



CARDIFF ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY - MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY, 23rd July 2020 at 19:30 via Zoom

1. Welcome and Apologies for Absence

Phill Wallace (PW), CAS Chairperson, welcomed everyone to the meeting; the first time that a CAS AGM has been held using the Zoom platform. With 22 participants the meeting was determined as quorate. Apologies had been received from one member, Marc Delaney.

2. Approval of the Minutes of the AGM held on 18th April 2019

The draft minutes, which had previously been circulated to members alongside the notice of the AGM and posted on the CAS website, were put to the Meeting for approval, and this was duly given.

3. Matters Arising from the 2019 AGM

No matters arising were raised.

4. Presentation and Approval of the 2019 Trustees' Annual Report by PW and Statement of Accounts by Roy Blunt, Treasurer (RB).

Trustees' Annual Report

(See Appendix 1 for the written report)

PW wished to add his personal thanks to RB and Katherine Compton (previous Membership Secretary) for their hard work and tenacity in obtaining the Gift Aid monies from HMRC.

There were no queries or clarifications raised in relation to this item.

Statement of Accounts

(See Appendix 1 for the written report)

RB wanted to emphasise that there are no immediate problems and we do have significant reserves but to be aware that our main income source remains the membership subscriptions. As yet we have no idea what level the membership total will become with the Society's activities being curtailed because of Covid19 and talks being held online rather than in person at the University. The way that CAS operates has been transformed. He also pointed out that speaker expenses almost doubled last year, and we do need to be careful about booking speakers from too far afield.

Queries raised:

Q: From Jeff Morris. As we are not meeting in person how we do pay our Membership fee?

A: The fee can be paid at any time using the CAS website and PayPal. Alternatively, a cheque can be posted to the Membership Secretary.

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Q: From Cedric Longville. Can the Gift Aid be listed separately in the accounts?

A: GA will appear in the 2020 accounts as it was received in May 2020 and yes, the format of the annual accounts can be adjusted so that it appears separately in the accounts presented at next year's AGM.

The Trustees' Report and the Statement of Accounts were accepted by those present at the meeting.

5. Presentation and Approval of Committee Officers' Reports

Public Events Organiser's Report

(See Appendix 2 for the written report)

The Public Events Organiser, Theresa Cooper (TC), wanted to emphasise her thanks to all volunteers who contributed to make the Society's public events a big success once again with excellent attendance figures. The events take commitment but are very enjoyable for those concerned.

Queries raised:

There were no queries or clarifications raised in relation to this item.

Treasurer's Report

(See Appendix 3 for the written report)

Queries raised:

There were no queries or clarifications raised in relation to this item.

6. Election of Trustees

Following an appeal by PW Chairman of Trustees, Greg Titley (GT) stepped forward to volunteer as a Trustee. He was welcomed by PW and warmly thanked.

To avoid a conflict of interest, the Chairperson invited Edward Cooper (EC) to chair this part of the Meeting and to conduct the election of the 2020/21 Trustees. EC confirmed that there were now five candidates for election as a Trustee - Roy Blunt, Jane Clark, Nick Pollock, Greg Titley and Philip Wallace – and it was agreed that the Meeting should now decide, by a show of (electronic) hands, whether these candidates were elected. This was done with no dissent being expressed in relation to any of the candidates.

7. Presentation of the Bill Sutherland Award

PW gave the background to the Award and some information about the late Bill Sutherland. He announced that following nominations and consideration by the Committee it was being awarded this year to Lin Love for her sterling work at public events over many years.

The shield was presented 'virtually' and will be engraved, and a personal copy purchased when that is possible under current Covid19 restrictions.

Appreciation was also expressed to Joan Payne for employing her quilting skills to tailor a very appropriate storage/carrying bag for the shield.

8. Topics for Discussion

CAS Activities during the Covid19 situation

PW stated that the Committee is trying to do everything it can in the present Covid19 circumstances. Talks are being maintained via the Zoom platform but unfortunately our activities in the public arena have, by necessity, been suspended. Our response as we go

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forward will depend on outside organisations and what they can do i.e. National Museum of Wales, National Trust, Dark Sky Wales and Cardiff University for the talks.

Hopefully, things will improve in the new year and the possibilities are being monitored by the Committee.

PW would like to record his thanks to Marc Delaney for organising weekly informal Zoom chats, quizzes Which help to engage people and keep each other in touch.

Queries and Comments:

Q: From Tim Walker. If the Covid19 situation goes on longer than we would like, can we maintain the Zoom talks?

A: PW replied that the intention is to transfer the talks to the University as soon as we are able. The online participation currently is very low. EC suggested that we may be able to simultaneously transmit talks from the University via Zoom for those who will still feel hesitant in venturing outside, but this will depend on Internet access from our usual lecture theatre. This idea can be borne in mind but not progressed any further currently.

Q: Tim Walker suggested that we find out why people do not 'attend' the Zoom talks and could we approach those who do not and find out why this is the case?

A: PW replied that there will probably be many reasons, but we cannot contact 160+ people individually to pinpoint the exact explanation. Peter Crabb (PC) informed everyone that the next CAS Covid19 update email will ask relevant members for feedback on why they do not participate. In response to a suggestion from Cedric Longville, PW stated that placing talks on YouTube depends on the wishes of the speaker concerned and security that the talks could not be shared outside of the membership. GDPR also needs to be considered.

Membership Subscriptions

PW stated that there is no intent by the Trustees to raise the level of subscriptions at this time. If this is done at sometime in the future, they will be raised just once and not repeatedly in multiple years. He also stated that in the opinion of the Trustees, membership of CAS gives good value for money.

For the information of everyone present, PC stated that the last time subscriptions were raised was in 2007.

The Treasurer RB said that PC had recently looked at 11 other Astronomical Societies - 9 have higher subs (up to £40 p.a.), one the same, and one lower than CAS. The average adult subscription is some £23. Please note that CAS is a large society compared to most of these hence our total membership income is probably far higher than most whilst our expenditure is not significantly influenced by membership numbers. However, CAS does currently offer an extremely attractive and phenomenal value package compared to the other societies.

In RB's opinion if 2020 had been a 'normal' year for CAS then he would have expected to recommend an increase in membership fees at the 2021 AGM. However, 2020 is definitely anything but a normal year. He is of the opinion that we should not change the subscription at the moment but keep it under review for a possible increase in 2021.

Organisation of Society help for Schools

CAS has carried out a number of these engagements on request in the past which also includes groups such as Scouts, Guides, and organisations such as Techniquet. However, this activity has been suspended because of a lack of volunteers. GT felt he could help with this activity as he already provides talks to schools re: financial awareness.

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But as PC pointed out the priorities of schools may lie elsewhere at the moment and if we do have more volunteers then we have key committee posts that need to be filled first.

EC made the observation that whilst volunteers were very welcome, the Society had a dearth of volunteers with practical astronomy skills whether utilising a telescope or being able to identify and guide people around the night sky. In this respect the Society is very reliant on the same few to participate in events and we only just manage to fulfil our bigger public event commitments.

PW asked if anyone had any suggestions on how we can recruit more helpers other than his regular appeals to the membership in general. None were forthcoming.

9. Any Other Business

PC reminded the Chairperson that the Trustees had agreed that the members intending to be on the 2020/21 CAS Committee – to whom various powers and functions had been delegated by the Trustees – should be put to the AGM for comment and approval. The Chairperson apologised for his oversight and stated that the following members had nominated themselves for appointment to the 2020/21 Committee: himself (currently Committee Chairperson), Roy Blunt (Treasurer), Theresa Cooper (Public Events Organiser), Edward Cooper (UKMON Co-ordinator), Ann Bennett (Ordinary Member 1 and Merchandising Officer), Nathan Elward (Ordinary Member 2), Bob Biss (Director of Observations), Nick Pollock (Membership Secretary) and Peter Crabb (Webmaster).

He asked if there was any opposition to any of these members being appointed to the Committee and there was none.

The Chairperson asked if there were any other items for discussion but there were none, and the meeting then closed at 20:40.

**TRUSTEES' REPORT & FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE PERIOD
1 JANUARY 2019 TO 31 DECEMBER 2019**

LEGAL & ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

CHARITY NUMBER	1169953
LEGAL FORM	Charitable Incorporated Organisation formed under the Charities Act 2011
TRUSTEES AT 31/12/19	Roy Blunt (Treasurer), Jane Clark, Nick Pollock and Philip Wallace (Chairman);
GOVERNING INSTRUMENT	Constitution as incorporated on 31/10/16
OBJECTS	To advance education in the science of astronomy and related subjects for the public benefit by furthering the knowledge of its members, promoting and conducting observations, and by providing facilities for active participation in astronomical observation
CONVERSION TO CIO	The members of the Cardiff Astronomical Society agreed at an Extraordinary General Meeting on 21 July 2016 that the Society should become a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO). The Cardiff Astronomical Society (CIO) was formed and registered as a charity on 31 October 2016 when it took over all the activities of the former Cardiff Astronomical Society.
INSPECTOR OF ACCOUNTS	Philip Smith
SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP	The Society had, as of 31 December 2019, 177 adult members, 7 junior members and 49 family memberships (this includes an additional 79 family members) for a total of 312 members.

THE SOCIETY'S ACTIVITIES DURING THE PERIOD 1 JANUARY 2019 TO 31 DECEMBER 2019

Trustees/Committee - The Trustees met twice and the Committee on 6 occasions during 2019. The Trustees have delegated most of their duties and powers to the Committee which, thus, takes care of the main operational issues. A major effort this year from both Trustees and Committee members has been getting CAS registered for Gift Aid support from the Government – this has involved a great deal of effort on the parts of Trustees Roy Blunt and Nick Pollock and Membership Secretary Katherine Compton, for which the Society is very grateful.

Fortnightly Talks - It was another busy and successful period for the Society which continued to hold well-attended evening meetings for members every other week from January through to July, resuming in September and continuing into December to listen to talks given by visiting astronomical experts including, in particular, academics from the School of Physics and Astronomy at Cardiff University. A total of 21 lectures were given between 1 January 2019 and 31 December 2019 as well as the 2019 AGM. Average attendance at each talk was approximately 75, with several talks exceeding 100 attendees.

Public Events – During 2019, the Society was involved in a series of highly successful public events, including:

- **19th January Star Attractions at NMW (National Museum of Wales)**. This year's annual event at the National Museum was bolstered by the continuing presence of the Soyuz capsule exhibit. CAS had its usual prominent position in the foyer and also contributed its Chairman as a speaker for two free lectures on the science of Star Trek and Doctor Who, both of which were fully booked and well-received by the audience. The day went very smoothly with at least 7,000 visitors.
- **22nd June Solar Observing at Brecon**. As with previous years, CAS volunteers and equipment travelled to the Brecon Beacons Mountain Visitor Centre for a day of solar observing open to the public. Fortunately, the weather cooperated, and we were able to show a great number of visitors our Sun – which was virtually inactive, with no sunspots or prominences. Nonetheless the event was successful, and a number of very complimentary comments were received from the public.
- **20th July Moon Landing Event at NMW**. With the 50th anniversary of the Apollo 11 landing being on a Saturday, CAS participated in a major event at the National Museum to commemorate this milestone. Its Chairman once again delivered a pair of short lectures, this time on the Apollo Program and on debunking the various conspiracy theories. For this event, CAS held pride of place in the centre of the Museum's foyer, along with a large-scale model of a Saturn-V rocket made by CAS member Ian Davies. The event proved extremely popular with over 3,000 visitors.
- **18th October Stargazing Evening at Brecon**. This was our second year of partnering with Dark Sky Wales (DSW) for this event as the 2018 evening had proven successful. With additional volunteers and equipment and a repeat of the three-group, three-activity schedule that worked previously, CAS and DSW welcomed 120 guests to this event that ran smoothly and successfully, with a great many positive comments from guests. The Society is grateful to both DSW and the Brecon Beacon National Park for their collaborative support on this event.
- **Additional Events** – during the year CAS participated in a several other large-scale events, working with groups such as the Open University and St David's Hall, most notably for the Transit of Mercury and for the Planets Suite event.
- **Monthly Star Parties**. Starting in January and continuing through to December (with a summer break), the Society continued running its monthly Star Parties at our observatory for both members and the public. During the Autumn and early winter, these have increased significantly in popularity, leading to a new system whereby members of the public register their interest in advance so we can control the number of guests. These were all well-attended and were very well-received by the guests, with several coming back for a second visit and others becoming Society members. The Trustees would like to thank the National Trust and in particular the staff at Dyffryn Gardens for their continuing help and support with these events.

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Appendix 1
continued

Observatory - For regular stargazing events and occasional solar viewing the Society continues to run its own excellent Observatory, situated in the grounds of the Dyffryn Gardens, just outside Cardiff. Amongst other astronomical equipment, the Observatory houses a state-of-the-art 11” GoTo telescope for use at star parties and observing sessions. Due to weather damage, some repair work was needed to the Observatory roof, but this was promptly carried out by volunteers and the Observatory remains fully operational.

Library - The Society continued to maintain a comprehensive Library of astronomical books which is available for use by all members attending the fortnightly talks. A number of books have been added to the collection this year, as the Committee try to obtain books written by our speakers where possible.

UKMON (UK Meteor Observation Network) - CAS continued to provide observational data (obtained from its cameras at the CAS Observatory) to UKMON. Edward Cooper has monitored and maintained this system and has contributed a significant amount of data and images to the national network.

Website - The Society’s website is at <http://www.cardiff-astronomical-society.co.uk/>

Links with other Societies – The Society has had some success in 2019 in establishing relationships with other societies in the South Wales area. Of particular note are CAS members Edward Cooper and Philip Wallace visiting the Bridgend Astronomical Society as speakers and making arrangements for a CAS member to speak to the Cardiff Humanist Society (scheduled for January 2020). The Trustees hope that these links will continue to develop in 2020 and be beneficial for all the societies involved.

STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS FOR THE PERIOD 1 JANUARY 2019 TO 31 DECEMBER 2019 (in £)

Available Funds at 1 January 2019		Available Funds at 31 December 2019	
Current Account Opening	1,875.48	Current Account Closing	1,473.12
Reserve Bank Opening	6,093.92	Reserve Bank Closing	5,596.83
Petty Cash Opening	405.65	Petty Cash Closing	392.26
PayPal	297.34	PayPal	270.66
TOTAL	8,672.39	TOTAL	7,732.87
Expenditure exceeds Income by			939.52

Income and Expenditure

Category	Income	Expenditure	Surplus
Subscriptions	3,209.50	74.18	3,135.32
Raffle	622.00	133.90	488.10
Merchandise	160.00	206.54	-46.54
Donations	28.00		28.00
Amazon/EasyFundRaising	22.98		22.98
Miscellaneous	352.00		352.00
Interest	2.91		2.91
Special Events	0.00		0.00

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Books for sale to members	0.00		0.00
Travel		141.20	-141.20
Insurance		1,322.64	-1,322.64
Observatory		283.35	-283.35
Equipment/Maintenance		434.22	-434.22
Speaker expenses		1,747.25	-1,747.25
Hospitality		244.52	-244.52
Website		287.76	-287.76
Newsletter etc.		99.84	-99.84
Library		55.79	-55.79
Telephone		20.00	-20.00
Printing/copying		142.50	-142.50
Stationery		2.00	-2.00
Postage		47.16	-47.16
Other		94.06	-94.06
TOTAL	4,397.39	5,336.91	-939.52

These accounts were approved by the Trustees of the Society on 05/03/2020 and signed

Signed *PHILIP WALLACE* (Philip Wallace)

Signed *ROY BLUNT* (Roy Blunt)

Notes to the Accounts:

Reserves Policy - The Trustees have kept under consideration the level of reserves they wish to retain appropriate to the Society's needs. This is based on the Society's size and the level of financial commitments held. The Trustees aim to ensure the Society will be able to continue to fulfil its charitable objectives even if there is a temporary shortfall in income or unexpected expenditure arises. The Trustees will endeavour not to set aside funds unnecessarily.

Public Benefit - The Society acknowledges its requirement to demonstrate clearly that it must have charitable purposes or 'objects' that are for the public benefit. Details of how the charity has achieved these are provided in the Trustees' report.

REPORT OF THE INSPECTOR OF THE ACCOUNTS

Report to the Trustees/members of the Cardiff Astronomical Society on the accounts for the first period as a CIO from 1 January to 31 December 2019 and to provide a basis for the Society's return for 2019 to be made to the Charity Commission.

Respective responsibilities of the Trustees and the inspector

The Society's Trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts and have noted that an audit of the Society's accounts is not required under section 144 of the Charities Act 2011 and an independent examination is not required under section 145 of the Act. However, the Trustees consider that an informal inspection of the accounts by an independent person should, for the sake of good order, be carried out.

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It is the inspector's responsibility to examine the accounts, state whether particular matters have come to their attention, and then report on their findings. The purpose of the inspection was to establish the credibility of the finances of the Cardiff Astronomical Society for the period 1 January to 31 December 2019.

**Appendix 1
continued**

Statement by the inspector of the accounts

Period of examination:	01/01/2019 to 31/12/2019
Examination Date:	01/03/2020
Auditor:	Philip Smith
Treasurer (01/01/19 to 31/12/19)	Roy Blunt

Observations/Suggested Improvements/Comments from the inspection

My inspection included consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and the seeking of explanations from the Treasurer concerning any such matters. A small number of relatively low value items of expenditure were not supported by invoices or other supporting documentation.

Findings

No matter has come to my attention (other than those mentioned above) which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the accounting records maintained by the Society were deficient. I have also raised queries that I had with the Treasurer and am satisfied with the responses I received. The results of the inspection were satisfactory and in my opinion the accounts are a true and credible reflection of the Society's financial results and position at 31 December 2019.

Signed: PHILIP SMITH (Inspector – Philip Smith)

Date 01/03/2020

Public Events Organiser's Report 2019-2020 by Theresa Cooper

I do not wish to repeat the Trustees' Report which details the public event activities of CAS this past year, my contribution to the AGM is to highlight events of particular note and to thank all those who volunteered as helpers which ensured their success.

Firstly the Star Attractions day at the National Museum of Wales (NMW) saw record breaking visitor numbers and the CAS team were kept exceptionally busy answering queries, demonstrating equipment, welcoming anyone interested (or thought they may be interested) in astronomy. Being 'on duty' all day with such a crowd was challenging but everyone proved once again that they have limitless enthusiasm and patience for passing on their knowledge and skill.

Having a stand at St. David's Hall to add value to a performance of Holst's The Planet Suite was something new to the CAS volunteers. The evening was a resounding success and thoroughly enjoyable.

To set up the evening took a few meetings with the staff of St. David's Hall and the logistics were not the easiest: access via roof car park, early start, limited parking etc

We were kindly given complimentary tickets; reimbursed parking costs and the hosts were very hospitable. I did provide a copy of our logo for their publicity which was gratifying to see in print. But this was surpassed when unexpectedly it appeared on the huge stage screen to a packed house! None of the audience could fail to miss that CAS were on Level 3 and keen to help everyone with their astronomical queries.

The remaining event I wish to highlight is the day at NMW to celebrate and commemorate the 50th Anniversary of Apollo 11 and the first Moon landing on July 20th. Preparations for this began with discussions with staff the previous August and initially, jointly booking a loan of lunar samples. Other preparations included obtaining from the Science and Technology Facilities Council (STFC) hundreds of specially produced booklets, maps and project books on all things lunar which were excellent and handed out free.

This was a day not to be repeated obviously and CAS also contributed display of equipment, a philately exhibition and in keeping with the theme of the day, an exhibition of local newspapers to show how they covered the event in Wales at the time in 1969 and my own collection of memorabilia.

This day required the most organising during my tenure and needed a 'all hands-on deck' effort on the day which everyone coped with admirably.

I will finish with a sincere thank you to Bob and Lin Love, Kath Compton, Joan Payne, Stephen Webber, Mike Foley, Gordon Harries, Kayleigh Churchill, Ian Davies, Jim Hennessy and Owen Cornelius, fellow committee members and anyone else I have inadvertently missed.

And not forgetting the always helpful staff at the NMW; Victoria Le Poidevin and Dr Lucy Owen with which we have a very good working relationship.

Above all we could always do with more help and the main point to bear in mind is that we *enjoy ourselves! Please do join us, you will be very welcome.*

Treasurer's Report for 2020 AGM

During 2019 the society's total funds decreased by some £940 to a total of £7,732.87. This sum is still well above the minimum reserve as defined by the trustees so the financial loss in 2019 is not an immediate problem. The original budget for 2019 had envisaged a loss of some £760 and we were well on track to record a lower loss than this until, almost at the end of the year, we needed to replace a CAS laptop at some £400.

Our main income is from Subscriptions and was very similar to last year – this is very encouraging as it suggests that the decline in membership seen between 2017 and 2018 has been halted. Raffle Income increased significantly whilst Merchandise showed a small loss in 2019 – this was due to purchase of new items and should balance out in the future. Donations and income from Amazon/AmazonSmile and EasyFundRaising (resulting from members purchasing items online after nominating CAS as their chosen charity) fell, whilst Miscellaneous Income (money paid to CAS to cover travel and other costs where we have organised or supported an event outside our normal operations) rose slightly.

Insurance costs are high but similar on an annual basis to previous years. Observatory costs were well down on last year whilst Equipment/Maintenance costs increased due to the purchase of the new laptop computer. The most serious rise in expenditure arose from Speaker Expenses (effectively doubling from £872 in 2018 to £1,747 in 2019). With typical hotel and travelling expenses for a 'non-local' speaker now coming to around £150 and 21 speakers in a year we do need to be a little cautious over speaker choice to keep within a reasonable budget. Hospitality, Travel, and Printing/Copying costs were also somewhat higher than in 2018 but not ridiculously so.

In 2020 we should receive the long-awaited contributions from Gift Aid refunds which should ensure that we actually end up 'in the black'. CAS has very significant reserves so we can accommodate some annual losses and should remember that we have made significant annual surpluses in recent years. However, we must keep a very close eye on the situation and look for ways to increase income (including potentially raising subscriptions in 2021 - they have been at their present level since about 2007) or reduce expenditure.

Roy Blunt
Treasurer – Cardiff Astronomical Society
March 2020

Addendum – June 2020

In view of the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown preventing the usual CAS meetings and events from taking place in the foreseeable future the society's finances in 2020 will be very different from previous years. Both income and expenditure will be lower but are, at the moment, difficult to predict accurately. We have, however, received some £800 as a one-off sum from Gift Aid refunds for the years 2016 -2019 which will give us a useful buffer – although we had originally hoped to use this money to improve CAS facilities and benefits to members.