

WEST YORKSHIRE AGS GROUP

NEWSLETTER NO. 63 AUGUST 2016



Alpine Weekend Harlow Carr Gardens

NOTES FROM THE COMMITTEE

A garden for me is not about the show of colour, though I have worked at getting flowers for every week of the year. It is about friends. I grow plants that I have seen in the wild and I wander round remembering seeing them in Scotland, Greece, the Pyrenees, the Alps, Alaska, Arctic Norway and Iceland. I nod to Mrs Wilson: I don't know the lady but she gave my mother the seed before I was born and it wasn't until recently that I discovered it was rose campion! There are the marigolds that I started from seed from a friend, the Rosemary, grown originally by my parents from cutting taken before they were married and Shortia and unusual Cyclamen plants given by my Scottish friends.

Now I have a new friend. After admiring Tony and Ruth's *Daphne bholua* 'Jacqueline Postill' Tony offered me one of the seedlings which had appeared all over their garden. At the February meeting this year he came up to me to say they had the seedling in the car. Expecting one of maybe 10cm at most

it was quite a shock to see a metre high plant. Somewhat daunted I planted it immediately and crossed my fingers. Tony had said that it would be fine, that they were really tough, but I know how fickle Daphnes can be. The leaves turned yellow and dropped off gradually leaving a bare framework. Finally at the beginning of June the tight buds released their scales and it grew! Now it stands in fresh green and I await the winter flowers. Thank you Tony!

Rosemary Cox

TONY RYMER

Tony was committed to and involved in the AGS West Yorkshire Group for well over 30 years serving on the Local Group Committee a number of times, both as a member of committee and as an officer, including periods as Membership Secretary, Chairman and Programme Secretary.

If something needed doing within the Group, Tony was there, knowledgeable, committed and hard working. He was always willing to give guidance or advice to members, hospitality for speakers (both for local group meetings and for our 20 annual conferences), lectures and ideas for future activities. He was involved with the RHS at Harlow Carr in the library and giving guided tours to visitors.

Tony was also fully involved with Shows showing plants of a high standard and as a national judge, in the preparation and running of 'our' Shows: Harrogate (North of England) and Summer Show North, now Autumn Show North, setting up beforehand, stewarding, and as Show Secretary for Summer Show North for 5 years.

He served on the AGS Main Committee and was involved nationally as one of the organisers for AGS Tours. He contributed to the Fritillaria Group, serving on the committee, and The Bulb Group (run by Brian Mathew).

Tony lectured nationally to AGS Local Groups about the cultivation and propagation of alpine plants, plants in the wild and specific genera. He and Ruth travelled widely, usually independently (Tony's Tours!), to Europe, North America and Argentina looking at plants in their natural habitat after thoroughly researching locations with other AGS members and local botanists.

His quiet, experienced contribution to the Local Group in W Yorkshire was greatly valued by us all. Although we miss him it is perhaps a blessing that he

has been released from the illness that robbed him of his memory and even the enjoyment of the alpines that had meant so much to him.

Rosemary Cox



Tony Rymer

Beneath follows an article taken from the AGS newsletter about the Allium that Tony was awarded an A.M. for, and which he named for his granddaughter, Hannah. Tony really knew his onions!

Allium unifolium 'Hannah Rymer', A.M.

The list of non-ornamental, unexciting alliums is disappointingly long, and has dragged down the horticultural reputation of the genus as a whole. This is most unfortunate, for there are numerous attractive species, the preponderance of them from Turkey through to Central Asia, and from western North America. Quite a few have only been available to gardeners in recent years; others

are recognised as staunchly reliable, which is probably why the Clay Onion (it's Latin name inappropriately translates as the one-leaved onion, when in fact each bulb will produce a compliment of two or three) joins *A. cernuum* 'Hidcote' as the USA recipients of the RHS award of Garden Merit.

Whereas the widely distributed *A. cernuum* secured its AGM rank on the strength of the above clone, *A. unifolium* (from northern California and Southern Oregon, at up to 1200m [or 1700m; reports vary] in evergreen woodland glade clearings) is usually catalogued from unspecified, but reasonably uniform stocks. This uniformity surely arises from the species' trick of producing new bulbs on short rhizomes projecting from the old bulb, which at flowering time has largely faded away; a habit that leads to the build-up of dense colonies in its coast range homeland, and puts the emphasis on vegetatively propagated material in cultivation.

Seed is set fairly readily on the one hand, which accounts for the predictable presence in the AGS seed list, for all that, the name under which it appears is less certain, as the following exhibitor's notes make clear:

'My plants were grown from AGS seed received in 1993 as *A. murrayanum* (a much misapplied name, the muddle apparently still not resolved). Flowering first took place in 1996; my note, made at the time, reads 'good-sized pink flower'. The second-generation seedlings have not all inherited the attractive characters of the



Allium unifolium 'Hannah Rymer'

parents, so I have had to keep a watchful eye and rogue out any that were pale coloured, lanky or narrow-petaled. My current policy is to prevent self-sown seedlings in order to preserve the integrity of the original raisings. These have proved bone hardy and more vigorous than some North American onions that

I have grown: with me 'Hannah Rymer' (named after my granddaughter) is a good garden plant, flowering well in sun or part-shade in any well-drained soil.'

TONY RYMER

The flowers are usually various shades of pink, more rarely lilac and, exceptionally white; should anyone be growing an albino variant, however, this is not on record.

Checking around, just one other named clone of *Allium unifolium* could be found; 'Chris Dwarf' (sic) has appeared in the catalogues of Latvian bulb specialist Janis Ruksans, where it is described as a 20cm tall, dwarf form with 'bright lilac pink 'flowers' in large umbels'. There can be no confusing this with 'Hannah Rymer', which at 25 to 33cm is an appreciably taller plant, with umbels of 20 to 30 star-shaped flowers, at first deep rose pink (66C) but fading to a paler shade (66D), green at the base, and with a deeper coloured, central 'stripe'. The 30cm long, 2mm wide, flattish leaves had been clipped back by around 20% for the purposes of exhibition; rather conservative when compared with some of this allium's dryland compatriots, whose leaves can safely be removed, having done their job for another year. A cool, dryish rest with standard bulb treatment (repotting in the autumn, using a loam-based, gritty compost) is all that is required, leaving the compost just moist during the winter, but making sure that water is provided in plenty at the time of bud maturation (6 to 10 weeks before flowering), and dividing stocks every two or three years.

Alpine Weekend Harlow Carr Gardens Harrogate 14/15/16

The West Yorks Group of the Alpine Garden Society supported a three day event, in support of the AGS society, the Local AGS group and Saxifrage Society. The weekend was promoting the growing of alpiners in containers, with a demonstration of the making of lightweight troughs and containers.

On the Friday the weather was fine but cold. Our display of alpiners together with the demonstration on the construction of a lightweight trough from a polystyrene fish box proved to be very popular with the visitors. With all our promotional and marketing material from the three societies, new members for all looks very promising.

Saturday was a bitterly cold day, sleet and very cold wind only 4 degrees. There

weren't any local people visiting, but there were visitors from Cambridge, Reading and Cheshire who were on a tour of gardens.

Sunday was a different day altogether, fine sunny weather and great many visitors, made the day a very busy one. Once again interest was shown in the making of troughs from polystyrene fish boxes.

My thanks to support given by members of the West Yorkshire Group members.

Eric Rainford

STRAWBERRY COTTAGE, SECOND HELPING

I left off the last article with plans to start on the shrubbery, which is taking the place of a woodland since it is only 16 ft square and right outside the back



Trillium kurabayashii

windows of the cottage. There is a tall hedge on one side and the brick wall of the utility room on the other. I marked out an upside-down U-shaped path, dug compost into the sandy soil and planted a Buddleja which was unwanted in another part of the garden, a *Photinia x fraseri* 'Red Robin', *Cotinus coggygria*, *Solanum crispum* 'Glasnevin' and two clematis, alpine type,

all of which came up with us. I also put in two heuchera and a helleborus moved from other places in the garden. I have two mystery shrubs, probably the same, which came up from Devon without labels and un-flowered so far. They look a little like Forsythia but not quite and they too have gone in. Then I added anemones, mostly blanda and nemorosa types, a small Berberis, Beesia, Erythronium, trilliums, primulas, Cyclamen, Podophyllum, Uvularia, Mukdenia, hostas, Jeffersonia, etc. and an assortment of bulbs. There was already a Euonymus under the hedge which seemed to be doing well, so I added more of those to this dry place. To deter the grandchildren and dog

from this area, Bob fixed a low picket fence across the front over which we step to access it. In front of the fence are three troughs brought up from Devon containing shade loving plants. This area is known as the near back garden or shrubbery.

The next area, known as the mid-back garden and mostly beside the workshop, was until this year, just grass...weedy, lumpy and patchy. For years I fancied a 'ruin' in the garden and we decided this was the place to put it...just two brick walls at right angles to look like the corner of an old cottage. Bob dug out two trenches and I filled them with concrete for the foundations. At this point, I did wonder if I should have applied to the local council for planning permission! I'd acquired some old bricks in an auction for £6 and included in the lot was the back of a fireplace. I used most of those bricks for a path through the wild flower bed in the far back garden behind the workshop, but added more bought from a junk yard and then from a neighbour. A footpath runs alongside her garden and when walking the dog, I noticed stacks of assorted bricks between a shed and a hedge and asked if I could buy them. She was only too pleased as they were getting the property ready for sale. Bob and



Mukdenia rossii

I made about five journeys in the car as I didn't fancy making dozens of trips down the the road with a wheelbarrow! They were all sizes, shapes and colours but were perfect for my purpose. I built two cavity walls eight feet long and stepping up from four to 41 inches at the angle between the two, leaving a few planting holes at intervals. I also incorporated the fire back in one wall and left a space for the bottom part of a window in the other. Bob made me a

windowsill and part of a frame to fit here. I filled the bottom of the cavity walls with stones, broken pieces of brick and crocks, then added compost and finally topped up with gravel after planting up. Because of the shape, there are all aspects of sun and shade so I've planted ferns and succulents and whatever I had to hand which was not going to get too large, including a *Lewisia*, *Fuchsia*



The Ruin with Barney the Barn Owl

procumbens, *Epimedium x warleyense*, *Chrysanthemum weyrichii*, *Saponaria* ‘Bressingham’, *Ramonda myconi*, among others. There is still room for a few more. Really it is just a different type of rockery.

By the ‘window’ I’ve put a trough (to represent an old sink) and planted it with *Penstemons procerus* ‘Roy Davidson’ and *laricifolius* ssp. *exilifolius*, *Allium amabile*,

Gentiana paradoxa, *Ranunculus crenatus* (which flowered well and we’re waiting for the seeds to ripen), *Saxifraga longifolia*, *Soldanella minima* and *Campanula pulla* around the edges. In the middle, sandwiched between or in four pieces of tufa are *Phlox caespitosa*, *Edraianthus dalmaticus* ‘Albus’, *Silene acaulis* ‘Frances’ and *Saxifraga* ‘Bryn Llwyn’. Between the sink and the angle of the walls is a pile of logs for insects. We have various garden ornaments in most beds, e.g. imitation toadstools on the Log Bed/Stumpery, and on the ruin I’ve put ‘Barney’ the barn owl (a present from Bob).

At the other end of the mid-back garden (which Bob looks out on to from the workshop window) he thought a pond would look good. After discussion and because I’d always wanted a bridge, we decided on two small moulded ponds which, with a bridge between, would look like one longer one. We heaped the



The rockery and bridge.

soil from the excavations up nearby and set to work. With our sandy soil, it was a fairly easy task and they were soon in place. Bob made a bridge and this went in a couple of weeks later. I've partly planted up by one pond - *Salix caprea* Pendula, three Buckthorn and various grasses. Here also is Molly the moorhen who looks very realistic. So far there are only two Achilleas by the other pond but there is still more to do.

The lady from whom I bought the bricks also had some York stone which I was lucky enough to buy quite cheaply and the mound of earth became a rockery which is partly planted up and has a wren perched on the top. I've now used all the plants that came up from Devon with us, plus some we've propagated (more in the pipeline hopefully) and those bought at club meetings and shows, also garden centres. If we've previously had a plant and liked it, they are like old friends and I love to get them back! Many are too big so they will just be memories.

There is still one part of this garden unfinished and because the rockery is top-dressed and surrounded with gravel (which I can plant into), I decided that on the other side of the grass path leading to the bridge I would like to have pebbles. We were given a shallow sink by a kind neighbour and this will be going here, planted up with *Sempervivums*. The bricks in the photo are waiting to support this trough.



From the public footpath.

Since my first screed about the front garden, we have removed a large, boring, prostate conifer from by the road. We had to keep it cut back so that people could walk past without having to step on the grass verge so it was brown on that side and had various weeds hiding inside which couldn't be reached. We cut this back in stages and were lucky that a passing 'white truck' man offered to saw off the trunk and take it away together with the three heaps of branches on the grass for just £15. I then planted up this area with small shrubs, herbaceous and rockery plants and bulbs. Also a pair of my old leaky wellies containing a Phlox and a Campanula. In the background, to the left of the trough area is our trailer which is for sale if anyone is interested.

We would be delighted to welcome any members to our little patch if they would like to see it in person. Cups of tea or coffee free!

Di Dark

Local Group Local Show 13 May 2016



Winners

H C Crook Tankard for best plant in show: Chris Weavers *Cypripedium* 'Parville'

Hemingway Trophy for best bulbous plant: Fred Bundy *Arisaema sikokianum*

Daphne Kent Trophy for one plant in flower: Trevor Whitaker *Fabiana foliosa*

Local Group Bronze Medal for best plant in novice section: Chris Weavers *Calanthe* sp

Number of exhibitors 10 and 36 plants exhibited.

Eric Rainford

Editor's Note

Many thanks to all the contributors to *this* newsletter.

The editor, Anne Wright is VERY keen to receive articles, news items, tips etc., for inclusion in future issues.

All it takes is a paragraph, or a photograph, or both. This is not just the committee's newsletter! Have your say too! **PLEASE** give your contributions to Anne at the meetings or post to Mrs A. Wright, 130, Prince Rupert Drive, Tockwith, York, YO26 7PU, **to arrive before end DECEMBER 2017** (e-mail attachments or CDs preferred but not essential). Articles via E-mail to be sent to anneswright@hotmail.co.uk

Most formats accepted, e.g., Microsoft Word/Works and graphic formats like BMP, TIF, JPG. You can even hand write it, and I can manage!

LOCAL SHOW AT HARLOW CARR GARDENS

A new venture for the group - our local show this autumn will be on Sunday October 16 at Harlow Carr Gardens - the day after the national show on the Saturday. The show will be from 11.00am to 3.00pm. This is a great opportunity for the group to get our presence known with the local public, and hopefully to get some new members, so PLEASE support Eric, our very hard-working show secretary, and bring some plants for the show to help to make it a success.

CALENDAR

10 SEP	<p>Local Group Meeting, St Chad's - Prof John Good - Making the best of the site.</p> <p><i>John is a well-known speaker who has a particular interest in ecosystems and how alpiners are affected by the changing environment. His N Wales garden demonstrates how to use micro-environments in a garden to grow a wide variety of choice alpiners. We are looking forward to welcoming him back.</i></p>
1 OCT	Loughborough Autumn Show
8 OCT	<p>Local Group Meeting, St Chad's - John Mitchell - In the Footsteps of the Snow Leopard</p> <p><i>As the Rock Garden and Alpiners Superintendent at Edinburgh Royal Botanic Gardens. John is widely travelled and knowledgeable about alpiners in the wild and cultivation. 'In the footsteps of the snow leopard' is based on John's expeditions to the '...stans' looking at both sides of the Pamirs. I am sure we shall enjoy wonderful little known alpiners from this Central Asia wilderness.</i></p>
8 OCT	Newcastle Show
15 OCT	Harlow Carr Show
16 OCT	***LOCAL SHOW*** at HARLOW CARR
12 NOV	<p>Local Group Meeting, St Chad's - Michael Myers - Woodland Ranunculaceae</p> <p><i>Michael has long been associated with W Yorks group. He is a horticulturalist now teaching at Craven College. He has a deep knowledge of Hepatica and also grows many anemone cultivars and Hellebores. This talk will explore these plants and how to grow them successfully</i></p>
12 NOV	AGS AGM
10 DEC	Local Group Meeting, St Chad's - Members' Slides
14 JAN	<p>Local Group Meeting, St Chad's - Don Peace - In a Cleveland Alpine House.</p> <p><i>This is a return visit by Don and we look forward to learning about his most successful cultivation of alpiners. In 2015 he reached his 19th Gold Bar and won the Giuseppi Cup to add to his Farrer and Forrest Medals and Certificates of Merit with a variety of alpiners from ferns and Iris to Fritillaria and Androsace.</i></p>