

Starshine or moonshine?

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THE Star of Bethlehem may make a re-appearance next week, according to an astronomer.

The Head of Astronomy at Hatfield Polytechnic in Hertfordshire, Mr Lou Marsh, believes that he has come up with the scientific explanation for the star which led the Wise Men to Bethlehem in the bible Christmas story - an alignment of planets.

Not only does he think he can explain the phenomenon, but he expects one like it to happen next Thursday when the giant planet Jupiter and the red planet Mars almost merge in the night sky.

But Britain's best-known star-gazer, Patrick Moore has dismissed the theory.

"The two planets will get closer together but they will not merge and there is certainly no connection with the Star of Bethlehem.

"This is an old chestnut which crops up every year. It is not important at all - it will just make quite a nice picture. The idea that the Star of

Bethlehem will shine again is a load of moonshine," he said.