

HAS SECRETARY'S REPORT 2004-05

Can you remember why you became a Member of Highlands Astronomical Society? Attracted by the energy, enthusiasm, knowledge, expertise and synergy of its Members, I joined in April 2002. I was not disappointed and am delighted that this buzz has continued. When, in April 2004, you appointed me your Secretary, I felt immensely privileged.

For me, the year started with printing some of the 2004-05 programmes. Following this, I arranged the coach hire for the Glasgow Science Centre in June. SPA Coaches of Strathpeffer, and their driver John, contributed greatly to a very happy day. Another helpful contact was with Carol MacPherson and her team from the Eastgate Centre who did so much to make the Open Day in September the success it was.

Outside speakers frequently give us new knowledge and a fresh perspective on information we already have. We try to make them feel very welcome and appreciated. To this end, I contact them a few weeks before their visit to check that we can supply whatever technology they require, ask about their travel arrangements and offer local transport, overnight accommodation, or a meal if required. All speakers give us their services free and we pay travel expenses giving them a small gift (often a book token) in appreciation. A more formal letter of thanks follows.

Speakers who are Members only receive a vote of thanks. Arthur, who combines humour with graciousness, often takes on this task. We are so fortunate in our Member-Speakers who, in addition to their talks, go out of their way to use their expertise to help other Members.

From the Member Surveys already received, it is becoming very clear how much we appreciate the use of The Green House. Our thanks go to Fiona Clarke, of The Green House staff, who has voluntarily given her time to be present at every meeting to deal with security. It is she who supplies the flasks of hot water. At Christmas, on your behalf, we gave Fiona a basket of flowers as a token of appreciation. At 9 pm, a paid security guard takes her place. This gives both The Green House staff and us peace of mind. Marie Hunter, Assistant Centre Manager, is also involved in making our venue as comfortable as possible. As a result of the Survey she is already looking at further improvements.

Our upgraded website and *Courier* articles have attracted a great deal of interest. Often with the assistance of other Members, I reply to the e-mails thus generated. On behalf of the Society, I receive a number of telephone calls from the public. After some initial difficulty, finding my way around the various other UK groups, such as The Federation of Astronomical Societies and the Scottish Astronomy Group, your Society has renewed its links with both. We will host the SAG weekend in September 2005. Neil Bone for *Astronomy Now* publicises our meetings. Recently the Editor of a new magazine, *BBC Sky at Night*, publication date 24th May 2005, has asked us to contribute a Society profile for the first edition

To avoid duplication of the Chairwoman's Report, I will not individually thank anyone already thanked - those who helped Pauline also supported me. As a Society we owe a great deal to our Chairwoman who works unstintingly not only for HAS but also to bring astronomy to the wider public, especially schoolchildren; thank you Pauline.

Pat Williams 2005