THE ROCK GARDEN 124

January 2010

£6

SUBSCRIPTIONS FROM 1st OCTOBER 2009

Members' subscriptions are payable annually on 15th October and provide membership of the SRGC until 30th September in the following year.

Subscription rates from 1st October 2009

	UK	OVERSEAS
Single annual membership	£16	£22
Junior membership *(Under 18 on1st October 2009)*	£3	£7
Family membership *(Two adults and up to two children under 18 on 1st October 2009)* *Each additional adult or child*	£19 £3	£24.50 £7

All payments to the club must be in GB Pounds Sterling.

Cheques should be made payable to 'The Scottish Rock Garden Club' and must be drawn on a UK bank. Unfortunately, due to the high commission now charged, we are unable to accept cheques or credit card payments in US dollars or euros.

Where subscription payments are made by Visa or Mastercard they can only be accepted if all the following information is given: the number on the card, the name of the cardholder as shown on the card, the card expiry date, the three digit security code and the cardholder's signature.

Visa or Mastercard subscription payments may also be made via the secure order form on the Club's website at **www.srgc.org.uk**

No card details whatsoever are retained by the club after a transaction.

Applications for membership and all subscription payments or authorisations for payment from a Visa or Mastercard account should be sent to:

Graham Bunkall, 145 Stonehill Avenue, Birstall, Leicester, LE4 4JG, UK

Although every effort is made to minimise costs, they continue to rise. These new rates therefore reflect the decision of the club's annual general meeting of November 8th 2008 to increase the annual subscription during the course of 2009. Allowing for inflation, the new subscription is about the same as at the end of the last millennium. The support of members in this matter is both vital and much appreciated by the club's council.

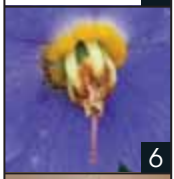
SRGC email - *info@srgc.org.uk*

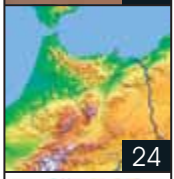
The ROCK GARDEN

The Journal of the
Scottish Rock Garden Club
January 2010

Number 124

Cover: *Meconopsis horridula* (Paul Egan)





Printed by Wyke Printers, Hull.
www.wyke-printers.co.uk
ISSN 0265-5500

The ROCK GARDEN

is published twice yearly by The Scottish Rock Garden Club
on 31 January and 30 June

Anton Edwards
Duguid's Wark
Manse Road
Caputh
Perthshire
PH1 4JH
01738 710774
antonedwards@aol.com

The Editor welcomes articles, photographs and illustrations on any aspects of alpine and rock garden plants and their cultivation. Authors are encouraged to submit material electronically but articles may also be submitted in manuscript, preferably double spaced. Digital images are particularly welcome but 35 mm slides, high quality prints or drawings may also be submitted for professional scanning.

The deadlines for contributions are 1 November for the January issue and 1 April for the July issue. These dates also apply for material for the Yearbook & Show Schedules.

Enquiries about advertising should be made to:
Christine Boulby
10 Quarry Avenue
Acklington
Morpeth
NE65 9BZ
01670 761423
boulby@coniston.demon.co.uk

Individual copies are available from:
Glassford Sprunt
17 Claremont Drive
Bridge of Allan
Stirlingshire
FK9 4EE
Tel. 01786 833607 (evenings only)
glassfordsprunt@aol.com

Contact may also be made through the website: www.srgc.org.uk

8th International Rock Garden Conference 2011

This event will be held at the East Midlands Conference Centre, Nottingham University. The Provisional Programme is given below, together with costs. As you will see there are 'Early Bird' Discounts available. The AGS website will open for bookings on **11 January 2010,** or forms are obtainable from the AGS centre, tel 01386 554790. www.alpinegardensociety.net

PROVISIONAL PROGRAMME

Thursday 14 April 2011

15.00 - 16.00	Registration
16.00 - 16.30	**Tea**
16.30 - 17.30	Welcome & Opening Lecture - Brian Mathew: provisional title 'Ever-changing Frontiers: of all sorts!'
19.30 onwards	**Dinner**
	David Haselgrove ' Southern Hemisphere Treats'

Friday 15 April 2011

09.00 - 10.00	Harry Jans 'Plant Hunting on the Roof of the World'
10.00 - 11.00	John Richards 'Asiatic Primulas Old and New'
11.00 - 11.30	**Coffee**
11.30 - 12.30	Martin Walsh 'The High and Low in the Himalaya'
12.50 - 14.15	**Lunch**
13.30 - 15.00	WORKSHOPS
15.00 - 16.00	Robert Rolfe 'Location, Location, Location: Alpines Near and Far, Narrowly Endemic and Nationalistic'
16.00 - 16.30	**Tea**
16.30 - 17.30	Jim Archibald 'Beyond the Last Frontiers'
19.30 onwards	**Dinner**
	Plant Auction

Saturday 16 April 2011

09.00 - 10.00	Keith Wiley 'An Holistic Approach to Alpines in the Garden'
10.00 - 11.00	Todd Boland 'Alpine Plants of Newfoundland through to the Appalachians'
11.00 - 11.30	**Coffee**
11.30 - 12.30	Bob Wallis 'Fritillaries on Four Continents'
12.50 - 14.15	**Lunch**
13.30 - 15.00	Free Time (to allow opportunity to see Show)
15.00 - 16.00	John Good 'Alpines in a Changing World'
16.00 - 16.30	**Tea**
16.30 - 17.30	John Watson 'Three Decades in the Andes'
19.30 onwards	**Dinner**
	Roy Lancaster 'My World of Plants'

Sunday 17 April 2011

09.00 - 10.00	Ian Young 'Highland Gathering'
10.00 - 11.00	Michael Kammerlander 'Juno Iris – the Persica Group and Some Others'
11.00 - 11.30	**Coffee**
11.30 - 12.30	John Grimshaw 'Giants and Dwarfs: the Alpines of Africa'
12.50 - 14.15	**Lunch**
13.30 - 15.00	WORKSHOPS
15.00 - 16.00	Vojtěch Holubec 'Central Asia: Plants under Burning Sun and Cooling Snow'
16.00 - 16.30	**Tea**
16.30 - 17.30	Christopher Grey-Wilson 'A Lifetime of Alpines'

Stirling Group Discussion Weekend

1 - 3 October 2010

Following last year's event, the 2010 event will again be held at the conveniently central Macdonald Inchyra Grange Hotel, Polmont, just off the M9, Junction 5. With easy access by road, the hotel is close to Polmont railway station and Edinburgh Airport. Edinburgh, Falkirk and Stirling are within twenty minutes drive while Linlithgow Palace, the Falkirk Wheel, the Pineapple and other attractions are nearby.

The hotel is an extended country house on the landward side of Grangemouth. The facilities are modern and spacious and there is a heated pool for delegates to use. The registration area, lecture room, plant areas and restaurant are all on the ground floor. Accommodation is in double, twin or single rooms. A few rooms on the ground floor will be reserved for disabled delegates. There are lifts to the upper floors where there are more rooms for any delegates with disabilities.

A booking form is enclosed with the Secretary's Pages. Please indicate on the back of the booking form if you require special facilities. If you are sharing a room with someone please indicate the person's name. We will help you to find a sharer if you need one. Extra nights are available on the Thursday and Sunday as per the booking form. Please return the form and booking fee to Liz Mills as soon as possible, but not later than 6th August 2010. After this date bookings will incur an extra charge of £10.

The registration secretary: Liz Mills,
Upper Kinneddar House, Saline, Fife KY12 9TR;
Telephone 01383 852321;
e-mail liz.saline@hotmail.co.uk

RESIDENT (per person)

Friday dinner – Sunday afternoon tea, double occupancy	£195
Friday dinner – Sunday afternoon tea, single occupancy	£255
Saturday morning – Sunday afternoon, double	£137
Saturday morning – Sunday afternoon, single	£167

NON-RESIDENT

Saturday - morning coffee, lunch, afternoon tea	£40
Saturday - morning coffee, lunch, afternoon tea, dinner	£66
Saturday – dinner	£26
Sunday - morning coffee, lunch, afternoon tea	£40

Programme

Friday 1st October

16.00	Registration
16.00 - 17.30	Plant staging
19.45	President's Welcoming Address
20.00	The Bulb Group Lecture: Ian Young - '*Erythroniums*'
21.30	Small Bulb Exchange

Saturday 2nd October

08.00 - 09.00	Plant staging
08.00	Registration
09.00	Optional activities
11.30	The William Buchanan Lecture: Finn Haugli - '*Alpines at 70˚ North; Sixteen years with the Arctic-Alpines Botanic Garden in Tromsø*'
12.30	Show opens
14.00	The Harold Esslemont Lecture: Dave Toole - '*Alpines of Southland, New Zealand; Flowers, Foliage and Form*'
15.45	Brian Mathew - '*Cyclamen in Nature, Art, Science and the Garden*'
19.00	Dinner
21.00	Plant Auction

Sunday 3rd October

08.30	Registration
09.30	Dave Toole – '*Gems of South Island, New Zealand; my favourite NZ alpines*'
10.00	Finn Haugli – '*Alpines on the top of the World; Native alpines of Troms County, North Norway*'
11.00	David Millward – '*Limestone Landscapes and their Plants*'
14.00	The John Duff Lecture – Speaker to be confirmed

Stag River Estancia

Patagonian Parallels

Our rock garden world is a disorderly but ever-fascinating network of plants, people, places, propagation, personal passions, show benches, expeditions and history. Thanks to the kindness and enthusiasms of our authors, this journal reflects the diversity of knots to be found in that net. But there are also hidden links to be found across time and distance. Readers who enjoyed our (now) past president Ian Christie's account of his expedition to Patagonia in issue 121 may now look forward to another armchair visit with Ger van den Beuken's complementary tales of Patagonian exotics in the next issue 125; or they may more energetically anticipate joining him in his expedition in late 2011 (page 122).

Your editor, looking ahead only to July 2010 *(how the years pass...)* is grateful to Ger for a preview of his article and perceives some interesting

A compilation of *Oxalis laciniata* from near Stag River

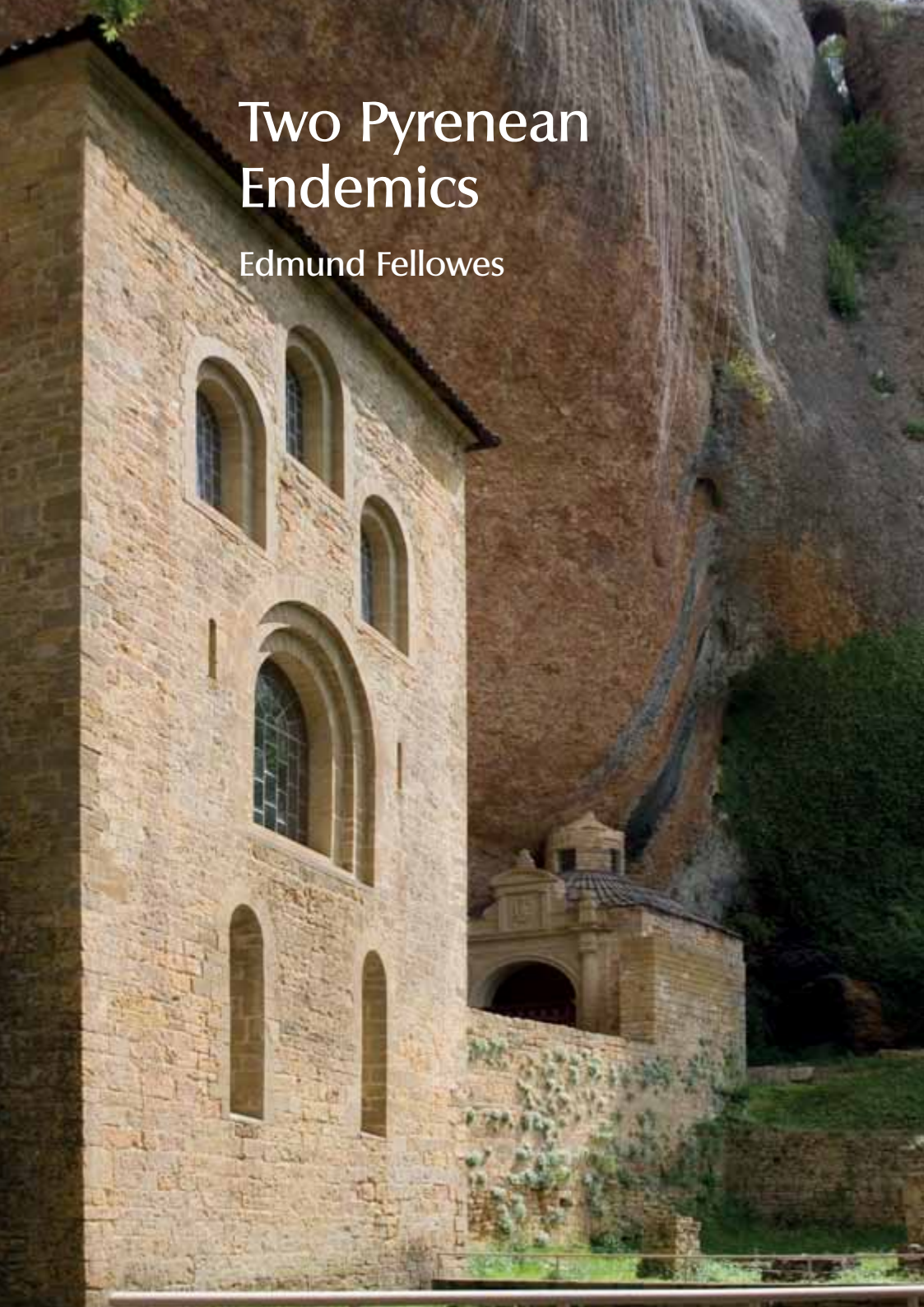
Alstroemeria patagonica, Mount Zeballos near Los Antiquos

examples of the links. Stag River Estancia pervades many accounts of Patagonian plant hunting; the variety of *Oxalis* described in this issue by Robert Rolfe in his historical review is reflected by Ger's pictures; *Benthamiella patagonica* appeared to great effect in the 2009 Newcastle Show but has been omitted from that report because it will appear to advantage from the Patagonian wild in issue 125; the beauty of *Alstroemeria hookeri* on the show bench at the discussion weekend is paralleled in Patagonia; Robert Rolfe's account of the introduction of *Ourisia* seems almost inevitable, given the contemporary beauty of the species in the Andes. The links in the alpine gardening network seem never-ending ... your own views and articles are, as ever, welcome.

Ourisia ruelloides

Two Pyrenean Endemics

Edmund Fellowes



Ramonda myconi

In early June 2009, my wife Elizabeth and I spent ten days in the Aragon Pyrenees. We were based in our campervan. I was interested to visit the monastery of San Juan de la Peña (St John of the Rock) in the outlying hills south of Jaca. I had been here birding thirty years previously and remembered the spectacular location in a now protected landscape of gorges in conglomerate rock. Our aim was to enjoy the mountains and

Opposite: San Juan de la Peña

Below: *Ramonda myconi,* pale form

our timing was to coincide with the flowering season of a host of plants.

A walk down to the old monastery on June 6th revealed few birds, but was enlivened by a show of plants including some fine spikes of *Saxifraga longifolia*. The building itself was as remembered although the overhanging crumbling conglomerate rock face is now encased in steel netting and gabions to protect the tourists beneath. I ventured round to the west of the complex looking for a photograph and came face to face with a mass of *Ramonda myconi*, mostly growing in shaded areas beneath trees on the north-facing rock. Great clumps of flowers looked out from beneath the steel netting. Further along, the netting stopped and here the two endemics covered a damp rock face. I went back to the van for tripod and macro-lens and spent a happy couple of hours on the precarious slope enjoying the massed flowers at their peak of condition. I have a single *Ramonda* on a north-facing retaining wall in my garden in Dumfries. It flowers every year in early June, but it is puny in comparison with these wild plants. Here there were several forms, apart from the beautiful typical specimens, including pale ones and forms with narrow petals. The *Ramonda* is a perennial, and several clumps had tumbled from their fissures under the weight of damp leaves. Other plants had dried up when their shade cover had failed, but hundreds were thriving.

Saxifraga longifolia, detail

The saxifrage is monocarpic and juvenile rosettes grew among the *Ramonda*, varying from tiny seedlings to twenty centimetre pompoms. The relatively few flowering individuals displayed their metre-long plumes of white, attracting several species of hoverflies and solitary bees that were going about their business of pollination and ensuring the next

Rock face at
San Juan de la Peña

Saxifraga longifolia at the juvenile stage

generation of these wonderful plants. How the seeds become lodged in the crevices of the conglomerate rock, I don't know. But with hundreds of flowers on a single raceme, the seed yield from a single plant must be enormous, and the survival of a tiny minority sufficient to ensure the spectacle for years to come.

I am left with happy memories of this beautiful natural rock garden, enhancing a wonderful building in a spectacular location.

Saxifraga longifolia on rock face

A Spanish Fiesta

Mike Hopkins

Most people will know of Andalucía (Al-Andalus, الأندلس) because of the Costa del Sol, that carbuncle that resides almost entirely along the south-west coast of Spain. Driving along the coast road towards Malaga after two weeks in the Andalucian hinterland was a rude reminder of man's folly in building unsustainable communities in a fragile environment. Mile upon mile of icing-cake apartments and villas pile high on every hill and in every valley. Electricity pylons crisscross the route and tower cranes dominate the skyline. Quite unbelievable unless seen for oneself, and the sight begs the question of how to service such huge transient communities with their expectations of facilities and indeed comforts: even basic water, electricity and drainage. Thankfully, this all happens between road and sea - not more than a mile in many cases - but encroachment to the north of the road is starting. Fortunately, one still only needs to go a mile or so inland to be back in the true Spanish environment - but for how long? The big question is how far can it go and the even bigger question is how can it be sustained?

Contrast this with our previous two weeks in totally unspoilt landscapes and protected parklands photographing wonderful wild flowers, watching a huge variety of birds and even some mammals in spectacular unspoilt scenery. The classic white villages nestling in the valleys between high mountains are accessible by modern tarmac roads that still have only two lanes (sometimes one and a half) and still wind tantalisingly through the landscape. To meet someone else on the road is an event in itself. To the East is the Coto de Doñana, whose spectacular and extremely well protected wetlands provide unspoilt habitats for a host of water birds and other flora and fauna. It is a huge expanse of marshland created from a river delta that has gradually silted up to provide a rich variety of habitats. Although not of great interest to rock gardeners, there are nonetheless many plants of interest, but the real joy of this area is just being there in the tranquil, serene atmosphere and to watch the hundreds of birds.

Narcissus assoanus

Having set the scene let's get on with the plants. The main attraction at this time of year is the *Narcissus*, eight species in all (one of which we didn't see) with much variation and several habitats. All but one are of the smaller varieties and this makes for a photographic challenge not just because of the size but also because of the colour. A challenge that, by and large, I sadly failed to meet despite the advantage of a brand new digital camera providing instant results. Photographing flowers in the wild has many pitfalls, not least of which are one's own physical shortcomings; but wild flowers are mostly very un-obliging in their choice of growing spots. They don't congregate together in nice clumps as in a pot on the show bench; if they form a group, half are dead or not yet in bloom; they often make their home halfway up sheer rock faces or in the middle of a bog; and to cap it all the light is too dull or too bright. We won't mention the complexities of wind. However, it's all worth it when you finally find that perfect shot and can forget aching feet and wet muddy knees.

Narcissus cuatrecasasii and habitat

Iris planifolia

I digress once more - back to the flowers. The first narcissus, *Narcissus assoanus*, or *requienii*, or *juncifolius* if you prefer, we found on our first day in the delightful woodland below the white village of Benaoján. A dainty yellow with a hint of orange around the edges of the cup, faint scent and rush-like leaves, growing in rocky limestone outcrops in open areas of woodland. *N. assoanus* is in the *Jonquilla* Group - long tube, small cup. We later encountered *N. cuatrecasasii*, superficially very similar to *N. assoanus* but in the *Rupicola* group, with the two keels on the back of the squarish section leaves. In the same general environment and conditions, *Iris planifolia*, subgenus *Scopiris* (Juno) is to be found, the only European iris, a very pleasing blue with yellow crest not obviously in the main stream of captivated plants; I did manage to find the white form in one nursery catalogue. It seems to grow in similar conditions to that of *N. assoanus* and *N. cuatrecasasii*, both of which are widely grown in the UK. Some time later we encountered several tens of

Narcissus jonquilla

sheep-grazed acres of the iris – sheep don't seem to like *Iris planifolia*! Along with the *Iris* and *Narcissus*, *Fritillaria lusitanica* popped up here and there, perhaps not the most exciting of fritillaries but welcome simply because it was in the wild. Here were also, of course, the inevitable large number of weeds: *Aristolochia baetica*, *Gagea pratensis*, *Linaria oblongifolia*, *Ranunculus ficaria* ssp. *ficariformis*, *Euphorbia helioscopia*, *Ornithogalum reverchonii*, *Verbascum sinuatum* - to name but a few. I largely ignore such irrelevances in what follows except for the odd one that happened to take my fancy.

Fritillaria lusitanica

On Sunday, the third day, we hoped to see *Narcissus cantabricus* in woodland above El Burgo but not one was to be seen - just a lot of holes in the ground and disturbed turf. Speculation about what had occurred ranged through mice, boar, Martians and our planet's most destructive animal, man. My money was on the last, having seen wild collected bulbs for sale in markets all over the world. This is a great pity as *N. cantabricus* is one of the most desirable of all. The situation was not helped by Chris, one of the tour leaders, saying that last year they were magnificent!

So, we had to wait for the fourth day on our way to a memorable ten-course tapas lunch in the village of Grazalema, for the third narcissus, *Narcissus jonquilla*. It was worth waiting for because three others followed in quick succession: *N. papyraceus*, *N. cordubensis* and *N. bulbocodium*.

Woodland above El Burgo

Narcissus papyraceus

Specimens of the latter two were initially disappointing and we found better ones later. *N. jonquilla* was, once again, superficially like *N. assoanus* and *N. cuatrecasasii* but was distinguishable by its multi-headed flowers and its strong scent with a hint of orange. It is also taller, with an almost round stem and a cup that is noticeably more frilly (is there a botanical term for *frilly?)*. They grew by the roadside in huge numbers in farmland, once again grazed by sheep and goats, but the roadside fence protected the verge flowers from the grazing. *N. papyraceus* was truly magnificent at a later site in an open cultivated field. In perfect condition with glistening snow white petals with a hint of a yellow centre, the plants just begged to be photographed. Several flowers per stem and a fantastic perfume completed an almost perfect plant.

The high Sierra de las Nieves on the fifth day brought us *Narcissus hispanicus*, a trumpet type much more like the daffodils of parks and suburban gardens, quite tall with a long trumpet. A much more interesting plant was *Romulea bulbocodium*, which appeared here in a huge range of colour shades from white to lilac through to purple and at one point

carpeting the ground with its multitude of colours. The yellow centre sets off the flower perfectly with added shades of green on the outside of the petals. The distinguishing feature of *R. bulbocodium* is the stigma, which is very much longer than the stamens. The high light of the day was undoubtedly a snake, a Southern Smooth Snake (*Coronella girondica*) to be exact, that was caught by Chris and subsequently much photographed. I must mention - for those who are interested - the numbers of orchids that we saw in passing over the past few days. *Ophrys fusca, O. tenthredinifera, O. scolopax, O. bombyliflora, Orchis collina* and *Himantoglossum* (*Barlia*) *robertianum* - there may have been others. Enchanting little things, impossible to photograph (except the *Barlia*) and even more impossible to grow.

Narcissus hispanicus

Romulea bulbocodium

Our sixth day above Montejaque, which in turn is above Benaoján, provided relief from daffodils for some members of the group; and our last and only day of albeit slight rain in this area was spent partly in the town of Ronda. Ronda is a town built on a spectacular sheer cliff face and has much of interest for those who can relate to its complex and bloodthirsty history of Celts, Romans, Moors and Christians; linked to Pedro Romero and the origins of bullfighting, and

Barlia robertianus

Ophrys tenthredinifera

highlighted by the enthusiasm of Ernest Hemingway and Orson Welles, it is one of the most popular non-coastal destinations in Spain. Enough said.

On day eight we moved from Benaoján, leaving our lovely hotel, Molino del Santos, where we had all become very settled, and travelled to El Rocío on the edge of the Coto Doñana. Approaching our destination, we drove along a road straight for some miles, either side of which was what

Leucojum trichophyllum

can only be described as prison grade fencing complete with barbed wire topping. This was the beginnings of the Coto Doñana's security fencing separating the riff-raff from the precious wildlife inside, which of course includes the famous lynx, the Egyptian Mongoose and the Spanish Imperial Eagle. El Rocío itself is famous for its distinctive classical Spanish architecture and sand streets which, when without their cars, give the impression of a Hollywood western. A beautiful lagoon was packed with water birds that later provided the most glorious sunrises and sunsets and put the finishing touches to a most fabulous location.

The next two days were spent within and around the Coto Doñana: two of the most delightful days I have ever spent on a botanical tour, despite the paucity of interesting plants (*interesting for me, that is*). Everything else made up for the lack: the quiet, calm, clear atmosphere punctuated only by bird calls with that strange and unique echo typical of large open spaces, especially over water. The perfect weather of course was partly responsible but I imagine it to be a glorious place even in less favourable conditions.

Birds of note were the well-known flamingos but we should not forget the storks nesting on all the electricity pylons, and the azure winged magpies, which I found charming despite my personal war with the common magpie that some readers will be aware of. Some plants of note were *Leucojum trichophyllum*, *Linum perenne*, a *Linaria* and more *Narcissus papyraceus*. The *Leucojum* with its crystalline white petals

Flamingos at Coto Doñana

Narcissus bulbocodium and habitat

occurred in various habitats, both open and shaded sandy scrubland. Many had pink shading at the base of the petals.

A totally new plant for me was the *Halimium*; at first I thought it to be a rock rose with bigger flowers, needle-like leaves and a good range of colours. Of interest to the orchid lovers was a *Serapias* - I think *lingua* but I couldn't be certain. Late on the second day we stopped by a field of *Narcissus bulbocodium*, hundreds or even thousands of blooms in a boggy open location of several acres that may have once been cultivated. Here was a chance to see natural variation in action, from colour through to corona shape and size. There were many desirable forms that could easily have been collected and given unique names; it would not have been difficult to add var. *conspicuus*, *bulbocodium* or *citrinus* to many of them. Despite my hundreds of plants and a dozen photographs, I failed miserably to obtain a single good picture. It was here that I discovered one of the problems of digital photography. That wonderful facility to be able to view your picture instantaneously is only of use if you can see the screen! In high ambient light conditions this is not always possible and it is doubly difficult to decide whether everything is in focus. I offer as an

Anagallis monelli

Lotus creticus

Paronychia argentea

excuse the wet ground; kneeling in a couple of centimetres of stagnant water is not the most comfortable of conditions.

Day eleven saw us on the move again, to Tarifa - just beyond Gibraltar and with a beach-side room at the Hotel Dos Mares offering through the haze a view of the African coast line. On the way, through the rich rolling farmland of the Cádiz Province, we stopped at the Laguna de Medina, another paradise for bird watchers. We were once again entertained by the antics of ducks and other water birds.

Our first day out from Tarifa was to the Barbate woodlands above Cape Trafalgar where we found an abundance of orchids: *Ophrys tenthredinifera*, *O. atlantica*, *O. fusca* and *O. scolopax*. There was also a couple of tiny *Scilla*. The best find for me was a perfect selection of *Anagallis monelli* with its beautiful blue colour that appears to have come reasonably true in the photographs. Cape Trafalgar was interesting with its lighthouse, the inevitable water bird lagoon and a rather colourful Spanish account of the Battle of Trafalgar. The visit was slightly marred by lots of tourists; quite what they were doing there I have no idea. However, the whole area around Tarifa is largely spoilt visually by another of man's

Wind Turbines at Tarifa

Reichardia gaditana

Hedysarum coronarium

follies, the wind turbine. In the view that wind turbines are going to solve our greenhouse gas emission problems, the Spaniards have erected hundreds, possibly thousands, of these monstrous machines along hilltops and in open areas.

The Mediterranean littoral zone at Tarifa and nearby revealed an abundance of weeds of great interest to botanists (*I am not a botanist*) and I have to say that many had very attractive flowers and foliage. How to grow such plants in captivity I can't imagine; they need - or perhaps merely tolerate - a sandy soil, salt water and a saline atmosphere.

Drosophyllum lusitanicum

Aristolochia sempervirens

Here were *Lotus creticus*, *Paronychia argentea*, *Reichardia gaditana* and *Hedysarum coronarium* to name a few of the best.

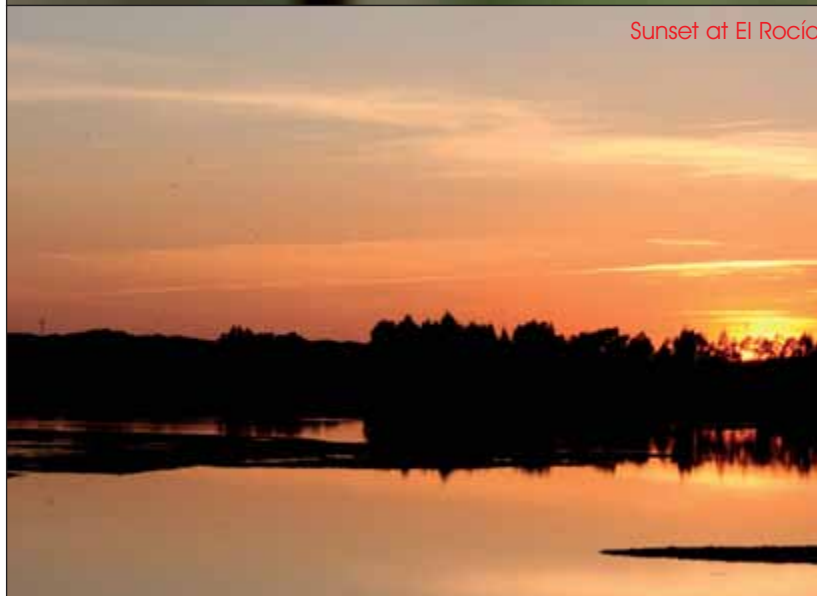
Our last day proved to be a good plant day. El Cuartón, just along the road from Dos Mares, was the location of a most unusual insectivorous plant, *Drosophyllum lusitanicum*, growing not as you might expect in a bog but on sheer dry, bare rock faces. The plant put me in mind of the star fish with several arms - actually branches with coiled tips. Just where the vehicles were parked, an *Aristolochia sempervirens* gave the photographers great interest with its dainty little pouches, while in some nearby wooded area was another tiny *Scilla*, *S. monophylla*. The afternoon offered up two wonderful plants, *Tulipa* sylvestris ssp. *australis* and *Scilla peruviana*.

The tulips proved most unhelpful, growing on banks just out of reach amongst thorny shrubs and - to top it all - stubbornly refusing to open their flowers despite quite good sun. It is possible, in retrospect, that this was the best outcome, as the inside of the flower is merely yellow whereas the outside is yellow with stunning red and orange veining. Later, at La Janda, a freshwater lake and marsh, the *Scilla* was much more cooperative, growing along a canal bank on gentle grassy slopes and offering a whole range of differing stages of flowering.

For such an enjoyable two weeks in Andalucia, in Southern Spain, I have to thank the Greentours team, Chris Gardener, Terry Underhill and Bazak Guner - all of whom I have been with on previous tours and was once more delighted to be with again - and of course my fellow group members for being such good company.

Scilla peruviana

Tulipa sylvestris ssp. *australis*



Sunset at El Rocío

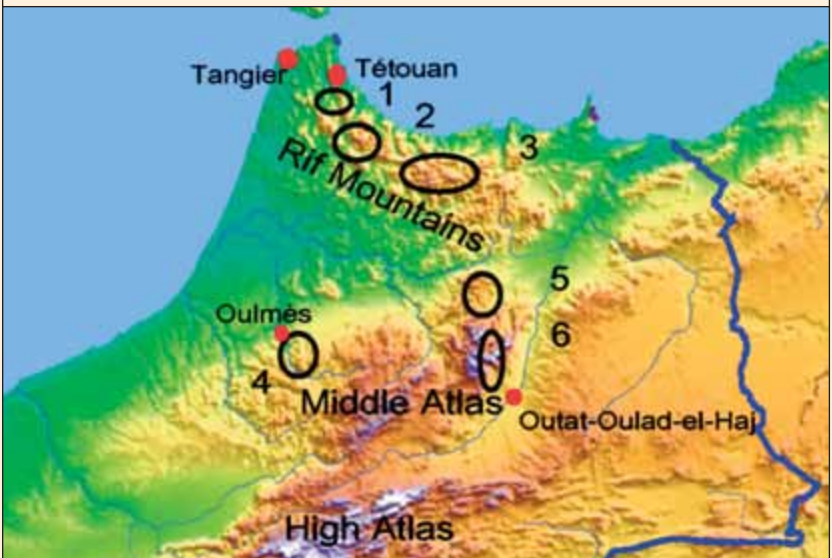
Mountains of Northern Morocco

Malcolm McGregor

In researching anything it's not unusual to find loose ends of knowledge which have never been properly unravelled. Among the mossy saxifrages there have been fascinating recognitions in the last few years, with the interesting find of *Saxifraga styriaca* in the eastern Alps and with Pablo Vargas clarifying the taxonomy of Spanish saxifrages. However, unresolved issues remain about the mossy saxifrage species of North Africa. Some of these African species are also found in Spain but there are about half a dozen endemic species which are not, and our knowledge of some of them is limited to single collections from which they were originally described in the 1930s.

Most rock gardeners are familiar with the hybrid mossy saxifrages, whose soft cushions of foliage have red, pink or white flowers. They are derived from species found in the Alps, a provenance indicated by their soft foliage and extreme hardiness allied to a dislike of long hot dry conditions. But wild mossy saxifrages are much more diverse. Most are European but some extend to the Caucasus, all down the western mountains of North and South America, while a fascinating range of

Northern Morocco:
1 - Rif, Beni Hosmar & Jebl Kelti
2 - Rif, Jebel Kraa
3 - Central Rif
4 - Monts des Zaians
5 - Tazzeka National Park
6 - Jebel Bou Naceur



species - often very highly drought-adapted – is found in North Africa as well as Spain. These drought-adapted species of genus *Saxifraga* belong to three series: *Saxifraga*, *Biternatae* and *Gemmiferae*. Series *Saxifraga* is the most familiar of these, with the Meadow Saxifrage *Saxifraga granulata* being widespread in Europe. There are six other species in the series, whose centre of diversity is in Spain. Their characteristic is the formation of bulbils in the leaf axils - usually of the basal leaves - that allow them to pass the summer in this resting state. Series *Biternatae* has three species confined to southern Spain which are charming but intransigent as far as gardeners are concerned. In going to northern Morocco we concentrated on series *Gemmiferae*, named after their drought-adapted leafy buds, or gemmae. A good example is *S. globulifera*, which copes with the summer conditions of Spain and Morocco by forming globular gemmae that only open again to recognisable mossy saxifrage foliage in sufficiently cool and moist conditions. Other species in this section include *S. erioblasta* and *S. reuteriana*.

Morocco is home to the greatest concentration of mossy saxifrage species outside Spain. There are some species in the High Atlas, including the reasonably well-known endemic taxon *Saxifraga pedemontana* ssp. *demnatensis* and a much less well-known endemic, *S. maireana*. Both would be nice to find but it was impossible to combine this with exploration of the more northerly mountains of Morocco, home of the most intriguing species, some of which have never been photographed. The Rif mountains are home to endemic species, *S. maweana* & *S. werneri* and endemic subspecies of *S. rigoi* & *S. globulifera*; the Monts des Zaians are home to the endemic *S. embergeri*; and the eastern Middle Atlas is home to the endemic *S. luizetiana*. Of the endemic species, only *S. maweana* has been in cultivation - from now lost 19th century introductions - and none has been seen in the wild for many years. They grow in parts of Morocco very rarely visited, for a variety of reasons, and *S. werneri* and *S. luizetiana* seemed to me to be very poorly understood in terms of their proper place among the mossy saxifrages.

The practicality of visiting northern Morocco varies enormously from place to place. Trekking is well-established in the High Atlas but the mountains of northern Morocco are visited far less – and for good reason! A drug trade based on cannabis cultivation flourishes in the Rif, meaning that foreign plant hunters are suspect; in the eastern Middle Atlas there is no tourist infrastructure, with very few hotels of any description south of Taza & Guercif, and roads do not always accord with the maps.

The flora of the Rif is very distinctive. It has connections with Andalucia but there are many interesting endemics and overall this area deserves much more attention. The western Rif is extremely rewarding for the botanical visitor and the town of Chefchaouen makes a charming and

perfectly safe base. It was easy to hire a 4WD and driver (about £70 per day) and we found that hiring a guide (about £20 per day) obviated any difficulties from local drug sellers who might otherwise be a problem. There is a range of hotels and restaurants in Chefchaouen and the town itself with its blue-washed buildings is stunning.

The Monts des Zaians are largely igneous and bare, superficially resembling the Auvergne. Access is limited to a couple of secondary roads meeting at Oulmès, one cutting through from Khemisset to Khneifra and the other from Meknes to Fes. The Gîte Berbère de Charme just outside Oulmès or the Hôtel des Thermes at Oulmès-les-Thermes are the only accommodation options.

The Middle Atlas is a very large area. The most visited parts are the towns strung along the N8 south of Fes as it heads on toward Marrakech on the western side: Sefrou, Ifrane, Azrou and Khenifra.

Transfer from Fes to Chefchachouen

Fes has become much more accessible from the UK in recent years with the introduction of direct flights from Luton that unfortunately depart at 6.30 in the morning. Arriving in Fes by 9.15, we expected to pick up our car from Europcar and be on the road nice and early but things were not quite as simple as that. The Europcar office was open, the young man knew all about us, but we needed to be taken into town to the office to pick it up. For various reasons our car had to be changed - our fault rather than theirs - but apart from the two-hour wait, sitting outside a street-side café drinking Moroccan coffee, there were other slight difficulties. One that would only surface at the end of our trip was that because we had been driven to the centre of Fes we were uncertain as to the exact location of the airport. More importantly, it meant that we started from the middle of a busy downtown Fes, preparing itself for a state visit with police lining the streets, rather than from a quiet out-of-town airport.

Outside Chefchaouen

David Victor and I were easily named as drivers but trying to get Kathryn Hart as our third gave the manager problems. She could only drive with one of us in the car as her '*official man*' who was to be

responsible. Because Kathryn had never driven abroad before and none of us was assertively feminist this caused us no real difficulties but was the first cultural indicator of an attitude to women which could and would be extremely oppressive. Our remaining difficulty was getting out of town. Signage for the right road (N4) westward was confusing and contradictory. Nevertheless we finally found our road to Ouezzane and on to Chefchaouen. An interesting alternative would be the more winding N8 north from Fes to Ketama and then west to Chefchaouen but we were deterred by the distance, road quality and the reputation of the area as the centre of the Moroccan drug trade. Another time, with more confidence and local knowledge I would probably take this road.

Most of the country is pretty arid with giant agaves (*Agave americana*) immediately apparent. Roadside botanizing quickly introduced us to the flora which included two lavender species (*Lavandula stoechas* and *L. pinnata*), squirting cucumber (*Ecballium elaterium*), clary (*Salvia sclarea*), globe thistles (*Echinops spinosus*), *Chrysanthemum segetum*, *Linaria chalepensis*, and various *Convolvulus* including *C. althaeoides*, *C. elegantissimus*, *C. tricolor* and *C. sabatius*, with occasional punctuations of *Ipomoea purpurea* in slightly more lush areas. There was the interesting and pretty endemic annual *Convolvulus gharbensis* with terminal clusters of blue flowers (rather than axillary as in the similarly-coloured perennial *C. sabatius*). The last part of the drive, from Ouezzane, leads through more mountainous country before dropping towards Chefchaouen through cork oak woodland with the mountains rising dramatically behind the town. We had few opportunities to explore this woodland but one species we did find in it was *Serapias strictiflora*.

Chefchaouen is a wonderful base for a week and could be visited for its own sake. The town is famous for its blue-washed walls and blue-painted doors in the narrow streets of the medina, the old walled town. This medina is not enormous but is sufficiently complicated that we repeatedly failed to find our way through it successfully on foot. On our last morning we visited to take photographs and found jewellery and garment districts that we had previously completely missed.

Inside Chefchaouen

Chefchaouen- Tétouan Road (N2/N13)

The road north from Chefchaouen first descends to join the N2 in marshland by the Oued Laou which rises in the mountains south-east of Chefchaouen to run northward to the coast at Et-Tieta-de-Oued-Laou. This marshland is ornithologically interesting with egrets and marsh harriers the most obvious species. North along the road towards Tétouan the road gradually rises to a high point at Souk-el-Arba-des-Beni-Hassan. There is nice roadside botanizing on the descent northward with a range of plants very similar to that of Andalucia: plenty of the borage family (*Anchusa, Cynoglossum, Borago*), scorpion vetch, *Reseda lutea* and tall spikes of *Ornithogalum narbonense*. Of particular note was the high degree of parasitizing of the broad-bean fields by *Orobanche crenata*.

To the east, the mountains including Jbel Kelti (1928 m) - one of the possible sites for *S. maweana* - rise above the valley of the Oued Hajra but there seemed to be no tracks up this face of the range so we drove up to the small dam at Akchour off the road to Et-Tieta-de-Oued-Laou which forks north-eastward from the Chefchaouen-Tétouan road just north of Chefchaouen, passing a large artificial lake. There are interesting opportunities for botanizing among rocky habitats by this road where dwarf fan palm *Chamaerops humilis* and large numbers of the giant sea squill *Urginea maritima* can be found with slightly surprising companions such as *Arabis verna*.

We walked for about an hour on a track above the dam to the west of the river, climbing to a shoulder about 200m above our starting point. This area offers interesting plants initially among the *Pistachia* and *Cistus* scrub and later on fairly sheer cliffs. Among the more interesting larger plants among the scrub were *Lavandula dentata* (our third lavender) and *Erica australis* with *Aphyllanthes monspeliensis, Fedia cornucopiae, Convolvulus althaeoides, Ophrys apifera* and a *Serapias parviflora*. Another nice plant here was the small shrubby violet, *Viola arborescens*, with

Digitalis laciniata ssp. *riphaea*

its small white flowers having purple streaks on the lower petal, and there was a single specimen of *Digitalis laciniata* ssp. *riphaea* while *Aristolochia baetica* scrambled through the scrubby bushes. Hanging out over the sheer fall to the river, the cliffs had one particular nice extra: *Iris filifolia* was in flower, perhaps remaining there because, unlike more accessible sites where there were none, it would have been impossible to pick. This was an interesting but not very encouraging day. The general impression was that we needed to go considerably higher and find more shaded northern exposures to stand any chance of our targets: *S. maweana* and *S. werneri*.

Erica australis

Iris filifolia

Jebel el Kraa

On 17th May we drove the 4WD track from Bab Taza (700 m) northward toward Jebel el Kraa in the Talassemtane National Park. This can be walked from Bab Taza (about 20 km south-east of Chefchaouen) but it would be necessary to camp overnight or it would be possible to walk from the dam at Akchour (probably two days). The 4WD and our hotel in Chefchaouen had all been arranged with Moudden Abdeslam, the local organiser for the Chefchaouen Association of Guides. A young entrepreneur with a clear understanding of visitors' needs, he is recommended unhesitatingly; his plans for hotels, vehicles, drivers, guides and camping all worked out reliably and well.

Saxifraga werneri

The lower stretches of the 4WD track from Bab Taza are flanked by fields - some of cannabis - with *Gladiolus* & *Muscari comosum*, and with *Orchis langei* & *Ophrys tenthredinifera* (some with pink sepals, some with green) in the verge. Higher, the fields gave way to meadows and flocks of goats. Beyond this, about 6-8 km from Bab Taza, agriculture declines and there is woodland, mainly oak with notable stands of *Paeonia coriacea*. This is a very similar flora to that of the Baetic Mountains of southern Spain. On shaded rocks at about 1350-1450 m were large quantities of *Saxifraga globulifera* with all specimens seeming to fit comfortably within the

Aristolochia baetica (David Victor)

Saxifraga werneri

typical ssp. *globulifera* as found within Spain.

The highest point of this track is by the National Park guardian's hut at the base of Jebel Kraa around 1550 m. Here, about halfway along, facing the eastern face of the mountain, are open grassy areas where it would be possible to camp. Jebel Kraa runs north-south and is the highest mountain in the Western Rif at 2159 m; its name means 'bald mountain', referring to its distinctively treeless top. The single collection of *Saxifraga werneri,* on which all descriptions have been based, was from between 2100 and 2150 m - more or less at the top of the mountain. We approached steeply up the eastern face in an almost straight line through the lower forest with its old specimens of *Abies marocana* (*Abies pinsapo* ssp. *marocana*) and *Cedrus atlantica*, on through open patches of more rocky ground onto bare upper slopes of pale grey limestone. This part of the slopes of Jebel Kraa is fenced with barbed wire immediately above the track to deter herders from bringing goats and sheep. The ascent from the east comes back through the barbed wire around the tree line at about 1850 m, suggesting that the protection is for the magnificent conifers. But if the trees are exciting the saxifrages were truly stunning.

I had hoped for a few specimens of *Saxifraga werneri* if we could get high enough but from the track where the 4WD had parked at about 1600 m the upper slopes looked very dry and sun-baked and not obviously providing any of Maire's '*rochers calcaires des montagnes bien arrosées'.* There may be such habitats on the mountain but we saw none. Nevertheless, from the track up to 2100 m much of the bare limestone, whether solid rock or fine scree, provided habitat for abundant *S. werneri.* Since the only records came from the highest slopes of the mountain we expected it would be hard to find but instead we found large numbers at fairly high densities and in flower throughout this range. *Saxifraga granulata* was also common, although not in the quantities of *S. werneri,* and inhabiting similar habitats often contiguous with colonies of *S. werneri* rather than interspersed with it.

Although *S. werneri* has some sign of drought-resistant gemmae they are poorly developed and we remarked various previously unrecorded characteristics that suggest it is misplaced:

- Plants are almost invariably single rosettes rather than cushions
- Flower stems are terminal but complex and many-flowered. Many plants had more than 30 flowers on the single stem, larger plants had about 35-40 flowers but occasional plants had more, with as many as 78 flowers seen in one inflorescence of 11 main branches
- Very little sign of perennation, with the vast majority of plants having single rosettes, suggests monocarpy, probably as a biennial
- Foliage is more like series *Cespitosae* than series *Gemmiferae*, with no distinct petiole and leaf tip with short fingers as in *S. exarata* or *S. pubescens*.

Its taxonomic position within its genus is clearly problematic. It might be better considered alongside *S. latepetiolata* in series *Pentadactyles*: it usually has a single rosette, its flower stem is terminal, it has a complex many-flowered inflorescence and it may often be monocarpic rather than normally perennial. Perhaps it will be possible to establish this with more certainty in the future.

The whole trip was justified by the opportunity to photograph this attractive plant for the first time. Few saxifrage species are more charming. Almost every plant consists of a single rosette 2-3 cm across in a large flowering plant but with a flat-topped head of pure white flowers. The bare, pale-grey rock beautifully sets off the deeply reddened foliage sprinkled with pinpoints of short villous hairs and the pure white flowers. The final touch is that as the flowers are pollinated the petals pinch themselves to a point, and colour to pure clear pink. The combination of pale grey rock, dark red foliage, pure white & clear pink flowers is irresistible.

Geranium malviflorum

Sfiha Telj to Taria to Mount Kraa

Another 4WD route leads from Chefchaouen up behind Jbel Tissouka and then on through to the previous day's track at Jebel Kraa. The track zigzags rapidly up the open slopes immediately behind Chefchaouen past Jebel el Kelaa to the north and on to

Convolvulus vidalii

a pass at about 1800 m below Sfiha Telj where there are patches of woodland and limestone outcrops. The roadside is rewarding on the way up with particularly interesting plants. On the slopes immediately above Chefchaouen are extensive areas of cistus scrub, giving way to more open rocky ground where notable plants include *Geranium malviflorum*, which is found in Spain and North Africa, and *Digitalis laciniata* ssp. *riphaea*, very similar to the Spanish *D. obscura* but with toothed leaf margins. It was already obvious to us that *Convolvulus* are numerous in Morocco, and two were present here: the well-known *C. sabatius*, and *C. vidalii* with pink flowers with very distinctive dark markings on each segment of the corolla. This pretty species is a very narrow endemic confined to the south-western faces of the mountains immediately behind Chefchaouen with a complete range of little more than a ten km square.

At the pass there were stands of *Paeonia coriacea* in the woods, *Primula acaulis* ssp. *atlantica* as on Jebel Kraa, and on the cliffs was *Saxifraga globulifera* var. *globulifera*. Following the track down the far side of Sfiha Telj the landscape falls away and the high slopes of Jebel Tissouka are seen immediately up to right; to the south-west the bare top of Jebel Kraa is visible. Normally the route turns north towards the dam at Akchour but I was keen to travel through this intriguing area to Mt Kraa from this direction, despite the reluctance of our guide, the terrible track and the obvious cannabis farming in this remote, isolated valley. Various stops in pine and broad-leaved woodland gave us a variety of orchids: *Neotinea maculata*, *Ophrys lutea*, *Cephalanthera longifolia* and *Limodorum abortivum*. Near Taria on rocks among woodland we also found *Saxifraga globulifera* var. *globulifera*.

Paeonia coriacea

Central Rif

This area is geologically distinct from the Western Rif, with many more acid rocks. From Chefchaouen it is reached along the spine of the Rif along the N2 (the road through Bab Taza), along which there is much drug-cultivation. The highest mountain is Jbel Tidighine, just south of Ketama, but we decided to explore between Bab Berrad and Ketama. Again we took a guide to ease our path with locals if needed. As in so many places in Morocco, thistles in a broad sense are a major part of the flora; animals such as goats give these spinky plants a competitive advantage. Today the major thistle *en route* was *Echinops spinosus* in wonderful clumps by the roadside. The most obvious feature was the very different flora, reflecting changed geology. On shale slopes *Convolvulus pitardii,* another endemic Moroccan species, was displayed beautifully; like *C. althaeoides,* it lacks the deeply lobed terminal leaves and has much longer pedicels than peduncles.

Echinops spinosus

A small roadside patch of oak woodland, predominantly *Quercus faginea* and *Q. suber*, beyond Bab Berrad showed the variety with *Viola munbyana* & *V. jaubertiana, Lavandula stoechas, Halimium* sp., *Erica arborea* and *E. australis*. At another site high above a roadside scree *Orchis langei* and *Dactylorhiza markusii* were found in scrub, also a purple-flowered *Anthyllis vulneraria*, probably ssp. *maura*, and flesh-pink flowered *Echium flavum*.

By the roadside was a giant species yet to flower, probably *Echium boissieri*.

The saxifrage find of the day was large quantities of *Saxifraga globulifera* on shale slopes at about 1600 m alongside the road north from the N2 toward El-Had and on to El-Jebha at the coast. Most of the plants fitted reasonably into var. *globulifera* but a small minority comprised a quite distinct var. *spathulata*. Other variation within the population showed a small number of extra large plants, tending toward var. *oranensis* in having elongated, long-stalked buds, almost hairless leaves and long petioles but with the leaf-blade not broadened.

Convolvulus pitardii var. *leucochnous*

Tétouan and Beni Hosmar

Tétouan sits about halfway between Tangier and Chefchaouen near the Mediterranean coast, very much at the northern end of the Rif. On either side of the road from Tétouan to Chefchaouen are ranges of mountains with that on the east side having Jbel Kelti as its highest point (1926 m); no obvious approaches to this were apparent from initial reconnaissance along the Chefchaouen-Tétouan road or from our maps. Unfortunately, from our point of view the key recorded location of *S. maweana* was 'Beni Hosmar'. This is variously described as 'south of' and 'opposite' Tétouan but it is marked on no current map. 'Beni' may be Berber, similar to Arabic 'Jebel' or 'Jbel', meaning 'Mount'. Moudden Abdeslam and our guide M'Hamed combined their considerable local knowledge and suggested the area to the west of the Chefchaouen-Tétouan road as our most likely hope, with the area north of Bouhachem (1681 m) the most probable.

Erica arborae

Echium flavum

Echium boissieri

Searching for Beni Hosmar, we turned north into the hills after the dam at Nkla. We ended up in a weekend souk and at the end of its narrow corridor of stalls we were waved into a parking place at the road's end. Enquiring again for Beni Hosmar, David and I were taken to an office in the mosque while Kathryn sat in the car. After much discussion of where we should be and where we were (west of Souk-el-Arba possibly near Souk Khemis), the Chef des Gendarmes appeared to inspect our passports, to hear of our interest in '*les fleurs sauvages*' and to look at our maps. With a smart salute we were on our way back to the car, leaving a small contribution to the mosque. It seemed that the slopes north of the Tétouan-Tangier road might be our destination.

We tried various routes through housing developments south of the ring road at Tétouan to find a track into the range. After exploring what was obviously a rather nice community of expensive housing we succeeded. The track led up to much higher reaches but it was sufficiently degraded that we could do no more than crawl up in our hired saloon; ten km does not sound far but it took us about three-quarters of an hour.

On reaching the top at nearly 900 m and finding a slope of exposed north-facing rocks above us, we abandoned the car and worked up the slope. A scramble

Beni Hosmar

among the eroded limestone and across slopes of flowering *Gynandiris* which had escaped the flocks of goats led us to a cluster of *Saxifraga tridactylites* going to seed in a crevice on a boulder. Further across the slope was a larger boulder with a deep fissure like a Yorkshire gryke where *Saxifraga maweana* lurked, away from the goats. This plant matches Maire's description and drawing very well - like *S. maderensis* with summer-dormant gemmae. At the peak were a couple of dozen goat-chewed plants. With such dramatic predation the plants were less obviously distinct and less like Maire's drawing. Only one other plant on a vertical exposure seemed to have escaped browsing and to fit Maire's description. In the meantime we had been joined by a local shepherd boy whose only language was the local Berber. His name was Hamed and he dragged me across the slopes to reunite me with the others, happily accepting a handful of fruit gums. He gestured to his flock of goats below and when we mentioned Beni Hosmar, he smiled, patted his chest and pointed to the ground. This was his ground - this was Beni Hosmar!

This is an important find, both in confirming that *S. maweana* is still extant in the wild and in its type locality. It is also important in making clear that it has nothing to do with the hybrid mossy saxifrage *S.* 'Wallacei'. This is one of the very oldest of the mossy hybrids, possibly the oldest; as it is known today it has the largest of all mossy saxifrage flowers. It was originally seen as a hybrid involving either *S. camposii* (which John Howes, Paul Kennett and I found in Andalucia in 2005) or *S. maweana*. Neither of these now seems to have had any part in the history of *S.* 'Wallacei'; it seems much more likely from its general morphology that it is a sport of a subsection *Cespitosae* species such as *S. rosacea* or *S. exarata*, possibly the ssp. *ampullacea*, or a

Saxifraga maweana

Monts des Zaians - above the gorge at Oulmès

polyploid hybrid of two species within that subsection.

Oulmès (Monts des Zaians)

Oulmès lies at the centre of the Monts des Zaians. We had great difficulty in finding any accommodation but eventually found the Gîte de Maroc. The gîte is a splendid location for a couple of nights; a large building very much in the Moroccan tradition with thick brown walls and an interior of sofas, antique rugs, French-Moroccan cooking with full board including a splendid lunch about £22 per person per night.

The saxifrage we sought was *Saxifraga embergeri*, described such that it seemed to be a species close to *S. rigoi* and *S. globulifera* but noticeably smaller than either. Like *S. maweana* and *S. werneri* in the Rif, *S. embergeri* is a narrow endemic with its type location (and there may be no other collections) described as '*Oued Agenour; au-dessus des Thermes d'Oulmès.*' Oued Agenour turned out to be the river at the bottom of the gorge. With no other information to go on we searched the valley above Oulmès les Thermes. This saxifrage grows on '*Rochers basaltiques et granitiques des basses montagnes bien arrosées.*' The Hotel des Thermes is a 1920s or 1930s hotel in which Hercule Poirot would have looked at home. Below the hotel, upper parts of the gorge are massive granite cliffs - source of the local mineral water - about 400 m above the river. The granite was extremely friable, pieces crumbling in our hands or disintegrating if dropped on the ground but of the saxifrage there was no sign. We searched towards Khenifra, discovering granite and basalt - even some miniature versions of the Giant's Causeway - but nothing like a suitable habitat for our saxifrage. The following day I woke to the thought that we should look in the bottom

Oued Agenour, Gorge at Oulmès

Cultivated lavender at Oulmès

of the gorge upstream of the source of Les Thermes d'Oulmès, rather than above the town itself, perhaps this was what was meant by '*au-dessus des Thermes d'Oulmès*'.

The gorge bottom is narrow and very difficult to work along, once you have descended its 400 m, because of the steepness of the slopes but we managed to scramble across them from one large outcrop to another. We were at last rewarded when Kathryn found our first small cushions of *Saxifraga embergeri* in the shadow of a granite boulder. Most of the plants we then found were in extremely inaccessible and exposed spots on the large outcrops; the cushions of small rosettes were up to about 30 cm across although usually smaller and were very dry - more or less crispy - with the resting gemmae as very small flattened globules. Flowering had clearly peaked at least three or four weeks earlier by the beginning of May but we managed to find a single flower still with remnants of petals; this confirmed that the flowers were certainly no more than the 3-5 mm of the description. This species is not spectacular but is very intriguing. The location is hot, indeed extremely hot in high summer, although enjoying some humidity from its position at the bottom of the gorge. It does not seem like saxifrage country - one of the other reasons why looking above Oulmès les Thermes had made sense. The very dwarf flowers & foliage and survival for many months in an extremely crispy dry dormant state are fascinating features. We found no other saxifrage species in the gorge or the previous day, adding to the sense that *S. embergeri* has long been isolated from its ancestral relatives. It seems probable, from the flattened globular gemmae, that this ancestral species was *S. globulifera*.

Saxifraga embergeri

Taza and Southwards

About 120 km east of Fes, Taza sits in the eponymous gap between the Rif to the north and the Middle Atlas to the south. Immediately to the south is the Parc National de Tazzeka,

Gorge in Tazzeka National Park

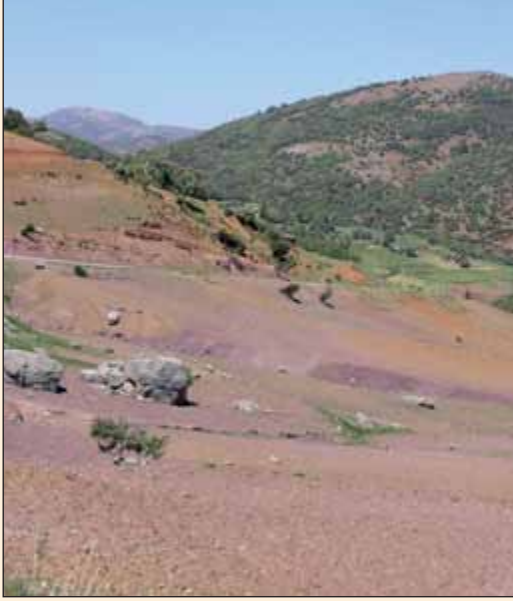
Biarum arundanum

Sedum modestum - a pinpoint endemic in Tazzeka

botanically closely allied to the more northerly floras. It is possible to drive right round the Tazzeka massif - about 100 km in all - and return to the Fes-Taza road. Three roads radiate southward and although they look somewhat uncertain on the map and as if they might deteriorate to tracks it seems to be the case that anywhere signed in French will have a road passable in an ordinary hire car. Our objective was Jbel Bou Naceur. One approach which might lead into the valley on the west side of Jbel Bou Iblane could be a road shown running south from Guercif to Bou-Ichourdane to Tighza. However, we discovered that any future approach would need a 4WD and a camp to the west of Jebel Bou Naceur, probably near Tinesmet.

Geranium cataractarum ssp. *pitardii*

Tazzeka National Park is interesting with pinpoint endemic species such as *Sedum modestum*, some nice species which are otherwise very restricted such as *Geranium cataractarum* ssp. *pitardii* and some more widespread but nonetheless attractive plants such as the Moroccan French lavender *Lavandula pedunculata* ssp. *atlantica, Antirrhinum majus*, *Catananche caerulea* and *Biarum arundanum* (*B. tenuifolium* ssp. *arundanum*) and *Rupicapnos africana* on one of the roads south from Tazzeka.



Amazing coloured soils south of Taza

Outat-Oulad-el-Haj and *Saxifraga luizetiana*

Only in the last part of our trip did we encounter failure. It's not always the successes that brand themselves in memory - there were plenty of them during our two weeks in Morocco - but it was sitting in the restaurant-café in Outat, at seven in the morning sharing a loaf and olive oil with *le patron* with no more than a few words of French in common, that comes most to mind. Outat-Oulad-el-Haj in the long strip of arid semi-desert between the Middle and High Atlas in eastern Morocco is very much an Arab town with very little French

Catananche caerulea

Natural pavement

Convolvulus supinus

spoken. More like a road movie than a botanical expedition, the café was fly-blown with customers sitting facing the door. Upstairs, the rooms had three beds apiece but they had not been made or changed within memory; sleeping on top of the blankets seemed the best bet. And they were the only beds in the only hotel: Outat is a lunch stop - if you must - but it's not a destination. From the door we looked across the gently rising plain to the south-eastern foothills of Jbel Bou Naceur. This 3300 m mountain rises about 2500 m from the plain. At the southernmost end, the sun-baked face of the mountain rises about 1700 m in an uninterrupted cliff above the village of Oulad Ali and in a few high gullies on the north-facing slopes there is standing snow in late May. It is up there that *S. luizetiana* was found '*vers 3000 metres'.*

My hope had been that we could drive up to the col at nearly 2500 m between the north end of the mountain and another high peak to the north. On the maps there used to be a road up to the col but it has now disappeared under the arid sands. There are other roads but none gets us close enough. Anyone going up this mountain will need tents and horses or a 4WD. And it may not be a quick *one-day-in, one-day-up, one-day-out* trip. The mountain is aligned roughly NE-SW, with the part over 2700 m being about 15 km long although only about 1.5 to 5 km across. Given the difficulty of approach, which will probably have to be from the north ridge, more time will be needed. The maps show two roads: they have disappeared, abandoned to the wind and sands and the scavenging raptors - black kites, buzzards, eagles - scattered flocks of goats and the occasional group of camels.

Desert at Outat-Oulad-El-Haj (David Victor)

Tuberaria guttata

The flora of this arid region might be expected to be very limited but various roadside stops convinced us of its richness, with a wonderful mix of species of which my favourite was the pale yellow *Convolvulus supinus* related to the pale blue *C. valentinus* that was present in much smaller numbers. At higher altitudes on Jbel Bou Naceur the flora will be very different, some 2500 m above this plain. *Saxifraga luizetiana* would be a fascinating plant to find but it will take another trip in which it becomes the major objective, and one that overcomes logistical requirements that were not obvious to us in advance: a guide speaking Arabic would seem to be the first requirement!

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Kathryn Hart from Wisley, and David Victor, Honorary President of the Saxifrage Society, who joined me and contributed to this report. We thank the Scottish Rock Garden Club and the Hendry Bequest of the East Surrey Group of the Alpine Garden Society for grants, and I would also like to thank Mark Carine of the Natural History Museum for his help in identification of various *Convolvulus*.

Maps

Detailed maps of this area were produced in the past (by the French) but not today. We had a couple of 1:800,000 road maps, neither infallible; the best of the topographical maps was the US airforce 1:500,000 survey sheet Tactical Pilotage Chart TPC G-1D that came from Stamfords, Longacre, London. A map in the Lonely Planet guide to Morocco (in the chapter on Trekking) was extremely useful for the Chefchaouen & Talassemtane National Park.

Books

- Valdés, B, M Rejdali, A Achhal el Kadmiri, S L Jury & J M Montserrat (Eds), *Checklist of vascular plants of N Morocco with identification keys /Catalogue des plantes vasculaires du nord du Maroc, incluant des clés d'identification*. 2 vols. 1008pp. Madrid : CSIC (2 volumes)
- Blamey, M. & C. Grey-Wilson (2004) *Mediterranean Wild Flowers*, A&C Black, 560 pages (although it is not 100% accurate on what can be found Morocco)

A parallel article more specifically about the Saxifrages found during the trip (with different illustrations) is being published simultaneously by the Saxifrage Society in the *Saxifrage Magazine* 17. For further details see *www.saxifraga.org*.

One for another day: the south face of Jebel Bou Naceur (David Victor)

Expedition *Meconopsis*

The Ethnobotany Nepal Himalaya Project

Paul Egan

In the autumn of 2008 we made a successful expedition to central Nepal, with the prime objective of studying *Meconopsis* in the wild. With a strong multi-disciplinary team, I had the great pleasure of coordinating the project, a collaboration between the University of Aberdeen and the Central Department of Botany, Tribhuvan University in Nepal. Considering how long and demanding expedition preparation can be, we appreciated strong backing from the Scottish Centre for Himalayan Research and the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh. Both institutions are heavily involved with botanical research in Nepal and it is therefore wonderful to see a strong Scottish link maintained into the 21st century since the pioneering days of the likes of Francis Buchanan-Hamilton and, later, David Prain (a former Aberdeen botany student). The expedition was truly a rewarding and enriching experience: good science and great plants - some of which I'm pleased to be able to share with you here.

A land of *Meconopsis*-lore

For many decades Nepal has been a notoriously attractive region of the Himalayas from the perspective of the alpine enthusiast. Although most of the recent and exciting discoveries concerning *Meconopsis* have come out of remote regions of south-east Tibet and the surrounding provinces of China, Nepal still offers much to those in pursuit of these poppies and vast areas, especially in western Nepal, still remain underexplored botanically.

Sub-Alpine meadow in the Langtang Valley

Central Nepal in particular is known to harbour around fifteen species of *Meconopsis* spread between the western limit of the Annapurna Conservation Area through to the foothills of the Rolwaling Himal in the east. A good proportion of these species is endemic, such as *M. gracilipes*, *M. taylorii*, *M. regia* and the recently described *M. staintonii* & *M. ganeshensis*. Following Chris Grey-Wilson's taxonomic revision based on the type specimen of *Meconopsis napaulensis*, it can be said that 'true' *M. napaulensis* is strictly yellow in flower. Perhaps more fitting to its name, it is now also considered endemic to central Nepal (from the Langtang Himal). However, for many years botanists and local authorities referred to this species in Langtang as *Meconopsis dhwojii*, and it is interesting to note that the 1949 British Museum Expedition to central Nepal, which included the renowned Himalayan field botanist Oleg Polunin, also collected this species as *M. dhwojii*. In fact, the distribution of *M. dhwojii* seems to be quite restricted and is actually only known from a small range of the Rolwaling Himal in the east of the country.

Within central Nepal the target locations of our expedition were Langtang National Park - a famous location of which I've read some lovely botanical accounts elsewhere - and also a nearby much less accessible and less botanised region, the Ganesh Himal. In recent times, the region has unveiled a new red-flowered species of *Meconopsis*, aptly named *M. ganeshensis*, and it is suspected that the Ganesh Himal may harbour some populations of the little known *M. pinnatifolia*. The area is very remote and far removed from the tourist trail, so we had to be completely self-sufficient in order to explore even a part of it. This exploration certainly paid off, as it was here that our team collected specimens of an as yet unidentified and possibly new taxon of *Meconopsis*.

Langtang valley and the south-west adjacent region of Gosainkund have long been important places in the history of *Meconopsis* and the great Himalayan plant-hunters. As far back as 1820 Nathanial Wallich (to

whom *Meconopsis wallichii* owes its name) explored this area which was then known as Gossian Than. Remarkably, he collected what would later become the type specimens of three species of *Meconopsis*: *M. paniculata*, *M. napaulensis* (in the strict sense) and *M. simplicifolia*. Indeed, when following in the footsteps of Wallich we found several populations of each of these species still alive and well, perhaps even the very populations from which the type specimens had been collected! But just how truly 'well and healthy' these populations were is a point I'll get to later: one of the main objectives of our study was to assess the conservational status of the genus here, in an important area of its distribution. But first, I'd like to introduce another aspect of the study that may prove insightful to

Heracleum wallichii

Allium wallichii

Meconopsis napaulensis with stem damage

those who think they've heard it all when it comes to *Meconopsis*.

Meconopsis – good for health

In his infamous monograph of 1934 'An Account of the Genus *Meconopsis*', George Taylor states under the heading of 'Properties of *Meconopsis*': 'Apart from its horticultural value the genus is of no economic importance'. This statement of course no longer holds true. In fact, centuries before the western world even knew of the existence of Himalayan poppies, they were traded for their medicinal value throughout the Indian sub-continent, Tibet and China. Why the great plant hunters failed largely to pick up on such details is a matter of speculation, and it is only since the second half of the last century, with the emergence of the inter-disciplinary science of ethnobotany, that botanists really began to document such information in their field notes.

Throughout the Himalayas there

Meconopsis paniculata in an area of heavy grazing

is rich knowledge of medicinal plant use inherent in the various traditional medical systems. Especially in Tibetan medicine, the impressive numbers of prescriptions that include *Meconopsis* as an ingredient suggest great potential for critical scientific study. In fact, according to some Tibetan medical texts, *M. torquata* has even been prescribed to the Buddha to relieve indigestion! Nevertheless, in comparison to other genera of Papaveraceae, research on the medicinal properties and phytochemistry of *Meconopsis* has remained very limited and was therefore a priority for our study. Previous estimates of the number of *Meconopsis* that are used medicinally stood at about fourteen species. Now, from review of the fragmented and often obscure literature on this topic, the number may be increased to 25 - approaching half the genus. Our field study provided the first exciting confirmation of the ethnobotanical use of *Meconopsis napaulensis* in traditional medicine.

Meconopsis – medicinal trade and use

Of our findings regarding the ethnobotany of *Meconopsis* in central Nepal, perhaps most interesting is the trade that is involved. We generally found the yellow-flowered species *M. paniculata* and *M. napaulensis* to be treated as one species by local people in respect of their medicinal use and economic value. Typically, a kilogramme of the aerial parts of these plants collected from the high mountains would fetch about 150RPS (1.2GBP) in Kathmandu medicinal plant markets - quite a good price for *Meconopsis* in comparison to what we're accustomed to in the UK. In the case of *Meconopsis horridula*, the price per kg is higher, probably because of its greater medicinal demand, its smaller size, and the renowned difficulties of gathering it from high barren moraines & screes in upper alpine habitat. For these reasons, *M. horridula* typically fetches around 350RPS (2.8GBP) per kg dry weight of the aerial parts.

Root system of *Meconopsis paniculata:* a tasty meal

The data that we collected were assembled from interviews with medicinal plant collectors, traders and traditional healers, both in the mountains and Kathmandu. From them we learned that the yellow flowered species listed above are commonly used in central Nepal to treat digestion problems and that the young shoots and roots are sometimes cooked as vegetables. However, this is no recommendation to dig up a *Meconopsis* to have a go yourself. The roots of many species exhibit narcotic properties and are carefully prepared before medicinal or culinary use. Like the yellow-flowered species, *Meconopsis horridula* is used for digestive problems and also in treatment of muscular-skeletal system disorders.

It is the various classes of alkaloids and flavonoids found in *Meconopsis* that justify the plants' use as medicine, though the genus lacks the famed alkaloid morphine as found in *Papaver somniferum*. Some morphinane alkaloids have nevertheless been found but it is likely that numerous compounds interact synergistically to render the actual bioactivity of *Meconopsis* as medicine. Unfortunately, because of high demand for *Meconopsis* throughout the Indian sub-continent, Tibet & China and the good income that may be derived from collection of these plants in some otherwise economically disadvantaged areas, the extraction rate of several species now commonly exceeds the capacity for natural regeneration. Which brings us to another aspect of the expedition's research: the conservational status of *Meconopsis* in the wild.

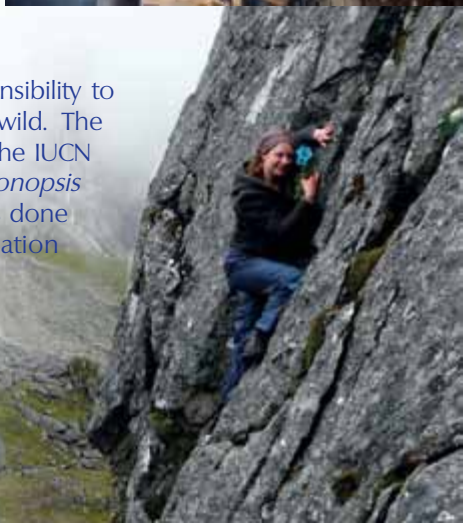
Traditional healer and
Meconopsis napaulensis,
Gosainkund

Conservation of *Meconopsis* in the wild

Sadly, many factors already influence populations of *Meconopsis* throughout the entire Himalayan region. Most are human induced and include indirect pressures from over-grazing and rapidly changing land-use patterns. They are coupled with direct pressure from collection of the species for medicinal use. The truth of the matter is that, for alpine genera such *Meconopsis*, barely any ecological information exists on the population level, which should serve as the foundation for any assessment of threat or for conservation. Generally, little scientific research has been conducted in the wild on the genus and a lot of what is presently known may be attributed to the keen interest of horticulturalists through their knowledge of germination, propagation and habitat. Currently, only two species of *Meconopsis* are listed on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. The list includes *Meconopsis aculeata* (endangered) and *Meconopsis latifolia* (vulnerable), although a number of Chinese *Meconopsis* (including *M. punicea*) are also critically rare in several regions. That said, the conservational status of the majority of the species remains largely unknown. It is likely that many more *Meconopsis* warrant an IUCN designation but have not yet been assessed against appropriate criteria.

Portage for the expedition
Drying for the herbarium press

As lovers of such plants, we bear a responsibility to reduce our impact on these species in the wild. The main way is to avoid illegal trade, especially of the IUCN and CITES listed species (which includes *Meconopsis regia*), and to ensure that wild seed collection is done responsibly. However, with tightened regulation



Marloes Eeftens collecting *Meconopsis horridula*

Scapose form of *Meconopsis horridula*

throughout many of the richly biodiverse nations, along with obligations to the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD), it is increasingly difficult to gain permission for collection. For those who wish to learn more about the legal framework surrounding the collection of alpines from the wild, the Alpine Garden Society publishes good information on its website under the section 'Conservation and the AGS'.

Highlights of other alpine species

Even though our sights were firmly set on *Meconopsis*, it was hard not to take time to photograph other beautiful alpines. One tell-tale sign of our arrival in upper alpine '*horridula* territory' (above 4500 m) was the sudden appearance of the roundly shaped *Saussurea gossipiphora*, which we lovingly nick-named the Himalayan Football. To reach these altitudes we had usually to trek through beautiful meadows of the sub-alpine zone, where frequently the blues and purples of various *Delphinium* and *Aconitum* (including *A. ferox* & *A. spicatum*) fused colourfully with the pinks of *Pedicularis siphonantha* and several species of *Bistorta* and *Geranium*. One species I greatly wished to see was *Corydalis cashmeriana*, a small blue alpine gem that I eventually stumbled across while on hands and knees counting seedlings of *Meconopsis napaulensis* at Gosainkund. Primulas also featured quite prominently in the vegetation, most notably *Primula denticulata, P. obliqua, P. sikkimensis* and the tiny *P. primulina*.

Saussurea gossipiphora

Delphinium kamaonense

Geranium lambertii

Primula sikkimensis

Euphorbia wallichii

Morina longifolia

Trekking in the very pronounced monsoon of central Nepal has many disadvantages, dangers and annoyances; the positive points were that we usually had the run of lodges for ourselves and of course had the chance to see many of the alpines in flower. When the mist blanket and associated leeches were so kind as to clear during some of the days, we easily took time to relax and photograph some of the fine species encountered along our way, such as *Geranium lambertii*, *Morina longifolia*, *Euphorbia wallichii* and the Himalayan rhubarb *Rheum acuminatum* (which was sometimes fed to us in the villages in the form of a chutney). The presence of *Ephedra gerardiana* in the upper Langtang valley seemed to confirm our suspicions that this area is more sheltered from the monsoon than the other regions we visited. Another wonderful sight at the higher altitudes was *Lomatogonium lloydioides* and a few of Nepal's sixty-odd species of *Gentiana*, although it is noteworthy that we didn't come across a wide range of these.

A bleak picture - our ecological findings

Of the numerous populations of *Meconopsis* that we sampled throughout the sub-alpine and alpine ecosystems of Langtang and Ganesh Himal, many showed clear signs of risk of extinction. This is not to say that such an outcome is imminent but that, from our assessment of seedling recruitment and population structure, most populations are in poor health and therefore vulnerable. For example, the only populations of *Meconopsis simplicifolia* were found buried deep into thick pockets of thorny *Berberis* as a last refuge from over-grazing. Although *M. paniculata* and *M. napaulensis* seemed to grow quite happily to a mature state in heavily grazed areas, seedling

Lomatogonium lloydioides

Potentilla argyrophylla

Gaultheria trichophylla

recruitment was also commonly very low. On a brighter note, populations of *Meconopsis horridula* were generally in quite good shape at high altitude and seedlings abounded. We can attest to the remark made by Oleg Polunin that once you get high enough up into the Nepal Himalaya, *Meconopsis horridula* can actually become quite a common sight.

We had not expected to find such a wide range of pH values tolerated by *Meconopsis* in the wild. *M. simplicifolia* revealed the strongest preference for acidic soils, while the pH range of *M. horridula* stretched from just below neutral into truly alkaline soils. An interesting point from a horticultural perspective is that we noticed quite a strong statistical relation between acidity measured as pH and the number of flowers in *M. horridula,* which increases as pH increases (more alkaline). Most of the species we studied inhabited quite broad ecological niches and may therefore be classed as 'generalists'. However, *M. horridula* is confined to a much narrower niche and is aptly designated a 'specialist'. This will no doubt come as no surprise to those who have attempted to maintain the high altitude form in cultivation! The majority of *M. horridula* that we encountered grew on steep screes and almost vertical cliff faces, perhaps explained by the extreme pH exhibited by the very thin soil layer of these cracks and crevices.

Rheum acuminatum

In conclusion, concerning *Meconopsis,* I hope that growers of these beautiful plants now have greater appreciation of the utilisation of the genus outside horticulture, as well as increased awareness of the plight of many of the species in the wild. Given proper attention, I am sure that the future will be bright, both in cultivation and the wild. And so, from their undisputed reputation in horticulture to their economic and medicinal value in Himalayan traditional healthcare, it is fair to say that *Meconopsis* truly are people plants!

I am grateful to Carol-Ann Cunningham, Marloes Eeftens, Mukti Ram-Poudyal and Cearúil Swords. Mark Watson and Colin Pendry kindly shared their experience of the plants and wilds of Nepal and allowed access to the RBGE treasures in the library and herbarium collections. I acknowledge the support of the *Meconopsis* Group which encouraged such a study. Our sponsors and the SRGC Diana Atchison Fund helped us financially.

References

C Grey-Wilson (2006) The true identity of *Meconopsis napaulensis*. D C Curtis's Botanical Magazine, 23, 176-209

D Prain (1915) Some additional species of *Meconopsis*. Bulletin of Miscellaneous Information (Royal Gardens, Kew), 4, 129-177

Y Xie *et al* (2002) Conservation biology of the Himalayan poppy (*Meconopsis* spp.): *In situ* and *ex situ* cultivation in northwest Yunnan, China. WWF Kathmandu, Nepal

Paul Egan will talk about this expedition at the next *Meconopsis* Group meeting (10.00 till 15.30) at The Royal Botanic Gardens, Edinburgh on the 6th March 2010. Contact secretary@meconopsis.org for full details.

Notable Anniversaries:

Some significant alpine plant introductions from the past 75 years

Robert Rolfe

1933 was the year in which the Scottish Rock Garden Club was founded and marked a watershed in the activities of the period's most renowned plant-hunters. This was especially true in the Himalayas and in western China, where Forrest had died the previous year, while Rock made his last collections there two years later. These were decisive 'stops', whereas the 1933 Ludlow & Sherriff expedition to Bhutan and SE Tibet was a 'start' of equal significance. On five further joint expeditions, the last in 1949, they came upon a tremendous range of plants. Ludlow subsequently catalogued and classified these at the British Museum, while Sherriff farmed at Angus, where he and his wife created a renowned garden at Ascreavie near Kirriemuir.

Even by focusing on the alpine plants successfully introduced from these mountains alone, through to the present-day, an alarmingly long article would still have thudded onto the editor's desk. And turning a blind eye to the rest of the world's mountains would have represented a ridiculous, monomaniacal misjudgement. Accordingly, I have chosen to highlight in the main plants favoured by Harold Esslemont, whose taste in alpine plants was famously eclectic and whose prowess when it came to growing them was second to none. I met him but once, at the Fourth International Rock Garden Conference (Harrogate, 1971) where after attending a couple of lectures I bought a copy of Kit Grey-Wilson's at the time recently-published monograph on *Dionysia*. Harold, by then in his 70th year, came over to find out, in a kindly way, why a teenager had bought a copy. He struck me as slightly patrician but keen to encourage anyone showing a pronounced spark of interest. He was imbued with that inspired mix of candour and humour that so often delineates the very best of gardeners (a personal roll-call: Percy Picton, Joe Elliott, Valerie Finnis, Christopher Lloyd, Duncan Lowe, Bob Straughan, Eric Watson, Roy Elliott and his sometime sparring partner, the irreplaceable Kath Dryden - they all had it in spades). Everything that I have heard about him since bears this out.

Harold Esslemont was born in 1901 and lived to a ripe old age. Rather surprisingly, and despite a lifetime interest in gardening, his first Forrest Medal came as late as 1956 (with *Shortia uniflora*) but he very

quickly gained ground, in 1960 installing an 18 foot custom-built alpine house in his Aberdeen garden (he was that type of no-nonsense, do-it-properly sort of man). After that there was no stopping him ... except to say that he died in 1992, 16 years short of the SRGC's 75th anniversary, so I've included a couple of subsequent introductions that strike me as apposite. He was no great follower of fashions (or rather, he set trends, taking shares in various seed collecting expeditions such as the 1966 Albury, Cheese & Watson (AC&W) landmark enterprise) and he was wryly amused by some of the novelty-worshipping antics of malfunctioning judging panels who genuflected over immature plants with a scant handful of flowers and awarded them Forrest or Farrer Medals.

He was the recipient of 43 of the former, the vast majority fluke-free. One such was *Paraquilegia grandiflora*, which Ludlow & Sherriff encountered in July 1934 at Tsona in especially fine condition, with some of the venerable clumps 60 cm or more across. They sent back seed from Tsari (SE Tibet) two years later, and in 1949 Sherriff air-freighted several plants to Britain from Bhutan. Harold's first plant was a L&S descendant, from the Rentons' garden at Branklyn; he subsequently obtained a rooted layer (an unusual method of propagation) from his great friend Jack Crosland, who got his plant in turn from Bobby Masterton at Cluny.

There appears to have been a hiatus until the 1970s, when Barry Starling collected seed that gave rise to a white version, though not the "Kashmir form" (there's no such thing; it's multi-faceted) that won a Farrer Medal for Brian Burrow at the 2002 Early Spring Show. The earlier, Branklyn-sourced stock endured: I well remember Jack Drake listing it in his 1974

Paraquilegia anemonoides

Spring Supplement, at half the price - £1 – charged for *Sanguinaria canadensis* 'Multiplex'. In Afghanistan, meanwhile, on the Salang Pass in 1971, Bob Gibbons and his party collected seed of a dwarf, fleshy-leaved species, referred to as "*Paraquilegia afghanica*"; this was later described as *P. altimurana* but did not last long in those very few gardens it graced.

Advancing a decade, the 1983 Swedish Expedition to Pakistan (SEP) was one of several around at that time to collect pale blue and whitish versions of *P. anemonoides* (its separation from *P. grandiflora* the subject of much debate), quite widely available a few years later, for seed was readily set on hand-pollinated plants in captivity. Then, in the 1990s and beyond, Josef Halda sent back seed almost every year, from Kyrgyzstan, Tadjikistan, Uzbekistan and Mongolia, under a scattering of identities, viz. *P. caespitosa*, *P. microphylla*, *P. uniflora* and *P. anemonoides*, quite apart from the Chinese samplings that he and others have made.

The high alpine credentials of *Paraquilegia* have never been questioned, whereas *Pleione* has always polarized opinion, with an enduring contingent of supporters yet also an opposing army of detractors who query the hardiness of some representatives, for they feel uneasy when faced with the orchidaceous audacity of most species, and have tended to give all but elfin species such as *P. yunnanensis* and *P. forrestii* a wide berth. This is special pleading, since one of my relatives named the former, and others such as *P. grandiflora*, but I have never understood the antipathy. Higher-still dwelling orchids with

Pleione humilis

unimpeachably alpine credentials, *Dendrobium cuthbertsonii* from Papua New Guinea most obviously, are decidedly more vulnerable to low winter temperatures.

Corydalis solida 'George Baker'

Pleione humilis, one of the earliest-flowering species, was first collected in Nepal by F Buchanan-Hamilton, and described by J E South in 1806 as *Epidendrum humilis*. It opens its first flowers as early as October in the wild (Nepal eastwards to Myanmar), the pseudobulbs typically cocooned epiphytically on moss-covered *Rhododendron* branches, and was collected by Frank Kingdon Ward in 1956 from Mt Victoria. This was not, as is sometimes stated, the earliest introduction; Charles Mountfort showed it to the RHS a couple of years earlier, when a Preliminary Commendation was awarded. The misreported history is further complicated in the clone 'Frank Kingdon Ward' by a chromosome count suggesting possible hybridity with *P. bulbocodioides*, which doesn't occur in that part of former Burma. The history of the plant now called *P.* x *confusa* confirms that this order of confusion is nothing new; orchids are inveterate deceivers when it comes to duping pollinators, taxonomists and untutored gardeners.

Much the same can be said of *Corydalis*, whose modishness some have tracked mainly from the 1970s and 1980s, when first Central Asian, then numerous Near Eastern and Chinese species poured into cultivation. The flow continues unabated, and the pool of available species now stands around 450, a third of them (mainly Chinese) described since 1980. But the germs of enthusiasm were sown in the 1930s especially; for example, around 1933 Sir William Lawrence obtained *C.* "*transylvanica*" (now sometimes equated with *C. solida* 'George Baker') from a Dutch source, as with so many bulbs and quasi-bulbs. In 1925 Van Tubergen obtained stocks from Transylvania (Romania), hence the invalid qualifier. These varied from white- and claret-coloured to rich salmon-pink, the colour of 'George Baker'. Some doubt remains over the lineage but, whatever the truth, the merit of this striking plant, best grown in the open ground to maintain its low stature and vibrant colouration, is manifest. A further and relatively recent addition, 'Zwanenburg', was first listed in 1990 by Michael Hoog and is even more vibrantly red.

Rather neatly, for its introduction coincides with the SRGC's founding year, *Corydalis cashmeriana* was first sent back (by Sherriff, from Bhutan) in

Corydalis flexuosa

1933. Reports from the time all agree that its early appearances caused great excitement among gardeners. Some early attempts to introduce representatives from elsewhere across the species' range (which extends as far west as Kashmir) foundered; in one instance, the plane crashed and, although the parcel was delivered, the tubers (or rather plump storage roots) had been crushed to pulp. It romps away in cooler gardens, and accordingly struggles in hot summers (when it usually aestivates), even when generously top-dressed with leaf-mould and kept unfailingly moist. The best-known member of its grouping (Subgenus *Corydalis*, Section *Fasciculatae*), it is also inter-fertile with *C. flexuosa* (from the allied Section *Elatae),* which is famously easy-going and represents one of the most important alpine plant introductions of the late twentieth century.

A Brit-centric history of plant introductions is only part of the picture; this surprisingly adaptable species, for example, dates back to a 1986 collection by Reuben Hatch (Vancouver), and herbarium material was initially gathered the previous century by the French missionary Père David, the first botanist to visit Baoxing in Sichuan. However, my first sighting was of several clones brought back in 1989 by Compton, D'Arcy and Rix, who had seen it growing in profusion in damp, leafy soil in steep-sided valleys, often in association with a stinging nettle, *Paris polyphylla*, *Anemone demissa*, *Cardiocrinum yunnanense* and many others. They staged a small but memorable display at the RHS London Show in April 1982, described as "An exhibit of a new and easily-grown *Corydalis* from West China, and associated species". The most floriferous and tidiest of these, 'Purple Leaf' (C.D. & R 528a), has maintained its early promise and still eclipses more recent novelties such as 'Golden Panda' (with yellowish leaves, a tissue culture aberration from 2000).

If distinctive foliage is sought, then a highish alpine, dwarfer relative from the north of the province, *Corydalis pseudobarbisepala*, will appeal, for it has, in some selections, grey on grey near-variegated leaves. Distributed by Gothenburg Botanic Garden and others, it is a mild-tempered new arrival, described as long ago as 1924, though its few localities have only recently been studied as a consequence of newly-built roads, such as that up and over the Balang Shan Pass, which appears, courtesy of the spoil heaps created, to have actually benefited the species.

Anchusa cespitosa

Plant-hunters throughout history have often taken alarming risks or exerted themselves to the point of illness or even death. However, in some parts of the world all you need do is walk somewhat further along the road than those who have gone before, or perhaps choose a different time to visit. This has repeatedly been the case in Turkey, whose Flora (sometimes glibly described as a guide to the roadsides of that country) stands as a testimony to the talents and sheer industry of Peter Davis. His monumental work occupied much of his life, but early on he visited other areas, Crete most notably, and in the White Mountains found (in 1936) *Anchusa cespitosa* "running down all the cracks, flowing in wide mats across the scree even in the bare earth itself and looking like a sapphire carpet". Harold Esslemont won a Forrest Medal with this bluest of borages in 1962, growing his plant under glass, though others have had success outdoors, where full sun and the deep root run of a limestone scree are said to inhibit any "leafiness". Didn't work with mine, planted in paving, where it formed a mighty, multi-rosetted but unkempt specimen. In contrast, an abiding memory is of the main alpine house at Percy Picton's Colwall nursery almost 40 years ago, where an entire bench was occupied by around 100 pots full in glorious bloom, each with a tidy display of narrow, prostrate leaves, and a very generous central hub of flowers.

The problem of plants that outgrow the largest of pots but generally do best under cover has been tackled in a number of ways. Another Peter Davis introduction, *Verbascum dumulosum*, known only from the Turkish classical site of Termessos, was for half its six decades' tenure in gardens represented solely by the PD 15477 gathering, until it was reintroduced in

Verbascum dumulosum

1984, and again in 1988, by Jim & Jenny Archibald. At the end of one of their polytunnels, several seedlings have coalesced to form a spectacular spread of several metres, obscured by countless short-lived, blazing yellow flowers at the very start of summer. Harold Esslemont, having seen his plant "go back" if left unpotted for long, overcame this by cutting the woody-based shoots hard back after flowering, then removing half the new leaf rosettes produced in response. Once the newly-furnished plant had settled down, he would then repot in early autumn, using a compost comprising 50% small lumps of soft tufa. Labour-intensive, admittedly, so if you can fashion a vertical crevice siting on the rock garden, then the verbascum, despite its Turkish, subalpine locale, can live happily outdoors for many years, as at RBG Edinburgh – fitting, given Professor Davis's long association with the institution.

From one historical site to another: the type specimen of *Fritillaria gibbosa* comes from near the ruins of Persepolis, in SW Iran. Where grazing herds aren't present, or at least where a spiny scattering of shrubs fends off guzzling goats or voracious sheep, populations numbered in the thousands may be found. And not just in Iran, for it is also found in Afghanistan, Beluchistan (Pakistan), Armenia, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. The 1960s were notable for the number of Turkish and western Asia-bound trips, and it was from the 1963 Bowles Scholarship Botanical Expedition (which included the young Brian Mathew) that Harold Esslemont obtained a few bulbs; a Forrest Medal was secured six years later. These were very slow to increase and required cross-pollinating to achieve a seed-set. Nowadays it would be fairly easy to beg pollen from another enthusiast, sent through the post, but 40 years ago only a handful of enthusiasts grew the species. More recent raisings have given us variably freckled flowers in various shades of pink, though reportedly brick-red forms remain highly unusual, as do virtually yellow ones (found of late by Bob & Rannveig Wallis in N Iran).

Much rarer, in the wild at any rate, where just a handful of small colonies is known, *Fritillaria michailovskyi* vies with *F. alburyana* for the accolade of eastern Turkey's most admired representative. Discovered in 1965 on the Sarikamis Pass, 100 bulbs were introduced under the number MT (Mathew & Tomlinson) 4299, and these represented the species at its best, with broad-belled, nodding, dark purple flowers whose segment tips were strikingly, contrastingly bright yellow, as if dipped in egg yolk. This population had measured just 30 yards across, on a dry slope with a pine forest fringe. Subsequent discoveries have varied in quality,

Fritillaria gibbosa

Fritillaria michailovskyi

Rhodohypoxis baurii

from similar paragons to others less showily bicoloured, and at least one readily-propagated "trade form" that has rather muddy flowers in clustered, crowded heads. Avoid all such examples! Unlike the foregoing *F. gibbosa*, a cooler, dryish but not desiccated summer rest yields the best results. There are plenty of Turkish bulbs that won't thank you for a summer baking.

On the other hand, pretty much all of them require moisture in the winter months. Not so, as a general rule, for what is surely the most popular of African alpines, *Rhodohypoxis baurii*, better kept unwatered, and either lifted (store in dry peat) or at least given glass cover from October to April. So familiar is this readily colony-forming corm that it comes as a surprise to find that attempts to establish the species in the nineteenth century failed and that it wasn't until 1938 that Mrs Susan Garnett-Botfield succeeded. There are various notable Club members of greater vintage! Wolverhampton and its environs are nowadays chiefly famous in the plant world for Ashwood Nurseries; a few miles to the north-west, in Albrighton, Mrs Garnett-Botfield grew *R. baurii* by the thousand, as did her daughter Audrey McConnell, who moved to Surrey. Describing her foray to the Drakensberg as "a nice trip for the not too young", Susan G-B found large stands in the upland swards and argued that because there were year-round thunderstorms the plants wouldn't need a really dry rest in British gardens. I'm with her when it comes to providing a "good loam with sand and leaf-mould...there must be no lime" but subsequent experience has shown repeatedly that a very wet or very severe winter can wipe out long-established plantings.

A fellow South African, *Oxalis depressa*, can be rather too much of a good thing in gardens where mild winters predominate. Remaining in the southern hemisphere but turning to the Patagonian Andes and the Argentinian steppe, arguably the finest member of the genus, *O. laciniata*, is thoroughly hardy and will never become invasive, more's the pity. Ruth Tweedie, a Scot whose Argentinian husband's estancia at Stag River was - and remains - a stronghold of this virtuoso performer, related 50 years ago in this journal that clumps averaged 7-10 cm, at most 15 cm across. She observed they were most prolific "on the side of small hills in very open,

Oxalis laciniata

sandy loam ... {growing} in moderately bare spaces between tussocks of hard grass" and that the flower colour range encompassed "blues, violets, pinks, lilacs, crimsons and near-white".

Only a small sampling of this span was evident in her husband's introduction (she is repeatedly credited on this front, but wrote herself of

Oxalis laciniata E92/R6

Ourisia polyantha 'Cliftonville Scarlet'

"the blue, sweet-scented *Oxalis* which Mr Tweedie introduced in 1955". From the early 1990s onwards several re-introductions have made their mark, most notably Peter Erskine's dark purplish-navy 'Seven Bells', several others not named to date but encompassing a pure lilac selection, and another labelled E92/R6 with greyish-white flowers, ornately and extensively shot through with delicate veining. Although these grow well enough in the alpine house, they have a tendency to draw up under such conditions, whereas in a trough the crinkled leaves form a small mat just above the top dressing and the flowers sit neatly atop, short-lived but produced in succession, and in some years forming a generous covering. Mrs Tweedie, incidentally, was adamant that "a very soft open mixture with coarse sand and humus" gave the best results and that, while this should be well-drained, anything approaching scree-like conditions should be avoided.

Ourisia microphylla

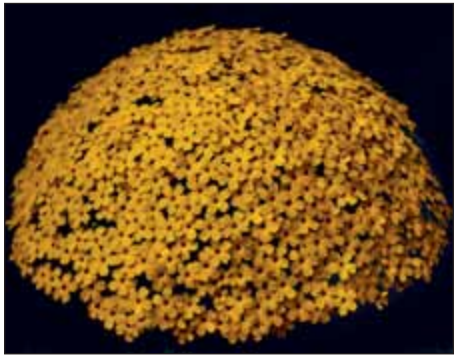
Now seems a suitable point to mention just one other significant Andean introduction, *Ourisia polyantha*, made by John & Anita Watson in 1993,

the year following Harold Esslemont's death. This is a flamboyant, bright orange-red relative of the more familiar *O. microphylla* – this too comes into our period if you ignore Harold Comber's 1925-26 sending, which died out in the late 1940s - and instead focus on John's 1970-71 re-introduction (C&W 5233; he noted that it gave almost the best yield of any collection, for all that the dust-like, rusty brown seeds only lined the bottom of an envelope), or even David Hale's chance find in 1981 of an albino variant, half of whose progeny breed true.

Ourisia microphylla forma alba

These are all extremely floriferous plants when well-suited, but are certainly not for the lazy gardener. Dieback is an ever-present threat and they benefit from a restrained clipping-over after the main flush of flower, leaving just a few capsules to provide seed. Botrytis can soon take hold, often opportunistically affecting any dead flowers left in place, so a pair of long-handled surgeon's scissors will assist in the prompt removal of affected shoots. And it as well to take cuttings every year (they are brittle but root well and soon form chubby, tiny shrublets). *O. polyantha* has a discontinuous, elusive distribution in the mountains south of Santiago and as far south as Valdivia (Chile). All the plants presently grown stem from a single specimen found at 1200 m in Rancagua. Like its close relative, this yielded abundant seed but, unlike it, the habit is slightly looser and mat-forming. It is very easily distinguished by far longer tubed, vibrantly coloured flowers. In plants grown "on the flat" in a pot, these open first around the circumference, and only after a week or two form a convincing mantle. The clone 'Cliftonville Scarlet' is larger-flowered and more richly coloured than any other examples raised to date.

Dionysia aretioides



A *Dionysia*-like aura is exuded by a well-flowered mound of *Ourisia microphylla*, and this fairly small (but latterly much-augmented) genus attracted the interest of Harold Esslemont early on –

Dionysia involucrata 'Gothenburg White'

he grew, for example, seedlings of *Dionysia aretioides* from the Paul Furse collections in the first part of the 1960s and was astonished to see one of these, a young plant, given a Forrest Medal in 1967. This North Iranian, discovered in the late eighteenth century, was not described until 1817 and was at that time included in *Primula* – a taxonomic status that some researchers would like reinstated. However, the first cultivated plants didn't result from the efforts of Admiral Furse and his wife; Per Wendelbo got there several years earlier, in 1959. Has there been a more obliging, more self-selectingly appropriate alpine house introduction in the interim? I suppose that the vigour of contented plants, which need repotting at least once a year and can outgrow a 36 cm plant pot in five years or so, may give rise to an accommodation crisis. This may well explain the less frequent show bench appearances nowadays of those spectacular yellow domes that in the 1970s and 1980s especially were regularly paraded.

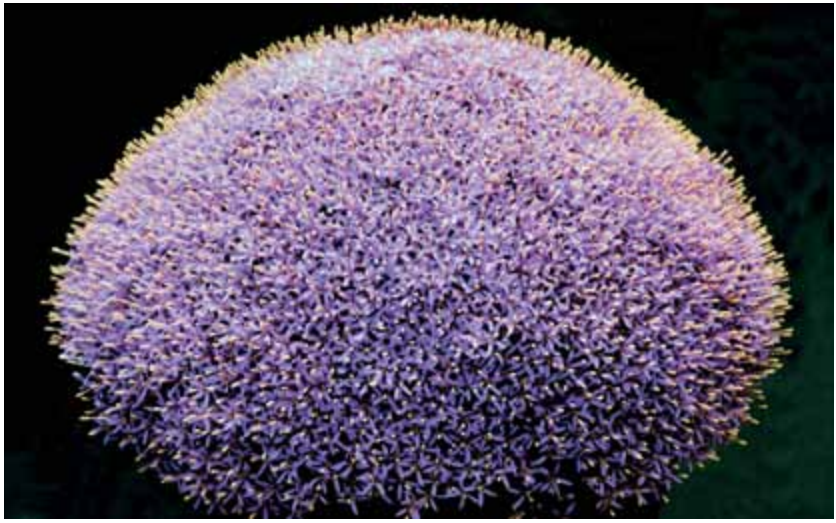
Mention of Per Wendelbo acts as a welcome excuse to highlight another species, *D. involucrata*. His generosity with wild seed distributed by Leningrad Botanic Garden in 1975 greatly fostered its horticultural progress. The original lilac-pink, white- then later dark-eyed versions, from granite, quartzite, schistose and sandstone cliffs at 1400-3100 m in SE Uzbekistan and Tadjikistan, can form cushions up to almost a metre across; the Varsob Gorge is far and away its best-known locality. Two factors aided its popularity: it flowers for longer and later (to May or in some years even to June) than any other species; and the uniquely homostylous flowers set seed without the need for a mate. One or two other species very occasionally produce white-flowered morphs, but 'Gothenburg White', one of two seedlings that arose at the Swedish institution of that name, has transmitted its genetic imprint most successfully. Plants often lose vigour after their third or fourth year, which may well reflect badly on their owners, for larger, still vigorous specimens entering their second decade have been maintained.

The Swedish link can be conveniently forged yet further by citing the efforts of one-time SRGC President Eric Watson (who was very generous with *Dionysia* material sent to Gothenburg) and also Harold Esslemont, who in 1981 sent a large-flowered version of *Dionysia bryoides* from a 1976 Tom Hewer (H1986) gathering, subsequently named in Harold's honour.

Yet another Iranian, from the south-east of that country (a hot-spot for the genus), the earliest cultivated plants appeared in the Club's founding year from a 1932 seed collection by Paul Giuseppi and E K Balls, but soon died out. Nevertheless, Jim Archibald's 1966 introduction persists - just about - as does the above collection. From both of these and through inter-pollination, second, third and further generations of seedlings have been raised, none of the individuals attaining the 30 cm diameter of cushions witnessed in the wild, though a few have persuaded their plants to live to a decent age and to flower so freely that the stemless flowers are double-tiered. Some growers have found that these are more rewarding than cuttings: to achieve a seed set, pollination using a horse hair – in approximation of the proboscis of a butterfly – has worked best. You need a very steady hand, a keen eye when it comes to harvesting the deeply-buried seed in the autumn, and a stoicism when a scattering of the raisings - which look half-dead in the winter - fail to re-awaken come the spring.

Dionysia bryoides

Dr Paul Guiseppi, cited above, was a visionary, tireless, prodigiously skilled gardener and plant-hunter who in 1934 conducted a marathon tour of the Balkan peninsula, starting in Albania, progressing eastwards to Greece, where he climbed an unfeasibly large number of mountains, re-introducing *Jancaea heldreichii*, staying at the mountain hut on Chelmos (at that time the only one in Greece), and ending up in Sarajevo. Twelve of his finds were new to cultivation, and the most enduring of them all has been a very narrow endemic member of the Campanulaceae, famously from Chelmos in the gorge of the Styx, where it forms hummocks tight as moss, clamped along the Triassic limestone fissures. Variously identified as *Diosphaera asperuloides*, then as a *Trachelium* (on account of the narrow floral tube and the long exserted style), and presently as *Campanula asperuloides*, it is known from a scant handful of localities in the Peloponnese at 500-1700 m. Described in 1896, it is not restricted to Chelmos, but can also be found in the foothills of the Taigetos; a population from the Langada Gorge was described in 1967 as *Trachelium taygeteum*, but has since been subsumed. In the 1980s, another outlier was found in the Parnon region. Joe Elliott grew a venerable plant in his main alpine house, with a self-sown *Androsace*



Campanula (Diosphaera) asperuloides

pyrenaica in its midst. Giuseppi's 75 year old gathering was for many years the sole representative in cultivation, but in 1984 Jimmy Persson (Gothenburg again) re-collected the species at 700 m close to Stymfalia, near the classical site of *Asperula arcadiensis*, which was coincidentally reintroduced two years later, from 200 m lower down, by Giuseppi's modern equivalent, the yet more peripatetic Jim Archibald.

Before leaving this part of the world, it would be remiss not to find room for *Geranium dalmaticum*, introduced immediately after the end of the Second World War by Giuseppi's sometime co-collector Will Ingwersen, not from the wild but from King Boris of Bulgaria's garden. Vice-regents, ambassadors, village head men and an array of ruling families ... plant-hunters have often received help from on high in several senses. You might imagine that its stations in SE Yugoslavia, at least, would have been re-visited as tourism has picked up again after years of political unrest, and perhaps even those in adjacent Albania, where at least one party of Czechs has ventured, but it remains little-known in the wild, regardless of its long-standing familiarity in gardens. Here it copes with almost any soil, forming a steadily-spreading deciduous mat, rooting as it goes, with delicate pink or else white flowers ('Bridal Bouquet' the best of these) that open in early summer. The heads comprise 2-4 flowers of good size, with whiskery stamens that add to the appeal. As a bonus, the leaves are spicily apple-scented when brushed against, and take on a range of tints before they die down in the autumn. Unlike the majority of those plants mentioned immediately before, it is tenacious, and looks

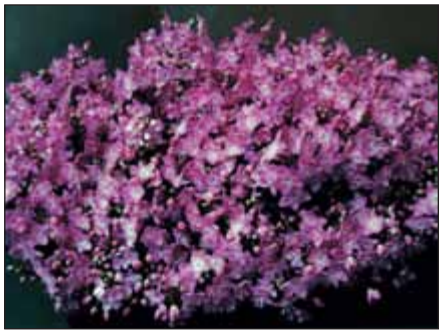
after itself: you would have to make a determined effort to kill an established clump, for it takes summer drought in its stride, and may be divided roughly and readily with a spade.

Geranium dalmaticum

Will Ingwersen formatively helped to popularize the very rich alpine flora of western North America; look back 70 years and you can find pictures of him harvesting seed of *Phlox hoodii* on the fairway of Calgary golf course, or feeding a rearing, youngish grizzly bear. He also recorded that while camping in Banff National Park his sleep was disturbed by the nocturnal investigations of a porcupine. Again, tying in both with the Club's foundation and with Esslemont's predilections, *Kalmiopsis leachiana* was found by Mrs John Leach in 1930 in Curry County, Oregon – supposedly her horse tripped on a long surface root, though far more often the species is strictly saxatile. At first described as a *Rhododendron*, in 1932 the new genus was concocted and, as far as can be traced, it entered cultivation in 1933. Harold Esslemont gained a Forrest Medal in 1965, and in 1987 a First Class Certificate, when he showed both the original 'Umpqua River' find and a representative from 100 miles to the North-East, in Douglas County, branded 'Marcel le Piniec' in honour of the man who discovered the site.

Mrs Rae Berry travelled there in 1965, reporting that "the *Kalmiopsis* grew in shade, in sunshine and some just scrambling over the rock faces, ... roots so embedded that only one plant could be pried out intact {which} ... we divided three ways ... It had seeds – they were already forming when the plant was taken – so I sent them to the SRGC seed exchange, calling it var. 'M. le Piniec', hoping for his sake that the name would 'hold' to commemorate his find." More recently the species has been reconsidered and split into two, with those elements from Douglas County in the western Cascades rebranded as *Kalmiopsis fragrans*. The small elliptical dark green leaves are leathery in texture and viscous, while the flowers are slightly

Kalmiopsis leachiana



larger and paler rose-pink.

Relatively few North American, non-bulbous alpines have stayed the course, when you consider how many species of *Astragalus*, *Penstemon*, *Phlox*, *Polemonium*, *Townsendia*, *Erigeron*, *Eriogonum* and all the rest have been collected in the past 25 years especially. Some enthusiasms, as for white forms of *Campanula piperi*, *Phlox kelseyi* 'Lemhi Purple', *Phlox nana* and its close relatives in astonishing colour forms such as 'Mary Maslin', once wholesaled by nurseries such as that of the late Don Mann, who also grew *Rhodohypoxis* by the glasshouseful, have come and gone or else subsided. One notable exception is *Clematis tenuiloba* 'Ylva', a 1987 find made by Henrik Zetterlund, named for one of his daughters, which was brought back as cutting material from Wyoming (the species also occurs in Montana and the Dakotas). Other versions, which included white, powder blue and pink examples found at the same time, have not made their mark, whereas 'Ylva', at first a rarity but subsequently widely-established, has shown itself readily propagated; it suckers generously, and the short aerial stems with their vestigial roots can be detached; or else internodal cuttings, taken in midsummer for preference, provide a high success rate. The flowers, like scaled-down versions of *Atragene alpina*, are sometimes borne very freely from fat winter resting buds but during this season considerable efforts are required to clear away the dead leaves, which cling to the skeletal, sleeping framework of stems.

A distant New Zealand ally, evergreen and far less widespread, with just two stations (again on limestone, though preferring a gritty, ericaceous compost in cultivation) in Nelson Province (South Island), *Clematis marmoraria* was discovered 40 years ago and first introduced in 1982; freshly-gathered seed that was sent to Kew and elsewhere germinated within five weeks of sowing. As in the avian world, it's the male that makes the better display, with a relatively plain female. Out of flower, there is no means of telling between the two; both fashion a rather fleshy, dark green, condensed mat of finely dissected foliage, with the flower buds noticeable even in the depths of winter (but check for greenfly and also selectively snip away any excess foliage to leave their swelling progress unhindered). Not quite as exiguously rare as was suggested when it was first found – very pricey helicopter flights have done away with the arduous trek – it is nonetheless confined to a very few peaks around Crusader and has

Clematis marmoraria

apparently not been re-collected of late, so the few "pure" examples that endure amid a welter of hybrids involving various other Australasian species, the invalidly cited *C.* x *cartmannii* (= x *paniculata*) to the fore, should be cherished and maintained.

Narrow endemics from various parts of the globe have shown themselves to be encouragingly adaptable in cultivation, witness (for example) the establishment of the Japanese *Rhododendron keiskei* 'Yaku Fairy', confined to the summit of Mt Kuromi, Yakushima, where it was first stumbled upon in 1966. Unlike the more usual forms of the species, which can be 2 m tall, this is intensely dwarf – a ground-hugging, dense mat is slowly formed – and has sometimes been misrepresented by look-alikes. Introduced to Britain via the USA, occasionally under the synonymous guise of *R. kuromiensis* var. *cordifolia*, it is very rarely epiphytic, and repeatedly favours interstices between boulders or else crevices on cliffs in Japan. In the garden it grows steadily, albeit rather slowly at first, if afforded any of the several contemporary versions of the peat bed, whence it can be readily lifted for exhibition just before the buds break, watered generously, then returned to its mooring as soon afterwards as is practicable.

The same arrangement is applicable where another refined member of the Ericaceae, this time Sino-Himalayan, is concerned. *Cassiope wardii* gained a First Class Certificate when shown by Harold Esslemont in 1982; he obtained a rooted layer from his great friend Jack Crosland, who in turn had it from Bobby Masterton at Cluny. In Aberdeen it proved frost-tender in the run-up to flowering and as such was kept in a cold frame, closed in winter and lightly shaded in summer, where its unmistakable silvery-grey fringed, thickish shoots increased generously and stoloniferously (layering these in sphagnum remains the most reliable means of propagation). Described in 1924 from Kingdon Ward's find in SE Tibet, it was subsequently introduced in 1938 by Sir George Taylor from Tripe (pronounced "tree-pay") from his expedition with Ludlow and Sherriff; almost 60 years elapsed until it was re-found and re-introduced by Kenneth Cox in the mid 1990s. As with other members of the genus, it is the epitome of grace, disappointing only in its faintly bleach-like scent and a susceptibility to late frosts.

Cassiope wardii

The Himalayas in the broad sense have yielded any number of first-rate

introductions, some of them widely established, others only successful in a very few enclaves, where they have been maintained for many years, and only grown elsewhere for a few fleeting years, before (usually) a hot summer has put paid to their further spread. The genus *Primula* is of particular relevance on this front, although long-gone (almost 40 years distant) are the days when Scottish nurseries such as Jack Drake's routinely listed such rare Soldanelloid species as *P. cawdoriana* and *P. wattii*. Every bit as beautiful as either of these, and apparently rallying slightly of late (I saw splendid specimens at two or three shows last April), *Primula reidii* var. *williamsii* was introduced in 1952 by Stainton, Sykes & Williams from the neighbourhood of the Dhaulagiri range. In the early 1970s, Inshriach Alpine Plant Nursery, among others, used to sell two or three year old plants, which you could buy in the autumn (at five shillings apiece, the equivalent of 25 pence) as they entered dormancy, keep glass-covered over the winter, then trigger into growth the following spring, when up to half a dozen flower stems would arise, flowering at peak *Daphne* time, with arguably an even more powerful scent. Seldom chanced upon in the wild of late, but maintained in gardens for over 50 years, the best plan is to maintain a seed bank from the occasional fruitful years, keep the dormant crowns dry in the winter months, and pray for a cool summer, which encourages them to perennate.

Another Nepalese species, *Primula aureata*, belongs to a second, hallowed section of the genus, the petiolarids (Section *Petiolares,* subsection *Petiolares* to acknowledge the formal ranking). It was first seen

Primula reidii var. *williamsii*

by a western botanist, Lt Col Bailey, in 1935, festooning steep crevices and overhangs in the Gosainkund and Langtang locales. A seedling at RBG Edinburgh, of disputed origin, flowered in 1939, from which the species was described; a rediscovery in 1952 brought further material into cultivation and more recent sendings (notably by Pete Boardman) have further secured its tenure in British gardens. Unlike some relatives, it eschews the forests, with records from 3050-4400 m, often in positions where snow cover is unlikely. Avoid overhead watering and direct sunshine, and grow the plants either under an alpine house bench or in a light-diffusing polytunnel. At Gosainkund especially it grows intermixed with *P. deuteronana*, and latterly has been seen in full flower in May, with various hybrids, some with a yellow centre and pink-flushed petal tips, some with broader, serrate-ended, whitish petals.

And so to the western Chinese Section *Bullatae,* wholly devoid of duds and best-known for the long-cultivated *Primula forrestii*, originally grown in gardens just over a century ago, in 1906, then reintroduced 80 years later by Roy Lancaster, with further sendings thereafter. Plants in the wild (principally from the Lichiang Range) have been estimated to be at least 50 years old and their progeny have settled down in gardens for many years, as for instance at Bodnant (though this is no longer the case). Optimally, up to 25 flowers per umbel are produced, and a plant in full vigour is a sight to behold; seedlings flower in their second or more usually their third year. Occasionally established in the open garden, it is generally better under glass cover, a stricture that most certainly applies to

Primula bracteata ssp. *dubernardiana*

Primula forrestii

a resolute chasmophyte and close relative, *P. bracteata* ssp. *dubernardiana*, fleetingly in cultivation many years ago but significantly re-introduced in 2002 by Vojtěch Holubec, one of the most significant of present-day plant-hunters, who visited NW Yunnan and Xizang (under very difficult conditions) and at 4300 m, on limestone cliffs, found this covetable exemplar just above the pine forest zone, which he provisionally identified as *P. henrici*; it has now been redetermined by John Richards. The seedlings germinated very well but proved almost *Dionysia*-like in their sensitivity to pricking out, so many plants were lost. The vernally mealy or farinose leaves are much longer than those of *P. bracteata* as we have it in cultivation, and susceptible to Botrytis under greenhouse conditions, where they can otherwise thrive if very carefully watered and kept slightly pot-bound. The type material was gathered by Forrest in the upper Mekong in 1904 but is rather sparse; most was lost when he fled hostile Tibetans, who caught up with and killed the man after whom it is named, Père Dubernard.

Surprisingly, a 'new' European *Primula* also qualifies for inclusion: *Primula albenensis* was described 1993 from the mountains just north of Bergamo, in the SE Italian Alps, principally Mt Alben (2019 m), from which it takes its name. The heavily farinose leaves are reminiscent of *P. auricula* (which co-occurs), while the flowers bring to mind *P. marginata*, though the scapes are in general much shorter, to about 5 cm. Recorded from 1150-2000 m and generally inhabiting shady fissures, this is a first-rate introduction that can hold its own in the company of the best of the genus from much further east and has proven reliable – something one hesitates to assert where many of the latter are concerned.

Reliability is hardly the hallmark of another narrowly endemic North

Primula albenensis

Daphne petraea 'Lydora'

Italian, *Daphne petraea*, but nonetheless it has been grown to a superlative standard again and again in recent years. Although first grown in the latter part of the nineteenth century, none of these clones has survived, yet the 1914 blind collection 'Grandiflora' is still going strong and has been joined in recent years by at least a dozen distinctive alternatives. In 1962, Harold Esslemont wrote a short article for the Journal (Vol. 111, no. 30; 34-5) entitled 'In Search of *Daphne petraea*', in which he described a stay in Riva and his travels in the mountains thereabouts, when "Twenty minutes hard work with hammer and chisel opened up a sufficient gap for some well-rooted pieces {of the daphne} to be extracted". Such activities would nowadays be frowned upon but were more acceptable at the time that he wrote; in any case they evidently proved fruitless, whereas a youngster bought (possibly from Ingwersen's) and planted in a lump of hard tufa received a Forrest Medal after a 14 year wait and was proudly described by Harold as "without doubt the finest plant I ever grew". Latterly, enthusiasts have been spoilt for choice, with Blackthorn Nursery (Kilmeston, Hampshire) pioneering the commercial availability of this and other species. Among the most worthwhile are 'Lydora' (Peter Erskine, 1997), a small, deep-coloured selection that flowers early in the season, sometimes in the first weeks of April, and Henry & Margaret Taylor's introduction 'Michele' (1991), which has a distinctive trailing habit and often repeat-flowers in late summer. While sometimes grown on their own roots (and necessarily so if they are to be planted in tufa crevices), these are generally offered as grafted plants, with *D. longilobata* or *D. tangutica* as the rootstock. Repotting is often the critical point in their cultivation and is best undertaken early on, around mid-March if spring arrives on time, or else soon after flowering.

Daphne petraea 'Michele'

The Taylors really deserve an article to themselves for all

the many worthwhile introductions they have made and passed round to others, whether after lecturing on them, given to garden visitors, or sent to nurserymen. I'll mention but two of their plants here, the first of them *Ranunculus parnassifolius* 'Nuria', made in the early 1970s in the eastern Pyrenees, on the slatey screes above the Spanish monastery that provides the clonal name. Unlike the standard white-bloomed issue from the Alps, this has silky-haired leaves and, more importantly, attractively veined, pink flowers; similar forms have been reported from as far west as the Cordillera Cantabrica, but only in the mountains above Nuria over onto the French side, tenanting the high screes of the Val d'Eyne, can they be said to be ubiquitous. Slow to increase its crowns and best divided every few years, *R. p.* 'Nuria' appreciates a gritty, well-nourished soil and abundant watering during the spring and summer. Seedlings inherit the character of the parent but are only reliably produced if the seed is sown almost the minute that it ripens.

Androsace studiosorum 'Doksa'

While chiefly remembered in the 1970s and 1980s for an enterprising range of visits to European mountains, in the 1990s the Taylors turned their attentions to the western Himalaya. *Androsace studiosorum* 'Doksa' (1991), found in a remote Lahuli valley growing in moist turf at about 3500 m, stands as one of the most significant introductions of the genus in recent years, even allowing for excitements such as the numerous Chinese species or the diminutive *A. bryomorpha* from the Pamirs. Readily propagated when the strawberry-like runners reach their optimum size in August, the trick is to cram as many together as you possibly can and grow them on 'hard', so that the whitish flowers appear on the shortest of stems. Pegging and re-routing the stolons can be a tedious business, and 'Doksa' is more difficult to manage and re-train in a pot than in a winter-covered raised bed, where it thrives in a gritty soil.

There are, of course, innumerable other alpine plants deserving of inclusion, but I'll conclude with a trio of personal favourites. First off, and staying in the Himalayas, *Saxifraga poluniniana* caused quite a stir when brought back from Nepal in 1981; it inspired a new wave of hybrids, some of which rival its beauty, though none eclipses it. A plant of gravel outwashes and cool screes, it loathes hot summers, and so while on the one hand it grows fairly rapidly when well-suited, on the other it scorches all too readily. Some have found that old-fashioned wooden lath shading

Saxifraga columnaris

is the best means of fending off summer heat, and that the plants do not etiolate as readily under this shelter as when kept in a white-washed or shade-cloth draped alpine house. One of the best introductions was made by one-time Himalayan veteran George Smith, whom some members will remember fondly for his absorbing lectures, his lively visits to shows (he hadn't an ounce of compromise in him and would express his opinions in the most lively manner), and his kindness if ever you visited his Cheshire home. Tales of his later journeys to China, on one of which he was carried down by stretcher, and catapulted out of it (twice!) on the rougher parts of the descent, are not exaggerated. Happily, a number of his finds have stayed the course, encompassing three of his favourite genera (*Primula*, *Androsace* and *Saxifraga*), and an especially large-flowered form of *S. poluniniana* that he made, a blind collection would you believe, that serves as a fond memory of this tireless explorer.

While Chinese and Himalayan saxifrages have grabbed many of the headlines over the past 40 years, there was particular excitement in 1996 when a party of Czechs visited the northern Caucasus and, despite being harried by local villains, stayed the course to bring back seed of, among others, *Saxifraga columnaris*. Predicted to prove a challenge, on account of its strictly saxatile occurrences on the soaring dolomite cliffs of the Skalistij Khrebet, where it sometimes fashions aged, coral-like mounds, it has in fact settled down rather well but requires patience, for it grows as slowly as almost any *Dionysia*, occupying a comparable niche in the wild. Given the chance, one would wish to select plants in flower, for some are broader-petalled than others, and more vibrantly coloured as well, but

very few will disappoint. Even so, its inclusion here is almost arbitrary, for there have been many other noteworthy introductions from these mountains: one might well have included, for example, *Draba longisiliqua*, *D. ossetica*, *Omphalodes lojkae*, several campanulas, and even *Gentiana oschtenica*, first seen in the 1970s.

Dianthus microlepis 'Rivendell'

Also from the Caucasus, more specifically the mountains around Dombai, *Primula renifolia* clung on in a few alpine houses for almost 20 years but has probably now faded away. It was one of many prizes for which we have Dieter & Rosi Zschummel to thank, and happily many of these have prospered in our gardens. It was Dieter who provided Brian Burrow with seed of *Dianthus microlepis* from Bulgaria's Rhodope Mountains around 1981, and the superior clone 'Rivendell' was selected from the batch raised. Their trips to Iran have been consistently rewarding, with new species of *Dionysia* discovered and many other plants besides. But few would have associated this part of the world with violas, whereas in fact a particularly distinguished member of the genus, *Viola spathulata*, is centred in the Elburz Mountains, where it inhabits seasonally moist, grassy slopes, or else tight crevices. Often with felted leaves, the version raised in 2000 has deep green, glabrous foliage, and is one of the most appealing and most diminutive of violets, producing a cheering flush of two-tone, dark-eyed flowers in mid spring.

The aforementioned Brian Burrow is perhaps the only person to have raised a seedling of this hitherto obscure Iranian, which he has increased both by cuttings and by selfing, then carving up one of his best plants in order to provide further material for propagation. It is only by such actions that some of the world's finest alpines have been kept in cultivation, and it is only through the example of men such as Harold Esslemont that others have been inspired to take up such challenges, and share their successes.

Viola spathulata

(The Harold Esslemont Lecture 2008)

Glasgow Show

2nd May 2009

The Glasgow Show's long circumstantial tradition of being blessed with good weather came perilously close to forfeiting its legend ... but to the delight of exhibitors and public alike a squally Friday gave way to a benign Saturday, and the record was left intact. Meteorological worries aside, show secretaries fret over the raising of an eyebrow, let alone a depleted show, but **Show Time** it is and members rise unfailingly to the challenge of preparing the hall and filling the benches with miniature treasures that delight, educate, dazzle and perplex an admiring and critical public. You make this, our shop window to the world, renowned and respected in alpine circles everywhere, and I salute you all.

Trillium pusillum ozarkanum

And how refreshingly apposite it was to see a trillium from eastern USA vie with a Pyrenean fritillary, a classic gentian from the Alps and a delphinium, arisaema and androsace from the Himalayas in a tussle for the premier award: diversity aplenty to satisfy the most enquiring alpine soul. For Brian Davidson (Gatehouse-

of-Fleet) it was '*same venue - different plant*' as his wonderful pan of *Trillium pusillum* var. *ozarkanum* gained him another Forrest medal. This striking white trillium from the Ozarks stands about 25 cm with an upright habit and resembles a slimmer version (leaves and flowers) of its more opulent cousin, *T. grandiflorum*, which was also on the bench. Definitely a gem for the woodland garden!

Trillium grandiflorum roseum

Cross - border raiding, in the horticultural sense, has never displayed the same ruthless enterprise and deadly exploitation of its real life antecedents. Rather it has engendered a true spirit of friendship, cooperation and cross-fertilisation (ideas and, yes, plants) seen at best formally in the three joint shows, the discussion weekend, the travelling speaker and informally in occasional forays by tireless exhibitors in both directions resulting in Forrest or Farrer medals and - even better - new and different plants on the bench. Step forward George Young (Stocksfield) who brought along among other beauties a magnificent pan of the very new *Delphinium chrysotrichum* var. *tsarongense*. Only 10 cm high - so disabuse yourself

Delphinium chrysotrichum tsarongense

Fritillaria pinetorum

of any preconceptions you may have of delphiniums - its large flowers of an underlying off-cream with grey veining and dark anthers brought to mind an *Oncocyclus* iris or a *Pulsatilla vernalis* that's gone in for a funereal make-over. Growing in Tibet and China at 5100 m with all these attributes I suggest that this is one of the truly great alpines. Reading George's notes leads me to think its main drawback might be difficulty in cultivation but, regardless, roll on the Forrests and Farrers that will undoubtedly accrue. It got the bandwagon rolling by taking the 75th Anniversary Prize for best small pan in the show, a Certificate of Merit and, as part of George's trio in class 3, the William C Buchanan Challenge Cup for new, rare and difficult. George's entry also included a *Fritillaria pinetorum* in flower (from northwest native seed) and a lovely pan of my favourite lewisia, the rose-purple *Lewisia stebbinsii*. Small wonder that even the Glenrothes maestro had to take a back seat to that mighty grouping: Cyril Lafong's own entry included *Penstemon uintahensis* (a tiny jewel with light blue

Lewisia stebbinsii

flowers), *Meconopsis lancifolia* and *Iris sari* ssp. *manissadjiani* (an *Oncocyclus*). There's a sense of inevitability or redundancy in stating that Cyril did not go home empty-handed: he won the Diamond Jubilee Award for six small pans, the Crawford Silver Challenge Cup for most first points and two Certificates of Merit for *Fritillaria pyrenaica* 'Bernard Tickner' & *Androsace studiosorum* 'Doksa'. These were just rewards for the skill, hard work and dedication he puts into his craft. Like Federer in tennis and Woods in golf he has pushed the alpine boundaries and taken the art of exhibiting to a new level. Let's just be grateful for all the magnificent plants that he brings to our shows and hope that his success spurs on others to similar achievements.

Iris sari manissadjiani

Bulb classes were dominated by George Young, who took the Don Stead prize for most points in these classes. Don, a great stalwart and character in the Glasgow group, loved all things bulbous, certainly encouraged me as a fledgling exhibitor, and is affectionately remembered in this award. He would have loved George's pans of *Phaiophleps biflora*, *Iris paradoxa*, *Fritillaria liliacea* and *F. biflora*. Likewise, the Joan Stead prize commemorates his wife (who was a past president of the SRGC) and is given to the best primula in the show. Carole & Ian Bainbridge (Easter Howgate) won this with the American pink *P. ellisiae*, perhaps a form of

Corydalis melanochlora

P. rusbyi. Disregarding the validity of its name, it improves with every outing and it is definitely one to watch out for.

Another award winner that caught my eye was Stan da Prato's (Tranent) three pans of *Rhododendron* which took the Edward Darling trophy: 'Wren', 'Dora Amateis' and 'Sacko'. David & Stella Rankin (Lasswade) won the Ian Donald Memorial trophy for best Scottish native with their little orchid, *Orchis mascula*. They staged an even more interesting plant in *Corydalis melanochlora*, white with electric blue tips - stunning but recalcitrant! The best orchid in the show and winner of the Charles M Simpson Trophy was Margaret & Henry Taylor's (Invergowrie) *Pleione Vesuvius* 'Aphrodite'. Peter Semple (Buchlyvie) caught the iconic status of *Gentiana acaulis* in a hernia-sized pot and was awarded a Certificate of Merit for his endeavours. From heavyweight to Hollywood ... Anne & Viv Chambers's (Killearn) pan of *Arisaema griffithii* makes me think of a Harry Potter film prop but its subtle metallic sheen and rich colouration ensured a starring role on the show bench in the fifth and final Certificate of Merit.

Other goodies to look out for? *Calochortus tolmiei* shown by Barry & Cathy Caudwell (Abernyte) is one of the diminutive cat's ears of a soft lavender persuasion – the inner cup of delicate threads of hair is a work

Aquilegia flabellata alba 'White Jewel'

Pyrethrum leontopodium

Iris paradoxa

Meconopsis x *cookei* 'Old Rose'

of art. At the very least, a dry summer rest followed by careful watering at the autumnal wake-up might encourage a kind of persistence. *Daphne petraea* 'Tremalzo' and *D. petraea* 'Idro', both from the Lafong stable, are two selections well worth seeking out but are probably slow growing and definitely not cheap! If your taste runs to dwarf aquilegias then *A. flabellata nana* 'White Jewel' (the Rankins) fulfils the epithet: loads of pristine columbines sit on top of deep green frothy foliage.

Section II was again poorly represented but a big vote of thanks goes to all those who showed. In particular, Dr Dai Davies (Killearn) brought a wide range of fine plants that won him the James Wilson Trophy. Nevertheless, I plead with all members to support their own show by taking the plunge and putting at least one pan on the show bench. You never know, you just might get to enjoy the participation, competition and fun that it engenders. It's your show. Expand its possibilities!

The current but temporary closure of the cut rhododendron section left a large gap in the hall which was gloriously filled with a wonderful display of alpines and woodland plants from the RBGE. Our thanks go to the Regius keeper, to John Mitchell, Elspeth Mackintosh and the students for providing the plants and setting them up. A well deserved silver

medal was awarded. Cheek by jowl with the RBGE was a superb display of show auriculas from the Rumbling Bridge nursery of Graeme & Hilary Butler, which gained a bronze medal. I must confess that as a show secretary I especially love the extra dimension that these exhibits lend the show. More please!

Finally - about the experience of the show. It's about friends, old and new, indulging themselves; about fresh faces being bitten by the alpine bug; about parading your Sunday best (the plants) in your Saturday clothes; cups of tea and cakes; new composts and secret recipes; it's about public appraisal and private revelation; but mostly it's about enjoying yourself. If you've never been to a show then why not resolve to visit your nearest in 2010. You might enjoy it!

Iris korolkowii

My thanks go to everyone involved in the show: to those who set it up, to Anne Bush and her helpers in the kitchen, to Ian Doig and his group on the plant stall, to the stewards, to Glassford Sprunt whose photography illuminates this report, to Peggy Anderson our treasurer, to the exhibitors who travel the length and breadth of the country to bring their plants, to the nursery folk who bring the treasures that we like to buy, to the judges (Brian Burrow, Ian Bainbridge, Anne Chambers, Dave Riley, Ian Kidman, Stan da Prato and Sandy Leven) and to Bill Robinson, the assistant show secretary. See you all next year when those wee plants irresistibly draw us back: let's go and indulge ourselves again.

John Lee

A non-competitive exhibit of *Gentiana sino-ornata* (Howard Humphrys)

Discussion Weekend Show

October 2009

The discussion weekend show took place at the Inchyra Grange Hotel in Polmont. The overall standard of the plants on show was high but the judges felt that there was no plant that stood out sufficiently from the rest to be considered for a Forrest Medal. The Forrest Medal is awarded for the most meritorious plant and the judges felt that this condition had not been met. It was a few years ago that the show reached a nadir in some respects. However, over the past few years the general standard of the exhibited plants and of their overall quality, quantity and variety has been raised considerably.

As usual, the show was dominated by various species of *Cyclamen*. These included no less than three pans of *Cyclamen rohlfsianum*, each of which had a history of around 25 years of cultivation. A wide selection of leaf forms is normal in *Cyclamen graecum* and the one about which I heard the most congratulatory remarks was that presented by Darren Sleep. This cyclamen had many small sized and nicely patterned leaves. There were also some good representative specimens of *Cyclamen*

Cyclamen rohlfsianum

Joan & Ron Beeston

Cremnosedum 'Little Gem'

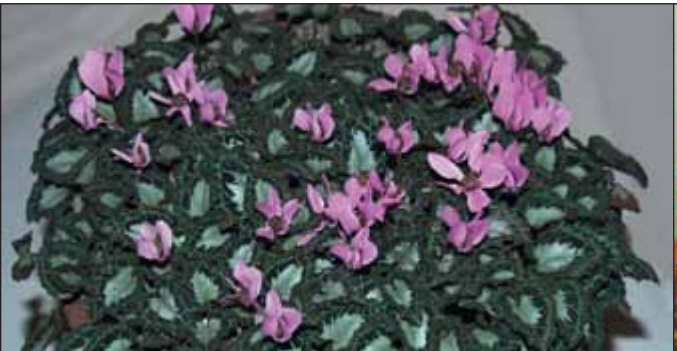
hederifolium and *Cyclamen cilicium*. Outstanding among the cyclamens was that presented by Sue Gill. It was in Section II; it was *Cyclamen mirabile* and was awarded the East Lothian Cup for the best plant in Section II and the Jim Lever Memorial Trophy for the best cyclamen in the show. The strong pink in the leaves suggested that it could well have been of 'Tilebarn' descent.

There were quite a few conifers present on the benches, some of which were most attractive, and the best specimen was undoubtedly the *Cryptomeria japonica spiralis* that was shown by Stan Da Prato. It was awarded the J L Mowat Trophy for the best conifer in the show. One or two other plants had not been adequately prepared for presentation, in that they dropped 'dandruff' when their heads were agitated.

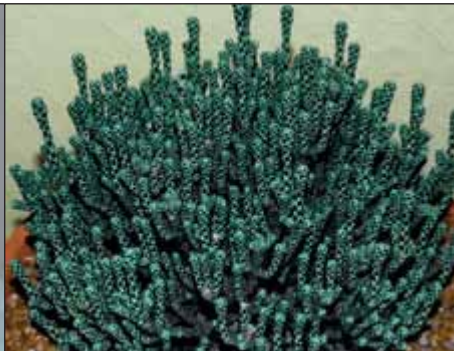
Sandy Leven won the Mary Bowe Trophy for the most points in Section I. Jean Wyllie was the winner of the East Lothian Trophy as the winner of Class 1. The Peel Trophy, which is awarded for the winner in Class 42, a miniature garden, was won by John Dower.

Brian and Shelagh Smethurst can usually be guaranteed to bring along something unusual. They did it again for this show when they put x *Cremnosedum* 'Little Gem' on the bench. This is a cross between *Cremnophila nutans* and *Sedum humifusum*. It was certainly an eye-

Cyclamen graecum



Ozothamnus coralloides



Above: *Alstroemeria hookeri*
Right: *Eucomis vandermerwei*
Below: *Habranthus robustus*

Gentiana 'Compact Gem'

catching exhibit. Also remarkable was Tony Rymer's *Eucomis vandermerwei*, which was most attractive and more diminutive than most species of *Eucomis*. Tony brought along a good specimen of *Ozothamnus coralloides*, which has previously been exhibited under the guise of *Helichrysum coralloides*. Another unusual plant was *Alstroemeria hookeri* which had clearly not enjoyed its journey to the show. Brought by Catherine Boulby, it had a most attractive flower and brightened up a Class in Section II.

Taken over all, it was a most creditable show. The judging was done by Bette Ivey, Margaret Young and Glassford Sprunt, and thanks are extended to Willie Campbell who was the show secretary.

Glassford Sprunt

Cryptomeria japonica spiralis

Saxifraga 'Coolock Gem'

Saxifraga 'Allendale Charm'

Above: *Saxifraga poluniniana*
Below: *Hepatica japonica* 'Gyousei'

Blackpool Show

October 11th 2009

The Blackpool show is a joint show run by the SRGC and the AGS. Historically, local members wanted to belong to both clubs and this is their local show. Members of both clubs travel from North, South and East to support the show; consequently it is one of the best in the calendar. This year it was particularly floriferous. The first plants to see on entering the show hall were the colourful domes of saxifrages. The prevailing cold winter had developed into a spring full of promise - displayed especially by this continuing floral show of saxifrages, but also with primulas and dionysias both in quantity and quality.

Fred Cumbus's (Lancaster) photographic display of the 'Flowers of Yunnan' received a Gold Award and framed the hall most ably. Geoff Rollinson (Holmfirth) carried off the Forrest Medal with a 30 cm pot of *Saxifraga* 'Coolock Gem' covered in glorious white flower and fully filling the pot. The saxifrage displays in all relevant classes were the arena for intense competition and David Hoare (Lyminge) carried off the AGS Medal for class 1 with six

stunning pans of distinct rock plants, including saxifrages - all of which were so full of flowering cushions that no top dressing was visible!

Ivor Betteridge (Ashby-de-la-Zouch) took the Hollett Trophy for the Open Section, including amongst his successes a lovely *Cyclamen libanoticum* (class 56) seed sown in 2004. Certificates of Merit were awarded to Robin Pickering (Goole) for *Cyclamen coum*, Robert Rolfe (Nottingham) for *Saxifraga* x *dinninaris* and Derek Pichard (Stockton-on-Tees) for *Dionysia bryoides*.

A series of *Primula* hybrids was exhibited in several classes by Derek Lockey (Heddon-on-the-Wall); they were derived from a bee pollination of *P. irregularis* x 'Tinny's Moonlight'. These ranged through pinks to a pure white and were all most attractive. Completing the *Saxifraga* theme, show secretary Lionel Clarkson (Blackpool) won class 64 with his *Saxifraga dinnikii alba*, an intense white with grey lines through the petals as would be found in *Cyclamen intaminatum*.

Rarely seen and seldom exhibited, George Young's (Stocksfield) plant of *Viola trinervata* (class 76) had been raised from North-American wild seed sown in February 2000 and carefully nurtured through the ensuing years. Other interesting

Saxifraga 'Coolock Kate'

Saxifraga 'Harry Smith'

Above: *Saxifraga* 'Lismore Mist'
Below: *Narcissus* 'Betty May'

Primula irregularis hybrid (Derek Lockey, Heddon-on-the-Wall)

and uncommon plants included Sandy Leven's (Dunblane) *Scilla winogradowii* in class 67, Darren Sleep's (Carnforth) *Anemone tschernaewi* in class 77 and Ian & Carol Bainbridge's (Edinburgh) *Saxifraga clivorum* in class 31.

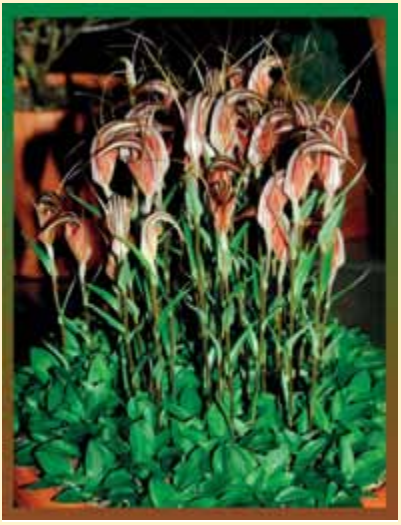
All in all, this was a stunning show, and the promising start of an impressive season that was to come.

David Riley

Narcissus cyclamineus 'Englander'

Cymbidium goeringii

Class 36 entry from David Boyd



Diplodium coccinum

Newcastle Show

10th October 2009

If the show was less colourful than sometimes it has to be said that the problem was not the fault of the exhibitors, because the seasonal conditions this year meant that many of the expected favourites were over. Fortunately, *Crocus* and *Cyclamen* boosted the colour of the display. The Ponteland Bowl for the most first prize points in the Open Section was won by David Boyd. One of his entries was a very attractive Class 36 six pan that included *Nerine humilis*, *Crocus goulimyi* and *Oxalis perdicaria*; it was the only entry in the class but it well deserved its award of the AGS Medal.

Anne Vale took the most first prize points in Section B; among her many exhibits was a beautiful example of *Gentiana scabra* that won first prize in class 97. The Forrest medal was awarded to Barry Tattersall for his entry of *Diplodium coccinum*, a somewhat unusual choice, as it lacked the WOW! factor, but nevertheless a worthy winner.

Had there been a prize for scent, its winner would have been Derek Lockey's plant of *Cyclamen purpurascens* f. *fatrense*. The scent of cyclamen can be so very fleeting, depending on the conditions, but this plant valiantly held on throughout the show and it gained a well earned first prize although, sadly, it was the only entry in Class 9.

Crocus tournefortii

Sternbergia sicula (John Bunn)

I was not expecting to see a bowl of snowdrops at this show but Ian Kidman's entry of *Galanthus peshmenii* walked away with first prize in Class 20. John Bunn's *Sternbergia sicula*, the winner in Class 98, provided a splash of brightness. Come to think of it, having said at the beginning that the show was less colourful than sometimes, there nevertheless seems to have been plenty of wonderful plants to write about! The show is always a social event as well as a competition and it was delightful to see people

Oxalis massoniana
Sorbus reducta

Shortia uniflora kantoense
Trochocarpa thymifolia

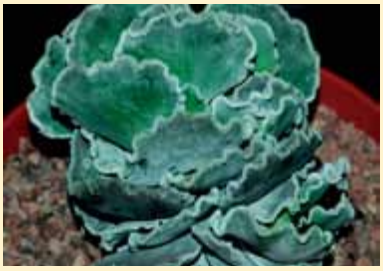
Gentiana scabra (Anne Vale)

exhibiting from far and wide. The organisation was good, as we have come to expect. Mike and Pearl Dale, together with all their helpers, deserve our warmest congratulations.

Ray Fairbairn

Pterocephalus spathulata
Campanula carpatha

Cotyledon undulata
Crocus goulimyi



Aberdeen Show

16th May 2009

To break the mould of the traditional show report, here are comments from some of the members who attended the Aberdeen show on a dreich mid-May Saturday, telling us which plants stood out for them. Let us first note that the Forrest Medal was won by Cyril Lafong, with a really chubby thicket of *Cypripedium pubescens parviflorum*.

David Millward, *East Linton*

A good show, I thought - my thanks to the Aberdeen Group. You asked that I select a plant that merited special mention. For me this was Cyril Lafong's *Penstemon absarokensis* in the '3-pan new, rare or difficult' class. A very neat and tidy ring of flowers was held just above the leaves - wonderful colour and it looks to be a real winner (well that's my humble opinion).

David Shaw, *Dyke*

A favourite? *Silene acaulis* (in class 11) shown by Nick Boss. I liked the even and very large (12 inches) cushion of this plant. It had an unusually generous number of flowers for a *Silene acaulis* in flower and I wonder if the very cold spell during the winter helped this. I understand that the plant is about 15 years old. Or ... *Arisaema asperatum* group (class 18) shown by Anne & Viv Chambers. This is a new *Arisaema* to me. I liked the way that the five low inflorescences were so clearly visible below the leaf. This plant is suited for the show bench because the leaf stem is so much longer than the peduncle.

Cypripedium pubescens parviflorum & Cyril Lafong

John Owen, *Askival*

Plants that appealed to me? As requested (I'll restrain myself from mentioning *Cypripedium calceolus*) - *Sebaea thomasii* - I didn't want to choose one of Cyril's but it was amazing. I don't think I've seen one of such a size and with so many flowers - and of his usual quality of course. I'll have one, one day! Good yellow plants aren't too common either.

Arisaema nepenthoides (Anne Chambers)

Penstemon absarokensis

Cypripedium 'Pixi' *(calceolus* x *tibeticum)*

Two others make up for it. *Edraianthus pumilio* (Mike Hopkins) was a plant that appeared to be in rude health; odd flowers, so good, but not all at once - and I liked the colour! And *Penstemon acaulis* - tiny plants have a strange appeal as I do like 'proper' Penstemons, not the common blousy hybrids; another one that I shall look out for, and obviously a challenge, judging by the age of the plant.

Marcelle Garden, *NZ*

While visiting Scotland with my family I could not help but coerce them into doing a detour to Aberdeen to visit the show. I certainly was not disappointed: the hall was full of beautiful plants.

I particularly enjoyed the Edinburgh Royal Botanic Garden's display. There were several plants that I have only seen in books - *Iris*

Primula 'Elizabeth Killaley'

iberica var. *elegantissima* and many different cypripediums. On the show bench there were many plants that took my eye: a beautiful pan of *Globularia cordifolia* 'Blue Bonnets' grown by Carole & Ian Bainbridge and a beautiful little *Meconopsis delavayi* grown by Helen Greenwood, while *Lewisia tweedyi* 'Lemon' grown by Bob Maxwell was another stand-out plant.

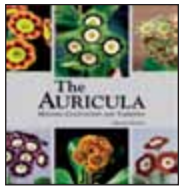
I loved seeing *Arisaema nepenthoides*, another plant that I have not seen before, but by far the most outstanding exhibit was three pans grown by Cyril Lafong consisting of *Penstemon absarokensis*, the most beautiful *Daphne petraea* 'Tremalzo' and *Dionysia involucrata alba*.

It was really great to meet some of the people that I have read about both on the website and in the journals. Thank you to everyone for making us all feel so welcome and my family all enjoyed the lunch, especially the soup!

Dionysia involucrata alba

Calceus youngii (Ian Young)

The Auricula
History, Cultivation, and Varieties
Alan Guest
174 pages & 200 colour illustrations
ISBN 978-1-87067-362-4
Garden Art Press £19-95



This eagerly awaited book will be well received by enthusiasts old and new, bringing things up to date. It is about nine years since the previous book on auriculas; the auricula world has recently been buzzing, with many exciting and wonderful new varieties produced every year by a handful of members from the three UK auricula societies. Alan has grown, hybridized, exhibited and judged these wonderful plants for over thirty years and he now passes on his wealth of knowledge and experience regarding all aspects of history, care and cultivation.

The book's pages glow with wonderful colour plates showing some of our very best named auriculas, some old varieties and some of the very newest. They will whet the appetite of anyone seeing them for the first time or of anyone not fully familiar with the present-day range of different sections and varieties. The amazing and glorious colour range of all the auriculas in this book will take your breath away.

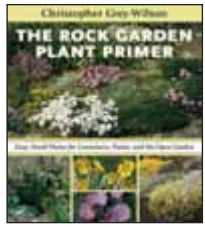
Alan covers well the exciting development by a few hybridists in recent years in bringing the striped auriculas of old back from the brink and improving their quality; they had almost disappeared and could have been lost forever. Similarly, with the double auriculas that only twenty years ago were restricted to just a handful of varieties in limited dowdy colours, Alan covers the work of the dedicated few who have increased the number of these rare and beautiful plants; he shows the exciting new colour range that lies beyond all recognition or reasonable expectation of what was only available to us even a few years ago.

Alan covers all aspects, starting with the terms used by the florists of centuries ago and still in use today, and continues through the long and interesting history of the auricula. There are sections on a little light botany, cultivation advice, obtaining auriculas, composts, how and when to feed and water, re-potting, taking offsets to increase your collection, hand pollination and how to pollinate to get the seed for future new varieties: Alan covers them all beautifully.

I am very happy to add 'The Auricula' to my library; it contains a good balance of easy-to-follow information without being too heavy, and anyone just starting with auriculas will really appreciate this. The beautifully taken and well presented pictures of these fascinating plants will help you identify the plants to obtain and grow. I would say that if you are limited to owning only one Auricula book this is a serious contender.

Terry Mitchell

The Rock Garden Plant Primer:
Easy, Small Plants for Containers, Patios, and the Open Garden
Christopher Grey-Wilson
232 pages & 302 colour photographs
ISBN: 978-0-88192-928-7
Timber Press £20



The gardening bookshelves are laden with too many books written by amateurs who tend to copy the errors of others. I have known Chris for many years as a very knowledgeable plantsman and excellent photographer; it is therefore no surprise to me that he does not fall into the above category.

'The Rock Garden Primer' aims to recommend easy-to-grow plants for various garden conditions. Introductory chapters explain how to grow and care for these cold-hardy and adaptable plants. Detailed plant descriptions are based on personal experience of plants in the wild and of growing them in the garden.

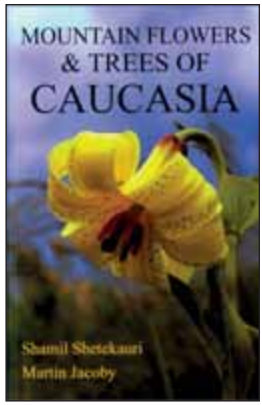
The book has a very eye-catching and colourful dust cover although I must admit the title did little for me and may not grab the non-dedicated gardener's attention. However, the book is well produced with a strong binding and should withstand frequent usage when identifying plants. Another point in its favour is the superb illustrations; they are, almost without exception, pin-sharp; considering the vast range of colours that are notoriously difficult to render accurately, the colour reproduction is excellent. I note a little wistfully that four recent plant books by Peter Cox, Peter Hutchinson, Jim Jermyn and now Chris Grey-Wilson – all with such high quality and reasonable prices - have had to be printed in China.

The content of the book is on the whole very well handled. One might quibble that the basics of growing is rather scant: only twenty three pages of a total of two hundred and thirty are dedicated to ensuring that the beginner gets off to a good start. In mitigation, the book's title does indeed suggest a focus on the selection of plants. As a Scotsman, the lack of plants for the cooler climate disappointed me, while the same could be said about the Himalayan plants. However, from a more general viewpoint, I realise that any plant book is published within the constraints of size and cost.

Overall, my impression of the book is very favourable - it is a good guide to selecting rock plants to suit varying conditions. It will be a useful reference book for beginners and experienced gardeners alike.

Jim Sutherland

Mountain Flowers & Trees of Caucasia
Shamil Shetekauri & Martin Jacoby
320 pages & 945 colour photographs
ISBN 978-99940-984-1-5
Koeltz £28



This book is like the proverbial curate's egg: although good in parts, the whole is rather disappointing. It is potentially very useful but is unfortunately marred by some all-too-obvious defects. It is not comprehensive, of course; that would be impossible. But although the blurb on the back cover claims that it '*describes and illustrates in full colour nearly all the wild flowers, trees and shrubs that can be found over 1000 metres*' it is odd that some choice and easily-accessible species have been omitted (*Paeonia tenuifolia*, *Pulsatilla aurea* and *Viola minuta* to name but three) and others are not illustrated.

The photographs are mainly quite good but often too small; some are not very helpful (*Primula bayernii*, p163) and some are incorrectly identified. For example, the page 159 photo of *Primula woronowii* - synonymous with *P. vulgaris* ssp. *sibthorpii* - is not of that species but of *P. elatior* ssp. *meyeri,* called *P. amoena* in this book and illustrated again on page 161. Also, it is difficult to see what purpose the photographs of herbarium specimens serve.

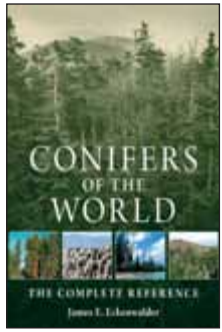
Perhaps the most perverse and irritating feature of the book is that all species are given English names. Most seem to have been specially invented for the occasion. Inevitably, some are just plain wrong: *Primula pseudoelatior* is not the 'false oxlip' (*P. vulgaris* x *veris*) and *Epigaea gaultherioides* is not the 'creeping azalea' (*Loiseleuria procumbens*). Others are, to say the least, misguided: why call *P. bayernii* the 'Bavarian Primrose' (which would be *P. bavarica*) when it was named by Ruprecht after the naturalist Friedrich Bayern? There are some infelicities in the 'English' names, such as 'Iberican' iris rather than 'Iberian'. Others are just ridiculous: what are we to make of the 'Beautiful Hyacinth' (for *Bellevalia speciosa*) and 'Paradoxical Bellevalia' (for *Bellevalia paradoxa*)?

The sections on the 'habit' of each plant are not always helpful: *Lilium kesselringianum* is said to be smaller than *L. monadelphum*, which is not usually the case. The sections on 'distribution' are frequently too perfunctory to be very helpful. The sometimes over-abbreviated text and the very small pictures often fail to be helpful; pages 58-59 are unlikely to be of much assistance in trying to differentiate the various white to cream paeonies of the area.

Caucasus freaks like myself will certainly want to add this book to their collections. If you want a pocket guide, then by all means buy it - for there is no other - and it will serve the purpose, but a more satisfactory guide to the flowers of the Caucasus and a book to treasure is Holubec & Křivka (2006), 'The Caucasus and its Flowers', ISBN 80-902541-3-6, Hortus Press, available from the SRGC.

Michael J B Almond

Conifers of the World
James E Eckenwalder
720 pages, 67 colour photographs, 295 b/w photos, 240 line drawings & 67 distribution maps
ISBN 13:978-0-88192-974-4
Timber Press £45



This is one of the most definitive accounts of the conifers (at species level) that has ever been published within a single volume. It takes on board the plethora of taxonomic changes that have come about through a better understanding of the relationships between conifer species largely as a result of DNA data. The bulk of the book is taken up with species accounts (545 taxa) but there are introductory chapters on conifer classification, morphology, biogeography, evolution, cultivation and a synopsis of the families and genera. To aid the identification of the conifer species, detailed descriptions are given and some taxa are illustrated with line drawings of cones and seeds and with silhouettes of the foliage. For all species there are identification guides that highlight the diagnostic key characters.

It is brave for anyone to attempt to detail all the known conifers at the level of species, particularly the relatively poorly known tropical ones. The problem with conifer identification is that for the vast majority of the species there are few macroscopic distinguishing characters that can be used easily. To attempt to produce a useful identification guide one has to provide clear and accurate line drawings for all the taxa so that the key characters of each species may be compared. This publication, although comprehensive in its approach, fails to provide the user with these detailed illustrations that are so crucial for accurate identification. The few that have been provided are mostly not of very high quality, and this pertains particularly to the black and white photographs. The 57 colour plates arranged in a block towards the front of the book are generally of good quality, and here there was an opportunity to include photographs of rarely seen conifers, so as to aid the identification of these species.

Instead, most are of commonly known conifers with twenty percent of these being familiar North-American species. With two other books due to be published on the conifers of the world in the next twelve months - both with high quality illustrations – I fear that this present volume will compare very poorly in its usefulness as an aid to the identification of conifers.

Martin Gardner

Blue Heaven
Encounters with the Blue Poppy
Bill Terry
192 pages
ISBN 978-1-894898-82-9
Touchwood Editions, about £16

This thought-provoking book on the genus *Meconopsis* is written by a Canadian. Bill Terry is passionate about these wonderful plants and is without doubt qualified to produce such an interesting book. Bill's own observations are of special interest, as he has spent several years studying *Meconopsis* raised both from his own seed and that purchased from as many other different sources as possible.

In his book, Bill has added several pages about the history of past plant hunters and also a deal of useful comment on different individuals he knows from around the world. I certainly find chapter 7 ('Get Growing') most useful where he details at length very many useful tips on how to grow *Meconopsis* from seed. A quote from this chapter reads '*I don't believe I have special talents. I have persistence. After the first failure, second failure, third failure, I kept trying'.* Well, with Bill's guidance outlining the many problems and their solutions, I am sure that every gardener will want to read about raising from seed and to assure themself that success will come more easily. I myself will keep this book nearby every year when seed sowing time comes round so that I may once again benefit from Bill's wisdom.

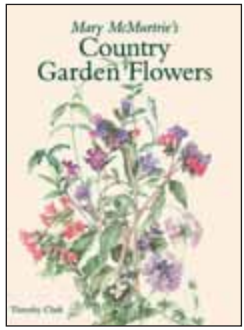
I recommend the book for its good general information on all the other *Meconopsis* species and hybrids. It is full of references and special tips that will be helpful to all in growing some of the more difficult species. He has made it all very exciting, with several interesting stories woven throughout the text. Bill pays tribute to the *Meconopsis* Group - of which he is an active member - never allowing the distance between Scotland and Canada to deter him from being part of the group or

contributing to the discussions. I remember when Bill visited my collection of *Meconopsis* and I asked him how many shades of blue did he see? His reply was that every flower has its own colour and texture, so written in this book now appears the quote: '*is there a more beautiful bloom in the entire kingdom than the fabled Blue Poppy, is there a more bluetiful bloom*'?

'Blue Heaven' has a wealth of superb pictures within its pages although unfortunately some are rather muddied; but do not let this minor drawback deter you from buying it - every page is crammed full of interest and useful practical guidance to all those who, like Bill, like me, are passionate about *Meconopsis*.

Ian Christie

Mary McMurtrie's Country Garden Flowers
Timothy Clark
192 pages & 176 colour plates
ISBN 978-1-87067-360-0
Garden Art Press £25



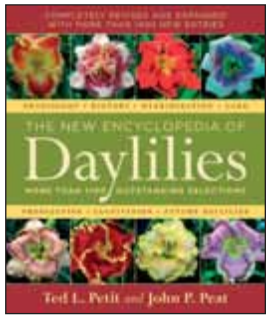
In this beautifully illustrated book, Timothy Clark reveals the deep love that artist and writer Mary McMurtrie had of all cottage garden flowers and her understanding of the beauty and tranquillity of gardens. Many of we specialist alpine enthusiasts share this love. Born in Aberdeenshire in 1902, she lived until she was 101. She had an affection for all things Scottish and lived most of her life at Balbithan House in Kintore whose garden she reconstructed and planted with her favourite flowers. In particular, she had a passion for Scots roses and grew them in abundance; a large part of the book reproduces her paintings of the varieties which grew prolifically at Balbithan. She had a number of favourite plants, among them double primulas, and throughout her life exchanged many of these with contemporaries such as Margery Fish, Alex Duguid and the Logan-Home sisters from Edrom Nurseries. The book contains interesting correspondence between herself and Margery, giving a flavour of gardening in the years around the Second World War.

She propagated enthusiastically from cuttings and seeds, and was particularly successful at raising rhododendrons from seed, giving none away until they had flowered - and keeping the best forms for herself. Being artistic, she gave importance to the placing of her plants as well as the advantages of all-round colour. For me, her most beautiful illustrations are those of pinks and carnations, the detail and the colour tones so accurate they appear almost to leap out from the page.

Timothy Clark writes amusingly and informatively, including anecdotes and helpful hints among the wealth of information - for example, ailing plants can be treated with aspirin. Mary's watercolours form the bulk of the material but his observations make this an extremely readable book in our present age when cottage gardens have become less popular.

Eileen Goodall

The New Encyclopedia of Day Lilies
Ted L Petit and John P Peat
408 pages, 1751 colour photographs & 3 watercolours
ISBN-13: 978-0-88192-858-7
Timber Press £30



This is an updated version of 'The Color Encyclopedia of Daylilies', first published by Timber Press in 2000. Since that time the authors acknowledge an increase of 20,000 registered plants – perhaps as many as 60,000 from the original writing.

The book describes 1700 varieties, largely chosen from the authors' personal experience and from varieties considered worthwhile by the American Hemerocallis Society. This revised edition includes some of the older classic flowers as well as the newest daylilies. It reflects the diversity of forms that are now being grown, some of which are still unavailable because the newer tetraploid plants are slower to increase when compared to the older cultivars.

The first three chapters give general information concerning the plants' characteristics, their history and hybridisation. This sets the scene for the cultivars to follow and proves interesting reading. The following pages and chapters favour the new showy tetraploid and patterned varieties, some with large picotee petals - many of which seem to me grotesque rather than beautiful. Nevertheless, this is merely a matter of personal taste, and the many illustrations are indeed numerous and engaging. These colourful chapters offer detailed descriptions as well as information regarding parentage. Regrettably, from our more parochial point of view, those cultivars mainly available in Scotland and particularly suitable for our growing conditions are not apparent; this is a fine book aimed at the North-American market and especially at the *Hemerocallis* enthusiast rather than the general gardener.

Beryl McNaughton

AGS President Frank Tindall

I had known Frank for several years, mainly through the Blackpool and Hexham shows. He was easily recognized by his infectious laugh and we often exchanged some great banter to brighten up the day. Frank's knowledge and love of plants was evident; he exhibited some great specimens, often achieving the desired red ticket; if he didn't win he was sure to comment on any good plant that did. On occasion - and always humorously - he would question the wisdom of the judges' decision.

When Frank was elected AGS President we became better acquainted, keeping in touch by telephone and meeting at shows. It was very special for me to be able to share views or discuss the general running of the sister societies. Frank valued and cared deeply about the grass roots of the membership of both AGS and SRGC. He looked forward to meeting and chatting with members at the shows and at local level. We were all delighted when Frank attended the SRGC 75th Anniversary at the Royal Botanic Garden in Edinburgh and, in turn, Frank said he had thoroughly enjoyed the friendly atmosphere of the celebrations.

Frank was also a dedicated family man and held a special place in his heart for his young granddaughter; with my young grandson's being the same age we often enjoyed protracted conversations about their escapades. After paying my respects at his funeral, I was introduced to his family and can only wish that it had been under happier circumstances.

I am very happy that our paths crossed and we knew each other as friends; laughter was always close in his company; Frank's contribution to the AGS, the SRGC and the plant word generally will leave a lasting effect. I pay tribute to him, a generous man, good friend and fellow plantsman.

Ian Christie

Kath Dryden 1925 - 2009

Kath joined the AGS in the 1960s and was awarded many honours over the years: Director of AGS Shows, President of the AGS, Honorary Vice-President of SRGC and a member of the Joint Rock Committee – here, you disagreed with her at your peril. Kath's list of mentors reads like the plant world's *Who's Who.* A great exhibitor

and contributor of special plants for Chelsea, she worked tirelessly and was recognized by the award of the Victoria Medal of Honour.

Kath and Maurice ran the world-renowned nursery known as 'Manavlins'; I recently discovered that this old word means *bits and bobs*. The bits and bobs that Kath offered were the *crème de la crème* of plants. Many people looked forward to her plant list, sent out with wonderful hand written descriptions and cultivation notes. The lists were treasure chests to read and it took great self-discipline not to order all of the plants that she offered.

Kath's great love of plants was evident to visitors. I was also intrigued by the structures she created to accommodate her range of rare and unusual plants. Erected by Maurice and friends, they made it possible to cope with the local environment and provided a mini-climate to grow superb woodland plants. One such was the 'Bus Shelter'; this consisted of a wooden canopy with plastic sheets and some net on the roof; within it Kath grew a collection of cypripediums while alongside in the cold frame grew fantastic hepaticas, trilliums and erythroniums. Other glasshouses contained her bulb and primula collections. The bulbs included narcissus, fritillaries and cyclamen - a special favourite with Maurice. Kath had the most intricate label system, several in each pot with each colour having a specific purpose. The daphne house was my favourite, for there I witnessed well-grown plants some of which I had never heard about or seen; she would always say '*well you must have that ...*' or ' *... this would be good.*' I would come home so excited about all my new acquisitions kindly given by Kath. One very special *Daphne* (*Wikstroemia*) *gemmata* var. 'Sceringa' (see 'The Garden', 2008, p364) was named by Kath and was originally one of only three Chinese imports. It is a superb five-lobed yellow form that flowers non-stop and is without doubt one of the best

Kath Dryden's 'Bus Shelter'

Alongside the 'Bus Shelter'

recent introductions. The varietal name 'Sceringa' is an ancient word for Kath's local area, Sheering. She was a master with all plants; not a bulb moved in the United Kingdom that she didn't know about. She liked to be up to date with everything that was going on in Scotland and was very proud to be an Honorary Vice-President of the SRGC. We kept in touch regularly by telephone where she imparted knowledge in every seemingly ordinary conversation.

Kath and Maurice were a great team: Kath looking after the plants while Maurice took charge of the paperwork, writing labels, packing and posting. After Maurice died Kath lost some of her sparkle, missing greatly his quiet loyal support. The devotion of her family, passion for her plants and strength of her character all helped her to soldier on.

We will never meet anyone quite like her again and it was a privilege to know her as a friend. I felt so special to receive the AGS Kath Dryden Award in 2006 for my work with *Meconopsis*. I received many congratulatory messages and one read as follows - '*and I met Kath Dryden once at a Harrogate show, a tall articulate lady who marched round the exhibits followed by a string of trembling officials*' - that was Kath; she stood no nonsense from anyone, was well respected, generous with her knowledge, and a superb grower. We will miss her, a definite one-off, a dear friend and an exceptional character.

Finally, I leave you with an extract of some recent words written by Kath: '*I reckon there are three stages, stage one is the raw beginner who knows nothing, make the most of it, it is bliss. Stage two is when you think you know it all. I was fortunate enough to have that firmly knocked out of me by my mentors. Stage three is when you come to terms with the fact that one lifetime is not long enough to learn all there is to know about our plants*'.

Ian Christie

Daphne gemmata

Kaths's labels at work

What are the benefits of joining the **SCOTTISH RHODODENDRON SOCIETY?**

1. Specialist garden visits and tours.
2. Free advice from experts.
3. Quarterly newsletter and yearbook.
4. A seed list and pollen bank.
5. Book list containing a wide range of horticultural titles at discount prices.
6. An annual list of members, most of whom welcome fellow enthusiasts.
7. Our annual show always has plants available at very keen prices.
8. Free entry to Crarae garden and the NTS garden at Arduaine.
9. Members of the Scottish Rhododendron Society are also members of the ARS and receive the publications of that society, including the Journal, a quarterly periodical on Rhododendrons and their culture.

Details of membership can be obtained from the

The Secretary
Willie Campbell, Stables Flat,
Gargunnock, Stirling FK8 3AZ
Email: enquiries@scottishrhodos.co.uk


Tresco


Japan


Norfolk


Madeira


Sissinghurst

Royal Horticultural Society

Quality Garden Holidays

Brightwater Holidays, on behalf of the Royal Horticultural Society, are proud to unveil a unique collection of Garden Holidays throughout the gardening world.

Our exciting overseas tours include Japan at blossom-time, some rarely-visited gardens in China, along with South Africa, Bermuda, Mexico and Ecuador, where we visit private properties as well as enjoying some famous gardens and the native flora.

In Europe, we savour the splendour of Keukenhof and Het Loo Palace on our Dutch Bulbfields river cruise and offer an autumn tour to see Piet Oudolf's private garden of spectacular grasses. The timeless combination of gardens and architecture features heavily in Andalucia and in Italy, while our old favourites, Monet's Garden and the French Riviera, are as popular as ever.

We never forget the fact that some of the best gardens in the world are here in Britain and we offer a diverse range of domestic holidays from Cornwall to Kent, Norfolk to Cheshire and Galloway to Caithness, along with visits to the great RHS flower shows and to the fabulous Abbey Gardens on the tranquil island of Tresco, a must-see for any garden enthusiast.

Join us on a wander through the great gardens of the world.

To obtain a copy of the RHS Worldwide Garden Holidays brochure, please call Brightwater Holidays on:

01334 657155

brightwater holidays

Brightwater Holidays Ltd, Eden Park House, Cupar, Fife KY15 4HS

rhs@brightwaterholidays.com

www.brightwaterholidays.com

JACQUES AMAND
International

Below are photos of just a few of the plants and bulbs available from our two full colour catalogues published in January and July each year. See us in Edinburgh in June at Ingliston Showground. Visitors welcome to the Nursery. Many treasures not listed also available. To obtain our catalogues write to:

The Nurseries, Clamp Hill, Stanmore, Middlesex, HA7 3JS
or phone 020 8420 7110 or fax 020 8954 6784
or e-mail bulbs@jaquesamand.co.uk or www.jacquesamand.com

Arisaema asperatum

Cypripedium formosanum

Arisaema elephas

Asarum splendens

Nomocharis meleagrina

Trillium stamineum

Trillium pusillum

EXPLORERS

The Scottish Plant Hunters Garden

ILLUSTRATED TALK
by David Mitchell

Behind The Bamboo Curtain

Friday 26 March at 7.30pm

Join Curator of the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh, as he recounts the extraordinary history of botanical exploration in China.

Tickets: £7.50

EXHIBITION
by Ian Christie *(past SRGC president)*

Wild Patagonia

In the David Douglas Pavilion from 26 March to 31 October

Exhibition is free with entry to the garden

WORKSHOP
with Ian Young & Sandy Leven

Look Before You Shoot

Photographing Plants and Gardens

Sunday 8 August 10am-4pm

In this practical workshop you will learn how to get the best from your camera equipment and improve your photography.

Tickets: £5 for SRGC members, £30 for non members

The Explorers Garden reopens 27th March closes end of October

We sell seeds and unusual plants!

CALL: 01796 484626 CLICK: www.explorersgarden.com