




MEXBOROUGH & SWINTON ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

Annual Report & Statement of Accounts

For the year to 31 March 2018

Available online

 msas.org.uk/annual-reports/2018



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Annual Report for the year ended 31 March 2018

The trustees of Mexborough & Swinton Astronomical Society are pleased to present their report and accounts for the period 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018.

Achievements and Performance

The Year in 5 Numbers

14	54	788	14	£2,141
Community Access and Outreach Events	Society meetings	Members of the public served	Guest Speakers	General Fund Surplus for the year

Meeting Programme

The meeting programme was again the backbone of our operations and a total of 54 meetings were provided, of these 13 were presented by visiting guest speakers with the remaining meetings given by our own members. The topics covered included a wide range of both practical and theoretical astronomy and its associated sciences. Attendance at these meetings was 883 members and 155 visitors.

We would like to thank all our members for providing such a rich and varied programme and thank our guest speakers: Jost Migenda, Dr Justyn Maund, Paul Money, Katie Tehrani, Kevin Kilbrn, Rod Hind, Prof Carlton Baugh, Prof Dan Tovey, Prof Albert Zijlstra, Dr Sue Cartwright, Dr Alan Chapman, and Prof Brad Gibson

Last year's 'Planet Imaging' programme was followed up with a 'Solar Imaging' course which consisted of one theory lecture, 6 supported viewing sessions, a solar filter workshop and an image processing workshop over the course of the summer. Many thanks to Paul Graham from Rotherham College of Art & Technology for helping with the solar filters and Mick Nicholls for sharing his expertise.

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.

Our Community Access Programme is run from the J.A. Jones Hooper Observatory and provided 13 events this year, of these 5 were open to the public whilst 8 were provided to school or community organisations. Our visitors this year included Herringthorpe School, 46th Rotherham Cubs, 11th Rotherham Scouts, Wybourn School, High Green Scouts, Grenoside Guides, 82nd Beavers, and 33rd Chapletown Scouts. In total we had 240 visitors to the observatory in through this programme.

For several years the society has been working in partnership with other groups and venues to offer our outreach programme.

Five events were planned in conjunction with the local RSPB Old Moor reserve. Sadly, our solar Sunday programme had received little support from either the public or our members and it was decided to offer only a single event in 2017/18; this was on 13 August 2017. Five members of the society volunteered for the event and interest from visitors to Old Moor was significantly better than the previous year with approximately 40 people showing an interest in our offering, thankfully it was a reasonably clear day which helped us engage with the public.

Four evening events were planned for 7 October 2017, 11 November 2017, 13 January 2018, and 17 March 2018. The first of these was a good night attracting 95 visitors who showed a keen interest despite cloudy conditions. The November and January events were also plagued by poor observing conditions but still attracted 92 and 52 visitors respectively. Sadly, the 17 March event was cancelled due to severe weather conditions.

We also held two events at Thrybergh Country Park, the first "A Night Under the Stars" was on 2 September 2017. This event attracted serious interest from 25 visitors – no doubt stimulated by the good viewing and clear skies, indoors presentations were offered in the cafeteria for people to enjoy along with some refreshment. The second event was a Funday at Thrybergh Country Park on 16 September 2017, whilst our volunteers were a little thin on the ground some 40 visitors showed an interest in our offering.

On 17 February 2018, the society made a return visit to Clifton Park for “Planets in the Park VII”. Our standard display was on show along with plenty of free literature for all and our book stall achieved sales of £35. It was a good night with a few hours of clear skies giving our guests ample opportunity to make use of the 5 telescopes present. Several visitors brought their own telescopes wanting advice on how to set up and use them; this was willingly provided! In addition, there were two presentations in doors using the Stellarium planetarium software. It was estimated that 45 people attend and all said that they had enjoyed it.

We extend our thanks to the staff and volunteers at RSPB Old Moor, Thrybergh Country Park, and Friends of Clifton Park for their continued support.

Observatory & Instruments

There was a total of 73 days in the year when the observatory was used; 31 of the visits were for maintenance or administrative purposes, 23 visits were for night sky observations, 12 visits involved Community Access Programme events, 5 visits were for solar observing and 2 visits were for talking to local media when Radio Sheffield visited.

A total of 25 different members (67% of membership) attended the observatory at least once.

Project Aquarius

Our project to improve the facilities at the JA Jones Hooper Observatory has made slow progress through the year. The continuing call on smaller grant makers to fund gaps in social care and amenities has led them to redirecting their efforts away from projects such as ours. The trustees allocated £15,000 to the project because of continuing strong fundraising in house (through our community access, outreach, and fundraising efforts).

In addition, a delegate was sent on a National Lottery grant application course in December 2017 run by the South Yorkshire Funding Advice Bureau. This has led to award of a grant from National Lottery Awards for All (England) of £9,761 towards the project. Whilst we await decisions from other grant providers such as the South Yorkshire Community Foundation, the trustees decided to proceed with the project. Work will commence on the 1 May 2018 with the completion date as 1 October 2018. The JA Jones Hooper Observatory will be closed during this period.

A new dedicated fund has been established to support Project Aquarius.

Messenger

11 issues of the society newsletter were issued through the year.

Membership

At 31 March 2018 membership of the society was 37.

Solstice Dinner

The 2017 solstice dinner was held on 23 June 2017 at the Rotherham Golf Club, Thrybergh and 33 members and guests attended. The main speaker was our Honorary President Dr Alan Chapman.

Accommodation

In our report for the year ended 31 March 2013 we identified as a major risk the long-term future of our accommodation at Swinton Working Men’s Club which is owned and operated by Swinton Bottom Club Ltd. (SBC Ltd) Several alternatives have been investigated but none, to date, has offered quality, dedicated alternative accommodation.

The most recent accounts from SBC Ltd. (to 31 December 2017) do not make for pleasant reading, showing further losses and depletion of cash reserves; the risk of SBC Ltd. failing due to a cashflow crisis must now be regarded as very high. Whilst options for future accommodation are still being considered our operating costs in the short to medium term would radically increase should SBC Ltd. cease trading – at present the cost of using our room is around £5 per hour whilst room hire from a local library, for example, is £25 per hour. Additionally, there would be potential extra costs to store our equipment until a permanent new venue can be found.

The trustees invite suggestions for alternative accommodation from all members and urge them to keep a keen lookout for possible venues.

Financial Review

Financial Performance

Financial performance in the year to 31 March 2018 has been broadly consistent with the trustee's forecasts and expectations; a surplus of income over expenditure of £2,141 was achieved for the general, unrestricted, fund compared to £4,864 in the year to 31 March 2017 however the previous year figure includes a significant bequest of £5,000 without which the year would have resulted in a slight deficit.

The year ended with a general fund balance of £33,064 (compared £30,923 for the same date last year). It should also be noted that £15,000 of the general fund has been designated for project Aquarius and fund-to-fund transfers will be made as required as Project Aquarius progresses.

A new restricted Project Aquarius fund was opened in February 2018 when the National Lottery Awards for All (England) was confirmed and has a balance at year end of £9,761.

Detailed accounts can be found on page 6.

Income

Figure 1 compares general fund income in the year to 31 March 2018 with the previous year.

Overall income receipts for the year totalled £5,421 – a marked decrease on the previous year which included the £5,000 Jeff Williams bequest.

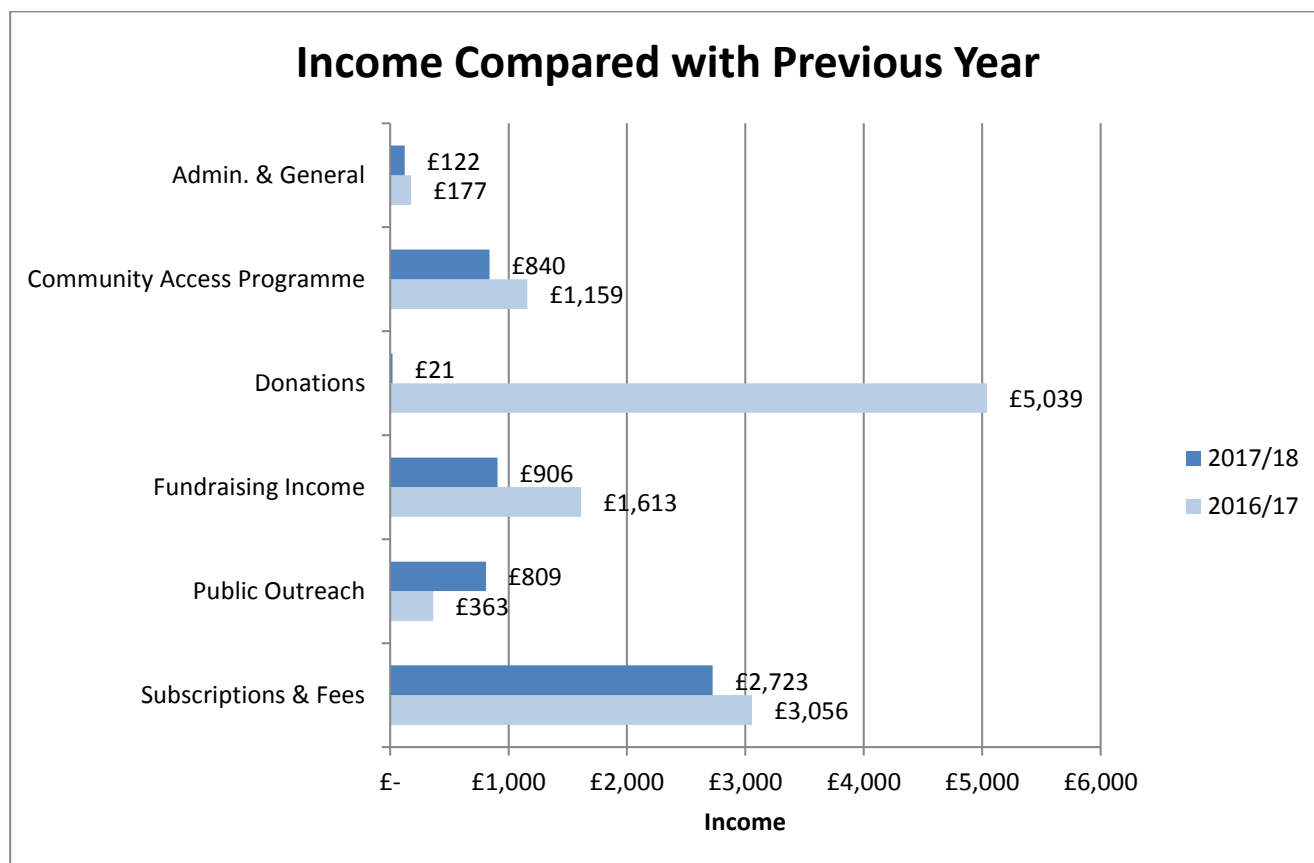


Figure 1 Comparison of General Fund Income with Previous Year

Administrative & General income has fallen year-on-year by £55, this is mainly due to lower interest rates on our Virgin Charity Account.

Our Community Access Programme income has also decreased by £319 due to running fewer events and offering lower fees to school and youth groups visiting the observatory.

As has already been stated Donations income in the year to 31 March 2017 was significantly higher than to the same date in 2018 as the former included a one-off bequest of £5,000.

Fundraising income shows a marked decrease of £706 from £1,613 in the year to 31 March 2017; however, some of this difference is expected to be received in the next financial year due to the timing of events.

Public Outreach shows a healthy increase to £809 in the year to 31 March 2018 compared to £363 to the same date last year; this is mainly due to an increased number of events – particularly those with the RSPB. It should be noted that at year-end an invoice of £114 is still outstanding for our most recent RSPB joint event.

Finally, Subscriptions & Fees have fallen by £333 due to a decreased membership.

Expenditure

General fund expenditure for the year totalled £3,280 – significantly less than the previous year (£6,544) and this is illustrated in Figure 2.

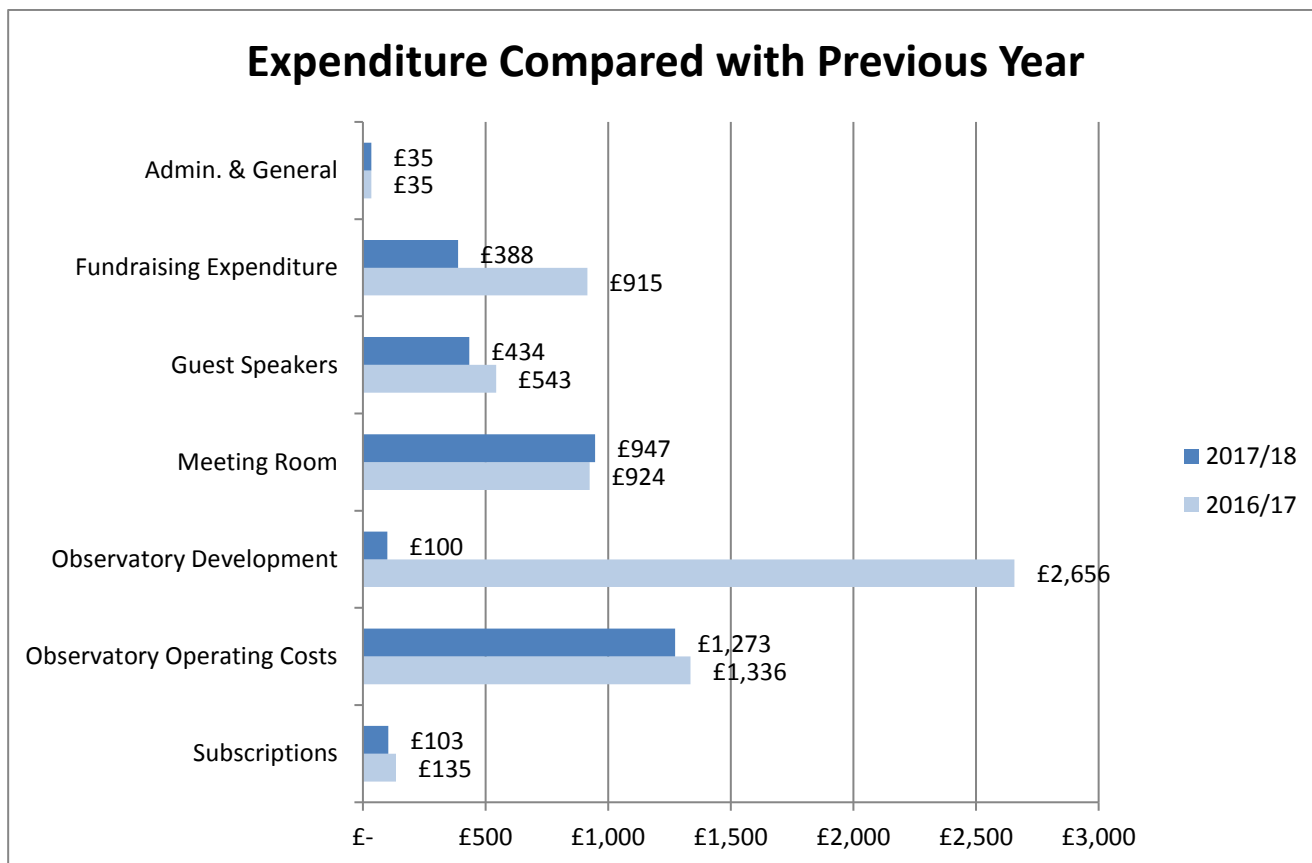


Figure 2 Comparison of General Fund Expenditure with Previous Year

Administrative & General expenditure shows no change with the previous year.

Fundraising expenditure has fallen by £527 year-on-year, this is explained by only deposits for the Solstice Dinner having been paid at 31 March 2018.

Guest Speaker expenses have fallen by £109 to £434 at the end of the year due to the number of guest speakers who make no charge for their services for which we are very grateful.

Meeting room expenditure shows little variation year-on-year with a very modest increase of £23 – this is solely due to sundry items which fall due for replacement; the most significant contributor to this expenditure is the £900 rent paid for our meeting room.

Observatory Development shows a marked fall from £2,656 in the year to 31 March 2017 and £100 at the same date in 2018; this is due to the previous year including the purchase of the land on which the observatory is situated.

Observatory Operating Expenditure shows a slight fall of £63 due to reduced energy bills.

Subscriptions also shows a slight drop of £32 due to reduced subscriptions to Swinton Bottom Club Ltd.

The society benefits greatly from members and supporters who work on our development projects on a voluntary basis which further help reduce costs.

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 £323,750 at National Living Wage rates of April 2017 of £7.50 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 these contributions.

Funds Materially in Deficit

As at 31 March 2018 the Society had no funds in material deficit.

Major Risks

In our Annual Report and Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2014 we identified a single major risk relating to our accommodation at Swinton Bottom Club Ltd. It must be recognized that Swinton Bottom Club Ltd. is operating in a very difficult market and the ongoing use of our rented accommodation must continue to be considered a major risk to the society. We noted earlier the very real risk of an unsustainable rise in our operating costs in the short-to-medium term if temporary accommodation had to be rented.

Financial Management and Reserves Policies

The Society has a Financial Management Policy which meets the requirements of the Charities Act 2011, the Charity Commission guidelines "Internal Financial Controls for Charities" and "Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice (Revised 2005)".

The General Fund is unrestricted and is used for the day-to-day operation of the Society. The Project Aquarius restricted fund was opened in the year to 31 March 2018. At that date, it had a balance of £9,761.

Reserves are held without any exposure to the stock market.

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

At 31 March 2018, the General Fund had a balance £33,064 (compared to £30,923 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 must be prepared to seek alternative accommodation, possibly at short notice. Furthermore £15,000 has been designated from the general fund to support project Aquarius.

In the year to 31 March 2018 core operating expenditure accounted for ~95% of subscription and fee income – or 113% if guest speaker expenditure is included. In calculating this any subscriptions received in advance for the year 2018/9 have been excluded.

Approved and adopted by a meeting of the Executive Committee on 18 April 2018 and signed on their behalf,



Leslie H. Marsden FRAS
Chairman

Accounts for the Year ended 31 March 2018

Receipts & Payments Account

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds	Last Year
	to nearest £	to nearest £	to nearest £	to nearest £
Receipts				
Admin. & General	122	9,761	177	177
Community Access Programme	840	-	1,159	1,159
Donations	21	-	5,039	5,039
Fundraising Income	906	-	1,613	1,613
Public Outreach	809	-	363	363
Subscriptions & Fees	2,723	-	3,056	3,056
Total Receipts	5,421	9,761	15,182	11,408
Payments				
Admin. & General	35	-	35	35
Fundraising Expenditure	388	-	388	915
Guest Speakers	434	-	434	543
Meeting Room	947	-	947	924
Observatory Development	100	-	100	2,656
Observatory Operating Costs	1,273	-	1,273	1,336
Subscriptions	103	-	103	135
Total Payments	3,280	-	3,280	6,544
Net of receipts/(payments)	2,141	9,761	11,902	4,864
Transfers between funds	-	-	-	-
Cash funds last year end	30,923	-	30,923	23,790
Cash funds this year end	33,064	9,761	42,825	30,923

Statement of Assets and Liabilities

Cash Assets

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds
	to nearest £	to nearest £	to nearest £
NatWest Current	4,313	9,761	14,074
<i>Add: Cheques not cleared at bank</i>	30	-	30
NatWest Savings (Closed)	-	-	-
NatWest Transfer Account	-	-	-
Virgin Charity Account	28,392	-	28,392
Petty Cash	359	-	359
PayPal	-	-	-
Total Cash Funds	33,094	9,761	42,855

Other Assets held for functional use

All assets shown belong to the Unrestricted (General) Fund

Observatory building and members' key sets.	54,600
Observatory Land (purchased 2017)	250
Paramount ME Robotic Telescope System	6,850
Takahashi TOA 130 wide-field telescope	3,710
Celestron C14 Schmidt-Cassegrain telescope	3,500
Focuser TCF-3 w/ Paramount Wiring Kit	1,400
Takahashi 50mm Eyepiece	355
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	
Optoma EH415e Video Projector & accessories (purchased 2016)	1,037
Phillips Data Projector (purchased 2000)	3,500
Overhead projector (purchased 1996)	300
Kodak Slide Projector (purchased 1996)	1,300
Panasonic AG7350 SVHS video recorder (s/h price)	1,000
DVD Player	60
Amplifier	20
Furnishings (purchased 1999)	500
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	220
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
	94,205

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 2018; 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

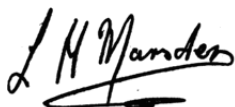
In the year ended 31 March 2018 gross income did not exceed £25,000 and therefore, in accordance with the sections 144 & 145 of the Charities Act 2011 no audit or independent examination is required and no such scrutiny requirement is imposed by the Society's governing document.

Cheques not cleared at bank at 31 March 2018

At 31 March 2018, there was one (1) cheque, with a value of £30, issued by the society which had not been presented.

For comparison, at 31 March 2017 there was one cheque with a value of £40 issued by the society which had not cleared at the bank.

Approved and adopted at a meeting of the Executive Committee on 18 April 2018 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 2018

Mr Leslie Holmes Marsden	<i>Chairman</i>
Mr Shaun O'Dell	<i>Secretary</i>
Mr Michael Kerry Collinson	<i>Treasurer</i>
Mr Roy Gunson	<i>Deputy Chair</i>
Mr 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 Stephen Taylor	<i>Programme Co-ordinator</i>
Mr Andrew Kirton-Vaughn	<i>Observations Officer</i>
Mr Philip John Muffett	<i>Committee Member</i>

Other Charity Trustees in the year to 31 March 2018

Mr Alan Birch	<i>Resigned from office at the Annual General Meeting 29 June 2017</i>
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Patrons as of 31 March 2018

Dr Allan Chapman	<i>Patron & Honorary President</i>
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Advisors

Banking	National Westminster Bank PLC. Bank Street Mexborough South Yorkshire S64 9QE	Virgin Money Jubilee House Gosforth Newcastle upon Tyne NE3 4PL
Insurance Broker and Underwriter	Access Insurance Services 50 Chapel View South Croydon Surrey CR2 7LF	Ansvar Insurance Company Ltd. Ansvar House St. Leonards Road Eastbourne East Sussex BN21 3UR

Structure, Governance, and Management

Governing Document and Constitution



The Society is an unincorporated association and is governed by a constitution adopted August 1996 and last amended 23 May 2013; this is available 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 31 March 2018, the Society had a membership of 37.

Trustee Selection and Management

The Society is managed by an Executive Committee which consists of all the appointed trustees. Several 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 31 March 2018 a total of 12 formal meetings took place.

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. 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.

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.

A trustee of Mexborough & Swinton Astronomical Society, Shaun O'Dell, has in the year to 31 March 2018 served on the Council of the FAS as Secretary. All FAS Council members are drawn from the Federation's member societies.

The Society made a subscription payment to the FAS of £25 in the year and purchased additional Public Liability Insurance, to cover events held away from the Observatory and meeting room, as part of a group scheme at a cost of £28.

The Society's meeting room is a rented room in the Swinton Bottom Club Ltd. (formerly Swinton Working Men's Club & Institute). It is a requirement 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 £50 were made in the year, in addition room rent was paid in the amount of £900.

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 promoted 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 2017.

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 public and to organised groups such as schools, Scouts, and Round Table. Disabled access to the observatory is limited as the telescopes are on the first floor however we do have facilities to take portable instruments outside to visitors who are unable to access the building.

With our Outreach activities, we take solar telescopes out to fetes and galas or to public spaces such as country parks. In recent years, we have increasingly worked in partnership with other organisations and venues in our community, this helps us to reach a wider audience.

Fees are charged for these services but these are kept at a low level, concession rates do not apply as the full fee is small and the administrative overheads of concession rates would be disproportionate.

Approved and adopted at a meeting of the Executive Committee on 18 April 2018 and signed on their behalf



Leslie H. Marsden FRAS
Chairman