

Initial ideas for enhancement of the Society's Educational Profile

1. Restart the Education Special Interest Group that flourished many years ago. There are over 100 members who have indicated education as an interest when they joined the Society. We need to invite them to join the new Group. It should be allocated a budget and then it needs to be left to get on with things without interference from the Officers of the Society, a bit like the only other remaining interest group – that for mass dials.
2. We need to recognise that historically most people come to sundials as an interest later in life. However the take up at a later age is significantly increased if people have been exposed to dials and dialling as a child particularly as a late teenager. As well as reprinting more copies of *Make a Sundial* we also need other packs for schools – perhaps ones that can be used in school times away from the classroom. The biggest problem is the teachers' personal interest and in their own background to science.. That is especially a problem in primary schools. Once started the members of the Educational Special Interest Group should be encouraged to 'adopt a school' so as to give support to the teachers.
3. As well as looking at high up dials, I think that we could usefully use mass dials on churches as a way to interest children. They can be at a manageable height and some still permit a stick to be inserted and the 'time' displayed.
4. We have a constitutional need to justify our charitable status and educate the public in gnomonics. To date we have tended to be passive rather than active in this though there is a place for that. However I think we need to plan to do more than simply bring dials and dialling to the attention of people at local events with a table and display boards where visitors simply pause as they pass by, say 'fancy that', maybe take a leaflet and walk on.
5. If we are manning a stand somewhere in this sort of passive mode I think we should give out more than just the society leaflet and have available to give out one or more kits which can be taken away to be assembled later within the family environment and tried out – and more importantly kept.. There are several paper dials that can be made that might form such handouts. This site has links to Fabio Savian's collection of 13 amazing designs for paper sundials. We should develop a range of these (and others) to be available as free gifts but with full instructions. However, any such must additionally contain details of how any buyer may get back in contact with BSS to ask questions since it is by identifying a question/problem and getting the answer by which people learn. Then, we must always have an assured response time to any such questions. That might not be easy.
6. Moving from the School environment, we ought to try again with the Universities. Perhaps we might explore how it might be possible to start a Freshers' Society in dialling at one or more of the Universities – especially those with established dials but also in those where there are currently none? I am sure that our University connected members will be able to advise. I think it is fair to say that anyone who took up an interest in College always remembers it. It may even be that any such Fresher society might take on an educational role in their own town.
7. Turning now more to Adult education. We need to make use of the BSS Library as an educational resource. Now, it is not easy to get people to beat a path to a library these days but when BSS gets its web site back up and running in an updated mode it should be used to

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host a series of short video clips where people can be taken through some of the early dialling books and methods with a commentary and explanation by someone really knowledgeable. I think some degree of professionalism will be needed here but the popularity of this type of presentation shows that in the right hands small 'You Tube' clips could form a major way to bring those interested in scientific or horological history to the Society. Not only that but these clips can of course be viewed over and over again to ensure that the topic is learned – and not just forgotten after one lecture.

8. We should try to emulate Sal Khan's video-based learning system, which departs from the traditional lecture-seminar methods of teaching. Such an approach would bring the BSS library into real international prominence and it might encourage more to join the society too.
9. The use of lectures in bringing the Society to the notice of the public is very important. You have mentioned the WI, U3A and other institutions. They are valuable and can generate much interest. In my view it can be even better if you can link them with a project. Some years ago we were involved with the Northamptonshire WI as a millennium project to identify and record all the dials in the County. It only took two lectures and the establishment of a simplified system for recording the dials. It was very effective and the society gained as a result. We even got a few members from it I recall.
10. You have mentioned U3A, local history groups, Mothers Union, WI and local astronomy groups. To this list I would add local Probus Groups and local horological groups.
11. These talks are all very well and are quite inspiring but we do need a way of following them up. They suffer from the 'fancy that' syndrome and we will not benefit unless we seed the ground. We need to be inventive and where we have a clearly interested audience – like a clock club – we might at the end of the lecture offer a one year free BSS membership to all lecture attendees with the latest Bulletin handed out at the meeting. Yes, this will cost some money and effort it could be very useful.
12. In all this we might consider one or two video clips on the website of successful talks. It would need an excellent presenter or a teacher to make the presentations but I do think we need to explore in much more depth the value of video.