

Flamsteed Astronomy Society - minutes from a meeting held on Thursday 20th October 2005 at The Ashburnham Arms in Greenwich

Present: Lin Potter, Eddie Yeadon, Mike Dryland, Peter Kitcherside, Pat Wainwright, David Waugh and Jane Bendall

Committee roles and composition

The committee unanimously elected Lin Potter as Chairwoman and Eddie Yeadon as Vice Chairman.

Lin welcomed new committee members to the meeting and thanked them for offering their services to the Society.

Eddie pointed out that the tabled document setting out roles for the committee was a draft and the definitions could be changed if necessary.

The following roles were agreed by the committee:

Secretary, membership secretary, social secretary and liaison role with the Friends will continue to be undertaken by Jane. Peter will back up Jane as social secretary at meetings.

Publicity secretary, including our website will continue to be managed and arranged by Mike.

The Observing coordinator will be Pat Wainwright.

The Volunteer coordinator will be David Waugh

Peter Kitcherside will act as back up to both these functions.

It was agreed that Peter will ask Ian McDowell if he would be willing to be co-opted onto the committee to act as Equipment Coordinator.

Matters arising from the meeting of 26th September: Mike tabled a copy of the Meridian magazine which had published a short article featuring the FAS. Lin is hoping to persuade the editor to run a regular monthly update of our activities or else "a sky at night" slot. Either would be excellent publicity.

Mike distributed leaflets for display in libraries and other public places. It was agreed we needed to put a notice in the Friends Meeting Room.

Jane will endeavour to find out names of those schools who participated in the eclipse morning to ask for children's comments for the website.

Arrangements for meetings

Jane is finding the museum's lack of cooperation and haphazard approach to the arrangements for meetings increasingly frustrating, therefore she is going to attend a

planning meeting on 26th October to ask for better cooperation and a clear line of communications. She will contact Eddie that evening and report her progress to him as we may have to take the matter further.

Bookmart: Mike will arrive by 6.00 p.m. to set out his stalls. He will need four tables. Jane will invite the CGSE students to join us for the bookmart and coffee. It was agreed that FAS guests would be very welcome for the evening. The lecturer Ian King is planning to arrive by 6.30 – he is already aware of the event and is ready to be flexible. Lin and Peter will arrange refreshments as Jane will be away. Mike will email everyone to remind them and also to ascertain how many books he can expect from members.

Programming

- a. Committee members are to choose three subjects from Mike Leggett's extensive list of lecture titles and let Jane know.
- b. Jane will give Kevin Fong to reply until the end of October and then ask Alan Longstaff if he would lecture on the impact of space travel on the human body to fill the April slot.
- c. **Star Lecture:** It was agreed that sadly we must abandon Alan Chapman as he has not replied to any of the three letters sent to him by Eddie and Jane and we have passed the deadline for his acceptance. Jane will now approach Sir Arnold Wolfendale.
- d. Jane to write to Dava Sobel asking if would she consider speaking to us when she next visits the UK.
- e. Jane to try to get a firm date from Francisco Diego for the Mill Hill Observatory visit.
- f. The arrangements for the visit to the Rutherford Appleton Laboratory for one Saturday next spring are in hand. Richard Harrison has proved both charming and helpful.

Membership

There is great confusion over the new direct debit system introduced by the Friends. We do not know whether we can pay the FAS sub by direct debit in tandem with the Friends' subscription or whether we need a separate direct debit instruction for Society membership. Either way nothing seems to be happening very fast and the lack of information is daunting and confusing. To our knowledge several cheques have not been cashed and also instructions to take the FAS sub with the Friends sub appear to have been ignored. Jane is still not sure how many people have now renewed their membership. Both Lin and Mike volunteered to take the matter further with Polly and try to set up a sensible and clear system. The FAS membership form will have to be modified. There are many advantages to persuading people to pay automatically by direct debit every year.

It was suggested that we should do a little informal market research. A member of the committee could be deputized to approach people who are not renewing their membership to ask for a reason – it could be helpful when planning events in the future.

Jane will email the committee with the list of FAS members at the end “our” year in September 2005.

Attendance at meetings:

We are only attracting about 30-35 people to meetings and would like to increase attendance if possible. It was agreed that we should negotiate with the museum to have a later finish time which would mean that people who have to travel from central London from work would have more opportunity to get to the meetings before the lecture starts. This would inevitably mean that the gate would have to be kept open later than 7.30 and we would not finish our meetings until 10.00 instead of the very rushed 9.30 as at present. Jane will test the water at the planning meeting.

Observing report

November 11th 12th and December 9th are *Viewing with the Stars* evenings especially laid on to look at Mars, so Mike and David will check that the FAS will have its usual 9.00 – 10.00 slot after the public have left the building.

We must discuss the role of our trained volunteers with Robert/Tony/John to see what if any plans have been made to make use of their expertise.

The astronomers who run the *Evenings with the Stars* were enthusiastic about the idea of having viewing in the courtyard for members of the public who are waiting in the courtyard before their turn with the 28” starts. It is now up to us to arrange.

Ian McDowell and Peter are going to look at a possible dark field site in Otford and will report back – hopefully with encouraging news.

Several people thought that we should run practical telescope viewing for beginners – a sort of Beginner’s Corner - starting on Blackheath, probably linked to Hare and Billet evenings. Knowledgeable enthusiasts such as David Woodford and Nick Vermeulen would be excellent tutors. Peter agreed to sound out Nick Vermeulen for his thoughts.

The viewing evenings at Martin and Jane need to be given more publicity with perhaps coordination over car sharing to make it easier for first timers to find the house.

Any Other Business

- a) The committee decided to express its thanks to Lesley Bound for her sterling work with the Hydrogen Alpha programme for the past three years by sending her a letter and a book token for £20. Jane will also write to Nicki Bearcroft

and David Barnewell as retiring committee members to express thanks for their hard work and commitment.

- b) Robert Massey has asked the FAS to affiliate to the Association for Astronomy Education which would give us an opportunity to involve local schools in some of our special activities such as eclipse watching. This seems a worthwhile project for the sum of £12 per year.
- c) There is a total eclipse of the sun next year at the end of March. Eddie is going to southern Turkey to view the eclipse and wondered if any FAS members would be interested in making up a party (this would be an unofficial group which is not under the Friends' umbrella). He will ask if members at the meeting on 7th November.
- d) Roy Clare cannot come to the FAS Christmas Party and Jane suggested that she invite the Deputy Director Kristen Lippincott instead, as it would be an excellent opportunity to present our donation of £1,000 to the Universal Appeal.
- e) The Christmas Party will be held on Neptune Court podium this year. It would be a wonderful opportunity for the Choir to sing in larger and more suitable surroundings and Lin kindly agreed to ask them to come again this year. It was agreed that we should plan the party beforehand, scheduling in time for two 20 minute singing slots, the quiz, the presentation and of course eating and drinking.

Date of next meeting: Thursday 19th Jan 2006 at 7.00 p.m. in the Ashburnham Arms.