

# **Annual General Meeting, 2006 October 25**

## **held at New Hunts House, Guys Hospital, London Bridge, London SE1**

**Richard Miles, President**

**Ron Johnson, Hazel Collett and Nick James, Secretaries**

The President opened the 2006 AGM and invited Mrs Hazel Collett, Meetings Secretary, to read the minutes of the previous year's meeting. These were approved by members and duly signed. The President then welcomed Mr David Freedman, Auditor to the Association, to the meeting, and invited Mr David Boyd, Treasurer, to present the Accounts.

Mr Boyd reported that a statement of the Association's Accounts had appeared in the 2006 October issue of the *Journal*<sup>1</sup>. In summary, its assets had risen in value by £8,854 over the year ending 2006 June 30, showing a healthy profit. Mr Boyd invited questions on the statement published in the *Journal*, but there were none. He thus proposed that the Accounts be adopted; this motion was seconded by Michael Maunder and passed with two abstentions. The Treasurer concluded by extending his thanks to Mr Roy Dowsett, Accountant, and Mr David Freedman, Auditor, for their advice and assistance in the financial running of the Association.

The President added his own thanks to these individuals, wishing also to mention Ms Jean Felles, Manager of the Association's Office, who had overseen the implementation of and smooth transition to a new membership database at the start of the year. He further commented that the Association's income from Gift Aid had totalled £12,691 over the past year. This very valuable contribution to its finances had come at no cost to members at all; it had been paid entirely by the Inland Revenue. However, the Association could only claim it if members had signed Gift Aid Declaration forms, and any who had not done so were urged to get in touch with the Office.

Dr Miles then proceeded to present his Annual Report of the Association's activities, opening by expressing thanks to his predecessor, Mr Tom Boles, for proposing him for the Presidency. To begin, he summarised the *Annual Report*<sup>1</sup> of Council which had appeared in the October *Journal*. He wished to draw especial attention to the reports of the section directors, as they gave an insight into the Association's diverse activities and revealed the high level of support which it received from its membership. He wished to take this opportunity to thank all for making the Association the thriving, active organisation that it was.

Turning to membership figures, Dr Miles reported that the Association had had 2,904 members at the end of July – up from 2,780 at the same time in 2005. Putting this into context, he added that the membership had peaked at 3,200 in 1994, but subsequently gone into decline in the later 1990s. Mr Guy Hurst had reversed the decline during his Presidency with a successful membership drive; Dr Miles was pleased to see the growth in membership continuing and was keen to see it go on. Against this flux of new members, the Association had less happily noted the death of a number of active and talented contributors during the year, among them Andy Hollis and Howard Hill.

Moving on to the Association's publications, Dr Miles congratulated Mr Callum Potter, Webmaster, for his redesign of its website, bringing to it a considerably more professional feel. Amongst the new additions was a discussion forum, and the President was pleased to see it being well used. Mrs Hazel McGee, Editor of the *Journal*, was thanked for her stalwart work in maintaining the high standard of the Association's printed publication. In addition, Mr Don Miles had produced four paper circulars, and the electronic circulars service was becoming increasingly popular as a source of the latest news; 46 email messages had been sent over the course of the year. Dr John Mason had recently published a newly-updated edition of the *Observers' Guide*, and Roger Perry had worked with Nick James to produce a DVD of members' video observations of the 2006 March total solar eclipse, which was now available for purchase.

Readers of the *Journal* would be aware that the Association was going through a period of administrative upheaval. Its Office would shortly be moving out of Burlington House for the duration of lengthy renovation work. It would be operating in the meantime from temporary rented accommodation on Hallum Street, though its official postal address would remain unchanged; mail sent to Burlington House would be redirected. Regrettably, the temporary office was too cramped to allow visitors access to the library, though Anthony Kinder, Librarian, remained happy to handle enquiries where possible.

At the Exhibition Meeting in June the Association's awards and medals had been presented; Damian Peach had received the Walter Goodacre Award, and ??? the Merlin Medal and Gift. Other recipients of notable awards in the past year included Mr Bob Mizon, Coordinator of the Campaign for Dark Skies (CfDS), who had received the 2006 Galileo Award from the European Region of the International Dark Sky Association at the 6th European Dark-Skies Symposium in Portsmouth on September 15. In recent times, his name had become almost synonymous with the campaign against light pollution, and this award was surely well deserved.

Turning to the Observing Sections, there had been three changes of directorships over the year. Upon Andy Hollis' death in 2005 November, Roger Dymock had taken over the Asteroids and Remote Planets Section; the President congratulated Mr Dymock upon having settled into the job so fast, noting that he had produced section newsletters every month since then, and that their standard had been consistently high. In January, Ron Livesey had stepped down from running the Aurora Section after 23 years of service; his successor was David Gavine. Finally, in May, Lyn Smith had taken over the solar section from Mike Beale.

Briefly summarising the achievements of the individual sections, the President gave especial mention to the Variable Star Section for having continued to demonstrate that visual astronomy remained a valuable art; over the course of the year they had filed in excess of 38,000 visual photometric estimates.

The Lunar Section had recently appointed a new topographic coordinator, Peter Grego, and produced some superb sketches and CCD images over the course of the year. Perhaps most notable were Damian Peach's CCD images, which reminded the President of images taken by lunar orbiters.

The Comet Section had had a rather dormant year due to the lack of bright objects, though the dearth had recently come to an end with the appearance of 2006 M4. The President noted the visual discovery of 2006 T1 by David Levy on October 3; it was now quite rare for amateur comet hunters to beat professional robotised surveys to comet discoveries. This object was also to be noted because it would make a close approach to Earth at its next return in 2011, and possibly pass close enough to reach naked-eye magnitudes.

The planetary sections had produced some excellent imaging over the year. Dr Miles especially singled out the Jupiter Section for mention; David Tyler and Damian Peach had once again produced a plethora of breath-taking images for it. The data amassed by the Section had been of sufficient quality that John Rogers, Director, had been able to present it in two papers<sup>2,3</sup> in *Icarus*, a professional refereed journal.

The President turned finally to the logistics of the Association, thanking Jean Felles and Valerie Stoneham for their work in running the Office. Jean Felles had just completed her first year as Manager following Patricia Barber's departure, and was doing a sterling job. This was the first AGM since Valerie Stoneham had joined the Office, and the President invited her to come forward to receive a presentation, to which members applauded.

Dr Miles closed by noting that Richard Flux had this year stepped down from the job of organising the Winchester Weekend after having done so for the past ten years; the 2006 April event had been his last. Thanks were due for his long service.

The President then invited Mr Ron Johnson, Business Secretary, to read out the results of the ballot for Council for the 2006-7 session, expressing his thanks in doing so to the scrutineers of the ballot. Mr Johnson reported the results of the ballot as follows. President: Richard Miles, 361. Vice-President: Tom Boles, elected ex-officio. Treasurer: David Boyd, 363. Secretaries: Hazel Collett (Meetings), 336; Nick James (Papers), 335; Ron Johnson (Business), 336. Other members of Council: Nick Hewitt, 343; Martin Morgan-Taylor, 337; Ann Davies, 336; Geoffrey Johnstone, 333; John Mason, 332; Sheridan Williams, 327; Callum Potter, 324; Peter Hudson, 321; Maurice Gavin, 315; Mark Armstrong, 308.

Dr Miles then proceeded to deliver his Presidential Address, entitled *A Light History of Photometry*, in which he traced the development of photometric astronomy from ancient times through to the present. A full account of this can be found on page ??? of this *Journal*.

The meeting was then adjourned, and the first Ordinary Meeting of the 117th Session followed.

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Dominic Ford

## References

<sup>1</sup> *J. Brit. Astron. Assoc.*, **116**(5), 248-265 (2006)

<sup>2</sup> Rogers, J.H., Mettig, H-J & Peach, D., *Icarus*, **184**, 452-459 (2006)

<sup>3</sup> Rogers, J.H. et al., *Icarus*, **185**, 244-257 (2006)