

16TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE FLAMSTEED ASTRONOMY SOCIETY

Held on Monday 14th September 2015 at 7.00pm in the lecture theatre of the National Maritime Museum.

1. **Present:** Malcolm Porter (Chair) and 91 members of the Flamsteed Astronomy Society
2. **Apologies** were received from Grey Liple, Brian Blake, Peter Linstead-Smith, Simon Hurst and Mike Meynell.
3. **Matters arising:** There were no matters arising from the minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on Monday 15th September 2014.

4. Chair's address:

Malcolm welcomed members to the 16th Annual General Meeting of the Flamsteed Astronomy Society and gave an overview of the 2014/15 season and plans for the forthcoming season.

Activities in 2014/15

We organised 90 events across the year, including 10 lectures, 11 Blackheath observing evenings, 6 meetings of the History of Astronomy Group, 11 pub social evenings, 8 Great Equatorial Telescope viewings, 4 members' solar viewing events, 16 public solar viewing events, 9 viewing events at Romney, 6 observing/imaging workshops and visits to places such as the Royal Astronomical Society library and the University of London Observatory in Mill Hill.

Of the 90 events organised, weather unfortunately forced the cancellation of 22 events, with the Romney viewings and the public solar viewing events being particularly hard-hit.

Membership

Current total membership of 325 is down by around 30 on last year, but that is possibly related to the lack of 'big' astronomical events over the past year, with the solar eclipse being completely clouded out. (Despite that, we still had around 1,500 members of the public turn out, the vast majority of whom seemed to have a good time anyway!)

Financial surplus

The gross surplus was again approaching the maximum allowable and subsequently it was resolved to fund support items primarily for the Great Equatorial Telescope refractor. After some delay, all items were finally delivered earlier this year.

The Flamsteed and the Royal Museums Greenwich

We continue to enjoy a good working relationship with the new Development and Membership team, led now by the new Development Director, Kate Seeckts, together with continued support from Chris Hill and his membership team and the new ROG Manager, Lance Bourne.

Earlier this year, the Museum took the decision to adjust the membership pricing policy in order to encourage additional membership by reducing fees, particularly for those paying by direct debit. However, this involved the potential removal of the concessionary rates. Having said that, after much discussion, Malcolm was pleased to report that, by adjusting the additional fee that Flamsteed members pay, the concessionary rate remains for our 'more mature' members so that, effectively, all our members will now enjoy some form of reduced membership fees, particularly if they pay by direct debit.

One of the side effects of the discussions associated with membership rate policy changes was that we have finally managed to establish some better understanding of our true financial position i.e. we can now see that the annual 'gross surplus' is, in fact, due to some mis-allocation of costs, considerably smaller than had previously been thought.

Many of the outstanding issues with the Membership and Booking system have been resolved although, unfortunately, a few remain which the Membership team are working on.

Through your committee, the Flamsteed continues to be committed to providing support to the RMG and, in particular, the ROG by

- Holding public astronomy events,
- Dealing with media requirements,
- Holding public and members astronomy workshops.

Proposed activities for 2015/16

All main lectures are now scheduled with assigned subjects and speakers.

Together we will continue to support the following activities and special interest groups:-

- The Radio Astronomy Group – augmented with potential membership participation in meteor activity detection
- The History of Astronomy Group
- The Observing and Imaging Group
- Pub Social Meetings
- Public viewing sessions including Solar Viewing, possibly augmented with demonstrations of solar radio and meteor activity at some stage during the coming season
- Continued imaging and telescope workshops
- Various visits to astronomy related places of interest
- Continue with member's Great Equatorial viewing sessions
- Continue, and refine, two Great Equatorial imaging sessions
- Review the Flamsteed member's deep sky imaging workshops with a view to continuing these
- Continue media support for the RMG and institutions such as the BBC
- Probably organize another overseas trip to a suitable location (applying the approach used for the two successful trips to CERN) – with Florence as a possible location.

Taking the Flamsteed forward in 2015/16

We will continue to explore, with the RMG, a better way to run the finances of the Society.

In line with the Memorandum of Understanding between the RMG and the Flamsteed, we continue to improve the process of ensuring that there is an improved flow of accounting information between the RMG and the Flamsteed e.g. budget information.

Continue the process of increased contact with other astronomy societies e.g. the Wealden Astronomical Society and the Norman Lockyer Society

Building on this season's successful trips to the RAS Library, the Kidbrooke reserve collection, and the UCL Observatory, organise trips to other astronomy related institutions, such as the Norman Lockyer Observatory at Sidmouth, the Mullard Radio Observatory near Cambridge (which is, in fact, scheduled for the 10th October) and potentially the Institute of Astronomy in Cambridge.

We will continue to use Mycenae House for our committee meetings and potential events such as members' workshops.

We will continue with our institutional membership of the BAA.

Whilst continuing with the external viewing sessions and those at Martin Male's observatory in Romney, we will look to find additional potential semi-dark and dark sites building on, as of the 2014/15 season, the success of viewing from Chris Mann's garden near Leeds Castle.

Thanks...

Malcolm, as chair, expressed thanks on behalf of the membership to Mike Meynell, who has coped with a vast amount of 'front and back office' work for the Society; to the Committee, who have worked hard all year; and to the people who run the special interest groups.

Thanks were also offered to Linda Potter, Jane Bendall, Mike Dryland, Eddie Yeadon and others who, over the years, have done so much to make the Flamsteed into the strong astronomy society that it is today.

Thanks, too, to Chris Hill and the membership team at RMG, as well as the technicians and security staff who 'look after us' at our lectures.

And finally Malcolm thanked the members for turning out in such numbers, helping when we needed help and 'prodding' us when necessary!

Committee

The Committee in 2014/15 comprised:

- Malcolm Porter – Chair
- Mike Meynell – Vice Chair
- Grey Lipleby – Vice Chair
- Brian Blake

- Rupert Smith
- Christina Chester
- Clive Inglis
- Andy Sawers
- Nick Phillips
- Tej Dyal
- Roger Geeson

Brian Evans has been nominated to join the committee. As there were no other nominations, an election was deemed unnecessary. Alan Evans proposed and Bill O'Brien seconded the appointment of the whole of the committee.

Malcolm said that if it were the wish of the membership, he would be happy to serve as chair for one more year. Eddie Yeadon proposed and Pat Wainwright seconded the re-appointment of Malcolm Porter as chair and Grey Liple and Mike Meynell as vice-chairs of the Society.

Any other business

As there was no other business, Malcolm Porter closed the meeting.