



Minutes for SAGAS Meeting 17th January 2009

at South Downs Planetarium, Chichester

Administered by the Cody Astronomical Society, Farnborough

Chair	Phil Alner
Secretary	Gordon Lloyd

1. Introduction & Welcome

Phil Alner, Chairman of Cody Astronomical Society opened the meeting at 14:15. Welcoming all to the Jan 2009 meeting. Offering a warm welcome to the two newest members Richmond & Kew AS and Foredown Tower AS.

Chair reminded those present of the process to evacuate the building in an emergency.

Chair asked all speakers to firstly stand up, state who they are, and then speak as if they are talking to somebody on the other side of the room. This is to assist the minute taker in producing an accurate record of the meeting.

1.1. Societies Present

Society	Represented by
Ashford AS	Jason Hall
Brighton & Hove AS	John Wade
Cody AS	Phil Alner
Crawley AS	Jim Swift
Croydon AS	Paul Harper
East Sussex AS	Simon Allen
Fore Down Tower Astronomers	David Inman
Guildford AS	John Axtell
Hampshire AG	Graham Bryant
Richmond & Kew AS	Anthony Seal
South Downs AS	Jan Whittington
Vectis AS	Richard Flux
Worthing AS (as visitor)	Doc Sutton

In addition a number of additional members from several societies also attended so the total attendance was 26

1.2. Apologies for Absence

Basingstoke AS, Farnham AS, Horsham AG, Wadhurst AS, Wealden AS, Wessex AS.

2. Minutes of the 18 October 2008 Meeting and Matters Arising

Corrections:

Page 5. 4.3. There was no mention of who manned the SAGAS stand at Herstmonceux. (*Secretary Subsequent Note – this was in fact as follows:*

Saturday - Keith Brackenborough (Eastbourne), Paul Harper (Croydon), Phil Berry (Wadhurst), John Axtell (Guildford)

Sunday – Phil Alner (Cody), Gordon Lloyd (Cody), Janet Young (Worthing Astronomers), Brian Halls (Worthing Astronomers)

Page 6. Numbering incorrect; there are two 6s.

Page 6 “Main summer meeting” should be in the past tense.

The Minutes were then accepted by all present.

3. SAGAS Constitution

The Chairman asked if there were any disagreements about the Constitution document which had been circulated. There being no dissenters, the meeting was asked to vote to formally adopt this Constitution. The vote was unanimous with no abstentions. The meeting thanked the Working Group and Phil Alner for all the work they had put into drawing up this SAGAS Constitution.

4. Society Reports

4.1. Matters arising from submitted reports

The Chairman asked the meeting if there were any comments about Societies sending in their reports in advance of the meeting instead of verbally giving them at the meeting.

Graham Bryant suggested a standard format for Society’s SAGAS reports. The Chairman agreed in principle and asked Societies to ask themselves :-

- What was their Report’s purpose?
- Could MS Word be used by everyone?

Simon Allen (Sussex) said that he used Open Office instead.

Jim Swift (Crawley) asked for broad outlines including speakers, and where they come from. He suggested that all Societies include details of all their speakers.

John Axtell (Guildford) suggested that people should normally find that out on Society’s websites and only put special speakers into their reports to SAGAS.

John Wade (Brighton) suggested sending details directly to SAGAS Working Group instead of – or as well as – putting it in their report.

John Axtell asked Societies to say what of particular interest has happened since the last SAGAS meeting, what is planned before the next one, and that what is planned for the IYA 2009 is very important.

John Wade proposed that a centralised reporting to SAGAS was better than only relying on societies’ websites.

The Chairman asked members to send their various ideas about reporting to the SAGAS Working Group.

John Axtell reminded the meeting about the offer from Eastbourne AS for low-price copies of “Eyes on the Sky”. (*see Society Report from Eastbourne*). John

Murrell (Croydon) showed the meeting an excerpt from the DVD (produced by ESA, IAU and ESO about the IYA2009). The DVD is available from the Eastbourne Society (Peter Gill) for £3. There is also a book available from Amazon (with DVD?) for £14.25 + P&P.

4.2. Showcase reports

The Richmond and Kew Gardens Astronomical Society member Anthony Seal presented their Showcase Report.

This society (Chairman Jerry Workman) has about 40 members and has experienced massive, recent interest and progress. They meet every last Friday in the month. Several IYA meetings are planned, in particular the 26th September meeting at Syon House.

The following points were raised in discussion about the Syon House event

- Simon Allen said that the IYA website has information about the Syon House event.
- Robin Gorman gave an update about several discussions that had taken place.
 - This event is for families, not just for children.
 - A plaque about Thomas Harriot will be unveiled by Lord Egremont who owns Syon House and may attend the event.
 - He asked people to look at the “Telescope 400” site which will have lots of information about it.
 - The event for the general public will be from 11am to 5pm and cost £9.
 - From 5pm, Allen Chapman will run another, astronomical event in the Conservatory. Tickets for this will be sold, but are limited in number. The price will be around £5 for this evening, including food.
 - Funds from the RAS were slow coming in.
 - Interested people should register on the “Telescope 400” site.
- Jan Whittington reported that members from the South Downs Society planned to attend.

The Ashford Astronomical Society presented their Showcase Report.

Jason Hall (Secretary) said that the Society started in 2006 and has 28 paid-up members. Their new venue, which has darker skies, will be Woodchurch near Dungeness. Members will bring telescopes and a Friday night encourages people to stay up late. They have plenty of speakers booked and lots of local radio support. Big IYA events are planned for October. These will be at schools using a mobile planetarium etc.

A new Meade ETX has been bought for the members to borrow and use.

The Foredown Tower Society presented their showcase report

SAGAS is delighted to welcome the return of Foredown Tower Astronomers. This society had ceased operation when Foredown Tower camera obscura in Portslade was closed, but had decided to reform. David Inman announced this news at the meeting, stating that their first formal meeting and adoption of a constitution had only occurred a few days before this SAGAS meeting. Foredown must be the only Society to join SAGAS within it's first week of operation!

5. IYA2009

John Axtell said that John Stapleton sent apologies for not being able to come, and so he presented the Working Group's progress on IYA

5.1 The Herstmonceux Observatory Science Centre

Last year they received significant funding from STFC, naming SAGAS as one of their partners for outreach work. Wealdon AS meets at the Science Centre and provides the first tranche of volunteers. CRB checking (Criminal Record Bureaux) clearances are not required for volunteers because all children will be brought by parents or guardians. Simple telescopes will be constructed from simple lenses and cardboard poster tubes, then sold to children for £1. These events at Herstmonceux need lots of helpers. Herstmonceux want us to bring telescopes and want to demonstrate how to sketch the Moon from photos, at the eyepiece and via a video link from one of the Science Centre's telescopes. The Science Centre will hold its Annual Astronomy Festival as usual this year.

Another event at which the Science Centre will appreciate SAGAS support is on Saturday the 18th July, a cheese and wine Star Party to celebrate the anniversary of the first Lunar Landing.

5.2 The SAGAS Rolling Road Show

SAGAS had been the only regional group to be successful in its application for funding funds and had been given £200 from the Federation.

John is looking in to the purchase of display panels from eBay and showed an example at £129. consisting of six boards at 60 x 900 cm. This included a carrying case and delivery is free. SAGAS will however consider buying larger albeit more expensive ones. These panels will be loaned to Societies for their IYA outreach events.

SAGAS is in the process of assembling educational astro images for these displays and will also include material for laptops used during displays. He thanked the following Societies for their contributions towards the RoadShow material:

- Horsham AS. Their Chairman Allan Smith has produced splendid posters comprising images plus text for educational purposes. These will be provided electronically to SAGAS for printing A3 and mounting on boarding for display.
- Eastbourne AS. – have promised a complimentary copy to SAGAS of the *Eyes on The Skies* DVD
- Guildford AS. A PowerPoint presentation is in process of production. It provides explanation about telescope types, explains basic concepts, and provides advice as to choosing a telescope. This is aimed at non-experts and the intention is that it will automatically scroll through the slides on a laptop during an event, for visitors to stand and watch. John showed several slides for the presentation.
- Hampshire AG, for providing copies of the excellent Thomas Harriot's Moone Map and explanatory text put together by a society member. Robin Gorman donated these to SAGAS during the meeting.

6. SAGAS/Vectis Isle of Wight Star Party 2009 (Lucy Rogers)

Lucy Rogers stated that after the success of the first Isle of Wight Star Party the society is holding its second event between Thursday 26th to Monday 30th March 2009. Website www.iowstarparty.org has the details. Discounts (£47 return for car plus up to 6 passengers, including either side of the event dates) with the Wightlink Ferry company have again been arranged. The venue will be the Brightstone Holiday Centre.

There will be a raffle with an extra free draw ticket for SAGAS members.

Last year there were 45 astronomers from 12 different societies. Lucy showed photos of that event. There was a trip to the IOW Observatory and the Black Arrow test site. The facilities of the campsite were shown. Thanks to the Vectis organising members were expressed.

7. SAGAS/Nightlife Summer Meeting 4th July 2009

Graham Bryant (Hampshire AG) said that the event will take place at Portsmouth and room (capacity 250) had been booked. An overnight stay is possible if required. There might be a morning event for astronomers. Various ideas are being considered. The website will be the Nightlife one. Tickets will be available in a few months. Graham advised delegates to book early because this event will be advance ticket only. This cost has not yet been determined.

8. Other miscellaneous items

8.1 John Axtell said that FAS will have a stand at Astrofest. He asked societies to please send fliers to him for display on this stand, to attract new members.

8.2 SAGAS has leaflets about insurance of equipment for attendees to take after the meeting. Glover and Howe insurers spoke to the SAGAS Secretary at Herstmonceux. They will insure individuals' equipment as well as societies'.

8.3 The INTECH Science Centre and Planetarium, Winchester, "Telescope Amnesty" (21st Jan).

The Chairman said the first event of this kind, on 22nd Oct 2008, was very successful with over 100 visitors including many children. Cody Astronomical Society and several other local societies supported this venture and brought display stands and equipment. They also set up a good number of telescopes, which were used to good effect in the clear skies that evening. An excellent planetarium show by Ninian Boyle and Pete Lawrence followed. Jenny Shipway, who runs the Planetarium was delighted by the turnout and enthusiasm and another event is planned for the evening of 21st Jan 2009.

8.4 The “Telescope 400” site has the Moon Catalogue on it. It is suggested that 38 main Lunar features are selected for observation. Lord Egremont is sending some original drawings to Florence for 6 months to show alongside the Galileo display.

9. The SAGAS Annual General Meeting

At this point the role of Chair was taken by Graham Bryant, SAGAS Working Group Coordinator, and that of Secretary was taken by John Axtell, Secretary to the SAGAS Working Group. The minutes of the AGM are to be found in a separate document – SAGAS AGM Minutes 090117.doc After the AGM the roles of Chair and Secretary reverted to Cody AS.

10. Any Other Business

10.1 Graham Bryant (Hampshire AG) talked about the Lighting PFI as a 25 year programme on public lighting adopted by Hampshire County Council. Graham has agreed to represent SAGAS and talk to them. He said that low pressure sodium lights were less of a problem for astronomers than high pressure ones as the latter produced a wider spectrum of visible light. Graham said that a better method is to switch off or dim the lighting to reduce energy costs. He will send info to SAGAS members. John Wade said that white, broad-band lights are very bad, being impossible to filter out. He said that Portsmouth now looks better than before. John suggested that SAGAS takes regular measurements of sky-glow.

10.2 BBC Southern Counties radio John Axtell said that the BBC Southern Counties radio reporter wants to be informed about the IYA and involved in activities within the area.

10.3 UK Space Conference Charterhouse School Godalming, 1st –4th April John Axtell reported that Guildford AS is helping to organise an Astronomy themed day on 4th April. There will be a charge of £40 for the day, including lunch. Well known speakers are on the programme

10.4 A SAGAS Calendar The Chairman proposed that an event calendar on the SAGAS website would be of use. John Murrell (SAGAS web master) suggested that Google does a suitable model. The meeting agreed.

10.5 A SAGAS Social Event This was proposed by Glen Shackelford (Cody AS) as an addition to merely business meetings. It was stated that there had been such events in the past. The meeting agreed that it would be worth looking in to. The Chairman reminded the meeting that SAGAS support 1500 astronomers plus spouses.

10.6 SAGAS Committee Meeting venue The Chairman suggested holding these at different places in turn. Some could be Society's premises. It might be better, though, that the hosting society be different from the Society chairing the meeting. There was some interest in this idea but London was not very popular mainly because of travel cost and difficulty. John Axtell reminded the meeting that this effectively happens already, as our Summer meeting is always hosted by a Society, at or near their usual venue. John Whittington (Southdowns) reminded the meeting that a new hall would soon be built next to the Sir Patrick Moore Building, and that this would be much more suitable for our meetings than the planetarium itself.

11. Date of next meetings

- The next meeting was agreed for 18th April. David Pulley of East Sussex Astronomical Society had volunteered to Chair the meeting.
- As reported above the Summer meeting will combine with the Nightlife Event at Portsmouth on 4th July
- The meeting after the Summer event will be on 17th October.
- All ordinary meetings are currently booked at the present site at the Chichester Planetarium.

End of Formal Business

Appendix 1

Post meeting entertainment

The Inverted Planetarium and other Gizmos

Following a break for refreshments, Gordon Lloyd (Cody AS) presented what he called "Astro Gizmos". He described and showed photos on PowerPoint of several educational devices he had made to help his previous after-school astronomy club children, and newcomers generally understand some basic concepts. Afterwards, these devices were on display and members could play with them. Several people took their own photos and noted the name of the book Gordon used for some of the devices. "Practical Astronomy. A User-friendly Handbook for Sky Watchers" by H. Robert Mills. ISBN 1898563004. He will try to supply more details to SAGAS members if they ask him. John Axtell borrowed the Drinking Glass sundial.

A brief list of these devices follows.

- Inverted planetarium – a rotating plastic globe, with a fixed "ground" plane inside. This represents the Celestial Sphere. The globe rotates on a "Polar axis" whose angle can be set to show the sky between Latitudes zero and 90 degrees. Lines and spots on the globe illustrate such things as the 1st Point of Aries, circumpolar stars, mid-summer Sun etc.
- A "Star Clock" which is basically a cut-down Planisphere's outer, graduated circles of date and time. A cardboard disc marked in hours from 0 to 24 is glued to a wooded handle. A smaller, concentric disc rotates on an aluminium tube at its centre. This is marked in months (and, theoretically, in days). A "Clock Hand" made of a ruler is glued to the inner disc. The device is used by holding the device with its handle upright and sighting on Polaris through the tube. The clock hand is made so that, by rotating it, one end can be pointed at the star Phecda in the Plough and the other at Caph in Cassiopeia. The end marked and pointing at Caph then tells Sidereal Time against the outer circle (provided that this is glued at the correct orientation in construction). The date circle can also be used to give Mean Solar Time.
- Two simple sundials. An astronomer called Mike Knee of 6 Woodbury Avenue, Petersfield GU32 2EE, sold one to me about 7 years ago. This is marked "UK patent pending". This is a sundial in a drinking glass. The other is simply a folded piece of card with a support at the back angled at the user's Latitude and to be pointed north. It is then an Equatorial Sundial and reads from 6am to 6pm.
- Angles in the sky ruler and string. A "bendy" ruler marked clearly in centimetres has holes drilled near its ends. A piece of string rather longer than 114.6 centimetres long (twice times 57.3) is tied with each end through one hole. There should also be a knot at its centre. This is used by holding the ruler at arm's length with the string tight and the knot just in front of one's eye. If each half-string is 57.3 centimetres long, the ruler's centimetre marks will be one angular degree in the sky! This is a little better than just holding one's hand or fingers out. In both cases a dim, red torch is needed to see the hand/fingers/ruler scale!