



CONSERVING THE DIVERSITY OF GARDEN PLANTS

Cornwall Group Newsletter. May 2021.

The Covid pandemic has continued to disrupt activities through the spring however the vaccination program has been moving forward rapidly and there is a hope that some activities will be able to resume before long.

In January we put the Annual Meeting on hold for a few months while the situation stabilised. It now looks as though we will be able to hold a brief meeting shortly. It will not be our usual full day event and there may well be people unwilling to come out yet. To keep everybody informed I have set out the content of the formal meeting below. Please do contact me if you have any comments or wish to add any matters for consideration.

During the AGM we will also vote to elect the Chair, Treasurer and any other committee members prepared to stand. If you are not able to attend the meeting **Please e-mail your vote to approve/not approve the proposed committee** . This is not an ideal solution but I hope it will allow greater democratic representation. Hopefully we will be able to conduct a more conventional vote at the next annual meeting.

If anybody is unhappy with this arrangement please let me know, I am very open to any better suggestions.

Annual Branch Meeting 2021.

The next Annual meeting will be held at 2.30pm on Saturday 19th June 2021.

We will meet in the garden of Caroline Stone, our collections co-ordinator. The Glebe, North Petherwin, Launceston, Cornwall, PL15 8LR. Please park on the road or in front of the church.

Caroline holds the National Collection of Double Primroses but is also developing a collection of peonies. I am hoping that the peonies will still be looking spectacular for our visit. There is plenty of space in the garden and room under cover if it should rain. Please take note of any restrictions in force at the time, it is not yet clear what those may be.

Please would you let me know if you are planning to come, in uncertain times we need to be able to plan in advance in order to keep everybody protected. Telephone me on 01209 215931, you can leave a message on the machine if I'm not there.



Paeonia 'Duchesse de Nemours' .



Peonies .



Paeonia 'Bouquet Perfect' .

Minutes from the last Annual Meeting, January 28th 2020.

I have attached a copy of the minutes from the last Annual Meeting at the end of this newsletter. Please take a moment to look through them and let me know if they can be accepted as a true record of events.

Chair and Secretaries report.

Spring this year was cold and dry, my garden developed in slow-motion and I am sure many of you experienced the same effect. Once I got used to the days passing without the temperature going up it was quite enjoyable. Plants were moving very slowly, weeds seemed to stop altogether and I got a lot done. A friend remarked that is was very strange weather and I might have agreed. However I can recall the same comment being made every year for a couple of decades and I am sure it was made for decades before that. Weather is characteristically strange.

Whatever the state of the weather, this year has been very peculiar. I am sure that we have all experienced the difficulties of operating through the pandemic. It has been impossible to meet during the lockdowns, and events planned for 2020 and 2021 were suspended. I did look at the possibility of organising some meetings through Zoom but the National Office has organised such a good schedule of speakers that it seemed like unnecessary duplication. If you haven't tried them yet I urge you to join in through the National website, there are some excellent events available. In a large county like Cornwall, Zoom meetings have also been attended by members who might have difficulty getting to physical meetings.

During the year we have had a few new members joining the Cornwall Group - welcome to you. This trend has been mirrored around the country with national membership up by 121 since November 2020.

Our financial situation remains stable - the only change since the last Annual Meeting has been a small income from plant sales. The treasurer's report below contains the details. As lockdown eases we are hoping to have a stand at the Cornwall Hardy Plant Society's sale at the end of June. This sale has always been our main fundraiser and publicity event in the year, we will need volunteers to sell plants from the stall and promote membership. We will also need plants for sale, I hope the members are able to help.

There have been no events for the Plant Nannies since the last Annual Meeting. We had hoped to run an event at the Tavistock Plant Sale last year but as the date approached the risk seemed to be growing and I withdrew the group's stand. The following day the entire event was cancelled and we entered the era of lockdowns.

Those Plant Nannies looking after plants in Cornwall please take heart, your efforts are much appreciated. Spare plants will be very welcome shortly. Perhaps it will be possible to have an event at the Tremenheere Plant Sale in September. Things are very tentative at this stage but details will be circulated if we are able to go ahead.

The group has a website but it would be nice if it was more active. It requires a volunteer to keep it fresh and updated - any offers of help would be much appreciated. This year has demonstrated very clearly the essential role of the internet in spreading information.

On the same subject, it would be nice to establish a facebook page for the group however a volunteer will be needed.

Looking forward, it is to be hoped that the lockdown restrictions will continue to ease and we may manage a few physical meetings before the end of the year. There have been plenty of developments in the National Collections in Cornwall and it would be good to get out into gardens again. If meetings become possible then details will be included in the newsletter and posted on the website.

Treasurer's report.

At the end of a quiet year very little has changed with regard to finances. We have had no expenditure during 2020 and received a small sum of 15.34 from plant sales in the period before the first lockdown.

The balance in the bank stands at 3711.90 and 795.00 is held as cash.

Banking continues to present challenges, the banks are not making things any easier for small organisations, however some progress has been made. Some of the cash held has now been deposited successfully with the bank.

Collection coordinator's report.

I took on being collections coordinator for Cornwall in 2019 picking up the role from Alistair Rivers who had done it since time immemorial. After a slow start I was planning to get round all the collections during 2020, but thanks to Covid 19 still have a few to make my first visit to. Things are generally looking very positive and it is a pleasure to be getting to know the collection holders. There have been some changes however that show the fragility of a National Collection and the importance of succession planning. In terms of specific activity:

The *Hemerocallis* collection at Antony was rescoped last year to more closely reflect the nature of the collection: it is now officially *Hemerocallis* pre 1977 (collected by Lady Cynthia Carew-Pole). Sadly, Mark Maunder who looked after the collection and had a wealth of knowledge about it has been made redundant by the National Trust in the wave of redundancies that were announced last Autumn. It is not clear who will take on responsibility for the collection.

There was one National Collection in Cornwall - *Dahlia* species - which had provisional status. The application for full status was approved earlier in the year. Sadly, during summer 2020 Varfell Farm was sold and the daffodil operations streamlined. This meant too that there was no future for the dahlia collections under the new ownership. In a very brave move Louise Danks has taken on the plants. Louise used to manage the collection so she has a good understanding of the requirements. It is good to see the collection's future secured. She has been able to find a site for the plants at Kelhelland Trust near Cambourne. When ownership of a National Collection

changes or a Collection moves site the National Collection status is withdrawn and a new application is made with the new details. The application for National Collection status to be reinstated went to the June meeting of the Plant Conservation Committee (PCC).

There have been five proposals relating to collections within Cornwall accepted by the Plant Conservation Committee in the past two years. This is the first step to becoming a National Collection. One achieved National Collection status at the March meeting of the PCC. This is the *Prostanthera* collection held by James and Katie Treseder.

Living as I do on the border, in May I visited the *Epimedium* collection held by Penny Jones just outside Holsworthy. Strictly speaking a Devon collection, a coordinator's report was needed on the plants so an application for National Collection status could be submitted. The appropriate Devon coordinator couldn't make the visit at the required time, and anyway I live much closer, so I dealt with the application.

The Cornwall Gardens Society has decided to have a series about the National Collections in Cornwall in their annual Journal. A different collection will be featured each year. The first was published - Charlie Pridham writing about *Lapageria*. It was very well received. It is good to have this sort of publicity for the National Collections. There were to be two collections featured in the next Journal but the CGS took a decision not to publish the Journal. With the text and photographs already prepared for the issue it is hoped that they will be carried when publication resumes.

There is an annual meeting for Collection Coordinators from the South-West (which seems to have a rather wide definition I think since it includes Hampshire and the Isle of Wight). It was held at Stourhead in Autumn 2019.

In January 2020 I attended a national meeting for Collection Coordinators at Birmingham Botanic Gardens. This was a very useful meeting - not really so much for the content of the meeting but for the opportunity to meet other coordinators, exchange phone numbers, make useful connections, pick up information on other collections, and generally swap experiences. We also were taken into the working glasshouses to see the National Collection of Cyclamen held there with some quite beautiful specimens with fascinating foliage.

We also had an on-line National Collection Holders meeting in November. Held over two days there were keynote talks from the RHS's Tim Upson and Fergus Garrett of Great Dixter. A lot of good topics were covered during the meeting. There was an extremely good update on plant health from the RHS's Dr Jassy Drakulik that I particularly enjoyed and talks from several Collection Holders. Two break-out sessions were held which I felt was rather adventurous; they did go quite well in fact!

Of course, Zoom has become the order of the day and I have done a number of talks on Zoom through the year. It started with one for Plant Heritage talking about the herbaceous peony collections that I am building up. These on-line talks have proved extremely popular for Plant Heritage and have become an on-going feature. They are being used to raise money for bursaries for the National Collections but have also attracted a lot of people who are not members of Plant Heritage and have proved good publicity for the organisation.

Plant Heritage has managed to keep operating well throughout the restrictions. I am told there has been a record number of enquiries about starting a National Collection and the Plant Conservation Committee has been kept busy. There are some new initiatives planned by Head Office which should result in people feeling more connected with the National Collections. As a Collections Coordinator I hope to get back on track with visiting the Collections in Cornwall soon.



Prostanthera rotundifolia .



Prostanthera cuneata .



Prostanthera 'Poorinda
Ballerina' .

Nominations and elections.

At the time of writing there have been no new volunteers for the committee. If you would like to be involved in organising the activities of Cornwall Plant Heritage we would love to hear from you.

At present we are operating without a secretary. The role is not particularly onerous and involves taking minutes at two committee meetings and the AGM each year, and acting as the contact point in Cornwall Plant Heritage for head office. It would be a great help if somebody would take on those tasks.

If you did not want to take on a formal role we also need committee members to help us come up with new events and keep our activities fresh. Please let me know if you are interested, 01209 215931.

I will be happy to accept any nominations up to the day of the annual meeting, at present the following are prepared to stand for the coming year:

Chair - John Sirkett;

Treasurer - Charlie Pridham;

Collections co-ordinator - Caroline Stone.

Others would be welcome.

Any other business.

If you have any other matters that you would like to raise at the annual meeting, please let me know.

Little progress has been made on the groups website since last year, assistance updating it would be very welcome. It would also be useful for the group to have a facebook page so if you are a facebook user, please spare us a thought!

Committee members.

The committee is currently running with three members. In a small group like ours this isn't a major problem but we would benefit from new members, new ideas and possibly a little help from a group secretary. We meet a couple of times each year to put together a program of events to interest the members and raise money for conservation both nationally and in Cornwall. Please get in touch if you feel you could volunteer a little time.

National Website. www.plantheritage.org.uk

This year has seen a wide variety of restrictions and many activities have had to be suspended. The program of events for Cornwall Plant Heritage was suspended while we considered what was possible. In recent months organisations have started to put together online activities to engage members, particularly Zoom meetings. For those of you unfamiliar with Zoom, it is an online platform that allows individuals to join in with a video conference call. It is now possible to hold meetings over the internet and to listen and participate in presentations. We haven't managed to organise anything at a local level but there are a range of meetings coming up that can be accessed through the national website:
www.plantheritage.org.uk

Some events are free, others have a small charge to help cover the costs involved. Zoom meetings are easy to enter. If you e-mail the group organising the meeting you will be sent an electronic link that you can click on to join the meeting. If you have not used Zoom before you will have to download the app which will be offered to you when you click on the link for the first time. Full details and access are available through the National website.

Coming events. HPS Plant sale.

Every year in May the Cornwall Group of the Hardy Plant Society organise a plant sale held in the car park of Truro Cattle Market, Newquay Road, Truro TR1 1RH (just along the Newquay road from Waitrose). Covid restrictions mean that it has been postponed this year until Saturday 26th June from 10.00am until 2.00pm. Please get in touch if you are able to volunteer some time to help on the stall, we will be selling plants and promoting Plant Heritage. This is our largest fundraising and publicity event for the year and the main support to keep the Cornwall Group of Plant Heritage running. Please pot up some garden plants for us to sell (bring them on the day), come down to buy some plants, or just come and say hello! If anything changes I will try to keep the website updated.

VOTE VOTE VOTE.

At the Annual Meeting there will be votes to:
Accept the minutes of the previous annual meeting as a true record;
Confirm the proposed committee members.

After a quiet year I am hoping that the business of the annual meeting can be dealt with promptly and that we can move on to hearing about the Peony collection, refreshments and viewing the peonies. If you are unable to attend it is very useful if you can let me know whether you accept the previous minutes or not and whether you support the proposed committee or not. This is not ideal democracy but these are difficult times and we are improvising. Your opinion matters, please express it.

Hope to see you soon.
John Sirkett.

**cornwallplantheritage@gmail.com (01209)
215931**



Bluebells in May .

APPENDIX.

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Plant Heritage Cornwall Group. Tuesday, January 28th 2020 at 11am held at the Steward's House, Heligan.

Present: John Sirkett (Chair), Charlie Pridham (Treasurer), Ros Smith, Caroline Stone, John Price, Jim Stephens, Emma Lainchbury, Lucy Pitman (National Collections Officer, Plant Heritage), Liz Pridham, Alistair Rivers
Minutes taken by Caroline Stone.

- 1. Apologies:** Apologies for absence were received from Brian and Heather Hiley, Gilly and John Mann.
- 2. Minutes of the last Annual meeting:** The minutes of the previous Annual General Meeting held on January 29th 2019 were circulated to all present. They were unanimously accepted as an accurate record of the meeting.
- 3. Matters arising from the minutes:** there were no matters arising.
- 4. Chairman's report:** The Chair said that it felt it had been a good year notwithstanding the lower number of people attending the AGM and the reduced committee. Events had been successful and the Group had attracted more interest. Three new members have joined during the year. However the group is operating without a secretary and he would welcome any offers to take on the role. Other committee members were also to be welcomed since it is important to bring in a fresh view point. The Chair expressed his gratitude to Heligan for again permitting use of the Steward's House for the AGM.
In March the Group had visited Antony Woodland Gardens. In May there had been a stall at the HPS Truro Plant Fair again. This is the Group's opportunity to raise funds. More money

was made than the previous year - a reflection on the weather. The Chair thanked all the helpers and suppliers of plants and especially Mike Bell. In June the Group visited the Tremeneheere Sculpture gardens. This is a remarkable opportunity taken by Neil Armstrong to create a new garden with fantastic vistas over Mount's Bay and interesting plantings, many of plants considered tender elsewhere in the country. The Chair had been unable to arrange a visit to the Hemerocallis National Collection at Antony having missed the optimum flowering period. This year he hopes to arrange a visit in conjunction with the Collection's Open Day. In September a Plant Nanny Event was held at Tremeneheere. This was very successful. All the plants available were given out, and some newly propagated plants were brought back by existing Plant Nannies. Daubenton's Kale has achieved a significantly greater distribution through the efforts of the Plant Nanny scheme. The Chair attended the Devon Group AGM in November. Apart from enjoying their 40th Anniversary cake, he had enjoyed the speakers: Carlos Magdalena from Kew and Neil Lucas from Knoll Gardens. Carlos Magdalena's talk had reinforced the importance of plant conservation to the Chair. There are increased challenges presented by such changes as the Nagoya Protocol which will curtail the introduction of new plants. There is an important role for Cornish gardens to conserve the plants they contain from historic plant hunters since it will not be possible to reintroduce these plants. Leaving the EU will take the country out of the European CITES zone, and the introduction of plant passports will increase costs leading inevitably to some plants being dropped by nurseries as not economically viable. The impact of the introduction of plant passports has yet to be seen.

5. Treasurer's report: The Treasurer said that the Group had had no expenditure for the year. There had been income of 147.92 from the stall at the HPS Truro plant fair. There have been twelve months without any capitation payments from Head Office; this does not impact on the Group since in the past this was donated back to the national organisation. Head Office have introduced an electronic cash book which has simplified the production of accounts.

The Treasurer said that the Group could look for suitable ways to use some of the funds held.

The accounts will be included in the next Group newsletter.

7. Collection Coordinator's report: Caroline Stone reported that she had taken on the Collection Coordinator role in the Spring. It had taken a while to establish contact with all the collections and she had not made as many visits as she had hoped to do so far. However, the scope of the Hemerocallis collection at Antony was changed to Hemerocallis collected by Lady Cynthia Carew-Pole before 1977 following her visit in July. This more accurately reflects the actual nature of the collection. The pace of visits is now picking up and she hopes to have soon completed her initial visits. Alistair Rivers reports written as part of his thorough review of the Collections in 2015 have been helpful in preparing for visits. The Collection Coordinator's target for this year is to get the National Collection on provisional status to full status and to bring two new National Collections on board. There are another two collections in Cornwall for which proposals have been accepted by the Plant Conservation Committee but she does not expect to get these to full status within the year.

8. Election of Officers: The Chair, John Sirkett, Treasurer, Charlie Pridham, and Collections Coordinator were all reappointed unopposed and unanimously.

9. Any other business:

- a.** John Price expressed his concern that there was a lack of interest in the *Camellia reticulata* collection at Tregothnan. They have all been mapped and detailed in a report he has compiled. He has shared his report with the Collections Coordinator.
- b.** The Chair said he would like contributions and help with the Group website and he would like to see a Facebook group started to publicise the Cornwall Group. If anyone could take this on he would be pleased to hear from them.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 11.45am.