



2020

ANNUAL REPORT

**THE ASTRONOMICAL
SOCIETY OF EDINBURGH**

www.astronomyedinburgh.org

Registered Scottish Charity SC022968



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PREFACE

This Report presents the organisation and activities of the Astronomical Society of Edinburgh in the calendar year 2020. Recording this in the following year, the Society has operated to an adjusted set of working practices to allow business to continue during the ongoing Coronavirus pandemic.

Thankfully, the developments of the Society's electronic and online resources in response to the pandemic has allowed it to remotely deliver a full range of meeting, presentations and events for its members, and the wider public, in a totally remote format.

The Society has continued to hold all of its meeting and events throughout 2020 online, using various virtual networks such as Zoom and WhatsApp. The Society also held its 2020 AGM remotely over Zoom with Members able to vote online as required. This has allowed the Society to meet the requirements of its constitution and charity law.



1 Constitution and management of the Society

The Society is registered in Scotland as a charity no SC 022968. It is an unincorporated association founded (as the Edinburgh Astronomical Association) in 1924 and is governed by a Constitution most recently modified on 1 November 2019. The Constitution may be referred to on the Society's web site at www.astronomyedinburgh.org/membership/constitution

Clause 1 of the 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:

to circulate information on astronomical matters by the publication of articles, books etc;

to encourage astronomical study and observation; and

to increase popular interest in astronomy.”

The Management of the Society is vested in a Council, elected from the Ordinary Membership of the Society at the Annual General Meeting (AGM). The members of Council are trustees of the Charity. In the event of any vacancy arising in the Council, the Council has power to co-opt a Member of the Society to fill such a vacancy. Council Members and their functions in 2020 are listed in Annex 1.

As of 31 December 2020 there were 133 membership of the Society. Of these, five had honorary membership: Dr H. Ford, Dr N. Grubb, Prof D. Heggie and Dr H. Meyerdierks, and one of the Society's two Honorary Presidents: Prof Andrew Lawrence (Regius Professor of Astronomy at the University of Edinburgh). The other position of Honorary President remained vacant following the death of and Prof John Brown, Astronomer Royal for Scotland, in 2019. The Society hopes to appoint a new Honorary President in 2021.



1 Constitution and management of the Society...

During 2020, the Council of the Society continued to build on the improvements made to its systems of communications with its members, and the wider public, which commenced in 2019. This ongoing development has allowed the Council to tailor the delivery of the Society's output in order to better meet the needs of its members. Membership feedback and engagement has engaged greatly with more members taking an active part in shaping the Society's work programme. Twice-weekly meeting to place until summer 2020, and thereafter Twice-monthly member meetings have taken place online based on topic suggested by members. While engagement with the public on astronomy through platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, Facebook and the Internet has grown during 2020.

Looking to the longer term, the Council's Future Work stream Group is taking forward work on various key issues to the Society: a permanent base & storage, members' observing site, mobile observing platform, scoping for a star party, people & skills and financing & resources. Council is progress this work as circumstances allow during the lockdown. The Council is also establishing a dedicated work group to commence plans to celebrate the Society's centenary in 2024.

Trustees of the Lorimer bequest

A former Vice-President of the Society, Mr John Henry Lorimer, 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 and others, dated 10 December 1937. The Astronomical Society of Edinburgh Trust is registered Scottish Charity no SC013921.

As of 31 December 2020, the following were the trustees in terms of that deed:

Mr Jim Nisbet (Secretary and Treasurer)

Mr Alan Ellis

Mr Andrew Farrow

Mr Alan Pickup

All of the above trustees are past or current Presidents of the Society; Mr Ellis is currently Treasurer of the Society and Mr Nisbet is currently a member of the Council of the Society.



2 Publications & Electronic Communications

The Society retired its online Journal in 2020 as we moved our communications to a newer range of platforms. The Society now produces more material than ever. This material consists of:

- Articles and news items on the website
- Regular weekly email newsletters sent to members with information about meetings, Society news and other relevant astronomical information. Archives of these newsletters are held in the Members website;
- Archived recording of our public monthly meetings on our YouTube channel;
- Communications through our Facebook, Twitter and Flickr channels

To accompany the Night Sky preview by Alan Pickup and Horst Meyerdierks at monthly meetings, Alan's monthly astronomy article for "The Scotsman" – with kind permission of the paper's publishers – is republished in the Society's website.

2020 saw the start of our electronic newsletter to Members. Issued on a weekly basis, this draws together information on Society meetings, administrative business and items of astronomical news and interest into one location. Currently, access details for our remote Society meeting on Zoom as circulated to members via this newsletter.

The Society provides a range of tools, both online and in paper form, for beginners to astronomy. This includes beginners' seasonal star charts, planispheres and sundials available to the public. They are available under the Creative Commons by Attribution License, so that others can re-distribute or amend and distribute these documents, requiring only that the Society be acknowledged.

The Society has also developed an online Beginner's Guide to buying a telescope, as well as an 'ASE-24 List'. This is a table of the 24 celestial objects for beginners in observational astronomy to find in the night sky. These are part of our "4-STEPS to the STARS" programme. This is a public outreach programme designed to help people get into astronomy.



2 Publications & Electronic Communications...

The four steps are:

1. Buying a telescope
2. Telescope help shop
3. Navigating the night sky
4. Introduction to astro-imaging

There is a range of materials available on our website and YouTube channel to support this programme. The Society's website may be found at www.astronomyedinburgh.org and a Members only website at members.astronomyedinburgh.org

Email contact addresses have been set up for some Society Officers and the webmaster:

president@astronomyedinburgh.org
secretary@astronomyedinburgh.org
treasurer@astronomyedinburgh.org
webmaster@astronomyedinburgh.org

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

Social media

The Society's Twitter account: twitter.com/ASEdinburgh, had approximately 2,400 followers as of 31 December 2020.

Our Facebook account www.facebook.com/AstronomyEdinburgh has a very wide reach, with events often reaching 20-50,000 people.

Our YouTube channel www.youtube.com/c/AstronomicalSocietyOfEdinburgh is very active with videos of meetings attracting several hundred viewers after the events.

Public meetings are publicised using Eventbrite where users can get free tickets plus reminders. This helps to extend our reach and results in many visitors joining us live on YouTube.



3 Regular Meetings

The Society continued to hold meetings throughout 2020 to educate members and promote interest and discussion, to broadcast news items and receive presentations by Society members. The Council wishes particularly to thank Alan Pickup and Horst Meyerdierks for kindly presenting the majority of our "Night Sky this Month" presentations to the Society. In keeping with its constitutional function to educate and promote astronomy in the Edinburgh area, these meetings are open to the public at no charge.

A key attraction of the regular meetings is the programme of guest speakers, offering a wide variety of topics associated with astronomy. Promotion of these meetings by our more pro-active website and through social media has drawn a wider section of both local and international interest. All online meeting of the Society were free of charge, however free ticketing has had to be introduced to allow the numbers joining online to be managed effectively. Our main monthly meeting, with guest speakers, are also broadcast live on our YouTube channel and archived recordings of past meeting are also available.

The Society is actively looking at how it will retain the best developments from its move to online working and engagement as a result of the pandemic, when physical meeting of the Society recommence as soon as public health guidelines allow. It is envisioned that, going forward, various meeting of the Society will be hybrid in nature, allowing participation for members in a physical meeting, alongside that of members joining remotely online.

In 2020 the following events, talks and speakers were hosted at the Society. The majority were public and available to non-members online after March:



3 Regular Meetings...

Programme of events in 2020

10 Jan	Bob Mizon / Alan Pickup	Night Light or Night Blight?, Sky in January
15 Jan		Imaging Group
7 Feb	Grant Miller / Horst Meyerdierks	Zooniverse: From Planets to Penguins, Sky in February
12 Feb		Imaging Group
18 Feb	Alan Pickup	Navigating the Night Sky
29 Feb	Andrew Farrow and others	Telescope Help Shop
6 Mar	Dr Alan Thomson / Alan Pickup	Space Weather: A Modern Hazard to Technology, Sky in March
1 Apr	Mark Phillips / Andrew Farrow	Introduction to Astro Imaging Part 1 – basic imaging
3 Apr	Prof. Giles Hammond / Horst Meyerdierks	Longitude and clocks, Sky in April
8 Apr		Imaging Group
15 Apr	Mark Phillips / Andrew Farrow	Introduction to Astro Imaging Part 2 - stacking and EAA
17 Apr	Dr Anastasia Kokori, Dr Angelos Tsiaras	ExoClock and ARIEL Mission / Exoplanets and Citizen Science
24 Apr	Peter Black	Remote Robotic Astrophotography
29 Apr	Mark Phillips / Andrew Farrow	Introduction to Astro Imaging Part 3 - Lunar, planetary, solar video
1 May	Prof. Franz Muheim/ Horst Meyerdierks	Neutrinos / Sky in May
5 May	ASE Council	Council meeting
6 May		Imaging group
8 May	Tosh White	Ramblings of an astron*ut
13 May	Jim Nisbet	Reflections on Space flight
15 May	Dirk Froebrich	HOYS – Hunting Outbursting Young Stars - update
20 May	Clive Davenhall	Spaceship 1: Circling the Moon in 1941
22 May	Horst Meyerdierks / Andrew Farrow	All my telescopes / Scope Talks 1-3
27 May	Bruce Vickery	Speed of Light and other stellar effects
29 May	Prof. Andy Lawrence	Residence above the Clouds' screening to members only

3 Jun	Mark Phillips / Andrew Farrow	Introduction to astro-imaging part 4 – deep sky long exposure
5 Jun	Andrew Farrow /Aalan Pickup	Sky in June / Virtual Pub Quiz and Social
9 Jun	ASE Council	Council meeting
10 Jun		Imaging Group
12 Jun	Neil Martin/ John Murrell	ASE-24 scripts for Stellarium / Scope Talk John Murrell
17 Jun	Dr Hannah Wakeford	Exploring Alien Atmospheres
19 Jun	Jim Anderson	Celestial navigation at sea
24 Jun	Tosh White / Mike McGovern / Peter Black	Scope Talks No 5 & 6 / 'Shed Talk'
26 Jun	Bruce Vickery	James Bradley and others Fact Checked
1 July	Clive Davenhall / Horst Meyerdierks	The Lundmark Panorama/ Sky in July
3 July	Dr Rosa Santomartino	The BioRock Experiment
8 July		Imaging Group / Scope talk Ian Smith
10 July	Prof. Andy Lawrence	Things that go Bang in the night and Lasair ?
15 July	Bruce Vickery	Thomas Henderson first Astronomer Royal for Scotland
17 July	Prof David Waltham	Is Earth Special?
22 July	Dr Nour Raouafi	Parker Solar Probe
24 July	Mark Phillips	Introduction to Astro-imaging Part 5 - Imaging for science projects
31 July	Mark Phillips, Andrew Farrow	The sky in August, End of term round-up: "Astro Lounge"
12 Aug		Imaging Group
1 Sept	ASE Council	Council Meeting
4 Sept	Prof Duncan Lorimer / Alan Pickup	Fast Radio Bursts, Sky in September
9 Sept		Imaging & Observing Group
18 Sept	John Murrell	Gaia data release
24 Sept		Virtual Telescope Help Shop
26 Sept	Mark Phillips, Andrew Farrow	IOMN live stream from Mark Phillips' observatory
2 Oct	Sean Wixted, Andrew Farrow, Horst Meyerdierks	AGM, Andrew Farrow Talk, Sky in Oct
7 Oct		Imaging & Observing Group
16 Oct	Mark Phillips	Choosing a telescope
6 Nov	Prof. Andrew Coates	Looking for life on Mars with the Rosalind Franklin rover
11 Nov		Imaging & Observing Group
20 Nov	Dr Rebekah Higgitt	Edinburgh to Hawaii: the short astronomical career of John Walter Nichol
4 Dec	Prof. William Chaplin	Asteroseismology & Exoplanets with the NASA TESS Mission
9 Dec		Imaging & Observing Group
11 Dec	Andrew Farrow	Members only Christmas Quiz



4 Activities in 2020

The Coronavirus pandemic has greatly impacted the activities of the Society throughout 2020. From the imposition of restrictions on public meetings, gathering and travel in March 2020, all of the Society's physical meetings and activities were cancelled. All of the key annual events the Society would normally engage with, such as the Doors open Day at the Royal Observatory of Edinburgh and the National Air Show at the Museum of Flight were cancelled in 2020, owing to Coronavirus.

Instead, the Society moved all of its activity online. This included engagement with Members and online events.

On 18 February 2020 we hosted a Navigating the Night Sky event at the Royal Observatory Edinburgh, with Alan Pickup. About 100 people attended this. Presentations included tutorials on how to find our way around the night sky using 'signposts'.

On 29 February 2020, the Society hosted our second Telescope Help Shop at St Thomas's Church, Costorphine. Both were very successful events.

Unfortunately, other physical events, which had been planned for the rest of 2020, has to be postponed owing to COVID restrictions.



Financial Review

The Society had a reasonably large surplus of £875 at the end of 2020 and therefore did not need to request additional funds from the ASE Trust for 2020. Contributing to this surplus was the reduction in costs of physical meetings and physically based outreach events due to the Covid restrictions. We also have a credit with the AUC for meeting room hires booked in advance that had to be cancelled due to Covid. That credit of £388 will be used to offset the cost of future on-site meetings at the AUC.

The significant increase in annual subscription receipts resulted from both the rise in the subscription fee and the total membership numbers over the year and also the popularity of membership gift vouchers. Membership rose from 110 at the end of 2019 to 133 at the end of 2020; this may have been partly due to online meetings being easier to attend than those physically based for some members. The online format also allows for more frequent meetings and a wider range of speakers to be provided for little or no additional expense.

Declaration

The Society's trustees' annual report presented on pages 1 to 12 was approved by the Council of The Astronomical Society of Edinburgh (the trustees of the charity).

Andrew Farrow, President, 16 May 2021

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



ANNEX 1

Members of Council & functions January to October 2020

	Position	Name	Additional duties
Officers	President	Mr Andrew Farrow	
	Secretary	Mr Sean Wixted	
	Treasurer	Mr Alan Ellis	
	Vice President	Mr Peter Black	Society's representative on the Charles Piazzi Smyth 200th anniversary organising committee.
	Vice President	Mr Andrew Mackie	Society's liaison with various public bodies on the issue of light pollution in the Edinburgh area.
Council Members	Councillors	Mr David Archibald	Society liaison with Care for Carers charity
		Mr Carl Dennis	Guest speaker programme coordinator
		Dr. Geraldine Dennis	External events and branded products coordination
		Mr Jim Nisbet	Data protection coordinator
		Mr Mark Phillips	Webmaster and Head of IT support
		Mr Hugh Somerville	



ANNEX 1

Members of Council & functions October 2020 to June 2021

	Position	Name	Additional duties
Officers	President	Mr Andrew Farrow	
	Secretary	Mr Sean Wixted	
	Treasurer	Mr Alan Ellis	
	Vice President	Mr Peter Black	Chair of Workstream projects group
	Vice President	Mr Mark Phillips	Webmaster and Head of IT support, IOG coordinator
Council Members	Councillors	Mr Carl Dennis	Guest speaker programme co-ordinator
		Mr Will Joy	YouTube meetings host
		Mr Neil Martin	IOG host and coordinator
		Mr Jim Nisbet	Data protection coordinator
		Mr Ian Smith	IOG coordinator
		<i>Vacant</i>	



ANNEX 2

Astronomical Society of Edinburgh

Statement of Balances

	Notes	2020		2019	
		£	£	£	£
Bank Balances at start of year					
Current Account		6,498		6,288	
Total Balance at start			6,498		6,288
Plus Receipts		3,160		6,569	
Less liability for 2018	1a			-25	
Less liability for 2019	1b	-50			
Less Payments		-2,284		-6,335	
Total Balance at end			7,323		6,498
Bank Balances at end of year					
Current Account		7,323		6,498	
Total Balance at end			7,323		6,498
Assets and liabilities at end of 2019	1b				-50



ANNEX 2...

Income and expenditure report

	Notes	2020		2019	
		£	£	£	£
Income					
Donations					
ASE annual subscriptions	2	2,737		1,879	
Outreach Events	3	91		0	
Other donations		5		14	
Gift Aid		326		291	
Donations total			3,160		2,184
Grants					
ASE trust	4	0		2,000	
Grants total			0		2,000
Bank interest					
Current Account		0		0	
Bank interest total			0		0
Asset sales					
Lorimer Chairs	5	0		2,385	
Asset sales total			0		2,385
Income total			3,160		6,569



ANNEX 2...

Expenditure

Charitable activities				
Meeting expenses	6	1,550	1,245	
Memberships and affiliations	7	30	30	
Stamps		14	0	
Print and Mailing service	8	58	0	
Public liability insurance	9	28	28	
Member expenses		0	18	
ASE Events	10	0	116	
Publicity Items	11	0	483	
Zoom subscription	12	144	0	
Lorimer medal engraving	13	0	15	
Sponsorship	14	0	4,000	
Gifts	15	30	0	
Charitable activities total			1,854	5,935
Governance costs				
Independent examination		130	100	
Governance costs total			130	100
Asset purchase and upkeep				
Equipment		0	0	
Repairs and maintenance		0	0	
Storage rental	16	300	300	
Asset purchase and upkeep total			300	300
Expenditure total			2,284	6,335
Income minus expenditure			875	235



ANNEX 2...

Assets

	Notes	2020		2019	
		£	£	£	£
Library	17	7,700		7,700	
High-value books for disposal	17	11,000		11,000	
Low/medium-value books for dispos	17	12,000		12,000	
Artwork	18	3,900		3,900	
Telescopes etc., historic	19	2,300		2,300	
Telescopes etc., current		7,300		7,300	
IT equipment	20	300		300	
Educational equipment	21	5,200		5,200	
Assets total			49,700		49,700



ANNEX 2...

Notes to Accounts

1a There was a liability of £25 from a 2018 uncleared cheque 012121 for Imaging Group room hire which was not cleared until 2019. This appears in the expenditure for 2019.

1b There is a liability of £50 from a 2019 uncleared cheque 012145 for Imaging Group room hire which was not cleared until 2020. This appears in the expenditure for 2020.

2 Members subscriptions: direct £2,572, Gift vouchers purchased £165

3 Outreach events - attendance donations Navigating the night sky events £72, Telescope Help Shop £19

4 Lorimer Trust income from investment income on financial assets management by the ASE Trust. None was requested for 2020.

5 Sale of the 13 Lorimer chairs at auction (Lyon & Turnbull) 2019

6 Meeting expenses comprise of £1,059 Room Hire at the Augustine United Church, £50 for Imaging Group Room Hire, £44 Meeting Refreshments, £397 Speakers' expenses. Note also that AUC Room Hire is partially paid in advance and that credit for unused bookings due to Covid-19 will be carried over to next year.

7 Federation of Astronomical Societies annual membership

8 2020 AGM notices and annual report printed copies and mailing for non-email members.

9 Public Liability Insurance is with the Federation of Astronomical Societies

10 2019 ASE outreach events: Telescope Help Workshops hall hire x 2

11 2019 Publicity Items: Assorted posters for outreach events £54, "4-steps to the stars" PR material £216, Presentation mugs for guest speakers £213

12 Zoom annual subscription for virtual meetings 13 2019 Lorimer medal engraving for Ron Livesey presentation

14 2019 Sponsorship towards cost of 200th Anniversary of Charles Piazzi Smyth events

15 Thank you gift of flowers for Hilary Phillips



ANNEX 2...

16 Annual cost for storage at the Augustine United Church

17 The value of the books is listed as unchanged. The value is a very rough estimate, so that the sale of a few books from the low-value end has no significant impact on the overall estimate.

18 This figure estimates the value of the three remaining Lorimer Medals, a recently purchased blank medal from a US collector and of the President's Medal. The President's medal is considerably more valuable than originally assumed being made of 9ct gold and along with the presentation case is valued at £3,500. The Lorimer award medals are silver gilt and value estimated at £400 for the three remaining medals and the unassigned collector's Lorimer medal. Not included in the value are a number of large photographs, three science displays, and two 20th century water colour paintings of the City Observatory.

19 This includes estimated values of the modern instruments available to members, and of three historic telescopes.

20 The value is for the data projector purchased a few years ago. While our main venue provides data projectors, this is used regularly at other venues.

21 This figure is a rough estimate of the value of three globes plus the 1990s valuation for a "starfinder" instrument by Sir William Peck.

Declaration

The receipts and payments accounts presented on pages 15 to 18 were approved by the Council of The Astronomical Society of Edinburgh (the trustees of the charity).

Andrew Farrow, President, 16 May 2021

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



Independent examiner's report on the accounts

Report to the trustees/members of	The Astronomical Society of Edinburgh
Registered charity number	SC022968
On the accounts of the charity for the year ended	31st December 2020 which are set out on pages 15 to 20
Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner	<p>The charity's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the terms of the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005 ('the 2005 Act') and the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006 (as amended) (the '2006 Regulations'). The charity trustees consider that the audit requirement of Regulation 10(1) (d) of the Accounts Regulations does not apply. It is my responsibility to examine the accounts as required under section 44(1) (c) of the 2005 Act and to state whether particular matters have come to my attention.</p>
Basis of independent examiner's statement	<p>My examination is carried out in accordance with Regulation 11 of the 2006 Regulations. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts and seeks explanations from the trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit and, consequently, I do not express an audit opinion on the accounts.</p>

Independent examiner's statement

In the course of my examination, no matter has come to my attention:

1. which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements:

- to keep accounting records in accordance with section 44(1) (a) of the 2005 Act and Regulation 4 of the 2006 Accounts Regulations, and
- to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting record and comply with Regulation 9 of the 2006 Accounts Regulations,

have not been met, or

2. to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

Signed:



Date:

23rd May 2021

Name:

Helen Bourquin
Associate Member ACIE

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