

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the British Astronomical Association held on 2024 October 30 on line and at the Institute of Physics

The President, David Arditti, welcomed everyone to the AGM of the 134th Session. He reminded members that minutes of the 133rd AGM held on 2023 October 25 had been displayed for inspection on the website and invited members to comment. None was made and, following a vote from those present, the minutes were passed. He then invited the Treasurer, Mr Graham Winstanley, to present a summary of the accounts.

The Treasurer told the meeting that a summary of the accounts was printed in the October Journal and that the full version, reviewed independently, is available on request and on the website. Mr Winstanley reported that the results are in line with the budget. Total income for the year amounted to £162,023 (2022/23 = £132,632) Expenditure amounted to £234,072 (£259,467) resulting in a deficit for the year of £72,049 (£126,835). Investments are managed by the CCLA and offer low risk for charities' surplus funds. There was a net gain in investments of £172,174 (£14,141 decrease). Expenditure on legal fees and the archives had reduced in the year. Total funds carried forward are £1.648m (£1.548). Mr Winstanley invited questions.

Q. Following the move away from Burlington House have the office costs significantly reduced?

Our premises costs are indeed lower, but there have been extra expenses as a result of moving the archives, so not all the rent is saved.

Q. Given that the Association's financial position is healthy do we spend donations or save them?

Unless made with a request, most donations are saved.

The President thanked Mr Winstanley and asked if the meeting endorsed the Treasurer's report. The meeting did so overwhelmingly.

Dr Arditti then began the annual review of the 2023/2024 Session, his third year as President. There have been 27 deaths of members, most notably that of Mr Roger Pickard, President from 2007-2009 and longest-serving member of the VSS (20 years). Another sad loss is Prof Brian Warner, Director of the Lunar Section for two years, who was a professional astrophysicist and had moved to the USA. He had seen 68 years membership of the BAA. The meeting held a minute's silence in their memory.

Mrs Hazel Collett, long-serving Meetings Secretary was presented with the BEM by the Lord Lieutenant of North Yorkshire in recognition of her long service to the BAA and her local society. Dr Arditti had presented her with some gifts at the last AGM on her retirement as Meetings Secretary.

Clyde Foster, resident in Namibia, had received the Steaphenson Award at the Christmas meeting. At the same meeting, the Goodacre Medal was presented to Nick James, the Steaphenson Award to Paul Abel, the Horace Dall medal jointly to Steve Floodgate and Dave Grist, the Sir Patrick Moore Prize to James Dawson and the Cicely Botley prize jointly to Ann Davies and Alan Dowdell for contributions to publications. The IOP allowed us to hold a Christmas drinks party at which everyone was well behaved, so the effort will be repeated at the forthcoming Christmas meeting. At the January meeting, Dr Arditti had presented the Lydia Brown medal to Janice McClean.

Meetings have seen several interesting talks from notable speakers; the Winchester Weekend took place in close proximity to the total eclipse visible in the USA, which could have resulted in some absences. The meeting was a great success and thanks are due to the organisers. The Spring meeting was held in scenic Greenock, which was notable for a talk from Dame Jocelyn Bell Burnell, with an added bonus of a spectacular auroral display in the evening.

The June Council meeting voted to award the Goodacre medal to Alex Pratt, the Merlin medal to Jonathan Shanklin, the Steaphenson award to Richard Miles and the Lydia Brown Medal to Steve Harvey for his work on the Handbook over many years. Prof Bill Leatherbarrow gave the George Alcock Memorial Lecture. A notable meeting was held at the Rutherford Appleton Laboratory in Oxfordshire with the theme of current research highlights, with talks from several leading astrophysicists. Thanks are also due to the Section Directors who organised meetings centered on Solar, Deep Sky, Historical, Asteroids, Equipment & Techniques, Radio Astronomy and Exoplanets.

We have a huge archive, containing the notes and observations of many past members, which is in the process of being scanned and made available to members. The BAA Journal is our flagship publication and the decision was made to increase the number of pages to broaden content, add new features and reduce the backlog of unpublished papers. The Journal is produced by the Editor, Philip Jennings, and his assistant, Indra Bains, and thanks are due to them. There has been a hiccup over the production of the 2025 Handbook, but Indra Bains, Philip Jennings, Richard Miles, Nick James and Tim Parsons have done sterling work so it will appear with the December Journal.

The Education and Outreach Section, under the Directorship of Helen Usher, is a new Section which is geared towards utilising the energy and enthusiasm of those in the BAA who would like to become more involved. It will work with local societies and the SPA.

This year, the House of Commons science, innovation and technology committee held an enquiry on UK astronomy at which the President gave written evidence and made a presentation. He explained the role of the BAA and expressed our concerns about light pollution and the growing proliferation of artificial satellites.

The BAA changed accountants and registered office address, though this has no impact on members. We continue to employ one full time person and two part-time workers in the office.

Legal action continues in two cases: the first is the continuing action against the former curator of instruments, R.A. Marriott, for recovery of BAA property. There has been no progress given the backlog in the courts. The second is the dispute over the Will of the late Roy Panther which is closer to resolution.

A Special General Meeting was held in January to propose some amendments to the by-laws and change the nature of local society affiliation. Honorary Membership was also concluded, though existing Honorary members are unaffected. Other changes to membership categories were also approved. Thanks are due to those Council and Board members who are stepping down. John Mason is also stepping down as Public Relations Officer, though continues in his role as Director of the Meteor Section.

Membership is down by about 2.5% over the year and stands at 2,533. We have had a slow decline in membership in recent years and the President expressed regret that he was unable to arrest it. It is not enough having a great history: we must offer new activities and change to meet the needs of the modern world.

Bill Tarver, Business Secretary, announced the results of the ballot for the 2024/2025 session. For the first time, there was no paper ballot (though a paper vote was available on request) and, as previously, Civica created and managed the online voting system. Results were as follows:

President:	Janice McClean	393
Vice President:	David Arditti	<i>ex officio</i>
Treasurer:	Graham Winstanley	385
Business Secretary:	Bill Tarver	368
Papers Secretary:	Jeremy Shears	389
Meetings Secretary:	<i>Vacant</i>	

Five elected **Trustees**:

Jeremy Shears	300
Lyn Smith	290
John Chuter	283
Tim Parsons	199
Steve Knight	184 (carried to Council ballot)

Five elected to **Council**:

Bill Leatherbarrow	321
Hazel Collett	319
David Boyd	316
Steve Knight	100+184=284
Steve Floodgate	228

Tim Parsons	94
Total valid votes	0 paper, 435 on-line
Invalid/blank	6

The Business Secretary noted that the online ballot costs about £1,000, and asked members to make use of it.

Following some routine meetings announcements Dr Arditti opened the 135th Session.