

NEWS FROM COUNCIL

An open letter to members from the incoming President, Professor Trevor Hocking

Dear Members,

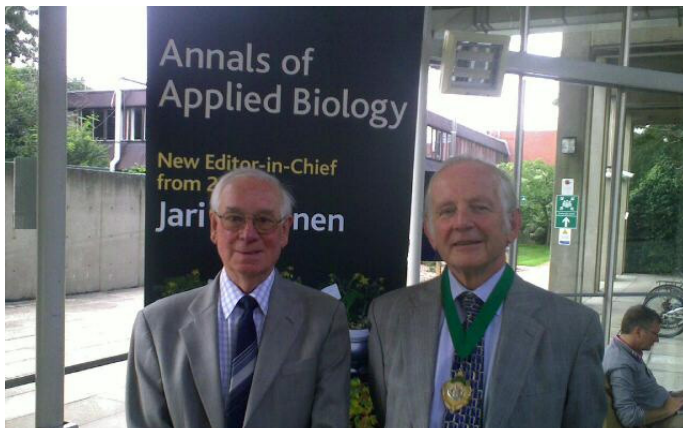
First I would like to pay tribute to the out-going President, Professor Mike Jeger, for his successful leadership of the Association over the past two years. During his term of office, the position of the Association has strengthened and members who have read his report to the AGM in September 2010 (see the notes reproduced below) will be aware of the advances that have been made. Council members have appreciated his calm but firm guidance and have valued his contributions to the development of the AAB. We wish him well in his (no doubt) busy 'retirement'.

During my term I hope to continue this development, starting with the launch later this year of the new online, open access journal in agricultural crop production, focussing on food and energy security (a possible alternative title). This will contribute to raising our international profile, which will be a priority for my term. It should also contribute substantially to income generation in the future - continuing the progress towards achieving financial security for the Association will be another priority, alongside maintaining a strong and vibrant membership (as evidenced by the list of new members recorded in this Newsletter, see page 13). Our conference programme, hopefully with an enhanced international dimension, will be as always, a major feature and in this endeavour the on-going excellent work by our Subject Groups will be crucial. I hope to be able to report continuing progress with these goals, both in future editions of the Newsletter and at the next AGM in September 2011.

Best wishes, Trevor Hocking

Notes from the September 2010 AGM

At the AAB AGM held on 8 September 2010 at Royal Holloway, the AAB President, Professor Mike Jeger presented the report by drawing out key areas from the written report for 2009.



Alan Brunt and Mike Jeger at AAB AGM. September, 2010

Professor Mike Jeger felt that it had been an interesting year for the Association and one in which the identity of the Association continued to develop. For example specialist groups had adapted to take on a more multi-dimensional approach in their areas rather than narrow the focus. This has led to some interesting meetings and opportunities for collaboration.

The President highlighted that the AAB is a medium-sized society with a broad remit; consequently along with many others over the year the Trustees had considered a number of resourcing issues in the light of the current financial situation. The Association had also sought to share experiences with other societies and explore opportunities for collaboration.

In parallel the Society of Biology had formed. To date the AAB had had very positive engagement with the new Society. Responses to policy consultations are now co-ordinated by the Society of Biology and the AAB Programme Secretary had taken on the additional role of co-ordinating inputs from Council, Specialist Groups and individual members as appropriate. We are currently contributing to the Society discussions on CAP reform. The Society of Biology is still taking shape but the President is happy to report that he feels that the AAB is well placed in the process.

In particular the President drew members' attention to the long discussions that had taken place with the Society of Experimental Biology. For a long time these had been informal, but towards the end of 2009 both societies decided to challenge themselves to determine whether any formal forward steps should be taken to closer working or even a merger. After careful and transparent sharing of ideas and information, both societies agreed that their interests would be best served by remaining as separate organisations. However, this would not prevent the continued sharing of activities and resources if appropriate. In particular the establishment of Darwin House in London as a base for a number of biology-related societies including the Society of Biology provided a number of interesting opportunities which will continue to be explored.

Although the financial situation has been a concern, steps have been taken in preceding years and are continuing to put the Association on a footing which is secure over the medium-long term to allow forward planning. This has allowed investment of the reserves of the Association in strategic new initiatives.

The regular business of the AAB continues to be in supporting its members through conferences and publications. The Association received 143 new members during 2009 largely linked to recruitment at conferences. There is no lack of new members but the total membership overall remains stable, indicating a relatively high turnover. The scale and scope of the conference programme has remained continually at the fore front of the field. In 2009 there were 11 conferences/workshops in total running over 1-3 days. The President commented that he was not aware of any other society providing such breadth to its members, and he challenged the members to respond and engage with the Association in ensuring that what was provided was a good fit