

# Minutes of SAGAS Meeting ~ 18<sup>th</sup> April 2009

## At South Downs Planetarium, Chichester at 14.15

Chairman: Graham Bryant, Chair SAGAS Committee  
Minutes: David Pulley, East Sussex AS

### 1 Introduction and Welcome

Graham Bryant, Chairman of the SAGAS Committee, opened the meeting at 14.25 and welcomed all delegates to this April SAGAS business meeting.

The chairman conducted a role call of the societies present and each society was given the opportunity to introduce themselves. The chairman welcomed the Worthing Astronomers as newest members to SAGAS.

#### 1.1 Societies Present

Society	Represented by
Ashford AS	Monika Butcher
Brighton & Hove AS	John Wade
Cody AS	Phil Alner
Crawley AS	Neil Morrison
Croydon AS	Paul Harper
East Sussex AS	David Pulley
Eastbourne AS	Keith Brackenborough
Farnham AS	Peter Campbell-Burns
Foredown Tower Astronomers	David Inman
Guildford AS	John Axtell
Hampshire AG	Graham Bryant
Lewes Astronomers	Alice Smol
Richmond & Kew AS	Anthony Seal
Solent AS	Ken Medway
South Downs AS	Jan Whittington
Vectis AS	Lucy Rogers
Wadhurst AS	John Vale-Taylor
Wessex AS	James Fradgley
Worthing Astronomers	Brian Halls

## **1.2 Apologies for absence**

Horsham AG, Orpington AS and Wealden AS were unable to attend and offered their apologies. John Murrell, SAGAS Committee member, was also unable to attend.

## **2 Minutes of the meeting of 17<sup>th</sup> January 2009 and matters arising**

**4.1 Society reporting.** It was agreed that SAGAS would develop a template for society reporting. This would be issued to societies and also made available on the SAGAS website. It will include headings for items of significance. Phil Alner (Cody AS) suggested adding a deadline date for submission to SAGAS as two weeks before the next SAGAS meeting. All members agreed to this proposal.

**Action: SAGAS ~ John Axtell/John Murrell**

John Axtell stated that John Murrell was putting together a Google Group web based calendar where societies could include all dates of their events.

**Action: SAGAS ~ John Murrell**

**5.1 IYA2009.** Volunteers for helping at the Herstmonceux Observatory Science Centre (HOSC) are still needed for the support of the Cheese and Wine party celebrating the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the first Moon landing. SAGAS will place information on their website and circulate a round robin to member societies. Local societies (eg Eastbourne, ESAS, Wealden, Wadhurst, Lewes etc are conveniently positioned to help

**Action: SAGAS ~ John Axtell**

**Action: Societies local to HOSC**

**5.2 IYA2009.** Eastbourne AS donated a DVD "Eyes on the Skies" to SAGAS at this meeting. Copies can be purchased by SAGAS members from Eastbourne AS for a fee of £3 each. Eastbourne AS has approximately 30 copies available for sale. The SAGAS DVD can be borrowed by SAGAS member societies as part of the IYA2009 Road Show package.

**10.1 AOB.** The lighting PFI information is to be placed on the agenda of the next SAGAS meeting. The lighting PFI project is a 25 year scheme being trialled in Hampshire, Southampton and West Sussex and will incorporate new lighting technology. Hampshire Astronomical Group are making regular sky brightness measurements and it is hoped that this new project will measure the improvement in the dark sky. If successful it could be extended to other areas with support from other local SAGAS societies. Portsmouth has already started down this route and there is unsubstantiated evidence that there is improvement in the night sky for astronomers.

**Action: Graham Bryant, Hampshire AG**

**10.5 A SAGAS Social Event.** It was suggested that a SAGAS social event would be held at the Herstmonceux Science Festival in September.

**Action: SAGAS ~ John Axtell**

John Axtell (SAGAS) apologised for inaccuracies in the Foredown Tower Astronomers report due to an email issue. The correct report can be found in Appendix 1. John commented that Foredown were fastest in subscribing to SAGAS following their formation.

### **3 Society Reports**

All society reports have been circulated to members prior to the meeting. SAGAS recommended that these be made available to local society members via their websites. Guildford AS had already placed the society reports on the members section of their website.

**Action: All local societies**

Orpington AS submitted a short report which was read out at the meeting by John Axtell. Please refer to Appendix 2.

It was suggested that one society, the chairing Society, would be allocated 5 minutes to talk about their society and activities which might be relevant to other member societies.

**Action: SAGAS to include on the next agenda**

#### **3.1 Worthing Astronomers Showcase report**

Brain Halls reported that Worthing Astronomers had been founded at end of 2008. Membership is internet-based and they do not hold speakers meetings. Worthing Astronomers are a "hands on" observing group and membership is free. There is no rigid structure, constitution etc. Anyone can join. There is a free email newsletter. The group have been active in public viewing sessions. Their Moonwatch was held on Worthing Promenade, 300 meters west of the pier and ran over seven evenings. Over 200 members of the public attended and viewed the Moon, Saturn etc. There will be a further Moonwatch on the weekend of the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2009 again on the Worthing Promenade. The Worthing Astronomers website is: [www.worthingastronomers.org.uk](http://www.worthingastronomers.org.uk).

### **4 SAGAS Accounts and Treasurer's Report**

Brian Halls presented the SAGAS Treasurer's Report. The Society year end balance was £186-84. Subscriptions for the new SAGAS year were requested. Dave Doc Sutton was proposed and accepted as auditor for

2010. SAGAS member societies voted to accept the accounts. The SAGAS accounts were unanimously accepted by the member societies. SAGAS noted that societies who have recently joined SAGAS will have the subscriptions rolled through to next year. The meeting expressed its thanks to Doc Sutton for his audit work.

## **5 Report back from the Council of the Federation of Astronomical Societies**

Keith Brackenborough reported back on the last FAS meeting. SAGAS were unable to attend this meeting. It was reported that SAGAS had received £200 for their IYA2009 Road Show display boards and was the only Regional Group to be successful. After their success with their first application for funding, a second application for further funding was refused.

The next FAS AGM will be held at the Institute of Astronomy on 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2009 in Cambridge. There will be a strong itinerary of speakers including Lord Prof. Sir Martin Rees (The next generation of telescopes), Dr Chris Lintott (Galaxy Zoo), Damian Peach (Planetary observing), Dr Haley Gomez (Herschel: unveiling the cool universe).

The FAS has brought forward their year end so member societies will get an extra period of free membership and insurance.

John Axtell stated that the FAS have a vacancy for a committee member to manage publicity. This will be advertised in the next Federation newsletter.

## **6 SAGAS Newsletter**

Janet Young outlined the new SAGAS newsletter and requested articles about what your Society is doing. Pictures as well as articles are requested. Articles on astronomy are not requested. There was a correction for author of an article on page 2 "Intech Telescope Amnesty". This was attributed to Phil Alner but should have been Gordon Lloyd. The meeting applauded Janet Young's efforts in putting the Newsletter together

**Action: Member societies to provide articles**

## **7 IYA 2009**

### **7.1 Herstmonceux Observatory Science Centre**

John Axtell reminded attendees that SAGAS joined with HOSC who have received STFC funding for their IYA programme. To support this SAGAS are looking for nearby societies to provide volunteers to assist the IYA2009 project. The support required by HOSC/SAGAS is for:

**7.1.1** Daytime activities that includes making telescopes and explaining how to use telescopes ~ 18<sup>th</sup> /19<sup>th</sup> July and 10<sup>th</sup> /11<sup>th</sup> October 2009

**7.1.2** Open Evenings. Bring your telescopes. The evenings will include Moon sketching ~ 25<sup>th</sup> September and 10,17 24, 25 and 31 October 2009

**7.1.3** 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Lunar Landing Star Party ~ July 18<sup>th</sup> 2009. This is a Cheese and Wine party and the HOSC telescopes will be available.

**7.1.4** Science Centre Astronomy Festival to be held on 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> September with an extra viewing evening on the 11<sup>th</sup> September

In all cases contact Sandra Voss at the HOSC for ways in which your societies can help.

## **7.2 Rolling Road Show.**

**7.2.1** The display panels have been purchased from eBay. They weigh 6 kgs and come with their own carrying case. The panels were on display at the meeting in the Planetarium corridor, and were loaded with much of the other material that constitutes the Rolling Road Show package.

**7.2.2** The main images for the Road Show boards were provided by Horsham AG

**7.2.3** "Eyes on the Sky" DVD's are available from Eastbourne AS at £3 each. There are limited supplies. One copy is included in the Road Show

**7.2.4** A PowerPoint presentation on Buying a Telescope from Guildford AS. Also available is a large Moon map.

**7.2.5** Thomas Harriot Moone Maps were donated by Hampshire AS

**7.2.6** There is a new FAS poster for IYA2009 which can be downloaded from the FAS website. Also the Society of Popular Astronomy poster is available. John Axtell noted that there was a lot of clipart available on the IYA2009 website.

**7.2.7** The Road Show package can be borrowed by any SAGAS Member Society but has to be collected from the previous borrower. Current bookings are shown in Appendix 3. At present John Axtell, SAGAS Secretary, is managing the bookings.

## **7.3 Moonwatch Feedback**

***Worthing Astronomers.*** Lighting was not an issue. The Moon, Saturn and M42 are easily visible. Advertising was in the local library and some shops.

***Hampshire AG.*** Hampshire AS held a 9-day Moonwatch. Some members of the public took photos but the Society found it consumed too much time. An entrance fee of £7.00 charged and they made

available three of their observatory telescopes. Moon sketching was not done because of logistics of ambient light and time.

**South Downs AS.** South Downs used a 5" refractor and a 12" reflector. They advertised through a local taxi firm.

**Croydon AS.** Croydon AS advertised in local newspapers but restricted viewing to their local observatory. It was considered unsafe to hold viewing in public areas. The events were free and drinks were provided

**Vectis AS.** Vectis did their observing at local school. The children were fascinated by DSLR photography and allowed to push the shutter button on the camera. The photographers could see their images on the CCD display but they could not take away copies.

**East Sussex AS.** ESAS met on four nights at the De La Warr Pavilion. Three nights provided good observing and the Moon, Saturn and M42 were widely looked at. Four or five members telescopes were available and one set up with a camera and the image displayed on a laptop. Interest from the public was good and a lot of interest was shown on the moons of Saturn.

**Farnham AS.** Farnham found local radio station keen to help and the radio advertising was very helpful for their daytime event on the Moon and solar observing. They had over 100 visitors. They provided displays in three gazebos, including the "first light" of the SAGAS RoadShow's Display Panels. Events included a game where children had to seek out posters of the planets

#### **7.4 Syon House Event**

Robin Gorman addressed the meeting and stated that Syon House has offered a large marquee for the event on the 26<sup>th</sup> July 2009. The evening speaker will be Dr Allan Chapman. More tickets will now be available for this event and the cost will be around £18 to £20 per ticket. Tickets will be available from the end of April

### **8 Isle of Wight Star Party 26<sup>th</sup> – 30<sup>th</sup> March**

Stephen Griffiths (Vectis AS) showed a selection of pictures taken at the recent and most successful Isle of Wight Star Party. Four astronomy traders were present (Island Planetarium, Astronomia, Astroparts and 365 Astronomy), who provided prizes for the raffles.

BBC coverage was on both television and radio and also on the BBC website.

Those that attended totalled 58 and included:

- 34 people from 6 SAGAS societies (21 Vectis and 13 others)
- 9 from 5 non SAGAS societies
- 15 not affiliated to any society.

More information about the Star Party is available at  
<http://www.iowstarparty.org/>

Next year the Isle of Wight Star Party will be held between 11<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> March 2010.

## **9 SAGAS/Nightlife Summer Meeting**

Graham Bryant provided information on this event. Tickets will cost £10 for SAGAS members and £12 otherwise. Tickets are available now. Post Meeting note details are available at [www.nightlife.demon.co.uk](http://www.nightlife.demon.co.uk)

## **10 Any Other Business**

**10.1** To ensure information between SAGAS and member Societies is shared quickly, a second nominated person from each Society was requested by John Axtell (SAGAS)

**Action: All member Societies to nominate second contact**

**10.2** The SAGAS IYA coordinator resigned at the AGM in January and a replacement is required to help in managing the logistics of this programme. Those interested should contact John Axtell.

## **11 Date of next meeting**

The date of the next meeting, the Summer Meeting, will be held at Portsmouth on 4<sup>th</sup> July 2009. This will be followed by a Business meeting at the South Downs Planetarium on 17<sup>th</sup> October 2009.

The Chairman extended his thanks to David Pulley for taking the minutes and to Phil Alner for providing the lectern.

### **End of Formal Business**

Sadly, complete cloud meant that the planned Solar Observing using a DayStar Calcium-H telescope could not take place at coffee break. Our thanks to Anthony Seal for bringing the telescope – maybe another time?

The attendees at the main meeting were joined at coffee break by a large number of guests who had arrived for the talk. This was entitled “The Sun’s Role in Climate Change” and was presented by Dr Keith Strong of NASA Goddard Flight Centre, SP Systems. The speaker was introduced by Dr John Mason. The talk was well received and questions lasted as long as the talk!

## **Appendix 1 ~ Foredown Tower Astronomers**

We are a new club formed on 15 Jan 2009.

We joined SAGAS on 17 Jan 2009.

The Tower, which is owned by Brighton & Hove Council, as a section of the Museums dept, is a converted water tower housing a camera obscura, open to the public during the summer weekends.

It had for the previous 10 years had a monthly astronomy evening class, known as Foredown Tower Astronomy Group, run by the tower Facilities Management & Interpretation Officer.

The Council in 2008 changed the status of the venue, ending the evening class. The members wished to continue so a team had the task, in the final years` quarter, to organise a club to be ready for IYA 2009.

We are organising several events for IYA 2009 for Brighton & Hove Council that will coincide with the public visiting at weekends.

Previously as the astronomical evening class we held public events for eclipses, transits of Mercury & Venus & night sky events.

We have started with a membership of 17.

## **Appendix 2 ~ A Brief Society Report From Orpington AS**

We held a Spring Moonwatch on the 4th April, commencing with a Solar Watch in the afternoon and a talk on the Sun from Carole Pope. We then followed with a talk on Saturn and the Moon by Greg Smye-Rumsby and observing later in the evening. About 45 members of the public attended (half kids), we had clear skies and a very successful event.

## **Appendix 3 ~ Bookings so far for the SAGAS Road Show Material**

<b>13<sup>th</sup> Feb</b>	Guildford AS – Public Observing Evening
<b>4<sup>th</sup> April</b>	Farnham AS – Day time event
<b>1<sup>st</sup> May</b>	Guildford AS – Public Observing Evening
<b>25<sup>th</sup> May</b>	Guildford AS – Surrey County Show
<b>29<sup>th</sup> May</b>	Guildford AS – Public Observing Evening
<b>4<sup>th</sup> July</b>	SAGAS – Nightlife Event
<b>25<sup>th</sup> July</b>	Orpington AS - Public Observing Evening
<b>12<sup>th</sup>/13<sup>th</sup> Sep</b>	SAGAS – Herstmonceux Event
<b>1<sup>st</sup>/2<sup>nd</sup> Oct</b>	Hampshire AG– Intech Space Day
<b>14<sup>th</sup>/28<sup>th</sup> Oct</b>	Orpington AS– Library Event