



8th International Alpine Garden Society Conference Show 2011

A Report for the Merlin
Trust

Peter Feilen

Preface

The following is a report is a personal account of 8th International Alpine Garden Society Conference 2011. The conference took place on the 14 – 17 April 2011 in Nottingham, at the East Midlands Conference Centre. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Merlin Trust for generous grant awarded to me so that I could attend the conference. It was an excellent experience to be surrounded by so many alpine enthusiasts and wonderful plants, many I have never seen let alone have heard of before. I found the conference inspiring and I will never forget it.

Peter Feilen

Contents

Preface.....	2
No table of figures entries found.	Error! Bookmark not defined.
8th International Alpine Garden Society Conference Show 2011	4
Thursday 14 th April 2011	4
Friday 15 th April 2011	4
Saturday 16 th April 2011	5
Sunday 17 th April 2011	6

8th International Alpine Garden Society Conference Show 2011

The conference took place on the 14 – 17 April 2011 in Nottingham, at the East Midlands Conference Centre.

Thursday 14th April 2011

I arrived at the conference centre at about 3:00pm for registration and things were already pretty the busy. While I was waiting I started chatting to people in the line. Some people had come from as far as New Zealand and Australia just for the conference. There was literally people from all over the globe here especially for this conference, this made me feel even more privileged to be there.

When I reached the administration desk I was handed an welcome pack that was full of goodies, I then went and checked into my room in one of the lodgings I then made my way back to the Conference Centre for the official Welcome and Opening Lecture The welcome was given by the current president of the AGS , Val Lee, and the opening lecture entitled: *Frontiersmen of the Past*, was given by Brian Mathew. It was excellent way to start the conference! The lecture was about the alpine plant hunters in history, their stories and their plant discoveries.

After the Welcome lecture we had diner and then returned back to the Conference Centre for a lecture given by David Hasselgrove, entitled: Southern Hemisphere Treats. He was right too, there were plenty of treats to be seen in his lecture. His lecture pretty much covered every alpine system in the southern hemisphere. From Chile to South Africa, to New Zealand. Just everywhere! My favourite photo of his was of Scarlet Gorse (*Anarthophyllum desideratum*), in the Andes in Chile. The colour of the flower was just so intense and the contrast of this stark environment that it inhabited made it stand out even more.

After David's lecture it was time for bed.

Friday 15th April 2011

Today's first was given by Harry Jans. It was entitled 'Plant Hunting on the Roof of the World'. Harry's lecture was about trips he had been on in Tibet and Sichuan . There was some amazing scenery and plants in his lecture but my favourite plants would have to be *Rheum nobile* and the various species of *Meconopsis*.

The next lecture was given by John Richards- 'Asiatic Primulas Old and New'. I had no idea there was so many types or that people even specialised in them. John is clearly a fanatic.

The lecture that led up to lunch was entitled: 'The High and Low in the Himalaya', which was given by Martin Walsh. Martin divided his lecture up in to sections of altitude and what plants you can find in the Himalaya's at the different heights. The plants I particularly fancied in this lecture were the species of *Meconopsis* shown, *Arisaema griffithii*, and the various *Saxifraga* species shown. My favourite from the lecture is one of the strangest plants I have ever seen: *Saussurea gossypiphora*. How it comes to look so strange is because it has adapted to the extreme conditions it faces at the very high altitude it inhabits in the Himalayas.

After lunch I attended one of the workshops that was on offer. The one I chose to go to was on maintaining bulb collections. I learnt a lot and some information confirmed what I already knew which was good to know I was on the right track.

Toshio Yoshida gave a lecture: 'Endemism in the Sino-Himalayan Alpines. Toshio has extensively travelled in Western China and throughout the Himalayas. His lecture discussed his observations and research regarding endemism in the plant communities in this area of the world.

The lecture after the workshop session was given by Henrik Zetterlund. He gave a lecture that was dedicated to Jim Archibald entitle '*Beyond the Last Frontiers with Jim Archibald*'. This lecture was about Jim, his work and his relationship with Gothenberg Botanical Gardens.

Robert Rolfe gave a lecture entitled: 'Location, Location, Location: Alpines Near and Far, Narrowly Endemic and Nationalistic'. Robert's lecture was about pursuing plants in the wild and how difficult it can be to track down exactly what you are looking for. Even when you have leads on where to find a plant it can still be notoriously difficult.

Saturday 16th April 2011

Today started off with a lecture given by Keith Wiley. Keith's lecture - 'An Holistic Approach to Alpines in the Garden'. Keith's lecture was very useful and interesting. His lecture stood out because its approach was garden based rather than just collecting plants or plants hunting in the wild. Keith mostly talked about his own garden and how he went about creating it and evolving it.

Todd Boland was next. His lecture: 'Alpine Plants of Newfoundland through to the Appalachians', looked at the diverse flora that is found on one of the longest mountain ranges on earth.

Bob Wallis spoke on *Fritillaria* species from all over the world in 'Fritillaries on Four Continents'. I had no idea that there were so many natural species of this genus.

After Bob's lecture we had free time to look at the show, to see the show plants in competition. There was not only the competition plants on display, there were art works; books and plants for sale etc. The plants on show were just amazing and atmosphere in the room was electric. I have never seen such a variety of fine looking alpine plants in one location.

After the plant show John Good gave a lecture: 'Alpines in a changing world'. It was on climate change and what this could mean for alpine flora.

John Watson's lecture 'Three decades in the Andes' had breath-taking scenery and amazing plants in them. My newly discovered genus: *Saussurea*, featured a couple of times, to my delight

After John's lecture we had the conference's formal dinner, where the networking and socialising continued. After dinner Roy Lancaster was the conference guest speaker, his presentation was entitled: 'My World of Plants'. Roy started his talk with how he got started in horticulture as a young boy then went on to talk about his favourite plants and plant hunting trips. He has had a really interesting life.

After Roys talk there was an auction and after the auction it was time for bed. It had been a big day.

Sunday 17th April 2011

Ian Young 'Highland Gathering'

The last day of the conference was started by Ian Young. Ian's talk, 'Highland Gathering', was about his garden in Scotland and the successes and failures he has had with growing alpines outdoors in a garden.

Next we had Michael Kammerlander who 's talk: 'Juno Iris – the Persica Group and Some Others', was all about Juno Iris cultivation, his collection and observations while growing them.

John Grimshaw gave a presentation entitled: 'Giants and Dwarfs: the Alpines of Africa'. This was a talk I found very interesting indeed. The African-alpine plants and ecosystems are some of the most dramatic and extreme I have ever heard of or seen. There are plenty of ecosystems that are extreme but the fluctuation of extremes that African Alpine plants have to cope with are unique, hence the flora is so unique.

After John's presentation there was more time allotted for workshops. This time I wasn't so lucky to get a place in one of them. They filled up too fast.

The second last lecture of the conference was give by Vojtech Holubec 'Central Asia: Plants under burning sun and cooling snow'. It was an excellent talk on the flora of the Tien Shan mountains, which run from Turkey to Kamchatka. Again, amazing scenery and amazing plants.

The final lecture of the conference was given by Christopher (Kit) Grey-Wilson 'A Lifetime of Alpines'. Christopher, at the time of giving the presentation was close to retiring as editor of the AGS after 21 years of service. He has had a very fortunate life, much of which has revolved around alpine plants. He is a wealth of knowledge on the subject and has just about been every corner of the earth in search of new

alpine plants. This lecture was a great way to end the conference. Kit showcased his favourite plants and places in this lecture. And he certainly has already made his mark on the botanical world.

After the Kit's presentation the conference came to a close. It was such a great opportunity for to go to such an inspiring event that only happens once every 10 years.