

PRETORIA CENTRE OF THE
ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTHERN AFRICA
ANNUAL REPORT July 1st 2020 – June 30th 2021

Another year disrupted by Covid. All our meetings have been by video link. The Committee decided that the format of the video meetings should consist of two half hour talks and that What's Up would be written by a member and submitted to and published in the newsletter. The format has worked relatively successfully, and we have managed a couple of full length talks.

We have had the pleasure of hosting members of the Blackburn Leisure Astronomical Society (BLAS - based in Yorkshire UK), and they have provided a speaker on occasions. Some of our members have also attended the BLAS meetings, although the time difference in the northern hemisphere winter does make a late start for us (sometimes 10.00 pm!).

It has not been easy to find speakers this year, and some of the presentations were prepared at short notice. Offers of talks are always welcome.

Average attendance has been about 23.

The following main topics were presented.

- 2020 07 “Winter WhatsApp Star Party 2020” – by Johan Moolman, Percy Jacobs, Neville Young. This was a virtual “Kambro weekend”, each did an observing from home run as if at Kambro
- 2020 08 Michael Poll told us why the Sky is Blue.
Danie Barnardo gave some basics about Mars – its formation, statistics and its moons
- 2020 09 Bosman Olivier talked about Gravity Waves.
Danie Barnardo detailed the geology of Mars
- 2020 10 Andy Russell (BLAS) talked about “Amateur radio astronomy” detailing the BLAS experience.
Craig Cloke gave a history of the making of the 200 inch mirror of the Hale telescope
- 2020 11 “The frustrations of changing from one imaging camera to another” by Louis Kloke .
“Telescope optics testing and what went wrong with the Hubble Space Telescope.”
by Johan Smit.
- 2021 01 “Haloes” by Michael Poll.
“Remote control of telescopes.” by Bosman Olivier.
- 2021 02 “The 100 year anniversary of the discovery that the Crab nebula is expanding ” by Michael Poll. “Observational astronomy ” by Percy Jacobs.
- 2021 03 “My place in the incomprehensible Universe ” by André Buys.
- 2021 04 “Microbes on Mars?” by Michael Poll
- 2021 05 "The Planets up close and personal - a journey into planetary imaging." Clyde Foster
- 2021 06 Johan Moolman talked about the 2021 Karoo Star Pary and Percy Jacobs discussed the Starry Sky software with reference to the phases of the Moon.

The Centre thanks all these speakers for their contributions.

Meetings have been chaired by:

Johan Smit, Bosman Olivier, Louis Kloke, Michael Poll, , Pierre Lourens, Percy Jacobs and Danie Barnardo. Thanks go to those who Chaired the meetings, and dutifully submitted reports to the newsletter.

“What’s Up?” has been written in the newsletter by Michael Poll, Johan Smit and Danie Barnardo

Observing Evening Report Michael Poll

Observing evenings were in abeyance because of limits on gatherings, and in any case we were not able to use the CBC grounds. However for May, Danie Barnardo identified a possible alternative location – a rugby club pitch in Silverton. An observing evening was arranged for May 21st, but it was cloudy and only three people attended, and in June there were only two attendees. No serious observing was done on either occasion.

Outreach events.

None of the usual type of outreach events were possible, but in September 2020 Johan Smit attended at our dark sky site at Deelfontein with about six guests, and in October Bosman Olivier also attended with a few guests.

The Karoo Star Party was held successfully from May 12th -16th 2021.

Section Reports

Library: Danie Barnardo.

The Library together with the monthly meetings and viewing evenings, were unable to function this past year, as a result of the Covid pandemic. However, all is not bad: Barbara Cunow donated a total of 34 books to the library. Thanks very much to her. Our web-based Library database is also in the process of being transformed to a more user-friendly version and the new version should be available on our website soon. In the meantime, the database in its old format is still available from the website.

We are confident that the library will be able to fully function again soon.

Website: Danie Barnardo

The website is functioning as planned and proved extremely useful for the advertisement of the Kambro weekend and other Centre events during the year, as well as details of monthly meetings. A website section to advertise used equipment remains popular and seems to function well, according to reports from users.

The Observation Section page of the website remained very popular with users and new content is added from time-to-time.

The Archive section of the website contains all newsletters as far back as 1988 and continues to be updated on a monthly basis. The website is hosted by Afrihost, who provides a reliable service.

The table below contains statistics of usage for the past year. Thanks to Johan Smit for providing this information and providing help with the e-mail web functions to committee members.

| Month | Unique visitors | Number of visits | Pages | Hits | Bandwidth |
|--------|-----------------|------------------|-------|-------|-----------|
| Jul-20 | 187 | 263 | 992 | 5,493 | 2.27 GB |
| Aug-20 | 256 | 330 | 1,147 | 7,670 | 2.58 GB |
| Sep-20 | 221 | 273 | 961 | 4,717 | 896.53 MB |
| Oct-20 | 247 | 301 | 820 | 5,732 | 1.38 GB |
| Nov-20 | 214 | 288 | 865 | 5,743 | 1.60 GB |
| Dec-20 | 278 | 377 | 1,770 | 8,917 | 496.71 MB |
| Jan-21 | 212 | 302 | 941 | 4,707 | 496.95 MB |
| Feb-21 | 191 | 269 | 1,073 | 4,775 | 771.28 MB |
| Mar-21 | 245 | 358 | 1,165 | 5,585 | 360.93 MB |
| Apr-21 | 242 | 374 | 1,358 | 5,103 | 257.19 MB |
| May-21 | 265 | 376 | 1,836 | 5,122 | 404.92 MB |
| Jun-21 | 222 | 304 | 1,020 | 4,060 | 150.21 MB |

Newsletter Editor: Pierre Lourens

The Editor has noted that sometimes he is short of copy because there was no Chairman's report of the previous meeting and/ or What's Up? features have not been submitted.

It was noted that we get newsletters from other Centres which the Editor circulates to members, and it has been decided that he should continue to do this.

Newsletter Contributors : Apart from reports, contributions have been made to the Newsletter by Magda Streicher, Johan Moolman and Pierre Lourens

Telescope Making Class, including ScopeX : Johan Smit

The classes have continued as and when lockdown restrictions allowed. As of January 2021 three classes had been held, and during April 2021 there were new attendees each Saturday. The attendees were mainly from Johannesburg, including the Witwatersrand University student community.

Curator of instruments: Louis Kloke (& Johan Smit)

Some telescopes have been donated to the Centre and it has been decided that donated telescopes should be given away to members without telescopes if the telescopes are not being used. It is intended to make a list of telescopes that could be donated.

At present the telescopes to be disposed of are in the dome at CBC, but we do not have access to the premises due to Covid restrictions. The situation will be reviewed when we can regain access.

Centre representative : Bosman Olivier

- The ASSA AGM was held August 12th 2020, and the Centre Chairman, Bosman Olivier, hosted the meeting.
- Some members of the Centre spoke at the SAAO 200th Anniversary Meeting.
- The Centre Chairman arranged a meeting on behalf of ASSA for the handing over of an ASSA award to Clyde Foster.

**Observations Co-ordinators Percy Jacobs and Louis Kloke
Percy Jacobs reports**

Activity continues in the Observing Section WhatsApp Group and information is shared regarding various night sky activities. We continue to encourage one another to go outside and use equipment and observe whatever it is that they wish. The various interesting submissions made by the members and participants are displayed and kept on the Pretoria ASSA Centre website under the Observing Section.

Publicity No report. It is not feasible to promote the Centre if we cannot meet.

Christian Brothers College

We did notify CBC of our meeting dates for 2021, and we did note that the dates would be provisional. The principal, Bernard Langdon wrote on November 4th 2020: "*When the pandemic is over or we have a vaccine and/or the threat/risk levels are negligible, I will be more than happy to accommodate your society. Until then, CBC will not be in a position to extend the use of our facilities to you.*" We remain grateful to CBC for keeping the Centre in mind.

2021 Sky Guide distribution

The Sky Guides were made available from various collection points as in previous years. Bosman Olivier, Michael Poll, Johan Smit and Danie Barnardo were the contact persons.

Committee

The committee comprised nine persons after the last 2020 AGM – namely Bosman Olivier, Johan Smit, Michael Poll, Michelle Ferreira, Pierre Lourens, Danie Barnardo, Craig Kloke, Louis Kloke and Percy Jacobs.

Percy Jacobs has indicated that he wishes to step down from the Committee for 2021 - 2022, although he intends to remain an active member of the Centre. Percy joined the Committee at the July 2007 AGM. The Centre thanks Percy for all his input and support over the years.

The remaining members of the Committee have stated that they are willing to stand again for 2021 – 2022.

Thanks

Thanks are due to all members who have supported and kept the Centre going over the lockdown period. Particular thanks are due to Johan Smit for organising the video links