IOW Dark Skies Festival REPORT















Context

Isle of Wight Dark Skies: The aim of the festival was to celebrate and raise awareness of the fantastic dark skies of the Isle of Wight.

Over 1000 people attended, an eclectic audience of young and old from far and wide. Talks, presentations, workshops, art, film, and performance were on offer **all for free**.

The festival was commissioned to support the Island's application to become an international officially recognised 'Dark Skies Park'.































FRI 17TH FEB

SAT 18TH FEB

CLEAR SKIES TENT

4.00- 4.20pm Richard Grogan AONB, Welcome 4.35-5.15pm 'Tale of Three Sisters' Play by Tide Nor Time Players 5.30-6.15pm Zen Stretch & Starry Stories Workshop

6.30-7.15pm Vectis Astronomers 'Space and us' Presentation

7.15-8.00pm IW Planetarium, 'Stargazing for Starters' Paul England

BLACKOUT TENT

3.30-4.30pm 'Painting With Light' Photography Workshop 4.30-5.00pm 'Benefits of Sleep' Presentation by Barnados 5.00-5.20pm 'Waiting' Ghost Story by Sandra Singleton 5.30-6.15pm 'Measuring the Universe' Stokey, Presentation 6.30-7.15pm 'Astrophotography Workshop' Jamie Russell 7.15-8.00pm 'Isle of Wight Ghosts' IW Ghost Experience

CANVAS TENT

3.30-4.30pm Cosmic Creative Writing Workshop

4.30-5.30pm Make a Pinwheel Workshop

5.30-7.15pm Make an Asteriod, Clay Workshop

7.15-8.00pm Phases of the Moon Craft Workshop

FRIDAY & SATURDAY- FEATURING THROUGHOUT...

AONB, Vectis Astronomers, The Butterfly Conservation Society, Robert Hook Society, Hampshire IW Wildlife Trust, Brading Roman Villa, Chad Powell Photography, Island Visions Photography, Wild Wight Podcast

CLEAR SKIES TENT

3.20-4.00pm Zen Stretch and Starry Stories
4.00-5.00pm 'Robert Hook IW Scientist' Presentation by Arnold Taylor

5.15-5.45pm 'Nocturnal Activity of Beavers' Presentation HIWWT

6.00-6.45pm 'Tale of Three Sisters' Play by Tide Nor Time Players

7.00-8.00pm 'Measuring the Universe' Stokey, Presentation

BLACKOUT TENT

3.00-4.00pm 'Painting with Light' Photography Workshop 4.00-4.45pm 'Isle of Wight Ghosts' IW Ghost Experience 5.00-6.00pm Selected Dark Skies Short Films with Paul Windridge 6.00-6.20pm 'Waiting' Ghost Story by Sandra Singleton 6.30-7.30pm 'Astrophotography Workshop' Jamie Russell

CANVAS TENT

3.30-4.15pm Ipad Soundscape Workshop 4.45-5.30pm Ipad Soundscape Workshop 6.00-7.00pm Ipad Soundscape Workshop

OUTSIDE: 6-7pm Fire and Light show with StixguyKai

Exhibitions by IW College Art Students, the IW Womens Insitutute, Viva Carnival Club, Fiveways and Broadlea Primary School.
Commissioned dark skies artwork from local artist 'Losten'.

Stargazing, Story telling, Poetry, Facepainting, Telescopes, Willow Wreath Making, Celestial Headdresses, Torches, Trails and Fun Activities...



























Press:

https://www.countypress.co.uk/news/23226880.new-dark-skies-festival-coming-isle-wight-next-month/

County press 4th Jan

https://onthewight.com/isle-of-wight-dark-skies-festival-astronomy-wildlife-photography-and-more/

On the Wight 24th Jan

https://www.islandecho.co.uk/dark-skies-festival-heading-to-isle-of-wight-pearl-this-february-half-term/

Island Echo 25th Jan

https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/its-all-wight-all-year-round-pxxzvw8cc

The Sunday Times, 12th Feb

https://www.countypress.co.uk/news/23346353.first-isle-wight-dark-skies-festival-hailed-success/

County Press 25th Feb

https://www.islandecho.co.uk/first-ever-isle-of-wight-dark-skies-festival-a-resounding-success/

Island Echo 26th Feb

Listed on: Visit Isle of Wight, Events on the wight, Visit Heritage, Eventbrite















Audience Quotes:





'I enjoyed meeting people and experiencing our community's enthusiasm. Finding common ground... in space! The artistic aspect to the island's dark skies, realising that it's not only science and scientific types who can contribute to this project and to the evolution of the dark sky work.'

'The whole experience was really well put together'

'We all loved the art outside, the children were really interested and it prompted lots of questions - which was brilliant'

84% of the audience felt they learnt something about Dark Skies













Participants...

















IW College Art & Design

The Isle of Wight College Art and Design students used the 'Dark Skies Festival' as the theme to their fine art unit within their coursework. New Carnival acted as their client and they were asked to research dark skies on the Isle of Wight and to then produce a piece of artwork in any chosen medium. They created sculptures of nocturnal animals in small groups, in a day, as part of an introduction to willow workshop. The Art and Design students then created an individual bespoke piece of fine art themed on the 'Isle of Wight Dark Skies' to go on public display at the festival.















IW College tutor Carly Lacey:

'The students have loved working on this theme, it is always quite difficult to engage all learners on one theme but they all were able to find an area of this that was of interest to them. The willow workshop with the group expanded their skills is so many areas, thank you so much for giving them the opportunity.

Quite a few of the student artists attended the event and said they thought it was fantastic- well done to you and your team!

Overall the students felt proud to see their work on display and it is has been an invaluable experience for them to work for a real client and displaying their work for the public to see'.

























Student Ouotes:

'I liked working in groups and I liked seeing my artwork displayed for people to see.'

'I enjoyed getting to try something new by working with a company doing a themed piece.'



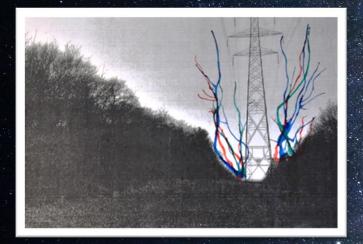




















Students rated their experience 4.53 out of 5 stars overall

3/4 of the students had not known about the importance of Dark skies before the project and gained knowledge and understanding by undertaking it.

Just over half of the students attended the festival







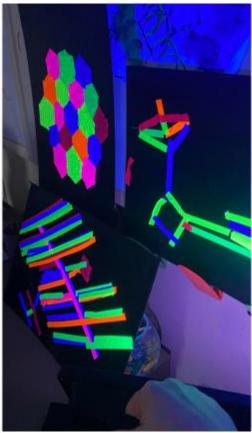


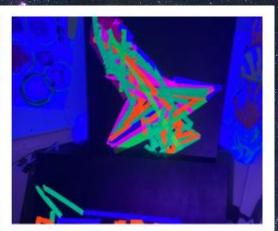


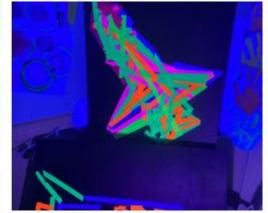


Ryde School – Pre Prep – Carnival Club









Pupils aged 4-7years, in their carnival club, Fiveways, Ryde School Pre-Prep, created neon artworks representing spacecraft using glow in the dark tape. They also made a series of photo booth props representing the solar system.













Viva Carnival Club VIVA

(Valuing Individuals, Valuing All)





Viva Carnival Club are an integrated, fully inclusive carnival craft and samba group who meet weekly. For Dark Skies, Viva members used a selection of UV chalk pens, inks and paints as well as stickers and stencils. They created a series of spiral-art galaxies spinning against a hand drawn dark sky backdrop.













Broadlea Primary School

Broadlea School children, years 5 & 6, worked with the Wight Aviation Museum finding out about the Black Arrow project where rockets were designed, built and tested on the Isle of Wight in the 1960s and 70s. The children experimented making stomp rockets with experts Brian Curtis and Helen Blake. They then created junk model rockets with **New Carnival artist Gemma** Mallinson.

A quote from one of the children:

'The best bit was the whole day. I loved doing the experiments with the rockets and being able to create the satellite we learnt about - I can't wait to see it when its been painted!'

A quote from the class teacher Rebecca Eaglen:

'The day's workshop was incredible. The children were so excited to take part that they had created incredible posters to be in with the chance of attending! They were fully engaged all day and loved being able to ask all of their questions. Not only did they enjoy the practical experiments, they loved being able to create their own structures with the challenge of only a few pieces. They couldn't wait to tell their friends at the end of the day!'





Dark Skies Festival Report 2023

Contributing Organisations

- Area of Natural Beauty,
- Vectis Astrological Society,
- The Island Planetarium,
- The Robert Hook Society,
- IW Hampshire Wildlife Trust,
- Brading Roman Villa,
- The IW Butterfly Conservation Society,
- IW Ghost experience,
- Barnardo's,
- · Wight Aviation Museum,
- UK Star wars Garrison,
- IW Music Hub,
- Celestial Navigation, Stokey Woodall



















Individual Contributors





- Chad Powell Astro
 photographer. Chad sponsored
 the event kindly letting us use
 his images in our Publicity. He
 had a stand exhibiting his
 photographs- his first time
 having one.
- Jamie Russell from Island
 Visions Photography ran two
 popular 'Astro photography'
 workshops and had a stand
 exhibiting his work.











Artist Commissions

New Carnival asked for applications from local artists for a dark skies themed art piece or performance.

2 Artists won a £500 commission to produce their chosen artwork for the event. However, all 9 applicants were invited to get involved. The two successful recipients of our £500 IOW Dark Skies Festival Commissions were Lostenart and Paul Wilson.

The competition was really tough, with entries from a wide variety of artists, all submitting thoughtful and exciting ideas.

Applications were scored based on the following criteria.

- Response to the Brief
- How it fitted within the event, based on the organisations that are trading
- Target Audience

Losten said:

'The piece 'The visible invisible' was a bespoke interactive piece demonstrating the effects an individual could have on light pollution. Audiences were invited to cast a shadow to reveal more...'















Losten















Time and Tide Players

Paul Wilson

An original, live production based on an old Isle of Wight story about that the three main rivers of the island (Eastern Yar, Medina and Western Yar), the magical entities that dwelled within and how they entered the stars.















Artist Workshops and Performers

















Corey Gibbs Story Teller, Huxley Magic Scrap Bots, Jon Jewitt Willow, Alicia French Clay, Eloise Preston Creative Writing, Em Johnston ipad soundscapes, Andrew Butcher Poetry and Stories, Steph Brittain Stories, Georia Upson and Soulface facepainting, Paul Windridge Short Films











Artist Workshops and Performers



Quote from Alicia French, young emerging artist:

'During the Dark Skies Festival, I conducted workshops open to all ages on how to make an asteroid out of air drying clay. Where we delved into using the pinch pot technique, then used tools and our hands to create our asteroids textured surface. I'm so grateful that New Carnival invited me to lead these workshops as an early career artist. As well as helping me show people how to explore the sensory and spontaneous nature of making with clay.'













Engagement Data:

961 pre-booked tickets for workshops and specialist talks

www.eventbrite.co.uk

Total visitors: over 1100

Total Staff: 138

Children and Young people Involved in

pre- event workshops: 84















Individual Contributors / Organisations & New Carnival Team

Specialist Staff	Managers	Artists	Other Staff	Volunteers
Refers to those working in an area of specialism.	Refers to senior managers	Refers to any producing artists	Refers to technical and administrative staff	Refers to those that received expenses only
48	7	43	22	18

























Engagement: Community Workshops - Pre-Event

Working with **New Carnival**, pupils from Fiveways, Broadlea Primary School, The Isle of Wight College and VIVA, along with the NC's Creative Volunteers, created 'Dark Skies' themed artworks for public display at the event.

Workshop	Under 16	16 – 24	24- 35	35 – 44 45 - 54	Volunteers	Specialist Staff / Artists
Ryde School Pre Prep	19 (4 – 7 years)	0	0	0	0	3
Broadlea	30 (9 - 11 years)	0	0	0	0	5
The IW College 2 groups	0	38	2	0	0	4
Viva	2	2	5	4	1	1
NC's Creative Volunteers	0	1	1	2 3	7	2













New Carnival Team Evaluation

What worked well?

Great atmosphere,

Good attendance. Good local knowledge of the event- press promotion worked

Range of activities on offer suitable for all ages and abilities. Indoor and Outdoor space.

84 young people involved presenting work ,3 young emerging artists delivering/performing

New alliances and relationships formed

What did not work?

Free shuttle bus- this was underused and expensive. Parking was maxed and people sunk on the grass.

Not assigning volunteer staff to particular areas, we could have better managed talks/ activities and collected tickets and then assigned any empty seats at the end. Tech issues despite tech support!

Short set up time did not leave much time for adjustments/ attention to detail.

We needed more tables and more chairs, and better lighting at the far end of the building

How to improve?

People seemed confused about what was actually going on prior to the event and were not sure if they could come without booking, make this clearer in publicity.

More time for changeovers between presenters, more heating/blankets.

Fantastic representation from local experts but it would be good to have some other representation from further afield- Winchester science museum, Sothampton Uni etc.

Space for a mobile planetarium so we can still stargaze irrespective of weather!













Evaluative Feedback: Online Questionnaires

46 Respondents from Audience questionnaire,

19 Respondents from IW College Art and Design Students,

17 Respondents from Contributing Organisations

(TOTAL 82 people)

















Audience- FEEDBACK

What did you enjoy most at Dark Skies Festival?

- Robot cars
- The talks from the Vectis astronomy soc
- The talk from Vectis astronomical society
- Learning new things
- Meeting people and experiencing our community's enthusiasm.
 Finding common ground... in space! The artistic aspect to the island's dark skies, realising that it's not only science and scientific types who can contribute to this project and to the evolution of the dark sky work.
- Lots to do, free of charge, friendly people
- Stories by Steph Brittain
- Ghost stories
- Venue and diversity of workshops
- Theatre

- An opportunity to attend something that was creative and educational for all the family. Not a lot happens in winter on the island so it was nice to see something on offer as well as celebrate something that is special to the island.
- Izzie's beaver talk
- Nice atmosphere
- Willow workshop
- The variety of talks, especially Stokey, IW Ghosts and the talk on Robert Hooke. It was also good to attend Jim Baldwin's very informative Moths stand.
- The atmosphere
- The atmosphere, the good choice in the activities.
- · The variety of exhibits
- The events outside in the tents and lights at night
- The astrophotography workshop
- The Losten interactive display
- All of it. 4 a first event i thought it was very good. Thank you
- Story telling
- Loved it!













- Measuring the Universe and Ghost Stories
- Talk by Vectis Society member on our place in solar system.
- Light painting- was fantastic
- Yes Pinwheel
- Unfortunately the ones I wanted were fully booked
- Wreath making
- Space and where we fit in
- DSLR photographing the night sky: great tips and technical know how on how to take good photos
- Willow- very good
- Ghost stories- fun
- Introduction
- The Robert Hooke talk
- 1. Stokey Woodall 2. Astrophotography 3. Planetarium
- The three sisters, really enjoyed it, fun and knowledgeable.
 Wish we booked more!
- We booked 4 and they were very informative











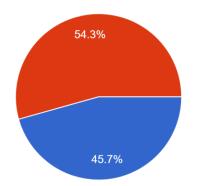




Knowledge and Awareness...

Did you have much knowledge or awareness of the Islands application to become a designated 'Dark Skies Park' Prior to the event?

46 responses



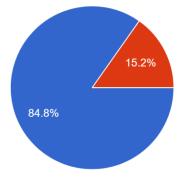






Did you feel that you learnt about the importance of 'Dark Skies' and/or gained new knowledge about the night sky?

46 responses

















IW College – FEEDBACK

19 Responses

2. What has been the best thing about being involved in the Dark Skies Festival?

Creating nocturnal animals and just being Creative.

being allowed to be creative and explore more skills.

Having my work up on display

being able to make something that's then shown in a public space

making the tree and the willow bat

I really enjoyed doing the willow, I also enjoyed working in a team.

I liked working in groups and I liked seeing my artwork displayed for people to see.

Getting to try something new by working with a company doing a themed piece.

It gave us all a great opportunity. And was for a great event.

i liked our work being displayed somewhere where i can go see it and others seeing it as well

I liked the themes and how the themes gave an easy idea of what to create.

other people getting to see my work on display

Overall please rate how you found the experience of working with new carnival (1 star poor, 5

star excellent etc)



getting to work and having people seeing my work

Creating a final piece of artwork that involved the theme of dark skies in some way and adapting a famous piece of art to fit the narrative of dark skies.

making the lantern and making some artwork to display

Being able to work as a team to produce a project together.

The Workshops

Getting to work on a piece of art of a place in the island and getting it displayed

being a part of a bigger project and having my artwork displayed















3. Had you heard about the importance of 'Dark Skies'

before you did this project?

More Details

Yes 5 No 14

4. Do you feel you have better knowledge and understanding about the Island's 'Dark Skies' now you have finished the project?

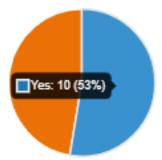
More Details

Yes 1 No 1 Maybe 7

5. Did you attend the festival yourself to see your artwork on display?

More Details

Yes 10 No 9



Yes: 11 (58%)

Yes: 5 (26%)















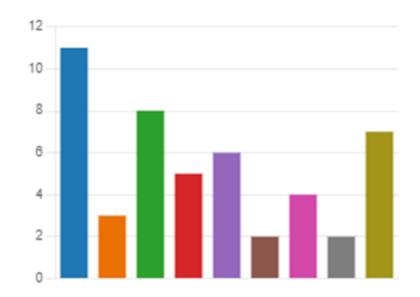




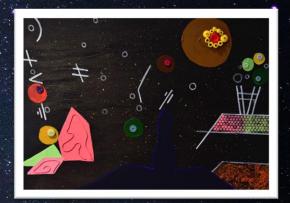
6. Which themes interest you most within the Dark Skies Project? (you can tick as many as you like)

More Details

	Nature and animals	11
•	History and heritage	3
•	Astronomy- the stars and planets	8
	Astrology- star signs	5
	Stories of the stars and folklore	6
	Wellbeing and sleep	2
	Science fiction and aliens	4
	Space travel and satellites	2
	The moon	7



















7. Was there anything about the project that you did not enjoy or found difficult?

I loved the dark skies festival.

no

I found using willow to create my sculpture quite difficult

trying to not break the willow

I enjoyed everything.

I did not like the willow sculpture making as it was difficult and kind of boring.

Trying to incorporate mental health elements into my project since you cant visually see the side effects it has.

Wish it was easier to book the talks and demonstrations

making the willow sculptures was dificult

Mostly making the willow sculptures, because it was difficult.

no

no

No there was nothing about the project I did not enjoy.

nothing much difficult, probably trying to find some sci-fi artist to get inspiration

Not really

8.Is there anything else you would like to say? Anything that could be improved? Or any other opportunities you think New Carnival could offer you which would be beneficial?

Everything was perfect.

no

No.

More art workshops would be cool.

More workshops and hand on experiences.

more workshops and more booking talks at the festival

nc

more organised with signs telling us what's what

I think the new carnival company is doing a great job at planning these festivals and they are very well thought out right now there is nothing I can think of that can be improved.

I would say add some artist related to the themes

Nope









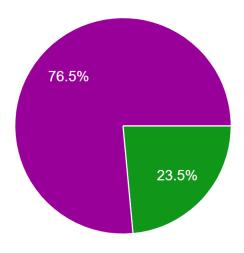




Contributing Organisations - FEEDBACK

Overall how would you rate the Dark Skies Festival.

17 responses



1 - Poor

2 - OK

3 - Good

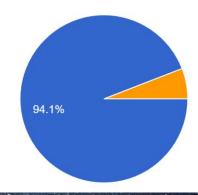
4 - Very Good

5 - Excellent



Would you like to be involved again?

17 responses





















What was the best thing about it?

17 responses

The general atmosphere was lovely lots of happy involved visitors

Everyone very helpful/friendly. Stands really interesting.

Response with numbers interested in the festival, ideal venue woth ideal cafe

Brilliant creativity and knowledgeable speakers.

The event as a whole. The atmosphere was so positive with oeople enjoying themselves.

Variety

How many people turned up and took part

The good-natured atmosphere

Well attended - likely thanks to free buses

TISCIVES.

The verity of entertainment, information and people was just outstanding. Wonderful event.

As a performer, I was impressed by the helpfulness of the organisers to cater for our requirements.

Well organised

The huge choice of really interesting activities, talks, workshops, plus plus.

So many different activities/ talks catering for everyone at every level and for variety of interests.

Diverse range of activities, performances and stands available, catering to a wide range of ages.

I personally liked all the uv installations & workshops avaliable













What could be improved?

17 responses

Nothing

Put tents closer to café so that the visitors could access them easier

Can't really think of anything.

Gaps between performances to allow set up, how to organise those waiting for a show, it was incredibly cold waiting outside, a holding tent maybe?

Better car park capacity and external lighting.

The weather lol! From a personal perspective, I am struggling to think how it could have been improved for my pitch. One for the future perhaps is to publicise the event a bit more widely. I shared your posts to some of my groups near to the date and it seemed a lot did not know about it despite all your efforts.

It was a bit windy but not sure what you can do about that haha!

Would possibly be better to hold it towards the end of March, August or even early September





As far as my involvement, I could not think of anything that needed improving.

The weather!

Maybe to have set up a few things the night before so it was not such a rush to get it all up in time. Also either more exits to the outside tents or better sign posted to the outside door. A lot of people were questioning whether it was the right way as not obvious, especially on the first night. Also thought about whether for the first timed workshops/talks if someone might be allocated to be a direct guide taking them to tents, as people seemed to trickle in during the time, which made me wonder if they hadn't been able to navigate to correct tents or hadn't realised where it was.

The weather. Extended setup time.

the weather! maybe have a few more arty installations? fill the space outside a bit more. maybe run event slightly later in the year (Spring?)

Not from my point of view, not without the ability to control the weather.



France (Channel) England
UNESCO Sites across the Channel



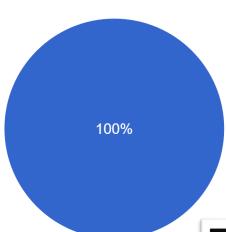






Do you feel that the event helped to raise awareness and understanding of the Islands Dark Skies?

17 responses





















Engagement- Eventbrite Bookings & Locations

Workshop	Attendance	Postcode, geographical location from Eventbrite bookings
Welcome from the AONB	56	Rotherham, West Cowes, Edinburgh, Ryde, Newport, Sandown, Burgess Hill, Fareham, Croyden, Gosport, Godshill, Nottingham.
The Tale of Three Sisters	111	Ryde, Gosport, Leeds, Swindon, Shanklin, Niton, Freshwater, Edinburgh, Littlehampton, Newport.
Cosmic Creative Writing	15	Ryde, London, Newport
Zen Stretch and Starry Stories	88	Newport, Freshwater, Purbrook, Brighton, Ryde, West Cowes, Ventnor, Southampton, Niton.
iPad Workshop	45	West and East Cowes, Freshwater, London, Eastbourne, Sandown.













Engagement

Workshop	Attendance	Postcode, geographical location from Eventbrite bookings
Astrophotography	45	Harrow, Newport, Mitcham, West Cowes, Ryde, Southampton, Freshwater, Manchester, Lymington.
Planetarium Space and where we fit in	45	Wakefield, Freshwater, Newport, Sandown, Nottingham, Hornsey.
Stokey Celestial stargazing	95	Newport, Shanklin, Ryde, East Cowes, West Cowes, Fareham, Pollenca – Spain, Petersfield.
Painting with Light	34	Ryde, Ventnor, West Cowes, Southampton, London.
'Waiting' A ghost Story	37	Godshill, Ryde, Purbrook, West Cowes, Eastbourne, Sandown, Freshwater











Engagement

Workshop	Attendance	Postcode, geographical location from Eventbrite bookings
Isle of Wight Ghosts	83	London, Ryde, Worthing, West Cowes, Gosport, Southampton, Freshwater, St Helens, East Cowes.
Robert Hooke	50	Newport, Ryde, Lymington, West Cowes, Southampton,
HIWWT Beavers	45	Freshwater, Ryde, East Cowes, Fareham, Newport, Brighton.
Pinwheels	20	Godshill, Ryde, Gosport, West Cowes
Barnardo's Benefits of Sleep	13	Lymington, Southampton, Ryde
Dark Skies - Short Films	30	Southampton, Ryde, Hammersmith, Newport, IoW, Sandown.











Engagement

Workshop	Attendanc e	Postcode, geographical location from Eventbrite bookings
Phases of the Moon	16	West Cowes, Ryde, Fareham, Newport, Spain.
Asteroid Workshops	33	Sandown, East and West Cowes, Newport, Southampton.
Scrap Bots	23	London, Southampton, Yarmouth, Gosport
Vectis Astronomical	36	West Cowes, Sandown, Newport, St Helens, Southampton, Fareham.
Willow Wreaths	41	East and West Cowes, Sandown, Ryde, Harrow, Southampton.













PHOTO CREDITS:

Event Photography by Tracy Curtis & Sam Frence

Dark Skies Photographyby Chad Powell (Sponsored)

















