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Bulb Log Diary

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BULB LOG 06.....6th February 2019





This past weekend the two Ians, that is Ian Christie and myself, travelled to County Carlow in Ireland where we were the speakers at their annual Snowdrop Gala. The event started on the Friday with an evening of talks hosted by Altamont Plant Sales celebrating the life and work of the former owner of Altamont Gardens, Corona North, twenty years after her passing. It was fascinating learning about the history of this amazing woman and the development of an outstanding garden.



We presented our talks to a welcoming and enthusiastic audience on the Saturday morning and after a hearty lunch we all set off for a guided walk around Altamont Gardens and for the plants sales. On the way to their well stocked colourful plant sales area a few things attracted my attention requiring a few pictures such as this old stone gable against the blue sky.



In front of Altamont house is this majestic weeping ash tree under planted with a selection of spring bulbs including Crocus and Eranthis. I felt that in travelling to Ireland we had walked forward through time as their flowering season is fully four to six weeks ahead of ours here in Aberdeen.



While at home their flowers have yet to open these Erantihis hyemalis and Crocus flowers are past their best and starting to fade.





In addition to the excellent Altamont Plant Sales some specialist snow drop sellers had made the journey to offer their wares in a poly tunnel and this was the scene shortly before the eager purchasers were admitted.



There was a good range of snowdrops on offer at a range of prices.

Then the delegates were admitted and purchasing started.



On Sunday morning, as we headed back North towards Dublin airport, we visited two very special gardens where I was in awe of the clumps of *Cyclamen coum*. To think how I have struggled to find a suitable habitat to satisfy the growing needs of this species in our garden and how pleased I have been with the way it is growing in a sand bed, to see it growing so happily in this Irish garden was a delight and a reminder that different plants will thrive in different garden conditions and how to achieve the best garden you should choose plants that like your conditions.



Snowdrops and hellebores also enjoyed this large garden's woodland conditions.



The second garden was very different but equally as impressive with a profusion of early colour including this bed with a display of *Crocus tommasinianus* whose flowers were wide open – something we do not often see in our colder northern garden.



Crocus
tommasinianus



A feature of this garden was the beautiful companion plantings and the very healthy clumps of a wide range of snowdrops including this fine yellow.



While Ian Christie was in typical action examining the leaf of a snowdrop I was attracted to a nearby group of *Cyclamen hederifolium* seedlings that were growing in the path, below, showing a range of leaf variation.





Just before I left for Ireland I took these few pictures of the raised beds which on closer inspection I can see the flower buds on the saxifrages starting to expand so I will have to tidy away the fallen leaves.





Saxifraga with swelling flower buds.



In Ireland we had a preview of the colour that has yet to arrive here in the frozen north where snow and ice still covers the frozen ground.



Compared to the magnificent plants I saw in Ireland my *Cyclamen coum* growing in the sand bed look very poor but I am happy with the way they are growing and seeding around in this sand bed habitat.



Unlike the *Eranthis* I saw in Ireland whose flowers were going over, these our most advanced buds, have yet to open.



Galanthus woronowii looks at home and unbothered by the snow.



Despite the frost and snow the display in the bulb bed continues to gather momentum.



The bulb houses are frozen and with all the water being locked up the Narcissus, in both pots and the sand beds, are lying down in response.



As the frosts lift the stems will resume their upright position.

A thaw is setting in as our weather turns again and falling rain forms a layer of water on the frozen pond making the surface shine like a mirror. Having completed and delivered one of my new talks 'Waves of Colour' at the Irish Snowdrop Gala I now have to push on and complete editing my talk on 16 years of the Bulb Log for the SRGC Early Bulb Day in Dunblane on the 16th February where the same two Ians will again be the speakers with two different talks. 'First we take County Carlow, then we take Dunblane'. Leonard Cohen fans may recognise the rhythm of those words and be able to add the tune.



I leave the last word this week to Miss Molly dressed for the cold viewing her garden