



*Advancing
Astronomy and
Geophysics*

THE ROYAL ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF 8TH MAY 2009

The one hundred and eighty ninth Annual General Meeting of the Society was held on this day in the Lecture Theatre of the Geological Society at Burlington House, London W1 at 14h00m.

The President, Professor A.C. Fabian, was in the Chair. Before commencing the meeting the President requested all non-Fellows, save staff of the Society, to withdraw. He then announced that the meeting was quorate and drew members' attention to copies of the agenda, Trustees' Report and Report of the Honorary Auditors, which were available for collection.

1. The minutes of the 188th Annual General Meeting of 9th May 2008 were confirmed and signed.
2. The President announced that Rev. G.A. Barber, Mr G. Harding, Mr C. North and Dr G.Q.G. Stanley had been appointed as Scrutineers of the Ballot for Council and invited fellows who had not already done so to cast their votes.
3. Dr H. Walker, Senior Secretary, presented a summary of the Report of the Trustees (Council) for the year 2008. She drew attention to the following highlights:
 - The role of the Council and its committees in managing the affairs of an organization of some 3,400 fellows of whom 12% were female, 15% under- 34 and 26% over- 65 years of age
 - The priority given to the interests of fellows who were professional scientists, including those not easily able to reach London, but also the importance attached to education and outreach
 - The increased utility of Burlington House since its refurbishment

In conclusion, Dr Walker paid tribute to the President, Treasurer, Executive Secretary and staff.

4. The Treasurer, Professor P.G. Murdin, presented the accounts for 2008 and answered members' questions. He drew attention to the Statement of Financial Activities which showed a loss of around £200,000 as a result of expenditure on the refurbishment of Burlington House and severance paid to a member of staff but pointed to the expectation of returning to surplus in 2009. He reminded members that he needed to budget for the costs associated with the tenancy of Burlington House and staff pensions as well as fund the provision of grants (including additional grants for IYA 2009 activities) and initiatives such as out-of –town meetings. The revenue to meet this would be a mixture of contributions (in connection with which he noted the continued upward trend in membership, but also its higher level of 'churn') and surpluses from the sale of journals, which went from strength to strength, supplemented by new income streams from the RAS –Springer book series and the arrangement with the Science Photo Library for the dissemination of RAS owned images. Given the highly unstable economic and financial environment he proposed to continue to restrain unnecessary expenditure and, for the while, not to encourage bids for large scale projects. In answer to questions

he advised the meeting that reserves would be held at a prudent level, noting that they should not be inconsistent with the Society's charitable status; that the maintenance of the fabric of the Society's premises was governed by the terms of the lease and that the transfer of investment management from HSBC to Newton was inspired by their relative performance records.

5. The report of the Honorary Auditors was presented by Mr.T.Boles on behalf of himself and Professor Nial Tanvir. He noted the positive attitude of the staff, the sound financial state and, compared to previous years, the lower level of the threat posed by open-access publishing. Turning to membership Mr Boles observed that the coming year would determine the success of the 'Friends of the RAS' category. He welcomed the increased attention overseas fellows would receive following the establishment of an International Committee as well as the increased engagement with public and outreach activities during the 'International Year of Astronomy' year. While the auditors had no particular recommendations they were struck by the library's need to resolve the tension between spending on journals, which were rarely read in hard cover form these days, and preserving the historic collections. In conclusion Mr Boles drew attention to the need for constant monitoring of the IT systems and to resolving some of the 'gremlins' in the A-V equipment in the lecture theatre.

6. The Treasurer introduced Council's proposals for admission fees and annual contributions for 2010. He intended to continue to match increases in the basic Annual Contribution to the rate of inflation. The latter's historically low level, however, would result in negligible changes, which he proposed to ignore. Accordingly he proposed that rates in 2010 should be unaltered and requested approval of the following:

Rate 1 Concessionary rates for students and older Fellows: £26.00. For:

1. Fellows who, on 2010 Jan 1 (or at the time of election in 2010), are full-time students at any level (or part-time postgraduate students enrolled on a research degree), who are studying Astronomy, Geophysics or a related subject, without age restriction and with certification.
2. Fellows who, after 2003 Jan 1, validly exercise their rights under Byelaw 38.

Rate 2 Concessionary rates for recently qualified and newly elected Fellows: £64.00. For:

1. Fellows who on 2010 Jan 1 are under 30 years old, or who completed full-time education less than 5 years before 2010 Jan 1.

Rate 3 The standard rate: £93.50. For:

1. Fellows who on 2010 Jan 1 are aged 30 or over and who completed full time education more than 5 years ago.

Rate 4 The concessionary rate for older Fellows having historic rights: £nil. For:

1. Fellows who exercised their rights under Byelaw 38 before 2003 Jan 1.

Conditional reductions:

Discount for IoP members: Rates 2 and 3 are reduced by 25% for Fellows who are also members of the Institute of Physics.

Discount for those who choose to reduce RAS administration through automatic payment: Rates 1, 2 and 3 are further reduced by £3 for Fellows who have already taken out a Direct Debit authority to charge Annual Contributions to Bank Accounts or a Continuous Payment Authority to charge credit cards, or who do so at the time of payment of the Annual Contribution.

Discount for those joining with the year half over: Rate 2 is reduced by 50% in the first year for non-student Fellows who are newly elected to membership after the end of June.

Further discount for students in their first year: Rate 1 is reduced to £1 in the first year of membership provided the newly-elected student Fellow takes out a Direct Debit authority to charge Annual Contributions to a Bank Account or a Continuous Payment Authority to charge a credit card at the time of election. (Note: the DD/CPA discount is applied after the first year).

Further discount for the newly qualified: The newly qualified Rate 2 is reduced by one third in the first year to which it applies to Fellows who transfer from Rate 1 to Rate 2 upon ceasing full time education, and to Fellows who are newly elected and eligible for Rate 2, provided the Fellow takes out or has earlier taken out a Direct Debit authority to charge Annual Contributions to a Bank Account or a Continuous Payment Authority to charge a credit card at the time of election. (Note: the DD/CPA discount is applied after the first year).

Rate 3 is likewise reduced by one third in the first year to which it applies to Fellows who are newly elected in 2010 and who are not eligible for Rate 1 or for Rate 2 provided the newly-elected Fellow takes out a Direct Debit authority to charge Annual Contributions to a Bank Account or a Continuous Payment Authority to charge a credit card at the time of election. (Note: the DD/CPA discount is applied after the first year).

Reductions are applied in the order given.

The Admission Fee remains at zero.

The President asked for a show of hands to approve these proposals. There was an overwhelming vote in favour.

7. The President announced that there had been two nominations for Honorary Auditors viz Professor Nial Tanvir and Dr Nick Hewitt. These were agreed unanimously.

8. The President asked for approval for the re-appointment of Baker Tilly UK Audit LLP as the Society's professional auditors for 2009. This was agreed unanimously.

9. On behalf of the Scrutineers of the Ballot, Dr G.Q.G. Stanley announced that 830 valid ballot papers (433 in 2008) and 5 (7 in 2008) spoilt votes had been cast for some 14 candidates (8 in 2008). Of these 576 votes had been cast electronically (116 in 2008). He went on to announce that the following Fellows were elected to the Council for 3 years: Professor K Blundell; Dr E Bunce; Professor A Hood and Professor O Lahav.

In addition, Professor J Drew and Professor JC Zarnecki were elected unopposed as Vice-Presidents for 2 years.

10. Dr H. Walker, Senior Secretary, proposed a vote of thanks to the retiring members of Council, the Honorary Auditors and the Scrutineers.

11. There being no other business the President closed the meeting having announced that the 190th Annual General Meeting of the Society would take place on 14th May 2010.

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A.C. Fabian
President

14th May 2010

