

The Open University Astronomy Club

MINUTES OF THE 2013 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY 5th MARCH 2013

The AGM of the OU Astronomy Club was held at 7.45 p.m. in Robert Hooke Seminar Room on the OU Walton Hall Campus. 11 members were present.

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

Apologies were received from John Walters.

2. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING.

These were circulated at the meeting and were posted on the website prior to the AGM. There were no amendments and their acceptance was proposed by Jakub, seconded Rosalind.

3. MATTERS ARISING

Discussion took place on the weather station and on-line access. Jakub says that Andy Norton has no funds and that there are no plans to replace current equipment. Peter Hudson said we discussed a new focuser and web cam. Was there any more news? Jakub led the discussion and suggested that the new focuser supplied by John Walters was a definite improvement, but of course doesn't belong to us. Jakub discussed the mount itself but that even though it has been returned to the supplier there has been little improvement. Peter Hudson said that he thought the problem was the weight of the equipment being mounted. This was deferred to item 10 on the Agenda.

4. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chairman reported that we had several successful PIRATE sessions including M81. These images are available online for analysis. PIRATE survived a critical failure but was now operational. During March and April we have 4 observing opportunities. Possibly concentrating on variable stars. We also have access to a fortnightly updated Exoplanets news. The Campbell outing to see the Transit of Venus featured in the BBC 3 Counties radio programme. We also had an outing organised by Rosalind to the Jupiter occultation. Members got trained on PIRATE. We also joined with the OU to observe the Sun through H-alpha. The Chairman also reported success in obtaining several speakers over the year from within the OU. The next event will be a Stargazing Live event in late March organised through the OU.

TREASURER'S REPORT

The treasurer presented the annual accounts. We spent a little more this year on speakers' expenses, and we only had 11 paid up members! This is down from 17 last year and 24 the previous year. There was no money spent on equipment purchases and also many of our speakers had been from the OU which had saved us fees and travel expenses. The club had made no application for grants from the OU club, and no equipment had been purchased. The treasurer recommended that subscriptions remain at £8.00 for OU staff, £10.00 for non-staff members and £5.00 for students for the time being. However, it was suggested that the treasurer looked at the attendance records to see who had been attending, as attendance certainly averaged more than 11.

Sheridan asked if we should retain on our mailing list all members from previous years. Jakub proposed 2 lists, current and non-paid. People may re-join as a result. Sheridan also asked whether we should continue to provide speakers from OU sources to save money. Another member asked whether we should have fees for occasional visitors.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

- The Treasurer (Samantha Rolfe) agreed to stand for another year. She was proposed by Roger P. and seconded by Yakub and was elected unanimously.
- The Chairman (Yakub Bochinski) agreed to stand again and was proposed by Rosalind A. and seconded by Peter Hudson, and was elected unanimously.
- The Secretary (Sheridan) agreed to stand for a further year and was elected unanimously having been proposed by Rosalind Armson and seconded by Peter Hudson.

UPDATE ON THE OBSERVING GROUPS

Discussion moved to the observing groups, where not a lot of progress has been made this year. Opinion was that we should ramp these up and observe some time midway between our monthly meetings. This should be timed to avoid the Moon and should be a central Wednesday. Peter Hudson would provide a list of observing group coordinators and Jakub said that we can make far more use of the observatory.

A discussion took place on how to make access to the observatory easier, and it was agreed that security should retain the key which could be collected by anyone on a list provided by Samantha to them.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS.

PIRATE

John Walters has started to be trained on the robotic telescopes use, and Jakub will continue with this. Jakub will also embark on some training sessions on MaximDL. The SBIG camera has been thoroughly checked out and drivers updated.

Equipment

A discussion followed about additional equipment needed as a grant could be available. Thoughts included a “webcam” type instrument such as a DMK or ATIK camera. Also suggested was a new focuser for the Meade. This latter suggestion seemed to be the favourite but further research was needed. There was a suggestion that the existing one could be overhauled.

There was no further business and the AGM finished at 8.30 p.m.

The next AGM is scheduled for Tuesday 4 March 2014.