



**CORNWALL GROUP
NEWSLETTER FOR
March 2020**

Chair Report to AGM, 5th February 2020

This has been my first year in the role of Chair and I have to say that overall it has been an enjoyable and rewarding experience. Much of the reason I have found it so is because of your committee who work for you, and alongside me, in their various roles and who diligently and quietly fulfil those roles which makes this society function as well as it does. They make a great team. I would also like to thank my wife for her support and understanding for when I do have to dedicate time to being, the Chair! And finally, I would like to thank all of you, our members, without whom we would not exist, and I would be stood here talking to myself!

Our Secretary, Sarah Wilks, as you would have read in the last Newsletter, is standing down from the role. Sadly, I have been unable to charm, flatter or bribe her into continuing so I must thank her sincerely for doing an excellent job this past year. I did offer to arm-wrestle her to stay in the post but, I'm sorry to say, she proved to be stronger than I thought!

Our Treasurer, Peter Howard, has done a first-class job, making sure we spend his, sorry, your money wisely and keeping us buoyant. It was his initiative to make available direct membership payments to the groups bank account as well as setting up online access to be able to get more UpToDate account information instead of having to wait for monthly bank statements. Brian Hiley has, once again, provided us with some excellent speakers over the past year and, as you will see, this upcoming year looks just as promising. Tricia Howard arranges our garden visits over the summer months, and these have been both varied, interesting and enjoyable, and again, this upcoming year has much to look forward to.

John Sirkett has continued to do an amazing job with the Newsletter which is incredibly informative with articles and events both local and far afield. Sadly, John has indicated that this might be his last year in the post. Janet Margetts in her first year as Membership Secretary has kept an impeccable eye on our numbers and payment of subscriptions, and if you have yet to pay, we will be going into lockdown until you cough up! We have actively been trying to promote ourselves, with a modicum of success, this past year and we intend to continue to do so, notably with a promotional stand at the Cornwall Garden Society Spring Flower Show this year.

I must also mention, Pam Dormand for handling our raffles, Sue Lake for managing the Three Flower competition, Charley and Liz Pridham for organising our Plant Fair plus those who help run our stall on the day, and Nina Paternoster for the Refreshment services, who sadly will vacating the role after May this year.

If I haven't mentioned you by name or thanked you specifically then please forgive me as the list seems endless from the printing of the programme cards, the Christmas meeting display table, parking for the New Year walk, to supporting the three flowers, showing on the display table and emails I get reminding me to invite Janet with her snowdrops and others correcting her surname for me, and so on. You all very dear to me, thank you one and all, and keep up the good work.

The issue of membership of the National HPS is still with us so it would be remiss of me not to comment on it. Whilst I understand that some members don't see the subscription element to the National as good value for money I would like to suggest that, conversely, we at the Cornwall branch offer exceptional value for money, and, if you combined the two subscriptions together you still get very good value for money, and I think this really is the correct way to view your membership!

In researching this subject I looked at the Cornwall Garden society membership fees which are, £22.50 for an individual and £30.00 for a couple, which at first I thought, this is not a good example as they offer all we do, talks, garden visits, newsletter, journal, etc at a lower cost! But with further digging I found that whilst their talks/lectures are free to members, their garden visits are not and the cost of those vary, but were not insignificant, pushing the potential cost way up.

My good lady wife is a member of our local Women's Institute (WI), which is similar in its set up with a National body and Local branches and the cost for her is £43.00 a year, which they take as a single payment, and whilst I'm not decrying what they offer it is not the same level of value for money we offer.

We have had a document from the Groups Coordinator for the HPS which touches on the subject of membership and that there is a Strategic review currently being run, hence the questionnaire circulated to you all before Christmas, and thank you to those of you who replied. There is a summary of the Strategic Review included in the document. So, let's hope that proves fruitful over the coming months! The document also includes an overview of the Public Liability insurance we run under and we have already made representation on a few points for clarification.

Looking back at 2019...

March was a talk by Chris Birchell of Tale Valley Plants on Shade tolerant plants.

April was a talk by Terry Baker of Botanic Nurseries on *Digitalis*.

May was a garden visit to Caroline Latham at Trebartha, Near Launceston.

May was also our Spring Plant Fair where once again we just exceeded £1000 in income.

June was a garden visit to Judith Carrigan at Trewether, St Winnow.

July was a garden visit to Liz & Charlie Pridham at Roseland House, Chacewater.

August was a garden visit to Sue Newton of Gardens Cottage, Prideaux, St Blazey.

September was a talk by Marina Christopher of Phoenix Perennials on Pollinator Plants.

October was a talk by Dr Julian Sutton of Desirable Plants on "I believe in the Western Cape".

November was a talk by John Amand of Jaquesamand on unusual bulbs & how they get to you garden.

December was our Christmas Social and a talk by Brian Hiley on "My favourite gardens".

December was also our Christmas Festive Lunch held at the Hawkins Arms, Zelah.

January, we held our New Year Walk around Restronget and Mylor Creeks with a pub lunch in the Pandora Inn.

Phil Gadd (Chair)

Group News, January 2020

Happy New Gardening Year to you all.

First, my apologies for neglecting my responsibilities during 2019. As most of you will know Lois, my wife, died in August and her well being and so forth has had to take priority. We held a joint position and I have agreed in consultation with the Trustees to continue in role.

During the past few months several groups have been reviewing their local Constitutions following new guidelines being issued on the Model Constitution. The aim is to ensure groups adhere to HPS principles whilst enabling groups to function efficiently. Tenure of Office or Committee membership is often raised. The advantage of a fixed tenure is that it does not inhibit members wanting to serve from standing. However, it is fully understood that there are times, for the survival of a group, when flexibility is vital.

Recently there has been much discussion about local groups and National HPS. These are not two separate organisations. We are all the National HPS. The National Officers and Trustees do have legal responsibilities to the Charity Commission to ensure the Society fulfils its obligations.

A Strategic review is currently being run, hence the questionnaire before Christmas. Thanks for all those who have responded – do remember you are the HPS. A summary of what has happened so far is attached. Thanks to Lorraine Shepherd for this.

A lot of questions have been raised regarding insurance. It is a Public Liability Policy, I attach a Statement from the Broker clarifying the terms. These have not changed significantly from those of many previous years.

The National programme of events has started so please encourage your local members to join in. I look forward to seeing many of you at the AGM in Dorset.

There are some vacancies for National Officers, with that of General Secretary being of critical urgency. Without a General Secretary there is significant onus being placed on other Officers to continue the smooth and efficient running of the Society. If you know of someone who may be interested please contact Jan Vaughan and have a chat. May I stress you can do the job from anywhere and all out of pocket expenses are paid.

Wishing your group a happy and successful year.

Keith Scott

Groups Coordinator

Hardy Plant Society. Insurance Overview.

Aviva Commercial Combined Policy – this covers the office activity of your central office and also provides Public Liability insurance for all affiliated Groups.

AXA Management Liability Policy – trustees indemnity cover to protect all (of the national organisation or local Group) trustees and officers in their personal capacity whilst carrying out their duties.

How does Public Liability insurance work ?

Public Liability insurance provides cover for claims made against you the Group for injury or damage sustained by third parties as a result of your activity. In order for a claim to succeed the Group must be legally liable for the injury or damage although the policy also provides legal costs to defend an allegation.

What sorts of activity do insurers understand the HPS undertake ?

- Group visits to gardens, whether privately, commercially owned or owned by the National Trust etc. The cover is for injury or damage the group causes to others.

- Group visits to nurseries, shows and fairs and the like.
- Regular Group meetings, talks and meetings of special interest groups. The use of guest speakers is acknowledged.
- Provision of plant sales, running of stalls and stands etc at shows and exhibitions, other publicity events.
- Social events relative to the HPS.

How does the HPS Public Liability cover relate to the cover provided by a garden owner or perhaps a coach company ?

Please remember the HPS cover will only operate to defend a claim made against you and ultimately if the HPS is legally liable. A trip down the steps of a coach or a road traffic accident involving a coach will most likely be dealt with by the coach company. A fall in a privately owned garden will be dealt with by the insurers of the garden owner if a defect in the garden caused the accident. The question is always who is legally liable ie responsible for the accident. Sometimes it is just an accident !

What is not insured.

With the exception of the national office any physical assets of any group.

Any personal possessions.

Personal Accident. If a member has a fall on a HPS outing and neither the HPS or the garden owner etc are responsible.

Any claim relating to money lost if an outing or holiday is cancelled by or due to the insolvency etc of a hotel or coach company etc.

Loss of data and/or personal information

Strategic Review.

Thank you to those Groups who completed the survey questionnaire we sent out in December. We had an excellent response with 50% of Groups giving their views and ideas. Responses are still coming in, so if your Committee has yet to meet and would like to share its views, please complete the survey monkey or send them to the email address below.

There were a number of themes which came out of the responses. You felt that the HPS was a recognised and respected name, which was valued and enabled you to attract high quality speakers. The seed distribution scheme, the newsletter and journal and the opportunity to join Local and Special interest Groups were the things that were seen as the greatest benefit for members, whilst Committees welcomed the support and advice given by National, particularly for shows and events and publicity, as well as the Insurance cover and the networking opportunities such as the annual Group Secretaries' meeting.

However, a number of you said that the National HPS was seen as a remote organisation which members joined only in order to be able to access the Local and Special Interest groups. You also felt that it was difficult to explain the role of the National HPS and the benefits of membership. Nearly two thirds of you said that you would like national and local subscriptions to be collected together.

There were lots of positive and helpful suggestions of things that we might do in the future, including being clearer about what the National HPS offers and holding events in different parts of the country to encourage networking and the sharing of information. Benefit schemes for members, e.g. access to gardens, were also mentioned.

A small Working Party of Trustees has been set up to take forward the work on the Strategic Review. It has just started work on scoping the Review and your feedback was extremely useful in identifying the areas that we need to focus on from the Groups' perspective. Although the Review will take a number of months to conclude, we also hope to identify a number of things that we will be able to do more quickly and your suggestions will be very helpful in this.

We hope to do some more consultation, as part of the Review, later in the year that will allow us to seek the views of members. In the meantime, we will keep you informed of progress through Group News and the HPS Newsletter. If you have any questions, suggestions or feedback at any point please send them to Lorraine Shepherd email: Review@hardy-plant.org.uk

I have never been on a roller-coaster in my life. I don't much like heights, I don't much like speed and the thought of being locked in a carriage with a group of screaming strangers gives me cold chills. Once, when I was about 7 years old, my teenage aunt forced us onto a fairground ride at the Bell Vue Amusement Park in Manchester. I didn't want to get on, I begged to be excused, I didn't enjoy it in any way and when we got off, my sister vomitted on my aunts new skirt. Even at that young age I knew better than to say "I told you so"!

The arrival of a new year. The slow winched ride to the top is over, spring is underway. There's

no getting off now. There will be one or two spectacular water splashes along the way, the daffodils will be screaming and sometime in May we will alight with legs of jelly, ready to snooze in the summer sunshine.

So if you get a little dizzy at the pace of spring you can close your eyes, hold on tight and wait for it to slow down.

If you turn a strange colour at the giddy pace of it all then go and sit in a darkened room for a while. Nobody will mind.

The inevitability of daffodils.

In the last couple of weeks the weather has destabilised. Storms blowing in from the south-west have rocked the garden and sent dead wood tumbling from the trees. Small holes have been scraped in the soft earth beneath the trees, evidence that rabbits have returned to the garden after their winter holidays. I don't know where the rabbits go during the winter but I wish they would stay there. Hard on the heels of the rabbits, the spring has crept through the undergrowth and with it comes the inevitability of daffodils.



Narcissus 'King Alfred'.



Fields of daffodils ripple between the hedges.



Narcissus 'Mount Hood'.

In many parts of the country the acid yellow flowers of oil-seed rape set the fields aglow in May but in Cornwall we are lucky to have fields of daffodils to ripple between the hedges.

Historically daffodils have been grown for cut flowers in the fields around Penzance, taking advantage of the warm climate to produce an early crop for the London market. Over a period of decades large populations of *Narcissus* Fly built up along with a number of fungal diseases associated with *Narcissus* Fly damage. At the same time, breeding work at Rosewarne Experimental Horticulture Station led by Barbara Fry, introduced new cultivars bred for early flowering. This combination of events has led to the daffodil fields being relocated around Cornwall. It is now possible to see the golden fields almost anywhere in the county. Usually the crop stays in the ground for three years before the bulbs are lifted and then the ground will not be used for daffodils again, helping to reduce the levels of *Narcissus* Fly.

When I was growing up the traditional golden trumpet daffodil was 'King Alfred', raised by J. Kendall some time before 1899. It seemed to be the ideal of daffodilliness but even as a teenager I was aware that its fortunes were in decline and it was being replaced by 'Carlton', raised by P. D. Williams at Lanarth near St Keverne, and introduced before 1927.

A great many good yellow daffodils have been raised since then and 'Carlton' has slipped from large scale production as a cut flower, however it remains one of the best cultivars for general garden use.

In the last few decades the market for cut flowers has diversified and other colours of daffodil have been bred. The most significant of them has probably been 'Mount Hood' raised by P. van Duersen around 1938. It takes a long time for a cultivar to move from being a novelty to becoming a major field crop. Growers need time to build up confidence in its performance. The

pale lemon, almost white flowers of 'Mount Hood' are often at their peak around Easter and as well as being an excellent cut flower, it makes a magnificent garden plant.



Narcissus 'Rijnveld's Early Sensation' in December.



Narcissus 'Spring Dawn'.



Narcissus 'February Gold'.

It is these same golden fields that have always driven my choice of daffodils for the garden. I don't see much point in having a bed of yellow trumpet daffodils in the garden when I see fields of them every time I go out in the car. If I am going to make space for daffodils at home, they have to bring something special to the garden. The most important thing to me is the season. As the days shorten and the nights become gloomier there is a sudden spike of golden light in the garden. Sometime around the first week of December the earliest flowers of *Narcissus* 'Rijnveld's Early Sensation' will appear. It is a strange cultivar raised by F. H. Chapman in 1943. Nobody is quite certain how it came to flower so early, but it always shows its head in December, bringing with it the promise of spring and the return of better weather when the rest of the garden is looking rather grim. If you only have space for one daffodil, let it be 'Rijnveld's Early Sensation', it will fill you with perennial joy.

On the other hand, gardeners can always fit a few more plants in, and I would recommend the earliest of daffodils. By the time March and April arrive the garden is full of activity, it is the flashes of hope through the winter that make the difference. So my second early suggestion would be 'Spring Dawn', a seedling of 'Rijnveld's Early sensation' raised at Rosewarne and registered in 1986. It has a pale flower, the tepals creamy white and the tube lemon yellow. For me it generally flowers in the last days of January as its parent starts to go over.

My final early selection has to be 'February Gold', blooming for me in the last week of February. It is a cultivar that I grew up with, the first to flower in the garden at that time, and it will always be my herald of spring. I look forward to sitting in the garden with a cup of tea watching its perky heads bobbing in the breeze. It is a hybrid from *N. cyclamineus* which gives it a short, feisty, upright appearance and an elegantly shaped flower. Raised by the de Graaff brothers before 1923, its flowering marks the start of the new gardening year, the ground warms up and plants start springing back into life. That cup of tea with its bobbing flowers will be the last chance to sit down in the garden for a while.



Narcissus asturiensis .



Narcissus 'Camborne'.



Narcissus cyclamineus .

Snowdrops bring life into the garden while the feet are still stamping on the ground and the hot breath makes ghosts in the cold air. They have an enormous following but there is another group

of plants that trumpet the arrival of spring in a tiny way, the miniature daffodils. I was first introduced to them through the charms of *Narcissus asturiensis*, a species in flower at the moment in the hills and mountains of Spain. It grows about three inches tall and flowers just as the earliest snowdrops start to look ragged. It is perfectly hardy, the only special care I take with mine is to keep it free of competition while in growth. It is so tiny that it seems unfair to make it fight with anything larger.

Once the allure of tiny daffodils has taken hold it is only a matter of time before you will want to grow *Narcissus cyclamineus*. It is the most charming small bulb, and if it is happy it will naturalise in grass. Fortunately it is easy to make it happy in Cornwall. It adores moisture and we have plenty of that. If you want to see it at its best then it is worth a visit to Rosemoor at this time of the year to see them growing in the meadow beyond the formal garden where rain falling on the high ground behind seeps through the grass.

These smallest daffodils have a devoted following and there are plenty of cultivars to choose from, though they may not be easy to track down. I was looking for a good small white daffodil when I was offered a bulb of 'Camborne'. I have had it for two years now and it has been a delight, no more than five inches tall with a fragile appearance that belies its inner toughness. At the moment I have it in a pot, hoping that a small increase in the bulbs will allow me a spare for the garden. I am particularly pleased with it because it is a local variety, raised by Alec Gray in Treswithian, just outside Camborne.



Narcissus 'Jumblie'.



Narcissus 'Gipsy Queen'.



Narcissus 'Elka'.

Alec Gray was born in London but after the first World War he moved to Devon, then Penzance and on to the Scillies where he managed a farm. It was while on the Scillies that he became interested in daffodils. He started by breeding with a number of miniature species collected in Southern Europe in an attempt to produce early flowering cultivars but he raised a lot of miniatures along the way and ended up specialising in them.

After his period in the Scillies he moved to Treswithian just outside Camborne and established a daffodil farm selling bulbs by mail order, including many of his own breeding. Broadleigh Gardens now have a National Collection of Alec Gray daffodils and many are available from them at the end of summer. Many of Alec Gray's varieties are popular and often appear at shows though people do not always realise that they were bred locally. 'Jumblie' is a good example, frequently available from the garden centres in autumn and originally raised sometime before 1953. It is a small growing daffodil with an orange corona raised as one of three seedlings from an open pollinated plant of 'Cyclataz', a cross between *N. cyclamineus* and *N. 'Soleil d'Or'*. A second seedling was named 'Quince' and it can still be obtained from specialist growers.

A less common cultivar is 'Gipsy Queen', though it remains very popular among alpine growers for the show bench. It is a hybrid between *N. asturiensis* and *N. minor* growing to three or four inches tall with pale lemon flowers and a deeply frilled corona.

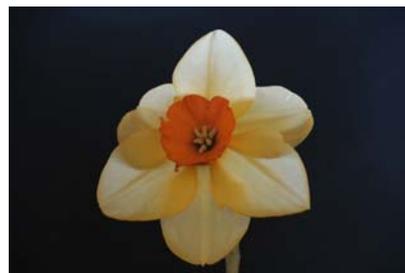
Many of Alec Gray's hybrids are available on specialist lists but a few have become common in the industry. About a decade ago 'Elka' started to appear as a flowering plant grown in pots for the spring market. I first saw it at Penzance Spring Show but it is now grown very widely. The creamy flowers have a lemon tube and plants will flower through March and into April. Raised in 1967 it has at last been recognised as one of the finest pale flowered miniature daffodils.



Narcissus 'Bossa Nova'.



Narcissus 'Altruist'.



Narcissus 'Prairie Fire'.

With the arrival of the large yellow daffodils in March I start to look for distinct varieties to grow in the garden. I have been particularly fascinated by the small range of orange flowered cultivars that appear from time to time on the show bench. They are all small cupped daffodils with a deep orange corona but instead of having yellow outer tepals they are a fascinating pale orange. It isn't to everybody's taste but I am very fond of them. They are unfortunately very liable to fade in the sun, so although they open orange (and remain orange in a vase) they become much paler after a few days in the garden.

The first of these that I saw was 'Altruist' in a display at the Cornwall Garden Society Show. It was being discreetly ignored by the daffodil lovers who felt that it was a step too far. I loved it. Raised in 1965 by F. E. Board, it is very similar to 'Ambergate' though slightly darker in the corolla. 'Prairie Fire' is more recent, registered in 1986 it is taller than its pollen parent, 'Sabine Hay' and a better garden plant. Finally comes 'Bossa Nova' raised by Brian Duncan in Northern Ireland in 1983. It is a seedling from 'Altruist' but smaller growing and with better poise.

With the fields full of yellow daffodils space in the garden becomes precious. However there are a few very special cultivars that deserve space in every garden. My first choice would always be 'Tete a Tete'. It has become very common in recent years but that is because it is one of the very best. It grows easily, flowers reliably and has a sturdy appearance wherever it is grown. I have already mentioned 'Jumble' and 'Quince', two of the daffodils raised by Alec Gray from an open pollinated flower of 'Cyclataz' but there was a third seedling, and it is 'Tete a Tete'. It has become so important that there has been pressure to find similar varieties with a range of colours. It hasn't been particularly successful, a number of plants have been hyped as the next 'Tete a Tete' but they have not matched their early promise. However in 2014 Brent and Becky Heath registered a seedling they had raised under the name of 'Snow Baby'. It is now widely available and early indications are that it will be as vigorous and effective as 'Tete a Tete' but with white flowers.

My final selection was raised by W. H. Wheeler in 1974 and combines two of my favourite groups. A seedling between *N. jonquilla* and 'Apricot Distinction', it is a small growing jonquil with orange flowers named 'Kedron'. It has been waiting for a suitable opportunity. With the rise in pot grown daffodils I think its time has finally come. It has been available from the big garden centres this spring and it would be my tip for the future (for what that's worth)!



Narcissus 'Tete a Tete'.



Narcissus 'Snow Baby'.



Narcissus 'Kedron'.

LAST MEETING

"The Falkland Islands". by Jonathan Hutchinson.

Jonathan trained at Edinburgh Botanic Garden and spent a year working in Australia which gave him an interest in the flora of the southern hemisphere. In December 1994 he had the opportunity to visit the Falkland Islands for a family wedding and see a flora that is associated with South America.



Jonathan Hutchinson.



Tin roofs.



***Blechnum magellanicum* with reddish spring growth.**

He was lucky to go when he did, it is a lot more expensive to travel there now. He was based in Stanley but also took a trip to Carcass Island. When he arrived he was handed a map showing in red the areas that still contained minefields thirteen years after the Falklands war. The mined areas could not be cleared and they had become great areas for wildlife. They were also protected from overgrazing and so the native tussock grasses were able to re-establish. At the time Stanley was made up of houses with tin roofs but they are more permanent structures now and the population of the islands has risen. The islands are very open and windswept. There are no native trees but some *Cupressus macrocarpa* have established. The weather can be extreme and changeable but it is possible to grow some crops under poly-tunnels.



***Caltha sagittalis* .**



***Senecio candidans* with ducks.**



Hebe elliptica

Blechnum magellanicum has pink foliage in spring and in the Falklands it still has reddish foliage at Christmas, in the middle of the southern summer. *Blechnum penna-marina* is a familiar garden plant, seen growing with *Baccharis magellanica*. *Nassauvia gaudichaudii* was named after Charles Gaudichaud-Beaupre who served as botanist on several long voyages around the globe between 1817 and 1831.

There is a lot of abandoned kit and rubbish in the hills left over from the Falklands war period.

Scars on the bogs and heaths made by large machinery were still looking fresh after the war as a result of the slow recovery of the vegetation. There are wide panoramic views across the islands from Two Sisters. *Nassauvia serpens* was seen, endemic to the islands and difficult to grow in the UK. There are many stone runs on the islands, areas of large stones that move slowly downhill like glaciers. They provide a unique, well drained and acid environment for plants. *Luzuriaga radicans* was seen and seemed to have larger flowers than the form that is grown in the UK. A good specimen of the cultivated form grows near the underpass at Rosemoor. Magellanic Penguins are very endearing and make an insane donkey-like braying. They burrow under the tussock grass while the Gentoo Penguins build nests on top of it. Gorse was introduced to the islands and has run amok. It has a strong scent of coconut in flower. *Gunnera magellanica* is familiar in British gardens but it grows everywhere in the Falklands and sometimes seems to make a mat of vegetation that hold the islands together. *Senecio candidans* grows on the sea shore, it has recently been available through garden centres. The British Isles are closer to the arctic circle than the Falklands are to the antarctic circle but we are still warmer as a result of the Gulf Stream. There are no ground predators in the Falklands so it is a great environment for birds including their native Flightless Steamer Duck, Cobbs Wren, the Kelp Goose with white males and greyish females, and the Upland Goose which often features on menus. Meat on the Falklands tends to be either lamb or goose! The islands are also home to the Southern Sealion. *Oxalis enneaphylla* is widespread along with *Empetrum rubrum*, or Diddle-dee and *Viola maculata*. *Pernettya pumila* has large red berries and forms a part of the complex interlocking flora of the islands. *Leucheria suavelons* was Jonathan's favourite plant with scented double daisy flowers and small silvery rosettes.



Magellanic penguins.



Sealion.



King penguins and sheep.

Between 19th and 24th December Jonathan flew to Carcass Island which has a climate comparable with Inverewe in Scotland. There were few luxuries. It is barren land that requires large areas per head of sheep, so the farms are huge and at the time there was little road infrastructure. On the more remote islands the Striated Caracara is still thriving. In the more populated areas it is persecuted because it is believed to prey on young lambs.

Caltha sagittalis, *Anagallis alternifolia* and *Leptinella* were seen mingled together growing in the peaty ground. Gentoo Penguins were seen and they are very smelly. They take over the tussock grasses and nest on top of them. The male King Cormorant has a huge carbuncle on the top of his beak which must interfere with vision. Other plants seen include *Bolax gumifera*, *Myrteola nummularia*, *Perezia recurvata*, *Oreobolus obtusangula*, *Azorella caespitosa*, *Carex trifida* and *Calceolaria fothergillii*.

The islands are visited by Atlantic cruise liners that stop in the clean and clear waters of the Falklands. The tussock grass, *Paradichloa flabellata* is starting to grow back in protected areas. It can make very old 'pedestals' of growth. You have to be very careful in the tussock grass because it can hide Sealions that rush to the sea if startled. They are very fast and very heavy. It is also home to the Tussock Bird, *Cinclodes antarctica*. Jonathan also saw Southern Elephant Seals, very well camouflaged when they lay immobile among the rocks. The Dolphin Gulls in the area do a very good job scavenging the islands and keeping them clean.

Hebe elliptica may be familiar in British gardens and *Agropyron magellanicum* was attractive growing among rocks but it would probably be very invasive in a garden. King Penguins were seen at Volunteer Point. They are the most northerly of their group of penguins. The juveniles were just moulting into adult plumage. They huddle together in the cold and move around constantly so that those on the outside move towards the middle for warmth.

THE THREE STEMS COMPETITION

Thanks to Jonathan Hutchinson for judging the Three Stems competition. Trish Wilson brought a sensational selection of bulbous *Iris* flowers in perfect condition despite the challenges of the weather and took a well deserved first place. Pam Dormand was also celebrating spring with a selection of dwarf *Narcissus* from her garden in second place and I came third with three flowers of *Galanthus* 'Comet'.



1st. Trish Wilson.
Iris reticulata 'Pauline'
Iris reticulata 'Harmony'
and *Iris histrioides* 'Katherine
Hodgkin' .



2nd. Pam Dormand.
Narcissus bulbocodium,
Narcissus bulbocodium
'Arctic Bells'
and *Narcissus cyclamineus*.



3rd. John Sirkett.
Galanthus 'Comet'.

Peter Howard brought a *Rhododendron* and two *Camellia*. *Rhododendron* 'Olive' had pink flowers with a hint of lilac and fitted very well between the double white flowers of *Camellia* 'Eric Baker' and the single pink of 'Dainty'. Phil Gadd brought a vase of large flowered camellias in perfect condition, and Jean Gadd brought a group of hellebore flowers showing the range of colours available in the early spring garden. Tricia Howard continued the early spring theme with a group of snowdrops. *Galanthus* 'South Hayes' has single flowers with a long green mark on the reflexing outer segments. *G.* 'Cordelia' has tall, well organised double flowers and *G.* 'Merlin' has deep green inner segments. It was selected in the 1890's by James Allen of Shepton Mallet. The magnificent parade of spring that marched across the rear of the hall was dominated by camellias. A group of frilled flowers in shades of pink and white brought in by Peter Watson captured the spirit of the moment. Thanks to everybody who brought plants in, they made a really cheering show and summed up the optimistic frivolity of the season.



**Rhododendron and
camellias from Peter
Howard.**



**Jean Gadd's
hellebores.**



***Galanthus* from
Tricia Howard.**



**Optimistically
frivolous camellia
from Peter Watson..**

A great assortment on the display table this month. A lovely bowl of *Narcissus bulbocodium* 'Arctic Bells' stole the show for me with the palest primrose flowers. The primroses, on the other hand, had gone for the brightest colours and the largest flowers. *Primula allionii* had the first flower open, a delicate start to the rock gardening season. A beautiful arrangement of early spring flowers and well marked *Arum italicum* leaves added to the variety.



*Narcissus
bulbocodium* 'Arctic
Bells'.



Primroses.



Primula allionii .



Mugful of spring!

Special thanks to Janet and Leslie Dale, who came to the meeting with their wonderful range of snowdrops for sale. I came away with *Galanthus plicatus* 'Warham', filled with the hope that it will eventually cover the ground under some trees with its early, scented flowers. I have the bulb, now all I need is the patience.



Galanthus
'Viridapice'.



Janet and Leslie Dale and their snowdrops .



Galanthus 'Trumps'.

Secretary, Cornwall Hardy Plant Society.

At last years AGM the secreatry of our group stood down after long service. At the time nobody was able to step forward and take on the role so Sarah Wilks agreed to keep things running smoothly for a year. We are all very grateful for the job she has done but the time has come for her to give up the role and we are looking for a volunteer to take over. Sarah has supplied a summary of the duties entailed, if you feel that you could support the Cornwall group by taking them on PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE consider volunteering.

Secretary's duties, CHPS.

Attend two committee meetings a year, taking minutes at the meetings, drawing up the agenda for the meeting - liaising with the Chair.

Receiving various emails from HPS head office on a range of subjects. Examples: a television company is looking for gardens to film – this would be passed on for inclusion in the CHPS monthly newsletter if appropriate; the head office is closed for holidays (no action needed); the deadline for asking for a grant for the following year is approaching. All are usually dealt with in a matter of minutes.

In the last two years two small grants from HPS head office have been sorted out, for a flutter flag and for taking a stand at CGS Spring Show 2020. This involved a few emails again, not an involved process.

This year application for a stand at the CGS Show required a few emails to the Trade Stand director plus a simple form to fill in.

PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE.

OTHER EVENTS LAST MONTH

Gardeners came alive in February, toddling around gardens of snowdrops, fogging the air with their cold breath and dreaming of hot soup. Spring bulbs have been putting on a show both in gardens and in garden centres. Hellebores have been springing up, and in the sunny moments I

can finally smell the perfume from my *Daphne*. If you are lucky then lawns don't quite need mowing yet, nothing really needs doing, you can stand back and enjoy the garden for a precious moment. Or, you might just visit somewhere wonderful - send us some pictures!

Myddleton House Snowdrop Sale. 25th January 2020.

A return to the Myddleton House sale to start the year of with some snowdrops. Warm weather in January means that they are early this year, a good display from the sellers and some rumbling worries that there might be nothing left in flower for the later events. It was noticeably warmer standing in the queue this year before the start at 10am. Tea and coffee were still in strong demand but last years mad dash for bacon butties had slowed down a bit.

Trade was brisk again, possibly fewer yellow snowdrops than last year but more emphasis on very large flowers. There was plenty of variety on offer, this years novelty was a double poculiform snowdrop called 'Ice Princess' with an asking price of £500. I don't know how many sold, people were keeping very quiet about it.

The gardens of Myddleton House are well worth visiting once the mania of the main sale is over (the madness lasts about an hour). I saw some late-comers arriving at mid-day and wondering why it was so quiet, by then the business had been done. I bought a single snowdrop, 'Joy Cozens' that will cheer me next season. It was one of the first with a pale apricot mark on the end of the outer segments. It has faded by the time the flower opens fully.

It's not madness, its enthusiasm!



Myddleton House Sale.



***Galanthus* 'Joy Cozens'.**



Plenty of snowdrops.

Heligan. 28th January 2020.

It is always interesting to visit a well known garden during the winter when its bare bones are visible. In the case of Heligan, the garden was clothed in the remains of a century of overgrowth when the restoration started so its January nudity is a recent phenomenon.

A fantastic selection of rhubarb forcers in the walled garden attracted my attention. I have two that I leave lying around the garden for decorative effect but at Heligan they were definitely at work forcing rhubarb. The exotic elements in the garden were looking rather battered by the winter weather, but tree ferns were still green and almost certainly benefitting from the available moisture. Fortunately the "available moisture" stopped falling during my trip around the garden. The earliest *Rhododendron* had started to flower but the best displays came from the early camellias. C. 'Gloire de Nantes' was still looking spectacular and had been flowering since December.



Rhubarb forcers.



***Camellia* 'Gloire de Nantes'.**



***Dicksonia antarctica*.**

The Garden House. 1st February 2020.

The Garden House is open during the weekends in February to show off the collection of snowdrops built up by Matt Bishop while he was head gardener. This year the event was enhanced by Avon Bulbs, who brought a selection of their snowdrops for sale, growing in pots. A sunny afternoon helped and meant that the snowdrops in the garden opened wide. Sadly there wasn't enough of the bright, shiny stuff to open the *Crocus tommasinianus* in the Acer glade but they will save their energies and have a lilac party on their own. When they do, the air will be perfumed with the assorted seedlings of *Daphne bholua* that are planted throughout the garden. The cafe at the Garden House is being upgraded to cater for the increase in garden visitors and a new events space is being built in the house to be ready for the new garden visiting season. For a cold, wet exposed garden on the side of Dartmoor the winter effect of some of the ornamental grasses was remarkable. Somehow the garden remains pretty even in the depths of winter and it is going to be a good year for a springtime visit to Devon.



Crocus tommasinianus
keeping their own counsel.



Avon Bulbs selling
snowdrops.



Galanthus 'Green Teeth'.

Cornwall Garden Society Show 4th - 5th April.

Once again we will be having a stand at the Cornwall Garden Society Spring Show to promote Cornwall Hardy Plant Society. Volunteers are needed to man the stand and talk to the general public. If you think you could spare an hour or two during the weekend please have a word with the Chair, Phil Gadd.

Phil has also been promoting the society through the free newspapers around St Austell. If anybody knows other free papers that are distributed in the county could you let him know so that he can spread the word more widely.
Thank you.

Coach trip to two North Devon Gardens, Castle Hill Gardens and Marwood Hill Garden. Wednesday 29th April 2020.

Leave from St Erme Community Centre car park at 9.00am and returning at 6.00/6.30pm. Arrive Castle Hill at approx 11.00am, refreshments available from tearoom, depart at 1.00pm.

Arrive at Marwood Hill 1.30pm, light lunches etc available from garden tea room or bring your own packed lunch. Depart 4.00pm.

Cost is £30 per person which includes the return coach journey and both garden entrance fees. There are 49 places available on a "first come first served" basis, secured by payment. Please let Sue Lake or Dave Mayhew know if you wish to reserve a place. Payment can be made at the February meeting or at the March meeting at the latest please.

COMING EVENTS

Spring is well underway, I have included all the garden events I know about this month. Please tell me if you know of anything else that might be of interest to members.

Cornwall Orchid Society.

Sunday 1st March, 2.00pm, Chacewater Village Hall.
Trey Sanders, "Sumatra and its Orchids".
Check website for details: www.cornwallorchidsociety.com

Cornwall Branch, British Cactus and Succulent Society.

Friday 6th March, 7.15pm. 6th Form Common Room, Redruth School TR15 1TA.
Members Talks and Slides.
Check website for details: www.cornwall.bcsc.org.uk
Contact: ifaceymacleod@yahoo.co.uk

West Cornwall Spring Show, Marazion Community Centre, TR17 0DG.

Friday 6th March.
Saturday 7th March.
Check website for details: www.wchs.co.uk

West Cornwall Orchid Society.

Sunday 8th March, 2.00pm, The Annexe, behind Camborne Community Centre, South Terrace TR14 8SU.
"Experiments in Orchid Growing".
Check website for details: www.westcornwallorchidsociety.btck.co.uk

Cardinham Gardening Club.

Monday 9th March, 7.30pm. Cardinham Parish Hall, PL30 4BN.
Elly Phillips of Cornwall Wildlife Trust, "Gardening for Wildlife".
Check website for details: www.cardinhamgardening.co.uk

Cornwall Garden Society Lecture.

Tuesday 10th March, 7.30pm. The Alverton, Tregolls Road, Truro.
Graham Gough, "The Icing on the Cake".
Check website for details: www.cornwallgardensociety.org.uk

Cornwall Garden Society Lecture.

Wednesday 11th March, 2.30pm. Penventon Park hotel, Redruth.
Graham Gough, "A Miscellany of Plants".
Check website for details: www.cornwallgardensociety.org.uk

Blackwater Show.

Saturday 21st March.
Blackwater Village Hall, TR4 8ET.
Check website for details: www.blackwatervillagehall.net

Alpine Garden Society South West Show.

Saturday 21st March, 11.00am - 4.00pm.
Rosemoor, Devon EX38 8PH.
Check website for details: www.alpinegardensociety.net

Plant Heritage Cornwall Group.

Sunday 22nd March, 10.00am - 3.00pm.
Plant Nannies event at Tavistock Plant Fair, Tavistock Pannier Market PL19 0AL.
Check website for details: www.cornwallplantheritage.co.uk

Falmouth Spring Show, Princess Pavillions, Falmouth.

Saturday 28th March, 10.00am - 5.00pm.

Sunday 29th March, 10.00am - 4.00pm.

Contact: 01326 313863

If you go to any of these events, please would you take some pictures for the newsletter! Three "landscape" (broad and low) pictures fit the page perfectly. "Portrait" (narrow and upright) pictures may have to be cropped to fit them in. Add some words if you like. Any other content very gratefully received. Thanks.

NEXT MEETING

Wednesday 4th March 2020 .

Penelope Townsend will talk about "Gardening with Jane Austin".

7 for 7.30pm, Ladock Village Hall.

ADVANCE NOTICE

Wednesday 1st April 2020 .

Penny Jones will talk about "Japanese cultivars of *Primula sieboldii*".

7 for 7.30pm, Ladock Village Hall.

Saturday 1st May 2020 .

CHPS Plant Fair.

10am - 2pm, Truro Cattle Market, Newquay Road, Truro.

Wednesday 6th May 2020 .

Garden Visit. Brackenwood, Zelah, 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