



ALPINE GARDEN SOCIETY

Dublin Group



NEWSLETTER NO. 55 - WINTER 2011

CONTENTS

Editorial-----	3
Alpine Miscellany-----	4
Choice Daisies by Liam Byrne-----	11
Forty Years A Growing - Part 2 - The Plants by Dr Dermot Kehoe-----	14
Review of Recent Group Events-----	19
Book Review by Dr George Sevastopulo-----	39
Fixtures-----	41
Officers and Committee-----	43

Front cover illustration is of *Rheum nobile* and Back Cover, *Corydalis hemidicentra*, (see p. 35) (Photos: Martin Walsh)

EDITORIAL

Being a keen gardener can lead to taking on other complementary hobbies and the one that many gardeners opt for is photography. This is unsurprising because the garden provides so many photo opportunities. Photos are also useful as a record of your garden's development and they will give you much pleasure in years to come. The advent of the digital camera has made photography much more accessible to everybody and much cheaper. For those who have no interest in the finer points of the art, perfectly acceptable images can be obtained using the camera's auto mode. If you want to put a more personal stamp on your pictures most cameras have a huge range of features that you can try.

As well as taking pictures of your plants it is also worth including shots of people whom you associate with your garden. Nowadays it is a source of regret to me that I didn't take more photos of people over the years.

This year we have two events which should be of interest to all photographers irrespective of how expert they consider themselves to be. I refer to the talk on 17 February by that highly experienced botanical photographer **Sidney Clarke**, who as you will see from our list of fixtures, will be giving a talk entitled 'Plant Hunting with a Camera' at the NBG – see also p.6.

A further great opportunity to hone your skills will arise on 15 October when **Jim Almond**, who, while an amateur, is a really fine photographer, will give a full day's workshop in the NBG. There will be a fee of €10 for the workshop and unfortunately participants must be limited to a maximum of twenty. Application forms will be included in the summer mail-out.

We have already had a couple of sessions in the past from **Edwin Davison** who knows all there is to know about photography. Edwin judges the artistic section at our annual Show and also prints the newsletter. I feel certain that we will be calling on Edwin to enlighten us further in the future.

I hope you got some nice pictures of your garden in the snow.

It is my wish that, despite the awful economic situation, all our members will have a happy, healthy and satisfying year in 2011.

ALPINE MISCELLANY

In This Issue

In the second part of his article in which he reminisces on his four gardens **Dermot Kehoe** talks about some notable alpine plants that he has grown over the years. My most regular contributor, **Liam Byrne**, once again contributes one of his excellent practical guides, this time on some choice daisies.

Reports on our fixtures, including mine on another great weekend in Termonfeckin, are included as usual. My sincere thanks to all the contributors.

In asking members to report on events I try not to approach the same people all the time. I know that some of you baulk at the idea of writing a report, but I like to get a view of the lectures from as wide a range of members as possible. Reviews are almost always positive but constructive criticism is welcome also. It would make my job easier if I had a panel of volunteers, and if there are any members who would welcome the opportunity to review a talk I would love to hear from you. This is my tenth newsletter and sometimes I think that they are getting a bit repetitive, although I am probably not the best person to judge. Anyhow in order to try something new I would like to introduce a 'plants wanted' item in the next issue. So, if there is a plant or plants that you have been seeking for some time please let me know. Your request can be anonymous as far as our readers are concerned if you so wish.

Fixtures

Our Programme for 2011 is listed on p.41. It is a varied and interesting list and I hope we can look forward to record attendances at the talks and other events.

On Wednesday (note the day) 19 January we have our **AGM** in Stillorgan. The AGM provides you with an opportunity to express your views on any aspect of the Group's activities and your attendance offers encouragement to the Committee, all of whom work hard to ensure that the Programme offers something of interest to all members, both beginners and more experienced growers, and, of course, to ensure that our events run smoothly.



Primula dryadifolia (see p.35) Photo: Martin Walsh



Corydalis melanocentra (see p.35) Photo: Martin Walsh

The business of the AGM is usually concluded in less than thirty minutes and is followed by a lecture. In January **Brendan Marnell** will be talking about 'Alpine Shrubs – Tall and Small'. Brendan has given us a talk before on the development of his garden and I must say that I found it very instructive and entertaining. He has a terrific garden which I think can lay claim to having the only tufa wall on this island. He is also an expert grower of daphnes and we can be sure that this genus will get a mention in his talk.

On Saturday, 12 February at 12.30 pm our **Annual Lunch** will be at the Royal St George Yacht Club in Dun Laoghaire. This is a very nice social occasion, is always enjoyable and I think you will agree that the 2011 price is not unreasonable. You will find a booking form and further details in your mail-out.

After lunch **Mary Waldron** will speak on 'Gardens in Other Lands', a topic that seems to me ideal for an after lunch talk. Mary gardens in the midlands and is a much sought after speaker. She also contributes articles regularly to *The Irish Garden* and other publications.

On Thursday, 17 February in Glasnevin, **Sidney Clarke** will entertain us with a talk entitled: 'Plant Hunting with a Camera'. Sidney was Principal Photographer for the Royal Botanic garden in Edinburgh for fifteen years until his retirement in 2003. He has travelled widely with his camera and has received several awards for his work. He has also co-authored and/or been the photographer for a number of horticultural publications. Nobody with an interest in taking pictures of plants can afford to miss this talk.

Our **Local Show** takes place in Stillorgan at 2 pm on Saturday, 12 March. As well as the competitive and non-competitive displays of plants there will be a members' plant sale and demonstrations of cultivation techniques as well as tips on showing. This event has been improving significantly in recent years, as has the attendance, so be sure to come along.

Kevin Hughes gave us a memorable talk on woodland plants a few years ago and is back in Glasnevin on Thursday, 24 March at 8 pm to talk to us on 'Trilliums and Associated Flora of South East USA'. Kevin gardens near Salisbury and sells a mouth watering range of rare and unusual plants some of which he will have for sale on the night from 7.30 pm. His nursery was written up by **Roy Lancaster** in the March

2010 issue of the RHS's *Garden*. This talk should not be missed. It is a joint lecture with the **IGPS**.

Our main **AGS Show** will be held as usual in Cabinteely Community School on 9 April at 1.30 pm. This is the flagship event in our calendar at which the general public gets to appreciate the beauty and diversity of alpine plants. In addition to our own plant sale there will be several commercial stalls with lots of gorgeous plants for sale. Refreshments will be available throughout at very modest prices. As the Show Secretary tells us later, we need exhibitors, plants for the plant sale and visitors. Please come and bring as many friends as you can.

Kilmacurragh Arboretum is an offshoot of the NBG, Glasnevin and its Curator, **Seamus O'Brien**, will be in Stillorgan on 21 April at 8 pm to talk about 'Kilmacurragh and the Plant Hunters – 300 Years of History'. Seamus is a passionate plantsman, an experienced lecturer and plant hunter and you can be certain that you will be educated and entertained by this talk.

At Greenmount in Co. Antrim the **Ulster Group** will hold their annual **AGS Show** on Saturday, 7 May. The unusually late date will mean that there should be lots of different plants on the benches. The format is very similar to our own Show and, of course, you all know how interdependent the two shows are. There is always a good attendance of Ulster Group members at our Show and it is important that we reciprocate. You should make every effort to attend as an exhibitor or merely as an observer and remember if you can please bring some plants for the plant sale.

On Saturday, 28 May from 2.30 pm my garden will be open to members. Originally this visit was to be combined with a visit to **Noelle Ann Curran's** garden which is but a stone's throw from mine, but due to a change in Noelle Ann's situation this is no longer possible, so you are stuck with me. It will give you a chance to see my new crevice garden. Refreshments will be available.

We don't normally have a fixture in August but this year on the fourteenth at 1.30 pm sharp we have arranged a visit to the wonderful gardens of sister and brother **June and Jimi Blake** in Blessington, Co. Wicklow. These two gardens are really exceptional. If you have been before you will want to come again, and, if it is your first time, you have a treat in store. There will be an entry charge of €15 to the two gardens

which includes a guided tour and refreshments. We visit Jimi's garden first.

I will provide more details about the remaining fixtures in the summer newsletter.

Away Trip

The Committee has been considering various possibilities for a trip away in May/June but for one reason or another has rejected the options looked at so far. The possibility of a coach trip with one night away to visit gardens in Galway and Clare is now under the microscope, and once it is organized we will let you know the details, by email to members who are on line and by post to everyone else.

The Show

Our Show Secretary, **Val Keegan** has sent me the following:

Coming up to Christmas and with our current icy weather conditions it is very difficult to think of our Alpine Show, but needs must as this is our main communication with you all before the big day!

Last year's Show was a great success with some people dipping their toes into showing for the first time. We will need you all again in 2011 as a number of our recent beginners have moved up into the Open Section. So, as usual, please could we encourage each and every one of you who have not yet entered plants, artwork or photos to produce a couple or more for this year's Show. You really won't regret it.

In the Open Section, there is an intriguing new class: "3 pans rock plants, distinct, all requiring similar cultural conditions. Educational information about 'How and Where to Grow' should be provided." It will be interesting to see how many entries this attracts.

As well as new exhibitors, of course, we also need lots of good plants for the plant sale. There has been a drop in donations in the last couple of years so I would urge you all to try to reverse that trend for 2011.

Finally, the acid test of a successful Show is the number of people who attend. Please come and encourage your family, friends and neighbours to do so as well. It's a great afternoon out for all gardeners.

The Website

Our webmaster, **Jamie Chambers** writes:

You haven't heard much about the website over the last year - my foreign travel put on hold a number of projects - but that doesn't seem to have stopped you (and many others round the world) from using the site. In fact quite the opposite - the November 2010 figures show quite an increase over last year, for example 16,001 hits from visitors (2009: 12,938) and 2,691 sites visiting us (1,327). The analysis our web host provides us with can't always be easily interpreted - this is just the nature of internet traffic I'm afraid, and a fair few of our 'visitors' were 'web spiders' - not genuine visitors. These aren't as creepy as they sound - they are automated programs which visit websites and analyse them for search engines like Google.

Nonetheless, we can be sure that many more real people are visiting us, as we see from the requests for information from the site. For example, I can tell which images are being downloaded - Helen Dillon's *Origanum* 'Barbara Tingey' (Seasonal Focus September 2006) was the most popular in November, since you ask, followed by Val Keegan's *Eranthis hyemalis* (March 2006). The picture of Joan Carvill and Michael Higgins was also often requested.

A number of enquiries come to us from web searches, of which the most popular in November was 'maidenhair spleenwort'. This is a result of the photo I took in the Burren on our last trip there (you'll find it on the Archive page). Just for fun I typed 'maidenhair spleenwort' into Google and was amazed (and flattered!) when up came my picture in the selection of images at the top of the page. Try it now, and also try '*eranthis hyemalis*' - you'll see Val's photo. You'll find that Google Images uses quite a few of our photos in this way - Helen's *origanum* mentioned above, and Billy Moore's *Paeonia cambessedesii* and *Cyclamen hederifolium* among them. But perhaps we shouldn't be surprised - Google is clever enough to figure out that it should show us Irish searchers, Irish pictures. Finally, I was encouraged to see that a number of you had downloaded the summer 1984 Newsletter. I warned you I'd check! That's another project I can restart.

Questions? Ideas? Material? Send them to me at agsinfo@eircom.net, and if you don't know what I'm talking about, go to www.alpinegardensociety.ie and have a browse.

Jim Archibald

It was very sad to learn of the death of Jim Archibald on 9 August aged 68. His passing is a serious loss to the world of horticulture. Jim and his wife Jenny collected seeds of alpine and other plants from many remote parts of the globe, but particularly Europe and sold them to enthusiasts all over the world. Jim's seeds were always reliable and many of us have plants in our gardens that were grown from seed supplied by him. He gave memorable talks to the Group in Dublin and in Termonfeckin. He was a superb lecturer and his knowledge of plants was encyclopedic. He and Jenny stayed with us on his Dublin visit and we found them a most delightful couple.

In 2003 Jim received the Lyttel Trophy, the Alpine Garden Society's highest award and was to give a talk at the AGS 2011 Conference in Nottingham. He will be greatly missed.

Our condolences go to Jenny and the family.

Joyce Carruthers

Joyce died tragically in a car accident in Canada on 25 September. She was the partner of Zdeněk Zvolánek (who features elsewhere in these pages) for the past eighteen years and they travelled widely together. She had a passion for natural landscapes, rare plants, rock gardens and adventure and spoke at the Prague Rock Garden Conference in 2007 where I met her and found her a charming person. She is greatly missed by ZZ and her family in Canada to all of whom we offer our condolences.

Pots

Michael Meagher has seven and nine cm, rigid, square, plastic pots for sale at ten and twenty cents 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.

Editor

Choice Daisies

The daisy family, Asteraceae (formerly Compositae), with over 22,000 species, must be the largest in the plant kingdom. It is distributed worldwide except for Antarctica and is especially diverse in the tropical and subtropical regions of North America, the Andes, eastern Brazil, southern Africa, the Mediterranean region, central Asia, and south-western China. I grow a lot of daisies but I have five favourite species and I will write about them in this article.

Anacyclus pyrethrum, native to the Mediterranean region, is a precious little



daisy which is easily grown in well-drained soil in a sunny spot in the open garden and is also good in a pot. *A. p.* var. *depressus* from the Atlas Mountains is a more choice and compact plant. It is prostrate with finely cut ferny green foliage. From the centre of the plant radiating stems bear white daisy flowers with a yellow eye and the back of the petals are red. The flowers last from late

spring to mid-summer. It is not a long lived plant. In a pot I grow it in a compost consisting of one part J12, one part peat or leaf-mould and one part grit. Propagation is by seed sown in spring or cuttings taken in August.

Celmisias are natives of New Zealand with a few species from Australia. I grow *C. spectabilis* and *C. allanii*. The former is grown in the garden and the latter in a pot. *C. spectabilis* likes a lightly shaded area in soil enriched with peat where it should be kept moist during summer. I grow *C. allanii* in a pot for showing using the compost mentioned above. I have tried it

in the garden but it didn't survive last winter. It has five cm silver leaves and the typical white daisy flower of the genus. Propagation is by seed sown as soon as it is ripe or by cuttings taken in late spring.

My favourite erigeron is the deservedly popular *E. aureus* 'Canary Bird' which originated as a chance seedling in Jack Drake's nursery in Scotland. Its creamy yellow flowers are carried on single fifteen cm. stems and last through spring and summer. It requires well-drained soil in a sunny area with normal watering during the growing season.

The genus *Helichrysum* consists of summer flowering annuals, perennials and sub-shrubs, the flowers of some of which are 'everlasting' when dried. *H. angustifolium* is a frost-hardy sub-shrub with very narrow aromatic silvery grey leaves bearing clusters of small yellow flowers in summer growing to about forty-five cm high. *H.* 'County Park Silver' forms a mat of silver foliage with the leaves overlapping. I grow it in a pot in the alpine house where in seven or eight years I have never seen it flowering.

H. virgineum from the cliffs of Mount Olympus in Greece has thick rosettes of fleshy green leaves with white 'everlasting' flowers. I prefer it in bud because the contrast of pink bud against the silver foliage is lovely. It is one species that will droop its foliage when in need of water. I am trying it outside in the garden this year. In pots I use the same compost as for *Anacyclus* repotting each year in spring. During the winter all dead leaves should be removed to prevent fungal infection. It may be propagated by detaching rosettes in May.

The final species is my favourite composite, *Rhodanthemum nanum* from South Africa. Its white daisy flowers with a brown centre last from spring to autumn. With its finely cut silvery grey foliage growing to about thirty cm it would make a wonderful garden plant if fully hardy. I planted the specimen that I showed this year out in the garden after the Show and it seems very happy since it escaped from its pot but the real test will come over the winter. I propagate by taking cuttings in May.

Gardeners vary widely in their ideas about how best to grow their plants. You may have other thoughts on how the plants I have mentioned

should be grown but I have given you my views which are based on my own personal experience and have worked for me.

Liam Byrne



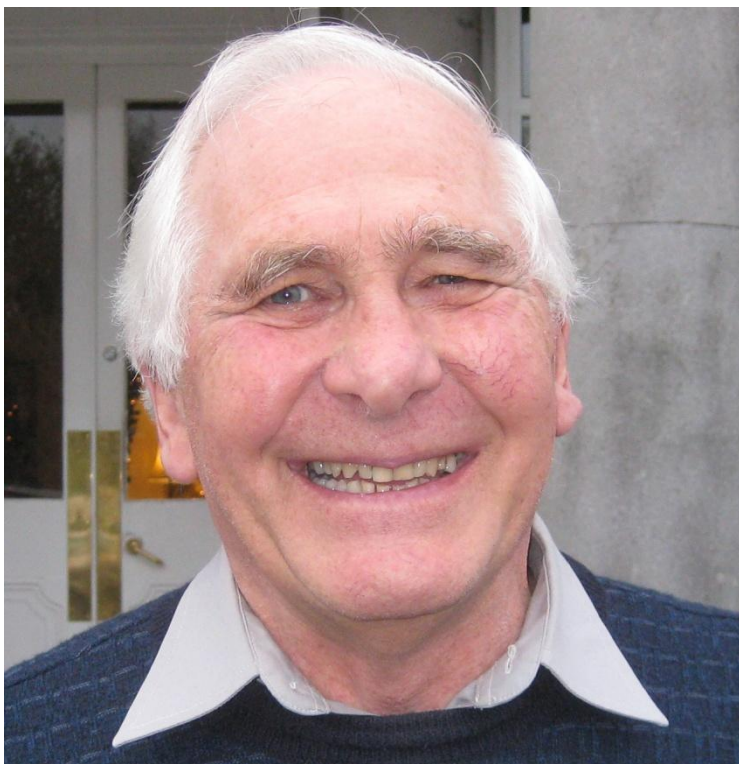
Cypripedium margaritaceum (see p.35) Photo: Martin Walsh

FORTY YEARS A GROWING

PART 2 - THE PLANTS

A SOMEWHAT STRANGE OMISSION RECTIFIED...

In the last issue of the Newsletter I wrote at length about my four gardens without giving any details of the alpine plants I've grown. This was a strange omission as I have always tended to be more interested in the plants rather than the designs of gardens. In some rock gardens



there is an over-emphasis on design and the importance of the rockwork over that of the plants, producing in me at least a feeling of design fatigue. In short ... ration your rocks!!

My interests have ranged very widely throughout the plant world and I've grown as many genera as possible. Specialization is for other people. As against this there are

some families which for some reason or other have occupied centre stage for at least a time in my gardens. Ease of culture, availability or a 'certain something' all play their part in this illogical mix.

Certain families have traditionally dominated the flora of most rock gardens and in this respect I certainly am no different. The families Saxifragaceae, Primulaceae, Campanulaceae and Caryophyllaceae have been well represented in my gardens. The latter two families I find particularly attractive as they are later flowering and carry the interest well into the summer.

THE BACKBONE ...

The *Primula* family holds a special place in my affections with five genera of major garden interest, ranging from the very easy to cultivate to species which test the skill and patience of the most experienced gardeners.

The geographical spread of the genus *Primula* is very wide, but mainly centred in Asia and Europe. Many of the most attractive are short lived.

My quick picks from a huge range I've grown (and lost) are the Asiatic *P. vialii* which is easy from seed and has flowers which glow like a mini red hot poker. A more subtle beauty is *P. reidii* and I've more often grown the pale blue and fragrant subspecies *williamsii*. I have always liked *P. marginata* in all its forms and hybrids. The contrast between the farina covered leaves and the pale blue flowers makes this species universally popular.

Nothing can be more exciting to the alpine travellers than the sight of soldanellas poking their intense blue pixie hats through the melting snows. I've grown *S. villosa* for a long time in shade. It must be 'easy'!!

Higher up in the European mountains the genus *Androsace* reigns, a demanding sovereign insisting to be grown in the garden under the conditions to which it was accustomed in the wild. In my younger days I loved to grow these tricky species in an alpine house. They come surprisingly easy from seed and depart just as easily. Now I get much pleasure from two Asiatic species which roam around as they will; *A. rotundifolia* by seeding and *A. sarmentosa* by stolons.

In southern Europe and Asia Minor the family is best represented by *Cyclamen*, every species a gem. Although I've grown several very choice species my favourite remains *C. coum* from the island of Cos. Its stubby flowers bring joy into the garden right through the gloomiest winters.

Requiring cooler conditions are the members of the North American genus *Dodecatheon*. These I have mainly grown in shade. The naming is difficult as the species merge. I've grown *D. pulchellum* most often and *D. maedia* f. 'Album' was a novelty for a time. Great plants for shade.

The Saxifragaceae family is mainly represented by the huge genus *Saxifraga*, with lesser interest in shade loving *Tellima*, *Tiarella* and *Boykinia*.

In my early days I grew *Kabschia* hybrids too numerous to mention. Other than those I like the glittering silver leaved *S. longifolia* from the Pyrenees and even better is the hybrid with *S. callosa* aptly named 'Tumbling Waters'. A very long lived plant is the Irish native *S. oppositifolia* which forms a large mat with good purple flowers in early March.

I sought the unique *Telesonix jamesii* for a long time. Unfortunately for several years the seed distributions were sending out some boring *Boykinias* labelled as *Telesonix*. The real plant has large striking cherry coloured flowers. It flourished for several years in a trough until the vine weevil found it.

The later flowering Campanulaceae is another very extensive family. The campanulas themselves are well complemented by *Edrianthus*, *Codonopsis* and *Cyananthus*.

Striking campanulas I grew were *C. incurva*, and *C. formanekiana*, both monocarpic but easy from seed. Smaller in size and long lasting are *C. pulla*, *C. cochlearifolia* and the Irish hybrid of *C. garganica*, 'W.H.Paine'.

I particularly like codonopses because of their climbing habit, making the typically bell shaped flowers of the family easily enjoyed. *C. ovata* is the prettiest with pale blue bells. More spectacular is *C. convolvulacea* where the bells have opened into lavender stars. Slugs love it and I've never kept it for long.

Caryophyllaceae also deserve to be included as 'backbone'. With the genera *Dianthus*, *Silene* and *Saponaria* they are most prominent later in the summer when the rock garden is looking somewhat drab.

I have grown a huge number of dianthus and dianthus hybrids. They are mostly easy, long lived plants. Over the past ten years *D. erinaceus* has formed a rock hard hummock on my south facing bed, sprinkled in mid-summer with pink flowers. The pure white hybrid 'Berlin Snow' was more recently acquired and this is one I really like.

SOME OTHER FAVOURITES

Some of the most beautiful plants I have are perhaps more suitably classified as 'woodland'. *Trillium chloropetalum* has thrived here in deepest shade as has *Uvularia grandiflora*. More surprisingly a plant of *Arisaema candidissimum* has never failed over twenty years. Lavender blue *Jeffersonia dubia* has never lived so long nor has its pale American cousin *J. diphylla*. Both deserve searching out and renewal.

This plant summary would not be complete without mentioning some of the other plants I've grown. Dwarf geraniums, particularly *G. farreri* have long been favourites.

From the pea family I cherished *Lupinus lepidus lobbii* and that dwarf pink flowered shrub *Ononis rotundifolia* far more than they did me.

Aquilegias are too numerous to mention but too sinful to omit and keeping the late summer in mind I rate the origanums highly. I particularly liked *O. rotundifolium* but its hybrid *O. 'Barbara Tingey'* is a stunner.

The omission of bulbous plants from my lists can mostly be attributed to lack of space but truth to tell they have been relegated in recent times mostly to the status of second class citizens.

Dermot Kehoe



Lilium euxanthum (see p.35) Photo: Martin Walsh

REVIEW OF RECENT GROUP EVENTS

Shangri-La – A Plant Hunter in Western China, Philip Cribb, 16 September

Philip's talk covered the areas of Yunnan, Tibet and Sichuan in Western China. He spoke of the changes he has seen in this part of the world over the last twenty years, making the change from a medieval to a modern society. This geographical region is home to a large percentage of our garden plants, collected by famous collectors such as Ernest Wilson, George Forrest and Frank Kingdon-Ward. Philip gave us a



flavour of what these great plant collectors must have gone through to bring these garden wonders back to us.

This armchair tour took us on a trip starting in East Yunnan/Tibet. Philip showed us an amusing image of two Naxi ladies who were spotted sitting in the same place they had been when he visited two years previously. We were shown amazing shots of Jade Dragon Mountain which reaches an altitude of 5,600m. Philip showed us some of the treasures that grow in this area, such as *Rhododendron yunnanense*, which flowers before it puts on leaf. Two unusual orchids, *Pleione yunnanensis* and *Pleione*

bulbocoides can often be found growing in association with it.

Philip next showed us the area of Gang-Ho-Ba in NW Sichuan, which is home to twelve species of orchid. It is also home to such treasures as *Rhododendron decorum* and *Indigofera pendula*. *Pleione aurita*, a mostly epiphytic orchid is also to be seen in this area. Knowing orchids are Philip's first love, it was no great surprise that a number of them were included in the talk. A range of *Cypripediums* deserve a mention, including *C. flavum*, *C. tibeticum* and the strange *C. lichiangense*.

Philip also showed a range of images from the Zhongdian (Shangri-La) area including the dwarf *Daphne retusa* which possesses purplish-rose flowers, a purple form of *Rosa moyesii* and the eye-catching *Thermopsis barbata* which unfortunately is not successful in cultivation due to its very deep tap root. Also included was the not so common *Stellera chamaejasme*, the pink *Androsace delavayi* and the stunning, brilliant red *Androsace bulleyana*.

Moving into Sichuan, Philip showed a range of amazing images including the purple *Gentiana rubicunda*, *Hydrangea aspera*, *Corydalis flexuosa* and the very scented *Rosa longicuspis*. Oh, and a few Pandas too!!

Next followed a range of treasures from the Abba Plains region of North West Sichuan, including *Hedysarum yunnanense*, the chocolate coloured *Primula tangutica* and the electric blue *Corydalis kansuensis*. This area is also home to a number of *Meconopsis* including the large yellow *M. integrifolia*, *M. sinomaculata* and the purple *M. henricii*.

Nearing the end of this breathtaking travelogue, Philip showed a range of images from the Huanglong-Si region, famous for its tufa pools as well as its plants. We were treated to a wonderful array of plants including, *Trollius farreri*, *Callianthemum farreri*, *Primula gemmifera* and the tiny flowered *Cypripedium bardolphianum*. Lastly, Philip covered the region of Jiuzhaigou in Northern Sichuan. Again we were shown high quality images of a long list of plants including *Epipactis mairiei*, *Blettia ochracea*, *Cypripedium fargesii* and the notable shrub *Dipelta elegans* which is not yet in cultivation.

This was a most enjoyable and educational talk by Philip. He succeeded in encapsulating the great diversity of the climate and geography as well as the plants and the people that hail from this region of the world. And he also may have succeeded in giving me the travel bug again!!

Michael Higgins

Climate Change and Alpines,

Dr John Good, 21 October

Dr John Good is a plant ecologist with a special interest in alpine and woodland plants. He lives and gardens in North Wales, is involved with the Alpine Garden Society, is a judge at AGS Shows and is a member of the RHS Joint Rock Garden Plant Committee. He is the co-author with Dr David Milward of *Alpine Plant Ecology for Gardeners* which was published in 2007.



It is a measure of Dr Good's attributes as a speaker that he managed to keep his audience enthralled in a talk entitled *Impacts of Global Environmental Change on Alpine Plants*. Hardly a topic to set the pulses racing!

He divided his subject into three parts – evidence of climate change, the significance of climate change and the potential impact of climate change. He talked of the melting of glaciers, the changes in the phenology of plants, how plants are migrating northwards in the northern hemisphere; how average temperature (the winter of 2009/2010 notwithstanding) and sea levels are increasing in the northern hemisphere. He told of a survey in Surrey, England where it was shown that oaks came into leaf a month earlier in 2000 than they did in 1950. In another family-kept record on snowdrops dating back to 1750 a similar finding was reported. In the Arctic region trees are spreading into areas that had previously been permafrost and in the Italian Alps some species of plants had moved up twenty four metres in a decade.

The effects of climate change on some alpines will be catastrophic with plants from the tundra and snow melt areas most affected. Woodland and alpine meadows will be affected by an onslaught of coarser, more vigorous plants and will be more susceptible to pests and diseases. The

only positive news is that climate change will have little effect on the higher alpine, the crevice plants that are already subject to extreme conditions.

The talk ranged widely over all aspects of global warming from forest clearances and melting glaciers to increased grazing, off-track pursuits, skiing, to the ticking time bomb (as he called it) of the drying up of peat bogs and the subsequent effect of the released methane gas.

Still, Dr Good ended on a positive note. Thanks to global warming, we will, he said, be able to grow weldenias outside without protection. And he promised that, should he be invited back, his next talk would be about plants and would be illustrated with plant pictures.

Carmel Duignan

Alpines at Home and Away, 11 November

On a very wet and windy night a large number of members turned up in anticipation of an interesting and stimulating lecture from **Billy Moore** and we were not disappointed.

True to the title we travelled from Ireland to Turkey via the Bernese Alps to the Czech Republic. Here we saw some wonderful views of the rocks, natural structures and planting of crevice gardens that the members who were on the trip to Prague some years ago are still recalling with enthusiasm.

A short week-end trip to the Botanic Gardens in Gothenburg, returning for a brief visit to the northern gardens of **Maisie Michael** and **Harold McBride**, a quick side step to the Burren, a visit to California and somehow we ended up back in Turkey on Mount Nemrut.

A little bit of history was included with a view of the first show in 1985 in Kilruddery – some notable Irish plantspeople could be identified.

Also a mini show in itself of the boot of **Liam Byrne's** car prior to a show. A treasure trove indeed. From recent shows we were shown great shots of many beauties – *Primula* 'Linda Pope', *Lewisia tweedyi*, *Jeffersonia dubia*, *Narcissus cyclamineus* and *N. bulbocodium* to name just a few. Most unusual of all, a very rare and, not for sale offering from **Rose**

Sevastopulo – I have never yet seen it mentioned in any article on edible plants.

Billy treated us to some views of his own garden and the changes made over the years. We had views of his raised beds with among others *Roscoeae cantleoides* and *Calceolaria* x ‘Walter Shrimpton’ growing happily. It was suggested, several times, that we should start growing from seed – *Tulipa sprengeri* was recommended as being easy. So just to urge us on we saw some of Billy’s impeccably neat and tidy pots and trays, plus the cold frames.

Among the plants shown that I particularly liked was *Athyrium* ‘Ghost’, *Dicentra* ‘Burning Hearts’ and a white *Corydalis malkensis*. I was delighted to see ferns and woodlanders getting a mention as these are some of my favourite plants.

While speaking about his Narcissus Billy mentioned that he had noticed that they were beginning to decrease in number but that he had found the culprit. An image of what looked like a bee turned out to be a Narcissus Fly which was new to me. It lays its larvae at the base of the dying leaves and as the leaves rot the larvae work their way down and into the bulbs. The result is not a pretty sight.

Many thanks to Billy. This was a great lecture – we had travel, great plants, shows, history, education, wonderful photography all in one.

Ricky Shannon

Twenty-seventh Alpine Weekend in Termonfeckin

19 – 21 November 2010



Zdeněk Zvolánek, Christine Skelmersdale and Martin Walsh at Termonfeckin
(Photo: Billy Moore)

Numbers were slightly down and we had one embarrassing technical hitch, of which more later, but otherwise our 2010 Discussion Weekend was an unqualified success. More than a third of the delegates were from the Ulster Group and the Cork Group was also well represented. We missed **Peggy Parker**, **Jim Price** and **Margaret Glynn**, all loyal Termonfeckin veterans, due to illness and we send them our best wishes. Peggy especially has made a huge contribution to the enjoyment of the weekend over the years with her crossword, quizzes and the sales table of lovely cards and small *objets d'art*. This year the sales table was looked after by **Gwenda Wratt** who was Peggy's collaborator in previous years.

Our Secretary, **Mary O'Neill Byrne** with the support of Treasurer, **Tessa Dagge** organized everything to perfection and Tessa's husband **Arthur** provided invaluable help in many ways to ensure the success of the weekend.

The Table Quiz, masterminded by **Jamie Chambers**, puzzled and delighted participants and **George Sevastopulo** skilfully cajoled a considerable sum from enthusiastic bidders at the Plant Auction. A collection of plants generously donated by **Harold McBride** alone raised €147. Our thanks to Harold and to everyone who donated plants for the auction and for the plant sale which was organized and managed by **Carmel Duignan**. A significant sum was also raised by the raffle which was run by **Rose Sevastopulo**.

The management and staff of ***An Grianán***, as usual, pulled out all the stops to ensure the comfort and well-being of all the delegates.

Keith and **Tim Lever**, **Norrays Maxwell** and **Susan Tindall** had a mouth-watering selection of plants to tempt us and all did a brisk trade.

The informal slide presentations by delegates on Friday night were interesting and enjoyable although there were fewer presenters than usual.

The main focus of the weekend is, however the lecture programme and once again we had a strong team made up of **Christine Skelmersdale**, **Martin Walsh** and **Zdeněk Zvolánek**.

Proceedings were opened on Saturday morning with a splendid talk on **The Woodland Garden** by Christine who is an experienced and compelling speaker. She is also an outstanding photographer and illustrated her talk with many beautiful images using slides. Christine believes strongly that digital photography has some way to go before the images it achieves can compete with slides. She feels that digital images when projected tend to be 'flat' and lack the depth and sparkle provided by good slides. I don't disagree but I think that with the increasing sophistication of digital cameras and projectors the gap is narrowing.

Unfortunately Christine's talk was somewhat marred by technical problems with the projector which must have been terribly frustrating

for her, and for the audience, but her experience came to the fore and despite the interruptions gave us a terrific talk which was much enjoyed. We were all full of admiration for her tremendous aplomb in coping with the difficulties.

In recent years woodland gardening has become increasingly popular and after hearing Christine's comprehensive and persuasive treatment of the subject I feel sure that more of us will succumb to its charms.

Obviously woodland plants require shade, ideally the shade provided by deciduous trees and shrubs. They like to be cool and dry in summer with light and moisture in winter. An open, leafy, humus-rich soil is essential. Christine took us from autumn, through winter and spring, to early summer and gave us a glimpse of the huge and diverse range of plants that can brighten our gardens during those seasons. Several cyclamen do well in woodland with their foliage being as decorative as their flowers, and longer lasting. In particular *C. hederifolium* provides wonderful ground cover in winter with its many different leaf patterns but *C. cilicium*, *C. coum* and *C. repandum* should not be overlooked.

Colchicums are good in autumn with *C. speciosum album* being a favourite with its pristine flowers and stately foliage. *Tricyrtis* species can be tricky but given sufficient moisture are valuable. *Saxifraga fortunei* can light up the garden in autumn and is available in many different forms.

Snowdrops, which should be divided regularly, are a must and were dealt with more comprehensively in Christine's second talk as were snowflakes.

Surprisingly, to me at any rate, she has found that *Iris reticulata* forms do very well in woodland conditions as do some crocuses. The various forms of *Anemone nemorosa* are indispensable as is *A. apennina*. Among the larger plants hellebores and pulmonarias are important.

There are many good erythroniums for these conditions; patience is required with *E. dens canis*; and *E. californicum* 'Harvington Snow Goose' is her favourite plant in the garden, although she thinks it is *oregonum* rather than *californicum*. Some fritillaries and daffodils are excellent including *F. acmopetala* and *F. pyrenica* and again a surprise *F. thunbergii*,

while *Narcissus cyclamineus* is a must and the cultivar 'Mite' is very good. Sanguinaria, uvularia, cardamine, polygonatum and corydalis are classic woodlanders as are some violas and primulas.

The genus *Trillium* is a rich source of candidates with *luteum* being my favourite. Christine finds that the doubles need a lot of water as does the lovely *Paris polyphylla*.

A plant not widely grown is *Heloniopsis orientalis*, easy and 'a great doer'.

No woodland is complete without hepaticas which demand woodland conditions. Arisaemas, which should be planted deeply, dactylorhizas, cypripediums (not easy) foxgloves, hostas, roscoeas, paeonias and, of course ferns all add to the display as do many lilies with *Cardiocrinum giganteum* being perhaps the most spectacular.

Christine delivered a master class in woodland gardening to a very appreciative audience and did so in less than ideal circumstances.

Circumstances improved for her second talk on Sunday morning with the introduction of a gremlin free projector. This talk was on winter flowering bulbs entitled **Winter Isn't Just Snowdrops** and complemented the earlier talk, taking us from November through to March and dealing with bulbs only. A welcome aspect of the talk was that the bulbs recommended are readily available; and with a few exceptions are inexpensive; and all are easily grown.

For winter foliage look no further than *Arum italicum* 'Marmoratum' and the already mentioned *Cyclamen hederifolium*. Crocuses flower in autumn and spring and Christine showed excellent photos of some of her favourites. *C. speciosus albus* has been in cultivation for a century and is a delight as is *C. imperati* and *C. sieberi* 'Bowles White', now regrettably to be called *sieberi albus*. The flowers of most crocuses open in sunshine and close when the weather is dull in order to protect their reproductive parts but *C. tournefortii* which flowers in autumn, is an exception as once its flowers open they stay open, a characteristic that suits the gardener. *C. tommasianus* and *C. chrysanthus* naturalise well and are available in several forms. 'Whitewell Purple' in the former and 'Blue Pearl' and 'Ladykiller' in the latter are worth looking out for.

Cyclamen can be relied on to brighten up the winter garden as we have seen but few gardeners grow species like *libanoticum* and *pseudibericum* outside. The latter came through last winter in fine style in my garden but I have yet to try *libanoticum* outside.

The winter aconite is valuable for its February flowers. The best in the genus is the cross between *Eranthis hyemalis* and *E. cilicica* called 'Guinea Gold'. Unfortunately this plant is sterile and can only be propagated vegetatively and so is scarce and is not cheap.

Christine spent some time on snowdrops of which there are now some 700 cultivars available. The most extreme 'galantophiles' can pay really obscene amounts of money for a single bulb of a new cultivar. Many cultivars are quite distinct and can readily be identified but the differences between some are so minute that magnification may be needed to tell them apart.

She first ranged over the species, illustrating the essential differences between them in terms of foliage and flower, highlighting, for example the distinctive broad glaucous leaves of *Galanthus elwesii*. She then surveyed a sample of the cultivars of which 'Magnet', 'Scharlockii', 'Wendy's Gold', 'Lady Elphinstone' and 'Trym' were, I thought, outstanding. The similar snowflake, *Leucojum vernum*, needs much more moisture than most snowdrops to thrive.

Anemone blanda and *A. apennina* are excellent and there are many lovely irises to bring colour to the spring garden. *Iris reticulata* is best treated as an annual and 'Harmony' is particularly good. *I.* 'Katherine Hodgkin' is striking and reliable but may be overshadowed by the newer cultivar *I.* 'Sheila Ann Germaney'.

Scilla mischtschenkoana 'Tubergeniana', despite its name is good as is *S. bifolia*.

Excellent tulips are *T. bifloriformis* (formerly *turkestanica*), *T. biflora* and *T. humilis* especially in its form 'Lilliput'.

Erythroniums and Narcissus were discussed in the earlier talk but Christine reaffirmed her liking for *E. dens canis* and finished her superb

talk with a survey of her favourite daffodils her number one being, I think, *N. 'Cedric Morris'*.

Christine is of course the proprietor of Broadleigh Gardens and sells bulbs. The small selection she brought to Termonfeckin were quickly snapped up but you can access her website to see the full range at: www.broadleighbulbs.co.uk.

In the past few years interest in growing alpine in crevices has been increasing and we had two timely and very interesting talks from Mr Crevice Garden himself, **Zdeněk Zvolánek**, (ZZ), from the Czech Republic. ZZ has made crevice gardens in mainland Europe, in the UK, including Northern Ireland and in North America. As you can read elsewhere in these pages he made his first crevice garden in Dublin on this visit. The crevice garden in Pershore is his and just before he came here he made a large one in Wisley for the RHS.

His first talk was entitled (what else?) **'Crevice Gardens'** and in it he showed us many examples of these structures in gardens, made of different types of stone, including tufa. Alongside these he also illustrated crevice gardens in nature and explained the principles of building a naturalistic looking equivalent in the garden.

ZZ acknowledged that crevice gardens are not a Czech invention but originated in England in the nineteenth century. He was emphatic that once the bed is established and plants have been given a chance to get their roots into the sand that is packed in the crevices, no watering is necessary. He said that deep in a crevice the temperature and moisture levels are constant and thus the paradox in conventional rock gardening of using a growing medium that is both free draining and moisture retentive is avoided.

When a plant is placed in the crevice it should be surrounded by slivers of rock which are wedged in around it. Also steep crevices must be closed off with rock slivers and clay to prevent the sand being washed out by rain.

A crevice garden starts life as a mound of soil. This is covered by a layer of sand the depth of which is determined by the height of structure

that is desired. The stones are then set in the sand, some of them overlapping and the structure should slope down at the front and rear at an angle of roughly 60° to mimic the weathering that occurs in nature. A free draining sand is dribbled into the crevices and firmed down with a suitable piece of timber. This is vital to create stability and to eliminate air pockets. It is also very important to consider access as the building progresses.

A structure with a slight curve in the parallel crevices can be very attractive as this type of 'folding' is often seen in natural rock outcrops as ZZ demonstrated. Also the layers can be vertical or tilted and this is a matter of choice for the builder. Presumably tilted layers would tend to be drier.

A crevice garden has essentially two views: from the front and rear we see the faces of the layers, and from the sides the side walls. Ideally the view of the side walls should suggest that we are looking at one massive piece of stone whereas looking at the faces of the layers the crevices are clearly visible.

An effective crevice bed can be created in a trough following the same principles and ZZ showed us some examples.

It was interesting to see peat blocks being used in some of the crevices in the very large crevice garden in Bangsbo Botanical Garden in Denmark. This will enable a wider range of plants to be grown.

This talk relied more than most on the pictures to tell the story. Space does not permit me to mention all the wonderful gardens that ZZ showed us in different parts of the world. Several of them, including his own fine garden, were in the Czech Republic and these were particularly well constructed. I think my favourite would be the garden of **Milan Čepička** in Prague which ZZ had a hand in creating. I saw this myself a couple of years ago and remember thinking that even without a single plant it would be a thing of beauty. The garden of **Vojtěch Holubec**, who spoke at Termonfeckin some years ago, is also very fine.

Outside of the Czech Republic ZZ showed us some shots of the large crevice gardens he built for Pershore and for **June Dougherty** in Co.

Antrim and he had words of praise for **Alan Furness's** work in his garden in Northumberland. Pictures of the recently constructed crevice garden in Tromsø Botanic Garden in Norway are an indication of how widespread this form of gardening is becoming. ZZ has also worked with **Peter Korn** in Sweden who was a big hit in Termonfeckin in 2008.

This talk was mostly about rocks but some plants were included. *Primula x juliae*, *Saxifraga federici-augusti* 'Wisley', *S.* 'Southside Seedling', *Dicentra* 'King of Hearts', *Adonis vernalis*, *Sempervivum arachnoideum*, *Polygala vayredae*, *Silene hookeri* var. *hookeri*, *Ranunculus parnassifolius*, *Lewisia cotyledon* and *Lithodora oleifolia* among others looked very much at home planted in crevices as, quite surprisingly, did *Rhododendron* 'Oban' in June's garden.

ZZ became rock-specific in his second talk entitled '**Mystery of Limestone**' which was much more plant focused and included many lovely images of familiar and seldom seen alpine. There were also lots of scenic shots of natural limestone formations. Most of the photos were of plants in the wild but many also in cultivation so we had a similar contrast between plants in nature and in gardens as we had in the previous talk and it was notable that in both situations most of the plants were growing in crevices.

He opened by explaining the origin of limestone and observed that especially in its dolomitic form it suits a wide range of very desirable plants. Aesthetically it provides an excellent foil for plants as he demonstrated with beautiful images of *Daphne petraea* and *Eritrichium nanum* growing in limestone crevices. The latter is very hard to grow so if you want to try an eritrichium you should start with *E. howardii* which is easier. He told us that there are certain bacteria which thrive on limestone and these provide nourishment to the plants thus creating a symbiotic relationship between the rock and its inhabitants.

For space reasons I can mention only a small selection of the plants that we saw.

Daphne cneorum 'Czech Song' is beautiful with sugar pink flowers and is much more compact than the type. Worth seeking out I would think

Viola cazorlensis from Spain is excellent but requires a mineral soil to perform well in the garden. It is lovely but not as nice as my favourite violet, *V. delphinantha* which I can't keep going even in the alpine house, so I was impressed to see it thriving outside in ZZ's garden.

The highly desirable *Adonis distorta* grows near melting snow in limestone crevices in the Majella Mountains in Abruzzo in Italy and should do well in cultivation in tufa or in a crevice as should *Centaurea achtarovii*.

Another knapweed, *C. triumfettii*, should also be worth trying.

I have long had a passion for daphnes and apart from those already mentioned ZZ showed us several others including different forms of *D. petraea* one nicer than the other. *D. velenovskyi* in its normal pink form is lovely but is surpassed, I think, by its white form called 'Josefina'. All forms of *D. arbuscula* are worth growing but the white form, *D. a. albiflora*, that ZZ showed seemed particularly attractive. I have always found this species difficult but others seem to grow it with ease.

Dianthus microlepis var. *degenii*, which likes lime, is a little jewel, nicer I think than *D. microlepis* var. *microlepis*, which requires acid conditions. *D. simulans* is lovely too but ZZ finds it challenging. Less so is *D. brevicaulis* from the Taurus Mountains.

Globularia cordifolia is a good alpine for the open garden and is a lime lover. ZZ also recommended *Anthyllis aurea* as a good garden plant as is the excellent *Degenia velebetica*.

Anchusa caespitosa is sometimes seen on the show-bench but is not an easy plant to grow well. We saw pictures of it in the wild and in cultivation, the wild plant growing at over 2,000m and seeming tighter and more compact than the one in cultivation, although the latter was a fine well-flowered specimen.

Edraianthus pumilio is widely grown and is well worth while with its deep purple blue flowers but judging from ZZ's pictures *E. serpyllifolius*, *E. montenegrinus* and *E. vesovicii* should also be considered. The one failing of this genus is its attraction for molluscs.

Another plant that many of us grow is *Moltkia petraea* which is easy and highly decorative. It seeds around in ZZ's garden and recently a pure white seedling appeared which he has called 'Joycinka'.

Aethionemas are easily grown but there are a lot of weedy species. *A. caespitosa*, *A. subulatum* and *A. schistosum* would grace any rock garden.

Campanula chorubensis from Turkey is a terrific bellflower and is one of ZZ's favourites. It would surely do well in a crevice. One of the nicest small aquilegias, *A. scopulorum* var. *perplexans*, would also.

Two impressive plants which were new to me were *Calylophus* (formerly *Oenothera*) *lavandulifolia* and *Penstemon nanus*, both worth seeking out.

I have only been able to touch on some of the delights that Zdeněk brought to us in this absorbing talk.

Maintaining the very high standard of Termonfeckin 2010 Martin Walsh delivered a powerful and deeply researched talk on his second trip to Yunnan in 2009 which he called '**A Return to the Land of the Blue Poppy**'. His previous visit was in 1998 and he deplored many of the changes, especially in the towns, introduced by the Chinese authorities in their misguided attempts to woo tourists, being particularly outraged about the 'improvements' visited upon the Tibetan Songzanlin Monastery in Zhongdian, now called Shangri-La.

He was visiting areas written about by **F. Kingdon Ward** in his well-known book *The Land of the Blue Poppy*. **Joseph Rock**, after whom *Aquilegia rockii* and *Hemilophia rockii* are named also explored the area and we visited his house in Lijiang, a town which has deteriorated sadly in many ways since 1998.

Once Martin got out of the towns his main focus was on plants but he kept us firmly grounded in the landscape with his spectacular scenic shots. His plant portraits were no less spectacular and impressed me so much that I have included a selection in this issue.

The first plant photograph was of *Cypripedium lichiangensis*, the first of several from that genus, and it provided a foretaste of all the beautiful plants that were to come. Obviously I can mention only a few and I had considerable difficulty in making my selection.



Meconopsis speciosa (see p.36) Photo: Martin Walsh

Another wonderful cyripedium was *C. margaritaceum* (see p.13), not a plant that I expect to see in my garden anytime soon. However *Salvia campanulata* and two roscoeas, *R. cautleyoides* and *R. humeana* are easily grown, the salvia being suitable for woodland.

Meconopsis delavayi is quite variable in the wild and is a good garden plant, as is *Paris polyphylla* which is also variable but maintains its display in the garden for months.

Extensive swathes of *Iris bulleyana* were impressive as was its namesake, *Primula bulleyana* which is easy and a good garden plant. We have to take Martin's word for the beautiful perfume that he says is produced by the elegant *Lilium stewartianum*.

Tianchi Lake is relatively unspoilt and is an area not previously visited by Martin. Huge drifts of *Primula secundiflora* were impressive as was the handsome gentian relative, *Megacodon stylophorus*, a plant that would enhance any garden. *Cremanthodium campanulatum* with its drooping, purple hairy flowers drew murmurs of approval from the audience as did the rather tulip-like *Lilium soulei*.

In the Shika Shan area we saw our first corydalis, the easily grown *C. pachycentra*, and the superb *Meconopsis pseudointegrifolia*.

The scenically stunning Da Xue Shan (Big Snow Mountain) proved to be an absolute treasure house of gorgeous plants including meconopsis, lilies, fritillaries, incarvilleas, pedicularis, primulas, corydalis and others. The most imposing was the amazing rhubarb, *Rheum nobile* (see front cover) dwarfing its cousin, *R. delavayi* which stands at a mere 15cm. Among the corydalis, *C. benecinta* was outstanding and Martin's lovely photo of *Primula dryadifolia* (see p.5) makes us wish we could grow it.

Noteworthy plants on the western side of Bai Ma Shan were the sweet *Lilium euxanthum* (see p.18), *Primula nanobella*, the extremely variable *Meconopsis lancifolia* and, every alpine lover's dream, the adorable (and being adored in one of Martin's shots) *Chionocharis hookeri*. To the east of the mountain were more paraquilegias and several corydalis species, including the lovely sky-blue *C. melanochlora* (see p. 5) and the distinctive,

tiny *C. hemidicentra*, the best of the genus according to those two experts, **Henrik Zetterlund** and **Magnus Lidén** (see back cover).

Paraquilegia anemonoides (see below) seemed at its best in the Red Mountain Gorge appearing in several different shades, each one a ‘Farrer’ winner, along with some rather sinister looking saussureas.



Photo: Martin Walsh

On the Red Mountain itself, *Primula sikkimensis* var. *pseudosikkimensis* made a great splash of yellow which would have contrasted beautifully not only with the blue of *Corydalis hemidicentra* and *C. calcicola* but also with the eponymous blue poppy, *Meconopsis speciosa* (see p.34) of which Kingdon Ward wrote: “Surely no flower could be that peerless blue...the flowers were of a dazzling azure blue, like Japanese silk in texture and in the centre was a shock of corn yellow stamens”.

Martin finished his presentation with some images of an extraordinary ‘forest’ of limestone pinnacles where, in a most unlikely position in a rock crevice was growing *Arisaema consanguineum*.

The enthusiastic and sustained applause at the end of the talk spoke for itself.

An innovation this year was the discussion forum on Sunday morning when a panel of experts comprised of the three speakers augmented by **Susan Tindall** and **Keith Lever** answered a range of questions on cultivation posed by the delegates. This proved popular and the feedback was very good so we will repeat it in 2011.

And so we had another successful Alpine Weekend during which we were entertained and informed, enjoyed the company of like-minded friends and appreciated the escape, if only for a couple of days, from the bleak economic news with which we are being constantly and relentlessly bombarded.

Next year our speakers will be **Harry Jans**, **Jim Jermyn** and **Liam McCaughey**. Something to look forward to.

Editor

A Christmas Miscellany, 9 December

The thaw had started but there was still plenty of snow and ice about so a low attendance was not unexpected. But the fourteen brave souls who had ventured out had a very pleasant evening, and there were more than enough scrumptious mince pies kindly provided by **Val Keegan** to permit seconds and more.

Jamie Chambers had prepared a comprehensive pictorial retrospective of our year and it made pleasant viewing. Generally it was thought that 2010 had been good for the Group. He also took us on a tour of Utrecht University Botanic Garden which has some fine rock gardens full of good alpine as well as excellent woodland plantings and other features. Jamie strongly recommends a visit.

Liam McCaughey of the Ulster Group (and the Dublin Group) had sent down a selection of his signature close-ups of the flowers and foliage of show plants which were warmly applauded. His portrait of *Pulsatilla ambigua* was particularly admired.

Carmel Duignan had been touring gardens in Pennsylvania in the summer including Longwood and Chanticleer, and she shared some of her experiences with us. The trip seems to have been very worthwhile but Carmel was unimpressed by the tendency of Americans to refer to

plants almost exclusively by their colloquial names and to be ignorant of their ‘proper’, i.e., botanical names. But the gardens were super. In one 10,000 hostas were planted, all bearing foliage untouched by molluscs. In another the wisterias were wonderful, but the plant that most impressed Carmel was *Abelia mosanensis*, a Korean native, with a scent that excels the best viburnums. It is fully hardy and grows to about six feet. This has gone onto Carmel’s ‘must have’ list. She enjoyed the visit to Amish country despite initial reservations.

Janet Wynne has created a crevice bed in her garden using slate and she gave us an account of its evolution. It has been a highly successful project and is now home to many fine alpine plants including some small daphnes and difficult plants such as *Anchusa caespitosa* which is unprotected in winter and flowers well. It is visually attractive and because it is waist high is easily looked after.

I gave a brief account of the building of a crevice bed by ZZ in my garden while he was over for Termonfeckin. I am delighted with the result and will let you know how it fares in future issues.

So ended the final fixture in our 2010 Programme which despite the small audience was at least as enjoyable as any Christmas Miscellany we have had.

Editor

Portraits of Alpine Plants by Robert Rolfe. 2010. Alpine Garden Society Publications Ltd. 154 pages. Stg£25.00.

In a recent discussion with colleagues about the merits or otherwise of electronic books, I, with other members of the older generation, plumped firmly for printed books: we liked the appearance of a printed page and the feel of a bound volume. This publication confirms my opinion: it is handsome, well designed and securely bound – a pleasure to own. My one criticism of its overall design is the inclusion of two pages of garish advertisement for the AGS at the end of the volume,



which contrast with the magnificent closing photographs of mountain landscapes.

But what of the content? Robert Rolfe in the Introduction advises the reader to “expect a blend of the familiar and the obscure”. He provides that in an eclectic selection of plants and some landscapes, generally with one or two

photographs facing a page of text. How nice it is to see *Erinus alpinus* and *Omphalodes linifolia* take their bow in the company of rarities such as *Iris urmiensis* and the delectable *Nototriche pedatiloba*. The photographs, most of which are by the author, are excellent and the description of the plants is perceptive, witty and affectionate. The choice of plants was a personal one. They appear in apparently random order, in some cases under a formal name, but more often with a heading such as “Almost All-American” (a rolfeian pun), which makes an accurate index a necessity. Unfortunately, the index is not consistent. Some plants referred to, but not illustrated, are included; others are not. A gremlin has been at work at the entries for *Trillium*.

Robert is one of that small group of writers on alpine, which includes Reginald Farrer and Dwight Ripley, whose style is instantly recognisable. The text is replete with what I shall refer to as rolfeian throw-away remarks, which any reader who has heard Robert lecture will have anticipated. A small sample: “Coincidentally, ‘veronica’ is also a Spanish word used to describe a bull fighter’s avoidance of a bull’s charge ...” with reference to an assault by hawkmoths, the pollinators of *Veronica caespitosa*; and “A year or two earlier, the same nursery first listed that oxymoron of a plant, *Epimedium grandiflorum* ‘Nanum’...”. But the verbal pyrotechnics do not obscure his deep knowledge of alpine plants, their history, ecology and cultivation, and the landscapes that they inhabit, which is apparent on every page of this book. I enjoyed the prose and the illustrations and learned from the description of the plants. The book is contained within the Group’s library but I would advise adding it to the list of your horticultural desiderata.

George Sevastopulo



Corydalis pachycentra (see p.35) Photo: Martin Walsh

FIXTURES

Wednesday, 19 January, 8 pm, AGM, followed by **Brendan Marnell**, 'Alpine Shrubs – Tall and Small', St. Brigid's Parish Centre, Stillorgan.

Saturday, 12 February, 12.30 pm, Lunch followed by **Mary Waldron**, 'Gardens in Other Lands', The Royal St. George Yacht Club, Dun Laoghaire.

Thursday, 17 February, 8 pm, Sidney Clarke, 'Plant Hunting with a Camera', NBG, Glasnevin.

Saturday, 12 March, 2 pm, Local Show, St. Brigid's Parish Centre, Stillorgan.

Thursday, 24 March, 8 pm, Kevin Hughes, 'Trilliums and Associated Flora of South East USA', NBG, Glasnevin. Joint with **I.G.P.S.** Kevin will be selling plants from 7.30 pm.

Saturday, 9 April, 1.30 pm, Dublin Group AGS Show, Cabinteely Community School.

Thursday, 21 April, 8 pm, Seamus O' Brien, 'Kilmacurragh and the Plant Hunters - 300 years of History', St. Brigid's Parish Centre, Stillorgan.

Saturday, 7 May, Ulster Group AGS Show, Greenmount, Co. Antrim.

Saturday, 18 June, 2.30 pm, Visit to garden of **Billy & Anne Moore**, 32 Braemor Park, Churchtown, Dublin 14.

Sunday 14 August, 1.30 pm SHARP. Visit to gardens of **June Blake** and **Jimi Blake**, Blessington, Co. Wicklow. We will start in Jimi's garden

with a guided tour. The entrance fee for the two gardens will be €15 and includes refreshments.

Thursday, 13 October, 8 pm, Jim Almond, 'Fritillaries and other Bulbs', St Brigid's Parish Centre, Stillorgan.

Saturday, 15 October, Jim Almond, Photographic Workshop, NBG, Glasnevin.

Thursday, 10 November, Susan Tindall, 'Alpines at High & Low Altitudes', St Brigid's Parish Centre, Stillorgan.

Friday, 18 to Sunday 20 November, 28th Alpine Weekend, Harry Jans, Jim Jermyn, Liam Mc McCaughey, An Grianán, Termonfeckin.

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

OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE

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