



The Astronomical Society of Edinburgh

Annual Report for 1996

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. 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 were elected at the AGM in March 1996 and served from 1st April:

President	Mr Jim Nisbet BSc 46 Kenmure Avenue, Edinburgh EH8 7HD Telephone: 0131 661 4535
Secretary	Graham Rule BA FRAS FRSSA 105/19 Causewayside, Edinburgh EH9 1QG Telephone: 0131 667 0647
Treasurer	Mr Jim Nisbet BSc 46 Kenmure Avenue, Edinburgh EH8 7HD Telephone: 0131 661 4535
Vice-Presidents	Mr Peter MacDonald Mr Alan Ellis BSc FRAS
Councillors	Mr Johnnie S Bradley FRAS Mrs Lorna McCalman

Mr Mark Dean BSc MPhil (co-opted at the Council Meeting held on 29th April 1996)
Mr Austin Gordon MIScT
Mr Raymond Fenoulhet
Mr Alan Pickup BEng FRAS FBIS

The following Council members elected at the AGM in 1995 held office during the early part of the year (from 1st January to March 31st): Mr Graham Rule, Mr Peter MacDonald, Mr Jim Nisbet, Mr Alan Pickup, Mr Gerry Taylor, Mr Johnnie Bradley, Mr Alan Ellis, Mr Raymond Fenoulhet, Mrs Lorna McCalman, Ms Carol Rankin.

The Society's principal address is:

The City Observatory
Calton Hill
Edinburgh EH7 3AA

Telephone 0131 556 4365

Membership

The following were admitted as members of the Society during 1996:

Brian Cockburn, Inverkeithing
Ian Craig, Linlithgow
Laura Crane, Edinburgh
Maurice Frank, Dunfermline
Deborah Geddes, Edinburgh
Charles Gleed, Edinburgh
Duncan Hale-Sutton, Edinburgh
Irene McAllister, Colinsburgh
Brendan McQuillan, Musselburgh
Sean O'Neill, Edinburgh
Cristina Reynolds, Edinburgh
Alan Stobie, Edinburgh
Alistair Sutherland, Edinburgh
Brian Whitworth, Edinburgh
Jacqueline Whitworth, Edinburgh
Henry Wilson, Edinburgh

On 31st December 1996 membership of the Society was 129 of which 8 were Honorary.

Honorary Members

The Society's Honorary Presidents are Prof. Andy Lawrence and Prof. John Brown. Honorary Members are: Dr M. Brück, Prof. H. Brück, H. Ford, Dr D. Gavine, Prof. D. Heggie, Mrs E. C. Jenkinson

Publications

One edition of the Society's **Journal** has been published in 1996 (issue 35) under the editorship of Dr Dave Gavine.

Gerry Taylor has continued to produce **Bulletins** for distribution at the monthly meetings although your Council took the decision to discontinue the practice of including monthly Star Maps.

Star Maps are still being provided to members but in the form of the Federation of Astronomical Societies' **Astrocalendar** which has been issued to every member. It is envisaged that these booklets will be used in place of membership cards in the unlikely event that members have to vouch for their status.

The Society continues its arrangement with **Sky & Telescope** allowing a discount to members subscribing in a bulk order despatched by the Treasurer. (The magazine is posted direct to the member's address.) Any member who is not in this scheme but would like to join should contact the Treasurer so that they can be included in next autumn's order.

Meetings

The Society has held the following meetings during 1996

January 12th	Dr Bob Harwood, University of Edinburgh <i>Looking at the Stratosphere from Space</i>
February 2nd	Mr Duncan Lunan of Astra <i>Waverider</i>
March 1st	Annual General Meeting followed by the Presidential Address: Mr Graham Rule <i>The History of the ASE</i>
March 30th	Open Day at the City Observatory
April 12th	Ms Pam Spence, Editor, Astronomy Now <i>Recipe for a Solar System</i>
April 13th	Joint meeting of the Solar and Aurora Sections of the British Astronomical Association
May 3rd	Dr Dave Gavine

	<i>James Nasmyth</i>
June 7th	Quiz night followed by Cheese and Wine ASE versus ROE
July 5th	Dr George Grant <i>Amateur Telescope Making Experiences</i>
August 2nd	Members' Night Short presentations were given: Dave Gavine <i>Swansea Observatory</i> Alan Pickup <i>Some features of the night sky</i> Russell Eberst <i>Satellites</i> Lord Murray <i>Astronomical aspects of tides</i> Duncan Waldron <i>Astronomical photographs</i>
September 6th	Mr Jim Nisbet <i>Properties of the Stars</i>
September 27-29th	Scottish Astronomy Weekend
September 28th	Doors Open Day
October 4th	Ms Krystyna Robinson, Consultant to City of Edinburgh Council <i>Presentation on the Millennium Bid for Calton Hill</i>
November 1st	Mr Guy Hurst, Editor, The Astronomer <i>Twenty Years of International Searching for Novae and Supernovae</i>
December 6th	Professor Douglas Heggie, University of Edinburgh <i>Globular Clusters</i>

Attendance at meetings (where recorded) has been:

Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
	41		48	41		35	33	38	48	50	45

Council Meetings

The Council met on January 19th, February 23rd, March 29th, April 26th, May 31st, June 28th, July 26th, August 30th, September 29th, October 4th (special meeting), October 25th and November 29th.

Electronic Communications

The Society has continued its presence on the World Wide Web. This has resulted in a number of enquiries about the Society and membership, from as far afield as the United States. The "URL" for the Society is <http://www.roe.ac.uk/asewww> and the Society thanks the Royal Observatory, Edinburgh for hosting our pages on their server.

Some Society Officers are also available on the Internet:

Graham Rule Graham.Rule@ed.ac.uk

Alan Pickup alan@wingar.demon.co.uk A.Pickup@roe.ac.uk

Jim Nisbet Jim.Nisbet@dial.pipex.com Jim.Nisbet@ed.ac.uk

Alan Ellis alan@ellis22.demon.co.uk

Austin Gordon austing@ocs6.mis.ed.ac.uk

Equipment

The **6" Cooke** telescope continues to be in regular use with observations of the moon and Saturn being most common. Thanks to Charlie Gleed for cleaning up the right ascension setting circle and for returning the declination circle to use. He has also examined the finder telescopes and we hope to realign the smaller finder scope and bring the larger one back into use if the City agrees. Some members may have noticed the temporary reappearance of the original clockwork drive for the telescope. As part of a television programme being made by James Burke for his Connections series, the Society was asked if the telescope could feature in the programme. We were happy to oblige and added the clockwork drive for greater authenticity. Last year saw the centenary of the installation of the Cooke telescope on Calton Hill.

Also making an appearance on television during the year was the **Transit** telescope in a programme called "Local Heroes" celebrating lesser known scientific figures. Filming took place at the Observatory because one of the featured scientists was former Astronomer Royal for Scotland, Charles Piazzi Smyth.

The **8¾ inch Newtonian** telescope which the Society purchased last year has been used on a number of occasions. It has been particularly useful at busy times when both it and the Cooke have been in operation. It may also be used by wheelchair users.

The Council would like to thank George Grant and Kenny Millar for their continuing efforts to refurbish the **13 inch Cox reflector**. Possible developments at the Observatory (see later section) have introduced a degree of uncertainty into the future of this instrument but the Society will press for its future use for public and Society observing.

Observing

The Society issued a questionnaire to members inviting them to list their astronomical interests, give feedback on Society meetings and to ask if members would be interested in organised observing. Overall there was a positive response to Society activities and a number of members formed an observing group. Although the group has only made one visit to a dark sky site so far, the Society is seeking a semi-permanent location outside Edinburgh to which members can have access.

Plans were made to open the Observatory for the **partial eclipse of the sun** on the afternoon of October 12. Unfortunately the weather was dreadful with thick cloud and heavy rain, although Jim Nisbet and Ron Livesey did manage to glimpse the Sun partially covered by the moon through the cloud for a few fleeting moments. Others had to make do with images from the internet. Despite the disappointing conditions, the event did result in some good publicity for the Society in Scotland on Sunday.

The Observatory continues to be open on Friday evenings and throughout the year there have been many visits of groups and individuals and (weather permitting) the 6 inch Cooke refractor and the 8³/₄ inch reflector have been used for observing. Whilst it is often visitors to Edinburgh we see on Friday evenings, the open days also attracted residents of the city and the Society was able to promote its activities and encourage them to visit in the evening.

Library

The Council is sad to report the discovery of dry rot in some of the main bookshelves of the Library in the Playfair Building. We had to throw out a number of books and many volumes of the Journal of the British Astronomical Association. However, we have been able to deal with the problem quite quickly and were lucky that things were not much worse. The City of Edinburgh Council has been alerted about the problem and we believe that it is being treated as a matter for urgent attention. Given the listed status of the building, we expect that restoration of the woodwork will be with materials and in a style in keeping with the rest of the room. The problems with dry rot have meant that we have had to remove the books from the shelves and store them in cardboard boxes. The Library is still available for members' use, although it might take a little more time to find the book you are looking for. The Council would like to thank Graham Rule and Lorna McCalman for all their hard work in clearing the shelves and storing the books. A printed catalogue of books in storage boxes has been prepared.

When the books were being removed from the shelves, Graham Rule took the opportunity to check the library catalogue and he found that the current catalogue, compiled before 1953, was out of date. We have decided to prepare a new catalogue and once this is complete it will be available in both printed and electronic form. Additions to the library will be reported in the Society's journal to allow members to keep up to date with what is available.

On a happier note, the Society continues to add items to the library. We purchased a number of books and subscribe to several monthly magazines which are available for members to borrow.

Visitors to the Observatory

The **Open Day** as part of the Science Festival at the end of March was well attended once again with members of the public listening to short talks on astronomical matters, touring the observatory and looking at the telescopes. This year the appearance of Comet Hyakutake in the Spring generated additional public interest. Unfortunately observing conditions in the evening were not favourable for a night-time view of the sky. In addition to the Sundial kit prepared last year, Graham Rule produced a planisphere kit for visitors to take away. Both of these were available free of charge.

On September 28th, the Observatory took part in the annual **Doors Open Day** which is organised to allow interested visitors to tour buildings which are not normally open to the public. Although the Society does open the Observatory on a regular basis, this event has a high public profile and we were rewarded with many visitors, with the Cockburn Association estimating numbers being as high as 1,000. The Observatory

House was also open and many people seemed to make the effort to come to the top of Calton Hill. Unfortunately this event clashed with some of the Scottish Astronomy Weekend talks during the morning and the ASE members were kept busy with a steady stream of visitors. The Council would like to thank all those who helped on this day, which undoubtedly was a great public relations success for the Society.

During the autumn the Observatory Director, Mr Jamie Shepherd, has conducted a series of **Evening Classes** in Astronomy. These have been well attended with over 60 enrolments. Some interest was expressed in a more advanced course and the Society is considering organising a course which would cover the GCSE syllabus in Astronomy, and which could permit people to sit the examination if they wished.

Meetings Hosted by the ASE

The Society was pleased to welcome the Aurora and Solar sections of the **British Astronomical Association** for a joint meeting on 13th April.

The **Scottish Astronomy Weekend** was held in Edinburgh for the first time in many years from 27th to 29th September with the activities centred on the City Observatory. Participants from all parts of the UK enjoyed a varied programme of talks, including Dr John Mason of the BAA delivering the first Merson lecture, presented in honour of a recent benefactor of the Society, on the Leonid Storm.

Dealings with the City of Edinburgh Council

The slow pace of discussions with the City Council mentioned in last year's report has not quickened and, if anything, things have become more complicated with the development of the City's bid for lottery funding for Calton Hill.

The Council now expects the Society to meet the rates and water charges for the City Observatory and it can be seen from the annual accounts that this amounted to over £1,800 in the last financial year. We hope that the water charges can be reduced through the installation of a meter but it is clear that there is now a significant additional financial burden on the Society.

We have continued to raise funds by charging groups and organisations for using the Observatory and this year we almost managed to recoup all of the rates and water costs. We will be examining the possibility of a discretionary rates rebate in future and if necessary we hope to rely on grant funding from the City Council to make up any shortfall. However, for an organisation like the Society with only modest financial reserves this is a potentially risky situation and your Council will continue to monitor the costs associated with the Observatory as it is not our intention to allow Society funds to seep away to maintain a City resource. The position is complicated because the discussions over the Society's lease of the Observatory, which have been delayed because of local government reorganisation, are continuing and may drag on because of the current plans for redeveloping the Observatory (see below).

The Society continues to be concerned at the steps which have been taken to limit access to Calton Hill. Initially this was simply a notice at the foot of the Hill prohibiting vehicular access after 9pm, although during the summer the gate at Regent Road was padlocked. Later in the year the gate has been locked at dusk, although this is not the case on Friday evenings when the Observatory is open following representations from the Society. We aim to persuade the Council and the police that access to the Observatory for members and visitors needs to be maintained and have been considering guidelines for access which we hope will satisfy all parties.

Last year we expressed concern about the lack of communication with the City Council on some occasions and I am pleased to report that the situation has improved in the last twelve months and we hope that some of the difficulties in previous years will not be repeated.

We noted in last year's annual report that in December 1995 a firm of consultants charged with preparing a plan for a development at the Calton Hill to be funded from the **Millennium Fund** visited the Observatory. Things were quiet for a while but members will recall that when the plans were eventually unveiled in the summer they provoked a storm of protest in the press when the proposal for completing the National Monument in glass was revealed. In the ensuing debate the plans for the Observatory tended to be overlooked, although the Society's Council submitted a carefully considered response to this element of the proposals.

At the end of the public consultation period the development of the National Monument was abandoned and the Council announced that it would submit a bid to the **National Heritage Lottery Fund** for a less ambitious scheme which would be centred on the Observatory and would incorporate many aspects of the original proposal. These include a planetarium in the City Dome, a new Futures Dome, internal restoration of the Playfair Building and refurbishment of Observatory House. The development of these plans will have far-reaching consequences for the Society and your Council will seek, as far as possible, to protect the Society's interests.

Non-Astronomical Events

These are events with which we have been involved through our tenancy of the City Observatory and are not directly related to the main business of the Society. They are, effectively, a contribution to the life of the City that far exceeds our desire to run an Astronomical Observatory for the community.

Calton Hill continues to be connected with **Fireworks**, both as a popular vantage point for the Festival and Hogmanay displays set off from Edinburgh Castle and as a launching area for the pre-Hogmanay display.

Although fewer broadcast radio groups asked to site a transmitter in the Observatory grounds this year, the Edinburgh University Student Radio club did broadcast their "**Fresh Air FM**" radio station, taking to the air for two month long broadcasts in February and October. Also broadcasting from Calton Hill during the year was a group of students from **Napier University** during the Science Festival.

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 have been assumed as trustees in terms of that deed:

Mr David C Todd AIB (Secretary and Treasurer)
5 Brunton Avenue, Carlisle CA1 2AU
Mr Raymond Fenoulhet (also a member of the Society Council)
Dr John Rostron

Dr David Gavine FRAS

Dr John Hunter

All of these trustees are currently members of the Society. During the year 1996 the Society received £1000 from the ASE Trustees being income from investments held by them for the benefit of the Society.

Financial Report

In last year's report the Council reported that following the legacy from Miss Christian Merson received in 1994 the Society was in a much healthier financial position than for many years. The final settlement from Miss Merson's estate has not yet been made.

The increased interest income this year has allowed the Society to do more for members such as the purchase of the telescope and the distribution of FAS Astrocalendars when subscriptions are renewed.

Subscription income remains at a similar level to last year and the annual Subscription Rate remained unchanged at £10 (£5 concessions).

We acknowledge with thanks the continuing support from the City of Edinburgh Council.

Details of the Society's finances can be found in the Statement of Balances and the Receipts and Payments Account included in this Report.

Statement of Balances for the Year Ended 31 December 1996

<u>Bank Balance</u>	(£)
At 31 December 1995	
Current Account	1,729.55
Business Investment Account	<u>12,387.47</u>
	14,117.02
Less Liabilities for 1995	913.42
Plus Receipts for 1996	6,467.65
Less Payments for 1996	<u>5,221.75</u>
	14,449.50
At 31 December 1996	
Current Account	3,250.68
Business Investment Account	<u>11,855.23</u>
	15,105.91

Current Liabilities

Unpresented Cheques		
Cheque No 011284		2.50
Cheque No 011385		0.47
Cheque No 011386		350.00
Cheque No 011387		200.00
Cheque No 011388		45.00
Cheque No 011389		<u>58.44</u>
Total Liabilities		656.41

These cheques were written prior to the end of the financial year and had not been presented for payment by 31 December 1996.

The Society has the following accounts/investments :

Current Account : Bank of Scotland Treasurer's Account

Investment Account : Bank of Scotland Business Investment Account

Receipts and Payments Account for the Year Ended 31 December 1995

<u>Receipts</u>		(£)
Membership Subscriptions		858.00
Grants		
Edinburgh District Council	0.00	
Astronomical Society of Edinburgh Trustees	<u>1,000.00</u>	1,000.00
Investment Income		
Interest on Current Account	33.56	
O'Neill Bequest 14% Treasury Stock 1996	46.06	
Interest on Business Investment Account	<u>467.76</u>	547.38
Redemption of 14% Treasury Stock 1996		658.13
Sale of badges		9.00
Donations		
Donations box	53.00	
From members	24.00	

Carlton Terrace Residents Association	25.00	
BAA Solar Section	10.00	
Scottish Astronomy Weekend	<u>100.00</u>	212.00
Organisations using City Observatory		1,690.00
Income from Astronomy Classes (note 1)		1,200.00
Re-imburement for telephone costs from Stereodome (note 2)		293.14
TOTAL RECEIPTS		<u>6,467.65</u>

Payments**Specific
Notes****(£)**For the Society.

Lectures and Meetings		
Expenses	3	183.37
Hospitality		131.00
Cheese and Wine	4	75.37
		389.74
Printing and Duplicating		
		191.47
Honoraria		
Secretary	5	100.00
Treasurer	6	<u>100.00</u>
		200.00
Telephone	7	426.64
Library	8	263.49
Insurance	9	98.78
Expenses		
Secretary		230.84
Treasurer	10	<u>0.83</u>
		231.67
Filing Cabinet		45.00
Independent Examiner's Fee	11	25.00
Planetarium equipment		21.30
Telescope equipment		9.99
Items for Open Day		7.38
Society Subscriptions	12	51.50
Total for the Society		1,961.96

For the Observatory.

Honoraria	Director	350.00
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Secretary	13	100.00	
Treasurer	14	<u>100.00</u>	550.00
Gas			67.87
Rates			894.10
Water			925.60
Cleaning			180.00
Redecoration costs			140.00
Library	15		263.48
Insurance	16		197.56
Expenses (Treasurer's)	17		0.82
Laser pointer			40.36
Total for the Observatory			<u>3,259.79</u>
TOTAL PAYMENTS			<u>5,221.75</u>

**Note to the Statement of Balances
and the Receipts and Payments Account
for the Year to 31 December 1996**

General Notes

The form of presentation conforms to the requirements of the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 1992.

The following statements are required to be made:

(i) Nature and Purpose of each of the Major Funds

Current Account

: Bank of Scotland
Treasurer's Account

Society Investment Account

: Bank of Scotland
Business Investment Account

(ii) Remuneration and Expenses of Trustees

(in the Society's case this refers to members of the Council)

Aggregate amount of Honoraria paid to Office-Bearers

£400.00

Aggregate re-imburement of expenses to Council Members

£867.67

It should be noted that the split of expenditure under the headings of Society and Observatory is an historical decision which was made a number of years ago to attempt to show an estimate of the costs falling on the Society through its occupation of the City Observatory. The proportions of items which are split between the categories are identified in the specific notes below.

Specific Notes

(Numbers refer to items on the Receipts and Payments Account)

1. At the end of the financial year the Director of the Observatory had not completed the accounts for the Astronomy Classes. The expenditure associated with the classes for 1996 will appear in next year's accounts.
2. See also Society Expenditure (note 7).
3. This item includes the cost of tea and biscuits following meetings.
4. This item represents the net cost of this event (ie expenses less proceeds).
5. This is one half of the Secretary's Honorarium with the other being shown against Observatory expenditure.
6. This is one half of the Treasurer's Honorarium with the other being shown against Observatory expenditure.
7. See also Receipts (note 2) for re-imburement from Stereodome for telephone costs.
8. This is one half of the Library expenditure (including the cost of journals and the purchase of FAS Astrocalendars) with the other being shown against Observatory expenditure.
9. This is one third of the Insurance costs with the other two thirds shown against Observatory expenditure.
10. This is one half of the Treasurer's expenses with the other being shown against Observatory expenditure.
11. This was the fee for examining the Society's report and accounts.
12. This item includes the cost of subscriptions to the British Astronomical Association, the Federation of Astronomical Societies and the Scottish Astronomers Group.
13. This is one half of the Secretary's Honorarium with the other being shown against Society expenditure.
14. This is one half of the Treasurer's Honorarium with the other being shown against Society expenditure.
15. This is one half of the Library expenditure (including the cost of journals and the purchase of FAS Astrocalendars) with the other being shown against Society expenditure.
16. This is two thirds of the Insurance costs with the other one third shown against Society expenditure.
17. This is one half of the Treasurer's expenses with the other being shown against Society expenditure.

This report was approved at a meeting of the Council of the Astronomical Society of Edinburgh held at the City Observatory on 31st January 1997

Jim Nisbet

President

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

*The Astronomical Society of Edinburgh
City Observatory
Calton Hill
Edinburgh EH7 3AA*

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