



# **MEXBOROUGH & SWINTON ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY**

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

For the year to 31 March 2025

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## **Annual Report for the year ended 31 March 2025**

The trustees of Mexborough & Swinton Astronomical Society are pleased to present their report and accounts for the period 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025.

### ***Achievements and Performance***

#### **Meeting Programme**

Our weekly meeting programme has continued to deliver across a wide range of topics in astronomy and its associated sciences and levels of experience; we place on record our gratitude to all our speakers.

We had 39 meetings with guest speakers and 8 with member speakers. Of the guest speakers 3 were from the USA, 1 from Switzerland and 1 from Republic of Ireland.

In total 45 of meetings were advertised on Eventbrite with tickets sold online, this brought in a total of £430 (215 visitors). A handful of visitors paid by BACS and not through the Eventbrite system.

Of the visitors 72% came from the UK, 20% from the USA, the other 8% from various other countries (Ireland, Turkey, Lebanon, Latvia, Finland & Norway).

The best on-line sales were for Professor Colin McInnes "Micro-to-Macro: astrodynamics at extremes of length-scale"

#### **Membership**

The society had a membership of 41 as of 31 March 2025.

#### **J.A. Jones Hooper Observatory**

This year there has been a focus on the maintenance of the observatory grounds. All the trees on our property have been substantially trimmed., all bushes against our boundary fences have been cut back. This has been done by a small team of members, and we thank them for their assistance. We have had informal contact with the Yorkshire Water grounds staff, this has resulted in them trimming some trees on their side of our boundary fence.

The grass car park has become threadbare in places due to vehicle access and bad weather, action to address this is planned for spring 2025.

The reliability of the equipment in the observatory has been good this year however multiple light dimmers have failed; these have been replaced.

The observatory dome, flat roof and gutters have had a light wash to keep them clean. The dome running track has also been lubricated.

To accommodate the books and equipment moved from our old meeting venue at Swinton Bottom Club various extra shelves have been fitted in the observatory control room and presentation room. The curator would like to remind members that we have a small stock of equipment at the observatory for members to borrow.

The presentation room projector has been fitted to the ceiling. We have an ongoing issue where our projector cuts out intermittently. This has been investigated but no cause has yet been found.

There has been rodent damage to the air conditioning unit air inlet trunking. The trunking has been replaced. However, we have an ongoing rodent issue with some minor damage in other parts of the building.

The telescopes in the dome have had some minor cleaning and adjustment, more work will be undertaken during 2025. An adapter part for the C14 telescope was 3D printed by the Curator; this has alleviated a focussing issue.

In March 2025 the septic tank full alarm was activated, Rotherham Council were tasked to empty it which happened within a few days of the order being placed.

During September 2024 the Mexborough and District Amateur Radio Society once again used the observatory grounds and toilet facilities, which were left in a good state of repair.

A new ramp for disabled access to the observatory has been planned during the year and should be implemented during the summer of 2025.

The curator thanks again all those who have assisted or undertaken various tasks during the year at the observatory.

The Curator was tasked with designing and building a cart to store our computer, monitor and sundry equipment in our new meeting venue. This is now in service and works as expected.

### **Community Access & Outreach Programmes**

We continued delivering our objects - 'to promote and advance public education in the science of Astronomy' through our Community Access and Outreach programmes.

During the summer months we manned four Solar Sunday Events, two at the observatory and two at RSPB Old Moor, Wombwell, Barnsley. Although two of the morning sessions started cloudy, there were many opportunities for the public to safely view the sun. Members set up telescopes using white light, H $\alpha$ , Ca-K and Magnesium wavelengths.

In the autumn the Community Access Programme started visits to the J A Jones Hooper Observatory. Between October 2024 and March 2025 some 13 groups visited with one cancellation due to poor weather. The groups included brownies, cubs, scouts and explorers (24th Doncaster Scouts, 105th Sheffield (High Green), 22nd Barnsley Scouts, 6th Rotherham Scouts, 82nd Sheffield (Chapeltown) Scouts) as well as adult groups, two visits from the Friends of Cusworth Hall and one from Creative Recovery (Barnsley).

Running alongside these visits were a programme of six Public Viewing Evenings (PVE). These popular events are timed to coincide with first quarter moon from October to March to allow visitors the chance to observe the surface features of the Moon as well other celestial objects. This year we were able to show Jupiter, Saturn and Mars for most of the season as well as other Deep Sky Objects.

The 'So, Santa Left You a Telescope' event, at The J A Jones Observatory on the 28 December 2024 was also well attended with 30 visitors bringing 10 telescopes along that they needed help and advice with.

In all we welcomed 366 visitors to the observatory during the winter months.

Unfortunately, the weather did not always cooperate and events at RSPB Old Moor and 'Planets in the Park' at Clifton Park, Rotherham had to be cancelled due to inclement conditions.

Thanks to Roy Gunson, Michael Collinson and Tony Morris for delivering talks to interested groups across region.

On Saturday 12 October 2024 we provided our expertise at the 'After Hours: Astronomy Night' at Wentworth Woodhouse. After a grey, wet afternoon the skies cleared for most of evening allowing some 40+ visitors to enjoy views of the Moon, Saturn and various deep sky objects through 10 instruments ranging from binoculars to a Seestar S50s.

The trustees would like to thank all the members for supporting these efforts throughout the year.

### **Accommodation**

In our report for the year ended 31 March 2024 we reported our plans to move our meetings to John the Baptist Community Centre, Mexborough to mitigate the long-standing risk to Swinton Bottom Club (formerly Swinton Working Men's Club). The move was completed in May 2024 and, except for a few meetings when the hall has been unavailable, for example when required to serve as a polling station, this is now our regular meeting venue.

## ***Financial Review***

### **Financial Performance**

Detailed accounts can be found on page 5.

#### **Income**

There is a marked increase in income under the Admin & General heading, although £1,000 of this is due to a grant received towards construction of a ramp to improve disabled access at the observatory. Once the grant is removed the year-on-year increase is only £25.

With our Community Access Programme and Public Outreach enjoying a full year income from both shows a year-on-year increase. Community Access Programme income was up a little under 7% to £1,258 (£1,176 in the previous year) and Public Outreach rose slightly from £250 to £264, a 5.7% increase.

Donations show a marked year-on-year increase to £515 from £171, much of this was driven by the disposal of assets for donations when the society vacated our former Swinton Bottom Club venue and consequent reduction in storage space available.

There is a 19% increase in income from Subscriptions and Fees to £3,927 (£3,299) this is due to increased attendance and online ticket sales.

#### **Expenditure**

Guest speaker expenses are higher compared the previous year (£404 compared to £262) as more speakers are charging expenses than previously, this still represents excellent value for money and is an essential expenditure if we are to deliver the wide variety of speakers and subjects in our meeting programme.

Equipment purchased to enable online meetings, the construction of the AV equipment card and increased rent, compared to our former venue, and paying £360 to Swinton Bottom Club during the transition accounts for the bulk of Meeting Room expenditure increase to £3,465 compared to £1,169 in the previous year. Annual room rent is expected to be £1,500 Per annum (£30 per week).

Observatory development again shows a marked decrease (£156 to £56) as there have been fewer items required to be purchased following development in recent years.

Observatory Operating Expenditure has dropped slightly from £1,900 to £1,666 (12.3%); this is driven the relocation of our meeting programme which was temporarily hosted at the observatory due to deterioration of the building fabric at Swinton Bottom Club, most meetings are now held at John the Baptist Community Centre reducing utility bills at the observatory.

Subscription expenditure an increase of over 51% to £809 (£534 to 31 March 2024) – this includes the Zoom subscription and SIM cards to enable online and hybrid meetings and website security software.

#### **Assets**

The closure of Swinton Bottom Club Ltd. and the society's move to John the Baptist Community Centre necessitated a full review of our assets held at Swinton Bottom Club as our new venue and out observatory lacked the storage space required.

A selection of the better and more up-to-date library items, as well as the Optoma EH415e projector, and Kodak slide projector were moved to the observatory.

Older library items, and those in formats such as VHS which are no longer widely used were written off after attempting to dispose of them for donations. Similarly, the furnishing and equipment which could not be disposed of for cash have been written off. The total value of assets written-off was £7,110, however this is based on original purchase price as the society does not produce accounts on the accruals basis; the age of items written-off means the true value is significantly less.

## **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 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 2025.

## **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. Following our move to John the Baptist Community Centre this risk is mitigated. It should be noted that Swinton Bottom Club closed permanently a few months after our departure.

With this risk mitigated no major risks have been identified.

## **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 £10,000 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.

On 31 March 2025, the General Fund had a balance £38,969 (compared to 37,585 at the same date last year).

Approved and adopted by a meeting of the Trustees and Executive Committee on 23 April 2025 and signed on their behalf,



Leslie H. Marsden FRAS  
Chairman



## Accounts for the Year ended 31 March 2025

### Receipts & Payments Account

	Unrestricted Funds to nearest £	Restricted Funds to nearest £	Total Funds to nearest £	Last Year to nearest £
<b>Receipts</b>				
Admin. & General	1,514	–	1,514	489
Community Access Programme	1,258	–	1,258	1,176
Donations	515	–	515	171
Fundraising Income	525	–	525	115
Public Outreach	264	–	264	250
Subscriptions & Fees	3,927	–	3,927	3,299
<b>Total Receipts</b>	<b>8,004</b>	<b>–</b>	<b>8,004</b>	<b>5,501</b>
<b>Payments</b>				
Admin. & General	62	–	62	35
Fundraising Expenditure	159	–	159	454
Guest Speakers	404	–	404	262
Meeting Room	3,465	–	3,465	1,169
Observatory Development	56	–	56	156
Observatory Operating Costs	1,666	–	1,666	1,900
Subscriptions	809	–	809	534
<b>Total Payments</b>	<b>6,620</b>	<b>–</b>	<b>6,620</b>	<b>4,511</b>
Net of receipts/(payments)	1,385	–	1,385	990
Transfers between funds	–	–	–	–
Cash funds last year end	37,585	–	37,585	36,595
<b>Cash funds this year end</b>	<b>38,969</b>	<b>–</b>	<b>38,969</b>	<b>37,585</b>

### Statement of Assets and Liabilities

#### Cash Assets

	Unrestricted Funds to nearest £	Restricted Funds to nearest £	Total Funds to nearest £
NatWest Current	1,055	–	1,055
<i>Add: Cheques not cleared at bank</i>	–	–	–
NatWest Savings	37,890	–	37,890
NatWest Transfer Account	–	–	–
Virgin Charity Account (Closed)	–	–	–
Petty Cash	25	–	25
PayPal	–	–	–
<b>Total Cash Funds</b>	<b>38,969</b>	<b>–</b>	<b>38,969</b>

### ***Other Assets held for functional use***

All assets shown belong to the Unrestricted (General) Fund

	0
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 Eyepiece set of seven focal lengths incl. Eyepiece case	604
2x Personal Computers	1,000
Data Projector – Outreach Use – was observatory use	799
Audio-Technica Condenser Microphone	33
ZWO ASI 071MC Pro (16-megapixel cooled colour camera)	1,400
Zytel NR5103E 5G Dual Band Indoor Wi-Fi Router	163
<b><i>Solar Max Telescope (purchased June 2003)</i></b>	<b>0</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
80mm wide field telescope	100
<b><i>Equipment Moved to Observatory on closure of Swinton Bottom Club</i></b>	<b>0</b>
Optoma EH415e Video Projector & accessories (purchased 2016)	1,037
Kodak Slide Projector (purchased 1996)	1,300
Books – Mainly atlases and observing guides	600
Canon EOS 350D Digital SLR Camera	25
<b><i>Audio-Visual Cart for new meeting room</i></b>	<b>0</b>
AV Cart build	42
Assorted Cables & Connectors	26
Epson EB-FH06 3LCD Projector	549
Powered USB Hub	30
Eagletec KG010 Mechanical Keyboard White LED Backlit	50
ZTE MU5001 5G WiFi 6 Hotspot (Portable 5G)	283
2 x Anker PowerConf C200 2K Webcam	102
TRIGKEY AMD Mini PC	359
BenQ GW2490E 24 inch Monitor	89
Logitech Spotlight pointer	116
Audio-Technica ATR4697-USB Omnidirectional Condenser Microphone	23
Stereo Sound Bar	50
<b><i>Library</i></b>	<b>0</b>
SeeStar S50 telescope	519
Dobsonian telescope	541

<b>Sale Items for Fundraising</b>	0
Books – assorted stock	200
<b>Phil Turner Legacy</b>	0
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>90,979</b>

## 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 2025; 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 2025 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 2025

On 31 March 2025, there were no cheques issued by the society which had not been presented at the bank, for comparison, this was also the case on 31 March 2024.

Approved and adopted at a meeting of the Trustees and Executive Committee on 28 May 2025 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 2025

Mr Leslie Holmes Marsden	<i>Chairman</i>
Mr Shaun O'Dell	<i>Secretary</i>
Mr Michael Kerry Collinson	<i>Treasurer</i>
Mr Glenn Michael John Marsden	<i>IT Officer</i>
Mr Anthony John Morris	<i>Curator of Instruments &amp; Observatory</i>
Mr Roy Gunson	<i>Programme Co-ordinator</i>
Mr Kristian Keith Hudson-Lee	<i>Observations Officer</i>
Mr Edward Bothamley	<i>Librarian</i>
Mr Thomas Peter Wade	<i>Fundraising Officer</i>
Mr Philip John Muffett	<i>Committee Member</i>
Mr Paul D'Silva	<i>Committee Member</i>
Mr Stephen Taylor	<i>Committee Member – retired from office 12 September 2024</i>
Mr Laurence Horrocks-Barlow	<i>Committee Member – co-opted 09 October 2024</i>

### Patrons as of 31 March 2025

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	
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 12 September 2024; this is available from our website at [msas.org.uk/about/constitution-and-rules](https://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 2025, 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. 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](http://www.fedastro.org.uk/fas).

A trustee of Mexborough & Swinton Astronomical Society, Shaun O'Dell, has in the year to 31 March 2025 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 £20 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 £55.

### **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 payments totalling £51 (to the nearest £) made to Safron Electrical Safety in the period of this report for supply and fitting of new dimmer switches.

## **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 2024.

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 topics related to astronomy and its associated sciences
- Developing and maintaining the J.A. Jones Hooper Observatory
- Offering a Community Access Programme at the J.A. Jones Hooper 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 Trustees and Executive Committee on 28 May 2025 and signed on their behalf.



Leslie H. Marsden FRAS  
Chairman