



Irish Garden Plant Society

Newsletter
February 2019

Our Contributors

E Charles Nelson, formerly Taxonomist at the National Botanic Gardens, is a founding member of the Society and its first Chairman. A prolific author, he was awarded the Veitch Memorial Medal by the RHS in 2015.

Brendan Sayers is Glasshouse Foreman at the National Botanic Gardens and long-standing member of the Society. Although a specialist in orchids, he has recently developed an interest in breeding daffodils.

Seamus O'Brien, Head Gardener at the National Botanic Gardens, Kilmacurragh, is a horticulturist, author and plantsman and has been a member of the Society for many years.

Mary Forest is Dean of the Faculty of Agriculture and a former Chairman of the Society. In the 1980s she prepared an inventory of trees and exotic plant collections in Ireland.

Brid Kelleher is a leading flower arranger, keen gardener and a member of the National Executive Committee.

Paddy Tobin is a retired teacher and enthusiastic blogger who gardens near Waterford. He is our website manager and a former Chairman of the Society.

Stephen Butler is the recently retired Curator of Horticulture at Dublin Zoo. He is a member of the National Executive Committee and spearheads the Society's activities to propagate and promote plants with Irish associations.

Cover Photograph by Paddy Tobin

Iris unguicularis 'Kilbroney Marble'

A winter flowering Iris thought to have been introduced by Slieve Donard Nursery, Newcastle, County Down. This is one of the society's target plants in its conservation programme and we would very much like to hear from any member growing this plant.

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Copy deadline for articles for the Spring 2019 edition will be 15th March 2019

Editorial

The Editor is delighted to welcome the Image Library for IGPS, which is currently in development by Philip Quinlan. We receive so many beautiful photographs, we aim to stock an Image Library with suitable photographs for reference/instruction and pleasure. It seems to me that these two essentials have always been reflected in pictures of plants once the utilitarian 'Herbal' with its generic woodcuts was superseded by realistic images.

A while ago, I was lucky enough to pick up a copy of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Botany: A Study of Pure Curiosity* which is a facsimile of the 1821 edition with Redouté illustrations. Rousseau adored 'botanising' and the book, unpublished in his lifetime, contains a series of letters to a young girl of fifteen (whose 'intelligence & judgement were far greater than her age, and equal to the excellence of her heart' as he wrote to her mother) to introduce her to the delight of botany. I enjoyed reading the letters, but the greater pleasure for me certainly lies in the beautiful plant portraits by Redouté. You most probably know his famous collection of rose portraits. However, this odd little book of instruction and pleasure contains quite superb illustrations of the commonest of wild flowers: here is Horehound (*Marrubium*

vulgare) drawn so exquisitely that you can almost feel the down on the leaves; and a whole page of Compositae from dandelion and thistle flower heads, down to details of their ovaries and calyxes. The combination of learning with delight is, I think, exactly what Rousseau had in mind.

I hope that the IGPS Image Library will accomplish both of these things as well. Of course, although photographs may be the most reliable of records, it is actually very difficult to make a 'Plant Portrait' with the camera, I think. I offer this as a challenge to all IGPS members: see if you can conjure up the essential plant for the new Library. The success of botanical artists in this work is almost impossible to match, I fear - but that is the challenge! We look forward to collecting a beautiful and instructive library of images, especially of Irish Heritage Plants, so remember to bring your cameras wherever you go.

Mary Montaut

Editor

2019 AGM Announcement

Annual General Meeting May 2019

The 2019 AGM will be held this year in County Tipperary on the weekend of 18th and 19th May. We will be based in the beautiful 4* Minella Hotel in Clonmel, the county town of Tipperary, on the banks of the River Suir.

Clonmel is an historic and attractive town. The River Suir has played a big part in its history, especially after it was made navigable as far as Waterford in the mid 18th century allowing large vessels to reach the town. The transport revolutionary, Charles Biancone, was once Mayor of Clonmel; fittingly there is a transport museum in the town where you can explore and learn some more. At St Mary's Church, which dates back to the early 14th century, some of the original town walls can still be found while other buildings of note in the town are the Main Guard, the Town Hall, the Franciscan Friary and the old Wesleyan Chapel which now houses the White Memorial Theatre.

Garden Visits

Our first visit on Saturday is to a well-established garden with fine specimens of small trees and flowering shrubs; the current owner has gardened there for some 45 years. The second garden on Saturday, Ballyhist House which has been featured in The Irish Garden

magazine, shows how well one can manage on a windswept site; the garden, which has stunning views, features some beautiful stonework, a lily pond, pergola and courtyard garden.

Sunday is a day of contrasts. The first garden, just a 10 minute drive from our hotel, could be described as a 'walk on the wild side' but beautiful. The final visit is to Killurney, a one acre plant-lover's garden with a natural stream, a sunken garden, meandering paths taking you throughout hidden nooks and crannies, and a wonderful array of choice plants. Tea/coffee/scones will be provided to sustain us on our journeys home.

Accommodation

Please book directly with the Minella Hotel, Clonmel, telephone +353 (052) 612 2388 and mention the IGPS when booking to secure the discounted rate. A number of rooms are being held for us and will be available on a first come first served basis. NB: the hotel has stated that it will only take bookings by phone.

One night in a double/ twin room and the Gala dinner:
€100 per person sharing

Two nights B&B as above and one Gala Dinner: €150 per person sharing

Chairman's Notes

As we look forward to the promise of a new year, let's celebrate what a successful year we have just had.

Our editor, Mary Montaut, produced four instead of the usual three Newsletters, thanks to Anne James we published the 17th issue of *Moorea*, Paddy Tobin continued to maintain the website keeping it fresh and up to date while Ali Rochford sent out regular colourful and informative ebulletins.

Over 100 members and guests enjoyed the AGM weekend, the highest attendance for many years, resulting in new committee members and volunteers coming forward for a variety of projects.

The regional organisers treated us to an excellent programme of talks, plant sales and garden visits. A remarkable amount of hard work goes into organising these but, in the autumn, each of the three committees organised a special event to launch the book *In the Footsteps of Joseph Dalton Hooker* by our long-standing and distinguished member, Seamus O'Brien. The society was very pleased to give financial support towards its publication and our confidence in its worth is proven by book sales of over £6000.

Our volunteers at the Rectory Garden in the Ulster Folk Museum organised

an enjoyable Open Day and plant sale in the summer while, at Pogue's Entry, with extra volunteers and generous funding from Antrim and Newtownabbey Council, the garden has undergone a marked change.

Collections of Irish Heritage Plants (IHPs) have increased at both Blarney Castle Gardens and Glasnevin. Stephen Butler continues to lead the programme to conserve and propagate Irish cultivars and more members are recording their collections with him while Debbie Bailey has organised the annual seed exchange.

Membership Secretary Nichola Monk reports stable numbers of over 500; she is making progress on a new membership database while Diane Sprules is preparing the way to move to direct debit payments. Philip Quinlan has developed a prototype Image Library software package where we intend to collect and store quality photographs for use in our publications.

A great year and a great team thanks everyone



*Billy
McCone*

Chairman



Minella Hotel, Clonmel

One night in a single room and the Gala dinner: €135

Two nights B&B in a single room and one Gala dinner: €220

The cost of the AGM Gala dinner for non-residents is €35

Booking the weekend

The cost of weekend including the garden visits will be €80. Members may bring one guest, guests pay €90. Bookings will open on February 1st. Please book online if at all possible as it greatly reduces the workload of the organizing committee. A full information pack with the AGM papers, itinerary, detailed instructions to the venues, and suggestions for lunch on Saturday and Sunday will be available from Friday 17th May at the hotel reception. Registration times and further details will be confirmed in the April Newsletter.

Further information from igps. munster@gmail.com or Margaret McAuliffe, +353 (0)86 816 6842 or margaretandstephen@eircom.net

The Annual General Meeting

The meeting will be held on Saturday morning; attendance at the meeting is free to all members but please let us know for catering purposes if you plan to attend. There are a number of vacancies coming up on the committee so have a think about coming forward to join the team for what will be a busy and exciting time as we approach our 40th anniversary in 2021. The formal notice of the meeting and the draft agenda will appear in the April Newsletter as will registration times and further details. Get in touch through igps.ireland@gmail.com or phone Billy McCone +44 (0)7411 244568.

In the Footsteps of Joseph Dalton Hooker : A Sikkim adventure

Lectures and Launch

Compiled from reports by Janet Edwardes and Adrian Walsh

October was an important month for the Society with special events being organized in all three of our regions to mark the publication of a new book by Seamus O'Brien, *In the Footsteps of Joseph Dalton Hooker: A Sikkim adventure*, firstly at the National Botanic Gardens, Dublin and then at Fota House in East Cork, followed by the Old Courthouse in Antrim. Each very successful event comprised a lecture, refreshments and a book signing by the author.



Seamus O'Brien with Leinster Chair, Anne-Marie Woods, at the Book Launch in Dublin.

In his lectures, Seamus took us on a fascinating journey setting the scene with a brief history of Kilmacurragh house and gardens. When he took up his stewardship of Kilmacurragh, he soon became aware of the very many specimens of rhododendrons and other plants which had come from seed which Joseph Dalton Hooker had sent back from his travels through Sikkim.

He then introduced us to the life of Joseph Hooker, son of Sir William Hooker, in particular concentrating on the various expeditions he undertook. He brought to life the excitement and dangers that Hooker experienced on these expeditions and brought us up to date with his own experiences on the four expeditions he led retracing Hooker's travels in Sikkim. It is awe inspiring to think of the vast number of plants which were introduced at a time when travel was often dangerous and sending vulnerable plant material back home was not easy.

In Cork the event felt particularly special as it took place in Fota where more than likely plants were distributed from Hooker's original collections. In fact there were several Cork connections because some of the plants were grown very successfully at Gumbleton's garden, east of Cobh



Rhododendron montroseanum at Fota, IGPS Photo

and in attendance were several family descendants of Hooker himself.

Of particular interest in the Northern region was the information that Daniel Ferguson, Curator of Belfast Botanic Gardens, received seeds of *Rhododendron madenii* and miscellaneous lots of Sikkim seedlings. Ferguson grew rhododendrons in the Palm House in Belfast Botanic Gardens and the Belfast consignment included among others *Rhododendron grande*, *R. thomsonii*, *R. cinnabarinum* Roylei Group, as well as *R. madenii*.

Our gardens in Ireland would be so much poorer without the wonderful range of plants that

Hooker discovered and introduced. It was appropriate that, in retracing Hooker's footsteps, Seamus and his team discovered a new natural rhododendron hybrid. Named as *Rhododendron x thupdenii*, after their Tibetan guide Thupden Tsering, this hybrid has *Rhododendron hodgsonii* and *Rhododendron wightii* as its parents.

Members greatly appreciated that Seamus gave freely of his time both before and after his riveting lecture, talking to members and signing copies of his book. A great plantsman speaking about a great plantsman.

Seamus O'Brien, *In the Footsteps of Joseph Dalton Hooker – A Sikkim Adventure*, Kew Publishing, 2018, Hardback, 324 pages, £40

IRIS PALLIDA ‘PHYLIS MOORE’: PROBABLE SYNONYMY

E. Charles Nelson & Brendan Sayers

In the early 1980s, in season, David Shackleton would draw attention to a fine blue Iris looking very much like a clone of *Iris pallida* (*syn. I. dalmatica*) with peculiar but highly attractive sky-blue flowers. Each bloom was flat, without erect standards – a normal *Iris*, such as the native wild flag, has flowers comprising three spreading falls and three erect standards. Among those who saw and admired this plant was Graham Stuart Thomas who took material to England to grow in his own garden at Woking in Surrey.

Enquiries among iris experts and enthusiasts, by Graham and others, only resulted in negative answers. No one knew the plant and thus no one knew what its name should be, presuming it had been named at some time in the past.

David Shackleton had acquired the iris from Lady Moore’s garden, Willbrook, in Rathfarnham, and he did not have any name for the clone. It is quite possible he had it labelled something like “Iris Lady Moore”. Otherwise, the iris was anonymous.

In those times, unless there were some strong clues and someone remembered an old cultivar, finding any further information, or a name, was worse than searching for a needle in a haystack. As the plant is a good, garden-worthy iris, a name was needed, and so from 1995 onwards, this Willbrook iris was called ‘Phylis Moore’. The name was first used in *The Irish Garden* 5 (3: May–June): 34 (see also 6 (8:October): 36–38; 17 (1: January): 54–56), and the cultivar was included in *A heritage of beauty* (Nelson 2000: 120) as an Irish one.

Nowadays, with internet databases of all kinds, identifying old cultivars is a little more easy but still very much a matter of happenstance. While researching possibilities for inclusion and illustration in the joint project *Heritage Irish Plants – Plandaí Oidhreacht* by the Irish Garden Plant Society and the Irish Society of Botanical Artists, Brendan Sayers noted an online message (dated May 2005) from Sterling Okase (USA) questioning if the iris cultivar called ‘Phylis Moore’ (as “*I. pallida* ‘Lady Phyllis Moore’ [sic]) and ‘Clematis’ were one and the same.

Indeed, ‘Phylis Moore’ and ‘Clematis’ do share the same flower colour, markings on the lower parts of the falls and overall morphology – usually (but not always) flat, rather like the flower of a clematis. In 1919, ‘Clematis’ was described thus (Anonymous 1919: 296): “A rather unusual form was seen in the variety Clematis, for instead of having a well-defined standard, the segments hang down as in the falls, and, moreover, the standard segments have beards so that the flower must be regarded as an abnormality. The effect was that of a more regular flower than is usual in Irises, and it is from this fact that the name Clematis was given to it.”

We cannot yet say that ‘Clematis’ and ‘Phylis Moore’ are indistinguishable – and thus the same cultivar – because that requires comparison of living plants of each after they have been cultivated side by side in the same conditions (soil and climate) for at least a year. After such comparison has been made, however, it is our opinion that ‘Phylis Moore’ will be proven to be ‘Clematis’, and so the later name (‘Phylis Moore’) has to be relegated to synonymy under ‘Clematis’, the earliest one.

‘Clematis’ was raised by Arthur John Bliss (1859–1931), a reclusive English plantsman who lived in chaotic conditions at Morwellham Quay

in Devon (Milner 2016), where he hybridized daffodils and gladioli as well as irises. We know of no direct connection between Bliss and the Moores of Rathfarnham, and there is no indication in the scant information about the collections at Willbrook that the Moores grew his irises. That, of course, proves nothing. Lady Moore had an “eye” for a good plant, and there can be no doubt that *Iris* ‘Clematis’ is such a thing.

In *The Garden* in 1923, the renowned expert on *Iris*, W. R. Dykes noted that “Seedlings of [*Iris*] *pallida* not infrequently appear with some or all of the “standards” changed in form ...”. He refuted the notion that irises with a “flat form of flower” were hybrids involving the Japanese species, *Iris ensata* (formerly *I. kaempferi*), and invited Bliss to comment. Bliss did so, pointing out that ‘Clematis’ had been raised from ‘Cordelia’ x ‘Princess Beatrice’: “It was the only one of the batch of seedlings of the cross which displayed this form [in which all six petals reflex].” Bliss added that ‘Clematis’ was the most perfect example of this variant.

Notes

Lady Moore's Christian name only has one "l": she was *not Phyllis*.

The cultivar name, in accord with the *International code of nomenclature for cultivated plants (ICNCP)* then applying, did not include her title: it was simply 'Phyllis Moore', and not the doubly erroneous "Lady Phyllis Moore" (used by Russell (2003), and subsequent writers), nor 'Lady Phyllis'.

'Lady Phyllis' is the name for a tall bearded iris – "Midseason bloom. Colour Class B1L." – introduced by W. W. Neel, 1932 (The American Iris Society Iris Encyclopedia URL <http://wiki.irises.org/bin/rdiff/TbKthruO/TbLadyPhyllis> accessed 25 October 2018). It has no connection with 'Clematis' and so should not be confused with 'Phyllis Moore'.

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The British-Irish Botanical Expedition to Tasmania (BIBET) 2018

Seamus O'Brien

In recent years Kilmacurragh has seen a flood of new, mostly wild-origin trees and shrubs, sourced from across the globe. Some of these plants have come to us through collaborative projects with the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, and the Royal Botanic Gardens, Edinburgh, while our most recent acquisitions arrived earlier this spring from Tasmania.

I had previously travelled in Tasmania in 2011 with staff from the Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens (RTBG) in Hobart. Knowing this, Stephen Herrington, Head Gardener at Nymans in Sussex, asked if I might be interested in helping to organise a botanical expedition to Tasmania in 2018. The answer was of course a resounding yes and so, once dates were agreed, I made contact with James Wood, the Seed Bank coordinator at the Tasmanian Seed Conservation Centre and Natalie Thapson, the RTBG's very enthusiastic Horticultural Taxonomist.

Kilmacurragh has long been famed for its southern hemisphere conifers, particularly *Athrotaxis*, a relict genus that is endemic to Tasmania. Thomas Acton was one of the earliest cultivators of both the King Billy pine, *Athrotaxis selaginoides* and

the pencil pine, *Athrotaxis cupressoides* and their naturally occurring hybrid, *Athrotaxis x laxifolia*. The passage of time, old age and storms have felled several of our Tasmanian veterans and so I welcomed the opportunity to visit Van Diemen's Land for the purpose of rebuilding our southern hemisphere collections.

The historic National Trust garden at Nymans has equally strong ties with Tasmania. In 1930, their Head Gardener, Harold Frederick Comber (1897-1969) visited Tasmania, to collect for a syndicate of wealthy British gardeners arranged by the owner of Nymans, Leonard Messell (1872-1953) and by Lionel de Rothschild (1882-1942), then enthusiastically developing his garden at Exbury House in Hampshire on an extraordinary scale. Comber's collections from Tasmania, and from his earlier Andean Expedition, were raised at the National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin during the 1920s and '30s.

Our team therefore consisted of members of staff from Nymans, the National Botanic Gardens of Wales, Mount Stewart in Co. Down, the National Botanic Gardens, Kilmacurragh and Coolcarrigan

House and Gardens near Naas, Co. Kildare. On my suggestion the expedition came to be known as the British-Irish Botanical Expedition to Tasmania (BIBET) and just before our departure the Government of Tasmania granted permits for our group to collect seeds and herbarium specimens of non-threatened taxa. The permits also allowed us to collect material for the International Conifer Conservation Programme at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Edinburgh (in which the NBG, Kilmacurragh collaborates) and to collect duplicate sets of herbarium specimens for the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew and the National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin.

The BIBET trip was timed for early January, and, having rung in the New Year, the team met in Melbourne Airport and spent a day gathering equipment and provisions in Hobart. From the island's capital we made our way to the Tasmanian Lake Country, in the Central Highlands, using the small town of Miena as our initial base.

Tasmania's Central Plateau can see major falls of snow, even in summer time, and so any plants growing there are undoubtedly hardy in coastal gardens like Kilmacurragh. One of the most important trees in this area is the Miena cider gum, *Eucalyptus gunnii* subsp. *divaricata*. A tree of about 15 metres tall, its habit is quite different from the more commonly encountered *Eucalyptus gunnii* and can be quickly recognised by its

heavily divaricated (forked) branch system and its broader juvenile and adult leaves and the greater degree of glaucousness that extends from juvenile and adult leaves onto young stems, flower buds and capsules. Exceptionally frost tolerant, this striking eucalypt is an extreme local endemic and only occurs on the southern end of the Great Lake and Tods Corner where it integrates clinally with *Eucalyptus gunnii* and *Eucalyptus archeri*.

The Miena cider gum is a woodland tree that has evolved to grow on the edges of treeless flats in poorly drained frost hollows that are exposed to early morning sun, both of which increase the damaging effects of frost, though in winter these hollows tend to be covered by cloud and mist. It has been used in breeding programmes in Australia and other parts of the world because of its exceptional frost resistance.



Eucalyptus gunnii subsp. *divaricata*.
(Miena Cider Gum)

Sceptics of climate change might change their opinions on seeing this tree. In recent times, this incredibly handsome tree has become endangered as a direct result of climate change (there has been a 1.5°C increase in the mean daily maximum temperature in this area between 1945 and 1995). It is thought that the long-term effect of global warming (combined with decreased rainfall, droughts and reduction of frost) on the Tasmanian eucalypt gene pool will be the loss of resistance to extreme frost.

Most of the trees we saw were dead gnarled giants silhouetted against an intensely blue antipodean sky. Strangely, in death they made an impressive sight, old veterans with heavy horse chestnut like limbs, in habit quite unlike any of the other Australian gum trees. The Miena cider gum is the most palatable species of all the eucalypts. Climate change with associated prolonged drought means it now leafs up earlier than ever and it is quickly stripped by insects and possums which find both its sap and foliage highly edible.

This tree was already well known to Tasmanian aboriginal hunters before the European colonisation of Tasmania. Producing a sweet sap, similar to maple syrup, once bottled and capped, the sap quickly ferments producing a drink similar to apple cider, hence the common name and this intoxicating sap was popular with the now sadly extinct

Tasmanian Aboriginal peoples.

This is thought to be the first record of a pre-European use of an alcoholic beverage in Australia. This sweet sap is also a welcome source of food for native marsupials, birds and insects. Following heavy browsing by insects a copious flow of sap covers the ground beneath trees with a carpet of manna pellets. Flocks of parakeets can be seen in a drunken state feeding on the manna and drinking from pools of sap.



Miena Cider Gum

Only eight small stands of this tree now remain, covering a few hundred hectares. Twenty years ago only 2000 trees were setting seeds; the population has plummeted

since, mainly due to warming weather, grazing and browsing by sheep, wild deer, brushtail possums, rabbits and insects and the tree's intolerance to drought and frequent fires. The cessation of the possum fur trade has increased browsing pressure beyond what many of the older trees support and increased nesting sites have meant the complete stripping of epicormic growths when re-growth does occur. Humans have had an impact on numbers too, in the last twenty years mature trees were felled when the level of the Great Lake was raised and roadside trees were felled.

Two of the largest populations representing the most extreme forms of the Miena cider gum have fared worst, with trees stressed to such a state that they are no longer setting seeds and with most mature trees now dead; those that resprout are quickly eaten by possums. The stands closest to Miena (the type locality) exhibit the greatest degree of extreme morphology within the subspecies; sadly this forest has also seen the greatest decline with an estimated 60% of mature trees having died in the last ten years. Mature trees have now seen a severe loss in reproductive capacity and seedlings are rare due to increasingly severe drought and over-grazing. Left unchecked the forests of Miena cider gums will disappear to be replaced by grassland. It is thought that in our

lifetime the Miena cider gum will face definite extinction.

While we travelled with colleagues from the Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens, we discussed the possibilities of developing ex-situ populations of the Miena cider gum in British and Irish gardens and it's believed this may be the only means at present of preventing the tree's total extinction. Sadly, such are the times we live in.

To reach these endangered gums our journey took us from Hobart to the Central Highlands meeting our first populations on the Plains of Saint Patrick and by the Shannon Lagoon (the latter fed by the Shannon River). Driving past the Liffey Falls led to some suspicion between myself and Robert Wilson-Wright that we were not the first Irishmen to cross these plains. On later travels we drove out the road to Longford, passed Lake Rowallan (without the 'e') and resisted the temptation to drive out to the Plains of Dublin. These places, it seems, were christened by the Irish Land Commissioner, Roderic O'Connor (1784-1860), who had previously managed his father's estate at Dangan Castle in Co. Meath, the childhood home of the Duke of Wellington. The O'Connors claimed lineal descent from Ruaidrí Ua Conchobair (Roderick O'Connor), the last High King of Ireland, after whom the commissioner was named. Roderic O'Connor emigrated to Van

Diemen's Land in 1824, building up an estate of over 70,000 acres. He built a mansion near Cressy, naming it Connorville after another family seat in Co. Cork.

Irish people were among the earliest settlers in Tasmania, whether transported as political prisoners or as the new elite, wealthy settlers who bought vast tracts of land and forged new estates down under. Another of these was William Talbot (1784-1845), the youngest son of Richard Talbot, of Malahide Castle in Dublin. Talbot was granted 3,000 acres in 1824 by Lieutenant Governor George Arthur (1784-1854), infamous for the ethnic cleansing of Aboriginal peoples in Tasmania that happened under his governorship. Talbot's lands were located at Fingal (surveyed in the same year by Roderic O'Connor) and he named his estate (once over 40,000 acres and now covering 21,600 acres) Malahide, after his father's property in Ireland. In 1948 the Irish Malahide was inherited by Milo John Reginald Talbot, 7th Baron Talbot de Malahide (1912-1973) who famously sponsored the publication of the six-volume *The Endemic Flora of Tasmania*, one of the most important florilegia of the 20th century. In 1961 Lord Talbot commissioned the Australian botanical artist, Margaret Stones (b. 1920) to produce 35 watercolours of Tasmanian endemic plants.

This was to be the genesis of *The Endemic Flora of Tasmania*, which made Margaret Stones famous. The work was produced between 1967 and 1978 illustrating 254 Tasmanian endemics with notes by the island's most prolific botanist, Winifred Curtis (1905-2005). Stones was then based at Kew and did most of the artwork from her home, from plants collected by Milo Talbot, Winifred Curtis and other field botanists that were sent from Tasmania by air in Tupperware containers. Lord Talbot, who grew many Tasmanian plants in his Dublin garden, did not live to see the publication of the last two volumes, but the work was completed by his sister Rose, who, after the sale of Malahide Castle, retired to the Tasmanian Malahide.

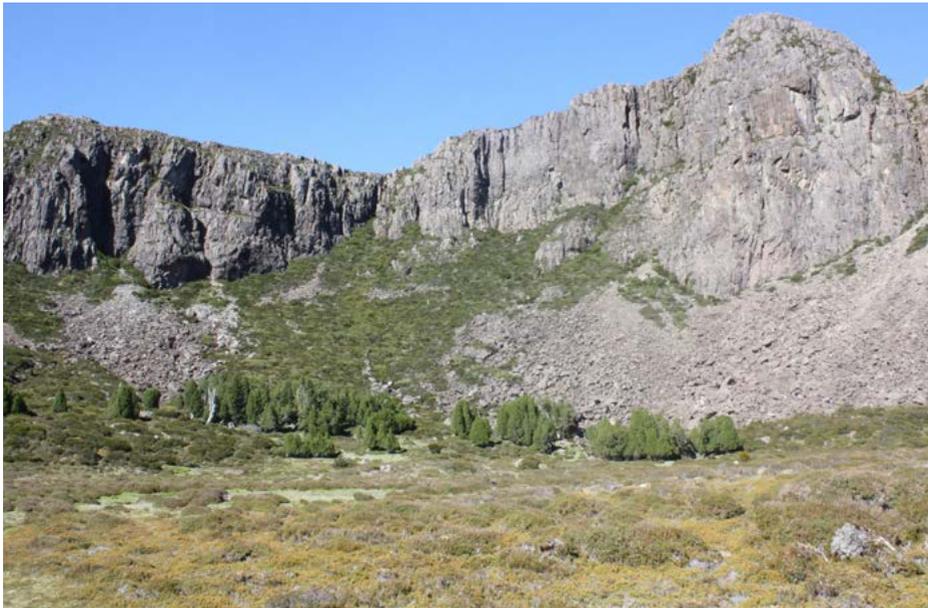
Lord Talbot's greatest memorials are this publication and his garden at Malahide Castle. In Tasmania he is commemorated in *Geum talbotianum*, a spectacular white flowered alpine species named by his collaborator, Winifred Curtis in 1974. When describing this species (known as the Tasmanian snowrose), Curtis wrote, 'It is appropriate that the species should be named in honour of Lord Talbot de Malahide whose enthusiasm in the collection and cultivation of Tasmanian plants led him to sponsor *The Endemic Flora of Tasmania*.'

Highlights of the British-Irish Botanical Expedition to Tasmania are hard to enumerate, though those that come instantly to mind are the lakes, tarns and great forests of pencil pines, *Athrotaxis cupressoides* in the Walls of Jerusalem National Park and the mammoth King Billy pines, *Athrotaxis selaginoides*, named not for King William of Orange, but William Lanne (c. 1835-1869) the last 'full-blooded' Tasmanian Aboriginal man, who in death, met a rather grizzly and irreverent end. Following his passing, Lanne's corpse was dismembered and used for scientific purposes. A row broke out between the Royal College of Surgeons of England and the Royal Society of

Tasmania over who should gain possession of his skeleton.

A member of the English College of Surgeons broke into the morgue where Lanne's body was being kept and decapitated the body, stealing his skull and replacing it with the skull from a white body. Their Tasmanian counterparts then proceeded to amputate his hands and feet to prevent further thefts and Lanne was buried in this state, a shocking disregard for the last male member of a race of native peoples then driven into extinction at the hands of English and Irish colonial settlers. King Billy, the last of his people, came to mind when we reached Cradle Mountain

Pencil Pines



National Park, where on the shores of Dove Lake, we encountered mammoth King Billy pines, some estimated to be over a thousand years old. There it grew in wet-temperate forest full of tree ferns, celery-topped pines and banksias bedecked in golden candle-like blooms.

We had also arrived in time to catch Tasmania's two endemic *Eucryphia* species in full bloom – *E. lucida* and *E. milliganii* – and on the edge of Hartz Mountain National Park (where both species occur together) we found their progeny, *E. x hybrida*, with flowers and foliage intermediate between the parents. This rare hybrid, unknown to our Tasmanian hosts, was discovered by Harold Comber and though

virtually unknown in European gardens, there is a good young tree at Castlewellan in Co. Down. Our Van Diemen's Land travels yielded 254 seeds and herbarium specimens, now distributed across Britain and Ireland, and, alongside seeds received from the Royal Tasmanian Botanical Garden's seedbank, will do much to replenish Kilmacurragh's southern hemisphere collections and those at Coolcarrigan, Mount Stewart, the National Botanic Gardens of Wales, Nymans, the RBG, Kew and the RBG, Edinburgh.

Print of Malahide, Tasmania



Remembrance Day at Kilmacurragh, 11th November 2018

Mary Montaut



Seamus O'Brien with Ball-Acton family portraits

To mark the Centenary of the ending of the Great War - 'at the eleventh hour on the eleventh day of the eleventh month' of the year 1918 - a tree planting ceremony was held at the National Botanic Gardens Kilmacurragh, led by Seamus O'Brien. It was a beautiful day, sunny and chilly - November at its rare best - and the large crowd of about a hundred people gathered at the site chosen for the planting of the 'Verdun Oak', grown from a descendent of an acorn actually gathered in Verdun a hundred years ago.

Seamus spoke movingly about the losses of Irishmen in the conflict, including very heavy losses to the

Annesley Ball-Acton family who then owned the estate with its superb collection of trees and shrubs. They had owned the estate since the end of the seventeenth century, and the gardens had been successively developed until the twentieth century. Close links with the prominent botanists of the day meant that the collection contained many very rare and special trees, collected by well-known Irish plant collectors in the nineteenth century especially. The family's friendship with the Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens at Glasnevin (as it was then) Dr. David Moore ensured that Kilmacurragh received newly collected seed and other plant material at the same time as the other Royal Botanic, and

Seamus pointed out to us that many of the specimens grew much better at Kilmacurragh than at Glasnevin, owing to the depth of 'brown earth' compared with the Dublin site.

The tragic loss of two generations of family members, as well as many of the gardeners from the estate, meant that the estate at Kilmacurragh was driven into bankruptcy, leaving the widowed Mrs Annesley Ball-Acton and her young son penniless. Over the ensuing period, the gardens fell into severe neglect and the huge value of the rare trees which survived there was only recognized again when they were brought under the aegis of the National Botanic Gardens at Glasnevin.

The Director of Glasnevin, Sir Frederick Moore (who was the son of Dr. David Moore) had, with foresight and devotion, kept a watching brief on the collection at Kilmacurragh throughout this period, though until the National Botanic Gardens took over in 1996, nothing could be done to restore the gardens themselves. The tradition of planting 'remarkable' trees at Kilmacurragh continued with the planting of the Verdun Oak (*Quercus petraea*) as a living memorial to the dead, by Aidan Davies (son of Sir David Davies of Abbey Leix House) who came from London specially for the ceremony. Other distinguished plantsmen then helped to firm the young tree into its new home, and the ceremony



Billy McCone and Seamus O'Brien planting the Verdun Oak

Seamus took us on a poignant walk through the gardens, introducing us to many of the trees as if they were his personal friends. I cannot do justice to the depth and breadth of his knowledge in this short piece, but we were treated to a virtuoso performance. I will single out just one example, as it was so touching: Seamus pointed out a group of *Ginkgo biloba* trees visible beyond the wall beside the main herbaceous border. These elegant trees were looking their best, with their clear yellow autumn leaves and the bright blue sky beyond. He told us that these trees

had been temporarily planted to grow on in the walled garden, to be ultimately transplanted into the arboretum and gardens, when the Annesley Ball-Actons had to leave Kilmacurragh. As a result of the war the ginkgos never made it out of the walled garden, though they miraculously survived all through the long period of neglect. Now they form an unofficial memorial to the people who died in the Great War.

Seamus encouraged us all to come back and see the wonderful *Magnolia campbellii* - a native of Sikkim, I believe. He admitted this may be his favourite of all the extraordinary and rare collection. A spring visit is highly recommended.

[As an aside, I remember coming to Kilmacurragh the first time in about 1996 with the IGPS, on a very wet Saturday, and sloshing through the undergrowth to view the magnificent trees, absolutely enraptured by the place. There was something very magical about a 'forgotten garden', but I may honestly say that Kilmacurragh restored has lost none of its magic.]



Seamus with Aidan Davies



Lake View at Kilmacurragh

When in Rome - a visit to the Museo Orto Botanico

Mary Forrest

A comment of a nice botanic garden from Stephen Butler, prompted Mary Forrest to visit the botanic gardens in Rome

The Museo Orto Botanico (Botanical Garden Museum) is part of the Sapienza Università di Roma and is located in the city between Trastevere and the Vatican. Situated on the Gianicolo hill, one of the seven hills of Rome, from its upper slopes there are commanding views of the city. The overall impression of the gardens is one of greenery, large leaved evergreen and deciduous trees and palms with enormous leaves and pillar-like trunks under planted with grass and low growing flowers. Generally the flowers and seed/fruit too were green in colour. Within the 12ha Orto Botanico, there are collections of Mediterranean trees, conifers, ferns, palms and grapevines, a rose garden and a Japanese garden. An extensive rock garden is under reconstruction. Three spectacular historic fountains connect with the previous landscape history of the site, a garden of the nearby Palazzo Corsini.

For a visitor from Ireland, the collection of plants could be divided into 'readily recognisable'

- commonly cultivated in Ireland; 'somewhat familiar' - related species grow in Ireland; and 'most unusual' - Mediterranean or subtropical plants, not cultivated outdoors in Ireland.

Some trees were familiar: *Cedrus deodara* (Deodar Cedar) with drooping foliage even more pronounced than in Ireland or England, *Quercus ilex* (Evergreen Oak), casting deep shade, massive *Acer pseudoplatanus* (Sycamore), *Platanus orientalis* and *Platanus x hispanica* (Plane). *Parrotia persica* (Persian Ironwood) by the main gate in the Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin makes a wide spreading shrub. In contrast the specimen in the Orto Botanico forms a tall tree. At first sight its yellow flaking trunk suggested a Plane tree, but from one look at the elliptically shaped leaves, it was *Parrotia*. Another Glasnevin - associated plant, *Cortaderia selloana* (Pampas grass) was planted in a lawn where it formed a large mound of greyish green long narrow leaves. In the 1840s the Director, David Moore, having successfully grown seed gathered in the Argentinian pampas by John Tweedie, distributed plants to other botanic gardens. One wonders if this plant had any 'Irish ancestry'.

Some genera were somewhat familiar as their more hardy species grow outdoors in Ireland. *Osmanthus fragrans* with evergreen foliage is tender in Ireland. Even without their fragrant white flowers, the large glossy green leaves were attractive as they glistened in the Roman sun. *Ligustrum lucidum* is in all respects like the common privet but with larger flower heads and glossy green leaves. In Rome it is also cultivated as a hedge and as a street tree. *Zelkova sinica* with distinctive orange patches on the trunk, this is in contrast to the grey smooth trunk of *Zelkova carpinifolia*, which stands sentinel by the Herbarium in Glasnevin. Though *Zelkova sinica* occurs in Irish tree collections, it deserves to be more widely planted. Native and introduced Ash (*Fraxinus*) trees are common in Irish gardens and parks. Based on their growth in Rome, two Ash, *Fraxinus americana*, a stately parkland tree and *Fraxinus sordiana*, a medium sized tree, warrant cultivation in Irish gardens.

Palm Trees were the most architecturally striking trees in the Garden. *Chamaerops humilis*, while this European palm can grow in well sheltered gardens in Ireland, is truly at home in Rome where it formed a large mass of intertwined branches and spikey fan shaped leaves. *Dasyllirion acrotichum* from Mexico has a similar habit but with long narrow long strap-like leaves with 'barbs' along the stem, together the leaves form a large spikey

pompom. The stateliest of the Palms were *Phoenix dactylifera* (Date Palm) and *P. canariensis* of which there is a specimen in Fota, Co. Cork, and *Washingtonia filifera*. The *Washingtonia* leaves being well out of reach, the informative label stated that the petiole was 1 - 2 m long with a 2m long blade divided 50 - 70 segments, creating a wide fan shape. The label also noted that the species is designated 'near threatened' on the IUCN Threatened Plant List.

Among the 'unusual' shrubs and trees unlikely to thrive outdoors in Ireland, were *Manihot grahamii* and *Boehmeria nivea*. *Manihot grahamii* (Euphorbiaceae), native to South America, has an attractive elegant open habit with green digitate leaves (not unlike *Euphorbia mellifera* the shrubby spurge). The yellow bell-like flowers are succeeded by round green fruit, similar in size to a cherry tomato. *Boehmeria nivea* (Utricaceae) is a shrub with green triangular shaped leaves, white beneath and soft with greenish nettle-like flowers held in clusters around the stem. In habit it looked like *Buddleia davidii*, Butterfly Bush and appeared suitable for coppicing too. *Flueggea suffruticosa* (Phyllanthaceae) is a free standing medium sized shrub or small tree, reminiscent in habit of *Caragana arborescens* but with pendulous stems, entire leaves and small round stalked fruits borne in late summer. It looked like the ideal tree for a small Roman courtyard

or balcony. *Cocculus laurifolius* (Menispermaceae), while the specific name suggests foliage like Bay Laurel, has foliage which is longer with prominent veins, reminiscent of the evergreen *Clematis armandii*. This medium sized tree is available from specialist nurseries in Ireland and England.

In contrast *Firmiana*, *Phytolacca* and *Cinnamomum* formed large limbed trees, the North American term 'shade tree' being an apt description. *Firmiana simplex* (Sterculiaceae) is a large tree with striated bark and 25 - 30cm broad 3 - 5 lobed green leaves. The lantern-like large seed pods, a distinctive feature, split open into petal-like segments. It was recorded in gardens in the south west of Ireland; perhaps with summers like 2018 it might become more common. Shiny green ovate leaves are a distinctive feature of *Phytolacca dioica* a South American tree with yellow semi-pendulous flower spikes. A large bulky tree related to *Phytolacca americana*, Pokeweed, an herbaceous plant with distinctive maroon berries, grown in some Irish gardens. *Cinnamomum glanduliferum*, False Camphor, is a large tree with rough dark brown bark and elliptic green leaves.

The conifer collection included familiar trees of *Sequoiadendron giganteum* (Giant Redwood), some less common *Podocarpus* (Plum Fruited Yew) and *Pinus* (Pine). These genera grow in Ireland, as does the

Wollemi Pine, *Wollemia nobilis* which was discovered in the wild in Wollemi National Park, near Sydney in 1994. The specimen formed a tall slim erect columnar tree about 5m tall with dark green foliage. It was a thrill to see it in flower with male slender catkins hanging from the tips of the mid to upper branches and female green egg shaped maturing cones, extending from the uppermost branches. The bark is rusty brown, knurled as in *Araucaria* (Monkey Puzzle).

The Museo Orto Botanico is as some guidebooks say, 'worth a detour'.



Wollemia nobilis,
male and female catkins

Irish Heritage Plants Update, December 2018

Stephen Butler, Irish Heritage Plants Coordinator

The last few months have seen me updating our spreadsheet of IHPs, many completely new entries, always good to have that, and lots of updates from various gardens and members. Very many thanks and well done to all those who have responded. At the end of the day all I have is a list, the plants are out there in gardens all over Ireland, a very dispersed collection indeed!

I can now throw lots more numbers around, a benchmark for where we are at the moment, with the caveat that there is potentially many a slip. My mum (Yorkshire) always said there's many a slip twixt cup and lip. My dad (Essex) said there's many a slip twixt dress and drawers. Which maybe says more about the people in Essex...

Now, number crunching:

- 1335** total number of spreadsheet entries; many plants have multiple growers of course.
- 598** total number of Irish Heritage Plants listed as grown in Ireland.
- 208** IHPs grown by members but not generally available in trade (as in Plant Finder

– the simplest benchmark). That's a remarkable amount of material being safeguarded, and shows the value of the IGPS in championing such plant conservation. Well done everyone!

- 155** IHPs grown by members that are listed in only one nursery (Plant Finder again) for sale, with obvious potential to be dropped off their lists,
- 129** IHPs listed in Plant Finder over the years, but not in the latest issue, no longer available, and this number will increase yearly, I fear.
- 200** IHPs that are not listed in Charles Nelson's *A Heritage of Beauty* i.e. new cultivars selected or bred since that book's publication 18 years ago.
- 339** IHPs in trade (again Plant Finder as benchmark) but not listed as being grown by anyone in Ireland. That may not mean they are not here of course, just that no one has let us know yet!

The biggest caveat here is that it is dependant on the nursery listing them as still available and more importantly, having them true to type, which can often be a significant problem – remember the issues with *Aconitum* 'Newry Blue'!

- 247** IHPs at NBG Glasnevin.
- 229** IHPs at Blarney Castle Gardens.

So, apart from me playing with the spreadsheet, what else is happening? There have been increases in the number of IHPs grown, especially in the two public gardens above, a great achievement from both Blarney Castle and NBG Glasnevin. Several members have also increased their collection, or sent in details of which IHPs they grow, great to see and well done to all. The *Bergenia* trial at NBG Glasnevin is ongoing, and will take a little time yet to be productive, see the excellent notes in previous Newsletter by Gary Mentanko. Equally, the trial there of *Aconitum* 'Newry Blue' will take a little more time. The dry summer was not kind to the plants, but there are certainly very different clones going around under that name. Some members have also taken on particular genera, or are chasing particular plants. That's great to see, very well done to everyone.

Herbarium specimens, pressed, dried, and mounted, are slowly being prepared, and lodged at NBG Glasnevin. They will form a permanent record for future reference. Accompanying notes and pictures give a full description, with colour noted from a standard RHS chart. This is essential with any new cultivars as they come along, if only we had the same for *Aconitum* 'Newry Blue' ...

It would be great if we could duplicate the work being done at NBG Glasnevin with *Bergenia* and *Aconitum*. Would someone take on *Calluna* (16), *Erica* (35), or *Daboecia* (7), many last listed a few years ago? Or *Dierama* (22)? How about *Dianthus* (4)? Any fern fanatics for *Polypodium* (4) or *Polystichum* (3)? How about *Saxifraga* (9), *Sedum* (5), or *Sempervivum* (4)? If anyone has any special interest, let me know and I can see what is listed, or not, as the case may be. Every plant counts.

Happy hunting!

Winter Fragrance

Brid Kelleher

Little effort is required to succumb to the profusion heady perfumes and colour in the summer garden, but in the grey, pallid days of the year's end the gardener needs an added incentive to venture outdoors. The earlier glories of deciduous trees and shrubs give way to an appreciation for structure provided by evergreen trees and shrubs and nature's offering of scented plants, from resinous conifers, winter flowering shrubs, fruit and aromatic herbs and later the emergence of early flowering bulbs.

With a little planning the winter garden can bring many unexpected delights and choosing the correct position for scented plants is critical; ideally most should be planted near paths or steps so that their fragrance can be readily enjoyed. Roses are usually associated with warmer seasons, but the miniature tea rose, *Rosa* 'Cécile Brünner' with its delicate, tissue paper petals, continues to flower into November. One could forgive this beautiful miniature rose if it lacked scent, but nature has bestowed on it a rich, resonant aroma that is totally enchanting.

By late November the first flowers of *Daphne* *bholua* 'Jacqueline Postill' with their pervasive scent begin to appear. Last year this invaluable *Daphne* defied the harsh, glacial

winter and continued flowering until early spring. On still winter evenings one need only open a door as its intense fragrance can travel a surprising distance. In the same genus, *Daphne odora* 'Aureomarginata' with its early rosy-pink flowers also exudes a sweet fragrance with an undertone of spice. *Mahonia oiwakensis* and *Mahonia x media* 'Charity' are valued for their architectural qualities, but both also bring winter cheer with their crowns of bright, yellow, lily of the valley scented flowers.

Many winter scented plants have flowers that are small and insignificant, *Sarcococca confusa* is one such plant that plays come hither and thither with our olfactory sense. The flowers of *Osmanthus delavayi* could also be described as modest, but the quality of their scent is unsurpassed. *Azara microphylla* 'Variegata' with its delicate foliage is not just an elegant addition to the garden but its demure, vanilla scented flowers make it invaluable.

The *Skimmia* genus is widely used to bring colour to the winter garden and, although lacking berries, *Skimmia x confusa* 'Kew Green' produces dense clusters of creamy-white flowers that are beautifully scented. The variety *S. japonica* 'Fragrans' is more widely available and equally good. These shrubs



Seasonal ring: *Azara microphylla* 'Variegata', *Buxus sempervirens*, *Chaenomeles x superba* 'Crimson & Gold', *Hedera helix*, *Hedera helix* 'Parsley Crested', *Iris foetidissima*, *Mahonia oiwakensis*, *Mahonia x media* 'Charity', *Osmanthus heterophyllus* 'Goshiki', *Rosmarinus officinalis*, *Rosmarinus officinalis Prostratus Group*, *Sarcococca confusa*, *Skimmia x confusa* 'Kew Green', *Thuja plicata* 'Zebrina'

are perfect for illuminating a shady border or woodland area.

A recent addition to my garden is *Edgeworthia*, a small genus of shrubs native to Himalaya and China. *Edgeworthia tomentosa* has dense nodding terminal clusters of fragrant yellow flowers in late winter. In Japan the bark of *Edgeworthia* is used in the manufacture of high quality paper used for their currency, so one could say with certainty that this shrub gives value for money!

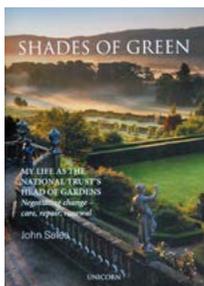
For whom are these winter offerings? Are they for the occasional pollinating insect or for the singular pleasure of

the gardener? I would suggest for both and, to shorten winter days, a few stems of *Chimonanthus praecox* should be cut and brought indoors so that its leafless branches tipped with waxy yellow, richly scented flowers may be enjoyed for days. Many bulbs which have been specially treated to flower indoors during winter are another source of winter perfume but, unless we venture into the garden in the dark gloomy months, we will miss the discreet charm of so many wonderful scented plants. With a little forethought the winter garden can be a beguiling place where we can allow our olfactory sense to enjoy primacy.

Worth a Read

Paddy Tobin

John Sales, *Shades of Green: My Life as the National Trust's Head of Gardens*, Unicorn, London, 2018, Hardback, 328 pages, £25, ISBN: 978-1-910787-00-7



The National Trust in Great Britain is probably one of the most successful conservation and preservation organisations in the world. It is the largest landowner in Britain and, were it not for the National Trust, many irreplaceable buildings and gardens would have been lost.

John Sales, after college, parks work, lecturing at Writtle College and managing the campus gardens there, was appointed gardens adviser, under the wing of the famous Graham Stuart Thomas, and, subsequently in 1971, he was appointed Head of Gardens of the National Trust. The Trust already had a number of gardens but it was only in this period that a greater understanding of the historic and cultural significance of gardens came to be appreciated and valued. It was also a period when the numbers visiting gardens simply boomed and the demands on those with charge of these gardens increased proportionately to balance the needs of accommodating the public and yet preserve, conserve, renew and develop the gardens. John Sales guided this process for twenty-five

years, a monumental responsibility and challenge in the hands of a man of matching capabilities.

He tells this story through his experiences with fifty of the National Trust's gardens and it is an account which is insightful, informative and, oftentimes, entertaining. This is a book which could open our eyes, change our opinions and enhance our enjoyment and understanding of the gardens of the National Trust and, indeed, of gardens in general.

John Sales' interaction with people – owners, tenants, head gardeners – runs as a thread through the book and, as would be appropriate for a gardener, he calls a spade a spade and his comments on people are outspoken, direct and unhindered. Praise is generous and fulsome when given and criticism sharp, clear and without hesitation.

It all makes for a wonderfully readable book, informative, insightful and entertaining and I recommend it to you, wholeheartedly and enthusiastically.

Peter Dale, *The Irish Garden, A Cultural History*, The History Press, Dublin, 2018, Hardback, 384 pages, ISBN: 978 0 7509 8809 4

What is it that makes an Irish garden different? Our gardens and what we can grow in them are most influenced by our climate and soil type. Devon, Cornwall, western Scotland and, indeed, many parts of England have basic conditions very similar to those in Irish gardens yet our gardens differ and it is this difference and the reasons for this difference that Peter Dale examines and seeks to clarify in this book.

The book brings together a number of Peter Dale's previously published articles. Such collections are not uncommon but this one differs in that the author has reworked them to create a single narrative on Irish gardens. The articles/chapters cover visits to twenty Irish gardens, some more extensively described and discussed than others, and here gathered into a narrative on what is an Irish garden and what is distinctive about it. Illustrations are by Brian Lalor, small line drawings which are generic in nature rather than being specific to any of the gardens.

These original individual, stand-alone essays were not written with this theme of examining what an Irish garden is in mind but have been reworked to suit this publication. In places, this re-editing is chunky and awkward – some introductory



paragraphs added to preface a article but not lying well with it, too obviously a later addition rather than part of the original. Yet, despite these areas which did not

appeal to me, there was a great amount of the book which I enjoyed thoroughly.

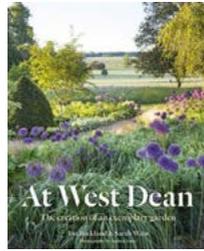
There were times, reading this book, when I thought it ought to be part of every gardener's education, essential reading in all horticultural colleges, and other times when it would be cruel to inflict it on the same students. The author brings together what are obviously two great loves in his life, horticulture and literature, and he writes wonderfully on both but I find it difficult to imagine there is a wide readership with these shared interests. My interest was in the horticultural discussion and I found the frequent and, at times, in depth references to Irish myth and literature – particularly a final chapter given entirely to an examination of "Ireland as a Place in the Mind" – tedious and more for the 'gardener' with ink stains on the finger rather than dirt under the nails. I tend more towards the latter.

The book, I suppose, like many a garden, even the very best of gardens, has parts which appeal to us and parts which don't; yet at the end of the day we are glad that we have visited and glad we have read the book.

Jim Buckland & Sarah Wain, *At West Dean: The Creation of an Exemplary Garden*, Photography by Andrea Jones, White Lion Publishing, London, 2018, Hardback, 288 pages, £40, ISBN: 978-0-7112-3892-3

West Dean, as we see it today, is a 19th century country house with gardens in the Arts and Crafts style. The walled garden, with its range of Victorian glasshouses and gardeners in a style which is deeply rooted in Victorian practices, is the crowning glory, though the extensive gardens outside the walls are beautiful and interesting and lead to sweeping wildflower meadows and a significant arboretum. The layout of the 90 acres of gardens is informal and blends almost seamlessly into the borrowed landscape of the rolling parkland to the south, nestled in the foot of the South Downs in West Sussex. Thanks to the efforts of Jim Buckland and Sarah Wain, it is now one of the greatest restored gardens open to the public today and this book tells its story.

The authors, Jim Buckland and Sarah Wain, are first and foremost, gardeners – “not horticulturalists, designers, managers but dirt under the nails gardeners” and over the past twenty-seven years they have “breathed new life into the sleeping beauty that was West Dean Gardens.” The narrative of this book is the process of achieving the objectives laid out for the gardens.



Though it is almost impossible to separate exceptional horticulture practices from gardening excellence - process from product - it is clear that at West Dean process leads the way. There is here an uncompromising and absolutely diligent attention to the very best of good gardening practices.

There are no short cuts; there is no taking the easy way out; there is nothing less than perfect. There is a right way to do every gardening job – from grass cutting, to lawn edging, to organising a glasshouse regime, to training and pruning fruit trees, to growing vegetables and the ever so many mundane and daily tasks of any garden, and this right way is the only way employed at West Dean. It is an example of horticultural practices of the highest calibre and, not surprisingly, the gardens – the product of all these processes – is sublimely beautiful.

Jim Buckland describes the processes of work in West Dean in an insightful and informative narrative which is wonderfully illustrated by Andrea Jones' photography. It champions the values of good practices, hard work and the satisfaction of a job well done – and, indeed, it was very well done!

Two of the Many New Narcissus Cultivars for 2018

Brendan Sayers

In any given year, since 2000, the catalogue of Irish cultivars has increased mainly by the registration of daffodils by breeders such as Brian Duncan, Nial Watson, Derrick Turbitt or the late Sir Frank Harrison and Kate Reade. Occasionally these breeders have divested themselves of some stock allowing a novice patient of 'yellow fever' to grow and show their novelties. On occasion the stock proves to be worthy of a name and in the case of the following two, such was the case.



Narcissus "Susan Mary"

Narcissus 'Susan Mary' is named for the botanical artist, Susan M. Sex. It is Brian Duncan's seedling 3438 and is classed as a trumpet with a white corolla and a white, pink tipped corona (1W-WWP). Its parentage is 'Ben Aligin' as the seed and 'Korora Bay' as the pollen parent.



Narcissus "Ella Bell"

Narcissus 'Ella Bell' hails from 'Hillstar' as the seed and 'Little Bell' as the pollen parent and is Brian Duncan's seedling 3885. A deep yellow jonquilla (7 Y-Y) with up to 3 flowers per stem, it received Best Bloom in the Open Classes 15 – 48 at the Malahide Spring Show in April 2018. It is named for my niece Ella.

Around the Regions

Leinster Region

Reports by Mary Montaut
Autumn Colour at Tullynally Castle
& Gardens, 27 October 2018

We were welcomed into the gardens at Tullynally by Thomas Pakenham, author of several books on 'Remarkable Trees' who has planted many trees at Tullynally. He had collected some autumn leaves to show us at the beginning of the tour, inviting us to identify the different trees from which they had come, which was a delightful way of challenging us to pay attention. As we moved off to the Arboretum, he explained what he means by this term: it is definitely not a wood - it must have Contrast, Colour, Clearings - it must in short be managed to display the individual trees to special advantage. The trees were of widely differing ages, with old vulnerable beeches and oaks kept on although they might crash into the newer planting in a storm. Perhaps ungallantly, he called the last two bad storms 'bitches' - Ophelia and Ali - but this was highly understandable when one viewed the torn branches. In spite of this, many of the younger trees were in beautiful colour and their characteristic forms showed splendidly in the clearings and in groups. There were spectacular

maples, not only the Japanese ones, but also handsome tall American species in beautiful colours. Many rare trees were planted alongside the familiar and native species, giving constant interest and stimulation to the party.

Thomas was a most entertaining guide, as well as incredibly knowledgeable. He told wonderful stories all through our tour, my favourite of which was about his 'duck' plants. He confessed that he had taken an acorn from the ground at Kew by slyly carrying a bag which looked like innocent bread for the ducks on the lake there: but really this 'duck bag' enabled him to smuggle out the acorn and bring it to Tullynally. These plants are labelled with a duck, as well as their botanical names. As we progressed, he pointed out other 'duck' plants, from various places, his impish humour making us all laugh.

After the Arboretum, we visited the Tibetan Garden where virtually all the plants had been collected by him in Tibet and Yunnan, and it was very clear that we would all have to visit Tullynally again in the springtime, to see the glories of the rhododendrons and meconopsis.

There was a superb patch of bergenia, which had spread from a

single small root. We went through the Forest Walk along the stream to the Chinese Garden, where again the plants had all been collected by Thomas himself. Most striking were the wonderful berries on the *Sorbus vilmorinii*; and it was a real privilege to hear Thomas talking about the way the plants cross-bred, with *S. pseudo-vilmorinii* on one side, and the true form on the other, to demonstrate the distinction. We realized that the many different magnolias which we passed would require us to make another visit - but we will just have to wait till the spring!

Sorbus pseudo-vilmorinii
at Tullynally



'Garden Design as Second Nature' Report by Cor van Gelderen
National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin
22nd November 2018

The talk opened with Cor van Gelderen introducing us to his parents - a most unusual opening but very material to the lecture. His parents were both plants-people and there was no talk in their house on any other subject. Plants for breakfast, lunch and tea! As his lecture progressed, the importance of this early indoctrination became clear, not just in the extraordinary breadth of his botanical knowledge, but in his own absorption in every aspect of the plants themselves.

The 'design' aspect however was very challenging; it turned out that he really wanted the landscapes he designed to be 'natural' - plants which would happily grow in the specific conditions of the project. Several of his designs were for roof gardens, or had a bare minimum of topsoil. The stands of wild grasses and spinneys of birch trees bore witness to the difficult conditions: These 'pioneer' types grew in abundant swathes, making landscapes rather than gardens, I felt.

A contrast was Cor's description of a project where he had to design a wide and lengthy border, containing virtually nothing but hydrangeas. The slide showed a glorious display of various types, and Cor really gave himself away when he described how much he loves the leaves (*H. quercifolia*) almost more than the heads of these bulky and blousy plants.

He was clearly in love with plants, just like his forebears. At one stage he asked whether we in Ireland suffer from 'Yellow Fever' - apparently the Dutch tend to avoid yellow in their planting. He showed us numerous superb shrubs and perennials which form wild-looking clumps of yellow flowers - golden rod *Solidago*, day lilies *Hemerocallis*, - but not a daffodil in sight. He happily plants subjects which will flourish in the specific site, no matter where they originate from; indeed, he was at pains to avoid all kinds of preciousness in his talk, so no particular emphasis on 'native' or 'wild-life friendly' plants. It was a most refreshing and amusing lecture, and his modesty in presenting such radical and challenging ideas for planting gardens was utterly delightful.

Munster Region

Report by Janet Edwardes
Patthana: lecture by T J Maher

Our November lecture was given by T J Maher from Patthana Garden in Kiltegan. Some of our members had been to visit his garden during the summer and were very impressed with the artistic and romantic atmosphere of the garden. TJ explained that the garden was situated in the middle of the town and thus the garden was mainly to the rear of the property.

TJ and Simon had bought a very old house and initially needed to do remedial work on that before they were able to move out into the garden and create an intimate space to relax, garden and create a beautiful picture around their home. So TJ took us on a journey around the garden showing us some views at different times of the year so one could get an idea of how TJ made the garden and planting work to provide interest at different seasons. Because the space is quite small, you had to be very disciplined in your use of plants so that they worked for you. But you could extend your view outward by cutting a window in the hedge and bringing a lovely frame of the local church spire into the garden.

Another important factor is scent and TJ has placed plants to maximise the effect in areas you might sit and enjoy a cup of tea and be engulfed in the sweet perfume of a rose, for example. *Eleagnus* 'Quicksilver' is a plant which has earned its place for both scent and foliage. Pots are used to great effect with key plants which can be moved around at will and change the whole palette in a second. Another very important dimension to the garden for TJ and Simon is the wildlife they share it with. No chemicals are used and thus the birds, bees and butterflies and other creatures have found a very safe habitat to make their home. TJ has used his artist's eye to make this space a most beautiful oasis where you would not want to leave.

Northern Region

Lismacloskey: Report
from the Rectory Garden
by Lorna Goldstrom

It has been a busy and successful year at the Rectory Garden at the Ulster Folk Museum despite some of our volunteers having to take time out for health reasons. Following the success of the 30th anniversary celebration last year of the partnership between the IGPS and the Folk Museum, we were asked by the Museum to organise another garden-themed day on 8th August. There were a variety of attractions on the day including a plant sale which raised about £400 and our Chairman, Billy McCone, planted *Escallonia* 'Alice' to mark the occasion. This *Escallonia* was bred by C. F. Ball of the then Royal Botanic Gardens at Glasnevin and named for his bride; Charles Frederick Ball was killed at Gallipoli during the Great War. In mid-September, Marion Allen gave a talk on the historical background of some of the plants grown in the garden as part of an educational project run by the Museum while at the end of the same month we ran a quiz for children, 'Garden Insects - Friends or Foes', during the Museum's annual Wildlife Hunt.

There is a feeling of quiet satisfaction that comes with concluding a year's work and putting a garden to bed. Not much colour now, apart that is from the *Mahonia* 'Winter Sun'

shown in the photograph, a lovely rowan, *Sorbus* 'Autumn Spire', and the beech hedge that separates us from the forge and assorted historic cottages. Visitors will see a blanket of compost on all the beds and we have been putting saw and loppers to work on the more congested shrubs. Our *Escallonia resinosa* has needed some discipline, but we do enjoy its strong wafts of curry. The *Eucryphia* 'Castlewellan' is still flowering, likewise *Hypericum* 'Rowallane', and the penstemons which don't seem to realise it's November. It's not exactly been an easy summer, with the drought that punished the sweet peas so severely and shrivelled the primula foliage - though these have now made a comeback. But the only casualty we've had all year has been our *Chaenomeles* 'Rowallane Seedling', which having been munched up by rabbits last year, now appears to have expired altogether.

Mahonia x *media* 'Winter Sun' growing in the Rectory Garden. This is a sister plant to the well-known *Mahonia* x *media* 'Charity' and was a seedling selected, raised and introduced by the former Slieve Donard Nursery at Newcastle, Co. Down.



While we work in the garden every Wednesday morning for most of the year, we plan to turn up once a month during the worst of the winter months to keep everything ticking over. We have been very lucky and received a present of some bulbs of *Narcissus* 'Countess of Annesley'; they have been planted and we look forward to seeing them bloom along with the others in our collection of Irish daffodils, almost 40 now.

Tree Plantings at Castle Gardens, Antrim

As part of its campaign to raise awareness of plants with Irish origins, the Society recently presented a young Castlewella juniper, *Juniperus*

recurva 'Castlewella', to Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council. Present at the ceremonial planting in Antrim Castle Gardens are Maeve Bell, Billy McCone, Chair IGPS, Roz Henry, Ted McKeever, a gardener at the Castle Gardens, Paul Michael, the Mayor, Victor Henry and Yvonne Penpraze. Not only are the Council and the Society co-operating in the development of a new garden to complement the historic cottage at Pogue's Entry but the Council gives valuable support to the Society by making the Old Courthouse in Antrim available free of charge for two lectures a year.

'From Show Gardens to Real Gardens'

Report by Barbara Kelso

Malone House in Belfast, beautifully decorated for Christmas, was the venue for Oliver Schurmann's lecture 'From Show Gardens to Real Gardens'. Oliver and his wife, Liat, own Mount Venus Nursery set in a Victorian walled garden in the Dublin hills and for over 20 years they have been growing a wide range of hardy garden-worthy plants.

Oliver began his well-illustrated talk explaining that he and Liat have a passion for creating exciting show gardens to display and share innovative and inspiring ideas with the public. They want each of their gardens to capture an atmosphere, so that one feels enclosed and comfortable within them. Starting back in 2005 at RHS Hampton Court Show, they had created a beautiful water garden 'Walk on Water' inspired by the coastal landscape of Kerry. Stepping stones appeared to 'float' on the water surface and natural stones surrounded by water created rocky islands. We were treated to many other pictures of their show gardens over the years, with the majority of them gaining Gold and Best in Category/Show at Bloom in Dublin. At the end of each show when the garden has to be dismantled, Oliver keeps many of the hard landscaping materials, such as

the pond liner, glass panels and the large rocks, which are then recycled for future show gardens.

After the gorgeous show garden pictures, we admired some beautiful photos of real gardens they had designed and constructed for clients within Ireland and Germany. Oliver said he aims to create a dynamic garden, where his planting schemes develop and grow into well-balanced and sustainable gardens. His intention is to make the gardens low maintenance by using diverse planting which will grow well and is suited to the design and location. One of his designs showed a garden transformation from a sloping front lawn to a dry-stone wall terraced garden in concentric circles around a raised pond. The pond was kept topped up by rainwater from the house roof and the water remained clear as it overflowed the rim of the pond and was filtered through a reed bed. Oliver also gave us interesting examples of design tricks to make a small garden look bigger.

It was an inspiring talk and many ideas were gained from his wonderful pictures of fabulous gardens.



Dates for Your Diary

Saturday February 23 2019 at 2:30 pm – 4:00 pm

Planting with Bees (and Other Pollinators) in Mind - Mary Montaut National Botanic Gardens Glasnevin

No matter how small a space you may have to plant flowers, Mary Montaut aims to help you choose plants which will encourage both honey bees and wild pollinators to visit.



Tansy, *Tanacetum vulgare*
with visiting hoverfly

Dates for Your Diary

Thursday 21 March 2019 at 7.30 pm

'My Thirty Best Plants' with Bob Brown

Antrim Old Courthouse, Market Square, Antrim BT41 4AW

Bob Brown, owner of Cotswold Garden Flowers nursery, has a life-long obsession with gardening and is known for having opinions (many very critical) about all the 16-17 thousand kinds of plants he's grown or tried to grow. He oversees the RHS

AGM herbaceous trials and he is a prolific writer, having a regular section in 'Which? Gardening'. Bob is also holder of the Veitch Memorial Medal awarded for the Science and Advancement of Horticulture. His specialist nursery, based in Evesham, stocks a huge range of unusual perennials, with a focus on good old-fashioned plants, newly introduced plants bred not only for colour and form but for vigour as well, and plants newly introduced from the wild. Refreshments provided, plant raffle on the evening. Everyone is welcome!



Saturday 11 May 2019

Northern Region Garden Visit

The first visit of the year will be to the Garden of Lady Anthea Forde at Seaforde, County Down on 11th May and is limited to Members and their Guests. Further details will be available on the Website and in the April Newsletter.

SEED DISTRIBUTION SCHEME 2019

Despite a year of very strange weather and the tardiness of seed ripening, I have received some excellent seeds for this years seed list from a very dedicated bunch of collectors and huge thanks are due to them. I hope that you will find something on the seed list to whet your gardening appetites and look forward to the influx of requests. Please do fill in the second choice numbers in case your first choices have already been depleted.

Please do remember that you are sure to have some seeds of interest to other members and even you only manage a few, we would love to include them in next years seed list. As ever the number of contributors is small and it would be so helpful if a few more members were to contribute.

Debbie Bailey



Hallowe'en Display
at the Botanic
Gardens, Glasnevin
October 2018



Dianthus 'Chomley
Farran', a sport of an
unnamed seedling,
found in Dublin
around 1975 by
Chomley Farran in
his collection. No
longer listed in the
UK Plant Finder, but
in trade in the USA.



Leinster Plant Sale
October 2018

IRISH GARDEN PLANT SOCIETY

C/O: National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin, Dublin 9

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