

IRISH ASTRONOMICAL ASSOCIATION 50<sup>th</sup> AGM

Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> May 2024

SECRETARY'S REPORT

Dear IAA Members

Welcome to the 50<sup>th</sup> AGM of the Association. It is amazing to think of all the events, publications etc we have been responsible for in the process of promoting astronomy locally over the years.

The Association's activities have been primarily in three areas.

1 Hosting fortnightly lectures at Queen' University between September and May.

2 Publishing Stardust, a quarterly magazine.

3 Arranging and hosting night sky observation sessions. This year there has been a fourth; with the support of a grant from the Heritage Fund, a program of giving talks in schools has started.

The lectures covered an eclectic range of subjects, from the Worldwide paranoia prior to the passing of Halley's Comet during 1910, to the analysis of spectra from supernovae that happened in far off galaxies over 70 million years ago! Thank you to all those who contributed. A list of talks is in the addendum below. Thanks to Terry Moseley for contacting lecturers and arranging the lectures. Thank you to President Paul Evans, and Vice President Andy McCrea for hosting the lectures and providing updates as to what was currently visible in the night skies and sunspot activity. Also thank you to Simon Hearne and Poppy for providing the post lecture refreshments and "craic".

A special thank you to Alan Fitzsimmons and all at the Astrophysics Research Centre at QUB for all their continued support, especially for the use of the Larmor Lecture Hall at QUB.

A continued thank you to Andy McCrea. Not only was he Vice President again, but he continues to superbly edit the quarterly Stardust magazine. Thank you to all who contributed articles and photographs of a wide range of heavenly bodies. Special thank you to Tony and Eve Kempston for the regular Stardust Kids section and the organising of the printing and distribution of the magazine.

Unfortunately night time viewing sessions are no longer available at Delamont primarily due to access issues. Fortunately we have access to another venue at the Clandeboye Estate, Bangor. The local University of the Third Age (U3A) has a site there that includes telescope facilities and a room where images can be seen on television and they are very keen for IAA input. So the future of observation sessions looks promising. Thanks again to David Stewart for all his help.

Thanks to Paul Bates for organising the grant we received from the Heritage Fund. This is being used to give talks in schools, colleges etc , giving introductions to astronomy to younger generations. A number of talks have already been given and others are planned for before the end of this academic year in June. It is hoped that this program can be developed. The Stardome, which has only been used once since the Covid pandemic, has been tested and is in working order. There are new volunteers , including Junior Vice President Eve Kempston, who are keen to be trained up and give talks.

Organised council meetings, where council members can meet, have been a bit sporadic. This might be due to the aftermath of Covid pandemic when Zoom meetings were the norm. A few meetings did occur at the Hub Centre in Bangor, but with few attending. The last meeting was at a suitable room freely loaned to us by Tesco's Supermarket at Knocknagoney, Belfast. This would appear to be more convenient for more council members; so it is hoped that future council meetings will be more productive.

Thank you to Paul Evans. Not only has he been President for the year and as has already been mentioned hosting lectures at QUB, he also is the Webmaster who keeps the IAA website up to date, assisted by Tony Kempston.

Continued thanks to Pat O’Neill for handling all the Association’s finances and organising the enjoyable pre lecture meals with the guest lecturers.

Many thanks to Mary Kirwin-Mackey. As Membership Secretary she is doing a great job keeping our records up to date.

There has been a push for new members on the council. Many thanks to all who have put their names forward for posts. These will be ratified at the AGM.

John McClintock

IAA Hon. Sec.

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#### IAA Lectures 2022 – 2023

20/09/23 “JWST Highlights of the first year.” Prof Tom Ray, DIAS

4/10/23 “Developing NI Space Economy” Robert Hill, NISO

18/10/23 “Fear and Loathing. The 1910 Return of Halley’s Comet” Richard Goodrich

1/11/23 “Apollo to Artemis- the Next Giant Leap”. Paul Evans, IAA

15/11/23 “Living with an Active Star”. Dr Elizabeth Butler, QUB

- 29/11/23 “The Discovery and Characteristics of Earth Like Planets” Dr Jean COSTES
- 13/12/23 “Solar Flares” Luke Majury , QUB. “Supernova” Thomas Moore QUB
- 10/1/24 “The Brightest Supernovae in the Universe”. Dr Mat Nicholl. QUB
- 24/1/24 “Our Solar System”. Prof Mark Bailey. Armagh Observatory
- 7/2/24 “Heavy Metal Stars”. Dr Laura Scott. Armagh Observatory
- 6/3/24 “Earth’s Space Weather”. Dr Alexander Fog Dublin Inst. Adv. Studies
- 20/3/24 “Weather on Worlds beyond our Solar System” Jonathan Vos, Trinity College Dublin