

Notes from a Flamsteed Astronomy Society Committee Meeting held on Monday 11th September 2017 at 7pm in Mycenae House, Blackheath

Present: Andy Sawers (chair), Christina Chester (vice-chair), Grey Liple (vice-chair), Brian Evans, Clive Inglis, Malcolm Porter, Mike Meynell, Tej Dyal.

Apologies: Asra Jilani, Brian Blake, Lin Potter, Nick Phillips, Roger Geeson, Rupert Smith, Sumitra Sri Bhashyam.

1. Matters arising from the committee meeting on 15th June 2017

Membership survey

Mike has circulated a copy of the previous membership survey (performed in April 2012).

Andy agreed to coordinate the design of a new survey. The committee agreed that questions on how members would like communications to be sent to them should be included in the survey. In addition, questions on what members are interested in should be included, as per the previous survey.

Update on the under-18s project

We've had positive feedback to our proposal from both society members and stakeholders at the museum. We are still awaiting guidance from the Federation of Astronomical Societies about the coverage of under-18s within their Public Liability Insurance scheme.

Public solar viewing events

Of the 9 planned public solar viewing events over the summer period, only 3 went ahead due to poor weather. One of those sessions was curtailed early because of weather conditions. For the two "full" sessions, we had over 800 visitors.

The volunteer response was excellent, with 19 members offering to volunteer over the course of the summer. 5 of these members were new volunteers.

The committee thanked Tej for his hard work in organising these events. Tej, in turn, thanked Mike and Nick for their support during the solar viewing season.

It was suggested that we look at scheduling back-up events for next season, as there were a few occasions this summer where the day following the scheduled session had good weather. This should hopefully improve our strike-rate, even if the commitment to back-up dates means that we can't schedule as many sessions. It was also agreed that we should start the sessions earlier in the summer, possible from late-May onwards.

Alt-Az Pavilion fundraising ideas

Around £230 was raised via the fundraising "buckets" at our solar viewing sessions this summer. Had the weather been kinder, we would have raised significantly more. At our previous committee meeting, we had agreed to raffle a copy of the latest Astronomy Photographer of the Year book, which has been signed by all our 2016/17 season lecturers. As the AGM has a packed agenda, it was agreed to run this raffle later in the season (but before the end of the calendar year).

Charlton & Woolwich Free Film Festival

We participated in this event on the afternoon of Saturday 10 September. As it was a Saturday afternoon event, the film wasn't well attended. However, the committee agreed that the event was worthwhile supporting, particularly if the event takes place in the evening next year.

Kent Wildlife Trust

Clive visited the wildlife centre and was informed of a "Sky at Night" event on Saturday 28 October at the Bough Beech Visitor Centre. The committee agreed that it would be worthwhile for some members to attend to assess the quality of the night sky.

2. Review of the 2016/17 season

The society organised 84 events last season, around the same number as the previous season. This included a few new events – including tours of the Alt-Az Pavilion at the ROG. Even with several weather-cancelled events, the society still ran, on average, more than one event per week. Details will be provided at the upcoming AGM.

3. Planned activities for 2017/18

Lectures

Christina reported that the whole lecture programme for the 2017/18 season had been finalised. The lecture programme is as follows:

Date	Topic	Speaker
18th September 2017	Sputnik: Punctuating the 20th Century	Doug Millard
16th October 2017	Earth's Aurora and Space Weather	Dr Robert Fear
13th November 2017	The Far Future of the Sun, Earth and Life in the Solar System	Professor Ian Crawford
11th December 2017	Searching for the Most Distant Quasars	Dr Daniel Mortlock
8th January 2018	Smashing Physics	Professor Jon Butterworth
5th February 2018	Infrasound and the Evolution of Galaxies	Professor Andrew Fabian
12th March 2018	How to Measure the Universe	Dr Andrew Pontzen
9th April 2018	The Volatile Universe	Professor Tim O'Brien
14th May 2018	Exoplanets	Professor Giovanna Tinetti
4th June 2018	Leading Astronomers	Dr Allan Chapman

Christina agreed to send out a calendar of lecture events to members.

Practical Astronomy Group

Mike agreed to run a meeting with interested committee members to help with the planning of practical astronomy events for the coming season. This meeting would involve the planning of both the practical astronomy workshops and observing events for the 2017/18 season. Mike would be in touch with committee members as soon as he could arrange some meeting dates (both for the planning meeting and our workshops) with Mycenae House.

Mike also agreed to contact the museum for some dates for Great Equatorial Telescope viewing events. We would request 8 viewing events, as normal.

Radio Astronomy

It was agreed that we would use one or more of the Practical Astronomy Group dates for Radio Astronomy. There may be some flexibility to fund overnight stays for speakers to come to the society to talk about the concepts of radio astronomy and try to build interest in the subject amongst our membership.

The committee agreed that the forthcoming membership survey would include a question on radio astronomy, so that we could determine if there was sufficient interest in the topic to sustain a radio group that would meet on a regular basis.

History of Astronomy Group

As Mike was already contacting the museum for Great Equatorial Telescope viewing dates, and we did not want History of Astronomy group dates to clash, he agreed to also contact the museum for dates when the foyer area outside of the ROG planetarium would be available. Around 6 talks are planned during 2017/18 for the History of Astronomy group.

Trips

Clive has been in touch with Bayfordbury Observatory, and was informed to contact them again in October once their plans for the academic year have been finalised.

Rupert has informed the committee (via Mike) that costs and an itinerary for a future E-Eye trip should be finalised on his return from Spain.

Potential trips to La Palma, CERN, Florence, ROG Edinburgh, Mullard Radio Astronomy Observatory and others were discussed. It was agreed that this would be a topic for our next committee meeting, when the new 2017/18 committee would meet for the first time.

4. Committee roles / AGM

Andy indicated that he would be happy to serve as chair for the coming season. Christina and Grey indicated that they would be happy to continue as vice-chairs for the coming season. No objections were raised.

Two nominations to serve on the committee have been received, from Bobby Manoo and Simon Hurst. It was agreed that both members would make for great additions to the committee, and we look forward to welcoming them on board.

Brian Evans and Roger Geeson would stand down from the committee at the next AGM. As two people had been nominated and two will stand down, a ballot will not be necessary.

The committee placed on record a vote of thanks to both Brian Evans and Roger Geeson for their many years of practical service on the committee.

The committee also thanked Andy, Christina and Grey for their leadership over the last 12 months.

The proposal to lower the minimum membership age to 16 will be put before the Flamsteed membership at the AGM.

5. Any Other Business

Members' talks

The society has previously given over one of our main lecture evenings to members so that some of our members can give talks to the society. The committee felt that we shouldn't give up one of our main lecture dates for this purpose given the popularity of these events. We have no difficulty in filling our programme with quality lecturers, and regularly have near capacity audiences for these lectures.

However, as there is clearly some interest within the society, it was agreed that we investigate the use one of the dates when the foyer area outside of the ROG planetarium area was available for a members' talks event. In addition, some of the proposed talks could fit in to the History of Astronomy group programme.

North Essex AS

North Essex AS have been a touch, with a view to forge some links with the Flamsteed. The committee agreed that this was an excellent idea. Christina agreed to get back in touch with them to see if we could organise a trip for their members to Greenwich. Mike stated that we had successfully given tours of the ROG to astronomy societies in the past, so this might be something that we could offer them.

New Scientist Live event

The Flamsteed will be participating in the New Scientist Live event at ExCeL on Sunday 1 October. Andy, Christina, Grey and Mike have agreed to help. We will be situated on the BAA stand at the event.

Grey and Mike agreed to meet in advance of the event to plan what we will offer to our visitors on the day.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 9.01pm.