

of 74 Commercial Members, 32 Non-Commercial Members, and 13 Junior Members. One of the main reasons for these figures has no doubt been the personal effort and interest shown by Mr. James S. Wells. For this, we all express our deepest gratitude. We were very pleased that Mr. Wells was able to attend in person the inaugural meeting at Syon Park.

A one-day conference was held on 2nd January 1969 at Pershore College of Horticulture, Pershore, Worcestershire. This, I am pleased to report, was a great success, with 105 persons attending.

Looking to the future, a one-day trip to Boskoop on 21st April 1969 is being organized, and also it is proposed to hold a conference during the following September.

A. B. Macdonald  
(Hon. Secretary)  
January 8th, 1969

## **THE FORMATION OF THE NEW CHAPTER OF THE SOCIETY IN GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND**

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The newest chapter of the International Plant Propagators' Society covering the region of Great Britain and Ireland officially came into existence on the 18th September 1968 at a meeting of interested people at Syon House, Brentford, Middlesex. Behind this announcement and the rather impersonal minutes of the inaugural meeting printed elsewhere in this volume there lies a tale of endeavour which for the record should be told.

An attempt to form a chapter in Britain was made in 1960-61 but proved abortive in spite of some hard work by a number of enthusiasts over here. In order to profit by any mistakes which might have been made in the past the reports and correspondence of the earlier effort were re-examined carefully. It was clear that the effort failed because the nursery industry as a whole was just not ready for the concept of all that I.P.P.S. stood for. Free interchange of knowledge and experience was not yet generally acceptable and the "locked door" still epitomised the propagation departments of many nurseries. The lobby against the idea was too strong and the project was abandoned though a very few individuals in Britain joined the American regions.

However Jim Wells has a missionary zeal so far as conversion to the principles of I.P.P.S. are concerned. This was a challenge which he had no doubt met before and was prepared to meet again in his efforts to spread the benefits of the Society from his adopted land back to his native country. So in 1967 Jim Wells was renewing his efforts to get someone to

start the ball rolling over here. In due course his message came via Brian Humphrey (from the famous English nursery of Hilliers and Sons of Winchester) to us at the Pershore College of Horticulture; it so happened that we were in the midst of planning the third of what has become a popular series of annual short refresher conferences for nurserymen held at Pershore each January. The theme for January 1968 had been chosen — 'Plant Propagation', so that it was expected there would be a very representative gathering of nurserymen and their propagators on this occasion, an ideal opportunity to launch the idea of a new chapter of the Society in Europe.

An evening was set aside for the subject. Jim Wells recorded his account of the formation of I.P.P.S. and its subsequent development. We were fortunate in having at the meeting five British members of I.P.P.S. including Mr. S. Challenger from New Zealand. Their enthusiasm impressed the audience considerably and after a long and valuable discussion it was decided to appoint an *ad hoc* Committee to examine the possibility of a chapter or branch being formed in Britain. The Committee comprised Mr. Brian Humphrey, who acted throughout as Chairman, Mr. David Clark (Sydenham-Notcutt Ltd. Woodbridge), Mr. Robert Garner (East Malling Research Station), Mr. John O' Connor (Dartington Hall Gardens), Mr. C. E. Salter (John Tooby and Son, Bransford, Worcester), Mr. A. Weguelin (Barters Nurseries Ltd. Chappanslade, Westbury, Wiltshire) and Mr. H. J. Welch (The Wansdyke Nursery, Hillsworth, Devizes, Wiltshire). The writer together with his colleague Mr. Tom Wright, then Lecturer in Nursery Practice at Pershore, offered to act in a secretarial capacity. The Committee also co-opted two other existing members of I.P.P.S., Dr. Margaret E. Marston (University of Nottingham) and Mr. C. D. Dempster (Wolverhampton).

The Committee, of course, was '*ad hoc*' in the most literal sense of the word. It was formed at a conference of growers that could never meet in the same form again; it had no funds or official backing and could certainly not launch any large publicity scheme or inaugural conference.

The idea of a European rather than British chapter appealed to many and certainly to Jim Wells and perhaps to the Board of Directors also. In principle we all agreed but it soon became obvious that at this stage it was impractical. To make sufficient contacts amongst potential members in even a few Continental countries would take considerable time and be beyond the capacity of a small unofficial committee of busy people. We were anxious that the momentum of the enthusiastic Pershore meeting should not be dissipated over too long a waiting period. Furthermore our early enquiries suggested strongly that whilst support might be forthcoming from non-commercial members, there was little likelihood of an enthusiastic response from the continental commercial nurseries

for any free interchange of technical information. With some regrets therefor, but with no doubt about the wisdom of our choice, we elected to concentrate in the first instance on a chapter for Great Britain and Ireland to include, of course, the Channel Islands. Nothing would please us more than being able to extend the chapter in to the Continent eventually or to assist in the formation extension of the I.P.P.S. in Europe if required.

At home the Committee's first task was to assess the interest in the Society amongst plant propagators themselves and, more important still, amongst the nurserymen and their trade associations. The interest of both was essential for the project to proceed. It became evident too that the disparity in currency and wages between U.S.A. and here would make membership very expensive by our standards. Would the nurseryman be persuaded that it was worth while for his propagator to join the Society? And would he pay the expenses of membership as we were informed, about 90% of American employers did? Doubts on this point led to much discussion on possible ways of reducing membership costs but it was eventually and inevitably realised that differential rates of subscription within the same society were quite impracticable. Further shocks came when it was realised that the Society was about to introduce an increase in subscription rates.

Things looked a bit black until we had reassuring news from the Horticultural Trades Association that the consensus of opinion therein was that the nurserymen felt that the Society was a good thing; it was clear that there had been a transfusion of a young, vigorous and forward thinking generation of growers into the organisation since the days of 1960-61. We gained the impression that many would support the idea of membership for their propagators and back the idea financially, and we had concrete proof of their support with the promise of £20 towards the initial costs of setting up a branch. At the same time too we had a generous donation of £35 from the Trustees of the Dartington Hall Trust, a body which are renowned both for their interests in gardens and in sponsoring good Anglo-American relationships. This it was hoped should certainly benefit both.

All this was a tremendous encouragement to the Committee who now felt empowered and able to proceed. At the third attempt a Constitution was agreed by the Committee and sent to the President and Board of Directors for approval. It remained the same basic constitution accepted at the inaugural meeting and agreed in principle by the parent body apart from the question of initiation fees and annual dues. Fears were expressed that in spite of the evidence of support for the Society from many nurserymen fees on the American scale would prevent the new chapter from getting off the ground. Not until the inaugural meeting itself when the enthusiasm for the whole concept was self-evident was the final plunge taken

and annual dues fixed in line with those of the other regions. It was decided to work with a reduced initiation fee of one guinea (\$2.50) for a limited period of time but that this fee should be paid by both commercial and non-commercial members.

In only one other way was there any material variation in the draft constitution from those adopted by the Eastern and Western Regions; this concerned the minimum attendance requirements of members. As distances within our proposed region are so much smaller than they are in the other regions it was felt reasonable to expect members to be able to attend at least once in two years rather than in three. It has since been pointed out to us that at the Fresno Conference in October objections have been raised to this provision and no doubt the discussions will continue but at least it expressed a keen desire from the new branch to uphold the principles of personal involvement as a condition of membership.

By June 1968 therefore it appeared to the Committee that sufficient interest existed to warrant calling together as many interested persons as possible at a public meeting and getting a formal proposition that a chapter of I.P.P.S. should be formed subject, of course, to the agreement of the parent body.

What form should such a meeting take and where was it to be held? Jim Wells had urged us to 'think big' but with few funds for publicity we had to settle for a one-day conference. A date was fixed in September barely three months ahead at which Jim himself agreed to come over and add his persuasion. Our first choice of venue was Kew — what better place to launch an organisation for plant propagators than the Royal Botanic Gardens? What better centre for the birth of a Society which is a blend of scientific worker and practical craftsman? Kew however felt unable to help us at this stage. The horticultural trade came to our rescue however and, through the good offices of Mr. Martin Slocock, President of the Horticultural Trades Association, the recently formed Garden Centre Ltd. at Syon House, Brentford, a few miles from the centre of London, offered us their very considerable facilities for the inaugural conference. These facilities and the willing help of their staff contributed in no small way to the successful outcome.

Time was short to organise a programme of speakers and a holiday season is not the most convenient of times to attempt such an exercise. The bulk of this work fell upon John O' Connor whose enthusiasm for I.P.P.S. had been fired by a spell of experience in the U.S.A. With little money available for press advertising we relied on personal communication and editorial comment wherever we could get it. No one could forecast the effect until the day itself — September 18th, 1968. The Society was born just 8 months and 10 days after the idea had been conceived at the Pershore Conference.