



MEXBOROUGH & SWINTON ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

Annual Report & Statement of Accounts

For the year to March 31st 2015

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Annual Report for the year ended March 31st 2015

The trustees of Mexborough & Swinton Astronomical Society are pleased to submit their report and accounts for the period April 1st 2014 to March 31st 2015.

Achievements and Performance

The Year in 6 Numbers

36 th	35	55	1,036	15	£3,595
Year Promoting Astronomy	Community Access and Outreach Events	Society meetings	Members of the public served	Guest Speakers	Surplus for the year

Meeting Programme

The society's weekly meeting programme is a core activity which contributes greatly to the success enjoyed by the society. In the year to March 31st 2015 a total of 55 meetings were held, this mathematical curiosity is explained by the fact that in addition to the normal Thursday evening meetings two additional meetings were held on Friday evenings to accommodate guest speaker travel requirements and a special Saturday meeting was held when the society hosted the Yorkshire Astromind competition.

Total attendance across the meeting programme was 1,226 members and 131 visitors.

Our guest speakers are always a highlight of the programme and this year has been no exception. Our Honorary President, Dr Allan Chapman, gave two outstanding talks this year on the lives and works of Edmund Halley and Sir John Herschel; Dr Sue Cartwright from Sheffield University gave two excellent talks on Extra-solar Planets and The Photon, we are especially grateful to Sue who stepped in at the last minute when a booked speaker had to cancel at short notice.

Paul Money is an old friend to the society and visited to give a talk on Observing in the Arctic. Dr Bill Leatherbarrow, Director of the BAA Lunar section gave an excellent talk on the History of Lunar Observing in Britain and we hope he will be returning next year. A new speaker to our programme, Prof Albert Zijlstra gave an outstanding talk on the subject of planetary nebula. Our Christmas Lecture got the festive season started, quite literally, with a bang when Hanna Hudson-Lee, aka Hydrogen Hanna, gave a talk with several practical – and explosive – science demonstrations.

Other guest speakers in the year were Bob Christy (From Khazakhstan to Siziwang - There's Nothing New Under the Sun), Phillippa Browning (Our Active Sun), Kevin Kilburn (Manchester's First Rocket Man), Gary Poyner (Double Stars), Edward Hand (Robotic Telescopes), Francis Hickenbottom (Light & Spectra), and Harry Page (A Guide to Pixinsight).

Whilst guest speakers accounted for 15 of the 55 meeting held in the year our own members provide the majority of content. Combined guest and member speakers have delivered an informative and varied programme covering a wide range of topics in astronomy and its associated sciences. The society is grateful to all our speakers who continue to deliver a packed and excellent programme.

Community Access & Outreach Programmes

The society's Community Access and Outreach programmes are vital tools in our work to promote astronomy and its associated sciences to a wider public and provide a showcase for the society's work. The programmes also play a key role in recruiting new members to the society.

In the period covered by this report there were a total of 22 Community Access events at the J.A. Jones Hooper Observatory which attracted a total of 308 visitors. The events include both evenings with a narrated slideshow and opportunity to observe the night sky, solar observing events which offer an opportunity to view our nearest star, the Sun, safely and a special event for the partial eclipse of March 20th 2015. It is a pleasure to report that a number of events have been arranged for the benefit of local schools; this is due in no small measure to an increase in the pool of volunteers able to staff these events.

In the same period there were a total of 13 Outreach events with a combined audience of 593. Many of these events built on our relationships with our partner organisations: RSPB Old Moor, Thrybergh Country Park, Clifton Park, and Wentworth Castle and Gardens. The society places on record its gratitude to our partner organisations and their staff and volunteers whom we work so closely with.

Thrybergh Country Park hosted two events, a new "Fun Day" and our well established "A Night under the Stars". The former took place on June 29th 2014 with ten members of the society volunteering on the day. Telescopes were provided for solar viewing but sadly the weather did not cooperate which reduced the number of public taking an interest in our display.

"A Night under the Stars" event was held on September 13th 2014, the park ranger undertook a bat walk with visitors and 11 volunteers from the society attended to staff four telescopes and provide a narrated slideshow presentation called "Our Solar System". Observing conditions were poor but the event nevertheless attracted 50 visitors with a good proportion of those being campers on the Thrybergh Country Park site.

Sadly this event was marred by the theft of a society banner from the site entrance.

The society also paid a return visit to Clifton Park Walled Garden as guests of the Friends of Clifton Park; the "Planets in the Park IV" event took place on the evening of February 14th 2014. Attendance was reasonably good with 28 visitors being looked after by 8 volunteers. Although excellent presentations were provided by Tony Morris and Paul D'Silva though sadly the weather again spoiled the observational activities. Generous supplies of tea maintained those involved in good spirits.

The society has teamed up with our friends at the RSPB Old Moor reserve on 6 occasions in the past year; there were 3 "Solar Sunday" events and 3 evening events.

The solar events held on June 15th 2014, July 18th 2014, and August 17th 2014 were well supported with several members bringing their own solar observing equipment for visitors to use. The events were advertised both by society and RSPB.

The evening events were held on October 5th 2014, January 24th 2015, and March 28th 2015 and proved extremely popular with the RSPB taking bookings months in advance and frequently having to turn requests down since they are limited to 100 visitors at each event.

These are well supported events by the society and the society places on record its thanks to all members who give so generously of their time. Les Marsden did 3 talks on the Solar System at each event in the classroom, Phil Muffett showed visitors the interactive night sky using the Stellarium virtual planetarium software, and we also had a book stall.

Outside, members brought their own telescopes to show visitors the night sky. The first 2 events were relatively clear but at the last event only a few visitors who stayed to the end managed to see the Moon & Jupiter through a telescope.

The society visited Wentworth Castle Gardens twice during the year; November 29th 2014 and March 7th 2015. Poor weather kept visitors and volunteers indoors at the November event but dryer conditions prevailed in March, one of the better events at this venue.

The public were supportive whatever the weather and attendance was 35 in November and 22 in March.

Presentations were given by Les Marsden and Phil Muffett on the Solar System and the Stellarium planetarium respectively with the Solar System display and books being on show and for sale in the cafe.

The better weather conditions of the March event allowed telescopes to be used giving the public a reasonable view of the night sky.

The society wishes to place on record its appreciation of our partner organisations, their staff and volunteers who work so closely with us to promote and deliver our Outreach programme; we very much look forward to building our relationship in the year ahead.

BBC Stargazing Live

BBC Stargazing Live returned to the nation's television screens for a fourth annual series, this was a little later in the year to coincide with the partial solar eclipse visible from the UK on March 20th 2015.

Unfortunately, due to changes in BBC terms and conditions only three events were deemed to fit their criteria for inclusion under the Stargazing Live banner, furthermore the BBC "Things to do" website was removed which resulted in there restricted publicity of our events by the BBC. The society's own publicity efforts secure coverage in local media.

Messenger

The society published 11 issues of its monthly newsletter during the year, with the months of December 2014 and January 2015 being combined in to a single edition. The Messenger is edited by Roy Gunson and we are grateful to Roy for this.

Electronic distribution of the newsletter was introduced in the last year; planned enhancements to the society website will eventually simplify this and make back issues available for download to members.

Permission has been obtained to use articles from the "One Minute Astronomer" website (<http://oneminuteastronomer.com/>) provided that appropriate credit is given.

J.A. Jones Hooper Observatory

In the year to March 31st 2015 the observatory has been heavily used, on an almost weekly basis. The Imaging Group used the observatory on 39 separate occasions either imaging or image processing in addition to the usual Solar Sundays and the Community Access Programme events. The momentum built by the Imaging Group has also fed through into the annual imaging competition with a wide range of images being shown taken using the equipment in the observatory and techniques shared amongst members. The elevated use has created interest in enlarging or enhancing our present observatory to cater for the extra demands it is now seeing; a feasibility group has been working on various observatory upgrade options over the last year, further details can be found later in this report.

This year has seen a number of enhancements to the observatory equipment and also a number of equipment failures.

The electronic focuser has been installed on the C14 telescope and the primary mirror has been locked in place using components made by one of our members, Gary Gawthrope. These additions have made focussing very easy especially with the various focussing aides at our disposal. However there have been 3 separate failures of the focussing system, two of which relate to issues with the Paramount drives internal wiring and one due to failed components in the focus controller. At the time of writing a work around is being sought for the recent wiring issue as we don't want to remove the telescopes to fix the wiring.

The shutters had proved to be reliable until a total failure of the upper shutter drive. New components have been purchased and a slight re-design is being undertaken to strengthen the belt drives and bearings. The shutter drive control box power supply failed early in the year and was quickly replaced with a better specified unit from Farnells Ltd.

A new set of ladders has been purchased to provide safer access to the top of the dome from the inside.

A larger capacity 12 volt battery has been purchased for the shutter drives and will be installed with upgraded wiring once the upper shutter drives had been repaired.

The observatory grounds have been well maintained by the usual volunteers which paid dividends when representatives from Yorkshire Water, our landlords, visited the site. The dome has been scrubbed externally to remove the green deposits growing on it, it now looks much better. Thanks to our members involved in this activity.

The outsides of the top of the shutters are in quite a bad state again with rust showing and flaking paint, a complete clean and re-paint will be required in the summer of 2015.

Observatory Improvement and Extension Feasibility Study

With the increased use of the observatory several members of the society were concerned with the lack of space and facilities at the J.A. Jones Observatory. A proposal was passed at the AGM 2014 to explore possible solutions. All members were invited to take part in the project.

A group of 11 members has been formed and met four times in the year.

The remit developed and agreed by the group was to explore options to provide:

1. Toilet – with disabled access.
2. Small kitchen area –sink, kettle, microwave, hot and cold running water.
3. Space for at least 6 members to use computers in comfort.
4. Space for a large table to study star maps (up to A2).
5. Larger presentation space for 10 people and 2 presenters.

In addition the group also identified two options for investigation

1. A maximum 5m X 5m extension.
2. A zero extension, rearranging the current use of space.

The group explored the need for a water supply and waste management system. It is the latter which has created a 'pinch point'. Yorkshire Water, the land owner, has been contacted and are considering our request to install a waste storage tank (water and toilet waste) on the site.

Through our contact with Yorkshire Water the possibility of the society buying the land has arisen; currently Yorkshire Water is exploring both possibilities on our behalf and the group will continue with its work once further information is received from the company.

Membership

At March 31st 2015 membership of the society was 47; the society has accepted eight new members in the year and we extend a warm welcome to them.

Accommodation

In our report for the year ended March 31st 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.). A number of alternatives have been investigated but none, to date, has offered quality, dedicated alternative accommodation.

Representatives of the society attended the Annual General Meeting of Swinton Bottom Club Ltd. in March 2015, the clubs accounts were in equal measure alarming and depressing. The trustees are urgently considering options for relocation, including emergency measures should the worst happen leaving the society homeless at very short notice.

Financial Review

Financial Performance

Financial performance in the year to March 31st 2015 has been broadly consistent with the trustee's forecasts and expectations; a surplus of income over expenditure of £3,595 was achieved for the year compared to £3,112 in the year to March 31st 2014.

The year ended with a general (and sole) fund balance of £23,790 (compared £20,196 for the same date last year). Detailed accounts can be found on page 10.

Income

Income receipts for the year totalled £7,963 – an apparent decrease of £627 (7.3%); however the year to March 31st 2014 included prize money from the ICAEW Charities Online Financial Reporting Awards (COFRA) of £2,250 and the year to March 31st 2015 included a back-dated Gift Aid claim settlement income of £1,751. Removing these atypical transactions from the analysis would result in a year-on-year drop in income of £127 (2%).

The society's income is generally healthy and remains consistent with previous performance, Figure 1 illustrates the comparison of income in the current and previous years.

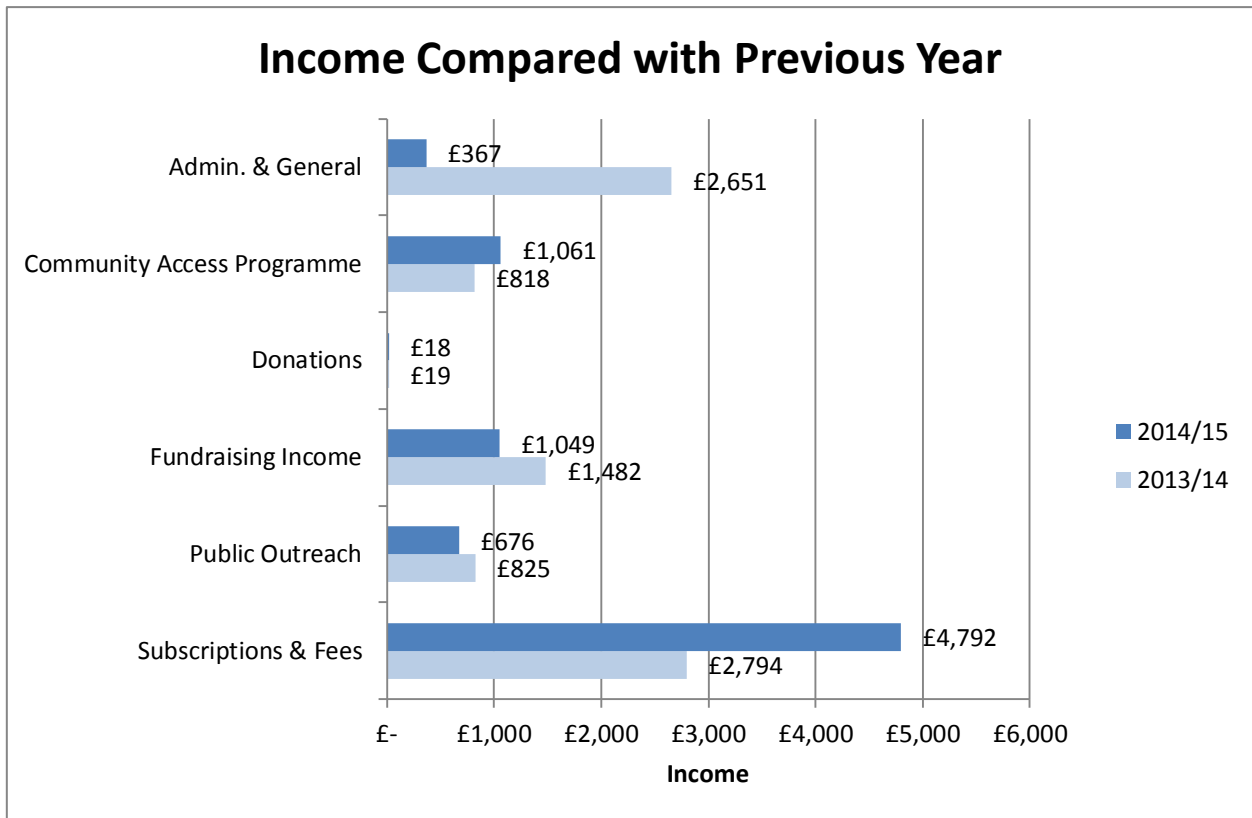


Figure 1 Comparison of Income with Previous Year

Administrative & General has fallen by a little over £400 (8.5%) – once the previous year COFRA prize mentioned above is excluded. This is largely due to the reduced interest rate offered on the Virgin Charity account which earned interest of £287 this year compared with £350 for its first full year of operation. This income still 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 £1,061, very nearly 30% more than in the previous year (£818). This can be attributed to a hugely successful programme which has proved incredibly popular with the public. A greater number of events have been provided as noted elsewhere in this report.

Public Outreach is another major source of income however in the year ended March 31st 2015 this stream suffered a year-on-year decrease of 18% from £825 to £676. The number of events offered, in collaboration with our partner organisations, has changed little attendance at these events has been more varied. In some cases this is simply due to poor weather conditions deterring the public from attending events which do not require pre-booking.

Fundraising Income for the year to March 31st 2015 was £1,049 compared to £1,482 to the same date last year – a drop of £433 (29%). The accounts for last year included a £300 income and corresponding expenditure for a planned member’s visit to Bletchley Park which had to be cancelled. Excluding this the fall year-on-year is a more modest £133 (9%) which is largely due to variable book sales at outreach events – due in part to lack of volunteers to man the sales desk and, of course, to the varied attendance just noted.

Commissions from Amazon and EasyFundraising continue to accrue steadily, totalling £132 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.

Donations income remained virtually unchanged, incoming donations totalled £18 compared to £19 last year. 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, our primary source of income – Subscriptions and Fees shows a headline increase of £1,998 (71.5%) to £4,792 for the year. This is largely due to the submission and settlement of a Gift Aid claim to HMRC for the period April 1st 2010 to March 31st 2013. This resulted in income of £1,751 which includes interest payments.

Excluding Gift Aid income Subscriptions and Fees income is still higher by some £247 (8.9%) – this is especially significant since subscription rates for both periods remained consistent and can only be attributed directly to increased membership.

It should be noted that the Gift Aid claim referred to above was the first made by the society using the new HMRC online submission system. Now that the use of this system has been established further claims for the periods April 1st 2013 to March 31st 2014 and April 1st 2014 to March 31st 2015 will be progressed; once these have been completed Gift Aid claim processing for future years will become part of the society’s normal year end accounting and reporting activities.

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 31st 2015.

Expenditure

Expenditure for the year totalled £4,368 – a drop of a little over 20% on the previous year (£5,477) 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.

Figure 2 below shows expenditure for the current year compared with the previous year.

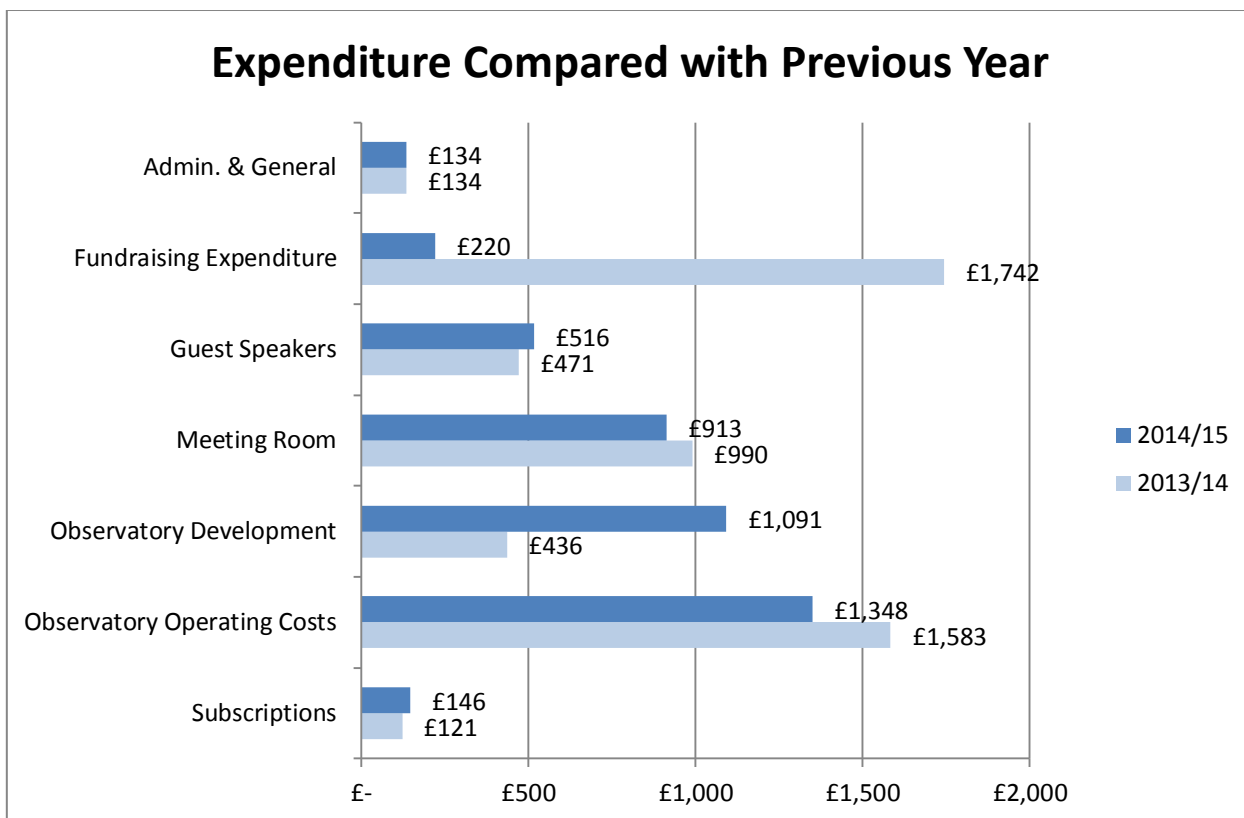


Figure 2 Comparison of Expenditure with Previous Year

Administrative & General was identical for the year to March 31st 2015 and the year to March 31st 2014 at £134. £35 is the registration fee levied by the Information Commissioner's Office which is an annual expenditure. Other Administrative & General costs were the cost of cutting key sets for the observatory (£49) and purchasing solar viewers for partial solar eclipse events (£50).

Meeting Room expenditure is changed little from year-to-year at £913 compared to £990; in both years rent paid to Swinton Bottom Club Ltd. accounted for £900. The slight decrease year-on-year relates to differing sundry purchase requirements, for example in the year to March 31st 2014 a vacuum cleaner was purchased for the meeting room.

Observatory Operating Expenditure has fallen by £235 from £1,583 as of March 31st 2014 to £1,348 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 (£804) 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.

Land rent was £90 per annum, the same as the previous year, whilst electricity costs rose from £264 to £315 per annum (an increase in excess of 19%).

The long-term undertaking entered into with our insurance broker limited the annual increase to just 0.25% to the £804 (£802 for the previous year) mentioned above. Telephone service remained constant at £60 per year. Non-domestic rates had an annual increase of 1.3% to £78 (£77), this figure includes the 80% mandatory charitable relief.

The total for the year to March 31st 2014 also included £290 for replacement batteries, charger, and vacuum cleaner for the observatory which did not need to be repeated in the period of this report.

Subscription expenditure for the year has increased from £121 to £146 – this is largely a result of the success of the society in attracting and retaining members. Our subscriptions to Swinton Bottom Club Ltd. increased from £78 to £90 as a direct result of our growth, similarly subscription rates to the Federation of Astronomical Societies (FAS) increased as we moved from being classed as a medium to a large society (£28 rather than £23 per annum, both figures reflect the application of the FAS prompt payment discount). The FAS also stopped discounting its PLI premium which added a small amount (£8).

The expenditure categories above form the core operating costs of the society, if one-off expenses are excluded the non-discretionary spend is around £2,442 which is comfortably met by subscription and fees income of £3,041 (once backdated Gift Aid income is excluded). In the year to March 31st 2015 core operating costs equated to 80% of subscription income.

Guest Speaker expenses have risen by 9.5% from £471 to £516 in the year to March 31st 2015 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 31st 2015 was £1,091, up £655 on the previous year (£436). This increased spend has been largely fuelled by increased use of the observatory and our desire as a society to offer first class facilities to our members and the wider public.

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 fell by 87% from £1,742 in the year to March 31st 2014 to £220 at the date of this report. Two items included in last year's accounts however distort the accounts should be excluded in order to give a fair evaluation of how Fundraising Expenditure compares year-on-year. Firstly, payment of the £1,011 balance for the Malham Tarn Field Studies Centre weekend (monies collected and reported in the year to March 31st 2013) 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 to March 31st 2014, compared to £220 at the date of this report. The expenditure is mainly the purchase of stock for the society book sales.

Stock

As of March 31st 2015 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 £29,250 at National Minimum Wage rates of October 2014 of £6.50 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 31st 2015 the Society had no funds in material deficit.

Major Risks

In our Annual Report and Statement of Accounts for the year ended March 31st 2014 we identified a single major risk relating to our accommodation at Swinton Bottom Club. The club had been reporting year-on-year losses which cannot be sustained indefinitely. We are gravely concerned that the latest set of accounts available from Swinton Bottom Club show a loss; it must be recognized that Swinton Bottom Club Ltd. are operating in a very difficult market and accommodation must therefore continue to be considered a major risk to the society.

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 31st 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 31st 2015 the General Fund had a balance £23,790 (compared to £20,196 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.

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 1st 2015 and the finance sub-committee are recommending that subscription rates are held for the year commencing April 1st 2016.

Approved and adopted by a meeting of the Executive Committee on May 6th 2015 and signed on their behalf,

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

Leslie H. Marsden FRAS
Chairman

Accounts for the Year ended March 31st 2015

Receipts & Payments Account

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds	Last Year
	to nearest £	to nearest £	to nearest £	to nearest £
Receipts				
Admin. & General	367	-	367	2,651
Community Access Programme	1,061	-	1,061	818
Donations	18	-	18	19
Fundraising Income	1,049	-	1,049	1,482
Public Outreach	676	-	676	825
Subscriptions & Fees	4,792	-	4,792	2,794
Total Receipts	7,963	-	7,963	8,589
				17,178
Payments				
Admin. & General	134	-	134	134
Fundraising Expenditure	220	-	220	1,742
Guest Speakers	516	-	516	471
Meeting Room	913	-	913	990
Observatory Development	1,091	-	1,091	436
Observatory Operating Costs	1,348	-	1,348	1,583
Subscriptions	146	-	146	121
Total Payments	4,368	-	4,368	5,477
Net of receipts/(payments)	3,595	-	3,595	3,112
Transfers between funds	-	-	-	-
Cash funds last year end	20,196	-	20,196	17,084
Cash funds this year end	23,790	-	23,790	20,196

Statement of Assets and Liabilities

Cash Assets

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds
	to nearest £	to nearest £	to nearest £
NatWest Current	1,533	-	1,533
<i>Add: Cheques not cleared at bank</i>	-	-	-
NatWest Savings	4,636	-	4,636
NatWest Transfer Account	-	-	-
Virgin Charity Account	17,480	-	17,480
Petty Cash	142	-	142
PayPal	-	-	-
Total Cash Funds	23,790	-	23,790

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
Solar Max Telescope (purchased June 2003)	
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
Meeting Room (Rented) Contents	
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
Library	
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
Sale Items for Fundraising	
Books – Assorted stock	136
Phil Turner Legacy	
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
	93,534

Notes to the Accounts

Restricted Funds

The society closed its New Horizons restricted fund on March 31st 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 31st 2015; 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

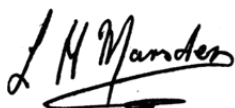
In the year ended March 31st 2015 gross income did not exceeded £25,000 and therefore, in accordance with the sections 144 & 145 of the Charities Act 2011 no audit or independent examination is required and no such scrutiny requirement is imposed by the Society's governing document.

Cheques not cleared at bank at 31st March 2015

At 31st March 2015 there were no cheques issued by the society which had not cleared at the bank.

For comparison, at 31st March 2014 there were no cheques issued by the society which had not cleared at the bank.

Approved and adopted by a meeting of the Executive Committee on May 6th 2015 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 31st 2015

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 & Observatory</i>
Mr Philip John Muffett	<i>Programme Co-ordinator</i>
Mr Michael John Hall	<i>Observations Officer</i>
Mr Michael Kerry Collinson	
Mr Stephen Taylor	
Mr Roy Gunson	

Other Charity Trustees in the year to March 31st 2015

Mr Trevor Worall	<i>Did not seek re-election at the Annual General Meeting</i>
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Patrons as of March 31st 2015

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 May 23rd 2013; this is available at 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 March 31st 2015 the Society had a membership of 47.

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 31st 2015 a total of 13 formal meetings took place. Attendance at these meetings, shown as meetings attended/meetings eligible to attend was as follows: L. Marsden (13/13), S. O'Dell (11/13), M. Waterfield (6/13), G. Marsden (8/13), G. Gawthrope (13/13), J. Botterill (2/13), P. Muffett (5/13), A. Morris (10/13), P. D'Silva (11/13), T. Worrall (2/3), M. Hall (6/10), M. Collinson (9/13), S. Taylor (12/13), and R. Gunson (11/13).

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.

Two trustees of Mexborough & Swinton Astronomical Society, Shaun O'Dell and Gary Gawthrope, have in the year to March 31st 2015 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 £28 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 £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 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 £90 were made in the year, in addition room rent was paid in the amount of £90.

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 31st 2015.

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 May 6th 2015 and signed on their behalf



Leslie H. Marsden FRAS
Chairman