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When we first discussed having a newsletter early in December and before what would have been a normal AGM meeting in the middle of the month I wondered whether we would be able to raise enough material to make it worthwhile. Well, the answer follows and you will see it has been. In fact it was even more than that so I have decided to hold over a few bits and pieces until another time. So thank you to everyone who had contributed, it is much appreciated.

As I write this various announcements have been made in the last few days about the apparent efficacy of each vaccine for individual age groups and particularly those over 65. Given that the average age of horticultural group members, possibly, leans towards that age group it is, hopefully, good news for many in our membership. I am sure a lot of us are starting to tire of this prolonged period of isolation and, like me, long to get back to something like normal. Hopefully there is a little light for us at the end of that long tunnel.

### **Chairman's report** Ian Black

Where to start? Where to finish?

By this time in the year, I would usually be able to run through all the highs and lows, the events, the talks, the outings and all those other things which make the AGS Norfolk Group successful as an important local section of the National society.

Where to start? Well, all was looking promising for another full-on season of alpine activities - that was in January. Our speaker list was in place, our management of the East Anglian Show was well underway and we were exploring the potential for some trips.

It wasn't far into the year, however, when the realisation was upon us that some of these plans might not reach fruition. We began to hear words which would not normally be part of our day-to-day conversations - in fact, a few names and places were appearing which would turn out to be totally new to most, if not all, of us. Wuhan, novel virus, epidemic (then pandemic), coronavirus, SARS-CoV-2, Covid-19, quarantine, lockdown and many more.

Every one of these factors has had an impact on our Group. No meetings, no local show, no E A Show and no trips. Another new word in today's vocabulary - Zoom - the online platform for presentations. Our first experience of using Zoom, saw us running a committee meeting and buoyed by the success of this session, it was shortly to be followed by our first full Zoom presentation from, appropriately Tony Goode. In addition to our own programme, we are able to access presentations arranged by other groups and by the AGS nationally and this has provided an expanded experience of all things alpine, enjoyed from the comfort of our own front rooms. To those who are unable to access online presentations, I apologise for enthusing so much about the technology but it has definitely compensated for some of the missed events of 2020.

Adapting to the technology has been one of the challenges to your committee but we have been able to run meetings, to discuss options for keeping the Group active, to plan a speaker programme, to consider the possibilities for activities and events in 2021 and to try to keep you up to date with these plans. My thanks, as usual, go to my colleagues on the Committee and in particular to Diane for maintaining the momentum of the Group in these rather static times and to Roy for ensuring that our finances are fully in control at all times.

And where to finish? A few more words - Track, Trace, Vaccine >> Tier 3 > Tier 2 > Tier 1 > Normality. I would very much like to think so and I am sure we are all looking forward to meeting again, to showing plants, to enjoying shows and, once again, to embracing all things alpine. I wish you well, keep safe and have a wonderful Christmas and great New Year. See you in 2021.

## The 2020 AGM

Our constitution states that we should vote for our committee at the yearly AGM. We would very much welcome another committee member as most have served for many years. We don't have many meetings as we do a lot with emails which works very well. At present we do have an occasional zoom committee meeting. It is a relaxed and easy committee to belong to. Could you be that person please?

The AGS Norfolk Group Committee

Chairman - Ian Black  
Vice Chairman - John Foster

Committee members are:  
Peter Lyle, Peter Mallett, Rosie Ward, Brenda Foster

Could we have a proposer and a seconder by December 16th 2020 please, and would you let Diane know if you all agree by emailing her at: [dianenblyth@gmail.com](mailto:dianenblyth@gmail.com)

## Treasurer's Report

### Norfolk Group AGS December 2020

- Membership level for the past year has been 51
- Raffle income was £110: thanks to all who donate prizes and to the organisers
- The show bonus for 2019 was up again this year, visitor numbers were 141. This figure always looks at the previous year, as we don't always receive the bonus from AGS Centre until after the start of our financial in September.
- Committee Meeting expenses remain at zero, thanks to the generosity of Diane hosting meetings in her house.
- Hire of Hall includes 2 months advance payments for March and April 2020, when we were unable to use the facility. We will be able to use these 2 monthly payments in 2021.
- Overall we had a surplus of £224.41
- Local Group membership fees to run from 1st January 2021.

We have had very little financial activity for the second half of our Financial Year due to the Covid19 restrictions. The reduced income over this period will mean that our expenses will be higher than our income but we do have enough in reserve to manage over the next Financial Year.

Roy Mellor 10<sup>th</sup> November 2020

The 2020 Accounts are shown on the next page.

## Subscriptions

Normally we ask for renewal of subscriptions in September but as we missed the March, April, May and June meetings this year the four zoom meetings to end this calendar year are a replacement. The committee has decided to ask for subscription renewal this year from January 2021 instead. Zoom meetings can cost anywhere between £50 and £100 to set up, depending on the speakers.

## The 2020 Accounts

AGS Norfolk  
Accounts and Balance sheet 2020

<b>Receipts</b>	<b>2019-20</b>	<b>2018-19</b>	<b>2017-18</b>	<b>2016-17</b>	<b>2015-16</b>	<b>2014-15</b>	<b>2013-14</b>
Subscriptions	£255.00	£315.00	£295.00	£295.00	£285.00	£315.00	£290.00
Visitors	£5.00	£1.00	£2.00		£3.00		
Refreshments					£17.00		
Raffle	£110.00	£186.00	£255.00	£268.90	£205.00	£269.00	£262.01
Books for Library	£8.50	£454.50	£31.40	£75.10	£2.00	£5.00	
Excursions		£927.00	£502.50	£7,707.00	£4,374.00	£774.00	£1,155.00
Show Bonus	£471.87	£464.37	£390.91	£232.08	£446.00	£441.80	£415.00
Bank Interest							£3.00
Plant Sales		£58.80	£35.35	£24.00	£26.75	£40.00	
Conference			£1,789.00			£2,174.50	
Misc			£5.00			£126.33	
<b>Total</b>	<b>£850.37</b>	<b>£2,406.67</b>	<b>£3,306.16</b>	<b>£8,602.08</b>	<b>£5,358.75</b>	<b>£4,145.63</b>	<b>£2,125.01</b>
<b>Payments</b>							
Hire of Hall	£280.00	£360.00	£356.00	£360.00	£314.00	£362.00	£325.00
Meeting Expenses						£60.34	£68.45
Speakers Fee	£252.60	£732.50	£470.00	£548.90	£559.00	£475.00	£739.00
Stationery/Telephone	£4.86	£8.70	£21.17	£3.90	£4.29	£0.95	£1.90
Refreshments	£28.50	£37.07	£29.50	£61.61	£51.63	£78.98	£38.90
Excursions		£879.45	£479.50	£7,576.75	£4,365.50	£727.00	£1,052.35
Newsletter		£5.00	£16.20	£34.60		£33.60	£5.75
Misc			£5.00	£45.00	£12.00	£126.33	
Conference			£2,053.08			£1,858.52	
Insurance / Affiliation Fees	£50.00	£50.00	£50.00				
<b>sub total</b>	<b>£625.96</b>	<b>£2,072.72</b>	<b>£3,480.45</b>	<b>£8,630.76</b>	<b>£5,306.42</b>	<b>£3,722.72</b>	<b>£2,231.35</b>
Surplus/debit yr	£224.41	£333.95	-£174.29	-£28.68	£52.33	£422.91	-£106.34
Balance Brought Forward	£2,408.21	£2,074.26	£2,248.55	£2,277.23	£2,224.90	£1,801.99	£1,908.33
<b>Balance Carried Forward</b>	<b>£2,632.62</b>	<b>£2,408.21</b>	<b>£2,074.26</b>	<b>£2,248.55</b>	<b>£2,277.23</b>	<b>£2,224.90</b>	<b>£1,801.99</b>
HSBC	£2,621.11	£2,390.34	£2,037.92	£2,240.79	£2,243.02	£2,254.15	£1,797.08
Petty Cash	£11.51	£17.87	£36.34	£7.76	£34.21	-£29.25	£4.91
<b>Total</b>	<b>£2,632.62</b>	<b>£2,408.21</b>	<b>£2,074.26</b>	<b>£2,248.55</b>	<b>£2,277.23</b>	<b>£2,224.90</b>	<b>£1,801.99</b>

## 2020/2021 Lecture Programme

For the time being we will have monthly  
Zoom meetings at 7.30pm

Dec 16	Martyn Denny	Yunnan Independently
Jan 27	Celia Wright	Lessons from Swedish Gardens
Feb 17	Jim Almond	Some Times at the Shows
Mar 17	Martin Sheader	Alpines on the Equator - flowers of the High Mountains of Ecuador
Apr 21	Cliff Booker	Creating an Alpine Haven
May 19	Kit Strange	Alpines of the Western Pacific Coast of the USA
Jun 16	To be advised	
Jul 21	Visit	Hoecroft Garden (Jane Lister) at Wood Norton near Dereham
<b>Please Note there is no meeting on Wednesday 15th September</b>		
Sep 25	Razvan Chisu	Title to be advised Norman Read Memorial Lecture (hopefully Hethersett Village Hall)
Oct 20	Robert Rolfe	Title to be advised
Nov 17	Time Lever	Jewels in the Rain
Dec 15		Annual General Meeting and Social

Martyn Denny's talk covers the southern part of north-west Yunnan mainly from a trip in 2009 with a little from 2015.

Celia Wright, who has given us several talks in the past, visited Sweden with an AGS group and explored several gardens.

Jim Almond, a seasoned exhibitor at shows and a very accomplished photographer will show us a collection of superb plants from the AGS Shows.

Martin Sheader, who after having 3 months in hospital with Covid 19 earlier in the year, has agreed to give us a talk on one of his many trips exploring the high altitudes of Ecuador. Martin has an article in the special edition of the "Alpine Gardener" marking the 90 years of the AGS. The article 'A Maiden Voyage to Ecuador' provides an interesting background to his talk.

Cliff Booker from Lancashire with his unique style has created an Alpine Haven in the Pennines which brings challenges rather different from Norfolk, but we are sure there will be ideas we can all take away. Cliff has had some great pictures of his garden on the AGS members facebook page.

Kit Strange from Kew will take us to the Western Pacific Coast of the USA sharing her experiences of the alpines she found. Kit has an enthusiastic and engaging style.

Norman Read, was a well respected member of the group, who died, sadly, 2 years ago. Several of our members have the wonderful troughs he made, some of which he generously donated to the raffle. His wife gave the group all Norman's Alpine books for us to sell. With some of the proceeds we decided to do a special open meeting inviting local garden clubs and others. It would be good to be able to fill Hethersett village hall. We have invited, at Tony Goodes suggestion, Razvan Chisu, an excellent well travelled speaker from Transylvania, very much enjoyed at the conference we held in 2012. We are hoping to have a normal meeting at Hethersett Village Hall.

Robert Rolfe is an assistant editor of The Alpine Gardener the AGS quarterly magazine. He is one of the most enthusiastic and knowledgeable alpine experts you will ever meet and is in much demand to talk to AGS groups and conferences.

Tim Lever will visit us from Aberconwy Nursery in North Wales. Following in his parents footsteps, he now runs the nursery alongside his mother Rachel after father Keith sadly died. Tim will take us on a trek in the Himalayas as he talks about walking the mountains of Arunachal Pradesh in his talk 'Jewels in the Rain' - bring your waterproofs!

We hope the AGM will also be our normal Christmas social time.

## New Zealand Roderick and Caroline Woods

We had an excellent start to 2020. We left on the 2nd of January and flew to Christchurch, New Zealand. Three days to find our feet and some NZ plants. Preserved original forest in Riccarton Bush is a 'must see'. Then we drove to the Otago Peninsular near Dunedin. Two days to explore then to Clyde to visit one of RIW's College friends from the 1960s. We joined the AGS Tour in Queenstown taking in mountains on the South Island, then the NZAGS 60th Anniversary Conference in Christchurch, before touring the North Island and arriving back on the 3rd of February as news of a new virus was making us wary of Chinese travellers.

**Christchurch:** A city like a Polo. A hole in its centre. It has not been re-built after the 2011 earthquake. 3 square kilometres of the Central Business District was lost. We understood more the emotional hole left when we were with local people at the Conference in Christchurch.

**Canterbury Plain:** The 360 km drive to Otago was an eye-opener. European weeds and farm crops all the way. Native plants exterminated to grow grass for huge herds of cows. Cows not sheep! Even on the supposedly wildlife rich Otago Peninsular the native plants were rare and having to be re-introduced in Reserves. Even on the mountains around Cromwell the purple haze turned out to be European thyme which exudes toxins from its roots and displaces the native plants.



**The Tour:** From Queenstown Mark Hanger soon got us into Alpine vegetation on Mt Burns and Alpine scenery in Milford Sound. Mark's whirlwind tours take at least a year to digest. Mountains, plateaus, scree, forests, swamps, thermal mud pools, coasts, Albatrosses, Sea Lions, 20 days of Tour, 3 days of Conference and visits, 14 hotels or lodges, 11 hour time difference, 24 hours of flying to get home....

**Weather:** As always in mountains the weather can play a determining role. On Mt. Burns I had to hold onto shrubs to prevent being blown over. At Arthur's Pass it was difficult to stand at all and I could not make any progress on slopes devoid of handy shrubs. Two sticks were not enough. Rain drove us out of Gertrude Valley as the path was under water and some of the party were less amphibious than others. However the next day at Milford Sound benefitted from the rain as the waterfalls were spectacular, and fortunately the Mt. Burns wind storm that had given 140 kph winds in the Sound had dropped and the boats were sailing. After we got home we saw sections of the only road to Milford Sound had washed off the mountain-side trapping numerous tourists. Some had to be helicoptered out from between land-slides. Norfolk is so quiet!



**Plants:** The natural vegetation cover of New Zealand is not European! Having been to Tasmania and South Eastern Australia it was in part familiar in open areas, but the tree species forming the tree cover are largely endemic to New Zealand and new to us as wild plants. The wealth of ferns and mosses gave us a new perspective on forest floor environments. For us the most memorable plants were on the high scree and bare mountain ridges. There are 750 species of New Zealand alpine.

We particularly liked the yard wide mats of Raoulias - We saw 8 of the 16 species; The other and most spectacular vegetable sheep - *Haastia pulvinaris*; Tiny *Lobelia roughii*; Dark *Leptinella atrata*; Penwiper - *Notothlaspi rosulatum*; Golden speargrass - *Aciphylla montana* and *A. kirkii*. The famous buttercups and forget-me-nots left us a bit underwhelmed.

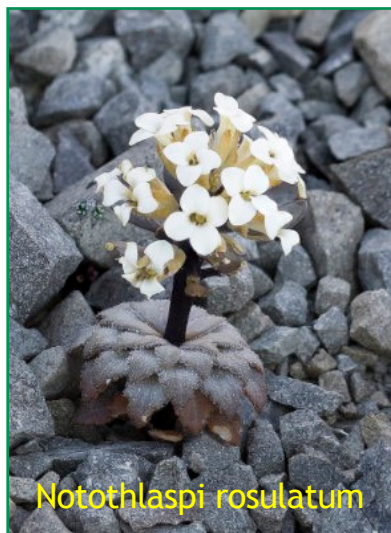
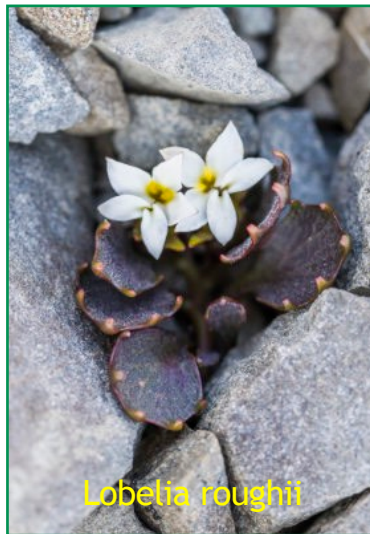


The most arresting native plant was the New Zealand Christmas Tree, *Pohutukawa*, or *Metrosideros excelsa*. It is widely planted as a coastal shrub or small tree. On Tiritiri Matangi island we walked in wild plants. They are difficult to comprehend as they are 20 m tall and 50

m wide with numerous aerial roots from branches forming supplementary trunks. A continuous thicket with only a view of the canopy underside. Flowers are outside on top! The *Metrosideros* known as Ratas are members of the Myrtaceae, their flowers recalled the

many Australian genera we have seen. The more you know the Ratas the stranger they are. Many are climbers and start as seedlings in the epiphytes on tree trunks. Their roots go down to the forest floor and their shoots may reach the top of the canopy. In time the Northern Rata *Metrosideros robusta* reaches 30 m in height and its roots fuse to form a trunk 2 m in diameter, often as a hollow cone formed around the host tree which has succumbed. We saw four species of Rata.

**Now:** We have many memories to be re-ignited by our pictures as we work through them. There is no hurry as our next trip is an unknown time in the future.





## What did you do this year? Diane Blyth

Gardening and interest in plants is such a therapy. We are so lucky to have our gardens. I hope you have all been able to catch up with all the gardening and DIY jobs you have been promising yourself you would do one day, as this year has given us a lot more time to do so.

We have spent most of our time in the garden and greenhouse but we have also had some lovely walks. Chris Skinner has a livery yard near us. He has a huge acreage and wide grass walkways round his fields. Some of the fields are on the site of an Anglo Saxon cemetery so are not farmed but grazed by the horses. He plants some of the fields with wildflower seeds for birds and insects. These include sainfoin, clover, borage, teasels, corncockle, cornflowers, some grasses, chicory, sunflowers, wild carrot and we did see a few hardy orchids in a damp spot in one of the fields.

One plant Phil and I had not seen before was *Phacelia tanacetifolia* (fiddleneck) that flowered for most of the summer and was always covered with bees. It had lovely purple flowers which made long curled seed stems with new flowers on the ends which reminded me of a fern when it starts to grow. It makes large amounts of biomass aiding weed suppression, ideal for a wild flower meadow. There were so many bees, butterflies and ladybirds on the teasels and the seeds will feed the birds through the winter.



*Phacelia tanacetifolia*  
(fiddleneck)

We hope those who have joined us on zoom meetings are enjoying the talks. Some of the speakers charge for their time and others ask for donations to a charity. We also pay for a zoom account. Mid Anglia and the Bedford AGS groups invite us to their talks and we in turn invite them to ours.

For those of you who haven't joined us before we do send a clickable link with instructions, it is very straight forward, and most members have found it very easy to join us. Do have a go.

As we go through the autumn and winter if you have any interesting plants/flowers in your garden do photograph them and send them to Peter Lyle who will put them on our AGS website page we would love to see them.

My best wishes to everyone and keep well.

## Plants that grow too well! Ray Mitchell

When we moved from the heavy clay of our garden in Sussex to the light sandy soil here in Suffolk, I didn't realise how different the plants would behave. At the end of our garden is a two acre pit that was dug during the last war to provide ballast for the concrete runway at Knettishall Heath.

Things we found difficult to grow, or overwinter in Sussex have been relatively easy here, dahlias for instance, not alpines I know, there they grew OK but we had to lift and store them, with all the associated hassle it can cause. Here we don't bother and they have come through all the winters so far, including hard frosts and deep snow, obviously the drainage helps.

On the flip side, we have to water more frequently, not a real problem but inconvenient sometimes. What is more of a problem, we have to be careful which plants we use, especially the ones with a thuggish reputation, we still get caught out.

*Cerastium tomentosum* is a case in point. Commonly sold as an alpine plant, in the clay it stayed within bounds, here it romped away swamping more choice plants in a short time before I pulled it out. It had only been in about five months so was fairly easy to remove and I even managed to get all bits of root out.

I felt quite chuffed when I got *Aristolochia clematitis* to germinate, I kept it in a pot until I found out if it was hardy or not. The following year I planted it out, I was pleased with the curious yellow flowers and it seemed tame so it was left in situ, I wish now I had left it in the pot. Being perennial it died down in late Autumn and I thought I had lost it as it didn't seem to be in a hurry to emerge in the Spring. In late May, up it came, that year it looked a picture, a slightly bigger clump but even more flowers. This year it appeared but shoots were popping up 2 metres or more away even growing with impunity under a concrete path, realising the horror I was going to use weed killer but the recent endless rain put paid to that till next year.

A couple of years ago, a kind 'friend', knowing I like unusual plants gave me a small piece of variegated *Physalis*, as our son grows it not far from us, I planted it in the open garden. It looks great, especially the orange *Physalis alkekengi*, 'Chinese Lanterns' in autumn. My son's plant had stayed the same sized clump for at least 6 years, so I knew it was safe until I discovered his garden is mostly clay.



This year, once again it has spread by runners just under the surface, I'm now in the process of pulling the outliers and shall dig the whole plant completely, when I get to it, I hope. As we like it I shall put a piece in a pot and watch for escapees.

For a few years we both admired a plant that grew on a roadside bank near us to a point where I thought of digging up a small piece, it had stayed the same size patch just a few hundred yards from our garden. I found out it was soapwort, *Saponaria officinalis*, but the double form, apparently, there had been a cottage on the site many years ago and the occupants had used it as a soap substitute.

Last Summer I found a nursery online that was selling it so I bought a pot and planted it in a corner where I knew it would shine. In April this year, I noticed it growing in every part of at least a metre patch round, it had to go. It took me all week to dig it out, going down almost a metre, taking every scrap of stem and root I could find, as I back filled I found more, ending up with a large barrow full of fodder for my bonfire.

I kept an eye open for more shoots over the next few weeks and eventually put another bucket of stems and roots on the bonfire, I haven't seen any new growths for a couple of months or so but I'm still looking, please be warned. There was no warning on the site but there is now, apparently the double form is the least invasive, goodness knows how much the single form grows.

Don't let this put you off, there are a terrific amount of fantastic, well behaved plants out there, if ever we get back to near normal don't forget the members and nursery stalls at our show.

Picture: Coral Mitchell

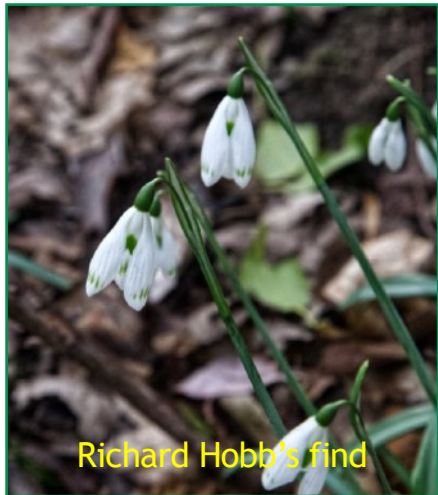
## The Greatorex Garden Brian Ellis

In the spring of 2009 I arranged for two friends, David Quinton and John Finch, both sadly no longer with us, to join David and I on a visit to the gardens of Ann Borrill and Richard Hobbs and then to the Greatorex plot. You may know there have been some lovely finds there, amongst the best must be *Galanthus* 'Greenfinch' one of my absolute favourites and the quirkiest probably *G.*'Clovis' but there are many others.



On that occasion the three galanthophiles found distinct snowdrops, David Quinton was first, finding a good strong snowdrop with green lines on the outers, I was second finding a substantial snowdrop with two flowers per scape on a mature bulb and John the third, a snowdrop with a fan shaped thick green tip to the outers. As my find proved stable over the next few years I asked if it could be named and thought of the name 'Saraband'. This refers to Snowdrop Acre (the local name for that area) Richard And Brian And Davids, and being a musical name gives a nod towards the formation of the buds looking like notes on a stave.

In 2019 I was at the East Ruston Snowdrop Day when Joe Sharman and Richard asked if they could name a snowdrop for me, it is a *navalis* from the Greatorex plot similar to G. 'Greenfinch' but more vigorous and with a more solid mark on the inners which bleeds near the base. Naturally I was very flattered and delighted that it had local origins.



We had not been able to co-ordinate a return visit until a chance comment early this year in a phone call to Richard meant we were able to visit a few days later! This time it was just Richard, David King and myself. It was a real treat to go again and we were greeted on our approach by yards of snowdrops cascading down the bank by the side of the road, a little less poetic was a large industrial rubbish bin blocking the entrance gate, however we clambered over the fence and were able to search through the mass of snowdrops again to see whether there were any with good marks.

Richard was the first to spot some of the variations (as the custodian he knew in which part of the plot the best finds would be made) and there were a couple with nice green lines on the outers. We also found another 'twin' this time with one flower held near to the scape and one held further away, but again, like 'Saraband' the flowers were almost as big as each other. Hopefully it will remain stable but only time will tell. We criss-crossed the area looking for others whilst David was looking for general photographic shots, then he said "Is this one any different?" pointing to one at his feet (and no doubt knowing full well that it was). There was a single flower with four outers with nice green marks on them, quite distinct enough I think and the icing on the cake for that day!

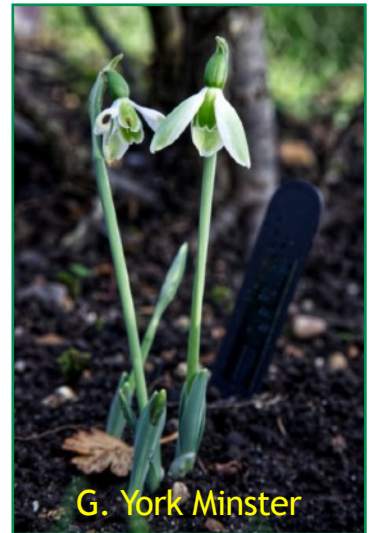


We met up with Richard and Sally at a snowdrop lunch a week or so later and he had very kindly bought us four pots containing one of each of the snowdrops we had found that day. Hopefully they will be stable and perhaps worth naming in due course - only a little while now to wait and find out!

Some other snowdrops from the Greatorex plot include Bishop's Mitre, Brian Ellis, Cordelia, Desdemona, Dionysus, G71, G75, G77, Greenfinch, Hippolyta,

Jacquenetta, Jenny Wren, L.P.Long, L.P.Short, Lacewing, Lavinia, Nerissa, Ophelia, Poseidon, Quintet, SA0901, SA0903, (many others with the designation SA...), Titania, White Swan.

Some of the early snowdrops flowering now and during the autumn:



Pictures by David King