



CROYDON ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

TRUSTEES' REPORT AND ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR TO 31st MARCH 2023

1. LEGAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

CHARITY REGISTRATION NUMBER:	1187803
LEGAL FORM:	Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) formed under the Charities Act 2011 (the "Act").
CHARITY TRUSTEES (COMMITTEE):	8 (see section 3).
GOVERNING DOCUMENT:	Constitution dated 7th Feb 2020 as amended on 5th June 2021.
OBJECTS:	<p>To advance education in the science of astronomy and related subjects for the public benefit in Croydon and the surrounding area by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">a) encouraging a popular interest in astronomy and allied subjects;b) helping beginners, irrespective of their age, to acquire a knowledge of astronomy and allied subjects; andc) providing facilities for practical work and active participation in astronomical observation.
ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP:	78 as of 31st March 2023 (for the membership year to 31 st August 2023).
BANKER:	NatWest / Charities Aid Foundation
WEBSITE:	https://croydonastro.org.uk

2. ACTIVITIES IN PERIOD

The society meets for talks about astronomy (and related subjects) approximately every two weeks during school term time on a Thursday evening (Friday evenings prior to January 2023). The talks are held at a school located close to, and with good transport links with, central Croydon.

Our general aim is to alternate between having a 'short talks' meeting where two or three members of the society each present a short talk, and a 'long talk' meeting where we invite an expert third party speaker – perhaps from a university or from another astronomical society.

As an ancillary activity, the society maintains the self-built Norman Fisher Observatory. The observatory dates from 1979 and is located on a small plot of land in a relatively dark sky location on Kenley historic aerodrome. The observatory site is within easy reach by car from central Croydon, but it is not close to public transport links.

- The observatory is open to the public every Saturday evening when it is clear and dark, provided qualified volunteers are available. Information about observatory openings and other outreach events is posted on the society's Facebook page and website.
- Pre-arranged visiting groups (youth organisations, schools, U3A etc) are welcomed at the observatory at other times during the week.

The society encourages members to use an online forum 'croydonastro' (hosted on Google Groups) where astrophotography and other astronomy-related topics are discussed.

The society is unusual amongst astronomical societies in that it is funded by donations from its members and visitors, and does not charge a membership fee.

The society is a member of the Federation of Astronomical Societies (FAS) and the Southern Area Group of Astronomical Societies (SAGAS).

Regular Activities

Talks Programme

- During the period to 31st March 2023 the society held 23 meetings (including the Annual General Meeting and two Christmas quiz meetings (one postponed from the previous year). Average attendance was around 26 persons.
- With effect from January 2023, the day of the meeting changed so that the talks programme now takes place on Thursday evenings rather than on Fridays, and strictly within school term time. This change allows our host school to better manage its energy costs.

Norman Fisher Observatory

- *Outreach* - During the period to 31st March 2023 the observatory was opened to the public 12 times with the number of visitors on each evening varying significantly from a low of nine to an estimated 130+. Additionally, nine group visits took place comprising six visits from youth organisations and three visits from a local school.
 - There is a shortage of volunteers who are willing and able to run such outreach events at the observatory and, if this situation does not change, regrettably the society will need to scale back or cease such activities entirely.
- *Members Evening* – For several years it has been apparent that few members use the observatory. Those interested in observing or astrophotography generally prefer to use their own astronomical and photographic equipment and would choose to set up at home (or another convenient location) rather than making the journey and then setting up at the observatory. Now that the society's meetings have changed to take place on Thursday, Friday evenings have been set aside as a Members Evening to encourage members to visit the observatory and use either their own equipment or equipment belonging to the Society, or just turn up for a social gathering.

Special Outreach Activities

Astronomy at the RAF Kenley Historic Airfield

- The society held its *Annual Perseid Meteor Shower event in August 2022*
 - The Perseid Meteor shower occurs when the Earth passes through debris left by comet 109P Swift/Tuttle.
 - As well as meteor observing, the society provided telescopes to view the planets, and a "smart telescope" to look at some deep sky objects.
 - About 80 members of the public attended in addition to society members, and it is thought that everyone saw at least one meteor. The moon washed out the feinter ones but there were some very bright events, with one observer remarking she saw the biggest, brightest trail that she had ever seen.
 - Members of the society were kept busy answering questions and pointing out astronomical sights.
 - Some members of the public stayed until well after midnight. Many of our visitors expressed their intention to visit the observatory during one of our Saturday public openings.
- The society also attempted to organise a walk around the perimeter track of Kenley Aerodrome themed around the *Harvest Moon*, but unfortunately this had to be called off due to cloudy weather.

Other Notable Changes

During the period substantial maintenance work has been done to the observatory buildings:

- *Main Dome:* The fibreglass dome was washed down and given a base coat of white yacht paint. The wooden dome doors have also been strengthened.
- *Clubhouse:* The heavily deteriorated plywood cladding on the west side and around the door of the clubhouse was stripped off and replaced with shiplap,

Public Benefit

Committee members confirm that they have had regard to the Charity Commission's guidance on public benefit.

3. COMMITTEE

The Committee can have up to ten charity trustees.

- All Committee members (apart from the offices of Chair, Secretary and Treasurer) retire at every AGM.
- Those holding the offices of Chair, Secretary and Treasurer are required to retire at every second AGM, with the Chair and Treasurer retiring in the same year and the Secretary in the alternate year.
- Retiring trustees are immediately eligible for re-election.

Committee Members during the period 1st April 2022 to the date of this Trustees Report

Name	Role as at the date of this report	On Committee 1st April 2022	New Joiners - Date Joined Committee	Date Left Committee	On Committee as at the date of this report
Tony Roberts	Chair	•			•
Graham Cluer	Secretary & Vice-Chair	•			•
Colin Weightman	Treasurer & Membership	•			•
Stefan Blakemore			8 Jul 22		•
Martin Gaiger	Outreach	•			•
Laura Quayle			8 Jul 22		•
Carolyn Raishbrook		•			•
Paul Stenning		•			•
TOTAL		6	2	0	8

No charity trustee was paid during the period (other than for out-of-pocket expenses).

4. FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

Basis of Accounting

- The society has elected to prepare accounts on a 'receipts and payments' basis adjusted for any significant (>£300) accruals and prepayments with the net amount being the 'Accumulated Fund').
- It is our practice to ask a member of the society (the 'CAS Accounts Examiner') to examine the society's accounting records and confirm to the Committee that nothing has come to their attention that would cause them to believe in any material respect that accounting records were not kept in accordance with Section 130 of the Act, or that the accounts do not accord with the accounting records.

Financial Review

We present on page 7 accounts for the year to 31st March 2023:

- On 1st April 2022, the Accumulated Fund stood at £8,165. During the period the society made a surplus of £1,978 and, as of 31st March 2023, the Accumulated Fund stood at £10,143.
- Donations of £3,979 include amounts collected through CAF Donate, 'Grey Box' cash and contactless donations made at the Thursday/Friday meetings, cash donations boxes at the observatory and donations for Group Visits. The Society claimed a total of £581 from HMRC in Gift Aid and under the Gift Aid Small Donations Scheme.
- With increasing interest rates on bank deposits, the society opened an instant access interest-bearing Business Reserve Account in December 2022.
- The Observatory Buildings expense include an amount of £333 to replace the outer sacrificial layer of plywood on the west side of the clubhouse building, £193 for the first coat of yacht paint for the main dome, and £269 to strengthen the dome doors,
- The Observatory Equipment expense includes £200 for the purchase of a handset and cable for use during public openings and group visits.
- Bank charges of £60 principally relate to the costs of using the CAF Donate system.

Croydon Astronomical Society

Amounts in £

Statement of Assets and Liabilities as at 31st March 2023

Cash at Bank and in Hand	10,143
Add: Debtors and Prepayments	-
Deduct: Creditors and Accruals	-
Accumulated Fund	10,143

Movements in Accumulated Fund as at 31st March 2023

Accumulated Fund Brought Down	8,165
Surplus /(Deficit) of Income over Expenditure for Period	1,978
Accumulated Fund Carried Forward	10,143

Income and Expenditure for the Year ended 31st March 2023

Income

Donations	3,979
Gift Aid and Gift Aid Small Donations Scheme	581
Refreshments	163
Bank Interest	20
Other	-
Total Income	4,743

Expenditure

<i>Cost of Meetings at Trinity School</i>	
School Hall Hire	(990)
Speakers' Expenses	(115)
Cost of Refreshments	(60)
Other	(18)
	(1,183)
<i>Kenley Observatory Maintenance & Costs</i>	
Observatory Buildings	(831)
Observatory Equipment and Computing	(200)
Electricity	(187)
Voice and Data	-
Council Tax	(67)
Other	(15)
	(1,300)
<i>Other costs</i>	
Website, Email & Videoconferencing	(145)
Insurance	(32)
Membership Fees (FAS and SAGAS)	(45)
Bank Charges	(60)
Miscellaneous	-
	(282)
Total Expenditure	(2,765)
Surplus /(Deficit) of Income over Expenditure	1,978

NB:- Columns may not add due to rounding.

Reserves Policy

- Committee is required to retain only those cash reserves that are appropriate to the society's needs and ambitions. However, in reviewing the amount of the reserves to be retained, Committee's aim is to ensure the society will be able to continue to fulfil its charitable objectives even if there is a temporary shortfall in donation income or if unexpected expenditure arises.
- A significant item of expense (and Committee time) is the ongoing maintenance of the self-built Norman Fisher Observatory. The observatory is located within a small fenced-in site within the RAF Kenley historic aerodrome with access provided by the London Loop long distance footpath which runs directly through the society's land. The observatory consists of a brick-built building with a fibreglass dome which was constructed in 1979 to house the society's then self-built 18-inch telescope, and a substantial self-built felt-roofed wooden clubhouse which was constructed and then extended in the 1990s. Additionally, there is a small commercially made fibreglass dome which is believed to be of a similar date to the clubhouse.
- The site is in an elevated and exposed position. The buildings are likely to require substantial future maintenance.
- Although the observatory and clubhouse were originally self-built, some items of ongoing building maintenance may need to be done professionally. The substantial costs of professional maintenance, the limited number of members who now use the facilities, and the shortage of volunteers to run outreach events at the Observatory need to be balanced against the society's other priorities, its limited income and Committee time. At some stage Committee may conclude that it is appropriate to reduce the size of the Observatory facilities, and funds will be required to make this adjustment.

This Trustees' Report and Accounts was approved by Committee on 9th May 2023.

Signed: Tony Roberts, Chair

Colin Weightman, Treasurer