THE ADSTOCK SCIENCE CLUB

Probably for as long as we have existed, Man has asked questions about his place in the Universe, The meaning of existence? Is there a God? And are there others like us out there?

The first 3 questions are firmly in the realms of philosophy, metaphysics and theology however the last question , “are there others like us out there?” may be getting closer to being answered. Over the past few years there have been projects such as the Search for Extra-Terrestrial Life or SETI, the Kepler mission and others which have been searching for clues for the existence of ET and the worlds that he/she/it may inhabit.

In 1961 Dr Frank Drake came up with an equation, the “Drake Equation”, which tried to quantify the chances of intelligent life existing elsewhere in the galaxy. We are now able to fill in some of the blanks within the first half of this equation, the second half still only contains best guesses. But someday this may change. The hunt for exoplanets, these are planets orbiting other suns other than our own, has in recent years seen many new developments which are beginning to bear fruit. From the development of new telescopes to some novel technology such as the “Giant Starshade” which NASA is currently working on, the hunt for exoplanets is accelerating.

Our speaker for July was Professor Andrew Norton from the Open University, who is one of those in the forefront of this search. He told us all about the quest for these worlds and what is involved in the hunt for them. “Exoplanets and how to find them” was a fascinating and enlightening talk and discussion on where we are today with our research and where we hope to be in the not too distant future in this quest. He outlined the four main methods used to find exoplanets and how they are bringing us closer to finding a second Earth!

The previous month’s talk was given by one of our own members, Mr Demetri Petrou, who has a degree in Cosmology. His talk was on Einstein’s Theory of Relativity and covered both the Special, as well as the General Theory of Relativity in an excellent PowerPoint presentation. When he was asked to do the talk, some months earlier there was only one stipulation, not to use any equations. He almost managed this but failed at the last instance. Well how can you talk about Einstein and Relativity without using $E=MC^2$.

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