

Notes from a Flamsteed Astronomy Society Committee Meeting held on Thursday 15th June 2017 at 7pm in Mycenae House, Blackheath

Present: Andy Sawers (chair), Christina Chester (vice-chair), Grey Liple (vice-chair), Brian Evans, Clive Inglis, Malcolm Porter, Mike Meynell, Lin Potter, Nick Phillips, Rupert Smith.

Apologies: Asra Jilani, Brian Blake, Roger Geeson, Sumitra Sri Bhashyam, Tej Dyal.

1. Matters arising from the committee meeting on 2nd March 2017

ROG's Science Fact –vs– Science Fiction event in May

The event took place and the museum appreciated our support on the evening.

In addition, we took part in the "Space-Up" event at Queen Mary College, University of London on Saturday 10 June. The committee agreed to review our participation in future events of this type, as quite a lot of organising had to take place for an event with only a short period of solar viewing for a limited number of attendees.

Awareness of Flamsteed Special Interest Group emails / society communication strategy

Christina agreed to set up a meeting with the museum membership department to discuss our communication strategy and ways in which the museum can help. Mike agreed to participate in this meeting, if he is available.

Membership survey

Mike agreed to circulate the contents of the previous membership survey (performed in April 2012) as a basis for the creation of a new membership survey.

Some questions were asked as to why the Flamsteed promotional leaflet was not on display at the museum. Christina stated that the promotional leaflet was currently being redesigned to comply with the new museum branding. When this exercise is completed, she will raise the question with Lance Bourne at the ROG.

2. Update on the under-18s project

Andy gave an update on progress on the proposal to lower our minimum membership age to 16, bringing our "adult" definition in line with the museum. This allows us to open membership to the 'A-level' age group - students who are at the age where they are considering their university options and who would be enthused by the passion and subject matter of our lecturers.

The museum's membership department have supported this proposal. They have requested that the membership price be the same as the current concessionary rate.

The committee had previously agreed that we wanted to make all the Flamsteed events available to 16-18 year-olds, and not restrict them to on-museum-premise events. The museum insurance policies cover on-premise events. For off-premise events, we had hoped to take advantage of the Federation of Astronomical Societies (FedAstro) public liability insurance (PLI) policy. However, this policy current excludes events where under-18s are present. FedAstro have indicated that their insurers will agree to unrestricted cover (it would have provisions such as adherence to child safeguarding policies, etc) - but we have not yet received confirmation of this.

We will be putting forward a proposal at the next AGM (to be held on 18 September) to lower the minimum membership age to 16. However, even if the membership vote supports the change, we will not be able to progress with it until and unless we are able to arrange appropriate PLI cover. If, ultimately, there is no resolution to the insurance matter, then the proposal will not proceed.

3. Plans for public solar viewing events

Mike and Nick updated the committee on plans for nine public solar viewing events to take place over the months of July and August at the ROG. We have been in touch with potential volunteers for each of these dates, and there are some new volunteers this year. The first public solar viewing event is scheduled to take place on Saturday 1 July.

4. Alt-Az Pavilion fundraising ideas

The museum has thanked the Flamsteed for their participation in the initial fundraising event which took place at the ROG on 25 May. The aim is to raise £50,000 to transform the Altazimuth Pavilion at the Royal Observatory Greenwich into a working observatory for the first time in over 60 years.

Andy asked if the committee had any ideas on raising money for this cause. The following ideas were proposed:

- At our previous committee meeting, Andy reminded the committee that he had provided a copy of the latest Astronomy Photographer of the Year book, which all our lecturers had signed. The committee agreed that we would raffle the book at the first lecture of the 2017/18 season to raise funds for this initiative.
- A pub quiz was proposed, but the committee felt that it would not raise significant funds to justify the amount of organisation and potential costs involved.
- Have a fundraising bucket available at our public solar viewing events for members of the public to donate.

5. Possible links with Crayford Manor House Astronomical Society

As mentioned at the last committee meeting, we have been contacted by Janice McLean, who is a member of both the Flamsteed and CMHAS, about forging links between the two societies.

The committee agreed that the links should be relatively informal to begin with, with the Flamsteed potentially offering an exclusive evening with the Great Equatorial Telescope at the ROG. In return, we might seek an evening using the CMHAS facilities.

Andy agreed to contact Janice and, ultimately, the CMHAS committee to discuss next steps.

6. Possible participation in the BAA/New Scientist Live event at ExCeL (Sunday 1st October)

The BAA have a stand at the New Scientist Live event at ExCeL, which takes place between 28 September and 1 October. Via Janice Mc Lean, the BAA have offered a place on their stand on the final day of the event (Sunday 1 October) to the Flamsteed.

The committee agreed that this was an excellent idea, and agreed to our participation. We will contact Janice McLean to discuss next steps.

7. Possible participation in the Charlton & Woolwich Free Film Festival (likely to take place on evening of Saturday 10th September)

The organisers of this event have asked the Flamsteed if they could be involved with a solar viewing event and a talk about the Sun. The event will take place at The Stables, next to Charlton House.

The committee agreed to take part, so Andy will organise a site visit to Charlton House to assess the sight-lines and determine the feasibility of our involvement. Poor weather alternatives also need to be determined.

8. Society trips for next season (Bayfordbury Observatory, E-Eye)

Clive will contact Bayfordbury Observatory in September to discuss a potential Flamsteed visit. The committee agreed that it would be nice to organise a visit before Christmas.

Rupert stated that a trip to E-Eye would be best from November onwards, to keep costs down. The committee agreed that we should pursue a further trip, so Rupert will come up with some indicative costs.

9. Event reports on the Flamsteed website

For the last couple of seasons, we are not regularly placing reports of our lectures on the Flamsteed website. The committee agreed that we would try to organise a rota of writers for the lecture reports. It was not necessary to write detailed reports for every lecture, just a couple of paragraphs with pictures will often suffice. The key thing is to ensure that reports are on the website as soon as possible after the event, ideally within a week.

10. Any Other Business

Kent Wildlife Trust

Rupert informed the committee of a site called Bough Beach, just south of Sevenoaks, which is maintained by the Kent Wildlife Trust. The site has very dark skies, with a visitor centre, car park and toilets. There is a local astronomy society who already use the site, so we agreed that a joint session with them would be a good first step to using the site. Rupert agreed to make the arrangements.

Programme for 2017/18

Christina gave a brief update on the lecture programme for the 2017/18 season. Progress has been slow, but three speakers have been confirmed, including for the first lecture of the season.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 9.03pm.