



BULB LOG 50.....14<sup>th</sup> December 2016





This week's cover is of **Meconopsis sherriffii** a plant we used to grow well - for many years it set seed but then the pollen became sterile and we lost it – as far as I know this plant is no longer in cultivation.



Using my phone through the train window I took this image of the two Forth road bridges while crossing the famous iconic Forth Bridge last week while I was on my way down south to give some talks - the new bridge is still under construction. I was taken by the beautiful light hitting the fanlike structure of the new bridge which was just appearing as the freezing mist was burning off in the warmth from the sun. I posted the picture on Facebook and one of the comments from Tim Ingram was “Beautiful structures! Makes you want to be a bridge-builder Ian 🙌” which got me thinking - Tim is correct, that is exactly what we are doing - joining people together. I was on my way to talk to the NE group of the Hardy Plant Society then travelling on to speak to the Shropshire group of the AGS and I was delighted by some of the comments I received – words like motivated, inspired and enthusiastic are music to my ears. I do enjoy writing and giving talks and when I receive such feedback I know I am succeeding in my task of encouraging the interest in plants.



Three days later I took almost the same image of the bridges but this time it was in the fading late afternoon winter light which brings an entirely different mood to the picture – photography is all about light.





Most of our first plants were bought from Jack Drake's Inshriach Nursery who were involved in introducing many plants from New Zealand so no surprise that among the very first plants we bought was **Leucogenes leontopodium**. We still have this plant or cuttings raised directly from it - one plant we planted in a raised slab bed where it spread over half the top and down the sides almost to the ground. Below is the smaller flowered but equally attractive relative *Leucogenes grandiceps*.



***Leucogenes grandiceps***





I continually refresh my talks and while working on 'Highland Gathering' I thought, having shown some historic images from the garden layout a few weeks ago, it would be a good idea to feature some of the plants we used to grow in the glasshouses before the bulbs took them over. All these images are scanned from slides using my own home made method which I featured in [Bulb Log 44 of 2008](#) - click the link to go there.

In the 1980's we got involved in taking our plants to and competing in the SRGC Shows with the result that most of the space under glass was dedicated to show plants. Clay pots were the order of that time, each plunged as deep as possible in our sand plunge.



Staying with the New Zealand theme **Clematis 'Craigton Comet'** was a cross we made between *Clematis marmoraria* and *C. x cartmanii* 'Joe'.





***Stellaria roughii***

Raised from seed we showed *Stellaria roughia* for quite a number years before we lost it –we only managed to raise one from the seed we received and it never set seed nor I was not successful in propagating it by cuttings.



***Stellaria roughii***

In 2008 I was delighted to be asked out to New Zealand to speak at a Conference where I was able, with a bit of a scramble, to see this scree dwelling plant in its native habitat.





***Pulsatilla vulgaris***

This *Pulsatilla vulgaris* was one of our very first show plants – we lifted it from the garden and potted it about three weeks before the show, to give it time to settle in, then it was planted back in the bed after the show. We watered it well when we replanted it and continued to water it for around a month after which it grew on without any setback from it's out of the ground experience.



Plants boxed for transit to a show including a range of our seed raised *Tecophilaea cyanocrocus* – I was always most interested in showing the variation within a species.



***Tecophilaea cyanocrocus***





***Dicentra peregrina***



***Jankaea heldreichii***



***Physoplexis comosa***

This plant is growing in a trough but we also grew one in a pot for taking to shows.



***Shortia soldanelloides***



***Shortia uniflora***





**Rhodothamnus chamaecistus**

It was a fascination with *Salix herbacea* and *Loiseleuria procumbens*, both of which I saw growing on the Cairngorm plateau when I was a boy, that stimulated my interest in plants and especially my love of dwarf shrubs. Despite many attempts I have not succeeded in growing *Rhodothamnus chamaecistus* in our acid garden. We did grow it in pots while we were showing and perhaps it is time to get a plant and try again in a trough where I can control the PH more easily.



**Saxifraga 'Theoden'**





**Dionysia aretioides**

Wherever possible I like to grow plants from seed, that way we can see the variation across a species.



While we select the most attractive forms to grow on for showing it is important to cross pollinate between as many of the clones as possible to maintain the widest genetic variation. The most beautiful one may also be the most susceptible to disease.





**Eriophyton wallichii**, grown from seed collected in the Himalaya was a winning plant for us in both the silver foliage and the new, rare and difficult classes.



**Androsace vandellii**

I remember we caused great discussion among the Judges when we first showed this pot of three *Androsace vandellii* seedlings – exhibits were supposed to be of a single specimen plant – this did not fit in when I wanted to show the variation within a species.

The interpretation of rules is more relaxed now.





**Primula frondosa**



**Gentiana cultivar**



Gradually at first, we grew and showed more and more bulbs.



**Fritillaria alburyana**



**Fritillaria kotschyana 'Craigton Max'**





**Narcissus watierii**

A show pot of *Narcissus watierii* we built up from a single clone always did well at shows but I much prefer the pot of seed raised forms shown below.



**Narcissus watierii seed ex Atlas Mountains**





**Narcissus atlanticus** is quite a rare plant in cultivation and not the easiest species to grow – sadly we no longer have it.



### **Arum creticum**

Arum creticum was another successful show plant for us but it was a dreadful travelling companion. It has a powerful and not very pleasant smell making a two hour plus car journey a memorable experience.





I was hopeful that this pot of *Erythronium americanum* 'Craigton Flower' would get a Forrest Medal when we took it to the Perth Show one year. The show is held in a sports hall with no natural light and within five minutes of placing it on the bench all the flowers closed – I know the judges discussed it but decided the flowers had to be open for it to receive the best plant in show award. At the end of the show we gathered our plants up and took them out to the car which was in sunshine and within five minutes all the flowers were open and there was a huddle of the judges looking, thinking as I was, of what might have been.



**Crocus scardicus and mouse!**





We often took shares in John Watson's seed collecting expeditions in South America and were delighted to rise to the challenge of raising the shrubby and rosulate Violas.







**Tropaeolum azureum** was a rare plant in cultivation in the early days as well as being considered to be difficult to grow. We did work out how to grow it and each year it got better - the image on the right was the year it received the Forrest Medal. Now we find this plant regularly self-seeds and grows in the sand plunge.



**In the garden two forms of *Meconopsis horridula*.**





**Meconopsis delavayii** growing in a trough.



**Omphalogramma delavayi** and **Meconopsis delavayii**





It is so easy to share our plants and gardens with thousands of people across the world via the web and social media but I do hope that it never completely replaces us actually coming together at local, national and international meetings where we can enjoy each other's company in a way that is simply not possible on the Web. I have been fortunate and have greatly enjoyed being invited around the world to give talks literally crossing bridges to celebrate plants.

The day I cannot be enthusiastic or enjoy sharing my interest is the day that I will stop.....