

FLAMSTEED ASTRONOMY SOCIETY COMMITTEE MEETING

Notes from a meeting held on Thursday 1st February 2007 in the Young Education Services offices, 1st Floor Greenwich Station.

Present: Lin Potter (Chair), (in alphabetical order) Jane Bendall, Mike Dryland, Peter Kitcherside, Pat Wainwright and David Waugh

Apologies for absence: Jonathan Ellenor

Matters arising from previous meeting on 31st October 2006 are on the agenda; therefore the minutes were signed off by Lin Potter

Astrofest arrangements: The rota of FAS volunteers has been passed to Janet Small who is making the arrangements on behalf of the ROG. Jonathan had volunteered to print colored flyers and bring them to the meeting. It was agreed that if Jonathan hadn't had time to do the printing Mike would copy black and white flyers on Janet's office photocopier.

Mike would give all our publicity material, including the portfolio case and full colour poster, to Janet before Thursday, in time for ROG staff to set up the stand that afternoon.

Star Lecture planning: Lin is going to ask Professor Carl Murray if he would talk to us again, updating us about the Cassini probe, preferably on Thursday 24th May as we have already booked the lecture theatre on that day.

Article for f@mmm: Pat and Lin had written an article about their recent star watching visit to Morocco "Shooting Stars" and suitable illustrations had already been passed to Polly. Mike advised that Pat ensure that she is given a picture credit in the published magazine.

Monthly meetings – short talks programme. There will be three short talks by FAS members starting with David Redfern talking about his "Drawings of Mars" at the February meeting. In March Malcolm Porter will talk about imaging and in April Mark Duwe will discuss Astronomy for Beginners. It was agreed that if there were no volunteers to do a short talk Mike and Pat would give news and observing updates.

New members and renewals: The day before the meeting Jane had sent out an updated list of fully paid up members. We now have 97 and it was agreed that we would contact Roy when we signed up our 100th member. A dozen members had not renewed and as usual there is a question mark over one or two, who never quite pay up the full amount, but do not sever their links with FAS either. Jane will continue to pursue.

Peter suggested that we add Alan Longstaff to our circulation lists.

Financial Status and donations:

Jane had already asked the office for fully updated accounts. In lieu of a reply she had worked out that we have spent some £2,800 out of an income of around £3,700. From last year's final figures we appear to have £2,687.18 in our reserve funds and another £2,000 in our current account, so we look fairly healthy. There is definitely money available for specific astronomical objectives.

Astronomy for the Blind:

David is currently liaising with Helen Whiteoak, who has taken over the museum's accessibility policy during Clare Plumley's absence on long term sick leave. David and Terry Goodman had shown images produced by the specialized printing machine which turns photocopying into tactile images at last November's meeting and are keen to donate one to the museum, costing £500. Although the committee is in favour of buying the printer, strong reservations were expressed. There is no point in donating the machine if the museum is not fully committed to maintaining it and taking full responsibility for using it properly. David to enquire about the museum's astronomy for the blind programme e.g. Helen Whiteoak could be encouraged to put together Evening with the Stars for the Blind etc. In the meantime we agreed to ring fence £400 towards its purchase – expecting the museum to contribute at least £100 of the cost to underline that we would require full museum involvement. The FAS could not run a programme for the blind on the museum's behalf.

Flamsteed Telescope: Needs upgrading to make it more “user friendly”. The committee agreed the expenditure of about £70 on a right angle finder and also that we invest in a hand held laser pointer which would fit into the telescope on a bracket. Malcolm Porter is willing to help out with the installation. David Barnewell has volunteered to take a series of photographs of the assembly. The telescope also needs a protective cover over the mirror and a surrounding shroud – neither should cost a great deal.

Possible donation to 28” telescope and video cameras in Altazimuth dome solar telescope.

- **28” Telescope:** Tony Sizer is eager to obtain a hand held sky scout device which helps to locate objects in the sky for the 28” telescope costing about £400. He wishes to try one out first and will then do a specification for us.
- **Altazimuth dome:** A hydrogen alpha telescope is going to be installed alongside the photoheliograph and ROG astronomers are hoping to set up two video cameras to display images on large screens, costing £500 each. Unfortunately the telescope and the dome are not synchronized and therefore cannot be used to give an automatic presentation session.

Gloria holds the budget and Jane will arrange a meeting with her to discuss a possible FAS donation as soon as she returns from holiday.

Coronado: Mike will discuss the problem of the fragility of the mounting with Tony Sizer to see if they can find a more robust fitting.

28" telescope training. It was agreed that we should arrange a session with the 28" where Tony could give a briefing on the use of the telescope rather than a full training.

Telescope Workshop review:

The workshop had been a great success with overwhelming praise from the 47 attendees (see attached summary) and there is definitely a market for more practical-hands on follow up sessions. Indeed there is probably enough support for a regular twice yearly event for beginners from now on. Mike is to arrange an intermediate follow-on workshop shortly, probably with Tony Sizer.

Pat suggested that we have some telescopes set up in the museum grounds before our monthly lecture for a quick view of the night sky. She volunteered to bring a telescope on February 5th. It was agreed that people should not be invited to bring their own telescopes as there would not be time to put them all up and dismantle them and there may be health and safety issues involved.

Similarly members could be invited to bring their own telescopes along and set them up in the courtyard of the ROG before Evenings with the Stars sessions start for FAS members at 9.00. Jane will discuss with Gloria Clifton at their meeting.

Campaign for Dark Skies. Colin Henshaw has entered into extensive correspondence with the museum about the "light pollution" generated by the meridian line laser. We agreed that as we had been approached for our view Mike would reply saying that although the FAS fully supported the aims of the Campaign for Dark Skies we did not find that light from the laser intrudes on our activities. He would copy Bob Mizon, Martin Male and the Director into his reply. We would reinforce Roy Clare's invitation to visit the site and say we were happy to talk to Mr Henshaw if he wished to come to Greenwich. Beyond that we shall support the museum's policy, recognizing that the meridian line is of international significance and try to stay on the sidelines.

Jodrell Bank visit: 23 people have signed up for the visit to Jodrell Bank in April and three more are on the waiting list. One hitch has arisen because of engineering works on the line that weekend Virgin Trains are not taking discounted group bookings. Jane, with considerable help from Pat, is exploring other possibilities such as express coaches etc. and will keep the committee informed of progress.

Programme planning: We seem to have several people lined up in principle already – Simon Singh, Ben Edwards, Mark Duwe and Francisco Diego with a newly prepared lecture. Jane is keen to ask Robin Catchpole to come and speak at some point too. Robert

Massey is also talking of coming to the FAS with a new lecture. As usual everyone's input is most welcome. Pat to give details of the Star of Bethlehem lecturer to Jane.

Jane will enquire what plans are afoot to observe the lunar eclipse on Saturday 3rd March at the observatory.

Coronado status:

David will send out another email suggesting that we abandon our previous practice of booking up volunteers for solar viewing for the first weekend of every month in favour of more ad hoc arrangements. People do not like booking themselves up so far in advance and also don't like hanging round if the weather is poor, but are very willing to respond if the weather is good e.g. Mike emailed members last weekend and got an excellent response including four new members who wished to do training. It was decided that David, Mike and Peter would liaise on Wednesday/Thursdays and decide to whether to arrange a weekend session depending on the advance weather forecast. One committee member should be at each session.

National Science Week March 9 to 18 2007: The museum has not planned its normal busy programme to mark National Science week this year; this is probably because Robert Massey's replacement has not yet been appointed. Mike felt that we should start a rota for the Coronado and run daily – weather and numbers of volunteers permitting – solar viewings. David agreed to contact members and compile a formal rota for the week.

Friends update: Polly Larner has offered to meet and tell us about the plans for the future of the Friends. Jane to contact Polly suggesting a meeting on Tuesday 13th February at 11.30 a.m.

Any Other Business: There was no other business and the meeting was declared closed.

Date of next meeting: 26th April at 7.00 p.m. at the Young Education Services offices.