



**CORNWALL GROUP
NEWSLETTER FOR
March 2019**

This time last year we were looking into the teeth of the Beast from the East, this year we have seen record high temperatures for a winter day in February. In the garden things are changing fast. Students of literature will recognise the moment when Tigger bounces into the narrative (The House at Pooh Corner). That is how spring has arrived in the garden. At the start of February the place was filled with the spare aesthetic of snowdrops nodding and whispering among themselves. Suddenly spring bounced in last week, the place exploded with colour and working in the sunshine has been sensational. Almost as good as sitting in the sunshine thinking about working.

The garden is full of birdsong, and a sound those same students might recognise. Worraworra! (Bouncing noise).



AGS show, Pershore.



Miniature garden.



AGS show, Pershore.

With spring bursting out of the shell of winter like a sausage you forgot to prick, I took myself up to Pershore over the weekend for the Alpine Garden Society's second show of the year. Spring at the show was heating up just as vigorously but it was safely contained in an earthenware pot. It was good to see tables awash with colour and the bright sunshine burst through the windows at a low angle creating dramatic effects. Nightmare for the photographer but wonderful at dispelling the chill of a morning in the Midlands.

I stayed at a local hotel the night before and was shocked to come out to the car and discover thick ice on the windscreen. I had forgotten that was still a risk it has been so long since I had a ground frost in the garden. It is good to be reminded of the delights of living in Cornwall even though many of the plants on show fare rather badly in our damp climate. I gave a hearty cheer for my thermal underwear, watched the frozen breath dissipate across the car park and went through the doors to a miniature paradise. It was no surprise that the door to paradise was wheelchair friendly and opened automatically.

The Alpine Garden Society shows are open to all, our most local is at Rosemoor on 23rd March and well worth a visit. Pershore was packed with the first harbingers of spring. *Crocus* were putting on a good display and I think it has been a good year for them. I even have a couple at home that are cheering me at present. They flower about once a decade, the squirrels note the position of the lilac blooms and return later in the year to dig up the corms. I have admitted defeat, but if I could grow them then *C. heuffelianus* 'Shock Waves' would be high on my list. The pale lilac blooms are streaked and tipped in darker colour as though they had been dipped in water-colour and allowed to dry.

*Corydalis sewerzowii* .*Crocus heuffelianus* 'Shock Waves'.*Dionysia tapetodes* .

Moving on from the *Crocus* brought me to a difficult genus, *Dionysia*. I kill them with depressing regularity. I may have admitted defeat in the face of the squirrels, who are cunning and ruthless little beasts, but I am obstinate to the point of stupidity with intractable plants. *Dionysia* seem to like warm, dry conditions, out of the sun, never wet, never desiccated. My only chance is under cover in the greenhouse and this winter I killed two of the three I (can't) grow. So I bought another two to make up the number of the doomed. I console myself that they aren't as expensive as a bunch of flowers and they will last longer (by a small margin).

Hepatica is another difficult group, but they grow on woodland margins and will prosper in a sunny spot outside if they get some shade in summer. There are hundreds of named Japanese cultivars available that are better in pots with some protection. Never let them dry out in summer, they don't appreciate it. All you need is the money and Edrom Nursery's catalogue to indulge a perfect miniaturised Japanese insanity. Fortunately Edrom hadn't come down to this show from their Scottish fastness so I was saved some serious soul searching. Luckily seedlings of most of the species are cheaply available and the blue forms of *H. nobilis* are a good place to start.

*Hepatica nobilis japonica* .*Iris* 'Eye Catcher'.*Tecophilaea cyanocrocus* .

There has been a revolution in the breeding of small bulbous *Iris* in recent years, and the results are starting to appear in the catalogues. *Iris reticulata* has been hybridised with *I. wingradowii* and the seedlings have shown new colours and patterns in the flowers. The first of them are appearing at the shows, and *I. 'Eye Catcher'* is getting a reputation for growing well in a garden situation. Many others are becoming available, including the delightful 'Sea Green', check out the autumn catalogues.

There were a few amazing pots of the Chilean Blue Crocus, *Tecophilaea cyanocrocus* on display, but perhaps not as many as in previous years. It has lost a little of its exclusivity recently. After decades of official "extinction" in Chile, it has recently be rediscovered growing wild. Good thing too, very good thing.

In the slanting sunlight I could feel my trousers getting warm, not just the sunshine, but money burning a hole in my pocket. Fortunately it was rapidly extinguished by a very choice selection of nurseries. Hartside helped lighten my burden with the aid of some new *Roscoea* hybrids and some petiolarid *Primula* that will frustrate me. Aberconwy nursery from North Wales supplied the replacement *Dionysia*. The rows on display a testament to their talent, I saw more than one person gnash their teeth in frustration at the sight of them. Those of us who regularly commit dionysicide have learnt to recognise the signs in others. Edulis from Berkshire brought some of their growing collection of snowdrop cultivars but the moment has passed for me (I imagine it is still winter in Berkshire). I thought that I was getting away lightly and then almost accidentally bought four new ferns. Pottertons from Lincolnshire and Choice Landscapes from Norwich added to the geographical bonhomie of the day. I set off for home with a tray of tiny delights and the prospect of a service-station supper!



**Hartside Nursery from
Cumbria.**



**Aberconwy Nursery from
North Wales.**



Edulis from Berkshire.

LAST MEETING

"A Taste of China". by Sarah Chesters.



Bedding display.



***Lycoris radiata* in Xi'an
Botanic Garden.**



***Nelumbo nucifera* in Xi'an
Botanic Garden.**

China is an astonishing country and when I visited I was completely unprepared for the scale of everything, whether it be the bedding displays, the absolutely vast amount of building, the number of people everywhere, the hundreds of miles of hand-clipped motorway topiary on the central reservations, or the huge acreage of pomegranate orchards.

The people were friendly, the language so interesting to hear, the varied landscapes breath-taking and the food mostly delicious. The classical Chinese gardens were intricate and filled with symbolic rock formations, covered walkways, tranquil pools, ornate pavilions and a limited but again symbolic range of plants. Do visit if you ever have the chance.



**Li River and limestone
karsts.**



**The Master of Nets garden,
Suzhou.**



**Rice terraces at Longji
village.**

THE THREE STEMS COMPETITION

Many thanks to Sarah Chesters for judging the Three Stems competition. Spring has certainly started with Crocus and Snowdrops putting on a good show and the first herbaceous flowers of the season making an appearance. Crocus always bring a splash of exotic colour to the garden in February, a vase of three lilac blooms from Jo Waterhouse opened to perfection in the warmth of the hall. A darker purple from Sue Lake found the warmth a little

too much and started to flag by the end of the evening. *Cardamine quinquefolia* made a very stylish posy (sorry, I don't know who brought it), flowering when the garden is yearning for colour, and the tall stems of *Lunaria annua* from Janet Symons matched the soft colour.

Hellebores also made a strong showing with a selection from both Jean and Phil Gadd.



1st. Sarah Wilks.
***Hamamelis* 'Arnold Promise',** **Three *Helleborus x hybridus* .**
***Helleborus argutifolius* and**
***Narcissus* 'Rijnveld's Early**
Sensation'.

3rd. Tricia Howard.
***Galanthus* 'Sentinel'.**

It was the month for snowdrops on the display table with only a sprig of *Sarcococca* prepared to stand up (rather beautifully) to their conquest of the table. I think it was *S. confusa*, my writing is completely illegible. Among the snowdrops, the green tipped flowers of *G* 'Alan's Treat' were looking particularly lovely, and the markings on the tepals of *G*. 'Armine' make it quite distinctive. *G*. 'Primrose Warburg' and *G*. 'Wendy's Gold' were good examples of the yellow snowdrops that are becoming so popular. To my eye 'Primrose Warburg' was slightly the better on the night, although I know that the vigour of 'Wendy's Gold' makes it a very useful plant in the garden.



***Galanthus* 'Alan's Treat'.**



***Sarcococca confusa* ?**



***Galanthus* 'Armine'.**

Those of you dumbstruck by the fascinating beauty of snowdrops will have been as grateful as I was to see Janet Dale and her table of plants for sale. Some really lovely cultivars on offer this year, some for the first time, catering for all tastes and all budgets. I already have too many snowdrops and after the meeting I had three more than too many which I would describe as almost sufficient!

'Augustus' has been looking particularly pretty in the garden this morning, it is a low growing plant with large flowers and a distinctive poise. 'Tubby Merlin' has similarly shaped flowers but with solid green inner segments. The green theme continued with 'Trumps', the green marked flowers turn upwards at the tips in a very attractive way.

I was very pleased to see 'Sandersii', the first of the yellow snowdrops to be grown, discovered in Northumberland in 1877. People have been growing special snowdrops for a long time. More recent are 'Fieldgate Tiffany', a large flowered snowdrop with textured outer segments, and 'Tom Watkins', a very elegant flower with faint green markings on the tips.

*Galanthus 'Augustus'**Galanthus 'Tubby Merlin'**Galanthus 'Trumps'**Galanthus 'Fieldgate Tiffany'**Galanthus 'Sandersii'**Galanthus 'Tom Watkins'*

OTHER EVENTS LAST MONTH

A few days of sunshine make a remarkable difference in the garden. Last month I was struggling to find snowdrops to cheer the place, now there are Crocus and daffodils and every delight of spring pushing through the ground.

Wisley. 25th January 2019.

Strangely, snowdrops had drawn me to to the home counties at the end of January. A trip to Wisley seemed like a really good way of making a decent break out of a long trip. I admit that the prospect of lunch with a friend was as much of a draw as the gardens in January, but spring had certainly arrived and the gardens were looking fabulous, the building work is progressing well and it looks as though the new entrance building will be open this spring.

For many years Wisley have run a "Butterflies in the Greenhouse" event during January but this year it is being rested, and the greenhouse is home to the "Brick Safari" (Lego without the brand name).

There were too many remarkable things to show them all, but I liked an Ostrich among the cacti and a Wart Hog in front of the lake. There is a popular warning about the risks of a bull in a china shop - no mention of a Zebra in a glasshouse or a Lion in a cafe. Hopefully nobody needs warning about the hazards of a Crocodile in a pond, even in Surrey.

The very rare Pixillated Turtle put in an appearance along with an angry Tiger and a lazy Kangaroo. People showed a lot of interest.

**An Ostrich among the cacti.****Pixillated Turtle.****Zebra in a glasshouse.**

Myddelton House. 26th January 2019.

It was the snowdrop sale at Myddelton House that took me north while winter still lurked in the mornings. An early arrival at Myddelton House left me puffing condensation and stamping my feet. It's a chance to meet up with friends and pretend that's what we came for while secretly eyeing up all the snowdrops.

The timing was exactly right this year, the snowdrops in the garden were making a fine show along with some early daffs. The cafe declared an emergency bacon shortage and crossed the bacon butty off the menu, I'm sure a hundred people sighed with disappointment when it was announced but sales of Danish Pastries went through the roof.

Back to the snowdrops - I walked away without 'Uranium' last year because I decided I didn't really need it. I have spent the year regretting it so this time it came home with me, after that I didn't look too closely, I find it best!



Setting up.



Queueing.



Snowdrops at Myddleton House.

Kew. 26th January 2019.

Kew lies (almost) on the road home from Myddelton House and it makes a perfect place to spend the afternoon. I was keen to see the Temperate House, I was told that the planting had matured well in the previous year. Certainly the rock bank housing a display of tree ferns had settled in, the rocks becoming mossy and blending into the landscape. Particularly nice to see *Greyia sutherlandii* in flower. It might well be hardy in Cornwall and has been offered by James Trehane if you are feeling adventurous.

In the Princess of Wales Conservatory the annual orchid festival was being set up, well worth a visit if you are in the area during March.



Moss covered rocks.



Greyia sutherlandii.



Orchid Festival in the conservatory.

The Garden House. 2nd February 2019.

The Garden House opens right through February and into March over the weekends, to show their large collection of snowdrops. On the first weekend of the month Avon Bulbs were also attending with a stand of their own snowdrops for sale. Along with a beautiful sunny day it made the trip very worthwhile. In some ways the garden looks stronger in the bareness of winter, the shape and form of the various garden sections and the moulding of the ground is easier to appreciate.

At this time of year the garden is flooded with rivers of *Crocus* and the purple shades were made more telling by a dusting of snow during the previous night. Winter shrubs, especially forms of *Daphne bholua*, were looking their best and the early Hellebores injected strong colours into the spring plantings. Well worth a visit, the display is only going to get better (check their website for opening times).



The Garden House.



Rivers of *Crocus*.



Hardy Plant Galanthus Group Study Day. Sunday 10th February 2019, by Tricia Howard. Peter and I joined 123 Galanthophiles from the Hardy Plant Galanthus Group for a study day in Somerset, all dressed in warm clothes and sensible boots. The two of us travelled up on the Saturday, visiting the delightful Elworthy Cottage garden near Taunton on the way, which was open by Jenny and Mike Spiller for the NGS. This was well worth the visit at snowdrop time with over 350 varieties in a well-kept cottage-style garden, a real treat to start the weekend's snow-dropping.



Elworthy Cottage Garden.



Elworthy Cottage Garden.



Snowdrop sale.

On Sunday the day began at the Episcopi Academy, for plant sales and lectures followed by a visit to East Lambrook Manor Gardens and tour of Avon bulbs nursery in the afternoon. There was a great rush when the doors to the plant sale opened at 9am where Avon bulbs had a large stall, as well as hundreds of snowdrops and seasonal plants brought in by members. Rare and new snowdrops commanded a high premium and buyers were waving twenty-pound notes to the sellers to attract their attention in the jostle. I found it difficult to choose snowdrops amongst the many on display, but I came away with some desirable ones for my collection.

After the A.G.M our first speaker was Alan Street from Avon bulbs, who talked about snowdrops from the Past, Present and Future, looking back to how snowdrops have captured the gardening world from very modest beginnings to the thousands who flock to snowdrop gardens today. The second speaker was Michael Dreisvagt from Germany, who talked about his work at Haerle Arboretum in Bonn and how he liked to spend some of his tree budget on snowdrops. A German with a sense of humour, he made fun of our narrow lanes and liked to visit our old English churchyards to study snowdrop populations.



Snowdrop sale.



The Ditch Garden at East Lambrook Manor.



Snowdrop display at East Lambrook Manor.

After lunch we travelled a short way to East Lambrook Manor, where the car park was overflowing with mud and cars, to visit Margery Fish's iconic cottage garden. It was amazing to see how many snowdrops were fitted in, as when we visited this garden last summer it was very closely planted with herbaceous plants. The famous ditch was clothed in swathes of snowdrops and there was a wonderful display of different named varieties in clay pots in a raised bed to view at eye level, plus hundreds of other snowdrops throughout the garden. We were then taken by mini bus for a tour of the famous Avon Bulbs nursery. Firstly, we were shown the cold store, which was holding back the snowdrops on Dutch trolleys for a trip to Germany later in February. It had artificial light and was kept at 2C. Then we walked alongside the frames which held single snowdrops that were ready for sale, plunged in 6mm grit to stop the pots freezing and damaging the roots. These are propagated from chips by cutting a bulb into 8 or 10 pieces. Another area held many more frames with bulbs in larger pots to use for propagation. These are given the hot water treatment when dormant in July by plunging into water at 44.4C for 3hours, which kills eelworm, they are also sprayed for disease. A wooded area was underplanted with cyclamen and different varieties of snowdrops, where new seedlings have been discovered in the past. There were yet more snowdrops for sale here, a large yellow form called Galanthus 'Treasure Island' was £250! Back to East Lambrook Manor for tea and cake before setting off home, a lovely but busy day.



Snowdrop frames at Avon Bulbs.



Cold store at Avon Bulbs.



Galanthus 'South Hayes'

A note from Barbara Santi about Trengwainton. "Home of Springs, Trengwainton Film Tour"

I wanted to let you know that we are touring across Cornwall our latest film *Home of Springs, Trengwainton*, which tells the story of the beautiful Trengwainton Garden, Madron (National Trust). The film and book have been the result of us running an exciting three year Heritage Lottery Funded community project www.trengwaintonheritage.co.uk

To watch the trailer for *Home of Springs, Trengwainton* visit <https://vimeo.com/awen/trengwaintonfilm>
The film will be show in the following venues:

28th February 2019. 5.00pm. Duchy College , Rosewarne. Tickets: Duchy College, Rosewarne reception.

3rd March 2019. 3.00pm. FLIC Launceston Town Hall. Tickets: CRBO or Launceston TIC or on the door.

16th March 2019. 7.30pm. Helland Village Hall. Tickets: CRBO or 01208 72603.

21st March 2019. 7.30pm. The Poly, Falmouth. Tickets: www.thepoly.org or 01326 319461.

23rd March 2019. 7.30pm. Crackington Haven Institute. Tickets: CRBO or Wainhouse Stores.

6th April 2019. 7.30pm. Landithy Hall, Madron. Tickets: CRBO or on the door.

6th April 2019. 7.30pm. WI Hall, St. Just. Tickets: CRBO or on the door.

I hope you can make it to one of the venues and should you wish us to screen the film in your local area do get in touch.

Barbara Santi. 0781 210 1388

[www. barbarasanti.co.uk](http://www.barbarasanti.co.uk)

www.trengwaintonheritage.co.uk

BBC Gardener's World have sent this request, you may be able to help, please contact them directly.

I am one of the researchers on the BBC's long running gardening series. I am trying to find a garden with a collection of crocus, preferably a smaller garden with an expert gardener, but even a larger garden would suffice if they had different varieties. Do any spring to mind at all?

The flowering season of this genus is fleeting, so the other option is to find a garden with a good range of early flowering bulbs and herbaceous plants, including perhaps some species tulips. Again any suggestions would be gratefully received.

Many thanks and best wishes, Yvonne.

Horticultural Researcher.

BBC Gardeners World , BBC Studios, Broadcasting House, Whiteladies Road, Bristol BS8 2LR.

NB: I work Monday - Thursdays.

COMING EVENTS

Gardens are warming up, there are events all over the county and beyond. Please let me know if you hear about things going on. I am particularly interested in the smaller local events that I might not hear about without your help.

The Garden House, Buckland Monachorum, Devon.

Every Friday, Saturday and Sunday through January and February. 11.00am - 3.00pm.

Large collection of snowdrop varieties planted in the garden.

Check website for details: www.thegardenhouse.org.uk

Snowdrop Valley, Wheddon Cross, Exmoor.

Saturday 2nd February to Sunday 3rd March .

Snowdrops naturalised through a privately owned valley on Exmoor. Park and Ride operates from 9th - 24th February. Sensible walking clothes advised.

Check website for details: www.wheddoncross.org.uk

West Cornwall Spring Show.

Friday 1st and Saturday 2nd March .

Marazion Community Centre.

Check website for details: www.wchs.co.uk

Daffodil Weekend at Cotehele.

9th March to 24th March .

Cotehele, St Dominick, Saltash PL12 6TA.

Check website for details: www.nationaltrust.org.uk

Cornwall Garden Society Lectures.

Tuesday 12th, 7.30pm, The Alverton, Truro .

Wednesday 13th, 2.00pm, St Mellion International Resort, Saltash .

Kenneth Cox, "The Woodland Garden" and "Woodland Gardening".

Check website for details: www.cornwallgardensociety.org.uk

Rosemoor Spring Flower Festival.

Saturday 16th and Sunday 17th March. .

Rosemoor, Great Torrington, Devon EX38 8PH.

Check website for details: www.rhs.org.uk

Tavistock Plant Fair, Devon Plant Heritage.

Sunday 17th March.

Pannier Market, Tavistock.

Check website for details: www.plantheritagedevon.org.uk**Alpine Garden Society Show.**

Saturday 23rd March.

Rosemoor, Great Torrington, Devon EX38 8PH .

Check website for details: www.alpinegardensociety.net**Falmouth Spring Show.**

Saturday 23rd and Sunday 24th March .

Princess Pavillion, Falmouth.

Check website for details: www.falmouth.co.uk**Cornish Daffodil Fair at the Lost Gardens of Heligan, Pentewan, St Austell PL26 6EN.**

25th March to 2nd April .

Check website for details: www.heligan.com**CGS Spring Flower Show.**

Saturday 6th and Sunday 7th April .

Royal Cornwall Showground, Wadebridge.

Check website for details: www.cornwallgardensociety.org.uk

If you go to any of these events, please would you take some pictures for the newsletter! Three "landscape" shots fit the page perfectly, add some words if you like. Thanks.

Please would you let me know of any garden shows, open days or other events that may be of interest to our members so that I can include them in the next newsletter.

If you are planning to attend an event please check the details for yourself. I try to verify them all, but I might make mistakes!

All other content gratefully received.

cornwallhps@gmail.com

NEXT MEETING

Chris Birchall from Tale Valley Plants will talk on "Shade Tolerant Plants".

Wednesday 6th March 2019 .

Ladock Village Hall, 7.00 for 7.30.

ADVANCE NOTICE

Wednesday 3rd April 2019 .

Terry Baker from the Botanic Nurseries will talk about "Digitalis".

7 for 7.30pm, Ladock Village Hall.

Wednesday 1st May 2019 .

Visit to Caroline Latham's garden.

Trebartha nr. Launceston.

6 for 6.30pm.

Please let me have any items that may be of interest to the members so that I can include them in the next newsletter. News items, visits, photographs and upcoming events especially welcome. Please let me know if I drop any clangers!

John Sirkett cornwallhps@gmail.com