



Scarborough & Ryedale Astronomical Society

Annual General Meeting 2017

Report of the Secretary

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Just over a year ago I spoke to a couple of members of York Astronomical Society. They told me how much better their society was than SARAS and tried to persuade me to join them.
- 1.2 I must admit I was tempted and I became unsettled as a member of SARAS. I wanted to be part of an astronomical society that was thriving. Where I could learn from other members and improve my knowledge of astronomy.
- 1.3 But when I thought about it I realised that if I was not happy at SARAS then there was only one person to blame. Me. I had to put more time and effort into the society rather than expect others to do so. I tentatively put myself forward for the vacant post of Secretary at last year's AGM and here I am reporting on what has happened since then.
- 1.4 Earlier this year the committee agreed upon the aims and objectives of the society and I will use those as the framework for my report.

2. Objective 1 – To support and develop member's interest in Astronomy

- 2.1 My first act as Secretary was to send out a survey to members which included a question about the talks at Ayton. It is not possible to please all of the members all of the time when it comes to talks but I hope that the 9 meetings at Ayton this year have pleased most people most of the time. Suggestions for new speakers are always welcome.
- 2.2 Ad hoc observing sessions have not been regular enough. The binocular only evening led by Howard Watson was very successful and it is hoped it can be repeated. Jon Borgia has developed a means for members to send messages to everyone in the society. Among other things it will allow all members to invite others to meet for observing.

- 2.3 At the beginning of the season both domes at Dalby were in poor condition. The south dome in particular was waterlogged. Both have been resealed and new floors have been laid.
- 2.4 There was little interest in a Winter Star-camp. Trips were arranged to the Astrocampus at York and Jodrell Bank. Seven members undertook each trip. There appears to be little appetite within the society for these types of events.

3 Objective 2 – To increase membership numbers

- 3.1 At the start of this season 9 members did not renew their membership. Overall membership dropped from 47 to 38. Since January this year 10 new members have joined bringing the current total to 48.
- 3.2 The Introduction to Astronomy meeting earlier this year was well supported by both members and non-members and resulted in 5 new members joining. A similar event is planned in September.

4 Objective 3 – To develop member skills

- 4.1 Our most experienced and knowledgeable member is the society founder, John Harper. John has given excellent tours of the night sky at Dalby this year, but his health means it is unfair to depend solely on John to be our teacher and guide. When I joined the society in 2013 the previous Secretary, Andy Exton, was the person I always looked to for guidance but work and family commitments have prevented Andy from continuing in that role. The Chairman, Mark Tissington, has a keen interest in astrophotography. Sadly, family illness and work commitments have prevented Mark from organising events I know he would otherwise have liked to arrange.
- 4.2 This is an area for improvement. Both domes at Dalby will be fully operational as the new season starts. And as mentioned above it is hoped that members will be encouraged to arrange ad hoc observing sessions anywhere within the Scarborough and Ryedale area.

5 Objective 4 - To promote astronomy through outreach

- 5.2 The 4 public observing sessions held at Dalby between October and February were very successful. Well over 200 people attended the events with up to 9 members in support. Even on a wet Friday night in March with no hope of observing anything I was amazed to count 45 people in the crowd.
- 5.3 Talks have been given to schools, a cub pack and various community groups on 7 occasions by Mark Tissington and John Harper. In total about 250 persons of all ages have benefitted from their knowledge and enthusiasm.
- 5.4 We missed out on regular events at Humblebee Farm, the Dark Sky Festival at Dalby and Riveaulx. We are back at Humblebee in October and will be part of the Dark Sky Festival in 2018. Sadly, Riveaulx has now been taken over by York Astronomical Society.

- 5.5 The recent Dalby Explorer Day was an event where SARAS had a stand and opened our domes to the public. Solar observing was very popular and numerous people approached us wanting help with that telescope they bought a couple of years ago and used once.

6 Objective 5 – To maintain the viability of the Society

- 6.1 Starfest is usually the biggest income generator for the society and it did not go ahead this year for a variety of reasons. Our Treasurer, Sheila, has done a great deal of detective work to assess the financial comings and goings of Starfest 2016 and I will leave it to her to report fully on whether it made a profit or not. Starfest is scheduled to go ahead in 2018 and its viability will be reassessed.
- 6.2 The society receives occasional requests for private star parties or for use of the telescopes at Dalby. It is possible to explore these as additional funding streams.

7 Conclusion

- 7.1 Looking back on the most successful and enjoyable events of this year: the public stargazing events; the Introduction to Astronomy event; the binoculars only event; the observing at Dalby we did manage, they all have one thing in common. Every one involved enthusiastic members turning up and getting involved.
- 7.2 As a member I would like to thank everyone who has had an input into this society this year and for making me glad I did not join York, even if their observatory has got a warm room.