




MEXBOROUGH & SWINTON ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

Annual Report & Statement of Accounts

For the year to 31 March 2017

Available online

 msas.org.uk/annual-reports/2017



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Annual Report for the year ended 31 March 2017

The trustees of Mexborough & Swinton Astronomical Society are pleased to submit their report and accounts for the period 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017.

Achievements and Performance

The Year in 5 Numbers

36	52	1,157	15	£4,864
Community Access and Outreach Events	Society meetings	Members of the public served	Guest Speakers	Surplus for the year

Meeting Programme

The meeting programme was again the backbone of our operations and a total of 52 meetings were provided, of these 17 were presented by visiting guest speakers and 35 were given by our own members. The topics covered included a wide range of both practical and theoretical astronomy and its associated sciences. Attendance at these meetings was 940 members and 124 visitors.

We would like to thank all our members for providing such a rich and varied programme and also thank our guest speakers: Dr Chris Arridge, Sue Cartwright, Dr Allan Chapman, Dr Ed Daw, Prof Clive Dickinson, Mike Frost, Prof Simon Goodwin, Neil Haggath, Dr Nick Hewitt, Dr Matthew Malek, Jost Migenda, Paul Money, James Mullaney, James Nightingale, and Marcus O'Flaherty.

BAA Back to Basics Workshop

On 11 March 2017 Mexborough & Swinton Astronomical Society had the pleasure of hosting a British Astronomical Association (BAA) "Back to Basics" Workshop at Swinton Masonic Hall, Swinton, South Yorkshire.

Booking had been slow but by the date of event the BAA had confirmation of 71 delegates. A group of members set up our displays, stage, and projector on Friday afternoon which was a great help.

The day began with Dr Jeremy Shears, President of the BAA, welcoming the delegates. The programme for the day consisted of:

- *What Astronomy Can I Do?* - Hazel Collett
- *What Equipment and Books Do I Need?* - Jeremy Shears
- *Lunar observing* - Bill Leatherbarrow
- *History of Mexborough and Swinton Astronomical Society* - Paul D'Silva
- *Planet Observing* - Mike Foulkes
- *Radio Astronomy* - Paul Hyde
- *Imaging for Beginners* - Tony Morris

A very good day was had by all who attended but, unfortunately, we did not attract the interest of any younger astronomers which is a shame. We were congratulated upon the friendly and helpful manner of our society members. We may even volunteer to host another workshop in the future.

We would also like to place on record our gratitude to Sarah Woodhouse of Swinton Masonic Hall for the excellent catering and thank the BAA for inviting us to partner with them to host this event.

Community Access & Outreach Programmes

The society's Community Access and Outreach programmes are vital tools in our work to promote astronomy and its associated sciences to a wider public and provide a showcase for the society's work. The programmes also play a key role in recruiting new members to the society.

Several outreach events took place at our local RSPB reserve, RSPB Old Moor. Three solar observing events took place on 12 June, 17 July, and 14 August. It is disappointing to report that support for these events by our members was very poor with only two members attending regularly; we also had very little interest from visitors to the RSPB. As a result of this we plan to run only one solar Sunday at RSPB Old Moor in the coming year.

Our evening events at RSPB Old Moor offer rather more positive news; two events took place on 8 October 2016 and 25 March 2017. The first of these attracted 60 visitors, despite cloudy conditions,

and was supported by 6 members of the society, the second saw attendance of 106 and 7 members. A third event planned for 14 January 2017 was cancelled due to an advertising error made by the RSPB.

Two outreach events were held at Thrybergh Country Park. A Solar Observing Super Hero Day took place on 28 June 2016; this proved a very busy day with hundreds of visitors on site, some 40 or so showed a serious interest keeping the ten members of the society who volunteered for the day quite busy.

“A Night under the Stars” on 10 September 2016 was rather poorly attended with only 6 visitors, we suspect this was due to the event falling on the same date as the Rotherham Show; also the event did not include a Bat Walk as Claire Moseley, the ranger, was unavailable.

On 17 September 2016 the society returned to Boston Castle for a day of solar viewing which proved very popular and was undoubtedly a success attracting 100 visitors of all ages. We had many positive comments at the end and a good time was had by all, weather was good with a reasonable amount of clear sky.

Two solar telescopes were set up and operated by Mike Collinson and Tony Hood, Phil Muffett was on the roof with two telescopes viewing the Rotherham area whilst Les Marsden gave a lecture on the solar system.

We returned to Clifton Park on 18 February 2017 for “Planets in the Park VI”. This featured our display and free literature, book sales, and 4 telescopes which were heavily used when the weather allowed with a few hours of clear skies. A couple of virtual planetarium presentations using Stellarium were given indoors to give our visitors a chance to warm up. 8 Members and family attended with assistance from the Friends of Clifton Park.

The event attracted around 60 visitors and many brought their own ‘scopes to get advice on how to set up and use them and this was provided by our members. Feedback from our visitors was very positive.

An outreach event took place at Parkgate Retail World on Monday 6 February and although atrocious weather prevented any real astronomy (or passing crowds) the society put on a good show with 5 telescopes and 7 club members.

Sadly, there were no events at Wentworth Castle this year.

We would like to thank the staff and volunteers at RSPB Old Moor, Thrybergh Country Park, Boston Castle, the Friends of Clifton Park, and Parkgate Retail World for their assistance and support, without them we could not deliver our outreach programme.

The Community Access programme provided a total of 23 events at the J.A. Jones Hooper Observatory and our Outreach programme provided 13 events, total attendance was 364 and 669 visitors respectively.

Neither of these programmes would be possible without our volunteers who staff them, we place on record our gratitude to them for their sustained contribution.

BBC Stargazing Live

BBC Stargazing Live returned in 2017 with the programmes focusing on the Milky Way, Saturn and the Exoplanets and why the night skies visible in the Northern & Southern skies are different.

Once again the BBC changed its criteria for Partner Events, at the time of writing they are only showing observing events on their website. Their acceptance criteria are the same as last year. Our Stargazing Live events were:

- 2 March - Dr James Mullaney: The Future of the Universe
- 3 March - Public Viewing Evening at the J.A. Jones Observatory
- 4 March - Public Viewing Evening at the J.A. Jones Observatory
- 16 March - Roy Gunson and Paul D’Silva: Jupiter Watch
- 23 March - Tony Morris: The Jeff Williams Memorial Lecture
- 25 March - Nature & The Night Sky outreach event at RSPB Old Moor
- 30 March - Mike Hall: Life Off Earth

Unfortunately, BBC cutbacks meant no free handout material was provided.

Observatory & Instruments

The observatory has been used on an almost weekly basis with the imaging group and planetary group using it on 40 separate occasions, either imaging or as space for image processing meetings. In addition to this there have been a number of members using the observatory telescopes and grounds for their own imaging or observing projects. The observatory was used to observe the transit of Mercury on the 9 May 2016. A small group also used the observatory for the Perseid meteor shower during August 2016

There have also been a large number of visitors to the observatory so the general cleaning and upkeep demand has been high once again this year.

This year has seen a number of enhancements to the observatory equipment.

The C14 has had its optical elements cleaned and re-collimated by Orion Optics UK. The mirror and corrector plate surfaces were returned to "like new". We have also purchased a dew shield for the C14 in an attempt to stop the front collector plate from dewing up. The dew shield may provide a little more image contrast due to cutting down on the light pollution impinging on the front corrector plate.

The TOA130 has now got a 7:1 focus knob fitted to aid critical focussing. A new solar filter has been purchased for the TOA 130 as the original filter is showing signs of degradation.

The computer that controls the paramount has been upgraded and we have also upgraded the paramount control software from the Sky 6 to the Sky X with T Point. The Sky X is more powerful than the older software, upgrades are now subscription based. The Sky X allows for extra modules to give greater capabilities; these can be purchased from Software Bisque if required. A small GPS module has been fitted to keep the PC clock accurate, but some teething problems have been found and, at the time of writing, need to be resolved. The paramount has been serviced and lubricated.

The Vixen GP-DX mount was accidentally knocked over and needs some new parts. The parts have been designed and will be made by the Curator of Instruments. This highlighted the issue that all user of the observatory need to take care in putting equipment back in a safe place and that all users should be cognisant to their surroundings. The observatory dome has been repainted. The grounds have been kept tidy and the trees have been well trimmed by the usual volunteers.

This year has seen one set of observatory keys returned the member asked for the return of the deposit for the keys.

Messenger

The society published 11 issues of its monthly newsletter during the year, with the months of December 2016 and January 2017 being combined in to a single "Christmas" edition. The Messenger is edited by Roy Gunson and we are grateful to Roy his efforts.

Main articles have provided a variety of subjects such as, Norman Lockyer, Thornborough Henge, Urania's Mirror, Mary Ward, and the end of Philae. Regular contributors include our Chairman, Les Marsden and Mike Hall with his monthly "Skynopsis" report.

Land Purchase

As we reported in our Annual Report & Statement of Accounts for the Year Ended 31 March 2016 Yorkshire Water Services Ltd., owners of the land on which the observatory is situated, had offered to sell that land to the society – this offer was made whilst discussing our observatory extension plans

This opportunity was pursued by the trustees and several months of negotiation took place to clarify the boundary of the land for sale and agree a price. The purchase was completed on 25 January 2017 for a total cost, including legal fees, of £1,250 and Land registry fees of £40.

Project Aquarius

The Aquarius Project has been running throughout the year; the project's task is to provide running water, a toilet with disabled access and a 5 metre by 5 metre work room at the J. A. Jones Observatory. The project group has had seven meetings over the year and have finalised the plans for the work and the choice of water supply and waste management.

The main milestone achieved is the purchase of the land; this is a major outcome for the project even though it was unforeseen when we started.

Planning permission has been sought and granted and, after much work, Building Regulation approval has also been sought and obtained. This will set the clock running and we must 'break ground' by the end of April 2019 if we are to avoid further planning fees. The next task to produce set of detailed designs and re-cost the project; this task has been undertaken by Les Marsden.

Fundraising remains a major difficulty. Although we are raising funds through our outreach activities and have had promises of help in kind we still need to raise the majority of the £35,000 needed (note this is an approximate cost subject to the re-costing mentioned above). We have made many grant applications as yet with no success although we have been asked to re-apply by several would be supporters when the project is closer to completion.

Membership

At 31 March 2017 membership of the society was 41; the society has accepted 4 new members in the year and we extend a warm welcome to them.

It is with sadness that we record the passing of our good friend and long-standing member, Jeff Williams and offer our condolences to Jeff's widow, Janet. Jeff had been a great supporter of the society for many years and it is typical of his generosity that he made a bequest of £5,000 to the society. Thank you Jeff, we will miss you.

Solstice Dinner

The "Solstice Dinner" was held on 17 June 2016 at the Rockingham public house at Wentworth. We had 40 attendees and the main speaker was our President and Patron, Dr Alan Chapman. The event was primarily intended to break even and in the end a small surplus of £29.29 was made.

It was decided to go for a second "Solstice Dinner" in 2017, in the hope that this may become an annual event. In view of some issues at the Rockingham a new venue for 2017 has been selected: Rotherham Golf Club, Thrybergh

Accommodation

In our report for the year ended 31 March 2013 we identified as a major risk the long-term future of our accommodation at Swinton Working Men's Club which is owned and operated by Swinton Bottom Club Ltd. A number of alternatives have been investigated but none, to date, has offered quality, dedicated alternative accommodation.

Financial Review

Financial Performance

Financial performance in the year to 31 March 2017 has been broadly consistent with the trustee's forecasts and expectations; a surplus of income over expenditure of £4,864 was achieved for the year compared to £2,268 in the year to 31 March 2016.

The year ended with a general (and sole) fund balance of £30,923 (compared £26,059 for the same date last year). Detailed accounts can be found on page 9.

Income

Figure 1 compares income in the year to 31 March 2017 with the previous year.

Overall income receipts for the year totalled £11,408 – a marked increase on the previous year which is explained by the Jeff Williams bequest.

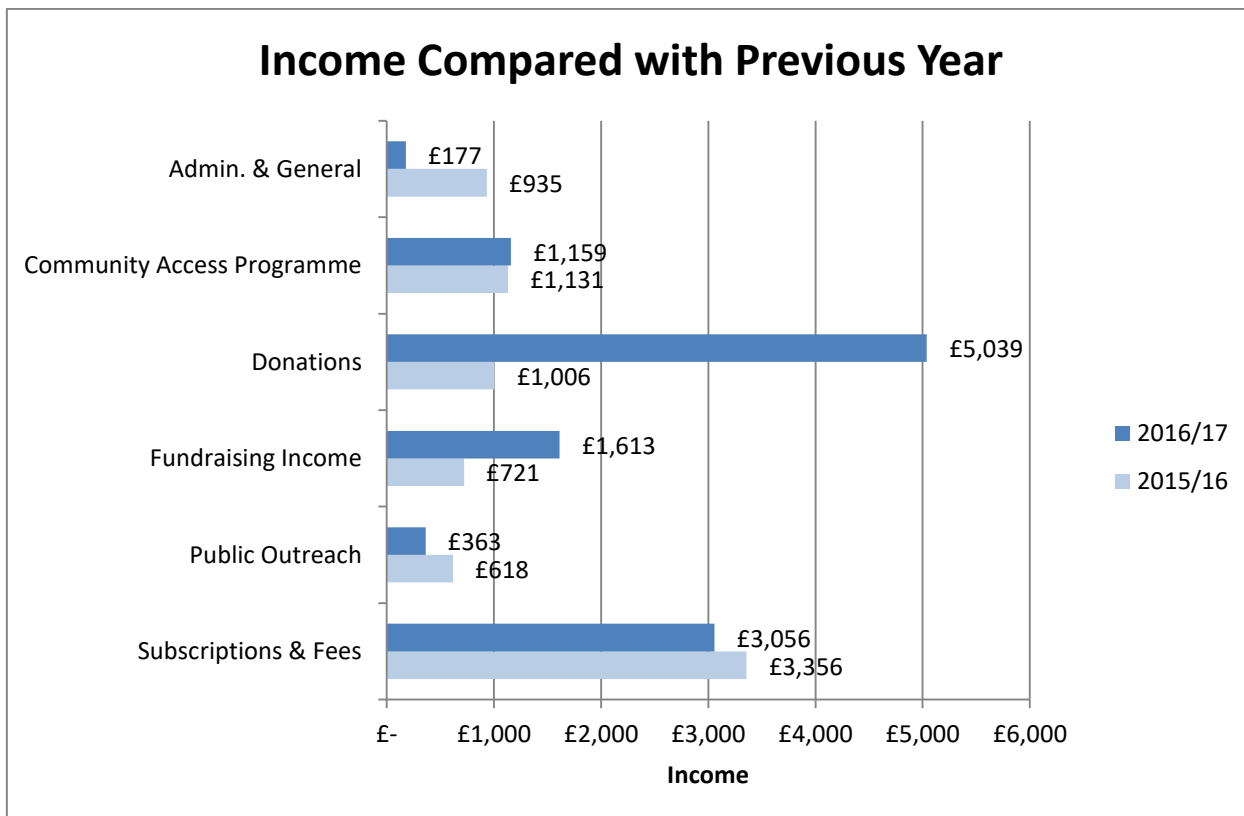


Figure 1 Comparison of Income with Previous Year

Administrative & General (2% of income) has, on first inspection, decreased but it should be noted that the previous year figure includes an income of £750 from the disposal of surplus assets (the 18" mirror from the old telescope). Excluding this sale would bring the two years figures much closer with the remaining slight difference, a drop of £8, being due to lower bank interest rates.

The Community Access Programme at the J.A. Jones Hooper Observatory has generated 10% income, totalling of £1,159, this is a broadly similar value to the previous year.

Our Public Outreach activities accounted for 3% of income at £363 compared to £618 for the previous year. This significant decrease is due in part to fewer events being provided in the year to 31 March 2017 and also that income from one RSPB Old Moor event (25 March 2017) will not be received in the period covered by these accounts.

Donations (44% of income) show a significant rise due to the legacy of £5,000 left to the society by Jeff Williams.

Fundraising Income (14% of total income) for the year to 31 March 2017 was £1,613 (£721). The year-on-year variation is due to a number of factors: a number of prize draws on guest speaker evenings, the loose change collection, and income from Amazon and Easyfundraising affiliate programmes.

Finally, our primary source of income, Subscriptions and Fees (27% of income) shows a reduction due to decreased membership in the earlier part of the year though this is showing some recovery at the date of this report. The figures here also include £465 received before 31 March 2017 in subscription payments for the year commencing 1 April 2017.

Once advance payment subscriptions are removed, subscription income for the year is £2,591 – this covers the “core” expenditure items of Observatory Operating Costs, Subscriptions, Meeting Room, and Admin & General expenses which together total £2,430; the goal of covering core operating costs from subscription income has been met for the year to 31 March 2017.

Expenditure

Expenditure for the year totalled £6,544 – an increase of 19% on the previous year (£5,497) and this is illustrated in Figure 2.

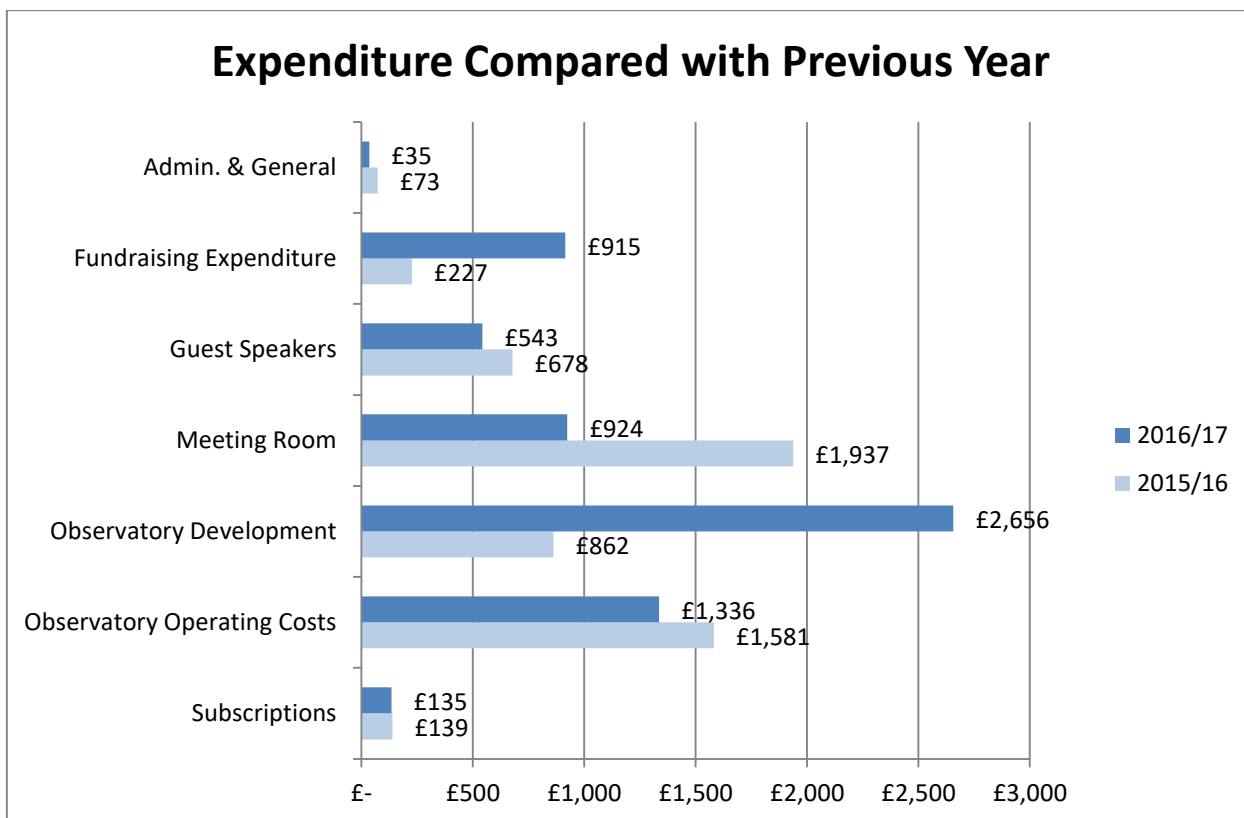


Figure 2 Comparison of Expenditure with Previous Year

Administrative & General expenditure (1% of total) for the year to 31 March 2017 was £35 compared to £73 for the previous year. The increased use of email for distribution of notices etc. has largely accounted for this reduction, the expenditure in the year to 31 March 2017 is the annual registration fee paid to the Information Commissioners Office.

Fundraising expenditure (14%) shows a marked increase to £915, this includes final payment for the Solstice Dinner of £736 however this is actually offset by fees paid for this event by members.

Guest Speaker expenses (8% of total expenditure) totalled £543 compared to £678 in the year to 31 March 2016; however, 14 guest speakers visited to society in each year. The variation is due to some speakers generously not charging the society and the different distances speakers have to travel; as such this expenditure category is expected to show variance year-on-year.

Meeting Room expenditure (14%) is broadly similar to the previous year once the previous year purchase of a data projector (£1,037) is excluded. The total is then mostly rent paid to Swinton Bottom Club (SBC) Ltd. of £900 and minor purchases.

Observatory Development expenditure for the year to 31 March 2017 was £2,656 (41% of total) compared to £862 for the previous year. The year to 31 March 2017 includes the purchase of the observatory land and its registration with the Land Registry at £1,290, a £240 planning application fee for the observatory extension, and £310 for software upgrades.

Observatory operating expenditure accounted for 20% of all expenditure in the year to 31 March 2017 with £1,336 (£1,581 in the previous year). The variation is largely due to changing electricity supplier at the observatory reducing month payments from £49 to £8.

It should be noted that the premium for the society's main insurance policy (£840) is reported as an observatory expense as historically this was the case; the current policy replaced an earlier building and contents only policy for the observatory and the attribution has been retained for comparison purposes. The current policy covers a wider range of charitable activities and employers and public liability; however, the premium is not broken down by our provider.

Subscription expenditure (2% of total, £135) for the year has barely changed.

The society benefits greatly from members and supporters who work on our development projects on a voluntary basis which further help reduce costs.

Gifts and Support in Kind

In assessing the finances and assets of the society it must be noted that many members and trustees give a great deal of support in kind. Many purchases are made and the payment never claimed back; for example, printing and postage costs, stall fees at events, and web hosting have all been paid for by members but the cost not claimed despite such a claim being perfectly legitimate.

Members also give generously of their time; without the many hours given to preparing and delivering talks, running community access and outreach events, and managing the society its growth and success could not be achieved.

We undertook an analysis of the time which trustees and members give to the society to support our Community Access and Outreach programmes, preparing and delivering presentations, and on trustee and officer duties. The total exceeds 4,500 hours which equates to £32,400 at National Minimum Wage rates of April 2016 of £7.20 per hour. The value of this time to the Society is, of course, much greater.

The trustees wish to place on record their recognition of and gratitude for all these contributions.

Funds Materially in Deficit

As at 31 March 2017 the Society had no funds in material deficit.

Major Risks

In our Annual Report and Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2014 we identified a single major risk relating to our accommodation at Swinton Bottom Club. The club had been reporting year-on-year losses which cannot be sustained indefinitely. We are gravely concerned that the latest set of accounts available from Swinton Bottom Club show a loss; it must be recognized that Swinton Bottom Club Ltd. are operating in a very difficult market and the ongoing use of our rented accommodation must therefore continue to be considered a major risk to the society.

Financial Management and Reserves Policies

The Society has a Financial Management Policy which meets the requirements of the Charities Act 2011, the Charity Commission guidelines "Internal Financial Controls for Charities" and "Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice (Revised 2005)".

The General Fund is unrestricted and is used for the day-to-day operation of the Society.

The New Horizons restricted fund was closed on 31 March 2012 as we reported in our Annual Report and Statement of Accounts of that date; the society is currently operating with no restricted funds.

The Society operates with an unrestricted reserve at a level set by the trustees; currently this is £4,500 which equated to approximately 18 months running costs. The reserve is held to allow the Society to offset fluctuations in income receipts and to provide for contingencies.

Reserves are held without any exposure to the stock market.

At 31 March 2017 the General Fund had a balance £30,923 (compared to £26,059 at the same date last year).

Whilst the current unrestricted fund level is above the reserve we feel it is prudent in the current economic climate; maintaining a substantial reserve will better allow the Society to meet the funding challenges which the wider economic situation may impose. We also note that securing external

funding is becoming increasingly difficult as sponsors and grant making bodies are forced to address their own funding issues. We are also mindful that the long-term future of Swinton Bottom Club Ltd. is difficult to guarantee and that we must be prepared to seek alternative accommodation, possibly at short notice, should our current venue cease to be available.

We have also attained our long standing goal of member subscriptions meeting core operating costs, something we have been working towards for a number of years. No increase in subscription rates is to take place in the year commencing 1 April 2017 and the committee are recommending that subscription rates are held for the year commencing 1 April 2018.

Approved and adopted by a meeting of the Executive Committee on 10 May 2017 and signed on their behalf,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L H Marsden', with a horizontal line underneath.

Leslie H. Marsden FRAS
Chairman

Accounts for the Year ended 31 March 2017

Receipts & Payments Account

	Unrestricted Funds to nearest £	Restricted Funds to nearest £	Total Funds to nearest £	Last Year to nearest £
Receipts				
Admin. & General	177	-	177	935
Community Access Programme	1,159	-	1,159	1,131
Donations	5,039	-	5,039	1,006
Fundraising Income	1,613	-	1,613	721
Public Outreach	363	-	363	618
Subscriptions & Fees	3,056	-	3,056	3,356
Total Receipts	11,408	-	11,408	7,766
Payments				
Admin. & General	35	-	35	73
Fundraising Expenditure	915	-	915	227
Guest Speakers	543	-	543	678
Meeting Room	924	-	924	1,937
Observatory Development	2,656	-	2,656	862
Observatory Operating Costs	1,336	-	1,336	1,581
Subscriptions	135	-	135	139
Total Payments	6,544	-	6,544	5,497
Net of receipts/(payments)	4,864	-	2,268	2,268
Transfers between funds	-	-	-	-
Cash funds last year end	26,509	-	23,790	23,790
Cash funds this year end	30,923	-	30,923	26,059

Statement of Assets and Liabilities

Cash Assets

	Unrestricted Funds to nearest £	Restricted Funds to nearest £	Total Funds to nearest £
NatWest Current	7,088	-	7,088
<i>Add: Cheques not cleared at bank</i>	40	-	40
NatWest Savings	3,602	-	3,602
NatWest Transfer Account	-	-	-
Virgin Charity Account	20,270	-	20,270
Petty Cash	2	-	2
PayPal	-	-	-
Total Cash Funds	31,123	-	31,123

Other Assets held for functional use

All assets shown belong to the Unrestricted (General) Fund

Observatory building and members' key sets.	54,600
Observatory Land (purchased 2017)	250
Paramount ME Robotic Telescope System	6,850
Takahashi TOA 130 wide-field telescope	3,710
Celestron C14 Schmidt-Cassegrain telescope	3,500
Focuser TCF-3 w/ Paramount Wiring Kit	1,400
Takahashi 50mm Eyepiece	355
Takahashi 2" Diagonal	300
Takahashi 2" Diagonal	300
2x Personal Computers	1,000
Data Projector – Observatory Use	799
Data Projector – Outreach Use	400
Solar Max Telescope (purchased June 2003)	
H-alpha filter	3,154
Williams Optics 80mm Zenithstar 2	648
Eyepiece set for Solar Max	246
Orion optics field tripod	289
GPDx Mount	695
Sky Sensor 2000	859
Dovetail plate and counterweight	54
Meeting Room (Rented) Contents	
Optoma EH415e Video Projector & accessories (purchased 2016)	1,037
Phillips Data Projector (purchased 2000)	3,500
Overhead projector (purchased 1996)	300
Kodak Slide Projector (purchased 1996)	1,300
Panasonic AG7350 SVHS video recorder (s/h price)	1,000
DVD Player	60
Amplifier	20
Furnishings (purchased 1999)	500
Library	
Books, DVDs, videos, CD-ROMs; all in good condition (items of varying age)	2,600
Telescope 76.2 1250mm + 3 eyepieces & tripod	100
Tasco Refractor Telescope (9TE-5)	50
Dell Remote control keyboard	30
Meade LXD 55F/U 5" Refractor Telescope	150
Canon EOS 350D Digital SLR Camera	200
Sale Items for Fundraising	
Books – assorted stock	220
Phil Turner Legacy	
Telescope – 14 inch Dobsonian	1,600
Telescope – 5" Celestron "Go to" Telescope	700
Telescope – Coronado PST 40mm	479
Telescope – Orion Optics 5" Reflecting Telescope	300
Binoculars – Helios	200
Assorted Eyepieces, filters and tripods (no item over £75)	450
	94,205

Notes to the Accounts

Restricted Funds

The society is currently operating with no restricted funds.

Trustees' Expenses

No expenses were paid to any of the Trustees during the year except to reimburse them for purchases made on behalf of the Society.

Trustees' Indemnity Insurance

No charitable funds have been used to purchase insurance to indemnify the Trustees against the consequences of any neglect or default on their part.

Accounting Policies

Section 133 of the Charities Act 2011 permits a charity to prepare a receipts and payments account and a statement of assets and liabilities where gross income in the financial year does not exceed £250,000, therefore receipts and payments accounts and a statement of assets and liabilities has been prepared and presented for the year ended 31 March 2017; this is consistent with previous years.

Bank Interest is included in the Admin & General category.

All Income, including grants and investment income is recorded when received.

All Expenditure is recorded when paid.

Gift aid reclaimable on donations is included in the amounts of income once received.

Basis of Valuations

Valuations have been provided for assets held for functional use; where possible the brand new purchase price/replacement cost is given. If this is not readily available a second-hand purchase price is given.

Independent Scrutiny

In the year ended 31 March 2017 gross income did not exceed £25,000 and therefore, in accordance with the sections 144 & 145 of the Charities Act 2011 no audit or independent examination is required and no such scrutiny requirement is imposed by the Society's governing document.

Cheques not cleared at bank at 31 March 2017

At 31 March 2017 there was one (1) cheque, with a value of £40, issued by the society which had not cleared at the bank.

For comparison, at 31 March 2016 there were no cheques issued by the society which had not cleared at the bank.

Approved and adopted at a meeting of the Executive Committee on 10 May 2017 and signed on their behalf.



Leslie H. Marsden FRAS
Chairman

Reference and Administrative Details

Charity Name

The Mexborough & Swinton Astronomical Society which is also known as MSAS.

Charity Number

Registered Charity in England & Wales, N°.1064103

Principal Address

147 Queen Street
Swinton
Mexborough
South Yorkshire
S64 8NG

Charity Trustees as of 31 March 2017

Mr Leslie Holmes Marsden	<i>Chairman</i>
Mr Shaun O'Dell	<i>Secretary</i>
Mr Michael Kerry Collinson	<i>Treasurer</i>
Mr Roy Gunson	<i>Deputy Chair</i>
Mr Paul D'Silva	<i>Fundraising Officer</i>
Mr Glenn Michael John Marsden	<i>IT Officer</i>
Mr Anthony John Morris	<i>Curator of Instruments & Observatory</i>
Mr Stephen Taylor	<i>Programme Co-ordinator</i>
Mr Andrew Kirton-Vaughn	<i>Observations Officer</i>
Mr Philip John Muffett	<i>Committee Members</i>
Mr Alan Birch	

Other Charity Trustees in the year to 31 March 2017

Mr Michael John Waterfield	<i>Resigned from office 1 January 2017</i>
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Patrons as of 31 March 2017

Dr Allan Chapman	<i>Patron & Honorary President</i>
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Advisors

Banking	National Westminster Bank PLC. Bank Street Mexborough South Yorkshire S64 9QE	Virgin Money Jubilee House Gosforth Newcastle upon Tyne NE3 4PL
Insurance Broker and Underwriter	Access Insurance Services 50 Chapel View South Croydon Surrey CR2 7LF	Ansvar Insurance Company Ltd. Ansvar House St. Leonards Road Eastbourne East Sussex BN21 3UR

Structure, Governance, and Management

Governing Document and Constitution



The Society is an unincorporated association and is governed by a constitution adopted August 1996 and last amended 23 May 2013; this is available at from our website at msas.org.uk/about/constitution-and-rules.

The Society is run entirely by its members who pay an annual membership subscription and are not eligible for reimbursement of any out-of-pocket expenses. As of 31 March 2017 the Society had a membership of 41.

Trustee Selection and Management

The Society is managed by an Executive Committee which consists of all the appointed trustees. A number of the trustees also hold offices within the society, for example the Curator of Instruments and Observatory. These officers are noted in the list of current trustees above.

The Executive Committee meets typically once per month; in the year to 31 March 2017 a total of 12 formal meetings took place.

At each meeting the Treasurer presents the latest accounts and these are reviewed against budgets and forecasts; spending is discussed and approved. Officers may authorise some spending, between meetings, within set limits but must ensure such spending is reported at the next meeting.

The meetings also offer a forum to review recent activities within our programme and to plan forthcoming events. Correspondence and applications for membership received are considered; in addition, officers report on their areas of responsibility. Further *ad hoc* meetings are called if required, for example to plan and manage special events or projects.

The Annual Report and Statement of Accounts are approved by the trustees and then presented to the members at the Annual General Meeting.

Related Organisations



The Society is a member of the Federation of Astronomical Societies (FAS), a national body established to promote co-operation between astronomical societies and provide information and advice to its members; for further information, see the FAS website www.fedastro.org.uk/fas.

A trustee of Mexborough & Swinton Astronomical Society, Shaun O'Dell, has in the year to 31 March 2017 served on the Council of the FAS as Secretary. All FAS Council members are drawn from the Federation's member societies.

The Society made a subscription payment to the FAS of £25 in the year and also purchased additional Public Liability Insurance, to cover events held away from the Observatory and meeting room, as part of a group scheme at a cost of £28.

The Society's meeting room is a rented room in the Swinton Bottom Club Ltd. (formerly Swinton Working Men's Club & Institute). It is a requirement our tenancy that all adult members of the society must be members of the Swinton Bottom Club, this is managed by the society and subscription payments totalling £68 were made in the year, in addition room rent was paid in the amount of £900.

Objectives and Activities

Charitable Objects

The object of the Society as set out in our Constitution is the advancement of education for the public benefit in astronomy and its associated sciences.

The Society aims to promote astronomy as a recreational activity for its own sake but also aims to promoted public awareness and understanding of science and the scientific method. A scientifically literate community is, in our view vital, in the modern world.

Public Benefit Statement

The trustees of Mexborough & Swinton Astronomical Society confirm that they have complied with their duty under section 17 (5) of the Charities Act 2011 to have regard to the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit and that the public benefit requirement has informed the activities of the Society in the year to 31 March 2017.

In evaluating public benefit, the trustees note that membership of the society is open to all who share an interest in astronomy and its associated sciences. Whilst we would encourage those with interest to join our ranks we also strive to make our services and facilities available to non-members and ensure that restrictions placed on that availability are both necessary and reasonable. Our meeting programme for example is open to all whilst public access to the observatory or solar telescope is only available when supervised by the society; this is to protect both our assets and public safety. A society member, once suitably trained, may choose to use the observatory at any time.

Summary of Main Activities

The core activities of the Society are:

- Delivery of a weekly meeting programme covering a wide range of astronomical topics
- Developing and maintaining the J.A. Jones Hooper Observatory
- Offering a Community Access Programme at the observatory
- Providing an Outreach Programme within the local area
- Offering support and advice to the public on matters related to astronomy

Our philosophy is to offer access to all regardless of personal circumstances, race, gender, ability, or faith. The Society operates mainly in South Yorkshire however visitors from further afield are always welcome. The programme of weekly meetings is open to all, although disabled access to our meeting room is sadly limited.

Our Community Access Programme opens the J.A. Jones Hooper Observatory to give supervised access to the general public and to organised groups such as schools, Scouts, and Round Table. Disabled access to the observatory is limited as the telescopes are on the first floor however we do have facilities to take portable instruments outside to visitors who are unable to access the building.

With our Outreach activities we take solar telescopes out to fetes and galas or to public spaces such as country parks. In recent years we have increasingly worked in partnership with other organisations and venues in our community, this helps us to reach a wider audience.

Fees are charged for these services but these are kept at a low level, concession rates do not apply as the full fee is small and the administrative overheads of concession rates would be disproportionate.

Approved and adopted at a meeting of the Executive Committee on 10 May 2017 and signed on their behalf



Leslie H. Marsden FRAS
Chairman