

How could any member sum up their personal perspective on the BBS on one page? And fortunately every member will have a very different view, and reasons for being a member.

My interest in natural history was set from the age of four, as a farmer's boy, but my interest in mosses started through the need to identify plants that I couldn't name at school in the 1950s with the usual floras. An old student microscope revealed a world that astonished me. Obvious beauty may be expected in orchids and butterflies, but to find it in something we walk on without thinking was a turning point. It was, rather cornily, another world. So botany it had to be, but not the obvious glamorous sort, more the alternative and hidden. I joined the BBS in 1962, aged 19, and Ted Wallace made a personal trip to welcome me (he was fairly local) and we went on a little moss foray. This made a big impression, and surely influenced my commitment to the Society.

At university in South Africa, the field course was to the Amatole where mosses festooned from strange trees in the humid forest, and my interest in bryology took deep rhizoid. But 2 years devoted to mosses (not to mention surfing and other student things) meant that course work suffered, and I took a gap year travelling and working on mosses for the government herbarium in Rhodesia (as was). I completed my BSc at London, with my finals dissertation on *Sphagnum* zonation on Thursley Common. It was this, I learnt later, that earned my PhD under the inspirational Prof. Paul Richards at Bangor, on African mosses, and it was here that I learnt about taxonomy, the most satisfying process of finding order in apparent chaos.

This was followed by a post at Manchester, part lecturer and part based in the herbarium of The Manchester Museum. This hybrid job, a foot in

both camps, formed a bridge between academia and the public. This was reflected by my term in the BBS as Publicity Officer, with the production of the BBS travelling exhibition *The Secret Garden*, and the two BBS volumes *Mosses in English Literature* and *English Names for British Mosses* were researched with as much care as academic work.

A value and challenge of the BBS lies in its mix of professional and non-professional, and the BBS caters for all in its mix of publications and the website. Although our flagship *Journal of Bryology* is a peer-reviewed, academic journal, almost every member understands papers on anatomy and morphology – we can all look down a microscope and see with our own eyes. Papers on mosses in far-off countries also hold a fascination even if we have never been there, or expect to go there – they are the travelogues of the bryological world. But sadly molecular or statistical work – ordination and multivariate analysis – leave a lot of members cold.

But these fields are vital and interesting, and it is for this reason that I support the Publication Committee's proposal for authors either to avoid using obscure technical terms that cannot be found in standard English dictionaries, or to provide explanations of their meanings. Perhaps it might further be possible for the authors to provide short readable commentaries paired in *Field Bryology**, or even develop short Special Volumes introducing these topics for the fascination of all our valued membership.

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**Note from the Editor: Short and (hopefully) readable summaries of a small number of papers from Journal of Bryology and other journals available through the BBS reading circle will be available in a new section in Field Bryology called 'Hot off the Press'. The first of these can be found on p. 62 in this issue.*