

BFSS Occasional Publication

The BFSS returns to its Southwark roots

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BFSS

BRITISH & FOREIGN SCHOOL SOCIETY
Educational Opportunity for All

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INTRODUCTION

In October 2017 the British and Foreign School Society moved from Caterham in Surrey back to its roots on the South Bank. To mark the occasion Phaedra Casey, Brunel University Archivist, produced a brief history of the Southwark site where the BFSS was located from its inception early in the 19th century to 1890. This Occasional Publication builds on that history, tracing the BFSS ‘homes’ through to the present site in Great Dover Street, Southwark and linking those ‘homes’ with BFSS officeholders, principal activities and governance arrangements.

The Southwark Roots at the Royal Free School: 1808-1890

In 1798, Joseph Lancaster, the 20 year old son of a cane-sieve maker, set up a school for the children of the poor in his father's trade premises in Kent Street [now London Rd], Southwark, London. Numbers of pupils rapidly increased, especially when Lancaster began providing free instruction to those who could not afford to pay, and even free meals.

His success obliged him to rent larger and larger premises, one of which was said to be a barn-like building which had to be reached via a plank bridge over a ditch.

In 1804 Lancaster erected new buildings in Belvedere Place to accommodate his school. By 1816 however, these buildings were already close to falling down, "inconvenient, difficult to access part of the year", "exposed to depravity" - the site was close to two prisons; King's Bench Prison and Horsemonger Lane Gaol, the gallows of which were erected on the flat roof of its gatehouse.

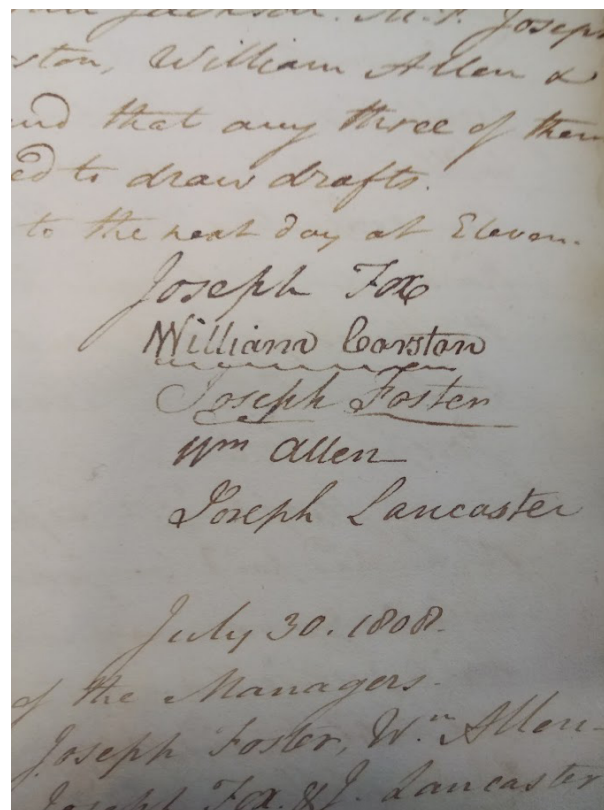
Lancaster's plans for his system were boundless, but his financial planning left a lot to be desired. By 1808 Lancaster's financial difficulties had led to the formation of a small committee of supporters to raise money to pay off his debts and to put the finances and administration of the school onto a firmer footing. His Grace the Duke of Bedford became the first President of the embryonic Society (served 1808-1861) and committee members included Secretary James Fox (served 1808-1816) and Treasurer William Allen (served 1808-1844), a Quaker, philanthropist, supporter of the anti-slavery movement and partner in Robert Owen's New Lanark school for factory children. Early meetings were held in William Allen's house in Plough Court, Lombard Street in the heart of the City of London.



The Allens' house, Plough Court, 1850s (out of copyright)

In 1810 a public meeting attracted subscribers and an enlarged committee, 'The Committee of the Royal Lancasterian Institution for the Education of the poor of Every Religious Persuasion', was formed, including William Wilberforce, James Mill, Henry Brougham and Samuel Whitehead. Following the adoption of a formal constitution in 1813, allegations over the conduct of Joseph Lancaster were investigated by Francis Place. This led to Lancaster's resignation and the renaming of the Lancasterian Institution as the 'British and Foreign School Society'. Lancaster's name was dropped from the title while the inclusion of 'Foreign' reflected William Allen and his supporters' enthusiasm for developing the activities of the Society overseas. This 'foreign' emphasis was reflected in the appointment of the Rev Dr Schwabe as Foreign Secretary from 1815-1828. He was succeeded as Foreign Secretary by Henry Dunne until 1830, from when he served as BFSS Secretary until 1857. Throughout this period in the Society's history the minutes of meetings show that they were chaired by the highest ranked subscriber present.





Extract from minutes of a Committee meeting, showing signatures of attendees, June 1808 [BFSS Archives, Brunel University London]

The BFSS committee applied to the City of London for the lease of a plot of ground at the corner of **Union Street and Borough Road**, Southwark. An appeal for subscriptions towards new school buildings raised several thousands of pounds and the newly constructed buildings were opened on 4th June 1817 by the Duke of Sussex. The new site was large enough to accommodate 500 boys and 300 girls, as well as the teacher training establishment and storerooms.

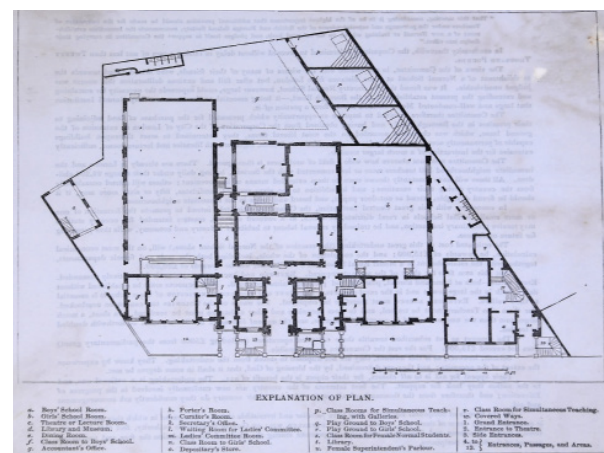


Borough Road College, Southwark, 1817. [BFSS Archives, Brunel University London]

This new building was extended in 1834, at a cost of £2,600, but by 1839 additional accommodation was required as the number of students in the teacher-training establishment had risen steadily from 44 in 1818 to 207. With the help of a £5,000 grant from the Government, Borough Road College was rebuilt on a larger scale. Lord John Russell formally opened the new building on 9th June 1842. It had residential accommodation for 45 men and 30 women, a lecture theatre, dining room, several classrooms for the use of students, large schoolrooms for boys and girls and other offices.



Borough Road College, 1842 [BFSS Archives, Brunel University London]



Borough Road College, 1842 [BFSS Archives, Brunel University London]

In 1861 The Rt Hon the Earl Russell became the Society's President (after serving as Treasurer 1857-1869), working alongside secretaries Rev Wilks (served 1857-68) and Rev Bourne (served 1868-1907) and Treasurer Joseph G Barclay (served 1869 – 1921). It was under their leadership that Borough Road College was extended again in 1870.

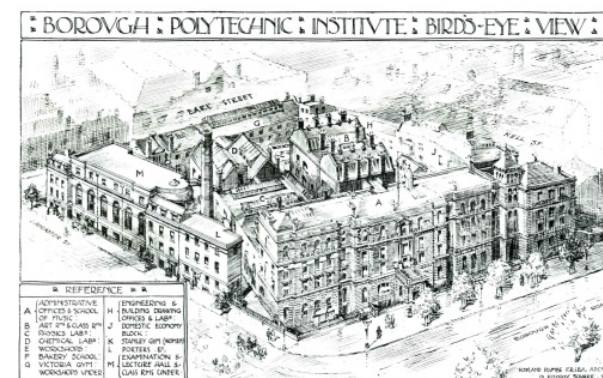


Borough Road College, 1870 [BFSS Archives, Brunel University London]

Twenty years later, in 1890, the decision was made to move Borough Road College out of inner-city Southwark to the then green and leafy Isleworth. By then the Presidency had passed through the hands of The Marquis of Lansdowne (served 1879-80), The Rt Hon Lord Aberdare (served 1880-82), the Rt Hon Lord Mount-Temple (served 1882-83), the Rt Hon WE Forster, MP (served 1883-85), Sir J W Pease, Bart MP (served 1885-86) and the Rt Hon A J Mundella MP (1886-98). W Prydderch Williams became Assistant Secretary in 1870, also serving as Resident Superintendent of Borough Road College from 1879 to 1901. The Southwark building was sold and became **Borough Polytechnic Institute**.



Borough Polytechnic c.1910 [Image kindly provided by London South Bank University Archives]



Borough Polytechnic Institute [Image kindly provided by London South Bank University Archives]

The left of the above image shows that by then Union Street had been renamed Lancaster Street.

In the 1920s, the main building had an additional storey built on top and a new façade, but during WW2 a third of the Polytechnic's campus was destroyed or damaged in the Blitz. Although some internal areas were damaged, such as the library and the gymnasium which were in the middle of the building, the original BFSS building was unharmed.



Borough Polytechnic c.1970s. [Image kindly provided by London South Bank University Archives]

A further extension was built in 1968 and Borough Polytechnic Institute expanded becoming the **Polytechnic of the South Bank in 1970**, attaining university status as **South Bank University** in 1992. It is now known as **London South Bank University**.

Although with a new storey, a new façade and many extensions, the Borough Road building of London South Bank University is the original 1842 BFSS Borough Road College building. The lighter coloured building with red brick window arches on the right of the photograph on the following pages is a surviving unchanged part.



London South Bank University, Borough Road building, as it appears today
[Image kindly provided by London South Bank University Archives]

Temple Chambers: 1890-1937

With the move of the college out of central London to Isleworth, the BFSS required a new central London home for its office, and took premises in Temple Chambers.

The impact of the introduction of state funded primary education from the 1870s and the consequent need for a trained teaching force saw the Society's focus shift from schools to the provision of teacher training through its colleges. At its height in the nineteenth century the Society had supported the foundation of over 4000 schools in the UK and had influenced the development of education in some 80 countries across the globe. Annual Reports throughout this period are dominated by detailed accounts of the affairs of Borough Road, Darlington and Saffron Walden Colleges right up to the end of the 1970s when the direct involvement of the BFSS in the provision of teacher training came to an end.

Until 1906 the Society operated under a set of rules adopted on 19th November 1817. These provided for the election of a President, Vice-Presidents, Treasurer and Secretary by subscribers (the annual subscription was one guinea) and a general committee of 48 subscribers. Interestingly the full designation

of the Society in the rules was 'The Institution for Promoting the Education of the Labouring and Manufacturing Classes of Society of every Religious Persuasion' but it was to be known as 'The British and Foreign School Society for the purpose of making manifest the extent of its objects'. In May 2006 many of these rules were incorporated into the Royal Charter and Statutes that had been granted to the Society by King Edward VII. It was at this time that a BFSS Council of the President (the Rt Hon A H Dyke Acland who served until 1923), Treasurer (Joseph G Barclay who served until 1921) and 36 members was formed with all members of the Council being subject to annual re-election. The Charter was granted at the end of the Rev A Bourne's 37 years as Secretary (1868-1907). He was succeeded by W Prydderch Williams until 1920 when he had completed 50 years in the service of the Society. There was no reference to the position of Chairman in the first Statutes and yet a Chairman of Council is listed among the Officers in the annual report for every year after the granting of the Royal Charter. T Buxton Morrish served as Chairman until 1908, followed by Sir Evan Spicer until 1929 and GL Bruce until 1936.

Chancery Lane, City of London: 1937-1940

The office move to No. 40 Chancery Lane took place under the presidency of the Rt Hon the Lord Gorell who continued in office until 1945. No Treasurer was listed in the annual reports between 1921 and 1978, with the finances presumably being handled at this time by the Secretary G W Knowles who served from 1930 to 1952.

The stay in the Chancery Lane office was brought to an abrupt end on 24th September 1940, when the building sustained a direct hit by an incendiary bomb. The BFSS lost most of the contents of its office, including some "beautiful old furniture, bookcases and many records, books and pictures". {BFSS AR 1941 p5}. Salvage operations could not be undertaken until the building was made safe, and so it was not until January 1941 that items could be recovered, at which point they were taken temporarily to Stockwell College in Bromley.

Roseacre Gardens, Chilworth & Tunsgate, Guildford: 1940-43

The BFSS needed a new office location, and the homes of its office staff had also been rendered uninhabitable, so the office removed out of London. After a brief spell in a private house in Chilworth, Surrey, temporary accommodation was found for the office in Tunsgate, Guildford, Surrey. Meetings of the Council were held in Croydon in November 1940 and February 1941.

But with the unfailing support of members of the Council and the loyal and efficient co-operation of the office staff these have for the most part now been successfully overcome, and the Society is re-established and, as far as necessary, re-equipped in its temporary home at Chilworth.*

BFSS Annual Report 1941 p6 [BFSS Archives, Brunel University London]

But with the coming of unrestricted aerial warfare all this was changed. On September 24th the Central Offices of the Society sustained a direct hit by an incendiary bomb which destroyed most of their contents, including some beautiful old furniture, tables, bookcases, and other office equipment and many records, books and pictures.

Owing to unexpected difficulties and delays salvage operations could not be undertaken until January 1st, 1941. Everything that could be recovered was then taken to Stockwell College. Property so salvaged comprised the whole contents of the safe (including deed boxes containing documents of title and other valuable papers) the seal of the Society, filing cabinets, a good deal of stationery and some books in a poor condition.

BFSS Annual Report 1941 p5 [BFSS Archives, Brunel University London]

Stone Buildings, Lincoln's Inn: 1943-78

When the tide of war turned in favour of the British allied forces the Society moved back to Central London, this time to Lincoln's Inn, for a period of 35 years. For almost all of this time the Society's President was the Rt Hon R A Butler, MP, instigator of the seminal 1944 Education Act. Miss F Potter replaced G W Knowles as Secretary for 18 months and was followed by G G G Robb in 1953 who served until 1975. Chairs of Council during this period included Mrs E M Lowe (served 1939-50), Sir James Pitman (served 1950-1962) and Mrs E W Parsons (served 1962-74). This period in the Society's history was dominated by the difficulties associated with the Society's teacher training colleges, the growing role of the state in such training and, in the latter part of the period, with the closure/handover of the colleges.

Richard Mayo Hall, Kingston upon Thames: 1978-1997

Under President the Rt Hon R A Butler, MP, Secretary W O Bell (served 1976-96), Chair of Council Professor J Ferguson (served 1974-1985) and Treasurer Sir Andrew Carnwath (served 1978-79) the Society moved to the Richard Mayo Hall owned by the United Reform Church in Kingston upon Thames. The Hall was named after Richard Mayo, a 17th Century minister in Kingston upon Thames who was ejected from his living for his non-conformist ideas. He continued as a separatist preacher in various locations in and around London until his death in 1662. The hall now serves as a home to small businesses and a wide range of community activities.

Other officers during this period were Presidents Dame Diana Reader Harris (served 1982-91) and Sir Brian Young (served 1991-2003), Chair of Council Rev Dr J M Sutcliffe (served 1985-96) and Treasurers B M P Thompson-McCausland (served 1979-80).

It was during the 1970s and 80s that George Bartle, working closely with Brian York (then a Lecturer in History at Borough Road College) began to pull together and organise the myriad of documents, photographs and artefacts that now comprise the BFSS Archive. The first dedicated room and office for the archive was opened at Borough Road College, Isleworth in December 1990. George Bartle was succeeded as archivist in 1990 by Bryan Seagrove who continued to work with Brian York and volunteer Dr Gillian Collins, former Principal of Saffron Walden College (1965-77).



BFSS Archives at Lancaster house, Borough Road College (combined office, strong room and reading room) and Brian York, 1990s. [BFSS Archives, Brunel University London]

Croudace House and Maybrook House, Caterham, Surrey: 1997-2017

Under President Sir Brian Young (served 1991-2003), Chair of Council the Rev Professor Stephen Orchard (served 1996-2007), Director John Kidd (served 1996-2005 – the title of secretary was changed to Director in 1997), and Treasurer David Swain (served 1997-2013), the Society moved into a dedicated office building on Godstone Road in Caterham in 1997 and then into larger premises owned by the same company in 2002.

John Kidd was succeeded as Director by Charles Crawford in 2005 and then by Imogen Wilde (served 2008-2016). The Reverend Baroness Richardson of Calow succeeded Sir Brian Young as president in 2003 and served until 2010 when the Rt Hon David Lammy, MP became the first President to be elected by postal ballot under the Society's revised Royal

Charter and Statutes in 2015. He was re-elected for a further term of three years in 2018.

In 1999 the **Statutes** of 1906 were revised, regularising the role of the Chair of Council as an elected officer at the AGM, introducing three years terms of office for the Chair and Treasurer of Council and a system of one third of Councillors retiring each year, but eligible for re-election. The position of Vice-Chair of Council was also introduced as an elected officer with Graham Kingsley, the Rev David Tennant and Roger Howarth carrying out Vice-Chair duties between 1999 and 2015. In 2015 the Rev David Tennant became the first Vice-Chair to be elected by postal ballot. At this time the Society's rules precluded any member over 75 years in age from being a councillor, a rule that was abolished in the 2015 revisions.



Signing over the BFSS Archives to Brunel University, 2013 [Brunel University London Archives]

The 2015 **revisions** to the Royal Charter and Statutes brought the Society into line with Charity Commission guidance on the length of terms of office for officers and councillors, with terms of office limited to two three years terms and an obligatory standing-down from office after that for one year, with a maximum of twelve years for those elected as councillors and then holding elected officer positions. This was a major departure from practice pre 1999 when there were no restrictions on the number of years a member could serve. For example, Joseph G Barclay had served as Treasurer for 52 years between 1869 and 1921 and the forward-thinking Rt Hon R A Butler, MP as President for 37 years between 1945 and 1982.

The 2008 – 2017 period, with **Caterham** as the BFSS office base, was characterised by significant developments in the governance and practices of the Society under Imogen Wilde's directorship, Chairs Roger Howarth (served 2007 – 13) and Professor Steve Hodgkinson (served 2013-18), and Treasurers David Swain (served 1997-2013) and Steve King (served 2013-2018). A major review of the Society's work in 2008-9 led to the formation of a Grants Committee and significant increases in the level of funds available for grants due to the sale of the Society's last remaining large property, the former college at Saffron Walden, in 2010 and a well-defined and managed investment portfolio. The BFSS annual reports show how the ending of the Society's direct involvement in teacher training through the colleges it had founded towards the end of the 1970s (Saffron Walden College closed in 1977 and Darlington in 1978) facilitated the Society's shift of focus to become a grant making charity with grants in 1987 of £89,204, rising through £106,812 in 1997 to £1,007,741 in 2017.

It was also during this period that the Society decided to move from multiple Vice-Presidents, all connected to the different Christian faith groups, that had been the Society's practice for more than a century, to a single Vice-President, the first of whom was education historian Professor Richard Aldrich (served from May 2010 to May 2014). Professor John Furlong, educationalist and former Head of Education, University of Oxford, was elected Vice-President in May 2015 and re-elected for a further term of three years in May 2018. The election of distinguished educationists to this position fitted well with the Society's principal focus on grant giving that was formalised in the 2015 revisions to the powers of the BFSS Council.

The **BFSS Archives** also experienced changes and development during these times. Prompted by Brunel University's major capital programme to unify its work on its Uxbridge campus and the sale of the Borough Road, Maria Grey and Runnymede sites during the period 2000-2006, the archive was first moved to the **Runnymede Campus** in 2005



Hayward Building, Runnymede campus – location of BFSS Archives 2005 to 2013 [Brunel University London Archives]

and then to the Old School House on the edge of the Uxbridge Campus in early 2013.

With the retirement of Brian York as archivist in 2005 the Society partly funded an archivist at Brunel University until the archive was donated to Brunel University London by the Society in 2013.

Archivists Mandy Mordue (2001 – present), Helen Betteridge (2005-8) and Phaedra Casey (2008-present) have ensured the conservation, cataloguing and safekeeping of the Society's archive for future generations.



The Old School House, Brunel University London – location of BFSS Archives 2013 to present [Brunel University London Archives]

CAN Mezzanine, Loman Street, Southwark: 2017-April 2019

During 2016 the owners of Maybrook House signalled that the Society's lease would not be renewed beyond the end of 2017, the premises being earmarked for housing development. A range of options was considered, priced and the decision made by the Council to return to Southwark, to a CAN Mezzanine on Loman Street. CAN is a registered charity trading as a social enterprise committed to helping other charities and social ventures thrive, grow and maximize their impact. CAN offers business support, capital and flexible, affordable office space. The open plan office environment is a big change for the Society's part-time staff, but the availability of conference and meeting room facilities makes the new location much more accessible for the Society's elected officers, councillors, members and the charities with whom the Society works.

The period 2016-18 was one when the pending office relocation, and the retirement of the Society's Director Imogen Wilde, led to a review of the Society's administrative support and leadership. Acting Director David Crowther (served September 2016-January 2018) led this work until the appointment of Mark Leighton as the new permanent Director from January 2018, supported by administrator Belinda Lawrance (served 1996 – present), the Society's first Grants Manager Felicia Willow (served 2017-present) and Finance Manager Raphael Gordon (2016-2018). Changes in the composition of the Council continued in May 2018 in accordance with the agreement with the Office of the Privy Council on the phased introduction of the revised rules on terms of office. Peter Miller replaced Professor Steve Hodgkinson as Chair, Professor Joy Palmer Cooper was elected as Vice-Chair and David Baron replaced Steve King as Treasurer.

CAN, Great Dover Street, Southwark: April 2019 to present

In April 2019 the BFSS office made another move, to Great Dover Street, at the request of CAN as the Loman Street site is to be redeveloped.

CONCLUSION

During its 200 years history the Society has occupied nine different office premises, seen its archives maintained in three locations, had seventeen Presidents, eleven Treasurers, thirteen Chairs of Council (since the Royal Charter was granted in 1906) and nineteen Secretaries/Directors. Its governing Committee/Council has gradually reduced in size from the 46 in 1819 to the 15 of the present day. Its object – the education of disadvantaged young people wherever they are to be found – has been faithfully adhered to both in the UK and overseas through its support of the formation of schools in the early days, teacher training establishments in its middle phase and its more recent grant giving focus. Its 1906 Royal Charter and Statutes have been revised on two occasions in 1999 and 2015. And now the BFSS is back near its first home in Southwark, London.

Appendix

Appendix 1: Presidents 1808-2018

1808-1861	His Grace the Duke of Bedford
1861-1879	The Right Honourable the Earl Russell
1879-1880	The Most Nobel The Marquis of Lansdowne
1880-1882	The Right Honourable Lord Aberdare
1882-1883	The Right Honourable Lord Mount-Temple
1883-1885	The Right Honourable W. E. Forster, MP
1885-1886	Sir J.W. Pease, Bart MP
1886-1898	The Right Honourable A.J. Mundella, MP
1898-1903	Sir Joseph W Pease, Bart MP
1903-1923	The Right Honourable Sir A.H.Dyke Acland
1924-27	No Presidents listed
1928-1932	Sir Evan Spicer, J.P.
1932-1945	The Right Honourable Lord Gorell
1945-1982	The Right Honourable R.A. Butler, MP
1982-1991	Dame Diana Reader Harris
1991-2003	Sir Brian Young
2003-2010	The Reverend Baroness Richardson of Calow
2010-Current	The Right Honourable David Lammy, MP

Source: BFSS Annual Reports held at the BFSS Archive, Brunel University London

Appendix 2: BFSS Secretaries and Directors 1808-2018

1808-1816	Mr Joseph Fox
1816-1826	No secretary listed
1826-1827	Rev J M Cramp
1828-1830	Mr D.D. Scott, first resident Secretary
1831-1857	Mr H Dunn
1857-1868	Rev Wilks
1868-1907	Rev. A Bourne
1907-1920	W Prydderch Williams (Asst. Sec 1874/ Resident Superintendent Borough Road College 1879)
1920-1930	Mr E N Fallaize
1930-1952	Mr G W Knowles
1952-1953	Miss F Potter
1953-1975	Mr G G G Robb
1976-1996	Mr W O Bell
1996-2005	Mr John Kidd (1997 Title changed to Director)
2005-2008	Mr Charles M C Crawford
2008-2016	Mrs Imogen Wilde
2016-2016	Mr Dominic O'Reilly
2016-2018	Mr David Crowther
2018	Mr Mark Leighton
2018 – current	Mr David Crowther

Source: BFSS Annual Reports held at the BFSS Archive, Brunel University London

Appendix 3: BFSS Treasurers 1808-2018

1808-1844	Mr William Allen
1844-1857	Mr Samuel Gurney
1857-1869	The Right Honourable the Earl Russell
1869-1921	Mr Joseph G Barclay
1921-1978	No Treasurer Listed
1978-1979	Sir Andrew Carnwath
1979-1980	Mr B M P Thompson-McCausland
1980-1997	Mr FA Peat
1997-2013	Mr David A Swain
2013-2018	Mr Stephen J King
2018-Current	Mr David Baron

Source: BFSS Annual Reports held at the BFSS Archive, Brunel University London

Appendix 4: Chairs of Committee/Council 1906-2018

1905-1908	Mr T Buxton Morrish
1908-1921	Sir Evan Spicer
1921-1928	Mr H Gurney
1928-1929	Sir Evan Spicer
1929-1936	Mr G L Bruce
1936-1939	Mr P M Greenwood
1939-1950	Mrs E M Lowe
1950-1962	Sir James Pitman
1962-1974	Mrs E W Parsons
1974-1985	Professor J Ferguson
1985-1996	Rev Dr J M Sutcliffe
1996-2007	Rev Professor Stephen Orchard
2007-2013	Mr Roger Howarth
2013-2018	Professor Steve Hodkinson
2018-Current	Mr Peter Miller

Source: BFSS Annual Reports held at the BFSS Archive, Brunel University London

