

## **Minutes of a SAstroS Meeting held on the 9<sup>h</sup> February 2017 at 6.30 pm in the Sunflower Café – Island Hall**

Present: Reg Guille (RG)(Secretary), Jo Birch (JB)(Treasurer), Mike Fawson (MF), Richard Axton (RA), Arthur Rolfe (AR) and Wendy Guille (WG).

The meeting opened at 6.30 and RG read out an email from our Chairman in relation to the situation regards her son, Oliver's condition in hospital in Thailand. Members present expressed their hope for a good recovery from a stroke and a safe return home soon.

1. **Apologies:** Annie Dachinger (AD)(Chairman), Mandy Grey (MG), Susan Synnott (SS), Lucy Belfield (LB), Jan Guy (JG), Katie Hamon (KH) and Howard Petrie. (HP)

2. **Election of Deputy Chairperson:** Prior to the meeting Richard Axton put his name forward, on a temporary basis. There being no other nominations, Richard Axton was elected unanimously on a show of hands. RA took the chair.

3. **Approval of the Minutes of last meeting held on the 18<sup>th</sup> October 2016:** Accepted on a show of hands and signed by the Deputy Chairman.

### 4. **Matters Arising:**

a. JB informed the meeting that the Bank Mandate changes are now complete.

b. JB informed the meeting that no donation had yet been made by the Roots Festival organisers for the Star Walk.

c. JB asked if any Star Almanac had been purchased/gifted to the Observatory, as she had said at the last meeting that she would purchase one. RA said that he had been given one as a Christmas gift and provided JB with the details. JB said that she would purchase a copy for the Observatory.

d. Observatory Equipment. RA said that equipment purchased at the request of the last meeting had happened, the total cost coming to £210. The binoculars purchased required a tripod and JB had brought a set along, these were deemed to be suitable and JB gave them to the Society on permanent loan. Thanks, were expressed by the members. The Canon EOS camera is ready to be used but may not be suitable with our present main telescope due to it not having a 'go to' facility.

e. RA reported that a contract had been awarded to Adrian Guille to maintain the pathways to the Observatory.

5. **Treasurer's Report:** JB reported that we have a current total of £3168 in our account. JB raised the issue of the annual Observatory insurance and said that she would ring the Insurers, Island Insurance, to determine this year's quote, renewal being required at the end of February. Last year, the first year, cost £250. The issue of the list of Members to keep track of subscriptions (due end of March) was discussed between JB and MF.

Chairman: [sarkannie@outlook.com](mailto:sarkannie@outlook.com) Deputy Chairman: [raxton@guernsey.net](mailto:raxton@guernsey.net)  
Secretary: [regguille@cwgsy.net](mailto:regguille@cwgsy.net) Treasurer: [jo.birch@cwgsy.net](mailto:jo.birch@cwgsy.net)

**6. IDA Dark Skies Status Report.** JB commented on the report that she had sent to the IDA last year after we had been reminded by the IDA that if no report was forthcoming our Dark Sky Status would be removed. JB was congratulated on the swift response that she had put together for the society and which the IDA found to be acceptable to maintain Sark's Dark Sky status. RA said that La Société Sercquaise holds a Dark Skies archive box and he would check the contents, as this may be useful for SAstroS in the future. **NOTE: AN ANNUAL REPORT MUST BE SUBMITTED.**

After Note. RA sent RG an email on the 10<sup>th</sup> Feb and the following is an extract:

It consists of 'Sark Dark Sky Community... Application to the International Dark-skies Association' (2 copies)

A 'Lighting Management Plan' by James H Paterson, and 'Property Self-Audit Guidelines'. They are kept in the pamphlet box labelled Astronomy.

Jo has (or has passed on to you) more up-to-date correspondence. We may have occasion to consult the Management plan in the future, but strikes me it is kept in a good, public place for the time being.

**7. Paul Fellows MA FIET FRAS – Chairman Cambridge Astronomical Association Committee.** JB reported on the contact made by SS who had emailed details of Paul Fellows to JB and RG. JB had made email contact with Paul Fellows who seemed to be keen on helping us; a discussion started on the merits of having a Cambridge student, found through Paul Fellows, to be in Sark to run the Observatory for a period during the summer season. The issue of costs was raised which would include flights, accommodation and other expenses. No conclusions were reached. Paul Fellows had also offered to come over to Sark to give us hands-on experience and give talks and instruction to members. RA said that as he was going to Cambridge next week (13 to 17 Feb) he would try and meet Paul Fellows to discuss issues further and report back to the Society.

#### **8. Any Other Business:**

a. AD had suggested an Open day (evening) for the schoolchildren, suggesting dates of either Sun 19 Mar or Sun 26 Mar. It was decided that we would offer the 19<sup>th</sup> Mar at 7 pm. RG said that he would email MG with the offer and ask her to organise the schoolchildren.

b. 1<sup>st</sup> European Dark Sky Places Conference 20-22 Sep 2017. AD had been notified by the IDA of this first conference of the European region which is to be held in Dumfries and Galloway, Scotland. Sark has been invited to attend, to see more about the conference visit <http://eudarkskiesconference.com> JB pointed out that this was for the whole of Sark as a Dark Sky Community and not just SAstroS. Members expressed the wish that a member of the Society may be able to attend, AR expressed an interest but could not commit at this stage. RA pointed out that the dates for the conference clashed with Sark hosting the CI Environmental Conference, a first hosting for Sark and looking at our environment and Ramsar site. RG agreed to email back to the IDA saying that we hoped that Sark might be  
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represented and look forward to receiving further details. It was felt appropriate that Bob Bower be contacted if a SAstroS member were to attend. After Note: RG will bring this conference to the attention of Chief Pleas at the Easter Meeting on the 26<sup>th</sup> April.

c. RA reported that he was hosting an Observatory session for a Guernsey Youth Group at 8 pm onwards on the 23<sup>rd</sup> Feb, arrangements being made through Adventure Sark. The group will consist of 4 adults and 12 youths. There will be two sessions and RA asked for other members to help if possible.

d. RA reported that a group of six journalists from the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) will be visiting Sark on the 17<sup>th</sup> Mar with a view to the RHS conducting CI Garden visits this year and have, through the Visitor Centre, requested an Observatory session that evening, time to be confirmed. RA will host but once again other members would be welcome to attend.

e. Observatory flooring. The current poor state of the flooring was discussed. RA said that he had just laid carpet tiles in his house which he suggested would be suitable for the Observatory. The meeting requested that RA purchase tiles and asked that they be laid before Easter.

f. RA suggested that we should aim to raise money to purchase another 'go to' telescope at some time in the not too distant future, possibly a tripod mounted telescope, and in a general discussion the members present agreed this to be a good idea.

g. RG raised the issue of the Clos á Joan rebuild and wondered about the external lighting conforming to Dark Sky requirements; he apologised for not thinking about this sooner. JB said that she would contact the contractor, Phil Godwin, to confirm the suitability of the external lighting for Dark Sky purposes and report back to the society.

**9. Date of Next Meeting:** This meeting is to be the AGM and the dates of 10 or 11 Apr were proposed, dependent upon the availability of the Hall. After Note. RG has booked the Toplis Room of the Hall for between 5.30 and 6.30 on Mon 10 Apr. (11<sup>th</sup> not available.)

Meeting closed at 7.28 pm.



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