



MEXBOROUGH & SWINTON ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

Annual Report & Statement of Accounts

For the year to 31 March 2026

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Annual Report for the year ended 31 March 2026.....	1
Achievements and Performance	1
Meeting Programme	1
Membership.....	1
J.A. Jones Hooper Observatory	2
Community Access & Outreach Programmes	2
Financial Review	4
Financial Performance	4
Income.....	4
Expenditure	4
Gifts and Support in Kind.....	4
Funds Materially in Deficit.....	4
Major Risks.....	4
Financial Management and Reserves Policies.....	4
Accounts for the Year ended 31 March 2026	6
Receipts & Payments Account	6
Statement of Assets and Liabilities.....	6
Other Assets held for functional use.....	7
Notes to the Accounts	8
Reference and Administrative Details	9
Charity Name.....	9
Charity Number	9
Principal Address.....	9
Charity Trustees as of 31 March 2026	9
Advisors.....	9
Structure, Governance, and Management.....	10
Governing Document and Constitution	10
Trustee Selection and Management	10
Related Organisations	10
Conflicts of Interest.....	10
Objectives and Activities	11
Charitable Objects	11
Public Benefit Statement	11
Summary of Main Activities.....	11

Annual Report for the year ended 31 March 2026

The trustees of Mexborough & Swinton Astronomical Society are pleased to present their report and accounts for the period 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026.

Achievements and Performance

Meeting Programme

Our weekly meeting programme has continued to deliver across a wide range of topics in astronomy and its associated sciences and levels of experience; we place on record our gratitude to all our speakers.

We had a total of 50 meetings with 38 guest speakers and 9 member speakers, a quiz night, photo competition and our Annual General Meeting. Of the guest speakers 4 were from the USA, 1 from Canada. We would like to encourage more members to give talks at our meetings.

The Society has arranged several "speaker swaps" with several other astronomical societies which help to keep costs low and builds our relationship with these societies which are Cleethorpes, Bradford, Keithley, Cleveland & Darlington and, Aylesbury.

Eventbrite sales for our meetings brought in a total of £356 over the period which seems to indicate a drop in online visitor attendance in comparison to previous years; however, it is still a healthy contribution to the costs of our online activities. We had one visitor who bought online attendance on 42 separate weeks!

Membership

The society had a membership of 41 as of 31 March 2026.

Dr Allan Chapman FRAS

The trustees and society note with sadness the death of our Patron and Honorary President, Dr Allan Chapman FRAS who sadly passed away on 21 January 2026 at the age of 79.

Allan was based at the University of Oxford for most of his career, as a member of the Faculty of History, based at Wadham College. Allan wrote many books, notably *The Victorian Amateur Astronomer*, *Astronomical Instruments and Their Users*, *Gods in the Sky: Astronomy from the Ancients to the Enlightenment*, *Robert Hooke and the English Renaissance*.

Allan was a Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society, a founder member and president of the Society for the History of Astronomy (SHA). He was the Honorary President and a member of Salford Astronomical Society, Honorary President of Reading Astronomical Society, Honorary President of Orwell Astronomical Society, Vice-President of the Newbury Astronomical Society, and President of Preston and District Astronomical Society, in addition to his role with Mexborough & Swinton Astronomical Society.

He leaves a wife, Rachel, and we extend our sincere condolences to her, and Allan's friends and colleagues.

Peter Drew

We also note with sadness the passing of a former President of the society and the maker of the society's first telescope, Peter Drew. Peter was a telescope maker and founder of The Astronomy Centre near Todmorden. Peter gave generous support and encouragement to many amateur astronomers and societies; he served as honorary President of the society for many years.

We offer our condolences to Peter's family and friends.

Les Marsden

A further sad loss, we note with a heavy heart that our friend, founder member and Chairman, Leslie Holmes Marsden also sadly passed away as this report was being written, in April 2026. A fuller tribute to "Mr Chairman" will be included in a future Annual Report; for now, we place on record our appreciation for Les's immeasurable contribution to our society, his infectious enthusiasm and friendship and extend our condolences to his wife, Sylvia, and Les's family.

J.A. Jones Hooper Observatory

This year there has been a focus on the maintenance of the observatory grounds. The trees on our property have been trimmed again. All bushes against our boundary fences have been cut back again. Unfortunately, this year has seen many instances of rubbish dumped or left outside our entry gates, a frequent litter pick has been undertaken to keep the access to our observatory looking tidy.

The main project undertaken in the year has been designing and building the much-improved access ramp to the observatory front door. The onsite work started in May and completed in August. This includes a new safety handrail that can be removed and stored inside the observatory.

The grass car park has been re-seeded in some areas due to the new ramp work however it is still thread bare in places due to vehicle access and bad weather, this will be attended to over the coming months.

The reliability of the equipment in the observatory has been fair to good this year. The main shutter battery was replaced in April, after many years of use. The fire alarm back-up battery was replaced in October. An issue with the indicated state of charge of the batteries used in the Uninterruptible Power Supply (UPS) was noted. The UPS batteries were tested and found to be good. The issue subsequently resolved itself which is unsatisfactory. A full load test will be undertaken later in the year when the observatory is not so heavily used. The shutter drive connectors have degraded contacts and housings. New connectors have been purchased, and cable assemblies have been produced along with 3D printed parts. These will be changed when the observatory is less used.

The power supply to the dome is now on its own switch so the dome and computer cabinet may be powered independently for maintenance and testing.

The observatory fire extinguishers were tested in February 2026 and found to be serviceable. A service schedule has been set up with Lightning Fire Services Ltd.

As part of the society's legacy the UK Astromind quiz winners display was installed in the observatory presentation room.

Last year we had an ongoing rodent issue, this now appears to have been solved. There has been an issue with a lingering odour. The presentation room was cleansed with an ozone generator, and the odour issue has been resolved.

During September 2025 the Mexborough and District Amateur Radio Society once again used the observatory grounds and toilet facilities, all was left in a good state of repair.

We remind members that we have a small stock of equipment at the observatory for members to borrow, this included the Colin Jubb bequest. One member has expressed an interest in the Meade LX90 8-inch telescope; this will be serviced and made available for their use.

To encourage more use of the observatory, evenings had been arranged for members to bring their own telescopes - the turnout was small but enthusiastic.

The trustees, especially the curator, place on record thanks to all those who have assisted or undertaken various tasks during the year.

Community Access & Outreach Programmes

In addition to our weekly meeting programme Society actively encourages members of the public to take part with astronomy events, and hopefully take up the hobby, through its Community Access and Outreach programmes. Community Access events are those where members of the public can visit the J A Jones observatory and, weather permitting, use the society's equipment to observe the skies. Our Outreach programme are events that are held away from the observatory or meeting room.

23 such events were provided in the period of this report, however, the programme was heavily affected by the weather with a further four events cancelled.

The Summer events were based around 'Solar Sundays' a chance to safely observe the Sun in white light, Hydrogen- α , Calcium-K and Oxygen-III. Two events were held at the J A Jones Observatory, two at RSPB Old Moor, Wombwell, Barnsley and we were pleased to return to the Wentworth Village Day to support our local village. Several of the days were marred by rain and cloudy conditions but even on the worst days we were able to show the Sun to many interested visitors.

From October through to March interested groups can book for an evening visit to the observatory. This year we had nine such visits (another being cancelled due to illness) mainly consisting of Cubs and Scout Groups from the area as well as an Explorer Scout Group (Don Valley Explorer). The latter presented the opportunity to try a new approach and MSAS showed how to take images using a variety of equipment, including mobile phones. Overall, these events brought 139 visitors to the observatory.

Over the same period, once a month, visitors are invited to attend Public Viewing Evenings (PVEs) at the observatory and this year all six events were sold out (120 tickets). Visitors had the chance to use the main instruments at the observatory and listen to a talk on the night sky illustrated with images taken by society members. On inclement evenings, when it was impossible to open the dome, they received a talk about the equipment and a planetarium presentation on what they should have been able to see.

Evening outreach events at RSPB Old Moor were cancelled due to poor weather and Wentworth Woodhouse cancelled their event as well. Although the weather was poor over Christmas the 'So Santa Left You a Telescope' event at the J A Jones observatory went ahead in December but with a small turnout, only eight members of the public with three telescopes, was much reduced from the previous year.

In February 'Friends of Clifton Park' asked the society back for another edition of 'Planets in the Park', held in the Walled Garden, Clifton Park, Rotherham. Unexpectedly, the weather was good and on a clear night the society's members turned out ten instruments with talks and displays that entertained and informed over 300 visitors.

In November the society was approached by Rotherham MBC to take part in the yearlong 'Children's Capital of Culture' project. An event, based around the 18th Century astronomer Charles Green was suggested. Green was born in Swinton and after moving to London became the assistant astronomer at the Royal Observatory. He had a successful career being involved in such work as the trials of John Harrison's H4 Seawatch and as the astronomer on James Cook's voyage to Tahiti to observe the transit of Venus. Green died on the way home after the transit. Working with the Culture Capital team and the local history group MSAS provided the astronomical equipment and expertise for the event showing participants Venus, Jupiter and the Moon.

The trustees would like to thank all members who contributed by turning out, with their own equipment, for these events and all our partners for their continuing support for the Outreach and Community Access Programme.

Financial Review

Financial Performance

Detailed accounts can be found on page 6.

Income

There is a marked decrease in income under the Admin & General heading as the previous year included £1,000 grant received towards construction of a ramp to improve disabled access at the observatory. Once the grant is removed the year-on-year decrease is due to lower interest rates.

Community Access Programme income is down year-on-year as several events were cancelled due to poor weather.

Public Outreach enjoyed a 30% increase over the previous year; this is due to the Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council Heritage Event.

Donations show a marked year-on-year decrease to £242, the higher figure of £525 in the previous year was driven by the disposal of assets for donations when the society vacated our former Swinton Bottom Club venue and consequent reduction in storage space available.

Expenditure

Admin & General expenditure shows a marked increase to £137 (from £62) – this largely due to the additional expenses of sending representatives to the funeral of Dr Allan Chapman.

Guest speaker expenses are only slightly higher compared the previous year (£450 compared to £404).

Meeting room expenditure is down by £1,974 to £1,490; this decrease is due to one-off equipment purchases in the previous year.

Observatory Development shows a marked increase of £1,001 – this being due to the construction costs of the ramp to facilitate disabled access. A grant was received from Voluntary Action Rotherham (VAR) Miss Penlington Community Chest Grants which covered this cost.

Observatory Operating Expenditure has increased by £173 to £1,839 due to increased electricity and water utility costs.

Subscription expenditure has increased by a little over 14% to £925 (£809 to 31 March 2025) – this includes the Zoom subscription and SIM cards to enable online and hybrid meetings and website security software.

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 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

The Society had no funds in material deficit as of 31 March 2026.

Major Risks

No major risks have been identified.

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 £10,000 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.

On 31 March 2026, the General Fund had a balance £38,969 (compared to 37,585 at the same date last year).

Approved and adopted by a meeting of the Trustees and Executive Committee on 13 May 2026 and signed on their behalf.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Shaun O'Dell".

Shaun O'Dell
Secretary

Accounts for the Year ended 31 March 2026

Receipts & Payments Account

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds	Last Year
	to nearest £	to nearest £	to nearest £	to nearest £
Receipts				
Admin. & General	361	-	361	1,514
Community Access Programme	958	-	958	1,258
Donations	242	-	242	515
Fundraising Income	130	-	130	525
Public Outreach	345	-	345	264
Subscriptions & Fees	3,470	-	3,470	3,927
Total Receipts	5,506	-	5,506	8,004
Payments				
Admin. & General	137	-	137	62
Fundraising Expenditure	151	-	151	159
Guest Speakers	450	-	450	404
Meeting Room	1,490	-	1,490	3,465
Observatory Development	1,057	-	1,057	56
Observatory Operating Costs	1,839	-	1,839	1,666
Subscriptions	925	-	925	809
Total Payments	6,048	-	6,048	6,620
Net of receipts/(payments)	(542)	-	(542)	1,385
Transfers between funds	-	-	-	-
Cash funds last year end	38,969	-	38,969	37,585
Cash funds this year end	38,427	-	38,427	38,969

Statement of Assets and Liabilities

Cash Assets

	Unrestricted Funds	Restricted Funds	Total Funds
	to nearest £	to nearest £	to nearest £
NatWest Current	1,289	-	1,289
<i>Add: Cheques not cleared at bank</i>	-	-	-
NatWest Savings	3,026	-	3,026
NatWest Transfer Account	-	-	-
UnitedTrust Account	31,100	-	31,100
4Petty Cash	12	-	12
PayPal	-	-	-
Total Cash Funds	38,427	-	38,427

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 Eyepiece set of seven focal lengths incl. Eyepiece case	604
2x Personal Computers	1,000
Data Projector – Outreach Use – was observatory use	799
Audio-Technica Condenser Microphone	33
ZWO ASI 071MC Pro (16-megapixel cooled colour camera)	1,400
Zytel NR5103E 5G Dual Band Indoor Wi-Fi Router	163
Solar Max Telescope (purchased June 2003)	0
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
80mm wide field telescope	100
Equipment Moved to Observatory on closure of Swinton Bottom Club	
Optoma EH415e Video Projector & accessories (purchased 2016)	1,037
Kodak Slide Projector (purchased 1996)	1,300
Books – Mainly atlases and observing guides	600
Canon EOS 350D Digital SLR Camera	25
Audio-Visual Cart for new meeting room	
AV Cart build	42
Assorted Cables & Connectors	26
Epsom EB-FH06 3LCD Projector	549
Powered USB Hub	30
Eagletec KG010 Mechanical Keyboard White LED Backlit	50
ZTE MU5001 5G WiFi 6 Hotspot (Portable 5G)	283
2 x Anker PowerConf C200 2K Webcam	102
TRIGKEY AMD Mini PC	359
BenQ GW2490E 24 inch Monitor	89
LogiTech Spotlight pointer	116
Audio-Technica ATR4697-USB Omnidirectional Condenser Microphone	23
Stereo Sound Bar	50
Library	
SeeStar S50 telescope	519
Dobsonian telescope	541

Sale Items for Fundraising

Books – assorted stock 200

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

90,979

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 2025; 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 2026 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 on 31 March 2026

On 31 March 2026, there were no cheques issued by the society which had not been presented at the bank, for comparison, this was also the case on 31 March 2025.

Approved and adopted at a meeting of the Trustees and Executive Committee on 13 May 2026 and signed on their behalf.



Shaun O'Dell
Secretary

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 2026

Mr Leslie Holmes Marsden	<i>Chairman</i>
Mr Mark Anthony Walton	<i>Deputy Chair (resigned from office 5 January 2026)</i>
Mr Shaun O'Dell	<i>Secretary</i>
Mr Michael Kerry Collinson	<i>Treasurer</i>
Mr Glenn Michael John Marsden	<i>IT Officer</i>
Mr Anthony John Morris	<i>Curator of Instruments & Observatory</i>
Mr Roy Gunson	<i>Programme Co-ordinator</i>
Mr Kristian Keith Hudson-Lee	<i>Observations Officer</i>
Mr Edward Bothamley	<i>Librarian</i>
Mr Thomas Peter Wade	<i>Fundraising Officer</i>
Mr Philip John Muffett	<i>Committee Member</i>
Mr Paul D'Silva	<i>Committee Member</i>
Mr Laurence Horrocks-Barlow	<i>Committee Member</i>

Advisors

Banking	National Westminster Bank PLC. Bank Street Mexborough South Yorkshire S64 9QE	United Trust Bank 1 Ropemaker Street London EC2Y 9AW
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 12 September 2024; 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 2026, the Society had a membership of 41.

Trustee Selection and Management

The Society is managed by an Executive Committee which consists of all the appointed trustees. Several of 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, advice to and advocacy for 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 2026 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 £20 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 £55.

Conflicts of Interest

The society employs the services of Safron Electrical Safety to provide security, fire safety, and electrical services to the J.A. Jones Hooper Observatory. 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 whilst the services of Safron Electrical Safety are 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 2026.

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 topics related to astronomy and its associated sciences
- Developing and maintaining the J.A. Jones Hooper Observatory
- Offering a Community Access Programme at the J.A. Jones Hooper 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 Trustees and Executive Committee on 13 May 2026 and signed on their behalf.



Shaun O'Dell
Secretary