



The Society for Italian Studies

Registered Charity no. 313786

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Annual subscription

Subscriptions are due on 1 January each year. Rates are as follows:

Members living in the UK and Ireland	£25
Members living elsewhere	£30
Full-time postgraduate students, post-doctoral fellows, and part-time university teachers	£15

These rates include three issues of the Society's journal *Italian Studies*.

Dear Member of the SIS

A little recent history

As you may be aware, the SIS has experienced significant difficulties with its banking arrangements in recent years. To what extent the banking crisis of 2008 may have played a part in this, and how far mismanagement at the branch of the Clydesdale Bank where the SIS account was held were to blame, it is difficult to say; but the Society's former bankers simply ceased to communicate with us in that year. Letters remained unanswered and the bank stopped issuing statements. Negotiations with the bank's complaints department eventually secured the missing bank statements and an agreement to close the account on 31 July 2009, when remaining funds were transferred to a new account with the Charities Aid Foundation Bank (CAF Bank). By the end of last year, however, it had become clear that payments were still being collected from those members of the SIS who paid their subscription by standing order and had not cancelled their arrangement with the Clydesdale Bank. This aroused suspicions which were confirmed when, in February of this year, it was learned that the Society's account with the Clydesdale had not been closed, as agreed in 2009, but had remained open and had been used to make various payments unauthorized by the SIS. The bank clearly

recognized the gravity of this situation and appointed an employee to sort out the mess. In a complete reversal of previous experience of dealings with the bank, this employee has been diligent and extremely co-operative. The outcome is that the Society has suffered no financial harm: the unauthorized payments have been reimbursed in full and the account has now been definitively closed, as of 19 July 2011. An incidental benefit of this curious episode is that those members who were concerned about what had happened to subscriptions paid from their accounts in 2010 or at the beginning of 2011 – subscriptions that had neither been returned by the Clydesdale nor been received by the SIS – can now be reassured that, with the recovery of monies from the Clydesdale account that was supposed to have been closed in 2009, these subscriptions have ended up where they intended them to go. We are now in a position to start afresh.

Please cancel any standing order arrangement involving the Clydesdale Bank

With the definitive closure of the Society's account with the Clydesdale Bank, any subscription paid under a standing order arrangement with that bank will be returned to the subscriber. Please ensure, as a first step, that you do not have a standing order in favour of the SIS directed to the Clydesdale Bank's University of Glasgow branch (account no. 50502170). If you still have an arrangement of this kind, please cancel it with immediate effect.

Please complete a Direct Debit mandate

The arrangement with the CAF Bank is convenient and suits the Society's needs. Initial progress has been slow because the bank has been upgrading its entire computer system and this has taken longer than expected. However, the first phase is complete, and the SIS can now offer the membership a Direct Debit facility for the payment of annual subscriptions. For members resident in the UK, payment by Direct Debit is easily the simplest method of payment, both for the subscriber and for the Society, and you are urged to employ this method if you possibly can. You will find a Direct Debit mandate form accompanying this message; it is also available on the SIS website. Please send the completed form, not to your bank nor to the CAF Bank, but to me, the honorary treasurer, at the address given above. Please do this, if you can, by 1 December: this will allow time for what I hope will be a considerable number of mandates to be processed before subscriptions fall due on 1 January.

Credit Card payments

There is a new form for those members who wish to pay by credit or debit card the relevant mandate is attached and it can also be found on the SIS website. Please note that it is now a requirement that you give your three-digit security code as well as your account number. Please also make it clear on the form to which calendar year your payment relates.

Online donations

The CAF Bank was instituted exclusively to serve the needs of charities and, as part of the service introduced with the ongoing computer upgrade, the SIS has been given an online donation facility (there is, or will be, a button on the SIS website). Please note that this is for donations only: it cannot be used for the payment of annual subscriptions. While it is worth noting that a subscription to the SIS is treated as an 'allowable expense' by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs for Income Tax purposes, the subscription cannot attract Gift Aid to the Society, because the benefit that members receive in kind (three issues of *Italian Studies*) is worth more than 10% (HMRC's upper limit) of the annual subscription. (It is in fact worth well over 100% of the highest annual subscription rate, which has to be considered value for money.)

Future developments

If it were possible to pay membership subscriptions online, this would be a great convenience, particularly for those members resident outside the UK. I have been told that when the CAF Bank's computer upgrade is complete, it should be possible to pay subscriptions, and not simply make donations, online. If and when it becomes available, we shall take advantage of this facility.

Membership details

Please complete the Direct Debit mandate or credit card payment form in full, with your e-mail address and the address to which copies of *Italian Studies* are to be sent, if different from the address known to your bank or card company. In the case of a Direct Debit mandate, you need complete the form only once; so please remember to inform the membership secretary of any change of address or other personal details.

It has taken a frustratingly long time to sort out these issues and I thank you for your forbearance. Things should run more efficiently from this point on. I thank you too for your co-operation in implementing the new arrangements and look forward to receiving your subscription mandate very soon.

All good wishes

Spencer Pearce