

Secretary's Annual Report 2009-10

Please read this report in conjunction with that of the Trustees Report. The latter is the report HAS sends to the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR). It focuses on finance and outreach, as befits a charity. The secretary's report focuses on the society's regular activities.

Secretary

Pat Williams has held the position of Secretary over the past year, and also in 2004-05, 2005-2007 and for part of 2007-08. Eric Walker held the post in 2008-09. Pat will be standing down as secretary at the AGM on 6th April 2010.

Membership

The number of members, by the end of the current accounting session, is 90 consisting of 60 Full members, 10 Family members, 4 Student / Unemployed members, 10 Junior members, and 6 Honorary members.

Meetings

Apr 2009		AGM + DVD 'Walking on the Moon'
May	Howie Firth	'Sirius Red'
Jun	Melvyn Taylor	'Blinking Stars'
Jul	Des Loughney	'Eclipse China 2008'
Aug	Maarten de Vries	'Planetary Exploration with Robotic Vehicles'
Sep	Mike Lunan	'What's in the Night Sky'
Oct	Aidan Keane	'Relativity and Black Holes'
Nov	Pauline Macrae	'The Universe in 3D'
Dec	Paul Jenkins	'Journey to a Nearby Star'
Jan 2010	Bill Leslie	Meeting cancelled because of snow.
Feb	Stewart Argo	'Climate and the Cosmos'
Mar	Eric Walker	'History and Evolution of Astrophotography'

Numbers attending each monthly meeting including speaker, visitors and Youngstars.

	2009-2010	2008-2009	2007-2008	2006-2007
Apr-09	37*	36	29	26
May-09	42	42	45	39
Jun-09	44	54	40	36
Jul-09	52	50	27	28
Aug-09	52	54	43	40
Sep-09	60	50	46	51
Oct-09	60	51	42	48
Nov-09	57	57	48	52
Dec-09	53	38	41	0
Jan-09	0	47	32	53
Feb-09	59	48	49	48
Mar-09	53	56	47	50
Total	569	583	489	471
Average	51.73	48.58	40.75	42.82

*April AGM attendance included three non-members who had no voting rights.

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In August, the monthly meeting moved from The Green House to Smithton Culloden Free Church. Our thanks are due to the Rev. David Meredith, Charlie Anderson the Church Manager and all the church members for making us feel so welcome.

The society is indebted to Christine Clifford for greeting everybody as they come in the door and for ticking boxes, supervising programme distribution and handing out the notices compiled by Eric and astronomy information sheets from Antony McEwan and Bill Leslie. Members, being a well-educated group, have opted to have only the important notices highlighted by the chairman, read, and inwardly digest the remainder by themselves. This has worked well and frees up time within the meeting. Eric posts the notices on the website. Paul meanwhile zealously enrolls new members. Arthur Milnes sells the 'winning ticket' to everyone he can persuade to buy. Thank you to everyone who has supported Arthur and HAS's venture whether by donating prizes or buying 'the' ticket.

The "Youngstars" meeting & activities continue and are well supported, catering for children in the 8 -14 age range. Pauline and Trina Shaddick lead these for half an hour before each main monthly meeting.

The format of the monthly meetings continues to evolve. We make every effort to run on time. The observatory report each month is a new feature designed to encourage members to make full use of our wonderful facility. Break out groups are planned well ahead and thanks to all those who have taken part so far including John Burns who, once again, came from Aviemore to demonstrate the range of binoculars he

has for sale. We hope that many members will front these groups. At present, the groups are concentrating on observation, with members showing their telescopes or consideration of what is to be found within an individual constellation. The subject of the break out is posted on the website.

A questionnaire was sent 86 members. 33 were completed. The results will be presented at the AGM. Thank you Paul for devising the questions, helping with the analysis and thanks to all members who sent in returns.

The tea break continues to be a very important part of the evening. Fred and Jean Millwood together with Rhona Fraser have quickly adapted to their new kitchen and to having a dishwasher. Did you notice that we now have proper cups or were you too busy chatting? Rosemary Mitchell joins the team in April and others help from time to time. Did you ever wonder who is responsible for the up to date astronomy information on the tea-room walls. Look no further than Pauline.

Speakers

We know from the questionnaire results that the speakers are one of the main attractions of HAS. Thank you to each of them. Steve Owens, UK director of International Year of Astronomy 2009 spoke to the joint meeting with Sigma. Outside speakers this session were Howie Firth and Aidan Keane. From other astronomical societies, we had Melvyn Taylor (Leeds), Des Loughney (Edinburgh), Mike Lunan (Caithness), and Stewart Argo (Sigma). They all gave of their time freely. We pay travel expenses and give a book token and card in appreciation. Members provide accommodation if required. HAS members who gave talks were Maarten, Pauline, Paul and Eric. They receive a card crafted by Pauline who puts much thought and expertise in to these. Thank you Pauline. Martin Hendry's postponed talk will be in May. Although we did not hear Bill Leslie's talk in January because of snow, he will give it in June.

Media - Publications (Inverness Courier)

April 2009	Pauline Macrae	'Ursa Major'
May	Antony McEwan	'Moon + Lunar 100 and 2 Globulars'
June	Rhona Fraser	'Southern Skies'
July	Pauline Macrae	'Galaxy Shapes and Redshifts'
August	Antony McEwan	'Ophiuchus'
September	Rhona Fraser	'Bootes'
October	Pauline Macrae	'Aquila'
November	Antony McEwan	'Pegasus'

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December	Rhona Fraser	<i>'Cassiopeia'</i>
January 2009	Pauline Macrae	<i>'Extra Solar Planets'</i>
February	Antony McEwan	<i>'Canis Major and Canis Minor'</i>
March	Rhona Fraser	<i>'Canes Venatici and M51'</i>

These articles give us welcome publicity as well as introducing astronomy to the reading public. Well done all of you.

Media - Features (newspapers & magazines)

BBC Sky at Night & Astronomy Now – HAS meetings are advertised in both magazines.

Press & Journal and Inverness Courier – published articles relating to HAS's contribution to IYA 2009.

The Spacegazer Website

The website is now used to inform members and the public of the status of viewing on observing nights. Advance notice of the next meeting, as well as the annual programme can be found there. The website continues to receive many hits each month. Eric deals with the enquiries, which range from requests for school talks and visits to the observatory to people wishing to sell telescopes. Antony, Eric, Maarten and Pauline form the media team. Congratulations to them all for a very professional website. This had an average score of 4.6 out of 5 on the questionnaire.

Events

These are well documented in the OSCR report and on the website.

Messier Challenge

Maarten, Antony and Eric all received their certificates this winter. Congratulations.

Observing Sessions

Observing at Culloden has attracted many of the public. It is gratifying to have so many children attending. Thank you to Paul for his sterling work as manager, Rhona who makes up the rota, does the cleaning and supplies the goodies and to all members who assist. Come when you can and view our uplifting night sky.

Specialist Support Team

If you have a particular query about any specific aspect of astronomy consult the website for our list of specialists who assist our members, the public, and the media – both practical and knowledge-based.

Members

HAS membership reached 91 by the March meeting ranging in age from seven to 80. Thanks to its members, we are greatly respected among UK astronomical groups.

Committee

On a personal note I would like to express my gratitude to all those who agreed in February last year to stand for election or to come on the committee. We had lost many key personnel from the previous year. A new team emerged who have worked very hard to make IYA 2009 a resounding success for HAS. We have had lots of fun along the way and would warmly welcome some new members.

Pat Williams, Secretary, 29 March 2009