

FLAMSTEED ASTRONOMY SOCIETY COMMITTEE MEETING

Minutes of a meeting held on Tuesday October 31, 2006 at 7.00 p.m. in Lin Potter's office.

Present: Lin Potter (chair), Mike Dryland, Jonathan Ellenor, Peter Kitcherside, Pat Wainwright, David Waugh and Jane Bendall.

Apologies: There were no apologies for absence

Lin Potter welcomed Jonathan Ellenor to his first formal committee meeting.

1. Election of Chair

Lin Potter was unanimously re-elected as Chairwoman and Mike Dryland was unanimously elected to the position of Vice Chairman.

2. Committee roles and appointments:

Mike agreed to continue as Publicity Secretary

Pat agreed to continue as Observing coordinator. She further agreed to continue as Equipment custodian.

David agreed to continue as Volunteer Coordinator

Jane will continue as Committee Secretary, Programme Secretary, and Membership Secretary and as the Museum appointed administrative assistant

It was agreed that the Social Organizer role should be shared amongst the committee and perhaps we could persuade members to help on a rota basis.

It was also agreed that the Membership Secretary should be added to the list of committee roles.

Jane pointed out that, due to changed family circumstances, she may have to be away more frequently, sometimes at short notice and she was concerned about continuity in her absence. It was felt that another committee member could pick up the duties of Committee Secretary and even Membership Secretary at short notice, but that problems would arise with programming and liaison with the museum.

Jonathan Ellenor volunteered to shadow Jane as Programme Secretary, so he can take over quickly when required.

Jane will talk to the Friends office about a substitute for the role of the Museum administrative assistant in her absence.

Peter has volunteered to work part time in the Friends office, which could prove a very useful contact for the FAS, when he gets to know the somewhat labyrinthine workings of the museum and meets the staff involved.

3. Matters arising

- **Donation for 2006/7:** Jane explained that when the FAS was inaugurated in 1999, it coincided with an inspection from the Inland Revenue. The inspector was checking on the charitable status of the Friends and he felt that the FAS had been set up as a benefit to individual members, not as a benefit to the museum. The Society was brought into line with the Friends and agreed to donate 20% of its funds to the museum, therefore avoiding any question of VAT payments across the board. An FAS reserve fund was eventually created from which we make the donations, when and to which cause or piece of equipment we chose. No pressure has ever been exerted upon the FAS financially by the Friends to date. It was agreed not to consider a donation for the time being. Jane to enquire what our donation of £1,000 to the Universal Appeal was actually spent on.
- **Subscriptions for 2007/8:** This discussion was deferred for another meeting.
- **Telescope workshop:** The Flamsteed telescope is currently with Malcolm Porter but Pat pointed out that it is rarely used. It was agreed to investigate acquiring a new view finder which can be paid for from FAS funds, as at present, the telescope is difficult to use. Mike volunteered to store the telescope if Pat runs out of space. It was further suggested that we could arrange another telescope workshop around the Flamsteed.
- **Summer trip 2007:** Jane will investigate a visit to Jodrell Bank – perhaps choosing Chester as an overnight stay rather than Manchester.

There were no other matters arising and Lin signed the minutes.

4. **New members and renewals:** Nearly 70 members to date, 16 of whom are new members. Sometimes information about re-joiners is slow to reach Jane from the Friends office. Renewals are always slow and it was decided to draw up a list of late payers and share the reminders between each committee member.
5. **Arrangements to entertain the Astronomer Royal for Scotland.** John Brown will be staying at the Ibis Hotel on 5th and 6th November. We shall offer him dinner before the meeting on Monday at the restaurant which Lin will book for 5.30 p.m. Terry Goodman, David, Jonathan, Lin and Jane will join him while Peter and Mike and hopefully Pat, will arrange refreshments and meet and greet members and their guests at the Queens House. Jane to book parking spaces in the car park. We can choose whether to return to the Novotel for pudding and coffee after the meeting or to go to the pub.
6. **Mill Hill visit.** Francisco has offered 1st and 8th December. Both are Friday evenings and it was felt that it was too near Christmas. Jane to reply suggesting an early Sunday evening in January.
7. **Eddie Yeadon:** to mark Eddie's retirement from the committee it was agreed to make him an honorary life member of the Flamsteed. This could be done at a simple ceremony at the Christmas party and Jonathan volunteered to make a suitable certificate. Eddie might consider becoming president of the Flamsteed, but should be sounded out first.

8. Christmas Party planning

- **Catering:** Unlike previous years, members will not be asked to contribute food or drink, instead it was decided that, unless the cost was prohibitive, we should buy in platters of sandwiches delivered from M&S and provide supermarket mince pies and the usual drinks. Lin will ask Polly if this would fulfill the museum's stringent H&S rules.
- **Bookmart:** Mike will organize and run the Bookmart from 6.30 onwards
- **Planetarium:** Tony Sizer will do one or two short shows during the evening, depending on numbers.
- **Quiz:** Jonathan has the quiz in hand – he is also approaching various contacts re prizes.
- **Invitations** to join us for a drink after class (about 8.45) to be issued to those GCSE and introduction to Astronomy students who are over 18. Mike to action.
- **Music:** Jonathan to provide a battery driven portable music system for background music. Lin to check with Polly if this is acceptable to the museum.

9. **Star Lecture planning.** Jane has yet to ask Jocelyn Bell Burnell to talk on Women in Astronomy – failing that, she will approach Carl Murray.

10. **Observing Plans:** Pat reported the usual disappointments due to the weather. There is an active programme coming up with dates (November 17 & 24th) for both Romney viewing and Evenings with the Stars. David to liaise with Tony Sizer and Greg Smythe Rumsby on 2nd and with John Griffiths on 3rd November and make decisions re viewing at about 7.00 p.m. which Mike will post on the website.

David and Pat to liaise and to ask both Simon Singh and Marcus Chown to join us, also the residue of the GCSE students who were thwarted last season by the weather, providing a good opportunity to do some recruiting at the same time.

December 14th Height of the Geminids meteor shower is due and Jane will check whether Hazelwood is available that evening, letting Pat know.

The next Hare and Billet meeting will be on Monday 20th November.

11. Coronado:

Mike suggested starting a “Sunwatch” programme to replace the regular first weekend in the month sessions. . If the weather is good a core team could be contacted to turn up to man the telescope – this would be better than volunteers committing weeks ahead and then perhaps hanging around waiting for the sky to clear. David would arrange these sessions.

The Coronado programme is running into problems of maintenance, servicing and general good housekeeping, batteries are not recharged, leaflets not photocopied etc.

Various suggestions will be tried.

- Retraining all the volunteers – stressing the housekeeping aspects of the sessions.
- Regular servicing checks undertaken by Tony Sizer
- David volunteered to organize regular photocopying of the information leaflets – probably using the GOOD quality photocopier outside Janet Small's office. The leaflets could then be stored in concertina files under the relevant language heading.
- Peter volunteered to co-ordinate translation of the information leaflets into more languages. There is a need for Mandarin, Arabic, Hindi, Urdu, Punjabi, Portuguese, Polish, and Czech etc. etc.

12. 28-inch Training. In abeyance – none of the ROG staff have called upon trained FAS members to help in any of their public sessions. Rather than a full training it was suggested that we approach Tony Sizer to run a special hands-on briefing one evening. Jane to arrange.

13. Article for f@mmm: Pat and Lin volunteered to write about **Nights under the Stars** after their trip to Morocco. Jane to ask Polly for deadline dates.

14. Jonathan's survey results: Jonathan had (inadvertently, for which he apologized) sent out a draft questionnaire to about 45 Astronomy Societies round the country asking them about membership, events, programmers etc. His enquiries were well received and he will correlate the results in time for the next meeting. One interesting result that immediately struck him was the use many of the clubs made of the local press to get publicity and support.

15. Any Other Business.

Astronomy for the Blind: David mentioned there is a piece of equipment which enables pictures to be translated into Braille. It costs around £420. It was felt that we should approach Claire Plumley to ascertain whether the museum needs or would use this specialized equipment for their access programme and then perhaps discuss a contribution towards its acquisition.

Date of next meeting: 7.00 p.m. on Thursday 1st February at Lin's office