

FLAMSTEED ASTRONOMY SOCIETY

Notes from a Committee Meeting held on Thursday 1st May 2008 at 7.15 p.m. in Jane Bendall's house.

Present: Mike Dryland (Chair), Kate Bishop, Mark Duwe, Roger Geeson, Peter Kitcherside, Pat Wainwright and Jane Bendall

Apologies: Apologies were received from Lin Potter

There were no **matters arising** from the committee meeting held on 31st January 2008.

Recruitment publicity and optimum numbers for Flamsteed AS

Kate is now launching a full and varied Membership programme and has persuaded the museum to grant a publicity budget for the Flamsteed.

Currently we have about 120 members. This year we have expanded slightly. We feel that because of the considerable administrative problems during the past year we should normally hope that not so many people would leave the society and more enquirers would join. It was agreed that we should aim to cap membership for the time being at about **150**, because of the capacity of the lecture theatre, and in recognition of Kate's priorities to recruit for the general NMM membership. Therefore we should be looking at a fairly low level of publicity to attract about 40 new members.

New members have been reached by three routes –

1. From classes held at the museum.
2. Accessing the website (probably the majority of enquiries)
3. Direct approach to the museum, often from current Members

Action

It was agreed to spend the Flamsteed AS publicity budget on the design and printing of two sided strip leaflets in four colours, and also some posters specifically for the Flamsteed. The Flamsteed will be mentioned in the general Member's posters. The Director, Kevin Fewster, is very supportive of the Members schemes and is eager to help the membership grow. From 8th May the backs of the admission tickets to the museum will inform the public of the Membership scheme.

Posters in the Museum: displaying Members publicity posters on the railings at the observatory seems to be a very difficult procedure as we require agreement from the parks authorities but negotiations are in progress. Inside the South Building and Great

Equatorial dome, Pat suggested that the museum could use lollipop signs if hanging posters proved impossible.

Kate is planning to target all existing Members by sending them letters publicising the Flamsteed and also to everyone who has attended events at the ROG such as EWTS and astronomy courses. To reinforce this publicity Mike and other Committee members will continue to visit the classes to speak to the participants, but this time near the beginning not towards the end of the courses.

Roger suggested handing out leaflets to the queues waiting for admission to RAS lectures.

Mark is going to publicise the Flamsteed at his astronomy class.

Jane had emailed some of the people who have not renewed their membership and asked for reasons/suggestions as what prompted them to leave, sadly only one bothered to reply and say that her decision was due to work commitments. It is felt that the more local the member the more likely they are to attend meetings and stay in the society.

Recently we have had a better recruitment rate from enquiries; probably reflecting the new Members office's professional and prompt approach.

Discounts: There will be no subscription discount available to students from Museum classes wishing to join the Flamsteed but they will be entitled to discounts for museum astronomy courses after that.

Programming

Plans for the **open evening** are well advanced with 22 volunteers for general duties and 19 for the Coronado sessions. Mike and Pat have drawn up draft duty rotas and await a meeting/liaison with Rob Edwards and Andrea Cunningham to finalise details. Kate reported that the Art Club will be running the Camera Obscura. It was agreed that Terry Goodman would be asked to undertake a roving brief answering questions from the public.

Visit to **Herstmonceux** on Saturday 14th June – 24 people have signed up and Jane will arrange the coach etc before she goes on holiday next week.

Fred Watson's visit to Greenwich: it is looking increasingly unlikely that he will be persuaded to lecture as time is short and he is leading up a group. Probably the best that the museum can hope for is a reception for Members. Kate will keep us informed.

Access: much to everyone's relief the road train will probably be replaced by mini buses, as access arrangements last winter were most unsatisfactory. The Flamsteed has permission to use cars for the few meetings we hold in the ROG, so the problem is not so pressing for us. Kate reported that many sections of the museum - Education, Members

Office, Events and Corporate Events are pressing to open the St Mary's Gate in Greenwich rather than the Blackheath Gate. At present the museum is discussing the issue with the Parks authorities.

Rob Willets workshop: Mike suggested that we run the Rob's workshop one Saturday morning followed by a planetarium show and picnic (weather permitting). Jane to contact Rob and arrange.

Jane had prepared a list of potential **lecturers for next season**. So far Alan Longstaff, Nik Szymanek and Ian Morison have signed up. Mike reminded the meeting that we are to have a new ROG Astronomer in place shortly and that both Darren and Claire are also eager to lecture. So far no suitable lecture has been suggested for the **Christmas party**.

Partial eclipse on Friday 1st August: We hope that the Observatory will open an hour early as the eclipse starts about 9.20 a.m. Kate will check on plans. This will be the last partial eclipse seen from Britain for many years so although only 22% of the sun will be covered, if it is a clear day and given some publicity, we should be able to attract the public. Jane has a list of 15 Flamsteed volunteers and offers of 5 suitable telescopes. Mark suggested that we order some special solar viewing glasses with Flamsteed publicity printed on the side. He will let us have details of suppliers.

Current finances: our budget is in credit with a small surplus. Jane will circulate the end of year expenditure and her rough estimate of income shortly. We await definitive figures from the Accounts Department – our surplus will be down owing to the six month hiatus when no subscriptions were collected.

Coronado: Pat reported little action - the weather has been poor and there is virtually no solar activity.

Any other Business:

- i. **Badges.** Lin is very anxious to encourage members to wear name badges at our meetings as it would be much easier to identify new members and "first timers". We had issued all members with plastic pin on badges bearing the logo and their name but within three months most members had lost them. It was expensive option. We had also tried writing names on sticky labels and asking people for people to wear as they arrived at each meeting – a messy and amateur procedure. It was agreed to try a pilot scheme, printing each name onto a roll of labels for each meeting – Mike to study the feasibility and if possible to action. Kate felt that the Members office might be able to help by printing off the names.
- ii. Lin has requested an evening/afternoon workshop discussing how astrolabes and armillary spheres actually work. There are several people who might be helpful such as Gloria Clifton, the newly appointed ROG astronomer etc. Jane to action.

- iii. Jane will email members asking if they wish a copy of the Spring edition of the Federation of Astronomical Society's magazine which has just arrived. Kate volunteered to post them to members
- iv. Mike has sent info to Kate for the Members magazine

Date for next meeting to be agreed.

Meeting closed at 9:15pm