

The Meconopsis Group

Report of the meeting held on 6th March 2010 at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh Conference Room 10.00am – 3.30 pm

(Compiled by Norma McDowall)

The meeting was opened at 10.30am by the Chairman, John Mitchell, who welcomed the large turnout of members [45 in total], to the meeting and the AGM. He welcomed in particular Jenny Wainwright-Klein from Germany and our two speakers, Dr Chris Grey-Wilson and Paul Egan.

John outlined the programme for the meeting.

10.00 - 10.30	Arrival - Complimentary Teas and Coffees	
10.30 - 11.00	7 th AGM	
11.00 - 12.15	'The taxonomy of the large blue poppies - trials and tribulations'	Dr Chris Grey-Wilson
12.15 - 13.00	Bring your own picnic Lunch - Complimentary Teas and Coffees	
13.00 - 14.00	'New findings on <i>Meconopsis</i> from Nepal'	Paul Egan
14.00 - 15.00	'A miscellany of old and new - getting intimate with the smaller <i>Meconopses</i> '	Dr Chris Grey-Wilson
15.00 - 15.30	'Members' Questions..... and answers'	Ian Christie

Announcements

John directed members to the raffle with plants and seeds as prizes [included in the Day Charge], 50/50 Plant Sale and demonstration material on the tables.

Gardening Scotland

Last year we had a successful display at Gardening Scotland. We also have a stand this year, and Geoff is seeking volunteers to help staff it over the three days of the Show.

Special Group meeting

Toshio Yoshida, [eminent field botanist and photographer of Chinese and Himalayan mountain plants], will give two lectures on May 8th at a meeting to be held at the RBGE from 10.30 until 3pm. It is an all ticket event. There will be tickets for sale for £5 at lunchtime and from the website. There will be time at lunchtime to visit the Garden.

John then asked non members to leave, but invited them to return after the end of the AGM for the lectures.

Agenda for 7th AGM to be held on 6th March 2010

1. Apologies
2. Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 28th February 2009
3. Matters arising
4. Chairman's Report
5. Secretary's Report
6. Treasurer's report
7. Seed Exchange Manager's Report
8. Web-site Manager's Report
9. Appointment of Office-bearers and Management Committee
10. Appointment of Trials and Assessment Subcommittee
11. Appointment of Auditor
12. Membership Subscription Rates 2011
13. Any Other Business

1. Apologies

Apologies have been received from the following members:-

Ute Adelt, Ann Armstrong, Bob Armstrong, Peter Bland, Graeme Butler, Cameron Carmichael, Cyril Cooper, Anne Cooper, Julia Corden, Avril Drummond, J. Leslie Drummond, Jim Eddison, Keith Folwell, Roz Folwell, Patrick Fox, Richard Fulcher, Martyn Furzer, Alison S. Goldie, Robert Gordon, Valerie Hannah, Ziyue (Eva) Huang, Mark Hutson, Ian Lawton, Keith, Rachel and Tim Lever, Ian McEnery, Pamela McEnery, Nicola Macnee, Linda McGavigan, Richard Oliver, Brian Parker, David Rankin, Harvey Shepherd, Evelyn Stevens, Peter Taylor, Alan Tomlinson, Peter Treeby, Terence J. Vince and Liz Young

2. Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 28th February 2009

The Minutes of last year's AGM had been distributed to Members in May 2009. The Minutes were taken as read and no changes or amendments were proposed. Adoption of the Minutes was proposed by Jim Jermyn and seconded by James Cobb.

3. Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

4. Chairman's report

This included the Group Co-ordinator's report.

Meetings

We had our usual two indoor meetings - both very successful and well attended. John gave a huge thank you to members for supporting these meetings.

Group Visit to the Lake District 5-7th June 2009.

This was a very successful trip to see the *Meconopsis* in this area.

We are particularly grateful to the Lake District Horticultural Society for hosting the meeting, and in particular to Pat Murphy and Bob Pearce of the Society. John thanked Peggy Anderson for being the main organiser of the trip for The Group.

28 people attended at some time during the weekend.

We are grateful to the various garden owners for letting us view their gardens.

For *Meconopsis*, particularly outstanding was Dr. Roger Nelson's garden at Brampton - the home of *M. 'Lingholm'*, as well as Dalemain Garden for its large bed of *M. 'Dalemain'* (George Sherriff Group).

Gardening Scotland 2009

We had a display at Gardening Scotland, again very nicely set up by Geoff Hill and his helpers. We also had a special visitor, HRH The Princess Royal, who visited the stand and chatted to members.

JRGPC met too at Gardening Scotland and there were two more Awards for plants on The Meconopsis Group stand.

AGM Trial

The Royal Horticultural Society have embarked on a trial of 23 cultivars of big blue poppies at Harlow Carr, with demonstration beds at Wisley, Rosemoor and Holehird.

The plants were delivered to the gardens last autumn and have been planted. They will be assessed by the RHS Committee for three years from 2012.

"Blue Heaven - Encounters with the Blue Poppy"

This book by Bill Terry, a Canadian member, is now in publication.

5 Secretary's Report

Membership

At the end of 2009

- 132 renewals (including 34 family memberships)
- 15 new members (5 England, 1 Germany, 1 Netherlands, 6 Scotland, 2 USA)
- 1 rejoined
- **Paid membership =148**
- 5 free students (Complimentary for a year)
- 25 Complimentary members

- **Total Membership = 178**
- Including Family memberships the final total remains over 200.

By comparison at the end of 2008

- **Paid membership =144**
- 2 free students (Complimentary for a year)
- 25 Complimentary members
- **Total Membership = 171**

16 members did not renew their subscription for 2009, despite several reminders throughout the year, and their names were deleted from the list.

2010

Norma reported that 81 members had renewed their subscription for 2010 by the end of February (the official date) with another 2 in March and 3 before the start of the meeting. There are also 2 new members.

Mailings

There have been 4 mailings to members, in May, September and December 2009 and in January 2010. This included Reports of the Group meetings in February and October, as well as the visit to the Lake District in June 2009.

The January mailing comprised the newsletter and the Notice of the 7th AGM and program for the meeting. There have also been several emails about meetings and events throughout the year.

At present about 116 members, several overseas Complimentary members and some UK Complimentary members get reports etc sent by email, other UK Complimentary members and members without email by post. Major mailings have now to be divided up into 8 groups. A final plea was made to let us use email if you have it - using an email address rather than using post would save 5 minutes of time and save on costs - it all mounts up.

John thanked Norma for the Secretary's Report.

6 Treasurer's Report

The following report was prepared by Peggy for inclusion.

1. "Mat Heasman has audited the accounts for 2009 and found them to be in order.
2. I have two take-home messages with respect to the 2009 finances of The Meconopsis Group:
 - i) Expenditure exceeded income by about £1,200
 - ii) The finances are nevertheless in a healthy state.

To place some flesh on the bones, here is a table showing income and expenditure for the last two years - Table 1. Some items vary slightly from year to year and I'm not going to discuss them. To save time, I'll focus only those items that are new or are very different between 2008 and 2009.

Income

- i) **Commission** This is a new category and probably a one off. At the Group meeting last autumn, there was a display of botanical paintings. We earned £20 commission on sale of one of these.
- ii) **Donations** are down by about £115 from 2008. Its not that 2009 was a bad year for donations, it was 2008 that was extremely good.
- iii) **Bank interest** has fallen markedly because of the recession. The rate is now about 1/10 of what it was in 2008.
- iv) **Plant sales** at meetings were well down in 2009. This is disappointing
- v) **Seed sales donation** We do not get donations every year. The donation in 2008 was probably a one
- vi) off.
- vii) **Subscriptions** The amount paid in subscriptions in 2009 is much less than in 2008. The figures are not as bad as they appear at first sight.

The figures shown are for the amount paid in that year, which is not necessarily the same as subscriptions due for that year. This is illustrated in the table 2.

Note that of the money paid in 2008 some was for 2007 subscriptions, some for 2008 subscriptions and some for 2009 subscriptions. The money paid in 2009, includes subscriptions for 2008 and 2009. The table shows that the sum of the subscriptions for 2008 and 2009 are very similar, but just over 50% of the 2009 subscriptions were paid in 2008. This simply means that some people paid their 2009 subscriptions before the end of 2008 and the rest paid after the new year of 2009.

Expenditure

1. **AGM trials** We have sent *Meconopses* plants to be trialled Harlow Carr and for demonstration at Wisley and Rosemore. The £300 is the costs of transporting the plants to these venues.
2. **Committee Meetings** There are 2 parts to this entry.
 - a) We normally have committee meetings at Evelyn Stevens' home at Sherrifmuir. This means that some people have a long way to travel to attend the meetings. £37.50p is for travel expenses.
 - b) To make it less of a journey for some of our members we held one of our 2009 committee meetings at the Royal Highland Showground at Ingliston. This entailed costs for hire of the room and coffee (£129.49).
- 3a. **Gardening Scotland Stand**
The cost of staging our *Meconopses* display at Gardening Scotland was greater in 2009. The cost of the stand itself was greater than in 2009 (£128.80 in 2009, £94 in 2008). In addition there were costs for compost (£20) and van hire (£125), to transport plants to Edinburgh. Also there were costs of mounting photographs of *Meconopses*. These photographs can be used again as necessary, so any future framing costs are likely to be less.
- 3b. **'RHS affiliation and insurance'** It is a requirement of having a stand at Gardening Scotland that we have public liability insurance. The most economical way of getting this is through the RHS. This in turn involves the Group joining the RHS and paying the premium for insurance. Hence the expenditure of £ 106.00.
4. **Printing Fliers and Fact Sheets** We printed quite a lot in 2008 and had some left over for 2009 so we did not need to buy more in 2009.
5. **Seed packaging and dispatching** Jim purchased seed envelopes and stationery in 2008 and had left overs to be used in 2009. So the 2009 costs are less than in 2008.
6. **Visit to Cumbria** There was a *Meconopsis* Group members' visit to Cumbria in June 2009. The expense of £82.15 is made up of 2 parts:
Firstly, those who opened their gardens to us were given plants including *Meconopses* as a 'Thank you' and the plants cost £50.
Secondly, the success of the visit was down in large part to the organisation of Pat Murphy and Bob Pearce. As a 'Thank you', the Group paid for their meals at the dinner we had on the last night (£32.15).
7. **The Web** Expenditure was less in 2009 than in 2008. This is because in 2008 we purchased domain names for **2 years** for meconopsis.org.uk and meconopsis.co.uk and virtual service rental for each name for 1 year.
In 2009, the costs were only for 1 year's virtual service rental.
8. **New account** We intend that at some time in the future we will be able to pay subscriptions via PayPal. So we have set up a new account for PayPal income and expenditure – see Table 3.
£300 was transferred from our main account to this new account and the only income to date is 21p in bank interest. There was no expenditure.

In summary, we spent more than we earned in 2009, but that is OK. It is not our intention to accumulate money without spending any. One of our aims is to bring *Meconopses* to the attention of a wide public. This we do at Gardening Scotland and that costs money. We believe that the expense of trialling *Meconopses* is a good investment. It will allow many people to see them and if any get awards, this should encourage the public to buy good garden plants.
Lastly, costs are going up, and we want to keep income up. We can all help e.g. by encouraging friends to join the club and by bringing and buying plants at the group meetings.

John thanked Peggy for the Treasurer's Report.

Copies were made available if required. There were no questions.

The accounts were accepted by the meeting - Proposer- Jeanie Jones Seconder -Tom Shearer

7 Seed Exchange Manager's Report

Jim thanked members for sending him seed so early, for without seed there can be no Seed Exchange. He thanked in particular Peter Cox who had donated species collected from the wild, and Geoff Hill for his assistance with packing up the seed.

8 Web Manager's report This has been given to John by Peter Taylor, and is copied below. It includes additional information from that given by John.

“Changes over the past year

Hosting is still with Easily.co.uk but using an updated package which gives us much more space and unlimited usage at approximately the same cost as in previous years.

Usage

The method of calculating usage statistics has been changed with the new hosting package and so figures this year are difficult to compare with those of earlier years.

Over the past four months, the average number of *unique* visitors each month was 969. These figures are not comparable with those presented last year, but do give a realistic indication of use of the site that continues to remain encouragingly high. The site continues to be in first position (excluding commercially paid-for links) with the major search engines (Google, Yahoo, MSN, Bing) when the keyword “Meconopsis” is used.

Development

The site continues to be developed. There has been a substantial recent revision including the adoption of the recent reclassification of *M. betonicifolia* to *M. baileyi*, and extra pages and entries under plant portraits, particularly photographs taken in the wild. Access to an Index for the increasingly large number of pages in the Plant Portraits section has been added to its main page and in Site Contents. Access to the members' area has been simplified and the rarely used forum has been discontinued. The members' archive may include more files now that we have a much larger storage space under the new hosting package.

Costs

The following renewal charges will be incurred over the next year (until March 2011):

1. Two year renewal of domain names £35
2. Web hosting £30

Prices are approximate and include VAT. Thus the total cost over the next year will be approximately £65. “

9 Appointment of Office-bearers and Management Committee

John announced that the present Management Committee was standing down but was willing to stand for re-election for a further year.

Present Management Committee

Chairman	John Mitchell
Vice-chairman	Jim Jermyn
Secretary	Norma McDowall
Treasurer	Peggy Anderson
Group Co-ordinator	Evelyn Stevens
Seed Exchange Manager	Jim Jermyn
Web-site Manager	Peter Taylor
Committee members	Cameron Carmichael, Ian Christie, Geoff Hill, Steve McNamara and Beryl McNaughton

The present Management Committee was elected to serve a further year. This was proposed by Matt Heasman and seconded by George Watt.

In addition, Scott Cook, who had been co-opted on to the Management Committee in summer 2009, was elected to serve on the Management Committee for up to three years. This was proposed by Jim Jermyn and seconded by Geoff Hill.

10. Appointment of Trials and Assessment Subcommittee

John intimated that the present members of the subcommittee, namely John Mitchell, Jim Jermyn, Beryl McNaughton, Ian Christie, Steve McNamara, Cameron Carmichael and Evelyn Stevens were all willing to continue in office, if elected.

The present Trials and Assessment Subcommittee was elected to serve a further year. This was proposed by Les Newby and seconded by Janet Watson.

11 Appointment of auditor

John thanked Matt Heasman for undertaking the job of auditor in 2009. He was asked to continue in this role for 2010 and agreed to do so.

12 Membership Subscription Rates 2011

The Management Committee recommended that the following membership rates for 2011

- £8 for UK members
- £10 (or US\$20 or 15 euros) for non -UK members

The rates for 2011 were accepted by Members.

13 Any Other Business

James Cobb thanked the members of the Committee for all their hard work.

There being no other business John closed the AGM at 11.05am.