

**PRETORIA CENTRE OF THE  
ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY OF SOUTHERN AFRICA  
ANNUAL REPORT July 1<sup>st</sup> 2024 – June 30<sup>th</sup> 2025**

- There were 44 paid up members for the 2024 -2025 financial year

## **1 MEETINGS**

As in the past it has not been easy to find speakers this year, and, as noted in the 2024 Annual Report the situation is quite problematic. The burden of giving talks and presenting What's Up falls mainly on the Committee, although we did have two talks presented by out-of-town persons. Meanwhile, offers of talks are always welcome.

By the end of 2024 there was only a small group of regulars attending in person at CBC, with occasional visitors, but more than half the audience were attending on line. Considering that the attendance at CBC was so small, the Committee decided that, as from January 1<sup>st</sup> 2025, the meetings would be held on line only and no longer would we meet at CBC.

We are pleased to welcome on line visitors from out of town, who would not otherwise be able to attend, and we must mention Etsui here who regularly joins in from Japan.

### **• Attendance 2024 -2025**

	<b>At CBC</b>	<b>On Line</b>	<b>Total</b>
24/7/2024	10	15	25
28/8/2024	6	23	29
25/9/2024	8	13	21
23/10/2024	6	14	20
27/11/2024	7	9	13
22/1/2025	-	34	34
26/2/2025	-	26	26
26/3/2025	-	no	record
23/4/2025	-	19	19
28/5/2025	-	13	13
25/6/2025	-	14	14
<b>Average</b>	<b>7.4</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>21.4</b>

### **• The following Main topics were presented.**

- 2024 07 "Fireball over Botswana – The search for the Motopi Pan meteorite" Michael Poll.
- 2024 08 "T Corona Borealis, a recurrent nova" Koos van Zyl.
- 2024 09 "Polar alignment" Johan Smit.
- 2024 10 "Astrophotography with a cell phone" Johan Jordaan.
- 2024 11 "DIY 3D printed star tracker for astrophotography" Mauritz Geyser.
- 2025 01 "Exposing conspiracy theories" by Johan Smit.
- 2025 02 A short talk to motivate members to do actual science - by Johan Smit.
- 2025 03 "Conjunctions" by Michael Poll.
- 2025 04 "Awe in astronomy" Johan Jordaan
- 2025 05 Video "History of Leiden Southern Observatory at Toppieshoek"
- 2025 06 "Circumpolar Stars" by Michael Poll

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

- 2024 07 Johan Smit.
- 2024 08 Michelle Ferreira.
- 2024 09 Johan Jordaan.
- 2024 10 Danie Barnardo.
- 2024 11 Michael Poll.
- 2025 01 Johan Smit.
- 2025 02 Danie Barnardo.

2025 04 Michelle Ferreira.

2025 05 Michael Poll

2025 06 Danie Barnardo

- The “What’s Up” presenter also Chaired the meetings

Thanks are due to the above Presenters.

## **2 REPORTS**

### **2.1 Observing Evening Report Michael Poll**

The Observing evenings this year have been only moderately successful. Three evenings (September, February and March) were cancelled due to the weather – even postponing the February and March evenings for a week did not help – the clouds persisted. The attendance of an average of about ten people has not been as good as in times past, and even this average was boosted by the January event when with visitors and friends, families and children, about 30 people were present. But ....at the postponed-for-a-week April event only two people turned up and for the May evening only the same two people from April were there, and only five came in June.

However, when there was attendance there were always a sufficient number of telescopes. It was pleasing to note that on one of the evenings the attendance included a couple of visitors from Johannesburg from the telescope making class..

The sky brightness precluded us from seeing all but the brightest objects including double stars, bright nebulae and clusters. Even on the best evening, in the sky we had we could only just about make out the Square of Pegasus with the naked eye. In November we glimpsed the Andromeda galaxy - it reflects on the quality of the City sky when we get excited about seeing an object with difficulty in a telescope which is an easy naked eye catch in a dark place. The Moon was present on a couple of occasions, and a number of craters were identified on both the east and west limbs.

A comprehensive list of the objects seen, including the Lunar 100 “L” numbers, is recorded in the Observing Evening Report each month in Centre Newsletter.

### **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.

- **August 10<sup>th</sup> 2024 Mountain Club of South Africa (MCSA) at Wilgepoort**  
Michael Poll attended. About 30 attendees.
- **August 24<sup>th</sup> 2024 ESSA/ASSA Annual Event. Bushtrails, Magaliesburg.**  
Johan Smit, Vicus Cruywagen and Bosman Olivier attended from ASSA Pretoria.  
Three persons from ASSA JHB attended. There were 70+ attendees.
- **January 8<sup>th</sup> 2025** Johan Smit gave a talk at the Johannesburg Centre about the flawed optics of the Hubble Space Telescope
- **Voortrekkers Zytse Wierda Park May 23<sup>rd</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> 2025**  
Johan Smit, Johan Jordaan and Bosman Olivier (BO) attended.  
The event was for the Voortrekker Astronomy Badge.  
There about 50 – 70 children in two age groups.
- **Trinity Church, Lynwood June 7<sup>th</sup> 2005.**  
Johan Smit, Bosman Olivier and Jacques Kuun attended.
- **Free State Star Party June 26<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> 2025.**  
Johan smit Johan Moolman, Rudolph Strydom and Robert Kimm attended.

### **2.3 Website and Social Media: Danie Barnardo.**

- The website is functioning as planned. It is possible to contact the Committee members via the website, eliciting several queries to Committee members during the year.
- The website proved extremely useful for the advertisement of Centre meetings during the year.
- A website section to advertise used equipment was also extremely popular.
- The Archive section of the website contains newsletters as far back as 1988
- We consistently have over 1,000 hits per month except December.
- Compliments for the look and functionality of the website are frequently received and it is generally expressed that the website is fulfilling its role admirably.
- The website is hosted by Afrihost, who provide a reliable service.

## **2.4 Newsletter**

### **2.4.1 Editor: Pierre Lourens. Summary of contents by Michael Poll**

**The Editor has contributed “Editor’s Chatter” with these topics:**

2024 07	Construction of the TMT in jeopardy.
2024 08	L = ? (Astronomer Frank Drake)
2024 09	The old Leiden Observatory
2024 10	The Nancy Grace Roman Space Telescope
2024 11	The Van Allen belts
2025 01	Fine-tuning of the Universe
2025 02	Investigating the atmospheres of exoplanets
2025 03	Colliding galaxies
2025 04	Exoplanets
2025 05	Gravity Assist
2025 06	Rogue Black Holes

**Pierre has also initiated a section entitled “Give your imagination free rein” with links to these subjects:**

2025 01	Life Elsewhere
2025 04	Interstellar travel
2025 05	The Intelligent Universe; Quantum Teleportation and Possibility of Aliens on Warm Planets
2025 06	Gravity and the Universe, and Time Travel Tourism

**Pierre has also provided these links every month:**

Web links for the astronomy enthusiast  
Astronomy related articles on the Internet

### **2.4.2 Magda Streicher**

- Magda Streicher has been sending articles about observing for the Newsletter for the last 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.

2024 07	NGC 5460: Strings attached
2024 08	NGC 6000, a galaxy hiding in Scorpius
2024 10	NGC 660, a ring around
2024 11	NGC 53 - Behold the southern skies by Magda Streicher
2025 02	NGC 1763, a breath of smoke
2025 03	NGC 1955, NGC 1968, NGC 1974 A Misty Situation
2025 04	IC 2602: take note Carina Melotte 101, also Melotte 102
2025 05	ESO 172-7: In the cold – by Magda Streicher
2025 06	Ruprecht 106 misjudged

### **2.4.3 The following occasional essays were also submitted**

2024 07	Photographs of all 100 objects on the ASSA Top 100 list: taken by Thys Maree.
2024 11	The story of Comet C/2023 A3 Tsuchinshan-ATLAS Johan Jordaan
2025 04	“Calculating Stellar Quantities” By Percy Jacobs (Amateur Astronomer – Spectroscopy – Graaff-Reinet SA)

## **2.5 Telescope Making Class, including ScopeX : Johan Smit**

- Johan Smit serves as permanent instructor from Pretoria at the class.
- The class has been running for more than 30 years
- In October 2024, there were three new members, and by January 2025 further members had joined. Some telescopes were nearly completed although it took time to finish them. Membership increased again in April 2025 when three further members joined, and some telescopes were being finished.

## **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**

- People who are interested are invited to join the group to “see what we do”. Our Centre meeting dates are circulated to the Group.
  - The Group has been active especially with monitoring T Corona Borealis and Comet Tsuchinshan-ATLAS, and Nova V0462 Lupi.
  - Percy Jacobs has been continuing with his spectroscopy work.
  - Many excellent astrophotos have been circulated.
  - A number of new members joined the Group during the year, including some who are not members of the Centre, but we do not exclude them as we wish to foster an interest in astronomy.
  - Some of the members are novices and so some of their posts are basic or are educational queries.
  - Some of the photos submitted by novices are not the best, but this is not a problem, and constructive criticism is offered.
  - The Committee considered the question as to whether posts from and responses to novices will put off serious observers who are making and reporting in-depth observations – should there be two groups?
  - It is good thing if novices are exposed to serious observations – it may stimulate them to go further. It does not matter if they cannot handle it.
  - If there are two groups the novices may not see the serious stuff and so may not be exposed to what is being done.
  - Serious observers need not necessarily be involved with novices if they do not wish to be so.
- Decided:** To keep one group as it will keep less experienced members exposed to science.

## **3 TREASURER’S REPORT**

- The report was presented by Michelle Ferreira and is available for perusal by any one with a legitimate reason.
- The Centre is in a sound financial position.

## **4 2025 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**

- The committee comprised eight persons after the 2024 AGM, namely: 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 ELECTION OF OFFICERS**

- **The following were elected on to the Committee for 2024- 2025**
- Johan Smit, Michael Poll, Pierre Lourens, Danie Barnardo, Michelle Ferreira, Neville Young and Johan Jordaan.

## **7 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

- On the positive side, the What's App group is very active.

## **8 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. We never made contact with the new Principal, Derek Bradley, who started at the beginning of 2024.

## **9 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*