



THE ALPINE GARDEN SOCIETY CENTRAL SUSSEX GROUP



NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 2005

Mr. RONALD FRANK 1918 – 2005

It was with great sadness that we learnt of the death of Ronald Frank on 2 December. Born in Isleworth and educated at the City of London School, Ronald served with the army during WW2 and when in Germany met and subsequently married Erna. On return to England he trained as a chartered surveyor and honed his entrepreneurial skills trading in commercial property eventually ending up as the chief executive of a German company in London. After "partial" retirement he remained extremely active, regularly swimming and joining a poetry writing class. Ronald was man of great culture. He shunned a television and never possessed one, preferring to be immersed in the radio (usually BBC3 and BBC4 for The Archers), going to classical concerts, writing and reading. When, as often he did, he came to see me for a bit of supper after meetings, Erna was always telling him off for reading the articles I thought might interest him, rather than waiting to read them at home! He was an avid diary writer and the illustrated logs of his travels make fascinating reading.

Ronald became a member of our Group sometime between 1975 and 1978, its Chairman from 1987-89 and with Erna talked to us on his travels to Turkey, which was his destination on 26 or 27 occasions, Mongolia and Syria. Other visits were to Andalusia, Austria, the Dolomites and in more recent times Lebanon. One of the highlights of our programme over the years were the many visits made in September to his and Erna's home, Cadenza in Butterfly Walk, Warlingham and the lovely garden falling steeply to the railway below. He loved this garden and increased its size from time to time; one regret would have been that after at last finding a suitable liner for the pond, its realisation was not achieved.

Again with Erna, he was a founder of both the Cyclamen and Fritillary Groups. Bob and Rannveig Wallis (a former members of this Group) recall that "in spite of his declared greater interest in antiquities and the humanities, Ronald had an uncanny knack of finding something unusual. He claimed not to be particularly skilled at identification but he was amazingly observant in the field and we can recall many instances when he would shout: "is this anything interesting?" or "is this it?" when we were seeking particular specialities. On scrambling over to his find we would confirm many times that not only was it indeed something interesting but that it was exceedingly unusual! It was Ronald who found the first ever plants of *Cyclamen cilicium forma album* in the Cilician Taurus, to be followed a few years later by *Cyclamen graecum ssp graecum forma album* in southern Greece. It is to Ronald that we owe the introduction of the stock of these white forms which are both now freely available commercially. On another well known occasion, we were with Ronald when we were seeking the legendary *Fritillaria viridiflora* in Hatay province of Turkey. Ronald always liked to engage with the local people, a pastime that in our experience often led to wild goose-chases, but this time the local farmer, on being asked about ters lale, (literally: hanging lily), started hopping about excitedly and yelling "Nylon...Nylon" and gesticulating at the polythene-covered crops in the valley. We followed him to his fields and sure enough there in the boot-clinging mud there were

fritillaries, not *F viridiflora*, but of a hitherto undescribed species. We eventually wrote this up and published it in Ronald and Erna's honour as *Fritillaria frankorum*.It was in Lebanon that Ronald showed what a tower of strength he was when we were compelled to take tea with Hizbollah and again in Syria when one of us was arrested by the army when we were a bit close to the border! It is very gratifying to know that although the human body is mortal, the fritillary will live on."

Our sympathy goes to Erna, his wife and very close companion of 53 years and his two surviving children, Georgina and Tim.

Thanks to the Fritillary Group Newsletter from which extracts have been taken.

RM

CHAIRMAN 'S NEWS

In spite of a frosty and foggy evening, 19 members braved the elements to attend the Annual General Meeting which turned out to be quite a lively event in which some members raised questions that had been a cause of concern to them.

The first was the raising of the subscription to £7.50 per member producing a cost for a two member family of £15. It was claimed this was too steep an increase and would be counter productive if we lost members as a consequence. The majority of members took a totally different view saying in their opinion the £7.50 cost wasn't realistic in the first place, it was less than £1 per meeting and was indeed extremely good value. The Central Sussex Local AGS Group was a very low cost organisation. Other organisation's fees were mentioned such as the WI at £22/year, The Embroiderers Guild at £22/year and a levy of £1.50 for each meeting attended. Some members said they would be willing to pay £1.50 to £2.00 per meeting attended, over and above the basic fee of £7.50. Another suggestion was that the fee set apply to the half year and subject to a proviso it could be increased in the second half of the year if necessary.

A suggestion was made that cutting out the January meeting would save costs and should be considered further. I didn't sense any other support for that suggestion, but the committee will consider it at their next meeting.

The view was expressed by another member that the quality of the speakers engaged had diminished over time and that we should be prepared to engage more costly speakers. The counter view was expressed that paying a higher speaker fee did not give any guarantee of getting a better lecture than could be obtained from a speaker who was more realistic in their fee required.

Election of Officers and Committee.

We are still in need of a volunteer to act as Treasurer when Bob steps down in August 2006 which is the end of the financial year. Other Officer posts were confirmed in Office. A new Officer post has been created of Vice Chairman and Jean Griffin agreed to serve in that capacity and was voted into office.

Audrey Dart has completed her three year term but it was agreed she should be co-opted on the Committee as a non-voting member in recognition of her willingness to continue to oversee catering arrangements at our meetings and Shows etc. Joan and John Goodman have agreed to continue to serve on the Committee and Roy Metcalfe agreed to become a member of the Committee and were so elected.

The Vera Crundall Competition Challenge Cup was not presented this year and has been left in abeyance until a volunteer is found to do the recording throughout the year. The number of plants placed on display and competition has reduced by half from earlier years. I hope this facility can be continued because it is nice for new members to see some of the plants displayed. We had *Sternbergia*, *Ornithogalum* and *Massonia* on display in December. These helped remind us that in spite of unfavourable winter weather outside, these plants were helping to raise our spirits and prospects of better things to come shortly.

The Christmas Social Evening The food supplied by members and organised by Audrey and her helpers looked most impressive and we had a veritable feast to get us well and truly into the festive spirit.

Jean acted as MC for the games, her first was a real sizzler, and we were asked how many chocolates we liked to eat in a week. The number was then multiplied, added to and the end result turned out to be our age. That was real magic! Then she divided us up into pairs produced a quiz game based on clues which lead us to a flower such as Snap Dragon, Daisy etc.

I provided games for her of a different nature asking for the meaning of Latin plant names. I had to smile when Roy and Paul were doing that, one of them had seen most of them in the wild and the other spent most of his life growing them! Then followed a quiz asking questions about the Alpine Garden Society. That was followed by asking members to identify 10 different Cyclamen species or hybrids which proved a challenge. The final game was to provide members with 10 pots of different materials such as composted bark, loam, Chichester grit, an alpine mix etc for them to identify correctly. Few were able to identify tufa dust and pumice and these caused much head scratching.

We had an excellent Christmas raffle to which members had generously contributed and bought tickets so we all went away with something at the end of the evening. I had the good fortune to have my ticket come out first and I was let off doing the washing up as a Christmas treat! I judged the evening a great success, it was a nice friendly atmosphere, members were competing with each other and much conversation indicated they were enjoying themselves. So much so some didn't want to go home and it was well beyond 10pm when we finally dispersed.

My thanks go out to all who attended and made the evening a huge success.

Keith Moorhouse

2006 AMENDED PROGRAMME.

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| January 21 st | Flora of Alaska ~ Roger Facer |
| February 18 th | Islands Apart - Plants at extreme latitudes~ Brenda Holcombe |
| March 18 th | Plants and their alpine environment ~ Roy Metcalfe and Spring Plant Sale |
| April 8 th | Chile – A long thin journey ~ David Lang |
| April 22 nd | Spring Show ~ Adastra Hall, Hassocks 11.45-4.00 |
| May 20 th | Summer Fund Raising Garden Visit ~ Mr & Mrs David Brown, 31 Hurst Road, Hassocks |
| September 16 th | Primula and Polyanthus ~ Geoffrey Yates |
| October 14 th | Growing and Propagating Saxifrages ~ David Hoare |
| November 18 th | Wildflowers of the Pacific ~ Ian Rumley-Dawson |
| December 16 th | Annual General Meeting and Christmas Social Event |