



## **Scarborough & Ryedale Astronomical Society**

### **Annual General Meeting 2018**

#### **Report of the Secretary**

#### **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 In 2016, when I joined the committee, we 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 I hope that everyone has enjoyed the range of talks at Ayton this year. These included a number of regular speakers, such as Stuart Atkinson and Paul Money, and some new friends. I am particularly grateful to the learned members of Hull University who gave their time to provide an interesting range of talks.
- 2.2 Ad hoc observing sessions have not been regular enough and this is an area that could be improved.
- 2.3 Observing at Dalby has had mixed success. The mirrors on the 16 inch Dobsonian telescope were in poor condition as we started the season. After some debate we put the telescope into storage and replaced it with a 12 inch computerised Dobsonian, which is on permanent loan from John Harper. This telescope proved to be very popular a number of members made use of it in the lead up to Christmas. Unfortunately winter this year maintained its icy grip well into March, preventing further observing sessions.
- 2.4 The 12 inch Meade in the north dome had a major malfunction that prevented its use all season. Fortunately tenacious detective work by Neil Graham appears to have solved the problems and we can look forward to being able to use the telescope in the coming season.

#### **3 Objective 2 – To increase membership numbers**

- 3.1 At the end of last season the number of members was 48. For various reasons a number of members did not renew their memberships. Despite this we optimistically increased our target from 50 to 60 members. The year has seen a

steady flow of new and enthusiastic members joining the society and current number of members is 61.

- 3.2 It is particularly gratifying to see young people joining the society.

#### **4 Objective 3 – To develop member skills**

- 4.1 As described above, our ability to open the domes at Dalby was marred by the awful winter weather.
- 4.2 At last year's AGM there was a request for a beginner's course. In response to this Jon Borgia arranged sessions at Dalby and Ayton. The sessions were attended by up to 12 people and were well received.

#### **5 Objective 4 - To promote astronomy through outreach**

- 5.1 Four public observing sessions were scheduled at Dalby between October and March. Unfortunately the March meeting had to be cancelled due to the 'Beast from the East', which closed all access to the forest. Numbers attending were down on the previous year. This is a mixed blessing as smaller numbers are easier to accommodate and people get more from the experience were very successful.
- 5.2 When conditions permit, our ability to provide a tour of the night sky is a cause for concern as we rely upon John Harper as our resident expert.
- 5.3 On those nights when conditions are poor we have provided a range of talks in the community centre. More volunteers to give inputs to the public would be appreciated. That said, as Secretary I am very grateful to those members who give up their Friday evenings to support the public events. I have noted as many as 9 members turning up to support the events and for a society our size that is remarkable.
- 5.3 Talks have been given to various community groups such as the Women's Institute on 6 occasions - all by John Harper. In total well over 200 people of all ages have benefitted from John's knowledge and enthusiasm.
- 5.4 The society has been supporting a star gazing weekend at Humblebee Farm each October for several years. In order for the farm to advertise the event is agreed a year in advance. As the booking for October 2017 drew ever nearer I was very concerned by the lack of members with suitable knowledge and expertise to support it. In the end, and much to my relief, the booking was cancelled as the farm could not provide an indoor space and conditions were not good for observing. I reluctantly informed the farm that we were not in a position to support future events.
- 5.5 We enjoyed success at Ayton Village Fete last September. John and Sheila manned a stall inside the hall whilst Neil, Jon, Jonathan and myself set up telescopes outside for solar viewing.

- 5.6 The recent Dalby Explorer Day was another successful event where SARAS had a stand and opened our domes to the public. People were also able to measure the speed of light using a microwave oven and a Twix!

## **6 Objective 5 – To maintain the viability of the Society**

- 6.1 Starfest has traditionally kept the society afloat by boosting its coffers. It is an event that requires a lot of organisation. Sadly, last year we were not able to host the event as there was no one with the requisite skill and knowledge to take the lead.
- 6.2 This year Neil Graham has taken on the task of organising the event, with assistance from Sheila Anderson. The society owes them a debt of gratitude for this. Whether the event will break even or make a profit is yet to be seen. But what is important is the event has been saved and whatever success is achieved this year can be built upon next year.

## **7 Conclusion**

- 7.1 There is no escaping the fact that the society's inability to support events such as Humblebee Farm is a weakness. Fortunately such events do not take up much of our calendar and we can live without them if necessary. But we cannot live without supporting events at Dalby Forest if we are to maintain our good relationship with the Forestry Commission.
- 7.2 On the positive side the society has continued to flourish this season and encourage new members. Some of the highlights of the season have not involved any observing.
- 7.3 The Introduction to astronomy event last September was very well supported by members and encouraged others to join the society. It was also fantastic to have so many members give up their Saturday mornings: firstly to attend at Dalby to clean the domes and conduct an inventory of the store; and secondly to hack down the foliage surrounding the south dome. All of these occasions engendered a spirit of togetherness and willingness to be involved that was a joy to behold.
- 7.4 This is my last report as Secretary of the Society. I am not going to single anyone out for thanks. I took on the role of Secretary two years ago because I wanted to be part of a thriving, vibrant and welcoming society. That is exactly what I have witnessed this year. It has made all the work of organising events, booking speakers and the numerous mundane tasks that go with the job all very worthwhile. Thank you.