

The Geological Society of London

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Minutes of the meeting held at Burlington House on 8 June 2011

The President confirmed that the Bye-laws in Section 9 relating to meetings had been observed. Under Paragraph 9.10, non-Fellows could be present but may not vote.

1. APOLOGIES

Noted.

2. MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON 2 JUNE 2010

These were agreed.

3. APPOINTMENT OF SCRUTINEERS

Two scrutineers were appointed for the ballots for Council and Officers, and Fellows were asked to vote for the new Council for 2011/12.

4. BALLOT FOR COUNCIL

The Ballot for Council was declared open.

5. ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS FOR 2010

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The President asked the meeting to consider two days in the life of the Society. On the first, he visited Cardiff for a debate between six schools, organised by the South Wales Regional Group, about humans and their planet. He had asked participants to identify those matters in their presentations that they considered to be established "beyond reasonable doubt" and those about which they were most uncertain. The idea that the Society can emulate the legal profession to move "beyond reasonable doubt" in public assertions about socially significant matters had been invoked in 2010 when the previous President and Council had asked a group of notable scholars from the Fellowship to produce a statement on climate change. The result, communicated in a report presented by the Group Chair Colin Summerhayes, would stand as a model of how these things should be done. The advantages of such an approach were immediate when, for example, the Society was asked to make a response on shale gas.

The second day was in November at the final day of a joint meeting at the Society co-hosted with the British Ecological Society. The latest research on carbon isotope excursions and on the ecological impact of the current excursion was presented and discussed. Following this fundamental science session the group was joined by policy makers and others in public life to discuss, before a Panel composed of Professors David Mackay, John Raven and the President, the social and political implications of the scientists' conclusions.

These events, and many like them, were not instigated or delivered in isolation. Each was designed to contribute towards realising the Society's 10-year Strategy to promote the geosciences. The delivery of such events was

monitored and success the norm, not least because of the commitment of the staff. Thus, the Cardiff debate was expertly integrated into a range of educational activity. The statement on climate change was published and featured at that November joint meeting with the BES and was preceded and followed by many other events that serve both science and profession.

The President concluded by saying that it was now two decades since science and profession came together in the present-day Geological Society of London. In public affairs, the Society's collective wisdom was increasingly giving it a significant voice without jeopardising its traditional eager promotion of individual academic specialisms to each other. In 2010 it was made clear that though geologists may argue a lot among themselves it is unwise to argue with a rock.

SECRETARIES' REPORTS

External Relations

Professor A R Lord, Secretary Foreign & External Affairs, reported on the following topics:

Strategy – respected voice. The Society's aim to be a respected voice for geoscience had many faces, reflecting outreach in its broadest sense, from a 'science-led communications policy' to publications, meetings and international collaboration and capacity-building. In April Professor P A Allen, Secretary Science, arranged and led a very successful session on 'Teleconnections' jointly with the Geological Society of America (GSA) at the meeting of the European Geosciences Union (EGU) in Vienna, and it is aimed to make this a regular event.

Climate Change. The Society under its previous President L E Frostick initiated a working group on Climate Change chaired by Colin Summerhayes. The group's report, issued in November, focused on geological evidence for past climate change events and this different perspective on a very emotive subject was well received.

Another outward-facing initiative was a joint letter and supporting document to Government, prepared in collaboration with the Committee of Heads of UK Geoscience Departments (CHUGD) and the British Geological Survey (BGS), pressing the case for Earth Science as a strategically important but high cost subject in universities.

Consultations. The Society also responded to requests for evidence and opinion, especially from the House of Commons Science & Technology Committee. The number of such consultation responses has increased and so far in 2011 there have already been responses to as many requests as in the whole of 2010, on subjects as diverse as shale gas and field work in school science. This work is demanding on the time of staff, officers and colleagues consulted but can be valuable in extending the Society's influence and networks of contacts. It is known that the Society's responses to select committee inquiries have been well received, since the Society was asked to provide oral evidence witnesses in two instances.

'Friends' scheme. This was developed from the popular Shell London Lecture programme and encourages enthusiastic members of the public to draw closer to the Society. There are currently about 100 members.

The Society's outreach efforts towards the general public include podcasts, and an increasingly active presence on social networks such as Facebook and Twitter.

Science Festivals. The Society was represented by Sarah Day at the *Big Bang* science fair in London and at the *Orkney Science Festival*.

Media Coverage. Among highlights of the last year, the Climate Change statement attracted great interest, and the meeting on the 'Anthropocene' was reported in *Nature*, *New Scientist*, the *Guardian* and the *Economist* (including the front cover).

International bodies. Thanks to the previous Secretary, Professor E Derbyshire, the Society has good links with IUGS and UK scientists remain active with the *International Geoscience Programme* (IGCP). At the recent celebration of the 50th anniversary of the International Union of Geological Sciences both Professor Derbyshire and Professor Iain Stewart (a member of the External Relations Committee) gave addresses. The Society was also active in collaboration with BGS, GSA and the American Geological Institute (AGI) in promoting grass-roots support for a Global Geoscience Initiative.

Corporate Affiliates. The number of our Corporate Affiliates remained stable at 67. The Society is keen to diversify the industrial sectors represented and to this end a series of annual workshops is being arranged, the first by Dr P Dolan and Mr M Steeves on subsurface risk assessment and its relevance to the insurance industry.

Education. Through the Education Committee and Society staff the Society interacts with students and those working in education at all levels and we have a new Schools Affiliate Scheme. With funding from BP, and help from AGI, the Society ran the first residential Geoscience Education Academy designed to help science teachers with a non-geological background to integrate geosciences into national curriculum teaching. Mr P Maliphant and the South Wales Regional Group organised a successful Schools Geology Competition with sponsorship from industry, and other Regional Groups are now following suit. A national final at Burlington House is planned for early 2012.

Higher Education Network – the Society launched a new Higher Education Network, bringing together Earth scientists in academia from a wide range of scientific specialisms, to discuss common interests such as geoscience pedagogy, university-industry collaboration, and early research career development.

The accreditation scheme for university degree programmes continued to thrive, thanks to the work of Dr J W Gaskarth and Dr C Scrutton.

Professor Lord acknowledged the help of Professor Derbyshire and of the Burlington House staff, especially the Head of Strategy & External Relations.

Science

Professor P A Allen, Secretary Science, said that the primary responsibility of the Science Committee was managing the Society's programme of scientific meetings and in this it took a proactive role in generating ideas for meetings.

The programme is so full that no new proposals can be taken on within the next year which inevitably leads to disappointment to those proposing meetings.

The Science Committee is also actively considering ways in which the Society can promote geosciences to as wide a constituency of interest groups as possible. It wishes to facilitate more integrated, systems-type approaches to problem-solving in Earth and allied sciences and to promote newly emerging areas and had therefore initiated, as already reported by the Secretary, Foreign & External Affairs, a joint session with GSA at the annual general assembly of the EGU as the beginning of a closer, long-term relationship.

The Committee had started an annual "Frontiers" meeting covering emerging areas and designed to be of special interest to younger geoscientists.

One of the greatest outreach activities was the Shell London Lectures which continued to attract capacity audiences and a themed programme was being put together for 2012.

In collaboration with the Professional Committee an Environment Network has been formed – a horizontal structure to weave together several specialist groups with broad environmental interests. This was the first such network and it was hoped it would be rolled out perhaps to Energy and Climate Change.

Professor Allen thanked the members of the Science Committee. He also thanked the Secretary, Foreign & External Affairs, speakers and conveners, the Executive Secretary and the Conference Office team.

Professional

Professor D A C Manning, Secretary Professional Matters, said that this was his final report as Professional Secretary and the three years had been quite remarkable.

Chartership in particular had developed and had a much more client friendly approach. Work that had started in 2009 had been consolidated and the new process had worked well during 2010 under the stewardship of Dr Gaskarth who was thanked.

There had been an increase in the number of applicants for chartered status (CGeol and CSci) and it was important to recognise that these titles were equal in status.

The Society has accredited geology undergraduate programmes at all major UK universities and has begun to accredit both MSc and overseas programmes. We have moved from the endorsement of company training schemes to their formal accreditation which helps to reduce the time before a candidate can start to prepare their case for chartership.

In February 2010 the Executive and Professional secretaries visited Hong Kong where there are some 250 members, 60 of them Chartered. The demand there for geologists is far greater than presently experienced in the UK. The Society's discussions with Hong Kong University, the Geotechnical Engineering Office (HK Government) and multinational consultants showed that our service to the

profession will be needed for decades to come. Accreditation of the Hong Kong University programme was granted.

Experience in Hong Kong showed that the Society was unique in offering a pathway to professional formation that people want and will pay for; a title, portable like a university degree that was internationally recognised and which provided an independent assessment of professional competence.

The Society's approach to awarding chartership enabled it to be offered to anyone in the world who was appropriately qualified; the system was robust in its operation.

Professor Manning thanked Miss R Allington and the Chartership Audit Panel for checking the robustness of the system.

The Register of Ground Engineering Professionals was to be launched today, a project on which the Society had worked with other bodies. Those involved were thanked for their efforts.

Professor Manning thanked all the people who gave their time so enthusiastically on a voluntary basis and also the staff in the Fellowship Office.

The President thanked Professor Manning for his service to the Society as Professional Secretary.

Publications

Dr J P Turner, Secretary Publications, reported that 2010 had been another very successful year and fulfilled the two major objectives for the Society of disseminating high-quality geosciences to the Earth science community and generating financial surplus. There were 23 new *Lyell Collection* subscriptions (now at 102) and the publication of 23 volumes in the flagship Special Publications series, plus four other books including the two-volume proceedings of the 7th Petroleum Geology Conference. The Special Publication commissioning process was boosted with several new initiatives including free colour figures for authors and the inclusion of the series in the Thompson Science Citation Index.

Journal performance was excellent with the *Journal of the Geological Society* achieving its highest ever impact factor at a shade under 3.3 and the impact factors of the journals *Petroleum Geoscience* and *Geochemistry: Exploration environment, Analysis* also recorded encouraging increases. The Society's titles also consistently received greater than the average number of hits as measured by *Geoscience World*, the online consortium of geosciences publishers of which the Society was a founding member.

Among the challenges which the Publishing House face are the extraordinarily rapid pace of development of new publishing technologies and services, the growth of areas such as mobile devices, social networking and open access. As opportunities to develop brand new journals and book series dwindle an increasing trend in scientific publishing will be the expansion of services to readers and authors. Developments in this area include a publish-ahead-of-print service whereby papers are published online as soon as they are accepted rather than all the papers having to wait for the slowest manuscript to proceed through the system. Another development will be the inclusion of the Lyell Collection in Elsevier's new *Geofacets* web-based geographic search tool which will facilitate even greater exposure of the collection worldwide with additional potential to increase pay-per-view income significantly.

Professor P Styles chaired the Library Review Committee. One of the recommendations was the need to develop more income streams and more details of this review have been placed on the website.

The Society was grateful for the donation by the great grandson of William Topley FRS FGS of a relief map which was created in 1875 of the Weald of Kent and the Bas Boulonnais.

In September the Society took part in *Open House London* which celebrated London's architecture and gave visitors the opportunity to see inside the Society's apartments for the first time.

Dr Turner thanked the Director of Publishing and colleagues at the Publishing House, the editors and reviewers and the readers and contributors.

REPORT OF THE TREASURER

Professor A J Fleet, Treasurer, reported on a good year with the achievement of a financial surplus of £187,445, £299,055 more than the 2010 budget anticipated. This was the result of hard work across the Society. Publishing had yet another successful year producing a surplus of £512,810 against a budgeted surplus of £280,321. Thanks were due to everyone who helped achieve this.

Room hire and investment income also provided greater surpluses than expected. Cost control and new ways of working also played their parts in the good financial result for 2010.

The surplus enabled the Society to do a number of things.

The Society invested £117,744 in the Library mainly in journal subscriptions as well as an additional £32,791 invested in electronic journal licenses and spent £37,743 from reserves on achieving parts of the business plan.

The surplus bolstered reserves which were held to achieve business plan items that furthered the charitable objectives of the Society; funds were set aside to meet the obligations of the Burlington House lease for refurbishment and maintenance; and during the year Council reviewed the Society's reserves policy and agreed the need to build up further the free reserves over a number of years.

In his final annual report, Professor Fleet thanked all those who had assisted him during his time in office: the Executive Secretary and the management team, the Head of Finance and his team in the Account Office, the Head of Strategy & External Relations who had guided and facilitated the Budget and Programme Committee, the Director of Publishing, and his team at the Publishing House and the members of the Investment, Remuneration and Research Grants committees.

The President thanked Professor Fleet for his report and also for the enormous contribution that he had made during his time in office.

6. COMMENTS FROM FELLOWS

Dr R Allington said she was impressed with what had been achieved since she had last attended an Annual General Meeting and expressed her thanks.

Dr R Stabbins asked what percentage of those applying for Chartership were not accepted. Professor Manning replied said he preferred to say that those who were not successful were deferred and encouraged to re-apply after mentoring. This figure was 10 – 20%. The Society was trying to help candidates in this category by advising on preparation and better mentoring, activities in which those in the regional groups could help.

Professor I N McCave asked how far back would ISI incorporate special publications in their database. The Director of Publications replied five years.

Sir Crispin Tickell said that there used to be publications on display at Burlington House and this was valuable to get an idea of the full range. Dr Turner said he agreed and that this matter had been discussed with the Director of Publishing and Executive Secretary. The Executive Secretary said that Special Publications were put in the Library on publication and also on a table in the hallway.

Dr M Ridd said he was concerned that other books were “poor relations” to Special Publications in spite of the huge amount of work that went into them. Dr Turner replied that those such as the memoirs and the “Geology of” series were not seen in a lesser light but Special Publications were a major income stream for the Society. There were data to suggest that the commissioning process was receiving fewer new titles than we had in the past.

Mr D Entwistle made a number of points about Engineering Group Special Publications. These included colour, the “coercion” of authors and the need for more sponsorship. Mr Entwistle was asked to take these matters forward with the Publications Management Committee.

Dr M Winter said that although the Chartership process had come a long way there was talk in some quarters of discontent with the standards achieved.

The President agreed with Dr Winter about the advance in the Chartership process, and said that the Society could not respond to mere anecdote concerning shortfalls. Those with sound evidence of shortfalls in standards should bring that evidence to the attention of the Professional Committee.

The Professional Secretary thanked the President for his comments and agreed that there was no room for complacency and that much was being done including CPD.

Dr Allington said, as internal auditor for the Chartership process last year, that she was aware of some attitudes about Chartership but there was a lag between these and improvements made. She had heard that the Society had a reputation for having a worthwhile accreditation that was hard to achieve.

The President concluded the discussion by saying that the matter was of central importance and that Council would continue to keep it under review.

7. ACCEPTANCE OF THE ANNUAL REPORT AND ACCOUNTS FOR 2010 AND APPROVAL OF THE BUDGET FOR 2011

Mr B Cooper proposed acceptance of the accounts for 2010 and the budget for 2011. Miss R Allington seconded the motion, which was passed *nem con*.

8. FELLOWSHIP SUBSCRIPTIONS FOR 2012

Following the principles agreed in previous years, Council reviewed the latest estimates of the total costs of Fellowship, and the most recent measures of inflation. These considerations informed rather than dictated the overall percentage increase in fees. It was recommended that the fees for 2012 increased overall by 3% over those for 2011 with the impact on the youngest and oldest categories of Fellow reduced where possible. This was consistent with the fact that while it was estimated that Fellowship income would slightly exceed the concomitant costs in the current year, forecasts suggested inflation would rise in the coming months, and the Society faced continuing uncertainty in several areas of its finances.

The following subscriptions for 2012 were agreed *nem con.*:

	2012 £
Junior Candidate Fellows	10.00
Candidate Fellows	15.00
One-off payment for undergraduate course	40.00
21 and under	31.50
22-27	65.50
28-33	120.50
34-59	183.50
34-59 (Overseas)	141.00
60-69	92.50
70+	63.50
Concessions	92.50
Full time postgraduate MSc	37.00
Full time postgraduate PhD	51.50
Joint Fellow supplement	52.00
CGeol supplement	27.00
CSci supplement (TBC)*	21.00
EurGeol supplement*	17.50
Fellowship application fee	20.00
Chartership validation fee	75.00

**Fees not set by GSL*

9. DEATHS

Fellows received a list read by the President of those Honorary Fellows and Fellows whose deaths had been reported since the last Annual General Meeting.

10. REPORT OF SCRUTINEERS ON THE BALLOT FOR COUNCIL

The President called upon the Scrutineers to read their report on the ballot for Council. Thirty-one votes were cast with no abstentions or spoilt papers. The following Fellows were duly elected to Council:

Professor P A Allen, Miss S Brough, Mr M Brown, Professor R Butler, Mr D J Cragg, Professor J E Francis, Professor A J Fraser, Dr S A Gibson,

Mrs M P Henton, Dr R A Hughes, Dr A Law, Professor R J Lisle, Professor A R Lord, Dr J P B Lovell, Mr P Maliphant, Professor S Marriott, Professor S Monro, Mr D T Shilston, Dr C P Summerhayes, Professor J H Tellam, Dr J P Turner, Professor D J Vaughan, Mr N R G Walton

The ballot for Officers then took place.

11. APPOINTMENT OF AUDITORS

BDO Stoy Hayward was re-appointed as the Society's auditors for the coming year.

12. REPORT OF SCRUTINEERS ON THE BALLOT FOR OFFICERS

The President called upon the Scrutineers to read their report on the ballot for Officers. Thirty-five votes were cast, with no abstentions or spoilt papers. The following were duly elected:

President	Dr J P B Lovell
Vice Presidents	Mr P Maliphant
	Professor S Marriott
	Dr C P Summerhayes
Treasurer	Dr A Law
Secretary, Foreign & External Affairs	Professor A R Lord
Secretaries	Professor P A Allen
	Mrs M P Henton
	Dr J P Turner

13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business.

14. DATE OF NEXT ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

A provisional date for the next Annual General Meeting of 13 June was agreed.

15. VOTE OF THANKS

Dr Lovell welcomed Mr D Shilston as the President designate and the other new members of Council.

He thanked the Committees, Specialist Groups, Regional Groups and Joint Associations for their sterling work during the year. He also thanked the Corporate Affiliates, particularly Shell for sponsorship of the Shell London lectures and other sponsors of Society events and the organisations who allowed their staff to participate in the committees and activities of the Society.

He thanked the retiring members of Council and all the retiring officers and other Council members for their diligence and hard work during their terms of office.

Retiring members of Council were:

Dr M C Daly

Professor A J Fleet
Dr R Herrington
Professor J N Ludden
Professor D A C Manning
Dr G W Tuckwell

The President asked the Executive Secretary to pass on thanks to the staff who always showed great courtesy to visitors to the Society and for all their work on behalf of the Fellowship during the year.