

## **Notes from a Flamsteed Astronomy Society Committee Meeting held on Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> September 2016 at 7pm in Mycenae House, Blackheath**

Present: Malcolm Porter (chair), Mike Meynell (vice-chair) (via phone dial-in), Grey Liplely (vice chair), Brian Blake, Christina Chester, Tej Dyal, Brian Evans, Clive Inglis, Nick Phillips, Andy Sawers.

Apologies: Mike Dryland, Roger Geeson, Asra Jilani, Lin Potter, Rupert Smith, Sumitra Sri Bhashyam.

### **1. Matters arising from the committee meeting on 12<sup>th</sup> May 2016**

#### Alt-Az building and radio astronomy equipment

There are still problems with the Alt-Az building and it appears there are limited prospects of the matter being resolved. The building remains affected by damp, and the stairway hand railings have been taken apart and rebuilt. We will continue to discuss this matter with Lance Bourne at the Observatory.

The Great Equatorial Telescope is currently out of action because the chain that opens the dome doors has slipped. A guard is being made and installed to prevent the chain slipping in the future, and repairs should be completed by the end of October.

#### Unused telescopes

We will also try to discuss with Lance the unused telescopes currently held in storage by the Observatory and to find a date to examine them and decide what to do with them.

#### Membership office

We have not yet organised a meeting with the new volunteer in the membership office, Tessa Mo, who will be working specifically on membership matters.

We noted that the Museum recently sent out a mailer that managed to put the wrong names and addresses together.

#### Book signings

Lance is taking control of the book signing arrangements. It had been agreed that a fee will be offered to Lance Dartnell, our upcoming speaker, to compensate for him not being able to sell his own copies of his books. Chris Hill has agreed that this extra cost should not come out of the Flamsteed budget. Logistics are being checked, but at the moment it isn't clear whether the books, to be sold by the museum, will be sold in the shop or at a kiosk of some kind.

#### Under 18s

Andy and Christina put forward two proposals for extending the membership of the Flamsteed to under-18s. In both cases the age limit would be reduced to 16, which would allow for A-level students to attend our lectures and potentially other events. Briefly the two proposals were:

- (i) Option 1 – Under-18s would only be admitted to on-museum premises events such as lectures and Great Equatorial viewings
- (ii) Option 2 – Under-18s would be able to attend most Flamsteed events unaccompanied, but would require a parent to be with them on events such as trips to Romney or CERN.

It is also open to debate as to whether that parent should have to be a Flamsteed member as well as a Museum member.

The committee recommended that we go to the Museum to discuss both options, with a preference for the second option. It will have to be discussed with the membership department whether the parent should also be a Flamsteed member.

When these issues have been discussed and tentatively agreed with the Museum, the committee will then consider the resulting proposal before putting it to the membership.

#### No-shows

Increasing the capacity of the auditorium to 130 looks like it might have resolved the problem of no-shows blocking seats for others. Recent lectures have not been hitting capacity.

## **2. Review of 2015/16 season**

We had a very good season with some 85 events organised, of which more than 60 ran without being affected by weather – more than one event per week. Details will be provided at the upcoming AGM.

## **3. Planned activities for 2016/17**

Major trips such as to Florence or Paris are extremely difficult and time-consuming for the committee to organise. It was noted that the Museum used to run trips as part of its membership offering which could help boost membership. The committee recommended that this option be discussed with the Museum. Offering an ‘astronomy-themed’ trip to Museum members would be of obvious interest to Flamsteed members in particular.

Our second participation in the Lewisham Smashfest festival again showed that, while the target audience may be teenagers, the actual attendance is very much younger than that – around age 6-7. It’s not obvious that this is an event we should support next year.

Public attendance at the Shrewsbury Park event was affected by terrible weather and by the fact that the dog show was moved to the Sunday while the Flamsteed was taking part on the Saturday.

We will continue to support ROG events. We noted that the Observatory ‘Evening with the stars’ events, which are ticketed, are supported by a number of Flamsteed members who are museum volunteers.

Mycenae House’s summer party was a good event. The Flamsteed did not have a great location but in other respects it was fine and we are happy to support this event in the future.

Special interest groups: we are considering having a spectroscopy special interest group, perhaps within the Observing group. A workshop could be organised to kick this off but it needs someone in the committee to take this on. Nick expressed an interest in doing so.

#### **4. Committee roles / AGM**

Three positions on the committee are voted on by the membership at the AGM – the chair and two vice-chairs. Malcolm Porter reiterated that he is resigning as chair and Mike Meynell that he is resigning as vice-chair. The committee agreed that the names of Andy Sawers and Christina Chester be put to the membership at the AGM to succeed Malcolm and Mike respectively.

#### **5. Any other business**

We have been in contact with the European Space Agency about trying to get Tim Peake to come and speak. No decision on their side yet but we agreed we should enlist the museum as well, as that would be an added appeal from ESA's perspective as well as giving us potentially additional route of access into ESA and assisting with logistics for what will certainly be an extremely popular lecture. Christina will speak to Kate Seeckts about this.

Malcolm Porter gave his thanks to the committee that he has had the pleasure to work with for the last several years.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.48pm.