

Notes from a Flamsteed Astronomy Society Committee Meeting held on Tuesday 10th September 2013 in The Forum, Greenwich at 7.00 p.m.

Present: Lesley Hodsdon (Membership) for first part of the evening.
Malcolm Porter (Chairman), Grey Litley (Vice Chairman) Mike Meynell (Vice Chairman), Brian Evans, Peter Kitcherside, Chris Mann, Lin Potter and Jane Bendall

Apologies: Asra Jilani, Brian Blake, Deborah McGarvey, Roger Geeson and Sumitra Sribhashyam

1. Matters Arising: Risk Assessment: Lesley will continue to peruse the question of the museum's 48 hour notice risk assessment requirement. There is no problem with most activities, but the new special interest Observing Group must be able to arrange observing at short notice. Some proper clarification and modification is necessary as this is probably not an actual legal requirement.

Membership cards should be ready in three weeks.

Email addresses: The Membership office will continue to contact those people who have not provided an email address. They are most willing to enclose a letter from the Committee requesting email address.

2. Update on Society Activities

A: Membership: From this week stands at 346, apart from a slight dip during the summer months, the numbers have remained stable throughout the year and most members are still drawn from within a 10 mile radius. Surprise was expressed that average attendance at lectures was only about 80/90 members.

B: Activities: The lecture programme is in place until December (with the May 2014 slot already filled) and has been circulated to members.

Blackheath and Romney Marsh observing evenings are scheduled until the end of 2013.

28" telescope observing evenings: dates for 28" observing are also in the pipeline and should be finalised shortly. It was proposed to hold the usual 8 evenings but to dedicate two sessions to a smaller group (probably drawn from the new special interest Observing Group), who would have an opportunity to actually use the telescope. Training may be a crossover with the members who are also volunteers for EWTS. A ROG astronomer would have to be on duty throughout.

Radio Astronomy: Grey has been in touch with the Norman Lockyer Observatory and feels that a mutually beneficial relationship could be developed. Indeed it may be possible to extend the radio telescope across the South of England between Greenwich and Devon. The Lockyer are eager to host a visit from the Flamsteed and in turn we can welcome them to Greenwich. Grey has made similar, warm contacts with staff at the

Herstmonceux Science Centre, who are currently bouncing signals from the moon and also receiving signals from Io.

C. Media contact: Stargazing Live – although the Flamsteed and museum have been approached by the BBC to get involved in their next Stargazing Live event this entails a great deal of work and effort which we may not be willing to undertake. To be discussed further with Marek Kukula.

Mike has been approached by a TV production company connected to the National Geographic Channel asking about upcoming events particularly plans to view Comet ISON. He will keep the committee in touch with developments.

It was suggested that we need more skilled people to work with the media as currently only Grey and Mike are dealing with the continually growing contacts and with a whole variety of media requests. The ultimate purpose is to offer support to the museum and it was suggested that perhaps we should have a skills audit of our members to draw more active people into the pool to relieve the pressure.

D: Planned activities and visits: CERN is arranged and the 24 lucky participants are all prepared.

E: Flamsteed Star Party: Mike, Grey and two others have scouted out a small campsite in Romney Marsh which would be willing to help us host an overnight star party at the end of their next summer season – October 2014.

F: Finances – some anomalies (particularly income from membership subs) to be addressed and raised with the museum. Malcolm plans to give a general report at the AGM stressing the healthy state of the reserves that will permit us to make more contributions to the museum in the coming year.

G: Solar viewing will continue as before. Each session has been a huge success attracting an average of 500 members of the public over 4 hours. The museum have pressed for solar viewing to be moved into the paying area of the courtyard, but the committee agreed that we are not a revenue provider and we prefer to stay in the area between the fence and the Altazimuth building, where we can attract passers-by as well as people who have entered the complex. We would like to have a large screen to show actual footage whilst people are waiting in the queue (might be a suitable acquisition with our reserve funds). This suggestion has already been mooted with Rob Edwards and discussions continue.

The telescope and astrophotography workshops will continue as a joint enterprise with the museum.

3. Committee nominations

Nominations have been received from Christina Chester, Nick Phillips and Rupert Smith.

Resignations: Deborah McGarvey, Jane Bendall, Peter Kitcherside, Brian Evans and Chris Mann have resigned.

This means that there are still 11 people on the committee when the MoU states that it should be up to 10 people. It was felt that this should not be a problem and if necessary the MoU could be modified. Concern was expressed that there are not enough women committee members and it was agreed that we should actively encourage women to become more involved.

From now on the Chairman and Vice Chairmen will be elected at the AGM from the new committee.

Malcolm's proposals for the Chairman's address at the AGM were tabled. (See attached).

5. Annual Calendar of Activities and procedures

A small number of the committee are undertaking a particularly heavy workload and it was unanimously agreed that every member of the committee should be encouraged to take a definite role in future. This might mean being in charge of a special interest group or at least acting as back up, as most activities need more than one volunteer to run things successfully. To that end Mike has started to draw up a list of procedures with a back up list on the website; in essence a project management plan...to consult to inform and then to action.

6. Twining with Overseas Astronomy Societies

Everyone thought that in concept, a twinning, mutually beneficial relationship with some other astronomy societies overseas might be a good idea. Peter felt we should be cautious and we should investigate what they would be able to offer us and visa versa. Brian Blake is holidaying in from Brazil where he is making a presentation to a local Brazilian astronomy society. This will be discussed again upon his return.

7. Any Other Business

The museum permit lecturer's books to be sold at meetings as long as the book is not already being sold in the museum shop and that no Flamsteed member is actually involved in the selling.

The committee meeting closed with a vote of thanks to the Chairman and two Vice Chairmen for the amazing amount they had achieved for the Society during the past year and all agreed that this would not have happened without their extremely hard work and efforts.

Jane Bendall was also thanked for her contribution to the Society throughout the last 13 years since its foundation in 1999.