

# WEST YORKSHIRE AGS GROUP

## NEWSLETTER NO. 64 FEBRUARY 2017

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*Snowdrops and aconites*

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### **NOTES FROM THE COMMITTEE**

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The other day I used the toll bridge at Aldwark, just south of Boroughbridge. The drive to it had been through shallow freezing mist. The trees were white with rime, looming out of the whiteness with the hint of blue sky through the mist. It was beautiful. The Ouse was mirror-like and the white edged bushes reflected perfectly. Handing over the ticket I commented cheerily “Isn’t it beautiful!” The toll keeper pulled a face, looking at me as if I was mad.

‘Beauty is in the eye of the beholder’. True. You have to look for it sometimes. *Galanthus* ‘Three Ships’ has been out since just before Christmas and one morning, again as the mist was lifting, every part was edged with tiny diamonds, sparkling in the new sunshine. *Crocus pestalozzi caeruleus* has a tiny black spot at the base of each stamen but you have to look for it.

The most rewarding thing about learning to paint flowers when I had to give up work was seeing the beauty in my alpinas. Tiny spots of rime-like calcium on

saxifrage leaves, the delicate crystalline pink petals of *Dionysia archibaldii* seen through a lens and the myriad of blues in a gentian flower or blue *Meconopsis* changing constantly as the light changed.

We still have some winter left. Don't wish it away but hunt for the beauty and be uplifted by our early flowering gems!

Rosemary Cox

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## *My Disappearing Galanthus*

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About 20 years ago I purchased 5 bulbs of *Galanthus reginae-olgae sub.sp reginae-olgae* from what was then Potterton and Martins Nursery. In those days, autumn flowering plants were something of a novelty to me and with a mortgage and four children to raise these were quite an expensive item. With that in mind and being ignorant of their requirements I decided to plant them in a lattice pot so that should the need arise I'd be able to retrieve them with ease. I eagerly awaited the arrival of the flowers and sure enough they duly appeared in the second week of October.

This event was repeated for the following four years bang on time, but the next year they failed to make a show. As I was extremely busy at the time, I neglected to do anything about it and subsequently forgot about them. Seven years ago I broke my leg and my wife offered to tidy up the garden for me and remembering the lattice pot I asked her if she could locate it as it might come in handy. To our surprise she found it and though no foliage had been in evidence for many years it contained over



50 bulbs of varying sizes. The original bulbs had reproduced vegetatively, but without making any leaves. The upshot was that I kept the 20 largest and either gave the rest away or sold them at the group plant sales. Those which I kept are now slowly spreading beneath a *Cedrus libanii* 'Compt de Dijon' where they seem to be very happy. I think the relatively warm and dry sheltered conditions suit them well and I leave the cedar's needles as a constant mulch. John Stone.

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## ***Observations From The Kitchen Sink***

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I was standing at the kitchen sink doing the dishes when I noticed a beautiful spider's web across the outside of the window. As I looked, a wasp flew into the web. A large spider dashed out to investigate, but on seeing the wasp promptly retreated.

Meanwhile, the wasp, instead of struggling in the web, cut its way free and started to attack a fly which had already been caught and parcelled up by the spider.

The wasp cut the fly in two, then flew off with part of it in its jaws. Within a minute this was repeated – a wasp flew into the web and removed the remaining piece of fly.

I was left with the question; was this one particularly clever wasp, or is it something they all do, but which I have never seen before?

Has anybody else witnessed this behaviour?

Sonya Walker

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## ***Androsace hedraeantha***

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This *Androsace hedraeantha* appeared in my garden in 2015 and was a mystery to me as I had never bought it. It had probably germinated from a seed piggy-backing on another plant bought from a nursery. It placed itself in a perfect spot on a lump of tufa which gets good light levels. It does not have winter protection. It is also very easy to grow in a well-drained but not too dry soil. It is a few centimetres tall and flowers in April-May.



*A. hedraeantha* originates in meadows and gravelly slopes above 2000m in mountainous regions of Albania and Bulgaria. What a beauty! I've collected a few seeds already.

Matthew Childs

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## STRAWBERRY COTTAGE, The Next Project

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Old greenhouse

When we moved here three years ago there was already an 8' x 10' greenhouse in the garden, with the garage (now Bob's workshop) shading the south-west side and a fence and trees to the north-west. There was rather unsteady aluminium staging on the left so we carried in two 4' x 3' 'benches' to put on the

right and at the end with another two of the same balanced on top of them. We'd used these in a hired van to transport our plants when moving up here. They had previously been used in a display and weren't made to last so were also rather rickety. We filled the top ones with sand for our *Primulas allionii*, *marginata* and *auricula*, some bulbs and a few other plants which needed winter protection. Bob removed a couple of panes from the end for extra ventilation but we did want to give the greenhouse a good clean and insert 'proper' benches which we have yet to do.



New greenhouse, workshop to the left, utility room to right.

Last November we saw an advertisement for a 6' x 8' greenhouse for sale, already dismantled, so we bought that and erected it in the only space available which is between the cottage and workshop. It is not in an ideal position but catches the sun at the back in the morning and at the front in the evening. It is also only a few steps from the back door!

Bob made plunge beds out of twin-wall polycarbonate sheeting which we already had, by heating and bending up the sides and then made wooden ends leaving drainage gaps. All the plants have now been cleaned up and transferred leaving the old greenhouse ready to be sorted out in warmer weather. It needs a thorough clean, some repairs and better staging. This will be the bulb house.

Di Dark

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## ***AGS National Alpine Show Harlow Carr 2016***

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For the second year running the weather was a fine sunny day, the sun's rays shining through the picture windows overlooking the resplendent autumn colour of Harlow Carr Gardens.

The show benches were full of colour with many first rate autumn flowering plants which included many cyclamen.

The big winner of the day was Ian Kidman's Farrer Medal Winning *Galanthus peshmenii*, which had many galanthophiles amazed at the uniformity of flower.



*Galanthus peshmenii*

Other notable plants, pictured overleaf: *Sternbergia greuteriana* brought all the way from Sussex. In the cushion plant class, Trevor Whitaker's 2008 raising of *Hymenoxys lapidicola* was in stonkingly good condition. Anne Wright exhibited a number of cyclamen including *Cyclamen mirabile* 'Tilebarn Nicholas' and *C mirabile* 'Tilebarn Anne'. She also exhibited an immaculate *Galanthus reginae-olgae* 'Blanc de Chine', beating a range of other well flowered dwarf bulbs.

This year 2017 will be my last year as Show Secretary. In future years Ian and Georgina Instone will be taking over the running of the Harlow Carr

Show. I am sure they will enjoy the level of support I myself have enjoyed from the members of the West Yorkshire group.  
My thanks to all who have given up their spare time to assist in making our show a great success.

Eric Rainford





*Sternbergia greuteriana*



*Cyclamen hederifolium*

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## *Greenhouse on offer to members*

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In the summer, we took up Ruth Rymer's very generous offer to donate Tony's greenhouse. We decided that, although we had no room for an extra greenhouse, we could just about fit a larger one into the space already occupied by our 6x8.

Helped by Eric, we dismantled Tony's and transported it here (inadvertently losing a crucial piece on route!). Fortunately, the contents of the 6x8, all bulbs, were dormant and in the process of being repotted, so could be removed into trays out of the way during rebuilding. We took the opportunity to raise the footprint of the new greenhouse by 10cm, as it had been prone to flooding.

All the glass for the new house was washed, all the glazing strips were replaced, the base was slabbed and levelled, and holes dug for the ground anchors. We were ready to go. We quickly raised the sides and bolted them together and prepared to fix the ridge section in place. Disaster! We discovered that one of the special plates that fixed the ridge to the end of the greenhouse was missing, presumed lost in transit.

A quick googling session came up with one place that could supply the part, and it was ordered with a promise of swift delivery. It duly arrived the next day, but as we tightened the first nut against it, the



*Tony's Greenhouse*



moulded aluminium part just shattered as if made of glass. An urgent call to the company who supplied it followed, and another part was winging its way across to us.

Eventually we were able to complete the construction and glazing without further setbacks, and new staging was made to fit inside. By this time, the bulb tenants had all been repotted and were waiting for an invitation to move in, so we were quickly rehoused and we were very happy to have all the extra room. It was a high, light area with superb ventilation from 8 louvres and wide double doors.

Fast forward a few months to this January, and the first high winds since the construction. We found that some of the panes of glass had blown out, and many of the glazing clips had sprung away, leaving more panes vulnerable to falling out. We quickly secured them with as many clips as we could find, and replaced the broken panes, crossing fingers that we would get no more wind before we could rethink.

With heavy hearts, we realised that we were going to have to replace it. Our garden is on the edge of an airfield and exposed to all the westerly gales, and the new greenhouse was broadside on to the wind, and taller than our old, smaller one. The situation had got the better of the structure.

Replacing a greenhouse, leaving the existing staging and valuable plants in situ, is not to be approached lightly, but we didn't have any choice. We ordered a new heavy duty Rhino greenhouse and were fortunate that they could deliver within a week. Even luckier - the week after it arrived we had an almost perfect weather opportunity



*Shortening the staging*

- calm, dry weather forecast for several days.

It took only one day to dismantle the structure as all the new nuts and bolts came apart easily. The next day dawned frosty, and since I had only covered

very vulnerable seedlings with fleece, we found that the pots we needed to remove in order to shorten the staging (to make it fit the slightly shorter new house) were frozen into the plunge sand. Barry persevered with digging the new anchor holes, then eventually we were able to shorten the staging and were ready to put up the new structure.

The new greenhouse went together fairly easily, but problems with squaring and levelling meant it took the whole day before we were finished. The following day, we glazed the sides, but had difficulty fitting the full-length glazing strips. It was so cold, we had to store the strips inside a shed with heaters on to keep them flexible.

Finally, on the next day we completed the glazing and were finally able to take the fleece off the plants and close the doors against the cold. The last job, the concreting in of the anchor points was finished off the next day.

Since then, there has been no wind! We are still keeping our fingers crossed that the Rhino will cope with the gales we expect at regular intervals.



*The new Rhino*

Consequently, we now have a beautifully refurbished 12 x 8 greenhouse to offer for the £50 it cost us in new parts, to any member who has a suitably sheltered position for it. It is dismantled into separate sections, so is partially assembled and ready for transport.

Please contact Anne on 01423 358791 or [anneswright42@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:anneswright42@hotmail.co.uk) (remove the 42 before emailing to this address) if you would like Tony's greenhouse - it will be a real asset in the right garden, and would make a super alpine house.

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## \*\*\**Editor's Note*\*\*\*

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**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 [anneswright42@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:anneswright42@hotmail.co.uk) (remove the 42 before emailing to this address)

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!

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## *Website reminder*

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The West Yorkshire AGS Group have their own mini website hosted on the main AGS website. It has recently been updated a bit and should continue to develop. If you have any contributions that you think would be suitable for the website or any suggestions about it please speak to Matthew Childs or Rosemary Cox.

To find the website:

main AGS website > Groups > Group Websites > West Yorkshire AGS Group

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## *Getting your newsletter*

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For the first time, many of you will have received this newsletter by email. Thank you - it will enable the group to cut down on printing and postage.

The newsletter will also be available as a download from the website (above).

# CALENDAR

18 FEB	Caerleon Show
25 FEB	Pershore Early Show
4 MAR	Harlow Show
11 MAR	<b>Local Group Meeting, St Chad's</b> - Rosemary Cox - Alpines: Plants on the edge
18 MAR	Kendal Show
25 MAR	East Lancs Show
1 APR	Hexham Show and Rosemoor Show
8 APR	<b>Local Group Meeting, St Chad's</b> Martin and Anna -Liisa Sheader - Plants of the volcano region Northern Patagonia
8 APR	Chesterfield Show and Dublin Show
15 APR	Cleveland Show and Kent Show
22 APR	Dublin Show and Midland Show
6 MAY	East Anglia Show
<b>13 MAY</b>	AGS AGM*** <b>LOCAL SHOW</b> *** - Fred Bundy - North West China
27 MAY	Wimborne Show
4 JUN	Bakewell Show Show
1 JUL	Pershore Show
9 SEP	<b>Local Group Meeting, St Chad's</b> - John Richards - Flowers of the Sichuan
30 SEP	Loughborough Autumn Show