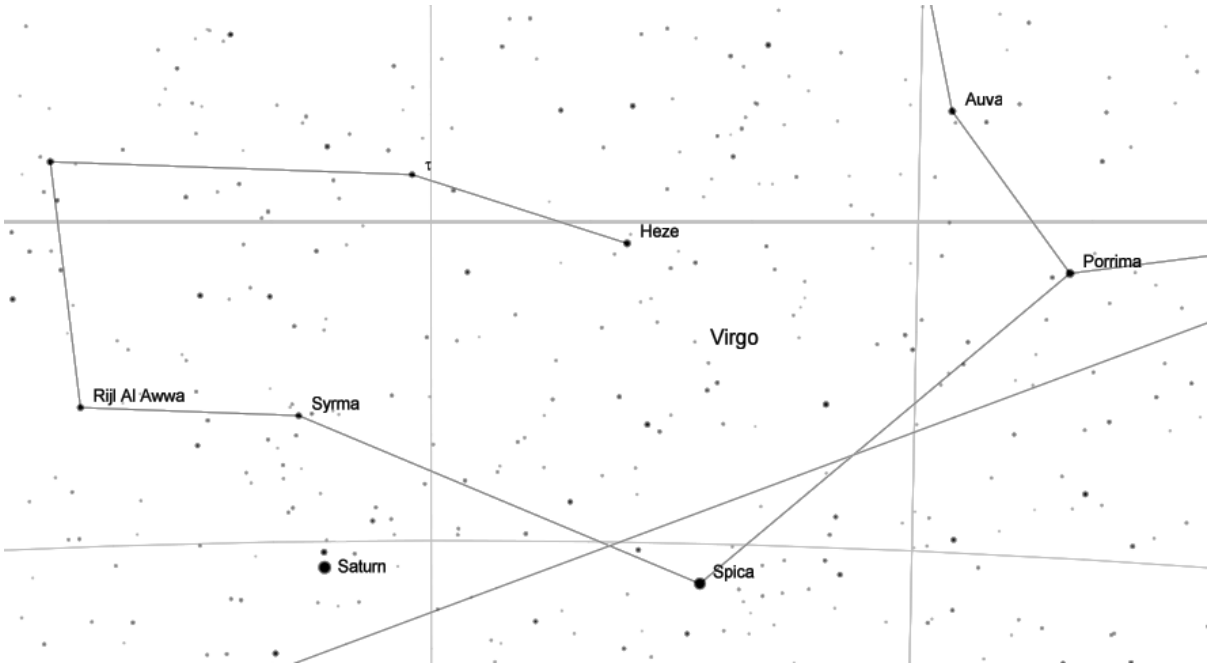
Over the last few months, the skies above us have been very busy, as have I. Two months ago, Comet Panstarrs just about was visible from Chailey. You can still see it with a good pair of binoculars or a telescope at about magnitude 9.

There is a new Moon on 8th June at 4pm, so look out in the early evening sky the day afterwards to see if you can catch the smallest sliver of the Moon. Whilst we are on the subject of our Moon, on the 23rd June, the Full Moon will appear largest in the sky. The actual time of full is 12:32 BST, however, just 32 minutes earlier it will be at its closest to the Earth at 221,824 miles. Our Earth's tides will be exceptionally low or high around this time as a result.

The 12th June sees Mercury at its highest in the sky. This will be the best time to spot Mercury as it is at its greatest elongation (furthest angle) from the Sun. The Sun will set at 21:13 BST, so look to the West-Northwest at about 13 degrees above the Horizon. The Hooke road behind Mill Lane gives a good high view in that direction.

Talking of the Planets, Saturn is really making a lovely showing at the moment. Its rings are inclined at 17 degrees at the moment, so really are a spectacular sight. You do not need a large telescope to see the rings either, any scope will do!

Throughout all of June and July Saturn will be in a commanding position to the South. At around 21:00 BST Saturn close to the bright star Spica in the constellation Virgo. At this point in Saturn's orbit it is said to be in apparent retrograde motion, as it appears to move backwards against the background stars, so each night until 8th July it will slowly creep closer to Spica. Each planet more distant than the Earth from the Sun exhibits this behaviour, drawing a 'loop' in the sky relative to the stars. On the 8th July, Saturn will return to an apparent prograde motion, starting to move away from Spica night by night.



Don’t forget that you can learn more about South Common Observatory, see the pictures I have taken from Chailey, or order my Astronomical Greetings cards from my website: http://nebul.ae.

Richie Jarvis
South Common Observatory
Email: richie@nebul.ae
Website: http://nebul.ae
Twitter: http://twitter.com/richiedeepsky
Facebook: http://www.facebook.com/richiedeepsky