

## **Altrincham and District Astronomy Society**

Meeting number **612** held on 6<sup>th</sup> December at 8pm

**Location:** Timperley Village Club

**Apologies:** None

**Members Present (in person):** 18

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### **PRESENTATION**

The presentation for the evening entitled "In Search of Dark Skies" was given by Mazin Younis. It had been split into two distinct parts, the first covering his early years when he was still living in Northern Iraq and the second when he revisited the area in search of the dark skies of his youth.

Mazin said he had felt at home with the stars growing up; as a child he had slept on the roof of his house looking up at the stars and Milky Way as he went to sleep. Mazin said that he had began his observing career in 1973 and been taught astronomy under a Bortel 2 sky. He went through those early years of observing, how he had seen the 1975 lunar eclipse, the various instruments he had had access to; the photographic film he had used and the processing techniques of the time. Mazin then went on to cover his involvement in the Iraqi National Observatory project in 1977 and what subsequently had happened to the observatory.

The presentation then jumped in time to his revisit of Northern Iraq in 2019 and his search for a remote observing site. Unfortunately when he returned Iraq, the skies of his youth were no more, there was a lot of light pollution and the skies had become a Bortel 6. It proved impossible to find an alternative site in the area. He came back to the UK (Manchester) where, although he had access to some excellent equipment, the weather was a serious obstacle to meaningful observing. He had had to have a rethink. Mazin said that he decided to investigate Morocco as a potential region to set up a remote observatory and he went through his reasons for the choice. Mazin detailed his criteria for selection of the site, the process he undertook once the site had been selected; his initial visit, taking out the equipment and how he had received support from the local monastery. Mazin shared many photos from this time. Unfortunately on his third trip out to the site he lost it as he had had no official permission to use the site. He had to start all over again to find an alternative.

This time on his fourth trip out he obtained a formal invite before he went. Mazin described the interaction he had had with his hosts and the outreach activities he had been able to undertake. His fifth trip out (post-Covid) had been to a different site, where he had used the roof top of his assistant. His sixth trip had been to a further site in search of even darker skies, for this site his local contact had been a member of the local authority. The only problem with that site had been the cold and the wind.

Mazin covered in detail all his investigations into potential dark sky sites during the time period 2019 to 2023, his site testing programme and his current remote set up whilst he was waiting for formal approval for a more permanent site from the authorities, Mazin ended the presentation by sharing the photos taken from the dark sky site found in Adar.

### **ITEMS OF BUSINESS**

#### **1) Events**

##### **a) 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Party**

The Chairman reported that the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary party had been a success.

#### **2) Any Other Business**

There had been no further business to discuss.

#### **Next meeting**

The next meeting was 3<sup>rd</sup> Jan 2025