



ALPINE GARDEN SOCIETY

Dublin Group



NEWSLETTER NO. 56 – SUMMER 2011

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Front cover illustration is of Patricia McGeown's *Saxifraga primuloides* 'Clarence Elliott' and Back Cover, Barbara O'Callaghan's *Tulipa humilis*. (See Editorial).

(Photos: Billy Moore).

EDITORIAL

The efforts made over the years to encourage members to exhibit at the annual Show have had mixed results, but maybe there has been something of a breakthrough this year. The cover pictures in this issue are of plants exhibited by members who are relatively new to the show bench, and in each case demonstrates that getting a first does not require years of experience, or unique skills, or the availability of sophisticated facilities. Nor does it mean that the plant must be rare and difficult to grow in order to win the approval of the judges. A well grown and well presented 'ordinary' alpine can often be a winner, even in the open section.

Without in any way taking away from the achievement of the two exhibitors concerned, it can be said that the plants in both cases fall into the category of 'easy alpines'. Patricia McGeown's lovely saxifrage grows happily outside and was lifted from the garden and potted up a few days before the Show. It got a well-deserved first in a highly competitive class in the intermediate section, seeing off some excellent entries from more experienced exhibitors.

The striking potful of tulips, which got a red sticker and the Millennium Cup for the best plant in the novice section for Barbara O'Callaghan, was potted up in the autumn of 2010, and the only attention it needed prior to the Show was an occasional drop of water and protection from molluscs once it started into growth. Also the bulbs were neither difficult to obtain nor very expensive.

Congratulations to Barbara and Patricia on their achievement and for showing that there is no need for any member to feel that success on the show bench is not for them. Success, of course, may not come at the first attempt, but with a little perseverance everyone can get there.

Getting new exhibitors is vital to ensure that we can continue to mount an annual Show that will be up to the high standard that has been achieved in the past. A special initiative will be launched at the local show next spring to incentivize beginners, and improvers, to have a go. More details in the next newsletter.

ALPINE MISCELLANY

In This Issue

I suppose the summer newsletter could be described as the ‘Show issue’ as we always include reports on the two main shows, usually those written by the official reporters, i.e., those appointed by Pershore to write the show reports for the Bulletin. This year we have two first timers and I think you’ll agree they have done at least as good a job as we’ve had from the old timers (including your editor) in the past.

Sadly, we have obituaries of two prominent members who were very active and supportive and were also dear friends.

Liam Byrne, who has become a fixture in the newsletter, departs from his usual theme of tips on cultivation to giving us his impressions of the International Rock Garden Conference in Nottingham.

I mentioned in the last issue that I continue to have problems in getting members to do reports on our meetings and asked for volunteers to go on a panel. The lack of any response suggests that my problems will continue. I have written three of the reports myself for this issue because I forgot to ask someone to write up the local show so, my own fault there, I had no takers for Seamus O’Brien’s talk and the visit to the Blakes was too close to the print deadline. I don’t mind doing the reports, but I think the newsletter benefits from getting a range of viewpoints from members. I’ll keep trying.

Once again I will ask any of you who may have any suggestions for improving the newsletter to get in touch. As usual my contact details are on the back cover.

Fixtures

On Thursday, 13 October, in Stillorgan, Jim Almond will give a talk called ‘Fritillaries and other Bulbs’. Jim is a really interesting and entertaining speaker as anyone who was in Termonfeckin in 2009 can confirm. You can be certain that you will enjoy this talk and that you will pick up lots of practical information as well.

On the following Saturday, 15 October, Jim will give a photography workshop at NBG, Glasnevin from 10 am until 4.30 pm. This workshop is aimed at the keen novice or intermediate photographer and will be restricted to an absolute maximum of twenty participants. There will be a charge of €20 for the day, and if you want to participate you should get your application in quickly as places will be allocated strictly on a

‘first come’ basis. More information on the workshop is contained in the booking form included in the mail-out.

Thursday, 10 November, will see Susan Tindall in Stillorgan with a talk entitled ‘Alpines at High and Low Altitudes’. Susan is the proprietor of Timpany Nursery in Co. Down and is well known to you all. She is an accomplished lecturer and a very experienced grower, and, like Jim Almond, will deal with practical issues.

From Friday, 18 to Sunday 20 November our 28th Alpine Weekend will take place at An Grianán in Termonfeckin. This year our stars are Harry Jans, Jim Jermyn, and Liam and Joan Mc McCaughey. You will travel far to get a better lineup. More information can be found in the booking documentation. Early booking is advised because places at this very popular event are open to members of the Ulster and Cork groups also, and it tends to fill up quickly.

We finish the year in Stillorgan on 8 December with our Christmas Miscellany, which will, like last year, continue to be plant focused. But it will also be a relaxed social evening and should be enjoyable. Jamie will be looking for contributions.

We are just finalizing the fixtures for 2012 and we have an excellent and diverse list of speakers including, in no particular order, Ian Christie, Mary Waldron, Christopher Grey Wilson, Deborah Begley, Keith Wiley, Declan Doogue, Rod Leeds, Martin Walsh, Ian Young and Carl Wright. This amazing array of talent should be useful in persuading family members, friends and neighbours to join the Group. And what about giving membership as a Christmas present, a present that will last for twelve months, and could be an opening to a better life?

Peggy Parker

As you know at the AGM this year it was decided to confer life membership on Peggy who has done so much for the Group over many years. She was very appreciative of this gesture. Unfortunately Peggy has serious mobility problems and so will not be able to attend as many of our meetings as she has been accustomed to do. I know we all wish her well and she will remain in our thoughts, especially at the Alpine Weekend in Termonfeckin to which she has made such a valuable contribution.

Rosemary Brown

Rosemary, who was very prominent in Irish gardening circles in the early years of the Group, died recently. Rosemary was very supportive of us in those times and her help was greatly appreciated. We had a number of Group visits to her wonderful garden in Bray and our condolences go to her family.

The Committee

The Committee has suffered a huge loss with the death of Arthur Dagge last January – see page 8. Paddy Smith, who has been a very active member for some years, has agreed to join the Committee. Thank you Paddy.

The Committee has decided to create the position of Vice Chairman and Jamie Chambers has agreed to be the first. I hope he realizes what's ahead of him.

All the changes on the Committee will be put to the AGM for ratification in January.

New Show Secretary

Val Keegan, who has been Show Secretary for more years than she cares to remember, has decided to retire from this onerous position. Val has done a splendid job in this role over the years with considerable support from her husband, Ian, and we owe them both a considerable debt of gratitude. By way of a thank you the Committee has conferred life membership of the Group on them and made a small presentation to them after the 2011 Show. Val would have retired some years ago if a suitable replacement had been available but there was never a queue of applicants. This is unsurprising as it is not a job to be taken on lightly. While there is an excellent team of helpers to carry out various tasks on the day, the final responsibility for the success of the Show rests with the Show Secretary.

We are very fortunate that Michael Higgins has agreed to take on the job so he will be in charge from 2012 onwards. I have every confidence that Michael will be a worthy successor to Val and we wish him well in his new role.

We have two other retirees from Show duties also, as Anne Nolan and Patricia McGeown, who have organized and run the 'Café' for more than ten years, have decided to bow out. Patricia and Anne have done a

terrific job in what is a very important element of Show day and in recognition of their contribution, which included providing a lot of the goodies at their own expense, the Committee also made a small presentation to them after this year's Show. For now, Mary O'Neill Byrne (bless her) has agreed to step into the breach but we would welcome offers from anyone who would be willing to take on the job for a few years.

Pots

Michael Meagher still has seven and nine cm, rigid, square, plastic pots for sale at ten and twenty cent each respectively. If you want any you should phone Michael (01 8382368) well in advance of any meeting and he will bring your order along.

Editor

OBITUARIES

Arthur Dagge

1933 - 2011

The shock of Arthur's sudden death last January still resonates. He was a larger than life figure, generous, always in good humour and ever ready to lend a hand to anybody who needed it. We have lost a great colleague and a good friend.

Arthur played a key role on the Committee with formal responsibility for public relations and the organization of coach trips and other events, but he also contributed in so many other ways, putting forward excellent



suggestions, and volunteering to take on many of the tasks that arose from time to time. Although he did more than his share, he never complained but just got on with it quietly and efficiently. If you wanted a job done well and on time, Arthur was your man. On his own initiative he provided a report to the other members of the Committee on the day after each function giving the number of attendees, the length of the talk and any other details that he considered relevant: a very useful service. He has been invaluable at the weekends in Termonfeckin, always on the

lookout for anything that might need attention and ensuring that the requirements of the speakers were attended to. He has made an enormous contribution to the running of the Group during his time on the Committee, and this despite the fact that he was not really a plantsman (Tessa is the gardener) but instead brought to our affairs a lifetime's business experience.

Apart from the AGS, Arthur was involved in several voluntary organizations such as the local residents' association, and the lay committee of his parish church. Up to his death he still played a role in his trade association. He had a great sense of community responsibility

offering himself as a volunteer for the Special Olympics and on the night he died was canvassing in the general election for the local Fine Gael candidates. I have no doubt that in all his voluntary efforts he was just as effective as he was in the AGS.

In his private life Arthur was a devoted family man and if we feel his loss so keenly we can only imagine the effect that his sudden demise had on Tessa and the family. Tessa has been admirable in the way in which she has dealt with her bereavement and our heartfelt condolences go to her and to the family.

Billy Moore

James Salmond Price **1924 - 2010**

Jim Price, who was a member of the Ulster Group for many years and a member of our Group for the past few years died just after last Christmas. Most of our members will have known Jim, who was very supportive of the Group from the outset, and many will have been the recipients of his generosity in the form of advice and plants. Jim liked people and made friends easily. He had a wicked sense of humour, which he employed to good effect on social occasions, and was always excellent company. He will be greatly missed by us all, including this



writer and his family.

The Ulster Group benefited greatly from Jim's involvement over many years. He was a long-term member of the Committee and served as treasurer for an age and also in many other capacities. He was a rock of good sense and his wise counsel will be missed by the Group.

Plants were Jim's passion and he was a knowledgeable and skilful grower. He enjoyed showing, and produced many enviable exhibits over the years, winning the elusive

Farrer Medal at the Dublin Show in 2005. Jim was a superb judge, bringing total objectivity to the task. It was always instructive to walk around the show benches with him when the judging was over, and to hear his comments on some of the decisions. If he disagreed, he was usually right.

As is true of many gardeners Jim was generous with his plants. Merely to admire one of his show plants would result in a cutting or seeds as appropriate, and when Jim promised someone a plant he never forgot that promise. Jim's gardening activities were not confined to the AGS; he was a staunch supporter of his local flower club. His own garden was a treasure house of good plants, growing outside and in his alpine house and frame. He was never deterred from trying out a plant because of its reputation for being difficult in cultivation, and so succeeded in growing many rarities to a high standard.

Another great interest of Jim's was music. He sang in the church choir for most of his life and was a member of at least one music society. He loved opera.

Jim was the youngest of a large family and was predeceased by all his siblings. He is sadly missed by his nieces and nephews and our condolences go to them and to Jim's great friend, Michael Geraghty.

Billy Moore

The Shows

Dublin AGS Show 9 April

Despite the very harsh winter and unprecedented low December temperatures across the entire island, the show benches in Cabinteely Community School were full of plants of the highest quality for the Dublin Show. The relatively mild spring and several days of warm sunshine preceding the Show resulted in far fewer primulas, cyclamen and saxifrages than is usual at the early Irish show. This absence was compensated for by the presence of early androsaces, lewisias and an unusually full Violaceae class.

This year, Dublin was lucky to have Ray Drew, the AGS Director of Shows in attendance. After the main judging was completed, Ray chaired an AGS Judges Forum for all those involved in judging the Show. This exercise was invaluable for both experienced and trainee judges alike. Although the forum is intended to ensure consistency in decision making across all shows, it also sparked a lively debate on the merits of allowing certain plants space on the show bench – exhibitors of Japanese double hepatica cultivars beware!

As always the Dublin Show was well supported by the Ulster Group, with exhibitors making the early start to drive south to make the 10am staging deadline. Several plants required every last minute on a sunny windowsill to open blooms, closed after their boot-confined journey. One family of plants not affected by the Ulster winter was the Ericaceae. George and Pat Gordon exhibited three fine pans from that family, two of which deserve special note. George tells me that their



Cassiope 'Jim Lever' (left) and *Phyllodoce nipponica* are grown in the peat garden throughout the year. This winter both plants were covered with almost two feet of snow for much of

December, however, it is clear that neither plant was set back in any way as both were heavily laden with a myriad of white bells. To keep the plants growing well, they are top-dressed with an ericaceous mix each year, and occasionally moved to other parts of the garden to take advantage of fresh growing conditions. The judges awarded the phyllodoce a Certificate of Merit.



There was another cassiope in pristine condition in Dublin: Susan Tindall's *Cassiope myosuroides* (above) was deemed the best plant in the show. The plant is a Chinese native and extremely rare in cultivation. Susan has been unable as yet to propagate it, so it is safe to assume that to do so would be extremely difficult. The plant has been grown in an open position in the garden for many years and, until this year, did not thrive or flower well. Two years ago Susan clipped it back to remove any dead material and encourage fresh new growth. Evidently this is the secret with this plant as it was a worthy winner of the best in show award, a Certificate of Merit and the Jacki Troughton-Smith Trophy for best pan Ericaceae. Unfortunately the judges voted that it was not quite of Farrer Medal standard and so none was awarded. Susan also won the

Margaret Orsi Bowl for best plant from North America for a specimen of *Anemonella thalictroides* 'Oscar Schoaf' in perfect condition.

As in many Dublin Shows past, Liam Byrne won the ACC Cup for the most first prize points in the open section. Yet again, the importance of Liam's contribution to the Show cannot be over emphasized. Once more he exhibited a full car load of absolutely top quality alpines. Two of



Liam's plants were especially noteworthy: *Shortia soldanelloides* var. *intercedens* (left) and *Cheilanthes eatonii*. The shortia was in excellent condition and narrowly missed out on several of the main awards. The fern, shown in the 19cm section, was a flawless example of a very difficult plant to grow to show standard.

Not all the top awards were destined for local homes. Ian Leslie from North Wales brought some very fine plants across the Irish Sea for the Show. Ian's 19cm pan of *Clematis tenuifolia* 'Ylva' (below) was in



absolutely perfect condition on the day. Ian grows this plant in his alpine house, and this six-year-old specimen was a self-sown seedling in the sand in which its parent was plunged. Ian was awarded a Certificate of Merit for the very unusual and slow-growing *Saxifraga* aff. *karadżicensis*. It prefers an alkaline compost and, given the right conditions, this very

small alpine produces an impressive display. Ian also won The Ulster Group Trophy for three pans raised from seed in the 19cm section.



Billy Moore was awarded an AGS Medal for the 19cm six-pan class in the open section and a Certificate of Merit for a plant described as an 'old friend' during the awards presentation – a very distinguished *Gypsophila aretioides* (left) that has attained such a size that it required a pot to be hand-

made especially to accommodate it. Billy also exhibited another loyal companion – a *Saxifraga stribyrni* that won a Farrer Medal more than ten years ago and is now approximately twenty years old, and a fine addition to the show bench.

This reporter won the Barney Johnson Trophy for most first prize points in the intermediate section and the Waverly Trophy for the best



plant in the same section for a small but well flowered specimen of *Androsace vandellii* (left). The same plant was also awarded the David Shackleton Trophy for the best pan *Primulaceae*. Jimmy Lott won the Termonfeckin

Trophy for the most first prize points in the novice section and the Brian Wood Trophy for one pan raised from seed for a fine *Draba brunifolia* ssp. *olympica*. Barbara O'Callaghan won the Millennium Cup for the best plant in the novice section for a very well presented pan of *Tulipa humilis* (see back cover).

There was a very impressive photographic display in the artistic section. The top awards went to Jon Evans from Farnham, England, and Maeve

Spotswood from the local group for the most first prize points in the open and intermediate sections respectively.

The Show was rounded off by the presentation of honorary membership of the Dublin Group to Val and Ian Keegan for their contribution to the show. Val, who has been the Show Secretary for twenty one years, is handing over the reins to Michael Higgins. Michael has the unenviable task of following this – and the previous twenty – highly successful and enjoyable Dublin Shows.

Text: **Gavin Moore**

Photos: **Billy Moore**



A view of Jimi Blake's woodland. Photo: Billy Moore – see page 36.

Ulster AGS Show 7 May

Exhibitors belonging to both the Ulster and the Dublin AGS Local Groups have over the years grown many very good plants whose flowerings peak around the time. But in 2011, the International Conference and other events meant that the Ulster Show was delayed until early May. This revised date, combined with exceptionally warm April weather, really put them on their mettle. Despite a slight dip in the number of plants staged, they certainly rose to the challenge with a varied range of first-rate plants, in the Open Section most notably. Entries in the Intermediate and Novice Sections were reduced in comparison with previous years, but here too the entries were overall of a high standard.

Leiorhynchus buxifolium, (below) an excellent, floriferous specimen grown by George and Pat Gordon that had been recently dug up from a high humus bed, scooped the Farrer Medal.



This species has a reasonably compact rootball, in its dwarfest forms most especially, and if kept well-watered doesn't resent such treatment. Grown in light shade, it receives sufficient sunshine to flower

generously, and further benefits from occasional liquid feeds formulated for ericaceous plants, and an annual mulch. Last winter it was buried under a 60cm deep insulating blanket of snow for some five weeks, and as such suffered no ill effects from the cold snap. Fittingly, in that the exhibitors were close friends with the late benefactor, it also received the Carol McCutcheon Award for the best pan of Ericaceae other than *Rhododendron*.

Ian Leslie (Bangor) caught the ferry over from Holyhead, his *Androsace cylindrica* winning the SRGC Quaich for the best plant in a 19cm pot. Grown from Androsace Group seed sown in December 2005, it had responded well to an open, very gritty (60%) rooting medium, producing a solid dome of pure white flowers.



Ian also showed pans of the western Chinese, rose-purple flowered *Cypripedium franchetii* (above left), grown in a mixture of composted bark, peat and Perlite in a cool, moist position outdoors during the summer, then placed under the alpine house benching throughout the winter; and the elfin *Calochortus tolmiei* (above right) from the Siskiyou, this example, from Josephine County, Oregon, representing a pale rose-pink form with a dark centre and up to six flowers per stem. Sown ten years ago, it had been grown in a 50:50 mix of John Innes no. 2 and grit. Kept outside for much of the year, with cold frame protection in the winter months, this was its best performance to date.



A Certificate of Merit went to a well-flowered pan of *Physoplexis comosa*, (right) brought along by stalwart exhibitor Liam Byrne. Grown from seed some ten years ago, it was at its best a month or more before the usual peak flowering date for this species when in

captivity. Following its flowering, the plant is sheltered from strong sunshine and stowed under an alpine house staging until the leaves die away. The ruby-red shoots first emerge in March, after which four liquid feeds of a tomato fertilizer are administered during the course of the growing season. A standard compost of equal parts loam, leaf-mould and grit is used for this and other plants: he received the Cooke Cup for the most first prize points in the Open Section. Surely the soft Dublin rain wasn't entirely responsible for its rude good health!

The AGS small six-pan medal was won by another long-distance exhibitor, Lionel Clarkson, with a floriferous set of plants, including *Linum uninerve* (a recent introduction from Bulgaria's Rhodope Mountains with yellow flowers, yielded in succession for weeks on end) and *Delphinium beesianum*, the seed collected from Min Shan, Sichuan by Vojtěch Holubec at 4000m on limestone scree (grown in a compost of three parts John Innes no. 3, five parts grit and one part composted bark).

The small Open Section three-pan class for plants raised from seed always attracts my attention. The winning trio, all impeccably presented by Harold McBride, gained him the Phebe Anderson Trophy. They comprised the pillar-box red, Chinese *Androsace bulleyana* (which he has maintained from seed for some 20 years, the initial stock provided by that fondly-remembered grower of the genus, Duncan Lowe), the

refined European *Leontopodium alpinum* subsp. *nivale* and the narrowly endemic New Zealander *Myosotis albosericca*, (below) which also won the Alpines '96 Award (for the best Australasian plant exhibited).



As with the androsace it is a short-lived species, which the exhibitor and a few other enthusiasts have kept going from the original introduction. Just as well, for its rarity in the wild makes the prospect of a re-introduction unlikely. Harold afterwards described it as challenging and in need of careful watering. Grown in a 50:50 mix of John Innes no. 2 and grit, it perpetuates by setting copious amounts of seed annually.

A fine specimen of *Ranunculus parnassifolius*, raised from seed, was shown by Bob Gordon in a large, long tom clay pot. It is most usually white-flowered in its European range, though in some westernmost stations, the flowers can be sumptuously pink.

A compact, well-flowered *Fritillaria camschatcensis*, (below) one of the latest flowering of the genus, was voted best plant in the Intermediate Section, and as such won the Betty Hill Trophy for Liam & Joan McCaughey. Grown in a standard 'alpine' mix, it had been left outside

throughout the winter in a slightly sheltered site.



Exhibitors in search of a consistently free-flowering, late spring plant need look no further than *Saxifraga primuloides* 'Clarence Elliott', (see front cover) a London Pride exemplar barely 15cm tall with delicate sprays of small pink flowers that was selected by the Six Hills nurseryman of enduring repute. A very healthy, floriferous plant had been dug up from her garden by exhibitor Patricia McGeown, and was the subject of much favourable comment.

Kay and Sam McDowell also enjoyed success with their exhibits. She received the J.A.E. Hill Trophy for most points in the Intermediate Section, while he was awarded the Malcolmson Cup for most first prize points in the Novice Section. Sam also took home the C.H. Hammer Trophy with an eye-catching exhibit of *Iberis oschtenica*, (below) a

narrowly endemic crucifer from the westernmost Caucasus that flowers for a long period, but needs to be propagated from cuttings very early in the spring, for it has a tendency to flower itself to death without setting seed unless several plants are grown together and cross-pollinated.



Text: **Paddy Smith**
Photos: **Billy Moore**

An Alpine High

The International Rock Garden Conference takes place once every ten years and is a joint effort involving the Alpine Garden Society and the Scottish Rock Garden Club. The theme this year for the eighth conference was 'Alpines without Frontiers'. It covered the world-wide interest in these plants and their habitats, and was held in the East Midlands Conference Centre at Nottingham University from Thursday, 14 to Sunday, 17 April.

On Thursday morning, Billy Moore, George Sevastopulo and myself caught the first ferry from Dublin Port to Holyhead. On arrival in Holyhead we travelled in Billy's car to Nottingham University, Billy



driving, George navigating and yours truly just relaxing. We arrived at our destination early, just as registration had opened. We soon met up with the rest of the Dublin Group who were attending, namely, Val Keegan, Carl Dacus, Martin Walsh, Barbara O'Callaghan and Breda Handley and three members of the Ulster Group, Heather Smith and Joan and Liam McCaughey all of whom,

as it happens, are also members of the Dublin Group.

Each day there was an excellent programme of lectures. Our own Martin Walsh gave a wonderful lecture entitled 'High and Low in the Himalaya'. Very few people can compare with Martin when he talks about that vast region. Other speakers included Roy Lancaster, Henrik Zetterlund, Ian Young, Harry Jans, Brian Mathew and Robert Rolfe, all giving splendid talks which, along with the other lectures, are paraphrased in the April 2011 Bulletin.

Besides the lectures another great plus for me was meeting and talking to the big names of the alpine world. I greatly increased my knowledge of growing, propagating and showing alpines from these encounters.



The Conference Show was held on Saturday. On the previous day, George, Billy and myself were asked to be judges at the Show by the new Director of Shows, Ray Drew. Needless to say we didn't turn down the invitation. All the top exhibitors were there and it was an excellent Show. Three of the plants that caught my eye were the Farrer and Forrest Medal winning exhibit, a wonderful specimen of *Trillium grandiflorum*, also *Cypripedium* 'Ursel' and a large and floriferous pan of *Gentiana acaulis*.

Later on Saturday night there was a plant auction and who was the auctioneer but George. Obviously his performances at Termonfeckin had been noted. He was in top form and disposed of all the lots skilfully and I would say the Committee was very happy with the financial result. The final lecture at 4.30 pm on Sunday was 'A Lifetime of Alpines' by Christopher Grey-Wilson, a most fitting finale to a marvelous few days. I can say that since I started growing alpines this Conference was the most enjoyable, stimulating and satisfying alpine occasion that I have experienced.

Liam Byrne

REVIEW OF RECENT GROUP EVENTS

AGM, followed by, 'Alpine Shrubs, Tall and Small', Brendan Marnell, 19 January

The business of the AGM was disposed of swiftly with Mary O'Neill Byrne reading the minutes from last year and reporting on the activities of 2010. Tessa Dagge, the Treasurer reported crisply on the finances for the year and the Chairman, Billy Moore, gave his report, mentioning the sad loss of Rosemary Brown and Jim Price.

With great pleasure the meeting decided to award Peggy Parker Honorary Life Membership for her contribution to our Society.

Billy thanked the Committee and it was re-elected for another year.



With the formal part of the evening out of the way Brendan Marnell took the floor. I would have to say at the very beginning that there were so many plants I was unfamiliar with, and I was so busy admiring the pictures, that I missed a lot of the names and information but I will just pick out some that made a particular impression on me.

Our library copy of *The Smaller Rhododendrons* by Peter A Cox, Batsford 1985, came in very usefully as a reference tool for checking up on some names.

Brendan's digital slide show followed the year in his own back garden, sprinkled with a few pictures from his trips abroad.

His interest in alpine shrubs started in 1985. Since he was gardening on limey soil, like most of us, and wanted to include some acid lovers, he dug out an impressive amount of his garden soil and replaced it with twenty tons of acid soil and five tons of bark in order to create the conditions many of his dwarf shrubs relish. The sheer scale of moving such amounts of soil left me astonished, but it certainly did wonders for his many dwarf rhododendrons and azaleas.

Brendan opened his talk with a wonderful picture of *Daphne bholua* at Christmas 2009 in full bloom, sweetly scented and his favourite plant. In

his opinion, every garden should have one and I am looking forward to my own plant, only in the ground a year, flowering too, some Christmas soon.

There followed a row of dazzling pictures of rhododendrons and azaleas-all unfamiliar to me. One of the first rhododendrons to flower in Brendan's garden is *R. 'PJM Elite'* in early March, but I really liked *R. leucapsis* with lovely pure white flowers and really dwarf in its habit. Another beautiful white-flowered plant was *R. schlippenbachii*, and one of Brendan's prize possessions is the twenty-five year old *R. campylogynum* subsp. *myrtilloides*.

Azalea 'Vuyk's Scarlet' has a good long flowering period, starting in April. May /June sees *R. 'Wee Bee'*, *R. calostrotum 'Gigha'* (also good for foliage), *R. 'Scarlet Wonder'*, brilliant red but hard to keep, and a magnificent *R. lowndesii*, notoriously difficult to flower well, given to Brendan by Duncan Lowe if I recollect correctly.

He likes to grow rhododendrons not just for the flowers but also for foliage, and there are some lovely plants like *R. tsariense*, and *R. 'Viking Silver'* which provide striking foliage.

Brendan also grows a dazzling array of daphnes, starting off with *Daphne 'Beauworth'* in April, *D. hendersonii* at the beginning of May and a fantastic *D. arbuscula*, beautiful, low growing and eighteen years old. But, my favourite was the yellow-flowered *D. calcicola*, introduced by George Forrest in 1906 from N.W. Yunnan. And in late summer we are getting *D. oleoides*, white flowered *D. jasminea*, *D. rollsdorfii* and *D. 'Kilmeston'*.

And it wasn't all rhododendrons, azaleas and daphnes only, some more familiar shrubs like *Polygala buxifolia*, *Cassiope 'Askival'*, which does not like sun on its roots at all, *Embothrium*, *Shortia uniflora*, *Helianthemum*, *Zaluzianskya ovata*, *Acer palmatum*, *Lithodoara diffusum*, *Paeonia cambessedesii* and some not so familiar (to me), *Phylliopsis 'Coppelia'*, a heather-like shrublet, and *Leiophyllum buxifolium*, commonly known as the Sand-myrtle.

It was a pleasure to listen to Brendan's enthusiasm and hear his thinking on how to grow the many different plants. I got the impression he is his own man and tries out things for himself. He is currently clearing a space in his garden to make room for a crevice garden, and we are

looking forward to follow the development of this project. The talk left me with a great desire to be able to grow some of those dwarf shrubs but, alas, I cannot see myself being able to change my alkaline garden into any significant acid site. Brendan is always pleased to have visitors to his garden and there is much to admire, and delight in, all the year round.

A question and answer session finished the lecture and there was lots more chat while enjoying a refreshing cup of tea and biscuits.

AnneMarie Keoghan

Annual Lunch, and ‘My Garden and Other Plants’, Carmel Duignan, 12 February

Our Annual Lunch in Dun Laoghaire fell on a day with lovely sunshine, but, unfortunately, the guest speaker, Mary Waldron, was unable to attend due to a family illness, so, at very short notice, Carmel Duignan kindly stepped into the breach.

Carmel has a unique garden packed full of well grown, rare and unusual plants of all kinds. We saw many of these including the very sculptural *Schefflera taiwaniana*; some beautiful roses including *Rosa chinensis* ‘Bengal Crimson’, which is an unusual brown/red, the glowing *Salvia* ‘Limelight’ (which, sadly, she lost this winter), and the big *Arbutus unedo* which she grew in her front garden, looking great but not there anymore! She showed many slides of the large collection of Clematis that she grows,



including *Clematis nepaulensis*, *C. ‘Purpurea Plena Elegans’* and *C. ‘Mary Rose’*.

Carmel’s skill in the placement of plants was well demonstrated by her photographs of some lovely planting ideas such as *Clematis* ‘Polish Spirit’ (deep purple) with *Rosa* ‘Sympathie’ (strong red) and *Clematis* ‘Pink Fantasy’ with *Cotinus* ‘Royal Purple’.

There were many other illustrations of a wide variety of plants from her own garden, and others that she

met in her travels, and all described knowledgably and with humour. Carmel's talk was interesting, informative and entertaining, rounding off a most pleasant afternoon in the 'George'.

Janet Wynne

Plant Hunting with a Camera, Sidney Clarke, 17 February

The stunningly beautiful opening slide of *Euphorbia obtusifolia* on Grand Canary Island set the standard for the lecture, and what a standard.

Sidney Clarke, a professional photographer, formerly with Edinburgh Botanic Gardens, took us on a tour from the Canary Islands, through the Iberian Penninsula, the Alps and all the way to the Eastern Mediteranean. I wasn't sure if I was at a plant talk or a photographic exhibition. Were the flowers really that beautiful or was the photographer so good that he made them seem so?

We moved on to Tenerife to see pictures of *Pinus canariensis* and its beautiful bark. This is one of the first plants to move into volcanic areas after an eruption. This was followed by *Aeonium tabuliforme*, *Orchis patens* ssp. *canariensis* and *Canarina canariensis*, an orange, climbing bellflower. After a few more beauties we were on the Iberian Penninsula. In Portugal we were admiring *Narcissus bulbocodium* just after snow melt, *Crocus carpetanus*, *Narcissus asturiensis* coming through the snow and *Scilla monophyllos*. In Galicia we feasted our eyes on a mass 'planting' of *Narcissus cyclamineus*. In Northern Portugal, on a wind farm site, *N. assoanus* var. *praelongus* was the dominant plant. We hopped around the Iberian Penninsula seeing a huge variety of narcissi as well as other plants. From there to the Pyrenees to the Pic d'Ani where *Androsace hirtella* grew high up in a cave and *Geranium cinereum* in a limestone gryke.

On to the Alps where I felt very much at home but was I looking at the same plants that I had seen there? It was late April and the raindrops glistened on the flower heads and the sun made them



sparkle or did the photographer help them give their very best performance? I couldn't begin to pick out the outstanding alpinists from this area: there would be too many. However, I must mention *Laburnum alpinum* which is spotted through the spruce woods around the little quaint but important town of Bagolino. In the Maritime Alps I could almost feel the raindrops in the photograph of *Campanula cochlearifolia*. We travelled down through Italy right into the heel, to Puglia, where we saw *Anemone hortensis* and *Muscari neglectum*, and then back up to the Monte Sibillini to see both yellow and red forms of *Dactylorhiza sambucina*.

On leaving Italy we were taken through Crete and Cyprus and finished with a grand tour of Greece in both Spring and Autumn. Here you will have to imagine which plants we saw as I am running out of space. Through the lecture, and in answer to questions, Sidney gave a number of tips with regard to taking good flower photographs, e.g., using a diffuser to soften the light and photographing cypripediums on a misty day. He actually captured *Epipogium aphyllum* (ghost orchid) using a flash.

Rose Sevastopulo

Local Show, Workshop and Members' Plant Sale, 6 March

The local show is a curtain raiser for the main show in Cabinteely and provides a good opportunity for new exhibitors to pick up some tips. This event has been improving consistently over the past few years with both the quantity and quality of exhibits showing a marked increase. As well as the competitive classes there is also a display table for members who merely wish to present good plants for exhibition. There are often plants on this table which would outclass some of the competitive entries.

There was a good turnout this year, and, as usual, the plant sales table came under siege early on. There were some excellent plants for sale including some very good snowdrops. The sale yielded a very respectable sum for our coffers.

Gavin Moore was given the award for the best plant in show, a very fine *Dionysia aretioides* 'Bevere' and also picked up the medal for most points in the show as well as receiving a certificate for his *Saxifraga* sp. Maeve Spotswood was awarded a certificate for her *Primula allionii* and George Sevastopulo got one for his *Cyclamen persicum*.

Liam Byrne and Billy Moore were the judges (with Paddy Smith as a trainee judge) and afterwards discussed their decisions with the audience, explaining why particular plants were chosen over others. They also pointed out how some of the exhibits could have been improved by paying more attention to presentation.

The afternoon ended with conversation over tea and biscuits organized by Mary O'Neill Byrne and her helpers.

Our thanks go to Barbara O'Callaghan, Local Show Secretary, for organizing the event which was an undoubted success and should go from strength to strength in future years.

Billy Moore

'Trilliums and Associated Flora of South East USA', Kevin Hughes, 24 March



Members of the Irish Garden Plant Society and of the AGS, Dublin Group joined forces for a joint lecture from Kevin Hughes at the well appointed lecture theatre of the National Botanic Gardens. It was a few years since Kevin last lectured in Glasnevin and some of those attending, this reporter included, had retained fond memories of that outing when a learned discourse on woodland plants had been delivered. Indeed, at least one attendee on that occasion had preserved the plant list then furnished and had had recourse to it in the intervening years! So it was with no small

sense of anticipation that a small but well informed audience gathered to hear Kevin's thoughts on trilliums, and other observations on his travels in SE USA. We would not be disappointed.

This is an area dominated by the Appalachian Mountains and which has been subject to much plant hunting for commercial organisations.

Kevin's introductory remark was a fascinating insight into the mind of a deeply thoughtful man – he opened by offering the opinion that “the flora of the SE USA are much more suited to European garden cultivation than are plants of Chinese origin as they are far more resistant to late frosts.” There followed an interesting discourse peppered with occasional meteorological data on the conditions favoured by the plant life native to these areas of the US, which Kevin has botanized on

several different occasions over the last fifteen years. His enthusiasm for the natural world encountered on these occasions is all embracing and he shared with us observations on mosses, trees, shrubs, bulbs, snakes, bees, butterflies and birds, not to mention the geological and topographical characteristics of the region and the specifics of particular plants and their preferences.

Kevin frequently opined that a particular plant was not grown nearly as much in our gardens as its merits deserve. One particular object of this accolade was *Chionanthus virginicus*, the American Fringe Tree, much photographed and beribboned with enthusiastic recommendations in garden books and books on small trees in gardens. The suggestion that we should grow it in acid soil and full sun may be a recipe for success in Southern England, where comparable degrees of the warmth indigenous to Pennsylvania may apply, but local experience here does not bear out our Lecturer's optimism for this lovely tree in Ireland.

However, there was a less sceptical reception for his recommendation of *Cercis reniformis*, a small vase shaped tree ideal for a sunny position, and of which a splendid example was shown in full flower on a crevice in a deep ravine. Happily, Kevin lists this rarely offered form of *Cercis* in his extensive plant list and on his website www.kevinsplants.co.uk

In a wide ranging lecture, this author noted reference to over twenty other genera without any reference to trilliums, which eventually found centre stage after forty five minutes of presentation. The stunningly detailed photographs which now followed were memorable, and worthy of a much fuller discussion than the somewhat accelerated treatment obligated by the earlier diversification into wider issues, such as plant conservation and breeding program difficulties, seed grown plants taking seven years to flower. The trilliums shown will have created a lasting impression on the audience and Kevin was generous with his knowledge and experience of hybridising these different forms. Perhaps the lecture might have been enhanced by the provision of a plant list to add to that of his previous talk and other attendees were also of this view.

Spare a thought for latter day botanists. Botanizing may no longer carry the potentially fatal consequences of concealed pits and enraged bulls, as famously befell David Douglas, but Kevin's account of poison ivy sensitization, snakes, wild cats and brushes with gun happy natives underline the commitment and courage still needed to acquire the first hand experience which formed the basis of an interesting and

entertaining hour even if trilliums formed only a fifteen minute coda at the end!

Willie Reardon

**Kilmacurragh and the Plant Hunters – 300 Years of History,
Seamus O'Brien, 21 April**

Seamus delivered a stimulating and encyclopaedic lecture on the National Treasure that he looks after in Co. Wicklow. His talk was illustrated by many fine slides including reproductions of a lot of historic photographs of the garden and the people associated with it. The estate dates back 1300 years when it was the Church of St Mochorog, subsequently dissolved by Henry VIII. In the 1640s the Acton family arrived with Cromwell and 1800 acres were granted to Thomas Acton. The estate remained in the ownership of the Actons until after the Great War which claimed the lives of a number of the family. The music critic, Charles Acton was a Kilmacurragh Acton. Seamus outlined the development of the garden over the centuries and mentioned the many great plantspeople who were associated with it. David Moore of the NBG in Glasnevin became friendly with Acton and from the 1850s was his advisor on the garden and its plants. These were sourced mainly from Sir Joseph Dalton Hooker, but also from people like Frank Kingdon Ward, George Forrest, E. H. Wilson, Augustine Henry (of whom more later) and Joseph Rock. Many of these plants still flourish in the garden which boasted the largest collection of rhododendrons in these islands at the time.

Before the talk many of us expected to spend most of the time in Co. Wicklow, but no: we were taken on a world tour by Seamus to all the exotic places which were home to the plants. We were in China, Chile, India, California, New Zealand, Australia, South America and, of course the Himalaya.

In the 1930s the estate became an hotel and was subsequently acquired by the Land Commission. The NBG bought it in 1986 and the garden, which had deteriorated over the years, was gradually reclaimed. Seamus took over in 2006 and continued. His approach was based on geographical planting: Chilean, Chinese, Himalayan etc. Plants are sourced only from collections and institutions; none from commercial sources.

Seamus described some of the expeditions that have taken place under his watch to Chile, Tibet, the Andes, China, New Zealand and Australia.

He showed us many of the plants encountered, including several puyas from his favourite genus.

This report can barely skim the ground that Seamus covered in his detailed, erudite and deeply researched talk. Kilmacurragh is open all year and guided tours are available at noon and three pm daily, and if you haven't been you should go soon. More information is available on the website.

Augustine Henry, the great Irish plant explorer is something of a hero for Seamus and at the time of his talk his wonderful book on the great man had just been printed. We had the privilege of examining an advance copy. It will be the definitive work on Henry and would make a wonderful Christmas present. It is reviewed by George Sevastopulo on page 39.

Billy Moore

Coach Trip to Western Gardens and the Burren, 21 May

It was raining in the Booterstown DART car park as we climbed into the AGS's coach at eight o'clock on a Saturday morning, and so it continued; we looked hopefully at the western sky as we crossed the Shannon, but it was to remain 'a grand soft day' all the way to Galway and beyond. In fact, Lorna MacMahon's Ardcarraig garden looked magnificent through the raindrops despite the need to view it from under an umbrella: all the lush foliage was showing off its spring best. The overall impression was of winding, undulating paths, passing now and again over rivulets via simple slab bridges, where we alternated between negotiating thick plantings of trees and shrubs and pausing in open glades to enjoy rich mixes of hostas, astilbes, iris, candelabra primulas and ferns.



Lorna led our colourful umbrella cavalcade cheerfully through the many different areas, from the grass border alongside the old house to the top stream section at the very far end, all linked by the presence everywhere of granite, water and luxuriant mosses. 'Harry's Garden', in particular, has a massive granite outcrop overlooking its two pools. When we reached the formal Herb Garden - once a tennis court - it had the added attraction of plants for sale, though we could only grieve for the central

standard bay in the box parterre, reduced by winter weather to a sorry brown. Then umbrellas were shed for an indoor picnic in welcome warmth.

After Lorna's, the urge to acquire plants was satisfied at Dangan House Nurseries, on the outskirts of Galway city, and the coach luggage compartment acquired a few treasures. The nursery had splendid large tubs of hostas - full-grown and ready to be instant features in some lucky gardener's border - but, alas, rather too unwieldy for long-distance transport.

The well-treed shores of east Galway Bay were left behind as we drove through stone-walled fields towards Kinvara. Many of the scattering of houses along the roadside, some traditional, some new, had 'gardens' of bare limestone where any plantings would need a crowbar. The first sight of the rounded hills of the Burren looming out of the rain was fittingly heralded by the coach radio playing Ravel's 'Bolero'. We paused at the Pinnacle Well House, where a fresh-water spring is enclosed in an elaborate Victorian structure, and *Erinus alpinus* grows on the pinnacles. *Geranium sanguineum* in full flower was a foretaste of the next day.

Hyland's Hotel, on Ballyvaughan's main street, made us welcome and fed us well: small contretemps about a lack of hot water and a jammed bedroom door merely added to the character of the visit. Sunday was a day of sunshine and brisk wind, with rough seas breaking on the cliffs. We passed the sandhills at Fanore where George Sevastopulo described the bungalows as "breeding like rabbits", before he led us out onto limestone pavements at the water's edge. George talked illuminatingly about the geological history as well as the flora, and we saw most of a dozen or so of the Burren plants on his hand-out, though not all were in flower.

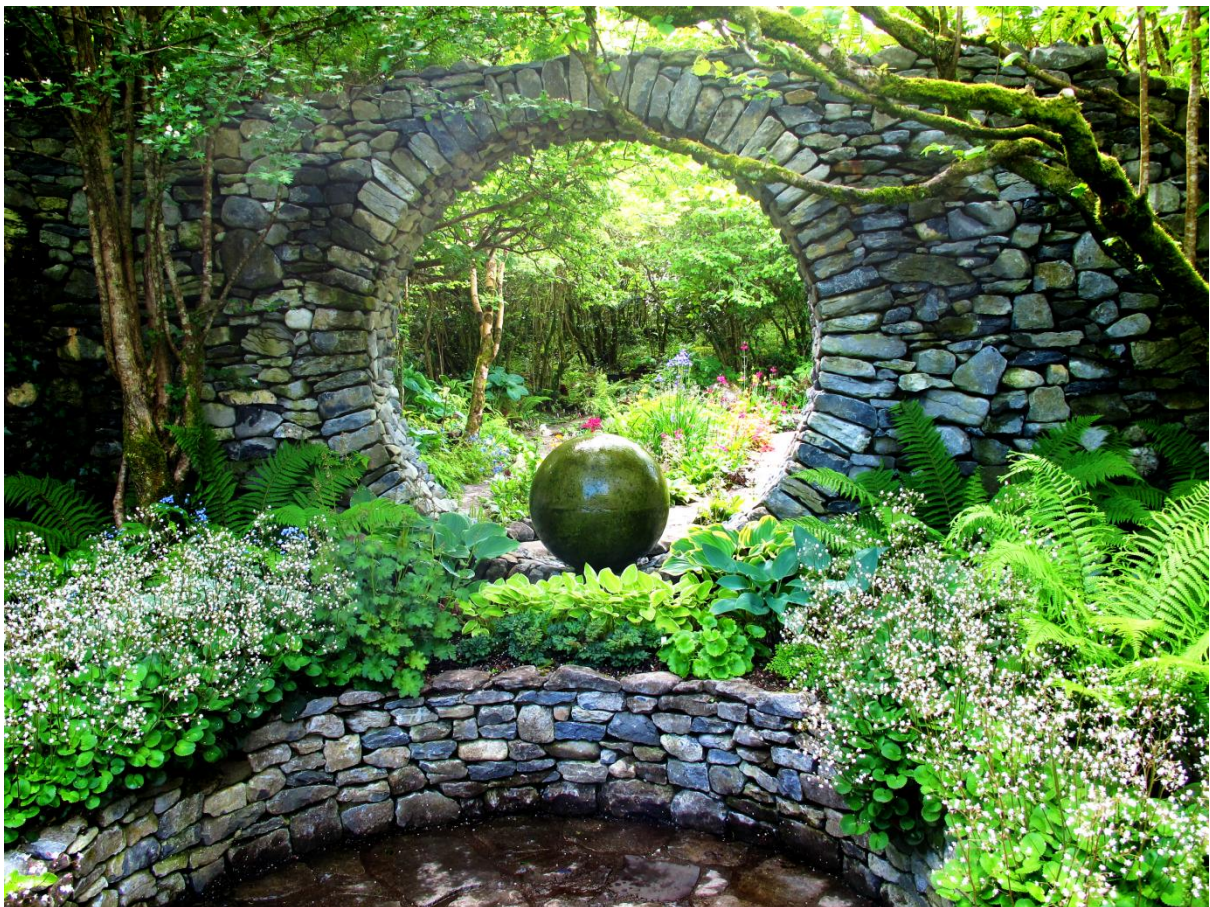
Then we struck inland, up into the heart of the Burren, on a minor road edged by a clear fast-flowing stream. For those who heard Carl Wright talk to the AGS a year ago, this was a much anticipated visit to his Caher Bridge garden: we were not to be disappointed.

Like Lorna MacMahon's, this garden is carved out of rock and dense scrubland, but Carl's raw material is limestone, rather than granite, with a constant echo of the Burren in the bare slopes on the opposite side of the stream. An 'incorrigible collector', he has shaped this unpromising site to provide homes for collections of plants - snowdrops and daffodils earlier, hostas, day lilies, crocosmias and dieramas (many of

these two lost last winter) and more - by adding terraces using many tons of rubble and soil, and by building elegant dry-stone walls pierced by a large moon gate (below). From the pool close to the stream, flooded, he told us, the day before our visit, we followed the plantings up behind his house across natural rock outcrops and steps until the garden merged gently into the trees. Pots of hostas everywhere provided a recurrent theme. Stories of the many birds' nests in the wall crevices and the pine martens that insist on using his house as a nursery were a reminder of how close he is to the natural wilderness.

On the way back we stopped at the Carlton Shearwater Hotel in Ballinasloe, as we had on the outward journey, and had coffee and excellent scones in its somewhat underutilized reception area. This two-day tour gave only a taste of this fascinating part of the West, but a most enjoyable one. Many thanks to the organizers!

Mary Davies



Visit to garden of Billy and Anne Moore, 18 June

The garden at 32 Braemor Park was the venue for our visit on an afternoon on which the gods were friendly and the rain held off, in fact the sun lit up the garden to perfection. It was fascinating to see how much colour remained when most of the alpine were worn out after their spring flush.

From a difficult, long, narrow site, Billy manages to give the impression of space. (I should say that Anne is adamant that the garden is solely Billy's responsibility and she just enjoys it.) It is not a garden simply for alpine; he has a most interesting collection of shrubs, roses, shade lovers, a corner collection of ferns and some lovely conservatory plants. Billy has a good eye for contrasting colours and unusual plants. His *Cotinus coggygria* was growing along the wall mixing with a yellow leaved



climbing jasmine over an arch, and the brown and yellow specimens of *Bupleurum longifolium* were completely new to me. One of the few remaining specimens of *Celmisia* 'David Shackleton' is thriving.

The shady side of the garden has a totally different range of plants, depending more on leaf shape and colour, from well pruned bamboos to the little shiny leaved *Asarum europaeum* and the pleated leaves of *Veratrum album*. Roses were at their best, both

climbing up trees and amongst other perennials, including *Rosa gallica* 'Tuscany Superb', R. 'Perle D'Or' and the tiny *Rosa* 'Suffolk', a cutting from the late Margaret Orsi. Interest at all levels from your toes to above your head!

His propagation area and greenhouse are a lesson to all of us, and the superb finished products that we have all seen on the show bench begin life here. His recent addition of a fascinating crevice bed (below), whilst still in its infancy, blends beautifully into the established garden, and will need another visit in the future as it develops!

Billy is fortunate in having Anne at his back, whose culinary skills went down a treat. Many thanks to them both for a fascinating and very enjoyable afternoon.



Ian Keegan

Visit to Gardens of June Blake and Jimi Blake, 14 August

Around twenty members met at Jimi Blake's wonderful garden near Blessington in Co. Wicklow at 1.30 pm. It was a lovely afternoon although slightly spoiled by two showers. Nothing, however, could have spoiled the pleasure of experiencing the outstanding beauty of this garden which Jimi guided us through, telling us, as we went, about its evolution and giving us details of many of the rare and exquisite plants that grow in it. The tour was followed by a tea/coffee break accompanied by delicious cakes and biscuits.

We then proceeded to Jimi's sister June's garden, which is but a stone's throw away, where we were once more enthralled by another beautifully designed garden packed with rare and visually stunning plants. Again, June took us through the garden, explained its history and discussed many of the outstanding plants and their provenance. Both June and Jimi also sell plants, many of which are very difficult to get hold of elsewhere.



A view of a small part of Jimi's garden. Photo: Billy Moore

I could have devoted half the newsletter to a description of this glorious afternoon, but as I must meet my already postponed deadline, and as I have run out of space, I can only leave you with a couple of photos and urge those of you who have not visited what in my opinion are two of the best gardens in the country to get yourselves on to the Blessington Road as soon as you can to enjoy one of the most inspiring garden experiences you are ever likely to have. Congratulations to June and Jimi for their achievement in creating these two outstanding gardens in such a short space of time, and for enhancing the tourist attractions of this country, so very badly needed at present, for the two gardens are already attracting international attention and will certainly be a magnet for the gardening tourist in the years ahead.

Billy Moore



June's canal. Photo: Billy Moore

BOOK REVIEW

In the Footsteps of Augustine Henry and his Chinese Plant Collectors by Seamus O'Brien (2011). Woodbridge, Suffolk, Garden Art Press, 367pp. ISBN-13: 9781870673730. £40.00.

Augustine Henry (1857 – 1930) was arguably the foremost Irish plantsman, in the widest sense, of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. During his career in the Chinese Imperial Maritime Customs Service, he introduced to the western world and to formal taxonomic botany, many of the plants that we grow in our gardens. Following his return to Europe, he collaborated with Henry Elwes to write the magisterial *Trees of Great Britain and Ireland* and developed a second career as a forester (becoming in time Professor of Forestry at Cambridge and subsequently at the Royal College of Science – now University College Dublin), which lead directly to the establishment of forestry as a crop science in Ireland.

Surprisingly, as Roy Lancaster notes in his foreword, there has been no detailed account of Augustine Henry's botanical exploration in China, and his



horticultural legacy, to complement Sheila Pim's biography *The Wood and the Trees: a Biography of Augustine Henry* (Second edition. 1986. Kilkenny: Boethius Press). Seamus O'Brien has filled this gap admirably.

The book is divided into 13 chapters, an epilogue and several appendices. The first chapter deals with Henry's upbringing, education and introduction to China. The second, third and fourth describe his and his native plant collectors' exploration around Yichang. From this region he sent back to Europe numerous, now familiar, garden-worthy plants, such as *Lilium henryi* and *Sarcococca ruscifolia*. The fifth chapter brings us into the 21st century with an account of the expeditions mounted by the National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin, in 2002 and 2004

to the Three Gorges region (immediately before the flooding associated with the Three Gorges Dam) and other localities associated with Henry. Chapter six, at first reading, seems out of place. It describes the journey and plants collected by the English explorer Anton Pratt in 1889 and 1890 in Sichuan and Tibet. However, it illustrates a recurring theme – the connections between the early European plant collectors in China: Henry, who by this time had been posted to Hainan on the coast, helped Pratt. Henry was later to advise Ernest Wilson. Chapters seven and eight describe Henry's stay in Hainan, which he detested, and Taiwan, respectively. The visit of the National Botanic Gardens team to Taiwan in 2004 is recounted in chapter nine. Henry's last two postings were in southern Yunnan, described in Chapters ten and eleven; the National Botanic Gardens team visited Yunnan in 2005 (chapter twelve). The final chapter recounts Henry's career after he returned to Europe in 1900. The epilogue describes the aftermath of the National Botanic Gardens expeditions – the development of networks with Chinese institutions and individual botanists, and the raising of plants from the seeds collected – several of the trees have been planted at Kilmacurragh where Seamus is in charge. There are four useful appendices: a list of Henry's plants; Chinese place names; a condensed chronology of Henry's life; a botanical glossary; a list of notes; and a select bibliography. Seamus writes with verve and enthusiasm and the narrative flows. His love of plants is evident on almost every page. The photographic illustrations are an integral part of the book and are well chosen and have been reproduced well. I would have liked each illustration to be numbered and to have an index of illustrations. In particular, it would have been nice to know the source of the many photographs that are unattributed. Presumably many of the colour photographs are by Seamus himself and some of the monochromes by Augustine Henry. All in all, this is an enjoyable book and excellent value at the price quoted. It should be on every Irish gardener's bookshelf.

George Sevastopulo

AUTUMN FIXTURES

Thursday, 13 October, 8 pm, Jim Almond, 'Fritillaries and other Bulbs', St Brigid's Parish Centre, Stillorgan.

Saturday, 15 October, Jim Almond, Photography Workshop, NBG, Glasnevin.

Thursday, 10 November, Susan Tindall, 'Alpines at High and Low Altitudes', St Brigid's Parish Centre, Stillorgan.

Friday, 18 to Sunday 20 November, 28th Alpine Weekend, Harry Jans, Jim Jermyn, Liam and Joan McCaughey, An Grianán, Termonfeckin.

Thursday, 8 December, Christmas Miscellany, St Brigid's Parish Centre, Stillorgan.

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Barbara O'Callaghan's *Tulipa humilis* – see page 14.

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