

ASSA Johannesburg

AGM and Monthly Meeting

8 July 2026 at 19:00

Zoom meeting + Observatory



Committee for 2025-2026

Chairperson – John Lindsay-Smith

Vice Chairman – Cornel Smit

Treasurer – Alison Coulter

Secretary – Daeva Stafford

Instrumentation and Librarian – Frans van Nieuwkerk

IT – Andy Overbeek

Website – Alison Coulter

Comms – Michelle Freeman

Membership – Adam and Shereen

Public Liaison – Carmel Ives

Voting Members – Rajeev Gopal, Etsuo Takayanagi

Agenda

- Welcome
- Chairman's Report
- Financial Report
- Membership
- Committee for 2026 – 2027

Welcome

A very warm welcome to everyone, ASSA JHB members + members of ASSA National and thank you for attending our Annual General Meeting.

Chairman's Report

We again had some excellent speakers this year.

August	Javeria Makda	Vera Rubin Observatory: How we got here and where we will go
September	Ramana Athrea	Radio sources in the nuclei of galaxies
October	John Lindsay-Smith	Solar system astrophotography basics
November	John Lindsay-Smith & Alison Coulter	The history of the Jacobs and Papadopolous Domes and Light monitoring study - an overview
January	Shaun Overmeyer	Dark skies no matter where you are
February	Johan Smit	Telescopes
March	Carmel Ives	Asterisms and Orion
April		Planetarium
May	Clyde Foster	The planets up close and personal- an amateur astronomer's journey into pro-am collaboration in planetary science
June	Moumita Aich (June 9)	HIRAX

With so many exciting things happening in the field of Astronomy we had some fabulous speakers this year, ranging from Professional Academics to avid Amateurs, near and far, we loved hearing from everyone.

In August 2025 Javeria Makda, a PHD candidate at Wits spoke about the Vera Rubin Observatory: How we got here and where we will go.

September 2025 Professor Ramana Athrea (from the Indian Institute of Science Education and Research spoke on the topic of Radio sources in the nuclei of galaxies. Thank you Rajeev for organising this for us all the way from India.

John Lindsay-Smith presented in October 25 on Solar system astrophotography basics

In November 2025, John Lindsay-Smith presented a lovely history of the Jacobs and Papadopolous Domes and Alison Coulter gave us an overview on her Light monitoring study.

At the January 2026 meeting, Shaun Overmeyer presented a talk on Dark skies no matter where you are

After a long hiatus we heard from the fabulous Johan Smit on telescope basics in February 2026 . We definitely need to hear a talk from Johan more often.

In March 2026 Carmel Ives spoke about Asterisms with a focus on Orion

In April 2026 we were thoroughly spoilt with an invitation to the Anglo American Digital Dome by Prof Moumita Aich and Constant Volschenk

Clyde Foster spoke in May 2026 about the planets up close and personal- an amateur astronomers journey into pro-am collaboration in planetary science

We finished the year in June 2026 with a standing ovation for Moumita Aich who spoke so eloquently on Hubble Tension - one of the biggest mysteries in modern cosmology.

We continue to present “Whats up in the Sky” every month. This is mainly aimed at helping less experienced observers who do not have a go-to telescope to locate interesting objects to view.

Adam Gardee has again been presenting the “Whats in the News” section at the meetings every month – thank you Adam.

This has again been a challenging year in terms of holding end of month members’ star parties. The continuous wet and cloudy weather over a long period from around September to May has forced us to cancel most planned star parties. We managed a clear night at the end of August, but it was a last minute decision and attendance was poor. A star party which was held on 30th May was well attended.

In April the Wits Digital Dome offered to give us a show in lieu of our regular monthly meeting. This was most enjoyable and we again extend our thanks to Moumita Aich and Constand Volschenk for giving us this opportunity.

On the 29th May we hosted a star party for the 1st Kengray Scouts and Cubs. The evening was well attended and we focused mainly on identifying some major constellations and on navigating with the aid of the night sky.

The ASSA/ESSA star party in Magaliesberg takes place on 18th July and we encourage our members to attend this very pleasant event.

In December a film crew shot scenes for an Old Mutual TV ad at the observatory. We again volunteered to supervise on site on behalf of SARAo to ensure that all assets on site were not damaged in any way. Thanks to Frans for putting in long hours of supervision. The film crew made a substantial donation to ASSA Jhb for our efforts.

Last but not least, a very big thank you from myself to the committee: Alison, Carmel, Daeva, Adam, Shereen, Frans, Michelle, Rajeev, Cornel, Gideon and Etsuo for all your support to help me ensure that we keep things going. I would not have been able to do any of this without you.

Instrumentation:

In addition to the normal maintenance on the domes and scopes:

1. In January we received from Marisja Kritzinger the donation of a Celestron CPC800 SCT plus a Celestron 2" E-Lux eyepiece kit. The hand controller was unserviceable – we have ordered and paid for a replacement, but are still waiting for it to arrive into stock at G&L Agencies. The scope was cleaned and has been fitted with a Celestron dew heater ring like the 11" scope.
2. At the end of January we had another donation from John Hilton, a 5" Celestron Maksutov on an alt-az mount, with the request that it be used for outreach activities.
3. In February we spent some time on the Innes telescope and got the red dot finder and finder scope aligned with the main scope, making it much easier to get objects of interest into view.
4. In June, Alain who had donated the CPC1100 donated a Celestron Nexstar 8 with some eyepieces and accessories and a pair of Celestron 25 x 100 binoculars.
5. SRAO have cleared some more of the remaining alien trees from the top of the hill. The northern horizon has been considerably opened up particularly for the Papadopolous dome.

Library:

Frans has continued putting in many hours to sort and catalogue the library, grouping the books into their proper classifications.

Our library is well stocked with books of a variety of subjects related to Astronomy. During the last two years more than 600 books were donated plus star maps. It is an ongoing project to place all the books in our bookcases and shelves and to place books of the same subjects together. During the work on the adjacent office building's roof it was difficult to enter the library. The area was full of building materials and rubble. Now the work is finished and access to the library is back to normal. Working with the books is slow because you spot too many interesting topics that keep you reading and studying. It is heaven for a book lover. Official members can borrow books to study and when finished or after a certain time bring them back. We are discussing the possibility of opening the library before monthly meetings to give access to our members.

We have still not managed to sort out the issue of no electrical supply to the library and storeroom.

Financial Report

In addition to sending out the Starguides and the monthly meeting email notifications, Alison Coulter has continued in the role of Treasurer from last year. Alison has also taken over running the monthly meetings. Thank you so much Alison, couldn't do this without you.

Summary of the financials for 2025/2026:

	Memberships	Expenses	Income	Total
July	R1,800.00	R200.06	R0.00	R1,599.94
August	R6,772.50	R197.30	R0.00	R6,575.20
September	R1,275.00	R197.30	R0.00	R1,177.70
October	R1,070.00	R7,197.30	R0.00	-R6,127.30
November	R1,042.50	R200.42	R3,650.00	R4,492.08
December	R187.50	R2,018.25	R10,172.70	R8,341.95
January	R650.00	R206.59	R0.00	R443.41
February	R675.70	R206.59	R0.00	R450.91
March	R534.50	R206.59	R0.00	R327.91
April	R2,455.00	R206.59	R0.00	R2,248.41
May	R665.00	R206.59	R0.00	R458.41
June	R3,525.00	R206.59	R350.00	R3,668.41
Opening Balance 1 July 2025			Closing Balance 30 June 2026	
R15,830.81			R39,487.84	
Investment Account				
R182,085.58				
Income:		R34,907.20		
Memberships		R20,634.50		
Donations / Merchandise		R14,272.70		

Total expenses for the year:	R11,250.17
Bank Fees	R2,442.22
Claims	R0.00
Skyguides	R7,000.00
Insurance	R1,807.95
Web Hosting	R0.00

ASSA JHB are very grateful for all the continued membership payments as well as the donations received during this financial year as the society greatly relies on these to continue with the maintenance of the equipment and buildings.

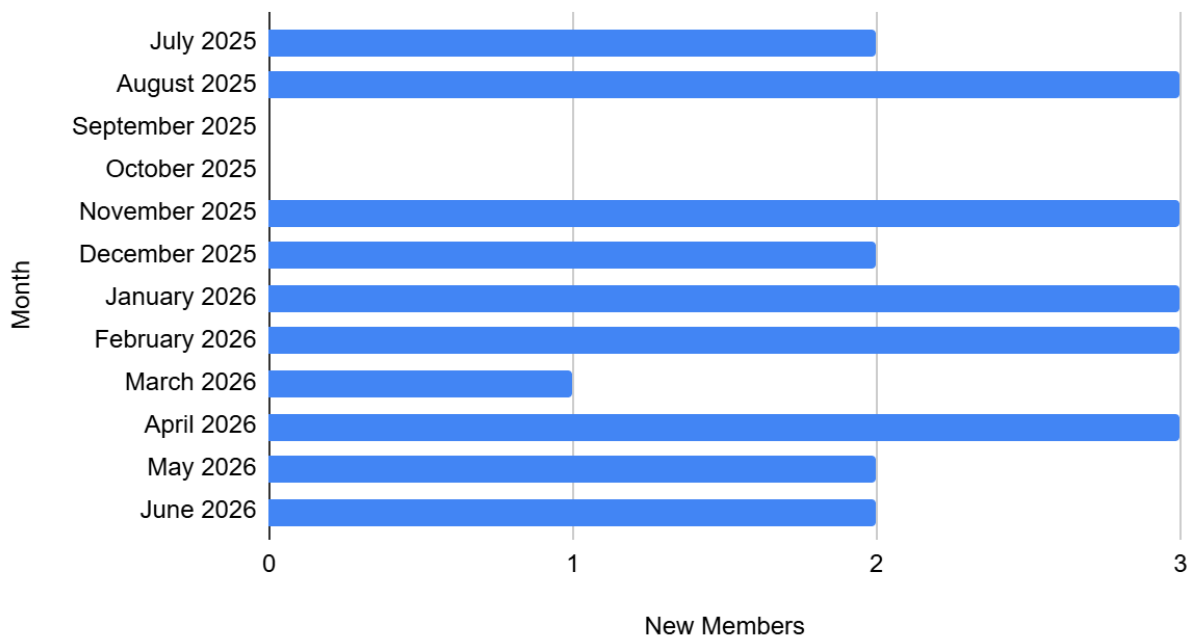
Membership

We have 77 members as of end June 2025 (this is down from the 86 members last year).

Total membership (including honorary) as at 30 June 2026 : **73**

Honorary members: 6

New Members vs. Month



Sadly in August another long standing member of ASA and ATM passed away. Rodney Hyman will be sorely missed.

Membership renewals are now due, from 1 July. We have decided to increase some membership fees slightly. We are also introducing a family membership option.

Fees are:

Normal Adult Member – R300. (R150 For Jan to July)

Children, Pensioners, Students – R150

Family Membership – R400 (1 Sky Guide per family)

New Membership – R50 admin fee

Courier Fee – R50 locker to locker; R75 locker to door.

Proposed Committee for 2025 -2026

We are not proposing any changes to the committee for 2026/7

This is the proposed committee for 2026. If anyone would like to nominate someone or themselves, please let us know now.

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