

The Scottish Rock Garden Club & The Alpine Garden Society Kendal Show 15 3 20 part 1

The last show

It was appropriate that the last spring show of the truncated 2020 season for both The Scottish Rock Garden Club and The Alpine Garden Society should have been this joint show in Kendal. No one reading this at the moment needs to be told that the cancellation was caused by the need to keep people safe during the Corona-virus pandemic. In line with gov-



The judges gather to make their judgement while Stan takes their picture and I photographed Stan!

ernment guidelines priority had to be given to safeguarding the public. Both the SRGC and AGS want to safe guard our members. In view of the age profile of our members cancellation of our events is essential.

Since the RHS had already cancelled the planned meeting of the Joint Rock Garden Plant committee which was due to take place at the Kendal show, I half expected the show to be cancelled. Therefore, I was surprised at the number of exhibits staged by a slightly re-

This superb plant of Saxifraga 'Coolock Gem' won the Farrer Medal for Frank & Barbara Hoyle

duced number of exhibitors. The standard of the plants in the show was, as usual, of the highest order and the variety of species and varieties incredible. This was a great show with great plants. The numbers of people on previous years attending were down but I still found plenty friends with whom to have a wee chat. I did not shake hands with anyone but followed the Prime Minister's advice and knocked elbows. No one was surprised that all the later shows were to be cancelled. Many of our members spend lots of their time in their garden and thereby they are effectively self isolating, so I hope that the effects of the Corona virus on members is minimal. I like the fact that visiting a show gives me the chance to see different parts of the country.





Bodnant Garden



Little Egrets, Southport



Shelducks, Barrow in Furness



Sculpture on Roundabout, Morecambe

OUR JOURNEY TO KENDAL The Dunblane part of the Leven family planned to visit the Kendal show after a family gathering at Frodsham, a historic market town near Chester. There we stayed at The Old Hall Hotel which proved to be a good base from which to visit Bodnant Garden in the Conwy valley. Spring springs earlier down there than up in Dunblane. The magnolias were flowering in the woodlands. The star attractions were the Winter garden and the Daffodil meadow which is protected by a Ha-ha from marauding members of the public. I think this was the first true day of warm sunshine we had enjoyed for many weeks or months.

On the way north we booked into The Bluebird Inn at Salmesbury [near Preston' just off the M6. it is a good base for visiting the Pennine towns and Dales. Even Harrogate and RHS Harlow Carr Garden is just along the road.] While at Salmesbury we drove to Holden Clough nursery where we had an excellent lunch in the nursery café. The nursery is run by Peter Foley's son John and is well worth a visit..

We then spent two nights in the excellent Crooklands Hotel, a few miles south of Kendal, near junction 36 on the M6. All three hotels were quite quiet with many fewer residents and diners than normal. We feel lucky that we were able to enjoy a family break before the true scale of the current crisis became apparent and all the associated restrictions came into place. People away from home will still need accommodation and food, so I hope that the staff who enabled us to enjoy our week away can keep their jobs and that enough business keeps their establishments open. We certainly couldn't have had a week away after the Kendal Show.

Even before the warnings and prohibitions on large gatherings, Anne and Andrew decided to have a walk in the countryside near Crooklands and did not go to the show so I provided a picnic lunch for them by buying three delicious filled rolls from the show café and much appreciated they were, in spite of torrential downpours during the day. Oldies like me quite like a picnic in the car. We have a splendid basket hamper which Alasdair and Sian had had delivered to us as a birthday present. They lived in Dubai at the time so the basket, with the company initials on the side, came direct from Fortnum & Mason. Sandwiches are a start, just add 3 bags of crisps and a punnet of wee plum tomatoes and the Levens are set. My family are used to their father's idiosyncrasies. One snowy Easter after rolling boiled eggs I set up the gas stove in the back of our Volvo estate. It was not until afterwards that I realise the Camping Gas stove was directly above the petrol tank. We enjoyed our Kendal picnic on Morecambe esplanade. I wanted to see Morecambe again partly because the first joint shows in the north east were held there. [P.S. So were the Miss Great Britain contests]. I was delighted to see many sculptures of assorted seabird



The Beach Car Park, Southport

sculptures scattered throughout Morecambe. They were all over the sea front, on roundabouts and in supermarket car parks. The tide was in so we did not see the beach but had good view over Morecambe Bay to Grange-over-Sands and the mountains of the Lake District.

At Southport, on the Wednesday, the tide was higher than it had been for a long time and the waves were overlapping the sea wall and had totally obliterated the car park on the beach. Locals were most impressed. Even Council workers were having their pictures taken on the ramp down to the beach / sea. One elderly lady seemed proud of the high tide and the way it had inundated the sea marshland. 'I've been here for 15 years and never seen it like this!' she informed me. Southport specialised in fish sculptures and leaves the birds to Morecambe. Little did I know then that the wild winter weather, gales, floods and landslides were just a foretaste of the unparalleled interruption to normal life which the Coronavirus was to bring. Writing this one week after the Kendal show I pray that we all will face the challenges ahead with legendary British fortitude. I treasure the memories of plants, people and places from our family week and hope that all of us can return to normal as soon as possible. In the meantime I have plenty of time to devote to our garden. Task 1 ...cut back the ivy!. Task 2...enjoy the garden and plants!



Plus ça change ; plus c'est la même chose! Brian Burrow and Geoff Rollinson at the 2012 Blackpool show above and at Kendal in 2020 below. Neither seem to have aged at all but interestingly they are wearing the same jackets. Are these their lucky show jackets?



Fish Shoal Sculpture, Southport



Primula 'Marjorie Wooster'



Dionysia aretioides



Saxifraga 'Coolock Gem'



Primula allionii 'Eureka'



Saxifraga 'Coolock Kate'



Primula allionii 'Crusader'

In 2020 the AGS Sewell medal was won by Frank & Barbara Hoyle for Class 1, 6 pans of Rock Plants. The Sewell medal is an itinerant prize, awarded at a different show each year and presented at the AGS AGM. It is one of their most prestigious medals. Their entry comprised excellent domes in eye catching colours :- left to right / top to bottom. Primula 'Marjorie Wooster', Dionysia aretioides, Saxifraga 'Coolock Gem', Primula allionii 'Eureka' Saxifraga 'Coolock Kate' and Primula allionii 'Crusader' Memory tells you that they won the AGS medal last year with the same sextet but as the photograph below shows there was a change. Last Year Coolock Kate was in perfect condition but had a few flowers going over this year. Last year it won the Forrest this year its sister Coolock Gem took the Farrer.



Saxifraga 'Coolock Gem'



Dionysia aretioides
Own seed sown 2008 "Bevere x"

Grown in a very free draining compost of equal parts J12, 5mm grit, sharp river sand, perlite, and vermiculite.
The clay pot sits up to the rim in a sand bed, in a well-ventilated greenhouse positioned so as to provide maximum sun light. Shading from intense summer sunshine is provided when necessary.
In late January it is placed in water with added potash and seaweed extract, up to half the depth of the pot, where it remains until the compost is thoroughly soaked. It is then returned to a moist sand bed for the remainder of the year.
D. aretioides is a vigorous grower which needs to be frequently placed into a larger pot. This has to be done with care as any root disturbance will be fatal.
The greatest threat to the plant's well-being is when it is in full flower, because moisture coming from the leaves can be trapped amongst and under the petals. This quickly leads to an onset of botrytis and so, to guard against this, all of the flowers are removed.



Dionysias could be thought to be the most rewarding or the most demoralising alpine to grow, depending on how successful you are in cultivating them. Frank Hoyle has given a detailed description of how he grows *D. aretioides*, slightly out of focus at the top left. His large plant is behind a smaller *aretioides* in the picture above. It looks smaller but as Father Ted told Dougal, 'It is further away!'

Below Derek Pickard, another Dionysia expert is standing beside his 3 pan [less than 19cm pan size] winning entry.



DIONYSIA
CHARLSON THOMAS



Dionysia sarvestanica
DZ 1.01-07

Dionysia sarvestanica, from near the city of Sarvestan in Iran, shown by Brian Burrow in his 3 pan entry





As their cushions get bigger, so Dionysias get progressively more difficult to keep in show condition. They don't have to be huge to be spectacular. Here in the class for plants in pots of less than 19cm several Dionysias sparkle like jewels in Aladdin's cave. Derek Pickard's purple flowered *D. freitagii* [above] was awarded a Certificate of Merit, one of only four in the entire show! It comes from limestone cliffs in Northern Afghanistan. The well named 'Inka Gold', a deep golden yellow, was shown by John Bunn. It is a hybrid between *D. odora* and *D. tapetodes* raised by Michael Kammerlander from Wurzburg.

Above it, the larger plant is Jim Watson's class winning *D. 'Bernd Wetzel* [tapetodes x ?aretioides]



The brightest plant in the show was undoubtedly John Richard's *Primula rosea*, whose large flowers glowed an almost fluorescent pink. Behind it was his excellent *Primula megaseifolia* in a much more subdued shade of lilac. The duo well deserved their first prize. In the next class sat a magnificent, ebullient even, hybrid of *Primula elatior* ssp. *pallasii*, which although placed third demanded attention. Mala Janes' *P. marginata* 'Mrs Carter Walmsley' was a deserved class winner. Second prize went to Geoff Rollinson's *P. renifolia*. This must have been a difficult class to judge as all three were excellent in their own way.



On the right is Edward Barraclough's incredible *Primula allionii* GFS 1984 with hundreds of flowers in immaculate condition. I bet you don't see allionii like this growing on the home cliffs in the Maritime alps of south-eastern France. The large plant on the right below is *P. 'Saracen'*.



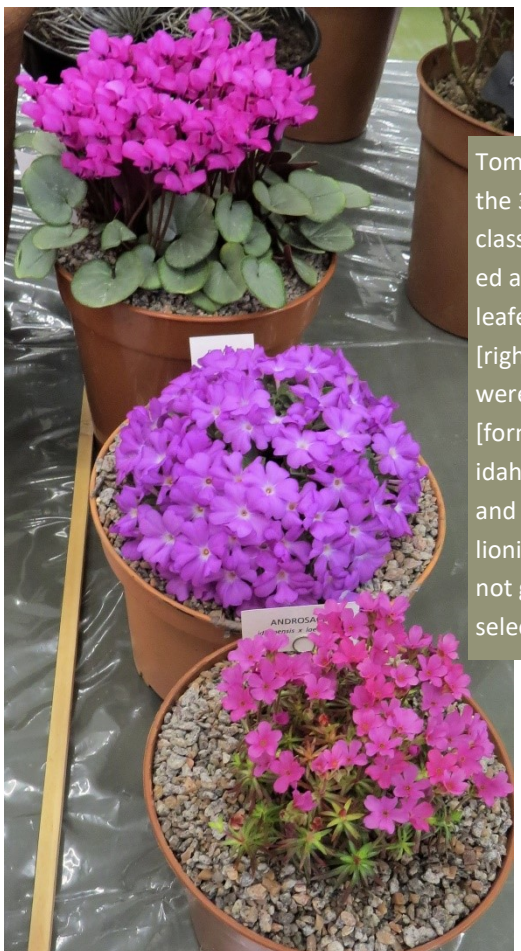


There were a few Cyclamen in the Large Open section, luckily they were all different, one being a hybrid to provide further interest at the top *C. pseudibericum*, Bottom right *C. alpinum*. the plant on the bottom left is labelled *C. wellensekii*. It looks like *C. libanoticum* to me. The nearest reference I can find to its label is *C. x wellensek*, which is applied to the 'Mini' series of autumn flowerers. Perhaps someone will enlighten me ...please.

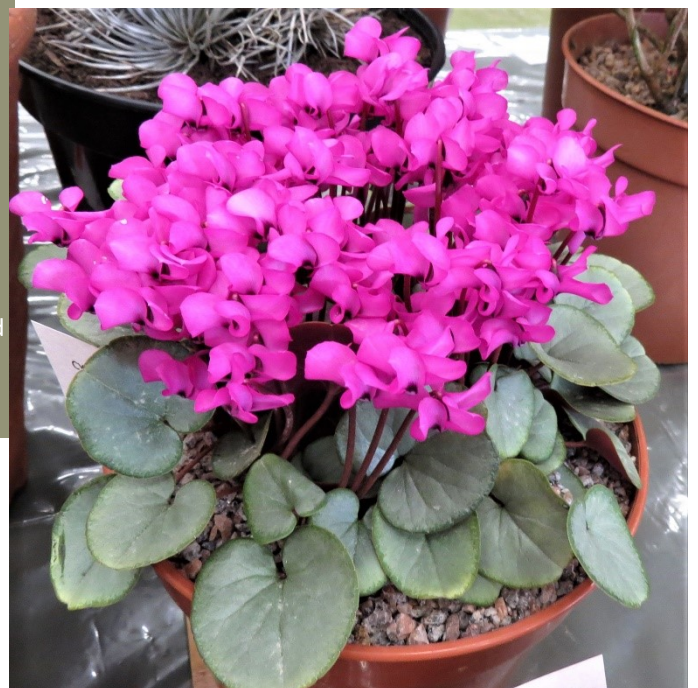




Class 53 for 1 pan rock plant in flower had 13 entries ranging from bulbs to cushions. Primulaceae were well represented. Geoff Rollinson's dark flowered Cyclamen coum 'Meaden's Crimson' [below left] was first and Derek Pickard's *Dionysia microphylla* [below right] second. These would seem to demonstrate both the opposite ends of the Primula Family and of the colour purple.



Tommy Anderson won the 3 pan Primulaceae class. His entry included a fabulous silver leafed Cyclamen coum [right]. His other plants were Androsace [formerly Douglasia] idahoensis x laevigata and a nice Primula allionii, whose name I did not get but it is super selection of allionii!





Jim Watson included an excellent plant of silver leafed Cyclamen coum 'Tilebarn Graham', another selection worth seeking out. All these Cyclamen coum make excellent plants for a winter flowering trough. Sometimes the birds regard the buds a winter treat. Class 56 for one pan Asiatic Primula demonstrated attracted a number of attractive plants Peter Hood won with Primula henrici below, left





This view of the 3 pan and 1 pan European or American [excluding allionii] Primula classes was dominated by Stan da Prato's magnificent Red Gold Lace plant. Brian Burrow won the 3 pan class with smaller more delicate plants; crisp snow-white Primula 'Purity', the Russian P. renifolia and P. hirsuta var. cuviae, which I have not met before. The 1 pan class is at the bottom.



1 pan European or American Primula excluding P. allionii and allionii hybrids was won by Mala Janes' P. marginata

Renowned Professor John Richards drew my attention to these plants of *Primula elatior* in the picture on the right. The plant on the left side has tall stems as you would expect while the other looks more like *Primula vulgaris*, the common primrose. Close inspection of the latter, labelled *P. elatior* ssp *pallasii* a sub-species from Turkey, has the fewer flowers which are contracted into the flower stalk. The leaves of subspecies *pallasii* are much less hairy.



Below is the incredible entry in the 3 pan primula *allionii* or *allionii* hybrid class. One again Geoff Rollinson again took top honours. His first prize trio are second from the right below and individually at the bottom of the page. Geoff has been dominating Primulaceae classes for as long as I can remember.





Don Peace was first with his P. allionii 'Mary Berry'



Soldanella may be the most unexpected member of the Primulaceae, mainly because of its dissected petals. The leaves resemble those of young Cyclamen coum plants. Soldanellas are tricky to flower as well, this is *S. carpatica* grown by Don Peace.

[More Kendal Show 2020 in Part 2](#)