

Notes from a Flamsteed Astronomy Society Committee Meeting held on Thursday 28th June 2018 at 7pm in Mycenae House, Blackheath

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

Apologies: Asra Jilani, Barry Cassels, Brian Blake, Malcolm Porter, Tej Dyal.

1. Matters arising from the committee meeting on 21st February 2018

Membership Survey

Andy gave the committee an update on a draft membership survey. Some amendments have been made with a view to gauging membership interest in events that are held off museum premises, to help with the planning of our events.

It was decided that we would concentrate on gauging the interest in our events, rather than asking for attendance data, as we already have good data on attendance at our events.

Practical Astronomy Group

Planning for the 2018/19 season will commence after the September AGM. The view was that we should try to run a telescope workshop prior to Christmas. In addition, the Robotic Telescopes workshop should take place earlier in the season, when the skies are darker.

North Essex Astronomy Society

The North Essex Astronomy Society have arranged to visit to the Royal Observatory on Saturday 21st July. Flamsteed volunteers will assist on the day to give guided tours and a special solar viewing event (weather permitting).

Under-18s Update

A further meeting will be arranged with Lance Bourne at the museum to finalise the insurance issues. An update will be given at the next committee meeting.

History of Astronomy Group Meetings

Planning for the 2018/19 season will commence in August / September. Bobby will contact Nick Babbs to determine when the Planetarium foyer would be available.

Solar Viewing Sessions

Solar viewing events are progressing well, with 2 out of 5 sessions going ahead. Training sessions have been arranged on the mornings of specific events so that new volunteers can get involved.

Shrewsbury Park Summer Festival

This event is going ahead on Sunday 8 July and the Flamsteed have agreed to be involved. Andy agreed to volunteer and would email the general membership to get further volunteers to assist.

Charlton & Woolwich Free Film Festival

The Flamsteed will be involved in the Charlton House event, when they are giving an open-air viewing of the film "The Dish". This will take place on Friday 14 September.

New Scientist Live

The Flamsteed will be involved, once again, on the BAA stand. This will be on Sunday 23 September. It is understood that the museum will not be involved.

2. Update on the Annie Maunder Astrographic Telescope (AMAT) and Alt-Az Pavilion restoration

Mike gave the committee an update on the opening event for AMAT. The event was very well received by all who attended. A few committee members got a sneak preview of the telescope before the event, which was much appreciated.

The project is very much a work in progress, with various phases due to deliver over the coming months and years.

The museum managed to raise £171,000, which paid for both the new telescope installation and the restoration of the building. No money has come from the estates budget, with all renovations paid for by donations.

The museum is keen for Flamsteed members to get involved in assisting in the operation of the telescope. In addition, a part-time (employed) role for an Astrographic Officer will be advertised in September.

A meeting will be arranged with Brendan Owens soon to discuss how the Flamsteed can assist.

3. SpaceUp London 2018 feedback

Clive and Tej attended the event which was held at Kings College London. The attendance and organisation were poor this year, and the committee felt that it was not worth our while to continue involvement in future events.

4. Car sharing travel arrangements for Flamsteed events

Christina suggested using an Eventbrite plug-in to help with the planning of car sharing when travelling to Flamsteed events. When people book for events, they can indicate if they can offer a lift, and those who require lifts can see which lifts are on offer and make the arrangements themselves.

Obviously, this functionality needs testing, so Christina will contact committee members to see if they are able to assist.

5. Lecture programme 2018/19 planning update

Helen gave the committee an update on lecture planning for the coming season. All lecturers for September, October, November and December have been confirmed. Most of the remaining slots have been filled, but Helen is just waiting for a couple more lecturers to confirm before the whole season is finalised.

6. Flamsteed trips/visits for autumn 2018

Clive mentioned a potential trip to La Palma, but due to the lack of available volunteers to organise and the fact that the visitor centre at the observatory is still being built, the committee decided to postpone this to September 2019.

Rupert gave an update on a potential trip to the E-Eye facility in Spain. This would take place in early October. The cost would be approximately £520 per person. The committee agreed to go ahead with the trip and Rupert would arrange to have details sent out to members to gauge interest. A minimum of 5 people would be required for the trip to go ahead.

Christina mentioned the possibility of arranging a further trip to the RAS Library early in the new season. The committee agreed to pursue this, so Christina will go ahead and arrange.

Mike mentioned the possibility of arranging a “graveyard tour” as many astronomers are buried in our immediate vicinity. This has been done by the society in the past, so we could look at arranging another trip of this type.

7. Any other business

Great Equatorial Telescope viewings 2017/18 report

Tej circulated a report prior to the meeting of the Great Equatorial Viewing events for the 2017/18 season. Of the 6 events, it was only possible to use the telescope on one evening. However, back-up planetarium shows, and telescope talks took place on the remaining evenings.

On the events when the weather looked unfavourable in advance, the attendance figures were well down, with less than half of the booked attendees turning up.

The committee felt that we could enhance the offering for the coming season by bringing the Alt-Azimuth Pavilion and AMAT into our weather back-up plan.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 8.49pm.