



The Newsletter of the Irish Garden Plant Society



Issue 103, January 2007



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Front Cover Illustration:

We have a very beautiful and seasonal illustration of a group of snowdrops drawn by Ros Power for this issue. Ros tells that there is a very long story going with this picture but she didn't go into any further detail.

She did tell me that this clump was borrowed from the Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin for a while to allow her to draw it but that was a far as she went.

Many thanks to Ros for an excellent illustration.



Editorial

*On the next page you will read a message from the Chairperson, Nilla Martin. Nilla says that we need to look forward to the next 25 years of the IGPS and that in order to do this the members **HAVE** to become involved and have their ideas taken into account.*

Most of you have been long-time members of the IGPS and believe that the aims and ideals of the society are important. However, there is a continuing need to get this message out to the general public and, indeed, reinforce it within the society.

At the Annual General Meeting last year, it was reported that the membership numbers had dropped significantly – to below 500. Again, at the 25th Anniversary Conference it was emphasised that there was a need to attract both new and younger members into the society so as to ensure its work will continue. It is my firmly held belief that we will not attract new members, nor indeed hold onto older or present members, unless our aims are clear, clearly stated and obviously central in the activities of this society.

Many years ago when I was attending an AGM I had the nose taken off me, so to speak, when I passed the facetious comment that the AGM was now out of the way and that we could get on with the garden visits. I received the quite curt reply that the IGPS ‘was not a garden-visiting club and that it had much more important aims than simply being simply another garden-visiting club’. At the time, and many times since, I have felt that this answer had been quite rude and quite bad-mannered but now I am perfectly in agreement with the sentiments if not with the manner in which they were expressed at the time.

We do need to identify what it is we are about and make this central to what we do. We have to examine what we are doing as an organisation. We seem to be providing attractive social occasions for many of our members – garden visits and winter lecture meetings are certainly pleasant affairs, nice people in a pleasant atmosphere. There are two local garden clubs here in Waterford which do that also. So, what is different about the IGPS? Are we simply members of another garden club with winter lectures and summer garden visits? Of course, the IGPS is a national society; it has long-standing links with the National Botanic Gardens and counts among its members many people of horticultural note. That is a feather in our collective hats, isn't it? Nice to mingle with the glitterati of the horticultural world, isn't it? It has a seed list for members, produces a newsletter and has published several good books – why, such things do have a certain prestige, don't they? Baloney! Unless the society does what it purports to do then it, the society itself, is a load of baloney. Read the Chairperson's message; come to the meeting on the 4th March; do something for the conservation of Irish plants; get involved; be active – what better New Year's resolution could you make?

Material for the newsletter should be sent directly to: Paddy Tobin, “Cois Abhann”, Riverside, Lower Gracedieu, Waterford. Telephone: 051-857955. E-mail: pmtobin@eircom.net



From the Chairperson

The IGPS year started with a very successful seminar in September to celebrate the 25th Anniversary of the society. That day we celebrated the great work done by the members of the society in the past. Now, at the beginning of 2007, we need to look forward to the next 25 years.

In order to do this the members **HAVE** to become involved and have their ideas taken into account. To facilitate this process, we plan to have a meeting on Saturday, the 4th of March, at the National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin, at 10.30a.m. and all members are invited and welcome to attend.

This will be an opportunity for members to put forward their ideas and help formulate a plan for the future of the society.

Following the meeting, the day's proceedings will be summarised in the form of proposals and these will be put forward for discussion at the Annual General Meeting in May.

Members who are unable to attend this meeting are invited to submit their ideas in writing before the 20th of February to my address as given below.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the members of the various committees of the society, those who are on the National Committee and those who on the Northern, Leinster and Munster committees for their commitment to the society. I would also like to thank Paddy Tobin as he continues to collect articles and edit the newsletter.

To all members, may I wish you a Very Happy and Successful New Year.

Yours Most Sincerely,
Nilla Martin

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A Journey by Two IGPS Members by Brendan Sayers

The time of year is upon us when we try to plan what we may achieve in the next twelve months. It is also a time when we reflect on the progress of the last 12 months and are struck with the realisation that much of what we wanted to do did not get done. The reasons why can be various but I expect that 'time ran out' is a resounding chorus. Time, to my knowledge, is not getting any shorter but we are definitely trying to fit more and more into the same amount as we go through the years. Armed with this knowledge, I still intend to set myself some ambitious targets that will keep me busy. One of the targets involves the IGPS and the Irish Cultivar Preservation Programme. Efforts to get a propagation program up and running over the last few years has yielded few results. I think it is time to take a more professional approach that will remove the emphasis on donated time. The January meeting of the IGPS committee is scheduled to have full discussions on proposed actions and to have substantial results for 2007.

It is interesting to see how many Irish cultivars are available throughout English gardens as I and a fellow IGPS member found when we visited some last year. It was also interesting to see cultivars in the making. There was one plant in particular that showed how plants can erroneously get attributed to Irish gardens. One is a *Berkheya* that grows in front of the Curvilinear Range at the National Botanic Gardens. I assume that the English gardener 'secured' some seed which germinated well for her. She now sells the surplus plants as *Berkheya* 'Glasnevin' instead of *Berkheya sp.* (from Glasnevin) or something like that.

The unfortunate thing is that it appears that gardeners across the sea have more of a grá for our outstanding Irish plants than we do. Let us do more in 2007 to change that. The assault will be led from committee level but, as usual, any member with an interest in getting involved is welcomed with open arms. If you are under pressure, and can only do a little bit then I suggest the following.....

A few years ago we had an appeal to have members list the cultivars that they grow in their gardens. Some of you, too few really, did the task and we are thankful for that. However many of you whom I bumped into at events following the appeal mentioned that you intended to write out your list and send it on in. But I never received them. SO..... I will ask again and encourage you to set a little time aside, grab a comfy chair, a drink (tea, coffee or something stronger) and browse through *A Heritage of Beauty*. Write down the plants that are mentioned which you grow and post it onto me sometime in the near future.

To get the juices flowing and peak interest, I am interested in finding which of you have material of Lobelia with an Irish connection?

The Society will also need stock for propagation in the coming months. Can we rely on you to be generous? I expect so.

Best wishes for 2007

Brendan Sayers



Snowdrop Week at Altamont Gardens

The Snowdrop week at Altamont Gardens, Tullow, Co. Carlow has become a well-established event by now. As a result of the hard work of Paul Cutler and the other members of staff at the gardens this event has attracted large crowds on each of the past number of years.

Already this year the indications are that this will be another very popular year as telephone enquiries to the garden have already been very numerous. For those of you who are snowdrops enthusiasts, this week should be more attractive than usual as the collection of snowdrops continues to grow.

Paul told me he had received an excellent selection of cultivars new to the garden from visitors who had travelled from Northern Ireland to last year's Snowdrop Week and also that he has had some very generous gifts from other sources so that the selection of snowdrops in the garden continues to grow and become more interesting year by year.

The Snowdrop Week begins on Monday 5th February and finishes on Sunday, 11 February with guided tours each day at 2p.m. at a charge of €2 per person.

The gardens are generally free and are open at this time of the year from 9.00a.m. to 4.30p.m.



Calling all Irish Mistletoe Plants!

By Charles Nelson

Do you have mistletoe growing in your garden or anywhere nearby? I am attempting to co-ordinate records of plants in Ireland, both within gardens, orchards and demesnes, and in the “wild”. If you know of any mistletoe please send me exact details of the locality (if possible with an OS grid reference), county, host tree (if you can identify it), and approximate number of plants.



For the record, mistletoe is reported in Ireland on the following hosts: Norway maple (*Acer platanoides*); red horse-chestnut (*Aesculus* cf ‘Briotii’); cotoneaster (*Cotoneaster* cf *horizontalis*); cultivated apples (*Malus* ‘Bramley Seedling’ and other cultivars); crab-apple (*Malus* cf *sylvestris*); willows (*Salix* spp); rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*); lime (*Tilia* spp or cultivars). It is known presently to inhabit the following counties – Waterford, Wexford, Carlow, Wicklow, Limerick, Dublin, Antrim – and has formerly been recorded also in Cork, Down, Roscommon, Tyrone.

Please send the records to me either by post (Tippitiwchetchet

Cottage, Hall Road, Outwell, Wisbech PE14 8PE) or by email (tippitiwchetchet@zetnet.co.uk) – or to the IGPS newsletter editor, Paddy Tobin. If sending data by email please do not add any attachments (such as photographs); if I need images I will contact you direct. Thanks.

Dr Charles Nelson



Gardening by the Book

By Rae McIntyre

My addiction to gardening is only 28 years old but I have been hooked on books nearly all my life and have amassed a rather large number of them. Nearly every room in this old house has books in it and even the pantry had shelves built last year to house my collection of cookbooks. It was inevitable when I started gardening that I would read all about it.

The very first book I bought cost 25p in an antique shop in Armagh city. It was called *Mr Middleton Suggests* and was mainly comprised of plant lists for different situations. It had been published before World War 2 so some of the lists are now obsolete. Who needs to know in the Noughties what to plant in sooty town gardens? However, I've learned what to plant under the drip of trees and in cold exposed gardens. Mr. Middleton apparently had a weekly gardening column in the *Daily Express* newspaper and it was knowing this that prompted me to buy my first new book, *The Daily Express Book of Weekend Gardening* by Max Davidson. It was exactly what I needed because it was written in a light-hearted way and was aimed at beginners and people who hadn't much time for gardening. Of course, as my interest grew, I made more and more time for gardening.

We live out in the sticks and one of the advantages of this is a mobile library van that calls every couple of weeks. Before being bitten by the gardening bug I had studiously ignored the gardening section but I soon discovered that there were some worthwhile books in it. One book that I kept borrowing for years (yes, years) was Graham Stuart Thomas's *Plants for Groundcover*. The argument in this book is that if the ground is planted densely enough weeds will not stand a chance and he gives good advice on what to plant for effective cover. The people who bought our previous house, and who revolutionised the garden, followed Graham Thomas's precepts faithfully and they didn't have much bother with weeds. Unfortunately some of their plants, grown in great drifts, were boring, like comfrey, *Symphytum officinale* or *Vinca minor*. I decided that I'd rather have more interesting plants with weeds growing through them.

Over the years I've acquired many more books by Graham Stuart Thomas and have learnt much from them. His *Perennial Garden Plants*, *The Art of Planting* and *Colour in the Winter Garden* have all been influential. The last of these inspired me to make a small winter garden at the back of the house. In the beginning I transplanted everything that looked well in winter to this area. This was fine until they all grew so well in the rain that I had to move a lot of plants and shrubs back to other parts. When

winter bloomers are dispersed round the garden it makes tours of inspection much more interesting on winter days.

Christopher Lloyd was another great gardening guru. The first book of his I read was *The Well-Tempered Garden* which has a wealth of knowledge in it and is written in a very witty style – as was all his writing. When he died last year he had been writing a weekly column in *Country Life* since 1963. In my pre-gardening days we used to buy the magazine sometimes but we had a standing order for it in a newsagent's when I began to read his articles. For years I didn't miss one and often laughed out loud at his mordant wit.

I first met the great man walking along a street in Melbourne and was going to accost him and tell him I was a fan. Then I had second thoughts because (a) he might have only been a Christopher Lloyd lookalike and (b) I was overcome by an uncharacteristic shyness. When I knew he was coming to the Horticultural Lecture of the Year in Craigavon in Co. Armagh a few years later I wrote to him and he wrote a very nice letter back in which he told me to make myself known. I did that holding a stack of his books to be autographed.

His great friend was Beth Chatto. Although she gardens in Essex, the driest county in England, and I do so in one of the wettest parts of Northern Ireland I still find her books inspirational. It was reading her book *The Dry Garden* that gave me the idea of making a garden in the stackyard. In 1984, when I had been an addictive gardener for six years, I decided that I needed a place where I could grow sunlovers like lavender, cistus and rosemary. These didn't succeed in the heavy damp soil of the main garden where rhododendrons thrived. The stackyard was a stony place, roughly triangular in shape and on a south-facing slope with no big trees to shade it. In theory it was ideal. Everything seemed to be going very well during 1984 when we had a long, dry, warm summer. After 70 lorry loads of stones had been removed I laid out three beds and two borders along the edges. Using many of the plants suggested by Beth Chatto I filled the three beds in colour schemes of pink and grey, yellow and grey and blues with green foliage – not grey. This last was the only one that didn't have to be dismantled over Easter 1985. Everything that had looked so well in the 1984 summer warmth looked dismal and wretched after a winter of heavy rains and wind. Reading the book *The Englishman's Garden*, a compilation of writings by well-known English gardeners, gave me the courage to try again. Frank Lawley, who has a garden at Herterton House in Northumberland, seemed to have exactly the same teething troubles that I had and he had to pull everything apart and start again. Significantly he was writing as a *northern* gardener. The other three gurus along with Vita Sackville-West, the creator of Sissinghurst in Kent, gardened in the south of England below that arbitrary line drawn between the Severn and The Wash.

Beth Chatto's book *The Damp Garden* was much more suitable for conditions here and I consult it quite often. Her more recent books *The Gravel Garden* and *The Woodland*

Garden have full colour illustrations and are to drool over.

About twenty-five years ago I came across a book in the mobile library van entitled *The Peat Garden and its plants* by Alfred Evans who was a director in Edinburgh Botanic Gardens. Thinking it was a boring old treatise on heathers I nearly didn't look at it. I'm glad I changed my mind because the book described some real treasures of acid-lovers. This gave me the incentive to stay with friends in Edinburgh during the Easter holidays in 1981 and visit the 'Botanics' on a sunny but piercingly cold day. With stiff hands I made copious notes. At home I made a small peat garden which wasn't easy because the peat blocks had to be wet which made them too heavy and slippery to arrange in proper terraces but I did my best. The whole thing collapsed in a few years but by that time peat no longer fitted in with the horticultural zeitgeist anyway. I still cultivate many of the plants I learnt about and acquired at that time. Small rhododendrons figure largely among these. Larger rhododendrons are covered by a whole row of books devoted entirely to this genus. I think my favourite is *The Illustrated Rhododendron*, mostly about species, classified according to *Curtis's Botanical Magazine* and illustrated with reproduced paintings and engravings by fourteen different artists. It's the sort of book I turn to when I'm feeling low.

The Himalayan Garden. Growing Plants from the Roof of the World by Jim Jermyn made the same impact on me as *The Peat Garden and its plants* had done 20 years earlier. Although I can never succeed with androsaces (because of too much rain) or some other plants from the alpine zone of the Himalayas I feel very much at ease with many of the genera described. There is a Scottish nursery catalogue that supplies a range of 'Himalayan' plants and I study it so closely I almost know it off by heart.

I enjoy dipping into *A Heritage of Beauty*. It's one of those books that's like a good garden; no matter how often it's studied there's always something new to be discovered. *Hilliers' Manual of Trees and Shrubs* also makes enjoyable reading. My copy is nearly as old as my interest in gardening and is ready to fall apart from overuse. The hardback cover disintegrated many years ago so I made another one, even though my bookbinding skills are minimal, but it too is in poor shape.

For Christmas 2006 I received a copy of *Hellebores: A Comprehensive Guide* by C. Colston Burrell and Judith Knott Tyler. Potatoes have burnt dry and dishes remained unwashed as I pored over this fascinating book. There is a very memorable quotation in it from the writings of Elizabeth Lawrence, an American gardener and writer "gardening, reading about gardening and writing about gardening are all one. No one gardens alone". Another quote from one of her books is "Gardens are so perishable; they live on only in books and letters; but what is gone before is not lost; the future is the past entered by another door".

Rae McIntyre



National Collections *By Stephen Butler*

Yet again I find myself writing to encourage our members to consider forming a collection as part of the National Council for the Conservation of Plants and Gardens (NCCPG). We have had a few enquiries over the years, and I know of several collections developing nicely out there which will probably get to registration in 2007 – my own *Libertia* being one of them.

I thought a wee bit of judicious examples may help to spur you all into activity, so below please find 5 potential candidates.

How did I choose them? Firstly, they are all not collections (yet) – this is easily checked if you are on the web by going to the National Council for the Conservation of Plants and Gardens home page – www.nccpg.com Click on to *National Collections*, go to *Start a Collection*, and then click on the highlighted *Missing Genera* and up will pop an alphabetical list of several hundred potential candidates. I merely chose 5 from A, picking interesting plants – though that's very personal!

I've listed how many species for each genus (that we know so far), how many appear listed in the Plant Finder (and therefore normally available – no guarantee of availability or correctness of name), and how many appear in the RHS Dictionary – a test of how much they are normally in cultivation.

Happy Reading!

Stephen Butler
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***Albuca* - Liliaceae.**

30 species known, 20 listed in PF, 3 in RHSD.

Native to Middle East and Africa, found in grassland. Refined bell shaped flowers, mainly yellow or white. Mainly? Half hardy to frost tender; some would need to be either at a very sheltered south facing wall, and kept drier in winter, or perhaps pot culture instead and moved into a cool greenhouse for the winter. Start with free seed of *Albuca shawii* from the seed list.

Anisodontea – Malvaceae.

19 species known, 9 listed in PF, 2 in RHSD.

Native to South Africa, easiest described as a mallow with attitude, normally only growing to a metre or so depending on specie. Mainly half hardy?, needing a sheltered drier spot, or regular easy prop each summer in case of winter loss.

Aristea – Iridaceae.

50 species known, 8 listed in PF, 2 in RHSD

Native to West, East, and South Africa, and Madagascar. Half hardy to frost tender again, but what wonderful shades of blue to try for! Another candidate for that sheltered sunny wall facing south, but in moist soil.

Asphodeline – Liliaceae/Asphodelaceae.

20 species known, 8 listed in PF, 2 in RHSD.

Native to the Mediterranean area, from Turkey to the Caucasus. We all know the usual *A. lutea*, and what a marvellous border plant it is – so why don't we see more species? Easily grown, and even doing well in a dry spot.

Arisaema – Araceae.

Perhaps surprisingly, no collection yet, but then look at the 150 known species alone, the over 100 listed in the PF (with many species having several different, and differing, accessions), and the problems cultivating some of them. But no doubt someone out there soon will have enough to qualify for collection status – will it be you?

It is well worth while visiting the website of the National Council for the Conservation of Plants and Gardens: www.nccpg.com You will be able to access a great deal of information on the various National Collections, the plants held and the people who take care of them. It may happen that you will be in the vicinity of one of these National Collections and take the opportunity to visit. If you are interested in a particular genus, this is a great way to see an unparalleled selection of the plants in it.

The site, of course, also contains an enormous range of other information of the conservation of plants, a central aim of the IGPS also.

Stephen Butler



Confessions to Assumpta Broomfield

By Nora Stuart

Spring 2004: On a glorious day in February a good crowd gathered in Angela Jupe's garden for the 'Hellebores in the Winter Garden' seminar.

My day was made when I was offered a Caltha by Assumpta Broomfield, on behalf of the IGPS, to nurture. (Well, in truth I offered.) My heart soared. After gardening for fifty odd years I had made it. I had been accepted into the realm of elite gardeners. Next steps would be guardianship of a National Collection.

I arrived home full of enthusiasm. I placed my prize on the ground and went to get my Diary to record the name.

Mistake No. 1. I forgot about my Irish Terrier pup, Rog. The label had disappeared.

Nothing daunted, Rog was put in her kennel and the Caltha (?) was certainly placed in 'rich, boggy soil ... at the water's edge', halfway down the field.

Rog and Caltha flourished over the summer. I glowed with pride and self congratulations.

Spring 2005: Caltha sprouted a generous mass of lovely young shoots. I crooned over them. Unfortunately, so did the slugs and snails. (We run a private, very fecund, gastropod mollusc maternity facility in our dry stone walls and these new shoots were just the best food for the newborn 'dears'.)

I hastily put a large plastic collar around the delicate shoots, watched by Rog.

Mistake No. 2. Rog was now large enough to travel the length of the field and within ten minutes delivered the collar to the back door. There followed a few weeks of tussle with the collar being alternatively chewed and replaced, over and over again.

So now my confession: Assumpta, the Caltha is no more. The dogs and snails won. Mea culpa. Mea culpa. Beating of the breast. Sackcloth and ashes.

Forget the National Collection. I slink back to my rightful place.

Nora Stuart



Seed Distribution

By Stephen Butler

I must admit, after the variable weather this summer, I thought we would have difficulty getting enough good seed. My own attempts seemed to coincide with wet mornings, or wetter afternoons, finding seed soaking in the pods or not developed properly. Opened pods could be dried, but I'd often find the whole a rotten mass instead – a missed chance would often mean a missed year.

I obviously underestimated the resourcefulness and sheer determination of our band of seed collectors.

Imagine my pleasant surprise when the padded envelopes and boxes started to come in again, packed full of great seeds. I always check visually that the seed is present, and this year there has been slightly more chaff than usual, and some of the seed has been much harder to find. If you notice a particular seed sent in is not listed, then please assume I could not find good seed in the packet – this was especially true of Compositae, often a tricky item!

As usual, writing this in early December, I have not fully compiled the list yet, final numbers will depend on taking off duplicates, removing perhaps 'genus only' or 'no seed' accessions etc, concentrating on quality not quantity, but I'd expect about 250 or thereabouts, a very commendable total indeed, from approximately 350 accessions.

I have listed the seeds as last year – a few favourable comments flattered me enough to continue the idea. As usual, errors and omissions are expected, anyone who spots one please let me know and I'll soon have an eagle-eyed band of helpers.

On behalf of our members a hearty thanks to all our seed collectors – well done indeed!

Stephen Butler
IGPS Seed Distribution
sbutler@indigo.ie



View from Above

By Bobby Buckley

On the atlas, there it is, Australia a vast island slowly floating northwards parting the Pacific and Indian Oceans; a vast desert at its heart, while on its ocean coastlines a rim of diverse floral regions abounds. Would it be feasible to build a great garden reflecting the diverse flora of the continent?

Great gardens are usually powered by a vision, an understanding of mans' relationship to nature. Vaux le Vicomte, and Versailles, two of the great gardens of France, illustrate man's power and control over nature while the English landscaped garden reflects the harmony between man and nature. Wordsworth and Capability Brown are kindred spirits. At Cranbourne the vision was to create an Australian garden, a garden of Australian plants growing in Australian conditions.



Master of all he sees. Director Phil Moors explains the concepts of the project.

In my two previous articles I explored the search by Australian gardeners to create gardens typical of an Australian flora. An Australian garden should only have Australian plants. What if one started from such an extreme premise? It is not a statement of gardening jingoism but in these environmentally aware times it may be the right thing to do, right plant in the right place, a garden that presented the Australian species in their own habitats. Cranbourne is such a garden and is the brainchild of the director of the Melbourne Botanic Gardens, Dr. Phil Moors.

The Australian Garden at the Royal Botanic Gardens Cranbourne was opened in May 2006 to great acclaim, has won many architectural prizes and is now one of the most visited sites in Australia.

As a prequel to this great public success, our own private odyssey, through some personal contacts, found us as guests of Phil and his charming wife Debbie and we were given a behind the scenes tour of the Cranbourne site in October 2005.

Six months away from a grand opening the main outlines of the garden was nearing completion, the visitors' centre, the vast red central desert garden, the spectacular Rockpool Waterway which has the greatest and longest sculptural piece, standing like a great escarpment beside the waterway.

Now, as I write on New Year's Eve 2006, Cranbourne is a wonderful success and can be viewed, with wonderful descriptions of the design and plants on the very comprehensive website. Just load www.rbg.vic.gov.au/australian-garden and even on the internet marvel at the great achievement of it.

I was there before it was finally completed and I give only a viewpoint as a garden thinker reflecting on what I saw. Time has elapsed so therefore this piece will tend to be more intellectually reflectively rather being preoccupied with plant nomenclature. The plant names may be found on the website.

Most great gardens have one viewing point, be it from a terrace or great windows looking south or from some great height where the maker looks back at the achievement of it all. Cranbourne doesn't disappoint on the viewpoints. It has many. The central viewpoint is from the **Visitors' Centre**, not a great house but more a stockade. The publicity states that the "weathered timbered building has been designed to give a tree top experience for visitors." The wooden building is louvered throughout keeping it naturally cool thus saving on an expensive air-conditioning plant and anticipating the imminent era of low carbon footprints.

From parapets and windows one looked out on a mini botanical Australia stretching to a blue horizon. The Red Desert Garden, seemingly natural, was as deliberately constructed as an Elizabethan knot garden and had carefully built sand crescents which

I presumed were constructed of man-made materials and then encrusted with sand. On the plains were salt ceramic sculptures representing the salt lakes of dry regions. The artist worked from templates informed by aerial pictures. Here was art taking a lesson from nature. The space was drawing literally from something Australian - an Australian sensibility once rooted in a European view of nature, now turning to an Australian vision.

While visiting the NGV Art gallery in Melbourne I discovered the landscapes of the Australian artist Fred Williams. The garden before me had the same feeling. Williams has been described “as Australia’s greatest landscape artist. Williams clarifies our vision develops our understanding, defines our land.” Here is a landscape reminiscent, or maybe informed by, Australia’s modern artists, a garden that in its own mission statement has a touch of that visionary approach.

Where are the plants? To quote the website, “mass plantings of *Acacia binervia* and *Spinifex sericeus* are used to stabilise the sandhills. The lower slopes are covered by a carpet of muntries (*Kunzea pomifera*), the fruit used for food by the Aborigines.” The description continues with a plant inventory of the red rockery which overlooks the desert space on the west. I include these plants since this is garden plant publication: “planting in this area includes the Albany Daisy, Kangaroo Paw (a plant that can be seen in the car park of Fernhill Gardens Co. Dublin) , Pincushions, Pineapple Bush, Rope rush, Grass tree and other rockery plants.”



Ceramic tiled flat sculptures representing salt lakes.

When we were there this central Red Garden was devoid of plants and could only be viewed from the terrace of the Visitors' centre. It was a space for reflection, a necessary quiet moment before one began to explore the garden.

From this initial quiet we turned to the spectacularly active **Rockpool Waterway**, which is representative of the river landscapes of Eastern Australia. Framed by a slope of newly planted Australian red smooth-barked Apple (*Angophora costata*), three fountains bubbled up in a great white spume of water. The resulting stream gushes down over a computer designed surfaced stream made up of square concrete pavers. These are of three different thicknesses. Some are seemingly level with the water, others are submerged and some pavers stand above the water, inviting a child or even an adult to walk across, but then like an 18th century garden joke the water increases in flow and the unsuspecting sojourner turns and runs to the bank with their feet wet. No worries - it is Australia not Ireland.



Plumes of water herald the beginning of the stream. The Visitors' Centre is in the background.

Stone seats provide a chance to enjoy the stream but there is more, much more. The river is dominated by a monolithic iron cliff. This is an iron sculpture stretching the length of the stream. Here one moves into superlatives. It is reported to be the longest and largest sculpture in the world. It seems like a large Redstone one-sided canyon, a tour de force of sculpture within a garden setting. When one arrives at the source pool one looks back up the stream, it is cascading in a loud torrent down its course and then

it slows to a quiet flow and the final waterfall, caught by the wind, collapses into a small wave...silence.



The monolithic structure overlooks the computer driven stream



Left: The end of the sculpture. Note the fine finishes to all the surfaces: the waterfall, the copper pipes in the sculpture, the steel decking and the gabions at the end of the slope

We now climbed onto the man-made Northern Hills to view the central Red Garden from the other side. Here the native saltbush was planted into hessian to contain the sandy soil. The hill was topped by a deeply recessed waddi, complete with termite mound.

There was a constant reminder that this was gardening of a most challenging nature; nature here was

very inhospitable to any plant. Trying to shape dry river beds on slopes with plastic edgings ended with the plastic fraying, buckling and breaking. Ancient transported Grass trees, patently very expensive, found it difficult to sandy soil in this their new location. Luckily, they were saved by gentle watering. When we were there, there were coils of fine water tubing at the base of each Grass tree. To make sure every tree was at home all the trunks were fire blackened. From my viewing of the website it seems that all these settling-in problems seem to have been successfully resolved.



A grass tree (Xanthorrhoea) is nurtured back to robust health with this specially installed watering system.

We turned toward the Visitor's Centre and we were now passing through the well planted Western Australian Rock Garden and like a home key in a piece of music we were returning to the familiar flora of our first few weeks (see article in July issue) *darwinias*, *boronias*, *leschenaultias*, *melaleucas* and so on. Seeing these flowering plants one had a sense of seasonality, something not always obvious in Australian flora.



The already maturing rock garden representative of the flat land river environments.

We were fortunate to experience a great gardening project near its completion, the creation of a unique Australian gardening aesthetic, sustainable and ecological.

Is there a lesson for us here in Ireland? Could one foresee a great Irish Garden project representative of all our unique habitats, bog lands, woodlands, fields, hedges mountainsides? The Botanic Gardens have an educational mini version, but for the present let us protect and cherish our own native habitats.

Bobby Buckley

All photographs above are by Bobby

Bobby tells me that he is working hard on his project to set up a bulb-planting landscaping business. Despite this he is delighted to share his experiences in Australia where he travelled extensively following his retirement from the classroom. Bobby's website is www.bbgardens.ie Best wishes to Bobby in this new venture. Ed.



Valerie Finnis (Lady Scott), An Appreciation *By Seamus O'Brien*

Many horticulturists in Ireland will be saddened to hear the news of the passing, on October 17th of the renowned English plantswoman and garden photographer, Valerie Finnis. Born in Sussex on October 31st 1924, Valerie was the daughter of Constance Finnis, after whom a strain of Iceland poppies is named. Valerie Finnis was born with gardening in her blood, she could recall the excitement of seeing intensely blue gentians when just three and at the age of five she had her own garden. Encouraged by her mother, eighteen-year-old Valerie entered Waterperry Horticultural School near Oxford, then owned and run by Miss Beatrix Havergal.

Waterperry's training was for women only; its reputation was superb but the work extremely hard. Chores included stoking the glasshouse boilers on frosty winter mornings and Valerie was later to relate that the fumes were so sulphurous that she sometimes fainted.

After the Second World War Valerie was recruited onto the Waterperry teaching staff and while based there she greatly expanded the alpine department. *Saxifraga* was her great passion, particularly the difficult *Kabschia* and *Engleria saxifrages* from the limestone mountains of Europe.

In 1955 she was given a Rolleiflex camera by Wilhelm Schacht, curator of Munich Botanic Gardens. She became famous for her plant portraits as well as photographs of well-known gardeners of the time. During the 1960s and 1970s her images were in great demand for cards, magazines and gardening books.

She married Sir David Scott in 1970 and just an hour after their wedding they were weeding together. They met when Scott visited her nursery and she heard him exclaim, "She's got *Gillenia trifoliata*". Valerie left her potting shed to congratulate him on being the first person to recognise the plant. (*Gillenia trifoliata* is rare in cultivation but grows in the family beds – Rosaceae – at Glasnevin)

In 1971, Waterperry School closed and Valerie brought the alpine collection to her new home with Scott, the Dower House at Boughton House, the seat of the Duke's of Northumberland. The Dower House became a Mecca for plantsmen and from her garden were named a number of well known plants including *Artemisia ludoviciana* 'Valerie Finnis', *Muscari armeniacum* 'Valerie Finnis' and the beautifully marbled *Helleborus x sternii* 'Boughton Beauty'. For many years Valerie was an RHS judge

and in 1975 she received the society's highest honour, the Victoria Medal of Honour (VMH).

Valerie Finnis had very close associations with Ireland and its leading gardeners. She was a good friend of Lady Moore's and obtained many exceptional plants from her garden at Willbrook House in Rathfarnham over the years, including a hybrid tree peony, a cross between the maroon-flowered *Paeonia delavayi* and the yellow *Paeonia delavayi* var. *lutea*. Lady Moore had selected the seedling in 1945 for its small cup-shaped blossoms with yellow petals tinged amber-red on their extremities. *Paeonia* 'Phylis Moore' received an Award of Merit as a hardy flowering shrub when shown by Valerie Finnis at the Chelsea Flower Show in 1988. There is an excellent illustration of Lady Moore's tree peony in the 1988/9 Yearbook of the Royal Horticultural Society. Valerie was also one of the late David Shackleton's closest friends and mentors. She was godmother to his son, Charles, and was a regular visitor to his magical plant collection in the walled garden at Beech Park near Clonsilla in the western suburbs of Dublin. Valerie helped build the raised alpine beds at Beech Park and in an account of his garden in Sybil Connolly and Helen Dillon's lovely book, *In an Irish Garden*, David Shackleton had the following to say of Valerie:

The person who contributed most to my interest in alpine plants was Valerie Finnis, now Lady Scott. She introduced me to many good nurseries and private gardens, and to her no door was closed. She is probably the most talented plantswoman and propagator I have had the privilege to meet. Her collection of *Kabschia* and *Engleria saxifrages* was second to none in Europe.

Valerie was also responsible for the distribution of two of Beech Park's finest plants, the exceptional *Helianthemum* 'Beech Park Scarlet' and the very distinct *Galanthus* 'David Shackleton'. Valerie and David were also involved in the discovery and distribution of *Epilobium canum* 'Dublin'. From the three cuttings taken from the original plant, one was rooted at Beech Park and flourished in front of David's lean-to alpine house. Alas, the garden at Beech Park, like Lady Scott, is now just a memory.

Valerie Finnis was always keen to keep in contact with horticulturists and keen amateur gardeners in Ireland. She knew Glasnevin well and its successive directors and would often phone Donal Synnott out of the blue to enquire about those of us she knew there and of the progress of restoration of Glasnevin's various buildings and glasshouses. When Glasnevin turned 200 years old in 1995 and the IGPS and Glasnevin's Educational Society brought an exhibit to the Chelsea Flower Show to celebrate the occasion, Valerie was a familiar face during the build up and was often seen sitting beside the display with a cup of tea in hand, courtesy of long time IGPS member and former treasurer, Ricky Shannon.

A turning point occurred in Valerie's life when Sir David Scott died in 1986 at the age of 99. Four years later she founded the Merlin Trust in his memory and also in memory of his son, Merlin, a gifted amateur naturalist who had been killed in the Second World War. The Trust was established to part-fund young horticulturists in their travels. Valerie became deeply immersed in the project and loved to phone and write to "my Merlins".

I became one of her Merlins in 1996 when I received funding from the trust to



participate in a five week long plant-hunting trip to Yunnan province in western China.

Valerie was full of enthusiasm about the trip and regularly wrote to me at Glanleam with valuable advice relating to the expedition. Over the course of the following nine years the Merlin Trust was to part-fund my participation in expeditions to Nepal, Tibet, Sichuan, Hubei, Shanghai, Taiwan and a return trip last year to Yunnan.

Almost 500 of us young horticulturists from Britain and Ireland were Valerie's "Merlins" and the list of destinations across the globe is an impressive one. A surprising number were from Ireland and it was a generous act on Valerie's behalf to extend the trust's work across the Irish Sea.

Valerie Finnis (1924-2006) with her dog, Sophie, on the memorial to her husband in the garden they created together at the Dower house

Valerie Finnis had a profound influence in shaping the careers of many young horticulturists in Ireland. She was an exceptionally talented gardener, a great benefactor and will be fondly remembered through the global travels of many hundreds of her Merlins. May she rest in peace.

Seamus O' Brien, National Botanic Gardens, Kilmacurragh Arboretum.

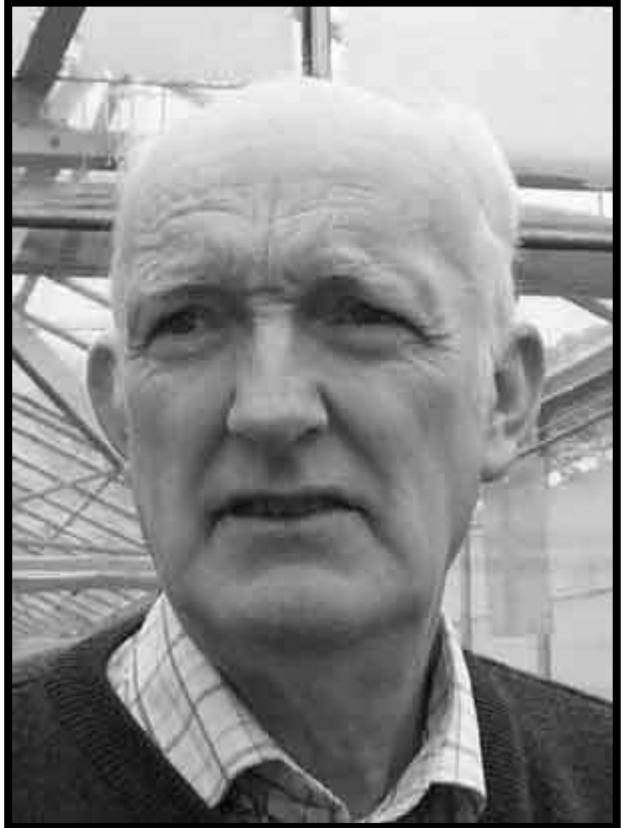


Jody Murray (1944 – 2006) An Appreciation *By Mary Bradshaw*

The Irish Garden Plant Society would like to offer its deepest sympathy to the family of Jody (Joseph) Murray who died recently.

Jody worked at the National Botanic Gardens for 39 years, mostly in the Tropical Nursery and for many years had been the Nursery Foreman. He had an encyclopaedic knowledge of garden plants and had a particular interest in rarities. He also had a great love for Pelargoniums and Begonias.

The I.G.P.S. owes him a great debt of gratitude for his contribution, on behalf of the NBG, of *Gloxinia sylvatica* 'Glasnevin Jubilee' to our annual plant sale. Many of us were lucky enough to study under him and he had great patience in explaining the rudiments of horticulture as well as identifying seeds we brought back from tropical countries.



Jody had a great love of music and was especially appreciative of the music of Meryl Haggard whom he met in the USA. He will be remembered as a true gentleman and an outstanding gardener.

Mary Bradshaw



Regional Reports

Northern Reports

**The Clotworthy Lecture, Clotworthy Arts Centre, Antrim
Joint IGPS (Northern Branch) and the Clotworthy Arts Centre, October 19th 2006
Excavation and Restoration of the 17th Century Terraced Gardens
at Lisburn Castle by Ruari O’Baill and Jackie Harte.**

I had been privileged to visit the excavation site of Lisburn Castle Gardens and was, frankly, enthralled. Few mid-17th formal historic gardens in Ireland have been excavated; Lisburn Castle was laid out not long after the Flight of the Earls, and this is a unique site that has survived by neglect.

Ffouk Conway began to establish a settlement in the area, the name survived in the Conway Hotel at Dunmurray, for Lisburn was an important position between the ports of Dublin and Carrickfergus.

The 1650 map shows Lisburn Castle as an E-shaped building with a terraced garden, the beginnings of a pleasure ground and a walled physic or kitchen garden. The gardens ran from the current Market Square to the River Lagan. About half the gardens survive to-day, including the terraces.

These gardens were created by George Rowdon who was the agent and married Dorothea Conway from North Wales and so gained Lisburn Castle. The exact position of the Castle is unknown but was almost certainly where Castle Gardens Public Park is today.

In April 1707 there was a bit of a mishap, the Castle burnt down and appears to have been abandoned immediately. The debris seems to have been thrown into the gardens, then the terraces became completely overgrown and this protected the archaeology. The dig began in 2003 and what emerged was the garden of a wealthy man. The formal terraces were constructed between 1630 and 1650, and several are intact. Garden buildings have been excavated and one of these was a real gem, a perron (you know what it is but you might not know what it is called). A perron (an 18th century French word) is a structure with arched vaults built against a terrace wall, steps lead over it to a

viewing platform above it. Here the steps were parallel to the wall. Perrons are extremely rare in Ireland and, though the Lisburn one had mature trees growing out of it, the building is intact. Its use is speculative, a summer house, a trysting place for lovers or somewhere for the gardener to keep his tools?

Another building uncovered is thought to have been a bakery. It seems rather large for just the house and it has been suggested it might have been a bakery for the garrison. The terraces had been faced with brick with stone base and coping. Cat and dog prints have been found in the hand-made bricks.

The perron, gravel paths, field drains and four of the terraces are to be reconstructed by 2007 and it is hoped to look for the Castle foundations at a later date. Ruari stressed this is top of the range archaeology.

Jackie took up the story. The pottery finds are of high status, tiles and large ornamental pots. The gardens may have been Dutch inspired; Dutch tiles have been found and it was thought these faced one of the terraces. Bits of large smashed pots have been uncovered, some of them glass, and it is thought that fruit trees were grown in pots against the brick walls, trees included medlar (*Mespilus germanica*) and quince (*Cydonia oblonga*).

The terrace walls are 25m long and 3.5m high and Health and Safety is setting standards not thought of in 1630. The terrace walls are being strengthened and stabilized, so behind the 17th brick façade is 21st century steel and concrete made up in pre-cast units.

The huge roots that encased the walls have been removed and it was discovered some of the walls had a 45° list. Many of the tree roots were of sycamore and, due to the dubious stability of the walls; this was a delicate operation, more scalpel than JCB. Health and Safety also requires balustrades but not a lot is known about railings and balustrades of the times. However, patterns are being taken from contemporary houses.

A pollen survey did not show any exotic species but it is known that the apple trees came from France and replacements have been sourced.

In the grounds is an air-raid shelter, one of the six Lisburn built. This is to be retained as a classroom.

This is a wonderful site but perhaps the most amazing thing is that it has survived at all, not only survived but given the chance to live again.

Marion Allen

Wednesday 15th November 2006.

The Planet as a Garden Patch by Noeleen Smyth

Noeleen, who is currently a Trinity College PhD student and formerly worked at the National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin, was introduced by Patrick Quigley.

On the evening of a day when the rain never stopped 17 brave souls braved the wind and the rain to listen to Noeleen who is currently working on a PhD in Horticulture for Conservation.

As part of her field work Noeleen has visited the Pitcairn Islands in the South Pacific on three occasions where she made a study of “Gardening in the Wild”. Noeleen hooked attention by quoting that “43% of the world’s surface is in need of some form of restoration”.

The tiny high and steep island of Pitcairn (2 x 4 kilometres) was occupied from 1220 to 1650 by the Polynesians. Once abandoned, the island remained unoccupied for almost 100 years until 1790 and the arrival of the Bounty Mutineers – Fletcher Christian et alia who had been on route to Tahiti in search of the Breadfruit Plant! Every January the islanders replicate the Burning of the Bounty.

However, under Noeleen’s leadership and guidance, the local community has responded to the call to halt the decline in the number of endemic species. The island, positioned to the east of New Zealand, can only be accessed by hitching a ride on a Cruise or supply ship or by a 16 day sail on a small boat or yacht. The well-known Easter Island and the jaggy limestone, World Heritage Site, Henderson Island are relatively close neighbours.

Currently there are only 82 plant species on the island, of which only 11-13 are endemic! As a result of its unique location and isolation, the flora of Pitcairn is of great scientific interest. The island enjoys a temperature range from 17 to 26 degrees centigrade. The enthralled audience were introduced to the fact that this relatively microscopic island is a useful tool and barometer when developing and implementing a corrective, positive and effective environmental restorative programme!

Under a programme funded by UKOTEF (UK and Overseas Territories Environment Fund) Noeleen and her team of local paid labour force have started a programme to grow and increase the number of those species which are threatened or endangered.

Some of the problems affecting the project are:-

- Abundance of invasive weeds
- The lack of regenerating native trees and shrubs
- The lack of pollinators and/or dispersers (birds and insects)

Given the difficult and dangerously steep terrain, the manual weeding out and eradication of the pernicious Rose Apple (*Syzygium jambos*) is a slow and difficult task! The enthusiastic and energetic team has moved to use a faster method of herbicidal weed control by drilling and injecting with Glyphosate using the well known brand names of Round-Up and Tordon.

In 2003 Noleen and her colleague, Conservation Officer, Jay Warren (ex RGB Kew) set up a small plant nursery to propagate the indigenous plants from seeds, cuttings and division, for example *Macrothelypteris torresiana* (Old Man Fern). In the early days of the nursery, they had had the good fortune to have successfully raised seeds & cuttings from the sole surviving *Abutilon pitcairnense* (Yellow Fatu, pictured below).



In 2004 the parent plant was swept away in a landslide! The young plants have since been re-introduced to the wild!

Necessity is the mother of Invention – the team now use 1.5 or 2 litre empty plastic soft drinks bottles as modern day Wardian Cases to transfer threatened plant material back to the nursery for propagation and/or seed raising.

Since 2003 the island nursery has raised 2000 native and economic plants – 1400 have already been planted out in the wild! One of the most interesting “economic” plants is *Thespesia populnea* (the Miro tree) which is used for the wood carvings which are sold to visiting cruise ships if they manage to stop. Honey is also sold to the island visitors. *Homalium taypau* / Papai / sugar cane / Taro are used in the making of flour. Interestingly the root of the *Cordyline fruticosa* (Raoti) is used to make liquor!

A number of offending weeds were specifically identified:

- *Lilium longifolium*, having been brought to the island by an unsuspecting visitor, is now spreading like wild fire.
- *Dolichos lablab* – wild bean
- *Lantana camara* – “a very nasty plant”.

Another source of damage is the “Grazers”, a large number of free roaming goats. As recently as 2005, goats damaged over 100 plants highlighting the need for a culling programme. This effort has now begun!

The island is home to an aging Galapagos Island Turtle – the only one left on the island! He or she is the only one because some time ago the islanders threw the others off the cliffs for persistently eating their vegetables...perhaps an over reaction?

Author's note: Noeleen's well illustrated lecture proved to be most interesting and educational. Her dedication, diligence and enthusiasm for the project were obvious and the talk was thoroughly enjoyed by all who were present!

Trevor J Edwards

The Malone House Lecture –joint with Belfast Parks Wednesday 6th December Gardens of Italy –their Design and Development by Patrick Quigley

Patrick Quigley's lecture transported the audience from a cold wet night in December to a sunny enthusiastic visit to the gardens of Italy.

The lecture opened and continued with spectacular photography; one man's passion and enthusiasm was transferred to his audience while he showed us the diverse contrasts in the designs of the gardens Patrick visited in Italy.

Patrick outlined for us in great detail the history and the background to the design of the gardens he had visited, starting with the early period of the Cloister Gardens.

We started our visit to Pompei at the House of Veitii; a peristyle cloister garden, then to San Lorenzo, Florence, and next to Santa Chiara, Naples showing us the cloister garden with distinct painted tiles. Villa Adriana (Hadrian's Villa in Tivoli) showed off its Canopus canal.

The next period of design covered was the Medieval period when the dominant feature was that of fortified structures with little development of the gardens and with emphasis on an outward looking approach. Here we viewed the Villa Medici at Fiesole near Florence, Villa Medici at Castello and Bevedere Court in Rome, now the Vatican Museum but bearing no resemblance to how it looked in 1502. In the 1500s the gardens were simple with terraces designed for agriculture and some for ornamental usage.

From the 1500s the emergence of elaborate balustrades and changes in the levels of the gardens leading to symbolic factors were typical of the Mannerists Gardens. Patrick explained that this era in design saw the use of many shock and surprise elements, using statues and water features .

Patrick's photographs from the Villa Lante near Viterbo showed the twin pavilions and water chain with a square parterre, whilst in the Villa d'Este, the home of Cardinal

D'Este, at Tivoli near Rome he showed us an outstanding water garden with many surprise elements, among them the terrace of one hundred fountains and the famous Organ Fountain. The gardens of Sarco Bosco Bomarzo near Viterbo certainly provided the shock element with their very unusual statues of pagan goddesses and other frightful creatures.

Guisti Gardens at Verona followed the principle of the early Renaissance style where the gardens are more naturalised. The villa is built on the lower level with a parterre style lower garden whilst the higher terrace is used for the mask on the top of the cliff with views overlooking the city. The later uses for such terraces are now ornamental.

The Baroque style gardens of Villa Garzoni in Collidi near Lucca in Tuscany and Villa Reale also in Lucca introduced us to the familiar topiary shapes, covered walkways and an Islamic feature with citrus fruits grown in large terracotta pots.

The fun element of gardening was identified in Villa Reale with the green theatre and the Temple of Pan with Giocchi D'aqua (water tricks). Our speaker had evidently experienced an unexpected water shower by his explicit commentary on the water fountain featured at this garden.! The property was bought by Napoleon's sister and is now almost similar to an English landscape garden.

The French formal style influence was illustrated by visiting the Villa Pisani at Stra, a large Royal villa between Venice and Padula built in 1735. Napoleon commandeered this villa before presenting it to his Viceroy. The long canal built in 1911 reflects the amazing stable block and the aerial photograph of the Maze amazed the audience. For those who plan to visit the garden maze it is advisable to buy a map! The garden is now state owned.

La Reggia di Caserta, the Royal Palace at Caserta, was built for the Bourbon family in 1775 and clearly shows the French influence, similar to the Palace of Versailles but on a smaller scale. It has an amazing two mile long avenue with canals and fountains topped by cascades and an English garden to one side as suggested by Lady Hamilton.

All too soon we were visiting our last garden and the speaker's favourite Italian garden, the Gardens of Ninfa in Latina near Rome. These gardens were a neglected part of the estate of the aristocratic Caetani family but now owned by Fondazione Roffredo Caetani, an American.

Ninfa was left to slumber until the twentieth century when the descendants transformed the medieval town into a botanical garden. Now plants wind over ruined towers and walls. The setting is very picturesque with roses scrambling over ruined archways and because of its location under the hills there is a wide mix of unusual plant species growing here.

The good attendance at the lecture demonstrated its wholehearted appreciation of Patrick's enthusiasm and expert presentation of an intriguing subject.

Joy Parkinson

Munster Reports

Friday 6th October 2006

"Gardening in a Changing World" with Margaret Griffin

At our first meeting after the summer holidays we were treated to a 'WOW' lecture. Our lecturer was Margaret Griffin and her topic was 'Gardening in a Changing World'. This lecture really was 'the touch of a master's hand.'

She pointed out to us how gardening as a pastime is being phased out and still we have no problem spending an hour in a gym breathing in stale air – instead of an hour in the fresh air doing a little work.

In our quest for progress we now are in houses with higher walls, less greenery and less time to see 'the beauty of this world.'

Margaret encouraged us to plant up our winter baskets using half grit, half compost and a slow-release fertiliser. The use of lighting in the garden is a must, she said. So, in winter instead of drawing the curtains and looking inwards light your garden, leave your curtains open and look outwards.

In conclusion I must say this was just the lecture we needed to prevent us from hibernating for the winter.

Kitty Hennessy.

Friday 3rd November 2006

"Soil, Health and Society" with Sean O'Halloran

Sean introduced himself, as a man born on, and dependant on the fertile land of Co. Cork. Over many years he has studied nature in all its diversity and richness. As a consequence, his farm is now run on biodynamic principles. BIODynamics involves a blending of the old and the new. The renewal of ancient peasant culture, with the distillation of centuries of customs and practices, combined with all that is best from more recent discoveries, is what biodynamics is all about.

Plants are open to and formed by influences from the depths of the earth, to the heights of the heavens. Therefore our considerations in gardening must range more broadly, than is generally assumed to be relevant.

The light of the sun, moon, planets and stars reaches the plants and us in regular rhythms. Each contributes to the life, growth and form of the plant. The ancients knew all of this. By studying and understanding what they knew, we can time our ground preparation, sowing, cultivating and harvesting to the advantage of the plants we are raising.

Rudolf Steiner is generally considered the father of modern BIODynamics. His work was dominated by a conviction that food grown on increasingly impoverished soil cannot provide the inner sustenance, or LIFE-FORCE, required for optimal functioning of the human being. His life's journey took him from the mountains and valleys of eastern Europe, into the hallowed halls of academia. He synthesized all his learning from the rural peasants and the laboratories of the various colleges where he studied. This body of work fills many volumes and is the basis of what fires the enthusiasm of Sean O'Halloran. He endeavoured to pass on some of this enthusiasm to us.

Now it has to be said that this was not our usual type of lecture. There were many doubting Thomases. However at the end of the day, diversity in nature and opinion is very enriching.

Therese F. Murphy

Friday 8th of December 2006

"New Places, New Ideas and New Magic" by Stephen Lacey

Despite the inclement weather, a very enthusiastic group braved the elements to hear Stephen Lacey give his talk, entitled, "New Places, New Ideas and New Magic."

Stephen began by taking us first to Italy where he illustrated the use of dramatic moments in the garden to make it memorable and give it the wow factor. One image which could only be described as theatrical was a pergola clothed in a frothy white wisteria. Simple, yet stunning.

We then moved to the east coast of America where the emphasis was on comfortable, stylish and lavishly expensive seating areas in the garden. If any of us were short on Christmas gift ideas??

Back to Italy again where we saw how the use of water in their gardens created a sense of the playful, the theatrical, the light-hearted spirit of a garden. There was an air of poignancy about Greenway, the garden of Agatha Christie where the lovely woodland

sloped down to the estuary. The mood changed with a garden designed by Cleve West whose planting was thick and lush. In Stephen's own garden we saw how he used foliage shapes to make a tapestry of colour which gives a permanent display and the use of scented plants which give another very important dimension to our gardens. Through some other examples we saw how gardens should have a layer of meaning whether that be from a historical point or just putting in plants which evoke some special memory for us. Of special interest was how a photograph taken by the Luftwaffe gave evidence of an Elizabethan spiral garden.

We finished back in the US again where we were shown how a green garden can have colour introduced by structures painted in bold colours and where the effect is very dramatic and sensual. We were amused by the quotation from Robert Dash, who said that he wanted 'somewhere rather delicious to have a nap.'

After Stephen's splendid lecture we finished the evening with some delicious mince pies and mulled wine.

Janet Edwardes

Leinster Reports

23rd September

Visit to St. Anne's Park Raheny

In late September we were very fortunate to have Dr. Mary Forrest as our guide on a visit to the Millennium Arboretum at Saint Anne's Park in Raheny.

The Rose Garden is well known but less so is the Millennium Arboretum that extends from All Saints Road across to the Main Avenue. To celebrate Dublin's millennium in 1988 a collection of one thousand trees was planted, and includes both conifers and broad-leaved trees.

Mary told us how when the planting was completed the grass in the area was allowed to grow longer than usual. This was to discourage visitors until the trees were established, and judging by the density of planting today most if not all of the trees planted must have survived. This was also an opportunity to see the growth achieved in the past eighteen years with minimal intervention from the City Council.

Growing near the entrance was a sixteen-foot *Sorbus commixta* laden with berries whose leaves were already red edged. Other conspicuously berried trees of similar height included *Malus* 'John Downie', *Malus* 'Red Sentinel' with bright red berries, and best of all for fruit *Malus* 'Evereste'. As we walked along it was obvious that this was a good year for fruit, *Phellodendron chinense* and *P. japonicum* had green/black

berries in large clusters. The Medlar *Mespilus germanica* with russet leaves also had an abundance of fruit.

The weeping varieties with the best shape included *Carpinus betulus* 'Pendula', *Fagus sylvatica* 'Pendula' and the white Mulberry *Morus alba* 'Pendula'. Larger trees in the collection included *Zelkova carpinifolia*, *Metasequoia glyptostroboides* and *Notofagus oblique*. The Roblé Beech was already more than twenty feet tall with lance shaped leaves that had beautiful hints of red.

For anyone undecided about what tree to plant the Millennium Arboretum is worth a visit. There is a fine collection of trees in a relatively small area that is easily accessed, with a good car park and The Stables restaurant for refreshments afterwards.

Mary Rowe

7th November 2006

"Alpines Through an artist's Eye" by Rosemary Cox

Rosemary Cox's lecture on November 7th at the National Botanic Gardens was sponsored jointly by the Alpine Garden Society. This was an introduction to the world of botanical art from a woman who has only recently gone down that path. Rosemary took a botanical art course at Harlow Carr for a mere nine Mondays and now looks at plants and everything else in a totally different way!

Rosemary outlined for us her main techniques to achieve such beautiful watercolours. She has her favourite plants - *Iris afghanica*, *Lilium pumilum*, *Fritillaria affinis*, *Fritillaria meleagris*. She bought *Iris bucharica* in order to paint it, but it did not last in her garden. *Iris iberica* subsp. *iberica* was painted using her earlier technique. She first measured it, then took close-up photographs and worked from them. Nowadays she paints everything from nature, but the plants are in pots. That way she can see them from many different angles and work at her paintings indoors at all times of day and night.

She begins by looking for highlights on each plant. Then she draws it in pencil on to layout paper, using a divider to get the dimensions correct. Accuracy is vital! The image at this stage is very faint. Then she begins to paint with a wash of the palest colour. She never uses green paint, always mixing yellow and blue to get the exact shade she wants. Irises have parallel veins so she applies her colour in parallel lines. *Iris barbatula* flowers go over very quickly but there is a series of flowers enabling Rosemary to complete her painting.

You might be forgiven for thinking that irises dominate Rosemary's oeuvre. Not so.

Gentians also feature. These are difficult as they are not constantly the same shade of blue. When the light changes so apparently does the blue colour. Incidentally, *Meconopsis* 'Jimmy Bayne' has no less than 13 shades of blue. Rosemary does paint with pure blues, pinks and purples. Yellows are also difficult- to make them three-dimensional, to capture the shadows. On Winter Aconite there appear to be green shadows on yellow, while on *Crocus chrysanthus* the shadows appear brownish-yellow.

White flowers are described as a "nightmare". *Galanthus* 'Augustus' has a green tinge and the petals have dimples - use yellow, blue, green shadows, not grey. How to convey hairs on a plant? You must know the angle at which the hairs emerge. It is not necessary to paint in every hair; the observer's brain will do it. Rosemary enjoys painting seedheads, dead leaves and bulbs.

Recently she has been painting flowers in their habitats. She is also beginning a new series of Cistus paintings. She anticipates some difficulty with them due to the papery nature of the flowers.

Rosemary is her own agent and does not exhibit at galleries or shows. She did not bring examples of her work for sale which I think was a great marketing opportunity lost. However, I took the opportunity to speak to her after her lecture on our behalf. I would urge you to contact her internet address: rosiecox2@btinternet.com to discover the large range of botanical images she produces and sells. It is incredible to think that just nine Mondays could bring out that "gift" that is Rosemary's insight and skill in the world of botanical art.

Mary Bradshaw.

7th December 2006

"New Places, New Ideas & New Magic" with Stephen Lacey

Stephen Lacey's lecture at the National Botanic Gardens brought a welcome brightness into a cold, stormy night. This was a very personal take on gardens old and new, across Western Europe and the eastern U.S.A. Stephen's message is that a garden is not just an accumulation of plants and a spatial challenge. It is also an attempt to create a picture, to generate theatrical moments, soporific moods and a dream-like quality. La Tourechia, a little south of Rome is a prime example, with long narrow vistas, soaring verticals, a pergola covered in *Wisteria floribunda* 'Alba' with white flowers in racemes up to 60cm. long and wild flowers welcomed in from the surrounding countryside. This is a garden which draws you out to linger.

Villa d' Este, restored recently, demonstrates how to control light and shadow and the

clever use of water in Italian gardens. This is also evident at the Villa Lanta at Viterbo where water and scent ambush you all the time.

Then at Ninfa, most people's favourite Italian garden, a river meanders along a central line through the garden and there is a feeling of Nature being in control and overwhelming old follies. Romanticism looms large!

Closer to home Stephen is also impressed by "Greenway", Agatha Christie's country home on a promontory overlooking the River Dart in Devon. Although on a steep slope there is a series of woodland paths winding through scented rhododendrons including *R. Lady Alice Fitzwilliam*'. Also at "Stagshaw" on the shores of Lake Windermere there is an attempt to colour-coordinate the Rhododendron planting which has succeeded very well.

Back in Cornwall at Trebah there is a sense of being in an exotic jungle especially in the one acre planting of *Gunnera* with a walkway laid down through it. At Broughton Castle near Oxford originally designed by Lanning Roper who said "Every garden should spill", dark Sweet Williams are combined with *Alchemilla mollis* and *Digitalis 'Sutton's Apricot'* with *Viola cornuta*. *Verbascum chaixii* is encouraged to seed itself around.

In Stephen's own garden at Wrexham, near Chester, he likes to make use of red, yellow and orange especially tulips. He likes to plant these in pots so that he will remember which tulips are planted where and he can ring the changes easily. He allows *Tulipa sprengeri* to seed around and it has clumped up well. *Agapanthus sp.* (also in pots) replace the tulips in summer.

Stephen admires the work of Tom Stuart-Smith at Broughton Grange where the garden's backdrop is an agricultural valley. Here there is a combination of a formal garden with a pleached lime tunnel and also dry meadow planting with loose patterns and meandering paths. He also likes Andy Sturgeon's work at Kingston, south of London, and that of Charles Jencks in Scotland with his "Universe Cascade" and "Black Hole" dining terrace.

So, the overall message is to "loosen up" - welcome in the surrounding countryside and wild flowers, allow the leaf carpet to remain in your borders, use repetition planting, forget rectangles, squares and circles and go for romantic cloudscape planting. Above all, create a garden that is welcoming and "somewhere delicious to have a nap".

Mary Bradshaw.



Looking Ahead

Saturday, 4th March at the National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin at 10.30a.m. A Consultative Meeting for all members – see ‘A Word from the Chairperson’ for more information.

The IGPS Annual General Meeting will be held on 5th-7th May 2007 at the Woodlands Hotel, Adare, Co.Limerick.

Leinster Fixtures

Thursday 18th January 2007 8p.m. at the National Botanic Gardens
“Plants and Gardening Styles” with Karen Foley

Karen is a lecturer from the School of Architecture, Landscape and Civil Engineering at U.C.D.

Thursday, 22 February 2007 8p.m. at the National Botanic Gardens
“Daffodils” with Brian Duncan

Brian has international renown as a breeder of daffodils and has introduced many wonderful cultivars for our gardens.

Thursday, 22 March 2007 8p.m. at the National Botanic Gardens
“Gardens of Italy, Design and Development” with Patrick Quigley

Patrick is a man simply obsessed with the gardens of Italy, particularly those from the Renaissance to the present day. He is also an accomplished photographer, so the illustrations for his talk will be excellent.

Thursday, 26th April 2007 8p.m. at the National Botanic Gardens
“Narrow Meadow” with Mary Waldron.

Mary will give one of her very entertaining and informative talks about her own garden.

This is a joint lecture with the R.H.S.I.

Munster Fixtures

Friday 12th January 2007

"Plants from the Iveragh" with Nigel Everett

Nigel looks at the various plants found in the Iveragh Peninsula. The Iveragh peninsula is located in Co Kerry and contains towns such as Kenmare, Caherdaniel, Sneem and Waterville.

Nigel Everett is the author of "Wild gardens", "The lost Demesnes of Bantry Bay" and The "Historic Gardens of Bantry House".

Friday 2nd February

"Rare and unusual Plants for your Garden" with Paul Maher

Paul gives an in-depth talk about unusual plants that can make a difference to any garden.

He is the Curator of the National Botanic Gardens.

Friday 2nd March 2007

"Spring Planting inspired by Graham Stuart Thomas" with Stephen Redden

Stephen is a true nurseryman, is passionate about the plants he grows and has a particular interest in Magnolias. He is owner of the Hillberry Nurseries at Crecora near Patrick's Well, Limerick.

Friday 6th April 2007

"The Role of Horticulture in Plant Conservation" with Noleen Smyth

This talk deals with how we can use gardening skills and horticulture to conserve rare plants, threatened ecosystems and cull invasive species.

Noleen is working as a consultant for Botanical and Environmental Conservation Consultants based in Dublin and is currently finishing a PhD. thesis.

Northern Fixtures

February 17th

Snowdrop Garden Visits: Bob Gordon and June Dougherty

11am & 1pm. A very early first garden visit of the year. Bob's we know in its summer finery and we will now have the opportunity to view his marvellous collection of snowdrops cultivars. We also visit June Dougherty's garden, surrounding a Georgian rectory, new to us, with its camellias, rhododendrons, limestone rockery, alpine

collections, a stream and pond, and many shrub beds as well as fabulous drifts of snowdrops.

Donations for local charities, non-members £2.00 extra.

Directions:

(1) Bob Gordon, 34 Kilrea Road, Portglenone, Co Antrim; 11am. Take the A6 to the roundabout in Randalstown; turn right on to the B52 to Portglenone. At the top of Main Street, turn left at mini-roundabout on to the A42; cross the river. After ½ ml. turn right at pub on to the A54 for Kilrea, then left at 3rd turning (approx 600yds).
(2) June Dougherty, Glenone Rectory, 168 Ballynease Road, Portglenone; 1pm. From Bob Gordon's, turn back towards village; at end of road, turn left on to the A42; take the first on the right, (A54); go along 1ml and turn left into Ballynease Road. Rectory is 300 yds on the left.

March 21st

“Battling Nature” with Tom Gilbert of Ballylagan Organic Farm

The Clotworthy Spring Lecture, Clotworthy Arts Centre, Antrim; 7.30pm.

Tom, a leading exponent of the organic movement in Northern Ireland, describes the trials and tribulations of his battles with Mother Nature, and while concentrating on growing vegetables and fruit, will no doubt also regale us with tales of his rare breed animal programme. Refreshments provided. Members free, non-members £2.00. Joint with Antrim Borough Council.

April 21

Garden Visit to Leslie and Anne Mackie,

Larchfield, 375 Upper Ballynahinch Road, Bailie's Mills, Lisburn; 2.00 for 2.30pm.

Various gardens surround the 1740's house - a collection of *Rhododendron* species and varieties, a recently replanted walled garden, a rock garden leading to lake walks, and fine parkland with champion cypress and ancient yews. ***Members and guests only.***

Tea/coffee/soft drinks provided. Donations for charity, non-members £2.00 extra.

Directions:

From the M1, leave at Junction 6, and turn towards city centre; take immediate first left into Kensington Park and left again at end of this road. Drive 3.9mls and find Larchfield entrance gate on left with gate lodge opposite.



Snippets



Marcella Campbell with Stephen Lacey when he spoke to the IGPS members in Dublin on the 7th of December last.

Grow and be healthy:

Gardeners who grow their own fruit and vegetables could be the healthiest people. That's the conclusion of Dr Laurence J Trueman, a molecular biologist and biochemist currently working as a consultant to the horticulture industry specialising in the effect of eating fruit and vegetables on human health.

The Gardener's Favourite:

The hedgehog has been named the UK's favourite garden creature in a survey by the RHS and **The Wildlife Trusts (TWT)** for the joint project Wild About Gardens.

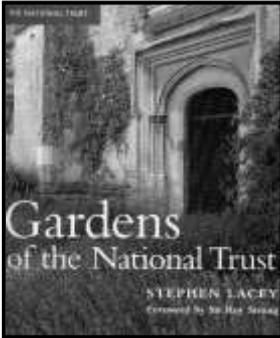
The UK's favourite garden creatures were: 1 Hedgehog 2 Bird (non-specific)
3 Robin 4 Frog 5 Butterfly 6 Blackbird 7 Blue tit 8 Ladybird 9 Bee 10 Squirrel



Worth a Read

By Paddy Tobin

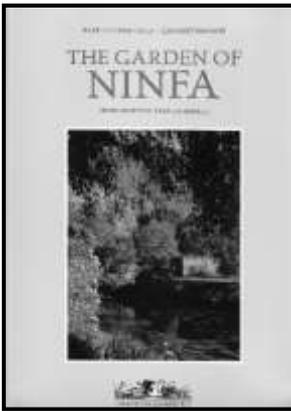
By good chance, two of the books I am about to recommend to you in this issue have a connection with the lecture reports carried earlier in the newsletter.



Stephen Lacey spoke to members in Dublin and in Cork and from the reports was well received in both locations. I was present at the Cork talk and enjoyed it very much, particularly so to see such a large attendance. However, back to the book which is the latest Stephen Lacey has written, '*Gardens of the National Trust*'. While one must admit that this is not a book to read at one sitting, it is certainly one worth dipping into when needs or interest dictate, I must say that my immediate reaction on my first leafing through was, 'What an absolute treasure trove of gardens the National Trust has in its care.' This book truly

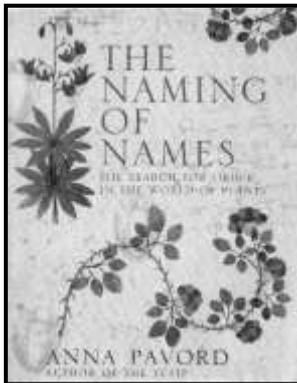
displays some of the greatest works of art that we can imagine and these are all there and easily available for our enjoyment. It is this reaction I think which shows the outstanding work of this book. It is produced to the highest standards with excellent photography, clear and precise text and covers an enormous range of gardens. It is far more than simply a display, though an excellent display, of the gardens of the National Trust. It shows history and styles, gardens and plants, gives interviews with head gardeners and all in all is a book that no gardener should travel to the UK without as it is a guide par excellence. This book is excellent now and will also stand the test of time. Well worth having. [*Gardens of the National Trust, Stephen Lacey, National Trust Books, London, 2006, HB, 392 pages, ISBN-10 1 905400 00 4 £30*]

In one of the reports on Patrick Quigley's lecture on Italian gardens it was stated that Ninfa was his obvious favourite. Having read my second book, *The Gardens of Ninfa*, I can see why he should say this. These are absolutely enchanting gardens and here they are presented in book which does them justice. The gardens themselves are wonderful built in the remains of a village deserted several centuries previously, the ruins now used as framework for plants, old walls now carrying enormous roses, open areas planted as flower meadows, the river which flower through the village has its banks planted with a wonderful assortment of plants. This is what would happen to a deserted village is nature took over, except here nature has been guided by the loving and knowledgeable hands of the Caetini family. The text also contains historical information on the family, with many family photographs, and the area itself as well as



on the development of the gardens. The photography is stunning with some pages which open out to give a four page spread with panoramic views of the garden. The photography of the river views are especially beautiful with reflected colours and background views of castle and Italian countryside along with the garden. [*The Gardens of Ninfa, Texts by Marella Caracciolo and Giuppi Pietromarchi with photographs by Marella Agnelli, Umberto Allemandi &C. Turin HB, 152pages*]

Anna Pavord has a deservedly excellent reputation as an horticultural writer. Her 'Tulip' was certainly well received and if you enjoyed that you will certainly enjoy this offering. It is what one of the contributors to the newsletter described to me recently as a good read, a book with substance in it, far more than 'how-to' book to be read and cast aside. In this book the author traces the history of the development of the present system of naming plants, the rules of nomenclature, how to make sense out of the



chaos of earlier ways. The story brings in the great and well-known characters of horticultural history and presents them with information about the period in which they lived, the circumstances of writing at the time, the position of gardening at the time and other cultural factors which influenced their particular actions. It moves from Theophrastus in Athens, through the renaissance to the establishment of our present system. The use of plants in pharmacology stimulated the need to name them accurately but was followed by the simple desire to make sense of the natural world. This was a problem which engaged some of the brightest minds of each era and Anna Pavord presents these personalities in an extraordinarily vivid way; her accounts of events in

Venice, Padua, Florence and Pisa were particularly enthralling, I found. Well worth a read.

[*The Naming of Plants, Anna Pavord, Bloomsbury Publishing Ltd, London, 2005, HB, 472 pages, ISBN 0 7475 7952 0, £30*]



The Newsletter of the Irish Garden Plant Society

The Irish Garden Plant Society

The Aims of the Society are:

- **The study of plants cultivated in Ireland, and their history.**
- **The development of horticulture in Ireland**
- **The education of members on the cultivation and conservation of garden plants.**
- **To research and locate garden plants considered rare or in need of conservation, especially those raised in Ireland by Irish gardeners and nurserymen.**
- **To co-operate with horticulturalists, botanists, botanical and other gardens, individuals and organisations in Ireland and elsewhere in these matters.**
- **To issue and publish information on the garden plants of Ireland and to facilitate the exchange of information with those interested individuals and groups.**

*Correspondence: The Irish Garden Plant Society, c/o The National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin, Dublin 9.
(Please note that staff at the Botanic Gardens cannot take telephone enquiries about the IGPS. They simply facilitate by providing a postal address for the convenience of committee members.)*

Do you have a few hours a week to spare for your society?

We are looking for an Executive Assistant.

The duties of the Executive Assistant are:

To deal with correspondence

To answer emails

To maintain the membership database (computer etc. supplied)

To be in attendance at Committee Meetings (approx. every 4-6 weeks)

An honorarium and expenses will be paid.

Please apply to the Chairperson: Nilla Martin, 72 Shandon Park, Phibsborough, Dublin 7

Telephone: 01-8380067

Issue 103, January 2007