

NEWS FROM COUNCIL

The July meeting of the Council took place at Studley Castle in Warwickshire. From 1903 until 1969 Studley College was housed at this castle. It was a college for women founded in 1898, originally as Warwick Hostel in Reading, to train 'surplus women in the lighter branches of agriculture' by Daisy Greville, Countess of Warwick (from Wikipedia). Existence as a College is evident now in a range of interesting farm buildings. The hotel provides information to guests about the activities of the students including extracts from some letters. Landgirls were trained at the college in the early years of the 1939 – 1945 war.

The Convenors met early on 16 July before the Council meeting that began just before 11.00. After the usual routine business, there were two issues of major importance to the Association to be considered. Martin Parry, who has been a Trustee and member of Council for more than ten years, had announced his wish to resign at the end of the year. Martin has worked extremely hard on behalf of the Association and Council, first as a member of the committee of the Plant Physiology Group from 1993 to 1996 and then as Convenor from 1996 to 1999. From 2000 to 2002 Martin was Chairman of the Board of Editors and responsible mainly for *Annals of Applied Biology*. Since 2003, as Chairman of the Editorial Boards, Martin also oversaw the creation of and subsequently managed, on behalf of the Association, the new journal, *Plant Biotechnology Journal*, the ownership of which is shared with the SEB and Blackwell Publishing. The success of the Journals has been referred to in previous Newsletters and especially in terms of increased impact factors. The Council believe that it is impossible to find a single person to take on all the duties entailed in Chairman of the Editorial Boards and will recommend a change in the Laws of the Association to allow appointment of a Publications Officer to be a Trustee and member of Council, to oversee the Association's publications including the Newsletter. Further the Council will recommend that an Editor-in-Chief of *Annals of Applied Biology* should be appointed who will not be a Trustee or member of Council. Council will nominate an appropriate person for election as Publications Officer at the Annual General Meeting in September. The changes will require a Special General Meeting (SGM) before the AGM. Council propose that the

SGM should take place immediately before the 2008 AGM on 11 September to be held at Sutton Bonington.

The second issue has been of concern for more than a year (See Issue 64 of the Newsletter). Since the formal termination of the Post-Harvest Biology Specialist Group at the 2007 AGM, there have been strong voices supporting the establishment of a new Specialist Group dealing with all aspects of food from farm to shop. A nucleus for such a group has been nurtured under the wing of the Cropping and the Environment Group (CATE). The latest name to come forward to Council is 'Food Systems'. The Laws of the Association are specific, if a little difficult to implement concerning the creation of a new Specialist Group but correctly drafted in such a way that the membership should have a say. The creation of a new specialist group is to be approved at an AGM. Members of the Association are asked to nominate members for election to the Committee of the new group, two for one year, two for two years and two for three years. The nominees should then elect from among their number a person to be Convenor of the group who then will automatically become a Trustee and member of Council. As is usual, members nominated for election must have agreed to the nomination. Subject to formal approval of the Group formation, the election of the Group Committee and Convenor will take place at the AGM. Nominations for the proposed 'Food Systems' Group should be sent to myself as General Secretary by 30 August. I would, however, like to hear any views of members about the creation of this new group.

Council debated the annual rise in the cost of Membership fees and Subscriptions. It was decided to recommend an inflationary increase. It was noted that the Association is not always able to assist students as much as it would like and so it was suggested that Members be invited to make a voluntary donation along with the fees.

An important item at the July meeting of Council was to approve in draft form the Report of the Trustees and Financial Statements which will form part of the Notice of the Annual General meeting. The draft report had been meticulously assembled by Rachel Cousins with input from Carol Millman, the President and General Treasurer. The draft was approved subject to minor amendments.

Alf Keys, July 2008

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