

Crocus Group Newsletter

Spring 2000

Patron	Brian Mathew	Members	189
Committee	Ray Cobb	Home	150
	Alan Edwards	Overseas	39
	David Stephens		
Secretary	Ann Borrill		

153 Lime Tree Avenue, Wymondham, Norfolk, UK NR18 0TG

Editorial

The millennium has arrived and the Y2K bugs and viruses have left the p.c of yours truly unaffected, just as the real life beasties are not a significant problem with our favourite genus. I did however take the precaution of typing this before the New Year, so who knows, perhaps I am infected and just don't know it.

The autumn *Crocus* flowered very well here. The trouble is, so have quite a lot of spring taxa. Looking back over the years, the dates of the spring *Crocus* Group visits are getting earlier and earlier. Fairly soon we will probably get one homogenous flowering season starting about September and finishing in late January. This would not be too much of a problem if the spring flowering taxa could be persuaded to enjoy the dank, wet, sunless yet unseasonably warm conditions of December and January when most now come into flower (well, in southern UK anyway) If you still get real winters where you are, I envy you. **DBS**

Crocus Group visit on February 12, 2000 to Brian Mathew and Alan Edwards

Its quite fitting that the first *Crocus* Group visit of the new millennium should be to see our mentor and guru. Meet at **1100 at 90 Foley Road, Claygate, Surrey.** M25 to A3. A3 north for a couple of junctions then take the junction for Esher and head towards Esher, just before Esher turn right to Claygate. Follow road round bends till you reach the Foley Arms public house. Turn right and then left after 100 yards. Brian is on the left another 100 yards. Bring a packed lunch, and after lunch we will head for a double whammy by going on at **1400 to Alan Edwards at 'Tryfan, Burney Road, Westhumble, Surrey.** This is about 15 minutes drive from Brian, or if you go independently, take the A24 Dorking to Leatherhead road. About half way between the two towns, just before the Burford Bridge roundabout there is a left turn to Westhumble (right turn after the roundabout if you are coming from Leatherhead) This is a narrow windy country lane so be careful. Go up this lane for a few hundred yards and take the second left turn. Alan is the first house on the left.

Seed Exchange 2000

Another millennium, another seed exchange. I don't need to tell most members that our seed exchange is one of the best of all those run by single genus specialist groups. There is indeed no other way to get hold of some of the taxa we have distributed over the years. It is also one of the easiest to join in.

Rule 1. If you are going to be a donor, send seed to me before 31.7.2000

Rule 2. If you are not going to be a donor but want a seed list, send a SAE to me before 31.7.2000 (overseas, an IRC)

That's it. Obviously, this is a seed exchange, so donors always get first choice and very rare seed in short supply invariably goes to them. However, non-donors always receive a fair proportion of what they ask for and always get a good deal. As some of the plants that used to be rare become more available the chances for non-donors have improved dramatically. It is pretty certain that our seed exchange has significantly added to the general availability of more taxa of *Crocus* so keep it up. **David Stephens, Sherwood, Bunce Common Road, Leigh, Surrey, RH2 8NS. UK**

Crocuses of Lefkada by Terry Smale

Lefkada, or Levkas as it is better known to anglophones, is one of the Ionian islands off the north-west coast of Greece. It is, however, not quite an island because it is joined to the mainland via a causeway and swing bridge. Jennifer and I took a package tour to Lefkada in early October last year and stayed at the resort of Nidri; a fairly quick coach transfer from Prevesa airport. The fact that the island is a wind-suffers paradise did not contribute to our choice of destination, more interestingly it is the type locality for two fairly wide-spread *Crocuses*: *hadriaticus* (hill of Chrysobeloni) and *cancellatus mazziaricus* (foot of mountains around Caria, i.e. present-day Karya). Sometimes these localities will be seen quoted as being on Santa Maura which was the Venetian name for the island and is still the name of the fort that guards the causeway.

Lefkada is basically a slab of limestone that rises to 1167 metres in the centre; it is well wooded on the slopes of the hills and was very green even after the long summer. Tourist development is, as usual, confined to the coastal strip and there is a fair amount of agriculture including sheep and goat husbandry. However, there is minimal evidence of over-grazing and the autumn flowers were among the best that we have seen in Greece. The *Cyclamen hederifolium* (I think *confusum*) were spectacular; found throughout the island, they were amazingly variable in flower size, shape and colour. In total, we saw three *Crocus* species but the differences between them were not immediately apparent because they are all white *Crocuses* with yellow centres. Furthermore there is a tendency for them to grow in mixed populations.

On a short walk inland from Nidri to a waterfall, we first saw *boryi* growing in small numbers among the cyclamen. This was a surprise because I have usually seen *Crocuses* growing in fairly open situations, even when associated with woodland, but here they were in quite deep shade on densely wooded slopes in damp moss. This species was also seen in another similar situation near the coast on the east side of the island and was then encountered in a more normal *Crocus* habitat near Komilio in the west. This is a flattish open area of stones and short turf at about 550 metres elevation. The turf was studded with a little pink *Colchicum*, but the *boryi* were much more spread out. It eventually dawned on us that a couple of the *Crocus* blooms had three-lobed stigmas rather than multiply-dissected ones and these were *hadriaticus*. I can not find Chrysobeloni hill on present-day maps of Lefkada, so it is not possible for me to accurately relate a *hadriaticus* population to the type.

By contrast, the hill village of Karya is easily located because it is a popular tourist destination due to the embroidery tradition practised by the local people. Just a couple of kilometres to the south of the village at 400 m elevation are some fine old uncultivated, terraced, olive groves on the side of the hills; a classic bulb habitat. In the half shade were the dried remains of *Fritillaria* with still-full seed capsules and a lesser number of well-separated *cancellatus mazziaricus*. Unlike the other two *Crocuses*, this did not have any leaves visible at anthesis, but the large goblet-shaped flowers shared the character of pure-white flowers with yellow bases. Here at what must be more or less the type locality, there was none of the lilac coloration that is often found in other Greek populations, nor were there any dark veins on the outside of the petals.

The high plateau on top of Lefkada is easily accessed from Karya on the roads that serve the microwave and radar stations. Here in the short turf between old dry-stone walling was the very special treat of the holiday; thousands of flowers of *hadriaticus* in what was one of the best displays of wild *Crocus* that we have ever seen. There was some diversity in petal shape and size, but the perianth tube varied from yellow to deep violet with every possibility in between. Just outside the microwave station, Jennifer spotted a few flowers with multiply-divided stigmas and indeed there were a few *mazziaricus* mixed in with the *hadriaticus*; these interlopers also had white petals like the ones nearer Karya. TS

Millennium Appeal

Being one of the oldest and strangest of the specialist single genera enthusiast groups has left us with some obscure traditions. One of these is the fact that we do not charge an annual subscription. This is not a particular problem as our financial needs are modest, we just need to cover stationery and postage costs and the annual corm auction helps to fund these. Administrative and secretarial effort is voluntary. The main problem with not charging an annual subscription is keeping in touch with which members wish to remain members, and indeed if you are all still alive!!

Also, however modest our needs, eventually we do need to appeal for extra funds to keep going. So, for the first time this millennium we are asking you to pay for your continuing membership by sending £5 UK to our secretary.

Ann Borrill at : 153 Lime Tree Avenue, Wymondham, Norfolk, UK NR18 0TG