

## **Astronomy Talk 24<sup>th</sup> January 2023**

### **Astronomical Oddities**

Tony Roberts, chair of the Croydon Astronomical Society gave this talk in person. There were 56 attending on Zoom, and 15 in the hall.

Tony started with Mercury's movement and the hypothetical planet Vulcan that would have affected its orbit as Neptune was discovered for having done so to Uranus. Many people observed Vulcan transiting the Sun, but it was all nonsense, and the effect being looked for was explained by Einstein's General Relativity.

William Herschel noted the rings round Uranus in 1787, but they weren't seen again till 1975. He thought he may have been wrong as he couldn't see them a few years later, but what he drew was correctly aligned, and so who knows?

Auguste Comte commented that we will never know about the constitution of stars, but only a few years later Bunsen and Kirchoff showed that the spectral lines, which Fraunhofer has earlier described, answered the question.

We then had a number of other odds and ends, including the great Moon hoax that a New York paper in 1835 publicised saying that John Herschel had seen life including human forms with wings on the Moon. He had of course done no such thing. It did increase the paper's circulation enormously. At that time it was thought all bodies would have had life on them, otherwise why had God put them there?

Lastly, Tony described the Schiaparelli/Lowell Martian "Canals", which nobody else could see.

Afterwards Bob Mizon gave a 5 minute talk using Stellarium to show what's to see in the sky this month.