

# Astronaut gives Isaac Newton cosmic view of Earth

May 20 2010, By MARCIA DUNN , AP Aerospace Writer

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In an image made from NASA TV Astronaut Stephen Bowen Wednesday May 19, 2010 adjusts a cable on the end of the orbiter boom that was inhibiting a camera from maneuvering correctly. (AP Photo/NASA)

(AP) -- Sir Isaac Newton is getting the royal treatment in space, thanks to the British-born astronaut who carried up a picture of the 17th century scientist and a chip from his famous apple tree.

Atlantis astronaut Piers Sellers said Thursday that he placed Newton's picture in the glassed-in dome of the [International Space Station](#) - the best seat in the gravity-less house. The views of Earth are stupendous from there.

"Sir Isaac absolutely loved it, I've got to tell you," Sellers said in an

interview with The Associated Press. "We had him in the window, and he got to watch his little wood chip float by and ponder the laws of gravitation and everything, so I think it was a treat for him."

The Royal Society of London provided Sellers with the 4-inch sliver of wood, which he took with him into orbit aboard the shuttle. It's inscribed with Newton's initials and, according to the society, came from the actual tree in England from which an apple fell nearly 350 years ago and inspired Newton to discover the law of gravity.

Sellers said Wednesday's ceremony was a dry run. He plans to videotape the Newton items later this week for the Royal Society, which is the national academy of science of the United Kingdom. It's celebrating its 350th anniversary.

Newton was a physicist, mathematician and astronomer. His brush with the falling apple is believed to have occurred in the mid-1660s.

Sellers, now a U.S. citizen, and the rest of Atlantis' visiting [astronauts](#) got some time off Thursday after nearly a week of stressful work in orbit.

The day's big event was the grand opening of the space station's newest room.

The Russian compartment, named Rassvet, or Dawn, was installed by the Atlantis crew earlier this week. Station commander Oleg Kotov had the honor of opening it up.

Kotov wore goggles and a mask as he peeked inside and hooked up an air filter. It was a precaution in case of floating dust, paint flakes or other debris. He reported that everything looked normal.

The compartment - 20 feet long and 8 feet in diameter - is crammed

with food, laptop computers and other supplies provided by NASA. The space station residents don't plan to unload the provisions until Atlantis leaves Sunday.

One last major chore awaits the shuttle astronauts: a [spacewalk](#) on Friday to finish replacing space station batteries. Four fresh batteries were plugged in during Wednesday's spacewalk. The crew also untangled a cable on Atlantis' inspection boom and fixed a loose antenna on the station.

"I am absolutely super pleased" with how the mission has gone, shuttle commander Kenneth Ham told the AP. "We're all feeling pretty darned good."

This is NASA's last planned flight of Atlantis. The shuttle and its six-man crew are due back on Earth next Wednesday.

Only two shuttle missions remain, by Discovery and Endeavour this fall. Once the fleet is retired, NASA will focus on getting astronauts to an asteroid and Mars by 2025 and 2035, respectively. That's the plan laid out earlier this year by President Barack Obama.

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Citation: Astronaut gives Isaac Newton cosmic view of Earth (2010, May 20) retrieved 4 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2010-05-astronaut-isaac-newton-cosmic-view.html>

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