

Irish Garden Plant Society



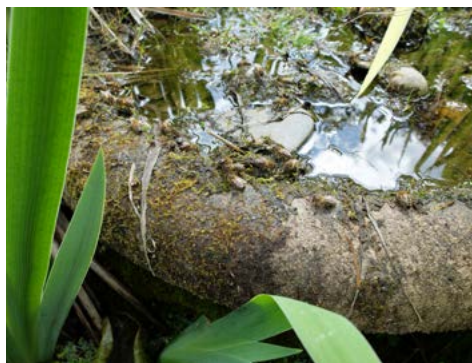
Newsletter
September 2017

Fernhill Gardens, Co. Dublin

- a suitable case for conservation

IGPS Visit, Spring 2017

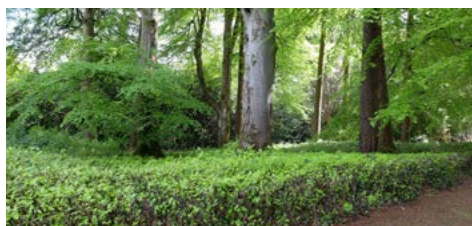
Photographs: Mary Montaut



Neglected Pond



The Wildflower Meadow



The Laurel Lawn



Candelabra Primulas



Paeony

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Editorial

Guest Editor: Mary Montaut, Leinster Branch, IGPS

I hope that my choice of the photograph on the cover of this issue has not shocked too many of our readers. I quite deliberately chose to include the spider inside the beautiful flower of the Irish Heritage Plant, *Romneya coulteri*, in order to open a discussion about the way in which we view our gardens. The question I would like to open is whether we see our gardens as areas of total control (so far as is humanly possible, of course) - or, alternatively, whether we may not rather view them as environments in themselves, that is, as 'garden ecology'? I suggest that the former view would encourage us to find spiders and insects, not to mention other arthropods like woodlice or pill bugs, as threats and pests; whereas I hope that the latter view would encourage gardeners to take a more tolerant attitude towards the other inhabitants of their patch, even at the expense of the odd prize vegetable or other treasured plant.

This romantic hope of mine is based in good science: the use of garden chemicals for pest control has become a serious source of threat, not only for the other garden creatures which we do favour, like birds and hedgehogs, but for the health of the soil itself. This most vital and perhaps unregarded part of many gardens may be polluted with residues from garden chemicals, even ones which we have not used for years. A study in the USA has found that residues from pesticides which have been banned (and not available for sale) for eight years are detectable in the nests of bumblebees. In fact, an earlier study which truly alarmed me found that there were no fewer than twenty-five different pesticides in the small body of a single bee. The residues of various 'safe' pesticides may stay in the garden soil long beyond their use to control 'pests' and the cumulative effects of these combinations are only just being researched - and indeed, found to be more harmful to soil life than we had realized. If any reader is interested in this question, I would recommend André Leu's book, *The Myths of Safe Pesticides* (2014).

However, this is only the beginning of the view we need to understand 'garden ecology'. The meaning of this phrase includes the idea of a garden which is in balance with itself, rather than a constant struggle. We are well aware that the Ph. of our soil will determine which plants flourish in our own particular gardens: we may even remember an old saying to remind us, "Lime, lime and no manure, Make the fathers rich and the sons poor." But on top of this (literally) there is an entire community of living things about which

we tend to be woefully ignorant. I am sure that most of us have sprayed greenfly on roses and fruit bushes, but has anyone ever really found a way to deal with the enormous fecundity of these little beasts? You may know that they can reproduce both sexually, or not: with the young greenfly being born live and ready to suck your precious plant stems, in vast numbers. In fact, the wasps we hate so much are brilliant at controlling greenfly; unlike bees, they are insectivorous and feed the masticated greenfly to their young in quantities. If your garden is able to balance itself, this should help the birds and ladybird larvae to take care of the problem. The book which has completely opened my eyes to this complexity is by the American entomologist, Eric Grissell, whose wonderful *Insects and Gardens: in Pursuit of a Garden Ecology* (2001) is the most illuminating read: his theme is that 'Diversity is the basis of a balanced garden.'

Our gardens are increasingly becoming an important refuge and resource for our diverse wild life, with new emphasis on planning 'green roofs' in urban areas, 'bee paths' through cities, and wildflower meadows in our parks. The IGPS aim of conserving our heritage of beautiful Irish plants surely requires us to conserve the health of their environment as well. May I close this polemic with another quotation?

"Certain gardens are described as retreats, when they are really attacks."
(Ian Hamilton Finlay)

Lacewing or Aphid Lion (*Chrysoperia carnea*) is a voracious greenfly eater.





Billy McCone, Chairman IGPS

A Note from the Chair

It is heartening to have members step forward to share the workload and I am very grateful to Mary Montaut as our second guest editor this year to do so.

It has been a fairly eventful few months with several things coming at once. In addition to the planned regional talks, garden visits and conservation programme, the following is a summary of the main items that the society is funding this year.

My thanks to our *Moorea* editor, Anne James, for producing the 17th edition of the society's journal. A monumental task.

Congratulations to the volunteers at Lisnacloskey who in August celebrated their 30th year looking after the rectory garden at the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum.

We are pleased to support Brendan Sayers and Gary Mentanko with their *Bergenia* trials at Glasnevin Botanical Gardens. When the working group for the plant conservation programme, headed by Stephen Butler, started to target the rarer Irish cultivars, it was evident that provenance was going to be an issue with some plants. The project that Brendan and Gary propose is important as it will provide a format and process to extend trials to other varieties.

Another project we are delighted to assist with is the planned publication of a book by Seamus O'Brien, *In the Footsteps of Joseph Dalton Hooker – A Sikkim Adventure*. Seamus tells us the book will have a significant Irish content, such as the connections to Earl of Rosse at Birr, the botanic gardens that grew Hooker's plants in Belfast, Dublin, Doneraile Court, Kilmacurragh and Fernhill. It will also focus on Irish plant hunters in India and the Irish Heritage Plants we grow today as a result of Hooker's plant finds. It is hoped that Kew publications will be releasing the book in the Spring of 2018. Seamus has generously offered to deliver a talk to all three regions (and book signing) on Hooker's expeditions.

Pogue's Entry garden in Antrim, under the direction of Yvonne Penpraze with her small team of volunteers, has got off to a steady start but more volunteers are urgently needed. As with Lisnacloskey the expenditure on this project is expected to be extremely modest; however, linking to the conservation programme the garden is intended to be another and very critical 'safe haven' for Irish Heritage plants.

Although not immediately apparent, as Paddy Tobin has done a brilliant job keeping it together, our web site, which is beginning to creak at the seams, is in serious need of an overhaul. The society has contracted a web-site developer to re-vamp and maintain the site.

Finally - The executive committee have agreed to return to the publication of four Newsletters per year rather than the current three.

When you look at the above you would be excused for thinking that we had a large team to manage not only the day to day administration but all the other things we aspire to achieve. I suppose we could make life easy and aspire to less. Or we continue to make that stretch and try to punch above our weight. We don't have a large team but a strong team; in our executive committee, our regional committees and our volunteer groups --- strong but small and stretched. I'm probably sounding like a broken record by now but I have to and will continue to ask for more people to join the committees or volunteer to take on tasks or roles.

On that note a massive thanks again to Mary for this *Newsletter* and I almost forgot, my past HNC Garden Design tutor Joanna Loane has joined the Northern committee – welcome aboard miss, my turn to set the homework.

Happy reading folks,

Billy.

Memories from the IGPS Annual General Meeting, 13-14 May, 2017 at Birr, Co. Offaly

Birr Castle and Gardens

It has been my good fortune to visit Birr Castle estate many times in the past to attend game fairs or source items of garden furniture crafted from some of the ancient fallen giants that have finally reached the end of their days. These are converted in to rustic timber tables and stools and other attractive pieces by Paddy Murray, who runs a small sawmill in the town where he takes care of the aftermath of storm damage. But I had never before seen the Castle and grounds properly or appreciated them fully until I spent a day there with the IGPS last May. When you are alone you miss the invaluable guided tour and the sharing of knowledge with other plants-people. You also miss the opportunity to meet the owners of famous properties and hear, at first hand, their family history and how our great gardens and estates developed over the years.

Predictably, a large number of gardening enthusiasts arrived on the day so we were split into three groups for a tour of the estate. I was fortunate to be among those who had Brendan Parsons, 7th Earl of Rosse, as our tour guide and what a fascinating narrative he shared with us as we strolled through the grounds. The gardens at Birr contain an abundance of rare plants and within the 50 hectares you will find the world's tallest box hedges, over 40 champion trees, along with more than 2,000 species of plants as well as rivers, lake and waterfalls. In addition to the numerous specimens collected by the Parsons family, many of the trees and shrubs here were also gathered by some of the most famous plant hunters of the past. Birr was the first garden in Ireland to receive specimens of *Metasequoia glyptostroboides* (Dawn Redwood) after its discovery in China in 1945. Recent plant hunting expeditions by the current Earl and Countess included Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Iran, South Africa, New Zealand, China and Bhutan. Among the many striking specimens we noted were a splendid *Taxodium distichum* (Swamp Cypress) growing close to the lake, while along the bank of the river Camcor there are superb *Viburnum* and *Rhododendron* that provide a colourful backdrop to the oldest suspension bridge in Ireland.

Michael, the 6th Earl, started the great collection of magnolias and although the garden is mostly on alkaline soil, they thrive here, especially in the River Garden. On his honeymoon, after his marriage to Anne Messell from Nymans

garden in Sussex, they visited China. Here they became involved in plant hunting expeditions and this contact was the beginning of the long co-operation between Birr and China in the botanical field and many plants from Western China now flourish here.

In the early 1840s, the Third Earl of Rosse designed and built what was then the largest telescope in the world. With this he discovered the spiral nature of some of the galaxies, and from 1845-1914, anyone wishing to witness this phenomenon had to come to Birr. We were enthralled at the workings of the telescope and how in the past, people came from all across Europe and beyond to marvel at this feat of engineering. We then took a break for lunch in the excellent café situated in the courtyard and looked forward to an afternoon tour of the castle.

Joe Barry

The Castle

Heavy showers arrived in the afternoon but we were by then under the vast roofs of the castle, unlike some of the others from our main party who later returned from their tour of the garden, damp but still full of enthusiasm for all they had seen. Despite the splendour of the rooms and furnishings, the castle interior has a friendly feel to it. The large windows allow for ever changing views of the grounds, and the plants on the outside walls included a delightful *Rosa banksiae* 'Lutea'.

Lord Rosse had gone to considerable trouble to lay out a wonderful collection of old books and paintings of botanical art for us to view. Many famous artists, including Wendy Walsh and Susan Sex, have visited Birr to paint and among the books on display was the relatively recent but much sought after *Irish Florilegium*. The library is magnificent with thousands of books lining the walls, creating an atmosphere of peace that is so conducive to study and research. The secret doors that led from room to room were a lovely surprise and one can only imagine the fun the family would have had, slipping unseen back and forward. Our President, Michael D. Higgins, had been a recent visitor to launch the ambitious Giant's Grove project and the chandeliers still bore decorative garlands as evidence of his visit. There were many old albums and photographs also on display, which Lord and Lady Rosse shared with us and brought vividly to life with fascinating anecdotes of family history.

Judy Barry

Visit to Contemporary Town Garden at Oxmantown Mall, Birr

This is one of the gardens included in our AGM weekend in May. We had a guided tour of the Gardens at Birr Castle in the morning, but this garden provided a whole new aspect given its contemporary nature. Fortunately, or unfortunately, depending on your viewpoint, the weather changed from fair in the morning to an afternoon of fairly heavy rain. It was wet, very wet but calm; for my own part I quite like to see plants and gardens in rain as the colours and shapes can appear more defined. IGPS members, of course, are a hardy variety, and we braved the rain and thoroughly enjoyed this lovely space.

I am sure that all the gardens behind the beautiful houses of Oxmantown Mall have lovely gardens, many of the walls of the front gardens are Wisteria and rose clad with roses the predominant plant. There is quite a contrast at Number 10, a Contemporary Garden; the front garden is planted with small and large Box balls and white Cosmos, the side walls feature espaliered pears which have been more successful than apple here. The front garden sets the scene for what lies behind this imposing house.

We were met at the garden by Angela Jupe whose own garden we visited the next day. Angela had been contacted by the owner of No.10 about 8 years ago after he had bought the house. She started the plans for work in the garden while waiting for plans for the restoration work to the house. The restoration drawings for the house were done by the architect, Grainne Carr of Dublin and all supervised by Derek Coulter of Birr. On entering the garden there is an immediate feeling of calm and order; the 180 ft long garden is divided into three distinct spaces. Angela explained that there was the usual clearance of rubble and growth, with noxious weeds such as thistle and bindweed. All had to be sprayed and left for 18 months to die off.

The first section adjoins the house. The existing coach house has been converted to a double height kitchen and attached to that is a most wonderful and unusual French style metal greenhouse built by a French company, 'Living Heritage Company' which specialises in hand made products. A most unusual curved roof (but entirely fitting in the setting) has automatic vents and a watering system. There has been no planting in the Greenhouse yet as decisions on what to plant have not been made. One gets the feeling here, that everything in the garden is about time, much time has been taken and much thought gone into the design, this is no garden 'makeover'. The courtyard is planted with pleached Hornbeam to screen neighbouring houses and there is a Box and Lavender parterre. The day we visited *Camassia*

were in bloom. The focal point at the centre of the parterre is a specially commissioned armillary sundial.

The middle section has had levels adjusted in two directions; entrance is through beautiful iron gates up to the pool level - a tranquil pool, the surrounds had come from the Cotswold home of Princess Marina of Kent. Four 5 ft herbaceous borders line the paths. The mixed planting is muted with colours of blue/green, pink, blues and whites giving a tranquil feel and softening the grey of the stonework. The old stone garden walls have no foundations, so the ground could not be lowered, and two longish grassed areas were created up to the walls with David Austin rose beds. The owner had become very fond of David Austin roses and Angela was instructed to include these as an essential within the overall plan.

The third section of the garden is a summer house which allowed us to shelter from the heavy rain. This beautifully proportioned building is decorated with old Portland stone door casings, stone roof architrave and window sills. The many arched windows have decorated cast iron frames which create some great viewing points from which to view the whole garden. All of the stonework and cast iron work has been salvaged from sources in Ireland, England and France. This summerhouse forms the division with the last garden, the white garden. Here there is a central grass circle which is sunken 2 ft below floor level. The upper raised area contains snowdrops and *Narcissus odoraplana* in Spring; summer planting is white peonies, Camassias, Day lilies and one of my own favourites, *Romneya coulteri*; for late summer there are *Hydrangea* 'Annabelle' in profusion. The whole is surrounded with pollarded Limes; Mike Snowden had advised on the pollarding and ongoing maintenance.

Towards the end of our visit the heavens opened wide and we were forced to make a very hasty exit. The leaden skies that day did provide great focus for the colour and feel of this calm, beautifully and lovingly created garden. This is an ongoing project: the garden is looked after by Eamon Ashe of Birr and the owner, when at home, can be found weeding, deadheading and, as is the wont of all gardeners, planning.

Our thanks to Angela Jupe, our guide and for helping me with background information; thanks also to the owner of No.10 for allowing us to share this wonderful space.

Jenny Constable

The Walled Garden at Bellefield House, Birr, Co.Offaly

Owner: Angela Jupe

Many hours must have been spent trawling salvage yards and auctions for Angela has made good use of reclaimed items. A bizarre onion-shaped roof had been found in Cheltenham when Angela had preferred prowling salvage yards to the races. Now it tops an Orient inspired kiosk, with pretty wall paintings inside. Just think of the effort of bringing the roof back – the removal man must have taken a really deep gulp. On the other side of the garden beautifully leaded windows had been reclaimed to construct an Orangery. Inside some interesting pelargonium and succulents stood on the slate window sills.

In both the town garden and her own, Angela has shown she is unafraid to alter substantially ground levels. Here she had levelled out a slope, and placed the Orangery on level ground with a rill in front of it. But can it really be called a rill? Not quite a canal perhaps, but more than a rill surely!

There were many lovely plants to pause and admire. The tree peonies were at the peak of their flowering. ‘Hesperus’, a Saunders hybrid, is an orange-pink that defies description but looks so much nicer than that sounds. Obviously happy, the tree peonies have produced many seedlings which members were quick to take the opportunity to purchase at very good prices. *Paeonia willmottiae* was in flower in a border pulled together by drifts of alliums. Robust lupins and aquilegia added to the county feel of the garden. Sadly, the visit was curtailed by a downpour (a theme of the weekend); we could have spent much longer there. It would be a wonderful garden to linger in.

Caroline Stone

Lough Boora Discovery Park, IGPS AGM Weekend, Sunday 14 May 2017

Lough Boora Discovery Park was the third place that the IGPS arranged to visit on our AGM weekend around Birr, Co. Offaly. And what a discovery it was, because the Park is very new - having only opened its Visitors' Centre in 2014 - and it is still relatively unknown. It is a worthy attempt by Bord na Móna to restore some environmental value to their cutaway peatlands.

We met our guides, Mark McCorry and his colleague David, both Bord na Móna ecologists, at the Visitors' Centre, which has a fine café and a peaceful sitting area on a deck overlooking the lough. The raised bogs of the Midlands appeared after the last Ice Age, around 15,000 years ago. The bogs provided turf, heat, a place to store food and other valued items and eventually electricity for the people of Ireland over many centuries. Bord na Móna mechanised peat harvesting in the middle of the twentieth century and at its peak, Boora supplied over 1 million tonnes of peat every year.

Now that the peat has been largely cut away, Bord na Móna is promoting various beneficial uses, including renewable energy, biodiversity, amenity uses, water storage and other infrastructure. Lough Boora is now a sanctuary for wildlife and a fantastic amenity for the local community – a place of quiet, relaxation, and employment.

Mark pointed out that only around the Visitor Centre has there been any planned landscaping (mostly birches and heather) while in most places they have just allowed the natural ecology of plants, birds and other wildlife to take over. Five pathways have been created for walking and cycling, each with a special area of interest: the Sculpture Park, Mesolithic History, Farmland, Lakes, and even a Lagoon. The routes range from 3 km up to the full cycling route of 22 km, and there are facilities for fly-fishing and birdwatching. The park is now becoming a popular local attraction and all around us we witnessed happy families riding hired bicycles, with children in tow, either on tandems or in child carriers of all sorts.

Our group followed the Sculpture Park Route, which pays homage to the human interaction with the bog lands; several international artists were invited to create large-scale sculptures using the existing materials in the environment and those left behind by the bog-cutting industry. They range from a forest of up-ended ancient bog pine trees, to a ‘Sky Train’ of an old bog train raised in a curve against the sky, to various geometric structures made from wood, turf, and the metal railway lines. All were very striking and interesting, so that the visitor is enticed forward on to the next piece.

We were shown an area of untouched raised bog, with its common bog plants such as bog cotton, reeds and rushes. An Active Raised Bog is defined as the living, actively growing, upper layer of a raised bog, the surface of which is composed mainly of living bog mosses (*Sphagnum* spp.) which form

peat in anaerobic conditions. He explained that a bog is watered only by rainfall and can dry out for part of the year, while a fen has a source of groundwater all year round. The cutaway bog areas were less wet and becoming more alkaline, due to the introduction of stone for the building of the railways and paths. This is reflected in the type of wild plants growing there.

We looked at the native plants that were literally all around our feet, such as the Common Knapweed (*Centaurea nigra*), Marsh Speedwell (*Veronica scutella*), Milkwort (*Polygala vulgaris*) and Marsh Orchids (*Dactylorhiza incarnata*). There is a welcome return of native Irish flora and fauna (particularly hares) returning to what was a barren cutaway bog. Bord na Móna is also cooperating with a NPWS project to promote the expansion of the rare Irish Grey Partridge population from Lough Boora. However, there are problems with invasive species, such as Parrot's Feather (*Myriophyllum aquaticum*), in the water canals.

Raised bogs are an extremely rare and unique habitat in global terms. Active Raised Bog, or bog that is continuing to lay down peat, is a priority habitat under Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive and a significant portion of the world's remaining active raised bog is in Ireland. 53 raised bogs have been designated as Special Areas of Conservation (SACs), but Lough Boora is not one of them, as it has very little conserved bog left. In fact, Ireland has lost 90% of its raised bogs to commercial peat extraction, turf cutting and forestry. Of the peat moss harvested in Ireland, 66% is used by amateur gardeners. The remainder is used by professional horticulturalists. Such is the demand for moss peat, that countries which have used all of their indigenous supplies of this natural resource resort to importing moss peat from Ireland.

We discussed with our guide Mark the fact that we, as gardeners, are very much part of the problem and he pointed out that the Bord na Móna Growise range now includes a peat-free compost, made from forestry waste. However, from talking with other IGPS members, it seems that though peat-free alternatives are more readily available now in Northern Ireland, it is still difficult to get them at garden centres in the South.

We left Lough Boora Discovery Park with a renewed determination to ask garden centres to stock more peat-free products.
See more at: <http://www.loughboora.com>.

Sara & Noel Whelan

Honorary Memberships

Announced at this year's AGM, the National Executive of the Irish Garden Plant Society unanimously awarded Honorary Membership to Ricky Shannon as a thank you for her years of unstinting dedication to the Society; and to Daffodil grower Brian Duncan for a major contribution to Irish horticulture.

Ricky Shannon, member of the National Executive Committee, has been a cornerstone of the IGPS, serving in a variety of roles and committees for many years. When her name was proposed there was no shortage of accolades from her colleagues expressing support. As one succinctly put it :-

"If you think Ricky has been around forever, well, you would be right for she has been active since the inception of the Society in 1984. There has hardly been an IGPS event which she has missed and as such acts as a social historian for all of us who have had the privilege of knowing her at Leinster and National Executive levels and on our garden visits around the country. Every society needs its organiser, the one who is not afraid to say things as they are: Ricky is our character."

Brian S Duncan. One of our great Irish daffodil breeders and one of the best and most successful hybridisers and exhibitors in the world. Coming from Co. Tyrone, he started hybridising daffodils in 1964. Success at daffodil shows soon followed and he has won the prestigious RHS Englehart Cup, which is awarded to the exhibitor showing a dozen perfect daffodils raised from seed, a record number of times. He has won numerous other cups and RHS Gold Medals and been a member and sometime Chair of the RHS Narcissus Classification Committee. Brian has received a Gold Medal from the American Daffodil Society and has been a highly respected lecturer and judge in the USA. Closer to home he is a founding member and past chairman of the Northern Ireland Daffodil Group, wrote the chapter on daffodils for our Society's recent publication *Heritage Irish Plants Plandai Oidhreacht* and continues to give encouragement and advice to all who ask.

Congratulations: To IGPS members, Paul and Orla Woods of Kilmurry Nurseries, who won Gold and Best in Show for their nursery exhibit at Bloom.



Lismacloskey Garden Part 2

While researching the story of Lismacloskey, it became clear that the garden's development has taken place in roughly 10-year cycles. From its inception in 1987, described in the last issue of the *Newsletter*, it has been planted and maintained by a small but enthusiastic group of volunteers but by 1995, with diminishing membership in the North and consequently diminishing volunteer numbers, the garden was, in the words of one member, "fading away."

A Steering Group was set up to attract new members and as part of a recruitment and publicity drive, the new group accepted an invitation from the Rare Breeds Society to take a stand at their show held annually at the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum. With past involvement in the Rectory Garden, this was a good opportunity to highlight the work of the IGPS. A small group met with Robin Pierce, Open Air Development Officer of the Folk Museum, and Andy Bingham, Head Groundsman. Patrick Quigley reported that they found the garden in good shape and very little work was needed to tidy it up before the show. This observation was enough to preserve the garden as an IGPS project.

Over the next few months, the Steering Group, with Catherine Tyrie as coordinator, took a close look at the garden to rethink the practicalities of the planting, to create a flexible long term plan and draw up a list of plants which would give structure to the beds and a green spine for winter colour. It was a clearing of the decks and setting out the stall to make maintenance easier.

The Committee relied very much on plant donations from members with occasional purchases of special plants, but over the years many of these had been lost, others had lost their vigour and needed replacing. At this time too, appeals for volunteers went out frequently for weeding and planting duties on one morning a month. By 2003 it was obvious this was not enough to keep on top of maintenance and it was decided to have a major overhaul of the borders and at the same time to introduce more old Irish cultivars, in keeping with the aims of the IGPS. And so the concept of The Big Dig was born becoming part of the folk lore of the Rectory Garden.

In April 2004, a large group of members descended on the garden to clear, double-dig, clean and replant the North border. Catherine Tyrie recalls how they removed vast quantities of *Lysimachia punctata* and *Oenothera* roots while some new plants were introduced including *Agapanthus campanulatus* 'Mooreanus' and a double white lilac. Soup and sandwiches provided by the Museum were very welcome on a very wet day when even wet weather gear failed to fulfil its purpose.

The Big Dig continued in April 2005, this time to clear the South bed and the bed along the hedge which was now reserved for the few Irish cultivars already acquired. A plea went out to members for more donations for the garden and Andrea Duffin, now well established as Co-ordinator, was invited to Mrs Casement's beautiful walled garden at Ballycastle. She remembers being given a spade and told to take what she liked. She did and filled her car. The original phlox, still in the garden, came from there, as did the white *Lysimachia clethroides* (goose-necked loosestrife) and the pretty *Primula* 'Lady Greer'.

In 2006 the Museum was undertaking major work with the reconstruction of Gilford Cinema adjacent to the Rectory. By 2007 the work was complete and the long term boundaries of the garden could be fully established. The Steering Committee presented a series of proposals to the Museum but, because of increasing financial restraints, most of the proposals were put on the long finger. Some issues were addressed, including the drainage at the

front of the Rectory and instead of the red brick wall extension, a white picket fence which is now the backdrop for most of the Irish daffodil collection.

In 2011, with Lorna Goldstrum as Co-ordinator, the volunteers had a major injection of support from the Museum in the form of Ruth Osborne, the very enthusiastic Outreach Officer for the Live and Learn Project. Ruth presented the Museum's plan to widen the scope and numbers of volunteer gardeners. Her remit included recruitment through several volunteer bodies, including the Live and Learn project and IGPS.

The volunteers presently number 9 with 4 or 5 present on any one day and until his retirement in December 2016, Andy Bingham was usually in attendance too. The volunteers elected to change their work pattern to every Wednesday morning, March to November, weather permitting of course, with monthly planning (social) meetings December to February. The supply of tools was a major step forward. No longer do volunteers struggle with armfuls of tools from the car park to the garden and back again.

There were new challenges such as the development of the small vegetable garden at Coshkib Hill Farm and the publication in 2012 of a booklet called 'A Year in the Gardens', written by the volunteers and produced by the Museum.

From 2011 until today, the Rectory garden has been expanding with two periods of extension of the bed beside the cinema right down to the bottom boundary wall and this is gradually being filled with Irish cultivars. Remit has been extended to include some modern Irish cultivars which are deemed as worthy of display and protection as the older varieties which are becoming harder to obtain. Parallel with this expansion, one of the volunteers is making a photographic record of the plants in the Garden, particularly the Irish cultivars.

IGPS association with The Old Rectory goes into its 4th decade in a very healthy situation indeed. By the time this goes to press, we will have celebrated our 30th Anniversary at Lismacloskey with a not immodest Garden Party and no doubt this will be reported in the next issue. For 30 years, the fortunes of the Rectory Garden have waxed and waned but thanks must go to those who stayed the course --- to Philip Robinson and Mary Davies whose idea the garden first was; to the National Executive Committee and the Northern Steering Group for guidance and finance; to the Folk Museum who

have been increasingly supportive of our aims; but mostly to the Volunteers for turning up rain or shine.

There is one other very important group to mention ---those who donate plants particularly Irish cultivars. I would ask you to keep them coming.

Yvonne Penpraze

Grey Abbey's Physic Garden



"There are no worthless herbs, only lack of knowledge." - Avicenna

Located on the eastern shore of Strangford Lough, the village of Greyabbey gets its name from the remains of this Anglo-Norman abbey, the first fully gothic style building in Ulster. Grey Abbey was established in 1193 by Affreca, wife of John de Courcy and daughter of Godfred, King of Isle of Man. Affreca built the abbey to give thanks for arriving safely in Ireland after a perilous sea journey.

The abbey housed Cistercian monks of two separate tiers. The choir brothers were literate monks who had an elevated status, and the lay brothers provided the bulk of the abbey's labour. It is believed the abbey and subsequently the village became commonly known as Grey Abbey due to the unbleached colour of the monks' greyish-white habits. The rule of St.

Benedict meant Cistercians believed manual labour was an integral part of monastic life. The monks would have had a frugal diet, mainly vegetarian and consisting largely of bread, vegetables, herbs and beans. In the early days of the abbey, meat was forbidden to all apart from the weak and the sick. Delicacies like fish and eggs would have been served on occasions like feast days and anniversaries.

In 1993, the Department of the Environment developed a representative medieval herb garden to commemorate the Cistercians of 1193. Barbara Pilcher, who is a panellist on BBC Radio 'Gardeners' Question Time' and a columnist on wildlife gardening for the Ulster Wildlife Trust's 'Irish Hare' magazine, chose plants known to have been in use in the 12th century for medicinal purposes. Some sources suggest monastic gardens were the first to contain plants that were not native. Among the herbs planted by Pilcher in Grey Abbey was Elecampagne (*Inula Helenium*) which has been used since Roman times to ease respiratory disorders such as asthma. Elecampagne is thought to be native to southern England and when found farther north and in Ireland, believed to have escaped from cultivation. The monks who came to establish the abbey were from Holm Cultram in Cumbria.

The abbey's medieval herb garden is located at the entrance to the site. The well ordered, narrow rectangular beds are separated by gravel paths, giving access to the beds from all sides for easy cultivation. Each plant within the garden earned its keep through multi-purposefulness. The monks produced food and medicine for themselves and their livestock.

Borage (*Borago officinalis*) with its starry blue flowers was used to make a drink which helped raise spirits and drive away melancholy. Borage was also referred to as the 'herb of courage' and Celtic warriors drank wine with borage to give them courage. Folklore also tells stories of women slipping borage into men's drinks to encourage a marriage proposal. Not only soothing to the soul, borage helped with sore throats, hoarseness as well as stomach pains.

Dill: (*Anethum graveolens*) was used for cooking in the same way as today, however, it was also believed to protect against witchcraft. A bag of dried dill kept close to the heart was believed to protect the wearer from the 'evil eye'.

Hyssop: (*Hyssopus officinalis*), chamomile (*Anthemis nobilis*) and tansy (*Tanacetum vulgare*) were used as 'strewing' herbs. These herbs were laid on

floors to release pleasant smells as people walked over them. They were also used to repel insects.

Yarrow: (*Achillea millefolium*) was also believed to protect against witchcraft. Not only useful against witches, if pushed up the nose it would cause a nosebleed which was thought to relieve the pain of migraine headaches, hence its other folk names – nosebleed, bloodwort, sneezewort.

Sadly, none of the herbal remedies in the Physic garden protected the abbey against poverty and decay. It was dissolved in 1541 by order of Henry VIII. In 1572, Brian O'Neill destroyed Grey Abbey by fire in order to stop it being used as a refuge for English colonists trying to settle in the Ards Peninsula.

The estates surrounding the Abbey were granted to the Montgomery family in 1607 and the nave of the Abbey was re-roofed and used as a parish church until 1778. In the early 1900's conservation work was carried out by the then Ministry of Public Works, which included adding buttresses to the south side of the nave which prevented the nave from collapsing.

The Abbey is now in the care of The Department for Communities and a Visitor Centre was added a few years ago which provides an insight into the life of the Abbey and its monks. In 2015, "Friends of the Abbey" came into existence as part of the work by Greyabbey & District Community Association to assist in keeping the historic Abbey & Physic Garden open. Volunteers provide information and tours of the grounds. I am pleased to say that as a current volunteer at the abbey, the herb garden is popular with visitors, who enjoy hearing about the plant lore and traditional uses of the herbs.

Julie Holmes

The Physic Garden

The Physic Garden is a re-creation or pastiche, as Julie implies. In the absence of documentary or scientific evidence from Grey Abbey, my choice of plants was based on research into evidence from other monastic sites in Europe, with a little added input from the locality and from contacts. I had a reasonably broad time-frame to play with, being given 1450 AD as a working cut-off date. There are forty beds and at the time of planting, thirty-eight were assigned to individual medicinal herbs, two were of mixed plantings: strewing and brewing herbs.

The curved beds at either end were reserved for dye plants such as woad, weld, dyer's greenweed, along with irises and roses of the period, used

medicinally and for decorating the church. We had the Apothecary's rose *Rosa gallica* var. *officinalis*, and its sport *Rosa* 'Versicolor', three forms of *R. alba* along with 'Cuisse de Nymphe', *R. x damascena* var. *semperflorens* and several others.

Of particular interest at the opening in 1993, to celebrate the 800th anniversary of the founding of the Abbey, were native cowslip of local provenance, donated by a conservationist, wild betony from an old demesne from another conservation source, local native ferns, yarrow, sanicle, and valerian and many others from my own garden and nursery at Lisdoonan. To these were added plants that I grew from seed generously donated by the Kenneth Allsop Memorial Trust at the Augustinian Priory at Steep Holm, notably *Paeonia mascula*, naturalised there in its only site in the UK. Pellitory-of-the-wall, *Parietaria judaica*, used for kidney and bladder afflictions, occurs on the Abbey walls, so it had to be included, along with biennial alexanders, *Smyrniolum olusatrum*, abundant on the roadsides in the Grey Abbey area, as it is near other Medieval sites. We were also donated seed of the Martock bean (grown in Bath ever since Medieval times) and an early pea, by Thomas Ety and Co., and these were planted across the path as part of a pot-herb garden or vegetable plot established in 2002, as was the splendid *Allium ampeloprasum* var. *babingtonii*, naturalised near the Cistercian Corcamroe Abbey in Co. Clare.

I maintained my consultancy with the garden for several decades, adding to and refreshing the herbs, speaking to groups and putting on displays for memorable open days, when on occasions we had a number of the herbs too poisonous to have been included in the beds, such as henbane, deadly nightshade, monkshood, thorn-apple. (Poison gardens are all the rage now, aren't they?)

It is heart-warming to know that there are now willing volunteers keeping the garden going. Indeed I met with a group of them on a typically soggy day in June 2017, accompanied by Heather Birkett from Acorn Bank. Heather is doing a survey of UK herb gardens, so after a quiet phase, it is good to know that the Grey Abbey Physic Garden is once again on the map.

Barbara Pilcher

More information about the abbey can be found on the 'Friends of the Abbey' website: <http://www.friendsoftheabbey.co.uk/>



POGUE'S ENTRY – a new home for Irish Heritage Plants

Going into Antrim town via Church Street one could easily miss the entrance to this remnant of Ulster heritage. Off a busy main street, down a narrow passage way, lies a small cobbled courtyard, a walled garden and an 18th century cottage. The cottage, maintained in its original state, is the childhood home of Alexander Irvine, the ninth of twelve children, who became a missionary in New York's Bowery. As an author, his books would describe his boyhood years and the lives of Irish country folk during the years after the famine.

So it is fitting that the garden is to be a new home for Irish Heritage Plants. The garden, kindly provided and supported by Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council, will be developed and maintained by IGPS volunteers.

Project manager, and long term Lisnacloskey volunteer, Yvonne Penpraze and her small team have already started planting her first batch of Irish cultivars including *Dahlia* 'Matt Armour,' *Agapanthus* 'Kilmurry Blue' and *Pulmonaria* 'Blake's Silver'. Large swathes of *Alchemilla mollis*, *Hemerocallis* and various non-descript herbaceous planting will be replaced by heritage plants as they become available.

It is intended that some plants will be sourced or propagated by way of the plant conservation programme. It is inspiring to see projects linking together

and Stephen Butler and his working group have already started to reserve heritage plants for Pogue's Entry.

The potential for this garden is tremendous but it will only work if there are enough volunteers to see it through.

Yvonne admits they are struggling with low numbers and has been grateful of the much needed help from Antrim Castle Gardens gardener, Ruth McKnight and her Greenmount student, Theresa.

More volunteers willing to give a few hours a month, are urgently needed. If you feel you can help, please email Yvonne at ypenpraze@gmail.com.

Admission to Pogue's Entry is free and is open June to September, Thursday and Friday 14:00 - 17:00, Saturday 10:00 - 13:00 and 14:00 - 17:00 Other times by appointment.



Planting the first of the Irish cultivars, left to right: Council gardener, Ruth McKnight, Greenmount student, Theresa, IGPS volunteers, Patricia Kernohan, Dianne Sprules, Yvonne Penpraze and Museum Guide, Bill McBride.

Billy McCone

SEED DISTRIBUTION SCHEME 2018

The seed collecting season is already well under way and will hopefully continue for some time to come. I do hope that many of you have already made some forays into your gardens with envelopes in hand to collect your much appreciated seeds - after all, without the donations from our many generous members, there would be no Seed Distribution Scheme.

Last year I received a total of 240 seed donations. Some 45 were duplicates or without specific name and the vast majority were well cleaned and of very good quality. For this I am very grateful as I am sure those who received the seeds were also - a total of 102 requests arrived and for the most part, the majority of the seeds requests were fulfilled.

Amongst the most popular choices (and therefore the first to run out) were:

Orlaya grandiflora
Monarda var. *Menthifolia* 'Gardenview Scarlet'
Echium candicans
Lychnis yunnanensis
Camassia leichtlinii subsp. *Suksdorfii* *Caerulea* Group
Dicentra scandens *Dierama atrum* ex 'Blackberry Bells'

So a big thank you to all of the donors, new and seasoned. I look forward to seeing the myriad packages in my post box in the very near future with bundles of carefully wrapped seeds, clearly named.

I would be more than happy to receive any suggestions or comments that you may have to improve, adapt or emend the seed distribution process, at any time. My contact details are:

Debbie Bailey, Reba Lodge, Braemor Drive, Churchtown, Dublin14
debbiebailey797@gmail.com Phone 086 6085849

IGPS LEINSTER PLANT SALE

Saturday 21st October 2017 at Marino Institute of Education, D 3

12noon - 4pm Refreshments available

Rare and Heritage Plants

Irish Heritage Plants Update, July 2017

Summer is not the best time to be chasing people, far too much going on in gardens! I intend to contact all listed growers over the coming months to keep in touch, see if any new IHPs have been added to their collections, or any losses, and maybe suggest propagating some of the cultivars at greatest risk of disappearing, those with no nursery listed as growing, or with not many growers.

As mentioned previously we have a small collection of *Aconitum* 'Newry Blue' (below) being grown for comparison, hopefully we will be able to determine something out of this. A similar small collection of *Bergenia* is being assembled too, for comparison and hopefully elucidation.

Tackling a small group like this is an excellent way forward, and it is something anyone can do. Often IHPs are now only listed in UK nurseries, it takes time to order (and often no mail order so needs a trip) and maybe grow on to see results.

If you are interested in helping in this project please get in touch at igps.heritageplants@gmail.com – or via Glasnevin. This is an ongoing project, 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, apart from actually growing the plants!

Stephen Butler, Irish Heritage Plant Coordinator, IGPS



Bergenia (Irish) trials - a proposal by Brendan Sayers

The importance of verification of Irish cultivars (Irish Heritage Plants, Heritage Irish Plants) has been raised recently by the Irish Cultivar co-ordinator, Stephen Butler. The process, for older cultivars, is an onerous one, fraught with difficulty. However the process of growing plants with problematic names all together for ease of comparison is well advised. With this in mind, the Society's committee has agreed to fund the sourcing of named *Bergenia* cultivars of Irish origin and the National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin have agreed to loan a plot of land in the Propagation area for such a trial. This trial will hopefully supply us with a methodology for future trials on other plants of Irish interest.

There are approximately 30 known cultivars of *Bergenia* of Irish origin and confusion surrounds some of these cultivars, while others have a verifiable provenance involving horticulturists of sound standing and a proven record, working with catalogued collections. The confusion that arises with plant names over time has been added to by the Royal Horticultural Society's [RHS] report on *Bergenia* trials held at the RHS garden, Wisley in 2007-2009. The RHS report contains a photographic image of a *Bergenia purpurascens* clone with the title *Bergenia* 'Glasnevin'. There is no such cultivar, though the plant correctly known today as *Bergenia purpurascens* 'Irish Crimson' (also distributed as *Bergenia purpurascens* ex Helen Dillon, or *Bergenia purpurascens* Helen Dillon form) probably originated at the National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin where it was grown as an example of Saxifragaceae in the Family Beds since before the 1980s.

After extensive communication with various estates and nurseries, fourteen *Bergenia* cultivars have been selected for this trial, many originating from Thomas Smith at Daisy Hill. Should additional cultivars subsequently come to light which warrant investigation, they will also be included. A full list can be found below.

Bergenia ×smithii/B. 'Newryensis'

Bergenia purpurascens 'Irish Crimson'

Bergenia ×spathulata

Bergenia 'Croesus'

Bergenia 'Ballawley'/ B. 'Delbees'

Bergenia 'Profusion'

Bergenia 'Distinction'

Bergenia 'Sunshade'

Bergenia 'Brilliant'

Bergenia 'Cascade'

Bergenia 'Progress'

Bergenia 'Irish Bronze'

Support from management and staff, especially the Curator, Paul Maher, through the loan of a plot where samples of material from Irish gardens and beyond can be grown for comparison, is gratefully acknowledged and will allow the Society to get a fuller understanding of the level of confusion that needs to be addressed. The Garden's location and horticultural traffic should make deposition of appropriate material an easier task.

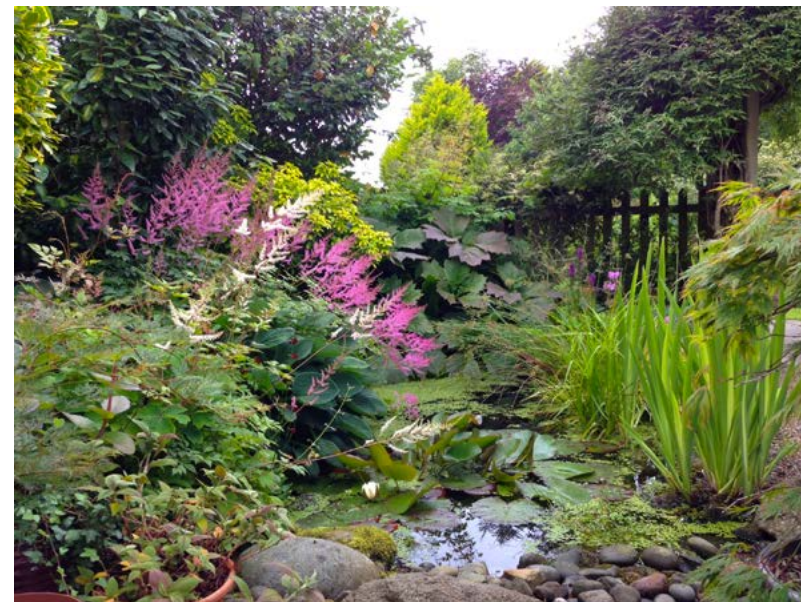
The trial will be headed up by Gary Mentanko with the assistance of Brendan Sayers. Some well recorded and verified examples of cultivars are already sourced and more will be obtained from interested Society members and nurseries. It is proposed that an initial report can be delivered to the Society by end of year 2019 though it is wise to allow another year period to run so that plants obtained in 2018 can be fully assessed.

Contacts: gary.mentanko@opw.ie and brendan.sayers@opw.ie.

Information on those listed above and other named *Bergenia* of Irish origin can be found in *A Heritage of Beauty* by Charles Nelson and *Daisy Hill Nursery, Newry – a history of 'the most interesting nursery probably in the world'* by Charles Nelson and Alan Grills.

Brendan Sayers

Around the Regions



Doreen Wilson's Garden

Doreen and Ivan Wilson came to a new house on a hill above Dundonald between Belfast and Newtownards some 36 years ago. They describe it as a "...barren, wind-swept field" - hard to believe today as the garden they have created is filled with unusual shrubs and trees, eye-catching colour combinations, a lushly planted pond, and an immaculate, orderly vegetable plot. From the start, the garden has been run on organic principles and, in addition to the three large compost heaps, there are comfrey leaves soaking in a butt and a wormery.

Some of the choice plants we admired included a colourful selection of *Roscoea*, a very deep blue iris which sadly had come without a name, and several pergolas festooned with scented climbing roses. There was a rare Chinese tree *Emmanopterys henryi*, found by and named in honour of Augustine Henry, whose large glossy leaves contrasted beautifully with

Cornus 'Porlock', and the exotic-looking *Amicia zygomeris* which Doreen over-winters in the ground with just a small amount of protection.

For me, the pool area tucked away at the side of the house had a real wow factor, combining a magnificent clump of bronze-tinged *Rodgersia* with hostas, primulas, and astilbe while a white water lily floated on the surface. Other members of the Northern committee nominated some of their particular favourites.

Victor Henry: "Doreen had great specimen of an *Abutilon* festooned with seed."

Barbara Kelso: "The unusual *Weigela middendorffiana* was superb; it had gorgeous, foxglove-like, pale yellow flowers with deep red throats."

Adrian Walsh: "Where to start? The *Cornus* in the front garden, the planting around the pool, the *Cobaea scandens* growing around the sunroom, and the various salvias; I could go on!"

Windy - possibly; barren - absolutely not!

Maeve Bell, IGPS Northern Branch

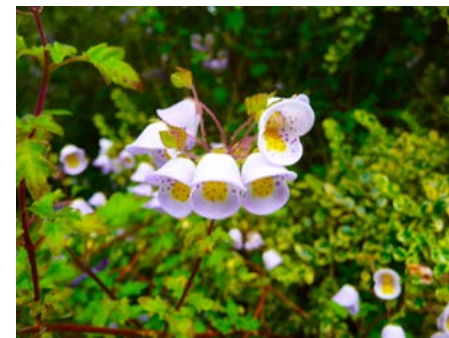
Visit to Katherine Nixon's Garden, 27th May, 2017

The various weather forecasts had all been duly scrutinised and we arrived suitably attired and totally prepared to brave the persistent rain that had been predicted to last all day. What we hadn't prepared for, unfortunately, was the sunshine and hot temperatures that persisted all day; no hats, no sunglasses, no sun cream. Did we care? Definitely not when we saw the beautiful garden of artist, Katherine Nixon, which runs down to the shores of Strangford Lough near Killinchy. The tour started on the shoreline, led by Katherine's husband James, where we walked among mounds of bladderwrack seaweed and samphire, that salty, sea-tasting vegetable that is served fresh or steamed in the finest of restaurants. The area has been inhabited since ancient times and, as the tide was out, James was able to point out the remains of man-made pools for catching fish that were possibly built by the monks from the nearby early Christian Nendrum Abbey that could be seen across the water.

Walking back up to the garden around and in front of the house, we passed a fine stand of *Echium pininana*, one of which was multi-headed rather than the more familiar singular spire shape. The garden is set out in a series of tableaux or rooms that meld very naturally into one another. Lawned paths beckon you around corners to discover another area; rhododendrons,

aquilegias, roses, clematis, osteospermums, variegated hollies, large glaucous blue hostas (untroubled by slugs and snails) all worked together in various areas to create rich tapestries of colour. Katherine has created a lovely vista down one straight path of lawn with mixed borders on each side, and with a large natural stone sculpture placed centre stage at the end. There are fine examples of Katherine's sculptures, all very artistically placed into their surroundings, in other parts of the garden as well.

Katherine's artistic eye is well demonstrated in the painterly way in which plants are so effectively grouped. One particularly striking combination was the sub-shrub *Jovellana violacea*, (covered in pale purple flowers with a yellow throat marked with small, dark purple spots, photo below) that was climbing and wending its way through an *Azara microphylla* 'Variegata'. There was also a striking dark purple leafed form of *Cercidiphyllum japonicum* strategically placed to draw one's attention to it. The planting is more formal in the paved area close to the house, one particularly strong combination being a purple leafed *Acer palmatum* 'Dissectum' growing in an urn placed in the middle of a small rectangular bed of *Buxus sempervirens*.



Across the road from the house is a meadow, which also houses James's hives of Irish black bees. At the time of the visit, the field was a haze of native grass heads and wild flowers, including buttercups, occasionally punctuated by clumps of blue flag irises. The meadow has also been planted with a range of trees including birches and hedges of *Viburnum opulus*, the native guelder rose. This whole area will, in time, develop into a very fine woodland area.

Adrian Walsh, IGPS Northern Branch

Sex and Death in the Irish Midlands

Thomas Pakenham led us on an informative and engaging tour of his woodland garden. He first came to Tullyally in 1961. Along the way he has learned an enormous amount about trees, and generously shared his knowledge with us. The losses in the 200 year-old shelter-belt from the great storm of 1991 provided the opportunity to try something new. The 250 years old Squire's Walking Stick provided the acorns for the planting of 100 new oaks. What next?

There was no master plan, but Thomas emphasised the importance of clearings to allow a view, and thematic planting to provide interest. Thus one part of the arboretum has trees associated with Augustine Henry, including *Emmenopterys henryi*, *Tilia henryi* and *Tetracentron sinense*. There are trees planted in honour of all his grandchildren, including the twins' Gingkos. Evergreens are used to create structure, and more than 15 different Hollies have been planted. (The fact that a Caucasian Fir was 20ft. tall was no obstacle to moving it to the right spot with a digger). Autumn colour is important; Thomas spoke strongly about the merits of *Acer Freemanii*, a fast growing maple ('like rockets') with fiery autumn foliage.

Book 24 of the *Odyssey* provided the classical theme for the 10 apples, 13 pears and the single fig in the Homeric garden. Thomas regaled us with the back-story of Odysseus, Laertes and Penelope - lust and violence - and more to come! Many of the trees and herbaceous matter in Tullyally is grown from seed, and Thomas pointed to the genetic variations that inevitably arise. Some of the 100 acorns were more successful than others. Similarly the progeny of 20 Tesco walnuts. Much seed was collected by Thomas during expeditions of two weeks each to Tibet in 1995 and Yunnan in 1993/5, during which 50 taxa were collected. The seeds are stored at 4/5°C for 12 weeks to acclimatise them to this part of the world, before germination.

The care of trees is important at Tullyally, and we were joined by Ben, the Head Gardener, just returned from paternity leave. Some of this work is aesthetic: we looked at a divided Wellingtonia and speculated which of the two top branches would be removed to ensure the fine columnar shape and height that is so much admired. More of it is cultivation: a great deal of Laurel and other undergrowth has been cut back over the years - a Gingko almost disappeared under the mound of debris from a chainsaw, only to miraculously spring up again, not much the worse for wear.

It is no surprise the garden has rarities. There were several plants of a gold form of *Metasequoia glyptostroboides*, and *Lindera obtusiloba* was new to this writer. But not all the trees were unusual. *Magnolia* 'Star Wars' was highly

commended for the size of its blooms and its long flowering season. Notable too were fine specimens of *Cornus kousa chinensis*, in full flower, so to speak.

Thomas is a highly regarded writer and historian so it is no surprise the tour was replete with well-chosen expressions. The most memorable occurred when he characterised *Cardocrinum giganteum*, which dies after flowering, as 'Sex and Death'. The towering scented plant was contrasted with a second, nearby specimen that was notably shorter, more floriferous, and to this observer had a slightly greenish hue. There was much more to see on a glorious sunny afternoon, and we were sorry when Thomas had to rush off to a Tree Society event; Octavia picked up the story and lead us to the Flower and Kitchen Gardens.

Paul Smith, IGPS Leinster

Visit to the Vegetable Garden of Josh and Mary Wilkinson

15th July 2017

Following the directions provided, we arrived at the entrance gate, near Skryne, Co. Meath, to see a bunch of colourful balloons swaying in the breeze. Was this the right house, we wondered, or would we find a children's party, complete with trampoline and bouncy castle, at the end of the avenue? All was well, though, and we were greeted by Mary and Josh and then passed through the house and into the garden, sheltered by many tall trees that stood well back from the growing area..

Immaculate rows of well-grown vegetables stretched out in front of us, everything growing on broad raised ridges, and with scarcely a weed to be seen, due to assiduous hand-weeding of the rows. There were serried ranks of broad beans from successional sowings at different stages of maturity, and a great grove of potatoes ... did we hear that there were over 20 varieties? There was a fine crop of the onion 'Stuttgarter Giant', which seems to be resistant to fungal attack, and crops of beetroot, lettuce, peas as sweet as sugar in their pods, carrots, leeks and cabbages, all grown to perfection.

Further on, covering one of the paths, a A-shaped tunnel that would delight the heart of any child, made of strong poles that supported several varieties of runner beans. Along one side of the garden there was a large plantation of autumn-fruiting raspberries, some of the canes over 8 feet high. On another

side, a high stone wall supported a large fig tree, rhubarb with umbrella-sized leaves and stems as thick as a wrist at its base.

What was the secret, we asked Josh? Dung, was the reply, and lots of it, together with great quantities of home-produced compost, copious libations of comfrey-water and strict rotation of crops. Nothing new there, but in this garden all of these simple rules are obviously carefully followed.

We moved back into the house then, where we were entertained to a magnificent spread of home-made bites, together with several cups of much-needed tea. After making a donation to Multiple Sclerosis Ireland, we took leave of our hosts, with a view to doing better in our own gardens next year.

David Grayson, IGPS Leinster



IGPS Accounts, Annual General Meeting 2017

Income & Expenditure Account, Year Ended 31.3.2017

	2017	2016
Income		
Subscriptions	€13,695	€13,096
Plant Sales	4,948	6,041
Raffle	1,014	1,443
Garden Tours & Visits	-	512
Donation	-	238
AGM	314	1,814
<i>Heritage of Beauty</i>	169	213
<i>Moorea</i>	-	20
Council subsidy	357	614
Bank deposit interest	11	1
	<u>20,508</u>	<u>23,992</u>
Administrative Expenses		
Newsletter	3,137	3,426
Insurance	272	253
Lectures	4,313	2,679
Equipment	515	743
Garden Visits	270	-
Meeting Expenses	193	290
Eventbrite Fees	642	283
PayPal Fees	156	124
Printing, Postage & Stationery	2,934	1,967
Advertising	-	330
Website	283	-
Travel	551	1,967
Accountancy	800	554
Bank Charges	417	333
Profit/Loss on Exchange	640	685
General Expenses	-	131
Heritage Projects	532	1,039
Donations	60	-
	<u>(15,717)</u>	<u>(14,186)</u>
Net Surplus	<u>4,791</u>	<u>9,806</u>
	=====	=====

IGPS Balance Sheet

as at 31.3.2017

	2017 €	2016 €
Current Assets		
Prepayments	337	430
Cash at Bank & In Hand	<u>52,327</u>	<u>48,069</u>
	<u>52,794</u>	<u>48,499</u>
Creditors		
Amounts falling due within one year		
Creditors	<u>2,025</u>	<u>2,611</u>
Net Current Assets	<u>50,679</u>	<u>45,888</u>
Total Assets Less Current Liabilities	<u>50,679</u> =====	<u>45,888</u> =====
Capital Account	<u>50,679</u> =====	<u>45,888</u> =====

Forthcoming Fixtures

Northern Region

Saturday 30th September 2017 : Autumn Plant Sale at Rowallane (National Trust) Gardens, Saintfield, Co. Down

Thursday 26th October 2017 Lecture: Timothy Walker (Botanist, Oxford University) 'A Blaze of Glory - Autumn Colour' : Old Courthouse, Antrim

Wednesday 6th December 2017 Lecture: Matthew Jebb (Director National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin) 'A View from the Palm House' : Malone House, Barnett's Demesne, Belfast

Thursday 22nd March 2018 Lecture: Andrea Jones (International Garden Photographer) 'Garden Inspirations' : Antrim Courthouse, Antrim

Leinster Region

Lectures take place in the Visitor Centre, National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin at 8pm

Thursday 19th October 2017 Lecture : Julian Sutton (Desirable Plants, Devon) 'Making sense of the *Iridaceae*', Joint lecture with AGS

Saturday 21st October 2017 : Plant Sale at Marino Insitute of Education, Dublin 3 12noon - 4pm
Carmel Duignan has confirmed that there will have some small plants of *Lunaria* 'Chedglow', as mentioned in her article in the April *Newsletter*, for sale in the Leinster Plant Sale.

Thursday 16th November 2017: Lecture: Robert Brett (Curator at RHS Garden Hyde Hall, Essex) TBA

Saturday 20th January 2018: Lecture : Assumpta Broomfield 'The Magic of Snowdrops'

Munster Region

Lectures take place in Northridge House, St. Luke's Home, Castle Road, Mahon at 8pm

Tuesday October 3rd 2017 : Lecture: Eoin Lettice, 'UCC BEES'

Saturday 14th October 2017 at 11am: David O'Regan (Head Gardener at Fota) Visit to Fota Gardens

Tuesday 7th November 2017 : Lecture: Matthew Pottage (Curator, RHS Wisley) 'Wisley: the new chapter for the flagship garden of the RHS'

Tuesday 5th December 2017 : Lecture: Rory Newell, Blarney Gardens

Save the Date: 19-20th May 2018 : AGM weekend will be on in the South Down area.

Other News

The NI Heritage Gardens Trust are holding their annual conference - 'Historic Gardens: Restore, Preserve or Conserve? Making Choices' - at Lissadell, Co. Sligo from **Thursday 5th to Saturday 7th October**. It will include talks by two of our members, Seamus O'Brien of Kilmacurragh and Adam Whitbourn of Blarney Castle. Further information from and bookings through the website www.nihgt.org

The Rare Plant Sale will be held on **Sunday, 13th May, 2018** in Burtown House, Athy, Co. Kildare.



National
Trust

Planter's Seminar - Mount Stewart



Rhododendron Lindleyi CLONE 'D' KW 8,204, 1927/28

Planter's Seminar – Mount Stewart

Saturday 23 and Sunday 24 September 2017

This year's theme celebrates a wealth of plants and gardening. Talks include:

The Collections of Frank Kingdon-Ward, Gardening in the Balearic Islands and The most exciting and inspirational gardens of the world.

Speakers at the seminar are Matthew Biggs, Stephen Lacey and Mary Keen.

Call Reception on 02842788387
www.nationaltrust.org.uk/mount-stewart
www.facebook.com/NTmountstewart

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IRISH GARDEN PLANT SOCIETY

% National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin, Dublin 9

Contact us:

Website www.irishgardenplantsociety.com
Facebook www.facebook.com/IrishGardenPlantSociety
Twitter <https://twitter.com/igpstweets>

Email Addresses:

Northern Region igps.northern@gmail.com
Leinster Region igps.leinster@gmail.com
Munster Region igps.munster@gmail.com
Irish Heritage Plants igps.heritageplants@gmail.com
Newsletter Editor igpseditor@gmail.com

Officers:

Chairman Billy McCone
 Ph: +0044 112 44568
 Email: igps.ireland@gmail.com

Membership Sec. Patrick Quigley
 24 Arema Drive, Dunmurry, Belfast
 BT17 0QG
 Ph: +0044 78012 99263
 Email: igps.ireland@gmail.com

Hon. Sec. Ali Rochford
 Ph: +00353 86 348856
 Email: igps.ireland@gmail.com

Registered Charity No: CHY 7893
