

FLAMSTEED ASTRONOMY SOCIETY

NOTES OF A COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 31ST JANUARY 2007 IN THE YOUNG EDUCATION SERVICES OFFICE at 7.15.pm.

Present: Lin Potter (Chair), Mike Dryland (Vice Chair), Roger Geeson, Mark Duwe, Peter Kitcherside, Pat Wainwright, Jane Bendall and Katy Bishop the new Manager of Members of the Museum Section.

Lin welcomed Katy to the meeting and thanked her for coming.

Apologies: There were no apologies for absence

Katy Bishop spoke about her role in the museum. She is planning to launch a new membership programme in April when all except those people who joined/remained members from April 2007 – April 2008 will become Members not Founder Members. Others would remain Founder Members with some special privileges. The new programme is aimed to raise the profile of the Member's scheme, with specially planned events and new promotional material.

It was agreed that when dealing with the museum our first point of contact should be Katy.

Katy and her team are in the Communications and Development Department.

Membership, Recruitment and Finance

Jane reported that we have 83 members to date. Of course there are others whose FM dues have not yet expired so we should have a clearer view when we receive the three monthly reports from Accounts detailing the complete picture, which must be due very soon. The Members office sends out a renewal letter and if there is no response they follow it up with a very polite reminder saying that the non-joiner will not be contacted again if they decide not to respond. After discussion it was agreed, that in certain cases where this happens, we might contact the lapsed member in a very informal way seeking reasons and expressing regret. This would be done sensitively and only when we were surprised by the deflection of a good member.

Recruitment: We are due to target the GCSE class and some of the longer running astronomy classes immediately to offer membership to the FAS. This has proved a good recruiting ground in previous years. It was agreed that we should not put the same effort into one-off events like the telescope workshop, but that we should have literature and information available at these events.

Finance: Our income stands at £2,000 and our expenses at £990 which is a reasonably healthy situation at this point in the year. Our expenses will of course continue although there are not many renewals due now before Easter and the end of the financial year.

Google list: Pat has the computer expertise and has agreed to maintain the google list when Mike is in Australia.

Programming:

It has been decided at our meeting with the museum that we shall, of course, always observe the museum's arrangements for public events and therefore continue with the plans put in place by the museum for EWTS: The road train will be our only means of access and we shall have a private hour with the astronomer on duty from 9.00 – 10.00 p.m. Jane and Pat will share the coordination between them while Mike is away.

Telescope workshop: Peter volunteered to liaise with John Griffith and our members over arrangements for the telescope workshop, using Jane as a back up throughout. Peter will stress to John that the session must be practical as our members will be bringing their telescopes and need to know how to set them up and how to get the best results for good viewing. Jane will keep Katy informed re progress. We have requested for FAS members-only events that one of the gates to the park shall be opened for access instead of the road train. This would only need to be done a few times a year. We await Peter's reply; should this not be allowed we shall cancel the workshop, as it is impossible to carry valuable and bulky equipment safely on the road train.

Outings: The Mullard Observatory is not accepting visitors at the moment as they are reviewing their visitor arrangements. They shall let Jane know the outcome of their deliberations in due course. It was decided to set up a special day visit to Herstmonceux instead in May/June if possible. Jane has drawn a complete blank with the Science Museum so far, but is still hopeful!

Planning for Mike's absence

We decided that although it's a great pity, nobody had the time, or in some case the expertise, to up-date the website in Mike's absence. He will bring it up-to-date before he leaves and it must remain for the six weeks of his holiday. He will direct general enquirers to Jane.

Google calendar: Mark will continue setting up an observing calendar for use of the members on Google. He would send Mike instructions how to embed the calendar into the website. We were undecided about displaying other google calendars of events as Mike was reluctant to change the current clear format that is on the website. The committee needs instructions about how to access and in certain cases add to the google calendar.

Observing:

Flamsteed Telescope: Pat has now handed over the Flamsteed Telescope to Roger.

Hare and Billet evenings: Roger had taken over the role of arranging and publicising the monthly pub sessions at the H&B checking that dates do not clash etc. In principle we shall continue to arrange H&B get-togethers on the third Monday of each month. If Roger is unavailable Mark will act as his back up.

The thorny problem of viewing from a light polluted London was discussed at length again. Three sites have been identified – Blackheath for short notice on the spur-of-the-minute viewing; Cudham for more special events and Hazelwood for the big one offs. See Minutes of 22nd November 2007 for a fuller explanation.

Pat volunteered to keep liaising with Martin and Jane Male and organising viewing evenings at their observatory in Romney.

12. Mark's Book: Mark is currently teaching an introduction to astronomy class for beginners which he intends to give up in a year's time. He is thinking of putting his lecture notes together into a book for complete beginners in astronomy as there appears to be a sizeable gap in the market. Katy is going to investigate whether publication via the museum would be feasible. As we are aware all museum publications must be officially approved and must follow an agreed format. Failing this there is always private publication through the internet.

When the book is ready the FAS would be delighted to arrange an event where Mark both lectures and does a book signing.

13. Coronado: There is not much solar activity at present so things have been rather quiet. **House Keys:** Katy will investigate why volunteers should not be issued with a house key so that they can collect and return the telescope after the public solar viewing sessions. Pat volunteered to email Katy with the details. Mike is liaising with Tom Sturdy to try and find a suitable, secure storage area for the telescope.

14. Any other Business

Cups: When FAS met in the old Royal observatory the then committee bought 35 cups – as we have no more use for them Jane will dispose of them to a local hostel for the homeless.

Astrofest: Six volunteers are joining the ROG stand over the two days of Astrofest. We shall have to use out-of-date publicity as Katy and team have not yet had enough time to arrange for new posters and flyers. Mike shall give the notice boards and posters to Janet Small to be sent with the museums publicity in the van. Mike asked that the volunteers

only hand out material to genuinely interested enquirers as we are very short of the old flyers.

Metro: Jennifer Cox, a journalist from the free hand-out paper Metro, contacted Mike some time ago as she wished to come to a viewing evening. Finally the weather enabled Mike to call a last minute session on the Heath which was a great success. Nearly 20 people turned up and viewed the Moon, Saturn and Orion nebulae. The article is due to come out next week and hopefully should create a lot of interest in the FAS.

Date of Next Meeting:

Friday 9th May in the same venue.