

British Geophysical Association
Annual General Meeting 2010
Friday 12th February 2010, 1.00 pm, Geological Society,
Burlington House, Piccadilly, London

1. Present: Prof. J.-M. (Mike) Kendall, BGA President, in the chair, and 13 members.
Apologies: Richard Holme, John Brodholt, Christine Peirce.

2. President's report

Mike Kendall reported that the BGA is a Joint Association of the Geological Society of London (GSL) and the Royal Astronomical Society (RAS) and exists to support geophysics in the UK, particularly solid-Earth geophysics and geomagnetism, through support for scientific meetings, education and outreach. This year it had arranged the annual William Bullerwell lecture to take place at the European Geosciences Union in Vienna and be given by Dr. David Dobson of University College, London, with the title "Tectonics of the lower mantle II: mineral physics constraints". The date has yet to be fixed but will be either 4th or 6th May.

The BGA attaches great importance to the promotion of geophysics at school level after the 2006 Khan report commissioned by it showed that widespread ignorance of geophysics as a subject was partly responsible for the low take up of university geophysics courses. It had co-operated in 2009 in the award of the PESGB Geoscience Schools Outreach Fund, of which £20,000 had been awarded in lots of £2000 to ten universities that had organised courses for school teachers to learn to use the School Seismometer Project seismometer. The money covered the cost of purchase of the seismometer and support for the teachers using it. (The School Seismometer Project is organised by the British Geological Survey.) It is hoping to engage with the Institute of Physics, which has extensive programmes for outreach to school teachers.

This year the BGA has made "political" submissions on geophysical subjects to national enquiries, including the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) consultation on the proposed Research Excellence Framework, and the House of Commons Science and Technology Committee's enquiries into the effect of cuts on science and the regulation of geo-engineering. The BGA had emphasised the importance of continuing to collect and preserve long term geophysical and environmental data, for which new uses not apparent yet might be crucial to the advancement of science and/or societal concerns.

There is a concern that the BGA needs to engage better with the geophysics community, exacerbated by the split of members between the two Parent Societies. A new mailing list of BGA members has been established, with about 400 names of members of either the GSL or RAS who are "in" the BGA, but it is known to be inaccurate. Prof. Peter Clarke has prepared a newsletter and circulated it to this list; a further one is planned for April/May.

In the ensuing discussion Roger Searle asked whether BGA membership could be extended to those not members of either parent society. The GSL Remote Sensing Group has a similar arrangement. Mike Kendall agreed to look into this.

Mike reported that he had been asked to stand for election as Vice-President (Geophysics) of the RAS, and Barry Parsons and Stuart Crampin are standing for the Council. Peter Maguire stated from the floor that the RAS is aware of the problem that solid-Earth geophysicists are seldom elected because the

majority of the electorate is astronomers, and is grateful for a “healthy discussion” of that issue. Kathy Whaler reported that the RAS had supported a BGA-supported geomagnetism meeting (about results from the SWARM geomagnetic satellites) as one of its 2009 “G” discussion meetings. In the end the RAS had paid the entire cost of the meeting without drawing on additional BGA support, because the cost fell within its limit for “G” meetings. She suggested that the RAS would support a 2-day meeting at a place outside London.

Tony Morris, BGA treasurer, reminded members that the BGA can pay small amounts to support small meetings.

Mike Kendall reminded members that the solid-Earth geophysics content of the RAS' magazine “Astronomy and Geophysics” is low and encouraged them to write pieces for it about their research or meetings. Richard Holme (Liverpool) is on the editorial committee. The RAS also offers research grants, of very small amounts but up to 50 might be available. There have been few solid-Earth geophysics applicants – the BGA should advertise these grants. (Note: details are on the RAS website under “Awards and Grants”.)

3. Royal Astronomical Society medallists

The BGA congratulated recent RAS prizewinners, particularly Dr. Frank Lowes for the Award for Service to Geophysics, Prof. John Woodhouse for the Geophysics Gold Medal and Dr. David Robinson for the Winton Capital Prize for Geophysics.

4. Treasurer's Report

Tony Morris presented the treasurer's report. The opening balance of £3220.24 had increased to £7469.86 by the close of the year, but the increase is artificial because the cost of the 2009 NAG meeting had been paid “up front” in 2008, causing the account to be unusually depleted at the start of the year. The accounts were accepted.

5. Election of new Committee members

Prof. John Brodholt (University College, London) was proposed by Sheila Peacock and seconded by Mary Fowler, and Dr. Christine Peirce (Durham University) was proposed by Sheila Peacock and seconded by Roger Searle. Both were elected nem.con.

The meeting closed at 1.40 pm.