

SPACEJUNK

In 1930 American astronomer Clyde Tombaugh discovered the planet (later to be reclassified dwarf planet) Pluto. It was the first object in what later became known as the Kuiper belt. He died at the age of ninety on January 17, 1997, nine years and two days before the launch of *New Horizons*, NASA's mission to Pluto. He was cremated and some of his ashes were placed aboard the *New Horizons* spacecraft. The container was inscribed - *Interred herein are remains of American Clyde W. Tombaugh, discoverer of Pluto and the solar system's third zone.*

The third zone or heliopause is a theoretical space border. It is the final boundary before being considered in interstellar space. This is where all shit breaks loose and there is material from all sorts of stars and suns floating about. Beyond the heliopause region there are no effects from the Earth's sun. Well, that is my understanding. I can't really get my head around all that stuff out there. Space travel is beyond my everyday thought capacity. It hurts my head to comprehend endlessness. It's like that impossible riddle of digging through the Earth. If you dig straight down, at what point do you turn around and start digging upwards, or do you get to the other side and fall upwards out of the hole? Just another thought that hurts my head. Not to mention Gods, spacemen and afterlives.

The space probe *Voyager 1* left the Earth on September 5, 1977. That was a few weeks after I was born. Its been floating through space for over 40 years travelling at about seventeen kilometres per second. It entered interstellar space passing beyond the heliopause on 25th August, 2012 and became the first man made object to do so. It should have enough power to communicate with Earth until about 2025 before it disappears into eternity. Apparently it is heading towards a star, which it may get close to in forty thousand years. Galaxies, planets and solar systems are ridiculous. Infinite space does my head in. Life. It's all totally absurd.

I like the thought of space junk. Abandoned things floating forever into infinity. Art. These things we make, with the hope that they exist somewhere in a forever future - preserved to mark our existence - in unquantifiable silence.

David Turley, 2019