

SYSTEMATICS ASSOCIATION ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2006

Minutes of the 66th AGM held at 5:00pm. Wednesday 6th December in the Meeting Room of the Linnean Society, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London

Present: Prof. Barry Leadbeater (President), Dr. Zofia Griffiths (Secretary), Dr. Colin Hughes (Treasurer), Dr Geraldine Reid (Membership Secretary), Dr William Baker (Chair, Programmes Subcommittee) and Dr Julie Hawkins (Chair elect, Grants & Awards Subcommittee) and 19 members were present.

1. **Minutes of the 2005 AGM.** The minutes of the previous AGM were accepted with minor corrections and then signed.

2. **Matters arising.** The President answered a question from the floor regarding the health of Dr Gordon Curry (Item 3 President's Business) and concluded by wishing Gordon well in his recovery.

3. **President's Business.** The President noted how much he had enjoyed his time in the role. He gave special thanks all those members of the Association, too numerous to mention individually by name, who had helped him through his time as President.

4. **The Treasurer's Annual Report.** Dr Colin Hughes provided a copy of the accounts for the year to the end of April 2006. He noted that the finances of the Association are always dominated by the biennial conference and this is reflected in the accounts for 2005-06, with more than 50% of income and expenditure associated with running the 5th Biennial conference held in Cardiff in August 2005. The Cardiff meeting had generated a useful surplus of funds in large part due to the generous support from the University of Cardiff and the National Museums and Galleries of Wales. This surplus is available to support both bursaries for the next biennial in 2007 and 2005-06 financial commitments. The surplus from the Biennial meant that income exceeded expenditure during 2005-06 by almost £7,000. Combined with an increase in value of the Association's investments in the first half of 2006, this meant that the overall assets of the Association increased to just over £90,000 at the end of the 2005-06 financial year. The Treasurer noted income from membership subscriptions and investments remained largely unchanged, but other important source of income, royalties from book sales, dropped significantly during 2005-06, a trend that has continued in the current financial year. This dip in income from royalties is likely to be temporary given the healthy list of new titles recently published or in production, but royalty income during the 2006-07 financial year is likely to be particularly low. This means there will be a significant excess of expenditure over income during 2006-07. This deficit combined with considerable upfront costs associated with the 2007 Biennial, pose significant cash flow demands for the first half of 2007 that will mean selling investments unless some additional income can be secured. Finally he concluded, it is worth noting that the Association continues to maintain a favourable preponderance of expenditure on its core activities (Systematics Research Fund, symposia and lectures), whilst keeping administrative costs (around 10% of total expenditure in 2005-06) to a minimum. The Treasurer asked the meeting to approve the accounts so that they will be ready for submission to the Charities Commission. The meeting approved the accounts and there were no questions.

5. **Membership Secretary's Annual Report.** Dr Geraldine Reid reported that membership currently stands at 420 members - 291 are fully paid up. This year there has been 42 withdrawals: - comprising of 3 deaths (Dr W. Le Quesne of Jersey who died 25 May 2006; Dr J. Hendelberg of Sweden who died beginning 2006 and Professor R. Ugborogho of Lagos Nigeria who passed away on 2 Sept 2004 but we have only just been informed). There have been 5 resignations (3 of which were due to retirement so no longer wanted to be active), 12 mail returned as no longer at institute and no forwarding address and the remainder (22) for non-payment of dues.

The current year has seen 12 new members joining the association plus a further 2 who had been deleted in the past for non payment re-joining the society. Finally the Membership Secretary thanked all those who have paid their subscriptions and to those that have encouraged their students to join the Association.

6. Programmes Subcommittee Annual Report. Dr Bill Baker reported the Association had co-sponsored or organised seven meetings in 2006. SA funding has been put towards a wide range of appropriate uses including the support of students and developing country participants, and to cover the costs of speakers. All of these meetings have attracted maximum participation. Two of the meetings will lead to SA publications.

The 2006 programme ran as follows:

11-12 April 2006

Symposium on the State of Molecular Systematics in Algae - Natural History Museum

Primary contact: Juliet Brodie and Jane Lewis

10-13 April 2006£

Palaeogeography and Palaeobiogeography: Biodiversity in Space and Time – Cambridge University

Primary contact: Claire Slater, NHM/University of Cambridge

5 July 2006

The Sir Julian Huxley Lecture

Loren Rieseberg, University of Indiana – “Species Evolution”

4 August 2006

Plants, People and Evolution – Linnean Society

Primary contact: Julie Hawkins & Mark Nesbitt

Use of grant: International air fares

Note: Meeting to mark retirement of Barbara Pickersgill

18-22 September 2006

Third International Rubiaceae Conference: Rubiaceae Systematics in the 21st Century – University of Leuven

Primary contact: Erik Smets

Co-sponsorship: Univ of Leuven and National Botanic Garden of Leuven

6 December 2006

Annual General Meeting – Linnean Society

Barry Leadbeater, University of Birmingham, Retiring SA President – “Simple but Smart: How our Closest Protozoan Relatives (The Choanoflagellates) Conquered the World”

7 December 2006

Young Systematists’ Forum – Natural History Museum

Primary contacts: Juliet Brodie, Jonathan Bennett

The Programme Secretary went on to outline a number of meetings to be held during the next year.

The 2007 programme focuses heavily on the forthcoming Biennial to be held at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Edinburgh on the 28-31 August. Within this meeting, two contrasting symposia are planned, the first on Speciation, organised by Pete Hollingsworth and colleagues, the second entitled “Floras and faunas serving biodiversity research” co-ordinated by Mark Watson.

The association is so far co-sponsoring one other meeting, “The Evolution of the Animal Phyla”, co-organised by Max Telford and Tim Littlewood at the Royal Society. The regular annual fixtures of the Sir Julian Huxley Lecture in Summer, the AGM Lecture and Young Systematists’ Forum will also take place.

Dr Baker concluded by gratefully acknowledging the support of my current subcommittee James Richardson, Juliet Brodie, Jonathan Bennett, Mark Wilkinson, Pete Hollingsworth, and three others, Julie Hawkins, Malte Ebach and Ray Tangney, who retired from the subcommittee this year.

7. The Editor-in-Chief's Annual Report

The President announced that Dr Alan Warren was unable to attend the meeting and asked the Secretary to read out his pre-prepared report.

2006 has been a very active year for the Association in terms of its publication programme with two volumes having been published and three in production. In addition the manuscripts of three more volumes are due to be submitted by the end of January 2007 and one further volume was contracted.

The two volumes published in 2006 were: *Neotropical Savannas and Dry Forests: Diversity, Biogeography and Conservation*, edited by Toby Pennington, Gwilym Lewis and James Ratter, and *Biogeography in a Changing World*, edited by Malte Ebach and Ray Tangney. Copies of both volumes are available in the Linnean Society library for members to peruse.

Of the three volumes in production, two have gone to press: *Pleurocarpous Mosses: Systematics and Evolution*, edited by Angela Newton, Ray Tangney and Efrain De Luna, which is due to appear in December 2006, and *The Taxonomy and Systematics of Large and Species-Rich Taxa: Building and Using the Tree of Life*, edited by Trevor Hodgkinson and John Parnell, which is likely to appear in January 2007. The third volume, *Biodiversity Databases: from Cottage Industry to Industrial Networks*, edited by Chris Humphries and Gordon Curry, has a scheduled publication date of April 2007.

The manuscripts of three volumes are at an advanced stage of preparation. These are: *Automated Object Identification: Theory, Approaches and Applications*, edited by Norman MacLeod, *Unravelling the Algae: the Past, Present and Future of Algal Systematics*, edited by Juliet Brodie and Jane Lewis and *The New Taxonomy*, edited by Quentin Wheeler. Submission of the latter has been slightly delayed by Quentin's relocation to the USA.

One volume was contracted in 2006: *Palaeogeography and Palaeobiogeography: Biodiversity in Space and Time* edited by Paul Upchurch, Alistair McGowan and Claire Slater, with a submission date of August 2007.

At the 2005 AGM, I reported the possibility of a new publishing venture for the Association, i.e. an electronic publication, initially aimed at those who wish to publish taxonomic monographs. A working group was set up to investigate but, following several meetings and discussions at Council, it was decided by Council that this initiative would not be pursued at least for now.

It just remains for me to thank the editors and contributors of the various volumes mentioned above for their hard work in supplying the content of our publications programme, and fellow members of the publications sub-committee Barry Leadbeater, Colin Hughes, Richard Bateman, Dave Roberts, and John Sulzyski our commissioning editor at CRC Press.

Dr D. Williams asked the President if the Association reviewed its relationship with its publishers. The President answered that Council under the guidance of Dr Warren kept a ongoing review of CRC Press.

The President was further questioned if he was happy with CRC Press. The President and President Elect responded saying that a number of issues had been raised with CRC Press and some of these had been addressed. However the matter would be discussed further in 2007 under the leadership of Professor Richard Bateman the incoming President.

8. Grants & Awards Subcommittee Annual Report

The President announced that Dr Tim Littlewood was unable to attend the meeting and asked Dr Julie Hawkins to read out his pre-prepared report.

On behalf of Dr Tim Littlewood, I am presenting reviews of two items concerning small grants and prizes given out in the name of the Association.

- **The Systematics Research Fund (SRF)** is funded jointly by the Systematics Association and The Linnean Society of London, and includes funds from the Bentham Moxson Trust and the Natural Environment Research Council Fund for Taxonomic Publication.
- For 2006, the SRF attracted 84 applications from 29 countries requesting a total of >£92,500.
- This represents an increase in interest from the previous year of: 24 additional applications, 8 additional countries and an additional £27,000 requested.
- 29 SRF awards were made, totalling £29,332, and one NERC award for Taxonomic Publication was made, totalling £1,440.
- 16 of the applicants were UK based.

With the SRF securely in place, Prof Richard Bateman, on behalf of the Association and The Linnean Society of London, was able to complete negotiations successfully with BBSRC in establishing the BBSRC Collaborative Scheme for Systematics Research (CoSyst) to provide short-term funding for new collaborative research in systematics [*full details are on the Associations' web site*].

- **Cosyst** will run for 3 years in the first instance. Funding will be more substantial than SRF awards, allowing applicants to seek funding for grants from £2000 to £20,000. CoSyst will be accepting and deliberating applications during the next reporting year.

As last year Young Systematist's Forum took place the day before the AGM, and this year's takes place tomorrow, there are no winners for 2005 or 2006 to be reported. The winners for 2005 were reported at the last AGM.

Finally, having been in the role as Chair of the Grants & Awards Committee since the Third Biennial in 2001, Dr Littlewood has chosen to step down from the position, to be succeeded by Dr Julie Hawkins. Dr Littlewood would like to convey his sincere thanks to all members of the Association and Council for their help and support in effecting the duties of the Committee during such a prosperous period. In particular, all the members of the various judging panels are thanked for their tireless efforts in ranking the ever-increasing numbers of SRF applications, student talks and student posters, and applications for Biennial bursaries.

Prof Richard Bateman added his grateful thanks for her assistance in the negotiations with BBSRC to secure the CoSyst scheme.

Dr Hawkins added that online electronic applications were available on the Systematics Associations Website for the SRF, CoSyst and Biennial Bursary awards. Paper applications were no longer possible.

Dr D. Williams asked the Dr Hawkins if the Association could be sure that moving away from paper based award applications to electronic forms allowed it to remain inclusive to all potential applicants. Dr Hawkins responded saying that the matter had been discussed and approved by Council. It was also pointed out that previously the forms had to be downloaded from the website. Dr Hawkins concluded that Council had agreed to review the use of online only applications after the current round and that the matter of paper applications would be raised.

9. Elections of Council Members

Prof Barry Leadbeater formally welcomed Prof Richard Bateman as the new President of the Association and also Dr Julie Hawkins as the new Chair of the Grants and Awards subcommittee.

The Secretary read out the names of the six nominations for members of Council and asked the meeting to accept their election. The following were duly elected, namely: Dr P. Rudall (RBG Kew), Dr M. Ruta (Univ. Bristol), Dr D. Williams (NHM London), Dr R. Scotland (Univ. Oxford), Dr A. Vogler (Imperial College) and Dr P. Olson (NHM London).

10. Any other business

There being no further business Prof Barry Leadbeater concluded the proceedings by again thanking all those who had supported him during his Presidency. He noted his membership of the Association for many

years and had watched the hard work by many people behind the scenes. His three year term as President started with the Williams Report which yielded the Sir Julian Huxley summer lecture as one of its outcomes. He went on to mention the enjoyable Cardiff and commented that the new President would have to oversee two biennials at Edinburgh in 2007 and Leiden in 2009. Prof Leadbetter hoped that better European links would be a feature of the future years and that great benefit had been made through combining the Linnean Society and SA awards to create the Systematics Research Fund as well as the new CoSyst Fund. Finally Prof Leadbeater paid tribute to the past Presidents of the Association particularly Prof Chris Humphries whom he succeeded and wished Prof Richard Bateman all the very best for the future,

Prof Bateman responded by thanking Prof Leadbeater for his work as President with a safe pair of hands and a high level of geniality at council meetings.

The meeting closed at 5.55pm