

# Astronomical Society of Edinburgh – Annual Report for 2006

The Astronomical Society of Edinburgh was founded (as the Edinburgh Astronomical Association) in 1924 and is governed by a Constitution adopted in 1937 and since modified (most recently on 13th January 1995). A copy of this Constitution has been supplied to each member and may be referred to in the Society's Library at the City Observatory and on the Society's web site. Copies may be obtained from the Secretary.

Clause 1 of that Constitution is:

*The name of the Society shall be "The Astronomical Society of Edinburgh" and its objects shall be to advance the education of the public about the science of Astronomy and to promote astronomical research chiefly in Edinburgh and its neighbourhood. In furtherance thereof:*

- (a) to circulate information on astronomical matters by the publication of articles, books etc.;*
- (b) to encourage astronomical study and observation; and*
- (c) to increase popular interest in astronomy.*

The Management of the Society is vested in a Council, elected from the Ordinary Membership of the Society. The following served from 1st April:

- President: Des Loughney  
113 Kingsknowe Road North, Edinburgh EH14 2DQ  
Telephone: 0131 477 0817  
Email: desloughney@blueyonder.co.uk
- Secretary: Graham Rule  
105/19 Causewayside, Edinburgh EH9 1QG  
Telephone: 0131 667 0647  
Email: Graham.Rule@ed.ac.uk
- Treasurer: Alan Ellis  
10 Greenbank Gdns, Edinburgh, EH10 5SL  
Telephone: 0131 447 9968  
E-Mail: alan.ellis@blueyonder.co.uk
- Vice-Presidents:  
Iain McEachran, David Small
- Councillors:  
Maurice Frank, Danny Gallacher, Pete MacDonald, Alastair Mackie, Ken Thomas, Adelaide Webster

The following Council members held office during the early part of the year (from 1st January to March 31st): Des Loughney, Iain McEachran, David Small, Graham Rule, Alan Ellis, Maurice Frank, Danny Gallacher, Pete MacDonald, Alastair Mackie, Ken Thomas, Adelaide Webster.

The Society's principal address

c/o Graham Rule  
105/19 Causewayside  
Edinburgh, EH9 1QG  
Telephone 0131 667 0647

Our meetings take place at

The City Observatory  
Calton Hill  
Edinburgh EH7 5AA  
Telephone 0131 556 4365

There is currently no post box at the observatory which the post office can reach.

## Membership

On the 31st December 2006 the membership of the Society was 75 of which 6 are honorary members.

## Honorary Members

Honorary members are Dr M. Brück, Dr H. Ford MBE, Dr D. Gavine, and Prof D. Heggie. The Honorary Presidents are Prof Andy Lawrence BSc PhD FRAS FRSE (Regius Professor of Astronomy at the University of Edinburgh) and Prof John Brown BSc PhD DSc FRSE FRAS (Astronomer Royal for Scotland).

## Publications

Editions 50 and 51 of the Society's Journal were published in 2006 under the editorship of Dr D.M. Gavine and Dr H. Meyerdierks, resp.

Members are issued with the latest edition of the Federation of Astronomical Societies "Astrocalendar" on payment of their subscription to the Society.

## Electronic Communication

The Society's website may be found at <http://www.astronomyedinburgh.org/>

Email contact addresses have also been set up for some Society Officers:

- [president@astronomyedinburgh.org](mailto:president@astronomyedinburgh.org)
- [secretary@astronomyedinburgh.org](mailto:secretary@astronomyedinburgh.org)
- [treasurer@astronomyedinburgh.org](mailto:treasurer@astronomyedinburgh.org)

Full details of the Society's activities and information about how to join are on the website.

Details of Society meetings are available on our answering machine at 0131 556 4365.

The Council expresses its thanks to the Royal Observatory Edinburgh for continuing to provide web space and email forwarding.

## Meetings

The Society has held the following meetings during 2006:

|           |      |  |
|-----------|------|--|
| January   | 6th  | <b>Roger Stapleton</b> – St.Andrews University<br>The St.Andrews University Observatory Instruments – past and present   |
|           | 20th | Open Evening   |
| February  | 3rd  | <b>Melvyn Taylor</b> – Leeds AS<br>Blinking Stars!   |
|           | 17th | Open Evening   |
| March     | 3rd  | <b>Des Loughney</b> – ASE<br>Presidential Address – Brown Dwarfs   |
|           | 17th | <b>Annual General Meeting</b><br>and Open Evening  |
|           | 29th | <b>Partial Solar Eclipse</b>   |
| April     | 7th  | <b>Alan Pickup</b> – ASE<br>Saturn and Cassini   |
|           | 21st | Open Evening   |
| May       | 5th  | <b>Gerry Taylor</b> – ASE<br>Extreme Stars   |
|           | 19th | Open Evening   |
|           | 20th | <b>Scottish Astronomers Group Meeting</b><br>Lecture by Alan Cayless of the Stirling Astronomical Society about his experiences as a tutor at the Open University on their student practical astronomy programme at an observatory in Majorca. |
| June      | 2nd  | <b>Ron Livesey</b> – BAA<br>Space Weather  |
| July      | 7th  | <b>Neil Grubb</b> – ASE<br>Its not Rocket Science  |
| August    | 4th  | <b>Members' Night</b><br>Short presentations by members of the Society   |
| September | 1st  | <b>Dr John Davies</b> – ROE<br>Is Pluto a Planet?  |
| October   | 6th  | <b>Tom Boles</b> – Past President, BAA<br>Supernova Discoveries  |
|           | 11th | Evening Class<br>The History of Astronomy  |
|           | 18th | Evening Class<br>The Sun and Sun Spots   |
| November  | 1st  | Evening Class<br>The Moon  |

|          |      |   |
|----------|------|---|
| November | 3rd  | <b>Alex Pratt</b> – Leeds AS<br>Video observations of meteors             |
|          | 8th  | Evening Class<br>Inner Planets (Mercury / Venus / Earth / Mars)           |
|          | 15th | Evening Class<br>Jupiter and Saturn – and their moons                     |
|          | 22nd | Evening Class<br>Meteors and Aurorae                                      |
|          | 29th | Evening Class<br>Comets   |
| December | 1st  | <b>Graham Dale</b> – The Mars Society<br>Latest News from the Mars Probes |
|          | 6th  | Evening Class<br>Neptune, Uranus and the dwarf planets                    |

The Council wishes to thank Alan Pickup for kindly presenting the “Monthly Sky Map” talk to the Society whenever he was available. Thanks also go to Dave Gavine for arranging speakers for many of the meetings.

## Council Meetings

The Council of the Society met on 27th January, 10th February, 14th April, 26th May, 30th June, 28th July, 25th August, 29th September and 27th October.

## Observatory

Last year we reported that there had been discussions with the Council regarding the state of the buildings that the ASE leases. It was hoped that progress would be made in 2006 in dealing with these issues. It is with regret that we have to report that no progress has been made. No repair and refurbishment work has been started apparently because of the City of Edinburgh Council’s lack of finance.

The situation has got worse and having a serious impact on the Society’s activities. We had a program of observing nights when the Playfair building was open to the public. This program had proved to be popular. The program had to be cancelled because in the summer part of the ceiling in the Playfair building fell down denying access to the Cooke telescope – our main working telescope. A further consequence was the postponement of our plan to refurbish the telescope in 2006. It might have been possible to show people features of the night sky using other equipment. This possibility has been ruled out by the failure of the plumbing system on Calton Hill. There are no operational toilets and no drinking water. We have no idea when the City Council will carry out these basic repairs.

If the Society wishes to have a program of showing the Moon and the planets through telescopes and binoculars to the public, including families, in 2007, then it should seriously contemplate organising this at other venues which have access to basic facilities such as toilets.

After giving up the Earlyburn site the Society has been seeking access to a ‘dark sky’ site somewhere within reasonable driving distance of Edinburgh. We have been offered access to a ‘darker sky’ site near Cobbinshaw reservoir in West Lothian. The site is owned by a model aeroplane society complete with a car park, runway and hut. The financial terms of the access are still being negotiated.

## Observing

The programme of opening the Observatory to the public had gone well in the early part of 2006. It had been halted for the summer months with the intention of resuming in August. The roof fall referred to in the previous section prevented this from happening. At the time of writing this is a shame as Saturn moves into a favourable viewing position.

There are two major astronomical events scheduled for 2007 which will attract public interest. Hopefully something can be organised despite the state of Calton Hill. These events are the total eclipse of the Moon on Saturday March 3rd and the opposition of Mars in December.

During the course of the year members of the public and Society members were trained on the use of the Society's instruments and how to observe variable stars and other objects. The Society helped the Sunday Times prepare an article on Scottish astronomical societies in March 2006. A talk was delivered to photography students at Stevenson College on astrophotography with the new generation of digital cameras.

## Night Classes

The ASE was aware of the success of the astronomy night classes organised in Stirling and Dundee. We were also aware that talks were offered by the ROE. Nevertheless it was thought that the public would be interested in a programme of night classes in Edinburgh at the Calton Hill site. A series of night classes were organised in the autumn on the general theme of the 'Solar System'. They were attended by an average of 7 people per session. Our thanks go to all those who made the classes possible.

## The Astronomical Society of Edinburgh Trustees

A former Vice-President of the Society, Mr John Henry Lorimer RSA left a substantial bequest to the Society when he died in 1936. This bequest has been assigned to "The Astronomical Society of Edinburgh Trustees" and is managed by them under conditions set forth in a Deed of Trust granted in favour of Rev Dr James Patrick DD BSc and others, dated 10th December 1937.

The following are the trustees in terms of that deed:

- Mr Raymond Fenoulhet (Secretary and Treasurer)
- Dr John Rostron
- Dr David Gavine FRAS
- Dr John Hunter
- Mr Alan Pickup

All of the above trustees are members of the Society.

## Financial Report

I am pleased to report that this year's annual report is the first for a long time that shows a surplus rather than the usual deficit. The surplus of £662.80 is entirely due to the decision by the City of Edinburgh Council to grant the Society full discretionary relief for its rates liability. The relief was backdated to 2005 and will be reviewed again in March 2008. We have received a full refund of last year's payment and along with a zero rates bill this year means we are around £2,800 better off than we would have been at the end of 2006.

The main items of expenditure are now the electricity use (£841.40) and insurance costs (£622.46).

Our main source of income continues to be from our membership subscriptions this year amounting to £1086 and secondly from donations this year of £620.

### **Errata Note for last year's 2005 Annual Accounts:**

*It was reported on last year's statement that £1135 had been received from the ASE Trust from the Lorimer foundation. It was pointed out by the Treasurer of the ASE Trust that only £570 had actually been paid to the Society in 2005. We have since discovered that this payment was made up of a number of cheques paid as a single transaction on the Bank Statement – The amounts were £570 from the Lorimer Trust, £500 donation from Fresh Air FM and £65 as membership subscriptions paid in March 2005.*

The form of presentation of this report conforms to the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 1992, which also requires the following statements to be made:

#### **i. Nature and purpose of each of the major funds:**

Current Account: Bank of Scotland Treasurer's Account

Investment: Bank of Scotland Business Investment Account

#### **ii. Remuneration and expenses of trustees**

(this refers to members of the ASE Council): £378.84

This money was paid to Council members by the Treasurer on presentation of receipts for costs incurred on Society business.

## Statement of Balances for the Year Ended 31 December 2006

|                                  |         |         |
|----------------------------------|---------|---------|
| Bank Balance at 31 December 2005 |         |         |
| Current Account                  | 739.31  |         |
| Business Investment Account      | 7408.51 |         |
| Total balance                    |         | 8147.82 |
| Less Liabilities for 2005 (1)    |         | 69.50   |
| Plus receipts for 2006           |         | 3456.36 |
| Less payments for 2006           |         | 2793.56 |
|                                  |         | 8741.12 |
| <br>Balances at 31 December 2006 |         |         |
| Current Account                  | 3297.44 |         |
| Business Investment Account      | 5443.68 |         |
| Total balance                    |         | 8741.12 |

## Income and Expenditure Report for 2006

|                             |        |                |
|-----------------------------|--------|----------------|
| <b>Income</b>               |        | £              |
| Subscriptions               |        | 1086.00        |
| Donations (5)               |        | 620.00         |
| Gift Aid (2)                |        | 290.23         |
| Bank Interest               |        |                |
| Current Account             | 14.30  |                |
| Business Investment Account | 35.17  |                |
|                             |        | 49.47          |
| Rates Rebate (2005)         |        | 1410.66        |
| Lorimer Trust Income (4)    |        | 0.00           |
| <b>Total Income</b>         |        | <b>3456.36</b> |
| <b>Expenditure</b>          |        | £              |
| Astrocalendars (3)          |        | 338.93         |
| Astronomy Magazines         |        | 139.40         |
| Hospitality (13)            |        | 223.65         |
| Equipment Purchases (8)     |        | 43.87          |
| Insurance (6)               |        | 622.46         |
| Subscriptions (10)          |        | 52.50          |
| Rates                       |        | 0.00           |
| Repairs & Maintenance       |        |                |
| ASE Equipment (9)           | 82.88  |                |
| Observatory                 | 0.00   |                |
|                             |        | 82.88          |
| Mailing & Stationery        |        | 113.95         |
| Travel Expenses (12)        |        | 81.90          |
| Utilities                   |        |                |
| Electricity                 | 841.40 |                |
| Gas (11)                    | 0.00   |                |
| Telephone (7)               | 252.62 |                |
|                             |        | 1094.02        |
| <b>Total Expenditure</b>    |        | <b>2793.56</b> |
| <b>Income – Expenditure</b> |        | <b>662.80</b>  |

## Note on Statement of Balances and Income and Expenditure Report

At the 31st December 2006 one cheque had not been cleared. This represents a liability for the Society of £17.50.

- Cheque number 011839 for £17.50 to Graham Rule for travel expenses.

## General Notes:

1. The 2005 liability of £69.50 represents cheque payments made during 2005 but not cleared until 2006.
2. The Gift Aid Tax receipt is for the two Inland Revenue Tax years 2004/5 and 2005/6.
3. The Astrocalendars payment also represents two years (2005 and 2006) and so is double the usual amount.
4. Lorimer Trust Income from interest earned on ASE Trust assets is usually requested by the ASE Treasurer from the ASE Trust. None was requested by the Society this year but a request is planned in 2007 backdated to 2006.
5. The bulk of donations came from radio groups and other organisations such as Unique Events for use of the Observatory premises. Cash from the donations box in the Playfair Building amounted to £120 over the year.
6. The insurance provision covers General Contents of £6,339 and specified items of individual equipment ranging from £1,654 to £3,184. Also included is public liability cover of £5m.
7. The base quarterly telephone bill is reduced by £20 per quarter due to cancellation of rental of handset equipment and cancellation call minder facility. This has been replaced by a private handset and answering machine at the Observatory provided by courtesy of Graham Rule.
8. Equipment purchases of £43.87 were for a replacement vacuum cleaner and timers for observatory heating.
9. Equipment repairs & maintenance of £82.88 was for the slide projector.
10. Subscriptions of £52.50 was for annual membership for the Society of the Federation Astronomical Societies.
11. The gas bill of zero is due to overpayment on a previous bill in 2005.
12. Travel expenses of £81.90 is for speakers at Members meetings.
13. Hospitality of £225.65 is for speakers' meals (£187.50) and general meeting refreshments of £36.15.

This report was approved at a meeting of the Council of the Astronomical Society of Edinburgh held at the City Observatory on 23rd February 2007

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Des Loughney, President

For and on behalf of the Council of the Astronomical Society of Edinburgh

The Astronomical Society of Edinburgh

**REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT EXAMINER**

to the members of the ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY OF EDINBURGH

I have examined the accounts of the Astronomical Society of Edinburgh, and according to the best of my knowledge and belief in accordance with the information and explanations given to me, confirm that they have been properly prepared from the records of the Astronomical Society of Edinburgh and are in agreement therewith and comply with The Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 1992.

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David Thomson

25/2/2007

Please address correspondence to the Secretary at  
105/19 Causewayside, Edinburgh EH9 1QG  
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