



ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY OF  
SOUTHERN AFRICA

Natal Midlands Centre

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

13 JUNE 2001

MEMBERS

John Werten  
Friskie de Bruyn  
Roy JOUBERT  
Leanne Hearmon  
MIKE CULVERWELL  
Fred Eates.  
P. Hawkins  
P. Wessel  
Julian Wessels  
ALAN Hill  
Trevor Morley  
Ivan Schroeder  
Roger Cliftel  
Aminé Norris  
R. Roth  
C. Lake.

VISITORS

Amanda Buxton

APOLOGIES

LYNN WRIGHT & MICHAEL BRAND  
MARTIN PROZESKY  
HARRY TUNMER  
GAIL CULVERWELL

ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

NATAL MIDLANDS CENTRE

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at Worlds View Observatory, Pietermaritzburg on 13 June 2001

1. The Chairman, Mr Rogan Roth, declared the meeting open at 19h30, and welcomed the 16 members present.  
Apologies had been received from 5 members, and there were 2 visitors
2. Minutes of the AGM held in June 2000  
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. Wessels                      Seconded Mr P. Hawkins
3. Matters Arising  
No matters arising regarding the 1999/2000 minutes
4. Chairman's Report  
Mr Roth reported on the various activities of the Centre as follows :-
  - a) A brief review of monthly meetings and other regular activities
  - b) The Education programme, with thanks to J.Watson and all others involved
  - c) Observatory program, and the need to keep the site in good order
  - d) Membership statistics (74 members and 17 adherents)
  - e) "STARDUST" and the N.M.Centre Web-page
  - f) The growing library facility, with many new books, magazines and videos
  - g) The need for more aggressive PRO work to attract new members
  - h) Future plans for development of the observatory site (Education centre, Planetarium etc)
  - i) Meritorious Award for 2000/2001 presented to Mr Alan Hill
  - j) Thanks to the outgoing committee

Proposed Mr P. Wessels                      Seconded Mr R. Clifford
5. Treasurers Report
  - a) Mr Clifford handed out copies of the Statement of Income & Expenditure for the 2000/2001 year which reflected :-
    - i) Bank Balance of R 901.99
    - ii) Cash on Hand of R 139.43

Proposed Mr P. Hawkins                      Seconded Mr C. Lake
  - b) A Budget for the forthcoming year was also presented, in the light of which it would be unnecessary to increase annual subscriptions, as long as all existing members pay
  - c) It was agreed that, with the increasing number of visitors to the observatory, the committee should follow up on a quotation already received in respect of Public Liability insurance.
6. Election of Office Bearers 2000/2001
  - a) The following members were nominated and elected  
R.Roth, J.Watson, P.Hawkins, R.Clifford, R.Joubert, A.Hill, P.Wessels, F.de Bruyn, T.Morley  

Proposed Mrs J. Wessels                      Seconded Mr C. Lake
  - b) First meeting of new committee to be held on 26 June 2001 at the home of P.Hawkins
7. Other Business
  - a) Screening of video 'The Cosmic Constant', made by Mr F.Crooks, Mr C.Lake et al, would take place on 11 July 2001, at a venue still to be decided
  - b) The planet MARS at its closest approach for some 13 years
  - c) Mr P. Wessels proposed a vote of thanks to the Chair
8. Meeting closed at 21h30, after which all those present enjoyed some refreshments and telescope viewing using the observatory instruments

CHAIRMAN

SECRETARY

## ASSA - NATAL MIDLANDS CENTRE - CHAIRMAN'S REPORT - JUNE 2001

### A brief revue...

The year 2000/1 was, I think, a very successful year punctuated by enjoyable monthly meetings and pleasant public viewing evenings, despite the inclement summer weather. Our autumn weather has been superb however, and we have all feasted abundantly. This being the year of solar max several telescopes were seen to sprout during daylight hours on several occasions with an appreciative audience getting to know our closest star better. One group even braved the early hours beside a busy road to view the Leonid meteor shower.

Our lecture programme covered a wide range of subjects with several talks presented by persons not of the Natal Midlands Centre (NMC) - always a refreshing change. We also screened several interesting video and slide presentations, and despite the fear expressed that they usually put everyone to sleep this was found not to be the case.

Our Christmas party was held in the pleasant and tranquil surroundings of the Natal midlands. Despite dubious weather conditions a small group of revellers made the most of a very pleasant evening and even managed to get some superb views of Saturn through alcohol-ravaged retinas and low cloud. Such a pity then that more people did not make the effort to attend.

Many members were very disappointed when the Izinkhayesi conference was cancelled at the last minute. We so seldom venture much beyond our nearest horizon in the pursuit of our hobby that when an opportunity to share it with other like-minded people from further afield is lost we are all the poorer.

### Education...

As usual the education programme was run very successfully by Mr John Watson. This programme is undoubtedly the 'shop-front' of the NMC with talks and slide shows presented to a wide audience. Just to mention a few: several talks were given to Cub and Brownie packs during the year as well as to more mature audiences such as the Rotarians and several senior citizen organisations.

This programme must be kept going at all costs as it reaps huge benefits in new members and general enthusiasm from the public at large. At this very moment John is preparing for the next Basic Astronomy Course to be run during the month of July.

Several other people are also involved in the education programme and thanks must be given to them as well.

### Observatory...

Few new developments have taken place on this front during the year. This has largely been due to the substantial debt we have incurred during the initial construction phase - much of this still has to be repaid.

As mentioned previously, the public viewing evenings are becoming more popular with the general public, but sadly little support is forthcoming from most members of the NMC. The reason for this is not altogether clear, but lack of confidence while speaking to strangers and a feeling of vulnerability while out at night may be factors.

That necessary evil the WORK PARTY reared its ugly head several times during the year. Having become the custodian of substantial property the NMC membership has a certain obligation in maintaining said property in a fair state of repair, but once again that task seems to fall squarely on the shoulders of a select few. Keeping our property clear of grass and weeds is very important as an uncontrolled fire may threaten the observatory or the neighbouring plantations. Needless to say we have a certain public liability while entertaining groups of people on our property so keeping the premises in good repair is in our own best interests.

### Membership...

Subscriptions have remained static during the course of the year. While saying goodbye to some long-standing members we also welcomed some back after a period of absence.

### Stardust...

Our newsletter has continued to 'spread the word' so to speak. We have a merry band of writers who contribute to Stardust on a regular basis, thus making the present editors job a pleasure. We owe them a debt of gratitude as the newsletter plays an important part in keeping the NMC together and in touch.

On a related note: our www homepage is still functional, but needs a fresh injection of interest and inspiration by someone well-versed in html editing and with an artistic flair. Judging by the occasional comment this facility seems to be quite well used.

#### Library...

Our library is still rather under-utilised, but continues to grow as more books, magazines and videos are added. Sadly we had to bid farewell to Gail Culverwell who has looked after the library for the past few years. We will miss her interest and efficiency.

#### P.R.O....

The PRO portfolio has been a little quiet this past year, but much good progress has been made on this front by our very active education officer and the public viewing evenings.

Sadly the proposed public star party and exhibitions were cancelled due, mainly, to a lack of sufficient support from the NMC membership. A trend these days is for sporting fixtures to have a higher priority than astronomy - the 'box' has far more appeal on a Saturday afternoon than putting your neck out by peering through a telescope!

#### The Future...

This is perhaps the most difficult part of the evening as here we have to put forward fresh ideas and make new commitments for the year ahead.

Obviously the observatory development must continue. We have for some time now toyed with the idea of constructing some or other planetarium facility, a means by which we can teach astronomy while the inclement midlands weather is doing its thing during the summer months. It would also make far more sense to entertain an audience of young children in the comfort of an education centre rather than outdoors at night where control is often difficult. Let me hasten to add though that a planetarium is no substitute for the 'real thing' as it can never even get close to the true magnificence of the starry night sky, but would be useful as a teaching aid to the more formal aspects of astronomy.

Further development of the observatory itself should also continue. We must also continue with our education and public viewing evenings here at the observatory at all costs. More work has to be done on our two resident telescopes to make them more 'user friendly'. The low-voltage lighting system has to be expanded and completed, with perhaps the addition of a solar panel to keep the batteries topped up. Work also has to continue outdoors - the dob platforms have to be replaced and the ever-present wattle and weed growth kept under control. The establishment of a permanent lawn in the vicinity of the building and the construction of a braai area should be completed. The list is endless - we new committee needs your continued support.

#### Meritorious Service Award...

As the incumbent chairman it is my honour to present this years Meritorious Service Award to Mr Alan Hill.

#### Finale...

As I am quite sure you must be sick and tired of hearing me going on and on I would like, as a grand finale, to thank the outgoing committee for all the hard work, enthusiasm and dedication they have shown for these past twelve months and I would also like to wish the new committee all the best for the next twelve months - keep up the good work!

Rogan Roth

INCOME & EXPENDITURE 15<sup>th</sup> JUNE 2000 to 12<sup>th</sup> JUNE 2001

1. BROUGHT FORWARD AT 15<sup>th</sup> JUNE 2000:

BANK 907.16c  
CASH 20.80c

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TOTAL 927.96c

2. INCOME

R 6702.81c

3. EXPENDITURE

R 4949.35c

4. SURPLUS INCOME

R 1753.46c

5 BROUGHT FORWARD

R 927.96c

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6 TOTAL ASSET.

R 2681.42c

MADE UP BY.

BANK R 2401.99c

CASH R 279.43c

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TOTAL R 2681.42c

OUTSTANDING LIABILITIES

A.G.M. R 140.00c

LOAN REPAYMENT R 1500.00c

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R 1640.00c

LEFT TO CARRY FORWARD R 1041.42c

BANK. R 901.99c

CASH R 139.43c

*R. Clark*

INCOME	JUNE	JULY	AUG.	SEPT.	OCT.	NOV.	DEC.	JAN.	FEB.	MCH.	APR.	MAY	JUNE	TOTAL
SALES	161	30	4			4			280	25	20	40		564
COURSE	1000	200	462.80						77.50					1662.80
SUBS.	115	1370	495	275	880	150					20			3382.50
DONATIONS	175	285	298.72	15	10	5	50			219.04				1057.76
INTEREST	00.20		1.46	3.27	3.42	3.67	3.97		3.76	6.73	3	3.33	2.94	35.75
TOTAL	1451.2	1885	1261.98	293.27	893.42	162.67	53.97		361.26	250.77	43.	43.33	2.94	6702.81
EXPENDITURE														
BANK DEBIT.								0.20					0.20	0.40
HANDBOOKS								320						320
POST BOX							140.00							140
A.S.S.A.	425.00													425
AWARD/GOODWIL.	100.00										30.30	120.00		250.30
BINDING	9.00													9
KEYS/LOCKS	53.00						216.00		24.00					293
POSTAGE		113.20	120.90	137.80	113.20	111.80	102.70		102.70	114.40	109.50	106.60	127.20	1260
COURSE			600											600
CATERING			118.06		9.74	9.48	23.75		29.06		34.04	15.97		240.10
COPIES			89.50	94.75	48.30		72.25		48.75		81.00	115.25	12.00	561.80
STATIONERY			208.49	81.17			56.88		68.85		28.92		10.59	454.90
REPAIR PHONE			26.95											26.95
TOURISM			50.00											50.00
TAPES												69.90		69.90
SPEAKER/INSTN.						50.00						28.00		78.00
HALL/LEASE						50.00	50.00		28.00		50.00			170.00
TOTAL	587.00	113.20	1213.90	313.72	171.24	221.28	661.58	320.20	293.36	114.40	333.76	455.72	149.99	4949.35

# BUDGET. 2001-2002

TREASURER  
A.S.S.A.  
NATAL MIDLANDS CENTRE



## INCOME

SALES. (Handbooks, video hire)	R 400
COURSE	R 1050
SUBS.	R 3600
DONATIONS (Obituary, Education)	R 1050
Interest.	R 30
TOTAL	R 6030

## EXPENDITURE

A.S.S.A. (includes sky & Telescope)	R 450
Handbooks.	R 360
Post Box	R 150
POSTAGE	R 1400
GOODWILL	R 150
COURSE	R 600
CATERING.	R 300
COPYING.	R 600
STATIONERY }	R 600
	R 60
TOURISM.	R 200
Hall / LEASE	R 630
SUNDRIES.	R 5500
TOTAL.	

## FUNDS AVAILABLE FOR 'PLANNING' & EXPENSES.

BROUGHT FORWARD from 2000/1.	R 1041.42c
SUNDRIES	R 630.00c
SURPLUS BUDGET.	530.00c
TOTAL.	R 2201.42

PUBLIC LIABILITY INSURANCE: FOR INSTANCE.

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

**2001/2002 COMMITTEE**

Chairman	Mr R. Roth
Vice Chairman	Mr P. Hawkins
Secretary	Mr J. Watson
Treasurer	Mr R. Clifford
Newsletter	Mr R. Roth
Observatory	Mr R. Joubert
Instruments	Mr A. Hill
Library	Mr T. Morley
Council Rep	Mr J. Watson
P.R.O.	Mr P. Wessels
Education	Mr J. Watson
Prog & Research	Mr F. de Bruyn

**Addresses and telephone numbers**

Mr R. Roth	P O Box 100210, SCOTTSVILLE, 3209	033 - 3442635 (h) 033 - 2605147 (w)
Mr P. Hawkins	1 Ashbourne, Harwin Rd, PMBURG, 3201	033 - 3460303 (h)
Mr J. Watson	P O Box 330, HILTON, 3245	033 - 3433646 (h)
Mr R. Clifford	145 Howick Rd, Wembley, PMBURG, 3201	033 - 3423625 (h)
Mr R. Joubert	4 Sanders Rd, Scottsville, PMBURG, 3201	033 - 3460666 (h)
Mr A. Hill	P O Box 101441, SCOTTSVILLE, 3209	033 - 3961710 (h) 033 - 2606816 (w)
Mr T. Morley	P O Box 19, MKONDENI, 3212	033 - 3433234 (h) 033 - 3862314 (w)
Mr P. Wessels	P O Box 826, PMBURG, 3200	033 - 3434220 (h) 033 - 3458165 (w)
Mr F. de Bruyn	168 Cleland Rd, Hayfields, PMBURG, 3201	033 - 3963624 (h)

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Web page : <http://www.botany.unp.ac.za/nmc/nmc.htm>  
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