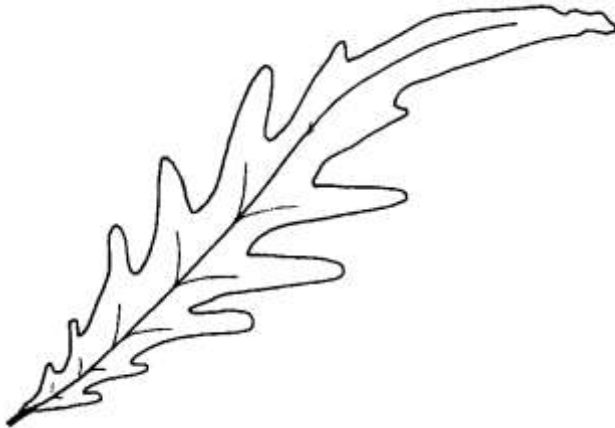


*IRISH GARDEN PLANT SOCIETY*



*NEWSLETTER NO. 88*

*OCTOBER 2002*

Dear Fellow Members,

This is my first edition of the newsletter as editor and I hope that I will be able to continue the high standard which has been set by previous editors. The newsletter has always been an important aspect of the Society for me as it was generally the only way through which I was involved with any of the society's activities. There are many members in the same situation, I am sure, and I hope to make the newsletter as relevant and interesting as possible for you.

There have been a number of regular contributors to the newsletter and great praise is due to them for their work over the years. Other members have indicated that they are interested in contributing and I will be contacting these people in the near future.

If any member has any items of gardening news, particularly items relating to Irish plants and gardens, I would be delighted to hear from them with a view to having an article in some future newsletter.

By the time you read this newsletter Seamus O'Brien, of the Botanic Gardens Glasnevin, and his group will have travelled to China. This is an expedition of the greatest significance, importance and interest as the area to which they are travelling will shortly be lost forever. We will hopefully have an account of their adventures in a future edition. Sincerest best wishes to Seamus and his group. I hope they have a safe and successful trip.

For the rest of us, at least, the sometimes frenetic activity of garden maintenance is now slowing down and it is time to take life a little easier – time to enjoy the beauty of autumn trees, those flowering cannas, crocosmias and, of course, get on with bulb buying and planting.

Paddy Tobin, Waterford.  
[pmtobin@eircom.net](mailto:pmtobin@eircom.net)

Front cover illustration: a leaf of *Quercus robur* 'Fennessii'

## **ON THE NATURE TRAIL IN CHINA'S DOOMED LANDS.**

*Irish plant-hunters are getting ready to make history as the last visitors to a site of unique specimens.*

If you think of gardening as a gentle, relaxing pastime, it's time to wake up and smell the flowers. Later this month, a team of Irish horticulturalists embarks on a gruelling mission to a remote part of China in search of rare plants. And judging by previous expeditions, no shrinking violets need apply.

Almost every exotic plant has its own story of discovery. The South American dahlias or Himalayan poppies we mull over in garden centres were once unknown species. And despite the work of the great plant-hunters of the past two centuries, there is still plenty of virgin territory to explore.

The Glasnevin Central China Expedition plans to boldly go where no gardeners have gone before and explore the little-known provinces of Shichuan and Hubei.

Seamus O'Brien, Irish gardening's answer to Indiana Jones, and the team leader, says: "This is a very important trip for me as I will be following in the footsteps of one of Ireland's most important plant collectors, Augustine Henry. This is the first time an expedition has been sent from the National Botanic Gardens to Asia."

"What makes it even more important is the fact that the area known as the Three Gorges, which is noted for its unique and special flora, will be flooded in the next 18 months to make way for the world's largest dam, which is costing the Chinese about \$19 billion. Our plant-hunting expedition will be the last to enter this area in search of plants, and this makes our work of international importance. The plant seed and cuttings we return with will be the last records collected of unique material from this region."

Having trekked through China before in search of rare breeds, Seamus knows the dangers of exploring undiscovered territory. His first plant-hunting venture was in 1996, when he went on a five-week expedition to China following in the footsteps of famous plant collectors Frank Kingdom Ward, Joseph Rock and George Forrest. Seamus returned from that trip with a collection of 600 species. "It's dangerous country, though. I can recall being caught on the side of a

mountain in such dense fog that you couldn't see your hand in front of you. The group was lost in an extremely dangerous area in the shady slopes of a steep mountain. Struggling to find level ground, one of the porters dislodged a rock and before we knew it, there was a landslide, with boulders hurtling over us from above. One porter was badly injured. I and some others were lucky to find shelter behind a large boulder. I remember huge rocks bouncing off my rucksack, which was my only protection from the fall. It is in these situations that you quickly realise the perils of hunting for plants in their native habitats," he said. "On other trips, we've had to learn to come to terms with the most unusual cuisines. In one village, there was nothing to eat but wasps and their larvae."

Like Indiana Jones, Seamus' work is much less exciting, although equally rewarding, when at home. "I've worked in some of the country's most prestigious gardens, such as Glanleen, Co. Kerry, and the famous Beechpark garden in Clonsilla."

Since 2000, Seamus has been employed at the National Botanic Gardens, and he will be accompanied by Dr. Matthew Jebb from the gardens to collect herbarium specimens. "These will be housed at the herbarium at Glasnevin," he says.

Seamus' latest expedition will give him another chance to search for his own holy grail, the exceptionally rare golden yellow poppy, *Meconopsis oliverana*. This was discovered by Augustine Henry in 1888, and after exhaustive investigation of Henry's diaries and notes, Seamus believes he can locate the exact area where this fabled poppy grows.

"Another highlight of the trip will be to see another one of Henry's introductions, *Emmenopterys henryi*. This is a rare tree in Ireland which has never flowered in this country."

In the past, Seamus has been responsible for introducing many new plants to Irish gardeners. He has imported five new species of Sorbus (Mountain Ash) and one new birch, along with countless rhododendrons and other plants.

His current pride and joy are two new clematis. The first and most promising is a form of *Clematis tibetana*, which has recently been called 'Glasnevin Dusk'. This small-flowered clematis flowers from June to late September. The flowers are blue-black and look like pearls. This new variety will not be available

commercially for a number of years, but already there is tremendous interest from America and Japan in acquiring this climber, which Seamus discovered growing on the side of a mountain in Tibet. He has also named another form with larger flowers and brown colouring after his brother, Lorcan.

After this month's trip to China, the entire O'Brien clan could soon be coming to a garden centre near you.

Dermot O Neill

*This article first appeared in the Sunday Times on Sunday, September 15, 2002 and has been reprinted here with the kind permission of the author, Dermot O Neill, and of News International for the Sunday Times. Ed.*

## **THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, WATERFORD, JUNE 2002**

It must be the hint of autumn approaching that has me in reflective mode these past few days as I wander round my little plot thinking of my own horticultural successes (a few) and failures (several - thanks to the voracious appetites of Northern slugs and snails). It also has me thinking of the gardens visited during the previous months. For me, circumstances combined against my usual whirl of garden visits and the season started later than usual with the AGM weekend in Waterford. I've come to look forward to these weekends - the meeting itself being only an excuse for getting a few days of garden exploration. This year Paddy Tobin, Margaret Power and George Kavanagh put together a lovely package of gardens for the group to visit - and they even had the courage to invite us to see their own gardens.

Following the AGM in the Waterford Manor Hotel, we headed to the garden of Jim & Phyllis Nolan. Jim is obviously a 'tree man' with lots of interesting trees used to divide the space into a series of vistas. My eye was caught by the *Acacia baileyana* 'Purpurea' which I had been hunting for my own garden recently - spectacular blue-green foliage tipped with dark purple/red young growth. However it's one of those plants where the flowers

don't seem to work against the colours of the leaves – the bright yellow flowers seem to clash with the young growth. But there's more to this garden than trees – there is a wide range of herbaceous and shrubby planting too, with a few ponds and water features thrown in for good measure. A *Buddleja globosa* covered in a mass of orange flowers combined well with a blue aquilegia and lived up to the 'butterfly bush' epithet attached to the buddleja family. An arch leading from a paved and gravel area was covered in a mass of blooms from *Solanum crispum* 'Glasnevin'. A variety of clipped conifers, flanking some of the paths, added a semi-formal touch and a group of Japanese maples, set in a fine gravel-mulched bed, lightened the solidity of the conifers. In the midst of the extensive planting, Jim has included space to sit and enjoy the garden – paved areas beside a pond, a circle of gravel with a seat underneath a group of silver birch and broad sweeps of lawn giving views to specimen trees and shrubs. Coloured foliage is used effectively throughout the garden – purples, yellows and silvery greys, but textures and form have not been forgotten either. In one area the spiky foliage of cordylines was picked up by an underplanting of irises, hemerocallis and grasses and contrasted beautifully with the background of a large gunnera. The garden behind the house was planted up just as extensively and it was interesting to see here the use of a wooden deck area. This seems to have become the *bête noir* of so many gardeners, but this is no 'Ground Force' makeover style garden; here in a plantsman's garden, it has been used to great effect providing an area to sit and to just enjoy being surrounded by the beauty of the garden.

Our next visit was to Mount Congreve, a monument to the plant collecting passion of Mr Ambrose Congreve. With resources to match his passion, he has created a marvellous collection of plants in a woodland setting overlooking the River Suir. Prominent in the collection are his personal favourites – a huge range of rhododendrons, azaleas and magnolias. Our visit started in the walled garden filled with beds of flowers for cutting. Walking down through this area led to a large rectangular pond flanked by swathes of bearded iris and a massive stand of *Gunnera manicata*. It may be a cliché, but the irises really did add a rainbow of colour against the old brick walls. An arch led to the second part of the walled garden – a large open lawn dominated by the magnificent glasshouse. In one wing, a large bed was planted up with carnations for cutting, while the others had a mass of 'typical' glasshouse exotica. But tucked into a corner was a rather lovely euphorbia

(name not known) with creamy white margined leaves and stems topped by open sprays of bracts with similar variegation – a real beauty.

Out of the walled garden we started our trek through the huge outer gardens. Lining one path a row of purple *Acer palmatum* was set at a low level their domes of soft leaves acting as a ground cover planting – very unusual. An old specimen of *Magnolia x weiseneri* with large strongly scented upward facing flowers caught the attention of the group. One of the flowers was passed around the group and I couldn't help thinking a single flower would look splendid carried by a bride as she walked up the aisle, with the large leathery leaves highlighting the cream saucer of petals filled with a centre of crimson stamens. Other trees which caught the eye were a fine *Nothofagus cunninghamii*, and the beautiful *Pinus montezumae* set against *Acer platanoides* 'Crimson Sentry'. Hidden amongst the trees was a lovely little rock-pool surrounded by massed planting of *Primula helodoxa* – the bright yellow primula flowers lighting the dark rock. Further on a gorgeous little acer (possibly *A. palmatum* 'Osakazuki') seemed to be covered with tiny pink butterflies, but on closer inspection these were the winged seeds. And so we continued – past more rhododendrons, a *Calocedrus decurrens* 'Berrima Gold', some vivid *Azalea* 'Klondyke' along a walkway lined with a collection of free-standing wisteria including delicately coloured *W. floribunda* 'Pink Ice'.

Descending towards the River Suir our path took us to a brightly coloured Japanese pagoda, dramatically set in a round pool below a sheer rock face – its vivid colours a marked contrast to the otherwise gentler green surroundings we had become accustomed to during our walk. Another rock face descended into a series of pools planted with *Lysichiton*, *Rodgersia*, candelabra primulas, ferns and irises. The short narrative here could not hope to do justice to the huge collection of plants at Mount Congreve – it really is the type of place that has to be experienced first hand.

Sunday saw the group refreshed and ready for more gardens to explore. We started in Waterford itself at the gardens of Margaret Power and George Kavanagh. Margaret's three-quarter acre cottage-style garden at Abbeylands was a marked contrast to the excesses of Mount Congreve the previous day. Although the gardens did not match in size, I would say her passion for plants is on a similar scale to Mr Congreve's.

A scree type garden lines the upper end of the entrance driveway. Here the lovely silvery spikes of astelia erupt out of the gravel amongst several types of grasses and mat forming alpinas. The deep magenta flowers of *Gladiolus communis* subsp. *byzantinus* formed a lovely colour combination with the silver astelia, while moving towards the lawn we found a flower covered mound of the *Prostranthera cuneata*, its tiny dark green leaves producing the most wonderful scent when crushed. Opposite, a heavily planted mixed border had its own walk-through path, entered through an arch flanked by the dark beetroot coloured *Dodonea viscosa* var. *purpurea*. The dodonea colour was picked up by a purple plantain. Close by, in contrast to the darkness, a stand of white siberica-type irises was backed by white lupins and the emerging white flowers of *Crambe cordifolia*. The centre of the front lawn is taken with an old laburnum – blown over at some stage in the past, but still dripping its yellow racemes through the semi-prostrate sprawling branches.

Moving around the back of the house, the planting seems to become denser and then opens out again into an expanse of lawn. A new woodland-style area with silver birch underplanted with hellebores also includes the graceful *Elegia capensis*. Beside a small summerhouse, a tall cordyline towers over *Grevillea rosmarinifolia*. In another border, a dark purple cotinus sets off a deep pink rose in front, while close by *Papaver* ‘Patty’s Plum’ continues the theme. Behind an outbuilding is an open gravel area where the bright yellow of *Euryops pectinatus* provided a strong contrast to the grey green of an *Agave americana*. Behind a wall fountain splashed into a grey cistern, surrounded by bamboos. In a large raised border, *Solanum crispum* ‘Glasnevin’ climbs skyward on a trellis, behind a dianella and some silvery rosettes of celmisia.

Leaving Margaret’s garden we moved on to George & Antoinette Kavanagh, just a short distance away. Their house sits on a hill in an old mature garden with great views across the river to Waterford City. With an obvious respect for the site and a love of plants, George and Antoinette are in the process of renovating the garden. Looking uphill towards the house, the area to the right is very open with a formal arrangement of paths dividing up a large lawn. Tall urns and an ornate tiered fountain punctuate the junctions of the paths, while the surrounding borders are filled with a good range of mature plants. While we were there, a fine specimen of *Melianthus major* was in full flower. I grow this for its deeply cut foliage and hadn’t appreciated its deep mahogany coloured flower spikes until now. Beside the house is a small enclosed walled garden. In this enclosed space a range of plants thrive,



including the rarely seen *Crinodendron patagua*, the white flowered Chilean lantern tree. In front of the house, the garden descends quite steeply, mostly in lawn, but with the upper part terraced and nicely planted. A huge ribbon of osteospermum in whites and pale lilac lines the path across the terrace, while at one end a gorgeous wedding cake cornus rises above some recent planting. To the left of the house, the planting is quite dense with walks through mature woodland, interspersed with new plantings of rhododendrons such as *R. sinogrande* and *R. falconeri*. Immediately beside the house on this side, hidden from view is my favourite part of the garden – an oriental style shaded pool with a single jet fountain. The pool is completely enclosed by a range of tree ferns with huge arching fronds. A few tall bamboos, some *Carex pendula* and some Japanese stone lanterns add to the atmosphere of quiet seclusion.

Then we were on the move again – to Ballyknockane Lodge near Clonmel. This is described as a wild garden on the slopes of Slievenamon, traversed by deep river gorges. Set high on the slope, the Lodge has great views out over the Golden Vale. The garden is indeed very wild in character, with great numbers of rhododendrons crowding the hillside and winding riverside paths. We approached the garden from below, walking up the main avenue through mature planting of trees and shrubs. As we arrived at the lodge, we could look across the slopes where, from this distance the rhododendrons provided great swathes of colour. The effect was lost somewhat as we wandered along the paths which passed underneath the canopy. As we criss-crossed the cascades the noise of the water crashing down the hill beside the paths added a sense of drama to the jungly atmosphere. Obviously created as a labour of love by someone with a passion for rhododendrons, the garden has now evolved into a ‘lost garden’ style.

The next day was the final day of the trip and our final garden – belonging to Mary & Paddy Tobin. Both Paddy & Mary are keen gardeners whose personal tastes in plants compliment each other. Always on the lookout for the rare and unusual, it would have been easy to create simply a collection of plants, but they have made a proper garden with just as much care and attention paid to the layout as to each individual plant. The overused description of garden rooms could definitely be applied to this garden. Every turn takes you to another little self contained section – a formal square of box hedges surrounding a square container, or perhaps a narrow box-lined path terminating in a single hosta in a pot with some *Trillium luteum* in the borders

alongside. Having added an acre to their existing half-acre plot, no doubt there will be many changes and developments in the coming years.

On entering the garden you know immediately that this belongs to dedicated gardeners – not only a huge array of plants, but beautifully maintained. To the right is a densely planted mixed border where a block of deep purple alliums, combined with the related *Nectaroscordum siculum*, really catch the eye. To the left an arch, flanked by silvery astelia and blue delphiniums, opens onto a circular lawn enclosed by more flower-filled borders. On one side of the lawn, a terracotta urns splashes water out onto a pebble and gravel area where *Cirsium rivulare* ‘Atropurpureum’ adds a strong shot of colour against the pale stone. A small bed of roses frames an opening onto the next lawn enclosed by shrubbier planting. Here a dark green arbour with seat, backed by a golden hop, provides a restful spot to sit and admire the view, but somehow I don’t think Paddy & Mary spend too much time sitting in the garden. Stepping up towards the house takes you past an *Abies koreana* with its gorgeous blue cones. Behind these main areas, an old laneway has been converted to garden with newly planted border crammed full with little treasures – some meconopsis, primulas and geraniums adding a splash of colour and some young rhododendrons and acers providing the structure. The silvery rosette of an *Echium wildpretii* adds a touch of lightness. The old ditch at the boundary is being converted into a water feature – a series of stepped seasonally wet areas. Immediately behind the house raised scree beds hold some of Paddy’s precious alpines – a personal passion of his. Beyond these is the newly acquired acre which only a short time ago was just rough grass. Now a formal vegetable garden is bursting with produce on the upper level and plans are being made to develop the remainder. The impatience of the makeover gardener is nowhere to be seen here – ideas will be formulated, mulled over for a while, possibly rejected or adapted and then the fun will really start.

Unfortunately that was the end of our weekend of garden visits. It was a weekend for meeting new friends and catching up with some old ones. As always, there was a range of gardens to suit all tastes and of course we had a couple of good garden centres thrown in for good measure. I hope that the next AGM weekend will live up to the high standards set by the Waterford team. Details will be posted in the Newsletter as they emerge, but be prepared for a trip to the North in 2003.

*Patrick Quigley*

## **The Fennessy Nursery in Waterford**

Although we Fennessys derive from Fiangus of Cashel of the Kings, whose name is translated as a “strong soldier” or “brave warrior”, the Fennessy genes must have had some gentler elements which came to the fore in the eighteenth century when an interest in horticulture became evident.

Richard Fennessy, who died in 1779, over two hundred years ago, established a nursery at Ballynattin, a few miles north of Clonmel, and this was believed to be the first of its kind in Ireland. This Richard had eight sons and the second of these sons was William, who was a nurseryman in Limerick. He set up his nephew, also called Richard, in the nursery business in Waterford, in lands which had been used by William’s brother, Nicholas.

We are told that Richard, the nephew, died at the age of 96 in about 1873 and left four sons and a daughter, along with an estate of some £30,000. It seems that the business was highly profitable in those days, and that £30,000 at today’s values would be reaching a million pounds.

Richard’s eldest son was Edward, who inherited. Edward married a lady of English stock, named Mary Belcher. My late father, when he belched occasionally, used to excuse himself by saying: “Well, my grandmother was a Belcher”!

Edward bequeathed the nursery to his son, William Henry, who was my grandfather. William Henry married Lillian Agnes Rance, the daughter of Major Frederick Rance, who once served in the British Army in India. I had a souvenir of the Major in the form of a sword stick, which was a thick Malacca walking cane, hollowed out, from which one could withdraw a thin steel rapier in case of need. It was a lethal weapon.

William Henry, from when I first knew him was crippled, having been thrown from a horse and trap, which was the mode of transport in those days, and he was never able to walk again. My father, Arthur Fennessy, was then asked to run the nursery and the family moved to a house in the nursery grounds.

The nursery was located in the townland of Grange in Waterford. It lay between Upper John's Hill and Passage Road. In its latter years the trade had declined considerably. The 1920s and the 1930s were bad years for the Irish economy, in what was then our fledgling state. Money was scarce and for most people gardens were a bit of a luxury. The old days of planting out big estates were over and the trade now consisted of selling shrubs, bedding plants and tomatoes, which were grown commercially in season. In those days cattle and pig fairs were common-place, as were the established market days when people came into the town. My father would hire a small lorry to take shrubs and plants to towns in Counties Waterford, Tipperary and Kilkenny, where money might be in circulation.

There was also a seed shop on the Quay, quite near to Reginald's Tower. It was established around 1820 although the business itself dates back to the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Documents indicate that there were earlier premises on the corner of Gladstone Street, where it meets the Quay, and in Barronstrand Street. We still have some artefacts from the business, including some of the stationery.

The nursery itself was well laid out, with proper walks in between the trees and shrubbery, and with cultivated areas for young trees. It also had greenhouses where seedlings were nurtured until ready for planting out.

It was a magic place for a nine year old boy, as I was then, where you could make a bow from a yew branch and arrows from the tropical bamboos, not to mention the cover for games of hide and seek. There was a large mulberry tree which fruited regularly and aromatic seed pods from the eucalyptus trees, and all sorts of wonderful things. Along with hay, oats were grown to feed the plough horses and the mare that drew the trap and there was a fine orchard with apples, pears, quince, raspberries, loganberries, gooseberries and all kinds of currants.

The main house in which my grandfather lived was called "Grange Villa" and the house in which my family lived "The Laurels". Both are still there today. Regretfully, following my grandfather's death in 1937, the nursery lands were sold to a development company and they are now covered by the Grange Park housing estate. To give the developers their due, they incorporated as many of the mature trees as they could so that a few reminders of former glory still remain.

# WATERFORD

Scale - 12 Inches to the Square Mile



Extract from Harvey's Map of Waterford, also probably early 20th century. This photocopy has reduced the size of the original. The scale bar below represents one sixth of a Square Mile, or 161 acres.



Jennisey's Nursery

Today, of course, we have garden centres which are more compact and can supply the same needs. The trade has diversified too into specialist productions like mushrooms, soft fruit and cut flowers.

In their heyday the Fennessys had nurseries in many counties of Ireland, including Kilkenny, Limerick and Kerry as well as Waterford and the first one at Ballynattin in Tipperary. They brought their specialised knowledge to the United Kingdom and to America and Australia and quite possibly to other parts of the world as well.

***Frederick William Fennessy, Ballinacurra, Limerick, Ireland***

*This article and the next were first published as part of a book of genealogical interest for the Fennessy family, "Fiangus to Fennessy," ed. by Michael J. Fennessy and Aine C. Ni Fhiannusa. Ed.*

## **Quercus robur ‘Fennessii’: The Fennessy Oak, A Family Tree.**

I knew from when I was young, through family “folklore” and from conversation with my reverend uncle, Dr, Richard Fennessy OFM, that one of my great-great-great-grandfathers – also Richard Fennessy – had discovered a new variety of oak tree, which was named after him. We believe him to have been the Richard Fennessy who is listed on the chart of our family (genealogical) tree, who died in about 1873, and was one of the sons of Richard Fennessy of Ballynattin who had ten children.

More research needs to be done into investigating plant registers of the time to find out exactly when the oak was first listed and named.

My own Uncle Richard, always having an interest in trees and forests, had occasion to visit the Botanic Gardens in Glasnevin, Dublin in the 1980s and met with the then Curator, Dr. Charles Nelson. Dr. Nelson subsequently wrote to Fr. Richard on the 23<sup>rd</sup> September 1985 stating that he had visited Holland in August of that year and discovered a nursery where the owner was

propagating *Quercus robur* 'Fennessii'. He added a comment: "'tis a strange tree with tattered leaves, but one certainly of interest". The shape of the leaves is undoubtedly the most striking feature of the variety.

Dr. Nelson wrote again on the 12<sup>th</sup> of November 1985 and stated: "I have certainly filed the information among my notes on Irish nurserymen and when I get more time will look into the matter in a bit more detail as I think a note should be published about the oak and its background. I saw the oak being propagated in a number of Dutch and Belgian nurseries. It was growing at Kalmthout in an arboretum owned by the de Belder family, and was being propagated by a nursery at Zundert, just across the border in Holland.

Location note: Kalmthout is about 19 km north of Antwerp in Belgium. Zundert is 18 km north east of Kalmthout, but in Holland.

In their book *Trees of Ireland, Natural and Naturalised* (1993), Nelson and Walsh describe the oak as follows: "*Quercus robur* Fennessii (Heterophylla) is little known in this country (Ireland) today, although it originated as a seedling in Messrs. Fennessy's Nursery, Waterford, in about 1820. The leaves are very variable in shape, some much contorted, others almost linear, and many with deeply cut margins. I have seen hundreds of trees in Dutch nurseries, but remarkably none are sold in Ireland. It is not an elegant plant, merely a curiosity".

By way of general description, we can say that the oak is a member of the family *Fagaceae*. Other genera within the family *Fagaceae* include Beech (*Fagus*), Southern Beech (*Nothofagus*) and Chestnut (*Castanea*). Oaks are a large group of plants, with well over 400 different species known. Most are trees, some growing to over 30 metres, while a few are shrubs. The larger trees generally require a temperate climate and rich soil to achieve full height. In the British Isles two oaks predominate, the Pedunculate (*Quercus robur*) preferring more alkaline soils and the Sessile (*Quercus petraea*) preferring more acid soils.

The Pedunculate Oak, of which the Fennessy Oak is a derivative, is also known as the English Oak or Common Oak. A hardwood, it is world renowned for its exceptional durability and has been highly prized for shipbuilding for many centuries.

Several features distinguish *Quercus robur* and help to identify it:

- The bark is fissured and the branches are often crooked.
- The dark green leaves are deciduous, spaced alternately on the branchlets and have short stalks.
- The leaf shape is obovate or oblong with three to six lobes on each side.
- The buds at the end of the branchlets are in groups of five, and this is a useful point of identification.
- Male and female flowers occur on the same tree but on separate inflorescences.
- The male flowers are formed on tassel-like catkins and the female flowers are borne on upright stalks at the base of the leaf stalk.
- The catkins ripen and their pollen is spread by the wind.
- The most distinctive feature of the oak is its fruit, the acorn, the lower part of which is enclosed by a cup.

The above description applies to the species, *Quercus robur*. The ‘Fennessii’ cultivar is characterised mainly by the difference in the leaf shape. Generally the leaves have deeply cut lobes and the end lobe may be very long and thin.

Along with the reference in *Trees of Ireland, Natural and Naturalised*, there are several other contemporary references to the Fennessy Oak. In these references I have retained the publisher’s spelling and emphasis as far as possible.

- J. G. S. Harris of Mallet Court Nursery in Oaks of the World (1995): *QUERCUS ROBUR* ‘FENNESSYI’. Leaves variable and usually deeply incised with narrow entire lobes. A very attractive cultivar. Named after a nursery in Ireland, c.1820.

In their 1997/1998 catalogue, Mallet Court Nursery lists the variety as: *Quercus robur* ‘Fennessii’. Up to 10m. Leaves variously shaped, some long and narrow scarcely lobed, some deeply and raggedly cut.

- W. J. Bean in his 1976 publication *Trees and Shrubs Hardy in the British Isles*, records: *QUERCUS ROBUR* cv. ‘FENNESSII’. – Leaves very variously shaped, some long and narrow, scarcely or not at all lobed, often hooded; others deeply and raggedly cut, never so regularly as in ‘Filicifolia’. They usually hang loosely



from the branches and are 3 to 9 inches long, ½ to 2 inches wide. Raised in Ireland by Fessessey and Son of Waterford around 1820. It was put into commerce as *Q. pedunculata fennessi*, but the varietal epithet became corrupted to “Trinessii”. Loudon included it in his *var. heterophylla* and it has in consequence acquired the cultivar name ‘Heterophylla’ (Arb. Et Frut. Brit., Vol. 3 p.1735 and fig. 1571).

Bean refers above to the publication of Loudon (1838). Thus we need to include older specimens that carry the name *Quercus pedunculata* ‘Heterophylla’ or *Quercus robur* ‘Heterophylla’. Mitchell (1974) mentions at the end of his discussion on *Quercus robur* ‘Filicifolia’:

*Q. Robur* ‘Heterophylla’ (17m. Kew), even more rare, has leaves to 20cm, sessile, usually hooded and less deeply cut into curved lobes.

It is assumed that sessile in this case refers to the leaf positioning, rather than the acorn positioning. Clearly the length of leaf described by Mitchell is consistent with contemporary specimens of *Quercus robur* Fennessii.

- In The New RHS Dictionary of Gardening (1992) a number of varieties are listed under the entry for *Quercus robur*, including: ‘Fennessii’: leaves flat or convex, margins deeply incised, lobes irregular, narrow.
- The variety is also listed in the RHS Plantfinder (1996) as: *Quercus robur* ‘Fennessii’, followed by index codes for three nurseries able to supply, which are:  
Mallet Court Nursery, Curry Mallet, Taunton, Somerset, TA3 6SY, England.  
Bluebell Nursery, Blackfordby, Swadlincote, Derbyshire, DE11 8AJ, England.  
Madrona Nursery, Pluckley Road, Bethersden, Kent, TN26 3DD, England.

*Editor’s note: I have seen this oak stocked by Orchardstown Nurseries, Orchardstown Cross, Waterford and by Jan Ravensberg, whose nursery is near Clara, Co.Offaly*

***Eleanor Fennesy, Monkstown, Dublin.***

## Sweet Charity

Anna Nolan, I.G.P.S. member and member of the Dublin Garden Group, opens her garden at Cabinteely to interested groups and for charity. This year she opened on August 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> for Our Lady's Hospice, Harold's Cross and raised a substantial sum of money. Were you there?

Anna has created this beautiful suburban garden over 25 years. The soil is neutral to alkaline, much improved over the years with compost, leaf-mould and constant T.L.C. Both her front and rear lawns could be described as "curvaceous rectangles". Both gardens are crammed with plants, the rare and unusual combined with the more commonplace in vivid combinations.

The rear garden, measuring approximately 20m x17m faces north and is on a steep slope. Planting takes account of this and waterlogging does not occur, because of the nature of the site. Directly outside the back door, I was struck by a twining *Codonopsis convolvulacea* 'Forrest's Form' climbing on *Berberis thunbergii* 'Helmond Pillar'. Anna grew the berberis from seed and its narrow upright habit is an ideal support for the pale blue *Codonopsis*. Nearby, on the north-facing wall, the first blooms of *Lapageria rosea* were beginning to unfold.



*Anna's redesigned patio area. Photo by Mary Bradshaw.*

The patio area, designed by Dominick Murphy, has a little pool and a tiny trickling fountain. Here Anna has planted *Isoplexis canariensis*, the evergreen Canary Island foxglove, very well combined with *Crocasmia* 'Dusky Maiden', *Miscanthus sinensis* 'China' and *Tropaeolum majus* 'Hermione Grasshof', tender and with bright red flowers. Anna propagates this plant annually from stem-tip cuttings. On the table, a pot of *Salvia discolor* completed the picture.

Anna is a self-taught gardener who was interested in colour from childhood. Margery Fish was an early influence and Anna says she is always on the lookout for interesting herbaceous material. She grows the herbaceous *Clematis x aromatica*, blue and pink forms of *C. integrifolia*, *C. recta* 'Purpurea' as well as species clematis from seed. Another striking picture is *Clematis* 'Royal Velours' growing through a mature *Azara microphylla* on the south facing border.

In the tender corner, a relatively new development, the visitor will find *Lobelia physaloides* "Pink Elephant", *Oxypetalum caerulea*, *Rhodochiton atrosanguineus* and *Clematis florida* 'Sieboldii' with a white *Codonopsis convolvulacea* 'Alba'. These plants are over wintered indoors.

In addition to clematis, Anna also favours Monarda. *Monarda* 'Cambridge Scarlet', *M.* "Beauty of Cobham" and *M.* "Blue Stocking" all make an appearance. As well as *Salvia discolor* mentioned previously, *S. confertifolia*, *S. involucrata* 'Hadspen', *S. cacaliifolia*, *S. patens* 'Cambridge Blue' are in evidence but Anna's favourite is *S. uliginosa*. In the "red corner" the deep red *Lobelia cardinalis* 'Compliment' is combined with *Dahlia* 'Bishop of Llandaff', *Salvia confertifolia* and *Crocasmia rosea* 'Severn Sunrise'. These are displayed against a background of *Phormium cookianum* subsp. *hookeri* 'Cream Delight', *Gleditsia triacanthos* 'Sunburst' and *Acer pseudoplatanus* 'Brilliantissimum' which really emphasise the reds. Not content with perfection, Anna plans to change this corner. The true gardener always sees a better combination!

I visited this garden on August 17<sup>th</sup>. Groups visit all year round. Anna has no less than 100 hellebores, species, hybrids, doubles and variegated flowering over an extended season. American and Canadian visitors love her garden, but it seems the French visitors are the most enchanted!

**Mary Bradshaw.**

## KNOCKMORE, AN IGPS VISIT.

We set off on a Saturday afternoon in early September for Knockmore Garden in Enniskerry Co. Wicklow, home of Ruth Isabel and John Ross. Having driven through south County Dublin's appalling traffic in heavy rain, it was just what the drooping spirit needed to be met by a carpet of white and dark rose autumn flowering cyclamen, *Cyclamen hederifolium*. Further drifts were to be found at the top of the avenue and under the Cedar, *Cedrus deodara*. This year, much to John's delight, the Cedar produced cones for the first time in over thirty years.

Our genial hosts told us of the history of Knockmore as we stood looking out at the Irish Sea a mere three miles away. The house was built in 1850, but the history of the garden dates from 1898 when two sisters Charlotte and Stella May came to live at Knockmore. They lived here for fifty years and much of what they created during that time has been preserved by Ruth Isabel and John.

A dry stone wall built by the sisters has been reclaimed and one of the plants used by Ruth Isabel is *Geranium* 'Ann Folkard' which she strongly recommends. On the sunny gravel terrace, which has a good view of the Sugar Loaf mountain, blue and grey plants predominate; *Artemesia*, *Anaphalis*, and *Agapanthus*, and the *Clematis* 'Etoile Violette' and in a sheltered corner is a blue *Abutilon vitifolium*. The terrace is edged with a particularly good lavender hedge that flowered very well this summer despite the rain.

Below, in a hollow, the garden stretched before us to its other boundary, a wood. It has a magical quality that invites you to visit. There are old roses with neatly clipped box balls, a kitchen garden designed by John with eight rectangular beds centered round a small granite table where vegetables and soft fruit grow. Ruth Isabel told us that Fennel is not planted until after midsummer to prevent it from self seeding. The double border was dominated by large drifts of white, pink and dark rose Japanese Anemone with soft grey stachys.

An unusual sundial in the Summer Garden stands on a brick pedestal and had us checking our watches. The dial consists of two wing-like shapes and is thought to have been brought to Knockmore from Hong Kong in the early years of the twentieth century by relatives of the May sisters.



*The unusual sundial in Knockmore. Photo by Paddy Tobin*

Another story of the sisters was told when we reached the Pekinese graveyard. When a dog died it was carried in a wheelbarrow to the graveyard by the head gardener. The procession that followed included the assistant gardener, two maids, the Miss Mays and any visitors in the house at the time. At the graveside prayers were read from a prayer book before the deceased pet was interned! A short distance from the graveyard the leaves of a large Snowdrop tree, *Halesia monlicola* had hints of pale gold, Ruth Isabel mentioned that it is possibly the largest specimen growing in Ireland today.

As we headed back towards the house we visited the Greenhouse. It is a wonderful old fashioned house with a four foot wall below the glass which ensures no extremes of heat or cold. Here yellow and red tomatoes grow but the star was undoubtedly a gold coloured grape ‘Muscat of Alexandria’ planted outside the greenhouse and coming in through a hole in the wall, a single rod runs the length of the house with heavy bunches of grapes that will have ripened by mid October.

Back at the veranda Ruth Isabel signed copies of her book ‘A Year in an Irish Garden’, and the seventeen members that made up our group headed home. Many thanks to Ruth Isabel and John, their warmth and enthusiasm made for a most enjoyable afternoon.

*Mary Rowe*

## **Must see.....**

Three short years ago I was lucky to be able to see the new Welsh National Botanic Garden at Middleton Hall in South Wales, as part of a PlantNet meeting. Planting had only just started on the long herbaceous borders, and the unique greenhouse was still a builders' site. We all said at the time – give it a few years, and see it again.

During September we held a zoo conference at Bristol Zoo, and we put Middleton Hall on the post conference tour. My early misgivings have given way to awe at the amount of work done in a short time, and with limited staff and much work from a committed team of volunteers. Novel hard landscaping includes rocks from each Welsh county, flowing water in a meandering rill that wanders across the main path, and feature fountains and water falls.

But the plants are now coming into their own. The herbaceous borders are very wide, and stretch uphill. Pathways lead you off through the border as well, and there is an excellent mix of traditional plants with a lot of unusual ones too – and plenty of grasses – not often seen combined in the same border on this scale.

Currently in development is the double walled garden – one wall 30ft inside the other – now designated for Order Beds, but with a difference – wait and see!

The great greenhouse – designed with no internal supports, one large curved span that copies the shape of the surrounding hills – is now very full of well grown plants. All the Mediterranean zones – Chile, South Africa, Australia, California, and the Med itself – are covered in sections. The layout is in the form of a deep defile, allowing for much planting on the narrow terraces, and a greater feeling of space. Winter temperatures are kept to a minimum 47 F

We noticed many fine plants; *Banksia blechnifolia* looking exactly like the fern itself, enough *Anigozanthus* in greens and yellows to look like a bedding display, *Moorea* and *Dietes* in profusion to really make you jealous and fine *Echiums* of many species. A carpet of *Lotus corniculatus* cascaded over the waterfall. Marvellous white velvet leaves of *Salvia candicans*(?).

Intense blue flowers on *Alyogyne huegelii*, like an oversized mallow. Fine range of Proteaceae.

To get a quick-planted effect many of the plants were actually quite familiar and very recognisable – to be removed later when more choice plants are big enough. After 10 minutes in “Chile” someone said to me “I suppose you grow all these outside in Ireland”, and yes we do, Puyas, Fascicularia, Maytenus, Azaras, Grindelia, Justicia, even a few Escallonias (including *E. resinosa* that had *almost* everyone looking for the sweet scented flowers!).

I don't intend a long article – just make sure you pop in if driving through Wales from Fishguard to England. National Botanic Gardens Wales is just past Carmarthen.

*Stephen Butler*

## **CONGRATULATIONS!**

A very short note to let you all know that Fingal County Council has been granted Full Collection Status for their collection of *Potentilla fruticosa* cultivars by the National Council for the Conservation of Plants and Gardens. Lots of hard work by Kevin Halpenny and Dominica McKeivitt at Ardgillan has been justly rewarded. I visited the collection earlier this summer and it was a pleasure walking around being able to compare the different cultivars, seeing the remarkable differences in growth habit and colours, but mostly the detailed cataloguing, and very careful cultivation, that made granting the full status almost guaranteed! Co-operation with other *Potentilla* people, (what is the correct collective noun – *Potentillaphile*? *Potentillaholic*??) especially Wilf Simms from England helped tremendously.

As Kevin has promised a more detailed article nearer next year's flowering time I will not elaborate further, except to say that the collection also includes newly planted specimens propagated, (with permission!), from the original wild plants that Linnaeus used to describe the species growing near his home. I really like that idea!

Well done everyone. *Stephen Butler*  
NCCPG Collections Coordinator Ireland (South)

## RAIN

Everyone knows the old rhyme:

If the ash comes out before the oak  
There'll be a summer soak.  
If the oak comes out before the ash  
There'll be a summer splash.

For years, in fact for much of my life, this rhyme has puzzled me. A soaking means a wetting and if you're splashed you also become wet, don't you? Some canny adults explained to me that you soak up sunshine but that just didn't seem right. I think I may have solved the puzzle at last. This year, rain round here has been almost incessant; the sky has been predominantly grey and farmers had to keep cattle inside long after they were due to go out to the fields because their hooves churned up the land making small lakes and mini-seas of mud everywhere. Recently a local farmer complained to me that there had been so much rain that the ground wouldn't soak. I thought he was either being sarcastic or becoming senile but no, he was being perfectly serious and is, as far as I know, fully compos mentis. He is a North Ulster dialect speaker so I looked up the Concise Ulster Dictionary (O.U.P. 1996) and sure enough, one of the meanings of 'soak' was given as 'dry' (clothes) in the open air (from the idea that the air soaks up moisture).

I do not have an English Dialect Dictionary but it probably means the same in Northumbria or Yorkshire or other counties with large hoards of local dialect words. Diarmaid O Muirthile, who writes 'The Words We Use' column weekly in the Irish Times would certainly know but as I wrote in late August, he is sunning himself in Ithaca. Not only would Diarmaid be fully conversant with the word 'soak' but could give the etymology of it going back to Old Norse or something. A surprisingly large number of our words have Old Norse ancestry.

I digress, as usual. Let's assume that 'soak' means 'dry' in the dialectal sense. It's no more paradoxical than talking about dry white wine and, as any woman who's had a glass of very dry Chardonnay spilled down her cleavage knows, dry it is not. So, if the ash comes out before the oak we're going to have a dry summer. If the oak comes out before the ash, it's going to be a summer splash. For 'splash' read rain – mega gallons of the stuff.



This year, ash trees were extremely late in coming into leaf. We were in the south and south-west of England in May and there were still skeletal ash trees adding an unwelcome touch of winter to the landscape. There was also much rain there. Back home at Blackhill (how aptly named!) an ash tree down at the bottom of the garden didn't start coming into leaf until May 21<sup>st</sup>. That was long after a nearby oak had mature leaves.

This interpretation of the old rhyme is supported by the amount of rain we've had. In April there was a sunny dry spell, albeit chilly because a northwest wind was blowing and only a northeast wind is colder in spring and summer. Then the rains came. Between the last week in April and the last week in August we've had ten days when the sun has shone and it hasn't rained during a 24 hour period. I could hardly believe it when we had three glorious days in Dublin on a garden tour with 'Talks and Tours'. While it drizzled at home we viewed Dermot Kehoe's latest garden in the New Russian Village. He uses the same formula that he did in his last garden in Bray with sun, arid-soil-loving plants in front of the house and sumptuous well-fed growth at the back. Dermot says that where he lives the rainfall figures are exactly the same as Lisbon's. One of the party, whose hearing isn't great, thought he had said 'Lisburn' and wondered out loud to me how Lisburn and Coleraine could have such different weather.

The sun seems to shine at the right times in Anna Nolan's exquisite small garden at Shanganagh and we finished the day having tea in Siobhan and David Dillon's garden behind their house in Blackrock. It's hard to believe that, on the other side of their enviable regency house, there's a busy road with nose-to-tail traffic because the Dillon's garden is so tranquil. It's also hard to believe, looking at slides of that visit, that while we sat in that beautiful garden, 160 miles away a north-west wind had blown up after a day's steady mizzle and drizzle. I wonder when the ash trees came into leaf in Dublin.

The copious rain wasn't all bad. Rhododendrons in May were spectacular even when viewed through a fringe of drops from an umbrella. Magnolias were good too because they had a frost-free spring and now, in late August *Euchryphia* 'Nymansay' is a tower of white blossom loud with the buzzing of bees and hoverflies. Some, (I'll qualify this later) damp-loving perennials burgeoned in the wet. *Inula hookeri* is not the sun-lover you'd think it should

be and its yellow daisy flowers are bolder and brassier than ever. Aruncus, astilbes, dieramas and filipendulas have thrived. I have ordinary old tiger lilies, *Lilium tigrinum* (syn *Lilium lancifolium*) growing in clumps and some of them are taller than I am (nearly six feet) this year. They are considered naff by some more sophisticated gardeners than I but I match them with an anonymous hemerocallis and this combination pleases me greatly. Most of the hemerocallis have performed well; the exception is *H.* 'Nashville' which does best in sunny years.

It has not been a good season for roses here in the far north. At the end of June I had a group of partially-sighted people from The Blind Centre in Coleraine to smell the flowers and touch leaves. This had been arranged in January when it seemed a good idea. Alas, in the rain, the old roses become brown mushy blobs in no time and it takes sunshine and warmth to release their scent. Leaves like those on *Stachys lanata* were sodden and stroking them was like stroking a cat that had just walked through the wet grass. The visit would have been a total flop if I hadn't been able to give everyone leaves of *Aloysia triphylla* which smells heavenly.

And the slugs! Oh Lord, the slugs! The damage they've done this year is almost unbelievable. I love lily relatives, like *Nomocharis mairei*, *Paris polyphylla* and trilliums, all of which look right growing among rhododendrons but I never can keep them because, no matter what precautions I take, slugs devour them. This year I decided to try one more time so I acquired a collection of these (wildly expensive) lovelies. Slug pellets (yes, I know, I know) were put around them regularly and every morning I swept up the nauseating slimy horrors in case birds or frogs would eat them. Before we went to England I sprinkled a few pellets around the plants but covered them with pieces of broken slate. I might as well have emptied flour on them because when I came back everything, except the struggling specimen of *Paris polyphylla*, was destroyed. Naturally most hostas are in shreds. I was writing earlier about the growth of some damp-loving perennials. After this year it's goodbye to *Ligularia clivorum* 'Desdemona' because the foliage is only a collection of brown stalks and even the flowers seem to have been eaten. Sad, because I used to like this cheerful big brute and the flowers match those of *Hemerocallis* 'Burning Daylight' perfectly but there's no point in struggling to keep a plant alive by using dangerous chemicals. In Scotland, in June, I bought *Senecio ericsmithii* and only by keeping a very careful daily watch over it is it surviving.

Slugs are everywhere. They climb up the walls of the house and crawl across the lawn in droves. One murky night in July, when there was a steady, almost horizontal drizzle and it was prematurely dark, the slugs must have been having a convention because there were at least a hundred moving steadily southwards across the grass. People to whom I've told this have said, "Well why didn't you kill them for heaven's sake?" How? Jumping on them? Yeugh! Emptying salt on them? Yeugh, yeugh! Picking them up and drowning them in buckets of water? I had neither the heart nor the stomach to do any of these things. Sprinkling the grass with slug pellets would have been the easiest option but that would have been lethal to birds. I still can enjoy the sound of thrushes banging snail shells against stones to get at the snail inside. There are snails galore too and every paving slab has tell-tale silvery meanderings on it.

Amyan Mc Fadyen, who gardens beside the Bann in Coleraine, had an expert on slugs and snails visiting him. This chap counted no less than 52 different varieties of the mini-beasts in Amyan's garden alone.

What we need now is some hard frosts this winter to decimate their population but unfortunately, after the deluge, plants will have put on lush and sappy growth that will be vulnerable in frost. It's a real catch 22 situation. Perhaps I should stick to rhododendrons and other shrubs which slugs don't eat – yet.

***Rae McIntyre***



## Villa Ephrussi de Rothschild

There was a sense of déjà vu at my second attempt to go on a ‘non-plant’ holiday (see IGPS newsletter April 2000). Instead of the Costa del Sol, it was the South of France and a week in Cannes was the destination. Again, after four days of catching some much needed sun, celebrity spotting, and shopping on Rue d’Antibe, it was time to visit a garden!

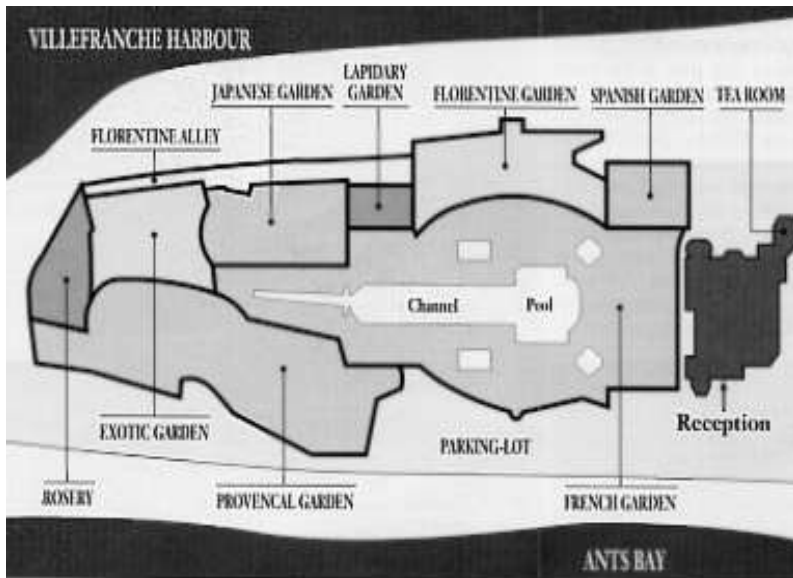
It would be hard to top the Alhambra in Granada, but in a league of its own is the Villa Ephrussi de Rothschild, in Saint-Jean- Cap-Ferrat. It is named in memory of Beatrice Ephrussi, born Baroness of Rothschild on September 14<sup>th</sup> 1864. From a wealthy background, Beatrice was the daughter of the influential director of the Bank of France and on the 5<sup>th</sup> June 1883 married a Russian banker, Maurice Ephrussi. Although the marriage was subsequently dissolved, she preserved his name along with that of her own.

Beatrice discovered ‘Cap-Ferrat’ in 1905, at a time when the Riviera was blossoming into ‘the’ summer resort, (read ‘Tender is the Night’ by F. Scott Fitzgerald to capture the lifestyle at that time). She already owned a beautiful mansion in Monaco, but was so taken by the area that she bought 18 acres on the narrowest part of the isthmus, much to the disappointment of King Leopold II, who wanted to enlarge his neighbouring property. It is easy to see why Beatrice was so taken by the site, its western view overlooks the Bay of Villefranche, and to the east you look over the sea to Italy.

It took seven years of hard work to build the Villa, which resembles the large Renaissance houses of Venice and Florence. Twenty to forty architects worked under the supervision of Beatrice herself until its completion in 1912. The villa contains 12 different halls, galleries, cabinets, offices, bedrooms, and boudoirs. Today, the visitor can be taken on a guided tour through most of the villa or walk at leisure with the leaflet provided. An experience not to be missed is lunch on the terrace restaurant, noticeably inexpensive for such an opulent setting.

Not surprisingly, the gardens surrounding the villa were given as much attention as the interior. Aaron Messiah, the French partner of Harold Peto, designed the gardens. Peto was an English architect and connoisseur who loved Italian gardens. His work was influenced by the Arts and Crafts

movement of the day and an Irish example of his Italian Arts and Crafts Garden style can be seen at Ilnacullin (Garnish Island). With Aaron Messiah by her side, Beatrice decided to give the main garden the shape of a ship's deck decorated with waterfalls and pools. The Temple of love was built on the prow, with the sea surrounding the garden. Literature on the garden states, that she could imagine herself aboard the 'Isle of France' from which she took the name for the Villa after an unforgettable journey on that ship. She could supervise the 30 gardeners from the loggia: she was the captain; they were the sailors working and wearing red tuft berets!



*Map from leaflet provided at the gardens, courtesy of Sally O Halloran*

Today, a walk through the 10-acre garden takes the visitor through seven distinct thematic areas. The **French Garden** is the centre of the platform, with a classic pool that leads the eye to the Temple of Love (a replica of the Trianon). The only access to this garden leads you through the other six gardens and the rose garden.

The visitor therefore begins in the **Spanish Garden** – a mini Alhambra! Soft yellow coloured walls surround this patio-style garden, with a formal pool in the centre. It is a very peaceful space, with green the predominant colour of the

planting, other than pockets of white New Guinea Impatiens. The main feature in the **Florentine garden** is a 'staircase' in the shape of a horseshoe above a grotto in which a marble ephebe hides. The top of the staircase forms a wonderful viewing platform for the garden and its surrounds.

The **Lapidary Garden**, which uses the term 'garden' loosely, is a collection of sculptures that the architects could not display in the Villa. It would have seemed more appropriate to place them strategically throughout the garden, as they looked almost liked headstones lined against the wall. The **Japanese Garden** in contrast had small temples, which were carefully placed amongst lush bamboo.

A collection of cacti and succulents, growing happily in full sun add an exotic touch and guide you to the **Rosery**, at the end of the ship or should I say garden! A wonderful stopping point, as the scent of roses lingers in the air. Onward to the **Provencal Garden**, which is more exposed to the elements and has wonderfully shaped olive trees, sculpted by the wind. The large pines, also in this area, protect the Temple of Love and form a perfect backdrop to the view from the house. This is certainly the most popular spot for photographers in the garden as the Villa can be seen in its full glory.



*The mosaic floor in the Terrace Restaurant. Photo, Sally O Halloran*

Beatrice died on the 7<sup>th</sup> April 1934, at 75 years of age, and bequeathed the property to the Academy of the Arts School of the Institute of France. The only stipulation was that the Villa was to ‘keep the essence of a private salon’. Her nephew Guy inherited her properties in Paris and Reux.

The Villa welcomes over 120,000 visitors every year, so if you are in the area it should be put top of the list!

**Address:** Villa Ephrussi de Rothschild, 06320 Saint – Jean-Cap-Ferrat.

Telephone: 04 93 01 45 90 Fax: 04 93 01 31 10

**Directions for Visiting:** 8km east of Nice via the N98

**Opening Dates and Times:** Mid March to end October: Daily

Open 10am to 6pm (or 7pm in July and August)

Also open weekend in winter.

*Sally O’ Halloran, Kilkenny Castle*

## **FROM CARLOW TO CHELSEA 2002**

Although I had been promising myself for thirty years that I would visit the Chelsea Flower Show, it was only this year that I finally did so. I was one of a group, led by Dermot O Neill, who set off for the Chelsea Show and the RHS Wisley Gardens.

We travelled over on Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> May and spent all day Friday, the last day of the show, at Chelsea. This turned out to be a mixed blessing. It had been a rainy week and at this stage, the show grounds were looking tired and soggy. Nevertheless, hoards of people turned up for the last day, so many in fact that there were queues at all the show gardens and I did not get to see half of them. Thankfully, these were all featured on the nightly BBC gardening programmes, which I viewed in my hotel room afterwards.

This year was particularly good for the prestige of Irish Horticulturalists as we had three medal winners. I had to queue for quarter of an hour to get photographs of Wicklow designer Mary Reynold’s Gold Medal garden, “*Tearmann Si*”, it was so popular. The next port of call was our own IGPS silver gilt-winning stand about Augustine Henry. The girls manning the stand reported that they had received a marvellous response all week, especially from the many Irish visitors, including ex-patriots from America and

Australia. I confess that I failed to find the third Irish Silver Grenfell Medal winner, Kilkenny-based *"Flowers by Lucy"*, but according to Dermot O'Neill, Lucy Yates has been exhibiting at Chelsea for many years and well deserved her award. Well done all three!

Our group consisted of sixty people, too many for Dermot to guide around the crowded show grounds. So we each went off to follow our own gardening interests. Here is a brief selection of items that I found interesting.

The IGPS stand was in the Lifelong Learning Marquee, which housed many other interesting displays. The John Innes Centre, from Norwich, invited gardeners to *"Meet the Ancestors"* of many horticultural foods such as peas, cereals and tomatoes. The British Mycology Society demonstrated the amazing number of *"Spores above our Gardens"*, complete with microscopes for passers-by. The Duchy College of Cornwall had a display about *"Understanding and Reducing the Effects of Wind in the Garden"*. As my own garden in County Carlow is very windy, this naturally caught my attention! Besides the many tips given, such as planting permeable wind breaks rather than constructing solid barriers which cause wind turbulence, they also listed and displayed many wind-hardy plants.

How can I describe the vast number and range of floral displays in the main marquees? One moment I was marvelling at the giant veggie displays of Medwyns of Anglesey; the next I was plunged into the tropical world of the Horticultural Society of Trinidad and Tobago. Have you ever seen a hot air balloon made from two different shades of chrysanthemums? This was the brainchild of the Southend-on-Sea Borough Council who reproduced *"A Southend cliffs view taken from a hot air balloon rising over the Thames Estuary"*, complete with a boat filled with geraniums! The Alpine Garden Society had built a mini woodland glade and nestling beneath some trees I glimpsed an *Anemone cf henryi*! Meanwhile, Thompson & Morgan (seed company) put on a display of potato varieties that featured several Irish types: *Arran Victory, Arran Rose, Ulster Chieftain*.....

I took a particular interest in the insectivorous plants whose flowers looked as exotic and spectacular as any orchid. I joined the Carnivorous Plant Society, which publishes a regular newsletter, organizes a seed bank and provides tips on how to germinate their wide variety of plants, from simple sundews to the rare *Cephalotus follicularis* (West Australian Pitcher). Mary Reynolds was



praised by the society for including Sundews in her garden while I believe that Lucy Yates featured *Nepenthes* in her floral display.

Dermot whisked us away from the show grounds half an hour before the famous bell rang at 4.30pm. Perhaps it was just as well; after six hours of non-stop wandering, none of us was in a fit state for the plant-fight at the end of the show week. We made up for it the next day when we visited the RHS Wisley Gardens in Surrey. This garden is almost as good as a visit to Chelsea as it houses several former show gardens and acts as a showcase for a wide range of plants, from ornamental plants, fruit and veg to glasshouse exotics and trees, all to be seen growing in a garden setting. Best of all, Wisley gift shop stocks books on every gardening topic, while its garden centre has a comprehensive range of both plants and garden accessories. Needless to say, after the abstinences of Chelsea, we all went berserk at Wisley. Our flight back to Dublin looked like a flying florist's shop!

Would I visit Chelsea again? Probably not. It was a bit too much like an endurance test. Give me a leisurely garden visit any day!

*Veronica Smith*

## **The New Year Lecture, Ulster Museum, Botanic Gardens, Belfast**

The annual RHS Regional Lecture, held jointly with the IGPS and the Ulster Museum, will be given this year by Maggie Campbell-Culver. The title is:

### **'To Boldly Go – the Intrepid Plant-Hunters'.**

Maggie Campbell-Culver is a garden and plant historian. She was the Garden Conservationist at Fishbourne Roman Palace near Chichester, and was in charge of the conservation work and running of Mount Edgcumbe, in Cornwall. She also has a long involvement with the Eden Project. In September 2001 she published her first book 'The Origin of Plants' and is one of the editors for the new edition of 'The Oxford Companion to Gardens' due to be published in 2004. She regularly lectures on historical and horticultural matters.

This should be a most interesting lecture, and not one to be missed.

**Wednesday 22 January 2003, 7.30pm. Members/Non-members £3/4 Stg. Tickets can be purchased from Museum Reception in advance or on the night. Book signing. Information desk.**

*Maggie will also be lecturing for the IGPS in Dublin on Thursday 23 January 2003 and in Cork on Friday 24<sup>th</sup>.*

**GARDENING TIPS**  
**From Dermot O Neill and Friends**  
**– A REVIEW**

A list of 25 well-known gardeners would surely have plenty of wisdom to impart I imagined and I was not disappointed. Dermot has picked his contributors well. The fact that I had visited many of their gardens and met the gardeners added to the attraction.

Of course there was much advice about the perennial topics: vine weevils, slugs, weeds, seed sowing, making compost, taking cuttings and other usual topics talked about by gardeners everywhere. Fortunately there were many gems of wisdom and wit also. When a lady (Rosemary Brown) who has driven an army ambulance during World War II and whose first garden was made in ammunition boxes on a London rooftop tells you that we all should consider having a bantham or some gamebird in the garden to control slugs etc. we know that this is the advice of a practical person.

John Cushnie advises that we never buy on impulse, while Carmel Duignan “can never pass a good plant.” Not only that, Carmel Duignan advocates theft from the gardens we visit – theft of ideas, designs, focal points, planting combinations etc. Did you know that Corinne Hewat makes manure tea or that Vera Huet uses her hanging baskets upside down?

Angela Dupe, with her background in architecture, gives lots of design advice while Daphne Levinge Shackleton, (who better?) advises on moving garden. Lorna McMahon, with her western garden, has plenty to say about wind and rain while David Robinson, on his usual hobbyhorse, talks about the use of herbicides. What Anna Nolan does with her tights – well, I’m a gentleman and don’t wish to say here - you’d have to read that to find out! Donal Synnott gives his advice in humorous doggerel, which is great fun to read.

This book, which is being published in early October, is one to be dipped into, not one for a straight-through read (though I did so myself) and has something for everyone – an ideal gift for the Christmas stocking.

*Paddy Tobin.*

## TO BURMA'S ICY MOUNTAINS

On 27 April 1911 in the telegraph office at Kanpetlet, a tiny village on the slopes of Mount Victoria in one of the most remote part of Burma, Mrs Charlotte Wheeler Cuffe dictated a telegram to her mother in Wimbledon: "DELIGHTFUL HERE, MOUNTAINS, PINES, RHODODENDRONS".

For many years that telegram was a tantalising challenge – would I ever be able to go to the village and see her delightful mountains? In the summer of 1998, unexpectedly, my wish began to come true for my friend David Sayers rang and gave me 24 hours to say YES! Yes, I would accompany him to Burma and climb to the summit of Mount Victoria, Charlotte Wheeler Cuffe's delightful mountain.

My three winter lectures, Waterford, Dublin and Cork, will trace that journey from the golden pagodas of Rangoon, to the royal city of Mandalay, and thence to Maymyo which had been Charlotte's home for almost a decade. They were all places familiar from her superb watercolours, now among the treasures of the National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin. Maymyo was almost as ineluctable as Mount Victoria for it was in that town she had established a botanic garden. Our journey continued. We crossed the Irrawaddy and late at night, in pitch-darkness, reached Kanpetlet. We were on the flank of Mount Victoria at last – and next morning the floral spectacle that greeted us was as stunning as it was unexpected. We spent five days exploring the slopes of the mountain reaching the summit in brilliant midday sun. We saw what she had seen; we found for ourselves what she had discovered there, unique rhododendrons, familiar primroses, wild onions and shamrock peas. And, yes, it was icy cold at night! In this lecture, combining modern photographs with Lady Wheeler Cuffe's evocative watercolours, I retrace her journey and recount her discoveries in the land she called "dear beautiful laughing Burma".

*Dr. E Charles Nelson*

***The item above is a summary of the lecture which Dr. Nelson will deliver in Waterford on the 27<sup>th</sup> November, in Dublin on the 28<sup>th</sup> November and in Cork on the 29<sup>th</sup>. See the Fixtures List for full details. Ed.***

**IRISH GARDEN PLANT SOCIETY  
FIXTURE LIST OCT - DECEMBER 2002**

**DUBLIN**

**Sunday, 13 October** Plant Sale. Starting at **12 noon** at the Parish Hall, Church of Our Lady of Dolores Glasnevin (opposite the National Botanic Gardens). Deliveries from 9.15 am. Volunteers needed. **Please ring Mary Bradshaw: 01-2697376. E-mail: [dstc47@indigo.ie](mailto:dstc47@indigo.ie)**

**Thursday, 24 October, 8pm:** Dr. Declan Doogue *Hedgerows of Ireland* – a follow up lecture to our June Field Trip at **the National Botanic Gardens Glasnevin**. Please bring pieces of hedgerow material if possible.

**Thursday, 28 November, 8pm:** Dr. Charles Nelson, *To Burma's Icy Mountain - in the botanical footsteps of an Irish Lady*. This is a joint lecture with the RHSI at the **National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin**.

**WATERFORD**

**Wednesday, 27 November, 8pm:** Dr. Charles Nelson, *To Burma's Icy Mountain - in the botanical footsteps of an Irish Lady*. This lecture is being hosted by the Waterford Garden Plant Society at the Granville Hotel, Waterford.

**CORK:** - All Cork lectures will be held at the SMA Hall, Wilton.

**Friday, 4 October, 7.45pm:** *Beyond the Window Pane - the Glasshouse collections at Glasnevin.* Brendan Sayers, National Botanic Gardens & 'Garden Heaven' Presenter

**Friday 1 November, 7.45pm:** *Weed free gardening – pipe dream or reality.*  
Dr. David Robinson, Former Director Kinsealy Research Centre

**Friday, 29 November, 7.45pm:** Dr. Charles Nelson, *To Burma's Icy Mountain - in the botanical footsteps of an Irish Lady*.

**Friday 6 December, 7.45pm:** *My Favourite Winter Plants*, Charlie Wilkins, Gardening Correspondent for the Irish Examiner

## NORTHERN IRELAND

**Saturday, 12 October, 12.00 - 3.00 pm: Plant Sale.** Stranmillis University College, Stranmillis Road, Belfast. Parking on site. Deliveries from 9.00 am. Plants and volunteers wanted. **Contact Mary Brown 048-97541405.**

**Wednesday, 23 October, 7.30 pm:** The Clotworthy Lecture *Stourhead - The Story within the Landscape*. Alan Power. Clotworthy Arts Centre, Randalstown Road, Antrim. Joint with Antrim Borough Council. Non members £1.00. Parking. Refreshments.\* See note below.

**Wednesday, 4 December, 7.30 pm:** The Malone House Lecture: *A Taste of French Gardens*. Barbara Pilcher. Malone House, Barnetts Park, Belfast. Joint with Belfast Parks. Parking. Free refreshments. Non members welcome. \* See note below.

### TWO LECTURE NOTES:

**Stourhead: The Picture within the Landscape, Alan Power, 23<sup>rd</sup> Oct.** Join us on an illustrated visual tour through the history, influences and the people involved in the creation of this picturesque landscape garden. Stourhead is one of the finest 18c landscape gardens in Europe, it has unique historical importance as an early example of that mixture of art and nature which became known as le jardin anglais

#### **The Malone House Lecture, Malone House, Barnett's Park, Belfast 9**

Barbara Pilcher of Lisdoonan Herbs, who designed the herb garden at Greyabbey, Co Down, and is a frequent visitor to France, will talk on 'A Taste of French Gardens'. This will give us a glimpse of gardening in France, from a chateau or two to a window box. The speaker admits to a bias towards the edible, the aromatic and the curious, so we can expect a relaxed and enjoyable evening wandering the highways and byways of France!

### **SEED TIME AGAIN.**

A very, very short note to remind everyone to send seed for the 2003 Seed Exchange. This year has been a real challenge, wet, dreary weather (need I remind you) has severely hampered easy seed collection, and I'd imagine generally poor seed set with less flying insects for pollination. We can but try.....

Please send seed, well labelled, in paper envelopes please (poly bags can make seed rot, and the static build makes it hard to get seed out), and well wrapped in boxes or padded envelopes to: Stephen Butler, Curator of Horticulture  
Dublin Zoo, Phoenix Park, Dublin 8

.....and of course many thanks to all our seed collectors!

### **A NOTE FROM CHARLES NELSON:**

#### **THE AZORES, 7 – 14 JUNE 2003**

I am leading a "botanical" holiday to the mid-Atlantic islands for The Heather Society next June. We will see the endemic species of St Dabeoc's heath, *Daboecia azorica*, and other plants that do not occur anywhere else - *Euphorbia stygiana*, *Vaccinium cylindraceum*, for example. Accommodation will be in comfortable hotels and all evening meals and inter-island travel is "included". It will be at a gentle pace, starting on the island of Sao Miguel before transferring to Pico with its spectacular volcano. We visit Faial and conclude the holiday on Terceira. It won't be all heathers ...!

For further details IGPS members are invited to contact David Sayers (AzoresHeathers), Andrew Brock Travel Ltd, 29a Main Street, Lyddington, Oakham, Rutland, LE159LR, UK.

CharlesNelson

## IRISH GARDEN PLANT SOCIETY

### ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION RATES FOR THE YEAR 2002-2003

	<u>£ Sterling</u>	<u>Euro</u>
Single membership	£15.00	€25.00
Family membership	£22.00	€35.00
Student membership	£7.50	€10.00
5 year single membership	£70.00	€120.00
5 year family membership	£100.00	€165.00

#### **IGPS COMMITTEE :**

Malcolm Rose (Chairman); Dermot Kehoe (Vice-chairman); Patrick Quigley (Hon. Secretary); John O'Connell (Hon. Treasurer); Brendan Sayers; Mary Bradshaw; Maire Ni Chleirigh; Anne McCarthy; Edward Bowden.

#### **Regional representatives** (ex officio members):

Patrick Quigley - Northern group: Kitty Hennessy – Munster group.

**NCCPG representative:** Mary Forrest.

**Correspondence and enquiries** should be addressed to the Hon. Sec., IGPS, c/o National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin, Dublin 9. **N.B.** Letters only please. **No phone enquiries.** **E-mail:** [igps@eircom.net](mailto:igps@eircom.net)

Please send copy for the next issue of the Newsletter to: The Editor, IGPS Newsletter, c/o National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin, Dublin 9 (or E-mail direct to Paddy Tobin: [pmtobin@eircom.net](mailto:pmtobin@eircom.net)) **by Friday 22 November, 2002.**