

## REPORT FOR JAMES RENNIE BEQUEST

BY GARETH HINCHLEY

The money obtained from the fund enabled me to travel to the Interim Meeting of the International Forestry Students' Association (IFSA) in Freiburg, Germany, 24-29<sup>th</sup> of January 2001.

I was asked to attend this meeting for two reasons. Firstly, I had been elected the previous September as the Regional Representative for Western Europe. The Interim was the opportunity for all officials to present their reports from the last 4 months. Secondly, a fundraising seminar was part of the agenda. I have had a lot of experience with raising funds since I had been part of the organising team for the International Forestry Students' Symposium (IFSS) held in Edinburgh in September 2000. Our budget had been around £25,000, virtually all of which was successfully raised.

I arrived on the evening of the 24<sup>th</sup> of January. We spent a relaxing evening at a quiet party before retiring to bed. The next morning, we started at around 9:30 with the fundraising seminar. Everyone present was given the opportunity to talk about his or her own fundraising experiences. I felt that I contributed well here with many ideas, thoughts and suggestions. We discussed how IFSA could raise funds for the coming year, since the Association was suffering a severe lack of money due to the previous year's overspend and the refusal of the EU to award a grant. This had been IFSA's main source of income in previous years. After lunch, we brainstormed with ideas about what to include and what not to include in letters asking for sponsorship. Several draft letters were drawn up for different purposes. Being one of only two native English speakers, I was asked to check the spelling, punctuation and grammar! I felt that the day was a great success. We all learnt from each others' experiences and a number of useful suggestions were made for the future.

Friday 26<sup>th</sup> January saw the start of the Interim. The President, Karen Hoyer, introduced the session. Firstly, the Council presented their report. It is their job to find and approve new members and keep in contact with Regional Representatives. Their hard work was praised, especially that of Mardi MacGregor from Australia. Many possible new

members had been approached, as well as accepting membership requests from Romania and Liberia.

Next, it was the turn of the Regional Representatives to make their presentations. There are 8 of us in all, split up into the regions of Western Europe, Eastern Europe, North America, South America, Northern Africa, Southern Africa, Asia and Pacific. I was the only one who had been able to attend the meeting, so I was asked to go first. Below is a summary of my report.

### **1. Contact with member Local Committees (LCs)**

This has not been easy due to the sheer number of IFSA members in the IFSA-WEST region. According to the Year Report, there are 23 Ordinary Members and 1 Associate Member. Most members have been active, organising events and contributing to the region's mailing list. However, I have heard nothing from other members, despite emailing them several times. These are:

- a) IFSA Vienna, Austria
- b) Etudiants Unis de la Foret, France (Associate Member)
- c) AUSF Bari, Italy
- d) APEF, Portugal
- e) Spain. I am confused as to who is from which member association. But I haven't heard from all 4 members in Spain.
- f) OUF5, England.

I will still continue to try to re-establish contact with them all.

### **2. Activities**

IFSA Umea have organised a "Wintergames" in Sweden, a skiing and shooting competition, to which all IFSA members are invited. This will be held in February. For more information contact ifsaumea@hotmail.com

I have been in contact with Ana, Reg. Rep. for E. Europe, about a photograph competition. Ana has volunteered to take over the running of this for the IFSA-WEST region. She has more details.

### **3. Regional Meeting**

This will take place in Switzerland. The dates are March 9<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup>. Thanks to Jochen and Asti who are leading the team out there. Around 50 people have registered to come.

### **4. Exchange Programme (EP)**

There has been a disappointing response in IFSA-WEST to this year's EP. The only places were found in Germany (presumably found by EP Commissioners) and Scotland (found by myself). Nicole Mirza (EP commissioner) had sent out an email asking for places, which had gone out over the mailing list.

## **5. Web Page**

I have been designing a Web Page, with help from a friend who is studying Computer Science. My computer skills are fairly limited when it comes to web design!! I hope to have it ready within the next few months. Watch this space!!

## **6. Potential New Members**

Bangor, Wales is still interested in becoming a member. However, the instigator of the membership, Cameron Maxwell, is currently in a year's work placement in Scotland. Also, I have spoken to him on the phone and he tells me that he has had trouble with Statutes. He cannot find any for his organisation! I will keep pushing so that their membership application should go through this year.

I have tried to contact Aberdeen University in Scotland. I have spoken with the Professor's secretary and have sent numerous emails. However, I have had no reply and I suspect that their forestry association has become inactive. I will keep trying.

I have been in contact with a few people at Dublin University, Ireland. Their organisation is fairly inactive too, but since I have established contact, then I will keep trying. I invited them to the regional meeting. However, this falls within their exam period.

## **7. What have I been doing?**

I wear three hats:

Hat 1: Regional Representative hat. As mentioned above, I have been trying to email organisations as much as I can. The Regional Meeting is organised. The web page is in the process of being designed. I have been looking for new members. I have also continued to moderate the mailing list that Karen started last year. I will also soon be starting a "pack" which I can pass on to next year's regional representative for IFSA-WEST.

Hat 2: IFSS2000 hat. We still have a few more bills to pay. More money is promised which we have yet to receive. The proceedings have finally been produced and we are about to set about sending them out.

Hat 3: IFSA LC hat. Our organisation is the University of Edinburgh Ecological Society (EcoSoc). This means that the majority of our students are ecologists. At Edinburgh now, there are a total of 16 forestry students in all four years. So our problem is a lack of students, rather than a lack of interest. I have been in contact with a lad called Gareth Owen from a lower year who hopefully might carry on the IFSA message once I have left university. But at the moment, it is predominately just myself, with a certain level of help from Alex Brearley (President of EcoSoc but also in his final year) and a lad called Alastair Herd, who will be accompanying me to Switzerland. I have found an EP place at Nethy Bridge in Scotland and have had a German student interested. Our organisation is particularly active within itself, but isn't when it comes to IFSA.

I am trying to rectify this, but have met up with a surprisingly large amount of opposition.

## **8. Future**

I will continue the activities already started and will do my best to keep IFSA-WEST an active part of IFSA. With another regional meeting and a new web page, the region is continuing to grow.

I have also been in contact with Cordoba, Spain and Wageningen, Netherlands about the possibility of organising an exchange. There are no details yet, but we will set to work on it soon after this Interim.

I also hope to take a team to the forestry competition in Poland, which will also encompass the Eastern Europe Regional Meeting.

I was glad to get the opportunity to show off what I had achieved in such a short space of time. The President praised me for a good presentation and thanked me for my hard work.

Next, the Councillors read out the reports from the other Regional Representatives. Various Commissioners' reports were then presented and this was followed by presentations from the Secretariat, Treasurer, Vice President and, lastly, the President. Several points were made, particularly about how hard it was to integrate all IFSA activities with University work.

After lunch, we split into working groups to discuss 4 main points:

- IFSA News. This is the quarterly newsletter published by IFSA. Recent problems have included lack of money to pay for the printing. The publishers kindly let us have the latest edition for free. Points that were discussed included what we wanted in the magazine, should it be published less often and how to get better quality articles.
- Supporting members. It has been realised that supporting members could be a great source of income and so it was discussed what we could offer them in return for their money. It was also discussed as to how they should pay, since the amount is set at a small amount (US\$25) and that international transfer bank charges cause this amount to be next to nothing.
- External partners. It was discussed as to what we wanted from our external partners, both academic ones (i.e. other international student associations) and professional ones.

- Higher education. The idea of a virtual university was discussed whereby students across the globe could access lecture notes from other universities around the world.

The next day, Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> January, also happened to be my 21<sup>st</sup> birthday! Nevertheless, I was still obliged to attend meetings, which I did without hesitation, after a hot German sausage for breakfast! Today, we had a lengthy discussion about IFSA's statutes. The councillors had proposed a few changes to include guidelines about accepting new members, since it is becoming clear that not all members are purely forestry based (for instance EcoSoc) and that different levels of qualification are offered. Many ideas were discussed, but it was difficult to get anything concrete since there were so many differing opinions.

The bank was also discussed. The Treasurer outlined how beneficial it was to change the membership fee from US\$ into Euros. Most were in agreement. Next came further presentations from a forestry website company and the European Forestry Institute (EFI).

The next day saw us move to wooden hut based in the mountains of the Black Forest near to the village of Hinterzarten. We had some free time to explore the snow-covered forest, a welcome break from being cooped up in a room all day. Meetings that day were fairly informal. The next morning, a workshop about the EP began. However, I was unable to stay, as I had to get back to Edinburgh.

In conclusion, the first objective was to present my ideas about fundraising in an attempt to help IFSA find money. This I feel was achieved and I also gained some ideas from others at the same time, which was a bonus. The second objective was to present all that I had achieved over the previous 4 months. The President was pleased with my work, which made me feel good! It was also a good opportunity to see again some of the great friends I had made in previous years and to celebrate my birthday in a foreign country. The meeting also gave me more motivation to continue my activities and achieve even more over the coming months. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the trustees for giving me the chance to travel to Germany for this meeting. I feel that it was an invaluable trip.