



HIGHLANDS ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

Unaudited Statement of Receipts and Payments

28 February 2023

Charity Number: SC037209

Trustees (and members of the committee)

Eric Walker	Chairman
David Davidson	Vice Chairman
Pauline Macrae	Secretary
Andrew Brough	Treasurer
Lorraine Shepherd	Membership Secretary
Pat Escott	
Lisa Pattenden	Programme Secretary
Charlotte Wallace	
Antony McEwan	(ex-officio – equipment consultant)
Gerry Gaitens	(ex-officio – Observatory Manager)

Independent Examiner

Neil Johnstone
26 Leys Drive
Inverness
IV2 3JA

Bankers

Bank of Scotland
2-6 Eastgate
Inverness
IV2 3NA

Contact Address

5 Boswell Crescent
Inverness
IV2 3ET

Andrewbrough1977@gmail.com

Trustees' Annual Report

The trustees present their report and receipts and payments account for the year ended 28 February 2023.

Origins

The Society was formed in 1993 as the Inverness Astronomical Society, merging the next year with the Moray Astronomical Society to form the present society. A formal constitution was drafted in 1996.

Governing Document

The Society is a charitable unincorporated society, and the purposes and administration arrangements are set out in our constitution.

Objectives

The Highlands Astronomical Society aims to promote and extend the awareness of, and interest in, all branches of astronomy and cosmology. We host educational, practical and social activities in the Highlands of Scotland, within a friendly and stimulating environment, accessible to all ages and levels of knowledge.

The Society seeks to achieve its aims through a varied programme of meetings, activities and events, including talks, exhibitions, observing sessions open to the public and social events. The Highlands Astronomical Society also aims to contribute worthwhile observational data to national and international astronomical organisations.

Astronomy is one of the few remaining sciences where valuable contributions and discoveries are still being made by amateurs. These facts are recognised and actively encouraged by professional astronomers and scientists.

Trustees

The trustees during the year were as listed on page 2. Where shown, some hold the title 'Office Bearer'. Any new appointments as trustee are made following approaches to suitably qualified people, who then agree to accept the appointment. New trustees are given the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator's booklet 'Guidance and good practice for Charity Trustees' to ensure that they are aware of their responsibilities, and are asked to sign as having read it.

The Office Bearers are appointed or reappointed by the members at our annual general meeting which is held in April each year. Committee members are appointed by the Office Bearers when required. The trustees do not receive any remuneration for their services.

We have in place a child protection policy (CPP) that reflects current Scottish legislation. New trustees are given the link to our policy to ensure that they are aware of their responsibilities, and are asked to sign as having read it.

Risk Management

The trustees have assessed the major risks to which the charity is exposed, including those at the Observatory, and in particular those related to the operations and finances of the trust, and are satisfied those systems are in place to mitigate such risks.

Reserves

The Society aims to have unrestricted funds of £2,500

The JSL Observatory.

The JSL Observatory dome houses a fully computerised **Meade LX200R 14" catadioptric telescope** within a Pulsar 9-foot dome.

We have a **Skywatcher MAK90 (with tripod)** for white light solar observing, a **4" Vixen refractor telescope (with tripod)**, a **6" Celestron telescope (with tripod)**, an **8" Vixen Astrograph telescope (with tripod)**, an **8" Meade LX90 telescope**, a **12" Dobsonian telescope** and a **Lunt Ha telescope (with tripod)** for solar observing. These offer alternate views from our main telescope and are especially useful when we have a large number of people at the Observatory. We also have an **80mm refracting telescope** which sometimes piggybacks the main telescope as well as a computerised EQ3 mount to use with our smaller telescopes and an iOptron Skyguider Pro which can use with the Club camera. We can also offer 4 pairs of 10 x 50 binoculars for society members and visitors to use.

The adjacent observing station (warm room) has disabled facilities which includes a lavatory as well as a wall mounted screen which is used to view telescope images remotely via a laptop as well as demonstrate a planetarium programme. The facility also houses the Society's library, and has room to allow us to hold small groups of visitors.

Instead of an Astro-cam (which was borrowed) attached to the Meade LX200R 14" in the dome, we now have a video camera which allows viewing in real time from the Celestron telescope. This uses a small screen instead of the eyepiece, allowing members and visitors to see the images more easily. It can also be used wirelessly with the large flat-screen in the warm room (still being refined) allowing views from the telescope, via the video camera to be seen in comfort by members and visitors and, in particular, anyone with limited mobility, as well as children who have more difficulty using an eyepiece thus allowing them the chance to partake in astronomical observing.

The Covid 19 pandemic, continued to reduce the number of people attending the Observatory in the spring of 2022 with only one Youth Group managing a visit. However, we opened the Observatory fully from the autumn and have been inundated with requests from Youth Groups for a session, and visitors are slowly increasing. As the weather can be so variable, it was decided to hold opportunistic observing sessions whenever we had a clear sky and enough Supervisors for that evening. This has resulted in increased use of the observatory by members and visitors.

This year we have hosted one Rangers' group, one Scout group, two Brownie groups, two Cub groups and one Beaver group (divided into two sessions) at the Observatory. Altogether we have had 119 visitors to the Observatory. Due to the large number of Youth Groups requesting visits, we have had to postpone some of them until next season.

We have continued to give advice on buying and setting up telescopes to members and the public.

We would like to acknowledge Gerry Gaitens for all his work as Observatory Manager. In addition, we would like to thank Gerry Gaitens, Trina Shaddick, Eric Walker and Pat Escott for helping Pauline Macrae (Youth Group Co-ordinator) with the Youth Groups at the Observatory as well as Dave Davidson and Paul Moffat (and Gerry, Eric, Pauline) who run the observing sessions for members and visitors.

We are most grateful to the National Trust for Scotland for allowing us to locate the observatory on their property at the Culloden Battlefield.

Activities and Achievements

In March, April and May, we had three external talks given via Zoom. No meetings took place in June and July. From August, we returned to monthly meetings but in a different venue – the Spectrum Centre. We tried a hybrid meeting format (speaker zoomed in to the venue) which our members had requested, and although it worked, it really was not good enough. There were only two members who were able to work the technology, which meant they were tied up the entire meeting ensuring there were no problems. After a lot of thought and discussion, and one more hybrid meeting, we decided the hybrid system was not workable due to both the technology (poor in the Spectrum Centre) and too few members who could ensure everything worked smoothly. The difficulties with the technology and various restrictions imposed by the Spectrum Centre meant that it did not fully meet our needs and we decided that, although more expensive, we would return to the Smithton Church from January, where we once again meet once a month in surroundings which are much more conducive to sociability. The meetings are preceded with the half hour Youngstars sessions (aged 8 – 14) led by Pauline Macrae and Trina Shaddick.

We have had seven external speakers via Zoom arranged by Lisa Pattenden, (either Zoom only, hybrid or Zoom only in a venue), one HAS member and a Christmas quiz in December. Initially the main talk was followed by a constellation, the Club news and astrophotographs taken by our members and given by Pauline Macrae but from November the Club News, targets for the month and members' astrophotographs were delivered by Eric Walker. Our Zoom talks are later edited and uploaded to our YouTube channel by Eric Walker.

From February, we decided to alter the way our meetings are run to provide a more active approach to astronomy as this is what our members wanted. This is all very new and will take time to settle but the first part of the evening consists of the Club News, targets and astrophotographs instead of a speaker, and is then followed by a beginners and practical session which can be followed up at the Observatory.

Our 2022 AGM was undertaken using Zoom for a third time, with the members being sent the normal AGM papers by email. The required quorum numbers were reached and the report was passed without alterations.

The AllSky camera built by Eric Walker has proved very useful for all members, and we remain a 'community consultant' to Highland Council especially where dark skies are concerned.

Website & Social Media

Social media now plays a major part in our communications for existing & potential members and it also enables us to share our successes, including details of observing events & astrophotographs taken by our members, with both a local & global audience.

Our website was completely updated by Eric Walker to make SSD safe and give it a modern, streamlined look which is now easier to access. It is kept up to date by Charlotte Wallace.

Our website, Facebook, and Instagram accounts continue to attract increasing numbers of regular followers and this enables us to promote our Club activities as well as facilitate public outreach.

Our social media links are

- **Website:** www.spacegazer.com
- **Facebook & Messenger:** Highlands Astronomical Society
- **Instagram:** highlands.astro
- **YouTube:** <https://www.youtube.com/@highlandsastronomicalsocie1119>
- Members only **WhatsApp groups**, set up by our Membership Secretary, Lorraine Shepherd. These include:
 - **Nebulous News:** event alerts, especially short notice, such as aurora sightings, live observing webcasts, noctilucent cloud sightings

- **Cosmic Convos:** anything astronomy related and social

The Monthly Newsletter – ‘Stargazey Pie’

This is written by Pauline Macrae and consists of Club News, what to look out for in the night sky and sometimes a Constellation. Our talks and video format versions of our presentations can be seen on our YouTube channel. The ‘Pie’ is sent to all members via email.

News Media

Our meetings are once again advertised in Astronomy Now Magazine as well as on our website and on Facebook.

External Educational Activities

We give talks to local societies and organisations to promote astronomy, our society and the Observatory.

During the year, three talks, by Pauline Macrae, were given to adult groups: two of those via Zoom and the other at a venue. During the winter months, five classes in two schools and one Beavers group were spoken to by Pauline Macrae.

We usually take part in external activities such as Doors Open Day and the Inverness Science Festival but were not ready to partake this year, apart from attending the Belladrum Festival. With beautiful weather, it was perfect for solar observing which attracted several **100 visitors**. The Orkney International Science Festival was a hybrid affair and Eric Walker was again asked to become a member of the 2022 Online Technical Team & Presentation Team.

Fund-raising Activities and grants

Due to rising electricity costs, each Youth Group visiting the Observatory have been kind enough to donate a small amount of money and now that the Observatory has opened up this winter, we have had a few donations from visitors.

Being back in a venue has allowed us to reinstate the raffle and this contributes to our funds.

Membership

The Society's membership has increased greatly despite losing some members as is usual. At the end of February, we had a membership of 102. At Committee meetings, we have continued to discuss ways of keeping our current members and gaining others.

Other Astronomical Societies

We are still invited to the online Zoom meetings of our sister Astronomy Clubs: SIGMA in Moray, Caithness Astronomy Group and Aberdeen Astronomical Society.

We have maintained our ‘twinning’ relationship with the Dunedin astronomical society in New Zealand by sending links to our YouTube channel.

Governance

During the COVID 19 pandemic restrictions, monthly bank statements were scrutinised by the Chairman and the Secretary via email and it also encouraged increasing use of Online banking services. The Society has three approved cheque signatories, with any two of the three to sign (as long as the cheque is not made out to one of them). Monthly bank statements and finances are now discussed in full at our Monthly Committee Meetings.

Closing Remarks

The Chairman would like to express his sincere thanks to all of the Society Committee for their invaluable support and also to the increasing number of 'Member Helpers' who are actively involving themselves in Club activities. It is the support and participation of the members which makes this a highly recognised and active astronomy club in the heart of the Scottish Highlands.

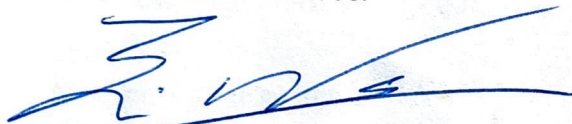
Financial results

The society has seen a slight drop in the level of reserves held, however it has still retained a good level by year end.

The society saw an increase in membership levels compared to the previous year along with an increase in donations and raffle income due to the return of face to face meetings, and sessions at the observatory. There was an increase in expenses from the previous year due to a higher than normal level of maintenance required at the observatory including the purchase of a new shed. Total cash reserves of the society at the end of the year stood at £4,322 and £689 is due to be claimed for Gift Aid this year along with an outstanding claim from the 2021-22 financial year.

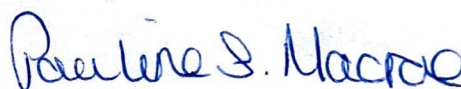
The above does not include the assets owned by the Society, which have a current value of approximately £81,250.

On behalf of the trustees:



Signed: Eric W. Walker, Chairman

Date: 04 NOV 2023



Signed: Pauline S Macrae, Secretary

Date: 6 November 2023

Highlands Astronomical Society

Highlands Astronomical Society – unrestricted funds

Statement of Receipts and Payments

for the year end	28 February 2023	2022-23	2021-22
		£	£
Income			
Membership subs	1,638	1,303	
Gift aid from subs and donations	0	719	
Donations	303	1,113	
Grant applications	0	0	
Fundraising events	238	322	
Outreach events	0	0	
Raffle	98	0	
Other income	0	0	
HAS Events	0	0	
Total Receipts:	2,277	3,457	
Expenses			
Venue costs	503	0	
Obs and equipment insurance	345	314	
Obs ground rent NTS	0	317	
Maintenance of obs buildings and ground	1099	100	
Obs electricity NTS	0	0	
Website costs	30	95	
HAS equipment i.e. obs equip, laptop, camera	80	0	
Speaker expenses	617	398	
General Admin	0	222	
Outreach Costs	68	0	
Sundry costs	35	0	
HAS events	0	0	
Total Expenditure:	2,777	1,446	
Net (expenditure)/receipts for the period	(500)	2,011	
Fund Balance brought forward	4,822	2,811	
Fund Balance carried forward	4,322	4,822	

Highlands Astronomical Society


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Statement of Balances

At 28 February 2023

	2022-23	2021-22
	£	£
Cash at Bank and on hand		
Cash at Bank	4,299	4,787
Cash on hand	23	35
Closing Balances	<u>4,322</u>	<u>4,822</u>
Reserves		
Unrestricted Funds	4,322	4,822
Closing Balances	<u>4,322</u>	<u>4,822</u>
Assets		
Observatory	64,000	64,000
Astronomical equipment	17,000	17,000
Computing equipment	250	250
Unclaimed Gift Aid	977	288
	<u>82,227</u>	<u>81,538</u>

Approved on behalf of the Trustees and
authorised for issue on 6 November 2023

Signed 
Andrew Brough, Treasurer
06 Nov 2023

Signed 
Eric Walker, Chairman
04 Nov 2023

Notes to the accounts

for the year ended 28 February 2023

1. Accounting policies

Reserves

All funds are unrestricted funds which may be applied to any purposes as decided on by the trustees, so long as these are within the objects of the charity.

Income and expenditure

Income and expenditure are recognised at the time of receipt or payment.

2. Nature of funds

The Highlands Astronomical Society Fund is a general purpose fund into which all the ongoing income is placed and the operating costs of the Society are met.

3. Trustees' and other remuneration

No trustee receives any remuneration for their services. The Society has no paid employees.

4. Reserves

The Society has a policy of holding a reserve of £2,500 against unforeseen eventualities.

Independent Examiner's Report to the Trustees of Highlands Astronomical Society

I report on the accounts of the charity for the year ended 28 February 2023 which are set out on pages 8 to 10.

Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner

The charity's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the terms of the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005 and the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006 (as amended). The charity trustees consider that the audit requirement of Regulation 10(1) (d) of the 2006 Accounts Regulations does not apply. It is my responsibility to examine the accounts as required under section 44(1) (c) of the Act and to state whether particular matters have come to my attention.

Basis of independent examiner's statement

My examination is carried out in accordance with Regulation 11 of the 2006 Accounts Regulations. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts, and seeks explanations from the trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit, and consequently I do not express an audit opinion on the view given by the accounts.

Independent examiner's statement

In the course of my examination, no matter has come to my attention

1. which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements:
 - to keep accounting records in accordance with Section 44(1) (a) of the 2005 Act and Regulation 4 of the 2006 Accounts Regulations
 - to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with Regulation 9 of the 2006 Accounts Regulations

have not been met, or

2. to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.



Name: Neil Johnstone

Address: 26 Leys Drive
Inverness
IV2 3JA

Date:

6 November 2023