

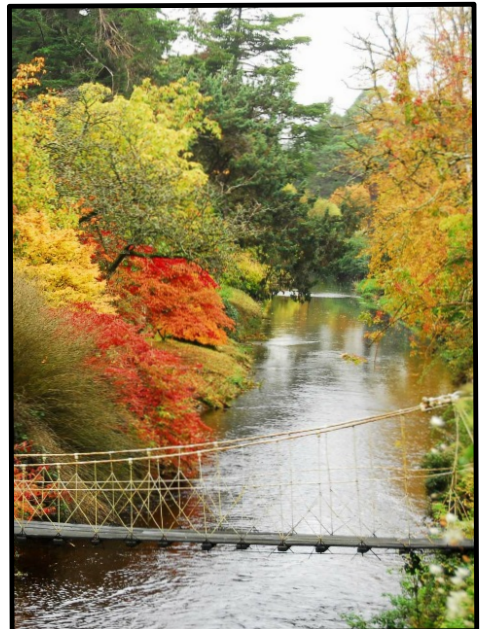


The Irish Garden Plant Society

NEWSLETTER 138: MAY 2017

If you are unable to attend the AGM at Birr this year you may want to consider an autumn visit as Paddy Tobin did.

Photographs by Paddy Tobin



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*Copy date for the next issue is **23rd July.***

Editorial

I have just experienced the honour, and fun, of being the guest editor but on a strictly one-off basis. A volunteer to take over the role is needed urgently, or perhaps more than one as it could be a job share with one person looking after the content and an IT-savvy friend organising the photos and layout. If wished, the Editor's team could also include regional assistants to help identify contributors and organise the reporting of regional news. The Committee is fully behind this approach. So please contact Billy as Chair or Ali as Hon Sec right away if you think you can help; their details are on the back page.



Many congratulations to Brendan Sayers on being awarded the Westonbirt Orchid Medal by the RHS in recognition of his work over many years. Read more about Brendan's career on page 9.

We are a Society of enthusiastic gardeners with a special love of Irish plants. While life becomes more global by the minute, local things which contribute to a sense of place become ever more valuable so I am delighted that this issue carries a couple of articles about beautiful, but rare, Irish cultivars.

Thank you to all the contributors who responded generously to my requests for help, especially those who unearthed their memories of 30 years ago at the start of the Society's co-operation with the Ulster Folk Museum on the Lismacloskey Garden. The anniversary will be celebrated on 9th August with special events and free admission for IGPS members. Find out more from the Fixtures list.

Be sure and keep up to date with this and all our activities and news through the website and our Facebook page.

Maeve

A Word from the Chair

My sincere thanks to Maeve for offering her services as guest editor and what a successful Newsletter she has produced. While we are still in need of a regular editor, the concept of having guest editors provides an opportunity for people to participate without a long term commitment.



So should any of you wish to try their hand at producing a future Newsletter we would love to hear from you.

Filling positions is an ongoing process and the four years in office seem to fly by. As people complete their term in office or on the committees it is necessary to fill or plan to fill the vacancies; this is an on-going task and one that is easier said than done. With an excess of over thirty office /organiser positions, plus committee members, working groups and volunteers, sustaining operations is a challenge.

I have been approached by several members (and even some non-members) with suggestions, of what they think the Society should be doing; truthfully, for most they have all been good ideas, some excellent ideas. However, while they are telling me the 'what' we should do, I'm thinking of Kipling ----- no, not the cakes, the other Kipling. I'm seeing the ideas in measures of time and hours and asking 'who' will do it.

There is a lot to do and so much we would like to do but we need people on committees, working groups and people to take on specific roles as they become vacant. On that note – I must thank those who have recently stepped up to help. New Leinster chair Anne-Marie Woods, Munster treasurer Ted Kiely, Northern Rep Claire Peacocke , Volunteer Manager for Pogue's Entry Yvonne Penpraze and her team of volunteers (read next edition), 2018 AGM working group Jenny Constable and last but not least all the contributing authors for Moorea and the newsletter. I just hope I haven't missed any one!

And for those of you wondering what on earth I was talking about.

*"I keep six honest serving-men
(They taught me all I knew);
Their names are What and Why and When
And How and Where and Who."*

(Rudyard Kipling, 1902)

Billy.

Exploring Northern Vietnam

by Adam Whitbourn

Background

Last November saw a group of four intrepid horticulturalists travel to Northern Vietnam on a plant-hunting expedition close to the Chinese border. The group consisted of Adam Whitbourn and Rory Newell from Blarney Castle & Gardens, Bruno Nicolai, a tropical plants specialist, all of whom are IGPS members, together with Paul Smyth of Crug Farm. The expedition was a joint project between Botanic Network Ireland and Blarney Castle & Gardens.

The expedition was organised by Blarney Castle's Head Gardener, Adam Whitbourn. This was his second visit to the region. He secured a permit from the Vietnamese authorities to collect seed, and intends to build a Vietnamese woodland back in Blarney Castle Gardens. According to the Conservation International List, Vietnam is identified as the fifth biodiversity hot spot in the world, on account of its exotic flora and fauna. Between 1997 and 2007, almost 1000 new species have been discovered. However, many areas still remain to be explored, and more species are likely to appear in the future. The flora estimated is of the order of 12,000 species of which 9,628 have been recorded.

Adam takes up the story.

On 05/11/16 the four of us arrived into Hanoi and took a taxi from the airport into the city. We stayed overnight and the following morning we met our driver who was to take us up to Sapa. This proved to be an interesting journey to say the least. I was later asked to name my most scary experience of the trip: this was it. I will note, however, that we made the 320km drive in record time.

We arrived at our hotel which is owned by our guide Uoc (made famous by the recently discovered plant species *Uocodendron wartonii* which bears his name) and we spent the evening getting settled in Sapa and planning our itinerary. Sapa was a French colonial hill town and, up until a few years ago, was relatively small. It has fast become a tourist destination for visitors who use it as a base to visit the region and climb Fansipan and other nearby peaks. Many areas of the town resemble building sites and there is a constant rattle and hum of construction.

Uoc had checked the weather reports and planned our trips accordingly. Our first trip was to be to Yty, an area I had visited the previous year and was keen to return to. The following morning we loaded the mini bus, greeted our team of porters, and set off. The weather had taken a turn for the worse and we found ourselves in what I could only describe as borderline monsoon conditions. Several roads became impassable, and a river crossing that was normally a trickle had become a torrent. We persevered and, after several detours and adventures, we finally arrived at our destination.

Trips like this are not for the faint hearted. We unloaded from the mini bus in teeming rain and donned our hi-tech waterproof gear, picked up our bags, and headed into the jungle. We couldn't see the mountain or the sky, just a grey fog all around. We were however in great spirits. We had arrived and there were new plants around every turn in the track. Schefflera, rhododendron, birch, hydrangea, begonia and many other unrecognisable plant species were all around us.

Seed collection and note-taking became a real challenge in these conditions. Cameras malfunctioned in the humidity and note-paper and envelopes dissolved. We resorted to iPhones and plastic bags with permanent marker. It was a hard day and we had to cover a lot of ground in very dangerous conditions including sheer cliffs, walking along metal pipes over ravines, landslides, river crossings, a cobra snake and giant spiders. We arrived at our first camp just as night was falling. Tents were erected by torchlight and a fire was lit to cook dinner and warm us. We hung our now soaking wet, hi-tech waterproofs over a line by the fire to dry. They would never be the same again.



After a very welcome dinner and a little local rice wine, we retired to one of the tents and by torchlight we began to sort that day's seed. A lot of material was dried and processed into envelopes which were then packed into a dry bag. Day one was over and we attempted to get a good night's sleep in our rickety tents surrounded by the night-time noises from the jungle.

The next two days saw similar conditions as we worked our way up the mountain towards the peak. The flora changed with altitude and, further towards the top, we found a lot more of what I would call recognisable plant species. The weather also started to improve; by the time we were descending the mountain, it was beginning to clear and we were treated to some breath taking views. We returned to Sapa and the comfort of Uoc's hotel for the evening, and treated ourselves to a few local beers and some western food. One can only eat so many plates of noodles! Our Yty trip had been a great success.



The whole trip continued along the same pattern and, after hunting in two more areas, we had around 350 different collections. Three days in total were spent in hotel rooms just cleaning and preparing seed as well as note taking. I found whiskey to be a good way to deal with the monotony!

The forest areas we visited are disappearing fast as cardamom farmers and other industries push further into the valleys and clear the native woodland. Due to the uniqueness of the flora on many of the mountains here, there is a good chance that some of the species we collected are already highly endangered. It may be that ex-situ sites like Blarney Castle Gardens and other botanic gardens are the best chance that we have of ensuring these species survive. I am planning a third visit to the region later this year to attempt to visit some new areas that have yet to be explored.

Adam Whitbourn is the Head Gardener at Blarney Castle and Gardens where, among other things, he has developed an Irish Trail.

Prestigious award for Brendan Sayers

Earlier this year the Royal Horticultural Society awarded its Westonbirt Orchid medal to Brendan Sayers, Glasshouse Foreman at the National Botanic Gardens. It is an annual award given in recognition of an individual's scientific, literary or other outstanding achievement in connection with orchids. Brendan has been an active and influential member of the Society since its very early days; we are extremely proud of him and offer our warmest congratulations.

Brendan told the Newsletter a little about his career.

When did you decide that you wanted a career in horticulture and what influenced your decision?

Prior to finishing secondary school I must have decided that a career in horticulture was what I wanted. I do not know exactly when I made this decision but it must have been when I was gardening instead of studying for my Leaving Certificate! I was guided in my earliest gardening days by my maternal grandfather, Dan Doherty, in Edgeworthstown, Co. Longford. A career in horticulture was not seen then (early 1980s) as a sensible choice but a scholarship to the Amenity Horticulture Course at the National Botanic Gardens was the only course to which I applied. I was fortunate to secure a place on the same day as my "less than favourable" Leaving Certificate results were obtained.



Was it difficult to get your first job?

The 1980s were a difficult time to get employment and, like many of my friends and classmates, emigration was the best option. As an American citizen, I was able to travel without difficulty and less than a year after graduating I was on a plane. Before going to America, I had an interview for a gardening position at the National Botanic Gardens and, though not successful, was unknowingly placed on the panel for the position.

Once informed I returned to the Gardens where I spent some time in the Inner Grounds and the Vegetable garden sections. Within two years I had returned to America on a five year career break.

Did you always love orchids or how did you come to specialise in them?

I always had an interest in orchids and would go to the Orchid Show at the New York Botanical Gardens in my birthplace of the Bronx, every spring. I grew, with various degrees of success, some windowsill orchids in America. On my return to Glasnevin, by chance I was given the care of the orchid collection. It was not an immediate "love at first sight" but I grew very fond of the collection and came to specialise in the plant family.

Are there any particular highlights in your career?

I have been fortunate to have many highlights, both big and small, during my career. They range from successful exhibitions at the Royal Horticultural Society's Orchid Show in Vincent Square, London, exciting and rewarding expeditions to Belize where one collection of a *Pleurothallis* species was unknown to science. Naming it in honour of Ken du Plooy of Belize Botanic Garden was a great highlight. My publications, especially those with Susan Sex, give me great pleasure and, lastly, the acknowledgement of my work by both the Linnean Society in 2011 and the Royal Horticultural Society in 2017 rank among the best.

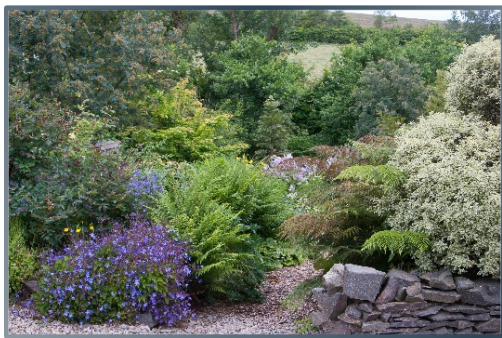
You have played a big part in the IGPS ever since it was founded in 1981. What encouragement have you for members some three decades later?

From when I was first given plants by founding IGPS members like Finola Reid, Charles Nelson, Margaret Glynn and Keith Lamb to name a few, it was with a generosity and an accompanying story that filled me with appreciation and pride. As present day Irish gardeners, we are making the stories of the future, guarding those of the past and hopefully keeping the plants that are uniquely ours travelling from garden to garden, their stories entertaining us as we go about doing what we love to do best - to garden.

From King's Road to Killinchy

by Rae McIntyre

Knox Gass has always enjoyed a challenge, particularly a horticultural one. He and his wife Shirley decided to downsize as so many people of pension-age do. They were 'empty nesters' in a large house on Kings Road in Belfast surrounded by a beautiful garden of 2.5 acres. Moving to a neat bungalow with pocket handkerchief gardens front and rear would not have presented a challenge; instead they moved to a slightly smaller house set within an acre of land near Killinchy in Co. Down. There wasn't much in the garden - just one border with a few very unexciting trees but Knox obviously saw its potential. The soil is stony but it must be fertile because, in the nine years they've lived there, everything planted has thrived. Drainage is good because much of the site is sloping and, living so close to Strangford Lough, the climate is benign. Tender plants like the South African *Amicia zygomeris*, *Lophosoria quadripinnata*, a terrestrial tree fern, *Anisodonta capensis*, a shrubby hollyhock relation which flowers all year, *Lomatia ferruginea* and *Leptospermum scoparium* are all unscathed by frost. The rare Wollemi Pine was successfully transplanted from Kings Road to Killinchy.



Another factor in the transformation of a dreary site into a beautiful garden is that Knox has unquestionably green fingers. He reckons that he has grown eighty per cent of the plants in the garden from seed and, as a result, it is filled with flowers. Close to the house there are two parallel borders, a spring one and an autumn one although there is always something to be found in

bloom in both. Plants seed themselves about, for example, the large Madeiran *Geranium palmatum* does so and is found in both borders.

The ground slopes gently away from the house and planting is dense. There is a path, made of forest bark so it is soft and aromatic underfoot when wandering through it. There are so many interesting shrubs and perennials to see that it takes a long time to reach the bottom. Lack of space precludes writing about more than a few but the overall impression given is of softness and serenity with flowers in pink, white, mauve and blue predominating.



There are white camasias, *Ceanothus* 'Zanzibar', *Olearia* 'Henry Travers', meconopsis, *Gladiolus* 'The Bride', pink and white foxgloves, *Diascia* 'Hopley's Apricot', *Berkheya purpurea* and *Thalictrum aquilegifolium* to name but a few. This last self-sows in many places. It's a lovely plant with bluish leaves and fluffy candy-floss pink flower heads. All, of

course, are grown from seed by Knox. In a damp, shady corner, Paris, the trillium relation, isn't often seen in gardens but there are three different types thriving. I could hardly drag myself away from these highly unusual, fascinating green flowers.

Beyond the slope there is a sweep of flat grass and at the far side a swathe of predominantly orange flowers. These are in sharp contrast to the delicate pastels of the slope. There is a bog garden beside what Knox and Shirley call 'the sheugh', a traditional Irish field drain although here it is more of a stream and eventually drains into Strangford Lough. Beside it, gunneras, persicarias, astilbes, rogersias and irises thrive in the damp soil. The orange colour comes from a glowing drift of candebra primulas.

Back up at the house there is a profusion of roses which seem to enjoy life in the fertile soil. They are mostly climbers and scented. Opposite the kitchen window there is a wall covered by the prolific pink rose 'Laura Louise', with the purple clematis 'Etoile Violette' threaded through it. *R.* 'Madame Grégoire Staechelin' with petals in different shades of pink enhances the tool shed while 'Lawrence Johnston' is a mass of small sulphur yellow flowers. The best way to appreciate the glories of this garden is to go and visit it. Do so if you have a chance and enjoy!

Rae McIntyre is a retired teacher and avid gardener near the north coast.

The Northern region has arranged a visit to Knox and Shirley's garden on Saturday 27th May – see the fixtures list.

A Love of Honesty

by Carmel Duignan

It is something that is asked of every gardener. "What", the questioner will say with the air of someone who expects a straightforward answer, "is your favourite plant?" And most of us can't answer that question. "It all depends on the season", we'll protest as we procrastinate, or perhaps we'll say that we change our minds every year. I can say with certitude what my favourite plants are – any of the exotic woody members of the ivy family. In short, anything that has 'panax' in the name. I grow ten different varieties of *Pseudopanax*, four *Scheffleras*, a big *Tetrapanax papyrifer* 'Rex', *Oreopanax incisus* and *andrianus*, *Metapanax delavayi*, *Notopanax laetus* and one that I have to keep indoors but has exceptionally beautiful, intricately fingered glossy green leaves, *Trevesia palmata*.

But I have short-term favourites too: little fads that last for a few seasons before I move on to something new or decide that I need the space for something else. High on my list just now are members of the Honesty family. I grow the perennial *Lunaria rediviva* and greatly admire it for its good leaves, pretty flowers, scent, and its attractiveness to bees. This European native of the cabbage family can be invasive in damp ground. I grow it in a large pot because it does not thrive in my dry garden. And I saw it grown in a pot in Nick Macer's Pan Global Plants Nursery in Gloucestershire in England. It looked so good that I promised myself to grow it again.

My soil is alkaline and I cannot grow rhododendrons or azaleas and I always find it difficult to produce much flower in the late days of April or early May. True, tulips will provide some colour but I love shrubs and tall perennials more and, other than Viburnums and Forsythias, very few of them flower early enough for me. I discovered a plant in the nursery run by Derry Watkins – Special Plants near Bath in England. It was called *Lunaria annua* 'Corfu Blue' and was apparently discovered by the English plantswoman, Mary Keen, on the island of Corfu in Greece. It is a biennial plant that can sometimes be a short-lived perennial although best results are got by growing it fresh each year. The flowers are a bright blue colour that is quite different from the type and they appear to shine in the garden when it starts to flower in April. Perhaps it has to do with the quality of the light at that time of year but it glows as brightly as some of the rhododendrons that I cannot grow. The leaves are a soft green and, although the main flowering time is April

and May, it will flower intermittently throughout the summer. Indeed, if grown in a shady spot it will flower for most of the year. As with the regular *Lunaria annua*, the seeds are encased in a translucent coating that gave the plant its name – Lunaria meaning moon-shaped or of the moon. These seedpods are sometimes likened to coins hence the American name of 'silver dollar plant'. But the best thing about this lovely plant is that it comes true from seed.

Another interesting biennial *Lunaria* is 'Chedglow'. This plant starts off life with green leaves that are speckled with brown. As the plant grows, the leaves darken until they end up as a dark chocolate colour. The flowers are the usual lavender-purple honesty type and the effect of flowers and foliage is very attractive. And, like the 'Corfu Blue' variety, this one comes true from seed. There will be an occasional reversion to type so I discard any seedlings that don't have the purple spotting on the leaves.



Lunaria 'Chedglow'



Lunaria 'Corfu Blue'

I find it best to grow these plants in groups of three. I sow the seeds in spring and plant them out in summer. If sown and planted out later it may take two years for them to flower. They will seed around the garden but they are so pretty and so easily removed that they don't present a weed problem and the seeds make welcome presents to fellow gardeners.

Living in Shankill, Carmel Duignan writes a regular column for the Irish Garden magazine, and is a keen gardener and plantswoman.

***Paeonia* 'Anne Rosse' and *Bergenia* 'Irish Crimson': some notes on their vegetative propagation.**

by Brendan Sayers

There are many plants of interest to Irish gardeners in the collections of the National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin. They fall under the term Irish cultivars or, the more recently popular, Heritage Irish Plants. For many years past, the Gardens propagated plants for distribution at IGPS plant sales and allow supervised access to the Gardens' collections to the IGPS for propagation material. High on the priority list are plants that Stephen Butler has identified as being unavailable in the horticultural trade or available only from a very limited number of nurseries.

Paeonia 'Anne Rosse', which carries yellow flowers splashed with red, is one such plant presently unavailable in the trade. [This peony is named in honour of Anne, the wife of the 6th Earl of Rosse of Birr Castle. The Society will be visiting the gardens on the occasion of its AGM this year. Ed] Only vegetative propagation results in a true representation of the named clone. Unfortunately, seedlings from *Paeonia* 'Anne Rosse' may be in circulation under their parental name but these are not the true cultivar and will not exhibit the exact traits for which 'Anne Rosse' was named. A small batch of young seedlings of the cultivar growing in the National Botanic Gardens, already shows substantial variation.

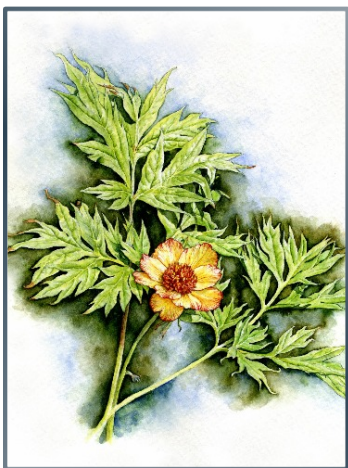
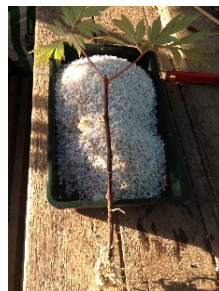


Illustration of *Paeonia* 'Anne Rosse' by Irish artist Aislinn Adams



Bergenia purpurascens 'Irish Crimson' is an excellent plant for the garden but seldom offered for exchange or sale. Plants of this cultivar have and may continue to be distributed under the names of *B. purpurascens* ex Helen Dillon and *B.* 'Glasnevin'.

Tree peonies are considered difficult to propagate from cuttings and named clones are usually bulked-up by grafting scion wood to herbaceous paeony root stocks or by expensive tissue culture techniques. To examine how cuttings performed, a small experiment using three

cuttings was carried out on 10 July 2015. The cuttings, ranging from 20 to 30 cm long, were inserted to almost half their length into damp perlite in a plastic long tom, 20 cm tall and with a diameter of 15cm. Approximately a third of each leaf was removed to minimise transpiration and for stability of the cutting. The pot was placed in a mist unit; after three months, one cutting had rooted while the others had not. The rooted cutting was potted and placed in a cold frame for the winter.

To continue the experiment, five more cuttings were inserted in the same manner on 17 October 2015. One was approximately 40 cm while the others less substantial and ranging in length between 12 and 15 cm. None of these cuttings rooted.

In July 2016 the above experiment was repeated with similar sized cuttings but taken in July when a successfully rooted cutting had been produced. This again resulted in a single rooted cutting. Even though the success rate was low, clonal material of *Paeonia* 'Anne Rosse' of a substantial size can be produced from summer cuttings rooted in perlite under mist.

Propagation by root cuttings is a technique that is less frequently encountered nowadays. The technique has the potential to produce many small plants from suitable herbaceous perennials, more than simple division can provide. Traditionally used for the multiplication of *Bergenia* species and cultivars in the past at the National Botanic Gardens (pers. comm. D. McNally), the technique



was used with *Bergenia purpurascens* 'Irish Crimson' when 20 rhizome cuttings were inserted into a 40/60 sand and peat mix and placed under mist on 14 December 2015. Leaf production from the rhizome cuttings was evident by March 2016 but was quicker with larger sections of rhizome. There was an approximate 75% success rate with the cuttings.

Rhizome cuttings are an effective method of increasing *Bergenia* cultivars quickly but close attention needs to be paid to the small-sized propagations which can be killed by pests that usually only cause unsightly damage. Some of the propagations succumbed to Tortrix moth caterpillars which were able to fully kill the plants due to their size.

Brendan Sayers is the Glasshouse Foreman at the National Botanic Gardens, Dublin and a member of IGPS from its earliest days.

Lismacloskey Garden 30 Years On: Recollections Part 1



In the spring of 1987, the then chairman of the IGPS, Mary Davies (1986–88), had been liaising with Philip Robinson, then a keeper and head of collections at the Ulster Folk Museum, on a project unrelated to gardening and on 1 June that year he took her on a tour of the Folk Museum grounds. After the tour he was driving her back towards the entrance when, as she recalls: “Making conversation, I started explaining about the IGPS, and that the Society was looking for a garden project in the north. Philip did a U-turn and we headed back up the hill — he had somewhere to show me. It was Lismacloskey Rectory, dating from the early 1700s and not long moved from Toomebridge, Co. Antrim

to the Folk Museum. I was delighted with the building and with its garden — the latter a blank canvas. It took no time at all for us to agree that it would be ideal if the IGPS designed and planted the garden, anchoring it to the fashion of the early 1900s.”

To put this in context, the IGPS, with its main aim the conservation of Irish garden plants, was also involved in planting schemes. During his tenure as the first chairman (1982–84), Charles Nelson had initiated an IGPS project to assist the restoration of the Lutyens garden at Heywood, Co. Laois. The Society also gave plants to the restored Islandbridge War Memorial Gardens, before its formal opening in 1988. And at the same period the IGPS collaborated with architectural historian Peter Pearson to provide a 17th-century-style parterre within the moat at Drimnagh Castle, in south Dublin. Mary remembers a challenging day: “Jim Reynolds designed the parterre, and Helen Dillon, Finola Reid, Jim and I spent a day pegging out the formal layout with paths radiating from the centre, a surprisingly difficult task. A project to engage the Society’s enthusiastic northern members was well overdue.”

Following speedily on from her visit to Belfast, Mary wrote to Philip Robinson on 16 June as follows: “This is to let you know formally that the IGPS committee members are most enthusiastic about the suggestion that the society might be able to join with the Folk Museum in plant-

ing your rectory garden, using plants appropriate to a particular period, say 1900." The letter went on to say that the Society would provide an overall design and a planting plan together with some or all of the plants.

Philip Robinson replied positively saying that he hoped the project would become "... one of our most attractive and educational exhibits". He set out the Museum's parameters (which he hoped would not be seen as limitations); these included the dimensions of the plot, an indication that the ethos of the garden should be consistent with that of "... a C. of I. Clergyman ... living in an attractive but relatively modest two-storey thatched house ... located in a small Ulster town" and of the period 1900 to 1915, that the Museum would be responsible for the planting and maintenance work, and would be the final arbiter of how the garden was interpreted to the public. He proposed a small working party consisting of himself and Archie Bingham, the head groundsman. Indeed Archie continued to be a great supporter of the garden and of the Society's volunteers until his recent retirement last Christmas.

By September Mary Davies had responded agreeing to the conditions and welcoming the reassurance of working with an institution such as the Museum which would mean that the IGPS contribution would be properly cared for in the future. It was agreed that she and Philip would chair the group and that the other IGPS representatives would be Reg Maxwell and Katherine Nixon.

Katherine Nixon remembers the very early days

We were restoring Farm Hill, Cultra, when the IGPS was formed in 1981 and in April 1987 the Society held a plant sale behind our new Knot Garden. Mary Davies was looking for a project in Ulster where the membership was growing rapidly. Philip Robinson of the Ulster Folk and



Lisma-closkey Rectory 1987
illustrated by Katherine Nixon

Transport Museum suggested making a period garden at Lisma-closkey House, an early 'rectory' from Toomebridge. Possible collaborators including Alan Gailey, Reg Maxwell, Jonathan Bell, Geoff Coates, Andrew Bingham and me were invited to discuss the project

An opportunity for fact with fantasy while working with nature was irresistible and Mary Davies could not be refused. Her card to me dated 16/9/87 encouragingly

commented: "... delighted with the rectory drawing — it is so good!" My drawing illustrated her Newsletter article about the project that October. Mary and I annotated the Folk Museum's site plan with possible plantings. I have it still.

Another card dated 28/1/88 confirms my offer to list plants with biblical associations. Charles Nelson recommended some appropriate books including the 'fascinating' and 'enthraling' *Planting a bible garden* by Nigel Hepper (1987). The Rectory's former site had yielded nothing but a grassy graveyard with a brooding yew.

In the spring of 1988, the Society ordered a weeping ash, *Fraxinus excelsior* 'Pendula', from Baronscourt Nurseries in Co. Tyrone for a ceremonial tree planting and it was planted by Alan Gailey, Director of the Museum, and Mary Forrest on behalf of the IGPS in March.

That autumn Reg Maxwell reported the planting of a yew hedge, the removal of old shrubs and creation of new pathways. He appealed for plants from the Edwardian period, and offered to propagate material at the Botanic Gardens in Belfast. Iris Hall, Molly Sanderson, Lesley Casement, Amyan Mac Fadyen, and Margaret Garner responded generously.

I should also mention the hard frosts, letting the privet hedge grow up for badly-needed shelter, the resolutely stony ground, the vanishing plants, the isolation in the early days of working there alone and, later, more amusingly, a boy shouting "There's a snake!" while running from an elongated flat-worm which I was showing to a party of school children.



My thanks to the small group of volunteers who gathered round to continue planting and maintaining the garden with the help of Museum staff. Do please let me know if you were involved. Thanks also and best wishes for his retirement to Andrew Bingham who always obliged with the three M's — Manure, Machines and Manpower — anytime I asked.

Six of One and Eight of Another: A Snowdrop Adventure

by Gary Mentanko

As the weather picks up and more colour appears in our landscape and gardens, let us take a last glance at the snowdrop fever that annually affects many gardeners. Interest seems to be at a peak for the new generation of cultivars like the yellow tinged *Galanthus* 'Fiona's Gold' or the horizontal petalled *G.* 'Compu.Ted' which bring to mind the wings of a white beetle about to take off in flight.

As with most things, rarity and scarcity creates a business opportunity for one and rash and perhaps expensive decisions for another. Many readers will be familiar with the sale of *G. woronowii* 'Elizabeth Harrison' which sold for £725 in 2012 or *G. plicatus* 'Golden Fleece' for £1390 in 2015, the most expensive snowdrop ever sold on eBay. Indeed, last February saw some enterprising soul also selling this cultivar for a mere £500 at the AGS Snowdrop Day in Shropshire.

The media has weighed in on galanthophile trends. On 26th January just past, the cover photo in the Daily Telegraph had an attractive and rare snowdrop which had eight, instead of six, petal-like tepals, which was to be auctioned off at Myddelton House Garden in Lee Valley. The estimated auction price was £1,000.

Unfortunately, just as the ballyhoo of snowdrops can affect gardeners, it can result in journalistic hyperbole as the newspaper got the story somewhat wrong. While there was a snowdrop for sale at Myddelton House for £1,000, it was not the eight petaloid variety pictured but the aforementioned 'Golden Fleece'. The snowdrop in the photo, later named via a contest as *Galanthus* 'Market Cross', was available to the public at £80 a bulb and sold out in swiftly.

This journalistic overstep did result in an interesting little chain of discoveries for the National Botanic Gardens. The day after the publication of the article, an email came across the desk. Having seen the Telegraph article, a lady recounted that her own garden had an abundance of similar eight petaloid snowdrops and she invited us to come and take a look. A short jaunt to her beautiful farm estate in Wicklow found us curiously close to Glasnevin's sister garden at Kilmacurragh. Sure enough, there were plenty of snowdrops to be found and, while many had eight petals, they were usually standing in a clump of six petaloid plants. Some had malformed petals or sepals while others were nearly perfect. Interesting, we were told by the owner that her property was once part of the former Acton Estate which now forms the Kilmacurragh Botanic Gardens.

Not to be unsociable, we then went over to visit Seamus O'Brien, the Head Gardener at Kilmacurragh, to share our findings; he confirmed that the adjacent farm was in fact sold off by the Acton family sometime at the turn of the 20th century.

Seamus took us for a quick walk around to see what was in bloom. Sloshing through the overgrown grasses of the 'Fossil Lawn' after two weeks of unrelenting wet weather, we came across the first bunch of snowdrops which had ... eight petaloids! Both our young and seasoned gardeners alike were a little stunned at this coincidence.

The snowdrop in question was *Galanthus* 'Atkinsii', an old cultivar dating back to 1875 and introduced to the trade from Painswick Rococo Garden in Gloucestershire by nurseryman James Atkins. A subsequent visit by Seamus to the farm confirmed this to be the same snowdrop as the one growing at Kilmacurragh which makes for a fascinating connection in local phyto-geography.

An identical snowdrop to *G.* 'Atkinsii', first available in 1877 and known as *G.* "James Blackhouse", is known to produce malformed or additional petaloids such as we observed and is often sold incorrectly though the industry as 'Atkinsii'. Intriguingly, when looking at the modern estate of Painswick where 'Atkinsii' originated, both cultivars are growing despite no evidence of "James Blackhouse" ever being purchased. Could both cultivars be growing at the sites we visited or are we looking at the same cultivar expressing itself differently?

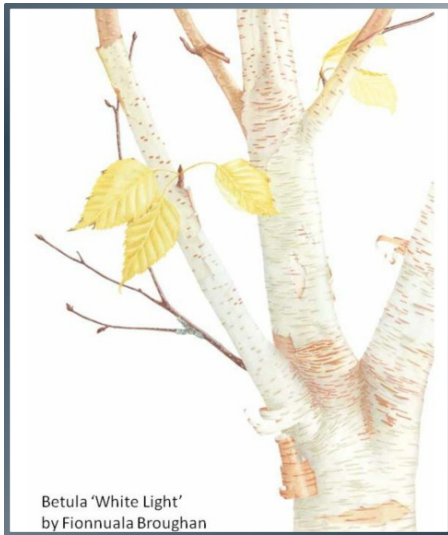
We advised the farm owner to mark where these unique snowdrops appear in her garden and observe whether they persist from year to year. After consultation with the experts in the IGPS, we found that these extra petals and sepals are a known aberration which occurs regularly but is generally not stable.

If it were, it would be the kind of thing that I would buy!

Gary Mentanko studied horticulture as a mature student and now works for the National Botanic Gardens.

***Betula* 'White Light'**

Paddy Tobin reflects on a note from John Joe Costin



One of the Irish plants chosen for inclusion in our recently published *Heritage Irish Plants – Plandaí Oidhreachta* was *Betula* 'White Light', a cross made by the late John Buckley of Birdhill in Co. Tipperary between *Betula utilis* var. *jacquemontii* and *Betula costata*.

When John Joe Costin read the article about our publication and the mention of *Betula* 'White Light', it brought to mind an article he had written in 2007 in *Trees*. In the article, he commented on the unusually good selection of plants found at the Berkeley Court Hotel in Ballsbridge and explained that

the hotel was built in the former botanic gardens of Trinity College before its move to Dartry Road, Rathmines. The highlight of this planting was an especially good form of *Betula utilis* var. *jacquemontii* which had especially attractive, bright white bark. This was, of course, the tree which Dr. Charles Nelson later registered as 'Trinity College'. While the original tree remained in the grounds of the Berkeley Court Hotel, scions were taken, grafted at Kinsealy and distributed to the trade and it is now widely grown and appreciated.

John Joe recalled visiting the gardens in 1975 at the request of Charles Haughey to survey what trees were worth saving and could be transplanted: "The grounds were abandoned and overgrown, but in the middle dominating the garden was a tall, mature birch with a broad umbrella-like canopy. From a distance it looked surreal, like an art installation or an apparition in white. The bole was smooth, chalky, clean and white. Incredibly, the white bark extended right up through the branch network to the very end of each branchlet at the rim of the canopy. As I had not encountered a birch remotely similar to it in terms of its dazzling unblemished pure whiteness, I assumed it was mistakenly or mischievously white-washed by a power sprayer. A nonsensical notion quickly dismissed when I got up close to the bole. It was the largest, cleanest and whitest birch I have ever encountered."

John Joe concluded his 2007 article with the following comments: "Human nature seeks perfection. Alas, *B. jacquemontii* does not do autumn colour. It sheds all its leaves in the first autumnal frost to reveal its naked whiteness for 6 months. However, *B. costata*, a native of N. E. Asia, does autumn colour in style. John Buckley (Buckley's Nursery, Kilmastulla, Birdhill, Co. Limerick), in 1985, raised a seedling which is a cross between these two species. *B. costata* is the seed parent. The hybrid, named 'White Light', is a splendid tree and grows taller than *B. jacquemontii*. It is available commercially since 1996. It combines the bark colour of *B. jacquemontii* and the autumn colour of *B. costata*. Furthermore, it roots from cuttings and, uniquely, transplants readily even at large sizes.

"Regrettably, the Irish trade equally ignores this splendid tree. As all plants sold as *B. jacquemontii* are in fact selected forms, it is disappointing that the very best forms, which are of Irish origin, are not the form most widely distributed."



In recent correspondence, John Joe continues and, in light of his fulsome praise of *Betula* 'Trinity College' above, his comments on *Betula* 'White Light' are all the more significant: "*Betula* 'White Light' is the most impressive of the birch that I grow here. *Betula nigra*, from Eastern America, is quite useless, unhappy and unthrifty, like most of its companion plants from east coast America. *Betula* 'Fascination' has an A.G.M. and its growth here reflects that. It is very good.

"Sadly, *Betula* 'Trinity College' is not really at the races, has no autumn colour and sheds its foliage early. It is the least vigorous of all. The outstanding performer is *Betula* 'White Light'. It sits in an open lawn and dominates all the birches, taller and, uniquely, in the end period of the year has the best autumn colour of all the birches (a trait inherited from *Betula costata*). John Buckley had both parents in his garden and the hybrid was natural. It combined the best of both and I would emphasise its autumn colour."

Note: John Joe Costin developed Costin's Nursery, Kilcock, Co. Kildare into one of the leading nurseries in the country.

Paddy Tobin is a former Chairman of the Society and gardens with his wife Mary in Waterford.

Seed Swap: Spring 2017

by Debbie Bailey There is no doubt that the early order catches the seeds – the first orders were in my post box within a day of the list seed being dispatched and all twenty of the first preferences were available. As time progresses and more and more requests (81 at time of writing) come in, the most popular seeds are gone and your noted substitutes become more important.

It has been a learning curve for me; the greatest challenge has been trying to give everyone a fair share of seeds whilst also keeping enough for future orders – easy to judge with *Digitalis*, *Francoa* and *Fritillaria* but a lot more difficult when it comes to *Paeonia* or *Canna*. I have tried to spread the seeds as much as possible but please forgive me if I was a little mean with some seed (and over-generous with others).

At this stage, I would like to request a small change for members in Northern Ireland. This year there was a mix of pound coins, Irish stamps, and UK stamps on the envelopes sent in. It would be simpler if all the envelopes had stamps on them – whether UK or Irish. There is always someone travelling across the border who will pop the envelopes with UK stamps in a post box for me. However, the most important part is to make sure you include the self-addressed and stamped envelope: a large handful arrived with only the envelope and no stamp and some without even an envelope.

Soon it will be seed collection time again so here is my first request of the year for you: start saving seed. The more seed donors we have, the greater the variety and amount of seeds for the list next year so, over the course of the season, please do pop a few into a paper bag (with name of plant and variety marked) to dry ready to send in later. It is greatly appreciated.

In the meantime, I hope you all have fun and success sowing your newly acquired seeds. If you have any suggestions, queries or comments, please do contact me either by post or email:-

Debbie Bailey - Reba Lodge, Braemor Drive, Churchtown, Dublin 14.
email: debbiebailey797@gmail.com

Debbie Bailey completed degree in Horticulture as mature student; she teaches horticulture and flower arranging while practising as a Horticultural Therapist.

Progress on Irish Heritage Plants

by Stephen Butler

Over the last year we have had a significant number of additions both to the number of Irish Heritage Plants (IHPs) listed as being grown, and to the number of new plants bred in Ireland. Both the National Botanic Gardens at Glasnevin, in particular Brendan Sayers, and Blarney Castle Gardens with Adam Whitbourn have increased greatly their accessions of IHPs. There have been introductions from nurseries too, particularly Kilmurry Nursery. Keeping the spreadsheet up to date is a regular task; hopefully with a slight change in format this will be easier, and I will be back in touch with our growers again soon.



Two of Stephen's target plants *Escallonia* 'C.F. Ball' and *Escallonia* 'Alice' named after Glasnevin assistant keeper Charles Frederick Ball and his wife Alice

We have now 888 entries on the spreadsheet, listing plants being grown by members and in gardens. Many of course are grown by more than one garden giving 279 duplicates, so in total we have now 609 different IHPs listed as grown by members, public gardens, or nurseries. The nursery-grown list is still very small, we only know of 50 different plants. Please let us know if you are aware of any nurseries growing IHPs and encourage them to contact us; we can check their catalogue, particularly if it is provided in an Excel format. If you own a nursery, please send us your list!

I am sure there are more Irish plants in cultivation than are listed as yet. As an exercise, I worked through the wonderful book *Heritage Irish Plants - Plandaí Oidhreachta*. Only four out of the 70 entries are easily available, a further 30 are listed as grown by members, sometimes several, but there are another 30 or so plants that are obviously being grown somewhere, but have not been notified for our list yet. So how



Photographed here at Killmacurragh -another plant on Stephens list is the beautiful yellow berried *Taxus baccata* 'Lutea'

many more are there out there? Rest assured, we will keep the details secure if you contact us.

Aconitum 'Newry Blue' has featured in this column before and is still on our agenda as we try to verify the correct plant. Plans are afoot to grow several different accessions, with at least one from a source where we can reliably say: 'Yes, there's a paper trail and good garden knowledge that this is the right one'. Once we have that, we can compare 'the others' and label accordingly. But first and essential is that one verified plant; without that, we really cannot say we have a definite 'Newry Blue'.

This Aconite demonstrates a major challenge in trying to identify an historic Irish Heritage Plant: the lack of a detailed picture or description. Old nursery catalogues can be frustratingly vague. Going forward, the very best would be an herbarium specimen - a pressed, dried, and mounted representative piece of the plant with a detailed description attached, and pictures of course which nowadays would be digital. Developing records like this should be a priority for us, especially for any new cultivars as they come along, to avoid future problems.

If you are interested in helping in this project, please get in touch at igps.heritageplants@gmail.com or via Glasnevin. This is a continuing project as there are many aspects we could use help with: tracking new cultivars, checking nursery lists, chasing nurseries outside Ireland for possible IHPs, or inputting data into the spreadsheet, and of course actually growing the plants!

Stephen Butler is Curator of Horticulture at Dublin Zoo and Irish Heritage Plant Coordinator, IGPS

Around the Regions

Leinster

Zoo Habitats jointly with the Irish Society of Botanical Artists.

'Immersing the animals and visitors in naturalistic planting at Dublin Zoo' was a challenging prospect to one whose idea of a zoo has advanced little since my childhood visits to the Regent's Park London Zoo in the 1950s where I vividly recall the concrete enclosures and the caged animals.

Stephen Butler explained his aim to create naturalistic effects throughout the zoo, even though Dublin cannot be expected to provide tropical rainforest, or savannah, or all the other geographical areas from which the Zoo's animal population has been drawn. He described the ways in which, for example, a rainforest effect could be created for the orangutans with big-leaf plants and concrete trees which are so realistic that a close-up view even displays the colouration of the bark. He was reluctant to fence off areas of planting even though the animals tended to devour all the greenery; instead, he researched the plants' foliage to understand which leaves might be bitter and distasteful so that the animals would spit them out and which might actually be dangerous. *Gunnera manicata* with its enormous leaves seemed to be pretty distasteful to most, but many other big-leaf subjects were either too tender or too tempting or too poisonous.

Not alone must the planting look as if it comes from the animals' native habitat but, if edible, it must also be sufficiently resilient to survive their constant browsing. By trial and error coupled with much research, the different zones of the zoo are now planted with effective cover, so that visitors see the animals through the foliage almost as if they were on safari plus it's better psychologically for the animals.

Where animals need to climb trees, the former playground-type climbing frames have been replaced with dead trees such as oaks from the Phoenix Park. The effect of trampling, which any captive animal will do in a confined space, can be lessened by using special materials to prevent the animals' feet from creating a hard pan which would inhibit plant growth. A different issue arose when clover was grown in the gorilla's habitat: they loved it so much they gathered armfuls to carry back into their house overnight.

Stephen also included botanical hints and suggestions which the gardeners in the audience were eager to note. He mentioned a lovely pale blue *Orthrosanthus laxus* which forms part of the National Collection of *Liber-tia* held there for Plant Heritage. What about all the compost? Stephen described the ways in which the different materials were composted, to the delight of every gardener present. His openness and willingness to explain exactly what was being done in the Zoo was extremely refreshing, and the audience applauded vigorously.

Mary Montaut

The Role of Urban Gardens in Pollinator Conservation

Dr Jane Stout, Trinity College -20th April.

What's this, a lecture about bees organised by a garden society? Absolutely, and it is good that gardeners are kept informed about how their gardens can help in conserving some of Ireland's fauna too. Interesting too that the audience of about 70 people was largely not our normal membership, but many new young faces, mainly students, great to see, and we were well informed by Jane's excellent talk.

Most people would be aware that bees in general are facing problems, whether it's honey bees – the loss of which would drastically reduce most fruit yields around the world – or native bumble bees or solitary bees. A lot of people may not know the differences between the native bees, a fear of being stung tends to cause an overreaction to most bee-like insects, which is a shame as very few bees will sting unless provoked. Remember bees die when they sting as it is their last defence. Wasps however sting for a living as they kill flies to nourish their larvae back in the nest. More importantly solitary bees **do not sting at all**, you can encourage them totally free of any concern. I well remember advising a worried friend to use a dusting of plain flour as a 'pesticide' to look as if she was killing the bees nesting in her lawn, her neighbour was allergic and complaining.....I was told I was very sneaky.

Jane gave us a detailed account of how bad bee threats are here. Europe has 2000 species, of which 9% are at risk, but there is really not enough data to be sure, it is certainly worse than that. Ireland has 100 species, 30% are threatened, 42 species have suffered a 50% loss of distribution. These figures are also worse than they look, as there are population dynamics involved, because when they get to a certain low number, it is harder to keep going – harder to find mates, harder to tolerate predation, harder to recover from bad summers. One area of Ireland that seemed to be doing better was the Burren, no doubt with its unique flora

and farming practices, and also an excellent conservation ethos among the farmers there.

So what can gardeners do? Certainly growing a diverse range of flowering plants, with a good spread of flowers through the spring, summer and autumn, will help, and there are many lists of which plants attract most bees for pollen and nectar. Double flowers often sacrifice reproductive parts, and thus nectar and pollen, so choose single flowers. Long nectar tubes, as in for instance some *Salvia*, indicate bird pollination, with long beaks and tongues, so not good for bees, although they sometimes cut their way in near the base to rob the nectar. Not spraying pesticides of course, but also think about bought plants, especially bedding, as systemic sprays will remain in the plant. Ask when you buy, as that also raises the issue with suppliers.

Quantity and quality of nectar varies too, the best supply comes from *Ilex* – have a good look early in spring, the small flowers are very productive. *Rubus* is also excellent, and is one of the top 3 for hoverflies too (and they lay eggs in your garden to eat greenfly remember), which makes the recent decision to cut roadside hedges earlier all the more damaging as it takes away late summer food supplies – please contact your local councillors and TDs to voice your concerns.

Rhododendron also gives an excellent nectar yield but only for bumble bees; honey bees are killed by the alkaloid grayanotoxin. The explanation would be that honey bees are good nectar gatherers but poor pollinators for *Rhododendron*, the bumble bee's bigger body would collect much more pollen. The presence of various other alkaloids also affects bees' behaviour; low levels of caffeine in for instance some citrus flowers seems to improve memory so they come back to the same plants – probably works on us too!

What else can gardeners do? The most important is providing nest sites. Many solitary bees will use 'bee hotels' – a simple bundle of hollow stems, bamboo, cardboard tubes, or holes drilled in timber, will quickly be used once the hole diameter is correct – lots of info on the web. I did this at home years ago and within a year had 3 species nesting happily, and even an ichneumon fly predated on the larvae in the nest. But, out of 77 solitary bee species, only 10 use these. More important may be allowing a dry soil bank, facing south, for soil nesting species. Imagine a sloping grassy bank, with a vertical cut into it so the soil is exposed, and the grass roots hold it together - perfect.

For more information look up the All Ireland Pollinator Plan, a grouping of 68 organisations, with much info available. www.biodiversityireland.ie

Mary Montaut and Stephen Butler, for IGPS Leinster Group.

Northern

The Story of Blarney Castle Gardens

As a horticulture student and new member of IGPS, I look forward to the lectures; having such a diverse range of experts in an accessible format is inspiring and humbling in equal measures. Blarney Castle Gardens, under the management of Head Gardener, Adam Whitbourn, are among a small number of notable gardens developing within large private estates in Ireland. Adam introduced us to the history of the estate, its ownership and some of the stories surrounding its past development.

The photos of druidic remains, dolmens, 600 year-old yews and even a witch's kitchen linked us to Ireland's ancient past and perfectly described the romantic and timeless spirit of the Robinsonian-styled gardens on which Adam's newer developments are sensitively built. The stone circle and the 'garden of the seven sisters', new tree collections building on the original Harold Hillier-supplied arboretum, a poison garden, fern garden, herbaceous borders with rose pergola, woodland walks and re-instated waterfalls are some of the more recent installations. Adam also described his approach to conservation, both locally and farther afield - a trip to Vietnam to collect rare *Aesculus wangii* seeds in areas under threat of deforestation. The gardens include rare Irish tree cultivars and labels for beds planted with Irish heritage cultivars such as *Bergenia* 'Irish Crimson'.

The Blarney Stone has always been well-known as a major tourist attraction; Adam half-joked that his ambition is to have the gardens overtake the Stone in terms of fame and hopes that visitors will '...come for the Stone and stay for the gardens'. I think what he has achieved means that visitors will '...come for the gardens and stay for the gardens'. In the mean time, I wonder how many of us will trap a lily beetle to see if it screams... or was that part of the blarney?

Claire Peacocke

Munster roundup

Munster had a busy programme of lectures in the early part of the year starting with Nick Macer of Pan-Global Plants, followed by more exotic plants and travels by Billy Alexander of Kells Bay. Closer to home, Lorna O'Mahoney gave a talk on Wildlife in the Garden while Paddy Tobin rounded off the season enthusing about Mount Congreve with its magnificent collection of trees and shrubs. All were enjoyed at our new Northridge House venue.

Margaret McAuliffe

Snippets

Gardens of Ireland Trust

The newly established Gardens of Ireland Trust aims to represent all gardens open to the public, throughout the island of Ireland and promote garden tourism. Although they are primarily representing gardens open to the public, they would welcome interest from garden centres, garden tour leaders, wedding venues which include a garden setting, photographers and writers who specialise in gardens and gardening.

The committee consists of Angela Jupe, Elizabeth Temple, Hester Forde, Breandan O Scanail, Kevin Begley and Trevor Edwards. Further details from Hester Forde at www.hester.gardenireland.com

Tulip Mania



Tulips at Glenarm

Among some of the best gardens in which to admire glorious plantings of tulips this year are the Bay Garden in Camolin, Co Wexford, Glenarm Castle Gardens in Glenarm, Co. Antrim, and June Blake's Garden near Blessington Co. Wicklow. The Bay Garden is open at weekends from 15th April until 14th May, Glenarm is open from 1st April with its tulip festival on the weekend of 29th April - 1st May, while June Blake's is from 14th April until 14th May, Wednesdays through to Sundays. For further details please check their websites: www.thebaygarden.com; www.glenarmcastle.com; www.juneblake.ie,

County Galway

IGPS member Lorna McMahon will open her garden at Ardcarraig, Oransdwell, Bushypark, Galway in aid of Galway Mental Health Association on Sunday 7th May from 2pm to 6pm. Tea. Plant sale. Admission €5.

To celebrate its 50th anniversary and in aid of Galway Hospice, Galway Flower and Garden Club are holding A Festival of Flowers in St Nicholas Church, Galway from Friday 5th to Sunday 7th May, 10am to 6pm on Friday and Saturday and 1pm to 6pm on Sunday. Admission €10.

The Woodland Trust

Two gardens in Co Tyrone, that of IGPS member Uel Henderson at 52 Moyle Road, Newtownstewart and that of Sir Bob Salisbury at 46 Drumconnelly Road, Omagh, will open in aid of the Woodland Trust on Saturday 20th May between 11am and 5pm. Teas. Plant sale. Admission: one garden £5 or both gardens £8

National Collections

Plant Heritage, the plant conservation charity with which the IGPS is associated, has announced four new National Plant Collections. Two have the status of historic collections; they are *Rosa* – hybrid musk introduced by Pembereton & Bentall 1912 -1939 which is held at Dutton Hall in Lancashire and *Colchicum* at East Rushton Old Vicarage in Norfolk. Two are reference collections; they are *Clivia* which is held in Hampshire and *Fragaria vesca* at Polemonium Plants in Co. Durham.

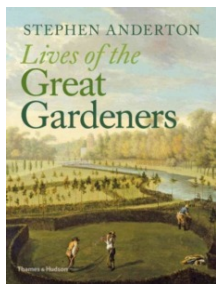
Botanic Network Ireland

The Network is a newly formed organisation for serious horticulturists with a focus on professional networking, plant collections, exchanging information and plants, excursions (to study) and lectures.

They aim to have a plant hunting trip each year, with a view to reviving the old tradition of plant hunting but with a modern ethical approach and a particular emphasis on research and conservation working in compliance with the Nagoya protocol.

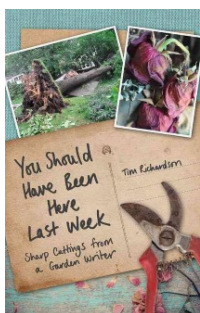
For more details see their Facebook page or email botanicnetworkireland@gmail.com

Worth a Read by Paddy Tobin

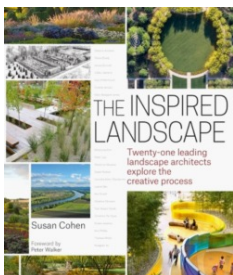


Stephen Anderton presents essays on 40 gardeners over a time spread of 500 years though with a strong leaning to those of the 20th century. Rather than a chronological sequence, the gardeners are organised thematically: “Gardens of Ideas/Straight Lines /Curves/Plantsmanship” and include Sir Roy Strong, Lancelot Brown, Russell Page, Graham Stuart Thomas, Christopher Lloyd, Beth Chatto and Piet Oudolf among others – something for everybody! The essays are bio-

graphical rather than critical and, given Stephen Anderton’s pleasant style, are light, enjoyable and informative. **[Thames & Hudson, 2016, Hb, 304pp, £24.95 ISBN: 9780500518564]**

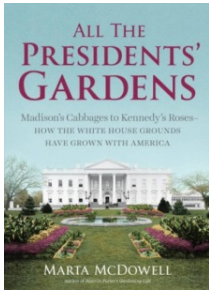


Small, compact and a little treasure. It is a collection of Tim Richardson’s columns, articles, essays and reviews and they are, first and foremost, entertaining but also informative and thought provoking. Tim Richardson’s style is witty, insightful, provocative and, above all, enjoyable and fun to read. I loved it! **[Pimpernel Press, 2016, Hardback, 208pp, £16.99, ISBN: 9781910258354]**



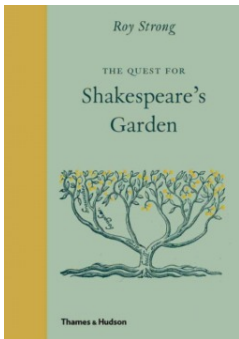
Susan Cohen gives a wonderfully informative, absorbing and entertaining insight into a gardening area with which most of us are not familiar – the work of landscape architects (21 in total) and what inspired them. These are not gardens as we know them domestically but projects on the grand scale, impressive, awe-inspiring and, oftentimes, puzzling. The author has interviewed the creators of these great spaces to explore what it was that inspired them. Some were inspired by

their childhood backgrounds, others by their love of particular aspect of natural landscape or plant ecology, others by pattern and form in art and one by his wife’s baggy orange camouflage pants! I found it fabulously interesting and think you would enjoy it also. **[Timber Press, 2016, Hardback, 272pp, £35, ISBN: 9781604694390]**



Michelle Obama brought media attention to the gardens of the White House with her vegetable garden but she was not the first resident to make an impact on the eighteen acres around the President's residence. Martha McDowell recounts the contributions – or lack of them – of the many residents over the past centuries. The beautiful Rose Garden of the Kennedys will be well known but there are many, many more interesting stories: Eisenhower's putting green, Lincoln's goats, Amy

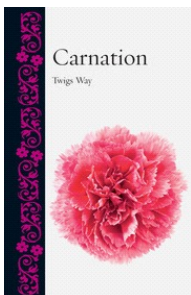
Carter's tree house, Gerald Ford's swimming pool, George H. W. Bush's horseshoe pit and Bill Clinton's jogging track among them. Kings and Queens walked these grounds but Presidents and their families shaped them – in most interesting ways. **[Timber Press, 2016, Hardback, 336pp, £20, ISBN: 9781604695892]**



Did Shakespeare ever garden at New Place? Probably not but that small fact has not stopped generations celebrating his garden at Stratford on Avon and it has recently been completely renovated with the installation of an Elizabethan style box parterre. There are no plans which show that such a garden existed at New Place but it is supposed that it is the style of garden he would have had if he had a garden! Despite my attitude to this fallacy of garden recreation, I enjoyed this book enormously for Sir Roy Strong explores all these matters in a wonderfully insightful and informed manner

and considers them of great gardening significance for, as he writes, "this recreated Elizabethan garden is not just sentimental curiosity but a milestone in the emergence of garden history and recreation," and he describes the garden as "the first major public attempt in England to accurately recreate a garden of another age." An excellent read! **[Thames & Hudson, Hb, 112pp, £14.95, ISBN: 9780500252246]**

T



This book is not about growing carnations but about the social and cultural history of a plant which has delighted people for centuries. The carnation challenged the tulip as the florist's favourite and was as popular a hobby plant in its era as the auricula. Time after time the author presents fascinating associations and facts about the carnation that makes this book a most enjoyable read. Very enjoyable! **[Reaktion Books, 2016, Hb, 224pp, £16, ISBN: 9781780236346]**

Fixtures for April Newsletter

Saturday/Sunday 13th and 14th May, Birr, Co. Offaly.

Our AGM this year will be centred in Birr. We will visit the Castle, Gardens, Telescope and Science Exhibition as well as a newly created town garden, an old walled garden with plants for sale and Lough Boora Discovery Park.

Online booking will close 8th May www.irishgardenplantsociety.com/events or return the booking form in the January newsletter to Ricky Shannon, 48 Sydney Avenue, Blackrock, Co. Dublin.

Saturday, 20th May, at 11 a.m. Tourin House and Gardens

Tourin, Co. Waterford is home to the Jameson sisters whose name is synonymous with Irish Whiskey. The house is situated 5 km from Cappoquin and Lismore and overlooks the River Blackwater. The Italianate style house dates to 1840 and features a fine double oak staircase. The garden extends to over 2 hectares and includes a walled garden. There is a good collection of camellias, rhododendrons and magnolias. Included in the rare and mature trees is a Champion London Plane Tree www.tourin-house.ie
Tour of house and garden with light lunch (soup, roll/brown bread, tea/coffee and biscuits) €15 per person.

Saturday, 20th May, at 2 p.m. Lismore Castle Gardens

These gardens contain a fine collection of magnolias, herbaceous borders, camellias and rhododendrons. There is also a remarkable yew walk and a contemporary sculpture trail. Set on 7 acres the garden is divided into the Upper Garden which is a complete example of a 17th century walled garden. Constructed by the 1st Earl of Cork it dates to about 1605. The Lower Garden dates from the 19th century and was created by the 6th Duke of Devonshire. It has an informal collection of trees, shrubs and lawns. Lismore Castle Arts Gallery is located in the west wing of the castle. There is also a cafe for light snacks and a plant sales area. www.lismorecastlearts.ie
Cost is €6.50 per person for 10 or more in the group.

Saturday, 27th May, 2017 at 11.00 a.m.

Note: This is the first of two Gardens to visit to-day.

Number 1: Katherine Nixon's garden.

48 Ballydorn Road, Killinichy, Co. Down BT23 6QB

This young garden on Strangford Lough explores a range of habitats across five acres from saltwater to boulder clay. At the water's edge, the artist Katherine Nixon has defined a landmark barn, original stackyard and potager. Further south-west, a courtyard collection of flowering shrubs and perennials, mostly scented and many from the house in south County Dublin where Katherine was born. These provide all-year-round privacy, shelter and a succession of tableaux vivants.

This is a sensual garden at every level. PLEASE DO TOUCH, smell, taste, look and listen. N.B. Very limited parking on roadside. Suggest leave cars at Public Car Park on main Whiterock Road opposite Daft Eddy's and double up for last leg to the verge by the field opposite the garden. No parking in lane.

Shelter in barn and conservatory for those who wish to bring a picnic.

Light lunches suggestions: Daft Eddy's Cafe or Restaurant; Mufflers at Baloo: Old post Office, Lisbane

ADMISSION - KATHERINE HAS GENEROUSLY DECIDE THAT NO ADMISSION FEE WILL BE CHARGED FOR THE VISIT, WE ARE ALL HER GUESTS!

Saturday, 27th May, 2017 at 2.30 p.m.

Number 2: Knox Gass' Garden

5 Bally Morran Road, Killinchy, County Down, BT23 4 SB

The Gass's moved to this garden just nine years ago, so you need to view it as a young project. Knox is attempting to divide it up into various areas, but this still requires time to become effective. There is a small 'woodland' area, a large lawn bordered by shrubs and trees, herbaceous borders each timed for different seasons, a fruit cage, propagation and a composting area. There are still corners where work is ongoing in this evolving garden. Knox is looking forward to our visit and anticipates that you will encounter some plants with which you are unfamiliar.

PARKING IS DIFFICULT SO CAR SHARING WILL BE ESSENTIAL FROM YOUR CHOSEN LUNCH VENUE. ADMISSION: MEMBERS AND VISITORS £3.00

ALL PROCEEDS FROM THE VISIT WILL GO TO THE NATIONAL TRUST.

Saturday, 17th June, 12.00 p.m. Tullynally Castle, Lunch and guided tour of gardens

A light lunch followed by guided tour of the gardens at 2.30 p.m. Cost includes admission, lunch and guided tour. Members €30; Non-Members €33.

The Gardens at Tullynally date back over 350 years. The Pakenhams settle here in the 17th century and three generations still live here as their family home. The layout of the gardens and magnificent parkland date mainly from the early 1800s, but the present owners, Thomas and Valerie Pakenham, have added many new features. To appreciate this wonderful garden a look at their website www.tullynallycastle.ie is recommended. You will also find a map indicating how to find the location.

Booking can be made via the link on our website www.irishgardenplantsociety.com/events from 15th May. Or by returning booking form to Ricky Shannon, 48 Sydney Avenue, Blackrock, Co. Dublin.

SATURDAY, 1ST JULY, 2017 AT 2.00 P.M.
DOREEN WILSON'S GARDEN
14 BALLYROGAN PARK, NEWTOWNARDS, BT23 4SD

Although the original house and garden are 35 years old, it was only in the past 10 years, when the owner retired, that much gardening has taken place. Trees and hedges were planted as a shelter belt from the cold fronts that roll down from the Craiganlet Hills and the strong westerlies that blow up from Strangford Lough. Largely a country garden with a wide variety of herbaceous plants, some unusual shrubs including 'Emmenopterys henryi' and a productive vegetable garden with a small overflowing greenhouse. There is a pergola planted with wisteria and a walkway with a variety of roses leading to a secret Summer House. A small shelter pool in a courtyard is surrounded with pots of pelargoniums which should be flowering in July.

This is not a designer garden, as more plants are acquired more lawn is surrendered. The garden is managed completely organically and the owner is a fanatical composter. Partially suitable for wheelchairs.

Doreen will provide Coffee, Tea, etc. (not included in entry fee)

Location: From Dundonald take the A20 and turn left onto the Belfast Road (past Old Mill coffee Shop). Turn right into Ballyrogan Road and first left into Ballyrogan Park.

ADMISSION: MEMBERS FREE (PAID BY SOCIETY)

VISITORS £4.00

ALL PROCEEDS FROM THE VISIT WILL GO TO DOREEN'S CHOSEN CHARITY 'BLOODWISE'

Sunday, July 9th 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Blarney in Bloom

In aid of Irish Guide Dogs for the Blind

IGPS will have a stand. Members can donate plants. A rota will be organised for the day nearer the date. Members will receive e-mail and webtext with details.

Saturday, 15th July, at 2.30 p.m. Visit to Josh and Mary Wilkinson at Skryne, Co. Meath. NUMBERS LIMITED TO 25.

This has been described by some of our members as one of the most beautiful and tidiest vegetable gardens they have ever seen.

Directions from the M50. Take the N3 for Cavan/Navan – this will shortly become the M3. There is a Toll along this motorway. Continue for 32 kilometres and take R147 signposted Skryne. Drive a further 4 kilometres. Our turn is first on left hand side – L50000 this is a narrow road. House is on the right side and will be indicated – we will enter by one gateway and exit by the other.

There will be tea/coffee, biscuits and tray bakes. No charge - donation to Multiple Sclerosis.

Kirsten Walker, has kindly invited us to her nursery which is nearby in Skryne. Directions will be given on the day to those participating. Bookings by E-mail to shannon.ricky2@gmail.com or by texting a message to Ricky at 086 3511281.

Visit to Aughtentaine Estate Garden, 22nd July 2017 , 12.30pm to 2.30 pm

**James and Caro Hamilton Stubber, Aughtentaine,
Aghintain Road, Fivemiletown, Co. Tyrone, BT75 0LH**

Designed in the mid 1950's by Percy Crane, and created over the last 50 years by Mrs. John Hamilton Stubber, the extensive gardens at Aughtentaine cover some 12 acres and are on an elevated site with magnificent views. They range from the formal terraced herbaceous borders to planted parkland, a walled kitchen garden and an attractive woodland glen sheltering a collection of specimen rhododendrons, camellias, azaleas and trees.

Please bring a picnic lunch and arrive by 12.30 p.m. Cora has very kindly offered to provide a pudding after the picnic, as well as tea/coffee. After lunch, there will be a tour of the garden by James Hamilton Stubber and head gardener, Barbara Carleton. There will also be a plant sales table and members are asked to bring along their contributions to add to those provided by the head gardener.

Location/Directions

Aughtentaine is approx 1 ½ hours drive from east coast Co. Antrim and Co. Down. Make your way to the M1 and take it westwards towards Dungannon where it becomes the A4. Follow signs for Enniskillen passing through Clogher to Fivemiletown. At the first mini roundabout in Fivemiletown turn right for the B122 to Fintona; after 50 yards turn right again on a sharp left hand bend (also signed B122 to Fintona).

Then go down hill, passing church on right. At the bottom of the hill, on a left hand bend, turn right into Aghingowly Road, passing gates to 'Blessingbourne' on right. After approximately 2 ½ miles turn right at T junction, the gates to Aughtentaine will be ½ mile on the left after left-hand bend over stone bridge.

Admission: Members free, visitors £5. All proceeds from the visit will go to the IGPS.

Wednesday 9th August 2017, Ulster Folk Museum – 1pm to 4.30 pm

Lismacloskey IGPS Volunteers, 30th Anniversary Garden Day

IGPS and museum volunteers invite you to join them in celebrating their 30th year of tending the Lismacloskey Rectory garden at the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum, Cultra, County Down. (<http://nmni.com/uftm>)

In co-operation with the Folk Museum the volunteers are hosting a garden event day with a variety of activities including flower arranging, lavender bag making, paper flower making, a talk on bee-keeping and a talk on the history of Lismacloskey. There will also be a plant sale with an opportunity to buy some of the Lismacloskey heritage plants.

Visitors can also explore the 50 restored and authentically furnished rural and town exhibits set in over 170 acres of rolling countryside, telling the story of life in 19th and early 20th century Ulster.

Admission (normally £9) is FREE for IGPS members and any of their guests over the age of 50. NO BOOKING REQUIRED - Please bring your IGPS Membership Card

Heritage Irish Plants Plandaí Oidhreachta

Purchase online!



Many thanks to all who have supported this project and have bought a copy of the book. In case you haven't your copy yet do remember that you can purchase it online on the Irish Society of Botanical Artists' site: <http://www.irishbotanicalartists.ie/shop/>

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