

Notes from a Flamsteed Astronomy Society Committee Meeting held at 6.30pm on Thursday 30th May 2013 in the Member's Room at the National Maritime Museum.

Attendance: Mike Meynell (Vice-Chair – acting Chair for this meeting), Grey Liplely (Vice-Chair), Brian Evans, Lesley Hodsdon (RMG Membership Manager), Peter Kitcherside, Asra Jilani, Lin Potter, Sumitra Sribhashyam.

Apologies: Jane Bendall, Brian Blake, Roger Geeson, Chris Mann, Deborah McGarvey and Malcolm Porter (Chair).

1. **Apologies:** Apologies received from Jane Bendall, Brian Blake, Roger Geeson, Chris Mann, Deborah McGarvey and Malcolm Porter (Chair).
2. **Matters Arising:** Brian Evans asked that we confirm the decision made at the last committee meeting, that we would only send one or two communications per year to those members not on email, rather than prior to every lecture. Mike raised the issue that there had been a steep increase in the number of members without email addresses. Lesley stated that a museum volunteer had been working on this issue, and we hoped to see an improvement soon, though some members clearly did not want communication sent via email.

Mike stated that a lot of work was going in to schedule society events well in advance, so it should not be necessary to send postal communications to members on a regular basis. Therefore, the decision from the last committee meeting stands. Lesley agreed that the membership office would pick up this communication, if we can tell them what to send out.

Lesley said that new membership cards and a new booking system would commence in September. Membership cards would be bar coded, making booking and entry into events much easier.

Mike stated that we had received an update on the society income and expenditure levels from the museum. However, we did not have an update on the current level of the society surplus. Given that we are likely to be nudging the maximum surplus of £10,000 at some point in the future, he urged committee members to start thinking about what equipment we might donate to the museum. We will also open discussions with the ROG about what equipment they might want.

Progress is being made on creating an annual calendar of dates detailing when certain events need to take place. Mike stated that he hoped to complete this during the summer break.

3. **Creating a New Flamsteed Online Forum:** At the last committee meeting, the creation of an online forum to allow for discussions amongst members was raised. Members of the Radio Astronomy Group, who would like a forum to share ideas, have also raised this topic. These forums would be for sharing ideas, discussions and communicating with other members and with members of the public (i.e. non-Flamsteed members).

Mike passed around a proposed ‘mock-up’ design for the forum, but raised his concern that the forum would quickly die unless there was continual user interaction and comment. In addition, it was critical that we had several individuals to help to moderate the site and ensure that abusive content is not posted.

A domain name for the forum has been registered (<http://flamsteedforum.info/>), but it was agreed to gauge interest from the general membership over the summer period to see if it was worthwhile going ahead with the idea in the new season. If we decide to go ahead, we should review the forum after 6 months to see if it is working.

4. **Formation of an Observing Special Interest Group:** We currently have three special interest groups within the society: History of Astronomy, Radio Astronomy and Solar Observing. The new History of Astronomy group has been received very positively and Mike Dryland has done superb work in ensuring a successful launch.

It was now proposed to form a new special interest ‘Observing Group’ in time for the start of next season. Our existing observing sessions are timetabled well in advance, but this precludes the possibility of calling short-notice or no-notice events. The sessions also have to be held at venues that have been subject to a prior risk assessment, thus limiting our options. It was proposed that the new ‘Observing Group’ could allow for any member to call an observing session at any location (e.g. a member’s back garden). There are a limited number of Flamsteed members who are regular observers, so a group such as this would be very useful.

Lesley agreed to check with the museum about the requirement to give 48 hours notice and complete risk assessments for our observing events, particularly as the events would not be open to the general public but instead would be for Flamsteed members only. Providing we get the go-ahead from the museum, the committee agreed to proceed with this idea during the 2013/14 season.

5. **CERN trip update:** 40-45 members applied for the trip to CERN on the 21st September, which was over the CERN-imposed limit of 24 people (the number that can fit on the CERN coach). A ballot was performed and 24 people were chosen and notified of their success in the ballot. Members have been advised to make their own flight and accommodation arrangements and a list of preferred flights and accommodation options have been sent to participants.

Sumitra said that the new forum would be a good place to offer the sharing of hotel rooms and even car sharing to Flamsteed events, etc.

6. **AOB:** It was agreed that the committee would meet for meetings 4 times a year; September, November, February and May. They will be held during the first 2 weeks of each month, although there would be scope to be flexible for the dates. We should avoid scheduling committee meetings during school holidays.

Sumitra raised the possibility of using the social media website 'Meetup', which allows groups of people who have shared interests to meet each other. This could be helpful in getting people to come to our public events, either by inviting existing groups or creating groups of our own. Lesley stated that the museum was currently looking at this and that we should contact Caroline to discuss further. It was agreed to pursue this in the new season.

There was no other business and the meeting was closed.