

Notes from a Flamsteed Astronomy Society Committee Meeting held on Monday 9th October 2017 at 7pm in Mycenae House, Blackheath

Present: Andy Sawers (chair), Christina Chester (vice-chair), Grey Liple (vice-chair), Barry Cassels, Clive Inglis, Helen Edwards, Mike Meynell, Nick Phillips, Roger Geeson, Rupert Smith, Simon Hurst.

Apologies: Asra Jilani, Bobby Manoo, Brian Blake, Malcolm Porter, Tej Dyal.

1. Matters arising from the committee meeting on 11th September 2017

Membership survey

No progress to report since the last committee meeting, but Andy hopes to make progress on this over the next few weeks.

Update on the under-18s project

The proposal to lower the admission age to become a member of the society from 18 to 16 was passed at the AGM on 18 September on a show of hands (with one dissenter).

Simon has drafted some working policies for dealing with members under the age of 18, and these will be discussed with the museum at the proper time.

The issue with insurance cover is still outstanding, and Andy continues to chase the Federation of Astronomical Societies to get the wording of their PLI policy changed to include members under the age of 18.

Alt-Az Pavilion fundraising ideas

The committee were delighted to learn that the museum target of £50,000 had been met, and the “stretch target” of £100,000 had also been met.

Kent Wildlife trust

Several committee members will be visiting the Bough Beech Visitor Centre on the evening of Saturday 28 October.

Practical Astronomy Group

Rupert has set the dates for all Blackheath observing sessions for the coming season. We also have dates for the Romney observing sessions and the Great Equatorial Viewing sessions.

Room bookings at Mycenae House have been made for all Practical Astronomy workshops. Mike reported that the first of these would take place on Thursday 26th October, when we would be running a Telescope Workshop. The full workshop schedule is as follows:

Date	Topic	Location
Thursday 26 th October	Telescope Workshop	Mycenae House – Room 10
Tuesday 28 th November	Astrophotography: A Beginner’s Guide	Mycenae House – Room 10
Thursday 22 nd February	Deep Sky Imaging Workshop	Mycenae House – Room 10
Thursday 22 nd March	Radio Astronomy Workshop	Mycenae House – Room 10
Thursday 26 th April	How to Remote Control your Scope	Mycenae House – Room 10
Thursday 24 th May	Solar Imaging Workshop	Mycenae House – Room 10

History of Astronomy Group

Mike reported that the dates for all History of Astronomy Group meetings had been set for the coming season:

Date	Topic	Location
Tuesday 14 November	TBC	ROG
Tuesday 23 January	TBC	Mycenae House – Room 10
Tuesday 6 March	TBC	ROG
Tuesday 24 April	TBC	ROG
Tuesday 22 May	TBC	ROG

There are potential speakers and topics for most of these dates, but they are yet to be confirmed.

Public solar viewing events

Mike reported that he had booked the foyer area outside the ROG planetarium for a potential Solar Viewing Training Session on Tuesday 8 May. This event would be used to give existing volunteers an understanding of our plans for the solar viewing season and encourage new volunteers to get involved.

Trips

Rupert reported that there had been interest from the membership in a trip to E-Eye in Spain, but that many people couldn't make the proposed dates of 23-26 November. The committee felt that the lead time was probably not sufficient, so Rupert said that he would postpone the trip and move it to March or April next year (depending on the cost and availability of flights).

Clive will be contacting Bayfordbury Observatory as soon as their bookings open for 2017/18. The committee felt that it would be good to organise a trip before Christmas, ideally at the weekend.

Clive informed the committee of his recent trip to La Palma, and felt that it would be a good location for a Flamsteed trip, with the travel arrangements like those that we had for the trip to CERN (i.e. members responsible for booking their own travel and accommodation). The committee agreed that this was an excellent idea. Clive agreed to take the idea forward and come up with a proposal for the trip. He has already contacted two companies that could assist in the organisation of a trip and is awaiting replies.

Another trip to the Mullard Radio Astronomy Observatory was supported by the committee, and Clive agreed to contact them to arrange a trip in the late spring / early summer next year.

Members' Talks

Mike reported that he had booked the foyer area outside the ROG planetarium for a potential "members' talks" event on the evening of Tuesday 1 May. We need to arrange for speakers for this event at least 3 months prior.

North Essex AS

Christina reported that she had been in touch with North Essex AS regarding a potential visit to Greenwich. No date had yet been set.

New Scientist Live event

Andy reported that the event had been a great success, and thanked Christina, Grey and Mike for their assistance on the day. It is understood that the Royal Observatory Greenwich are looking to take part in the event next year.

2. Appointment of co-opted committee members

The committee agreed to the appointment of 4 co-opted committee members: Asra Jilani, Barry Cassels, Helen Edwards and Roger Geeson. Andy welcomed all co-opted members to the committee and thanked them for volunteering.

3. Committee roles and responsibilities

The following roles and responsibilities were agreed for the 2017/18 season:

Category	Event type	Role description	2017-18 volunteers
Lectures & learning	Programme secretary	Agreeing the lecture topics, approaching potential lecturers, and booking lecturers for each lecture date	Brian Blake
	Programme administrator	Responsible for agreeing lecture dates, booking the lecture theatre, lining up museum resource to support on the evening, lining up volunteers to provide refreshments on the evening, contacting the lecturer to find out technology requirements, agreeing on meeting arrangements with the lecturer on the evening of the event (including lining up tours and/or dinner), sending thank-you note to the lecturer, administering any expense or fee reimbursements for the lecturer	Nick Phillips
	Social organiser	Provide refreshments and catering at meetings and events as required	Roger Geeson, Sue Yates, Bob Yates
	History of astronomy group organiser	Organises and runs meetings of the History of Astronomy Group	Bobby Manoo
	Trips organiser	Takes overall responsibility for organising society trips	Clive Inglis, Christina Chester

Category	Event type	Role description	2017-18 volunteers
Observing	Blackheath observing organiser	Organises and runs meetings of the Observing and Imaging Group. Plan, schedule and arrange observing events. Ensure provision of equipment and qualified leaders at each session. Coordinate announcements, SMS, and web postings, etc	Rupert Smith
	Other observing: Romney, Leeds, Cudham, etc. (potentially Otford in future)	Organises and coordinates specific observing events (e.g. Romney observing) where bookings need to be taken and travel arrangements made	Romney – Helen Edwards. Supported by Nick Phillips. Other events – to be confirmed when venues are decided
	Observing assistants	Assists with the organisation of meetings of the Observing and Imaging Group. Helps with the provision of equipment and assists in the running of the sessions	Tej Dyal, Grey Liple, Clive Inglis, Mike Meynell, Nick Phillips
	Solar - public	Organises and runs public solar viewing sessions	Tej Dyal. Supported by Nick Phillips, Simon Hurst, Barry Cassels, Mike Meynell
	Solar - members	Organises and runs members only solar viewing sessions	Clive Inglis. Supported by Nick Phillips, Rupert Smith
	Solar viewing assistants	Assists with the organisation of solar viewing sessions	Roger Geeson, Tej Dyal, Andy Sawers, Grey Liple, Mike Meynell, Nick Phillips, Simon Hurst, Rupert Smith
	Great Equatorial	Organises and runs the Flamsteed viewing events with the Great Equatorial Telescope	Tej Dyal
	Great Equatorial assistants	Assists in the running of the Flamsteed viewing events with the Great Equatorial Telescope	Clive Inglis, Nick Phillips, Mike Meynell, Simon Hurst, Barry Cassels, Roger Geeson
Practical	Workshops	Organises society and public workshops at the ROG and elsewhere (telescope / imaging / radio, etc, workshops)	Mike Meynell, Practical Astronomy Group

Category	Event type	Role description	2017-18 volunteers
Outreach	Smashfest, APOTY, Shrewsbury Park, etc	Organises outreach events on behalf of the society	Andy Sawers, Christina Chester
Social Evenings	Pub evenings organiser	Organises and hosts monthly pub evenings	Brian Evans

Role	Role description	2017-18 volunteers
Chair	Acts as the embodiment of the FAS for all external matters. Takes the chair at all meetings of the FAS and committee at which he/she is present	Andy Sawers
Vice Chairs	Assumes the duties of the Chair when the Chair is unable to attend	Christina Chester, Grey Liplely
Committee Secretary	Takes & publishes minutes and issues notices of meetings and agendas for committee and general meetings. Receives nominations for committee membership and proposals for resolutions. Organises elections for committee membership	Mike Meynell
Membership Secretary	Works with the NMM Members Office to answer enquiries, resolve subscription issues, welcome new members, and track membership numbers and meeting attendance	Welcome new members - Asra Jilani; Membership list - Mike Meynell
Web Editor	Organises hosting etc for the FAS website. Arranges design of the website as agreed with the committee. Coordinates provision, editing and upload of reports, articles, photographs and updates	Mike Meynell, Christina Chester
Forum Moderators	Moderates the Flamsteed online forum. Ensures that no abusive messages are posted. Splits discussion topics where necessary	Mike Meynell, Andy Sawers
Lecture and Event Reports	Writing of lecture reports and other event reports for the website	Andy Sawers
Social Media Coordinator	Organises social media accounts as agreed with the committee (Twitter, Facebook, SMS, LinkedIn, etc). Proposes & coordinates contributions	Christina Chester, Sumitra Sri Bhashyam, Andy Sawers

Role	Role description	2017-18 volunteers
Astrophotography Video Compiler	Coordinates the receipt of astrophotography images taken by Flamsteed members and compiles a video of the best images for display at Flamsteed lectures and other Flamsteed events	Simon Hurst
Management of Flamsteed e-mail Account	Responding to enquiries made to the Flamsteed email account	Mike Meynell, Christina Chester, Andy Sawers
Expenses Secretary	Keeps track of Flamsteed expense spend	Christina Chester

4. Flamsteed AS involvement with third-party events

During the last season, the Flamsteed had to cancel their participation in two third-party events due to a lack of volunteers and a lack of solar observing equipment.

To encourage more volunteers to put their names forward, Andy raised the idea of coming up with some alternative attractions for visitors rather than just our standard solar viewing option. Solar viewing requires specialist equipment, which only a few of our members have. These new attractions could be video displays, quizzes, sky this month presentations, etc. This will hopefully make it easier for people to volunteer for these events.

Grey mentioned that the event organization should be better understood in advance, so that we weren't expected to carry heavy equipment long distances.

5. Any Other Business

Promotional leaflets

Christina shared the design of the new Flamsteed promotional leaflet which has just been printed. The leaflets follow the new museum brand guidelines.

Email standards

Christina requested that all emails to members follow the museum guidelines on fonts and font-sizes. The font should be Tahoma with a font size of 10.5. Mike requested that the signature line is amended to remove the incomplete telephone number.

Google Groups

The committee agreed that we should suspend the usage of separate Google Groups email lists for History of Astronomy, Observing & Imaging, Radio Astronomy, and Solar Observing on a trial basis. The decision would be reviewed at the end of the calendar year.

There are several problems with the usage of these groups:

- The lists are not linked to the main membership list in any way, meaning that they must be manually updated to remove those who left the society;

- We've had comments from members saying that they weren't aware of certain events taking place, and would have liked to opportunity to know about them earlier;
- We make new members aware of the groups, but, in the last two years, not one new member has asked to be added.

Barry suggested that we use a naming convention in the email subject line so that members can instantly see if the topic is of use to them. The committee agreed that this was an excellent idea, and Mike agreed to come up with a list of approved email subject lines.

Questions at Lectures

A Flamsteed member has mentioned that it was very difficult to hear questions at the post-lecture Q&A sessions. This has been a recurring problem over the years, which we've tried to solve in various way. We did experiment with using a roving microphone, but abandoned it for two reasons. Firstly, it was taking more time to get through the Q&A session. Secondly, and more importantly, some members were uncomfortable using a microphone. For those reasons, we stopped.

We are mindful that some members find it difficult to hear questions, particularly if a question is asked from the front of the lecture theatre. We do sometimes get the host to repeat the question, but often the lecturer launches off into their reply before there is a chance, and this does slow down the Q&A session considerably.

Therefore, the committee agreed that we would ask the lecturer to repeat a summary of the question before answering. Nick and Grey agreed to speak to the lecturer at the start of the evening to make these arrangements.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 9.05pm.