

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the British Astronomical Association held on 2020 October 28 on line

The Zoom meeting co-ordinator, Andy Wilson, welcomed everyone to the meeting with others watching a live stream on You Tube.

The President, Alan Lorrain, welcomed everyone to the AGM of the 130th Session. He reminded members that copies of the 129th AGM held on 2019 October 30 had been displayed for inspection on the website. Mr Lorrain invited members to comment on the minutes using the Q&A button on the Zoom screen, as facilities for on-line voting are limited, adding that, if no comments are received by the end of the Treasurer's report, then the minutes will be taken as 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. The financial year end was changed to March 31 and the accounts for the year therefore cover only nine months. Year end coincided with the bottom of the market and there has been a strong recovery since. Nevertheless, the financial year saw a loss of £51,500 and, combined with a loss on investments of £83,000, gives a nett movement of (£134,500). Reserves carried forward amount to £1.4 million (2019= £1.5m). There is thus a healthy balance sheet, despite the temporary market setbacks. Mr Gerard Giligan asked about the current level of reserves. Dr King replied these amounted to £1.613m at October 28, an increase of £205,000 since March and an increase of £65,000 compared with this time last year. Mr Adam Fairhead asked about the type of investments. Dr King replied that £1.35m is held in the CCLA, an investment vehicle for charities and churches. Mr Matthew Rosenz asked about the level of operating losses. Dr King said that these amounted to £6.5-7,000 per month. As we are a charity, our aim is not to make a profit, although reducing overheads and losses is one of the Board's priorities.

The President said that no comments had been received on last year's minutes and they were thus approved. He then began the annual review for the 2019/2020 Session. 2020 has been a difficult year with all the adverse consequences of isolation. Thirty members have died, an unusually high number, three notable names being Heather Couper, Iain Nicholson and David Gavine.

Mr Lorrain thanked the Council and Trustees for their invaluable work over the year. One trustee, Dr Richard McKim, is stepping down under the three-year rule and thanks are due to him. Mr Lorrain congratulated all those elected to the new Board and Council and encouraged people to put their names forward next year. Thanks are also due to the office staff, Maddy Davey, Julia Palmer and Jayne Rickard, especially as they have so smoothly migrated to working from home. Andy Wilson's support has also been invaluable.

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 Nick Hewitt for Sky Notes, Jeremy Shears as Papers Secretary and John Chuter for technical support. Janice McClean produces an excellent monthly newsletter and Steve Harvey continues to prepare and collate material for the invaluable Handbook.

Hazel Collett has worked tirelessly under difficult circumstances to arrange meetings. The session began well enough with the inaugural meeting of the Equipment & Techniques Section and the Christmas and January meetings at the IOP. This last meeting was notable for having the first female presenter of Sky Notes, Mary McIntyre. But following the Back-to-Basics meeting in Hull, events changed rapidly as the national lockdown was imposed. The Board decided to open up recordings of meetings to all comers and to begin a programme of weekly webinars, launched by Nick James on April 1. These have proved hugely successful and thanks are due to Andy Wilson for his long-standing support. Normal meetings were reinstated in the form of webinars and suggestions for future topics or offers of a presentation are welcome.

The Association's senior prize is the Walter Goodacre Award: two outstanding candidates emerged this year, Bill Leatherbarrow and Gary Poyner and an award was made to each. The Steavenson Memorial award went to Alexandra Hart and the Merlin Medal to Roger Pickard. Martin Lewis received a Ridley Grant to further his work on the Venusian night side and the Sir Patrick Moore Prize was awarded to Steven Barrett.

The website is actively managed by the Website Operations Team led by Callum Potter, with the aim of increasing the frequency of news articles and producing Observers' Challenges and tutorials. Members are encouraged to upload their observations to their own Member's Page and to contribute to the Live Forum.

At a Section Directors' workshop held last November, with the aim of identifying general improvements, a key outcome was the requirement for a Web Content Editor. Over 100 applications were received for the position and Ade Ashford, a regular contributor to Astronomy Now, started in August.

The Association again took a stand at the IAS and Astrofest and thanks are due to Ann Davies for her work in running the shop. Sadly, with government restrictions in place, the Practical Astronomy Show and New Scientist Live will be deferred to next year.

Sections are the backbone of the Association and sincere thanks are due to all Directors and their teams who work so hard on the BAA's behalf. The Commission for Dark Skies was thanked by the All Party Parliamentary Dark Skies Group of MPs with the comment that, "your expertise has been really invaluable in putting this together." Ten Dark Skies Policies for Government will be published shortly.

Bill Tarver, Business Secretary, announced the results of the ballot for the 2020/2021 session. The ballot again had two components: paper returns and the online system created by the Electoral Reform Services. Combined results were as follows:

President:	Alan Lorrain	560
Vice President:	Callum Potter	<i>ex officio</i>
Treasurer:	Geoff King	545
Business Secretary:	William Tarver	533
Papers Secretary:	Jeremy Shears	549
Meetings Secretary:	Hazel Collett	539

Five elected Trustees:

Janice McClean	422
John Chuter	355
Nick Hewitt	326
Peta Bosley	313
Tim Parsons	287
Steve Bosley	283

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

Four elected to Council:

David Boyd	469
Marie-Louise Archer	468
Steve Bosley	464
Eliot Hall	405
Nick Hewitt	189
Tim Parsons	181
Peta Bosley	167
Total valid votes	154 paper, 457 on-line = 611
Invalid/spoilt	12 paper, 4 (blank or void) on-line = 16
Voted twice	11 paper voting slips discarded.

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