

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the British Astronomical Association held on 2025 October 29 on-line and at the Institute of Physics

The President, Janice McClean, welcomed everyone to the AGM of the 135th Session. She reminded members that minutes of the 134th AGM held on 2024 October 30 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. She then invited the Treasurer, Mr Graham Winstanley, to present a summary of the accounts.

Mr Winstanley said that the total income for the year amounted to £144,090 (2023/24 = £162,023) Expenditure was £280,194 (£234,072) resulting in an operating deficit for the year of £136,104 (£72,049), with a substantial expenditure on legal fees mostly arising from a disputed legacy. Legacies amounted to £936 (£25,463) Investments are managed by the CCLA and offer low risk for charities' surplus funds. There was a net loss on investments of £27,836 (£+172,174), though these have recovered somewhat since financial year end. As a result, the total deficit for the year is £163,940. Total funds carried forward are £1.484m (£1.648), indicating a healthy financial position. Mr Winstanley invited questions.

Q. Creditors due within one year have increased from £26,000 to £55,000. Is there a single cause of this?

This is caused by Winchester Weekend which costs over £20,000. Money is largely collected in January, the previous financial year, but the expense is incurred in the current financial year, so it's an accounting phenomenon.

Q. Professional fees have also increased £7,100 to £27,200?

This is the result of legal expenses described above. This case has now been settled.

Q. The BAA is running an operating loss. If the investments didn't make any money we would be bust in 10 years. Is that correct?

Yes, the advice is we should hold three years' worth of expenditure, assuming zero income. This amounts to about £600,000, so we are holding too much. The Charity Commission has not complained but, if they did, they would probably say we should spend more on charitable activities. Membership subscriptions are quite heavily subsidized.

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

Ms McClean then began the annual review of the 2024/2025 Session. It has been a significant year for astronomy: T CrB did not erupt, Saturn has been recognised as having an extra 128 moons and University College Dublin has been active in its use of the Atacama facilities. It is important at the AGM to recognise all the contributions made by individuals. Governance is performed through monthly Board meetings held via Zoom and she thanked Tim Parsons for his hard work and legal expertise: he is standing down from the Board under the three-year rule. She also thanked David Boyd who must also stand down. Ms McClean paid a warm tribute to Ann Davies who is relinquishing Sales & Promotions. A presentation had been planned but, unfortunately, Mrs Davies could not be present so Dr Boyd collected the gifts on her behalf. New officers include Steve Floodgate who becomes the new Meetings Secretary, while Hazel Collett retains the responsibility for London meetings. Gary Palmer is the new Equipment and Techniques Section Director. David Grist has taken on Sales and Promotions and Thomas Morris is the new Computing Section Director. Ms McClean also thanked the office staff – Madeleine Davey, Jayne Rickard and Julia Palmer.

Membership numbers and the pattern of joining are being monitored and members are encouraged to talk about the BAA at their local society meetings. There have been too many deaths of members, the most notable being Storm Dunlop, President in 1986, Matthew Foreman, Alan Heath, twice Director of the Saturn Section and longest-serving member of the VSS (20 years).

The BAA's flagship publication is the Journal under the excellent editorship of Philip Jennings and the assistant Editor, Indra Bains. He has initiated some significant improvements and innovations. The published papers make a contribution to science and the Papers Secretary, Professor Jeremy Shears, is to be thanked for his work in reviewing manuscripts. Thanks are also due to Hazel McGee, former Editor, who creates the annual index. The Handbook continues to excel under the supervision of Thomas Morris with contributions from Section

Directors. Thanks are due to Steve Knight for writing the newsletter. The Observing Guide is also another important publication and thanks to Ann Davies for her work on compiling this. Sections also produce their own newsletters and guides. One-off guides include Absolute Beginners while pullup banners for meetings are created by Dave Grist.

At least 23 meetings were held across the year. Winchester was a good event and was fully booked. Thanks to Ann Davies, David Boyd and all speakers and volunteers who made the meeting a success. The keynote speaker was Dame Jocelyn Bell Burnell who gave the Alfred Curtis Memorial Lecture. The Alcock Memorial Lecture was given by David Boyd in June. Mr Michael Woodman was a special guest at the January meeting where he was presented with the Charles Butterworth award. As a 15-year old schoolboy he made one of the first observations of the 1946 eruption of T CrB. At the Christmas meeting Alex Pratt was awarded the Walter Goodacre medal, Jonathan Shanklin received the Merlin Medal, Steve Harvey the Lydia Brown award and Richard Miles received the Stephenson Memorial Award. The Sir Patrick Moore Prize was given to Marion McNeil and Julian Shapiro. Ms McClean thanked all staff at the IOP for their support and Hazel Collett for managing London meetings.

Section meetings were held across the country. These included Radio Astronomy, Solar, Deep Sky, Historical, Comet, VSS and E&O Sections. They support individual members in achieving their goals. Thanks to Callum Potter for organising the Autumn meeting in Orkney. Thanks to all members and Section Directors who made meetings a success. The BAA also has a stand at many astronomy shows, including Astrofest, Practical Astronomy Show and, for the first time, the EU conference on Radio Astronomy, held at Rutherford Appleton Laboratory. Thanks to everyone who contributes to these.

We have a huge archive, now being migrated to a dedicated section of the BAA website. Thanks are due to the Archivists, John Chuter and Richard McKim, and to the technical team of Nick James, Callum Potter and John Berman for making the migration possible. Sheridan Williams and Martin Mobberley have undertaken most of the scanning for which the Association is very grateful.

Papers published in the Journal are now accessible through the cross referencing system overseen by Editor, Philip Jennings, and Jeremy Shears. John Berman continues to manage the website, the forum being a key component of members' discussions, with Dominic Ford providing support for images in the gallery. Live streaming of meetings is a very important component of our meetings as it allows people who otherwise would not attend to take part and the staff at the IOP deserve thanks for their support in making this possible.

The CfDS is undergoing a process of reorganisation following the sad death of Bob Mizon and we look forward to working closely with them. Our old friends at the RAS continue to be supportive and allow access to their library.

Bill Tarver, Business Secretary, announced the results of the ballot for the 2025/2026 session. 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	385
Vice President:	<i>Vacant</i>	
Treasurer:	Graham Winstanley	373
Business Secretary:	Bill Tarver	366
Papers Secretary:	Jeremy Shears	380
Meetings Secretary:	Steve Floodgate	357

Five elected **Trustees:**

Lyn Smith	310
Jeremy Shears	308
Mike Frost	305
Richard McKim	301
John Chuter	281
Steve Knight	114 (carried to Council ballot)

Four elected to **Council**:

Bill Leatherbarrow	327
Hazel Collett	324
Steve Knight	114+195=309
James Latham	277
Total valid votes	0 paper, 423 on-line
Invalid/blank	3

The Business Secretary noted that the online ballot costs over £1,000, is required by our constitution and asked members to make use of it.

Ms McClean concluded the AGM and opened the 136th Session.