

Minutes of the ASSA AGM, Saturday, 26 July 2008

The Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Astronomical Society of Southern Africa was held on Saturday, 26 July 2008 at the Johannesburg Planetarium, hosted by the Johannesburg Centre.

1. Welcome

The meeting was opened by Robert Groess, Chairman of the Johannesburg Centre who introduced our current president, Magda Streicher.

2. Present

There were 17 ASSA members present and three non-members.

3. Apologies

Apologies were received from Dudley Field, Peter Martinez, Cliff Turk, Tim Cooper, Case Rijdsdijk, Auke Slotegraaf, Jacques van Delft, Maciej Soltynski, Michael Poll, Chris de Coning, Lia Labuschagne, Kevin Govender and Jannie Smits.

Cliff Turk has not been well and members were made aware of this by Cliff and reminded again at the AGM by the Secretary. For this reason Cliff was not able to submit his reports, but they will be submitted for publication in *MNASSA*.

4. Ratify Previous Minutes

The minutes of the AGM of the Wednesday 25 July 2007 as published in *MNASSA* were ratified by Magda Streicher. No corrections were required.

5. Report on Council

Laurie Simone read the Council report which will be submitted for publication in *MNASSA*.

6. Reports of Observing Section Directors

A) Comet & Meteor Section – Report read by Brian Fraser

B) Deep Sky Section – Report read by Laurie Simone

C) Double Star Section – Report read by Atze Herder

D) Imaging Section – Report read by Oleg Toumilovitch

E) Occultation Sections – Report read by Brian Fraser

F) Solar Section – Report read by Laurie Simone

G) Variable Stars – Report read by Chris Middleton

Achievement Awards were presented by the Directors of their sections after reading out their reports. A separate list will be circulated and published of the recipients.

All the above reports will be submitted for publication in *MNASSA*.

7. Reports of other Sections

A) Dark Sky Section – Refer to notes under item 3 “Apologies”

B) Education and Public Communication – Report read by Laurie Simone

C) Historical Section – Report read by Robert Groess

All the above reports will be submitted for publication in *MNASSA*.



While vote counting at this year's AGM was underway, Magda Streicher, Robert Groess, Atze Herder and Laurie Simone could relax for a moment. Picture: Oleg Toumilovitch

8. Financial Report

Refer to notes under item 3 "Apologies"

9. ASSA Scholarship Report

The report was read by Laurie Simone and will be submitted for publication in *MNASSA*.

10. ASSA Endowment Trust Report

Refer to notes under item 3 "Apologies"

11. Election of Auditor

Ronnie Glass was nominated as auditor by Brian Fraser and seconded by Atze Herder.

12. Election of Office Bearers

Lerika Cross prepared the ballot papers to vote to determine Vice Presidents and Council Members. This was necessary as the constitution only allows three Vice Presidents and four were nominated, and four Council Members and seven were nominated. We had 17 ASSA Members present and eligible to vote. The majority of votes received were as follows; Magda Streicher 17, Michael Poll 16 and Matie Hoffman 13 votes. All three were duly elected as Vice Presidents.

The majority of votes for Council Members were as follows; Case Rijdsdijk 14, Lerika Cross 13, Kevin Govender 10 and Pat Booth 9 votes. All four were duly elected.

The remaining nominations on Council were determined prior to the AGM. The final list of Council Nominees will be circulated by the Secretary and published in *MNASSA*.

After the break Magda Streicher introduced Peter Martinez, the New President, on ASSA Council by reading out a short resumé submitted by Peter.

Dr Martinez is a senior astronomer at the South African Astronomical Observatory in Cape Town. He holds a PhD in astrophysics from the University of Cape Town and is also an alumnus of the International Space University in Strasbourg. Dr Martinez's research area is aster seismology, the study of the oscillations of stars to probe their internal properties and evolution. In recent years he has worked with various government Departments and agencies on the development of the future South African space programme. Dr Martinez deeply regrets not being able to be here this evening owing to other commitments, but looks forward to visiting the Centres of the ASSA and meeting with members in the coming year. He wishes all members present a very successful and productive AGM and looks forward to working with the newly elected Council and the ASSA Centres.

13. **Awards**

Please refer to the notes under item 6.

14. **Any other business**

There was no other business.

15. **The next Council meeting**

The next Council meeting will be on Tuesday, 26 August 2008.

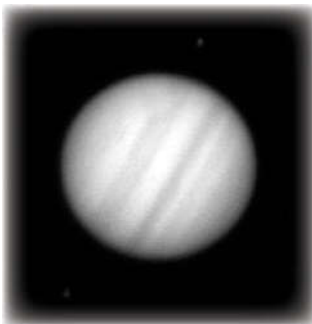
16. **Presidential Address**

Past President, Magda Streicher gave a Power Point presentation.

17. **Closing**

Magda Streicher then handed over to Robert Groess to close the meeting.

Robert thanked the ASSA Council for the privilege of holding the AGM in Johannesburg with the Johannesburg Centre as host and thanked all members and non-members for attending. ☆



After the formal part of the AGM, attendees were treated with viewing through the 26-inch Innes refractor. It was Magda's first ever visit to the Johannesburg Observatory. Jupiter offered a good view of its Great Red Spot, closely flanked by two moons, Europa and Io. Pictures: Oleg Toumilovitch

Report on Council 2007/2008

Laurie Simone, ASSA Secretary

Introduction

It gives me great pleasure to report on Council for this last year. It has been a positive year throughout, with our President Magda Streicher setting the example. Testimony of this is the correspondence received from Dudley Field submitted at the last Council meeting, and I quote; "I am sure that on behalf of Council, I want to congratulate our President, Magda, for a wonderful year. Magda you are really going to be a hard act to follow! It is a long time since a President has been so committed, so giving of their time. Thank you!"

Magda attended most Council meetings in Cape Town, yet her excursions did not stop there. In November you will have found her visiting the Garden Route Centre, February in Durban to offer assistance with the Symposium, the Louis Trichardt Club in April, and Boyden in May and the OOG in June. She was also at numerous game parks to promote ASSA's publication of the *Sky Guide*. As one member aptly put it, this was the Magda Road Show, but she is too late for the position of CEO at Eskom as they have just appointed Bobby Godsell.

Most of the observing is done beyond the Western Cape and when Magda suggested that the AGM be held in Johannesburg I and later Council had no hesitation of stamping their approval. Council would

like to thank Lerika Cross and Brian Fraser from the Johannesburg Centre for all their hard work to make this event possible.

Terms of Reference (T.O.R.)

ASSA is about Astronomy and the one exercise that is at the heart of Astronomy and the most important item in this report is manuals for observers. We have at this stage a T.O.R. drawn up by Lerika Cross under the watchful eye of Auke Slotegraaf. The T.O.R. has been approved by Council and is presently a work in progress. This exercise has to reach a satisfactory conclusion no matter how long it takes, sooner rather than later. For this to happen we appeal to all the observing Section Directors to co-operate with Lerika to make this possible. The T.O.R. clearly indicates what directions one can take once these manuals are published. If you do not have a copy, please contact your secretary or Lerika Cross. Council would like to thank Lerika and Auke, the originators of the TOR, and all ASSA members who made a contribution.

ASSA Web Site / Astronomy Starter Pack (ASP)

How Gerrit Penning, the originator of the Astronomy Starter Pack, also finds the time to keep the ASSA site updated and still go out there to earn a living is remarkable. Council would like to thank Gerrit for his efforts. As at the financial year-end of 29 February 2008, 166 CD's have been

sold. The ASP is a great accompaniment to *Sky Guide* and Council recommends that the Centre representatives encourage their members to purchase the set.

The ASSA web site is an excellent vehicle for promoting ASSA. There have been numerous enquiries from overseas, mostly for information and in some cases participation. A case in point is the Parallax Project with Milan University. This project is completed and we anticipate publication of an article in *MNASSA* in the near future.

The site was also the source for arranging participants for a live TV Show, *African View*, shown on the 18 March on DSTV. The programme was about meteors and impact craters. Magda Streicher, Tim Cooper and Case Rijdsdijk all had a hand in getting Trevor Gould and Prof Marian Tredoux on the programme, together with Prof Roger Gibson, head of the Impact Cratering Research Group from the University of the Witwatersrand Geosciences and Prof W.U. Reimold, former head of the same research group.

The ASSA web site is our link to the rest of the world and creates awareness that astronomy is alive and well in South Africa. The trick to increase the number of viewers to the site is to reply to correspondence promptly. On numerous occasions we have been thanked for a prompt response. This is not always possible and we should give some thought to appointing an astronomer to respond to astronomical enquiries,

especially if it promises participation in projects as we have done with Milan in Italy. It will also reduce pressure on Gerrit Penning our Web Master and the Secretary who would only answer queries of a secretarial nature.

I have laboured at length about the ASSA web site as I believe it is a vital function of ASSA and we should always be looking to enhance and upgrade the site. Centre members should be encouraged to visit the site as it may encourage them to apply for membership. For a small subscription fee you get 6 issues of *MNASSA* and the *Sky Guide*. This alone makes it worth while. In the future the ASP could be included, obviously at an extra cost. The Observer Manuals could also be included in the mix.

The 8th ASSA Symposium 2008, Durban

Recent correspondence received from Magda Streicher declares that the Symposium was a success.

Asteroids – South Africa and Poland

Asteroids have been added to Tim Cooper's portfolio. He will be working in conjunction with Anna Marciniak in Poland. The original source for this participation is Maciej Soltynski. Tim has already had several contacts with Anna and they have agreed on a way forward.

Imaging Section

This is a post that was vacant for a few

years and Council would like to thank Oleg Toumilovitch for taking up the position. Reports are that this section has taken off well. Oleg also initiated the photo competition of the lunar eclipse which was done through the ASSA web site.

Short Notes

Magda has also been in contact with the different TV and Radio stations and we can anticipate seeing and hearing more about astronomy in South Africa on 50/50 and RSG radio, amongst others. Magda is also working closely with amateur astronomers in Australia. Magda reports that for this year South Africa leads the world on reported observations of variable stars.

Last, but not least, is to encourage the promotion of *Sky Guide* with the Game Parks.

ASSA and the Constitution

The *Way Forward* as initiated by Chris de Coning took a back seat this year, yet we have gone forward. Chris's intentions were good and they are still valid, however change can only be accomplished if changes are made to the constitution. The ASSA constitution, or any constitution for that matter, is the back-bone of any society or organization and change is not to be taken lightly. The one change that should be made as soon as possible is to legalise email nominations. Other possible changes are to open the way for additional Council Members. Do we want three Vice Presidents? Is one year enough for one president?

We can agree that the one criterion that a President must have is that he or she has to be an astronomer, amateur or professional. However, the President is also required to drive the Association. If not, the Secretary will find himself in the uncomfortable position of having to assume leadership. Your present Secretary is not an astronomer. A Secretary does not have to be. This is an administrative function and it does take up considerable time. Senior members of Council, past and present, should give serious thought to what is been reported here, and that possibly the roles of President, Vice Presidents and Secretary should be re-defined. Again this aims at changes to the constitution. Today's technology is also to be considered where the speed of change is phenomenal. We need to adapt.

Conclusion

It has been a pleasure as Secretary to work with Magda. During my short tenure as Secretary, I honestly believe that we can grow the Association. This report reflects some of the advancements we have made and there is no reason why we cannot move forward from here. We need younger members, yet we also need senior members for guidance. Once again, and I believe I also speak for Council, we would like Centre Representatives to encourage their members to join ASSA.

Last but not least, on behalf of Council, we would like to thank all members of ASSA who have made a contribution, however big or small, to make this year a successful one. ☆

2008/9 Office Bearers

ASSA Council Members for 2008/9

Title	Member elected	Email Address
President	Peter Martinez	peter@saa.ac.za
Vice President	Magda Streicher	magda@pixie.co.za
Vice President	Michael Poll	pollmnj@icon.co.za
Vice President	Matie Hoffman	hoffmamj.sci@ufs.ac.za
Treasurer	Cliff Turk	cliffturk@absamail.co.za
Business Manager	Cliff Turk	cliffturk@absamail.co.za
Membership Secretary	Dudley field	dudley.f@absamail.co.za
Convener, Scholarships	Maciej Soltynski	Maciej@telkomsa.net
Secretary	Laurie Simone	picodot@mweb.co.za
Council Member	Case Rijdsdijk	particles@mweb.co.za
Council Member	Pat Booth	PBOOTH@sli.wcape.gov.za
Council Member	Kevin Govender	kg@saa.ac.za
Council Member	Lerika Cross	lerika@icon.co.za

ASSA Specific Designations 2008/9

Position	Member elected	Email Address
Editor <i>MNASSA</i>	Willie Koorts	mnassa@saa.ac.za
Webmaster	Gerrit Penning	gpenning@webmail.co.za
<i>Sky Guide, Africa South</i>	Anthony Jones	abjones@iafrica.com

ASSA Section Directors 2008/9

Section	Member elected	Email Address
Comet, Meteor & Asteroids	Tim Cooper	tpcoope@mweb.co.za
Dark Sky	Cliff Turk	cliffturk@absamail.co.za
Deep-sky	Auke Slotegraaf	auke@psychohistorian.org
Double Star	Atze Herder	awherder@wol.co.za
Solar	Jaques van Delft	jvdelft@vodamail.co.za
Occultation	Brian Fraser	fraserb@intekom.co.za
Variable Star	Chris Middleton	wbrooke@netactive.co.za
Imaging	Oleg Toumilovitch	oleg@foton.co.za
Education & Public Communication	Case Rijdsdijk	particles@mweb.co.za
Historical	Chris de Coning	siriusa@absamail.co.za

ASSA Centre Representatives 2008/9

Centre	Member elected	Email Address
Cape Centre	Lia Labuschagne	lee@thenewradiant.com
Garden Route Centre	Case Rijdsdijk	particles@mweb.co.za
Durban Centre	Peter Cramb	peterc@astronomydurban.co.za
Midlands Centre	Frikkie de Bruyn	debruyn1@telkomsa.net
Bloemfontein Centre	Chris de Coning	siriusa@absamail.co.za
Pretoria Centre	Michael Poll	pollmj@icon.ca.za
Johannesburg Centre	Robert Groess	groess@gmail.com



Report of the Comet and Meteor Section

TP Cooper, Director

Table 1. Summary of observed meteor showers

Observer (no. of showers observed)	Showers Observed and duration (hours)	Total Time (h)
Dudley Field (3)	Orionids (5.0), Leonids (2.8), Geminids (7.0)	14.8
Tim Cooper (4)	Pi Puppids (2.8), eta Aquarids (7.2) Taurids (2.0), Leonids (1.0)	13.0
Koos van Zyl (1)	Orionids (8.4)	8.4
Tony Jones (1)	Geminids (6.9)	6.9
Carol Botha (1)	Geminids (6.8)	6.8
Magda Streicher (2)	April Lyrids (3.8), Perseids (1.6)	5.4
Auke Slotegraaf (1)	Geminids (5.4)	5.4
Karen Koch (1)	Geminids (4.1)	4.1
Wayne Mitchell (2)	Orionids (2.1), Leonids (2.0)	4.1
Michael Poll (2)	Orionids (2.0), Leonids (1.6)	3.6
Cliff Turk (2)	Delta Aquarids 2006 (2.0), Geminids 2006 (1.2)	3.2
Kos Coronaios (1)	April Lyrids (1.8)	1.8
Fiona Hobson (1)	Geminids (1.2)	1.2
Total		78.7

Notes on observed meteor showers
Magda Streicher and Kos Coronaios observed the **April Lyrids** from their northerly vantage in Limpopo. Magda observed best rates on the morning of April 22, seeing 8 Lyrids in 2.3 hours under LM=5.9. Tim Cooper observed

the **pi Puppids** despite poor conditions and a first quarter moon. During periods when cloud allowed observation the shower was found to be inactive. Cloud severely hampered observations of the **eta Aquarids**, the Director the only observer logging 7.2 hours with rather low rates of

only 8/hr on the morning of May 6 with LM=5.2. Koos van Zyl and Dudley Field managed some useful observations of the **Orionids** from the Cape, and Michael Poll and Wayne Mitchell from cloud affected Gauteng. Highest rates were observed by Koos with 18 Orionids in 0.75 hrs on the morning of October 21 with LM=5.6. Weather conditions only permitted four observers 7.4 hours observation of the **Leonids**. Predicted maximum was during daylight hours for South Africa and the Director observed only 3 Leonids in 1 hour on the morning of November 19 under poor conditions of LM=5.0. Conditions in 2007 were particularly favourable moon-wise for the **Geminids**. No observations were possible from Gauteng or Limpopo due to inclement weather, but Cape observers enjoyed clear skies, where Carol Botha, Karen Koch, Tony Jones, Dudley Field and Auke Slotegraaf logged 30 hrs observations between them. Carol Botha observed highest rates of 24 Geminids/hr in the early morning of December 14 with LM=5.2.

Summary of observed fireballs

2007 saw a total of 16 fireball reports. The full details will be submitted for publication in *MNASSA* as a separate article.

Summary of observed comets

Six comets were observed by nine observers during 2007, summarised in the table below.

Notes on specific comets observed

The highlight of 2007 occurred early in the year, with the surprise brightness of comet C/2006 P1 **McNaught**, peaking at about magnitude -5 and visible in daylight. The results of ASSA observations were summarised in *MNASSA*. Comet C/2007 E1 **Garradd** was a single observation of magnitude 12 by Theo Smith. Comet C/2007 E2 **Lovejoy** peaked at magnitude 8.3 in April. Comet C/2007 F1 **LONEOS** was only observed by Simon Walsh and Tim Cooper, brightest in November at magnitude 6.8. Comet 17P **Holmes**

ICQ Code	C/2006 P1	C/2007 E1	C/2007 E2	C/2007 F1	8P	17P
COO02	•		•	•		•
SMI08	•	•	•			
WAL	•			•		•
STR03	•		•			
BEG01					•	•
VAN15	•		•			
MITxx						•
VANxx						•
VERxx						•

Key to observers in Table:

BEG01 = Mike Begbie COO02 = Tim Cooper VERxx = Vermeulen
 MITxx = Wayne Mitchell SMI08 = Theo Smith WAL = Simon Walsh
 STR03 = Magda Streicher VAN15 = Koos van Zyl VANxx = Andrie van der Linde

brightened to magnitude 2.5 later in the year following an outburst and comet 8P **Tuttle** reached magnitude 6. A few observations of both comets were made from South Africa, but most observa-

tions came from Mike Begbie shortly after his move to the UK.

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

Report of the Deep-sky Observing Section

Auke Slotegraaf, Director

It is a pleasure to thank the following individuals for their contributions to the section in the year under review: Magda Streicher, Carol Botha, Richard Ford and Gary Lillis. Magda continues to be a stalwart of the Section and her strong, independent work is admirable. Long may she continue to plumb the depths of the deep-sky! Carol, Richard and Gary are relatively new observers and the quality of their work is such that they received Merit Awards for their contributions.

More than 378 copies of the Section's observing tutorial, *Deepsky Observer's Companion*, have been downloaded from the Director's website (with an unknown number downloaded from the ASSA website).

The Observing Checklist was revised and formed the basis of a successful deep-sky workshop presented by the director at ScopeX in Johannesburg. Following the workshop, Magda presented a well-received video-illustrated talk on sketching techniques.

Work continued throughout the year to digitize old deep-sky publications for inclusion in the section's online database. Most of the work consisted of making digital images of pre-photographic era sketches of deep-sky objects, manipulating the images and annotating them. Forty-three such publications were digitized at high resolution. Several hundred photographic negatives, taken with the Radcliffe telescope from 1948 to 1950, were also digitized and referenced.

In the year ahead, it's hoped that all available historical sketches will be digitized and that the collection of old, rare deep-sky related books will be electronically captured. This material can then be incorporated into the database and made freely available for reference. Members interested in helping with this archiving task should contact the director, who will be more than keen to make use of their kind offer. ☆

Report of the Double Star Section

Atze W. Herder, Director

I have been appointed new director of the Double Star Section in July 2007. Therefore only the second half of 2007 can be reported on. During this time only one observation was received – from Magda Streicher. For personal reasons this Section did not receive a lot of attention. During 2007 little support was shown from the ASSA members.

We believe that valuable observations of double stars can still be done, particularly being in the southern hemisphere. The shortage of interest could be attributed to a lack of an observation manual. It is believed that many southern double stars are still unconfirmed and perhaps we could do something about them. ☆

Report of the Education and Public Communication Section

Case Rijdsdijk, Director

It is with regret that I still have to report that, despite many requests, I have still only had a response from the Cape, Johannesburg and Garden Route Centres. I am sure that all the other Centres are also busy speaking to schools and the general public in addition to assorted other activities. I still believe it is important to collect this information as it is well known that, should ASSA require funding from any agency (eg. for ScopeX and the director's sponsored trip to Egypt), the first thing that agency will ask for is evidence to support such an application. All that I require is a short e-mail with the date, place, audience, numbers and topic. Also notice of any articles published in the popular press or scientific journals would be appreciated. I hope the 2009 report will reflect a better report – it is after all the International Year of Astronomy (IYA)!

Having said that, there have been a number of highlights and I am sure that many of

these will be repeated and added to next year.

The Johannesburg Centre again organized, arguably their most successful, ScopeX which was generously supported by South African Agency for Science and Technology Advancement (SAASTA). Attendance figures were up and as usual there was a good list of speakers with all talks very well attended. One of the highlights was the “Camera Obscura” and a detailed report of this, with sketches and images, could be submitted to *MNASSA*. Many thanks to Lerika Cross and other centre members. In addition to this, this Centre has done many other outreach activities.

The Cape Centre has again been active, particularly with the SAAO open nights and several members have spoken at schools and at the MTN Science Centre, with whom good relations continue. The

Cederberg Observatory has held open nights every Saturday (except full Moon nights!) and these have been well attended.

Another highlight this year was the invitation by the University of Milan for ASSA to participate in a joint effort in measuring the parallax of Mars and the Moon. Unfortunately, the weather was not very supportive! Efforts at Boyden in Bloemfontein with the help of Dr Matie Hoffman (UFS) and Lucas Ferreira (Garden Route Centre, GRASSA) were rained or clouded out, but Lucas persevered and on his return to the Garden Route was successful: the weather in Italy and SA was good and appropriate simultaneous images taken. The results have been written up in Italy, checked in SA, and they have been submitted to the *European Journal of Physics*. A report will be submitted to *MNASSA* in due course.

GRASSA has started with an outreach programme, with Lucas Ferreira hosting an open night in the National Park on World Earth Day, the director starting an outreach programme in association with the National Parks Board and continues to work closely with the Western Cape Education department..

The Section continues to deliver many public talks around the country, publish regular articles in the popular press and gives weekly radio talks on SAFM and FMR. Several members attended the education workshop organized by Kevin Govender at the SAAO in preparation for IYA. In addition a schools curriculum in Astronomy has been drawn up in conjunction with the Square Kilometre Array, SKA. Finally the director was sponsored by the National Research Foundation, NRF, to represent ASSA at the first Middle East-Africa, Regional IAU Meeting (MEARIM) in Cairo. ☆

Report of the Occultation Section

Brian Fraser, Director

Two grazing occultations were attempted during the year in the Midvaal area. Neither of them was successful due to the weather and star visibility. Participants included Dave Blane, Kevin Pearce, Gary Els, Andre van der Walt and Brian Fraser.

Notices of minor planet occultation predictions were sent out to the regular observers but again no successful

hits were recorded. Observers taking part included Magda Streicher, Tim Cooper, Jannie Smit and Brian Fraser.

Once again we have used the predictions provided by Dr Eberhard Riedel for the grazing occultations and Steve Preston for the minor planet occultations. We greatly appreciate the predictions that these services provide. ☆

Report of the Historical Section

Chris de Coning, Director

During the past year (calendar year, 2007) the following has happened concerning the History of Astronomy.

Website

During 2007 the Website underwent a mayor change. Its presentation and layout was completely revised.

Archive

The complexity and scope of indexing the archive is enormous and will take a long time to accomplish. A space has been set aside in the McClean building at SAAO, Cape Town, for the archive. Initial categorising of documents has been done and they are being stored in special boxes recommended for this purpose.

Publications

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

- KS Schindler for “EC Slipher’s Mars Expeditions to South Africa” published

in *MNASSA* Vol. 65 nos 7 & 8, August 2007.

- IS Glass for “The Discovery of the nearest star” published in *MNASSA* Vol. 65 nos 11 & 12, December 2007.
- B Warner, *Cape Landscapes: Sir John Herschel’s sketches 1834 – 1838*. University of Cape Town Press, Cape Town, 2006 (released 2007)

Rescue of old photo’s

The SAAO needed room for a new computer system. It was decided to renovate the MRM (Multiple Refractor Mount) building, meaning that there was no more room for the plate store and its content of glass photographic plates. I wish to express my great gratitude for Ian Glass and Auke Slotegraaf who mounted a rescue mission, sorted through a mass of photographic plates and rescued those of historical and scientific value. Auke then photographed all the plates so we now have a digital record available. ☆

Report of the Solar Section

Jacques van Delft, Director

Solar observation and reporting in the *Solar Bulletin* continued during 2007. By the end of 2007 monthly observations of five observers were received. Presentations on solar observations were presented at the Science Unlimited expo in Pretoria

during March and in Pietermaritzburg during August. More than 2 000 school learners attended these presentations.

As the director of the Solar Section I received an invitation for an interview on

Radio Rosestad, together with Dr Matie Hoffman, on solar activities. This one hour radio talk was held during May 2007. For observing sunspots, 2007 was not an easy year as we are now at the minimum of the solar cycle so most of

the observations done were low to zero readings.

I would like to thank Council for the opportunity to serve in this position and I am looking forward to continuing in 2008. ☆

Report of the Imaging Section

O.R. Toumilovitch, Director

The past 12 months have been a good test period for the re-activated Imaging Section. Amongst the vast choice of activities and enthusiasm of interested members the Section has also identified the challenges and directions for improvement. In few words they are:

- The activities of the Section on the national level, such as Photographic competitions and Imaging a particular celestial event or an object, represent a very effective way of promoting the Astro-photography and astronomy in general, attracting new members for the society and assisting members interested in a specific field in establishing connections between themselves. The challenges which I have come across during such activities are normally associated with maintaining the website and preparing some form of a guiding document in time. These challenges are easily rectified when assistance from the other members is available. Good example is the Eclipsed Moon Awakening Photographic competition, which will be analysed later.
- The Southern African astro-photographers are very enthusiastic members of the society and are very persistent in overcoming technical challenges and achieving good results. What can be more rewarding for us than creating a wonderful and unique image of a celestial object and be able to share it with others! The Image Gallery on the Imaging Section's website has been established to provide a platform for displaying the outstanding work of our astro-photographers. From now on it will be regularly updated with new images. But these images may just remain rather as a work of art than carry an educational and scientific value, if they are not used for that. It is planned to establish an Image Database in conjunction with Image Gallery. The Image Database will have more technical information about each image and will be available to students, astro-presenters and all ASSA and its centres members. It can be distributed in to every Centre's library on a compact disk and updated yearly with the latest version. This will be an outgoing project without any time constrains.
- It is very difficult to imagine any observing section's activities without us-

ing astro-imaging tools today, but it is the fact, that various ASSA observing sections until today are concentrating on preserving the “classic” techniques and instruments for observing and measuring rather than adopting new tools to their section’s activities. I myself am a firm believer that it is of paramount importance for any astronomer, professional to be or an amateur, to learn and understand; first the usage of a mechanical telescope and only then progress to the latest state-of-the-art computerised instruments. It is sad to read a good article or a report which uses a reference image, “borrowed” from the internet, created by the top professionals in their field, when the image might be available from our own astro-photographers. There might be some excused and founded reasons of cause, but that’s the point. In most cases the image with good educational and scientific value is a result of joint effort between two or more people and that will be acknowledged in the final result. The astro-photographers are there for the observing sections, we just need to make a first step. You know what you need, we know how to do it and we have the equipment. It’s time to start moving!

- At this point of my report I’d like to suggest that ASSA National together with it’s Imaging Section approach the SAASTA, the organizer of the Science lens Competition to make an accent on astronomy in this year’s competition and to start work on the “ASSA Na-

tional Astro-photography Exhibition”. This will be a mobile exhibition and will be displayed over the IYA-2009 in various Centres around the country. Also, based on it, the national competition can be conducted for several various categories, where the votes will be submitted by centres members.

- The last, but not the least point of my introduction is astro-photography workshops and presentations. These are very important and should be conducted at the centres and clubs by members who volunteer themselves for this task and feel that they can share their knowledge and experience with others. I haven’t received any official reports of such workshops or it’s attendance, but was told, that there was a well attended workshop, organised by Hannes Pieterse of Bloemfontein Centre. From my personal experience I can assure you, that astro-photography workshops and presentations are always very well attended and increased interest in this field is positively reflected in every single event, conducted by the Imaging Section over the past year.

Here is the summary of the Section’s activities:

- The Imaging Section website, hosted by FOTON Optoelectronics, has been established and well visited every month by at least 500 people from all over the world, as per built-in stats analysing software. This is expected to increase once the gallery is fully operational.

- The “Eclipsed Moon Awakening” photo-competition has been successfully conducted and enjoyed a great support and participation from across the country. Over 40 images have been received as reports and competition entries. My special thanks to the supporting team who were there right from the first announcement to the judging (in no specific order): Pat Booth, Auke Slotegraaf, Gerrit Penning, Willie Koorts. For the early reports from their locations, my thanks to Kos Coronaios, Carol Botha, Magda Streicher, Willie Koorts, Auke Slotegraaf and to all those, who contributed by entering their fine work of astro-photography in to the competition. From all of us, our thanks to the ASSA council and all those who contributed prizes for this event.
- Imaging Section, with the support of the Johannesburg Centre, has conducted two astro-photography workshops. One at the Observatory, before the centre’s public viewing was attended by over 25 people, after the presentation everyone was given an opportunity to produce their first astro-image, using their own digital camera with a 100mm refractor and even with a 26-inch Innes refractor. Imagine their excitement!
- The second workshop was conducted at ScopeX as a part of this year’s new attraction – ASSA Section’s workshops. This was reportedly attended by 66 people.
- Over the period from December 2007 to January 2008, Kos Coronaios and myself participated in an attempt to reproduce the Cassini’s determination of the Astronomical Unit from observations of the trigonometric parallax of Mars-project, initiated by the Technical college of Aalborg in Denmark. Between Kos and myself 18 images were produced, a third of which was sent to Denmark. Though the stars position from our images could be measured to sub pixel precision, the images couldn’t be used due to other reasons. The images are planned to be published on the section’s website.
- The last year presented the astro-photographers with many interesting opportunities, some of the images were sent to the Imaging Section and will be displayed in the gallery. In addition to the work already mentioned the list of images includes: Comet 17P/Holmes, Asteroid Vesta, Comet C/2007 W1 (Boattini), Asteroid 146 Lucina, Various Deep-sky Images, Solar activity, Eclipses and Light pollution monitoring. Images of Mars, Saturn, Jupiter were produced using 26-inch Innes refractor at the Johannesburg Observatory.

The Imaging Section of ASSA is always open for suggestions and joint projects. We are waiting for your contributions in the form of interviews, stories and astronomy related images. ☆

Scholarships Report for 2007

Maciej Soltynski (Convenor, ASSA Scholarships 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 2007 the Scholarship was re-awarded to Wendy Williams, who held the Scholarship in 2006. At the end of 2007 Wendy received her BSc degree with distinction from UCT. She achieved distinctions in two third-year astrophysics modules (Stellar Astrophysics and Galactic & Extragalactic Astrophysics) and distinctions in two-third year advanced physics modules and the class medal in three of these modules. In 2008 she plans to study for her BSc (Hons) in astronomy at UCT in the National Astrophysics and Space Science Programme (NASSP).

South African Astronomical Observatory - Astronomical Society of South Africa Scholarships

The discussions with SAAO which were initiated and supported by Dr Peter Martinez in 2006 resulted in the establishment of initially one SAAO-ASSA Scholarship for 2007 with a value of R4 000. It is planned that this number of scholarships will be increased by one each year, up to a maximum of three (in 2009 and onwards). The Scholarships are financially supported by SAAO

and are administered by ASSA. The purpose of the SAAO-ASSA Scholarship is to encourage current or *intending* undergraduates (i.e. 1st, 2nd or 3rd year) studying for a BSc degree at any university in South Africa, who have a stated interest in astronomy, to prepare for furthering their interest. The Scholarship will be granted to holders in subsequent years, subject to satisfactory progress. Applicants must be resident in South Africa.

The first-ever award of the SAAO-ASSA Scholarship (for 2007) was made to Mpati Ramatsoku, a second year undergraduate astrophysics student at the University of Cape Town, studying for her BSc degree. Of the five courses she undertook, Mpati achieved a distinction for the second year course, Classical & Quantum Mechanics. She plans to continue with her studies in 2008.

Expression of appreciation

Andrew Gray, Dr Abe Mahomed and Kevin Govander (SAAO) are thanked for their valued inputs in evaluating Scholarship candidates during 2007. Thanks also go to Cliff Turk for dealing with the financial administration of the Scholarships and to the university lecturers who supplied assessments of candidates. ☆

Treasurer's Report for 2007

Cliff Turk

Total assets are now well over R250 000 (quarter million) which includes the value of the Scholarship fund, the Symposium Fund and funds held for Sections.

Sales of *Sky Guide* for 2008 will be approximately R125 000, plus another US \$125. This is our main money source. Online sales of publications arranged by Maciej Soltynski are showing an income of over R4 000 per year and are increasing. At the same time normal subscriptions to *MNASSA* have also shown

a small gain during the past 6 months and it is hoped this will continue.

We are now in a position that at the end of the financial year we have enough funds to be able to meet our commitments for the whole of the following year, which is a nice comfortable situation. This is especially pleasing when we remember that as recently as 1999 and 2000 we had to borrow several thousand Rands each from three of our members to avoid being unable to meet our liabilities at the financial year end. ☆

ASSA Awards for 2007/2008

ASSA and its sections issue rewards to members who actively partake and submit their observations. These rewards will hopefully encourage recipients to continue their good work but also those who have made casual observations but did not send them in or others who are still considering it but have not yet got so far as actually doing some observing.

There were no nominations in the Double Star, Occultation and Solar Sections.

Comet and meteor Section (Director, Tim Cooper)

General awards to:

Kos Coronaios – for observations of the alpha Scorpiid and April Lyrid meteor showers, and comets C/2006 P1 and C/2007 E2

Koos van Zyl – for observations of the Orionids and alpha Crucids and comets C/2006 P1 and C/2007 E2

Andrie van der Linde – for observations of comets C/2006 A1 and 17P

Mike Begbie – for observations of comets 8P and 17P

Wayne Mitchell – for comets C/2006 P1, 17P and 73P, and the Orionids and Leonids

Magda Streicher – for comets C/2006 A1, C/2007 E2, 4P and 73P, and the April Lyrids, Perseids and eta Aquarids

Mary Fanner – for observations of the eta Aquarid and Geminid meteor showers and pho-

tos of comet C/2006 P1

Dudley Field – for observations of the Orionids, Geminids, Leonids, alpha Crucids and eta Aquarids

Tony Jones – for observations of the Geminids

Carol Botha – for observations of the Geminids

Karen Koch – for observations of the Geminids and alpha Crucids

Michael Poll – for observations of the Orionids and Leonids

Auke Slotegraaf – for observations of the Geminids

Theo Smith – for observations of comets C/2006 P1, C/2007 E1 and C/2007 E2

Directors award to:

Simon Walsh – for his excellent set of images of comets C/2006 P1 McNaught, C/2007 E2 Lovejoy and 17P Holmes.

Deep-sky Section (Director, Auke Slotegraaf)

The General Observer’s Certificate is awarded to members reporting observations made during at least three observing sessions. Recipients were:

Richard Ford – for continued observations throughout the year

Carol Botha – for continued observations throughout the year

Gary Lillis – for continued observations throughout the year

Education and Public Communication Section (Director, Case Rijdsdijk)

Lucas Ferreira – for significant contributions to an international collaboration to determine the parallax of Mars and the Moon

Berto Monard – for his outstanding contribution to astronomy with his Supernova search programme.

Lerika Cross – for her outstanding contributions to ScopeX, thereby promoting astronomy and space science, not only within ASSA, but also to the general public.

Imaging Section (Director, Oleg Toumilovitch)

Auke Slotegraaf – for his contribution towards promoting of amateur astronomy through astro-photography in 2007 on his website.

Kos Coronaios – for valuable contributions to the Imaging Section of ASSA in the field of astro-photography.

Percy Amoils – for achievements in the field of imaging deep-sky objects and for providing ASSA and it’s members with outstanding work in astro-photography.

Variable Star Section (Director, Christopher Middleton)

David Blane (BLD) – 202 visual. Brian Fraser (FBN) – 62 PEP.

Tim Cooper (COM) – 2114 visual. Percy Jacobs (JPM) – 7 visual.

Win Jones (JRW) – 396
 Michael Poll (PMO) – 115 visual.
 Tom Lloyd-Evans (LTE) – 789 visual.
 Berto Monard – timeseries photometry (part or full night) on cataclysmic variables (CVs).
 Peter Wedepohl (WPT) – 98 visual.
 Jan Smit (SJX) – 5 visual.

Special Awards of Merit

Christopher Middleton – for the field of study in W Ursae Majoris and cataclysmic variable stars, AAVSO states him as Top Observer, list in thousands of numbers.
 Brian Fraser – in recognition of his unconditional and dedicated contributions and observations of occultations over many years. ☆

Eighth Biennial ASSA Symposium: Durban 2008
 Mike Reid (Chairman, Organising Committee)

It is with a sense of great pleasure that I can report on the 2008 Biennial ASSA Symposium, which was held in Durban on 7-9 August, hosted jointly by the Durban and Midlands ASSA Centres. The venue was the Durban Country Club which, in spite of its as-yet-incomplete refurbishment project, was a delightful haven, providing good food, fantastic views and a very comfortable suite of rooms in which to explore and absorb the theme of the Symposium: *The Interaction between Astronomy and Cosmology*.

The proceedings were opened by the outgoing ASSA President, Mrs Magda Streicher, followed by the first keynote address. This was by Prof Phil Charles (Director of the SAAO) on the history of SALT since its inauguration. In all a total of 24 papers were presented, ranging through amateur and professional subjects, from an amusing account of



(Above) The first symposium delegates to arrive on Thursday, 7 August, were welcomed by Mike Reid (Symposium Chairman), Roger Bond (Durban Centre Chairman), Nigel Wakefield, Wayne Hutcheon and Ken Pullock. Keynote addresses were given by Prof Phil Charles, Director of SAAO (bottom, left) and Prof George Ellis, University of Cape Town (bottom, right). Pictures: P. Cramb

