

Alpine Garden Society Young Person's Activity Weekend 2026

16th – 19th April

North Yorkshire

by Georgia Palmer



1. Malham Cove, 2. Woodland Garden, Harlow Carr, 3. Alpine Garden, Harlow Carr

About me

Having previously studied at RHS Wisley, my current gardening role is at Gravetye Manor in Sussex. It is a varied 30-acre estate with collections of *Rhododendron*, *Galanthus*, *Hepatica* and other woodland treasures. Gravetye was made famous by Wild Gardener William Robinson in the late 19th century.

Aims of the trip

- Learn about bulb propagation to help boost our collections.
- Discover new (to me) plants and get an understanding of their requirements.
- Explore gardens and nature of the North.
- Discover Reginald Farrer's story and how his views compared to William Robinson's.
- Meet people in the industry.

Itinerary

- 16th: Arrival to Kettlewell Hostel, local hike.
- 17th: bulb propagation with Anne Wright, tour of Harlow Carr rock garden, tour of Cliff Bank Nursery, hike at Brimham Rocks.
- 18th: visit Ingleborough Estate and talk on Reginald Farrer, botanising hike up Little Ingleborough, and an impromptu visit to a generous local man's garden.

- 19th: visit Aysgarth Rock Garden, botanising at Malham Cove and return home.

I would like to send my deepest thanks for the opportunity the Merlin Trust has given me, by generously awarding me £200 which covered costs of the hostel, meals, garden visits and tours.

Outcomes

The weekend was jam packed full of incredible plants, gardens, landscapes and people. I had a great time botanising at Little Ingleborough, where we searched for *Primula farinosa* within boggy grazing land. Exploring Reginald Farrer's estate was fascinating, where we saw his original plantings of *Rhododendron* dating to the 19th century.

We encountered incredible swathes of various *Erythronium*, *Primula*, *Anemone* and *Trillium* at Harlow Carr's woodland garden; I had never come across such vast quantities of special woodland plants so seamlessly interwoven.

I especially enjoyed Anne Wright's talk on twin scaling and chipping bulbs. Since returning from Yorkshire, we have set up our own bulb propagation station and will be trying to propagate our stocks of *Galanthus* and *Narcissus* following Anne's method.

At Malham Cove we experienced immense natural rock formations and limestone pavements with cracks that went deep into the rocks, providing growing space sheltered from grazing mammals and allowing a more diverse range of plants to grow. Our most notable find was a lovely white *Saxifraga*, among *Asplenium* and *Arum*.

Cliff Bank nursery provided an interesting opportunity to see behind the scenes of a small-scale specialist nursery. Ben Preston showed us how they are trying to encourage seasonal sales of bare root herbaceous perennials at a fair cost to cut down on plastic pots and excessive compost. They had a lovely choice of plants, and I couldn't resist coming away with British native *Paris quadrifolia*, which is now planted amongst our Hepaticas at Gravetye.

Next steps

Following the AGS Young Person's Activity Weekend, I am looking forward to exploring more gardens and landscapes of the UK, including Birmingham Botanic and York Gate. After botanising with the AGS team I will be on the lookout for interesting alpine plants whilst out and about and am also interested in furthering my exposure to alpine landscapes in different countries.

Thank you again to the Merlin Trust and the Alpine Garden Society for funding and organising this enriching trip.



1. Alpine House, Harlow Carr
2. *Betula utilis* subsp *albosinensis* 'Chris Saunders'
3. *Primula palinuri*
4. *Primula kewensis*



Lewisioopsis tweedyi 'Alba'



Trillium erectum



Newly laid rocks for a horizontal crevice garden, Harlow Carr



Propagating *Saxifraga* at Harlow Carr



Woodland garden, Harlow Carr



Incredible display of spring colour at Harlow Carr, including *Primula denticulata*, *Erythronium* 'Pagoda', *Anemone nemerosa*, *Dicentra*, *Podophyllum*



Pulsatilla at Harlow Carr

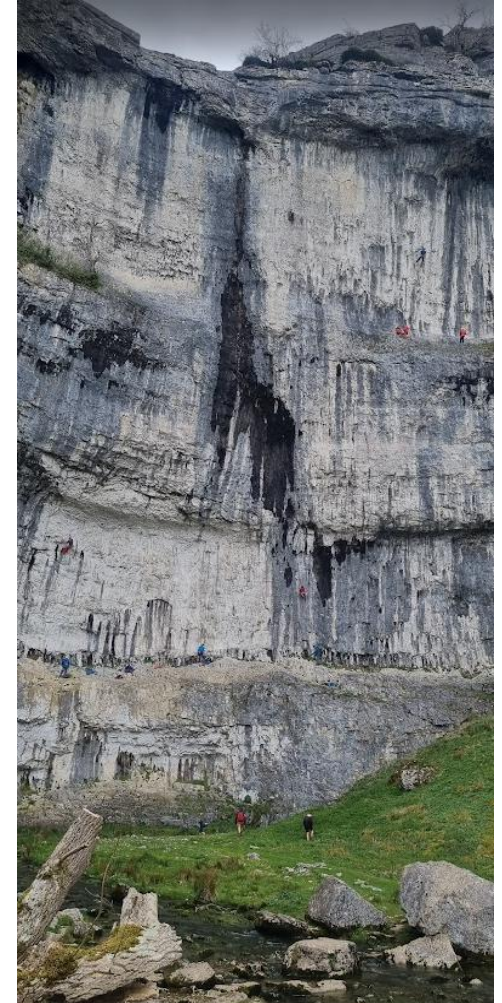


Brimham rocks



Ingleborough, searching for *Primula farinosa*

White *Saxifraga*



Malham Cove
Cliff Bank Nursery Shade Tunnel



1. Searching for *Primula farinosa* at Little Ingleborough. We did not succeed in our search, but we found a pink *Primula vulgaris* at least.

2. Venturing up Malham Cove





1. Rhododendron at Farrer's estate
2. River walk near Aysgarth Rock garden



The group at Little Ingleborough

Thank you for reading, I look forward to more alpine adventures!