

Good evening all, and thank you for joining us this evening.

I would firstly like to thank Lerika for organising this meeting, and seemingly everything else. Lerika your work for ASSA does not go unnoticed and is greatly appreciated.

I would like to thank our AGM Host, Derek Duckitt, ASSA Hermanus

And all the attendees for actively participating.

Next, I want to extend my appreciation to the Council members for their dedication and support throughout the past year. There are many tasks and responsibilities which take place behind the scenes to keep the wheels of ASSA turning and all of your work is pivotal in making that happen, so thank you!

Comet, Asteroid and Meteor Section

A huge thank you to Tim Cooper for running the CAM Section and providing updates

Throughout the year, members made significant observations, capturing visuals of Comet C/2017 K2 and Comet C/2022 E3, as well as conducting extensive meteor shower observations.

The Cameras for Allsky Meteor Surveillance (CAMS) tracked 4486 meteors. Excitingly, our collaboration with the Global Meteor Network (GMN) expanded coverage in the southern hemisphere, and we are on the cusp of launching a project to promote STEM education in schools.

Additionally, our fireball analyses and contributions to the Southern African Fireball Catalogue (SAFC) have strengthened international cooperation.

We are immensely grateful to all members who participated and contributed and you can read more details in Tim's report.

Astrophotography Section (formerly known as the Imaging Section)

The section has been instrumental in promoting and coordinating the use of astronomical imaging technology by amateur observers, resulting in a remarkable collection of images created by South African amateur astronomers available on our Flickr image archive,

Our collaboration with ASSA Publications has been highly successful, leading to contributions in Sky Guide, MNASSA, and Southern Skies. Furthermore, we are proud of our international collaborations, such as with sponsors like Optolong, which have provided incentives and support to the thriving local astrophotography community.

The recent Big 5 of the African Sky Astrophotography Challenge, sponsored by Optolong, was a great success, bringing forth stunning images. I would like to express my gratitude to our dedicated Section Director, Martin Heigan, for his invaluable leadership.

ASSA Historical Section

As the Astronomical Society of Southern Africa celebrated its centenary, we commemorated this significant milestone with numerous achievements in the field of the history of astronomy.

Notably, a cloud-based backup digital Archive was established, ensuring vital documentation accessibility for future council members and easing historical research. The Bi-Annual ASSA symposium in Cape Town put a spotlight on historical materials, emphasizing the importance of preserving our astronomical heritage.

In our publications, we unveiled captivating articles chronicling the history of different aspects of the Society, thanks to the dedication of the editorial team and various contributors.

Additionally, MNASSA published obituaries, paying tribute to distinguished astronomers who have left an indelible mark on our community.

Special appreciation goes to Archivist and Director of the Historical Section, Chris de Coning, for his leadership and commitment.

ASSA Cosmology

This year, we embarked on an engaging journey through the "History of the Universe" series, featuring 17 YouTube videos, in collaboration with the Hermanus Centre.

These informative videos covered a wide range of captivating topics, from the Big Bang to the nature of space and time. The approachable presentations in layman-friendly language aimed to cater to the majority of our members' interests. While we have seen some enthusiastic participation through Zoom, we are striving to improve attendance, especially from non-Hermanus ASSA members. To better meet the cosmology-related needs of our membership, we plan to conduct a survey to gauge interests and preferences for future directions.

Thanks to Derek Duckitt for his hard work on this.

ASSA Instrumentation Section

Activities primarily focus on communication, outreach, guidance, and education to support the instrumentation needs of both ASSA members and the general public. Through our online platforms, including Facebook pages, WhatsApp groups, and email lists, we provide invaluable resources and technical assistance to members worldwide.

The Amateur Telescope Making (ATM) class has been a cornerstone since 1991, fostering a supportive environment for individuals pursuing their telescope-making projects.

Our Facebook group, "Telescope Making SA," continues to grow in membership, fostering a strong sense of community. Our commitment to promoting interest in astronomy is evident in the refurbishment and donation of telescopes to enthusiastic young individuals.

With 3D printing and innovative techniques, we continue to develop novel components, fostering a healthy level of activity and interest within our section.

Thank you Chris for leading this endeavour and empowering amateur astronomy through instrumentation.

ASSA Observing section

Under the Observing section, the "Southern Skies Quarterly" was developed as a platform to encourage interest in the night sky and share observations and imaging from ASSA members and the public.

While initially well-received, the submissions for the publication experienced a decline, partly due to challenging weather conditions and general apathy. Nevertheless, plans are in place for a 2nd edition in 2023, members are encouraged to contribute

Outreach efforts have been successful, with an astronomy evening at St Dominics in Newcastle attracting over 800 attendees. However, considering the workload and the declining support for "Southern Skies Quarterly," Director Angus Burns proposes several options, including resigning and supporting a new director.

Regardless of the decision, Angus remains committed to supporting ASSA within his time constraints. Thank you for your continued support and involvement in our observational endeavours.

Ask an Astronomer

I'm happy to share the summary of the Ask An Astronomer Report for the year 2023.

ASSA has been actively responding to and addressing 163 queries posted on our website, covering a diverse range of topics. While some of the questions posed were challenging, the majority were insightful and intriguing, reflecting the genuine interest and curiosity of our audience.

Among these queries, 20% were related to astronomy careers, underscoring the growing fascination with pursuing professional paths in this field. As we continue to foster a deeper understanding and appreciation of astronomy, we are committed to providing comprehensive and informative responses to all inquiries. Thank you Case in particular for your ongoing support and engagement in our astronomical community.

Scholarships Committee

The Astronomical Society of Southern Africa is proud to administer two prestigious scholarships for studies in astronomy. This year, we received six eligible applications, and

after careful consideration, the ASSA Scholarship was awarded to Adnaan Nauthoo, a brilliant BSc (Hons) student from Mauritius at the University of Cape Town.

Additionally, the Cooke Scholarship was presented to Carys Gilbert, a 3rd-year Physics / Astrophysics student, also at UCT. We are delighted to celebrate the accomplishments of our 2022 awardees, Adnaan Nauthoo and Gary Louw, both BSc graduates with distinctions in Astrophysics and other disciplines.

We extend our congratulations to the recipients and express our gratitude to all who contribute to the success of these scholarships. Thank you for your unwavering support in nurturing the next generation of astronomers.

Double and Variable Star Section

The section has been thriving with growing popularity in astronomy and variable star webinars, providing unique opportunities for interaction with specialists in the field.

Observations of variable stars have been extensive, with Berto Monard submitting 33 133 for an impressive total of 2,902,043 observations to the AAVSO. The author also contributed significantly, collaborating on published papers and actively posting early warnings of exciting astronomical events.

Talks on Variable Stars and DSLR photometry of eclipsing binary stars have enriched our knowledge-sharing efforts.

In recognition of a lifetime of contributions, the Director, Dave Blane, received the prestigious Overbeek medal.

I'd like to express my gratitude to Dave and all contributors and observers.

Photometry and Spectroscopy Section

Within the Amateur Spectroscopy domain, we have observed limited growth, with Percy Jacobs being the only active Amateur Spectroscopist in South Africa, actively contributing spectra to the AAVSO database and other platforms.

To date, Percy has submitted 535 published observations, demonstrating his dedication and commitment to this field. The AAVSO Spectroscopy Section, which began in November 2018, now encompasses data from 11,337 observations by 75 observers.

Percy has also actively shared his expertise through presentations to the ASSA Johannesburg Centre, and his publications in MNRAS have contributed valuable insights to the community. His willingness to guide and support newcomers in spectroscopy showcases the spirit of knowledge-sharing that defines our astronomical community. We are immensely grateful for Percy's contributions and look forward to fostering the growth of Amateur Spectroscopy in the future.

General Thanks

I'd like to express my thanks to everyone on Council, to our Section Directors, to our Centre committees as well as all those supporting them in the background.

- Eddie Nijeboer, our Membership Secretary.
- AJ Nel, our Treasurer.
- Case and the Editorial team Ian and Willie.
- But then there is the SAAO IT team for all their willingness to help ASSA - and Christian,
- Lerika Cross, our Secretary
- Our past presidents for their wisdom and ongoing support of the Council

Conclusion

In conclusion, the various reports presented at the ASSA AGM in August 2023 showcase the dynamic and thriving nature of our astronomical society.

From scholarship initiatives supporting aspiring astronomers to the dedicated efforts of various sections, such as Astrophotography, Cosmology, and Instrumentation, our members' passion and commitment to the field are evident.

The Double and Variable Star Section and the Photometry and Spectroscopy Section continue to contribute valuable observations and research, while the Ask An Astronomer platform fosters curiosity and engagement with the wider public.

Despite challenges and fluctuations in submissions, our dedication to promoting astronomy education, outreach, and exploration remains steadfast.

As we celebrate accomplishments and milestones, we also recognize the need to adapt and evolve to meet future opportunities and challenges.

Together, as a united community of astronomy enthusiasts, we look forward to furthering our understanding of the cosmos and inspiring the next generation of astronomers.

Our collective efforts exemplify the spirit of curiosity, exploration, and collaboration that defines the Astronomical Society of Southern Africa. Thank you to all members, supporters, and contributors for making this journey a truly enriching and enlightening one. Here's to a bright and exciting future for ASSA and the awe-inspiring world of astronomy.

Incoming Council for 2023/24

Many thanks to Pierre for his work as Vice President and thank him for taking on the Outreach Director work

Welcome Derek - Hermanus Chair - as the new Vice President sure to be President next August

Many thanks to Eddy for all his effort as Membership Secretary and welcome Andre Bruton (all the way from George)

Welcome Jacques van Delft as Solar Director (from Bloem)

Ask for volunteers to assist Angus as Observing Director and Dave in Photometry and Spectroscopy.

