



HPS
HARDY PLANT SOCIETY

South Pennine Group

Newsletter



MARCH 2025

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Closing Date for the next issue is 30th April 2025

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*A member's new
gardening project
page 5*



Cover picture by Tricia Fraser: Cyclamen coum with a Geranium x oxonianum

Messages from the Chairman

South Pennine Group 30th Anniversary Year

Our group is celebrating being 30 years old in 2025 (how did that happen?). I remember seeing a small advert in the local paper advertising the first meeting, which was packed with people wanting to join the group and the HPS. The late Dilys Davies, then HPS Chairman, gave a talk, though I now can't recall what she spoke about! Officially we started in September/October 1995 but we are celebrating with some excellent speakers during the year, in March we have John Grimshaw, who was until recently the Director of the Yorkshire Arboretum. Full details of all this year's speakers are on page 12 and on our website <https://southpenninehps.webador.co.uk>

30th Anniversary Event

Your committee has arranged a lunch and garden tour at Renishaw Hall on Saturday 6th September 2025 starting with a buffet lunch in the Rex Whistler Room at 12.30pm. The lunch will be paid for from group funds. We are limited to 50 in the Rex Whistler Room, so do sign up as soon as you can – Don will have a sign-up sheet at the next and subsequent meetings. Further details will follow as finalise our plans.

HPS Peony Group's AGM and Peony Day – 14th June

The HPS Peony group is holding its annual meeting at Baslow Village Hall on 14th June 2025. There are two speakers and also a visit to Chatsworth Gardens to see their peonies in the kitchen garden and around the maze. Further details can be found on the HPS website <https://hardy-plant.org.uk/hps-event/peony-group-agm-2/> The day costs £18 for HPS members who are not in the Peony Group.

RHS Wentworth Woodhouse Show: 16–20th July

At the time of writing it is looking unlikely we will have a presence at this event but please keep an ear and eye out for further information.

Tricia Fraser

A member's gardening plans—

Jo Owen

"I've recently moved house and downsized to a bungalow with a neglected garden..."

My last garden was large with a council allotment at the bottom, eventually this new one will be more manageable.

It's on a hillside with fabulous views, it's steeply terraced the lower level has good steps and a handrail, the upper level is appalling with extremely narrow steps and no handrail. A builder is booked for late February to redesign this.

Previous owners had contractors in to keep, some very nice shrubs and trees, down in size. That is hacked into small lollipops! A large conifer heavily chopped so now a doughnut shape.

Of course, I brought loads of large pots with favourite things planted in them, I ended up with a separate van for garden stuff!

Lots of work ahead but looking forward to it ... I'll miss my fruit trees that were on the allotment, but especially a very productive row of Autumn Treasure raspberries, I'm definitely going to plant autumn raspberries. I'll have a few vegetables maybe amongst the perennials.

Two lovely old English roses had to be left, Jude the Obscure and Sharifa Asma both with a strong perfume, I'll miss them."

Photographs © Jo Owen



Looking for lilies in Bulgaria—

Simon Silcock

Three species of *Lilium* are listed as native to Bulgaria. By far the most common and widespread of these is *Lilium martagon* which is found in montane woodlands throughout the country. *Lilium jankae* is listed for various sites throughout the length of the Stara Planina (Bulgaria's central mountain range). *Lilium rhodopeum* is the less common species with a handful of sites listed in the Rhodope Mountains of southern Bulgaria. It is also found across the border in northern Greece. In late June 2012, my late partner and I planned a Lily weekend in which we hoped to see two of the three species of *Lilium* native to Bulgaria in flower.



Lilium rhodopeum (above) is listed as critically endangered in Bulgaria. Changes in land use mean that it has not been seen at some of its former locations in decades. Its principal site near the village of Sivino is a protected site where the population is 'managed'. This reserve (a short walk from the border with Greece) consists of one hay meadow which is said to hold 80% of the world population of this species.

On a previous visit to this location, we had arrived too late. The plants had already flowered and seedpods were forming. Unfortunately, the meadow (which makes up the reserve) was being cut for hay. This seemed to be poor management as the Lilies had not yet died down and no seed had been ripened. Two years later, we were able to return and had timed our visit perfectly. It was a gloriously sunny day and the entire meadow was full of *Lilium rhodopeum* in full flower. There were some plants growing around the woodland edges of the site but the largest plants were all in full sun with their flowers held well above the surrounding grasses. The soil here is very sandy and well drained yet still moist at this time of year. The lower meadows had the leaves and ripening seedpods of an autumn Colchicum



The next day we drove north out of the town of Kalofer up the road to Mount Botev – the highest peak in the Stara Planina. It is possible to drive until the road is no longer paved at which point there is a carpark which has a well-marked footpath leading up the mountain from the southern side. It's a very popular route but not a particularly easy one as height is continually lost after having worked so hard to gain it. Several hours later, we finally broke free of the tree-line and came upon the grassy pasture on a promontory where *Lilium jankae* (left) had been recorded.



We were maybe a week or so late for peak flowering and some plants were showing obvious damage caused by red lily beetle (which is native to this area).

The lilies we did see were however stunning. We had looked for them at various sites listed closer to our home and they had always turned out to be misidentified *Lilium martagon* so it was great to see the real thing.

Mt Botev is a granite mountain and the soil up here was a sandy/ stony mix full of humus. The grassland is grazed by cattle from as soon as the snow melts and this area

experiences a lot of foot-fall from visitors on their way to the famous Rayskoto praskolo waterfall.

Most people walked straight passed the lilies – drawn on by the smells of kebabs cooking at the mountain hut which serves the site.

Top: *Lilium jankae* ; Right: *Lilium rhodopeum*

Photographs (c) S Silcock



MAD visits 2025—Don Witton

To go on a visit just sign up at the monthly meeting before the visit date.

**If you are not at the meeting email Don on
donshardyeuphorbias@btopenworld.com or phone 01909 771366 .**

**Its fair to say the attendance at last years visits could have been better
so please do make the effort to support at least a few visits.**

Wednesday 26th March

11:00 Hooton Walled Nursery, Doncaster Road Hooton Roberts., S65 4PF

Opened only last summer, this new perennial nursery is going to be a great asset to keen South Yorkshire gardeners. It is a work in progress and we will witness how this semi derelict historic walled garden is being brought back to life. There are plenty of unusual plants for sale.

Free. Minimum £1 for tea / coffee and cake.

Wednesday 9th April

14:00 Wortley Hall, Wortley, Sheffield, S35 7DB

We are booked to have a Head Gardener's tour of this historic garden with plenty of Rhododendron colour at this time of year and a productive walled garden.

Free. Refreshments can be taken in the hall café.

Wednesday 21st May

10.30 Member's Garden, 8 Wood Walk, Wombwell, S73 0NG

This is a narrow suburban garden packed with hardy plant interest. There is no lawn, just densely planted shrubs, bulbs, spring perennial interest and 3 greenhouses.

Free. Donations for refreshments

Thursday 5th June

10.30 Member's Garden, 51 Pomegranate Road, Chesterfield, S41 7BL

This is a small, modern garden. However, there is plenty of hardy plant interest – especially geraniums and erodiums, a small mixed herbaceous border and plenty of plants in pots and in the greenhouse.

Free. Donations for refreshments

MAD visits 2025—Don Witton continued

Saturday 5th July

2pm NGS Garden, 330 Old Road, Brampton, Chesterfield, S40 3QH

This Yellow Book garden was a real treat when we visited last year. Voted winner of the Chesterfield in Bloom ‘*Best Large Garden*’, there is loads of unusual perennial colour. There are 2 gardens to see as a gate at the bottom of the garden leads to a relatives colourful and well stocked garden.

Garden entry £4 Hot drinks and cake £2 (bargain)

Wednesday 6th August

10.30 Grey to Green. Meet at entrance to Victoria Quays, Furnival Road, S4 7YA

Grey to Green is an award-winning scheme bringing colour and sustainability to inner-city Sheffield. This is a self-guided walk of about 1 mile from Park Square to Love Square with garden beds stuffed with perennials and grasses.

<https://www.greytogreen.org.uk/>

Free. Lunch or light refreshments can be taken at Victoria Junction café, Victoria Quays

Saturday 6th September

12.00 Renishaw Hall, Renishaw Park, Chesterfield, S21 3WB

This is our 30th birthday celebration event. We start proceedings with a buffet lunch in the Rex Whistler room followed by a presentation ‘*Thirty MAD Years of Garden Visiting*’ This will be followed by a Head Gardener’s Tour of Renishaw Garden.

Cold buffet lunch, entertaining slide presentation and tour of the garden

ALL FREE!

Plant Hunters Fairs—Judy Coulson

Thirty one fairs to choose from. Always check event status before travelling at www.planthuntersfairs.co.uk . If you want more information about a particular plant fair, please contact janet@planthuntersfairs.co.uk

NEW Sun 16 March Thoresby Park, Newark NG22 9EP 10am-4pm Plant Fair & Country Park **Free Entry** Normal Parking Charges Apply

Sun 23 March Arley Hall and Gardens, Northwich CW9 6NA 10am-4pm Gardens and Fair £5.00

Sat 29 March Bodenham Arboretum, Kidderminster DY11 5TB 10am-4pm Plant Fair Free Entry

Sun 30 March Sugnall Walled Garden, Eccleshall ST21 6NF 10am-4pm Gardens and Fair £1.00

Sat - Sun 5 - 6 April Weston Park, Shifnal TF11 8LE 10am-4pm Gardens and Fair £5.00 **TICKET REQUIRED***

Sun 13 April Middleton Hall, Tamworth B78 2AE 9am-4pm Gardens and Fair £4.00 **TICKET REQUIRED**

Fri 18 April Whittington Castle, Oswestry SY11 4DF 10am-4pm Plant Fair and Grounds **Free Entry** Normal Parking Charges Apply

Sun - Mon 20 - 21 April Dorothy Clive Garden, Market Drayton TF9 4EU 10am-5pm Gardens and Fair £5.00

Sun 27 April Cholmondeley Castle Gardens, Malpas SY14 8ET 10am-5pm Gardens and Fair £5.00

Sun 4 May 1620s House, Donington Le Heath LE67 2FW 10am-4pm Gardens and Fair £1.00 **TICKET REQUIRED**

Mon 5 May Chasewater Country Park, Brownhills WS8 7NL 10am-4pm Country Park & Fair **Free Entry** Normal Parking Charges Apply

Sun 11 May Capesthorpe Hall, Macclesfield SK11 9JY 10am-4pm Gardens and Fair £4.00

Sun 18 May Southwell Minster, NG25 0HD 11am-4pm Plant Fair £2.00

Sat 24 May Carsington Water, Ashbourne DE6 1ST 10am-4pm Plant Fair and Country Park **Free Entry** Normal Parking Charges Apply

Mon 26 May Arley Arboretum, Upper Arley Worcs DY12 1SQ 10am-4pm Plant Fair Free Entry

Sun 1 June Norton Priory, Runcorn WA7 1SX 10am-4pm Plant Fair £1.00

Sat - Sun 7 - 8 June Hodnet Hall Gardens, Market Drayton TF9 3NN 10am-5pm Gardens and Fair £5.00

Sun 22 June Middleton Hall, Tamworth B78 2AE 9am-4pm Gardens and Fair £4.00 **TICKET REQUIRED**

Sun 29 June Whittington Castle, Oswestry SY11 4DF 10am-4pm Plant Fair and Grounds **Free Entry** Normal Parking Charges Apply

Sun 6 July Thoresby Park, Newark NG22 9EP 10am-4pm Plant Fair and Country Park **Free Entry** Normal Parking Charges Apply

Wed 23 July Cholmondeley Castle Gardens, Malpas SY14 8ET 10am-5pm Gardens and Fair £5.00 **SPECIAL MIDWEEK DATE**

Sun 27 July 1620s House, Donington Le Heath LE67 2FW 10am-4pm Gardens and Fair £1.00 **TICKET REQUIRED**

Sun 3 August Southwell Minster, NG25 0HD 11am-4pm Plant Fair £2.00

Sat 9 August Carsington Water, Ashbourne DE6 1ST 10am-4pm Plant Fair & Country Park **Free Entry** Normal Parking Charges Apply

Sun 10 August Capesthorpe Hall, Macclesfield SK11 9JY 10am-4pm Gardens and Fair £4.00

NEW Sun 17 August Middleton Hall, Tamworth B78 2AE 9am-4pm Gardens and Fair £4.00 **TICKET REQUIRED**

Sun - Mon 24 - 25 August Dorothy Clive Garden, Market Drayton TF9 4EU 10am-5pm Gardens and Fair £5.00

Sat 30 August Bodenham Arboretum, Kidderminster DY11 5TB 10am-4pm Plant Fair **Free Entry**

NEW Sun 31 August Chasewater Country Park, Brownhills WS8 7NL 10am-4pm Country Park & Fair **Free Entry** Normal Parking Charges Apply

Sun 7 September Weston Park, Shifnal TF11 8LE 10am-4pm Gardens and Fair £5.00 **TICKET REQUIRED***

NEW Sun 14 September Arley Hall and Gardens, Northwich CW9 6NA 10am-4pm Gardens and Fair £5.00

Indoor meetings, guest speakers for 2025—Tricia Fraser

All talks are at Greenhill Methodist Church Hall, School Lane, Sheffield S8 7RL

Wednesday 5th March

John Grimshaw, *Give me chastity – but not yet. Gardening choices in a changing climate*. John was director of the Yorkshire Arboretum for twelve years up to last September and is the editor of *Trees and Shrubs online* an encyclopaedic resource <https://www.treesandshrubsonline.org/>

Wednesday 2nd April

Sue & Neil Huntley of Hartside Nurseries *My Favourite Alpines*. A welcome return to two popular speakers who hopefully will have lots of plants for sale.

Wednesday 7th May

Ken Thompson, a retired lecturer in Plant Science from Sheffield University, will talk on *Modern Gardening Myths*.

Wednesday 4th June

John Cullen, designer, nursery owner and holder of the National Collection of Achillea will talk on *Achilleas—a healthy obsession*.

Looking ahead....

2nd July, Peter Williams *Unnatural Gardening*.

August – no meeting

3rd September, Doug Stewart *Applying best practice*. How the latest trials and research can inform the way we garden.

1st October, Owen Hayman on *Pictorial Meadows*

5th November, AGM and Diane Clement *The Dark Months – not just snowdrops*

3rd December, Martin & Jill Fish, *Gardening on the Menu* (this talk includes some food to try!)

Our 30th anniversary

In her news update on page 4, Tricia said she couldn't recall

what the HPS

Chairman, Dylis Davies spoke about at our inaugural meeting on September 22nd 1995.

Thanks to the archive of newsletters, it can be confirmed she spoke on '*Perennials of Distinction*'. Through this year we would like to share early memories of the society you may have.

The first meeting included as Item 1 on the agenda a discussion on the name of

our Group, it seems HQ won out. Apparently our launch got a full page spread in 'Amateur Gardening' (does anyone have a copy?).

If you have photographs of early events, please do think of sharing copies with me for inclusion in this newsletter.

Although the inaugural meeting was in Eccleshall Parish Church Rooms we quickly moved to the Botanic Gardens. In newsletter number 3 members are informed the official emblem of the group will be a foxglove (contrary to the advise of the HPS). The rationale being it grows well in our area and has many interesting cultivars.



1 A Name For The Group

HQ would like 'South Yorkshire Group' but we have people coming from adjoining counties and 'SY, Derbyshire, Notts and Lincs Group' is too long. North Midlands? Ideas please.

HPS Conservation Scheme—

Jayne Conquest

Thank you to all Members who took part in the scheme last year, donating plants for the conservation table at our monthly meeting and for the national exchange in September. Within our group 69 plants were propagated and taken by other members to grow on up from 35 last year and again we had more members taking part in the scheme.

Updates from the national meeting in September

New plants

Geum ‘Tinpenny Orange’ –Raised by Elaine Horton, an HPS member, from her nursery Tinpenny Plants. It also goes by the synonym *Geum* ‘Elaine’s Variety’

Two *Pulmonaria* have been donated by the national collection holder and HPS *Pulmonaria* Group member Margaret Stone.

Pulmonaria rubra ‘Richard Nutt’ – this plant came from the garden of Richard Nutt at Great Barfield. It has dark calyces surrounding coral-red flowers.

Pulmonaria ‘Vera May’ – this soft pink flowered plant was a seedling in the garden of Michael Bowyer’s parents. He named it after his mother. It was awarded an AGM in 1998.



I was lucky enough to obtain a plant of each and will be propagating them to put in the exchange scheme.

It was brought up that some plants at the national exchange meeting last year were wrongly named. *Phlox paniculata* 'Grey Lady' was one of them, but Barbara did not bring any back last year.

I took two Phloxes to the meeting, one that I had bought from Kiftsgate Court Gardens several years ago as *Phlox paniculata* 'Milly van Hoboken' and the second I had had from exchange scheme which was labelled *Phlox paniculata* 'Milly van Hoboken'. A HPS member Edwina Miller who has just been awarded national collection holder for *Phlox paniculata* identified the one from Kiftsgate Court Gardens as *Phlox paniculata* 'Milly van Hoboken', the other plant I had from exchange scheme was *Phlox paniculata* 'Terry'.

Photos are of my two plants, Terry is darker Pink than 'Milly van Hoboken' and smaller flowers. If members this year who have had *Phlox paniculata*



'Milly van Hoboken' from the scheme check to see which they have, I will propagate *Phlox paniculata* 'Milly van Hoboken' hopefully this year.

Photographs: *Phlox paniculata* 'Milly van Hoboken' (page 14) and *Phlox paniculata* 'Terry' (above) both © Jayne Conquest

Alpine Garden Society Snowdrop day

The Alpine Garden Society Snowdrop Day took place at Lilleshall National Sports & Conferencing Centre on Saturday February 1st last. There were half a dozen nurseries alongside three speakers and, in addition, a display illustrating snowdrop cultivation by Anne Wright of Dryad Nursery.

John Fielding, photographer, author, lecturer, garden designer and plant breeder gave an informal talk on 'My Encounters with Snowdrops'. The talk was illustrated with some beautiful photographs of snowdrops in various garden situations and plant associations. One of the most striking was a display in a private London garden consisting of a stylised rivers of *Ophiopogon planiscapus* and *Galanthus 'Atkinsii'*. Maybe we don't think so much about co-planting with snowdrops thinking there isn't much else about when the bulk of them flower in a typical garden. However photographs of them in mass plantings with euphorbias, willow, Dog Woods, red flowered *Hamamelis* did demonstrate how they can be used as an element in a wider design.



Anne Wright of Dryad Nurseries is a renowned breeder of narcissus and snowdrops. She reminded us that you can have snowdrops in flower from September (e.g. *G. reginae-olgae* 'Blanc de Chine') through to April (*G. 'Fieldgate Superb'*). Her very favourite is one of her own creations, *G. 'Dryad Gold Sovereign'*. She has an excellent website <https://www.dryad-home.co.uk/> which contains some valuable information on cultivation. She urged us to scan the benches in garden centres for oddities among

the otherwise uniformity of the mass produced *Galanthus* on display. Sports, or volunteers as she called them, are, she said, more common as a source of new varieties than breeding.

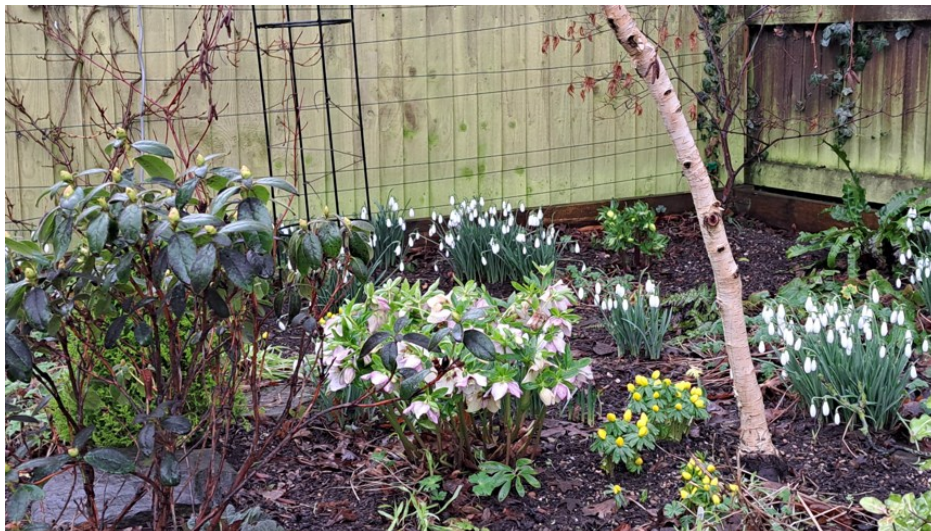


There is the proverb that *doctors differ patients die* and likewise it can be that *horticulturalists differ while plants die*. However, Anne did disabuse us of the belief that snowdrops must be regularly lifted and split – they don't apparently. She has clumps in excess of twenty years unsplit. Also the thorny issue of 'divided in the green': she advised waiting until dieback has commenced and the roots are no longer being used. Do check out her website, even if it is only to look at the lovely photographs.

The third speaker was Emma Thick, the deputy head gardener at Thenford Gardens & Arboretum in Northamptonshire. She is known for her expertise in snowdrops and has been instrumental in expanding the collection at Thenford. Thenford may be better known as the home of Lord and Lady Heseltine. She told us she was in a way talent-spotted by Lord Heseltine when she

was a more lowly employee in the gardens: he overheard her talking confidently and knowledgably about snowdrops to some visiting horticultural bigwigs. Thenford holds a national collection of c.1,000 varieties and has the ambition to grow and grow and it certainly doesn't lack the space to develop. Again lots of lovely photography in the talk, including a display of snowdrops in the sort of mini theatre frame you'd expect to see auriculas displayed in. The collection contains some horticultural punning. G. 'Limetree' is under a lime tree, G. 'By Gate' is by a gate. Slightly more risqué, they have planted G. 'Miss Adventure' and G. 'Miss Behaving' beside G. 'Duke of York'. Lord Heseltine has recently had a snowdrop named in his honour. I hadn't the courage to ask if she would be planting it next to Galanthus 'Falkland House'

Apparently, Lord Heseltine doesn't like to spend more than £25 on a individual bulb so he wouldn't have been spending much at most of the nurseries in the hall where the usual eyewatering prices were on display.



Photographs:

Page 16: a snowdrop with a topical name on sale at the event;

Page 17: unnamed cultivars Anne Wright had on display, described as ‘Inverse Pocliforms several generations down from Trimmer, South Hayes, Trymlet, Corrin, Wendy’s Gold and Primrose Warburg’;

Above: snowdrops under a cornus at the Dronfield Hall Barn NGS open day, Feb 16th last and from our Chairperson’s garden © Tricia Fraser.

Notes from our talks

Samantha Hopes

October 2nd 2024

A story of determination and hard graft



Many people move into horticulture as a career change, often a bit later in life but Samantha was a young graduate Geologist in a good job, working in Spain when she realised she was looking more at the plants than the rocks she was being paid to look at. She packed in Geology and went to work in Bournville Garden Centre near Birmingham. From there she applied for a studentship at Birmingham Botanic Gardens, securing a place above other applicants who had horticultural qualifications on the basis of a presentation on *Aquilegia*, despite subsequently finding out the head of the interview panel hated the genus.

Alongside the studentship she caught up on qualifications by securing her RHS level 2 qualification. She took us through her placement and shared memories of scrubbing the smell of pelargoniums off her hands. While there she was on a team building a geologically accurate alpine garden (as an amateur geologist myself one of my perennial gripes is the incorrect use of rock in alpine displays). From there she was chosen for an Alpine Studentship at RHS Wisley. She spoke of the immense back-up collections used to keep the public alpine house looking perfect every day and of the twenty three different potting mixtures used for different Alpines.

Samantha Hopes—continued

While at Wisley she worked on placements at Kew and the shows at Chelsea and Hampton Court, preferring Hampton Court as the crowds weren't as dense. She moved then to what she described as her first job as a horticulturalist to Ashwood Nurseries near Wolverhampton, working in the rock garden and with the *Hepatica* collection the nursery is famous for. At this point her husband, who she had met on the course at Birmingham, was also working there, he is now head gardener at Ashwood. She finished her talk by sharing her recent house move involving some 1600 pots. She concentrates now on horticultural talks which hopefully include audiences of young people to inspire them into horticulture as a first choice career.

Trish Kohn

November 6th 2024



Plants and where they come from

Many members will know Trish, who along with husband Peter, grows many plants from seed for Sheffield Botanical gardens, as well as maintaining the South African garden and several other areas within the gardens. To keep up to date with their activities I recommend following 'Sheffbotprop' on Instagram.

Trish's talk was informative and entertaining, accompanied by excellent images. Starting with the earliest known introductions, Trish took us on a journey of around a thousand years, talking about the types of travellers who brought them back to British shores, with a few examples from each era. Her talk ended with the recent discovery of *Wollemia nobilis*, the Wollemi pine, named in 1994.

Early introductions between 1000-1500AD came from the Mediterranean, Southeast Europe and the near East, mostly brought here by pilgrims, crusaders and even princesses! *Anemone coronaria*, *Rosa gallica*, and *Alcea rosea* being examples.

Trish Kohn—continued

The 1500s-1700 saw further introductions brought in by diplomats, merchants and colonists, and came from more distant places such as South America and Central and Eastern America. *Aster novae-belgii* arrived in 1710, brought here by John Tradescant the younger.

By the 1700s-1800 ships captains and explorers were travelling the ocean waves to far flung places e.g. Western America and South Africa. Of course Joseph Banks was also exploring Australia at this time, bringing *Melaleuca citrina*, the red bottle brush to our shores.

The 1800-1900 period was the age of the professional plant collectors, exploring South America, China, the Himalayas, Australia and New Zealand. A few introductions described by Trish: *Ribes sanguineum*, introduced in 1826, from northwest America by Archibald Menzies, Forsythia from China, Japan and Korea introduced by Robert Fortune in the 1840s and *Crinodendrom hookerianum* introduced in 1848.

Many more plant collectors were covered in her talk, but one I'd never heard of, with perhaps the most memorable name was Hildagonda Duckitt, from South Africa (1839-1905) who sent seeds to Suttons. More information on her can be found online!

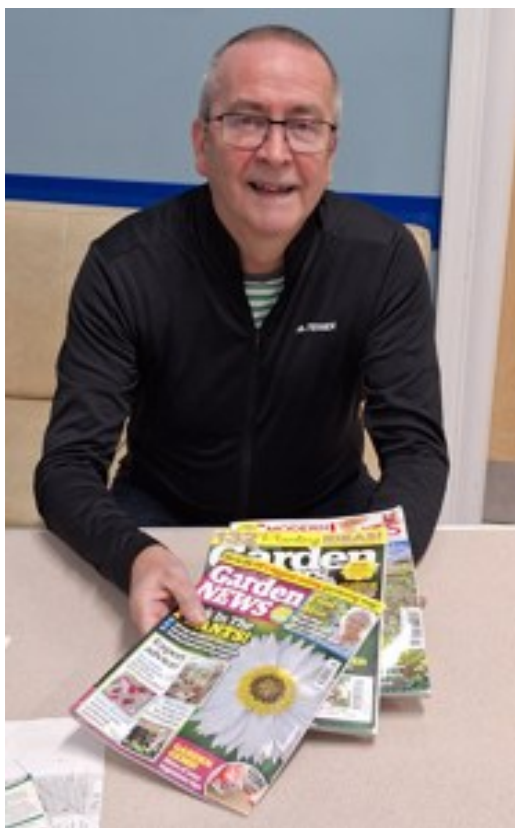


Geoff Hodge

December 4th 2024

Life and times of a gardening editor

Geoff Hodge spoke to us in December on his career in horticulture and horticultural journalism. He has a witty and easy-going style which brought to life a long a varied career in sharing horticultural knowledge. First through one to one in the garden centre trade and then in print, on-line and in the many different talks he offers to societies such as ours. Like many of us, his interest in gardening started at a very young age and was fostered by indulgent parents, relatives and in his case also a neighbour who let him turn her garden into a vegetable patch, in return for a supply of vegetables.



He went into the garden centre trade and took the opportunities offered to end up running what sounds like a proper garden centre, one which sells interesting plants sourced from around the world. Roy Lancaster described him as a fellow plantsman, which is some accolade. Luck comes into a career and having your first two articles submitted to the magazines *Garden Answers* and *Garden News* accepted and published is certainly lucky but following it up with successive articles and ultimately becoming editor of *Garden News* takes hard work and talent. It is also about recognising what's new on the horizon and he was among the first to see the potential of the internet in horticultural journalism. As an

editor, his job includes checking that anything recommended in an article is legal. If a contributor is recommending a chemical for something, that the chemical is licenced for that purpose (Note to self, I need to bear that in mind!). As an author, you have to endure a carefully crafted 1,000 words cut to fifty if the editor has to hand a nice photograph or two they would like to use. Photography, he told us, is the most important element in a publication – so please, dear readers, let us have your photographs for this, our modest publication. However, unlike in the commercial world, I won't doctor your photographs, we garden warts and all.

Photographs: Geoff Hodge (above) and (right) members enjoying the fabulous spread put on by Janet Lister and her team.



Notes from our talks

Troy Scott Smith

February 5th 2025

Sissinghurst – Revitalising Vita



Troy Scott Smith is head gardener at Sissinghurst and he came all the way from Kent to speak to us on February 5th. The meeting was well attended and, due to the weather in January, was the first meeting of 2025.

I hope he was pleased that, on a show of hands, about two thirds of those in the room had been to Sissinghurst. Troy took us through the history of the gardens, how Vita Sackville-West found the place and how it echoed her childhood home, Knole, another National Trust property. Vita Sackville-West and Harold Nicolson bought Sissinghurst, which dates back to Elizabethan times, in 1930. The castle tower dating from the 16th century is virtually all that remains of the original house. It wasn't their first garden together and their ambition at

Sissinghurst was to create a strict formal design with informal planting. Troy illustrated how Harold's structural design overcame the rather oddly shaped plot which contains few right angles in terms of the configuration of boundaries, walls and buildings.

At the centre of Troy's talk was the manifesto he was instrumental in developing in 2013/14 to restore the gardens to better reflect the ideals of Vita and Harold. It was felt the gardens had evolved into simply a horticultural showcase and the original vision had been hollowed out.

Troy Scott Smith—continued

What was agreed was to recreate a romantic garden in a rural setting. Be less keen to prune and shape, have sheep coming up to the garden gate, move car parks and visitor facilities away from the immediate environment of the garden and ‘trying hard not to make it look they are trying hard’. This wasn’t a straightforward restoration project to reverse the clock to 1950 but more to reflect the values and principles of Vita and Harold. An example of the compromise is that for Vita and Harold, each section of the garden had a moment in time when it peaked whereas a garden open to the public charging £13.00 admission needs succession planting in most places.

The story of the recreation of Greek island inspired area in the gardens, Delos, is worth checking out at <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/kent/sissinghurst-castle-garden/recreating-delos-at-sissinghurst>. Inspired by a visit to Delos in 1935, V&H struggled with realising the concept, not through lack of imagination or hard work but due to the heavy clay soil and wet climate in that part of Kent. Sometimes we may have a little moan or two at the National Trust and their perhaps overly corporate approach.

However its difficult to think of any other organisation which would support their employees to take on a project like this in such an iconic site. Also nurture young gardening talent with integrated personal development opportunities across its 180 or so parks and gardens.



Gallery

An opportunity for you to share pictures with other members.



Photographs:

Page 24 St John's Penistone, Feb 2025

Clockwise from top left:

Iris reticulata 'Rejoice' Feb 2025;

Hamamelis Intermedia 'Jelena', Jan 2025;

Cornus mas in fine colour in the garden of Irene May

South Pennine HPS—Calendar

March	March 5th	Talk by John Grimshaw, former Director of the Yorkshire Arboretum at 7.30
	March 26th	Visit Hooton Walled Nursery, S65 4PF
April	April 2nd	Talk by Sue and Neil Huntley, Hartside Nursery, Alston at 7.30
	April 9th	Visit Wortley Hall, S35 7DB
May	May 7th	Talk by Ken Thompson, retired lecturer in Plant Sciences at Sheffield University at 7.30
	May 17th & 18th	Spring Plant Sale, Sheffield Botanic Garden
	May 21st	Visit Member's Garden Wombwell - S73 0NG
June	June 4th	Talk by John Cullen who holds a National Collection of Achilleas, at 7.30
	June 45th	Visit Member's Garden , Chesterfield, S41 7BL
Talks are at Greenhill Methodist Church Hall, School Lane, Sheffield S8 7RL. Visitors welcome - £3 donation requested		