

PLANT HERITAGE
SOMERSET GROUP – 17 National Collections
(Registered Charity Nr: 1059504)
Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held in Edington Village Hall
on Saturday 03 December 2016 at 12 noon

Committee Members Present:

Mrs Sheila Chambers - President
Mrs Margaret Adams - Chairman
Mrs Penny Berry - Treasurer
Mrs E Ann Celer - Secretary
Mrs Pauline Clapp - Programme Secretary
Mr Don Everitt

24 Members were present.

1 Apologies for Absence: Ken & Sylvia Armstrong Joan Salmon Sue Applegate Avril Vaughan-Lee

2 Minutes of the AGM held on 05 December 2015

Copies of the abbreviated Minutes and the full Minutes of the AGM held on 05 December 2015 were available for members to read. The Chairman Margaret Adams asked members if they were willing to accept the 2015 Minutes as a true record. They were unanimously approved and signed.

3 Matters Arising: None

4 President's Welcome:

Welcome to you all and thank you for coming on a cold morning to our AGM and Christmas Meeting.

It is a year since we lost Mary Sephton who guided us so ably for six years as Chairman. We still miss her – remembering especially her work for Collection Holders and the great organisational skills which she brought to our National AGM here two years ago. Mary also started our Collection Holders lunch held in February and this is a good meeting point for them. It would be good to go out more to see our Collection Holders – they have Open Days and I am sure Pauline could fix some visits.

We are very proud of the fact that Somerset was one of the founding groups set up as NCCPG (National Council for the Conservation of Plants and Gardens) it was changed to Plant Heritage in 1979. Don Everitt, here with us today, and Roy Cheek were instrumental in setting it up and we have remained a separate Charity under the auspices of National Office ever since – more anon.

Sarah Quarterman (CEO) National Office has started a monthly member's e newsletter which is sent to Chair people and Secretaries and then passed on to Committees. This does help keep us up to date with what is going on between the twice yearly National Newsletters. The recent ones have good news about National Collections, the vital part of Plant Heritage conservation work.

Twenty nine new Collections added this year – including one at Cannington – *Santolina* – the total must be coming up to seven hundred now. The first National Collection Conference was held at Wisley this autumn attended by one hundred National Collection Holders.

The member's e-news also included a list of ten genera, Achillea: Aeonium: Antirrhinum: Caryopteris: Eryngium: Forsythia: Ginko: Ranunculus: Verbena: Verbascum: with no National Collections. If you are passionate about a particular plant, why not give it a try.

Workshops at Wisley this year included:- Seed Collection: Photography: Micro Propagation.

We have had many successful plant fairs over the years but we are finding it increasingly difficult as we are not as young as we were and lack manpower to set up transport, gazebos and tables. Two plant fairs for 2017 have been arranged one again at Castacrete by kind permission of Dr John Vanderplank and a new venue for us will be at Midney Gardens Somerton. Don and Joan have organised our Plant Fairs all these years so efficiently but have now decided to retire. We do thank him and Joan most sincerely.

The Plant Exchange is popular, with some gaps, and out of this come rare plants, some threatened, which can be looked after by Plant Guardians. The lists are on our website if you wish to look. I will also have the list for the next meeting.

For eleven years Pauline has planned and executed wonderful trips for us all over this country and abroad. We have a great deal to thank her for all the time and effort it has been lovely and we shall greatly miss them after all these years although she has kindly offered, in the absence of a volunteer, to book our speakers for the time being

Pauline also attends all the Council Meetings and speaks up for us and our views – so we also thank her very much for her efforts.

I will end with a plea – do get involved – the Committee does not have to do everything and a little help is worth a lot – we are not getting any younger! You will learn a lot and feel more a part of Plant Heritage. We look forward to another interesting year.

5 Chairman's Report:

Margaret thanked Sheila and went on to report that:-

Charity rules have recently been changed and Sarah Quarterman at National Office is again asking Somerset to give up their individual Charity status and join them. If we stay separate we would probably want to pay to become an affiliated group and this would mean organising our own collection of annual fees, as in the past. The Committee would be discussing this more fully in 2017.

Once again we had presented a £100 bursary to a Cannington College student and hoped to do that again in 2017.

I want to thank all the Committee for their work and support this year. Particular thanks to Noni Bemrose who has retired from Committee and as our Plant Collection Co-ordinator – a post she has held since 2005. Gaye and Hilary plus helpers for organising refreshments at our meetings.

6 Programme Secretary Report:

Pauline outlined a very interesting programme of speakers and a trip to Wales for 2017

7 Delegate to Council Report:

Pauline gave a very comprehensive report on the meetings she had attended in 2016, the Fit for Governance Review, Fit for Growth Membership Review Consultation and the National Office Income and Expenditure Account for year ended 31 October 2016. Pauline concluded this by saying:-

By their very presence, the natural resources of the earth are preserved. The task is simple – the way forward could be too, if we used the wonders of modern communications and the achievements brought about by the dedication of our ordinary members more of whom may well be inspired and inspire others, to become the guardians of our Plant Heritage, just like the man who planted trees – let us look away from the problems of Governance and Management, put our effort and finances to inspiring and educating the public at large to care for the Heritage of our natural world, to help them to see that the loss of a threatened plant is as much of a tragedy as the loss of the panda or the snow leopard, the elephant or the rhino. Who would have thought that the deadly Yew, spurned by farmers and shepherds who fear the death of an animal from consuming the leaves, and by parents who fear for their young children who are attracted to the tempting scarlet berries? few would plant it in their gardens or hedgerows for fear of the consequences – and yet its very poison can act as a barrier to the onslaught and advance of cancer and breast cancer, through the drug Tamoxifen in particular. Nature has its own laws and reasons for the existence of its most deadly seeming or unassumingly insignificant seeming plants. And we lose them at our peril. That is why Plant Heritage exists – that should be our mantra.

We need to set out our task of conservation with the dedication of the man who planted trees and in this task no one of us is more important than any other. For this reason, I and my committee and, as far as I can tell, our membership must have a voice. You may abolish Council and replace it with a meeting of “Chairs” or any other local officers, but ordinary members, through them, or better still in a genuine AGM of all members, have a right to their opinion and the right to vote to express it. They pay annual dues and they do the donkey work of fund raising after all. They are the little acorns, working from the bedrock of our Organisation.

7 Treasurer's report:

The Treasurer distributed copies of the accounts ending October 2016 to members and these were agreed as correct. Proposed: Ann Celer Seconded: Gaye Hicyilmaz

8 Collection Co-ordinator's report: No Report

9 Election of Officers:

President Mrs Sheila Chambers - Proposed Margaret Adams Seconded Margaret Midgely

The following were unanimously re-elected:- Chairman Mrs Margaret Adams Vice Chairman Mrs Yvonne Radford Treasurer Mrs Penny Berry and Secretary Mrs E Ann Celer.

10 Election of Committee:

The following Committee Members offered to stand:-

Pauline Clapp Don Everitt Barbara Barnwell Ken Armstrong Gaye Hicyilmaz
Proposed – Mrs Rosie Lishman Seconded – Mr Robert Parker

11 AOB

Pauline responded to several questions regarding National Office strategy and finances. Following correspondence from National Office the subject of our Charity Status was also raised. This would be discussed further in the coming year.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 12.55pm.