

Branklyn

By Steve McNamara

At the start of his presentation Steve showed a 15 minute film prepared by the National Trust for Scotland based on the footage taken by John and Dorothy Renton over several years after the construction of their house and garden in Perth.

Branklyn Garden started life in 1922 when Dorothy and John Renton purchased two acres of sloping orchard on which to build a house and develop a garden. Landscaping the garden involved considerable effort and expense and it was set out in an informal way to enhance the many plants that they acquired. The Rentons knew many of the great plant collectors of the pre-war years, including George Forrest and Frank Kingdom-Ward who visited places such as Tibet, Bhutan and China in search of seeds and plants. As a result the Rentons became favoured recipients of many plants. After a lifetime building up some unique plant collections Dorothy died in 1966 and John died the following year. Branklyn Garden passed into the care of the National Trust for Scotland, which continues to look after it today.

The commentary highlighted a number of plants in detail - including *Primula*, *Rhododendrons*, *Fritillaria* and *Paeonia* - and members present were invited to spot the *Meconopsis*. Our list included:-

MM. integrifolia, grandis, quintuplinervia, aculeata, sheriffi, cookei, pratensis, violacea and *superba*....and maybe others not identified.

Steve continued with a tour of the garden as it is today, highlighting both *Meconopsis* and other plantings in a series of slides, with some relevant comment.

1. The slide shows the arts and crafts style house built in 1922 by Dorothy and John Renton. The site was an old orchard area with various fruit trees there is now only one Jargonelle pear now left.
2. *M. 'Crarae'* has been grown at Crarae for many years; they lost a lot one year when planted as a river in the open lawn. Plants were given to Evelyn in 1997 by Mervyn Kessell one of the founding members of the *Meconopsis* group.
3. *Stellera chamaejasme*, the original plant of this came to Branklyn in 1949 from Ludlow and Sherriff expedition with a note saying by air. The plant was one of three one went to Branklyn one to RBGE. The one at Branklyn died in 1995-6 nearly 50 years old. We have another plant now, in a sandy soil. I had seen the plant in Nepal but after it had flowered.
4. *Stellera chamaejasme* var. *chrysantha* a recent renaming by Kit Grey-Wilson, this is the Chinese version. I thought it was strange that both plants had the same name.
5. *Celmisia 'David Shackelton'* Acquired after a trip to N. Ireland by the *Meconopsis* group committee, from Gary Dunlop. A good plant for the scree.
6. *Paraquilegea anemonoides*, introduced by Ludlow and Sherriff again from the 1949 trip to Tibet. Kit Grey-Wilson says there are two species the other being *P. Microphylla* which has slightly larger flower.
7. *Scoliopus bigelovii* a plant from North West America grows in the shade of the Redwood forest in California, we grow the plant in a shady peat bed.
8. *Arisaema griffithii* are plants that like the peat bed area but good drainage must be assured otherwise plants may rot in winter. Native to Bhutan, Himalaya.
9. *M. 'Slieve Donard'* raised by Dr Curle from Edinburgh in 1935 from a cross with *M. grandis* and *M. betonicifolia* or *M. baileyi*.
10. *M. superba* a monocarpic species needs some overwinter protection on a open closh. Taylor puts it in the same group with *M. regia* in series *Superbae*. It has been in cultivation since being introduced by Ludlow and Sherriff in 1933 from Bhutan. We have grown it on a slope and not needed the cover.
11. *M. superba* in flower.
12. A seedling with *M. regia* blood in it showing variability.

13. A picture showing M. 'Slieve Donard' and M. paniculata and M. regia hybrids.
14. M. 'Susan's Reward' Given to Sue Sym who worked for Betty Sherriff's and was given the plant in 1972 as a leaving gift (reward) named by her Betty's Dream poppy. This plant does well in the garden and East Scotland. GSG
15. M. 'Susan's Reward'
16. M.'Susan's Reward'
17. *Cypripedium farreri* a rare slipper orchid from China, Sichuan.
18. C. Farreri
19. *Arisaema sikokianum* plant from Japan likes well drained moist position in part shade. I found it grew better in a raised bed.
20. *Megacarpa polyandra* a monocarpic member of the cabbage family native of Nepal, great honey scented flowers.
21. *Nomocharis aperta* are from China, Yunnan lily relatives, grown in raised peat beds.
22. *Paeonia 'Branklyn'* This plant along with *Meconopsis 'Branklyn'* are mentioned by G.S.Thomas in an article about great gardeners written after the war.
23. This bed was renovated a few years ago and old hybrid azalea's removed. The exposed rocks showed a link from the main rockery (Scree) to the smaller rockery beyond.
24. *Trillium ovatum* a native of N. W. America in woodlands, has a good white flower fading to pink purple, we also have the *T. ovatum* var. *rubrum*.
25. *Trillium grandiflorum* from E.N. America but has grow on Vancouver Island, we also have the double form.
26. *Meconopsis betonicifolia* plant from Alaska from seed original plant from Yunnan, growing well.
27. *Rhododendron augustii* great display in spring.
28. *Pleione formosana* native of Taiwan and E. China. We plant either in peat walls or in rockery, usually over winter.
29. M. 'Keillour' Stand alone type, different from all others except James Aitkin plant that also came from Keillour.
30. *Meconopsis* from Stewart Moore's garden, we visited his garden in N. Ireland about 7-8 years ago. He was in his late 90's but remembered getting his plants from Inshriach Jack Drakes nursery in 1968. He had ordered only M. 'Branklyn' and M. 'Slieve Donard' he remembered paying 17s 6d for his Branklyn plants. As these plants are not similar in type and he had no other *Meconopsis* this seems an undisputable plant.
31. *Meconopsis* Stewart Moore's plant of 'Branklyn'.
32. *Podophyllum aurantiocaulis* is a good plant from Glendoick. It is native to S.E. Tibet and produces good flowers and fruit.
33. *Clintonia andrewsiana* a plant from N. America mainly California in the Liliaceae family, it has bluish fruits later in the year.
34. M. 'Lingholm' purple form and is consistent each year.
35. M. 'Mrs Jebb' a stand alone or infertile blue group. M. *punicea* has to be raised from seed each year, thanks to Jim Cobb for plants.
36. M. 'Mrs Jebb'
37. *Rhododendron edgeworthii* from Glendoick good plants, epiphytic in the wild. We planted in a raised well drained bed in part shade. Collected under various names and locations most now called under this name.

38. *Caridocrinum giganteum* from the Himalaya. Easily grown but monocarpic, just divide bulbs to increase.
39. M. 'Barney's Blue' discovered after a visit to Ascrieve by Ian Christie in 2000 and named for the owner Barney Baron.
40. M. 'Mop-head' given to Evelyn by Liz Young, she had grown the plant from SRGC seed as *M. grandis*. It has unusual twisted style and stigma. Early to flower and continues for a long period, very large flower.
41. M. 'Mop-head'
42. M. 'Springhill' or MG 80 a good plant.
43. M. 'Marit' received as Marit from Fin Haugli in 1998 a white cultivar.
44. *Cypripedium tibeticum* a great orchid from Sichuan China, it grows on limestone in the wild but we grow it in a raised bed with dwarf Rhododendrons. Rare plant.
45. *Cypripedium formosanum* more common and easier to grow, from Taiwan. We again grow these in a raised peat bed.
46. Branklyn has a tradition of growing lilies; this is a hybrid L. 'Marhan' a strong growing lily with a good dark red colour.
47. *Calceolaria* 'Walter Shrimpton' easier to grow than *C. uniflora* but a great plant for a trough.
48. *Dicentra micrantha* known as the gold fish plant in Sichuan, China. Plants were given to Beth Chatto, Christopher Lloyd and Alan Bloom by former head gardener, Andrew Duncan told me recently.
49. *Iris chrysographes* native to China, an easy plant to grow but useful.
50. M. 'Bobby Masterton' We at Branklyn originally had this as 'Betty's Dream Poppy' also given to Evelyn by Cameron Carmichael as that. Finally named as above after the owner of Cluny garden.
51. M. 'Inverewe' a good plant that looks different. Received from John Anderson former head gardener at Inverewe. Seen here growing with *Primula* 'Inverewe' a good companionship.
52. M. 'Inverewe'
53. Received from Dr. Jim Gauld as a form of *M. grandis* PSW but named M. 'Strathspey' as an infertile plant.
54. M. 'P.C. Abildgaard' from Danish University as *M. betonicifolia* but clearly different, named in 2007.
55. *Podophyllum delavayi* S.W. China a good foliage plant for part shaded area.
56. Rock garden.
57. *Sorbus vilmorinii* a native of Yunnan.
58. *Cypripedium* hybrid growing in a trough.
59. *M. x beamishii* a hybrid of *M. grandis* and *M. integrifolia*, looks like *M. grandis*
60. *M. x sarsonsii* again a hybrid but with *M. baileyi* as one of the parents and *M. integrifolia* as the other.
61. M. 'Dorothy Renton' grown for many years at Branklyn. I have given to quite a few growers but it has not lasted with them. A good propagator required.

[Note: The Garden is open from April - October - Please visit! NMcD]