

## **18<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE FLAMSTEED ASTRONOMY SOCIETY**

Held on Monday 18th September 2017 at 7.00pm in the lecture theatre of the National Maritime Museum.

1. Present: Andy Sawers (chair) and approximately 78 members of the Flamsteed Astronomy Society
2. Apologies were received from Brian Blake, Jonathan Chandler, Ian Sherwood and Sumitra Sri Bhashyam.
3. Matters arising: There were no matters arising from the minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on Monday 19<sup>th</sup> September 2016.

### **4. Chair's address**

Andy welcomed members of the Flamsteed Astronomy Society to the 18<sup>th</sup> Annual General Meeting before giving an overview of the 2016/17 season and plans for 2017/18.

### **Special thanks**

Andy started by stating that he had been very proud and honoured to be the chair of the Flamsteed for the past season. He thanked all the members of the Flamsteed committee, without whom none of our events could take place. Three committee members were given particular thanks, as they had taken on new and challenging roles during the previous season:

- Tej Dyal for his work in organising the Great Equatorial Telescope and solar viewing sessions;
- Nick Phillips for his role “behind the scenes” in organising our lectures;
- Christina Chester in her role as vice-chair, who has taken on a phenomenal amount of work, helping others, organising events and getting things done for the society.

Andy also thanked others who are not on the committee: Mike Dryland for his work in organising trips and visits for the History of Astronomy Group; Martin and Jane Male for generously allowing society members to use their observatory in Romney, and our refreshment organisers, Bob and Sue Yates and Peter Kitcherside.

### **Relationship with Royal Museums Greenwich**

Andy reported that, when he and Christina took up their respective roles at the start of last season, they had made a point of meeting as many senior stakeholders at Royal Museums Greenwich as they could.

This included: Lance Bourne (ROG General Manager), Andy Bodle (Director, Operations and Human Resources), Kate Seeckts (Director, Development) and her new team Chloe Chapman and Tessa Mo in Membership, Stuart Bligh who heads up the curators, Mike Sarna (Director, Collections and Public Engagement) who is in charge of collections, and Marek Kukula and the astronomers at the ROG.

Andy was delighted to report that the value our society brings to the museum was widely understood. Our role in supporting events at the museum, both at the ROG and NMM, was fully appreciated and valued by all.

### **Activities in 2016/17**

In 2016/17 the Flamsteed planned 84 separate events, including lectures, Blackheath observing events, solar viewing sessions for members and for the public, social evenings, a number of trips, outreach events and radio astronomy workshops.

Because of the weather, 63 of the planned 84 events ran:

- 10 Lectures
- 8 Great Equatorial Telescope viewings / planetarium back-up
- 6 Blackheath viewings
- 8 Practical astronomy workshops – including telescope and astrophotography workshops at different levels & radio astronomy
- 4 History of Astronomy talks
- 3 History of Astronomy tours/visits – Caird Library, LTE Stores, Alt-Az building and Endeavour Room tours
- 2 Romney viewings
- 2 Trips – Herstmonceux and UK Space Centre in Leicester
- 3 Public solar viewings at the ROG
- 3 Outreach events – Charlton & Woolwich Free Film Festival, SpaceUp (at Queen Mary, University of London), 'Run The Solar System at Olympic Park.
- 11 Social evenings
- 3 ROG support events – Alt-Az Patrons and Members appeal, 'Stranger worlds', ROG Evening of Astrophotography

Andy updated the society on the current state of the appeal to raise £50,000 for new telescopes and equipment in the Alt-Az Pavilion. 93% of the funds have now been raised. The Flamsteed have fully supported this initiative by taking part in the Patrons and Members fundraising event, and raised money at public solar viewing sessions by asking members of the public to donate to the cause. Andy also thanked members who donated to this project which will benefit not only the ROG but the Flamsteed as well.

### **Membership**

Membership of the society currently stands at 356 (345 active and 11 lapsed). We have 134 single, 100 concessions, 102 joint and 9 honorary memberships (plus 11 lapsed members). Membership numbers have remained consistent at around 350 members for the last 5 years.

### **Budget**

Andy reported a small underspend on budgeted expenditure during the last season. This is, in part, due to an underspend on web services, as multi-year contracts were signed and paid for in the 2015/16 season.

Membership income is slightly higher than expected, with the result that we have a net surplus of around £1,400.

The Flamsteed membership supplement will remain unchanged for the coming season, with the concessionary rate to remain in place.

### **Upcoming activities for 2017/18**

All main lectures for this season are now scheduled with assigned subjects and speakers. We will shortly be planning our Practical Astronomy and History of Astronomy group meetings.

The committee will also re-examine how we can organize overseas trips (or other trips that require an overnight stay). These trips are much more difficult to organize, particularly for committee members who have day jobs. However, we should have news of a trip to an observatory in Spain soon.

Andy informed members that they should expect to receive a membership survey in the next few months. This survey would be designed to assess membership interest in various aspects of astronomy and what the Flamsteed offers to members. It would also ask questions on how members want to receive communications from the society. Andy urged all members to respond to the survey, as it would be critical in determining the future direction of the society, much like our previous membership survey in 2012.

We continue to look for further dark sky viewing locations, and also continue to explore informal arrangements with other astronomy societies.

### **Further thanks**

Andy thanked the following for their support during the last season:

- The RMG team; membership, astronomers, curators, and security / visitor experience / technical staff, who provide so much assistance to the society.
- The Flamsteed committee.
- The Flamsteed members for their support, feedback, volunteering efforts and for their regular contribution of astronomy photographs for the pre-lecture video.

## **5. Vote on lowering the admission age from 18 to 16**

Andy introduced a proposal to lower the admission age to become a member of the society from 18 to 16.

Since its inception in 1999, the Flamsteed Astronomy Society has been an organisation that welcomes members aged over 18. The Committee was now asking members to vote in favour of lowering the Society's membership age from 18 to 16, bringing it in line with the definition of an adult member of Royal Museums Greenwich.

Andy explained that the committee had been exploring this option for many months, and had concluded that this would be a very positive move for the Flamsteed and is not just an administrative adjustment.

- Lowering the membership age allows us to welcome young adults who are at the age where they will likely be studying for their A-levels and considering their university options. The Committee believes that enabling 16 and 17-year-olds to attend our lectures and other events will help instil in them a passion for astronomy and astrophysics.
- It will give young adults a taste of the type of research projects and space missions that our world-class lecturers are involved with – and maybe even introduce them to lecturers and professors that they may meet in their university career.
- And it gets rid of an anomaly whereby young people of this age group are regarded as adults by the Museum’s membership definition and yet are not allowed to be members of the Flamsteed.

Fundamental to this proposal is one of our long-standing objectives: “promoting the public profile of astronomy”.

Andy explained that we still have a number of matters that need to be addressed before we can implement this proposal, in particular the need to arrange appropriate, affordable insurance cover and the establishment of safeguarding procedures. But we believe that now is the right time to ask members for their approval as we continue to work through the remaining issues.

It was noted that this proposal will not change the core nature of the Flamsteed: our programme of events will not be changed in any way in the future because of this policy. Rather, we will simply be allowing young adults to experience everything that the Flamsteed, and astronomy, has to offer.

The proposal had been sent to members via email on 18 August 2017, and no dissenting replies had been received.

The resolution was put to members in attendance, and was passed on a show of hands (with one dissenter).

## **6. Election of Committee**

In 2016/17 the elected members of the committee comprised:

- Andy Sawers – Chair
- Christina Chester – Vice Chair
- Grey Liptey – Vice Chair
- Brian Blake
- Brian Evans
- Clive Inglis
- Malcolm Porter
- Mike Meynell
- Nick Phillips

- Roger Geeson
- Rupert Smith
- Tej Dyal

The committee also co-opted 3 additional members (who do not have voting rights): Asra Jilani, Lin Potter, and Sumitra Sri Bhashyam.

Andy reported that Brian Evans and Roger Geeson had decided to step down from their roles on the committee. He thanked both Brian and Roger for their many years of service.

Two nominations to serve on the committee had been received: Bobby Manoo and Simon Hurst. As there were no other nominations, and we had two members stepping down from the committee, an election was deemed unnecessary.

Andy handed over the chair to Mike Dryland to conduct the vote on committee election.

Eddie Yeadon proposed and Bill O'Brien seconded the re-appointment of the committee as a whole.

The reappointment of Andy Sawers as chair was proposed by Adrian Challinor and seconded by Helen Edwards.

The reappointment of Christina Chester as vice-chair was proposed by Gurinder Lall and seconded by Martin Male.

The reappointment of Grey Liplely as vice-chair was proposed by Tony Sizer and seconded by Linda Potter.

All votes were passed by members present without dissent.

Co-opted committee members will be appointed at the next meeting of the Flamsteed committee.

Mike Dryland added his thanks to the committee, reminding members that many of the committee also have full-time jobs, as well as performing their roles in helping to run the society. He then handed the chair back to Andy Sawers.

### **Any other business**

There being no further business, Andy Sawers closed the meeting.