

Understanding the James Webb Space Telescope

John Thatcher, CEng, MRAeS. Project
Manager, Mid-Infrared Instrument, Retired

Date: Thursday, 31 March 2022, 18:00 CET

Online: <https://purl.org/ProfScholz/zoom/2022-03-31>

The James Webb Space Telescope (JWST) is optimised for making infrared observations in order to study the origin and evolution of galaxies, stars and planetary systems and is designed to look further back in space and time than the Hubble Space Telescope. It is a massive international project, decades in the making, involving NASA, the European Space Agency and the Canadian Space Agency.



NASA, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

The UK has a key role in leading a multi-national group that provides one of the four instruments on JWST with the lead scientist (Principal Investigator) based at the Royal Observatory, Edinburgh and the Project Manager (John Thatcher) based in what is now Airbus Defence and Space in Stevenage.

This talk provides an overview of how JWST came to be, why it looks the way it does and a preview of what is to come when it begins science operations following its successful launch on Christmas Day 2021.

John retired in May 2013 after over 30 years working in the space industry, mainly involved in spacecraft engineering and project management. For the last decade of his career he was the European Consortium Project Manager for the Mid-Infrared Instrument on the James Webb Space Telescope - more details are included in his talk. In 2013 John was awarded the Royal Aeronautical Society's Geoffrey Pardoe Space Award along with the Society's Specialist Bronze Award for his work on the JWST.