

FLAMSTEED ASTRONOMY SOCIETY - Minutes from a meeting held on Wednesday 29th April 2004 at 7.15 p.m. in the Ashburnham Arms

Present: Linn Potter (Chair), Mike Dryland, Eddie Yeadon and Jane Bendall

Apologies: David Barnewell and Nicki Bearcroft

Matters arising. Linn approved the minutes of March 17th 2004. Eddie Yeadon has yet to follow up the issue of name badges with the Friends. Jane has not asked David Redfern to write an article for Horizons.

Wash up from first FAS meeting in new venue.

All agreed that Francisco's lecture was excellent and that the evening had gone well. The schedule of a short "member" talk followed by refreshments, then the main speaker of the day followed by questions seemed to work well. The sociable period after the meeting had been fun, giving people enough time to enjoy a glass of wine and a chat.

The only glitch was that the kitchen keys were missing and therefore, as we could not open the crockery cupboards, hot drinks had to be served in paper cups, which were totally unsuitable. It was agreed that we would not use the museum crockery in future (even if the keys are available) and that Linn would buy a large catering pack of polystyrene cups from Macro, the ones that are designed to hold hot drinks. We would make coffee beforehand in our own FAS vacuum jugs and use the elderly teapots available in the kitchen. Apart from hot water and disposing of rubbish we would therefore be independent of the vagaries of the kitchen. We would continue to use paper cups for wine after the meeting. Linn also volunteered to buy wine from Macro to save money.

Observing group.

The last meeting attracted 12 members who had to be content with a drink in the Hare and Billet as it started to rain, but it was a very pleasant social occasion. A system is being set up to enable members of the observing group to borrow museum telescopes. The telescopes are not insured but the ROG does not feel this is a problem as they expect wear and tear, because the instruments were bought for public use.

Coronado viewing.

We agreed to put a note in the telescope box reminding users to log the telescope out and in. Also to ensure they have liased with the site manager beforehand.

Jane to take up the issue of allowing Coronado volunteers to park in the South Building car park at weekends, as it seems wrong to expect people who are helping the museum to have to pay the hefty parking fees levied by Greenwich Park. Unfortunately there will not be room in the car park on weekdays.

Transit of Venus Arrangements

Eddie reported that Screenhouse Productions have been commissioned by the Open University and the BBC to screen the Transit – the OU programme will be called Star Date. There will be a BBC programme to stimulate public interest before the event on the 5th June. On 7th June they will be setting up the cameras etc and on 8th June they will be there from 5.00 a.m. onwards. The control room will be in the Octagon Room.

Screenhouse Productions plan to start live transmissions at 6.15 a.m. They will be working in 10-minute slots inter-cutting with astronomers based in either the Sinai or Oman and with us at Greenwich. The BBC will also run a one-hour programme at 7.00 that evening fronted by Adam Hart Davies, to show the highlights of the day.

The Blackheath gates will be opened at 5.00 a.m. At critical contact times FAS volunteers will have priority access to the telescopes. The museum has stipulated that there must be two volunteers to run each of the telescopes. Eddie is drawing up a rota for members who have put their names forward and will give them slots in good time. He is also writing a short explanation of the event for distribution to the public.

Solar spectacles will be handed out to the public and solar filters are being fitted to the 3 x EX90 and the 1 x LX10 telescopes.

There will be a large plasma screen in the courtyard and Eddie feels that a direct image from one of the ETX90 telescopes could be transmitted directly onto the screen and is working to get round the problem that direct projection may burn out the eyepiece.

Programme for next season

Already arranged:

Art And Astronomical Phenomena by Sarah Tombs in the Lecture Theatre in conjunction with the Friends on September 13th.

The Successes and Problems of Contemporary Cosmology by Michael Joyce from Paris University on Dec 6th

The committee compiled the following “wish list” which Jane will action, keeping everyone updated as to progress

AGM linked to a Planetarium show about the stars in autumn.

Bob Mizon to speak about the Dark Skis Campaign

Workshop about telescopes with Francisco Diego on a Saturday afternoon in November (impossible to actually arrange until we know more about accommodation after the South Building closes)

Professor Carl Murray of Queen Mary College talking about Saturn

Modern knowledge and observations of the Sun by Professor Richard Harrison of the Rutherford Appleton Laboratory to link in with our Coronado initiative.

Gilbert Satherwaite back to talk about George Airy

Rosemary Selmes (possibly to speak about measuring Quasars) this may have to be on a Saturday afternoon as she lives a long way away.

Visit to museum stores with Emily Winterburn discussing astrolabes etc.
In the spring we can arrange a tour of the ROG galleries.

In reserve

Marcus Chown "The Universe Next Door"
Lisa Jardine talking about some aspect of the history of Astronomy.

Star Lecture

The committee congratulated Eddie on finding David Sellers who had not only been an excellent and enthusiastic speaker, but also absolutely charming to deal with. The event had been a great success from every point of view, including the short tours of the Cook exhibits afterwards. Eddie suggested that he contact Ian Nicholson, who was the guest lecturer on his recent cruise, to come from Scotland to speak at our next Star Lecture. Failing that we might try Colin Pilinger.

Viewing with 28" telescope

We hope to link our 28" viewing to public Evenings with the Stars as suggested by Robert, hoping for kinder weather. There were 12 public viewing evenings arranged last season so we should get some good viewing eventually. We also hope to start training volunteers to assist with the 28" as originally suggested by the ROG staff.

Picnic

Linn will arrange a picnic in the summer...date to be decided. Eddie suggested that the site of the old Hampstead Astronomical Society's meetings might be appropriate and will investigate further.

Christmas Party:

As Michael Joyce is travelling from Paris to speak to us at the beginning of December it was decided to hold a party without a speaker a week later than usual in the Octagon Room. Mike had suggested a quiz and Linn thought it would be a good idea to hold one at the party. Mike volunteered to compile the questions (with help from various expert members).

Book Mart.

Mike tabled the attached document suggesting a book mart to be held at one of our FAS meetings. He is going to circulate FAS members and canvass opinions as to the feasibility of his idea. The committee approved his plan, the only caveat being from Eddie who finds it difficult to part with books but would be very pleased to buy some more!

Any Other Business

Short talks by members: Mike suggested that we ask Stephen Wakeford if he would speak about building the Dobsonian telescope. Jane to action. Eddie volunteered to speak about telescope optics.

Mike asked Jane to chase up the NMM about a link from their web pages to our FAS website.

Date of Next Meeting: Thursday 26th August at 7.15 p.m. at the Ashburnham Arms.