



Alpine Garden Society Hampshire Group



Newsletter: September 2017

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Chairman's Message

As I write this message (19 July) we have just had a very welcome deluge and an amazing lightening display after what has been a long dry summer involving many hours of watering. This duty was delegated to Ben whilst I recuperated from my knee replacement and luckily he managed not to kill too much! During the summer we finished developing the former wild flower meadow which has been transformed into a new tufa / rock garden and a spring bulb bed. We hope you will be able to enjoy the fruits of our labours next spring.

This year we have managed a holiday to Crete in early April, which was wonderful and thanks to David and Christine Hughes who pointed us in the direction of some excellent flower hunting spots. It was a wonderful experience seeing so many flowers in the wild, in perfect conditions. Of particular note were the Ranunculus, anemone and tulips.



A short break to Devon in late May to visit Keith and Ros Wiley at Wildside was Ben's birthday treat (despite being my favourite garden!!) and we took in RHS Rosemoor whilst we were there. In early July RHS Wisley was definitely suffering from the effects of the long hot dry spell, we love visiting the alpine house there but it was looking sad. We have also been to a number of AGS shows this year and started exhibiting a little further afield than just our local Wimborne show; see Ben's report on page 5.



The Rocky Flower Show at the end of May was again a great success, and I would like to thank the many Hampshire members who supported helping to set up on Friday, manning various stations on the Saturday, or coming to the show. See John McCarthy's report on page 4.

We enjoyed another excursion this year to East Lambrook and Forde Abbey Gardens, organised by Malcolm Calvert, thank you Malcolm. See article on page 6.

Many thanks to Michael Baron and Frank Rhodes for opening their gardens (see page 7) and Jo Whitfield, whose garden we enjoyed during Romsey 'La Ronde'. We were also delighted to welcome a group from Plant Heritage to Hursley Road, and we have been approached to do the same for the Hardy Plant Society in 2018. Many thanks to Angela and Steve Loble who helped with the teas, enabling Ben and I to circulate.

Through our networking and contacts across the AGS network and 'Facebook Friends' we have put together another interesting programme for 2017/18. Janice has detailed the first half of the programme on the next page. This year, the Christmas event will return to Hursley Road where Ben and I will be pleased to host an evening of entertainment. The programme contains some recognised names, including some that may be new to you, and a variety of subject matter. Printed copies of the full programme will be available at the September and subsequent meetings and Lesley will post it on the website. Please let Ben or I know if you are unable to make Group meetings but would like a programme; we'll pop one in the post.

There remains a committee vacancy and therefore I would welcome a volunteer to fill the post and join us in driving the Hampshire AGS forward into 2018.

I am looking forward to seeing you on the 28th September when will be entertained by Paul Cumberton who will be speaking on 'Pleiones for Pleasure'. Paul is a very entertaining and knowledgeable speaker, plus we will hold the annual bulb sale which has been arranged by Lesley.

Hampshire AGS – Social Media

Thanks to Lesley and Janice who keep the website up to date and both our 'Twitter' and 'Facebook' pages have been very active throughout the summer months. I am grateful for the support of the administrators, who help keep the Facebook site very much for the benefit of Alpine growers, but are also among the regular contributors. I have also taken over running the National Society Social Media pages, managing to promote shows, posting show winners, book launches and many other events. Numbers visiting the sites have risen dramatically, which is most encouraging; give it a try and if you need help, do not hesitate to ask.

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/>

Paddy Parmee

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	Kevin Hughes
	Dorothy Searle	Jo Whitfield	

2017 Autumn Programme

Dates – all Thursdays	Titles	Speakers
28 th September Annual bulb & seed sale	<i>Pleiones for Pleasure</i>	Paul Cumbleton worked for the RHS Wisley for 11 years - responsible for all things alpine – rock garden, alpine meadow, crevice garden and the display houses
26 th October The AGS Open lecture	<i>Woodland Ranunculaceae – Anemones, Hepaticas, Aconites, Hellebores and Celandines</i>	Mike Myers lecturer at Craven College, Skipton, North Yorkshire Active Botanical and gardening contributor to social media
23 rd November	<i>Under the apples – Adventures with woodland plants</i>	Tim Ingram and his wife, Gillian, run Copton Ash Gardens & Nursery in Kent
14 th December (2 nd Thursday)	<i>In-house seasonal entertainment</i> food & wine provided	Ben & Paddy's home 179 Hursley Road, Chandlers Ford, SO53 1JH
2018		
25 th January	<i>In the Footsteps of Blanchard: Narcissus in south-eastern Spain</i>	Matthew Topsfield has a background in environmental conservation and works for Conserving Scottish Machair Life+
<p>ADVANCE NOTICE</p> <p>*** Our Annual Plant Sale will be at our April meeting ***</p> <p>and the AGM will be at the May one.</p> <p>The ROCKY FLOWER SHOW will be on the 19 May</p>		

Alpine Garden Society Conferences

This year there are:

a 'Bulb' conference being held on 24 September at Pershore College, adjacent to the AGS Centre; and the AGM and annual conference on 11 and 12 November, is being held in Stratford-upon-Avon. Full details are on the main AGS website - <http://www.alpinegardensociety.net/>

Numbers are limited, and early booking is recommended.

Winners at the Lionel Bacon Memorial Lecture March 2017



Steve Loblely
Margaret Hedges Photographic Award



Tony Stanley
David Benton Rose Bowl voted for best plant in the competition

AGS Summer Show South (Rocky Flower Show) 27 May 2017

by John McCarthy

An erratic, late spring had a knock on effect on early summer this year and this made the Summer Show even more of a challenge to growers than usual. This led to fewer entries and gaps in some classes but the quality was as ever excellent. Local Groups were well represented and Dorset and Hampshire did well. Our own Group fielded 8 exhibitors who between them netted 15 firsts, 11 seconds and 7 thirds. These included 'Best in Show' in the Photographic Section, 2 trophies and Martin and Anna-Liisa were awarded a Farrer Medal for the Best Plant in Show.

The accompanying illustrations show the quality and scope of the Show, there being something for everyone to admire and even aspire to.





The Nursery trade was well represented and offered a wide range of plants at affordable prices. This is the closest National Show (our Rocky Flower Show) to our members, so make a diary promise for 19 May in 2018.

A 'Novice' View of AGS Shows and Competitive Exhibiting by Ben Parmee

In June 2016 I retired and since then have become increasingly interested in the workings of the AGS and in particular shows and exhibiting. Two years ago, I joined the Rocky Flower Show committee having helped at the show previously. However, until this year I had not really appreciated how easy it was to enter the world of competitive showing. This was probably because I was awe struck by the quality of the exhibits on the show bench, believed that I could never aspire to such quality of growing, and did not really understand the 'way in'.

Having spent a little time reading the Shows Handbook it all became quite clear that the 'way in' was through the Novice Section, and the attainment of a Bronze Medal all of a sudden seemed achievable. I first exhibited at the South West Show at RHS Rosemoor in April when my *Fritillaria* and *Pleiones* were in full bloom and, whilst they may not have competed with those in the Open Section, they were, in my opinion and presumably the judges, quite presentable. Alongside a pan of *Primula rosea* 'grown from seed', I walked away with four Firsts and the Dartington and Otter Trophies for the most Novice points and the Best Plant in the Novice Section for my *Fritillaria meleagris*.



I had caught the bug! Two weeks later, with the *Pleiones* still looking good, two further Firsts were gained at the Kent Show, indeed one of those in the Intermediate Section. Whilst awe inspired by those names that were becoming so familiar in the Open Section I plucked up the courage to ask questions, of the Wallis', Martins, Ransons amongst others, to try and increase my knowledge of competitive exhibiting; and indeed they have all been most encouraging.





Our own show at Wimborne resulted in another Intermediate First, four Novice Firsts and the John Blanchard Cup, this time it was the Dactylorhiza that came up trumps. So my little tally of 11 Firsts will result in a Bronze Medal (10 required).

At the summer Pershore Show, my entries in the Intermediate Section resulted in a number of Seconds and Thirds, I guess demonstrating what is required at the next level, or maybe my Sarracenia weren't in vogue! However, further good advice was received from Martin Sheader and those aforementioned. Not deterred, let's see if we get to the Loughborough and Kent Autumn shows.



So what have I learnt from my 2017 exhibiting experience thus far? It has demonstrated that the route to that ultimate Gold Medal is staged, giving you time to mature those show plants, and learn that it is not all about having perfect 36cm pans of floriferous cushions. Also, those highly experienced growers want to see new exhibitors, and are very encouraging. But I think, most of all, it is rewarding, especially when you see pictures of your plants, photographed by Jon Evans, in the AGS Show reports.

My advice, when it comes to show time and you have a good looking plant or two, is bring them along to your local show and pop them in the Novice Section. From a Show committee perspective, we would welcome many new Novice exhibitors and maybe you will also get hooked.

Our Coach Trip 2017 by Malcolm Calvert

This year we had a day out to **East Lambrook Manor** and **Forde Abbey Garden**. Although the weather forecast was not great we had a very dry morning at Margery Fish's garden and a damp start to Forde Abbey garden.

East Lambrook Manor was a sparkling display of cottage garden planting using a mixture of perennial, annual and bulbs to produce a naturalistic planting scheme. The pallet of colours drifted through the garden like they had been there forever. When Margery first moved to East Lambrook it was nothing like it is today. Although untrained as a gardener, but very well read, she gradually shaped the garden and planting, putting the right plant in the right place, and, during the process, wrote an amusing book describing the trials and tribulations involved. We were welcomed by the current owner and given a potted history of the garden before looking around. I would recommend visiting East Lambrook Manor if you have not been, it will inspire you.



East Lambrook – ditch where Margery Fish grew her snowdrops

Forde Abbey Garden was a different kettle of fish! It is a large open garden, spread out over 40 acres, mostly arboretum but with a large bog garden and circular border and a well appointed nursery with a small garden display area. Unfortunately, it did rain just after we arrived at Forde Abbey but this didn't spoil the day. Everyone enjoyed the day. My thanks to those who attended and to Ben for sorting out all of the money on the day. I hope we can have other trips in the future but we will need a better turnout to make it viable.



Forde Abbey

Photos: Paddy Parmee

Garden Visits 2017 by Jennifer Harmer

Visiting gardens is an enjoyable part of the AGS and this spring I visited 2 gardens under the scheme. One I knew very well and have visited many times over the last 30 years – Michael Baron's garden – and the second one I did not know at all – Ben and Paddy Parmee's.

As is so often the case when visiting Michael's garden at snowdrop time, it was bitterly cold and damp but the welcome was as warm as ever. A steaming hot drink and cake are always welcome at any time, but particularly so in February. Michael has recently been rejuvenating his snowdrop beds and everything was looking very pristine. It is always a joy to see snowdrops in the dark days of winter; they give so much hope for the spring to come. The garden at Brandy Mount is an all the year round garden and if you haven't been I can highly recommend it at any time.



Rejuvenated area

I did not know Ben and Paddy until I joined the AGS last autumn but have been seriously impressed by the amount of work they do for the AGS so I did wonder if they found time to garden! However, I visited their garden on a beautiful spring morning and was completely bowled over by it. Their long winding garden takes you through an alpine garden pass herbaceous borders to a bog garden with almost every plant being very unusual. We were all queuing up to ask Paddy and Ben about their fascinating plants. One that was catching everyone's eye was a dark form or *Anemone nemorosa* which Paddy said had been in flower for 2 months. It starts off almost white and become a very dark crimson. It has no cultivar name – just dark form!

*Anemone nemorosa* - early colour*Anemone nemorosa* 'Dark form'

Photos: Paddy Parmee & author

The morning I was there, the bog garden was being guarded by one of the most beautiful cats I have ever seen, and I am a dog person not a cat one!! Another cat was maintaining watch over a beautiful *Rosa banksiae* 'Lutea'!!



Dorset and Hampshire Group Visit to the Dolomites 3-10 June 2017

by John McCarthy

A party of twelve, composed of seven Dorset and five Hampshire Group members, arranged a private trip with Naturetrek, based locally in Chawton. Our destination was to Tamion in the Fassa Valley. We were based in a modern but traditional family run hotel and were made warmly welcome – well fed too!

We had two leaders who drove us each day to a couple of sites of floral interest and they were well able to provide as much botanical support as we needed.



The Group + Graham Poynter, a tour leader & Dorset member, on the final day at Passo Rolle

Photo: Jessica Turner, tour leader

The first two days were misty and damp, but not soaking, and the weather improved for the rest of the week. It soon became apparent that the season was late and high altitude flora had still to come. Timing is always a gamble, but we were able to see gentians, plenty of meadow plants and 'roadside botanising' yielded some interesting orchids. *Cypripedium calceolus* would be easily overlooked when in bud but is spectacular while briefly in flower and incognito again as soon as it fades. The accompanying pictures are a small selection.



Orchis militaris



Cypripedium calceolus in bud



Cypripedium calceolus



Paradisea liliastrum



Gentiana verna



Epipogium aphyllum



The Sella Massif viewed from the north

As a footnote I have included a couple of orchid finds in the Winchester Royal County Hospital grounds shortly after my return!



Ophrys apifera



Anacamptis pyramidalis

Early Days with Vertical Paving by Frank Rhodes

At the southern end of my main rockery is a retaining wall, some 6 ft. wide and 3 ft. high, next to the front gate and a set of steps. It was a dry stone wall topped with a band of wall germander. Although there was a half way step, I never managed to grow much on it. *Rubus trilobus* wandered happily along it, but rarely flowered, while all other plantings sulked. So last winter I wondered if I could replace it with a retaining wall made of vertical slabs, forming a series of narrow ledges. The sides of the slabs would have to be straight in order to abut tightly. So some kind of paving was called for, large enough to form a strong wall, though not too large for me to handle, and quite thin in section. B&Q stock a quarter inch thick paving made of what appears to be a very hard limestone, in two sizes, 2x2 and 2x1 ft. – ideal.

The new wall has 5 rows of pavings, set vertically, in a slight curve, with the joints staggered. The first and third are sunk into the ground, the second rests on the ground, while the fourth and fifth rest on made up soil, with flat stones underneath for support. The ledges are 2-3 ins wide, and the gaps are filled with a John Innes, sand and chippings mixture. The first heavy rain showed that soil alone was not enough to bear the pressure from the ground above, so the whole wall had to be taken down and remade with stone blocks between the pavings to bear the pressure. At the top there are four rows of undressed slabs set as a more usual crevice bed, while next to the steps are some of the old stone blocks. Will it be strong



Retaining wall by front gate

and stable enough to hold up through several winters? Time will tell – it's early days yet.

If one can make a series of horizontal ledges with stone pavings, can one make a series of near vertical crevices, with them? A few cardboard models showed that if 2x2 ft. pavings are cut diagonally (not quite corner to corner) they can be set to form a mountain 'shoulder', which could be placed abutting the front wall of the garden. I started

with four split slabs, set with the two halves of one of them leaning on each other, with the others receding with 2 ins. gaps, the ones at the outside and back abutting the wall. But I thought that the triangular gap at the top was not large enough in relation to the triangular base to make it easy to keep the whole structure watered. So I re-built the 'shoulder' with two more cut pavings, and moved the position so that the new 'shoulder' merged with the crevices at the top of the retaining wall. I am told that similar structures have been used in Czechoslovakia to grow alpines.

I see two main problems in managing near-vertical crevices - retaining the soil, and inserting plants. While some books and articles recommend retaining the soil with chock-stones packed with clay, I chose to use plugs of horse hair (removed, years ago, from a Victorian armchair), with chock-stones packed with horse hair once plants are inserted. To insert a plant, I cut the bottom off the plastic pot, and cut two slits from top to bottom. That leaves two sides which will hold the soil while the plant is being inserted into the crevice, and can then be withdrawn. The sides can be used to squeeze the soil ball, so that a plant from a 3½ inch pot can be inserted into a 2 inch crevice. Odd that I have never been told that trick, or seen it mentioned in print alongside breaking plants out of clay pots. Several visitors to my garden have told me that they cut plants out of plastic pots, but perhaps the method should be more widely known.



Shoulder by front wall

After six months, the shoulder is well dressed, but by no means full. Most of the dionysia and lewisa are settled, though a few died. Primula, draba, asperula, *Petunia patagonica* and others are well established. Some acid loving primula were moved to a small extension but are still not happy. Will the more difficult plants survive the winter and thrive on the 'shoulder'? Time will tell – it's early days yet.

I moved a collection of porphyron saxifrages from a large pan, which they were outgrowing, to the ledges of the new retaining wall. They settled in well and gave a good show of flowers in the spring. But the scorching weather of mid-June showed that even a steeply sloping, NE facing, slope did not give enough shade for the porphyron. The only other place which I could find in the garden for them was in one of the frames, which is shaded, but not overhung, by apple trees. So I have now used stone paving to build a double-sided set of ledges. I gather that not-dissimilar structures have been used to exhibit alpines in the past. The saxifrages will be transferred to the NE facing side, while the SW facing side will be available for 'specials'. I have two pavings which can be cut to fit the ends of the double sided block of ledges, though first I stuffed the ends with horse hair. I wondered if I could establish plants in these vertical crevices, but early trials showed that it was extremely difficult to control the slump of the very open soil which I used to fill the crevices. So I will fit ends, with a tie bar to hold them in place, and cut planting holes in them.

In the mean time, the retaining wall by the front gate will be filled with alpines chosen to show a greater variety of form, and a longer flowering period, than the Porphyron saxifrages. Lots of people lingered at the front gate to examine the saxifrages in flower, but few now bother to look at the developing (and scorched) cushions. Will the new alpine wall encourage passers- by to stop and enjoy the glory of alpines?

Time will tell – it's early days yet



Double side set of ledges under construction

The Garden at Brandy Mount House

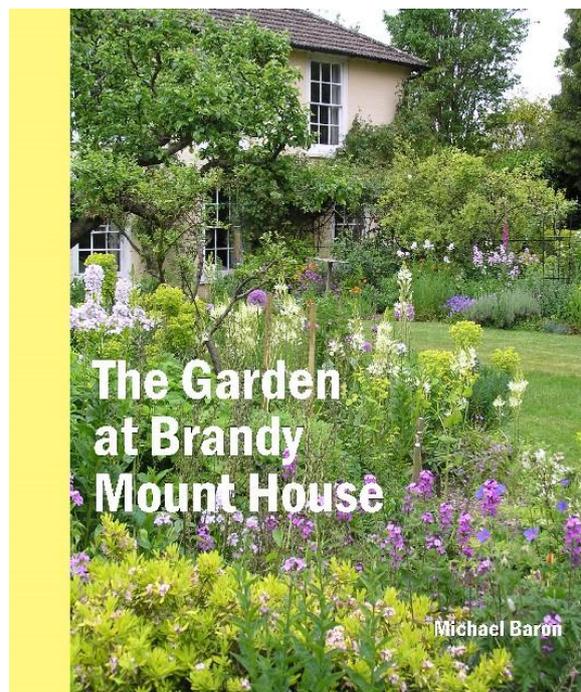
by Michael Baron

A Review by Michael Powell

AGS publication:

Members' price: £25.50, otherwise £32.00

<http://www.alpinegardensociety.net/sales/books/>



When I was asked to review this book I did not know what to expect. I do not normally read books of this kind and braced myself for a worthy but dull read. I need not have worried; in fact I was pleasantly surprised. The book tells the story of how Michael Baron, a master at Winchester College, acquired Brandy Mount House in New Alresford in 1983, and then with his dear wife Caryl over 30 or so years developed the garden into a centre of horticultural excellence, at one time holding the National Collection of Galanthus.

The book is divided into two parts. The first part is biographical in a broad sense. It gives a brief account of Michael's early life and the botanical and horticultural influences he was open to. He seems always to have been surrounded by plants and to have taken a keen botanical interest in them. Having studied Botany at Oxford and then married, he took up a teaching post at Winchester College. Eventually in 1983 he and Caryl moved to Brandy Mount. The history and development of the garden is also outlined. The famous gardeners and horticulturists he has met and from whom over the years he has acquired plants and advice are also described. It is a long and illustrious list. The second and larger part describes a tour round the garden describing the plantings in the different areas. There is a useful plan of the garden on page 24 and this is reproduced in miniature as each part of the garden is described, with the relevant part ringed in red.

I would recommend this book for a number of reasons: Firstly it is interesting as a history of a thirty year long labour of love. The planning and decisions, the choice of plants, the physical labour involved, and the plantings -all are described and all can be learnt from. Secondly, if you live in the south of England, particularly on chalk, you will learn much about the kind of calcicole plants you may be able to grow. Thirdly and most importantly the book is packed with cultural information. The garden once housed a National Collection of Galanthus and Michael and the garden are known nationally for the quality and range of the collection. There are comments on a large number of different individual varieties – ease of culture, quality of flower, vigour, how they were acquired, etc, as well as instructions on how to increase stocks by chipping. Galanthophiles will love it! There is cultural information scattered throughout the book, but you will have to read the book to find it. There is also useful information of Peonies, Daphnes, Crocus and other spring bulbs. The garden is strong in spring interest, but skilful planting and planning ensure there is always something of note going on. There is also a useful list of plants to avoid, such as *Arum maculatum*, Brunnera, Lily of the Valley, and others less obviously weedy – wolves in sheep's' clothing!

Being an AGS book the quality of production is high, with excellent photos and clear text. You will find it a useful addition to your library.

Fifty Years Ago (March 1967) – A.G.S. Bulletin Volume 35 No. 147 p.59

***A Note on Allium triquetrum* by R D Nutt**

I had just read Helen Dillon's '*From my Garden*' in the August RHS edition of *The Garden* and had been amused and sympathised with her problems in moving house. While her house was being restored the builders bulldozed 'all the topsoil into one monstrous pile – for security, they said'. What they had not appreciated is that in one area there was a 'wildly invasive *Allium triquetrum* that she referred to as 'dangerous brute, although pretty'. R D Nutt, writing 50 years earlier, had also found it 'a very lovely plant'. In his *A Note on Allium triquetrum* he was responding to Dr Lionel Bacon's difficulty in cultivating it in Winchester as the Dr had suspected it was a lime-hater (1965 Bulletin p.351). Nutt had acquired the plant without a name and was able to identify it when he visited Savill Gardens. There he found the allium growing in a large woodland area amongst bluebells of pink, blue and white and thought it enchanting. After he explained the attractiveness of the plant, he wrote:



Allium triquetrum
<https://upload.wikimedia.org>

I now wondered if I had acquired one of those pernicious weeds we are always being warned never to plant. ... The kind owner of a large garden [where he acquired the plant] had by now warned me that the allium had, at Knap Hill Nursery, become a weed which nothing would kill.

That was in 1965; then I read Lionel Bacon's comment that the plant was difficult. In one respect, I hoped not, as I wanted to see its lovely flowers each year. Clapham, Tutin and Warburg describe the allium as 'introduced, though naturalized in the Channel Islands, South West England, South Wales and South Ireland: increasing.' It is a native of the Western Mediterranean.

Many alliums put up their leaves in the autumn or winter, and *A. triquetrum* is one of the latter. Lionel Bacon tells me his garden is a frost pocket, and also 'suffers' from warm spells which bring plants on rather too soon. Another suggestion was that the allium abhors lime; this might be expected from its flourishing at Knap Hill with azaleas. One correspondent reports it flourishing at Oxford on a lime soil. It would be interesting to hear other views on the hardiness of this allium.

I think many of us have suffered from the invasive allium even coming up in cracks between paving stones. Helen Dillon's part solution, from the few remaining visible clumps, was to make a delicious wild allium pesto which she ate with potato gnocchi, pine nuts and Italian cheese. If you so choose to do the same, the recipe for the pesto recipe may be found at <http://www.carllegge.com/2014/02/three-cornered-leek-recipes/>.

Janice Bennetts