

Chairman's Report for the Year 2009 - 2010

To suggest that the outcome of last years Annual General Meeting could have been envisaged at the time might be perceived as something of an understatement. That aside, the reasons behind those outcomes have already been made clear to all concerned within the membership, so my Report for this current year aims to reflect on what has been done within the Federation and the likely plans for the near future.

Following the AGM of the 25 October, 2009 it was agreed that, as no nominations could be accepted based on the constitution of 2006, an interim committee be appointed. The task of this committee would be to resolve the problems which has been identified just prior to and during the AGM, such that, at a later date, and Extraordinary General Meeting would be held in order to formally appoint a new Committee.

A large part of the difficulties which had manifested at the time of the October AGM related to matters concerning Companies House, FoBBS being a Company Limited by Guarantee. These matters focused initially on the lack of Annual Returns from FoBBS to Companies House for the previous two years. Further issues arose concerning the Federation's accounts for the financial period of 2007/8 and 2008/9. Correspondence from Companies House set a deadline date by which completed and accurate Annual Returns be submitted before legal action would be taken against FoBBS and its Directors. The Returns were submitted in good time and accepted by Companies House.

Over the next few months, the interim committee met on two occasions during which time, the role of FoBBS as a national bonsai organisation were evaluated. It was recognised that, over recent years, the Federation had been trying to operate with an ever diminishing Committee (at the time of the AGM, the Committee comprised just three individuals, one of whom had taken on two officer roles). A change of direction was clearly needed, first by re-establishing a larger, more viable Committee and then determining FoBBS' future role in the short to medium term.

The EGM of the 2 May, 2010 resulted in the establishment of a new, formally elected Committee, comprising eight full members, one co-opted member and two ex officio members (webmaster and administrator). Apart from ratifying the new Committee, the EGM also passed a motion requesting that the current FoBBS constitution be reviewed and changed to a more manageable document.

Since the May EGM, progress has been made in a number of areas. The constitution has been revised and is being submitted to the membership to be voted on. The new constitution still covers all the necessary criteria, but it has been possible to condense much of the previous document and provision is now in place should any constitutional changes be required in the future.

The 'Bonsai Instructors' book has been re-introduced following a period of some years since the 'Speakers Book' was last published. As with that publication, the 'Bonsai Instructors' book lists bonsai speakers and demonstrators from within the UK and is made available to those societies which are fully paid up members of FoBBS.

The 'New Talent' competition is retained and already one of the heats has been held at the Wessex Show earlier in the year. Other heats are planned, culminating in the final to be held at the Sussex Bonsai Show this next August. The winner will then be entitled to represent the UK

at the European Final, to be held at the European Bonsai Association Congress in Ratingen, near Düsseldorf between the 30 September and 2 October, 2010.

One of the major criticisms directed at FoBBS in recent times concerned communication of information to the membership. Since last years AGM, every effort has been made to provide a steady flow of information to the membership on a regular basis, and this would appear to have been perceived favourably on the basis of reported feedback. Likewise, during the same period, re-establishing the FoBBS website was identified as a priority, and now, thanks to the efforts of Nigel Wright, our new webmaster, a sophisticated but easily accessible website in a new format has been established and is regularly updated: see www.fobbsbonsai.co.uk.

As part of the 'shop-window' for FoBBS, this website plays a significant role in promoting the organisation, as well as providing information on member societies, borne out by the fact that, on average, the site is gaining between 2,500 and 3,000 'hits' per month since it came on line.

An idea raised early in 2009 was to consider establishing regional areas which encompassed certain bonsai societies. The concept was that, should a society within a regional area wish to put on an event, e.g. bonsai exhibition, convention or even just bring in a notable guest speaker, the other societies in that region could participate and share in putting on the event. The process of establishing regional areas is already underway, with representation already in place for three regions (S. Wales and the South West, Central Southern England and the Midlands). There is still a need, however, of sorting out regions for the remainder of the U.K.

What has to be remembered is that the Federation is an amateur organisation comprising societies, commercial and individual members. Those involved in the running of FoBBS are, like those on society committees, individuals who have occupations and other commitments and voluntarily give of their time. This does not imply that the FoBBS Committee on its own dictate the roles that this organisation sets out to achieve. The effective functioning of the Federation should reflect, as far as possible, the wishes of the membership, balanced by what the FoBBS Committee sees as being feasible both in practical and financial terms.