



*The
Irish Garden Plant Society*



Newsletter No. 124 September 2012



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Front cover: *Lonicera henryi* by Seamus O' Brien



Editorial

I would like to extend a warm welcome to our new Chairman Paddy Tobin. Already well known to members through his writing in the newsletter and as a former editor, he is also known for his passion for the preservation of our plant heritage. His commitment bodes well for the Society. Welcome also to the new members of the National Committee, Anne-Marie Woods as Leinster Representative and Maeve Bell as Minutes Secretary. Finally welcome to the new members of the Society who have joined during the past year.

Congratulations to Seamus O'Brien whose recently published book *In the Footsteps of Augustine Henry and his Chinese plant collectors* won the Annual Literature Award of the Council on Botanical and Horticultural Libraries (CBHL) in the General Interest category. Congratulations also to Dublin-born horticultural taxonomist Susyn Andrews formerly of the National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin who has been awarded the Veitch Memorial Medal for her outstanding contribution to horticulture. Finally congratulations to Ricky Shannon for her commitment to the Society. Paddy Tobin mentions in *The New Chairperson* on page 2 that when he joined the Society in July 1989 Ricky Shannon was the Treasurer, and now in 2012 Ricky is again our Treasurer, thank you Ricky.

Regional committees have as usual events planned for the coming months and have provided background information on upcoming lectures. Leinster details are on page 34 and information on Northern events is included on the fixture sheet.

Mary

Please send material for the Newsletter to: igpseditor@gmail.com
or Mary Rowe 29 Bantry Road, Drumcondra, Dublin 9.

The copy date for the January 2013 Newsletter is December 8th. 2012



The New Chairperson

The members of the national committee have “suggested” that as well as my first “Letter from the Chairperson” I should also write a personal profile with a photograph so that people could put a face to the name and know a little about me. It was suggested that this might be done in a “Question and Answer” format but, as the interviewer has not materialised and the deadline for the newsletter is fast approaching, I am left to put a few words together myself, somewhat reluctantly I might add. I hope you will look kindly on my effort.

I fail to recall when we, my wife Mary and I, joined the IGPS and, so, searched out our old newsletters and find the oldest one we have is “Newsletter No. 33, July 1989”, just twenty three years ago. David Jeffrey was Chairman at the time, Dermot Kehoe, Vice Chairman, with Catherine Gorman as Secretary, Ricky Shannon as Treasurer and Finola Reid as Fixtures Secretary. Reg Maxwell was the Northern Representative and Christine Fehily the Munster Representative. The newsletter contained articles from, among others, Shirley Musgrave, Mary Forrest, Marcella Campbell, Rosemary Brown and Aidan Brady. I believe we joined the IGPS because our local club, the Waterford Garden Plant Society, was affiliated to the IGPS and still is, by the way. There were close connections between our local club committee members and IGPS committee members at that time and it was probably this which prompted us to join. Despite this long connection the number of IGPS members in Waterford remains very small though of the highest calibre!

You will all have plants in your garden with no other name than something like, “that campanula we got from Betty” or some such and I’m sure these are plants which are especially treasured in your garden. It is the same with us here and this aspect of gardening – plants with an association – was one which I always found interesting and enjoyed. It was natural then that the connections the IGPS recognises in plants of Irish origin should appeal to me. Quite simply the plant with a story is always more interesting to me. In the late nineties Mary took an interest in snowdrops. Bob Gordon swelled this interest into a large collection and I became particularly interested in Irish snowdrops and this continues to be my particular interest in the garden.

I am living in Waterford, just to the outside of the town and have a garden which is over an acre in size. In style, it is a country garden, I suppose, with planting rather than hard landscape, a mixture of trees, shrubs and lots of herbaceous perennials. There is a vegetable patch and a run for hens and ducks. All in all, it is a mixed affair.

Here, I am most certainly the assistant gardener – I do what I am told by the head gardener and I bow to her superior knowledge and taste. It is good to know one's place and for you to realise I am a gardening enthusiast and not an expert, just someone who loves and enjoys gardening and plants.



Photograph courtesy of Trevor Edwards and was taken at the AGM in Northern Ireland in May.



Letter from the Chairperson

Dear Members,

Some time before the recent Annual General Meeting I was approached by a member of the National Executive Committee and asked if I might consider serving a term as Chairperson of the IGPS. My first reaction was one of shock; this was followed by a sense of flattery and then by the truth that, obviously, there was no rush to take on this position and I was being asked to take my turn, so to speak. The society and its aims are important to me and I am, indeed, taking my turn to do something for the society which has done so much for me and which I have enjoyed for so many years.

Initially, I was daunted by the prospect of what I was undertaking but was reassured by the fact that the serving members of the national committee were going to continue in their various positions and so I viewed my appointment as simply that of a new face at the front of a very successful team. My experience over the last few months has reassured me that such is the case. We are very fortunate to have society members of long standing giving of their time and expertise to organise the society and promote its aims. Likewise, I have become familiar with the work done by the members of the three regional committees and realise there is a great commitment, dedication and enthusiasm among them.

Organising a large society, such as the IGPS, is no easy task and those who have taken on the role over the years certainly deserve our praise, our gratitude but, most of all, our help. Outside of present committee members, there are many, many people who could also contribute to the work of the society and I wish my first message as chairperson to be one of encouraging these people to become more involved. Each regional committee would welcome with open arms any offer of participation or assistance. Communication is often the difficulty; committee members might feel reluctant to approach a member in case they might be imposing on them and members might be reluctant to appear too forward by offering to take on a role in the society. At the same time both would welcome the participation. Please make the first move; offer your time and expertise and become involved. Of course, the very simplest way to participate is to attend the activities organised by the regional committees, the winter lecture programmes and summer outings and also there is the very valuable work of propagation, especially of Irish cultivars, and preparation for plant sales.

There are many members, such as myself, who live too far away from any of the regional centres to benefit from the winter and summer programmes and who are so envious of those who can participate. Our great contacts with the society over the years have been the newsletter and the seed offer and we will always be so grateful to Mary Rowe and Stephen Butler for their work. A development of the IGPS presence on the internet may facilitate contact and exchanges among the far-flung members. It is an area the national committee hopes to develop and we would welcome suggestions and help from anybody interested in this area. Drop me a line if this is something which interests you.

As a general comment on the society, I feel it is vital we continue to focus on our central aims, that of the conservation of Irish plants and the dissemination of information about them. There are times when this appears to be an impossible task, one simply beyond the capabilities of such a small organisation. However, I have no doubt that there are many Irish plants which would have been lost but for the enthusiasm of IGPS members over past years. We must continue to propagate the Irish cultivars in our gardens and spread them about generously. It is only by spreading them about that we will ensure their survival.

It was very heartening to see the enthusiasm with which Joe Kennedy's primulas were received the world over. I am personally delighted that Joe's many years of dedicated breeding has been so well recognised and received. Great praise is also due to Pat Fitzgerald (Fitzgerald Nurseries) who propagated and distributed the plants. Pat is a great enthusiast for Irish plants and had plans to propagate other Irish cultivars but that works is presently stalled for lack of funding but, hopefully, it will continue again shortly. It would be wonderful to see other Irish plants being so successfully distributed.

Two wonderful projects of the last few years have been the development of the Lismacloskey Rectory gardens at the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum in Belfast where Northern group members have forged a most successful relationship with the museum and have established a garden with an emphasis on plants of Irish origin and connection. It is also particularly wonderful that the work on the garden is being carried out by IGPS members and by members of a volunteer gardening programme. It was wonderful to visit when in the North for the AGM as it is an example of an outstanding way to both preserve our plants and also display them to the public and so raise both awareness and interest. The Royal Horticultural Society of Ireland has begun a similar project at Russborough House, restoring an old garden and setting part of it aside to feature Irish plants. I have no doubt that local IGPS members would be most welcome to participate in the volunteer work there and the society could certainly help by providing plant material. Have a look at the RHSI website and their Facebook page for more information.

Finally, I wish to express my deepest gratitude and admiration for Patrick Quigley and the work he has done over the last years as Chairperson of the IGPS. He has worked tirelessly for the society and continues to do so as a member of both the national committee and the Northern committee. His continued presence on the national committee was one of the factors which convinced me to take on this role.

Yours sincerely,

Paddy Tobin.

pmtobin@eircom.net

The Northern Ireland Heritage Gardens Committee 2012 Conference

The Royal Hospital Kilmainham, Dublin



October 5th 6th and 7th 2012

Conference fee £200/€220

Fee includes coffee/tea, luncheons, dinner and visits.

Details on www.nihgc.org



Vive la difference? by Rae McIntyre

In October 2009 a 50th anniversary reunion was organised for my year in Stranmillis College, Belfast which I had attended. I looked forward to it because I was filled with curiosity about how bright young things I knew as teenagers had made the transition to elderly retired teachers. Also I enjoy talking to people especially when I have something in common with them. But what I really hoped for was that someone out of the 130 expected to attend would be interested in gardening but I didn't hold out much hope. It seems that only a very small percentage of the population of Northern Ireland is truly interested in gardening. People have gardens, mow the grass, plant a few containers with bright annuals, own a tree or two (*Prunus* 'Kanzan' is unfailingly popular) a couple of conifers, some flowering shrubs (*Pieris* 'Forest Flame' seems to be obligatory) and generally keep the place tidy. There is a world of difference between them and addicted gardeners whose lives are ruled by gardening. Meeting someone from the latter category was, I feared, highly unlikely. But it happened and much more quickly than I thought. When I was getting out of the car a woman stepped out of a taxi. We both looked at each other, summed each other up and realised that we were contemporaries. We introduced ourselves and then, of course, we remembered. Maggie had changed from being a very pretty girl-next-door type into a very elegant, smartly dressed woman who seemed to have been all over the world with her husband Chris, a civil engineer, and family, and was now living at Blackheath in London. In the intervening years I had been stuck in Northern Ireland and only moved thirty-five miles away when I married. Of the two of us she had worn much better. At college we had been in the same section for some subjects. We had a lecturer called Dr John Musson for English and I have come to realise that his influence can still be apparent in our writing.

During our chattering I asked her if she was interested in gardening. "Oh heavens yes", she replied. "At the moment I'm doing a course with the R.H.S. in London". Wonderful news! Then, because we both wanted to talk to as many former fellow students as possible, we agreed to meet up again for the last hour of the reunion. There are no prizes for guessing what we talked about during that time and, as expected, neither of us had talked to anyone else who was a devoted gardener. Addresses and telephone numbers were exchanged. We both have email addresses but we are at an age when we still prefer to write longhand and use snail mail. During the past two and a half years we've had many long garden-related phone calls.

In November 2010 Maggie had just read the book *Dear Friend and Gardener* by Beth Chatto and Christopher Lloyd. When Christopher was alive he and Beth were close friends and the book is comprised of letters between them, written over a couple of years, and recording the happenings in their lives in general and their gardens in particular. Maggie had the bright idea that we could do the same with a view to having it published. I am very sceptical about this ever happening because the Chatto-Lloyd book never made the gardening book bestseller list (there are no glorious technicolored illustrations in it) and there's an enormous difference between them and us. They are eminent; we are nobodies. However that doesn't prevent us from writing to each other at fairly regular intervals. We started in January 2011, right in the middle of that dreadful winter, so we had plenty to write about. Even though the same seasons come and go and neither one of us makes any radical changes in our garden there is always something happening. Moreover, both of us could talk for Ireland and writing follows suit. Maggie writes from a garden in Blackheath in London in the deep south of England. I write as someone who lives out in the sticks in the far north of Ireland. Every day I look at the weather map in the *Daily Telegraph* and nearly always London has a higher temperature than Belfast. Here, close to the north coast, it's usually 2 or 3 degrees cooler than Belfast. We live nearly at the top of Blackhill where the prevailing winds, that used to be from the west, are now either from the north or north west; this means we have to contend with the windchill factor as well. The main climatic difference is in the amount of rainfall we receive. In London they have long periods of drought that started in the spring of 2011 and have continued off and on since. The forecast is for it to last all summer and that there will be a hosepipe ban over much of England until December 2012. Meteorologists maintain that it's as bad as, if not worse than, 1976. They welcome rain there whereas for most of 2011 we looked out of windows first thing every morning and said, "Not rain again!" A few expletives were usually added.

They had a very dry autumn. Here it was exceedingly wet, the wettest Davy can remember and, apart from four years as a student, he has lived here all his life. As I said earlier, we live nearly at the top of Blackhill, not on a flood plain or beside a river and yet two rooms in our house were flooded on October 5, 2011. After two days of incessant and very heavy rain the water flowed down from the top of the hill into the yard, overflowing the cattle grid on the way, and then, because the underground drainage pipes and gullies were blocked – we only discovered this later – the water came into the oldest part of the house. It was built in 1789 and has no foundations; it just sits on a seam of basalt like most of the old houses round here. The carpet in one room was completely sodden and between the floorboards in the hall there were little jets of water spouting. Water in the yard was deep enough to go over the tops of our son David's size 11 wellingtons. One man actually found it hilarious that our house on a hill had been flooded. I didn't. My sense of humour was inactive that day.

Fortunately the rain stopped for a time in which there were clearing up operations and the faulty drains were repaired or replaced if necessary. But it returned through much of November and December so that when Maggie and Chris came over to Northern Ireland for Maggie's mother's 90th birthday and called with us on December 19th much of the stackyard was lying under water. I was irked that they should see the garden in December when it always looks awful anyway, but at the same time they realised that I wasn't exaggerating about our excessive precipitation. Chris viewed the top bed, which was doing a mini paddyfield impersonation, from a civil engineer's perspective and said that the water was coming in from a little country road which runs parallel with the stackyard. We took note and managed to get the council to repair faulty drains in it too.

Rainfall and sunshine – or the lack of either – dictates the planting in our separate gardens. Maggie wrote in September 2011 that camellias, azaleas and rhododendrons were looking very sad but rain off and on for two weeks helped to restore their vigour. But she had decided to give up on rhododendrons because her garden was too dry for them. *R. 'Elizabeth'* was struggling to survive, *R. yakushmanum*, *R. maccabeanum* and the rather tender 'Lady Alice Fitzwilliam' had all recently died. She had thought the previous winter had been too cold for them but the latter survived here albeit in a cold greenhouse. At the risk of tempting fate I would say that rhododendrons do quite well here in the rain, the moist air, feeble evaporation and damp soil. Maggie added to this bit about ailing rhododendrons, "However good old ponticum grows so well under the beech tree beside the hot tub. It grows near an unnamed bamboo and adds an exotic air". At first I sniffed at the idea of 'good old ponticum', which grows wild a few miles from here adding an exotic air to anywhere, even in the company of an unnamed bamboo. But this was in January; in the wild it doesn't bloom until late May or June. I am not surprised that *R. yakushmanum* died in her garden because it's a native of windswept, rain-drenched mountain peaks in the island of Yakushima in Japan. It finds conditions here just like home, sweet home.

Among the perennials that have died in droughty conditions in Maggie's garden is *Eupatorium purpureum* which grows like a weed here. Then there are so many plants that thrive there but are only half-or even quarter- hearted in their performance here – that is if they perform at all. Here are some of them. She says that *Romneya coulteri* is a real star which grows to 2 to 3 metres tall has been in the garden for 25 years and never ceases to mesmerise people and bees. I have tried three times to establish this plant but it just diminishes with each successive year until finally it disappears. Another real star in Maggie's garden is the very fashionable and ubiquitous – except here – *Verbena bonariensis*. I grew it from seed one year and had a few plants of it growing in the garden. Gardening books, magazines and catalogues all assured me that it would self-seed liberally and might even become a weed. It didn't of course;

there wasn't even a hint of one the following year. A similar fate befell the once ultra-fashionable *Cerintho major*. Maggie asked, "Have you got *Cerintho major*? Although it has a Mediterranean provenance every year, regardless of freezing winters it seeds itself in the gravel path pushing that glaucous foliage up through the golden pebbles." Maybe it doesn't succeed here because I have no golden pebbles. *Iris unguicularis* in her garden was over and done with before Christmas. Here it lives in the best growing conditions I can provide, but the plants I have send up a couple of flowers that last for two days at the most and then repeat that a fortnight later. In late April I had one still flowering.

Both *Clerodendrum trichotomum* and *Clerodendrum bungei* sat and sulked here so much that I kindly donated them to a plant sale after which they probably died within a few days. In Maggie's garden *C. trichotomum* grows to 6 metres tall. *C. bungei* has lovely purplish-red rounded clusters of flowers and, when it suckers, she plants the babies in the herbaceous border where they will grow to give added height. *Echium pininana*, which won't even survive with care in the greenhouse here, grows fantastically in the ground in London and adds an exotic touch to her tropical bed. Cannas, which I have never even attempted, thrive there too. Maggie and Chris have a house on the Greek island of Paxos where they spend about five weeks every late spring/early summer and another five in the autumn. Paxos has a metre of rain annually so from her accounts, it seems to be a quite idyllic place. *A beaker full of the warm south*. Agaves, aeoniums, marguerites, osteospermums, *Felicia amelloides*, *Aloysia triphylla* and plumbago all flourish outside. Yuccas grow to 5 metres tall and the plumbago regularly needs to be cut down to size. In the autumn, gaudy yellow sternbergias pop up everywhere between drifts of *Cyclamen hederifolium*. The most recent planting has been of bougainvilleas and hibiscus. Best of all they have an olive grove. I would nearly kill for olives so this is luxury indeed.

Meanwhile back in windswept, rain-drenched Blackhill a very large ash tree down at the bottom of the main garden in the corner next to the field, came crashing down in a storm on January 3rd. It completely destroyed five rhododendrons, seriously injured seven other shrubs and left only the main stems on two magnolias. These last look as if they have come straight off the set purporting to be the Somme battlefield in the television dramatisation of *Birdsong* by Sebastian Faulks. Both were 3 metres tall. One is *Magnolia stellata* 'Rosea' which, bless it, managed to produce a few flowers. The other is *Magnolia denudata* which was still in leaf when the crash came. It struggled in late April to open new leaves on what was left of it. Members of my family bought me a large deep-pink flowered *Magnolia soulangeana* for my birthday and that cheered me up enormously. It's planted beside where the ash tree was. Andy had burned the rotten stump after he had cleared away the rest of the tree for firewood.



The Reptile and the Queen

by John Joe Costin

I walked 3.5 miles to national school from the age of 5 years in the era before refined minds developed concepts of victimhood and entitlement. They reclassified my enthusiasm as a hardship. In the absence of alternatives, my father with his valise, ¹ walked 88Km/55 miles to Queenstown/Cobh to board an emigrant ship bound for New York in 1927. That was my benchmark for a long walk, until I read of David Douglas, the Scottish plant hunter's travels. Between 1825-34 he covered prodigious distances in the wilderness in N. W. America on 3 separate expeditions. He went alone, unlike Ernest Wilson who moved as an imperialist, carried in a sedan chair as a person of rank, with a retinue that enabled him to dine each evening at table with linen, silver, crystal and wine. Douglas travelled lightly only with his journals, collection of seeds, plant specimens and his gun. It had three uses, security, provisions and was the most efficient means to shoot down seed bearing cones. His were the first introductions, of the many behemoth conifers that grew there.

Not being a sharpshooter, when I was planning a 2000Km seed collecting itinerary from Hokkaido, the most northerly island in Japan to Hiroshima, I was advised that I would need and should hire the services of a specialist tree climber. Seigu Yamaguchi was introduced as the best in Japan. He wore specialist boots that he claimed provided extra sensitivity and grip. The toe cap was divided in two, with compartments that separated the big toe from the other four. He climbed with the speed, ease, grace and agility of our primate cousins. Spreading his body across the spiny branches on the perimeter of the canopy of *Zanthoxylum ailanthoides* above a ravine to collect seed, remains the nightmare, cold sweat terror moment of that trip.

On telling him of my ambition to visit Chile, he told the story of his grand uncle. After a family row in 1894, his relative stomped out of home and disappeared. Two years later they received a letter from Chile which recorded his walk. He followed the route that anthropologists established, was the one by which people of Asian origin populated the Americas 20,000 years ago. He headed north through Honshu to Hokkaido, bridged the Kuril Islands chain and then crossed the Bering Straits to Alaska. From there he dissipated his monumental sulk walking south, parallel to the West coast, through Central America and continued by the coast of Chile until he ran out of road at

Puerto Montt. Such epic walking journeys were then the norm. David Douglas, on completing his first seed collecting expedition 1825-27, preferred to walk across Canada and catch a Hudson Bay ship back to London, rather than waste 6 months at sea returning via Cape Horn. As a consequence of distributing seeds from his first two expeditions to its Botanic Gardens, the Czar of Russia invited Douglas to visit St. Petersburg on his way home on completing his third, simply by walking via Alaska across Siberia and Russia. He set out to do so, but lost everything, his boat, journals, maps and seeds in a whirlpool, whilst attempting to cross the Columbia river.

Travel writers extol the remarkable 'freedom to roam' possibilities that the N5 Transamerican Highway presents. They proclaim one can travel from Fairbanks, Alaska, all the way south to Tierra del Fuego. This freedom is not a reality. The only way south of Puerto Montt is a 2 hour and 10 minute flight over forest and water or a 7-8 day sea voyage by Ro/Ro ferry. Below Puerto Montt the coast line crumbles into a labyrinth of contorted and tightly knitted series of channels, fjords, islands and forests. Rain falls in biblical deluges and exceeds 9m or 354 inches per year in the wettest places.

The Voyage of the Beagle reveals that Darwin was neither a man to complain nor to record its many undoubted discomforts over its 5 year duration. The climate in Chiloe, the largest island nearest Puerto Montt frustrated him. He wrote **"In winter it is detestable and in summer it is only a little better. I think there must be few parts of the temperate region where so much rain falls. The forests are so impenetrable and the land is nowhere cultivated except near the coast."** He could not walk on the ground or explore the forests. What he tried and failed to traverse was an elevated undecayed accumulation of fallen tree trunks and their debris.

The iconic tree of that island is the giant redwood of Chile. *Fitzroya cupressoides* thrives in the same environment of high humidity and rainfall as its nearest relative the coastal redwood, (*Sequoia sempervirens*) luxuriates in, i.e. the fog belt further north. The timber of *Fitzroya* is the equal of and as desirable as the latter. It would have been mined to extinction long ago, but its habitat of high rainfall and swampy condition prohibit extraction.

Much of what remain is now protected. It needed that because it will never be planted as a forest tree. Where cellulose production is required *Pinus radiata* is the economic alternative. It grows there at the rate of 2m/year. *Fitzroya* is hardy, it grows down to the seashore and its habitat is marshy and peaty soils. It could be more widely planted in Irish gardens, especially in wet ground where the choice of evergreen trees is limited. It should be at home in high rainfall locations in the south and west. The word redwood conjures an image of monumental size. In terms of height, size and presence *Fitzroya* accords with our expectation of the venerable. At 4000 years, it is verified as the second

oldest living tree to the Bristlecone Pine. Alan Mitchell in 1966 measured a tree planted in Powerscourt in 1869 at 13.4m, a rate of growth of 14cm or 5 inches per year. The Scottish and UK champion planted 175 years ago measures 20m, a growth rate of 4.5 inches per year.

Many trees that we plant in our gardens reach 20m in 40 years. If *Fitzroya* takes 175 years to achieve that size it is unlikely that any descendent for 8 generations or more will ask “What were the ancestors thinking of, when they planted *Fitzroya* in our suburban garden”. The specimen in Powerscourt no longer exists but it is listed in 10 other Heritage Gardens. The specimen at Mount Stewart makes history tangible, as this is the ancestral home of Lord Castlereagh an uncle to the young Robert Fitzroy. He was just 23 years old when he was appointed on merit as the Captain of the Beagle.

At our nursery we grow ***Pinus aristata*** the bristlecone pine, for its botanical curiosity and uniqueness as the Methuselah of trees. It was an altruistic exercise, as it has little eye appeal. It is a gaunt, slow growing runt and even its conspicuous white resin exudations on its needles were a bother. They gave cause to 'quality assurance' plant buyers to issue admonishments for supplying plants infested with whitefly. ***Fitzroya*, *Pinus aristata* and *Sciadopitys verticillata*** are three very slow growing conifers, each with a distinguished pedigree and interesting life story that could be suburban favourites. They are unlikely to outgrow their space. The majority of suburban gardens become overcrowded quickly as gardeners select many plants for their speed of growth and few for their ultimate height. If that ratio were reversed, they would have a few tall plants for structure and many lower case plants for interest. The smaller the space the more benefits accrue where this discipline is imposed. The **demand for the instant** popularises many inferior and leaves interesting and superior plants such as these languishing or dropped from production schedules.

Puerto Montt, at the equivalent latitude to Rome, at 42°S, is a straggly, hilly up and down miserably damp city with an annual rainfall of 2.5m/100inches. The poverty of its predominantly indigenous population is incongruously conspicuous in the cheap lurid hard plastic sandals that are their footwear. It was from its fine quay, that a sea captain grand uncle of a Scottish friend bought 3 tonnes of nuts from a vendor, a member of the local Mapuche tribe, called the Araucanos. These nutritious nuts were a staple in the native diet, eaten raw, boiled or roasted. They made pastry and distilled a liquor from them. The resin from the tree was a source of all sorts of internal and external medicines. The nuts added welcome variety to the diet of his crew. He had sufficient left at the end of the trip to plant a 16 acre plantation to evaluate the performance of the Monkey Puzzle on his estate in an exposed west coast site near Oban in Argyll in the 1880's.

Prospecting for new sources of timber for the navies of the world in the 18th century was the equivalent of to-days incessant search for oil and uranium. The Monkey Puzzle was discovered in the 1780's by the splendidly named Francisco Dendariarena, a timber examiner for the Spanish government. Named ***Araucaria araucana***, it rightly commemorates the local tribe. It demonstrated an anthropological sensitivity and an awareness that some missionary societies and political systems have yet to show to indigenous people. Taxonomists must be accurate in their observations but many were jingoistic in their naming. I fume that Blume tarnished the potential of a distinctive southern hemisphere genus ***Nothofagus*** by being so pedantic. It translates as the 'spurious beech'. If he had a little bit of poetry in his soul, music in his ear or history in his mind, he could have named it Dendariarena. The man who found the first South American native tree that was introduced to Europe is not remembered in a 'plant's' name.

Ancient stands of Monkey Puzzle exist to-day because its wood had little to commend it as a timber for the navy. This is surprising as ***Araucaria angustifolia*** timber, known as **Parana Pine** in the trade, is the most important softwood export from South America. It is harvested from stands in Parana state S.E Brazil, in N.E Argentina and from Northern Paraguay. Being grown in only 2 Heritage Gardens, would accord with its marginal hardness and suitability for Irish gardens. The limited quality of the Monkey Puzzle wood is also in marked contrast to that of the monarch of the family, the famed Kauri tree, ***Agathis australis*** of the North Island of New Zealand. The enormous volume of its trunk and the high quality of its wood made it the El Dorado for timber prospectors. Logging it, to virtual extinction, is an indictment of the rapacity of man. Marginally harder, than ***Araucaria angustifolia***, it grows very slowly in 5 Heritage Gardens. Now thousands of tree lovers annually pay their respect to the stands that survive in the rain forest habitat north of Auckland where many specimens are 50m in height and have a diameter of 8m.

Araucaria heterophylla is the impossibly perfect symmetrical, **Norfolk Island Pine**, beloved of landscape architects, prestige gardens, embassy rows, and holiday resorts in exotic places. More tender than some of its relatives, it is listed in only one Heritage Garden. However, it makes a fine fast growing indoor specimen and the uninitiated will compliment you on your topiary skills should it grace your residence. It is indigenous to the incongruously named Norfolk Island, then uninhabited, when discovered by Captain Cook and named by him to honour the patron of his expedition in 1774 on his second around the world voyage. He reported enthusiastically to the Admiralty that trees 60m in height and 3m in diameter crowded its cliffs. These could make the largest ship masts, a major concern, as such sizes were not available on the Indian subcontinent. However, it is not a pine, its timber lacks resin and the masts under stress snapped like carrots.

Norfolk Island is a volcanic speck 5x8Km that rises precipitously from the sea, 1600Km NE of Sydney. Its sheer cliffs average 90m in height, and access was possible only from one location, which made it a natural prison for recalcitrant Irish convicts transported to Australia. It is ranked among the most notorious of prisons for its merciless punishments and discipline regime. The prison was closed after 30 years (1825-1855) because of the difficulty of supervising the supervisors! Their sadism left few innovations for subsequent gulags to devise. Theologians do not have a term that encapsulates the suffering of those who enjoy heavenly views while enduring hell. The island remains the main source of seed of *A. heterophylla* required to satisfy the world wide demand for this lovely ornamental.

Araucaria bidwillii is native to Queensland, where it thrives in subtropical conditions. It is more tender than *A. heterophylla* but it is represented in one Heritage Garden - in Rossdohan. David Robinson planted one in his almost frost free haven in Howth. It survived the lowest temperatures of -4° recorded there in what were two of the coldest winters for the rest of us over 2010/'11. Kilcock, 50Km/30m from Howth experienced a low of -17°C. This indicates that the sea had a 13°C ameliorating effect at Howth but this did not extend to Kilcock. About 16Km/10m is regarded as the limit of the sea's influence inland. These 2 cold winters will establish the cold hardiness of the many recently planted specimens of the latest Monkey Puzzle to grace our gardens, the most glamorous tree introduction since *Metasequoia* in 1948, namely *Wollemia nobilis*. Early indications are that it may relish our high humidity. That the last few surviving specimens grew near a wine growing area north of Sydney, is no guide to the optimum conditions that it might luxuriate in. That location, in fact, could be at the limit of the range where it could survive. This can only be established in the future by observing its performance over the widest possible range of soils and climates.

Conquello National Park located in a high Andean valley north east of Puerto Montt, is home to one of the finest forests of *Araucaria araucana*. It is considered a short lived tree in Ireland, 200 years at the most, but trees aged 2500 years have been verified in Chile. The scenery is dramatic and the setting stunning. Driving to the top up a forest road, across ancient lava flows, studded with occasional pampas grass with views of snow capped peaks, waterfalls and lakes, the open red soil grows a memorable flora of forest floor herbs, shrubs and some well known trees. *Geum chinensis* always grows near water in damp ground. The clarity of the pink *Alstroemeria ligtu* competed with the orange yellow of *A.aurea*. On the forest floor the indigo blue flowers of *Lathyrus magellanicus* replicated the mood bluebells create at home. *Mutisia decurrens* exuberantly climbed everything it could attach itself to, the stink of *Vestia foetida* when crushed wrinkled the nose and *Haplopappus glutinosus* seemed to like growing in the clearing by the

track. *Desfontainia spinosa* looked noble here. It is an underappreciated 'holly' whose primary coloured yellow and orange red flowers should feature more in our humid coastal gardens. *Escallonia revoluta* grows to 5m and the evergreen *Diostea juncea* (a deciduous shrub in the Verbena family) elegant rush like foliage appeared occasionally as if dotted about artistically to provide contrast. The distinctive foliage and the instantly recognisable elegant branch arrangement of *Nothofagus antarctica* made an under storey that promised autumnal splendour.

On a broad plateau at the summit, the 'landscape architect' that is nature, created an inspirational arrangement of complementary opposites. It was as unlikely a combination as the unique pairings I had witnessed in human form in Osaka during the parade of Sumo champions, where each behemoth wrestler was accompanied by his delicately petite wife. Here, in December above a forest floor suffused by the blue of *Lathyrus magellanicus* was a woodland of tall *Embothrium*, spaced randomly 10m apart in full flower and rising against a clear blue sky, was a forest, some 50m tall, of well spaced gigantic snow pruned crowns of ancient Monkey Puzzle. It was a eureka moment, that repudiated conventional wisdom.

I was looking at a harmonious marriage of opposites, between the reptile and the queen of trees. It was a pairing that scoffed at the denouncement of garden experts that the Monkey Puzzle lacks landscape compatibility and is unmatched. It is orphaned by garden writers who share a unanimity that is sect-like in its certainties. To admire it reveals an untutored eye and unsophisticated mind. It is perceived as difficult to place and even harder to arrange. Fashion creates herds and there may be only loneliness in arguing the contrary. Its otherness, in its prehistoric reptilian appearance was confirmed recently. The arrangement of its plate like bark on mature specimens matches the scales of the **Armadillo**, another reptilian like creature. It does indeed have a stark geometry and its elephant like trunk has reptilian toes.

It was the skilful and combative writing of our own William Robinson, which had a transformational influence on English garden taste and fashion that put the kibosh on the planting of the Monkey Puzzle. He founded The Garden in 1871 (now the official Magazine of R.H.S). He was a polemicist, who enjoyed attacking the gardening values of the day and his intransigence guaranteed him continual controversy (and attendant publicity and profits). He disparaged topiary and formal design and despised those who degraded gardening by subordinating it to architectural values.

However, Reginald Farrer in an article on 'Rock Gardening and Garden Designs' in 1912 wrote unstintingly in his recognition of Robinson, **“like all true prophets, he rose magnificently and passionately but qualified it by adding he was unguided and unguidable”**.

The naturalism he fled so headlong into **“was a thing purely anarchic unruddered, unfounded on any rule or depth of knowledge. He later added that his nature was merely wobbly anarchy reduced to a high art”**.

Robinson became establishment. His offices were in 63 Lincoln Inn Fields and in 1884 he bought 200 acres in Gravetye, Sussex. He enjoyed influence as a writer, as a plantsman and as garden advisor to the decision makers that managed the empire and the great landowners, many of whom gardened on the grand scale. Two factors had a catalytic effect on the speed of adoption of Robinson's edict. The British Empire was at its zenith. The world marvelled at how so few could control so many. Their style of communications was a significant element in managing its affairs. They spoke in a declaratory manner that left no room for ambiguity, questions or discourse. Robinson's words were in effect a pontification from on high from their betters.

Secondly, the elite appropriated and distorted Darwin's Theory. It added 'scientific' certainty to their existing camel like hauteur. Darwin's Theory and Mendel's Principals of Genetics were the two most important scientific contributions to biology in the 19th century. Darwin's Theory first published in 1859, became an instant best seller and 6 further editions were issued during the following decade. What Darwin observed and recorded but could not identify the mechanism or the precise mathematical ratios involved, was explained in George Mendel's paper written in German and published in an obscure journal. It did not become widely known until 1900. In that vacuum and within that time frame, his Theory was venomously appropriated to create a cruel Social Darwinism. Darwin had emphasised the intimate and complex manner in which the inhabitants of each country are bound together in an ecological sense of interaction, rather than pure competition. While Darwin used the term **“Aptness to Survive”**, the public latched on to the inaccurate alternative more suited to its mindset, **“Survival of the Fittest”** that was coined by the British philosopher Herbert Spencer.

Social Darwinism emphasised profits and competition and the exclusion of the weakest from the good. It equated success with moral worth. Its values confirmed Britain as the greatest country in the world. Its army and administration were without peer, their aristocracy, the elite and its tycoons, the greatest traders in the world. Social Darwinism explained the poor as those unable to compete. Whites were superior to blacks, Christians to heathen and in the USA it reached the pernicious level, where the mulatto claimed superiority to the black as they had white blood in their ancestry. Darwin was dismayed and worked through a frenetic phase of rebuttals, elaborations, corrections and explanations. The vapours of that theory remain to be expunged from society.

Darwin clarified it all in 1872. Only Sexual Selection would explain the peacocks (otherwise useless) tail or the avenue building antics of the Bower Bird. It was the male who had to compete because it was the female who choose. This accords with current garden purchasing practices. Women predominantly select, men plant. Men worked a six day week and the Sabbath was strictly observed when Robinson issued his edict. Planting a Monkey Puzzle in the middle of a circular bed in the middle of the front garden had a compelling logic. It was the means to keep harmony in the household and maintain appearance on the street. They were simply imitating their betters, a practice that they were encouraged to adopt. The design concept was incidental.

The wind strewn remnants of the successful Scottish experiment survive. They reveal conclusively the conditions that Monkey Puzzles dislike; poorly drained soils, lack of shelter and seaside exposure. Good drainage explains the uniformity of a perfect short avenue in Powerscourt and its absence the dilapidation that is Woodstock. The avenue in Powerscourt is set in a lawn near the house as if anticipating the smoking ban 100 years later. It seems more like an ambulatory space to savour port and puff cigars or an outdoor space for ladies to take fresh air and sip champagne. In comparison, Mr Tighe was poorly advised at Woodstock. The avenue is disproportionately narrow at 8m relative to its length indicating little awareness of the trees' ultimate size. Correct spacing, uniformity and species selection in that order, determine the visual appeal that differentiates the great avenue from the disappointing. Replanting failures is a pusillanimous intervention that breaks the uniformity and perpetuates for another 100 years the visual irritation of disparity in size. The Monkey Puzzle of all trees is the least suited to this misguided compromise.

The Monkey Puzzle grows taller in Ireland than in the UK, a reflection of our higher humidity. The tallest specimens are:

Location	Size/m	Height
Caledon Co.Tyrone	30.5m	Irish Height Champion
Lissanoure Co.Antrim	29.5m	Second tallest
Glenstal Co.Limerick	29m	

The specimens with the greatest girth are:

Location	Girth/m	
Carrickmacross Co. Monaghan	4.24m	Irish Girth Champion
Powerscourt Co.Wicklow	3.85m	

We grew thousands at our nursery readily raised from seed collected in Woodstock. The large cones, 15cm in diameter or more can contain 300 seeds. It shatters when the seed is ripe after 2-3 years and can be collected when they fall to the ground. They are a little smaller than a Brazil nut but are as inviting to eat. The seeds up to 3cm long are covered in a thick brown coat. The pointed end should be pressed in the compost leaving the top 1cm or more exposed. They establish best if germinated one per pot. The crucial factor is that this tree is sensitive to water logging at all stages from a seed to a specimen. Nevertheless, it grows well in Ireland and is the most successful conifer from the southern hemisphere in our climate.

Footnote (1)

My father spoke Irish at home but was caned for doing so in school where English was compulsory. Pupils wore a notched stick around their neck, each notch recorded a punishment for a transgression. His Hiberno-English was ornamented with 'French' words learned in school such as *valise* (suitcase) and (*chemise*) vest.



Plant Search

Caroline Stone writes of her search for double primroses -

“Having won prizes at the Cornwall Garden Society Spring Show with some double primroses, I thought I would add to my collection. To my surprise I found that even varieties I thought commonplace like ‘Marie Crousse’ are dropping off nursery lists. The difficulty in locating them has spurred my determination, and I now have approaching 30 varieties and aspirations of getting National Collection status. Most of the varieties I have been able to find are Barnhaven introductions. The older ones are just not turning up at all; even those that could be expected to have been treasured are not appearing. For example, Torchlight which has a RHS Award of Garden Merit and, primroses with regional connections, ‘Elizabeth Dickey’ found in an Irish hedgerow, or ‘Tyrian Purple’ from Cornwall. I would be delighted to hear from anyone who grows double primroses, or who can help me in my search.”

Please contact Caroline with any information at the following email address: carolinestone_mayfield@yahoo.co.uk



Honeysuckles - common and less common for the garden by Mary Forrest

Honeysuckles (*Lonicera*) a genus of evergreen or deciduous shrubs and climbers are valued in the winter, spring or summer garden. Many are commonly grown in amenity landscape schemes in parks and shopping centres. The foliage is opposite and in the deciduous species the net venation on the under surface of the leaves helps to identify the genus when not in flower. The tubular shaped flowers can be elusive, hidden in the axils of the leaves or flamboyant in some of the climbing species. Some species fruit and bear red, amethyst or black fleshy berries. While one species *Lonicera periclymenum* is native to this country the honeysuckles in our gardens and parks are native to Europe, North America and China.

Evergreen species

Lonicera nitida is a Chinese shrub introduced into cultivation by Ernest Wilson in 1908. By 1915 the Donard Nursery Company of Newcastle, Co. Down had specimens of 'a neat growing evergreen' amongst their exhibit at the Irish Rose and Floral Society Summer Show in Belfast. Time has shown that this shrub will attain a size of 2m – 4 m. It has tiny dark green leaves, and is sometimes called 'Box' but Box (*Buxus sempervirens*) has an elliptic shaped leaf and the colour is a lighter shade of green. This species was commonly planted as a hedge and in recent years in the Dublin area, hedges have borne tiny yellow flowers which were succeeded by amethyst fruit. At least three cultivars have been selected. The most common being *Lonicera nitida* 'Baggesens Gold' which was named for J.H. Baggesen of Pembury, Kent. The leaves are a vibrant yellow colour and remain so as the shrub matures. Yellow or silver margins to the leaves distinguish *Lonicera nitida* 'Lemon Beauty' from *Lonicera nitida* 'Silver Beauty', however the variegation in the latter is not stable and rapid reversion occurs. If *Lonicera nitida* is most commonly seen as a hedge, *Lonicera pileata* with its wide spreading habit is usually seen as a groundcover shrub. Narrow elliptic leaves also distinguish it from *L. nitida*. It bears pale yellow flowers in May and amethyst translucent fruit in early autumn. Seamus O'Brien records in his Chinese travels in the footsteps of Augustine Henry that Henry discovered the shrub on the banks of the Yangtze river. Today the shrub lines the 'banks' tram tracks of the Luas.

Deciduous species

Some honeysuckles form striking flowering shrubs. In the winter months the Chinese species *Lonicera standishii* flowers on bare stems. *Lonicera fragrantissima* a former name is apt as the yellow flowers are sweetly scented.

The shrub grows to 3m x 2m with mid green thinly textured leaves. For many years a plant grew by the path through the Oak class in the National Botanic Gardens. It taught me a lesson about positioning scented shrubs near the passer-by.

Lonicera tatarica as the name might suggest is native to the regions of Central Asia to Central Russia. In the cultivar 'Hack's Red' raspberry red flowers are borne in abundance in late March early April before the dark green leaves develop. The flowers are followed in summer by small red fruits and a second flush of blossoms. The shrub is fast growing and like *L. standishii* can be pruned. My plant came from the nursery of Gash Gardens, Castletown, Co. Laois. More recently it was on special offer in a German supermarket chain suggesting that it is more common on the continent than in Ireland.

Lonicera involucrata is native to North America and grown as a landscape shrub in northern Europe. It deserves to be planted in this country. Inconspicuous orange/yellow coloured flowers are surrounded by leafy bracts. Black fruits later develop and the shrub provides ornamental interest for months. Debunkers, a species that is not readily recognisable as belonging to a genus occur in many genera and *Lonicera* is no exception. The large blue fruit of *Lonicera caerulea* are most unusual in the genus, where the fruits are juicy generally red or orange berries. Flowering in summer with two pale yellow flowers and thinly textured leaves with delicate venation confirm the genus. It occurs in the Northern hemisphere but is not common in gardens. The shrub in Glenveagh National Park foxed me.

Climbers

Of *Lonicera periclymenum*, commonly called Honeysuckle, Columbine or Woodbine, Bean writes 'No wild plant adds more to the charm of our hedgerows and thickets in July and August than this, especially in the cool dewy morning or evening when the fragrance of its blossoms is richest.' Pale to dark yellow tubular flowers with reddish markings are borne in terminal clusters. The flowers are succeeded by red berries. Two forms have long been selected for garden cultivation, 'Belgica' and 'Serotina' which flower in July and August, both develop reddish purple flowers.

Lonicera sempervirens or Trumpet Honeysuckle is native to the Eastern and Southern United States. Orange/red blossoms are borne in clusters of six flowers. This evergreen climber flowers from June to September and deserves to be more widely planted in gardens. *Lonicera henryi* is a rampant evergreen climber, used in Northern Europe as a landscape climber and in this country as a garden climber. The stems of this evergreen shrub twist themselves through fences and clamber through trees. The leaves are narrow lanceolate up to 3 – 4 inches long. My plant, some twenty years old has grown vigorously, but is shy to flower. In July some dark red honeysuckle like flowers caught my attention in a suburban hedge, on closer examination it was *Lonicera henryi*. While not as striking in flower as other climbing honeysuckles it deserves to be planted where quick growth is required.



The Annual General Meeting 2012

The 31st Annual General Meeting of the Irish Garden Plant Society was held on Saturday 12 May 2012 in the unusual and historic surroundings of the former courtroom in the Old Courthouse, Hillsborough. Fifty members, a substantial increase on the previous year, were there to hear the outgoing chair, Patrick Quigley, pass judgement from ‘the bench’ on a challenging year for the Society. Not only had it celebrated 30 years of existence with some notable events but it had had to cope with a significantly reduced income due to a shrinking membership.

Chairman’s Report

Key events to mark the 30th anniversary included the lecture in Antrim by Seamus O’Brien which had attracted an audience of 140 and a tour of Maynooth led by John Joe Costin which was followed by a dinner. A further high spot was the maintenance and development by members of the Lismacloskey Rectory garden at the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum, an initiative which dated back to 1987.

He paid tribute to the contribution of Marcella Campbell who had stepped down as Executive Secretary earlier in the year and to Mary Bradshaw for her work on the Leinster Committee over the previous 12 years.

The major issue during the year had been the reduction in annual income due to lower membership numbers, now in the region of 350. This had resulted in re-structuring the National Executive Committee to share the workload of the former Executive Secretary post and reducing the number of Newsletters from four to three. Once again it had not been possible to publish Moorea and there had been limited progress on the Irish cultivar front. However Pat Fitzgerald’s work on propagating and promoting Joe Kennedy’s primulas was a breakthrough. The meeting gave a warm welcome to Joe Kennedy, a very long standing member, at this point.

He reviewed the findings of a questionnaire about members’ satisfaction with their membership of the Society which had been circulated earlier in the year. Unfortunately it had attracted just 38 responses, mostly long standing members who were either satisfied or very satisfied. Where were the other 300 or so members? And how was the Society to improve if the Executive did not receive feedback?

Finance

Ricky Shannon introduced the Annual Accounts. She was pleased to report an €4k increase in income for the year which, coupled with a reduction in expenditure, had led to a surplus for the year compared with a deficit the previous year. However this had been achieved through a major exercise in chasing up outstanding subscriptions so there could be no certainty as to a similar level of income in the forthcoming year.

INCOME & EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2012		
INCOME	2012	2011
	€	€
Subscriptions	10,289	8,115
Plant Sales	3,538	2,677
Raffle	1,265	655
Book Sales	0	110
Maynooth Event	300	0
Donation	0	68
AGM	781	111
Summer Lunch	0	129
Copyright Income	92	52
Deposit Interest	0	1
Total Income	16,265	11,918
LESS: EXPENDITURE		
Newsletter	4,134	5,859
Lectures	1,864	2,583
Executive Secretary	2,250	3,000
Bank Fees	142	170
Postage and Telephone	38	70
Printing and Stationery	253	319
Travel	332	79
Garden Visits	0	138
Accountancy Fees	369	363
Insurance	250	1,099
Plant NetWork	150	0
Equipment	134	330
Sundry Expenses	371	48
Total Expenditure	10,287	14,058
Excess Expenditure over Income	5,978	-2,140
Accumulated surplus brought forward	13,296	15,436
Accumulated surplus carried forward	19,274	13,296

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 MARCH 2012				
	2012		2011	
	€	€	€	€
CURRENT ASSETS				
Debtors & Prepayments	223		273	
Cash at Bank and in Hand	20,104		14,070	
	20,327		14,343	
CURRENT LIABILITIES				
Creditors due within one year	1,053		1,047	
NET CURRENT ASSETS		20,274		13,296
TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES		20,274		13,296
ACCUMULATED RESERVES				
Income and Expenditure Account		20,274		13,296

Elections

Having completed a three year term as Chair, Patrick Quigley announced that Paddy Tobin, familiar to most members as a former Editor of the Newsletter, had been proposed as Chair. This was passed by acclamation. In addition Anne-Marie Woods had been nominated as Leinster Rep., he himself as Northern Rep., and Maeve Bell as Minutes Secretary.

Other business

Alex Whelan recommended that the Society should have a Facebook page especially with a view to appealing to younger members and it was agreed that she would discuss this informally with relevant Executive members.

Maeve Bell



The AGM Garden Visits

7 Main Street, Hillsborough

I was wary of re-visiting Dawn and Ken McEntee's garden. What if it wasn't as good as I remembered? Within seconds I knew my fears were groundless, the enchantment had increased and the garden was even better than I remembered. The first delight is a cobbled yard but not just any cobbled yard but laid in intricate spirals of cobbles and slate that required mathematical precision to look so good. Past a hedge heavy with *Clematis montana* and under planted with *Aquilegia* sp. and Bachelor's button, (*Centaurea cyanus*), an annual flower that got its name from its use as a buttonhole flower, to the greenhouse area.

Clematis montana 'Elizabeth', which is a beautiful pale pink, smothered the house while the common honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*) scented the air. I think the latter, though a wild plant is worthy of any garden: it has lovely flowers, a magnificent scent and low thuggish tendencies. And why do their white Camellia flowers stay white and not turn brown? Fairy dust? Lined against the greenhouse a fine collection of bonsai and then a Gothic mirror cleverly positioned to reflect the garden not you, was I the only one that tried to walk through the wall? A fun frog fountain nestled in the greenery.

Time to move on, under a wooden arbour covered in honeysuckle and *Clematis montana* into a lawn area. Here an *Acer* in a pot under planted with pansies (note to self to copy). This garden is planted in shades of gold, using grasses, bamboo, variegated hostas, spotted laurel, *Spiraea japonica* 'Goldflame' and the golden *Philadelphus coronarius* 'Aureus'. Sunshine on an overcast day. A garden ornament had been made by placing water pebbles on top of each other to make a slender column (another note to self).

Got to keep moving, this time through a long tunnel made of the golden hop *Humulus lupulus* 'Aureus' and a purple clematis, a good combination (another note but remembering my golden hop was super thuggish and had to be moved to Moira). This garden is laid out as a grass area with cooler greens and maples providing colour spots. The Black lily magnolia (*Magnolia liliiflora* 'Nigra') is a compact deciduous tree with dark purple-red, tulip-shaped very fragrant flowers that appear in spring. It is deciduous, can be kept as a shrub with the flowers at nose level. Not all the beauty in the garden comes from flowers and foliage, *Parrotia persica* (Persian ironwood) was introduced over 150 years ago from northern Iran. The bark is smooth, pinkish-brown that flakes to leave a patchwork of cinnamon, pink and pale cream patches that just ask to be touched. The leaves are a glossy green, turning a rich purple to brilliant red in autumn.

Whenever two or three gardeners are gathered together the talk always turns to the losses, and surprising survivors, of the winter of 2010. The enchantment could not save the *Ceanothus* but, as with many of us, the *Crinodendron* are recovering. Past plantings of azalea, magnolia and a pink clematis growing through a Corkscrew hazel (*Corylus avellana* 'Contorta') (another note to self) to a woodland area with bluebells and primroses. Then one of my favourite features, a tree (name still unknown after two visits) with a slate surround. Slung between trees, hammocks piled with cushions, affirming faith that we will have a summer. No time to linger but through a tunnel of Laburnum (*Laburnum anagyroides*). All parts of the tree are poisonous: roots, bark, wood, leaves, flower-buds, petals, and seed-pods. Eating the seed-pods, which are mistaken by children for pea-pods, has an unpleasant but rarely fatal effect. The yellow-flowered Greater Celandine *Chelidonium majus*, with its beautiful yellow sap, and Lesser Celandine *Ranunculus ficaria* (very thuggish) were used

as under-planting. Down curved steps through a neatly clipped hedge with a natural planting of ferns to the pond garden. The planting here is of *Rodgersia* sp. which are herbaceous perennials originating from east Asia, and *Gunnera* sp., these plants make an “architectural statement” with sculptured leaves and majestic flowers. You can't overlook them. These are complimented by Comfrey (*Symphytum officinale*), violets (*Viola* sp.) and hostas with no slugs (more fairy dust?)

Time to sit down and admire the hard work and vision needed to turn a long narrow strip into a timeless, enchanted place.

MDBA

Hillsborough Castle

Hillsborough Castle, for long the seat of the Marquess of Downshire, became in 1924 the residence of the Northern Ireland Governor and has latterly served as the official home of the Secretary of State. Its Georgian facade of 1797 is well known but the 98 acres of park behind the demesne wall contain a plethora of less familiar treats. That well known gardener, Lady Jean O'Neill has for many years been the inspirational lead and many features now make a visit very special. The Thornberry wrought iron entrance gates and screen have been restored and reinvigorated as part of the Jubilee celebrations and soon you pass a small productive green house overlooking a box enclosed herb garden. A pleasing group of *Rhododendron loderi* 'King George' were in full bloom with their skirts raised – a technique that added greatly to their statuesque character. Nearby stood one of three great Turkey oaks, *Quercus cerris*, which predate the house of 1797. The large lawn which sees the feet of many thousands of garden party guests receives no chemicals, a policy that is effected throughout.

A former Governor's wife, the Countess of Granville, and maternal aunt of the Queen, was responsible for the West Front garden. All smartly enclosed by new yew hedging which replaced the frost ravaged *Pittosporum*, it contains a formal array of rose beds with an outer band of herbaceous planting filled with easily recognised perennials. *Wisteria* trained on the house looked good against the sandstone but one of two *Fremontodendron* has succumbed to the previous harsh winters with its stablemate bravely soldiering on. On the South Front, *Magnolia grandiflora* was very healthy, the terrace here overlooking a new Jubilee garden – this replaced a formal rose garden and was particularly successful with a well proportioned sundial on a central stepped platform surrounded by box in gravel and box edged beds containing topiarised yew in bold obelisk form and spheres of varying height. Looking west, the terrace continues in the Yew Walk – dramatic huge drums of yew parade down a slope to a small lake with a temple as an eye-catcher in the distance.

Developments continue apace – a former shabby tennis court is in the process of being replaced by a wild flower meadow, an overgrown stream and glen is being cleared and replanted and the larger lake reshaped and planted as part of the Jubilee Woods campaign. Leaving the more formal areas, the garden becomes awash with bluebells beneath the dappled shade of beech and the delicate hints of emerging oak, lime and maple. Moss and ferns are luxuriant and nowhere more attractive than in the Lime Walk which leads from the aforementioned temple along the periphery of the garden. Here the walk is surrounded by a glorious carpet of bluebells, wild anemones and primroses. Birdsong and the babbling brooks with the impressive canopy of mature oaks, pine and grand estate conifers create a civilised yet calming haven. Perhaps the only jarring note is in the glen area where a few vibrant camellias and hybrid azaleas seemed out of tune with the more muted and natural appearance of the woodland. Whilst this is a garden on a large scale, it gives an impression of intimacy and achieves a gentle progression from formality to woodland very successfully.... three cheers for all involved.

Robert Logan.

No. 7 The Square Hillsborough

When visiting Hillsborough I have always admired the unusual wrought iron gate at the entrance to No. 7, and wondered what was beyond such a special gate. I was overjoyed when I realised that this was to be our third garden visit of the week-end, and what a treat that was.

The long town garden has been developed over twenty years, but with increased enthusiasm during the last eleven since Charles Stewart has retired. On entering the courtyard two pots of tulips, 'Queen of the Night' caught the eye as the sun showed up the hues on the deep purple petals. On the opposite side a pot of 'Molly Sanderson' pansies complemented the purple tulips. The warm tones of the stone of the converted stable buildings which are Charles' home provided a pleasing backdrop for his interesting trees and shrubs growing in a variety of shapes and sizes of containers. A blue table and chairs completed the courtyard scene. Progressing down a set of steps to the terrace a glass roofed pergola caught our attention. It was covered in *Clematis armandii* and surrounded by ferns, ivies and a mature fig. Alongside comfortable seating and lighted candles this sheltered corner provided the perfect atmosphere for a pre dinner drink and entertaining. The tinkle of water drew attention to a cistern with a waterspout which was nestling in a corner. The boundary walls were clothed in a variety of climbers and the mature trees of the forest park provided a perfect backdrop to the garden. Proceeding through the garden step by step sculptures, statues and amusing features constantly appeared, all thoughtfully positioned among the vegetation. At the lower end of the garden there was the greenhouse, a pond, a raised vegetable bed and a gravel garden with currant

bushes. At the bottom of the garden a sheltered seating spot was tucked into a corner and a concealed entrance led to a working area with compost bays and a garden shed, and to add curiosity a mock doorway was positioned on the boundary wall of the forest. Charles' artistic eye was evident throughout the garden. As one area led to another, eyes constantly needed to look around as every inch of space was occupied with something of interest. I would need another visit to discover all the things that I have missed. Now when I visit Hillsborough I will have the satisfaction of having "seen beyond the special gate".

Lorna Greenwood

Ballywalter Park, Ballywalter, Newtonards

The second day of our visit took us to the Ards Peninsula and Ballywalter Park. The home of Lord and Lady Dunleath, Ballywalter Park is a 250 acre estate with 30 acres of pleasure grounds. Parking in the extensive Georgian stable yards, we enjoyed the hospitality of the Dunleaths in the restored conservatory.

Conservatory

The honey-coloured conservatory with its under-floor heating had just been restored at a cost of £800,000. Among the many plants were *Ficus carica*, *Musa acuminata* a fine specimen of *Polypodium glaucum* and a great collection of succulents. The ambience was enhanced by an elegant water feature. The conservatory faces south west onto the back of the house with vistas across the lawn to shelter-belt plantings and rhododendrons.

Parkland

Our walk took us into the parkland. In the winter of 1846/7, Andrew Mulholland undertook the planting of 93,500 trees and shrubs with further planting of shelter belts to protect the house from the easterly winds. The tree collection at Ballywalter is impressive with many fine specimens of broad leafs and conifers including some specimens of *Pinus radiata* said to be the finest in Ireland. Great discussions were had among the group when it came to identifying some species in particular a *Metasequoia*, *Thuja*, *Olearia lacunosa*, and a *Davidia involucrata* var. *vilmoriniana*. Ballywalter now boasts a superb collection of Rhododendrons including *R. 'Boddaertianum'*, a cross between *johnstoneanum* and *R. kyawii*. But the crowning glory among the Rhododendrons has to be the deep red flowers of *R. 'Lady Dunleath'*, a winter hardy cross between *arboreum* var. *kermesinum* and *elliottii* propagated by Lord Dunleath's great grandfather and unique to Ballywalter Park. Lord Dunleath was keen to test our knowledge of some tree specimens of unsure nomenclature. One that caused much discussion was a pine tree. The reddish bark and flattened top suggested the Umbrella Pine, *Pinus pinea*. The long green paired needles and globe shaped shiny brown cones confirmed this.

Having had a grove of dendrologists visit a few days before, the IGPS were not lacking in learned taxonomists who could hold their own.

Walled Garden

A feature of many an Irish country house, Lady Dunleath pointed out that no such feature exists in her native Denmark where the harsh winter would kill any planting in such an enclosed space. Yet it is the walled garden that Lady Dunleath has adopted as her project, the creation of a Biblical Garden. Half way through her project, the garden will be divided into 12 rooms each representing one of the Apostles with the centre of the garden reserved for Jesus Christ. Planting is mainly roses which divides the garden in two along the central path.

Glasshouses

At the end of the walled garden Victorian glasshouses dating from the 1860s contain vines, strawberries, potatoes and other fruit and vegetables to cater for the growing corporate business run at Ballywalter Park.

Anne-Marie Woods & Ed Bowden

Lismacloskey Rectory Garden, Ulster Folk & Transport Museum.

The word Museum would conjure up the picture of a static exhibit but this garden was anything but. The happy band of IGPS volunteers were looking forward to welcoming everyone to the garden which has the wonderful backdrop of the 2 storey thatched Rectory.

The late season had restricted the amount of colour on show but shining out were *Meconopsis sheldonii*, *Primula* 'Guinevere' *Osteospermum* 'Lady Leitrim' and *Omphaloides cappadocia* 'Starry Eyes' (Irish cultivars) along with a lovely peachy avens, *Choisya* and cream *Corydalis*.

Patrick related the history of the garden and distributed the booklet "A Year in the Gardens" a joint publication between the Folk Museum and the volunteer gardeners detailing the Irish plants on show. Indeed the greatest reward for all the hard work past, present and future came from our new Chairman Paddy Tobin when he said "the work in this garden is the living example of promoting Irish cultivars". The gathering culminated in the planting of a *Sorbus* 'Autumn Spire' to the rear of the Rectory by Paddy aided by Andy Bingham, Head Groundsman.

Sharon Morrow



Regional Reports

NORTHERN

April 21st Garden visit to Brook Hall

After arriving at Brook Hall, Culmore Road, Londonderry, the owner David Gilliland gave us a warm welcome and a brief history of the garden. Then to our amusement, he climbed on to a sit-on lawnmower, started the engine and with our group walking behind him, proceeded to give us a most interesting and informative tour of the 30 acre arboretum and 3½ acre walled garden of Brook Hall. Oh what a wonderful garden with its impressive house commanding beautiful views over the River Foyle.

We were amazed at the mature tree collection, which was begun in the 1930's by David's cousin, the late Commander Gilliland. Some of our favourites were a *Betula albosinensis* - Chinese Red Birch, *Pinus montezumae* - Montezuma Pine, *Acer griseum* - Paper-bark Maple and *Thujopsis dolabrata* - Hiba. David explained that his *Metasequoia glyptostroboides* was from the first batch of that species to be planted in Ireland, it had developed a beautiful twisting, fibrous orange-brown bark. He also commented on the fine Chilean specimen tree, *Podocarpus salignus*, the Willowleaf Podocarp, proudly adding with a glint in his eye, that his was a much better shaped tree than the ones he had seen in the wild when he had travelled through Chile.

Many of the rhododendrons were in flower, David pointed out one of his favourite *R. 'Loderi Sir Joseph Hooker'*, commenting on its good shape, pale margins on its leaves and sweet scented flowers. *R. thomsonii* was looking good with its deep blood-red flowers and within the walled garden, the yellow flowered *R. lutescens* had just finished flowering and its young bronze leaves, which mature to dull green, were emerging.

Along with many camellias, magnolias and bamboos, there were several magnificent huge trees in the walled garden, such as *Eucryphia x nymansensis* 'Nymansay' and *Fagus pendula*, the weeping beech. David said that in some years, one could not see the leaves of the *Eucryphia* due to the amount of white flowers it produced in late summer. Another fine specimen tree within the arboretum was *Sciadopitys verticillata*, the Japanese Umbrella Pine, with its glossy linear leaves borne in whorls at the shoot-tips, like the spokes of an umbrella. Fortunately for us, the weather remained reasonably sunny, with only a few umbrellas required for the occasional light shower.

By the end of the tour, David had told us some of the most interesting stories about his wonderful trees. For me, it really made me more appreciative of these grand and majestic plants. If only I had a bigger garden....

Barbara Kelso

The second garden visit of April 21st.

Mr Liam Greene's Hampstead Hall Garden

On arrival at Liam's home, a grand Georgian House on the outskirts of Derry we were welcomed with tea and coffee, delicious sandwiches and cakes, provided by Liam's wife Mary before setting off on the tour of this fine garden. We crossed the gravel courtyard and entered the Italian garden located to the side of the house. Eight fine specimens of *Cupressus sempervirens* (Italian cypress) surrounded by clipped box hedging and topiary spirals create the look, then down the stone steps to the formal fish pond. The Goldfish were, wisely, still laying low waiting for the weather to improve. Adjacent to the pond Liam had ingeniously trimmed two 'Castlewellan Gold's' to resemble the Italian cypress, an interesting idea! Ivy covered the walls and a Lutyens bench completed the formal look of the garden.

Returning through the stylish courtyard we passed two Versailles planters containing box pyramids at the rear entrance of the house, which incidentally dates from the 1820's. Immediately through the arch at the opposite corner of the courtyard is the Japanese garden containing some wonderful and rare specimens and a circular fishpond, with a central island, which, when completed, will provide a home for Koi carp. Liam was in the process of 'lifting' a sizeable specimen evergreen tree by trenching around the roots before relocating it to the nearby Hospice Garden, an operation which will require lifting machinery and some ingenuity.

To the front of the house is a Yew tree walk leading to a pedestrian gate, extensive lawns, fine specimen evergreen oaks and a Cedar around which Liam is currently re-routing a Laurel hedge away from a stone retaining wall. The garden has many specimen trees and shrubs and is clearly a 'labour of love' to Liam.

PS. This garden has been featured on the BBC Television series "Secret Gardens" and is listed in the Ulster Garden Scheme 2012 leaflet under Gardens Open by Appointment.

Victor Henry

June 13th. A visit to Kilmacrew, Co. Down

A long tree lined loanin' deep in the heart of Co. Down is the prelude to Kilmacrew House, a veritable Eden where in the hollow of the hills a garden of five acres has been lovingly created. Generously sheltered and blissfully preserved from the sounds of the 21st century at the heart of the landscape are venerable lime, ash and beech trees.

Two figures stride across its history, the siblings Charlie and Mary Martin, who from the middle of the 20th century poured their passion for plants and the art of gardening into Kilmacrew. Charlie majored on trees whilst Mary focussed on the underplanting and thanks to their combined efforts an eclectic collection of plants exists, many now at the peak of their maturity. Whilst our visit was a little late for much of the rhododendron and azalea bloom, most of the magnolias were still in flower – *M. campbellii* had bloomed well and *M. wilsonii* was still magnificent, it's glorious cups one of the joys of spring. *M. hypoleuca*, *M. x soulangeana* hybrids and others brightened the glades as did a very large *Davidia involucrata* with a good display of 'handkerchiefs'.

The delights of seeing mature *Catalpa*, *Liriodendron*, and *Paulownia* and *Pterocarya*, the glorious barks of a huge *Prunus serrula*, *Acer griseum* and many *Betula* genus, and a conifer and *Sorbus* collection which defied specific naming, kept the Society enthralled. Added to which the underplanting of rampant *Rubus* 'Benenden', *Trochodendron*, *Deutzias*, *Weigelas*, *Philadelphus*, *Rosa* 'Geranium' (*moyesii* hybrid) and tree peonies ensured that at every turn there was something of note – a cut leaf oak, a *Cornus kousa*, *Aralia elata*, a soaring Kiftsgate rose, the intriguing Dutchman's pipe *Aristolochia*, the skunk cabbage *Lysichiton americanus*, and the jewel colours of candelabra primulas backed by *Osmunda regalis*. Whilst the creation of this woodlands treasure can be placed at the feet of the late Charlie and Mary Martin, the baton has been taken up by their grand niece Louise Anson whose enthusiasm for the garden has been undimmed despite the challenges of drainage, storm and frost damage. Her welcome and hospitality were greatly appreciated by all and her vision for the garden is exciting and will ensure that Kilmacrew is as renowned for its plant collection as its literary associations.

Robert Logan

MUNSTER

April 21st Visit to Blarney Castle Gardens

I was surprised to find that a large number of Cork people had not actually visited the gardens at Blarney Castle. To my shame, I for one had not been there until two years ago. I suppose a visit to Blarney Castle conjures up a vision of busloads of tourists climbing the numerous steps to kiss the famous

stone to improve one's "gift of the gab" and the very fact that there is a magnificent garden there is lost. There have been great improvements in the garden and arboretum since Adam Whitbourn took over the helm as head gardener a few years ago. Talking to him, one realizes that he is a very enthusiastic young man, who is quite happy to share his knowledge and experience with all people interested in gardening. He was very happy to give us a tour of the garden including places not usually open to the general public. Blarney Castle's arboretums and pinetum contain a collection of specimen trees that is one of the finest in the country. Many of the trees in the collection are rare and unusual, such as the Wollemi Pine *Wollemia nobilis*, Foxglove Tree *Paulownia tomentosa*, Formosan Redwood *Taiwania cryptomerioides* and Water Pine *Glyptostrobus pensilis*. A lot of the trees in the arboretum were planted in the late 1970's and 80's, but there existed a large number of old trees including Limes, Yews, Spanish Chestnuts and various conifers some of which are 600 years old. Adam told us that as well as planting new trees, he had the difficult decision of removing some trees that were planted too close to each other.

On our way to the upper arboretum we passed the double herbaceous border which runs along a south facing wall. It is 90 metres long and will make an impressive display of colour in the summer using a wide range of herbaceous perennials along with some more unusual annuals and semi hardy specimens. A more recent addition is a pergola which stretches nearly over the length of the herbaceous border and has been planted with roses City of York (white) and 'François Juranville' (pink). In the heart of the Castle gardens there is a fern garden surrounded by a limestone cliff, containing over 80 different types of fern including a 204 inch *Dicksonia antarctica* which happens to be the tallest specimen of this fern in Ireland. A bog garden area is found in the lower rock close and features two waterfalls. A raised wooden boardwalk passes through groups of *Gunnera manicata* and many different varieties of bog plants. The oldest trees in the gardens are to be found near the bog gardens. A group of three yews (*Taxus baccata*) sit together on an island and are thought to be over 600 years old. Towards the end of the tour we came to the newest development which is an Irish Garden. It is intended to educate the general public about the importance of conservation while giving them some information about some of the traditional uses and folklore that surround our native plants. Finally we arrived at the Poison garden, in which the public are warned that they enter at their own risk. The IGPS members showed true courage and fortitude by entering the area without hesitation, but they kept their hands firmly in their pockets and walked in single file through the area. Some plants are so toxic that they are kept in large steel cage like structures. Poisonous plants from all over the world are grown here including Wolf's bane, Mandrake, *Ricinus*, opium and cannabis. However the cages containing opium and cannabis were empty as said plants had been seized by the Gardai. That is Irish law for you. They left behind the really dangerous plants that have the potential to kill you, waiting for their moment. I am happy to say that all

members of the group survived the poison garden, which was an interesting end to a great visit. I wish to convey our appreciation to Adam for a giving us a great tour of the garden which was conducted with much enthusiasm and generosity of time.

Martin Edwardes

LEINSTER

Summer Luncheon 2012 Burtown House, Athy, Co Kildare

Saturday, 16th June was a dryish day but with rain threatening every now and then; occasionally the sun came out!! Full of expectation about the visit to Burtown House and gardens we gathered at the front of the house to be welcomed by our host James Fennell from the front steps of his family house, which has been a family home for over 200 years. The visit began with a brief history of the house and its earlier owners. James then introduced his Aunt, Anna Baggally who was to take us round the garden later.

There then followed a most interesting tour of the eighteenth century house with James' commentary. We were encouraged to follow James throughout the house and we were invited to enter all the lovely rooms with their wonderful furnishings right up to the attic bedrooms and children's playroom. A most charming and friendly house being pure Irish Georgian and now turned into a wonderful home for James, his wife Joanna and their children with the addition of modern bathrooms and a new kitchen/living room. Our luncheon followed the house tour and in the splendid dining room a really excellent cold buffet of poached salmon, Coronation chicken and other delights had been prepared for us and were served by Joanna Fennell and her helpers. Again we were free to roam with our plates and drinks. Homemade desserts followed by tea or coffee concluded our excellent lunch. This provided a great chance for members to circulate, chat and renew acquaintances. After lunch Anna lead us around the garden and although she had told us that she had little knowledge of gardening and had lived most of her life in S. Africa, I suspect that she was being very modest!

The joy of the gardens at Burtown must be the separate and the different areas, the wonderful, big, sunny, island herbaceous and shrub borders around the house, the rock and water garden and woodland gardens, the well maintained vegetable garden with its simple slate signage and its novel line of *Clematis viticella*, is a credit to all concerned. The orchards complete with topiary are in separate 'compartments'. Pieces of sculpture and iron work, notably a fine new decorative pond cover to keep the young children out, lovely old gates and large pots add to the pleasures of the gardens. Some years ago, Lesley Fennell, James' mother extended the gardens to create a planted riverside and to include an island area within a boundary stream. This is now showing

maturity with masses of iris, ferns, hostas, hellebores, martagon lilies, trilliums and other damp loving plants together with a collection of newly planted Magnolias. One of the many unusual plants to be found at Burtown is the scarlet flowered *Schisandra rubriflora* growing on a north wall adjacent to the left side of the house frontage. Some other notable plants are a *Phyolacca americana* and in the rock garden a *Prunus* 'Mt Fuji', a *Cornus controversa* 'Variegata', and a tree peony, *Paeonia* 'Wendy Walsh' named after James' grandmother Wendy Walsh, the famous botanical painter who was delighted to see so many visitors to the gardens and house. In the former basement kitchen of the house a gallery to exhibit Wendy's well known and delightful botanical water colours and a tea room for visitors has been created this year. Here there was also a nice collection of unusual plants for sale which members eagerly seized upon!!! Finally on departure we were told about the famous Oregon maple, *Acer macrophyllum*, whose provenance was as a seedling found by James' grandfather on a rubbish dump at Trinity College, Dublin!! Now enjoying a superb position and thriving in the meadow in front of the house!! We all enjoyed our visit to Burtown House and gardens and would extend our thanks to James and Joanna and the family for their warm welcome and excellent hospitality. We wish them well and success with their new venture in opening the gardens to the public. Thanks too are due to Ricky Shannon for the arranging of this very enjoyable outing for us.

Charles Stewart

Forthcoming Leinster lectures at Botanic Gardens Glasnevin

Thursday 20th September 8pm A lecture by Dr. John Mc Cullen Former Chief Park Supt. O.P.W. "Celebrating 350 years, The landscape and Social Evolution of the Phoenix Park 1662 -2012".

A note on the lecture from John:

"The Phoenix Park is an historic landscape of international importance and one of the largest designed landscapes in any European city. The history of the Park consists of an amazing tapestry of landscape, social activities, politics and culture. This year marks the 350th anniversary of the formation of the Phoenix Park by King Charles II and his Lord Lieutenant in Ireland James Butler and I am delighted to be giving this lecture on the landscape and social evolution of the Phoenix Park. I will be tracing the origins and landscape development of the Park from its beginnings in 1662 through the Chesterfield and Burton era and other significant landscape developments to the present day. The Park can also boast of an amazing social and sporting history including the provision of the People's Garden for the working class as well a plethora of sporting opportunities ranging from cricket, polo, Gaelic games, football and athletics."

Thursday 18 October, 8pm A lecture by Keith Wiley “Holistic Planting

Keith Wiley was head gardener at the Garden house in Devon for over 25 years. While there the beauty of the gardens attracted great attention, myriads of visitors and featured regularly in many gardening magazines. Above all, it struck the visitor that the gardens were very natural both in design and in planting. There was an ease about them, a calmness, a feeling that they fit, that they didn't clash with their surroundings, that all was as it should be, that it was natural. Of course, this was nature contrived, designed and planted by Keith Wiley. His influences have always been taken from looking at how nature arranged its plants, how the plant communities formed, how plants intermingled and worked together and he sought to reproduce this effect at The Garden House. It strikes me, as I write, that it is odd that I am referring to The Garden House so much when it must now be about ten years since Keith Wiley left there and started a new garden only a short distance down the road. However, there is a very strong connection – Keith Wiley certainly developed his planting style while at The Garden House but it was only when he had his own garden that he could give these influences and preferences full rein. We visited both gardens in April 2009. Matt Bishop had taken over at The Garden House at that stage and, while he was beginning to put his own stamp on the place, undertaking some renewal and replanting, it still bore much of the naturalistic style Keith Wiley had developed over the years. However, it was no preparation for what we encountered on entering his garden at Wildside only five minutes away. It was a sight which immediately scrambled one's concept of what a garden was or should be. It was challenging, as is the phrase now used for such situations. It was mind blowing, mind boggling and utterly confusing. Well, it was to me at any rate while Mary immediately simply got what he was doing and thought it was the most amazing and brilliant idea she had seen in a garden in years.

Briefly, on taking over this site, Keith Wiley cleared off all the topsoil and then, with a mechanical digger, completely rearranged the contours and levels of the site into a series of meandering walks flanked by high, head high and above, banks on either side. The topsoil was then returned but not as an even layer on the garden but deep in some places to give great depth for trees, shrubs etc and shallow in others for those plants which like growing conditions mean and hungry. If you can imagine yourself in a very tight boreen or, closer to the reality, in a farm lane where the ditches are high and have the local hedgerow trees growing on top of the ditch so that you are in the planting, surrounded by it, immersed in it and all the levels and varying conditions from dry bank top, to damp base, to sunny side and shady side are all alongside you. Now, in your mind's eye remove our native vegetation, which was the source of inspiration for the planting, and replace it with the choicest range of plants and you have an idea of the gardens at Wildside. It is very difficult to give you an idea of what this garden is like; it is so different in design and planting to anything you have experienced to date. It is truly innovative and yet very natural as it copies

natural conditions and provides them for the chosen plants. The plant selection is, by the way, simply exquisite and each twist and turn of the pathways brings new treasures to awe and delight the visitor. It is a garden I am certain you would enjoy visiting but in the meantime we are fortunate that Keith Wiley will be visiting in October and will deliver a lecture to IGPS and A.G.S. members. I doubt if anybody who attends will imitate Keith Wiley's garden but I am certain nobody will fail to be impressed by his vision, flair and achievements.

Paddy Tobin

Thursday 6 December at 8pm a lecture by Patrick Quigley.

“Sanctuary Gardens – the garden as a sacred space, a place of refuge,”

Why do we garden? In theory it should be a burden – weeding, mowing, digging, down on hands and knees getting dirty, sore backs, hacks and cuts. And yet still we do it and find pleasure in it. This talk looks at our need to create a garden, to connect with nature through the growing and nurturing of plants and the special role that gardens have in our lives. It examines the importance of the garden as a Sacred Space in the major world religions and cultures - from the imagery of Eden, the Persian Paradise Gardens, the Islamic Garden, the Christian monastic garden to the meditative Zen gardens of the Far East. In various cultures through time and across the globe, the garden has been used as a sanctuary - a special place held sacred as a shrine to a deity or as a sacred memorial to the dead; and even in our modern society we still use gardens as special memorial spaces. In our secular society, this central role has moved from a religious theme towards a holistic healing theme where the garden has become a refuge, a place where we re-connect with the natural world with increasing emphasis on organic natural gardening and ecological balance. As people have become more in tune with the natural environment, the awareness of the healing effects on body and soul has led to an increase in the use of the garden as an essential part of a healing environment in hospitals, hospices and community sensory gardens. In our homes, we are using our gardens as places of respite and refuge from the pressures of modern living.

Anne-Marie Woods



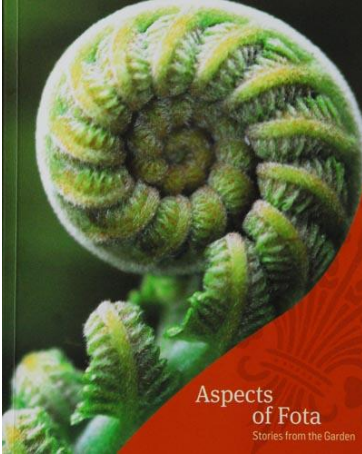
Garden Trip 2013 Glorious Gardens of Argyll

Andrena Duffin from the Northern group is organising a four-day trip to some of the magnificent gardens of Argyll on the West Coast of Scotland from Friday 24th to Monday 27th May 2013. This area of Scotland with its dramatic landscapes and rocky and indented coastline is influenced by the mild currents of the Gulf Stream and possesses some of the finest woodland gardens in the world, such as Benmore Botanic Gardens, An Cala, Ardmaddy, Crarae and Arduaine. Rhododendrons and azaleas dominate in the spring but there also are many fine tree and bulb collections. Full details will be available on request from Andrena Tel 028 9185 2668. Email duffin@riddell.co.uk or from Yvonne Penpraze :- Tel 028 9337 2032. Email yvonnepenpraze@gmail.com



Worth a Read by Paddy Tobin

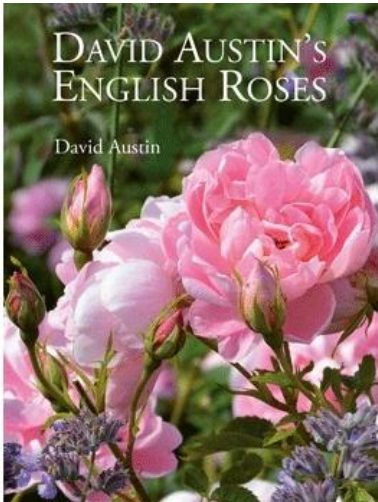
My holidays, garden visits, are generally preceded by a long period of planning and research and I find there is great enjoyment in this and that the holiday



itself is all the more enjoyable afterwards. It is rare in this research phase of the holiday to find all the information desired in one location but the Irish Heritage Trust has made a very valiant effort to do so in relation to Fota House and Gardens. I have to hand a copy of “Aspects of Fota” which is a collection of three publications: “Stories from the Big House”, “Stories from the Back Stairs” and “Stories from the Garden”. It was the latter which most interested me but the others were also interesting and would certainly enhance one’s visit to Fota. Despite thirty years or so of visiting the gardens I can say that “Stories from the Garden” was still very interesting and

added to my information about the garden and I will certainly appreciate the gardens all the more on subsequent visits. The books are on sale at Fota or may be sourced from Irish Heritage Trust at 11 Parnell St. Dublin 1 or through their website. When we visit somewhere frequently we are inclined to become familiar with it and imagine we know all there is to know about it but,

oftentimes, we have only seen the surface and appreciate little of what lies beneath. These books will bring greater depth to your future visits to Fota. Certainly, worth a read.



David Austin’s English roses have deservedly enjoyed huge popularity for many years now and a book which, after some short introductory chapters, describes about 120 of these beautiful plants is simply wonderful. In a sense this book might well be described as a very upmarket catalogue and, while it is that, it is of such a quality and beauty that it transcends that mundane description. The photographs illustrating the roses are

perfectly wonderful and the descriptions strike me as being so very honest and forthright, in the way a gardener would describe a plant to you, telling you of its faults as well as its good points, how it has done in this situation and not in that, how it looks well with such and such but not with another. I will add that Mary ordered some bare-rooted roses from David Austin's last winter and found both the service and the quality outstanding. With this book in hand I feel her orders may be bigger in the coming winter. [*David Austin's English Roses, David Austin, Garden Art Press, HB, 183pp, £15*]

I recall a recent comment that while there is an upsurge in interest in gardening, the traditional garden clubs are not benefiting from it; that the interest of younger gardeners is mainly in growing vegetables rather than ornamental plants. This trend seems to be reflected in the number of gardening books being published which now deal with vegetables.

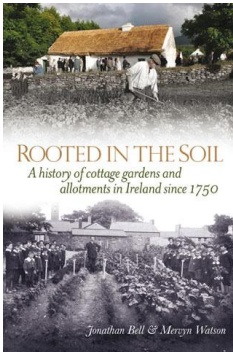


While, recently, vegetable growing has been enjoying one of its cyclical bouts of popularity, Joy Larkcom has been studying, researching, growing and writing about vegetable for forty years. While she has written several books and innumerable articles she will probably be best remembered for bringing gardeners attention to many varieties of vegetables previously uncommon in our gardens – rocket, purslane, endives, chicory – and for the cut-and-come-again method of growing many crops. Her market garden in East Anglia, as well as being a commercial enterprise, was where she championed organic gardening and experimented with growing methods.

Her grand vegetable tour around Europe in 1976 was the foundation of much of her subsequent work for there she witnessed and recorded a wide range of growing methods and collected a huge range of seeds, many quite rare. "Just Vegetating" is Joy Larkcom's recollection of a life's work using material she has written at various stages through her career all seamlessly joined into a cohesive unit by her reflections on these times.

Sometimes, at the end of reading a book a thought strikes me which sums up my feelings about it. With this book it was that I had read it very slowly, that all that had been written was valuable, worthwhile and interesting and that I appreciated the fact that I was reading the work of a genuine authority on the subject. All of Joy Larkcom's books were excellent; this one was special. [*Just Vegetating – A Memoir, Joy Larkcom, Frances Lincoln, 2012, HB 336, £19*]

“Rooted in the Soil – A History of Cottage Gardens and Allotments in Ireland since 1750” by Jonathan Bell and Mervyn Watson records the trends, attitudes and methods of small scale vegetable gardening in Ireland over the last 250 years. While it might seem basic that people would grow some potatoes, carrots, onions and the likes, it was remarkably interesting to read how the waves of interest in this occupation were linked to and influenced by larger social factors. Few of us grow vegetables nowadays simply to feed ourselves, yet we view it as an important part of our gardening – some see it as the central part – and so it was interesting to read the social context and cultural heritage which lead to this situation.

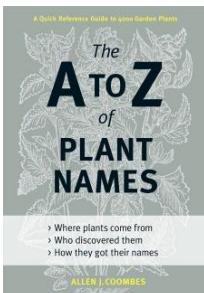


Before retirement, both authors worked at the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum, Jonathan as Head Curator and Mervyn as Curator of Agriculture and also co-wrote “A History of Irish Farming 1750 – 1950” (Dublin 2008) [*Rooted in the Soil - A History of Cottage Gardens and Allotments in Ireland since 1750, Jonathan Bell and Mervyn Watson, Four Courts Press, 2012, 240pp, HBC45, SBC25*]



This is a revision of Penelope Bennett’s guide to growing fruit, vegetables and herbs in a very small place. She gardens on a London rooftop in a space only 16 X 8 feet yet has managed to grow a very impressive range of produce. This is a book which will interest the beginner who wants to dabble in a little bit of this and a little bit of that making the best use of even the tiniest of spaces. I am at a loss to describe the writer’s style but will say it didn’t appeal to me. However, the book will be of interest and use to people who wish to garden in a similar situation.

[*Window-box Allotment, Penelope Bennett, Frances Lincoln, HB, 176pp, £17*]



Finally, Allen J. Coombes explains botanical names, giving the origins of the names, their meaning, the information we can glean from them, the common name and a little cultural comment on each. It is not a comprehensive listing but a selection of the most commonly grown plants. It is hardly a book one would sit and read cover to cover but it is interesting to read a few entries now and then or when a plant catches one’s attention. [*The A to Z of Plant Names, Allen J. Coombes, Timber Press, HB, 312pp, £13*]



Frederick James Nutty - An Appreciation

Frederick James Nutty (known as 'F.J.' or 'Fred' to his friends) was born in Clontarf, Dublin in 1925, to Frederick Nutty, a native born Dublin veteran of WWI and Emma Behan from a Republican family in Co Laois. He was the second of three children, preceded by a brother Robert and followed by a sister Marie. In his later life he fondly, recalled childhood adventures exploring the nearby natural beauty of the Bull Island and the Cliffs of Howth. He attended Coláiste Mhuire (Parnell Square) and subsequently the Albert College (Glasnevin) where he studied horticulture. Fred was not suited to the academic environment and left the Albert College without graduating. He chose to pursue his interest in all things natural at his own pace, following his in-built natural curiosity.

In 1959, Fred married Anne Hall with whom he celebrated 52 years of marriage. Together they had 4 children: Stiofán, Ann (Sr Fiachra), Martin and Ben. Also, in 1959 following employment on the Department of Agriculture's national allotment scheme and a short stint in a privately owned nursery in Co Limerick, Fred began full time employment with An Foras Taluntais, taking up the position of Station Manager in the newly founded Kinsealy Research Station. He subsequently rose to the position of Experimental Officer Grade 1, where his pioneering work in the propagation and production of hardy ornamental nursery stock earned him great respect in the national and UK industries. While working in this capacity he undertook a number of valuable conservation projects which ensured the survival of the celebrated *Betula jacquemontii* 'Trinity College' as well as a number of valuable and endangered plants in the National Botanic Gardens.

In 1968 Fred and Anne acquired a 4½ acre property at Mabestown near Malahide where they built a family home. While Fred worked fulltime in An Foras Taluntais, the family, under his direction, began a wholesale rose growing business. Production rose to approximately 38k bushes per year - a significant achievement by any standard. In the early 1970's however the demand for rose bushes significantly decreased, so Fred shifted the family business into wholesale containerized nursery stock and aquatic plant production. This shift ultimately led to the foundation of a retail operation known as Malahide Nurseries (now Plantagen) and became a destination for plant lovers from the length and breadth of Ireland.

Fred was well known for his ability to propagate a wide range of plants which were recognised as 'difficult' or 'impossible' and deployed this knowledge to provide customers with a diverse range of rare, unusual and much sought after plants.

He also had a gift for recognising spontaneous appearances of new plants and to his credit had a number of new introductions registered including *Pittosporum tenuifolium* 'Nutty's Leprechaun' (<http://dublinflora.blogspot.com/2009/10/pittosporum-tenuifolium-nuttys.html>) and *Aubretia deltoides* 'Mabestown'. As the nursery grew more successful, his daughter Ann, later joined by his son Stiofán, took over the operation of the business, leaving Fred to pursue his numerous other interests. The nursery was subsequently awarded the accolade of An Bord Glas 'National Garden Centre of the Year Award' in 1996 and was sold in 1998.

Fred was driven by an insatiable curiosity and became a self educated expert in a number of divergent fields which ranged from fishing, rough shooting, botany and egg collecting in his youth to horticulture, tropical and cold freshwater fish, native and foreign birds, bantam hens, orchids, beekeeping, violin making and Irish music. His friends often remarked that he'd forgotten more knowledge in his various fields of interest than most learned in the course of a lifetime!



Towards the end of his life Fred returned to his first love: plants. At the age of 85 he rebuilt a dilapidated greenhouse on the property, displaying his adeptness at both carpentry and glazing and used it to cultivate and expand a collection of Alpine plants. He also immersed himself in the world of snowdrops and became a true Galantophile. Indeed at the time of his death he had just embarked upon the exploration and cultivation of herbaceous plants, which undoubtedly would have provided much challenge and satisfaction if he had had the opportunity to pursue it.

Fred passed away quietly on March 7, 2012 at his home in Mabestown surrounded by his family. He is survived and greatly missed by his wide circle of friends and his family: wife Anne, children Stiofán – Garristown, Co. Dublin, Ann (Sr Fiachra) – Glencarin Abbey, Waterford, Martin – New York and Ben – Waterford City.



The Irish Garden Plant Society

Members of The National Committee 2012/13:

Chairman: Paddy Tobin, Waterford pmtobin@eircom.net or
[+353 5 185 7955](tel:+35351857955) and [+353 87 230 4555](tel:+353872304555).

Hon. Treasurer: Ricky Shannon, Blackrock Co Dublin Dublin
shannon.ricky2@gmail.com

Membership Secretary: Hilary Glenn, Dromore Co Down
hglenn@btinternet.com phone +44 28 9269 9859

Minutes Secretary: Maeve Bell, Belfast maeve.bell@btopenworld.com

Committee Member: Anne James, Dublin annejames@eircom.net

Leinster Representative: Anne-Marie Woods, Donabate Co Dublin
amwoods16@gmail.com

Munster Representative: Dan Murphy, Co Cork dan@ballinphellic.ie

Northern Representative: Patrick Quigley, Dunmurry, Belfast
patrick.quigley@live.co.uk

Membership Correspondence:
The Irish Garden Plant Society,
C/o The National Botanic Gardens,
Glasnevin,
Dublin 9.

Please note that staff at the Botanic Gardens cannot take telephone enquiries about the IGPS.

E-mail: igpsireland@aol.com

Website: www.irishgardenplantsociety.com