

Minutes of the AGM, 16 August 2006

Cliff Turk (Acting Secretary for AGM)

1. The meeting opened at 20h03 with 23 members present (more arrived later)
2. The Notice of meeting was taken as read having been circulated to all members with the June *MNASSA*.
3. Apologies were received from: Drs IS Glass and T Lloyd Evans, Mrs M Streicher, Messrs M Poll and MG Soltynski.
4. Minutes of last AGM were taken as read, having been published in *MNASSA* and there were no matters arising.
5. The Report of Council was read by the retiring President, Miss P J Booth and will be published in *MNASSA*
6. The reports of the observing and other sections were read, either by the Directors of those Sections or various other members standing in for them. The reports will be published in *MNASSA*. The exceptions to this were the Imaging and Computing Sections which are presently without directors and the Double Star Section whose Director has just resigned.
7. The Financial report from the Hon Treasurer was presented and will also be published in *MNASSA*. It shows a very healthy state of affairs.
8. The report of the ASSA Scholarship committee, prepared by Mr MG Soltynski, was read on his behalf. It too will appear in *MNASSA*.
9. The ASSA Endowment Trust report was read by the Secretary of the Trust and will also appear in *MNASSA*.
10. The Auditor, Mr R.G. Glass was re-elected on the proposal of the treasurer, Mr CR Turk seconded by Mr AB Jones.
11. The Retiring President, Miss PJ Booth read the list of nominees for office and as there were no conflicting nominations, the following were declared elected by unanimous agreement of the meeting:

President:	Dr CDL Laney
Vice Presidents	Mrs M Streicher
	Miss PJ Booth
	Dr P Martinez
Members	Dr IS Glass, Mr A Herder
	Mr M Poll, Mr A Van Zyl
Hon Treasurer	Mr CRG Turk
Editor <i>MNASSA</i>	Mr WP Koorts
Comet & Meteor	Mr TP Cooper
Deep Sky	Mr A Slotegraaf

The remaining offices will continue to be filled by the current incumbents, subject to their agreement, or failing that Council will appoint a member to the position at the first opportunity.
12. The formal part of the meeting closed at 20h59 and was immediately followed by the retiring President's address in which she gave details of her trip to Libya to see the recent Total Eclipse of the Sun on 29 March 2006 for which she was thanked in the usual way.
13. From 21h18 until final closure at 22h05, Mr C de Coning gave a resume of his investigation into a future path for the Society which created some lively discussion. Mr de Coning was thanked for his efforts in collecting and collating all the suggestions as well as for his able presentation. ☆

Report of ASSA Council 2005/6

1. Membership

It was with regret that Council received the news during the year of the deaths of two of our Past Presidents Pieter van Blommenstein and Rupert Hurly, the latter of whom was also an Honorary Member. Last year the demise of another of our Past Presidents and Honorary Members, David S Evans, was accidentally omitted from the Report of Council. Mr TP Cooper has been elected an Honorary Member of the ASSA.

At present membership is as follows:

Members with <i>S&T</i> subscription	102
Non- <i>S&T</i> subscribing members	118
Honorary members	11
New	6
Total (previous year 233)	237

2. Finance

Mr CRG Turk, as Treasurer and acting-Business Manager is to be thanked and commended for his continued efforts. Accounts are in order and the ASSA is in good financial health.

3. Council Membership and Appointees

There being only two valid nominations received for the year, Council membership remained substantially the same. Mr Tony Jones resigned as Vice President and Mrs M Streicher was appointed to the vacancy. Mr Braam van Zyl was appointed to fill the consequent vacant Council Member seat. The Webmaster, Mr Auke Slotegraaf, resigned at the end of December. Council is very grateful

for his excellent work on the website. Mr Gerrit Penning was appointed as Webmaster in his place. The Honorary Secretary Mr C Rijdsdijk resigned on 14 June 2006 as he is leaving Cape Town shortly. Council thanks him for his services since 2002.

4. MNASSA

The Editor, Mr Auke Slotegraaf resigned in February. He is to be thanked for his services here since 1994. Dr Ian Glass and Mr Willie Koorts stepped into the breach for the rest of the year. Mr Maciej Soltynski continued as Book Review Editor. The experiment to turn *MNASSA* into an electronic journal was begun with the SAAO kindly offering to host it. Council is most grateful to the Director of the SAAO for this facility.

5. Annual Handbook

The *Sky Guide Africa South* has again been very successful. The print run was decreased to 3 500 copies and these were sold out. The binding problem was also successfully overcome. Mr Auke Slotegraaf, ably assisted by the ASSA's Editorial Board, is to be thanked for his efforts. Mr Slotegraaf resigned from the Editorship at the end of 2005. The success of the publication is entirely due to his expertise and his setting of a professional standard for its layout and composition. Council greatly appreciates this and the three years of hard work he has put into it. The 2007 edition will be undertaken by Mr Tony Jones.

6. Sections of the ASSA

The Imaging Section Directorship is still vacant as it was last year. Mr C Rijdsdijk resigned in June from the Directorship of the Education and Public Communication Section. Council thanks him for his work since the inception of this Section. All other Directors remain in their posts.

7. The Future Direction of the ASSA

Council authorized the setting up of a website to initiate discussion on the way forward for the ASSA hosted by Mr C de Coning. A lively discussion then took place. Mr de Coning will present a collated report of these discussions later this evening.

8. Scholarships

Mr Maciej Soltynski, Dr Abe Mahomed and Mr Andrew Gray are thanked for their efforts in running the ASSA Scholarship. The scholarship was again awarded for 2006.

9. ScopeX

Once again the Johannesburg Centre organized a superb ScopeX. It was very well attended. The invited speaker was Dr David Malin from Australia.

10. Public Relations

Dr David Malin went on a successful mini tour, speaking in Bloemfontein and Cape Town, after ScopeX. His visit to South Africa was partly subsidised by the ASSA. Council for the first time voted by e-mail to approve the subsidy.

The Cape Centre's presence at the Hobby-X exhibition, held in Cape Town in June, was sponsored by the ASSA.

11. History Symposium

A very successful Historical Symposium, due to the efforts of Dr Ian Glass, Mr Maciej Soltynski, Mr Willie Koorts, Mr C de Coning and Mr Auke Slotegraaf, was held at the SAAO on 8-9 November. Several overseas visitors were among the 65 who attended. Council thanks the National Research Foundation for their significant financial support of the symposium.

12. Opening of SALT

A few of the participants in the Historical Symposium, but regrettably not all who wanted to go, attended the opening of SALT on 10 November. Equally regrettable is that the ASSA received no invitation to the opening.

13. Acknowledgements

The Council wishes to express its thanks to the following:

- Prof Phil Charles, Director, SAAO for allowing the Council to use the SAAO Lecture Hall for its meetings and also the use of many other of the Observatories resources.
- The Directors of the various Sections within the ASSA for forwarding data to their respective international bodies and for their support.
- Finally to all members of the various Centres, especially the Cape Centre for hosting this year's AGM. ☆

Report of the Comet and Meteor Section

TP Cooper (Director)

Table 1. Summary of observed meteor showers

Magda Streicher (4)	Eta Aquarids (3.8), July Phoenicids (3.6), Upsilon Pegasids (2.7), September Taurids (3.1)	13.2
Tim Cooper (4)	Eta Aquarids (6.1), Upsilon Pegasids (4.5), Alpha Monocerotids (1.3), December Phoenicids (0.7)	12.6
Koos van Zyl (1)	Upsilon Pegasids (3.8)	3.8
Karen Koch (1)	Eta Aquarids (2.5)	2.5
Tony Jones (1)	Eta Aquarids (2.4)	2.4
Total		34.5

Notes on observed meteor showers

Eta Aquarids – four observers logged a total of 14.8 hours observation. Cloud again prevented complete coverage of the maximum, but highest rates were observed by the Director of 40/hour on the mornings of 5/6 May.

July Phoenicids – Magda Streicher observed weak activity on the mornings of 12/13 July.

Upsilon Pegasids – this potential shower was observed at the request of Hal Povonmire, Florida, USA. In 11.1 hours observation Koos van Zyl, Magda Streicher and Tim Cooper logged only 8 possible Upsilon Pegasids.

Alpha Monocerotids – weather only permitted 1.3 hours observation by the Director on the night of 21/22 November. With previous outbursts in 1985 and 1995, the shower did not exhibit any enhanced activity in 2005.

Summary of observed fireballs

2005 saw a total of 13 fireball reports. The full details have been submitted for publication in *MNASSA* as a separate article.

Notes on some observed comets

Table 2 summarises six of the seven comets observed during 2005. C/2004 Q2 Machholz peaked at magnitude 3.5 in January and was observed until May, by when it had faded to magnitude 9. C/2003 K4 LINEAR was observed during January, peaking at magnitude 7.5 and until March, by which time it was magnitude 10-11. C/2005 A1 LINEAR was observed during March at magnitude 9. 9P Tempel 1 was well observed. The comet remained rather faint, peaking at perhaps magnitude 10 and little condensed, even after the impact by the Deep Impact probe on 4 July. The ASSA observations

section reports

were reported in *MNASSA*, 64 (11&12), 182. 21P Giacobini-Zinner, a single observation on 17 July at magnitude 13.1. 37P Forbes, a single observation on 8 August at magnitude 11.8. C/2005 E2 McNaught a single observation during November at magnitude 12.

Obituaries were published by the Director in *MNASSA*, 64 (7&8), 118 and *International Comet Quarterly*, 27 (3), 157. With 6 discoveries to his name, Mike jointly held the record for comet discoveries from South Africa.

The year also saw the passing of Michiel Bester on 15 April, aged 87.

All observers of meteors and comets are heartily thanked for their contributions. ☆

Table 2. Summary of observed comets

Observer code	9P Tempel 1	C/2003 K4 LINEAR	C/2004 Q2 Machholz	C/2005 A1 LINEAR	21P Giacobini Zinner	37P Forbes	C/2005 E2 McNaught
COO02	•	•	•	•		•	•
BEG01	•	•	•				
STR03	•				•		
VAN15	•						
PRI04		•					

Key: ICQ

Observer code:

- COO02 = Tim Cooper
- STR03 = Magda Streicher
- BEG01 = Mike Begbie
- VAN15 = Koos van Zyl
- PRI04 = David Pringle-Wood
- TUR = Cliff Turk

Comets:

- 9P Tempel 1
- C/2003 K4 LINEAR
- C/2004 Q2 Machholz
- C/2005 A1 LINEAR
- 21P Giacobini Zinner
- 37P Forbes
- C/2005 E2 McNaught

• indicates the comet was observed

Report of the Deep-sky Observing Section

Auke Slotegraaf (Director)

In the year under review, members of the Deep-sky Section were involved in both observing and astronomy popularizing.

Magda Streicher has continued her excellent observing programme, which for the year under review included the study of 384 deep-sky objects, 90 asterisms (of which 21 are her own discoveries) and almost 100 double-star observations (including the possible discovery of a faint companion to a triple-system in Aries).

Furthering her ongoing interest in asterisms, she co-operated with Jenni Kay of Australia on a "Small Clusters and Asterisms" project and has been working towards her Herschel 400 certificate (having logged 87 to date).

In addition to a regular newspaper column and regional radio talks, her "Deep-sky Delights" column appears regularly in *MNASSA*. In the period under review, Magda published an article on double stars in Circinus, in *Deepsky Observer*, the journal of the Webb Society. A special publication (co-authored with Jenni Kay) of Magda's observations of the Jack Bennett Catalogue is being prepared by Bob Argyle of the Webb Society. Magda's deep-sky sketches appear regularly in the Australian magazine *Sky and Space* to illustrate Jenni Kay's deep-sky column.

Magda will also be representing the Section at the 2006 ScopeX with a display of deep-sky photographs and drawings and promoting the Section's workbook (see below).

Gerrit Penning, the Bloemfontein Centre deep-sky coordinator, reports that during the year, various deep-sky evenings in and around the city were held. Informal evenings were also arranged after meetings. At the start of the year, a monthly observation schedule was compiled, but due to practical reasons, little of the schedule could be followed and observations were not as numerous as in 2004. For the current year it was rather decided to focus on specific constellations that were most suited for observation of its deep-sky objects. Unfortunately clouds and rainy weather hampered some practical club activities and it was further restricted by the fact that the Bloemfontein Centre's deep-sky coordinator was out of the country for a few months.

Beginners were properly trained in night-sky observations and some members acquired or even built telescopes. The Centre can now proudly say that the majority of its deep-sky members have telescopes of sufficient aperture.

The venues of some of the Centre's deep-sky evenings included Boyden Observatory, Barkly-Wes, De Oude Kraal Country Estate and the city of Bloemfontein. The greatest challenge now lies in motivating advanced members to further their interest in deep-sky and persuading them to follow discipline in self-development.

In July 2005, the Section published a booklet containing naked-eye star maps, intended as a first-step in observing the night sky. Called *Discover!*, the workbook aims to teach the constellations and at the same time encourages the novice to use binoculars or a small telescope to search the southern skies and record any deep-sky objects they find. *Discover!* was compiled by myself, with valuable advice received from Magda Streicher and Gerrit Penning. In January 2006 a second edition was prepared.

The workbook is advertised to ASSA members in the 2006 *SkyGuide*, in various issues of *MNASSA* and on the ASSA website. *Discover!* was also mentioned on several e-mail lists, in newspaper columns and on my personal website.

Discover! is also available for download from the ASSA website and from my personal website.

From my homepage, 413 copies of *Discover!* were downloaded. In addition, 94 copies of a preliminary *Advanced Discover!* workbook and 64 copies of *DOC* (the *Deep-sky Observer's Companion*), were downloaded. An unconfirmed number of copies were downloaded from the ASSA website, kindly hosted by SAAO.

Reproduction, binding and distribution of the workbook was undertaken by Magda Streicher and myself. Magda has distributed 41 copies (costing R530), mainly to local high schools, social clubs and at game parks and camps in the Kruger National Park. I have distributed 95 copies (costing R890) including sending sets to ASSA Centres who accepted an invitation for the free workbooks; responses were received from the Bloemfontein, Durban, Garden Route, Johannesburg & Natal Midlands Centres. In addition, 28 copies were distributed to individuals who were unable to download the free electronic version and requested printed versions instead (at a cost of R25 per copy to cover printing, ring binding and postage).

In summary, for the year under review, at least 160 paper and 413+ electronic copies of *Discover!* were distributed. ☆

Report of the Occultation Section

Brian Fraser (Director)

As the years pass, so the average age of our observers increases – which is another sad way of saying we still don't have any younger astronomers joining the observing sections. Our society is not the only one in the world experiencing this sorrowful phenomena as we read that even organizations like the AAVSO suffer from the same problem. We were saddened to hear of the death last year of one of the most active occultation observers in the section, Peter van Blommenstein. Peter was one of our stalwarts and with his departure we are have lost one of our friends and regular contributors. Last year Jannie Smit was also not able to do as much observing as he would have liked, due to health problems, but I am happy to report he has now recovered and is back into his old routine.

Our priorities have changed over the years and today we have a small but very active minor planet occultation observing group. In years gone past we focused much more on lunar occultations and grazing occultations. Minor planet occultations can be observed from your own backyard and if you are lucky enough to be located in the shadow track then you will get a positive observation. In recent times we have been using the predictions of Steve Preston of IOTA, which we have found to be extremely accurate. So much so that we have even traveled to the predicted path with some confidence of getting a positive observation. This wasn't the case

in previous years. We even had the good fortune to get positive observations of two occultations of two separate events on a single night, 5 August.

I will repeat a comment that I have made before – we still do not have enough observers in our country doing minor planet occultation observations. And sadly even the small number of active of observers are so spread out that we often miss out on getting valuable results because we end up getting only one positive observation. If we just had another 3 or 4 observers in the PWV area and 2 or 3 in each of Bloemfontein, Kimberley and the Western Cape we could catch many more of these spectacular and important events.

Getting a good time signal has been a problem that has haunted our efforts over the years. But I am please to announce that at the time of writing I have received a GPS-based receiver/timing device built to suit our requirements and will be making this unit available to observers after doing some trial runs with it. First indications are that it is perfect for our needs.

Observations reported for the year 2005.

Lunar Occultations.

Cliff Turk	43 disappearances	
	9 reappearances	
Brian Fraser	4 disappearances.	☆

Report of the Education and Public Communication Section

Case Rijdsdijk (Director)

I will take the liberty of extending this report to cover a bit more than just the last ASSA year. The reason for this is that I will be re-locating to Wilderness and would like to continue with the EPC efforts at the previous levels. But in order to do this it would be really great if all centres could simply e-mail me and let me know what it is that they have done in terms of public talks, night viewing sessions, newsletters sent out etc. just to collect the stats: **not** for the director to claim glory! It is vitally important that if one or other centre needs to fund raise, then being able to say what it is that the ASSA has done in the past year in very helpful, if not essential. This report can then be of real use to other centres. Funders don't really like to hear that "we do a lot of things" – they would rather hear things like, in 2005 we delivered 134 talks to the public around the country, visited 84 schools and gave talks there, 12 678 people attend our night viewing sessions etc. These things need to be quantified.

Although no reports have been received from the various centres I know that many have been very pro-active. Of particular import in the annual ScopeX which is run by the Johannesburg Centre and is something of which we can all be proud. Their efforts in promoting astronomy are to be lauded and the fact that for the last two years they have managed to get two prominent international speakers is just reward for their efforts.

The last speaker to attend ScopeX was Prof David Malin, the world famous astro-photographer whose talks in Johannesburg, Bloemfontein and Cape Town were as usual, very different and stimulating. In future I think we should try and get more publicity for events like this

I know that the Cape Centre has, as usual, supported SAAO with its monthly Open Nights and that members have given talks to schools and the public, as has the director. I am sure that other centres have done similar things and it would be really great if details of these efforts could be forwarded to me so that I can build up a data base for distribution to all centres in this report.

The director has also produced some resources which are now on the Education page of the SAAO website. They will be fine tuned as there are a few minor problems of software incompatibility – some numbers appears as letters etc! But it is an ongoing process which can only improve with time.

I would like all centres to please send me details of what they are doing – just a short note, something along the lines of: "Last night Peter Bloggs spoke to the Middelorp Probus group on What's Up in the Night Sky. The meeting was attended by 27 people",

or “Joe Soap went to the Chris Hani High school and gave a workshop on the Solar System to 68 Gr 9 learners”.

Have a good year and I look forward to hearing from you all – I know you have something to report! ☆

Report of the Historical Section

Chris de Coning (Director)

Introduction

The past year (Calendar Year 2005) had the following highlights concerning the History of Astronomy.

Website

Preparatory work was done on the part of the web site dedicated to the Historical Section. However no update occurred, but it will be done in 2006.

Archive

Due to the complexities and scope of the task the indexing the archive will still take some time.

Publications

A Historical diary for events to be commemorated was published in *MNASSA*, 64 (3&4).

Individuals in their private capacities wrote articles with historical content. Please note my appreciation to the following people:

- Jan Hers for his excellent article on the recollections of William Finsen published in *MNASSA*, 64 (3&4).
- Auke Slotegraaf for the article on Hipparcos’s long-lost star cata-

logue. *MNASSA*, 64 (3&4).

- Brian Fraser for the article on “The Union /Republic Observatory and Minor Planet discoveries”. *MNASSA*, 64 (7&8).
- Pat Booth for the article on “The Rings of Uranus – the South African Story” *MNASSA*, 64 (9&10).

Obituaries

MNASSA published obituaries on the following astronomers:

- David Evans; *MNASSA*, 64 (1&2).
- Michiel Bester; *MNASSA*, 64 (7&8).
- Pam Cook; *MNASSA*, 64 (9&10).

I would like to thank A. Slotegraaf and fellow contributors for their hard work in preparing the obituaries.

Symposium

The first ever Symposium for the History of Astronomy for the whole continent of Africa was a success. It took place on 8 and 9 November 2005 on the premises of SAAO with 62 delegates attending. On 10 November the delegates were invited guests at the opening of SALT at Sutherland. This event, especially the opening of SALT, was history in the making. ☆

Report of the Solar Section

JJ van Delft (Director)

Publicity and awareness was the main focus in the Solar section for 2005.

The monthly solar bulletin is well established during this year and according to web statistics downloads nationally and internationally were experienced. Solar reporting in the *MNASSA* also started during 2005 and will be built up into a solid publication during 2006.

Solar presentations during 2005 where held at the following organizations:

- SARL (South African Radio league) Roodepoort, followed by a live radio broadcast presentation on short-wave radio.
- SENWES, Hartbeespoort at there annual Silo Conference.
- CUT (Central University of Technology) Bloemfontein at their annual research presentation day.

Solar observations continued during the 2005 period and we ended the year with 3 observers. ☆

Report of the Dark Sky Section

CRG Turk (Director)

During the year the Director has continued to include aspects of light pollution in all the talks he has given to various groups – a total of only 12 in 2005 compared with 24 in the previous year.

Photographs were supplied to one member to assist with giving lectures in Natal, but the response to the appeal in the past two reports has still been very poor.

We vitally need experienced astronomers to constantly tell the public about this problem so that it becomes better known. At the same time we have to accept that our finances do not run to legal action against offenders as this route can only be a very expensive business while there

is no legislation in place to define what may or may not be an offence. In fact, to date, only one country in the world has national legislation covering the problem, although several others do have local by-laws giving some protection. It has been suggested that our Constitution gives us wide ranging freedoms under which we could take action, but what would be the cost of going to the Constitutional Court and who would foot the bill?

Legal action, in my opinion, is not the best path to follow. It is much better to educate the public to the widespread problems which light pollution causes and to gain co-operation rather than make enemies through civil action. If, at the same time, we can persuade some

local authorities to declare invasive light to be a recognised nuisance, then those who refuse to co-operate and continue to pollute can be dealt with in the Magistrates Court much more promptly and at less expense.

During the coming year the Director will be attending the 6th European Dark-Sky Symposium in the UK where he hopes to gain from the experiences of others in organising campaigns over a wide area. ☆

Report of the Variable Star Section

J Hers (Director)

Summary of Variable Star observations for 2005

Tim Cooper	Kempton Park	769	
Brian Fraser	Pretoria		236 (Pep)
Win Jones	Fish Hoek		1767 (Pep)
Michael Poll	Gezina	103	
Jan Smit	Pretoria	257	
Cliff Turk	Cape Town	25	
Peter Wedepohl	Somerset West	236	
Total Visual:		1390	
Pep:			2003

☆

ASSA Endowment Trust Report for 2005

Cliff Turk (Secretary to Trustees)

The Trust capital has grown to over R30 000 during the year and a further R70 000 distributable reserve brings total assets up to over R100 000 for the first time.

This provides the Trust with a reasonable income in spite of falling interest rates and we are able to consider requests for assistance from the Society, Centres or individuals. The only provisos are that the expenditure must be for the benefit of astronomy and that no individual may profit from the funds. One such project

is under discussion at present and others are expected shortly.

During the year, the Trust's holding of ABSA Bank shares was disposed of under the offer made by Barclays Bank and we are hoping we will not be hit by Capital Gains tax, especially as we are exempt from income tax.

The Trust continues to support ASSA with an annual grant and would like to hear of additional projects which it can support. ☆

ASSA Scholarship Report for 2005

Maciej Soltynski (Convenor, ASSA Scholarship Committee)

The ASSA Scholarship was established in 2000 to encourage the study of Astronomy at any Southern African university at the 2nd and 3rd year level. For 2005 the Scholarship was awarded to Renée Holzek, a final year B.Sc student at the University of Pretoria. Her subjects for 2005 included Astronomy modules from UNISA up to the final (third) year level. At the end of 2005 Renée

obtained her B.Sc. with distinction from the University of Pretoria. She advised that she will be undertaking a B.Sc. (Hons) in Astrophysics at the University of Cape Town in 2006.

Andrew Gray, Dr Abe Mahomed and Prof Derck Smits are thanked for their valued inputs on Scholarship matters during 2005. ☆

ASSA Financial Report for 2005

Cliff Turk (Hon. Treasurer)

The Society's finances are in a very good state, probably the best at any time during its 84 years existence. There are still a few problem areas which cost us money, but the majority have been blocked and the main cash drains are a thing of the past.

During the last few years the Society has been able to set aside R40 000 for its Scholarship Fund and has added to this since the end of the reporting year. In spite of this our liquidity is constantly improving which will enable us to undertake a number of additional projects.

Unfortunately, the annual accounts to 30 June 2005 have not yet been published. There were a number of mi-

nor misleading items in the document prepared by the auditors and I refused to sign it as correct. I reported this to Council and the document has been referred back to the Auditor for correction. Publication will take place as soon as possible.

During the first half of the 2005/2006 financial year, the trend set over the past three years has continued and we have been able to provide finance for projects being run by Centres. Section Directors and Centres are welcome to approach the Society for support for specific projects and all will receive consideration.

Financially, the way ahead looks good. ☆