



ALPINE GARDEN SOCIETY

Dublin Group



NEWSLETTER NO 57 – WINTER 2012

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Front cover illustration is of 'Harry's favourite alpine', *Chionocharis bookeri* (See p. 34), and Back Cover, Top: *Edraianthus pumilio* (p. 32) and Bottom: *Roscoea* 'Red Ghurka' (pps. 26 & 33) (Photos: Harry Jans).

EDITORIAL

2011 was tough on gardens. We had an exceptionally cold winter which saw off at least some plants for most of us. Near drought conditions in spring and early autumn posed further challenges; we had a poor summer; and record mild weather in November induced precocious growth that hopefully will not be blasted by frost. But despite the vagaries of the weather our gardens bloomed and gave us enormous pleasure throughout the year. As I write this, in early December, some snowdrops are in flower and many others above the ground, *Cyclamen coum* is blooming, *Daphne* 'Jacqueline Postil' is scenting the air and soon winter aconites, crocuses, narcissus, hellebores, saxifrages and other early flowers will be delighting us. We complain about our climate but really it provides us with interest in our gardens for twelve months of the year. Even in November we still have the consolation of the last of the autumn leaves. I write this just to remind ourselves of what a wonderful hobby gardening is, and how lucky we are to be addicts.

It's good to be able to report that in spite of the awful economic situation membership numbers are down only slightly. What is a bit worrying though is that we are not attracting younger members. This has obvious implications for the medium to long term and it is something that the Committee will have to prioritize. Meanwhile each member could sift through their friends and relatives to see if there might be any potential members there, of any age, but youth (or relative youth) would be a bonus.

Although the age profile of our members is high the great majority have internet access. From a communications perspective this is very useful as we can, at no cost, contact those members about changes to our fixtures or indeed any other matter. But access to the Internet is also invaluable for information about plants and plant related matters. I am prompted to mention this as a result of having browsed Harry Jans' fascinating website after hearing his talks in Termonfeckin –see p. 28. It is also relevant in the context of Jamie's proposal – see p. 7 - to use Facebook to facilitate further communication between members. I think it is an exciting idea and I hope it can be progressed.

I wish you all health, happiness and good gardening in 2012 and thank you for your participation in our 2011 programme.

ALPINE MISCELLANY

In This Issue

The main item in this newsletter, at least in terms of length, is the report on Termonfeckin. It is my hope that as well as reminding members who were there of some of the highlights of the talks, it will also give members who were not there some access to their content and, of course, if it encourages some readers to come along next year so much the better.

For one reason or another, the reports on other events, apart from one, come from my pen, and I want to thank Patricia McGeown for, once again, coming to the rescue with her account of Susan Tindall's talk. Liam Byrne tells us how he grows some lovely, easy primulas in his garden. Where would I be without him!

Gavin Moore has contributed a piece on the construction of a cold frame which is ideal for those alpines that must be given full protection from winter wet. Gavin has built five of these for himself so you are getting the benefit of what he learned in the process. A frame like this greatly extends the range of plants that can be grown, at little cost, but it leaves the owner with no excuse for not putting a few plants on the show bench. If you think the work involved in building the frame yourself is beyond you, maybe some friend who has some carpentry skills would help you out.

Fixtures

Our programme for 2012, which is listed on p.36, starts on 19 January with the **AGM**, followed by a talk from our new Show Secretary, **Michael Higgins**, on 'The National Botanic Gardens through the Seasons'. Michael started in Glasnevin in 1994, and since then has worked in most sections of the gardens at various times giving him an unrivalled knowledge of how the whole operation works. This is a unique opportunity to get an informed insider's view of the 'Bots.' and you'd never know what little juicy morsels Michael might have to impart. The AGM itself usually takes little more than fifteen minutes and gives members a chance to make an input to the running of the Group. So I hope we'll have a good turnout for this event.

The **Annual Lunch** will take place as usual in the salubrious surroundings of the Royal St George Yacht Club in Dun Laoghaire on 11 February. This is a very pleasant social event and members are welcome to bring along a non-member friend. The lunch will be

followed by a talk from **Mary Waldron** on ‘Gardens in Other Lands’. Mary is a noted plants-person and an excellent and much sought-after speaker, and you may be sure that her talk will be informative and entertaining. She was to give a talk at last year’s lunch but due to a serious illness in her family had to cry off at the last minute. Her place was filled most ably and most generously by Carmel Duignan.

Deborah Begley’s talk on 16 February with the intriguing title, ‘Terra Nova – Full of Little Surprises and Debradations’, would be worth attending just to find out what ‘debradations’ means. But as Deborah (with her husband, Martin) is the owner of an acclaimed half-acre garden in Limerick which is absolutely packed with plants – I think I read that she grows around fifty species and cultivars of *Arisaema* – there are other compelling reasons that this lecture should not be missed.

On 10 March our **Local Show, Workshop and Members Plant Sale** will be held in St Brigid’s. There will be competitive and non-competitive exhibits, so if you have a plant that is looking well on the day, bring it along, and don’t forget to bring something for the sale. Our local show has been getting better and better over the past few years and is an excellent curtain-raiser for the main show in April. It offers an opportunity to see plants which flower earlier. Barbara O’Callaghan is the show organizer and will be happy to deal with any queries. We are having an experiment this year whereby we are offering a plant or plants, suitable for showing, free to interested members who would be expected to grow the plant on with a view to exhibiting it in due course at one of our shows. If the recipient of the plant so desires the donor would be prepared to provide ongoing advice on the care of the subject.

Ian Christie will join us on 15 March with a workshop on woodland plants. Ian is one of Scotland’s foremost nurserymen and alpine growers, and is an experienced lecturer with a practical approach to gardening. He has been president of the SRGC and does a lot of work for the club by way of talks and practical demonstrations. I have heard Ian speak on several occasions and unreservedly recommend attendance.

The **Ulster Group AGS Show** will be held in Greenmount on 31 March, somewhat earlier than usual. Every year I urge our members, as visitors, or better still as exhibitors, to head north for this show as it is a most enjoyable day out and members of the Dublin Group are always made especially welcome. Our two groups are quite interdependent and we always have a good attendance of Ulster Group folk at our shows.

On 19 April there is a special treat when **Pam Eveleigh** from Canada will be at the NBG to give a lecture that she is calling 'Let's Talk Primulas!' This will involve a detailed survey of the Genus describing many species so that the audience will be left with an appreciation of the variability of the Genus. Pam is the administrator of the Primula World website where you will find in excess of 2,500 images of primula species. We are very fortunate to have her in Dublin to talk to us about these much-loved plants. She is visiting Scotland to talk to the SRGC and Martin Walsh persuaded her to make the detour.

To mark its official tercentennial celebrations we will visit the wonderful **Kilmacurragh Botanic Garden**, in the company of IGPS members, at the invitation of Seamus O'Brien, who is in charge of the garden, on Sunday, 22 April. Driving south from Dublin on the N11, turn right at the Beehive pub, keep to the main route, and you will find the entrance on your left after four and a half kilometres. Seamus will guide us around the garden so it is important to be at the entrance by 2 pm at the latest. There is no entrance charge to the gardens but the Committee would like to have a voluntary collection (say, €5 per head) so that we can make a donation which will be used to purchase plants for the garden. You can get further information about Kilmacurragh, including more detailed directions, on its website at:

www.botanicgardens.ie/kilmac/kilmhome.htm.

We will have our **AGS Show** in **Cabinteely** on 28 April. As always we need exhibitors, plant donors, helpers and visitors. As well as our plant sale there will be lots of first class commercial plant stalls but of course the exhibits are the main attraction. This is probably the best plant show in the country so please come and encourage all your friends, relatives and neighbours to come as well.

Michael Viney, writing in the Irish Times, described **Declan Doogue's** recently published book, *The Wildflowers of Ireland*, as the "most important book on Ireland's wildflowers in a century, packed with first-hand knowledge and a memorable beauty". In a lecture, jointly hosted by the Dublin Naturalists' Field Club, Declan will talk on 'Garden Plants and their Wild Irish Cousins' at the NBG on 10 May. This will be a super talk and we should try to outnumber the Field Club members.

On Sunday, 27 May, Declan will take us on a field trip to **Bull Island**. The trip will take about two hours and will start at 2 pm **sharp**. We meet at the Bull Island Interpretative Centre at 1.45 pm.

On 9 June we have the opportunity to visit the gardens of **Patricia McGuire** at 3 Hillcrest Downs, Sandyford, Dublin 18, and of **Gavin Moore** at Tinabruach, Sandyford Village, also in Dublin 18. We visited Patricia's gorgeous garden in 2010 but the day was so foul that only a small number turned up so we persuaded Patricia to give us a second chance. You can read a report on that visit in Newsletter No. 54. I need say no more. It is suggested that we visit Patricia first.

Gavin's garden is about a ten minute walk from Patricia. It is a relatively new garden but is full of interest with lots of alpines, woodlanders, herbaceous plants and shrubs. Parking should be available near Patricia's in a new public car park to be opened at Lamb's Cross, and for Gavin's, you could park in the Sandyford House car park and walk up the hill to Tinabruach, which is the last bungalow on the left at the top.

I will write in more detail on our autumn fixtures in our next Newsletter. I think you must agree that our 2012 Programme would be hard to beat, and our thanks must go to Martin Walsh who has been Fixtures Secretary for more years than he cares to remember and is retiring from that position at the AGM. Martin has done a terrific job over the years, putting together an interesting, varied and balanced list of fixtures year after year. He will be succeeded by Paddy Smith who will have the benefit of his guidance for the first twelve months. I wish Paddy every success in his new role.

The Website

This exciting proposal from Jamie Chambers:-

The Committee have been thinking all year about how we can enable our members to use the web to share information, photos, etc. As a result we now have an AGS Ireland Facebook page!

Whatever you've heard about Facebook, at its simplest this is just another web page that you can visit to get AGS information. The big advantage for you is that you can use it as a 'noticeboard' for sharing information between AGS members. You can just type - you don't need to be a web master!

You use it to share ideas or tips by 'posting' them. You can easily share photos by uploading them from your own computer, or you could share links to other websites of interest. Have some excess seedlings to share? Let members know! Want to know where to get a choice alpine? Post a question! Got some photos from the latest garden visit? Upload them into an album for others to share.

Another great thing is that other members can add their comments or just 'like' your posting, which is akin to 'agreeing with' or finding amusing or interesting. I will be adding information about upcoming events, and, of course, the page can be updated very quickly and easily, if we have to make sudden announcements, for example. I will administer the page, but mostly all that means is that I will remove any clutter from time to time as necessary to make sure the important stuff is visible.

AGS Ireland is a public web page which anyone can look at, but if you want to post things on it you will need a Facebook account. You will find instructions on the website to help you set up an account on Facebook and how to get to and use the AGS Ireland Facebook Page. The easiest and most direct way is to go to the AGS website (www.alpinegardensociety.ie) and click on the Facebook link at the bottom.

Better still - find a young relative who will happily guide you through the set-up process. Although you need to have a Facebook account to interact with the page, you can ignore all the other Facebook stuff that you will see each time you log in. That is Facebook trying to get you to 'friend' as many people as possible. You don't have to do it!

You needn't worry too much about privacy as long as you remember, as I tell the kids, "Think before you post - Is it fair to my friends? Does it reflect positively on me?" Of course, I can't promise that you won't become addicted, like the 'screenagers', and spend the day stalking, posting and commenting.

Give it a try. You have the minimum information to get started. Send me your feedback to aid monitoring and mentoring.

Good luck & happy Facebooking.

The Show

I have mentioned the Show already but as it such a key event in our calendar I think it merits its own heading. Michael Higgins has a daunting task ahead of him as he faces into his first Show, although Val has assured him of her support and guidance. Nevertheless, Michael will be anxious to ensure that his first outing will be a resounding success. Let's all do everything we can to make this happen. What does he need? Well mainly, he needs all the help and cooperation Val has had from members over the years. He needs helpers; he needs exhibitors; he needs plants for the plant sale; and he needs lots of members of the public to

come and see the exhibits, buy plants and refreshments and perhaps also to become members. George Sevastopulo has offered this year to do the marketing job so well done by our late great friend, Arthur Dagge, in the past, but, as I've suggested already, you can do your bit by telling everyone you know about the delights that await them if they visit Cabinteely Community School on 28 April.

The Committee

Some changes to the Committee will be proposed to you at the AGM. Paddy Smith was co-opted during the year to replace Arthur and is prepared to stand for election on 19 January. If there are any other members who would like to join the Committee they should let Mary O'Neill Byrne know well in advance. After two years in the job I am standing down as Chairman, and Jamie Chambers is the Committee's nominee to replace me. Any other nominations for this position should likewise be notified to Mary in advance. As mentioned Martin Walsh is retiring from the position of Fixtures Secretary and is handing over to Paddy Smith. All the existing members of the Committee are prepared to serve for another year and will be proposed for re-election at the AGM.

Coach Trip

The Committee is considering a coach trip in the May/June period either to Gardens in Northern Ireland or in the Tipperary area. If you have any preference or a view on whether it should involve an overnight stay or just be a day trip please let us know.

Pots

Michael Meagher still 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.

Editor

Primulas for the Open Garden

My lifelong interest in and love of primulas dates back to my boyhood days when the hedgerows were full of primroses (*P. vulgaris*), and the fields were dotted with cowslips (*P. veris*). Alas, these are now a rare sight due to intensive farming and the overuse of herbicides. The primrose and the cowslip are wonderful plants for the spring garden, although the former can be temperamental, thriving and seeding around happily in some gardens and sulking and hard to please in others. Both species will do best in light shade in fairly rich soil that doesn't dry out. A subspecies of *P. vulgaris*, *P. v. sibthorpii*, with lovely clear pink flowers is worth looking out for.

I grow a range of primula cultivars which do well in various positions in my small garden and I think they are ideal plants for today's smaller plots. *P.* 'Garryard Guinivere' has rosettes of bronze purple foliage which are a wonderful foil for its mauve flowers with a yellow eye. It is, of course, an Irish cultivar as is the superb *P.* 'Lady Greer' with deep green foliage and fragrant creamy



yellow flowers. Another Irish cultivar is the free-flowering *P.* 'Kinlough Beauty' which has salmon pink flowers with a creamy stripe down the centre of the petal and is a gem. It will quickly form a substantial clump. So too will the smaller *P.* 'Wanda' with its striking purple red flowers. And there are many others which are worthwhile including *P.* 'Inisfree' and 'Drumcliffe', bred by Joe Kennedy of Ballycastle and now being distributed by Pat Fitzgerald of Kilkenny. Another of Joe's cultivars is the delightful *P.* 'Maisie Michael'. It has the bronze foliage of 'Guinivere' with surprising soft yellow flowers (see p. 38).

I grow a couple of hybrids from the auricula section my favourite being *P.* 'Rufus', a vigorous plant with pale green, shallowly toothed leaves and large brick red flowers. It does well in a pot but is ideal for the rockery as it likes good drainage as does *P.* 'Blairside Yellow' with its small yellow flowers.

I have given up on Asiatic primulas, apart from some of the so-called candelabra species, as they do not like the Dublin climate, needing cooler and moister conditions than we can provide. They do much better in Scotland and in Northern Ireland.

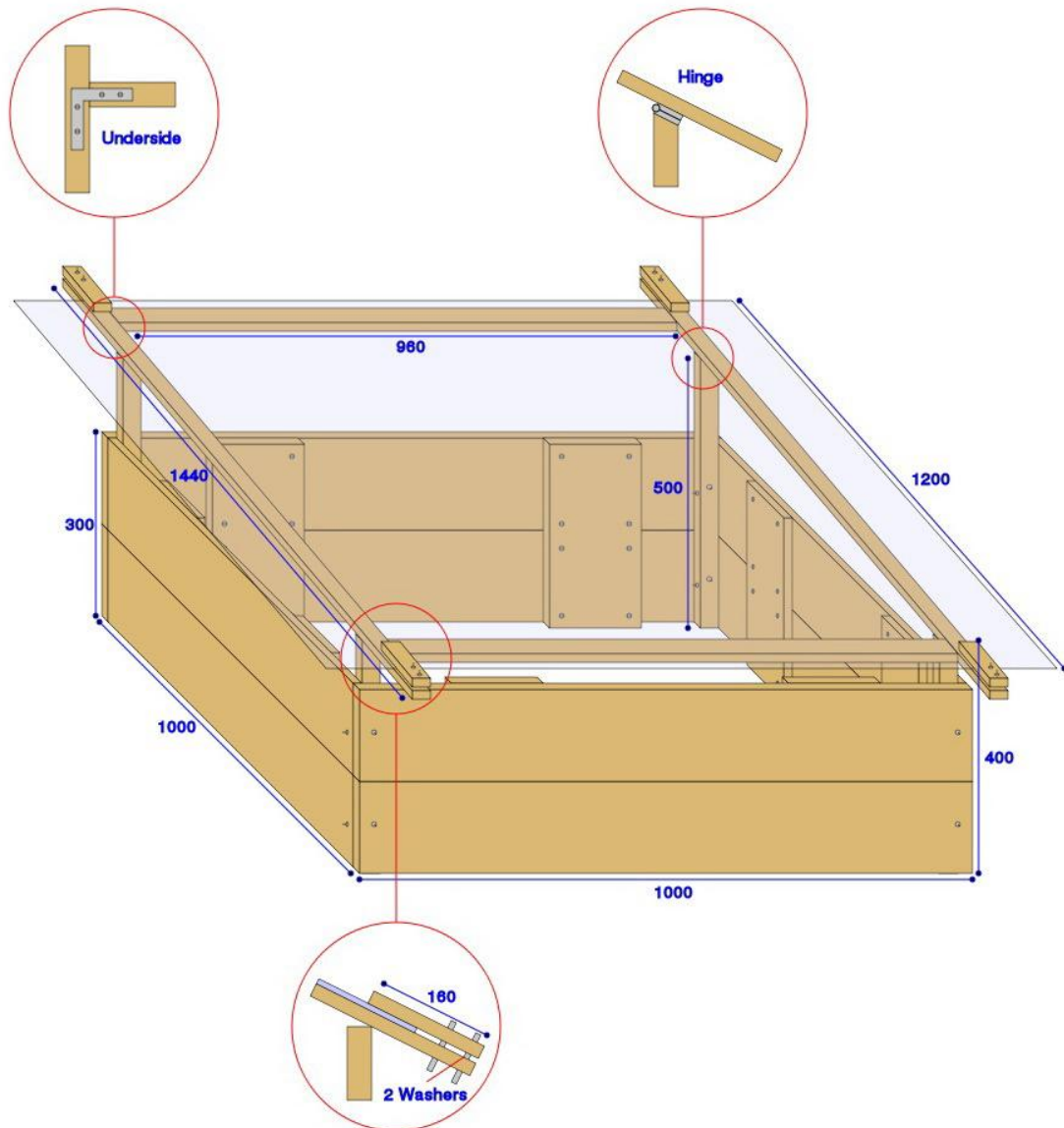
In general primulas are easy plants for the open garden provided their few basic needs are met. Primulas are deep-rooted and my soil is a heavy clay so, before planting, I dig deeply, incorporating lots of humus in the form of garden compost or leafmould and some grit to improve the drainage. When growth begins in the spring I give a light dressing of Growmore fertilizer. Every two years, after flowering, I lift and divide the clumps, retaining the outer rosettes and moving them to a fresh area of the garden. I also wash the soil off the roots before replanting keeping an eye out for vine weevil grubs. I do this as well with any new plants I get so as to avoid importing any 'nasties'.

I find that the 'auriculas' are fairly pest and disease free but all members of the genus can be susceptible to attack by aphids, vine weevils, slugs and snails and can be attacked by grey mould and root rot. I use Roseclear to deal with infestations of aphids and, as it contains a fungicide, it also deals with grey mould. I apply Provado in summer to prevent attack by vine weevils or root aphids. I use slug bait to control molluscs. If I notice any sign of root rot when I lift the plants in early summer I prune the roots back to healthy growth. Primulas can be propagated by division or by seed which can be sown as soon as it is ripe or kept until spring the following year. If seed heads are left on the plants some varieties will do the job themselves by self-seeding gently around.

The genus *Primula* is huge and contains very many garden-worthy plants. If you don't already have a collection in your garden I hope this short article will persuade you to make a start.

Liam Byrne

An Alpine Frame



Building the Frame

The diagram shows the depth of the frame as being 300mm, however, this is not critical, nor is the width of the planks used (old floorboards are very effective and all timbers must be treated with a proprietary 'green' wood preservative). I've found this depth to be sufficient for all but the very tallest pots. It's important not to have the frame too shallow even for small pots, as it will dry out very quickly. Ensure that the roof is above the base by 20cm at the back and 10cm at the front so that there will be plenty of airflow over the plants. I use building sand for the

plunge as it's readily available, and it holds moisture well, without ever being too wet.

The roof is made of one sheet of 'Clearlite' plastic, which is available in most DIY shops. It is clamped on to the wooden roof frame because drilling holes in the plastic doesn't work (I tried!). If your plants tolerate rainfall in summer, you can easily remove the plastic sheet. If summer rain is not tolerated, it is also straightforward to clamp a sheet of netting to shade the plants should we happen to get some bright sunshine.

It is not shown in the diagram, but it is useful to add a hook to allow the roof to be hooked to the base to secure it in very windy conditions, and hook it to a wall to keep the roof up when working with the plants. The frame is best placed in front of a wall.

Shopping List

| Qty | Item | Purpose | Price |
|--|---------------------------------|---------------------|-------------|
| 1 | 1200mm x 1200mm Clearlite Sheet | Roof | €35 |
| 4 | 2.4m x 15cm Sawn Timber Planks | Frame Box | €45 |
| 1 | 2.4m x 47mm x 50mm Sawn Timber | Corner Posts | €8 |
| 2 | 2.4m x 19mm x 38mm Sawn Timber | Roof Frame | €5 |
| 16 | M8 x 80 Hex Head Bolts | Bolt Walls to Posts | €8 |
| 8 | M8 x 60 Hex Head Bolts | Clamp Roof | €4 |
| 50 | Wood Screws | Build Frame Walls | €3 |
| 2 | Hinges (approximately 4mm wide) | Hinged Roof | €4 |
| 4 | L-Shaped Metal Brackets | Build Roof Frame | €3 |
| Total approximate cost of materials | | | €115 |

Gavin Moore

REVIEW OF RECENT GROUP EVENTS

‘Fritillarias and Other Choice Bulbs’, Jim Almond, 13 October

Jim Almond is a great communicator and it shows in his talks. He manages to convey a tremendous amount of information to his audience almost without their noticing, and his talks are absorbing and entertaining. It was no different on this occasion and those in the audience who had been delighted with his talks in Termonfeckin a few years ago were not disappointed.

About a third of the talk was devoted to fritillarias with irises, alliums and erythroniums being covered at some length but trilliums, corydalis, crocuses, snowdrops, ipheions, gladiolus and narcissus were not ignored. Jim is an excellent photographer and so there was a feast for the eyes during his talk but we got a lot more than pretty pictures as Jim also talked about the cultivation and propagation of the various species. Thirty five fritillaries featured, many of which require a bulb frame or other cover to grow well but some, like *F. michailowskyi*, *F. meleagris*, *F. crassifolia*, *F. whittallii*, *F. pinardii* and *F. pyrenaica*, would be quite happy outside. Most of them though would need a sunny well drained spot to do well. *F. collina* needs cover but it is a lovely plant with flower stems just a few inches tall and large brown-patterned yellow flowers. *F. davidii* is also very desirable and must be kept moist at all times.

Juno and Onco irises are by and large a challenge to grow well, but again, some species are suitable for the open garden, for example, *I. magnifica* and its cultivars and *I. aucheri*. Most of the others require perfect drainage at all times, and need a summer baking, so can only be grown well in this country in a bulb frame or alpine house. But most of them such as *I. iberica* subsp. *elegantissima*, are so beautiful that almost any trouble seems worthwhile to enjoy their sumptuous flowers.

Most alliums on the other hand are quite happy outside provided they have good drainage and we should grow more of them. *A. karataviense* ‘Red Globe’ is very good as are *A. caesium* (hot and dry), *A. unifolium* and the late flowering *A. thunbergii album*.

Erythroniums are a delight and do well outside making substantial clumps over time where they are happy. I love *E. helenae* and *E. multiscapoideum* but for the open garden *E. californicum* ‘White Beauty’ cannot be beaten, and it is widely available and inexpensive.

I will pick just a few favourites from the miscellaneous category that Jim spoke of otherwise I will have space problems. No garden should be without *Trillium rivale* which is so easy to grow and such a delight in spring. Of the crocuses *C. corsicus* and *C. biflorus* subsp. *alexandrii* are excellent as is *C. banaticus*. Jim's recommendations for galanthophiles, a growing group (sorry), were: *G.* 'Straffan', *G. nivalis sandersii*, *G. plicatus* 'Wendy's Gold', *G. p.* 'Augustus', *G. elwesii* 'Rosemary Burnham' and *G. nivalis* 'Sandhill Gate'.

Ipheion 'Rolf Fiedler' is excellent and *Gladiolus flanaganii* is a good early summer bulb. A must grow daffodil is *Narcissus cyclamineus*, although because it must never dry out it is scarcer and more expensive than other narcissus species.

Most of these bulbs can easily be grown from seed which should be sown in a free-draining compost, potted on without disturbance for a year or two, and then either planted out in the garden or in a pot, as dictated by the needs of the plant or the grower. In this way anyone can acquire a fine and varied collection of bulbs at little cost save the wait of a few years for the flowers.

Jim, as is his wont, finished his talk with some music which accompanied a re-run of the best of his slides leaving his audience well satisfied.

Photography Workshop 15 October

On the following Saturday in the NBG Jim gave a workshop on digital photography to nineteen members, some complete novices, others with varying degrees of knowledge all of whom ended the day better informed about the capabilities of their cameras and inspired to learn more. The best value for €20 I've ever had. Thank you Jim.

Billy Moore

'Alpines at High and Low Altitudes', Susan Tindall, 10 November.

Susan, with her husband Colin, is the proprietor of the well known alpine and perennial plants nursery in Co. Down. The operation which commenced in 1987 has expanded since then and now covers twenty acres combining extensive gardens, facilities for visiting groups and a wide variety of unusual alpines.

During her talk Susan showed one hundred and forty slides of alpines from all over the world.

I decided to limit myself to commenting on some from the Dolomites and from New Zealand, having a limited experience of the first and an interest in the second.

The Dolomites are forever associated with Reginald Farrer, so it was a pleasure to look at the slide of *Eritrichium nanum* – Farrer's 'King of the Alps'. It is a challenge to cultivate but what joy awaits if you can persuade its azure blue blooms to tumble down a crevice as they do in its chosen Alpine location.

Ranunculus seguieri, with its delightful, snowy white flowers and green ferny foliage, and *Potentilla nitida* with its rosy flowers springing out of hassocks of silver leaves were memorable.

From the grassland/woodland area we saw *Primula elatior* displaying lovely yellow flowers on sturdy stalks, and *P. halleri*, very similar in nature, with lilac flowers. As the latter enjoys moist, semi-shade, it may well do in my garden.

Of the New Zealand plants, the two groups that interested me most were the celmisias and the curious so-called

vegetable sheep. *Celmisia semi-cordata* is striking plant with fluffy white daisy flowers with a yellow disc. *C. spedenii* is most unusual, making tufts of very slender, silvery leaves, with a few short stems and quite small daisy flowers, but the splendid foliage is why it should be grown. *Raoulia eximia* - a strange gray hummock, and *Haastia pubvinaris* - a mound of tightly packed rosettes covered in buff-coloured hairs - presented good examples of so called vegetable sheep!

Altogether it was impossible to do justice to so many slides so this is no more than a personalized taste of her talk.



Patricia McGeown



Primula minkwitziae in the Tien Shan. (Photo: L. & J. McCaughey) – See p. 22.

28th Alpine Weekend at Termonfeckin 18 – 20 November

It becomes a bit boring, I suppose, to read that year after year our discussion weekend in Termonfeckin was once again an unqualified success. But, believe me, this is not just hyperbole: the weekend met all our expectations and was thoroughly enjoyed by all the participants. At least I can say that all the feedback I got was entirely positive.

Arriving at An Grianán participants are met by a warm welcoming atmosphere with the Christmas tree adding a seasonal touch. One person who was conspicuous by his absence was the late Arthur Dagge who was missed by all the regulars. Arthur had become a prominent figure in recent years due to his friendly outgoing personality, and had become part of that atmosphere. But Mary O'Neill Byrne and Tessa Dagge who met all the delegates as they arrived ensured that everyone felt welcome. We owe a huge debt of gratitude to them both for all their hard work without which the weekend would not have been possible. Thanks must also go to the rest of the Committee for their contribution and to other members like Carmel Duignan and her team on the plant stall; Gwenda Wratt, who set up and managed the stationery and *objets d'art* stall; Nilla Martin and Marie Cunningham who provided the floral table pieces for the dining hall; Carl Dacus, our lighting and projection engineer; and everyone else who helped to ensure the success of the weekend.

Perhaps as another sign of the difficult economic situation that we find ourselves in, numbers were down slightly on previous years, but we still had a substantial audience. The participation of the Ulster Group in the weekend is invaluable: without it the event would probably not be viable, at least in its present form. Due to illness and other factors representation from the Cork Group was down to one and we hope to see it back up to normal next year. It was, however, wonderful to see Margaret and Henry Taylor from Scotland once again joining us as delegates, (they were speakers in 2009) and they both professed themselves to be delighted with the experience.

Before I come to the speakers I should mention the other features that contribute to the overall attraction of the weekend. The informal slide show on Friday night, coordinated by Carl, was most enjoyable. We had contributions from Barbara O'Callaghan, Heather Smith, Joan McCaughey, Harry Jans and Carl and visited New Zealand, Tasmania,

the Dolomites, the Himalayas, Lebanon, Nottingham and Edinburgh. The Table Quiz, entertainingly created and presented by Jamie Chambers, was challenging and enjoyable. Do you know how many petals a snowdrop has?

Fresh from his triumph at the International Conference in Nottingham George Sevastopulo coaxed a substantial sum out of peoples' pockets at the plant auction. There were lots of fine plants coming under the hammer and thanks are due to all the donors but especially to Harold McBride, whose contribution to the auction and to the plant sale enhanced the group's finances very significantly.



Jim Jermyn, Joan McCaughey, Liam McCaughey and Harry Jans at Termonfeckin

Business was brisk on the commercial plant stalls of Aberconwy and Timpany Nurseries, joined this year by Clare Beumer from Co. Tipperary, who is a new member of the Group and had an attractive range of plants for sale. Amazingly, given this competition, our own plant stall was a sell-out leading one to speculate on, and wonder about, the total amount of cash that is spent on plants over these weekends. But don't we all know that money spent on plants is money well spent.

The Plant Forum on Sunday morning once again proved popular with the questions being answered by the panel of Susan Tindall, Harry Jans, Keith Lever, and Jim Jermyn. Of course, there is always a huge vein of knowledge and expertise among the audience also and their wisdom supplements that of the panel. Valerie Keegan kindly kept a record of the questions and answers on this occasion and we will put a selection up on the website.

Despite all these activities and the lectures there was still time for relaxed conversations in the bar and of course at mealtimes there was the opportunity to share experiences and knowledge with like-minded dining companions.

An Grianán itself is an important ingredient due to its comfort and homeliness and the unfailing courtesy and friendliness of the staff. We are very well looked after, the food is good and it is hard to think of an alternative if the venue were no longer available. So we must wish long life and prosperity to An Grianán.



Dracocephalum grandiflorum (Photo: L. & J. McCaughey)

Joan and Liam McCaughey

But on to our speakers around whom the whole weekend revolves.

Harry Jans and Jim Jermyn gave us two talks each and we had one from

Joan and Liam McCaughey, mainly from Joan. I will start with that which was entitled 'From Mullingar to the Mountains of Heaven'. Some years ago Joan and Liam were in Mullingar for an outing organized by the Belfast Naturalists' Field Club, in the course of which they visited Belvedere House and learned something of its history. Belvedere is probably best known for the 18th Century tragic story of the marital difficulties of Robert Rochfort, Earl of Belvedere and his savage treatment of his wife because of her alleged adultery with his brother. Joan told us some of this history, illustrated with contemporary photographs, but the centre of her interest in Belvedere was its last owner, Lieutenant Colonel Charles Howard-Bury, who was a keen plantsman and explorer. He created a Himalayan garden at Belvedere which was much admired in its day. *Primula buryana* is named after him. But perhaps he is best known for having led the Reconnaissance Expedition to Mount Everest in 1921, but, more pertinent to Joan's story, in 1913 he went on an extended trip to the Tien Shan Mountains. He wrote an account of this trip in his diaries but failed to publish it before his death in 1963. Marian Keaney had been given access to his papers and, in 1990, *Mountains of Heaven: Travels in the Tien Shan*



Hegemone lilacina (Photo: L. & J. McCaughey)

Mountains, 1913 with her as editor was published by Hodder & Stoughton (ISBN-13: 978-0340525319). Joan subsequently read this book and, although it is less than riveting, it left her with a persistent longing to visit the Tien Shan. Eventually she and Liam signed up for the Greentours trip to the region in 2008. The tour started at the northern edge of the mountains in Kazakhstan, taking in the Ala Tau, just south of Almaty, the former capital, and the Kara Tau, in the Aksu-Dzhabagly reserve some 300 km to the west, a route that once formed part of the old Silk Road.

Part of the trip involved the use of horses which made things easier on the feet but caused some distress to other parts of the anatomy. One member of the party took a tumble, resulting in a broken wrist which put a stop to his time in the saddle.

Liam made his input to the talk by providing us with an interesting and clearly illustrated geological history of the evolution of the Tien Shan range.

Joan recounted some of the history of the region. She then took us through

their trip illustrating it with many excellent pictures taken by Liam and herself. Most of these were of plants but there were also shots of animals, insects and birds, and, of course, landscapes. Among the plants mentioned we saw roses, gentians, primulas, alliums, tulips, anemones, androsaces and many more. For me some of the highlights were *Dracocephalum grandiflorum*, *Primula turkestanica*, *Hegemone lilacina*, *Chorispora bungeana*, *Pedicularis oederi*, *Saussurea gnaphaloides*, *Primula minkwitziae*, *Iris caerulea*, and, of course, *Paraquilegia anemonoides*. I thought their photo of a white, black-veined butterfly on *Gentiana olivieri* (above) was particularly attractive. Joan showed some lovely pictures of alpine meadows which must have been even more colourful in reality.



Some of the animals encountered on the trip included a brown bear, an ibex, marmots, an Egyptian vulture and several other birds, an Asian green toad and a viper.

The soviet occupation of Kazakhstan was evident at Gaish, just south of Almaty in the form of a derelict astronomical observatory with disintegrating buildings and equipment including a massive radio telescope. Higher up in the same area there were other abandoned structures on a site where nuclear bombs were manufactured by the Russians during the cold war.

Joan finished her lecture with a delightful collage of portraits of a selection of the plants discussed.

The talk held a particular resonance for me as I visited the Celestial Mountains in 1999 with an AGS tour in which Martin Walsh was also a participant, and the plant photos brought back great memories of that adventure.



Paraquilegia anemonoides (Photo: L. & J. McCaughey)

This was a wonderful talk, informative, full of interest, beautifully illustrated and delivered seamlessly and confidently by Joan. Indeed several people told me that for them it was the best lecture of the weekend.

Jim Jermyn

Jim Jermyn has been a speaker at Termonfeckin before and has also given talks to us in Dublin. He is a very experienced lecturer, author, plant explorer and, most importantly, plant grower. He owned and ran Edrom Nurseries for twenty years until 1999 and many in the audience, including this writer, are still growing plants bought from Jim. Before taking over Edrom he trained with Jack Drake, Ingerswens, and the Schachts and had as mentors many other famous names in the world of alpinists. His first talk was entitled 'A New Approach to Cultivating Himalayan Plants' and was informed by his years of experience of growing these often very difficult plants.

Scotland is noted for having a climate that is ideal for the cultivation of plants from the Himalayas. Meconopsis, autumn gentians, Asiatic primulas and their ilk are much more easily grown there than, say, in the drier warmer conditions that obtain in Dublin.

Jim noted however, that even in Scotland, due to

the changing weather of recent years, they are now becoming more challenging. He talked about ways of meeting this challenge and illustrated his talk with fine images of mouth-watering plants, and few plants are more photogenic than those from the Himalayan regions. Also Jim was using slides in contrast to the other speakers whose presentations were digital and, although digital photos are now excellent



Leucojum vernum (Photo: Harry Jans) See p. 27.

due to improvements in cameras and projectors, I think they still lack that extra sparkle that good slides seem to have.



Gentiana urnula (Photo: Harry Jans)

Over the course of the weekend we saw many superb plants but I think pride of place must go to the stunning *Gentiana urnula* (I notice that Vojtěch Holubec is offering seed of it this year but I suspect that growing it to flowering stage in our climate would test the most skilful grower). This was just one of a number of gentians that Jim discussed and he noted that all the autumn gentians need a rich soil and constant moisture to thrive. *G. depressa*, also lovely, is, he told us, one of the easier species.

Unsurprisingly the genus that dominated the talk was *Primula* and we saw a wide selection of these beautiful plants. Petiolarid primulas need the protection of a cloche or similar in winter to prevent them rotting off, and summer heat is a huge problem for them. So, only a few of them will succeed in Dublin gardens: they fare better in Northern Ireland. *P. reidii* var. *williamsii* is very desirable with its large sweetly scented flowers of the palest blue. I have grown it, but never for long. The magnificent palette of colours among the candelabra primulas makes them a must if bog garden conditions can be provided. The display they can provide in late spring/early summer is unrivalled.

Of the many *Meconopsis* shown Jim considers *M.* 'Lingholm' the easiest. *Incarvillea himalayense* is a species with much potential and requires good drainage. *Stellera chaemaejasme* also likes drier conditions. Roscoeas are more easily grown and *R. purpurea* 'Red Ghurka' is eye-catching.



Stellera chaemaejasme (Photo: Harry Jans)

Some other plants mentioned were *Lilium nepalense*, among several Himalayan lilies, *Daphne bholua*, *Anemone trullifolia* and *A. obtusiloba* 'Pradesh'.

We visited a number of Scottish gardens famous for their collections of Himalayan plants such as Ascreavie, once owned by George Sherriff, Branklyn, Arduaine, Crarae as well as Ballyhivistock in Northern Ireland. Jim closed this informative talk with another shot of the wonderful *Gentiana urnula* growing in the Khumbu Himal in Central Nepal. Jim's second outing brought us closer to home and was titled 'A Closer Look at some Alpines from the Eastern Alps'. He brought us on a tour of the eastern Alps and discussed the plants there, most of them more amenable to cultivation in our lowland gardens than those in his earlier talk. His experience as a nurseryman was invaluable here as he could speak with authority on the growability of the plants mentioned. Many of the photographs had been taken by his friend Dieter Schacht. He opened with a nice group of *Hepatica nobilis* which likes a humusy alkaline soil. Other easy plants shown were *Anemone nemorosa*, *Helleborus*

niger, *Leucojum vernum*, which likes wet conditions, *Primula elatior*, *Callianthemum anemonoides*, and *Saxifraga oppositifolia*, but *S. rudolphiana* is more difficult.

Jim believes that Austria is under-visited by plant lovers and offers much. *Primula auricula*, a lovely plant with which we are all familiar is also easily grown. Jim bemoaned the fact that the name is no longer valid and we must get used to calling it *P. lutea*.

In the course of this talk Jim emphasized several times the importance of timing when plant exploring. Due to the short flowering period of many alpinas a couple of weeks too early or too late can mean missing the flowers, and weather conditions can affect flowering times by several weeks in some seasons.

Androsace helvetica is very tricky in cultivation. Jim recommends sowing the seed in situ in a crevice in which there is a small amount of humus. It is a beautiful plant and every alpine enthusiast would love to grow it. Difficult also is *Daphne petraea* but, as Jim showed, it flowers happily on Monte Tremalzo in northern Italy as do



three other desirable species: *Physoplexis comosa*, (above. Photo: Harry Jans) *Silene elizabethae* and *Geranium argenteum*.

Much as I would like to it is not possible in a short report like this to list all the plants that Jim discussed but I can mention the highlights.

Rhodothamnus chaemaecistus and *Eritrichium nanum*, both challenging, obviously come into this category as does *Primula tyrolensis* which is closely related to *P. allionii*.

Mount Elmo is Jim's favourite mountain in the Dolomites where we saw several pulsatillas. Jim opined that every garden should have five species of this lovely genus and considers that *P. vernalis* is the best. Pulsatillas are not difficult to grow provided they are given the deep root run that they require. Our knowledge of the genus will be amplified and clarified

when Kit Grey-Wilson's book on the genus comes out in the autumn of 2012.

Geum reptans which Farrer enthused about is a lime hater, has attractive seed heads, but is hard to please in cultivation.

Throughout the talk Jim interspersed the plant pictures with wonderful views of the spectacular scenery of these mountains which adds greatly to the joy of plant exploring.

Cyclamen purpurascens can be shy-flowering but it should feature in every cyclamen collection.

Moving into Slovenia we saw *Lilium carniolicum* which Jim thinks should be grown more. He also recommends *Linum alpinum* subsp. *julicum* "a good, easy plant". The very fragrant *Dianthus monspessulanus* subsp. *sternbergii* is "essential". More difficult but equally indispensable is the lovely *Campanula zozysii*.

Ranunculus traunfellneri and *Primula wulfeniana* are "easy and lovely" and good garden plants. *Gentiana froelichii*, a beautiful member of the genus, is on the red list of plants endemic to Slovenia that are threatened.

Dianthus alpinus likes lime and for Jim is "one of the finest of all European alpines".

This lecture ended with a fine shot of the rare and beautiful *Campanula morettiana* which is best in tufa.

In the course of his talks Jim delivered a vast amount of information with an amazing fluency without reference to a note or to the prompts afforded by Powerpoint presentations – a tribute to his professionalism.

Harry Jans

We had two talks also from Harry Jans and he opened with an account of a trip he made from Chengdu to Lhasa in 2009 which he called 'Plant Hunting on the Roof of the World'. As the audience filtered into the lecture hall we were treated to a video made on the trip accompanied by Chinese music which wonderfully set the scene for the excellent talk that followed.

The trip involved a 3,000 km drive in eight jeeps over fifteen mountain passes up to 5,000 m, during which the party saw a multitude of stunning plants, many of them very rare and some not seen before. Again I can only touch on the highlights of the talk but all the pictures

can be seen on Harry's exemplary website at www.jansalpines.com.



The very dark *Primula euprepes*, (Above. Photo: Harry Jans), now available from Kevock Nurseries, is a sinister beauty looking highly desirable in Harry's picture. I expect to see it on the show bench soon. *P. florida*, although lovely, seemed unexciting by comparison. Not so a lovely pale blue form of *Gentiana sino-ornata*. Harry showed several shots of this species demonstrating the wide range of blues in which it comes.

Pedicularis variegata was impressive as was *Meconopsis henrici* but both were overshadowed for me by fine stands of *Stellera chaemajasma* some of the plants with their carrot like roots being upwards of forty years old. Not easy in cultivation, *Stellera* can be described as an herbaceous daphne – see photo on p. 26. I am fond of arisaemas and *A. ciliata* var. *linbaense* should be worth growing. Several shots of *Meconopsis lancifolia* illustrated its colour variability the flowers being varying shades of pink or blue.

Pleurospermum hedinii, new to me, looked very attractive.

Throughout his talk Harry showed us not only the landscape through which they were passing but also the towns, houses, including interiors, monasteries, and, of course, the inhabitants all of which added greatly to help the audience to visualize the experience more fully.

The Chinese have very strict plant laws and collecting of any kind is prohibited. Harry operated a strict no collecting policy throughout the

trip making it clear to participants that he would not tolerate any breaches. The Chinese rules also meant that each member of the party had to have multiple official permits to enable access to the various districts. Some areas were completely out of bounds.



Gentiana sino-ornata (Photo: Harry Jans)

The starfish like *Saussurea stella* is eye-catching as is *Androsace bisulca* var. *aurata* with its prominent soft yellow flowers, (later we were to see the rarer, pink flowered *A. bisulca* var. *brahmaputrae*). Also with yellow flowers, *Cremanthodium decaisnei* was pictured standing in water. A new species of *Incarvillea* with pink flowers on tall stems was an exciting find. It was also exciting for us to see large mats of *Primula bracteata* growing on sheer cliff faces, sadly out of flower.

Other unusual plants were *Solmslaubachia prolifera* with pale blue flowers and *Saussurea leucoma* with its column of grey felted foliage. But the real stunner, mentioned by Jim also, had to be *Gentiana urnula* with its rosettes nearly as attractive as its flowers.

Harry considers that the blue very floriferous *Salvia wardii* would make an excellent garden plant. It's doubtful if the spectacular *Primula szechuanica* would be as amenable to cultivation but perhaps the

wonderfully fragrant *Lonicera syringantha* would.



Primula szechuanica (Photo: Harry Jans)

The very floriferous Galung La Pass was a highlight of the trip with many plants such as cypripediums, primulas, rogersias in abundance but the star at 4,400 m was *Meconopsis speciosa* with flowers of an ethereal light blue. Blue also were the berries of *Gaultheria tricophylla* but, unusually for the genus in which yellow flowers predominate, *Caltha sino gracilis forma rubriflora*, as the name implies, had pink-purple flowers.

We saw beautiful drifts of the sweetly scented *Primula agleniana* with pink and white flowers. *Gentiana cf. wardii* was most impressive as was *Diapensia himalaica* and *Omphalogramma tibeticum*. In this very rich area there were also lots of lilies, arisaemas and rhododendrons.

The trip was by no means all plain sailing due to breakdowns and other holdups. One of the team of drivers and guides was a 'fixer' who would stay behind to mend the affected jeep, catching up with the others later while his passengers would be distributed among the other cars. On one occasion the party came upon a large truck which was completely broken down and likely to remain so for several days. With the help of the locals a new road was made around the stricken truck so that the jeeps could pass, reducing a potential delay of days to one of merely hours.

Towards the end of the trip we encounter more gentians, a pyrola, the variable but beautiful *Meconopsis baileyi*, *M. prainiana*, *M. impedita* and the stately *Rheum nobile*, up to two metres tall marching up a hillside. The final plants are a 2,500 year old *Cupressus gigantea*, a fine specimen of *Meconopsis horridula* and the marvelous *Corydalis milarepa*.

Finally we arrive in Lhasa and Harry gives us a tour taking in the Potala Palace, Bakhor Square and the Jokhang Temple with many shots of monks, pilgrims and local people who are friendly. Some of the faces are quite striking. The presence of Chinese troops on the streets clashes with the otherwise peaceful environment. Access to the iconic Palace is now more restricted than was the case in the past which is sad to relate. So the talk ended leaving the audience wishing that they could have participated in what must have been an outstanding journey.

Harry's second talk, which he called 'Plant Portraits', was centered on his garden, and both it and the plants that he grows can be seen on his amazing website.

The front garden consists of tufa boulders, artfully arranged to mimic a natural outcrop, and densely planted with an eclectic range of superb alpines. Harry now sows seeds in situ and allows established plants to seed around, removing any unwanted seedlings. Ramondas, for example, seed heavily and are attaining the status of weeds! Holes are drilled in the tufa to accommodate any planting that needs to be done. *Edraianthus pumilio* and *E. serpyllifolius* love the tufa as do saxifrages with *S. longifolia* being prominent.

The back garden contains the alpine house, a large frame, tufa walls, a tufa column, more tufa beds and a peat bed. The tufa walls are hosts to paraquilegias, saxifrages, jenkaeas, dionysias and other aristocratic alpines. *Physoplexis comosa* thrives there.

The tufa column is twenty years old and is irrigated by an overhead drip. Ramondas are happy there as is *Daphne arbuscula* in various forms. A particular favourite of Harry's is the richly coloured form, 'Libussa'. Like Jim, Harry is fond of pulsatillas and showed a lovely seedling from *P. 'Budapest'*.

The peat bed is constructed with peat blocks and is planted with a variety of ericaceous plants like cassiopes, rhododendrons, gaultherias, and pernettyas. *Pleione formosana* does well there too, in shade, and has proved hardy to -15°C. *Sanguinaria canadensis* 'Multiplex' features also as does *Paris japonica* which is not easy. *Roscoea purpurea* 'Red Ghurka', also

mentioned by Jim, makes a fine splash of colour as do hepaticas; *H. nobilis* 'Prickel' is unusual having white petals with blue mottling. *Dactylorhiza* 'Eskimo Nell' is a super plant but slow to increase. Harry also has great success with cypripediums in his peat bed. He grows them, both species and hybrids, in a peaty soil with added pumice – "a light, loose mixture" - in half shade. They like to be cool in summer. *C.* 'Reginae' needs more moisture than others (maybe that's why mine died) and the hybrids in general are easier. 'Philip' is very good. The plants can be increased by division in early spring. Harry told us that one breeder in Holland is growing cypripediums by the tens of thousands and he is confident that they will be very much cheaper in a few years.

Ute and Wolfgang Strumpf are dedicated alpine growers and Harry took us on a visit to their wonderfully pristine garden in Germany. They grow sixty different androsaces outside as well as many other choice alpiners. *Viola delphinantha*, which is very difficult, has been growing outside for twenty years and a beautiful specimen of *Jenksaea heldreichii* crosses happily with *Ramonda myconi*.

We also visited the alpine house of Gerd Stopp where we saw a fine plant of *Dionysia afghanica*.

Harry is very fond of *Primula allionii* and has in recent years reintroduced the pure species from the wild. He illustrated the remarkable colour variation in the wild species and showed us some lovely plants.

As mentioned earlier *Kabschia* saxifrages do well in tufa. Good ones are: 'Jenkinsae', 'Galaxie', 'Sherlock Holmes', 'Christian Huygens' and 'Louis Armstrong', but there are many others. Of the species *S. dinnikii* and *S. columnaris* are terrific, but difficult.

Some alpiners remain nigh impossible to grow but make excellent subjects for photographs. Harry finished this stimulating lecture with enviable images of *Eritrichium nanum*, *Ranunculus glacialis*, *Rheum nobile*, some African lobelias and finally, his favourite alpine, a picture of which adorns our cover, *Chionocharis hookeri*.

And so our Termonfeckin weekend was over for another year and we headed home educated and stimulated and looking forward to 2012 when our speakers will be Rod Leeds, Martin Walsh and Ian Young.

Billy Moore

Christmas Miscellany 8 December

Despite the cold weather we had a reasonably good attendance for our last fixture of 2011, and it turned out to be an interesting, enjoyable and convivial evening.

Harold McBride, who is one of our northern members, kindly sent down some lovely slides taken in his garden, a garden which had been visited at least once by most members of the audience. All Harold's slides were admired but his picture of the lovely golden flowers of *Eranthis tubergeniana* peeping through a covering of snow was the highlight. We all hoped to be spared a similar photo opportunity this winter however.

Val Keegan showed some pictures taken at the International Conference in Nottingham. As well as pictures of delegates from Ireland she put faces on several of the well known names regularly encountered in the Bulletin, and showed us some of the plants that graced the show benches, including Liam Byrne's first prize winning *Primula aureata*. Barbara O'Callaghan also took Nottingham as her theme but confined herself to some interesting gardens which she and Breda Handley visited before and after the Conference.

Jamie Chambers gave us a brief tour of *De Hortus Botanicus*, as the Amsterdam Botanic Garden is called. He was quite taken by the number of New Zealand plants that were displayed in the main glasshouse and intrigued us with his picture of the 'Plant Doctor', one of the staff who is there to answer queries from members of the public.

Carmel Duignan showed some nice pictures taken on our successful trip to the West earlier in the year. We were reminded of the torrential rain experienced in Lorna McMahon's lovely garden, and the fierce wind which we struggled against on our visit to the Burren. But we were also reminded of the unique landscape of the Burren and of the great plants we saw in Lorna's garden and in the amazing garden of Carl Wright. Janet Wynne reinforced our memories of a very enjoyable outing with some more, but different, photos of people and plants.

AnneMarie Keoghan and her husband went on a trekking holiday to Argentina last March and took some fine photographs of the magnificent landscapes through which they travelled, managing to get some great shots of alpine plants on the way, including a rosulate viola which sadly was not in flower as it was autumn south of the equator.

But she showed us colourful images of autumn berries which apparently tasted as good as they looked.

Dermot Kehoe took us to Germany where we visited the renowned Berlin Botanic Garden, specifically the large greenhouse and its huge range of exotic plants. Dermot also told us about the famous *Bundesgartenschau* which is held every two years in a German city. We saw the established garden that resulted from the show in Britz some years ago and also from the show in Schwerin in 2009. A notable aspect of German public gardens is the presence of dramatic water features.

The final presentation was from Martin Walsh who enthused about the spectacular garden of Keith and Ros Wiley in Devon which was inspired by wildflower meadows that Keith, a very experienced plantsman, had seen in various parts of the world. Martin's pictures gave us an idea of what to expect when Keith comes to talk to us on 18 October, a talk that simply cannot be missed. Martin considers Keith to be at the cutting edge of British gardening and rated his talk in Nottingham as the best of the Conference. One of the plants that we saw in this dramatic garden that particularly appealed to me was *Roscoea* 'Brown Peacock' and it has been added to my wish list.

Our evening concluded with tea and talk and delicious mince pies kindly baked by Val Keegan and Mary Glennon. We all parted, exchanging seasonal good wishes, and looking forward to our 2012 Programme.

Billy Moore

FIXTURES

Thursday, 19 January, 8 pm. AGM followed by **Michael Higgins**, 'National Botanic Gardens through the Seasons'. St. Brigid's Parish Centre, Stillorgan.

Saturday, 11 February, 12.30 pm. Annual Lunch followed by **Mary Waldron**, 'Gardens in Other Lands'. Royal St George Yacht Club, Dun Laoghaire.

Thursday, 16 February, 8 pm. Deborah Begley, 'Terra Nova - Full of Little Surprises and Debradations.' St Brigid's Parish Centre, Stillorgan.'

Saturday, 10 March, 2 pm. Local Show, Workshop and Members Plant Sale. St Brigid's Parish Centre, Stillorgan.

Thursday, 15 March, 8 pm. Ian Christie, 'Woodland Plants' - Workshop, St Brigid's Parish Centre, Stillorgan.

Saturday, 31 March, Ulster Group AGS Show, Greenmount, Co. Antrim.

Thursday, 19 April, 8 pm, Pam Eveleigh, 'Primulas' NBG, Glasnevin.

Sunday, 22 April, 2 pm. Garden Visit – Kilmacurragh Botanic Gardens, Rathdrum, Co. Wicklow. . Joint with **IGPS**.

Saturday, 28 April, Dublin Group AGS Show, Cabinteely Community School, Cabinteely, Co. Dublin.

Thursday, 10 May, 8 pm. Declan Doogue, 'Garden Plants and their Wild Irish Cousins'. NBG, Glasnevin. Joint with **Dublin Naturalists' Field Club.**

Sunday, 27 May, 2 pm. Field trip with Declan Doogue – Bull Island.

Saturday, 9 June, 2.30 – 5 pm. Garden Visits – Patricia McGuire and Gavin Moore.

Thursday, 18 October, 8 pm. Keith Wiley, 'A Holistic Approach to Plants', NBG, Glasnevin. Joint with **I.G.P.S.**

Thursday, 8 November, Carl Wright, 8 pm. 'Wild about the Garden – Embracing Nature'. St Brigid's Parish Centre Stillorgan.

Friday 16 to Sunday 18 November, 29th Alpine Weekend, Rod Leeds, Martin Walsh and Ian Young, An Grianán, Termonfeckin.

Thursday, 6 December, 8 pm Christmas Miscellany, St Brigid's Parish Centre, Stillorgan.

[You will find more details about the fixtures on p. 4.](#)

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Primula 'Maisie Michael', See p.10. (Photo: Billy Moore)



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

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