

THE BRITISH
SUNDIAL
SOCIETY



We've changed our clothes!

A BSS INFORMATION SHEET

WYBOSTON LAKES

Our new Website is up!

KEY POINTS

- Our new website is up and ready for use
- It's now standards compliant which makes for more consistent viewing
- It no longer uses 'frames' technology so it can be

The new BSS Web site is up and running!



Members who have had occasion to look on our web site recently will have noticed that it has changed. The most obvious change is that it has a different colour scheme of relaxing shades

now have *Google Translate*. This little gadget allows any user to translate our pages into the language of their choice.

We also have a new menu system. It may look similar to the one we had before but this one's more flexible and allows greater depth of item selection.

More content...

Of course, we haven't stopped there. The improved menu system now allows us to add more content to the site and for that



all who do this work do so voluntarily, this will take some time to complete but keep looking over the coming months to see how far it's got.

Conference Information

Details of our conferences are

frames technology so it can be better found by search engines

- Google Translate now can translate the whole site into your own language
- Tony Moss explains how sundials work
- A new mapping system is being trialled to allow people to see where dials are in the UK
- For the second year now we have maintained a special Conference Information page
- The BSS website is at;
sundialsoc.org.uk

change is that it has a different colour scheme of relaxing shades of blue rather than our earlier green. However that isn't all!

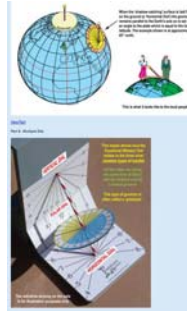
Behind the Scenes...

First of all—though you may not realise this when first looking at the site—Richard Mallett, our webmaster, has painstakingly restructured the whole site to make it fully standards compliant. The glossary still has some things to be done but it now looks the same in a whole load of different browsers and on different machines. Perhaps more importantly its more detailed content can now more easily be found and logged by the search engines. The BSS web site was always a market leader but now its content can be found even more easily by all those looking for sundial information

Front of house...

Right there on the home page and on every other page too, we

tem now allows us to add more content to the site and for that to be easily found by our visitors.



How dials work

We were delighted when member Tony Moss let us use his excellent colourful presentation on *How sundials work*. This is now only one click away for any member of the public

wanting to understand how dials work and how they might be able to read clock time from them. There are other language versions of this too.

Where are the UK's dials?

John Foad, our Registrar, is implementing a mapping system by which anyone can see where a non-vulnerable dial is and read a little about it.

We tried the idea out on some dials in Kent but the first go-live county on the new web site will be Staffordshire. Naturally since

Details of our conferences are easily seen on our web site and for the second year now we have maintained a special information page about the current conference. This page has been packed with details of what is happening, how to get there and all sorts of other relevant details. This year's information can be found from a link on our website or just by going to bit.ly/wyboston.



So, how's it going?

Well, in March 2011 the BSS web site was top in the world rankings of all Timekeeping/Sundial sites:

1. BSS
2. Wikipedia
3. NASS
4. SOTI

KEY POINTS

- When Members submit suggestions for change it is the Council's policy to consider them
- Such investigations take a lot of everyone's time. They are also expensive and consume funds that the Society badly needs for other things so it is important that each investigation is thorough and comprehensive. And does not have to be repeated
- This suggestion has now been examined twice and rejected twice.
- After hearing the expla-

It's all in a name...

Feedback on an AGM query

In March 2010 the Council received a suggestion from Doug Bateman and David Brown:

"That the Society adopt the website name www.britishsundialsociety.org.uk as the primary website address, and on all publications, as soon as convenient"

At the 2010 AGM Doug verbally went further and suggested that the Society might alternatively consider the name www.thebritishsundialsociety.org.uk. The Council agreed to consider this.

Doug had first suggested the idea in a Council Meeting where it had been considered but turned down . So when it was raised again, the Council felt it important for the matter to be fully investigated to ensure that a final definitive decision could be taken.

The following is a short summary of the Council's investigation.

The idea was investigated in depth with external advice being sought and much time was spent by all of the Trustees in order to come to a proper decision .

After a lengthy review, the Council's unanimous decision was that it was in the Society's best interest not to make a change of domain name.

**The Reasons:
Aesthetically pleasing to make such a change?**

the Dutch "De Zonnewijzerkring" has a long domain name "de-zonnewijzerkring.nl". Interestingly when the Council checked, it was not even ranked by the international web site ranking process.

The use of "sundialsoc" as a domain name is not confusing nor hard to quote or difficult to remember. Indeed, it even carries an amusing connotation of BSS being the Sundial Society.

Even the proposal's seconder when asked if he would

- After hearing the explanation the Seconder to the proposal immediately declared that he understood why the Council did not agree to the change and further, after hearing of the link from our other two web addresses, he declared that he was 'content'. He has again confirmed this view as recently as January 2011.

Doug had argued:

"The full title is 'commensurate with our growing status, nationally and internationally'.

Short abbreviated titles tend to apply to sites that are well known already.

Typing a long title is a rarity anyway because many sites are found by simply clicking a link from a browser".

At the AGM he additionally felt that either of the above proposed names would be "more accurate and more aesthetically pleasing". David Brown said that he used the full name of his company as his web address (though it is short) and found that very satisfactory.

No other arguments in favour were presented.

to make such a change?

It was felt that no significant case could be made for why a fuller title might be 'more commensurate with growing status' or be 'more aesthetically pleasing'. Indeed the Council unanimously felt that it would be a retrograde step.

Who else has made such a change?

If such a change would be so much better how long is the list of sundial-related sites which have actually changed to use a longer name?

There are none.

A highly ranked world sundial site, "Sundials on the Internet", uses a short domain name of "sundials.co.uk". It has no plans to adopt "sundialsontheinternet.co.uk". NASS uses a short name "sundials.org" for its web site which doesn't even imply a society. However, the oldest sundial society in the world,

Even the proposal's seconder when asked if he would change his own sundial web address at all, let alone to a longer one, firmly (and rightly) said 'NO'.

Where then is there a list of any web sites, even ones unconnected with sundials, that have changed to a longer name?

No such list was provided to the Council and despite a search of its own, the Council could find none. We asked:

- Why haven't the BBC changed "bbc.com" to "thebritishbroadcastingcorporation.com".
- Would CNN be better known if it moved from "cnn.com" to "thecablenetwork.com".
- We are affiliated to the Royal Astronomical Society, would they change their web address from "ras.org.uk" to theroyalastronomicalso-

KEY POINTS

- No other sundial sites have made or have any intention of making such a change
- The Council could find NO examples of ANY similar web site that had made such a change
- The Council found that a longer name is actually harder to write down or enter
- The highest ranked websites in the world have short names
- Professional web designers do not recommend longer names over shorter ones

It's all in a name...

ciety.org.uk?

No, these and many other institutions have not and would not because they too perceive no benefit.

Not only could we find no websites that have changed to a longer name but it is well known that having many complete words in a joined domain name actually introduces its own confusions about the presence or absence of spaces, hyphens, underscores or dots.

If we had gone for this change we would not only have had to reprint some of our current literature but all references to our web site in past copies of the Bulletin would remain for ever as a source of confusion to our membership.

Harder to write and type

Just try typing out three times

Short abbreviated web site names are as Doug said, associated with well known sites. Ours is 13 years old and it is very well known. In March 2011 it came top (above Wikipedia, NASS and SOTI) in world rankings. The position of our site in any search list is the important thing. Our site comes top of the page in a wide variety of searches even when only typing 'BSS Home'!

Effect on Archive sites

There are many archiving sites around the world that keep snapshots of interesting web sites for posterity. The owners of each chosen web site are never informed of the archiving nor if for any reason a website goes down and an archive is missed, will the site owner be told of that either. Nor will they be contacted after a name change stops the

Effect on new Membership

The Society now gets most of its new Membership via its web site. Like other sundials societies over recent years we have seen a membership drop. Why ever should the Society risk making that worse for no real benefit?

The Professionals' opinion

ALL web-design websites promote the use of shorter web addresses over long ones. And none recommend changing a domain name unless it has to be done for (say) legal reasons. Even if we were to be starting from scratch with a new website (which we are not) independent marketing advice is always to go for a short name if possible. There is even a market in short domain names that expired up to 15 years ago!

names over shorter ones

- Where we cannot contact them world web archive sites would lose contact with us and their records of us would be fragmented.
- Any change would temporarily though seriously, affect our ability to attract new members—all for no tangible benefit



Shorter names permit memorable advertising

Just try typing out three times <http://www.thebritishsundialsociety.org.uk> and see if you make a mistake. It's true that with search engines today you rarely need to do that though you might if you first heard about BSS from one of our leaflets. So much easier to type "sundialsoc.org.uk". Or, because our site is so well known, all you actually need to type is "BSS home" and Google, Bing and the others will find us in less than a second **and** place us at the top of their lists too.

Are long domain names better ranked?

The Council looked at the one million highest ranked web sites of the world (as of 2nd July 2010). 95% had fewer characters than "britishsundialsociety" and 99% had fewer than "thebritishsundialsociety"!

NOR will they be contacted after a name change stops the archiving. Quite by chance the Council became aware in 2010 that the BSS web site had been selected by the British Library to have its website archived in an ongoing manner for posterity. The choice is based on interest and popularity but is not done entirely manually – it is decided by an automated searching process. If we changed our domain name we would lose this archive status and all early archives unless we were able to contact each and every one of them to request that they make a change to their web crawlers. Even it were possible to make such contact any such request naturally might cause the archiving authority to reconsider the value of the website. We are being archived by other internet based archives too. Where we do not know of them their record of us would be fragmented or lost.

that expired up to 15 years ago!

It's true that there is a small recent increase in the number of new sites being registered with longer names but that is because it is now harder to find unique shorter ones. It is rarely to do with preference. To obviate this and permit more short names, some new top level domain names (like .eu, .biz and .info) have already been released and ones like .ldn (London), .sco (Scotland) etc are expected soon. Indeed big companies may shortly be able to set their own top level domains.

As mentioned above many, if not most, web-design sites counsel that companies and institutions should not change a domain name at all.

Effects of any change on BSS

So what would be the effects on us from such a change?

KEY POINTS

- No other academic institutions have made a domain name change
- No design web site recommends changing a domain name
- If we made a change, commercial sites with links to us would not know of it. Their links would still get to us because we'd still link from the old name, but this would perpetuate confusion and such links would no longer contribute to our rankings
- Private persons also have links to us. They too would still get linked to any new name site but again their visits would be

It's all in a name...

We'd lose all our current search engine rankings at the time of the change. There are many examples on the web of disasters when a domain name has been changed. But if we did make a change to our main domain name surely we'd eventually get recognised? Yes, but it would take months if not years to regain the same position that we have today and the legacy would always be with us in one way or another. Not only that but references to our old site would continue to come up in any search. Old references don't get eliminated from the search engines and this would continue to confuse visitors for a long time, perhaps many years, making the Society look very unprofessional.

But surely we would still have

useful link to us in the resulting list. Such persistent links abound on the Internet and the last thing we want is to lose their benefit on our rankings by breaking the main domain ink that is currently there.

Private links

Not only that but hundreds of people interested in sundials have our web address stored in their 'Favourites' list. We have no means of identifying them. They cannot be contacted to make a change so they end up with two different ones. Yes, we would have linked the old site to the new at our end but that is not the point. Visitors to our site will be confused and won't know how long the links from old to new will stay in place. We have all seen this problem when someone changes their e-mail address – the effect

and as the seconder to the proposal also readily accepted, we already own the domain name britishsundialsociety.org.uk which is linked to our main domain as is sundialsociety.org.uk.

Anyone who might happen to experiment and type in either of those web addresses will always get connected to us without a problem. That is quite sufficient to meet any aesthetic considerations.

Conclusion

The Council concluded that there would be no significant benefits for the Society by making a change of domain name but there would be very many disadvantages

name site but again their visits would no longer contribute to the rankings of our new domain

- We have no way of eliminating these confusions so we shouldn't trigger them
- The Society's web site address is sundialsoc.org.uk However it may also be accessed at britishsundialsociety.org.uk or at sundialsociety.org.uk
- We are an academic Society affiliated to the Royal Astronomical Society. They, in common with most academic societies, use short domain names. We do the same and we should continue to do so

But surely we would still have a link from the old web address to the new. Yes, but the search rank for the old site would drop - losing our first position on the search engine's list - and that at just the same time that the rank of the new has not yet built up.

Commercial links

As if that isn't enough, there are lots of other web sites that have links to us. We cannot identify these and even if we could we have neither the manpower nor the money to get them to make changes. So that sort of confusion will persist for many years, if not permanently. Some web sites that have links to us this are not even directly connected with us. Try Googling the "London Festival of Architecture 2008" – an event which finished nearly three years ago - but look under 'Events' and select the 28th June. There is a very

problem when someone changes their e-mail address – the effect can last for ages even though we may still be able to contact those have made an e-mail change.

At the time of our study, our website was ranked at 1.4million in the world (NASS is at 4.48Million) and we were ranked 74,224th in Great Britain. All these rankings will be lost and have to be slowly recovered if we were to make a change of domain name. It would take a long time to recover and it would still leave confusion in its wake for years.

Our own links

The Society uses its own email addresses, conferences@sundialsoc.org.uk being just one well known one. These would have to be changed with yet more confusion to those who already use them.

Finally...

As the 2010 AGM recognised

name but there would be very many disadvantages. Some of these would be temporary, some more permanent and all at risk of causing confusion to the public and membership alike.

Of course some of the disadvantages would reduce over time, a few could even be helped with costly and time consuming intervention by Council members and with page-to-page redirection, but even so there would always be some permanent consequence.

With no tangible benefit and especially since no other websites - let alone any other sundial sites or even that of our affiliate, the Royal Astronomical Society - have adopted this policy, the Council concluded unanimously that the Society should leave its domain name as it is.