

# The Scottish Rock Garden Club SHOW REPORTS NEWCASTLE SHOW in Ponteland 2012



This being a Joint show, held by both the SRGC and the AGS [the Alpine Garden Society], in alternate years Forrester and Farrer Medals are awarded to the Best Plant in the Show.

This year the Farrer Medal went to a wonderfully surreal pan of *Biarum marmariense* shown by Bob and Rannveig Wallis.



Usually I drive south to Ponteland from Dunblane but because the RHS organised an excellent Gention day at Harlow Carr garden in Harrogate, this year I found myself driving north to the show. This may not seem a big difference but from my point of view I was able to see a very different part of the country.

## BREAKFAST

First I had a full English breakfast, which is very similar to a full Scottish breakfast or a full Welsh or Irish one. I think the critical feature is where did the pig, who was sacrificed for the bacon and sausages, live. I don't think the domicile of the hens which laid



**The 3 Guardian Angels**  
One from Gateshead  
One from Saline and  
One from Taunton

the eggs nor the source of the black pudding, affect the breakfast description much at all. Anyway, I can confirm that Yorkshire and Northumberland are beautiful counties with lots of splendid open spaces, woodland and hillsides. We tend to think that Scotland has a lot of bleak areas but on a dull damp day the north of England has just as many. There are certainly many beautiful tranquil spots near the A1. Luckily for me that Ponteland show day was sunny and fine making the views splendid. The morning sun lit up Harrogate's autumnal foliage and Harrogate has lots of trees.

The road from the south to Tyne-side is a better one and much busier than that from the north. I did find time to stop to photograph The Angel of the North at Gateshead. It is more difficult to see from the A1 these days because the trees surrounding the sculpture have grown a lot thus obscuring it, except from a distance. This may well be deliberate.



Jim McGregor & Kit Grey Wilson  
- back lit

When I got to the show the car park was pretty full but luckily local member and friend Alistair found me a space near the door! Pretty jammy for me! The trees round the car park were golden in their autumn tints. As quickly as I could I found my way into the hall to see if there were still plants to buy from the group stall and from the specialist nurseries. It is wonderful how the professionals keep finding new plants to propagate to tempt us into making purchases. I had time for a few purchases and some pictures when the show opened.

JOINT ROCK



Harry Jans, Ian Bainbridge & Cyril Lafong



Plant and image  
on Val's Ipad

At noon, there was a meeting of the RHS Joint Rock Garden Plant Committee. At Ponteland there was a good turn out of committee members from the SRGC, AGS and RHS. The strength of the Committee is that it draws its members from all over the UK. Everyone brings something special to the meeting and thus the suitability and hardiness of plants for different conditions throughout the UK can be

discussed. At Ponteland we had Chairman Kit Grey-Wilson and Vice Chairmen Sandy Leven and John Richards as well as AGS Committee Secretary Jim McGregor and SRGC Committee secretary Carole Bainbridge. Eminent plants-people are often invited to attend the Committee see us in operation. This time we were delighted that Harry Jans from the Netherlands could join us. Harry had been one of the lecturers at the gentian Day at Harlow Carr. Most importantly there were good plants to consider.

Digital technology allows us to record things in ever increasing ways, from cameras, mobile phones, android devices and I pads. Val Lee brought her Ipad and I was delighted to be able to take a picture of Oxalis ..... On the bench and on the Ipad. Is there a time lapse between the two images? On the Ipad you can see Mary Ridley and John Richards.



Keith Lever and Joy Bishop look at the Farrer winning Bi-arum





After the committee meeting when several awards to plants were recommended, The local group provided a splendid sit down lunch for judges, officials and Joint Rock members. I would like to record my thanks for their generosity and send my compliments to the waiters, waitresses and cooks. Such kindness fosters great friendship between members and societies in straightened times when everyone is conscious of where their pennies are spent. Once I had been fed and watered [Appletised actually] It was time to get back and take more pictures. It is amazing how long it takes to photograph the plants in a show when you stop to gossip and comment at every class! Some plants get photographed several times, others, despite every care on my part, get missed. I always try to record the exhibitor as well but sometimes I miss their name. So sorry to people whose plants appear but whose own name does not.

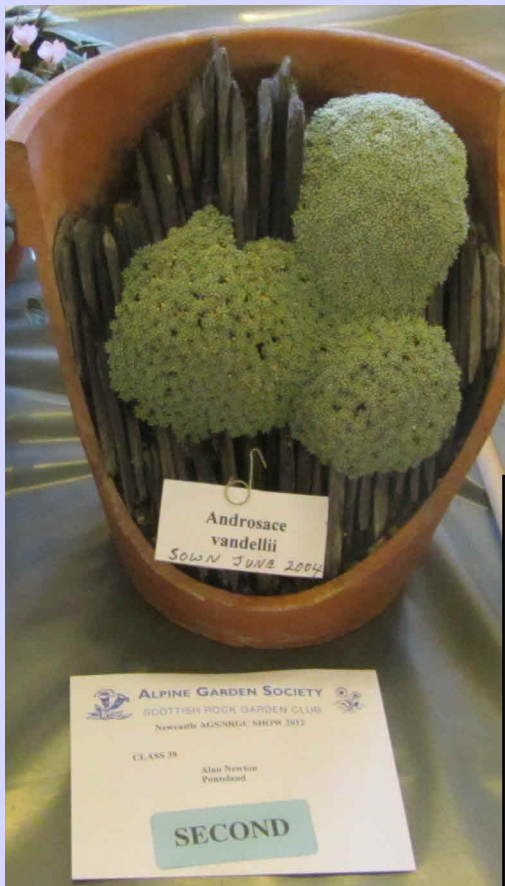
Later on in the day I had to stop taking photographs because the memory card in my camera was full. Now, I try to be prepared and intend always to carry a spare card or two in the car but not at Ponteland. My other stand by is the card which Anne always carries for me in her handbag but she was still home in Dunblane. What to do? Thank goodness for Newcastle Airport and W H Smith ! Saved! It took about half an hour to worry, drive to the airport, park, run [or walk] inside, buy a new memory card, walk back to the car, find a pay machine, pay £2.50 for 10 minutes parking, drive back to the hall, park and return to take more pictures of the great plants in the show.

Ponteland show is always good for Gentians and Cyclamens as well as autumn bulbs and berried shrubs.

This year was as good as ever. You can always be sure to see something new or something 'ordinary' grown exceptionally well. I get a thrill as soon as I get a glimpse of the show benches, like a child in a toy shop. I know it should be 'like a child in a sweet shop' but children should never get into sweet shops so that they don't risk the health of their teeth.



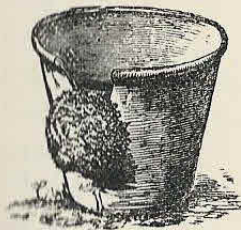




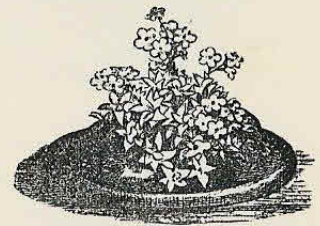
Alan Newton staged this pot of *Androsace vandellii* in a most unusual way. The plants look like they are growing on a slate cliff. They must have perfect drainage. The presentation reminds me of a method for cultivation *Androsaces* and difficult cushions advocated by W. Robinson in 'Alpine Flowers for Gardens' in 1903. I have the 1903 edition but the book was first published in 1870! That is 142 years ago!

In 1870 the first ever international football match, between England and Scotland, took place on 5th March. the British Red Cross was established on 4th August. Marie Lloyd was born and Charles Dickens died. Queen Victoria was on the throne and Gladstone was Prime Minister. All this and some people needed advice on how to grow *Androsace vandellii*!

For growing the *Androsaces* and some rare Rockfoils, a modification of the common pot may be employed with a good result. This is effected by cutting a piece out of the side



Pot for *Androsaces*, etc.



Alpine Plant growing between stones in a pot.

of the pot, 1½ or 2 inches deep. The head of the plant potted in this way is placed outside of the pot, leaning over the edge of the oblong opening, its roots within in the ordinary way, among sand, grit, stones, etc. Thus water cannot lie about the necks of the plants to their destruction. This method, which I first saw in use in M. Boissier's garden, near Lausanne, is a good one for fragile plants. The pots used there were taller proportionately than those we commonly use, so that there was plenty of room for the roots after the rather deep cutting had been made in the side of the pot.

An even better mode is that of raising the collar of the plant somewhat above the level of the earth in the ordinary pot by means of half-buried stones.

Below. Jean Wyllie and Chris McGregor chat at the AGS book stall. Right in the middle of the stand is Robert Rolfe's book 'Portraits of Alpine plants'. Whereas Robinson's book had to make do with drawings as illustrations, Roberts book contains exquisite pictures of the best of Alpine Plants. If you don't own a copy: Send for one or ask Santa for a copy for Christmas. I am sure the AGS would send you a copy if they knew your VISA or Mastercard details.



Colin and Kathleen Billington had several nice plants including this nice *Abies koreana silberkugel* [silverball]





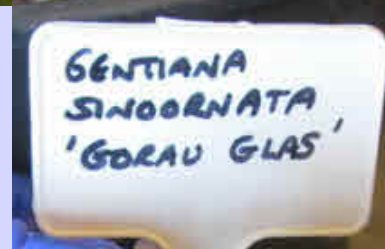
**Gentian sino ornata  
Gorau Glas**

shown and raised by Keith Lever of Aberconwy Nurseries is named after one of the finest Welsh Cheeses - a blue cheese from Caws Gorau farm in Anglesey. Keith reckons the gentian is as good as the cheese. It must be great cheese. Maybe I should send for some!





1. *Gentiana farreri* 'Silken Star Group'
2. *Gentiana* 'Blue silk'
3. *Gentiana sino-ornata*
4. *Gentiana* 'Berrybank Star'
5. *Gentiana* 'The Caley' raised by Ian MacNaughton, was named to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Royal Caledonian Horticultural Society. It was recommended for a PC by the Joint Rock Committee











Merendera montana 'Norman Barrett' has very narrow petals. Merenderas are very similar to Colchicums and the main difference between the genera is that in Colchicum the petals fuse to form a tube while in Merendera the petals are separate all the way down.



Colchium speciosum is one of the most spectacular and best bulbs for autumn. A single bulb soon bulks up into a clump. Just before flowering [mid August] is the time to shift Colchicums. You should carefully uncover the bulbs, which almost certainly will be much closer to the surface than they were when planted. The clump pushes upwards and outwards. Lift some from the top, large and small. Don't disturb the deepest bulbs. Replant the lifted ones. You can see the strong 'stems' on the flowers. These are the fused petals.

I am not sure what differentiates Galanthus reginae olgae 'Tilebarn Jamie' from other Queen Olgas but it looks to be a sturdy autumn snowdrop. [right]

Jim McGregor's pan of Crocus kotchyanus ssp kotchyanus was a delight to behold. All those lilac flowers vied for space to show themselves off to best advantage.



The Wallis' Empodium flexile [bottom left] has grabbed my attention before at Ponteland. This year an award of Merit was recommended for the plant. It is a South African. As I wrote last year, 'It is a member of the Hypoxidaceae [like Rhodohypoxis] and grows in desert areas from Namaqualand to Oudtshoorn in South Africa. It is a member of the Hypoxidaceae [like Rhodohypoxis] and grows in desert areas from Namaqualand to Oudtshoorn in South Africa. It is dormant in summer and flowering occurs when the leaves start to grow. It can be found in flower in the Little Karoo during May. The flowers are about 2cm across with reflexed daffodil yellow petals. The striking feature is that there are 6 stamens sticking out like spears ready to protect the flower from all attackers.'







Ian Kidman seems to have the knack of growing almost any species to perfection. I associate his name with the genus *Dionysia* when his entries vie for Forrests and Farrers. His magnificent *Campanula zoysii* took the double medal at Alpines 2001 in Edinburgh. Here is his fabulous pan of *Cyclamen hed-erifolium albiflorum*.



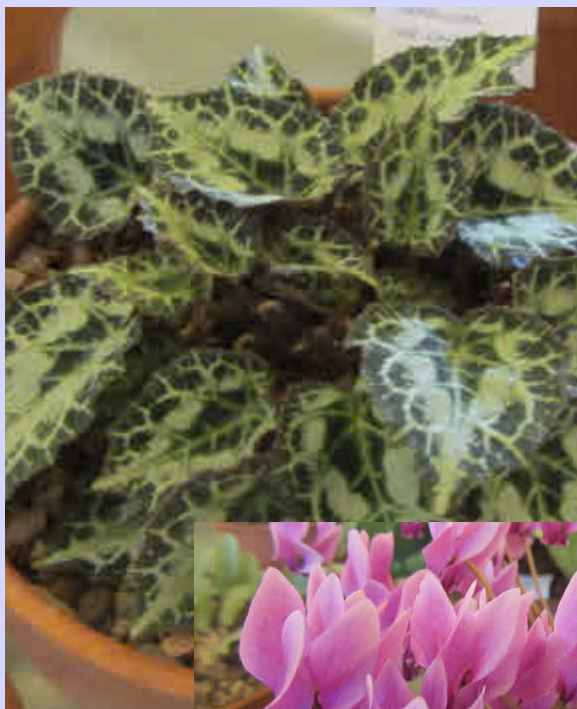
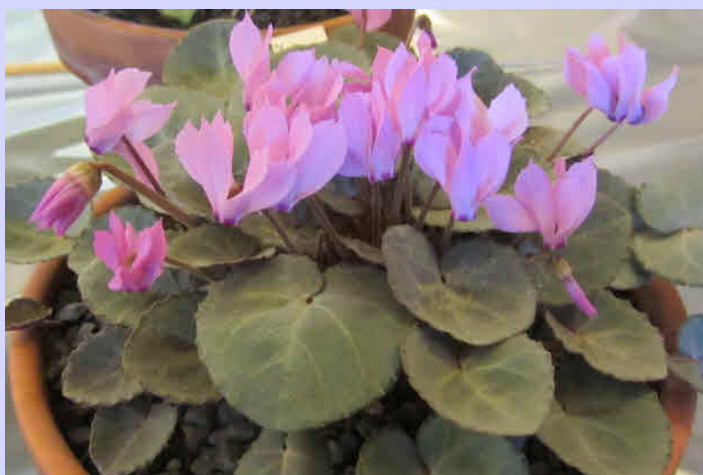
Bob and Rannveig Wallis have a collection of *Cyclamen* with the most exquisite leaves. They also grow them to perfection. Here are four of their *Cyclamen graecum*.  
 Top left *C. g. ssp. graecum* forma album.  
 Bottom left *C. graecum* ex Rhodopou in Crete, and a pink flowered centre *C. g. graecum*.  
 Above is *Cyclamen graecum* ssp. *anatolicum*

ALPINE SOCIETY  
 100, GARDENS LANE  
 WIMBORNE, DORSET BH15 2JF





The Ewesley Salver, for Best Cyclamen in a 19 cm pot, went to Don Peace's amazing Cyclamen mirabile. *C. mirabile* can be distinguished from *C. cilicium* by the feathery tops on the flower. The leaves usually have the dark red reverse. Two other forms with extra special leaves



I've forgotten who entered this wonderful pink flowered *Cyclamen intaminatum*. Often it is shown in its white flowered variety. Note the plain dark green oval leaves. On the left are a deep pink colour form of *C. hederifolium* from Ian Kidman and furthest left, Ian's *C. graecum*



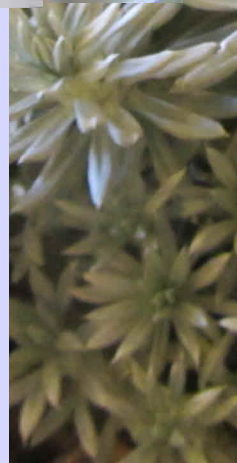
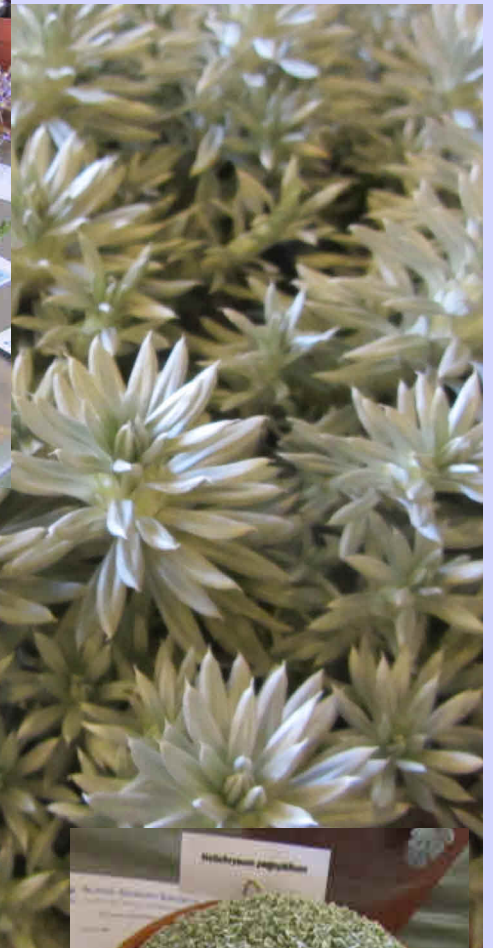


*Oxalis pedemontana* 'Cetrina' was recommended for a PC. Perhaps Cetrina is a place? Why not 'Citrina' meaning 'lemon'? Still it is another wonderful plant from Keith Lever

*Brachyglottis bidwillii* 'Basil Fox' [below] from George Young is a smashing shrub. At Ponteland there were lots of good shrubs shown for foliage, autumn colour and berries .















**Time to say a big THANK YOU to the two ladies who, for the past three years, have worked together for the benefit of both  
The Scottish Rock Garden Club  
And  
The Alpine Garden Society.**

**Thank you Liz and Val.**