

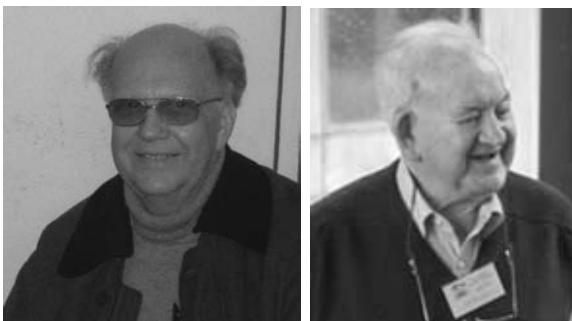
Blackpool 2010

The journey to Blackpool is one to which I always look forward. From Dunblane it is motorway all the way and with cruise control it is usually quite relaxing. Engine on, select 'drive', off we go. When I get to the M9 I switch on the radio, usually Radio Scotland or Radio 4 to update me on news and current affairs. This year Scotland were taking on England at Murrayfield and there was lots of conjecture about who would beat whom by how much! Would Scotland play to their potential? How good was our auld enemy? Remember 1990 a Grand Slam and Calcutta cup victory for Scotland! Glory days! This year Scotland just didn't want another defeat.

I would discover the result of the rugby on the return journey. A draw! I think that's a good conclusion.

At Blackpool, SRGC and AGS combine to put on a wonderful show. Friendships are renewed and strengthened. It's a pity more folk from the North don't make the journey but as Eric Watson said to me many years ago the joint shows in the North of England are the local show for the local SRGC members. Most exhibitors are members of both clubs and we enjoy the spirit of inclusion.

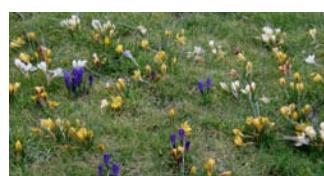
Two old friends were absent. I met both years ago at the old Morecambe show when it was run by Wilf Kirby and was actually held in Morecambe. Frank Tindall passed away last year and I was informed on Sunday morning after the show that Jack Brownless died on the show day. Both were stalwarts of the rock garden world and were typically members of both SRGC and AGS. I expected to see them at our discussion weekends as much as at the joint shows. Generous with their time, knowledge and experience they are sorely missed.



This is the first time I have driven down to Blackpool without roadside daffodils. The long cold winter ensured that the flower stems stayed below ground and are just emerging, while road-builders near Cumbernauld have bulldozed thousands of bulbs to build the new M80.



The beds of Crocus at Stanley Park in Blackpool compensated for the lack of daffodils.





Each year as you travel along the M74/M6, there are more and more windmills. Certain ones I find exciting and a plus on the journey others annoy me because they cut the smooth silhouettes of the hills. My favourites are the ones near Killington Lake services in Cumbria. As you enter Blackpool from the M55 you pass a big, white, old-fashioned windmill with strong sails. I wonder if I will come to like our modern giant windmills, the way I like this relic?

When I got to the show, several hours after the exhibitors and judges, I wondered what outsiders would think of lots of people driving, sometimes for hours, to bring wee plants out for the day. The range of species and varieties grown by our members is truly incredible. This year the colour on the benches was provided, in the main, by bulbs. I expected lots of Dionysias as I am always told that they had been superb 'last week' at an earlier AGS show. This year they are late as well. Primula allionii forms were also down but it proved to be good year to see petiolard Primulas, much to the joy of John Richards. The most worrying feature for the future, of this and other shows is the lack of 'beginners' in the novice sections.

Jean Wyllie's
Fritillaria
alburyana
always
flowers for
Blackpool and
always wins!



View from the outside

View from the inside



Tim Lever had a big tray of *Narcissus cyclamineus* adjacent to his Aberconway nursery stand. The blue chairs beside them either complimented the yellow of the flowers or clashed with them. It is a matter of opinion [as the man with the wooden leg said - Andy Stewart].

Jean's *Narcissus 'Betty Mae'* was a gift from a friend in New Zealand. Over the years it has prospered and the big panful here is the result of much looking after. Jean has been hybridising it *N. astruiensis* and *N. cyclamineus*. She has been rewarded with some nice seedlings.



The Farrer Medal [even year so AGS rules] was awarded to a magnificent 8 year old Cyclamen coum shown by Mike and Christine Brown of West Kirby. No words are need when you see the picture! Top plants like this need care all year round.



Mike and Christine had two pans of Primula allionii 'Anna Griffith', both in fabulous form.



Another family which contributes to spring colour is Ranuncuaceae. These cousins look similar but the top one is Ranunculus asiaticus and the lower Anemone biflora. Their shiny petals reflect the light in a magical way.



I thought that 'The Three Musketeers' were fictitious!

Petiolariid primulas clockwise from top left

P x 'Tantallon', moupinense, nana, nana alba, Arduaine

Below. The class for petiolariid primulas and John Richard's winning 6 pan entry



Some first prize winners left to right from top

Eranthis 'Guinea Gold', Dionysia 'Monika', Dionysia baoftica, Douglosia ochotensis

Corydalis popovii, Draba sphaeralea, Fritillaria pudica

Saxifraga 'Allendale Grace', Colchicum szovitzii, Iris reichenbachiana



Beautiful plants from all over the world.



Robert Rolfe spends hours taking pictures of prize winners and other interesting plants for 'The Alpine Gardener' for which he writes the annual report on Shows



Iris kolpakowskiana from John Lee



Crocus angustifolia

The price you pay for a bulb or plant reflects its rarity and desirability but not necessarily its beauty and garden worthiness. You could buy lots of the crocuses for one of these irises and unless you are a skilful grower, you should!

More first prize winners left to right from top

Dionysia afghanica, Cyclamen coum [Duncan Lowe Award]

3 pan Primulaceae, 3 pan silver, 3 pans bulbs

Saxifraga 'Allendale Grace', Colchicum szovitzii, Iris reichenbachiana





Colchicum szovitsii NARGS seed sown 1996



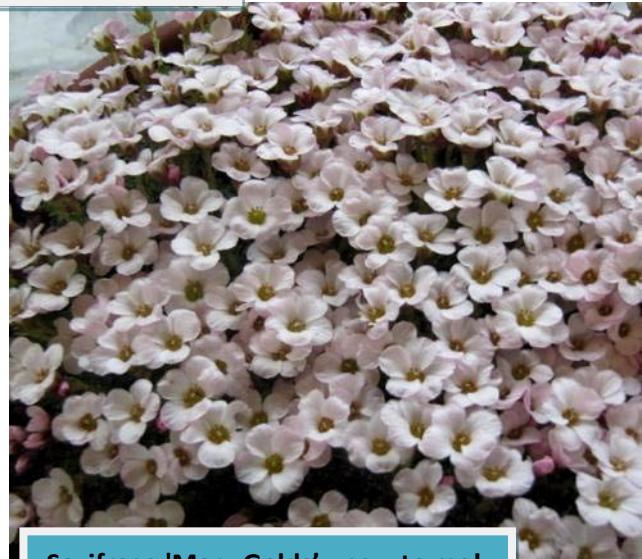
Galanthus viridipicis



A long day but plenty to consider right through till the end



Ranunculus asiaticus used to be seen more often



Saxifraga 'Mary Golds' - new to me!



Glassford and Jean take a rest before packing up and driving north. Glassford has the show report to write for 'The Rock Garden'.



Hepatica 'gyousie'



The label might read Hepatica japonica



Another great day out in Lancashire. Thanks to Lionel and all you exhibitors for the wonderful plants and flowers. There is always something new to see. Remember'Alpines 2011' is coming: book soon to get your discount!

