

NORMAN LOCKYER OBSERVATORY SOCIETY LIMITED

A company limited by guarantee (No. 3048646) and a Registered Charity (No. 1048807)

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Norman Lockyer Observatory Society Limited held in the Donald Barber Lecture Theatre, Norman Lockyer Observatory, Salcombe Hill, Sidmouth on Friday 8th November 2024 at 7.00pm

1. The Chairman welcomed everybody included David Wilkins. Apologies were received from Jonathan Milford and Janet.
2. The Minutes of the 2023 Annual General Meeting were approved. Proposed by Alan Green and seconded by Dave Jones. No Matters arising.
3. To receive the Annual Report from the Chairman. See copy. Highlights: Our Membership (273) and Astro scouts (16) are growing in numbers. Private group visits are also increasing. Events held include a family day with 240 attending and a very successful South West Astro fair. Two Introduction to Astronomy courses were run. A major electrical test and upgrade was carried out at the NLO's expense. Discussions are taking place with EDDC regarding maintenance and repairs to domes. A meeting will take place on 26th November to receive a presentation from EDDC on this topic.
4. The Accounts for the year ending 31st March 2024 were presented and approved with the need for the inclusion of a comment giving an explanation regarding the property reserve. Proposed by Mike Seconded Tony
5. To re-appoint as the Society's accountants Easterbrook Eaton Ltd and to authorise the Directors to fix their remuneration. Proposed by Vikki Brown and Seconded by Kathleen Dollery.
6. Election of Directors (see personal statements below). As there are six vacancies but only five candidates a ballot was not required and all those standing were appointed. Proposed Dave Jones. Seconded Steve Savage approved.
 - a. The meeting appointed **Des Howlett** as Director (re-standing)
 - b. The meeting appointed **Jeff Legg** as Director (re-standing)
 - c. The meeting appointed **Hilary Naylor** as a Director
 - d. The meeting appointed **David Strange** as Director (re-standing)
 - e. The meeting appointed **Karen Williams** as a Director
7. The Chairman closed the formal proceedings of the AGM at 7.40pm. Interest Groups, Sections, Members' Forum & Workgroups shared their achievements of this year. Our Chief Astronomer Alan Smith started by giving us his report, which included many excellent images captured by members. Alan was then thanked for his excellent presentation and for his significant work in preparing the selection of telescopes for members to use on evenings.

Dave Alexander gave a short talk on volunteering at NLO. We are currently getting more than 100 people at open events. He paid thanks to those who volunteered a lot this past year. Additional volunteers are required.

Astro Scouts report by Andy Anning. Currently there are 18 plus two recent joiners bringing the total to 20. Age range is 8 to 15. This gives a spread of knowledge such that we are considering splitting into two groups. Andy gave thanks to all those who helped during the past year.

Dave Jones delivered an update on the Technical Centre which included a presentation. We received a donation of a receiver for the UK Meteor Beacon Project. We also have 4 cameras for meteor detection. There is an All-sky camera. We still have the Green Wheelie bin containing the magnetometer.

A vote of thanks was given to Janet for her story telling.

Jeffery Legg
Acting Secretary

Please find on the following pages:

2 to 4 Chairman's Report – David Strange

4 to 7 Personal prospective Director introductions (*in alphabetical surname order*)

The Minutes of the 2023 AGM are *published on the website*:

<https://normanlockyer.com/our-society/agm/>

Chairman's Report – David Strange

I am very happy to report that since the COVID years our membership has continued to grow, and we now have 273 adult members of which 81 have joined in the last year. Astro scout numbers have also been growing and we now have 16 regularly attending with parents. Many thanks to Andy, Alex, Shona and Kathleen for leading them.

Many thanks to all NLO volunteers who have made 2024 another successful year. In particular, our last few public open evenings have presented us with a problem of how to manage large groups of over 100 visitors at any one time. By doubling up the planetarium shows and talks we found we can divide large numbers into groups of 15 for the dome tours, which although somewhat tiring for our presenters means that our visitors get an NLO experience in the two hours of their visit despite the large numbers on site.

Our private group visits have also been gathering momentum, and many thanks are due to Mike, Karen, and Alan who have been helping out here.

NLO Events

Our Family Day for British Science Week was held on Saturday 16th March. It was a successful event despite the weather with an attendance of 240. Colyton Grammar came along as usual and set up their hands-on-science displays in the Jeanne Edyvean Centre. They also held rocket launching

sessions outside in the fog! In the planetarium our NLO storyteller Janet Dowling gave several sessions on star myths as well as planetarium shows throughout the day. The theme for this year's BSW was "Time" so we invited Science communicator Richard Elham to come along and talk about "How we measure time", and NLO Director Des Howlett talked about GPS satellite communications.

After a five-year absence, the South West Astronomy Fair came back with enthusiasm. We had nearly 300 visitors on what proved to be a sunny day with plenty of solar telescopes set up to show people solar prominences and sunspots. The talks began with Dr. Garry Hunt who had worked on Mars projects and the Voyager missions. Carolyn Kennett gave a talk on Archeoastronomy, and Mike Foulkes on Saturn. Peter Lawrence and Paul Abel gave the final talk telling us what to look out for in the months ahead. Sidmouth Quilting Group also showed us plans of a large quilt they are currently making which will record the life and times of Lady Mary Lockyer and be presented to us in due course.

Our final big event of the year was our Family Fun Day held with Sidmouth Science Festival on Sunday 13th October. Again, we were blessed with good weather and a great turnout of visitors. The NLO was humming with loads of activities to engage young minds. Space Detectives were here with their virtual reality headsets and space workshops. Mike O'Leary was story telling in the planetarium and Exeter University Space Exe society held talks on alien life and exo-planets in the lecture theatre.

We held another successful Introduction to Astronomy Course on Saturday 6th April for 35 attendees and again on 7th September for 28 attendees. These are always popular courses, and we tend to gain new members quite regularly.

Many thanks to Robin Devonshire and Bob Miles who have been running the STEM group which currently meet on the first Tuesday afternoon of the month at 2.30pm at NLO, and thanks also to Mike Curran who has been hosting the Cosmology group on the fourth Tuesday of the month on Zoom.

On Tuesday 6th August Mrs Christine Marsh and family very kindly donated a large pair of observation binoculars 25 x 105 to NLO. These were used by the legendary George Alcock OBE who had discovered 5 comets and 5 novae with these binoculars. We were offered these binoculars as the Marsh family were so impressed with the standard of the display of the Mond Equatorial which her late husband Glyn had bequeathed to us. Our Mond display is now complete with a projected display telling of its history. Many thanks must go to Allan Brittan who spent many hours in erecting this telescope and all its components.

Exeter University Space Exe Society have recently enquired whether the NLO would be willing to have their 5m radio telescope to be erected on site. We are entering into discussions with them.

Buildings and Maintenance:

We have had an electrical safety inspection and major upgrade to many of our fuse boxes and power points in June. The work was carried out by Paul Chick of Ex-Electrics at a cost of £15,000.

We have recently installed solar powered path lights in the centre of all NLO concrete paths. These emit a faint red glow during the night illuminating the direction of the path to our domes. These are proving very successful and help our visitors find their way safely around the site.

The board has been trying for some time to get East Devon District Council (EDDC) to commit to the major repairs needed for the Kensington Dome. At present there is no funding approved for these works to commence. We have been advised that we will be contacted by EDDC Asset Management Working Group, to find a way forward.

Our plans for a ground mounted solar pv system did not materialise as we were unable to comply with a net biodiversity gain requirement to enter a management agreement for a period of 30 years to

manage an area of grassland in another part of the NLO grounds. As our lease expires in 2035, we were unable to agree these terms. It also appears that EDDC are unable to extend our lease for a further ten years.

The re-establishment of the Victoria Dome is held up waiting the return to work of EDDC's conservation officer and we hope for approval soon.

Regarding the NLO Management Committee, we have been advised that the present council are replacing two of their current representatives which will occur at the next meeting on 3rd December. We hope to have an update on the repairs to the domes at this meeting.

Forthcoming Events: We are planning to hold our South West Astronomy Fair on June 28th in 2025, and planning is now underway.

Final thoughts

It would seem that climate change and increasing temperatures are now noticeably giving us more water vapour/clouds in our atmosphere. Certainly, there appears to be less frequency of having a clear Friday observing night than that of a few years ago. It's therefore even greater reason to make as much use of clear skies as and when they occur. It's great to see many members have bought smart telescopes such as the Seestar which can be set up in an instant to give pictures on a phone. We have recently seen some wonderful pictures of Comet Tsuchinshan-ATLAS taken with this little 50mm device. It didn't turn out to be the comet of the century but one could just make it out with the naked eye.

However, no matter how smart this latest technology may become there is still no substitute for looking through a telescope with the mark one eyeball, or even just sitting out in a reclining deck chair and taking in the vastness of the Milky Way with your naked eye. Another all sky event that we were recently treated to was the recent auroral storm on May 11th and again on October 10th and many pictures were captured from NLO.

Scientific studies have shown that spending time in nature enhances positive emotions and reduces stress. People with a greater connection to the night sky had better mental health and felt happier. At the recent British Association of Planetaria conference, it was reported that the Lowell Observatory in the U.S. was currently installing an outside planetarium with heated seats! No technology here, just the need for cloud free skies overhead!

Finally, I should like to thank all those regular members who come along to support our events. We couldn't offer all the events we put on without you. However, we will always welcome new members into the fold. You don't need to be an expert astronomer, and we will give you easy to follow instructions on how to be a site guide or dome presenter.

Best wishes

David Strange

October 2024

NLO Chairman

Personal prospective Director introductions (in alphabetical surname order)

Personal Statement from Dr Des Howlett

I have been keen on astronomy from an early age, having been interested in space technology from the end of the Apollo programme and through to the present day. First licensed as a Radio Amateur at the age of 15, science and technology forms an important part of my life in general. I hold two degrees in electronic engineering and have been recognised for my professional work in both Europe and the United States. I now teach electronics and software programming to engineers across the UK and rest of Europe.

I see education and promotion of astronomy as an incredibly important driver for the future success of the observatory. Inspiring younger generations to have an interest in any aspect of the hobby is vital, while remembering that older people have a vital role to play in providing stability and enthusiasm. It was thanks to having two uncles who encouraged and inspired me from a very young age that I am where I am today, and I feel I have a duty to continue that with others.

I am standing for re-election in 2024 to continue to the work we have started in improving facilities for members and visitors since we reopened after the pandemic. I would like to think that I make a difference in helping the observatory to grow and become a more important centre for astronomy and learning.

Personal Statement from Jeff Legg

My name is Jeffery (Jeff) Legg and I have been a member for six years and a Director for three years. I retired seven years ago after a long career in industry. My first job involved grinding lenses, polishing prisms and measuring the focal lengths of lenses and mirrors where I worked for, Gooch and Housego. Whilst there I purchased my first telescope, but only occasionally used it to look at the Moon. My later career took me to running IT Departments for companies and then on to Project Management. As a Project Manager for many years, I was responsible for multiple implementations of large computer systems which control companies on multiple sites. These companies were in aerospace, chemical and automotive industries. In later years I was lucky enough to spend long periods of time in Portugal where the night skies were very dark and mostly cloudless. I purchased a larger telescope to have a better observing experience. We now live in Somerset about an hours drive from the observatory. I attended an introductory course at the NLO and decided to become a member on the day. Since then I have taken the GCSE course, my thanks to Kate for her hard work in preparing material and teaching us. During the past four years I have been assisting most Thursday mornings with site maintenance. Should I be re-elected, I will continue to promote the NLO and support our society to ensure its long term future.

Personal Statement from Hilary Naylor

I run a property business with my partner, who is also a member of the NLO. Hence I have had involvement with councils and government legislation as well as the practical aspect of renovating houses.

I joined the NLO about 10 years ago. Since then I have been involved in most of the groups, including giving talks to the Cosmology group, attending the STEM talks and helping with archiving as part of the Thursday morning group. Having done a lot of volunteering for open evenings, I organised volunteers for the recent science festival event at the NLO. I also instigated holding meeting with volunteers on open evenings to ensure the events ran smoothly.

My main aim at the NLO is to make us into a cohesive society and to promote the NLO in a positive light on open days. To that end, I talk to new members, go between as many groups as possible and am welcoming to visitors on open days. I also started our magazine which appears quarterly in the members area.

Having been so heavily involved with the society for so long, I have chosen now to apply for membership of the board as the NLO is likely to be facing a critical time. The unique way this observatory is run is worth preserving and if this is no longer possible, we need to make decisions openly and with as much input from the membership as possible on its future direction.

As a board member, I would see communication as important. Firstly, with regard to the NLO membership, I would be looking to see the minutes of board meetings being published on the members area of the website and would put myself forward as being a go to person for members liaison with the board. Secondly, productive communication with EDDC, as our landlords, is vital at this time and this is an area I would like to become involved with.

It took a lot of struggle to set this society up. We, the entire membership, are now its custodians. It is not only our responsibility but our right to ensure its future.

Personal Statement from David Strange

I have been very honoured to be NLO Chairman for the past twelve years. I have been a keen amateur astronomer for over fifty years during which period I have been actively involved in astronomy outreach at the Wessex Astronomical Society and at NLO. We are very privileged to receive much financial support from our community and members, and over the past twenty years we have seen much development of the NLO in the new Connaught Dome, LTC, and Jeanne Edyvean Centre. I should like to see the NLO continue to grow, particularly with regard to adapting to new technologies and promoting astronomy to the younger generation. The NLO also has a deep and valuable historical archive which needs to be promoted and preserved in digital format, and I shall continue to support that project.

Personal statement from Karen Williams

Main Aims

- Continue to raise the profile of the NLOS and Sir Norman locally and nationally
- Improve links with EDDC
- Institute regular sessions whereby members old and new can tour the site, get to know the Observatory, its facilities and its history, see what's new, what's happening in the different areas, and generally get to know the wider membership, thereby encouraging members to become more involved with the NLOS.

What would I bring to the role of a director? In my work and volunteering roles, comments have been made about my approachability and good humour, my insightful comments, and my ability to communicate on a variety of levels.

My dome presentations are well-received, and no one is afraid to ask what seem to be simple questions. The stargazing guide I produced, and which was for sale in the NLO shop, was partly inspired by the quantity of such questions and from the presentations I delivered to the Astroscouts. The talks I give at a local library in Exeter and to small school and scout groups, demonstrate my ethos of promoting the NLO wherever and whenever I can. My working background was in education as a specialist teaching assistant and as an administrator in various organisations.

I would continue the good work of previous directors in bringing together the various interest groups, improve communication to members, have greater transparency in decision making, and encourage all members to contribute something tangible to the NLOS, be it time, resources, or promoting it. With over 20 years of involvement at the NLOS, I have a good knowledge of what has been tried successfully before, and how the society has grown and evolved. I remain inspired by the legacy of Norman Lockyer and continue to find many new things to learn and enjoy at the Observatory.

How did I become involved with the NLOS? Back in 2003 my family were moved to Devon from Berkshire. Having a lifelong interest in space and the Moon in particular I was delighted to see there was an observatory nearby, as indeed was my daughter who had avidly studied for her Brownie stargazing badge. But it was through a chance meeting with Alan Green, that proved the catalyst for actually joining. Alison became one of the original members of the then Young Observers Group under Kathleen Dollery while I gradually became more and more involved with active stargazing and gradually learned how to use the Lockyer telescope under the patient guidance of John Bardsley. The group then attending on Fridays was small and hot chocolate was always much appreciated after observing outside for a while.

Following the ill health of John Bardsley, membership declined on Fridays, and I was asked to restart the Friday Observing Group. I was delighted to see the group grow from just a few members to over 40. I produced weekly presentations for when the weather was not kind and was later assisted by Kerry Powell until a small group took over the running of it. I was then invited by Kathleen to assist with the younger members of the Astroscouts in 2014 which I loved, providing activities and presentations as well as going outside whenever possible. We used the Lockyer telescope to supplement naked eye observing.



Unfortunately, due to the ill health of my father in 2019 I needed to step back from being an active member and then the Pandemic hit! I was delighted in January 2023 to return to helping at open events as and when possible. I was also able to join the History/STEM group, where I give the occasional talk.

The Lockyer telescope is my favourite, and I love sharing my enthusiasm with visitors on open days. I produced a set of notes, with John Ponsford, for use by presenters new to the Mond Dome. I am currently researching Sir Norman's personal history and am revisiting the papers held by Exeter University first looked at by George Wilkins. It is an additional bonus this year to have made contact with a relative of Sir Norman which brings his back story to life.

I look forward to supporting the NLOS still further as a Director.

Karen Williams BA(Hons) (Open)

