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Dear Members,

The EMS operates an apprentice scheme. Before coming President one serves one year as Vice-President, learning the ropes from the President. Roles are then reversed, with the previous President becoming Vice-President. I would like to thank Tony Carbery for all the help and invaluable advice he has given me over the last two years in his roles as President and Vice-President, and I wish him well as he “retires” from direct involvement in EMS affairs. But past-presidents never really retire – as I have traversed the country on EMS business I have met many past-presidents and, universally, they have remained deeply interested in the affairs and health of the society. I have been left with that feeling that I am not leading the society – I’m just the latest baton holder in the Society’s long history.

At the heart of the Society’s activities are the scientific meetings. My one regret is that more people don’t attend these talks. Universally, the talks have been excellent and carefully prepared for a general mathematical audience. None of this year’s talks have been in my own area of research, but I have found them inspiring and I have learnt a lot. We are all busy people and making the effort to attend a talk late on a Friday afternoon is hard, but I do encourage you to make the effort – you won’t be disappointed. Just meeting people and realising one is part of a wider community is valuable in itself.

One special event this academic year was the joint LMS/EMS meeting last December, held as part of the LMS’s 150th Anniversary. This was a much larger, event, with nine talks over two days on the subject of The Mathematical Aspects of Big Data. I would like to thank Uli Kraehmer, Peter Richtarik, Colva Roney-Dougal and Jim Wright for organizing this event. At the end I had the pleasure of presenting Prof. Simon Tavaré, President of the London Mathematical Society, with a quaich as a token of the friendship between the two societies.

These meetings, while being the most visible of the Society’s activities, are by no means the society does. Our Research Support and Education Committees award approx. £30,000 in grants each year to support mathematics in both Schools and Universities. While the types of activities we fund in Universities is probably familiar to you all, I thought that the activities we fund in Schools may be less so. Grants to schools are never large – typically a few hundred pounds – but they

make the difference between activities happening or not happening. Just one example – we funded a school project to estimate the number of leaves in a forest! Supporting such activities are the members of the two committees who read, comment and rank all the proposals we receive, and I would like to take the opportunity to thank them for all their work.

While these activities all appear apparently effortlessly, this is an illusion – a great many people work extremely hard behind the scenes to make these events happen, and I would like to thank Jozsef Farkas (General Secretary) and Jon Pridham (Meetings Secretary), and all of the University Representatives who take the lead with all the local organization. Thank too to all members of the General Committee, the Investment Committee, the Policy Advisory Group, the Research Support Fund Committee, the Education Committee, and all members of the Editorial Board of our Proceedings. If I have left anyone off, my apologies – your work for the Society is greatly appreciated.

And congratulations to Arend Bayer for winning the Society's 2016 Whittaker Prize. The quality of the nominations that were received this year was superb and the Prize Committee has recommended that the frequency of the prize should be changed to every second year.

But how are all these activities funded? A major item of business this year was the renegotiations of our publishing contract with CUP. This is just about finished (awaiting final signatures) and we should receive more funds, which in turn will be used to fund our activities. Many people have been involved in this – and thank you to you all - but I would like to single out Richard Steiner for both his mastery of the technical details of the contracts and for his liaison work with CUP itself. Without his expertise this would have been a much harder task.

There is also much that happens behind the scenes to promote Mathematics. We continue to be a member of the Royal Society of Edinburgh's Learned Societies Group which lobbies Holyrood on education matters. This year we joined Holyrood's Cross Party Group on Science and Technology as an "Organizational Member". Quite what this means I not sure, but I hope it will provide an opportunity to make a presentation on the importance of the Mathematical Sciences to Scotland.

A new activity this year is that we will be having a stand at the "Science and the Parliament" annual event. While this has been held annually for at least the last decade, there has been no representation of the Edinburgh Mathematical Society. This will now change and we will have a stand at this year's event which will be held on Wed. November 9th in Dynamic Earth, adjacent to Scottish Parliament buildings. Do come along and say hello (or even better – volunteer to help!).

As President, I attend the meetings of the Council for Mathematical Sciences – or CMS – which is chaired by Sir Adrian Smith and consists of the President and chief-executives of the London Mathematical Society, The Royal Statistical Society, The Institute for Mathematics and its Applications and the Operational Research Society. Discussion of devolved matters is now firmly on the agenda

and there is now an understanding that a plurality of structures - across both teaching and research - now exists with the UK.

Not everything went well this year. In June I led a delegation that met staff at the Scottish Funding Council to ask for both funds for the continuation of the SMSTC, and a change to the post-REF REG-c funding multiplier. The latter sounds mysterious, but a multiplier is used in their funding formulae to convert REF results into research money. A multiplier of 1.6 is now used in England, but in Scotland a multiplier of 1.2 is used. Thus our research is less-well funded here. They said "no" to both requests. More lobbying on this issue will be done, probably in conjunction with CMS, but the outcome was disappointing.

It is always sad to see people leave after their terms of office ends. As well as Tony Carbery stepping down, our Treasurer, Richard Steiner will be retiring. The fact that all our meetings happen, with grants and expenses being paid, is entirely due to his dedication and outstanding efficiency. Many thanks Richard. Three University representatives have also come to the end of their terms of office, Dumitru Trucu (Dundee), Heiko Gimperlein (Heriot-Watt) and Lars Olsen (St Andrews) are stepping down, so thank you for all your contributions to the Society.

However, new people come to the fore: Ineke De Moortel (St Andrews) will start in her role as Vice-President, Fordyce Davidson (Dundee) will start as Treasurer, and Mariya Ptashnyk, Oana Pocovnicu and Magda Carr as representatives for Dundee, Heriot-Watt and St Andrews, respectively. I wish them all well, and hope they will enjoy their work for the Society as much as I do mine.

I started writing this newsletter wondering how I would fill the pages, but it has been very easy. In fact, I feel I have not done justice to all of the Society's affairs and I'm sure I have left something out (beside our continued support for the Scottish Mathematical Challenge, our annual public lecture and the annual PhD student event at The Burn). I am assured that we more than fulfil the main aims of the Society, namely:

The aims of the EDINBURGH MATHEMATICAL SOCIETY shall be the promotion and extension of the Mathematical Sciences, pure and applied, particularly in Scotland.

It really has been a pleasure to serve as President over the last year.

With best wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ian Strachan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line above the first name.

Prof. Ian Strachan