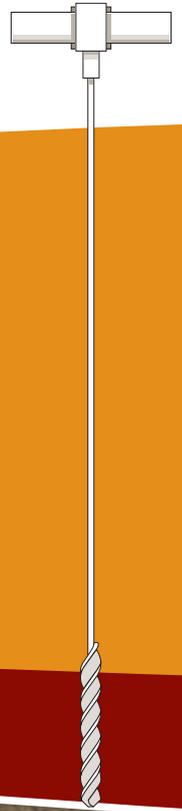




BRITISH
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OF SOIL
SCIENCE



THE Auger

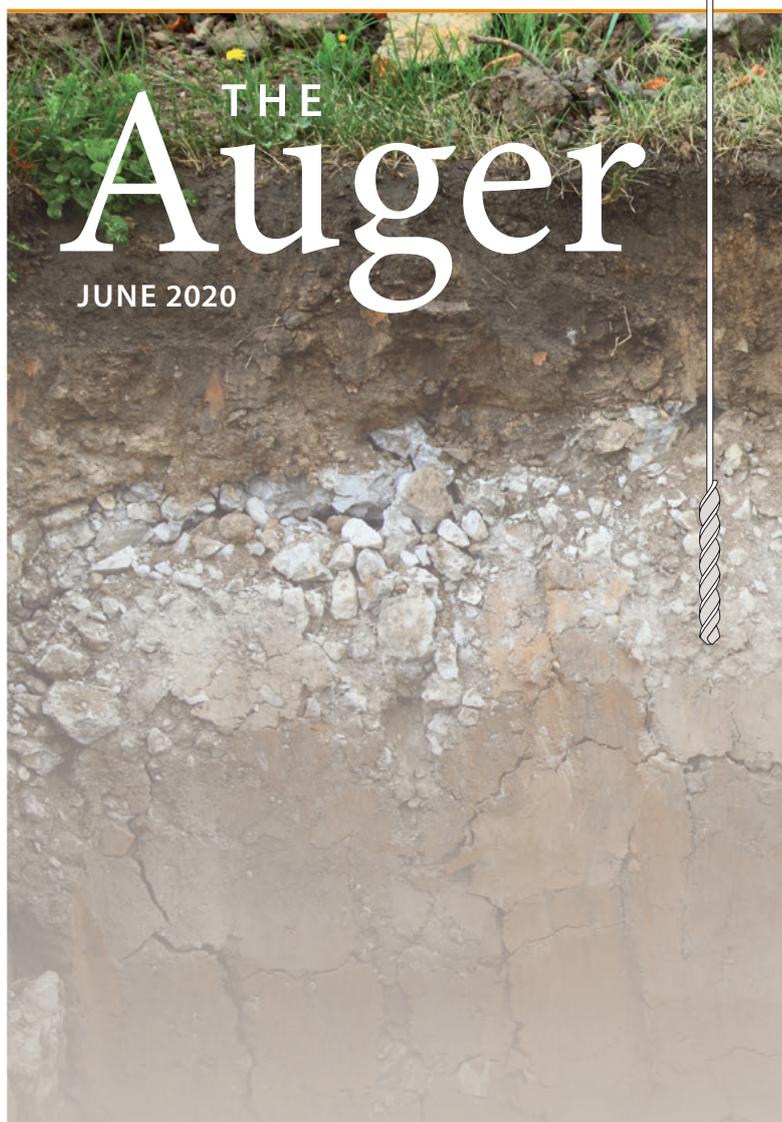
JUNE 2020



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Cover image: BSSS Time Capsule to be opened on the
100th Anniversary of the Society

*Our mission is to promote
the study and profession
of Soil Science*

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Sarah Garry
Executive Officer
exec@soils.org.uk

President's Welcome

Professor Sacha Mooney President



Dear Members...

When I wrote my last piece for the Auger in the Autumn of 2019, I could never have predicted the circumstances that have followed to the point as I write today in the last week of April. The World has changed enormously within a matter of a few months and we are all now anxious to see the new landscape that will emerge as we hopefully start to recover from what has without doubt been a dreadful time for most of us.

Of course, there are always positives, and as I sit in my office today I can hear my wife talking to her work colleagues in Germany, my son discussing creative writing with his English teacher on skype and my daughter practising her flute with her music teacher via Zoom. For me it is week 5 of working from home and I am now in a regular swing of around 6 digital meetings per day and I think I have finally acquired some expert skills in almost every digital communication channel. The advantage of the digital world means that, with some exceptions, life for many of us can carry on as normal even when confined to home and I am pleased to say that is largely what has happened for the Society, though obviously to an extent...

The most positive news of the year thus far has been the recruitment of our new Executive Officer, Sarah Garry. Sarah officially joined the Society in the beginning of May and comes with a wealth of experience in many areas of Society, Charity and Event Management business. I am really looking forward to working with her and I am sure everyone in the Society will make her feel very welcome as she settles into her new role.



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...I am really looking forward to working with her and I am sure everyone in the Society will make her feel very welcome as she settles into her new role.

The next recruitment phase for the Society has just begun which is for a new administration post and hopefully I will have more details concerning this in our next issue.

Our current office team remain busy whilst working from home whilst Cranfield University is closed. Unfortunately, due to the COVID19 situation, we took the decision last month to postpone all Society events until the end of June. When we made this decision I recall naively thinking everything should be 'back to normal' by the end of June, however we have currently extended this to the rest of the year. It is not a decision that we reached lightly, but of course the health and wellbeing of our staff and members is always at the top of the agenda. We will review the position again at the next Board meeting in September.

We have recently made the difficult decision to postpone our Annual Meeting in Glasgow in September which was very disappointing, especially as we had arranged to coincide this with the IUSS Inter Congress visit in preparation for the World Congress in 2022. However, the current climate means

that planning events of this size for the immediate future is just not possible. As we are unable to hold the Annual Conference this year in person we have decided to hold a digital alternative on 4th December and I am hoping to spend some time in the coming weeks seeing how other events, such as the EGU conference, are adapting to an online delivery.

President's Welcome



“

At the turn of the year we welcomed Dr Deyi Hou as our new Editor in Chief (EiC) for Soil Use and Management and thanked our outgoing EiC Professor Mike Goss for his excellent contribution in the role. ”

At the turn of the year we welcomed Dr Deyi Hou as our new Editor in Chief (EiC) for Soil Use and Management and thanked our outgoing EiC Professor Mike Goss for his excellent contribution in the role. The other important news regarding publication is that the publisher of our journals, Wiley, announced a new four year deal with JISC (the UK higher/further education and skills sectors' not-for-profit organisation for digital services and solutions) offering free open access to researchers at most UK universities/institutes. This builds on a similar agreement Wiley signed last year with a large number of German institutes. This will be an excellent opportunity for our journals to attract the best publications. Both Deyi and Jenni (EiC for European Journal of Soil Science) are doing excellent jobs in helping us as a Society prepare and adapt for the significant changes that are coming to the world of publishing associated with Plan S (which aims to ensure all research is published open access) and I strongly urge all members to consider our journals for their own potential publications.

A slightly shorter editorial than usual. I think this reflects the current mood. It had been an excellent start to the year for the Society with new recruits, exciting activities and new events planned but for all of us COVID₁₉ has impacted significantly and negatively on our day to day life. However, it has also offered an opportunity for reflection. Speaking to my family and friends they have many examples of how the current situation has brought them closer together, provided much needed time to pause and think and a chance to plan and prepare for the future, focusing on what is most important.

Rest assured that we have also utilised the time effectively as a Society and we will be ready to offer you the best possible member experience as we move forward. I wish you all good health and for you to remain safe at this time and look forward to seeing you in what I hope is the near future.

With best wishes,

● **Professor Sacha Mooney, *President*, June 2020**

president@soils.org.uk

Welcome from the *new* Executive Officer

Welcome to the June edition of the Auger!
I am absolutely delighted to welcome you to
the publication as your *new* Executive Officer.

Although lockdown has been a strange time to start a new role and I haven't had the opportunity to meet you face to face, I have been struck by how friendly the members I have spoken to are, and the dedication and commitment you give to your society. On a personal note, I am particularly pleased to be working with BSSS as in my spare time I am a keen gardener and keep busy growing vegetables in my allotment garden!

Professionally, I have had 15 years' experience in other trade and membership bodies, most recently as Project Director at Build UK, the leading representative organisation for the UK construction industry.

I have a particular interest in skills, training and policy work and in the construction sector have worked with young people to encourage them to enter a career in construction. I understand that recruiting new talent into the soil sciences is a concern for BSSS members and I hope that my past experience can support you, to attract the right candidates into both industry and academia.

I also hold a Masters' Degree in Event Management and began my career organising both UK and international events. With work on the World Congress of Soil Science 2022 starting to ramp up over the next few months, I will be rolling up my sleeves to support the organising committee and our Professional Congress Organiser.



“

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I have been struck by how friendly the members I have spoken to are,
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As with other societies and businesses, many of BSSS' outward facing activities have paused or stopped during the Covid-19 pandemic and you will see this reflected in this edition of the Auger: where we would usually be updating you on plans for the Annual Conference, we have instead taken the decision to cancel the face to face event and replace it with an online meeting, and we will not be running any training courses before the end of 2020.

Instead, we are planning a number of online events which will provide the society with the opportunity to engage with those of you who frequently attend our events, as well as those of you who don't always have the opportunity to attend. The autumn/winter programme will include an online AGM on 3 September, a virtual conference on 4 December and a series of short lectures via webinar. The details for all these online events are being confirmed as we go to print, and I hope to provide further information on how you can get involved, shortly. During these difficult times, we have all been used to using Zoom to call family, or using Teams at work, however delivering online events for hundreds of people is a new way of working for the society. I hope that our plans will make it even easier for members to show their support to our work, and to hear from interesting speakers.

Whilst writing, I would also like to take the opportunity to thank my colleagues Lynne Boshier and Judith Simpkins for their hard work, professionalism and dedication to BSSS over the last four and a half years. Both Lynne and Judith will be leaving the society at the end of June and although I haven't worked with them for long, I know that they will be greatly missed by our members. I hope to introduce you to the new BSSS team in December's Auger.

Having only started in the post in early May, I am still learning about the society and what is important to members. I hope you enjoy this edition of the Auger and please do send your comments and feedback on this publication and other membership benefits to exec@soils.org.uk

Stay safe and well,

👤 Sarah Garry, Executive Officer

exec@soils.org.uk

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*I would also like to take the opportunity to thank my colleagues
Lynne Boshier and Judith Simpkins for their hard work, professionalism
and dedication to BSSS over the last four and a half years.*”

Society News

New Early Careers Representative Sought!

*Are you a BSSS Early Careers member?
Keen to add new skills to your CV and
learn about strategic decision making?
If so, this role could be for you!*

Taking on the post for two years, the ideal candidate will have a good understanding of the issues which matter to Early Careers members, and be happy to work as part of a team to support members in those areas.

The ideal candidate should be keen to learn new skills including actively contributing to Council members and the organisation of events.

If you could be interested in volunteering your time to BSSS, please contact either **Dan Evans** (*Current Early Careers Representative*) via student@soils.org.uk for an initial conversation or the BSSS office via exec@soils.org.uk

Welcome to the following new Members:

Associate Member:

Harry Day	Gareth Foulkes
Byron Humphries	Brendon Hunter
Pia Sterndale-Bennett	Chris Thomas
Jordanne Thompson	

Early Career Member:

Alex Amerh Agbeshie	Marie Arnaud
Mark Arnold	Silvia Arpano
Sam Bate	Conor T Billam
Craig Booker	Samuel Booth
Alison Carswell	Margaret Cathcart-James
Megan Charlton	Marta Crispo
Jude Ene	Katie Evans
Daniel Evans	Emily Forster
Luke Fountain	Victoria Gauld
Bethan Hallett	Laura Hoath
Zoe Holmes	Helen Hughes
Danny Itkin	Ben Keane
Joseph Llanos	Isobel Lloyd
Adrian Mallory	Titia Mulder
Chinonso Ogbuagu	Rong Qu
Taupik Rahman	Maria Chiara Rosace
Marie-Elise Samson	Suleiman Suleiman
Marcus Winter	John James Wood
Amy Cooper	Daniel Scullion

Full Member:

Claire Anderson	Graham Beard
Sion Brackenbury	Ian Bull
Karl-Jan Erstad	Fiona Fordyce
Lucy Gilbert	David Grantham
Paul Hargreaves	Simon Jeffery
Elaine Jewkes	Aidan Keith
Lauren Manning	John Newstead
Olufisayo Onawumi	Richard Page
Rosemary Peel	Steven Philp
Elijah Phiri	Anne Quillet
Olaf Schmidt	Xin Shu
George Topsa	Robin Truslove
Joanna Uglow	Yuk Fo Lai
Gihan Soliman	

Technical Member:

Charles Bwalya Chisanga	Laura Cohen
Deborah Crossan	James Turner
Cairo Robb	

The Education Committee is responsible for developing education and outreach activities that enables the delivery of parts of the Society's Strategic Plan. There are currently five committee members and we welcome more members to help with our work programme. If you would like to contribute please send an email to education@soils.org.uk with a paragraph introducing yourself and why you would like to become part of the committee. We are looking at a flexible structure going forwards, where members can contribute either to the committee in general or to contribute to supporting, developing and delivering specific activities. Read on to find out about our current and future plans.

The current Education Committee members:



Jack Hannam (*chair*)

“ I am a soil scientist at Cranfield University working on soil data, digital soil mapping and soil health with pedology at the heart of all these activities. I also teach Masters level soil science. Much of my work involves collaborating with others in different disciplines and with varied stakeholders from farmers to policy makers. The interdisciplinary aspects of soil science are why I enjoy it so much — what other subject gives you science, humanities and the arts all rolled into one?! I am a passionate science communicator and have been involved in a number of activities ranging from Open Farm Sunday, school visits and Soapbox Science. I have been chair of the education committee since 2017 and have been involved in the Society for many years as a member and in various roles on council. Come and join us to spread the word about the wonders of soil! ”

“ My first degree from University of Liverpool was BSc (Hons) in Geography & Botany and I went on to study for a PhD in peatland geochemistry. After several years as a Teaching Assistant I moved to Liverpool John Moores University where I lectured in soil science for 30 years. I am passionate about soil science education so, in retirement, regularly visit schools to talk about soils. I now also write for children and my books have strong soil/natural history themes. ”



Jenny Jones



Leila Froud

“ I am a soil scientist and agri-advisor at ADAS and joined the BSSS Council in 2016. In my day job, I mostly spend my time talking with farmers, walking fields, digging holes and explaining to people why soil and the environment needs looking after. There is a massive interest from the general public about soil. Educating on soils is a fundamental part of BSSS’ strategic goals, however we have a lot to do as an education committee to improve our outreach. For the last few years I have led our efforts for Open Farm Sunday, and thanks to volunteers from our members, BSSS has been present at approx. 5 farms each year, reaching approx. 20,000 people/annum. We wouldn’t be able to spread the word on soil to the public without our amazing office staff and the volunteer hours put in by members. But we want to do more. We need more people like you, coming forward and volunteering to talk soil, dig holes and excite people about science. Joining the education committee is a great first step! ”

“ I am a soil mineralogist at the James Hutton Institute. My research focuses on the analysis of large soil mineralogy datasets to investigate the physical, chemical and biological role of minerals within the soil system. Aside from my research I am also regularly involved in soil surveying for Forestry and Land Scotland, allowing me to observe the progression of soil data from the digging through to the databases. I have an enthusiasm for science communication and outreach, and with the upcoming WCSS being organised by BSSS, now is a really exciting time to be part of the Education Committee. ”



Ben Butler



Dick Thompson

“ I retired from the National Soil Resources Institute twelve years ago and set up in consultancy for a few years going back to my soil survey roots. During that period and through to the present day, I have been involved with the Society on a voluntary basis. I have been on the Board and Council in the past but am now focused on the Working with Soil competency and training scheme. This involves me in membership of the Professional Practice Committee which runs Working with Soil. I sit on the Education Committee to provide a link between the two groups but also because of the training side of the scheme. Working with the Society, particularly my involvement in teaching basic field soil science skills, is very rewarding and I would encourage everyone to get involved in some way. ”

What is the Committee currently doing?

Open Farm Sunday is an annual event run by LEAF (Linking Environment and Farming) which opens farms all around the country to the public for one Sunday, normally in June. This is our flagship event and we organize a BSSS presence at as many farms as possible with members talking to the public about soil and its importance in food production and for environmental services. There is usually a large soil pit for children to enjoy and we provide an assortment of handouts. Everyone who has been involved so far has thoroughly enjoyed their day. The current lockdown means this year's event has been postponed to the 20th September so there is plenty of time to get it in your diary — why not give it a go? Check out the LEAF OFS website for farms near you that are participating <https://farmsunday.org>. Leila is the lead for this activity and you can contact her via events@soils.org.uk

Soils and the National Curriculum Jenny has been looking at the three National Curricula and where soil science sits within subjects (primarily geography) at primary and secondary levels. Initial assessment indicates there is little explicit soil science on the curriculum, although it is relevant to many topics such as the carbon cycle and plants. Jenny and other committee members are talking to teachers in a number of schools to find out how teachers are currently teaching soils within various subjects. Once that phase of the programme is complete, we hope to work in partnership with the Royal Geographical Society and the Earth Science Teachers Association to encourage a higher profile for soil science. This will link in with a future Glasgow WCSS 2022 education project (more of that below).

Working with Soil training programme

We have three courses up and running with a further two at the planning stage. *Exposing and describing a soil profile* (one day); *An introduction to soil classification* (two days) and *Agricultural Land Classification* (two days) run regularly. *An introduction to soil mapping* (one day) and *Techniques for describing soil structure* (one day) are at the planning stage. More detail on the courses can be found here <https://soils.org.uk/working-soil-o>

All our courses received excellent feedback from our past delegates but we still have a challenge to attract people to sign up. Anything that members can do to promote the programme would be very welcome.

Grants for teachers and educators

There are two grants available from the society to support teachers and educators. The next deadline is on 1 September.

1. **Field equipment grant** is designed to enable institutions to buy field equipment to aid in the instruction and understanding of soil science. Suitable for Primary, Secondary and Tertiary. Value: Up to £1000
2. **Innovation grant** is available to encourage teachers to develop innovative ways of incorporating soil science into lessons. Suitable for: Primary, Secondary, Higher Education Value: Up to £500

For more information, eligibility and to download the application form: <https://www.soils.org.uk/grants-and-awards-available>

What's in the pipeline?

Our biggest challenge is to put together an ambitious education-focused project culminating in an activity or session at the World Congress in Glasgow in 2022. The Society received a proposal from IUSS for a school-focused programme for congress and we have discussed how the BSSS might deliver an education focused activity for the congress. Our current thoughts are focused on *a)* bringing together a network of teachers who are interested and already teaching soils in schools around the UK, *b)* coming up with our own views on what the national curriculum should contain on the teaching of soil science, and *c)* collating the best teaching ideas and resources from around the world and putting these together in the right format to support teachers in the UK. We would welcome any feedback on these suggested activities.

Outreach grants We now have a budget to award a number of small outreach grants to BSSS members wishing to deliver an event or activity to celebrate World Soil Day. We are currently working on the details of the scheme but the activity should involve public engagement to raise awareness of soil science on or around World Soil Day.

We need you! If you are interested in helping the Committee, do please contact us. It is very rewarding work and we guarantee that you will enjoy being involved.

👤 **Jack Hannam**, *Education committee chair*
on behalf of the education committee

education@soils.org.uk • j.a.hannam@cranfield.ac.uk

BSSS Early Career Time Capsule, 2019–2047

In this feature, the Society's National ECR Officer, Dan Evans, briefly removes the lid on the Early Career Time Capsule, and gives us a glimpse of the artefacts that lie waiting for the soil scientists of 2047.



“

The British Society of Soil Science was, itself, just like an acorn once; an idea that germinated at the Bonnington Hotel in London, on 28th March 1946, and it began to take root in January 1947 when the first set of rules and recommendations were published.”

Dear all in the British Society of Soil Science, in 2019 and in 2047.

On this cool autumnal evening, my pen journeys across the pad; a creek of blue ink flowing over an expanse of white, lined pulp. Thoughts that seemed brief and ephemeral moments ago, have now been inked into words, and dried into permanence under the ochre rays of a low November sun. Riding a fresh south-westerly breeze into the garden is the sweet and subtle fragrance of autumn. Above me, a robin is tuning up for evensong; singing an elegy to the Oak tree as its leaves float away like crimson butterflies...

Penning a letter to the future of a national Society is a challenge, especially in one's family garden, where personal memories swarm from hedge to hedge. Often, I gaze up from my pad and catch a ghost of myself splashing in the paddling pool, or setting out to school. But since I am writing about burying a Time Capsule, there is a memory that is particularly poignant today: a Sunday afternoon about twenty years ago, when I found and buried an acorn.

I would only have been six or seven years old at the time; old enough to know what species of tree I was interested in growing, but too young to realize what impact it would have. Only many years later did I realize that a single acorn, buried out of sight, can, one day, bring so much joy, shelter, inspiration, and sanctuary. Whenever I perch under its boughs, as I do now scribing this letter, it inspires me to think that out of something small, something extraordinary can grow, but only if given time.

The British Society of Soil Science was, itself, just like an acorn once; an idea that germinated at the Bonnington Hotel in London, on 28th March 1946, and it began to take root in January 1947 when the first set of rules and recommendations were published. Then followed the first Ordinary Meeting of the Society, held at the London School of Economics in April 1947 and, later that year, the first Council meeting at the Institute of Archaeology was held in Regent's Park. The Society would grow in size and inevitably branch out, launching its first journal in 1950, and its second in 1985. The Professional Practice branch of the Society would develop about twenty years later, and in 2010, this branch would officially entwine with those of the Institute of Professional Soil Scientists.



From the acorn of an idea, planted in London in 1947, our Society now stands tall and proud, internationally recognised and valued in the global arboretum of Soil Science. Our branches continue to spread out across the world, interweaving with other societies, cultures and practices, whilst continuously seeking to fulfil the needs and interests of our members back home. In just a few years time, we shall host the World Congress of Soil Science in Glasgow; a fantastic opportunity not only to display the fruits of Soil Scientists far and wide, but to further enrich our Society's global community.

In 2019, the need for a Society such as ours cannot be overstated. Global soil resources are under threat from an array of environmental and anthropic perturbations, and two thirds are considered to be either moderately or highly degraded. As I write, there are currently 7.7 billion people living on Planet Earth, relying on the presence and health of our global soil stocks to meet their day-to-day demands, with this number expected to grow to 9 billion by the time this letter is re-read in 2047. Fully developed solutions will not emerge overnight; these will need to be steadily cultivated and nurtured. Fortunately, the British Society of Soil Science has over 800 members, many of whom are passionate in cultivating a more sustainable future. And who better to lead these efforts than that very future: our amazing community of over two hundred Early Career members.

Since I took up the role of National ECR Officer in 2018, the ECR network has both expanded and evolved. This community continues to enrich the discipline of soil science: displaying zest and creativity, delivering significant research, engaging public communities and stakeholders, being ambassadors for soils on the international stage, and demonstrating a profound, heartfelt desire to protect our soil resources for future generations.

“

Our capsule contains a myriad of items, from photographs and anecdotes to papers and perspectives, each of which is summarised in an accompanying contents pack. Many items will no doubt raise a smile or cause a chuckle; that is the wonderful thing about time.”

This year, from the ECR branch of the British Society of Soil Science, another acorn falls. This time, it's a Time Capsule: a snapshot of life as a BSSS ECR in the year 2019. It will lie dormant underground at Rothamsted Research in Harpenden until 2047, when it will be opened to celebrate the Society's 100th Anniversary. I hope that by browsing through our 2019 collection will demonstrate, yet again, how far we have travelled in our pursuit for more sustainable soils, if and how our intellectual priorities have altered, and what we need to continue to work on. In addition, I hope that this snapshot of our Society activities will provide a chance to reflect on how BSSS, as a learned community, has evolved with the changing times.

Our capsule contains a myriad of items, from photographs and anecdotes to papers and perspectives, each of which is summarised in an accompanying contents pack. Many items will no doubt raise a smile or cause a chuckle; that is the wonderful thing about time. Sadly, I expect we — the Early Career Class of 2019 — will not be quite so 'Early Career' by then, but no doubt many of us will feel like we're just getting started. 2047 will have its own Early Career community, many of whom may be standing with us, as we stood with our disciplinary elders, around a gaping hole at Rothamsted on a cold, winter's morning, to retrieve the capsule from its shadowy depths. When they turn around and (hopefully) ask us 'so, how did you do it — how did you save our soils?', we can unscrew the lid of the capsule and piece together the beginning of a remarkable story.

As the sun sets, I take one more look at my oak tree, towering forty feet above me, its canopy iridescent in the closing light of day. Yes, remarkable things can emerge from single acorns. In a few weeks, on World Soil Day 2019, we shall plant the BSSS ECR Time Capsule. The capsule won't grow. This time around, it's us who will grow, developing our ideas and saving our soils on behalf of British and global Soil Science. Let's go forth, and pen the rest of that remarkable story.

I wish each and every Soil Scientist of 2047 all the very best.

👤 Dan Evans

Inside the capsule...



The BSSS Early Career Time Capsule was buried at Rothamsted Research, Harpenden, on World Soil Day, 5th December 2019.

Inside the 'Old Sample House', President Sacha Mooney gave a welcome on behalf of the Society, as did Professor Steve McGrath on behalf of Rothamsted. After a few remarks from Dan Evans, the capsule was carried out to the front lawn, for the burial ceremony. Back in the Old Sample House, copies of some of the items were then unveiled in a special exhibition.



The capsule contains 58 items, and here's a brief snapshot of some of them.

A full list of the contents can be found on the Early Career pages of the BSSS website.



Letters to the future...

from H.R.H. The Duke of Gloucester KG GCVO, President Sacha Mooney, the BSSS Regional ECR Representatives, and some of our Society's ECR members.



Happy Birthday BSSS!

To celebrate the Society's 100th Anniversary, members from across the UK left a message in four very special birthday cards!

A membership leaflet

with eleven reasons to become an ECR member of BSSS, in an acrostic to fit each letter of the words 'Early Career'.



Inside the capsule...

BRITISH SOCIETY OF SOIL SCIENCE

Current Research Developments in Soils and Related Sciences

Monday 22nd September 1986

A one-day meeting at The Society of Chemical Industry, 14/15 Belgrave Square, London, SW1X 8PS.

The programme of what is considered to have been the Society's first ECR Conference held in London on 22nd September 1986.

Highlights from the 2019

BSSS ECR Conference:

photos, videos, the Botanical Gardens quiz sheet, presenters' slides, and an official programme detailing the attendance of our Society's Patron, H.R.H. The Duke of Gloucester KG GCVO



Photographs and quiz sheets from the 2018 ECR 'Campus Challenge' event,

held after the Society's Annual Conference that year across the campus at Lancaster University.



A selection of PEDcasts: monthly video podcasts highlighting some of the significant and noteworthy developments in soil science hosted by Dan Evans, on his personal YouTube platform, in 2018.



Early Career Soil Scientist?

Need some help with funding your development?



Professor Brian Chambers, a former President and Fellow of the Institute of Professional Soil Scientists (IPSS) and member of BSSS, worked tirelessly to apply science to the complex problems of soil, nutrient and manure management. With his outstanding technical knowledge and critical thinking, he was always prepared to push the boundaries and challenge convention but only when supported by 'sound science' — one of his favourite phrases.

For more details on how your organisation can get involved please see:
<https://www.soils.org.uk/bcsf-brian-chambers-soils-fund>

The Brian Chambers Soils Fund was established to provide grants to help fund the learning and development costs of students and early career scientists. Encouraging the skills and knowledge needed to manage soils effectively to meet the demands of modern farming systems is essential for the future sustainability of agriculture.

Practical experience and the ability to communicate effectively are key requisites for those wishing to follow in the footsteps of someone like Brian. A number of agriculture and environmental industry organisations have kindly offered to provide opportunities for work experience, mentoring or training.

The first application to the fund was made in November 2016 and since then it has received 18 applications for funding. To date, 12 grants have been approved (£5,300) by the Grants and Awards Committee (in association with the BCSF Steering Group).

If you would like to find out how this might help your career development, please email bcsf@soils.org.uk with a brief description of what kind of practical support you need. A member of the Brian Chambers Soils Fund will get in touch to discuss how we can help.

To find out more details of how you can apply for a grant head over to the BSSS website.

The Brian Chambers Soils Fund also works closely with the International Fertiliser Society who have established the Brian Chambers International Award. Cash prizes are available for PhD or MSc students.

New Editor in Chief for Soil Use and Management

The British Society of Soil Science and Wiley are delighted to announce that the new Editor in Chief of “*Soil Use and Management*” is **Dr Deyi Hou**. Deyi officially took over the post on 1st January 2020 from outgoing Editor Professor Mike Goss who has been Editor in Chief for the last 6 years.



Deyi is a world-renowned expert on the subject of soil degradation and remediation through sustainable approaches, with interests across multiple areas of soil management. He holds degrees from Tsinghua University (China), Stanford University (US), and Cambridge University (UK), and worked as an environmental consultant in the US for nearly a decade before returning to Tsinghua University in 2015.

After his appointment Deyi commented “*I am very honoured to be appointed as Editor in Chief of Soil Use and Management, one of the most prestigious international soil science journals. My aim is to help further develop the journal’s reputation for publishing the highest quality and most impactful papers in the field of soil science, with an increased emphasis on interdisciplinary studies. I hope such studies can inform policy decision making and sustainable management of soil resources, e.g. pertaining to food security, climate change, biodiversity, global health, and the UN’s sustainable development goals*”.

Society President, Professor Sacha Mooney
from the University Of Nottingham spoke about
Deyi joining the team,

“Soil Use and Management has a global reputation for publishing some of the best applied research in the field of soil science. The Society is absolutely delighted to be able to attract a scientist with such an excellent international reputation as Deyi. Building on considerable editorial expertise, his vision for the future of the journal is really exciting and I know he is really looking forward to getting started!”

Vicky Johnson,
Wiley Editorial Director added,

“Wiley is delighted to support Deyi and the Society in their mission to further develop Soil Use and Management, and deliver a first-rate publication experience to the author community.”

Soil Use and Management was first published in 1985. The Society also produces a second publication, the “*European Journal of Soil Science*” which was established in 1994 having previously been named the “*Journal of Soil Science*”, established in 1950. Both journals are published by Wiley on behalf of the British Society of Soil Science.

Publishing your paper!

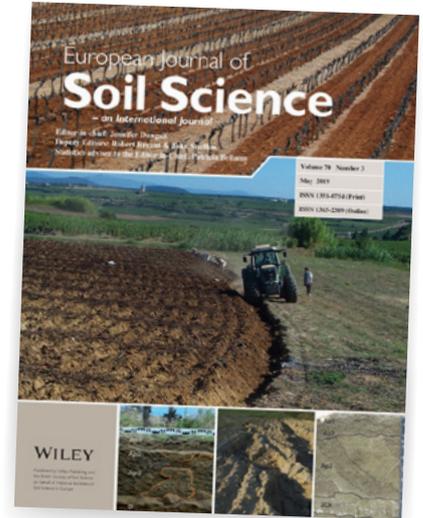
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For more information about the agreement, you can read the press release here <https://newsroom.wiley.com/press-releases/press-release-details/2020/Jisc-UK-Institutions-and-Wiley-Agree-Ground-Breaking-Deal/default.aspx>



Open Access Special Edition – SUM

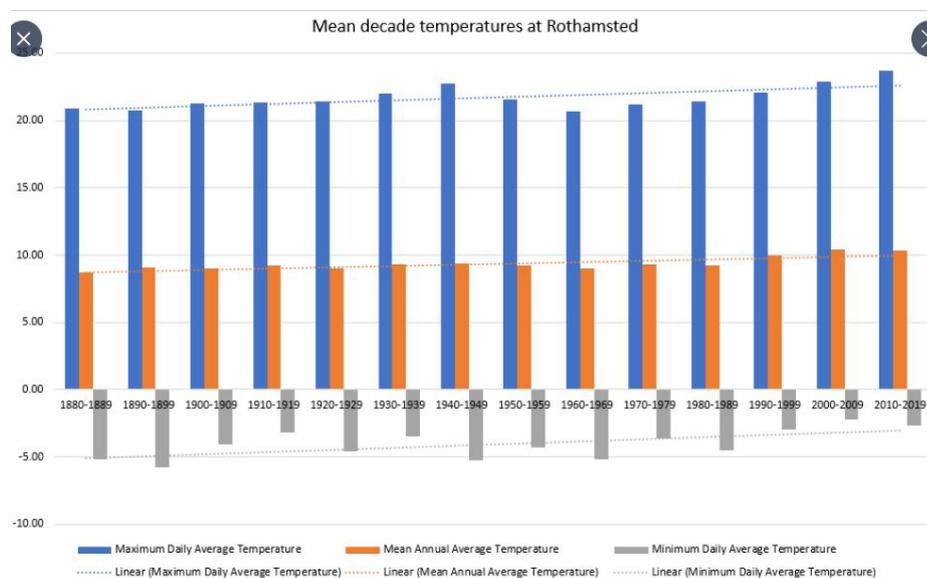
Soil Use and Management (SUM) has published its latest Virtual Special Issue, bringing together recent articles which support the topic **Knowledge Sharing and Adoption Behaviour**.

The issue is available free of charge, online for all, until September 2020.

Updated weather records

The dawning of a new decade gave Rothamsted the opportunity to compile weather data from its Met Station for the 2010s to add to the long-term record. The decade 2010–2019 had the warmest maximum daily average temperature (the warmest day of each year averaged over the decade) at Rothamsted since records began in 1878. For further information on Rothamsted's long-term data, please see: <http://www.era.rothamsted.ac.uk/>

Mean decadal air temperatures at Rothamsted from 1880.



Installation of new soil moisture probes in Park Grass

Soil moisture probes were installed in February 2020 in some treatments of the long-term Park Grass experiment at Rothamsted to examine the link between grassland soil moisture, herbage production and biodiversity. The probes were installed at 20 cm depth in 12 plots covering a range of organic and inorganic fertiliser treatments both with and without liming. The probes were connected to data loggers for hourly data recording through 100s of metres of cabling in plastic conduit running underground along the plot edges — quite a task for Andy Macdonald and the long-term experiments team!

New soil moisture probes at Park Grass: the probes installed at 20 cm depth (left), the plastic conduit housing the connecting cable (centre) and a data logger (right).

Latest-ever sowing of Broadbalk

The wet autumn and winter of 2019–2020 caused problems for farmers across the UK, and Rothamsted was not immune. The Broadbalk experiment was finally sown on 25–27 March 2020, marking the latest-ever sowing date in the experiment's 177-year history. In addition, this is only the second time that a spring variety of wheat (Tybalt) has been sown.

GCRF South Asia Nitrogen Hub

The GCRF South Asia Nitrogen Hub held its annual meeting by e-conference in early March as COVID-19 travel restrictions made the planned event in Kandy, Sri Lanka no longer possible. The Hub was launched in early 2019, one of 12 GCRF Hubs being funded by UKRI to address severe challenges in sustainable development. It comprises more than 50 partner organisations across the UK and 8 countries in South Asia and is led by the UK Centre for Ecology & Hydrology (Prof. Mark Sutton). The Hub aims to reduce the adverse impacts of nitrogen pollution on environment, health and wellbeing by using nitrogen sustainably with less waste across South Asia, a global hotspot in terms of 'reactive nitrogen'. There are four Research Projects (RP) addressing policy, practical ways to reduce pollution, impacts and public awareness, and nitrogen flows and budgets.

Tom Misselbrook (Rothamsted Research) co-leads RP2 with Dr Tapan Adhya (KIIT, India), with a focus on potential agronomic and genetic solutions at the farm scale and village-level engagement to increase nitrogen use efficiency and reduce environmental impacts. Although unable to conduct planned training sessions and site visits, substantial progress was made in the confirmation of study sites, development of protocols and agreement of which management interventions to trial where. Specific innovations will include fertiliser form, method of placement, use of inhibitors (urease, nitrification), biochar and green manure. Engagement at the village scale will include surveys and visits to identify (and quantify) hotspots of N loss, potential practices to minimise them and barriers to adoption.

Two early publications arising from RP2 are:

Shahzad *et al.* (2019) Crop production in Pakistan and low nitrogen use efficiencies. *Nature Sustainability* 2, 1106–1114 (<https://doi.org/10.1038/s41893-019-0429-5>). This paper provides the context regarding the very poor, and therefore great potential to increase, nitrogen use efficiency in crop production for Pakistan (and by association, much of the region), highlighting practices such as balanced crop nutrition, irrigation management, inclusion of legumes in crop rotations, precision in-season N management and the use of enhanced efficiency fertilizers as potential way forward.

Smith *et al.* (2020) Potential yield challenges to scale-up of zero budget natural farming. *Nature Sustainability* 3, 247–252 (<https://doi.org/10.1038/s41893-019-0469-x>). This paper assesses the potential of zero budget natural farming, a grassroots movement that aims to improve farm viability by reducing costs, to sustainably supply food for the Indian nation. While showing potential to reduce soil degradation and improve yields for low input systems, yield penalties are predicted for higher input systems and further research is recommended to address this to ensure that a large-scale adoption of the system does not limit India's capacity to feed itself.

Rothamsted in lockdown...

As with the rest of the country, Rothamsted is, of course, currently in lockdown as this article is written. But soil science activities continue at pace with home working and regular online meetings. We are indebted to our own fantastic team of 'key workers' who continue to maintain the buildings, facilities and farms at all our sites, including the important field experiments.



New project on novel soil sensing systems

Richard Whalley and colleagues were successful with a proposal to last year's UK-US (UKRI-NSF) *Signals in the Soil* call in collaboration with UC Berkeley (UCB) and the Colorado School of Mines (CSM). The three-year project (*Dynamic coupling of soil structure and gas fluxes measured with distributed sensor systems: implications for carbon modelling*) will develop two *in-situ* sensor systems that measure in-ground gas concentrations and strain/moisture/temperature/suction at different scales in order to provide data on the dynamics of gas flux and soil structure. One system is based on a distributed fiber optic sensor system that can provide measurements at the metre to kilometre scale, and the other system is based on a low-power sensor coupled with an in-ground mesh-network wireless sensor network system that provides data at selected local points in a distributed manner. Both technologies are currently being prototyped at UCB. The systems will be trialled first in the unique wind tunnel-soil experimental facility available at the CSM, and then implemented in field experiments at Rothamsted to examine feasibility under field conditions. The goal is to improve the predictive understanding of how atmospheric carbon loading is affected by soil structure changes. The project team includes Xiaoxian Zhang, Laura Cárdenas, Ian Clark and Kevin Coleman from Rothamsted, and colleagues from UCB (Kenichi Soga) and the CSM (Tissa Illangasekare).

New GCRF project addressing malnutrition with biofortified maize in Zimbabwe

Stephan Haefele and Steve McGrath were awarded a grant in UKRI GCRF call entitled *Developing combined interventions to address the Double Burden of Malnutrition*. The three-year project is in collaboration with CIMMYT (Maize and Wheat) and the Food and Nutrition Council of Zimbabwe. The project will test the efficacy of agro-fortification (Zn fertiliser) versus biofortification (high Zn maize lines) in meeting the dietary requirements of local populations. The objectives are to evaluate the effects of agronomic management options on micronutrient uptake of novel biofortification maize lines; test the effectiveness of agronomic biofortification at the farm-scale and in smallholders' farms; close the nutrient gap and predicting the effect of bio- and agro-fortification at the national level; and improve agronomic biofortification at the household level.

Sustainable Agriculture US-UK Scientific Forum

Steve McGrath and Michael Lee were invited by the National Academies of Science and the Royal Society as participants in this workshop in Washington DC, 5–6 March 2020. Topics covered included food security in a rapidly changing climate, agriculture's impacts on biodiversity and environmental health, agroecosystem productivity, consumption behaviours, and future challenges. Soil issues were central to many of these, and ways of assessing soil health and carbon storage were highlighted many times as fundamental to the Forum's main theme. For more details see: <http://www.nasonline.org/programs/scientific-forum/sustainable-agriculture.html>

New starters

Over the last few months there have been a number of new starters into the department at Harpenden. These include new staff members Luca Bütikofer and Prakash Dixit (both working with Goetz Richter) and Debz Wright who works across a number of teams and experiments. In addition, there are five new students affiliated to UK universities (Jesus Castillo (Cranfield), Munisath Khandoker (Lancaster), William Rickard (Nottingham), Bethany Roberts (Bristol), Owen Thornton (Reading)), and five new students from Rothamsted's recent link with Mohammed VI Polytechnic University in Morocco – UM6P (Masassine Arhazzal, Tadesse Asrat, Sophia Bahddou, Imane El Fartassi, Bader Oulaid). Welcome to Rothamsted!

👤 Andy Gregory



**Biotechnology and
Biological Sciences
Research Council**

Work like a soil: a post-PhD reflection

Dan Evans
Lancaster University,
Lancaster, UK



Two and a half metres below the ridge and furrows, I scoop a handful of cold, sandy soil into a sample bag. More people have traversed the surface of the moon than have scrutinized the deepest soils at this arable farm. As a PhD soil scientist, I am always incredibly excited to excavate parts of the Earth that few have ever seen, yet few could ever live without. Have you ever considered the soil's arduous workload to support and sustain life across every terrestrial environment? How about its ability to perform under multiple and intensifying pressures? I marvel at its endurance, and its capacity to adapt under continuously shifting demands.

In a way, PhD students are just like soils. They, too, have demanding workloads, complex commitments, professional burdens, and personal strains. Now that I reflect on post-PhD life, I have begun to realize that the factors that form healthy and productive soils are just as relevant for the development of a healthy and productive PhD life. There are five widely-agreed factors that contribute to the formation of soils and each can provide useful insights into how we can enhance the postgraduate experience. It's time, I'd argue, to think, live, and work like a soil.

Climate

Governing the long-term productivity of soils is the climate; the average weather conditions over a period of time. Most weeks bring a little of everything: mist and fog, wind and rain, cloud and sun. Accepting similar fluctuations throughout one's PhD is also essential. There will be days when clarity about your research will seem concealed behind a dense fog of unyielding question marks, when misfortune will rain down over an experiment, and when criticism will seem to blow in your face from every conceivable angle. But equally, there will be brighter days too. Most soils become more resilient to variability the more they are subjected to it. Likewise, one of the most important realizations I've made is that experiencing the various forms of PhD 'weather' is an important learning process that can help boost one's long-term resilience.



In a way, PhD students are just like soils. They, too, have demanding workloads, complex commitments, professional burdens, and personal strains. ”

Organisms

Productive soils depend on a diverse array of life forms, from microscopic bacteria to the similarly inconspicuous mole. Each species performs unique roles and functions to sustain life above the ground. It's a collective effort, and completing a PhD is the same. I conducted my PhD research within a national Centre for Doctoral Training called STARS (Soil Training and Research Studentships). Being a member of this consortium provided me with many opportunities to interact with, and learn from, a wide range of professionals from policy, industry, and business, as well as a kaleidoscopic array of academic disciplines. Similarly, you can diversify your PhD by joining a Society (like the British Society of Soil Science), setting up weekly seminars at your institution, and attending conferences. One of my most productive periods comes round every April, when an enormous tapestry of geoscience knowledge is stitched together by thousands of scientists at the European Geosciences Union General Assembly.

Relief

If you have ever hiked up a steep hillslope, you may have noticed that the vegetation becomes sparser the further you ascend. This is often because the most nutrient and organically rich soils are at the footslopes. Whilst it's always good to aim high, the goal of a PhD isn't about conquering the summits of academe. One of the privileges of a PhD is being able to spend time at the footslopes, nourishing on an abundant supply of support, skills training, and resources. By making the best use of these, you'll be better equipped to eventually scale any steep learning curves ahead of you.

Work like a soil: *a post-PhD reflection*

Parent material

Let's go back down my soil pit. With two and a half metres of reddish-brown sandy soil towering above you, one of the questions that you might ask is: where did it all come from? We call this the parent material, and it's an important factor in the development of soil properties. PhD projects often stem from parent materials (or, in this case, parent ideas) too. Soil formation — my own area of interest — began its life back in the 1890s! Nearly every subject of interest possesses a long and fascinating ancestry, and one of the most rewarding achievements of completing a PhD is the knowledge that your contribution, however small it may feel, will stand in a long and estimable lineage of work, and may one day itself be revered as heritage. So, become inspired by your discipline's parent materials, whether it's your subject's original architect, or your PhD supervisor. Both are there to support you.

Time

The sandstone at the bottom of my soil pit dates back 250 million years. Since then, time has imperceptibly grounded the rock into loose, unproductive sand. Subsequently, this sand has become enriched with nutrients and organic matter, and is now a functioning soil. Soils don't arise overnight; they are crafted slowly over time. When I get asked what I do, seldom do I reply "*oh, I'm crafting a PhD*". Yet, having uttered it out now, I admit there's a reassuringly unhurried and comforting feeling about the word 'crafting' that makes me wonder whether we shouldn't adopt it more frequently. After all, a PhD *shouldn't* be hurried. Take time at the start. You *should* gaze out at the bird feeder, and ponder your research questions with the house sparrow. You *should* take time to craft your methods, and if you can, design a pilot study to test their efficacy. Setting up the first experiment, or penning the first thesis chapter may be painstakingly time-consuming, but you will develop and, just like a soil, you will become more productive over time.

Xenophanes once said:

“ *for all things come from earth,
and all things end by becoming earth.* ”

Whilst we may not be soil at the moment, the factors that form this important natural resource provide, I'd argue, interesting perspectives for PhD students, as we all dig away, sowing seeds of questions, and harvesting crops of knowledge.





World Congress of Soil Science 2022

Working Group (WCS2022):



Work continues apace in the build up to the World Congress in Glasgow in August 2022. The Working Group holds regular virtual meetings, currently every month in the build up to the Inter-Congress meeting at the end of August 2020 (although we are now looking at how we could run this virtually given it is unlikely we will be able to hold a face to face meeting then) and drawing on support of our PCO, Speakeasy.

Scientific Programme

The Scientific Committee, with support from the Division Vice Chairs (who are all BSSS members) are developing a programme in collaboration with the Division Chairs, with the aim of having an outline programme to present at the Inter-Congress. This will allow us to start to provide more detail of the Congress theme and structure and also start to define the space we will require within the venue (the Scottish Event Campus).

The theme of the meeting, which we set out as part of our bid in South Korea in 2014, is **Soil Science: crossing boundaries, changing society**. This will form the over-arching theme and provides flexibility in the sub-themes that we are considering. The Divisions and associated Commissions and Working Groups will define much of the structure, but the team also want to find ways to raise the profile within the Scientific Programme of key issues in soil science that do not overtly appear in the existing IUSS Division structure; Interdivisional sessions are likely to be the best way to tackle contemporary issues and we will build further on the emerging ideas.

We are also planning for the plenary sessions to comprise key speakers from outside soil science. Through these sessions we want to raise the profile of soil science and the Congress to a wider public through the publicity associated with the key speakers and to challenge soil scientists to respond to issues articulated by those from outside our profession. Plenaries are likely to align to sub-themes which are actively being discussed. Provisionally these are:

- Soils and food security;
- Soils and their contribution to human health (a one topic for which a soil scientist won a Nobel Prize);
- Soils and biodiversity;
- Soils and their contribution to multifunctional landscapes;

- Soils and their role in climate change mitigation and adaptation;
- Soils, human evolution and societal well-being;
- Soils and contamination and human health.

Tours

A number of pre-, post, and within Congress tours are being planned. These include:

- Britain South to North: A six-day pre-congress tour from the South of England ending in Glasgow at the start of the Congress;
- Mid-Congress one day tours within Glasgow, the Stirling area, to the immediate west of Edinburgh and the island of Arran;
- Post-Congress tours to NE Scotland (4 days), NW Scotland (4 days) and SW Scotland (3 days). We are also in touch with the Soil Science Societies of Belgium and the Netherlands and we await further updates from them.

More details of the proposed itineraries of these tours are available from the Working Group so please get in touch. As you will appreciate, these will involve significant logistical planning, drafting and completion of accompanying commentary and excavation and descriptions of soil profiles. We will be putting out a call shortly to our Early Careers Community to support the profile description work. It provides a really valuable opportunity to learn about soil pit digging and profile description from some of our experts and we will cover your travel and subsistence for this work. We will also be looking for support from the Regional Groups to support the organisation and running of the tours.



Cultural Activities

An artistic/cultural dimension to the Congress is proposed to take the Congress out of the main venue into the city of Glasgow and, if possible, beyond. To this end we are working on a number of activities with various artists and groups from within Scotland and further afield. Activities under discussion include:

- A bid to Creative Scotland (CS) supported by seed corn funding from the Society. The original bid was well received but was oversubscribed and is being revised for re-submission. A key aspect is a symposium planned in Glasgow (hopefully on World Soil Day) primarily for artists (in all their guises) and writers involved in the natural world. This should provoke interest in other networks contributing to the programme at the World Congress in 2022.
- A compilation of existing events and materials that might be curated for display at the World Congress. We will be approaching the people behind these events/materials to gauge the possibility of and their willingness to have their material included.
- A suggestion to 'have a short audio drama series telling the story of three people whose lives have been dominated by soil and exploring their journey and how their paths intertwine' using podcasts as the medium.
- Collaboration with the Andrew Raven Trust which ran an event at Ardtonish Estate in the West Highlands. This was an excellent example of the integration of science, culture, community, land use and a number of other aspects. Discussions are ongoing.
- The compilation a digital archive of soil narratives which would serve as an educational resource and, if funding can be found, as a coffee table book. This would be a superb legacy of the World Congress.
- The inclusion of community-based food growing/soil awareness raising initiatives in Glasgow as part of a mid-Congress tour.

The Macaulay Development Trust are also interested in being involved in some aspect of the Congress; the Trust was set up in memory of T. B. Macaulay, the founder of the Macaulay Institute for Soil Research and its successor the Macaulay Land Use Research Institute.

Soil Film

A budget has been agreed to produce a short film on the importance of soils for use at the Inter-Congress and beyond (perhaps with further films on specific topics produced). This will form a great way to promote soils, the Society and the Congress.

Soil Judging

A feature of recent World Congresses has been the Soil Judging Competition, running for 4–6 days prior to the Congress. This is primarily aimed at early career scientists where they are given tuition on describing soil profiles and the World Reference Base (WRB) soil classification; this takes place in the lecture theatre and the field. The week culminates in each team (from different National Soil Science Societies) taking part in a competition to describe and classify a number of pre-excavated soil pits. The competition has been very well received in previous years and, whilst requiring a significant amount of effort, we are aiming to hold this again in 2022.

The Working Group hope that you are all keeping well during these times. We are now moving into a period where more and more support will be needed. If you are able to support, or have any ideas to suggest please do not hesitate to get in touch.

• **Bruce Lascelles,**
WCSS 2022 Working Group Chair

Bruce.lascelles@arcadis.com

NEXT STOP – GLASGOW 2022

World Congress of Soil Science 2022
in Glasgow, Scotland UK • 31st July – 5th August

SEC Scottish Event Campus | BSS BRITISH SOCIETY OF SOIL SCIENCE | International Decade of Soils 2015-2024 | PEOPLE MAKE GLASGOW

Further info...

Auger Print Deadline

If you would like to contribute articles to the next edition of the Auger please send them to exec@soils.org.uk by 30th October 2020. Please send in plain text format and images as separate high resolution files.

Annual General Meeting

Online 3rd September 2020.

Council Meeting

Online 3rd September 2020.

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Don't forget that the Society has a range of interesting videos on YouTube...

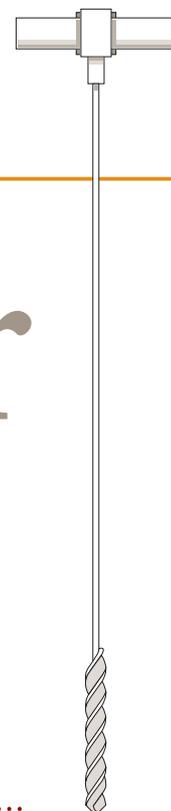
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In the next issue:

THE Auger

DECEMBER 2020

- Meet the Regional Group Chairs...
- BSSS plans for 2021...
- World Congress 2022 update...



Picture courtesy of Michael Eyres, BSSS member, Australia



Augering on...

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South West Regional Group Chair:	Dr Leila Froud
Welsh Regional Group Chair:	Mr Ian Rugg
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DIARY DATES 2020/21

Diary Dates 2020/21:

Details of all events listed can be found at:
www.soils.org.uk

If you would like to advertise an event on our website please email details to:
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3rd September 2020
Annual General Meeting
Online

3rd September 2020
Council Meeting

4th December 2020
BSSS Conference
Online (details to be confirmed)

5th December 2020
World Soils Day

23rd – 24th June 2021
Groundswell
Hitchin

7th – 8th September 2021
BSSS Annual Conference
Glasgow



**BRITISH
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SCIENCE**

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Promoting the study and profession of soil science

What we do

Publications

With your membership you have access to our two journals; The European Journal of Soil Science and Soil Use and Management.

Newsletter

You will receive The Auger twice a year along with e-mail updates detailing meetings, activities and general membership news.

Conferences

The Society sponsors a number of conferences, joint meetings with other organisations and regional discussion days. As a member you will be entitled to reduce registration fees.

Grants

A variety of grants are awarded ranging from individual grants to funding for teachers organising projects on the study of soil.

Professional Status

Full Members gain recognition as fully qualified and experienced professionals.

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Members are eligible to apply for Chartered Scientist status.

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