

MEXBOROUGH & SWINTON ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

Annual Report & Statement of Accounts

For the year to March 31st 2008



Annual Report for the year ended March 31st 2008

Trustees' Report

The Trustees of Mexborough & Swinton Astronomical Society are pleased to submit their report and accounts for the year 1st April 2007 to 31st March 2008.

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 & Governance

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.

The Society 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.

The Executive Committee meet once per month and decisions are made on a simple majority basis unless Constitutional or legal requirements mandate a greater majority. The Executive Committee members also have powers and spending limits within their specific areas of responsibility which they may exercise without prior consultation; however all actions and spending must be reported to the next meeting of the trustees.

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 <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; Mr O'Dell as Membership Secretary and Mr Gawthrope as Website Co-ordinator; all FAS Council members are drawn from the Federation's member societies.

The Society made a subscription payment to the FAS of £57.00 in the year and also purchased additional Public Liability cover, to cover events held away from the Observatory and meeting room, as part of a group scheme at a cost of £40.00.

The Society's meeting room is a rented room in the Swinton Working Men's Club & Institute (SWMC). It is a requirement of the SWMC that all adult members of the Mexborough & Swinton Astronomical Society will be members of the SWMC. SWMC membership of Society members is managed by the Society and subscription payments totalling £44 were made to SWMC, in addition room rent was paid in the amount of £600.

The J.A. Jones Hooper Observatory is built on land rented from Yorkshire Water Services Ltd. for an annual rent of £50.

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 instrument with computer control and digital imaging facilities.



Paramount ME telescope drive

In the November 2007 a funding application in support of New Horizons was made to The Coalfields Regeneration Trust (<http://www.coalfields-regen.org.uk/>); the Society learned on March 28, 2008 that this application had been unsuccessful.

A further funding application had been made to The Freshgate Trust Foundation; this too was unsuccessful however the trustees of the Foundation invite the Society to re-apply when we were “closer to our target”. In light of this response the Society has decided to shift the emphasis on to the incremental programme approach to achieving the New Horizons strategic vision. It is hoped that this shift of emphasis will allow access to smaller grants to support the project.

The Society’s own fundraising efforts have continued throughout the year. In February 2008 the Society had raised sufficient funds (£6,850) to allow it to purchase the Paramount ME telescope drive (*pictured left*) – the first milestone of the New Horizons programme. At 31st March 2008 the order has been placed and we await a delivery date from the supplier.

Observatory

The Society funded, built, and operates the J.A. Jones Hooper Observatory at Hooper near Wentworth, Rotherham. The observatory was first opened in 1993 and has been an integral part of the Society’s operations since then.

The planned work to automate the observatory shutter opening and closing was not completed as of March 31st 2008; several components have been constructed to enable this work to proceed but final installation will require better weather in the coming summer. A pier to accommodate the Paramount ME has been designed and constructed and will be installed within a few weeks of the date of this report.

Weekly Meeting Programme

The weekly meeting programme is a core activity of the Society; providing benefit to both public and members alike, attendance has remained consistently high throughout the year.

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.

On March 28th 2008 the first of a series of “Beginners Evenings” was held; this particular evening was given over to the often frustrating task of setting up a telescope. The evening was a great success and proved highly popular. Further such beginners’ events are planned for the coming year; the Society is keen to ensure that newcomers to astronomy can benefit from the Society’s services and this programme, it is hoped, will become a key tool in meeting that aim.



Members and visitors at the Society meeting room

Membership

At 31st March 2008 membership of the Society totalled 48; new members David Shepherd, Tony Lloyd, James Sheard, Chris Armitage, and Bob O’Malley joined in the year to 31st March 2008. The Society extends a warm welcome to all new members.

It is with great sadness that the Society notes the passing away of our member and friend Ray Jackson on Sunday, 20 May 2007. Ray joined the Society in 1986 and became heavily involved in the construction of the observatory and served on the committee until 1997. Ray will be sorely missed by all who knew him.

On a positive note two Society members and trustees, Mr Leslie Marsden and Mr Shaun O'Dell, were elected Fellows of the Royal Astronomical Society (<http://www.ras.org.uk>).

Community Access & Public Outreach Programme

The Society once again operated its Community Access Programme (CAP) at the J.A. Jones Hooper Observatory between September and March and a programme of “drop in” solar viewing events over the summer; these are a vital in providing public benefit and publicising the Society.

Bookings for the winter CAP events totalled 392, this includes private group bookings. A total of 13 drop in solar viewing events were held at the observatory between July and September 2007.

In addition the Society has been out and about attending a number of fairs and galas to raise awareness of astronomy and the Society.

Interest in the public viewing evenings has been very high in the year and this is very encouraging. Total income from CAP and Public Outreach for the year was £1,008.



Members set up at Warmsworth Gala

Website Development and Exploitation

The Society website (<http://www.msas.org.uk>) is an essential communication tool and acts as a showcase for members' work. Migration to a new Content Management System was not completed in the year but work is underway. The Society learnt on March 28th 2008 that its online Annual Report & Statement of Accounts for the year to March 31st 2007 had reached the final shortlist in the Charities Aid Foundation's (<http://www.cafonline.org>) Charities Online Accounts Awards; the winner will be announced on April 30th 2008.

The Amazon and Tradedoubler web affiliate programmes continue to generate a steady income for the Society. In March 2008 the Society enrolled with the easysearch internet search engine, revenue is earned simply by supporters using the <http://masas.easysearch.org.uk/> search site.

Health & Safety

SWMC recently undertook a full fire risk assessment of the building and raised some concerns with the Society. As a result all electrical appliances have undergone Portable Appliance Testing (PAT), a number of members are qualified to undertake PAT testing and have kindly offered their services free of charge.

The planned installation of a fire alarm conforming to BS6389 Part 2(2002) at the observatory was completed by Firelec Safety Co. Ltd. at no cost to the Society for which the Society is very grateful.

There have been no accidents or injuries to members of the Society or visitors at the meeting room, observatory, or external event managed by the Society.

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. In addition to the on-going fundraising initiatives further grant making programmes will be investigated and pursued.

The Society will celebrate its 30th anniversary in 2008, the following year as already noted is IYA2009; the next UK National Astronomy Week (NAW) is also planned for 2009. These events all provide opportunities to raise the profile of the Society and further the objects of advancement of astronomy and its associated sciences; a key aim therefore is to prepare for and maximise these opportunities.

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 is currently operating with two funds. The General Fund is an unrestricted fund which is used for the day-to-day operation of the Society such as subscription and community access programme income, operating costs and utility bills. The New Horizons fund is a restricted fund opened in 2006 in order to support the New Horizons project fund-raising initiative; it receives donations from New Horizons specific fund-raising activities and any grants secured. When making public appeals for the New Horizons project the trustees have made provision that any surplus in the New Horizons fund on completion of the project may be transferred to the General Fund to further the objects at the trustees discretion or retained within the New Horizons fund to offset increases in operating costs arising from the capital investment which the project entails.

The Society operates with an unrestricted reserve at a level set by the trustees; currently this is £3,500. The reserve is held to allow the Society to offset fluctuations in income receipts and short term cash flow variation and to provide for contingencies. The reserve level was reviewed in the year to 31st March 2008 to reflect increased rents and utility bills. Reserves are held without any exposure to the stock market.

At March 31st 2008 the General Fund had a balance £4,605, slightly higher than the reserve level stated, a transfer to the New Horizons fund will be made to reduce this surplus.

Financial Performance

Financial performance in the year to March 31st 2008 has been broadly consistent the trustee's forecasts and expectations. Expenditure shows little overall variation; Guest Speaker expenses (£182) are however notably lower the year to 31st March 2007 (£332). The decrease is due to a combination of having fewer speakers than planned and a number of those were quite local and thus had lower travel expenses.

Community Access Programme income for the year to March 31st 2008 shows a significant increase, some 162%, on the previous year.

Subscriptions and Fees show a *prima facie* increase of 70% from £1,864 to £3,182 – however the year to March 31st 2008 includes a payment of £1,488 from HM Revenue & Customs for Gift Aid (including interest) for the period 6 April 2002 to 5 April 2006; excluding this Subscription and Fee income shows a drop of some £170 to £1,694.

Membership subscription income met a little over 73% of core operating costs for the year reducing the dependency on other income sources for supporting day-to-day operations.

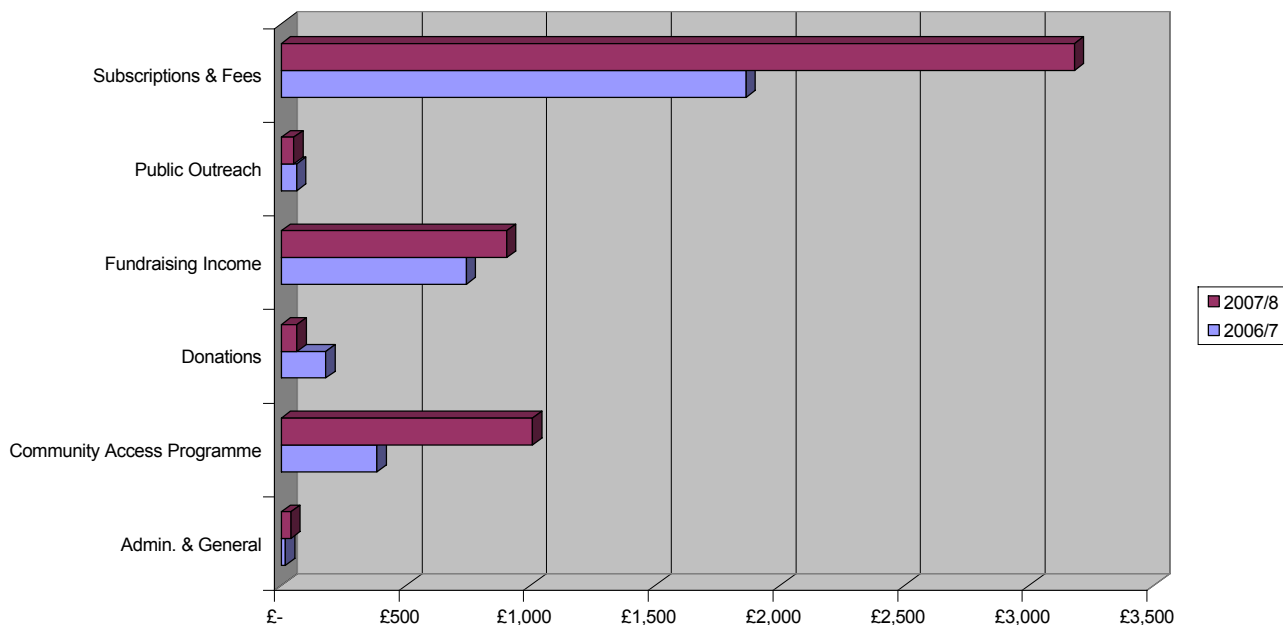
The Society receives a great deal of support in kind from the members. Members invest many hours in preparing the entertaining and informative presentations they give; though it is difficult to establish an average for the time invested a conservative estimate of 8 hours to prepare and deliver a presentation would not be unreasonable. As members cover 40 weekly meetings per year this totals some 320 hours per annum. The trustees also invest considerable time and effort both in preparing for and attending formal meetings, and discharging the duties of their individual offices. Whilst the effort will vary according to the demands of business and some officers such as the Chair, Treasurer, and Librarian are required to fulfil duties at all weekly meetings a monthly average of 20 hours per trustee would be a fair estimate (a total of 2,880 hours per annum). This time is given freely and is therefore not included as value in the accounts; however at the National Minimum Wage (£5.52 per hour) the total time invested voluntarily would have a value of £17,664 per year; the true value to the Society is of course much greater than this. In addition to time members routinely make material donations such as library items, or prizes for fund-raising raffles. Furthermore many costs such as internet hosting and stationary, printing, or postage costs are not reclaimed from the Society, reducing operating expenditure.

Major Risks

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

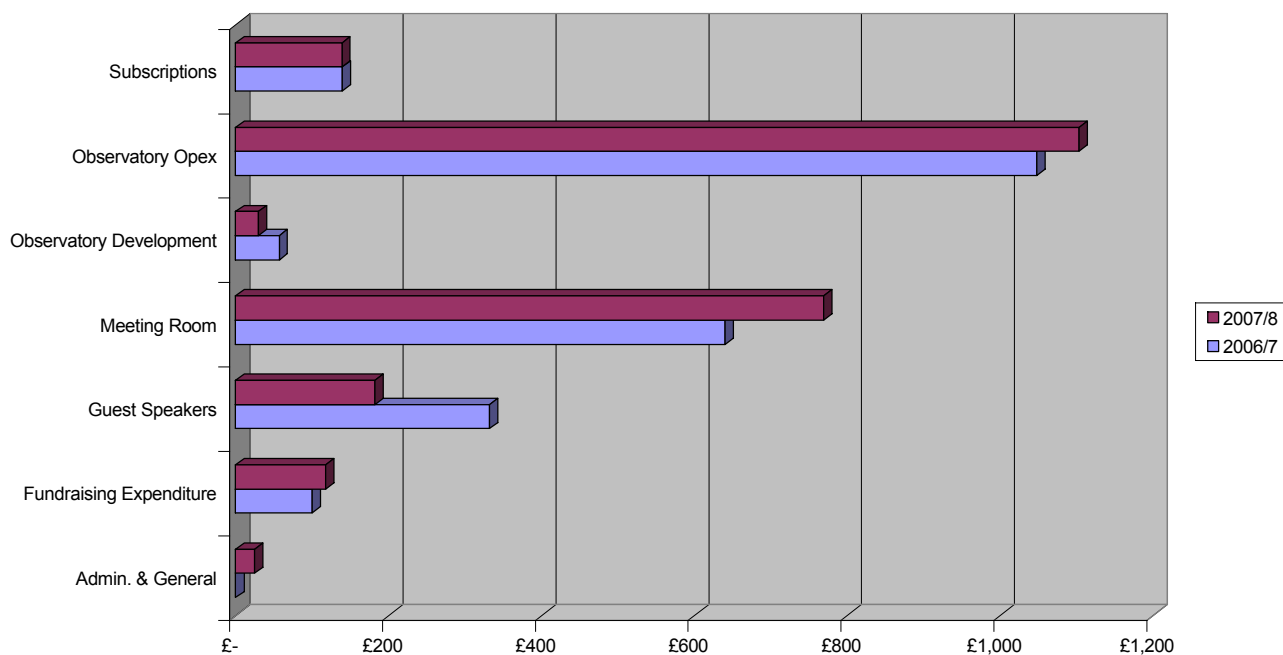
General Fund Income Comparison with Previous Year

The graph below compare General (unrestricted) fund income for the year ended March 31st 2008 with that for the year ended March 31st 2007.



General Fund Expenditure Comparison with Previous Year

The graph below compares General (unrestricted) fund expenditure for the year ended March 31st 2008 with that for the year ended March 31st 2007.



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 Paul D'Silva	<i>Fundraising Officer</i>
Mr Glenn Michael John Marsden	<i>IT Officer</i>
Mr Anthony John Morris	<i>Curator of Instruments & Observatory</i>
Mr Philip John Muffett	<i>Programme Co-ordinator</i>
Mr Barry Jackson	
Mr Michael Kerry Collinson	
Mr Andrew Devey	

Mr Muffett and Mr D'Silva are both co-opted trustees appointed after the Annual General Meeting held on May 24th 2007.

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

Insurers

Broker

Access Insurance Services
50 Chapel View
South Croydon
Surrey
CR2 7LF

Underwriter

Ansvar Insurance Company Ltd.
Ansvar House
St. Leonards Road
Eastbourne
East Sussex
BN21 3UR

Approved and adopted by a meeting of the Executive Committee on April 9th 2008 and signed on their behalf



Leslie H. Marsden FRAS
Chairman

Accounts for the Year to March 31st 2008

Receipts & Payments Account

	Unrestricted Funds to nearest £	Restricted Funds to nearest £	Total Funds to nearest £	Last Year to nearest £
Receipts				
Admin. & General	38	205	243	66
Community Access Programme	1,008	-	1,008	384
Donations	62	2,095	2,157	609
Fundraising Income	903	920	1,823	3,693
Public Outreach	50	5	55	62
Subscriptions & Fees	3,182	178	3,360	1,864
Total Receipts	5,243	3,404	8,646	6,678
Payments				
Admin. & General	25	-	25	-
Fundraising Expenditure	118	-	118	100
Guest Speakers	182	-	165	332
Meeting Room	769	-	769	640
Observatory Development	30	6,850	6,880	57
Observatory Opex	1,103	-	1,103	1,048
Subscriptions	139	-	139	140
Total Payments	2,366	6,850	9,216	2,317
Net of receipts/(payments)	2,877	(3,446)	(569)	4,361
Transfers between funds	-	-	-	-
Cash funds last year end	1,669	4,522	6,192	1,831
Cash funds this year end	4,546	1,076	5,623	6,192

Statement of Assets and Liabilities

Cash Assets

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds
	to nearest £	to nearest £	to nearest £
Nat West Current	1,862	78	1,941
<i>Add: Cheques not cleared at bank</i>	20	-	20
Nat West Savings	2,130	1,072	3,202
Transfer Account	-	-	-
Petty Cash	293	52	345
PayPal	-	133	133
Total Cash Funds	4,306	1,336	5,642

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.

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 31st 2008 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.

Cheques not cleared at bank at 31st March 2008

At 31st March 2008 the following cheques, with a total value of £20, had not cleared at the bank:

349 (20 September 2007)	Sue Cartwright	£10
356 (24 January 2008)	Sue Cartwright	£10

For comparison, the value of cheques not cleared at 31st March 2007 was £32.

Approved and adopted by a meeting of the Executive Committee on April 9th 2008 and signed on their behalf



Leslie H. Marsden FRAS
Chairman