

Astronomical Society of Edinburgh

Annual Report for 2008

Constitution and Management of the Society

The Astronomical Society of Edinburgh is registered Scottish charity SC022968.

The Society's principal address is

c/o Graham Rule
Secretary of the Astronomical Society of Edinburgh
105/19 Causewayside
Edinburgh, EH9 1QG
Telephone 0131 667 0647

Constitution

The Society is an unincorporated association founded (as the Edinburgh Astronomical Association) in 1924 and is governed by a Constitution most recently modified on 13th January 1995. A copy of this Constitution has been supplied to each member and may be referred to on the Society's web site.

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.

Council

The Management of the Society is vested in a Council, elected from the Ordinary Membership of the Society at the Annual General Meeting. The Society's Council at the date of this report comprises:

- President: Iain McEachran FRAS
38 Dougliehill Place, Port Glasgow, PA14 5DH
Telephone: 01475 713495
Email: iain.mceachran@ntlworld.com
- Secretary: Graham Rule FRAS
105/19 Causewayside, Edinburgh EH9 1QG
Telephone: 0131 667 0647
Email: graham@grahamrule.net
- Treasurer: Alan Ellis FRAS
10 Greenbank Gdns, Edinburgh, EH10 5SL
Telephone: 0131 447 9968
E-Mail: alan.ellis@blueyonder.co.uk
- Vice-Presidents:
Daniel Gallacher, Kenneth Thomas
- Councillors:
Frank Howie, Des Loughney, Horst Meyerdierks, Peter Mulholland, David Small, Rachel Thomas

The following Council members held office during the early part of the year covered by this report (from 1st January to March 31st): Iain McEachran, Daniel Gallacher, Kenneth Thomas, Graham Rule, Alan Ellis, Maurice Frank, Des Loughney, Pete MacDonald, David Small, Adelaide Webster

The Council of the Society met on 29th February, 2nd May, and 14th November.

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

All of the above trustees are past presidents and members of the Society.

Astronomical Society Of Edinburgh Trust is registered Scottish Charity SC013921.

Activities during 2008

The Society continues to hold meetings throughout the year with educational talks on different aspects of astronomy. 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.

Practical observing has always been encouraged by the Society with some members contributing to nationally coordinated observing programmes (through the British Astronomical Association), some producing interesting images to show at our meetings and others supporting public observing for members and visitors alike at the Calton Hill.

Membership

On the 31st December 2008 the membership of the Society was 70 of which 6 are honorary members.

Honorary members are Dr H. Ford MBE, Dr D. Gavine, Dr N. Grubb, 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).

The Council is sorry to record that Dr M. Brück, one of our Honorary members, died in December 2008.

Meetings

January	11th	John Braithwaite <i>Adventures of a Telescope Maker</i>
	14th	Observing Group
February	1st	Dr David Kerridge – British Geological Survey <i>The Earth’s Magnetic Field</i>
	4th	Observing Group
March	7th	Prof Andrew Collier Cameron – St Andrews <i>The Search for Extra Solar Planets</i>
	10th	Observing Group
	21st	Annual General Meeting

April	4th	Russell Eberst <i>Satellite tracking and other things</i>
	7th	Observing Group
May	2nd	Ken Kennedy – Dundee AS <i>The lunar maria</i>
	6th	Dr Horst Meyerdierks <i>Digital Image Processing</i>
July	4th	Karen Moran – Librarian, ROE <i>Crawford Collection</i>
August	1st	Members' Night Short presentations by members of the Society
	5th	Gerry Taylor – ASE <i>Twenty Bright Stars</i>
September	27th	Doors Open Day Playfair Building on Calton Hill
	27th	Scottish Astronomers Group Observing session at the ASE Dark Site
	3rd	Des Loughney – Past President, ASE <i>The total solar eclipse of 2008</i>
October	7th	Ken Thomas – ASE <i>John Goodricke</i>
November	5th	Dave Gavine – Past President, ASE <i>The Astronomy of Sundials</i>

Publications

Editions 55, 56, 57 and 58 of the Society's Journal were published in 2008 under the editorship Horst Meyerdierks.

The Council expresses its thanks to Horst not only for editing, but also for all his work in producing, distributing and to some extent, writing, the Journal. Members are encouraged to obtain their copy of the Journal from the Society's website, but paper copies are also available to members who prefer these. Paper copies are also sent to the Legal Deposit Libraries.

International Standard Serial Numbers have been issued for both online and paper versions of the Journal:

- web: ISSN 1756-5111

- print: ISSN 1756-5103

The online version is available to the public.

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
- secretary@astronomyedinburgh.org
- treasurer@astronomyedinburgh.org

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

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

The Observatory

In 1938 the Society was granted a lease, rent free, on the City Observatory at the Calton Hill. Non-domestic rates attract an automatic 80 % reduction because of the Society’s charitable status and recently we have benefited from a discretionary 20 % relief. The Society thanks the City for allowing us use of the observatory free of charge.

A significant proportion of the effort of the Society’s Council went into managing the Observatory. This was justified by the unique features of a number of listed buildings, with historical telescopes, in a city centre location. We have had a comfortable base for our activities – as a meeting place, housing our library and equipment, and as a site for public observing sessions.

In 2007 we reported the restriction imposed on the Society’s activities when part of the ceiling in the Playfair Building collapsed in 2006.

Last year we reported that there had been a theft of lead from the roof of the Playfair Building in February 2007. Although this was patched promptly the temporary repair was insufficient to prevent water leaking into the library and the transit room. The lead was replaced in 2008 but further thefts caused even more damage and by the end of the year most of the building was unusable.

Theft of metal from the City Dome roof caused two late night alarm call-outs and we had to pay for temporary repairs in order to secure our property. The Tweedie Dome was completely destroyed when the copper from the roof was stripped off. The Crawford Dome and the Cox Dome have been boarded up for some time. The workshop was broken into and it appears that there had been an attempt to start a fire.

We were able to report last year that the water supply to the site was once again operational and that there was a toilet available. Unfortunately vandals have since destroyed the fittings and the toilet block has been added to the list of boarded up buildings at the Observatory. The City Council indicated that they did not intend to fix the toilet but that new facilities would be included in plans to upgrade the City Dome and the Playfair Building. This would be some years away.

The Society's Council decided in January 2009 that the Observatory was no longer a suitable venue for our monthly meetings and that we would cease to occupy the Observatory.

The Council takes the view that this break with the past will allow us to revitalise the Society. Meeting in more comfortable surroundings near public transport should allow us to recruit and retain members who may have been reluctant to venture up the Calton Hill at night to a sometimes cold lecture room with no toilets nearby. We will also feel less reluctant to ask prestigious speakers to address our meetings and hope to see increased attendance from a wider range of age groups.

We will see a shift in how our finances are used with reduced utility bills but new costs for room hire. While some of the property we have accumulated at the Observatory over the past 70 years can be disposed of we have some instruments and books which will have to be stored.

Observing

An arrangement has been made with a local organisation which allows our members use of a Dark Skies site. Members are being required to pay a deposit for keys to this site and we look forward to seeing the results of observing done there.

The Council is also investigating how we can provide public observing and outreach sessions especially for the International Year of Astronomy 2009.

Financial Report

Although we incurred a deficit of £1,695.52 on our income and expenditure statement, this is not as bad as it would at first sight seem. The ASE Trust pays the Society

the interest earned on investments held by the Trust. As the Society receives only a very nominal interest rate on its own bank accounts it was felt to be more prudent to defer receipt of this sum from the Trust so that the Trust could continue to invest it at higher interest rates. To date the amount of deferred income due to the Society is of the order of £6,000. Over the four-year period from the end of 2004 to end of 2008 this would mean the Society's total monetary reserves would have remained fairly constant at £10k to £11k.

Also relating to bank interest rates, we have the bizarre situation where the Business Investment savings account yields much less interest (0.1 % prior to the downturn) than the Current Account. Hence most of the funds were transferred from the Business Investment account to the Current account during the year. It is planned to eventually close the Business Investment Account with the Bank of Scotland and just keep a Treasurer's current account.

Membership subscriptions are up this year £1,237 compared to last year £777. Much of this accounted for by the fact that many members paid their subscription late last year resulting in much of the 2007 subscriptions appearing in the 2008 Financial year.

As very little use was made of the landline telephone service at the Observatory a decision was taken to cancel it towards the end of 2008. As can be seen this year's annual phone bill was £256 which is a lot of money for a very under-used service. It's primary use was for the answer-phone service for public announcements of events at the Observatory should anyone happen to dial the Observatory's published number. This has now been largely superseded by announcements via the Society's Web pages and through the published contact numbers of Officers of the Society's Council.

In presenting the Income and Expenditure statement it was considered useful to split the expenditure into costs associated with the Society and those directly relating to the Observatory and as can be seen this amounts to £1,459 and £1,792 respectively. Although the Insurance costs associated with being at the Observatory are high £657 the Society will still need a degree of insurance for many of its assets as well as third party public liability insurance. Public Liability insurance from the Federation of Astronomical Societies is currently being offered at £40 per annum. It is expected that the contents insurance for storage of valuable assets belonging to the Society can be reassessed and a significantly better deal arranged.

The cost to the Society of emergency temporary reinstatement repair due to vandalism damage to the emergency exit of the City Dome was £327.

The computer projector power supply failed towards the end of 2008. Rather than pay a costly repair bill a replacement projector was purchased for £399.

Statement of Balances for the year ended 31 December 2008

	2008	Notes	2007
Bank Balances at start of year			
Current Account	£ 1,366.31		£ 3,297.44
Business Investment Account	£ 5,472.94		£ 5,443.68
Total Balance	£ 6,839.25		£ 8,741.12
Less Liabilities for previous year	£ 57.00	1	£ 17.50
Plus Receipts	£ 1,556.36		£ 1,327.64
Less Payments	£ 3,251.88		£ 3,212.01
	£ 5,086.73		£ 6,839.25
Bank Balances at end of year			
Current Account	£ 5,009.52		£ 1,366.31
Business Investment Account	£ 77.21		£ 5,472.94
Total Balance	£ 5,086.73		£ 6,839.25

Income and Expenditure Report for year ended 31 December 2008

	2008	Notes	2007
Income			
ASE Annual Subs	£ 1,237.00	2	£ 777.00
Dark sky site key deposit	–		£ 20.00
Donations	£ 141.00	3	£ 322.00
Gift Aid	£ 145.69		£ 145.54
Bank Interest	£ 32.67	4	£ 63.10
Total Income	£ 1,556.36		£ 1,327.64

Expenditure	2008	Notes	2007
Meeting Expenses	£428.70	5	£730.27
Travel Expenses	–		£25.75
Library	–		£9.99
Magazines & Subscription	£165.92	6	£104.50
Memberships & Affiliations	£57.00	7	–
Communications	£96.14	8	£419.85
Dark Sky Site	–		£140.00
Equipment	£562.68	9	£113.63
Astrocalendars	£149.35		£170.67
Total Society Expenditure	£1,459.79		£1,714.66
Electricity	£498.13		£479.79
Gas	£10.57		–
Phone	£256.41		£216.90
Insurance	£657.40	10	£634.48
Observatory travel expenses	£41.75	11	–
Observatory sundries	–		£116.95
Observatory repairs	£327.83	12	£49.23
Total Observatory Expenditure	£1,792.09		£1,497.35
Total Expenditure	£3,251.88		£3,212.01
Income – Expenditure	–£1,695.52		–£1,884.37

Note on Statement of Balances and Income and Expenditure Report

- All funds are unrestricted, i.e. available for any of the Society's purposes.
- No remuneration was paid to any trustee (Council member) of the Society, nor to any person connected to a trustee of the Society.
- The total amount of expenses paid to the 11 trustees (Council members) was £1,246.69. This money was paid to trustees by the Treasurer on presentation of receipts for costs incurred on Society business.
- The Council had agreed in November 2007 to purchase a second-hand laser printer (cf. general note 9 below) from Graham Rule, Secretary of the Society, for £80. The printer was unused and about 4 years old.
- Other than shown in note 9 below no fixed assets or investments were sold or purchased.

At the 31st December 2008 there were no outstanding uncleared cheques that will cause a deferred liability to the next Financial Year.

General Notes:

1. The 2007 Liability of £57.00 represents cheque payments made during 2007 but not cleared until 2008.
2. Annual subscription payments are better than 2007 plus the late payments from 2007 have increased the 2008 total income.
3. The donations for 2008 amount to £115 for the Playfair Building donations box. The remainder was from kind donations from members of the Society.
4. Interest from Current account £27.37 and Investment account £5.30.
5. Meeting expenses – Speakers' Hospitality £414 and Travel £19.
6. BBC Sky at Night Magazine, Sky and Telescope, Astronomy Now and Practical Astronomer Magazine.
7. Federation of Astronomical Societies annual membership.
8. Paper and postage costs for the year including printed journal and Astrocalendar distribution.
9. Computer projector £399, Samsung second-hand laser printer £80, Diagonal and eyepiece holder for Meade £47, Power-cable, RCD and magazine boxes £34.
10. Insurance – General Contents £6,498. and specified items of individual equipment ranging from £1,695 to £3,264. Also included is £5million public liability insurance.
11. Observatory Travel Expenses associated with overnight emergency callouts due to break-ins or false alarms.
12. Emergency temporary repairs to roof of the Emergency Exit of the City Dome – two instances £186 and £141.

The annual report presented on pages 1 to 10 – including the financial statements on pages 6 to 10 – was approved by the Council of the Astronomical Society of Edinburgh on 27 February 2009.

*Horst Meyerdierks, Councillor
For and on behalf of the Council of
the Astronomical Society of Edinburgh*

Independent examiner's report to the Council of The Astronomical Society of Edinburgh

I report on the financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31 December 2008 which are set out on pages 6 to 10.

Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner

The Council is responsible for the preparation of the financial statements in accordance with the terms of the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005 and the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006. The Council considers that the audit requirement of Regulation 10(1) (a) to (c) of the Accounts Regulations does not apply. It is my responsibility to examine the financial statements as required under section 44(1) (c) of the Act and to state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of independent examiner's report

My examination is carried out in accordance with Regulation 11 of the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the financial statements with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the financial statements, and seeks explanations from the Council concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently I do not express an audit opinion on the view given by the financial statements.

Independent examiner's statement

In the course of my examination, no matter has come to my attention:

1. which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements:
 - to keep accounting records in accordance with Section 44(1) (a) of the 2005 Act and Regulation 4 of the 2006 Accounts Regulations; and
 - to prepare accounts with accord with the accounting records and comply with Regulation 8 of the 2006 Accounts Regulations;have not been met, or
2. to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the financial statements to be reached.

Mr. Adrian C. Townsend, CA

2 March 2009

87 Morningside Drive
Edinburgh
EH10 5NJ