

Notes from a Flamsteed Astronomy Society Committee Meeting held on Tuesday 27th October 2020 at 7.30pm via Zoom

Present: Andy Sawers (chair), Helen Edwards (vice chair), Mike Meynell, Malcolm Porter, Bobby Manoo, Poly Philippou, Simon Hurst, Tej Dyal, Nick Phillips, Barry Cassels

Apologies: Grey Liple, Adrian Challinor, Asra Jilani, Roger Geeson, Clive Inglis

1. Eddie Yeadon tributes

Andy noted that there had been a great number of tributes to Eddie Yeadon, a co-founder of the Flamsteed Astronomy Society and our first chairman, who passed away on 6th October. The Committee had organised for these tributes to be sent to his family who were comforted to receive them.

2. Matters arising from the committee meeting held on Wednesday 26th August 2020

Great Equatorial viewing events

Tej said that he would follow up with the Observatory to see if there is any update on their plans to re-open the Great Equatorial in January 2021.

BAA – Back to Basics

The Flamsteed's partnership with the BAA to hold a 'Back to Basics' day was due to be in October 2021 but because of coronavirus all such events have been postponed rather than cancelled. The event is now pencilled in for October 2022.

Additional hosts /Q&A hosts / tech hosts for online events

Andy thanked Tej and Simon for their work on our online events doing the technical support and hosting the Q&A sessions. It helps spread the load rather than leaving it all to the host and it makes for a more interesting experience for Members who are viewing. Barry expressed his willingness to be able to contribute as well. A practice session will be organised at a convenient time. Andy said that Simon had been a great lecture host and he would be playing that role again. Bobby asked for more volunteers to host the History of Astronomy Talks. Tej has offered to assist with Q&A hosting and Malcolm has offered to assist with hosting.

Woolwich and Charlton Free Film Festival

Nothing has been heard from the organisers and in the circumstances it seems unlikely, regrettably, that this event will proceed or that the Flamsteed would be involved this year.

AGM

In his comments to the Flamsteed AGM last month, RMG director Paddy Rodgers said there would soon be displays setting out the mission for the Observatory. Andy said he would ask Lance Bourne if these are available electronically.

3. Appointment of co-opted committee members

The Committee was pleased to propose and agree the reappointment of the following co-opted members of the committee, and expressed thanks for their continuing service:

- Asra Jilani
- Roger Geeson
- Adrian Challinor

4. Budget update

Andy explained that there was particular pressure on finances across the board at the Museum, and that they were looking for significant savings on all fronts. In that, they were no different from finance departments anywhere.

As Flamsteed events are now totally online, there are no Visitor Experience staff costs or AV technicians to pay for. Our Zoom licence costs less than the staff costs we had been funding, so there is a net saving, added to which we do not have speaker travel expenses nor hospitality costs.

However, after the Flamsteed blazed the trail in its use of Zoom, the Museum has now caught up and has secured its own licence. Finance is asking for anyone with their own Zoom licence to cancel it and share the Museum licence instead. Andy acknowledged that this would be a considerable saving, but expressed considerable concern as to exactly how the process would work so that the licence is, in effect, switched over to the Flamsteed on the days it's needed and then switched back again. It has been agreed with the membership department that we will not surrender our current licences until we are satisfied that the new arrangements will work without a hitch. We are also concerned about a loss of flexibility.

We have made provision in our budget for the remainder of 2020-21 for possible speaker fees. Apart from that and Zoom, our expenses now are absolutely minimal.

5. Committee roles and responsibilities

After four years as our committee secretary, Mike asked to stand down from the role. The committee thanked Mike for his unstinting service.

Poly volunteered to assume the responsibilities of secretary and was welcomed to the position by the whole committee.

The committee roles and responsibilities for the 2020-2021 season are as follows:

Category	Event type	Role description	2020-21 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. Also, arranging Zoom familiarisation sessions with our guest speakers	Andy Sawers and Helen Edwards
	Social organiser	Provide refreshments and catering at meetings and events as required	Roger Geeson
	History of astronomy group organiser	Organises and runs meetings of the History of Astronomy Group	Bobby Manoo. Supported by Helen Edwards and Malcolm Porter
	Trips organiser	Takes overall responsibility for organising society trips	Deferred for now because of coronavirus
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	Mike and Tej
	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	Deferred for now because of coronavirus

Category	Event type	Role description	2020-21 volunteers
	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
	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, Helen Edwards, Poly Philippou
	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, Poly Philippou
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 and Helen Edwards but deferred for now because of coronavirus
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	Poly Philippou
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; Email to new members – Helen Edwards; Membership list and contacts list – Mike Meynell and Andy Sawers
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
Lecture and Event Reports	Writing of lecture reports and other event reports for the website	Andy Sawers
Social Media Coordinator	Organises social media accounts as agreed with the committee (Twitter, Facebook, SMS, LinkedIn, WhatsApp, etc). Proposes & coordinates contributions	Andy Sawers, Mike Meynell
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 events	Simon Hurst
Management of Flamsteed e-mail Account	Responding to enquiries made to the Flamsteed email account	Mike Meynell, Helen Edwards, Andy Sawers
Expenses Secretary	Keeps track of Flamsteed expense spend	Andy Sawers

6. Plans for events (including National Astronomy Week)

The talk on the discovery of phosphines in the atmosphere of Venus will take place on 9th November and will be given by Emily Drabek-Maunder, one of the co-authors of the academic paper.

Prof John Bridges kindly agreed to move his lecture to Monday 16th November, which is in the middle of National Astronomy Week, the focus of which is Mars. The committee agreed that we would invite smaller societies to join this talk.

ROG is planning a Mars livestreaming observing session on Tuesday 17th November but we don't know what their weather backup plan is. Tej said he would ask if there is anything we can do to collaborate with them.

Tej said that he would explore how we can do our own such event, both in terms of the technical aspects and the content. Malcolm offered to assist. Rupert Smith had previously been keen to get involved and Tej said he would contact him. We will keep an eye on the weather so we can be flexible with the observing date, ideally mid-November to coincide with National Astronomy Week.

As a possible alternative, Poly said she would look into whether GoStargazing or the BAA are planning Mars observing events that we might be able to join instead.

Thursday 26th November is a History of Astronomy talk about Jantar Mantar by Flamsteed member Thomas Obitz.

The pub quiz may not have been well promoted to the Members and might attract more interest next time. The committee discussed the option of a team game, inviting other astronomy societies. Bobby, Barry, Simon, Tej and Andy will discuss the various options and report back.

Andy is working on his two music-related projects as it appears we have budgetary approval for the necessary licences.

Malcolm offered to do a 'Sky in the coming months' talk as a standalone Zoom workshop of perhaps 20 minutes with a Q&A for early 2021.

We understand that the ROG does planetarium shows online. We will investigate whether a show dedicated for Flamsteed members is possible. Tej will ask the ROG about this.

The History of Astronomy programme is developing well with a good number of speakers interested, but some are a little wary of presenting online. Malcolm said that he may be able to assist with a talk.

7. Tribute to Eddie Yeadon

The committee agreed to look into having a memorial lecture in honour of Eddie Yeadon. There would perhaps be a special section at the start involving people who knew Eddie best. Andy will discuss with Mike Dryland and others.

Malcolm proposed the idea of a memorial award to be presented by the committee to a non-committee Flamsteed member who has contributed to the work of the Society. The criteria would need to be defined.

Malcolm proposed that a memorial fund-raising programme be set up with a view to, perhaps, providing local schools with books on astronomy. The outreach programme could perhaps be done in association with RMG. Malcolm, Simon and Andy will discuss this offline.

8. Astrophotography book

Our astrophotography annual has the signatures of the first few guest lecturers we had in 2020 before lockdown. In past years this has been one of our charity raffle prizes. It was suggested that the book be a prize should we do a pub quiz in future.

9. Any other business

There being no further business the meeting closed at 8.45pm.