

Treasurer's report of financial activities, 2008

In 2008 we saw the effects of the modest rise in BSMB membership subscription fees, leading to an increase in the society's subscription income, from £3,800 in 2007 to just over £8000 in 2008. Although we may have lost one or two members, the active membership of the society continues to grow and we are able to give more back to the junior members in the form of travel bursaries and prizes. At the end of the year the fund balance stood at £61,250, compared to £52,455 in 2007. However, this figure includes unmet liabilities for the meeting in Cardiff, which are in the region of £9000. The overall picture of the BSMB finances is therefore of continuing stability, maintaining a healthy reserve even while increasing the amount we have been able to give in pursuit of our primary goals - to promote research, knowledge and education in the biology of the extracellular matrix.

We had two meetings in 2008, both of which were well attended and brought internationally-renowned speakers into conference with BSMB members of all levels – those beginning their research careers and those whose careers have (probably!) reached their zenith. The spring meeting in York, very ably organised by Philippa Parsons, showed only a very small loss (£80), when payments received in 2007 and 2009 are taken into account. The Cardiff meeting, organised primarily by Emma Blain and Clare Hughes, celebrated the work and lifetime achievements of Tim Hardingham. The meeting was consequently somewhat larger than normal BSMB meetings, and the organisers did an excellent job raising sponsorship, leading to an overall profit of around £6700 when all liabilities are taken into account. My congratulations to both sets of organisers, including the unsung helpers, friends and members, who made these two tremendous meetings happen with such apparent ease.

2008 is the second year in which we have benefited from receiving the part-time administrative services of Jane Lohmann. Based in the University of Bristol, Jane is responsible for administering the membership database record and helps to coordinate the work of the committee. She is particularly helpful dealing with membership enquiries and new member applications, acting as the first point of call for many members seeking advice on subscription and membership matters. We now have much better records, and this has helped us maintain the membership database service available to our members on the website. The committee consider the £3000 cost of this service was well justified.

The BSMB website continues to develop, and we have benefited from a series of upgrades that were made during 2008 by professional website designers. We are now able to submit meeting abstracts electronically through the website, which I hope will take away some of the burden of the editorial role of the secretary, John Couchman. The website is now relatively easy for me to maintain and I can quickly add new information relating to relevant BSMB interests. So please let me know if you have any articles, job adverts, meeting information etc that you would like to have posted.

The Young Investigator Award for 2008 was awarded to Emma Blain. Emma gave a research presentation at the York meeting and was presented with a certificate and a cheque for £1000. I would strongly encourage junior members of the society to consider putting themselves forward for this award, which we hope will provide a substantial boost to the recipient's CV as well as their bank balance! The Fell Muir award for 2008 was presented to Dick Heinegard at the Cardiff meeting. This award seeks to recognise the life time achievement of prominent scientists, and we are pleased for the donation of the prize of £1000 from the International Journal of Experimental Pathology. The

committee will continue to consider making these annual awards as a mark of recognition to senior scientists who have contributed greatly to the work and aims of the BSMB.

A major part of the BSMB strategy for supporting younger scientists is through the provision of travel bursaries. This function has been particularly well administered by the BSMB committee member Ann Canfield, and we were successful in providing a large number of bursaries in 2008. There have been a number of innovations. Student and post-doc representatives on the committee are eligible for a bursary of up to £125 to attend one BSMB meeting a year, and this option was taken up by Darren Plumb and Yashi Mahalingham to defray the costs of the York meeting. We were able to give the full complement of conference reporter and conference presenter bursaries in 2008, as well as 9 bursaries of £400 to help younger members attend the FECTs meeting in Marseille. In 2008 the committee took the decision to open up the bursary scheme to enable members to attend any meeting with a matrix biology theme, in addition to the FECTS, ASMB and the regular BSMB meetings. Please have a look at the website (www.bsmb.ac.uk) to find the full details of these bursaries and the eligibility criteria.

I have already thanked the International Journal of Experimental Pathology (IJEP) for their support of the Fell Muir award, but I am also grateful for their sponsorship of poster prizes at meetings, which is another activity that seeks to encourage high quality research by our young members. IJEP publish the meeting abstracts, providing an important avenue for dissemination of our research output. Recipients of the Young Investigator and Fell Muir awards will also publish an overview of their research in the journal, and I hope that this will stimulate others to emulate their achievements.

The BSMB continues to be a member of the Biosciences Federation, an umbrella organisation which has the stated aim to provide 'a single authority representing the UK's biological expertise, providing independent opinion to inform public policy and promoting the advancement of the biosciences'. The subscription fee due in 2008 was just £280, and this will be paid in early 2009.

The accounts for 2008 also include bank charges for £240, which comprises the regular payment of £20 per month to ProtX, the company that provides our credit card payment facility on the website. A one-off payment of £235 was made for legal advice on public liability issues potentially faced by the BSMB at its meetings. The committee also provided £500 sponsorship for a meeting organized by three of our members, and I hope that other members will put forward similar proposals for support in the future. There was a small but highly successful satellite meeting before the main BSMB meeting in Cardiff, organized by Sally Roberts, and this received some financial support too.

The committee met twice in Birmingham during 2008, a venue that we find conducive to productive discussion of BSMB issues, as well as being readily accessible for most committee members. As ever, committee meetings were chaired by the irrepressible Bruce Caterson, providing the unflagging enthusiasm that helped stimulate the generation of many new ideas. Since this is the last year of his term as Chair, on behalf of the committee I would like to take this opportunity to thank Bruce for the massive contribution he has made to the BSMB over the years. As treasurer, I have very much enjoyed working with Bruce, John and the rest of the committee in 2008, and look forward to welcoming the new Chair, Ray Boot-Handford, when he takes over from Bruce at the AGM in London. I am confident that the BSMB will continue to prosper and grow under his leadership.

Graham Riley, BSMB Treasurer