


MEXBOROUGH & SWINTON ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

Annual Report & Statement of Accounts

For the year to 31 March 2021

Available online
 msas.org.uk/annual-reports/2021



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Annual Report for the year ended 31 March 2021

The trustees of Mexborough & Swinton Astronomical Society are pleased to present their report and accounts for the period 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021.

Achievements and Performance

Meeting Programme

The year opened in the very uncertain world of the Covid-19 pandemic and the “lockdown” restrictions which had been imposed for public health reasons on 23 March 2020 and consequently our meeting programme was suspended. As it quickly became apparent that these measures would be in place for some time the executive committee decided to trial online meetings for our members and the wider public.

After various trials of video conferencing platforms, the first meeting was held on 2 April 2021 using the Zoom video conferencing platform. Our Deputy Chair, Roy Gunson chaired a quiz with the intention of assessing the platform for ease of use for both speakers, hosts, and participants. Feedback from members was positive and over the next seven weeks members volunteered to give talks on a wide range of subjects including Comets, Volcanoes on Io and Star Atlases. During this time, we had our first overseas speaker, friend of the society Trevor Worrall based in Spain presented “Imaging the Heavens from Spain” and our first ‘outside broadcast’ from member Phil Muffett’s garage where he is building a replica of a Mercury Capsule.

Following media reports of online meetings being hijacked by individuals intent on causing disruption and spoiling meetings and seminars we took a decision to have distinct invitations for each weekly meeting and insist these should not be shared or forwarded. Members automatically receive an invitation, and a process has been developed to allow members of the public to request an invitation via our website. Meetings are publicised on our social media channels (Twitter and Facebook).

Our Programme Co-ordinator, Steve Taylor quickly adapted the programme, finding speakers willing to present talks via Zoom. We were able to welcome our first visitors on the 7 May 2021 and numbers attending steadily increased to some 30 plus connections per week.

The online meetings character quickly developed; Paul D’Silva became the regular host for them controlling access to events and chairing meetings. Speakers have been willing to take questions from participants and Q&A sessions have often been wide ranging and always enjoyable. Under the direction of the deputy chairman members and visitors were invited to submit their astronomy images. This has been a great success and the ‘Members Gallery’ is now a weekly part of the online meeting. In addition, members are kept up to date with society news, astronomical events, and details from other online event organisers (other local societies, the British Astronomical Association, Federation of Astronomical Societies, Institute of Physics, etc).

The online meetings gave us the opportunity to invite speakers not only from across the UK but also, from around the world. We have been fortunate to have speakers from the USA, Spain, Ireland, Canada and Sweden as well as all corners of the UK. Over the past year a total 51 online meetings have taken place in the form of 49 talks, 1 quiz and a ‘Christmas Get-Together’. Sixteen talks and events have been given by nine members of the society and 34 talks by 29 guest speakers.

After the first month of online meeting the executive was asked if the meetings could be published and recorded. Speakers are asked for permission before meetings are recorded and after the meeting an edited edition of the talk and the Q&A is posted onto our YouTube channel which is available via the website and Facebook pages.

The society wishes to place on record its sincere thanks to all our speakers for supporting us during this difficult period.

Membership

We note with sadness the passing, in October 2020, of our good friend and former member Jo Botterill. Jo was a member for many years before she left the area to be with family and will be sorely missed by all who knew her. We would like to place on record our heartfelt appreciation for the legacy of £1,000 which she left to the society.

J.A. Jones Hooper Observatory

Due to the Covid-19 public health restrictions the observatory has not been used during the year for either members events or public events. Visits have been strictly limited to essential maintenance and safety work and always in compliance with relevant public health regulations.

Community Access & Outreach Programmes

The society normally offers supervised access to J A Jones Observatory, primarily through the Public Viewing Evenings (PVEs) and engages with our community through visits to schools and community groups. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions it has not been possible to run these programmes in the year to 31 March 2021.

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

We would note that we have supported SBC Ltd through the Covid-19 pandemic by continuing to pay room rent (some £1,080 per year) whilst the club was closed due to public health regulations putting our room beyond use.

Covid-19 Small Business Grant

In July of 2020 the society was contacted by Voluntary Action Rotherham (VAR) and then Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council (RMBC) regarding the Coronavirus Small Business Grant scheme. Our initial response on reading details of the scheme was that the society did not qualify however when both VAR and RMBC repeatedly stated that we did satisfy the scheme criteria and encouraged us to apply we did and were awarded a grant of £10,000. This has been held to assist with future accommodation needs as we fear the impact of the pandemic on Swinton Bottom Club Ltd. (our normal meeting venue) and that we may need to find alternative accommodation once in-person meetings become a possibility.

Financial Review

Financial Performance

Detailed accounts can be found on page 5. It should be noted that Covid-19 restrictions mean that the comparison with previous years is at best difficult and at worst meaningless.

Income

There is a significant increase in income under the Admin & General heading due exclusively to the Covid-19 Small Business Grant of £10,000 received from Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council.

It will be noted the Community Access Programme income shows a small deficit of £10, this was due to refunds being issued for bookings made for events which had to be cancelled due to the Covid-19 restrictions imposed on 23 March 2020.

Donations show a significant year-on-year increase due to two substantial donations, £1,000 from the estate of the late Jo Botterill and £542.50 from Unison Yorkshire Water Branch made in lieu of honoraria due to Shaun O'Dell.

There is a marked increase in income from Subscriptions and Fees this is largely due to the processing of a backlog of Gift Aid claims for the years to 31 March 2016, 31 March 2017, 31 March 2018, 31 March 2019, and 31 March 2020. These totalled £2,394. Processes have been developed to make the Gift Aid claim process much smoother and it is hoped that future years will be processed much more quickly.

Expenditure

Notable differences in expenditure are due to the changes to our activities due to Covid-19 restrictions.

Guest speaker expenses are significantly lower compared the previous year (£130 compared to £315) as speakers have been unable to travel to us, we are grateful to many speakers who gave their time freely to speak at our online meetings.

Observatory development again shows a marked decrease (£161 to £424) as the observatory has been closed for all but essential safety and maintenance work. The fact the observatory could not be used for regular observing or public events also accounts for a £209 reduction, to £1,434, in Observatory Operating Expenditure.

Subscriptions also show a significant drop from £167 to £78 – this is because Swinton Bottom Club Ltd did not collect membership subscriptions whilst it was closed to members in compliance with Covid-19 regulations.

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.

The trustees wish to place on record their recognition of and gratitude for these contributions.

Funds Materially in Deficit

At 31 March 2021 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.

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 2021, the General Fund had a balance £33,096 (compared to £19,696 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 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.

Approved and adopted by a meeting of the Executive Committee on 10 November 2021 and signed on their behalf,



Leslie H. Marsden FRAS
Chairman

Accounts for the Year ended 31 March 2021

Receipts & Payments Account

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds	Last Year
	to nearest £	to nearest £	to nearest £	to nearest £
Receipts				
Admin. & General	10,051	-	10,051	132
Community Access Programme	(10)	-	(10)	871
Donations	1,759	-	1,759	313
Fundraising Income	136	-	136	340
Public Outreach	-	-	-	-
Subscriptions & Fees	4,383	-	4,383	2,999
Total Receipts	16,318	-	16,318	4,654
Payments				
Admin. & General	35	-	35	112
Fundraising Expenditure	-	-	-	147
Guest Speakers	130	-	130	315
Meeting Room	1,080	-	1,080	1,057
Observatory Development	161	-	161	424
Observatory Operating Costs	1,434	-	1,434	1,643
Subscriptions	78	-	78	167
Total Payments	2,918	-	2,918	3,865
Net of receipts/(payments)	13,400	-	13,400	789
Transfers between funds	-	-	-	-
Cash funds last year end	19,696	-	19,696	18,907
Cash funds this year end	33,096	-	33,096	19,696

Statement of Assets and Liabilities

Cash Assets

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds
	to nearest £	to nearest £	to nearest £
NatWest Current	5,364	-	5,364
<i>Add: Cheques not cleared at bank</i>	-	-	-
NatWest Savings (Closed)	-	-	-
NatWest Transfer Account	-	-	-
Virgin Charity Account	27,679	-	27,679
Petty Cash	54	-	54
PayPal	-	-	-
Total Cash Funds	33,096	-	33,096

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
2x Takahashi 2" Diagonal	600
Baader Hyperion 68° Eyepiece Set consisting of seven focal lengths (5, 8, 10, 13, 17, 21, 24 mm), incl. Eyepiece case	604
2x Personal Computers	1,000
Data Projector – Observatory Use	799
Data Projector – Outreach Use	400
ZWO ASI 071MC Pro (16-megapixel cooled colour camera)	1,400
<i>Solar Max Telescope (purchased June 2003)</i>	
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
<i>Meeting Room (Rented) Contents</i>	
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
<i>Library</i>	
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
<i>Sale Items for Fundraising</i>	
Books – assorted stock	220
<i>Phil Turner Legacy</i>	
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
	95,605

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

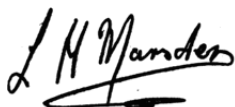
In the year ended 31 March 2020 gross income did not exceed £25,000 and therefore, in accordance with the sections 144 & 145 of the Charities Act 2011 no audit or independent examination is required, and no such scrutiny requirement is imposed by the Society's governing document.

Cheques not cleared at bank at 31 March 2020

On 31 March 2021, there were no cheques issued by the society which had not been presented at the bank.

For comparison, on 31 March 2020 there were no cheques issued by the society which had not cleared at the bank.

Approved and adopted at a meeting of the Executive Committee on TBC 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 2021

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 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 Peter Jalowiczor	<i>Librarian</i>
Mr Philip John Muffett	<i>Committee Member</i>
Mr Paul D'Silva	<i>Committee Member</i>
Mr Kristian Keith Hudson-Lee	<i>Committee Member</i>

Patrons as of 31 March 2021

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 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 2020, the Society had a membership of 32.

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, these officers are noted in the list of current trustees above.

The Executive Committee meets typically once per month.

At each meeting, the Treasurer presents the latest accounts, these are reviewed against budgets and forecasts; spending is discussed and approved. Officers may authorise some spending, between meetings, within set limits but must ensure such spending is reported at the next meeting.

The meetings also offer a forum to review recent activities within our programme and to plan forthcoming events. Correspondence and applications for membership received are considered, in addition, officers report on their areas of responsibility. Further *ad hoc* meetings are called if required, for example to plan and manage special events or projects.

The Annual Report and Statement of Accounts are approved by the trustees and presented to the members at the Annual General Meeting.

Related Organisations

The Society is a member of the Federation of Astronomical Societies (FAS), a national body established to promote co-operation between astronomical societies and provide information 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 2021 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 £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. In addition, room rent was paid in the amount of £1,080 (£90 per calendar month).

Conflicts of Interest

In the year to 31 March 2021 the society has employed the services of Safron Electrical Safety to provide security, fire, safety and electrical services to the J.A. Jones Hooper Observatory, the total amount paid to this company in the year is £70. Mr Kristian Hudson-Lee is both a trustee of the society and owner of Safron Electrical Safety.

Mr Hudson-Lee is asked to withdraw from any trustee meeting where employment of Safron Electrical Safety is being discussed.

The trustees feel the prices charged by Safron Electrical Safety are competitive and the society benefits from having the work carried out by someone who has great familiarity with the observatory and its systems and who has unsupervised building access.

Objectives and Activities

Charitable Objects

The object of the Society as set out in our Constitution is the advancement of education for the public benefit in astronomy and its associated sciences.

The Society aims to promote astronomy as a recreational activity for its own sake but also aims to promote public awareness and understanding of science and the scientific method. A scientifically literate community is, in our view vital, in the modern world.

Public Benefit Statement

The trustees of Mexborough & Swinton Astronomical Society confirm that they have complied with their duty under section 17 (5) of the Charities Act 2011 to have regard to the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit and that the public benefit requirement has informed the activities of the Society in the year to 31 March 2021.

In evaluating public benefit, the trustees note that membership of the society is open to all who share an interest in astronomy and its associated sciences. Whilst we would encourage those with interest to join our ranks, we also strive to make our services and facilities available to non-members and ensure that restrictions placed on that availability are both necessary and reasonable. Our meeting programme for example is open to all whilst public access to the observatory or solar telescope is only available when supervised by the society; this is to protect both public safety and our assets. A society member, once suitably trained, may choose to use the observatory at any time.

Summary of Main Activities

The core activities of the Society are:

- Delivery of a weekly meeting programme covering a wide range of 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 10 November 2021 and signed on their behalf.



Leslie H. Marsden FRAS
Chairman