

An appeal from the Membership Secretary

Claire Halpin describes some of the trials and tribulations of the Membership Secretary, and the things that members can do to help.

When I offered to take over as Membership Secretary from Peter Martin in 2021, I naively thought it would take a few hours, days maybe, of my time at the start of each year to process membership renewals. After all, Pete had made no great fuss about it, and I knew that membership numbers remained fairly stable, so I didn't anticipate a lot of work.

For those who don't know, the BBS Membership Secretary is primarily responsible for processing membership subscriptions and renewals – which run from January to December – and for producing mailing lists for *Journal of Bryology* and *Field Bryology*.

Pete had been in the habit of sending out emails towards the end of the year reminding people that their membership is due for renewal, and he duly did this in December 2021. He also kindly handled most of the renewal payments and emails until we met up mid-January for the official handover, and I began to get an inkling of what I had let myself in for...

The first thing I hadn't realised, is the relatively high turnover of people who join for a year or two and then let their membership lapse. This year, for example, at the time of writing this in May, we have already welcomed over 80 new members. In 2021, 126 people joined in total throughout the year. Many of these will try out the BBS (and bryophytes!) for a year or two, and then move on to other things. Unfortunately, when they decide not to continue, they don't usually let us know. So we send out the subscription reminders and wait. After six months (at the end of June), we assume that people aren't re-joining and remove them from the membership list.

There are always a few folk, though, who have just forgotten to renew. Some months later, they

might realise that they haven't received the latest *Field Bryology* and contact us to find out why. When we point out that they have allowed their membership to lapse, they usually pay up and then request any missing issues of *Field Bryology* and *Journal of Bryology*. Some people have been known to pay for the past two years, and then expect back issues of everything published during that time. We try to accommodate this as far as possible, but we don't keep unlimited reserves of each issue.

In an attempt to tackle this problem early on, I have decided to send out additional reminders in the first half of each year, specifically to those members who have not renewed by the time I send the reminder. Apologies to those of you who have decided not to re-join, but if you let me know, I will remove your details from our records and you won't be bothered again.

Bank statements and standing orders

The second main problem over the past few years has been obtaining bank statement details in order to check payments made by standing order or bank transfer. For various reasons to do with our bank and changes of Treasurer, we have not always been able to obtain transaction details promptly – sometimes having to wait until the end of the year. The only course open to us was to assume that people who have told us that they are paying by standing order or bank transfer, have indeed paid. This has resulted in some people receiving membership for free, and others paying twice by mistake.

Fortunately, the issues with obtaining statement details have now largely been resolved, and I have spent a lot of time since January reviewing and allocating payments made in 2021 and 2022. Even this straightforward-sounding task wasn't as easy as it

should have been, as transaction references often bear little resemblance to the member they relate to. We have payments made from accounts in a member's maiden name, payments made by a partner on someone else's behalf, payments with a reference of 'Smith, W' when we have two W. Smiths... I still have a payment reference that I haven't managed to match to a current member: 'Harl & Guil Har'. If you think this belongs to you, please let me know!

There are various other niggly things that cause problems and all take time to resolve:

- Members who still pay the old subscription rate of £20.
- Old email addresses in our records because people haven't told us about changes. The only way to resolve these is to write to people using 'snail mail'.
- Members who pay by standing order late in the year – after our June cut-off for renewal.

Some answers

There are a few simple things that members can do to make the life of the Membership Secretary a little easier.

- If you don't already pay by standing order, please consider setting one up. It is cheaper than PayPal, and means that you don't have to remember to send

a cheque or make a PayPal payment each year. If you do set this up, though, please make your payment date early in January and please give the payment a sensible reference which identifies you!

- If you use email, please make sure we have an up-to-date email address for you. As a society we don't inundate members with emails and, at present, only use email addresses for membership matters.
- If you move house, you can now update your own address details via the website. Log in to the Member's area, and edit your profile.

Gift Aid

Lastly, a plea on behalf of the Society. Completing a Gift Aid declaration allows the BBS to reclaim gift aid on your membership subscription, and means that the value of your subscription to the Society is increased by 25%. At present only 20% of our members have signed up to this, so if you think this is something you could do, please check out the Gift Aid information and form on the website at <https://www.britishbryologicalsociety.org.uk/the-society/join-and-renew/>

Claire Halpin

e membership@britishbryologicalsociety.org.uk

The BBS centenary photography competition 2023

This is to announce that the BBS is holding a photography competition to celebrate 100 years since the formation of the BBS in 1923. It is open to everyone and not just to members of the BBS. The theme is to be a celebration of the bryological world. There will be five categories:

- Photographs of bryophytes under the microscope,
- Close ups of bryophytes,
- Bryophytes in the landscape,
- Bryologists in action, and
- Best photograph taken by someone under the age of 18.

It is hoped that entrants will be creative and produce images of aesthetic appeal, rather than focusing on technical or identification criteria. The competition will open on 1 January 2023 and the closing date will be 30 June. The winners will be decided by a vote of BBS members online, and announced at the Annual General Meeting at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh on 9 September 2023.

There will be a winner for each category, with a prize of a £25 book token for each. The winning entries will be displayed at the Edinburgh Annual General Meeting and published in *Field Bryology*.

The winners will also be included in a celebratory centenary calendar along with eight other images from the competition. All entrants whose photographs are chosen will receive a free calendar. The rules of the competition and further information will be

posted on the BBS website in due course – www.britishbryologicalsociety.org.uk

Philippa Thompson

e philippabryology@outlook.com

FutureMeetings

Spring meeting 2023 – Lake District, Saturday 25 March to Friday 31 March

The meeting will be based in Rosthwaite, Borrowdale, and outings will be to various sites in the central Lake District, exploring a range of lakeland habitats. Upland and lowland sites will be included to cater for a range of mobility levels. Rosthwaite itself is close to many excellent bryophyte sites, in particular some good Atlantic woodland.

A room in the Borrowdale Institute in Rosthwaite has been hired for the week's microscope work and will be available in the evening and daytime throughout the week. It will be up to individual members to arrange accommodation, but if you would like to share, please let the local secretary know and she will put you in touch with others that either have or are looking for beds. Rosthwaite has many holiday cottages and Borrowdale YHA is 20 minutes' walk away (across fields) or a short drive. There is further accommodation in the Borrowdale area generally and at YHA Keswick and Derwentwater Independent Hostel. Early booking is recommended! Online booking for these dates is now available on some sites.

Note that 25 March will be for local exploration, potentially with meetings in the afternoon/evening, and the last field trips will be on Friday 31 March.

Contact details

To register your interest and/or for further information please contact Clare Shaw at clares9597@gmail.com



Rosthwaite, Borrowdale. *Clare Shaw*

Summer meeting 2023

The summer meeting is still at the planning stage, and information about it will be posted on the BBS website as soon as it becomes available.

Autumn meeting 2023 – Edinburgh, Friday 8 to Sunday 10 September

The meeting will be held at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh. Further information will follow in the near future and will be posted on the BBS website and published in the next *Field Bryology*.

Lucia Ruffino Meetings Secretary

e meetings@britishbryologicalsociety.org.uk