

ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY OF AUSTRALIA

MINUTES OF THE FIRST ANNUAL GENERAL (THE INAUGURAL) MEETING  
HELD AT THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY ON WEDNESDAY, 30 NOVEMBER 1966

The meeting began at 1405.

1. HISTORY OF THE A.S.A.

Dr J.P. Wild (in the Chair), after welcoming the 130 participants, called on Dr R.G. Giovanelli to outline the history of the A.S.A.. Dr R.G. Giovanelli likened the final emergence of the Society to the build-up of a signal amidst noise. There had been rumblings over the years but it was not until early in 1966 that their amplitude exceeded that of statistical fluctuations. The names of W. Buscombe, S.C.B. Gascoigne, R.G. Giovanelli and J.P. Wild seemed to be linked with the generation of the first signal of statistical significance.

An Inaugural Committee was formed that consisted originally of W.N. Christiansen, S.C.B. Gascoigne, R.G. Giovanelli, F.J. Kerr, B.Y. Mills, J.P. Wild and Harley W. Wood. This Committee circulated a letter to the prospective membership (about 150) and the overwhelming response encouraged the Committee to proceed. Later J.A. Roberts, K.V. Sheridan, R.R. Shobbrook and S.F. Smerd joined the Committee, whose work culminated in the Inaugural Meeting.

2. PROPOSALS FOR THE INAUGURATION OF THE SOCIETY

The Chairman then submitted to the meeting - the following 'Proposals for the Inauguration of an Astronomical Society of Australia' as prepared by the Inaugural Committee:

Proposals

The Society

1. An Australian Society shall be formed to promote the advancement of astronomy and closely related branches of science. The particular purposes of the Society will be to hold regular meetings in Australia, and to organize other functions such as teaching seminars, as shall be decided upon by the Society or its elected Council.
2. The Society shall be called the Astronomical Society of Australia.

Initial Membership

3. The members of the Society shall, in the first place, consist of those persons who accepted an invitation by the self-appointed Inaugural Committee to become foundation members. The Inaugural Committee have proposed that membership be basically professional; it would be open to graduate students and those deemed capable of making contributions towards the advancement of astronomy or related sciences.

The First Council

4. The affairs of the Society shall be conducted by an elected Council consisting initially of a President, two Vice-Presidents, two Secretaries, a Treasurer and five other members.



5. The first Council shall be elected at the Inaugural Meeting by and from the foundation members present at the meeting. The election shall be conducted by a representative of the Inaugural Committee.
6. In addition to their normal duties, the first Council shall be responsible for the first draft of the constitution and by-laws of the Society, which, in turn, shall be submitted to the Society at a subsequent general meeting.
7. The first Council shall decide among itself when and where to meet, and the manner in which those unable to attend may register their opinions. In framing the constitution and by-laws, the Council should give special attention to the question of electing future Councils which, on the one hand, must be representative of the whole of Australian astronomy, and, on the other, must form or include a working group in regular and convenient contact with one another.
8. Until the adoption of the constitution and by-laws, new members may be elected by the Council upon nomination by two foundation members of the Society.

#### Publication of Proceedings

9. The proceedings of the first meeting, including one-page accounts of contributed papers, shall be printed and published and circulated to members. It will be issued as the Proceedings of the Astronomical Society of Australia, Volume 1, No. 1, thus allowing for the possibility of continuing the series at subsequent meetings should the Council, after discussion with the Society, so decide. If it is resolved to continue publication in this manner, copies of the first Proceedings may be circulated internationally with invitations to outside bodies to subscribe to future Proceedings.

#### Subscriptions and Fees

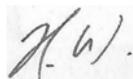
10. Until the question of fees has been resolved by the Council, the annual subscription shall be \$6 for full members and \$2 for students working towards a Master's or Doctor's degree. An entrance fee of \$2 will be charged.

The Chairman moved the adoption of the Proposals in blocks under their various headings. Proposals 1 to 9 were adopted unanimously in four separate votes and after short discussion. Giovanelli drew attention to the close link between the Society's publication policy and subscriptions. The Chairman pointed out that this was to be discussed more fully later in the meeting. It was therefore resolved that the acceptance of Proposal 10 be postponed till after the election of Council.

### 3. ELECTION OF THE FIRST COUNCIL

The Chairman submitted the following list of nominations for the first Council as proposed by the Inaugural Committee:

President: Wood; Vice-Presidents: Gascoigne; Wild; Secretaries: Sheridan, Smerd; Treasurer: Shobbrook; Members of the Council: Carver, Eggen, Ellis, Giovanelli, Mugglestone.



When it was noted that one of the nominees, Ellis, was not at the meeting, Gascoigne suggested that the words 'present at the meeting' be deleted from Proposal 5 as a necessary condition for election. To this purpose it was moved (Wood, Sheridan): That Proposal 5 be rescinded.

For: 32; against, 38; the remainder abstaining.

The motion was lost and Ellis' name was deleted from the nomination list. Buscombe nominated Harris as Member of Council. The nomination was seconded and accepted. There being no further nominations it was moved (Roberts, Ramsay): That the nominations be closed. Carried. The nominees listed above and with Harris in place of Ellis were declared duly elected to the first Council.

The President then took the Chair and briefly addressed the Meeting, including the information that the 15th General Assembly of the IAU may be held in Australia in 1973. He welcomed Eggen, recently appointed as Director of Mount Stromlo Observatory, to the Meeting and asked him to report on the negotiations for a big optical telescope. Eggen informed the Meeting that there was now a good chance of obtaining a 150-inch telescope for Australia.

This was followed by Secretarial announcements on arrangements for the scientific sessions and social functions.

#### 4. GENERAL BUSINESS

The President asked for the meeting's guidance on several important items of Society policy that would have to be considered by the first Council. These were discussed in turn.

(a) Membership qualifications. The discussion centred largely on what limits, if any, should be placed on membership to make the Society representative of astronomical work in Australia and to enable the Society to pay its way. Robertson advocated that anybody who is prepared to pay the subscription and is nominated by two existing members should be eligible. Keay pointed out that this would be similar to the present policy of the RAS whose membership had progressively widened, largely for financial reasons. Gascoigne reported that the comments received from those invited to join favoured the 'basically professional' membership of Proposal 3. He pointed out that the wording of the latter allowed the Society wide discretion. Eggen approved this wording; he referred to the comment by a Treasurer of the AAS that a good-sized cheque was a very acceptable contribution towards the advancement of astronomy. Again with Society finance in mind. Moreton suggested that the Society may like to follow the example of the AAS and provide for 'corporate' membership by companies that make or distribute equipment used in astronomical work.

At the end of the discussion a large majority of the meeting expressed itself, by show of hands, in favour of the membership policy of Proposal 3.

(b) Form, frequency and timing of Society meetings. The meeting accepted the recommendation by the Inaugural Committee that

*A.W.*

the Society should, to begin with at least, aim for not less than two meetings a year: one an Annual General Meeting, the other or others meetings on special topics. Mugglestone suggested that the Society meetings should be timed for the May, August or summer vacations of the Universities.

(c) Guiding principles for the Society's constitution. The meeting agreed that the Proposals, as amended by the meeting, should serve as a guide to the Council in framing the Society's constitution and by-laws for presentation at the next Annual General Meeting.

(d) Publication. A very animated discussion ranged from advice against any Society publication to the recommendation of Proposal 9 for publishing printed Proceedings. The main considerations seemed to be: (i) the wisdom of adding yet another scientific publication, (ii) the ability of the Society to pay for a worthwhile publication, and (iii) the possibility of managing a publication by honorary labour.

Giovanelli expressed a personal preference against adding to the long list of scientific journals. However, should the Society decide to publish, this would have to be done without unduly high cost to the members. He asked for an estimate of the cost of the proposed publication so that the meeting may be able to relate this cost to the proposed subscription rate. Wild spoke in favour of the publication policy of Proposal 9. He drew attention to the proposal that short accounts, rather than abstracts, of contributed papers should be published; these accounts were likened to letters in Nature. In reply to several suggested alternative methods of publishing the contributed papers, Wild strongly recommended that the papers be printed, preferably by typesetting. In his opinion the publication, if any, should be in the form of a journal that could be sold and referred to. In reply to Buscombe's suggestion that it may be possible to publish abstracts or short papers in the Aust. J. Science, Wild commented that this journal did not have the desired circulation. A tentative approach to the editor of the Aust.J.Phys. had not met with success. From several printers' quotations obtained so far it appeared that 400 copies of a 32-page journal of size 8" x 10" with 20 figures would cost approximately \$550. If the entire printing cost were borne by, say, some 180 members then two issues per year would account for all of the proposed annual subscription of \$6 for full members. If, on the other hand, all 400 copies of each issue were sold, the cost per copy would be less than \$1.40.

After further discussion on the relative costs of type-set and off set printing, on routine expenses for the running of the Society and on the possibility of financial or other help from, for instance, the CSIRO, it was moved (Roberts, seconder unrecorded): That Proposal 9 be rescinded.

Before the motion was put Eggen pointed out that one could not divorce the proceedings of the inaugural meeting from those of future meetings; there seemed no point in publishing one issue of a journal.

The President then summarized the discussion and put the motion to rescind Proposal 9 to the meeting. The motion was lost on a large majority by show of hands.

*J.W.*

2. (continued)

With the publication policy decided, the meeting resumed discussion of Proposal 10 on 'Subscriptions and Fees'. Giovanelli suggested that if the Society is to publish the proceedings of two meetings in the first year then the subscriptions recommended in Proposal 10 should be doubled.

There was no support for an increase in the proposed subscriptions. Some members were concerned about the possibility that Council may ask for an additional subscription during the first year because of publication costs. To prevent this a motion was proposed by Ramsay (seconded Mccusker) and subsequently modified following a suggestion by Roberts to read finally: That the following be added at the end of Proposal 10:- Council is not empowered to raise these fees. Council is empowered to charge such registration fees for meetings as may be deemed necessary.

The motion was put to the meeting and carried by show of hands. The meeting finished at 1545.

S.F. SMERD  
Secretary

*Harley Wood*  
*29 November 1967*