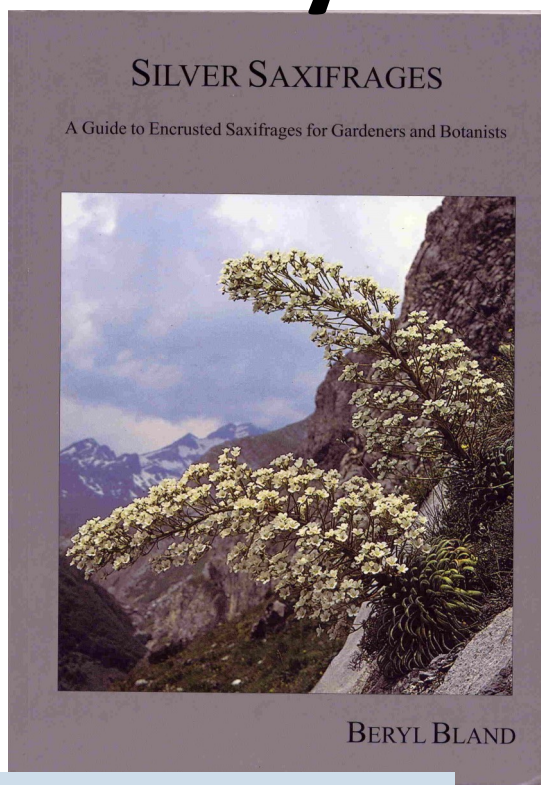


# The Scottish Rock Garden Club & The Alpine Garden Society Kendal Show 15 3 20 part 4

## Saxifrages. Jewels for everyone!



I enjoyed catching up with Saxifrage expert, Beryl Bland and husband Peter. They live quite close to Kendal and this is their local show. Several years ago her book on Silver saxifrages was published by the AGS. When Beryl asked if I had the book, I confirmed that I purchased one when it was first released. It is the definitive work on the 'silvers' If you don't have a copy, then buy one soon. On all rock gardeners' behalf I want to say 'Thank you, Beryl'.



Saxifrage Queen Beryl Bland  
with Prince Peter



Farrer Medal winner, Saxifraga 'Coolock Gem'  
being photographed for the AGS

**SAXIFRAGE COUNTRY.** Most of the saxifrages in the show belong to the Kabschia section which according to Reginald Farrer holds the 'dearest jewels' of the family. The kabschias are plants of small stature with spiky or 'leathern' foliage which makes them attractive all year round. Their flowers are comparatively large often on short stems. [Farrer's description] The fact that they hybridise so easily has led to there being a huge number of hybrids. I recommend that all SRGC /AGS members who grow Saxifrages join the Saxifrage Society [[www.saxifraga.org](http://www.saxifraga.org)].

Malcolm McGregor, past editor of the SRGC, has authored 'Saxifrages' the definitive guide to over 2000 species, hybrids and cultivars. Needless to say, I thoroughly recommend that you buy this as well. Ray Fairburn who has produced the excellent 'Allandale' hybrids lives just over the Pennines in Allandale. Reginald Farrer was brought up not far away in Clapham, West Yorkshire, not London!. Last summer, I had a confusing conversation about Farrer and his garden with a barman in The Masons' Arms in nearby Ingleton as I thought Clapham was actually in London, not just along the road. Just think, if Reggie were alive today, Kendal would be his local SRGC/AGS show. He would surely have been delighted to learn that Saxifraga 'Coolock Gem' won his medal.

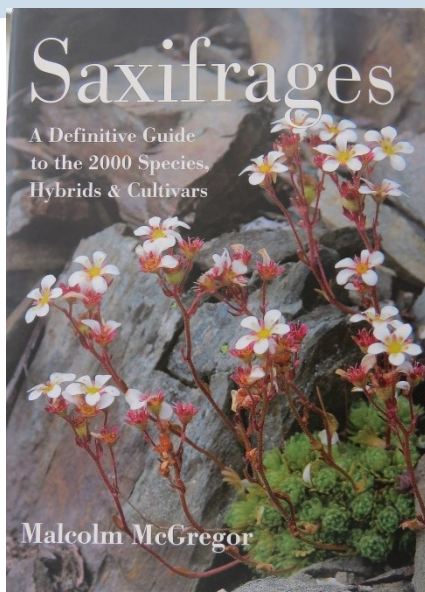


Tom Green took first prize in the large 3 pan Saxifraga class. All three are hybrids. To me Saxifraga hybrids are incomprehensibly complex. I have tried to understand them but I end up more confused. I now prefer just to look and enjoy. It seems to me that as soon as a new species is found, some enthusiast somewhere is at work with a paintbrush crossing it with every other saxifrage he or she can find. Mind you many of the resulting plants are highly desirable. The only problem is then naming the good ones!

In Tom's 3 pan entry, behind left Sax. x biasolettoi, a hybrid between Sax. federici-augustii and Sax. sempervivum [Farrer suggested Sax. thessalica x Sax. grisbachii ] which both occur in the Balkans and was a cross made by Franz Sundermann in 1912. Like its parents and cousins, it is good show plant in normal years because its flower stems slowly uncurl till they are about 3 inches long. It maintains the red colour in the

flower buds and stems, becoming more and more attractive as the weeks pass. Even when the flowers are over its stems still look good.

On the right back is Sax. x poluanglica 'Red Poll'. [Sax. x anglica 'Winifred' x Sax. poluniniana] this was bred by Winton Harding. Red Poll's mother, Sax. x anglica 'Winifred' is in front. Sax. x Winifred is a hybrid made between World War 1 and WW2. Saxifraga anglica is a group of hybrids derived from crosses between, Sax. aretioides x Sax. media x Sax. lilacina. Old girl, 'Winifred' has out-survived many of the others of her generation. However, it is good to know that her lineage continues to thrive.





Frank & Barbara Hoyle's fine plant of *Saxifraga oppositifolia* 'Theoden' was second to Mala Janes' *Primula marginata* 'Mrs Carter Walmsley' in the class for European plants. I am surprised that 'Continental' classes like this don't attract more entries. I like to see the variation. When I see it in flower in the garden I know it will be flowering next week on Ben Lawers above Loch Tay. Malcolm regards this selection 'Theoden' as the finest of the oppositifolias. It was found in the Pennines. He points out that it has pointed petals and noticeably orange anthers.

I have grown the selection 'Ruth Draper' for many years. I bought it from Jack Drake's nursery at Inschriach, near Aviemore. Although the nursery is just a memory the plant is doing fine in a trough.



**We've already met some of their offspring!** Ian Instone was first in the class for *Saxifraga* species with a well established *Saxifraga grisbachii*, on the right. John Richards took second with *Sax. sempervivum*. Below it is *Sax. federici augusti*. These three species contributed to *Sax. x biasolettoi*. The species are identified in great part by their leaves and rosettes, the bottom picture shows the differences in form of these in the different species





There are innumerable saxifrage hybrids. Each year new varieties are raised and offered for sale or exchange. 'Karl Capek' is a recent one. I like its large pale pink flowers with their dark eyes. Although it did not win as a show plant I was delighted to see it.

In recent years I have attended the AGS autumn Loughborough show where there many Saxifrage hybrids for sale on the 50:50 table. At the same time I bought some miniature narcissi. They are all flowering at the moment and it is a pleasure to see them. Self isolation is easier to bear with a garden.



This close up of *Bergenia* 'Pat Furness' shows that its flowers are really big Saxifrage flowers. It is a regular winner for Alan Furness and for Mala Janes. I wish it was available commercially.

Below is *Asarum forbesii*. A lot of *Asarums* hide their flowers under their leaves. This charmer holds its leaves upwards so the flowers are easy appreciated. This was part of Bob Worsley's 3 pan entry.



Pleione Bandai San 'Fireglow' and Pleione 'Doreen'



I was interested to know more about Reginald Farrer as a person rather than as an author. We all have admired his prose and the magical way he transports a reader to wild places when describing his journeys and his plants. I found this article in the Skipton paper, Craven Herald & Pioneer.

**REGINALD Farrer was a well-known traveller, plant collector, plantsman and writer. Dr Bill Mitchell investigates the real man, who lived in Clapham and died at the age of 40.**

ONE of the best-recalled residents of the village of Clapham is Reginald Farrer, the father of English rock-gardening, a flower painter and writer, who was born 1880 and died 40 years later. His family lived at Ingleborough Hall and owned the extensive local estate. Farrer wrote ceaselessly about plants since the age of 14.

As a boy, he was fond of exploring the grounds of the hall and venturing on to Ingleborough itself. He acquired his mother's fascination with plants. When he was only three years old, he was taken to the Continent for 11 months, most of which time was spent on the Riviera. There he saw his first fields of narcissus and was thrilled at the discovery of a Lady Tulip.

In later life, EMH Cox, who was a friend of Farrer, provided us with a picture of the plant-collector on his favourite terrain – the hills. "His stocky form was clad in khaki shorts and shirt, tieless and collarless, a faded toupee on his head, old boots and stockings that gradually slipped down and clung about his ankles as the day wore on."

Farrer spent much of his time seeking plants in remote alpine areas. He was 39 years of age when he undertook what turned out to be his last expedition, heading for the Minshan mountains of upper Burma. The difficulties were immense. He spent weeks in the company of his native helpers at elevations of between 15,000 and 17,000ft. This high ground was being ravaged by revolutionaries and brigands.

Reginald could not help but write. He kept a diary, wrote to friends and sent to his mother in Clapham notes about his doings in Burma. Reginald died in the wilds of Burma on October 17, 1920. When he was ill, runners were sent for help. The end came at a time when there was only a Chinese cook in attendance. His mother, who lived at Ingleborough Hall until her death in 1937, erected a memorial on which was written: "He died for love and duty, in search of rare plants."



All the wars of the world, all the  
Caesars, have not the staying power  
of a lily in a cottage garden.

— *Reginald Farrer* —

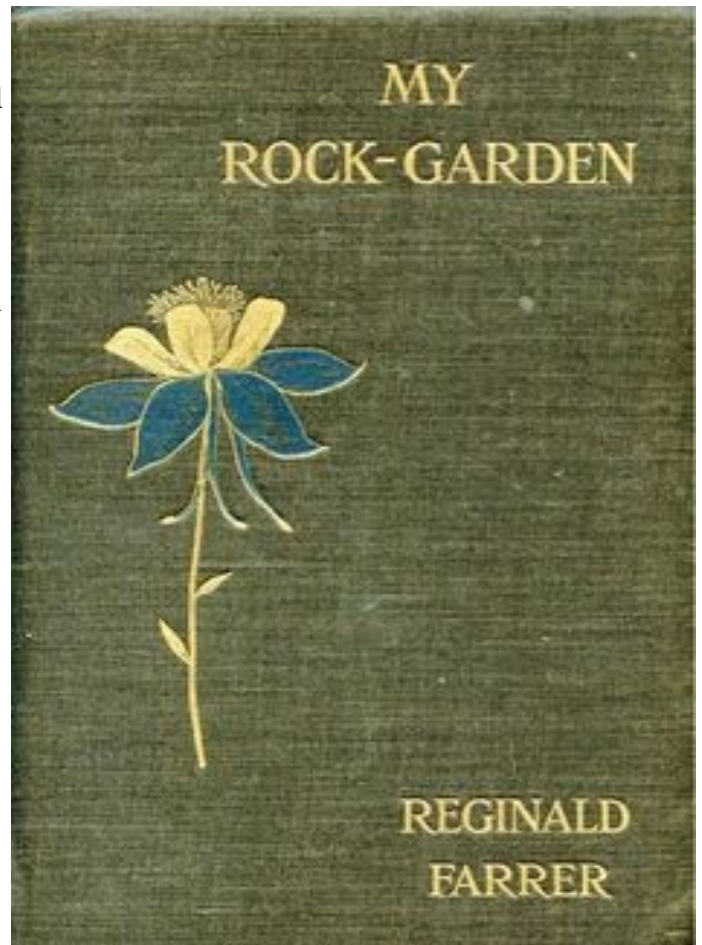


Dr John Farrer, who inherited the estate in 1953, arrived from his native Australia with a wife and two children. I knew him well. When his funeral took place not so long ago, the parish church was packed with mourners - family, friends and admirers.

John helped me to prepare a script for an audio-visual show that was held in October, 1980, as part of the Farrer centenary celebrations. Young Farrer had roamed on the Pennines in all seasons but with special joy in early spring when his beloved alpinists appeared “through the litter of last year’s growth and between the cores of ancient snowdrifts.”

Ingleborough held two of his favourite plants – *Primula farinosa* “with its rosy heads” and *Arenaria gothica* “spreading its brilliant branches of green and opening its bog snowy stars.” He found beauty underground, being the guest of the Yorkshire Ramblers’ Club when they met at Gaping Gill.

Reginald’s descriptive powers knew no bounds. He was ever an enthusiast, breathless in his prose as in his speech. Osbert Sitwell left us a striking pen picture of Reginald Farrer as he was in the spring of 1918, when he was middle-aged and “had a complexion with a florid tinge. His hair was black and grew very low on the forehead.” When Farrer died, his words lived on.”



**A HOLIDAY RECOMMENDATION** Below are details of Clapham and Ingleborough. I like the area for a holiday and once the Corona virus self isolation is past. I will return to one of the quaint hostelrys of the Yorkshire Dales. I would prefer to have my holidays in this country in places I can reach by car, rather than fly off tightly packed in a plane with 200 others. As the story unfolds you will see it will suit wheelchair users as well.

"Are you confused by fact that Ingleborough Cave is in Clapham? And if it's in Clapham, where's Ingleborough? And is there a village called Ingleborough? And where then, is Ingleton? And is your brain now in overload?

Well if you are like me and feeling confused please read on. It will all become clear!

Firstly there is a village in the Yorkshire Dales called Clapham (not to be confused with Clapham, London which is 280 miles away). There is also a village called Ingleton in the Yorkshire Dales which is 4.7 miles from Clapham (not to be confused with the Ingleton in County Durham which is 70 miles away). Ingleborough is the mountain (the second highest of the Yorkshire's Three Peaks rising to 723m) and there is no such village as Ingleborough.

Historians once believed that at there may have been an ancient settlement called Ingleborough, but it has been proved that this is not the case. 'Ing' is an Old English word meaning Peak. Are you still confused? Let's start again with the village of Clapham.

Clapham is a small, quiet village in North Yorkshire. It is a popular tourist destination for walkers, cavers, climbers and general holiday makers, with a regular bus service between Skipton and Kirkby Lonsdale calling at Clapham and additional services during the summer months. Clapham railway station is on the main Leeds to Morecambe line and is just over a mile from the village centre. The village is divided in two halves by the Clapham Fell Beck and is joined together by four old, quaint bridges. The village has a primary school, village hall, church, pub, post office, village store, B&Bs and guest houses, along with a few little shops to explore too. The Cave Rescue Organisation, based in the heart of Clapham, provides the cave and mountain rescue service in the Yorkshire Dales National Park. There is a large National Trust carpark in the centre of the village where you will find accessible toilets.

The village is nestled at the foot of Ingleborough mountain, one of the three peaks which has been made famous by the Yorkshire Three Peak Challenge. Many people use Clapham as their base to start their climb up to the summit. Clapham is also close to the famous cave, Gaping Gill. Gaping Gill is one of the largest underground chamber in Britain and can be reached from Clapham by walking past Ingleborough Cave and up on to the slopes of Ingleborough.

Unfortunately it is not easy to get an all-terrain wheelchair up to the entrance to Gaping Gill as there are stiles en route. For one week each year the cave is made accessible by a winch and in 2018, I had the thrill of going down Gaping Gill with the Craven Potholing Club during their annual opening up of the cave to the public. For me to experience this, special arrangements were made to have gates unlocked on the track which leads up to the entrance.

I used the TerrainHopper, a 4x4 all-terrain wheelchair, to travel to the cave before having to shuffle on my bum quite a long way down a rocky terrace and onto the gantry at the entrance. From here, I was strapped into the harness and then lowered down by winch. It was an amazing experience being lowered 100m through the waterfall and down to the bottom of the cave but it is definitely not one that I can promote as accessible!

Local folklore has it that a witch, named Dame Alice Ketyll, was tried and convicted for witchcraft in Clapham. Her punishment was to roof the church with lead, but she could not afford the expensive metal and therefore couldn't complete the work. However, she escorted a group of clerics up to Ingleborough, where both lead and silver were discovered. As a reward for finding these treasures, she was pardoned for



her crime of being a witch and was latter buried in the churchyard.

The church of St James in Clapham was founded in Norman times. The village and church were burned during a Scottish raid following the Battle of Bannockburn in the early 14th century. The church tower was probably built as a possible refuge in case the Scots ever returned. The rest of the church dates from the 19th century.

The 1.3 mile Nature Trail walk is very wheelchair friendly. Ingleborough Estate is one place in that you can borrow an all-terrain wheelchair in the Yorkshire Dales. There is National Trust parking in Clapham where the trail begins, with several disabled parking spaces. This trail is dog friendly too, so bring along four legged friends for the adventure!

The Nature Trail was created in 1970 to both mark European Conservation year and commemorate Reginald Farrer the "Patron Saint of Alpine Gardening". On his travels he brought back many different species of rhododendrons and other plants which have been cultivated and planted along the trail. It is said that Reginald fired seeds from a shotgun to sow the seeds and give the plant beds a natural, untamed look. In Spring, the whole of this area is in full bloom with the flowering rhododendrons – such vibrant colours make a real feast for the eyes. Along the track you will come to the money tree where over many years people have stopped and hammered coins into its branches and trunk whilst making a wish.

This scenic walk up through the woodlands heads towards Ingleborough Cave. It is a really good track and suitable for any type of wheels. It is not far along the path until the head of the lake will come into view. The lake is artificial and is up to 15m deep, providing power to the turbine at the Sawmill and the village with its water supply.

A little further along, on the left side of the path there is a building, known as the Grotto. It was built as a shelter for the gentry to sit and admire the view across the lake. From here you can see an exemplar of the Yorkshire Dales' limestone scenery.

Listen carefully you will begin to hear a regular dull beat of a drum. This is hydram pump which converts 98% of water energy to produce a supply of water to the farm buildings 100m above the path. Continuing forward on your ramble, you will soon be at the entrance to Ingleborough Cave.

We were treated to a stay at Lundholme Farm Accommodation in Ingleton which has self-catering cottages, one of which is wheelchair friendly (please note that the bathroom is not quite a full roll in wetroom therefore disabled visitors need to be able to transfer from their wheelchair onto a portable shower stool and have some ability to shuffle a few paces into the shower). Malcolm and Hilary, owners of Lundholme Farm have also have a caravan site on the farm and they have built an accessible shower and toilet block for their visitors with disabilities. Staying on this working farm was really very special. I don't know about you but taking breakfast on the patio in the sunshine, watching the wildlife around me is my idea of heaven.

Visitors with more limited mobility could consider King William the Fourth Guest House as alternative accommodation, located right in the heart of Settle, just a 10 minute drive from Ingleton. The ground floor room has an accessible wetroom. This a great place to stay and you will be guaranteed a warm welcome from owners Jackie and Chris.

We ate a mouthwatering evening meal at the Marton Arms which is nestled in the picturesque hamlet of Thornton in Lonsdale, just outside Ingleton. The Marton Arms is everything a country inn should be; welcoming, family friendly, dog loving and serving great value, delicious food – and wheelchair accessible too! What more could we ask for? "

It's easy to see why Stories in Stone wants to preserve all this landscape for our next generations. All this nature, culture and history packed into three little places in the Yorkshire Dales National Parks makes for a very special part of the UK.

So there you have it... A whistle stop tour of Clapham, Ingleton and Ingleborough. All very close, very beautiful and very different. Next time you are in the Yorkshire Dales, take a visit for yourself. You won't be disappointed.