



## Thank you note from Evelyn Stevens

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*If you have a contribution for the next newsletter, please contact the Newsletter Secretary email [bluepoppynews@btinternet.com](mailto:bluepoppynews@btinternet.com)*

I have just resigned as Co-ordinator of The Meconopsis Group, so I am writing this as Co-founder with Mervyn Kessell of the Group in 1998, and as Co-ordinator of the Group since then. I would like to thank members very much for their support of the Group over all these years. I think particularly of members who have been with us since the beginning, also of the dedicated members of our committee, most of whom have been long-term members of the committee. It is also good to see new members join us. I feel we are very lucky to also have such strong support from the Botanics, including the services of our Chairman, John Mitchell, over all these years. Before our inaugural meeting, I asked Mervyn how many people he thought would come to the meeting. He replied "Maybe if we are lucky, around 25". Seventy-five actually came! And, as I say, many have been with us ever since. For me personally, the following have been particularly helpful in sharing the load: Norma McDowall and Peggy Anderson as highly competent and meticulous secretary and treasurer, respectively, Peter Taylor for designing and helping me greatly with our influential and valuable web-site, recently handed over to Matt Heasman, Jim Jermyn in setting up the highly successful seed exchange, followed more recently by Ian Scott, Geoff Hill, and more recently Sharon Bradley for taking on our stand at Gardening Scotland. I am indeed thankful to Beryl McNaughton for all her moral support, help, enthusiasm and contributions over the years and also for providing the refreshments at all of the meetings! And I do not forget all the other helpers we have had over the years. And then, of course, there have been our many excellent speakers at our popular and well-attended meetings.

Little did I think back in 1998 that we would now still be in existence in 2015! But the genus *Meconopsis* is a very beautiful one, so maybe I should not be surprised. As we move on with more emphasis on species, rather than garden hybrids, I wish the Group continuing success.

Evelyn Stevens

ex Meconopsis Group Co-ordinator

## Is *Meconopsis betonicifolia* in cultivation in the UK?

Christopher Grey-Wilson

It has emerged that there is considerable confusion over *Meconopsis betonicifolia* arising out of seed sent to the UK from Stanley Ashmore. We know that Stanley collected seed of the true *M. betonicifolia* in NW Yunnan in 2000 and that this was grown on in his nursery at Palmer, in Alaska. At that time he sent me details of the collection and photographs showing the typical stolons, a feature of this species. He also indicated that hybrids had occurred in his garden where he had both *M. baileyi* and 'Lingholm' in the same area. Later, at Geoff Hill's request, he arranged for seed of what he hoped was *betonicifolia* to be sent to Geoff in Scotland with a view to getting this species introduced to the U.K. Geoff raised many plants and these produce viable seed. Geoff distributed established plants to a variety of growers in the belief that the plants were true *betonicifolia*. In time, however, he came to believe that the plants are hybrids, a view he still holds. Geoff has also distributed seeds to the seed exchanges from these plants under the name *Meconopsis* MGS#3.

I have recently been sent photographs of these fine plants from three different sources – Geoff Hill, John Richards and Evelyn Stevens, and I am convinced that I have to agree with Geoff that these plants, that are all the same, are hybrids. And I am convinced that at present I have found no legitimate source of *M. betonicifolia* growing in the British Isles: all plants grown under the name *M. betonicifolia* are, I fear, imposters.

All this is a pity as the history of *M. betonicifolia* in cultivation is a dismal one. It is clear several collectors (foremost George Forrest and Joseph Rock, but there were others in the earlier decades of the twentieth century), collected seed in the wild. What happened to this is not clear but there is no record as far as I can ascertain of plants being raised to maturity in this country or elsewhere. It is clearly not an easy plant although it would make a valuable addition to any collection. In contrast, the Kingdom Ward introduction of the closely related *M. baileyi* had a far better outcome: soon after its introduction the plant was being widely distributed and grown in gardens etc.

Returning to the case in hand, I think it is clear that the plants being grown in Britain with their source, either directly of plants raised from Stanley Ashmore's seed sent to Geoff Hill, or seedlings derived from its seed, must not be called *M. betonicifolia* as we don't want to add to confusion in this area.

There is no doubt that these are fine and distinctive plants. But I think that they should now be given an appropriate suitable cultivar name – I suggest *Meconopsis* 'Alaska'. Over time we will be able to establish more fully the characteristics and stability of these lovely plants. Then, if need be, other suitable cultivar name(s) may be required for any distinctive clones that appear amongst them – as has been done with *M.* 'Lingholm', for example *M.* 'Mildred', *M.* 'Louise' and *M.* 'Mop-head'.

*Note: M.MGS#3 will be shown to JRGPC committee at Gardening Scotland.*

## Seed Exchange 2015

Ian Scott

By the time that you are reading this newsletter I am hopeful that there will have been a good germination of most of your Meconopsis seed. Indeed, I already have reports of germination for *Meconopsis aculeata*, *Meconopsis punicea* and *Meconopsis tibetica*.

There were a number of choice species on offer this year (*M. henrici*, *M. horridula* (true species), *M. napaulensis* (true species), *M. simplicifolia*, *M. speciosa*, *M. tibetica* and an unidentified species which I've christened 'Tall Nepal'. Some of these were labelled A, B, C etc. as they were collected from different locations. These seed lines are very important to the Meconopsis Group and will need special attention. Please photograph the seedlings as they grow, so that we can verify that the wild collected material has been correctly identified.

Having just looked through fifty, or so, photographs of plants purporting to be *Meconopsis x beamishii* and *Meconopsis x sarsonsii*, it becomes obvious that many are mis-named. If you think that you are growing either hybrid, please send me a photograph of the leaves, especially if it is *Meconopsis x sarsonsii*. Also it would be wonderful if some kind member would like to re-make this cross.

At the last Group Meeting there were very few members raising a hand when asked if the *M. dhwojii* seed had produced strong plants. Perhaps people were reticent to commit themselves so early in the season, or perhaps hadn't checked their plants recently. Either way, we need fresh seed of this species for the 2015 seed exchange. So check your plants, feed them and perhaps help with a bit of hand pollination. If we have lost a lot of young plants this winter, perhaps they should be overwintering in a cold-frame for the first year.

A number of years ago, I remember seeing a white 'horridula-type' meconopsis on show. After a long period of absence, seed was offered in the SRGC and AGS seed exchanges two years ago. If you have raised plants I would be interested to hear. I think that the seed was provisionally labelled as *Meconopsis prattii (alba)*.

And lastly, while I was weeding in the garden I noticed that there were hundreds of Meconopsis seedlings coming up under a rhododendron on a most uninviting patch of dry ground. Next year, when I'm accused of not having a tidy garden, I can claim that there is a very good reason for not forking over the ground in autumn and leaving the dead flowering spikes as a memory of past glories!

Seed Exchange Manager

## Annual General Meeting, March 2015

**Committee** - At the AGM on 7th March 2015, the committee was elected as follows:

|                 |                                                                                                                                                                                |
|-----------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| John Mitchell   | Chairman                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Evelyn Stevens  |                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Pat Murphy      | Minutes Secretary                                                                                                                                                              |
| Peggy Anderson  | Treasurer                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Sharon Bradley  | Subscriptions Manager:<br>5 Collichill Road, Biggar,<br>South Lanarkshire ML12 6PN.<br>email: <a href="mailto:bigbluepoppies@btinternet.com">bigbluepoppies@btinternet.com</a> |
| David Rankin    |                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Steve McNamara  |                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Alan Elliot     |                                                                                                                                                                                |
| David Thorne    |                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Margaret Thorne |                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Matt Heasman    | Webmaster: <a href="http://www.meconopsis.org">www.meconopsis.org</a><br>email: <a href="mailto:webmaster@meconopsis.org">webmaster@meconopsis.org</a>                         |
| Ian Scott       | Seed Exchange Manager:<br>email: <a href="mailto:ianscotttryvoan@btinternet.com">ianscotttryvoan@btinternet.com</a>                                                            |
| Alice Bremner   | Newsletter Secretary:<br>email: <a href="mailto:bluepoppynews@btinternet.com">bluepoppynews@btinternet.com</a>                                                                 |

**Minutes from the AGM** - This will be available on the web site and distributed prior to the 2016 AGM.

At the meeting following the AGM, we were delighted to welcome members Zhi Ou and Yan Qu who had travelled from China specifically to attend this meeting of the Meconopsis Group.

### **Speakers at the meeting:**

Ron McBeath - Travels and plants at RBGE

Alan Elliot - Trip to Nepal

Sharon Bradley - Gardening Scotland

James Cobb - Between Three Gardens

Margaret Thorne - The direction of the group

The speakers reports will be made available on the web site [www.meconopsis.org](http://www.meconopsis.org)

**Autumn Meeting** - The conference room at The Royal Botanic Garden in Edinburgh has been provisionally booked for 17th October 2015. The agenda will be distributed nearer that date.

## Meconopsis Rich Gardens

**Holehird Gardens**, Patterdale Road, Windermere, LA23 1NP have a National Collection of Meconopsis. The gardens are open daily from dawn to dusk throughout the year with volunteers in the reception area from April to October, 10 am to 5 pm. The best time to visit to see the Meconopsis are the months of May and June, but in this 17 acre garden, which includes a tarn, there are always magnificent displays of plants throughout the year. A £4 donation for the garden is suggested.

**Branklyn Garden**, 116 Dundee Road, Perth, PH2 7BB, managed by The National Trust for Scotland, is the National Collection Holder of the Large Blue poppies. The garden is open all the time from 10 am to 5 pm. On 24th May, 2015 they are holding a Poppy Day that should have most of the Meconopsis out in flower.

**Royal Horticultural Society Garden at Harlow Carr**, Crag Lane, Harrogate, North Yorkshire, HG3 1EU has a good display of Meconopsis from the RHS trial; these are now planted along the streamside. Open all year, 1 March to 2 November 9:30 to 18:00 (winter to 16:00).

## Members' Open Gardens

We are aware that several of our Members open their gardens under Scotland's Gardens Scheme or perhaps as individuals to raise money for a particular Charity. Some gardens may be open by appointment or are open on certain days over the summer or at a certain specific 'plant' time. Some members also have Meconopsis rich gardens that are open and these are listed on the web page but not all members have access to a computer to be aware of this.

Openings are all obviously planned well beforehand and we would hope to be able to let our members know when these gardens may be open so they could plan or book to go and visit.

We would like to advise of these open gardens to our members in our newsletters and would ask any members who may wish to have their garden listed to contact us with their details and we can include it in the newsletter. This information may take a couple of newsletters to catch up as it would probably be best included in the reports at the beginning of the year or in the newsletter just after the AGM depending upon the open date.

If this is of interest to you please contact our Newsletter Secretary at [bluepoppynews@btinternet.com](mailto:bluepoppynews@btinternet.com) with short details of your garden and of the opening dates and we will do our best to try and include the information in time for your opening.

## **Gardening Scotland 29<sup>th</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> May 2015**

### **Royal Highland Centre Edinburgh**

Sharon Bradley

It is not long now until the Gardening Scotland weekend will be with us and all plans are underway to put on a good show to represent The Meconopsis Group.

Based on the number of visitors to the stand last year and the amount of time they spent asking questions and buying seed we anticipate that the ever growing popularity of the plant means that we can expect numbers to be greater this year.

I would urge members to have a look at their diary and see if they would be available any time during those three days to help out for a few hours on the stand. Perhaps it may be your intention to already come to the show and you may be able to cover for a little while. All those who are able to help out are given a complimentary ticket for the day to access the show.

This year we are very light on members to help out as several people who have helped out over the last few years have commitments and are out of the country. We really need some new members to offer or else we will not be able to provide the best 'service' to the public that we would expect from the Group.

If you can assist in any way can you please contact me at [bigbluepoppies@btinternet.co.uk](mailto:bigbluepoppies@btinternet.co.uk) or telephone me on 07910 274906 to see if we can slot you in at a time to suit you.

## **Photography Workshop**

Ray Cox is running a 2 day workshop this spring on Garden & Outdoor Photography at a garden in central Scotland which opens under *Scotland's Gardens*: Rowberrow, the garden of Bill and Rosemary Jarvis, is on the way up to Castle Campbell overlooking Dollar Glen. This colourful garden has several mixed shrub and herbaceous borders, a wildlife pond, two rockeries, alpine troughs, fruit and vegetable gardens and a mini orchard. The owner of this wonderful garden is a plantaholic and the garden has featured on Beechgrove garden on the Television.

As we already know Ray has shot many a Meconopsis photograph himself over the years and is very aware how photogenic they are and we are sure some members might benefit and enjoy some tuition on how to capture a variety of different plants at their best, both in the garden setting and as close ups. This will be a very popular workshop and places will be limited to a first come first served basis.

### **Weds 20th - Thurs 21st May**

**Rowberrow**, 18 Castle Road, Dollar FK14 7BE

**Cost:** £160.00 per person

For Details & Bookings please visit the News page on our website:

[www.rcoxgardenphotos.co.uk](http://www.rcoxgardenphotos.co.uk)

OR contact us:

Email: [ray@rcoxgardenphotos.co.uk](mailto:ray@rcoxgardenphotos.co.uk)

Mobile: 07762 067 255

Member of the Professional Garden Photographers' Association.

## Contact details and subscriptions

As far as we are aware contact details for members are as up to date as we have been advised of. Sometimes though members may move house or change email details and not remember to update their contact details with the group. If you receive your newsletter forwarded on from a previous address can you please advise us of the new address so we contact you there from now on. The same goes for telephone numbers or when you may update your email address. If you think you may not have received any information when you would have expected it please contact any of the committee.

With plant growth well underway now and excess seed from the seed exchange all ready for Gardening Scotland it serves as a reminder of members who may not have paid their subscription for Membership for 2015. Unfortunately there is no access to the seed exchange if subscriptions are not renewed. The access details to the member's area on the web site will change in the New Year and without the new name and password you will not be able to keep up to date with all the information which will now be posted there.

If you are not sure if you have paid your subscription please contact the subscriptions manager who will be able to let you know. If you wish to continue with your membership you can pay via the website using your credit card or by PayPal. You can also renew by posting your cheque payable to the Meconopsis Group to Sharon Bradley, Subscriptions Manager, 5 Colliehill Road, Biggar, South Lanarkshire ML12 6PN.

## Reports of talks at meetings

*The following is an extract from the Newsletter of February 2015.*

Reports of the talks at our meetings is an important part of our activities which we have undertaken since the inauguration of the Meconopsis Group in 1998. Many members cannot attend our meetings and the reports enable them to keep up with the group activities.

The reports are, at times, lengthy and benefit greatly from the photographs included. However, this does result in large files which are costly to print and difficult to send by email as attachments to the Newsletter. In the past, images may have been excluded to allow for email attachments and cost of printing and this does not give the best representation of these talks.

It has now been decided to do a trial to place these reports in the Members' section on the website rather than sending by e-mail or post.

We appreciate that this may cause some difficulty for members who do not have access to a computer at home and we are making provision for this.

The Newsletter will continue to be sent out by post or email as in the past and will also advise of additions to the Members' section of the website. Details of meeting dates, agendas and all news will still be included in the newsletter.