

## NEWS FROM COUNCIL

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

Dear Members,

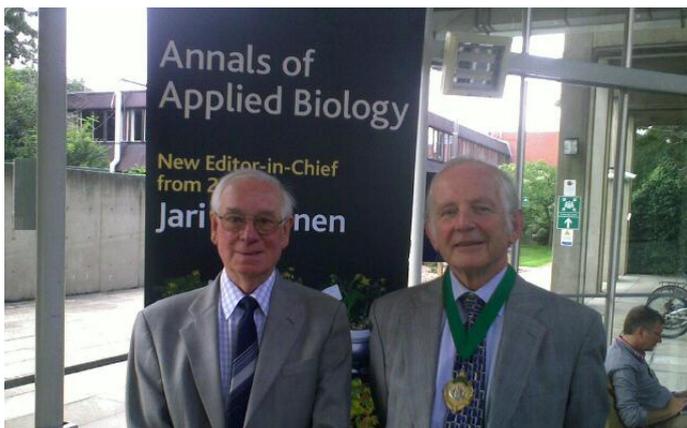
First I would like to pay tribute to the out-going President, Professor Mike Jeger, for his successful leadership of the Association over the past two years. During his term of office, the position of the Association has strengthened and members who have read his report to the AGM in September 2010 (see 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

to their interests and needs for development. The Journals have progressed well in 2009. The impact factor of *Annals of Applied Biology* has stabilised and that of *Plant Biotechnology* (published jointly with the Society for Experimental Biology and Wiley-Blackwell) has continued to increase. The Association was also working to develop an additional online only journal.

As this was his final year as President, Professor Jeger wished to highlight the role that the whole of Council plays in serving the best interests of the Association. In particular he wished to thank the Office who have provided excellent support to the work of the Association despite difficult circumstances and turnover of staff during the year

### **Financial Report for 2009**

The Honorary Treasurer, Dr Jon Knight, presented the Financial Report. The report for 2009 was encouraging especially given the circumstances externally in 2009. Overall the Association had made a surplus of £23,700 before investments, this was in comparison with a budgeted deficit. The additional income resulted from the continuing access online to back issues of *Annals* which had not been expected to continue and also to the fact that *Plant Biotechnology Journal* turned in a small surplus of £5300, whereas a small investment had been included in the budget. In the other areas of work, Dr Jon Knight noted that office costs continued to be well controlled and had met their target in reduction of costs in the year. Conference income and expenditure taken overall more closely matched the budget due to changes to the in which way budgets were put together but it was still difficult to predict how any individual

conference might perform. The investment portfolio of the Association has regained a little of its value in comparison with the previous year.

Looking ahead the future seems to be one of more stable finances for the Association and hence the use of our assets/reserves is sensible including a budgeted small continuing investment into the *Plant Biotechnology Journal* and investment in the new, international, online Journal (expected to be £28K in 2010). The Honorary Treasurer confirmed that examination of the accounts had taken place.

### **Election of Honorary Members**

The President noted that from time to time the opportunity arises for the AAB to be able to elect Honorary members on the basis of their contribution to the field of science and their work with the Association. Council were therefore proposing that Prof. Alan Brunt should be elected an Honorary member and the President read out a citation to the meeting.

Professor Alan Brunt has been a member of the AAB for more than half a century and has made many contributions to the work of the AAB most notably as Convenor of the Virology specialist group and through his role on the Board of Editors for *Annals* as well as work for the publication *Descriptions of Plant Viruses*. Professor Brunt has made significant contributions to the field and is an internationally recognised expert on Carlaviruses with wide ranging application across the world.

Professor Alan Brunt was duly elected an Honorary member of the Association.

*AAB, September 2010*

## **"Three of the First" - AAB Editorial**

The first eight Honorary Members of the Association were elected in 1905. All were "foreign" and, as a consequence, ineligible to join as Ordinary Members. This third article in an occasional series celebrating the lives and achievements of the Association's past Honorary Members is about three of these, all entomologists.

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*Leland Ossian Howard; 1857-1950*

Leland Ossian Howard, according to L M Russell, was

"a pioneer on the entomological frontier in the years before the relationship and importance of insects to agriculture and health were known or suspected" and "at the forefront of insect studies that propelled entomology from a nebulous state to full recognition as a legitimate branch of biological science".

LOH joined the Department of Agriculture in Washington DC in 1878, following graduation from Cornell. He subsequently rose to become Chief of the Division (later Bureau) of Entomology in 1894, a position he held until his semi-retirement in 1927. It is widely reported during his tenure as Chief, the annual appropriation to the Division rose from \$30,000 to \$3 million and that the original office had expanded to become a wide-flung group of research laboratories across the USA and abroad

LOH published more than 1,000 scientific papers, bulletins, and books, and described around 50 new genera and 300 species of parasitic Hymenoptera (order including wasps and ants). With colleagues, he carried out the first comprehensive study of mosquitoes in the Western Hemisphere, and this resulted in the publication of a classic, four-volume work. He published frequently on biological control and is said to have been "the founder of the biological method of pest suppression in the United States". In particular, he arranged for extensive introductions into the U.S. of parasites from Europe in order to contain the damaging spread of gypsy