

# WINTER NEWSLETTER

International Biometric Society – British and Irish Region

Welcome to the latest issue of the newsletter of the British and Irish Region of the IBS.

Take a break, have a cup of tea and find out what's been happening in the BIR.

If you have any items or news you would like to share with the society in future newsletters, please email [kirsty.hassall@rothamsted.ac.uk](mailto:kirsty.hassall@rothamsted.ac.uk)

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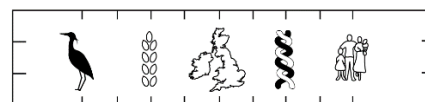
## Outgoing President's Corner, Daniel Farewell

My time as President of the British & Irish Region of the International Biometric Society has come to an end, and I am so thankful for these two years of continued working beside my friends on the BIR Committee. As Aaron Sorkin (or one of his on-screen characters) said, "If you're dumb, surround yourself with smart people. If you're smart, surround yourself with smart people who disagree with you." The BIR Committee are smart cookies beyond doubt but, just as crucially, they have shown themselves willing to disagree (where necessary, and always politely!) with the BIR officers, with each other, or just with 'the way things are'. I ask them only to continue to do so!

The committee have had frank and productive discussions about the relative merits of online-only, hybrid, and in-person meetings (environment, equity, efficiency, engagement, enjoyability, and unexpected encounters all come to mind). On this point I feel I have learned much recently. I came into the president's role anticipating pushing for more multi-day in-person meetings, but have been taken completely by surprise at the considerable appetite for online-only scientific meetings. These meetings have been an unequivocal success, with numbers attending far in excess of those at our recent in-person meetings. At the same time, being present at the November 2022 celebration of the life and work of David Cox -- a meeting



*A spontaneous trip in the lunch break of the 2022 AGM to see the grave of Rev. Thomas Bayes in the Bunhill Fields burial grounds*



## Regional News

### Seeking Student Representation on the BIR committee

For more details contact:

[secretary@bir.biometricsociety.org](mailto:secretary@bir.biometricsociety.org)

*"data [...] by definition cannot be missing."*

- **Daniel Farewell**  
(Presidential Address,  
2022)

fantastically well organised by IBS Board Member Ruth Keogh -- I was reminded of the joy that comes from spending a whole day with kindred statistical spirits, discussing matters both substantive and reflective.

I am extremely pleased to report that Heather Battey has agreed to represent the BIR on the Fisher Memorial Trust, joining Rosemary Bailey and Andrew Mead in this capacity. We remain very grateful to the Fisher Memorial Trust for their continuing partnership with us in funding the Young Biometrician Award, and also their support and bursaries for young statisticians attending international scientific meetings. I look forward to seeing the next chapter in this continuing collaboration.

I want specifically to thank the officers of the BIR with whom I have worked, for their tireless, often thankless endeavours on our behalf. Rachel McCrea and Kirsty Hassall have been superb Secretaries, Anestis Touloumis a tip-top Treasurer, and Rhian Daniel a marvelous Membership Secretary. Not only are their jobs more demanding than mine, but they have made my job easier through their enormous skill and dedication.

I shall now sit back and enjoy the considerable retirement benefits afforded to past presidents of the BIR (Rule 17 of our bylaws). As I await the first invitation to what will presumably be many lucrative lecture tours, I am delighted to be passing the presidential baton to my longtime friend and conference buddy Mark Brewer. (The photos below were taken when Mark and I attended a meeting in Budapest ten years ago. Is prawn spit suitable for vegetarians, we wondered?)

To close in earnest, I cannot thank you all enough -- officers, committee, members, and friends -- for the chance to lead this wonderful society. As Q (Trek, not Bond) memorably said, "See you...out there!"



### Incoming President's Corner, Mark Brewer

Firstly, I would like to thank Daniel Farewell for completing his term of office as President of the Region. This was clearly a difficult time for both society and the Society, and the pandemic made in-person meetings a near impossibility for much of Daniel's tenure. As we move into 2023, the Region will be seeking to organise more regular scientific meetings, mostly in-person but ideally with some sort of online access – to enable the widest possible access for members across the Region. It would be good to see meetings happening in different parts of the Region – not necessarily confining everything to the

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### Welcome to our new President



Mark is the Director of BioSS. He enjoys thinking about problems in environmental data analysis, Bayesian risk and decision modelling and ordinal regression.

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### SAVE THE DATE

*Channel Network Conference*  
**23<sup>rd</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> August 2023**  
*Wageningen University*



*Website and details to follow soon*

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London area. Such “remote” meetings may not draw in large numbers of attendees, but rather could serve as a means to engage with the wider statistical/biometrical community, beyond the existing membership.

As this is my first President's corner, I should take the liberty of introducing myself. As an undergraduate at the University of Sheffield, I managed to get a degree in Probability and Statistics by taking only one maths module in the final year (any more would have led to a degree in Mathematics...), and then did a PhD with Colin Aitken in Edinburgh – which ended up looking at the then-novel area of MCMC, with a short collaboration with SASS – the Scottish Agricultural Statistics Service. A spell at Aberdeen University working as a consultant saw the first direct interactions with applied biological scientists, especially at the Marine Laboratory in Aberdeen. Then followed five years as a lecturer at the University of Exeter, before I moved to BioSS (Biomathematics and Statistics Scotland) – which had morphed from SASS a few years earlier – back in Aberdeen in 2001, located at what was then the Macaulay Land Use Research Institute. I've been at BioSS ever since, becoming Director in 2018.

In terms of the Society, I was invited to become an Associate Editor of Biometrics in 2006, and that was when I joined the IBS – and never looked back; I was also an AE of JABES from 2016 to 2018. I acted as Treasurer of the Region from 2012 to 2017, and I was proud to serve on the Executive Board of the Society for four years from 2017. I then became a Co-Editor of Biometrics in 2019 for three years (although this job hasn't quite gone away yet...).

It was a great honour to be asked to become President of the Region. These are challenging times for all of us – many members who fund their own subscriptions may face difficult choices as the impact of the latest financial crisis becomes clear. As Treasurer of the Region ten years ago, I saw how the fall in the value of the pound against the US dollar caused a spike in our fees, which are set in dollars; it should be noted that most of the fees we pay to the Region as members get transferred to the central IBS coffers. With the resumption of in-person meetings, this should give us an opportunity once more to bundle membership subscription together with meeting fees – which should aid some members. Overall, we should be looking for ways to support the existing membership and to find new members – and we need to make the Region an attractive proposition for joining!

I am very much looking forward to serving the Region as President, and to working with the Regional Committee, whose officers are currently Daniel Farewell (as Outgoing Vice-President), Kirsty Hassall (as Secretary), Rhian Daniel (as Membership Secretary) and Anestis Touloumis (as Treasurer). Remote committee meetings by video-conferencing – which the pandemic forced us to get used to – can now replace the twice-yearly trek to London (well, it was a trek for some of us...) with more frequent, shorter meetings, to plan events and meetings. We are always on the lookout for new committee members, so please don't be shy in coming forward if you think it is something that would interest you – the main commitment is to lead the organisation of at least one scientific meeting during a two year

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### **Call for abstracts**

*14<sup>th</sup> biannual meeting of the  
Italian Region of the IBS*

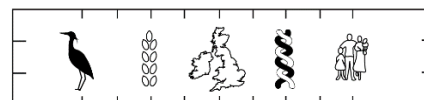
**27-31 August 2023**

**University of Milano-Bicocca**



<https://www.iscb2023.info/>

Deadline for Abstract  
Submission is **10 March  
2023**



### **Regional News:**

#### **Meeting Reports from 2022**

Variational Bayes, May 2022

[Report](#)

It's about time! November  
2022

[Report](#)

stint on the committee, and as you would help decide the topic of that meeting, should automatically prove interesting!

Finally, one aspect of the Society I'd like to explore is inclusion across the full breadth of our application areas. The Region – and indeed the IBS as a whole – has no shortage of medical representation; ecology, on the other hand, is perhaps not so well represented, despite the great strength of statistics in the field (especially so in the UK). Over the next two years, it would be wonderful to see greater links between the Region and the IBS on the one hand, and the statistical ecology community on the other – possibly by connecting the large biennial ISEC (International Statistical Ecology Conference) with the IBC, for example.

### Secretary's Report, Kirsty Hassall

Although I have officially been secretary of the BIR for just over a year, due to my maternity leave, this is my first Secretary's report. I would like to extend my thanks to all committee members and in particular, to Daniel for picking up the additional duties in my absence. It is my great privilege to serve as secretary for the next few years and I am really looking forward to my term. With the end of Covid restrictions, a semblance of "normality" is returning. The BIR held its first face-to-face meeting in over two years last November coinciding with the AGM. It was absolutely fantastic to see familiar faces (and remind oneself of how much taller everyone else seems to be).

Having said that, removing the need to physically travel to events has meant that wider participation has been possible at our virtual events and this positive impact is something we are actively trying to capitalise on. So be prepared for a number of exciting events in 2023, both in-person and online.

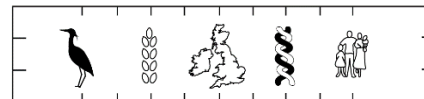
In the coming months, we will be running the Young Biometrician Award so please keep your eye out for interesting papers authored by our early career members that deserve celebrating in this way. More details to follow soon.

### Awards

The BIR are delighted to share the good news that our recent past-President, Prof. Ruth King, has received the Royal Statistical Society's Barnett Award in recognition of her exceptional work in statistical ecology. The tribute also acknowledges her many contributions to statistics and statisticians more broadly, including her distinguished leadership of the British and Irish Region of the International Biometric Society. Many congratulations, Ruth!

### Student Representation

At the AGM, the BIR proposed changes to the bylaws allowing for student representation on the committee. After a unanimous vote of approval this was proposed to the whole society by way of an online vote. Voting has now closed and we are delighted to say the BIR membership have agreed to the proposed changes.



## Regional News:

### AGM minutes

[Available here](#)

### IBC travel bursary winner

Read John Addy's report

[here](#)

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Ruth King



If you or a student you know would be interested in being co-opted onto the committee for the remainder of 2023 please contact Kirsty Hassall at [secretary@bir.biometricsociety.org](mailto:secretary@bir.biometricsociety.org)

## BIR Committee Members



President: Mark Brewer



Outgoing vice-president: Daniel Farewell



Secretary: Kirsty Hassall



Treasurer: Anestis Touloumis



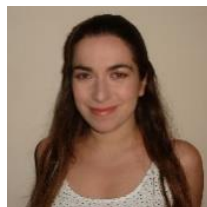
Membership Secretary: Rhian Daniel



Rafael de Moral  
(2021-2023)



David Hughes  
(2021 – 2023)



Christiana Kartsonaki  
(2022-2024)



Caroline Brophy  
(2022 – 2024)



Brian Tom  
(2023 – 2025)



Ken Newman  
(2023 – 2025)



Nicole Augustin  
(IBS Rep Council 2021-2024)



Angela Wood  
(IBS Rep Council 2021-2024)



Ruth Keogh  
(IBS Executive)