



---

## SOMERSET BONSAI SOCIETY

---

Bonsai Newsletter February 2025



Auctioneer John with one of the star lots.

Welcome to our February meeting report. No guest speakers or workshops this time. Instead, a brief summary of our annual Society auction led by John Trott.

Most Bonsai clubs now hold at least one auction per year and alongside the National events, such as the Bonsai Boot Sale at the Botanical Gardens and the Staverton Boot Sale, there are plenty of opportunities for enthusiasts to move on trees and other accoutrements and then replace them with new stuff. The bonsai circle of life!

Last year's auction saw a bumper number of lots and a healthy sum of money raised to support our programme of workshops and guest speakers. This year's numbers were somewhat down on previous years but we had more items donated to the Society. For some reason we also had less people attending but we did have a few members of other clubs attend which helped swell the coffers. Once again thank you all for making the journey.



The doors are open and John is ready for business.

So on to the auction. The doors opened at 18:45 for sellers to register their items and after a slow start, the lots started to appear. Our President and auctioneer for the night John Trott, has perfected the auction process over many years, and the whole event now runs so smoothly that people often forget how much effort goes into ensuring that both buyers and sellers get what they are owed. So, I would like to once again thank John for his time and effort and his uncanny knack of being able to wring every last penny out of bidders. It's a pleasure to watch. Also, to our Treasurer Roger who kept a tight rein on the money and the two seasoned 'gophers', Richard and Richard, moving the lots onto the auction table and off after selling.



The lots are lined up and ready for the block!

As in previous years, there was a wide variety of trees, ranging from basic starter material and pre-bonsai, to a few more mature specimens. There were several lots of pots; mame, shohin and chuhin, including a couple of English and Japanese signed pots that hopefully would make good money. As mentioned in previous meeting reports, pots are becoming more expensive to produce and therefore to purchase. So, buy them when you can as they aren't going to drop in value.



The bidders, keen to spend their money!

Seven thirty arrived and it was time to draw the first lot. As I previously mentioned, John has refined the auction process over a number of years to make it both easy to manage and fair to both sellers and bidders. When a seller brings in their items, each lot is given a ticket, the item number is recorded by our treasurer along with any reserve and a duplicate of the ticket is placed in a "hat". Once the auction begins, numbers are drawn from the "hat" and auctioned off until all the lots are sold. Doing it this way ensures that lots are random and that you avoid having one seller having all their lots sold quickly. It also keeps the interest of the bidders as you have to be on your toes for your next potential new acquisition!



A late entry, a selection of pots from Jon

If you have never experienced an auction before then it is well worth going to one. You won't end up buying something because you scratched your nose at the wrong moment, auctioneers always check if new bidders are actually joining in, but you might catch the bug and end up with some bargains you never knew you needed! If, on the other hand, you are a seasoned bidder then you will know all about the "Highs and Lows" of Auction fever.

You have your pot of money, unless you are one of the lucky people who don't worry about how much things cost. You have your list of lots that you want to purchase, your "Must haves" and your "I can find space for that". If you are lucky and get your chosen items, all is good and you can then relax and enjoy the rest of the show, but when you are 'pipped at the post' or downright thrashed by other bidders then the panic starts. You can't go home with nothing to show for your time and anyway you can always put it in next year's auction. But you need to be strong. Set sensible limits, plus a reasonable margin in case you get caught up in the bidding. Know when to give in and always be prepared to bid on an unexpected item, if it is going cheap.

But I digress. How is the auction going? The lots flowed across the auctioneer's table and prices were good. Several lots made appreciable figures helped no doubt by having several bidders' intent on getting them, whilst other items went for more modest sums.



Set of three cascade pots, start me at £3!

Eventually all the lots had been sold and it was time for a coffee, a biscuit and to settle up with the "money man". Buyers first, so we have all the money in, then settle with the sellers, commiserate with those who had been out bid and chat about what could be done with some of the "work in progress" trees.

Once again, we raised enough money to pay for a couple of guest speakers or to pay for the hire of the hall for a few meetings. It was also good to see some of our newer members leaving with material that they can bring to future workshops. I look forward to see what they do with them.

Well, that's all for now. Next meeting is on the 12th March and will be a repotting workshop, so lots of repotting, root pruning and maybe a bit of "general tidying up"!

The tree of the month will be back, with "Shohin" as the topic.

Till the next time, stay safe and "keep doing bonsai".

Alistair