



ALPINE GARDEN SOCIETY

Dublin Group



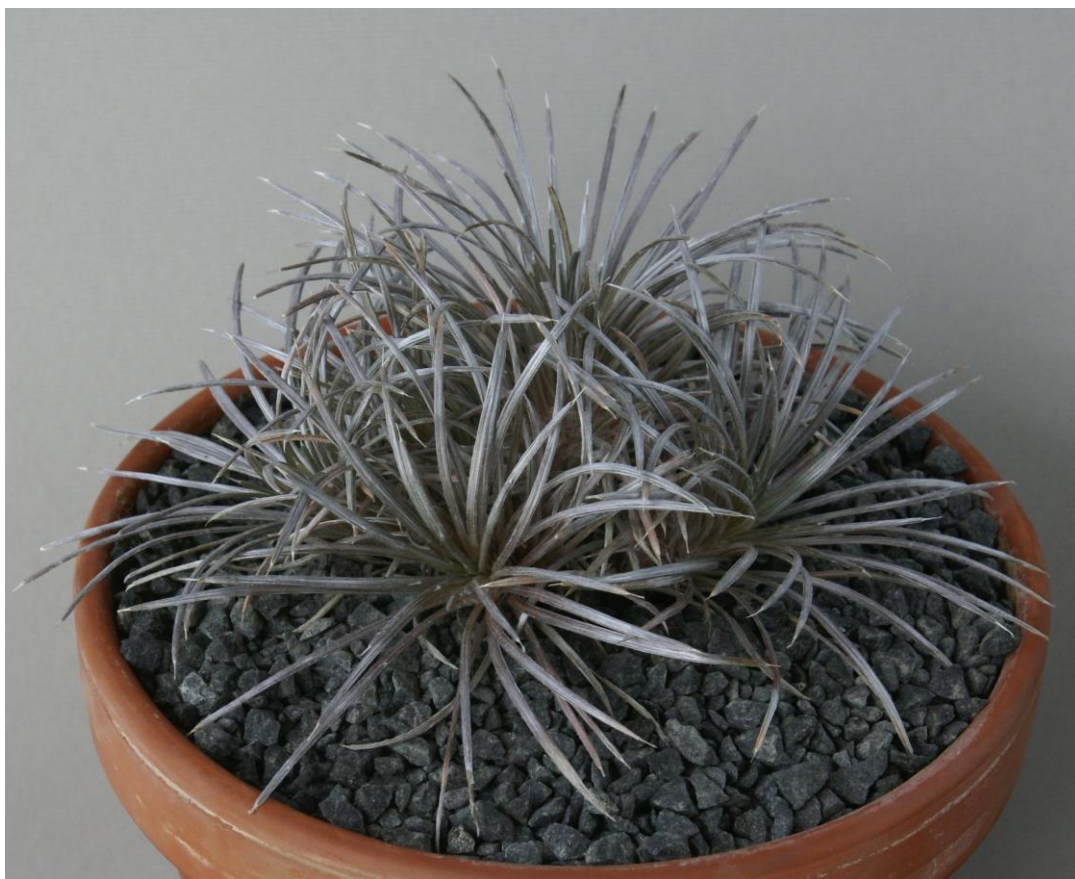
NEWSLETTER NO. 52 - SUMMER 2009

NOTES

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Front cover illustration is of *Iris chrysographes* ‘Inschriach’
(Photo: Billy Moore) – see p. 6



Celmisia spedenii (above) and *Anenome obtusiloba* at the Dublin Show (photos: Billy Moore)

EDITORIAL

The celebrations of our 25th Anniversary have been overshadowed by the deaths of two prominent members.

Joan Carvill, a founder member and Group Secretary for most of our 25 years, died suddenly on 15 May on holiday in Italy. Joan's commitment to the highest standards, her hard work and attention to detail have been an invaluable resource for the Group over the years. She was the 'onlie begetter' of the annual discussion weekend at Termonfeckin and this important fixture in the alpine calendar will stand as a monument to her vision. Joan was liked and respected by our members, by members of the Ulster Group and by those in our parent body who knew her. For example, **Val Lee**, the President Elect of the parent body in an email to me had the following to say about her: "Joan was such a lovely lady, warm, welcoming, encouraging, so full of life and fun and that doesn't begin to talk of her gardening and organizational skills. She will be sadly missed." And who could disagree. Our sincere sympathies go to her daughter **Julie Ann** who was with her at the end.

An appreciation of Joan written by **Carl Dacus**, a fellow founding member, appears on p. 11 and Joan's report on the annual lunch is on p. 31.

Anna Nolan who was a member from the outset died peacefully at home on 15 June surrounded by her family after a long illness. Anna was a very active member of the Group and hardly ever missed a meeting or function. For years she ran our plant sales at the Shows and in Termonfeckin and did so very successfully, making an invaluable contribution to the financial health of the Group. Anna was a hugely talented gardener and her garden in Cabinteely was visited and admired by people from all over the world including ourselves when she had special open days for members of the Group. She was a very talented plantswoman and was generous to a fault with her plants. She is a great loss to the Group. But the greatest loss is to her family and our sympathies must go to her husband, **Sean** and her children **Fergus** and **Orla**.

Carmel Duignan has written an appreciation of Anna which appears on p. 14.

ALPINE MISCELLANY

Gentiana verna

I had intended to include an article on *Gentiana verna* which **Robert Rolfe** has written specially for the newsletter in this issue but because of space considerations I have had to defer it to the Winter issue. It is a terrific article so you can look forward to reading it in the dark evenings.

I want to use a photo of this gorgeous plant on the front cover but it must be an image with real punch. I have some pictures of my own and some of them are ok but I'm sure that among our membership someone has a picture that is truly stunning. If you think that your photo of this plant, either in the wild or in cultivation, is worthy of gracing the cover of the next issue please send it to me before 1 November next. I will ask **Edwin Davison**, our judge of the artistic section at the annual Show, to select the best picture. Incidentally, Edwin's company now prints the newsletter and he will be giving a workshop on photographing plants with a digital camera after the AGM in January.

Iris chrysographes 'Inshriach'

I got this plant at **Mount Venus Nursery** earlier in the summer and I thought it would be an appropriate cover picture for an issue that is overshadowed by the deaths of Joan and Anna. The species comes from China and perhaps elsewhere and I presume this plant is a form selected by **Jack Drake**. If anyone knows any more about the plant perhaps they could let me know.

In This Issue

The official reporters for the two main shows this year were **Harold McBride** for Dublin and me for Greenmount and both reports are included.

Liam Byrne writes about some of the Irish plants that he grows. Since I became editor Liam has given me an article for each issue. I know that his articles are popular so on your behalf I thank him for all his contributions to date.

I have mentioned already the appreciations of Joan and Anna kindly submitted by **Carl Dacus** and **Carmel Duignan** to whom

thanks are also due.

Dermot Kehoe reviews a new book on native Irish orchids which seems to be an important and welcome addition to the literature on Irish plants. Thank you Dermot.

The Secretary of one of the English groups who had come across a copy of our newsletter told me that what she liked most about it was all the different 'voices' reporting on our meetings. I agree with her and I think it is important that we get these reports from as wide a range of members as possible. I am most grateful to everyone who has contributed so far and for the very high standard of the reports. I know some of you are shy about seeing your views in print and I understand completely when someone declines to act as reporter. I select 'victims' purely at random so it strikes me that there may be someone whom I have not approached who would like to write a piece. If so, please let me know.

Fixtures

Our programme for the remainder of the year is very attractive with plenty of interest for members to enjoy - see detailed list on page 48.

We kick off at 2:30 pm on Saturday, 29 August with a visit to the garden of **Jean Van der Lee** in Carrickmines. Jean reckons that her garden is at its best in late summer so we can expect lots of colour in the herbaceous borders and her new gravel bed should be interesting. All we need is a fine afternoon to provide an ideal occasion for members to renew acquaintance after the summer break.

On Saturday, 19 September at 2:30 pm the **Autumn Show** will be held in Stillorgan. The show is non-competitive but offers members an opportunity to present any plants which they think are looking well on the day. As well as the display of plants there will also be a cultivation forum and members' plant sale. This event was well attended last year and I hope that you will come in even greater numbers in September.

On Thursday, 24 September at 8 pm, also in Stillorgan, **Oliver Schurmann** will give a talk entitled 'Fascination - Show Gardens'.

Oliver and his wife Liat run the well-known **Mount Venus Nursery** in Rathfarnham which is always worth a visit. They have designed a number of prize-winning show gardens at Hampton Court in the UK and at Bloom. This year at Bloom they were awarded a gold medal for their garden which was adjudged best in show. The garden was also chosen by their fellow exhibitors as best in show, repeating their success of 2008. Their sales stand also received a gold medal. They will be bringing plants for sale.

On Thursday 1 October at 8 pm at the NBG Glasnevin **Magnus Lidén** will talk on 'Corydalis, Bleeding Hearts and their Relatives'. These plants are the subject of the recently published book of which he is joint author with **Mark Tebbitt** and **Henrik Zetterlund**. Magnus is a senior botanical researcher and scientific curator at the Uppsala University botanic gardens. This is an unmissable opportunity to hear an acknowledged expert speak on a subject close to his heart.

From Friday 20 to Sunday 22 November we have our **25th Alpine Weekend** at Termonfeckin. To mark our twenty-fifth anniversary the programme this year is a special one with a stellar cast and includes an additional speaker. **Jim Almond**, who judged at our show this year, will talk about propagation and other matters dear to the hearts of Alpine lovers. Jim has a really practical approach to growing alpine so I am certain we will learn a lot from him. **Susan Band** the owner of Pitcairn Alpines in Perth (check out her website at www.pitcairnalpines.co.uk) will give a practical demonstration on the management of a bulb collection. She grows her bulbs in a completely natural way and this is reflected in the quality of the bulbs she sells. **George Sevastopulo** will give what for me is the definitive talk on the Burren (George gave this talk at the SRGC Weekend last year and it was very well received). Our dear friends **Henry and Margaret Taylor** will take us on a trip to the Pyrenees and will also survey the bulbs of Spain. Margaret and Henry are the foremost experts on the Pyrenees and will shortly be publishing a book on the region. They are great travellers, great growers and a lovely couple and it is wonderful to have them back again in Termonfeckin. I can hardly wait.

As you will know by now this weekend has become more and

more popular in recent years so to ensure that you will not be disappointed you should book early. See the full programme and booking documentation.

Our programme finishes at 8 pm on Thursday, 10 December in Stillorgan with our usual festive fixture **‘A Christmas Miscellany’**. **Jamie Chambers** is putting together a *potpourri* of images and is depending on you to let him have material. This may consist of photographs, slides or digital images which need not necessarily be of alpinists. Refreshments including mince pies will be provided.

Our Website

From **Jamie Chambers**

I have a new project for the website, though it's going to take some time to complete. I went through the old Society newsletters in preparation for our 25th Anniversary Party, and found them fascinating. There are all sorts of interesting and useful articles there - on sowing, growing and cultivation, and reports on gardens and Society activities. The Party showed that we have a good sense of our history, but don't have the facilities to record it. My plan is to put the old newsletters on the website so they are accessible to all members. Watch this space!

Pictures Get Everywhere Spot: take a look at <http://medstu86.blogfa.com/post-78.aspx> which seems to be an Iranian web blog ('seems' because I don't read Farsi I'm afraid), where **Val Keegan's** photo of *Eranthis hyemalis* (our Seasonal Focus of March 2006) appears. Send me your plant photos and see where on the world-wide web they pop up!

The news on use of our website continues to be good - 10,414 hits on our site in June compared with 6,182 a year ago. As usual, activity peaks around the show, with 15,444 hits in March. The number of sites visiting us is also up - from 790 a year ago to 1,038 this June.

I've been putting up Google Map links on the site in order to give directions. When we first began the website there was a big blank space on Google Maps where Termonfeckin should have been. Now they have it mapped properly, and those of us without 'satnav' can hope to navigate there more efficiently. I'm also

putting more photos on the Gallery page. There are some of the Party there now.

As ever, send questions and suggestions to me at agsinfo@eircom.net, and if you haven't yet taken a look, go to www.alpinegardensociety.ie and see what you think.

Pots

Michael Meagher has seven and nine cm, rigid, square, plastic pots for sale at ten and twenty cent each respectively. If you want any you should phone Michael (01 8382368) well in advance of any meeting and he will bring your order along,

New Secretary

Mary O'Neill Byrne has very bravely agreed to take on the onerous duties of Hon. Secretary from now until the AGM when a new Secretary will be elected. I'm sure we all wish her well.

Plant Sales

The Group's financial viability is heavily dependent on the proceeds of plant sales at the local shows, the main show and Termonfeckin and these sales are made possible only by donations of good plants from the members. **Mary O'Neill Byrne** has sent me a timely reminder to remind you to keep our plant sales in mind when you are taking cuttings. She quotes a childhood poem: "Four seeds in a row, one for the rook, one for the crow, one will wither and one will grow" and suggests that it would be apt if we altered it, despite losing the rhyme, to "Four cuttings in a row, two for myself and two for the AGS plant sales". She assumes of course that all the cuttings will take but you know what she means.

Editor

JOAN CARVILL

1926 – 2009



(photo: Julie Carvill)

I first met Joan at an AGM of the Alpine, Cactus & House-plant Group of the RHSI at the beginning of the eighties. Little did I know at the time that from that meeting such a close friendship and working relationship would develop and strengthen. Joan's love and knowledge of plants was, I suppose, initially the common interest. At that time she lived on Sandyford Road in a house with a large garden filled with an eclectic range of plants, from alpiners through herbaceous to aquatics, shrubs and trees; so she was a true plantswoman. When she and Louis moved to Dun Laoghaire to a much smaller garden, her love of alpiners came to the fore with every square inch filled with a treasure trove of choice plants grown to a high standard.

As well as her love of plants Joan also had a lifelong interest in cars and sailing and had a significant involvement in fundraising for the RNLI.

After I was about three years with the RHSI a decision was made to set up an AGS Group in Dublin. The prime movers were Joan,

Ken Kinsella, Richard Sullivan, Dermot O'Neill and yours truly. In due course we approached the AGS in the UK. Our first contact was with **Michael Upward** and I can safely say that it was Joan's negotiating skills that won the day.

Our inaugural meeting was held at the NBG in November 1983 and Joan's past connection with **Dr Molly Sanderson** (from motor rallying) brought in the backing from the Ulster AGS members for that meeting. This support was invaluable in the establishment of the Group and continues to this day.

Trying to start a new society with no funds was a daunting task. Joan came up with the idea of running an alpine gardening course in the VEC on Shelbourne Road which proved very successful both in raising funds and attracting members, one of whom was **Anna Nolan**.

The one great event in the Group's calendar is surely the Termonfeckin weekend which was also Joan's brainchild. This annual fixture, where top lecturers from all over Europe share their knowledge, has become so popular over the past few years that a waiting list for places has had to be created. It will stand as a fitting memorial to Joan.

When I organized a garden trip to Italy and France last January Joan asked to be included. To see a lady in her eighties making her way down to the sea and up again in the Hanbury Garden at *La Mortola* which tested even the most fit, amazed us all. I think that this perhaps exemplifies Joan's indomitable personality and her determination not to be beaten but to soldier on. I am honoured to have been her friend and delighted to have spent those few most enjoyable days together in France and Italy. I also know that the other people with us on that trip would like me to express their sympathies to her daughter **Julie**.

From a very small start the AGS Dublin Group grew from strength to strength largely due to good team work. I will hold the memories of all the years that I knew Joan with great fondness and

respect. We had our disagreements but ended up respecting each other's views.

As Secretary for most of the twenty five years of the Group's existence Joan's influence on our activities has been enormous. Ever hard working, forward looking and a driving force on the Committee, her attention to detail and insistence on high standards is one of the reasons why the Group is where it is today. She always kept in touch with the broad membership and did everything possible to ensure that each member felt welcome and valued. She is a great loss and has left a very high standard to follow.

Carl Dacus

Anna Nolan

1944 - 2009



(photo: Cyril Byrne, *Irish Times*)

I first met Anna Nolan in the mid 1980s at a plant sale at a time when I was then establishing my credentials as a plant anorak. Anna had already qualified. Our shared interest in plants and gardens cemented our friendship. Anna was the consummate gardener; she was generous with her time, advice and cuttings and was especially encouraging to young plantspeople. She had a wonderful eye for a good plant. I can still see her approaching a laden plant table at a society sale, glasses pushed up on her head (they were never used for important close up work), index finger and thumb, closely followed by nose, reaching into the midst of the plants and emerging with some small treasure. Best of all, and unlike many of us, she could grow these sometimes difficult plants. She had an artist's feel for colour and texture and her garden was a work of art. Every section had its own colour theme, differing leaf textures and exciting plant combinations. It was much visited and admired by visitors from home and abroad and featured in many magazines and journals. Plant photographers came from afar to capture the beautiful flower cameos, the rare

and unusual plants and the fusions of colour and texture that were unique to her garden. One of the accolades of which she was proudest was when a French photographer told her that her garden was *très chic*.

For a few years she showed some of her alpine and woodland plants at the Dublin show and at Greenmount. She won many prizes and was slowly moving up the categories until she decided that she lacked the competitive spirit that excellence in this pursuit demanded. And excellence in all she did was Anna's hallmark. In later years she took up painting and, had illness not intervened, she would surely have become as talented an artist as she was a gardener.

Anna was a highly trained nurse and midwife who was part of that generation of women who were obliged to choose between marriage and their careers. She was happy to be a wife and a mother but she quite rightly resented the unfair law that gave her no choice in the matter. But nursing's loss was gardening's gain in that she channelled her considerable energies and talent into making an exceptional garden.

In her private life Anna was a committed Christian, a minister of the Eucharist in her local church and a devotee of Bible study. But this fidelity to her faith was a cloak that she wore lightly. Around Anna there was no joyless piety. She was funny, irreverent, perspicacious, kind, charitable, sometimes touchy, quick to forgive (if not necessarily to forget) and generous to a fault.

She and her beloved Sean shared an interest in theatre and film and had, in later years, begun to indulge their great love of travel when the fates intervened. Anna bore her cruel illness with great dignity and fortitude. She was always anxious to put people at their ease and to ensure that friends would not feel awkward in her presence.

To those of us who were privileged to know Anna, her memory lives on with us through her plants and memories we have of the pleasure of her company and the fun she generated with her

stories and sayings – many of them unsuitable for printing in a family magazine.

To Anna's husband, **Sean**, son **Fergus**, daughter **Orla** and her immediate family we offer our sincere condolences. No words of ours can diminish their loss. We can but invoke that lovely old Irish prayer "*go raibh a h-anam dílis ar lámh dbeis Dé*" (may her faithful soul be at the right hand of God).

Carmel Duignan

THE SHOWS

Dublin AGS Show, 2009



Lewisia tweedyi (photo: Billy Moore)

A bright sunny day greeted the exhibitors as they arrived at Cabinteely although they had to be careful with the taller plants as a fierce N.E. wind threatened to decapitate them before they reached the show bench. The warm spring weather, however, during the three weeks prior to the show meant that exhibitors were able to pack the benches with superb plants which were much appreciated by the visiting public.

The Shows in Dublin or indeed in Ulster don't often attract exhibitors from Great Britain; however, this year, **Ian Leslie** (Bangor Wales), was a very welcome visitor. Ian brought over a number of excellent plants and gained several prizes



including the AGS 80th Anniversary Award for the best plant exhibited in a 19cm pot with *Primula* aff. *bracteata*. This attractive Asiatic primula with its masses of very pale pink flowers was raised from seed recently collected in China. The show cards with the name I. Leslie (Bangor) caused some confusion amongst his fellow exhibitors as of course we have a Bangor in Co. Down!

The Irish exhibitors however managed to hold their own against the Welsh invader with **Liam Byrne** (Dublin) leading the way. Liam's awards included the Farrer Medal with a huge well flowered *Lewisia tweedy*, the ACC Cup (most points in the Open Section) and the Margaret Orsi Trophy (best plant from N. America).

Apart from the main prize-winners a number of other plants caught my eye. First among these was *Anemone obtusiloba*, yellow form (**Mark Smyth**), described in the *AGS Encyclopaedia of Alpines* as "a rare plant in cultivation". However this plant, which grows high in the western Himalayas, is now seen regularly at Irish AGS shows. The yellow form is less robust than the white and blue forms and being smaller in stature it lends itself to trough culture. Seed is often produced and should be sown as soon as it is ripe.

Hepaticas are popular plants in Irish gardens and some well flowered examples graced the show benches. *Hepatica nobilis* var. *japonica* forma *variegata* (**Gordon Toner**), with its blunt lobed leaves prominently marbled white, has foliage attractive enough to appear in foliage classes. However, this plant was also covered with pale



blue flowers, held well above the leaves. The exhibitor keeps the plant permanently in a pot and it has the protection of glass during the winter months.

Kalmiothamnus ×
kalmiopsis 'Sindenberg'

(**Susan Tindall**) was adjudged the best Ericaceous exhibit. This well-flowered bigeneric hybrid is grown in a pot containing ericaceous compost and kept in a plastic tunnel. Susan tells me that it has proven very difficult to get cuttings from this plant to strike: it is interesting that the “professionals” sometimes have propagating problems also!

Celmisias are usually well represented at Irish shows but *C. spedenii* (Ian Leslie) is not often seen. A well grown specimen of this high alpine with its highly decorative, narrow, sheer silver leaves made the journey from Wales. During a visit to New Zealand I spent hours photographing and enjoying this beauty which remains rare in cultivation. The exhibitor grows his plant permanently in a pot where the foliage benefits from winter protection. I have a plant which has lived in a well drained trough for over a decade, but never shows the pristine condition of Ian’s fine specimen.

Celmisia semicordata subsp. *aurigans* (Susan Tindall) grown from seed collected by Ross Graham in central Otago, New Zealand now makes a regular appearance at AGS shows and is a much admired foliage plant.

Specimens of the “Inshriach Hybrids” strain developed by the late Jack Drake often have a golden pellicle and in-rolled leaf margins, evidence that ‘aurigans’ was involved in the parentage.

Astelia nivicola (**Billy Moore**) is another fine antipodean foliage plant, now widespread in Irish gardens due to the generosity of **Margaret Glynn** (Co. Antrim). When grown in a fairly lean compost and confined to a pan this *Astelia* remains very compact; however when given its freedom in humus-bed conditions it becomes a much larger plant.

Paraquilegia anemonoides
(**Gavin Moore**) was awarded the Millennium Cup as the best plant in “C” section; this is quite a challenging plant for a “beginner” and was a very worthy winner in this section. I always enjoy seeing 2nd generation exhibitors meeting with success; Gavin is of course the son of your Editor.



The five nurseries selling plants at the show (including Aberconwy) did a roaring trade and hopefully many of the purchased plants will in future appear on the show bench.

Harold McBride

Ulster AGS Seventieth Anniversary Show, 2009

On 25 April the Ulster group staged their seventieth Show which proved an unqualified success with the benches packed with a diverse array of very fine plants. After a week of rather damp weather the sun shone and brought a sparkle to the lovely grounds of Greenmount campus. The fine weather also tempted a large number of visitors to the Show, hopefully reversing the decline in the number of visitors in recent years. As a result both the group plant sale and the commercial sellers had a very good day.

To mark the prestigious occasion the Joint Rock Garden Plant Committee of the RHS met in conjunction with the show and considered some eighteen plants for award. Six members of the committee, augmented by three judges from Ulster and three from Dublin, under the direction of **Ray Drew** made a formidable judging team. The standard of entries was high and in many classes the judges faced difficult decisions.



Pinguicula grandiflora (photo: Heather Smith)

Harold McBride of the Ulster group had clearly made a determined effort to ensure that the benches would be graced by some spectacular plants. His large pans of *Pinguicula grandiflora*, *Androsace sarmentosa*, *A. studiosorum* 'Doksa' and two forms of *Anemone trullifolia* were greatly admired. Harold was awarded

Certificates of Merit for the first two. I was particularly taken by the two anemones, which are the result of crosses Harold has made between *A. trullifolia* and *A. obtusiloba*; one exhibited as *A. trullifolia* 'Cream Form' and the other as *A. trullifolia* \times *obtusiloba* (yellow form). The latter was particularly attractive with its bi-coloured blue and white flowers. Harold also won the Festival of Britain (Northern Ireland) Trophy for class 2 (3 pans rock plants distinct) as well as the Phebe Anderson Trophy for class 62 (3 pans rock plants raised from seed).

Anemone thalictroides 'Oscar Schoaf', shown by **Susan Tindall** was a splendid example of this species as was Susan's large *Daphne petraea* 'Grandiflora' and her impeccable *Celmisia semicordata* which was judged the best plant from Australasia.

Liam Byrne from Dublin won the Cooke Cup for the most first prize points in the open section. Liam was also awarded a Certificate of Merit for his lovely *Ramonda myconi*, grown from seed, a Farrer Medal winner in Dublin a couple of years ago. His *Shortia soldanelloides* was also much admired.

The Eightieth Anniversary award and the SRGC Quaich for the best plant in a pan not exceeding 19 cm was awarded to another lovely Shortia, *S.* \times 'Leona', exhibited by **Frank Walsh**. Frank grows his plant in peaty compost in a pot which is kept in a shaded frame.

Lionel Clarkson from Blackpool won the E. B. Andersen prize for his fine six pan entry in class 38.

Ulster growers are well known for their success in growing ericaceous plants and the impressive specimen of *Cassiope selaginoides* exhibited by **George and Pat Gordon** provided ample evidence of this.

Bob Gordon's well flowered *Veronica bombycina* var. *bolcardaghensis*, a plant I find quite difficult, stood out. Bob grows it in his alpine house in a gritty compost in a plastic pot. He keeps it quite dry in winter, watering only when growth is evident in early spring.

Primula hardeliana shown by **Ian Christie** from Scotland was new to many of us, including this writer, and provoked considerable discussion.

The Farrer Medal was awarded to *Primula bracteata* (**Billy Moore**). This primula was seen by Kingdon-Ward at 3300-3700 m in Sichuan growing 'on the driest barest limestone cliffs', a clue to its successful cultivation. It is an alpine house plant and needs a very gritty compost and great care with watering. It is a variable species both in flower colour and proportion of flowers to foliage but the award plant is typical of the species.



Primula bracteata (photo: Heather Smith)

Miriam Healy from Dublin won the J. A. E. Hill Trophy for the most first prize points in section B and her very attractive *Rhododendron impeditum album* was adjudged the best plant in that section.

It was good to see strong entries in section C where **Kay McDowell** of Limavady won the award for the most first prize points in that section. The award for the best plant in flower in section C went to **Paddy Smith** from Navan for his well grown exhibit of *Aquilegia viridiflora*. The award for the best pan of

Ericaceae in section C went to **Gavin Moore**, Dublin, for his *Rhododendron impeditum* in its more usual blue colour.

The artistic section was impressive and very competitive. The John McWhirter award for most first prize points in the photographic section went to local photographers, **Joan and Liam McCaughey**, while the Muriel Hodgman Art award was won by **Kathleen Baker**, Llanarthney, for the most first prize points in the Art section.

A display of new Irish primula hybrids by **Joe Kennedy**, Ballycastle was awarded a Bronze Medal.

A very successful show was celebrated by a special seventieth anniversary reception and dinner held in the stately surrounds of Stormont Castle. Congratulations are due to **Pat Crossley**, the indefatigable Show Secretary, and her team for all the hard work that ensured that everything ran so smoothly.

Billy Moore

OUR FLORAL HERITAGE

In his editorial in the last newsletter our editor, Billy Moore asked what contribution the Group had made to the conservation of our native and rare plants. I strolled around my very tiny garden to see what Irish plants I was growing. It brought me back to the 1940s when as a young boy walking the meadows of my native county (which is part of the limestone central plain of Ireland) I was fascinated by the flowers and insects there. Dotted all through the grasses there were cornflowers, cowslips, hawkweeds, harebells, birds foot trefoil, buttercups, pink and white flowers of clover and many others. On a sunny day you're greeted by the hum of insects, grasshoppers, bumblebees, hover flies, ladybirds, dragonflies, etc.

The most impressive of the summer visitors were the butterflies, the common blue, the small blue, red admirals, peacocks, painted ladies, small and large tortoiseshells, and it was a delight watching them glide gracefully from flower to flower. Alas, the same



meadows are no more due to the herbicides and artificial fertilizers used in intensive farming. My interest in flowers is intimately linked to my boyhood forays into those meadows.

Of all flowers primulas take pride of place with me. In the springtime garden they are so bright and cheerful and provide such lovely colour. Our own two native primulas are among the gems of the genus, *P. veris* the cowslip and my favourite, *P. vulgaris*, the primrose. I am surprised that more primulas of Irish origin are not grown in our gardens for they are so easy. With its delightful contrast of purple foliage and mauve flowers *P. 'Garryarde Guinevere'* is a jewel. *P. 'Ballawley Purple'* carries its colour in its name with deep purple flowers. With its deep green foliage and

pale yellow flowers *P.* 'Lady Greer' is another delightful primula. In the mid-1980s I received from **Helen Dillon** *P.* 'Rufus'. In the European primula section of the AGS shows this plant won many firsts for me and it is a very good garden plant with pale green foliage and deep red flowers.

The charming wood anemones, *Anemone nemorosa*, are easy plants to grow and please. You can grow them under trees, shrubs or in the open garden. I grow *A.* 'Lady Doneraile' which bears large white flowers and *A. robinsoniana*, with delicate blue flowers.

Viola 'Molly Sanderson', named after that wonderful Irish gardener, is a terrific plant. Penstemons I love, and one of my favourites is *P.* 'Evelyn' with its pink flowers. It originated in Slieve Donard Nursery. Found in a garden in Rathfarnham and distributed by the National Botanic Garden in the 1980s was *Omphalodes* 'Starry Eyes'. The rim of the flowers is a very pale blue with a star shaped blue centre.

A campanula found in Tully Nursery by its manager W.H. Paine and named after him is a super garden plant. All along the growths that come from the centre are starry blue flowers with a white centre.

Another great plant is *Galanthus* 'Straffan'. It was spotted by the eighty-year-old head gardener of Straffan House. Mature bulbs carry two flowers, the main flower being taller and larger than the secondary one. *Aquilegia* 'William Guinness' with its black and white flowers is alleged to have come from Beech Park garden. I grew a very similar aquilegia called 'Magpie' a number of years ago. The present *A.* 'William Guinness' I grow is from seed I got from our editor.

While on holidays in Cumbria I visited a garden centre in the Lake District where I bought a bergenian named 'Helen Dillon'. With a name like that I thought I could not go wrong. How right I was because its upright leaves are beetroot red from October to April followed by pink flowers. It is now renamed *B. purpurascens* 'Irish Crimson'.

Finally the last flower I grow with Irish connections is from the Burren. *Gentiana verna* with flowers of the deepest blue. I find it not long-lived and I have to keep it going by seed. This is just one of the stunning flowers that are found in that most extraordinary district called the Burren. It is unique in Europe and is indeed a wonderful part of our floral heritage.

Liam Byrne

REVIEW OF RECENT GROUP EVENTS

AGM and '60°-70° North – Plants from the Woodlands and Gardens of Finland' by Ciaran Burke

Our 2009 season started as usual with our AGM. Our Secretary, **Joan Carvill**, reported on the past year's activities highlighting our visit to Lissadell and another fascinating weekend at Termonfeckin with **Robert Rolfe**, **Peter Korn** and **Martin Walsh** as speakers.

The Treasurer, **Tessa Dagge**, reported on our satisfactory finances despite the deficit recorded for 2008 and the Chairman thanked the committee, who were re-elected *en bloc*, for their work. **Jamie Chambers** as webmaster is doing sterling work with our website, which is updated regularly and well worth a browse.

Ciaran Burke followed the AGM formalities with a lively talk about his trip to Finland:

When one thinks of Finland the words cold and dark come to mind. In fact it is extremely cold in winter - down to -30°C at times. Plants and people



have to survive this. The growing season is short: spring comes in May and winter returns in September. Ciaran began with a picture of a beautiful red rose, *Rosa 'Flammentanz'* – the only rose that survives the Finnish winter. The countryside is mostly forest – Ciaran described Finland as a forest with spaces cut out for people to live in. Forests consist mostly of pine and birch, with birch having a better survival rate nearer the Arctic Circle.

The Gulf of Bothnia lies between Sweden and Finland. It is the most northerly end of the Baltic with a high proportion of fresh water. While this enables trees to grow close to the water's edge, it also causes the sea to freeze over for many months of the year.

In the south of Finland, around Hanko, sand banks form and dunes give large areas of very sandy soil. Human usage breaks this down very easily and many areas have their plant population protected by the use of boardwalks. The forests are very light and airy compared to our dark eerie pinewoods, allowing woodland plants like *Paris quadrifolia*, *Oxalis acetocella*, small violas and some sedums to grow under them. There are also large areas covered in lichens and moss. *Calluna vulgaris* is the only species of heather to survive and there are no hollies or ivies and fewer grass species. Brambles find it too cold in winter, but many other species of *Rubus* exist instead. These are important in August as many have edible fruits and Finns are inveterate berry eaters! Whole families go out berry picking and fungi collecting. They can walk and collect berries anywhere – there are different trespass laws in Finland! Thus in August/September there are large berry stalls at local markets. Red, black and blue including Cloudberry, *Rubus chamaemorus*, Blueberry, *Vaccinium sp.* and Bearberry, *Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*. Sea buckthorn, *Hippophae rhamnoides*, is found along the coast near Malpe and has very high content of Vitamin C – 6 times higher than an orange and omega oils.

In the large lakeland in the centre of Finland, *Ionoceras* have edible fruit. In the marshy areas there are sheets of *Parnassia palustris*, bog cotton, also *Drosera rotundifolia* and *Pinguicula grandiflora* survive the winter temperatures here.

Above the Arctic Circle, ground is hilly, typically tundra, lapland, reindeer and mosquitoes. Trees are few, usually birch and low growing junipers. Typical low alpine here are *Vaccinium spp.*, *Arctostaphylos*, *Diapensia lapponica*, *Linnaea borealis* and *Phyllodoce*.

In the garden context, Koskinen is a well protected garden with many *Clematis* species especially the viticella group. Very little grass is grown as it is difficult to keep in the winter but *Heucheras*, *Ligularias* and *Hemerocallis citrina* and even a large plantain, *Plantago maximus* do well. *Actinidia* was a surprising survivor of the cold.

One advantage of the cold weather as far as Hostas are concerned is that slugs do not survive in these low temperatures! Some

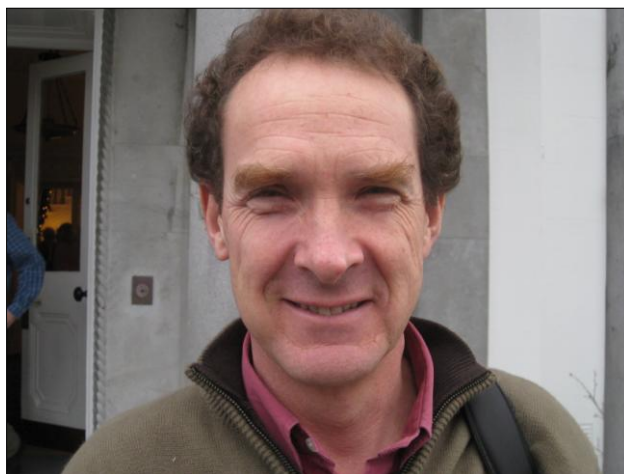
gardens are experimenting with pieris, some rhododendron species, shrub roses and acers.

Ciaran and his Finnish partner, Hanna, eventually made it to the Arctic Ocean (just into Norway) and had the traditional dip in the sea followed by a welcome sauna – we had pictures to prove it! His beautifully drawn map made it very easy to follow his route and enhanced a fascinating insight into a country I knew very little about – especially its plants.

Val Keegan

My Garden – Squeezing a Quart into a Pint Pot by Tony Rymer

Attending Tony Rymer's talk was an adventure in more ways than one. By 6 pm on the night of the lecture (5 February) the forecast looked bleak, with snow on the ground and hard frosts forecast. I fielded a number of



apologetic calls, before deciding that I'd risk the trip out to the 'Bots' from Sandycove. And of course, as is almost always the way, the roads were well clear of both traffic and ice, and stayed that way all evening. What a pity. Many of our less-experienced members would have found the lecture as approachable as I did (I even recognized the names of several plants).

I always enjoy hearing people talk about developing a new garden: there's such a lot to be learned in finding out how they overcame natural difficulties, what plants they chose and how successful these were. Tony's talk certainly didn't disappoint. When he retired eleven years ago he set about developing a new garden around the house to which he moved. Of course the suitability of the site was

a major factor in this decision, and he began with good conditions, on a south-west facing slope with neutral soil, largely uncultivated. Some might disagree with his definition of 'pint-sized' in relation to gardens - at a quarter of an acre he has plenty to occupy him, but then one's ambitions always exceed the space available.

Having the foresight to keep a record of the garden as it developed, Tony was able to show us all phases of development of the various beds (rockery, shaded, marshy, moraine, peat and pond), from construction to blooming completion, throughout the seasons. I envied him his local source of limestone, but no doubt the presence of an old quarry over the road also played a part in his site selection. I came away with a list of lovely plants to attempt, none of them too daunting for a beginner, amongst them *Crocus flavus*, the beautifully simple yellow crocus which he grew from AGS seed, and *Callianthemum anemonoides*.

Cultivation tips abounded - give your *Sternbergia* a hot and dry summer for good flowers (I know, I know), *Narcissus cyclamineus* likes to be wet, *Silene schafta* does better with a regular haircut - together with his observations of the unexpected - *Ophrys bombyliflora* establishing itself by chance, *Platycodon grandiflorum* springing up from some old soil. He discussed problems too, but I couldn't take too seriously his complaint that in his moraine bed *Pulsatillas* were "almost a nuisance".

Jamie Chambers

Annual Lunch – 7 February

Tradition has it that the Saturday of the Annual Lunch at the "George" is always fine and sunny, and so it was again this year. Another tradition is that we present awards won at the annual A.G.S. Show. **Liam Byrne** was presented with the Sewell Medal for his superb six pan entry in the Open Section, and **Miriam Healy** won an A.G.S. Medal for her six pan entry in B. Section.

After a good lunch, **Miriam Cotter's** talk on "Moisture-loving Alpines" gave us a great kick-start to the gardening year. She explained that the high moisture in the garden at Cedar Lodge is due to the level of the water table rather than any excessive rainfall in Cork. Plants with 'Oomph' is her gardening philosophy and this is



apparent in this garden, a garden for all the seasons, starting off with *Narcissus bulbocodium*, and ending the year with *Iris unguicularis*. Miriam is particularly interested in bulbs and grows a wide variety, including fritillaria, calachortus, cyclamen, sternbergia, erythronium, and above all, her favourites, the tulip family.

Not many plantspeople allow their small children a free run of the garden, but Miriam actively encourages her family and provides for them by creating special paths and ways to dens in corners, hidey holes under trees and so on. The photographic tour of her garden ended with a super 'Oomph' display of the vibrant combination of *Kniphofia* 'Light of the World', *Dahlia* 'Murdoch', *Zantedeschia* 'Mango' and *Helenium* 'Moorheim Beauty'.

Joan Carvill

Local Show, Workshop and Members' Plant Sale

The pleasant spring afternoon of Saturday, 7 February gave a lift to this event after the rather cold and miserable winter that we had been enduring up to this. There was a good attendance at our Stillorgan venue and entries for the various classes were up on previous years. The competition was keen and the quality of the plants well up to standard. **Noelle Ann Curran** was awarded the Local Show Medal for achieving most points in the show and the Margaret Orsi Trophy for the best plant went to **George Sevastopulo's** lovely *Erythronium oregonum* var. *leucandrum*. The full results are available on the website.

There were also a number of non-competitive displays which attracted much interest.

There was a good selection of alpine and other plants for sale and they disappeared rapidly.

A novel idea at this year's show was the provision of seven microscopes, courtesy of George. This innovation proved very popular and members had the opportunity to examine plant material in great detail.

The event was most enjoyable and provided attendees with an excellent opportunity to chat about plants and other matters with like-minded people. The afternoon concluded very pleasantly with tea and biscuits all round.

Bulbs through the Seasons – by Paul Cutler.

On 26 March we were treated to a very informative presentation by Paul Cutler, Head Gardener at Altamont Gardens, Ballon, Co Carlow. It is very obvious that Paul has a great passion for and extensive knowledge of the subject of growing bulbs. The first part of his presentation was a practical demonstration on the different types of what are loosely termed 'bulbs'. By use of an illustrated chart he outlined the differences.



A true bulb consists of several layers of leaves with the flower embryo in the centre all attached to the basal plate – demonstrated by a sliced narcissus.

A corm is a complete stem – represented by a crocus.

A tuber is a swollen root – examples being a cyclamen or an orchid.

A rhizome is an underground stem extending to a root – an example being a juno iris.

Paul then explained that plants are either monocot or dicot – a monocot has a single seed leaf (narcissus) and a dicot has two (e.g., Primulaceae). The most essential part of a bulb in order for it to survive and multiply is the basal plate from where all the roots extend. Bulbs may be increased more rapidly by a technique known as ‘twin-scaling’, i.e., by careful division into several sections with a part of the basal plate attached to each.

Paul also brought several pots of bulbs in flower from his own collection as a display, including cyclamen, narcissi and juno iris.

He moved into the second part of his presentation by firstly showing us several of his collection of books that are ‘must haves’ for the serious bulb grower. This led us into a show of slides, demonstrating his expert photography and his extensive travels to the native habitats of various bulbs. He suggested that to grow many of the more challenging species successfully it is best to know the habitat and soil conditions they experience in the wild. All bulbs are storage organs for food to survive from one season to the next. Several of his slides demonstrated this and made reference to woodland plants such as *Cyclamen purpurascens*, trilliums and bluebells that put on a great show of flowers and a spurt of growth early in the season before the canopy of tree leaves blocks off the essential light and the bulbs become dormant. Other bulbs such as fritillaria grow in differing habitats and several have a short growing season. They start into growth as soon as snow melt water becomes available and swiftly produce their foliage, flowers and set seed before being baked in summer sunshine to be followed by a long covering of winter snow for up to six months. However many fritillaria like it cool and damp and thrive in Irish gardens.

When it comes to choice of clay or plastic pots Paul has found varying success with both depending on the moisture requirements of the bulb type. In his experience, *Narcissus bulbocodium* thrives better in a plastic pot while *N. watieri* likes a clay pot with added

grit in the compost for good drainage. *Cyclamen graecum* flowers better when grown in clay and *C. rhodium* prefers plastic.

On the choice of composts, Paul has a flexible approach generally based on use of good non-sterilized friable soil from the vegetable garden. Soil is sieved and proportioned in equal parts with peat or leafmould and 6 mm grit modified according to drainage requirements. Fertilizer is only added for specific gross feeders. He feeds his bulbs in growth with a tomato fertilizer intermittently.

As Paul presented his slides, he gave us more additional information related to the various species including:

Snowdrops – at Altamont they grow very well mulched with leafmould or spent hops.

Eranthis ‘Guinea Gold’ is a small tuber that will naturalize in short grass in damp conditions.

Lecojum vernum and its beautiful subspecies *carpathicum* with yellow tips thrive in Altamont and like damp conditions also.

Narcissus cyclamineus grows best in mossy damp conditions in partial shade; however its hybrids including ‘February Gold’ are less demanding. *N. bulbocodium* also prefers damp soil.

Crown Imperial Fritillaria grow well in Irish gardens, they are gross feeders and should be fed annually to maintain flowering. *Lilium regale* is another gross feeder.

Tulips and *Iris reticulata* are best planted deeply in sandy soil in a raised bed in sunny conditions.

Juno irises should be started into growth in January by careful watering, increasing the frequency as growth progresses. Liquid feed every second week. Re-pot every third or fourth year by incorporating some farmyard manure and grit in bottom of pot. Avoid watering during cold spells.

Paul showed us slides of the recently replaced Alpine House at Wisley, packed with treasured alpines where he had worked for four years earlier in his career before moving to County Carlow and to his

present position at Altamont. Certainly, two very desirable positions to hold! For those of us who are interested in growing from seed, Paul also brought some packets of home saved seeds for us to try.

Paddy Smith

Flowers of the Italian Dolomites by Dr John Richards

On 16 April at the NBG a large crowd turned out to hear John Richards talk about one of his favourite mountain areas. John suggested the town of *Selva* (1600 m) as a good base for exploring the central western Dolomites, i.e., the *Gruppo di Sella*, the mountains encircled by the four passes: *Gardena*, *Sella*, *Pordoi* and *Campolungo*. It is an easy area to get around either by car or using the local buses. There are also plenty of ski-lifts available to reach the higher zones.

Having once been part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire German is spoken here as well as Italian and the local dialect Ladine. It is an area of dolomitic limestone, rich in meadows cut by hand in early July after which time the cattle are released on the grassland.



We followed John on his suggested tour starting in the *Vallelunga* with a hike uphill towards Wolkenstein Castle to see particularly *Physoplexis comosa* or Devil's Claw on the cliffs by the castle ruins. He warned us that it was a plant beloved by slugs and snails. This area is also very good for orchids, the annual *Gentiana utriculosa* and *Polygala chamaebuxus* including the less common red form. Going on through the forest we saw *Clematis alpina* scrambling through shrubs and *Cypripedium calceolus*, the Lady's Slipper Orchid, hiding in the scrub. We came out into the meadows and scree to see *Rhododendron hirsutum*, *Rhodothamnus chamaecistus*, *Gentiana clusii* and the white flowered insectivorous *Pinguicula alpina*. The scent of

Daphne striata, a difficult plant to grow in cultivation, was everywhere. *Dryas octopetala* was common and he even found one pink flower, the only one he ever saw. Further on we saw *Campanula carnica* and right at the top *Ranunculus bilobus* and *Gentiana brachyphylla*, also the white form. This is the best site for *G. tergestina*. At least six spring gentians grow in that area! He showed one slide of *Soldanella alpina*, the white *S. minima* and *S. pusilla* all growing together, apparently very unusual.

On another walk, at the Gardena Pass, we saw *Thlaspi rotundifolium*. We were taken from there down through the meadows to see *Primula balbisii*. *P. auricula* grows north of the Alps but the two types are not as closely related as previously thought. *Lilium bulbiferum* abounds in these meadows also.

The Sella Pass, between the *Gruppo di Sella* and the *Sassolungo*, is again an area of lovely meadows with an interesting collection of large boulders called *Steinerstadt* or Rock City. These are home to many chasmophyte specialities, including the lovely *Paederota bonarata*. *Pedicularis rosea* grows here on rock although it is a parasitic plant. Walking SW towards the isolated peak, *Rodella*, we saw high level meadows with hosts of golden *Trollius europaeus* and *Pulsatilla alpina*. On *Rodella* there was another large spread of *Thlaspi rotundifolia*, this time with a large brown patch in the centre which John pointed out so that the growers of this plant would not be too upset should they see their specimens doing the same!

He also covered the Pordoi Pass which he feels is probably the best single site in the pre-Alps for flowers. Going east by the Fedaia Dam the rock becomes volcanic and acidic. Here *Primula minima* and *P. halleri* grow alongside John's favourite alpine *Pulsatilla vernalis*. From there he took us up to the top of the ridge to find the King of the Mountains, *Eritrichium nanum*. 'There are few happinesses in life like that which comes from contemplating him (*Eritrichium*) on his native grey rocks, in the regal splendour of his silver fur and azure blossom' (Reginald Farrer).

We finished with a trip to the West side of Lake Garda, Mt. Tremalzo (where George and I try to go every year to pay homage to *Daphne petraea*), the *Corna Blacca* and *Croce Domini*, all wonderfully floriferous sites.

At the end of the evening I just wanted to hop on a plane and be off again to revisit the area which we had explored on our first mountain holiday and judging by the murmuring all around me a lot of other people wished to do the same. A delightful talk about a lovely area and lot of little cultural tips as well.

Rose Sevastopulo

Visit to Dargle Cottage Garden

Our Group's visit to Dargle Cottage Garden in Enniskerry last October, on a typical Irish "soft day" with light showers, was attended by about twenty members. However on 2 May this year what a turnout we had – at least forty people arrived to a really colourful and changed garden.



When we were driving towards the gates I had this daunting feeling that revisiting a "treasured memory" is sometimes a mistake and that it would be just a letdown. How wrong I was. Inside the gates was the first change. A new water feature had been installed surrounded by a rockery which was being planted, hopefully with plenty of alpine.

As we arrived at the car park the first tree to catch our eyes was an amazing *Davidia involucrata* commonly called the 'Handkerchief Tree' aptly named because the large white bracts hang down and

flutter in the breeze like handkerchiefs. It is sometimes called the Ghost Tree.

In October there was an air of the garden settling down for the winter but this time one was met with a haze of almost candyfloss colours as we looked towards the wide range of blooming Azaleas, Rhododendrons, Camellias and the deep coloured Acers and one had a sense of the garden opening up to the summer ahead.

Once again we had the pleasure of visiting that wonderful and much written about cantilevered summerhouse with the Dargle River still rushing underneath. As we left it we passed a well-planted bed of heathers (white and purple) interspersed with more Azaleas.

In a smaller garden the sight of a carpet of wild garlic might cause heart failure but this garden is large enough to accommodate these extremely attractive white plants sown under emerging *Gunnera* – the combination was excellent – and by the time the *Gunnera* reach maturity the garlic will have been overwhelmed for another season.

As we walked up some steps towards a bright red abstract sculpture, under-planted with ferns, we crossed a very small stream, which in October was very noticeable, but now was totally covered by a wonderful display of *Lysichiton* (commonly known as Skunk Cabbage) with their large bright yellow spathes.

Back down to the bridge over the Dargle River we passed **Patrick O'Reilly's** sculpture *Flight* (my favourite sculpture) and we had full view of the main house. Last October the walls were clothed in the bright red of Virginia Creeper but in May there was a sheen of gold. On closer inspection we found it was *Rosa banksiae lutea*. These thumb sized yellow double roses covered one entire wall and alongside it was the lovely white *banksiae* – what a welcome at your front door every day!

Once again throughout this visit the very pleasant and affable head gardener, **David Koning** guided us in his quiet unhurried way and was happy to chat to all and answer endless questions.

My last memory of this garden, as I said goodbye to David in the car park, was of **Joan Carvill** driving by in her red Honda sports car and we both marveled at her stamina and her style. Little did we know then that within a few short weeks she would no longer be with us, so as I write this short report I keep remembering, with a mixture of sadness for her loss and also of delight for the friendship I had with her, that wonderful woman who organized both these garden visits and who was a founder member of the Group. She will be sadly missed. *Ar dheis Dé go raibh a anam dilis.*

Mary O'Neill Byrne

**On Top, but Never in Control – Tales from a Small Garden
by Timothy Walker, Thursday 7 May - joint with the I.G.P.S.**

Having heard Timothy speak on a number of occasions through the PlantNet group, I was looking forward to his talk. He spoke only of his own small garden adjacent to the Oxford Botanic Gardens. It was an easy and very relaxed talk and certainly did not tax the brain too much but he did give a few tips some of which were excellent. The first was to look more closely at our plants, look at the individual parts rather than the plant as a whole. Demonstrating this maxim with his first question: could anyone identify the plant in the first slide (in which he only showed the flower without its coloured bracts)? Many in attendance had some sense of recognition but could they name the plant? Luckily for us we were not let down when **Stephen Butler** came up with the right answer: *Puya sp.*, much to the amazement of Timothy. We were off to a good start, but alas we failed the last question -the subject was *Gunnera*- a plant everyone knows but again once the flowering panicle was isolated from its leaves, all sat dumbstruck. These queries reminded me of another lecture given by **Philip Jacob** on the flowers in his garden. Philip loves photography and he too isolated the flowers to show their beauty, the stamens, the stigma and the markings often within the petals.

The second most important tip was to take cuttings when they are offered. All too often we wait until it is the correct time and then, as usually happens, the prospective donor lives too far away and the all important letter of request is never written.

He did mention plants including some euphorbias, *E. rigida* and *E. commutata*. Alas he did not look over the garden fence as the Botanic Gardens has a wonderful collection of euphorbias and in fact is one of the N.C.C.P.G. collection holders. I would have loved to have seen the collection *en masse*. Were they planted all together or were they scattered round the garden to show off their true beauty? For me the latter method is much better for all collections and I am certain encourages more people to take an interest in the species. Other plants were *Wisteria floribunda* 'Royal Purple', *Papaver orientalis* 'Patty's Plum', *Podophyllum pleianthum*, *Rosa* 'Gardener's Pink', *Astrantia major*, *Dictamnus albus* and *Allium* 'Globe Maitre'. From these few, it will be noted that nothing was rare and Timothy did emphasize that all plants were from nurseries and easily available.

Anne James

Garden Visit

We visited **Billy and Anne Moore's** garden on 23 May, a little saddened as we had attended the funeral service for **Joan Carvill** that morning. However it was felt that it would have been contrary to Joan's lifelong style to cancel the visit.

Arriving in the front garden, attention was caught first, not by alpines, but by the beautiful bark of a *Prunus serrula* and an *Acer griseum*, contrasting and complementing each other; these were underplanted with various shrubs,



ferns, and a particularly good yellow form of *Trillium luteum*. This woodland mixture, **Gavin** (Anne and Billy's son) told us, has replaced a grass lawn which eventually could not compete with the tree roots. Our attention was taken away from the plants by meeting and chatting to various members of the Dublin Group until Gavin, who seems to have inherited the family alpine genes, directed us through the house to the back garden.

This is a garden which successfully blends two diverse plant interests. It is a woodland garden, skilfully laid out so that as you walk along one of the two grass paths into the back garden between the side borders and long central bed, the foliage of the eclectic mix of trees, shrubs and herbaceous plants screens the different areas from immediate view, and there is again the beautiful bark of an *Acer griseum* in the foreground. It is also, and equally successfully, a showcase for Billy's collection of alpinists.

Just on entering the garden everyone stopped to admire the *roscoea*, in perfect condition, growing among other choice alpinists in the raised bed. Nearby a rather sinister *Arisaema thunbergii* also caused comment as did the bright red tubular flowers of *Ribes speciosum*, grown against the shelter of a wall.

I have always been impressed with the propagating skills of AGS members like Billy and **Harold McBride** who had travelled down with us. The secret is obviously in the meticulous care given to every plant - in Billy's case in a carefully constructed wooden propagating unit, followed by a large area at the rear of the garden, and for the *crème de la crème* - the alpine house. While there were many worthy plants there to draw envy, I lusted after a choice *Lewisia rediva* var. *minor*.

As we all wove our way round the various beds, filled with rhododendrons, aquilegias, alliums, thalictrums, an unusual large white silene (*S. fimbriata*)- to name but a very few - and carefully skirting a vicious aciphylla with 8 cm spines, we stopped to chat and share our admiration with our Dublin friends. It is interesting

to compare the diverse plants we each like and to be introduced to new plants.

The weather was kind and we all enjoyed the peace of the garden over a glass of wine and were tempted by Anne's delicious *canapés*. Somehow it all seemed a fitting end to a day when we all remembered a lovely person in Joan Carvill, who did so much to bring alpine lovers from all over Ireland together. Many thanks to Anne, Billy and Gavin for their kindness and hospitality in making it all possible and sharing their home and garden with us.

Liam & Joan McCaughey

25th Anniversary Midsummer Party

There was a fine turnout at the National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin, on the evening of 20 June for the party to celebrate the Group's 25th anniversary. The attendance consisted of members of the Group, members of the Ulster Group and invited guests. It was a lovely evening and the NBG proved to be an ideal setting for the event. Our thanks to the NBG's Director, **Dr Peter**



Wyse Jackson and his staff for accommodating us.

Our chairman **Val Keegan** presided over the evening with great aplomb. Background music was provided when appropriate by **Peter O'Callaghan**.

A central ceremony was the planting in the NBG of a silver birch, *Betula jaquemontii* 'Trinity College', an Irish cultivar. This tree was presented to us by the Ulster Group and was planted by **Bob Gordon** their president, pictured above with **Michael Higgins** of the NBG and a member of the Group's Committee.

Dr Wyse Jackson addressed the assembled guests and spoke of the close links between the Dublin Group and the NBG down through the years. He expressed the hope that these links would strengthen in the years ahead.

A beautiful cake masquerading as a tufa trough (pictured on back cover) had been prepared for the occasion by **Rose Sevastopulo**. The cake was much admired but in due course went the way of all cakes.



Jamie Chambers had put together a display of photographs taken over the years which was of considerable interest. He had also set up a digital slide presentation, again of photographs chronicling our first twenty-five years.

In recognition of the tremendous support given to the Group from the very beginning by **Helen Dillon**, (pictured above with Val Keegan) she was presented with honorary life membership.

Most of the work in preparation for this event had been done by **Joan Carvill** right up to the time of her death. She had been very much looking forward to the party and was represented on the evening by her daughter **Julie**.



Carl cuts the cake under Valerie's watchful eye..

Carl Dacus, a founder member of the Group reminisced about the early years and a most enjoyable evening closed with a champagne toast (the champagne was provided by an anonymous donor).

Billy Moore

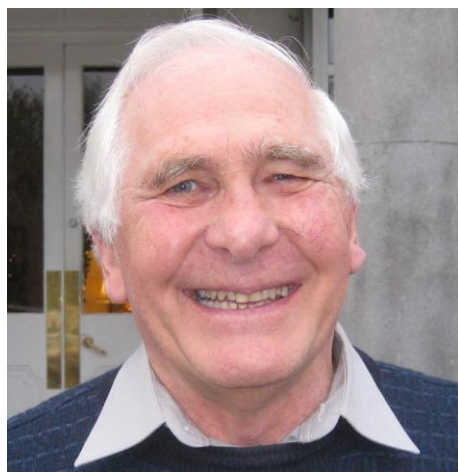
BOOK REVIEW

***The Orchids of Ireland* by Tom Curtis and Robert Thompson, 2009, National Museums, Northern Ireland, 160 pp. £ 20. Available widely from bookshops.**

Blousy and big and the bigger and more blousy the better would reflect the tastes of many orchid lovers. The beauty of the native Irish orchids is of a more diminutive and subtle nature. Our island is not particularly well endowed with members of the family and this is all the more reason to know and treasure what we have. The native Irish species are not often grown in the gardens of even the keenest plantsmen. *Dactylorhiza elata* which is most often seen here in the form 'Glasnevin' is not native.

Dr Tom Curtis is a botanist who has been studying the native flora of Ireland for 35 years and this new book with photographs by **Robert Thompson** is a distillation of his knowledge of the orchid family.

Although it is a work of scholarship it will appeal to the general reader and particularly those with an interest in our native flora or who grow some terrestrial orchid species and their hybrids.



As gardeners we probably would not be so concerned with the precise naming of the species as the author. In all thirty seven species and subspecies are described and illustrated. Each species is accompanied by its English and in most cases its Irish name. A long introduction deals with the structure of the flowers clearly indicating those features which distinguish the orchid family, a most useful explanation from which even very experienced gardeners could benefit. The complexities of orchid pollination were of particular interest to me. An equally interesting dissertation on habitat is followed by a section on conservation. Each species is

then dealt with in detail with specific information to aid identification and useful observations on variability and habitats. The photography is of the highest standard and the printing is excellent. Each species is shown in the wild followed by beautiful and striking pictures in close-up to aid identification. There is also an accompanying distribution map.

The book is a handy sized hard back at a modest price and is a most welcome addition to the small number of books devoted to the Irish flora. I hope that in the future Dr Curtis has the opportunity to bring us an equally scholarly and readable work on broader aspects of our native plants.

Dermot Kehoe

FIXTURES

Saturday, 29 August, 2.30 to 4.30 pm. Garden visit to **Jean Van der Lee**, 6 Glenamuck Cottages, Carrickmines, Dublin 18. (From M50 take J15 to Kilternan, past Park Shopping Centre and about half-way to Enniskerry Road turn left into Glenamuck Cottages.)

Saturday, 19 September, 2.30 to 4.30. Members' Show and Workshop.

Thursday, 24 September, 8 pm. Oliver Schurmann, 'Fascination - Show Gardens'. St Brigid's Parish Centre, Stillorgan. Oliver is bringing plants for sale.

Thursday, 1 October, 8 pm. Magnus Lidén, 'Corydalis, Bleeding Hearts and their Relatives'. NBG, Glasnevin.

Friday 20 to Sunday 22 November. 25th Alpine Weekend, Termonfeckin. Speakers: **Jim Almond, Susan Band, George Sevastopulo** and **Henry and Margaret Taylor**. See detailed programme and booking information.

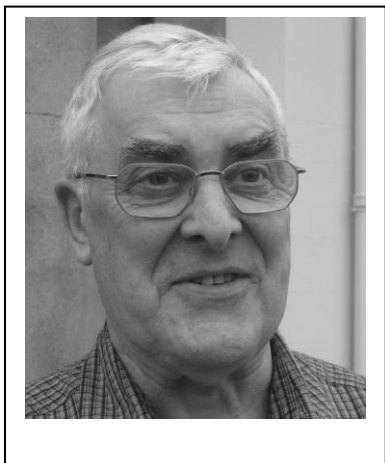
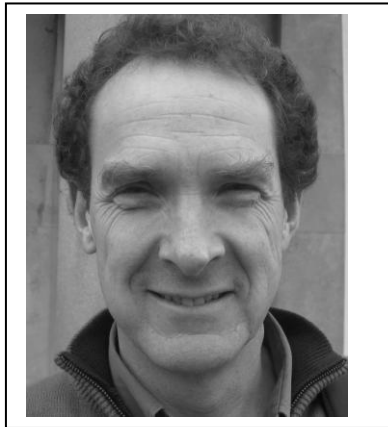
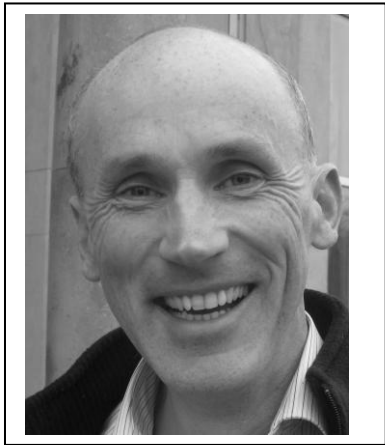
Thursday, 10 December, 8 pm. 'A Christmas Miscellany'. St. Brigid's Parish Centre, Stillorgan.

NOTES

OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE

| | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Chairman and Show Secretary: | Val Keegan |
| Hon. Secretary (Acting): | Mary O'Neill-Byrne |
| Hon. Treasurer: | Tessa Dagge |
| Fixtures Secretary: | Martin Walsh |
| Webmaster: | Jamie Chambers |
| Librarian: | Anne-Marie Keoghan |

| | |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|
| Committee Members: | Arthur Dagge |
| | Michael Higgins |
| | Barbara O'Callaghan |



Photos: Val, Mary, Tessa, Martin, Jamie, Anne-Marie, Arthur, Michael, and Barbara.



Above Rose's cake and below Dr Peter Wyse Jackson and Valerie at the 25th Anniversary party. (Photos: Billy Moore)

This newsletter is edited by **Billy Moore** who can be contacted at 32, Braemor Park, Churchtown, Dublin 14. Email: wjmoore@iol.ie.

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