



Longmont Astronomical Society

January 2004

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Dear members and friends,

Happy New Year! I trust your holiday season was safe and enjoyable.

So, what a banquet, huh?! What an incredible turnout – over 100 people. And what a special evening – David Levy gave a wonderful presentation, and proved to be a genuinely nice guy. I hope you all got your autographs and/or pictures taken, or at least had a chance to speak with him.

Please welcome your 2004 officers:

President:	Bob Spohn
Vice President:	Melinda Diehl
Secretary:	Mark Propp
Treasurer:	Monica Martens
Newsletter Editor:	Philippe Bridenne
Astronomical League Correspondent (ALCor):	Bill Possel
Publicity/Fundraising:	Ray Warren

We have another great executive board, and a great year planned for the L.A.S. Let's keep having fun, and thank you for your continued support!

Clear skies,

Bob Spohn
President

Calendar

Saturday, January 17th - New Moon Party at Pawnee

Saturday, January 24th - Public Observing at Flanders Park at dusk

WEATHER PERMITTING

Saturday, February 21st - New Moon Party at Pawnee

Saturday, February 28th - Public Observing at Flanders Park at dusk

WEATHER PERMITTING

December meeting notes

LAS MEETING NOTES – DECEMBER 18, 2003

Meeting called to order

Welcome and introduction of visitors

Officer reports:

VP – Melinda: Nothing to report

Sec/Treas – Monica: Telescope fund is in the black – no longer owes the main account. Summary of account balances. Calendars in by year end. Club voted to approve funds to buy office supplies

Editor – Philippe: Newsletter article by Mike Hotka will be put on the website

ALCor – Jim: Thanked the club for letting him be ALCor this year. Gave out 4 observing certificates. Gave updates on several space missions

Publicity/Fundraising – Kirk: Kirk is now also involved with boy scouts and cub scouts, and they will be visiting us for their astronomy patches

Equipment Chair – Leigh: Not present

Webmaster – Steve: Not present

Old Business:

Annual banquet Jan. 3rd at Wayside Inn in Berthoud. David Levy will be guest speaker!

Stapleton neighborhood star party – Jeff White & Michelle Lavers only astronomers there – 300 attendees! – focused on light pollution issues

Don Cerow & Lisa Michel announced their Winter Solstice event in Gunbarrel

New Business:

Nominations and election of next year's officers. 2004 officers:

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Break

Main Speaker: CU journalism professor Tom Yulsman. Tom specializes in science writing, and talked about cosmological topics covered in his book 'Origins'. Very informative and entertaining – we will invite him back for part 2!

News from Emily

What a terrific banquet - thanks to all of you in LAS. It's hard to follow David Levy, but for Jan 15th, I plan on sharing some pictures of our group at JPL in October when we were getting ready for our roles with the MER science team, some Martian geology, and how to access the images that are released from the rovers through the public version of the software we use at JPL to talk with the rovers.

Some websites and information to share:

NASA sites about the MER (Mars Exploration Rover) mission:

<http://marsrovers.jpl.nasa.gov/home/index.html>

<http://athena.cornell.edu>

or just <http://jpl.nasa.gov>

Images from the Mars Global Surveyor and Mars Odyssey can be found at:

www.msss.com

Malin Space Sciences Systems

Michael Malin designed and operates the Mars Orbital Camera (MOC) on Mars Global Surveyor
<http://themis.asu.edu>

This site gives you Themis Images from Mars Odyssey

Themis: Thermal Emission Imaging System

These images are in visible (starts with V) or Infrared (starts with I)

Also, you can download a public release version of the same software that scientists and engineers use to communicate with the rover to download images from MER. This is called "Maestro":

<http://mars.telascience.org>

This download only takes a few minutes on a T1 line, and 2 hours over the phone line at home.

Emily

Announcements

Spirit and Opportunity Landing Events at DMNS

"Where were you when we landed on Mars?" When you're asked this question 20 years from now, you might say the Denver Museum of Nature & Science because this is the place to be in January when the Mars Exploration Rovers (MER) land on Mars. A live feed from NASA-TV will let us experience the landings. Museum curators and other experts will provide background information and a narrative of the events as they transpire. Join the Museum community for this memorable event.

Saturday, January 24th

9:00 p.m.

Ricketson Auditorium

\$5 per person

University of Denver

Landers arriving at Mars are not the only cosmic events to expect in 2004. The Physics & Astronomy Department at the University of Denver has identified several key events you can see from your backyard without telescopes:

January: The year begins with three prominent evening stars after sunset: Venus in the southwest, Mars due south and Saturn (in Gemini) rising in the east. Jupiter (in Leo) joins the throng later in the evening, following Saturn. All these planets can be observed in detail at DU's historic Chamberlin Observatory, which offers frequent public events.

March: By March, Jupiter dominates the sky all night long, with Saturn slipping westward, while Venus and Mars approach each other in the southwestern sky at sunset.

April: Venus and Mars will make their closest approach to one another this month. As the sun sets, brilliant Venus outshines Mars by hundreds of times. Mars — the ruler of last autumn's sky during its closest Earth approach, is now approaching the far side of its orbit seen from Earth. However, the classic lovers Mars and Venus dance together in the evening sky for a few weeks before the sun's glare consumes them both. The young crescent moon joins them on the evenings of April 22 and 23.

May: Comet Neat may light up our northern skies in May as a naked-eye, evening comet if predictions are correct. For information, visit <http://encke.jpl.nasa.gov>

June: On June 8 Venus "transits" or eclipses the sun. This historic event occurs in pairs each century, but unfortunately happens at 2 a.m. Mountain Daylight Time, so it won't be visible from Denver. To see this event, you must travel to the East Coast, where it ends at sunrise, or to Europe, where it occurs at midday, or watch via the Internet. The second event and last chance this century is June 6, 2012, and will be better timed for Denver viewers.

July: The Cassini spacecraft arrives in Saturn orbit and drops the Huygens probe to the moon, Titan.

August: Denver sky watchers will finally benefit from a dark-moon night for the summer favorite, the Perseid meteor shower, which peaks early on the morning of Aug. 12.

October: This month will feature two major events, Colorado Astronomy Day on Oct. 23, and a total lunar eclipse of the full moon, visible from Denver on the evening of Oct. 28. For a really good view of the eclipse with explanations, visit the University of Denver's historic Chamberlin Observatory and share the experience DU astronomers and members of the Denver Astronomical Society. The event is free and open to the public. Information is available at (303) 871-5172 and www.du.edu/~rstencel/Chamberlin. The observatory is located at 2930 E. Warren Ave. in Denver, four blocks east of South University Boulevard and one block south of East Evans Avenue.

Public events at the historic observatory include first-quarter moon viewing, weather permitting, on the Saturday evenings of Jan.24, Feb.28, March 27, April 24, May 29, June 26, July 24, Aug.21, Sept. 18, Oct. 23~(Colorado Astronomy Day), Nov. 20 and Dec. 18, 2004. There will be extra telescopes in addition to the observatory's 20-inch refractor for these special events. You can get a close-up look at the spring evening stars, Jupiter and Saturn as an added treat!

Back from Antarctic by Karen Mendenhall

I am back from the Antarctic! Yes, I made it home in one piece.

The flight down on the Ilyushin 76 was one of the smoothest (and loudest), and probably one of the safest flights I have ever been on. The Russian pilots who fly to, from and in Antarctica are some of the best in the world! I have video of our take off and landing.

However, the audio on my camera is cutting out. I am scheduled for the January meeting so will have it fixed before then. Landing in Antarctica is interesting because, for obvious reasons, they cannot slam on the brakes. I was watching the pilot in the cockpit of our smaller aircraft when we took our scenic flight to the mountains, and there was a great deal of fancy footwork and interesting forced

air sounds while "braking".



I have the mail address of our pilot so will ask him how that works when I write.

We had a cloud-free horizon for a most spectacular eclipse!! The sun was still barely touching the horizon, but the corona was spectacular even though we could not see the lower portion. It was huge in appearance on the horizon!

I sure wish I had video from the eclipse site, darn it! Of the eclipse and the shadow bands!! Next time I am viewing a total solar eclipse in Antarctica (2021...:), I will know to strap one of those chemical heat packets to my batteries! It was so brutal, however, that even the heat packets did not work unless you had opened them on the plane and let them get warm already. A friend gave me one from inside his coat that was warm because none of mine would heat up there on the ice. They all started getting warm once we were back in the mess tent, which was good too because we had no heat due to the Japanese TV crew taking all the electricity until about 4:00 AM!

The wind was biting, even with my face covered, and my eyes were watering (and the tears were probably freezing on my skin). I was wishing I had worn my glasses instead of my contacts to help shield my eyes from the wind. Due to the wind and my watery eyes, I was not able to see the prominence that everybody else could see at about 1:00. RIGHT after totality ended and we were all screaming, jumping, hugging and kissing and thenI lost one of my contact lenses. About 5 minutes later I decided to see if I could find it since it has a blue tint. Amazingly easy to find on the ice, crumpled and frozen solid--took me only about 5 seconds to

find! :) It was very weird that it had just laid there for that long in the wind, but then, each time I went to pick it up the wind blew it away about 2-3 feet, so here we were chasing it all around. LOL. I could hear it tinkling on the ice, each time the wind carried it! Antarctica is a quiet place when the wind is not howling. I had more lenses back at the camp, so no big deal since I did not lose it until after totality (thank God!).

I would love to do a TV program on Antarctica!! And for sure I want to be on camera and be a star! :)

Shadow bands galore!!! The first I've seen ever! They were incredible! Pronounced and mesmerizing on the Antarctic ice. Visible ten minutes before and after totality. David Levy said they were by far the best he had ever seen. The crescent sun prior to totality was "SPARKLING"!! wow.

To experience totality during the "midnight sun" on Antarctica!.....was humbling at the very least.....

What an incredible bond we all experienced! Traveling with people to eclipses there is an automatic bond, but this difficult trip to Antarctica with the volatile and harsh environment, with the delays due to severe storms that obliterated our sleeping quarters, all this adhered us even stronger. Some of us were "nodding" in chairs in the mess tent after totality due to no tents to sleep in that were blown down from the previous storms, and/or no electricity and heat due to the Japanese taking all our electricity (for many hours!) for their TV broadcast, so we were freezing coming from the eclipse site expecting heated tents, and got no heat (which includes no hot water for coffee or tea even). I was in the mess tent trying to keep from nodding, when a local electrical engineer there, seeing our plight, offered his cot to me since he would be up all night working trying to get power back to us all. Me and my new friend from Scotland, Carol, took him up on it, and were able to get a couple hours of warm sleep in. I got about 1.5 hours before dawn. Then we shared tea with our hosts for a good hour or more. A most memorable moment! :) These were the people who were busting their butts before we arrived to see that we had tents and electricity!!!! How fortunate am I to have accidentally stumbled upon spending a good deal of time with them and able to hear their stories of the storms and hardships?? These guys were staying in a converted storage tent that they had put three cots into. The best hosts and "South African tea" I have encountered in my life.

I also was fortunate enough to have time to interact with the Russian pilots from "Novo" Research Station, and also some of the Indians from the "Maitri base." My Russian pilot friend, just when we were about to leave, gave me a large rock from the mountain area that he had flown us out to the day before. How cool is that? I had not seen any rocks, but also, we are not supposed to take them. I did not take one. This one was already taken and was a gift! :)

You must see an eclipse!! Each and every one of you out there needs to do this!! There is nothing else like it. And I don't care how many videos or photos you see, there is nothing like being there and watching it naked-eye and celebrating the moment with fellow astronomers! There are some great photos of the corona in existence, but to watch the event live, to see the diamond ring in transition!, no words or video or photos can capture. I hope to see some of you on the cruise ship in 2005 when we will also visit the Galapagos, or perhaps more likely in Turkey in 2006!! I am also planning on Egypt next year for the Venus transit-- certainly an event of a lifetime! See you there?

When we had achieved success, with our weather window being only 24 hours, there is a bond that can not be put into words, when most of us have been planning for so many months.

It was interesting also.... WE-- being people from Botswana, Scotland, Sweden, South Africa, Canada, USA, India, and many from Japan. All of us were taking pictures of our unique adventure. But I found it amusing that all the Russians were taking a boat load of pictures of us because we were also a unique event for them! How cool is that??

Well, my friends...by Karen Mendenhall

Was that a great banquet or what?? It was sooo great to see many of you whom I had not seen in so long!!! I will fix that--I have been away too long and need to start attending meetings again. I miss the camaraderie most, but I miss the nights out under the stars too very much....!

I am sorry to not have seen some good friends at the banquet who are on this distribution list.

David was a phenomenal guest speaker, yes??! I am so pleased! He did a talk down in Cape Town, SA, before our Antarctic Expedition, which was wonderful and included a few things from this talk. But I could tell in comparison, that he really worked on his talk for us!! There were so many special and sentimental things he included that he did not have in his talk to us before. His talk was very heart-warming and inspirational! Even though he is 'famous,' he is truly, still, just one of us amateur astronomers at heart. Be assured of that. He is a truly exceptional person (and his wife ("star") Wendee too).

I was thrilled that he added Antarctica photos to his talk! He had only hinted to me prior <smiling like the cat that ate the canary> what all he had included.....maybe a little Antarctica.. maybe a little reading from "Starlight Nights"....

This particular talk he did for us, "A Night Watchman's Journey," which he and I had discussed Christmas night at his house. He re-did and 'recreated' this talk with special highlights just for our banquet and had been working on it for a while. :) Needless to say, he could not have had a more appreciate audience, and we could all see that in his glowing face! He got more than one standing ovation!

I will be showing you more of Antarctica at the February meeting. Besides the TOTALLY AWESOME eclipse photos he showed from the Antarctic Expedition, several of the most beautiful eclipse photos he showed were from the Madagascar 2001 eclipse! Madagascar was my first eclipse (as well as my first time out of the country). I have a great slideshow of that tour that I can show at a meeting down the road as well!

I may have more "people surprises" during the year, so stay tuned!! :)

Annual banquet was awesome by Garry Garzone!

Banquet was awesome! I could tell David Levy was feeling at ease and was just like us amateur astronomers, with that old zeal that seems to drive us to hang out thru cold nights just to see some faint little fuzzies. He signed my telescope mirror cell along with Randy C. with date, I will cherish the scope, with some stories to tell at star parties now. Thanks Karen for all you have shared with us and I will look forward to hearing more tales of your Solar Eclipse from down under at next LAS meeting.

The new 30" scope will be a comet chaser with new energy from David Levy, the comet finding days are not over by any means, Keep it cosmic! GarryG



The astrophotography corner

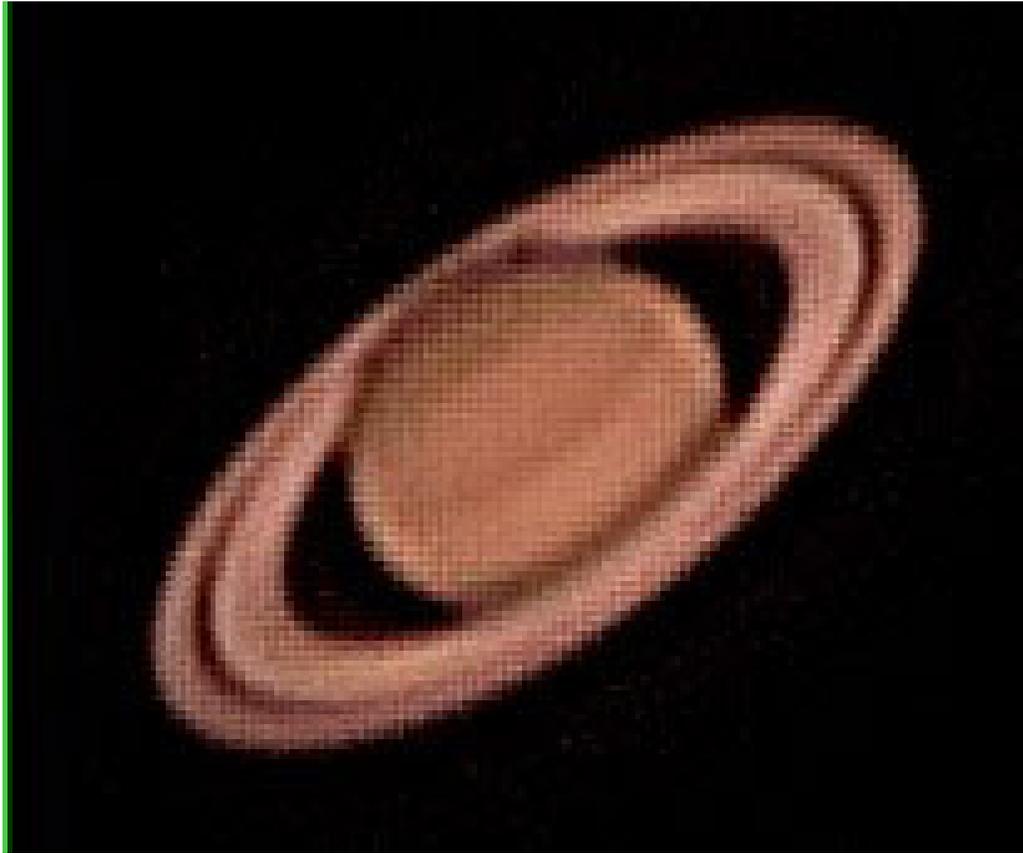
Hello everyone, Tim Brown made me go out to see if I still knew how to use the scope. This shot was taken Monday night at about 10:00pm. 300 images out of 1200 were used. A Phillips ToUcam and a 12.5 f9 scope with a 2x barlow. Brian Kimball



Hi, This is Jeffrey white member of the LAS and I sent you a picture the other day but I am not sure you got it...I took this the other morning at 4:30am using my Meade LX200 12" GPS and the Meade LPI imager. It is a stacked image using the software from meade of 81 pictures. Just thought you might enjoy this. Let me know if you get it. Jeff.



I took the attached image Fri night (9 Jan '04) with my schiefspiegler and Logitech webcam, from Lyons. Seeing was okay, but not great. The main purpose of circulating it is to goad Brian Kimball into taking a really good one. Cheers – Tim



Hi All, Well we finally got Brian Kimball to break out his camera and scope to show us how it is done. Best Saturn shot was from Brian with stack software. Other two shots of Saturn are from me with the 25 scope, no stacking, just right from the eyepiece. I really liked the one Jeff took of Jupiter on the FRAC.

I was out again tonight with Matt L and we took about 100 pictures of Saturn. Good thing it is Digital or I could not afford all the pictures I waste. Fun to go inside and see if any of them came out OK or not. Saturn was a real jewel tonight, seeing was very good at times with Cassini division easily seen. I would have to say it is some of the best views in awhile. I will be at LAS meeting this Thursday, try to make it you guys, bye, gary



Classified

To sell:

Sell Compaq Presario with Windows 98, keyboard, mouse, monitor, speakers and a lot of software including Starry Night Pro.

CPU AMD-k6-2 350MHz with 128Mb memory and 7.468Gb disk

Epson Stylus Color 740 + lot of ink!!!

Include StarryNight Pro application

Price: \$300 sends email to philippe_bridenne@yahoo.com

10" Sears Craftsman table saw

Price: \$200 sends email to Brian bnimball@msn.com or calls him at 303-678-0525

Complete set (3 books) of 1st edition of Uranometria 2000.0 Observing Guides. Excellent condition. Contains Volume 1 and 2 and Deep Sky Guide. Sells as a set only. \$80.00 for set which is 50% of price for a new set of these guides. Contact Mike Hotka deepskymike@earthlink.net

I am trying to sell a Celestron Ultima 9.25. If the deal were local I would expect closer to \$1,600 or so and accept credit cards.

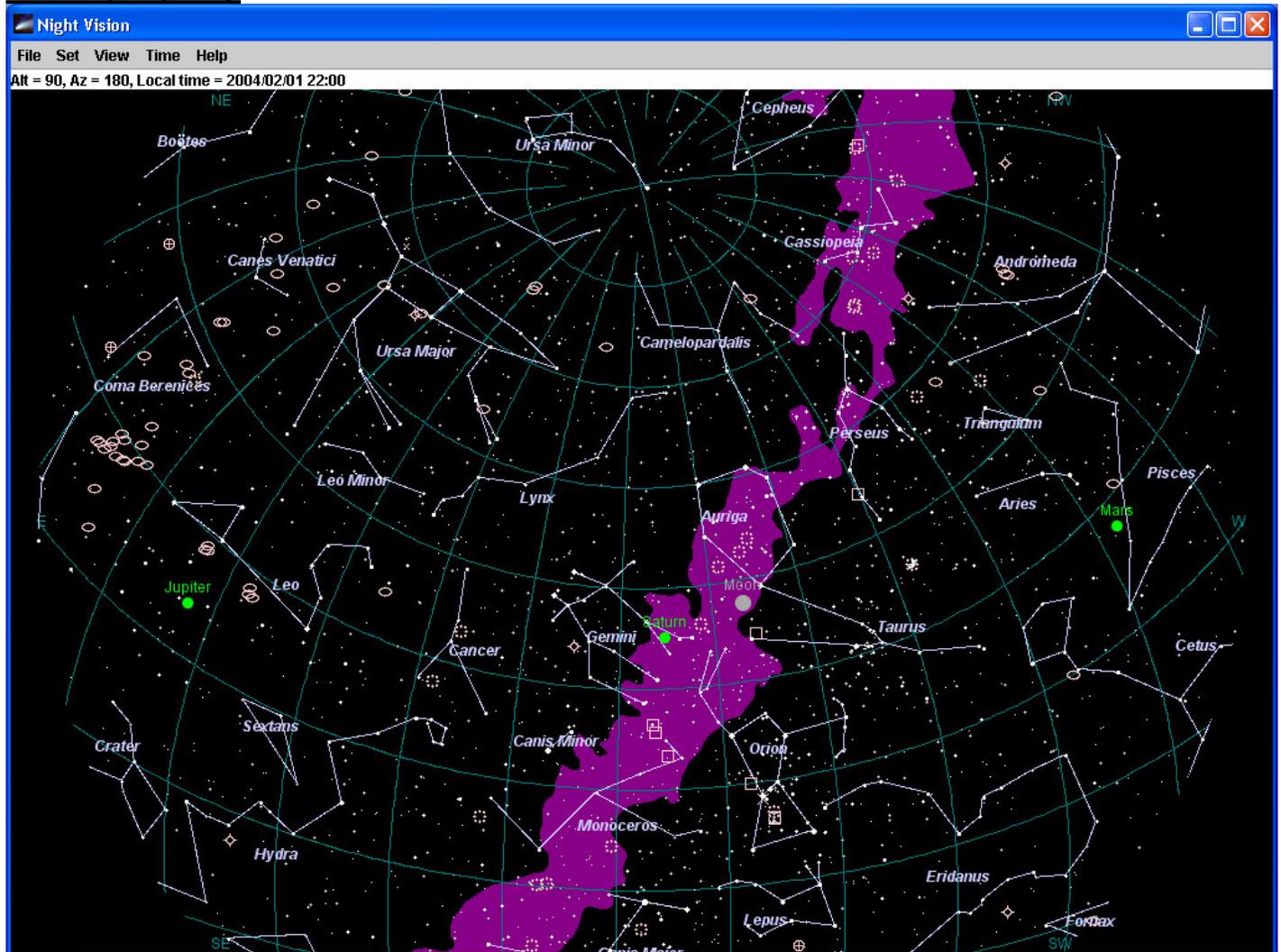
<http://www.astromart.com/viewad.asp?cid=233874>

Jared Workman

To buy:

If you have stuff to buy or to sell, send an email to your newsletter editor philippe_bridenne@yahoo.com

February Sky Map



Beagle 2 Update

Ground control initiates radio silence to tempt Beagle 2 from its hiding place

12-Jan-04 10:33 GMT

Summary

No signal was received from Beagle 2 this morning when ESA's Mars Express orbiter passed over the landing site around 02:02 GMT.

Full story

Prof. Colin Pillinger, Beagle 2 Lead Scientist, was present at ESOC when the data came through and although the news was disappointing, Prof. Pillinger was encouraged by the continued support and determination of the team at ESA's mission control centre to continue the search.

The next phase will be to initiate a period of radio silence where no communication attempts will be made with Beagle 2 until the 22nd January. Adopting this approach will force Beagle 2 into communication search mode 2 [CSM2] where the probe will automatically transmit a signal throughout the Martian day [power is still conserved during the night].

The results from future communication attempts will be posted on the Beagle 2 and PPARC websites.