



Advancing
Astronomy and
Geophysics

ROYAL ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

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MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING 10 DECEMBER 2010 AT 1300 IN THE ROYAL OVERSEAS LEAGUE

1. PRESENT: Professor R.L. Davies, Professor M.A. Barstow, Dr H.J. Walker, Professor P.G. Murdin, Professor J.E. Drew, Professor M. Kendall, Professor O. Lahav, Professor J.C. Zarnecki, Dr R.J. Barber, Professor R. Ivison, Dr A. Norton, Professor D.J. Southwood, Dr E. Bunce, Professor R.E. Spencer, Dr I.F. Corbett, Professor A.W. Hood, and Professor D.W. Hughes

APOLOGIES: Professor K. Blundell; Professor P.K. Browning; Dr I.A. Crawford

ABSENT: Mr M. Thompson

IN ATTENDANCE: D. Elliott (Executive Secretary); R. Massey (Deputy Executive Secretary)

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of 8 October 2010 were approved and signed with the following additional item under AOB viz 'Professor Hughes expressed concern that the median age of the recipients of Gold Medals was 68 (and increasing) and that the number of medals awarded had remained constant for well over a century. He suggested Council, alongside its other awards, might wish to re-introduce Silver Medals to enhance its capacity to recognise outstanding achievements by younger scientists'

3. MATTERS ARISING

3.1 Dr Corbett, General Secretary of the International Astronomical Union (IAU), reported that the proposal for a *UNESCO-IAU Astronomical Heritage Portal* was discussed at a series of meetings at UNESCO HQ in Paris on 15-16 November 2010. It was agreed that the IAU-UNESCO cooperation MoU would be extended to the end of October 2012 and that IAU Commission 41 (chaired by Professor Ruggles) would begin to identify candidate sites for World Heritage recognition and present a full report at the 2012 IAU General Assembly. In this context the *Astronomy Heritage Portal* proposal for which Professor Ruggles was seeking RAS support, was recognised as a valuable contribution to these activities. It would be endorsed by both IAU and UNESCO but remain legally independent of both, although supervised by Commission 41. IAU had requested a revised business plan from Professor Ruggles by the end of May 2011 and on the basis of this might provide 3000 EUR for start-up costs and up to 5000 EUR p.a. Dr Corbett suggested that the Society might wish to offer matching start-up funding with the possibility of providing additional support at a later stage. In the meantime Professor Ruggles and UNESCO intended to seek support from other organisations.

Council agreed to congratulate Professor Ruggles on his achievements to date and, providing sufficient other sources of funding were forthcoming to make a viable business case, to offer £3000 towards start up costs.

4. PRESIDENT'S BUSINESS

4.1 Both to deal with the immediate research funding situation but also for the future health of the disciplines, members of Council were urged to cultivate longer-term relations with their local MPs many of whom, for example, would be surprised to learn of the contribution made by physics

departments to the local, as well as nation and international, economies. For those who would find it useful, Dr Massey intended to provide an invitation letter template, and a form for reporting feedback following meetings with MPs, on the Society web site.

4.2 The President reported on his discussions with the German Astronomical Society concerning the possibility of the latter participating in the 2012 NAM in Manchester. Council welcomed this possibility and expressed the hope that this could be accommodated by the local organisers.

4.3 At the deadline, it was reported that a total of 90 applications had been received for the '2010 RAS Fellowships' and the 'Sir Norman Lockyer Fellowship', all of which would be tenable from October 2011

4.4 The President reported on the useful meeting he and Dr Massey had had with Andrew Miller MP, Chair of the Science and Technology Select Committee of the House of Commons. At his suggestion a meeting would be arranged with the Shadow Science Minister, Gareth Thomas MP.

4.5 Finally the President informed Council that the STFC CSR settlement was expected to be announced on December 20, 2010

5. AWARDS

5.1 Professor Drew summarised the recommendations of the 'A' Awards Committee viz

The Gold Medal - Professor R. Ellis

The Eddington Medal - Professor G.Chabrier

The Jackson-Gwilt Medal – Professor M. Griffin

The Fowler Award- Dr V. Belokurov

Winton Capital Award - Dr S. Kaviraj

The Darwin Lecturer - Professor M.Turner

The Whitrow Lecturer - Professor A.Vilenkin

Honorary Fellowships – Professor B. Barbuy (Brazil); Dr C. Jones (USA); Professor J. Palous (Czech Republic)

Council approved all recommendations. Professor Drew explained that, on this occasion, the committee had not felt able to recommend candidates for either of the Award for Service (A) or the Group Achievement Award (A). She added the following observations:

- Nominators appeared to pay insufficient attention to the rubric of the Eddington Medal and, instead of focusing on their investigations in theoretical astrophysics, some candidates were proposed on the basis of their life time's work, the criterion of the Gold Medal. Council agreed that the respective criteria of all awards should be emphasised in the next round of nominations.

- Given the desirability of holding the Whitrow Lecture during the NAM, Professor Drew suggested that it would create more headroom for potential lecturers with crowded diaries if selection was made earlier (thus, for example, identifying the 2013 lecturer during the 2011 round). This was agreed. Council also wondered if the scope of the lecture ('a topic in cosmology, usually with particular reference to philosophical aspects') should be broadened.

- Finally, Professor Drew invited Council to consider offering more awards to encourage a full spread of candidates. Council agreed to propose a revision to bye-law 78 at the 2011 AGM such that the Herschel and Eddington, and indeed the Chapman and Price, Medals could be offered annually instead of every other year.

5.2 Professor Zarnecki summarised the recommendations of the 'A' Awards viz

The Gold Medal - Professor E. Grun

The Price Medal - Professor R.Searle

The Fowler Award - Dr J. Wookey

The Winton Capital Award - Dr Leigh Fletcher

The Harold Jeffreys Lecturer - Dr Lyndsay Fletcher

Honorary Fellowships- Professor S. Bauer (Austria); Professor M. Kivelson (USA); Professor S. Tsuneta (Japan)

Council approved all recommendations. Professor Zarnecki 's committee, too, on this occasion, had not felt able to recommend candidates for either of the Award for Service (G) or the Group Achievement Award (G). He added the following observations:

- Exoplanets, an area of expanding activity, overlaps the 'A' and 'G' subject areas and suggested that Council might wish to rule whether it should remain a topic to be considered by both Committees or whether it should be allocated to one or the other. Council agreed to return to this issue.
- Some nominations had been insufficiently complete, he added. In the case of unsuccessful nominations recommended for further consideration in 2011 Professor Zarnecki suggested nominators, without prejudice, could be asked for more comprehensive citations. While this was agreed by Council it was also pointed out that awards committees were free to contact nominators at any stage.
- Professor Zarnecki suggested that nominations should be submitted on-line using a template form designed to elicit the information needed by the awards committees. C-Vs and lists of publications, of course, could take the form of attachments to the form. It was agreed that this would be investigated.
- Finally, it was agreed that Council would re-examine the respective criteria of the Fowler and Winton Capital Awards since they appeared to be a degree of confusing overlap

The President thanked the members of the awards committees for their conscientious work coupling this with a tribute to the efficient way in which the Society's Events and Awards Officer, Lara Maisey, had administered the processes.

6. ORGANISATION AND STRUCTURE

6.1 The Executive Secretary tabled a list of nominations received for election to Council in May 2011. As no nomination had been received for the position of Vice-President (A) the President was asked to consult with the Officers and Vice-Presidents to identify a candidate who, in accordance with bye-law 25, could be invited to stand for election as the nominee of Council. It was noted that the balloting list would be finalised at the February 2011 Council meeting.

6.2 Professor Zarnecki, its Chair, presented the recommended candidate of the Presidential Election Committee for the position of 'President Elect, taking up office in May 2012, noting that, while there had been no nominations, there had been several suggestions all of which had been carefully considered. Council accepted its recommendation and agreed that the candidate would appear on the balloting list in February 2011 as its nominee.

6.3 The Deputy Executive Secretary presented the recommendation of the Education Committee that, in view of his unique lifelong contribution to education and outreach in Astronomy, the new RAS Award to recognise outstanding teachers should be known as the *Patrick Moore Medal*. The medal would carry a likeness of Sir Patrick on one side and the RAS logo and motto on the reverse and would be struck in an appropriate metal. Sir Patrick Moore had been apprised of, and welcomed, this proposal. The Deputy Executive Secretary added that the availability of this award would be advertised at the Association of Scientists in Education Conference in Reading, in January 2011 and thereafter through the Institute of Physics schools network, as well as on appropriate web sites. Nominations would be invited from, or on behalf of, full or part-time secondary level teachers of astronomy. Selection would be made by a sub-committee of the Education Committee on the basis of a C-V and references. It was hoped to present the first medal at the 2012 NAM. Council approved all of these suggestions and instructed the Executive Secretary to commission a suitable medal.

6.4 Dr Walker reported on the progress of the demographic survey and encouraged members of the community to complete the on-line questionnaire

6.5 International Union of Radio Science - postponed

7. FINANCE

7.1 The report of the Finance Committee and the up-dated Operations Plan was noted

7.2 The Treasurer reported that, under the terms of the will of the late Mr Henry Joachim, a professional musician, the Society had been made the beneficiary of a bequest of the order of £85,000 to support astronomical research. Following discussion in the Finance Committee and with the agreement of Mr Joachim's executor, the Treasurer recommended that the sum should be committed to the Society's 'Research and Grants Fund'. This was agreed by Council.

8. POLICY & PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

8.1 The following submissions and reports prepared by the Deputy Executive Secretary were noted;

- National Infrastructure Plan
- Comprehensive Spending Review
- Research Excellence Framework
- STFC Grant Funding Mechanism Review

8.2 Discussion on the Society's proposed Statement on Creationism was deferred.

9. PROGRAMMES & PROJECTS

9.1 Council noted a report on NAM 2011 including the registration fees it was proposed to charge participants.

10. OTHER

10.1 Council approved the election of the following candidates to fellowship of the Society:

Surname	First Name
Ahsan	Aveesha
Barnes	David
Bryers	Carl
Buckner	Anne
Busuttil	Richard
Calcutt	Hannah
Case	Nathan
Danielski	Camilla
Day	Sarah
de Sainte Croix	Leon
Dharmakeerthi	Ajith
Dinally	Zeeshan Ali
Dubois	Elizabeth Naomi

Haworth	Thomas
Higgon	David
Higgs	Tim
Hyde	Ashley
Jess	David
Jocumsen	Robert
Khan	Abdul Waheed
Kidani	Taichi
Kirk	Donnacha
MacGillivray	Harvey
Mancini	Alberto
Mathews	John
Merrifield	Michael
Nixon	Sophie
O'Donoghue	James
Oninuire	Adesoji
Owen	James
Sener-Satir	Huri Tugca
Skrzypek	Nathalie
Steele	Oliver
Strege	Charlotte
Surina	Farung

Szepietowski	Rafal
Tessenyi	Marcell
Vikraman Nair Sreedevi Amma	Shyam
Woodfield	Emma
Yu	Shenghua
Abernethy	Feargus
Alexander	Poul
Armytage	Rosalind
Barrett	Alex
Barton	Emma
Clarke	Nicolas
Crass	Jonathan
Day	Elizabeth
Dutson	Kate
Faedi	Francesca
Farazian	Samane
Farmer	Robert
Hall	Philip
Hall	Alexander
Harkness	Patrick
Hibbert	Kate
Hollis	Morgan

Hurren	Karen
Jackson	Alan
Juanola-Parramon	Roser
Kipping	David
Koelemeijer	Paula
Kong	Dali
Kruk	Sandor-Iozsef
Leverment	Shaaron
Liang	Yu-Hsuan
Mäkinen	Anna
Malcolm	Chris
Martinavarro	Silvia
Morris	Andrew
Morse	Andrew
Newsam	Andrew
Nixon	David
Nordheim	Tom
Occhiogrosso	Angela
Olver	Paul
Orsi	Maia
Peck	Luke

Pettitt	Alex
Porcelli	Luca
Rolfe	Samantha
Smith	Phillipa
Soumagnac	Maayane
Steele	Liam
Stretch	Catherine
Taylor	Stephen
Thurgood	Jonathan
Tinetti	Giovanna
Tuttle	Sam
Walker	Stephen
Walton	James
Weiss	Lauren
White	Philip
Williams	Felicity

10.2 The minutes of A&G meetings of 8th October and 12th November 2010 were approved and signed

There being no further business the meeting closed at 1530

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R.L. Davies
President

11 February 2011