

## Astronomy Group Visit to the Jodrell Bank Radio Telescope, Thursday 17 July 2014

This was a joint outing between our own Radlett U3A Astronomy Group and the Bricket Wood Circle's Science Group. It was always going to be a long day (a 330 mile round trip) so we expected only a limited take-up. In the end we had 10 people spread over 2 cars, kindly driven by Normand Tuchband and Gary Harding.

On arrival we had an introductory talk about the telescope by one of the staff members covering its origins and current work. We then spent the next hour or so wandering round the beautiful grounds in glorious sunshine with the enormous telescope always in view. During our stroll, we were invited to have a look through a smaller optical telescope which was trained on the Sun (with the appropriate safety filters). We could clearly see some solar prominences – large strands of burning gases that can extend hundreds of thousands of miles from the surface. Several astronomical exhibitions were also available for us to peruse at our leisure.



We then waited for the restaurant to open for our pre-lecture meal which was well received by all of us. The lecture, by an astrophysicist from the University of Leicester, was about gamma ray bursts from throughout the Universe and how they are detected and studied by the Swift satellite. It was a well attended event with plenty of questions. We then began our drive home after a really interesting day out.

*Peter Altman*