

Astronomy Talk 26th January 2019

7 Moons

This talk was given by Bob Mizon. He had 2 meteorites to demonstrate as well as various items to sell in support of the commission for dark skies (CfDS).

Bob started by looking at moons in general: what is a moon? He looked briefly at history and at Galileo's discovery of the 4 principal moons of Jupiter, as well as showing the relative sizes of a large number of moons, some of which are larger than the planet Mercury.

His first moon was Miranda, one of Uranus's moons with very peculiar topography: "a satellite designed by a committee!" Then to Mars's moon Phobos, alluding to its proximity to Mars and likely break-up in 50 million years. The third moon was Jupiter's moon Io, the most volcanic body in the solar system.

The fourth and fifth were moons of Saturn. First Enceladus, which blows icy plumes out that constitute Saturn's E-ring, and is a possible home for life. Then Methone, a small satellite that has no craters: it looks like an egg.

Sixth came Proteus, one of Neptune's moons, that was only discovered in 1989 as it is very dark: its albedo is about 10%.

Lastly we looked at our moon, and at the enormous South Pole/Aitken basin which is mostly on the far side. Bob also mentioned that Neil Armstrong had to jump from his ladder to the surface, as the landing was so soft the compressible legs hadn't compressed, so the "one small step..." was not a small step at all! He also mentioned that the flag set up by Armstrong and Aldrin was blown flat by the lunar module's take off, and that it would have been bleached white by solar radiation.