



*Advancing  
Astronomy and  
Geophysics*

## ROYAL ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY

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### MINUTES OF COUNCIL MEETING 29 JULY 2005 AT 1300 IN THE COUNCIL ROOM AT BURLINGTON HOUSE

**1. PRESENT:** Dr R.C. Smith (Vice-President), Professor P.G. Murdin (Treasurer), Dr M.A. Hapgood, Professor I.D. Howarth and Dr H.J. Walker (Secretaries), Dr M.M. Grady and Professor D.W. Hughes (Vice-Presidents), Professor M.E. Bailey, Professor R.L. Davies, Professor D. Gubbins, Dr S.A. Mitton, Dr A.M.S. Richards, Mr I.W. Ridpath, Professor M.J. Rycroft, Professor E.I. Robson, Mr J.D. Shanklin and Dr I.P. Wright.

**APOLOGIES:** Professor K.A. Whaler (President), Professor E.R. Priest (Vice-President), Professor M.A. Barstow, Dr S.F. Green and Professor M.J. Rycroft.

#### IN ATTENDANCE

D Elliott (Executive Secretary)

In the absence of the President Vice-President Robert Smith took the chair

#### 2. MINUTES

The minutes of meeting of 13 May 2005 were approved

#### 3. MATTERS ARISING

##### 3.1 *Presidential portraits*

The Treasurer reported on the visit by members of Council to view a selection of candidate artists at the Royal Society of Portrait Painters at 1130 on 29 July. On the basis of the votes cast it was agreed that negotiations should open with 3 of them viz. Alastair Adams, June Mendoza and Simon Turvey, for 'relatively small' head and shoulders oil paintings of the current and immediate past Presidents of the Society, who, it was further agreed, would be involved in the process. At an appropriate time a proposal will be brought to Council.

### **3.2 *'The Future of Planetary Sciences in the UK'***

The Geophysical Secretary sought approval for the release of the report in its present form (minor corrections apart). This triggered a discussion about its purpose. It was agreed that it was not to provide a comprehensive survey (though a 'decadal review' in the future might be considered) but to signal to PPARC and others the importance of planetary sciences in the UK (while noting that the section dealing with 'Aurora' had already served the purpose of signaling the Society's support for a significant UK involvement in that programme). Accordingly, Council approved its release in the form of a RAS press notice, a posting on the RAS web site, a summary in 'A&G', a mention in the monthly email bulletin (and other relevant distribution lists e.g. the UK Planetary Forum) as well as by direct letter to PPARC (in time for its planetary sciences group meeting on September 2) and NERC. It was also noted that its release would come just before the DPS meeting at Cambridge.

### **3.3 *2008 RAE***

The Chair drew attention to the notice on the RAS web site inviting Fellows to send any comments on the assessment panels' draft criteria and working methods they wished to go through the Society by September 1

### **3.4 *Careers in Astronomy***

The Chair thanked Helen Walker and Paul Murdin for their major contributions to the drafting of the paper which, following further consideration by the Membership Committee, will be presented to Council in October

## **4. BURLINGTON HOUSE**

### **4.1 *Lease***

Following the conclusion of the negotiations with the ODPM and the exchange of leases on July 8 Council considered the advice from its Solicitors, 'Bristows', concerning the option to renew contained in Clause 20 of the Lease viz. that the Learned Societies will be entitled to serve on the Landlord a notice in writing electing to take a further lease "not less than twelve months prior to the expiry of the Term". As there is nothing to prevent giving more than twelve months prior notice, and in view of the risk of forgetting to do so in the future, 'Bristows' advised serving notice forthwith. If such a notice were given and the Society subsequently decided to change its position, the option to determine the lease, contained in Clause 23, could be exercised. Council duly authorised the Executive Secretary to serve notice.

### **4.2 *Refurbishment***

Council was invited to consider the 'Phase 1 Proposals' received from 'Peregrine Bryant' and associates (previously circulated) for the refurbishment of its Burlington House apartments and to instruct the Executive Secretary on the reply he should make. The Executive Secretary reminded Council of the relevant sections of the lease concerning the Society's duty of care for the building, the need to make the apartments more 'fit for purpose' and the size of the general reserves which provided a unique opportunity for undertaking a major refurbishment. He added that the estimated <£2m cost was unlikely to be augmented by funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund, though this would be investigated.

In discussion the following points were made:

- the ‘Phase 1 Proposals’ were imaginative, exciting and affordable
- while recognising that the drivers behind the refurbishment were to optimise the use of existing resources for the benefit of fellows, as well as meet the obligations imposed by the lease, there could be merit in producing a ‘business plan’ which quantified the costs and benefits of the proposed alterations (taking into account the degree to which the refurbished facilities could and should be available for hire by outside bodies)
- the single biggest cost item was highly desirable up-grades to Mechanical & Electrical services
- the proposed lift was essential to enable fuller utilisation of the building as well as meet the needs of the disabled
- the proposed lecture room could be a valuable asset to the membership (and save the costs of at least some outside room hires), given the correct functionality. There was concern though over its audience capacity and about the orientation of the seating (which, as a result of people entering and leaving meetings during lectures, was likely to produce unacceptable levels of disruption)
- allied to this was concern that the WC provision, especially for females, would be inadequate on meeting days
- some questioned if the space which it was proposed to allocate for library purposes might be better used
- there was concern that the proposed adaptation of the Annexe for meetings of Council might be seen by the membership as an unnecessary expense (while acknowledging the desirability of converting the existing Council Room into a study and meeting area for the use of Fellows, especially those based out of London)
- finally, Council was anxious about cost escalation and questioned whether the suggested contingency of 5% was realistic

In the light of the discussion, Council agreed, in principle, to go ahead with the proposed refurbishment subject to the Executive Secretary seeking changes to the ‘Phase 1 Proposals’, especially for the proposed lecture room (if necessary by sacrificing the versatility offered by retractable seating since it was more important to create the best possible facility for holding scientific meetings). Following this, Council would make a decision on ‘Phase 2’ i.e. implementation.

It was noted that were it decided to relocate staff during the refurbishment the annexe, temporarily converted to office use, as well as home working, would ensure that most services, but not the library, would be unaffected.

Finally, it was agreed that the sub-committee hitherto charged with overseeing the project, should be enlarged, and given more discretionary powers, by the addition of the following members of Council:

Ian Robson, Monica Grady, Ian Wright, David Gubbins and Jonathan Shanklin (who would, additionally, be able to reflect the interests of the BAA of which he is a Councillor).

## **5. ORGANISATION AND STRUCTURE**

### ***5.1 Appointment of the 'A' and 'G' Awards Committees***

The respective chairs of the committees, Robert Smith and Monica Grady, presented lists of names of potential members. All of which were approved by Council. In addition, it was suggested that a historian of astronomy might be included. The chairs were authorised to finalise membership in the light of the availability of potential members. Council was reminded that, except for the names of the chairs, the identity of the members of the awards committees was confidential. Finally Council was asked to encourage nominations (though the awards committees would act as search as well as reviewing committees)

### ***5.2 Appointment to MNRAS Editorial Board***

Council approved the appointment of Andrew Collier Cameron

### ***5.3 Appointment to Finance Committee***

Council approved the appointment of Bob Barber

### ***5.4 Appointment to the Membership Committee***

Council approved the appointment of Jacqueline Mitton (who, additionally, had signalled her willingness to succeed Robert Smith as chair in 2006), Cathryn Mitchell, Jim Wild and Andrew Ball

### ***5.5 Establishment of an International Committee***

Council approved the establishment of an 'ad hoc' committee to prepare for the 2006 IAU General Assembly. This was done in the expectation that, in the future, it will be expanded or otherwise changed to address the other international concerns of the Society (at which point terms of reference and a formal structure would be proposed for Council's approval). Anita Richards agreed to join the committee whose next meeting was scheduled for 16 September 2005

### ***5.6 2006 Subscriptions to RAS Journals***

The Treasurer introduced the recommendations, previously circulated, of the Publications Management Committee which comprises representatives of the Society, the publishing company, Blackwell and the Editorial Boards. These were based on keeping subscription rises to the minimum possible but at the same time take into account the growth in the size of the journals, the dollar exchange rate and industry inflation costs. The suggested base line rate increases of 8% for MNRAS and GJI and 7% for A&G were calculated to deliver to both the RAS and Blackwell the financial returns predicated in their contract. Council approved the proposed rates

### ***5.7 Away Day***

The Executive Secretary introduced a previously circulated report and drew attention to the working groups which had been established in order to prepare recommendations arising from the Away Day for the October 14 meeting of Council viz

**Meetings:** Ian Howarth (convenor) Quentin Stanley and Gordon Bromage

**Strategy:** Monica Grady (convenor) Simon Green and Jacqueline Mitton

**Governance:** Eric Priest (convenor) Susan Lamb and Mike Hapgood

**Information:** Mary Fowler (convenor) Betty Lanchester and Ian Ridpath

**Membership:** Anita Heward (convenor) David Hughes and Robert Smith

## **6. REVIEWS**

### **6.1 *International Review of UK Physics and Astronomy***

The Geophysical Secretary spoke to a previously circulated paper. In particular, he drew Council's attention to the meeting of Heads of Departments involved in the inspection visits which would take place during the Standing Conference of Physics Professors meeting at the Institute of Physics on 9 September and to the Town Meeting, at which the results would be presented in late January.

### **6.2 *RCUK Position Statement on the Dissemination of and Access to Research Output***

The Geophysical Secretary spoke to a previously circulated paper about the RCUK proposal to require all publicly funded research to be archived in e-print repositories and the provision of funds to authors to enable that to happen. He explained that the RCUK paper was a draft and that if the Learned Societies and others made cogent points there was a chance they would be listened to. The Society agreed with RCUK's wish that all research (including conference proceedings and presentations) should be available to the widest possible interested public. It was important, though, that changes to the present publishing model did not fatally damage the learned societies or erode safeguards protecting the quality of published research.

In the case of astrophysics, there was already virtual 'open access' (MNRAS authors, for example, can post electronic versions of their papers on personal websites, 'astro-ph', their employer's repository as well as on free public servers in the subject area). Repositories were less developed in Geophysics and therefore the RCUK proposals could have a greater impact on GJI than on MNRAS, assuming they were followed (which was by no means certain since policing would be difficult). That said, the levelling of the playing field in respect to author charges could lead to a haemorrhaging of papers from MNRAS to ApJ, its principal competitor. On the other hand the quality assurance role of Learned Societies, through their control of the peer review process, would become even more important in an author - pay publishing model (though it was not clear how that could be managed and paid for in an open access environment). More generally, there was concern that money made available to authors to pay page charges would be money lost to research. An alternative use of research council funds, which would avoid some of these pitfalls but encourage dissemination of research papers, would be to fund purchase of them by UK libraries. The Geophysical Secretary following a meeting with Astrid Wissenberg, the Interim Chair of the RCUK working group on scholarly communications undertook to produce and circulate a draft response by mid-August to allow for the final version to reach RCUK by the deadline of August 31.

## 7. OTHER

### **7.1 Endorsement of Distance Learning Courses**

Secretary Helen Walker spoke to a previously circulated paper and to one that was tabled at the meeting.

She proposed that Council approve the following recommendations, which were made following a scrutiny of the courses conducted on its behalf by herself in the case of UCL and by Keith Tritton in respect of Liverpool John Moores University and University of Central Lancashire, viz.

“The Royal Astronomical Society, the UK’s society for professional astronomers, endorses the UCL (University College London) Diploma in Astronomy by evening study as a relevant component of training in astronomy, which will be acknowledged as such if used to apply for fellowship of the Society.”

“The Royal Astronomical Society, the UK's society for professional astronomers, endorses the following Liverpool John Moores University's certificate awards in astronomy as relevant components of a training in astronomy, which will be acknowledged as such if used to apply for fellowship of the Society:

*Certificate of Professional Development in Astronomy*  
*Certificate of Higher Education in Astronomy”*

“The Royal Astronomical Society, the UK's society for professional astronomers, endorses the following University of Central Lancashire's certificate and diploma awards in astronomy as relevant components of a training in astronomy, which will be acknowledged as such if used to apply for fellowship of the Society:

*University Certificate in Astronomy*  
*University Certificate in Cosmology*  
*University Certificate in Sun, Earth and Climate*  
*University Certificate in Physics for Astronomy*  
*University Certificate in the History of Astronomy*  
*University Certificate in IT for Astronomy*  
*Certificate of Higher Education in Astronomy*  
*University Advanced Certificate in Astrophysics of the Sun and Stars*  
*University Advanced Certificate in Astrophysics of Galaxies*  
*University Advanced Certificate in Astronomy*  
*Diploma of Higher Education in Astronomy”*

Council approved these recommendations

### **7.2 Universal Ethical Code for Scientists**

The Chair spoke to a previously circulated paper from the Council for Science and Technology asking for an opinion on the Code produced by Sir David King, the government’s Chief Scientific Adviser. Its purpose was to raise awareness among scientists and the public of the ethical and professional responsibilities of scientists; it

was hoped that individual scientists and scientific institutions would adopt it voluntarily.

Council agreed that the principles enshrined in the Code were deserving of support and proposed that in addition to posting it on the RAS web site it would be included with the material sent to newly elected fellows. It was also observed that the editorial boards of MNRAS and GJI were likely to adopt a Code of Ethics, which had been compiled as a guide for authors, editors and referees

### ***7.3 Candidates for Election***

Council approved the following candidates for election to Fellowship:

Buscher	David
Cartwright	Paul
Campbell	Henry Joseph
Dawes	Anita
Gains	Tex
Hannah	Iain
Holtom	Philip D.
Jaffe	Andrew H.
Joshi	Sanhita
Kaiser	Christian
Kelday	John
Kent	Maurice
Kurtze	Lother
Law	Tony
Lennon	Daniel
Moont	Barbara
Morgan-Taylor	Martin P.
Nazarava	Katsiaryna
Rehman	Shiuli
Robertson	J. Alistair
Short	Daniel Richard
Stone	Jerry
Tissera	Patricia Beatriz
Wareing	Christopher
Werner	Marcus
Wilson	Rebecca
Young	Peter

### ***7.4 Report of the Education Committee***

This was postponed except for one item viz approval was sought and given to include an *ex officio* representative on the committee from the Bradford Robotic Telescope, to provide parity of treatment with the Faulkes and Liverpool Telescopes

### ***7.5 UTC- abolition of leap seconds***

The Geophysical Secretary spoke to a previously circulated paper about the proposal from the US delegation to the ITU Radio Communication Sector to suppress leap

second adjustments, about which there were grave concerns. The DTI had indicated that it would welcome a statement of support by the Society for its position of opposition to the proposal. The Geophysical Secretary agreed to draft a response on behalf of the Society. He also agreed both to liaise with the American Astronomical Society, and to contact European astronomical societies; in the hope they might encourage their respective governments to adopt a similar position to ours.

**8. AOB**

**8.1** Anita Richards advised Council about her discussion with ‘Blackwell’ concerning the archiving on ‘Vizier’ of data sets in MNRAS papers

**8.2** Council was reminded that obituaries were outstanding for Denis Walsh and J.L. Perdrix

**8.3** The Chair drew the attention of Council to the RAS Picnic on July 31

**8.4** Council noted the need to consider the opportunities presented by the London Olympics in 2012 and the bicentenary of the Society in 2020

Council rose at 1620

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14<sup>th</sup> October 2005