



THE ALPINE GARDEN SOCIETY CENTRAL SUSSEX GROUP



NEWSLETTER

JANUARY 2006

Mr. ROGER FACER
FLORA OF ALASKA

Alaska is the largest state in the USA with an area of 591,000 square miles, over twice that of the second largest Texas, yet in terms of population of 610,000, it ranks 49 with only Wyoming having fewer inhabitants. Of necessity, therefore, Roger confined his attention to the south eastern section of the state between Anchorage and Valdez on the coast and some 200 miles inland to the Denali National Park south of Fairbanks – all well south of the Arctic Circle. The typical scenery of the area is one of small lakes, bogs and coniferous covered mountains topped by snow.

On the Kenai Peninsula south of Anchorage (snow and ice cover 60 percent Kenai Fjords National Park on the south east coast of the Kenai Peninsula near the town of Seward and includes the 700-square-mile Harding Icefield one of only four remaining icefields in the U.S. It is also the largest icefield entirely within U.S. Borders.) The park's rugged coastline includes beautiful tidewater glaciers and abundant marine wildlife. Glaciers, a spectacular teeth-like one shown, enter the fjords 300-400ft. high and small ice-bergs and ice floes below the ice-cliffs pattern the water. There are Humpback, Minge and Orca whales. In the park we saw the Wintergreens *Pyrola grandiflora*, *P. chlorantha* and *P. asarifolia*, all with rosettes of stalked evergreen leaves and drooping white to pink or greenish (*P. chlorantha*) cup-shaped flowers, the latter not found in Europe, *P. grandiflora* confined to northern latitudes and *P. chlorantha* found throughout most of Europe and all at home in wet woodlands. The beautiful Orchid *Calypso bulbosa* has a single leaf and usually a single purple flower with a zoned red-brown lip with a yellow or white beard. It is usually a dwarf plant, but in the one seen, was quite tall. Closely related to the Butterfly Orchids, *Habenaria* is often named as *Plantanthera*. *Habenaria dilatata* carries long spikes of white flowers growing in very wet conditions, while *H. hypoborea* has greenish flowers and is less common. Growing throughout western North America in alpine zones, *Caltha leptosepala* is a white flowered marsh marigold and was very common in wet places. There is purple-flowered *Delphinium glaucum* and pretty orange flowered *Aquilegia formosa*, in shade and open thickets. Clumps of dwarf *Cornus canadensis* with creamy-white flower and white to pink-flushed bracts form attractive spreads. A western North American, tall-stemmed *Parnassia fimbriata* has long petals which are fringed in their basal halves. Photos of walrus basking on rocks and a sea otter on its back. Many sea animals and birds were killed by the Exxon oil tanker disaster at Valdez, but numbers are now returning.

From Valdez, the Richardson Highway and rail lead to Copper Center at just over 1000ft. En route, white swans and cygnets and a bridge whose end section was dislodged by an earthquake to which this part of Alaska is prone. (Each year Alaska had about 5,000 earthquakes, one fifth above 3.5 on the Richter scale - the most powerful earthquake in US recorded history, measuring 8.5 on the Richter scale, struck the Anchorage region on 27 March 1964, resulting in 114 deaths and \$500 million in property damage in Alaska and along the US west coast.) The Thompson Pass at 2700ft. (it holds the majority of snowfall records with Mount Rainier and the highest for August-July total and greatest daily snow depth) is good for flowers – dusky-red flowered *Rubus spectabilis*. a scattering of mats of the prostrate Alpine Azalea *Loisleuria procumbens* their pink buds opening a

pale pink, meadows with *Dodecatheon pulchellum* spp. *alaskanum*, burnt-orange flowered *Rhodiola rosea*, *Dryas octopetala*, carpets of the Bog Rosemary *Andromeda polifolia*, *Anemone multifida* with vivid, fluorescent pink upside-down urn-shaped flowers, common *Potentilla hookeriana*, *Diapensia lapponica* ssp. *obovata*, its large white flowers contrasting with the tiny evergreen leaves and *Salix arctica*. At Copper Center, now a township of just 360 people lying at just over 1000ft. there are blue and white Lupins and deep ink flowered *Hedysarum mackenzii*, about two feet high on dry hillsides and river bars.

A by-road east from Willow on the main road from Anchorage to Fairbanks leads to the Hatcher Pass in the Talkeetna Mountains (gold country 1906-1953) and a scenic lodge, and although not great for plants, there is the shrub *Potentilla fruticosa*, orange and yellow flowered forms of *Papaver nudicaule*, *Polemonium pulcherrimum*, the often dwarf Prickly Wild Rose *Rosa acicularis* and very common *Ledum groenlandicum*.

Further north, the Denali National Park within the Alaska Range (Denali, the "High One" is the name Athabascan native people gave the massive peak that crowns the 600 mile long Alaska Range. Mt. McKinley at 20,320ft. is North America's tallest mountain and with a vertical elevation of 18,000ft. is greater than that of Everest although its top is often cloud covered) A single 90 mile road leads into the park followed by a 12 mile shuttle bus to the North Face lodge with views across the Cotton Grass surrounded Lake Wonder southwards to McKinley. On the way Caribou, *Epilobium latifolium* in creek gravels and at 12" highly poisonous *Zigadenus elegans* with upward facing white to cream flowers. One interesting quite easy ascent is the the bare looking volcanic Mt. Galen. You may see white and brown bears and if going in June, mosquitoes will be a certainty in wet spots. On the mountain slopes, *Saxifraga bronchialis*, *Montia sarmentosa*, crimson-tipped, deep yellow flowered *Pedicularis oederi*, woolly *P. kanei* ssp. *kanei*, and pale-yellow *P. langsfordii*. *Castilleja* are more common in western and northern Alaska, but we were shown *C. elegans* with several stems branching from the base carrying purplish bracts. *Arnica frigida* is confined to most of Alaska, NW Canada and NE Siberia, its large yellow flowers somewhat out of proportion to its height and basal foliage. *Anemone richardsonii* with its digitate foliage and yellow flowers could easily be mistaken for a buttercup and white flowered *A. parviflora* is found in large drifts. The range of *Pulsatilla patens* ssp. *multifida* extends into eastern Russia. *Silene acaulis* seems to grow everywhere! In scree *Potentilla uniflora*, a lovely and choice plant, but hardly a cinquefoil as it has only three-part leaves. Both *Cassiope tetragona* and *C. stelleriana* are to be found. *Phacelia sericea* ssp. *ciliosa* has fewer silky hairs and more protruding stamens than the species, but still has the dense racemes of bluish-purple flowers. A pale blue form of *Mertensia alpestris* ssp. *asiaticus* was attractive as was *Oxytropis mertensiana*. It was pleasing to learn that the Snowdon Lily *Lloydia serotina*, seen in long grass, reaches into Alaska. *Primula tschuktschorum* is a dwarf plant, leaves lacking meal, its corolla usually rose-magenta. Here too, *Draba stenopetala* and *D. alpina* with densely hairy leaves and bright yellow flowers; in long brown grass, *Ranunculus nivalis* with generally solitary rich yellow flowers and shaggy brown hairy sepals; *Eritrichium aretioides*, a plant of Arctic Russia, Siberia and Alaska, is similar to *E. nanum*, but grows into larger mats, the flowers opening violet before turning bright blue. In a crevice *Saxifraga oppositifolia* and forming dense cushions, deep pink *Douglasia gormanii* which looks fantastic in a sink. The Butterbur *Petasites frigidus* with deep pink flowers reaches Europe only in Scandinavia. Ragworts are usually quite tall plants, but *Senecio atropurpurea* grow only 2" high. Yellow *Crepis nana* forms low cushions and carries yellow flowers. *Rhododendron lapponicum* is a low mat-forming species with leathery leaves, margins rolled under and violet-purple open bells and is confined to the Arctic and Scandinavia. A dwarf *Pedicularis* species was intensely woolly and had deep pink flowers. The distribution of *Campanula lasiocarpa* extends from Kamchatka into Japan and on into the Aleutians and Alaska; it is a tufted species with solitary blue flowers with prominent lobes. With deeply toothed tips to the leaves, the 6 to 12 inch red stems of *Saxifraga lyallii* carry several small, white flowers. *Ranunculus eschscholzii* with its lavender-tinted sepals and yellow flowers grows throughout north-western North America.

The windswept Pribilof Islands lie nearly 300 miles off Alaska's coast, St. Paul Island (the only one with an airport) provided an opportunity primarily to observe the birdlife – a cliff covered with puffins, but there were views of the hotel and church. There are flowers, such as *Iris setosa* which grows around the sub-Arctic Pacific and the intervening islands, a plant with fleshy leaves (probably a *Claytonia ?sarmentosa*), the well known *Androsace chamaejasme* and *Primula eximia* a species which has been in much dispute in its relationship to *P. tschuktschorum*, but differs from that species in that it is more robust, is initially mealy and has up to 10 homostylous magenta flowers – John Richards believes this is the plant shown in Bulletin 235/61 and not *P. tschuktschorum*. The talk ended with views of the Northern Fur Seal and an Arctic Fox with a white brush.

An interesting talk on a part of the world that we had not heard before (and with scarcely a reference in the AGS Bulletin), with plants that we were not familiar as well as a reminder that some of the familiar ones have a very wide distribution.

A flora of Alaska and Neighbouring Territories: A manual of Vascular Plants. - Eric Hulten 1968
Stanford University Press 1032pp. ISBN 0804706433 – expensive but definitive!
Field guide to Alaska wild flowers - Verna E. Pratt. Alaskacrafts Publishing
The Alaska-Yukon Wild flowers guide – Alaska Northwest Publishing Company 1979
Insight Guide Alaska - APA Publications
Rough Guide to Alaska – Paul Whitfield

For web users, an excellent map of the country on www.alaskais.com/AKM.htm. If you want information on individual parts, Google in Kenai, Copper Center, Thompson Pass, Hatcher Pass and Denali – there's plenty there!

RM

MEETING FEBRUARY 18th

IAN RUMLEY-DAWSON on WILD FLOWERS OF THE PACIFIC

Around or within the Pacific – either way, or both, sounds interesting

Summer Fund Raising Garden Visit ~ Mr & Mrs David Brown, 31 Hurst Road, Hassocks

The correct date is Saturday **May 20th**, not the 22nd as in some copies of the last newsletter

Chairman's News. The Annual General Meeting.

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 2 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 organisation of 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 £2.0 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

Minutes of the AGM of the Central Sussex Alpine Society
held on 10 December 2005
at St Wilfred's Centenary Hall, Haywards Heath

Before the meeting commenced a short silence was held in memory of Ronald Frank who had recently died.

Apologies for absence: Maureen Balcombe, David Brown, Lee and Julie Martin, Peter and Doreen Jennings, Anna and John Hooton, Richard and Penny Gaze, David Robbins, Mary Ingwersen and Norman Young.

Minutes of previous meeting: The secretary read the minutes to the meeting and these were approved and signed with one amendment – see Matters Arising.

Matters arising from the minutes: It was noted that the date of the AGM should have read 15th January 2005 and not 17th.

Chairman's Report for the year: The Chairman gave his report and this is filed with these minutes.

Discussion on the report followed.

1. Lionel Reuben stated that the subscription rise to £7.50 was in his opinion correct but he thought there should be a lower rate for a couple as proposed at the last AGM. The Chairman replied that the committee had discussed all possibilities and combinations of subscriptions and had decided that this was the best approach and was thought still to be value for money in comparison with other groups.
2. Derek Monk raised the subject of quality of speakers at meetings and felt that they were not as good as in the past. Discussion took place and various points of view were raised concerning the best value. The Chairman explained that the cost of some of the best speakers is much higher because of travelling expenses and accommodation. The present and future programmes do reflect this.

Treasurer's Report: Copies of the Treasurer's Report were circulated to the meeting and a copy is filed with these minutes.

The Treasurer explained that due to an abnormal charge by the Alliance & Leicester of £85.00 there was a loss incurred in the last financial year. However he felt that the loss will be made good by the end of the year due to lower costs for speakers in the 2005-2006 programme but we have to bear in mind that there is likely to be a fall in the number of members in the Group. The committee have decided to change bank after this current financial year when the Treasurer retires. Charges for refreshments have been increased this year so there should be no loss in this area.

Also there will be an increased contribution to the Group from the 2005 Autumn Show compared with 2004.

Election of Officers: All the current officers of the Group had expressed their willingness to continue in office for the next year. The meeting accepted their election en bloc.

Election of replacement committee members: The Chairman explained that there were four vacant places on the committee.

Jean Griffin and Audrey Dart have completed their term of office on the committee. The Chairman proposed that a post of Vice Chairman is created and that Jean Griffin fill this. Proposer: Keith Moorhouse. Seconder: Bob Charman – This was carried unanimously. The Chairman also proposed that Audrey Dart be co-opted by the committee as a non-voting member with responsibility for refreshments.

The Chairman stated that he would like Roy Metcalfe to serve on the committee as not only has he been producing the newsletter for some years but has now commenced work on the Group's website.

Proposer: Keith Moorhouse Seconder: Tony Birks – This was carried unanimously.

The Chairman suggested that he would approach Maureen Balcombe to fill the remaining vacancy on the committee and the meeting agreed with this suggestion.

Election of Auditor: Norman Young has again agreed to audit the accounts for the coming year but Olive Gilbert suggested that she would be able to undertake this job if Norman felt that he was unable to do it in the future. This offer was gratefully accepted.

2006/2007 Programme: Edith Moorhouse explained that she has been working on the future programme within the financial constraints of our income. This means that there will always be speakers from within the group and others selected on the basis of the quality of their talk and their costs. A programme for 2006 has now been issued to allow members to plan ahead. Lionel Reuben suggested not having a meeting in January or February to reduce costs. Discussion took place on the various options and merits of different speakers.

The AGS Autumn show at Horsham has now been fixed for 7th October 2006.

Any other business: There was no other business.

Following the AGM the evening continued with a social event with food and games provided by the members.