

## Astronomical Society of Edinburgh

# Annual Report for 2002

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

Clause 1 of that Constitution is:

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

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

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

<b>President</b>	Lorna McCalman 20 Hillside Crescent, Edinburgh, EH7 5EB Telephone: 0131 556 3790 Email: <a href="mailto:lmccalman@blueyonder.co.uk">lmccalman@blueyonder.co.uk</a>
<b>Secretary</b>	Graham Rule 105/19 Causewayside, Edinburgh EH9 1QG Telephone: 0131 667 0647 Email: <a href="mailto:Graham.Rule@ed.ac.uk">Graham.Rule@ed.ac.uk</a>
<b>Treasurer</b>	Charlie Gleed 48 Durham Avenue, Edinburgh EH15 1RY Telephone: 0131 669 4608 E-Mail: <a href="mailto:charliegleed@blueyonder.co.uk">charliegleed@blueyonder.co.uk</a>
<b>Vice-Presidents</b>	Alison Duncan George Grant
<b>Councillors</b>	Alan Ellis Des Loughney Dave King Pete MacDonald (from 31st May) Horst Meyerdirks David Small

Following the AGM in March there was a vacancy for the position of President. At a special Council Meeting on 1st April Lorna McCalman was coopted to serve in this capacity until 31st March 2003. This left a vacancy in the Council which was filled when Pete MacDonald was coopted on 31st May.

The following Council members elected at the AGM in 2001 held office during the early part of the year (from 1st January to March 31st): Lorna McCalman, Graham Rule, George Grant, Alan Ellis, Pete MacDonald, Alison Duncan, Raymond Fenoulhet, Charlie Gleed, Jim Nisbet, Adrian Weatherhead

The Society's principal address

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

Our meetings take place at

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

(there is currently no post box at the observatory which the post office can reach.)

The Council would like to express its thanks to Jim Nisbet, Ray Fenoulhet and Adrian Weatherhead who stepped down from the Council during the year. Particular thanks are due to George Grant who, as Treasurer, has computerised the Society's accounts, which it is hoped will make the job of Treasurer less time consuming.

## Membership

9 new members were welcomed into the Society this year: Chris Arnold, Marjory Sandison, Douglas Gallacher, Daniel Gallacher, David John, Norman Dublin, Rachael Findlay, Frank Howie, Andrew Mackie.

On the 31st December 2001 the membership of the Society was 117 of which 7 are honorary members.

## Honorary Members

Honorary members are Dr M. Brück, Dr H. Ford, Dr D. Gavine, Prof D. Heggie, and Mrs E. Jenkinson. 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).

We were most pleased to read that Harry Ford was awarded an MBE in the New Year Honours List at the end of 2002.

## Publications

Edition 45 of the Society's Journal was published in December under the editorship of Dr D.M. Gavine.

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

In addition to being a councillor, Alison Duncan has been Press Officer to the Society. Alison has communicated Society news and events to Astronomy magazines and has assisted the President when having to deal with the Press.

## Electronic Communication

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

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

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

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

The Society e-mail list is used to contact members about announcements, observing sessions and forthcoming events. Members of the Society can subscribe free of charge to this list. To join, please contact the Secretary of the Society.

The Council wishes to thank Graham Rule and Horst Meyerdierks for their work in supporting the web and email sides of the Society's on-going internet use and expresses its thanks to the Royal Observatory, Edinburgh for continuing to provide web space and email forwarding.

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

## Meetings

The Society has held the following meetings during 2002:

January 11th

Russell Eberst - Royal Observatory Edinburgh

*"Satellite Tracking"*

Attendance 57

February 1st

Slides Evening

Some of the interesting sets of slides recently purchased by the Society were presented by members followed by a presentation by Dr

Russell Cockman from the Association of Falkirk Astronomers of his own pictures

Attendance 48

March 1st (Annual General Meeting)

Prof John Brown - Honorary President, ASE & Astronomer Royal for Scotland

*"Magic of the Cosmos"*

Attendance 56

April 5th

Gerry Taylor

*"Space Oddities"*

Attendance 43

May 3rd

Dr Alastair Simmons - Astronomical Society of Glasgow

*"Arctic Aurorae"*

Attendance 35

June 7th

Dr Anastasia Pappa - Royal Observatory, Edinburgh

*"A journey through the history of astronomy: from Aristotle to modern cosmology!"*

Attendance 27

July 5th

Barbecue & Social Evening

Attendance 40

August 2nd

Members' Night

Contributions were received from Anastasia Pappa ("Amateur Astronomy in Europe"), Alan Pickup ("The Night Sky this month"), Dave King ("Forthcoming annular eclipse") and Dave Gavine ("Astronomy correspondence courses")

Attendance 31

September 6th

Dr Horst Meyerdierks - Royal Observatory, Edinburgh

*"All my telescopes"*

Attendance 35

October 4th

Dr Marek Kukula - Royal Observatory, Edinburgh *"Asteroid and Comet Impacts"*

Attendance 43

November 1st

Dr Nigel Metcalfe - Durham University

*"Deep Field Imaging - A Canvas for the History of the Universe"*

Attendance 51

December 6th

Dr Russell Cockman - Association of Falkirk Astronomers  
*"Basic Astrophotography with Film"*

Thanks to Alan Pickup for kindly presenting the "Monthly Sky map" talk to the Society each month.

## Council Meetings

The Council of the Society met on 25th January, 22nd February, 29th March, 1st April, 26th April, 31st May, 28th June, 26th July, 30th August, 27th September, 25th October and 29th November.

## Equipment

The 6-inch Cook telescope continues to be regularly used by members of the Society. Demonstrations on how to use this instrument proved to be very popular and it is hoped that members will enjoy using this telescope on clear nights. The 8 ¾ inch Dobsonian has been brought back to the Calton Hill because the refurbishment of the the 12 inch "Lewis" Newtonian reflector is complete. Many thanks to George Grant, Charlie Gleed and Horst Meyerdierks who put so much work into this project. The telescope has been taken out to Earlyburn and the society now has access to a magnificent instrument at a dark site.

The 4 inch Newtonian remains at the City Observatory. Being an easily portable instrument, it is useful to take with us when giving talks to other groups.

The Nearstar Solar telescope has now been mounted on an equatorial mount and has given some wonderful views of the Sun. A second hand zoom eyepiece was purchased for use with the Nearstar. It was noted that when comet Ikeya Zang was observable we had no binoculars available for use at the observatory so Celestron 11x80 binoculars and a large tripod were purchased.

A data projector was purchased in November because we were finding that most of our speakers required this facility. Although expensive, it is a worthwhile piece of equipment. In addition to being used for lecturing purposes we hope in the future to be able to link it to the Cook telescope. This would allow members who are unable to climb up to the telescope to "see" the images on the screen in the City Dome.

## Observing

The observatory is open to members of the Society and the public on clear Friday evenings between 8 and 10pm. A message is left on the Observatory telephone answer machine to say if there will be someone available to open up the observatory on the night. The message is updated at 5pm each Friday.

Comet Ikeya Zang provided interest in the Spring. Although low on the horizon it was just visually observable but made a good binocular object for observation. Seen at around magnitude +4, it wasn't as impressive as Hyakutake or Hale Bopp and the weather prevented much observation in the month of March. An interesting object flared up in Monoceros. This object which had been a fainter than 15th magnitude unidentified star, suddenly flared to +10 then up to +7. At one point observers reckoned that it increased by one magnitude over a matter of hours.

Although the Moon and high cloud and freezing cold made observing conditions very poor, the Leonid meteor shower was observed by many members of the society who observed 74 to 225 meteors; a remarkable number considering the limiting magnitude was around +2.

The Quadrantids fared no better than the Leonids, the sky once again being covered in patchy cloud. Few meteors were observed.

In the second half of the year, the planets Jupiter and Saturn returned to our evening sky and Venus was a brilliant object in the morning sky

A new comet was discovered in December 2002. Forecast to brighten rapidly and become a naked eye object, it sadly failed to live up to expectation and being in Hercules it was very low down in the evening sky. Although estimated to be around magnitude +6, it was not a very impressive object to observe.

## Imaging and Messier Groups

The imaging group co-ordinated by Dr Neil Grubb, and the Messier observing group, co-ordinated by Dave King, have been holding joint meetings at the observatory at 8pm on the Monday evening following the main Society meeting.

### January meeting

24 attending. Imaging Jupiter and Saturn through the Cook telescope. Members brought their own equipment. Excellent seeing conditions.

### February meeting.

12 people attended. Pouring rain and windy. Neil Grubb gave a short presentation on the pros and cons of digital imaging.

### March meeting.

20-25 people attended, many bringing their own equipment. Around 8 telescopes were set up around the grounds. Seeing conditions not very good but reasonable views of the Planets and Messier objects M45, M42, M35, 36, 37.

### April meeting

Due to totally cloudy conditions, only 8 people attended.

The imaging and Messier groups decided to stop meeting until September because the evenings were too light. Cloud and mist was very much the feature of summer 2002 weather, persistent easterly breezes keeping Edinburgh cool and misty. It was a very wet summer with high rainfall, some areas of the UK having one month's rainfall in a single day, causing flooding and landslides. There was little opportunity for observing. The observing and imaging groups decided to shut down until September.

### September meeting.

Once again the weather was a problem. A very wet and misty night. Only 5 people attended.

### October meeting.

The weather was cloudy but 13 people attended. Plans and projects for the coming observing season were discussed along with electronic equipment problems.

### November meeting

Our run of bad weather continued with no observing possible, despite this around 12 people attended the meeting.

## Visitors to the Observatory

The Edinburgh Photographic Society visited the observatory on Friday 12th April.

Edinburgh hosted the Scottish Astronomers Group meeting on Saturday 11th May.

## Other Events

The Scottish Astronomers Group meeting was held on Saturday 23rd March at Falkirk. A very enjoyable day hosted by the Association of Falkirk Astronomers. The new President of SAG, Mark Pollard from Renfrew, took over from Dr Alastair Simmons. A very high standard of Astro imaging including a video of Algol, the famous variable star dimming then brightening again, a movie of the Solar eclipse as seen from Africa by Dr Russell Cockman and some deep sky faint galaxies presented by Mark Pollard. Douglas Cooper from Stirling also presented some excellent digital images of the Moon and the Solar disc.

The very successful and popular Scottish Astronomers Group weekend was held in Dundee from the 6th to the 8th September. The society was well represented with 18 members attending a weekend of talks on the theme of "Stars". A trip to the Satellite receiving centre at St Andrews was organised for delegates with the alternative being a trip to Arbroath abbey followed by a geological cliff walk. Once again a magnificent display of members work was on show illustrating how amateurs are able to produce work which a few years ago was in the realms of the professional astronomer. An evening visit to Mills Observatory had been arranged and we enjoyed the use of the Mills Observatory 10 inch Cook refractor telescope. We also observed a small aurora.

In November, Graham Rule, George Grant and Ken Thomas went to Vogrie Country Park to give a public talk. The number of people attending was very low but this was due to the poor weather conditions. This prompted plans to change the date of our annual visit to see if we could manage to co-incide our visit with a clear sky.

Dr D. Gavine gave a talk at Wigtown Scottish Astrofest which was held on 15th-16th November.

Graham Rule spoke on the history of the observatory to the Edinburgh Members' Group of the National Trust for Scotland and to the Old Edinburgh Club.

The Astronomer Royal for Scotland Professor John Brown presented the society with a framed copy of his warrant from the Lord Lyon which describes Professor Brown's coat of arms. This can be found in the library in the Playfair building along with a photograph of the last 4 Astronomers Royal for Scotland also presented to the society by Professor Brown.

The ROE donated some educational display boards, which were mounted on the walls of the City dome by Jim Douglas. Thanks to Jim for giving up his time to do this.

Dr Dave Gavine obtained equipment which was being disposed of by the Jewel and Esk Valley College which is no longer a scientific and technical college. We benefited by gaining books from the college library, various teaching aids, including Schmidt photographic plates, a light

box and the teaching notes. A beautiful celestial sphere and a terrestrial globe were also gifted to the society along with a 4 inch refractor telescope on a wooden tripod.

The society submitted a bid for the planetarium which was also being disposed of by the Jewel and Esk Valley College. Unfortunately our bid was not accepted because we were unable to guarantee visitor numbers. The planetarium was given to the Manchester Science Museum. The loss of the only permanent planetarium in Edinburgh is extremely disappointing.

## **Non-Astronomical Events**

Fresh Air FM had use of the Observatory grounds from 24th April to 22nd of May. Total Asian Radio used the observatory grounds for a transmitter for a month from mid-October.

The Travelling gallery had use of the observatory and grounds for its 2002 exhibition launch.

## **City of Edinburgh Council Business**

The City of Edinburgh Council Parks Department has begun clearing years of overgrowth in the Observatory grounds. It is looking much better and thanks to them for their work.

The toilets and the Tweedie dome have been broken into on a regular basis. The City Council arranges to make them secure again and deal with any alarm calls to the Observatory.

Through the summer months, problems continued with break-ins and damage to the out buildings. This resulted in Lorna McCalman and Graham Rule being asked to attend the observatory sometimes at 2am. This was felt to be unsafe practice as on more than one occasion either Graham or Lorna found they were alone at the observatory checking the buildings after an alarm call. The Police do not wait for key holders to arrive unless they are informed that the person attending is alone.

The autumn continued with security problems, the most serious of which was in September when seven outbuilding doors, including the toilet block were kicked in. The Crawford dome was left open to the elements for several weeks which meant that we had to rescue the parts of the historical 13 inch telescope and move them to safety. Fortunately these were not vandalised.

Lorna McCalman went to see City of Edinburgh Councillor Dougie Kerr to discuss the security problems and a site meeting was arranged to see how we could resolve these issues with security.

The observatory has been lacking in general cleaning and maintenance but this is largely because we are waiting for major restorative work to begin. The steps at the south gate have been a cause for concern because they are slowly slipping down the hill creating gaps which could easily cause people to trip and walking sticks to catch. Members were advised not to use these steps but to use the east gate steps. A temporary repair has been carried out but care is still required when using them.

## **The Astronomical Society of Edinburgh Trustees**

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

The following are the trustees in terms of that deed:

Mr Raymond Fenoulhet (Secretary and Treasurer)

Dr John Rostron

Dr David Gavine FRAS

Dr John Hunter

Mr Alan Pickup

All of the above trustees are members of the Society.

Last year the Society expressed concern about the management of the Trust so we are particularly pleased to report that the Trustees have provided us with a Report and Accounts for the year ended 31st December 2001.

## Financial Report

The most significant expenditure in 2002 has been the purchase of a computer data projector for £2737.75 along with astronomical equipment for £618.90. In order to fund this £4450 has been transferred into the Current Account from the Business Investment Account.

Although this has led to a reduction in our reserves the Council of the Society believes that such equipment will enhance the Society's activities and further our objects.

Membership subscriptions remain healthy at £1258 which is supplemented by a rebate of Income Tax under the 'Gift Aid' of £173. Any member who pays sufficient income tax or capital gains tax (including tax credits on dividend income) should consider completing the relevant declaration form. (Details of the scheme are available from the Treasurer and in the Inland Revenue leaflet IR65 which is in the Society's library.)

Costs associated with running the Calton Hill Observatory were over £2000 but much of this is offset by donations of £1333 which were received during the year, the majority of which were related to groups expressing their thanks for us allowing them to use parts of the Observatory for events. We hope to receive further donations from these sources in the future, having already been promised £700.

Disregarding the amounts spent purchasing equipment, the Society has spent over £1000 in excess of income during the year. It is noted that much of this could have been covered if we had received the promised donation and demanded the investment income from the ASE Trust.

However, interest on the Business Investment Account has been very poor; the Treasurer will be investigating increasing the yield on our investments.

The form of presentation of the following Statement of Balances and the Receipts & Payments Account conforms to the requirements of the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 1992 which require the following statements to be made:

#### Nature and Purpose of each of the Major Funds

Current Account: Bank of Scotland Treasurer's Account

Investment Account: Bank of Scotland Business Investment Account

#### 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: £1040.34

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

### Statement of Balances for the Year Ended 31 December 2002

Bank Balance at 31 December 2001		£
Current Account	722.85	
Business Investment Account	16108.74	
Total Bank Balance at 31/12/2001		16831.59
Less Liabilities for 2001		62.46
Plus Receipts for 2002		2840.32
Less Payments for 2002		7338.09
		12271.36
Bank Balance at 31 December 2002		
Current Account	543.15	
Business Investment Account	11728.21	
Total Bank Balance at 31/12/2002		12271.36

### Receipts and Payments Account for year ended 31st December 2002

RECEIPTS	Notes	£
Subscription Income		
Members' subscriptions		1258.00
Income Tax Rebate		173.60
Total Subscription Income		1431.60
Grants		
City of Edinburgh Council		0.00

ASE Trustees	1	0.00	
Total Grants			0.00
Investment Income			
Current Account		6.25	
Business Investment Account		69.47	
Total Investment Income			75.72
Donations			1333.00
<b>Total Receipts</b>			<b>2840.32</b>
<b>PAYMENTS</b>			
Observatory			
Electricity			647.99
Gas	2		0.00
Telephone			269.62
Rates			1222.22
Misc			24.25
Total Observatory Payments			2164.08
Equipment			
Astronomical			
Binoculars		147.00	
Tripod		61.00	
Eyepiece		83.00	
Lewis Telescope project		327.90	
Total Astronomical Equipment			618.90
Audio Visual Equipment	3		2737.75
Total Equipment Payments			3356.65
Society			
Meeting Expenses			
Hospitality	4	286.55	
Ordinary Meetings	5	59.37	
Special Events	6	192.17	
Raffle costs	7	57.94	
Total Meeting Expenses			596.03
Publicity and Members' Mailings			
Internet		52.85	
Printing and Duplicating		79.00	
Office		25.86	
Postage		169.86	
FAS Astrocalendars		170.00	
Total Publicity etc			497.57
Library			
Magazines and Journals		36.00	
Books		67.78	
Total Library Payments			103.78
Miscellaneous			

Insurance		403.48	
Society Subscriptions		131.50	
Gift Vouchers	8	85.00	
Total Miscellaneous Payments			619.98
Total Society Payments			1817.36
<b>Total Payments</b>			<b>7338.09</b>
<b>OVERALL TOTAL</b>			<b>-4497.77</b>

## Notes on the Receipts and Payments Account

1. During the period covered none of the Trust income was demanded by the Society's Treasurer.
2. Because we were in credit on our Gas Bill no payments were required in the year.
3. The data projector purchase is described above.
4. The Society continues its policy of offering to take the speaker for a meal before the monthly meetings. This is very much appreciated by our speakers who seldom charge for their time and usually expect only minimal travel expenses.
5. This item includes the cost of tea and biscuits following meetings.
6. This includes the barbecue, cheese & wine and the Christmas event.
7. Income from the December 2001 raffle appears in the previous accounts.
8. Gifts were made to the Independent Examiner of the Accounts and to two people who had helped greatly in enhancing the Observatory with the display boards donated by the ROE as tokens of our appreciation.

This report was approved at a meeting of the Council of the Astronomical Society of Edinburgh held at the City Observatory on 7th February 2003.

Lorna McCalman  
 (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.

Note: There will be an interest paid element of 48p credited to the current account on 31st December 2002 and an interest paid element of £5.14 credited to the investment account. These amounts will be carried forward to the 2003 financial report.

David Thomson  
24th February 2003

**The Astronomical Society of Edinburgh**

City Observatory, Calton Hill, Edinburgh

Telephone: 0131 556 4365

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

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