



## A Derbyshire Delight – An Orchid Walk in Ravensdale by Peter and Sheila James

**Distance: 5 ½ miles including  
rough and sometimes steep tracks**

Following Hilary Hutson's talk on 'Going Native' at our November meeting we decided to tell you about our favourite walk to see ornamental native plants in Derbyshire.

We start from Tideswell Dale car park in late May and see the first Early Purple Orchids in the former basalt quarry nearby.

We then follow the River Wye to Litton Mill which in the bad old days imported children from London's workhouses to use as labour. We continue along beautiful stretches of river to Cressbrook Mill which has now been converted into smart apartments. Here the children were treated better and had a few hours off on a Sunday.

We take the road to the left signed Cressbrook and Litton up to a footpath on the right signed Ravensdale. After passing Ravensdale Cottages we follow a narrow path which crosses the valley then uphill to the valley rim. Here there is a profusion of wild flowers including Early Purple Orchids, Cowslips and the Yellow Mountain Pansies growing over the spoil tips of the old lead mines.

We descend again and follow the path up Tansley Dale to Litton.

A stop at the Red Lion in Litton is very welcome before returning to the car park.



## Derbyshire Group Committee

**Chairman:**

Robert Hawkesworth  
Tel: 0115 928 1050

**Secretary and Speakers:**

Celia Weaver  
Tel: 01773 824446

**Treasurer:**

Nigel Needham  
Tel: 01773 811429

**Publicity:**

Vernon Ellis  
Tel: 01246 270702

**Membership Secretary:**

Linda O'Neill  
Tel: 07449051515

**Newsletter Editor:**

Alison Farnsworth  
Tel: 01773 742848

## Co-opted Members

Ruth Sands  
Tel: 01335 344028

**Sales & Archive:**

Anne Evans  
Tel: 01332 558194

**Events Organiser:**

Martin F Brown  
Tel: 01623 489489

The famous gardener  
Marjorie Fish was once  
asked the secret of  
gardening, she answered:  
"The secret is, when in  
doubt, plant a Geranium"

## Gardening Assistants Folly - by Dorrell Harrison

After many years of decline, our old wooden lean-to greenhouse had finally rotted so badly that the only thing holding it together was the glass. So, at the end of 2012 I bravely told my gardening 'mad' wife not to use the greenhouse as it was in danger of collapse.

We looked around the garden for an alternative site, but in the end decided to replace the top half of the structure on the original dwarf- wall base. This proved to be a great mistake as the base was not a standard size and most manufacturers offer the standard sizes such as 10x8.

After much debate the only option seemed to be contacting a bespoke manufacturer for an estimate. After looking through the most popular gardening books we contacted two companies for a quote. The companies sent representatives within 14 days of initial contact. The first one, a likeable chap in his early forties, quoted a price saying he would come again to take more exact measurements once I had got over the shock of the figures. The second firm gave me a different story all together, the original dwarf-wall was so wildly out of square (3") that he could not make a metal greenhouse that would be pleasing to the eye on the original base. His suggestion was to get a builder to knock the thing down and rebuild the base, giving me exact measurements for the builder to follow.

**The first one, a likeable chap in his early forties, quoted a price saying he would come again to take more exact measurements once I had got over the shock of the figures.**

The builder arrived to give an estimate for the new base, but to save money I would demolish the greenhouse myself. My idea was to smash the old structure up and put it into a skip. However, the senior management of the house instructed that I take out every pane of glass to save for future use (I only managed to break one!) The frame was so rotten that Janet (my wife) pulled it down with one hand in 20 minutes. The fun really began when demolishing the base. The breeze blocks all smashed up into little pieces, unfortunately leaving a ridge of rock hard concrete round the edge, taking many hours (and much swearing) to remove.



**Using artistic licence, I decided to alter the shape of the base...**

Using artistic licence, I decided to alter the shape of the base adding a porch to the front of the greenhouse, this proved to be a costly mistake. The manufacturer was informed that the base was ready for final measurements to be taken. He duly arrived on site and, with a look of glee on his face, pointed out that altering the shape of the base had almost doubled the cost of the project. Still, it was too late now, it was my fault and there was no going back. I could only hope that it looked ok when it was completed.

After some eight weeks without any news, I phoned to check that they were still in business and was assured that the greenhouse was under construction and they would email me some pictures and then fit it within the next few days.

The day the fitting team arrived it poured with rain for five hours, after which time all three of them were soaked to the skin. They abandoned for the day, promising to return a couple of days later. Unsurprisingly, when they returned it was raining again, but they managed to complete the job in less than three hours.

I'm very satisfied with the greenhouse, my only regret is not having safety glass. It was offered, but in an attempt to keep costs down I decided against it. I would recommend Dovetail Greenhouses to anyone who wants a one-off greenhouse, and yes, it fitted the base perfectly!

**Did you know...**

Comedienne Miranda Hart's real name is Miranda Hart Dyke. She is Tom's first cousin. Don't think that Van is any relation, though.

## Hellebore Study Weekend hosted by the HPS Dorset Group -

On a very cold weekend last February we travelled down to Bournemouth for a weekend of Hellebores and cattle! With temperatures of -5c it was a very bracing weekend.

On the Saturday morning we were given an extremely interesting talk on Hellebores by Diane Guy. She is a hellebore enthusiast who often runs workshops from her garden. She spoke on all aspects of hellebore care. She recommends growing them in slightly alkaline soil, feeding them well and mulching with mushroom compost. All hellebores benefit from a late winter or autumn mulch of good garden compost. An autumn feed of bonemeal also helps.

After lunch we travelled to Manor Farm Hampreston which belongs to Anne and Guy Tremayne. They own the oldest known closed herd of cattle in the world. A closed herd is one where no females have been admitted into the herd from elsewhere. The cattle are Fresians. It is also the second oldest pedigree herd in the country and has breeding records going back over a hundred

years. Trehanes have been at the Manor Farm since 1913. The herd is run by the third generation of the Trehane family. Over 100 years ago Guy's grandfather James farmed in Hereford later moving to Wiltshire and then on to Manor Farm. Guy told us how his grandfather had to walk his cattle to Manor Farm stopping overnight on the way. Each evening and morning milk maids arrived by horse and cart to milk the cows. All the cows in this herd have names beginning with H.

Since Anne and Guy moved to Hampreston 10 years ago they have devoted a lot of their spare time to restoring the garden, which now opens under the National Gardening Scheme. When we visited the hellebores were at their best. One flower from each different plant had been picked and placed on the soil so it was possible to view the inside of the flowers. What a good idea! One shrub with which we were unfamiliar with was *Sophora microphylla* 'Sun King.' This is an evergreen leguminous shrub which produces bright yellow flowers in late winter/

early spring. In well drained soil in a sunny position it is very hardy and was flowering well. Jennifer Trehane of Trehane Camellias and Blueberries and Piers Trehane the author of *Index Hortensis* are also part of the family.

Hellebores by RD Plants were on sale. This is a small specialist nursery from Tytherleigh, near Aminster in Devon. Rodney Davey has produced a stunning range of hellebores known as Homelea Hybrids. Just a few were purchased. The nursery has no website or mail order and opens only from February to early spring.

### Dorset HPS were superb hosts!

After a most enjoyable day we all met up for a delicious dinner in the hotel. The after dinner speaker was Roy Lancaster who spoke on hellebores he has seen in the wild, in places ranging from Bolton to the Himalayas. Anyone who has heard Roy speak will know what an entertaining and informative speaker he is. This was a perfect end to a wonderful day. Dorset HPS were superb hosts.

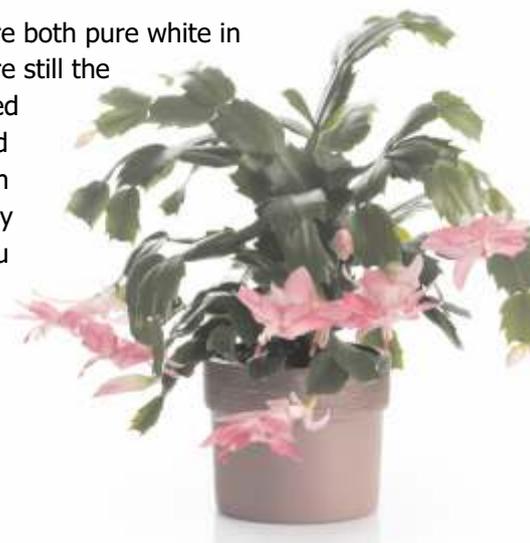
## A Christmas Cactus Mystery by Robert and Barbara Hawkesworth

Not the discovery of a long lost Poirot case, but one involving our Christmas Cactus (*Schlumbergera x buckleyi*), which Barbara purchased some few years ago from our local Greengrocer/Flower Shop. It looked a good, strong, healthy plant; and so it proved, growing well, increasing in size and each year flowering beautifully too. It thrives in our south-west facing sun room with a good mix of mostly sun but with some shade. Indeed a couple of years ago it flowered in such great profusion that we feared it might follow in the footsteps of a Wisteria of ours, which did the same one year and then expired immediately afterwards. Not so however, mind you it did 'take a year off' last year producing no flowers at all. However a stem broke away and Barbara simply planted it back in the soil, where it rooted and began to grow.

The whole plant and 'new baby' looked very healthy all spring and summer, and then in the late summer/early autumn it began to bud up, lots of them too, not an excessive crop just a jolly good one. It has now come into flower, not the deep, dark pink of yesteryear, but pure white! There is maybe a hint of pale pink around the lower tube of some few flowers; but on the whole, all are "as

white as the driven snow". Flowers do not normally change their chemistry to that extent. I am not sure about this plant, but most reds are anthocyanin based. (Here perhaps I should add that academically I am a graduate colour chemist, however I am not a qualified botanist, simply a keen amateur). What can have happened? I have searched in quite a few books but to no avail. Perhaps it would be wise to remind you that I am of the "book generation" in age and what I have not done is to search 'on-line'.

'Mother and Baby' are both pure white in flower, the leaves are still the same healthy polished green, indeed I could say that both look "in the pink", except they are not! If any of you can enlighten us we would be most grateful, just give us your ideas when you see us next at Shirland.



## A Mallorcan Holiday - by Linda O'Neill

In March 2013 I had the good fortune to escape the dreary, seemingly never ending winter and spend a week in Mallorca. What a breath of fresh air and sunshine it turned out to be.

I and a group of friends stayed in the small town of Soller on the north west coast. The setting is very picturesque, nestling in the foothills of the mountains but only a short, 15 minute tram ride to the coast at Port de Soller. The whole area is very popular with walkers and some very well known personalities, past and present, have lived in the area.

**The setting is very picturesque, nestling in the foothills of the mountains but only a short, 15 minute tram ride to the coast at Port de Soller.**

Soller has a botanic garden and on our first morning there located it after a short walk. It is fairly compact in size and has only been open to the public since 1992. Its main aim is to study, understand and thereby conserve the endemic, rare and endangered flora of the Mediterranean area, in particular those of the Balearic Islands.

To aid instruction and education plant collections are laid out in ecological groups simulating their natural habitats. So there are wild flowers that grow on the cool sides of mountains e.g. *Coriaria myrtifolia* and those that are adapted to coastal areas, to name just two. I was particularly fascinated by a collection of *Limonium* sp some of which have adapted to dry sandy conditions by developing leaves that looked more like spines! Another area of interest for me personally was a collection of fruit trees and vegetable cultivars which are traditionally grown in the Balearics. Oh to be able to grow tomatoes outside for most of the year!

There was also an impressive collection of succulents and cacti, some of which had grown to



*Echinaceas at Meadow Farm*

staggering proportions and I admired a fine specimen of a wall climbing *Pyrostegia venusta* with large orange, honeysuckle like flowers. All in all we spent a couple of very enjoyable hours there in beautiful sunshine!

During the rest of the week we managed a couple of walks in the hills which I found more interesting in some ways as I was able to gain a better impression of plants existing alongside human activity. We were too late for the almond blossom but the scent of citrus blossom was beautiful. The lower slopes are largely terraced with limestone walls – these date back to the early Middle Ages when Mallorca was a Moorish kingdom and are well maintained today. As to be expected, olives are an important crop and the trees had all been pollarded. Another common tree was the carob which, like the olive, is extremely long lived. Its trunk produces some very interesting gnarled shapes as it ages.

What struck me greatly was the way in which wild flowers were allowed to grow so naturally without any apparent attempt to "manage" them. A flower that was everywhere, carpeting the orchards and hillsides was an oxalis with sulphur yellow flowers which I discovered is known as the Bermuda buttercup. I am sure it would be far too rampageous for gardens but looked delightful in the landscape. On rocky banks in light



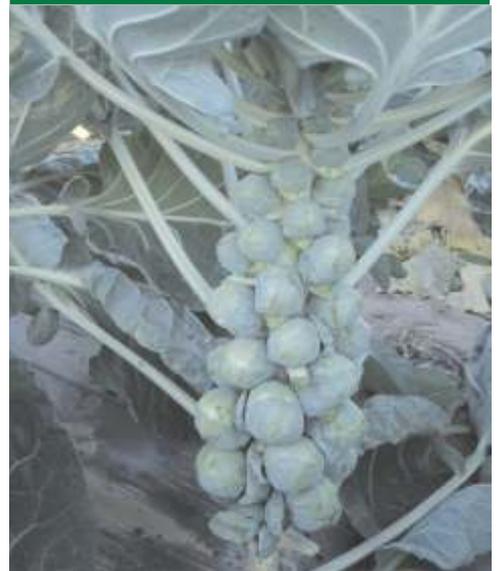
shade I spotted tiny *Asarum europaeum* with its unusual purple spathe. On another walk there was a fine clump of *Anthericum liliago* – St Bernard's lily – nestling among rocks and in seemingly poor soil. Other common plants were periwinkle, cyclamen, arum and cistus – the latter well suited to extremely free draining soil.

**In town great use was made of *Clivias* which were in full bloom providing a real splash of colour in the streets.**

In town great use was made of *Clivias* which were in full bloom providing a real splash of colour in the streets. Beside the bus station in Soller I admired a beautiful *Mimosa* in full



## Putting The Cart Before The Meeting by Nigel Needham



A number of members attending meetings have discovered a source of fresh, often (minimal) soil-on, vegetables to buy en route. They are mainly brassicas and root vegetables: brussels are sold by the stalk. Not only is the produce fresh and very reasonably priced, the quality is excellent. I'm not sure where the vendor sources the produce from, but he was once heard to say that he had been picking the brussels at 11 o'clock the night before.



flower and an exuberant clump of *Osteospermum*.

My overriding impression of this area of Mallorca is one of fertility and lushness in the valleys; certainly spring is the best time to experience the flowers and the grandeur of the mountains forming an impressive backdrop; but, above all, a landscape that is at ease with itself, having evolved over the centuries.

I hope I have been able to give a reasonable impression of this area of Mallorca in this article. It is certainly well worth a visit.

“The soil is a wonderful thing... Treat it like a good friend ....give it the sort of nourishment it really appreciates... keep it in good heart - and it will reward you by growing almost anything your heart desires...”

Fred Streeter,  
horticulturalist and  
broadcaster 1877 –  
1975)

Surprisingly, the vegetables are sold from a trailer in a field opening on Park Lane, Shirland. From Shirland Village Hall, turn right on the A61 towards Alfreton and then first left at the traffic lights just beyond the church: this is Park Lane. Proceed for about a ¾ mile until you see the laden trailer on your left: there is often a clue in the form of a line of parked cars on the verge of the road.

However, do go before the meeting as the trailer may have gone by the end of the meeting. Please also note that the trailer is there only on Saturdays, but not in summer: check with the stallholder for details.

# Picton Gardens and Spetchley Plant Fair by Robert Hawkesworth



"The first major storm of the autumn will smash Britain tonight!" Not my words, but those of our press! Nonetheless, the Hardy Planters of Derbyshire set off undeterred in 'Tim's Coach'. It was quite a pleasant journey too, a little brightness on the way and perhaps a slight cooling of the air, but nothing remotely similar to the headlines and after a coffee break on the M5 we soon turned off towards Picton, which lies in the Worcester area. The roads began to narrow somewhat and we knew that was a sign of our closeness to our venue. Tim was able to drop us off, literally at the gate, and we had soon negotiated our entry, whilst he took his coach away to park in an appropriate place.

The gardens house the Michaelmas Daisy Collection and whilst we may have been perhaps a tad early for the finest blooming there was a wonderful display of flowers

There was some splendid autumn colour especially from the shrubs and

trees, which of course lead the eyes upward through the garden, a very good point that is, especially for new gardeners. Remember that all gardens have a vertical aspect, not simply a horizontal one.

the layout of the paths and beds is such that you were constantly changing direction, twisting and turning, so that maximum use was made of the space available.

The area of the site is not particularly large, but the layout of the paths and beds is such that you were constantly changing direction, twisting and turning, so that maximum use was made of the space available. We were especially pleased to see Helenium 'Lemon Queen' looking resplendent, as is ours and in its first year too! It is a corking plant with lovely lemon yellow blooms which the bees have loved this year. Amongst the many shrubs, one which particularly drew our attention was Euonymus alatus compactus the lovely colour of its leaves, a bright shiny red, which lit up

the border just like a beacon. Other plants which were doing well were the dahlias, many varied colours and forms and not just the flowers, but the stems and foliage too. Some with very dark, almost black, stems and leaves, others in quite a pale green colour, Plant Breeders really are making some wonderful advances in these matters. I have mentioned the winding paths, but how clever, whichever route you took through the garden it seemed in every case to bring you out at the "Sales Point". One of the Michaelmas Daisies we had admired in our wanderings was a lovely white one, named, "Starlight", which was one of the more compact series, and there it was for sale. Our own garden is on the small size and it is quite full as you may imagine and we had made our minds up not to buy any more plants unless we knew exactly where they would go! You know don't you? The owner, what a delightful fellow, told us it would "do best in a sunny spot, with good drainage". Of course we bought it, and we found room for it! The sound bites I overheard were all very praiseworthy, it is a wonderful garden and as I have already intimated we could perhaps have benefited from a later date for the main blooming of the

Michaelmas Daisies, but when you have to plan far ahead it is very difficult to hit the button on the head. Well done say I!

### On to Spetchley Plant Fair...

Our next venue was Spetchley Plant Fair, this is in the environs of the Malverns, and so a short coach drive was necessary. It was beginning to look a little darker and the wind was becoming more noticeable but nothing really untoward. The entrance to Spetchley Park was a little narrow, but Tim negotiated it with aplomb and we pulled up on the gravel at the front of the Country House. We disembarked here with Tim then taking the coach around to the rear of the buildings. By now there was also more than a hint of rain in the air! There were fewer tents and stalls than I imagined the organisers had expected, but given the forecasts! There were no more than

about thirty, but they were welcoming to us. I think that I should first mention the extensive Walled Garden at the rear of the buildings, what a wonderful array of plants there were in the collection. Space will not allow me to mention them all, nor in particular. However it was a splendid gentle walk around and of course the walls ensured that we were sheltered from the worst of the wind, which was now rather gusty. However we discovered a small Summer House into which we retreated for a "short break", accompanied by four others!

### There was an extensive walled garden at the rear of the buildings with a wonderful array of plants in the collection

We then carried on and returned to the Plant Fair itself. Of course on one

stand we found *Euonymus alatus compactus*, wouldn't you know it? We asked the stallholder, a very pleasant young fellow, whether it would continue to thrive in a container, and having received his affirmative, we bought it! The stallholder said that he and his wife were at two shows that afternoon, he had rung her and she was "not very happy" were his words, "I'll have to buy her a curry tonight" he said! Considering the somewhat not ideal conditions, I felt sorry for the stallholders, the weather forecasters had as usual "gone over the top" and I wondered how much that had put off many people from attending.

Barbara and I thoroughly enjoyed ourselves, we were amongst a group of "happy Hardy Planters", who are a delight to be out with. Everyone has a smile on their face and if you have yet to take the plunge in joining us on our outings all I can say is "give it a try".

One of the guides on our visit to Spetchley Park Gardens was asked to identify an impressive black fruited plant in one of the borders. He named it as American pokeweed (*Phytolacca Americana*). Unfortunately, the plant had already been wrongly identified by one of our members as *Cornus* on the *Cob Nigra*!



Male Blackbird feeding on American Pokeweed berries – or should it be *Cornus* on the *Cob Nigra*?!

### Have you seen this? by Nigel Needham

I was looking at the updated national HPS website recently on [www.hardy-plant.org.uk](http://www.hardy-plant.org.uk) and can thoroughly recommend it.

In particular, there was a very good article in the 'plant of the month' section. It was by a member named Gill Heavens, and there was a link to her own website, [www.ontheedgegardening.wordpress.com](http://www.ontheedgegardening.wordpress.com)

Gill is head gardener at a private garden on the North Devon coast. I had a look at this website, a blog, and found a whole host of articles about plants and her gardening experiences. Some articles were informative whilst others were anecdotes and opinions regarding her work and gardening matters. All were witty and amusing and I can highly recommend a look at Gill's website to brighten your day.

## Dates for your Diary

Date	Event	Location
15th Mar 2014	'Hardy Plants for Cold Places' by Peter Foley	Shirland Village Hall 2pm
26 April 2014	'Gardening for Wildlife' by Steve Lovell	Shirland Village Hall 2pm
17th May 2014	Plant Fair	Shirland Village Hall 11 am - 1pm
June 28 2014	Moors Meadow and Ivy Croft	Please contact the Secretary for more information
26 July 2014	Wollerton Old Hall and Bridgemere Garden Centre	Please contact the Secretary for more information
20 Sep 2014	'Arctic & New Zealand Alpines' or 'Rock Gardening & the Dolomites' by David Charlton	Shirland Village Hall 2pm
25 October 2014	Batsford	Please contact the Secretary for more information

Unless stated, all Derbyshire Hardy Plant Society meetings are held in Shirland Village Hall, two miles north of Alfreton off the A61.

### Snowdrops

By Patience Strong

Aptly named a drop of snow. Sweet flowers come when cold winds blow-and in the depths of winter bring, the whispered tidings of the spring.

You'd think such fairy things would die-beneath the bleak and bitter sky. You wonder how the buds uncurled in such a grim and hostile world...

just little frozen drops of snow. How daintily the small bells grow-upon their slender stalks that thrust so bravely through the earths hard crust!

No sunshine warms their icy bed. No birds make music overhead-when like strangers they appear- at the gateway of the year.



## About this newsletter:

The opinions expressed by the authors are their personal views and not specifically endorsed by the HPS Derbyshire Group. The Editor reserves the right to edit contributions as necessary.

## Data Protection Act:

The personal data that you provide to the Group will be stored as paper and/or computer records by the HPS Derbyshire Group for the Group's administrative use only. It will not be disclosed to anyone outside the HPS without your permission. If you are concerned about the methods used to store your data, please contact the Membership Secretary.

## Editor's Note:

If you have an article that you would like to see published in the newsletter, I would be delighted to receive them either at a meeting, by email to: [alisonfarnsworth@btinternet.com](mailto:alisonfarnsworth@btinternet.com) or by post to:

Bridge Farm  
Main Road  
Lower Hartshay  
Derbyshire  
DE5 3RP

**Cancellations:** If a meeting has to be cancelled due to adverse weather, details will be posted on the website [www.HPSderbyshire.co.uk](http://www.HPSderbyshire.co.uk) or please contact Celia Weaver on 01773 824446 or email [cmw@gotadsl.co.uk](mailto:cmw@gotadsl.co.uk)

**Reminder:** If you would like to receive your copy of the HPS Derbyshire newsletter by email, please let me have your name, address and e-mail address so that I can add you to the list.

Thanks once again to Emma Oaks for designing the newsletter.