

Flamsteed Astronomy Society

Committee Meeting

Thursday 21st October 2021 at 7 pm via Zoom

Minutes

Present:

Bobby Manoo (Chair)

Helen Edwards (Vice Chair)

Andy Sawers (Chair)

Tej Dyal

Simon Hurst

Asra Jilani

Gurinder Lall

Mike Meynell

Malcolm Porter

Clive Inglis

Nick Phillips

Apologies:

Barry Cassells

Grey Liple

Roger Geeson

1. Matters arising from the last committee meeting on 6th September 2021

a) Eddie Yeadon tributes – Our October 2021 lecture was badged the Eddie Yeadon memorial lecture, commemorating the first anniversary of Eddie's death. Bobby Manoo thanked Malcolm Porter for his short pre-lecture talk in tribute to Eddie's life, achievements and contribution to the Flamsteed. ACTION: Bobby to follow up with thoughts on any future memorial.

b) Budget update – No current updates. Bobby had a meeting with Sarah (Foster) and Tessa (Mo), both RMG Membership team, who suggested Bobby follow up with Chloe (Shepherd) when Chloe is back in the office.

c) Covid and observing events (solar and Blackheath, public and members events) – To be discussed later. See agenda item 3 below.

d) What to do with the Dobsonian telescope – This has now been gifted to a local South London School. We had the offer of another telescope which has also been re-homed so no further action on that. CLOSED

2. Review of Vision 2021 actions

These actions are tracked separately in a detailed plan compiled by Bobby, following previous committee discussions. However Bobby gives an update on two items:

- a) The first relates to one of the main outstanding Vision 2021 actions, namely how to make the transition back into the [NMM] lecture theatre. Committee members attended or joined online an ROG event 'Behind the Lens' [21 Sept 2021] to observe and assess the state and possibilities for live-streaming from the lecture theatre. The general consensus is that the technology in place does not offer an upgrade on what Flamsteed offers members via Zoom currently. Therefore, two weeks ago Bobby met the RMG IT manager Louise as well as Tessa (Mo) and Sara (Foster) to discuss our requirements for going back to the NMM lecture theatre because what we saw at the event is not just what we want. We are looking for a hybrid approach which can incorporate Zoom facilities and participants together with using particular camera motion and lighting within the lecture theatre, so we make [the online experience] more engaging. Bobby reported that he left a document outlining our thoughts and requirements with RMG for them to consider. Bobby is pleased that they have agreed to explore this with us although their work schedule means they cannot do it in November. We are looking at December for a response/progress. At that time probably a couple of members of Flamsteeds's IT team will go over to the NMM and hold a test to see whether the set-up is how we want it to work. From discussions in the meeting, Bobby believes that not just Flamsteed but RMG will also benefit from what we are suggesting - it's either too little or too much. What we are proposing is a happy medium so RMG can benefit from this as well. So we should leave it at that for now. Bobby suggests that if we [Flamsteed and RMG] can get the technology working in December [2021], we could perhaps hold a trial small event eg an HOA session, or a small presentation such as a Sky at Night talk. IN conclusion, this is heading in the right direction. Andy says that has dealt with Louise De Villiers in the past: she heads the RMG [IT] help desk and reports the IT director. Bobby says that Louise is IT Manager and would make any recommendations to the IT Director. At the end of the meeting with her Bobby felt she was positive about working with us on our proposal. We should wait and see how it progresses.

Bobby confirms that our November and December [2021] lectures will be on Zoom. Therefore, if a test in December is successful, the earliest a lecture will be held in the lecture theatre is January [2022] - on 10th. Bobby says the meeting is pencilled in for 13th December. Andy recommends keeping in close touch with Louise to secure a date w/c13 December and also copying RMG Membership team on correspondence about this.

On the matter of timing for the next main lecture potentially in person, Malcol says that current increasing numbers of COVID cases might influence when that will be possible.

- b) Bobby invites Helen to give an update on the Museum Exhibits "Clips Corner" project. Helen reports that we (Helen, Poly & Grey) agreed to drop the idea of short videos of museum exhibits and anything else along those

lines because the museum wasn't able to help us and, in addition, it didn't seem to find favour with Flamsteed Committee members to go elsewhere to look for suitable topics and objects. However we did get a couple of concrete offers from the museum as alternatives to what we'd proposed and those involved two talks by curators plus a tour for members of the celestial globes collection so when we know who is filling the role of organisers of trips and external events, then Helen like to liaise with them about dates that have been proposed. ACTION: Follow up for the proposals, rather than "Clips Corner."

c. Bobby suggests we leave discussion of potential workshops till we can do them.

d. Simon has nothing further to report about outreach to young people due to the COVID situation and restrictions.

e. Bobby CLOSES the Vision 2021 planning and remaining topics from that merge into general topics.

3. Covid restrictions and events including observing (Solar, Blackheath, Romney)

Proposed by Mike - to be discussed later in the meeting and noted below.

4. Covid statement for website

ACTION: Poly to move the COVID statement which is currently on the About Us page of the Flamsteed website to the top of the Home page. **DONE**

5. Preparations for AGM on 9th September **CLOSED**

6. Update on the new website Agenda item 4 below (Mike)

7. Collaboration with Isles of Scilly Observatory..... Bobby contacted the people there following our last meeting [of 6th September 2021]. They want to work with us but they are a small group and their capacity was reduced further by illnesses, so things were not happening. However, they are back in play now. They will discuss at their next committee meeting, possibly in November, and come back to us. Grey was in the area (Cornwall) and had offered to meet someone on the mainland but but no-one from the ~Isles of Scilly Observatory was expecting to be on the mainland. However, their Chair of Cosmos is coming to London in November and asked to meet some of us then. Therefore we shall arrange a meeting at that time when Bobby gets word. Bobby will send a note round for anyone wanting to meet for coffee etc.

End of Matters arising from the last committee meeting.

2) Appointment of co-opted committee members (Bobby)

a. Roger Geeson and Asra Jilani are existing co-opted members and we propose to appoint Andy Sawers and Gurinder Lall as co-opted members. Bobby asks whether all committee members are in agreement to have these four co-opted committee members. All accepted.

b. Bobby wished to place on record on behalf of the committee and all members our thanks to Poly Philippou (who stepped down from the committee and the position of Secretary just after the AGM) for her wide-ranging and sterling contribution to the Flamsteed. Poly was Secretary from 2020-21 but even before that she was very active doing many other tasks, helping with lectures, observing and social events as well as website updates and various parts of Vision 2021. She was helpful, friendly and easy to work with. On behalf the committee, Bobby would like it recorded that Poly made a very sterling contribution to the society, and we recognise her contribution and record sincere thanks on behalf of committee and membership. Our thanks and appreciation recorded here with other committee members agreeing.

c. Gurinder, attending her first committee meeting, thanks everyone for such welcoming messages.

3) Assignment of roles (Bobby)

Bobby reminds us that committee members engaged in 2 sessions the previous week where Bobby introduced proposals for a modified structure [of committee roles and responsibilities] for going forward. Bobby thanks all committee members for their comments and for seeing things as per Bobby's intentions. One good thing that came out of agreeing the proposals before this meeting, is that it allowed committee members to engage with and discuss fully everything the society is involved in rather than starting that discussion during this meeting. Following discussions among committee members, Bobby made some tweaks to the plan as a result of this feedback.

Bobby says that all committee members (except one) responded indicating that they were willing to work in various roles and different areas. This shows how we can work as teams to move forward.

Other than the elected posts of Chair and Vice Chair, all posts were open to anyone who wanted to volunteer. Six co-ordinators are appointed:

Lectures and Talks Coordinator:	Helen Edwards
Observing Coordinator:	Mike Meynell
Workshops and Events Coordinator:	Clive Inglis
IT Coordinator:	Simon Hurst
Media and Comms Coordinator:	Adrian Challinor
Website Coordinator:	Mike Meynell

Drilling down further into detail:

Following earlier feedback from Grey and Barry, some adjustments were made to the visual representation of the teams so that all team members for each role are shown. (The concern had been that the only name being represented on the diagram was the Lead person.)

Lectures and Talks team:-

Main lectures : **Helen**, Gurinder, Andy, Simon
HOA talks: **Andy**, Bobby, Simon
Special Talks: **Gurinder**, Grey, Asra

Observing team:-

Blackheath: **Mike** (more volunteers needed)
Solar: Clive, **Simon**, Roger
ROG team: **Tej**, Nick, Roger
External Observing **Grey**, Nick, Roger

Workshops and Events team:-

Practical workshops : Mike pencilled in but needs more discussion
Outreach/trips: **Clive**

The above shows the events side of our activities.

Administration team:-

Committee Secretary: **Helen**, Gurinder, Asra
Membership Secretary: **Helen (GL) (temporary)**, Clive, Asra

IT team:-

Control room: **Simon**, Tej, Adrian, Andy, Bobby, Barry
etc
Video creators : **Barry**, Clive and Adrian.
Vimeo: **Barry**, Adrian, Mike
IT technical: Tej, Simon, Adrian

Media and Comms team:-

Email administration: **Helen (AC) (temporary)**, Adrian, Andy
Social media admin: Barry, Andy

Website team:-

Web administrators: **Mike**, Adrian, Barry
Web designers: Simon, Adrian
Web managers: Simon, Adrian
Back Office Users: Barry

Bobby appreciated the kind of comments and feedback he received about his proposals for this and was heartened by the support he received.

Bobby will play a part in all teams to make sure everything moves forward smoothly.

There are some adjustments to be made and things to think about.

Points to note:

- Mike is listed for two coordinator roles. If Mike were replaced as website coordinator by Simon or Adrian, then Simon or Adrian would have 2 coordinator roles. As observing is not in full fling at the moment, Mike is left with that role as well, for now, but this needs revising if someone else steps up.
- Helen has two temporary lead roles pending RMG volunteer security checks of Gurinder (who will take on Membership Secretary) and Adrian (who will take on Email Administration) leads. Andy explains that these roles require access to the Flamsteed email account (which in turn requires the person to be an officially vetted RMG volunteer). On this point Adrian says he has a current basic DBS check and could supply this which might help to fast-track the process. We do not have an estimated the timescale for completing this process.[Gurinder subsequently says she also hs a current DBS.]
- Workshops and events are currently light-touch but can be stepped up later.
- Social media admin - Barry agreed to take the lead but is very reluctant to continue with it. He agreed just if no-one else would do it. Bobby asks whether anyone is willing to take lead? Barry would be happy to be back-up. (See below, Andy volunteers.)
- Bobby thinks that the website roles need to be refined a bit and this will be done in the coming weeks.

Bobby opens the floor to questions and comments.

- Andy says it might make sense to reverse his and Barry's roles on soicial media. Bobby agrees to switch the 2 names. Andy to lead & Barry to support.
- Nick offers to step in as back up for practical workshops. Nick would like to get involved in practical and observing events, including Blackheath. Agreed.
- Tej mentions that he volunteered all for observing modules as an interest, especially Blackheath and solar observing. Mike agrees Tej is needed for Blackheath Observing. Bobby adds Tej as back-up to Blackheath and solar observing teams. Nick is also added to the Blackheath Observing team and to practical workshops. Tej is added as additional back-up on practical workshops.

- Mike comments he is pleased with this and he thinks this looks good. He is happy with the roles he has been allocated. He is not concerned about having two coordinator roles. The website will evolve and because it will be a new website, people will step in and it will naturally be develop.

- Simon says he assists Tej with the GET sessions and should be added to GET team. Agreed. Simon is added to the chart as back-up for GET sessions.

- Bobby agrees to re-publish the diagram on powerpoint with these amendments on the G-drive.

- Nick comments that putting people in the slots they volunteered for is good and it will progress over the year with adjustments and refinements of names, roles and positions being made. Bobby agrees. Bobby thinks that there may be some amalgamation of teams/roles in the IT/Media & Comms, and Website Teams but this is to be worked out as result of team members' comments and experience.

Bobby says he was really heartened by some of the comments. He is pleased that the diagram illustrated the uneven balance of workload and encouraged people to volunteer to redress that balance. This shows great engagement. People obviously gave it careful thought. Good suggestions from Grey and Barry enabled it to be improved further. Everyone had contributed and had input. Bobby thanks everyone.

NEXT STEP - Helen & Bobby to meet with coordinators over the next few weeks. There will need to be some handovers because people are doing new things so handover sessions will be needed. This is for review later if changes need to be made.

4) Cutover to the new website (Mike)

Mike reminds us of discussion at the last committee meeting of a couple of things still outstanding [regarding the new website]. One was about the archiving solution for the current website. Mike thinks he has more or less worked that out now: he has a tool that he can use within Wordpress that creates a static website. It trawls through all of the website pages and it creates Static URLs for them. Then these can be uploaded to a new domain and that takes it off Wordpress. It makes [the archived pages] completely static so they won't change in the future and can be sent off to a domain to see out its remaining life. That's a simple solution as a way to archive the current website.

There is not much more to be done to prepare the new website other than adding content. Based on the feedback received [from committee members], no particular design issues were highlighted, so all we need to work out now,

assuming the committee is happy with that proposed new website, is when we should cut over and what sort of timeframes we are looking at.

Mike asks first whether there are any objections to moving to the new website. The new website is as discussed at the previous committee meeting. There have not been any significant changes since committee members last reviewed the new website proposals a couple of months ago. The only think left to be done is updating content.

Andy asks what is involved in updating content. Mike explains that events need to be created; things like committee meeting minutes have to be uploaded to the new site. Essentially the structure is all there. It just takes somebody to take the time to do it. Mike is happy to get it to the place necessary for the cut over and go live. Then we need to discuss who does things going forward.

Adrian and Simon volunteer to help with updating content. Mike thanks them and says he will call on them if needed.

Mike warns there will be a period when there will be no website so need to work out what to do. Mike explains that the changeover can happen really quickly but it can take up to 48 hours so we need to plan for that worst case scenario. Andy suggests doing the changeover over Christmas and warning members that the website would be offline for up to 48 hrs during that time. Mike says that it is not necessary to wait until Christmas and his next step should be to come up with a cutover plan and work out when it is best to do it. Mike will then ask for the views of committee members on the plan. Andy says that when the plan is ready and it is time to do the changeover we can announce the new website to members, say what it is going to do, and then inform members of the timing of the changeover, warning members that they might not be able to access the website for up to 2 days when that happens. Mike says he will come up with proposed dates in the next week or so and circulate some proposed dates. Mike agrees it will be same URL 'flamsteed.info'.

Bobby thanks Mike as says Mike should to let us know if he needs any help. He points out that Mike has a team now for the website! (Mike agrees that that is great.) Mike can work on the cutover plan as a team, rather than on his own. Mike says that he wants to move to the new website sooner rather than later because he doesn't want to train people [new team members] on the old website, which has completely different technology, and then move to a new one soon after!

5) a) Blackheath Observing events (Mike)

As he mentioned at the last committee meeting, Mike has been monitoring what other astronomy societies are doing to gauge when it might be a good time for the Flamsteed to restart our observing events. He notes that the

Baker Street Irregulars have already run an event - a week or two ago. It ran successfully with c. 40 attendees. One thing they did which Mike thought was quite nice was that they put together well-being and safety advice for their events. Mike shares his screen showing the Baker Street Irregulars' website: the advice on the website is fairly basic, saying that they are not offering any COVID rules to be followed at their events, other than those set up by the UK Government. They ask attendees to please respect others, respect others' personal space, the right of people to speak up if their comfort zone compromised, to try to avoid touching surfaces and to please avoid crowding. They say that face covering is a personal choice, and remind people that it is polite to ask to use someone else's telescope. If anyone feels unwell or has COVID-like symptoms they are asked to please withdraw from the meeting. There is a link to Royal Parks website. Mike thinks that the safety advice looks good and logical and is the kind of message the Flamsteed should send if we want to re-start live observing. So the question is, do we now think of restarting observing events along same lines?

Mike has been looking at options including EV 'scopes and is planning to buy a Stellina telescope which has a better resolution than an EV scope, is completely electronic, does not use an eyepiece, shows the image on a mobile device and up to 20 people can connect to the telescope. With the app people can see the image building up on their own mobile devices. Mike thinks this would be nice to use in an outreach event. In addition, the Stellina copes better with light pollution. As we get more and more light pollution we might be more reliant on electronic methods to view the night sky. Mike thinks that if we re-started Blackheath events, we could have telescopes there for people to look through if they are brave enough, but also a Stellina as back-up that one can view through an electronic device. Mike mentions that the stellina is good for deep sky objects even in light-polluted areas as it has a light pollution filter on it which apparently works well. However, it is not good for viewing planets. Traditional telescopes are better for planets. Simon suggested could use laptop to connect to camera as well. Mike agrees. Give people options ie alternative to looking through eyepiece. Get people used to face-to-face events again.

Mike asks for comments from committee members. Nick and Tej think the Flamsteed should restart Blackheath observing events. Mike asks around the committee how many people would be happy to support the Blackheath event along those lines. Simon, Tej, Clive, Nick, Adrian (verbally) and others agree they would be happy to re-start the Blackheath observing events.

Re the timing, Mike notes he will have to buy the Stelina first. Mike says with Blackheath we generally try to target the first quarter moon because that means we can look at the moon early on in the session and then move on to other objects, so possibly we could re-start with a date around 11th November, the weekend before or after.

Bobby suggests that we need to think about what to say about this and how to market it to members and when kit can be ready - then we can look at a November or December date. Mike thinks he can get kit in a couple of weeks.

ACTION: Mike to come back with dates and an action plan.

Andy points out that we can send an email with the 'rules of engagement' to members but we would not be able to do this with members of the public who pass by so we need to be rehearsed about how to deal with members of public in these cases. Mike agrees that's a good point, though we don't get that many public passers-by. Andy says people standing around with mobile devices and laptops etc will be more visible than people with conventional telescopes. Simon adds that more people have become interested in astronomy during lockdown. Nick checks that we shall still promote Blackheath as public event and this is affirmed. We do want to interest the public but we need to get across the safety aspects to the drop-in public. Bobby suggests that Mike should first to get set up then arrange a meeting of interested parties ie the Observing group.

Andy raises the question of doing an updated risk assessment. Nick volunteers to download a form he has used from the Government website and to email it to Mike for reference. Bobby suggests picking details up in a separate meeting. Mike is keen to get back doing something practical with people.777

6) Car insurance for volunteers - reminder (Andy)

Andy reminds committee members to make sure that they have the correct insurance to cover them as 'volunteer drivers' if they are driving to or from a Flamsteed event in which they are taking part as a committee member or organiser. Andy stresses the need to check with your insurer in case anything has changed. Police can prosecute you for "driving uninsured" if you don't have it and have accident on way to or from a Flamsteed event. You need to inform the insurance company even though it is likely you're already covered or you can add such cover for no extra cost. But police can prosecute you for "driving uninsured" if you don't have it and have accident on way to or from Flam event.

Mike shows on his screen a document from the Association of British Insurers (ABI) which sets out in a list most mainstream insurers and their policy and requirements regarding volunteer driving. The list is as of March 2021.

ACTION HELEN: Bobby requests Mike send link to Helen and Helen to contact people not at today's committee meeting. Helen agrees Action.

7) AOB

a. Andy brings committee members up to date on the status of an entry-level telescope offered to the Flamsteed. Committee members considered that this might be good for viewing moon which can do in daylight so offered the donated telescope to the primary school in Peckham that did not get the Dobsonian telescope we were offered previously. They accepted. Donor and recipient are now in touch with each other to arrange delivery.

b. Andy mentions that at the AGM [September 2021] someone asked him about URL to access all Flamsteed videos. Andy says that he plans to do an email to explain the new arrangement [with the new website] of the overarching Members-only, single-password access for all of our videos and that will list events (on video) to remind members, especially new members, of all the things we've been doing for the last 18 months or so. Andy to draft that and run it by Mike, Bobby and Helen.

c. Nick asks for clarification on accessing videos on the proposed new website. Mike explains that we have quite a lot of videos which are not password-protected and are publicly available, so they will be individually listed on the website that anyone can access. At the top will be a link to all the videos including the password-protected ones. That will go to the password-protected area on Vimeo for which you need a password and then you can get access to all of the videos. Mike adds that we decided not to have a separate Members' Area on the new website (unlike the current one where we have a separate members area) because if we have a members area we have to control logins and passwords etc. We could add something like that later but it seems better to keep it simple.

d. Andy follows on from Nick's question (above) and says that, in terms of timing of explaining where videos are, we could do it around the time we move to the new website. Nick and Mike agree. Andy will prepare the draft email so it's ready to go at the appropriate time.

e. Access to the Flamsteed email account: Tej asks how access to Flamsteed email is structured because in carrying out his ROG events organising role he has to ask someone else to send emails to Flamsteed members on his behalf. It would be useful to him to have access to the email account, if possible, so that he could send the relevant emails. Andy agrees that Tej should have access and explains that the MOU says that the Flamsteed is allowed at least 3 committee members who are volunteers.

Bobby reports that, when with the RMG IT manager, he asked if we could get other email addresses on same domain - as happened in the past. Could we get Flamsteed/rmg email addresses for different committee members to use when carrying out Flamsteed business. RMG will consider that and let us know. Bobby is to follow this up with them. If it turns out to be possible, then we can discuss amongst ourselves how many email addresses we need.

There is some discussion about this. Mike warns we should take care not to set up separate email address that will need access to the Flamsteed contacts list. Nick checks whether we need more email addresses or more logins to the current Flamsteed one. Bobby says that he thinks there is no problem getting more logins but that, for example, Helen could probably use a Flamsteed email address to contact lectures etc. For that she would not need the membership contact list. In addition, the name on the email accounts could still be set up to look like official Flamsteed addresses (eg with a role-based identity rather than personal name) so that the emails will look official. Bobby says that we will look at the names to use in the future.

f. Clive asks how to manage payments for events. Andy explains that the issues encountered with this in the past were resolved by Andy getting a Revolute card, used only for Flamsteed business such as collecting payments and paying host eg on a Flamsteed-organised trip to Jodrell Bank. This worked fine. As it is a dedicated card it is easier to keep track of the funds. Clive is to carry on with that system.

g. Clive raises the matter of Greenwich now being in the ULEZ, pointing out that some members might not be aware of this. Members from driving in outside the zone would need to pay £12.50 to drive into ULEZ. (Mike comments that this is another reason why online [options] are good. Tej and Andy agree that mention of this should be included in the access instructions sent to members for events at the ROG or NMM. Andy and Tej to get access instructions revised and cleaned up for GET on this matter and also to liaise with astronomers for other changes to vehicle access.

h. AMAT Tej says, in reply to a question, we have one date for an Flamsteed Members AMAT visit, namely th December (2021) but that he is still waiting for information about the structure of that event.

i. Andy records a final word to praise Bobby's team structure. Andy says the most stressful thing [when he was Chair] was remembering when to do stuff. With that in mind, he encourages all team members to please remind each other about things.

m. Bobby thanks to everyone for the effort put into building the teams and for the great ideas. He asks that we keep it going because we are now setting things up for the future.

n. Malcolm asks Bobby to stay on after for chat.

The meeting ends at 20:35 hrs.