

MEXBOROUGH & SWINTON ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

Annual Report & Statement of Accounts

For the year to March 31st 2006

Annual Report for the year ended March 31st 2006

Trustees' Report

The Trustees of Mexborough & Swinton Astronomical Society are pleased to submit their report and accounts for the year 1st April 2005 to 31st March 2006.

Mexborough & Swinton Astronomical Society is a registered charity governed by a constitution.

This Report and the attached Accounts comply with all current statutory requirements, the Society's Constitution and "Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice (Revised 2005).

Charitable Objects

The object of the Society is the advancement of education for the public benefit in astronomy and its associated sciences.

Organisation

The Society is run entirely by a membership of volunteers, who pay an annual membership subscription and are not eligible for reimbursement of any out-of-pocket expenses. It is an unincorporated association governed by a constitution (last amended February 2004) and managed by an Executive Committee (the Charity Trustees) who are elected annually by and from amongst the membership.

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. Two trustees of Mexborough & Swinton Astronomical Society, Mr O'Dell and Mr Gawthrop, serve on the Council of the FAS; Mr O'Dell as Membership Secretary and Mr Gawthrop as Website Co-ordinator.

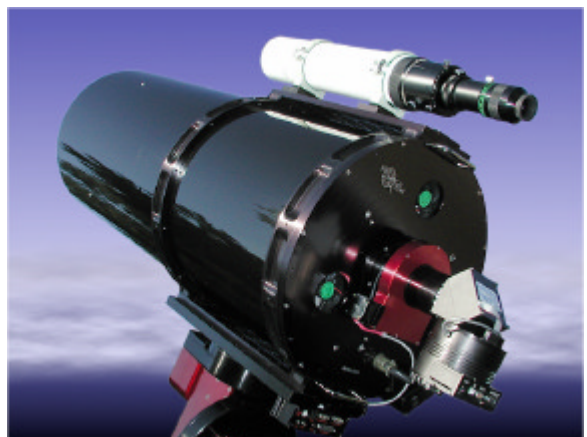
The Society's meeting room is a rented room in the Swinton Working Men's Club (SWMC). It is a requirement of the SWMC that all adult members of the Mexborough & Swinton Astronomical Society must also be members of the SWMC.

Review of the Year

New Horizons

The New Horizons project represents a major medium-term project for the Society; at its core the project entails a capital outlay of circa £65,000 to replace the existing telescope and drive with a high-quality research grade instrument with computer control and digital imaging facilities (a possible instrument is illustrated below). This project will:

- Provide publicly accessible research grade astronomical observatory.
- Offer visitors opportunities to participate "hands on" in observing events.
- Increase the number of visitors from school and youth groups, material to support the National Curriculum and the Scout's Astronomy badge qualification will be developed.
- Provide access for the disabled and infirm.
- Provide a safer observing environment for all.
- Increase the number of members able to support the Community Access Programme.



New Horizons, New Telescope?

In December 2005 the Society was informed that a grant application to the Community Fund - Medium Grants Programme made in May 2005 was unsuccessful. In view of the lessons learned from that application the New Horizons project and funding have been subject to a thorough review to determine what alternative funding strategies or delivery models might be employed.

The New Horizons project has been broken down in to a number of component packages which can be delivered incrementally, as funds become available. In addition to seeking other grants to support the project a fund raising initiative has been launched.

The New Horizons fund raising initiative only commenced in March 2006 – close to the end of the period of this report. Society member Andrew Devey undertook a sponsored bench press of 100Kg for 100 repetitions; the income from this event will be shown in next years accounts as monies pledged had not been collected at March 31st 2006.

Meeting Room Expansion

The Society meeting room at SWMC has in recent years been near to capacity; a hoped for move to a larger ground-floor meeting room was not possible. The Executive Committee reviewed Society meeting arrangements to see how capacity might be increased and what provision could be made for disabled members or visitors in line the Disability Discrimination Act.



The extended Society meeting room

A number of alternative meeting venues were investigated; all would have resulted in an unsustainable increase in operating costs as venue hire costs could not compete with the very favourable terms the Society enjoys at SWMC. In addition the Society would lose the considerable advantages of a permanent base which houses its library and audio-visual equipment.

An agreement was reached with our landlords, SWMC, which enabled our existing meeting room to be expanded in to vacant office space. A total of £3,383 – from unrestricted funds - was spent on the project, of which £3,250 was paid to the building contractor.

Observatory Enhancement

When the Society undertook the design and construction of a new dome for the J.A. Jones Hooper observatory it was planned that the operation of the shutters would be automated. The construction of the dome was completed in early 2000 but at that time funds did not permit the addition of motor drive systems to the shutters or to rotate the dome.

The year saw the Society commit to a project to fit motor drives; this was considered an essential foundation for the New Horizons project. Funding of £2,000 was allocated from the general fund. Orders have been placed for materials and at March 31st 2006 £1,518 had been spent. Construction work, to be undertaken by members of the Society, is anticipated to be completed over summer 2006.

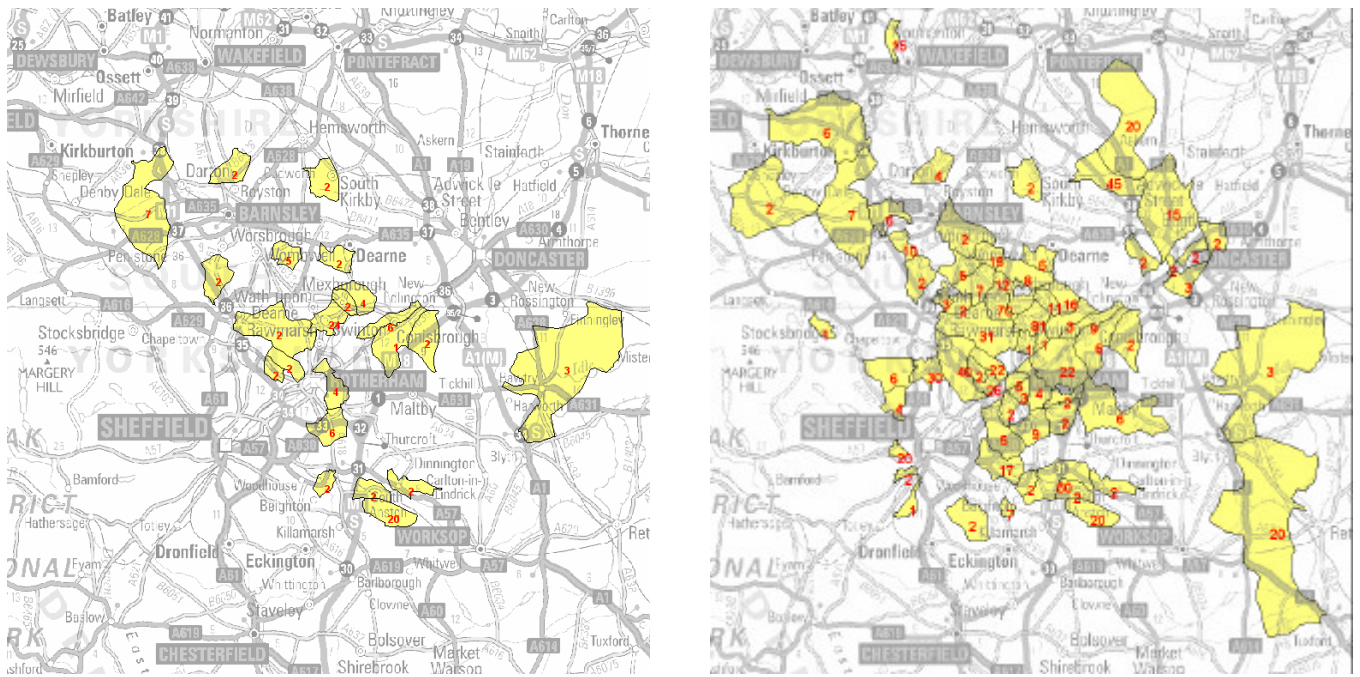


The J.A. Jones Hooper Observatory

Community Access Programme

The Society once again operated its Community Access Programme with public viewing evenings between September and March and a programme of Sunday afternoon solar viewing events over the summer. Unfortunately many of the events for which visitors have to pre-booked suffered from poor weather conditions which led to poor attendance on some of the events.

The left hand map below shows number of visitors by postal sector in the year to March 31st 2006, the map to the right shows cumulative data for the previous three years.



Maps showing the areas served by our Community Access Programme
Cartography by Philip's © Philip's, reproduced by Kind Permission.

In addition to the winter evening events a number of Solar Observing events were held on Sunday afternoons, these were based mainly at the J.A. Jones Hooper observatory though a number of outreach events were held at local country parks. These outreach events proved to be very popular with the public and a great success in raising the profile of the Society and generating funds.

Website Development and Exploitation

The Society's web site at www.msas.org.uk was completely overhauled and updated to meet the latest standards and ensure compatibility with as many web browsers as possible.

The Society has joined the Associates programme of Amazon.co.uk, the online retailer and has in the year to March 31st accrued revenue of over £200. To further develop the revenue generating potential of the website the Society enrolled with Tradedoubler.com and has joined two of its programmes – those of Dell and Jessops. These programmes have accrued over £100 to March 31st.

Yorkshire "Astromind" Quiz

The Society was proud to host the annual Yorkshire "Astromind" Quiz on September 24th 2005.

Neil Haggath accepted the invitation to act question master and setter and put a great deal of time and effort in to his discharging duties. Sadly, the level of support for this long-running regional competition was very poor and came as a disappointment to the Society.

Weekly Meeting Programme

The weekly meeting programme is a core activity of the Society. The meetings feature slide shows and presentations delivered by both professional and amateur guest speakers and members of the Society; occasionally a meeting is given over to a quiz or video presentation.

The meeting programme in the year to March 31st 2005 has provided a wide range of very good presentations on a diverse range of astronomical subjects and attendance amongst members and visitors has been maintained at a good level throughout the year.

Strategic Aims

The primary aim of the Society in the short to medium term is to secure the necessary funding to implement the New Horizons project. A number of initiatives are under consideration to achieve this objective.



Visitors enjoying a Solar Sunday event

Based on the success of the “Solar Sunday” observing outreach programme it is the intention of the Society to develop and enhance this aspect of its work with the aim of promoting astronomy (and the Society) to a wider audience.

A second line of development is the production and sale of astronomical CD-ROMs, DVDs, postcards and other astronomical souvenirs which will be offered for sale at Society events and on-line via the Society website. In developing this aim the trustees will be mindful of the distinction between primary purpose and non-primary purpose trading and the limitations set upon the latter by the statutory tax exemption for the profits of small trading carried on by charities.

Financial Policies & Commentary

Financial Management and Reserves Policies

The Society has a Financial Management Policy which defines the controls to be implemented to ensure that the Society’s assets are secure. This policy meets the requirements of the Charities Act 1993, the Charity Commission guidelines “Internal Financial Controls for Charities” and “Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice (Revised 2005)”.

The Society operates with a reserve at a level set by the trustees; currently this is £1,000. Reserves are held without any exposure to the stock market. The reserve is held to allow the Society to offset fluctuations in income receipts and to provide for contingencies.

Major Risks

The Trustees have not identified any major risks to which the Society is exposed.

Financial Performance

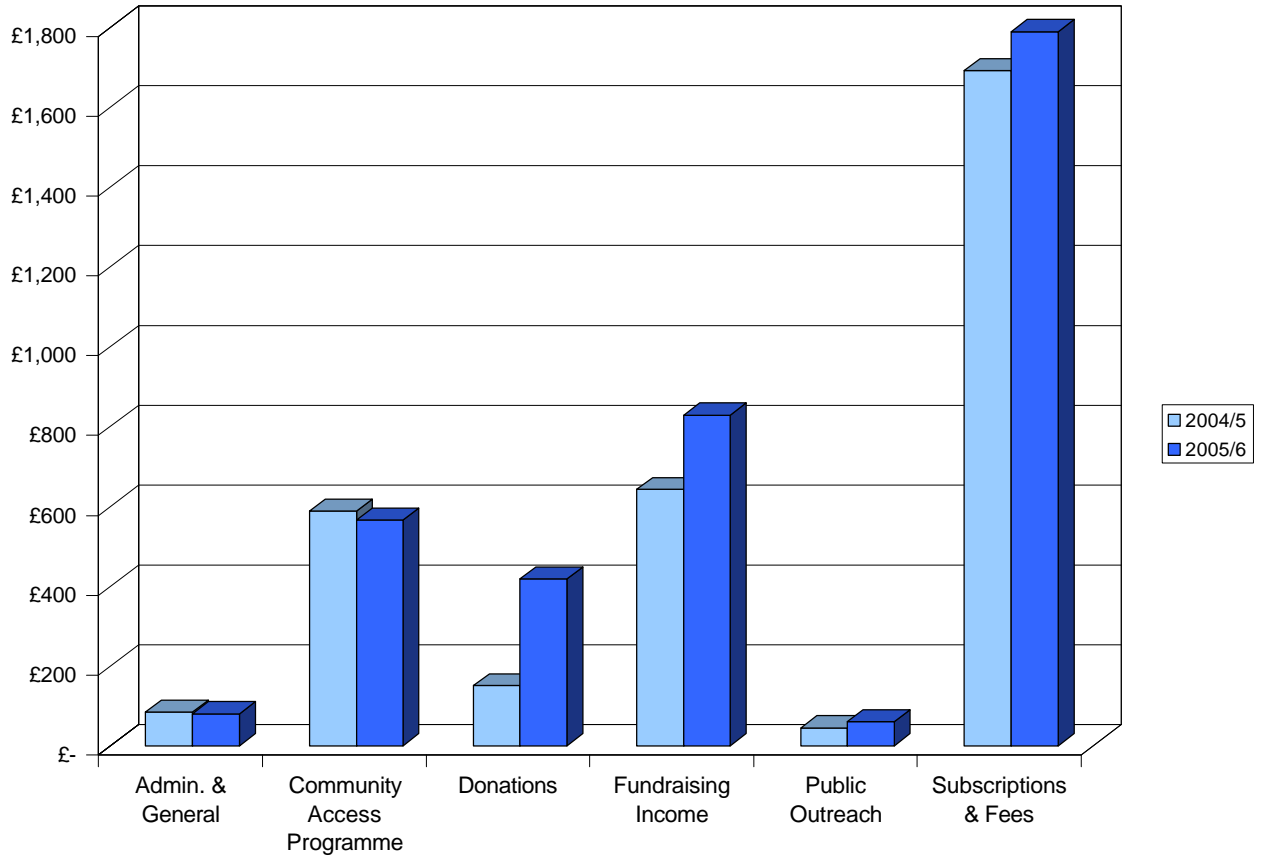
Financial performance in the year to March 31st 2006 has been broadly consistent the trustee’s forecasts and expectations.

The Society enjoys a sound financial base following a major overhaul of subscriptions and fees undertaken in February 2004; the core operating expenditure required is met by subscription and fee income; this allows for other incoming resources to be invested in developing the Society’s facilities and services.

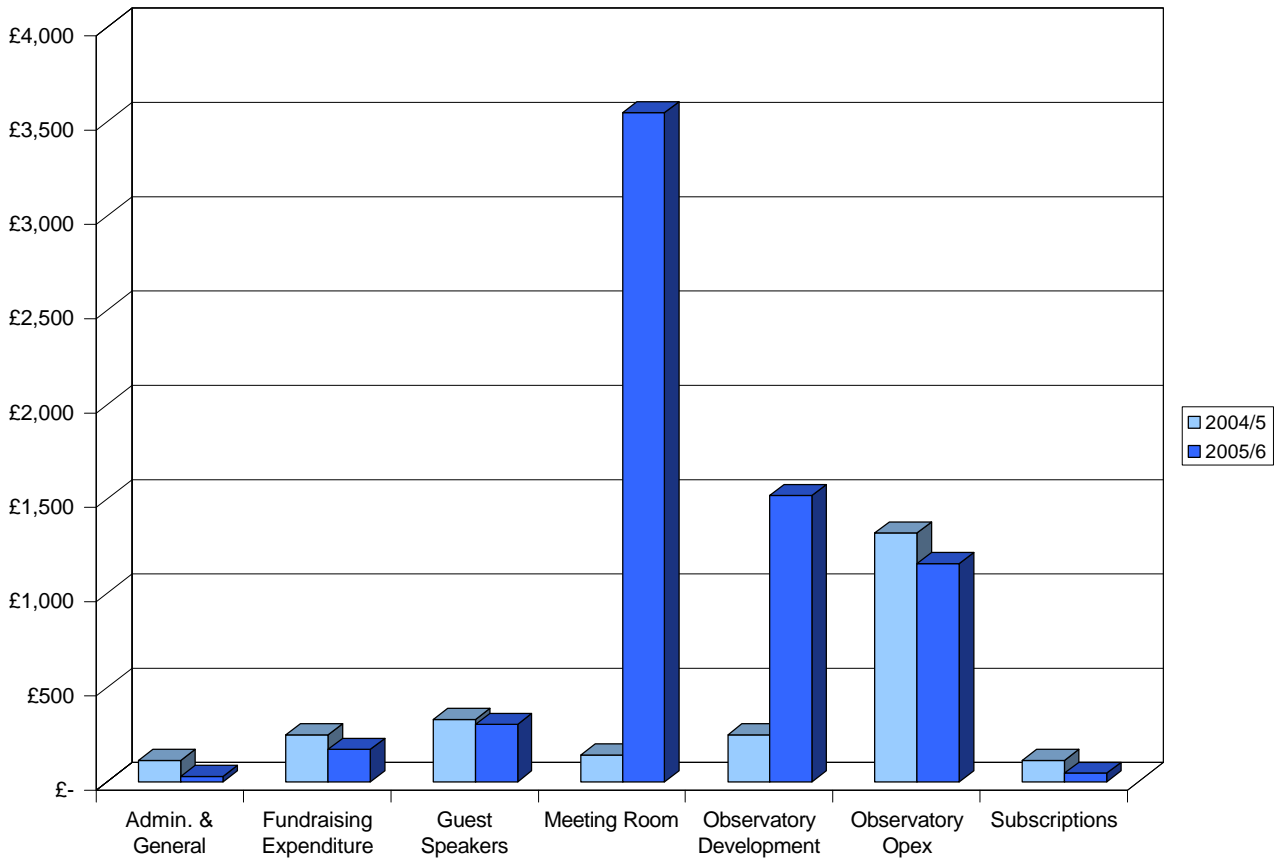
This strength has allowed the Society to commit to the expenditure required to extend the meeting room and install motor drive on the observatory shutters. These significant items of expenditure have left the Society below its stated reserve threshold at the end of the year however the trustees felt that work was essential and a valid use of reserve funds. The risk to which the Society was briefly exposed was minimal as the observatory development expenditure was deferred to as late as possible in the financial year. The trustees also carefully considered the cash flow forecasts to ensure that risk was minimised.

Total income receipts to unrestricted funds are again consistent with last year this is illustrated by the graph on the following page. Expenditure is also consistent (see the second graph on the following page) with the notable exceptions of Meeting Room and Observatory Development expenditure. These show a significant increase due to the projects noted above.

Comparison of Income with Previous Year



Comparison of Expenditure with Previous Year



Charity Trustees

Dr Allan Chapman	<i>Honorary President</i>
Mr Leslie Holmes Marsden	<i>Chair</i>
Mr Shaun O'Dell	<i>Secretary</i>
Mr Gary James Gawthrop	<i>Treasurer</i>
Mr Michael John Waterfield	<i>Deputy Chair</i>
Mrs Joyce Mary Botterill	<i>Librarian</i>
Mr Joseph Jones	<i>Observations Officer</i>
Mr Glenn Michael John Marsden	<i>IT Officer</i>
Mr Anthony John Morris	<i>Curator of Instruments & Observatory</i>
Mr Philip John Muffett	<i>Programme Co-ordinator</i>
Mr Ben Callear	
Mr Michael Kerry Collinson	
Mr Barry Jackson	

Charity Number

Registered Charity in England & Wales, N^o.1064103

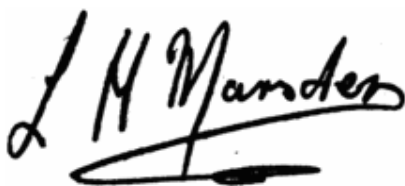
Principal Address

147 Queen Street
Swinton
Mexborough
South Yorkshire
S64 8NG

Bankers

National Westminster Bank Plc.
Bank Street
Mexborough
South Yorkshire
S64 9QE

Approved by the Executive Committee on May 5th 2006 and signed on their behalf



L.H. Marsden
Chairman

Accounts for the Year to March 31st 2006

1. Receipts & Payments Account

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds	Last Year
	to nearest £	to nearest £	to nearest £	to nearest £
Receipts				
Admin. & General	80	-	80	84
Community Access Programme	566	-	566	588
Donations	418	885	1,303	150
Fundraising Income	829	206	1,034	642
Public Outreach	60	-	60	45
Subscriptions & Fees	1,790	-	1,790	1,691
Total Receipts	3,742	1,091	4,832	3,201
Payments				
Admin. & General	30	-	30	114
Fundraising Expenditure	173	-	173	250
Guest Speakers	305	-	305	329
Meeting Room	3,549	-	3,549	144
Observatory Development	1,518	-	1,518	248
Observatory Opex	1,157	-	1,157	1,318
Subscriptions	45	-	45	114
Total Payments	6,777	-	6,777	2,518
Net of receipts/(payments)	(3,035)	1,091	(1,944)	682
Transfers between funds	-	-	-	-
Cash funds last year end	3,727	-	3,727	3,044
Cash funds this year end	692	1,091	1,782	3,727

2. Statement of Assets and Liabilities

Cash Assets

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds
	to nearest £	to nearest £	to nearest £
Bank Reserve Account	644	398	1,042
Bank Current Account	81	693	774
Cash	16	-	16
Total Cash Funds	741	1,091	1,832

See Notes

Other Assets held for functional use

All assets shown belong to the Unrestricted (General) Fund

Observatory - built c. 1990

Building and contents including astronomical telescope and associated sundries insured value. Includes members' key sets. £ 55,300

Solar Max Telescope (purchased June 2003)

Coronado 60mm Solar Max Telescope with H-alpha filter £ 3,154

Eyepiece set for Solar Max £ 246

Orion optics field tripod £ 289

GPDx Mount £ 695

Sky Sensor 2000 £ 859

Dovetail plate and counterweight £ 54

Meeting Room (Rented) Contents

Dell Inspiron Laptop (450MHz, purchased 2000) £ 1,600

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

Library £ 1,800

(books, videos, CD-ROMs; all in good condition, items of varying age)

Furnishings (purchased 1999) £ 500

£ 70,677

Notes

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

Mexborough & Swinton Astronomical Society is a registered charity and as such is governed by the Charities Act 1993. Under this Act and the Charities (Accounts and Reports) Regulations 2000, it is classified as a small charity since it has neither gross income nor total expenditure of more than £100,000 per annum. Section 42(3) of the Act therefore entitles this charity to take advantage of the more limited and simplified presentation of its financial statements. As a result of this and to be consistent with previous years, only a Receipts and Payments Account has been prepared and presented.

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 31st 2006 neither the total expenditure nor the gross income gross income of the Society exceeded £10,000 and there is therefore no requirement for independent scrutiny of these accounts.

Unpresented Cheques

The cash assets shown above include two cheques with a total value of £50 which have not been presented by the payee.

Approved by the Executive Committee on May 5th 2006 and signed on their behalf

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

L.H. Marsden
Chairman