

Council Newsletter No 40, presented to the 2023 AGM held in September at Edinburgh

This has been a very busy year for many members of Council. We wanted to have some special events to mark the BBS centenary and introduce bryology to a wider audience. As part of the Centenary celebrations the Society held its first ever photographic competition, which had 92 entries, the best of which, as voted for by the membership, have been included in the 2024 Calendars which are now for sale. Our thanks to Karen Rogers, Philippa Thompson and Claire Halpin for all their hard work in organising this. Another Centenary outreach event was the inauguration of National Moss Day, which took place on the weekend of the 21/22 October. There were many events planned in collaboration with a wide range of other organisations, including botanic gardens, conservation bodies, universities, and art galleries. Events included moss trails at botanic gardens, workshops, recording meetings, guided walks and art installations. Many thanks to Philippa, our meetings secretary, who has also put a great deal of effort into making contact with a range of artists, some of whose work on bryophytes was displayed during the AGM. It is hoped that these events will increase awareness about, and interest in, bryophytes.

We have had three national field meetings this year. The spring meeting in Cumbria was attended by 66 people for all or part of the week, an amazing number, and a record for a week-long field meeting. Many thanks to Clare Shaw for arranging the logistics for such an event and to Diane Dobson for the initial planning. This was a very enjoyable meeting, with a large number of locations and an interesting range of species found. However, with such a large number of participants, communication with everyone did give rise to some confusion and so we are trialling the

formation of specific WhatsApp groups for future meetings to ensure that everyone attending knows what is happening. This was first used successfully during the Galloway meeting in the summer, though being a much smaller group, with only 12 participants, it was much easier to keep in touch. Thanks to Rory Whytock for stepping in at relatively short notice to organise this excellent Galloway meeting which was marked by spectacularly and worryingly hot weather. In contrast to the 1993 BBS Galloway meeting when the volume of water in the Cooran Lane barred access to the Silver Flowe NNR, this time access was easy and in June we could walk across the river in shoes. Many thanks to Philippa for all her hard work in organising the Ben Lawers meeting, which followed after the AGM and the visit to Alva Glen. This is the third time we have had a long meeting associated with the AGM, and these may become established in future if we can find enough people to organise them. We are very grateful to the RBGE for holding the AGM meeting to celebrate the BBS Centenary and the synergy between academic and field bryology in the UK and internationally. Especial thanks to Neil Bell, for all his hard work in arranging such an interesting meeting.

There have been several workshops this year. David Holyoak ran a weekend Bryaceae workshop in March at Preston Montford, Lucia Ruffino organised a one-day beginners' course in North Wales, and there were a series of workshops in November in conjunction with St Andrews Botanic Garden and the NE Scotland recording group.

Council have started discussions following on from Oli Pescott's and Sam Amy's informative article in the May *Field Bryology* about the options for the future handling of bryological data. The mapping scheme was established in 1960, and it is an important

function of the society. I recommend the opening chapters of the Atlases for comprehensive accounts of the history of the mapping scheme and the changes over the decades. However, we now need to decide how, in the future, we are going to manage the vast amount of data we generate.

The BBS has always had an international perspective, as is evidenced by the content of the AGM meeting. The first overseas meeting of the Society was in the summer of 1932 to Norway, and in 1935 the first meeting to the Irish Republic, to Killarney, took place. For a while now there has been a question whether, after a century, the name of the Society should change to reflect this, and specifically to be more inclusive of the growing Irish membership.

This is now being considered by Council.

This is my final year as BBS President, and I hand over to Pete Martin for the next two years. I am extremely grateful to all Society members and especially to all the Society officers and members of Council for their help during my two years as President and for the considerable time and effort that they contribute to the running of the Society. Some changes in personnel: our treasurer Gail is resigning at the end of the year. Many thanks to her for stepping in mid-year in 2020 and for her hard work as Society treasurer since then, and we are thankful that David Adamson is willing to take over this role.

Liz Kungu, British Bryological Society President

Annual General Meeting 2024

The Annual General Meeting will be held at 4.30 p.m. on Saturday 7 September 2024 at Exeter University.

The agenda will comprise the standard business: namely, Minutes of the 2023 AGM, the Annual Report of the Trustees for 2023, Accounts and Treasurer's report from Council, election of Officers

and Elected Members (see separate notice), the place and date of the 2025 AGM and any other business.

In addition, there will be two extra agenda items – 'Changes to the Rules' and 'Proposed name change of the British Bryological Society' (see separate notices).

D.J. Scott, General Secretary, March 2024

Election of Officers and Elected Members of Council

The terms of the following Officers expire at the end of 2024: Both Bulletin Editors (Joint), Meetings Secretary, Website Editor, and Education Officer. The post of Conservation Officer is still vacant.

There are two vacancies for Elected members to serve for a period of three years. Members are invited to submit nominations for Officers and Elected Members of Council, sending them to the General

Secretary, D.J. Scott, 19 Abbotts Grove, Peterborough PE4 5BP (secretary@britishbryologicalsociety.org.uk) to arrive no later than 16 August 2024. A nomination must not be made without the consent of the person you wish to nominate. Elections will be held at the AGM in Exeter on 7 September 2024.

D.J. Scott, General Secretary, March 2024

Changes to the Rules

It was agreed at the autumn 2023 Council meeting that the Society will adopt a new automated membership system. This will greatly reduce the workload of the Membership Secretary. However, in order to implement the system, it will be necessary to move from a fixed (Jan – Dec) membership year, to a variable one, where individual members renew on the anniversary of their joining date. This move was agreed in principle at the spring 2024 Council meeting. Therefore, it is proposed that item 4 (b)

Subscriptions:

“(b) The annual subscription is due in advance on 1 January in each year. Members who have not paid their subscription by 31 March shall not be entitled to receive the Society’s publications until the subscription is paid.”
be changed to:

“(b) The annual subscription is due on the date of joining and is renewable thereafter on the same date. New members will be eligible to receive all new publications sent out after they join.”

In addition, the option for Family membership will be discontinued. Therefore, it is proposed that reference to ‘Family Members’ be deleted from paragraph 3 of the Rules – **‘Membership’**. Existing Family memberships (of which there are a few) will continue to be supported, but it will not be possible to register a new Family membership.

Members will be invited to vote on these two changes under item 9 of the agenda at the AGM in Exeter on 7 September 2024.

D.J. Scott, General Secretary, March 2024

Proposed change of name

The question of changing the name of the Society to include Ireland has been brought up several times over the years, chiefly to take into account that its recording and mapping activities encompass not just Britain but Ireland as well.

At the spring 2023 meeting, it was agreed by Council that a name change to include Ireland should be considered. Several variations of the most appropriate name were discussed, including simply ‘The Bryological Society’. Subsequently, Council agreed at the autumn 2023 meeting that the name

‘British and Irish Bryological Society’ should be adopted.

Therefore, it is proposed that the name be changed from **‘British Bryological Society’** to **‘British and Irish Bryological Society’**.

Members will be invited to vote on this change under item 8 of the agenda at the next AGM in Exeter, and also to approve the appropriate changes to the Rules.

D.J. Scott, General Secretary, March 2024

Advanced notice of membership system changes

The number of BBS members is growing slowly, year by year. At the end of 2023, we had 789 members, up from around 700 at the start of that year. Managing subscriptions for this size of membership is becoming increasingly onerous and we are therefore looking to implement a purpose-built membership system called MemberPress, which integrates well into our WordPress website.

The likely timescale for implementing the new system is after the AGM in September this year, so you may start to notice some changes in the way you can manage your personal information on the website. Logging in will be the same, and your password will not change, but the current Profile page with your address, contact preferences etc will be replaced by an Account page and will have some additional information (including being able to update your own email address).

If you have not renewed for 2024 by this point, then you will receive a Renewal reminder email and your subscription will be set to 'Expired'. You will still be able to log in to the website, but only in order to renew your subscription; you will not be able to access the Member's area. The majority of members, who have renewed, should not notice any other changes at this time.

The main change will be at the end of the year, when all current members' subscriptions are due for

renewal. More details will be provided closer to the time, probably in the next issue of *Field Bryology*, however it is worth mentioning the following now:

- Our two main methods of payment at present are PayPal and Standing Orders, roughly 50% for each. We will almost certainly be replacing PayPal with a payment service provider called Stripe, which allows recurring payments to be set up using debit or credit cards. Stripe integrates well with MemberPress and will almost completely automate the subscription renewals process from an administrative point of view. From the member's point of view, it only requires that you have a credit or debit card; there is no need to set up an account. It should also simplify things for our overseas members.
- Standing orders (or BACS, or cheque payments) will not integrate so well with the new system. In fact, they may require each payment to be entered manually and assigned to a member. For this reason, I would encourage members to think about switching across to credit/debit card payments from 2025.
- We will continue to handle cheque payments for those members who don't use the internet or just prefer to pay by cheque.

Claire Halpin, Membership Secretary, March 2024
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