

A Visit To Southern Ireland

JOHN TOOBY, United Kingdom

Visite en Irlande du Sud

Una visita al sur de Irlanda

Une visita in Irlanda del sud

Besuch in Suedirland

The 1989 Garden Tour arranged by the British and Channel Island Directors and Members of the I.C.S. was set in Southern Ireland and lasted a week, April 20th. to 26th., instead of the usual four days. The abiding memories of the tour are of a series of splendid gardens, each one of them different, but each delightful in its own way; of elegant 18th. and 19th. century houses where our hosts dispensed generous hospitality; and between the gardens, miles of emerald green countryside enlivened by large patches of richly fragrant golden gorse.

Unfortunately for us, the winter had been unusually mild and many camellias had finished flowering or were practically over. However we saw enough to realise that the Irish have soils and climate very suitable for Camellias and we saw many fine plants.

About 40 of us, including a couple from The Netherlands and another from New Zealand, started from Waterford, where some looked in at the home of Waterford Crystal, whose beautiful hand-crafted models are still made in the traditional way.

The whole of Friday was spent at Mount Congreve; this has been described as one of the three best gardens in Europe - and who am I to disagree? Our host, Mr. Ambrose Congreve, has given the property to the Irish nation, subject to his use during his lifetime. He was unable to be with us until lunchtime so we were taken round by the Director of the Garden, Mr.

Dool. Together with a small farm and nursery, the property extends to 120 acres (48 ha.) of which the garden accounts for perhaps half. It is laid out on a large scale on a moderately acid soil (pH 5.6) on a sloping site running down to the River Suir, part of it in woodland under a canopy of oak trees. Since 1965, Mr. Congreve has carried out replanting on a grand scale with Buddlejias, Clerodendrons, Hebes and Hydrangeas following on for summer effect, but Rhododendrons and Camellias stand out, and indeed the Camellia collection is one of the best in the British Isles. Of those still flowering, 'Elizabeth Rothschild' was still doing well with single pale pink flowers; 'Elegans' had a few blooms and 'Freedom Bell' lived up to its name with a fine show of red flowers. A group of 'Mattie Cole' still held some of its lovely single pink flowers, with flared stamens, Higo-fashion. 'Bowen Bryant', 'Charles Colbert' and 'Alexander Hunter' were still looking good while 'Elsie Jury' and 'R. L. Wheeler' still retained a few good flowers.

After a superb lunch in the house, we were welcomed by Mr. Congreve, who had flown in from London to meet us. Then, refreshed, we returned to the garden to see more fine plants. 'Inspiration' - the best of all for the garden and for cutting, we were told - and 'Donckelaeri' were admired, as was 'Joshua Youtz' with some nice white flowers, though others were somewhat marked.

Nearby 'Crinkles' was looking good near a plant of the excellent South American *Myrtus lechleriana*, so much more free-flowering than *M. luma* and apparently hardier too. Further on, 'Royalty' was coming to the end of its season but still making a good show; 'Joseph Pffingstl' was near the end too, but had some fine formal double flowers; the Irish summers are cool and a number of camellias produce flowers with a different form to what they do even in England. In central and northern Ireland, as also in Scotland, few forms of *C. japonica* produce enough flower buds to be worth growing, while many hybrids flower freely. One such is 'Leonard Messel', with very large flowers of a good, almost salmon pink, which was doing well at Mount Congreve.

On Saturday morning we went to the John F. Kennedy Arboretum at Campile. This has been developed as a memorial to the late President Kennedy. It extends to 623 acres (252 ha.) and is sited about four miles (6 km.) from the Kennedy family's ancestral home. The first shelter belts were planted in 1966 and the first trees two years later. The soils vary somewhat, with the pH ranging from 6.2 to 7. The site slopes gently towards the south so the main problem in growing Camellias is providing shelter from wind. A few plants of *C. japonica* planted close to the buildings near the entrance were looking less well than the examples of *C. cuspidata* (a very tight-growing form), *C. saluenensis* and *C. reticulata* lower down. These were in an open site and the *C. reticulata* seemed to dislike their exposure to wind.

After lunch in the Cafeteria we went on to Kilmokea, the garden of I.C.S. members Col. and Mrs. David Price; they came to Ireland 40 years ago, when the garden consisted of two apple trees and half an acre of potatoes. After rehabilitating the old garden they turned their attention to a boggy area in the corner of a field just below, and found themselves excavating a 7th. or 8th. century mill-pond - which is now a feature - and below it flows a small stream which now runs through a little valley with tributaries fed from springs. All is now well planted with a varied collection of trees and shrubs - including some very nice

Camellias. Amongst them we noticed a plant of *C. tsaii* about 8 ft. (2.5 m.) high and several shades of pink but all standing up well to the weather. Most Camellias were over but 'Brigadoon', 'Jupiter', 'Donation' and 'St. Ewe' all looked good, and a young plant of 'Anticipation' held several perfect flowers.

After tea in the house, we returned to the hotel, where we learned that the flowers - mainly camellias of course - had been arranged by members of the Waterford Flower Club which includes both Protestants and Roman Catholics; they were going on to arrange a Flower Festival at the Protestant Church with the proceeds to be divided between the two denominations. It was nice to know that religious harmony is possible in Ireland.

Next day, Sunday, we drove to Glountaune near Cork, our first call being at Lismore Castle, the Irish home of the Duke of Devonshire. As we approached, we saw a splendid Magnolia, perhaps 60 ft. (18 m.) high, probably of hybrid origin and covered with ruby-red flowers. This was in the Lower Garden, which is the spring garden and includes a good collection of camellias, mostly forms of *C. x williamsii*, planted by the present Duke and which were doing well. In the absence of the Duke, we were taken round by the Agent, Mr. Peter Barber. The soil of the Upper Garden is near neutral so it has been developed as a summer garden devoted to herbaceous plants with a sprinkling of shrubs. The far side is bounded by a high wall, part of the old ramparts. From here we walked through the courtyard - with two fine trees of the New Zealand *Sophora tetraptera* is full flower - to the castle, where we enjoyed coffee and light refreshments. The castle had been remodelled in the mid 19th century by Joseph Paxton for the 6th. Duke, and commands fine views over the valley of the River Suir.

After lunch at Ballyvolane House, which has been adapted for use as a delightful hotel and restaurant, we went on to the garden of Mr. and Mrs. Brian Cross at Glanmire. In contrast to the others, this is a relatively young garden with very varied planting and an emphasis on alpine and rock-garden plants.

Of the Camellias, 'Donation' was looking good, while a plant of 'Mary Phoebe Taylor' about 4 ft. (1.3 m.) high held a few nice flowers; 'Margaret Davis', about the same height, was carrying one last lovely flower. 'Jupiter', about 8 ft. (2.5 m.) had a good display, but 'Inspiration' had nearly finished and 'Francie L.' had no flowers left. Mr. Cross, who took us round, had been particularly helpful in making arrangements for our visit as had our next host, another I.C.S. member, his neighbour Finbarr Dowdall who had planted the sides of a dingle with camellias. These, too, had mostly finished flowering after a good display earlier on. Rosemary Dowdall then invited us into the house for a welcome cup of tea etc. And so we came to Ashbourne House Hotel nearby, with camellias in the garden, including a tea-plant, *C. sinensis*.

That evening we visited one of the Cork schools to join the Cork Men's Flower Club to hear an excellent lecture given by one of our party, Jennifer Trehane of the Trehane Nurseries, on Camellias and Camellia growing.

Monday was another lovely day and we started by visiting Annesgrove at Castle-townroche, the home of Mr. and Mrs. Grove-Annesley. This is a large old garden, through the bottom of which runs a small river, which is bordered by generous plantings of Primulas, Podger-sias, Irises etc. The garden is mostly on a limestone soil, with a pH of about 7, but a peaty area marks the line of an old watercourse. Part of this was planted with Rhododendrons etc. about 1902 and these have been added to since. As in some of the other gardens most of the Camellias had finished flowering but 'Bow Bells' was still giving a good display with flowers that stood up well to wind and weather. There is a wealth of fine old trees here and other plants of interest. After a splendid buffet lunch in the house, presided over by Mrs. Grove-Annesley, we rejoined our bus for the drive to Fota. This is an outstanding garden, which has recently come into the ownership of University College, Cork. It stands on an island in Cork Harbour and contains a marvellous collection of specimen trees and shrubs. Here again we were impressed with *Myrtus lechleriana*,

several large bushes of which were laden with flowers and scenting the air for yards around. Several Camellias were still flowering here, 'Anticipation', 'Elsie Jury' and 'Edith Linton' being outstanding as was a large bush labelled 'Anemoniflora Alba'. A collection from Portugal was planted in 1961, but the labels had been lost and the only one that we could identify with anything like certainty was 'Portuense' with variegated leaves. Our New Zealand friends were happy to recognise several New Zealand trees, which thrive here due to the mild climate.

The weather held again on Tuesday when we went to Glengarriff at the head of Bantry Bay, where we had coffee before embarking on the ferryboat to take us to Ilnacullin the fabulous Italian Garden on Garnish Island made in the early years of this century by Harold Peto for members of the Bryce family, and now the property of the Irish state. Here we had our picnic lunch and spent a delightful afternoon wandering around, led by the head gardener Mr. Finbarr O'Sullivan. 'Donation' was about over but 'Jupiter' was still flowering well, as was a nice striped one called 'York and Lancaster'. On the other side of the garden close to the jetty 'Captain Rawes' was flowering well against a wall and there were still a few flowers left on 'Lionhead' nearby. 'Elizabeth Rothschild' was also doing well and a young plant of *C. tsaii* looked promising.

That evening we had a fascinating lecture by Dr. Charles Nelson, the Director of Glasnevin Botanic Gardens, Dublin, on the flowers of the Burren, illustrated by some very fine slides. The Burren is an extensive area of limestone pavement close to the coast of County Clare which at first sight looks very barren, but on closer inspection is seen to hold a rich flora and a number of interesting plants.

On Wednesday the weather started to change as we drove to Killarney and it was raining when the bus arrived at Muckcross House in the Killarney National Park. Some of the party went to the greenhouses, and others to the house with its fine 18th. century furniture and cellars converted into craft workshops. A few enthusiasts braved the elements to

the camellias, quite recently planted in woodland in groups of six or so of each cultivar. Quite exceptionally for this part of Ireland there had been a frost the previous night and few good flowers were to be found.

After lunch we went on by Kenmare and part of the "Ring of Kerry" to Rossdohan on an island in Kenmare River reached by a lane too narrow for buses and by a bridge over the sea. The weather had now cleared and we enjoyed wonderful views over Kenmare River as we wandered through groves of tree-ferns, cordylines, eucalyptus and other exotics to the house, now an empty shell

after a disastrous fire some years back. Unfortunately the camellias were practically over and the highlight was a group of very large plants of *Rhododendron grande*, *Rh. macabeanum*, and *Rh. sinogrande* all of them in full flower.

It is ironic that on my last visit to southern Ireland (in late May) there were many more camellias in flower than on this trip in late April, due to the unusually mild weather of January and February, but the fine plants and fresh plantings that we saw suggest that camellias will become increasingly popular in that country.

Camellias In South Australia

JOHN PEDLER, Australia

Camellias en Australie du Sud

Camelias en el sur de Australia

Le Camellie in Australia del sud

Kamilien in Sued-Australien



Australia has had a very varied weather pattern in the first four months of 1989 with floods in Brisbane and Sydney, good rains in Melbourne, but a terrible drought in Adelaide. If we do not receive any rain for the next week (and it seems very unlikely that we will) it will be the worst drought we have experienced for 100 years. Naturally this has caused some problems for us with our camellias and has necessitated constant watering, especially important in January and February when flower bud formation is occurring. Our water supply contains a very high salt content, as much of the water is drawn from the River Murray where the salt content increases steadily as the river flows down from the snow fields of New South Wales to its outlet to the sea at Goolwa in South Australia. I, therefore, have installed a large number of rain water tanks and I use this by watering can for *all* my camellia watering. This is