

Minutes of the ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Lecture Theatre, Royal Botanic Garden, 20a Inverleith Row, Edinburgh
Saturday 1st February 2020

Welcome by the President: Dr Paul Cannon

Members present: Judith Allinson; Rod Ashwell; Graham Boswell; Richard Brinklow; Lin Campbell; Paul Cannon; Katherine Challis; Steve Chambers; Claudia Colesie; Brian Coppins; Sandy Coppins; Peter Crittenden; Amanda Davey; Simon Davey; John Douglass; James Floyd; Rolf Gademann; Dave Genney; Allan Grear; Raymond Griffiths; Geoffrey Haigh; Audree Hawke; Terence Hackwill; Sue Hepplewhite; Joanne Kaar; Les Knight; Sue Knight; Peter Lambley; Tracey Lovering; Fay Newbery; Heather Paul; Allan Pentecost; Heleen Plaisier; Steve Price; Maxine Putnam; William Purvis; David Richardson; Ann Ross; Neil Sanderson; Mark Seaward; Peter Scholz; Klara Schaenagl; Janet Simkin; John Skinner; Eluned Smith; Fiona Spence; Frances Stoakley; Chris Taylor; Gothamie Weerakoon; Tim Wilkins; Annie Woodford; Pat Wolseley; Rebecca Yahr.

Apologies for absence: Andy Acton; Ishpi Blatchley; Sam Bosanquet; David Brabban; Andy Cross; Chris Ellis; Bryan Edwards; Ester Gaya; Vince Giavarini; Theresa Greenaway; David Hill; Dave Lamacraft.

Minutes of the AGM held at RBG Kew Jan 2019 were published in the Summer Bulletin 124 (pages 124-137) in 2019. Adoption of the Minutes was proposed by John Skinner and seconded by Maxine Putnam and approved unanimously.

Matters Arising: none

The President's Report by Paul Cannon

The Officers and Council members were thanked for their service, along with members of the Conservation, Data and Education & Promotion committees. Editors, authors and reviewers of papers to the Lichenologist and material for the Bulletin contribute greatly to lichenological knowledge in the British Isles and overseas. Paul thanked contributors of records to the BLS database, participants in field meetings and Andy Stephens and the Royal Society of Biology membership teams. Our social media organisers, Amanda and Simon Davey were warmly thanked as well as all the thousands of contributors to our Twitter and Facebook pages. He welcomed the artists who had installed such interesting lichen artworks in the display area, and thanked our hosts at the RBG Edinburgh, in particular Becky Yahr and Heleen Plaisier.

The Society noted with regret the deaths of a number of members in 2019, including Tony Holwill and David Bellamy. Mark Seaward gave a short eulogy on his friend, the late David Bellamy, who was a founding member of the Society. Steve Price reported the death of Alan Bamforth of Audenshaw, Manchester who died in November 2019. He and his surviving brother were active lichenologists and

contributed a good proportion of the lichen records in VC59 (South Lancashire) and the northern part of VC58 (Cheshire).

Progress has been made towards conversion of the Society to a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO), but the process had stalled due to difficulties in getting a response from Companies House on permission to use “restricted terms” in the name of the Society. It is hoped that this will be resolved in due course and the application process resumed.

The President paid special tribute to the outgoing Senior Editor of the *Lichenologist*, Peter Crittenden, who was stepping down after twenty years’ service to the Society in this role, and welcomed the new joint Senior Editors, Chris Ellis and Leena Myllys.



Peter after the presentation of a framed lichen photograph.

The President concluded by summarising the activities of the Society in terms of numbers:

Publications

- Two issues of the Bulletin with 47 contributions and 263 pages
- Six issues of the Lichenologist with 37 papers and 585 pages

Social media and forum

- 2,931 followers on the BLS Twitter account (up from 1,929 in 2018)
- 898 followers on the BLS Facebook account (up from 551 in 2018)
- 88 topics, 246 replies and 76,040 views on the BLS Forum

New taxa and records

- 22 new species of lichens and lichenicolous fungi for the UK (up from 13 in 2018)
- 366 “New, Rare & Interesting” records
- 33,660 records added to the BLS database from 47,610km squares

Five field meetings and one workshop to Anglesey, Cumbria, Morvern, Surrey (twice) and Yorkshire

- 112 attendees with 482 person/days survey effort

Grants

- £1,377 on 5 grants for travel/subsistence (£2,341 in 2017/8)

Reports of Officers and Committee Chairs

Treasurer - John Skinner

Net income from charitable activities for the Financial Year ended on 30 June 2019 was £161,204 (2018: 10,661). This income is derived mainly from *The Lichenologist*, field meetings (roughly balanced by expenditure), members' subscriptions and trading activities. Donations fell sharply, reflecting the fact that a large legacy had been received in the previous Financial Year.

Significant items of expenditure were, of course, *The Lichenologist*, membership support (website, production of the Bulletin, Council expenses, insurance, etc.) and field meetings.

Net income for the year, after charitable activities and costs associated with fund raising have been taken into account, was £28,325 (2018: £66,090).

Profit from the Proprietor share of *The Lichenologist* (Vol. 50 for 2018) was £66,580 (2018: £74,787), with £19,156 (2018: £19,706) being contributed by the BLS. It should be noted that this total income includes £4,095 (2018: £8,527) from sales of digitalised journal content.

At the end of the Financial Year, reserves were £574,557 (2018: £546,232) of which £8,116 (2018: £9,371) are restricted funds.

The full accounts and the Trustees' Report to the Charity Commission can be viewed on the Charity Commission website or are available by email or post from the Treasurer (contact details at the front of the Bulletin).

Following comments from our accountants that the BLS should spend more of our financial assets, Mark Seaward and Les Knight stressed the need for the BLS to spend money on educating people and promoting lichens. The Treasurer replied that members are encouraged to apply for grants to attend workshops and field meetings. Resources will also need to be spent on the website, archives, herbarium, data storage and 'grey' (i.e. unpublished) literature.

The Treasurer thanked members of Council for their support during the year. He proposed adoption of the accounts for the Financial Year 2018-2019. The proposal was seconded by Les Knight and unanimously approved.

Paul Cannon proposed a vote of thanks to John for his work in compiling the accounts for the BLS and this was warmly acknowledged from the floor.

Conservation Committee - Neil Sanderson & Bryan Edwards

Despite the lack of money among the agencies, a good number of lichen-related survey work and projects have been carried out. Neil reported that his recently completed SSSI Selection Guidelines are now being used in England, Scotland and Wales. In England two new lichen-rich SSSIs have already been notified at Pixton Park in Somerset and Penwith Downs in Cornwall. Nettlecombe Park in Somerset has been renotified and the SSSI at Creech Barrow and Valley in Dorset has been extended.

Pat Wolseley now has the Lobarion project ready to be published and this will be available soon, at no cost to members who request a copy.

The BLS must continue to raise the profile of lichens when planning surveys and assessments and when development decisions are undertaken. Brian Coppins was praised and thanked for his great presentation at the Coul Links Enquiry; he was the only expert not challenged by the developers. The final decision was pending from the Scottish Government.

There are continuing issues with hydro-electric schemes on water courses. John Douglass has found the rare River Jelly Lichen in the River Calder ravine in Renfrewshire. This nationally important site is being threatened by the nearby hydroelectric power scheme.

Neil Sanderson has written a thorough technical report on the rare lichens which are threatened by ash die-back disease. This has been published and is being used. Dave Lamacraft is writing guidelines for landowners while Sam Bosanquet is organising a version for Wales. Sam has also developed an exciting GIS-based Ash Dieback Alert Map and some useful advice will be given to land managers such as planting more field trees and along headlands beside hedges, removing shading from old sycamore trees and planting more hazel and willow saplings. These two species mature quickly and can host ash-dependent lichens. The healthy growth of any alternative substrate trees and translocating lichens will also be encouraged.

Neil reports that major concerns for the BLS are how to be involved in the management of existing lichen-rich sites, and how to influence landowners and managers to implement sustainable grazing regimes. The restoration of sites damaged

by intensive forestry is important with reference to grazing, and with Brexit, many farmers are considering moving towards more sustainable, wildlife friendly farming systems including pasture woodlands.

Finally, a tidal wave of tree planting is coming our way so we must all influence it to reduce negative impacts such as dense new Sitka spruce plantations on moorland, and suggest positives such as more field trees, new pasture woodlands and even screening nitrogen pollution from chicken farms in imaginative ways. Neil thanked the committee for all their work on behalf of the Chair, Bryan Edwards who could not attend, and was warmly applauded from the floor.

Data Committee - Les Knight

'Data has its greatest value when it is being shared and used'

Les thanked the other members of the data committee for all their hard work, especially Brian Coppins and Janet Simkin. The total number of records currently stands at 2.74 million with a typical annual growth of 30-50,000 new records. Furthermore, the records are becoming more detailed, both in terms of more precise locations and small-scale habitat information etc. which greatly enriches the value of the database. We have also started to make use of data derived from iRecord. It was requested that BLS members do not use iRecord for sending in records, but instead use the BLS spreadsheet. This saves a lot of work and ensures that they are added to the database quickly. There is a need records of common lichens and from lichen-poor areas as well as rarities and known hotspots as both urban and rural communities are changing.

A new downloadable *Cladonia* key developed by Annelie Berghause and Nigel Chadwick is now available from the website. A field recording smartphone app was considered as a long-term goal but has not yet happened. Experience from other systems such as iRecord suggests that there is demand for such an app both to simplify and democratise field recording.

Les said that it had always been his goal to make the BLS database directly accessible to all members. Janet has generated national distribution maps for each species in the database and uploaded them to Dropbox to increase access to members of the BLS. She also responds to requests for data downloads from members and third parties. Les thanked Janet for undertaking these requests which can often be complex and time consuming but in many cases represent the outward face of the Society. He thanked all members of the Data Committee and said that he is standing down and is being replaced by Paul Cannon.

The President proposed a vote of thanks to Les Knight for his thoughtful stewardship and successes and this was warmly acknowledged from the floor.

Education and Promotions Committee - Fay Newbery

Fay reported that teaching materials have been gathered and there will be an article about this in the Summer Bulletin.

She thanked Steve Price for finding table space at recent Field Meetings for lichen samples that are collected. When named correctly, these display tables are a valuable and popular learning opportunity for the participants.

The recently formed Montane lichen group has already held a trip to Ben Lawers in Scotland and many new lichen records were added to the database. Fay said that due to the increasing interest in licheniculous fungi, a weekend course is going to be planned.

There have been requests for an online lichen course run along guidelines drawn up by the Chartered Institute for Ecology and Environmental Management. Both Paul and Fay thanked the members of the Committee and she received warm applause from the floor.

Bulletin Editor - Maxine Putnam

Some welcome contributions from BLS members resulted in two editions of the Bulletin in 2019. These contained, in a total of 263 pages, some 47 contributions of a pleasingly varied nature.

The sad loss of Maxine's co-editor Tony Holwill in September meant that she had to 'go it alone' to produce the Winter edition. She should like to urge you all to pen something for the Summer and Winter 2020 editions.

The Lichenologist - Peter Crittenden

Six issues of *The Lichenologist* have been produced in Volume 51 this year. Our membership has increased since September 2019, and Peter encouraged all BLS members to support their Society by subscribing especially to the paper version of the *Lichenologist*.

With regard to 2020 (Vol. 52), the January issue is being printed, the March issue is a special issue on the lichens of Glacier Bay, Alaska, and there are sufficient papers for the May issue either in proof or currently being copy edited.

Following Peter's appeal in the Winter *Bulletin* for a proofreader, he is delighted to say that he has had an offer of help from Shirley Hancock, a member from Birmingham.

The format of *The Lichenologist* is changing. From January 2020 onwards the page size is increasing to American Letter size and the text layout has been revised; this will show phylogenetic diagrams more easily.

By the time Council reads this report, the transition to the new Senior Editorships should have largely taken place as Peter is standing down after 20 years as Senior Editor, although he will continue to give advice. He wishes Chris Ellis and Leena Myllys well in their new roles. He also praised Mats Wedin for all his hard work on the Editorial Board. Janet Simkin said what an efficient Senior Editor we have had in Peter for over 2 decades, and the President thanked him very much for enhancing the reputation and prestige of the BLS with his organisation and publication of the *Lichenologist*. He presented Peter with a framed photograph of an *Alectoria* lichen and this accolade was warmly acknowledged from the floor.

Website Editor - Janet Simkin

The BLS, Lichens of Wales and the photographic British Lichens websites are stable and any technical problems over the last year have been resolved quickly by CEH. Minor changes have been made to both of the former to keep the content up to date

but apart from the areas listed below there have been no major changes to any for several years.

The BLS website gets about 4000 hits a month but most of those don't stay on the site for many minutes, and this may be partly due to the rather dated appearance of the home page. Those who do linger are a small group of active users who visit the four active areas:

- Taxon dictionary – maintained by Brian Coppins
- Events – maintained by Steve Price
- Maps and Downloads – maintained by Janet Simkin, to be updated during 2020
- The Society – council members, local contacts etc., maintained by Janet Simkin

Janet has now been keeping these websites ticking over for eight years without having had the time to do much with them and wishes to hand this over to someone else before the next AGM. Her dedication to the website was praised by the President and she was warmly acknowledged by the members.

Social Media - Amanda and Simon Davey

Education, ecology and conservation alongside the promotion of beauty and storytelling is our remit. Initially our aim was to reach out via Social Media to show beginners how attractive lichens are. We believe that the thousands of people now following us, and all their questions and observations indicate how successful this exercise has been. The 'following' for the Twitter account passed 3000 people in January 2020 while the Facebook account was approaching 1000 followers.

In September 2019, we ran #lichenstory, which was a series of daily posts intending to excite people with the stories lichens can tell, such as the enrichment of tree bases in the 'dog pee zone', and the barnacle lichen, *Thelotrema lepadinum*, which is important in indicating ecological continuity. We have also told followers about *Lobaria pulmonaria* and the increase in the distribution of the beautiful *Teloschistes chrysophthalmus* in the South. One our followers has been successful in finding new sites for this in the South Downs, and she is now a new and enthusiastic BLS member. We have posted stories about industrial pollution and the rise and demise of *Lecanora conizaeoides*, the use of lichens in lichenometry, the presence of lichens in the fur of sloths and on beetles in Australasia.

We put up a challenge to see how many lichens people can find on their cars and other substrates such as bone, old leather gloves on the beach and lichens which grow in areas polluted with heavy metals. Recently, our followers have been enjoying Mark Powell's challenge to find the lichen nearest to their back door. We talked about fossil lichens and also mentioned the mass extinction during the Cretaceous, and how lichens survived it.

In January 2020 we ran a popular series of entries called #lichenJanuary – making as good a use of the usual pun as we could manage, followers enthusiastically 'liken' it.

There has been an enquiry from a scientist about lichenologists in Pakistan. As a result of helpful BLS and international contacts, we were able to provide him with many more names to contact than any of us could have anticipated.

The BLS social media accounts attract people who wish to identify, and are attracted to a number of species, but the hot potatoes are: *Xanthoria parietina*, *Evermia prunastri*, and the differences between *Physcia adscendens* and *P. tenella*. And, of course, the wonderful challenge always presented by *Cladonia* species. One of the most popular lichen genera to beginners, we try very much to show how difficult many are to identify, but at the same time admitting their beauty, and our followers' interest in them.

Matters such as the use of lichens as dyes, in perfume and medicine are mentioned, but at the same time, great care is used to emphasise the slow growing nature and vulnerability to lichens commercial collecting would have. We have featured lichens in churchyards and strongly discourage the cleaning of church walls and gravestones, showing photographs of the destruction of chemically scrubbed surfaces.

There is a wildflower initiative called #wildflowerhour on Sunday evenings. We have mooted #lichenhour and the BBS have mooted #bryophytehour, but this would be too time consuming for us to do without consistent help.

There is the chance to get a lot more out of 'Citizen Science'. Mark Powell is producing the most amazing identification comments on other photographers' snaps of lichens. He also shows lichenicolous fungi and photographs of microscope slides showing the internal structure and finer details of lichen identification.

Amanda thanked Mark Powell, Paul Cannon, Fay Newbury, Becky Yahr and Sandy Coppins for their continued support. She also thanked Heleen Plaisier for selecting and printing out examples of Twitter posts for the AGM displays.

Comment from the floor: Rebecca Yahr asked members to send lichen photos to Amanda, whose email address is in the Bulletin. Amanda agreed and pointed out that our social media can be reached by: @bbslichens and @bbslichensf.

Comment from the floor: Paul Cannon encouraged Amanda to use the enthusiasm on our social media sites to get new members. Amanda replied that our membership has grown by 26 people since September and was now 592.

She and her husband Simon were thanked by Paul and were warmly applauded from the floor.

Field Meetings - Steve Price

Steve listed the six 2019 meetings which were in a wide range of geographical locations around the UK. Attendance was encouraging with a minimum of 11 and maximum of 27 attendees, averaging 19 per event. There are six field meetings and workshops planned for 2020 in Midlothian, North Yorkshire, North Harris, Aberdare South Wales coalfields, Worcestershire and Monmouthshire.

In 2021, the Dutch Bryological and Lichenological Society is celebrating its 75th jubilee with a special international meeting near Amsterdam. Steve thanked the local organisers and the workshop and field leaders and, of course, the attendees. He

reminded the meeting that BLS members can apply for grants to help with the cost of workshops and field meetings.

Paul thanked Steve for organising the frequently complex financial and booking arrangements involved in running these field meetings. He acknowledged how scientifically useful and enjoyable these trips and workshops are, and this was warmly applauded from the floor.

Archivist - Mark Seaward

Mark explained that although one third of the BLS Archives had been relocated to the Royal Botanic Garden Wales (with the help of Ray Woods) a decade ago, there is an increasingly urgent need for Council to address the problem of where to house this important resource in the near future some of which cannot be suitably transcribed onto digital platforms. Mark said that the Archives currently occupy 15 filing cabinets, 40 metres of shelving and several boxes. He argued eloquently that the BLS need a place and a paid Curator. Becky Yahr suggested that the BLS pay for the whole Archive to be securely stored. She suggested that the RBGE could take some of the Archives in mid-2022, although as much as possible would be selectively digitised, with the BLS expected to co-fund (with RBGE) the digital work.

Comment from the floor: Gothamie reported that all the lichen material including specimens, books, herself and our Minutes are going to be transferred from the NHM to the new science park at Harwell outside Oxford in the future.

The President thanked Mark for all his hard work looking after the Archives and assisting members with their frequent enquiries and his work on the mapping cards, and Mark received warm applause from the floor.

Herbarium Curator - Richard Brinklow

Richard reported another quiet year for the Herbarium which holds about 800 taxa. Like the Archives, he believes it should be curated in an Institution.

Overcollection of unusual species on Field Meetings is strongly discouraged and Richard wants fresh, clean microlichen specimens, preferably from forestry clearances and demolition sites to be sent to him. Specimens of lichenicolous fungi would also be appreciated. Paul thanked Richard for his curation of our Herbarium and for his active teaching involvement with several groups in Scotland. This was warmly applauded from the floor.

Librarian - Theresa Greenaway

Usage of the Library in 2019 continued to be low although there is an increasing use by National Botanic Garden of Wales staff who have become interested in lichens, following the popular lichen trail leaflets published a while ago. There have also been a few enquiries from BLS members about the presence of specific abstracts.

The increasing interest in lichenicolous species is not well covered in the Library. Last month a BLS member requested copies of 2 abstracts; one relating to lichens, which was not present in the BLS library, and one relating to a lichenicolous species. It was satisfying to be able to help by locating and then photocopying the latter

from the journal *Mycological Progress*, which is held in the Mycological section of the NBGW library.

Theresa also showed one of the library volunteers the volume of Acharius. This important tome is locked into a filing cabinet, but the volunteer felt that it was not being kept in the correct environment for such an important book. There are other copies of Acharius, properly curated, at the NHM, Kew and RBGE. There is a possibility of curating it properly at the Natural History Society of Northumberland where the book can be kept in its excellent, publicly accessible collection.

Election of Officers and Council

The President expressed his gratitude to all Officers of the Society for their support for the BLS over the past year, and especially to the incoming President, Rebecca Yahr and Vice President, Neil Sanderson. Kristina Bogomazova has resigned from Council and was thanked for her contributions and her place has been taken by Andy Cross. As the Society is in the process of transition to CIO status, when new trustees will be appointed, further changes in Ordinary members of Council were not proposed. Andy Acton and Graham Boswell agreed to continue past their normal terms of office until the new structure is in place.

All Officers and Ordinary members were duly elected unanimously by the membership present at the 2020 Annual General Meeting. They were as follows:

President: Rebecca Yahr	Secretary (Council): Eluned Smith
Vice President: Neil Sanderson	Archivist: Mark Seaward
Treasurer: John Skinner	Membership Secretary: vacant
<i>Bulletin</i> Editor: Maxine Putnam	Chair, Data committee: Paul Cannon
Librarian: Theresa Greenaway	Website Editor: Janet Simkin
Field Meetings Secretary: Steve Price	Herbarium Curator: Richard Brinklow
Secretary (Communications): Sandy Coppins	Data Manager: Janet Simkin
Chair, Conservation Committee: Bryan Edwards	
Chair, Education and Promotions Committee: Fay Newbery	
Senior Editors, <i>Lichenologist</i> , Chris Ellis and Leena Myllys	
Social Media coordinator: Amanda Davey	

Members of the Council: Andy Acton, Judith Allinson, Graham Boswell, Andy Cross, Ester Gaya, Heleen Plasier, Janet Simkin and Gothamie Weerakoon.

Election of an Honorary Member

Council has agreed to award Honorary Membership to the eminent Swiss lichenologist, Emeritus Professor Rosemarie Honegger. A statement of support and proposal from David Hawksworth was read to the meeting (see Summer Bulletin number 126; p162-163). The proposal, seconded by Rebecca Yahr, was approved by acclamation from members present at the AGM.

Date and Place of AGM 2021

The details of the 2021 AGM have yet to be finalised.

There being no other business, the meeting concluded at 1.00 pm.

**NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
January 30th 2021**

The Date and Place of the AGM 2021 was yet to be finalised but will probably be hosted by the Natural History Museum in London. Further details will be announced as soon as they are available.