

# WEST YORKSHIRE AGS GROUP

---

## NEWSLETTER NO. 67 AUGUST 2018

---



*Crocus beds in flower at Janis Ruksans' nursery in Latvia*

---

### ***The Chairman's Ramblings.***

---

The last several months have been somewhat taxing. At the start of the year I had my eyes sorted out - cataracts removed and laser vision correction on both eyes. I am now free from wearing specs for the first time in seventy years. I only have to wear reading glasses.

I had my new glasses on the 11 March and on the 15th we were flying out to Latvia to Janis Ruksans' bulb nursery. We hired a car to take us down to his nursery from our base in Riga. The old town's architecture is fabulous.

On our journey to Ruksans nursery it was a bright sunny day, but with a bitterly cold wind. (See photo of outside temperature on car's instrument)

We arrived at the nursery at midday and were greeted by Janis, we quickly made our way to his bulb poly-tunnel out of the cold. The scent that greeted us when we entered was fabulous from the crocuses which were in full bloom (the reason for our visit). We could have been in one of the famous perfumery

houses of Paris. I will be giving a review of our visit together with a photographic account of a fabulous crocus collection next March.



We were delayed a day getting back to the UK due to snow in Leeds. The following Friday I was on my way to see the National Saxifrage collection and for its open days at Waterperry Gardens in Oxfordshire (another one of the committees I sit on!).

On my return the following Tuesday I started to construct a number of lightweight troughs made from polystyrene boxes, three in total for our exhibit at the Harrogate Spring Show. My task was to plant up these troughs with saxifrages, and was to be a tribute to David Walkey for his work with new saxifrage cultivars over the last three decades (see accompanying article). With the very cold weather, the beast from the east, followed by that very hot spell, the effect on the Sax's was to end their flowering season. You can see a photo of two troughs planted up in haste, the photos and a summary of the Harrogate Spring Flower Show exhibit can be seen in a later article.

People talk about being in the right place at the right time, well this happened to me the first week in May. I was taking some rubbish to the local recycling centre, when I noticed on the ground next to the car at the side of mine a nice sized trough, I enquired was he disposing of it, and if so could I have it? He said "Is it worth anything, after all you see things of value on these money for nothing shows?" My reply – "No!" He said "You might as well take the other two". The troughs (see photo) were of the ones made by the Elmdene company some years ago, sadly no longer in business, lightweight and very much like the real troughs in days gone by. They will be planted up with some special alpinas, more than likely Sax's.

May 26/27 was the children's gardening weekend at Harlow Carr Gardens. Promoting the AGS and our local group to prospective new members, it's a great opportunity to bring our interest to younger members of society. We had about fifty young ones who delved into the soil mix and potted up their chosen alpine to take away with them. We may have two new members for the local group, but no takers for the main society. Harlow Carr said they had just short of 5000 visitors that weekend of which 1800 were children. Time will tell if we have been successful in attracting any new enthusiastic members. My grateful

thanks to Ian and Georgina Instone, Bob and Di dark for supporting me on this very worthwhile event.

I was looking forward to the East Cheshire AGS national alpine show on June 2, alas it did not happen, we were summoned down to Somerset by our daughter to look after our grandchildren. My orchid didn't get to go, which am told would have one a first - *Dactylorhiza maderensis* (at right).

I am looking forward to a further visit to Waterperry in July to see the silver Sax collection and with a bit of luck I will come away with some of the very new Sax cultivars, which have only just been named from David Walkey's collection. David died before any of his latest cultivars could be named. 37 of his new cultivars were left without any name.



To finish my first rambling as your new Chairman, I must give a big thank you to Liz Barber for her long stint as Secretary for the group. Liz's support to the group has been magnificent, which has kept the group functioning when no other member would take on the responsibility. Another big thank you to John Stone who took on the role of Chairman after our previous Chairman Paul Wade emigrated to the other side of the Pennines. The group was operating without a Chairman for some time. A great big thank you to Anne Wright who is responsible for producing the group's newsletter and now takes on the role as the Secretary for the group. We are in good health regarding our finances, my thanks to Sonia Walker our treasurer and members of the committee and look forward to supporting the membership of our group.

Before we know it, our next group meeting will be upon us, and hopefully a number of new members to greet. With the commitment of the groups committee we will make every effort to ensure our group continues well into the future.

Eric Rainford

---

## May Bells

---

May always leaves me a little disappointed as for two months or more I have had an abundance of colour in my rather small garden - this year despite the miserable weather it has been exceptional - but it struggles to maintain the show from May until late August when the first autumn crocus and Colchicums begin to appear. With this in mind and Anne's request for newsletter material I was a bit apprehensive when I went out this morning to look for something to write about and to photograph. Wandering around it suddenly became apparent that there were a few plants unrelated to each other which have campanulate flowers so I thought I would share their beauty with you.



*Uvularia sessilifolia* (right) is a dainty species from the western USA which grows in woodland.

I have grown this in the garden in the past but lost it to the ubiquitous slugs and snails. I now grow it in an open mixed compost with bark and grit along with pleiones and asiatic primulas in a lattice backed planter. I protect them in winter with a substantial covering of sphagnum moss and a polycarbonate cover, a worthwhile precaution.



*Rhododendron cinnabarinum xanthocodon* (left) is a particular favourite of mine and in my opinion like many other rhododendron species it exceeds its hybrid cousins in its grace and beauty. It is hardy but needs careful siting in a sheltered partially shaded position. It appears to flower on old wood so be patient if you decide to purchase one.

*Fritillaria camchatcensis* needs no such fussing over and is as tough as old boots. The plants I have are the yellow form which have brown freckles on the inner petals. I find it is good doer both in semi shade and full sun.

Campanula pulla does best in a raised bed but is equally at home in a large pot, scree or trough. It tends to flower a little earlier than many of its fellow bellflowers.

Last but not least is Symphyandra wanneri which is supposedly monocarpic but I think it is probably biennial. It sets copious amounts of seed and being from the mountains of eastern Europe is perfectly hardy. I grow it in a raised bed but it should be fine in the garden.

John Stone

---

## ***Harlow Carr Harrogate A. G. S. National Flower Show***

---



The weekend of the 13th/ 14th October is going to be a busy time for the West Yorkshire A.G.S. Group. On Saturday 13th October we are hosting a national show for the AGS and on Sunday 14th October is our own local group show. Both are being held at Harlow Carr, Harrogate and it would be really good to see you at either show or better still, both. You will have free entry on Saturday if you show your A.G.S. or R.H.S. membership card. On Sunday you need to show your local group programme or R.H.S. membership card.

If you would like to bring your plants to enter in the show on Saturday you need to be a member of the A.G.S. and details on how to enter are on the A.G.S. website if you don't have a show handbook. It is quite straight forward, just check which class number is best suited for the plant, measure the outside

of the pot to make sure it is no bigger than stated for that class, clean the pot and tidy the plant so it is looking its best with no dead leaves or flowers. The website/ handbook also gives timings for staging the plants, contact details and class details. If you have never shown a plant before, you would be best to enter the Novice section (Bronze Medal) classes. This section can be entered on the morning of the show, before judging starts at 9.45.



You can also enter on the Sunday for our local show which is open for staging from 11am. Information for this will be available with this Newsletter. Both these shows are our “shop window” for the general public to see the results of some of the skills we incorporate into our hobby. The more plants we have on display at the shows will hopefully inspire others to join our groups. If you have a plant of which you are proud, why not bring it to the show and share it with everyone there?

Ian and Georgina Instone

---

## **Local Group Show 12 May 2018**

---

**Local Group Shield** (most points open section)- Ian Instone

**H.C. Tankard** (best plant in show)- Trevor Whitaker *Eriogonum gracilipes*

**Hemingway Trophy** (best bulbous plant)- Fred Bundy *Fritillaria affinis* yellow form

**Lovat Plaque** (most points in section B) - Mathew Childs

**Daphne Kent Memorial Trophy** (plant in flower max pan size 19cm) - Ian Instone *Primula sieboldii*

**Local Group Award Card** (rock plant in flower who have not won a first prize at any AGS or local group show) - Charlie Philpotts *Cypridium* "Sunny"



---

## *Dr David G A Walkey (1937-2017)*

---

Over the last few years, David established himself as one of the leading Porophyllum Saxifraga hybridisers. His body of work speaks for itself - 65 quality cultivars is no mean feat. Those 65 plants arose out of approximately 2000 crosses, so you are looking at a success rate of around 3%.

David did not simply cross any plants, he carefully selected parents to achieve the results he required, and this ability to choose parents takes a lot of skill and knowledge. He particularly wanted to create new hybrids that had certain qualities, attractive cushions and most importantly near sessile flowers. He also had a strong perception of flower design, he looked for full open flowers of a good size and colour with petals that made a strong impression.

He liked veining and strove to achieve wavy and notched petals edges, these two features are clearly seen in *S. 'Tysoe Splendour'*.

Adrian Young (Saxifraga Collections Manager at Waterperry) has worked closely with David on the selection process since 2010. Every year he would visit David and take back to Waterperry (where the National Saxifraga collection is located) 6-10 plants of his new creations, which would usually be around 300 pots.

What David wanted to see was his selections growing in different conditions, as he grew his plants in a fairly shady environment and he knew at Waterperry they would be exposed to more light, which of course frequently produced quite different looking plants.

*Saxifraga 'Tysoe Sunrise'*, *'Tysoe Sunset'* and *'Tysoe Moonstone'* are good examples: in David's conditions they were OK, but growing in Waterperry conditions they proved to be exceptional, much harder, tighter cushions and importantly shell pink flowers, while in David's conditions the flowers were white. He found this dual trialing process important and Adrian was only too pleased to help this wonderful hybridiser.



*Plate 2. Saxifraga 'Tysoe Splendour'*

S. 'Tysoe Polka'



David started his selective breeding campaign in 1988 with Saxifraga 'Whatcote', one of his Warwickshire village plants. At that time he worked in partnership with his colleague Brian Dowker. Between 1988 and 1991 he introduced 17 new cultivars. All of the 17 contained Saxifraga poluniniana as one of the parents, 'Harlow Carr' or 'Winifred' was mainly used for the other parent.

In 2001 he released 3 new cultivars, Saxifraga 'Gaydon-Love' 'Crimscote-Love' and 'Hartford-Love' all using Sax. 'Miluj Mne' which is a cultivar from Jan Burgel. He had a lot of respect for Jan Burgel and was successful in producing good new Sax. x poluanglica hybrids.

In 2004 David started releasing his Tysoe series with Saxifraga 'Tysoe Star'. So far there have been 45 cultivars, the latest batch include some crosses using Saxifraga ludlowii, and this is the first time this Tibetan rarity has been used in hybridisation. David has named one of the new cultivars after Vojtech Holubec (Sax 'Tysoe Holubec'), the Czech botanist who first introduced the plant.

Many of David's hybrids are being grown and exhibited with considerable success at AGS shows.

Cultivars like 'Tysoe Splendour', 'Tysoe Burgundy', 'Tysoe Pink Perfection', 'Tysoe Robin' and others are being propagated by Alpine Nurseries.

The Society offers our sincere condolences to Heather Walkey and the family.

Eric Rainford



Plate 1. Saxifraga 'Tysoe Star'

---

## *Harrogate Spring Flower Show AGS Exhibit.*

---



The exhibit at the 2018 Harrogate Spring Show proved to be great deal of hard work from the Cleveland and West Yorkshire groups of the AGS, and the exhibit gained a silver medal award from the Northern Horticultural Society.

The theme was for plants from the continents of the world. The hardest part was getting mature plants from the specialist alpine nurseries, in particular those from the Southern Hemisphere. We had to build the exhibit with mature plants loaned to us by AGS members.

The exhibit took most of Tuesday prior to the show to build with a little tinkering the following Wednesday morning. Members of both groups commented that for the amount of work which had been put into the exhibit the reward was not worth the effort. They felt that the exhibit staged last year, a group of alpine photographs and lightweight troughs planted up with alpines, was far more rewarding

Throughout the four days of the show it was cold and wet, but for all four days we had many visitors, with the likely prospect of new members for the group.

What's the prospect of another exhibit next year? I would not bet on it.

Eric Rainford

---

## *Roberto Renzi*

---



We are very sad to report the death of Roberto earlier this year. He had been ill for some years, although most of us never would have guessed because of his unfailing enthusiasm and willingness to help and get involved in the workings of the group. Several members of the group were among the congregation at his funeral in Leeds Cathedral, the full church being a testament to his character.

He will be much missed and we send our condolences to his family and friends.

---

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

---

**Many thanks** to all the contributors to *this* newsletter. **I am 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 2018** (e-mail attachments preferred but not essential - please send images separate to the text). 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!

---

# CALENDAR

---

8 SEP 2018	<b>Local Group Meeting, St Chad's</b> - Peter Williams - 'A year in a woodland garden'.
29 SEP	Loughborough Autumn Show
6 OCT	Newcastle Show
13 OCT	<b><u>NO</u> Local Group Meeting at St Chad's</b> <b>AGS Harlow Carr Show.</b>
14 OCT	<b>AGS West Yorkshire Local Group Show</b> at <b>Harlow Carr.</b>
10 NOV	<b>Local Group Meeting, St Chad's</b> - Razvan Chisu - 'Romanian Alpines'.
8 DEC	<b>Local Group Meeting, St Chad's</b> Members Photographs (several members show photographs that might be from their gardens or field trips or illustrating gardening tips and favourite plants/genera.
12 JAN 2019	<b>Local Group Meeting, St Chad's</b> - Alan Oatway - 'Spring-time in Nepal'.
9 FEB	<b>Local Group Meeting, St Chad's</b> - Frank Hoyle - A talk on a visit to the Rocky Mountains in Colorado.
9 MAR	<b>Local Group Meeting, St Chad's</b> - Eric Rainford 'Buried treasures in Latvia'.

---

## Website reminder

---

The West Yorkshire AGS Group have their own mini website hosted on the main AGS website. If you have any contributions that you think would be suitable for the website or any suggestions about it please speak to Matthew Childs. To find the website:

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

*See you in September!*