

Minutes of a meeting of the Council of the Astronomical Society of South Africa held at the Wesleyan Church School, Rosebank, on Monday 21st March 1927, at 8 pm

Present

Dr Spencer Jones (President) in the Chair, Capt. Cameron Swan, Messrs Cox, Jersey, Long, Reid, Smith and Houghton (Hon. Secretary)

The Chairman reported that Dr Halm was unable to attend as he was engaged in packing up, etc. prior to leaving the Royal Observatory on retirement at the end of March, when he proposed to live at Stellenbosch. The Council considered that opportunity should be taken to make some presentation to Dr Halm as a mark of esteem, and Messrs Jersey, Long and the Secretary were appointed a Committee to approach members of the Council and of the Cape Centre and to purchase a gift which would be presented to Dr Halm at the Observatory before he left.

Alternate

The Secretary reported that Mr Jackson had appointed Mr. Jones as his alternate.

Minutes

The minutes of the meetings of 16th August and 15th November were read and confirmed.

Correspondence

The Secretary laid on the table the letters received and copies of those written since the meeting of 16th August. The following were considered:

Letters of 10th and 21st September and 8th November from and of 17th August, 25th September, 1st and 25th November to the Johannesburg Centre on various matters. The Secretary of that Centre had promised that the outstanding sum of 10/6 due to Headquarters ~~from~~ for 1925-26 would be sent, but it had not yet been received.

Correspondence with W.S. Blacker of Adelaide, C.P., regarding the times when the Sun was due north, and regarding books suitable for a Boy Scout studying astronomy.

Correspondence with S.C. Venter, Potchefstroom, who wished to buy or hire a telescope: this had been brought to the notice of members
 Letter of 17th November from Mr. G.J. Forbes Durban, giving the address of Mr. A.J. Hoyer.

Two postcards from Mr. Hoyer showing diagrams regarding his theory of rotating aether. Mr. Hoyer asked that the cards might be submitted to the Editor, and the Secretary was instructed to reply that this had been done.

Financial Position

The Treasurer submitted his statement to date showing balance in hand of £8:12:3; a sum of £15:17:3 was due to the Printers in respect of the last Journal, which had cost in all £30:17:3. The Secretary was instructed to ask the Printers for a detailed statement. £1:3:6 was owing to Dr. Helen in respect of half proceeds of "Sunbird" book, and 7/6 was due for electric light at Council meetings. The Treasurer said he expected a contribution from the Cape Centre at the end of month. No payments had been made by the Johannesburg Centre who would be reminded.

Report of Journal Com^{tee}

The Secretary reported that No. 1 of Volume 2 of the Journal had been delivered and distributed about the 1st December. It has sent 35 copies to the Natal Astro. Assoc. as agreed by the Council. Mr. Long read a very appreciative review of the Journal which had appeared in "English Mechanics"; and the Secretary said that one or two journals had been sold to persons in England. The Secretary of the West of Scotland Branch of the B.A.A. had also complimented the Society on its Journal. The Secretary reported that "The Wander and the Glory of the Stars" (Prof. G. Forbes) had been received for review and that he had written to the publisher for a copy of "Beyond the Milky Way" (Hale). He was instructed to write similarly for a copy of "The Internal Constitution of the Stars" (Edington). The Council approved the purchase of 1000 wrappers for the Journal.

Variable Star Section

The Secretary referred to Dr. Roberts' wish to be supplied with recent maxima and minima, and read a letter from Mr.

Skjellern of 14 October explaining as to the records in his possession. The Chairman understood that Dr. Roberts' reduction of his observations was now completed and that through the agency of General Smuts the necessary funds for their publication were being provided. The Council considered that the observed maxima and minima for the years 1925-26 and 1926-27 should be appended to the next report of the Section. They also wished ~~the~~ enquiry to be made regarding the resumption of the publication of the Section's work in the Union Observatory Circulars. The Secretary was instructed to write to Mr. E. S. accordingly.

Comet Section

Mr. Reid stated that on 11th January Mr. Blackheath of Johannesburg had discovered his second comet, and he suggested that a letter of appreciation be sent from the Council. This was agreed to. Mr. Long referred to the medals which were awarded for such discoveries and he thought that when a medal was received it should be formally presented to the recipient at a meeting of members of the Society.

Mars Section

The Secretary read letters from Dr. Mauw of 18 August and 2 November regarding observations of Mars. Mr. Jarry remarked on the bad conditions of seeing at the Cape during the last opposition.

Suggested Computing Section

Mr. Reid stated that the formation of a Computing Section had been suggested by Mr. Mackenzie who was willing to undertake the work and attend to the correspondence if postage were allowed, but he did not wish to be Director. Proposing that Dr. Hahn, Dr. Jones or Mr. Wood should be Director. The Chairman referred to the procedure when a comet was discovered and said that the established Observatories were the only places in South Africa where accurate positions could be obtained. Mr. Long thought that the extending of ephemerides of comets, etc. were computations which members could undertake.

The Chairman said he would communicate with Dr. Jones: meanwhile Mr. Watekovic should be thanked for his suggestion and for the work he had done, and he told that the matter was left in abeyance until the next Council meeting.

Mr Reid's
Presidential
Address

Mr Reid said that he had planned to give an address at a Cape Centre meeting on 8th June and he suggested that that address should be regarded as his Presidential address. The Council agreed.

Visit of Prof
Rossiter

The Society stated that in November he called on Professor R.A. Rossiter who was proceeding to Bloomington to superintend the erection of the Branch Observatory being established by the University of Michigan. He expressed the Society's good wishes and also their regret at the sudden death in England of Dr. W.J. Hussey whose place as Director Professor R.A. Rossiter was taking. Professor Rossiter had since been elected a member of the Society.

The Council suggested that Dr. Alden of the Yale Observatory at New Haven, Conn. be invited to join the Society.

Visit of Mr.
Wickes

In January Mr. C.F. Wickes, Secretary of the National Astronomical Association, met several members and expressed the good wishes of the Association to the Society which were reciprocated. Mr. Wickes had promised that the question of the Association becoming a Branch of the Society would again be considered.

Oculations

The Chairman referred to the recent appeal by Prof. E.W. Brown for the observation by amateurs of occultations of stars by the Moon. This matter had been brought to the notice of members of the Cape Centre. Discussion took place as to obtaining the observed latitude and longitude, and securing correct time. The Chairman said all observations would be welcome as conditions at the local Observatory might not always be favourable. He urged members to communicate observations by members to Dr. Conrie.

Absence of
Capt. Cameron-
Swan

Capt. Cameron-Swan stated that he wd. be away from S. Africa for several months and during his absence he hoped to see and if possible photograph the total eclipse of the Sun on 29th June. The meeting then terminated.

B. Cameron-Swan
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