

FLAMSTEED ASTRONOMY SOCIETY

Notes from a committee meeting held on Thursday 27th April 2006 at the Ashburnham Arms at 7.00 p.m.

Present: Lin Potter (Chair), Eddie Yeadon (Vice Chair), Pat Wainwright Mike Dryland, David Waugh, Peter Kitcherside, Ian McDowell and Jane Bendall

Apologies: There were no apologies for absence

Matters arising: There were no matters arising and Linn Potter signed off the minutes from January 26th 2006.

Subscriptions: Polly Larner has, in the main, agreed to the proposals put forward by the committee about reorganizing the subscriptions in line with those charged by the Friends to make recruitment to FAS more attractive.

One or two changes had been made to our proposals. Firstly the joint subscription had been raised from the suggested £60 to £70 – which is still a good discount from the current £90 per couple.

Secondly the suggested early bird discount of 10% had been dropped as too difficult to administer in the Friends office.

David expressed concern that although full time student have a 50% reduction and the ROG GCSE students will have a year's free membership of the FAS – other astronomy part-time students will not have any inducements to join.

It was agreed that we accept Polly's proposals but that we revisit the question of part time non-museum astronomy students in a year's time when the new subscriptions rates are up and running.

Eddie moved a vote of thanks to Mike for both conceiving and working out the new subscription rates and Mike responded by thanking Eddie and Jane for negotiating the proposal with Polly Larner and the Friends.

We are to continue to press for twice yearly payments by direct debit; apparently the hold up in implementing this procedure, which has already been agreed by the Friends, is down to computer incompatibility between the Friends office and the rest of the museum.

Recruitment of current GCSE students: Mike Dryland has arranged to talk to Mike Keskeys group next Monday and Peter Kitcherside will speak to "his" Saturday group next weekend. Hopefully with the revised subscriptions we should get a good response. Mike and Peter will liaise to arrange tactics, leaflets etc.

Licensing: Absolutely no progress and it appears that the issue is extremely contentious within the museum. We shall not serve wine at our Star Lecture.

Star lecture: A twin room for Sir Arnold and Lady Wolfendale has been booked at Devonport House Hotel for the night. It was agreed to take them for an early dinner at the Novohotel arranging to meet them at 5.45 at Devonport House reception. Lin, Ian, Eddie and Janice and Jane will host the occasion paying for themselves. The cost of dinner for our guests will be paid from FAS funds.

So far 62 members and guests are coming free of charge – and the Friends office has sold one ticket at £7.50. Mike had pushed Natalie to get publicity on the museum email which will hopefully result in some action.

It was decided that we offer seats to the GCSE astronomy society students free of charge.

Visit to Rutherford Appleton Laboratories

Details are being finalized which Jane will circulate next week to the 17 people who are coming on the visit. There will be 15 people on the coach and the cost will be roughly £22 per head. Two other members are joining us at the pub for lunch.

Hydrogen Alpha Telescope solar viewing

David reported difficulties in getting enough volunteers to run the solar viewing programme in the winter months. It was suggested that several factors are at work here (a.) people don't like to commit too far in advance particularly if (b) the weather is bad, which frequently means that no session is possible. (c.) at present – and for the next couple of years - there little solar activity. Also the programme lost momentum when we ran solar viewing in the grounds of the NMM, but should pick up now we have relocated to the ROG and the summer is coming.

It was agreed to take a flexible approach – perhaps not asking people to commit more than three or four weeks ahead. We could also plan to run more summer sessions and cut down the winter ones to one a month. It was further suggested that we remind volunteers to look at the SOHO website to see what is actually happening on the sun, as if it is entirely quiet they may decide not to go ahead. Of course volunteers (as long as there are at least two people) are very welcome to do an impromptu session at any time if the weather is good e.g. holiday weekends would be very popular with the public. Mike reminded David to check with museum staff on the day as both Robert and Graham sometimes use the hydrogen alpha telescope for educational purposes.

Supplies for the telescope: Although the Coronado telescope actually belongs to the museum they do not do regular maintenance checks. Jane agreed to photocopy the foreign language leaflets and provide a regular supply to the box.

Lin is to ask a friend to translate the leaflet into Arabic as there is a demand we are not fulfilling.

Dark Field Site: David and Pat have visited the site in Headcorn in Kent which is used by Orpington Astronomy Society. It is about one and quarter hour's drive from Greenwich and there is ample parking in an adjacent field. It would be most suitable for impromptu viewing as well as structured prearranged dates as the land owner is very supportive. It is very dark and safe. David assured the meeting that there was an excellent pub in the village nearby. We await further developments.

Programming for summer season.

Astronomy for the Blind: David and Terry Goodman travelled to the RNIB in Birmingham to discuss astronomy and look at specialized equipment. They saw photographs from a digital camera, which when passed through a machine will produce tactile images. Although the RNIB do not lend equipment to societies Lin, as Principal of an Education Centre which caters for Special Needs, felt that she could make a good case to borrow this machine from the RNIB – David and Lin to liaise. The short talk is well in hand and will be presented before the start of the Star Lecture.

Mike suggested that David talk to Claire Plumley at the museum. She is in charge of access for visually impaired people and is running a touch session about instruments in June.

Meridian walk: Jane to ask Graham Dolan for a plan for the proposed walk – which should not be too long and be in and around Greenwich.

Mill Hill – Jane will attempt once again to settle an evening date in September with Francisco, if she fails she will try the director of the observatory. David to send her contact details.

Visit to NMM reserve collections: In hand: Richard Dunn and Emily are to contact Jane next week with their suggestions.

Summer picnic: It was suggested that we go to Kew Gardens contacting Richmond Council to ask if we can visit the Kings observatory at the same time.

Another visit to the **South building site:** This is on offer and we decided to go ahead next autumn.

Programming for winter season

Jane tabled a list of speakers whom we could ask to come and talk. As the fit out of the planetarium will not finish until May at the earliest, we plan to continue to use the lecture theatre all next season.

It was agreed that we ask Carl Murray, Richard Coates, Robin Catchpole, Eric Dunford (RAL) and Jocelyn Bell Burnell – (to speak about Women in Astronomy). Failing these

impressive list of speakers there are several others to call upon e.g. John Griffiths, Emily Savage Smith and Ian Crawford.

Francisco Diego has agreed to give a solar evening on Monday 7th October after our AGM. This is an excellent opportunity to mount a display of member's recent solar eclipse photographs. Pat will also speak about the total solar eclipse in 2009 which will be in China as she is very keen to arrange a FAS visit – members booking separately not through the museum – and would like some indication of numbers in good time as the arrangements will take a couple of years. It will be the longest period of totality this century with the sun being blocked out for six minutes.

Jane has asked John Brown to speak in November but not mentioned any other issues.

It was agreed to arrange a weekend visit to both Edinburgh observatories next April or May. Rather on the same lines as the successful visit to Paris.

Any Other Business

Ian McDowell was formally and unanimously co-opted onto the Committee of the Flamsteed Astronomy Society as equipment co-coordinator. His nomination was proposed by Mike Dryland and seconded by Eddie Yeadon. Pat is currently holding the Flamsteed telescope.

F@nmm: Deadline for the next article is on May 8th. Jane will write about the recent eclipse. The article will be illustrated with one of Pat's excellent eclipse photographs.

Recruiting during NMM astronomy seminars: It was agreed that we should try to recruit members from the large audiences for the museum astronomy related events. We need to have plenty of flyers to distribute and Mike agreed to prepare a slide which could be shown between lectures and at break times.

Date of Next Meeting: Thursday 14th September at 7.00 p.m. Lin will book the conservatory at the Ashburnham Arms.