

Minutes of Committee Meeting		FAS
Date:	30 May 2024	Chair: Bobby Manoo
Time:	19:00 GMT	Secretary: Asra Jilani
Venue:	Mycenae House	
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ✓	
Attendees:	Bobby Manoo	✓
	Clive Inglis	✓
	Asra Jilani	✓
	Simon Hurst	✓
	Mike Meynell	✓
	Barry Cassells	✓
	Paul May	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Poly Philippou	✓
	Adrian Challinor	✓
	Mark Jeffery	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Gurinder Lall	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Roger Geeson (co-op)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Richard Summerfield (co-op)	✓
	Tom Riley (co-op)	✓

Coordinators:

Lectures and Talks Coordinator:	Paul May
Observing Coordinator:	Mike Meynell
Workshops and Events Coordinator:	Poly Philippou
IT Coordinator:	Simon Hurst
Media and Comms Coordinator:	Adrian Challinor

FAS Administration

Update on First Light Project at RMG

- Bobby gave an update on the First Light Project, following a meeting with RMG attended by Bobby, Simon and Mike. The documents are on the shared drive and on the website. In summary, the main points raised are: new entrance / ticket hall for the observatory, new café in the dolphin sundial area, improved accessibility including a lift for GET, re-greening of the area around the planetarium dome, and new entrance and covered courtyard area to the planetarium. This information is public knowledge and can be discussed with members and others.
- Work is currently planned for 2026 – 2028. Although the plan was to close specific areas at specific time, there may well be a long period when all areas will be closed.

FAS MOU

- Bobby sent this out for review in February. A couple have responded with feedback. **All** to respond with any more feedback within the next two weeks, as there is a further meeting about this with RMG in the second week of June.

Alternate Venue

- It is agreed we will use Greenwich West Community Centre as an alternative to Mycenae House if the need arises for the next season.

Finances

- There are no issues to report on reimbursement or expense payments.
- Bobby confirmed that RMG send a spreadsheet at the end of each year of all Flamsteed expenses.

FAS Membership

- Adrian sent a copy of this year's membership figures to the committee prior to the meeting and a copy is also on the shared drive.
- There are still some issues such as joint membership and members who add Flamsteed to an existing RMG membership, which have been raised before. There are 5 specific issues which Bobby and Simon will be raising with RMG at the next meeting.
- RMG have said they will be improving their membership system but we do not have timescales for this.

Committee Structure

- Simon has emailed to committee members checking that everybody is happy with their workload, positive feedback.
- Adrian raised that he is stepping down from his role as media/comms/membership coordinator due to workload. All expressed their thanks for the fantastic job Adrian has done on this. All roles will be reviewed at the end of the season (at the next committee meeting) and before the AGM. Adrian will decide then if he would like to take on another role and stay on the committee. In the meantime, Adrian will hand over to Bobby and Simon.
- Tom said that he is limited in what he can do with his A Levels now and then moving to university in Durham. **Tom** to discuss with Simon.

Lectures and Talks Team

Main lectures (Paul, Mike)

- As Paul was not present at the meeting, Mike outlined the main lecture schedule provided. We have had a good line-up of talks and good feedback so far this season, we have one more talk in June for this season and the talks for next season are planned and almost all confirmed. The schedule update presented is available on the shared drive.

- It was agreed that Paul has done a great job with the main lectures programme this season.
- Simon reported that we will be able to move the main lectures back to the main lecture theatre next season, potentially from September, with access via Devonport House and with the green room or open area where the loos and kitchen are for refreshments.
- We have had positive feedback from speakers about Queens House, but from a technical perspective, getting the acoustics right is still a challenge.

- Clive, Poly, Richard and Roger have discussed some options for increasing the numbers of people having refreshments before and after the main lectures.
 - o Clive presented the suggestions –
 - (i) setting up the refreshments table earlier, say 5:30, having the sandwiches delivered there, and hosting the speaker there rather than in a separate area.
 - (ii) after the lecture, announcing that refreshments are available downstairs and ushering the speaker and members down to the refreshments area, and encouraging questions and discussions there rather than in the lecture room.
 - o These changes were agreed.
- Main lecture attendance is definitely down since the pandemic (apart from Chris Lintott which was fully booked). Simon confirmed that the attendance statistics are available on the shared drive.

- We discussed again the option of opening up the lectures to RMG members and FAS members' guests. RMG are not keen on us bringing our guests for free, and this has been stopped, saying that extra guests should pay a fee to attend. The fee was discussed and it was agreed that £12 for RMG members and £15 for Flamsteed members' guests was a reasonable charge (when compared with the cost of membership). We would allow say 20 paid tickets per lecture. We could possibly refund the ticket price if that person then becomes a member within a defined time window. We would not be opening up the lectures to members of the public for now. **Bobby** to discuss this further with the museum.

- As Mark was not present, Mike gave a quick update on the short talks, the sky this month / astro news given by members/committee. This list is available on the shared drive. Getting volunteers for this season has gone well, with 3 or 4 new faces. Planning for next season's short talks is well underway and being confirmed.

HOA talks (**Mark**)

- It was agreed that Mark has done a fantastic job with HOA this season, with more events this season than we have ever had before.
- As Mark was not present, he sent an update which Bobby presented. The September, November and December talks are confirmed and the last talk of the season next year will be a talk by Louise Devoy on the History of the ROG to coincide with its 350th anniversary.
- Mark is also planning an evening of short members' talks for September. Mark has some speakers confirmed already and it was agreed that an email would be sent to members asking for more volunteers (it was thought that this request would get lost if it was included in the newsletter).

Observing Team

Blackheath (**Mike**)

- The new system of 1 or 2 primary dates and three backups per month has been working well this season. We had 12 volunteers in total across all the events. January was washed out, but still 9 out of the 10 events across 8 months this past season ran. Attendance was great at the start of the season but dropped off later as the evenings got colder.
- The same approach will be used again for next season, but hopefully with more volunteers.

Solar (**Mike**)

- The new season has only just started, with 2 events held so far. There was a great response for volunteers, and we have 30 volunteers this season, approximately 10 per session, more than before. 12 sessions are planned, each one a primary and backup date, so 24 in total including backups.
- The above are all public viewing sessions. There will likely be no member-only events this season, **Mike** to confirm with ROG.
- It was agreed it would be a good idea to get another banner, designed specifically for solar viewing, for the main gate. **Mike** to progress the design, review with ROG and production.

ROG team GET and AMAT sessions (**Barry/Gurinder**)

- Gurinder has sent the list of dates, this is also available on the shared drive. 5 dates are confirmed with ROG for this coming season, and two more hopefully will be confirmed soon.
- There was some disappointment this past season about no-go decisions where we/members felt we could have observed. Also, due to new H&S rules, we (Flamsteed volunteers) can no longer get involved in the dome/with the GET.
- There are currently no plans to hold any AMAT sessions, as the telescope has been removed from that building due to leaks. It was agreed we should ask the ROG if we can use that telescope elsewhere.

Romney Observing (**Bobby**)

- Martin Male has offered to open up the Romney observing sessions again. This was discussed and it was decided that we would not do this for now, primarily as there has been tapering interest, Martin can only accommodate 6 people, and the late 6 pm go/no-go decision makes it difficult to plan and organise. **Bobby** to inform Martin.

Workshops and Special Events Team

Practical workshops (**Clive**)

- Clive gave an overview of the events of this past season. A full report is on the shared drive. Since the last meeting, the Citizen Science (Mark) and Electronically Assisted Astronomy (Bobby, Richard) workshops have been held, with 22 and 18 attendees respectively.
- Planned for December/January is the Amateur Science workshop, Paul's idea. It was agreed this was a good idea and different to our usual workshops, where members can run with different topics.
- Also for the next season is another sketching workshop with Mary McIntyre, which was very popular last time. **Clive** to get in touch with Mary to confirm her availability and dates with consideration for late summer.
- Also discussed and agreed at the meeting were rerunning further telescope, astrophotography and EAA workshops.

FAS Visits/Trips (**Poly**)

- Since the last meeting we have conducted the visit to the UCL Observatory. It was a success, 32 attended (the maximum number), we received good feedback, really well organised by UCLO.
- The next visit is to Jodrell Bank, 15th June. So far, 36 are booked and paid. All arrangements, such as confirmation of the booking, Prof Ben Stappers' talk, pre-booked taxis, etc, are all confirmed.
- On 28th June we have the members' summer social event. We have 19 booked so far. **Simon** to forward an invitation to RMG/ROG.
- Work is underway for the Flamsteed/BAA/SPA Back to Basics Day on 30th November. Bobby and Mike will be speaking at this event. We have a draft agenda, speakers are booked, the planetarium slot booked. The only issue is that the University of Greenwich are unable to confirm the booking 100% until the summer when they confirm arrangements for the new academic year. Mycenae

House is still booked as a backup just in case. Nearer the day, Poly will send a call-out for volunteers to help on the day.

- It was agreed that the Introduction to Astronomy talks earmarked for next season will be parked as Back to Basics is going ahead.
- On the list for next year is the Norman Lockyer visit (summer 2025 date tbc).
- Poly is also considering visits to the RAS Library, MSSSL (solar-related) and History of Science museum Oxford. It was agreed these are good ideas. All to email Poly with any other ideas.

Outreach activities (**Richard, Poly**)

- Richard has written to Mr Hindocha at Eltham College to progress the outreach event there, this will be November date tbc
- Richard has also arranged a further outreach event at Morden College, the last event was so successful we were invited back. We will be doing solar viewing this time, and Richard has 5 volunteers confirmed to assist. This is scheduled for 13th June, with a backup date of 27th June.
- Simon is working on the safeguarding framework document, this is due to be reviewed soon by Poly, Gurinder and Richard. This is not an immediate priority as it is not required for the above events but will be required for future events.
- Poly said that ideas for next season's outreach events are collaboration with Crayford, as previously discussed, and participation in an initiative to rollout astronomy clubs to schools, though this is still at an early stage and there's a lot to be confirmed.
- Poly asked if/how we are letting our members know about the outreach work we are doing. **Bobby** to include this in the AGM.

Media and Comms Team

- Adrian confirmed there are no issues to report with emails and comms
- Facebook is working well, not so much X/Twitter. **Barry** to send images to Tom and **Tom** to post on Instagram

IT Team

IT technical (**Simon**)

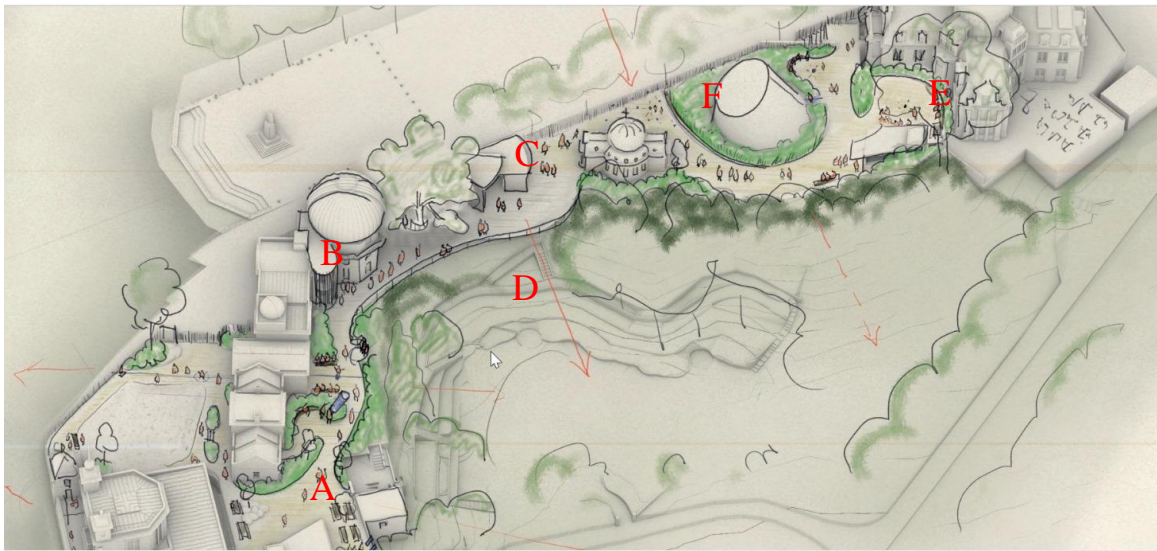
- Simon reported that the website and newsletter generation is working well. He said however that a lot of people are not opening the newsletters, and leaving bookings till very late
- It was agreed that after the next main lecture, the newsletters will be done fortnightly for the summer until the start of the next season

AOB

- No additional items raised

APPENDIX

1. First Light Overview



Meeting: 25 April 2024 12:00-13:00

Attended: RMG: Patricia Skelton (Dep Director); Ann Carter (Planning Board), Louise Devoy (Curator);
FAS: Bobby Manoo, Simon Hurst, Mike Meynell

RE: Update on First Light Project at the ROG

Artefact: See article on RMG Website and copied on FAS G Drive.

The 350th anniversary of observing the wonders of the night sky at the ROG in 2026 offers us an opportunity to make it a place of ‘awe and wonder’ a ‘must see’ London attraction for the UK and international visitor; revitalising our displays, rethinking the stories we tell and improving the visitor journey. Our visitors will see, hear and feel the wondrous, curious immensity of the universe and of our shared existence in it.

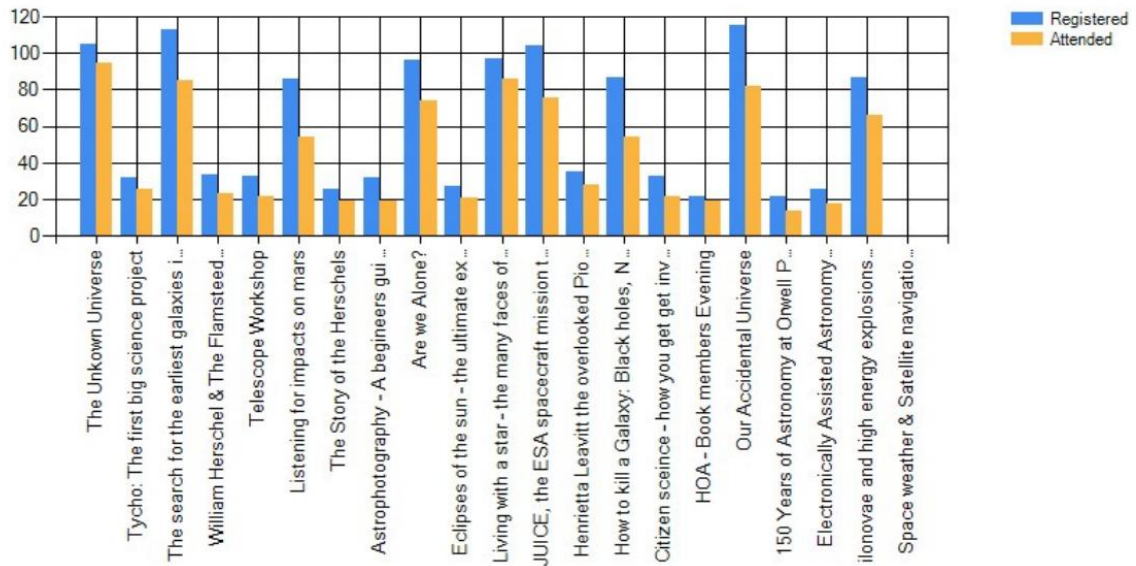
- We are aiming to create a new entrance,
- improve the visitor experience by removing bottlenecks and improving accessibility on a site which is historically significant but which was not originally designed for the thousands of visitors we welcome today.
- We are also planning to create new larger gallery spaces enabling us to explain the Time and Space stories and our place in the Universe

Key Points

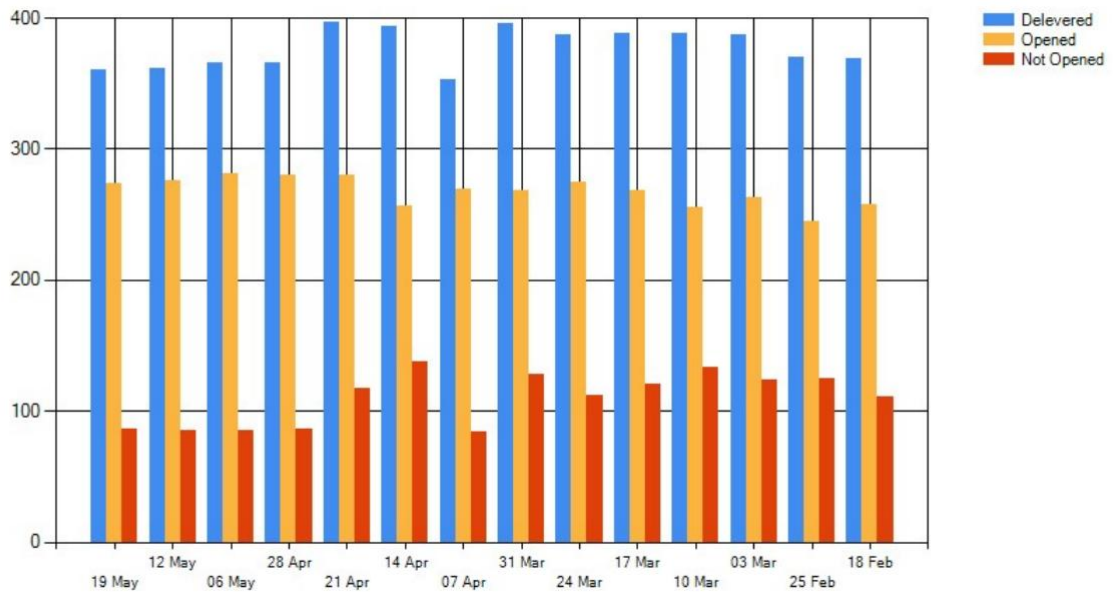
- Start in 2026 and end in 2028 with planning continuing this year and into next year.
- **A** - Existing building used for ticketing to be removed. (next to Dolphin Sundial)
- **B** - GET to be equipped with a lift and staircase.
- **C** - New ticket and entrance building to be erected near to area where visitors current enter from the parking lot.
- **D** - Back fence in the area between Dolphin Sundial to the planetarium to be pushed out into the garden area which opens up more space.
- **E** - Area in front planetarium Foyer to be covered and used for presentations, gallery, functions etc.
- **F** - The area around the planetarium cone to be turned into a green space.

2. Lecture Statistics for this season

Lecture Statistics



Newsletter Statistics



3. Update from Mark Jeffery on History of Astronomy

HOA Talks Autumn 2024

- 19th September Date TBC
Mary Dooley – Alice Everett
- 7th November Rob Peeling
The Bedford Catalogue – links to ROG
- 5th December – Frank Dutton
Astronomy in China, Korea & Japan prior to the Jesuit missionary arrivals in China and Japan.

Members Talks

I'm still trying to secure a date for this (hopefully in September)

Talks from:

- Tony Dillion - French Astronomer, Camille Flammarion
- Tej Dyal - planning and capturing images and timelapses of unique or interesting Earthly object conjunctions with celestial objects
- Paul Miller – Shakespeare's Astronomy (Paul is a museum guide at the NMM)

I'm working on some others, but these 3 are secured.

Also:

- Mike Richardson – Hitchhiker's guide to the galaxy!!
- Bobby Manoo – Wooden Telescope.

4. Update from Gurinder Lall on GET Dates

I have arranged the GET dates for next season and I'm waiting for them to come back to me to see if there are any additional dates they can offer.

We have:

7th November
28th Nov
9th January
6th February
5th March

They could not do any Dec dates but I'll contact Becca again to consider other possibilities.