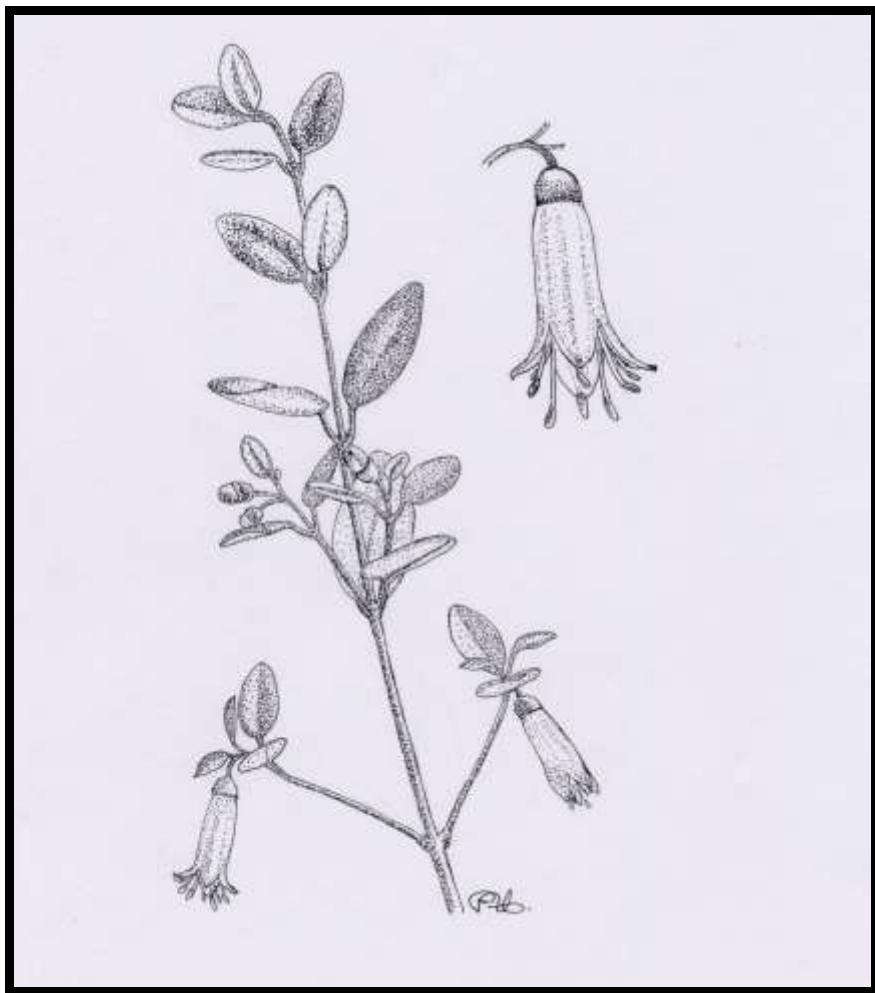


The Newsletter of the
IRISH GARDEN PLANT SOCIETY



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Editorial

Another New Year has come – a time when people reflect on the past, identify areas where change would be of benefit and resolve to effect these changes. What New Year's resolutions would be suitable for the I.G.P.S. I wonder? We might profitably reflect on the aims of the society and on how we are both as individuals and as a society working towards achieving these aims. The aims of the society are printed on the back cover.

Material for the newsletter is best sent directly to: Paddy Tobin, "Cois Abhann", Riverside, Lower Gracedieu, Waterford. Telephone: 051-857955. E-mail: pmtobin@eircom.net Don't worry if you don't type; handwritten material is perfectly acceptable.

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Front Cover: *Correa backhousiana*: line drawing by Paul Cutler of Altamont Gardens, Co. Carlow. Correa is a genus of evergreen shrubs with tubular flowers, native to Australia and Tasmania. All the species are tender in Ireland but some only marginally so and these can be grown in a sheltered position. *Correa backhousiana* is one of the hardiest species, possibly surviving to -8°C. The dark green leaves have a dense covering of rust-coloured down on the underside. The pale greenish-yellow flowers contrast well with the foliage and are borne in succession throughout the winter. In favoured locations *Correa backhousiana* can grow to 2 metres and has been used as a hedging in Tresco Abbey Gardens in the Scilly Isles.

A Journey to Western China by Seamus O Brien.

Yunnan province is situated in south-western China and borders to the south with Vietnam and Laos and to the west with Myanmar (formerly Burma). Geographically, botanically and ethnologically Yunnan is the most diverse of all China's provinces. To the north-west, Yunnan borders with Tibet and it is there that one meets with highland plateau and some of China's most massive mountain systems. To the south, on the Laos border, are the most northerly tropical rainforests in the world. Great rivers like the Yangtze, the Mekong, the Black River and Yellow River transverse the landscape. Most of these rivers follow the mountain ranges due south, while the mighty Yangtze instead takes a sudden turn east in north-west Yunnan and continues through the three gorges in Hubei province before spilling its silt-laden waters into the Pacific Ocean beyond Shanghai.

Over twenty five ethnic groups inhabit this region, all with their own distinct customs, dress, languages and traditions. For the plantsman Yunnan is heaven on earth; over half of all of China's plant and animal species are found in this one province. The current flora of China includes over 32,000 species of flowering plants, therefore Yunnan is home to about 16,000 species, varieties and subspecies from tropical, subtropical, warm-temperate and temperate habitats.

In late September of last year I joined a hardy band of Irish horticulturists and spent the following four weeks in China. Our purpose was to conclude one final journey in the footsteps of the Irish plant collector, Dr. Augustine Henry.



The Expedition Members, L to R: Cathal O'Sullivan from the RHS Garden, Wisley, Paul Gardiner of UCD, Assumpta Broomfield, Elizabeth Ryan, Head Gardener at Killineer House near Drogheda and Seamus O Brien, Expedition Leader. The background is provided by the trunk of a tree: Bombax ceiba.

As readers of the IGPS newsletter will be aware, two expeditions from the National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin travelled to Hubei, Sichuan, Shanghai and Taiwan in 2002 and again in 2004 to retrace the botanical routes taken by Augustine Henry and his native collectors in the late 19th century.

When Augustine Henry died in 1930 the bulk of his private library, including his Chinese diaries, botanical notebooks and maps were bequeathed to Glasnevin and these are now stored in our rare book room. These have been invaluable in the past couple of years and without them we could not have traced his route as successfully as we have. For example, last year's (2005) expedition route was based on Augustine Henry's hand-drawn map of southern Yunnan, outlining locations at which he and his Chinese collector "Old Ho" had made collections of herbarium specimens between 1896 and December 1900.

Once again our host was the Chinese Academy of Sciences and at Bangkok we were met by Dr.Guan Kaiyun, the Director of Kunming Botanical Gardens, before flying on to the provincial capital, Kunming. Our guide during our travels was Professor Wan Zhong-lang, who regularly leads botanical expeditions through the province.

Our first port of call was to the Stone Forest, a karst region to the south of Kunming. The Stone Forest was visited by Henry's native collector in 1897 and supports a rich surrounding flora. This region has obviously been exposed to the elements longer than the Burren, since the grykes here are up to 15 metres deep. On the edge of this "limestone forest" are woods of *Pinus yunnanensis* and *Cupressus duclouxiana*, while inside is a maze of stone pillars and lakes. These limestone pillars support an amazing range of climbers including massively rampant plants of *Rosa banksiae* f. *normalis* (the wild banksian rose), *Cuscuta chinensis* (Chinese madder), *Sageretia thea*, *Hedera nepalensis* var. *sinensis*, *Ficus sarmentosa*, *Zanthoxylum cuspidatum*, *Pueraria lobata* (the kudzu vine) and various species of *Dioscorea* and *Ipomoea*. The most impressive of all these climbers however, had to be *Trachelospermum bodinieri*, a rampant vine that carried masses of 30 cm long, runner-bean like pods. On the cliff faces, near fine trees of *Sapindus delavayi*, was *Arisaema erubescens* by then carrying heavy spikes of fleshy red seeds. New to me was *Ulmus changii*, a 15 metre tall tree with beautifully mottled bark. The loquat, *Eriobotrya japonica* formed fine trees, as did *Broussonetia papyrifera*, *Machilus yunnanensis*, *Cercis biondii* and *Malus halliana*. After a lunch of *Rhododendron decorum* flowers (deep-fried in batter) we headed further south to the ancient town of Mengzi, Henry's most famous base in Yunnan.

At Mengzi, we really didn't know what to expect. Few western botanical expeditions pass this way, preferring instead to head for the temperate forests and alpine slopes further north. Little information is available on the region apart from brief notes by earlier collectors who were based there such as Augustine Henry, Heinrich Handel-Mazzetti and Joseph Rock, for example. We were in for a treat; I look back on Mengzi

as one of the most beautiful places I have visited in all of China. Mengzi is set on a large plain and is completely encircled by mountains. In the centre of the town is an enormous lake and on its edge, reflected in the still waters, an ancient towering pagoda, the whole scene framed by an avenue of brick-red flowered trees of *Hibiscus rosa-sinensis*.

The greatest surprise of all however was locating the old customs house in which Henry once worked and seeing his name included on a list of former staff on a wall plaque. Henry's was not the only Irish name on the plaque. It also included that of William Hancock, an obscure Irish collector who was based at Mengzi before Henry's arrival there in 1896.

Marked on Henry's hand-drawn map, to the north of Mengzi, is a mountain range he called "Great Black Mountain."

Translated into Chinese this range is Dahei Shan. We made our way there, being the first western botanical

expedition to do so since Hancock and Henry over a century ago. While based in Mengzi, Augustine Henry took great interest in a number of ethnic groups, but one in particular, the Yi (known to Henry as the Lolas) he found fascinating and eventually compiled a dictionary of their language.

As we approached the mountain the surrounding paddy fields on the plains were a hive of activity as local farmers were busily harvesting and threshing rice. We were delighted to stumble across a Yi (or Lolo) village on Great Black Mountain. Though extremely poor the little village (Dubi) was beautiful - houses with mud walls, oxen drawing carts and the little village surrounded by orchards of bright-orange Chinese persimmons. We were given a great welcome by the villagers and visited the local primary school, a small two roomed shack near the edge of the village where Yi children sang traditional songs for us. As we left to make our way further up the mountain we were given a parting gift of walnuts and the entire village came out to bid us farewell.

The lower slopes of the mountain were covered by extensive thickets of *Dodonea viscosa*, a pioneering species of pantropic distribution. At higher altitudes *Lobelia*



*The beautiful pagoda at Mengzi.
Photo by Seamus O'Brien.*

seguinii became a familiar sight by the track-side. From a huge basal *Echium*-like rosette rose a 2.5 metre tall spike covered in light-blue spidery flowers. Our route took us past a rich thicket full of interesting plants like *Clerodendrum bungei*, *Thalictrum fortunei*, *Taraxicum mongolicum*, *Lyonia ovalifolia*, flowering trees of *Alnus nepalensis* and the very beautiful *Oxyspora paniculata*. Another interesting find on these mountain slopes was *Craibiodendron henryi* (Ericaceae), a small tree to about 10 metre tall carrying salmon flushed new growths.

The following day we crossed the fertile Mengzi plain and travelled south past plantations of pomegranates (*Punica granatum*), then laden in fruit. Our destination was the Daweishan Range in Pingbian County where Henry made some of his most remarkable finds. This mountain range is home to an extremely rich flora and was designated a national park some years ago. The flora of the lower slopes is subtropical though, rising in altitude, warm-temperate forests are encountered and plants from this region hold great potential for milder Irish gardens like Kilmacurragh and Ilnacullin.



The Sino-Himalayan tree fern, Cyathea spinulosa, a relict species, common on the Daweishan Range near the Vietnamese border. Photo by Seamus O'Brien

On the upper slopes the forest canopy was dominated by *Lithocarpus*, massive trees that towered to 70 metres overhead. In their boughs grew high-rise aerial gardens full of epiphytic *Apapetes*, *Vaccinium* and *Rhododendron*. We had arrived in time to see great swathes of the beautiful *Pleione praecox* in full flower on moss-laden branches

and on boulders on the woodland edge. Beneath the trees were acres of lush *Hedychium yunnanensis*, giving a brilliant show alongside the wonderfully scented *Luculia pinceana*. Tree ferns were abundant; the Sino-Himalayan *Cyathea spinulosa* was just one of a number of species found here and it grew with another relict plant, *Brassaiopsis ciliata*, a fantastic foliage plant with leaves to 3 metres across.

Rhododendron delavayi (which first flowered in cultivation in Kilmacurragh) towered to 10 metres overhead and jostled with other good garden plants like *Rubus lineatus*, *Acer cappadocicum*, *Pileostegia viburnoides*, *Actinidia callosa* (made enormous vines over 50 metres tall), *Saurauja nepalensis* (what an addition to Irish gardens this would make), *Buddleja yunnanensis* and *Rhodoleia championii* (Hamamelidaceae).

From the lush forests of the Daweishan Range our travels took us further south to Hekou, a frontier town on the Vietnamese border and from there we made our way due west to Yuanyang, a stronghold of the Hani people and a region famous for its hillside rice terraces. Henry collected in this region while transferring from Mengzi to Simao and crossed this way again when travelling back to Mengzi with a young Ernest Wilson in 1899.

One of the most interesting trees in this region was *Camptotheca acuminata*, the *xi shu* or happy tree. It is also known as the cancer tree and the active compound, camptothecine is used to treat patients suffering from leukemia and cancer of the digestive tract. Endemic to China, this species was discovered by Père Armand David on the Lushan range in Jiangxi in 1868 and is now being grown commercially as a crop plant in India, Japan and the USA. Cultivars with higher yields of camptothecine are being developed. The parts originally used were the stem, bark and seeds but it is now mainly the young leaves and trees are clipped for repeated harvests.

From Yuanyang we made our way south to Luchun County. A handsome Saint John's wort with an Irish connection grew in the mountains. *Hypericum henryi* ssp. *hancockii* commemorates William Hancock, a native of Lurgan, Co Armagh, who like Augustine Henry was employed by the Chinese Imperial Maritime Customs Service and collected material for the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. With it, grew *Callicarpa bodinieri*, by then covered in masses of tiny purple berries. Orchids were plentiful and in glades *Arundina graminifolia* carried masses of exotic pink and white flowers above tall, grass-like foliage. *Schizomussaenda dehiscens* formed a small evergreen tree to 3 metres tall, producing terminal cymes of golden yellow flowers surrounded by large white leaf-like bracts.

The following evening we finally reached Xishuangbanna, the most northerly tropical rainforests in the world and home to yet another ethnic group, the Dai. The forests sounded with the deafening tones of cicadas and we were soon engulfed in a lush jungle of rainforest plants. Our base for the next few days was the Xishuangbanna Tropical Botanic Gardens at Menglun, which lies about 10 km from the Laos border.

The rainforests here were dominated by massive trees of *Bombax ceiba*, the red silk cotton tree whose enormous buttressed base would dwarf any modern day house. Massive vines of *Tetrastigma obovatum*, with stems as thick as a man's waist scaled the trees overhead. Epiphytic orchids abounded; especially beautiful was *Dendrobium chrysanthum* whose sprays of golden-yellow blooms dangled from the trunks of trees overhead. Even more exotic were the many plants of *Tacca chantrieri*, the devil flower, bat plant or cat's whiskers, a spectacular perennial carrying a terminal inflorescence of purple black tubular flowers held within a purple-black bract. In China the bat plant is

known as 'tiger's paws' because of the flower's slender pendulous whisker-like bracteoles. The poisonous rhizomes were used in traditional Chinese herbal medicine and the Hani (an ethnic group) use the roots, leaves and stem to treat cases of gastroenteritis, dysentery, indegestion, hepatitis and lung infections.



Tacca Chantrieri, the Devil Flower, Bat Plant or Cat's Whiskers.
Photo by Seamus O'Brien.

From Xishuangbanna and its magnificent tropical rainforests we travelled north to Simao, Henry's other base in Yunnan. It was to Simao that a 23-year-old Ernest Wilson travelled in September 1899 to meet Augustine Henry to get from him the location of the Handkerchief tree. It was also from this area that Wilson introduced *Magnolia delavayi* to cultivation. At Simao our travels continued further north for another two weeks but that's a story for the next newsletter. Simao marked the final step however, in our quest to retrace Augustine Henry's footsteps in China. Few of the major 19th century plant hunters have had their routes followed. Henry Elwes (who co-authored *The Trees of Great Britain and Ireland* with Henry) followed in Hooker's footsteps in the Himalaya. In recent years Ken Cox has blazed Frank Kingdon Ward's route in south-east Tibet, Charles Nelson has done the same for Charlotte Wheeler Cuffe in Myanmar and, from Ireland, three expeditions have finally completed the Henry route.

Seamus O' Brien will give an illustrated lecture "Bat Plants, Lulos and Ginger Lilies – An Adventure in Southern Yunnan" at the National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin on Wednesday 2nd February 2006.

Making waves at the See House. Part Two. By Rae McIntyre

For the last issue of this Newsletter I wrote a piece entitled *Making Waves at the See House*. The title of this present one was going to be ‘*For Waves Read Pimples*’ because the first day’s planting left one bed as unlike waves (or drifts) as could be and instead it looked as unattractive as a very broad back dotted with pimples. The currants-on-a-cake analogy could also have been used.

Planting the garden was to have taken place over the four Saturdays in November. On Saturday, November 5th, forty voluntary workers turned up and, until I arrived, they were forking over the heavy, damp clay soil. I turned up later than they did because I had to find a man willing to take a trailer to Coleraine Garden Centre where we were picking up a load of mostly shrubby plants and trees, fix them securely in the trailer and then drive slowly the thirty-five miles to Derry. The Bishop greeted me saying, “See the conquering hero comes”. I’ve been called many things in my time but that was definitely a first.

There were actually too many volunteers that first day because I hadn’t enough plants to keep them all busy and only a few were skilled enough in gardening to plant things properly. After lunch they all cleared like snow off a ditch. Mary, the Bishop’s wife, and I took a last, very despairing look at the spotty planting on the bed that was to be predominantly of pale yellow and cream-flowered plants and decided that many more plants were badly needed.

Happily things were much better on the second Saturday, November 12. There were only about fourteen volunteers but all were workers and included some knowledgeable gardeners. Wendy Donaghy, bless her, had driven the 60 miles from Killybegs in Donegal and worked steadily all day. She was there the following Saturday too.

During the week two lots of plants had been delivered to the garden. In September I had spent a fruitful morning at Ann Buchanan’s garden, outside Magherafelt, choosing plants that would look good in the garden in autumn. Ann runs a small nursery and sells well-grown plants, many of them rare.

Another consignment came from Belfast, most of them grown by Knox Gass. He is unquestionably the most hardworking member of the National Trust Ulster Gardens Committee and grows thousands of plants to supply the plant stalls at garden openings. Like Ann he has the ability to grow nearly anything from seed or cuttings; they’re the kind of people who can stick a pine needle in a pot of compost and in five years have a

perfectly formed small tree with at least three other different seedlings growing alongside, so fecund are their gardens. I enlisted the help of John again (he had brought his trailer on the first Saturday) and we drove to Ann's garden, loaded the trailer and then went over the Glenshane Pass to Derry. Knox had been there before us and left not only the plants bought from the Gardens Committee, but very generously gave many plants from his own garden as well. These included a seven foot tall *Azara microphylla* that he had grown from a cutting but didn't need.

On the second Saturday, November 12 Andy, who helps me in the garden, arrived here at 8 am with his trailer and dug out numerous plants from the garden. I should say at this point that all this couldn't have been happening at a worse time for me because I've had a bit of a health problem and am not allowed either to lift anything or dig for three months starting from November through to the end of January. Andy's removal of plants has cleared much of the congestion that was becoming a feature of the garden. I have a habit of using little sticks of evergreens like hebes as markers where they invariably take root and there were far too many of these trespassers, all grown tall and lusty, round the place. Also sheer greed has resulted in having too many plants crammed in together so these have been thinned out and I now rejoice in the spaces. Many damp-loving herbaceous plants had become thoroughly invasive so they too were divided.

Andy stayed and worked all day at the See House Quiet Garden and that was invaluable. I can only get him here about one Saturday in every six because he's such a hard worker that everyone wants him. During the previous week a willow (not a very prepossessing specimen) had blown over at the See House and was leaning at a 45 degree angle in what was to be the blue and white bed. There was some discussion about setting it upright again and virtually replanting it but I insisted that this wasn't feasible. It was agreed then to leave it for the man who had been working in the garden with a digger but that would have delayed any work on the bed, and possibly the adjoining one, for at least a week. Andy asked if anyone had an axe and someone found one for him. Within half an hour he had the tree chopped down and the roots removed. These were on a stratum of shaly rock and could get no purchase in the soil so only shallow-rooted herbaceous plants were put in where the tree had been.

On that second Saturday it was cold with heavy showers at times and the soil was horribly squelchy and wet. Many plants that prefer dry conditions weren't planted but most of the perennials from my own garden should feel perfectly at home. We tried to keep off the beds as much as possible but the ground between them, where the paths are going to be, was so muddy that walking became difficult and twice I almost strode on without my wellingtons which were firmly embedded in the mud.

By the third Saturday, November 19, everywhere had dried up somewhat and the soil around the walls was in particularly good shape. We managed to plant many climbers and wall plants.

On the Tuesday of the previous week I had been to Professor Amyan MacFadyen's garden in Coleraine and raided all kinds of plant goodies from it. Sadly, Amyan is selling up and moving to England to be closer to his family. When asked how he could bear to leave his beautiful garden he was quite philosophical about it and said that gardens were ephemeral and that it was now time to move on. He has no objections to keen gardeners removing plants (I certainly wasn't the first) and had actually written to Mrs Mary Good, offering them. His son Matthew was there that day and he was able to remove all but the largest plants that Amyan suggested I take. The climbing rose 'Narrow Water' was just too big unfortunately because I had envisaged it against a wall with pink Japanese anemones that are a perfect match, growing round its feet. However the See House Quiet Garden now has a fine specimen of the hybrid musk rose 'Moonlight'. It was flowering abundantly and Matthew had to cut it back before excavating it. Amyan asked me did I want a wedding-cake tree *Cornus controversa* 'Variegata', which was still quite young, so it was duly transported to Derry. I didn't take him up on his offer of a *Magnolia soulangeana* because (a) it was much too tall and (b) autumn is a bad time to move magnolias around.

One of the many perennials taken from Amyan's garden was a fine specimen of *Lobelia tupa*. My original intention had been to have no red in the garden at all because it is a *Quiet Garden* but I love this plant. It harmonises with *Fuchsia magellanica* and *Schizostylis coccinea* so I decided to use a small area for these red flowers. One of the volunteers, who is a full time gardener, had brought in big clumps of the unholy *Crocosmia* 'Lucifer' and a healthy red-hot poker which he proudly presented. I hadn't the heart to refuse them. Let's just say that about 95 percent of the Quiet Garden is planted in more subdued colours.

After three Saturdays we managed to have a fairly good ground cover of plants in all the beds as well as having the thousands of bulbs, bought from a Dutch wholesaler in Manchester, planted. We decided there was no need to return until the spring. Mrs Lesley Casement of Ballycastle, who has a beautiful walled garden herself, has kindly offered lots of plants including some of her thousands of snowdrops so she is going to be the main source of these. They will be planted 'in the green' in late February in a bed shaped like an Elizabethan apron stage that will be the only place where grass is growing in the garden. Already there are 250 *Crocus tommasinianus* bulbs in it and the snowdrops will be planted alongside these. Mrs Casement has also offered quantities of primroses and clumps of *Iris siberica* and *Iris chrysographes* which should thrive in the damp soil.

All the planning and creativity have been most enjoyable but, inevitably, pessimism has set in. There was quite a hard frost one night after planting things in the heavy damp soil and I'm hoping that they will survive. Frost and wet sticky clay do not make a good combination as I have learned to my cost over the years.

All I can do now is wait and see what happens in spring.

Leaves from a Sun-lounger V: Charles Nelson writes of Arsenic and old apples

This series of contributions is as much about books and reading as it is about gardens, gardening and plants. It is also dependent on sunshine (in which to read) and serendipity – by which I mean that the books are not selected necessarily because they are about Irish gardens or garden plants.

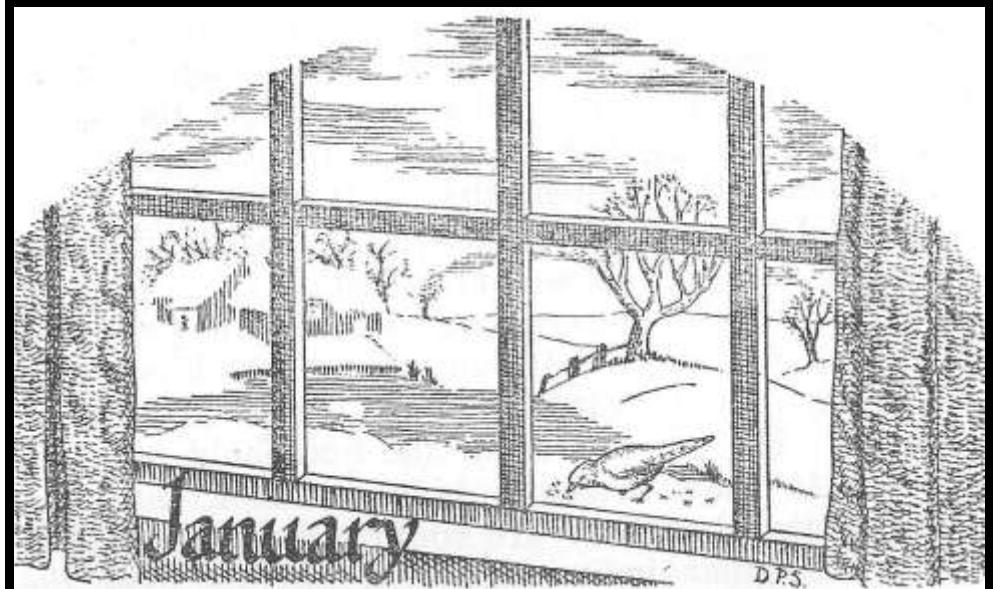
I never anticipated I would encounter a novel that included in its narrative Dr Augustine Henry and his involvement with the introduction of *Davidia involucrata* into European gardens. Members know his name very well, so I need not elaborate on Henry's main claim to fame, and you also know *Davidia*. Yet that is exactly what has happened. For our recent holiday, Sue selected her usual dozen books at the local library and among them was Elizabeth McGregor's *A Way through the Mountains* (Bantam Books, London. ISBN 0-553-81338-2. 2004). To be sure the name of Ernest Wilson is mentioned on the back cover, but that doesn't prepare the reader for Henry and *Davida*. An interesting diversion!

Any mention of Augustine Henry nowadays surely also conjures to mind Sheila Pim (1909–1995). I knew her well and had the privilege of helping get the second edition of *The Wood and the Trees*, her biography of Dr Henry, published. Alas, it never got the circulation it deserved and is quite a rare book. Anyone interested in Henry and in Sheila Pim needs that edition as it contains corrections and additions. Sheila told me that she was frustrated at a lack of co-operation from the authorities at Glasnevin when she was researching her book in the early 1960s, and the deficiencies arising were at least partly amended in the new edition.

Sheila Pim's other books are a joy. They are not easy to come by, but three of her “mystery” or “detective” stories, including *A Brush with Death*, have been re-issued in recent years by an American press and can be purchased on the Internet from a variety of outlets; second-hand copies are quite cheap. I have not seen these, despite attempts to obtain copies from the USA (they have been twice “lost in transit”), and therefore cannot comment on their quality. On the other hand I have, by dint of using the Internet, purchased copies of five of her books in their original editions during recent months.

In the late 1930s and 1940s, Sheila contributed a series of articles to a monthly magazine called *My Garden* edited by Theo A. Stephens. This was “the magazine for better gardeners”, which “preach[ed] good husbandry and ... mirror[ed] the beauty and wonder of growing things.” In 1949, under the title *Bringing the Garden Indoors*, a set of twelve of Sheila's articles, “decorated” by David Saville, was released as a book. It's a homely little work, redolent of those years, and one might pick out of it many a gardening tip, *bon mot* or recipe. Some of if may seem old-fashioned now, but none the

worse for that.



The January “decoration” for Sheila Pim’s book, *Bringing the Garden Indoors*. The book was “decorated by David Saville who was exactly Sheila Pim’s contemporary (1910 – 1995).

January

This is a month when one tends to find gardeners hanging about the house. They keep coming in with things like boxes of Geranium cuttings, for which they find excellent places where they won’t be in anybody’s way—such as on the drawing-room carpet under the grand piano. ...

Sheila would have written these pieces when she lived with her parents and disabled brother, Tom, at Campfield in Dundrum, County Dublin. One imagines a large walled garden, superintended by a gardener, attached to the house. She had been educated in Bray and at “finishing school” in Lausanne, and later studied at Girton College, Cambridge. Sheila’s horticultural tastes were evidently sometimes unorthodox: “I feel I must do my bit to persuade people to develop a taste for Dandelions ... Dandelions for salad should be blanched, and now [February] is a good time to start putting flower pots or flat stone over young plants.” She adds the advice – “Mention it first to the gardener, in case he thinks now is the time to go round spiking them with an arsenical weed killer.” Anyone who has read any of Sheila’s fiction will be familiar with the effects of arsenic!

I was impressed by her novels (about which more anon, perhaps), not just by the range of lethal substances she knew all about but also by her frequent references to the conservation of old garden plants. It is indeed very remarkable that in her 1950 book *A*

Brush with Death (Rue Morgue Press, ISBN0-915230-49-6) there is a homily about the need to preserve the older varieties of apple. This does not sound at all dated, but was written at least 55 years ago:

“Apples, man, apples. Every intelligent person ought to take some interest in apples. You eat them, don’t you? Then you ought to see that you get the best. I suppose you’d never think of asking for White or Scarlet Crofton, Sam Young, Gibbon’s Russet, Cockle and Whitmore Pippin, Cluster Pearmain, Cat’s Head, Nonesuch, Hall Door, Cockagee?”

The Chief Inspector shook his head.

“Of course you wouldn’t”, said Lord Kilskour. “You’ve never heard of them, let alone tasted them. Nobody now grows any but the commercial varieties. Big croppers and poor eaters. A big turnover and a quick sale. That’s all your commercial grower cares about. Nobody bothers to select fruit for its flavours; we’ve almost lost the sense of taste. Nobody takes the trouble to store good keeping apples like Cockle Pippins which you can eat in April; it’s easier to import characterless stuff from the Colonies, I mean the Commonwealth. ... I have one or two very old trees here,” said Lord Kilskour. “I’m anxious to preserve them. I may be able to grow some of them on from grafts. There’s Tervoider Rennet, and Aclam’s Russet, and a Cockle Pippin, all dating from my great grandfather’s times. The names are all down in his Orchard Book. The Cockle Pippin still bears a good crop and they keep till April. I don’t know where else you’d find any.”

Quite a few of these apples, including ‘Cockagee’, ‘Sam Young’ and ‘Gibbon’s Russet’ are indigenous Irish cultivars!

And in *Common or Garden Crime*, five years earlier (1945), she had a pen-portrait of “Old Miss Milfoyle”: “... a retiring person with mainly antiquarian interests; a collector of old rose varieties and the “Irish” double primroses ... she could not really get interested in any variety until it was in danger of being lost to cultivation.”

Conserving garden plants, we think, is a late twentieth-century, fashionable preoccupation – the IGPS was not established until 1981, more than a generation after that novel was penned. Miss Pim tells us otherwise.

Postscript:

In the last week I have acquired the Rue Morgue Press edition of Sheila Pim's *A Hive of Suspects* (ISBN 0-915230-38-0), a second-hand copy from a Norfolk dealer for a few pounds. It is not, as I hoped, a facsimile. The text has been reset and, alas, changed. American spellings have been insinuated (color, theater, for example), and there are a few other avoidable printing errors (probably due to the use of OCR software?). I am not sure Sheila would have approved; she was a most meticulous lady.

E.C.N.

A Year of Growth at Birr Castle by Dominic McCartney

For Birr Castle 2005 has been a fruitful year and the coming years look set to be as interesting. The plant collection has grown significantly this year with over 600 trees and shrubs being added to the already vast collection. For the most part plants have been grown in-house from seed collected in the wild by the Parsons family and other collectors. There are geographically arranged plantings representing these collections from Chile, Mexico, Yunnan and Pakistan, where Lord and Lady Rosse have concentrated their collecting.

This year saw the start of a new planting of South African material. We have added some rather interesting conifer species with success, among them *Widdringtonia nodiflora* and *W. cedarbergensis* with their attractive loose fans of foliage. These were propagated from wild-collected seed. These very rare conifers are found in mountain valleys where they can reach heights of 30m. We were rather worried about their hardiness in our midlands climate but to date they have grown away successfully. Another interesting collection is *Celtis africana*, of the Elm family, Ulmaceae, which has attractive small flowers which appear in the leaf axils along with the deciduous long-pointed three-veined leaves in spring. It is planted along the banks of the River Brosna.

Directly across the river from *Celtis africana* is a planting of *Arbutus unedo* in an area known as Tir na nOg. Here we have planted native Irish species and intend adding more and removing the non-native ones. This planting of *Arbutus unedo* was inspired by Lord Rosse's observation that all native *A. unedo* he has seen in Kerry, Cork and Sligo were growing on the banks of loughs or rivers and hanging out over water. The fourteen we have been planted to date have all been put into the ground at an angle so that they will grow out over the river as in the wild.

During the summer the exhibition of botanical art, Flora Birrensis, opened in the castle with great success. All the paintings in the exhibition were of plants found in the demesne and fifteen artists contributed thirty five paintings. Further exhibitions are planned for 2006 and 2007 when other artists will also be invited. As I write, Wendy Walsh is just completing a beautiful painting of *Decaisnea fargesii* with its unusual grey, greenish-blue bean-like pods which hang in groups of two or three.

The personal highlights for me in the 2005 exhibition were *Paeony* 'Anne Rosse' painted by Patricia Jorgensen in watercolour, *Fagus sylvatica* 'Aurea Pendula' by Lady Alison Rosse in oil on canvas, *Fuschia excorticata* by Grania Langrishe in water colour and *Carrierea calycina*, a water colour by Susan Sex. This latter, *Carrierea calycina*, is particularly special to us this year as it has flowered in the garden after ninety years. This rare tree, grown from seed collected in China between 1908 and

1914, is the first and only known flowering specimen growing in Ireland. It is a member of the Flacourtiaceae family and forms a remarkable tree with shining dark green leaves with red petioles and cup-shaped creamy-white flowers in terminal drooping racemes in June/July. It is planted here on the river bank by the suspension bridge and is one for visitors to especially watch out for in 2006.

The ‘Red Tree Trail’ in Birr Castle Demesne features fifty of our top trees, *Carrierea calycina* among them. Other show-stoppers include *Magnolia ‘Leonard Messel’* which has family connections to Birr Castle, *Quercus suber*, the Cork oak and next to it our World Champion *Populus canescens* which at over 40m is the tallest Grey Poplar known and is possibly the tallest broad-leaved tree in Ireland. The ‘Red Tree Trail’ booklet is available to visitors at reception. This provides a map of the grounds with a short history and description of each tree on the trail. It is an excellent way of seeing some of the outstanding trees in the gardens.

A particular effort has been made to label all of our most important trees before the end of summer 2006. We feel that this will add greatly to the visitors’ enjoyment of the gardens.

With excellent plants and an outstanding art exhibition Birr Castle Demesne is well worth a visit. We look forward to seeing you soon.



Carrierea calycina, grown from seed collected in China 1908 – 1914, flowered in Birr Castle Demesne this year after ninety years. The illustration is from a water colour painted by Susan Sex for this year’s exhibition of botanical art

An Edwardian Gardener (Strawberry Mystery) By Janet Wynne

Winifred Wynne was such a gardener.

During my childhood, I spent many summer holidays in Tigrony, Avoca where Cousin Winifred (as we titled her) lived with her two sisters, Emily and Veronica. (Under the pseudonyms V. and E. Pringle-West, Veronica and her sister Emily were co-authors of *Every Dog: A Novel*, published in 1929 which my father told me was very racy for its time!)

My Mother was a keen gardener and so I had an interest in plants: Winifred was obviously keen to foster this knowledge as, each night, there would be a small vase of mixed flowers beside my bed and I had to name them for her in the morning. One flower I remember was a green climbing rose which grew over an arch and that she thought silly as one did not see the flowers being the same colour as the leaves. I was invited into her potting shed just once which was considered a great honour by everyone but I cannot recall what I saw.

We used to raid the large ‘grape house’ which was out of bounds, naturally, to children; getting into trouble as, of course, our theft could be easily seen as they were for the table. There was also a large bed of strawberries but the sweetest were large white strawberries which were very tasty. I have never seen them since nor know of anyone else who has. They had the lovely shine on the glistening skin and the pips were dark. As she was a plant breeder, could they have been of her own breeding?

For many years we had a large very dark red/purple-coloured wanda type primrose with a orange eye and dark leaves that she bred; bringing it with us from garden to garden when we moved house but unfortunately, we left it behind on the last move. She also gave one of her miniature roses to my parents as a wedding present, which was also, much travelled. It grew and flowered well each year: the flowers the size of a twenty cent piece. Unfortunately, six years ago, when all efforts failed, it died aged 55. (See picture)

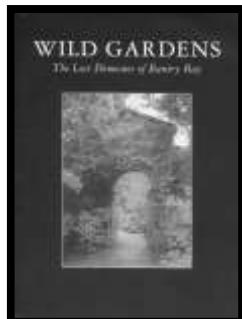
Should anyone know of the white strawberry, I would be very pleased to hear about it.



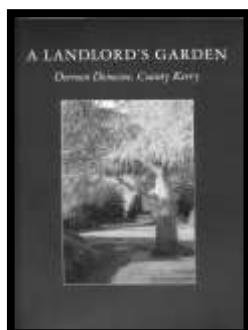
Worth a Read by Paddy Tobin

Books are always a pleasure but it is especially lovely to have three books to hand for this issue of the newsletter which were written by IGPS members, Nigel Everett in west Cork and Diana Beresford-Kroeger now living in Ontario, Canada, but originally from Cork.

In 1994 Nigel completed a history of artistic and literary perceptions of the British landscape in the 18th and 19th centuries which was based on his postgraduate work at Cambridge and was published as *The Tory View of Landscape* (Yale University Press). For the past few years he has focused his attention on the history of Irish designed landscapes, concentrating on those historic gardens in his immediate catchment area for the present. *The first, Wild Gardens - The Lost Demesnes of Bantry Bay*, was published in 2000 and reprinted in 2001 while *A Landlord's Garden – Derreen Demesne, County Kerry* was published in 2001.



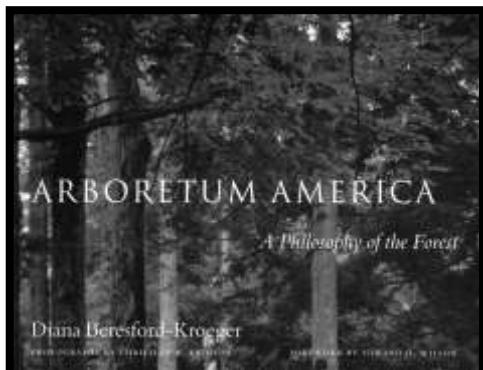
The introduction to Wild Gardens gives an excellent overview of the development of garden styles leading to the Irish wild garden. This is followed by accounts of various gardens, the account of Bantry House was outstanding, great historic background coupled with an amazing amount of garden detail, plant names, sources etc. Some of the following garden accounts were, perhaps, a little short on plant detail as could be expected given their state of decline but the historic notes were most interesting. The depth of your research impressed me greatly and I found the historical background material presented most interesting. The photographs, especially the older ones, along with maps and plans add greatly to the text. The book delivers the message that this country has lost some great garden treasures but does us the service of recording these losses and making us more acutely aware of the transient nature of gardens and the importance of preserving the good gardens of today for the future.



Nigel's second book concentrates on one garden, Derreen near Kenmare in Co. Kerry. I recall visiting Derreen when my children were toddlers and of walking about and wondering was it woodland or was it garden. It challenged the concept of garden I had at that time. Among the apparent randomness of a woodland setting were fine exotic plants, most notable, of course, were Derreen's large plantings of tree ferns, almost a trademark of the garden. Nigel's treatment of Derreen evokes

all the wonder of the Irish wild garden. The depth of historical research is very impressive and makes very interesting reading especially when it is so well illustrated with photographs, maps, plans and sketches from the period. This is much more than an account of a garden. It encompasses the history of the locality and of its people, the changes which the demesne owners brought about, their plans, what influenced their decisions and how, unfortunately, the gardens were left into decline. This book is an important historic document. Both books are available direct from Nigel who can be contacted at hafod@iol.ie and also at the Tourist Office in Bantry Nigel is currently studying the Manch and Kilcahan estates near Bandon and hopefully this will lead to another book as good as the two to hand. He is also writing on the Irish wildwood - myth and reality.

Diana Beresford-Kroeger, a botanist, a medical and agricultural researcher, a lecturer and, as she defines herself, ‘a renegade scientist’, has written a book of love and of passion, her love for the trees, the woods and all that is found in them, the flowers, the animals, the mushrooms, the birds and the people. Diana can see the forest and the trees and all else that goes with them. She has an all encompassing admiration and enthusiasm for trees and wants the world to realise their importance to the world and to take care of the trees and their ecosystems.



Her descriptions of the twenty tree groups she has selected are clear, accurate, detailed and engaging and range through maples, pawpaw, birch and hickory to pine, oak, sassafras and hemlock. They go beyond purely scientific descriptions and let her depth of admiration for each tree come through. The photographs by Christian M. Kroeger provide excellent illustration to the text.

Her goal in writing this book is to save the planet by encouraging people to plant trees – they clean the air, they counteract global warming and the effects of pollution, they promote health and, quite simply, they are beautiful and will add to the beauty of your garden and your world. She gives suggestions for the use of each tree in our gardens as well as recalling the quickly fading lore of the place and use of trees in Native American culture. Diana is a campaigner for a good cause and communicates this cause through a wonderfully written book. I’m convinced anyway! [*Arboretum America, A Philosophy of the Forest*, Diana Beresford-Kroeger, University of Michigan Press, 2005, 196 pages, softback, ISBN 0-472-09851-2]

Seed Distribution Scheme, 2006 - Stephen Butler

It's been a long autumn for me – our seed collectors have between them sent me a staggering 477 packets of seed, that's 140 more than last year and a few more seeds may come in. As usual I have sorted through them all as they came in, a few were only identified to genus level and I cannot justify distribution unless it's a really unusual genus or highlighted by the collector for a really good reason, and of course there were some duplicates. Seed coming in this year was also very clean – our collectors need a big thank you for that too.

You will see a drastic change in the organisation of the seed list this year. Recently, I bemoaned the diminishing take up of seeds from the list over the past 3 years. Responses to this included several suggestions, mainly from our excellent seed collectors, and I have broken down the list into several categories, Annuals, Biennials, Corms, Bulbs, Tubers, Climbers, Greenhouse Plants, Herbaceous (by far the largest section), Rock Garden, Shrubs and Trees. These are purely for guidance, errors and omissions expected – correspondence welcome!

I have also taken 2 seeds off the list as not suitable for distribution. *Hyacinthoides hispanica*, the Spanish Bluebell, lovely as it is, is hybridising with the native Bluebell, *Hyacinthoides non-scripta*. As a plant conservation society we need to be acutely aware of such issues. The other species removed is the Himalayan Balsam, *Impatiens glandulifera* - many river banks through Europe are overrun with it.

The list has only 2 (that I noticed) Irish plants – *Saruma henryi* and *Aquilegia 'William Guinness'*. Within the list there are several plants recognised as being rare or endangered in their native habitat. *Echium pininana*, *Campanula makashvili*, *Datisca cannabina*, *Dierama pulcherrimum*, *Eryngium sericum*, *Euphorbia mellifera*, *Lobelia bridgesii*, *Musschia wollastonii*, *Edraianthus pumilio*, *Crinodendron hookerianum*, *Sonchus arboreus*, and *Picea spinulosa* are all listed in the World Conservation Monitoring Centre 1997 IUCN Red List of Threatened Plants Database. This is available on the Web, at <http://www.wcmc.org.uk/species/plants/search>

Don't forget, the cultivar name after any seed on the list merely indicates the source of the seed – **it may not come true, and cannot be labelled or passed on as that cultivar.** This is because our seeds come from open pollinated plants, that is, they are pollinated by insect or wind with no control, so the pollen parent cannot be determined. There are many, many examples in trade of seed raised plants that are similar to, but not the same, or as good as, the original cultivar. On the other hand though, raising from seed may give something better, just be very aware of the possibilities! That's it from me. It's up to you now – let's see how many requests come in.....

IGPS Seed Distribution: One Year's Seeding... by Barbara Pilcher

I've been gathering seed throughout the season, feeling a bit guilty as I didn't get my contribution together in time last year. However, most years I manage something and occasionally quite a lot. Each year, for the past decade or so, I have drawn my allocation of packets and, with hope springing, sown the lot in a mammoth spree or, occasionally, in a rather more sedate succession over a period of weeks.

As a compulsive keeper of records, I find it interesting to look over my choice from past years' seed-lists and note some of the conspicuous successes and failures.

Prompted by Stephen Butler's piece in Issue 97 of the newsletter, I'm passing on my observations. Maybe they will jog other members into adding their contributions to the seed distribution scheme.

For me a conspicuous success can be anything from a plethora of seedlings to just one, as long as it grows on to maturity. Many of the plants offered are such that you only need one plant and thereafter you can propagate this by vegetative means, division or cuttings.

Going back to 2002, I can report successful germination of *Allium hollandicum* 'Purple Sensation', *Agastache foeniculum*, *Carex 'Frosted Curls'* and *Paeonia obovata* var alba. The latter is still a young plant in a small pot. However, I didn't manage the *Watsonia* (apricot) and the *Lilium bulbiferum* didn't appear to do either.

In 2003 *Agapanthus campanulatus* 'Albus' germinated very freely and I now have two 15" terracotta pots stuffed with them. They haven't flowered yet but are looking very promising for next year. *Anemone rivularis* from that year looked great this summer planted close to a steely blue *Eryngium*. In spite of its name, its situation in well-drained soil has suited it better than the damper parts of the garden. *Angelica hispanica* has delighted me with its amazing glossy foliage. *Eccremocarpus scaber* 'Aureus' yielded many seedlings. These plants overwintered happily and one in particular looks striking in a big old crock along with a *Cobaea scandens*, a startling combination going strong now in October.

The *Erodium manescavii* has made a big clump; I do like Stephen's idea of growing it in a crevice of a wall, so shall move some of it to one of the many crevices here. True to character, the *Plantago major* 'Rubrifolia' has threatened to take over and I now am very careful not to let it seed too much, but I love the beetroot foliage especially beside a dusty pink *Campanula punctata*, and elsewhere next to *Dahlia* 'Bishop of Llandaff'.

In 2004, I was pleased to propagate a few plants of the bizarre *Allium* ‘Hair’, *Angelica* ‘Vicar’s Mead’ and *Aquilegia* (gold leaf, mid-blue). The latter has made lovely big plants that will flower next year, just the thing to brighten up a dull spot. However, yet another year went by without producing neither any *Cirsium rivulare* ‘Atropurpureum’ nor any *Gentiana lutea*. The latter is particularly irksome as I’ve seen it thick as docks in fields in the French Aveyron.

On the other hand, I’m delighted to have a *Clematis potaninii* and wait eagerly to see it flowering. The *Lupinus arboreus* (purple white) did well; I suspect I may have to nurse it through the winter as it looks a bit delicate. *Meconopsis cambrica* ‘flore pleno’ is now firmly established in the garden and with its Carol Klein hair-do is welcome to fight it out with the species and single orange forms already here.

In 2005, *Asphodeline lutea* gave a good clutch of seedlings, growing on nicely now so will be planted out next spring, *Erinus alpinus* germinated prolifically which I might have expected having long enjoyed the spectacle it has made on the old gaol walls in Downpatrick. I was happy to find a few *Ferula communis* come up in the propagating house. Unfortunately, these were promptly eaten by an invading slug but have staged a recovery recently and so with luck they might survive long enough to be planted out and be eaten by outdoor slugs!

Like Stephen, I was thrilled at the ease with which the lovely *Erodium pelargoniflorum* germinated and they have done modestly magnificently all summer, attractive in fruit even when the dainty flowers go over. I wanted to acquire that after seeing it for the first time at last year’s RHS London spring show. *Tragopogon crocifolius* produced masses of seedlings and I look forward to finding out what it is, having grown and eaten *T. porrifolius* (salsify) for years. At the moment the leaves do not remind me more of crocus than of leek. Are they meant to be saffron coloured? Anyway, I wait with interest to see what happens next. In spite of trying for some years, raising *Veratrum album*, alas, eludes me still. I’ve tried various strategies, including stratification, to coax it to germinate, with no success. Another one which has so far beaten me is *Smyrnium perfoliatum*. It seemed to germinate and produce small bulblets and after that nothing. It’s just the plant for a micro-woodland I’ve been developing. (Anyone got any ideas on these three?)

I adore the challenge of growing things from seed. It’s a kind of horticultural sudoku, trial and error, repetition, a bit of try it and see, even the slice ‘n splice on occasion. Many thanks to Stephen and helpers for doing the packaging and distributing. I shall endeavour to send cleaned seed and get it in on time this year. It’s so nice to “borrow” a choice element from some unknown person’s garden, while hoping that one’s own seeds find a good home. Regular seeds crop up year after year and I like to imagine dedicated gardeners all over the country with their well-ordered routines, sending in their specialities.

This is a truly cooperative all-counties venture that I hope will go on and on. But doesn't it take a lot of effort to achieve what Mother Nature can do perfectly well most of the time without any help from us!

Note: Barbara is proprietor of Lisdoonan Herbs, 98 Belfast Road, Saintfield, Co. Down. BT24 7HF

Cedars of Lebanon: ancient and modern by Charles Nelson

In the July *IGPS newsletter* 97 Guy Jones wrote about the Irish-Lebanese Cultural Foundation's project to plant cedar trees as memorials: a very worthy project indeed. He mentioned two ancient cedars of Lebanon, one Irish and the other French, noting that there was a tree at Swords, Co. Dublin, which had been established as the oldest in Ireland. In fact, there is no record of any particularly old cedar of Lebanon in Swords, and when I queried Guy about this he told me he had obtained the information from an RTÉ News broadcast of November 1999. By luck this is archived on the RTÉ website, and was a report about the cedar at Adare Manor, Co. Limerick. I have had previous occasion to query the assertion that the Adare cedar was planted in 1645 (see *The Irish garden* (January 2000)): there is no evidence for this, whether in the form of archives (documents) or dendrochronology data (tree-ring counts). We simply do not know when that tree was planted, and suggesting an *exact* year on the basis of a record girth measurement is most unscientific.

The earliest documentary evidence for cedars of Lebanon in an Irish garden relates to Castle Forbes, Co. Longford, and dates from 1682 (see 'This garden to adorn with all varietie'—the garden plants of Ireland in the centuries before 1700. *Moorea* 9: 37–54 (1990)).

The other ancient tree mentioned by Guy was one said to have been planted at Grenoble by a crusader around 1200 AD – my attempts to confirm this story have all failed. No ancient and remarkable cedar of Lebanon is known to the tourist office in Grenoble, but I keep asking! Various sources say that cedars of Lebanon were first planted in France in the late 1730s in the Jardin des Plantes, Paris.

Large, record trees are too often claimed to be older than they are: yews, oaks and cedars are especially susceptible to this type of exaggeration. Only data derived from cores (ring counts) or authenticated documents should be used to verify the ages of such trees.

Regional Reports

Reports from Munster

4th November 2005

The Making of our Garden

Frances MacDonald

Frances MacDonald came to Cork, accompanied by her husband, Iain, to speak on '*The Making of our Garden*', the Bay Garden at Camolin, Co. Wexford. She had an audience augmented by some very happy clients from overseas garden tours. The well constructed lecture was illustrated by clear slides showing the development of the Bay Garden from its purchase in 1989 to the present day. This is a garden that grew, as circumstances permitted and increased space allowed, into a series of different areas with different themes. Practical aspects of infrastructure and maintenance were included by a lecturer with considerable horticultural expertise. France and her husband, Iain, must work very hard to keep this large garden advancing as much time is spent away on tour. For those who had already visited, the philosophy of its creation was evident; for many others it has stimulated an interest in visiting and in learning more of the planting, from funereal borders to formal rose garden, the newer prairie garden and its latest tree & shrub area.

Altogether, this was a well spent and enjoyable evening.

2nd December 2005

Heritage Gardens of the Killarney area

Cormac Foley

Cormac Foley's lecture opened with some spectacular slides to show the topography of Killarney as a background to his description of the two main estates, the Kenmare & Muckross demesnes as well as Dunloe Castle.

Cormac's brief included comments on the archaeological finding of field systems 4000 years old about 12 miles from Carrauntoohil (possibly the first Irish heritage garden?) to future work of exploration of the 17th Century monastic site of Innisfallen.

He went on to show the development of the two main estates from the 17th century and how each family had built a succession of houses within their demesnes as architectural fashions dictated. Inevitably the gardens changed too, but trees – long lived yews,

remnants of old walnuts and limes, a line of hornbeams once pleached – were clues that could be utilized.

Advice is often given that a ride in a wheelbarrow helps an ailing plant but in Killarney a statue of cupid and a curvilinear greenhouse were subjected to similar treatment. The lecture concluded with slides of modern Muckross, its Arboretum, its Camellia and Rhododendron collection and the latest addition, a formal parterre with colourful carpet bedding. We were also shown Dunloe Castle where the tree collection, many of them rare, continues to be augmented under the skilled guidance of Roy Lancaster. A fascinating lecture which was followed by many questions including a tongue in cheek suggestion of how to deal with *Rhododendron ponticum* - import a herd of elephants!

David O Regan

Special Presentation to Chris Fehily from Munster Group of IGPS



Dermot Keogh had travelled from Co. Wicklow to present Chris Fehily (to her great surprise) with a gift to mark her retirement from the onerous task of keeping her garden open to clubs and visitors.

Chris has been an inspiration to very many amateur and professional gardeners and a generous friend to all for years. Numerous people must be able to point out a plant originally shown them by Chris or persuaded by her to buy in a sale and are grateful. Chris has been a staunch member of IGPS since its inception and has served not only on the Munster Committee but also in Dublin. Thank you, Chris, from all IGPS members. Enjoy your garden in peace.

IGPS President, Dr. Dermot Kehoe, making the presentation to Chris Fehily



Chris Fehily, Mairead Henley and Shirley Musgrave

Kitty Hennessy masterminded the occasion and the following supper on behalf of the committee and Anne Cronin created a most apposite card.

The gift was an engraving of tools used in very early French floral art, accompanied by a bouquet of balloons!

Elizabeth Corban-Lucas

Reports from Northern Ireland

18th October 2005

The Clotsworthy Lecture at Clotsworthy Arts Centre, Antrim, in conjunction with Antrim Borough Council.

The Legacy of David Douglas, Explorer and Botanist

Mr. Syd House (Conservator, Argyll and Perthshire)

Anyone who has even a passing interest in a tree has heard of David Douglas and the Douglas Fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii*) and there their knowledge ends. Syd House told a story of a man who was the son of a stonemason but became one of the greatest botanical explorers of all time. This was at a time when foreign travel was a real, and often hazardous, adventure. Discomfort does not even begin to describe the difficulties of travelling to “foreign parts” where often finding enough food to stay alive was difficult. Added to this were the hazards of disease, difficulties of travelling through

an uncharted landscape of high mountains and deep valleys, and finding somewhere safe to sleep each night. Further, there was the native fauna that stung, bit or regarded you as supper. However, there were so many plants waiting to be discovered, these hazards become insignificant to men like David Douglas.

David Douglas was born in 1799 at Scone, Perthshire, and was educated, it would appear reluctantly, at the village school. He was apprenticed as a gardener at Scone Palace and it was here his botanical interests developed. He learned Latin and began exploring the botany of the local countryside. In 1818 he got a job as an under-gardener in Valleyfield, Fife, the home of Sir Robert Preston. He wanted to be a horticulturist rather than a jobbing gardener and at Valleyfield he was granted use of the extensive library. In 1820 he got a job in the Botanic Garden, Glasgow, where he attended lectures and became the pupil and friend of Dr William Hooker. It was Dr Hooker who called David Douglas “a scientific traveller”.

In 1823, on Dr. Hooker’s recommendation, David Douglas was accepted by the Horticultural Society as a botanical collector, and was sent to the NE United States and Canada to collect fruit trees and oaks. He travelled from New York to the Great Lakes in his search for plants of economic importance. In 1824 he returned from this very successful expedition and 6 months later left for the Pacific North West of America, where the climate is similar to western Europe though it has a much richer flora. This expedition was sponsored by the Hudson’s Bay Company. In 1825 he arrived at the mouth of the Columbia River and began serious botanizing. It was 1827 before he arrived back in London where he was welcomed as a celebrity and was awarded fellowships of the Geological, Linnean and Zoological Societies. By 1828 he had become frustrated with the Horticultural Society (he was awarded £400 to cover the cost of the expedition, including his salary - he was being paid less than the doorman).

By 1829 David Douglas was on his way back to the Columbia River, via Hawaii. It is while on this trip that he sent back seeds of the Noble and Grand Firs (*Abies procera*, *A. grandis*). He then moved to California and visited the coastal redwood forests; by 1832 he was back in the Columbia River and in 1833 returned to Hawaii. In 1834 he fell into a bull pit and was gored to death. Even his death was controversial, as there were three theories - was he murdered because the locals thought he was a spy, was he murdered for money, or did he just fall in (he was short-sighted)?

In his excellent lecture, Syd House, the senior forester for Argyll and Perthshire, brought David Douglas out of the shadows of history to stand in the limelight where his discoveries rightly place him.

For those who would like to learn more of this great “scientific traveller” I recommend ***The Tree Collector. The Life and Explorations of David Douglas*** by Ann Lindsay and Syd House. Aurum Press Ltd. 1999, 2005. ISBN 1 84513 052 9.

M.D.B.Allen

7th December 2005

**The Malone house Lecture, joint with Belfast Parks
The Walled Gardens of Fingal by Anne James**

Ann James brightened December for us with her talk on the walled gardens that she has cared for in her capacity as head gardener with Fingal County Council. Some of the gardens she spoke of are familiar to us, others less well known, so we all added to our lists of gardens to see or revisit in 2006.

The Newbridge Demense was of much interest. The 5 acre walled garden, in the original cruciform shape, is set around one of the finest unaltered Georgian houses in Ireland and formerly produced a wide variety of fruit for the Dublin markets. Nineteen different old varieties of apple and pear were grown, with peaches on the walls. We heard about the restoration of dilapidated glasshouses with such interesting features as the arched brick apertures for bringing the stems of the grape vines inside from the planting place outside. This is a garden worth watching as Newbridge develops the fruit and vegetable collection. Using techniques developed by Teagasc, in Co. Donegal, old varieties are being cleaned up by micro-propagation. Central borders are planted with herbaceous material, including some old varieties, and noisette roses among them *Rosa 'Alister Stella Grey'* together with David Austin roses for their scent and repeat flowering.

Anne next transported us to Ardgillan, built 1738, with a picture of its spectacular setting with views of the Irish Sea. This property was also in a very bad state when acquired by the council and much careful work has gone into its restoration. We were treated to bird's eye views of the beautifully laid out herb garden where box-edged beds are separated by grass paths. Plants for butterflies and bees, such as species of *Buddleja* and *Echium*, are ranged along the wall. Also within the walled garden, the productive vegetable garden is not just for show, and surplus produce is put out for the gardeners at the end of the week. A collection of *Potentilla*, some 250 varieties, is at its best in August while a beautiful old glasshouse, acquired and restored, looks splendid in the rose garden.

Anne went on to talk about Malahide Castle, dating from 1185. A picture from 1801 showed us the *Cedrus libani* and *Quercus robur* from the original plantings that are still extant; the oak with branches sweeping to the ground that is carpeted in winter with snowdrops as thick as a blanket of snow, and with some unusual forms. Areas such as the chicken yard, brought back from wilderness since Anne's appointment, are now planted with a wide variety of tender plants and are particularly fine in May and June. We were shown slides of a wide range of the southern hemisphere species, for which the gardens are famed, including *Azara*, *Nothofagus* and *Embothrium*. Anne noted that many species usually regarded as acid-loving did well in pH of 7 – 7.2 in borders near limestone walls. *Paeonia cambessedesii* apparently does well outdoors in Malahide and is producing viable seed; seedlings of this almost extinct species have

been taken to Hidcote – quite a coup! *Bomarea* species flourish here as also do *Agave ferox* and *Agave parryi*. The latter's flowering shoot incredibly growing 9-12 inches per day meant that it had to be brought into the dome area of the new house to allow room for its flowering height.

An interesting recent addition is the grass parterre, the design for which was based on the panelling in Malahide Castle. We were given a detailed account of how this was achieved. Anne used turf for this project but recommended that anyone attempting something similar might be better to sow grass using pure fine seed.

Named cultivars of *Auricula*, in pots of the old style with rolled tops, fill one of the smaller houses: there are four different acquisitions of 'Old Irish Blue'. This house alone must be worth a visit, for best scent and colour in May. Interest continues later on with a spectacular display from *Rhodochiton atrosanguineum*, positively dripping from the framework.

Other exotics brought to our notice included *Passiflora antioquiensis* with spectacular deep pink flowers, *Callistemon citrinus* 'Splendens', *Olearia lachunosa*, just one of the national collection of *Olearia*, *Eriobotrya japonica*, loquat, bearing very delicious fruit, *Buddleja colvilei* 'Kewensis' and many other desirable plants besides, together with hints on growing them.

This was a real window on to the achievements of the Fingal County Council team. Anne is to be congratulated on her dedicated work as well as for her fascinating, well illustrated lecture.

Barbara Pilcher

Reports from Leinster

July 10th 2005

The Garden visit to 'MIR'

The Garden of Dr. Dermot Kehoe

It was a fabulous day on the 10th of July this year. By Irish standards it was a hot summer day, which alone made the journey to Wicklow worthwhile but the visit to Dr. Dermot Kehoe's garden made it simply perfect. Coming to the house over a pebbled area, a rockery and alpine scenery stretches out with mounded areas planted with herbaceous plants and shrubs (e.g. *Viburnum davidii*).

Walking around the pond to the right hand side, you come over a nicely retained flight of steps with an old urn beside it and onto a large lawn area. This is divided by 3 broad

borders running away from the house. Dermot has planted these borders with an enormous range of herbaceous plants and grasses. Although temperatures had been hot

for days, the flowering borders were in magnificent condition and held a few surprises, such as *Scabiosa caucasia* 'Alba' and, *Cynara cardunculus*.



*The back garden at Mir, Dr. Dermot Kehoe's garden in Kilquade.
Photograph by Bob Bradshaw.*

At the left of the house an entrance gate leads to the rear garden, where Dermot is selling plants - at this time of the year mainly small-flowering perennials and alpine plants like *Dryas octopetala*. Entering the garden, past further alpine rockery areas, the first thing which caught my eye was the nicely retained old water-feature, a formal pond with well maintained stone edge of sandstone flags. At this time of the year the water-lilies (*Nymphaea x hybrida*) were breaking the formality of the pond with vigorous growth and massed flowering. A mature *Acacia delabata* planted with a group of conifers provided an excellent background to the pond.

At the end of the garden the well-reasoned regime of the herbaceous borders gave way to an area which was shady and wildly natural. The 'wood-path' creates such a feeling perfectly. Following the path I enjoyed spectacular glimpses into the Wicklow Mountains as well as sightings of some interesting forest groundcover plants. Dermot had sent us on the way to look out for *Lilium martagon* and *Arum maculatum* both of which were in full flower. The 'wood-path' leads onto a more secluded calm part of the garden: a lawn where scattered furniture invites you to rest and enjoy the humming summer atmosphere.

We spent lots of time in the garden, where Dermot was always pleased to tell us hidden stories about the different elements and to answer questions about (for me) unusual

plants. The different spaces in the garden invited the garden visitors to secluded conversations and exchanges.

The day drifted then - through Dermot's outstanding hospitality - into a most enjoyable Italian-styled afternoon with wine, antipasti and lots of talk and laughter. For me, as a foreigner, I never imagined I could experience such a 'Mediterranean' afternoon in Ireland.

Carsten Ascherfeld

22nd September 2005
The Family Jewels
Dr.Brent Elliott

Thursday 22nd September found us in very good company. A shared lecture with the R.H.S.I. brought us Dr. Brent Elliott, current Librarian of the Royal Horticultural Society's Lindley Library, to speak about the history of this famous international institution. Dr. Elliott outlined for us in great detail the progress of the society, from its founding in 1804 by John Wedgwood, onwards to Sir Joseph Banks and James Dickson among others. He told of the acquisition of the first garden in Kensington in 1818, the setting up of an experimental garden in Chiswick in 1821 and the dispatching of plant collectors abroad, Robert Fortune and David Douglas among them.

In 1861 Sir Joseph Paxton, later Vice-President, was admitted to the now Royal Horticultural Society. In 1866 the society held an International Horticultural Exhibition and the profit enabled them to purchase the library of the late John Lindley, former Secretary of the Society. Lindley's house and land became the Garden Suburb of Bethnell Green, but his library became the foundation of the modern library we know today.

The R.H.S. General Examination, with which so many of us are familiar, was instituted in 1893. The Victoria Medal of Honour was instituted in 1897 and the Society held its first International Conference on Hybridisation in 1899. In 1903 the garden of George Fergusson Wilson at Wisley was bought by Sir Thomas Hanbury who presented it to the Society as a new experimental garden replacing Chiswick. In 1904 a New Hall (now Old Hall) was built on Vincent Square for the Society's centennial to house the library and host exhibitions.

Librarians came and went. William Thomas Sterne took over in 1932, at the age of 21. He served for 20 years, except for war service and sorted out some monographs by combining all their published parts. He was succeeded by Miss Whitely who gave wrong advice about plant culture!

1952 saw the institution of the first version of the "Code of Nomenclature for Cultivated Plants" and in 1999 the National Council for the Conservation of Plants and

Gardens (NCCPG) was established. Dr. Elliott took over in 1982 and has witnessed enormous developments even in his short "reign" The premises were gutted and rebuilt in 1999. There is now a separate room for the picture collection. New acquisitions are on view for a year before they go into their boxes. By the end of January 2006, the entire catalogue will be available on line. Eventually, every book in the library will have an image on screen. The older the book, the more detailed will be the description. And what books!

Among the treasures of the Lindley Library are: Capability Brown's Account Book. Pierre-Joseph Redoute's works on Lilies and Roses.

A 1514 edition of Pliny's Natural History.

Bateman's Orchidaceae, the largest book in the collection.

1800 periodical titles, - from the 18th century to the present.

The personal papers of E.A.Bowles, Lanning Roper, Constance Spry and William Robinson.

We owe a huge debt to Dr. Elliott for reminding us of the wonders that are available in the R.H.S. Lindley Library. One tends to forget the enormous number of horticultural subjects catered for and available Mon-Fri, 9.30 a.m.-5.30 p.m. Admission is free! His best advice is to visit the website www.rhs.org.uk/libraries and view the finest horticultural library in the world.

Mary Bradshaw.

**14th October 2005
"Central Asian Adventures"
Dr. Christopher Grey-Wilson**

On the 14th of October we accompanied the Alpine Society of Ireland, led by Christopher Grey-Wilson, on an illustrated plant hunting trip which he made some years ago in Central Asia.

The trip began in Georgia in the Caucasus Mountains. Meadows in this region are at their best in April and are later cut for hay. Here are to be found *Stachys macrantha* growing in large swathes, and dense clumps of *Campanula bellidifolia*. *Daphne glomerata*, which is also found in Eastern Turkey, grows in this area as does *Gentiana angulosa*, the Spring Gentian. Also notable was *Digitalis ciliata*, a woody plant, endemic to the Caucasus where it sets copious seed.

The National Emblem of Georgia is found here-*Lilium monodelphum*. Dr. Grey-Wilson really wanted to find *Pulsatilla aurea* and it was eventually located in a bleak high valley where he also encountered *Anemone caucasica* and the purple *Primula elatior* subsp. *amoena*. *Fritillaria latifolia* grew among snow patches on the mountainside.

Moving into Iran we saw the Central Square in Isfahan and the Bridge of 1,000 Pillars before heading off to the Zagros Mountains. Here, Dr. Grey-Wilson encountered *Leontice leontopetalum*, a member of the Berberis family, and a very pale *Iris reticulata*. Three fritillary species were growing here, *Fritillaria chlororhabdota* which flowers as soon as the snow melts, the elegant *F. persica* and vast numbers of *F. imperialis* which were protected.

Between Iran and Afghanistan there are 40 miles of semi-desert covered with *Tulipa micheliana*. What a wonderful sight! This is the area of the Hindu Kush Mountains and the incredibly dry and dusty Kyber Pass.

Colonies of *Eremurus stenophyllum* grow here and also the white/pale pink *E. persicus*. *Paraquilegia afghanica* grows here and nowhere else. Also, there were various Iris species - *Iris microglossa* which has white flowers, *I. afghanica* and *I. heweri*. Some *Dionysia* species presented themselves - *Dionysia denticulata* which is endemic to the area and two new species, *D. afghanica* and *D. viscidula* the flowers of which have a white centre. There were two *Eremostachys* species- *E. bamianica* and *E. acaulis*.

Moving onwards into the C.I.S., Dr. Wilson encountered *Amygdalus bucharica*, the flowering almond, and masses of *Iris stolonifera* which abounds because there is no grazing. *Iris warleyensis* was in evidence too, a plant quite rare in cultivation and *I. magnifica* which is easy to grow but very attractive to slugs! South of Tashkent the Group found the yellow Briar Rose, *Rosa kohanica*, the white *Corydalis darwasica* and also *Fritillaria bucharica* which has lots of small flowers. Many Tulip species were growing here- the early flowering *Tulipa turkestanica*, *T. kaufmanniana*, *T. butkovii* and *T. fosteriana* which boys were selling at the roadside. *Thermopsis montana*, a snow-melt plant, grows here as does the sweetly scented *Viola dissecta*. *Primula turkestanica* prefers damp areas and *P. algida* is at home in the meadows.

The excellent slides, which have stood the test of time very well, added greatly to the lecture as also did the fact that Christopher Grey-Wilson's plant hunting was put in context not only botanically and geographically but historically and politically as well. This made for a very informative, colourful evening.

Mary Bradshaw.

16th October 2005

The Plant Sale

Given the distance, I don't get to the Plant Sale every year but this year it fitted in perfectly other arrangements. With my box of plants in hand I had gained early admission. Those inside before me must have been there from very early in the morning as the stalls were laid out, plants arranged and all was in order.

There were the usual stalls, with a display of Irish cultivars, trees and shrubs, rare and unusual, hardy perennials etc. With early admission came the opportunity to browse.

After a leisurely search I came away with two new shrubs for the garden, not Irish cultivars unfortunately, but interesting plants nonetheless. These were *Viburnum harryanum* and *Azara dentata*, both to make valuable additions to the garden, I hope.

What was available for sale was delightful but meeting so many enthusiastic members of the IGPS was a special treat. Were I to begin to list all those working at the plant sale I would have to write a very long list indeed. Nonetheless, I think it is important to recognise the valuable work these members do year after year, to thank them and tell them that it is appreciated. The Plant Sales, north and south, are the big fund-raising events of the society; the proceeds help keep subscription rates as low as possible and allow the society to stage displays on occasions such as the Garden Heaven Show or even the Chelsea Flower Show, as it has in previous years.

So, on behalf of the general membership of the IGPS: Well done to all involved, great work!

As an aside: The restaurant in the Botanic Gardens was very convenient for lunch and afterwards I took a stroll around the gardens. The newly restored and restocked glasshouses were very, very impressive and a great pleasure to visit. Something new is bound to impress, I suppose, but I thought the gardens generally showed that a great amount of work had been done in them. There was a feeling of renewal and enthusiasm about the place. The rock garden was being refurbished with a waterfall being added; a new group of raised beds was being prepared; the family beds seemed to be in the process of rejuvenation also. There was an exhibition of sculpture at the time and visitors were obviously engaged by the pieces placed around the gardens. The Botanic Gardens are truly a treasure and it is great to see continuous progress in them.

Paddy Tobin

8th December 2005

A World of Botanic Gardens - Conserving our diverse plant heritage

Dr. Peter Wyse-Jackson

Although he had just returned from Colombia, Dr. Peter Wyse-Jackson, Director of the National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin, treated us to a whistle-stop tour of the Botanic Gardens of the world, their origins, histories and priorities. Peter has had strong links with the I.G.P.S. in the past and he recalled that he had lectured to members 20 years ago. In the meanwhile he has spent 18 years, (1987-2005) directing Botanic Gardens Conservation International from its headquarters in Kew.

So what is a Botanic Garden?

Two definitions will be of interest. "A Botanic Garden is one which is open to the public and in which the plants are labelled." (1963) and "A Botanic Garden is an Institution holding documented collections of living plants for scientific research, etc." (2000). These definitions, to me, speak volumes about changes in priorities, concerns about living and extinct plants, attempts at conservation etc. all in just 40 years.

Nowadays we are aware that of the 440,000 flowering species worldwide, 100,000 are threatened with extinction and there is grave danger that 2/3 of the aforementioned 440,000 may be extinct by the end of the 21st century. Threats come in many shapes - from population growth, agricultural expansion, over zealous collecting, tourism, natural disasters etc. Botanic gardens and conservation are not new phenomena and already many species of plants, extinct in the wild, are being kept alive in Botanic Gardens for later release (hopefully) into suitable wild habitats.

The first European Botanic Gardens for which any evidence remains were at Pisa (1543), Padua (1545), Florence (1545), Bologna (1547), Zurich (1560). Padua has the distinction of being the oldest in the world on its original site. Oxford Botanic Gardens was founded in 1621 and that of Trinity College, Dublin in 1687. Since no trace now remains of the original T.C.D. gardens, Oxford is the parent of all the Botanic Gardens in the British Isles.

The aim of Botanic Gardens Conservation International is to put together and carry out a Global Strategy for Plant Conservation. Glasnevin has been involved since its inception and the strategy aims to halt the loss of plant diversity worldwide by 2010. This ambitious resolution was adopted by 188 countries in April 2002. Its target is to conserve 60% of the world's plants by 2010.

How are all these diverse Botanic Gardens going to achieve this target in their various locations and by what means? I will mention just a few examples from Peter's list: In China there is a Tropical Botanic Garden in Yunnan, established by the Chinese Academy of Sciences in 1959. Here there is a seed bank of plants from the region. Success has been achieved in conserving the Round Island Bottle Palm, almost extinct in its native habitat in the Indian Ocean. Now there are 250 plants growing happily at Yunnan. Cuba now has 8 Botanic Gardens, one for each region. Next year, Glasnevin staff will be going to Siberia to help train staff in new Botanic Gardens there. In Latin America there has been huge development in recent years. There are now 31 Botanic Gardens in Brazil, where environmental education, conservation and the creation of vegetable hybrids is very important.

In Jordan, a new Royal Botanic Gardens has been founded at Tel el Rumaan in 2005. Glasnevin staff will also be involved in training staff there. In Indonesia, at Bogor (established 1817) the emphasis is on conservation by providing saplings of native species for distribution and planting. Education plays a huge part here with 10,000 children involved in the Indonesian Children's Environmental Club. Then there is the new extension to the Botanic Gardens at Geelong, Australia, the aim of which is to conserve native species and to demonstrate the wise use of water in a very dry habitat.

In Colombia 51,000 plant species have already been described while 25 Botanic Gardens have been created in the last 10 years. The Colombian government has passed

a law recognising Botanic Gardens and their important role in plant conservation and distribution among the local population. On the week-end of 3-4 December, 2005, the 1st International Meeting of the Botanic gardens of Latin America and the Caribbean took place. Countries agreed to share their resources for plant conservation. An historical moment certainly, but we must ask ourselves - are we on target for 2010? I'm sure Peter Wyse Jackson will keep us up to date.

Mary Bradshaw.

A.G.M. Weekend, June 2005

Visit to Mary & John Markham's Garden in Greystones.

On a cold winter's day it is a great pleasure to recall one of the garden visits of our A.G.M. weekend. On Sunday morning we visited Mary & John Markham's garden in Greystones. My memory, on coming into the back garden, is of perfect hostas in pots, not a snail in sight. On one side of the lawn was an early summer border backed by clematis and roses and on the other *Cornus controversa* 'Variegata' and a large geranium which caused much discussion. Was it *G. maderense* or *palmatum*? And so through the Laburnum arch which opened onto their small tree and shrub plantation. On the left was John's vegetable garden which was viewed enviously and John was plied with questions. Here we also saw his large bed of dahlias, looking green and healthy awaiting the show bench in late summer, where doubtless they would receive their share of gold and silver.

We returned to the terrace which is surrounded by beds of roses, old and new, and enjoyed delicious scones and tea.

Thank you, John & Mary for your hospitality and a most enjoyable garden visit.

Marie Cunningham

Plant Sale Thank You:

Due to uncertainties about the Postal Strike earlier this year the Leinster Committee did not send individual letters of thanks to those who helped with the Annual Plant Sale this year.

We would like to thank most sincerely all those members who sent us donations of money, wonderful raffle prizes, seeds and sundries and a marvellous collection of very varied plants and bulbs. We also wish to thank those who worked so hard in the weeks coming up to the sale and on the day itself, catering and selling, advising and cleaning.

*€3,670 was raised which will go towards the production of our next edition of "Moorea"
Please get propagating for us in 2006, especially Irish Cultivars for next October.*

The Leinster Committee.

Looking Ahead

Northern Fixtures

Thursday 2nd & Wednesday 8th February, 6.30pm

Visit(s) to the Herbarium at the Ulster Museum

In preparation for major renovation work, all collections will be moved out and the Museum will close in September for 2 years. This is a chance to look behind the scenes at the collections which are the working tools for the botanists there. Guided tours, max. 10 people per visit, booking in advance only - contact Catherine Tyrie on 90-383152 to arrange. Free.

Tuesday 14th March, 7.30pm

The Clotworthy Spring Lecture at the Clotworthy Arts Centre, Antrim *'The Use of Superior Perennials and Grasses in the Contemporary Garden'*.

Jimi Blake has created a plantsman's paradise of herbaceous and woodland planting at his garden, Hunting Brook, Blessington, Co Wicklow. Using illustrations of his own and other gardens, he will show us how to combine the best herbaceous perennials with a range of grasses, in the recently-developed 'modern perennial planting' style.

Refreshments provided. Members free, non-members £2.00. Joint with Antrim Borough Council.

Saturday 22nd April, 2pm

Garden visit to Mr Brian Mooney, Fox Lodge, 20 Leckpatrick Road,

Ballymagorry, Strabane A 2-acre garden with mixed plantings – woodland plants, peat beds, scree area, large heather garden, linked pools with a bog garden, and swathes of daffodils from early April – a garden to wander through and enjoy. Donations for charity, non-members £1.00 extra.

Leinster Fixtures

Thursday 26th January at National Botanic Gardens 8pm

'Tales of Extreme Gardening'

The planet as a garden Growing native plants in their Natural Habitat.

Noeleen Smyth.

Thursday 16th February at National Botanic Gardens 8pm

'Propagation'.

Dealing with difficult subjects. Christopher Heavey

Thursday 23rd March at National Botanic Gardens 8pm
'Trees and Landscapes of The Phoenix Park'
John McCullen . Joint lecture with RHSI.

Thursday 18th May at National Botanic Gardens 8pm
Ron Mc Beath
Joint lecture with The Alpine Society.

Munster Fixtures

Friday 20th January @ 07.45pm at SMA Hall, Wilton.
Paradise in Ireland – Houses and Gardens open to the public
Richard Wood

Friday 3rd February @ 07.45pm at SMA Hall, Wilton.
From the Myrtle to the Phoenix
Val Dennison

Friday 24th February @ 07.45pm at SMA Hall, Wilton.
Summer Highlights of the Perennial Border
Neil Williams

Friday 7th April @ 07.45pm at SMA Hall, Wilton.
My Garden throughout the seasons
Catherine MacHale

Details of the Summer outing will be on the next newsletter

Snowdrop Week at Altamont Gardens, Co. Carlow

Monday 13th - Sunday 19th February 2006

Join an informative guided tour through the gardens, looking at the varied snowdrop collection and other early spring flowers.

Tours start at 2pm each day for one week, from the car park.

Groups welcome, but please book in advance.

Phone: 059-9159444

Fax: 059-9159510

e-mail: altamontgardens@opw.ie

Admission rates: Adults:€2.75

Group/Senior Citizen: €2.00

SNIPPETS

Botanic Gardens Glasnevin: Surely one of the real old-timer plants at the Botanic Gardens in Glasnevin must be an *Encephalartos woodii* growing there. It has been in the gardens for 100 years – the original receipt for the plant dates to 1905. For the past century it has been grown in a pot or container but now for its first time it has its roots directly in soil as it has been planted in the east wing of the Curvilinear house, where a bed is dedicated to the South African flora. *Encephalartos woodii* has only ever been found once in the wild, near the town of Durban in 1895. The only known plants are all male, which means this species, with no surviving females, is unable to reproduce, so technically it is already extinct. Staff at the Botanic Gardens have high hopes that this move into the ground may spur the plant into producing its first cone. The big question is, Is it a male plant or could it possibly be a female?

Glasnevin Website: This is only one of the many interesting articles which you can read on the website of the Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin. The programme of events in the garden is available there along with interesting articles of current interest. There is a listing of all the plants in the gardens with an interactive map which allow you to locate the plant in the garden. The whole site is very interesting and worth a visit. Although visiting the gardens is even better. Visit: <http://www.botanicgardens.ie/>

Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew: The cycad *Encephalartos woodii* which Kew has now had for around 110 years has just coned for the first time. It is believed that the coning is because of a recent fish-based organic foliar feed programme.

National Council for the Conservation of Plants and Gardens

A note from Stephen Butler: Have you tried...the new NCCPG tool bar available from their website? A very thorough collection of links for anyone regularly chasing plant names, nurseries, societies, floras, loads of databases, image searches etc. Plus, of course, access to their Website for details of the 650 National Collections, lots on botany, missing collections and the Pink Sheet of missing plants too.

Have a look for yourself at www.nccpg.com and look in the Contact Us section, and go to download toolbar, you won't be disappointed!

Leinster Committee: A special welcome to Janet Butcher and Petronilla Martin, both of whom have recently been co-opted onto the main Committee.

Congratulations: Seamus O'Brien has been awarded the Merlin Trust's "Christopher Brickell Award" and the Royal Horticultural Society's Bursary Award for his report on the 2004 China expedition. Well done, Seamus!

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.)

The contributions for this issue of the newsletter have been particularly numerous. We have a particularly full edition of 'Regional Reports' and I would like to express my gratitude to those who have reported on the various activities of the society.. Quite simply, without the hard work of these contributors, there would be no regional reports. Some reports are so comprehensive and well-written that reading them is almost as good as having attended the event. The newsletter is only ever going to be as good as its contributors and so your continuing efforts are so very important and deeply appreciated.

Of course, with no criticism of our present cohort intended, new contributors are always welcome and I would be delighted to hear from you if you would like to write an article for the newsletter.

Editor