

## Minutes for SAGAS Meeting 19<sup>TH</sup>. MAY 2007

at South Downs Planetarium, Chichester, starting at 2.15pm  
Chaired by Crawley Astronomical Society (Neil Morrison)  
*(Editor's notes in italics)*



### 1 INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME

Welcome to the May meeting of SAGAS – Crawley is pleased to be chairing this meeting.

To introduce ourselves, we are Jim Swift, Secretary, and myself – Neil Morrison, Chairman.

We are convened in the Chichester Planetarium, the stalwarts of which worked and schemed over a number of years to build this venue, and I am sure like me are all pleased to see how it is providing to be a valuable window into the Universe for the General Public. I would like to thank all concerned for providing SAGAS with a venue for our meetings.

As a group of Amateur Astronomers it would also appear appropriate for us to also send our congratulations to Sir Patrick Moore in celebrating 50 years of presenting The Sky at Night.

Sir Patrick's enduring enthusiasm over the years has been, and continues to be, an inspiration to many a budding astronomer. Thank You, Sir Patrick!

### 2 SOCIETIES PRESENT

12 Societies were present as follows:

Brighton	Dave Inman
Cody (Farnborough)	Phil Alner
Crawley	Neil Morrison Jim Swift
Croydon	Paul Harper John Murrell
Eastbourne	Keith Brackenborough
Farnham	Peter Campbell-Burns
Guildford	John Axtell Tony Preston
Hants	Robin Gorman
South Downs	John and Jan Whittington
Vectis	Richard Flux

Wadhurst

Phil Berry

Worthing

Janet Young

In addition a number of members from each society also attended so that the total attendance numbered about 24

### **3 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from:

Lewes

Alice Smol

Horsham

Derek and Corrinne Loudon

### **4 MINUTES OF THE 17<sup>TH</sup>. FEBRUARY 2007 MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING**

The Minutes of the previous meeting were accepted by all present with no comment or matters arising.

### **5 SOCIETY REPORTS**

A representative of each society presented a report, as follows:

#### **5.1 Brighton and Hove**

Brighton continues to operate in a low key, and had nothing of note to report. *The embers are still glowing and await fanning into flames.*

#### **5.2 Cody Astronomical Society**

The *CODY* Astronomical Society operates from within the Cody Technology Park in Farnborough in Hampshire, UK, about 30 miles west of London.

Ordinary members are currently employees (or retirees) on the Cody Technology park in Farnborough, site of QinetiQ and Dstl.

Recently the society has been given approval to offer 'Invited' membership to a limited number of the general public. Unfortunately membership cannot be offered to non-UK citizens or children less than 16 years of age because of limitations on the issue of site passes.

The society arranges monthly:

formal evening lectures (these are always a weekday they are not on a regular day or date) are usually held in the Whittle lecture theatre on the Cody Technology park starting at 7.30pm.

Observing evenings at the observatory

## Basic Astronomy class and other events during the year

The facilities at the observatory include:

- German equatorial mounted 15cm Carl Zeiss Coude refractor
- 8" Meade Newtonian reflector
- 12" Dobsonian (Society built)  
and other 'scopes and equipment
- Extensive library
- Computers

Training on the operation of the observatory

Visits to the observatory or our lectures by non-members can be arranged following 24 hours notice.

The membership year starts 1 Sept

Our membership is usually 40 - 50. This includes about ten 'Invited' members

Subs at £15

Lecture programme this year:

Thu-09-Nov-06	Lawrence Cox	2006 Solar Eclipse
Tue-12-Dec-06	Xmas Party	Xmas Party
Wed-i 0-Jan-07	Chris Goff	Solar Explosions
Thu-08-Feb-07	Andrew Ball	Planetary Landers
Tue-27-Mar-07	Guy Hurst	'The Astronomer' Highlights of the first 40 years.
Wed-25-Apr-07	Mike Maunder	Volcanoes and climate and astronomy
Thu-24-May-07	Robert Smith	Stars that go Bang in the night
Tue-12-Jun-07	Mike Frost	Norman Lockyer
July	Jerry Workman	

Our basic astronomy classes are well received. These are theoretical based on the GCSE but if the sky is clear on that evening we of course give our novices observing practice.

An 'astronomy surgery' is held each week during the day. Historically, this is at lunchtime giving

our members something to do at lunchtime.

The sort of activities that take place are: observatory maintenance, daylight observing (Solar, Planets, and some Stars), training, assistance with members' scopes, and library loans.

Members are encouraged to bring their own 'scopes to the observing evenings. We try to plan these on a monthly basis, so that members have the chance to plan ahead but with the British climate we more often than not have to resort to sending out an e-mail in the afternoon for observing that night.

We have been recording the clear/cloudy nights over the past 16 months. In 2006, we had 90 clear nights, last month, April 18.

This season we have had some major work done on the Zeiss objective lens. Last October it was noticed that there was some crazing on the outer surface of the objective. A lot of e-mails went to various bodies around the world to see if we could identify the problem. The exact cause has not been identified but we finally got Ed Reid to have a go at polishing the crazing out. It took 350 hours polishing and reconfiguring removing about 10 microns, and cost £500. The scope is now back on line and giving us better performance than before. Our thanks to Ed Reid who did a superb job.

The committee are currently working on our business management system which encompasses all our documentation and Health and Safety aspects.

### **5.3 CRAWLEY ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY**

Since our last report, Crawley AS has had three meetings:

Friday March 16<sup>th</sup>. Dr. David Whitehouse

Who returned to give us a talk – The Sun, a Biography. Dr. Whitehouse is now a freelance writer but was previously with the BBC as a science reporter. Dr. Whitehouse's talk was very well received by the members, so much so that the meeting overran and we had to be evicted from our hall by the Crawley Borough Council caretaker!

Friday 20<sup>th</sup>. April Members' Evening

Always a worry for the Secretary and Chairman – *will* anyone want to take the floor and speak? No worries this time – almost overwhelmed with members willing to contribute to the meeting. Topics explained – Plate Tectonics and Crustal Differences between the Solar System's Rocky Planets. A comprehensive and lavishly illustrated talk on vacuums – including how a factory in Crawley is a provider of a major component supplier to the facility that re-coats the mirrors now sited in the Atacama Desert. Finally, plans by two of our members as to how they propose to become armchair astronomers and control their telescopes from indoors!

Friday 18th. May – last night!

Saw us enjoying a great talk by our friend Konrad Malin-Smith on the Clouds of Magellan

Looking ahead, Crawley has been asked by Adur District Scout Group to give a presentation at their May Bank Holiday Camp which is being held at Blacklands Farm near East Grinstead. We

have been told that there are 200-300 Cubs, Scouts, and Guides attending. We are somewhat apprehensive and hope for a clear sky on the 26<sup>th</sup>. May between 8.30 and 11.00pm our appointed time.

#### **5.4 Croydon Astronomical Society**

There have been no changes to the main Committee.

We have a comprehensive website which covers a number of topics, including Light Pollution, Twilight and Moon Risings. We have had numerous enquiries including moonrise for the start Of Ramadan.

We have had many youth visitors to our observatory, and have carried out upgrades to the observatory.

We held an observing evening to cover the lunar eclipse on 3<sup>rd</sup>. March, at which we had national and international press representatives which gave us world coverage.

#### **5.5 Eastbourne Astronomical Society**

The most important thing that has happened to this society since the last SAGAS meeting is that membership has now reached 100 -just! For several years it has hovered at 90 to 95 but at the last meeting three new members joined.

I would like to thank the SAGAS societies who purchased books from this society at the last SAGAS meeting. The new, trimmed down library consisting of 150 books appears to be popular with members. Like the 'Federation' we are getting rid of the societies slide library as it is very rarely used now.

The Video/DVD collection seems well used by members and the society has asked members for donations of any such items that are no longer required.

At present there are no magazines now in the society library.

In the major sort out copies of *Sky & Telescope* covering some 30 years have been found - gaining dust in a loft. Along with many copies of 'Popular Astronomy'. For many years the society subscribed to *Sky & Telescope*. In the past it has been difficult to obtain in this country but now it is available 'off the shelf' in the local W.H.Smith with three other astronomical magazines. Indeed there are so many now available - such as 'Astronomy Now' and 'Sky at Night' magazine it would be easier for members to purchase what they want rather than the society to purchase them. They take up a lot of space and could get dated easily .

Eastbourne society is unique in so far that some 7% of the total membership are retired professionals. This being as a result of the closure of Herstmonceux and the fact that some decided to retire rather than to move to Cambridge. Many still know former colleagues who are still top professionals and they keep in touch . In addition, our meetings secretary, Peter Gill, also keeps in touch with many professionals throughout the world and, when they happen to be in the UK, or passing through he invites them to speak at our meetings. Some, like Halton Arp and Dr Stephen Edberg of NASA Jet Propulsion Laboratory in Pasadena spoke after correspondence going over several years. These meetings are expensive to put on: hi the last year speakers travelling expenses was £232 and meals and accommodation was £317.95: So £549.95 was spent, some 60% of he total received from subscriptions.

The last, 'big name' was Professor Sir Arnold Wolfendale, the astronomer royal from 1991 to 1995

returning home to Durham via Gatwick from an overseas visit. We have a policy of taking the speaker out for a pub meal prior to the meeting and I was asked to entertain him prior to the meeting. I asked him what was his greatest achievement whilst Astronomer Royal. I expected to get a reply connected with his work on Cosmic Rays, but no, his greatest achievement was to get a knighthood for Patrick Moore! Eastbourne society does not have an observatory now - but it does have a number of instruments - now seven in all.

Since the last SAGAS meeting three instruments have been donated which includes an 8" Celestron and a 10" Meade LX 200 only one of which is complete and can be used. One lacks a mount! We have now elected a Curator of Instruments who is a retired engineer. He is now working on bringing all the instruments in the collection to a working state. The instruments are then given to members and, it is hoped, they are brought along to the monthly observing nights.

The observing evenings have been gaining in popularity, some 14 members attending on one occasion. To-night, weather permitting there is a public observing evening on Beachy Head – our part in ‘International Astronomy Night’.

## 5.6 Farnham

Founded in 1971, the Society now has approximately 40 members, with regular meetings with talks given by well known speakers.

In April, observing meetings were held for local Scout troops. This elicited queries about the need for CRB clearance for astronomical members in contact with groups such as the boy scouts. The consensus is that for an isolated contact or meeting, no CRB is needed, also no clearance is needed if the Scouts are attended by responsible CRB approved leaders at the ratio of 1 to 6 or 1 to 8.

Two of the members have been having considerable success in astronomical imaging. The Society is hosting one of Ian King’s Imaging Courses, at which a few places are still available for anyone interested.

## 5.7 Guildford Astronomical Society

GAS was represented by committee member Tony Questa and secretary John Axtell, the latter reporting (unfortunately busking without his prepared PowerPoint slides). *(Sorry we didn’t make out on this – we’ll kick the cat and blame the computer- Jim CAS)*

Since the last SAGAS meeting the following had been speakers at GAS meetings, and all could be recommended.

March:	Ian King	“Widefield CCD Imaging”
April:	James Fradgley	“Variable Stars”
May:	Tony Marsh	“2 Arc Seconds per Month”

Forthcoming speakers are:

– June:	Gavin Stacey	“Choosing Your Telescope”
July:	AGM /John Evans	“Imaging With Film”
August:	No Meeting	
Sept:	Greg Smye-Rumsby“	The Solar System Today”
Oct:	(John Axtell	“Happy Birthday Dear Sputnik”
	(Paul Daniels	“No Sultan’s Turret?”

### Activities since the last SAGAS meeting:

Outreach at Tilford, Hampshire in conjunction with Farnham AS for 200 Scouts + families at a Family Camp

### Scheduled Monthly Observing Sessions had mixed success:

March clouded out  
April – 10 members, 6 scopes  
May – 6 members, 3 scopes

### Star Party Attendances, GAS members had attended the following:

Equinox Star Party, Kelling Heath  
Mid Wales Star Party

### **Issues:**

The major issues facing GAS were:

1 - Light Pollution. SAGAS attendees will recall that our observing site was under threat from Star Energy – wishing to set up initially test drilling and then permanent facilities for natural gas extraction. In the short term there has been success in that application has been withdrawn. However it is understood that a revised application will be submitted later this year.

2 - Observatory Training Following the completion of re-furbishing our equipment an intensive series of training courses have been undertaken

- 27 members through dome and telescope training
- 24 members through CCD training, with the following imaged by trainees at these sessions: *M35, M51, M101, M81, M82, M104, M84, M86*

3 - Health & Safety As the observatory refurbishment progressed it became apparent that we needed to seriously review our approach to H&S to ensure compliance and to do all we can to avoid committee and membership liability. Advice was sought from fellow SAGAS members, with very helpful advice coming from both Hampshire AG and Croydon AS. An internal Assessment carried out, a Working Party established with a committee member acting as project manager to oversee the immediate work. A H&S Officer will be appointed at the next AGM as a permanent member of the Committee.

### **Plans for the future:**

1- Beginner's Workshops GAS hope to emulate other SAGAS societies in introducing one additional meeting per month during our 2007/8 Season. These will be a mixture of theory and practical. In due course John plans to ask other SAGAS members for their advice as to how to go about this venture.

2 – Social BBQ to be held in the Summer

3 - Sidewalk Astronomy planned for a Thursday evening, to attract late-night Xmas shoppers in Guildford town centre.TBA

## 5.8 Hampshire

The report was presented as a PowerPoint slide show, listing some of the Society's activities and including photographs of the new Douglas Arnold Telescope and Observatory, opened by Audrey Arnold on 11<sup>TH</sup>. May 2007, alongside the old observatory. This is located on Water Board property as can be seen in the aerial view. Thanks to Vodafone, an electricity supply has now been run to the site, from which the observatory benefits.

A new quarterly newssheet/magazine is being produced, and a new logo has been planned for release in 2010 (*see sample above*) to mark the 50<sup>th</sup>. Anniversary. , A member's CD has been produced together with booklets on sites and telescopes, and new educational materials.

## 5.9 South Downs

South Downs has 130 members, and meets on the first Friday of each month, and of course are in the area of the Chichester Planetarium.

## 5.10 Vectis

The forthcoming Summer Meeting on Saturday 14<sup>th</sup>. July at the Vectis Observatory at Watery Lane, Newchurchy, on the Isle of Wight was discussed. Due to public works, the pickup railway station will be Shanklin (not Sandown as previously intended).

Vectis are keen to know how many visitors they should expect for catering and other reasons, and Societies are requested to contact Vectis with this information as soon as possible, preferably with at least a week's notice in advance.

Railway ticket prices were discussed, and it appears that a special flat rate of £10 is available (from Southern region only) as long as these are booked a week in advance.

## 5.11 Wadhurst

Wadhurst's contribution was in the form of a slide show, with views of the clubhouse, members, and Victoria Falls showing double rainbows with both day (sun) and night (moon) rainbows (see night view, the second bow can just be discerned on the original), plus lists of speakers both past and future.

20 June Telescope Evening

18 July Gilbert Satherwaith "George Airy and his Contribution to Positional Astronomy"

25 August Star BBQ Greenman Farm

19 Sept George Sallitt Webcam Astro-photography

22 Sept Outing to Belmont House

17 October Keith Brackenborough – The

Calendar – 500 year struggle to Align the Clock to the Heavens

21 Nov John Vale-Taylor “The Tim Bance Interview”

12 Dec Paul Treadaway – Why are We still Here?

## 5.12 Worthing

Eclipse March 2007

We opened up our observatory on the night of the Lunar Eclipse in March. We had many members attend, and although some did encounter problems with heavy dew on their equipment the event was viewed with complete success. We plan to have another 'open night' at the observatory for the Perseid Meteor Shower in August. The Society has booked the Planetarium on May 20<sup>th</sup> for the 50 Years of the Sky At Night show.

Our meeting with the lighting engineers mentioned in our last report went very successfully and at present we are waiting to hear about the details at our next committee meeting in June

Attendance at meetings has continued to be strong despite the move to a new hall and change of meeting day. The new hall has proved to be a success on the two meetings already held, including a members' meeting last month. We are hoping to provide an outing for our members during the summer months and will be having our annual barbeque in August.

We have brought along some pics of our observatory so members present can see the site we have.  
Jan Young, Chairman, Worthing Astronomy Society

## 6 SAGAS – REPORT ON PROGRESS IN RESTRUCTURING

### Report on Progress since last meeting:-

I am delighted to report that much has happened since the last SAGAS meeting of 17<sup>th</sup> February 2007. The first event was the acceptance of the new SAGAS logo. Designed by David Woods this has now been accepted by the co-ordinating committee as the new logo for SAGAS.

I attended the FAS Council meeting on 24<sup>th</sup> March 2007 in Birmingham and reported back to the members. I am now on the council e-mail list and have access to all communications between FAS officers. Links between SAGAS and the FAS have definitely improved and I am sure that the FAS are pleased that our area group has been re-born.

### Membership

Membership now stands at 20 societies (making it the largest area group in the country). South Downs and Southampton are yet to sign up on our new 'Application Form' but they were part of the original SAGAS and we hope that they will officially join very soon. There has been interest in joining from Loughton and even Norwich who were part of the now defunct 'East Anglian federation of Astronomical Societies'.

## **Web site established**

The old SAGAS web site was part of the 'Nightlife' site set up by Pete Seiden. It had not been up-dated for some time and was difficult to access:-

Thanks to John Murrell and David Wood the new SAGAS web site is now up and running. Not much on it yet - indeed we would still welcome ideas on what should be included. John has put on a map showing societies in SAGAS.

The Co-ordinating Committee held a meeting on the 30<sup>th</sup> April 2007 when John Axtell was nominated as Secretary of SAGAS and David Wood/as Newsletter editor.

Unfortunately Janet Young (Worthing) had to stand down as a member of the Coordinating committee. There were two applicants for her position: John Stapleton of Basingstoke AS who expressed interest at the last SAGAS meeting and Brian Halls of Worthing.

We are very anxious to use all the help we can find but your co-coordinating committee felt that, with just 19 member societies, we couldn't increase the size of the co-coordinating committee - at least not yet. We would like to invite Brian to help David Wood collect information for the newsletter - perhaps become a reporter.

The co-coordinating committee agreed to offer the position on the working group to John Stapleton who, we hope, will be able to help on planning for the future.

The first newsletter will be published shortly. It is hoped to be issued quarterly to tie into the normal SAGAS meetings. It is intended to include reports from member societies, FAS items and a profile on the hosting society. It is intended to distribute this electronically in pdf format.

## **Funding**

This will become an issue: At present my attendance at the FAS council was paid by the FAS. But they only pay for one council meeting and the AGM. The website and domain has been kindly funded by David Woods company.

In the longer term we will have to consider putting SAGAS finances on a more formal footing. In the short term this will be done (by gentleman's agreement) by a collection at SAGAS meetings - each society present making an equal contribution.

The habit of rotating the chairing of the business meetings will be reviewed. Should the SAGAS working group organize and chair these ?

It was agreed by your co-ordinating committee that we would promote the International Year of Astronomy 2009:

It was thought that the Herstmonceux Astronomy Festival could be an ideal opportunity to promote the societies by SAGAS. Last year a number of societies attended but few had any new members as a result. It is proposed that the co-ordinating committee will meet in Chichester prior to the normal SAGAS meeting

Keith Brackenborough., SAGAS Co-ordinator

## **7 MATTERS ARISING FROM ITEM 6**

David Woods our Editor, needs information for publishing, including **News Sheets from Societies please.**

It was mooted that SAGAS should act as collecting point for such topics as protests, light pollution etc for wider dissemination.

The Chairing of SAGAS meetings by member societies was discussed, and the general view was that societies should be requested to chair our meetings in alphabetical order

## **8 SUMMER MEETING AT VECTIS, ISLE OF WIGHT**

Notes on this meeting are included under section 5.9 – Vectis. (See also attached flyer from SAGAS website. Please refer it from time to time for any updates).

## **9 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

. Reinforcing comments made by other Chairing societies at previous meetings, it is most helpful for reports to be made both verbally at the meeting, and also in printable form for inclusion in the minutes. The easiest to reproduce are if they are in WORD form with minimum personal formatting, transferred either by USB memory stick (assuming that the Chairing club bring a laptop with them), or on a floppy disk, DVD or CD.

The individual Society reports were in several instances embellished with a slide presentation, which added much interest and colour to these reports. However, this caused the meeting to be extended to approximately 4.50 pm, and it would seem prudent to suggest that such reports, though valuable and very interesting, should be kept as brief as their contents allow. If each report took as much as 10 minutes, item 5 above would take 2 hours on its own....

No Smoking legislation. John Murrell brought up the requirement for appropriate 'No Smoking' notices to be displayed at all entrances to any premises managed by Societies. A copy of the legal sign can be downloaded from the website <http://www.smokefreeengland.co.uk/resources/guidance-and-signage.html#signage> in PDF. Any Society not having a source of signs can print this and laminate it and pin it up – it has to be at least A5 in size otherwise it is illegal and the manager of the premises can be fined.

The no smoking legislation applies to all 'substantially enclosed' structures but it is only buildings & vehicles that need signs. The current interpretation seems to be anywhere that has a roof and less than 50% of the sides open to the air is 'substantially enclosed' (Note this excludes windows or other openings with shutters or capable of being closed).

It will help reduce the fire risk inside your premises as well.

SAGAS Website. The SAGAS website is [www.sagas.org.uk](http://www.sagas.org.uk), and John Murrell is keen for all Society webmasters to provide links to it from their own websites.

International Year of Astronomy - IYA2009 A presentation was made by John Murrell (a copy of which can be found on the SAGAS website), with inputs by Robin Gorman, and this will need to be on the Agenda and discussed further at our next SAGAS meetings, so member Societies are invited to come up with ideas. 2009 is only 19 months away, and planning needs to start now. Pete Seiden may be organizing a 2009 event, and we need to liaise with him to avoid possible clashes.

Refreshments followed the meeting, and, owing to the kindness of the Planetarium staff, the entertainment was enabled to go ahead as planned, terminating rather later than anticipated. Thanks to the Planetarium staff were extended by the meeting.

## **10 DATES FOR FUTURE MEETINGS**

The date for the Summer Meeting is Saturday 14<sup>th</sup>. July, and an information sheet concerning this event is attached (just as a reminder!)

The date for the next SAGAS 'business' meeting is Saturday 20<sup>th</sup>. October at Chichester Planetarium, at 2.15pm. as usual. The Charing Society is Croydon AS. Thank you Croydon!

This concluded the formal business, which was followed by refreshments.

## **ENTERTAINMENT**

A PowerPoint presentation on "Nuclear Fusion – the Sun's power on Earth" was then given by Crawley AS. This included a brief history of nuclear fission and nuclear fusion development, the principles of the fusion process on Earth, progress on development, and a possible solution to the Earth's problems concerning global warming and the end of fossil fuels in half a century.

.Jim Swift, Secretary Crawley Astronomical Society, tel 01293 882560 e-mail [jimswift@btinternet.com](mailto:jimswift@btinternet.com)

sharing the same sky



*Southern Area Group of Astronomical Societies*

**Summer 2007  
Meeting**

**@ Vectis AS**

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## **SAGAS - The Southern Area Group of Astronomical Societies**

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### **SAGAS Summer Meeting 14th July 2007**

The SAGAS Summer 2007 meeting will be held on Saturday 14th July at Vectis Astronomical Societies Observatory at Watery Lane, Newchurch, Isle of Wight . (Latitude: 50° 39' 17" N Longitude: 1° 13' 00" W for those with a GPS.

#### **Current Speakers:**

Speaker	Subject
Ninian Boyle	of Venturescope will speak on Astronomical Equipment
John Mason	South Downs Planetarium - Subject to be announced
Peter Burgess	of Vectis AS - Subject to be announced

Estimated Cost = £5 per person

#### **Travel:**

Train from London, Guildford or the South Coast route (Brighton, Worthing , Chichester etc) to Portsmouth Harbour. In front of the station is the 'Fast Cat' catamaran service to Ryde - it takes about ten minutes to cross - costs about £7 ! At the Pier at Ryde a train leaves for Sandown. It's waiting on the arrival of the ferry. Vectis are going to meet certain trains at Sandown and take people to the site.

If you intend to go by car you need to book well in advance as this is the first Saturday of the school holidays and they will be very busy.

Approximate numbers are required at the SAGAS meeting on the 19th May at Chichester

More details to follow:

John Murrell - SAGAS Webmaster

Updated 7th May 2007

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Clicking on the SAGAS logo on other pages will return you to the home page

***This can be found on the SAGAS Website at [www.sagas.org.uk](http://www.sagas.org.uk)***