

Dundee Astronomical Society The Night Sky in October 2009



The Sky at 9pm on 15th October 2009

[chart courtesy of www.heavens-above.com]

By October the sky is quite dark by 7pm and the four stars marking the Great Square of Pegasus is high in the southern sky. Pegasus, the flying horse, was said to be born from sea foam mixed with drops of blood from the head of Medusa which had been cut off by Perseus. It's difficult to see a horse until you realise that Pegasus is flying inverted and its head and front legs project out to the right of the square. The rear of Pegasus is missing and may have been utilised in early times to create what is now the constellation of Aries, the Ram.

The most interesting object in Pegasus is probably the globular cluster, M15. This is a closely packed mass of stars at a distance of 33,600 light years and one of many surrounding our Milky Way Galaxy. M15 is the densest of all our globular clusters and its centre has collapsed because of the gravity of so many very close stars. The core is extremely dense and it is thought that a black hole may lurk there.

The Moon is full on the 4th, at last quarter on the 11th, new on the 18th and at first quarter on the 26th.



Events of note during October:

6th: Mercury at greatest western elongation.

8th: Mercury 0.3 degrees south of Saturn.

13th: Venus 0.6 degrees south of Saturn.

20th: Orionid maximum.

21st: Daylight occultation of Antares by the Moon at 1549 BST until 1704 BST.

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