

THE FLAMSTEED ASTRONOMY SOCIETY
MINUTES OF THE TENTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Held in the Planetarium of the Royal Observatory on Monday 28th September 2009

Present: Lin Potter, (Chair), Mike Dryland (Vice-chair), the committee and 79 members of the Flamsteed Astronomy Society, Helen Walton and Monika Turlo of the Members' Office NMM.

Apologies: Apologies were received from Kevin Fewster (Director NMM), Sarah Roots (Director ROG), Robin Gilbert, Norman Ellis, Linda Marlow, David Waugh, Anthony Stokes and Rob Willet

Minutes: The minutes of the ninth AGM held on 26th September 2008 had been circulated to members and as there were no matters arising they were approved by the meeting.

Chairperson's report

It is my great pleasure to report on the previous year's activities of the Flamsteed Astronomy Society.

We are delighted that Helen Walton and Monika Turlo of the Members office have been able to join us at our first meeting of the season.

Again I am happy to say that we have had a busy and action packed year.

The main theme of this year is, of course, the International Year of Astronomy – which is not yet over, and this has led to joint ventures and meetings with the Royal Observatory. Many of us volunteered to assist with the museum's expanded evening events such as Evening with the Stars, family evenings, and such specialised events as 'She's an Astronomer'. In return, on six mutually agreed dates we were allowed a very special hour after the public had gone, to view with the 28" telescope with the duty astronomer. We again mounted a very successful joint telescope workshop with the museum when in exchange for our help; we were allocated 20 free places for Flamsteed members. This will happen again this year on 15th December.

Our relations with staff at the ROG have continued to be very cordial and friendly and have resulted in a much enriched experience for us all. Here we should mention the arrival of Sarah Roots as Director of the Observatory. We have found her extremely helpful and "a very good thing" – willing to meet us and our ideas more than half way. We hope to introduce you formally to Sarah during the autumn.

To a large extent IYA also shaped our programme. Of course we had to celebrate the four hundredth anniversary of the year when Galileo first pointed a telescope to the heavens. Richard Dunn, curator of the History of Navigation, came to talk about his newly published book *'The Telescope—a short history'* last April. To underline one of the main aspirations of IYA – that is to explain the role that astronomy can play in current problems with global warming - Dr Marek Kukula, Public Astronomer at the ROG, spoke eloquently on *The Cosmic Oasis*. To mark Mars Month, Doug Ellison of the Planetary Society, delivered a very entertaining lecture (without a single note) on *Mars Discovered*. Of course we haven't finished yet - Dr Robert Massey will be talking about *The Moon -- exploring our Nearest Neighbour* next month – he will no doubt remember to mention the 40th anniversary of Apollo 11!

We cannot mention all our activities but one planned event fell foul of the weather when London experienced the worst snow fall of the decade on the very day that Professor Ian Morison from Jodrell Bank was to discuss the *The Search for Life on other Planets*. We are very lucky indeed to say that he is trying again – barring hurricanes and earthquakes – in early November.

We are also very happy to report that under the leadership of Kate Bishop, the glitches we experienced when the Friends were first wound up and we all become Members of the Museum have been steadily ironed out. After she took over we have experienced a happy and mutually beneficial relationship. Very sadly Kate has now left us for pastures new and we await the appointment of a new Head of the Membership. For the time being Kate has left behind a smoothly operating office in the very capable hands of Helen Walton and Monika Turlo.

We should mention membership and the continued expansion of the society – at a recent committee meeting it was decided that when we reach 175 members we must review further applications. This is to reflect the facilities available – indeed if everyone turned up to a lecture at once it would be standing room only. I am delighted to report that we are nearly there, having about 170 members at the last count a few days ago. It might be that we have to introduce a waiting list. Our increased and healthy numbers are partly a result of the publicity surrounding IYA, but also, with the Membership Department's agreement and cooperation, our profile has been much improved with a leaflet campaign throughout the museum, especially on the information desks in the observatory. After all we have no real desire to keep our presence a secret!

You will have received our financial end of year figures and see that we have a healthy profit balance. Very generously the museum is allowing us to ring fence our reserve fund and we shall shortly be discussing a donation of some suitable astronomical equipment or project with Sarah Roots and the ROG staff.

It just remains for me to thank you all but especially my very hard working committee.

Election of Officials:

Lin Potter, Mike Dryland, Mike Dear and Roger Geeson were all willing to stand again for election to the committee, but sadly both Pat Wainwright and Mark Duwe had decided to step down for the time being. The thanks of the Society go to Pat and Mark for their hard work on the Committee.

Two nominations had been received

Deborah McGarvey was proposed by Seaton Lee and seconded by Pat Wainwright

Linda Ransome was proposed by Stan Payne and seconded by Mike Dryland

As there were no other nominations an election was deemed unnecessary and Deborah McGarvey and Linda Ransome were accepted unopposed onto the committee.

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