



**CARDIFF ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY
MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
HELD ON THURSDAY, 18TH APRIL 2019
AT CARDIFF UNIVERSITY**

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

The CAS Chairperson, Philip Wallace, welcomed members to the meeting, which was clearly quorate, and advised that formal apologies for absence had been received from Nick Pollock (Trustee), Kath Compton (Membership Secretary), Katrin Raynor-Evans (Publications Officer and Librarian), and Ann Bennett (Merchandise Officer).

2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE AGM HELD ON 26TH APRIL 2018

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

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE 2018 AGM

No matters arising were raised.

4. PRESENTATION AND APPROVAL OF THE 2018 TRUSTEES' ANNUAL REPORT AND STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS

The Chairperson referred to the written Annual Report that had previously been distributed to all CAS members and advised that 2018 had been yet another successful year for the Society but a note of concern was that the number of CAS members had fallen significantly (from 325 to 276) during the year. It was felt that the reason for this was that the GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation), which had come into effect on 25th May 2018, restricted the Society's ability to approach lapsed members regarding the renewal of their membership.

He said that 20 excellent talks had been given during 2018 and the average attendance at those talks had been around 80 members which was a clear indication that the talks were being well-received. Quite a few of the speakers, in addition to the regular presenters, had indicated that they would be happy to give further talks in the future.

The Trustees had met on three occasions during the year and the Committee (to whom various – mainly operational – powers and functions had been delegated by the Trustees) had met seven times. Mike Foley had recently decided to stand down as Committee Secretary but would continue to carry out several of the Committee Secretary's key duties until the end of July 2019.

The Society had also recently appointed a new Observatory Manager (Feras Tuma) who would be delivering a report later in the Meeting along with the new Deputy Observatory Manager (Ian McLean).

The CAS Treasurer, Roy Blunt, then presented the 2018 Statement of Accounts which formed part of the 2018 Annual Report and, thus, had also been previously sent to members for consideration.

He said that the 2018 accounts had been independently inspected and the independent inspector had concluded that the accounts were in a satisfactory condition and were, in his opinion, a true and credible reflection of the Society's financial results and position at 31st December 2018.

Roy pointed out that most of the Society's annual income came through membership subscriptions, but these had decreased during the year as the result, as had been mentioned earlier, of a fall in the number of Society members. This meant that the aggregate subscription income had dropped by about £800 as compared with the previous 12-month period.

Another point to note was that Miscellaneous Income stood at £300 for the year. These monies related to reimbursements and payments made to the Society by organisations for whom CAS had provided speakers, telescope operators etc. The Society had also benefited financially from the previous Publications Officer's generosity in deciding not to seek reimbursement for certain items of expenditure.

Roy explained that it may appear that the Society was paying less insurance premium in relation to the Observatory, but this was an illusion caused by the Committee's decision to stop paying the premium in one lump sum and instead pay it in ten monthly instalments during the year. If the Society had continued its previous practice, then instead of achieving a surplus of about £650 in 2018 the surplus would have been only £50 or so.

Finally, Roy advised that the Society was now registered to claim Gift Aid in respect of donations received and members' subscriptions but, unfortunately, the response from members had been poor with only just over 50 Gift Aid forms (i.e. from less than 20% of members) having been returned to date.

Members were asked whether they accepted the 2018 Annual Report and the Statement of Accounts and this was agreed with no-one dissenting.

Consequently, the Trustees could now, as required, submit the Annual Report to the Charity Commission.

5. COMMITTEE OFFICER REPORTS

Public Events Organiser: Theresa Cooper

Theresa pointed out that a written report of the main public events with which the Society had been engaged in 2018 appeared on page 2 of the Annual Report that had just been approved. She therefore wished to provide only a personal perspective of the work that had been undertaken last year in this area.

She said that the other members of the CAS Outreach Team (Bob Love, Joan Payne, Alison Hartland, Keith Foxhall, Stephen Webber, Dave Levi and Ceri Smith) all made a valuable contribution at outreach events and proved that these were very much team exercises. Theresa added that outreach work was also great fun and there had been a further development in recent months with "after" parties which now involved consuming large quantities of tasty food including from a pizza oven!

More seriously, the Society continued to enjoy an excellent working relationship with both the National Museum of Wales, Cardiff, and the Brecon Beacons Visitor Centre where another solar observing day was to be held on 22nd June 2019 and at which there would, as in June 2018, be a display of Scottish dancing – a fact she had included in the background article recently submitted to Sky At Night magazine!

Theresa added that the experimental stargazing event the Society had held at Brecon in October 2018 alongside Dark Sky Wales had been extremely successful especially in that a higher number of telescopes for the public to look through were available. This was therefore an initiative that was well worth repeating.

Finally, Theresa pointed out that public events were organised largely in response to requests received from the public, schools etc and the Society did its level best to meet all such requests.

There were no questions from the floor.

Observatory Manager: Feras Tuma and Ian McLean

Feras said that he had joined the Society only six months prior to the AGM and had soon after participated in various star parties and other observing events. These experiences had led to his volunteering to take up the post of Observatory Manager after it became vacant in late 2018.

He went on to say that he had now been involved with several CAS star parties and had worked alongside various CAS members including Bob Biss, Bob Love, Ian McLean and Kath Compton. One recent notable achievement was the holding, on 29 March 2019, of a special stargazing event for 19 students from Cardiff University.

Feras also pointed out that there had been a problem with the Society's main 11" telescope which had been diagnosed as a collimation issue. The telescope had been successfully re-collimated by Jane Clark with the assistance of Bob Love.

He advised the Meeting that he had recently made a proposal to the CAS Committee for the purchase of a CCD camera to be used with one or two of the Society's telescopes for astrophotography, but this proposal had not yet been considered.

Ian McLean reported that eight successful star parties had been held at the Society's Observatory at Dyffryn Gardens in 2018. He also advised that entry arrangements for the Observatory via the main access gate had recently been changed as a result of night security guards no longer being used at Dyffryn Gardens. The Society had been given a single key (of which copies must not be made) for the padlock on that main gate, and this was held by Feras. The gate could be left open when the Society were using the Observatory, obviating the need for the gate to be manned.

A member asked Feras for the name of the Observatory Facebook group and this was provided.

Another member enquired about the repairs that were needing to be made to the Observatory's roof. Ian McLean said that the necessary repairs – effectively just a replacement of damaged roofing felt – were in hand and would be carried out when the weather was better.

Feras asked whether any member present had a CCD camera they could lend to the Society so that he and his colleagues could gain experience on the use of such equipment. There was a negative response, but Jane Clark said she was in the process of refurbishing her own observatory and, consequently, had a spare black and white camera which the Society could have.

Merchandising Officer: Ann Bennett. Submitted as a written report in advance of the AGM

"This is a brief report of what I do and why.

Whilst the role I have is a small one, our aim is not to make money. We cannot compete with retail outlets and what our merchandising stall aims to do is to draw people to the Society. At public events, I usually sit alongside the "freebie" table where we distribute free literature and try and engage people in conversation about our splendid society. An added bonus is that we get the opportunity to recruit new members to the Society, and this works, I believe we had several people express an interest in joining the Society during the Soyuz exhibition at the national Museum Wales, Cardiff, in November 2018.

In the coming months I am going to try and match merchandise to the fortnightly talks, to encourage our members to read more about the content of the talks. I think that would be a useful addition to the talks. I know that most of our members are a clever bunch, but we can all learn more!

I would appreciate any and all advice from members on how to improve the Society and look forward to helping make our brilliant society bigger and better."

Chairperson's Report (including Committee Membership Arrangements): Philip Wallace

The Chairperson said he did not have much to add to what had already been advised including in the 2018 Annual Report, but he pointed out that there had been several resignations from the Committee during the year including that of the Secretary, Mike Foley. Fortunately, however, Joan Payne had stepped forward to undertake the Secretary's main activities relating to providing hospitality for, and meeting and greeting, the external speakers for the fortnightly talks.

The Observatory Manager post had also been vacated during the year but, as previously advised, Feras Tuma had offered to take on this role. This offer had been accepted by the Committee and Feras was now doing an excellent job.

Finally, the talks programme for 2019/20 had recently been finalised and was about to be sent to the Society's printers for the production of the annual CAS flyer.

6. ELECTION OF TRUSTEES

The Chairperson pointed out that three current Trustees (Peter Crabb, Mike Foley and Cedric Longville) had decided not to stand for appointment as a Trustee in 2019/20, and he thanked each of them for the work they had carried out as a Trustee. As pointed out in the Notice of the AGM, the remaining current Trustees (Roy Blunt, Jane Clark, Nick Pollock and Philip Wallace) were prepared to stand for re-election in 2019/20 and he was also aware that two further individuals (Keith Foxhall and Ian McLean) had agreed to stand for election. [

In order to avoid a conflict of interest, the Chairperson invited Cedric Longville to chair this part of the Meeting and to conduct the election of the 2019/20 Trustees.

Cedric confirmed that there were now six candidates for election as a Trustee - Roy Blunt, Jane Clark, Keith Foxhall, Ian McLean, Nick Pollock and Philip Wallace – and it was agreed that the Meeting should now decide, by a show of hands, whether these candidates were elected. This was done with no dissent being expressed in relation to any of the candidates.

Cedric also took this opportunity to remark that he had very much enjoyed his period as a CAS Trustee for the past two and a half years. He felt that the duties were not particularly onerous, and he hoped that more individuals would come forward in due course to be appointed as a Trustee given that the current CAS Constitution allowed for up to nine Trustees whereas there were now only six.

7. TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

Peter Crabb reminded the Chairperson that the Trustees had agreed that the members intending to be on the 2019/20 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 2019/20 Committee: himself (currently Committee Chairperson), Ian McLean (Vice Chairperson), Roy Blunt (Treasurer), Theresa Cooper (Public Events Organiser), Edward Cooper (UKMON Co-ordinator), Keith Foxhall (Ordinary Member 2), Ann Bennett (Ordinary Member 1 and Merchandising Officer), Bob Biss (Director of Observations), Feras Tuma (Observatory Manager), Katrin Raynor-Evans (Librarian and Publications Officer), Kath Compton (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 then invited the Meeting to raise any issues that were of interest. Concern was immediately expressed about the recent reduction in the size of the membership and the following points, among others, were made in the ensuing discussion:

- More work should be done by the Committee to advertise the Society using local news media including local radio stations, but it was pointed out that the Committee had limited resources and there was a question mark over who would be able to take on that extra task
- All officers of the Society were volunteers and several officers had more than one post to perform i.e. there was a need for more members to make themselves available
- It was notable that although as many as 3,000 people had visited the National Museum of Wales, Cardiff, in January 2019 on the day of the successful Star Attractions event, with which CAS had been fully involved, very few applications for CAS membership had flowed from this
- Although it was thought that the need to comply with the provisions of the GDPR was the main reason for the recent large drop in the number of Society members, there may be other factors and it would be important to see what the level of membership will be in November 2019 i.e. after the months of September and October when the vast majority of membership renewals occurred
- Compliance with the GDPR was not too significant an issue when there was a need to remind existing CAS members that their membership was about to expire but it did create problems when seeking to contact ex-members about their lapsed membership
- If the income from Society membership fell further, consideration should be given to increase the cost of membership
- Although the current adult membership subscription of £15 a year provided excellent value for money for active Society members - those who regularly attended the fortnightly talks and/or visited the Observatory - any increase in the cost of membership might lead to the approximately 150 more passive members declining to renew their membership and so there may be no consequential increase in membership income
- The Society had achieved surpluses of over £1,100 and £650 in 2016/17 (14 months) and 2018 respectively, and existing Society members would probably be more amenable to an increase in membership fees after the Society had suffered an overall deficit rather than after surpluses had been made
- Gift Aid monies were expected to come through in due course and had not yet been taken into account in terms of the Society's future expected income, but it was essential to note that Gift Aid receipts must not be used to keep subscription fees down.

On a different matter, a member expressed her desire for the talks given by the Society not to clash with the Thursday evening meetings of the Cardiff Archaeological Society to which she also belonged. She said she had previously communicated with Peter Crabb on this matter. He undertook to follow things up with the member.

8. PRESENTATION OF THE BILL SUTHERLAND AWARD

The Chairperson reminded the Meeting of the background to the award which had been set up in memory of Bill Sutherland, an amateur telescope-maker and early member of CAS, who had passed away in 1990. It was awarded each year, at the AGM, to a CAS member (excluding Committee members) who had displayed outstanding enthusiasm for astronomy and the Society during the previous year.

Several nominations for the 2019 award had been received by the Committee, and this had resulted in a vote. The Chairperson was pleased to announce that Joan Payne would be the recipient of this year's award in the light of her almost permanent presence at the last year's CAS outreach events at which she had made a massive contribution and always showed considerable commitment and enthusiasm. The trophy was duly presented to her by the Chairperson accompanied by applause from the members present.

9. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

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