

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2007

**MINUTES** of the 104th Annual General Meeting of the British Pteridological Society held on Saturday 4th March 2007 at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh at 14.00 hrs.

[*Preamble.* These minutes were prepared by Graham Ackers using, for most of the Officers' and Committee Appointees' Reports, written reports supplied by the post holders. These minutes have been reviewed by Adrian Dyer, Robert Sykes, Yvonne Golding and Alison Paul, and their approval will be sought at the next Annual General Meeting on 5th April 2008. Notes, not being part of the minutes, are enclosed in square brackets as is this one.]

**IN THE CHAIR:** The President, Dr Adrian Dyer.

**PRESENT:** Graham Ackers, Pat Acock, Tony Braithwaite, Rob Cooke, Jonathan Crowe, Adrian Dyer, Grant Fortune, Mary Gibby, Tim Godfrey, Roger Golding, Yvonne Golding, Alec Greening, Michael Hayward, Jennifer Ide, Frank Katzer, Howard Matthews, Bridget Laue, Richard Lewis, Frank McGavigan, Heather McHaffie, Steve Munyard, Chris Nicholson, Alison Paul, Mike Porter, Tim Pyner, Martin Rickard, Paul Sharp, Harvey Shepherd, Bryan Smith, Gill Smith, Alex Storie, Matt Stribley, Robert Sykes, Mike Taylor, Ken Trewren, Alastair Wardlaw, Maurice Wilkins.

**Item 1 – APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** Matt Busby, John Edgington, Peter Freshwater, Andy MacGregor, James Merryweather, Joy Neal, Anthony Pigott, Paul Ripley.

**Item 2 – APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES:** Minutes of the 103rd Annual General Meeting of the British Pteridological Society held on Saturday 25th March 2006 and published in the 2006 *Bulletin* (Vol. 6, No. 5) were approved and signed by the Chairman.

**Item 3 – MATTERS ARISING:** There were none.

### **Item 4 – OFFICERS' REPORTS**

**Item 4a – REPORT OF THE GENERAL SECRETARY (Yvonne Golding):** Prior to the AGM 2006 the Committee recognised that the duties of the Secretary had increased as the Society's activities expanded. As a result, following the retirement of Jennifer Ide as Secretary, it was agreed to split the post: Graham Ackers took on the role of Committee Secretary, which involves servicing the Committee meetings and the AGM, and Yvonne Golding took on the role of General Secretary, which deals with all other duties, including external matters. I am pleased to report that this has worked well.

There have been quite a few changes on the committee during 2006. We now have a new treasurer (Gill Smith), Membership Secretary (Mike Taylor), Chairman of Publications Sub Committee (Martin Rickard), Plant Exchange Organiser (Jonathan Crowe) and Booksales Organiser (Frank Katzer). We have created some new posts: a Data Integrity Officer (Michael Hayward) to reflect our growing dependence on computer technology and a Project Officer (Anthony Pigott) to mobilise our membership to increase and pool our knowledge about ferns.

The Society has a very busy programme at the regional level and we note that four out of our six regional group leaders are retiring: Barry Wright has run the Leeds and District group (now renamed The Yorkshire Fern Group) for ten years; Barrie Stevenson has managed the East Anglia Group for ten years; Ian Bennallick has run the Cornish group for four years and Robert Sykes the North-West Group for two years. We thank them for their service and wish their successors – Bruce Brown, Tim Pyner, Matt Stribley and Peter Campion – the best of luck in the future.

Finally, we note that James Merryweather, editor of *Pteridologist*, wishes to retire. During his two periods of office James will have edited ten issues with the publication of the 2007

edition. He has completely re-vamped the format, taking the *Pteridologist* into the world of colour. We know he will be a hard act to follow but we urgently need a successor who will be given all necessary support.

The Committee met in August and October 2006 and January 2007. One of the first things we did was to define the terms of appointment for committee positions. It was agreed that Executive Officers and Committee Appointments should serve five years initially but this could be renewable. We felt this was a less daunting prospect for potential newcomers considering taking up these positions. The term of office for the President remains unchanged at three years.

We looked again at the role of Vice-Presidents, concluding that this should be a working role, not automatically awarded for long service or having been a President. We can have up to six Vice-Presidents at any one time, each serving a period of six years, which is now renewable.

During 2006 the committee decided to award three pteridologists honorary membership, which they have all gratefully accepted. These are John Mickel, Chris Page and Alan Smith. You can read their citations in this issue of the *Bulletin*.

Last year we awarded a grant from the Centenary Fund to Ken Trewren to investigate fern hybrids in Ireland. A short account of his work appeared in the 2006 *Bulletin*.

You will also have read in the 2006 *Bulletin* that the committee has instigated the J.W. Dyce Award in memory of Jimmy Dyce. This will take the form of an annual cash prize (the first to be awarded for 2007) for the best piece of published work in any of the Society's publications or on the website.

Last year saw the realisation of the much-awaited BPS Special Publication No. 9 on Fern Books by Nigel Hall and Martin Rickard.

An important issue that the committee had to address was the use of the term 'fern allies'. In the light of recent developments in pteridology we took the decision not to use this term but instead to refer to 'lycophytes' (which are the clubmosses and quillworts) and 'ferns' (which include ferns and horsetails). The remit of the Society, however, remains unchanged, as will our name, and our focus will continue to embrace both groups. It will take a long time for this new nomenclature to be generally used, so if in doubt refer to ferns, horsetails, clubmosses and quillworts, which is unambiguous and correct, if a bit long-winded!

During the past year Graham Ackers and Jennifer Ide have been incorporating the BPS herbarium into the RHS herbarium at Wisley. Jennifer Ide has also been working on an application for a possible grant to develop the BPS archive and is making efforts to find it a permanent home. Frank McGavigan has been re-invigorating the recording of ferns through taking the initiative in Scotland. Michael Hayward has been surveying the Jones' Nature Prints with a view to their eventual publication. The committee are deliberating as to what form this publication should take and what should happen to the original prints. Michael also successfully co-ordinated our BPS stand at the Southport Flower Show, continuing our representation there that was instigated by Matt Busby.

At this point it is my sad duty to bring to your notice the passing, in the last year, of seven members of our Society. Doreen Holly of Oxford joined in 1979 and was a regular at BPS meetings for many years. She was a gardener, growing many fine ferns and a keen Rambler who cared deeply about the environment. Rosemary Stevenson of Suffolk was a family member for about six years though she had been associated with the Society for longer than that by supporting her husband Barrie during his ten years as organiser of the East Anglia Group. Other members include Dr R.A. Finch of Cambridge who joined the Society in

1968, Dr Anthony Griffin of Cornwall who joined in 2004, Mr Malcolm Heywood of East Yorkshire who joined in 2002, Mr Graham Thomsit of London, a member since 1980 and Mr Bryan Williams of Northants, since 1996. The Society sends its condolences to all their families.

In this coming year some of our time will be taken with the drawing up of a new constitution to reflect the changes we have made in the running of the Society and also to bring our Society in line with new Charity Law. This new constitution will be presented at our AGM in 2008. Our registration as a charity, which involved a lot of work during the presidency of Alastair Wardlaw, has been a very positive and advantageous move for the Society. However, we must not forget that as a charity we have obligations not just to our members but also to the general public, so we must continue to be outward looking and come up with new and interesting ways of promoting ferns to everyone.

In conclusion, we are saying goodbye (or hopefully *au revoir*) to our President, Adrian Dyer, and welcoming the new one, Robert Sykes. Adrian has worked extremely hard on our behalf over the last three years, putting in place his vision for the future of the Society. His three-pronged approach was much more wide-ranging than simply Education, Education, Education but rather, Publications, Meetings and Projects with plenty of Education thrown in for good measure. In the near future we will be holding a planning meeting to build on Adrian's legacy and set out some objectives to take the Society forward into the 21st century.

Following this report, Jennifer Ide passed on Barrie Stevenson's gratitude for his wife Rosemary's remembrance in the *Bulletin*.

Acceptance of the report was proposed by Mike Porter, seconded by Grant Fortune, and approved by the meeting.

**Item 4b – REPORT OF THE TREASURER (Gill Smith):** The Treasurer distributed a draft set of the 2006 accounts, commenting that the layout was slightly different to the previous year, but the finances were essentially similar. Catching up with the backlog of *Fern Gazette* issues had resulted in an expenditure increase in this item. She pointed out that only the Centenary and Greenfield Funds were marked as restricted (ring fenced) at the moment but a case could be made for restricting other areas e.g. Publications. She also pointed out that the recent Chancellor's budget would mean a disappointing reduction in Inland Revenue Gift Aid income in 2008. Grant Fortune queried the increase in postage; this resulted partly from substantial increases in overseas postal charges. The Treasurer brought to the attention of all members at the AGM that there may be difficulties this year in getting the accounts audited, as Nick Hards had been seriously ill and there was no other examiner appointed. She asked for a volunteer to help out in this role as a second examiner when the elections took place later in the day. [Note that the final accounts for 2006 appear elsewhere in this *Bulletin*]. Acceptance of the report was proposed by Mike Taylor, seconded by Michael Hayward, and approved by the meeting.

**Item 4c – REPORT OF THE MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY (Mike Taylor):** Membership numbers suffered a decline in 2006, the overall total dropping from an impressive 793 in 2005, to a disappointing 746. This decline appears to have affected us across the board with a fall of 40 Ordinary and Family members and a drop of six Subscribers (Universities and Libraries). On the face of it a drop of six Subscriber members does not sound serious but the situation is in fact worse than it appears since, at the time of writing this report, a further 12 Subscribers had not paid for 2006. It should be mentioned at this point that, as regards deadlines for payment of fees, we tend to give extra latitude to Subscribers since many are based in comparatively remote areas of the world and many are in contact with us solely through agents. Nevertheless, if after a further reminder at the start

of this year, there is no response their membership will have to be cancelled. This could mean a loss of up to 18 Subscribers out of 92 in the space of one year – which is worrying.

Looking at the general situation from a slightly different angle, we see that there were 64 new members in 2006 (as opposed to 86 in 2005) and that in 2006 83 members resigned or lapsed, compared with 67 in 2005. This can be summed up as fewer new members plus a greater than normal loss of established members.

Can we pinpoint any reasons for this? Resigning members sometimes give a reason for withdrawing their support, usually along the lines of “old age and decrepitude” or “other financial commitments” but the sole critical comment made in 2006 was that the journals did not provide enough information on cultivation. None of the Subscribers who failed to pay gave any indication of why. Could it be the apparent lateness of the *Fern Gazettes*? I use the term ‘apparent’ because we delivered the standard number of pages for Volume 17 of this journal within the required time-span (by the end of 2006), although the delivery was somewhat erratic! Could it be that the decline in membership, which, anecdotally, has hit most small societies over the last few years has at last started to affect us as well? Could it be that we simply don’t provide what the fern-loving members of the public require? Suggestions are welcome!

A reduction in the number of members in a society inevitably leads to a drop in the amount of Gift Aid received and this indeed has occurred. However, the fall has not been as great as might be expected. In 2005, 207 members enabled us to reclaim £1,129.52 in Gift Aid, in 2006 the equivalent figures were 206 members and £1,118.88 – a very worthwhile sum. In the four years for which we have been able to claim Gift Aid we have received just short of £4,000.

Finally, I would like to thank my predecessor Mike Porter for all the help he has given me in my first three months in office.

Following the report, a discussion took place on possible reasons for the drop in membership and ways to avoid further drops. Points put forward were:

- There may be a decline in the interest of institutions
- The idea of electronic subscriptions could be explored
- On-line publication policies could be reviewed
- There may be insufficient coverage for gardeners in the *Pteridologist*; competent gardeners reluctant to put pen to paper could be interviewed as an alternative to their producing an article
- The Society should extend its presence at garden shows
- Advertisements could be placed in magazines such as *BBC Gardeners’ World* or (more locally) the *Suffolk Gardener*
- The *Pteridologist* could run a series of articles on growing different types of ferns
- There could be a Q&A feature in the *Pteridologist*
- One of the aims of re-formatting the *Pteridologist* was potentially to enable sales outside the Society – could this idea be pursued?
- Change the name of the Society to the more accessible ‘British Fern Society’.

[These points will be considered by the Committee.]

**Item 4d – REPORT OF THE MEETINGS SECRETARY (Pat Acock):** The weather was superb and I had the very good fortune to attend nearly all the meetings. Our leaders did us proud once again. Someone on the meetings’ sub-committee rings a candidate from out of the blue and they just seem to make it happen. We are so very fortunate to have people not only to serve on the sub-committee but also to find people who are willing to throw themselves into the preparation with such gusto.

All the meetings were superb and I must record on your behalf our grateful thanks to all our leaders and organisers. Thanks go to Barrie Stevenson, Graham Ackers, Barry Wright, Mike Hayward, Matt Stribley and Paul Ripley and all those who helped them. I must mention especially our grateful thanks to Dr Berndt Peters who was one of those people who received an e-mail from me out of the blue and said he would lead a meeting. He produced a meeting of ten days in Germany that was as towering in its organisation as it was intricate in its attention to detail. Also our very grateful thanks must go to Edmond Grangaud who not only had to put up with Paul Ripley and me in 2006 but spent another three days with us this year as well as coming out with us every day in the field when the main group arrived in his tropical paradise. Such wonderful generous people and we should be so grateful.

Our Autumn Indoor Meeting was disappointingly attended although of the 28 attendees we did have one member who travelled from Ireland, two from Wales and three from Scotland. The speakers and organiser really did deserve better than that especially from those who live so close to the capital. I am disappointed for them but also for the people who missed such an informative event that cannot be repeated in the near future as we will want to do other things.

Following the report, Robert Sykes thanked Pat Acock for all his work, and this was endorsed by Adrian Dyer.

**Item 4e – REPORT OF THE CONSERVATION OFFICERS (Fred Rumsey & Heather McHaffie):** No report given.

**Item 4f – REPORT OF THE FERN GAZETTE EDITOR (Mary Gibby):** After apologising for the recent publication delays, Mary announced that there was now sufficient copy for the next two issues, thus further delays were unlikely this year. It was felt to be a good idea to publish review articles, and more would be sought. Andrew Leonard continued to help with the editing, and was also producing an index using Mary's mark-ups.

Martin Rickard thanked Mary and Andrew for their work.

**Item 4g – REPORT OF THE BULLETIN EDITOR (Alison Paul):** The 2006 *Bulletin* was distributed two weeks before the AGM. On account of the number of meetings being reported, including two large overseas ones, the issue was once again large and had necessitated a considerable amount of micro-formatting.

Graham Ackers queried whether there could be more and larger photographs, and whether they could be printed in colour. This was discussed, and the following points emerged:

- The inclusion of colour photographs might entail formatting difficulties for the editor
- Photographs in the Bulletin used to be fewer and larger
- It was important to strike the right subject balance between people and ferns
- A portfolio of colour photographs could be included on the BPS website
- A quotation for the inclusion of colour photographs should be obtained.

[These points will be discussed by the Committee.]

**Item 4h – REPORT ON THE PTERIDOLOGIST (presented by Martin Rickard):** Our editor James Merryweather is standing down following the next issue. Potentially this is a problem, and members were urged to contact Martin if they felt they could help with any aspect of the editing. It was noted that, for various unavoidable reasons, last year's issue was late, and should have appeared in May as had been customary.

**Item 4i – REPORT OF THE WEBSITE EDITOR (Anthony Pigott, read by Graham Ackers in his absence):**

- Routine updates have gone ahead in a timely manner.

- A number of significant enhancements have been made this year, e.g. Fern Crib, full up to date *Fern Gazette* contents/abstracts, fern nursery listings.
- Photographs – permission has been obtained from a number of non-BPS photographers.
- We still need more contributions, especially photographs and material from other officers/editors.
- We have had serious problems with the hosting at the NHM, only very recently resolved, resulting in a period of over two months without being able to update the website. This has caused significant delays to our plans for the first half of the year.
- New items that are in the backlog now being cleared include completely revised BPS Society pages (to be co-ordinated with the *Bulletin* editor), a ‘Recording’ section, ‘Where to see Ferns in the Wild’, an ‘Editor’s Blog’ and special publication ‘flyer’.
- We will shortly announce the date of a website ‘re-launch’ later this year, to mark ten years of the website. By this time, all the website will follow the revised style and new structure along with a new navigation menu that will allow direct access to all pages. We will mark the re-launch with publicity both through the usual Society channels and through a range of external and sometimes novel routes on the internet. We must try to take advantage of all appropriate modern methods of digital communication. I like to think of the Society with one foot planted in the nineteenth century and the other firmly in the twenty-first!

**Item 4j – REPORT ON SPECIAL PUBLICATIONS (presented by Martin Rickard):** *Polystichum Cultivars* had sold around 200 copies, and the more recently published *Fern Books* around 100. Any ideas for further Special Publications should be forwarded to Martin. The series editor, Barry Thomas, was intending to stand down.

#### **Item 5 – COMMITTEE APPOINTEES’ REPORTS**

**Item 5a – REPORT OF THE PROJECT OFFICER (Anthony Pigott, read by Graham Ackers in his absence):** The basic principles of how the Project Officer will operate have been discussed and agreed by the committee. We hope to have regular reviews to agree the main project areas to focus on, aligning these with the current priorities of the Society.

- Funding is important to many potential projects and we will be looking at how to make best use of currently available resources and at ways to increase the amounts available.
- A New ‘Projects’ section on the website is imminent.
- ‘Quick Win’: Fern Crib to be published on website – this is now complete.
- ‘Quick Win’: ‘Affinis Watch’ re-invigorated. There’s been a lot of *affinis* related activity recently. It’s a sometimes sensitive area with strong personalities involved and often opposing views on the taxonomy (both inside and outside the pteridological community). New website material is being prepared which will serve the original objectives of providing up-to-date information and encouraging recording.
- ‘Quick Win’: BSBI data exchange. Much good work has been done independently in Scotland; I expect to be able to use this to help produce a general procedure with support to make it ‘routine’. I expect to meet with BSBI representatives shortly to confirm this.
- Electronic Publication: There are many, sometimes opposing views on what is appropriate to publish electronically. We are discussing the issues within the Publications Sub-committee with a view to establishing what we can all agree on with the intention of then starting an implementation project.
- Revitalised recording and data transfer: This follows from the data transfer and other recording initiatives already underway. I am working on a plan to co-ordinate this.
- Generally, some project areas may sometimes proceed with little direct involvement from the Project Officer. I don’t see this as a problem! The important thing is that our objectives are achieved.

**Item 5b – REPORT OF THE SPORE EXCHANGE ORGANISERS (Barry & Anne Wright, read by Graham Ackers in their absence):** The exchange continues to be a popular service offered to members. The new procedures for the 2006 spore exchange were implemented. The spore list was only sent out to those requesting a list and members had to apply for a list with their autumn mailing. The main benefit for us was that we were in complete control of the publication of the list and the time window for the distribution itself. Hopefully members were happy with these new procedures. There was also a major saving on paper and ink (and potentially postage) in not printing 700+ copies for everyone, compared to the eventual 132 lists which were requested. There were 76 requests for an electronic version, again reducing the paper usage. We have not had any adverse comments so far. We had a total of 132 (158 in 2005 and 133 in 2004) requests, 91 (107 in 2005 and 99 in 2004) from the UK and 41 (51 in 2005 and 34 in 2004) from overseas, so it seems that we have not made it too difficult and put anyone off applying with our new procedures.

Each year we tweak the wording of our literature to intercept some misunderstandings that seem to creep in. But also it seems that some members do not read the information carefully enough. We had people sending stamps when requesting postal spore lists. This postage is borne by the Society and is not asked for on the form. We still have trouble with some overseas members having difficulty obtaining IRCs and ensuring that they are franked by their issuing office. We may be able to accept money using 'Paypal' or offering to have a contribution for the spore exchange as an add-on to their subscription in future.

We do have problems when members ask for 'your choice' or 'pot luck', for their alternatives. This not only puts us under pressure to guess what sort of things they might like, but could potentially lead us to give them a taxon that another member may specifically want, but may not get, because we had given this to an earlier requester as a 'pot luck' species. Please don't ask us to choose for you, or we might send you ten packets of bracken!!

Another slight problem is with some donations that have leaked out of their packets en route to us, or alternatively are so securely fastened with sticky tape that it's impossible to get at them. Occasionally virtually all the spores end up stuck to the tape, which is such a waste of the donor's efforts in collecting them for us. However, we are totally dependant on the donors for the success of the exchange, so please don't be offended if we give a little 'feedback' about your donation.

Thanks for all your support. Here's to the next one.

Following this report, Adrian Dyer made the point that the Spore Exchange organisers would probably require additional support in the future. Regarding the point about overseas postage, since this report was written, the committee have agreed that the Society will waive postage charges for overseas members as well as UK members.

**Item 5c – REPORT OF THE PLANT EXCHANGE ORGANISER (Jonathan Crowe):** Donor forms were distributed with the autumn 2006 mailing. The Plant Exchange List was compiled and distributed at the end of February 2007.

Statistics for taxa offered are shown below.

Status Code	Plant Status Description	No. in 2003	No. in 2004	No. in 2005	No. in 2007
Sp0	Sporeling less than 1 year old	3	10	0	0
Sp1	Sporeling 1-2 years old	8	13	15	13
Sp2	Sporeling 2-3 years old	10	13	15	7
Esp	Established plant	3	11	39	7

Bul	Bulbil	7	0	0	1
Rhs	Rhizomes	9	11	1	1
	Plant status not stated by donor	21	0	0	0
	<b>Totals</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>58</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>29</b>

The statistics for participants are shown below.

Category of Participant	2003	2004	2005	2007
Donors (also receive list of course)	8	6	8	7
List requesters	10	16	19	13
Exclusively with wants	16	8	-	-
<b>Total Number of Participants</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>20</b>

It can be seen that participation in the scheme continues to decline. A possible reason may be that the autumn mailing is not a good time to distribute donor forms. Next year (2008) the intention is to distribute the forms with the *Bulletin* mailing. This will allow donors a better chance to assess what they have available and for the Plant Exchange List to be distributed in the early summer, giving a more favourable season for growing and distributing plants.

It is also intended to reintroduce the 'Wants' side of the scheme as a means of increasing interest.

**Item 5d – REPORT OF THE BOOKSALES MANAGER (Frank Katzer):** The major change for BPS Booksales has been that Steve Munyard has stepped down and I have taken over from him. The handover of the books took place at the beginning of October and since then I also have picked up the book collection of the late Trevor Walker, who bequeathed his books to the Society. I am in the process of cataloguing and pricing them and a list of available books will go out with one of the next mailings to members. The acquisition of second-hand and antiquarian fern books at reasonable prices is becoming more difficult, as pointed out by Steve in the past. As a result, BPS Booksales relies more on bequeathed and donated books to be able to offer fern books to BPS members at reasonable prices. With the next mailing I hope to provide more information about what services BPS Booksales is going to offer..

Following this report, Adrian Dyer thanked Frank for taking over Booksales.

**Item 5e – REPORT OF THE MERCHANDISE MANAGERS (Bryan & Gill Smith):** 2006 was another busy year for Merchandising, particularly as Gill took on the role of BPS Treasurer and Bryan concentrated on the Merchandise. We dealt with nearly 30 orders, which came mainly from the UK, but also as far afield as the USA, Canada, Australia, France, Belgium and Eire. Overall, intake amounted to over £1,300, somewhat less than the £2,000 for 2005. Details were available in the Merchandise accounts, with a summary in the Treasurer's account distributed.

So what was different in 2006? Well, probably the main reason for fewer sales is that Pat Acock kindly took over sales of Special Publications, which had been a big seller for us in 2005.

Mail order continues to be our main outlet for sales, but we did sell items face-to-face to members by making use of the AGM in Cambridge and at national meetings in Yorkshire in July, in Cornwall in September, and at the November 'Books' indoor meeting. We also sold items at our local East Anglia regional meeting, and colleagues in the north again sold a number of items at Southport Flower Show and at their North-West AGM.

Despite plans not to introduce any new items, we did trial John Mickel's US fern calendar, but with only limited success. Again, thanks to Anne Wright, we continued to add new varieties of her lovely fern greetings cards, including more designs of Christmas cards. The merchandise list that was distributed with the autumn mailing boasts some 17 ranges and a total of nearly 40 individual products. The list continues to be available through the BPS website, and we send out copies when we fulfil orders.

This year, we hope to add photographs of items to the website. If anyone has any ideas for ferny items they'd really like to see, please do let us know.

Following the report there was a brief discussion on the sales of the calendars produced by John and Carol Mickel for 2006 and 2007. For future years, consideration would be given to producing a BPS calendar.

**Item 5f – REPORT OF THE HORTICULTURAL INFORMATION OFFICER (Matt Busby, read by Graham Ackers in his absence):** I am pleased to report that I have been able to assist with four enquiries this year. The queries ranged from the identification of various ferns from photographs, the availability of spores, particular species for research and a response to an article published by me in the 2001 *Pteridologist*.

It should be noted that answers to such queries do not depend entirely on my grey matter but that within the Society, we have a wealth of knowledge and experience for me to draw on enabling me to answer any questions.

**Item 5g – REPORT OF THE ARCHIVIST (Matt Busby, read by Graham Ackers in his absence):** For the first time since the inception of the Society, we can now quickly retrieve from the Society's archive any material requested. This year, we received a request from a Warwickshire branch of the University of the Third Age (U3A), for colour-slides of the life history of a fern to illustrate a lecture on this subject by a member of the U3A. I am pleased to report that we received a letter of thanks from that branch complementing us on the excellent quality of the slides that we supplied.

Work on cataloguing the Society's slide collection is on-going and should be completed by the spring of 2007.

**Item 5h – REPORT OF THE FERN VARIETIES NOMENCLATURE SUB-COMMITTEE (Matt Busby, read by Graham Ackers in his absence):** Once again I must report that this subcommittee has not had any business since my last report for 2005. Unless some matters that require discussion present themselves during 2007, it is unlikely that this subcommittee will meet. At present the subcommittee consists of Dr Alan Leslie, Martin Rickard and Matt Busby (convener).

Acceptance of the above reports (items 4c to 5h) was proposed by Frank McGavigan, seconded by Jennifer Ide, and approved by the meeting. Adrian Dyer pointed out that the above reports do not include those of the Regional Organisers, but we should recognise the importance of the regional activities to the membership. The regional meetings reports are, however, included in the *Bulletin*. Adrian thanked all of the Officers, Committee Appointees, and their respective helpers for their hard work during the year.

**Item 6 – ELECTION OF OFFICERS, COMMITTEE AND INDEPENDENT EXAMINER:**

Having served his three-year term, Dr Adrian Dyer retired from the Presidency at this meeting. Mr Robert W. Sykes was proposed as the new President by Adrian Dyer and seconded by Yvonne Golding.

Both Mr Martin H. Rickard and Prof. Barry A. Thomas retired as Vice-presidents at this meeting having served their six-year terms. Mr Rob J. Cooke was proposed as a new Vice-

president by Adrian Dyer, seconded by Alison Paul. Mr Mike S. Porter was proposed as a new Vice-president by Graham Ackers, seconded by Frank McGavigan.

All of the Officers will retire, but are available for re-election. They are – General Secretary Dr Yvonne C. Golding, Treasurer Mrs Gillian J. Smith, Membership Secretary Mr Mike G. Taylor, Meetings Secretary Mr Patrick J. Acock, Conservation Officers Dr Heather S. McHaffie and Dr Fred J. Rumsey, *Fern Gazette* Editor Prof. Mary Gibby, *Pteridologist* Editor Dr James W. Merryweather, *Bulletin* Editor Miss Alison M. Paul, Website Editor Mr Anthony C. Pigott.

Two of the longest serving Elected Committee Members who retired at this AGM were Mr R. Graham Ackers and Mr Bryan D. Smith, both having served since March 2004. On being elected President, Mr Robert Sykes resigned as an Elected Committee Member. The other committee members will also retire, but are available for re-election – Mr A.R. ('Matt') Busby, Dr Michael Hayward, Dr Sylvia D. Martinelli and Mr Frank McGavigan.

The following new Elected Committee Members were proposed:

Prof. John A. Edgington, proposed Yvonne Golding, seconded Martin Rickard.

Mr Roger Golding, proposed Adrian Dyer, seconded Yvonne Golding.

Mr Howard W. Matthews, proposed Pat Acock, seconded Alison Paul.

Mr Matt J. Stribley, proposed Bryan Smith, seconded Gill Smith.

All the nominees and those available for re-election as listed above were duly elected unanimously by the meeting [see the inside cover of this *Bulletin* for a full list of Officers and Committee].

Dr Nick J. Hards had agreed to be nominated by the Committee for re-election as Independent Examiner of the accounts. However, in view of Nick Hards' recent illness, Mr Alex Storie offered to act as a second Independent Examiner, and this offer was gratefully accepted by the meeting.

Adrian Dyer pointed out that it was proposed to change the status of some of the committee positions when the constitution is re-drafted. [See the report of the General Secretary in item 4a above for an account of some of these proposed changes.]

#### **Item 7 – ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Robert Sykes thanked Adrian Dyer for his skill, enthusiasm and hard work during his three-year Presidency. He had stimulated people already in post and persuaded some new and excellent people to come on board – a vital skill in a Society with many facets, run entirely by volunteers. He had brought some additional clarity to our publications, meetings, and projects activities, and had established the new post of Project Officer. In concluding, Robert hoped that we would continue to enjoy his skill and congenial company in other roles.

**Graham Ackers**  
**Committee Secretary**