




# **MEXBOROUGH & SWINTON ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY**

## **Annual Report & Statement of Accounts**

For the year to March 31<sup>st</sup> 2014

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 [msas.org.uk/annual-reports/2014](https://msas.org.uk/annual-reports/2014)





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## Annual Report for the year ended March 31<sup>st</sup> 2014

The Trustees of Mexborough & Swinton Astronomical Society are pleased to submit their report and accounts for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014.

May 2013 marked the 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the formation of the society and we reflect with pride on what has been achieved in this 35<sup>th</sup> year and how the society continues to grow and develop.

### **Achievements and Performance**

#### **The Year in 7 Numbers**

35 <sup>th</sup>	34	54	681	6 <sup>th</sup>	£3,112	1
Year Promoting Astronomy	Community Access and Outreach Events	Society meetings	Members of the public served	Year COFRA finalist	Surplus for the year	National Charity conference

#### **BBC Stargazing Live**

The BBC's Stargazing Live series returned for a fourth series in January 2014 and the society once again participated in this popular and worthwhile event providing 16 events across our Community Access, Outreach, and Meeting Programmes in January and February 2014. In summary the added public interest generated by the Stargazing Live broadcasts combined with a very active programme resulted in a successful fourth year of Stargazing Live for the society.



All the society's events were published on the *BBC Things To Do* web site (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/thingstodo>), the clubbz.com events listing site, FAS website Society Events page (<http://fedastro.org.uk/fas/society-events>) and the BBC Sky at Night magazine What's On page (<http://www.skyatnightmagazine.com/whats-on>) as well as local radio and press.

Much of our weekly meeting programme for the two-month Stargazing Live period was given over to events under the Stargazing Live banner. The programme commenced on the 3<sup>rd</sup> January when Trevor Worrall, our Observations Officer, gave the regular quarterly observing update as he told us what to look out for in the Night Sky. January 9<sup>th</sup> saw Paul D'Silva heading up our Astro Clinic for our members and the public alike. Everyone who sought our assistance and advice was aided by our panel of experienced and knowledgeable members and all the problems put before us were resolved. We intend to offer several Astro Clinic style meetings throughout the year. As a society we always seek new ways to assist the public and our members to get started or get the most out of their interest in astronomy and to promote hands-on practical participation so were very pleased to present our Astro Clinic to coincide with Stargazing Live. January 16<sup>th</sup> we had our first guest speaker of the year David Adshead talking about Astrophotography. The following week we listened to Phil Muffett whose subject was An Old Spyglass. January was rounded off with the 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Imaging Competition on the 30<sup>th</sup>; this year saw several new entrants participate, Trevor Worrall being the deserving winner, with an excellent set of images.

Our member Steve Taylor opened our February meetings with his talk about Celestial Navigation. Saturday 8<sup>th</sup>, a venue visit, was our visit to Wentworth Castle Stainborough which drew a good number of visitors. Wanting to 'touch base' again we went 'Back to Basics' with our member Paul D'Silva 13<sup>th</sup> of the month. The guest speaker for February was the very well-known and first class speaker Paul Money, his subject was 'Ice Worlds of the Solar System'. We had another venue visit in the month to Clifton Park Gardens which was a success yet again. Our last member speaker for the month was our Observations Officer Trevor Worrall telling us what to look out for in The Spring Sky.

Our Stargazing Live meeting programme was very busy with three guest speakers: David Adshead talking on Astrophotography who visited January 14<sup>th</sup>. Our second guest speaker was our old friend Paul Money who entertained us with his very well informed subject of Ice Worlds of The Solar System. The final event of our Stargazing Live programme on February 28<sup>th</sup> saw our Honorary President and Patron Dr Allan Chapman of Wadham College, Oxford conclude the month and our Star Gazing Live programme when he gave an enthralling talk on Johannes Kepler.

In addition to our meeting programme four Community Access Programme events took place at the J.A. Jones Hooper Observatory over the period. The first followed our meeting of January 2<sup>nd</sup> at which our Observations Officer informed us on what the night sky held for us at the beginning of the year when meteor showers were discussed; allowed visitors to observe the Quadrantids Meteor shower on Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> which was quite busy this year. The visitors enjoyed it enormously even though we had gone into the early hours of Saturday morning.

Our Outreach Programme also made a huge contribution to our Stargazing Live efforts. On Saturday, January 11<sup>th</sup> we were at RSPB Old Moor Nature Reserve and we undertook an event at Wentworth Castle, Stainborough on Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> February. Another venue visit was at Clifton Park Gardens in Rotherham Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> February. All events were very well attended.

From Monday 6<sup>th</sup> January to Friday 7<sup>th</sup> of February the Society provided an outreach display of Astronomical Photography and Space Artefacts at the Riverside Library, Rotherham and, on Wednesday the 29<sup>th</sup> January Tony Morris gave a talk at the Riverside Library on Basic Astro Photography. 31 visitors attended. From the feedback received the exhibition and talk proved to a successful venture. We are pleased to pass on our grateful thanks to RMBC and particularly the library staff who were extremely helpful throughout the whole exhibition.

Should the BBC commission a fifth series of Stargazing Live in we would strongly recommend more notice be given to allow for planning and scheduling of events. We would also encourage greater promotion of local events through the BBC channels.

### **National Astronomy Week**

National Astronomy Week made a welcome return to the calendar after more than a decade's absence; National Astronomy Week (NAW) 2014 was organised to celebrate Jupiter, the largest planet in the Solar System. Jupiter reached its highest point in the sky for many years in early March 2014. NAW ran between 1<sup>st</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> March 2014 when an array of fascinating celestial objects were gathered in the night sky. Throughout the week, astronomical organisations and societies all over the UK held a host of special observing events open to the public.

The society was of course fully committed to supporting NAW and our meeting that week on Thursday, March 6<sup>th</sup> featured a talk entitled Observing Jupiter by Roy Gunson. This was followed on Friday 7<sup>th</sup> by a Community Access event at the J.A. Jones Hooper Observatory and finally it was the turn of our Outreach programme when we returned to RSPB Old Moor Reserve for "Nature & Nebulae" on Saturday, March 8<sup>th</sup>.

A grant of £50 was made to the society by the Federation of Astronomical Societies (<http://www.fedastro.org.uk/fas>) to support National Astronomy Week events.

### **Community Access Programme & Outreach**

In addition to the events described above held under the BBC Stargazing Live and National Astronomy Week banners the society has delivered its normal Community Access and Outreach programmes throughout the year, there has been a slight shift in balance between the two programmes however.

The demand from our Outreach partners, such as RSPB Old Moor Reserve and Wentworth Castle, has been increasing and we have found it difficult to fulfil these requests and run our typical 2 or 3 events per month at the J.A. Jones Hooper Observatory as part of our Community Access Programme. In view of the larger audiences which can be accommodated at our partner sites, and the greater potential reach derived by using their existing communication and marketing channels we have chosen to support these opportunities and reciprocally reduce our observatory based Community Access commitments. We anticipate this model continuing unless additional volunteers can be drawn from our membership to support additional events.

The society has provided a total of 12 Outreach events including those described as part of our BBC Stargazing Live and National Astronomy Week efforts; total attendance at these events in the year was 348.

The society visited the RSPB reserve on two Sundays during the summer to show members of the public the Sun through specialist equipment and offer a short presentation on the Sun, our nearest star. Liane Holdsworth Visitor Experience Officer at RSPB Old Moor nature reserve said of our partnership:

“Gazing at the skies over RSPB Old Moor is a treat in more ways than one when staff at the reserve join together with MSAS to show people the birds and the stars.

We started working together in 2010 just pre-empting the BBC’s Stargazing Live programmes when we first met to discuss holding an astronomy event at the reserve. Since that first meeting there have been 6 open public events, 2 smaller exclusive events and numerous solar gazing events and in total around 2,000 people have been introduced to the world of astronomy through our efforts.

The two societies work together like a well-oiled machine on event nights.

RSPB Old Moor were the first RSPB reserve to hold a stargazing event but it became so popular and well known throughout the [RSPB] that many other reserves have asked for advice and put on their own event.

Working with MSAS remains a highlight of our event calendar. The astronomers are exceptionally good with our visitors and are praised in feedback for their helpfulness and willingness to share their immense knowledge. They are a pleasure for our staff and volunteers to work with and seldom do we have such confidence in the many partners that we work with as we do with MSAS.”

Staff at Thrybergh Country Park again asked the society to put on a public event to show the autumn skies and “A Night under the Stars” was held on 21<sup>st</sup> September 2013. Thrybergh Country Park is owned and run by Rotherham Council and is situated in a semi-rural location on the outskirts of Rotherham, it has a lodge with a large south facing grassed area in a relatively light pollution free area. The public (some 50 visitors) were given the opportunity to use six telescopes to observe the Moon, Andromeda and various Nebulae and star clusters. The International Space Station kindly passed overhead on the evening and when we explained how this orbiting phenomenon passes across the sky every 92 minutes or so they were flabbergasted.

The event also featured lectures on the Solar System, we also gave advice on how to set up and use telescopes to several members of the public; we have found the offer of this practical “hands on” advice has been welcomed and valued by our visitors.

We held a joint event at Wentworth Castle was “Stargazing at Stainborough” on Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> December 2013. This event included seven telescopes for use by the visiting public with guidance from our members and there were presentations in St James Chapel with a Stellarium (<http://www.stellarium.org/>) virtual sky presentation and “A Look at the Solar System”. As ever society members were on hand to answer the visitor’s questions. There were 48 visitors of various ages throughout the evening. This event was promoted as part of the UK Dark Sky Discovery project. A second event at Wentworth Castle took place on Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> February 2014 but sadly the very poor weather conditions deterred visitors and only 23 attended the event.

We extend our grateful thanks to the staff and volunteers of our partner organisations for their assistance and support which have enabled us to deliver a substantial Outreach Programme, we look forward to working with them in future to strengthen our relationship to mutual benefit and build on our shared success to date.

The society is grateful to its members for bringing their own equipment on all these events to supplement the society’s equipment. As a society we need to encourage more members to become involved and support our efforts.

Our Community Access Programme of events at the J.A. Jones Hooper Observatory has not been neglected with a total of 22 events being provided. These were well attended with 231 visitors taking part.

## Meeting Programme

A total of 54 society meetings took place in the year to March 31<sup>st</sup> 2014; our weekly Thursday meetings were supplemented by a few Friday meetings to accommodate the travel arrangements of some of our guest speakers. Total attendance for the year was 1,348 – of which 102 visits were by none members; average weekly attendance was 25.

We place on record our thanks to all our speakers, both our members and especially our guest speakers: Dr Sue Cartwright, Dennis Ashton, Dr Allan Chapman, Professor Dan Tovey, Paul Money, Professor Sam Falle, Dr Rene Oudmaijer, David Adshead and Dr Steve Barrat. Guest speaker expenses for the year totalled £471, a little higher than last year (£335) but we feel this is a worthwhile expenditure and represents excellent value for money for speakers or such quality.

We greatly value the time and effort given by all our speakers to provide entertaining, informative, and stimulating presentations on a varied range of topics, without their help we would be unable to deliver the programme we do.

## Yorkshire Astromind

The society once again hosted the Yorkshire Astromind inter-society quiz. This longstanding fixture on our annual programme has been running for 30 years and we are pleased that over that time the trophy has been carried away on many occasions by members of our society. We were delighted to be hosts to our fellow astronomers in Yorkshire to mark 30 years of the quiz in our 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary year.



Four societies took part, Sheffield, Huddersfield, East Yorkshire, and of course Mexborough & Swinton! Whilst we would like to see more societies from the region taking part – in its early years ten or more contestants was not unusual – we are delighted to report that the day was produced a close fought quiz and enjoyable social event. We would encourage societies who may be struggling to find a candidate (willing or otherwise!) to at least come along to join the audience and meet other astronomers from the region.

The day ran like clockwork thanks, in no small measure, to the efforts of previous Astromind winner and long serving question master Neil Haggath, and we record our thanks to him. It was an added bonus that Gary Gawthrope took first place on behalf of the society.

The Yorkshire Astromind 2014 will be hosted by our neighbouring society and good friends Sheffield Astronomical Society, and we very much look forward to another enjoyable event.

## J.A. Jones Hooper Observatory

The past year has seen some small incremental changes made to the telescopes and shutter control equipment, with a few running repairs thrown in.

Firstly the shutters have not proved to be fully reliable with a number of problems at the beginning of the year however after some small tweaks and user training no further issues have arisen recently. A review has been requested to see if further enhancements can be made without operational over-complication for the society members.

The uninterruptable power supply (UPS) failed during the latter half of the year, however the problem was rectified by fitting a complete set of new sealed lead acid batteries. The observatory also suffered some sort of power surge which damaged the shutter drive and batter charge circuits. This was quickly rectified with the help of Kris Hudson-Lee. We also needed a new VDU screen in the dome as our old screen succumbed to the relatively harsh observatory environment.

Various counterweights, balance bars and mounting plates have been fitted to the Paramount mount to enable the fitting and use of the Williams Optics 80mm telescope or members own small telescopes. The components to allow us to upgrade the focussing mechanism on the C14 telescope have also now also been made.

The curator would like to thank Alan Birch, Gary Gawthrope and Mark Walton for their assistance and sometimes many hours in the machine shop producing these components.



As noted further in this report the observatory is getting used on a more regular basis especially by the Imaging Group, this is a welcome development and justifies all the hard work building and maintaining the observatory.

### **Imaging Group**

The astronomical imaging group is growing in popularity and participation, the group meets every couple of weeks, either at the J.A. Jones Hooper Observatory or at the club room, depending on the weather, to image and process various astronomical objects; this has promoted greater use of the society's resources and stimulated interest in the art of astronomy without eyepieces. The group is open to all, any members interested in taking part should see Alan Birch.

With motorization of the shutters complete the observatory can be easily used by small groups of two or three people. It is hoped that the mounting of the Williams Optics telescope with solar filters will allow the imaging group to continue through the summer months.

The group's members have varying levels of experience several participants submitted their processed images in to the annual Image Competition this year.

### **Charity Finance Group Conference**



Since 2008 the society has appeared each year in the finalist shortlist of the Charities Online Financial Reporting Awards (COFRA), taking first place in 2009 and 2010 and runner-up in 2011 and 2012. In recognition of this success the society was invited to participate in the prestigious Annual Conference of the Charity Finance Group (<http://www.cfg.org.uk>); CFG is a charity that champions best practice in finance management in the voluntary sector.

Secretary Shaun O'Dell represented to the society at the event held at the Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre, London on May 8<sup>th</sup> 2013 and took part in a panel discussion on the subject of Annual Report Assessment. Shaun was joined by Lynne Robb, Finance Director at Cancer Research UK and the debate was chaired by Graham Ward who has for the last decade chaired the COFRA judges.

It was interesting to note that whilst our society is a small, local, community charity with income last year of a little over £7,500 and Cancer Research shows a fundraising income in its latest accounts of £430 million many of the approaches and principles adopted when drafting Annual Reports, and wider governance, were common.

### **Charities Online Financial Reporting and Accounts Awards**

The Society once again entered in to the Charities Online Financial Reporting Awards in 2013, the competition is organised by the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales – ICAEW (<https://www.icaew.com>). The aim of the awards is to:

- increase transparency by rewarding best practice in financial reporting
- raise the standard of web-based financial reporting for greater impact and accessibility
- encourage more charities to do their financial reporting online



The winners were announced at the ICAEW Charities Awards evening on June 24<sup>th</sup> 2013 at Chartered Accountant's Hall, London.

The society's Annual Report and Statement of Accounts for the year ended March 31<sup>st</sup> 2012 was joint winner in the category Charities with income below £250k. The prize of £2,250 was a welcome addition to society funds and it was particularly pleasing to return to the top spot.

It is disappointing that, at the time of writing, no details of COFRA 2014 have been announced. We very much hope that ICAEW will continue to support and promote the competition in coming years.

## **Membership**

At March 31<sup>st</sup> 2014 membership of the society was 44; the society has accepted three new members in the year and we extend a warm welcome to them.

## **Malham Dark Skies Weekend**

As part of the celebrations for our 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary a weekend (5<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> April 2013) away at Malham Tarn Field Study Centre (<http://www.field-studies-council.org/centres/malhamtarn.aspx>) was organised. The aim of the weekend was to give every member of the society the opportunity to observe under dark skies. The Malham Tarn Field Study Centre was chosen as a perfect site close to South Yorkshire.

A group of nine members under the leadership of the chairman Les Marsden took up this opportunity and made the most of the clear skies over the weekend.

Night observations were made on both evenings under clear, steady conditions with little light pollution allowing everyone to observe many objects unseen at our observatory at Hooper Stand. The clear skies allowed observations down to magnitude 6 and the sky scintillated with dimmer objects. During the afternoon solar observing was the order of the day. With high, broken cloud over three hours of imaging, sketching and visual observations were made.

The consensus of those participating was that the event should be run on a regular basis and certainly repeated before our 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

## **Accommodation**

In our report for the year ended March 31<sup>st</sup> 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.). It was noted that year-on-year losses could not be sustained indefinitely. A number of alternatives have been investigated but none has offered quality, dedicated alternative accommodation.

Representatives of the society attended the Annual General Meeting of Swinton Bottom Club Ltd. On 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2014 and learned that they had returned a small profit for the year. We very much hope this marks a turning point for our landlord and long term future.

## **Data Protection**

Having carefully considered what personal data are collected, used, and retained by the society and having reviewed the advice and guidance available from the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) (<http://ico.org.uk/>) to trustees took the decision that the not-for-profit exemption did not apply to all data processing carried out by the society and therefore the society has now registered as a data controller with the ICO.

## Financial Review

### Financial Performance

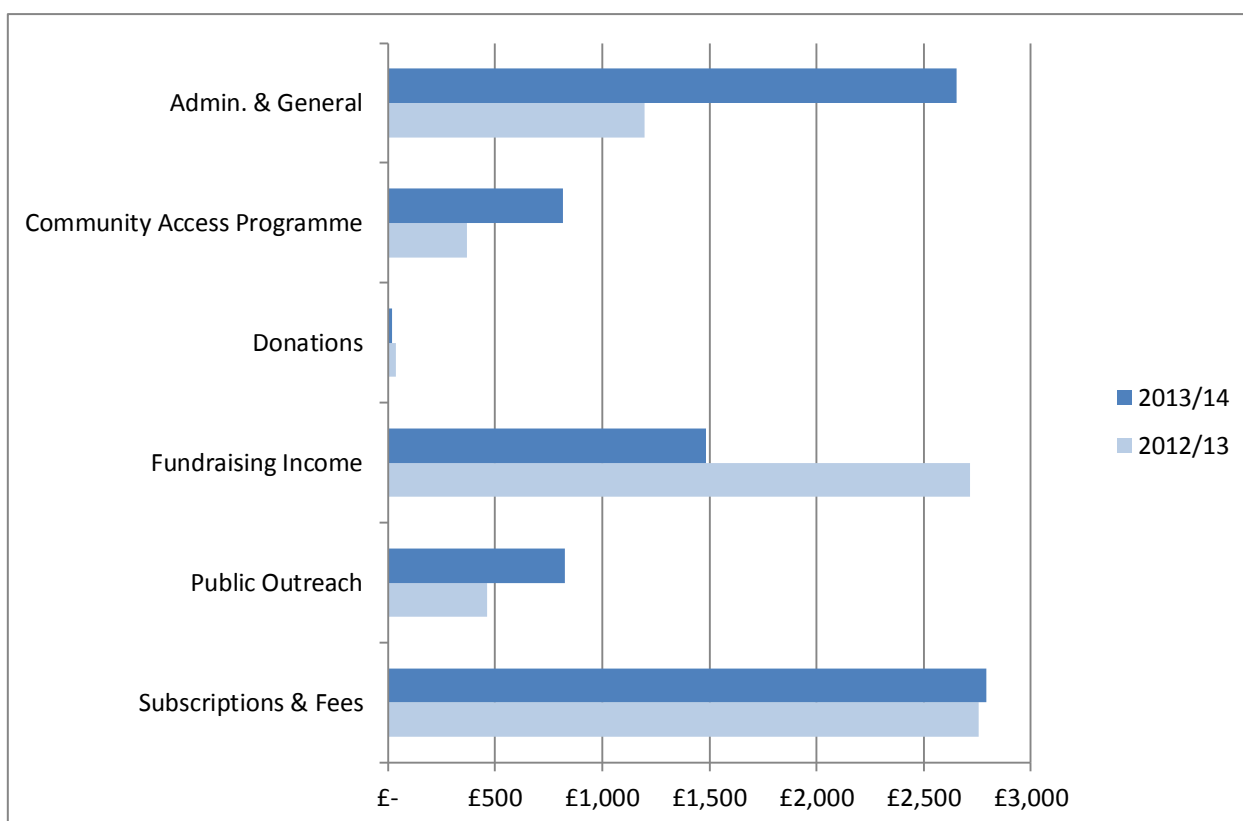
Financial performance in the year to March 31<sup>st</sup> 2014 has been broadly consistent with the trustee's forecasts and expectations; a surplus of income over expenditure of £3,112 was achieved for the year compared to £2,636 in the year to March 31<sup>st</sup> 2013.

These figures however are slightly misleading as each includes ICAEW COFRA prize money which was not forecast; this being £2,250 and £1,000 in each year respectively. When this is excluded the surplus for the year just ended is £862 compared to £1,636 for the previous year.

The year ended with a general (and sole) fund balance of £20,196 (compared to £17,084 for the same date last year). Detailed accounts can be found on page 12.

### Income

Income receipts for the year totalled £8,589 – an increase of 14% on the previous year (£7,535), as illustrated in the graph below. When the COFRA prize monies are excluded from both years a small drop in year-on-year income of 3% results. The analysis of income by category which follows demonstrates that when one-off items and phasing of income and corresponding expenditure over consecutive years are taken in to account the society's income is generally healthy and in some areas shows strong growth.



Administrative & General income has shown a marked increase to £2,651 compared to £1,196 in the previous year. There are two significant contributions to this change, firstly the ICAEW COFRA prize already noted and secondly interest earned on savings. Not having immediate need to draw upon the health reserve has enabled a significant proportion of savings to be moved to the Virgin Charity account which has earned interest of £350 in the year for its first full year of operation (£56 in the previous year). This compares favourably to the interest rate received on the NatWest Savings account.

The Community Access Programme at the J.A. Jones Hooper Observatory has generated income of £818, more than double that in the previous year (£370). Whilst there was a slight increase in fees in the year this alone would be insufficient to explain the increase, this can be attributed to a hugely successful programme which has, despite the poor weather, proved incredibly popular with the public.

Public Outreach is another major source of income and we are pleased to report a year-on-year increase of over 78% from £463 to £825. The strategy developed over the last few years of building partnerships to deliver our Public Outreach programme has certainly contributed to this increase. Leveraging the publicity and administrative services of our partners has freed the society and its volunteers to focus on developing and delivering content. Working with our partners in this way has helped to increase the “reach” of our Outreach efforts to a greater audience and ensures fees are collected which have driven up this income stream.

The headline figures for Fundraising Income are, on first reading, rather disappointing showing a fall of over £1,200 from £2,714 at March 31<sup>st</sup> 2013 to only £1,482 at the date of this report. However it should be noted that the accounts of the previous year included income for the Malham Tarn weekend for which the corresponding expenditure was incurred in the current year.

Fundraising Income also includes £300 for a planned member’s visit to Bletchley Park which had to be cancelled – a corresponding value of Fundraising Expenditure is included in these accounts.

Our other sources of income fundraising continue to deliver; the member’s lottery yielded £481 for the year and we must record here our gratitude to Jo Botterill and Mick Collinson who tirelessly run this on our behalf. Although a relatively recent innovation the sale of astronomical and scientific books and CDs at our events is continuing to prove very successful having generated income of £394. We must again thank Trevor Worrall who sources and manages our stock and those who volunteer to man the store at our events.

Finally commissions from Amazon and EasyFundraising continue to accrue steadily, totalling £142 for the year. We would like to take this opportunity to remind our members and supporters how easy it is to support our work when shopping on-line at Amazon or any of the hundreds of retailers – from high street names to specialist shops – available on EasyFundraising; and the best bit is your shopping doesn’t cost you a penny more! Simply visit our website, <http://msas.org.uk>, to get started.

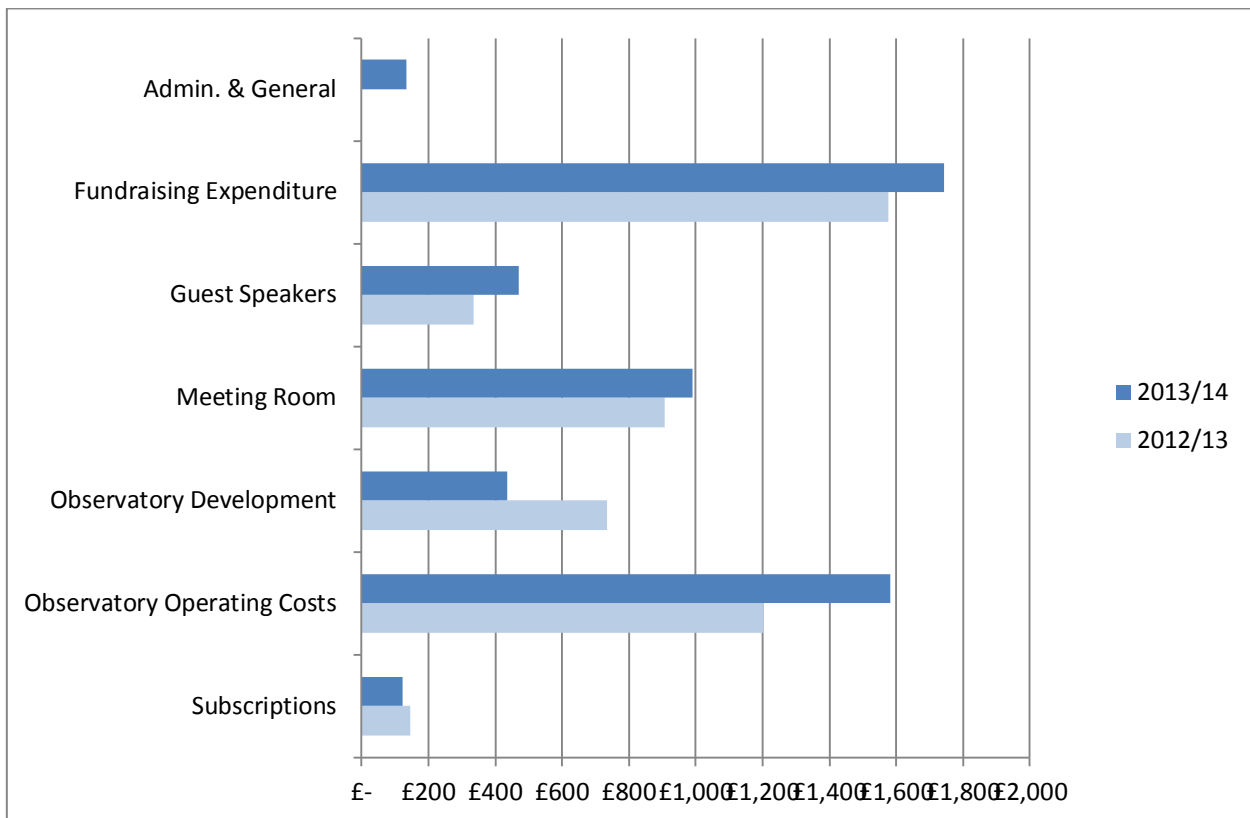
Whilst Donations income has dropped it from £37 to £19 this income stream is negligible; donations are often accrued as overpayment of fees or not taking change when purchasing a book or CD, consequently many donations are recorded under other income streams. The trustees are reviewing the categories used to classify income and expenditure and will consider if the Donations heading should become a subcategory of Fundraising Income in future years.

Finally, the major source of income – Subscriptions and Fees has remained remarkably consistent at £2,794 for the year compared with £2,755 in the year to March 31<sup>st</sup> 2013. This is no great surprise given that subscription rates were held constant over the two years and membership and visitor numbers at our weekly meeting have also remained steady. As we will be shown in the review of expenditure the goal of covering core operating costs from subscription income has been met for the year to March 31<sup>st</sup> 2014.

It should be noted that no Gift Aid claim has been submitted at the date of this report, work is ongoing to ensure backdates claims can meet the new HMRC online submission format before they are submitted; additional work will be undertaken to allow Gift Aid claims to be generated from our accounting software in a compatible format in future.

## Expenditure

Expenditure for the year totalled £5,477 – an increase of almost 12% on the previous year (£4,899) and this is illustrated in the following graph. Again the category-by-category analysis which follows will demonstrate that when one-off expenditure and expenditure of monies received for a specific purpose in a previous year are excluded expenditure is well managed and controlled.



Whilst we reported no Administrative & General expenditure in last year's accounts a small amount, £134, has been expended in the year to March 31<sup>st</sup> 2014. Of this £35 is the registration fee levied by the Information Commissioner's Office and we expect this to become an annual expenditure. The other expenditure in this category was the printing of business cards (£29) which help us promote the society at our events and ensure that our visitors have a note of our contact details. Finally we were proud hosts of the 2013 Yorkshire Astromind and £70 was spent on refreshments for the event.

Meeting Room expenditure is changed little from year-to-year at £990 compared to £908; in both years rent paid to Swinton Bottom Club Ltd. accounted for £900. The additional £90 is a one-off expenditure to purchase a new vacuum cleaner.

Observatory Operating Expenditure has increased by £380 from £1,203 as of March 31<sup>st</sup> 2013 to £1,583 at the date of this report. Regular expenditure in this area includes land rent, Rotherham MBC non-domestic rates, telephone and electricity supply. It should be noted that the premium for the society's main insurance policy (£802) 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.

Of these recurring expenses only electricity and land rent have undergone significant change year-on-year. Our land rent increased from £75 to £90 per annum (a 20% increase) whilst electricity supply costs rose from £195 to £264 per annum (an increase in excess of 35%).

The long-term undertaking entered into with our insurance broker limited the annual increase to just 0.5% to the £802 mentioned above. Telephone service remained constant at £60 per year. Non-domestic rates saw an annual increase of 2.3% to £77, this figure includes the 80% mandatory charitable relief; an application for a further 20% discretionary relief was made to Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council but this was unsuccessful.

In addition to recurring costs the Observatory Operating Expenditure in the year to March 31<sup>st</sup> 2014 include £290 replacement costs for batteries, charger, and vacuum cleaner.

Subscription expenditure for the year has fallen from £144 to £121 this is in part due to the Federation of Astronomical Societies (FAS) discounting its PLI premiums to drive down its own surplus and fluctuations in our own membership at the date where FAS and Swinton Bottom Club Ltd. memberships fell due.

The expenditure categories above form the core operating costs of the society, if one off expenses are excluded the non-discretionary expenditure is around £2,348 which is comfortably met by subscription and fees income of £2,794 – even if one off purchase are included giving a cost of £2,828 subscriptions are only short of meeting the expenditure by £34. Taking the £2,348

Guest Speaker expenses have risen by 40% from £335 to £471 in the year to March 31<sup>st</sup> 2014 this will be due to some extent to increasing rail ticket and fuel prices. The expenditure is however still a modest component of overall expenditure and our guest speakers add great value and diversity to our meeting programme.

Observatory Development expenditure for the year to March 31<sup>st</sup> 2014 was £436, down £298 on the previous year. This is mainly due to the phasing of development projects, expenditure in previous years has paid for materials and equipment used in development projects completed in the period of this report. Naturally after a period of sustained and significant development a pause for reflection is required whilst possible future developments are assessed and selected. The society benefits greatly from members and supporters who work on our development projects on a voluntary basis which further help reduce costs.

Fundraising Expenditure year-on-year was up by 10% from £1,576 in the year to March 31<sup>st</sup> 2013 to £1,742 at the date of this report. Two items however should be excluded in order to give a fair evaluation of Fundraising Expenditure for the year. Firstly, payment of the £1,011 balance for the Malham Tarn Field Studies Centre weekend which was paid using monies collected from those attending in the previous year and secondly a £300 expenditure to refund members who had paid deposits for a planned visit to Bletchley Park which sadly had to be cancelled. This is netted off against matching income recorded under Fundraising Income.

When these items are removed Fundraising Expenditure was £431 for the year, mainly the purchase of book stocks and printing and laminating for the Rotherham Library astro-photography exhibition.

### **Stock**

As of March 31<sup>st</sup> 2014 the society held a stock of books and CDs with a value of £126.

### **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 £28,395 at National Minimum Wage rates of October 2013 of £6.31 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 March 31<sup>st</sup> 2014 the Society had no funds in material deficit.

## Major Risks

In our Annual Report and Statement of Accounts for the year ended March 31<sup>st</sup> 2013 we identified a single major risk relating to our accommodation at Swinton Bottom Club. The club had been reporting year-on-year losses which could not be sustained indefinitely. We are pleased to note that a small profit was reported in its latest accounts; whilst it is to be hoped this is sustained and grows in coming years it should be recognized that Swinton Bottom Club Ltd. are operating in a very difficult market and accommodation must therefore continue to be considered a risk.

## 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 March 31<sup>st</sup> 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 New Horizons restricted fund is included in this report only to allow comparison with previous years.

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.

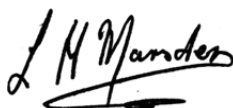
Reserves are held without any exposure to the stock market.

At March 31<sup>st</sup> 2014 the General Fund had a balance £20,196 (compared to £17,084 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. After a period of significant and sustained investment the trustees have also decided to pause and reflect on the next step in our development.

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 April 1<sup>st</sup> 2014 and the finance sub-committee are recommending that subscription rates are held for the year commencing April 1<sup>st</sup> 2015.

Approved and adopted by a meeting of the Executive Committee on April 16<sup>th</sup> 2014 and signed on their behalf



Leslie H. Marsden FRAS  
Chairman

## Accounts for the Year ended March 31<sup>st</sup> 2014

### Receipts & Payments Account

	Unrestricted Funds to nearest £	Restricted Funds to nearest £	Total Funds to nearest £	Last Year to nearest £
<b>Receipts</b>				
Admin. & General	2,615	-	2,615	1,196
Community Access Programme	818	-	818	370
Donations	19	-	19	37
Fundraising Income	1,482	-	1,482	2,714
Public Outreach	825	-	825	463
Subscriptions & Fees	2,794	-	2,794	2,755
<b>Total Receipts</b>	<b>8,589</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>8,589</b>	<b>7,535</b>
<b>Payments</b>				
Admin. & General	134	-	134	-
Fundraising Expenditure	1,742	-	1,742	1,576
Guest Speakers	471	-	471	335
Meeting Room	990	-	990	908
Observatory Development	436	-	436	734
Observatory Operating Costs	1,583	-	1,583	1,203
Subscriptions	121	-	121	144
<b>Total Payments</b>	<b>5,477</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>5,477</b>	<b>4,899</b>
Net of receipts/(payments)	3,112	-	3,112	2,636
Transfers between funds	-	-	-	-
Cash funds last year end	17,084	-	17,084	14,447
<b>Cash funds this year end</b>	<b>20,196</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>20,196</b>	<b>17,084</b>

### Statement of Assets and Liabilities

#### Cash Assets

	Unrestricted Funds to nearest £	Restricted Funds to nearest £	Total Funds to nearest £
NatWest Current	872	-	872
<i>Add: Cheques not cleared at bank</i>	-	-	-
NatWest Savings	2,007	-	2,007
NatWest Transfer Account	-	-	-
Virgin Charity Account	17,193	-	17,193
Petty Cash	124	-	124
PayPal	-	-	-
<b>Total Cash Funds</b>	<b>20,196</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>20,196</b>



## Other Assets held for functional use

All assets shown belong to the Unrestricted (General) Fund

	Value
Building and contents including astronomical telescope and associated sundries insured value. Includes members' key sets.	55,300
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
<b>Solar Max Telescope (purchased June 2003)</b>	
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
<b>Meeting Room (Rented) Contents</b>	
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
<b>Library</b>	
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
<b>Sale Items for Fundraising</b>	
Books – Assorted stock	137
<b>Phil Turner Legacy</b>	
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
	<b>93,535</b>

## **Notes to the Accounts**

### Restricted Funds

The society closed its New Horizons restricted fund on March 31<sup>st</sup> 2012 and is currently operating with no restricted funds; they are included here for consistency and to simplify comparison with previous years.

### 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 March 31<sup>st</sup> 2014; 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

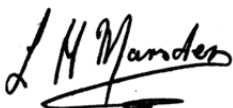
In the year ended March 31<sup>st</sup> 2014 gross income did not exceeded £25,000 and therefore, in accordance with the sections 144 & 145 of the Charities Act 2011 no audit or independent examination is required and no such scrutiny requirement is imposed by the Society's governing document.

### Cheques not cleared at bank at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013

At 31<sup>st</sup> March 2014 there were no cheques issued by the society which had not cleared at the bank.

For comparison, the value of cheques not cleared at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2013 was £35.00 (3 cheques).

Approved and adopted by a meeting of the Executive Committee on April 16<sup>th</sup> 2014 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 March 31<sup>st</sup> 2014

Mr Leslie Holmes Marsden	<i>Chairman</i>
Mr Shaun O'Dell	<i>Secretary</i>
Mr Michael John Waterfield	<i>Treasurer</i>
Mr Gary James Gawthrope	<i>Deputy Chair</i>
Mrs Joyce Mary Botterill	<i>Librarian</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 &amp; Observatory</i>
Mr Philip John Muffett	<i>Programme Co-ordinator</i>
Mr Trevor Worrall	<i>Observations Officer</i>
Mr Michael Kerry Collinson	
Mr Stephen Taylor	
Mr Roy Gunson	

### Other Charity Trustees in the year to March 31<sup>st</sup> 2014

Mr Barry Jackson	<i>Did not seek re-election at the Annual General Meeting</i>
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### Patrons as of March 31<sup>st</sup> 2014

Dr Allan Chapman	<i>Patron &amp; 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 May 23<sup>rd</sup> 2013, this is available at [msas.org.uk/about/constitution-and-rules](http://msas.org.uk/about/constitution-and-rules) or via the QRCode shown here.

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 March 31<sup>st</sup> 2014 the Society had a membership of 44.

### **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 March 31<sup>st</sup> 2014 a total of 12 formal meetings took place. Attendance at these meetings, shown as meetings attended/meetings eligible to attend was as follows: L. Marsden (12/12), S. O'Dell (11/12), M. Waterfield (7/12), G. Marsden (9/12), G. Gawthrope (11/12), J. Botterill (6/12), P. Muffett (5/12), A. Morris (12/12), P. D'Silva (9/12), T. Worrall (11/12), M. Collinson (9/12), S. Taylor (12/12), R. Gunson (7/10), and B. Jackson (2/2).

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 - typically reports are made quarterly. 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.

The Society has also appointed a Finance sub-committee which meets on an *ad hoc* basis to advise on budget and financial management matters, the sub-committee is chaired by the treasurer, Michael Waterfield and its members are Shaun O'Dell, Gary Gawthrope, and Michael Collinson.

### **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](http://www.fedastro.org.uk/fas).

Two trustees of Mexborough & Swinton Astronomical Society, Mr O'Dell and Mr Gawthrope, serve on the Council of the FAS; S. O'Dell as Secretary (and to October 2013 as PLI Officer) and G. Gawthrope as President and Deputy Treasurer; all FAS Council members are drawn from the Federation's member societies.

The Society made a subscription payment to the FAS of £23 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 £20.

The Society's meeting room is a rented room in the Swinton Bottom Club (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 £78 were made in the year, in addition room rent was paid in the amount of £900.

The J.A. Jones Hooper Observatory is built on land rented from Yorkshire Water Services Ltd. for an annual rent of £90.

## **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 promote 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 March 31<sup>st</sup> 2013.

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 by a meeting of the Executive Committee on April 16<sup>th</sup> 2014 and signed on their behalf



Leslie H. Marsden FRAS  
Chairman