

Astronomical Society of Edinburgh

Annual Report for 2003

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:

President	Dave King 15 Baberton Mains Hill, Edinburgh, EH14 3DT Telephone: 0131 442 2631 Email: DavidKing007@Talk21.com	
Secretary	Graham Rule 105/19 Causewayside, Edinburgh EH9 1QG Telephone: 0131 667 0647 Email: Graham.Rule@ed.ac.uk	
Treasurer	Charlie Gleed 48 Durham Avenue, Edinburgh EH15 1RY Telephone: 0131 669 4608 E-Mail: charliegleed@blueyonder.co.uk	
Vice-Presidents	Lorna McCalman	Pete MacDonald
Councillors	Alan Ellis George Grant Des Loughney	Neil Macnaughtan Horst Meyerdierks David Small

The following Council members elected at the AGM in 2002 held office during the early part of the year (from 1st January to March 31st): Lorna McCalman, Graham Rule, Charlie Gleed, George Grant, Alan Ellis, Pete MacDonald, Alison Duncan, Des Loughney, Dave King, Horst Meyerdierks, David Small

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 Alison Duncan who stepped down from the Council during the year. Thanks are also due to Pete MacDonald who took on the role of Membership Secretary during the year.

Membership

6 new members were welcomed into the Society this year: David Harrison, Michael Dale, Charles Connor, Caroline Alexander, Tracey Doherty, Arvind Nayack,. On the 31st December 2003 the membership of the Society was 107 of which 7 are honorary members.

Honorary Members

Honorary members are Dr M. Brück, Dr H. Ford MBE, 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).

Publications

Edition 46 of the Society's Journal was published in August under the editorship of Dr D.M. Gavine. The Society was pleased to learn that Dr Gavine was awarded the Lydia Brown Medal by the BAA during 2003.

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

During the early part of the year (from 1st January to March 31st), in addition to being a councillor, Alison Duncan was Press Officer to the Society. Alison communicated Society news and events to Astronomy magazines and 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
- secretary@astronomyedinburgh.org
- 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 2003:

January 10th

Dave King - Astronomical Society of Edinburgh
"From the Big Bang to Inflation"
Attendance 50

February 7th

Bill Ward - Glasgow University
"Snap, Crackle and Pop - the natural radio of the Earth"
Attendance 52

March 7th (Annual General Meeting)

Dr Fiona Vincent - St Andrews University
"Constellations"
Attendance 42

April 4th

Dr Moira Jardine - St Andrews University
"Young Suns and Planet Formation"
Attendance 56

May 2nd

Gerry Taylor - Astronomical Society of Edinburgh
"Planetary Rings"
Attendance 29

June 6th

Dr Nick Hewitt - Former President BAA
"Cosmic Recycling, an Amateur Perspective"
Attendance 42

July 4th

Barbecue & Social Evening

August 1st

Members' Night
Contributions were received from Dr David Gavine and Dave King
Attendance 30

September 5th

Des Loughney - Astronomical Society of Edinburgh
"Mysteries of Mars"
Attendance 51

October 3rd

Brian Kelly - Former Dundee City Astronomer
"The Night The Stars Fell"
Attendance 52

November 7th

Dr Alison Morrison-Low - National Museums of Scotland
"The Soldier-Astronomer in Scotland: Thomas Makdougall Brisbane's Scientific Work In The Northern Hemisphere"
Attendance 44

December 5th

Dr Lyndsay Fletcher - Glasgow University
"Solar Flares and RHESSI"
Attendance 35

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 31st January, 7th February, 28th February, 28th March, 25th April, 23rd May, 27th June, 25th July, 22nd August, 26th September, 31st October and 28th November.

Equipment

The 6-inch Cook telescope continues to be regularly used by members of the Society.

Also available for use by members at Calton Hill are the 8 $\frac{3}{4}$ inch Dobsonian, a 4 inch Newtonian, Celestron 11x80 binoculars, and a Nearstar Solar telescope. The Dobsonian, the Newtonian and the binoculars have been used regularly throughout the year on clear nights, particularly during the period of the Mars opposition in August.

The Nearstar Solar telescope is a dedicated solar observing instrument and provides superb views of the Sun in Hydrogen alpha. This instrument was particularly useful in observing both the solar transit of Mercury and the very large sunspot groups visible during 2003.

The Society acquired the Wray Telescope from Jewel and Esk College during 2003, which is also kept at Calton Hill and is available for use by members.

Also available is the 12 inch "Lewis" Newtonian reflector which is located in Earlyburn and the Society's dark sky site.

In March the Society purchased three Brandon Eyepieces, which are of very high quality. They have primarily been used in conjunction with the Cook Telescope and provide excellent views.

The Society also owns a data projector that is used by the large majority of our guest speakers as well as Society members when giving presentations.

During 2003 the Society was given a copy of RedShift 5 by its manufacturer, Focus Multimedia. It is hoped that a full review of this planetarium software will appear in a future edition of the Journal and that the program itself will be loaded into a computer at Calton Hill for use by Society members.

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.

2003 proved to be a busy year for observations, although not all were successful.

During May we had three major events - a solar transit of Mercury, a partial lunar eclipse and an annular solar eclipse. For the solar transit of Mercury, on 7th, 4 Society members observed the event from Calton Hill. Although initially cloudy, conditions soon improved and some excellent views were obtained, particularly through the Solar Telescope. The partial lunar eclipse was in the early hours of the 17th and unfortunately it was generally cloudy so few observations were possible. On 31st there was the annular solar eclipse and although 6 members of the Society were at Calton Hill to observe the event, it was again cloudy and no observations were possible.

During the summer, there were a number of very large sunspot groups visible and again some excellent observations were made using the Solar Telescope.

The major event for August was the opposition of Mars, for which the Society held open evenings during the last week of the month. This is described in more detail below.

Autumn saw some significant auroral activity for several nights and many members of the Society both observed and imaged the event. Many of these images have been shown at subsequent Society meetings. A number of observations of noctilucent clouds were also reported.

Mars Open Week: 23rd - 30th August

For the week 23rd - 30th August, the Society held open evenings every night as part of National Astronomy Week 2003.

During the open week, visitors to Calton Hill could see a display about Mars, a model of the Beagle 2 lander, a computer presentation "*Changing Views of Mars*" produced by the Society for Popular Astronomy and (on clear nights) could observe Mars using a variety of the Society's instruments.

Two Mars Observing Guides were produced by the Society and these were very popular with both visitors to the Observatory and local schools who were sent copies.

This was a very successful week, with visitors averaging over 50 each night. On one clear night we had approximately 100 visitors and long queues to observe the planet through the Cook Telescope. Although not all nights were clear, it was possible to view Mars on the majority of evenings and at times it was possible to clearly distinguish various surface features on the planet.

In addition to the Cook Telescope, the Newtonian, the Dobsonian and the binoculars were all used for public observing, as well as other instruments belonging to Society members.

The public response was very positive - some people returning several times during the week. A number of new members have joined the Society as a result of attending the open week and the comments in the Visitor's Book reflect the success of the event.

Thanks are due to all the members of the Society who assisted in the open week, from producing the display material and observing guides to preparing the Observatory and hosting the nights themselves. Particular thanks are due to Des Loughney who proposed holding an open week and co-ordinated the development of material for the exhibition.

Imaging and Messier Groups

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

During the summer with the lack of dark nights and dedicating time to preparing material for the Mars Open Week, the regular meetings were suspended. They have, however subsequently recommenced and all members of the Society are welcome to attend.

Visitors to the Observatory

There have been a number of visitors to the Observatory during the year:

11th February - an evening class studying the history of science in Edinburgh.

11th March - The Nautical Institute.

26th March - Aberdeen Astronomical Society.

May - The National Trust for Scotland Edinburgh Members' Group

Other Events

The very successful and popular Scottish Astronomers Group weekend was held in Dundee in August. The theme of this year's event was "Observing the Solar System" The Society was well represented at the weekend, with Des Loughney delivering his presentation on "Mysteries of Mars " which was later also given at one of the Society's own meetings.

During the weekend, a trip to St Andrews Observatory was arranged, which was a very interesting excursion and some attendees observed "sun dogs" during the afternoon.

In March Graham Rule, together with members of the Royal Observatory Edinburgh provided some "sidewalk astronomy" in the Meadows as part of National Science Week.

Lorna McCalman and Graham Rule gave a talk to the Edinburgh branch of the British Association for the Advancement of Science in November.

City of Edinburgh Council Business

The City of Edinburgh council maintains the Calton Hill site and respond to any alarm call-outs and the Society acknowledges the support received from the City Council.

Proposals have been made for the restoration of the Calton Hill site and if these proceed it may restrict the Society's access to the Calton Hill Observatory for a period of time. Members of the Society will be kept up to date with any developments in this area.

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.

Financial Report

In the year 2003, the main expenditure of the Society has been on running the Calton Hill Observatory. Including insurance, this was in excess of £2,100. The Society's running costs stayed quite constant, with the exception of moneys allocated to the Mars exhibition. This cost was largely for printing and laminating materials.

Membership subscriptions were significantly lower, as were donations, and reduced the Society's income by around £1,000. We will need to do all we can to reverse this position. Even with a £1,700 in investment income from the Lorimer Trust, the Society's assets have reduced by around £1,000 in 2003, a similar figure to the previous year. Clearly, this trend must be reversed if the Society is to have a secure financial future.

The form of presentation of this report conforms to the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 1992, which also requires the following statements to be made:

Nature and Purpose of each of the major funds:

Current Account: Bank of Scotland Treasurer's Account

Investment: Bank of Scotland Business Investment Account

Remuneration and expenses of trustees

(In the Society's case, this refers to members of the ASE Council)

Aggregate re-imburement of expenses: £889.59

This money was paid to Council members by the Treasurer on presentation of receipts for costs incurred on Society business

Statement of Balances for the Year Ended 31 December 2003

Balances from report to 31 December 2002		
Current Account	543.15	
Business Investment Account	<u>11,728.21</u>	
Total balance		12,271.36
Plus receipts for 2003		
		3,445.42
Less payments for 2003		
		<u>4,514.71</u>
		11,202.07
Balances at 31 December 2003		
Current Account	3,161.18	
Business Investment Account	<u>8,060.89</u>	
Total balance		11,222.07
Liability:		
Uncleared Cheque 011754		20.00

Note: The accounts for the year to 31st December 2002 showed balances that had failed to take into account interest paid in December 2002 on the current account of 48p and on the Investment Account of £5.14. These amounts have been included in the receipts for 2003.

Income and Expenditure Report for 2003

Income	£
Subscriptions	918.10
Donations	606.70
Gift Aid	182.48
Bank Interest	38.14
Lorimer Trust Income	1,700.00
Total Income	3,445.42

Expenditure	£
Astrocalendars	191.86
Astronomy Magazines	107.35
Dinner for Speakers	277.39
Food & Wine	147.39
Instruments etc	480.96
Insurance	522.84
Memberships & Affiliations	67.00
Postage	30.36
Rates	1,256.41
Stationery & Printing	409.57
Travel Expenses	152.60
Utilities	
Electricity	579.41
Gas	25.99
Telephone	265.58
	870.98
Total Expenditure	4,514.71

Income - Expenditure **-1,069.29**

This report was approved at a meeting of the Council of the Astronomical Society of Edinburgh held at the City Observatory on 20th February 2003.

Dave King
(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.

David Thomson
24th February 2003

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