

The Scottish Rock Garden Club & The Alpine Garden Society

Newcastle [Ponteland] Show 7/10/17

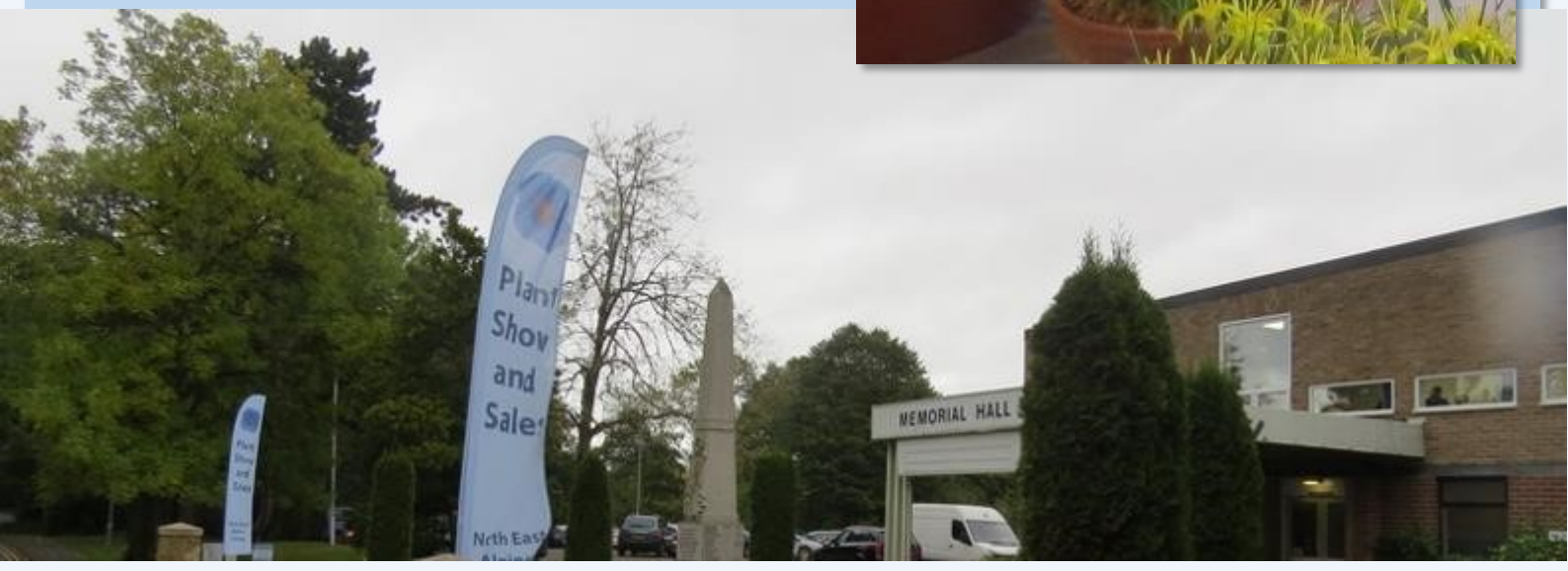


The smile on Jean's face says it all! Wherever your home, it is well worth your while rising early and getting yourself down [or up] to the superb show held in the Memorial Hall in Ponteland, just along the road from Newcastle Airport. I don't think many flew in but it is a possibility. This show is one of three in the year organised by the SRGC and the AGS. Joint show secretaries, Alan Newton and Alan Furness are to be congratulated for tempting exhibitors and members from a wide area of the UK. From Central Scotland to the midlands of England.

There were 373 plants to see and most of them were distinct. Even in classes where many plants belonged to the same species, there was still much variation e.g. in *Cyclamen graecum*. I never fail to marvel at the range of species and varieties on the benches. Plants new to me turn up all the time. The other won-

Our cover girl this month is Jean Wyllie whose job it is to keep a tally of the points won by each exhibitor at every show. Once an exhibitor gains 10 first in Section I a Bronze Medal is presented. Silver for 25 and a Gold Merit Medal for the exhibitor who wins 50 first prizes. You get a real metal medal, unfortunately made in base metal and coloured accordingly. After your first 50, for every 50 firsts you get a Gold medal bar card....and a round of applause at the AGM.

der is that an exhibitor brings a well known plant but has grown to unimaginable perfection. Alan Furness did just that with his fabulous pan of *Crocus banaticus* 'Snowdrift' which justifiably won the George Forrest Memorial Medal for the best plant in the show. It was accompanied in its class for 3 pans of *Crocus* by a white and a purple *Crocus goulimy*. All were quite magnificent. John Richard had a nice pan of purple *C. goulimy*.





Gentiana 'Eugen's Allerbesten'
Gentiana 'Strathmore'

GENTIANS

Gentiana cultivar with blue & white fls.
Gentiana sino-ornata



Here is a gem from Alan Newton. Whoever heard of a PINK GENTIAN? He grew it, entered it in the class for a plant new in cultivation and not surprisingly won the class. Native to grasslands, alpine scrub & forests at 500-1800m in China's Gansu, Guangxi, Henan, S, Shaanxi, SW Sichuan & Yunnan.. Alan grows it in a mix of J12, leaf mould, sandy grit and bark in his alpine house. FABULOUS!



Ian & Maria Leslie won the L.W. Browne Memorial Trophy with their pan of Gentiana 'The Caley' which was raised by Ian McNaughton and named for the Royal Caledonian Horticultural Society

GENTIANAS





David Boyd – plantsman

David was a well respected and loved member of the local North East England Group. He was also a member of the Scottish Rock Garden Club. In his will he bequeathed a large sum of money to both the SRGC and his local group. He wanted to further interest in alpine and rock garden plants. He was show secretary of this show for several years and a prize winning exhibitor. His enthusiastic support for the show ensured its continued success. I remember most of all his fabulous Hepaticas in spring time and his Cyclamen in autumn. Perhaps because these genera are among my own favourites. His talents and enthusiasm were not solely focused on these genera however. Two of his Forrest Medal winners stand out in my mind, a fine pan of *Nerine humilis* in Ponteland in 2011 and *Hepatica transylvanica* at Edinburgh in 2013. Many plants which others found difficult to cultivate grew well in David's garden. David died on 1st August 2015.



Mala Janes and Alan Furness who live near David's garden visited it several times during the year and photographed its plants. Using these pictures Mala mounted superb display of pictures and information at the Ponteland show. The boards ran the whole length of the stage. It was nice to see how the look and feel of the garden change with the seasons. Visitors to large garden shows like Chelsea and Gardening Scotland are faced with a plethora of plants in peak condition and bloom on a particular day. The secret of a great gardener and a good garden is that it looks good in all seasons. Mala showed just how David Boyd achieved this.



In my opinion the whole caboodle should be gathered together and published. It was comprehensive and really excellent. Using the pictures, lists and information anyone wanting to build their own garden in north east England or south east Scotland would get off to a flying start.

Below are some remarks from those who knew David. They were published on the SRGC Forum.

David, one of nature's absolute gentlemen was a person full of fun and kindness. He was also a very fine grower of all sorts of alpines. Many plants found to be "tricky" by other growers seemed to flourish in David's garden and his show plants were a delight to see. In another existence David was a National Judge for Dahlias, so he had many strings to his bow - or should that be tines to his fork?

David was quite a shy man at times but uproariously funny at others and always thoughtful of others.

While his plantmanship skills and his kindness in helping new members and sharing his advice - and plants - are greatly to be admired, it was as a charming and caring friend and husband that David will be most affectionately remembered. His loss will be most keenly felt in the AGS Group which meets in Ponteland - where he was a popular and respected member.

David will be very sadly missed by all who had the pleasure and privilege to know him.

'The David Boyd Event 2018'

The Scottish Rock Garden Club is using David's legacy to stage 'The David Boyd Event'. This year it was held in Granton-on-Spey and took the form of a weekend for novice rock gardeners with several expert speakers. Next year is titled 'Discovering the Scottish Machair'. It will run from Thursday 21st June till Monday 25th June and is based in Benbecula. For years to come rock gardeners will think fondly of the generous David Boyd.



Right. I want to thank Peter Maguire for pointing out my poor posture and tummy. Please don't Push too hard on it!



A DIFFICULT DECISION which plants should you enter in which class?

Whether or not to enter Class 1 [3 pans rock plants] is a major decision for most exhibitors when they are making up their entry. They know there must be three plants in tip top condition and that they may well be up against even stiffer competition. Therefore the exhibitor really must put all his or her eggs in this one basket and the three best plants in this single class. Even so, part of the brain says that perhaps you could get three first tickets by entering them in separate classes. However Bob and Rannveig Wallis grow so many exceptional Cyclamen and bulbous plants that even by entering this fabulous trio, they still had plants for other classes. In most classes their plants are the ones to beat. They set the gold standard for Cyclamen at our shows. This year they teamed Cyclamen rohlfianum with Oxalis lobata and Arisarum vulgare., which was recommended for an Award of Merit by the Joint Rock Garden Plant Committee.



Bob Worsley's *Cyclamen mirabile* [left] won the Ewesley Salver for best *Cyclamen* in a 19 cm pot. As you see it has a profusion of small palest pink flowers standing above well marled leaves. The *cyclamen cypricum* with its distinct leaves also won for Bob but it too was placed second! Hard Judging!

At the top and bottom are pictures of Bob & Rannveig's *Cyclamen maritimum*, a 'new name' for the species which has been distinguished from *Cyclamen graecum*. Don't you just envy them for having a plant with such fabulous smoky leaves. They are well patterned as well.



Cyclamen hederifolium 'Ivy Ice Rose' [far right] is a very dark flowered plant shown by Tommy Anderson. The flowers turn nearly purple as they age.

Ian Kidman showed an excellent *Cyclamen hederifolium* 'Silver Cloud'.





Cyclamen hederifolium leaf forms
My favourites are two grown by Tommy Anderson, [Top left and centre].
Top right form 'Lysander with well patterned cut leaves.'
Bottom right 'Bowles Apollo' and
Bottom left a silver leafed one.
Why not grow your own with some seed from the SRGC Seed Exchange? If you are not a member of the SRGC? It is easy to join on the web site





Cyclamen leaf forms

Cyclamen persicum at the top, which I feel often looks better out of flower as we can appreciate the intricate leaf patterns. Two wonderfully marked Cyclamen mirabile and below a host of different leaf patterns on Cyclamen graecum plants. I have difficulty in flowering graecums but I do have forms with nice leaves. The leaves last longer than the flowers so I am happy either way!





The two plants above both won for Tom Green. Both are in good condition with good leaves and well flowered. Why then the Fuchsia placed second when it was the only plant in its class? I cannot understand the decision. It is not for me to criticise the judging. The judges take great care and discuss all decisions. I can only think that perhaps the Fuchsia was marked down as it was thought not to be an 'rock plant' or perhaps they thought it was not hardy. Whatever the reason, it opened up some discussion afterwards. It illustrates that when you ask people to judge you then get their opinion and it is their opinion which counts. Tom's Saxifrage fortunei beat John Richard's Origanum dictamnus [right]. I like all three plants.



Robin Pickering's 'unusual' Grevillea lanigera prostrata took my fancy. On the bench it was attractive though the flowers were still in bud but when they open they become more spider-like and must be wonderful. I have found a pic of open flowers on the web site of 'Touch of Class Plants' from Tynong in Victoria, Australia. Grevillea is a member of the Proteaceae, known colloquially as

Prostrate Woolly Grevillea because of its habit and its soft leaves. I did not feel the leaves on Robin's plant but they don't look soft. The genus is named after Charles Francis Greville (1749-1809), son of the 1st



Earl of Warwick and co-founder of London Horticultural Society. Greville was educated at Edinburgh University. The specific epithet "lanigera" comes from the Latin word 'lana' (wool) and 'gerus' (bearing) referring to woolly leaves.



FERNS

are part of the backbone of the shows, rarely the main feature. At Ponteland there were many well grown ferns, some of which were less fern-like than others. **Pteris gallinopes** is one of these. It grows in limestone caves and crevices in forests in Sichuan, China.

Adiantum reniforme named for its kidney-shaped leaves is an ancient species found in Asia and Africa in widely separated populations. Several forms have developed of this antediluvian fern. Just a wee miracle that it has survived from dinosaur times. Both were shown by Shelagh and Brian Smethurst.

Pyrosia drakeana is another Eastern Himalaya /Chinese plant of forests, cliffs and stream-sides. It often grows on tree trunks.

Blechnum penna marina, despite being 'common' in Scottish gardens is an Australasian fern also known as Antarctic Hard Fern.

Cheilanthes eatonii is one of my favourite ferns though you would not know that by the number of times it has passed away while in my care!





BULBS *Allium stellerianum* var. *kurilense* is as its name suggests a plant from the Russian Kuril Islands, which stretch 1200 km in a long thin line from Hokkaido to Kamchatka. Many of the islands have an active volcano! The most northerly islands in the chain are administered by Moscow and the southern ones by Japan. Both countries claim more islands than they administer! Perhaps this is Japan's equivalent of our Falkland Islands. The Kuril Islands have a much richer flora. The northern flora resembles that of Kamchatka and the southern of Japan but many plants pop up on widely separated islands, possibly wiped out in between by volcanic activity. So we should be glad that this *Allium* has survived to develop into its own variety. This wee onion is one of them. It will never set the heather on fire but its starry flowers have a delicacy of their own. Unlike other alliums its leaves seem to stay green at flowering time, perhaps because of its northern distribution and the need to photosynthesise for as long as possible. It seems to be readily available in the horticultural trade.

Eucomis vandermerwii. *Eucomis* is now included in the family Asparagaceae. It is an African genus. They all look like pineapples hence their nickname 'pineapple lilies'. 'Eu' means 'pleasing' and 'comis' means 'hair of the head'. So here we may have a bulb for bald people! It grows in grassland in south Africa's Steencampsberg, north east of Johannesburg. It is surprisingly hardy. It is also very attractive.

Oxalis perdicaria citrino delights with its refreshingly pale flowers, above typical cloverlike leaves. It is a plant found at low altitudes from both east and west foothills of the Andes in both Argentina and central Chile. Research revealed that the specific name means partridge. It is best grown in an alpine houses.

Oxalis flabellifolia is a much richer daffodil yellow. It hails from sandy places near Oliphant's Ridge in South Africa. Information on the species is not abundant nor easily found. It seems to be regarded as a species to be included in the *Oxalis flava* complex. It is a stunning contrasting companion to *Oxalis perdicaria citrino*.

Oxalis massoniana is another South African plant in this genus of hundreds. It hails from the Northern Cape Province.

Liriope muscari with its strong blue candle flowers is another plant which grabs your attention. While not strictly a bulb it is a tuberous rooted perennial. White forms are also found. It is an Asian plant and in southern states of the USA, where it is known as 'Monkey grass', it is used in lawns instead of grass.



Ian Kidman's pan of the beautiful *Crocus mathewii* 'Dream Dancer' won the A.G.S. Trophy. This is one of the finest autumn crocuses.



The Millennium Trophy is a 'lump of fossilised dinosaur dung' and was presented by Ian Christie. It is a beautiful stone despite its origins or perhaps because of its origins. It was won by Ian & Maria Leslie's *Celmisia philocremna*



BERRIES

Melicytus alpina from Brian and Shelagh has white berries which seem to emerge from the stems

Vaccinium vitis idaea is good enough to eat but we would need a bigger plant.

Gaultheria mucronata 'Pearls' was an extraordinary mass of pink spheres. One of the best of all berrying shrubs

Coprosma petrei with translucent blue berries

Gaultheria mucronata has the biggest berries!





Mala Janes' flower stems in seed are very attractive and add a new dimension to the show. [top right,above]

Clematis heracleifolia is a twist on traditional climbing species. It was recommended for a Preliminary Commendation by the Joint Rock Committee as well as gaining a first prize for Christine Boulby.[left, two rows above]

Yellow Empodium flexile gabs your attention visually and with its scent in the 3 pan bulb class. It is accompanied by blue Hyacinthoides ciliolata

