



MEXBOROUGH & SWINTON ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

Annual Report & Statement of Accounts

For the year to 31 March 2022

Available online

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Annual Report for the year ended 31 March 2022

The trustees of Mexborough & Swinton Astronomical Society are pleased to present their report and accounts for the period 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022.

Achievements and Performance

Meeting Programme

At the start of the Covid-19 Pandemic the society moved its weekly meetings online. Members running the weekly meetings developed links around the country and, indeed, the world and we were lucky to host speakers from as far away as Chile, South Africa and Sweden. In addition, we had 'outside broadcasts', one from member Phil Muffet bringing us up to date on his replica of a Mercury 7 capsule and another with observatory curator Tony Morris enabling Doncaster Astronomical Society's Peter Llyod to give a remote guided tour of the Moon using the equipment at the J A Jones Observatory.

As Covid-19 restrictions started to relax in September 2021 attention was turned to returning to the society room at Swinton Bottom Working Men's Club. Roy Gunson led the challenge of setting up an internet link from the building and after several false starts, mainly due to the appearance of the Omicron variant, developed a system that has the capability to deliver a talk from our meeting room.

In all the programme delivered an Annual General Meeting, two outside broadcasts, an Astro clinic, the Astronomical Imaging Competition and 47 talks by 45 speakers with an overall attendance of 1,920 over the year.

In June 2021 we introduced ticketing for our online meetings using the Eventbrite system (<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk>). Initially tickets were free of charge but moved to a charging model in January 2022. Tickets were sold at a price of £2.74 of which £2.00 came to the society, in line with our standard visitor fee, and £0.74 service charge to Eventbrite, of course meetings remain free to members of the society. The table below shows non-member ticket numbers and, from January 2022 income generated. After we started charging for attendance not surprisingly the numbers signing up dropped, though it has provided a steady income covering much of the costs of providing online access.

Month	Attendance	Sales (£)	Month	Attendance	Sales (£)
June 2021	29	0.00	November 2021	48	0.00
July 2021	57	0.00	December 2021	77	0.00
August 2021	73	0.00	January 2022	10	20.00
September 2021	82	0.00	February 2022	17	34.00
October 2021	32	0.00	March 2022	10	20.00

The society wishes to place on record its sincere thanks to all our speakers for supporting us during this difficult period.

Membership

The society had a membership of 32 as of 31 March 2022. We note with sadness the passing, in February 2022, of our good friend and former member Joan Launders. Joan was a member for many years and will be sorely missed by all who knew her.

J.A. Jones Hooper Observatory

Due to the Covid-19 public health restrictions the access to the observatory was strictly limited to essential maintenance and safety work and always in compliance with relevant public health regulations. From October 2021 the observatory was reopened to members although strict Covid-19 protections were in place.

Community Access & Outreach Programmes

The society normally offers supervised access to J A Jones Observatory, primarily through the Public Viewing Evenings (PVEs) and engages with our community through visits to schools and community groups. The unforeseen arrival of the Omicron variant of Covid-19 led to the decision to postpone community access and public outreach activities to 2022/23 keeping the observatory closed to the public.

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. (SBC Ltd) Several alternatives have been investigated but none, to date, has offered quality, dedicated alternative accommodation. The trustees invite suggestions for alternative accommodation from all members and urge them to keep a keen lookout for possible venues.

Financial Review

Financial Performance

Detailed accounts can be found on page 5. It should be noted that Covid-19 restrictions mean that the comparison with previous years is at best difficult and at worst meaningless.

Income

There is a significant decrease in income under the Admin & General heading due to the Covid-19 Small Business Grant of £10,000 received from Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council in the year to 31 March 2021, the figure for the current year is far more typical.

With our Community Access Programme and Public Outreach activities suspended due to Covid-19 there is no income under these headings for the year to 31 March 2022 and apart from a £10 refund of a booked Community Access event the same was true for the year to 31 March 2021.

Donations show a slight year-on-year decrease though this would have been more significant had we not received a £1,000 donation from Mark McLennan (Monster Mesh Ltd.). A one-off donation in the previous year from Yorkshire Water Unison branch largely accounts for the difference.

There is a marked decrease in income from Subscriptions and Fees this is largely due to the processing of a backlog of Gift Aid claims for the years to 31 March 2016, 31 March 2017, 31 March 2018, 31 March 2019, and 31 March 2020 processed in the year to 31 March 2021, these totalled £2,394. A claim for the year to 31 March 2021 is being compiled at the date of this report.

Expenditure

Administration and General expenditure saw a marked increase due to the renewal of the website msas.org.uk domain registration renewal.

Guest speaker expenses are slightly higher compared the previous year (£185 compared to £130) although this is still lower than in pre-pandemic years as speakers have been unable to travel to us, we are grateful to many speakers who gave their time freely to speak at our online meetings.

Equipment purchased to enable online meetings accounts for a slight increase of Meeting Room expenditure from £1,080 to £1,198.

Observatory development again shows a marked decrease (£161 to £37) as little development activity has been carried out whilst the observatory has been closed for all but essential safety and maintenance work.

The reopening of the observatory accounts for a small increase in Observatory Operating Expenditure of £42 to £1,476.

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.

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

Funds Materially in Deficit

The Society had no funds in material deficit as of 31 March 2022.

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 Ltd. It must be recognized that Swinton Bottom Club Ltd. is operating in a very difficult market and the ongoing use of our rented accommodation must continue to be considered a major risk to the society. We noted earlier the very real risk of an unsustainable rise in our operating costs in the short-to-medium term if temporary accommodation had to be rented.

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.

Reserves are held without any exposure to the stock market.

The Society operates with an unrestricted reserve at a level set by the trustees; currently this is £5,000 which equated to approximately 24 months running costs. The reserve is held to allow the Society to offset fluctuations in income receipts and to provide for contingencies.

At 31 March 2022, the General Fund had a balance £33,676 (compared to £33,096 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 are also mindful that the long-term future of Swinton Bottom Club Ltd. is difficult to guarantee and must be prepared to seek alternative accommodation, possibly at short notice.

Approved and adopted by a meeting of the Executive Committee on 19 October 2022 and signed on their behalf,



Leslie H. Marsden FRAS
Chairman

Accounts for the Year ended 31 March 2022

Receipts & Payments Account

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds	Last Year
	to nearest £	to nearest £	to nearest £	to nearest £
Receipts				
Admin. & General	60	-	60	10,051
Community Access Programme	-	-	-	10
Donations	1,310	-	1,310	1,759
Fundraising Income	147	-	147	136
Public Outreach	-	-	-	-
Subscriptions & Fees	2,187	-	2,187	4,383
Total Receipts	3,704	-	3,704	16,318
Payments				
Admin. & General	95	-	95	35
Fundraising Expenditure	60	-	60	-
Guest Speakers	185	-	185	130
Meeting Room	1,198	-	1,198	1,080
Observatory Development	37	-	37	161
Observatory Operating Costs	1,476	-	1,476	1,434
Subscriptions	73	-	73	78
Total Payments	3,124	-	3,124	2,918
Net of receipts/(payments)	580	-	580	13,400
Transfers between funds	-	-	-	-
Cash funds last year end	33,096	-	33,096	19,696
Cash funds this year end	33,676	-	33,676	33,096

Statement of Assets and Liabilities

Cash Assets

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds
	to nearest £	to nearest £	to nearest £
NatWest Current	5,918	-	5,918
<i>Add: Cheques not cleared at bank</i>	-	-	-
NatWest Savings (Closed)	-	-	-
NatWest Transfer Account	-	-	-
Virgin Charity Account	27,739	-	27,739
Petty Cash	19	-	19
PayPal	-	-	-
Total Cash Funds	33,676	-	33,676

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
2x Takahashi 2" Diagonal	600
Baader Hyperion 68° Eyepiece Set consisting of seven focal lengths (5, 8, 10, 13, 17, 21, 24 mm), incl. Eyepiece case	604
2x Personal Computers	1,000
Data Projector – Observatory Use	799
Data Projector – Outreach Use	400
ZWO ASI 071MC Pro (16-megapixel cooled colour camera)	1,400
<i>Solar Max Telescope (purchased June 2003)</i>	
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
<i>Meeting Room (Rented) Contents</i>	
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
<i>Library</i>	
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
<i>Sale Items for Fundraising</i>	
Books – assorted stock	220
<i>Phil Turner Legacy</i>	
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
	95,605

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 2022; 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

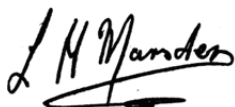
In the year ended 31 March 2022 gross income did not exceed £25,000 and therefore, in accordance with the sections 144 & 145 of the Charities Act 2011 no audit or independent examination is required, and no such scrutiny requirement is imposed by the Society's governing document.

Cheques not cleared at bank on 31 March 2022

On 31 March 2022, there were no cheques issued by the society which had not been presented at the bank.

For comparison, on 31 March 2021 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 19 October 2022 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 2022

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 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 (Resigned from office at the Annual General Meeting on 10 March 2022)</i>
Mr Peter Jalowiczor	<i>Librarian (Resigned from office at the Annual General Meeting on 10 March 2022)</i>
Mr Philip John Muffett	<i>Committee Member</i>
Mr Paul D'Silva	<i>Committee Member</i>
Mr Kristian Keith Hudson-Lee	<i>Committee Member</i>
Mr Edward Bothamley	<i>Librarian (appointed at the Annual General Meeting on 10 March 2022)</i>

Patrons as of 31 March 2022

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 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 2022, the Society had a membership of 32.

Trustee Selection and Management

The Society is managed by an Executive Committee which consists of all the appointed trustees. Several of the trustees also hold offices within the society, these officers are noted in the list of current trustees above.

The Executive Committee meets typically once per month.

At each meeting, the Treasurer presents the latest accounts, 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 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, advice to and advocacy for 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 2022 served on the Council of the FAS; 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 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 of our tenancy that all adult members of the society must be members of the Swinton Bottom Club, this is managed by the society. In addition, room rent was paid in the amount of £1,080 (£90 per calendar month).

Conflicts of Interest

The society employs the services of Safron Electrical Safety to provide security, fire safety, and electrical services to the J.A. Jones Hooper Observatory. Mr Kristian Hudson-Lee is both a trustee of the society and owner of Safron Electrical Safety. Mr Hudson-Lee is asked to withdraw from any trustee meeting whilst the services of Safron Electrical Safety are being discussed.

The trustees feel the prices charged by Safron Electrical Safety are competitive and the society benefits from having the work carried out by someone who has great familiarity with the observatory and its systems and who has unsupervised building access.

There have been no payments made to Safron Electrical Safety in the period of this report.

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 31 March 2022.

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 public safety and our assets. 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 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 19 October 2022 and signed on their behalf.



Leslie H. Marsden FRAS
Chairman