

Notes from a Flamsteed Astronomy Society Committee Meeting held on Monday 14th October 2019 at 7.30pm in Mycenae House, Blackheath

Present: Andy Sawers (chair), Helen Edwards (vice-chair), Bobby Manoo, Clive Inglis, Grey Liple, Malcolm Porter, Mike Meynell, Nick Phillips, Poly Philippou and Rupert Smith.

Apologies: Asra Jilani, Barry Cassels, Brian Blake, Christina Chester, Roger Geeson, Simon Hurst and Tej Dyal.

1. Matters arising from the committee meeting on Tuesday 3rd September 2019

Disabled Lift Issues

Having been previously told that problems with the disabled lift at lectures were due to lack of staff training, we unfortunately had another incident at the last lecture where staff couldn't operate the lift. Andy said that, at his recommendation, the Membership department has escalated the issue to Andy Bodle (Director, Operations and Human Resources at the museum).

Memorandum of Understanding / Under-18s

Andy reported that the Memorandum of Understanding between the Flamsteed and the museum has now been signed by Paddy Rodgers, the director of the museum.

Malcolm has provided some draft guidance for operational processes if a member under the age of 18 attends an off-site event without a parent or guardian. Andy agreed to review this guidance and would update the committee in due course.

Mike reported that he can cross-check all bookings for external events against the membership list to check for any bookings from student members.

Practical Astronomy Workshops

Mike reported that he had been unable to find time to organise a planning meeting for the Practical Astronomy workshops. He hoped to get this done within the next week or two and would update the committee in due course.

History of Astronomy Group

Bobby reported that he had received dates from Mikaela at the ROG for when the foyer area outside of the planetarium would be available for these meetings. All of the dates are next year, so there will be no meeting prior to Christmas.

He is also looking at some new speakers for this year's programme. Mike requested that Bobby provide the dates of the talks so that they can be blocked out on the Flamsteed calendar.

Great Equatorial Viewing events

Dates have been provided for a number of sessions prior to Christmas, but no astronomer has been confirmed for any event. Tej is chasing Mikaela to provide details.

Charlton & Woolwich Free Film Festival

Mike and Andy reported that the event went very well, with around 100 attendees. Views of Saturn, Jupiter, Albireo, the Ring Nebula and the Full Moon were provided for attendees. The committee thanked Andy, Mike, Rupert and Tej for helping out at the event.

Curator Tour of the Moon Exhibition

The event is going ahead as planned on 22nd October. Mike asked that the capacity be increased to 25 as there are a number of people on the waiting list. The committee agreed that this should be done, and Andy agreed to ask the museum if a second tour could be arranged due to the popularity of the event.

New Scientist Live

Mike reported that the event went well, with the BAA much appreciating our presence. Thanks were given to Clive, Grey, Mike and Nick for helping out on the day. The BAA will be taking a stand at next year's event and have asked that if Flamsteed could be involved. The committee agreed to participate. Grey, Poly and Rupert agreed to liaise with the BAA so that planning for the event was completed at an earlier stage than this year.

The BAA have also requested that we have a flag or banner promoting the Flamsteed Astronomy Society at next year's event. Grey, Poly and Rupert will take this into account during their planning for the event.

Transit of Mercury

The ROG are currently planning a one-hour live stream of this event on Monday 11th November using the AMAT telescope.

As regards public solar viewing of the transit, Mike reported that sight lines are definitely a problem. The only place on the ROG site that we could guarantee seeing the whole of the transit is the small paved area on the south west corner of Flamsteed House.

It is a small area, and probably we would only have room for one telescope. We have used this area for solar viewing during the early evening when the Sun is low in the sky. It is possible that we could set up in our normal solar viewing area at the start of the transit and then decamp to this area when the Sun dips below the trees.

The committee agreed to make a decision closer to the date, taking account of likely weather conditions on the day. A short-notice event could easily be arranged.

Pub Evenings

Andy reported that he has spoken to Tom Kerss about an "evening with an astronomer" pub evening. Tom had suggested a pub in Central London called "The Astronomer". Mike wondered if this could be an opportunity of getting a number of London-based astronomers together, rather than just the Flamsteed.

Andy agreed to pursue the idea and would discuss further with Tom.

Bobby agreed to investigate setting up a WhatsApp group for members, initially amongst committee members, to assess whether it is a workable solution to encourage people to go to events.

Christmas Lecture

Grey reported that plans were progressing for a talk about the history of the society prior to the December Christmas lecture. Grey and Malcolm agreed to meet with Jane Bendall to finalise the plans. Jane Bendall, Eddie Yeadon and Lin Potter have been mentioned as potential presenters.

The “Sky this Month” presentation would not take place at the December lecture, but Malcolm has agreed to present a “Sky this Year” talk prior to the January lecture.

2. Appointment of co-opted committee members

Andy welcomed Poly Philippou to the committee as a co-opted member.

The following members were proposed as co-opted members of the committee:

- Asra Jilani
- Barry Cassels
- Christina Chester
- Poly Philippou
- Roger Geeson

The committee unanimously agreed and thanked all co-opted committee members for volunteering.

3. Committee roles and responsibilities

The full list of roles and responsibilities for the 2019/20 season were agreed to be as follows:

Category	Event type	Role description	2019-20 volunteers
Lectures & learning	Programme secretary	Agreeing the lecture topics, approaching potential lecturers, and booking lecturers for each lecture date	Helen Edwards
	Programme administrator	Responsible for agreeing lecture dates, booking the lecture theatre, lining up museum resource to support on the evening, lining up volunteers to provide refreshments on the evening, contacting the lecturer to find out technology requirements, agreeing on meeting arrangements with the lecturer on the evening of the event (including lining up tours and/or dinner), sending thank-you note to the lecturer, administering any expense or fee reimbursements for the lecturer	Andy Sawers
	Social organiser	Provide refreshments and catering at meetings and events as required	Roger Geeson, Sue Yates, Bob Yates

Category	Event type	Role description	2019-20 volunteers
	History of astronomy group organiser	Organises and runs meetings of the History of Astronomy Group	Bobby Manoo. Supported by Malcolm Porter, Nick Phillips, Poly Philippou
	Trips organiser	Takes overall responsibility for organising society trips	Clive Inglis, Helen Edwards. Supported by Bobby Manoo, Grey Liple, Poly Philippou
Observing	Blackheath observing organiser	Organises and runs meetings of the Observing and Imaging Group. Plan, schedule and arrange observing events. Ensure provision of equipment and qualified leaders at each session. Coordinate announcements, SMS, and web postings, etc	Rupert Smith
	Other observing: Romney, Leeds, Cudham, etc. (potentially Otford in future)	Organises and coordinates specific observing events (e.g. Romney observing) where bookings need to be taken and travel arrangements made	Romney – Nick Phillips. Supported by Helen Edwards. Other events – to be confirmed when venues are decided
	Observing assistants	Assists with the organisation of meetings of the Observing and Imaging Group. Helps with the provision of equipment and assists in the running of the sessions	Tej Dyal, Grey Liple, Clive Inglis, Mike Meynell, Nick Phillips
	Solar - public	Organises and runs public solar viewing sessions	Tej Dyal. Supported by Nick Phillips, Simon Hurst, Barry Cassels, Mike Meynell, Clive Inglis, Helen Edwards, Poly Philippou
	Solar - members	Organises and runs members only solar viewing sessions	Clive Inglis. Supported by Nick Phillips, Rupert Smith
	Solar viewing assistants	Assists with the organisation of solar viewing sessions	Roger Geeson, Tej Dyal, Andy Sawers, Grey Liple, Mike Meynell, Nick Phillips, Simon Hurst, Rupert Smith, Helen Edwards, Poly Philippou

Category	Event type	Role description	2019-20 volunteers
	Great Equatorial (plus possible AMAT tours)	Organises and runs the Flamsteed viewing events with the Great Equatorial Telescope	Tej Dyal. Assisted by Barry Cassels
	Great Equatorial assistants	Assists in the running of the Flamsteed viewing events with the Great Equatorial Telescope	Clive Inglis, Nick Phillips, Mike Meynell, Simon Hurst, Barry Cassels, Roger Geeson
Practical	Workshops	Organises society and public workshops at the ROG and elsewhere (telescope / imaging / radio, etc, workshops)	Mike Meynell. TBC later in the season.
Outreach	Smashfest, APOTY, Shrewsbury Park, etc	Organises outreach events on behalf of the society	Andy Sawers, Helen Edwards
Social Evenings	Pub evenings organiser	Organises and hosts monthly pub evenings	Brian Evans – Andy Sawers to assist with ‘Evening with an Astronomer’

Role	Role description	2019-20 volunteers
Chair	Acts as the embodiment of the FAS for all external matters. Takes the chair at all meetings of the FAS and committee at which he/she is present	Andy Sawers
Vice Chair	Assumes the duties of the Chair when the Chair is unable to attend	Helen Edwards
Committee Secretary	Takes & publishes minutes and issues notices of meetings and agendas for committee and general meetings. Receives nominations for committee membership and proposals for resolutions. Organises elections for committee membership	Mike Meynell
Membership Secretary	Works with the NMM Members Office to answer enquiries, resolve subscription issues, welcome new members, and track membership numbers and meeting attendance.	Welcome new members - Asra Jilani assisted by Clive Inglis; Membership list and emails to members - Mike Meynell. Membership list could be transferred

Role	Role description	2019-20 volunteers
		to the membership department at the museum.
Web Editor	Organises hosting etc for the FAS website. Arranges design of the website as agreed with the committee. Coordinates provision, editing and upload of reports, articles, photographs and updates	Mike Meynell, Poly Philippou assisted by Christina Chester
Forum Moderators	Moderates the Flamsteed online forum. Ensures that no abusive messages are posted. Splits discussion topics where necessary	Mike Meynell, Andy Sawers
Lecture and Event Reports	Writing of lecture reports and other event reports for the website	Andy Sawers + rota to be arranged
Social Media Coordinator	Organises social media accounts as agreed with the committee (Twitter, Facebook, SMS, LinkedIn, WhatsApp, etc). Proposes & coordinates contributions	Christina Chester, Andy Sawers, Mike Meynell, Bobby Manoo. SMS messages to be discontinued in favour of WhatsApp
Astrophotography Video Compiler	Coordinates the receipt of astrophotography images taken by Flamsteed members and compiles a video of the best images for display at Flamsteed lectures and other Flamsteed events	Simon Hurst
Management of Flamsteed e-mail Account	Responding to enquiries made to the Flamsteed email account	Mike Meynell, Helen Edwards, Andy Sawers, Bobby Manoo; Bobby Manoo to take over Christina Chester's VPN access
Expenses Secretary	Keeps track of Flamsteed expense spend	Andy Sawers

4. Society trips

Clive gave an update on a potential visit to La Palma, specifically the Gran Telescopio Canarias and Isaac Newton Telescope. There are a number of other visits on the island which could take place. The committee agreed to pursue the idea.

Clive agreed to draft an email detailing the trip, along with potential costs and duration, so that we could send this to members to determine interest. Once we had determined potential numbers, we could take the plans further. As per the trip to CERN, the committee agreed that we would make recommendations on hotels and flights, but would not book any accommodation or travel on behalf of members.

The trip is likely to take place in September 2020.

A trip to the University of London Mill Hill observatory is being planned for Spring 2020.

5. Fundraising for the 350th anniversary of the Royal Observatory Greenwich

Andy reported that he and Mike had met with Michael Adamson, the Philanthropy Manager for Science at the museum. Michael would like to give a short talk to the Flamsteed prior to one of the lectures to let us know about the museum plans and what Flamsteed members can do to assist.

The Flamsteed can help with various fundraising activities, via raffles and public donations at observing events.

The committee agreed that we would not participate in any fundraising events for the museum until we received some specific details on what the money would be going to. In the meantime, money from the Christmas raffle would go to a local charity. Committee members were asked to send suggestions of worthy charities to the committee mailing list within the next few weeks.

6. Any other business

“Astronomy News” this Month

At the AGM, Flamsteed member Adrian Challinor suggested that we had a section prior to lectures to present the latest “astronomy news”. The committee agreed that this was a good idea, but were concerned that there wasn’t sufficient time during our lecture evening to do this along with the “Sky this Month” presentation.

The committee agreed that we should alternate a “Sky this Month” presentation with an “Astronomy News this Month” presentation during this season.

Lecture Theatre technical issues

Andy reported that the projector switcher (allowing you to change the source for display on the lecture theatre projector) has ceased to operate. Apparently, a complete rewiring of the lecture theatre is required, but this would not be done until the New Year.

The museum are recommending that we do not switch between projector inputs during our lecture events, meaning that all presentations need to be run from a single machine.

Mike raised a concern that many of our lecturers use Mac laptops, and may not be using Powerpoint but some other presentation software. Though formats can, in theory, be converted, some functionality is often lost – for example, auto-playing of videos or animations.

The committee agreed that we had to inform our lecturers to bring their presentations in a Windows-compatible format so that it could be transferred on to a laptop. Andy has offered to use his laptop for this purpose, as we have demonstrated that this connects to the lecture theatre projector without a problem.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 9.15pm.