

The Newsletter of the
IRISH GARDEN PLANT SOCIETY



ISSUE No100 APRIL 2006

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Cover Illustrations:

Front Cover: A beautiful watercolour of a viola from Wendy Walsh. Wendy sent this on at very short notice as I had asked her for a line drawing, not planning for a colour cover at the time. As ever, she was so obliging.

Back Cover: *Garrya x issaquahensis* 'Glasnevin Wine' by Wendy Walsh.

Wendy's note which accompanied her drawing explains her choice perfectly:

'Walking round my I garden I found this Garrya in full flower and somehow it seemed just the right one to be on the 100th edition of the newsletter. If you have 'A Heritage of Beauty' you will find its connection both with the Gardens and with Charles Nelson so I hope you agree with my choice.



Editorial

One hundred is a good number, a good number of newsletters to have gone out in the post to members. Congratulations and thanks to all previous editors, packers and posters and especially a most sincere 'Thank You' to contributors, those who have been wonderfully reliable and regular and those who have brought interest with their occasional articles. The newsletter is only ever as good as the contributions which arrive for inclusion in it. Personally, the newsletter was for many years my only contact with the IGPS and as such I valued it greatly. In the past few years it has given me contact with many of the people in the IGPS and I have valued this even more. These personal connections have added greatly to my enjoyment of gardening and plants can often be the link in these connections.

As you walk around your garden I imagine that, like me, you associate many of your plants with friends, relations, fellow gardeners, places or gardens visited. You will point to one and recall when you received it, where and from whom. They are the triggers of treasured memories. This provenance gives a plant added value in your garden

*So it is with us in the IGPS. We place special value on plants with an Irish connection. They may be Irish wildlings brought into cultivation because they differ in some attractive or interesting way from the run-of-the-mill species, Keith Lamb's *Dryas octopetala* 'Burren Nymph' or Evelyn Booth's *Anemone nemerosa* 'Lucy's Wood' for example. They may be cultivars with Irish associations- the dieramas of the Slieve Donard Nursery, Richardson's daffodils from Waterford, or plants brought back from foreign climes by an Irish person, Augustine Henry's lily perhaps, or Seamus O'Brien's wonderful clematis of latter years. There are lists of others. Who could not treasure Dr. Molly Sanderson's viola or the Straffan snowdrop, Charles Nelson's *Garrya x issaquahensis* 'Glasnevin Wine' or his *Deutzia purpurascens* 'Alpine Magician'?*

These, and many others, are the plants of our heritage. These are the plants our society aims to preserve. Perhaps at Issue 100 we should ask ourselves both as individuals and as a society if we are achieving these aims. We have Charles Nelson's 'A Heritage of Beauty' as our guide to help us search out these plants. In this issue Brendan Sayers suggests a strategy for their conservation which hopefully the National Committee will adopt and implement. However, neither books nor strategies will keep our plant heritage safe - it comes down to us the members to ensure the survival of this treasure.

The saying that the best way to keep a plant is to give it away has often been quoted in the pages of this newsletter. It is necessary to put this well-proven saw into practice. Propagate your plants of Irish interest, bring them to the plant sales, give them to friends and tell them of their connections. To the keen gardener you will be giving a treasure which will be cared for and appreciated for life.

This issue contains the recollections of many long-standing members and I am very grateful to them for the time they have taken to write them for the newsletter. While reading over them a thought came to my mind that it would be such a shame if at Issue 200 we had similar articles recalling Irish plants which had been lost. As a society we have done much to increase knowledge and an awareness of Irish plants among gardeners but I believe we still have a good distance to go to ensure the survival of these plants.

There is a great need to propagate, distribute and record the plants in our communal care.



Newsletter 100: Recollections and Reflections from Charles Nelson

We like numbers that are momentous, milestones and anniversaries. The one hundredth newsletter is a milestone, and momentous; the anniversary will come next. Regular as solstices and equinoxes, without a hitch, one hundred newsletters have been issued to amuse, inform and record. One day someone I hope will index them and allow access to what they contain for there is more in those hundred issues than just the dull routine of a well-ordered society, its dues and meetings, officers' names and requests for information.

Looking back, beyond the first issue, there were things happening in Irish gardening circles that may now be seen to have been significant in the formation of the IGPS in 1981. The need to conserve the dwindling heritage of fine gardens had been recognized. *Lost demesnes*, by Edward Malins and the Knight of Glin, had provided a yardstick as well as obsequies, and the Heritage Gardens Committee of An Taisce undertook its listing of the gardens within the Republic that deserved to be cherished as part of our international responsibilities. The Royal Horticultural Society of Ireland's spurious 150th anniversary in 1980 provided another significant impetus, and resulted in *Irish gardening and horticulture* (1979) which drew attention to the legacy of nurseries and plant collectors, and to the global botanical influences on the gardens that Irish men and women had created. The work of recording the garden heritage of Northern Ireland had also started in 1980. Disregarding the political boundaries, An Taisce, with generous assistance from bodies such as The Stanley Smith Horticultural Trust, established the cataloguing project, undertaken by Mary Forrest, which resulted in the publication of *Trees and shrubs cultivated in Irish gardens* (1985).

There was a lot happening and although Ireland did lag behind, there was awareness that our garden heritage was dwindling and needed salvaging. Our nurseries and garden centres were not as richly stocked as they had been; indeed many of the nurseries that had been stalwart providers of good plants had closed or were pallid shadows trading on a name without much substance.

The realisation that our plant heritage, in particular, was being decimated by the spread of industrial-scale production of nursery stock and by supermarket-style garden centres led in Britain to the formation of the National Council for the Conservation of Plants and Gardens. The NCCPG, with the backing of the Royal Horticultural Society, quickly became influential in making gardeners aware of what plants had been lost, and in stimulating the conservation of those excellent garden plants that were still in cultivation but not in favour or not susceptible to mass-production and uniform packaging.

The Irish Garden Plant Society, with its particular emphasis on the garden plants that had connections with this island, was established to extend the NCCPG's mission into Ireland, recognising that Irish gardens and nurseries had a distinctive history while, of course, remembering that gardeners have never been halted by political boundaries nor



sea-crossings, and that no matter what other differences may have existed, or continued to exist, they have always been more than willing to share and exchange their plants.

The first IGPS newsletter was laboriously typed on a typewriter – that’s a very significant measure of the passage of time. My present-day laptop is inconceivably more versatile than a finger-driven typewriter, and can even hold complicated databases that make Mary Forrest’s handwritten card-index of the trees and shrubs in Ireland’s gardens seem, in retrospect, primeval. But that’s how things were done in the early 1980s! PCs, CD-ROMs and the Internet had not yet been invented. It took a bank of about twenty steel-drawer filing cabinets to hold the inventory of woody plants; today that inventory would be accommodated in a small number of kilobytes.

Much else has happened since the IGPS was established in 1981. The horticultural world within Ireland and Great Britain has been transformed. The range of plants now available to keen gardeners is incalculably greater. Cultivars that were on the verge of extinction have been rescued and plants that were then unfashionable because they were “difficult” have found new champions. Gardens that had decayed have been revived and replanted – “restored”! Many more gardens are now open to public view than the meagre few of the early 1980s. Gardeners are more aware about Ireland’s heritage of garden plants; they learned a new word in the process, *Florilegium*.

Nothing is, or should ever be, static in a garden. Plants grow, blossom, set seed, and die. Likewise, gardeners: we had lost some old friends as the decades have proceeded. However, there is one unchanging obligation: propagation. It’s the only way for a garden to flourish, and for garden plants to survive: and, the best way to keep a plant is to give it away.



Ireland and World Conservation by Diana Beresford-Kroeger

The word conservation originated in ancient Iran and in Afghanistan and was first publicly discussed in sacred texts by the mystic called Zoroaster. The concept travelled westward with the crusaders into Middle English, old French and of course into the Gaelic speaking world of the Irish. Conservation, *Caomhnú*, caught on primarily because it had already visited Ireland in the scientific hands of the learned druids who knew about such things.

There is nowadays a global, grass roots concern about conservation. In the service of this, my dear friend E.O. Wilson has coined the word biodiversity. This word describes in plant and animal what is left of the web of life, the natural world to which we are all bound. In the mystery of our lives we are all heirs, plant and animal to 3.6 billions years of evolution. In that short time in a galactic scale, biodiversity bloomed into a picture of magnificent proportions. The planet earth was rich and green and viable in God’s hands.



Today we are living in a global village. We are part of a mass market society that yearns for speed and spending. This kind of thinking forces the march to extinction of one plant species per day. The population of the higher order of plants is only 250,000 species. And in fact there is a rule of thumb that 10% of all of life is facing extinction. It is happening at a rate that is 400 times faster than a few centuries ago. This is called non-sustainable living. It is spending on borrowed money. The bank of life will call in the debt when we least expect it.

In the framework of World Conservation, the island of Ireland is important. This is so because of its history of gardening. Éire was more than once described as the garden of the world. This truth is seen in the mild, temperate climate of the little country, in its soft rain and the warm Gulf Stream, currents that wash the coast and land with life-giving free winds.

Ireland has had its own extraordinary history, a history of domination by a foreign power which lasted for the roll call of many centuries. Out of this calamity has fallen the blessing of the Irish garden which has lived on in the manor, the walled estate and the Georgian home. Because of the Irish love of life, life in its plant form was plucked and picked out of these gardens and transported to the highways and byways of the land. The cacophony of the plants of the world is there today in Ireland's thousands of gardens. These Irish gardens are cared for by the masters of their trade, the gardeners themselves.

Life became precious to the Irish and that means plant life too. There is a compassion for plants that grow on the greenscape of the land. These have found their place in the landmarks of the countryside. They are not so easily removed as they are in other places of the western world. There is the ancient custom of thinking that the plants, too, have spirits, that they in turn are guardians of us, the human cutting edge.

There are other peoples of the world who think like this. They are the aboriginal First Nations of North America, who act under the guidance of their masters of the plant world, their medicine men and medicine women. There is a prophecy out of the Mohawk nation which says, *Ohenten Karinatekwa*, "words that come before all else." It is a grace to the plant spirit before they pick their medicines. They say that the environment of the world will be badly abused. Out of this will arise our children. They will have the gift of prophecy. They will speak to one another across the world and will hold hands to mend it. They will have clean hearts. This was spoken a long time ago. The time for this to occur is when the great sugar maple, a tree they call *wahtha*, dies from the top downwards.

The sugar maple, *Acer saccherum*, is dying such a death in North America. My tree is almost dead. It is time for us all to hold hands across the world. And I know the gardeners of the Irish Garden Plant Society are ready.

Diana Beresford-Kroeger gave the North American Queen's lecture on Conservation 2005-6 in Canada. She is author of A Garden for Life and the 2005-6 recipient of the American Arbor Day Award for her best-selling 'Arboretum America, a philosophy of the Forest' amongst other books. She is a scientist, author and broadcaster. She is Irish.



25 Years a Growing by Anne B. Carter

Looking back to the little seedling IGPS Newsletter that sprouted at Glasnevin in August 1981 it is exhilarating to examine the mature publication now flourishing so healthily. From this seedling, the original eight leaves have grown to forty, and a much wider content of botanical and horticultural material. Issue No 1 contained within its short items the seeds of current full length articles, but the typed and duplicated sheets - which must have entailed a great deal of concentrated and exasperating work - contrast greatly with today's state-of-the-art computerised publishing techniques.

Issue No 2 (November 1981) contained only four pages of text but, most importantly, included a copy of the Society's Constitution. This was (and is) mainly concerned with details of the practicalities involved in managing and regulating any such organisation but the central items were the six 'objects', or aims, of the Society and these are still, I trust, fundamental to all our activities.

Unless we are constantly aware of these aims we are in danger of becoming "just another garden club" with visits and lectures that could take place under any name. Most organisations, as time passes, tend to loose the first flush or flowering of the enthusiasm and dedication to their founder members' ideals: it is almost inevitable - and very human. Future committees and members will have to be vigilant in staying loyal to the original objectives of the IGPS.

Although our plants may be secure for the present - thanks to the awareness of officers and members (with a copy of "*A Heritage of Beauty*" to hand) - the same cannot, alas, be said for many of our gardens. While at long last a national inventory of Irish heritage/historic gardens and demesnes is in preparation (far behind those for architecture and archaeology), threats to some of our important historic gardens and landscape parks continue yearly at an alarming pace as road construction and insensitive housing developments rattle the gates and loom over the lawns. Golf and other "leisure" activities can destroy overnight designed landscapes that have existed, in some cases, for hundreds of years. These problems are not within the immediate remit of the IGPS, but a word to the wise does no harm. Your favourite garden retreat may be next in the sights of the developers, together with its plants.

However, challenges are made to be faced and the IGPS has never been an organisation to avoid them. Those members who have survived the backbreaking and exhausting work involved in our successful exhibits at Chelsea will doubtless agree. But no matter what challenges lie ahead we are bound to be reading about them in the Newsletter, perhaps by then with full colour, three-dimensional illustrations.

I am delighted to have this opportunity of congratulating all who have so carefully nurtured the Newsletter of the Irish Garden Plant Society during the last twenty-five years, and wish every success to those who will be involved in its production over the next quarter century.



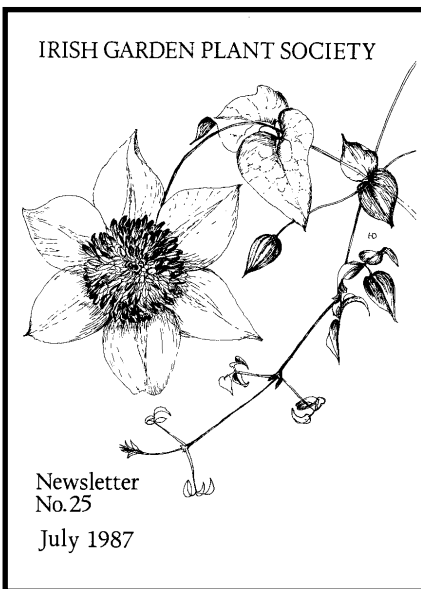
Some Early Days with the Newsletter Mary Davies and Helen Dillon Remember

We took over the IGPS Newsletter in 1987 from Judy Cassells, who had edited it for four years. Our compilation time involved a mixture of desperation, drink, last-minute brainwaves and much hilarity. At first neither of us had computers and of course e-mail was unknown. The text came in hand-written and was typed out on a typewriter; the make-up of the pages and everything else was done by painstaking cut-and-paste - boxes and lines were added in Indian ink (if you look closely you can see tiny blobs!). Then, for an issue or two, before we got computers of our own, Mary worked on it surreptitiously on a Mac in an attic in Trinity.

The cover has always been a catchy feature of the Newsletter and as always talented members of the society were generous. As photographs were then difficult to reproduce cheaply, line drawings and even cartoons were used to enliven the text. Mary (who was chairman during some of our joint editorship) was also an acting cartoonist; Helen drew on her garden knowledge to fill in last minute gaps and also provided drawings.

Since our day the Newsletter has gone from strength to strength. The 100th edition marks a milestone for the Society, and we want to congratulate the present editor for his unflinching high standards.

A front cover illustrated with line drawing



The Newsletter has always had articles of lasting interest. Here is Helen writing in October 1987 and she comments today: "*It certainly makes a disturbing read to see what I was growing in 1987. Plants still in the garden - the minority - are highlighted in bold. Some such as the **Petiolearid primulas** succumbed to a mixture of vine weevil and drought and lack of what Graham Stuart Thomas called 'coolth'. This list also well illustrates how much our climate has changed. Most of the ones regarded as tender in the 1980s are now surviving outdoors through the winter.*"

TIMELY REMINDERS (October 1987)

In the rush and fuss of autumnal upheavals it is easy to forget winter protection for tender plants. Here is an *aide-mémoire*, by no means complete, but perhaps enough to jog the memory.



Take cuttings before the end of October:

Felicia amelloides and its variegated form; *Aster pappi*; *Helichrysum petiolare* (used to be *H. petiolatum*) and its **lime green** and variegated forms; *Plecostachys serpylliifolia* (used to be *Helichrysum microphyllum*); *Stachys coccinea*; *Chrysanthemum frutescens* and *C. 'Jamaica Primrose'*; *Lavandula dentata*; *Arctotis*; **Osteospermum**; *Cuphea*; **Salvia**; *Heliotropium*; *Gazania*; **Verbena**; *Penstemon*; **Pelargonium**; **Fuchsia**; *Malvastrum*; some *Artemisia*; double red nasturtium; variegated wallflower; *Anthemis 'Crallagh Gold'*; (in specially favoured parts of the country you can get away with these).

Cover with glass to protect from winter damp:

Helichrysum sibthorpii (used to be *H. virgineum*); *H. milfordiae*; *Physoplexis comosum* (used to be *Phyteuma comosum*); **Rhodohypoxis**; *Paraquilegia anemonoides*; **Verbascum 'Letitia'**; *Mertensia maritima*; some *Origanum* such *O. amanum*; *Primula whitei*; *P. warsharnewskiana*; *P. gracilipes*; *P. aureata*;) *P. edgeworthii*.

Dig up, pot up, and put in cold greenhouse:

Viola hederacea; *Calceolaria arachnoidea*; *Arundo donax 'Variegata'*.

Make complicated and not very beautiful swaddling clothes of conifer branches and polythene for:

Beschorneria yuccoides; *Myosotidium hortensia*; *Fuchsia procumbens*; *Clianthus puniceus*; *Hebe 'Headfortii'*; any newly planted slightly tender evergreens.

Dig up and store in peat in frost-free shed:

Canna; Dahlia; Begonia.

Cosmos atrosanguineus: Some gardeners dig this up and put it in the greenhouse and store it like a dahlia, others leave it in the ground with its old stems on as protection and cover it with a pane of glass. I have managed to lose it both ways ...

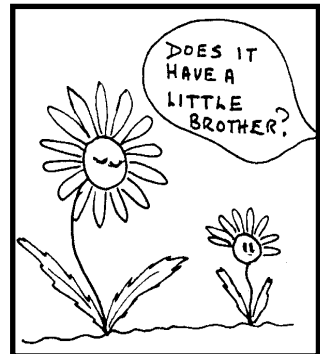
Also from October 1987:

ADDING TO ONE'S COLLECTION – the alternative ways

'Gardeners adopt different approaches ...

The charming way: Lady Moore was reputed to ask "Has it got a little brother?" – a request that is hard to refuse.'

We went on to list other possibilities: the bulldozer; the casual but pointed remark; or the questions: "Where did you get it?"; "May I have a cutting?" "Does it set seed?" "Is it easy from cuttings?" 'As you can see adding to one's collection depends less on green fingers and more on the skills of an avaricious diplomat.'





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April 1988

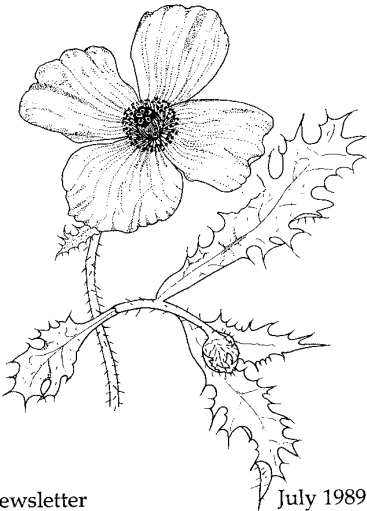
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January 1989

IRISH GARDEN PLANT SOCIETY



Newsletter
No. 33

July 1989

Note on Illustrators

The beautiful cover illustrations on this page, forwarded by Mary Davies and Helen Dillon prompt me to remember the generosity of illustrators over the past 100 issues.

Over the years the editors of the newsletter have been very fortunate to have had excellent illustrators who have given of their time and talent to provide beautiful material for the newsletter.

Even with digital photography and computers it is still very difficult to find any illustration better than the botanical line drawing. It captures the essence of its subject and shows this without distraction to the viewer.

I would like to say a very special 'Thank You' to all the illustrators who have been so kind over the years. Your work is greatly admired and deeply appreciated.

Ed.



Defending Urban Green Space by Dr. David Jeffrey

I am an ecologist clad in gardener's clothes. I seldom have pure horticultural thoughts. As we enter the 21st century we find that 80% of Europeans live in cities and realise that urban ecology owes much to the activity of the gardeners. Statistics of urban green space do exist. It varies over a range of 2% in Bratislava to 35% in Oslo. Dublin, in common with several other major cities comes in at about 20%. So what?

Green space yields 3 functions: a utility function, an amenity function and a biodiversity function. I argue broadly that a sustainable city must have a certain proportion of green space to achieve high quality of life for its inhabitants. This poses a challenge to planners and developers. I will not go into the flood reduction, wind speed and noise reducing properties of urban trees. Nor will I stress the health enhancing effects of green space. I will concentrate on biodiversity.

Biodiversity is a property of landscapes. It is expressed scientifically as the number of genetically distinct organisms per hectare. (Unit of area.) We have discovered that urban biodiversity can be measured and evaluated using the same methods as in 'natural' situations. There are big variations found within cities. Low values are recorded in areas such as heavily managed sport pitches. Highest values are found in suburban gardens. Without intentionally striving to be 'wildlife friendly' we can achieve remarkable ecological effects. The sheer variety of exotic plants introduced to gardens provides habitats for a large range of animal species.

What lessons can we learn from suburban gardens? First for IGPS members, stay as you are, using seed lists to widen the range of plants on your patch. Go easy on the use of insecticides. The larger the area of intensive planting the greater is the potential for biodiversity. It would help greatly to encourage not only your neighbours but the entire neighbourhood to plant as large a range of species as possible.

This reservoir of introduced alien plants will provide habitat for both native and incoming waves, particularly of southern European birds and insects that will inevitably invade our Irish shores.

So, in summary, there are real dangers to urban green space. These are obvious to the readers of the property pages. Developers are securing the former grounds of institutions. Private owners are building extra houses in their own gardens. Furthermore urban planners are permitting more houses in a given area. This is a relentless process which places an ever more important role on the shoulders of dedicated gardeners.

IGPS members do your thing and spread the word. Floreat!

Prof David Jeffrey was chairman of IGPS for 2 terms. In his Trinity College career he served as Director of its Botanic Garden and chairman of the Grounds and Garden Committee which manages the T.C.D. campus. He is now retired.



Irish Garden Conservation by Nigel Everett

In 1994, I completed a history of artistic and literary perceptions of the British landscape in the 18th and 19th centuries; it was based on my postgraduate work at Cambridge and published as *The Tory View of Landscape* (Yale University Press). For the past few years, my interests have focused on the history of Irish designed landscapes, an area largely under-researched outside the Dublin Pale. I have so far completed two books in this field. *Wild Gardens* - evoking the 'lost demesnes' of Bantry Bay - was made possible by the wealth of information contained in the White family archives at Bantry House (now transferred to the Boole Library, UCC). Also intriguing were records kept by local historians over the last half-century, various 18th and 19th century tour-guides and diaries, a number of private archives, and, not least, photographic glass-plates from the 1910s-30s, found in the former stables of Bantry's long-established Vickery's Inn. *A Landlord's Garden* - my study of Derreen, County Kerry - draws on the extensive papers of an estate in continuous family ownership from the Cromwellian era, and, like the demesne, enthusiastically maintained. The records include many old photographs, including an album (1869) assembled by the Lawrence Studio to record the transformation of a barren landscape through great schemes of planting.

Fine Irish gardens have long been distinctive; no facile copies of Continental or British counterparts, but part of a broader culture, remarkable - especially in literature, architecture, and design in general - for its typically genial excess, wit, love of paradox, and lack of provincialism. Little is being done to preserve this tradition in a world of mechanical landscapers, designers chiefly focused on celebrity, therefore novelty, nurserymen keen on marketing the latest, typically flashy, hybrid, and State bodies preoccupied with models of gardening heavily reminiscent of the English municipal style and entirely unsuited to Irish settings. Bedding-out schemes, lazily meandering shrubberies, and tidy lawns offer depressing accompaniments to distinguished buildings. They deserve a setting creative and coherent, whether the intent is primarily formal or picturesque. Where old records exist, serious efforts should be made to match original intentions, particularly where the architect and landscape designer were one and the same, or worked in close collaboration. This seems obvious enough, but at Fota, County Cork, for example, standard municipalization is triumphing over any attempt to create a landscape worthy of the house, and/or reflecting its various historical settings.

The proper conservation and development of old gardens demands a range of interdisciplinary studies - historical, botanical, architectural - combined with a sense of realism. The detailed 'restoration' of a substantial walled garden is a pointless exercise without the enormous reserves of money and skilled personnel necessary to its maintenance. Far better to design something both beautiful and sustainable. Intelligent conservation and management also require owners either knowledgeable or sufficiently effacing and wise to summon truly expert advice. Not least important is a planning



regime capable of appreciating what survives and determined to balance public interests with the rights of private property.

Currently, the walled garden of Derryquin Castle, County Kerry, is under threat of apartment-building by its owners, the semi-state (and soon to be privatized) Great Southern Hotels, whose representatives have already destroyed the castle ruins and wider demesne. In Bantry Bay, gardens of great fame in the 19th and early 20th centuries have all been under steady assault. The least-threatened are centres of inaction - the owners lacking interest and/or funds, without being ready or able to sell. Recently, belligerent dogs have discouraged visitors to the original Dunboy Castle, sacked in 1602 and one of the central sites of Irish history, but now contained within private property attached to the 19th century Dunboy Castle, burnt out in 1922, its elaborately designed demesne soon obliterated by inappropriate forestry. Glengarriff Castle, widely cited by early 19th century travellers - including the celebrated Prince Puckler-Muskau - as one of the most delightful landscapes in Europe, is currently in the hands of speculators, and likely to face the usual barrage of golf-course/marina/hotel/'exclusive' residential development. Cork County Council has recently refused permission to turn the Ardnagashel arboretum, with its extraordinary cork oaks and *cryptomerias*, into a holiday village. This is welcome, but the fact that such a thing could have been seriously proposed, with a 'landscape consultant' prepared to argue its merits, suggests how much needs to be learned if any of these places are to survive in any recognisable form. Curiously, of course, economic and historical imperatives need not necessarily be at odds. The potential for high-value tourism linked to garden history is obvious enough; the shame, and long-term costs, of having every demesne turned into an emerging oversupply of interchangeable resorts, obvious enough.

The study of Irish gardens is inseparable from that of Irish woods, the focus, in general, of much pseudo-history and science. Very little of what schoolchildren and tourists are taught regarding Ireland's woods stands up to serious scrutiny. The issue is important, in part, because worthy proposals such as the Native Woodlands Scheme threaten historic demesnes with ethnic cleansing - if beech and sycamore are to go, so presumably are all the multiplicity of garden exotica existing within many old woods. The Scheme also acts as a barely plausible smokescreen for a national forestry policy based overwhelmingly on coniferous monocultures - the creation, that is, not of woods, but crops. One of the most depressing aspects of forestry policy since the foundation of the State has been its persistence in outmoded methods imported from Germany, via Britain, in the 1880s, and usually involving the clear-felling of old woods. Glengarriff and Dunboy have both been savaged by such an approach. This unhappy legacy of colonial rule is the more regrettable since Samuel Hayes' *Practical Treatise on Trees* - originally published in Dublin in 1794 and recently re-issued with an introduction by Thomas Pakenham - offers a far more perceptive and intriguing view of what woods ought to be about.



I am currently concerned with the history of Irish gardens, woods, demesnes - the three are normally inseparable - on a national basis, but beginning with Cork and Kerry. Much of the information for this research comes from official repositories - libraries and public archives, most usefully of all, very often, the first Ordnance Survey. Yet much of the most valuable material will be in private hands - old documents, plans, planting books, pictures - handed down in families. The writer would be delighted to hear of any such materials.

Much of this, unfortunately, is a form of rescue archaeology - recording fine things before they are destroyed. One must avoid too much gloom. One of the more rewarding projects currently being undertaken in Ireland is the restoration and replenishment of the Manch Demesne, near Ballineen, County Cork, a property (and owning family) with impeccable United Irish, as well as Ascendancy, credentials. Matt and Oriana Connor are working with the Irish Natural Forestry Foundation to establish mixed deciduous plantations intended to become permanent woodlands rather than one-off crops. The old woods are being cleared of excessive *Rhododendron ponticum* and cherry laurel, oak regeneration encouraged without compromising the fine old beech, species rhododendrons, and other 'aliens'. At my family's own garden, near Bantry, we have tried to maintain traditions of Irish gardening, both native and exotic. Thousands of oaks have been planted; but also hundreds of Italian camellias (now - early December - beginning to flower), old roses, and fruit trees, as well as a labyrinth of yew, box, myrtle, and laurustinus, grove of metasequoias, hedges, knots, and topiary of box, noble laurel, beech, euonymus, and oak - the last an unusual material for topiary, but adding to the fun where a tree has made perfectly clear its intention never to grow straight!



Remembering – Marcella Campbell

Our editor asked me to write a few lines about our society and what it means to me. I have been a member for the last twenty years and I have to admit that it was my interest in unusual plants that enticed me to join in the first place.

Our Lectures about exotic places and their flora that were delivered by the elite from overseas such as, Anna Pavord and Stephen Lacey, or our home grown, up and coming speakers, Noeleen Smyth and Christopher Heavey, have been greatly enjoyable and instructive. My second favourite aspect would have to be our Plant Sales- the most exciting time of the year. Wonderful to watch the plants coming in from individual members; the lady who grows the dozen *Streptocarpus* in flower and the dozen *Nerine* lilies which really catch the eye are a great addition to the sale.

Many thanks to the institutions which have contributed to the plant sale over the years; we could not manage without them. The Garden Outings from Primrose Hill, with the beautiful snowdrops, to the wonderful collection of plants in Janet and David Jeffreys garden in Howth.

Last but not least, are all the people I have met and the friends I have made through the society who are as important to me as the plants.



Much more than Irish Plants by Mike C. Snowden BEM AHRS

It's 25 years now since my wife June and I along with our 10 year old daughter, Penny, arrived in Northern Ireland leaving a just married son, Shaun, and his new wife, Sally, in North Wales. My appointment to Rowallane Gardens had brought us.

I soon settled to the challenges of the garden, making contact with many gardeners in Northern Ireland and joining the Irish Garden Plant Society and was soon the Northern Representative with June doing the paper work! We arranged garden visits, lectures and events, widening our circle of friends, locating particular plants, making contact with various experts and all with plants and gardening as an interest in common.

Each month brought a journey to Dublin, for an evening meeting at the National Botanic Garden at Glasnevin, with border checks and a crawl through Dundalk, Drogheda and Balbriggan. Later we got wiser, taking the route via Ardee and on the Glasnevin side of the city. While quite pleasant on late spring and summer evenings it was sometimes grim on winter nights particularly the late night return though. At the time, Glasnevin was embracing modern horticulture and we witnessed the rebirth of the Curvilinear Glass House and later the Palm House and other modern installations while also becoming friends of many of the staff, some quite young at the time and now renowned plants people. The hospitality of the members of the Dublin group, in that small Glasnevin office, their lively banter and enthusiasm added to an ever widening source of knowledge and circle of friends.

Later our meetings transferred to a certain house on Parnell Road with a Pear Tree by the back door where we found a wonderful welcome, hospitality and wit and humour worthy of the theatre - often directed towards a sometimes serious chairman. Business only began when appetites were satisfied and often concluded late with return journeys after midnight. Discussions on the evenings proceeding shortened the journey home.

Another change of venue brought us to the Department of Botany at Trinity, a wonderful venue with a heavy table laden with leather-bound books with a patina bestowed by time and the hands of researchers. We were joined here by the Munster representative whose group had the foresight to form a small steering committee so the demands of different aspects of the society were shared amongst them. New friends lead to trips to the Cork area where great hospitality and wonderful gardens awaited us. This also prompted the idea of the North forming a steering committee, which evolved into the present day group, which arranges a full year of fascinating talks, events, garden visits and informative evenings and all with the underlying friendship that make things work. We are now retired but still involved and attend most events, but without the hassle of the organising.

Yes, much more than Irish Garden Plants! There are few places now within this Island that we are not able to call for a cup of tea and often something stronger, accompanied with good garden Craic. Thank you all for adding further embroidery to our very rich lives.

Mike and June Snowden



Where are the Answers? – Reflections of a Member by Brendan Sayers

I do not know exactly how long I have been a member of the Irish Garden Plant Society. My first vivid memory of the Society was an annual plant sale to which I had been coerced into attending by the ever-encouraging Finola Reid. She had more clearly identified my interest in horticulture than I had at that stage. As I was a student of horticulture at the National Botanic Gardens at the time it must have been in 1984 or 1985. I cannot be sure that I had become a member of the IGPS by then, it may have been a few years later while a novice gardener at the same institution.

Charles Nelson was a colleague for many years and stimulated and encouraged me further in the interest of our gardening heritage. He allowed me to accompany him on visits to gardens I had never seen, meet gardeners who had knowledge of a gardening community that was in its autumn years and sent me on searches for Irish plants. He is still doing the same today.

The way to obtain rare Irish plants in those days was to beg a cutting or division from another gardener. Many of the plants were and still are slow to increase. There are those that are members of the ‘most cultivated plants in the world club’. Their popularity has ensured them a long life. But what of the ones that are still seldom cultivated?

As the Irish Garden Plant Society celebrates 25 years in existence, have we achieved one of the main purposes of the Society? How many Irish cultivars enjoy a stable status compared to the number 25 years ago? How do we compare to the Irish Seed Savers Association? The Association is committed to “collect, conserve and grow fruit, grain and vegetables” with an emphasis on Irish varieties. The IGPS publication *A Heritage of Beauty* by Charles Nelson lists 105 (quickly counted) varieties of Irish apples. Not all of those listed are still extant, yet there are approximately 140 varieties available from the ISSA. Do we have anything that is comparable?

The job of locating, obtaining, propagating and distributing Irish cultivars is enormous. Without doubt the resources needed are beyond the current means of the IGPS. Yet there is no other organisation with the remit and the knowledgeable members to undertake the task. The onus is upon us to formulate ideas and policies that will allow us to be successful in reaching our goals.

Will we look back in another 25 years to success stories about Irish plants or will we be lamenting their demise?



Some Early Memories by Verney Naylor

Congratulations to the IGPS on the publication of their 100th newsletter!

I remember a meeting held under the auspices of the Royal Horticultural Society of Ireland (RHSI) in a sunny room in Thomas Prior House when a few keen gardeners came together to discuss the possible formation of a group which would devote their energies to the especially Irish aspects of gardening.

As conservation was to play a large part in these efforts it was decided to create a totally new society allied to the recently formed National Council for the Conservation of Plants and Gardens (NCCPG) in the UK but quite separate from it. So the IGPS was born. The inaugural meeting was held at the National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin, on 7th July 1981. By the way, I notice that Dr. Peter Wyse-Jackson was a member of the very first committee – many congratulations to him on his appointment to the Directorship of the Gardens – he is indeed an old friend of the Society.

In Issue No 2 (November 1981) the constitution of the IGPS was published which included the aims of the Society. Each new member was given a copy of this – does this still happen? By Issue No 3 there was a complete list of Foundation Members which reads like a who's who of Irish gardening in the 1980s.

Memories from those early days include being involved in the publication by the Society of a booklet listing many Irish nurseries and the plants in which they specialised – and this in the days before computers and databases.

We organised many garden visits, including one to Heywood. We were pleased to be able to persuade Graham Stuart Thomas to design a planting plan for this garden. I wonder did the missing turtles ever turn up. We had some first class speakers. I recall especially John Bond, Brent Elliot, Tony Schilling, Stefan Buczacki and Christopher Grey-Wilson.

The enjoyable habit of mid-summer supper parties was started about this time. I remember ones held at the lovely homes and gardens of Philip Jacob and Wendy Walsh.

But, what of the future? An interest in the history of Irish gardens is all very well, and indeed the Great Gardens of Ireland scheme has done much to breathe new life into some of our old gardens, but we should realise that the gardens we create today will be the 'old' gardens of the future and are also worthy of preservation. And what of all those old Irish cultivars we were so keen to conserve? How many have been saved from extinction? How many are available commercially? It would be interesting to read the answers to these questions.

Verney Naylor was a Founder Member and also Chairman from May 1985 to May 1987



*A Strategy for the Preservation of Irish Cultivars,
Prepared for the Irish Garden Plant Society
By Brendan Sayers*

The Irish Garden Plant Society (IGPS), in its constitution, lists the following among its aims: "*to research and locate garden plants considered to be rare or in need of conservation, especially those raised in Ireland by Irish gardeners and nurserymen*" (paragraph 2.d) and "*to co-operate with horticulturists, botanists, botanical and other gardens, individuals and organisations in Ireland and elsewhere in these matters*" (paragraph 2.e).

For many years members found it almost impossible to obtain details about such plants. In 2000 the IGPS cemented its commitment to the preservation of Irish cultivars and Irish associated plants by facilitating the publication of *A Heritage of Beauty* by E. C. Nelson. No organisation can proceed in conservation without information on what needs to be preserved. The Society now has the most authoritative list of Irish cultivars and associated plants and needs to proceed with their conservation.

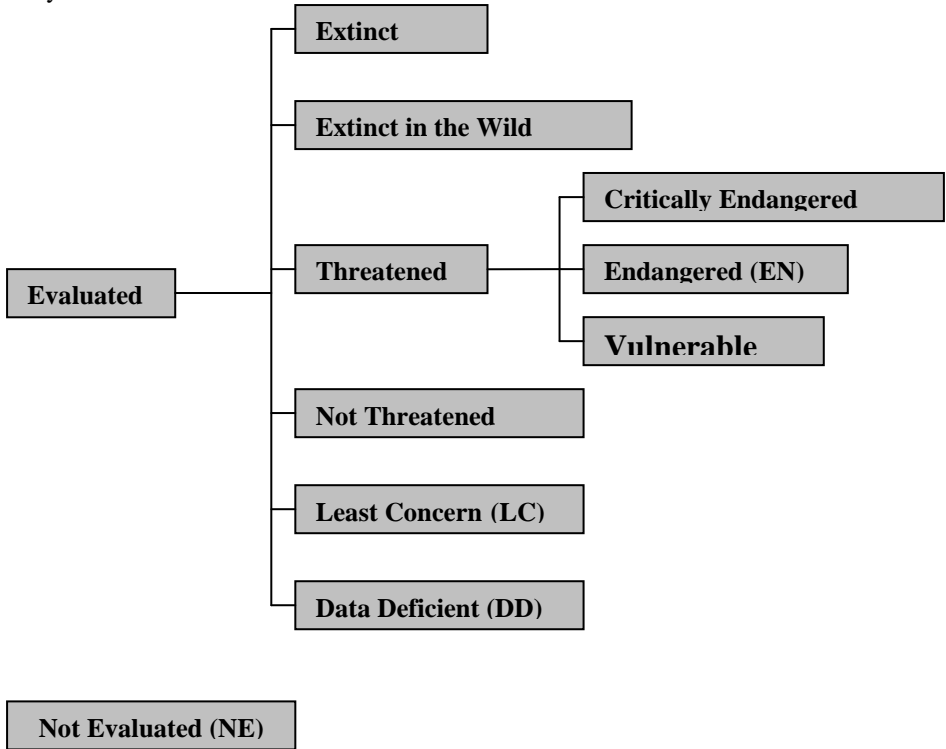
It is my opinion that the best method to proceed is with a formal strategy, one that can be easily followed and that will allow the conservation programme to proceed through the inevitable committee changes of future years.

The following is a draft, for discussion, on a strategy for the preservation of Irish cultivars.

A Heritage of Beauty lists over 5,000 plants with Irish associations which though very comprehensive is not an exhaustive list. Indeed since its publication many new plants and cultivars of Irish association have been launched on the market or are in development. A system of classification of the conservation status of each cultivar will allow the IGPS to prioritise the plants that most need preservation. The system used by international bodies involved with conservation can be adapted for use by the IGPS. Indeed it makes sense to use the categories that are in use and familiar to gardeners and botanists worldwide. The International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) gives a detailed categorisation system and assessment format for endangered plants in the wild. The Red Data books for individual countries follow these assessments and categories. Even though the assessment format is inapplicable to IGPS concerns, the utilisation of the categories may be useful.



They are as follows:



The only category used by IUCN that does not apply to an IGPS evaluation system is *Extinct in the Wild* (EW).

The following is an outline of how the IGPS might apply the IUCN categories: Initially all plants that have not been evaluated would be categorised as *Not Evaluated*. The plants that have been evaluated should fall into one of the following categories.

CATEGORY ONE: Cultivars known to be in cultivation.

Critically Endangered (CR) - Cultivars where immediate action is needed to ensure their survival

Endangered (EN) - Cultivars that have very low numbers and where action is needed as soon as possible.

Vulnerable (VU) - Cultivars where numbers are low but where action can be delayed once their numbers are being monitored and their status remains stable.

Not Threatened (NT) - Cultivars that are stable and well distributed and where the only action needed is their periodical monitoring.



Least Concern (LC) - Cultivars that are so well established in cultivation that even periodical monitoring is non-beneficial.

CATEGORY TWO

Cultivars that may no longer be in cultivation

Data Deficient (DD) - Cultivars that have been assessed and where no category can be given.

Extinct (EX) - Cultivars that are known to be extinct.

The IUCN applies strict assessment criteria for plants that are placed in each category. These range from numbers of individuals in a population to fragmentation of populations and fluctuations in populations. These criteria apply to wild plants and are therefore not directly applicable to our situation. The IGPS will need to make detailed criteria for plants to be included in each category and will also need to have a panel of experts that can verify cultivars or call on outside expertise to do so.

THE CATEGORIES IN MORE DETAIL AND SUGGESTED CRITERIA FOR INCLUSIONS WITHIN CATEGORIES

CATEGORY ONE - Critically Endangered (CR)

An initial assessment of *A Heritage of Beauty* will locate plants that are known to be in immediate danger of being lost forever. These plants need to be identified and given priority for the Society's efforts and funds.

An example is *Acer pseudoplatanus* 'Newryensis'. Its present status, as entered in *A Heritage of Beauty*, is 'Very rare, a single tree in the National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin, seems to be the solitary, surviving specimen.'

With only one known specimen this plant would be categorised as 'Critically Endangered (CR)'. The criterion for inclusion in this category could be cultivars that are known from less than X number of individuals.

CATEGORY ONE - Endangered (EN)

An example could be *Anemone* 'Green Dreams'. The plant is in cultivation in Ireland but not in enough numbers to allow us be confident in its continued existence. The criterion for inclusion in this category could be cultivars that are known from less than X number of individuals.

CATEGORY ONE - Vulnerable (VU)

Anemone 'Hannah Gubbay' is a plant that could be placed in the Vulnerable category. The cultivar was listed as available from four nurseries in *The RHS Plant Finder* 97/98 but dropped by one supplier in the 99/00 issue. It is not widely cultivated in Ireland outside specialist groups. The criteria for inclusion in this category could be plants that are known from X number of individuals. Listings in *The RHS Plant Finder* could also be a guide.

CATEGORY ONE - Not Threatened (NT)

Acer palmatum 'Senkaki' was listed in *The RHS Plant Finder* 93/94 and 96/97 as being widely available and in the 99/00 issue as having more than 30 suppliers. Again the criterion for inclusion in this category could be a specified minimum number of nursery entries in current issues of *The RHS Plant Finder*.



CATEGORY ONE - Least Concern (LC)

Taxus Baccata 'Fastigiata' is so popular a garden plant, both in and outside the island that the possibility of it being moved to a higher category is almost inconceivable, especially when the fact that it originated in the 1740's is considered. The criterion for inclusion in this category could be that the plant is listed in more than X number of nurseries in the current issue of *The RHS Plant Finder*.

CATEGORY TWO

Cultivars not known to be in existence

Data Deficient (DD) - Cultivars that are not located but may possibly turn up.

Plants placed in this category need to be searched out in a very definite manner. The most probable location for these 'lost' cultivars would be in old collections and in specialist plant collections (NCCPG collections, for example). Locating them would be time consuming and would, most likely, have a poor success rate. *Acer pseudoplatanus 'Pyramidalis'* might be taken as an example. It is listed neither in *Trees and Shrubs Cultivated in Ireland* nor in *The RHS Plant Finder*. It does not appear in the NBG, Glasnevin, catalogue of plants. It is highly possible that this cultivar is extinct but further research would be necessary before the category of Extinct (EX) could be applied with certainty.

Extinct (EX) - Cultivars that are known to be extinct.

A STARTING POINT FOR CONSERVATION CATEGORIES

The status of plants included in *A Heritage of Beauty* is that which was known to the author at the time of publication. Incidentally, the purpose of the book was to list the available information on Irish cultivars and not to give them a conservation status, though comments regarding their status are well founded. These are a good starting point from to work.

As work progresses there may be individuals with the knowledge that would allow the status of an individual cultivar to be reassessed and all efforts should be explored to have a consensus of views on extinct cultivars.

As work progresses through the plants listed in *A Heritage of Beauty* the IGPS would build up a database of information on cultivars which, over the years, would allow for easy monitoring of the conservation status of each cultivar.

THE WAY FORWARD

The Society needs to commit to a strategy, move forward in a planned and agreed fashion and make this work the main role of the Society and one that it will pursue with vigour. The committee needs to approve and adopt a strategy, as well as organising a group of interested people, to carry out the work.

The IGPS will need to link with other organisations to be effective and indeed to fulfil its constitutional role.

Links could be formed with the Irish Seed Savers Association which has been involved with Irish Apple cultivars for many years. Some information accumulated by ISSA on other Irish cultivars could be included in addenda to *A Heritage of Beauty*. Crann, an



organisation with an interest in trees, might assist the IGPS in locating Irish cultivars and also identify planting sites. It might also purchase propagations of Irish cultivars from the IGPS. The Alpine Garden Society's groups in Ireland might locate alpine cultivars of Irish interest and also purchase from the IGPS. The Irish Orchid Society could assist in the location or purchase of Irish associated orchids for donation to NBG, Glasnevin, or other institutions that have the facilities to cultivate these specialist plants. The Royal Horticultural Society of Ireland is the largest gardening group in the country with a very high percentage of interested and active members. The RHSI newsletter and lecture series could provide opportunities for the IGPS to raise its profile and promote its aims. RHSI members would be a large group of potential customers. The Heritage Gardens Committee of An Taisce is to proceed with a garden inventory, to update and build on the catalogue of plants entered in *Trees and Shrubs Cultivated in Ireland* compiled by Mary Forrest (1985).

FUNDING: Initially the Conservation program can be funded with money from sales of *A Heritage of Beauty*. Although limited their use would show a commitment on behalf of the IGPS to a formal strategy. Ventures would have to be profit making or, at least not loss making. An application to the Stanley Smith Horticultural Trust could prove successful in funding a person to carry out the necessary initial listing of *A Heritage of Beauty* entries. Bord Glas may have a role to play in financing some of the programs. They have a big commitment to increasing the status of Irish Horticulture and Irish cultivars and may be of assistance. Another option might be to ask nurseries to bulk up cultivars free of charge or if a nursery was being paid to bulk up a cultivar it could be asked to bulk up a sister cultivar free of charge.

ADVANCEMENT OF THE PRESERVATION STRATEGY

Adoption of the Strategy will allow the Irish Cultivar Preservation Program (ICPP) to begin. The Irish Cultivar Preservation Strategy needs to be progressed in a way that allows work to begin on obtaining, propagating and distributing material. The main committee of the IGPS needs to agree the way in which we proceed. Without the agreement and encouragement of the committee the progress of the project will undoubtedly be stunted. A working group needs to be formed, made up of people who have an interest in the project. People already interested in certain groups of plants might amalgamate their work with the Irish Cultivar Preservation Program.

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Brendan is the Irish Cultivar Co-ordinator of the Irish Garden Plant Society



Roses at Graigueconna by Rosemary Brown

When I was very young my parents gave me a small garden about four feet square. In it grew the pale pink climbing rose 'Caroline Testout'. My brother and I added a nasturtium, which was bright orange, and we thought it was beautiful! Mother collected old shrub roses so we grew up with 'Cardinal de Richelieu', 'Fantin-Latour', and 'Celeste' and on our return to Ireland I was able to collect cuttings and My suckers from these plants, including my fathers favourite *Rosa chinensis* 'Mutablis', which grows well at Graigueconna. I was given a shrub of one of its close relatives, *Rosa chinensis* 'Sanguinea' or 'Bengal Crimson', as named by Nancy Lindsay. It is so named because it came to Europe from China via India and Madagascar. Both these roses can be grown either as a shrub or a climber. I am told that 'Bengal Crimson' is tender, but it has not been touched by frost in this garden. I was asked for seed, but so far the hips always remain green in colour.

It is difficult to select a favourite rose, so I am naming the ones that do best in this garden. The albas, 'Celeste', and 'Maidens Blush' or if you prefer 'Cuisse de Nymphé' or 'Maidens Thigh', and 'Queen of Denmark', all do well here with their pale pink flowers and blue grey leaves. The gallica, 'Charles de Mille' is lovely with rich crimson blooms, which open flat as though cut across with a knife. Sadly both this and 'Fantin-Latour' are martyrs to black spot. I try to get rid of roses that are susceptible, but I love these two too much to part with them. 'Fantin-Latour' has glorious pink flowers for a long period.

The moss rose 'William Lobb' also attracts attention with its bluish-pink blossoms in June and early July. It sends up very long stems which when young and soft can be gently tied down to a stake or low branch. This causes the buds to break out into bloom all along the stem. I also use this method with the English roses, which also have long flowering stems. Several of the latter grow successfully here in the garden, including my favourites 'Graham Stuart Thomas' with its apricot yellow flowers, and 'Heritage' and 'Gertrude Jekyll' with their deep pink flowers.

Good climbing roses and ramblers, which grow into the apple trees, are *Rosa* 'Coopers Burmese', with large white single flowers, and *Rosa multiflora simplex* which has bunches of tiny white flowers and used to be used as root stock for modern climbers. 'Seagull', which I think is also a multiflora, grows on a wall in a vigorous fashion as does 'Belvedere', a rambler with double pink flowers. This should have been planted into a forest tree, and I have seen the original growing in the garden in Belvedere. The last rose I love is called 'Isphahan', presumably originally from Persia. It is a large bush rose covered in bunches of pink double flowers, and is in bloom during June and July. It never gets black spot although it grows next to 'Madame Hardy', which is always covered in spots. It is also scented and is loved by everyone here, so I would perhaps name it as my favourite, followed by 'Charles de Mille', and 'Gertrude Jekyll'.



25 Years of the IGPS – Ricky Shannon Remembers

My first memory of the Irish Garden Plant Society was going to a Plant Sale in Kilruddery. There was a queue a long way down the avenue and as I was very new to gardening I felt a little embarrassed passing various friends and relations on my way to the much shorter queue for “Members only”. The embarrassment went very quickly, however, when I realised that I would have a few minutes to get some choice pickings before the hordes arrived!

Since then I have moved “back-stage” – making lunches and counting the proceeds being my usual tasks. Many venues have been used – Kilruddery, Cheeverstown House, Cabinteely Community School, Malahide Castle - and in recent years the Pyramid Church in Glasnevin seems to have become the regular spot.

1990 was the first trip to participate in the Chelsea Flower Show. Sixteen years later the memories are only of the good and funny episodes – a tree fern arriving from Kerry in a hearse; Lady Valerie Finnis announcing that she could “smell Ireland” (we were spreading peat moss) as she arrived at our stand, sat down and gave us much encouragement; and our joy on the Tuesday morning when we discovered we had won a Silver Medal.

In 1992 we returned – we must have forgotten the months (more like years) of work that went into the project – the endless lists, fund-raising, booking accommodation and travel arrangements for vehicles and persons, customs forms, keeping plants in good condition (the disappointment when, despite your best efforts something flowered too soon or more likely would not come into flower quick enough) We must have learned something because this time we gained a Silver Gilt.

1995 was the last time that I was personally involved in the organising and staging of the display at Chelsea. I loved the few days spent setting up – it was quite frantic and hard work but you had room to move and could actually get a cup of tea (or find the ladies) in under 10 minutes ! Also, you had time to see how some of the commercial exhibitors prepared and looked after their blooms. One memory is of three women on Kelways stand spending hours removing collars and three coloured cottonwool buds from each individual Iris flower head - very carefully with a tweezers.

The AGM week-ends held in different locations have been of great interest. Not only do you have a chance of seeing some wonderful private gardens which you might not have a chance of seeing otherwise but you also meet up with some kindred spirits you have met on previous week-ends and might even have an opportunity of visiting a few garden centres on route.



I should not overlook the summer lunch – an annual event which again has been held in many different locations – Meath, Virginia, Wexford , Lismore , Dungarvan and Dublin to name but a few. Each year the committee wonders what the weather man will bring for us but somehow we always seems to be able to have a wonderful meal, a few glasses of wine and a lovely garden to look at as well. This year we will raise our glasses to a toast of another 25 years of The Irish Garden Plant Society.

Christopher Lloyd — Helen Dillon Remembers a Great Gardener

Christopher Lloyd was an extremely generous man. He was generous with his time and with his deep knowledge of gardening. He loved younger people, and he adored an argument, and to take the opposite point of view, and almost did it ‘to annoy because he knows it teases’. Unlike many gardening writers, everything he wrote was from his own personal experience - if writing about some plant he would have a piece of it on his desk. I remember him telling me that to spend more than one morning on a column was sheer indulgence (at one point he was writing for *County Life* and *The Observer* and another one as well – all weekly). He could be terrifying. Also sometimes his head was bent and you’d think he was half asleep and not listening. You’d then suddenly notice a deeply intelligent bright blue eye watching from under a hooded brow.

One of the best stories about him was about staying in the US whilst doing a lecture tour. He said he liked staying in people’s houses because it was more interesting than being in a hotel. He used to write in his diary what they, and their garden, were like. One weekend he was staying with some people on the west coast and went out for the day with some friends. When he returned the front door was locked and his luggage was on the doorstep. His diary had been read.

His garden at Great Dixter became better than ever during the last decade, very much due to Fergus Garret, his head gardener. Great discussions took place between him and Christopher, particularly about planting details.

I can't tell you how much I miss him. Christopher Lloyd was the outstanding gardener of the last half century and he was also an exceptional person.



Being a Hardy Perennial by Rae McIntyre

I must confess that I didn't know of the existence of the I.G.P.S. until sometime after April 1993. At that time I joined a committee and most of its members were also enthusiastic I.G.P.S. members so, not wanting to miss out on anything to do with plants and gardens (especially Irish ones), I joined too. Some time later, Paul Maher, when he was editor of the *Newsletter*, asked me to write for it. I still don't know how he got my name or why he asked me. Admittedly I used to write gardening articles for the *Ulster Countrywoman*, monthly magazine of the Women's Institute in the days when I belonged to that august body of women and weekly for the *Coleraine Times* in its previous existence, but for both I used the pseudonym Rhoda Dendron because I wanted to be anonymous. When Paul asked me to write and I agreed I thought it was just one article so didn't bother signing myself as Rhoda Dendron. I'm glad now that I didn't because through the I.G.P.S. I have come to know other members throughout Ireland and have received cards, letters, books (thanks to Sally O'Halloran) and even plants from them through the post. As with the arts, sport and some clubs there is no N.I. / R.O.I. dichotomy in gardening. Especially in gardening.

Since that first article I've written over thirty for the *Newsletter*. I rarely read my own ramblings once they've gone into print (shades of a dog returning to its vomit) but I realise I've repeated myself many times and I've done rather a lot of whingeing. For many years my pieces were handwritten because I am almost computer illiterate. I can type slowly in the 'hover and jab' style but I find it frustrating and can cover at least three A4 pages in my small handwriting in the time it takes me to type one. Now, Valerie, a close friend and neighbour, can decipher my scratchy writing and word-process it beautifully. She then e-mails it to Paddy Tobin so that they actually correspond more than Paddy and I do. Sometimes, when I hope he has forgotten about my existence, that there'll be a blessed McIntyre-free issue of the *Newsletter*, he e-mails Valerie and urges her to 'give Rae a prod because her article should be in by the end of the month'.

My pieces sometimes verge on the facetious but there are always seriously good articles in the *Newsletter*, many of them written by professional horticulturalists and far more skilled gardeners than I and I often consult back issues for information. For example, when I wanted to learn more about the culture of cyclamens I went to the Jan. 2004 and April 2004 issues in which Paul Cutler had written knowledgeably on that subject. Recently, a friend asked me about growing black plants so I was able to lend her Frances Macdonald's description of her funereal border in the Jan. 2001 issue. My copy of '*A Heritage of Beauty*' is also well-used.

The *Newsletter* has gone from strength to strength, growing perceptibly thicker in size over the years. I take this opportunity to wish the I.G.P.S. continuing success in the future.



100th Newsletter Notes from Stephen Butler

It seems a long time ago that David Jeffries tried to coax me on to the initial IGPS Committee; he failed purely because my family was too young and demanding at that time. But I attended great lectures, met interesting people, and learnt a lot too over many years. But it was very one sided – I was gaining, but not giving, and felt I needed to pay some rent. So when I was asked to join the Committee again, I happily walked into it, and rapidly fell into the Honorary Secretary position, taking minutes, organising lectures, ferrying speakers, stuffing newsletters etc, and also took on the Collection Coordinator role for the NCCPG, more home-based, but a great excuse to visit gardens and try to twist arms to keep collections.

A little later I was involved in the initial Professional Gardeners Guild meetings and at work we formed new networks for zoo horticulture - this involved both UK and European meetings - for all of which I was better prepared after a few years on the IGPS team, so it was still a benefit to me. You can have too much of a good thing though, and when I was asked to take on the new role for NCCPG of Regional Representative for Ireland, Scotland and parts of Northern England, I felt I had to give up something – so I said farewell to the Hon. Sec. spot, and tried to concentrate on NCCPG for a while. Then, in what must be regarded as a severe case of lack of forethought, I volunteered for the Seed Distribution role – after all it's home based, and only a matter of stuffing a few seed packets during the winter isn't it?

I feel that within the IGPS we have an incredible pool of talented gardeners, with a remarkable collection of plants between them, the skills to grow them, and a benign climate in which to grow them. We need to harness and utilise that collection far, far more and keep pushing our Irish Cultivars as a group (no one else will).

How about a Dispersed National Collection, lots of different people and gardens all growing Irish Cultivars with one person keeping the records? Perhaps we should look deeper and see how the plants we grow are faring in their native habitats – the seed list this year had several plants listed on the 1997 Red List of Threatened Plants. Our plants may be far more important than we think.

There can be few professions or pastimes that engender such help, camaraderie, and the sharing of ideas or materials as ours. We should give ourselves a pat on the back for past achievements, and look to the future for ways for our society and members to benefit both themselves and the plants that we all cherish – and long may this partnership continue!



A Journey to Western China, Part Two

by Seamus O'Brien

Blazing the trails of Delavay, Forrest and Rock.

From Simao, in Southern Yunnan, our travels continued further north to the provincial capital, Kunming. Known as “the city of eternal spring” because of its benign climate, Kunming was known as Yunnanfu to the early plant hunters. Kunming lies on the shores of Lake Dian at an altitude of 1,891 metres and is sheltered by the Western Hills, a 40 km long strip of limestone mountains which supports an interesting flora. We travelled to the Western Hills to see a rare conifer with an Irish connection.

The lower slopes of the range offered spectacular views of Kunming and Lake Dian and were clothed with a canopy of *Alnus nepalensis* (then in flower), *Cercis chinensis*, *Pinus armandii* and the three-needled *Pinus yunnanensis*. Scattered through these woods was *Keteleeria evelyniana*, a remarkably handsome conifer allied to the firs (*Abies* spp.). *Keteleeria evelyniana* was discovered by Augustine Henry near Yuanjiang in Southern Yunnan in 1898 and he had it named for his life-long friend, Miss Evelyn Gleeson from Dun Emer in Dundrum, in the south-side suburbs of Dublin. In China this tree may reach 40m tall and is native to the provinces of Guizhou, Sichuan and Yunnan and is further distributed in Laos and Vietnam.

From Kunming and the Western Hills our plan was to progress steadily along a north-westerly route until we reached the mountains and highland plateau on the Tibetan border. Our next port of call was the historic city of Dali, a city every bit as famous as Yichang in the history of botanical exploration of China. Dali, at one time or other has been visited by famous names such as Delavay, d'Orléans, Forrest, Handel-Mazzetti, Kingdon Ward, Potanin, Rock and Schneider.

Dali is one of the most beautiful and best-preserved ancient towns in all of China and occupies a breath taking location beneath the Cangshan Range at the edge of Erhai Lake. The city's walls are still intact and we entered Dali through its south gate, a magnificent entrance crowned by the



Dali's impressive south gate.

Both Forrest and Delavay passed beneath this archway.



city's finest extant classical building. Inside these walls lie narrow cobbled streets lined by two and three storey houses and shops in the traditional Bai architectural style. The Bai are Yunnan's second largest ethnic group and are related to the Yi (Lolo).

On arrival we immediately went to the Three Pagodas, Dali's most famous landmarks and the oldest standing structures in south-west China. The tallest of the pagodas, the Qianxunta, was built in the 9th century and has 16 tiers and is 70 metres tall. It is flanked on either side by two smaller ten tiered 42m tall pagodas built the 11th century. One of these smaller pagodas lies one metre out of perpendicular as a result of an earthquake in the 15th century.



The Three Pagodas at Dali, south-west China's oldest standing monuments.

My first ever taste of plant hunting in China was on the Cangshan Range in September 1996. The Cangshan (Azure Mountains) Range looms like a wall behind the Three Pagodas and is home to about 3,000 species of flowering plants. I can still remember the excitement of arriving in Dali, knowing that the city was a base for the French missionary, Père Jean Marie Delavay and the Scotsman, George Forrest. The range was also later explored by the British plant hunter, Captain Frank Kingdon Ward and by the Austrian-American collector, Joseph Rock.

Having spent the previous two weeks travelling through the tropical and subtropical forests of southern Yunnan we had now moved on to a temperate montane vegetation. Rhododendrons are abundant on the Cangshan and as we drove along a track on the lower slopes, I was seated by the window of our minibus identifying the first species to



come into view. Suddenly we brushed against a roadside thicket and I realised a poisonous caterpillar covered in minute bristles had fallen down my back. I spent the rest of the day on the mountain feeling as though I was carrying a cactus on my back! The incident did not spoil the day however (to the contrary, my travelling companions found the incident hilarious) and our visit to the Cangshan was one of the highlights of the trip.

One of the most beautiful plants on this range is the herbaceous *Campanula* relative, *Codonopsis convolvulacea* var. *forrestii*, a scrambling vine to about 2m tall carrying large blue star-shaped flowers. It was interesting to see *Hypericum forrestii* and *Abies delavayi* in their type localities and to re-encounter *Sorbus pseudovilmorinii*, a shrubby rowan recently described as a new species. Of the thousands of plants that grow on this range my favourite has to be *Geranium sinensis*, a humble little cranesbill recalling *Geranium phaeum*, with almost black, strongly reflexed petals. We grow this humble yet fascinating little plant on the Chinese slope and in the woodland garden at Glasnevin where it is pollinated by wasps.

Many of George Forrest's original Cangshan collections grow in the Headfort Arboretum near Kells in Co Meath. Lord Headfort and his sister, Lady Beatrix Stanley (some of you may grow the double snowdrop that bears her name) sponsored Forrest. Lord Headfort, with the aid of William Jackson Bean (curator of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew) and Sir Frederick Moore of Glasnevin, created the Headfort Arboretum and brought together one of the most complete collections of conifers and Chinese plants in Europe. Many of Forrest's plants were described not from north-west Yunnan, but from that remarkable Irish Arboretum.

Sir Frederick Moore also grew many of Forrest's collections at Glasnevin and regularly sent and received plants from J. C. Williams of Caerhays Castle in Cornwall. Williams was a regular sponsor of Forrest's expeditions and often sent large consignments of his seeds to Glasnevin. Moore knew of the hardships Forrest endured to send these novelties back to Europe and in replying to Williams in 1915 he stated the following: "*Forrest has been a wonderful man, and has done much, and suffered much, in introducing some of these fine new plants. His name will now certainly live forever in gardens.*"

Arriving near the summit of the mountain our efforts were rewarded with a panoramic view of Dali, the Three Pagodas and the vast spread of Erhai Lake. Jagged limestone crags were covered in copses of gnarled *Abies delavayi* and *Tsuga chinensis*, all lost in the swirl of dense mist racing up the mountainside. In places *Gentiana melandrifolia* formed extensive colonies and were draped in deep blue trumpet-like flowers. It grew alongside *Diapensia bulleyana*, a tiny mat-forming shrub to about 7 cm tall. This species was discovered on the Cangshan Range by Forrest and was named in honour of his employer, A. K. Bulley (1861-1942), the founder of Bees Seeds.

From Dali our journey continued to the extreme north-west of Yunnan to Shangri La on the Tibetan border. On my last visit to the area in 1996 the town was called Zhongdian



(the early plant hunters knew it as Chungtien). In a bid to boost tourism in the region the Chinese have renamed the place Shangri La, though it bears little resemblance to the mythical land in James Hilton's classic 1933 novel *Lost Horizon*.

Shangri La had changed quite a bit in the intervening nine years. In 1996 the town was a small backwater with the coldest, most basic hotels in all of China. In keeping with its new name, Shangri La now boasts twenty-five cocktail bars in the town's old quarter, serving anything from B-52 cocktails to *bai jiu*, the local firewater. Not exactly what we were looking for and its hotels are still as basic and as cold as ever. Shangri La lies at a chilly 3,160m and it was hard to believe that only a short time ago we had been in the sweltering tropical rainforests of Xishuangbanna.

Our approach to the region brought us through steep-sided gorges which were cloaked in a heavy mist, just descended, and forested in a primeval belt of *Betula utilis*, *Larix potaninii*, *Picea likiangensis*, *Pinus armandii* and *Pinus yunnanensis*, all magnificent trees. Our journey followed the course of the Chongjiang River, its swift currents crashing over enormous boulders. The banks of the river were lined by 8m tall trees of *Hippophae rhamnoides* ssp. *yunnanensis*, a flat-topped tree carrying masses of orange-yellow berries the length of its branches.

Exiting the gorge we emerged quite suddenly on the Shangri La (Zhongdian) Plateau, a long, rolling plain dotted with Tibetan villages and giant wooden drying racks standing surreally by traditional Tibetan farm houses. The plateau lies at an average altitude of 3,500m and is farmed by the Khamba branch of the Tibetans. Like Tibet proper this is a sacred land of prayer flags, holy mountains, lamaseries and stupas. We travelled to the Jietang Songlin monastery, which is located about 5 km north of Shangri La in the 300 year old monastic village of Songzhanlin. Founded by the fifth Dalai Lama in 1679, the



monastery belongs to the Buddhist Yellow Hat Order and was shelled and demolished by the communist army in 1959. In 1980 a delegation sent by the present Dalai Lama to investigate conditions in Tibet stayed at Shangri La. Following this visit, Songzhanlin's monasteries, temples and colleges have returned from the ashes and were reopened in 1981.

The monastery was very much alive during our visit and it was wonderful to see religious freedom slowly returning to China. One temple was full of purple-robed monks chanting scriptures. Hundreds of colourfully painted thankas were draped from the rafter and the walls were heavily decorated with newly restored murals and religious imagery. Beneath ox-blood coloured pillars, the smell of butter lamps lingered on the air, burning a dim light on altars lined with Tibetan deities and famous lamas.

Buddhist monks on the roof of a monastery near Shangri La



Climbing a set of stairs, I made my way through a long hall where rotating prayer cylinders lined the walls and eventually made my way onto the roof of the main complex where young monks were sounding 4 metre long trumpets across the whitewashed walls onto the monastic village below.

The Shangri La Plateau is one of the most beautiful places in all of China and to the keen plantsman it is nothing short of paradise. The most fascinating time to visit is in autumn when early frosts turn extensive colonies of *Euphorbia nematocypha* into a fiery red sea. During our visit the plateau looked more like a scene from the surface of Mars than a Tibetan plain. Even the surrounding hills were painted red by this highland spurge. Growing with the spurge was *Iris bulleyana*, a blue flowered species commemorating A. K. Bulley.

It was in the autumn of 1904 (on his first expedition for Bulley) that George Forrest first visited this plateau. On the same visit he discovered the beautiful little gentian relative, *Comastoma traillianum*, named in honour of his fiancée, Clementina Traill, who worked in the herbarium of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Edinburgh. *Ptercephalus hookeri* was also very common there and carried globular heads of white flowers. It is native to the Himalaya and China and was discovered in Sikkim by its namesake, Sir Joseph Hooker.

While in the region we visited China's newest botanic gardens, the Shangri La Alpine Botanical Gardens. Located on the edge of Napa Hai Lake at 3,200m, the gardens and reserve cover 2,200 ha and were opened to the public in July 2005. Many of the botanical and horticultural staff based there had been transferred from Kunming Botanical Gardens and we met some of these while staying in Shangri La.

The garden's entrance occupies a beautiful location on a high, flat brow overlooking the shallow waters of the lake and the autumn colour was spectacular at the time of our visit. Most of the vegetation was wild and through this the garden staff had planted many rarities they had gathered from the surrounding mountains and bulked up in their own nursery. Occasional trees of *Picea likiangensis* var. *linzhiensis*, *Picea brachytyla* var. *complanata* and *Larix potaninii* dotted the plains. Two other trees also stood out for particular attention, the Yunnan cotton wood, *Populus yunnanensis* and *Crataegus chungtiensis*, a small thorn. *Populus yunnanensis* had taken on an autumn hue of butter-yellow and *Crataegus chungtiensis* was heavily laden in fruit. This latter was first cultivated outside of China at Birr Castle in Co Offaly. The 6th Earl of Rosse raised plants in his garden from seeds collected in this region by the famous Chinese botanist, Professor T. T. Yü.

Tiny alpine abounded within the reserve, *Euphorbia stracheyi*, a minute spurge that is native to the Himalaya and western China formed prostrate spreading mats and had taken on autumnal amber shades. *Delphinium thibeticum* was at its best, its dark-blue flowers contrasting beautifully with the very abundant *Spenceria ramala*, a perennial to about 20cm tall, bearing spikes of yellow potentilla-like flowers. *Lilium brownii* carried a few out of season flowers and at its feet were the decaying remains of *Cypripedium*



yunnanensis and *Cypripedium tibeticum* which must have made a beautiful picture earlier that year.

From Shangri La our group continued on to Tiger Leaping Gorge, reputedly the world's deepest gorge; the Yangtze River is confined to an extremely narrow channel at this point and drops 210m in the space of just 17 kilometres. Tiger Leaping Gorge is an impressive, almost frightening spectacle. We made our way down a long flight of steps to the riverbank, where the Yangtze races by at a terrifying pace and the deafening roar of its violent currents echo against the canyon walls. Like the famous Three Gorges in Central China, plans are afoot to dam this gorge to provide hydroelectricity.



The Yangtze passing through its first major obstacle, Tiger Leaping Gorge.

Lijiang is the most beautiful and largest remaining ancient town in China, left virtually unchanged for 750 years. Founded in 1253 when Kublai Khan and his Mongol troops invaded the region, Lijiang is home to about 25,000 Naxi people. The city, with its narrow cobblestone laneways, gushing canals, bridges and wooden houses is a designated UNESCO World Heritage Site and is becoming more and more popular with western tourists.

The Naxi are one of Yunnan's most colourful ethnic groups. This group has its own written language and is the only hieroglyphic language still in use. Women take the leading role in Naxi society, taking control of the family economy and inheritance continues to pass to the youngest daughter in the family rather than to the eldest son.



Naxi society cannot be called a true matriarchy however, since local rulers are always men.

The Austrian-American plant hunter and anthropologist, Joseph Rock (1884-1962) studied the Naxi people, recording their rituals, learning their language, even translating their pictographic script. One of the highlights during our travels was to visit the house in which Rock once lived in the village of Nguluko (Snow Pine Village) to the north of Lijiang. George Forrest also lived in this tiny village in 1913 while exploring nearby Jade Dragon Snow Mountain. In the spring of 1914 the famous Austrian botanist Freiherr Heinrich von Handel-Mazzetti (1882-1940) and his German colleague, Camillo Karl Schneider (1876-1951) met Forrest in Lijiang and Handel-Mazzetti stayed in Rock's house in Nguluko for nine days.

Rock was employed to collect plants for the United States Department of Agriculture and later by the Arnold Arboretum. It was as the National Geographic Society's "man in China" that Rock gained world-wide fame and his little Naxi house in Nguluko was to become their Yunnan Expedition headquarters.

Rock's house in Snow Pine Village has been preserved much as he left it in August 1949. Many of his personal possessions are on display and one of the old villagers who took us around on the day of our visit had dentistry work carried out when he was a boy using equipment once owned by Joseph Rock.



The old Naxi style house in which the famous American plant hunter, Joseph Rock, once lived.



Rock's house lies on the lower slopes of Jade Dragon Snow Mountain (5,596m), a towering mass that is home to the most southerly glaciers in the Northern Hemisphere. We took a cable car up the mountain over great forests of *Larix potaninii*, *Tsuga dumosa* and *Picea likiangensis* (which grew with scattered plants of *Paeonia delavayi*). Our ascent took us to a chilly 4,680m and as we tracked our way through snow and ice, temperatures were in marked contrast to the sweltering tropical rainforest on the Laos border where we had so recently trekked. There were many colourful alpiners on the lunar-like screes, the tiniest of which was *Silene nigrescens* ssp. *latifolia*, a tiny mat forming species carrying grey, lantern-like flowers striped purple-brown along their length. With it grew the tiny *Primula amethystina* var. *brevifolia*, *Meconopsis horridula* var. *racemosa*, the blue flowered *Dracocephalum bullatum* and a tiny edelweiss, *Leontopodium stracheyi*.

The sub-alpine plains near the base of the mountain carried an even more impressive array of diminutive beauties that all combined to create colourful meadows of every imaginable hue. I think my favourite plant here had to be *Dracocephalum forrestii*, a classy perennial to 20 cm tall carrying spike-like racemes of blue flowers. Blue seemed to be the dominant shade across these alpine pastures, *Gentianopsis grandis* and *Gentiana primuliflora* both grew by hundreds of thousands amongst plants of *Silene delavayi*, *Anaphalis nepalensis* and *Onosma confertum*.

From the colourful alpine meadows of Lijiang we returned to Kunming where we had dinner that evening with an English expedition due to travel to Boaxing in Sichuan – Père David country! The party was being led by the well-known botanist Martyn Rix who trained at Trinity College, Dublin, and included the Irish tree enthusiast, Thomas Pakenham. It really is a very small world!

From the wilds of Yunnan our party continued on its way to Hong Kong, staying for part of the time on Lantau Island, the largest island in the Hong Kong region. Lantau lies in the tropics and has an interesting flora and spectacular scenery. Its narrow back roads and winding coastline remind me of parts of my native Co Wicklow and it is hard to think this peaceful place is only half an hour by fast ferry to Hong Kong and Kowloon. I was delighted to finally encounter *Camellia crapnelliana* in its native habitat near Lantau Peak. The bark of that species is almost exactly like the cinnamon-coloured bark of *Luma apiculata*; the white flowers are 15 cm across and the fruits weigh up to one pound.

Near our hotel, the Hong Kong orchid tree, *Bauhinia x blakeana*, sported a spectacular display of exotic purple flowers. Designated the city flower of Hong Kong in 1965, this hybrid commemorates Sir Henry Blake (a former governor of Hong Kong) from Limerick and his wife, Lady Edith Blake, a native of Clonmel, Co Tipperary. Hong Kong was as busy as ever; the *Rainbow Warrior*, Greenpeace's flagship was docked in Victoria Harbour and an avenue of *Hibiscus tiliaceus* was in full flower by the ferry point. Strolling our way up Hennessy Road and Connaught Street we soon reached Hong Kong Botanic Gardens and so, in a garden surrounded by skyscrapers we concluded our journey in China.



IGPS Memories by Carmel Duignan

Sometime in the mid 1980s...the queue for the IGPS Plant Sale stretched right down the entrance avenue of Kilruddery House in Bray, Co. Wicklow. A sign directed IGPS members to come to the top of the line. I was so envious of those who had this privilege that I immediately joined up and have kept my membership ever since. Ironically, the committee decided the very next year to abolish this concession to members! My outstanding memory of that plant sale was buying a plant of *Hebe* 'Headfortii' from the late David Shackleton who, with Helen Dillon, presided over the Rare Plant Section. With that special brashness that is born of ignorance, (I had no idea of his great eminence in the world of plants) I consulted with him on the fate of my petunias. I couldn't understand why my plants had to be replaced each year! The great man was very kind to me!

Many of my good memories are plant related and, indeed, I have acquired many outstanding specimens through my IGPS membership. The above-mentioned *Hebe* 'Headfortii' is an Irish cultivar that arose in Headfort House in Co. Meath. It is a fairly large growing shrub whose small blue flowers are carried throughout the year. In 1992, when I was a member of the committee, I was involved in the Silver-Gilt winning exhibit at the Chelsea Flower Show. One of the plants on the stand was a beautiful New Zealander called *Plagianthus betulinus* (now known as *Plagianthus regius*). The plant had been donated by that great plantsman Dr Neil Murray and was to be sold off at the end of the show to boost (the always precarious) finances of the Society. I couldn't let it go; I paid the UK£40.00 price and have been complaining ever since of not receiving a staff discount! However, the plant graces my garden with its lacy, birch-like leaves, tiny spring flowers and its very elegant growth habit.

Rosa 'Souvenir de St Anne's' was bought at one of the early plant sales. This a fine rose that arose as a sport on *Rosa* 'Souvenir de la Malmaison' in Lady Ardilaun's garden – now St. Anne's Park in Raheny, Dublin. It does suffer a bit from black spot but the seven months of flowers more than compensate for this small trouble. It is a mystery to me why no commercial rose grower has taken up the propagation and distribution of this plant. On the same theme, I think it is a pity that *Deutzia purpurascens* 'Alpine Magician' (named in honour of Reginald Farrer) is not available commercially. It has pride of place in my spring border with its myriads of tiny, purple-centred flowers. In the early 1990s, when he was Taxonomist at the National Botanic Gardens in Glasnevin, Charles Nelson discovered this plant growing in one of the shrubberies. He was able to trace its origin back to seed sent by Reginald Farrer from Burma in the early 1900s.

I have mentioned just a few of the plants that came my way via the Irish Garden Plant Society. There is always something special to be found at the annual plant sales. They are essential for raising the finance needed to run the Society and they are still treasure troves of good plants waiting to find good homes.



Some Reminiscences from a Former Secretary and Chairman by Mary Forrest

Over the years many garden owners have opened their gates to the society. Visits have taken place to gardens from Donegal to Kerry, Waterford to Galway via Limerick and Offaly, through the northern counties to Antrim and Derry. I haven't checked the newsletter reports, but visits must have taken place in each county, with repeat visits to gardens such as Malahide Castle and Glenveagh, Co. Donegal.

Lectures on all kinds of horticultural topics also come to mind: orchids in an Amazonian rain forest; the flora of Florida gave such a different image of the State than that seen in tourist brochures; Hostas in such a wide variety and rhododendrons in western China.

Garden projects: 'All hands on deck' as members helped to plant trees and shrubs with an Irish connection in An Taisce headquarters, Back Street, near Christchurch. Other garden projects included a garden in a palliative care centre in Eccles Street, Dublin and work on the Phormium collection at Fota, Cork. The longest running garden project, at the Lismacluskey rectory at the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum, Cultra, has particular memories for me. Standing in for the then Chair of the Society, Mary Davies, I had to plant a ceremonial tree, a *Fraxinus excelsior* 'Pendula'. The ceremonial spade used to turn the sod of the manor house had not been used for years and the wooden handle broke in the hand as I planted the tree.

Looking for plants, persuading people to donate, lifting and dividing plants myself have all been part of the excitement of plant sales. As I write I have several daffodils in flower in the garden, purchases of last year's sale in Dublin. But the most memorable sale was red-flowered begonias selling like proverbial 'hot cakes'. Would there be any more of those red flowered plants? The Plant Science Dept in UCC had a plentiful supply!

Publications have always been a feature of the Society, with the newsletter being published on a quarterly basis for 25 years. While the format of lectures and garden visits are not much changed, publishing has changed greatly. Computers have replaced typewriters, scanned images have replaced photocopied images and colour is commonplace. Yet whatever the format the newsletter has captured the activities of the Society for all to read. Having had a hand in the production of the newsletter and Moorea in the early days and more recently as editor of Moorea, it is always a joy to see the finished product.

Chelsea Flower Show in 1990 was a highlight for me. Collecting plants here in Ireland, obtaining the necessary paperwork from the Dept of Agriculture, packing the plants and then the lorry arriving in Chelsea driven by David Jeffrey. Ricky Shannon kept us supplied with tea and coffee. Valerie Finnis arrived at an opportune moment and accepted tea. Ricky, purloining a seat from University of Liverpool as they set up their own stand about Ness Gardens, proceeded to reminisce about Irish gardens

No reminiscences would be complete without mention of friendship, knowledge and insight, camaraderie and conviviality, enjoyment of the many activities of the Society over the last 25 years.



Helleborus lividus by Anne James

At this time of year the *Helleborus* take centre stage with their lovely glossy foliage and various coloured flowers from white through pink to dark purple and in between the many differing spotted forms. But at the Talbot Botanic Gardens it is *Helleborus lividus*, which excites the most attention. In 1984 the IGPS held their annual AGM in Dublin on the Friday night followed by a lecture given by Dr Ferguson of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew with outings on the following day to Beech Park and The Talbot Botanic Garden.

The Saturday outing was most successful, the weather being very kind and everyone enjoying the wealth of plants to be seen in both gardens. However, it was the *Helleborus lividus* in the small Dutch House, which caused the most excitement. I remember several members stopping in the sunken Dutch House and a great discussion taking place on its nomenclature. It had already been seen at Beech Park that morning and the discussion centred around which in fact was the true species as the leaves differed somewhat in the colouring and the marbling on the leaves. Eventually it was decided that Beech Park plant would get the honours, it was deemed to be the true species.

On the following Sunday Morning, I had the pleasure of escorting Dr. Ferguson around Malahide. Another very pleasant morning and my guest marvelled at the variety of species growing in the garden. When we reached the Dutch House I immediately sensed a feeling of excitement in my visitor. I turned and saw him staring at the *Helleborus lividus*. He was thrilled to see it, but I informed him that the consensus from the members on the previous day was that that the true species was in Beech Park. 'Oh, no!' he informed me. He had seen the true species growing in the wild in the Balearic Isles and this plant matched most closely those specimens. I duly offered him a seedling or two, which were most plentiful in the house. Hellebores can take up to two years to germinate, so we allow it to seed freely in the house and collect the seedlings in summer and pot up. He thanked me most profusely as he told me his wife had had a seedling but lost it and would be thrilled to have a replacement. Needless to say I was delighted that he had found at least one of his coveted plants to bring home.

On the following Monday morning I was recording this donation on the record cards and was truly amazed to discover that Dr Ferguson had been the original donor of the plant to Lord Milo Talbot in 1972. Dr Ferguson and his wife had collected the seed themselves in Majorca and had them germinated at Kew. Unfortunately Lord Talbot did not see the plant in flower at Malahide having died in 1973. In 1974 a seedling was passed to Mr. David Shackleton. The difference between the two plants was purely an accident of the environment. The Malahide plant growing within a cold glasshouse no doubt enjoyed an environment more akin to its natural habitat while the plant at Beech Park was growing outdoors under the vagaries of the Irish Climate.



Highlights of our Garden Year by Keith Lamb

As the years go by one comes to realise which plants do well in one's garden, multiplying on such a scale as to make an impact on the garden scene. I do not refer to individual plants which, though they may be special jewels, do not make a spread of colour at flowering time. The snowdrop season is the earliest example with us making such a brave show at an inhospitable time of year. Winter aconites can make a show also. We prefer the cultivar 'Guinea Gold' which, unlike the ordinary type, does not seed about but forms clumps which can be divided to make a patch in a controlled manner.

The various wood anemones make carpets of blue, white and yellow under the beech trees, where they are closely followed by the spring flowering *Cyclamen repandum*. With us, this species seeds itself around more freely than the others, and delights with its delicious scent.

The next major event in our garden calendar is the flowering of the dog's tooth violet species and hybrids. The two brightest we have are *Erythronium* 'White Beauty' and the yellow, *E. tuolumnense*. These thrive at the edge of the beech wood where they form good clumps readily divided as the flowers fade.

C. tommasinianus, which seeds itself freely, makes a fine show of lilac flowers in the thin grass during February. Other crocuses tend to disappear, perhaps due to the ravages of mice. Of hellebores we have some valued hybrids, but not in sufficient numbers to make a colourful display.

Now comes an exciting period in our garden – trillium time. One, *T. chloropetalum*, bears narrow upright petals in shades of red, rose colour or white over trefoil leaves. These leaves add interest by being more or less mottled with deeper colours. From a few specimens, this trillium has seeded itself freely under the beeches and even into the limestone gravel. This has taken a long time as the seedlings grow slowly. We wish *T. grandiflorum*, that splendid white one, was as prolific.

We are not strong on herbaceous borders, so as summer wanes we look for the first flowers of the autumn, *Cyclamen hederifolium*. These come in increasing numbers with the autumn rains, followed by the leaves, fascinating in the way the silver markings vary from plant to plant.

A shrub that must be mentioned is *Daphne bholua* 'Gurka', completely deciduous so the flowers show off well, scenting the air during Christmas and the New Year, whatever the weather.

So runs our garden year. With such a calendar there is always something to look forward to.



Botanic Gardens, A Postscript by Dermot Kehoe

Dr. Peter Wyse-Jackson's recent talk on Botanic Gardens around the world brought to mind a rewarding pass-time of mine. As philatelists collect stamps and hellenophiles collect Greek Islands I collect botanic gardens. From Reykjavic to Palermo and from San Francisco to Krakow I've collected them, enjoying the visits and learning from them over many years. When other travellers leaf through their guide books looking for art galleries or golf courses I'm at the "B" part of the index. As a way of increasing my knowledge of plants I found it easier than climbing mountains and more enjoyable than reading books. I have no particular favourite. They all have something to offer.

Every botanic garden is a reflection of its position, its ownership and its history. Some have seen better days and others are obviously still on an upwards curve. All have something unique to offer. While San Francisco has most snakes, Pisa has the loudest frogs. Berlin has the biggest rock garden while Kew has the most architectural and Vienna the most charming. One can only admire how Reykjavic defies its climate. If you want to see Mexican cacti it's much easier to visit Munich than cross the Atlantic and risk Montezuma's revenge. Montreal has a staggering collection of ancient and highly distorted bonsai. It's much nearer than China.

Botanic gardens reek with history and surprises. Lisbon shows its imperial past with exotic trees from its long lost colonies. I visited Leiden because of its age (1587) and association with Clusius and found it had an important collection of *Passiflora*. Even older is Padua (1545) and it houses the most spectacular *Passiflora quadrangularis*. Nearby I sat in the shade of the actual *Chaemorops humilis* where Goethe sat in 1786 and was inspired to write his seminal work on plant structure. It was a major surprise when I entered a whole green house in Munich devoted to Stags Horn Ferns; quite spooky in fact!

There is naturally a practical spin off. Many of the plants I first saw in botanic gardens induced me to search them out for my own plot. I never visit without a notebook. A trawl through the order beds at Glasnevin is better than hours reading about the relationship between plant families, genera and species. In Kopenhagen I noted *Seseli gummiferum* and had it growing in my garden long before Penelope Hobhouse found it and pronounced it "plant of the year". I was a few years searching for seed of *Amicia zygomeris* after I first saw it growing under a wall at Kew. The now defunct Alpine house there revealed *Incarvillea arguta* and I have been growing it now for a number of years. My "want" list from Kew extends over many years and notebooks. Most are probably too rare and will remain forever as "wants". In the Mediterranean house in Berlin I saw many new species of the genus *Echium*. It's a never-ending story. This year I've two new gardens in my sights, Dresden and Tallinn. Who knows what they may yield?



Seed Distribution 2006 by Stephen Butler

I have to write this in late February or the Editor gets stressed out, so this is a very short note indeed!

With 397 seeds listed we increased the allotment per request to 20. This has meant a little more work for me, but obviously more seeds going out. The envelopes this year gave me a headache sourcing them, and when I did get some they were larger than usual, and that gave me a headache getting them into the return envelopes! Then I found out (too late for some I fear) that a small number of the envelopes had a faulty corner that leaked small seed – anyone getting a taped up corner will now know why!

It has been awfully kind of people not to point out the errors in the list – why for instance *Galtonia* and *Orthrosanthus* appeared as bulbs and herbaceous. Why did *Alcea* appear as annual and herbaceous (actually they can be both can't they? – perhaps I just couldn't decide when compiling the list). Of course the plan was to recruit anyone who spotted the deliberate errors as helpers next year. Oh well, worth a try...

Seed requests out so far are 127. Still a month to go though, so we might be a little bit higher than last years 142, but we will I think still be far short of 2002's 196 requests. No doubt the postal strike in the north did us no favours, and I only hope my postings get there ok, and in reasonable time.

Thanks for all the favourable comments on the list layout, any suggestions warmly welcomed still. Full number crunching of favourite requests in the next newsletter, though there is noticeable interest in the plants highlighted in previous articles, *Libertia* especially!

Happy Sowing!

Editor's Note:

I think the Editor is entitled to make a comment following Stephen's introduction – getting stressed out in February! I was still asleep after Christmas in February, Winter hibernation and all that. Now getting reluctant writers to contribute...that can be stressful. (but well worth it)

*Nonetheless, I did get in my request for my seed allocation and duly sowed them all. And the winner was...*Erodium pelargonifolium*, first to germinate and a lovely plant, one which I had a number of years ago and 'lost'. It died on me! Ungrateful thing!*

Many thanks to Stephen for all his hard work and special thanks to all who send their seeds to Stephen. Each arrival of new seed is exciting and adds great enjoyment to gardening. Many thanks.



Regional Reports

Leinster Reports

The Planet as a Garden Patch" by Noeleen Smyth

Noeleen Smyth, a long-time member of the I.G.P.S. now studying for her doctorate in T.C.D., spoke to the Leinster Group on January 26th about a very interesting experiment she conducted on Pitcairn Island. Pitcairn Island was chosen as her case study because it is a small oceanic island with natural vegetation and could serve as a model habitat. Pitcairn flora consists of only 82 species of which 13 are endemic. Situated in the Pacific Ocean 5,000 km from New Zealand and 3,000 km from Easter Island, its area is 47 sq. km and its highest point is 380 m. The climate is subtropical. There is no harbour and people must get on or off the island by longboat. Fishing is very important, animals are not farmed. The main crops are Sugar Cane and Papaya.

An inventory of plant species was taken in 1998. The greatest threat to native and endemic species came from an imported plant *Syzygium jambos*, Roseapple, which was driving out the native vegetation so that native plants were now only growing around the edge of the island. Enter Noeleen with her 3-point plan in 2003. Her aims were to grow and increase the numbers of threatened plants, to devise methods of dealing with the Roseapple and to raise awareness of the status and vulnerability of Pitcairn's flora.

Syzygium jambos (Myrtaceae), native to S. E. Asia, was imported as a source of fuel and later superseded by gas cookers. It is of no use in building or for carving and thrives on steep slopes where chainsaws could not be used. So, poisoning had to be resorted to. "Frilling and Injecting" describes the method whereby bark was removed from the base of the tree and a combination of Glyphosate and Dicloram were injected into it, delivering 99% mortality.

A small nursery was established in 2003, built and run by the islanders. Cuttings from native plants rooted in 6 weeks. Some of the plants grown were *Macrothelypteris torresiana* (Old Man Fern), *Abutilon pitcairnense*, of which only one plant existed in 2003 and this was lost in a landslide in 2004. *Coprosma benefica* had only 11 plants remaining but it grows easily from seed. *Angiopteris chaulidonta* had only 3 populations left but it is easy to propagate. *Trichomanes enlicheranium*, in the same genus as our Killarney Fern, and *Asplenium nidus* (Bird's Nest Fern) which will grow only in native forest were also propagated in the nursery. *Pandanus tectorius* (Screw Pine), used for thatching, is easily grown from seed. *Meterosideros collinus* (Rata) was in severe decline was difficult to grow from cuttings or seed.

About 2,000 plants were produced in the nursery and 1,400 were planted out in 2004 and 2005 on hillsides cleared of Roseapple. Traps were set up to determine what seeds were falling annually. Weeding and maintenance of the planted areas must continue- *Lantana camara* is a troublesome weed. Native seeds were scattered with some success. Cruise ships call once or twice per annum and an attempt is being made to encourage ecotourism.

Noeleen's conclusions are that we can garden successfully even in extreme conditions if we become seed dispersers ourselves and we must broaden the use of horticultural and gardening techniques for the benefit of our planet.

Mary Bradshaw.



"Propagation" by Christopher Heavey.

Truthfully, a day's seminar was packed into 2 hours on February 16th by Christopher Heavey. He imparted so much information and illustrated it so well with practical examples that it would need an entire newsletter to do it justice. So, I will just choose some of his points, if I may, to summarise this lecture.

Prepare to take *Pittosporum* cuttings by pruning the previous season and always use new material.

Mahonia cuttings: remove all flowers and seeds and take a leaf- bud cutting leaving the bud exposed above the compost.

For *Passiflora* and *Camellia* leaf- bud cuttings likewise, do not bury the bud.

Evergreen cuttings should be taken in winter with basal heat of 18-20deg C. Deciduous cuttings should be taken in July/August. All Conifers should be propagated in winter without heat.

Would all ericaceous plants except heathers.

Composts must be free-draining but moist. Coir is recommended. 2 parts medium peat and 1 part horticultural sand will suit 80% of all cuttings.

Garrya elliptica likes 50/50 propagation bark and peat. It hates water.

Christopher recommends we use 9 cuttings per pot, a clay pot if available.

Dendromedum rigida (closely related to *Romneya coulteri*) is easy to root but difficult to establish. It hates disturbance. Grow it in sand.

Overwinter cuttings of *Azara microphylla* and *Cornus controversa* in the house.

Daphne bholua is difficult from cuttings in general but will root easily from root cuttings taken immediately after Xmas, no later.

Emmenopterys henryi is usually grown from seed but it is possible to root cuttings in 75% sand/ 25% peat in late summer/early autumn.

Captan is the recommended fungicide. Ceradix 3 is the most versatile rooting hormone, applied directly to the base of the cutting. Fungicides and rooting hormone are essential commercially but not for the private grower.

Propagate *Abutilon* cuttings in May-June, still using basal heat.

Propagate Tree Peonies from seed.

Betula jacquemontii 'Trinity College' should be grafted close to the root.

Aralia elata may only be "budded" on one day of the year according to the Dutch- March 19th.

Plants can fail due to over watering and also if planted in too big a pot. Plants must be weaned.

Do not ever lose heart because, PLANTS WANT TO GROW!

Mary Bradshaw.

"Trees and Landscape of the Phoenix Park."

John Mc Cullen, Chief Park Superintendent, spoke to a joint R.H.S.I. and I.G.P.S. group on March 23rd at the National Botanic Gardens.

The Phoenix Park was so called because it was founded as a Royal Park after the restoration of the British monarchy in 1662 by King Charles 2nd and the Duke of Ormonde. In 1680 the Royal Hospital was built on its grounds. 1745 saw it being opened to the public by Lord Chesterfield and in 1860 it was taken over by the Office of Public Works which still manages it today.

Various maps and artists' impressions were used by John to show the park's development. A map of 1650 showed mostly arable and pasture with 7-8 acres of scrubland. Kyle's Quarry had explosives used to make a nearby road safer in the 1860's. Decimus Burton used Gorse and Broom as ecological planting in what is nowadays called the Furry Glen. The importance of grazing as a source of income is very evident in the early years. Older maps show only a mere



5% of the landscape given to tree planting.

Decimus Burton was the great tree planter in the 1840's. He understood the importance of mixing tree species. The dominant species were Oak, Ash, Lime, Beech, Chestnut, Sycamore, Hawthorn and lots of Elm. By now the park consisted of 1,760 acres, 30% planted with formal tree groups and woodland. Some exceptionally old Lime trees of c.200 years still grow in the park.

Hawthorn was a very popular tree and John thinks this might have been to give shelter to the Royal Deer?

In 1903, a storm destroyed 3,000 trees. Lord Ardilaun donated *Quercus ilex*, the Evergreen Oak to replace them. These have been very successful. Some leaves fall continuously from them especially in June. There are quite a few colour variations. Trees do have their share of pests of course from Honey Fungus to damage from deer antlers and grey squirrels and have to be protected immediately after planting until they reach the age of 35. Tree-planting is ongoing and at the moment there is a project to plant 20,000 individual "Millenium" trees.

The park attracts a great number of visitors and a recent survey showed that what people appreciate most about the park is its peace and tranquillity. The challenge is to maintain these aspects of the park with 27,000 cars per day passing through and 2,000 apartments on the nearby racecourse. Plans are ongoing to close some more roads, eliminate commuter parking, slow down traffic, and develop the Magazine Fort as an Arts Centre. I get the impression that, in the capable hands of John Mc Cullen, the Phoenix Park has a bright and secure future and no worries about having to rise from its own ashes ever again.

Mary Bradshaw.

Northern Reports

The Gardens of Islam: Mirrors of Paradise by Penelope Hobhouse,

The Irish Garden Plant Society New Year Lecture in association with the Ulster Museum and the RHS.

This annual lecture has always been a popular event in the Northern Ireland horticultural calendar and this year proved to be no exception, with a speaker well known to garden historians, designers and the general gardening public.

Explaining how she developed a love affair with the gardens of the Middle East during research into one of her earlier books, Ms Hobhouse covered several centuries of gardening, taking us from the ancient gardens of Cyrus the Great (6th century BC), through the paradise gardens of Persia to the Mughal Empire in Northern India, across to Western Europe and the Moorish gardens of Spain and touching on the 20th century Mughal inspired gardens of New Delhi by Sir Edwin Lutyns.

Her talk explored the development of Persian gardens based on the geography and climate of the region and from her pictures we started to appreciate just how great a contrast there is between the cultivated land and the dry surroundings. With illustrations of plans, pictures of 'garden carpets' and richly coloured painted miniatures, Penny showed us many examples of gardens from the simple enclosed quadripartite arrangement (chahar bagh) of water channels intersecting at right angles in a square basin flanked by sunken flower beds to more elaborate palace gardens based on a repetition of this same basic pattern. She traced the evolution of the garden as an earthly retreat from natural elements to the elaborate pleasure gardens of Royal Persia and then to a space invested with religious meaning and symbolism where water rills came to symbolise



the four rivers of life – of water, milk, wine and honey and the garden itself became an embodiment of the celestial paradise of the Quran.

Moving through time we were guided through the gardens of Timur (Tamurlane) at Samarkand, the stunning pavilions of Shah Abbas in Istafan and the Mughal gardens of Emperor Babur and his descendents. We saw how the narrow rills of the early Persian garden gradually developed into wider canals so that the architecture of the pavilions could be reflected in their entirety in the waters – perhaps one of the most spectacular being the Taj Mahal.

The talk was well illustrated throughout with slides of plans, engravings and paintings and some stunning photographs (many by Jerry Harpur) of extant gardens such as Bagh-e Shahzadeh where an avenue of dark trees frames the series of rectangular pools stepping down a steep slope to the summer pavilion against a backdrop of barren buff coloured mountains. Another image of a single figure silhouetted against the pale stone of a mosque courtyard garden emphasised the serenity of many of these spaces. More of these images would have been preferred to the many plans shown.

This writer would also have liked to have seen the spiritual and symbolic dimensions of Islamic garden design explored in more detail; for example, what distinguishes an Islamic garden from other contemplative gardens – is it just the style of architecture or the quadripartite layout? At a time when Islam is under so much scrutiny, it would have been interesting to hear how its traditions and teachings have informed the design and creation of such places of beauty as the Mausoleum of Ne'matollah Vali, the Chehel Sotun (the Pavilion of the Forty Pillars) or the Taj Mahal.

That minor criticism apart, those who attended this lecture were treated to an interesting and well researched exploration of many beautiful gardens in a part of the world where few of us venture. We can now sit back and wait for the next volume of Ms Hobhouse's writings on the great Mughal gardens of India.

Patrick Quigley.

'The Walled Gardens of Fingal' by Anne James

7 December 2005

The Malone House Lecture, joint with Belfast Parks,

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 are featured, with peaches on the walls. 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 including *Rosa* 'Alister Stella Grey' together with David Austin roses for their scent and repeat flowering.

Ann 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 of box-edged beds connected 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 is a very productive vegetable garden. A collection of *Potentilla*, some 250 varieties, is at its best in August. A beautiful old glasshouse was acquired and now sits restored to splendour in the rose garden at Ardgillan.

Ann 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. Areas such as the chicken yard, brought back from wilderness since Ann's appointment, are now planted with a wide variety of tender plants. We were shown slides of a wide range of the southern hemisphere species that the gardens are famed for including *Azara*, *Nothofagus* and *Embothrium*. Plants were shown sited to perfection, like the *Parahebe catarractae* tumbling over a rock. *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* flourishes here along with *Agave ferox* with *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 in order to reach its flowering height.

An interesting recent addition is the grass parterre, the design for which was based on the panelling in Malahide Castle. Ann 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.

We were shown a detail of one of the houses with curved glass which forces run-off into a gutter. A groove inside conducts water clear of the wall-plate, a good design detail, contributing to the longevity of the house, built in 1901 and still going strong with no rotting.

Other exotics brought to our notice include *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, together with hints on growing them, far too many to mention here.

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

Barbara Pilcher

The Use of Superior Perennials and Grasses in the Contemporary Garden

by Jimi Blake, Hunting Brook, Blessington, Co. Wicklow.

14 March 2006.

The Clotworthy Spring Lecture at Clotworthy Arts Centre, Antrim, in conjunction with Antrim Borough Council

Jimi was trained at the National Botanical Garden, and was in charge of the renovation and development of Airfield House Garden, Dundrum, Co. Dublin. He is currently developing Hunting Brook which is at 900 feet in the beautiful Wicklow Mountains about 5 miles NW from the town of Blessington and runs to about five acres with both ornamental gardens and woodland walks while Jimi's sister, June Blake, runs a nursery from her garden nearby.



Through a series of colourful slides, Jimi showed how modern herbaceous borders could feature a great variety of grasses and use combinations of foliage, colour, height and texture to achieve some splendid effects. Of course, it helps to be able to plant hundreds of specimens at once!

Much use was made of giant *Miscanthus sacchariflorus* which gives a 10 foot high shelter and green background. In some places this was mixed with *Verbena bonariensis*, *Stipa gigantea*, *Geranium 'Patricia'*, and *Achillea 'The Beacon'*.

Favourites amongst the ornamental grasses were *Calamagrostis varia*, (yellow firework effect), *C. emodensis* (silky seed heads, brought back from a trip to Turkey), *Miscanthus 'Cascade'* (fuzzy hair), *Stipa tenuissima* (pony tail) and the taller *S. elegantissima*. Other interesting grasses included *Calamagrostis Karl Foster* (golden wheatsheaf) and *Miscanthus nepaulensis* (silky, golden, to 4 feet). There was a great variety in height, colour, conformation and 'bounce' in the selection on display. Some grasses can be used to conceal or enhance features. A planting of *Stipa gigantea* behind a stone wall was particularly impressive as was a photograph of the Grass Tunnel at Knoll, Dorset. Jimi recommends that grasses be cut back when they collapse at the end of the season, but not moved or split until spring growth begins, when tiny offshoots may be potted off into humid conditions.

Traditional border plants such as *Alliums*, *Cecily*, *Knautia arvensis*, *Echinacea purpurea* and *E. White Swan*, provide seasonal colour, and will persist for winter frost and fog interest whilst others like *Kniphofia* and *Geranium* will flower again if stems are cut back. Tulips, especially 'Ballerina' and 'Black Horse', are used for spring colour. Jimi uses *Aralia* and *Paulownia tomentosa* to produce huge leaves for foliage effect by pruning single stems to 2 feet. A magnificent specimen of *Heracleum sovnovskii* drew gasps of admiration but of course, as with its more common cousin, care has to be taken to prevent it from seeding around.

At Jimi's mother's home, Tinode House, a rather boring lawn, bordering the driveway, was transformed by mulching with 8 inches of farmyard muck topped with an equal layer of good topsoil. This saved the backbreaking job of lifting the turf or alternatively of waiting for weed killer to take effect. A mixture of grasses and perennials was closely planted into this giving an immediately mature effect in the first summer season

Jimi also showed work in progress at Lisadell House, where he is involved in a renovation scheme covering 2 acres of rockery, a 2 acre ornamental kitchen garden, and a walled garden right on the sea shore. This is a project which will be well worth following.

Jimi's talk will have stimulated many of us to 'have a go' at 'prairie' planting in our much more modest plots. The range of plants depicted and discussed, and the enthusiasm and ability shown by the presenter, made the evening a pleasure.

Agnes Peacocke

Munster Reports

Paradise in Ireland – Houses & Gardens open to the Public

A talk by Richard Wood

January 20th 2006

Richard Wood was a most competent, relaxed and entertaining lecturer. He brought 250 slides to show us many of the houses and some of their interiors open to the public though still in private hands, as well as those belonging to the National Trust in Northern Ireland and a few belonging



to various public bodies in the south. The lecturer's interest was obviously in architecture and the history of buildings; much of his information was up to date but sadly some places are no longer open. Many questions were asked on the financial future and government support but little thought seemed to have been given to the impracticality of keeping these houses as homes in modern conditions or of using them as museums in relatively isolated areas.

Oddly the slides of gardens were far more imaginative – they varied from historical Lismore and Kiltruddery to the rhododendrons on the edge of the edge of the Dublin Mountains at Fernhill, autumn mists and colours beside the River Vartry at Mount Usher and, most memorably of all, a couple of delightful views of gunnera and the herbaceous borders at Annesgrove glistening in the sun after rain. Many felt it a well-spent winter evening away from the practicalities of gardening.

Elizabeth Corban-Lucas

Looking Ahead

Leinster

Saturday 20th May 2- 5 pm: We are fortunate to have two good gardens in close proximity to each other in the Dublin 14 area. Both include an interesting collection of trees, shrubs, woodland, alpine, and herbaceous plants. There is no admission charge to either garden.

The garden of Billy Moore is at **32 Braemor Park, Churchtown**. Please park on the Orwell Road a few minutes walk away as there may be limited parking in a lay-by opposite the house.

The garden of Noelle Anne Curran is at **14 Woodside Drive Rathfarnham**. From the Braemor Road take a left turn at traffic lights just before the Ely Gate (the Arch). It is a steep hill. There will be parking on the road and in the cul de sac adjoining.

Sunday 25th June 2 – 6 pm **Plant Sale:** Assumpta Broomfield will have a large selection of plants with Irish connections for sale at The Dillon Garden, 45 Sandford Road, Ranelagh, Dublin

Saturday 15th July 2 – 5pm **Abingdon, Shanganagh Road, Shankill** Dublin 18 Abingdon is the mature and colourful garden of Philip and Brigid Jacob with shrubs, trees and herbaceous plants together with fruit and vegetables. There is no admission charge. **Directions:** From Dublin on N11 soon after Silver Tassie Pub and 300 yards before Loughlinstown roundabout and pedestrian bridge turn left onto Commons Road (easy to miss) and park well before the traffic lights. From Bray go through Shankill village take 2nd exit from roundabout, leave church on your left, continue past Texaco garage, immediately at next lights turn left onto Commons Road, and park. **Having parked on Commons Road, walk to lights, turn right up hill, 150 yards to Abingdon (NOT Abingdon Park).**

Munster

Saturday 13th May **Garden Visit to: Dunloe Castle, Beaufort, Killarney**

After our talk in December by Cormac Foley on the Heritage Gardens of Kerry, many were exposed, maybe for the first time, to the world-renowned but little explored gardens of Dunloe Castle. So with the many requests made at that meeting we have arranged a visit to Dunloe



Castle and Cormac Foley has kindly agreed to lead the group. Our programme for the day will be as follows:

12.00: Meet at Muckcross House and Gardens for whatever you fancy

13.00: Travel to Dunloe Castle

13.30: Meet our guide at Dunloe Castle for tour of Gardens

Unfortunately Dunloe Castle cannot provide refreshments as they are catering for a wedding.

Cost of Visit: 5 euro/person.

The North

April 22nd Garden visit: Mr Brian Mooney, Fox Lodge, 20 Leckpatrick Road, Ballymagorry, Strabane; 2pm. 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.

May 17th Garden visit: Dr & Mrs Stanley Hawkins, 177 Malone Road, Belfast; 6.30 for 7.00pm. A ½ acre garden with a marvellous collection of rhododendrons. Good collections of other shrubs & herbaceous plants, designed for ease of maintenance; pool and bog garden. Members £2.50, non-members £1.00 extra.

June 3rd -5th : AGM, Co Down area. Preview of gardens for the weekend below.

June 20th Garden visit: Glenarm Castle Walled Garden, Glenarm, Co Antrim; 6.15 for 6.30pm. Having just completed the first phase of an ambitious restoration programme under Nigel Marshall's guidance, with expansion of the existing herbaceous borders and shrub collections, the gardens have re-opened in 2005. Guided tour. Members £2.50, non-members £1.50 extra.

Annual General Meeting – Garden Notes from Patcick Quigley

As always for our AGM weekend we will have a range of nurseries and gardens to visit. Amongst those included are:

Ballvalloley House, Comber: Situated at the top of a steeply sloping site, with a beautiful view down through a select range of trees towards a small lake. The garden is extensive, with a rose garden, mature specimen trees such as *Magnolia wilsonii*, belts of rhododendrons and azaleas some charming pond side and bog garden planting and in the outer reaches, an old bluebell wood.

Sally Taylor, Saintfield, Co. Down This was an old well established, although slightly neglected garden when it was taken over by Sally. It is believed many of the plants may have come from Rowallane gardens originally – just a short distance away. Covering some 14 acres with a holly wood, generous herbaceous planting and an area left uncultivated where you can 'take a walk on the wild side'. Sally now runs an inter-faith spiritual retreat on the site and opens the garden occasionally for selected charities. The garden is devised as a 'Sacred Space' with a yew and hornbeam spiral and a labyrinth recently installed for meditation. Although there is much wonderful planting to admire, it is also a place where visitors should embrace the serenity and peace which can be found in a garden.



Barbara & Jonathan Pilcher, Lisdoonan Herbs, Saintfield Co. Down: Familiar to fellow members through her contributions to the Newsletter, Barbara runs a herb nursery at her home between Belfast and Saintfield. Both she and Jonathan are well known to gardeners around the country for the wide range of herbs and herbaceous perennials which they stock and which are often seen at the Rare Plant Fair and other specialist plant sales throughout Ireland. This will provide a chance not just to purchase a few more plants for your own garden, but also an opportunity to see them growing in the delightful one acre garden attached to the nursery. Run on a totally organic basis, the garden is divided into a series of different spaces, each with its own particular character, with demonstration beds of herbs, fruit and vegetables.

Susan Tindall, Timpany Nursery, Ballynahinch: Timpany Nursery, like the Pilcher's herb nursery, is well known to those who frequent the various garden fairs and specialist plant sales in Ireland. Susan specialises mainly in alpines and carries an extensive stock in the nursery. Less well known perhaps, is the beautiful garden attached to the nursery, maintained by both Susan and her husband Colin. Colin is the 'tree man' and in recent years has built up a remarkable arboretum with a well chosen selection of trees. Closer to the house are rock gardens, herbaceous borders, a cottage garden and a woodland garden. These were the first trees to be planted some 30 years ago and are sizable enough for underplanting of *Trilliums*, wood anemone, *Arisaema*, *epimediums* and a collection of hostas and ferns.

Robert Russell & Michael Connolly, Ballvstockart Road, Comber: This is an old style farmhouse garden covering approximately one & a quarter acres with lots of interesting nooks and crannies. It is still quite young and only opened to the public for the first time last year on a charity open day. No doubt, the response it got then will lead to further openings. A narrow herbaceous border flanks either side of the front path, in typical cottage style. Over to one side, there is extensive planting of a wide range of trees, shrubs and perennials in a relaxed and abundant style. Beyond this are a small pond and a wilder more naturalised area enlivened with old roses. The rose theme continues at the rear of the house with a further collection climbing up the house walls, along the fence and anywhere else that Robert can manage to squeeze them in.

Knox Gass, Redcot, Kings Road, Belfast: A larger than average town garden of some two and a half acres, this is a garden for the true plant lover. Knox is a stalwart worker for the National Trust Ulster Garden Scheme growing many unusual plants from seed each year for its plant sales. Inevitably many also appear in the garden which includes herbaceous borders, a grass border, a woodland garden and a wild-life area with lots of bog plants too. Trees are from the original Victorian planting, lending a great air of maturity to this fascinating garden.

Liz Andrews, Ballywilliam, Comber.

The IGPS Northern group visited this garden last summer and the response to it was so good that we felt it deserved a wider audience so are delighted to be able to include it in our AGM programme. Liz has created a charming garden which displays her passion for herbaceous plants set informally around an 18th century house. Ever modest she says that she tries to ensure that the flowers are taller than the weeds! Judge that yourself; to me, it's a lovely family garden with a warm welcome and an abundance of lovely old-fashioned plants.

This sounds like a very interesting programme of visits for the AGM weekend. Those who travelled to Londonderry some years back for an AGM will recall the excellent preparation and planning of the Northern Group which made that weekend such a great success and can look forward to a similar weekend this year. Ed.



Snippets

NEW MEMBERS WANTED:

A New Membership Form is included with this newsletter. Our numbers have fallen and we need existing members to encourage lapsed members to rejoin and to recruit new members if possible. This is one very positive way in which you can support the Society and its aims. Please try to encourage one person of your acquaintance to become a new member.

Major Plant Sale: A major Plant Sale is planned for the autumn. Funds are badly needed and this is the biggest fund-raiser each year. Members are asked to propagate their plants, especially Irish cultivars, for this event. Your Society Needs You!

New Appointment: Seamus O'Brien will be moving from the Botanic Gardens in Glasnevin at some stage over the next few months. He will be managing the arboretum at Kilmacurragh in Co. Wicklow. This is a dream come true for Seamus as Kilmacurragh is one of his favourite gardens. We wish him every happiness and success in his new position and look forward to reports from there for the newsletter.

West Cork Trail: Phemie Rose has written to remind members that the West Cork Trail will run from 10th - 25th June. You will receive a very warm welcome in West Cork.

Kilkenny Castle Lectures: As part of its 'Celebration 175 Years' celebrations the Office of Public Works has organised another series of talks in Kilkenny Castle for this spring. Judging on last year's lectures this is going to be another excellent series and the venue is simply fabulous. Well worth making the time to get to these! Already there has been an excellent talk from Paul Maher on '*Rare and Unusual Treasures of the National Botanic Gardens for your Garden*'. Cormac Foley will speak on '*Heritage Gardens of the Killarney Area*' on Wednesday 26th April at 8.00 p.m. and John McCullen will speak on '*History and Management of the Phoenix Park*' on Wednesday, 24th May at 8.00 p.m. Admission is free each evening and no tickets are required. For further information contact Sally O'Halloran: Mobile: 087 2303834 or by e-mail at: sally.ohalloran@opw.ie

Membership Rates: As follows:

Type of Membership	Euro	St£
Ordinary	25.00	18.00
Student	12.50	10.00
Family	35.00	30.00
5 Year Ordinary	120.00	83.00
5 Year Family	165.00	114.00

If your subscription is over due, you might remember to drop it in the post as soon as possible to: The Irish Garden Plant Society, c/o The National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin, Dublin 9



The Newsletter of the IRISH GARDEN PLANT SOCIETY



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