

19TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE FLAMSTEED ASTRONOMY SOCIETY

Held on Monday 17th September 2018 at 7.00pm in the lecture theatre of the National Maritime Museum.

1. Present: Andy Sawers (chair) and approximately 113 members of the Flamsteed Astronomy Society
2. Apologies were received from Brian Blake, Adrian Challinor, Simon Hurst, Grey Liple, Mike Meynell and Rupert Smith.
3. Matters arising: There were no matters arising from the minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on Monday 18th September 2017.

4. Chair's address

Andy welcomed members to the 19th annual general meeting of the Flamsteed Astronomy Society.

Special thanks

Andy gave special thanks to all the members on the committee who make all our events possible. All the organisational work that goes into the preparation and running of events is far from the glamorous side of astronomy, he said. Thanking all the committee members individually and highlighting their contribution to the society would take all night, but he made special mention of the contributions made by those who were new to the committee last year:

- Simon Hurst, for his work on the under-18s project and the very amusing astrophotography videos he compiles every month;
- Bobby Manoo, who took on the bulk of the programme work for the History of Astronomy group;
- Barry Cassels, who has been a great help with great equatorial viewing and our solar observing programme;
- And Helen Edwards, who has been looking after the running of our Romney programme as well as stepping up earlier this year to take on the very challenging task of putting together our speaker programme for this year.

Andy also offered thanks on behalf of the Society to a number of non-committee members who had also contributed greatly to the running of the Society:

- Martin and Jane Male who again made their observatory available to us several times.
- Sue and Bob Yates for kindly assisting Roger Geeson on the refreshments;
- Mike Dryland, who still gives his time generously, especially for conducting tours of the observatory for our guests and visiting astronomy societies;
- Stephen Brooks, who has kindly assisted Mike with these tours.

- Brian Evans for organising our social evenings (which we are moving to an earlier time of 7.30pm to see if that makes them more appealing for members);
- And a great number of people who volunteer to help at our solar viewing events – not least Saurabh Lahoti, who has assisted on several solar viewing events – and who comes in all the way from Brussels.

Review of the year

The Flamsteed organised 85 events in the 2017-18 season, and even with weather cancellations we managed to run 64 of them – but all 85 still need to be organised right up to the last minute when the weather fails to cooperate, Andy said. Both numbers were one more than the previous year.

The number and types of events we ran were:

Event type	Number arranged	Cancellations	Number run
Lectures	10	0	10
Members' Talks	1	0	1
Great Equatorial Telescope viewings / planetarium back-up	6	0	6
Blackheath viewings	10	7	3
Romney viewings	6	4	2
Public solar viewings at the ROG	15	9	6
Members solar viewings at the ROG	4	1	3
Practical Astronomy workshops <i>telescopes, astrophotography and radio astronomy</i>	6	0	6
History of Astronomy group talks – <i>History of UK space programme, interesting astronomical sites on SE England, Wm & Caroline Herschel</i>	5	0	5
Solar viewing training sessions	2	0	2
Trips - ROG curator tour / Bayfordbury Observatory / Mullard	3	0	3
Social evenings	11	0	11

Event type	Number arranged	Cancellations	Number run
Outreach events - Film Festival, SpaceUp, New Scientist Live, Shrewsbury Park	4	0	4
ROG support events - Evening of Astrophotography, AMAT opening	2	0	2
TOTAL	85	21	64

Weather of course also affects the flow of new images for our astrophotography video, so Andy reminded members that if they find themselves somewhere exotic with clear skies, then it would be great if they contributed any astronomy-related photographs.

Andy also thanked members who spoke throughout the year at our History of Astronomy talks and at our very successful Members' Talks evening, which we may repeat again this year if there are enough volunteers to happy to do a presentation.

Trips in 2017-18 included visits to the Mullard Radio Astronomy Observatory – where Jocelyn Bell Burnell discovered Pulsars – as well as the Bayfordbury Observatory at the University of Hertfordshire and a tour of Flamsteed House hosted by Louise Devoy, curator at ROG.

Events for 2018-19

Work already underway for scheduling talks and events for 2018-19. Events planned and proposed include:

- A visit to E-Eye – a telescope hosting facility in Spain 4th-7th October – some committee members visited last winter and thought it was terrific. There were still a three places left, but low interest from the membership means that the event may be cancelled.
- The Flamsteed would be present again at New Scientist Live on 23rd September, sharing the BAA stand.
- A visit to the Royal Astronomical Society Library is scheduled for 27 September.
- The committee is proposing a trip to La Palma in the Canary Islands and the telescope facilities there. While that won't be run for perhaps a year, it would help if members could let committee members know if that sounded like it would be of interest.
- Likewise, the committee has suggested a cinema visit to see First Man – the new film coming out in October about Apollo XI.

The Alt-Az Pavilion

The refurbishment of the Alt-Az pavilion was obviously a Royal Observatory Greenwich project rather than a Flamsteed one, but we eagerly supported it. Members will know that the

new facility, dubbed the Annie Maunder Astrographic Telescope, is now live, making this a working observatory for the first time in 60 years. Flamsteed members will be invited to contribute to that work – especially those members who have astrophotography skills. More details will be revealed soon.

Membership

There has been an increase in our overall membership numbers compared with the last few years, but also a curious rise in the number of ‘lapsed’ members. The lower membership fee charged to members who pay by direct debit ought to have kept that number from rising too much, Andy noted.

Year	Total membership
2018	379
2017	356
2016	339
2015	325
2014	355
2013	346

Category	Active	Lapsed	Total
Single memberships	125	10	135
Concessions	104	5	109
Joint members	116	10	126
Honorary / life	9	0	9
Total people	354	25	379

There’s been quite an increase in our ‘joint’ memberships – which is good to see that astronomy and the Flamsteed are something that can be shared.

Finances

Expenditure was, as ever, tightly controlled, however the main components relate to speakers’ travel & accommodation expenses. The Society recorded a surplus in the region of £1,500.

Andy thanked Christina Chester who took on yet more responsibility by managing the record-keeping of our expenditure.

Andy said that it was believed that the Museum was not expected to raise membership fees, at least not before next April or so. But he noted that Museum finances everywhere are under pressure, so what might happen in the Spring was currently uncertain.

Members' survey

The survey of members we had expected to perform in 2017-18 was delayed for several reasons, including the new GDPR rules, but is now very nearly ready to go. It will ask members about their interest in different aspects of astronomy and the different types of events the Flamsteed runs.

Andy asked members to please take time to complete this very important survey, which will be of great help to the committee. As an incentive, all members who respond to the survey will be entered into a prize draw to win a copy of the latest Insight Astronomy Photographer of the Year book, signed by all our main guest speakers in the 2017-18 season – a real Flamsteed trophy!

Admission of under-18s

At last year's AGM, members voted all but unanimously to allow 16 and 17-year-olds to join the Flamsteed. The idea was to allow young people of A-level age to hear our lecturers, take part in our events and fuel their passion for astronomy.

Many discussions had taken place over the past year to with various people and organisations to resolve matters relating to insurance and child safeguarding issues, especially for our many events that take place offsite.

Andy was glad to say these have finally been resolved and so we are now proceeding with dealing with several purely technical and administrative matters such as the Membership database system, marketing literature, revising the MoU where necessary and so on.

Further thanks

Before proceeding to the election of committee members and office holders, Andy offered a few more words of thanks to everyone at the Museum who helps the Flamsteed, in particular Lance Bourne, Nick Babbs, Chloe Shepherd and the whole of the Membership team, the ROG astronomers, visitor experience people and technicians.

He also thanked the members of the Flamsteed, for their support, for coming to our events, and for volunteering at events and helping out.

5. Election of Committee

Andy said that Grey Liple, after many years of unstinting service, is standing down as vice chair, but is remaining on the committee.

The structure of two vice chairs was first implemented some years ago when the committee was more reliant on a smaller number of people. But today we have a committee that is very well placed to shoulder the burden of committee work, and so going forward we will have one vice chair rather than two.

Andy said that all the committee and indeed the Society owe Grey huge thanks for all he has done over the years, and he added that he always valued Grey's words of wisdom and insight.

Andy then handed over as chair of the AGM to his predecessor, Malcolm Porter, to manage the committee election process.

Malcolm reminded members of the great effort contributed by members of the committee and said that members of the Society were always welcome to assist. He invited members to volunteer their services should they so wish.

There were no members stepping down from the committee and no new nominations to serve. The proposed slate of committee members comprised:

Brian Blake	Clive Inglis	Nick Phillips
Christina Chester	Grey Liple	Malcolm Porter
Tej Dyal	Bobby Manoo	Andy Sawers
Simon Hurst	Mike Meynell	Rupert Smith

Eddie Yeadon proposed and Brian Evans seconded the re-appointment of the committee as a whole.

Janice McClean proposed and Graham Finch seconded the reappointment of Andy Sawers as Chair and Christina Chester as Vice Chair.

Andy thanked the members for their support. Co-opted members will be appointed at our next committee meeting.

There being no further business, Andy brought the AGM to a close.

6. Any other business

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