

South Downs Planetarium, Chichester

Saturday 20th October 2007

### 1. Introduction and Welcome

The meeting was chaired by Keith Brackenborough who welcomed all the attendant representatives of the societies. Keith explained that this meeting was to have been organised by Croydon AS, but because of a various reasons three of the CAS members were unable to play their intended parts and so he had stepped in to the breach, as had John Axtell, who would be delivering the post-meeting talk. Keith welcomed William Bottaci and Mike Ross, both from CAS, who would be acting as Secretary and Treasurer respectively for the meeting.

### 2. Societies Present

A register was taken of all the societies that attended:

- Brighton
- Cody
- Crawley
- Croydon
- Eastbourne
- Guildford
- Hampshire
- South Downs
- Vectis, IoW
- Wadhurst
- Worthing

### 3. Apologies

All those that stated their intention to attend did, although this represents about half of the total SAGAS membership of 22 societies.

### 4. Minutes of February meeting and Matters Arising

The minutes of the last meeting were read out and all were in agreement. There are no matters arising not covered in the agenda.

### 5. Society Reports

All society representatives briefly introduced themselves in turn, either by a short talk or screen presentation. Notes of these, Society Reports, are to be emailed to John Murrell, SAGAS webmaster, at: 'webmaster07@sagas.org.uk'.

### 6. SAGAS 2007 at Vectis, Isle of Wight - Feedback

Minor feedback of significance; generally it all went very well indeed.

### 7. IOW Star Party 2008

The dates for this event are from Thursday 6th to Monday 10th March 2008. The Moon will be out of the way as New Moon occurs on the 7th. The Brightstone Holiday Centre camp site, (National Trust property and near to the former site of UK rocket tests), is the chosen venue and has reasonable facilities such as electricity, kitchen and will cater for late breakfasts. Chalets are also available.

Travel to the venue will be by WightLink ferry and Vectis will hopefully negotiate a cheap fare. There will be various activities and some speakers and the presence of

reasonably large telescopes, so it will be more of a festival than a party. SAGAS has been asked to help with publicity.

The holiday centre itself will manage bookings, which start in January.

#### **8. Feedback from Herstmonceux - SAGAS stand etc.**

John Axtell reported that SAGAS manned a table in the Astro Societies marquee at the Herstmonceux Astronomy Festival held on the 7th to 9th September. The table was manned by three members of the Working Group (David Woods, John Stapleton, John Axtell). The Working Group is indebted to Phil Berry (Wadhurst) who filled the 4<sup>th</sup> slot. John detailed that SAGAS was there to act as an "Astronomy club finder" for visitors, providing details as to where local societies could be found. We also distributed programmes and other details provided by some of our member societies.

Visitors to the marquee were a little thin on the ground, but all that changed when Sir Patrick Moore made an appearance. Sir Patrick came over to our stand and had a few words with the SAGAS squad. He knew of SAGAS and wished us every success.

The question arose as to whether SAGAS will be represented again in 2008. This may be for 1 or 2 days, free to attend but at least 4 volunteers will be required and preferably more. Some ideas were proposed.

#### **9. Report from Working Group Business Meeting**

The Working Group consists of:

- Keith Brackenborough - Working Group Coordinator
- John Axtell - Secretary
- David Woods - News desk
- John Stapleton - Planning & IAY2009 coordinator
- John Murrell - Webmaster

Keith Brackenborough reported that the dates for our quarterly SAGAS meetings have been fixed for 2008, i.e. 19th January, 19th April, 19th July and 18th October. Brighton was asked to run the next meeting and their responsibilities will include taking the minutes and finding a speaker. (Subsequent note: Brighton cannot host the January meeting but have undertaken to administer April, and Cody have accepted October's event).

At the Working Group's Business Meeting it had been agreed that the WG will assist societies where necessary in the running of any SAGAS event, but will keep a distance from running the event itself.

John Murrell is producing a guide to holding a star party. The newsletter by David Woods is running late but will be out soon, although not yet in email format at this stage.

Regarding the next year, IAY2009, the FAS has asked us what material we would like from them as support. A road show is one possibility, where each member gets to host the show for one weekend before passing on to the next society. It would be a good indicator of cooperation between SAGAS members.

Hampshire may hold an event similar to 'Nightlife' and hosted by SAGAS, and Basingstoke may hold an Astro Jumble sale.

A tour of Scotland is another suggestion for IAY2009 with the theme of looking for dark skies, especially in or near forested areas. There are 2 web site resources at:

[www.darkskscotland.org.uk](http://www.darkskscotland.org.uk)

[www.glasgowsciencecentre.org](http://www.glasgowsciencecentre.org)

## **10. SAGAS - Report on Progress and Restructuring**

Keith stated that the numbers and roles in the Working group seems to be about right, but there will soon be a need to formalise our finances and appoint a Treasurer.

## **11. Future Deliverables and how to Finance SAGAS**

SAGAS meets three times a year at the Southdowns Planetarium. Each of these occasions cost £30 and up until now this has been borne by the attending societies. Everyone agreed that this cost should be spread across all member societies, whether or not they chose to attend. In addition there are travelling costs for Keith Brackenborough who attends FAS Council Meetings on behalf of SAGAS. These have mostly been in Birmingham, but in future will often be in London, thus reducing costs. Asked if he could suggest a ballpark figure for annual expenditure John Axtell estimated about £300 a year, but stressed this was merely a rough figure.

As with the FAS, the fee could be based on size of society, with events paid for by tickets. Gauging size will be awkward – variables include the point at which we take the count, and what about using the amount of society funds instead? In addition the fee could be estimated from the sale of the SAGAS newsletter. In all possibilities there are issues; in addition to deciding who gets to keep the fees collected, not having a committee may be a problem and should we have charitable status? The working group will investigate this further, but a very helpful suggestion was that member Societies can always provide their mid-year figures, as an accurate way of gauging size.

Regarding insurance with the FAS, the question arose as to why we pay the premium in September but the policy does not come into force until January next year? The answer could be that it takes this time for administration and processing

## **12. The International Year of Astronomy, IYA 2009**

SAGAS's concept of a rolling sidewalk astronomy and public awareness events has already been mentioned.

The RAS is planning mass observing from 28th March to 4th April, both Saturdays. The Moon's phase will be aged from 3 to 11 days so viewing will be optimal.

There will also be an event on Saturday 25th July at Syon House, part of the Duke of Northumberland's estate.

Another RAS event, observing Jupiter's moons, is on the week of Saturday 10th to 17th October. Jupiter is currently low in the south but this will be better in autumn.

## **13. Summer 2009 SAGAS Meeting - Plans**

14. FAS Report

In the light of the time, Keith undertook to email this to member societies..

15. SAGAS Light Pollution Survey

This was not discussed , given Dave Woods's absence.

16. Any Other Business

Nil

**End of Formal Business**

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After coffee, the talk was entitled "Happy Birthday Dear Sputnik" which was delivered (and sung!) by John Axtell. A full write up of this will be included in the SAGAS Newsletter. To support the talk, Vectis AS had brought along an excellent half-scale model of Sputnik 1, made by a VAS member. A Group Photo was taken by William Bottaci.