

## West Midlands Branch Annual Committee Report 2014 – 15

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### Our Branch Committee

Committee Coordinator: Dr Anna Hine FRSB

Hon Treasurer: Mrs Lesley Payne CBIol MRSB

Meetings Secretary: Mrs Pamela Speed CBIol MRSB

External Communications Secretary: Mrs Deidre Marsh CBIol MRSB

Student Engagement Coordinators: Dr Steve Russell MRSB, Dr Sue Howarth CBIol FRSB, Ms Faryal Ejaz AMRSB

Event Coordinators: Dr Caroline Day CBIol FRSB, Mrs Norma Broadbridge MBE CBIol FRSB, Ms Deborah Dixon CBIol MRSB, Ms Cristina Nicolae AMRSB

Our thanks go to Anna Hine and Caroline Day for making us warmly welcome in their homes for committee meetings.

### Events organised by the committee

Events have been advertised in *The Biologist*, on the Royal Society of Biology website, via Headquarters' emailing to regional members and through other local channels as appropriate. With the exception of events organised for young schoolchildren or careers events for individual schools and colleges, all RSB members, their personal guests and interested members of the public have been welcomed to attend all our events. We have greatly appreciated the encouragement and practical help with promoting events given first by Mr David Urry, then by Dr Jane Magill, regional coordinators at the Royal Society of Biology; their help has been invaluable in promoting our work in the West Midlands. Every opportunity has been taken to promote the work of the Royal Society of Biology (formerly the Society of Biology) and to encourage recruitment of new members. The committee has organised several events jointly with other organisations, meeting the RSB's aim of collaboration with local groups. The committee has been delighted at the excellent attendance at our branch events, with several booked to capacity. Finally, we were delighted to hear during this year of the granting of the Royal Charter to the Society of Biology, and congratulate all who have worked to achieve it.

**October 2014**, University of Aston, AGM and lecture by Dr Anna Hine: Commercialising academic research: from lab bench to global product, via the medium of protein engineering. This lecture at the cutting edge of modern biology, and presented at professional development level, attracted an audience of Society members, undergraduate and postgraduate students, and well-informed non-biologists.

**October- November 2014**, University of Aston, Annual Schools' Poster Competition for Biology Week. Posters were judged by staff and undergraduates at Aston University. Winners attended a prize-giving ceremony and tour of Aston University bioscience laboratories.

**November 2014**, University of Birmingham, annual Charter Lecture for A level students and general audience, Professor Jonathan Frampton of University of Birmingham Dental School: The truth about stem cells. Audience members travelled from a radius of over 50 miles to hear this well-received authoritative lecture. Aimed at A level students, it was also accessible to the general public.

**November 2014**, University of Worcester, lecture with artifacts by Dr Chris Stringer of The Natural History Museum, London: Human Evolution. Organised by Worcester University Student Biology Society with the help and support of the Society of Biology, this fascinating lecture was enjoyed by students, Society members and interested non-biologists. This was an opportunity to hear and meet a well-known media figure and recently-published author.

**February 2015**, Shrewsbury, guided tour with talk to Darwin's Garden restoration project. This family event, hosted by Shropshire Wildlife Trust, attracted such large numbers that an extra tour had to be provided. Society of Biology members and families travelled from South and North Wales, as well as from across our region. This friendly family day gave Society members and guests the opportunity to meet and socialise on the tour and over lunch. Undergraduate biologists from regional universities appreciated networking with professional biologists and hearing about the work of the Society of Biology.

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**February 2015**, Darwin Festival in Shrewsbury: annual Society of Biology-sponsored public engagement talk, delivered by Dr Goronwy Wynne of Society of Biology North Wales branch: Tierra del Fuego. The room at Shropshire Wildlife Trust's headquarters was packed for this popular lecture, aimed at a general interest audience. Committee members were able to tell the general public about the work of the Society of Biology. Shropshire Wildlife Trust members were particularly interested to hear about the work of the Society of Biology.

**March 2015**, Birmingham University, joint meeting with Birmingham University Alumni, lecture by Dr Alan Woolhead of Bromsgrove School: Bee-keeping. This accessible lecture was well-received by biologists and attendees from other disciplines. It gave an opportunity for Society members to meet the Birmingham University Alumni, and some current staff, and to spread awareness of the work of the Society of Biology.

**May 2015**, Birmingham University, joint meeting with Birmingham University Alumni, lecture by Professor Steve Busby: Microbiology. This up-to-date lecture held the interest of specialists and non-specialists alike, with highly topical coverage of microbial resistance issues. An opportunity to hear an authoritative figure in this field, and also for networking between the two organisations.

**October 2015**, Aston University, Annual Charter Lecture for A level students by Professor Clifford Bailey: Diabetes and Obesity: the paradox of health and wealth. The decision was made to move this annual lecture into Biology Week for this and future years and this extremely well-received lecture proved a significant contribution to the week's events. Authoritative, entertaining and fast-paced, our speaker presented new and stimulating information for everyone in his diverse audience.

**October 2015**, Aston University, Primary Schools' 'taste of university' practical science day: DNA extraction. Catching them young and enthusiastic, this hugely popular day was a big hit with pupils and their teachers. A further day event is planned for 2016.

**October to November 2015**, Aston University, Annual Schools' Poster Competition. Timed as an activity for schools to celebrate Biology Week, this competition is divided into age-appropriate biology title categories. Judging is by University of Aston undergraduates, organised by Aston staff, and competition winners will be invited to present their posters at a November award ceremony at the university.

We have offered Continuing Professional Development (CPD) certificates at events; our CPD register currently has about 30 people.

### Society of Biology Headquarters Events attended by Branch Members

November 2014, London, Charles Darwin House: All Branches' Meeting and Branch Treasurer's training.

March 2015, Big Bang Fair, Birmingham.

### Engagement of school and college students and undergraduates

In addition to organising branch events for young people, branch committee members have attended careers fairs at the invitation of local schools and colleges, have given talks to local school students and have supported undergraduates in arranging visiting speakers. Branch committee members have individually responded to requests for guidance on work experience and careers matters. Wherever the opportunity has arisen, BioNet membership has been promoted, the wider work of the Society of Biology, then Royal Society of Biology, has been explained, and teachers have been encouraged to consider membership. Publicity and resource material provided by RSB Headquarters has been extremely useful in all of this.

### Retiring committee member:

Sincere thanks are due to Mrs Deidre Marsh CBiol MRSB for her valued contribution to the work of this branch committee.

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**TREASURER'S REPORT**

The branch committee has continued to work hard during the year organising events to provide good value for money in terms of service to the Members and publicity for the Society. We are most grateful to our guest speakers who have once again been extremely generous in providing their time and expertise without charge. We are also grateful to those organisations which have provided us with venues: Aston University, the University of Birmingham and Shropshire Wildlife Trust. Our policy is to reimburse Committee Members for expenses only and they are to be thanked for their valuable contribution.

	Gross Income	Gross Expenditure	Net Funds
	£	£	£
Cash balance @ 30th September 2014	<b>904.73</b>		904.73
Centrally funded events	1000	1246.08	658.65
Locally funded events	0	0	658.65
Branch Administration	0	79.08	579.57
Branch Travel	0	320.35	259.22
Other events and donations	0	40	219.22
Prizes & Awards	0	159.9	59.32
Total Income/Expenditure	1904.73	1845.41	59.32
Cash balance @ 30th September 2015			<b>59.32</b>

For the 2015-16 financial year Head Office are trialling a new scheme. Each branch will receive a basic allocation in October to cover general expenses and some event costs. In addition branch committees will have access to additional funds for specific events by applying via a separate application process. The basic allocation for the West Midlands branch for the financial year 2015 -16 is **£1250**.

Lesley Payne  
Honorary Treasurer  
October 2015