



Alpine Garden Society Hampshire Group Newsletter: January 2019



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Chairman's Message

I have just read what I had written last year and reflected '*Is it me or is the snowdrop season early?*' So it is definitely a case of *de ja vous*, indeed it seems even earlier than last year with many more snowdrops open than previous years, and the first *Eranthus* (Aconite) opened before the New Year. The same seems to be the case elsewhere as a visit to Michael Baron's garden confirmed my thoughts. It may be necessary for our snowdrop open garden events to be a little earlier than previous years, so do look out for notifications.

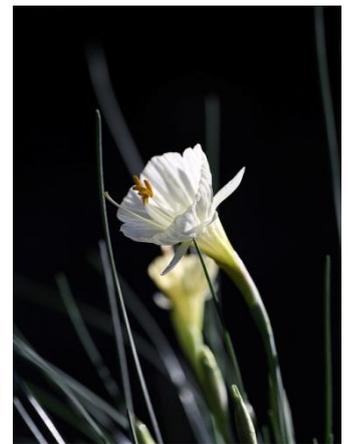
Ben has continued the development work in the garden and many bulbs are coming up in the latest area created at the bottom of the garden; and we have more capacity under glass with the purchase of Tony Stanley's Access frame. It is always sad when we hear of someone having to call it a day with their alpine gardening, but Tony has sent thanks that so many of his plants have found new homes within the Hampshire Group. There are a few saxifrages for sale at very reasonable prices, which will be brought to the next meetings. Back to our garden, only one small area along our damp ditch remains uncultivated and this is Ben's next little project to extend the growing area for our *Meconopsis*, which seem to do well in the humidity created by the shade and constant movement of water. It's going to be a horrible job, though I'm sure it will transform the ditch.



Early Narcissus & Snowdrops



Iris unguicularis 'Peloponnese Snow'



Narcissus seedling

Despite much rain before Christmas and the stream being in full spate on a number of occasions, we have had no flooding; and, indeed, the drier spell over the Christmas and New Year period has meant that we have been able to collect the last of the leaves before the bulbs have really got going, that is apart from the Snowdrops of course. My main task at this time of year is to identify the snowdrops as they come up and ensure the labelling is correct as labels get removed by birds and cats alike!! As you may know, *Galanthus* are my real passion and it is good to see so many clumping up well. In the greenhouses there are many narcissus in bloom, some of show quality, and it is just a shame there are no shows until mid-February, the first being South Wales.

Thank you for the continued support of the committee and all others who contribute to the smooth running of the Group, especially Lesley for all the great work keeping the Website fresh; Jackie and Mike Gurd who always provide refreshments at our meetings; and Jo, supporting on the door which is such a great help to Ben. Thanks to various members who help with the raffle and to Janice for producing our splendid and informative newsletters. I am always grateful for those of you who invisibly assist with the setting up and clearing of Chilworth Hall at our meetings.

Finally, as we approach the prime time for showing alpines, please remember to bring your plants to meetings for the show table and pictures of your plants, currently in flower at the time of our meetings, as we know not everyone grows in pots.

I am looking forward to seeing you all at the end of January.

Paddy Parmee



Clematis 'Jean Crumpston'

Photos: Paddy Parmee

Hampshire AGS – Social Media

Links are as follows:



Twitter @HampshireAGS (this link will take you there) <https://mobile.twitter.com/account>



Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/groups/hampshireags/>



Website <http://hampshirealpinegardeners.org.uk/>

Group Officers

Chairman	Paddy Parmee	Treasurer, Hon. Group & Membership Secretary	Ben Parmee
Vice-Chairman	Malcolm Calvert		
Newsletter Editor	Janice Bennetts	Teas	Jackie & Mike Gurd
Committee	Lesley Baker	David Hanslow	Vacancy
	Dorothy Searle	Jo Whitfield	Vacancy

Review of the Year so Far

by Paddy Parmee

What a start to the season we have had. John Massey commenced the year with a most enjoyable and humorous talk on *Hepatica*. John is such an entertaining speaker with fantastic anecdotes from his travels around the world to support his wonderful photography, and insights on his Chelsea success. John certainly pulled the crowds in with a packed hall that is always good to see.

The AGS Open Lecture in October was presented by Jim Jermyn, who made his promised return visit after his abortive trip of two years ago. Jim took over as Head Gardener at the National Trust for Scotland's Branklyn Garden and after just a couple of years in the role he has already made an impact, in particular, returning some of the garden to how it was originally designed by the Rentons.

In November, cyclamen was the topic of a very informative talk by Vic Aspland which covered a wide range of species within the genus. It included his plant hunting tours overseas as well as horticultural hints and tips on the growing of these delightful plants.

Again we had record numbers at the Seasonal Event and I would like to thank everyone who came and made it such an enjoyable evening. Ben and I have discussed whether we should return to the hall for this meeting. However, comments from those joining us certainly have put such thoughts on the back burner, Thank you for your kind words. It was always our intention to make it a convivial evening and seeing everyone having such a good time makes all the difference. Thank you also to the presentation contributors: Harvey Rutt with a botanical, cultural and geological view of the mountains of Ethiopia, a very different area of the world from that we so often see; and in fantastic contrast Jo Whitfield's tiny, splendid but very full garden in Romsey. I hope you enjoyed a few of my photos on a loop as we ate and contemplated Malcolm's quiz; congratulations to David and Jill Butcher with a winning score of 18/24. I am sorry we didn't manage to get to David Dickenson's photos, but he will be first on the list next year.

The New Year Programme starts with Bob Gibbons talking on 'A lifetime of flowers'. I know that a good number of the Group have been on tour with Bob and this is another must see talk. Janice has detailed the Programme below.

2019 Spring & Summer Programme

Dates – all Thursdays	Titles	Speakers
24 th January	<i>A Lifetime of Flowers</i>	Bob Gibbons set up <i>Natural History Travel</i> 25 years ago that offers high quality natural history and photography tours ,and his talk follows his travel experiences.
28 th February	<i>With the AGS in the Mountains of Central Chile</i>	Martin Sheader is a group member, AGS judge, author & tour leader. This is a new talk based on his South American travels.
28 th March The 21 st Lionel Bacon Memorial Lecture & Competitive Shows	<i>The Galanthophiles Snowdrop Devotees 1854-2014</i>	Jane Kilpatrick & Jennifer Harmer are co-authors of the book of a similar name as the title of their talk; Jennifer is a member of our group.
25 th April Annual Plant Sale (no raffle)	<i>A Photographic experience of Alpine plants at home and in the wild</i>	Paddy Parmee is our Chairman, exhibitor and passionate photographer
23 rd May – AGM Food & wine provided	<i>Alpine Flowers of Slovenia</i>	Graham Poynter is a member of Dorset AGS and leads plant hunting tours across Europe for <i>Naturetrek</i>

Spring Events

by Paddy Parmee

Our upcoming events to look forward to include: the annual plant and photographic competitions in March; and our plant sale in April. The New Year is a time to start propagating.

Some members' gardens will be opening during the spring for you to enjoy a range of alpine and other plants. These events are great social occasions and also important fundraising opportunities for the Group. Our garden at Hursley Road and Michael Baron's at Alresford hope to open for snowdrops, and we may well open again later in the spring when the garden is in full bloom.

A note for your diary is 18th May for the AGS National Wimborne Show a.k.a. Rocky Flower Show. This year Ben takes over as Show Secretary and I know he will be grateful for any help from members of the Hampshire Group. There will be more on this as the season progresses.

Bill Squire

by Janice Bennetts



Bill – Dolomites June 2017

It was with a great deal of sadness that I learned of the death of Bill. I had known him since 2003 when I became chairman of the Group and he was chairman of the Dorset AGS Group. I got to know him better when Hampshire and Dorset decided to run the AGS *Rocky Flower Show* at Wimborne. This, as it does now, involved various meetings in the autumn and spring, latterly these often took place at his house where we admired his extensive range of plants in his greenhouses, and in particular his lackenalias.

It was very apparent that Bill was a good organiser, knew how to delegate, but was also willing to do his fair share of whatever was necessary. He was also the Chairman of the South African Bulb Group (SABG).

We got to know him even better on the trip the two AGS Groups made to the Dolomites in 2017 when he regaled us with many of his military stories after a good meal and a glass or two of wine.

He had already decided to give up his Chairmanship of the Dorset AGS, the SABG and his role as Show Secretary to start a new life with a partner in Thailand. Sadly a week before he was getting married he died of food poisoning. Our sympathy extends to his family and many friends.

AGS Conference & Show Awards November 2018

Our congratulations to:

Martin and Anna-Liisa Sheader who received The Christopher Grey-Wilson Award, a literary award for their article in the December 2017 Journal *Glories of the Chilean Andes*; and for winning their 8th Gold Bar and 1st Gold Bar for Art;

Paddy and Ben Parmee, who won the 'Byne Trophy' for winning the Intermediate Section annual points aggregate, and their Silver Medal and Silver Bars 1 and 2.

Paddy has written that it has been encouraging to see so many other members of the Group entering exhibits at one or more shows, including Michael Dyer, Mike Powell, Steve and Angela Loble, Lesley Baker, Frank and Janet Rhodes; and in the photographic competition at Wimborne, David and Christine Hughes, David Hanslow, John McCarthy, Michael Baron and Victor Humphrey. She hopes this trend continues with even more entering shows, particularly our own Rocky Flower Show at Wimborne this coming year.

You may have noticed that the Alpine Garden Society has a new logo, which is on the front page of this newsletter. It represents a flower on a mountain scree with pebbles scattered all around. This is part of the redesign of the website, which has a much more modern look with clear links to various pages <https://www.alpinegardensociety.net/>. Of particular note is the online **Plant Encyclopaedia**, which is in various

stages of development but is already a very useful source of information. Over many years the unseen person behind these IT initiatives, including organising the data recording for the shows, has been Jim McGregor, and it was fitting that he received the Lyttel Trophy this year, the highest honour given to a member.

The Lyttel Trophy is a meritorious award which was given by the Reverend E S Lyttel, who was Professor of History from 1911 to 1934 at University College Southampton. He was elected as President of the AGS in May 1944 but died 3 months later, the shortest serving President. He lived at Chilworth in a house adjacent to the main Southampton to Romsey Road that practically overlooks the M3-M27 link motorway on the western end. In fact, his tennis court was situated in the valley that is now the link road. Two more houses have been built on the site and the garden of the central one still retains the layout of Lyttel's original formal garden. The rock garden, nearest the motorway, is no longer there. *Dianthus* 'Nyewood's Cream' commemorates his garden. He wrote extensively on various garden topics, and as *Claudestina* wrote in the June 1995 bulletin, 'he was a notable preacher, a lover of music and finally (when leisure came to him) a lover of beautiful plants, a clever propagator and a great gardener.'



Dianthus Nyewood's Cream
google image

2019 is the 90th year of the formation of the Alpine Garden Society, more of this in the next newsletter.

Ethiopia

by Professor Harvey Rutt

In the autumn of 2018 my wife and I made a three week trip to Ethiopia. Whilst alpine flowers are unlikely to be the sole focus of a trip to this little known country, the flowers of the East African Mountains are spectacular – and sometimes strange.

The Bale (pronounced Balé) and Simien mountain ranges are the prime locations for a flower-hunter – the latter better known and more accessible, but we found the former the better location for alpinists. At both there is one comfortable mountain lodge, and at Bale one local guide knew something of the flowers. Since we visited, Ethiopian Airlines has started flying from Addis to Robe, making Bale much more accessible.

At Bale, the huge Sanetti Plateau at ~4000m is a sea of several different *Helichrysums* extending as far as the eye can see, the silver leaves and glossy white flowers looking almost like snow. In amongst them many smaller alpinists nestle, but are very hard to identify! There would probably be far more in springtime. At the rocky outcrops there are stands of the enormous giant lobelia, *Lobelia rhynchopetalum* with just a few in flower reaching over three metres high. Fallen flower spikes decay into strange multi-layered spiral lattices



Lobelia rhynchopetalum & *Helichrysum* sp., Sanetti plateau, Bale



Helichrysum sp.; giant heather zone, Bale



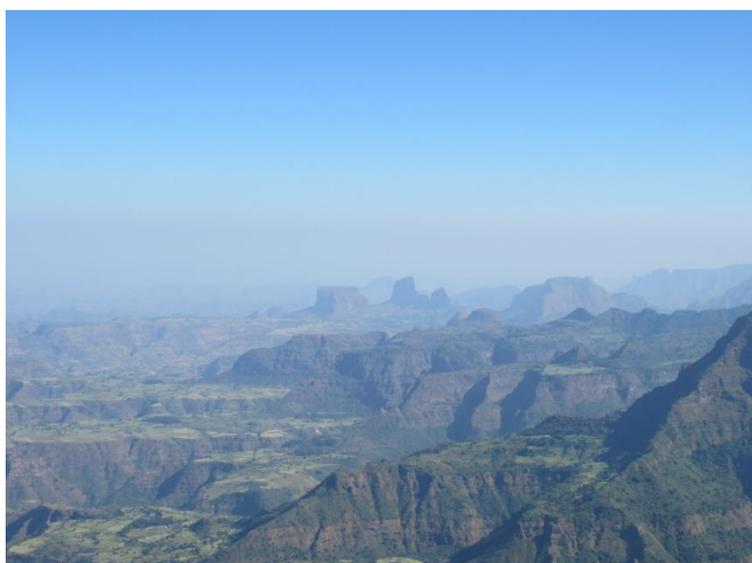
Thunbergia alata, Harrena Forest Bale

As you drop off the plateau you pass first through a zone of giant heathers dripping with lichens and with a diverse understory of colourful Helichrysums, minute lobelias, and much else I could not name. Dropping further into the Harrena forest growth becomes progressively more lush and tropical, with many species of salvia, a different giant lobelia (*L. giberroa*), scramblers like Black Eyed Susan (*Thunbergia alata*) and many different *Impatiens* sp.

Under the forest canopy are wild coffee bushes whose fruit is harvested by itinerant workers who camp there for six weeks or so. Clearings have many different *Asteraceae*, but also blue dots of *Commelina* sp. (which I grow, but was unaware it came from Ethiopia!) and *Cyanotis* sp.



Wild coffee gathering, Harrena Forest, Bale



The Ethiopian highlands from the Simien Mountains

The Simien range, despite its stunning views over the Ethiopian highlands and reputation as a trekking area, was initially a little disappointing for flowers. The part of the park close to the lodge is regrettably extensively cultivated by oxen drawn ploughs. However, further into the park, past the Chennek camp site which is a long, rough drive, there is far more to see. Vivid splashes of delphiniums by the road, large stand of *Kniphophias*, and veritable forests of *L. rhynchopetalum*. The pale purple *Moraea thomsonii* dots areas of short grass. In a stream valley we found a few vivid red geophytic plants, possibly *Gladiolus watsonioides*.



Cyanotis sp.



Kniphophia sp.



Delphinium sp.

All from the Simien Mountains



Walia ibex



Watsonia or *Gladiolus*,

As well as flowers, there are many birds, and in the mountains excellent views of some rare and impressive mammals. At Bale we saw six Ethiopian wolves, the rarest canid in the world, with only a few hundred left. In the Simien range male Walia ibex were fighting for dominance, and you can sit on the ground as a group of Gelada monkeys flows around you as if you did not exist. Often incorrectly called baboons, they are entirely safe, do not beg or steal, and eat grass and roots.

No trip to Ethiopia is complete without visits to the amazing solid rock churches at Lalibela, the spectacular palaces at Gondar, and at least one of the national parks such as Awash. We left out visits to the relics of ancient civilisations at Aksum and the colourful local culture in the south, which often figure



Gelada monkey

in trips to Ethiopia, to make space for flowers. Road travel is very slow as you dodge donkeys, horse carts, goats, sheep, children and holes in the road, but internal flights worked well. Hotels were of a good standard, and with sensible care, the country is quite safe – though in the Simien Mountains you are required to have an armed guard with you.

Some areas of Ethiopia however are unsafe. If you are prepared to ‘rough it’ and can tolerate temperatures of 40C and more, a trip to the volcanic areas of the Danakil Depression will yield views of a huge lake of molten rock, psychedelic minerals, and the ancient camel trade in salt.

This area is more challenging and less stable; we had three armed guards with us. Whilst certainly not a place a ‘plant hunter’ might instantly head for, the hillsides near Meke’le are covered in stands of *Dracaena*, and various *Euphorbia* species eke out a living between the baking stones.

Ethiopia is becoming a more popular destination, and its new Prime Minister has done an impressive job of stabilising the country and reducing conflict, so now might be a good time to go!

Anyone contemplating a trip is welcome to contact us for more detail



Dracaena sp, Danakil Depression

Fifty Years Ago (June 1969) – A.G.S. Bulletin Volume 37 No. 15 p.107

Galanthomania

As our Chairman and many other members have a passion for snowdrops, I thought this article was appropriate for the time of the year, although it was published in the summer *Anthology* section of the above bulletin. It was written by *Rhinanthus*. I am sure someone will let me know whose pseudo name it was.



Galanthus 'Frinton Advent'



Galanthus 'Christine'



Galanthus 'Moya's Green'

Photos:Paddy Parmee

'This is one of the pleasanter forms of madness, and the writer has suffered from it for many years. Quite a long time ago he began to collect a number of different named kinds of *Galanthus*. They were planted in separate clumps, carefully labelled. Some were reproduced from seed. Others, though they produced seed, did not produce seedlings – an experiment that proved that E. A. Bowles was as usual, right.

The time came to move garden. All were potted up and carefully labelled. They stood without harm, unprotected, through the 1962-63 winter. Then planting time came: the labels had all gone. Stern catalogues, drawings and notes would (it seemed) make it easy to name them next flowering season.

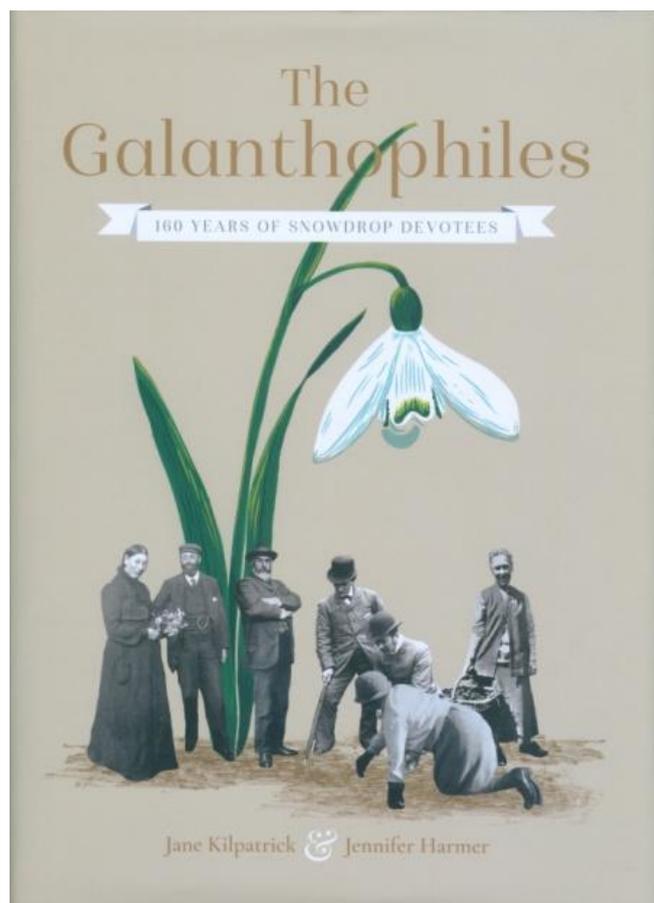
Alas, I had not anticipated that their transference to a heavy soil would result in much more vigorous (and to me untypical) growth. I must admit a number have baffled me. Then I was fortunate to be given some exquisite drawings by a Miss Alice Bickham done some 70 years ago. Her brother was of the great Bowles-Ellacombe-Allen-Boyd era. I was sure these would help me: the names of the donors (who were also the raisers) of the bulbs were given, so that misunderstanding or confusion seemed impossible.

But alas, confusion was increased as here were names that I could not trace. 'Double Green', *lutescens* and 'Boyd No. 4' came from William Boyd; 'Jason', a seedling from *G. Scharlockii*, and 'Belated' from Mr. Allen; there was "*atkinsii* of Atkins" from Miss Allen and *G. Imperati atkinsii* from Canon Ellacombe, and *plicatus x nivalis* from Mr. Fraser.

One or two of these I have traced – but my conclusion was that there was no end to the names of cultivars and hybrids and felt exonerated from doing anything other than to grow all the snowdrops I could find – and be blown to the names. And I was reinforced in my determination in the spring of 1968 when I wandered found the remoter villages on the Welsh Borders. Never have I seen such magnificent snowdrops – and one could invent names galore to puzzle the experts still further, and exaggerate **Galanthomania** into something worse.*

**Rhinanthus* is coat-trailing again! Ed. (R C Elliott)

I am sure Paddy would have sorted and labelled them!



To find out much much more about the various *Galanthophiles* listed above, do buy and read Jane Kilpatrick and Jennifer Harmer's book titled ***Galanthophiles 160 Years of Snowdrop Devotees***, which will be on sale at their talk on the 28th March.

This is a very well researched and scholarly account of the interest and background into the rise of 'Galanthomania'!