



Cornwall Plant Heritage

Newsletter. June 2017

It was good to see so many of you at our last meetings. Summer has arrived and I'm hoping for some sunshine for our next meeting at Tricia and Peter Howard's lovely garden near Par (details below). It is full of interesting plants and always lovely, but in the sunshine it is quite magical.

In July you will be welcomed to my garden, which is more plants than garden, but you will be welcome. I always love to visit other people's gardens - how do they do it when I can't even get the mower to run reliably? In recent years I seem to have concentrated on things that are not-quite-hardy or that like heat in the summer, so most of the action goes on in the greenhouses. I'm not saying that Cornwall can't get hot, just that it's more reliable under cover.

Last Meeting.

Heligan.

We were very lucky with the weather for our trip to the Lost Gardens of Heligan. The National Collection of Camellia and Rhododendron introduced to Heligan before 1920 is housed in the top part of the garden and the timing was just right to enjoy them in flower. Alistair was able to show us around the collection of mature plants. It is a pity that some of the labels were missing, but unfortunately that can happen in gardens open to the public. Many of us will only know *Rhododendron* and *Camellia* cultivars as relatively young plants so it was very interesting to see them as adults.



The Apple arch.



Myosotidium hortensia.



The walled garden.

Around the entrance to the garden the beds have been planted with *Myosotidium hortensia* in both the blue and white forms. I can barely grow it, so I think they were

just showing off - admirable behaviour!

The walled garden is an immaculately maintained productive garden. The apple arch is a remarkable feat of training and was in flower on the day. It was nice to see a full range of crops grown, not just vegetables but flowers from the period for cutting as well. Closer to the house the gardens become more ornamental and the restoration work is remarkable. The gardens look as though they have been maintained in this condition for the last century when in reality all of this area was rescued from the overgrown scrub that had taken over.



The rope bridge across the valley.



Rhododendron scrub.



Dicksonia antarctica.

The wilderness at the bottom of the garden has retained the atmosphere of a lost garden. The rope bridge adds to a sense of adventure and exploration. It connects the wooden walkways along either side of the valley and from the middle it offers good views along the length of the valley and the tropical planting on the banks. There is a wide variety of exotic plants, and at the top of the slope space has been cleared for some *Agave* and *Protea* but it is the tree ferns that dominate. Large numbers have been added to the original planting and the walkways and paths running down to the streamside give a range of interesting viewpoints for some remarkable specimens. Thanks to Alistair for showing us around and pointing out the most significant features, it added enormously to the visit.

HPS Plant Sale, Truro.



**Plant Heritage Stand.
Mike Bell with his rain hat
on.**



**Plant Heritage Stand.
Mike Bell with his rain hat
off.**

We were lucky with the weather for the HPS sale in Truro. Occasional light drizzle was a great result after the forecast had predicted heavy rain all morning. The nurseries turned out in force and there were enough buyers to keep us all busy. Many thanks to everyone who brought plants in to sell, we had a good range to tempt buyers and we took £177 on the day which will be a great help with this years budget! Particular thanks to Mike Bell and Caroline Stone who sold the plants and stayed cheerful and bright when the weather was gloomy.

Peonies.



Paeonia mlokosewitschii . *Paeonia officinalis* 'Rubra Plena'. *Paeonia cambessedesii* .

I grew up on the sticky yellow clay of mid Essex. A mile down the road it was (and still is) mined and fired to make clay aggregate. It was hard to work and the garden flooded in winter - an inch of standing water doesn't sound a lot but it can ruin a pair of slippers.

It doesn't seem like a good starting point for a garden but it grew roses the size of cabbages and cabbages as tall as a small child. More importantly, where it drained on a south slope, it grew peonies like rapturous weeds. We all have *Paeonia officinalis* 'Rubra Plena' as the iconic flower of childhood. Deep ruby balls of perfume bobbing on fragile stems, not quite upright, not quite falling. If you don't have it as a childhood memory you didn't have a proper childhood. You should sue someone.

At some invisible signal in June the clump would collapse outwards, the stems scattering scarlet petals as they fell. Nothing left of the perfection but an impossible jig-saw of pieces. The peony season had ended.

When I moved to Cornwall the garden was dank and misty. I was forced to put aside childish things.

But not for long. My peony revival started with *P. cambessedesii* in the greenhouse and an assortment of species in the garden. *P. mlokosewitschii* because it will grow in moist shade. In the herbaceous border I have a couple of species. *P. mascula* has survived the shade and *P. wittmanniana* makes an impact in May. Unfortunately *P. lactiflora* hasn't done so well. I get regal red shoots in spring but I don't get flowers. A queen without a crown.

Time to visit the trial at Wisley and drive myself into a delighted despair of unfulfilled longing.



Paeonia lactiflora 'Gay Paree'.



The peony trial bed at Wisley .



Paeonia lactiflora 'Miss America'.

This is the first good flowering season for the trial and the plants should improve over

the next couple of years so it is worth planning a visit next year if you get the chance. A sea of colour and I'm only going to show a few pictures , I don't need to stir up problems - I already have a terrifying 'wants list'.

I have only grown peonies as single specimens in borders. As a young man I knew a dedicated peony garden set within a clipped yew hedge and underplanted with *Dianthus*. It was a bit of an anticlimax, so the mass planting in an open bed at Wisley was a revelation. Wisley has a light, well drained soil and basks in the summer warmth of the south-east. The plants were clearly enjoying the conditions. Particular favourites on the day were 'Gay Paree' and 'Miss America' but I would cheerfully have grown any (or all) of them.



Paeonia lactiflora
'Inspecteur Lavergne'.



Paeonia lactiflora
'Kelway's Glorious'.



Paeonia lactiflora 'Lan
Ju'.

Which leads me to mention the Devon Groups visits on June 15th to which all Cornwall Group members are invited. At 11.00am Alan and Rosie Beat are opening their garden at The Bridge Mill, Bridgerule, Holsworthy, EX22 7EL. A series of small gardens around the house, all set within a much larger property with riverside walks. In the afternoon Caroline Stone is opening her garden, The Glebe, North Petherwin, nr Launceston, PL15 8LR. Caroline holds the National Collection of Double Primroses, but this visit is timed to see her large collection of pre-First World War herbaceous peonies, planted over the last three years. They should be at their best.

There is a charge of £8 to members for the two visits to include morning coffee and afternoon tea (but please take your own packed lunch or make other arrangements). It is a great help if you are able to let Malcolm Pharoah know if you are planning to attend on 01271 379001 or malcolmpharoah@gmail.com - it allows the hosts to plan catering without the stress of uncertainty!

Next Meeting: Hidden Valley Gardens.

Thursday 29th June, 2.00pm.

Our next visit is to Tricia and Peter Howard's beautiful and peaceful garden near Par. Attractive herbaceous borders set within a diverse 3 acre garden containing a number of interesting plant collections.

Hidden Valley Gardens, Treemill, Cornwall PL24 2TU.

From the A390 between St Austell and Lostwithiel turn onto the B3269

towards Fowey, then right after 200 yards following the signs for 2 miles.

Advance notice: Carn View, Lanner.

Saturday 29th July, 6.00pm.

It will be a delight to welcome you to my own garden on Saturday evening. The garden is always chaotic. I could promise to have tidied up by the time you visit, but I won't have made much of a dent in it. Still, I love it.

The greenhouse will be dry(ish) if it rains, and there is a large collection of *Sarracenia* which should be looking good, along with the *Disa*. I have finally got the mower started so at least the paths will be mown.

Carn View, 46 Lanner Hill, Lanner, Redruth, TR16 6DA.

About a mile outside Redruth on the A393 to Falmouth. Coming down the hill into Lanner my house is the first on the right after the Lanner village sign. Very large Monterrey Cypress in my car park grows out over the road!

Hope to see you soon.
John Sirkett.

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