

FLAMSTEED ASTRONOMY SOCIETY

Notes from a Committee Meeting held on Thursday 26th January 2006 at the Ashburnham Arms at 7.00 p.m

Present: Lin Potter (Chair), Eddie Yeadon (Vice Chair), Jane Bendall, Mike Dryland, Pat Wainwright David Waugh (alphabetical order) and Jonathan Ellenor as a guest.

Apologies: Peter Kitcherside

1. Matters arising:

Christmas party: Polly Lerner felt that we had not observed the museum's H&S regulations when handling food – Jane apologized as it was her responsibility and suggested that we have a subcommittee to run such events in future, using a written set of museum Health and Safety instructions. Jane to email Polly about trailing electrical leads pointing out that we had paid over £100 for the museum's electrician to be present and it was his responsibility.

Co-opting an equipment coordinator onto the committee.

Peter to approach Ian McDowell to see if he would be willing to volunteer. (Repeat)

2. Short talks programme: Jonathan Ellenor attended the meeting to urge that we give more publicity and thought to our short talks programme. It was agreed to approach members again to encourage them to speak briefly about any astronomy related subject which they find of interest before the main lecture. Jonathan volunteered to deliver a talk before the lecture on 6th March. Jane to email members to ask for other speakers.

David Waugh and Terry Goodman are preparing a talk about Astronomy for the Blind and we agreed to do this before the start of the Star Lecture to demonstrate what is possible and to stress our policy on access to a large audience.

Both Eddie and Mike have agreed to do short talks for the members evening in April before the Planetarium show. Jane to ask Tony Sizer to cover a few basic principles such as RH, Declination, celestial navigation etc. during the planetarium show.

3. Viewing update: Pat has circulated the dates for the next trip to Hazelwood to view Saturn. They will be on a rolling basis from 17 – 20 February – planning to go on the first good evening. If none of these evenings are clear we will try again between 20 and 24th February. Pat will undertake the liaison with Pat Townsend as Jane will be away.

28th Telescope viewing: Evenings with the Stars: Mike will coordinate liaison with staff and FAS members during February. Pat will do it on 10th, 13th and 17th March and Jane will take over on 18th March. Tony Sizer will be the duty astronomer on all of the evenings. Jane will do the normal activity sheet for the museum on every occasion.

4. Programme issues: Mill Hill visit is now scheduled for September when we shall try to combine a tour with viewing – given decent weather. Jane has asked Francisco Diego to choose a Wednesday or Thursday evening and is awaiting his reply. She has also asked him to deliver a lecture about eclipses in the autumn when we could also display member's eclipse photographs.

Astrofest arrangements and Site visit to ROG: in hand. Mike has put together a publicity pack for Astrofest in a folder which will be very useful for future occasions.

5. Finances: We have spent £1,100 to date out of a budget of roughly £2,500. An account of our expenditure is available from Jane.

6. Membership: Currently there are 70 members, we would like more.

Mike tabled his document re methods of payments of subs and suggestions for attracting more members (see attached) and it was agreed to set up a sub committee of Lin, Eddie and Jane to meet Polly to discuss the following objectives:

Consider ways to spread payments. The Friends office have offered a twice yearly payment by direct debit which the committee agreed would help by asking for two payments of £40 instead of one lump sum of £80. Jane felt that this was probably the best way forward considering the current manning and capacity of the Friends office. Pat wished to visit the subject again in a year's time as she feels monthly payments would be more acceptable.

Regularizing concession options: At present couples, students and the over 60s are only offered a £5 discount. It was unanimously agreed that we should press for a sliding scale of subscriptions along the same lines that the Friends have adopted.

Special offers: It was further agreed that we should consider offering the museum's GCSE students a year's free membership. Similarly UCL Diploma students and other astronomy students could be offered a 50% discount for the first year. In addition there could be an early bird discount for early payers.

Publicity and co-operation with Friends: Mike pointed out that over 50 Friends had attended Robert Massey's recent lecture. This seemed to be duplicating our efforts and lecture programme. He suggested that we open more of our lectures to paying members of the Friends instead of only the Star Lecture. Jane was cautious about this as she felt the Society should be a club where member's occasional guests were welcome to come along free of charge.

After discussion it was agreed that next season we would open more than one lecture to paying members of Friends as a trial. It was further stressed that we must ask Natalie and Polly to give the FAS more publicity to attract paying guests to those functions. We felt

that at present we are not given adequate publicity through the Friends for events that we arrange.

7. Member's survey: Pat has compiled a survey with the aim of discovering our member's special interests, improving communications, and giving us a steer on lecture subjects, visits etc. This will help us to respond to what our members actually want and are looking for the society to provide. Pat will review the document and circulate it to the committee for comments and suggestions.

It was agreed the survey would be sent by post to all our members in early April, asking for them to return it by the end of May. To encourage responses we will ask Sir Arnold Wolfendale to draw a name from those who replied out of a hat and award a prize to the first one picked. Eddie kindly volunteered an autographed copy of Simon Singh's book *The Big Bang*.

8. Any Other Business

- **Email from Nepal asking for help to acquire a telescope:** Mike has replied to the head of the school asking for more information.
- **Mike's absence in Australia** between 16th Feb and 20 March: Mike will arrange to forward all his emails to Jane.
- **Gilbert Satterthwaite** apparently gives guided bus tours round astronomical sites in London – might be interesting for our members – Eddie to enquire further.
- Mike suggested that we visit the **Science Museum's reserve collection at Blythe House**, but it was agreed we would arrange a visit to the NMM's reserve collection first. Jane to contact either Emily Winterburn or Richard Dunn and fix up a tour on a Saturday this June.

Date of next meeting: Thursday 27 April at 7.00 p.m.