

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the British Astronomical Association held on 2021 October 23 on line and at the Institute of Physics

The President, Alan Lorrain, welcomed everyone to the AGM of the 131st Session. He reminded members that copies of the 130th AGM held on 202 October 23 had been displayed for inspection on the website and in the forum. Mr Lorrain invited members to comment on the minutes using the Q&A button on the Zoom screen and in the auditorium. There were no comments and, following a vote from those present, the minutes were passed.

Geoff King, Treasurer, told the meeting that a summary of the accounts was printed in the October Journal and that the full 21 page version is available on request and on the website. Although meetings were not all they should be, the financial year was very successful with reserves increasing by £ 210,000. Year end saw a total of £1,619,000 in total assets in cash and intangibles with £150,000 added in the last six months. Nevertheless, an operational deficit of £83,000 remains in place, consistent with the position over the last few years. Dr King said that he would not stand again at the end of the 132nd session and invited anyone present who is interested in becoming BAA Treasurer to contact him.

The President began the annual review for the 2020/2021 Session. 2021 has been a difficult year with all face to face meetings cancelled. There have been 32 deaths of members, most notably Mrs Peta Bosley, member of Council and Board, and Mr Ron Livesey.

Mr Lorrain thanked the Council and Trustees for their invaluable work over the year. Standing down as Trustees are Nick Hewitt, Tim Parsons and Callum Potter. Steve Bosley, David Boyd and Eliot Hall are standing down from Council.

Mr Lorrain gave a statement of the result of the court action against the former Curator of Instruments, Mr R.A. Marriott. The court found substantially in favour of the BAA and had awarded ownership of several instruments in dispute with costs to the BAA. The action was regrettable - but necessary - as the former curator had claimed ownership of all the instruments in dispute.

The BAA has occupied Burlington House for the last 75 years under the stewardship of the RAS. Following the government's response to the Covid pandemic, staff are now working successfully from home. In response to the government's increasing demands on the RAS for a commercial rent, our contribution to Burlington House now stands at £35,000 per annum which Council and the Board of Trustees regard as a huge waste of money. The Board has thus given notice to vacate Burlington House effective January 31. Mr Lorrain stressed that we should like to maintain good relations with the RAS, and to work with them in promoting diversity within astronomy and in exploring the scope for pro-am collaboration.

The Journal remains the flagship publication of the Association and the Editor, Philip Jennings, is to be commended for his work. Credit is due to Marie-Louise Archer for her role as Advertising Manager, Nick Hewitt for Sky Notes and Jeremy Shears as Papers Secretary. Thanks are due to Steve Harvey for the invaluable Handbook.

The October Journal was late due to a perfect storm of unforeseen circumstances and not with any intent to see it phased out: Philip Jennings, Editor, was slightly late with his pdf submission, the printers had a surge of work and the Royal Mail was slightly dilatory.

Hazel Collett has worked tirelessly under difficult circumstances to arrange meetings and webinars and thanks are due to all those who made presentations. Mrs Collett's job is made the worse through the IOP being forced to close for urgent maintenance during December and January. The Christmas meeting will be held at the Royal Society of Medicine and the January meeting at the University of Westminster.

Jonathan Shanklin gave the George Alcock memorial lecture and he is to be congratulated on having an Antarctic glacier named after him.

Professor Bill Leatherbarrow retires as Lunar Section Director, with Dr Tony Cook taking over in an acting capacity.

The Association's senior prize is the Walter Goodacre Award: Lyn Smith, Solar Section Director, was awarded the prize for 2021 for her unremitting observational work and for the co-ordination of results. The Steavenson Memorial award went to Dale Holt and the Merlin Medal to Raffaello Lena and Barry Fitz-Gerald. The Ridley Grant, now expanded to encompass travel to international conferences, was awarded to Australian observer Monty Leventhal for his outreach work.

The 2020 Sir Patrick Moore Prize was awarded to Rita Whiting.

The website, the BAA's main showcase to the world, has been upgraded and will go live with new features in December. Emily Bick has been appointed Content Editor, replacing Ade Ashford. Members' webpages have proved very successful with the posted images often used to enhance talks and the Journal. The CfDs is sometimes regarded as autonomous, but it remains an important part of the BAA. Bob Mizon works with the lighting industry to promote appropriate illumination and he is emphatically not trying to switch off everyone's lights.

Bill Tarver, Business Secretary, announced the results of the ballot for the 2021/2022 session. The ballot again had two components: paper returns and the online system created by CIVICA (formerly the Electoral Reform Services). Combined results were as follows:

President:	David Arditti	490
Vice President:	Alan Lorrain	<i>ex officio</i>
Treasurer:	Geoff King	476
Business Secretary:	William Tarver	468
Papers Secretary:	Jeremy Shears	479
Meetings Secretary:	Hazel Collett	465
Five elected Trustees:		
Ann Davies		403
Richard McKim		395
Janice McClean		394
Lyn Smith		365
John Chuter		359
Tim Parsons		161

The first five are elected Trustees; the votes for Tim Parsons were added to his votes for Council:

Three elected to Council:		
Tim Parsons		423
Alexandra Hart		408
Marie-Louise Archer		406
Total valid votes		114 paper, 429 on-line = 543
Invalid/spoilt		7 paper, 3 (blank or void) on-line = 10

Bill Tarver thanked the scrutineers, Ms M. Davey, Ms J. Palmer and Mrs J. Rickard. He also thanked Mr Andy Wilson for managing the on-line ballot.

A question was raised about the operational deficit: if there is £83,000 lost on operations and £35,000 of this is a result of Burlington House occupancy, what of the remaining £48,000? Dr King replied that it was unrealistic for the BAA to aim for no deficit at all: some operational deficit was to be accepted. Nevertheless, our reserves are too high and more should be spent on projects for members' and public benefit. Any suggestions to advance this aim are welcome. Alan Lorrain added that we are always seeking to streamline operations.

Following his final Presidential address, Paul Abel said that Alan Lorrain is to be congratulated and there was a round of applause by way of a vote of thanks. Dr David Arditti then assumed the Presidency for the 132nd Session.