

FLAMSTEED ASTRONOMY SOCIETY

Notes from a Committee Meeting held on Thursday 26th April 2007 in the Young Education Services offices, 1st floor Greenwich Station

Present: Lin Potter (Chair), Jane Bendall, Mike Dryland, Pat Wainwright and David Waugh (in alphabetical order)

1. **Apologies:** Apologies were received from Peter Kitcherside
2. **Matters arising from the minutes of the meeting held on 30th January 2007.**
 - **Astronomy for the Blind:** David had met Helen Whiteoak who had in turn spoken to the Head of Education. They felt that until a full programme is in place after the new planetarium and galleys are operational our offer of specialized equipment should not be taken up.
 - **Article in F@nmm:** Lin and Pat were congratulated for an excellent and very well illustrated article in the last edition of the Friends' magazine.
 - There were no other matters arising and the minutes were signed by Lin Potter.

3 and 10: New arrangements for Founder Members.

- a) Lin, Mike and Jane are meeting Lucy Cooke Deputy Head of Development on 30 April. Lucy has overall responsibility for the new set up. We had already met Norman Reed, the Finance Director and his accounts assistant Kerri Richards, at a very friendly and open meeting. Norman Reed is immensely experienced in society membership and he appreciated the role that the Flamsteed can play in partnership with the ROG in using and developing the new facilities. He believed that the health and success of the Founder members was a very sure indicator of the health of the museum. To the Friends money was paramount, but money does not appear to be the same issue now. We are a small cog in a large wheel and the Museum's remit, unlike the Friends, is not exclusively to raise money from members. This should give us more leeway with our finances.
- b) **Indemnity:** We are indemnified for third party liability by the museum for our events and outings as long as they are officially sanctioned by the NMM. All travellers are advised to take out their own travel insurance and must agree that they come to events at their own risk.
- c) **Membership/subscriptions:** We are all agreed that £80 per annum is very expensive. Mike tabled suggestions for a new membership subs structure (see accompanying document). He suggested, and the meeting agreed, that we should roll the Founder members and the Flamsteed subscription into one. He felt that £50 would be suitable as the new joint membership rate, but given that the Friends rates will not be changed for the next

year, it was agreed we should seek approval from the Museum to go for £60 for the time being, as we are planning an expanded programme for next season which will inevitably cost more. We can also bear in mind that nothing is set in stone and figures can be tweaked again later on. This should be welcome news for the membership and may encourage people to rejoin when the time comes. We should also aim to instigate a rolling membership, slowly abandoning renewals every September. This could be arranged with Accounts.

- d) Currently we have 105 members many of who are paying either concessionary rates or in the case of the GCSE students, only the Friends/FM subscription for the first year. Our main concern is to keep members who have joined under our special GCSE joining package, when renewals come up this and next autumn. We must continue to offer a five star service at a reasonable rate. Jane will prepare and circulate a projected expenditure for 2007/08. She also has a running total of expenditure to date. No figures have been received from the Friends accountant despite several requests.

4. Venue for next season

Very disappointingly it appears that the new planetarium will not be suitable for multi purpose use – the chairs are fixed and all face into the middle, they are not tiered and the very large centrally placed projector is not retractable. In addition Mike felt that access during the dark winter months would pose a problem for our many members who travel to the museum using public transport. After discussion it was agreed, for the time being, we would continue to use the lecture theatre for normal lecture evenings. We should also make as much use of the new facilities as possible holding several planetarium shows per year and also holding workshops in the foyer where the acoustics seem excellent. This policy can be reviewed when we become more conversant with the new facilities.

5. Star Lecture

So far 54 applications for tickets have been received. It was agreed that Jane should remind everyone next week and then free up the remaining tickets for guests. Mike kindly agreed to take over issuing tickets when Jane is on holiday from 8-19 May. It was decided that Lin should read out the extremely appreciative letter of thanks which was sent to Mike from Roy Clare and then present Gloria Clifton with the new tripod. Jane will invite a museum photographer to record the ceremony. Lin lunched with Carl Murray last week and everything seems to be in hand from his end.

6. Programming Jane tabled the programme for 2007/08 to date.

The meeting approved the following ideas:

- a) There should be a beginner's telescope workshop with John Griffiths in the late autumn
- b) After the lecture by either Martin Thomas or Nik Szymanek next winter we should hold an intermediate astro-photography workshop with Tony Sizer

- c) We should arrange 3 or 4 planetarium shows each year the first one being in July – when we would invite the new astronomer Clair Thomas to officiate; the second one in December.
- d) Our list of possible lecturers includes Simon Singh, with the Big Bang - perhaps as our Star Lecture, Fred Taylor with exploration of Venus, Jocelyn Bell Burnell, Ian Morison, Robert Massey and Ben Edwards who has already agreed to talk about Ice Volcanoes in September. David suggested that we should also include a history-based lecture and Jane felt that a contact at the Herschel Museum would be willing to oblige.
- e) Jane to check whether Sir Patrick Moore, Chris Lintott and Brian May have been invited to the Royal Opening.

Now that the new facilities are nearly ready Flamsteed volunteers are willing expand the ROG programme by helping with a package of full day seminars encompassing tours, 28” telescope viewing and lecture sessions. Mike to explore possibilities with Helen Whiteoak.

7. Flamsteed Telescope

Thanks to Pat’s and Malcolm Porter’s efforts the Flamsteed telescope has been very successfully upgraded and the laser finder has been a great success. Pat is planning to make a cover when she returns from her holidays. She does not wish to advertise the telescope yet until all upgrades have been finished.

8. Coronado Telescope:

The new system of holding public sessions when the weather is good has been very successful and several excellent sessions have taken place. David would like to continue improvements by:

- a) **Stickers:** Giving children stickers saying “I’ve Seen Spots at Greenwich”.
- b) **Leaflets:** Providing more foreign language leaflets...after discussion it was agreed that Chinese, more Eastern European languages such as Hungarian and Czech and Arabic are desirable. A Polish translation is in hand and Lin will arrange for a translation in Arabic. David to acquire a concertina file for each of the three telescopes in use.
- c) **Signage:** The lollipops are heavy and small and often unavailable. It was suggested that we ask Rob to make a couple of sandwich boards where the team could pin leaflets advertising languages available.
- d) David will also investigate his idea of using rigid plastic shades on each telescope hoping that Rob could be persuaded to make and fit them.
- e) Jane asked David to send her a wish list with very rough costs.

- f) **Storage** – a perpetual problem. Jane to approach Gloria about the cupboard in the Time & Longitude gallery, beside the door from the lift, which would make an ideal location to store the sandwich boards, tripod, and the Flamsteed telescope.

9. Observing events:

- a) Pat felt rather discouraged as the weather as usual has been against her arrangements. As per normal there are no plans for the summer season – August would be the best time perhaps for an outing to watch the Perseid meteor shower. It was suggested that Pat might be able to produce a calendar of upcoming astronomical events so that we could plan a viewing programme.
- b) **Evening with the Stars:** it was agreed that we should upgrade these events and make the courtyard available to members with their own telescopes (and perhaps the Flamsteed) from 8pm on clear evenings instead of waiting to gain entrance at 9pm after the pubic have left. In principle the museum is agreeable, but we should also consult the two new members of staff, Clair Thomas and Darren Baskell. It might provide an opportunity for regular viewing in a reasonable and safe site.

Any Other Business

- a) **Inducements for new members:** There is a GCSE course at Bromley and it was agreed with the Museum's approval that we offer a £10 promotional reduction to students. If the new donation is set at £60 this would mean a special offer of £50 for the first year of membership. Mike and Peter will also be approaching this year's Museum CGSE students before the end of term in late May.
- b) **Reciprocal Membership with overseas societies.** Pat suggested contacting overseas societies to arrange reciprocal memberships. We are always happy to welcome other astronomy society's members and the idea was left for further discussion.
- c) **Cassini Competition:** At Carl Murray's request Lin is looking for volunteers to speak to local schools about involvement in the upcoming children's competition about the Cassini project. It was agreed that she let John Griffiths know the details and see if he could get involved. Jane mentioned that under none of us can speak under the Museum umbrella without Museum sanction.

Date of Next Meeting: Monday 1st October in the same venue.