

## **AN INVITATION FROM THE FRIENDS OF WINTERBOURNE**

**Lecture by Ann Bird at Winterbourne Botanic Gardens,  
7.30 pm 11 February 2008**

The Friends of Winterbourne Botanic Gardens, at the University of Birmingham, have invited members of the West Midlands Rose Society to a lecture by our good friend Ann Bird, President of the Royal National Rose Society.

The occasion is a joint meeting of the Friends and the West Midlands Branch of the NCPGG. The meeting takes place on Monday February 11<sup>th</sup> at 7.30pm. The friends meet at the annex to the main house at Winterbourne. Attendance is free to members of the West Midlands Rose Society, with refreshments at cost.

Ann is speaking about “Roses Old and New” and I’m sure there will be good examples of her many rose slides from all around the world. The West Midlands Committee hope that as many members as possible will take advantage of this kind invitation, support Ann and meet new friends amongst the supporters of the Botanic Gardens, and the NCPGG.

***NB1) This meeting is instead of our normal February meeting.***

NB2) Many of our members have attended sessions at Winterbourne, but for others please do not confuse this University Botanic gardens with the Edgbaston Botanical Gardens. These gardens are close to the University of Birmingham main campus. Going by car take the A38 from Birmingham, turn right into Edgbaston Park Road at the main University site, then right into Winterbourne where there is car parking.

**KINGS HEATH SHOW**

The eighty two colourful entries on the Show bench gave a very warm welcome to the visitors who flocked to the show on the first weekend in September. The standard of the exhibits was so high that the judges, Ann Bird and Roy Evans had a very hard time deciding on the winning entries. Ann said that never in all her years as a judge had she had to “point” so many entries to get a result.

Tony Bracegirdle had put in quite a few entries using the yellow rose Selfridges and in fact I counted 27 blooms of this rose in his exhibits, one of which won the Bronze Medal for Best in Show and others were used to give him Best Exhibit in the Open Classes. In all Tony won eight of the classes using large flowered or cluster flowered roses.

Our members Dave Bryant and Paul Evans did very well snapping at Tony’s heels In many of the classes to gain Second and Third prizes and Dave came First with his red, white, pink and cream bowl of cluster flowered roses using Tall Story, Mystique, Cliff Richard, English Miss and Dorothy Wheatcroft Ken Ellis came down from Lancashire with Tony and got a First with one stem of Friend for Life among other awards.

John Anthony, Dave Bryant and Ken Ellis battled it out in the Mini Classes with Ken getting First with his pallet, John getting First with his three stems cluster flowered using Hakuun, Miss Flippins and Sunset Strip and Dave getting First with his single bloom of Heartbreaker. John’s Picture Frame entry using Miss Flippins gained him a First and I managed a First with my vase of five cluster flowered minis using Summer Snow and Marry Me. Again, as there was only one other entry in the under 100 bushes class I managed three Firsts. How about some of our members who only grow a few roses putting some entries in next year to make it more of a competition.

We would like to thank my friends Joan Brookes, Joyce Maxwell and Hazel Wilson for their stalwart work on the Fragrance

Competition on the Saturday. They worked their socks off getting people to have a smell of the roses. Bill Pooley, Don Whitehouse and other members of the Committee did a sterling job on the Sunday, also manning the Advice Bureau on both days giving answers to all the usual questions we get at these shows.

Everyone was very pleased when the result of the Fragrance Competition was drawn and Errol the very helpful Car Park Attendant and Tea Urn Filler-upper was declared the winner. One new member was signed up at the Show, Ms Jennifer Campbell, and we hope to perhaps see some entries under her name next year.

All the blooms were sold off at the end of the Show and we have to say thank you to all our members who helped to make this – as John Anthony said – the best Kings Heath show we have had.

***Jean***

### **A few lines given to me by one of our members**

This world that we're a-living in  
Is mighty hard to beat.  
You get a thorn with every rose  
But aint the roses sweet.

### **Harrogate Show**

Another of our members is writing the Report from this show but I would just like to say how nice it was to have one of our members whom I only knew from a name on a list, come up to me and introduce himself. I enjoyed meeting you and having a chat and hope to see you again next year.

### **SEPTEMBER TALK**

For our September evening meeting John Anthony entertained us with slides of the roses seen on our visits to Moor Wood and Hunts Court. Moor Wood holds the National Collection of Rambler Roses and these cover an area of 5 acres, with 135 different varieties to see.

Although it had been raining when we visited, the slides had come out very clearly and reminded us of the enjoyable visit we had had. Those members who had not been on the trip were most impressed with the colours and varieties of the roses and said they would like the opportunity to go next year.

Next year's visit may be a couple of weeks earlier if the weather conditions are the same as this year as some of the roses we were told had been at their peak a little earlier.

John ended his slide show by showing us the changes he had made to his own garden with new climbing roses round an obelisk and clematis entwined with his ramblers round the boundary of his garden. A very colourful evening which we all enjoyed.

***Jean***

### **BELFAST TRIALS – CERTIFICATES OF MERIT**

I'm sorry to say that I made a mistake with the list of Certificates of Merit in the Autumn Newsletter. I misread the list I was copying from and all the roses mentioned on page 23 were just roses in the Trials and did not gain Certificates. The six varieties at the bottom of page 22 were the only ones to receive the Certificates. Sorry.

***Jean***

### **SEASON'S WISHES**

The President, Chairman and members of the Committee would like to wish all our member a very Merry Christmas and a Happy and Healthy 2008.

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## **CHRISTMAS TREES**

If you are having a “proper” Christmas tree this year do not discard it after the celebrations. Make use of the branches by using them as a mulch on beds of newly planted bulbs. This would also probably deter the squirrels from digging up the bulbs.

## **MOSS ON DRIVES AND PATIOS (seen in a local paper)**

Here is an easy way of getting rid of moss that doesn't involve harmful chemicals. Sprinkle some soda crystals on the ground when it is dry. If rain doesn't materialise within a day use a watering can to wet the crystals.

Leave the resulting paste for a day or two and then you will be able to brush or scrape away the detritus easily once it has turned brown. If you do this at the beginning and end of winter your drives and patios should be moss free throughout the year.

## **CONGRATULATIONS**

Congratulations to member Paul Evans from Ruabon who became National Champion again this year. Paul has sent me a list of rose questions which he hopes will put a few smiles on members' faces. Let's hope someone can come up with some answers.

## **PAUL'S QUESTIONS**

## **W H Y ?**

Why are some old roses completely thorn-less, when most roses have many thorns?

Why were so called 'Blue' roses described as blue when in fact they clearly were not?

Why do strong apparently healthy stems of in particular Hybrid Teas, sometimes fail to produce a bud?

Why do so few Hybrid Teas win the title Rose of the Year?

Why are varieties Fred Loads and Sally Holmes often listed as Floribundas when they are surely Modern Shrub roses?

Why do pests always seem to target your best opening buds?

Why name beautiful roses Hamburger Phoenix and Parkdirektor Riggers?

Why is the red Floribunda Lilli Marleen often also spelt Lilli Marlene? Which one is correct?

Why are so called disease resistant roses often anything but?

Why do exhibitors always seem to insist that the bad weather has been far worse where they live?

***Waiting for your answers!***

**A DAY IN THE COTSWOLDS**

**VISITS TO MOOR WOOD AND HUNTS COURT**

This was a return visit to these two venues, those who joined us last year will remember that we chose the only wet day in June when during the morning the rain got heavier and heavier and we got wetter and wetter. This year we arrived at Moor Wood hoping for better conditions so that at least our photographs would do justice to this wonderful place.

Once again we were greeted by Henry Robinson at the front of his beautiful Georgian Manor House where we were served with tea, coffee and biscuits. Even on our arrival rain was in the air and Henry also informed us that the Roses had been at their best two weeks before we arrived. However, with some 135 varieties of ramblers in this the home of the National Collection, we were hopeful that some of the later varieties would still be in full flower.

We started our tour at the front of the house then went across the manicured lawns with Henry leading the way. Early in our tour we saw the rambler Apple Blossom with its huge trusses of blossom pink flowers and which in spite of the rain was a superb display, also *Collestria* with its large pink perfumed flowers. We stopped for a while to wonder at the ancient huge Cedar tree, truly a wonderful specimen.

We then started into the valley negotiating slippery stone steps with great care, the rain was now getting worse, but we “hardy souls” were not to be deterred and we were to be rewarded by the varieties. Narrow Water with large trusses of pinkish lilac semi-double flowers, Paul Transon with its rich salmon double flowers and Lemon Eglesia all cascading over Cotswold stone walls. How magnificent these gardens must be on a fine sunny day and with the roses at their best.

Our tour took us through wild flower meadows seeded each year by our host and although Henry wasn't happy with the result they were still quite impressive. We continued up the slope towards the picturesque “Gardener's Cottage” passing on the way fine specimens of the climber *Alchymist* with yellow/orange flowers, *Snowdrift* with its tiny white flowers and the creamy white *Alberic Barbier*. The *Albertine* on the front of the cottage which was in full flower on our visit last year was almost over with only the odd flower remaining.

On the slopes leaving the valley we saw *Ghislaine de Feligonde*, orange-yellow musk rambler, white climber *Pleine de Grace*, *Dorothy*

Perkins and Pink Cloud with masses of pale pink flowers. Here also was the procumbent *Macrantha Taubretter* with trusses of clear pink semi-double cupped blooms, a lovely rose in any conditions. Picton Castle with its orange-coral flowers was rambling over the roof of a garden store and on the upper terrace we also saw American Pillar, Debutante and the unusual variety Wickwar with single white flowers set against a dense growth of grey foliage.

By now the rain had become unbearable and we all splashed back to our cars. Next year we have vowed to pick a sunny day and Henry Robinson has promised to let us know when the roses are at their best – third time lucky maybe! It was now lunchtime so we all retreated to the local Hostelry The Bathurst Arms at North Cerney before speeding across the Cotswolds for our afternoon visit to Hunts Court at North Nibley.

We were greeted there by Keith Marshall who together with his wife Margaret has planted some 450 varieties of Old Garden, Modern Shrubs, Ramblers and Climbers with companion planting. Thankfully by now the rain had eased and we were to have a very pleasant afternoon walking these beautiful gardens. Keith led us round imparting his wonderful knowledge of roses at every turn.

Along the main driveway we saw the lovely pink-crimson shrub *Cerise Bouquet* and the outstanding rambler *Emily Grey* with its golden yellow flowers. Here too, was the beautiful bright pink-mauve shrub *Belle de Crecy* and the deep pink and very fragrant moss rose *Salet*. Around the gardens hybrid musk rose *Danae* looked good with its buff-yellow flowers, as did the rich crimson gallica *Scharlachglut* (*Scarlet Fire*). To add to the mix an Austin rose *The Pilgrim* looked very good indeed, as did a huge example of the climber *Gardeners Pink*. The gardens had everything, companion plants, shrubs including wonderful *Philadelphus*, one we noted was *Belle Etoile* with its heady perfume. More and more roses, the lavender-pink rambler *Laure Davoust* and *The Garland* with its masses of small blush pink flowers, Mrs Honey Dyson growing through a hedge and here too the grey leafed *Wickwar* scrambling up a tree. I also recall a super *Veilchenblau* in full flower and on the north wall of the house the creamy white *Alberic Barbier* looking very healthy with its glossy dark green foliage.



I am sure there are many varieties which I haven't mentioned, the whole area really is a delight and the nursery has most of the varieties for sale. Before leaving the gardens I must mention the splendid Wedding Cake Tree – most unusual. Keith then led us to a huge open barn (a history lesson in itself) where Margaret was waiting to serve us tea and her delicious cakes. The day had ended well and we had seen roses galore, many of them rare and unusual.

After paying our thanks to Keith and Margaret and with my thanks to Sheila for taking copious notes, we all headed home, weary I am sure, but with lasting memories of a most enjoyable day amongst our favourite flowers.

***Roy Evans***

Thanks to Roy and Sheila for such a detailed account of our day's outing.

### **MIDDLETON HALL GARDENERS' DAY**

Again this year the West Midlands Rose Society supported Middleton Hall Trust's Gardeners' Day in August. Held in the grounds of Middleton Hall which is situated on the A4091 near Tamworth the Hall is one of the few remaining moated Manor Houses in the country.

The house itself was in a bad state of repair a few years ago but thanks to a dedicated band of volunteers it is gradually being restored to its original glory. Some of the Specialist Societies

had their stands in the house and we were fortunate this year to be sited in the Main Hall along with the Sutton Coldfield Fuchsia Society who had put on a very good display of fuchsias and also had a large stand of plants for sale at reasonable prices.

In another room leading off the Hall there were several other specialist plant stalls, Birmingham Carnation Society, the

Streptocarpus Society and also the Sweet Pea Stand that had a beautiful display of Sweet peas and were selling lots of Sweet pea Seeds.

John Windsor again put on a very good display of Roses – despite not many roses being around at this time, due to the awful weather we had been having for some weeks leading up to the Show. We were also joined by Lynn and Ian Lancaster and there was a steady troupe of visitors with questions to ask about roses to keep us all busy.

At lunch time I went into the grounds and walked along the side of the walled garden. There were quite a few Trade Stands, with a good selection of plants for sale. It was lovely strolling in the warm sunshine under the many trees, looking around at all of the many different plants.

In all it was a very good day and I must say to anyone who is interested in plants and gardening this show is well worth a visit.

***Don Whitehouse***

Thanks Don for your report. Anyone who would like to help on the stand next year would be very welcome. There are home made cakes, sandwiches, salads, tea and coffee on sale during the day and most people there go round with a smile on their faces as it is such a happy atmosphere.

## **DAVID AUSTIN HONOURED**

World famous rose breeder David Austin has been awarded an OBE after dedicating 50 years to rose breeding.

He travelled up to London to receive the award, which has been given to him for his services to horticulture and described the honour as the “most special day” of his professional life.

## **ANNUAL DINNER**

Sixteen members and friends gathered at the Terrace Restaurant on November 3<sup>rd</sup> for the Society's Annual Dinner. Sitting round the table after choosing from the extensive menu we noticed that President Chris Warner was wearing his latest rose, Gardeners' Glory, in his buttonhole. This rose has won two gold medals, one silver and a Certificate of Merit in the last twelve months so is one to look out for.

After the meal we were treated to an illustrated talk by Ann Bird telling us of her visit to America to present Ralph Moore with a crystal bowl from the RNRS on his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday in honour of his dedication to breeding miniature roses. She also gave him a Birthday card from the members of the West Midlands Rose Society with our best wishes.

Next we saw some splendid views from her travels in America and Japan which gave a very pleasant end to an enjoyable evening. Thank you Ann.

## **SPRING NEWSLETTER**

Copy date for the Spring Newsletter is Valentines Day, 14 February. Any items you think would be of interest to members would be welcome as it is always difficult to fill the pages in the Spring edition.

## **OCTOBER MEETING**

The speaker at our October meeting was amateur hybridiser Bob Webster from Sheffield who started his talk and presentation by giving us a colourful history of the rose. We were told of roses being mentioned in Persian and Greek history, in Roman times and Egyptian culture. The earliest rose found according to DNA testing was in Egypt in 110 BC. Coming up to date we saw modern roses including tea roses, floribundas, patio roses and miniatures

After the tea break Bob told us of his career with rose breeding starting in 1976 before he even had a greenhouse – that came later in 1987. In 1991 it was the Centenary of the City of Sheffield and he was asked by the Lord Mayor to introduce a rose for this event and bred a pink patio rose called Sheffield Pride.

One of his roses, My Mum, was selected as best rose in the Trial Grounds at Burston Roses. A rose he uses a lot as a parent plant is the Marquis of Bristol and crosses with this resulted in the rose Samantha Barker which won him a Gold Medal in France. His best rose so far he says is Fosters Ruby Glow, very useful for Ruby Weddings.

He judges his roses first for how they flower on their own roots then for disease resistance and always uses healthy plants as parent plants.

Roy thanked Bob for his interesting presentation and for making the journey down to see us. A round of applause was given by members.

***Jean***

## **SUBSCRIPTIONS**

Membership subscriptions for 2008 will fall due on 1 January and a form to send in with your cheque is enclosed with this Newsletter. Rates are £5.00 for a single membership and £6.00 for double when two people live in the same house. Cheques to me, made payable to West Midlands Rose Society. Thanks.

***Jean***

## **CITY OF BELFAST INTERNATIONAL ROSE TRIALS 2007**

A group of assorted International judges gathered in Belfast for this year's Trials, including the usual suspects from the West Midlands Rose Society, most of whom arrived in time for the arranged visit to Greenfields on the day before the Trials. As those who have read previous reports may remember, Greenfields is the horticultural campus for the University of Belfast. There are delightful gardens here, including the 'TV Garden' – and not one sign of Alan Titchmarsh! We were given guided tours of the gardens, including the fine rose gardens, and a very nice lunch too – Irish hospitality living up to its reputation. As it did again on the day after the Trials when an invitation

to Dickson's nurseries gave an interesting chance to view their new roses, and a generous lunch.

Amazingly, after the recent weeks and weeks of rain, the weather was so good that those of us who had packed wellies were wondering why we'd bothered. Although Lynn Lancaster's pair with pink roses would elegantly grace any venue. The roses however had suffered, and this became very clear during judging: although it did provide a good opportunity to assess those varieties best able to withstand torrential rain and high winds.

Cockers won both the best Hybrid Tea (Large Flowered) and the best Floribunda (Cluster Flowered) varieties, with 'All My Love' and 'Dazzling Delight' respectively. Kordes won the prize for Shrub roses with 'Roter Korsar', and their variety 'Moonlight' won best Climbing rose. The prizes for most Fragrant of the meritorious varieties were both garnered by Poulson with 'Nina' being judged the most fragrant and 'Global' the best Miniature/Patio rose.

Certificates of Merit were awarded to Fryer, Dickson, Interplant, Dave Kenny, and Poulsen.

Despite the dreadful weather, the roses were still in many cases looking very fine, and as well as those we judged this year, there were some eye-catching varieties which we look forward to assessing in future years.

***Alison Symons***

## **ROSE GARDENS IN 2007**

This year our visits were to some extent limited by the rain and floods. In addition to the trips described elsewhere, Ian and I went on two outings with the local National Trust, one to Deene Park in Northamptonshire, which we found very interesting, but unfortunately, just when we were due to visit the gardens, torrential rain prevented us from doing so, and we had to be content with what we saw from the windows. The courtyard however had some lovely old climbing roses which gave a romantic air to the place. The second was to Waddeston Manor, the Rothschild home, where, after a tour of the house, Ian and I headed straight for the rose gardens. Here the rain had again taken its toll, but we had an enjoyable time looking round the garden, which was

replanted in 2000 with roses chosen for their scent and perpetual display. It is always interesting to exchange comments with other visitors, which we were once again able to do. The newest rose was *Miss Alice* among many other David Austin varieties. *Gertrude Jekyll* and *Crown Princess Margareta* stood out best with *Janet*, *Windrush*, *Crocus Rose* and *Tuscany* also good under the conditions.

We also visited two gardens under the National Gardens Scheme. The first was in South Warwickshire, *Ilmington Manor*, home of Mr. and Mrs. Taylor, which boasts hundreds of old and new roses. We also enjoyed the roses growing up the walls of various cottages as we walked round this lovely village, a favourite of ours with its delightful and interesting church, which is where Chris Warner's father was once the vicar, as Chris later told us. We also had a chat with a gentleman who had come out into his garden to cut his hedge, just as we were passing by, who, after discussing roses and gardens, told us a lot about the village's history. Apparently he had taught at a junior school in Birmingham and used to bring his class on a trip to the village to give them a taste of country life. He told us about the small Roman Catholic church which had been created out of the old school and which has a Pugin window. The local gentry had worshipped secretly in a room in a house and had always remained Catholics, so the tradition was there throughout. We found the little church a hidden delight. This highlights how a love of roses can lead to so many other discoveries.

The second NGS garden was one which had opened for the first time under the scheme, *Latimer's Rest*, the home of Gerald and Christine Leedham at Baxterley, near Atherstone. We were attracted by the comment in the brochure "Brilliant Austin roses star in 2 acres of lush lawns." We were not disappointed. Almost fifty standard roses lined the lawn, with *Golden Celebrations* alternating with one of our old favourites *Trumpeter*. Other notable roses were *Crown Princess Margareta*, *L.D.Braithwaite*, *Sunset Boulevard*, *William Shakespeare 2000*, *Winchester Cathedral*, *Rosa Mundi*, *Tuscany Superb*, *Twice in a Blue Moon*, *Sexy Remy* and the beautifully-perfumed *Belle Epoque*. We were able to chat to the gardener, who told us he hard-pruned and summer-pruned the roses, despite Michael Marriot's advice to the contrary. As I do the same, I was particularly interested to hear this, as the results were stunning! Our own *Graham Thomas* has done particularly well under this regime this year. Christine also broke off from making tea and serving cakes to walk round the garden with us

and discuss her roses in detail. She said she would be willing to do an evening opening for us as a group with sufficient numbers should we wish it, as they can floodlight the garden! Other nearby gardens were also open, but our fascination with the roses meant we did not have time to visit these- perhaps next year, as a friend of mine said they are well worth it.

Another garden we visited this year was *Wollerton Old Hall* near Market Drayton in Shropshire. Jean Coleman has also recommended this, but as it only opens on Fridays, Sundays and Bank Holidays, we had not managed to go before. This also opens for NGS on occasions and for pre-booked groups of over 25. They also do special events and lectures in addition to normal openings. It is a must for garden lovers. John and Lesley Jenkins began the garden in its present form in 1984, although a much older garden had existed around the 16<sup>th</sup> century house. The gardens are laid out in a formal way near the house, but become less so as they merge into the countryside. Among the 19 listed areas are two rose gardens, one under-planted with herbaceous and ground-cover plants and the other a deep border, either side of a path, planted with many varieties of David Austin roses and old roses. They were in excellent condition. It is impossible to do justice to this lovely garden in a short space.

My next garden is our very own *Gardens of the Rose* at St. Albans. Some members will of course have much more experience of these than I, but, having seen them briefly at the AGM, I was able to take a closer look on 26<sup>th</sup>. June, while Ian was at a judging session. As we are aware, the paving and structures are looking good and much work has been done with the planting. The roses have now been labelled with numbers and a list of all the roses with their locations is available at the entrance kiosk, price £2. This is where I feel I have to make some criticism. I am not convinced that members of the general public will be impressed by having to pay an additional fee for this, especially those on group visits, and members may well feel that they ought to receive this information as part of their membership package. When you have the list it is very time-consuming and at times irritating to match up the rose to the name on the sheet. One man I was chatting to was on a return visit and had come prepared by having separated each sheet of his list out and put each page into a file with transparent plastic sheets to avoid getting the sheets wet if it rained, as he had struggled on his

previous visit. However, it was good to see the roses in flower, despite some apparent gaps, and I had great pleasure in walking round, ticking off on my list the ones which stood out with bloom and health. As I had a list, I found people were coming up to me to ask for information, so it was enjoyable to inter-act with people and hear about their favourite roses and views on gardens in general. I also met people who shared with me their sheer love of roses. It is this shared pleasure which I find the most delightful aspect of visiting gardens. It is also why I enjoy helping on the stand at the NEC and even dead-heading the roses in our front garden!

The roses which stood out were the ones we would expect to do well - *Sally Holmes* and Colin Dickson's new one *Desert Island* were the first to take my eye. *Ballerina*, *Marjorie Fair*, *The Fairy*, *City of York*, *Blush Rambler*, *Irish Eyes* - the list goes on, and it was good to see roses I had first come to know and love from my first visits to the gardens in the 70s, as well as more modern favourites. I felt that the information plaques describing the different types of roses were helpful to visitors.

A lot of work and effort has been invested into renewing the gardens, and an imaginative design and plan produced. Let us hope that over the next few years we will see visitors returning.

Our visit to Belfast was much enjoyed as usual. As well as the main events described elsewhere, Ian and I managed a closer look at the roses in the Botanic Gardens and a tour of Queen's University, which was most interesting. The weather was kind to us throughout our stay, but my pink wellies proved a good investment, as the ground was wet under-foot. At Dickson's nursery, Pat exchanged his walking stick for a quad bike and enjoyed showing us his roses. I particularly admired the red patio rose, *George Best*, and as I also admired George's football, which I was privileged to witness both live and on tv (though not his drinking and womanising), Ian has now ordered 3 bushes for the front garden. (This has already become a talking point in anticipation, as neighbours keep asking what we are going to plant in the newly-prepared bed and are awaiting the results!) I also noted *Forever Young*, amber-coloured; *Lovely Fairy*, a pink sport of *The Fairy*; *Hometown Ards*, a cream floribunda; peachy-cream *Isn't she lovely*; and *Light Fantastic*, a lemony-cream rose, which was of particular note. Colin also had two numbered roses which I liked the look of; one a light purple and one a deeper purple. *Wild Rover*, the true purple



rose we had admired on a previous visit is now, Pat tells me, widely grown in Chile. Colin was disappointed that his favoured floribunda *Desert Island* (see above) had been dead-headed before the trial judging and did not do as well as he had hoped. It is certainly an attractive rose, described as 'pastel buff' having 'glossy foliage' and 'sweet scent'. Once again we were made very welcome.

Our last visit was to *Coton Manor Garden*, again in Northamptonshire, where we were initially disappointed to discover that they had had to dig out the roses on the terrace, owing to rose sickness, but pleased to learn that they had planted additional roses in other parts of the garden to compensate. As on our last visit, *Rosy Cushion* was outstanding in the border and the gardens were a pleasure to see.

Once again we have enjoyed a 'rosy' year and met some interesting people. I have enjoyed re-living the experience in writing this account. Wordsworth had a point when he spoke of recollecting in tranquillity-one of the joys of seeing lovely flowers.

***Lynn Lancaster***

## **THE BUTCHART GARDENS** **VANCOUVER ISLAND BRITISH COLUMBIA**

Four and a half thousand miles is a long way to go to see a rose garden . . . but if you are lucky enough to be traveling to Canada's West coast as my family and I were this summer then a visit to The Butchart Gardens - with over 100 varieties of hybrid tea roses alongside 400 grandiflora and climbing roses and 64 types of floribunda from all over the world is not to be missed.

The Butchart Gardens is now one of the world's premier floral show gardens, but it wasn't always this way.

The site was originally a limestone quarry for Canadian businessman Robert Pim Butchart who in the late 1800's and early 1900's made his fortune making newly invented concrete - supplying city engineers as they developed Canada's West and the Pacific railroad. He and his wife converted this limestone quarry on the Saanich Peninsula that

supplied his business into one of the most revered formal gardens in the world.

We had only a vague inkling before we went that the gardens might be a good place to visit and had no idea that they contained such a great collection of roses. We went to see the Rocky Mountains of course; rising majestically from the plains of Alberta and British Columbia in the vast openness of the Canadian West they provide a striking backdrop to one of the worlds in places to be – Vancouver.

But fifty miles off the coast is Vancouver Island – quieter, unspoiled, and friendlier and just 15 miles from Victoria (capital of British Columbia) is the gem that is Butchart Gardens. We had a busy itinerary and I really didn't expect to have time to visit but as luck would have it we drove straight past the signs to the Gardens on the way to the ferry at Swartz Bay. We are so glad we stopped by.

Jennie Butchart – by her own admission knowing nothing about gardening, began to shape this magnificent landscape in 1904. She established, in the style of the grand estates of the period, several distinct gardens to evoke a range of aesthetic experiences. The then abandoned limestone quarry was transformed into the dramatic Sunken Garden, with ton after ton of topsoil brought in by horse and

cart from a neighbouring farm - an enormous undertaking. This, the spectacular Sunken Garden, was followed by the Japanese Garden in 1906 designed by Isaburo Kishida, an Italian Garden, and in 1930 the Rose Garden.

Alongside the roses there are over 1,000 varieties of other plants and trees, including dramatic massed plantings with 100,000 tulip bulbs planted each autumn by a team of over 50 gardeners. Each year over 1,000,000 bedding plants in some 700 varieties are used throughout the Gardens to ensure uninterrupted blooms from March to October.

I have been lucky enough to walk though some beautiful gardens - the Touilleries in Paris, Isola Bella Gardens in Lake Maggiore Northern Italy, the Gardens of the Royal Palace in Bangkok and Alnwick Garden in Northumberland – one of my favorites in England, but Butchart, now enjoyed by over 1.2 million visitors each year is a really wonderful place. Travelers from all over the world walk reverentially around the stunning vistas and manicured paths, excited and awe inspired.

The renown of Mrs. Butchart's gardening quickly spread. By the 1920s more than fifty thousand people came each year to see her creation (18,000 cups of tea were served in 1915!) In a gesture toward all their visitors, the hospitable Butchart's christened their estate "Benvenuto", the Italian word for "Welcome". To extend the welcome, 566 flowering cherry trees along Benvenuto Avenue leading to The Gardens were purchased from Yokohama Nursery in Japan and installed from West Saanich Road to The Butchart Gardens' entrance.

The garden became neglected due to shortage of manpower in the Second World War and with the Butchart's in old age moving to Victoria it was left for their daughters to care for the estate. But it was the Butchart's grandson – R Ian Ross returning from the Navy following the War who inherited the gardens from his Grandparents and with his Chicago born wife Ann-Lee restored and developed the Gardens into the spectacle we see today. Ian Ross was awarded the Order of Canada in 1992, he died in 1997 but the Gardens are still owned by the family.

Butchart has the large rose garden that is almost essential in any garden that seeks to draw large numbers of tourists. This one is just

stunning, blooming unceasingly from early summer into autumn, thanks to the beneficial climate of Vancouver Island, where days are sunny and mild and nights have the evening cool that seems to suit roses. Unusually very few plants are labelled but a few familiar names appeared: 'Peace', 'Red Devil', 'Iceberg', but most to me at least kept their identity secret.

Climbing and rambling roses spill over trellises and arches and pergolas, and hybrid tea roses and floribundas grow in informal beds along walkways that permit closer inspection of any rose that catches the eye from afar. The warm afternoon air of late summer was fragrant with rose perfume

During the summer now there are concerts each night, and firework displays on Saturdays right after dusk but I like to think it's the roses bring in the crowds. The attraction of the rose is world wide and with roses from all over the world Butchart should be reserved a special place in the heart of all rose lovers – it certainly has mine.

In 2004, its centenary, the Butchart Gardens were designated as a National Historic Site of Canada.

## **Adrian Evans**

*Adrian Evans is the son of Roy Evans, the Chairman of the West Midlands Rose Society*

*Thanks Adrian for the photographs and such an interesting account of your visit. The World Federation of Rose Societies has its Convention in Canada in 2009. Perhaps this is one of the places to visit.*

## **WELCOME TO TWO NEW MEMBERS**

This quarter two new members have joined our Society. They are Jennifer Campbell from Birmingham who joined at our Kings Heath Show and Kathleen Whittaker from Stockport who joined at Weston Park. We are pleased to welcome both ladies and hope to see them either at our meetings whenever possible or at our next year's Shows.

### **WEST MIDLANDS ROSE SOCIETY**

### **DIARY OF EVENTS 2008**

<u>DATE</u>	<u>EVENT</u>	<u>VENUE</u>
Feb 11	Lecture by Ann Bird Roses Old and New	Winterbourne Botanic Gardens, Edgbaston, B'ham – see Newsletter <b><i>No meeting at Park Hall</i></b>
March 13	WMRS Annual General Meeting	Park Hall
April 10	W M R S Society Meeting	Park Hall
May 9 - 11	R N R S Spring Competition	Three Counties Ground, Malvern
May 15	W M R S Society Meeting	Park Hall
June	Society Visits to Moor Wood, Malmesbury Abbey Gardens and Country Garden Roses are planned. Details in next N/letter. Tell John if you would be inter- ested. May be short notice.	
June 11 - 15	BBC Gardeners World Live	NEC, Birmingham
June 21 – 22	RNRS Summer Show	Farnham, Surrey

July 5 – 6	RNRS Mid Summer Show And WMRS Show	Weston Park, Shropshire
July 26 - 27	RNRS Miniature Show	St Albans
August 2 - 3	Bridgemere Joint Rose Show	Bridgemere Garden World
Aug 14 – 15	Shrewsbury Flower Show	The Quarry, Shrewsbury
August	Middleton Hall Gardeners Day	Middleton Hall Nr Sutton Coldfield
Aug 30 – 31	WMRS Autumn Show in conjunction with Gardeners Weekend	Kings Heath Park, Birmingham
Sept 4	W M R S Society Meeting	Park Hall
Sept 12 – 14	RNRS Autumn Show	Harrogate
Sept 27 – 28	RNRS Autumn Show	Three Counties Ground, Malvern
Oct 9	W M R S Society Meeting	Park Hall

We trust members will find our programme varied and give it their full support. It may be altered or added to but is correct at the time of printing. Full details will be published in the Quarterly Newsletter. Park Hall Meetings are held at Park Hall Community Association, Park Hall Junior School, Park Hall Road, Walsall. A-Z 34 - 4C or 49 - 4G commencing at 7.30 pm.