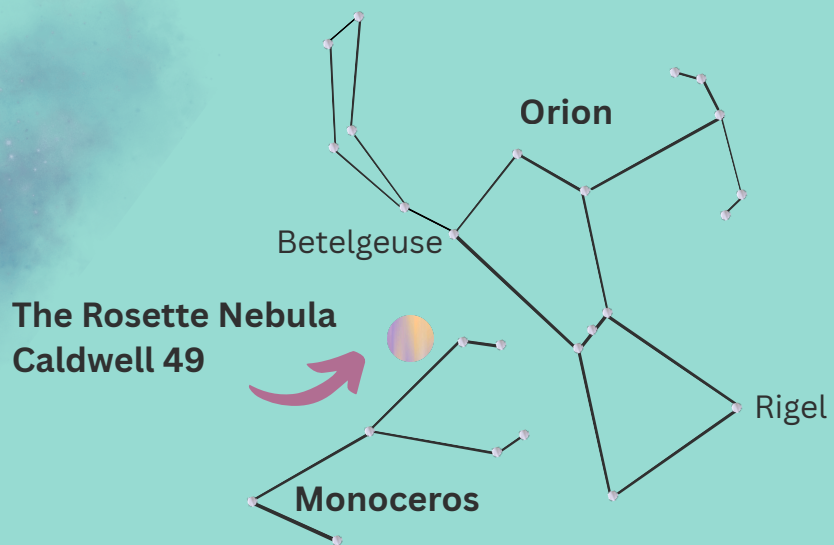


ROSETTE NEBULA CALDWELL 49

Within the small constellation of Monoceros the Unicorn lies the beautiful Rosette Nebula. This is a huge gas cloud 130 light-years across (Our nearest neighbour star is 4.25 light-years away) and 5,200 light-years away. This means this light left in the year 3,174 BC. The Pyramids in context were built in approximately 2,700 and 2,500BC.

The nebula is a rich star-forming region and is full of huge, bright, super hot new stars, consuming the hydrogen to burst into life, carving out the centre as they do so. One of the brightest, HD 46223, is 400,000 times brighter / 50 times more massive than our Sun. Another, HD 46150, is 450,000 times brighter and 60 times more massive. In context, our Sun is 333,000 times more massive than the Earth.



Approximately 2,500 stars are forming in this complex nebula. In the middle vast plasma bubbles, glowing purple-blue can be seen. These are caused by the super hot stars blowing very strong solar winds into the nebula around them, causing the bubble effect.

The dense cluster of stars in the nebula is thought to be only around 4 million years old. To the right of the nebula can be seen another famous phenomenon, The Carnival of Animals. This string of dust and dark gas appears to some to be like shadows of animals running on the plains of Africa.