

ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

NATAL MIDLANDS CENTRE

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at City Computers, Pietermaritzburg on 9 June 1999 at 19:45

1. The Chairman, Mr Rogan Roth, declared the meeting open at 19:45 and welcomed the 20 members present. A special welcome was extended to Miss Leanne Hearmon who was home from England for a brief holiday. Apologies were received from 4 members.
2. Minutes of the AGM for 1998/1999
The minutes of last year's AGM had been circulated to all members by post, and were accepted unanimously without being read
Proposed Mr P Hawkins Seconded Mr R Clifford
3. Matters Arising
No matters arising regarding the 1998/1999 minutes
4. Chairman's Report
Mr Roth reviewed the various activities of the Centre as follows :-
 - a) The Centre is now 25 years old (founded on 28 March 1974), and continues to flourish. 3 founder members (G.Prosser, A.Norris & J.Watson) were in attendance.
 - b) Having been somewhat nomadic for the past year or so, the Centre will henceforth use the Observatory and/or the Girl Guide Camp hall for monthly meetings. Thanks to City Computers for 'filling the gap'
 - c) The Observatory is now ready for use, but a lot of maintenance and development of the grounds is still required. An official opening is planned for September 1999
 - d) There is a continuing need to recruit new members, especially young people, and future plans/programs must aim to be as attractive as possible in terms of outings, events and viewing evenings
 - e) The present committee has plans for the further development of the observatory site to include an Astronomical Education Centre with permanent displays, slide shows etc, and maybe one day, a planetarium
 - f) Thanks to all members of the outgoing Committee
Meritorious Award for 1998/1999 presented to Mr John Watson
Proposed Miss K Hampson Seconded Mrs B Lawrence
5. Treasurers Report
 - a) Mr Hawkins handed out copies of the Statement of Income & Expenditure for the 1998/1999 year which reflected :-
 - i) Bank Balance of R 1751,68 (Single account for General & Observatory funds)
 - ii) Cash on Hand of R 33,30
Proposed Mr R Joubert Seconded Mrs A Norris
 - b) A proposal to increase annual subscriptions for the year 1999/2000 was accepted
These will be :- R 60,00 for Adult/Family members R 40,00 for Senior Citizen/Student members
Proposed Mr P Hawkins Seconded Mr R Roth
 - c) Mr Hawkins identified the need for a generator at the observatory, as the costs of installing municipal electricity are prohibitive
6. Election of Office Bearers 1999/2000
The following members were nominated and elected
R.Roth, J.Watson, P.Hawkins, B.Lawrence, R.Clifford, C.Lake, W.Russell, R.Joubert (Observer)
Proposed Miss L Hearmon Seconded Miss K Hampson
7. Other Business
 - a) Time of Meetings - it was proposed and agreed that monthly meetings commence at 19:30
Proposed Mr R Joubert Seconded Mr I Schroeder
 - b) Mr D Raine wishes to sell a 10" reflector
 - c) Basic Astronomy course will be starting on 6 July 1999
8. Meeting closed at 21:00, after which all those present enjoyed some 25th Anniversary snacks and champagne, and watched a video "The Dream is Alive"

CHAIRMAN

SECRETARY



ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

Natal Midlands Centre

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - 9/6/99

MEMBERS

Bill Lunnell

Darryl Lunnell

Kenny Hampson

Roger Roth

Arminee Norris

Leanne Heamon

Bianca Lawrence

Annette Dybwad

Dave & Maisie Kain

Ross Clift

Philip Hawkley

Keith Gregor

John Lunnell

Edna Lunnell

Apologies

Jon Lawrence

Toni Lidgott

P. J. McKenrie

VISITORS

Stevie de Vries

Roy Janssens

Goff Palmer

Ivan Schreder

20

ASSA, Natal Midlands Centre, Chairman's Report
City Computers, June the 9th 1999

It gives me great pleasure in delivering the Natal Midlands Centre's annual Chairman's Report for 1999. This has been a very special year for us as way back in April 1974 approximately 200 enthusiastic people gathered together and formed the Natal Midlands Centre of the Astronomical Society of Southern Africa. Ever since then the Centre has continued to prosper.

We are delighted to welcome Ms Leanne Hearmon to the meeting. She has been living and working in London for some time now and is out on holiday. We are also honoured by having three founder members present this evening to share some bubbly with us on the Centre's 25th birthday. They are Ms. Arminé Norris, Dr. Geoff Prosser and Mr. John Watson. We must express our appreciation to John and Messrs City Computers for the use of their comfortable facilities and to Mrs Bianca Lawrence for organising the snacks and drinks.

1998/1999 was, I think, a very successful year even though attendance figures at monthly meetings were lower than average. The continued progress at the observatory site has been a strong cohesive force for members of the Centre - we have, in a sense, finally found a home for ourselves. For an organisation such as ours to survive and continue to thrive in these times it is essential that we get out there and do things together, the pleasure gained from participating in a common interest makes the hobby that more satisfying.

What of the future? Where do we go from here? Progress at the observatory site will continue with the establishment of lawns over the areas that have been cleared as a means to control the rampant wattle regrowth. A small outdoor entertainment area is planned, the construction of which should be well under way soon. The "adopt-a-plot" programme has been fairly successful with several people putting in many hours of back-breaking labour clearing their plots (called "aerobics" in polite circles), however, more volunteers are needed to get the whole area under control.

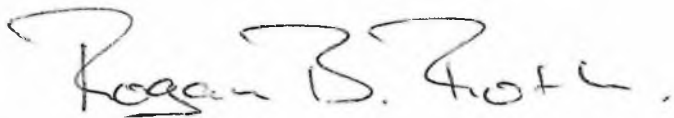
As enriching the lives of the present and future generations is one of the primary objectives of the NMC, it is logical that we should continue in that direction by introducing the simple pleasures of stargazing to young and old. Several members are heavily committed (and have been for many years) with an active programme of public lectures, displays and viewing sessions, largely during the winter months. This has been of immeasurable benefit to the Centre as many former students have continued in the field of amateur astronomy by becoming committed members of the NMC, some have even continued on to greater things. I would even like to think that someday a latter-day "Patrick Moore" or "Carl Sagan" will have had his astronomical roots in the fellowship of the NMC. The tricky part is how to catch the attention of young school-going children and then to introduce basic astronomy to them in a way that will keep them fascinated. Bridging the cultural gap is something that should be addressed with great urgency as there are vast resources of brilliant young minds to be tapped out there.

In the future we need to consider the possibility of establishing an educational facility such as a planetarium star projector that can be housed within a public building that is frequented by school groups, e.g. the local natural history museum. Having such a facility available would be a tremendous aid as all aspects of astronomy, including local folk lore, can be built into the presentations. In fact a complete "space science" centre could be established at the site with permanent displays, including models, photographs, artwork, posters, etc. Sadly, star projectors are hugely expensive and well beyond the reach of an amateur organisation such as ourselves, the money would have to be raised by some other

means (any ideas?).

All the above would not be possible if it weren't for the continued hard work and dedication of the committee, past and present. So, many thanks must go to the outgoing committee for the good job they have done and to the incoming committee who are going to keep the flag flying for another year and who, I might add, are more than willing and able to do the job! This does not let you, the "ordinary" member off the hook as without your support the Centre would wither and die in less than no time. Your ideas and enthusiasm are essential for the continued success of the NMC.

Before I give the floor over to more worthwhile pursuits I would like to use this opportunity to present the Centre's coveted *Meritorious Service Award* to John Watson in recognition of 25 years of continued hard work and dedication - congratulations John, this award is long overdue!

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Roger B. Fitch". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'R' and a stylized 'F'.

Chairman

The Astronomical Society of Southern Africa

Natal Midlands Centre

Income and Expenditure Statements as at 6 June 1999

INCOME

Balance at Bank as at 6 June 1998	684.20	
Subscriptions	2,935.00	
Sales	507.00	
Donations	3,258.33	
Sundries	680.76	
Interest	<u>127.50</u>	
		8,192.79

EXPENDITURE

Stationery	107.32	
Refreshments	120.91	
Building Expenses	3,291.66	
Postage	891.42	
Photocopies	419.30	
Sundries	<u>1,610.50</u>	
		6,441.11
Balance as per Bank Book 6 June 1999		<u>1,751.68</u>

PETTY CASH

Cash on Hand as at 6 June 1998		33.30	
EXPENDITURE			
Stationery	0.00		
Phone Calls	<u>0.00</u>		
		<u>0.00</u>	
Cash on Hand as at 6 June 1999			<u>R33.30</u>

A.S.S.A. - NATAL MIDLANDS CENTRE

1999/2000 COMMITTEE

Chairman:	Mr R. Roth
Secretary:	Mr J. Watson
Treasurer:	Mr P. Hawkins
Newsletter:	Mr W. Russell
Observatory:	Mr C. Lake
Library:	Mr R. Clifford
Council Rep:	Mr J. Watson
P.R.O.	Mrs B. Lawrence
Education:	Mr J. Watson
Observer:	Mr R. Joubert

Addresses and telephone numbers

Mr R. Roth	P.O.Box 100210, SCOTTSVILLE, 3209	033 - 3442635 (h) 033 - 2605147 (w)
Mr J. Watson	P.O.Box 330, HILTON, 3245	033 - 3433646 (h) 033 - 3452510 (w)
Mr P. Hawkins	1 Ashbourne, Harwin Rd, PMBURG, 3201	033 - 3460303 (h)
Mr W. Russell	4 Windermere Place, HOWICK, 3290	033 - 3304391 (h)
Mr C. Lake	P.O.Box 912, HILTON, 3245	033 - 3433710 (h)
Mr R. Clifford	145 Howick Rd, Wembley, PMBURG, 3201	033 - 3423625 (h)
Mrs B. Lawrence	P.O.Box 553, HILTON, 3245	033 - 3559478 (h) 033 - 3559283 (w)
Mr R. Joubert	4 Sanders Rd, Scottsville, PMBURG, 3201	033 - 3460666 (h)

.....

All correspondence should be addressed to :-

The Secretary
A.S.S.A. (Natal Midlands)
P.O.Box 2106
PIETERMARITZBURG
3201