



The Astronomical Society of Edinburgh

Annual Report for 1997

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 1997 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 FRMetS 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 Mr Austin Gordon MIScT

Mr Mark Dean BSc MPhil Dr Duncan Hale-Sutton BSc PhD
Mr Charlie Gleed Mrs Lorna McCalman

The following Council members elected at the AGM in 1996 held office during the early part of the year (from 1st January to March 31st): Mr Jim Nisbet, Mr Peter MacDonald, Mr Alan Ellis, Mr Graham Rule, Mr Johnnie Bradley, Mr Mark Dean (co-opted to the Council in April 1996), Mr Austin Gordon, Dr Duncan Hale-Sutton, Mrs Lorna McCalman

The Society's principal address is:

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

Membership

The following were admitted as members of the Society during 1997:

- Keir Anderson, Edinburgh
- Deirdre Baker, Edinburgh
- Neil Clifford, Edinburgh
- Gillian Cobley, Edinburgh
- Ian Dickson, Penicuik
- Keith Donnelly, Edinburgh
- Alan Erasmuson, Balerno
- Stuart Herschell, Livingston
- Mark Hartswood, Stow
- Robert Harwood, Musselburgh
- Richard Howarth, Edinburgh
- Duncan Johnstone, Edinburgh
- Janine Johnstone, Edinburgh
- Jim Kidd, Tullibody
- Jim Little, North Queensferry
- Larry Petro, Baltimore, USA
- Paul Power, Edinburgh
- James Redmond, Longniddry
- Harry Sutherland, Currie
- Peter Stubbs, Edinburgh

On 31st December 1997 membership of the Society was 123 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

Two editions of the Society's **Journal** has been published in 1997 (issues 36 and 37) under the editorship of Dr Dave Gavine.

The Society has continued to issue the Federation of Astronomical Societies' **Astrocalendar** to every member. It is envisaged that these booklets would be used in place of membership cards in the unlikely event that members have to vouch for their status.

The Society also 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 1997

January 10th

Short presentations from members of the Society:

Jim Nisbet: *Update on Millennium Bid*

Graham Rule: *The ASE Library; GCSE Astronomy Classes*

Dave Gavine: *An Old Scottish Astronomer*

Alan Pickup: *Comet Hale-Bopp*

Russell Eberst: *Shuttle and Mir*

February 7th

Professor John Peacock, University of Edinburgh

Universes in a Box

March 8th

Annual General Meeting

followed by Dr Mary Brück

Mary Somerville, Scottish Astronomer and Mathematician

March 23rd

Open Day at the City Observatory

April 4th

Dr Graham Woan, University of Glasgow
The Cosmic Anisotropy Telescope

May 2nd

Graham Young, Dundee Astronomical Society
Star Fields

June 6th

Robert Law, Discovery Space Club
Mars Missions

July 5th

Quiz night followed by Cheese and Wine
ASE versus ROE

August 1st

Members' Night

Short presentations were given:

Graham Rule: *Update on City Council plans for Calton Hill*

George Grant: *Photographs of Comet Hale-Bopp*

Jamie Shepherd: *Photographs of Comet Hale-Bopp*

Ron Livesey: *Photographic and visual comets*

Dave Gavine: *Schmidt-Cassegrain Telescopes*

Russell Eberst: *Mir Space Station*

Alan Pickup: *Astronomy and space on the internet*

September 5th

Ken Mackay, Stirling Astronomical Society
Space travel with a pocket calculator and a piece of string

October 3rd

Graham Rule, Astronomical Society of Edinburgh
Teaching GCSE Astronomy

Jamie Shepherd, Astronomical Society of Edinburgh
The Dark Skies Campaign

November 7th

Roger Stapleton, University of St Andrews
Long Standing Observatories

November 29th

Scottish Astronomers' Group Meeting
Hosted by the ASE

December 5th

Professor Peter Brand, University of Edinburgh
The First Stars

Attendance at meetings (where recorded) has been:

Jan Feb Mar Apr May Jun Jul Aug Sep Oct Nov Dec

40 42 43 40 25 32 35 50 47

Council Meetings

The Council met on January 31st, February 28th, March 28th, April 25th, May 30th, June 27th, July 25th, August 29th, September 26th, October 31st, November 28th and December 21st (special meeting).

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
Jim Nisbet:	Jim.Nisbet@dial.pipex.com
Mark Dean:	mtd@wpo.nerc.ac.uk
Alan Ellis:	alan@ellis22.demon.co.uk
Austin Gordon:	Austin.Gordon@ed.ac.uk
Duncan Hale-Sutton:	101723.2512@compuserve.com
Director of Observatory:	
Jamie Shepherd	D0193126@infotrade.co.uk

Equipment

The **6" Cooke** telescope continues to be in regular use with observations of the moon and planets being most common. We did experience a minor problem with water entering the telescope because of a combination of factors which forced rain through the dome roof at precisely the angle to enter the tube. However, immediate remedial action was taken and the telescope is now back in use. The Society has purchased a new eyepiece holder which will allow standard eyepieces to be used.

The **8¾" Newtonian** telescope has been used on a number of occasions. It has been particularly useful at busy times, such as when the Observatory was open during the appearance of Comet Hale-Bopp (see below), when both it and the Cooke have been in operation. It may also be used by wheelchair users.

George Grant and Kenny Millar have continued to refurbish the **13 inch Cox reflector**. The Society is very grateful for all their hard work and will aim to ensure that this instrument can be used whatever developments take place at the Observatory.

The Society has supported, through the provision of some start up funding for equipment, members who are interested in hypersensitising photographic film to try and produce improved deep sky images. Charlie Gleed has organised the necessary hardware and the intention is that the users will meet the running costs.

Observing

The big event of the year was the visit of Comet Hale-Bopp in the Spring. Following the appearance of Comet Hyakutake the previous year, Hale-Bopp promised much and it certainly lived up to expectations with much interest being generated amongst the general public as well as excitement in astronomical circles. The Society opened the City Observatory on several occasions and we had a number of visitors. Most wanted to look through the telescopes but they soon realised that they were better off with binoculars or the naked eye!

The Observatory continues to be open on Friday evenings and weather permitting the 6 inch Cooke refractor and the 8³/₄ inch reflector have been used for observing. We have recently added details of when the Observatory is open to the syllabus card and it is hoped that this will encourage people who have picked up copies to visit us.

Library

We reported last year the problems following the discovery of dry rot in some of the main bookshelves of the Library in the Playfair Building. As well as throwing out a number of books and many volumes of the Journal of the British Astronomical Association, we had to remove the books from the shelves and store them in cardboard boxes. Unfortunately this situation persisted for longer than the Society would have liked whilst we waited for the Council to undertake repair work. As the year drew to a close plans were being prepared to commence repairs early in 1998 and the Society was taking steps to relocate items from the Library to the City Dome on a temporary basis. It was hoped to make the library books more accessible in their temporary home.

It is worth reminding members that the Society continues to add items to the library. Purchases of books happens throughout the year and the Society subscribes to several monthly magazines, and books and periodicals (excluding current issues) are available for members to borrow. Members who believe that a particular item should be in the Society's library should contact the Librarian. Donations of suitable books are always welcome.

Visitors to the Observatory

We held our third annual **Open Day** as part of the Science Festival during March. This is becoming one of the high points of the Society's activities during the year and the Council is grateful to all those members who give up their time to give short talks on astronomical matters and help visitors tour the observatory and look at the telescopes. Once again the sundial and planisphere kits prepared by Graham Rule were available for visitors to take away. Both of these were available free of charge, although we did encourage people to leave a small donation for Society funds!

This year we were not part of the annual **Doors Open Day** as the theme was churches. We hope to be involved again in the future as this event has a high public profile and it is very useful for publicising the activities of the Society.

During the autumn the Observatory Director, Mr Jamie Shepherd, has again conducted a series of **Evening Classes** in Astronomy. Following enquiries from participants of the previous year's classes who were interested in taking their studies further, the Society ran a more advanced series of classes which covered the GCSE syllabus in Astronomy. This allowed those who wanted to sit the examination in June the opportunity to do so. The classes were taught by Graham Rule and Dave Gavine, with assistance from Jamie Shepherd, and in addition to learning the course material, students had to complete a number of practical projects if they wished to sit the examination. 12 people sat the examination and the Society is pleased to report that 2 achieved A passes, (and were actually grade A* which is the top 5% of candidates), 3 achieved a B pass and 3 achieved a C pass. Looking back, whilst it was a worthwhile thing to do, we underestimated the work involved and we decided that we would not offer classes for participants to sit the examination in June 1998. We will, however, consider running classes in 1998/99, although we would start in the Autumn to give everyone more time.

Meetings Hosted by the ASE

The Society was pleased to be able to organise one of the half yearly meetings of the **Scottish Astronomers Group (SAG)** on 29th November. These meetings are hosted by local societies which are members of the Group and are a good way of keeping in touch with amateur astronomers in other parts of Scotland. Jim Nisbet and Graham Rule represented the ASE at the May meeting of SAG in Paisley.

On a related topic, a dozen ASE members attended the 12th **Scottish Astronomy Weekend** in Dundee in September. As well as a varied programme of talks, participants enjoyed observing sessions at the Mills Observatory and excursions within Dundee and to the surrounding Angus countryside.

Dealings with the City of Edinburgh Council

This aspect of the Society's activities continues to occupy a significant amount of the ASE Council's time. There is not much that the Society can do about this if it wishes to continue to have unrestricted access to the Observatory, but it does mean that astronomy is not always to the fore in the Council's discussions.

As noted in last year's Annual Report the City Council abandoned its plans for a major scheme for the Observatory and the National Monument involving an application for Millennium funding following a public consultation exercise. This suggested there was not significant support for the plan to complete the National Monument in glass. The subsequent plan to centre the developments on the Observatory through funding from the National Heritage Lottery Fund was beginning to take shape when the Annual Report for 1996 was prepared.

During 1997 a bid was made to the Heritage Lottery Fund for funding for a full conservation study of the Hill, a task that would take up to a year. The results of this study would provide information to the City to allow them to prepare a full lottery bid for a scheme for the Hill, involving refurbishment of the buildings and it is the Society's hope that there is not too much new building. The immediate need is for essential repairs to the Playfair Building and, of course, Observatory House to address the problems with dry rot which have been much in evidence in recent months. Graham Rule is representing the Society on a working party which the City Council has set up to bring together parties interested in

the future development of the Hill. We will continue to keep members updated with progress as and when there are matters to report, at the monthly meetings and through the Society's Journal.

As has been reported previously the City Council expects the Society to meet the rates and water charges for the City Observatory. This is a continuing burden on the Society and whilst we have been reasonably successful in charging groups for using the Observatory it is a situation we have to monitor to ensure that we do not have to use Society funds to meet these costs.

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.

Broadcast radio groups continue to site their transmitters in the Observatory grounds. In 1997 the Edinburgh University Student Radio club broadcasted their "**Fresh Air FM**" radio station, taking to the air for a month long broadcast in February. Also broadcasting from Calton Hill during the year were "**T in the Park Radio**" to coincide with the major Scottish rock music festival in July, "**Apna Radio**" during November and, to tie in with the celebrations at the end of the year, "**Hogmanay FM**" was on the air during the final week of December.

The Society was pleased to welcome visitors from the **Cockburn Association** in October. Around sixty members of that organisation gathered for a reception in the Playfair Building to mark Lord Cockburn's birthday, an annual event of the Association which takes place at a different venue each year.

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
- 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 £1,000 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 increase in expenditure is partly accounted for by the fact that the expenses of the 1996 Astronomy classes were not included in last year's accounts. In addition the Society purchased a computer for office work in the Library and met the initial capital costs of equipment for hypersensitising photographic film.

Subscription income remains at a similar level to last year and the annual Subscription Rate remained unchanged at £10 (£5 concessions). The Society continues to issue FAS Astrocalendars to members when subscriptions are renewed.

Income from users of the Observatory increased in 1997, although it has to be borne in mind that the Society needs this income to meet the substantial rates and water charges and we need to err on the side of generating additional income to ensure that this does not become a drain on Society resources.

We acknowledge with thanks the continuing support from the City of Edinburgh Council, although the Society no longer receives a grant towards the running costs of the Observatory.

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 1997

<u>Bank Balance</u>	(£)
At 31 December 1996	
Current Account	3,250.68
Business Investment Account	<u>11,855.23</u>
	15,105.91
Less Liabilities for 1996	656.41
Plus Receipts for 1997	6,799.83
Less Payments for 1997	7,847.31
	13,402.02

At 31 December 1997	
Current Account	1,111.67
Business Investment Account	<u>12,290.35</u>
	13,402.02

Current Liabilities

Unpresented Cheques	
Cheque No 011445	34.70
Cheque No 011446	350.00
Cheque No 011448	100.15
Total Liabilities	484.85

These cheques were written prior to the end of the financial year and had not been presented for payment by 31 December 1997.

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 1997

<u>Receipts</u>		(£)
Membership Subscriptions		810.00
Grants		
City of Edinburgh Council	0.00	
Astronomical Society of Edinburgh Trustees	<u>1,000.00</u>	1,000.00
Investment Income		
Interest on Current Account	43.90	
Interest on Business Investment Account	<u>435.12</u>	479.02
Donations		
Donations box	219.74	

BAA (for gift of journals)	20.00	
For FAS Astrocalendars	<u>5.00</u>	244.74
Organisations using City Observatory		2,435.00
Re-imburement for telephone costs from Stereodome (note 1)		70.07
Income from Astronomy Classes		
GCSE classes (Spring) (note 2)	945.00	
Autumn classes (note 3)	<u>816.00</u>	1,761.00
TOTAL RECEIPTS		6,799.83

<u>Payments</u>	Specific Notes		(£)
<u>For the Society.</u>			
Lectures and Meetings			
Expenses	4	52.10	
Hospitality		85.08	
Meetings hosted by ASE		10.87	
Cheese and Wine	5	<u>62.90</u>	210.95
Costs associated with use of the Observatory by other bodies			14.30
Printing and Duplicating			241.44
Honoraria			
Secretary	6	100.00	
Treasurer	7	<u>100.00</u>	200.00
Telephone	8		392.89
Library	9		140.25
Insurance	10		99.85
Expenses (Secretary)			250.68
Office Equipment			309.95
Independent Examiner's Fee	11		25.00
Equipment (not Office)			337.51
Telescope refurbishment costs			25.00
Telescope equipment			40.54
Presentations			20.00
Astronomy classes			
Fees and expenses for 1996	12	1,123.50	

Examination fees for GCSE classes	13	<u>529.10</u>	1,652.60
Society Subscriptions	14		70.50
Total for the Society			<u>4,031.46</u>
<u>For the Observatory.</u>			
Honoraria		350.00	
Director			
Secretary	15	100.00	
Treasurer	16	<u>100.00</u>	550.00
Gas			74.48
Electricity			613.95
Rates			952.64
Water			1,002.56
Cleaning			165.00
Library	17		140.24
Insurance	18		199.69
Keys/Security items			117.29
Total for the Observatory			<u>3,815.85</u>
 TOTAL PAYMENTS			 <u>7,847.31</u>

**Note to the Statement of Balances
and the Receipts and Payments Account
for the Year to 31 December 1997**

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 £825.65

These expenses cover costs incurred by Council Members on Society business which are later re-imbursed.

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. See also Society Payments (note 8).
2. This includes both the fees for the classes and the fees for the examination from those who sat the examination (see also Society Payments, note 13)
3. At the end of the financial year the Director of the Observatory had not completed the accounts for the Autumn Astronomy Classes. The expenditure associated with the classes for 1996 will appear in next year's accounts.
4. This item includes the cost of tea and biscuits following meetings.
5. This item represents the net cost of this event (ie expenses less proceeds).
6. This is one half of the Secretary's Honorarium with the other being shown against Observatory expenditure.
7. This is one half of the Treasurer's Honorarium with the other being shown against Observatory expenditure.
8. See also Receipts (note 1) for re-imburement from Stereodome for telephone costs.
9. 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.
10. This is one third of the Insurance costs with the other two thirds shown against Observatory expenditure.
11. This was the fee for examining the Society's report and accounts.
12. As noted in the Receipts and Payments Account for 1996 (note 1)
13. See also Society Receipts (note 2)
14. This item includes the cost of subscriptions to the British Astronomical Association, the Federation of Astronomical Societies and the Scottish Astronomers Group.
15. This is one half of the Secretary's Honorarium with the other being shown against Society expenditure.
16. This is one half of the Treasurer's Honorarium with the other being shown against Society expenditure.
17. 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.
18. This is two thirds of the Insurance costs with the other one third 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 30th January 1998

Jim Nisbet
President
For and on behalf of the Council of the Astronomical Society of Edinburgh

The Astronomical Society of Edinburgh
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Calton Hill
Edinburgh EH7 5AA

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