

SARK ISLAND REPORT TO IDA 2018

Sark is a small island, 5 km x 3km, about 30km 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.

SAstroS, Sark Astronomy Society, continues to offer star-gazing to residents and visitors at the Sark Observatory. So far this tourist season we have had approximately 400 visitors at star-gazing sessions and they come from all parts of the world.

In October Professor David Hughes, Emeritus Chair of the University of Sheffield spent three days in Sark and gave a talk to the public on “Art and Astronomy” followed by a telescope session at the Sark Observatory. He also attended a members’ dinner and this too was followed by a session at the Observatory.

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

In May the Sark Astronomy Society mounted a very robust challenge to a development planned to be just over the hedge from the observatory of 8 yurts with electric lighting; in particular, there was to be a barn designed for entertainment with music, lights and a BBQ area. Other Sark residents also wrote to object. The application has now been withdrawn.

Country Life journalists filmed some star-watching at the Observatory for an article in this up-market UK magazine.

‘Wilderness Travel’ sent 2 groups of visitors to Sark who had a session at the Observatory on each occasion; they have booked 4 more visits for 2019.

A telescope was donated by a departing Sark resident July – a 5” reflector with RA motor.

In July Dr Robin Catchpole of Cambridge University gave a talk to the public entitled, “What’s New in the Solar System” and also led a star-gazing session at the observatory.

27 July. 20 sky-watchers gathered at the Observatory for the total lunar eclipse. It appeared through light cloud which cleared in time for a spectacular sight of the moon emerging from the Earth’s shadow.

7 – 15 August Perseid Meteor shower. During the week of the Perseid meteor shower two astronomers were invited to Sark; Professor Ian Morison from Jodrell Bank, Emeritus Gresham Professor of Astronomy and Robin Scagell, President of the Society of Popular Astronomy. Both gave a series of talks to the public on 6 nights, followed by meteor shower-watching at the north of the island.

Professor Morison, an Instrument Adviser for the Society for Popular Astronomy, took a sky quality reading at midnight on 6/7 August. The overhead values were ~21.58 and pointing slightly away from the Milky Way, which was overhead, 21.6. His Unihedron SQM-L is serial no. 4586.

On September 14/16 we had the Roots Festival in Sark; among the workshops offered was star-gazing on two nights which were well attended. (www.sarkrootsfestival.com)

Also on September 14 a Dutch TV film crew spent time filming in Sark and up at the observatory after dark; they are making a TV programme of the Channel Islands and the UK. www.3opreis.bnnvara.nl/pagina/english

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