

ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

NATAL MIDLANDS CENTRE

Minutes of Annual General Meeting held at the home of Ms. J. Baxter, Otto's Bluff
on 15th July 1995 at 6.30pm

1. The meeting was attended by 13 members, with 8 apologies and 1 visitor.
2. The Chairman, Mr R. Jarmain, extended a warm welcome to everyone present, and thanked J. Baxter for the use of her home.
3. Minutes of the 1994 Annual General Meeting held on 13 July 1994 had already been posted to members, and were taken as read (Prop: M. Christianson, Sec: T. Chance)
4. Matters Arising
 - a) Instruments/Observatory - all instruments are now safely stored at the home of M. Christianson
 - a sub-committee has been formed under the chairmanship of M. Christianson. Considerable progress has been made towards the establishment of an Observatory for the Centre.

5. Chairman's Report (Prop: M. Christianson, Sec: P. Hawkins)

Mr R. Jarmain summarised the programme of activities of the Centre during the year. In particular, he made mention of:-

- a) The steady increase in membership
- b) The continued educational endeavours, including the Adult Education course currently in progress at the Natal Museum
- c) The efforts of the sub-committee towards the establishment of an observatory
- d) The hard work of the outgoing Centre committee.

6. Treasurer's Report (Prop: B. Lawrence. Sec: K. Hampson)

Mrs H. Chance presented the Statement of Income and Expenditure for the year, which reflected a closing balance of R 816-16, a gain of some R 335.

The Centre's major item of expenditure is the preparation and postage of the monthly newsletter "STARDUST" - the meeting agreed that this was an excellent means of keeping in touch with inactive/elderly members, and that the expense was therefore justified.

A proposal was put to the meeting (Prop: P. Hawkins, Sec: M. Christianson) that annual membership subscriptions be increased by R 5-00 in each category. This was agreed to unanimously after a short discussion. The revised annual subscriptions will therefore be:-

<u>Members</u>	R 35-00	<u>Couples</u>	R 45-00	<u>Pensioners & Students</u>	R 25-00
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A further proposal (Prop: P. Hawkins, Sec: M. Christianson) that an Observatory Fund be established was also agreed to unanimously

7. Election of New Committee

The following members were nominated and elected:-

Mesdames B.Lawrence, K.Hampson and H.Chance

Messrs R.Jarmain, T.Chance, M.Christianson, S.de Vos, P.Hawkins and J.Watson

Office bearers to be decided at a Committee meeting on 17/7/95.

8. Instruments & Observatory

M.Christianson reported as follows:-

- a) Agreement had been reached with the Girl Guides Association to sub-lease a small portion of their land at World's View, which they in turn lease from the Pietermaritzburg Corporation.
- b) A letter has been written to Pietermaritzburg Corporation outlining our plans to establish an Observatory.
- c) R.Clifford has prepared some preliminary drawings of a suitable building.

9. Other business

- a) R.Jarmain read a letter from A.Gray, the founder of Natal Midlands Centre.
- b) Fund-raising efforts for the Observatory to be embarked upon - approaches to be made to suitable organisations for donations.
- c) ASSA Symposium to be held in Bloemfontein in September.
- d) Wykeham-Collegiate and other schools keen for viewing evenings - J.Watson going to Land Camp at Cedara on 19/7/95.
- e) Vote of thanks to the Chair.

- 10. The meeting closed at 7.50pm, after which a delicious supper was enjoyed by all present. Thereafter several members set up telescopes and took advantage of the excellent viewing conditions from the front lawn.

CHAIRMAN

SECRETARY



ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

Natal Midlands Centre

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

15/July/1995

MEMBERS

Jul Watson

Jon + Bianca Lawrence

Mike + Lorraine Christensen

Jim + Hilary Chance

Kerry Hampson

Sheila Dale

Philip Hawkins

Rusty Jarman

Jan Baxter

Steve de Vos

VISITORS

Gill Watson

APAS

J. Mackenzie

R. Joubert

P. Gardiner

R. Roth

V. Collingwood

M. Imber

Re. Clifford

G. Gopaul

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 1994/95

Ladies and gentlemen,

I remember that, at my first AGM as chairman in July 1988, I commenced my report by confessing to an entirely illogical sense of pride in the fact that my year in the chair had been marked by the appearance in the Smaller Magellanic Cloud of Supernova 1987 A. If I have seemed during the year now closing to have been walking a millimetre or so taller, please ascribe it to the fact that I assumed the chair this time round to a veritable cosmic drum-roll as 21 fragments of comet Shoemaker-Levy 9 thundered into Jupiter.

It was that momentous event that provided the impetus for our first viewing session of the year, held at the Girl Guides' campsite near World's View in the hope of observing a spectacular pyrotechnics display as the first fragment struck home. Unfortunately, conditions deteriorated during the course of the evening to the extent that, by the time the anticipated "zero hour" arrived, Jupiter was seen at best sporadically and even then rather hazily owing to a superabundance of water vapour in the atmosphere. Still, I am happy to be able to report that several of our number did indeed see the scarring effects of what we came to call the "Great Jovian Jolt" during private backyard viewing sessions held during the week that followed.

A most pleasing feature of the year is the steady increase in membership that has taken place. The most probable reason for this is thought to be our programme of adult education courses held over the last few years. These would also no doubt account for the high general standard of our new membership in terms especially of genuine enthusiasm, as reflected by the happy fact that attendance at our monthly meetings has consistently numbered well in excess of 50 percent of our total membership. Unfortunately, however, the increase in our numbers was offset by the resignation during the year of Les Hunt and Ray Forder - neither through any drop-off in enthusiasm but for genuine personal reasons. We were distressed too when Sheila Dale, one of our staunchest members ever since our inaugural meeting 21 years ago, gave notice of her intention to resign - a decision, happily, which she was subsequently persuaded to reconsider. She did, however, step down from the committee, on which she had served on and off innumerable times during the years of the centre's existence.

During the year it was decided to resurrect our "Project Palomar," aimed at establishing our own observatory. Having spent some years in limbo, the project now seems to be firmly on track with a sub-committee having been formed under the able chairmanship of Mike Christianson. A major advance was made by securing virtual assurance that a corner of the site leased to the Girl Guides Association will be made available to us for the building. We are fortunate too in having attracted to our ranks a professional architect in the person of Roger Clifford, who has already done commendable work in drawing up a preliminary set of plans. Much work lies ahead, though, not the least of it being the clearing of a sizable tract of real estate, presently stocked with closely spaced gum trees - assuming, of course, that the City Forestry Department will agree to the clearing of those trees several years prior to their scheduled felling date. But no project, least of all one as ambitious and far-sighted as this one, was ever completed by shying clear of every obstacle and we look forward to the future with optimism.

Our monthly meetings have been characterised by a wide variety of interesting topics and activities, a résumé of these being as follows:

August: "A pocketful of Galaxies:" a slide-supported presentation by John Watson and Tim Chance, held in the main lecture room of the Department of Physics at the local university.

This meeting was well attended by university staff and students and gave rise to a gratifying measure of interest amongst the student body which has been reflected repeatedly by the presence of several of their number at subsequent meetings through the year.

September: (i) Constellation of the Month: a look at Sagittarius, with members of the committee discussing various aspects of the constellation and some of the objects which it comprises.

(ii) "Our Wonderful Universe:" a showing of a video tape kindly donated to the centre by our "Foreign Correspondent," Kerry Hampson, during a regrettably brief period earlier in the year while home on leave from Miami.

October: "Whistle-stop to the Stars:" a programme of slides during which your chairman took members on an imaginary tour of the cosmos, looking en route at a selection of planets, stars, clusters, nebulae and galaxies.

November: (i) "Stars and Shuttles Forever:" Kerry, now home (we hope permanently) from a year's sojourn in America, entertained us with a most interesting account of her States-side experiences, which included watching the launch of a space shuttle.

(ii) "No-name Brand Dissertation on Variables:" a fascinating and extremely well informed talk by John Watson on the sundry types of variable stars.

December: Our meeting for this month made way for our traditional Christmas function, which this year took the form of a most enjoyable braai at the lovely home of Jan Baxter. Thanks to the vagaries of a superannuated internal combustion engine, I was denied the pleasure of attendance.

February: (i) Look-around for 1995: John Watson gave a preview of astronomical phenomena expected during 1995 and Tim Chance followed this with a look-ahead at the space flights scheduled by NASA during the same period.

(ii) "Spacewatch:" Bianca Lawrence kindly gave us the loan of this excellent video tape from her well stocked library. Owing to its length and the lateness of the hour, it was decided to watch only the first half, leaving the second in abeyance till the next meeting.

March: (i) Constellation of the Month - Orion: a look at various aspects of the celestial Hunter, led again by members of the committee.

(ii) "Spacewatch:" a viewing of the second half of Bianca's tape.

April: (i) Open Forum on Meteors: a bring-and-share session, convened by Bianca, at which members took turns in imparting what amounted to an impressive assortment of knowledge on shooting stars.

(ii) Constellation of the Month: your committee yet again gave evidence of their indubitable worth by dispensing information on a prominent sector of the sky, this time the constellation Leo.

May: The Armillary Sphere: Diane Grayson gave a most interesting talk on this ancient astronomical device, its history and application. I might mention that I derived especial enjoyment from her contribution, as I had undertaken to build a sphere from plywood to make the demonstration practically possible. I found the project extremely interesting and eminently satisfying, never having laid claim to any but the most rudimentary skill in the field of handicraft.

June: A viewing session was held at the home of Veronica and Chris Collingwood, with some 30 members in attendance. The sky was brilliant and the chill of the evening more than compensated for by the warmth and conviviality of the occasion. Many thanks indeed to Chris and Veronica for yet again placing their home at our disposal.

Earlier in this report I made mention of the programme of adult education courses presented over the past few years. I am happy to report that the fourth such course is presently in progress, this one under the auspices of the Natal Museum, with sterling work being done by the team of lecturers, comprising John Watson, Tim Chance, Bianca Lawrence and Mike Christianson. Apart from these formal courses, talks are frequently given by our members to schools, Scout and Guide troops and other organisations. Judging by the frequency with which requests are made for such talks and by the comments and questions that ensue, it may safely be stated that they are highly successful and much appreciated. The centre's thanks are due to all those members who give of their time and effort in sharing their knowledge in this way.

In closing, I wish to express my sincere thanks to the members of the committee for their hard work during the past 12 months. In particular I must thank John for his unflagging work as secretary, a post he has held, if memory serves me right, for an unbroken spell of seven years. His minutes have always been of the highest order, business attended to with unimpeachable efficiency and correspondence dealt with with immediate dispatch. My especial thanks are also due to Tim for relieving me of the editorship of our newsletter at a moment when I felt certain that final departure of the last vestige of inspiration was imminent. He has maintained an excellent standard of penmanship and his articles have been notable for a well-nigh perfect blend of humour and informativeness. Moreover, he has done my self-esteem a world of good by qualifying his every reference to the centre chairman with an assortment of adjectives ranging from "intrepid" through "industrious" and "ingenious" to ... wait for it ... "indomitable!!!"

Ladies and gentlemen, I thank you.

R M Jarman

THE ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTHERN AFRICA

(NATAL MIDLANDS CENTRE)

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE STATEMENT AS AT 30 JUNE 1995

INCOME

Brought forward	Bank	373.58	
	Cash	108.13	
Subscriptions		1180.00	
Handbooks		143.00	
Donations		60.00	
Interest		31.60	
Cheque w/b		159.00	
University of Natal - Course		<u>600.00</u>	
	TOTAL		2655.31

EXPENDITURE

Annual Payments			
ASSA Subscription 94/95		110.00	
95/96		200.00	
PMB Publicity Association		30.00	
Post Box Rental		50.00	
Purchase of Handbooks		260.00	
Refreshments		155.95	
Stationery		133.06	
Photocopying		177.81	
Postage		523.00	
Video		65.59	
Subs - St Charles		110.00	
Maps (Occultation)		18.24	
Key		5.50	
Carried Forward	Bank	800.80	
	Cash	<u>15.36</u>	
	TOTAL		2655.31