



HIGHLANDS ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

Unaudited Statement of Receipts and Payments

29 February 2024

Charity Number: SC037209

Trustees (and members of the committee)

Eric Walker	Chairman
David Davidson	Vice Chairman
Pauline Macrae	Secretary
Kristina Petkova	Treasurer
Lorraine Shepherd	Membership Secretary
Pat Escott	
Lisa Pattenden	Programme Secretary
Charlotte Wallace	Website
Paul Moffett	(from May 2023)
Carl Frampton	Social Media (from February 2024)
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

kris.petkova@gmail.com

Trustees' Annual Report

The trustees present their report and receipts and payments account for the year ended 29 February 2024.

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, taking part in science festivals, observing sessions open to the public and social events and now focussing on active astronomy where we focus on practical observing.

The Highlands Astronomical Society also aims to contribute worthwhile observational data to national and international astronomical organisations where possible.

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. Last summer the wooden floor of the dome was removed as it was becoming rotten, and a new concrete floor with a soft top was put in place, thanks to Paul Moffett and Dave Davidson.

Unfortunately, we have an alignment issue with the telescope where it has not been finding objects in the sky. Efforts have been made to sort this out and although improved, the problem has not yet been fully resolved.

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** (which now has setting circles and better wheels making it more portable, thanks to Paul Moffett) 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 be used with the Club camera. We can also offer 4 pairs of 10 x 50 binoculars for society members and visitors to use. Our new shed (installed in 2022 with the help of member, Gary Fairlie) has proved invaluable for freeing up room in the observing station.

We have access to 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 but, in particular, also anyone with limited mobility and children who have more difficulty using an eyepiece to see the images more easily. It can also be used wirelessly with the large flat-screen in the warm room allowing views from the telescope, via the video camera, to be seen in comfort by members and visitors.

The adjacent observing station (warm room) has disabled facilities which includes a lavatory (septic tank now emptied) 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, including Youth groups.

This year we have hosted one Guide group, three Scout groups, two Brownie groups, one Cub group, one Sea Cadet group and one home school group at the Observatory. In addition, we were host to a private group of six and a daytime school class visit during the summer.

By holding opportunistic observing sessions when the weather has been favourable, more observing sessions for members and their guests have been able to take place, ably led by the enthusiastic night owls, Dave Davidson and Paul Moffett. By advertising our observing sessions on our website and Facebook pages, this has also led to some members of the public coming along.

After each observing session, Dave displays his talent for writing by detailing the evening events in an article for the website.

Altogether we have had 297 visitors to the Observatory.

Over the summer, a number of astronomy sketching courses and two astrophotography coaching sessions were arranged and run by Dave Davidson culminating in a barbeque and Perseid meteor shower watching evening.

We have continued to give advice on buying and setting up telescopes and the Observatory is a perfect place to do this.

We would like to thank Gerry Gaitens, Trina Shaddick, Eric Walker, Pat Escott and Dave Davidson for helping Pauline Macrae (Youth Group Co-ordinator) with the Youth Groups at the Observatory.

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

This was the first full year, since the pandemic, where we were able to hold each Club meeting at our preferred venue of Smithton Church.

Our active astronomy meetings have proved successful and is perhaps the reason for our younger demographic. Pauline Macrae, Eric Walker or Dave Davidson, will start the evening with a presentation of our Club News often including a constellation, targets/challenges as well as members astrophotographs. We are concentrating on Messier Challenges and two members received certificates with one, Paul Moffett, completing all four challenges in just a year. This is then followed by a member giving a short talk or practical session on any subject they want; this is known as the 'Spotlight'. After the tea break there is time for general discussion and chat amongst the members, as well as help and advice from more experienced members. The practical side of things can be followed up at the Observatory. Astrophotography has become extremely popular and the enthusiasm of members, whether beginners or experienced, knows no bounds.

We had one excellent external speaker secured by Lisa Pattenden and a Christmas quiz with a break during June and July. The meetings continue to be preceded with the half hour Youngstars sessions (aged 8 – 14) led by Pauline Macrae and Trina Shaddick.

Our talks and PowerPoint presentations without the audio, can be seen on our YouTube channel after being uploaded by Eric Walker. See below under website and Social Media.

We are very grateful to the members who have volunteered for various roles during the meeting such as helping with the teas: Joyce Cruickshank, Kim Thain, Norma Duncan, Janine Cade: also, the AV equipment Peter Etheridge and Angus Trevelan; and the raffle: Linda Moncur and Mike Welham. Pat Escott has worked quietly in the background doing tasks that others haven't been able to do.

Our 2023 AGM took place at our venue for the first time in three years, with the members being sent the normal AGM papers by email. The required quorum numbers were reached and the report was passed without alterations. After final scrutiny by the Independent Examiner the Annual Report was submitted to OSCR.

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.

We are hoping to form a collaboration with ORBEX, a local rocket company. Some of them have visited our Observatory and a short film by the Ground Segment Software Architect featured our Observatory.

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. One of our members, Carl Frampton, has recently agreed to come onto the Committee as our social media person to promote the Club as well as upload the astrophotographs.

Our modern, streamlined website is kept up to date by Charlotte Wallace and, along with Facebook, and Instagram accounts, it continues 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 group** is called **Nebulous News** and is used for event alerts – especially those that require short notice such as aurora and noctilucent cloud sightings, as well as ad hoc

observing sessions. This was set up by our Membership Secretary, Lorraine Shepherd.

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, sometimes a Constellation and a summary of the ‘Spotlight’ talk. The ‘Pie’ is sent to all members via email.

News Media

Our meetings are 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, seven classes in two schools, all the children in a small school and a Scout group were spoken to by Pauline Macrae. In addition, Pauline Macrae and Dave Davidson took the Lunt (solar telescope) and another telescope with a white light filter along to a school for all the pupils and staff (over 100) to view the Sun.

We took part in three external events this year: Doors Open Day, the Belladrum Festival and the Strathpeffer Science Festival. Once again, each event attracted large numbers of visitors and some new members. We would like to thank the many members who kindly gave up their time to help with these events: Eric Walker, Gerry Gaitens, Dave Davidson, Trina Shaddick, Lisa Pattenden, Kristina Petkova, Pat Escott, Joyce Cruickshank, Stuart and Trish Fletcher, Norman Duncan, David Stephen, Niamh Martin and Pauline Macrae. The Orkney International Science Festival was a hybrid affair and Eric Walker was again asked to become a member of the 2023 Online Technical Team & Presentation Team. Eric, along with Callum Potter (BAA Deep Sky Section Director), also supported the 2023 North Ronaldsay Science Festival by presenting astronomy talks, hosting observing sessions, and giving advice and demonstrations to the NorthRon team on how to use & maintain and their own telescope.

Fund-raising Activities and grants

Due to current 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. Each event we hold or attend (festivals) also attracts welcome donations

The raffle continues to contribute to our funds.

Membership

The Society’s membership has continued to increase in number despite losing some members as is usual. At the end of February, we had a membership of 113 – the most we have ever had! Lorraine Shepherd does a great job of ensuring all members are accounted for. 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 a ‘twinning’ relationship with the Dunedin astronomical society in New Zealand.

Governance

Monthly bank statements continue to be scrutinised by the Chairman and the Secretary during our Committee meetings held by Zoom. Banking transactions are carried out online as much as possible. 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 discussed in full at our Monthly Committee Meetings.

Closing Remarks

"I feel incredibly fortunate in having had nearly five incredible years in this role and am handing over 'the baton' of the Club with it being in as good a condition as it has been for years. I have been fortunate to have worked with and had the support of various teams of committee members who have helped steer the Club into a very healthy financial position, coped with the massive COVID crisis, differentiated the outlook and aims of the Club to one of an active astronomy club for the benefit of its members, and, excitedly put it in the 'launch position' to reach for any stars it is ambitious enough to aim for. I want to leave with a very big thankyou to all the people that helped me along the way and never forgetting you, the Members, without whom there wouldn't be an active local Scottish Highlands astronomy club at all" – Eric Walker (Chair)


Financial results

Compared to the previous financial year the society has increased its income due to an increase of donations and outreach events (£616 more than the previous year), membership payments (£208 more than previous year) and raffle income (£259 more than the previous year).

The total cash reserves of the society at the end of the year stood at £5,326 (£1,004 more than the previous financial year) and £230 is due to be claimed for Gift Aid this year along with an outstanding claim from 2022-23.

The above does not include other 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: 21 MAY 2024



Signed: Pauline S Macrae, Secretary

Date: 21st May 2024

Highlands Astronomical Society – unrestricted funds

Statement of Receipts and Payments

for the year end	29-Feb-24	2023-24	2022-23
Income	£	£	
Membership subs	1,846	1,638	
Gift aid from subs and donations	0	0	
Donations	691	303	
Grant applications	0	0	
Fundraising events	215	238	
Outreach events	228	0	
Raffle	357	98	
Other income	0	0	
HAS Events	0	0	
Total Receipts:	3,337	2,277	
Expenses			
Venue costs	1,017	503	
Obs and equipment insurance	310	345	
Obs ground rent NTS	0	0	
Maintenance of obs buildings and ground	539	1,099	
Obs electricity NTS	53	0	
Website costs	78	30	
HAS equipment i.e. obs equip, laptop, camera	200	80	
Speaker expenses	79	617	
General Admin	57	0	
Outreach Costs	0	68	
Sundry costs	0	35	
HAS events	0	0	
Total Expenditure:	2,333	2,777	
Net receipts/(expenditure) for the period	1,004	(500)	
Fund Balance brought forward	4,322	4,822	
Fund Balance carried forward	5,326	4,322	

Highlands Astronomical Society

Statement of Balances

As at **29-Feb-24**

	2023-24	2022-23
	£	£
Cash at Bank and on hand		
Cash at Bank	5,303	4,299
Cash on hand	23	23
Closing Balances	<u>5,326</u>	<u>4,322</u>
Reserves		
Unrestricted Funds	5,326	4,322
Closing Balances	<u>5,326</u>	<u>4,322</u>
Assets		
Observatory at estimated market value	64,000	64,000
Astronomical equipment at estimated market value	17,000	17,000
Computing equipment at estimated market value	250	250
Unclaimed Gift Aid	<u>1,207</u>	<u>977</u>
	<u>82,457</u>	<u>82,227</u>

Approved on behalf of the Trustees by the treasurer and authorised for issue on

21 May 2024

Signed  **Kristina Petkova** Treasurer

Dated

21 May 2024

Signed  **Eric W. Walker** Chairman

Dated

21 MAY 2024

for the year ended **29 February 2024**

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 29 February 2024 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.

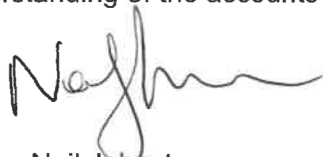
Independent examiner's statement

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:

21 May 2024