



*Advancing
Astronomy and
Geophysics*

THE ROYAL ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF 9TH MAY 2008

The one hundred and eighty eighth 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 M. Rowan-Robinson, 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, minutes of the 2007 AGM, Trustees' Report and Report of the Honorary Auditors, which were available for collection

1. The minutes of the 187th Annual General Meeting of 11th May 2007 were confirmed and signed.

2. The President announced that Rev.G.A. Barber, Dr A.E.L. Davies, Mr G. Harding, 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, Secretary, presented a summary of the Report of the Trustees (Council) for the year 2007. She drew attention to the following highlights:

- a series of submissions and reports on various policy related issues (and that some of these were influential was exemplified by the Report on Space Policy of the House of Commons Select Committee for Science and Technology which referred to RAS evidence no fewer than 19 times)
- 54 press releases, some of which were widely reported in the print and broadcast media, were issued in addition to 37 radio and television interviews given by the Press and Publicity Officer
- the creation of a web site listing 'kite-marked' educational resources to support secondary school teachers of astronomy and geophysics
- the planning of a programme of monthly public lunchtime lectures (launched in January 2008)
- the continued success of the Society's research journals with *MNRAS* increasing its circulation by 10% and *GJI* by 21%.
- the successful National Astronomy Meeting at the University of Central Lancashire
- the successful refurbishment of the Society's Burlington House premises

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 2007 and answered members' questions. He drew attention to the healthy cash reserves, which, even after the expenditure incurred by the refurbishment of Burlington House, would be at the level agreed by Council to be sufficient to cover all known risks and still provide the capacity to fund a further large-scale project, without being so large as to bring into question the Society's charitable status. In recent years, the Society's finances had shown a progressive reliance on surpluses generated by income from its journals. However, in order to limit future price increases to the journals so as not to unnecessarily put circulation at risk, since 2003 there had been a steady rise in the level of members' contributions, which had been deliberately increased above RPI. The Treasurer said that he felt that it was no longer acceptable to rebalance income by yet further above- inflation increases in contributions since that entailed a different risk, the resignation of fellows and the increased reluctance of non-fellows to consider membership.

5. The report of the Honorary Auditors was presented by Professor M. Bode on behalf of himself and Mr.T.Boles. He noted the positive attitude of the staff despite the inconveniences endured during the redevelopment of Burlington House which had fallen particularly hard on the library. The auditors were concerned that it operations should not be impaired following the planned reduction in the staffing complement. The Society, he added, continues in a sound financial state and, compared to the previous year, was less exercised about the threat posed by open-access publishing. Turning to membership Professor Bode welcomed both the exploration of a new 'friends' category and the increased attention overseas fellows would receive following the establishment of an International Committee. He felt the RAS had played a valuable part in representing the community during the ongoing STFC funding crisis but went on to hope that Society's attention could revert to the promotion of astronomy and geophysics, particularly during 2009, the International Year of Astronomy. In conclusion he reiterated the previous year's proposal for another strategic planning away day

6. The Treasurer introduced Council's proposals for admission fees and annual contributions for 2009. As foreshadowed, he proposed that the increase in the basic Annual Contribution in 2009 would (only) match the rate of inflation. In addition he proposed to extend the concessionary rate to part-time postgraduate students enrolled on a research degree

Accordingly the Treasurer asked for Council's approval of the following:

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

1. Fellows who, on 2009 Jan 1 (or at the time of election in 2009), 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 2009 Jan 1 are under 30 years old, or who completed full-time education less than 5 years before 2009 Jan 1.

Rate 3 The standard rate: £93.50. For:

1. Fellows who on 2009 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 2009 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 Mr. Boles and Professor Nial Tanvir. 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 2008. This was agreed unanimously.

9. On behalf of the Scrutineers of the Ballot, Dr. A.E.L. Davies announced that 433 valid ballot papers (420 in 2007) and 7 (0 in 2007) spoilt votes had been cast for some 8 candidates. Of these 116 votes had been cast electronically (65 in 2007). She went on to announce that the following Fellows were elected to the Council for 3 years: Dr. Barber; Dr Browning; Dr Corbett and Professor Ivison.

In addition, Professors Cruise and Hapgood were elected unopposed as Vice-Presidents for 2 years, and Professor Barstow as Secretary for 5 years.

10. Dr H. Walker, 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 189th Annual General Meeting of the Society would take place on 8th May 2009.

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A.C. Fabian
President

8th May 2009