

The Meconopsis Group

Report of the meeting held on March 15th 2014
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 [44 in total], to the meeting and the AGM.

1 Apologies

Apologies have been received from the following members:-

Ute and Axel Adelt, Ann & Bob Armstrong, Edward Attree, James Bell, Norma Brandt, Anne M. Bush, William Campbell, Anne M. Chambers, Philippe Chauvet, Christian Curtis, Sue Dawson, Peter and Anne Elliott, Keith & Roz Folwell, Richard Fulcher, Martyn Furzer, Alison Goldie, John Hawgood, Geoff & Maureen Hill, Mark Hutson, Keith, Rachel & Tim Lever, Nicola MacNee, Marissa & John Main, Hugh McAllister, Susan McBride, Jim & Isobel McFarlane, Bob & Felicity Mitchell, Grace Morris, Peter Murphy, Rick Nelson, Roger Newton, Alan Oatway, J. O'Keefe, Richard Oliver, Roger Parkes, Bob Pearce, Ruth Plant, Swallow Quyan, Dr. David Rae, David & Stella Rankin, A.J. Richards, Mary Ridley, Vivien Self, Ian Shearer, Harvey Shepherd, Sue Simpson, Walter H. Slingsby, Margaret & Henry Taylor, Peter and Anne Taylor, Terence J. Vince, Svetlana Voronina, Jenny Wainwright-Klein, Tim Walsh, Robert Watson and Erika Zemite.

2 Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on March 2nd 2013

The Minutes of last year's AGM had been distributed to Members in January 2014. The Minutes were taken as read and no changes or amendments were proposed. Adoption of the Minutes was proposed by Evelyn Stevens and seconded by Jim Jermyn.

3 Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

4 Chairman's report

John made the following announcements:-

- a) Ten Awards of Garden Merit were given to *Meconopsis* cultivars following the recent RHS Trials, and the AGM previously given to *M. 'Slieve Donard'* was re-confirmed
- b) The Joint Rock Assessment Committee will meet again this year to further assess the remaining plants for Awards. The site at Harlow Carr was not ideal for all cultivars and there were some "near-misses".
- c) The Meconopsis Group will have a stand again at Gardening Scotland this year, thanks to Sharon Bradley and her team. The excellent Meconopsis Group stand last year was awarded a Gold Medal.
- d) The Clarence Elliott Memorial Award was awarded by The Alpine Garden Society to Evelyn Stevens for her article, 'Sorting out the big blue poppies', in Volume 80 of the 'Alpine Gardener'.
- e) Ian McNaughton's article on 'The importance of polyploidy in *Meconopsis* with particular reference to the big perennial blue poppies, is published in *Sibbaldia* No.11, p159 (autumn 2013)
- f) The monograph by Chris Grey-Wilson is due to be published by Kew in October 2014. This is the first full monograph on the genus since George Taylor's of 1934.
- g) John thanked Norma McDowall, Jim Jermyn and Peter Taylor who are retiring from the Management Committee.

5 Secretary's Report

Membership

As Norma is also Subscription Secretary she provided a range of statistics (copied below) about membership in 2013 via Powerpoint. The financial year runs from Jan 1st to December 31st.

Membership

	<i>2014 at 28.02.14</i>	2013	2012
Members	87	175	166
<i>Student (free)</i>		<i>1</i>	
Complimentary Members	19	19	22
<i>Lapsed Members</i>		36	28
<i>Resignations</i>	2	2	7
<i>Family memberships noted</i>		21	19

Membership 2013 by payment year

Paid in 2012	36
Paid in 2013	138
Paid in 2014	1

Subscription Record paid in 2013

Membership record	Free member	Number of payments in 2013	Method of Payment		
			Paid by PayPal	Paid by cheque	Paid By cash/PO
New for 2013		11	9	2	0
New for 2013 and 2014		11	6	3	2
Renewal for 2013	1	116	49	57	10
Renewal for 2014	1	36	6	14	16
Total	2	174	70	76	28

Paid Membership by Country in 2013

Country	Existing Members	New members	Country	Existing Members	New members
Scotland	79	8	Australia	1	
England	47	7	Belgium	3	
N. Ireland	6		Canada	8	1
Wales	1		China	3	2
Jersey	1		Denmark	2	
(UK)	(134)	(15)	France	2	
			Germany	3	1
			Japan	3	
			Netherlands	2	
			New Zealand	2	
			Norway	2	
			Sweden	1	
			Switzerland	1	
			USA	8	3
			TOTAL	175	22

Complimentary Membership

Scotland	9
England	7
Germany	1
Norway	1
Japan	1
Total	19

Subscription Record paid in 2014 at 28.02.14

Membership record	Number of payments in 2014	Method of Payment		
		Paid by PayPal	Paid by cheque	Paid by cash/PO
Renewal for 2013	1	1		
New for 2014	11	5	5	1
Renewal for 2014	75	38	35	2
TOTAL	87	44	40	3

New members from: Scotland 4 England 3 Norway 2 China 1 Russia 1

2013 Membership

Membership increased this year to 176 members. 134 Members live in the UK. There were members in 14 non UK countries, including 8 members in both the USA and Canada.

2014 Update

Norma reported that 87 members were members for 2014 by the end of February (the official date) with another 5 before the start of the meeting. It was pleasing to report there were already 11 new members for 2014.

Group Meetings

There have been two Group Meetings this year, in March and October, both held at the RBGE. Both have had good attendances with 46 members in March and 38 members in October.

Mailings

There have been 4 mailings to members in 2013 with Newsletters and Reports, in January, May and September, with an extra one in November 2013 with the results of the RHS Trials and several reports from the October meeting.

There was also a selective mailing to members who had wished to be on the Members' Contact List and receive a copy. It was only sent to those who wished to be included.

There has also been a mailing in January 2014. The latest mailing included the Newsletter and Program for today's meeting as well as the Minutes of the Group AGM held in March 2013.

There have also been several reminder emails about subscriptions, meetings and events throughout the year.

At present, 145 members, several overseas Complimentary members and some UK Complimentary members get reports etc sent by email, other UK Complimentary members and 31 members without known email by post (down from last year).

Major emailings have still to be divided up into groups to comply with bulk personal emailing regulations.

A final plea was again made to let us use email if you have it - using an email address rather than using post would save 5 minutes of time for each and save on increasing postal and print costs - a second class stamp is soon to be 52 pence. It all mounts up.

The report was accepted by the meeting - proposed by Matt Heasman and seconded by Jeanie Jones.

6 Treasurer's Report

Peggy kindly provided this financial statement of her verbal report to the meeting for the published Minutes:-

1. Willie Campbell has audited the accounts for 2013 and found them to be in order.
2. The books are here and if you care to examine them, feel free. A few hard copies of the slides I am going to show are also available for your inspection.
3. The take-home message with respect to the 2013 finances of The Meconopsis Group is that they are in a healthy state.

To all intents and purposes we have money in three places:

- i. A general account which we have had since the Group was founded.
- ii. In PayPal. This account was opened so that people, especially from abroad, could pay subscriptions and donations without excessive bank charges.
- iii. The nominated account for PayPal. This is a Bank of Scotland account that we opened in 2009 and into which we could transfer money from PayPal. We opened this new account so that if PayPal was hacked into, the hacker would not get into our main account which contained more money.

4. Table 1 compares income and expenditure in 2012 and 2013 in the General Account. Overall we made a surplus of about £1,133 compared to a surplus of £200 the previous year. Why the big difference? Well the reason is a combination of increased income and decreased expenditure in 2013.

Most of items coming under the heading of general running of the club, don't vary very much from year to year so I won't be discussing them. I will only highlight those items which show a big difference.

Income

Subscriptions Subscriptions were up by about £90 in 2013.

Plant and Seed Sales through Ian Scott: The combined total in 2013 was up by about £67.

Gardening Scotland: The biggest increase in income came from seed sales at Gardening Scotland. This brought in £579. Taking into account the cost of the stand, our appearance at Gardening Scotland brought in a net £405.46. In 2012 we did not have a stand and did not sell any seed. So Gardening Scotland 2013 was very successful and in addition we got a gold medal which is good for our status.

Expenditure

Computer /internet: We don't have expenditure every year for the web because domain name extensions last for two years. In addition claims for some items which would come under this heading in 2013 did not reach me until January 2014.

Printing Fact sheets A new set of fact sheets was printed in 2012 costing £135. None were printed in 2013.

Seed packaging and dispatch: The greater part of expenses in 2013 was for postage and a printer cartridge. We also purchased glassine envelopes. We did not have the latter two expenses in 2012.

Donation for room use: We are not billed for using this room for our group meetings and unfortunately I forgot to give donations for using the room twice in 2013! I have now rectified this and we will have donations for 4 x £70 in 2014 instead of 2 x.

RHS Affiliation and Insurance: Don't think we had no public insurance in 2012. We did. In 2011 the RHS extended the period of affiliation to the RHS and public liability insurance premium to 17 months instead of the usual 12 months. This was in order to bring the accounting of small groups into line with the RHS's own accounting period. So there was no payment for 2012. Payments were resumed in 2013 for 12 months.

Speaker's costs: The figures here are a function of the number of speakers and their travel costs. Some years the costs are higher and sometimes lower.

Travel to meetings: The figure in 2012 is for travel to a meeting at Harlow Car. In 2013 we instituted paying committee members for travel expenses to committee meetings. The figure for 2013 is for travel costs to 3 meetings.

So in summary, we made £1,133 surplus in 2013 compared with £200.60 in 2012 in the general account.

5. 2nd Bank Account

This account was set up as the nominated bank account for PayPal income and expenditure. Periodically I transfer money from the PayPal account to this bank account. We do not get bank interest now. Again periodically, I transfer the money into the General Account.

6. PayPal Account

Income into PayPal in 2013 all came from subscriptions. In 2013 the subscription income via PayPal was up by about £132. Payments come not only from overseas, but also from UK members.

7. Summary

This table shows the breakdown of how subscriptions and donations came in.

In 2013 subscriptions via the bank and via PayPal were both up compared with 2012.

Donations in 2013 were all via the bank and were slightly down from 2012.

Questions:

Q1 How much money is in the PayPal account at any one time? Is there too much?

A1 The maximum is about £1,500. I transfer money to the nominated account periodically. I will do it more frequently in future in the interests of not having too much in the PayPal account (in case of hacking into that account).

Q2 What is the insurance we have through the RHS for?

A2 It is mainly for public liability. So that if there is an accident at our functions, we are covered. It is highly desirable and really necessary to have public liability insurance.

Acceptance of report: Proposed by Celia Wright
Seconded by Ian Wright

7 Seed Exchange Manager's Report

This report was given by Dr. Ian Scott to the meeting and a written copy provided for the Minutes.

“My thanks to the many donors who generously provide the seed for the exchange year after year. Without their efforts, the seed exchange could not offer such a wonderful range of plants to choose from.

In the autumn of 2013 we e-mailed all members to offer seed of *M. punicea*, *quintuplinervia* and *delavayi* so that it could be sown immediately. Sufficient seed of these three species was reserved for the main seed exchange, so that non e-mail members were not disadvantaged. This one-off arrangement allowed time to set up the pre-ordering system for future years.

In 2013 there was a better supply of *M. quintuplinervia*, and it was pleasing to be able to offer *M. dhwojii* and *M. simplicifolia* again. Next year (2014) I would like to see seed of *M. punicea* 7/8 from the 2012 distribution and the white form of *M. horridula / prattii*. By the way I was curious about *M. baileyi* – ink (SRGC seed list), thinking that a dark blue form might have been found. Stuart Pawley assures me that somehow the initial 'p' disappeared (i.e. it's pink)

82 batches of seed were sent out to UK members, and 21 batches to non-UK members (a small increase). Donors were given preference over non-donors and supplies of wild collected seed, *M. integrifolia*, *M. pseudointegrifolia* and *M. quintuplinervia* (Farrer's Form) were depleted items well before the seed exchange closed.

New members who have joined after the Seed Exchange closed have been sent a selection of packet from the remaining stock to encourage them

The cost of postage continues to rise, but we have managed to generate a small surplus which will be used to cover the cost of packeting seed for Gardening Scotland 2014. In addition some of the surplus will be used to purchase seed. I have ordered seed of *M. henricii* from a Norwegian source as a trial. He is doing field work in China this summer trying to locate *M. betonicifolia* when it is in flower, and may be a useful contact.

The 'companion seed' (i.e. not *Meconopsis*) will continue to be listed as a separate page on the seed list, but will not expand beyond the single page. Last year there was a high demand for some very desirable species.

If there were any prizes (and there aren't) - First prize for speed would go to Ian Christie who returned his desiderata in less than an hour. And First prize for Cultivation would go to Holehird Gardens who received seed of *M. paniculata*, raised plants which flowered and set seed in time for the following year's seed exchange.” The report was accepted by the meeting - proposed by Jim Jermyn and seconded by Peggy Anderson.

8 Web Manager's report

This report was given by Evelyn Stevens to the meeting and a written copy provided for the Minutes by Peter Taylor.

“General

The usage of the site increased by approximately 16% in 2013 compared with 2012. PayPal continues to be popular for joining and renewing membership. Site hosting continues to be with Easily.

Usage

For the period 1 January to 31 December 2013, the average number of visitors each month was 2,327. The corresponding figure for 2012 was 2,010. (These figures should not be confused with the number of “hits” a much larger but misleading figure, over 70,000 per month in 2013). The peak usage was in June 2013 when there were over 4030 visitors. (The site continues to be in first position (excluding commercially paid-for links) with the major search engines (Google, Yahoo, Bing) when the keyword “Meconopsis” is used.

Development

The site continues to be developed. The Group Archive is fully up-to-date. Full reports on the plant trials at the RHS have been included.

Costs

Renewal charges in 2013 were:

Web hosting for one year	£29.99
Projected renewal charges for 2014 are:	
Registration of three domain names for two years (September/October)	£51.56
Web hosting for one year (December)	£29.99
	Total
	£81.54

Thus the average cost per year is about £55. Prices include VAT at 20%.

The domain names currently owned by the group are:

meconopsis.org meconopsis.org.uk meconopsis.co.uk

Site management

After nearly ten years, I am handing over the technical management of the site to the competent hands of Matt Heasman.

The software I have used for the development of the site is now completely out of date and increasingly difficult to use. Thus some considerable revision is required. I also think it is time for new blood to become involved. I wish the Group well for the future.”

Additional points from Evelyn Stevens

We are very aware that our web-site has been, and is, a large factor in the success of our Group.

So are very grateful to Peter Taylor for his meticulous work in designing and initiating our site and maintaining it over many years, particularly as plants and *Meconopsis* are not actually of major interest of his.

I have been ever grateful to Peter for editorial help in the writing and arranging the material on what is really quite a complex site.

Peter has worked at no cost to The Meconopsis Group . He was presented with difficult software which has now become very out-of-date. He set it up at the time when a narrow page format was best for most members when broadband was not widely available.

We are also very grateful to Matt Heasman for taking over from Peter. His first task, with much better software, is to re-arrange the page format so that it fills the width of the screen more pleasingly than the narrow format.

Much work has been done by The Meconopsis Group and others (particularly by people travelling into the wild and by Chris Grey-Wilson with his forth-coming monograph) since its founding So, although I think that the site continues to contain much of interest and use to members and other visitors, I am very aware that the content of the site is in need of up-dating and revision, and we hope that the Group will be able to achieve this as time goes on.

The report was accepted by the meeting - proposed by Ian Wright and seconded by Jeanie Jones.

9 Appointment of Office-bearers and Management Committee

Jim announced that three Members of the Management Committee wished to stand down - namely Jim Jermyn (Vice Chairman) Norma McDowall (Secretary) and Peter Taylor (Website Manager)

The other members of the present Management Committee stand down but were willing to stand for re-election for a further year.

The following members of the Management Committee were elected to serve a further year:- namely

Chairman	John Mitchell
Treasurer	Peggy Anderson
Group Co-ordinator	Evelyn Stevens
Committee members	Sharon Bradley (as Membership Secretary) Scott Cook, Pat Murphy, Steve McNamara and Beryl McNaughton

Nominations had been sought for additional members of the Management Committee.

The following members were also elected to serve on the Management Committee:- namely

Secretary	Allan Jamieson
Website Manager	Matt Heasman
Seed Exchange Manager	Ian Scott
Committee members	David Rankin, Margaret Thorne and David Thorne

The meeting agreed to all these proposals en bloc - proposed by Jim Sutherland and seconded by George Watt. This was agreed unanimously by the meeting.

10 Appointment of Trials and Assessment Subcommittee

John intimated that members of the subcommittee, namely John Mitchell, Beryl McNaughton, Steve McNamara and Evelyn Stevens were all willing to continue in office, if elected. They were elected to serve a further year along with an additional member, Pat Murphy. This was proposed by Matt Heasman, seconded by Les Newby and accepted by the meeting.

11 Appointment of auditor

John thanked Willie Campbell for undertaking the job of auditor in 2013. Willie Campbell was nominated as auditor for 2014 and agreed to do so. This was proposed by Peggy Anderson and seconded by Matt Heasman.

12 Membership Subscription Rates 2015

The Management Committee recommended that the membership rates remained the same for 2015 as for 2014.

- £8 for UK members
- £13 for non -UK members

The rates for 2015 were accepted by members: - Proposed by Ian Wright and seconded by Margaret Thorne.

13 Any Other Business

- a) Alan Elliott suggested that a request from a Group of *Meconopsis* enthusiasts in China to establish a link with The Meconopsis Group should be considered.
- b) It was proposed by Jim Jermyn and seconded by Ian Scott that Norma should be granted Honorary (Complimentary ???) membership. The meeting approved of this suggestion. Norma thanked the meeting.
- c) Jim Jermyn suggested that some of the Group funds could be used to link with the work of the Merlin Trust or invite speakers from abroad. In reply John said that funds had been earmarked to help with the proposed publication of a book on *Meconopsis*. Other suggestions would be discussed by the Management Committee.

There being no other business the AGM concluded at 11.15 a.m.