

## **Notes from a Flamsteed Astronomy Society Committee Meeting held on Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> September 2015 at 7pm in Mycenae House, Blackheath**

Present: Malcolm Porter (Chairman), Mike Meynell (Vice Chairman), Andy Sawers, Christina Chester, Mike Dryland, Tej Dyal, Brian Evans, Clive Inglis, Lin Potter and Rupert Smith

Apologies: Grey Liple (Vice Chairman), Brian Blake, Roger Geeson, Asra Jilani, Nick Phillips, and Sumitra Sri Bhashyam

### **1. Matters arising from the committee meeting on 21 May 2015**

#### Radio equipment installation

The Alt-Az building is still damp and not suitable for housing electronic equipment. We have been chasing the ROG who are still keen for us to install radio astronomy equipment, but we have no firm information yet as to when the building will be usable.

#### Under 18s attending Flamsteed events

It came to our attention that at least two people who were clearly under the age of 18 attended the most recent Flamsteed lecture. Current Flamsteed policy is that under-18s cannot be members of the Society, nor may they attend our members-only events such as our lectures. Regardless of that, it is thought that at least one under-18 has in fact been admitted by RMG as a paying member. This is being raised with RMG membership director Chris Hill and with development director Kate Seeckts.

#### IAU 'Name an Exosystem' competition

Because of some complications arising with the voting system, the deadline for voting has been pushed back to the end of October. Members of the public have until then to vote for the names they prefer for a number of exoplanet systems.

The Flamsteed Astronomy Society has submitted a proposal that the Upsilon Andromedae system be given the names:

**Host Star:** Flamstedius

**First Planet:** Grenovicum

**Second Planet:** Londinium

**Third Planet:** Cantium

#### Herstmonceux

The Wealden Astronomical Society at Herstmonceux has again issued an invitation to members of the Flamsteed to join them for their annual BBQ on 17 October. Tickets are £20 each. To date, the rate of take-up has been somewhat slow, however we expect approximately the same number to attend this year as did last year (around 25).

#### Membership fees

Following the recent revision to membership fees, some parts of the RMG website are carrying out-of-date fees information. This will be raised with the Museum.

### Lapsed members

The question of how long to allow members to be 'lapsed' before being removed from the membership list has again been discussed with RMG membership director Chris Hill. Currently members are allowed to be 'lapsed' for up to three months. No final decision has been made as to whether or when to reduce this period, but until the committee is satisfied that the subscription renewal system has settled down, we are happy to leave the three month period as it is.

### Unused telescopes

Unfortunately we have not yet been able to determine the usefulness of a number of telescopes currently sitting in a cupboard at ROG. It is possible that a number of these could be cannibalised to make a few useful scopes that could be taken to our Blackheath viewing events.

It was noted that our main point of contact at ROG now is the newly-appointed general manager Lance Bourne.

## **2. Review of 2014/15 season**

The Flamsteed organised 90 events in the season just ended – a new record (see Appendix for full analysis). 22 events were cancelled because of weather. The list of events includes four trips: two to the Royal Astronomical Society Library, one to the University of London Observatory in north London, and one to Chris Mann's home observatory near Leeds Castle.

Malcolm, as chair, gave thanks to Mike Meynell and all the others who had helped make it possible to run so many successful events – a great number for a voluntary society.

## **3. Events for 2015/16**

The committee considered whether we should continue with such a number of events again this year.

Our lecture programme is considered sacrosanct. We currently have 8 dates available to us for viewing with the Great Equatorial Telescope and are awaiting confirmation of these dates from the ROG. Blackheath viewing dates have been fixed up till Christmas and put on our website. Romney viewing dates are awaiting confirmation from Martin Male.

Visits: It has been suggested that a trip to Florence be included in this year's programme. Florence has the Galileo Museum and a planetarium as well as an observatory at Arcetri. We met a tour operator who specialises in astronomical tours (such as solar eclipses) and we will discuss with them whether a Florence trip is something that it would be appropriate for them to organise on our behalf.

Mullard: There are still a few places left for the upcoming visit to the Mullard Radio Astronomy Observatory in Cambridge.

Other possible visits:

- A visit to the Institute of Astronomy at Cambridge may also be organised.
- The committee briefly discussed whether another trip should be organised to Jodrell Bank, but distance is a factor to consider: it's not a day-trip.
- Birr Castle in Co Offaly, Ireland, is a possible visit destination, as is the Armagh Observatory in Northern Ireland. Neither would be easy to organise because of the travel arrangements.

Other activities:

- The Insight Astronomy Photographer of the Year Awards are hosting a private showing for patrons of the museum on September 23<sup>rd</sup> and the Flamsteed will be helping out by providing a display of astrophotography equipment. Rupert offered to organise a pop-up display, we have leaflets to hand out to prospective members of the Flamsteed, and we can rejig the video of members' astrophotography, which we used at the SMASHFest event earlier this year.
- Grey, Clive, Brian E and Mike M organised a fact-finding trip to the Norman Lockyer Observatory in Devon, to find out how radio astronomy is promoted there. There is an enthusiastic group of radio astronomers there. Projects include meteor-detection, lightning detection and solar flare detection. They would really like for us to set up a meteor detection system and feed our data into their system. Such information has genuine scientific value when meteors are detected from a number of different locations. We could also upload relevant data onto our website (this attracts significant visitor traffic to the Norman Lockyer website). Clive has determined the specifications of the equipment that we would need to buy and costed it at around £360, including the cost of a dedicated laptop. The purchase can be funded from some of the spare cash currently at the Flamsteed's disposal. We are working on how to get members involved and this may also be of interest to the ROG. The challenge will be to raise awareness and make it more interesting to more people but meteor-detection is a good first step.
- The BAA is holding a meteor-detection workshop on 31 October.

#### 4. **Committee roles**

Malcolm indicated that he would be happy, if the membership so wishes, to serve as chair for one more year, by the end of which he will have served four years.

Grey and Mike have also indicated their willingness to carry on in their roles as vice chairs, but with Mike indicating that one or perhaps two more years in the role might be all he is able to serve.

Therefore, Malcolm said that the committee will need to give thought to the future and look ahead to how the committee will be run in a year's time. He reminded the

committee that it was always possible to co-opt non-committee members to provide additional support.

**5. Any other business**

This is the last meeting of the current committee and Malcolm, as chair, expressed his thanks to everyone on the committee and his pleasure that all committee members are pleased to serve again for another year.

There being no further business the committee meeting closed at 8.42pm.