



Galloway Forest Astronomical Society

Newsletter #19, October 2016



Planetarium Visit to Newton Stewart schools



Planetarium inflated at start of day

With funding from the Holywood Trust and the willing co-operation of the head teachers of Douglas-Ewart High School and Penninghame Primary School we were able to bring the Scottish Dark Sky Observatory's mobile planetarium to Newton Stewart on Wednesday 28th September.

SDSO staff set up the planetarium in the assembly hall of Douglas-Ewart High School and ran nine 40-minute sessions throughout the day for a total of 296 visitors aged between 7 and over 70! We got evaluation forms back from 242 pupils and are using these to prepare a detailed report for the Holywood Trust. Feedback was very positive and the bottom line is that 95% of the visitors say they want to do it again sometime. (Only, according to one primary pupil, we need to “make it scarier next time”!)

GFAS members stayed in contact with the SDSO staff from their arrival and inflation of the dome early in the morning right through to packing up and setting off at the end of the day. That was a heavy day's work for the observatory staff, taking into account travelling time to and from Dalmellington, and we give them our best thanks for providing everyone with a great event.

Not all the feedback was positive, however: many visitors complained that the hall floor was very hard to sit on and that some more comfortable form of seating or reclining would be a great improvement. A few of the younger children reported feeling sick or dizzy as a result of the rapid 3D movement of the “immersive” displays.



Open session visitors

These are points that GFAS will be taking on board in developing plans for acquiring and deploying our own planetarium in the coming months. We'd also like to investigate better projection systems than the one in use in the visit, and have been thinking about alternative, less expensive designs for the dome itself.



The projection system

AGM 2016: Saturday 5th November

The AGM will be held on Saturday 5th November 2016 at 10:30 am in the Belted Galloway Visitor Centre, Newton Stewart. As always, all six trustees fall to be elected. Nominations, with the names of proposer and seconder, who must be adult members of the society, for the posts of Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer and up to four members of the management committee, should be forwarded to the Secretary with a statement from the nominee of willingness to serve, by Friday 4th November please. Nominations may also be made from the floor during the AGM.

Members and friends evening: Saturday 26th November

We are planning a “Galaxy shoot” for the evening of 26th November, new moon. After 7:00 pm, given clear skies, the Andromeda, Pinwheel, Triangulum and Sculptor galaxies are all visible along with Bode's Nebula. Mars and Uranus are both available, and the Whirlpool galaxy although that is low in the northern sky. After Orion rises at 8:30pm, the great nebula could be seen too. Venue is yet to be decided, we'll let you know as soon as we can.



Galloway Forest Astronomical Society

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