ROYAL METEOROLOGICAL SOCIETY

METEOROLOGICAL OBSERVING SYSTEMS
SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP

Annual General Meeting

Held from 1100 to 1240 hrs on Wednesday 1st July 2009
at the University of Reading

The Minutes of the meeting

1. Attendance and apologies
11 members attended – Mike Brettle, John Prior, Stephen Burt, Ian Strangeways, Steve Colwell, Chris Sloan, Charles Pethica, Roland Marshall, Ian Thornton, Peter Redgrave and Richard Griffith. Apologies were received from Jonathan Shanklin, Dick Saffel, Mike Bennett, Andrew Overton and Paula Taylor.

2. Minutes of last AGM
The minutes of the last AGM (2nd July 2008) were tabled and the items were noted. All actions had been completed. The minutes were then accepted by the meeting.

3. Chairman’s report
The Chairman, Jonathan Shanklin, had provided a report, as follows. This was presented by Mike Brettle, acting Chairman:

“With a large number of calls on my time, I continued to be conscious that I was only able to put a limited amount of effort into the affairs of the Group. In addition I cut my working hours down to a four day week and for this reason decided to resign the Chair early in 2009. I have suggested that Steve Colwell would make a good long term Chair, but for the interim Mike Brettle agreed to take over the reins.

The AGM and summer visit in 2008 was held at the Chilbolton Observatory in Hampshire, where we gained an insight into large meteorological observing systems. Thanks are due to the Head of the Observatory, Charles Wrench, and to the Station Manager, Darcy Ladd, for hosting the visit and to the other staff who helped show us round on the day. A report on the visit appeared in the Autumn newsletter. Mike Bennett organised a very interesting autumn meeting, on Observations for Transport Applications, which was held at Manchester Metropolitan University. The meeting illuminated a number of perhaps unexpected applications which were recounted in the Spring newsletter. Bruce Ingleby, with help from John Prior organised the spring meeting at ECMWF, Reading, as a joint meeting with the Data Assimilation SIG. I arrived just in time to give the first talk, but it was a close run thing thanks to heavy traffic on the M25.

I would like to express thanks to all our meetings organisers, whose often substantial work goes on in the background, and to the committee of the Group, which does a lot of work to keep up its high profile within the community. Finally I would like to particularly thank Mike Brettle, Andrew Overton and John Prior for their support and
assistance during my time as Chairman. I hope to maintain contact with the Group and will lend advice and assistance when I can.

Noting that Jonathan had now stood down as Chairman, Mike proposed a vote of thanks to him for all he had done for the SIG – this was carried unanimously.

4. Treasurer's report
The Treasurer, Mike Brettle, provided the accounts for the period 2 July 2008 to 29 June 2009 and the following report:

“Overall our financial position is healthy and there have been no major developments since the last AGM.
Regarding the two meetings held since the last AGM.
The meeting on ‘Weather Observations for Transport Applications’ on 2008-11-08 incurred expenses costs of £125.20
The joint meeting with the data assimilation group was financially neutral. There was no fee charged and attendees paid for their own lunch.
Note the expenses for the meeting on 2008-10-27 were for committee members attending. Note also that newsletter distribution is no longer charged because the majority of members now receive these by e-mail.
Membership has remained stable at 63 (62 last year).
I propose that we carry on with membership fees at the current level, however there is a major change proposed for our fee structure.
Currently our membership fees are the same irrespective of whether the member also belongs to the RMetS itself. The proposal is that members of the main society should be able to join our group free of charge. The membership who are not also RMetS members should therefore pay more. To give an estimate, to maintain the current income of about £175 per year, if the membership remains unchanged, with roughly 1/3 of our members not being in the RMetS the fee would go up to £15 per year. We are not proposing this for a vote at this AGM because it has not been possible to forewarn the membership sufficiently in advance. It will however be floated in the newsletter for comment ahead of future discussions and recommendations by the committee.
Last but not least I must emphasise that the bulk of the work in keeping and preparing these accounts is carried out by Catharine Martin in the Vaisala Office and my thanks go to her."

The concerns about the membership fee arrangements for the RMetS and the SIGs (and Local Centres) were discussed. At present approximately 2/3 of the SIG members also belong to the RMetS. The meeting agreed that any proposal to change should not discourage the remaining 1/3 of members. A way forward could be to offer free membership to RMetS members, and increase the ‘SIG-only’ annual fee by only a modest amount. The committee will look at all options, their impact on the SIG balance sheet and put proposals to members through the autumn Newsletter inviting responses before the November committee meeting (Action: Mike Brettle & committee members)

The accounts were accepted by the meeting and Mike was thanked for his management of the Group’s finances and memberships, ably assisted by Catharine Martin at Vaisala.
5. Newsletter Editor’s report
The Newsletter Editor, Andrew Overton, provided a report, as follows. This was presented by John Prior.

“Over the previous 12 month period I have issued both an Autumn and Spring edition of the Group Newsletter in line with our policy. Thanks to contributors it has been possible to include a mix of news, Group business and articles. One area of continuing concern is that there have again been no contributions to the Research News column and as a result this column has been suspended. This is in marked contrast to News from the Manufacturers which continues to be very well supported by that community, and I wish to record my thanks to those organisations which regularly send me material.

Looking forward, I have an article on the Brewer spectrophotometer for the Autumn 2009 edition and a promise of another on the Met Office synoptic station renewal programme (Met Monitoring System) for next Spring. I will be looking to source new promises of small articles over the next 12 month period in order to keep the stock up. It is difficult to know what to do about the Research News column - if members are not willing to send material then it will be permanently discontinued, as repeated comments about the lack of material will become tedious. Changes in work commitments have led to my inability to attend all Group meetings but thanks to other committee members taking notes and writing up proceedings full meeting reports have continued to appear, and I hope it will be possible to continue this arrangement through the next year.

Although changing work patterns and other commitments may mean that I am able to devote less time to the Group in future, especially with regard to meetings, I remain confident that I can continue to produce the Newsletter to time and am happy to continue in the position if this is the wish of the membership.”

The lack of material for the Research News column was noted and ways to improve the situation were discussed. A possible reluctance to submit items until research had been published was noted. However, it was felt that there should be news from Universities and the Met Office, for example, including notification of published material. (Action: Committee and SIG members to keep in mind that material is needed and feedback suggestions to Newsletter Editor)

The sterling work that Andrew does as Editor of the Newsletter, in terms of its timeliness and content, was noted and much appreciated.

6. Future Meetings
Arrangements are being made for an autumn meeting, as follows –

Title: Data transmission and presentation
Date: early October 2009
Venue: British Antarctic Survey, Cambridge
Organiser: Jonathan Shanklin / Steve Colwell
Comments: A workshop format including demonstrations of data presentation, with a hands-on opportunity. Date and programme TBC, and publicity arranged through SIG website, email and the September issue of ‘Weather’
Other proposals being pursued are:

- Collaboration with the Worshipful Company of Scientific Instrument Manufacturers, WCSIM on their proposed 1-day meeting “Climate change or instrument change?” in London, spring 2010
- Collaboration with History SIG for their meeting marking the 150th anniversary of the founding of the British Rainfall Organisation, 17 April 2010 in London. Stephen Burt is organising this and outlined the programme, including a related RMetS-funded initiative to replace the headstone of George Symons (BRO founder) in Kensal Green cemetery, London.
- AGM and 2010 Summer Visit to the newly-established Chiltern Observatory at Whipsnade in July 2010, if suitable. (Action: Stephen Burt to contact Philip Eden about a suitable nearby venue for the AGM).
- Support to a 2-day meeting 19-20 July 2010, being organised by the History SIG at Exeter
- Support to a meeting to mark the 40th anniversary of the founding of the Climatological Observers Link, possibly in autumn 2010

It was noted that the SIG committee had not yet made any firm proposals for other meetings in 2010, and to encourage discussion from members present a list of those meetings organised over the last 30 years was tabled (this list is also on the SIG web site). It was noted that we could certainly revisit earlier topics to cover ‘progress and plans’ e.g. measurements at sea. (Action: Mike Brettle to contact Andy Overton to arrange a note for the autumn Newsletter welcoming meeting suggestions).

Stephen Burt suggested that the April 2010 meeting on the BRO could be joint with our SIG, and this offer was warmly accepted. (Action: John Prior to arrange appropriate web site and Newsletter publicity to refer to the History Group’s meeting details etc)

7 & 8. Election of Committee & Officers

Mike Brettle, the acting Chairman, noted that since the last AGM Jonathan Shanklin (BAS) and Jonathan Wright (Metspec) had resigned, each for work-related reasons. He welcomed Steve Colwell (BAS), who had joined the Committee recently. The Committee were able to accept more members and would be pleased to know of any others interested in joining. Ian Strangeways noted that Mark Dutton of Environmental Measurements Ltd had expressed a willingness to join the Committee and since this would fill the ‘manufacturer vacancy’ left by Jonathan Wright, this offer was warmly welcomed. (Action: Mike Brettle to formally invite Mark Dutton to join the committee)

There were 2 motions to be voted upon, as follows:

1) That Mike Brettle, Group Membership Secretary and Treasurer, be elected as interim-Chairman of the Group for the 2009-10 term of office, with the intention that Steve Colwell will take over as full-time Chairman at the 2010 AGM. A vote in favour of this motion in 2009 will authorise both appointments. The Committee believe that the stability that this joint appointment will give will be in the long-term interests of the Group.
2) That the Group adopt the following policy - *A Nominee for Chairmanship of the Met Observing Systems SIG must be a member of the Group Committee and have served a continuous period of at least 12 months prior to nomination*. Anyone is eligible to come and serve on the Committee and it is felt that it would be very difficult for anyone to lead the Group effectively upon stepping straight into the Chairman's role from outside the Committee.

Each motion was passed unanimously, and Mike Brettle becomes acting-Chairman until Steve Colwell takes over as Chairman at the AGM in 2010.

The meeting approved the following members to serve as the Committee and Officers of the Group for 2009/2010:

- **Mike Brettle** Vaisala Ltd (acting-Chairman, Treasurer & Membership Secretary)
- **John Prior** Met Office (Meetings Secretary)
- **Andrew Overton** Fellow RMetS (Newsletter Editor)
- **Mike Bennett** Manchester Metropolitan University
- **Stephen Burt** Fellow RMetS
- **Steve Colwell** BAS
- **Dick Saffel** Campbell Scientific Ltd
- **Ian Strangeways** Terradata Ltd

**9. Any other business**

It was noted that the "Vaisala award for weather observing and instrumentation" would be made every 2 years. A call for nominations (amateur and professional) will be made and these will be considered by the awards committee, with SIG involvement.

At the last Committee meeting, discussions had begun on ways to improve the MetLink facility for disseminating weather observations to involve more climate stations.

**10. Date and Venue of next AGM**

Provisionally July 2010 as part of a summer visit to the Chiltern Observatory, Whipsnade, Bedfordshire

John Prior
Secretary
31 July 2009