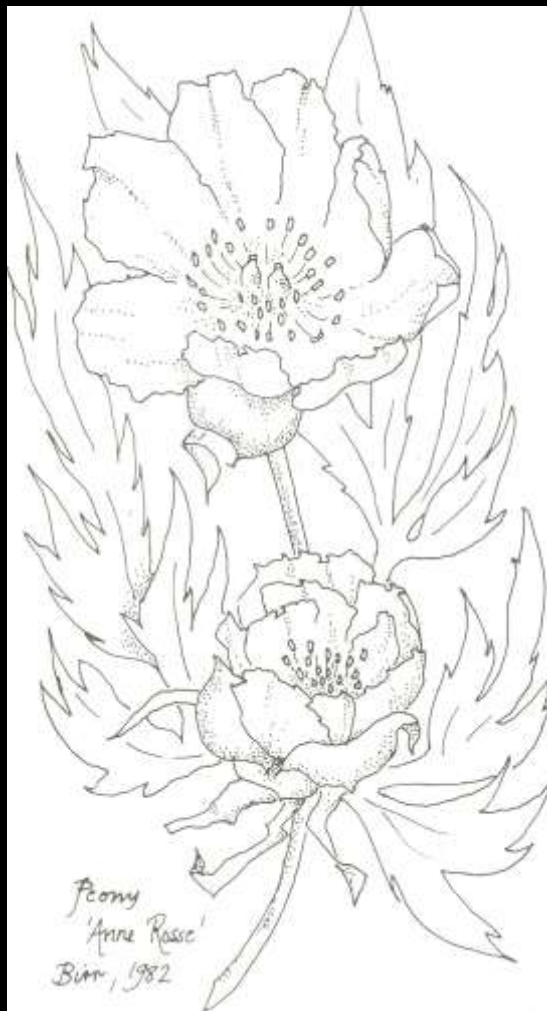




# *The Newsletter of the Irish Garden Plant Society*



*Issue 101, July 2006*



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### **Front Cover Illustration:**

A line drawing which Lady Rosse did of *Paeonia* 'Anne Rosse' in 1882. The peony has subsequently been painted by Wendy Walsh and Julian Watson.

In "*An Irish Flower Garden Replanted*" Charles Nelson describes *Paeonia* 'Anne Rosse' as follows: "Another distinguished gardener is eponymized in a shrubby peony, with large, ruffled flowers of yellow streaked with red. *Paeonia* 'Anne Rosse', named after the Countess of Rosse, was a hybrid deliberately created by her husband, the sixth Earl of Rosse, in their garden at Birr Castle, County Offaly. The yellow tree peony from Western China (*Paeonia delavayi* var. *ludlowii*) was crossed with the variety of the same species (*Paeonia delavayi*) which has flowers of blackest red. One seedling produced fine flowers of yellow and crimson with deep red stamens, similar in size and character to the handsome blooms of Frank Ludlow's form of *Paeonia delavayi*. The original plant at Birr Castle is over four metres tall and has erect, wood stems crowned with tufts of large, divided, pale green leaves. The flowers open in May, a few days before those of Ludlow's variety."



## *Editorial*

Sincerest congratulations and thanks to the Northern Group for their organising a very successful weekend for the Annual General Meeting. The welcome was warm; the venue was excellent and the gardens most enjoyable. It was an outstanding weekend.

The normal business of any A.G.M. was conducted and was followed by an interesting discussion which showed that there are members who are concerned about the welfare of the society and also that we have many members keenly enthusiastic that we keep alive the central aims of the society, that of the conservation of Irish plants and gardens, which serve to distinguish this society from the other gardening clubs/societies around the country. Concern was expressed about a drop in membership and present members must help redress this situation.

Although the Annual General Meeting is called to deal with the business and running of the society most of those attending come for the opportunity of meeting friends and visiting gardens. Old acquaintances were renewed and friends engaged while the gardens and the gardeners were simply wonderful – there was a welcome and a friendly atmosphere in each garden visited. You can read a report on the A.G.M. and on the various gardens in this issue of the newsletter.

Coming events of importance are the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Seminar in September and Annual Plant Sales. Details of the seminar and a booking form are enclosed and you all realise the importance of the Plant Sales – they provide an excellent opportunity to acquire that elusive plant and also are an essential part of the funding of the society. Your support is always appreciated and very necessary.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the many compliments received at the A.G.M. weekend for the newsletter and wish to pass these on to the contributors who have made the newsletter a success over the years. The newsletter will only ever be as good as the material received. My work is simply to put this material together for the printers and it is a work I enjoy. Some of our contributors have many years of association with the newsletter; these are the stalwarts of any publication and without them this editor would be very nervous as each deadline approached. We also have regular, if occasional contributors, who bring a much appreciated freshness to an issue. I would particularly welcome new contributors, essential to keep the newsletter vital and relevant. In this issue Bobby Buckley has written a first instalment of his holiday in Australia, a wonderful example of the material members can contribute. To all contributors I give my sincerest thanks and pass on the compliments of your readers.

*Material for the newsletter is best sent directly to Paddy Tobin, "Cois Abhann", Riverside, Lower Gracedieu, Waterford. Telephone: 051-857955. E-mail: pmtobin@eircom.net*



## *The Annual General Meeting*

The Annual General Meeting took place on Saturday, 3<sup>rd</sup> of June, in the La Mon Hotel, Comber Co. Down. There was a good attendance of approximately fifty members. The following is a brief report:

### **Chairperson's Address:**

The Chairperson, Dr. Dermot Kehoe, addressed the meeting and outlined the following: The committee was delighted that *Moorea* had been published this year, wished to compliment the editors on their trojan work and acknowledge the €4,000 contribution from Anglo Irish Banks which financed the production. This funding has also freed society funds for a colour cover on Issue 100 of the newsletter.

Dermot announced plans for a One-Day Conference in September to mark the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the founding of the society. This will be held in the Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin, with Helen Dillon, Mary Forrest, Harold McBride and Charles Nelson speaking.

Membership has dropped to under five hundred, a decline common to several other societies. Dermot suggested we make efforts to get more publicity for the society so as to reach a wider audience and encourage membership growth. He felt the society had much to offer: winter lectures are of a very high standard, gardens visited are of high interest and these two areas alone give excellent value for the membership subscription. The annual Plant Sales provide an opportunity to source plants not regularly available elsewhere as does the seed list which is now presented in a new and more helpful format. '*A Heritage of Beauty*' continues to be available to members for purchase and is the premier publication on plants of Irish interest. Each of the aforementioned gives members an area of interest and enjoyment for their garden interest and should be promoted as such to attract further members.

The Chairperson thanked the various committees, national and regional, for their sterling work over the previous year and gave particular praise to Mary Forrest for her work on *Moorea* and to the newsletter editor. He gave his best wishes to the new committees and wished them well in their work for the society. He noted that David O Regan was resigning from his post in the Munster area and acknowledged and thanked him for his work over the previous years. He also wished Janet and Martin Edwards every success as they took over the helm in Munster. Dermot noted that Patrick Quigley was standing down as National Secretary and Northern Representative after years of sterling service and he thanked him for his excellent contribution to the society.

Finally, Dermot thanked all the members for their support both for the society and for himself personally over his term of office.

## Treasurer's Report:

### **Income and Expenditure Account for the twelve months to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2006**

	<b>2006</b>	<b>2005</b>
<b>INCOME</b>	<b>€</b>	<b>€</b>
Subscriptions	11,840	15,747
Plant Sales	4,762	5,964
Donation re Moorea	4,075	
Raffle	938	1,293
AGM(Less Expenses)	185	184
Summer Lunch(Less Expenses)	-	26
Annual Dinner	76	
Art Workshop	150	
Deposit Interest	1	1
	<b>22,027</b>	<b><u>23,163</u></b>
<b><u>LESS EXPENDITURE</u></b>		
Newsletter	4,958	6,212
Moorea Publication	-	3,384
Lectures	4,287	3,606
Executive Secretary	4,667	3,905
Bank Fees	205	324
Postage and Telephone	567	217
Printing and Stationery	1,156	1,293
Travel	984	931
Garden Visits	126	
Audit Fees	303	157
Insurance	1,620	1,838
Subscriptions	205	254
Seed Offer	306	399
Sundry Expenses	497	549
Depreciation	96	556
	<b>19,977</b>	<b>23,625</b>
Excess Income over Expenditure	2,050	462
Accumulated surplus brought forward	8,598	9,060
Accumulated surplus carried forward	<b><u>10,648</u></b>	<b><u>8,598</u></b>

	€	€	€	€	<b>Irish Garden Plant Society. Balance Sheet as at 31 March 2006</b>
<b>FIXED ASSETS</b>					
Tangible Assets				<u>96</u>	
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>					
Debtors & Prepayments	1,021		1,233		
Cash at Bank and in Hand	10,945		12,435		
	<u>11,966</u>		<u>13,668</u>		
<b>CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>					
Creditors falling due within one year	1,318		<u>5,166</u>		
<b>NET CURRENT ASSETS</b>		10,648		8,502	
<b>TOTAL ASSETS LESS</b>					
<b>CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>		<u>10,6481</u>		8,598	
<b>ACCUMULATED RESERVES</b>					
Income and Expenditure Account		<u>10,648</u>		8,598	

Ed Bowden presented his report to the A.G.M. Although membership subscriptions are down the society still holds a reasonably healthy balance in the bank. There was a small increase in funds from the Northern Area during the past year. The Plant Sales continued to be significant sources of income as was the raffle organised during the year. The donation from Anglo Irish Bank was most welcome and financed the publication of *Moorea*. Insurance costs are generally falling, approximately €250 per annum for each of the last few years. The finances are in a reasonably healthy position.

### **Election of Committee Members:**

Petronilla Martin was proposed as new Chairperson by Mary Bradshaw, seconded by Dermot Kehoe and was elected unopposed.

Mary Rowe was proposed as Secretary to the National Committee by Petronilla Martin, seconded by Mary Bradshaw and was elected unopposed.

The following were also elected as members of the National Committee:  
Susie Moorhead, proposed by Mary Bradshaw, seconded by Ed Bowden.  
Janet Butcher, proposed by Ed Bowden, seconded by Brid Kelleher.  
Marco , proposed by Ed Bowden, seconded by Brid Kelleher  
Carlo , proposed by Ed Bowden, seconded by Mary Rowe

### **Any Other Business:**

Margaret Power commented on the difficulty of contacting the society, particularly that there was no telephone number that people could use, and believed that this might have led to a lack of members. Petronilla Martin replied that she was willing to have her telephone number published to resolve this situation.

It was also suggested that there might be more of a regional responsibility for the promotion of membership. One problem was that at present post to the society can lay unanswered in the Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin, for the long periods between committee meetings. Petronilla Martin stated that she would be in a position to call more regularly to collect the post and deal with it in the future and would also have her contact details published in the newsletter.

Dermot Kehoe commented that in its efforts to attract members the I.G.P.S. has the attraction of continuing to promote a working together of the profession and the enthusiastic amateur and referred to the article by Dr. Peter Wyse-Jackson in *Moorea* in this regard. He also said that the society's lecture and meetings programme continued to provide such opportunities, again, something which would attract members.

Martin Edwards commented that falling membership was common to many gardening societies.

Ed Bowden added that our subscription rates provided excellent value for money and that there was general satisfaction among members with these rates. Such a situation would continue to make membership worthwhile and attractive to new members.

Rose Sevastopulo commented that it was not unusual to have fluctuations in membership numbers, that this had been the trend over many years. She felt however, that the society could do more in the way of self-publicity and self-promotion as this was an area not being dealt with at present. She suggested that, for example, the website of the National Botanic Gardens might carry a link to the I.G.P.S. website. Rose also felt that we needed to reach out to beginner gardeners especially and attract them towards membership of the society.

George Sevastopulo stated that the I.G.P.S. needs to be extremely careful to continue with its original aims; that, for example, lecture topics should be chosen with care to reflect these aims; that the I.G.P.S. was not simply a general garden society and must select and promote those areas of activity which reflect and represent its aims. A society with clearly stated and particular aims would be more likely to attract interested gardening enthusiasts, George added.

Mary Tobin commented that the I.G.P.S. was not promoting itself with its own clear identity. The society aims at being more than simply a garden club but, at present, does not make that clear or apparent in its activities or publications. Publicity was lacking at present.

George Sevastopulo suggested there might be good reason to create the post of Publicity Officer within the society.

On another topic, Mary Rowe brought to the attention of the meeting that there was going to be a Plant Sale in the Dillon Garden at the end of June which would particularly feature plants of Irish connection. She suggested that such activities could be expanded as they promoted an essential aim of the society, the promotion of Irish plants.

Margaret Power added that pointing out that a particular plant had an Irish connection was of interest to people and attracted them to purchase such plants.

Patrick Quigley pointed out that it was not simply the responsibility of the National Committee to promote an interest in Irish plants and cultivars; that this was also something each individual member of the society should do. He added that, in general, people don't know which plants are Irish plants and don't know if the plants in their own gardens are Irish plants or not. He recommended we promote sales of '*A Heritage of Beauty*', especially to new members so as to raise knowledge of these plants.



Paddy Tobin agreed with Patrick that the responsibility of promoting Irish plants is not only that of the National Committee but also of each individual member but felt that members looked to the National Committee for leadership in this area and that such leadership was not always apparent. In this respect he requested regular reports from the committee for the newsletter so that members would be kept informed of the general direction and activities of the society.

Dermot Kehoe stated that the Executive Assistant, on the direction of the National Committee, sent a leaflet to each new member with a special offer to purchase '*A Heritage of Beauty*' but of the forty new members in the past year none had purchased a copy. He also added that the committee member with responsibility for publicity has resigned and this post needed to be filled again. He personally had contacted various publications in the hope of promoting the I.G.P.S., for example, he had been in contact with Mary Davies of the *Irish Garden* with a view to having a history of the I.G.P.S. printed in that magazine.

There was general agreement that the society needed to promote itself both at national committee and individual level; that it was a society with very worthwhile aims which we should promote and publicise and hopefully that we will continue to attract members.

The meeting closed and members departed in eager anticipation for the gardens.

### **Saturday Morning: Ballylolly House, Comber.**

A.G.M. formalities over, the participants headed for our first garden visit on Saturday 3rd June at 11.00 a.m. Sunshine beamed down on us as we were welcomed into the home and garden of Michael and Augusta Nicholson at Ballylolly House.

My first reaction to this splendid location and layout was " Powerscourt without the formality". Augusta filled us in about the house, site and horticultural background. The original garden was designed by Armitage Moore ( Rowallane). The present house was built in the 1930s on a south-facing, steeply- sloping, 10 acre site with acid soil. House and garden blend seamlessly into the surrounding countryside, surrounded on all sides by mature trees. Augusta acknowledges how much the garden owes to its previous occupants, William and "Shu-Shu" Stevens, whose ashes now lie in a wooded area of the garden. The Nicholsons have been gardening here for 19 years with help from Head- Gardener Nick Burrows. It was difficult to believe in such a rural location that we were a mere 15 minutes from Belfast city centre.

As might be expected on acid soil much use has been made of *Rhododendrons*, *Azaleas*, *Ceanothus*, *Embothrium coccineum* and *Pieris*. *Callistemon* sp. *Abutilon*, *Potentilla* and *Enkianthus chinensis* were also in evidence and a very dark green-leaved *Weigela*. *Magnolia wilsonii*, its pendent, cup-shaped flowers with their crimson

stamens in full bloom captured a lot of attention- it could not steal the show in a garden so full of delights.

The former Rose Garden has recently been replaced by a small orchard on the advice of Nick Burrows. This will bear fruit in a year or two. At the lower end of the garden a bog garden and pond have been established. Here *Candelabra* primulas, all one colour, flourish, also *Lysichiton* and *Hemerocallis*. There are bull rushes in the pond and recently, a large amount of Canadian pond weed was extracted by hand! *Gunnera* and *Rodgersia* grow here too and then the garden heads off via a small bluebell wood into the countryside. (The original 1730's house was built near here. It too would have had a wonderful screen of trees. Nowadays, this is farmland.)



*A view of Ballylally House and gardens. Photograph by Bob Bradshaw*

Weaving back up towards the house we encountered *Persicaria bistorta*, *Vestia foetida* and *Prostanthera cuneata*. On the south-facing parterre was a lovely blend of white geranium, blue aquilegias, red valerian, rosemary, *ceanothus*, *Iris siberica*, pink *Schizostylis* and *Veronica longifolia* which made a very pleasant combination in the bright sunshine. *Rosa banksiae* 'Lutea' and a *Wisteria* sp. grow on the house. Nearby are *Cytisus battandierii* and *Rhododendron* 'Lady Alice Fitzwilliam' which needs winter shelter.

Lunch was served indoors and on the parterre by our hosts. This was a wonderful garden chosen to commence our week-end visits. It was with great reluctance that we tore ourselves away to other earthly delights!

*Mary Bradshaw.*

## Saturday Afternoon: 64 Ballystockart Road

The garden at number 64 Ballystockart Road, home for the last four years of Robert Russell and Michael Connolly is one of those inviting gardens where visitors are irresistibly drawn to view its exuberant and colourful planting. There are four foot-wide borders running from the gate to the hall door with Aquilegia, Aconitum, Ligularia and the perennial cornflower, *Centaurea montana*.

Geraniums are a particular favourite; Roger has been collecting them for around fifteen years. In flower for our visit was the evergreen deep violet *Geranium pyrenaicum* 'Bill Wallis'. Paths wander through the garden and lead from one area of planting to the next.



*Up the garden path – a view of the front garden at 64 Ballystockart Road.*

*Photograph by Paddy Tobin*

A wide range of perennials and roses are grown including *Berheya purpurea*, *Inula magnifica*, *Papaver oriental* and a wonderful *Rosa* 'Paul's Himalayan Musk' that was covered with hundreds of buds.

Roger groups plants that require similar conditions and that are 'happy living together' and feeds them with leaf mould and horse manure. Growing along the boundary were *Fraxinus excelsior* and a *Viburnum opulus* whose berries according to Roger are show stoppers in the autumn. Another autumn favourite are the purple *Colchicum autumnale* whose new spring foliage was still broad, lush and shiny. Nearby *Aruncus dioicus* was

making a bold architectural statement, and *Buddleja globosa* had rounded clusters of fragrant yellow flowers. There are many trees growing in this 1.25 acre garden. The *Caragana arborescens* had a sprinkling of yellow, while *Drimys winteri* was covered with a fine display of fragrant white flowers. Growing through an apple tree was *Clematis montana var. rubens*. There was also a *Ginkgo biloba*, *Cornus kousa*, and *Liriodendron tulipifera* – a young tree that has yet to flower. At the end of the garden in total contrast to the colour of other areas is a wild garden with a mown path to allow us wander through a magical sea of cow parsley, *Anthriscus sylvestris*, whose umbels of white flowers were waist high.

This is a garden for all seasons tended by a passionate gardener whose love of plants was evident.

Mary Rowe

### **Saturday evening – Kings’ Road, Belfast.**

Many people might wish to create a “Rus in urbe” effect in their gardens but few could succeed as well as Knox Gass has here on the King’s Road. The lower part of this garden has that air of quietness and solitude that is nowadays almost impossible to create in an urban setting. Here one seemed to be away from the immediate city surroundings and this lower section of the garden is the impression I shall carry with me of a most enjoyable visit because here the gardener had created something that only vision, patience and time could bring about. Here he had created that most difficult of all gardens, the natural garden. It is at the bottom of a steep slope, well furnished with mature trees, damp in its lower parts and a perfect home for primulas and meconopsis – how I am jealous of the success these Northern gardeners have with these. The grass here is left to grow, meadow style, with paths simply cut into it to allow access. Down here also were well-placed plantings of rhododendron, American Skunk Cabbage, ferns and that giant of the damp garden, the gunnera.



*The garden of Knox Gass, King's Road. Photograph by Paddy Tobin*

In contrast, the rear of the house was kept very open and uncluttered allowing light into the house and giving the sense of great space and peace with a well-maintained lawn bordered by shrubberies. The back of the house itself held great interest. A magnificent specimen of the white-flowered wisteria, in full bloom, was trained across the rear entrance and was brought off to either side to further adorn the house. At the base of a short flight of steps there was an excellent specimen of a *Restio sp.*, for long considered the preserve of Cork gardeners but obviously the enthusiastic Northern gardeners grow it very successfully also. Though *Ceanothus* is a relatively common plant I thought those I noted growing in the Northern gardens had a particularly vibrant blue and Knox had an excellent specimen at the back of the house also.

Traditional double herbaceous borders were laid out to the side of the back lawn, behind the shrub border. I thought the division of the garden in this area was done most successfully with well designed trellis work. The design was simple but elegant, light yet sufficient to divide effectively and gave this area the sense of being a garden apart. A similarly attractive design was the positioning of the two seats at the side of the garden; simply painted in black and white and situated facing each other across the garden.

Knox had a large selection of unusual plants for sale and many availed of the opportunity to take home a souvenir of this wonderful garden. Some Northern friends

have told me of this garden repeatedly over many years and I had been longing to see it. I was not disappointed; it lived up to all their praises. On another occasion I hope to have the opportunity to walk the garden with its creator; that would be a pleasure indeed.

*Paddy Tobin*

### **Sunday morning – Liz Andrews' Garden at Ballywilliam**

It was one of those warm balmy sunny days when it is good to be alive. The heat helped the arthritis and everyone was in good spirits, full of joie de vie. But no sun or heat could outdo the warmth of the welcome we got at Ballywilliam. We walked through the entrance to find tea, coffee and **home made smalls** waiting for us, such hospitality and kindness.

Of course, we immediately began walking around the garden, tea in hand, admiring the general ambience, but even before we found out about the age of the garden, soil type etc we all seemed to hone in on a tree, as none of us had seen anything like it. Liz got it as a snowdrop tree, which it very obviously was not. The suggestions ranged from *Amelanchier Canadensis* to *Staphylea colchica*, but Liz has been assured it is a *Staphylea colchica*. Liz and James Andrews' garden is that type of garden, full of rarities and Liz herself that type of person, generous with her tips and ideas, though she says she really appreciates all she learns when people visit. She immediately began telling us how she hopes the frogs from the pond will keep the slugs off her plants as she is using *Slugget* (Slug Clear) at the moment and would need to use it a number of times a day to keep the plants clear.

I have never seen such a large area of Chatam Island Forget-me-not, *Myosotidium hortensia*. And once again Liz said she covers it with a mini glasshouse in the winter to protect it, while the rest of us use bracken or straw. The care and attention was obvious. The Giant Fennel, already in flower, was the biggest I'd ever seen, lending architectural structure, an organised framework, to the area. A magnificent Copper Beech was large enough to provide a wooded expanse on the lawn, where snowdrops and crocuses had already gone over; the remains of the bluebells were still to be seen while Dog's tooth violet was making a display.



For some, Liz Andrews' garden was particularly relaxing. Photograph by Paddy Tobin

But it was the creativity of design detail that really intrigued us. Cow parsley with Poppy, Cow parsley with Meadow rue, Cow parsley with Granny's Bonnet; Cowparsley, *Anthriscus sylvestris* 'Ravenswing', Meadow rue, *Thalictrum aquilegiifolium*, Poppy, *Papaver* 'Patty's Plum', and Granny's Bonnet, *Aquilegia* (probably *flabellata*) all together with a double red Peony, which was in the garden when Liz and James took over, a vibrant mixture. This garden full of pinks and purples, blending, mixing and contrasting in the breeze, is a rare sight to behold. Chelsea had nothing as fine (in my opinion).

A horseshoe area of box enclosed Lady's Mantle, a mixture of green colour, and, textures; Alliums stood like harbour lights at the glasshouse; there were raised beds for the vegetables and butterflies flitted from the wild life area; what I heard described as the Pond's Cream Rose climbed the wall; *Centaurea hypoleuca*, blended with *Geranium* 'Bill Wallace', *Astrantia major* 'Hadspen's Blood' and *Bistorta* and Hostas dotted here and there, mixed and matched; Anthemis bordered the steps and I've hardly mentioned shrubs. *Pseudowintera*, *Lavandula stoechas* 'Tiara', *Elaeagnus angustifolia*, *Viburnum* 'Mariesii', *Sambucus* 'Guincho Purple', *Clematis forestii*, *Euphorbia mellifera*, The Tree Peony, *Paeonia delavayi*, which Liz prunes hard in early winter, *Rosa* 'Heritage' is beautifully scented and resistant to black spot. But

naming plants gives you no idea of the setting and layout, the attention to form and structure, the hue and shade, the pastels and patterns. An *Achillea* in the gold and white area that Liz described as a “Vicious Yellow Yarrow” - that would have to go.

The Andrews family have lived in the house since 1928, though a dated carved stone shows 1781 so some dwelling has been here for hundreds of years. The soil is heavy clay, not easy to work with, but Liz and James have certainly overcome any difficulty.

Comments from various members included that it was a garden to inspire to, you couldn't mimic it, so much nicer than formal gardens. And could the IGPS please organise a visit to Ballywilliam when the *Cardiocrinums* are in bloom. That would be a real treat to look forward to.

If life is a collection of memories, this is one that will live in my heart, a day, a garden, and people to remember. Thank you Liz and James. *Ann Kavanagh*

### **Sunday Afternoon: Drumnaconnell Road, Saintfield.**

This was an old well-established garden when it was taken over by American, Sally Taylor, 15 years ago. It is believed many of the plants may have come from Rowallane Garden, a short distance away. The garden of 2 acres is part of 20 acres set aside as a wildlife sanctuary. It is being developed as a ‘Sacred Place’ with a yew and hornbeam spiral and a labyrinth, recently created for meditation.

When we entered the garden we saw an old apple tree in blossom which Sally had managed to resuscitate. It looked suitably venerable and she regards its survival as a symbol of the garden's resurgence.

Martin, who helps Sally in the garden, showed us around as she was away. He explained that the deep mulch of mushroom compost which we admired on the flower beds is put on regularly every year. Though a very informal garden, the maintenance programme is stuck to rigorously otherwise, as he said, “We lose control!” In these informal beds were mixed plantings of, for example, rhododendron, meconopsis, choisya and hydrangea.

There was a gently waterfall, constructed by Sally, discreetly overlooked by a statue of Buddha; a natural place of moss, fern and bluebell.

*Celmisia semicordata* was thriving here. Mature hardy hybrid Rhododendrons added strong splashes of colour to the quiet setting. *Lithodora diffusa* ‘Heavenly Blue’ trailing through a small-leaved rhododendron looked very pretty.

Sally is a lover of W.B. Yeats' poetry so she planted a hazel wood to reflect his ‘Lake Isle of Innisfree’. She is nostalgic for American plants and grows a selection, for example, Blueberry, *Vaccinium corymbosum*.





*Celmisis semicordata* - one of the feature plants in Sally Taylor's garden. Photograph by Paddy Tobin

This garden is an integral part of its owner's spiritual life. From the old apple tree to the Buddhist prayer flags it is an imaginative symbiosis of west and east. It is restful and thought provoking at the same time.

Proceeds from garden visits go to fund self-help projects in Mongolia with which Sally is very closely associated.

*Shirley Musgrave*

### **Sunday evening: Lisdoonan Herbs, Saintfield**

Patrick Quigley described this garden as providing "a chance to purchase a few more plants for our gardens" (I like the "few"! ). We did appreciate that but, my goodness, there was a lot more to appreciate.

The garden attached to the nursery, mainly a herb and herbaceous nursery, was a delightful treat. Barbara Pilcher said, honestly, that she had put two Aeoniums in pots on the steps just two minutes before we arrived. That was a totally unnecessary exercise; the garden and nursery were glorious in themselves, not needing any tweaking, but I know you feel you have to do everything possible before people come.

Both garden and nursery are run on a totally organic basis and thus afford a rare opportunity to see beds of herbs, fruit and vegetables grown to perfection and also

growing in the garden in raised beds made from planks of wood – easy on the eye and viable too. One bed grew Potato ‘Mira Sarpo’ which Barbara told us is a very good tasty potato and, would you believe it, it doesn’t get blight! They grow lots of green manure and one bed was just ready to be dug in. You can imagine how good that is for the soil and how much the next crop will appreciate it.

Some vegetable beds ended in a trellis on which grew perennial sweet peas. I don’t know if they were attractive to the vegetables, but they certainly were to me.

I remember a group of seven trees (*Alnus cordata*) underplanted with wild parsley. That made a lovely picture.



*Part of the much-admired vegetable garden at Lisdoonan Herbs. Photograph by Paddy Tobin*

Teasels self-seeded freely in the gravel areas; fennel and borage near the vegetable beds, but all were left to grow – no herbicides here. Golden oregano, another good herb, was used to edge beds and here it did a great job of supplying a herb for the houses, keeping the edges of the beds neat and cutting down on weeding.

The neat architecturally-shaped arches cut into box hedges belied the fact that we were in such a beautiful, natural, organic garden.

*Chris Fehily*

## Monday morning: Timpany Nurseries

As we stood in a lush garden near Ballynahinch, on a glorious sunny Monday morning, it was difficult to imagine that this had been a bare field until Susan and Colin Tindal had settled here and started to weave their magic with trees and plants.

Susan started our tour in a lovely enclosed warm garden which had been the vegetable garden but now has healthy clumps of herbaceous plants in borders at least fifteen feet deep.

Members admired a very unusual euphorbia which Susan said was *Euphorbia stygiana*. A beautiful pink poppy also caught our eyes and this was known simply as Granny's Poppy as it had been passed down in Susan's family. Soon we reached the patio where acers eight feet high grew in pots – I didn't think this was possible. These were display plants that Susan kept to bring with her to various shows.

In the next garden section the star of the show was *Magnolia wilsonii* with its downward facing blooms. Nearby in the centre of another bed stood *Cornus* 'Porlock' which had many admirers.



We then strolled through the woodland garden where these two fantastic plants-people grow a vast array of plants under and around mature trees. Though the trilliums were at the end of their season they still looked well. There were a number of excellent plantings of *Paris polyphylla* which attracted attention, as did the wonderful foliage of *Podolphyum delaveyi*.

Finally, we finished at the sales area where we all managed to find some special souvenirs of our visit to Timpany. Indeed, a certain trio from Cork were tempted to such a degree by the plants that they found they couldn't fit them into their car. A good recommendation of any nursery.

*Margaret Power*

*A delightful woodland character in Susan's woodland garden. Photograph by Paddy Tobin.*



## *Western Australia with Bobby Buckley*

Western Australia is famous for its unique flora, with over 6000 species endemic to the region. Maria and I arrived in mid-September, springtime down under. On the drive in from Perth airport one's eyes greedily devour the new flora. This devouring is confined, at first, to the embankments and roadside margins of the motorways. Later we discover that roadside margins are a rich source of native flora in Western Australia.

One is struck by the strange and exotic, at least to our eyes, the emerging tall spikes of the grass trees, *Xanthorrhoea preissii*, and the exuberant palm like fronds of the *Zamia*. The ground is carpeted with cape daisies *Arctotheca calendula*, a weed from South Africa, now as common as our daisies and spread throughout Southwest Australia, causing many problems for livestock.

Another outsider, but this time a welcome one to Australians, is a large trellis-type tree, the Norfolk Island Pine, *Araucaria heterophylla*, which has been adopted by the Australians as a symbol of their past maritime history. George Seddon, the well known writer and commentator, suggests its popularity was due to "*its striking verticality in a mostly flat continent, together with dark green foliage that reads well in the strong light intensities of most of Australia.*"

Green is a colour that we take for granted in Ireland. One can imagine the sense of longing Europeans had for this colour amidst the bright grey greens of Australia. All along this coast on the beach esplanades, in suburban gardens and in municipal parks the green distinctive Norfolk Island Pine stands as some kind of antipodean symbol. My sister's front garden has one. This became our landmark whenever we might feel lost. Here it is known as a Christmas tree and it is used as a Christmas tree in December. The nostalgia for green European forests must be very strong.

On first observation, the flora of Perth's suburban gardens seems to be of Mediterranean or South African origin. Nearly every garden has *Osteospermum* spreading out onto its manicured lawns. It seems that because South Africa and S.W. Australia have a similar geology and climate that the plants of one region do well in the other. This is true but with an ecological health warning. Many of South Africa's bulbous species have become South Western Australia's worst weeds. When we continued our journey further south, towards the more temperate humid regions around Busselton and Albany, we often found the fields and woods overgrown with watsonias, freesias, arum lilies and lupins. When we were there the weather was as cool as any cool Spring day in Ireland. One begins to wonder if with global warming many of our tender and well behaved plants will grow robust and play truant across the Irish

countryside. *Rhododendron ponticum* and *Gunnera* have already shown the way. Australia has a unique flora and fauna and is becoming rapidly aware of how much it is threatened by cavalier introductions of foreign species some of which can have a catastrophic effect on a native ecosystem.



*Geraldton Waxes in the left foreground. These are common shrubs in Western Australian gardens. In the centre are the popular Kangaroo Paws. Photograph by Bobby Buckley*

Western Australia has about 1000 weed species, all brought in by European methods of agriculture and horticulture - where the plough went the weed followed. The capeweed mentioned above is unpalatable to stock and spreads aggressively, suppressing native plants. But the case against introduced weed species is not conclusive. Willows, which populate many of Melbourne's streams, can retain more sediments and nutrients than native eucalypts can. Yet the argument against willows seems to have been won, as on

a walk along the suburban River Merri in Melbourne, notices were announcing that the willows were to be removed by the local council.

In Western Australia another strange proactive strategy is taking place to combat the destructive influences of introduced mammals, like foxes and cats. It was discovered that the gastrolobium plant, a member of the pea family, is poisonous to mammals but not to the native marsupials. So the government department of Conservation and Land Management, "C.A.L.M.", has dropped many carcasses containing a poison called 1080 [an extract from the gastrolobium plant] within their extensive national parks. The fox population has dropped 40% since the programme was started. At every national park path or car park the public are warned not to bring their pets into the park because of the 1080 project. So the native plant species are striking a blow in defence of the native marsupials.

The fascination that West Australians have for flora swings from the giants of the forest to the tiniest spring flowers that grow all over the forest floor, the wheat belt and the bush. Throughout much of the southwest we saw the last remnants of the ancient forests which had escaped the axe and chainsaw of the loggers. The greatest are the Tingle trees, found in the Valley of the Giants, near Walpole. These are regarded as the tallest and greatest of the eucalyptus trees. They have a rough reddish bark and the oldest have, like some old, very old, granny, developed pimples and carbuncles which give them a somewhat comical look. These trees soar up to 75 metres and may be 400 years old. Why have they survived for so long? A miracle of nature? Partly! They lie in a protected valley open to the prevailing rain-laden winds from the cool south, remember this is in the southern hemisphere. So if Australia is becoming drier this little enclave still receives enough rainfall to ensure the survival of these few hundred arboreal giants. How long will they survive? Western Australia's C.A.L.M. hopes for a very long time and they have invested in a spectacular tree top walk from which the visitor can view these giants. For some reason that I cannot fathom Australians love viewing nature from above and so this tree top walk soars 40 metres into the canopy of the forest and is about 600 metres in length. It is an exhilarating experience - that is if you don't suffer from vertigo. I found it a little unnerving when the metal walkway began to throb. Some nervous walkers were forced to crouch down on the walkway. The source of this shaking was a forty year old male, who should have known better, trying to frighten his teenage daughters. His wife arrived with younger children and with one withering look all silliness ceased. One arrived at the end of the walk with a sense of satisfaction and relief.

A few days after being in the dizzying heights of the Tingle Trees we turned our attentions to the tiny orchids of the Stirling Ranges. The Orchidaceae is the world's largest plant family, containing over 30,000 species. We usually associate orchids with the epiphytes of the tropics, but all of the orchids of S.W. Australia are terrestrial, that is, they grow out of the ground. There are about 200 species, mostly found in dappled woodland and, as we found, they are discovered very close to roadside verges at the edge of woodland. When we were in the Stirling Ranges we took a guided tour. At 9a.m. on Wednesday Oct. 2nd we found ourselves in a minibus with 20 other flower

"bods" many totally conversant with the minute differentiations of the Orchid world. The prima donnas of this orchid world are the Spider Orchids, which boast such names as Dwarf, Zebra, Wispy, Purple-Veined, Fringed Mantis, King and many other esoterically descriptive names. Our guide, Aileen, was good humorously accepting of all nomenclatures, thinking it was all rather arbitrary since nature, through the work of the European bee, was now cross pollinating most of the orchids, leading to unknown and spectacular-looking Spider Orchids. Much debate was spent on whether a certain orchid was a Leaping Spider Orchid or a Broad-Lipped Spider Orchid or some such. We later came across a posse of excited photographers all gathered around a spot, complete with tripods and massive lenses. This must be important. The rare King Spider Orchid was found, a wonderful discovery, but growing beside it was The Esperance King Spider Orchid. Esperance was over 300 kilometres away. How did the seed come this far? One of the most acceptable theories was that it came on the wheels of the huge roadtrains that pass by every few minutes. Who were we to suggest otherwise?



*The Stirling Range is renowned for its cloud formations. This picture is taken with the Sterling Range beyond. Photograph by Bobby Buckley*

The orchids are found all over the bush of S.W. Australia in spring. They are wonderful to discover and one feels privileged to be in their company for just that one flowering moment in their short lives.

Western Australia is full of wonderful wild flowers but how many of them are garden-worthy? As I stated earlier, gardens here still tend to be very influenced by European tastes, with a great longing for the English garden evident everywhere. This fashion for

a non-native garden leads to a high-water, high-fertiliser regime in their gardening. Water is a precious commodity in an arid environment and fertilisers have proven to be toxic to many native plants especially to the Protea family. If gardeners in Australia could be persuaded to grow native plants it would save water and do much to conserve the environment.



*The way to go in Western Australia. Here, in King's Park in Perth, the Wildflower society shows how beautiful a garden could be with native species. Photograph by Bobby Buckley*

The Perth Botanic Gardens, situated in the picturesque King's Park, have taken a lead in returning to the native habitat as a source of inspiration for Australia's gardens. One of its recent projects was to remove all "foreign" plant introductions and return some areas in its grounds to native plantings.

On September 21st -24th 2005 The King's Park Native Wildflower Show held its great garden event which broadcasts its advocacy of growing native species. When we visited the show the sun was shining down on a huge tented village, resplendent with flags, set on the edge of an area of bush with a vast colourfully planted native garden. This garden was a mix of many different styles, cottage, formal, herbaceous borders, coloured pots and stone mulches. There was a missionary spirit about the exhibition. In the gardens there were large notices explaining how to garden with native species, while in the tents we explored exhibits about such subjects as how smoky water encourages plant growth, how trigger plants grow in containers, even in boots, the dangers of die-back in the bush due to backpacking, and how native trees can remove harmful toxins from the ground.

We were to see many of the plants in their native habitat in the ensuing weeks. The



plants that caught our eye were the Kangaroo Paws, *Anigozanthus manglesii*, the floral emblem of Western Australia, the prairie fields of everlasting flowers, *Rhodanthe manglesii*, the charming little triggerplants, *Stylidium*, and the brilliant blues of the *Leschenaultia*. The shrubs were represented by a huge display of Geraldton Waxes, *Chamelaucium*, a popular shrub in Western Australia, so much so, that it is now becoming invasive far from its usual habitat.



*The low-growing, mat-forming trigger plant, so called because when an insect lands on the flower a trigger is released covering the insect with pollen. Photograph by Bobby Buckley*

Returning to the question of native garden-worthy plants: Yes, for the sake of the environment it is a worthy ideal but I wonder if the gardening public will be won over? I believe it will take a great deal of persuasion. The native plants give a wonderful display in spring, but only in the spring. There are very few plants to carry on the baton into the hot summers, except those foreign thirsty exotics and it will be a long time before the public will give these up. Untended native gardens revert quickly to looking very "bush" like and the Australian psyche has an inherent fear of the great beyond of the bush.

As we left the show the native gardens stretched in great swathes of colour across the bush area and the eye was caught by a little shack nestling in against an old oak. Maybe it is through such sentimental scenes as this the native plant argument will be won. More on this when we continue our garden odyssey to Melbourne in the next article.

*Note: Bobby is a Dublin-based member who is obviously enjoying his retirement, having started it off with a trip to Australia. I look forward to the next instalment. Ed*



## *Reconceptualisation* by Rae McIntyre

At the time of writing (end of May 2006) much of the garden is a disaster area. I have been *reconceptualising* it, as my academic friend Rosalind calls it, yet again; this is professor-speak for a bit of a makeover. According to a back issue of this *Newsletter* I did this before in 1998 but I haven't, in the intervening years, been entirely happy with it. The lawn, especially where a rosebed has been, was bumpy and unpleasant to walk on and I was constantly irritated by the way it was surrounded on three sides by straight-edged borders reminiscent of a smug suburban front garden. All it needed was beds edged with neat blobs of lobelia and alyssum or whatever people use.

Then there were the big sycamores on the western side of the garden. These were not in the boundary hedge or even the field side but right in the garden and nearly drove me demented last year with their thousands of seedlings everywhere. Some plants that are dying (*daphnes* are a good example) seem to 'know' it and self-seed so I began to wonder if these sycamores had some premonition about their demise. This thought was gradually followed by one that decided if they weren't going to depart this life naturally I could arrange euthanasia by a chain-saw operator. I wonder why I didn't think of it years ago but then I have always been averse to trees, particularly mature ones, being felled.

There was strong family opposition to the idea with husband and son being entirely unmoved by the sight of buckets full of nasty little sycamore seedlings that I had spent a morning removing, almost doubled over. Finally, after months of hinting and complaining I wrote down my reasons for wanting to be rid of the sycamores. I also listed all the trees that I had planted since moving here in 1976 – 42 in total – to show that I was not a vandal. That worked and Andy, who does the hard labouring in the garden, started on one of the trees at the end of February. Ideally I would have had proper tree surgeons in but they are extortionately expensive and with only a fairly narrow single entrance gate there was no way machinery like a stump-grinder could be brought in. So the felling and clearing of the trees went on over several Saturdays through March, April and even May. Delays were caused by the death of Andy's brother-in-law, atrocious weather with heavy rain and high winds making tree climbing very dangerous and then Andy had a very bad bout of 'flu.

Meanwhile there was the bumpy lawn to consider. One plan had been to make a large pool in it and do away with the rectangular pool close to the house. However I am constantly striving against duckweed in it and having to clear it from an area three or four times the size was daunting. We also have a visiting heron who regards

frogspawn as we would caviar so I am not best pleased with him/her and he/she can find some other local waterway to maraud. Instead I decided to make another shrub bed surrounded by paths. As I am trying to cut down on my workload rather than increase it I am going to do the weed-suppressing membrane and bark mulch thing. I've always rejected this idea but last year Andy persuaded me to try it in one corner where rhododendrons grow and where there's neither groundcover nor bulbs. It has worked and has remained almost weed free; I say almost because ground elder will always find a way. There are people who have truly weed free gardens using this stuff but I have no intention of doing so other than in the new ex-lawn bed. In fact I might just use the bark without the membrane because I've discovered, to my joy, that there are worms in the garden again.

I had to wait for weeks on end for a time suitable for spraying the lawn with glyphosate. This year we had, what will probably be, our summer in the second week in May – three days of warm sunshine. Even then there was still a slight breeze blowing at times and the spraying had to be done during calm spells to obviate drift on to plants. Since then we've had days when it has been much colder than it was in January and February because of a north wind that seems to blow constantly. To-day May 29<sup>th</sup> has been bitterly cold even though the sun was shining. I have a frightful looking old gardening coat – a man's grey duffel coat that I bought years ago in a charity shop because it had never been worn and still had the *Gloverall* label on it. It usually has its annual dry-clean in March or April but not this year because I haven't been able to do without its warmth and I was wearing it to-day with the hood up because of the vicious wind. England may have its hosepipe ban in places but we've had days of almost incessant pounding rain with hail showers thrown in at intervals for a bit of variety.

And yet the rhododendrons and azaleas have had glorious blooms and there are still more to come. Many so-called dwarfs have become taller than I and there's also some serious overcrowding. In early autumn (if I can wait that long) about eight of the larger ones are going to be moved to the area that used to be dominated by the sycamores. Sods were dug out when new paths were made in what used to be the lawn and these were dumped unceremoniously between the sycamore stumps. Later Andy levelled them out and is now building a low retaining wall here with flat basalt stones from the local quarry. However, we're still waiting for a wind- and rain-free day to spray this area with glyphosate because I want it to be as weed free as possible.

Even though this area is still very unsightly I am only now realising what big bullies the sycamores were. In front of one of them were two trees – a *Malus* 'Profusion' and a *Cercidiphyllum japonicum*. The malus still cowers away from where the sycamore was like a dog that has been beaten and I am giving it a liquid feed every week. The *cercidiphyllum* seems to be made of sterner stuff and already looks happier. It used to appear very one-sided but there are now branches appearing on the west side. An alder, growing in the hedge behind, which had been completely obscured by the sycamore, is quite weird looking with branches that are far more contorted than those

on the contorted willow and hazel. It has a young straight sapling growing from the base so the deformed part will be felled when the sap stops rising.

Alas the sycamores still haven't gone for good. The stump of one has quite beautiful new shoots growing from the base; these have healthy, shiny leaves of rich coral so much stronger weedkiller than glyphosate will need to be used. I detest strong poisons. Unbelievably there are even more of the damned seedlings than there were last year but I have to admire their tenacity. There was a little heap of beech leaves in a forgotten corner and even though there wasn't a trace of soil near them seven sycamore seedlings had managed to take root. If only I had the same success with seeds that I want to grow.



*The offending sycamores of which Rae speaks can be seen overhanging the garden in this photograph.*

*Photograph taken in June 2003 when the IGPS visited Rae's garden as part of the A.G.M. weekend in Londonderry. Hopefully we will be able to visit again and view Rea's 'reconceptualisations'. Photograph: Paddy Tobin.*



## *People at the A.G.M.*

*Petronilla Martin  
thanks Augusta  
Nicholson for her  
hospitality*



*Relaxing in  
the garden at  
Ballystockart  
Road, Comber*

*Mary Bradshaw chatting with Liz Andrews in Ballywilliam.*

*Janet &  
Martin  
Edwardes,  
Chris Fehily  
and Catherine  
McHale in  
deepest study  
in Sally  
Taylor's  
garden.*





## *Leaves from a sun-lounger VI*

*Charles Nelson writes of Midsummer's Eve*

The garden doesn't do much at this season. It's the driest, hottest time of the year, without even the morning dews to dampen the *picon*, and there are only a few plants that blossom now. The grey-leaved shrubby tobacco, *Nicotiana glauca*, which is pampered and protected in Irish gardens for its handsome foliage, is an alien weed hereabouts and blooms almost continuously. I pull out the seedlings unrelentingly. The local stonecrop, strangely, is another midsummer flowerer – it should have evolved to blossom with the winter rains, you would think, but it is now at its peak. Candyfloss-pink cones on upright stems, held above the grey-green rosettes, just like candyflosses from a fairground stall. I like this plant – its credentials are impeccable, as it was first described, and named *Aeonium lancerottense*, by Robert Lloyd Praeger. This was one of the botanical ways that he went. “This was our best ground”, he wrote in 1924 about the nearby coastal cliffs, “but its exploration was rendered difficult by a persistent gale of wind which made cliff-climbing a dangerous form of exercise. However, I crawled along ledge after ledge, and had the satisfaction of finding *Aeonium balsamiferum* unquestionably native, [and] another *Aeonium* not yet determined.” That yet-to-be determined one was the candyfloss-pink one, and it is found nowhere else on earth.

I've just been reading an entertaining little book, Muriel Stuart's *Gardener's nightcap*, a superb confection about gardening, lyrical, poetical, and splendidly written. In it she comes up with the observation that “Our gardens are the receivers of stolen goods, and would be incomparably poorer if strict horticultural honesty had been observed.” True: our gardens do contain plants that were taken from distant places without permission, and that could be deemed stealing. But our gardens also contain as many, if not more, plants that were not purloined from wild paces, but nurtured and raised in our own gardens over generations.

Twenty-five years ago, the IGPS was established to help educate people, including fellow gardeners, about the garden heritage that was, and is, uniquely Irish, and to work for the conservation of those home-grown cultivars that had survived. Has it succeeded? We have certainly made our gardening friends more aware of Irish cultivars. The quarter of a century that has passed has been remarkable for a renaissance in gardening, with many more gardens open to the public and many more good plants readily available. Have we rescued any plants from extinction? I am sure that has happened, although I cannot give a litany of names. Education is never finished, so the work has to go on. Conservation isn't a task that comes to an abrupt end either: we need to continue to be vigilant, to propagate and to distribute. We cannot rest on (or under) any laurels yet.

We have also, I am sure, become more aware of “stolen” heritage, those plants than have come into our gardens through the endeavours of Irish plant-hunters –the plants

tagged *henryi*, *stauntonii*, *coulteri*, *pentlandii*, *hugonis* or *blakeana* are only a few name-posts to the treasures that they “stole” for us.

In fact, Muriel Stuart wasn't accusing plant-hunters and gardeners of being immoral: “I know that many people deplore the rifling of the wild, but surely there is a difference between wholesale looting and petty larceny?” she opines. “The former I have never attempted: the latter I practise whenever possible.” She admits herself to digging up plants in the wild to add to her garden. The candyfloss *Aeonium* in our garden was grown from a few rosettes that were lying on a goat-path having been broken off by something passing by: human or goat, who knows? We “rescued” the pieces for our garden.

I enjoyed Stuart's writing and her gardening wit. “How I should dislike to own a ready made garden.” – I feel the same. She loathed blue lobelia because “she always keeps such vulgar company”, but adored fritillaries and the various species of *Sisyrinchium*. Single flowers were her preference: “All double flowers have rather a stupid look ...”. She gives some startling advice. When planting “Fill the hole with boiling water, let it subside, place your plant or shrub or tree on this warm bed, fill in in the usual way, and it will flourish exceedingly.” Strangely she never mentions that eternal gardeners' verity: “The best way to keep a plant is to give it away.” (Muriel Stuart's *Gardener's nightcap*, originally published in 1938, was republished in 2006 by Persephone Books Ltd, London. ISBN 10903155-568. £10.)

Darkness falls. The bonfires will soon be lit, blazing harbingers of Midsummer's Day, Fiesta de San Juan Evangelista, the patron of our adopted village. Tomorrow there will be fireworks. The year is half done. The candyfloss fades until next Midsummer.

## **“CONGRATULATIONS and CELEBRATIONS”**

I. G. P. S. 25th Anniversary Seminar  
**"PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE."**

Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> September, 2006.  
At the National Botanic Gardens

GUEST SPEAKERS: Helen Dillon, Harold McBride,  
Mary Forrest, Charles Nelson

See enclosed Booking Form for details.

Members are requested to lend any photographs, Chelsea medals, and other memorabilia of the Society and its activities over the past 25 years for inclusion in the accompanying exhibition. Please include your name and address so that the items can be returned promptly. Please contact Petronilla Martin about this. Her details are on the booking form.





## *National Collections in Newcastle, Northumberland* by Stephen Butler

I was recently asked, in my capacity as Regional Representative for the National Council for the Conservation of Plants and Gardens (NCCPG), to attend an area meeting in Newcastle. The meeting was held at Boston House, Blagdon, a few miles north of Newcastle itself, and the large estate held 3 collections recognised by the scheme – *Acer* (excluding *palmatum* cvs) with 280 plant types (i.e. species or cultivars), *Alnus* with 68 plant types, and *Sorbus* (British Endemics) with 54 plant types. It was a very large estate and the collections were in the more ‘gardened’ area – natural woodland that was very carefully managed – and we had a very pleasant afternoon following the meeting looking at the collections.

I stayed that night at the home of Ena and John Gatenby, who hold the collection of *Leucojum*. Ena is a remarkable lady who not only, as Area Coordinator, organised that day’s meetings, but hosted dinner that night for 12. My humble token effort was helping with the washing up. Within their small garden, about ¼ acre, which is wonderfully kept, they have 20 different *Leucojum*, a genus now broken into *Leucojum* and *Acis*. There are only 17 listed in the latest Plant Finder, and Ena, with her collection and experience growing them – some in a small greenhouse – is now exchanging plants with other enthusiasts and working with a local botanist on the relationship between the different species.

My chauffeur for the following day was David Goodchild, living around the corner from Ena with a ½ acre garden (this area of Newcastle was deliberately planned with large gardens and only one house per plot, with limits on what could be built). He has the collection of *Potentilla* (herbaceous) – a nice balance to the shrubby *Potentilla fruticosa* at Ardgillan! The 158 plant types are scattered through a very fully planted garden, with many large shrubs and a very large nursery area that was brim full of material for their area plant sale the next weekend. The range of leaf size, colour and shape alone was worth seeing, while the variety of flower was only just starting while I was there.

David drove us over the Pennines to Cumbria, where we had a Regional meeting, with Coordinators from Ireland, Scotland and Northern England. The meeting was held at the Lakeland Horticultural Society garden at Holehird, near Windemere in the Lake District. I had not heard of this garden before, and found it in a wonderful setting, with 3 collections, *Astilbe* with 200 plant types – which looked wonderful just in foliage, so many different shades of colour, *Polystichum* with 61 plant types, and *Hydrangea* with 270 plant types and such a good collection that it has the potential to be reclassified as a scientific collection. The most remarkable aspect is that this 10 acre garden is totally staffed by volunteers – each area has a small number of people assigned each week. They have 1800 members, with about 50 active in the garden not, I’m sure, all at the



*A photograph from Stephen showing the beautiful Lakeland Horticultural Society garden at Holehird, near Windemere in the Lake District.*

same time! It did look stunning – well worth a visit if in the area. Check it out on the web at [www.holehirdgardens.org.uk](http://www.holehirdgardens.org.uk)

The most interesting part of the visit for me was the *Potentilla* and *Leucojum* collections. Held in normal gardens by highly committed and able gardeners, they were an example to me of what can be done in a small area.

If anyone thinks they have a potential collection, or are interested in a particular genus, part genus, or themed collection, please get in touch with me at [scbutler@indigo.ie](mailto:scbutler@indigo.ie) or 01 626 8532 any evening. Check out current collections through the NCCPG web site [www.nccpg.com](http://www.nccpg.com) where you can also see a Missing Genera list – a long list of genera with no collection holder – yet! Just click into ‘Starting a Collection’ and follow the link.

*Stephen is the Area Coordinator and Regional Representative for the National Council for the Conservation of Plants and Gardens.*



## *The Call of New Zealand* by Annette Dalton

As you may be aware, a new iconic Alpine House has just been built at The Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, on the north end of the Rock Garden. Designed by architects Wilkinson Eyre, it is a modern and innovative design, and its official opening was in March 2006. So what does this have to do with New Zealand? Well, if you worked on the Rock Garden at Kew, you might be overheard saying something like, “We had to dismantle New Zealand for the New Alpine House!” The geographically arranged Rock Garden culminated at the north end in the Australia and New Zealand section, and to make way for the new construction, the plants in this collection were lifted and moved where possible, and some were inevitably lost. The rocks were taken apart and rebuilt at the south end, but when it came to planning the planting, we had a dearth of good material. The New Zealand collection was particularly poor, with few true alpinines and even less natural source material. Joanne Everson, the Rock Garden Team Leader, tried various sources for wild source seed with known provenance, but with little success.

So we investigated the possibility of collecting it ourselves. This soon broadened as a concept as we knew that to get funding the trip would have to benefit Kew in as many ways as possible. We widened the net to take in the Herbarium and Kew’s sister garden at Wakehurst Place, and soon there were 6 of us on board. Joanne had one or two contacts already, but now we needed to find out if other botanic gardens in New Zealand were interested in collaborating, and could tell us what we would need to do to get permission to collect.

Not knowing quite where to begin, we headed for the Kew Library in search of The International Directory of Botanic Gardens. Here we found 14 Botanic Gardens listed on the South Island – wonderful! We were soon to discover that most of these were, in fact, municipal gardens run by local town councils, and so did not retain herbarium collections on site. However, we did make valuable contacts at Christchurch and Dunedin Botanic Gardens. We were also pointed in the right direction for our collecting permits – the Department of Conservation or DOC as it was referred to



*The new alpine house at Kew Gardens under construction in May 2005. Photograph by Paddy Tobin*

locally. Then began the steep learning curve – New Zealand’s strict bio security laws, DOC land and the conservancies into which the Islands are divided, and finally, the Treaty of Waitangi and claim 262. The latter treaty, signed in 1840 by the Maori & the Crown, is currently being challenged in the courts through claim 262. This asserts the Maori rights to the flora, fauna and shores of New Zealand, and so our permit application also involved explaining ourselves to the local tribe, Ngai Tahu. Finally, one of our group, from the Herbarium, put us in contact with Landcare Research which runs the Allan Herbarium in Lincoln, near Christchurch, so we began to correspond regarding a potential collaboration between Herbaria.

We conducted much of our correspondence with all these contacts via email, but it became clear after eight months that we should really go and speak to them face to face. Having secured funding from Kew’s Overseas Fieldwork Committee in July 2005, we requested permission to use some of this to undertake a reconnoitre visit to New Zealand, and were allowed to do so on the condition that we secured funding to replace this from another award body. So, on October 17<sup>th</sup> Joanne and I headed for Christchurch; our mission, to convince all parties involved of the conservation and scientific value of our collections, to offer shared benefits, and Kew’s services in return. We also could use this opportunity to look at a few collecting sites and look into logistics such as car hire, accommodation, the quality of unsealed roads and finally, of course, look at some plant life!

We spent 12 days in total visiting 20 different people on the South Island. It was a wonderful surprise to see the difference a face to face meeting can make. The DOC representatives understood our objectives entirely and we found ways in which we could collaborate. The Ngai Tahu representative was particularly interested in some of Kew’s pro forma documents, such as *Access & Benefit Sharing Agreements*, and Dunedin Botanic Gardens will join us in our collecting. All parties gave us valuable information on collecting sites which helped us to complete our permit applications and to set out our itinerary. Best of all was the Allan Herbarium offering to let us base ourselves there, particularly when we would have to dry, pack and post material at the end of our trip. We could also use their herbarium for reference if we were unsure of any of our identifications.

...And then there were the plants. So many endemics! I think the toughest challenge of all was producing a species list to accompany our permit application. We had to take the entire New Zealand flora and narrow it down to what we thought we might collect! This involved removing anything endangered, threatened or rare, thinking about the sites we wished to visit, the areas at Kew where the material would be grown and the state of the current Herbarium collection of New Zealand plants. During our investigations I had the pleasure of looking through the Kew’s Herbarium collections of *Aciphylla*, *Dracophyllum*, *Celmisia* and *Gunnera*. I came across one specimen from a Mr. Petrie and attached to the specimen sheet was a letter dated in the 1860s written to Joseph Hooker. Mr. Petrie stated in this letter that the specimen was quite rare and unique in his collection and that he would very much like it to be sent back. Hmm... It

was amazing to be looking at botanical history, at the same time knowing that in some instances we would be updating the collection by 140 years! We narrowed our list to 937 species – now the fun part would be identifying them.

For that reason, we thought we would have a go and try to get our eye in while we were there. We had the great fortune to make contact with Hugh Wilson, eminent New Zealand botanist, Manager of the Hinewai Reserve on the Banks Peninsula (yes, named after Joseph Banks!), and a fountain of knowledge, particularly on the New Zealand flora. We couldn't believe that we were tramping in the bush with him, that he was telling us the Maori names for the plants, showing us some local endemics, and teaching us to recognise some of those elusive divaricating shrubs with their little leaves and myriad leaf forms! He showed us the blue pollen in the flowers of *Fuchsia excorticata*, the pores which gave away the name of *Myoporum laetum*, and we saw our first tree fern in the wild.

It only got better from there. As we travelled south we visited ski fields where the snows had just melted and, on cue, the delightful *Psychrophila obtusa* had popped open its creamy petals through the debris left by the melting snows. *Ranunculus lyalli* teased us from the roadside, while a number of species of *Dracopyllum* egged us on to

investigate further. The sight of *Celmisia lindsayi* growing on a cliff face at Nugget Point drove Joanne to throw caution to the wind and risk life and limb for a photograph! Dense rainforest revealed *Carpodetus serratus*, which I fondly remember from the Arboretum at Muckross Gardens in Killarney, growing in the dripping shade. We were continually added by the mind-boggling array of small leaved shrubs with complex and confused branching systems!



*Psychrophila obtusa* Photograph by Annette Dalton

Although our visit felt very short, we secured our permits (with a number of agreed conditions) and a party of six from Kew were set to return to New Zealand's South Island in February and March 2006 for six weeks. Our aim would be to collect seeds and herbarium specimens and collaborate with our new partner institutions. And, personally speaking, we would also hopefully learn a few identification tricks to determine those confounding divaricating shrubs!

*Note: Since her visit to New Zealand Annette has been very busy with the follow-up work such an expedition involves but will give us an account of her travels in due time. Ed.*



## Seed Distribution Resume 2006

by Stephen Butler

Well it's June already as I write this, and by now many of you should have a lot of seedlings popping up all over the place, and hopefully even a good few planted out if they are quick growing herbaceous plants. Don't forget of course that some seed, especially some tree and shrub seed, will need a cold period, or a second winter perhaps to germinate – checking my 'old' seed pots recently I saw a seedling of *Gymnocladus dioica*, the Kentucky Coffee Tree, sown in 2004, finally coming up – and I know there are still a few more in there for next year perhaps.

We had a staggering 516 accessions for the 2006 distribution, which after deducting the duplicates and those which were non distributable became 395, a remarkable total that we as a society can be very proud of indeed. Several of our seed collectors sent in over 50 different seeds each, with one just under 80, thanks to each and every one.

I ran out of 167 seeds during the distribution – exactly the same as last year! As usual though, supply and demand effected the distribution, with many of the most popular requests actually having very few seeds to send out from day one. *Paeonia obovata* var *alba* was an obvious favourite but had only 15 seeds to start with, which is why people only received two each, and this reinforces the importance of sending your requests in early as they are kept in sequence by day of arrival and filled in that order. Twenty one people requested this but did not get any.

So, to carry on the habit of the popularity rating, which seeds were favourites?

From the first 50 requests *Paeonia obovata* var *alba* and *Tulipa sprengeri* were top, the next 50 saw *Eryngium giganteum* a single request ahead of five others, while the last 47 saw *Cyclamen hederifolium* (scented), *Fritillaria cirrhosa* and *Acer palmatum* ahead.

Overall favourites were: (number of requests)

*Paeonia obovata* var. *alba* (29)

*Cyclamen hederifolium* (scented) (24)

*Scabiosa atropurpurea* (ex 'Chile Black') (23)

*Lilium nepalense* (22)

*Aquilegia* 'William Guinness' (22)

*Acer palmatum* (ex 'Osakazuki') (20)

*Tropaeolum speciosum* (19)

*Paeonia veitchii* var. *woodwardii* (19)

*Cyclamen hederifolium* f. *albiflorum* (ex 'White Cloud') (18)

*Eryngium x zabelii* 'Donard Variety' (18)

None of the above appeared in the top ten last year, although the ever popular *Cyclamen hederifolium* was in the top few in 2004.

As always there were a few poor lots sat on the shelf all the time, with no requests for:

*Anthriscus cerefolium*

*Dipsacus fullonum*

*Carex comans*

*Digitalis nervosa*

*Meconopsis paniculata*

*Polemonium pauciflorum*

*Senecio cinerarea*

*Senecio petasitis*

This is an incredibly short list considering we had so many seeds to choose from. Mind you, an awful lot had only one or three requests. At the end of the day we sent out only 147 requests, 1 more than last year. Perhaps that is to be our average number now, with more plants available at plant fairs, from specialist nurseries or on the web. Certainly many of the people who send in seed say how much they enjoy doing it, and many more write heart-felt thank-you notes for the seeds, so the show will have to continue!

Thanks again to all our seed collectors!

***Please send this year's seed contributions to: Stephen Butler, Curator of Horticulture, Dublin Zoo, Phoenix Park, Dublin 8.***  
***Don't forget to use paper envelopes, and label each packet with full name - genus, species and/or cultivar please!***  
***Many thanks in advance***

## **REMINDER - DUBLIN PLANT SALE, 2006.**

The annual Dublin Plant Sale will take place on Sunday, 15th October at 11.00 a.m. (Note earlier commencement time this year.)

Venue- Our Lady of Dolours Church, Glasnevin, across from the National Botanic Gardens.

All members are requested to put aside some plants, sundries, books, magazines, raffle prizes, for this event which is our main source of income for the year ahead. Plants of Irish interest or Irish cultivars are very important to this sale as it is one of the few outlets for these items. All contributions will be gratefully received. See you on the day!

For more information contact Mary Bradshaw. Tel. 01-2697376.



## Regional Reports

Normal activities continue around the country and below are the reports from members. Sincerest thanks to these contributors for taking the time to make notes and later to pass on their reports for your interest and entertainment.

### Leinster Reports

#### 18<sup>th</sup> April 2006 Lecture Report

#### Ron McBeath at the National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin

On 18 April Ron McBeath delivered a superb talk on alpine plants at a meeting in the NBG sponsored jointly by the Alpine Garden Society and ourselves. There are few people in the world better qualified to talk about alpinism than Ron. He was responsible for alpinism at Edinburgh Botanic Gardens for twenty years, and anyone who has visited the gardens will be aware of the very high quality of the rock gardens, the troughs, the raised beds and the alpine house there. In 1994 Ron left Edinburgh to set up his alpine nursery which has been highly successful. While he was at Edinburgh, and since he left, Ron has travelled extensively in the mountains of the world, particularly in Asia, and has been responsible for the introduction of many fine plants to cultivation. The fact that five prominent members of the Ulster Group of the AGS travelled all the way from as far north as Ballymena to hear the talk is, in itself, an indication of the high regard in which Ron is held by lovers of alpine plants.

In his talk Ron discussed a wide range of plants, ranging from the tall *Meconopsis grandis* to the diminutive *Androsace vandellii*, some requiring alpine house conditions but many perfectly amenable to being grown in a rockery, a raised bed, troughs, a woodland area or even in the open garden. He dispelled the myth that alpinism is only for the specialist, pointing out that many alpinism will thrive in most gardens provided they are given reasonably well drained soil. This can be done most easily by raising the level of the bed in which the plants are to be grown above the level of the surrounding soil and incorporating some grit. Raising the level by a mere 30 cms will do the trick and such a situation will suit many alpinism.

His slides showed the plants in the wild and in cultivation and he provided valuable information about the cultivation requirements of the various species. The audience was impressed by the sheer beauty of the pictures and I have little doubt that more than a few non-alpinism went home converted.

The Lamberton Nursery website is at [www.lambertonnursery.co.uk](http://www.lambertonnursery.co.uk).

Billy Moore



## 22nd April 2006 Garden Visit to Woodfield

After an absence of several years I was keenly looking forward to revisiting Helen and Keith's Lambs' garden at Woodfield near Clara. I was not disappointed. It was for everyone who visited a memorable occasion. Spreading out on all four sides of the distinguished 18th century house the gardens can be roughly divided into four sections each with its own character and yet merging informally into a harmonious pattern.

After a friendly greeting, Keith led us off into the woodland section which occupies the original driveway to the house. Most eye-catching as we started down the drive were the large naturalised clumps of *Trillium chloropetalum*. Great swathes of classical woodlanders followed with countless numbers of *Anemone appenina*, *A. ranunculoides* and *A. robinsoniana* forming a rich pattern with *Cyclamen repandum* and *Erythronium californium* "White Beauty". There was also a scattering of *Primula elatior*. Lines of ancient beech trees provide the dappled shade and deep leaf mould on which these woodlanders thrive.

En route back towards the rock garden which lies to one side of the house there were good clumps of *Trillium chloropetalum giganteum* and against the front house walls a number of *Echium pininana* which had survived the winter. This traditional rock garden supports classics such as *Celmisia* "David Shackelton", *Saxifraga longifolia* and *Ramonda myconi*. Most colourful just then was a stunning clump of naturalised *Fritillaria meleagris* with a sprinkling of the albino form. I noticed the more unusual *Erythronium* "Sundisc" with a good contrast between the yellow flowers and the brownish foliage. A large yew provides shelter and very dry conditions for a variety of cyclamen including *C. cilicium* and *C. balearicum*

Keith's interest in woodlanders was also evident in the walled garden where he had constructed a series of raised beds. These were filled with acidic soil and several plantings of *Trillium nivale* were present. The diminutive *Linnaea borealis* and the insectivorous bog plant *Sarracenia purpurea* were other plants of interest.

A wrought iron gate set in an old stone wall leads to the final section of the garden. This is known as the bawn although Keith also referred to it as the "jungle" and brings a total change of atmosphere. I remember this well from summer visits when the nickname is apt even though a degree of control is always evident. It's a shady area through which wander wide informal paths. Dramatic green giants crowd in from all sides. At this early season fresh green shoots of the shuttlecock fern were pushing up while the huge gunnera clumps were somewhat slower to spring into new growth.. There were good splashes of blue from a nice *Pulmonaria* "Blue Ensign" and *Mertensia virginica*. Yet another sure sign of a good plantsman was evident by the presence of that most unexpected member of the aristolochiaceae, *Saruma henryi*.

After a welcome cup of tea provided by Helen and her team and much further discussions on plants we bid farewell to our hosts. The memories will remain.

Dermot Kehoe

## **20th May. Garden visit to 14 Woodside Drive Rathfarnham**

Less than five minutes drive from Dundrum Shopping Centre, that busy centre of retail therapy, is the secluded garden of Noelle Anne Curran where the mood is one of serenity and harmony.

The garden is sixty feet wide and beyond the terrace is a large beautifully maintained lawn, bordered on the right by gently moving water and on the left by a wide border of mixed planting. When we visited *Tulipa* 'Spring Green' was still in flower but the pinks and purples of summer had arrived with a sea of stylish *Allium hollandicum* 'Purple Sensation' and *Allium christophii* running through the border. *Rosa* 'Souvenir de Saint Anne' and *Deutzia purpurascens* 'Alpine Magician' were also in flower, as was a large pink *Melanoselinum* while *Romneya coulterii*, *Papaver orientale* 'Patty's Plum' and *Hedysarum coronarium* were in bud. At the end of the border the summer house was overhung with one of the garden's star performers *Wisteria sinensis*, while a close rival was the beautiful *Buddleja alternifolia* with fragrant lilac flowers.

The garden is bisected by a low neat hedge of clipped box with the edges on both sides softened by box spheres, while beyond the hedge is a Potager of box triangular beds with decorative vegetables and culinary herbs including Swiss chard, lettuce and courgettes.

There is a fine collection of trees suitable for city gardens, *Betula utilis* var. *jacquemontii* grow near the boundary, while a sculpture of a girl on a swing is cleverly placed under *Acer griseum*. *Cornus* 'Eddie's White Wonder' was covered in white bracts while nearby *Cornus controversa* 'Variegata' majestically spans the Mediterranean garden, home to the shrubby *Echium candicum* and a raised bed where *Celmisia hectori* and *Ozothamnus selago* grow.

One reason to visit gardens is to enjoy and be inspired by other peoples' ideas and plant combinations and this is a garden where scale, interesting features, and a large collection of healthy well-tended plants combine to give that wow factor that stops you in your tracks.

Mary Rowe

## **20th May Visit to Billy Moore's Garden in Breamer Park**

The weather was kind to us in the middle of a bad spell when we visited Billy's garden. It is extremely interesting as well as being visually lovely. The front garden – which I believe has had a change of content in the past year – has become a mini woodland. The existing trees – a *Prunus serrula* and an *Acer griseum* created the atmosphere. The interesting under-planting had anemone, *Trillium luteum*, a lacy leaved purple elder (*sambucus* cv.) and a *Cardiocrinum* waiting to be a star.

On the other side of the entrance was a flowering *Magnolia wilsonii* which Billy told us had been in its half barrel many years while at the back of the house we met a raised bed full of precious alpinists, as you would expect in this expert's garden.

The long garden had lawn with curved borders full of treasures. A ceanothus around the base of a eucalyptus took my fancy while, further down, we admired a *Deutzia*

‘Alpine Magician’ and peonies with the promise of the darkest red flowers. In and out among his treasures Billy had a ribbon of aquilegia and plantings of tulips which brought you down to the end of the garden to the alpine house full of nesting prize winners and to a patio with all the evidence of industry – lots of pots of seedlings and cuttings.

We would like to thank Anne and Billy for having us visit their lovely garden and also for their kind hospitality.

*Marie Cunningham*

## **25th June. Irish Plants at 45 Sandford Road**

A sale of plants with Irish connection took place on Sunday 25th June at 45 Sandford Road, Dublin. A good selection of plants had been assembled by Assumpta Broomfield, and were sold during the afternoon to members and also to visitors who were interested to hear the history of their purchases, perhaps future society members? The five bestsellers of the afternoon were:

1. *Crocsmia masoniorum* ‘Rowallane Yellow’
2. *Agapanthus* ‘Lady Moore’
3. *Aster* ‘Little Carlow’
4. *Rosa* ‘Souvenir de St. Anne’s’
5. *Deutzia purpurascens* ‘Alpine Magician’

Many thanks to Diane Tomlinson and Assumpta for their help on the day, and to Helen and Val Dillon for the use of their garden

*Mary Rowe*

## ***Munster Reports***

### **5<sup>th</sup> April 2006 Lecture Report**

#### **‘Glenmahon throughout the Seasons’ by Catherine McHale**

Catherine McHale was welcomed by many old and new members when she came on the 5<sup>th</sup> of April to speak on her garden, Glenmahon, throughout the seasons. Unfortunately she had to battle against a children’s competition of martial arts in the adjoining area so sound was a difficulty. Despite this Catherine’s great knowledge of plants and her gift of observation came across and we all left having enjoyed a well crafted lecture.

Foremost among the tools in Catherine’s basket must be her camera which she had used to capture many of the fleeting moments of the year. Some of the plants shown were choice, purchased on journeys through the British Isles, but other slides showed beauties of more common type: raindrops on a cornus, frost in the back garden and the inevitable companion robin.

Catherine confessed that she treasured her hellebores and iris more than many other plants but her acute observation enables us to look at our own gardens with a different vision. Have we noticed the young growth of *Paeonia cambessedesii*? Or an aquilegia

probably peculiar to that garden? Or *Photinia* 'Red Robin' in flower? Do we have the skill to flower a Gardenia out of doors? Have we the knowledge to grow such a wide variety of choice plants successfully in a relatively small space?

Catherine is a plantsperson, eager to see her plants grow happily but also well able to communicate her knowledge to her audience. Everyone should have left the lecture hall wondering how to establish a similarly interesting garden to give pleasure throughout the year.

*Elizabeth Corban-Lucas*

### **13th May Visit to Dunloe Castle**

The annual summer outing of the Munster branch of the IGPS was held on the 13th May. Our group met for lunch at Muckcross House in Killarney and gave some of the party an opportunity to have a quick look at the beautiful display of colour in the gardens at this time of year. We then continued on the short trip to Dunloe Castle gardens where we were met by our host and guide, Cormac Foley, who is the OPW Park Superintendent for the SW region.

This garden is situated in the grounds of Dunloe Castle Hotel and has an extensive and interesting collection of plants, several of which are very rare. Cormac was very generous with his time and knowledge and outlined a brief history of the gardens for us. He then proceeded to give the group a three hour guided tour of the gardens pointing out various rare and beautiful shrubs and trees, many of which would not normally be seen growing so well outdoors in this part of the world. Many had reached specimen heights.

In the 1920's, the American, Howard Harrington, bought the estate and started the gardens. Harrington had a great love of plants, and much of the plant interest that exists today in this garden is the result of his enthusiasm and foresight. After his return to America, the estate was purchased by a Miss Agnes Petit who kept the gardens maintained and made some modest additions. After her death in 1960, the estate was purchased by Killarney Hotels Ltd owned by Dr. Hans Liebherr. Dr Liebherr also had a keen interest in plants and trees and so brought the garden into a new and exciting period. Over the last number of years the planting has been supervised by the plantsman and broadcaster, Sir Roy Lancaster.

One of the wonderful aspects of this garden is the detailed listing of the trees and shrubs which is available in a substantial catalogue which Cormac was able to refer to in his tour! We were treated to some rarely seen specimens from the southern hemisphere growing exceptionally well in the microclimate of the garden. Cormac pointed out some unusual trees, such as the aromatic leaved Headache tree and the Chinese Swamp Cypress.

This was an outstanding garden in terms of location, unusual species and the exotic and our outing was enhanced by Cormac's very informative talk as we toured!

*Martin Edwardes*

## **Munster Committee Reorganisation:**

Here is the list of Committee members for the Munster IGPS. Greenhorns!  
Martin Edwardes- Chairman (or to be PC, Chairperson.) Tel 021 4652204  
Fax 021 4652612 e-mail [edwaelec@eircom.net](mailto:edwaelec@eircom.net)  
Janet Edwardes (to prop up the above)  
Therese Murphy - Secretary Rosemary Hickey - Treasurer  
Catherine Coulter- Munster representative.  
Kay Twomey. Michael Kelleher. Kitty Hennessy

As a new committee, we are endeavouring to attract new members to the IGPS and revitalise existing members by setting out a programme of interesting lectures along with garden visits for the new season. This programme of lectures and events for the year will be listed in a pamphlet which will be handed out to all members. The programme will also appear in the October issue of the newsletter. Our first meeting and lecture will be on Friday 6th October at 8.00 pm at the usual venue of the SMA hall at Wilton, Cork. The subject and speaker of the first talk have yet to be decided, but the information will appear in the October issue of the IGPS newsletter. The meeting and content will also be advertised in the garden column of the Examiner written by Charlie Wilkins on the Saturday prior to the Friday meeting. The A.G.M of the IGPS will be held in Munster in 2007, and it has been decided to hold the event in the Limerick area. As a committee we think that it is important that all counties in Munster be included in hosting this event.

## *Northern Reports*

**22<sup>nd</sup> March 2006**

### **A Guided Tour of the Ulster Museum Herbarium**

Behind the scenes at the Ulster Museum is a world to rival Narnia, and the Botany Department in particular is opening its treasures to members of the Irish Garden Plant Society, before the Museum closes in the autumn for a major refurbishment. Catherine Tyrie and Paul Hackney explain and demonstrate to interested groups the specimens, and the information and expertise available in their department, and a group of us curious to see what went on were delighted to be allowed to open boxes, drawers and nosy into their work behind closed doors.

Among their seed specimens are alarming-looking nuts, ergot on wheat (which gives you the shakes), and even silky flax seeds, on which our linen industry was based and which can be used to cure constipation ..... what a plant! Some of the beautiful timber specimens looked too good for utilitarian use, and no, rubberwood does not bounce!

There were beautifully bound herbals dating back to the 1520's, illustrating the plants which were grown for medicine, dyes, food and perfume and now perhaps grown in

Irish gardens today. The cultivated plant herbarium now contains about 7000 specimens, many from local National Trust properties, making the Ulster Museum the only herbarium in the UK collecting voucher material from National Trust gardens. Log on to their web-site [www.habitas.org.uk](http://www.habitas.org.uk) and you too can learn to love pig-root!

If you delight in the tales of plant-hunting derring-do, with a bit of drug research and a dash of cannibalism, contact the Museum and join a tour.

*Sandy Fulton, Islandmagee*

**NOTE: Tours of the herbarium are still being organised – if you would like to see behind the scenes at the Ulster Museum, contact Catherine Tyrrie on 028 90 383152 to arrange a visit. Or organise a group of friends - minimum 5, maximum 10 people per tour – and contact Catherine.**

### **April 22<sup>nd</sup> Garden Visit to Brian Mooney** **A Wet Saturday in Strabane**

It was just the weather for a group of web-footed gardeners to enjoy Brian Mooney's beautifully laid out woodland garden.

Appropriately, we gathered by the ponds drawn by the vivid yellow of the largest marsh marigolds I have ever seen. In a few weeks primulas of every hue will adorn these ponds which descend to a large boggy area with clumps of yellowy-green skunk cabbage and gunnera about to burst forth. From the bottom of this Brian-made feature the flow of deep borders led us up and around the garden with surprises at every turn, clumps of erythroniums, Jacobs ladder (quite far on), *Sanguinaria canadensis* (Bloodroot), and trilliums. A terrific splash of orange, *Fritillaria imperialis*, had been there when Brian moved into the house 30 years ago.

Brian was keen that we should enter his latest woodland conversion from the right point to appreciate the vista of informally planted trees surrounded by carpets of fritillaries and daffodils with strategically placed homemade celtic sculptures. This area felt like a separate garden being open to the surrounding countryside and sky and in the far corner we found a large wooden sculpture of an eagle enfolding a man and woman in its wings, symbolic of the origin of nature. Two jacquemontii birches, with recently washed glowing white bark were prominent against the skyline and behind these was another White island replica stone sculpture set into the bank.

Nearer to the house a heather bed gave winter colour, there was promise of more colour from emerging *Euphorbia griffithi* 'Fireglow' and *Euphorbia robbiae* and I was quite taken with *Viola labradorica purpurea*, violets, set against a lime green euphorbia in a gravel bed.

Despite the constant drizzle the garden was fully explored and enjoyed by those who had ventured west of the Bann. Brian's bargain basement sale did a roaring trade with some choice trilliums now scattered throughout N.I.

*Sharon Morrow*



## *Looking Ahead*

**Please see the note in ‘Regional Reports’ regarding the Munster Fixtures.**

**Also note change to Northern Fixtures of September 3<sup>rd</sup>.**

## *Leinster Fixtures*

### **Saturday 15th July 2-5 pm**

**Abingdon, Shanganagh Road, Shankill Dublin 18** the garden of Philip and Brigid Jacob with trees, shrubs, fruit, vegetables and herbaceous plants. **No admission charge.** **Directions** At Loughlinstown take the Shankill exit and go as far as the Church, then turn left towards Killiney, Super Value on right. Through traffic lights and continue to sharp bend, Abingdon on right hand side with wooden gate. Entrance is facing you.

**Saturday 26th August** Summer Luncheon at Hunting Brook Lamb Hill, Tinode, Blessington Co. Wicklow By kind permission of Jimi Blake. Booking form in Newsletter.

**Saturday 2nd September 9am** IGPS 25th Anniversary Seminar National Botanic Gardens. Speakers Helen Dillon, Harold McBride, Mary Forrest, Charles Nelson. Details and booking form in Newsletter

**Saturday September 23rd 3-4pm** Millennium Arboretum St Anne’s Park Raheny. A tree walk to enjoy Autumn colour with Mary Forrest. Assemble at Tennis Court Car Park, All Saints Road Raheny at 3pm. Dublin Bus Route 29A. Walk will take 1 hour approx.

**Sunday 15th October 11am** **ANNUAL PLANT SALE.** Our Lady of Dolours Church Glasnevin (opposite NBG). Members with plant donations will be very welcome from 9.30 am on the day or contact a Leinster Committee member to arrange collection. **Please note earlier time of 11 am**

## *Northern Fixtures*

**JULY 27 – GARDEN VISIT,** Hilary & Jeffrey Glen, 23 Scolban Road, Dromore, Co Down, 6.30 for 7.00pm. We visited this 2-acre garden, on the side of a shallow valley, 5 years ago. Only 10 years old and still under development, it has extensive herbaceous borders, a herb garden, and collections of roses, trees and shrubs. Donations for Blind Centre, Northern Ireland, non-members £2.00 extra.

**AUGUST 19 - ANNUAL PICNIC & GARDEN VISIT**, Mrs Daphne Shackleton, Lakeview, Mullagh, Co Cavan; 1.00pm. Following Daphne's very popular Clotworthy Lecture last spring, we just had to organise a visit to these famous gardens! Guided tour. €6.00. Members and guests only - bring your own picnic.

**NOTE CHANGE TO PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED PROGRAMME HERE!**  
**SEPTEMBER 3 – GARDEN VISIT**, Mrs Ann Kavanagh, Ros Bán garden, Raphoe, Co Donegal; 2.00pm. Beautifully situated on Mongorry Hill, overlooking Raphoe, this ½ acre garden is one to enjoy and relax in, planted with herbaceous plants and shrubs, including a range of medicinal plants and those which attract wildlife. Donations for charity; non-members £2.00/€3 extra.

*c.3.30-4.00 pm The walled garden at Dunmore House, Carrigans* is a traditional walled garden with flower beds, vegetables, terraces, and ponds, and Maryette McFarland would be delighted to let us see the garden after the visit to Ros Bán. Donations for local charity.

**DIRECTIONS FOR ROS BÁN** - On Mongorry Hill, c. ½ ml NW of Raphoe. In the Diamond in the centre of Raphoe, take the narrow road opposite the petrol pumps and proceed round the old cinema, past the housing estate and take the next right; the garden is 5th on the right.

**FROM ROS BÁN TO DUNMORE HOUSE** – go back to the centre of Raphoe, and turn left on to the R236 for Derry. Follow this road, through Saint Johnstown, to Carrigans, 1½ mls further on. Go through the village, and Dunmore House is on the Derry side of the village, on the left, opposite Murray's Tiles. c. 9-10 mls from Raphoe. Grid Ref: C372121

**It is important that those intending to visit should make every effort to be on time at Ros Bán - 2pm - as we need to be prompt in leaving for Dunmore House afterwards.**

Any queries: Catherine Tyrie, Events Co-ordinator  
Tel: 028 90 383152 E-mail: [catherine.tyrie@magni.org.uk](mailto:catherine.tyrie@magni.org.uk)

**OCTOBER 7 - ANNUAL PLANT SALE**, Ulster Folk & Transport Museum, Cultra, Co Down; 12.00-3.00pm - deliveries from 9.00am.

***Plants & volunteers wanted. Contact Hilary Glenn on 028 92 699859.***

Following last year's very successful sale at our new venue, we expect even greater things this year, and again are likely to attract larger numbers than usual because of the location - please start propagating early !!! Get seed from the IGPS Seed List and start sowing! **GOOD-QUALITY PLANTS ONLY PLEASE.**

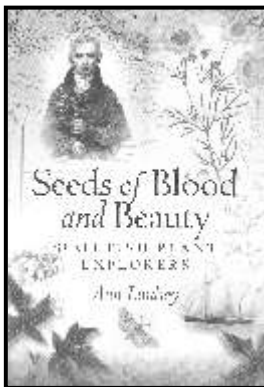




## *Worth a Read* by Paddy Tobin

Are you like me that your favourite plant of the moment is the one last obtained, whether purchased or a gift from a generous gardener? I am somewhat the same with books. Invariably I will have a number of books waiting to be read but it is the book which last comes through the door that is regularly given first preference. However, in the past month I have been very disciplined and taken out those books which have been longest on the shelf. Some came through the generosity of family and friends, which, though appreciated, is no guarantee that a book will be to my liking or would be on the shelf at all were the choice mine. Here then is the odd selection of books, some good, some not so good, I have read over the past month.

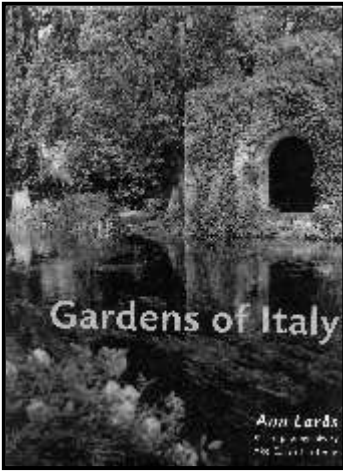
Let me start on a good note with a book of which I can say that I truly wish someone would write in similar vein for an Irish readership. *“Seeds of Blood and Beauty –*



*Scottish Plant Explorers”* is a set of accounts by Ann Lindsay of thirteen of her Scottish horticultural heroes. The names of some of the collectors will be immediately familiar to most gardeners as their names occur in plant names: Robert Fortune John Jeffrey, Thomas Drummond, David Douglas, Archibald Menzies and William Forsyth for example and as I list them off I realise just why Ann Lindsay writes with such a proud tone. Why wouldn't she? Are we not indeed indebted to the Scots for their contributions to our gardens? This is a well research and well written book, really a collection of lengthy essays and I heartily recommend it to you. Now who will write the Irish version?

[*Seeds of Blood and Beauty – Scottish Plant Explorers*, Ann Lindsay, Birlinn Ltd, Edinburgh, 2005, HB 298pp, ISBN 10: 1 84158 345 6]

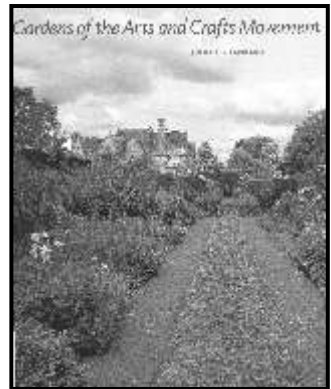
Colin Tudge is simply fascinated by trees and has been since childhood. *“The Secret Life of Trees – How They Live and Why They Matter”* is his latest book. His interest has brought him to travel the world to observe them in their natural environment and along the way he had noted many and varied wonders. Indeed, his travels have led him to wonder also – about how they work, how they talk to each other and why, indeed, do they exist at all. Yes, he is besotted with trees but a deep delving into the philosophy of trees did not prove a great attraction to me. Mr. Tudge is well qualified, is well experienced and writes well enough but his writing did nothing to enthuse this reader. I tired of his book rather quickly. Unless trees are your absolute thing, don't bother! [*The Secret Life of Trees – How They Live and Why They Matter*, Colin Tudge, Penguin, London, 2005, HB, 452pp, £20, ISBN 0-713-99698-6]



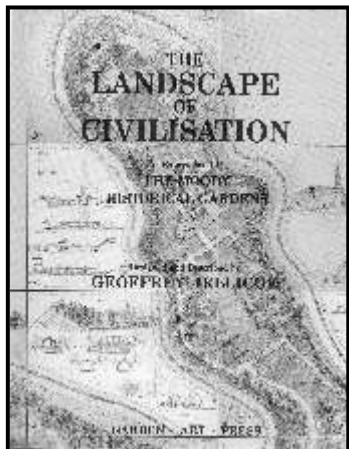
On the other hand, *“The Gardens of Italy”* by Ann Laras would make one wish to pack one’s bags immediately and head off to Italy immediately. Sixty of Italy’s finest gardens are presented, each given a short but insightful review, each accompanied by excellent photographs. Included are the majestic Villa d’Este, Villa Lante, Isola Bella and Giardino di Ninfa but also there are many gardens which are less well know but which certainly deserve to be known better. With space for text limited due to the number of gardens covered and the predominance of photographs is it perhaps not surprising that it is crisp, clear and concise. At the same time each account gives the reader an insight into the garden, its history, present state, features and highlights as well as the basic vital information that a garden

visitor must have – contact details, maps, opening times etc. This book is certainly a good place to start one’s study of Italian gardens. Ann Laras writes, *“My aim in this book is to share my joy in Italy’s Gardens”*. She does this admirably. [*The Gardens of Italy, Ann Laras, Frances Lincoln, 2005, HB, 207pp, £30, ISBN 0 7112 2490 0*]

Do you consider the gardens of Gertrude Jekyll and Edwin Lutyens to be the quintessentially English garden? If you do, then this book, *“Gardens of the Arts and Crafts Movement”* will appeal to you without any doubt. Judith B. Tankard writes of gardens of simplicity, utility, handcraft, natural materials and vernacular forms where the garden and the house are seen as one, a perfectly designed unit. The Arts and Crafts movement heavily influenced design in area such as architecture, furniture, ceramics, stained glass, wallpaper, jewellery and books and in this book Ms. Tankard gives an in depth historic account of the development of attitudes towards landscape architecture among the major proponents of this movement. The book is written in a scholarly tone and very well illustrated with excellent photographs, period watercolours and drawings as well as original plans. This author looks seriously at her subject and presents an excellent account of this most influential period of garden design. Not always a leisurely read but certainly one which was informative and enlightening. [*Gardens of the Arts and Crafts Movement, Judith B. Tankard, Abram Books, New York, 2004 HB, 216pp, ISBN 0-8109-4965-2*]



Geoffrey Jellicoe had a long and distinguished career, during which he worked on the gardens of many historic homes among them Royal Lodge, Windsor and Sandringham.



In 1958 he began to write the history of landscape architecture and completed the work in 1975. Ten years later he was given the opportunity to give physical form to this work. The Moody Foundation wished to develop a 25 acre site in Galveston, Texas which would show the development of horticulture through the ages. Jellicoe was enthusiastic and in the space of one night produced the plans for this project, a cultural history of the world as seen in miniature through landscape. Jellicoe envisaged not a series of illustrative gardens but a unity of work, a single deeply suggestive work of surrealist art of our time. The project is planned to take over twenty years to complete. In the meantime this book presents over 200 black and white and 32 colour illustrations of Jellicoe's drawings and plans,

actually much illustration and little text. It shows the sources of Jellicoe's inspiration, historic gardens or works of art, his interpretation of these and his proposals for the gardens in Galveston. If landscape architecture is of interest to you then this book may be also. [*The Landscape of Civilisation as Experienced in The Moody Historical Gardens Designed and Described by Geoffrey Jellicoe*, Garden Art Press, Suffolk, 1989 and 1994, HB, 200pp, ISBN 1 870673 01 8]

Finally, a small book, interesting and worthwhile, "***Native Trees and Shrubs for your Garden***" by Jill, Duchess of Hamilton and Christopher Humphries. What led me to the book initially was the keen interest of a gardening friend in the U.S.A. in gardening with native plants. Of course, I always viewed his native-plant gardening with a somewhat envious and rose-tinted eye as I also would be very happy to have a woodland underplanting of swathes of trilliums, erythroniums and similar treasures. An immediate reaction might be that you have no intention of letting wild plants loose in your garden but you will very quickly realise that you may already be growing some of these in your garden – hawthorn, mountain ash, crab apple, spindle, whitebeam, beech, pine and the likes. The authors give practical advice on their use in the garden, each plant introduced by a verse before its use in the landscape is outlined along with its care, propagation, use to wildlife and historical notes of interest. Certainly, for the rural gardener, or the urban gardener who wishes to be more environmentally friendly, this is a very worthwhile book, clearly written, illustrated with line drawings and completely down to earth. A very worthwhile book. [*Native Trees and Shrubs for your Garden*, Jill, Duchess of Hamilton and Christopher Humphries, Frances Lincoln, London, 2005. PB, 237pp, ISBN 0 7112 2215 0]





## Snippets

### **First time to flower outside of China:**

Plants of *Cirsium fargesii* and *Cirsium henryi* are about to flower for the very first time in cultivation in the family beds at Glasnevin. Both species are biennial and were first collected by Augustine Henry in 1888. The material currently cultivated at Glasnevin was collected by the 2004 Glasnevin Central China Expedition in the mountains above Xingshan to the north of Yichang in Hubei Province. Neither species has ever been grown outside of China before so this is yet another "first" for Glasnevin. *Cirsium fargesii* is also cultivated at the Kilmacurragh Arboretum in Co Wicklow.

*Seamus O'Brien*

### **Irish Heritage Plants at Airfield Gardens, Saturday 2nd September**

Airfield, Dundrum is planning an open day on Irish Heritage plants on Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> September. We are hoping to get as many as possible Heritage plant people together on the day with stalls, talks, exhibitions etc. We hope to have a general forum – discussion and question and answer session between 2 and 3 p.m. We are also very interested in hearing from people who are growing heritage vegetables.

*Brenda Moran, Education Department. 01-2984301 Mon, Tue, Wed and Fri. mornings.*

### **Chelsea GOLD 2006**

Congratulations to Orla and Paul Woods of Kilmurry Nursery, Gorey, Co. Wexford, who won a Gold Medal at Chelsea Flower Show, 2006. This is a wonderful achievement as it was their first exhibition at Chelsea. Orla says that among the plants with Irish connection that are carried by the nursery are: *Aster* 'Little Carlow', *Heuchera* 'Helen Dillon', *Kniphofia* 'John Benary', *Stokesia* 'Mary Gregory' and *Geranium* 'Irish Blue'. A more careful look through their catalogue, which is quite extensive and certainly worth a read may lead to other Irish plants.



This Gold Medal at the Chelsea Flower Show follows on silver medals at the Malvern Spring Show and the Harrogate Spring Show earlier this year. This follows on Silver Medals at Tatton, Malvern and the BBC Gardeners' World Show in 2005 along with a Gold Medal and Best in Show at the Garden Heaven Show in 2005. An impressive record indeed! More information on [www.kilmurrynursery.com](http://www.kilmurrynursery.com).

*Orla & Paul Woods with their Gold Medal at the Chelsea Flower Show this year. Photograph 'borrowed', with permission, from their website.*



# *The Newsletter of the Irish Garden Plant Society*

## **The Irish Garden Plant Society**

### **The Aims of the Society are:**

- **The study of plants cultivated in Ireland, and their history.**
- **The development of horticulture in Ireland**
- **The education of members on the cultivation and conservation of garden plants.**
- **To research and locate garden plants considered rare or in need of conservation, especially those raised in Ireland by Irish gardeners and nurserymen.**
- **To co-operate with horticulturalists, botanists, botanical and other gardens, individuals and organisations in Ireland and elsewhere in these matters.**
- **To issue and publish information on the garden plants of Ireland and to facilitate the exchange of information with those interested individuals and groups.**

*Correspondence: The Irish Garden Plant Society, c/o The National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin, Dublin 9. (Please note that staff at the Botanic Gardens cannot take telephone enquiries about the IGPS. They simply facilitate by providing a postal address for the convenience of committee members.)*

## *Issue 101, July 2006*