

## President's Newsletter: October 2010

It has been another good year for the Society, with our core activities of talks, the Proceedings (PEMS), grant giving, and the Burn postgraduate conference all flourishing.

We received a major donation of £31,000 from the International Congress of Mathematicians (Edinburgh) Fund. This Fund, formerly held by the Royal Society of Edinburgh (RSE), has been closed, and the balance has been transferred to the EMS. General Committee agreed that a good use for part of the funds would be to pay the production costs to enable accepted Proceedings articles to appear on the PEMS web page as soon as they are ready (at present articles appear online at the same time as in print). Moving to such an "online first" system should be attractive to both authors and subscribers, and we shall notify members when the new system is ready to launch. It was also agreed to increase the annual budgets of the Research Support Fund and the Education Committee (to £18K and £9K respectively). Full details on the application procedure for these grant schemes are available from the relevant sections of the Society's web pages.

The Fund was established in 1961 from the "unexpended balance of sums donated or subscribed for the International Congress of Mathematicians held in Edinburgh in 1958". One of the plenary speakers at the Edinburgh Congress was Professor Friedrich Hirzebruch, and it was a great privilege to represent the EMS at a recent dinner in his honour, on the occasion of his induction as an Honorary Fellow of the RSE. He spoke warmly of his memories of the 1958 Congress and of its positive impact on his work, and it is pleasing that the EMS can continue to use the fund to support developments in mathematics, 52 years later.

Another of this year's highlights was signing a new reciprocity agreement with SIAM ([www.siam.org](http://www.siam.org)) in January, which means that EMS members not based in the USA can now join SIAM for 70% of the standard annual fee. This is our ninth such agreement, and details of all our reciprocal societies are available under the "Membership" section of our web pages. EMS members are also eligible to join the European Mathematical Society at the reduced "national member society" rate, and our web page explains how to do this.

We were pleased to host the European Mathematical Society's Executive Committee meeting in Edinburgh in March – it was a case of "EMS welcomes EMS"! The Executive Committee members were interested to find out more about "our" EMS, and I presented a short overview of our activities to them. They kindly invited the General Secretary, Sandy Davie, and me to a very enjoyable evening dinner.

The Society's 2009-10 lecture programme again featured a wide range of excellent talks by eminent speakers, although unfortunately the scheduled talk by Professor Cornelia Drutu had to be cancelled because of travel problems due to the Icelandic volcano. The programme included the Society's inaugural "Popular Lecture", given by Dr Nina Snaith. Her talk, *Hollywood's hippest mathematics: random matrices and Riemann zeros*, given to a large and appreciative audience was a great success, and we plan to continue with an annual Popular

Lecture. Thanks are due to our Meetings Secretary, Tom Lenagan, and the local reps for organizing such an interesting and varied programme.

The EMS benefits from a strong relationship with ICMS (the International Centre for Mathematical Sciences, [www.icms.org.uk](http://www.icms.org.uk)): not only does ICMS manage PEMS, it also provides administrative support for our annual postgraduate meetings at the Burn House. Special thanks are due to the ICMS Scientific Director, Professor John Toland, and the Executive Secretary, Irene Moore, both of whom stepped down this year, and we welcome their successors, Professor Keith Ball and Jane Walker.

The Society continues its involvement in the Council for Mathematical Sciences (CMS, [www.cms.ac.uk](http://www.cms.ac.uk)). All CMS members are very grateful to Sir David Wallace, the first “independent” CMS chair, whose term of office finishes in October. David has been an excellent ambassador for UK mathematical sciences research, at all levels and throughout the UK: we in Scotland are especially grateful that he travelled to Edinburgh twice last year for meetings with the Scottish Funding Council. Although sorry that David is leaving, the CMS member societies are pleased that Professor Frank Kelly has agreed to succeed him as chair. Frank is Professor of the Mathematics of Systems in the University of Cambridge and Master of Christ's College, and served as Chief Scientific Adviser to the UK Department for Transport from 2003 to 2006.

Our membership of CMS has meant an increasing involvement in UK research policy issues. This usually means having to produce voluminous amounts of paperwork in response to various initiatives or consultations, but the Society is also frequently asked to make nominations. For example, Ken Brown at Glasgow is “our” nominee on EPSRC's Steering Committee for the forthcoming International Review of Mathematical Sciences. The IRM meetings in December provide a great opportunity for the mathematical sciences community to tell the panel about the excellent research which is being done in the UK, and also to emphasise the importance of a strong mathematical sciences research base in underpinning economic, scientific and technological advances. Of course this is especially important in the current financial situation, in which cuts in overall research funding are inevitable.

As the AGM approaches, it is my pleasure to thank the very many people who give their time to the Society, on its committees, on the PEMS Board, and as EMS representatives to outside bodies. Thanks are due in particular to the 2010 Burn meeting organisers: Max Neunhoffer and Radha Kessar; to the annual report coordinator, Gunnar Hornig; to the Society's continuing officers: Sandy Davie, Tom Lenagan, Richard Steiner, Elizabeth Gasparim, Iain Gordon, Colin Campbell, Marit Hartveit, Lyonell Boulton and Allan Grady; to those stepping down from the General Committee: Jozsef Farkas, Gunnar Hornig and Richard Paris; to Edmund Robertson who steps down from the Policy Advisory Group (PAG); and to Frances Reid for her work in the Society Office. I would also like to thank the Department of Mathematics at the University of Glasgow for its help in ensuring that the Treasurer had suitable administrative support last year, and particularly the University of Edinburgh's School of Mathematics for its very close and supportive relationship with the Society.

Special thanks are due to Jim Howie who finishes as convener of the RSF after eight years on that Committee, and of course to Rob Archbold, as he completes the four-year cycle of Vice President, President and then Vice President again. Both Jim and Rob have been invaluable sources of wise advice over the past year, and fortunately the Society continues to benefit from their expertise: Jim remains on PAG, and Rob will take over from Jim as RSF convener.

I hope that you find the forthcoming programme of lectures and the Society's other activities enjoyable and worthwhile, and look forward to meeting more of you during the year to come.

Penny Davies