

**PRETORIA CENTRE OF THE
ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTHERN AFRICA
ANNUAL REPORT July 1st 2025 – June 30th 2026**

1 MEETINGS

As noted in a number of Annual Reports recently, finding presenters for our formal monthly meetings is still quite a problem. Thanks are due to Johan Smit for his efforts in this respect, but the burden of giving talks and presenting What's Up falls mainly on Committee members.

As noted last year our monthly meetings since January 1st 2025 have been held on line only and are no longer held at CBC. We are again pleased to welcome on line-visitors from out of town, who would not otherwise be able to attend, and we must mention Etsui who regularly joins in from Japan.

• Attendance 2025 -2026

	Total
23/7/2025	21
27/8/2025	18
24/9/2025	15
22/10/2025	21
26/11/2025	19
21/1/2026	*
25/2/2026	20
25/3/2026	22
22/4/2026	21
27/5/2026	24
24/6/2026	22
Average	20

• The following Main topics were presented.

2025 07	Not recorded	
2026 08	Not recorded	
2025 09	Video – Lunar Rover	Johan Smit
2026 10	“Light Curves of Variable Stars”	Analize Jooste.
2025 11	“What not to buy for Christmas”	Johan Smit
2026 01	“Spectroscopy” :	Percy Jacobs
2026 02	“Telescope Mounts” :	Johan Smit
2026 03	“Introduction to Solar System Astrophotography”.	John Lindsay-Smith
2026 04	“The Milankovic Cycles – Precession and Eccentricity”	Michael Poll
2026 05	“Nebulae – Catalogues and Classification”	Michael Poll
2026 06	“Six Constellations”	Michael Poll

What's up has been presented both in the newsletter and at the Monthly meetings by:

07 Johan Smit 08 09 Johan Smit 10 Michelle Ferreria 11 Michael Poll 01 Danie Barnardo
02 Johan Jordaan 03 Johan Smit 04 Danie Barnardo 05 Johan Jordaan 06 Michelle Ferreira

- The “What's Up” presenter also Chaired the meetings
- Thanks are due to the above Presenters.

2 SECTION REPORTS

2.1 2025 – 2026 Observing Evening Report Michael Poll

The Observing Evenings have been reasonably successful considering the weather and other circumstances. We normally averaged about a dozen attendees on the observing evenings that were held, which is more than last year's average, and in May we had a great turnout of about 40 people – fortunately for that evening the sky was clear and amongst other things, the Moon, Jupiter and Venus were well placed. We also had about twelve people on a cloudy evening in June, even though there was no observing. We usually had enough telescopes available.

With the light pollution the skies at CBC are much worse than in the past and intermittent cloud was a frequent problem - we had to cancel the November 2025 and April 2026 observing because of total cloud cover and cancel the April evening it was rained as well. The latter was called off at the last minute which was unfortunate, as there was no time to inform anyone.

Three members were regular attendees and were available to “host” the evenings – Johan Smit, Johan Jordaan and Michael Poll. In fact in August when none of these were available for one reason or another, we decided to cancel the Observing Evening.

Although we made quite a few telescopic observations, because of the sky conditions - light pollution and a dusty atmosphere, we often could only see the brightest stars, and sometimes only a few of the first magnitude stars. We could look at double stars and the brighter nebulae and clusters and with the planets that were available during the year (Saturn Jupiter Mars and Venus) so we were kept sufficiently occupied, plus, there is always plenty to talk about. The observations made were recorded in the monthly Newsletter.

In spite of the atmospheric conditions, the Observing Evenings were and still are, useful and fun. They were useful in that newcomers could be shown around the sky in real time and look at and through telescopes and the evenings also lent themselves to informal background discussions and explanations.

2.2 Outreach and Other Events

Presentations to outside organisations are done by the Centre in the interests of the promotion of astronomy. However, the number of activities that were mounted during the year were very few.

- **July 4th -5th 2025 Girl Guides, Johannesburg.**

Johan Smit and Johan Jordaan attended. About 25- 30 attendees.

- **July 26th 2025 ASSA/ESSA**

Johan Smit and Johan Jordaan attended & another centre member attended, as well as Chris Stewart & other Johannesburg Centre Members. About 70+ attendees.

- **July 18th & 19th 2025 Voortrekkers Suider Cross, Zwavelpoort Primary School.**

Danie Barnardo attended. Sixteen children and four adults.

- **August 23rd 2025: Deelfontein**

This was a Centre event.

Bosman Olivier, Frikkie le Roux, Gert van der Westhuizen and Johan Smit attended.

- **August 30th 2025: Johannesburg Girl Guides.**

Johan Smit and Johan Jordaan attended. There were 10-12 girls doing the Astronomy Badge.

Johan Smit gave a talk about SETI

- At the Committee Meeting of July 28th 2025 the Chairman commented that it is now difficult for the Centre to get a team together to do viewing evenings. There are not many people available, and it is generally the same few. Also, a number of members who used to offer their services have moved away. It was agreed that we can no longer commit to offering viewing evenings. For example, if there were at least 100 people at the Zoo and it would be embarrassing if we could only supply two telescopes.

A compromise for schools and groups would be to invite them to our viewing evenings. We could still possibly do events for places with which we have a history.

Two groups who had provisionally requested Observing evenings for September 2025 were advised that we were not able to oblige.

2.3 Website and Social Media: Danie Barnardo.

- The website is functioning very well. It is possible to contact the Committee members via the website, resulting in several queries to Committee members during the year. It is also noticeable that a query about astronomy in Pretoria on Google results in a top listing of the Centre's website.
- Centre meetings are advertised on the website monthly during the year and this feature proved to be very popular.

- A website section to advertise used equipment was also extremely popular and several items were advertised during the year.
- The Archive section of the website contains newsletters as far back as 1988, which provide a history of the Centre and its activities.
- The website consistently attracts in the region of 1,000 hits per month.
- Feedback from visitors to the website frequently attract compliments for its look and feel and general layout.
- The website is hosted by Afrihost, who provides an extremely reliable service.

2.4 Newsletter Editor

- We were sorry to learn that Pierre Lourens had died in September 2025. Pierre had been editing and circulating the newsletter since at least 2003. As a consequence of his death there were no newsletters in August and September while alternative arrangements were being made. Michael Poll took over the newsletter for October and November and subsequently agreed to do it up until the 2026 AGM. Perhaps the AGM will need to discuss a way forward.
(Image: Pierre at Tswaing 2005).
- Content has since mostly been supplied by Michael Poll, but in February Magda Streicher submitted an article about her (successful!) visual search for the remnant of Supernova 1987A in the Large Magellanic Cloud.
- Magda has also continued with her Observers Page and has given details of how-to-find, and descriptions of, Proxima Centauri, NGC 1647, NGC 2516, NGC 3532 and NGC 6093.
- Magda has been sending articles about observing for the Newsletter for more than ten years. She welcomes suggestions about which objects to observe and write articles about but for each month, it must be an object that is visible in the night sky at that time and for the next month.
- **The following occasional essays were also submitted**
July 2025 In what was to be his last Newsletter, Pierre Lourens submitted an article about the collection of Astronomical Data



2.5 Telescope Making Class Johan Smit

- Johan Smit serves as permanent instructor from Pretoria at the class, which has been running for more than 30 years.
- The class still attracts new participants and is still quite busy.
- Attendees are enthusiastic, but sometimes progress is a bit slow, perhaps because it was not realized how much work was involved.

2.6 Curator of instruments: Johan Smit & Johan Jordaan

We have not been using the 12-inch telescope. For practical purposes the telescope is unlikely to be used in the foreseeable future although it can be shown to visitors. Added to this is the fact that we are now holding our observing evenings on the cricket field, so we do not use the sports field where the dome is located.

2.7 Observing (WhatsApp Group) Neville Young:

- The What's App group is very active. A number of people supply images, including Percy Jacobs, Barbara Cunow, Johan Moolman, Dawie Venter, Wessel Nel, Pieter Pienaar and others - apologies to those not mentioned.
- Observations and items of interest are being submitted.

3 CENTRE REPRESENTATIVE

The following was noted:

- The Garden Route Centre has closed down, as there was no-one to take over from Case Rijdsdijk. Somone in George has created a Centre that is a What's App group, and which does not hold formal meetings. It was hoped that this is not a sign of things to come.
- Sky Guide orders must be in by end of October.

4 2026 SKY GUIDE DISTRIBUTION

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

- Not everyone collected their copy

5 COMMITTEE

- **At the 2025 AGM The following were elected on to the Committee for 2025 – 2026:**

Johan Smit, Michael Poll, Pierre Lourens, Danie Barnardo, Michelle Ferreira, Neville Young and Johan Jordaan.

- The Committee met four times during the year.
- All the Committee Members are thanked for their support and for helping the Centre to remain active.
- It should be noted that the membership of the Committee is more or less static.

6 SOS (STATE OF THE SOCIETY)

Year	Paid up	Average
	Membership	Attendance
2002 -2003	121	70
2008-2009	111	
2016 -2017	80	
2017- 2018	65	23
2022-2023	39	22
2023-2024	36	23
2024 -2025	41	21
2025 - 2026	33	20

7 CHRISTIAN BROTHERS COLLEGE

We again thank Christian Brothers College for the use of their facilities, and Mark Yon in particular for being our contact person. Mark Yon resigned in April, and we have been in contact with the Principal, Derek Bradley. For his information the Chairman (Johan Smit) forwarded the meeting dates list to Mr. Bradley who is OK with us using CBC facilities. JS will remind him each month of the meeting dates to check if the field is available.

We have offered to see Mr Bradley for introductions and discussions.

8 THANKS

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

Johan Smit (Chairman)

Report compiled by Michael Poll