

## Experiences of starting in astronomy

Firstly, I am no Astronomer, just someone who has always been fascinated with the Moon and Stars having grown up watching the Apollo launches and have been intrigued ever since.

Being fortunate enough to have a second home in Normandy, in a small hamlet where we have no light pollution, we have spent many an evening sat outside with a fire just looking at the stars and contemplating life.

A couple of Christmas's ago my husband surprised me with a Sky-Watcher telescope. Now as keen as I was and as idiot proof as it apparently was, between us we just couldn't fathom getting started properly.

Eventually, early in 2022 we went along to Cotswold Astronomical Society on a cold Sunday evening workshop. Everyone was so welcoming and after a couple of sessions and expert advice we were able to get it aligned properly. I am now actually capable of collimating the scope pretty much by myself :)

I was so excited when Dave first helped me get the scope focused on the moon - just "wow" was my expression.

My daughter Olivia is an experienced and superb Photographer and she started to come along with me, with a keen interest in extending the star gazing to capturing photographs. Again, with the help of other members we eventually acquired the correct attachments for her camera and starting with the moon, she has achieved some beautiful photographs both with her camera and on both of our telephones.

We've not been able to attend many workshops of late, due to us isolating following my husband's kidney transplant, but that said clear nights permitting, it's not stopped me getting out in the garden or our little field at the end of our cul de sac and doing some stargazing. I managed to view Jupiter earlier in the year (bringing out my neighbours to take a look) and my current fascination is with Saturn. I now have the 'T' ring for my own camera and with some tuition from Olivia maybe I'll be able to achieve a photograph :)

I am now really looking forward to getting back into the Sunday workshops as soon as I can and cannot recommend this group highly enough. I'm embarrassed sometimes at my lack of knowledge, but it really doesn't matter. Everyone's take on what they can see through the scope is exactly that, not really rights or wrongs - just their own take.

Thank you, Cotswold Astronomical Society, for getting me this far :)

Denise Powell



Moon taken using an iPhone 13



Saturn using Olympus E-M10



Moon by Olivia using Fuji X-T5