

Minutes of Committee Meeting		FAS	
Date:	09 May 2023	Chair:	Bobby Manoo
Time:	19:00 GMT	Secretary:	Gurinder Lall
Venue:	Mycenae House	Author:	Bobby Manoo
Attendees:	Bobby Manoo		✓
	Helen Edwards		✓
	Clive Inglis		✓
	Tej Dyal		✗
	Simon Hurst		✓
	Mike Meynell		✓
	Barry Cassells		✓
	Grey Liple		✗
	Nick Phillips		✗
	Adrian Challinor		✓
	Mark Jeffery		✗
	Gurinder Lall		✗
	Roger Geeson (co-op)		✗
	Asra Jilani (co-op)		✗

Coordinators:

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

FAS Administration

Committee Members (Bobby)

- Review of members who have indicated interests to join the committee
 - o **Gurinder Lall** has indicated that she will remain on the committee for the next season and has reconsidered stepping down. However, she would like a less demanding role in order to accommodate her work schedule. This can be arranged ahead of the next AGM.
 - o **Paul May, Poly Philippou** and **Tom Riley** were approved to be co-opted members without objection.
- **Helena Murphy, Gokhan Hepsen** and **Mike Richardson** are also interested and Bobby and Mike are yet to have discussions with them to find out where they would like to get involved in the society. Bobby mentioned that any of the committee members can get involved in this initial discussion if desired.
- Bobby asked for interested committee members to consider taking up the position of **Vice Chair** after Helen steps down at the end of this season. The role needs to be filled by current committee members and it would be good for anyone interested to put their name forward sooner rather than later so that there could be a period of handover from Helen.

FAS Membership

- We did not have the exact figures but some members have passed away and some memberships have not been renewed. The figures have been slow to come in for Adrian since Tessa has stepped down. The overall number of members stand at just under 500. This may be a downturn due to the economic situation and that we have gone back to face to face meetings.

Finances

- Asra has reported that reimbursement for expenses have been slow in coming since Tessa left but we have been asked to have some patience as the museum sorts out the staff shortages.
- For the next season, **Bobby** will check to confirm if we can get an advance to cover small expenses.

General

- The Museum is experiencing an issue with staff capacity and as such, all requests are being channeled via Asra to help with priority and handling queries and requests.
- Bobby reminded the meeting to ensure that the FAS Master Calendar is updated with all events and also that any files are updated onto the GDrive.
- FAS polo and sweatshirts orders have been taken and passed to Helen. We will need to request delivery by end-May 2023.

Lectures and Talks Team

Main lectures - **Helen**, Gurinder, Simon

- We are fully booked for this season with all lecture slots taken.
- We have not had any takers for next season thus far. Mike / Clive to follow up on these over the next week. Paul can also get involved with this area once he comes on board.
- **Helen** to check with Tej, Poly, Adrian to help with refreshments for next lecture.

HOA talks - **Mark, Bobby**

- Bobby reported that the remaining slots for History of Astronomy speakers have been filled and that planning has begun for next season with the aim of getting speakers for the 2023-24 season confirmed by September.

Special Talks (Clive)

- The remaining Sky this month / Astro News will be filled by committee members as we have not had anyone from the membership come forward to take these up.
- Clive will need to follow up with any possibility of a Members Talk this season.

Observing Team

Blackheath – (Mike, **Tej**)

- Tej reported that Blackheath was on the whole a successful season, bad weather affected some events which were postponed multiple times until good weather was projected. We ended up with 5 out of 8 planned events being on. Attendance dwindled in the latter events. No changes recommended for next season.

Solar (**Clive**)

Updates on plans for Solar Observing sessions:

- Meetings held with Tania (with Mike and Clive) on members and public sessions. We will need to drum up volunteers to run the event. To this end we have been offered a planetarium show about the sun and a small training session. The timing is tight as the first public solar session is slated for 3rd June. Possible dates for this 16th or 30th May.
- We have dates and backup dates which need to be confirmed with the ROG. We need, on average, 7 volunteers for a weekend session and 5 for a weekday session. We may need fewer volunteers this time around due to the probable location having more restricted access/lower expected footfall.
- Dates agreed for members' sessions. All dates have been put into the FAS calendar.
- Dates for the public sessions to be held on Saturdays have been agreed and these have also been put into the calendar. (Suggested Friday dates yet to be confirmed.) **Clive** to check that the banner used in previous years for public sessions is serviceable and eg contains no out of date information.

Updates to repairs / upgrades on solar telescopes/mounts:

- We have some solar scopes and some other equipment that can be used. We can also use some equipment on loan from members if required.
- One of the HEQ-5 mounts needs to be replaced but there are new mounts with ROG which can be used. **Clive** to have a chat with Greg Brown to confirm what can be made available.

ROG team GET and AMAT sessions

- Report from Tej indicates that GET sessions had a successful season with generally good attendance. Astronomers struggled a little with handling the Telescope but eventually have become more adept with using it and showing more targets in a session. Attendees

appeared to enjoyed the events. There was the usual pattern of drop-outs from attendance when the weather looks poor.

- For next GET season, FAS organisers of events with ROG would like to be regarded more as part of a partnership with ROG, so that they are included more in discussions, planning, talks and getting to know the astronomers. This needs to be discussed before next season (2023-24).
- Bobby indicated that ROG hopes to hold some Evening with the Moon events over the summer but has a severe staff shortage so no sessions have yet been confirmed to FAS.

External Observing (**Nick**, Roger)

- Mike reported that bookings for Romney Observing are right down; there has not been much uptake on this event this season and attendance has not also been good for this. Running these events takes a lot of commitment from Martin and Jane to set up as well so we need to consider whether it is worthwhile continuing, given the amount of organisation involved. Bobby proposes that we look at booking and attendance figures and discuss things with Martin before making a decision about the future of Romney Observing events whether they should be continued or be dropped for a year or so. **Nick** to provide booking and attendance figures to Bobby and we can make a decision at the next committee meeting.

Workshops and Special Events Team

Practical workshops (**Mike**, Tej, Clive)

- Update on workshops held / upcoming for this season (Clive):
- 2 workshops (Introduction to Astrophotography and Introduction to Telescopes) have been held so far and both have gone well.
- There is another workshop coming up this week (Sketching Workshop).
- Some improvements are required to the Telescope workshop and these can be considered ahead of running another session in the next season.

Outreach/trips (**Clive**, Grey)

- Update on **Greenwich Together Festival** at Charlton Park (Mike)
 - o We have confirmed our participation to this event.
 - o The date has been set for Sat 10th June (noon to 6 pm) and will require assistance for planning and also on the day.
 - o There were 18,000 people in attendance last time this was held.
 - o Details of risk assessment and our Public Liability Insurance cover were provided to the organisers by Mike and accepted.
 - o Mike has fliers, Clive has a banner, if another banner is required then Mike has a contact for that.
 - o We have a plot 3m x 3m for the festival. Mike will check and bring the gazebo.
 - o Volunteers to help on the day requested. Adrian volunteered.
 - o Details to be worked out but it is likely FAS will try to do solar viewing, or at least bring and set up telescopes; possibly to include radio telescopes. Offers to contribute any required solar equipment also requested from committee members.
- Collaboration with **BAA session on Comets / Meteors** (Clive/Bobby)
 - o Date agreed with museum - 8 July 2023
 - o Agreed with RMG

- Outline of planned program: Start session at NMM with opening comments. Walk up to planetarium where an ROG Astronomer will give talk on comets & meteors. [Some attendees may choose to start at the planetarium to avoid the walk up the hill.] Back to NMM for rest of day. BAA have several good speakers engaged.
 - We Require assistance to help with planning and on the day.
 - BAA would like to book hotels in the area for attendees and organise a tour program of ROG on the following day, Sunday 9th July, with group discount rates. We are waiting for a response for RMG.
 - Nick James from BAA had enquired about videoing the event. Simon will respond and liaise with BAA and RMG on this matter.
- Collaboration with **BAA Back To Basic** for 2024
 - Use of the venue for free and the proposed date of 30 November 2024 have been agreed by RMG (Tania de Sales) but with the warning that it might be adversely affected by site closures for the First Light Project which is due to start in autumn 2024.
 - We are advised to have a back-up plan.
 - If this goes ahead it will be run along the same format as the BAA session on Comets/Meteors.
- Update on FAS Members Trips:
 - Grey had proposed a few possible trips such as Crayford Manor House Astronomical Society, Norman Lockyer Observatory, Herstmonceux Observatory but has not had time to organise them so it was agreed to push most back to next season with the following exceptions:
 - **Clive** to see if a trip to Cambridge is possible following an offer by Matt Bothwell.
 - **Mike** to look into the possibility of a trip to Herstmonceux this summer, possibly August.
 - **Bobby** to ask whether Poly could help with items under this group.

IT Team

IT technical (Simon)

- There are currently no problems with the revised Zoom / YouTube arrangement for main lectures.
- Zoom fees have been reduced now from the package we were on before.
- Simon informed the meeting that RMG will be upgrading all their control room equipment summer 2023.
- The control room staff (especially Richard and Chris) are happy to provide any type of support that is required going forward.

Media and Comms Team

Email Administration – (Adrian)

- Update on rollout of FAS Newsletter (Adrian)
 - Website was developed to produce a weekly newsletter which gives a summary of all our prior and upcoming events. This has come about based on instructions following prior email issues and recommendations by the RMG. We have therefore made recommendations to the museum based on their advice.
 - At this time, the matter has been escalated and we have not yet been informed of an update. We have no response yet but we are now being asked to be patient with our comms to the RMG due to staff shortages. Introduction of the newsletter etc would have helped reduce the burden on RMG staff.
Options:
 - Consider using Mailchimp
 - Consider using one of the platforms used by RMG if we get a license
 - It was agreed that it would be helpful to know what is the sticking point that is holding up the RMG response. If, as seems likely, this is due to RMG having a preference for Mailchimp - eg either due to an agreement to use Mailchimp or to their having carried out tests to check that Mailchimp satisfies their requirements - and if, by using Mailchimp instead of WIX, we could speed up the process, we should consider using Mailchimp. However, this would involve getting a license as more than the basic level of service is required.
 - Bobby to escalate this matter to Karen

AOB

- Some AOB points were raised by Tej who was unable to attend due to an immediate personal matter. These points were around committee structure, improving member communications and overall event organization. It was felt by the committee members that more discussion was needed on these items and as such, these should be brought forward at a separate/dedicated session.