

Athenaeum Astronomy Association
Interim Chairman's Annual Report
Presented at AGM 28th September 2017

On behalf of the Athenaeum Astronomy Association welcome!

Tonight is a special night, one that all of our members, friends and supporters should be immensely proud of.

Before I present the details of my report I wish to mention a number of people and organisations who have supported us along our journey, some of whom are here tonight;

- St Edmundsbury Borough Council, especially Gary Quilter, Damien Parker, Dwaine Gray and his excellent Nowton Park team
- Realise Futures
- David Murton, Chairman of OASI
- Paul Whiting, OASI
- Deborah - Director of Kinetic Science Foundation
- Andrew Speed, District and Town Councillor

We are extremely grateful for their support and we hope that we can continue to rely on this going forward, especially in achieving our aim to deliver outreach work and in our quest to complete the important restoration of the observatory and telescope in the historic Athenaeum.

On the 2nd of February 2017 at the first general meeting the AAA constitution was agreed and an interim committee of nine volunteers was voted in to steer the AAA's activities until its first AGM in September 2017 – and here we are!

Going forward the interim committee focussed on 'Bringing the stars closer to home' which it began to fulfil through a set of objectives which continue to underpin all that the association does. These are;

- 1.** To promote and advance public education in the science of Astronomy and related branches of research;

2. To hold regular outreach meetings using lectures, discussions, films and practical observations;
3. To provide facilities for those who wish to study astronomy within the Association and in the community at large;
4. To communicate with, and mutually support, other groups of amateur astronomers;
5. To extend public understanding of, and respect for, the historic value of the Athenaeum Observatory and Telescope as part of our local heritage;
6. With the support of West Suffolk/Borough/Town Councils instigate and encourage the restoration of, and access to, the Athenaeum observatory and Telescope.

In support of these objectives we have as a new association achieved a great deal during our brief history of time. We have;

- Established a constitution
- Formed an interim committee
- Met fortnightly for observations and presentations
- Created a web site and a presence on social media
- Become a member of the Federation of Astronomical Societies
- Published a members handbook
- Hosted our first star party in partnership with SEBC and will be hosting a further two nights next month
- Had our first members excursion, a trip to the Greenwich Observatory
- Supported OASI at their special event as they celebrated an amazing 50 years

And much more.

Of course none of these achievements would have been possible without the support of our members, friends and our interim committee who 'boldly went where no one had gone before'!

Whilst we are proud of what we have achieved I have witnessed something that is arguably far greater than the sum of all of these achievements. I am referring to a group of strangers (now forty five and growing) who came together because of a shared passion for astronomy, a willingness to learn and share knowledge and a desire to support others.

I have seen friendships develop, individuals with an insatiable appetite to explore current and new thinking and members willing to research and deliver presentations - for some this was a first! The air of excitement as members chat about a wide range of topics; Cassini, the Moon, Meteorites, Exo Planets, the Sun and much more, is a tribute to our members.

So I think it is pretty fair to say we have had one hell of a year! Whilst we have always tried to have fun along the way we have I believe we are already being recognised as an established astronomy group.

I ask that you accept this report.

Thank you

Mike Kirkham

Interim Chairman 2017