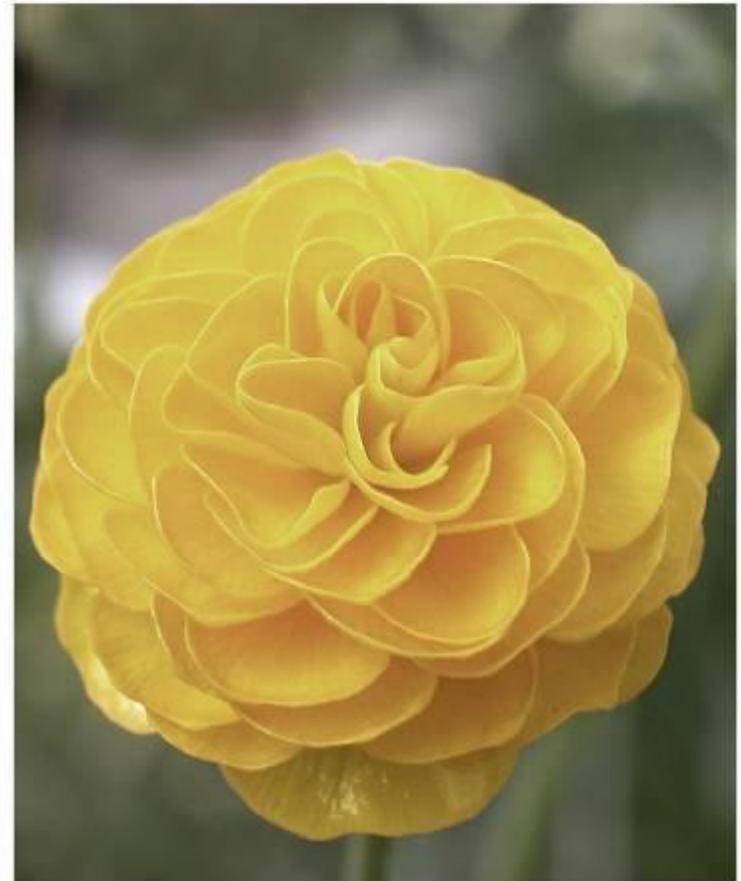




THE ALPINE GARDEN SOCIETY
ULSTER GROUP



Newsletter No. 7 August 2008

Cover Photograph : *Ranunculus acris flore plena*
Mark Smyth



Newsletter No.7

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Editorial

How appropriate that Zdenek should send me an article entitled 'Singing the Blues' just as our desk computer crashed permanently. Due to our trip to the Tien Shan Mountains in Kazakhstan I was already way behind in compiling the Newsletter and at this moment in time, am typing all on a laptop hoping to meet the deadline! Fortunately there was a backup to most articles and the others were in good old-fashioned print - so fingers crossed. Once again I am indebted to all who have sent contributions, especially those like Lorna and Zdenek who volunteered theirs without being asked, and also to Kay, who *encouraged* others. There are plenty of other garden magazines but this one is unique in that it is yours, the Ulster AGS group and I feel, should try to reflect everyone.

Zdenek's article with its wonderful photographs will have us all singing the praise of blue flowers. I only wish I could grow them as well but with his book on Crevice Gardens there might be an improvement.

Talking of books, Kay was the instigator of 'Desert Island' books and it is interesting to see the wide choice of books chosen. This past year has seen some very interesting new publications on gardening and plants including Helen Dillon, Janis Ruskans, and the Coxes in Glendoick, all well worth the read.

I was fortunate to be able to go on that most enjoyable trip to Dublin where we were royally treated in the three gardens by our hosts, Carmel Duigan, Noelle Curran, and Billy Moore, assisted by members of the Dublin AGS - many thanks to all. As usual the whole day was organised superbly by Margaret Glynn and Kay - what would we do without them!

While I was sitting on a horse in the mountains of Kazakhstan I kept thinking of the comfort, nay luxury, I could have been enjoying with those lucky enough to be on the Lake District Tour, again organised



by Margaret and Kay. By all accounts it was also a great trip, with every garden worth the effort, although I was compensated by seeing cliffs covered in hundreds of paraquilegias, all in perfect bloom.

Many congratulations to Brian Duncan on being awarded the prestigious Dix Medal by the Royal General Bulbgrowers Association in Holland at the World Daffodil Europe Tour 2008. It couldn't have happened to a nicer person as many of our members, who have seen his generosity with both time and plants, can testify, and is well deserved!

Congratulations also to the Scottish Rock Garden Club on their 75th Anniversary and, on a personal note, I really look forward to their journal.

It is with sadness that I record the death of Ruby Cardy, a member of the AGS for many years and active in both growing and showing until very recently. I have lovely memories of a kind gentle woman, who, in spite of the frailty of age, was always ready to play her part and our sincere sympathy goes to Lynas on his loss.

After a very successful year Paddy hands over the Chair at the AGM to Alfie Robbins and to ensure that next year continues this success I am sure all our members will give him and the committee all the help and support they need. This coming year also sees our 70th show and plans are afoot to make it special. Heather has managed to attract a star cast of speakers, who should appeal to all members and friends, so we can all look forward to a most interesting year.

A Visit to the New York Botanic Garden - Margaret Glynn

“You must see New York,” she said. I waited for the addendum “before you die”. Instead she said, “next April or May” – not a question but a statement of fact of what was to come.

So Kay and I set out for New York with her preformed plan of what to see and do! Priority, the 250 acres in The Bronx for which Andrew Carnegie, Cornelius Vanderbilt and J. Pierpont Morgan helped raise funds and where in 1891 a national treasure was born. Just 22 minutes from Grand Central Station by metro and entered through the Mosholu Gate into a springtime paradise.

The grounds were virtually deserted at the onset; gardeners were spiking and grooming lawns and a tram driver stopped to offer us a tour. He spouted welcome information about the botanic garden and its architecture. Tour ended and we walked to the 2.5 acre rock garden. This had obviously extensive restoration to set off a display of thousands of alpine flowers, all in excellent health and well tended. There was a beautifully landscaped stream, edged by primroses and woodland plants, which meandered to a flower-rimmed pool. Any alpine enthusiast would have been excited by the scree, sand beds and a small moraine. What more could one ask?

Then wandering into a wilder wooded area we were stopped in our tracks by what seemed miles of *Erythronium Californicum* in full bloom.

We did not linger to visit the Haupt conservatory. Unfortunately it was too early to see the Jane Watson Irwin perennial garden. Looking back it's surprising that Kay did not make a beeline for the Nancy Bryan Luce herb garden (redesigned by Penelope Hobhouse) – but maybe next time. Iris and peony collections would certainly have attracted me at the correct time of year.

This garden holds so much appeal for everyone, especially for children being so well catered for – an adventure garden, meadow and boulder mazes, Texaco kids lab, ponds and wetland trails. I've never experienced such a platform for education.

Our afternoon ended in the Visitor Centre where airline weight restrictions had to be applied rigidly. A one off experience for which I owe Kay endless thanks.



SINGING THE BLUES by Zdenek Zvolanek



Moltkia petraea

This is not singing the blues of sadness, this is a happy song of an old seed collector full of the nostalgia and colour painted in his mind. These true blues are not only in his mind but have been painted into the frame of his garden.

A rock garden in blue is a rare picture and a rock garden in shades of blue is even more unusual. The happiest thing is when some members of this symphony in blue decide to self-sow. Three of them perform blue chords creating a connecting form of composition on our sunny slope in the late spring. All of them are from the Balkan Peninsula. This sight brings back fond memories of collecting the seed with my dear Joyce Carruthers. The trio is formed of shrubby *Moltkia petraea*, low perennial *Edraianthus graminifolius* and monocarpic *Campanula formanekiana*. The campanula

reminds us of a limestone cliff on Mt. Vermion in Greece, the others recall the magnificent rocky dry canyon in Monte Negro (Black Mountain). This small country has a very rich flora in which the saxatile plants are well represented. This kingdom of *Edraianthus* goes all the way through the blues from palest to almost “royal” purple. In this old plantsman’s garden reside the following species in all their glory: *Ee. dinaricus*, *montenegrinus* and *serpyllifolius*. Silver and compact *Edraianthus pumilio* from the same general neighbourhood (Biokovo Mts., Croatia) plays a supporting role to these stars. The true “blue black” throated *Gentiana dinarica* on the Komovi Mts in Monte Negro was in full flower during our visit, so there was no alternative but to collect the Abruzzi



Campanula formanekiana



Edraianthus montenegrinus

form later in Italy. This gentian, together with the ice blue form of *G. angustifolia* (France) is ideal for our dry steppe garden with heavier limy soil. The soft blue *Globularia meridionalis* is a collection from Campo Imperatore in the Abruzzi Mts. of the Italian Apennines. Some form of *Primula*

marginata, which we collected in seed on Mt. Cheiron in Southern France flowered with elegant pale blue flowers in February 2008. Of course, we grow some outstanding blue rock garden plants, which we collected in an easy way - in nurseries: *Erinacea pungens* 'Alhambra', *Polygala calcarea* 'Lillet' and *Phlox kelseyi*.

Our earliest Pulsatilla is pale blue *P. grandis* from seed collected on a trip to granite hills in Moravia in the Czech Republic. Blue *Hepatica nobilis* is naturally from neighbouring Czech deciduous forest, which has heavy limy soil.



Linum olympicum



Paracaryum racemosum

From our many expeditions to Turkey we have some living (seed) souvenirs: pale blue *Veronica caespitosa* and dark blue *V. kotschyana*, sturdy *Iris taurica* and the forget-me-not blue *Omphalodes lucilliae* var. *cilicica*. *Linum olympicum* (15 cm tall), perfect but heterostylous, is lilac-blue and one of the best blues is provided by *Paracaryum racemosum* (20cm tall) from the Boraginaceae Family. A group of saxatile *Campanula aucheri*, perfectly established in our stony ground has large dark blue flowers with a white eye reminding us of the rock cliff above Zigana Pass. We do not water the garden and our plants have a slimming diet of mineral soil. As a result we do not have massacres of our Campanulaceae family by local and South American slugs.



Aquilegia scopulorum

Our trips to the Western States of the USA brought in a few blue alpines. We grow luminescent rock *Aquilegia A. scopulorum* from Butch Cassidy Draw in Utah, which has elegant long spurs and attracts visitors and small green caterpillars. *Penstemon humilis* from Western Utah, which was collected near a lower and better dark blue *P. nanus*, is a dramatic azure blue in combination with purple.

Penstemon caespitosus aff. *desertipicti* from Eastern Nevada has excellent "electric" blue flowers. Disappointingly we only have four fresh seedlings from our unsuccessful expedition in 2007, so we have to wait.



Penstemon humilis

In our trial area, close to the southern wall of our house, we have two plants suitable for the mild climate of Northern Ireland: *Daphne rodriguezii*, from the Balearic Island and the cerulean blue Cretan *Anchusa caespitosa*. We soon leave for Crete to see the natural blues of this endemic *Anchusa* at the alpine level (2200m) of the White Mountains. With the permit of the many local Gods we will select a hardier clone for our continental rock gardening.



Anchusa caespitosa and *Daphne rodriguezii*

My late spring song is over ending in a long humming, together with the team of bumblebees carefully pollinating polsters of *Moltkia petraea*.

AGS Ulster Group. Lake District Tour 2008

Eighteen gardens in five days!

Hectic, exhilarating and very enjoyable. No thought of driving from Stranraer straight to hotel in Penrith. Not a moment to be wasted! Off the ferry, to visit Dunskey Gardens for soup, sandwiches and a walk around the lake. Then to Logan House, Logan magnificent rhododendrons and on to Broughton House, where the garden of great charm is laid out in a series of miniature compartments - really lovely. Finally to our hotel in Penrith almost twelve hours since we had left Belfast. This was only the first day.

The gardens we visited were varied and full of interest. Too many to mention, but some remain very vividly in my mind. The magnificent walled garden of Holehird, the Garden House at Dalston, what an exciting nursery, full of treasures. The lakes filled with waterlilies at Glenwhan, with superb views over Luce Bay and the Mull of Galloway - the owner was a wonderful character. He bellowed at us "FOLLOW ME" and obediently we did as if we were cadets on parade.

Two gardens were highlights for me - Winderwath - a large garden slightly shambolic but full of rare, fascinating and wonderful plants. The head gardener, Ron Davies, has grown almost everything from seeds in the past two decades. The sales area was tempting. *Salvias* unheard of by me, *S. subrotunda* and *S. amarissima*, *Mosla dianthera*, which throws up tall stems of blue/purple flowers, and many more. We came away laden.

It was through Ron Davies that we visited at his suggestion Beauhill, the garden of Hugh and Margaret Barr. This was my favourite of all, a garden to wander through and find a fresh and exciting vista round every corner. Superb display of cypripediums, large drifts of *Dactylorhiza*, fibreglass containers with acers which blended into the scenery with great aplomb. I loved it!

Joan Christie and Harold McBride have described for us two very contrasting gardens. I know they will bring back to us very happy memories.

KE Dunlop

An Impressive Garden Joan Christie

In the late afternoon of Thursday 13th June we arrived at Garth House, Brampton, the fifteenth garden on our tour, just a little garden weary. The entrance was dark as befitted our mood, but a few steps on we found ourselves in bright sun on the terrace of a very elegant house. All weariness now evaporated as we looked down on a magnificent octagonal sunken garden. On the walls surrounding it and on the distinctive blue fencing were roses and clematis. The deep herbaceous borders were filled with peonies, foxgloves and poppies.



Our pace quickened in eagerness to see more and we proceeded past a stone fountain and through an elegant stone pavilion which led to a lovely woodland path bordered by azaleas and rhododendrons. We imagined what it must have been like a few weeks earlier.

The Japanese Garden which followed was a complete contrast. The traditional red bridge and the many acers and bamboos dressed a realistic cascade flowing through sandstone rocks into quiet pools softened by grasses and ferns. It was not beyond our understanding to realise that nine men had been employed for four years in the construction of this garden within a garden.

It became clear that there was an artistic designer behind what we were seeing as we walked along very well constructed paths into the pool garden, the Italian garden, the Mediterranean garden and the Zen garden. To come down to earth there was even a vegetable plot and a little nursery for propagation.

Our eyes widened when we saw the covered heated swimming pool and Jacuzzi. I reminded myself of the commandment about coveting my neighbour's house. Around the pool were rain forest plants only possible in such cosseted conditions.

Many members of our party manage gardens comparable with those we visited on the tour, but Garth House was one that was quite out of our league and for that reason I have chosen it as the most impressive garden that we visited. In money terms it must have cost millions, but that aside I must commend Mr and Mrs Tate for the effort and artistry they have put into it. If you were a young person taking the first steps down the gardening journey there were hundreds of ideas to be copied - perhaps in a more modest way.

We only had an hour and I know I only absorbed a fraction of what there was to see. Each garden in this estate had its own atmosphere and it would be lovely to sit for a while in each and experience the different sensations.

THE ALAN FURNESS GARDEN by Harold Mc Bride. St Luke's Cottage Hexam.

Choosing your favourite garden from the 18 we visited during our trip is rather like asking someone with 18 children to chose your favourite child !

Many of the gardens were truly memorable, some created on a grand scale, others packed with well grown rare plants which showed the gardening skills and green fingers of their dedicated owners.

On the Thursday we visited the garden of the immediate past president of the AGS, Professor John Richards and his wife Shelia, where amongst other things we saw an extensive collection of Asiatic primulas, many of them very rare in cultivation.

As we were leaving "High Trees" John commented that our next stop would be at "the finest rock garden in England", so we were filled with anticipation when we arrived at St Luke's cottage.

This was the most northerly garden we were to visit and indeed a cool N. E. wind was blowing as we disembarked from our tour bus; however the delightful design of the garden and its superbly grown plants soon made us forget about the cool temperatures!



Alan holds the National collection of the genus *Celmisia* with over 40 species on show and up to 100 plants growing on a sloping bank, many in full flower with typical white 'daisies' and of course displaying superb 'silver' foliage.

The rare dwarf *Celmisia* *C. spedenii* was however flowering in the newly built crevice garden which Alan had constructed from narrow slivers of local sandstone. The crevice garden hugs the contours of a sloping bank and looks completely natural. It has been planted with many "high alpinists" which would otherwise have to be grown in an alpine

house.

I noted the many cushion plants including *Androsace vandellii* which were grown by sowing seed directly into a crevice.

Many *Dianthus* were also thriving in these conditions and we were lucky enough to see them in full flower.

Two tufa beds constructed with very large pieces of tufa were much admired by the visitors, both beds were planted with lime loving plants such

as *Primula allionii* and its hybrids, numerous *Saxifragas* from the Silver and *Kabschia* sections were looking very happy in these conditions. I also noted *Physoplexis Comosa* and *Jankaea Heldreichii* growing in the shelter of tufa outcrops.

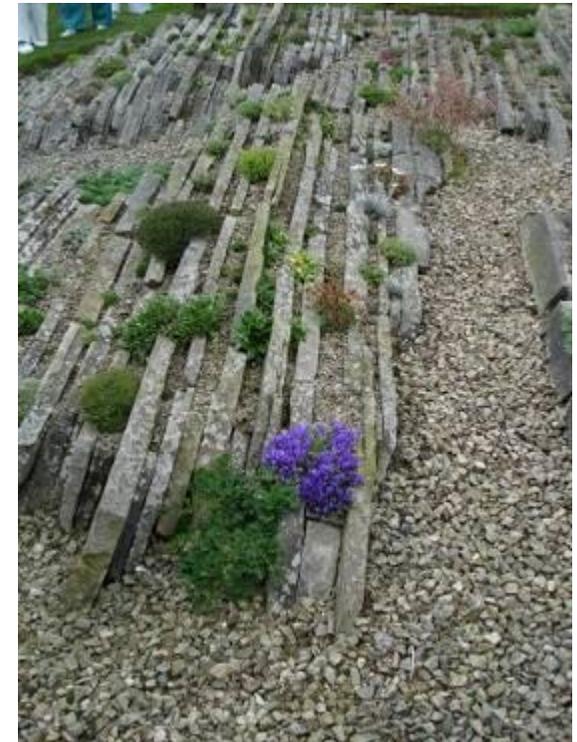
Another rock bed was almost entirely devoted to the genus *Pulsatilla* with many species present; although not in flower the hundreds of attractive seed heads reminded us of what a wonderful show it had been in early spring.

Another new feature at St Luke's Cottage is the peat bed which was only built in late 2007. Constructed from large peat blocks imported from Sweden the bed was planted with dwarf *Rhodes*, *Ericaceae* and other peat loving plants. Unfortunately Alan has had to cover the bed with black nylon netting cages as they have been subjected to severe damage by marauding blackbirds.

Several Alpine Houses were packed full of superbly grown plants, many of them rare and distinguished.

Alan is of course one of the leading exhibitors in the AGS and is the recipient of many Farrer Medals, it was very clear that the standard of his plants would lead to many more 'best in show' awards.

Alan's garden is a fine example of a 'Plantsman's Garden' and the Ulster AGS were thrilled to see so many fine plants grown with such distinction.



The Down Side of Compost making - Lorna Kennedy

Compost making is a GOOD THING. We all agree to that. It's eco-friendly, the plants love it, the soil benefits from it and it makes us feel virtuous and that we are doing our bit for nature - especially if it turns out well.

However, I would like to relate a little story for those people who have acquired free green council compost bins.

Last year I had two bins going. At the end of the summer I decided to empty one and put the rough bits back and start again. My helper tipped the bin sideways, and, to my horror, a large grey rat ran out just past my legs. Why I didn't collapse I'll never know. After a couple of hours when I had recovered my shattered nerves, I decided to empty the second bin, but it wasn't harbouring any rats. On examination of the contents of the first bin it seemed that the rat had made a nest in a dry layer between damp layers, thankfully with no young ones.

Anyway, I started a new bin, well damped down, and left it a few days. However, every time I passed the bin I thought of the rat and decided to empty the new one and forget compost making for a while. Imagine my horror when I discovered that the rat had returned and taken up residence again.

So my advice to anyone with this type of bin is to fix a wire bottom with small holes which will keep the rats out and allow worms in.

Desert Island Books

Book Reviews compiled by KE Dunlop

I asked some of our members which book on horticulture they would choose to bring to a 'Desert Island'. I hope you enjoy the books they have chosen.

Kay Dunlop: *Perennial Garden Plants* by Graham Stuart Thomas

My Desert Island Book : After a brief moment of indecision - Should I choose Patrick M Synge's "Guide to Bulbs", Betsy Clebsch on Salvias or Dan Hinkley's excellent 'The Explorer's Garden' ? However the inevitable decision was made: Graham Stuart Thomas on 'Perennial Garden Plants', a book of great substance and excellent prose, and to me the definitive book on perennials. His descriptions of plants are vivid and imaginative. He creates a picture in words. *The handsome drooping falls of Iris laevigata 'Rose Queen' in soft old rose are a great joy in Mount Stewart; The cool yellow shuttlecock flowers of Kirengeshoma at Rowallane with an ideal companion in dark blue Aconitum and Iris graminea with the odour of stewed apricots* (Iris g. is in blooming our garden this third week in May, glistening rosy purple flowers peering out from the tall thin leaves - a real delight).

My copy of his book is well worn, with an occasional muddy fingerprint, evidence of a quick dash from the garden to read where I should plant a recent acquisition.

It is a book to enjoy and to read time and time again.

Hugh McAlister: *Woodland Garden* by Beth Chatto

A garden book I would definitely take were I to be marooned on a desert island.

"Rain soaks my shirt. As I run home the smell of new growth - wet leaves, wet flowers, warm wet earth - envelopes me. Nature's aromatherapy, there for everyone who is privileged to grow a garden."

This quotation from Beth Chatto's *Woodland Garden* evokes for me memories of a wonderful, carefree childhood wandering, wondering and

learning in the woodlands and gardens of Tollymore Park at Bryansford. Her book, written in an easy prose, beautifully illustrated and describing both wild and cultivated plants through the seasons, delights me each time I read a chapter - a must for me, as wonderful memories can never be erased even when one is far from home.

George Gordon: *Cyclamen, A Guide for Gardeners, Horticulturists and Botanists* by Christopher Grey-Wilson

A book I would highly recommend is "*Cyclamen, A Guide for Gardeners, Horticulturists and Botanists*" by Christopher Grey-Wilson. It contains all the information you will want about this delightful and garden worthy genus. It is now in its second edition, and at £30 is worth it for the photographs alone.

Harold McBride: *The Burren* by E. Charles Nelson, illustrated by Wendy Walsh

When I first looked at my bookcase in an effort to decide which horticultural book I would pick to be my companion on a "Desert Island", I realised that most of my gardening books were written by authors whom I had met on a number of occasions; perhaps I had visited their gardens, heard them lecture or exchanged plants with them. So it became clear that I would not be "just taking a book as a companion", but at times I perhaps could hear the author speaking to me as well!

Many of the authors I regard as mentors, holding them in very high esteem and having fond memories of their company - for example the late E.B. Anderson, Lionel Bacon, Sir George Taylor, Duncan Lowe, Elizabeth Strangman; also C. Grey-Wilson, Brian Mathew, Joe Cartman and Charles Nelson.

I feel that on a Desert Island I would soon get fed up with 'wall to wall sunshine' and clear blue skies and would be longing for the soft rainy days of my homeland!

After much thought I decided to take *The Burren - A Companion to the Wildflowers of an Irish Limestone Wilderness*, written by Charles E Nelson and beautifully illustrated by Wendy Walsh.

The Burren is equally famous for its wind and rain as well as its botanical riches, so no doubt when reading this book I could imagine walking across the windswept limestone pavements seeking out the Ferns, Orchids, Primroses, Dryas and of course the spring gentian *G. verna*; walking further and further trying to find the white or pale 'duck egg blue' forms of my favourite alpine plant which I have grown in my troughs for many generations.

If my stay on the Island was extensive I feel that this is a book I could read over and over again and never become bored with the magic of the Burren.

Margaret Glynn: *The Well Chosen Garden* by Christopher Lloyd

What is it about this book, bought 24 years ago, that among a fairly extensive collection of gardening books it is never far from my bedside?

All those years ago I had to learn quickly, always asking questions. This well written authoritative book with not too many illustrations gave me the answers, simply and constructively.

Although I have met the author (now deceased) on two occasions, I never visited his garden. He became my inspiration. Terms never before in my gardening vocabulary - mixed borders, raised beds, two-tier gardening, foliage contrasts, fitting in ferns (my first love), garden your gravel and weavers and edge breakers raced through my head as I struggled to put them into practice.

I was taught to stand back and evaluate my planting schemes (many botched up), and slowly developed the courage to reshape for better effect. Thank you, Christopher, for guiding me on the evolution of Brocklamont garden as it is today and helping develop my passion for plants.

Kay Dunlop: *A Gentle Plea for Chaos* by Mirabel Osler

Finally in memory of Barbara Bates - "A Gentle Plea for Chaos" by Mirabel Osler. She describes with imagination and humour how her garden evolved and how without meaning to she let it take over her life. What Barbara appreciated - as do I, is how Mirabel Osler wrote that the very soul of a garden is shrivelled by zealous regimentation. To Mirabel one of the small delights of gardening is when seedlings of aquilegias or geraniums suddenly appear in unplanned places. They know where they are happy! I think Barbara would have chosen this book for the 'Desert Island'

"Buried Treasures" by Janis Ruksans

Postscript: In last year's Newsletter I mentioned a new book "Buried Treasures" by Janis Ruksans, which so far I have only had time to glance through and hoped that someone might review it. However on our recent trip to Kazakhstan, a Yorkshire member, Fred Bundy, told me he had read it from cover to cover **twice** and would be reading it again. I have since learned that Fred is an excellent grower of bulbs and the book could not be given higher praise. The illustrations alone are beautiful. Ed.

Information: - Past & Present

This year instead of repeating information in previous Newsletters, apart from some essential facts, I simply want to highlight some points.

As the Ulster members are a local group of the AGS, yet again a plea to those who are not yet a full member, to consider joining. Our subscriptions are kept as low as possible as we are under the AGS insurance umbrella but this only applies to full members.

Venue continues to be Stranmillis University College, Belfast, and on Saturday afternoons at 2.30 p.m.

Group Subscriptions: Local current subscription rates are **£9.00 single, £14.00 family**, (note small increase) due at the A.G.M. or before the end of the current year. To help our **treasurer, please put your subscription into the envelope provided with your name, title, address. Postal code, telephone number and email (if wished), also add "A.G.S." if you are a member of the parent body, all clearly written on the outside or on a**

slip of paper. Give or post this to Mrs. Margaret Glynn, Hon. Treasurer. A limit of one year's grace is given.

This subscription is for the local Group only and subscriptions to The Alpine Garden Society must be sent direct.

YOUR TREASURER REFLECTS



Attending a very exciting meeting recently where the lecturer spoke about woodland plants – the pleasure of the evening was greatly augmented by several tables of plants complimenting the subject. At the end of the talk I was greatly surprised that these plants were not for sale (for some managerial reason, I believe). The impact of this on me as your treasurer was instant.

Where would the Ulster Group be without the revenue of our plant sales? Now I want to take this opportunity to say thank you to the entire team, who make it possible for our group to survive so very well financially.

First, we have our team of propagators who willingly supply plants from all over the world to put on our sales tables to tempt the buyers.

Second, we have all the buyers and plant-aholics like myself who need a frequent plant fix and are pleased to pay the usually very fair price for it at our meetings and outings.

Third, we have our team of salespersons – arriving early, putting out tables etc, placing plants in correct sections, pricing, using excellent selling techniques when necessary, clearing up and presenting me at the end of the lecture with the proceeds.

No matter whether you slot into any of the above groups give yourself a pat on the back and accept sincere thanks from me.

Margaret

Programme - Congratulations to Heather on her excellent programme which is on your card and on the website but also listed on the back of the Newsletter.

Termonfeckin - the secret is out! Everyone now knows that the Dublin Group organize one of the best weekends of the year so book early although they usually manage to squeeze everyone in.

Shows: - Anyone who missed last year's Ulster Show at Greenmount missed a treat! The grounds of Greenmount Campus were simply gorgeous; the Show bench display the best of alpines, the most tempting plants for sale, trough



demonstrations, but unfortunately not as many visitors. We were well supported by the Dublin Group and in return many Ulster members enjoy going south. Next year everyone will have to make a special effort and support Pat Crossley, our Show Secretary as she explains -

“Everyone loves a celebration, and the AGS Ulster Show Committee is no exception! Plans are already well in hand for The 70th SHOW, which will take place on Saturday 25th April 2009 at Greenmount College-- But please remember this is YOUR show, and we do need the support off all our members to make it a "Day to remember"!!

At our 60th Show in 1999, we were privileged to have for the first time in Ulster, members of the Joint Committee of the Royal Horticultural Society, Alpine Garden Society and the Scottish Rock Garden Club, making their own very special mark, on the day's proceedings. After the Show members enjoyed a celebration meal at Hillsborough Castle, with English, Scottish and Dublin guests.

Following the 50th Show in 1989, a celebration dinner was held in Belfast Castle.

In 2009 we will be delighted to celebrate with the Dublin Group's 25th Show on 4th April.

So let everyone join in - to work - and to enjoy special Celebrations in 2009.”

Garden Visits:- The Winter Garden visit proved as popular as ever with Bob's, June's, Margaret's, and Mark's gardens living up to expectations to over 80 keen visitors. Snowdrops, hellebores and cyclamens all looked beautiful against a background of unusual shrubs; a Daphne 'Jacqueline Postill' caught my eye.

As mentioned earlier, the Summer visit to the Dublin gardens again was a day to remember, weather, hospitality and glorious gardens all contributing to the success.

These visits also help members to get to know each other and the social side is an important part of our group.



Ps: - Who could forget the delicious food and drink we had in Dublin and many requested the recipes for the delicious tray bakes we had at Carmel's garden. Ricky very kindly sent them so here is one for you to try -

Recipe : **Blondies** - Date and Walnut Brownies.

| | |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 55g/2oz unsalted butter | ½ tsp sea salt |
| 200g/7oz light muscovado sugar | vanilla essence/seeds of 1 pod |
| 1 organic egg, beaten | 55g/2oz chopped dates |
| 100g/ 3 ½ oz flour | 55g/20z walnuts |
| 1 level tsp baking powder | |

Preheat the oven to 180C/ 350F/gas4. Melt the butter over a low heat & the moment it is liquid, add the sugar. Stir it in, still over a gentle heat, only to the point at which the sugar, too, is melted. If you take it too far to bubbling toffee, it will harden instead of staying liquid.

Remove the pan from the heat & whisk in the egg while the mixture is still warm. Sift the flour, baking powder and salt into the pan & add few drops

vanilla essence/seeds. Add chopped dates and broken up walnuts to the mixture.

Line a shallow baking tin, 18cm/7in, or a small loaf tin, with greased bakewell paper so that it covers two of the sides & make sure you grease the other two sides thoroughly. Pour the mixture into the tin. Bake for around 25 minutes, but check with a skewer at 20 minutes. Place the tin on a rack for 10 minutes before cutting the brownies into rectangles and cooling them on the rack. Enjoy. (*? Photo of Carmel*)

John McWhirter Travel Fund:- Margaret Glynn has worked tirelessly to ensure this fund but, before it is executed, new regulations mean a lot of criteria have to be met. All members have contributed generously and, with the Group's approval, a small committee should make progress this year. I am sure you all appreciate the importance of ensuring the trust is properly set up. In the meantime I think everyone has enjoyed the picnics and again it is another opportunity for a lovely day out. We all appreciate the members who so kindly open their gardens and homes to all - many thanks.

Website. :- This is the one place where information about the Ulster Group can be picked up world wide so all members please continue to contribute a plant of the month.

April 25th
Ulster Group Show -- Greenmount

2008

September 20th –
Ulster Group A.G.M.
Members Plant Sale.
Brendan Marnell, Dublin
"Raised Beds and Tufa"

October 18th -
Dr. Mollie Sanderson Memorial Lecture
Henrik Zetterlund, Gothenburg, Sweden
"Bulbs of Gothenburg"

November 8th –
Chris Chadwell, Slough, Berkshire
"Gardens on the Roof of the World"

November 21st– 23rd
Termonfeckin Weekend – Dublin Group

December 13th -
Christmas Fayre.
David Lapsley, Newtownards, Co Down
"Turkish Delights"

2009

January 17th --
Tim Ingram, Faversham, Kent
"Sylvan Delights" (Woodland plants)

February 7th –
Tony Rymer, North Yorkshire
"Growing Hardy Orchids - Are Terrestrials Tameable?"

February 21st
Luncheon
Susan Band, Pitcairn Alpines, Perth, Scotland
"Propagating Bulbs"

March 21st
Members Show
With Slides & Contributions from Members

April 4th
Dublin Group Show