

FEDERATION OF BRITISH BONSAI SOCIETIES
Chairman's Report for the Year 2014

The year 2014 has again proved to be a good period for the Federation. Membership remained at steady with a total of 56 societies comprising 46 society members who took out FoBBS insurance, 9 members without insurance and 1 individual member. This was an increase in membership from a total of 51 societies the previous year, a 9% increase. What appears to be a turn-around from more recent years is that, contrary to previous trends, some societies are now reporting a gradual increase in membership. It is to be hoped that this might continue bearing in mind the pattern observed in recent time with a decline both in the membership of some societies as well as a small number of societies folding.

On a sad note, the year witnessed the loss of some of British bonsai's most notable personalities. In late 2013 Peter Adams, one of the foremost bonsai teachers died following a short illness. Shortly afterwards, in March of this year by Harry Tomlinson also died. Both had been among that uniquely select group of U.K. bonsai masters whose knowledge and expertise were appreciated not only in this country but around the world. Later in the year, FoBBS was to experience a significant loss with the sudden and unexpected death of its' Vice-Chairman, Ray Ward. He was a major driving force within his own society as well as being part of the Federation. He is best remembered for his role in initiating 'Bonsai World' and making it one of the significant bonsai events in the U.K in recent times. Then in November, the bonsai fraternity were shocked to learn of the sudden death of Paul Goff whose greatest talent was as a photographer of bonsai as well as being the editor of 'Bonsai Review'. All were significant individuals who in their different ways, contributed to bonsai in Britain.

In terms of events directly involving FoBBS, again this year the organisation was successful in winning another Gold Medal at the R.H.S. Chelsea Flower Show. This achievement was due in no small part to the efforts of Reg Bolton as event co-ordinator, together with an enthusiastic group of stalwarts who put together the stand, and all those who contributed trees. A brilliant effort on the part of all concerned. Once again thanks must be given to those individuals from the various bonsai societies who helped by manning the Chelsea stand throughout the event. Their contribution does not go unrecognised.

A month later, the success was repeated at the R.H.S. Gardeners' World Live event held at the National Exhibition Centre, Birmingham. In this instance a group of volunteers from the local Midland bonsai societies put on a 74 ft. long stand with thirty-nine trees and which incorporated a tokonoma as a central feature. Although the event had been reduced from five days to four, over 90,000 members of the public attended. Again, congratulations to all concerned.

The Amateur New Talent competition winner, Mark Kennerley of the Wirral Bonsai Society represented the U.K. in this years' final held in Wroclaw, Poland against strong competition. For this coming year's final, to be held in Vilnius, Lithuania in September, José Redondo, a member of

both the Maidstone and North-West Kent Bonsai Societies will represent the U.K. One major decision arrived at by the Committee was to dispense with two or three New Talent heats around the country as has been the case in the past; instead, there will just be one heat per year where all those wishing to compete can participate and at which the winner would represent the U.K. in the next European final. This approach will simplify the management of the event and hopefully bring together more participants compared to the previous separate heats, where on occasions, only two individuals participated.

FoBBS is also about to introduce a judges training programme for people seriously wishing to judge at bonsai events. Initially, this programme will be for those who could judge at society or national bonsai events. Following a request from the Royal Horticultural Society such a training programme will be extended for those wishing to be involved at R.H.S. events involving bonsai displays. Once established, FoBBS would then be able to provide a judges list in the same way that the Bonsai Speakers & Demonstrators book is currently issued.

Again the FoBBS website (www.fobbsbonsai.co.uk) is proving it's' worth and is regularly updated. Again it should be emphasised that this website is for the benefit of the member clubs and societies, so if a society wishes either to promote or submit a report (with photos) of an event, they are encouraged to do so. Such information should be submitted to the FoBBS administrator, Kath Hughes (mkhughes567@btinternet.com) who in turn would pass it on to the Federation webmaster.

In concluding this report, I would again wish to thank all those of the Committee, both full and co-opted members, for the time and effort during this last year; likewise those involved with the National Bonsai Collection. Their efforts are much appreciated.

Malcolm Hughes,

Chairman, Federation of British Bonsai Societies.