

1958

THE
CONSTITUTION
OF THE
ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY
OF
SOUTHERN AFRICA

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CONSTITUTION

(As amended 1954 April : 1956 June)

Article I. Name.

The Society shall be called "The Astronomical Society of Southern Africa."

Article II. Objects.

The objects of the Society shall be :-

1. The encouragement and stimulation of the study of Astronomy.
2. The association of observers and the organization of astronomical observation and research.
3. The dissemination of such current astronomical information as may be helpful to observers and others interested in Astronomy.

Article III. Membership.

The Society shall consist of Members, Honorary Members, Associate Members and Student Members.

Members shall have power to vote in any proceedings of the Society and shall be eligible for election to all offices of the Society. They shall receive all publications issued or distributed by the Society free of charge.

Honorary Members shall have all the privileges of Members except that they shall receive free of charge only publications issued by the Society.

Associate Members shall have no vote in any proceedings of the Society nor shall they be eligible to election to office in the Society.

They shall, however, have power to vote in proceedings of the Centres to which they belong and shall be eligible to hold office in such Centres.

Student Members shall have no vote in any proceedings of the Society or Centres and shall not be eligible to hold office in either Society or Centre. They shall only be eligible as Student Members until they attain the age of 21 years.

Associate Members and Student Members are entitled to receive publications issued by the Society on payment to the Society of a fee to be determined by the Council.

Article IV. Officers and Council.

The Society shall be governed by a Council consisting of a President, 3 Vice Presidents, a Secretary, a Treasurer, a representative of each duly constituted Centre, and four other members of Council. The Council shall be elected annually in accordance with the provisions of Article XIII. At all meetings of the Council, seven shall form a quorum.

Article V. Management.

Except as hereinafter provided the Council shall have sole management, control, and disposition of the affairs, property and funds of the Society, and shall have power to decide any questions not specifically covered by this Constitution.

The Council shall have power to appoint Directors of Observing Sections, a Librarian and an Editor or Editors and to fill any vacancy that may occur in any of the offices of the Society or in its own body until the next election of Officers.

Any member of Council unable to attend meetings may, by notification in writing to the Secretary of the Society, appoint a member of the Society to be his alternate for the period of his office. In the event of his being able himself to attend any meeting of the Council, his alternate may also attend, but shall not then have a vote.

The Council shall meet once every three months. Additional meetings of the Council may be held on the call of the President or of three other members of Council. Members of Council and alternates shall receive fourteen days' clear notice of every meeting.

The Council shall frame an Annual Report on the activities of the Society during its year of office and this shall be presented to the Annual General Meeting.

Article VI. Centres.

A group of members residing in the same locality may, after receiving the approval of the Council, form themselves into a Centre. Each Centre shall establish a local headquarters and shall appoint officers as provided in Article VII. The name of the Centre shall be that of the town or district in which its headquarters is established.

Any member of the Society residing within such distance of the headquarters of a Centre as permits of his taking part in the activities of the Centre shall be at liberty to join that Centre if he so desires, and to continue his membership as long as he pays his subscription to the Centre as provided for in Article XI and subject to the provisions of Article XV.

Article VII. Local Management.

Subject to the provisions of Article VIII each Centre of the Society shall have full control of its own finances and shall be solely responsible for its liabilities as a Centre. It shall elect a Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer and a Committee to conduct its affairs and shall have power to frame rules and bye-laws provided that such rules and bye-laws do not conflict with this Constitution.

Article VIII. Local Property.

All astronomical instruments, lanterns, slides, books and other property which are in the possession of, or shall be acquired by any Centre shall, subject to the further provisions of this article, remain the property of such Centre, and shall not be transferred, sold, donated or otherwise disposed of without the consent of two thirds of the members of the Centre in possession of such property.

If it is decided that a Centre shall be dissolved a meeting shall be called to discuss the disposal of its property. The final decision shall in this case be made on a simple majority vote of all the members of the Centre present at the meeting and entitled to vote.

Should a Centre cease to exist without formal decision to do so e.g. by failure to elect officers or Committee, or by failure of all members of the Centre to pay Centre subscriptions within the period prescribed by Article XI, its assets shall become the property of the Society.

Article IX. Election of Members. Associate
Members and Student Members

Subject to the other provisions of this Article the Council shall have power to elect members.

A candidate for election to membership must be proposed and seconded by Members of the Society.

Every candidate before election shall be required to sign a declaration in the following terms:-

I, the undersigned, having been proposed as a Member of the Astronomical Society of South Africa, do hereby declare that I will, if elected, abide by the provisions of the Constitution of the said Society.

Signature.....

As Witness, this..... day of..... 19..

After a candidate has been proposed and seconded and the above declaration duly signed and witnessed his proposal form in the following terms:-

We, the undersigned, propose M.....
whose address is.....
as a Member of the Society.

Proposer.....

Secunder.....

duly signed by the proposer and secunder shall be submitted to the Council.

The names of all candidates for election shall be circulated to members. If no objection shall have been lodged within 30 days of the date of publication the Council shall have power to declare such candidates elected to membership. Objection to election of candidates must be made in writing to the Secretary of the Society and shall state fully the reasons for the objection.

If objection is lodged the applicant shall be elected only by unanimous vote of the Council, otherwise the applicant shall be elected if not more than two members of the Council vote against his election.

Candidates for election as Associate Members or Student Members shall be eligible only if able to join a Centre. Such candidates must be proposed and seconded by Members or Associate Members of that Centre. Application shall be made to the Committee of the Centre who shall have power to elect Associate Members and Student Members. Such election shall then be formally confirmed by the Council of the Society. Candidates for election as Student Members must give their date of birth on the declaration form.

At least one member of the Committee must have personal knowledge of such applicant.

The Council shall have power to elect Institutions or Societies as such to membership of the Society. Every Institution or Society so elected shall have the same privileges as one single member.

No election shall be deemed complete until the entrance fee and first subscription are paid, until which date the candidate shall not be entitled to the privileges of membership.

Article X. Honorary Members.

The Council shall have power to elect as an Honorary Member of the Society any person who has rendered special service to Astronomy or to the Society. The number of such Honorary Members shall not exceed fifteen at any one time.

Article XI. Entrance Fee and Subscriptions.

1. Society.

(a) Persons joining as Members of the Society, whether or not they were previously Associate or Student Members, shall pay an entrance fee and subscription of amounts as decided by Council from time to time. Notice of any proposed increase of entrance fee or subscription shall be given to all Members. If objection is not raised by five or more Members within one calendar month of the date of the notice, the increase shall become effective. If objection is raised by five or more members, a postal ballot shall be held and the increase shall become effective unless a majority of the members entitled to vote oppose it.

(b) Honorary Members shall pay no entrance fee or subscription.

(c) Associate Members and Student Members shall pay no entrance fee and no subscription to the Society.

All subscriptions are payable in advance to the Treasurer of the Society and shall become due on the first day of July in each year, but a Member joining the Society after the first day of January shall be liable to pay for that year only half the subscription ordinarily due in the previous July.

Amended

Any member who fails to pay his annual subscription within three calendar months of the due date shall cease to receive publications until the subscription is paid, when all publications so withheld shall be sent to him. If his annual subscription remains unpaid for eleven months after the due date, a final registered letter of warning shall be sent to him by Council and if the subscription is not paid within one calendar month of the date of despatch of that letter, he shall cease to be a member of the Society.

In very special cases Council may waive payment of subscriptions by certain individual members. In each such case, the waiver shall be recorded in the Minutes of the Council Meeting at which it is decided upon and the reasons shall be fully stated.

2. Centres.

(a) Associate Members and Members attached to Centres shall pay the same subscription to the Centre. The amount of this subscription shall be determined by the Committee of the Centre subject to ratification by a General Meeting of the Centre.

(b) Student Members shall pay a subscription to be determined by the Committee provided that this shall in no case be more than one half of the subscription paid by Members and Associate Members to the Centre.

These subscriptions shall be the concern of each Centre exclusively and shall not be subject to ratification by the Council of the Society. They need not be the same for all Centres.

Subscriptions to Centres are payable in advance to the Treasurer of the Centre.

Any member of a Centre who fails to pay his Centre subscription within twelve calendar months of the due date shall automatically cease to be a member of that Centre.

Article XII. Annual General Meeting.

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The Annual General Meeting shall be held (at all the Centres) on the fourth Wednesday in July or such other day as the Council, [after consultation with the Committees of the Centres,] shall direct. [The meetings at the individual Centres shall all be deemed to be part of a single Annual General Meeting of the Society. [All members of the Society whether members of the Centre or not, shall have the right to vote at these meetings. Associate Members shall have no vote at the Annual General Meeting.]

Shall Council decide upon a change in the venue, all 6 members should be notified by M.A.S.S.A. at least one month in advance

Any Member entitled to vote at the Annual General Meeting may appoint in writing a proxy to speak and vote in his stead. Such proxy must be a Member or the wife or husband of a Member.

The purpose of the Annual General Meeting shall be to receive the report of the Council, the Treasurer's audited Financial Statement to the previous 30th day of June and the reports of the Observing Sections, and to transact any other business.

Article XIII. Election of Council and Auditor.

Section A:

The election of officers and members of Council other than the representatives of the Centres, shall be by postal ballot.

Nominations must be signed by two members of the Society and received by the Secretary before June 15.

A ballot paper, containing the full list of nominations, shall be posted to each member entitled to vote.

To be valid a ballot paper

- (a) Must be received back by the Secretary before the date indicated on the ballot paper;
- (b) Must show clearly (in the manner indicated on the ballot paper) the names of the candidates whom the member voting desires to be elected;
- (c) Must not give votes to more candidates than there are persons to be elected; and
- (d) Must bear the signature of the Member voting.

After the result of the poll has been declared the ballot papers shall be sealed and shall be kept by the Secretary of the Society for one calendar month, after which, if no protest in writing has been received by the Secretary, they shall be destroyed.

In the event of a protest being received, the Committee of each Centre shall appoint a Member of the Society, not being one of those nominated for election, and these shall form a Committee for the purpose of examining the ballot papers. The majority report of the Committee shall be final as to the validity of the election.

Section B: Election of Representatives of Centres.

Each duly constituted Centre shall be entitled to select a Member of the Society to represent it at Council meetings. This representative, who will be a full member of Council, shall be selected by the Committee of the Centre after the publication of the results of the ballot for the officers and other members of Council. The name of the representative so selected must be communicated to the Secretary of the Society by the twentieth day of August. The powers of Council and the efficacy of its decisions shall not be impaired by any failure or delay on the part of a Centre to select its representative.

Article XIV. Resignation.

Any Member, Associate Member, or Student Member wishing to resign from the Society shall give notice in writing to the Secretary of the Society and shall pay all subscriptions due, after which the resignation shall take effect. In the case of Associate Members and Student Members, a copy of the notice shall be sent to the Secretary of the Centre to which such Associate Member or Student Member belongs.

Any Member wishing to resign from a Centre, but not from the Society, shall similarly give notice in writing to the Secretary of the Centre and shall pay all subscriptions due, after which the resignation shall take effect.

Article XV. Suspension and Exclusion.

The Council may suspend or exclude any Member, Associate Member, or Student Member either for infringement of this Constitution or of any rules made thereunder, or for misconduct reported in writing to the Council. Provided that the person so suspended or excluded shall have the right of appeal to the next meeting of the Council whose decision shall be final. Any Member so excluded shall forfeit the current subscription.

The Committee of any Centre may similarly suspend from membership of the Centre (but not from membership of the Society) any Member, for infringement of the bye-laws of the Centre. It may similarly suspend Associate Members and Student Members but may not exclude them. It may, however, recommend their exclusion to the Council.

Article XVI. Reinstatement.

Any member who has resigned in good standing may be permitted to re-join the Society without payment of entrance fee at the discretion of Council. Persons who forfeit membership under Articles XI or XV may be reinstated with the consent of Council and shall then pay the entrance fee but not any arrears of subscription.

Associate and Student Members having resigned in good standing shall be allowed to re-join the Society and any Centre if, in the case of Student Members, they are still eligible. Associate and Student Members who have forfeited membership under Articles XI or XV may be reinstated only with the consent of Council and of the Committee of the Centre they wish to join or re-join and only on condition that any arrears of subscription are first paid.

Members who resign in good standing from a Centre but not from the Society may join or re-join a Centre at any time. A Member who has forfeited membership of a Centre under Articles XI or XV shall only be permitted to re-join the same Centre by consent of the Committee and after payment of any arrears of Centre subscriptions; and he shall only be allowed to join another Centre by consent of the Committee of that Centre and after payment of any arrears of subscriptions due to the Centre of which he was formerly a member.

Article XVII.

A medal has been established, known as the Gill Medal, to be awarded in recognition of services to astronomy.

The Medal shall be awarded not more frequently than once in any year, and no award shall be made if, in the opinion of Council, there is no suitable candidate in any year.

The award shall be made by Council. There shall be no restriction on the eligibility of any person as candidate, and candidates need not be members of the Astronomical Society of Southern Africa.

In making the award, Council shall observe the following conditions:

- (i) Council shall be required to state the particular service rendered by the Medallist which has been deemed worthy of the award.
- (ii) Council shall, as far as may be seemly, give preference to services to astronomy in Southern Africa.
- (iii) Council may, at its discretion, give special credit to services carried out under conditions of difficulty, or with limited facilities.

The award shall be publicly announced at the Annual General Meeting and, if possible, the presentation of the Medal to the successful candidate shall be made at that meeting at one of the Centres.

Article XVIII. amendment of Constitution.

The Constitution of the Society shall be amended only by ballot of all members entitled to vote. No proposed amendment shall be presented to the Society without either the recommendation of the Council or the signature of at least five members. Proposed amendments must be forwarded to the Secretary of the Society.

any proposed amendment shall be posted to every member who has the right to vote. To be adopted, an amendment must receive at least two thirds of the votes cast. Voting shall be by postal ballot.

If, in the opinion of the Council any proposed amendment would vitally affect the welfare of the Society or any fundamental principle of this Constitution, the Council shall intimate that fact to members by causing such amendment to be starred when it is submitted for voting. Such amendment shall take effect provisionally from the date of the announcement of the result of the ballot but must be confirmed by a second ballot after a period of three months or such longer period as the Council may deem necessary for its effects to be given fair trial.

Article XIX. Interpretation.

On any question of the implication or interpretation of any of the provisions of this Constitution, the decision of Council shall be final.

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APPENDIX

Procedure for Election of Gill Medallist.

In each year before the end of the first week in April, members of the Council shall send to the Secretary of the Society a note of a name or names of suitable persons to receive the Medal, together with a description of the services to astronomy which it is proposed to recognise, and a note of any further particular reasons in favour of any particular candidate. Before the fifteenth day of April the Secretary shall prepare and distribute to each member of Council a confidential memorandum embodying all the proposals and reasons.

Members of Council shall then, where necessary, give suitable instructions to their alternates. At a meeting of Council to be held in May, one name, or in the case of joint work, two or more names, shall be selected, or Council may decide that no suitable name has been proposed.

Council may not add names to those originally proposed, but it may re-draft the citation of the services for which it is proposed to award the medal.

If a name or joint names has been selected, this name, together with the citation, and any further particular reasons, shall be incorporated in a ballot paper, a copy of which shall be sent to each member of Council. Members of Council shall then vote for or against the award of the Medal to the person or persons named in the paper, for the service cited. Ballot papers must reach the Honorary Secretary by the end of the first week in June. Two thirds of all the votes cast shall be necessary to confirm the award.

If a member of Council or an alternate be proposed as a candidate he shall withdraw from the discussion and voting; if an alternate be proposed his principal shall send his instructions to the Chairman of the Council Meeting, who shall be given an extraordinary additional vote for each such case, at the meeting which selects the name of the final candidate.

All the proceedings leading up to the award of the Medal shall be kept confidential by members of Council and their alternates. Candidacy may be discussed among members of Council, but it is not to be a matter of public debate, and members of Council representing Centres of the Society are not bound to accept instruction from those Centres in this matter.

The details of discussion in Council shall not be minuted, nor the names of candidates specified. The Minutes shall record the fact that candidates were discussed and a name selected, if this is done. A sealed copy of the confidential memorandum and ballot paper shall be deposited each year among the Society's papers, and shall only be opened in exceptional circumstances by a unanimous vote of Council.