

## SARK ISLAND REPORT TO IDA - 2019

Sark is a small island, 5 km x 3km, (3 miles x 1.5 miles but heavily indented and narrow at one point) situated about 30 km off the coast of France in the English Channel. We receive approximately 50,000 visitors to the island annually. It is almost impossible to estimate how many of those come due to our Dark Skies status, but interest has been increasing annually.

The quality of our night sky appears unchanged – there has been no intrusive outside lighting installed on the island and, if anything, there is less light in Sark due perhaps to the continuing high cost of electricity. Possibly though, after 8 years of awareness of our Dark Sky status, residents are keen to keep it that way.

SAstroS, Sark Astronomy Society, continues to offer stargazing to residents and visitors at the Sark Observatory. Our Tourist Office [info@sark.co.uk](mailto:info@sark.co.uk) publish a small leaflet on how to book a star-gazing session at the Observatory but they don't keep count of the numbers receiving it. We are also advertised in the official Sark guide and map. The Spring issue of Sark's quarterly magazine, *Sark Life*, carried an illustrated account of the first three years of our observatory.

Since October 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018 we have had approximately 420 visitors at star-gazing sessions, and they come from all parts of the world. Not all visitors sign the book but this last year we have had stargazers from Switzerland, New Zealand, France, Singapore, Tanzania, Egypt, Norway, USA, Mexico and Australia as well, of course, as the United Kingdom.

The Youth Club of Sark came for a star session in December 2018 and an 11-year old children's birthday group also visited. On ordinary observatory nights some of the most enthusiastic and knowledgeable visitors are the children, occasionally as young as seven.

The winter was particularly wet and little star-gazing activity took place.

'Wilderness Travel' sent 2 groups of visitors to Sark who had a session at the Observatory on each occasion; 2 more visits by their groups were cancelled due to weather conditions and another on 12 September went ahead with good viewing conditions.

In May Dr Paul Fellows of the Cambridge Astronomical Society shipped over to Sark a second-hand Meade LX200 which was a gift from a member of his Society. It is identical to ours but with a functional handset. This took a while to set up but has proved reliable. Both scopes are optically sound, but since they are now more than 20 years old, we are pleased to be able to cannibalise parts if necessary.

On July 16 Several members and visitors were lucky to enjoy a good sighting of the partial eclipse of the moon – here in Sark it was 66% covered and well worth the 5 hours of viewing.

On the weekend of July 20<sup>th</sup> SAstroS celebrated the first manned moon landing and our guest speaker Bob Bowyers, FRAS, gave a talk entitled "A History of Observing the Moon". This was followed by a meal and the showing of the film "First Man", unfortunately rain prevented a planned viewing of the moon. The following day we watched the film "Apollo 13" followed by a session at the observatory of star and planet watching and we were able

to identify the Sea of Tranquillity and a further two Polish visitors were able to see the site of the moon landing through the telescope at 1 am. All events were free and open to the public.

On 3 June, two journalists from Waitrose booked a session and a good article was produced, see attached. The brochure has a print run of some 250,000 copies, on a very wide distribution.

Also attached were the Moon Landing celebration poster, the Visitor Centre leaflet and the Waitrose article.

Jo Birch, Petit Moie, Sark, Channel Islands. GY10 1SE

Sark Astronomy website is [www.sastros.sark.gg](http://www.sastros.sark.gg)