

by any other name

Issue 29 / May 2024

The Heritage Rose Journal of the World Federation of Rose Societies



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Cover image: Charles Quest-Ritson
'Augustus Hartman' [Cant, 1914]

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Magazine design

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Editors' note

Who was Mme Grégoire Staechelin? Why is *Rosa gallica* wrongly named? And which English Princess made the best private rose garden in Sweden? These are some of the questions answered in this new edition of baon.

Viru Viraragharan's sudden death in December was a sad blow to his many friends. Girija tells us about his work with water-loving *Rosa clinophylla* and the breeding of his Clinophylla hybrid 'Richard Rose'.

Helga Brichet remembers the excitement of finding *Rosa chinensis* growing wild in the mountains of south-west China. And James Henderson explains the story of the Sleeping Beauty legend depicted in rose-filled paintings at his house in Oxfordshire by the eminent Pre-Raphaelite English painter Sir Edward Burne-Jones.

There is a feast for lovers of roses in this edition of baon, and especially for lovers of old roses. Dicksons and Cants - two of the most historic rose-breeders in the United Kingdom - have bred their last roses. We celebrate their glory days and the roses they brought to our grandparents.

And we look forward to seeing many friends at Kalmar in July and, perhaps, in Otago in November.

You may find this publication more enjoyable to read online – you can find a page turning edition at bit.ly/BAON29

Charles Quest-Ritson and Martin Stott

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**“A rose by any
other name would
smell so sweet.”**

William Shakespeare, *Romeo
and Juliet*

'Falstaff'
[Austin, 1999]



Charles Quest-Ritson is a writer, historian and journalist, with a column in the lifestyle magazine *Country Life*. He is the author of *Climbing Roses of the World* (Timber Press, 2003) and, jointly with his wife Brigid, of an *Encyclopedia of Roses* that was first published in UK by Dorling Kindersley in 2003 and has since been translated into seven languages, including American English.



Martin Stott is a former journalist who has made programmes for the BBC World Service and Radio 4 in 21 countries and written for most of the UK's national press. Passionate about roses and garden history in general, he has also written for *Gardens Illustrated* and the *Historic Roses Journal*. He is a particular fan of Dean Reynolds Hole, the Nottinghamshire vicar who founded the National Rose Society. Martin's garden history blog can be found at www.storytellingarden.co.uk.

Left to right: 'Irish Elegance' [Dickson, 1905], Hall of Fame rose 'Elina' [Dickson, 1983] and 'Freedom' [Dickson, 1984].

Images: Charles Quest-Ristón and Stan Shebs CC BY-SA 3.0



Two famous rose breeding families call it a day

Martin Stott

Turn the opening pages of *The Rosarian's Year Book* of 1896 and you will find on page six a beautiful advert from Benjamin R Cant – “rose grower of Colchester”. It declares that he is a seven times winner of the Champion Trophy and Gold Medal of the National Rose Society. And – in bold capital letters – that he has won **“1,870 OTHER FIRST PRIZES, 77 SILVER CUPS, PIECES OF PLATE, AND MEDALS”**.

The modest Mr Cant tells us he is the “most successful rose grower and exhibitor for the last 47 years”.

Two pages on and nephew Frank Cant, who broke away to set up his own business in the early 1880s, proclaims his own virtues – winner of the “The Champion Trophy of the National Rose Society *FOUR TIMES Since 1888*.” (This “in addition to many cups, gold and silver medals and 550 other first prizes”.)

The final advert that year belonged to Alex Dickson & Sons from Newtownards in Co. Down, established in 1836. Though more modest in form, it tells us that Dicksons had – like

Benjamin Cant – been awarded “SEVEN gold medals by the National Rose Society.”

The Cant family businesses reunited in the 20th century. Dicksons, which had its own family splits, did the same. And both continued to compete against each other. For a while the Dicksons even had a branch of their business on the edge of Colchester, competing almost toe to toe against Cants.

The fruit of that friendly rivalry was dozens of great roses.

But a rivalry that has spanned three centuries has now ended. Last year Cants closed; Colin Dickson, the last of six generations of Dicksons to breed roses, has hung up his budding knife and in the next few months will shut up his business too.

Below left to right: ‘Alpine Sunset’ [Cant, 1974], Hall of Fame rose ‘Just Joey’ [Cant, 1972] and ‘Cupid’ [Cant, 1915].

Images: Cant Roses, Someone10x CC BY 2.0 and Stan Shebs CC BY-SA 3.0



Cants

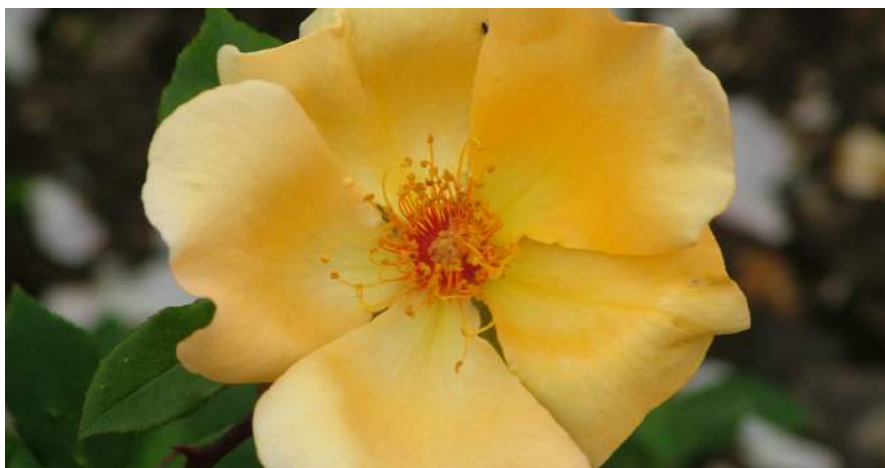
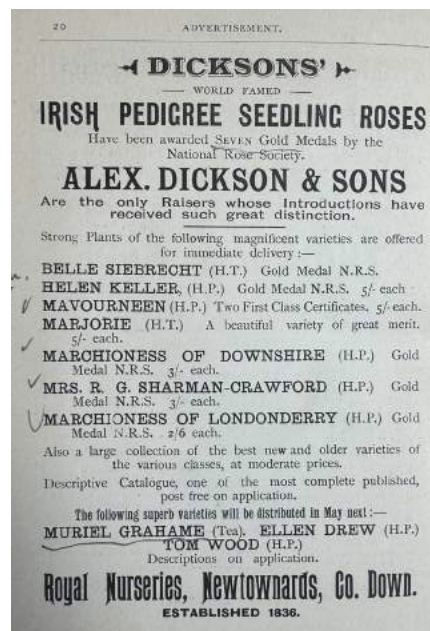
Cants Roses began life as a nursery in England in the 1720s and may have been selling roses as early as the 1730s according to its last co-owner, Roger Pawsey. Inspired by Henry Bennett's pioneering work to hybridise roses by hand, Benjamin Cant (1827-1900) probably started selectively breeding in the 1870s. The first rose he introduced – in 1875 – is believed to be 'Prince Arthur', though no-one knows if it was bred or found by Cant. By 1880 he was making his mark at the rose shows. Nephew Frank Cant (1857-1928) followed in his tracks. The two companies bred some outstanding roses, like 'Ben Cant' (1901), 'Blush Rambler' (1903) and 'Augustus Hartmann' (1914).

Dicksons

Over in Northern Ireland, George Dickson I and his two sons, Alexander II and George II, began breeding roses just four years after Benjamin Cant – in 1879. They took their first trio of strong roses to London in 1886 – a red Hybrid Perpetual, 'Earl of Dufferin', 'Lady Helen Stewart' (another red), and a pink Tea they called 'Miss Ethel Brownlow'. In 1885 Queen Victoria

Above right:
Adverts for both
Cants of
Colchester and
Dickson Nurseries
from *The
Rosarian's Year
Book* of 1896

Right: 'Tom Wood'
[Dickson, 1896] at
Chemins de la
Rose, Doué and
'Mrs Oakley'
Fisher [Cant, 1921]
at Mottisfont 2008



Images: Charles Quest-Ristón and Martin Stott

granted the company its first Royal Warrant. Its first Gold Medal came in 1892 with 'Mrs W. J. Grant'.

By its centenary in 1936 the company had so many gold medals the Dicksons caused them to be melted down and formed into golden roses, mounted and presented as a mayoral chain for the Borough of Newtownards.

Post-war recovery

During the second World War rose production ceased in Britain and the fields were turned over to food production. It took time for breeding to start again. Alexander Dickson III (1893-1975) – known as 'Sandy' – began slowly rebuilding his rose breeding department. In 1954 he produced 'Margaret' and 'Sir Winston Churchill'. Four years later his fiery orange red Floribunda, 'Dickson's Flame', won the National Rose Society's supreme award.

Sandy's son, Pat Dickson (1926-2012), began breeding in 1957 producing some outstanding roses over his lifetime, including 'Grandpa Dickson' (1966) and 'Red Devil' (1967). 'Redgold' (1967) won an All America Award. 'Beautiful Britain' (1983) was voted 'Rose of the Year' by professional growers.

Over at Cants it took a little longer for breeding to resume. Roger Pawsey was born in 1941. In 1959, and just 17, he was sent to Northern Ireland to spend eight months at the Dicksons'



Pat and Colin Dickson evaluating the rose field with Sammy the dog, about 2007.

Image: Dickson Roses

“The fruit of that friendly rivalry was dozens of great roses. But a rivalry that has spanned three centuries has now ended.”

nursery. “They were trading rivals but good friends,” says Roger. “My father asked Pat if I could come over there, just to see how other businesses work. That’s where I saw Pat doing the breeding. When I got back, I persuaded my aunt, Miss Cant, who was my late mother’s sister, to let me use some of the old greenhouses to start breeding.”

He attributes his subsequent success not to any scientific method but simply having an eye for a good rose. He produced only 5-6,000 seedlings a year. But that was enough. It can take eight

years to take a rose from a seedling to commercial viability. Roger’s most successful rose is probably Hall of Fame rose ‘Just Joey’ (1972) – the naming of which has gone down in history.

“I went into my Dad’s office and said I wanted to name a rose after my wife, who is called Joanna, but likes to be called ‘Joey’. And he turned around to me and said: ‘What? Just Joey?’ And that’s how it stuck. It wasn’t a perfect bloom, but its colour was unique. And people loved it.”

He tells the story of going on holiday to New Zealand with his wife and sitting in the courtyard of their hotel in Christchurch among a host of potted roses. “There was a ‘Just Joey’ in full flower. So, I went to see the owner. She didn’t know who I was. She told me she loved her roses and I asked which was her

favourite. She said 'Just Joey' was. I said: 'Well would you like to come and meet her?' She looked at me strangely. Then I told her: 'I'm the breeder and Joey is outside.' We didn't pay for any drinks that night!"

Other triumphs followed, including 'Goldstar' (1981), 'Alpine Sunset' (1974) and 'English Miss' (1977).

As Roger was reviving the Cants rose breeding tradition, over in Northern Ireland yet another generation of Dicksons was entering the glasshouse. Pat Dickson's son Colin started in 1977. It was one of his best years, resulting in 'Elina', 'Tequila Sunrise', 'Disco Dancer', 'Lovely Lady' and 'Freedom'. He says: "I was just brought up with breeding. I was at boarding school from 13 to 18 and we were allowed out on Sundays to go home. My father would come and pick me up and he was doing the hybridising

"I went into my Dad's office and said I wanted to name a rose after my wife, who is called Joanna, but likes to be called 'Joey'. And he turned around to me and said: 'What? Just Joey?' And that's how it stuck. "

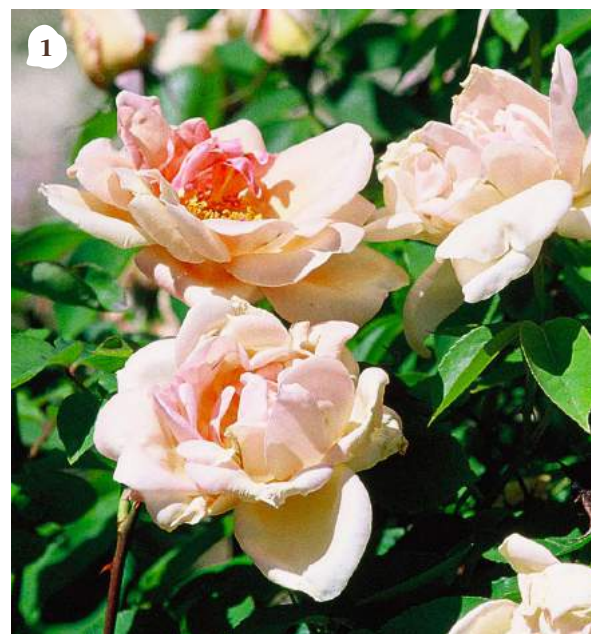
Below: Roger Pawsey with wife Joanna who is the inspiration Hall of Fame rose 'Just Joey'.

Image: Roger Pawsey

at the time. He'd say he hadn't finished and needed some help, so that's how I got started. It was in my blood!"

At the height of production, working in greenhouses 110 feet long x 30 feet wide, he was generating 15,000 crosses and quarter of a million seeds but found that was too many. He was brutal in weeding out weaklings. He says: "You know what a good rose is – you have to cut the rubbish out quickly. Meiland would save everything but as soon as I could tell it wasn't going to make the grade I kicked it out to let the others mature and give them space. I like a rose that stands up and has a good neck so you don't have to bend yours to look at it."

His favourite rose is the beautiful pale yellow Hybrid Tea, 'Elina' (1983), which is a Hall of Fame





1. 'Duchess of Wellington' [Dickson, 1909]
2. 'Blush Rambler' [Cant, 1903]
at Wakehurst Place
3. 'Lady Mary Corry' [Dickson, 1900]
at La Roseraie du Désert
4. 'Ards Rover' [Dickson, 1898]
at Mottisfont
5. 'Lady Ursula' [Dickson, 1908]
at Sangerhausen

Images: Charles Quest-Ritson



rose. There is a family dispute as to who bred it. Pat believed he had because it was not in Colin's main breeding house. Colin says he was using the greenhouse as an overspill and that it was he who decided to take pollen from the Kordes rose, 'Lolita', and cross it with Pat's creation, 'Nana Mouskouri'. Was the dispute ever resolved? "We agreed to disagree," he laughs.

The horticultural world has changed significantly over the decades that Roger (now 82) and Colin (67) have been breeding. Roger says that when the British Association of Rose Breeders was formed in 1973 there were around 400 registered licensed growers in the country. Today it is under 30.

He adds: "My Dad told me that in the 1950s there were over 50 million

rose stocks being planted in the UK. I would imagine today it is no more than six million. The whole market has changed. As we got older we sold our farmland to developers. It was good for my pension but not for the nursery. The houses they built there have barely any gardens – all those customers on our doorstep and none with any space to grow roses!"

Looking back on the history of the two companies, Roger says: "We and Dicksons were always friendly rivals. For both of us the most important thing was to improve the rose for the benefit of the public, because you don't get anywhere if you don't please your customer."

Though retiring, both men hope their roses will continue to do that for many years to come.

Below left to right: 'Sheelagh Baird' [Cant, 1934] and 'Golden Ophelia' [Cant, 1918].

Images: Charles Quest-Ritson



“The horticultural world has changed significantly over the decades that Roger (now 82) and Colin (67) have been breeding. ...When the British Association of Rose Breeders was formed in 1973 there were around 400 registered licensed growers in the country. Today it is under 30.”

1. 'It's a Wonderful Life' (Dictwix) was Rose of the Year in the UK in 2022.
2. 'A Fond Farewell' (Dicchiffon)
3. 'Honey, Bee Mine' (Dicsolar)

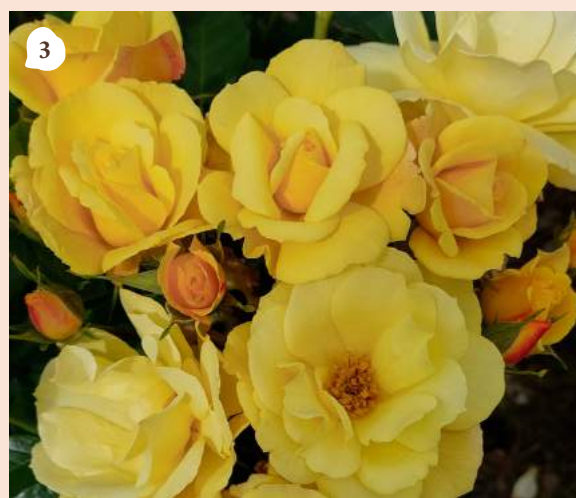
Below: 'Ulster'
[Dickson, 1899]

Image: Charles Quest-Ritson



Dicksons' last great roses?

If Colin's rose breeding career got off to an astonishing start, his finish looks to be just as strong. 'It's a Wonderful Life' (Dictwix) was named Rose of the Year in the UK in 2022. His last rose was meant to be 'A Fond Farewell' (Dicchiffon) but then came another 'Honey, Bee Mine' (Dicsolar) – both of which look like winners.



Wild rose hunting in China

Helga Brichet relives an adventure of a lifetime chasing the trail of *R. chinensis* var. *spontanea* in remote Chinese mountains.

Rosa chinensis var.
spontanea at 1,168 m
north of Chengdu

Image: Helga Brichet



The year was 2001, the end of April. The meeting point was Chengdu, capital of the south western province of Sichuan. Our little group comprised: two members of the Japanese Old Roses Club, Mr. and Mrs. Kawai; a well-known artist, Yukiko Ruogo; a botanist from the Japanese Natural History Museum in Chiba, Yuki Mikanagi; the Japanese VP of the WFRS, Akira Ogawa; and myself. With us also was Mikinori Ogisu, the Japanese botanist and plant explorer, whose knowledge of, and respect for, China's native flora is now internationally recognised.

The motivations for our expedition into the wild countryside were the immense joy and shared pleasure of seeing *R. chinensis* var. *spontanea* in its natural habitat, to enable us to draw conclusions as to the natural environment of the plant, and to note the plants with which it would be associated in the wild. The variability of plants according to their environment and climate is, in itself, a fascinating subject.

Discovery

The first record of this legendary rose's growth in the wild was made by Augustine Henry in 1884, who described his discovery in the *The Gardeners' Chronicle* in 1902. Then it was spied by Ernest Henry Wilson in 1910 and later by the American plant-hunter Joseph Rock, perhaps best known for his discovery of *Paeonia rockii*.

The plant's habit was described as variable: it could become a healthy climber, romping up trees with the

aid of its hooked, brown prickles, or remain a compact bush when heavily grazed, in spite of its prickles! The colour of blooms varied considerably from pale pink to lustrous pink to buff, red or even white, with only some plants showing the typical colour change from pale to much darker with age. Another distinctive feature of the blooms, together with those of *R. gigantea*, is that its petals reflex outwards, a feature introduced into some modern roses.

No more was then heard of this rose until 1983 when Mikinori Ogisu located it in a remote valley in southwest Sichuan, introducing it to the West in 1987. This rediscovery caused a sensation and was honoured by a cover of the Royal National Rose Society's magazine.

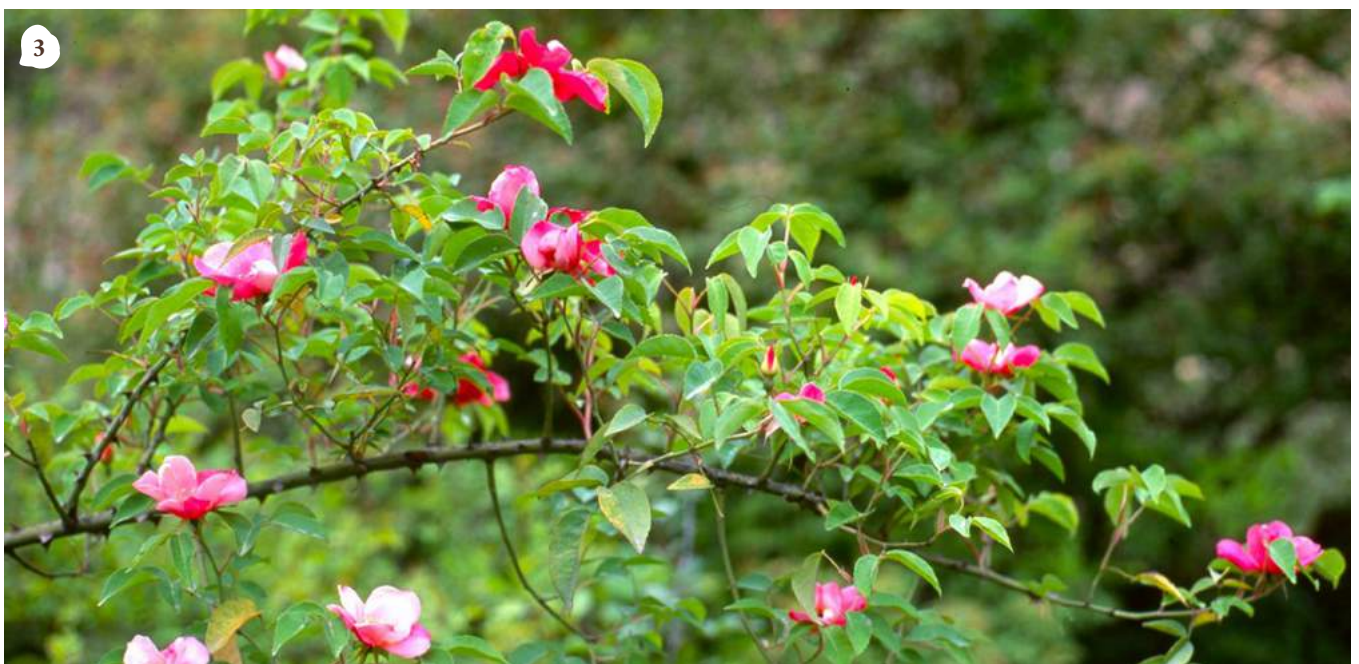
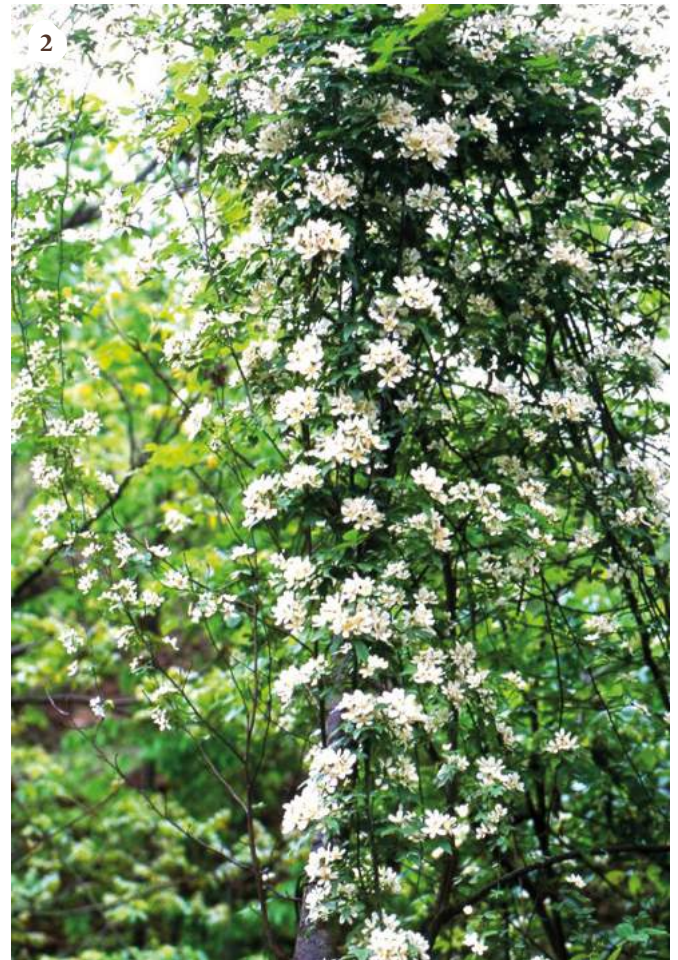
Mikinori Ogisu was born in Owari in 1951 and discovered early his love for indigenous flora, thus setting his heart on a career in horticulture. At the age of twenty he went to Europe and found a welcoming home at the Kalmthout Arboretum in Belgium, established by members of the de Belder family, especially Robert and Jelena. From there he proceeded, again as a visiting student, to Kew and Wisley. It was natural that he should meet England's foremost rosarian, Graham Stuart Thomas, who challenged him to find the ambiguous *R. chinensis* var. *spontanea* in its natural habitat. However, at that time China was still closed to foreign students and private travellers, and Ogisu had to wait until 1980 before entering the country, and until 1983 in



1. Rose hunters north of Chengdu photographing *Rosa chinensis* var. *spontanea* discovered at 1,168m altitude
2. *Rosa banksiae* var. *normalis*
3. *Rosa chinensis* var. *spontanea*

Images: Helga Brichet

“The colour of blooms varied considerably from pale pink to lustrous pink to buff, red or even white.”



order to receive permission to undertake research as a foreign student enrolled at the University of Sichuan.

In his book, *In Search of Long Lost Plants*, Ogisu vividly describes the moment he happened upon this elusive wildling:

'In the delirium of high fever, I thought I saw something red move in the dim field of vision. Could it be...? It was an area of about 1,560 metres above sea level in Leipo Xian, SW Sichuan, on a dry slope facing west, that I thought I saw something red move. There I saw red flowers 5 to 6 centimetres across on the twigs of a low shrub 1.5 to 2 metres high. I took a closer look and saw the open pistils sticking out of the calyx tube – the unique characteristic of roses in the *Chinensis* section, *R. chinensis* var. *spontanea*! The flower buds were very pale pink – almost white – but as they opened, the pink of their petals got darker and darker, and the stamens also changed colour from yellow to crimson. How lucky I was to have forced myself to come here when I was not feeling very well! I seriously thought that I was guided by a god.'



Rosa banksiae var. *normalis* and
Rosa chinensis var. *spontanea* at
1,168m, north of Chengdu

Image: Helga Brichet

Setting off from Chengdu

On our meeting in Chengdu, we enjoyed a 'hot' dinner (Chengdu is renowned as China's capital of spicy food) and an evening at a Chinese theatre with juggling, fire eating, mask changes and acrobatics. Ogisu-san meanwhile



“It was a truly unbelievable sight, a dream. I pinched myself and wondered whether I was capable of appreciating the marvel before me.”

taking took advantage of one of the fringe services of – a neck massage.

Following a good night's sleep, we loaded ourselves and all our luggage into a small van driven by an exceptional Chinese chauffeur (all Chinese chauffeurs in my experience are excellent!). We left Chengdu, heading north in the direction of Jiangyon and Pingwu. Fortunately, the weather – as it was throughout our trip – was kind to us.

After about two hours we were ecstatic to see the first wild roses, *R. roxburghii* f. *normalis* and the *R. multiflora* var. *cathayensis* along the road near Mianyang. After a roadside lunch, there were more Multifloras, this time the white form, together with *R. roxburghii* f. *normalis* and *R. rubus*. Passing the turn-off for Beichuan, which had been the area where Wilson discovered *Rosa chinensis* var. *spontanea*, the road became narrower and steeper, gradually winding into the hills, and we caught a glimpse of a *Clematis armandii* entwined with *R. cymosa*, not yet in flower.

Tension heightened, our eyes intently skimming the vegetation in search of the elusive blooms so ardently dreamt of. Ogisu-san mused that perhaps we were too late, that this year the season had been early. Our collective hearts plummeted and conversation became muted.

Chasing *R. chinensis* var. *spontanea*

Turning up the road from Gucheng, we stopped at Quingxi to photograph the *R. banksia* var.

normalis, an overwhelming site of metres and metres of umbels of delicate, white, perfumed blooms, like a bridal veil, aptly named in Chinese ‘The Seven-Mile Perfumed Rose.’ And there, in the middle of the road we noticed the fallen pink petals of *R. chinensis* var. *spontanea*!

Everyone jumped hurriedly into the van and encouraged the driver to continue higher and higher, along the winding road until, rounding a corner, there it was – *R. chinensis* var. *spontanea* at 1,168 metres, next to a fine *R. banksiae* spilling from the branches of a tree, at the feet of which was another *R. roxburghii* f. *normalis*. It was a truly unbelievable sight, a dream. I pinched myself and wondered whether I was capable of appreciating the marvel before me.

At the following bend of the road a deep red form was succeeded by others of various tones right up to the summit at 1,400 metres. Huge bushes covered in blooms of differing colours occupied the entire area, where we spent the afternoon in what we believed to be paradise. We captured the scene with our cameras, in watercolour paintings, in films, in written descriptions and with herbarium presses. It was hardly necessary to speak. We had realised our dreams.

Climbing

We returned to Pingwu and the following day headed north west to Nanping, where we found a ‘Maikwai’ rose in front of a home. This is a *Rosa rugosa* hybrid with very fragrant, double, purplish, crimson flowers used for centuries



Mai Kwai in a private garden in Normandy

Image: Charles Quest-Ritson

“I have travelled all over the world in pursuit of roses, but those days spent hunting for *R. chinensis* var. *spontanea* in the company of such knowledgeable rosarians are unforgettable.”

(as with Damask roses in Europe) for perfume and medicinal purposes. Nowadays, it is often planted in gardens or on verandas, the blooms of which are steamed and dried to make tea, which is also highly valued for its medicinal effects.

The soil had now become more acid, and before long we had our first sighting of the wild rhododendrons (some pale, others deep lilac), betula, pine trees, daphnes and ground orchids. The cardiocrinum lilies were not yet in bloom, but there were Tibetan hazelnuts and young boys stood along the road peddling baskets of wild cherries. They were smaller than the varieties we knew, semi-translucent and deliciously sweet.

We were now in the Autonomous Region, where the vegetation became sparse, with the remaining snow still in abundance. At a height of 2,500 metres, larch, picea and betula were the most common trees, together with a yellow meconopsis. At 3,000 metres the only vegetation in summer seemed to be low-growing rhododendrons and stunted plants of a *Juniperus*. Finally, we started the descent among bamboo to a fast-running stream with endless cascades of the Banksian rose and *Eremurus chinensis* against the steep cliffs, but also *R. hugonis* – China’s own yellow rose – in the valley. This rose seems to like dry soil, full of pebbles, in mountain valleys where it may reach a height of 2.5 metres.

We visited the Jiuzhaigou Valley, a world biosphere reserve tucked away in wild mountains, which every Chinese would like to visit once in their lives. It vaunts five beauties: lakes; waterfalls; mountains; trees; and five Tibetan villages, all of breathtaking scenic beauty. The lakes contain a high concentration of calcium, making the water appear both blue and transparent.

We returned to Chengdu by a different route. The Tibetan villages were few, the houses with slate roofs, the upper floors with carved wooden beams and surrounded by stone walls enthroned by irises. The arid plains evidenced little agriculture except buckwheat and were inhabited by horses and yaks.

We descended to 2,250 metres where bushes of *R. multibracteata*

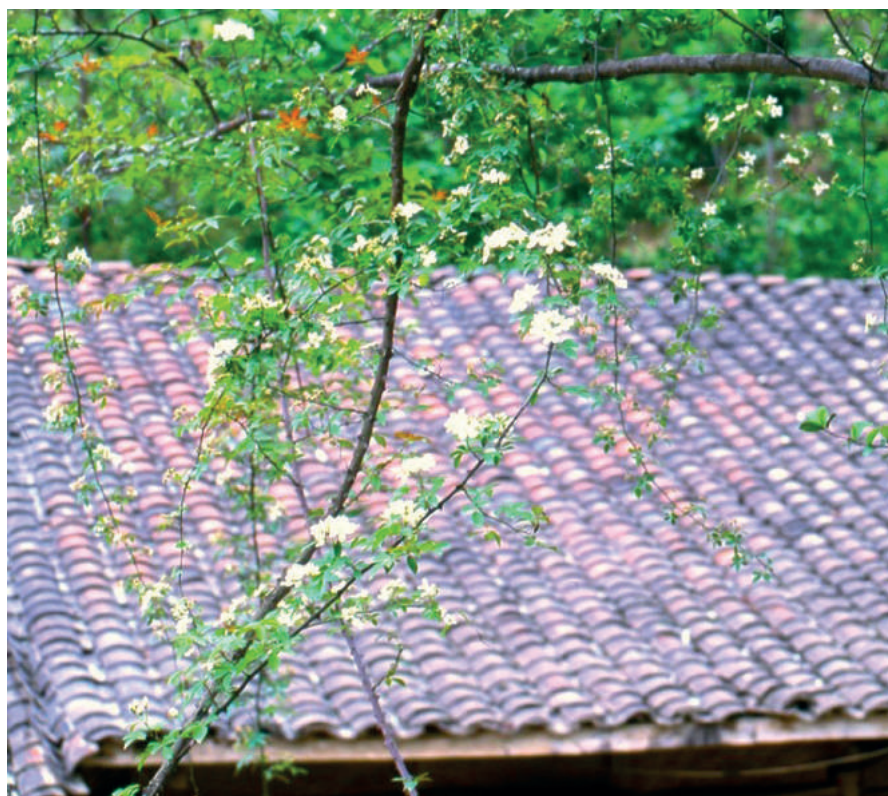
along the road were not yet in bloom, neither was *R. soulieana*, but *R. banksiae* once more proliferated. Unlike the cultivated European form, the wild plants have sharp, curved, brown prickles by means of which they grip their way up and through neighbouring vegetation. In the tiny, farmers' gardens we saw 'Maikwai' once more and the Tibetan hellebore and numbers of ancient roses which we could not identify.

Heading for Baoxing

The following day we set out for Tian quan, a village which has given its name to many plants, with deep and luxuriant ravines whose waterfalls cascaded into fast-flowing turquoise streams beneath ancient *Davidia* trees in bloom! From Na na, (the rainiest town in Sichuan) we headed to Baoxing along a valley of slow-moving turquoise water, tainted by the famous white marble which is extensively mined in the area. We stopped to admire the *Bergenia emeiensis* on a steep slope (beware of the leeches, I was told!) and *Epimedium davidii*.

After lunch at Baoxing, we found *R. sericea* almost everywhere. At 2,460 metres the ancient rhododendrons had virtually become trees. Ogisu-san estimated their age to be at least 200 years. Here, too, we spied the epiphytic *Rhododendron moupinense*, now nearly extinct in the wild.

The beautiful *Davidia* trees in full bloom led us towards the Christian missionary station where Father David resided for nine months in



R. banksiae normalis
in Sichuan

Image: Helga Brichet

1869. The beautiful wooden church and mission station surrounds a charming rectangular courtyard planted with 'Maikwai' and wild peonies, which we were told are now so difficult to find near inhabited areas, as the roots are much prized for medicinal purposes.

It was a glorious trip. I have travelled all over the world in pursuit of roses, but those days spent hunting for *R. chinensis* var. *spontanea* in the company of such knowledgeable rosarians are unforgettable – the landscapes, the people and, of course, the spectacular roses!



Helga Brichet is a former President of the WFRS and one of the most travelled of distinguished rosarians.



Typical *Rosa gallica*,
growing in Slovenia

Image: Charles Quest-Ritson



Early forms of *Rosa gallica*

Charles Quest-Ritson

In the March 2019 edition of BAON, Yuki Mikanagi drew our attention to a nomenclatural anomaly that generations of writers about roses had failed to notice: the double-flowered cultivar we know as ‘*Officinalis*’ is actually the botanical type for *Rosa gallica*. It was given this name by Linnaeus because his specimen – now in the possession of the Linnaean Society of London – was sent to him by a correspondent in France. And Mikanagi argues – quite correctly – that we need to accept another name for the wild species of *R. gallica*, even though ‘*Officinalis*’ is an historical development with its origins in cultivation.

A similar error occurred in the naming of *R. banksiae* and *R. roxburghii* – in both cases, a double-flowered form was described and became the published type, which means that the ‘wild species’ must be referred to as var. *normalis* in the case of *R. banksiae* and f. *normalis* for *R. roxburghii*. No adjustment has yet been made in the case of *R. gallica*, but Mikanagi suggests that the wild *Rosa gallica* species should now be designated *Rosa gallica* var. *pumila* or *R. gallica*

var. *austriaca*. [Fig. 1] Further suggestions have been advanced by other botanists and historians, always keen to apply the rules of nomenclatural priority, but there is, as yet, no consensus on how to treat this species. For the purposes of this article, therefore, I take *Rosa gallica* to be the wild single-flowered species and 'Officinalis' to be a cultivar.

Rosa gallica is a species that may be found growing in the wild from France in the west and across as far as the Caucasus mountains in the east of its range. We do not know whether its presence across such an extensive area is the result of natural distribution or whether it is native only to a small area, from which it was spread by human activity. Georgians have suggested Georgia as a possible place of origin, and Turkish botanists have promoted the idea that their country is the *locus classicus*. And, of course, the French know it as 'la rose de France', pointing out that it may have become naturalised as an introduced species in Spain and Portugal but it must unquestionably be endemic to France.

What we do know is that Gallica roses were grown in ancient Egypt, Greece and Rome. Some enthusiasts believe that the roses depicted in the frescos and mosaics of Pompeii and Herculaneum can be identified and given the names of cultivars that we still grow today. I remain unconvinced. [Fig. 2]

Rosa gallica is a foundation species from which a large number of 'old' roses are descended. DNA analyses

have found it among the ancestors of the Alba and Damask roses, as well as the group of garden hybrids that we just call Gallicas. Indeed, we are told that *Rosa gallica* is also the dominant presence in most Hybrid Perpetual roses, which are important ancestors of all Hybrid Teas and Floribundas. In short, it is fair to suggest that it is the most important Old World species among the progenitors of modern roses. But what we do not know is exactly which forms or hybrids of *R. gallica* were responsible for the development of Gallica roses as we see them today. Nor do we know whether recent DNA studies, with their dendrograms and cluster analyses, used 'Officinalis' or the true wild *Rosa gallica* for their researches. [Fig. 3] And, so far as I know, no comparison has yet been made between the DNA of 'Officinalis' and that of the wild species. My own belief is that 'Officinalis' is morphologically so distinct that it may be of hybrid origin.

The first question to ask is whether double-flowered forms have ever been found among wild populations of *Rosa gallica*. None is recorded in botanical literature, except where they have turned out to be 'Officinalis' which, but for Linnaeus, should properly be regarded as a cultivar. In my experience, wild colonies of the species are consistent in their characteristics – there is no apparent variation from plant to plant. They always have five petals and no hint of more.

I have grown plants from seed of two forms of *Rosa gallica* that I collected in the wild – *rubra* from

“Rosa gallica is a species that may be found growing in the wild from France in the west and across as far as the Caucasus mountains in the east of its range.”

1. *Rosa gallica* var *pumila*, growing in Tuscany
2. A probable Gallica cultivar in the House of the Golden Bracelet fresco at Pompeii.
3. *Rosa gallica* 'Officinalis'
4. *Rosa gallica* in Provence

Images: Charles Quest-Ritson and btwashburn
CC BY 2.0





Provence and *pumila* from Tuscany – and they came true from seed. All the seedlings resembled exactly the plants that I saw in the wild. [Fig. 4] There was no variation whatsoever among them. But I have also sown selfed seeds of ‘Officinalis’, carefully prepared to avoid self-fertilisation, and found that the seedlings exhibit quite a wide range of morphological variation, which is one reason why I suggest that a genetic comparison between ‘Officinalis’ and any wild-collected *Rosa gallica* would show evidence of a hybrid origin for ‘Officinalis’. [Fig. 5]

‘Officinalis’ is certainly one of the oldest cultivars and the only one that we can prove to have existed before 1500. It turns up in Italian Renaissance paintings dating to the 15th-century but no images can firmly be ascribed to it before 1400. From the horticultural point of view, ‘Officinalis’ is such a major improvement on the type that we can assume that there were stages on the way between the first domestication of *R. gallica* and the emergence of ‘Officinalis’. Many years ago, in Cáceres province in Spain, I found a possible half-way cultivar growing on the site of a small abandoned farm. [Fig. 6] But it is hard to know, short of DNA evidence, whether this Spanish cultivar was a progenitor or a descendant of ‘Officinalis’.

There are many forms of *Rosa gallica* that resemble the species in all but one small detail. I have a form with dark petals that came from an abandoned homestead in the Epirus region of northern



- | | |
|--|--|
| 5. Group of selfed seedlings of ‘Officinalis’ in author’s garden | 8. Found rose in Rosetta Borchia’s garden near Urbino |
| 6. Found rose from Cáceres, a possible a progenitor of ‘Officinalis’, in the author’s garden | 9. St Francis of Assisi, with symbolic roses |
| 7. Dark form of <i>Rosa gallica</i> from Greece, in author’s garden | 10. St Francis’s thornless rose at Assisi |
| | 11. Unnamed Gallica painted by Hans Simon Holtzbecker c.1660 |

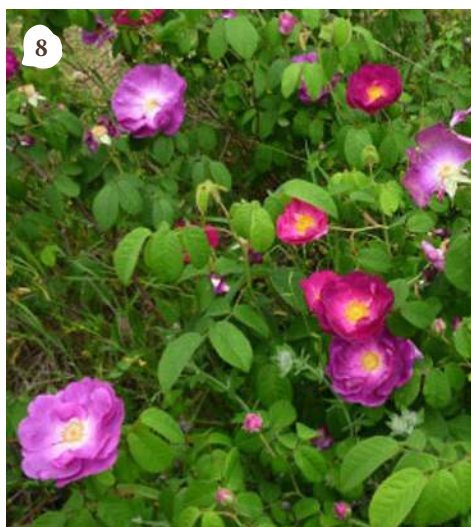
Images: Charles Quest-Ritson





“The Rose has a special place in the religious culture of the Italians and many of these found roses come from old shrines and oratories in deep country areas.”

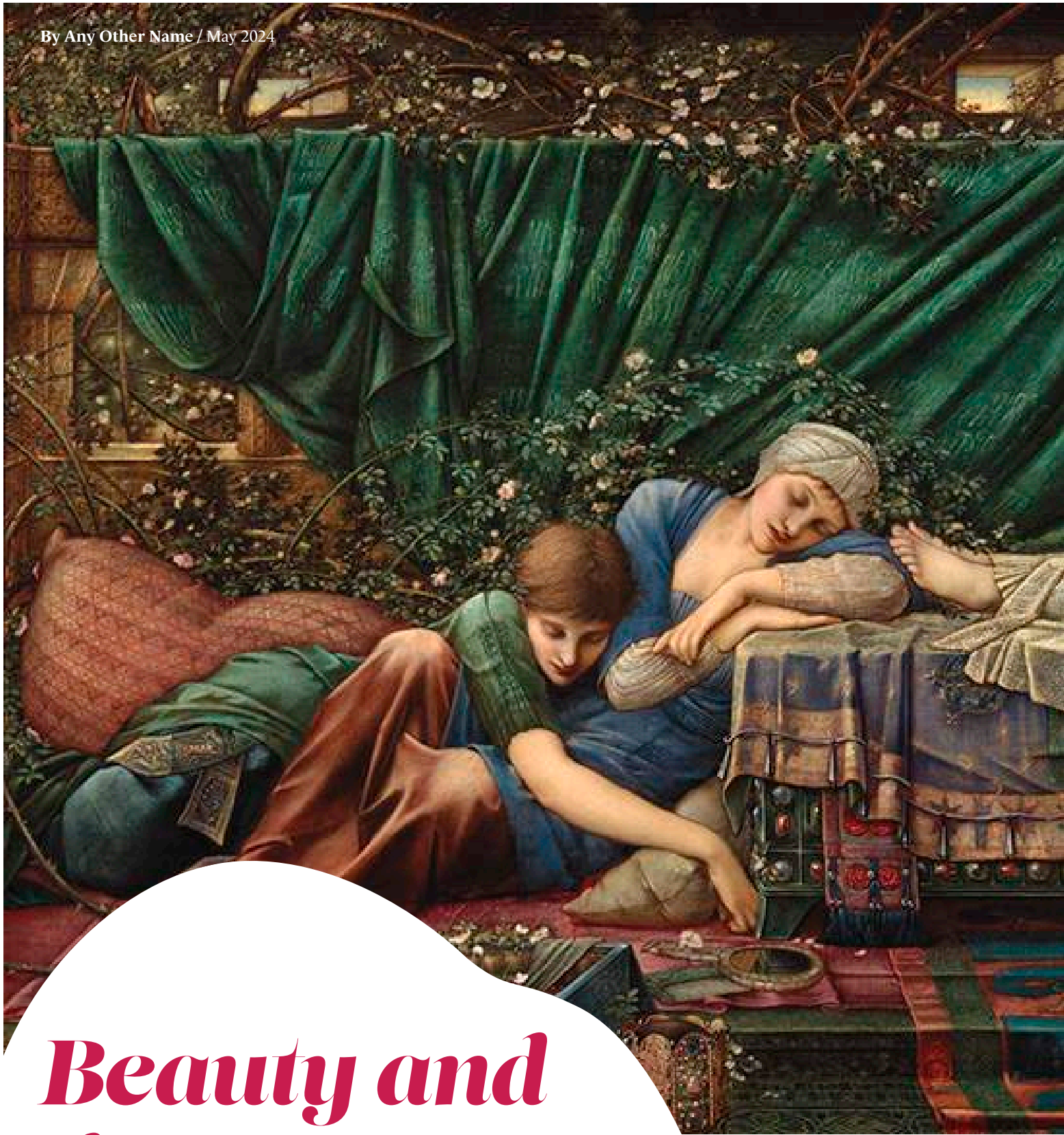
Greece. [Fig. 7] Clearly it was discovered, appreciated and taken into the garden by a person who found its different colour attractive. And rose rustlers like Rosetta Borchia in the province of Pesaro and Urbino have gathered collections of *rose ritrovate* that are little known outside Italy. The Rose has a special place in the religious culture of the Italians and many of these found roses come from old shrines and oratories in deep country areas. [Fig. 8] We shall have a chance to see the old, forgotten Gallicas of Scandinavia when we visit Alnarp as part of the WFRS convention in July.



There is another prehistoric rose that I have seen in Italy – at Assisi, dating back to about the year 1220. [Fig. 9] It seems that St Francis of Assisi was taunted by a lack of faith and impure thoughts about an attractive nun. He therefore threw himself naked into some briars so that its prickles would mortify his body and remove his doubts and temptations. However, on contact with the Saint's body, the prickly rose immediately lost its barbs. And its offspring have remained thornless to this very day. They grow in a small garden

adjoining the Basilica of Santa Maria degli Angeli and are sometimes known as *Rosa canina* var. *assisiensis*. However, any rosarian who reads this magazine would immediately recognise that they are actually an early form of *Rosa gallica*, close to the type but with a few extra petals and long spindly stems. [Fig. 10] Two asides may throw further light on this legend. First, a similar tale is told of St Benedict at Subiaco in about 500 AD. Second, Christians believe that roses only developed prickles after the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden.

The extra petals and greater vigour of St Francis's rose represent a stage in the development of forms and hybrids of the wild *Rosa gallica* towards the hybrids that we know emerged during the course of the 16th century – cultivars like 'Conditorum' and (probably) 'La Belle Sultane'. Roses are fairly well documented after about 1600, though one glance at 17th-century watercolours makes clear how many of them have since disappeared from cultivation. [Fig. 11] But I am convinced that much more DNA analysis of the kind undertaken by the Swedish scientists we will meet in the coming Scandinavian conference would reveal a great number of half-forgotten rose cultivars. This would help us to understand much better their development in cultivation in the centuries before the Italian Renaissance and the emergence of modern horticulture.



Beauty and the rose

James Henderson



The Briar Rose: the Rose Bower, Edward Burne-Jones (1885-1890). Oil on canvas

Part of four original paintings illustrating the Sleeping Beauty fairytale.

The sleeping beauty is surrounded by her slumbering attendants as she awaits the prince to wake her with a kiss. The princess was modelled on Burne-Jones's daughter Margaret.

Courtesy of the Faringdon Collection

What picture has the most roses painted in it? A contender would be the great Pre-Raphaelite artist Burne-Jones's "The Briar Rose" cycle which can be seen at Buscot Park in Oxfordshire – a property that was in my family for many years and now belongs to the National Trust.

It is in fact a series of pictures depicting the Sleeping Beauty legend. The paintings do not present a sequential story but rather capture a moment in time. There are four main panels (each nearly 50 x 100 inches in size) and seven smaller interlocking ones. We meet the prince in the first main canvas. In that one alone I have counted over a hundred rose flowers. Sleeping Beauty lies in the final panel.

The rose briar runs through the sequence of pictures giving it a narrative thread. It is beautifully

“The whole place gave one the impression of being the enchanted forest where the fairy-tale princess still slept.”

painted. Burne-Jones wrote to a friend asking to be sent a briar rose “hoary... thick as a wrist and with long horrible spikes on it... Three feet would be enough.” Certainly, he captured this in the finished picture.

The painting was an immense success when it was first shown at Agnew's galleries in Bond Street in 1890. It was subsequently exhibited in Liverpool and at Toynbee Hall, Whitechapel, London.

There was “enthusiasm amounting to ecstasy” as people flocked to see it. It was then sold to Lord Faringdon to hang at Buscot. When Burne-

Jones was staying nearby with his great friend William Morris at Kelmscott, he visited and was disappointed with how they looked.

He moved them within the house and added the seven extra panels that now join them together spanning three walls, and in which he continued the rose motif. He designed a framework of carved and gilt wood to give unity to the sequence.

Morris provided a poem to run below the four main canvases. The first main panel is called “The Briar Wood” and the inscription below it runs:

*The fateful slumber floats and flows
About the tangle of the rose;
But lo! The fated hand and heart
To rend the slumberous curse apart!*

The last of the four main panels is “The Rose Bower” with the lines below it:

*Here lies the hoarded love, the key
To all the treasure that shall be;
Come fated hand the gift to take
And smite this sleeping world awake*

In between these two we have “The Council Chamber” and “The Garden Court”. What is the painting all about? The key is surely in this poem. Morris and

The Saloon at Buscot Park. “The Briar Rose” series with the framework of carved and gilt wood Burne Jones designed specifically for the room

Image: Howard Stanbury CC BY-NC-SA 2.0





The Briar Rose: the Council Chamber,
Edward Burne-Jones (1885-1890). *Oil on
canvas*

The King, asleep and slumped on his
throne, is surrounded by sleeping
members of the council. Sleeping soldiers
can be seen under the draped curtains.

Courtesy of the Faringdon Collection

The Briar Rose: the Garden Court, Edward
Burne-Jones (1885-1890). *Oil on canvas*

Weavers are depicted asleep at their loom
with the castle walls and arches of roses
in the background.





Burne-Jones are harping back to a past before industrialisation. The world has walked in its sleep into a tawdry present from which it needs to be awoken.

However, it is not just this. It is a dream – a deep beautiful dream. And like many of our deepest dreams, it makes little sense in the cold light of day. The Knight in “The Briar Wood” canvas looks languid. He is not going to get far in cutting through the rose. The King on his throne in the council chamber appears to be wearing a papal gown. The weavers are in a highly polished, dirt-free room. Christian and Islamic motifs are muddled together. Where are we actually? It is all a glorious, beautiful absurdity, like the most extraordinary dream.

The picture is considered one of the greatest achievements of Victorian painting, but its huge

“The Knight in “The Briar Wood” canvas looks languid. He is not going to get far in cutting through the rose.”

popularity was short-lived. The horrors of the First World War were not far away, and a picture of roses and pretty girls seemed very dated as the new art movements on the continent came to dominate in the 20th century.

However, in the last 40 years there has been a revival of interest in late Victorian art. “The Briar Rose” has bloomed again, appreciated by a new audience.

“The Briar Rose” can be seen at Buscot Park from March to September. Admission is free to National Trust members.

The Briar Rose: the Briar Wood, Edward Burne-Jones (1885-1890). Oil on canvas

This painting depicts the Knight discovering the sleeping soldiers who have become completely entwined by the barbed thorns of the briar rose discovery of the sleeping soldiers by a Knight.

Courtesy of the Faringdon Collection



James Henderson is the son of Lord Faringdon. He and his wife, Lucinda, live at Buscot Park and manage the house and grounds on behalf of the National Trust.

Buscot Park garden

The rose narrative is continued within the gardens at Buscot. Its beautiful walled garden features roses prominently. Each wall represents one season. Roses planted include 'Tuscany Superb', 'Rose de Rêsch', 'Empress Josephine', 'Maiden's Blush', 'Königin von Dänemark', 'Jacques Cartier' and 'Ferdinand Pichard', as well as more modern roses, like 'Gertrude Jeckyll'. In the summer you may find courgettes and beans interplanted in some of the beds – potager-style. It works surprisingly well.

Within the 100-acre park is a water garden designed by the 20th-century landscape architect Harold Peto – a series of rills and fountains linking the house to the lake at the edge of the park. A white rose garden has been planted within the avenue, with roses like 'Jacqueline du Pré' and 'Margaret Merril'. James says Peto would probably not have approved, but visitors love it.

Martin Stott

Left: Roses in the walled garden at Buscot Park in Oxfordshire, England.



Roses in the garden at Buscot Park. Left, "Empress Josephine" (a found rose). Right, 'Pink Grootendorst' [Grootendorst, 1923].

Images: Martin Stott





An English princess's Swedish garden

Christel Kant and Christina Högardh-Ihr

*“The whole place gave
one the impression of
being the enchanted
forest where the fairy-
tale princess still slept.”*

The head gardener's
cottage at the end of
the flower walk in the
grounds of Sofiero
Palace, Helsingborg

Image: Dguendel, CC BY 4.0

One of the highlights of the WFRS conference in Sweden this summer will be a trip to the Sofiero palace and garden just north of Helsingborg.

The garden, with its steep ravines, herbaceous borders and many roses, was created in the early 20th century by an English princess, the Crown Princess Margaret, or 'Margareta', as she was known in Sweden.

Born Princess Margaret of Connaught in 1882, she grew up at Bagshot Park in Sussex, now home to Prince Edward and Sophie, the Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh. As a child, Margaret was called 'Daisy' and before she could read she was given her first book – about flowers. 'Familiar Wild Flowers', in four leatherbound volumes, was a gift from her grandmother, Queen Victoria, who lovingly wrote on the first page: "To Daisy from GanGan 1890."

Margaret's parents, the Duke and Duchess of Connaught, were both interested in gardening. She grew up at a time when the Arts and Crafts movement was developing a new style and way of thinking about gardening.

Margaret learned plant names in Latin from childhood, but also about soil, weeding and hard digging. Her artistic eye was nurtured through lessons with the French painter, Mademoiselle Fleurie, who in turn had been educated by Claude Monet.

Romance

Sweden's Crown Prince Gustav Adolf – later King Gustav VI Adolf – went on a tour of Europe's royal families in 1904 to find a bride. Apparently unsuccessful, it was rumoured in the London Evening Standard that he might settle for a President's daughter instead – Miss Alice Roosevelt. At the start of the following year Margaret and her sister went on their own tour, sparking more fevered marriage speculation in the press. First, she was to marry a Portuguese prince, then a Danish one. It was not to be. The family arrived in Cairo early in 1905 where she met Gustav and the two fell in love. They were married in June and received Sofiero, the summer castle of King Oscar II, as a wedding gift.

Arriving in Helsingborg they discovered that the locals had picked every daisy in the area to throw over their carriage as they rode from the train station to Sofiero. Each year when they returned to Sofiero thereafter they would find the locals had bedecked the station at Helsingborg with flowers for their arrival.

Margaret began transforming the park right away. She said: "The whole place gave one the impression of being the enchanted forest where the fairy-tale princess still slept." Enchanting it may have been, but she wanted more and she was happy to get her hands dirty helping to change it herself.

Early on she laid out a flower walk.



1. 'American Beauty' at Sofiero
2. Crown Princess Margaret of Connaught at Sofiero in 1905.
3. Margaret's favourite rose, Pernet-Ducher's Hybrid Tea, 'Prince de Bulgarie'

Images: Christina Högardh-Ihr and Wikimedia Commons

“Margaret had the architectural skill to understand and plan the gardens at Sofiero as a whole”



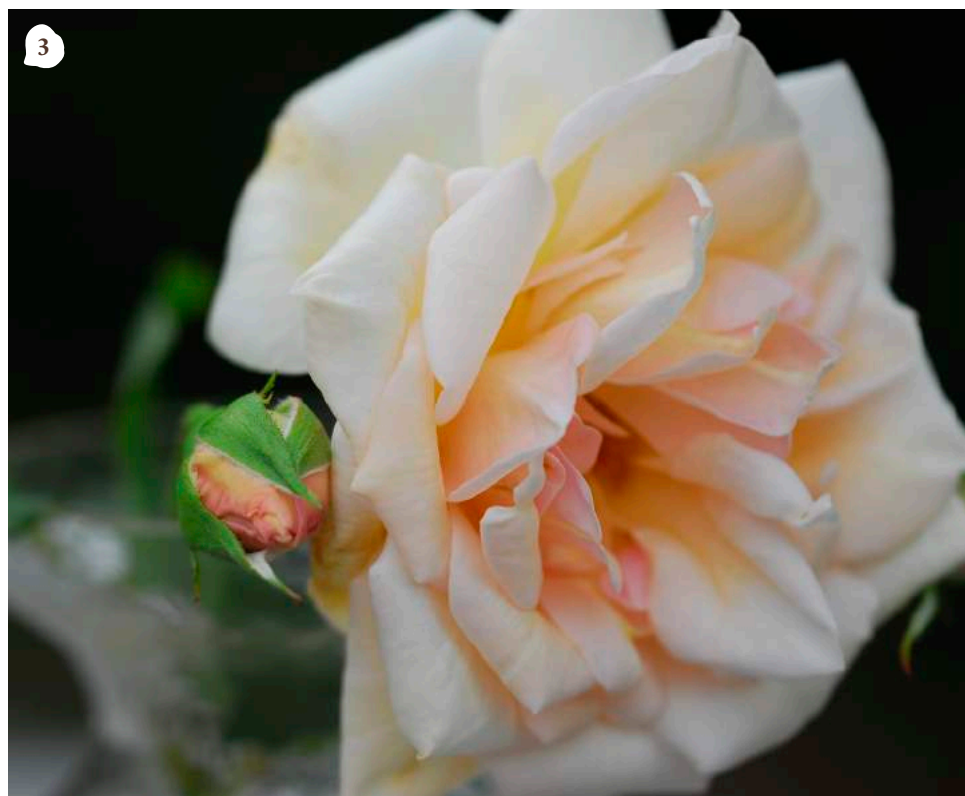
Her husband designed a water well made of a local red limestone to adorn it, which still stands today. At the end of the flower walk was a small cottage built for the head gardener in local traditional style, which also still exists. Close to the castle the beds were planted with perennials and summer flowers in squares – hot colours closest, blueish, cool colours in the distance, as Gertrude Jekyll had taught.

Roses were a prominent feature of the garden. She wrote: “Between the well and the cottage there are only roses, roses – all varieties, all colours, all sizes. A sea of roses.” A pergola was adorned with the pink Wichurana, ‘Dorothy Perkins’, which had only been introduced a few years earlier, in 1902. Margaret ensured garden seats were introduced so guests could rest and “enjoy to the full the rose-scented air”.

The crossing path to the east was planted with pear trees alternating with roses, each trained over a bower, creating a tunnel over the path and with *Narcissus poeticus* and forget-me-nots on the ground. You can almost feel her presence in the tight atmosphere.

Margaret wrote two books about gardening – *Our garden at Sofiero* and *From the flower garden* – which she illustrated with her own paintings and photographs.

In *Our garden at Sofiero* she listed her favourite roses as “‘Prince de Bulgarie’, with their pink and yellow blooms, ‘Rayon d’Or’ – a



charming pure golden rose; the luxuriant 'Laurette Messimy'; the simple and graceful 'Killarney'; and 'Souvenir du Président Carnot', an almost white rose. Another very generous rose is 'Conrad Ferdinand Meyer', with delightful flowers and of sturdy growth."

Others identified in the book include the Sweetbriar Hybrid, 'Anne of Geierstein', the Rubiginosa Hybrid, 'Lord Penzance', 'Bar le Duc', 'Dorothy', 'Veilchenblau', 'Dorothy Perkins' and 'Frau Karl Druschki' ('a rose that is very hardy'). She planted the China rose, 'Hermosa', among the rhododendrons and azaleas, along with blue delphiniums.

Margaret had the architectural skill to understand and plan the gardens at Sofiero as a whole, creating garden rooms as are found in Arts and Crafts gardens. Many say the greenhouses she built are even more beautiful than the castle. They still stand and are much treasured.

Margaret and Gustaf Adolf had five children. Their firstborn son, Gustaf Adolf, who died young, was the father of Sweden's current king, Karl XVI Gustav. Their only daughter, Ingrid, became queen of Denmark when she married Frederik IX.

Margaret died in 1920 from an ear infection, leaving her young, happy family in shock and grief. Her legacy in Swedish gardening was immense. At the turn of the 20th century gardening was not

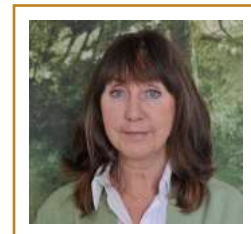
"At the turn of the 20th century gardening was not as popular in Sweden as it was in England and her passion was infectious. She had an enormous influence on garden culture in the country."

as popular in Sweden as it was in England and her passion was infectious. She had an enormous influence on garden culture in the country.

Her influence on her husband was enduring, too. He retained his enthusiasm for gardening, with a particular interest in rhododendrons – he had more than 5,000 seedlings planted, mostly growing in the ravines that run north and south of the castle. It is for these that the garden is perhaps best known today. Many of Margaret's old roses have been dug up and replaced – often with more modern David Austin English roses. In fact, Austin's "Crown Princess Margareta" rose is named after her – a lasting tribute to the English Princess who won a nation's heart.

The WFRS Regional and Heritage rose convention in Sweden runs from 2-6 July 2024, with a post tour to Norway.

Visit www.nordicroses2024.com to learn more.



Christel Kant is a writer of many garden books, among them *"Trädgårdsmästarnas Sofiero"* – The gardeners' Sofiero. She is columnist for the Swedish magazine *Trädgårdsliv* – Garden Life.



Christina Högardh-Ihr is a co-founder of the Green Guide, a Swedish tour operator co-ordinating the convention. She is a well-known author of gardening books and articles in her home country.

Heritage roses – wild and tamed

Tony Lawrence

Pioneer Garden, Alexandra
New Zealand.

Image: Tony Lawrence

New Zealand's 3rd National
Heritage Rose Conference
will be held in Cromwell in
Central Otago in the south
of New Zealand from 28 Nov
– 1 Dec 2024.

Aotearoa, New Zealand is the last habitable land on earth settled by humans. With skilled navigation the Polynesians were crossing the huge Pacific Ocean when Europeans were still hugging the coasts. Aotearoa was discovered by these Polynesians, the Māori, about 1300 AD. This is about the time the great cathedrals were being built in Europe. They were gardeners on their Pacific Islands and brought plants such as sweet potato (kumara) with them.

European sealers, whalers and colonists brought, amongst other useful plants, roses. The very first mission stations had gardens with roses as Charles Darwin noted when he visited on the Beagle in December 1835. *“All the cottages, many of which are white-washed and look very neat, are the property of the English ... It was quite pleasing to behold the English flowers in the gardens before the houses; there were roses of several kinds, honeysuckle, jasmine, stocks and whole hedges of sweetbrier.”* So, our entire written history has been associated with roses from its inception. No wonder we are so passionate about them!

At the 15th International Rose conference 2023 at Brussels there was concern made over the loss of heritage rose species. Our local rosarian, Murray Radka, spoke on this and talked about his heritage rose repository at Brandy Hill. A visit to his garden is part of the conference. But we also have two other huge repositories of heritage roses in the very south of Aotearoa – the stunningly beautiful Dunedin

“The wild briar roses, *Rosa rubiginosa*, lining the Kawarau and Cromwell gorges will be in full bloom – millions and millions of them!”

Northern Cemetery and the formal Jessie Calder Garden, Queens Gardens, Invercargill. Both will be visited in the pre-conference and post-conference tours respectively.

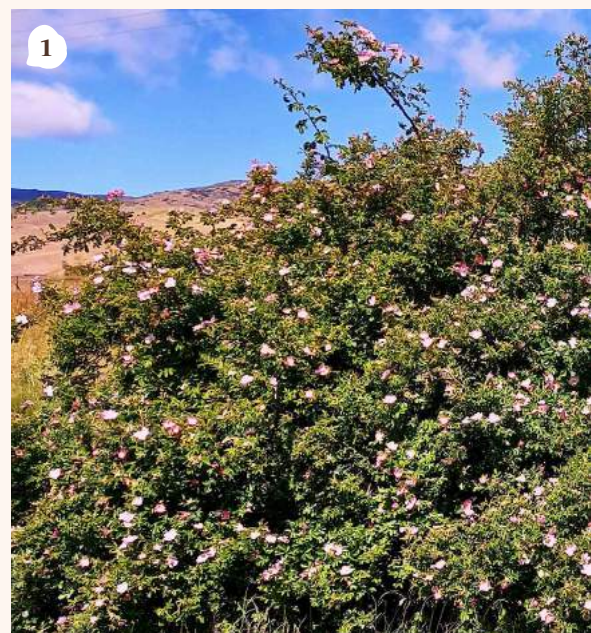
Heritage roses – wild

The wild briar roses, *Rosa rubiginosa*, lining the Kawarau and Cromwell gorges will be in full bloom – millions and millions of them! Darwin would have been awestruck. These will be the routes taken to visit the gardens and historic villages of Clyde and Arrowtown – the wild part of the conference.

It is a given that delegates at this conference will be the only people in the district appreciating these roses which are otherwise recognised as a noxious weed. Wrong plant in the wrong place! Other non-indigenous plants brought in by the early gold miners include California poppies, valerian, vipers bugloss and thyme.

Heritage roses – tamed

Coastal Otago and Southland have a cooler and damper climate than Cromwell and Central Otago. Driving from the coast it is not unusual to have a 13° C variation,



1. Cromwell. Wild Briar Roses
2. Cromwell. Bulbinella and golden Spaniard on Carrick Range
3. Arrowtown Roseburn
4. Historic Clyde

Images: Tony Lawrence





or more, in the summer. If you are doing either tour, you will see the early blooming old roses. The Dunedin Northern Cemetery and the Jessie Calder Garden in Queens Park in Invercargill will be in magnificent form with hundreds of heritage roses, as will all the other gardens on the tours.

Central Otago is warmer and drier, and so the roses flower about two weeks earlier. At conference time, in Cromwell, the early roses will largely be over, but gardens will be showcasing the later-flowering rambler and shrub roses in full glory. There will still be late peonies flowering.



The conference is not just about old roses, although rest assured there will be plenty. It is also about this magnificent southern part of Te Wai Pounamu (South Island) we call paradise. This is the dry, golden, mountainous countryside – where the annual rainfall is 300mm.

The lecture programme held over two mornings is diverse. Topics range from the Heritage Rose Register and retention of old roses, ecological considerations of growing old roses, the history of heritage roses entering Otago, food using old roses, scientific analysis and rose products from wild roses, and more.

Conference gardens

The conference gardens are varied. Brandy Hill contains a huge collection of old roses with





1. Dunedin Wylde Willow
2. Invercargill Jessie Calder Garden, Queens Park
3. Dunedin Northern Cemetery

Images: Tony Lawrence

“Their huge repository of old roses, exist due to the continuing engagement and the hard work of local Heritage Roses’ members.”

international significance. The Pioneer Garden, Alexandra, planted by Heritage Roses members, has a large collection of old roses. Other gardens include a dry garden (very suited to the local climate), formal and cottage gardens, large and small country gardens, and an ex-nursery being converted to a large country garden.

Pre-conference tour and post-conference tour gardens

These tours visit a varied number of gardens, from large country estates to tiny town plots. The

Dunedin North Cemetery and the Jessie Calder gardens in Invercargill, with their huge repository of old roses, exist due to the continuing engagement and the hard work of local Heritage Roses’ members. The post-conference tour will also take you to museums and Bluff, the most southern part of mainland Aotearoa.

Compulsory conditions

If you come to the conference, you must put your worries aside, meet up with old friends and make new friends, learn lots, but mainly have a really good time. Wallow in old roses, wild and tamed. No variation allowed!

For more details visit:
<https://heritageroses.org.nz/conference/>



Tony Lawrence is the organiser of the New Zealand Heritage Rose conference. His own garden will be featured in the programme.

Who was Mme Grégoire Staechelin?

Martin Stott

In edition 28 of BAON last November, I wrote about Pere Dot and the great Spanish rose-breeding dynasty he created that spanned three generations and a century.

One of Dot's best roses is 'Mme Grégoire Staechelin'. Mystery surrounds who it was named after.

Some authors have said Mme Staechelin was the wife of a Swiss ambassador in Madrid (I can find no mention of a Staechelin on the ambassadorial staff there).

Others have said she was the Spanish wife of a professor at the University of Basel in the early 1930s. His lectures were said to be very boring but students crowded into them hoping for an invitation to lunch with his charming and very beautiful wife.

Subsequently Behcet Ciragan from Switzerland drew our attention to an article he wrote in 2019. According to this, the Staechelin we are looking for is Gregor Staechelin (1851-1929) – a prosperous building contractor in Basel. And if that is the case, then Mme Staechelin was his wife Emma, née Allgeier (1859-1941).

Their son Rudolf (1881-1946) made his fortune in real estate. He is famous for amassing a fine collection of impressionist paintings, including several Picassos.

Great-grandson Ruedi Staechelin, who until his retirement was head of the Basel office of auctioneers Sothebys, says: "I am quite convinced that this rose was named in honour of my great-grandmother. Our family has always known about the rose. It has always been part of our family story and it has been planted in the garden of every house I've lived in."

He adds: "Gregor Staechelin was a self-made man. He was a German immigrant from just across the border. He started work building houses and then became an architect. He became quite a wealthy man. He was a Catholic, which was not so good in Basel because it was a Protestant city, but nevertheless, he got on well and even won election to the local canton council."

So did Gregor pay to have the rose named after his wife? Was it



Emma Staechelin, believed namesake of the Mme Grégoire Staechelin rose (above)

Images: Martin Stott and Ruedi Staechelin

Rudolf who made the connection with Dot? We do not know. Yet.

Gregor Staechelin wrote a book about his family history, published just after his death. It does not mention roses, says Ruedi. But in it are two rare photographs of the couple. So the connection to Dot is unproven, but if correct, we now know not just who Mme Staechelin was, but also what she looked like.

Read the Pere Dot article in edition 28 of BAON: <http://bit.ly/BAON28>

The late M.S Viru Viraraghavan

(1937 – 2023)

From an earliest age Viru was intrigued by the wonder of nature and much influenced by his father, a Director of Agriculture in Madras. After finishing his studies in Chemistry, he entered the Indian Administrative Service and thus had the opportunity to travel throughout the vast country. After twenty years of service, he took early retirement and, with his wife Girija and their young family, settled in their permanent home at the hill station of Kodaikanal, in order to fulfil his dream of breeding roses.

Viru was in profound harmony with nature and his visionary approach in the quest for modern rose varieties adapted to warming climates was indeed genetically innovative. The native Indian species *R. gigantea* and *R. clinophylla* were extensively used in his breeding programmes, which also included the search for new colour blends, perfumes and health. The 110 rose varieties which he created are a testimony to his skill, his patience and his passion for beauty.

Viru and his wife, Girija, received international recognition. They worked very much as a team and both were Vice-Presidents of the Indian Rose Federation and Editors of the *Indian Rose Annual* for many years. Both also received the Great Rosarians of the World Award from the Huntington Gardens in the USA, while Viru was presented with the World Rose Award by the World Federation of Rose Societies in 2006.

In 2023 their book, *Roses in the Fire of Spring*, was published. It tells the story of their life together, their work and travels in the name of roses, and also contains an accurate description, with beautiful photographs, of most of the rose varieties that Viru raised.

Today Viru's roses bloom in numerous gardens around the world as he desired, giving pleasure to his many friends whose hearts he touched with his vast knowledge, his gentle friendship and his wickedly impish sense of humour. Truly his was a life well lived.

Helga Brichet
WFRS President
Emeritus



Richard Rose and the discovery of *Rosa clinophylla*

Girija and M S Viraraghavan

In a tribute to Viru we re-publish this article that he wrote with his wife Girija for the Indian Rose Annual in December 2022.

'Richard Rose' a Clinophylla Tea with fragrant medium sized pink flowers and beautiful foliage. Named in honour of Richard Rose who discovered the rose species *Rosa clinophylla* whilst travelling by boat in eastern India during the late 19th century. Viru used *Rosa clinophylla* in his breeding programme.

Image: Girija and M S Viraraghavan

Imagine a wild rose which can grow under water, with only the tips of the plants showing above the surface. Is this not something extraordinary? Perhaps equally extraordinary is the location where it was found.

Unlike any other rose species in the tropical zone, it was discovered on the 'jheels' (ponds, usually by the side of rivers and streams) of what was, in colonial times, the Bengal Presidency – now Bangladesh. This astounding discovery was made in the latter part of the 19th century by someone whose name, coincidentally, was Rose.

Richard Rose was a keen botanist, though by profession he was the Deputy Postmaster General of the North-Western Provinces and Oudh. His headquarters were in Oudh (now Awadh, in the modern Indian state of Uttar Pradesh). In those days, travelling to inspect post offices within his extensive jurisdiction entailed going by boat on rivers and streams to reach inaccessible areas. On one such journey, whilst travelling to Sylhet, he came upon this extraordinary plant.

How did we come to know this? Well, it well known that Viru's goals in rose breeding are to create roses for warm climates and he felt that he should start his breeding lines with the wild rose species to be found in India – in the warmer areas, not the cold Himalayas (which are home to a number of wild rose species). We had zeroed in on two species, *R. gigantea*, which grows in north east India, in Manipur State, and the warmer species, *R. clinophylla*,

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which in earlier times was called *R. involucrata*. So we had been researching these two wild roses.

One of the papers we came across (given to us by our friend Mr Ivan Louette of Belgium) was a letter written in 1889 by David Prain, Curator of the Royal Botanical Garden, in Shibpur/Howrah just outside Calcutta (now called the Acharya Jagdish Chandra Bose Indian Botanic Garden), to François Crépin, the world famous plant taxonomist based in the State Botanic Garden of Belgium in Meise. Prain had sent specimens of various rose species, including *R. gigantea*, for identification. These specimens had been collected by General Sir Henry Collett from Burma (Myanmar) and Sir George Watt in Manipur, India.

This is the letter – undated, but seeing other correspondence between the two, we presume it must have been written some time in 1889.

Dear Mr. Crépin,

I enclosed General Collett's replies to your queries regarding Rosa gigantea

Collett. The General is, I believe, trying to bring away some samples with him.

Since I wrote to you last I have learned a very curious fact concerning Rosa involucrata. I may have told you that it is less common in Bengal, that is to say in the delta of the Ganges and Brahmaputra than it is in Sylhet which is drained by the Megna, a smaller but still considerable river of the same distributionary character. The Sylhet plains are less populous than those of Lower Bengal, the people depend largely for their food supply upon fishing the creeks and tributaries, and distributaries of the main river are not confined to their beds by means bunds (the Indian term for embankments to keep out water). So that when the river rises above its cold weather level, it and more or less all of its branches, overflow the adjacent plain at many points. So much so indeed that by the month of June, and from then on to the month of October, the plain is a series of jheels (that is, 'lakes' which dry up during the cold weather) and travellers whose only conveyance during the rains is by boat, do not keep to the main river or to its branches except in a very general way, but escape from these to the jheels, where the water can always be found from 3 to 5 feet deep, deep enough for the draught of the Indian country boats in this way often saving space by using as their slack the chord of a wide bend of the river, and saving time by avoiding the force of the current.

The chief of the Post Office in the province of Oudh – R. Rose Esq. – an ardent gardener himself, visited these gardens last week and told me that a year ago he was ordered to go down to



Specimens of *Rosa clinophylla* used in Viru's breeding were collected in Ranchi and Bengal. Above and overleaf, some of the hybrids created. Top (left to right), 'Ganges Nymph' and 'Pat Henry'. Below (left to right), 'Sergio Scudu' and 'Ganges Mist'.

Image: Girija Virarghavan

Dacca in East Bengal to have charge of the postal arrangements for this postal province (which includes Sylhet) for some time. While there, his duties took him on a journey such as I have described, and he found when sailing through these jheels that from end to end of the province they were full of a wild rose, hitherto unknown to him, which had no leaves upon it and was in full fruit, only the fruits being above the water. This fact he had mentioned on returning to Lucknow to his friends there who said it could not be a rose at all, but he had brought seeds away with him; some of which germinated and thrive quite well till the ensuing hot weather (that is, April) when all died one by one within a month.

This account is that of a very observant man, and it supplies at one moment an explanation to all the difficulties I have had in considering the habits of this rose.

It shows by direct experiment why the North West of India botanists have given no account of *Rosa involucrata*. It could not grow with them and they therefore could not see it alive.

It explains why at this season when other tropical plants with hardly an exception is in full foliage or renews its foliage in the rains – this Rose loses its leaves as I told you, at the outbreak of these (this year just a little earlier but then the rains were this year delayed)

and remains bare and unsightly all through the rains. I counted the leaves on the bush I am watching on your account the other day and it did not have 5 leaves altogether, having about 30 branches. Hitherto we have not grown any of this rose in water. This we will now proceed to do. Some of our lakes are not connected with the river. These therefore are deeper by 3 or 4 feet in the rains than in the cold weather. I shall have some plants put in at the water's edge when the lake is low this will pretty nearly correspond to its natural habitat – then it may bear fruits. Mr. Rose's account hardly affords an explanation of why it does not fruit freely here but it gives the hint as to an experiment which may explain this.

A perusal of this letter establishes clearly that *R. clinophylla* was in fact growing like the lotus, a hundred years back, in many areas of Bengal, though it is now confined to a few localities because of human pressure. But more important is the unique habitat described, of a rose which grows in the water with only the fruits visible above the water surface during the monsoon period.

Hybridizing with such a rose as one parent could possibly lead to roses entering the field of water gardening—an intriguing possibility first mentioned by the well-known rosarian, Peter Harkness. Viru has been working with this species, specimens of which we obtained from Narendra Singh of Ranchi

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and Dr N. C. Sen of Asansol, and he has bred many new hybrids.

One of his latest hybrids with *R. clinophylla* has been named ‘Richard Rose’ since we wanted to honour this intrepid gentleman whose keen eyes and interest in plants had led to his discovery of this species in its aquatic habitat.

Other botanists like J D Hooker and Sir George Watt had found the species growing naturally in other higher habitats. Hooker mentions

in his Flora of British India, 1879, that it grows “by the sides of streams of the Gangetic Plain and along the lower Himalaya from Kumaon eastwards”. Sir George writes in an unpublished diary of explorations in Manipur in 1882 “common along the sandy margins of the rivers which traverse the valley of Manipur proper, especially around the city”.

We had tracked down the descendants of Sir George Watt, Sir Henry Collett, and Frank Kingdon-Ward, all of whom were the discoverers of *Rosa gigantea* (in the wild, in India and Burma, in colonial days), the other species with which Viru is working. We had got in touch with their descendants because Viru has named his



Top left, ‘Takako Tradition’s Torch’. Right, ‘Ekja’

Image: Girija Virarghavan

newly created hybrids for their illustrious forebears. We met some of Sir George Watt's great grandchildren when we planted the 'Sir George Watt' rose in Logan Botanical Garden, in the Dumfries region of Scotland, since Sir George had hailed from there, and had died in nearby Lockerbie.

Similarly we had been able to send a plant of the 'Sir Henry Collett' rose to one of his great grand-nephews. And in 2014, we had had the 'Frank Kingdon-Ward' rose planted in the churchyard in Grantchester (near Cambridge) U.K., where he is buried.

So we thought it was appropriate that we try to track down the descendants of Mr Richard Rose so that we could tell them about this rose. *[Note: Since this article was first published we have tracked down three family members in the UK.]*

This new rose is a hybrid clinophylla Tea, deep pink with lighter pink and white shadings, with 25-40 petals and about 4 inches in diameter, borne mostly singly, and with a strong spicy fragrance, which it must have inherited from the species, which as you know has a surprising acetone fragrance.

We call this a 'patio rose' as it is a Tea rose, but a small compact plant, which can be grown in a pot.

The parentage of 'Richard Rose' is 'Faith Whittlesey' x {'Mrs. B.R. Cant' x ['Rêve d'Or' x {'Mrs. B.R. Cant' x ['Mrs. B.R. Cant' x Rosa clinophylla]]}]}

“One of his latest hybrids with *R. clinophylla* has been named ‘Richard Rose’ since we wanted to honour this intrepid gentleman whose keen eyes and interest in plants had led to his discovery of the aquatic form of this species.”

Richard Rose

Birth

12 Apr 1838

Calcutta, West Bengal, India

Death

25 Aug 1896 (aged 58)

Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh, India

Burial

Cawnpore Cantonment New Cemetery

Kanpur, Uttar Pradesh, India



Richard Rose's grave in the Lal Kurti Cemetery in Kanpur

Image: Girija Virarghavan

Google, as usual was helpful in getting some information about him, but our friend Dr Colin Munro of Glasgow, who is interested in Scottish colonial history, helped us greatly in finding the descendants, who are widely spread over the globe. He was also able to locate where Richard Rose is buried. Not back 'home' in the UK where we presumed he would have returned after retirement, but in India itself – in Kanpur, in the Lal Kurti Cemetery. This army-maintained cemetery was called the Cawnpore Cantonment Cemetery in colonial days. Rose was buried in 'Lair 9, Plot 16' according to The Miscellanea Genealogical et Heraldica 4th Ed. (1908), which also gave the instruction: "Erect rustic marble cross on rockery on marble slab."

The marble cross it originally supported has been lost – you can see the probable culprits grazing in the background. But it is nice to think that the sculpted roses which decorate the base refer to his botanical interests as much as his name.



M.S. Viru Virarghavan and his wife Girija

Viru did the breeding, Girija the recording. She says Viru left several promising seedlings to add to his legacy.



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