

17TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE FLAMSTEED ASTRONOMY SOCIETY

Held on Monday 19th September 2016 at 7.00pm in the lecture theatre of the National Maritime Museum.

1. Present: Malcolm Porter (chair) and approximately 92 members of the Flamsteed Astronomy Society
2. Apologies were received from Jonathan Chandler, Helen Edwards, Chris Gadsden, Mike Meynell and Chris Sutcliffe
3. Matters arising: There were no matters arising from the minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on Monday 14th September 2015.

4. Chair's address

Malcolm welcomed members of the Flamsteed Astronomy Society to the 17th Annual General Meeting before giving an overview of the 2015/16 season and the plans for 2016/17.

Activities in 2015/16

In 2015/16 the Flamsteed planned 84 separate events, including lectures, Blackheath observing events, solar viewing sessions for members and for the public, social evenings, a number of trips, outreach events and radio astronomy workshops.

Because of weather, 65 of the planned 84 events actually ran.

Membership

Membership numbers across the year have remained fairly constant at around 334, including 128 single memberships, 103 concessions, 96 joint memberships and 7 honorary memberships.

The Flamsteed and the Royal Museums Greenwich

We have continued to enjoy a good working relationship with the Development and Membership teams at RMG, led by the Development Director, Kate Seeckts, with continued support from Chris Hill and his membership team and the ROG Manager, Lance Bourne. However, Chris has recently moved on from the RMG and his replacement, Chloe Chapman will be joining next month.

Earlier this year, the Museum decided that we needed to change the way we conduct post-lecture book sales/signings. After much discussion it was agreed that the Museum would obtain the books and provide staff to administer the process during sales.

Because of our discussions about the membership rate policy changes last year, we have at last managed to establish a better understanding of our true financial position, taking into account all of the additional museum costs in running the society. This has led to our annual 'gross surplus' being considerably smaller than had previous been the case. This is also due, in part, to our decision to reduce the Flamsteed membership fee for concessionary members, to compensate for the abolition of this category from the main museum membership.

With regard to previous issues associated with the Membership and Booking system, thanks to a considerable amount of work by both the Membership Team and Mike Meynell, we are now experiencing only the occasional glitch.

Through the committee, the Flamsteed continues to be committed to providing support to the RMG and, in particular, the ROG, by:

- holding public astronomy events
- dealing with media requirements
- holding public and members astronomy events and workshops

However, given the size of the Flamsteed Astronomy Society and the complexity of organising all the events mentioned previously, and also in order to support the RMG we always need your help, after all it is your Flamsteed!

Proposed activities for 2016/17

All main lectures for this season are now scheduled with assigned subjects and speakers.

Together we will continue to support the following activities and special interest groups:-

- The Radio Astronomy Group – good progress has been made in 2015/2016 so will continue workshops with membership participation in meteor activity detection and detection of solar activity
- The History of Astronomy Group to continue with a series of talks within the ROG and to provide external visits. Malcolm said he would like to personally thank Mike Dryland for the excellent job he has done in setting up and running this group for the last three years.
- The Observing and Imaging Group to continue with public sessions on Blackheath and members' sessions in suitable dark sites
- Pub Social Meetings to continue as is, after all, they never get cancelled because of the weather!
- Public and members viewing sessions including solar viewing, hopefully augmented with demonstrations of solar, radio and meteor activity – the last two assuming that the current issues can be resolved with the proposed aerial site within the currently damp Altazimuth Observatory building.
- Continued Imaging and Telescope members Workshops augmented with possible spectroscopy workshops.
- Continue with Members' Great Equatorial viewing sessions.
- Review the Flamsteed members deep sky imaging workshops with a view to continuing these and potentially moving into CCD imaging and, possibly, the use of remote telescopes.
- Continue media support for the RMG and institutions such as the BBC, particularly given that 2017 will be the year of the 'US Total Solar Eclipse'.
- Work with the RMG and the ROG to support a suitable programme of events.
- Build a short to medium term programme of visits to various potential offsite locations based around the following potential list:-
 - Florence

- Paris observatory
 - Royal Observatory Edinburgh
 - Spain for observing
 - Jodrell Bank
 - Etc.
- Investigate the possibility of the RMG helping the Flamsteed with the organisation of external trips.
 - In line with the Memorandum of Understanding between the RMG and the Flamsteed, continue to improve the process of ensuring the better flow of accounting information between the RMG and the Flamsteed e.g. budget information, forecasts etc.
 - Continue the process of increased contact with other astronomy societies.
 - Building on this season's successful trips to the RAS Library, the Science Museum, the Mullard Observatory Cambridge, the Institute of Astronomy in Cambridge and others, to organise trips to other astronomy-related institutions.
 - Continue to use Mycenae House for our committee meetings and Members Workshops.
 - Continue with our institutional membership of the BAA and the FAS.
 - Whilst continuing with the external viewing sessions and those at Martin Male's excellent observatory, look to find additional potential semi-dark and dark sites building on, as of the 2015/2016 season, the success of viewing from Chris Mann's garden near Leeds Castle.

Special thanks

Malcolm thanked the following for their support in what has again been a full and, as always, challenging year:-

- In particular, Mike Meynell who, despite having a very busy work and family life, seems to be able to cope with a vast amount 'front and back office' work.
- Your Committee, who have worked hard all through the season on your behalf.
- The people who run our Special Interest Groups.
- To Lin Potter, Jane Bendall, Mike Dryland and Eddie Yeadon and others who have who have done so much, over the years, to make the Flamsteed Astronomy Society into the strong society it is today.
- The RMG Membership team, Lance Bourne, the technicians who look after us and the security staff who wait patiently whilst we drink our wine and eat our crisps, après lectures.
- And, last but not least, the members, who have turned out in numbers and 'prodded' us when we have needed prodding!
- He added his personal thanks to the members, for allowing him the privilege of chairing the Flamsteed Astronomy Society for the last four years.

Committee

In 2015/16 the elected members of the committee comprised:

- Malcolm Porter – Chair
- Mike Meynell – Vice Chair
- Grey Liplely – Vice Chair
- Brian Blake
- Rupert Smith
- Christina Chester
- Clive Inglis
- Andy Sawers
- Nick Phillips
- Tej Dyal
- Roger Geeson
- Brian Evans

The committee also co-opted 4 additional members (who do not have voting rights): Asra Jilani, Lin Potter, Mike Dryland and Sumitra Sri Bhashyam.

Malcolm said he was resigning as chair and that Mike Meynell was to resign as vice-chair. Having resigned as chair, Malcolm handed over the chair for the rest of the AGM to Mike Dryland.

Mike Dryland added his thanks to the committee saying that 84 events speak for themselves, that this is a working committee, not a talking shop.

Eddie Yeadon proposed and Sumitra Sri Bhashyam seconded the re-appointment of the committee as a whole.

The appointments of Grey Liplely and Christina Chester as vice chairs and of Andy Sawers as chair were each separately proposed and seconded.

Co-opted committee members will be appointed at the next meeting of the Flamsteed committee.

Any other business

Andy Sawers expressed his thanks to the members for entrusting him with the role of chair of what he described as the pre-eminent amateur astronomy society in the UK. He asked that Malcolm and Mike Meynell's huge contribution to the committee and the society and our gratitude be placed in the AGM minutes. Malcolm had kept the committee focused on the job while working hard to foster the relationship between the Flamsteed and the RMG, while the Flamsteed would not be what it is today without everything that Mike has done over the years.

Christina Chester said that on behalf of the whole of the society the committee had organised for a few gifts of thanks for Malcolm and Mike. Malcolm was presented with honorary membership of the Flamsteed, an engraved keepsake and a book signed by all the members of the committee. Because Mike wasn't able to be present on this evening, he will be given his gifts at next month's lecture.

There being no further business, Mike Dryland closed the meeting.