



The Astronomical Society of Edinburgh

Annual Report for 1998

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 1998 and served from 1st April:

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| President | Mr Alan Ellis BSc FRAS 10 Greenbank Gardens, Edinburgh EH10 5SL Telephone: 0131 447 9968 |
| 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 Johnnie S Bradley FRAS Mrs Lorna McCalman |
| Councillors | Mr Mark Dean BSc MPhil Mr Charlie Gleed |

Dr Duncan Hale-Sutton BSc PhD
Mr Peter MacDonald

The following Council members elected at the AGM in 1997 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, Mr Austin Gordon, Dr Duncan Hale-Sutton, Mrs Lorna McCalman

Mark Dean resigned from the Council in September 1998 and Adrian Weatherhead was co-opted in November 1998.

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 1998:

Ros Abramsky, Edinburgh
Jim Douglas, Edinburgh
Alison Duncan, Edinburgh
Fiona Grubb, Edinburgh
Neil Grubb, Edinburgh
William Joy, Edinburgh
Helen Newell, Poole
David Simpson, Edinburgh
Don Simpson, Sunderland
May Scott, Poole
Ozz Scott, Poole
Stephen Scott, Torphichen
Charis Stewart, Edinburgh
Anna-Louise Teasdale, Musselburgh
Grant Wilson, Edinburgh

On 31st December 1998 membership of the Society was 130 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** was published in 1998 (issue 38) under the editorship of Dr Dave Gavine.

The Society has continued to issue the Federation of Astronomical Societies' **Astrocalendar** to every member. These booklets can 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.

In addition, the Society continues its presence on the World Wide Web and results in a number of enquiries about the Society and membership from Britain and world-wide. 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. In addition to notices of meetings and other events The Society's Annual Reports and Journals can now be found there.

Meetings

The Society has held the following meetings during 1998

January 9th

Ron Livesey - ASE and BAA
Amateur Astronomy

February 6th

Dr Andrew Collier Cameron (St. Andrews University)
Mapping stellar surfaces

March 6th

Annual General Meeting
Followed by Jim Nisbet (President, Astronomical Society of Edinburgh)
A brief history of Gravity

April 3rd

Dr Mike Gadsden FRAS
Noctilucent Clouds

May 1st

Dr John Reid (Astronomical Society of Edinburgh)
The Comet Men

June 5th

Quiz Night followed by Cheese and Wine
ASE versus ROE

July 3rd

Dr Dave Gavine FRAS (Astronomical Society of Edinburgh)
Thomas Henderson - First Astronomer Royal for Scotland

August 7th

Members' Night
Short presentations were given:
Russell Eberst: *Iridium Flares*
Maurice Frank: *Moons that deserve to be planets*
Charlie Gleed: *CCD photography and alignment of Meade telescope*
Duncan Johnstone: *Slides of deep-sky objects from Australia*
Jamie Shepherd: *Meteorite Exhibition followed by preview*

September 4th

Discussion on light pollution
Harry Campbell (City of Edinburgh Council - Lighting Engineering)
Jamie Shepherd (Astronomical Society of Edinburgh)

October 2nd

Storm Dunlop FRAS FRMetS
Astronomy and Meteorology

November 6th

Dr Euan Mason (Canterbury and Rotorua Astronomical Societies, New Zealand)
Amateur Astronomy in New Zealand

December 4th

Prof Bernard Roberts (St Andrews University)
Magnetic Attractions on the Sun

Attendance at meetings (where recorded) has been:

| Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 40 | 42 | 32 | | | 33 | 28 | 33 | 42 | 54 | 38 | |

Council Meetings

The Council met on January 30th, February 27th, March 27th, April 24th, May 29th, June 26th, July 31st, August 20th (special meeting), August 28th, September 11th (special meeting), September 25th (informal meeting), October 2nd (special meeting), October 30th, November 27th.

Equipment

The **6" Cooke** telescope continues to be in regular use with observations of the moon and planets being most common. The object lens was cleaned in November by Charlie Gleed.

The **8¾" Newtonian** telescope continues to be used on a number of nights when queues for the Cooke are lengthy and also to allow convenient viewing of other night-sky objects.

The next stage in refurbishment of the **13 inch Cox reflector** is to mount the telescope in a suitable housing.

The Society continues to support members who are interested in obtaining **hypersensitised** photographic film to 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 Observatory continues to be open on Friday evenings and weather permitting the 6 inch Cooke refractor and the 8¾ inch reflector have been used for observing. A detailed timetable of the opening hours of the observatory continues to be published on the syllabus card and it is hoped that this will encourage people who have picked up copies to visit us.

Perhaps the most spectacular event was the Leonid meteors in November. Although clouded out in Edinburgh on the expected night of maximum activity a spectacular display of bright meteors was seen on the preceding night. The Draconid meteors in October were a disappointment, being considerably less spectacular than predicted.

One of the most exciting ventures on the observing front is the acquisition of a dark-sky observing site at Earliburn near Eddleston in the Borders. The site belongs to the National Environmental Research Council which is in the process of finalising the lease with the Society. Development of the site to convert a garage building to a shelter for observers are being organised by Council member Charlie Gleed with Kenny Laidlaw and Jim Douglas giving much time and effort in this project. Once complete, the site will allow more serious observations of deep sky objects away from light polluted cities and towns.

Library

As the dry-rot situation within the Playfair Building is still in the process of treatment, the library continues to be located in part of the City Dome on a temporary basis.

It is worth reminding members that the Society continues to add items to the library.

Purchases of books happen 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

Normally the Society holds an **Open Day** as part of the Science Festival during March. It was not, however, possible to hold an Open Day this year due to the state of the Playfair Building. During the investigations and treatment of the dry-rot floorboards and wall panels had been removed by the City of Edinburgh Council.

A European artificial satellite observers conference organised by Alan Pickup and Russell Eberst was hosted by the ASE at the City Observatory in October 1998. The **Eurosom** 3 weekend conference was very successful and being truly international in nature attracted prominent observers not only from European countries but also from as far afield as Canada, Australia and the United States. A full description of the conference will appear in the next edition of the Society's Journal.

The **'Rocks in Space'** meteorite exhibition in August 1998 organised by Jamie Shepherd and Duncan Johnstone was very successful and raised in excess of £250 for the ASE through voluntary donations. Rare meteorite and tektite specimens from all over the world were on display and expertly presented for the public to see. Members of the public were even allowed to handle certain specimens. It is estimated that several thousand visitors attended the exhibition although an unfortunate disagreement between the ASE Council and the Observatory Director over the security arrangements for the exhibition resulted in its temporary closure.

The theme for 1998 Cockburn Association's **'Doors Open Day'** was 'Education and Science' For this event the ASE organised the opening of the Playfair Building to show visitors the buildings, instruments and displays. The meteorite exhibition provided an additional highlight for visitors. It is estimated that over one thousand visitors were shown around the Observatory during the day.

Other Events attended

Two half-yearly meetings of the **Scottish Astronomers Group** (SAG) took place during 1998. The first was in Stirling on 23rd May with the ASE represented by Graham Rule, Lorna McCalman and Charlie Gleed. The second occurred in Paisley on 28th November with ASE represented by Alan Ellis, Jim Nisbet, Lorna McCalman and Charlie Gleed. The SAG meetings are hosted by local Societies and are a good way for members of other Astronomical Societies throughout Scotland to meet and exchange ideas.

Alan Ellis and Graham Rule attended the official opening of the **UK Astronomy Technology Centre** at the Royal Observatory Edinburgh on Blackford Hill. The event consisted of extensive tours of the ROE with demonstrations of the latest technologies being developed in the field of telescope and satellite instrumentation. The event also included a lecture by Dr Matt Mountain, Director of the Gemini Observatory and a civic reception by the City of Edinburgh Council. The newly appointed Director of the UK Astronomy Technology Centre, Dr Adrian Russell will be giving a talk to the Society in February 1999.

Observatory Management restructure

It has long been recognised that there is a potential conflict of interests between the Edinburgh Experience and the Astronomical Society of Edinburgh. As the Edinburgh Experience is a private commercial operation and in order to safeguard the future charitable status of the Society it was considered necessary that staff of the Edinburgh Experience and their associates should not be represented on the management of the Society. A proposal to replace the post of Observatory Director by an Observatory Management Committee made up of the President, Secretary and Treasurer was passed. The Observatory Management Committee was empowered to make decisions of a non-

contentious nature without having to resort to special meetings of the full Council. It is intended that this will smooth over decision making relating to the building.

Recognising and agreeing with this aim Jamie Shepherd decided to step down as Observatory Director in favour of the formation of the Observatory Management Committee. The Council of the ASE recognises the valuable contributions that Jamie has made to the Society during fifteen years as its appointed Director and hopes that he will continue his particularly active interest and involvement in the Society during the years to come.

Proposal for restructuring the Society

The ASE Council is examining the feasibility and desirability of setting up the ASE as a Company limited by Guarantee. The reasons for this are primarily one of the current situation regarding legal liability should the Society be held responsible for damages against a party. In the first instance the Society's assets would be seized and thereafter the private assets of each member of the Council, and individual members of the Society could be used to cover outstanding costs.

A possible solution to this problem would be the formation of a Company Limited by Guarantee in which no member would be allowed to hold shares in the Society's assets. The Society would continue to have the same name and have existing charitable status. The setting up of a Limited Liability company in this manner would be totally non-commercial as at present and purely to cover the legal liability situation. The British Astronomical Association is an example of such a Limited liability company with charitable status. Legal advice on the situation would have to be sought and, naturally, agreement from the membership of the Society before this could go ahead.

Dealings with the City of Edinburgh Council

During a year of continuing discussions on the future use and improvements of the Calton Hill site the Society has been represented by the Secretary, Graham Rule on the Calton Hill Advisory Group.

A press announcement was made in September of the award from the Lottery Heritage Fund of £33,000 towards the Conservation Study.

Discussions are also taking place in reviewing the leasing arrangements with the City and its relationship with the Edinburgh Experience, which will remain closed until a suitable agreement is concluded. Members will be informed of the progress of these negotiations at ordinary meetings.

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 1998 the Edinburgh University Student Radio club broadcast their 'Fresh Air FM' radio station, taking to the air for a month long broadcast in February and October

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 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.

Financial Report

Following the first payment from Miss Christian Merson's estate in 1994, the final settlement of £7,786.90 has now been received. The Society also received a payment of £1,000 from the estate of Eric Crisp. These bequests substantially increased the level of income last year and have greatly improved the Society's financial position.

The biggest change in expenditure over the last year is attributable to preparatory work on the Earliburn observing site. It has been necessary to purchase timber and other raw materials to weatherproof the building the Society will use, although the generosity of members in giving up their time to undertake the work has meant that we have not faced labour charges as well.

During 1998 the Council of the Society agreed that honoraria paid to office-bearers (Secretary and Treasurer) would only be paid if requested by the particular office-bearer.

The Society hosted a meeting of European satellite trackers last year (Eurosom 3) and further expenditure will be made as the accounts have not yet been finalised. The income from participants was intended to cover both the expenses incurred at the time and the meeting proceedings which have still to be prepared. The Society's contribution in hosting the meeting was in the provision of a venue and refreshments for the participants.

Subscription income remains at a similar level to last year, although slightly increased, 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 fell by over £1,800 in 1998 and although further monies (£700) relating to activities taking place in the later part of the year have still to be received, it will be noted that the Society did not cover the rates and water charges for the site. In the previous year the Society recovered slightly more than was required but the net effect facing us is a cost to the Society in the region of £300. The Society's Council will continue to endeavour that the full costs can be recovered to prevent the substantial amounts we have to pay becoming a drain on resources.

Donations were up last year, mainly due to the successful Space Rocks exhibition during the Edinburgh Festival which saw a large number of visitors to the Playfair Building.

It has been pointed out that there was an error in the presentation of the current account balance and the current liabilities at 31 December 1997 in the Annual Report and Accounts for 1997. This error had no material effect on the accounts and the correct values are stated above. A revised version of the statement of balances for the year ended 31 December 1997 is included as an annex to this report.

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 1998

| Bank Balance | (£) |
|-----------------------------|------------------|
| At 31 December 1997 | |
| Current Account | 1,496.37 |
| Business Investment Account | 12,290.35 |
| | 13,786.72 |
| Less Liabilities for 1997 | 384.70 |
| Plus Receipts for 1998 | 14,151.00 |
| Less Payments for 1998 | <u>5,637.68</u> |
| | 21,915.34 |
| At 31 December 1998 | |
| Current Account | 3,932.25 |
| Business Investment Account | <u>18,655.59</u> |
| | 22,587.84 |

Current Liabilities

| | | |
|----------------------------|------------------|---------------|
| Unpresented Cheques | Cheque No 011451 | 30.00 |
| | Cheque No 011497 | 12.50 |
| | Cheque No 011501 | 290.00 |
| | Cheque No 011502 | <u>350.00</u> |
| | | 682.50 |
| Less discrepancy in pay-in | | <u>10.00</u> |
| Total Net Liabilities | | 672.50 |

Notes : (i) These cheques were written prior to the end of the financial year and had not been presented for payment by 31 December 1998.

(ii) The discrepancy pay-in has arisen because of a difference between the Treasurer's records and the bank statement, the bank having credited the Society with £10 less. The matter is being investigated by the bank.

It has been pointed out that there was an error in the presentation of the current account balance and the current liabilities at 31 December 1997 in the Annual Report and Accounts for 1997. This error had no material effect on the accounts and the correct values are stated above. A revised version of the statement of balances for the year ended 31 December 1997 is included as an annex to this report.

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 1998

| Receipts | | (£) |
|--|-----------------|----------|
| Membership Subscriptions | | 900.00 |
| Grants | | |
| City of Edinburgh Council | 0.00 | |
| Astronomical Society of Edinburgh Trustees | <u>1,400.00</u> | 1,400.00 |
| Investment Income | | |
| Interest on Current Account | 33.54 | |
| Interest on Business Investment Account | <u>778.34</u> | 811.88 |
| Bequests | | |

| | | |
|--|-----------------|-------------------------|
| Residue of Merson bequest | 7,786.90 | |
| Payment from the estate of Eric Crisp | <u>1,000.00</u> | 8,786.90 |
| Donations | | 622.77 |
| Organisations using City Observatory | | 600.00 |
| Fees and Sponsorship for Eurosom 3 Meeting | | 660.00 |
| Re-imbusement for telephone costs from Stereodome (note 1) | | 369.45 |
| TOTAL RECEIPTS | | <u>14,151.00</u> |

| Payments | Specific Notes | | (£) |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------|------------|
| <u>For the Society.</u> | | | |
| Lectures and Meetings | | | |
| Expenses | 2 | 214.88 | |
| Hospitality | | 42.66 | |
| Cheese and Wine | 3 | <u>27.82</u> | 285.36 |
| Eurosom 3 Meeting expenses | | | 240.31 |
| Printing and Duplicating | | | 178.15 |
| Telephone | 4 | | 303.21 |
| Library | 5 | | 189.77 |
| Insurance | 6 | | 100.59 |
| Expenses | | | 201.97 |
| Secretary | | | |
| Treasurer | | | 2.88 |
| Office Equipment | | | 105.64 |
| Independent Examiner's Fee | 7 | | 25.00 |
| Equipment (not Office) | | | 107.89 |
| Items for Earliburn observing site | | | 609.53 |
| Astronomy classes | | | 109.30 |
| Society Subscriptions | 8 | | 42.50 |

| | | | |
|--|--|----|------------------------|
| Total for the Society | | | <u>2,502.10</u> |
| <u>For the Observatory.</u> | | | |
| Director's Honorarium | | | 350.00 |
| Gas | | | 56.65 |
| Electricity | | | 0.00 |
| Rates | | | 985.92 |
| Water | | | 1,111.76 |
| Cleaning | | | 115.00 |
| Library | | 9 | 189.76 |
| Insurance | | 10 | 204.23 |
| Expenses - Treasurer | | | 2.87 |
| Timber for flooring space in City Dome | | | 76.99 |
| Keys/Security items | | | 42.40 |
| Total for the Observatory | | | <u>3,135.58</u> |
| TOTAL PAYMENTS | | | <u>5,637.68</u> |

Note to the Statement of Balances and the Receipts and Payments Account for the Year to 31 December 1998

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 re-imburement of expenses to Council Members: £1,061.93

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 4).
2. This item includes the cost of tea and biscuits following meetings.
3. This item represents the net cost of this event (ie expenses less proceeds).
4. See also Receipts (note 1) for re-imburement from Stereodome for telephone costs.
5. 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.
6. This is one third of the Insurance costs with the other two thirds shown against Observatory expenditure.
7. This was the fee for examining the Society's report and accounts.
8. This item includes the cost of subscriptions to the British Astronomical Association, the Federation of Astronomical Societies and the Scottish Astronomers Group.
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 Society expenditure.
10. This is two thirds of the Insurance costs with the other one third shown against Society expenditure.

Annex: Statement of Balances for the Year Ended 31 December 1997

(Corrected to take account of error in presentation - see note following statement of balances for the year ended 31 December 1998)

Bank Balance**(£)**

At 31 December 1996

Current Account

3,250.68

Business Investment Account

11,855.23

| | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------|
| | | 15,105.91 |
| | Less Liabilities for 1996 | 656.41 |
| | Plus Receipts for 1997 | 6,799.83 |
| | Less Payments for 1997 | <u>7,847.31</u> |
| | | 13,402.02 |
| At 31 December 1997 | | |
| | Current Account | 1,496.37 |
| | Business Investment Account | <u>12,290.35</u> |
| | | 13,786.72 |
| Current Liabilities | | |
| Unpresented Cheques | Cheque No 011445 | 34.70 |
| | Cheque No 011446 | <u>350.00</u> |
| Total Liabilities | | <u>384.70</u> |

This report was approved at a meeting of the Council of the Astronomical Society of Edinburgh held at the City Observatory on 24 January 1999

Alan Ellis
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.

Craig J. Henderson 9 Feb 1999

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City Observatory
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Telephone: 0131 556 4365

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