

## **FLAMSTEED ASTRONOMY SOCIETY notes from a Committee Meeting held on Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> November 2008**

**Present:** Lin Potter (Chair) Mike Dryland (Vice Chair) Mike Dear, Mark Duwe, Roger Geeson, Peter Kitcherside, Pat Wainwright and Jane Bendall

**Apologies:** Apologies were received from Kate Bishop.

**Committee Business:** Lin was unanimously re-elected as Chairperson for another year and Mike Dryland was unanimously re-elected as Vice Chair. Lin formally welcomed Mike Dear as a new member of the committee. Peter Kitcherside agreed to be co-opted onto the committee.

### **Committee Roles:**

Observing coordinator: Pat Wainwright

Volunteers (Coronado and in future 28") and EWTS: Roger Geeson and Lin Potter

Equipment custodian (Flamsteed Dobsonian telescope): Roger Geeson

Publicity and webmaster: Mike Dryland with the caveat that publicity had come to an almost full stop due to other priorities in the NMM Membership Department. Mike is becoming very disheartened.

Secretary, membership secretary, programme secretary and social organiser: Jane

### **Matters arising**

- a. It was agreed that Jane approach Tony Sizer or another suitable person to persuade them to hold a beginners imaging workshop in the early spring, rather than an advanced telescope workshop.
- b. We must continue to press that is essential for members to inform us in good time if they do not intend to attend an event they have signed up for. The situation has improved since Lin's remarks at the AGM but there is still room for improvement.
- c. House keys are now available through Kate Bishop, but she must have three days warning in advance.
- d. Telescope cupboard is built and looks perfect for our needs. Unfortunately, it still needs painting and workmen have stored steps in there. Mike is to restart the process of nagging to get it up and running. He will need volunteer help to move the equipment when the cupboard is fully ready. (Update November 27<sup>th</sup> – the cupboard is now complete and we have moved the equipment into it. Success!)

**Programming: Christmas party** plans are well advanced. Pat will do a ten minute talk about her eclipse chasing experiences in Siberia followed by a presentation on the Sky Tonight by Darren Bask ill. This will be followed by fun and games in the planetarium. Lin's contact Lisa has agreed to undertake the catering – simple and hearty sandwiches and quiches and we shall provide mince pies, wine some lager and soft drinks. We shall need ice as there is no kitchen or refrigerator. The bill will be £200 - £250 for approx 70 people.

**Evenings with the Stars:** On 13th November Pat and Lin were representing the Flamsteed and discovered that the ROG staff were unaware of the agreed Flamsteed viewing slot from 9.30 -10.30. Thanks to the good offices of the senior duty Security staff member who stayed behind, the evening was very successful. Jane is to put procedures in place with Kate and Rob before the next EWTS on December 9<sup>th</sup>.

Mike had elicited member's feedback which was very positive, but there was a general feeling that the telescope presentation should have more structure and a proper introduction. Mike Dryland and Mike Dear will update Tony.

**Family Viewing:** We require a minimum of four volunteers for the four Saturday evenings we are helping with. Response to tentative feelers has been very positive so far. It was decided that we ask for volunteers shortly for the first two dates. Concerns were expressed about safety if telescopes are sited round the cone. Firstly, because of the floodlights, all the telescopes were on the north of the dome leaving very little space for even the 20 people at the EWTS. There would be about 60 people including children at the family evenings. Each telescope must have a clear space around it and there would have to be policed tensile barriers/red lamps/high visibility tape to ensure that people are queuing properly. It is necessary to turn off the floodlights.

We need training for volunteers and a familiarisation session. We shall have to meet Rob Edwards and other suitable museum staff to discuss.

**She's an astronomer.** Jane to request volunteers for this event on 31<sup>st</sup> Jan from female members; Lin and Pat may be available.

**Tea with Kevin Fewster:** On 20th November at 2.00 p.m. Lin, Mike Dryland and Jane will introduce the Flamsteed to Sarah Root who is the newly appointed director of the Royal Observatory.

**Bad Astronomy:** Mark is in touch with Phil Platt author of several entertaining books and an informative and amusing lecturer. It was agreed that we would be delighted to welcome him to Greenwich if and when...

**Telescope workshop:** Several issues arise – poor publicity resulted in six paying members of the public coming along. This is an issue it would be worth bringing up with the museum – we are undoubtedly missing Helen Whiteoak who has left. Secondly there were no refreshments, which on a cold night where people spent time out of doors was unacceptable. Lin came to the rescue and with the invaluable help of Waller (who must be reimbursed) refreshments were served. Jane has sent a minute to Peter Murphy, Rob Edwards and Kate and will continue to pursue, bearing in mind this is a Museum, not a Flamsteed AS, event. Mike pointed out that people were not clear about the finish time and anyway some people would inevitably want to leave before 10.00 p.m. Something we should bear in mind when arranging Flamsteed events in the Observatory.

Feedback about the actual workshop was very positive and has been copied to John Griffiths. It was suggested that for the February workshop John might consider using a portable projector instead of the fixed built-in unit, which means he could talk from the middle rather than at the far end of the room.

### **Publicity:**

- a) Very frustratingly there is still no result from our repeated requests for a brochure and posters. Jane will speak to Kate shortly and try to find out why the delay. We also felt the publicity for the museum-run workshop was very poor and the message is obviously not reaching the general public beyond the Members.
- b) **Meridian magazine:** Lin knows the editor of the monthly Meridian magazine but after discussion we decided that it was too big a commitment for the Flamsteed to run a regular monthly Sky at Night article. Also it is not the Flamsteed' remit to give publicity to museum events. It might be a good idea to suggest to Kevin Fewster and Sarah Root at our tea party that this could be taken up by one of the Museum's astronomers. Of course the Flamsteed could occasionally help out.

**Membership:** very healthy with good renewal rate. At last count we had 131 paid up members.

### **Any Other Business:**

**SAGAS:** We rejected joining the Federation of Regional Group.

**Security at Flamsteed meetings:** Kate is concerned that strangers may be slipping into our meetings. She suggested that someone (probably her, for which many thanks) should undertake door duty at the evening events.

**Hare and Billet pub evenings:** Monday 15<sup>th</sup> December is already scheduled. The meeting decided to go ahead with the regular evening on Monday 19<sup>th</sup> despite the very crowded programme that week which might put people off.

**International Year of Astronomy:** Mike suggested that we arrange a meeting with Marek to hold a general discussion about mutual cooperation with activities/ volunteers/general balance of events etc. and to consider as a committee what we wish to be involved with and commit to; being very aware that we must not over-commit ourselves.

**Member's Surveys** have been done on three previous occasions: the last being two/three years ago. In each we asked what the members would like from the society, but not what we can expect from them in terms of helping out and volunteering for events. Something to consider in the future.

**28" Telescope training:** Roger Geeson is to approach Tony Sizer about training sessions on the 28" telescope. The best option is at weekends during opening hours.

**Blackheath Observing:** Mike remarked that we did very little observing compared to other astronomical groups. Ad hoc observing on Blackheath is always very popular so we must try rather harder to anticipate clear nights and arrange an informal get together.

**Occultation of Venus** on 1<sup>st</sup> December in the early evening: Das is to send out some general information to our members and it was suggested that Pat might like to consider the feasibility of organising a pre-party look at the occultation from the Point at the top of Point Hill.

**Date of Next Meeting:** Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> February at 7.15 p.m. in Young Education Services office.