

# **Annual General Meeting, 2002 October 30**

## **held at the Scientific Societies' Lecture Theatre, 23 Savile Row, London W1**

**Guy Hurst**, President

**Ron Johnson, Nick Hewitt and Nick James**, Secretaries

The President opened the Annual General Meeting, and invited Dr Hewitt to read the minutes of the 2001 AGM. These were approved by the audience, and signed. Mr Hurst expressed his gratitude to Mr David Freedman, auditor, and Mr Roy Dowsett, accountant, for the smooth running of the recent audit. Mr David Tucker was invited to present the accounts.

Mr Tucker reported that the accounts had been published in the 2002 October Journal. In summary, the past year had seen widespread falls on the stock market, resulting in a reduction in the value of the Association's investments. The revaluation of these had resulted in a £25,004 loss, although this could be viewed as a paper loss since no actual money had been lost. It was reported that in the time between the publication of the accounts and the AGM, a further £15,000 reduction had been seen in the Association's investments. Mr Tucker pointed out that the BAA invests a relatively small proportion of its funds on the stock market, and hence the losses were minimal compared to those experienced by many other organisations.

The number of subscriptions received was down by 76 people relative to the previous year, and Council were anxious to reverse this trend. Mr Tucker reported that a number of Officers were considering possible recruitment campaigns. The treasurer reported that in the previous year a generous bequest had funded an extensive £12,000 modernisation of the Association's offices, including a new computer system. It was also reported that the late Neville Goodman had made a substantial bequest, which was dependent upon the sale of property and yet to be finalised. An interim payment of £290,000 had recently been received, however, and indicated the generosity of this bequest.

In response to a question concerning the accounts for the library, the treasurer stated that a new system had been used to display donations received, which he invited the auditor, Mr Freedman, to explain. A new standard accounting system called Sort 2000 had been introduced for registered charities, and under this system the donations received by the library were combined with the expenses. This explained the figure printed on page 286 of the 2002 October Journal. Mr Tucker proposed the accounts, and the members present approved their adoption. The treasurer expressed his thanks to the auditor and accountant for providing expert advice on complex issues.

The President then proceeded to deliver his annual report. Shortly after the previous AGM, the occultation of Saturn by the Moon on 2001 November 3 had produced a number of excellent amateur images. Mr Hurst suggested, however, that a greater number of timings of occultations would be well received in future. 2001 November had seen a spectacular view of the planets in close conjunction, attracting widespread media interest. Furthermore, the Leonid meteor shower had been monitored by a large number of observers, who were treated to storm levels of activity on the evening of November 18/19.

On 2001 December 30, a mag 11 star was occulted by minor asteroid (144) Vibia, and Mrs Hazel McGee had achieved scientifically useful timings. The Association's papers secretary had been honoured when the IAU announced the naming of minor planet 2001 NY40, which had passed a mere 530,000km from Earth on August 18. This was the closest pass of a 500m+ object in 77 years.

On the comet front, Ikeya-Zhang had been an unexpected treat. At discovery, this mag 9 speck had not shown much promise for a good display. As links with the Hevelius 1661 comet were established, however, it became clear that not only was this to give a spectacular display at perihelion in 2002 March, but furthermore it had the longest period of all recorded returning comets. Later in the spring, the lunar occultation of Saturn of April 16 had coincided with favourable skies, and had been widely observed.

Near Earth Objects had made the headlines on a number of occasions in the year, and whilst the President regretted that these stories were often inaccurate, he welcomed the publicity which they brought to amateur astronomy. An object of particular interest had been 2002 NY40, which had passed a mere 530,000km from Earth on August 18. This was the closest pass of a 500m+ object in 77 years.

The Association's office had as ever received a great number of queries, and Mrs Anne Davies had been appointed as a new secretarial assistant to relieve the pressure. Tom Boles and Nick James were thanked for their assistance in setting up a new computer system to streamline the office's administration. Further thanks went to Mrs Hazel McGee, editor, and Mr Nick James, papers secretary, for their hard work in producing the Journal.

The President reported there had been a number of experimental changes to the running of the Association in the past year. E-circulars had been introduced to allow faster communication between members. The comet and lunar sections had held their sectional meetings immediately before Ordinary Meetings, making these easier to attend. This appeared to have been a success, with high turnouts on both occasions. The April out-of-London meeting in Cardiff had been very well supported, with the enthusiasm of Cardiff's local astronomers a real bonus. The September Exhibition Meeting at the Cavendish Laboratory, Cambridge had also been well supported, with 211 visitors signing into the book and probably many more who did not sign in. This suggested that over 10% of the Association's membership had supported that meeting, and the President intended that the next Exhibition Meeting would be held at the same venue. A number of physics demonstrations and talks by section directors had been integrated into the event and had proved very popular. Mr Jonathan Shanklin was thanked for his work in organising the venue.

Sadly the past year had seen the loss of a number of significant BAA figures, most notably Neville Goodman, Miss Rossie Atwell, Leslie White, and Eddie Watson-Jones. Further bad news was that the Royal Society of Chemistry were selling the Scientific Societies' Lecture Theatre, and consequently the November meeting would be the last one to be held at this venue. The year had ended on a high-note, however, when Sir Patrick Moore was honoured with an award for science communication by Tomorrow's World on August 25.

The President then invited Mr Johnson to read the results of the ballot for Council. A total of 363 votes had been received, and were cast as follows: President: G.M. Hurst (341). Vice-President: N.D. Hewitt (ex-officio). Treasurer: D.J. Tucker (326). Meetings Secretary: N.D. Hewitt (324). Papers Secretary: N.D. James (319). Business Secretary: R.W. Johnson (314). Other members of Council: T. Boles (301), M.V. Gavin (301), P.V. Hudson (301), J.W. Mason (296), R.J. Flux (294), R. Miles (278), G. Johnstone (277), R. Dymock (261), D. Ford (260), C. Potter (243). Sadly, W. Barton (190) was not elected. It is tradition that the general Council member receiving most votes is elected as the third vice-president. On this occasion, however, there were three joint-highest scoring candidates. Consequently a ballot was conducted, of which the results were: T. Boles (29), M.V. Gavin (27), P.V. Hudson (10). Mr Tom Boles was therefore elected as the third vice-president, to serve with Dr Nick Hewitt and Sir Patrick Moore. The President expressed his gratitude to those members of Council who were retiring, before delivering his Presidential address. The speaker has kindly provided his own summary of this talk, which is elsewhere in this Journal.

Following the applause for Mr Hurst's superb summary of the history of the Nova patrol, presented from his unique viewpoint as director, the Annual General Meeting was adjourned until a future date. The meeting was immediately followed by the first Ordinary Meeting of the 113th session.

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Dominic Ford