

Minutes of the AGM of Croydon Astronomical Society held at 8pm on July 8th 2022

Present: Tony Roberts (in the chair) and 17 other members of CAS. Apologies were received from David Rawlins and Roy Easto. The AGM was quorate under section 11(5)(b) of the constitution.

Approval of minutes of 2021 AGM. These were agreed with no matters arising.

Trustees' report. The Trustees' Annual Report and Accounts (Appendix 1) and the Donations Analysis (appendix 1a) had been placed on the society's website and a link to these documents had been emailed to members 20 days in advance of the meeting. The Annual Report and Accounts would be sent to the Charity Commission and would appear publicly on their website. A brief overview of the Trustees' Report was given and the report was discussed, then agreed. Colin provided an explanation of the figures in the Accounts and the Donations Analysis. The Accounts and Donations Analysis were agreed (proposed Konrad, seconded Kevin).

Outreach report Martin presented a report on the society's outreach activities (including group visits, special events both at and away from the observatory, and other outreach events and support delivered by members). The report is attached (appendix 2). The report was accepted and Martin was thanked for organising the group visits.

Observatory report Graham presented a report, written by Carolyn Raishbrook, on the building and maintenance work that had been completed at the observatory and on future work which may be necessary (appendix 3). The report was accepted and those involved (particularly Jonathan Barrott, Carolyn Raishbrook and Paul Stenning) were thanked for their work.

Tony delivered a **Chair's report** (appendix 4). This was accepted. Members unanimously agreed a warm vote of thanks to Tony for his work and his leadership of the Society.

John Murrell Paul Harper announced that John Murrell, a previous chairman of the Society and a Life Member, had died after a short illness. Members observed a minute's silence in his memory.

Life membership Tony announced that the Committee had agreed to bestow Life Membership on Roy Easto for his service to the Society over many decades.

Announcement of nominations for committee.

Eight places were available for appointment at this AGM - the Chairman - Tony Roberts and the Treasurer – Colin Weightman were not required to retire until the next following AGM.

In addition, Stefan Blakemore, Graham Cluer, Martin Gaiger, Carolyn Raishbrook, Paul Stenning and Laura Quayle have been nominated.

As there were fewer nominations than places on the committee, no election will be necessary.

Tony thanked the retiring committee and others who had supported the society.

Examiner of Accounts Roy Easto was appointed as Examiner of Accounts for the year to 31st March 2023.



CROYDON ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

TRUSTEES' REPORT AND ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR TO 31st MARCH 2022

1. LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

CHARITY REGISTRATION NUMBER: 1187803

LEGAL FORM: Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) formed under the Charities Act 2011 (the "Act").

CHARITY TRUSTEES (COMMITTEE): 6 (see section 3).

GOVERNING DOCUMENT: Constitution dated 7th Feb 2020 as amended on 5th June 2021.

OBJECTS: To advance education in the science of astronomy and related subjects for the public benefit in Croydon and the surrounding area by

- a) encouraging a popular interest in astronomy and allied subjects;
- b) helping beginners, irrespective of their age, to acquire a knowledge of astronomy and allied subjects; and
- c) providing facilities for practical work and active participation in astronomical observation.

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP: 84 as of 31st March 2022.

WEBSITE: <https://croydonastro.org.uk>

2. ACTIVITIES IN PERIOD

The society holds meetings about astronomy (and related subjects) approximately every two weeks during school term time on a Friday evening. These are held at a school located close to, and with good transport links with, central Croydon.

Our current aim is to alternate between having a 'short talks' meeting where typically two or three members of the society each present a short talk, and a 'long talk' meeting where we invite an expert third party speaker – perhaps from a university or from another society.

As an ancillary activity, the society maintains the self-built Norman Fisher Observatory. The observatory dates from 1979, and is located on a small plot of land in a relatively dark sky location on Kenley historic aerodrome. Although the observatory site is within easy reach by car from central Croydon, it is not close to public transport links.

- The observatory is open to the public every Saturday evening when it is clear and dark, provided qualified volunteers are available. Information about observatory openings and other outreach events is posted on the society's Facebook page and website.
- Pre-arranged visiting groups (Scouts organisation, Schools, U3A etc) are welcomed at the observatory at other times during the week.

The society is unusual amongst astronomy societies in that it is funded by donations from its members and visitors and does not charge a membership fee.

The society is a member of the Federation of Astronomical Societies (FAS) and the Southern Area Group of Astronomical Societies (SAGAS).

Response to Coronavirus Restrictions

Following the introduction of Coronavirus restrictions in March 2020, the society was unable to either hold in-person talks or open its observatory until the latter part of 2021.

During the restrictions the society arranged a programme of online talks and a number of social meetings at the society's virtual pub, the 'Altair Arms'. The society's online Forum (hosted by Google Groups) also remained active throughout, particularly in respect of astrophotography.

Regular Activities

Friday Talks

- In-person talks recommenced in September 2021.
- Unfortunately, due to the rapid spread of the Omicron coronavirus variant around Christmas 2021, it was considered prudent to protect members by cancelling the two meetings either side of the Christmas break.
- During the period to 31st March 2022 the society held 10 talk evenings, with average attendance of 27.

Norman Fisher Observatory

- Committee re-opened the society's observatory in August 2021.
 - *Outreach* - During the period to 31st March 2022 the observatory was opened to the public 11 times with the number of visitors on each evening varying significantly from a low of three to an overwhelming 80+. Additionally 19 group visits took place comprising 14 visits from Scout association groups and 5 visits from local schools.
 - There is a shortage of volunteers who are willing and able to run such outreach events at the observatory and, if this situation does not change, regrettably the society will need to scale back or cease such activities entirely.
 - *Members' Usage* - Few members choose to use the observatory facilities.
 - Members interested in observing or astrophotography generally prefer to use their own astronomical and photographic equipment, and would choose to set up at home (or another convenient location) rather than making the journey and setting up at the observatory.

Special Outreach Activities

Astronomy at the RAF Kenley Historic Airfield

- Coronavirus lockdown and work-from-home advice has resulted in many exploring their local area. Walks in and around the RAF Kenley historic airfield (which is adjacent to the society's Norman Fisher Observatory) have become popular.
- During the period, the society organised three public events on the RAF Kenley Historic Airfield.
 - *Annual Perseid Meteor Shower (August 2021)*
 - The Perseid Meteor shower occurs when the Earth passes through debris left by comet 109P Swift/Tuttle.
 - About 30 members of the public attended in addition to society members, and it is thought that everyone saw at least one meteor with one observer spotting nearly two dozen.
 - As well as meteor observing, the society provided telescopes to view the planets, and a system to detect meteors using radar. Members of the society were kept busy answering questions and pointing out astronomical sights.
 - Some members of the public stayed until well after midnight. Many of our visitors expressed their intention to visit the observatory during one of our Saturday public openings.
 - *Moon-lit night walks around the perimeter of RAF Kenley Historic Airfield (February and March 2022)*
 - The society organised two family-oriented moon-lit night walks around the 1.8-mile airfield perimeter track, pointing out features of interest in the night sky. A third walk themed around the September 2021 Harvest Moon was planned but was cancelled due to cloud cover.
 - At the end of the second walk, a telescope was provided to view the Moon and other objects.
 - Both walks were well attended with around 30 visitors for each.

Other Notable Changes

Other changes that took place during the period include the following:

- *Refractor Telescope Loan* - a high quality 165mm aperture refractor telescope has been loaned to the society. Views through this refractor are often sharper than through the society's principal telescope – a 14-inch Meade LX-200 Schmidt Cassegrain - as a smaller aperture is less impacted by poor atmospheric conditions.
- *Improved Website and Membership Application Process* - The society has moved to a premium website service. This now allows membership applications to be made online and for the website to be kept up to date more easily.
- *Online donations through CAF Donate* – Many members choose to donate to the society when they join or renew their membership. As membership applications are now made online, the society has set up an account with CAF Donate (a service run by Charities Aid Foundation) to collect online card and Paypal donations, and to claim Gift Aid on the society's behalf.
- *Email Communications* – The society has set up a pay-as-you-go account with a specialist email marketing firm. This allows the society to send bulk emails which are optimised for viewing on mobile devices, and which provide convenient links to the society's website, Facebook page, and Twitter feed.
- *Registration of Observatory Site* – On 29th July 2021 the land on which the observatory is built was transferred from the four 'land trustees' (who held the land as nominees) into the society's name.

Public Benefit

Committee members confirm that they have had regard to the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit.

3. COMMITTEE

The Committee can have up to ten charity trustees.

- All Committee members (apart from the offices of Chair, Secretary and Treasurer) retire at every AGM.
- Those holding the offices of Chair, Secretary and Treasurer are required to retire at every second AGM, with the Chair and Treasurer retiring in the same year and the Secretary in the alternate year.
- Retiring trustees are immediately eligible for re-election.

Committee Members during the period 1st April 2021 to the date of this Trustees Report

Name	Role as at the date of this report	On Committee 1 st April 2021	New Joiners - Date Joined Committee	Date Left Committee	On Committee as at the date of this report
Tony Roberts	Chair	•			•
Graham Cluer	Secretary & Vice-Chair	•			•
Colin Weightman	Treasurer & Membership	•			•
Martin Gaiger	Outreach	•			•
Carolyn Raishbrook		•			•
Paul Stenning		•			•
<i>Alice Ardis</i>		•		4 Jun 21	
<i>Joanne Ardis</i>		•		4 Jun 21	
<i>Jonathan Barrott</i>		•		19 May 22	
<i>Will Stewart</i>		•		4 Jun 21	
TOTAL		10		4	6

4. FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Basis of Accounting

- Under Section 133 of the Act, since the society's gross income is below £250,000, we have elected to prepare accounts on a 'receipts and payments' basis, together with a statement of our assets and liabilities (with the net of the assets and liabilities being our 'Accumulated Fund').
- We do not meet the threshold required for an audit nor for an independent examination of the accounts. However, it is our practice to ask a member of the society (the 'CAS Accounts Examiner') to examine the society's accounting records and confirm to the Committee that nothing has come to their attention that would cause them to believe in any material respect that accounting records were not kept in accordance with Section 130 of the Act, or that the accounts do not accord with the accounting records.

Financial Review

We present on page 8 accounts for the year to 31st March 2022:

- On 1st April 2021, the Accumulated Fund stood at £5,842. During the period the society made a surplus of £2,322 and, as of 31st March 2022, the Accumulated Fund stood at £8,165.
- Donations of £3,981 include amounts collected through CAF Donate, 'Grey Box' cash donations made at Friday meetings, cash donations boxes at the observatory and donations for Group Visits. The Society claimed a total of £632 from HMRC in Gift Aid and under the Gift Aid Small Donations Scheme.
- The Observatory Buildings expense include an amount of £367 to create a rainwater soakaway (being the cost of materials used and the disposal of surplus soil).
- The Observatory Equipment expense includes £113 for the purchase of a Celestron Finder-scope and £123 on dovetails.
- Bank charges of £87 principally relate to the costs of using the CAF Donate system.

Croydon Astronomical Society

Amounts in £

Statement of Assets and Liabilities as at 31st March 2022

Cash at Bank and in Hand	8,165
Add: Debtors and Prepayments	-
Deduct: Creditors and Accruals	-
Accumulated Fund	8,165

Movements in Accumulated Fund as at 31st March 2022

Accumulated Fund Brought Down	5,842
Surplus /(Deficit) of Income over Expenditure for Period	2,322
Accumulated Fund Carried Forward	8,165

Income and Expenditure for the Year ended 31st March 2022

Income

Donations	3,981
Gift Aid and Gift Aid Small Donations Scheme	632
Raffles	-
Refreshments	95
Other	-
Total Income	4,707

Expenditure

<i>Cost of Friday Meetings</i>	
School Hall Hire	(630)
Speakers' Expenses	(20)
Cost of Raffle and Refreshments	(45)
Other	(37)
	(732)

Kenley Observatory Maintenance & Costs

Observatory Buildings	(564)
Observatory Equipment and Computing	(300)
Electricity	(210)
Voice and Data	-
Council Tax	(67)
Other	(32)
	(1,172)

Other costs

Website, Email & Videoconferencing	(238)
Insurance	(28)
Membership Fees (FAS and SAGAS)	(45)
Bank Charges	(87)
Miscellaneous	(83)
	(480)

Total Expenditure **(2,385)**

Surplus /(Deficit) of Income over Expenditure **2,322**

NB:- Columns may not add due to rounding.

Reserves Policy

- Committee is required to retain only those cash reserves that are appropriate to the society's needs and ambitions. However, in reviewing the amount of the reserves to be retained, Committee's aim is to ensure the society will be able to continue to fulfil its charitable objectives even if there is a temporary shortfall in donation income or if unexpected expenditure arises.
- A significant item of expense (and Committee time) is the ongoing maintenance of the self-built Norman Fisher Observatory. The observatory is located within a small fenced-in site within the RAF Kenley historic aerodrome with access provided by the London Loop long distance footpath which runs directly through the society's land. The observatory consists of a brick-built building with a fibreglass dome which was constructed in 1979 to house the society's then self-built 18-inch telescope, and a substantial self-built felt-roofed wooden clubhouse which was constructed and then extended in the 1990s. Additionally, there is a small commercially made fibreglass dome which is believed to be of a similar date to the clubhouse.
- The site is in an elevated and exposed position. The buildings are likely to require substantial future maintenance. Fortunately, the buildings managed to weather Storm Eunice in February 2022 without evidence of damage or leakage.
- Although the observatory and clubhouse were originally self-built, ongoing building maintenance will need to be done professionally. The substantial costs of professional maintenance, the limited number of members who now use the facilities, and the shortage of volunteers to run outreach events at the Observatory need to be balanced against the society's other priorities, its limited income and Committee time. At some stage Committee may conclude that it is appropriate to reduce the size of the Observatory facilities, and funds will be required to make this adjustment.

This Trustees' Report and Accounts was approved by Committee on 24th May 2022.

Signed: Tony Roberts, Chair

Colin Weightman, Treasurer



CROYDON ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

DONATIONS ANALYSIS

THIS WILL NOT FORM PART OF THE TAR AND ACCOUNTS

Analysis of Donation Income - Not Public				
	Total	Gift Aid	Costs	Total
CAF Donate	1,987	432	(86)	2,333
Grey Box Cash + Contactless	887	188		1,075
Observatory Cash Box	49	12		61
Group Visits	681			681
External Visits and Talks	170			170
Other Donations	208			208
Rounding	(1)			(1)
	3,981	632	(86)	4,527

Membership

- Annual Members – 84 (41 new)
- Life members - 7
- 27 members in MY20_21 have not renewed in MY21_22

A Report on 2021/2 Group Visits

Martin Gaiger
Group Visit Coordinator

During the 2021/2022 Group Visit season we had a total of 19 groups attend the clubhouse and observatory with an overall total of 425 visitors.

There were seven cancellations between December and January, five were Covid related, and were successfully rebooked and two were lost due to another reason. In February two Group Visits were postponed due to insufficient cover and are booked in for coming 2022/3 season.

Unlike the previous years when we relied upon the Scout Association for their support regarding the Group Visits, this season has seen more schools taking an active interest in astronomy, and this has accounted for five of the Group Visits.

In Summary

Scout Groups: 14 visits-236 Beavers/Cubs/Scouts and 66 Leaders. Total visitors 302

Local School Groups: 5 visits- 100 Students and 23 Teachers. Total visitors 123

The Group Visit season came to an end late in March, with the lighter evenings and the return of British Summer Time.

In addition, Society members have visited five individuals to help them with setting up their telescopes, helped teaching staff with equipment at two schools, attended a parents' evening for a practical demonstration at another school, attended one exhibition and visited 4 organisations to give a presentation on their premises. We also held a public event to look at the Perseid meteor shower and ran two astronomy themed walks at Kenley Aerodrome.

For the Group Visit season for 2022/3 the Committee should consider recruiting more volunteers to give two half hour presentations per Group Visit on an astronomical related subject, and to include a Q&A session, as well as volunteers to operate the telescope. Currently this is covered by three members who also have other commitments and hobbies. I would like to thank Tony Roberts and Graham Cluer for their help and understanding.

Appendix 3

WORK CARRIED OUT AT KENLEY 01/04/2021 - 31/03/2022

Report by Carolyn Raishbrook

Dovetails attached to various of the Society's 'scopes in order that they can be mounted on Celestron mount in AT dome. £132.08

Fitted Apo to CGem mount in AT dome and polar aligned.

14" Meade dismounted from cement pillar in NF dome.

Fitted new plate & pillar adapter for PS's EQ8.

Mounted and aligned PS scope to EQ8.

Fitted new light in kitchen.

Installed new switches and lights in AT dome. £9.75

Dug drainage trenches around AT dome.

Dug out soak away and filled with gravel from east side of observatory.

Removal of soil excavated from soak away. £228.00

Labour & materials £0 unless otherwise stated.

WORK OUTSTANDING

NF dome fiberglass/repaint.

Replace exterior walls of clubhouse, kitchen and workshop.

Weatherproof roof of clubhouse, kitchen, workshop.

Underpin AT dome to stop subsidence.

Lay cement path to make site uniformly level and retain non-slip paving stones over soak away.

Replace gravel on east side (taken for soak away).

Fit exterior plug socket (already purchased £10.99)

Exterior emergency lights.

Disconnect or replace interior emergency lights.

Replace bulb and starter in strip light in clubhouse.

Refurbish and refit dedication plaque for NF dome/observatory.

Replace/repair door to electricity meter box.

Chairman's Report CASCIO 2021-2022.

My report last year emphasised how badly we had been affected by the Covid Pandemic and how we hoped to return to normal later in 2021.

We were able to do so, although with different restrictions in place at various times.

We restarted physical meetings and have moved to a new venue, where you are now at Trinity School. As you have seen this has been a success and our membership numbers are higher than they have been for some years. At this point I must apologise for the quality of the lectures that have been presented to you. All sorts of excuses could be made but the fact is that it is directly my responsibility and the quality has not this year been what it was before 2020. I do want to thank the internal speakers who have stepped forward to fill holes in the programming and have provided quality presentations, some old hands and some new speakers: Konrad Malin-Smith, Roy Easto, Graham Cluer, Martin Hogbin, Janet Taylor, Anne Parker and Stefan Blakemore and Bill Bailey.

We also re-opened the Observatory for Saturday night public viewing and for group visits. This has proved its usual success with variable numbers turning up, one Saturday we had about 100! Others much less. It is not possible to tell in advance the numbers that will attend on any particular night.

The role of Chairman is much like that of a ring master at a circus. You maintain the structure of meetings. You get to wear a metaphorical red coat and top hat and some look up to you as being important. But anyone who has seen a circus, even a few minutes of one on a TV show, will have noticed that the ring master isn't one of the acts. Other people come on and do the clever stuff – taming lions, trapeze, acrobats, riding horses. So it's time for me to say thank you.

To Graham Cluer as Vice Chair and Secretary and looking after various things IT and to Colin Weightmann as Treasurer and Membership Secretary but also as the prime writer of the various detailed and lengthy documents which at time need to be produced to enable this Society to operate. As Chairman I lean very heavily upon the skills and dedication of both of you. To Martin Gaiger who you will know as the gentleman behind our welcome desk but as you will have heard tonight is absolutely central to the outreach activities and group visits. Without Martin the substantial balancing of who is coming when or going where we would have no outreach; in addition Martin happily undertakes an hour and a half journey each way by public transport to run a group visit which is only an hour long. To Carolyn Raishbrook and Jonathan Barrott for the maintenance work they have done at the Observatory and on the Electronic Assisted Astronomy system they are working on in the Alan Trehays Dome. To Paul Stenning for his contributions at the Observatory and towards the running of the Society.

We welcome two new members onto committee this year – Laura Quayle and Stefan Blakemore. Thank you for coming forward, we look forward to your contribution to the Society.

We always need more volunteers. At our meetings, at the Observatory and for other outreach events. You do not need a vast and comprehensive knowledge of astronomy or the background of the Society. All that is required is a willingness to get involved and if it is public facing then enough confidence to talk to them. Warmth and welcome are more important than knowing everything.

I must say thank you to our four previous land trustees. As a Charity we were not a legal entity and so the land at Kenley was held in trust on behalf of the Society. As a Charitable Incorporated Organisation we are a legal entity and you will have seen in the report earlier that the ownership of the land at Kenley was formally transferred into the Society's name last year. A huge thank you for serving the Society as Trustees for so many years – Keith Brackenborough (who secured the land for us in 1965), Alan Drummond, Paul Harper and Roy Easto. All of these we have honoured in the past for this and for decades of other service to the Society. Except Roy Easto.

I remember Roy as a youngster when I joined in 1978 and he was already an active member. From working on the Observatory and telescope, for years of using these, for being a top draw speaker both to us and to many outside astronomy groups, for his work on astrophotography and computer simulations of the cosmos, for writing the only history of the Society covering the first 30 years, for his involvement in numerous CAS field trips abroad and for auditing our accounts for decades it is my pleasure to announce that the Committee have bestowed Life Membership on Roy Easto.