by any other name

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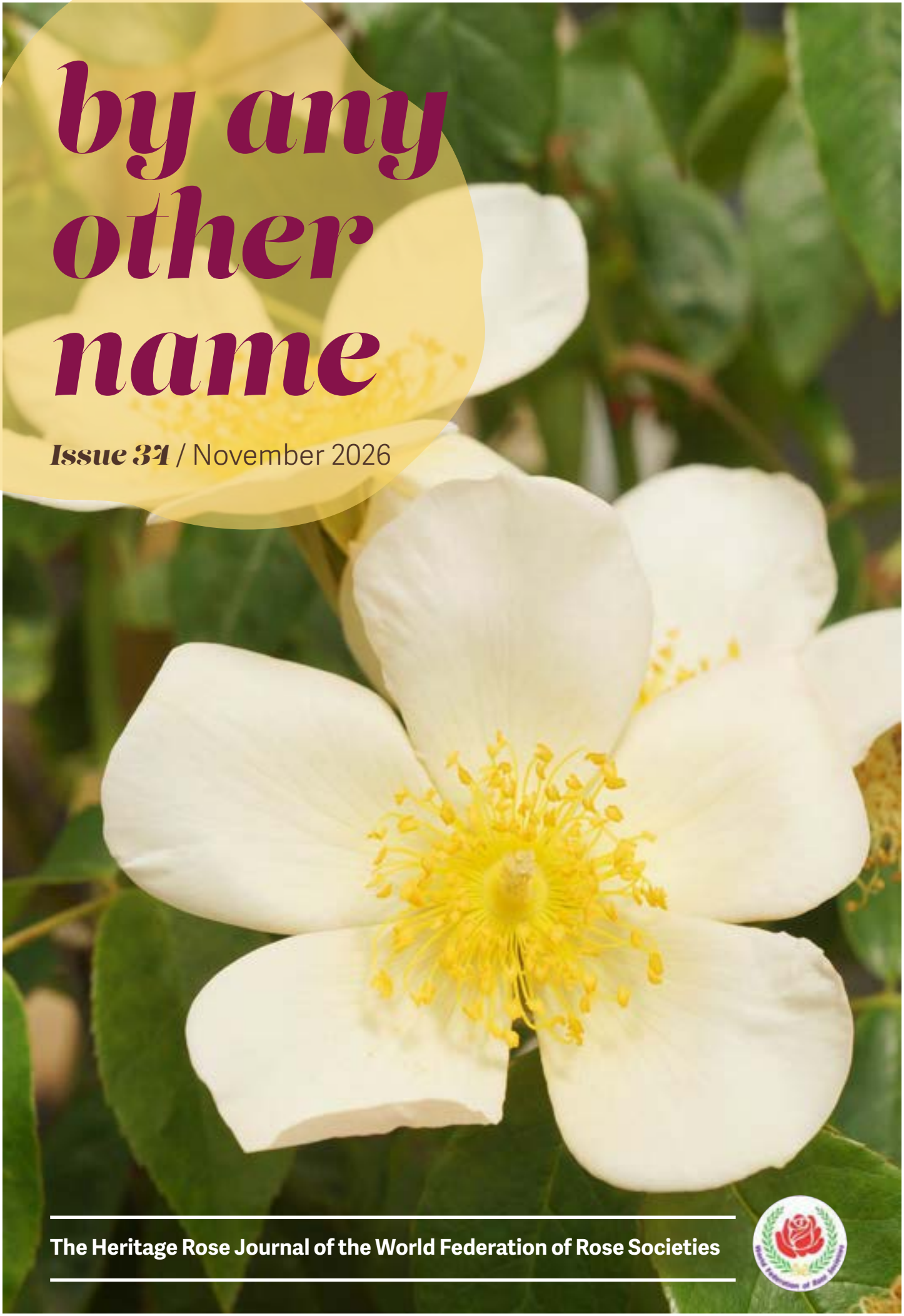

The Heritage Rose Journal of the World Federation of Rose Societies

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'Montecito' [Fenzi, c.1916]
Image: Charles Quest-Ritson

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Editors' note

In this edition of *By Any Other Name* we meet some of the giants of the rose world. William McNamara recounts his adventures in Myanmar collecting seeds and specimens of *Rosa gigantea* in the footsteps of the Victorian plant hunter Sir Henry Collett.

Gregg Lowery takes us for a walk in his garden in California where we meet one of *Rosa gigantea's* seedling offspring and a rose with a leaf so large it covers two hands opened wide. Though he has some way to go before he beats the *Rosa banksia* in Tombstone, Arizona planted in 1885 that, he tells us, has a trunk with a circumference of 12 feet.

In another sense we meet other giants of the rose world – breeders, gardeners and collectors. Charles Quest-Ritson reflects on the life of Georges Bugnet in Canada. I have found myself delving into the amazing story of Wilhelm Kordes II.

We pay tribute to the great spinosissima expert Peter Boyd, who died recently. We've included an abridged version of one of his lectures. We also pay homage to the South African rosarian Gwen Fagan who died at the age of 101. I have just returned from South Africa and her excellent book *Roses at the Cape of Good Hope* was part of my homework. I'm sorry I was too late to meet her but I did spend some time with her daughter, Jessie, who has clearly inherited some of her mother's botanical genes. I'm just editing a video of Jessie's fynbos garden, which is an astonishing place.

Clément Charreyron and Hella Brumme tell of their visit to the Fineschi garden in Italy to salvage budwood before the remarkable Professor Fineschi's collection is lost forever. Erich Unmuth reviews an enticing new book on the Redouté brothers. And Clare Haig invites us to the conference that *Heritage Roses New Zealand* is organising next November. Charles and I are both looking forward to speaking at it.

You can share this magazine with other rose lovers – view the digital version here in your web browser. Enjoy!

Martin Stott

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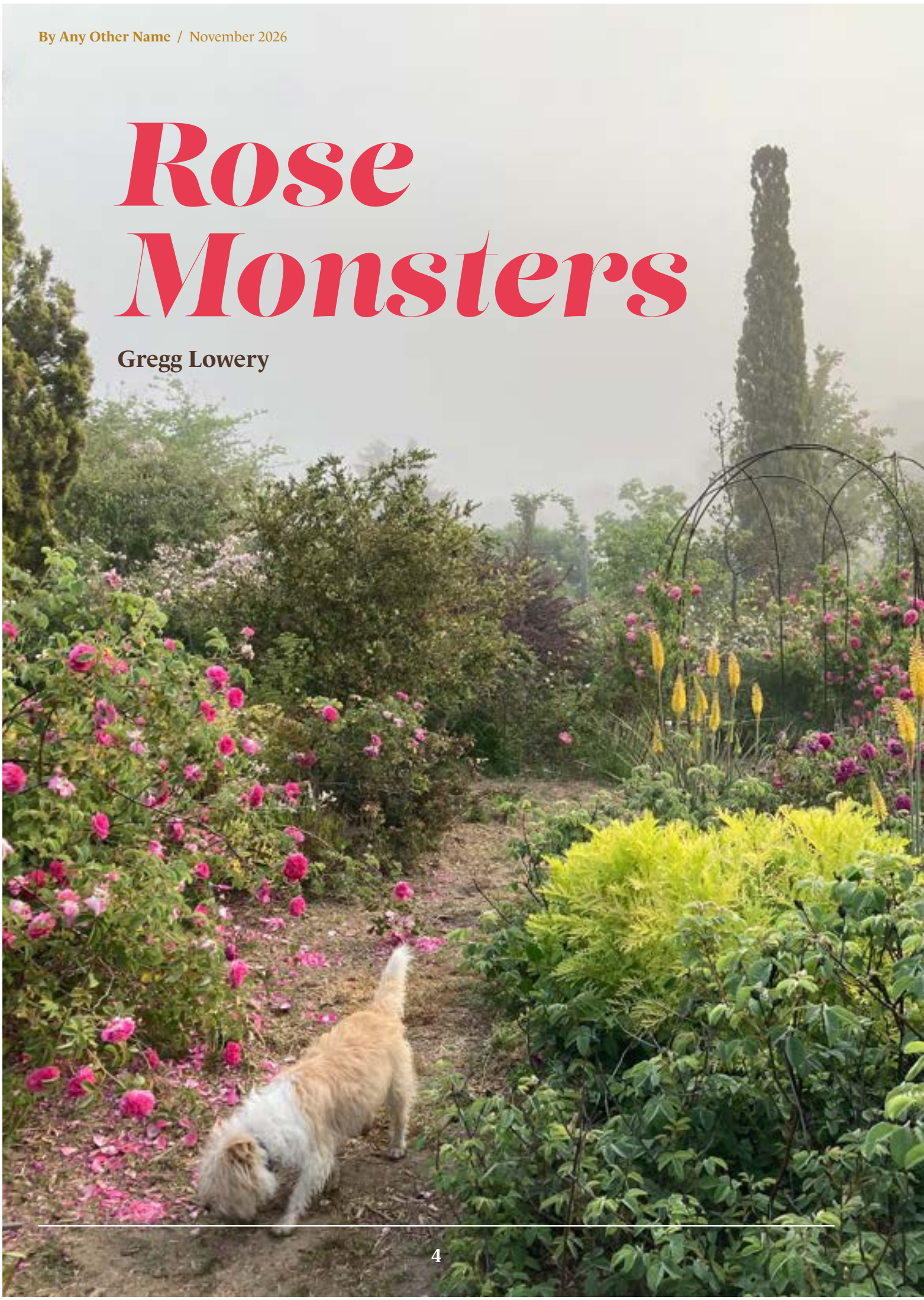
Charles Quest-Ritson is a writer, historian and journalist, with a column in the lifestyle magazine *Country Life*. He is the author of *Climbing Roses of the World* (Timber Press, 2003) and, jointly with his wife Brigid, of an *Encyclopedia of Roses* that was first published in UK by Dorling Kindersley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



Martin Stott is a journalist who has made programmes for the BBC World Service and Radio 4 in 21 countries. Passionate about roses and garden history, he has also written for *Gardens Illustrated* and *Hortus* magazine and lectured on rose history internationally. Martin's garden history blog can be found at www.thestorytellergarden.com and his YouTube channel at youtube.com/@thestorytellergarden

Rose Monsters

Gregg Lowery





Fergus the terrier exploring the old roses in Gregg Lowery's California garden.

Image: Gregg Lowery

Three small terriers lead me into the garden every morning. We head straight uphill on the gravel drive to an arbor. It runs through a new part of the rose garden, where wild roses grow. Ducking beneath the wire arches I pause and admire the single flowers of modern climbers – then on, past the hulks of old apple trees and the rose, 'Montecito', planted 40 years ago, now larger than my house. The dogs race ahead and I follow, turn back downhill and face the sky. It stops me. The crisp air, the warm light of dawn, the clouds or fog or mist waken me. I gaze higher, exploring the day, the sky, the clouds while three terriers urge me to move on. When you live on a hillside, half of your garden is sky.

Gardening on a hillside has given me this chance to ponder the universe, sometimes with awe, but mostly with wonder. I live near Sebastopol, California, in the folds of coastal mountains, near forests of Douglas Fir, Oak and Redwood, just a few miles from the Pacific Ocean. The power of nature is everywhere – our gardens can seem very small. This contrast has led me to plant big. Over time the scale of the garden has grown into balance with its wild setting. Now the garden itself strikes me as wondrous.

When visitors come, I take them first to see three roses. The first is 'Montecito', a seedling of *Rosa gigantea* from Northeast India and *Rosa brunonii*, from the Himalayas. It grows into a 100-year-old Gravenstein apple tree at the top of the garden, dangling its branches high above the roadway. Its massive vine-like trunk has matched the scale of the apple and the two are now permanently intertwined, branch and root. The scale is so large that

some who visit don't believe it could be a rose bush. The view underneath is a great place to explain to a child what a liana is in a tropical forest. Actually, the child appears in everyone who sees it – joy, curiosity and wonder.

Beside a nearby tree I have planted *Rosa longicuspis* var. *sinowilsonii*, a form of the species found on Mt. Omei in China. Perhaps the most striking leaves in the genus are found on this species. It takes two hands opened wide to hold a single leaf; I lead friends up to hold a leaf, just so. The new foliage is crimson on the underside, glowing against the large, creamy white flowers. It can grow up to 50 feet (15m) up into a tree.

These two roses exist at natural boundaries for the wild genus *Rosa*, of plant size and leaf size. But of course they surprise most of us, and some call them 'monster'.

Massive plants of *Rosa banksiae* are found throughout California and southwest North America, like the White Banksia specimen in Tombstone, Arizona. Planted in 1885, it is trained over an outdoor pergola as well as the roof of the adjacent inn, covering some 9000 square feet with a trunk circumference of 12 feet (3.7m).

The third rose that I share with visitors is a humble bush, a rose native to northwest Baja California and San Diego County: *Rosa minutifolia*. As its name would suggest this has the smallest leaves of any wild rose. A single leaf would sit comfortably on your little fingernail. The deep magenta pink bloom is just slightly larger. This is a coastal desert species in an area that receives rainfall only for a few months in the year, with coastal fog providing some moisture through the remaining months. I have observed that when dry, hot conditions are extreme the stems may die back to the soil completely. Stored energy in the roots sprouts new and rapid growth with the return of rain, and within a few weeks the new stems will shoot up, begin a long period of bloom, arch over and extend to the ground where they will rapidly root into the moistened soil. Some folks call this a monster as well. With echoes







1. *Rosa gigantea* 'Montecito' growing into a 100-year-old Gravenstein apple tree at the top of Gregg's garden.
2. *Rosa longicuspis* var. *sinowilsonii*
3. *Rosa minutifolia*

Images: Gregg Lowery and Charles Quest-Ritson

"The scale is so large that some who visit don't believe it could be a rose bush."





4. Top entry to Old Roses in Gregg's garden.
5. 'Gloire Lyonnaise' [Guillot, 1885] with a Chilean wine palm behind.

Images: Gregg Lowery

of Bram Stoker's monster, the rose seems to die, lie dead for months, then suddenly resurrect itself in an eruption of tiny fragrant bloom – death and vibrant life in one form.

What does it mean to be a monster? The Latin root is *monere*; to warn, remind, advise. *Monstrum* that which is warned of, carries the cultural charge, a portent of something abnormal to come. Children who come to my garden say the rose is a 'monster' Quite often friends who encounter plants that push a new bud through the middle of an open flower gasp and turn away. But things we've not seen before in plants are not mysterious to science which describes the boundaries. We're awe-struck, a bit suspicious and we want to stick a label on it.

"Children who come to my garden say the rose is a 'monster' Quite often friends who encounter plants that push a new bud through the middle of an open flower gasp and turn away."

This is where I lead my rose friends. It's the gateway into a garden of hundreds of roses, each unique. The extreme cases like size captivate them, their mouths ajar in wonder. Awe and wonder; they are not the same exactly; the first is colored by its ancient association, an abnormal newborn named in the warning. The monster can be large, or small or in some way not the norm, and it may frighten us. But wonder describes a different emotion; surprise at the unexpected and the corollary, curiosity – richer, more expansive, more rewarding than we had imagined. It leads us in the search of things unknown. It leads us to learn.

With newcomers to my garden I love to share the sticky oils that coat the fuzzy sepals and flower stems of Moss roses; each variety offering a different blend of musk and apple, lemon and attar, grape essence and sour orange. Their oils like perfume stain our senses and linger. Cindy, who helps in the garden, once spent a morning discovering each Moss rose variety in the garden, so I shared the whole collection of them with her, passing young plants and cuttings one by one, as I could, to feed her joy.

My first roses, at age 13, were common and colorful Hybrid Tea roses, I've never tired of them and all their 20th century companions. They grace their spaces in towns





> "Pamela's work inspired me to select some of the largest growers to adorn trees in my garden."



6. Pamela Temple's garden in 2016
7. Ramblers in Temple's garden
8. Hybrid Gigantea 'Lijiang Road' growing on a slope in Gregg's garden
9. Pamela and Michael Temple

Images: Gregg Lowery



and cities, holding so many of the attributes we humans value, the richness of color, fragrance and scale. At 13 they struck me with wonder. They planted a seed of curiosity in me.

But it was the old roses that captured my affection, and the more I came to know them, and to seek them out, the more deeply my life grew anchored in a garden, in the infinite beauty of plants. That led me in my twenties to join the Heritage Roses group who went in search of old roses in the wild – cemeteries to be precise, and other old, quiet, crumbling places one might expect to find monsters.

As my collection grew and I began to plant gardens in my thirties, I learned the most magical thing that I think a human being can learn – how to make new plants. It has been a guide for me in my life, more useful than learning how to make money. And from that emerges the greatest joy, which is sharing them with other people. And so a nursery and a garden are born.

A garden set between mountains, ocean and forests can quickly take on the scale and the drama around it, as mine has done. And I have learned from friends whose gardens cling to dizzying grandeur that there is wonder in these gardens.

The garden of Pamela Temple in the coastal mountains of Mendocino, California became the resting place for a collection I had welcomed to my garden, but could not accommodate – the rambling



Gregg Lowery's first rose garden in 1961

> "But it was the old roses that captured my affection, and the more I came to know them, and to seek them out, the more deeply my life grew anchored in a garden."

'Cooper's Burmese' in Gregg's garden

Images: Gregg Lowery



roses. Pamela adopted hundreds of them and planted them to make haystacks dotting the steep hillsides around her home. The vision she created has served as a haven to preserve rambling roses in the 21st century. In her garden they grow freestanding into haystacks. She and her husband Michael make what they call "wickets," open domes of three long steel rebar pieces bent into broad arcs and wired together. Sometimes all that is needed is one spectacle in a garden to make it grounded.

Pamela's work inspired me to select some of the largest growers to adorn trees in my garden including 'Cooper's Burmese', the first and longest blooming, with cream-colored petals. And also an heirloom hybrid of our American species, *Rosa setigera*. The found rose "Arcata Pink Globe", soft crimson pink I encountered years ago in the coastal city of Arcata which we believe to be one of the Feast Brothers' hybrids from the early 1800s in Baltimore, Maryland. It has scaled an eight-foot fence and thrust its canes twice as high seeking the old oak.

Uphill from the old live oak are three palms planted young in 1987, two are *Jubaea chilensis*, the Chilean wine palm, and a *Butia capitata* the arching silver-gray jelly palm from Brazil. Today they are massive and support the branches of the scented white Hybrid Perpetual rose 'Gloire Lyonnaise', famous for her very long canes; she blooms now among the palm fronds at 30 feet (9m). And in a columnar form of *Quercus robur*

10. 'Le Pactole' and yuccas
11. 'Perle d'Or' [Rambaux, 1875]
12. 'Buff Beauty' [Bentall, 1939], Leptospermum 'Kiwi' and oak tree
13. 'White Cécile Brunner' [Fauque, 1909]
14. 'Le Vésuve' [Laffay, 1825]

Images: Gregg Lowery and Charles Quest-Ritson









"Embracing the bold is an approach you will see carried through my garden. Roses are fine-textured plants and the best of them bloom in waves. Without contrasting plants rose gardens can become nondescript masses of green."



I planted beside the old house in 1983 I trained up a very old-fashioned climber, 'Mary Wallace'. The old house came down in 2015, the oak unscathed and the rose now garlands the 80-foot (25m) oak's lower branches with blooms through spring and summer.

Not only climbing roses but shrubs can overwhelm with their scale. Few lovers of the Tea groups realise how large some plants can become. The most impressive for us has been the Tea-Noisette, 'Le Pactole', a pale creamy yellow flowered plant that grows exactly like a haystack! Ours stands proudly at 15 feet tall (4.5m) and across; from April till December it flowers without pause. We've planted many Tea-Polyantha roses, letting them build into very large shrubs. 'Perle d'Or', 'Etoile de Mai', 'Mlle. Cécile Brunner' and the exquisite 'White Cécile Brunner', tinted lemon yellow, reward the light-pruning gardener with twice the bloom of any others. All of these have built to eight feet (2.4m) or more, and their spreading masses support thousands of blooms each year. Tea roses by nature are sometimes of monster proportions, including the roses we know as 'Le Vésuve' and 'Monsieur Tillier'.

Embracing the bold is an approach you will see carried through my garden. Roses are fine-textured plants and the best of them bloom in waves. Without contrasting plants rose gardens can become nondescript masses of green.I've always loved using perennial companions, as well as

"Not only climbing roses but shrubs can overwhelm with their scale. Few lovers of the Tea groups realise how large some plants can become."

a range of foliage color honing to green, to subtly liven the green mass. Blue-green delights me the most. I've found that structural beauty can provide freshness to the whole, and play a part in the bold parts of a garden. The counterweight of smooth succulents and the upright drama of cacti create a balance with fine leaf textures and sky.

Our native plants offer me an endless source of tough plants to add to the mix and to help bring the natural landscape into our consciousness. Beyond my garden I carry these principles with me; never fearing bold plantings in bold landscapes, trusting native plants and learning where to use them.

Apart from my own garden I have worked the past decade on one other where I have refined my laissez-faire approach to gardening on a big scale. Some favorite rose plantings are there. The absolute pinnacle of bold and beautiful is "Lijiang Road", the rich China-pink Hybrid Gigantea rose smothered with large, globular blooms in Spring. And "Fortune's Double Yellow" always deserves a place, even if you don't have the room; bright gold-green leaves iced with thick layers of mutable oranges, golds, straw yellow and warm pink.

My garden grows bolder and it is tough. The roses share space with a community of wild things. I've learned to move aside, keeping my distance, and learning from the life, as best I can. Barn owls and red tail hawks hunt in succession. A murder of crows pursues a goldfinch cloud. Great blue herons find their spots, feather their nests with weed piles gathered from autumn debris. Each finds their perch in evergreen oaks, grey-needled redwoods, English oak and California roses. The nighttime rustles with raccoons and possums. Badgers carve underground hide-outs; foxes and bobcats fight in the branches; mountain lions leave their great, soft paw prints in the sandy loam. And beneath it all a city of pocket gophers chews endlessly on the roots of roses, daring me to call them 'monster'.



Gregg Lowery is a world-renowned rose collector and curator. He has spent over 40 years saving rare and historic heritage roses. He is the co-founder of the California-based nursery Vintage Gardens and the founder of The Friends of Vintage Roses. His new Substack account is called @nakedintheroses

Georges Bugnet – The Man & his Roses

Charles Quest-Ritson



'Thérèse Bugnet' [Bugnet, 1950]

Image: Charles Quest-Ritson

Many of the important breakthroughs in the history of rose-breeding have been the work of amateurs.

Professional rose-breeders take a short-term view of their work. They are happy to continue crossing and re-crossing roses that have delivered satisfactory results for them in the past. Cynics would say that this year's novelties look very like last year's. Amateurs, however, perceive a new need and work painstakingly towards its fulfilment.

The Australian Alister Clark is a fine example: he sought to develop a race of roses that would flourish in the conditions of extreme heat and drought that characterise the climate of Melbourne. His 'Lorraine Lee', introduced in 1924, is still the best-known Australian-bred rose – and every Australian's historic rose of choice.

Georges Bugnet [1879-1981] concerned himself with the opposite problem – how to breed roses that would prove hardy and survive the bitter winters of Alberta in Canada. His legacy – greatly admired and now grown all over the world – was the hybrid 'Thérèse Bugnet' that he named after his sister in 1941. That introduction, like a dozen or so new roses that he raised and circulated, was the result of many years of thought, trial and experiment.

"His legacy – greatly admired and now grown all over the world – was the hybrid 'Thérèse Bugnet'."

Bugnet was an extraordinary man. He was raised in Burgundy at Chalon-sur-Saône, tried a religious vocation but left the seminary and then read literature at the university of Dijon before marrying his wife, Julia, in 1904.

In the following year, they left for Canada, where Georges – a romantic intellectual deeply infused in his Catholic religion – worked as a labourer on a farm in Manitoba. Then he moved, with his wife and ever-expanding family, to Alberta where he gained the concession of 14 acres (5.5 ha) of native woodland 60 miles (100 km) north-west of Edmonton and worked to convert the holding into a profitable undertaking.

He never explained why this pioneering enterprise was such a moral necessity – he had worked in France as a journalist and, in due course, became famous as a novelist. Nevertheless, he turned his thoughts to the problem of cultivating food in a land where January temperatures still average daytime highs of -6°C (22°F) and overnight lows drop to an average of -17°C (1°F), with cold spells as low as -30°C (-22°F) lasting for weeks on end.

Bugnet's thirteen-acre homestead was never a financial success, and the family survived on his earnings as a journalist while he taught himself the science and practicalities of plant-breeding in



Georges Bugnet at Rich Valley, site of Bugnet Plantation

Image: Devonian Botanic Garden, University of Alberta, Edmonton, provincial archives of alberta

the hope of being able to expand the range of foods that might be raised in such an inclement climate.

In due course, he was successful in raising a new apple variety that he called 'Paul Bugnet' after his son (who died as a baby) and a plum 'Claude Bugnet' after his father. But he was also concerned to develop ornamental plants that would thrive despite Alberta's brutal winters.

He therefore set to studying the hardiness of rose species which, by crossing them with more tender cultivars, might become the parents of a new class of super-hardy hybrids. It is known that he experimented with crosses



'Louise Bugnet' [Bugnet, 1960]
Image: Charles Quest-Ritson

> "He was also concerned to develop ornamental plants that would thrive despite Alberta's brutal winters."

'Marie Bugnet' [Bugnet, 1963]
Image: Charles Quest-Ritson



that involved *Rosa rugosa*, valued for its ability to flower early and repeatedly, and that he also used cold-resistant *R. amblyotis* from Kamchatka and Siberia – or the closely related *R. kamtschatica*.

He was also keen that his roses should have many petals, so he probably experimented with double-flowered forms and hybrids of these species – but we do not know. His aim, put simply, was to combine the beauty and scent of garden roses with the rugged survival traits of wild woodland roses. Georges Bugnet's approach to breeding roses was an exercise in extraordinary patience.

By far the best-known of Bugnet's roses is double-flowered 'Thérèse Bugnet', which is both early-flowering and continuous-flowering. The flowers, borne singly or in small clusters, are bright pink at first but fade to pale pink, and not quite quartered but nevertheless have the air of being a 19th-

century rose. The young leaves are very pretty too – bronzy-green and ridged.

The splendid stems are red and thornless – an arresting sight in winter. There is considerable uncertainty as to the parents of 'Thérèse Bugnet', but Georges himself maintained that its pollen parent was 'Betty Bland', a fine double-flowered hybrid of *R. blanda*, introduced by fellow-Canadian Frank Skinner in 1926.

Bugnet eventually released 15 roses. Their names are 'Anne Bugnet', 'Betty Bugnet', 'Elastic', 'Julia Bugnet', 'Lac La Nonne', 'Lac Majeau', 'Louise Bugnet', 'Madeleine Bugnet', 'Marie Bugnet', 'Marthe Bugnet', 'Mme Georges Bugnet', 'Nipsya Rose', 'Pelouses', 'Rita Bugnet' and 'Thérèse Bugnet'.

Georges and Julia had ten children but not all are commemorated by roses and only Thérèse and Marie are still widely available today. Their original homestead in Rich Valley is the best place to see most of his roses, although the land was uncultivated for many years after Georges and Julia retired in 1954 and moved 60kms east to the small francophone town of Legal.

The homestead is now known as the Bugnet Plantation Historic Site and managed by *La Société des Amis de la Plantation Bugnet* (Friends of the Bugnet Plantation Society). Almost all his roses grow there, alongside his historic fruit trees and other introductions.



Bugnet Plantation

Image: Alberta Culture and Community Services, Historic Resources Management Branch

"Their original homestead in Rich Valley is the best place to see most of his roses, although the land was uncultivated for many years."

Bugnet is widely remembered for his novel *La Forêt* (translated into English as *The Forest*) which is a *roman à clef* about a well-educated middle-class French couple, naïve and optimistic, who emigrate to Canada and try to turn a plot of wild forest into a farm where they can raise their family, hoping eventually to sell up and return to France for a wealthy retirement. *La Forêt* tracks their arrival in an untouched 'garden of paradise', the reality of life on the edge of the world, its impact on their family life and the development of an almost mystical relationship with the pitiless boreal forest where they lived. But it ends in tragedy: their son Paul dies, they lose their will to struggle and depart forever from the domaine that they hoped would be their Garden of Eden.

Bugnet's roses are not widely available in Europe. I have grown only 'Thérèse Bugnet' and its seedling, white-flowered 'Louise Bugnet', but both have proved dependable growers in the mild, temperate climate of southern England and northern France. I have, however, noticed that, as with many Rugosa hybrids, they fare very well in Mediterranean gardens, where they grow to a great height and tolerate both heat and drought. I can recommend both as first-class flowering shrubs.

A new rose 'from the 1930s'

Martin Stott

At the Rochfords UK Rose Trials this year one of the outstanding roses was 'Sparrieshoop 2.0'. It won a trial ground certificate and shared first prize as "rose of the day" among the international judges with another Kordes creation, 'Zauberhaft'.

'Sparrieshoop 2.0' is an unusual rose – a climber with large pink clusters. This is a rose that could have been hybridised nearly a century ago. In a world where breeders tend to focus on healthy, floriferous new roses in their programmes, it is a tribute to the qualities of heritage roses. And a reminder of why many of us still love them and grow them.

'Sparrieshoop 2.0' is a working title. The rose is not yet released and may never be – but more of that later.

Thomas Proll, head breeder at Kordes, says: "Sparrieshoop is a small village where the Kordes nursery is, and this rose reminds me of an older variety by that name bred by Wilhelm Kordes II in 1953. This new rose has a similar character.

"It has open flowers, like a rambler, but not small ones. So, it's a mix between a



'Sparrieshoop 2.0' [Kordes, 2025]

Image: Martin Stott

climber and a rambler and I like the size of the clusters. It's a really busy rose and healthy." What was remarkable was that in September in England it was still heavy with flower and had buds in abundance.

And what of its history? The rose is a cross between 'Ghislaine de Féligonde' (Turbat 1916) and 'Eva' (Wilhelm Kordes II 1933).

Thomas says: "Maybe it's my weakness for rose history, but many years back I got interested in studying Wilhelm Kordes II's early steps in breeding modern roses. Lots of his roses build on the work of Lambert and Pemberton's Hybrid Musks – though these should really be called Multiflora Hybrids. These old roses are still around and I've been able to get hold of some."

'Ghislaine de Féligonde'

'Ghislaine de Féligonde' is still recommended by many rose experts today. Michael Marriott listed it among his recommendations in his 2022 RHS guide to choosing and growing roses, describing it as "a rose whose qualities and garden worthiness have only recently been recognised". (Indeed, in the UK the first mention of it in a British newspaper appears to be in 1981 and it never merited reference in old Rose Society magazines). He says it can be grown as a large arching shrub, but its almost thornless stems and medium vigour make it ideal for a fence."

My co-editor, Charles Quest-Ritson, in his *Climbing Roses of the World* (2003) says it can also be grown as a large bush. "The flowers open apricot with a yellow base from orange buds, then fade to peach, pink and white… It flowers heavily over a long period and repeats in Autumn, when the flowers are pinker."

He says it is hardier than many Multifloras, which is perhaps why I saw it so often during the WFRS Scandinavia conference.

My own fascination with this rose (beyond its enticing colour and charm) lies in the myth associated with its name. The French breeder Eugène Turbat entered the rose in the Bagatelle trials in 1916 where it won a certificate of merit.

Nicolas, writing in 1930, said the rose had been entered under a number and the award could not be given until the variety was given a name.

'Ghislaine de Féligonde' [Turbat, 1916]

Image: Charles Quest-Ritson



It was 1916. Turbat's nursery was in Orléans, just 80 miles (130km) south of Paris, which in turn was not much less than that from the battle trenches of the First World War. Around 1.4 million French soldiers were to die in the mud of Verdun, the Somme and Ypres.

Nicolas tells us that at the point Turbat was being asked to come up with a name for his rose, he learned the story "of a young officer, the Count de Féligonde, who had been seriously wounded in battle and left between the lines in no man's land, where nobody could venture to fetch him. His wife, Ghislaine, hearing it, started at night, found him, dragged him to safety and nursed him back to health. Mr Turbat, hearing the story of the heroic woman, decided, right then to name his new rose 'Ghislaine de Féligonde'."

Nicolas claims to have met the Count and Countess de Féligonde some years later at a dinner at the

home of the trials organiser, Jean Claude Nicolas Forestier. Did he ask them to confirm the legend? One assumes not.

No such story appears in French papers of the time. In 2005 Madeleine Mathiot contacted the family for an article in *Roses Anciennes en France*. She learned that it was true that Charles de Féligonde was seriously wounded in the war. But he was not rescued by his wife. And Ghislaine, his daughter (not wife), was only two in 1916. Instead, she was told, the name was suggested to Turbat by Forestier.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, Ghislaine became an enthusiastic gardener. (She was among a party of 38 members of what was described as the "French Amateur Gardeners' Society", enjoying a 12-day tour of Irish gardens in May 1960. She was in regal company. Alongside her were a prince, two princesses, the Baroness de Rothschild, the Duke de Talleyrand and other French nobility.) She died in 1994

Ghislaine de Féligonde, c1930

Image: Pellissier de Féligonde family archive





'Eva' [Kordes, 1933]

Image: Charles Quest-Ritson

and is buried in the Féligonde family vault with the rose named after her planted nearby.

And what of the other parent of 'Sparrieshoop 2.0'?

'Eva'

'Eva' is a carmine-red Hybrid Musk with white centres. The flowers are in large clusters and flat, bee-friendly open form. It blooms throughout the season.

Named after Wilhelm's daughter, Eva, its parents were 'Robin Hood' (Pemberton 1927) and 'J.C.Thornton' (Thornton 1926). Thomas says 'Robin Hood' featured heavily in Wilhelm's breeding programme and is the seed parent of the legendary 'Iceberg'.

There is an unusual WW1 story associated with Wilhelm Kordes himself. He was born in 1891 into a nursery-owning family. His father – Wilhelm I – started in Elmshorn and eventually abandoned most of the plants he grew in favour of roses. His young son shared this passion. From the age of 14 Wilhelm II was studying the mechanics of hybridisation and experimenting with rose breeding.

It's a common apprenticeship route in rose families for the next generation to spend time with other nurseries and breeders, learning the profession and making connections.

Wilhelm worked first in Switzerland, then in Orléans. While in France he visited the great French breeder Joseph Pernet-Ducher at Lyon. In May 1912 father and son travelled to London together for the Chelsea Flower show. There Wilhelm met a fellow German 11 years old than him, Max Krause.

Ute Kordes (wife of Wilhelm II's grandson Wilhelm III) says: "Max was working at S. Bide & Sons Ltd in Farnham and helped Wilhelm secure a job there. Wilhelm was to bud the roses. He didn't speak a word of English but within three days the boys working alongside him had taught him to swear fluently!"

Wilhelm and Max were both ambitious. Wilhelm's father had started his business at the age of 21. Wilhelm II was now 21. He

decided to go into business himself, alongside his friend Max.

In the Kordes family archives Ute has found a contract between the two men and Wilhelm's father, who lent them 20 to 25,000 German marks with a 3.5% loan charge (around $200,000 today). The money was to buy them a nursery site in Witley, Surrey.

Wilhelm and Max established themselves quickly. By November 1913 they were advertising in the small ads across several local Surrey newspapers:

"DISTINCT Hybrid Tea Roses, strong, open ground trees, for 8s., carriage paid; packing free for cash with order. – W. Kordes and Krause, Rose Specialists, Witley, Godalming, Surrey. Catalogue free."

They were ambitious – that first catalogue had a colour cover. Inside they gave their credentials. "Having held leading positions in large Nurseries at home and abroad, we may say that our experience with regard to Rose Culture, also the growing of good Shrubs, Climbers, and herbaceous Plants, compares very favourably with that of any other firm in the United Kingdom."

They specialised in roses and promised to secure for customers all the newest varieties. "We undertake to design Rose Gardens in all styles, and also give practical advice to anyone who intends to re-arrange his garden, or to lay out his grounds in the modern way of Grouping and Massing of each plant used therein. Nothing is too much trouble to us."

"How did Wilhelm cope? He later said: "I found time to look at the Rose breeding business from the theoretic side." He was thinking."

It all sounds very promising. But the next we hear of them is 26th September 1914 – almost two months after the outbreak of war. Wilhelm and Max were struck off the voters' list for the area. They may have been interned around then.

Initially Wilhelm (internee number 1305) and Max (internee number 2326) were sent to a prisoner of war camp at Douglas on the Isle of Man, in the middle of the Irish Sea. At the beginning of 1915 the records show Wilhelm was transferred to Knockaloe Camp – a farm in the small village of Patrick on the west coast of the island.

Around 24,000 prisoners were to be detained there at any one time. The camp was the main centre for holding the 32,000 civilian German, Austro-Hungarian and Turkish nationals interned in the British Isles during WW1.

It was three miles in circumference, surrounded by 695 miles of barbed wire but prisoners were corralled into wooden huts in one of 23 100m^2 compounds.

Some of the prisoners were put to work. There was a furniture manufacturing workshop on the site, and a local Quaker handicrafts teacher, James T Baily, set up workshops, enabling men to craft vases from bones and boxes from wooden tea crates. There was a library, and gardening was encouraged. Some of the huts were adorned with small flower beds. So it is easy to imagine Wilhelm growing vegetables and roses there.

A photo sent from Germany to Willhelm shows his parents and siblings on the front doorstep of the family home. It may have come as part of a parcel – 2,500 would arrive from Germany every day for the prisoners.

Though not systematically ill-treated, many of the prisoners fell prey to "barbed wire disease" – depression. None escaped the island during the whole of the war.

How did Wilhelm cope? He later said: "I found time to look at the Rose breeding business from the theoretic side." He was thinking.

Initially when prisoners of war were interned their business were allowed (if possible) to carry on without them. In 1916 that was to change and "enemy firms" were forced to be wound up – often at a deep discount to their pre-war value. On 10th May 1918, the Kordes and Krause nursery was put up for auction under the terms of the Trading with the Enemy (Amendment) Act – one of just over 600 businesses reported in Parliament to have been closed during the War. Creditors would have been paid and any remaining money after the settling of expenses held in trust till the end of hostilities. It is unlikely they got back what they had invested.

"W. Kordes Söhne grew to become one of the biggest rose firms of the 20th century. And Wilhelm's experimentation led to some of the best roses of the time."





Images: Kordes family, image courtesy of Manx National Heritage and Martin Stott

1. Wilhem Kordes II
2. Cover of the Kordes & Krause catalogue, 1913-1914
3. A photograph, sent to Wilhelm while held in an interment camp on the Isle of Man, showing Wilhelm's parents and siblings on the front doorstep of the family home in Germany.
4. First World War Internees in the allotments at Knockaloe Camp, Isle of Man
5. Thomas Proll, head breeder at Kordes, with 'Sparrieshoop 2.0' at the Rochfords UK Rose Trials this year.







In 1919, Wilhelm and Max were finally released and returned to Germany. Max started a nursery in Hasloh, Holstein. He died in 1937. Wilhelm began working alongside his younger brother Hermann in the family business, which was relocated to Sparrieshoop in Northern Germany in 1919 and renamed "W. Kordes Söhne".

Hermann bred some of their early varieties but soon switched to managing the business. Wilhelm became the main hybridiser, becoming in the words of the Australian rosarian, Dr A. S. Thomas, "Possibly the greatest rose man of all time."

Over his lifetime (and he lived till he was 85), Wilhelm bred 152 roses, according to HelpmeFind. W. Kordes Söhne grew to become one of the biggest rose firms of the 20th century. And Wilhelm's experimentation led to some of the best roses of the time.

Those four years in a prisoner of war camp must have been tough, but as Thomas points out, had he not been imprisoned, Wilhelm might have been killed in battle – over two million German soldiers were to die during the war.

They are likely to have shaped him politically, too. Wilhelm and Hermann had kept the nursery going in WWII, despite some ferocious winters and the loss of many of their workers to the war. Though Sparrieshoop itself was bombed, the nursery survived – apart from half the panes in the glass house being smashed by bullets during an air dual overhead.

After the war Sparrieshoop was in the British Zone. The British questioned the brother's political affiliations and arrested Hermann. Farmers and nurserymen for miles around put down their tools until he was released, family friend Jack Harkness later wrote.

Willhelm found the post-war years hard. More tough winters followed; his beloved Sangherhausen Rose Garden had fallen into the hands of the Russians as the country was divided; and the future looked bleak.

But the business recovered. One of the remarkable things about the international rose breeding community is its ability to put politics behind it. Francis Meilland, creator of the 'Peace' rose, summed this up perfectly when he once told a visitor: "To love roses is sufficient to make you welcome here. "

The Kordes brothers rebuilt their friendships around the world and made more.

The famous English rose grower, Harry Wheatcroft, tells a story about Kordes sending him a beautiful orange-vermillion rose in the autumn of 1954. It was called 'Atom Bomb'. Everyone tried to persuade him it was an awful name.

But "Kordes… was adamant about the name. 'So long as there are atom bombs in the world people should never be allowed to forget them,' he said. 'This is one way of keeping the fact of their existence before their eyes and minds.'"

Sales were so poor, Harry cut it quickly from the catalogue. But perhaps it tells us something of how a man who spent so much of his youth in a British prisoner of war camp and went through the rise and fall of Hitler, was feeling about war in his 60s. He'd seen enough of it.

Looking ahead

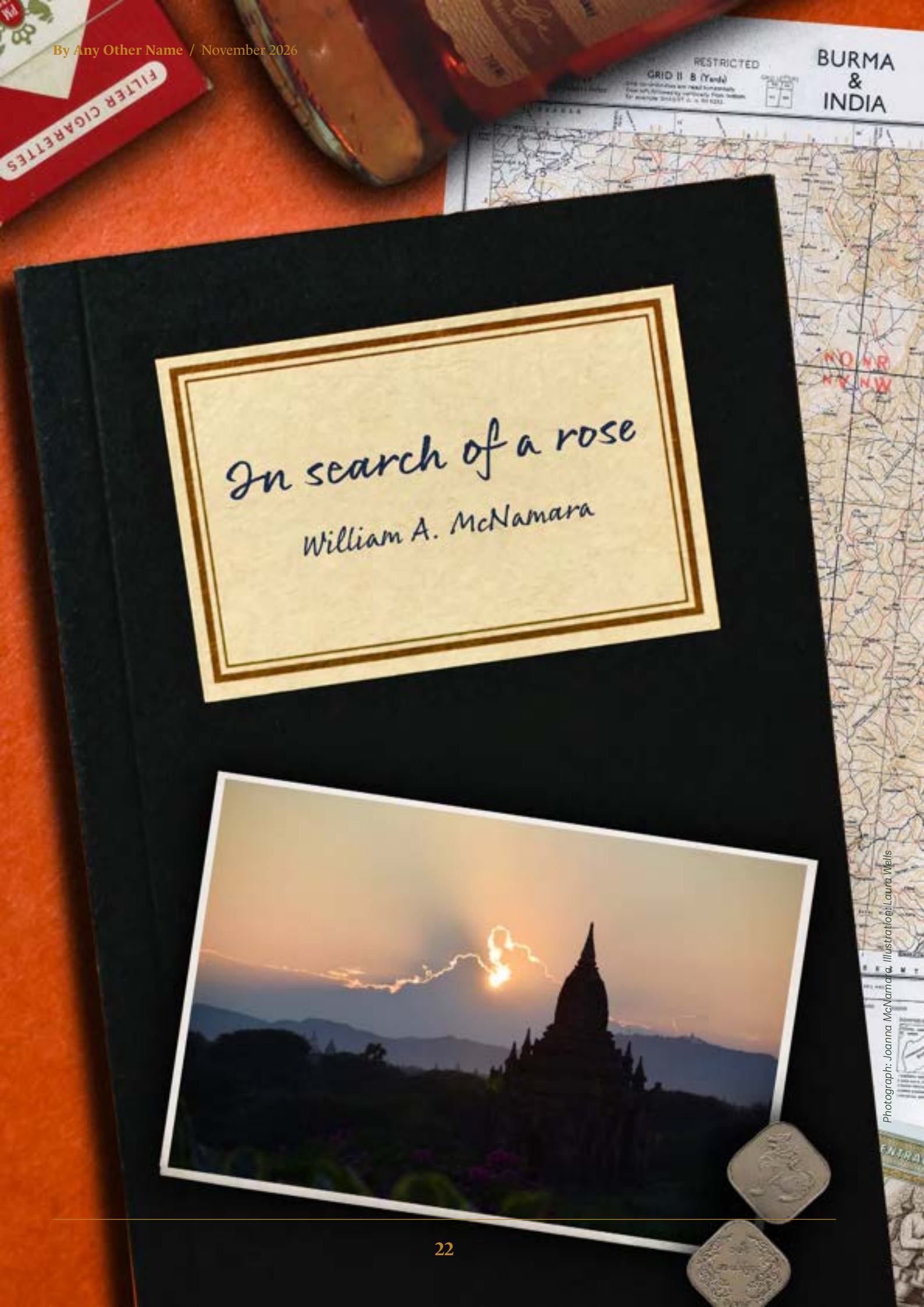
Thomas has been putting 'Eva' pollen on more modern roses lately, including one he plans to trial next year. So it will be interesting to see what's next in line.

As for 'Sparrieshoop 2.0', will it ever be sold? "I don't know if we'll ever release this rose," says Thomas. "There's still interest for insect-friendly roses. But not so much as 5-10 years ago.

"The real question is whether it is a good enough performer in a pot to sell in the nursery. The rose at Rochfords was in its third year. But will it make the same show as a small plant at point of sale? We will have to do some container trials. It's definitely worth having in the garden." It's certainly a rose I'd like in mine!

As Armistice Day approaches, 'Sparrieshoop 2.0' represents a rose with roots in the First World War, whose genes traverse three of the nations at its centre – Germany, France and England.

This is a rose that owes its existence to resilience and endurance – a symbol of the international fellowship of rose lovers.



Photograph: Joanna McNamara. Illustration: Laura Wells

"Don't forget
Everybody must give something back
For something they get"

Bob Dylan, Fourth Time Around

It was October 2014 and my fourth time to visit Burma – now called Myanmar – and we were looking for a rose. But I'll begin with my first visit.

It was 45 years ago when you could only get a seven-day visa. We were told by other travelers to arrive with a carton of American cigarettes and a bottle of cheap whiskey, as the taxi driver from the airport would offer to buy them both. This he did, providing us with enough Burmese currency for our seven-day stay. We landed in Rangoon, now called Yangon, and stayed in a guest house. It was during the Monsoon and there was heavy rain all night and by morning many of the streets were flooded.

We made our way to the train station and bought tickets to Mandalay. I loved the sound of that word and loved to say it out loud, each time thinking of the road to Mandalay in Kipling's poem. Only later did I learn that the road is the Irrawaddy River, deep enough for the British ships to sail the almost 500 miles all the way to Mandalay. On the train when you were still enough, bench bugs would crawl up from in between the slats of the wooden bench seats and bite, leaving red very itchy little welts. Lunch was rice and small pieces of over-cooked chicken, served in a folded banana leaf.

When we arrived in Mandalay there was a narrow footbridge over several train tracks that we had to cross to get into the city.

Lining the bridge on either side were beggars, many with small children, and many intentionally displaying their damaged and disfigured limbs and faces from years of leprosy.

It was impossible to cross over the bridge without fingerless hands brushing your legs in hope of sympathy and a few coins. That memory has overshadowed the rest of that visit and there is little else I remember.

"People carry roses
Make promises by the hours
My love she laughs like the flowers
Valentines can't buy her"

Bob Dylan, Love Minus Zero/No Limit

My next visit wasn't for another 33 years – now another person, almost another life. My goal and hope was to visit the far north, virtually an unexplored roadless area in the far eastern uplift of the Himalayas against the border with Tibet.

I had already been to Tibet a few times, but I wanted to see what species occurred in this remote area. I was initially helped by a friend who was the director of a botanical garden on the island of Shikoku in Japan.

He had been doing surveys of plants that occur on Nat Ma Taung (Mt. Victoria), a lonely high mountain in central western Myanmar near the border with India. He connected me with a guide who had been with the Myanmar Forestry Department. He organized what we were told would be a good introduction to the country.

So my wife Joanna and I set out in the spring of 2012 for what turned out to be a very enjoyable trip to Myanmar, but not what we were looking for. We visited most of the major tourist areas – Bagan, Mt. Popa, Mandalay, Pyin Oo Lwin (Maymyo), and Lake Inlay, overrun with mostly Europeans and Australians.

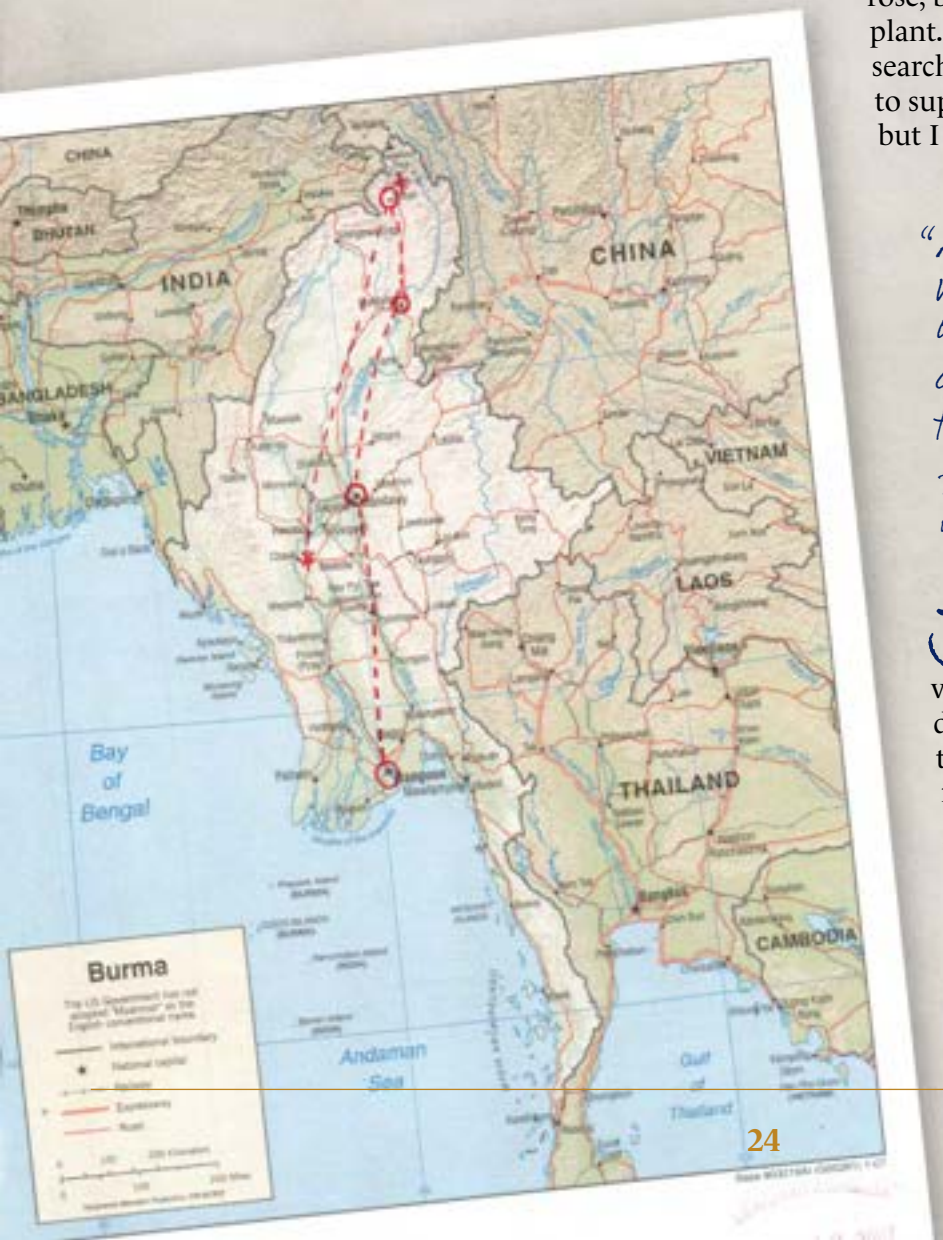
We especially enjoyed our visit to the National Kandawgyi Gardens that were started in 1915 in the British hill station, Maymyo. Maymyo is often referred to as the "City of Flowers." The famous plant hunter, Reginald Farrer, spent a couple of months there shortly before he died in the wilderness of upper Burma in 1920. In one of his letters, he referred to Maymyo as "the loveliest place in the world".

After visiting the monkey temple on a volcanic column near the base of Mt. Popa, keeping our distance from the aggressive beasts, we climbed to the top of Mt. Popa. Unfortunately, on our descent, Joanna lost her footing and rolled. Barely able to walk, she hobbled down the mountain and spent the next few days in a wheelchair.

Later, when I complained to our organizer about not getting to the mountains near Tibet, he said that it was very difficult to get permission to travel to the far north.

Not long after this trip I was asked by a friend in the American Rose Society if I would travel to Myanmar to search for and hopefully collect seeds and specimens of *Rosa odorata* var. *gigantea*.

Although this extremely rare rose had been collected in the Indian Himalayas and also in Yunnan, China recently, it had not been seen or collected in Myanmar since 1888. This rose is considered to be one of main parents of most modern roses and the form from Myanmar was rumored to be the largest of any wild rose, both in flower and in the size of the plant. I told him that I would be happy to search for it if he came up with the funds to support an expedition. He never did, but I found the money elsewhere.



"An' here I sit so patiently
Waiting to find out what price
You have to pay to get out of
Going through all these things twice"

Bob Dylan, Stuck Inside of Mobile with the Memphis Blues Again

Joanna and I returned for my third visit, her second, in the spring of 2014, determined to see the mountains in the north. This time we flew north from Yangon in a two-engine puddle jumper that stopped in Mandalay, then Myitkyina, and finally to Putao, where we were met by a quiet, unassuming young man named Wen who was a local guide.

When we landed in Myitkyina, it was so hot that a wheel on the plane sank into the melting tarmac. We had to disembark from the plane while several men pushed it out of the rut.

Wen escorted us in a jeep to the town, a couple of miles away, and set us up in a small guest cottage. After a warm beer, I quickly fell asleep under the mosquito net. The next day we headed out for the mountains, but since we were still in the warm tropics, we made the mistake of wearing shorts.

After fording a small river, we made our way over Jade Mountain and down to a small village of about 20 homes on stilts with thatch roofs made of palm fronds. Despite the beauty of the trek, with the sounds of swaying timber bamboo, seeing colorful birds, and hearing monkeys howling in the distance, we were miserable as the sandflies, leeches and mosquitoes feasted on our exposed flesh.

We continued on, now wiser and wearing long pants, but with nasty itchy wounds up and down our legs. The humidity was almost intolerable, so Joanna and I took off our shirts and soaked them in one of the many creeks we were crossing and laughed as we put them back on refreshed and happy to be alive.

As we climbed higher it was clear to me that we were entering a warm temperate area that would certainly yield good, and most likely new and interesting, plants. We hiked on, examining the flora for a return in the fall when most of the plants would be in seed.

Just before we turned around, we came across a beautiful *Styrax* in full bloom. On our return to Putao there was a brief but torrential downpour and we sought shelter in a farmer's wooden house on stilts. I had neglected to put our passports and money in zip-lock plastic bags (something I always did previously) and so we sat around his fire drying our passports and one-hundred-dollar bills over the flames as the farmer looked on in bewilderment.

We then traveled to Mt. Popa again for a short visit and afterwards drove east toward the Shan Hills, where the rose had been collected by Sir Henry Collett, and no one else, since in more than 120 years.

His field notes said that it occurred between the 19th and 20th north parallel, and between 4- and 5,000-feet elevation in the Shan Hills. Our timing was perfect to experience the annual water festival. Everywhere along the roads people of all ages were throwing buckets of water and spraying from hoses all who passed by, laughing and singing all the while. This was a welcome relief as the heat was almost unbearable.

"A rose is a rose is a rose is a rose"

Gertrude Stein, Sacred Emily

TWO days later, arriving in the Shan Hills we began our search for the rose.

With our driver, whose name sounded like "Nine-Nine", we crisscrossed the Shan Hills within our parameters and found nothing but urban and agricultural expansion, slash-and-burn agriculture and massive logging.

On the third day we were just about to give up when we noticed a small mountain with temples on it, often a sign that the flora is still relatively intact. We found a way up the mountain and to our amazement we discovered the rose.

Hips of *Rosa odorata* var. *gigantea* in the Shan Hills

Image: Joanna McNamara



It was just finishing flowering, so we only found a few flowers and because time was limited, we counted only 13 other plants, most of them growing as vines high up in the trees.

The dominant plants in the vicinity were *Melastoma*, *Quercus*, *Hedychium*, *Ficus*, *Pinus*, *Schima*, *Albizia*, and bamboo. After GPS tagging them, we knew we could find them in the fall in seed, but it was clear that the rose was a plant on the edge of extinction.

A few weeks after our return home to California, I traveled to London. While there I visited the herbarium at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, with Dr. Peter Raven and searched for Collett's specimen from 1888.

It was nearly as difficult to find as the living plant in Myanmar. We were led to different floors in vain and finally found the correct cabinet in the basement. As we opened the folders, before us lay Collett's specimen, the type specimen of *Rosa odorata* var. *gigantea*, called *Rosa gigantea* by Collett.

Pressed specimen of *Rosa gigantea* (Collett ex Crép.) collected in Mynmar

Image: Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew



And the flower was indeed 5.5 inches across. Almost speechless, I felt a calm sense of partial completion and imagined Collett all those years ago wandering the Shan Hills of Burma. He too must have been speechless when he first saw the rose. The only thing to do now was to prepare for a seed-collecting expedition in the fall.

"We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time"

T.S. Eliot, Four Quartets

We returned that fall with Joanna's son David and headed to the far north. When the plane stopped in Myitkyina a group of Americans boarded the flight. Sponsored by National Geographic and North Face, they were on their way to climb, map, and measure the highest mountain in Myanmar, Hkakabo Razi – thought to be about 19,300 feet.

This surprised us, as one of them repeatedly vomited on the short flight to Putao. We were taken, along with the mountain climbers, to the same guest house in Putao as before.

The climbers told us that they were under "house arrest" and could not leave. The mountain had recently been summited by a Myanmar team that never made it down the mountain. A helicopter crashed during the rescue attempt, killing the pilot. A second pilot and a passenger had to hike 11 days to safety. The climbers were never found.

We found out later that the American climbers we had met were finally allowed to leave and attempt the mountain but failed after weeks of a difficult jungle trek, though they did make it near the summit. They had run out of supplies and most of their porters had abandoned them.

The day after we arrived in Putao, we began the long and difficult hike over Jade Mountain with nine porters. The first two nights we stayed in villages in wooden houses on stilts. After that





Joanna fording one of the many rivers on the trekking on the Jade Mountain and *Rosa odorata var. gigantea*, found on the Gold Mystique Flowering Mountain

Images: William A. McNamara and Joanna McNamara

we camped. Leeches seemed to fall out of the dense canopy as the trail grew narrower.

We saw two bright green snakes on the trail that Wen said were deadly. Without our guide it would have been impossible for us to find our way. Apparently, we were on an ancient trading route to India that disappeared each year under the rapid growth of the jungle.

After several days of trekking, fording rivers, and crossing precarious bridges, with the humidity and steepness of the climb almost killing me (Joanna and David seemed to have no problem), we reached about 10,000 feet elevation. We had seen wonderful plants along the way but had grown weary of the many leeches.

"Quick now, here, now, always—
A condition of complete simplicity
(Costing not less than everything)"

T.S. Eliot, Four Quartets

Our descent was much easier, though I did walk into a sharp bamboo cane slicing my head open and Joanna did a full summersault in a steep muddy part of the trail. We did however manage to make several good botanical collections and we were fortunate to have David there to help us.

Several days later we returned to the Shan Hills to collect the rose, *Rosa odorata* var. *gigantea*, the largest of any wild rose. It was easy to locate as we had the GPS coordinates from our spring visit.

Seeds and herbarium specimens were gathered along with a sense of worthwhile accomplishment, this being only the second time that this rose had been collected and documented in Myanmar.

Known as the "tea rose" it is the source of that fragrance in modern roses, so adored with its long stems and dramatic elongated pointed flower buds.

Some say it is called the tea rose because the crushed petals and leaves offer a scent of tea, but others say it is because their hybrid descendants on their way to Europe traveled on ships loaded with tea from China.

Whatever the origin of the phrase "tea rose" may be, our journey had not been in vain. We had found the rose on Gold Mystique Flowering Mountain, perhaps named for the bright gold stamens of this once common rose of the Shan Hills.

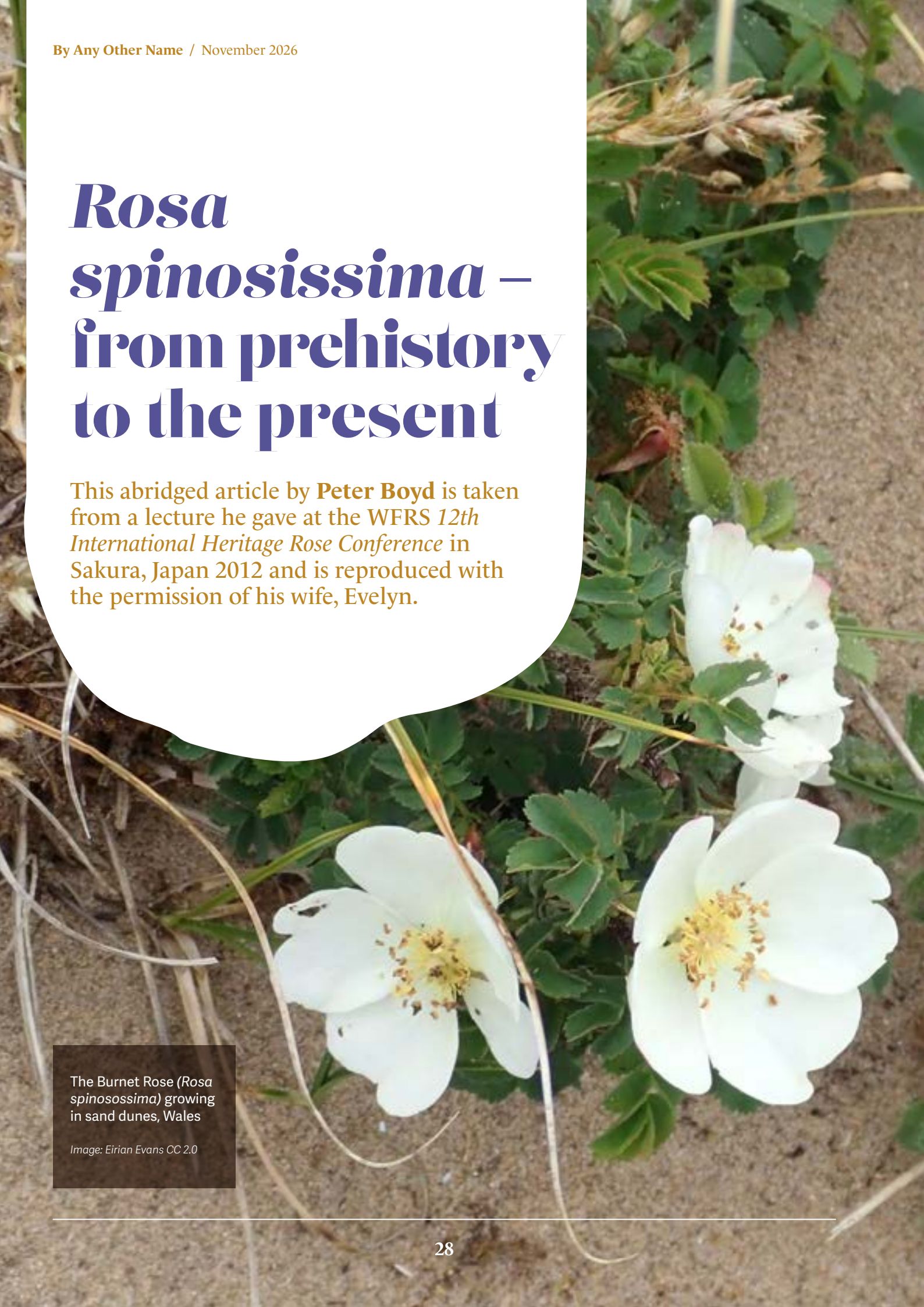
We were ready to give something back, a rose on the edge of extinction, not collected for more than 120 years, one of the main parents of modern roses, the source of so much pleasure, and so Joanna and I turned to face each other and gave that quiet smile, that smile that will live forever, and reached out for each other's hand and walked back into the mountains of our time.



William A. McNamara is an American horticulturist and expert in the field of plant conservation and the flora of Asia. Now retired, he was the President and Executive Director of Quarryhill Botanical Garden, a 25-acre wild woodland garden in Northern California's Sonoma Valley featuring wild-sourced plants from temperate East Asia.

Rosa spinosissima – from prehistory to the present

This abridged article by **Peter Boyd** is taken from a lecture he gave at the WFRS *12th International Heritage Rose Conference* in Sakura, Japan 2012 and is reproduced with the permission of his wife, Evelyn.



The Burnet Rose *(Rosa spinosossima)* growing in sand dunes, Wales

Image: Eirian Evans CC 2.0



Rosa spinosissima (*R. pimpinellifolia*) has been associated with the lives of people for thousands of years. It is the only species in the Section *Pimpinellifoliae* to occur naturally in Europe and probably evolved in China, the centre of diversity for the *Pimpinellifoliae* (18 species occur there).

However, it is not known when *R. spinosissima* evolved. The genus *Rosa* evolved at least 34 million years ago. The genus is confined to the Northern Hemisphere as a wild plant and fossil remains attributed to *Rosa* have been found in North America, Europe and Asia. However, these remains are fragmentary and usually only occur as an individual leaflet or prickle, rarely a complete leaf – let alone the combination of stem, leaves and flowers that one would expect to use in identifying a living species of rose.

R. spinosissima may have evolved before the Northern Hemisphere glaciations of the Pleistocene, during one of the lengthy interglacial periods or after retreat of the continental ice-sheet and amelioration of the climate about 12,000 years ago. As far as the author is aware, the earliest fossil or sub-fossil remains of the species are post-glacial but lack of preservation or identification does not mean that the species did not exist because plant remains are only preserved under quite unusual circumstances.

"*R. spinosissima* may have evolved before the Northern Hemisphere glaciations of the Pleistocene, during one of the lengthy interglacial periods or after retreat of the continental ice-sheet and amelioration of the climate about 12,000 years ago."

The continental ice-sheet and associated tundra conditions did not extend as far south in Asia as they did in Europe during the last glaciation. Therefore, more plant taxa were able to survive in the south to repopulate the northern areas and diversify than in Europe. If *R. spinosissima* had already evolved and spread westward before the last glaciation, it is possible that it survived in 'glacial refugia' in southern Europe from whence it was able to move

north as the ice sheet retreated. It may have been able to take advantage of lowered sea-levels and extensive sandy coastlines before the sea-level rose again as the ice-sheets melted. Its hardiness, ability to spread by suckers (root-shoots) and tolerance of salt-laden winds could have allowed it to take advantage of those newly available habitats in a pioneering role.

Distribution

The spread of *R. spinosissima* may have preceded the migration of Stone Age people along the coastline and such hunter-gatherers could have benefited from its fruits as a food resource in late summer and they may have discovered its medicinal properties. Juice from the heps might also have been used to add colour to the objects that they made or their own skins. Early people might even have helped in the spread of the species, carrying whole heps with them as they walked but disposing of the seeds several kilometres from where they had been collected.

Now, thousands of years later, *R. spinosissima* occurs naturally from the western fringes of Europe to parts of northwest China and southern Siberia. Its natural distribution is limited to Europe and Asia except for part of the Atlas Mountain Range in North Africa. However, if the species did evolve in China, the spread has been almost entirely westwards because of environmental barriers to the north and east. *R. spinosissima* grows from sea-level to an altitude of over 2,700 metres and it has the widest natural distribution of any rose species except possibly the circumpolar Arctic Rose (*R. acicularis*) which can withstand lower temperatures than *R. spinosissima*.

"The spread of *R. spinosissima* may have preceded the migration of Stone Age people along the coastline and such hunter-gatherers could have benefited from its fruits as a food resource in late summer."

Its wide distribution has meant that it has been associated with mankind for thousands of years. Over the last few hundred years, people have also carried it to North America and the Southern Hemisphere where it has become naturalised in some situations.

Names

R. spinosissima has been known by many different local names and it has attracted its own folklore. In



R. spinosissima along the dunes at Biville, North West France.

Image: Charles Quest-Ritson

some places, people have given it a vernacular name based on the resemblance of the leaves to a Burnet (*Sanguisorba*) and therefore, for example, called it the Burnet or Pimpinell Rose in English or Rose Pimprenelle in French. In other places, it was the prickly stems that caused it to be known as Bodičasti Šipek in Slovenia, for example, or Piikkiruusu in Finland. In Iceland, it has the name Þyrnirós which literally means 'Thorny Rose' but the same Icelandic word means 'Sleeping Beauty' and may refer to its early flowering – the beautiful rose waking up after the long dark Icelandic winter! In Norway, this rose is called 'Trollnype' – associating it with the trolls of Norwegian folklore. Elsewhere, it is named after the coastal sand-dunes where it grows so, for example, it is Klitrose in Denmark, Duinroos in The Netherlands or Dünen Rose in Germany.

Cultural significance

R. spinosissima is not native to Finland but it has gained a special cultural significance there and in Sweden where it is a native wild species but quite rare. A double white cultivar of *R. spinosissima* is Juhannusruusu (Saint John's Rose) in Finland because it is associated with St. John's Day (24th June) – celebrated as Midsummer.

Folktales about this rose probably exist in several countries. One that has probably survived from Mediaeval times, through an oral tradition, is the story of 'La Rose Pimprenelle" from the Ardennes region of Belgium and France. *R. spinosissima*, plays a key part in the story, as the object of a quest. In some versions of La Rose Pimprenelle, the hero in the story adopts the Pimpinell Rose (*R. spinosissima*) as the emblem of his family.

> "In Scotland, *R. spinosissima* is the plant emblem of the Clan Keith, which dates back to the 11th century."

In Scotland, *R. spinosissima* is the plant emblem of the Clan Keith, which dates back to the 11th century. In April 2005 the rose was chosen as the official plant emblem of the City of Aberdeen. I do not know if this was because of the Clan Keith association with the city or because the rose grows wild nearby.

A white rose has been chosen, in one form or another, as the emblem of other families including the House of York in the 15th century and the Royal Stuarts. It was the badge of the Jacobites who wanted to restore a Stuart monarch to the throne of Great Britain in the 18th century. It was not always the same type of white rose that was employed! Therefore, although the names "White Rose of York" or "Jacobite Rose" often refer to the hybrid cultivar *R.* × *alba*, the same names have been applied to the small, white-flowered *R. spinosissima* in other contexts. "The Small White Rose of Scotland" (*R. spinosissima*) was often more appropriate than *R.* × *alba* because of the particular association with Scotland.

Blood and snow

"The Towton Rose" or "Battle Rose" was a wild form of *R. spinosissima* although it is associated with the House of York through the 15th century so-called "Wars of the Roses". It used to grow abundantly on the site of the Battle of Towton in Yorkshire.

The Battle of Towton took place between Yorkist and Lancastrian forces on 29th March 1461. About 28,000 men were killed in the bloodiest battle that ever took place on British soil. There was snow on the ground and the white snow became stained red with blood of the dead and wounded.

The Towton Rose was a form of *R. spinosissima* with its white petals 'tinged' or 'streaked' with red. It still grew on the site of the battle in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Superstitious people thought that white roses growing on the battlefield had been literally stained with blood and had produced such flowers ever since. Others believed that the roses symbolised the red blood shed on the white snow at the time of the battle or that white roses planted on mass graves after the battle produced flowers tinged with red, representing the blood of Lancastrian men (whose emblem was a red rose) on the white Yorkist rose.

A myth that attributed failure of the rose to grow anywhere except on the battlefield probably arose partly from people digging it up when it was in flower (when failure



might be expected) and, in part, because some people wanted to discourage removal of the roses because they considered them sacred!

By the end of the 19th century, the Towton Rose had become rare because people dug up plants as souvenirs and farmers did their best to get rid of it because they considered it a weed in their fields. Local people also sold plants of it to tourists and, as it became rarer, some unscrupulous vendors seem to have sold the more spectacular *R. gallica* 'Versicolor' ['Rosa Mundi'] as The Towton Rose and may even have planted it on the site of the battle to support their claims. The true Towton Rose may still exist in a garden somewhere but it was finally made extinct on the battlefield in the 1940s when its stronghold 'Bloody Meadow' was ploughed up.

The Jacobite white rose

The Jacobite movement was named after *Jacobus*, the Latinised form of James. King James II of England was also James VII of Scotland. He had ascended the throne in 1685 but Parliament was suspicious of his attempts to give religious liberty to Roman Catholics and non-conformist Protestants and his belief that the monarch should have absolute power. His first son, James Francis Edward Stuart (Prince of Wales), was born on June 10th 1688. Parliament was frightened by the prospect of a Catholic dynasty and King James was deposed. He was exiled to France and when he died in 1701, still in exile, his son James Francis Edward Stuart (later to be called "The Old Pretender") claimed the right to the thrones of England and Wales, Scotland and Ireland. His cousin, Louis XIV of France supported him in this claim. James's son Charles Edward Stuart ("Bonnie Prince Charlie" or "The Young Pretender") was born on 31st December 1720. Later, he was to lead Jacobite forces in support of his father's cause in the 1745 Rebellion.

> "Superstitious people thought that white roses growing on the battlefield had been literally stained with blood and had produced such flowers ever since."

Above: Engraving of Edward IV fighting the Lancastrians at the Battle of Towton in 1461.

Below: A form of *R. spinosissima* tinged with red, possibly similar to the Towton Rose.

Images: Public domain and Peter Boyd



In the Christian religion (particularly Roman Catholicism) the white rose has often been used to symbolise the Virgin Mary so that in whatever manner a white rose symbolised support for the Stuarts, it also symbolised support for the Roman Catholic faith in the minds of some people.

The Prince landed at Glenfinnan on the west coast of Scotland in 1745 where he "raised The Standard" to rally an army of supporters on 19th August. As he and his men travelled inland towards Invergarry Castle, he stopped overnight on 23rd August at Fassfern House, on the shore of Loch Eil. It is a tradition that before he left Fassfern

in the morning, he picked a white rose from the garden and fixed it in his bonnet (hat). Some writers believe that this was *R. spinosissima* and indeed, in August, it could have been a late flower which caught the attention of the Prince. The white rose plucked at Fassfern is said to be the origin of the "white cockade" (made from white ribbon) worn by Jacobite supporters. Incidentally, the climbing white rose which grows on the wall of Fassfern House today (sometimes claimed to be the original from which the Prince picked the rose) does not show in 19th century photographs of the house so it cannot be the bush from which the white rose was picked in the early 18th century!

After some early successes, the Jacobite rebellion of 1745 eventually ended in failure at the Battle of Culloden on 16th April 1746 after which Charles Edward Stuart fled to France. However, the Jacobites continued to hope that a Stuart monarch would be returned to the throne.

The white rose remained a symbol of the Jacobite cause and its supporters wore a white rose on "White Rose Day", the 10th June, the birthday of James Francis Edward Stuart ("The Old Pretender"). The white rose that was likely to have been available to pick and wear on 10th June in Scotland was *R. spinosissima*.

James Stuart ("The Old Pretender") died in 1766, Charles Stuart ("*The Young Pretender*") died in 1788 and his younger brother Henry, Cardinal of York, in 1807. With their deaths, any realistic hopes of another Stuart on the throne of Great Britain died as well.



Above: An illustration of Prince Charles Edward on the battlefield in 1746.

Below: Charles Edward Stuart (The Young Pretender) wearing a white cockade in his hat, the emblem of the Jacobites,

Images: Public domain and National Library of Scotland, CC 4.0



Symbol of Scottish independence

Whatever the uncertainties regarding the identification of some "Jacobite roses" there is no doubt that the white rose in later Scottish literature and poetry is *R. spinosissima*, where it is often called "The Little White Rose of Scotland", "The Sma' [Small] White Rose of Scotland" or "The Wee White Rose of Scotland" as well as Scots Rose or Scotch Rose.

"The Little White Rose of Scotland" was the symbol of independence for the Scottish Nation chosen by Scottish Nationalists in the 20th century. The National Party of Scotland was founded in 1928. Several poets and other creative writers joined the Party. Compton Mackenzie (1883-1972) and

Christopher Grieve (1892-1978) were leading supporters of this resurgence in national identity and Scottish cultural activity. They felt that Scotland had been dominated by England for too long. In November 1929, Mackenzie used *R. spinosissima* in a BBC radio broadcast, as a symbol of 'Scottishness'. His speech was printed in the December issue of *The Scots Independent* (the newspaper of the National Party of Scotland) from which the following is part:-

"Let us turn to our own background and forsake utterly the enticement of an alien and for us unnatural culture. We have grafted ourselves upon the rich rose of England. It has flourished on our stock. We have served it well. But the suckers of the wild Scots rose are beginning to show green underneath. Let them grow and blossom, and let the alien graft above, however rich, wither and die. You know our wild Scots rose? It is white, and small, and prickly, and possesses a sharp sweet scent which makes the heart ache".

His friend, MacDiarmid adapted these words and sentiments (with acknowledgements to Mackenzie) for a short poem called 'The Little White Rose' first published in 1931:-

The rose of All the World is not for me.
I want for my part,
Only the little white rose of Scotland
That smells sharp and sweet – and breaks the heart.



R. spinosissima
Double White

Image: Charles Quest-Ritson

> "There is no doubt that the white rose in later Scottish literature and poetry is *R. spinosissima*, where it is often called "The Little White Rose of Scotland"."

This short verse became very popular and has been frequently quoted as an emblem of Scotland and Scottish independence over the last 80 years. Indeed, it was one of the texts chosen to adorn a wall of the Scottish Parliament building in Edinburgh, officially opened in October 2004.

Cultivated garden forms of *R. spinosissima* have also been closely associated with Scotland since at least the end of the 17th century. A cultivar in the Edinburgh Physic Garden (the precursor of The Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh) was recorded as the "The lesser Scottish Burnet, or Pimpinel-Rose with fine-stript flowers". By 1730, this cultivar had become known as the 'Striped Scotch Rose' and by the late 18th century, every cultivar of *R. spinosissima* sold by nurseries in Britain seems to have been called a Scotch or Scots Rose and included "Scotch White-flowered Rose", "Double White Scotch Rose", "Red Scotch Rose", "Striped-flowered Scotch Rose", "Pale Yellow flowered Scotch Rose" (*The Lady's Magazine*, 1784).

By the 1820s, hundreds of single, semi-double and double Scots Rose cultivars had been raised by Robert Brown, Robert Austin and others in a wide variety of colours. Their popularity outside Scotland was partly due to the number of Scottish head gardeners and nurserymen of Scottish descent in England! Initially, many Scots Roses were expensive to buy and could only be owned by rich landowners but, gradually, they were dispersed far and wide to be grown in many cottage gardens because they were so easy to propagate.

Scottish men and women took them to their hearts and carried Scots Roses with them to many other parts of the world including Canada, the United States and New Zealand during the 19th and early 20th centuries. So did immigrants from Sweden and other Norse countries where cultivars of *R. spinosissima* had also become part of their cultural heritage.

Graveyards

As a result, *R. spinosissima* and Scots Roses were often planted on graves in cemeteries around

the world – to act as a memorial to family members or friends who originally came from Scotland or Scandinavia or who were descendants of those who had. *R. spinosissima* and old Scots Rose cultivars have often survived in such situations.

Accounts of such burials even appear in several works of fiction. Lucy Maud Montgomery (1874-1942) came from a long line of Scots-Canadians. She wrote the novel *Anne of Green Gables* on Prince Edward Island in Canada (Montgomery, 1908). Her reference to the Scots Rose reflects the affection for these roses that was common among immigrants from Scotland:-

"I took a slip of the little white Scotch rose-bush his mother brought out from Scotland long ago; Matthew always liked those roses the best – they were so small and sweet on their thorny stems. It made me feel glad that I could plant it by his grave – as if I were doing something that must please him in taking it there to be near him. I hope he has roses like them in heaven. Perhaps the souls of all those little white roses that he has loved so many summers were all there to meet him".

These "little white roses" could have been the single white *R. spinosissima* or one of the very popular old double white cultivars.

Herbals

R. spinosissima was initially grown in gardens for its herbal properties



R. spinosissima hips were valued for their herbal properties and made into teas in certain parts of the world.

Image: Charles Quest-Ritson

> "Its heps and leaves have been used to make a tea and, in some places (particularly Denmark) a liqueur is still made from its heps."

and it was one of the first roses described and illustrated in 16th century herbals of Northern Europe. Its heps and leaves have been used to make a tea and, in some places (particularly Denmark) a liqueur is still made from its heps. In recent years, it has been the subject of intense research to investigate its special pharmaceutical properties. The chemical constituents have recently been summarised by Mayland-Quellhorst et al (2012). Its dark purple or black 'fruits' (heps) are high in vitamins and antioxidants.

Artistic depictions of *R. spinosissima* have been made, like those of other roses, to assist identification in herbals or specialist rose books. Therefore, *R. spinosissima* and its cultivars are depicted by artists in all the well-known illustrated rose books such as those of Lawrence (1799), Redouté (1817-1824), Andrews (1805-1828), Willmott (1910-1914) and McMurtrie (1998).

No doubt, many artists also depicted *R. spinosissima* in paintings created for other than descriptive identification purposes but depictions of this rose became a characteristic element in the pictures of one professional artist. Edward Atkinson Hornel (1864-1933) was one of a group of Scottish artists known as 'The Glasgow Boys'. His early paintings are much admired today but they were considered 'challenging' by a late Victorian public and they did not sell well at the time that he painted them. Therefore, Hornel was forced to develop a more commercial 'decorative' style to support himself and his sister. Many of these later paintings depict young girls arranged in innocent poses among flowers by the seaside or in woodland – such paintings having been commissioned by the children's parents. A favourite location for these paintings was Brighouse Bay, near Hornel's home in southwest Scotland, where dwarf-growing *R. spinosissima* grew on the sand dunes and formed a carpet of white blossoms in May or June. This carpet of roses is a feature of several paintings (e.g. *'The Captive Butterfly'* of 1905 and *'Brighouse Bay, Wild and Burnet Roses'* 1923).



R. spinosissima ex Lindley, *Rosarum monographia* (1820) plate no. 9

Image: Charles Quest-Ritson

Decline

Although *R. spinosissima* is still locally abundant today as a wild plant, it was far more widespread and abundant in the past than it is today. One can conjecture that it was usurped in early times from places that became the natural location for permanent human settlements or agriculture. Populations of the species have undoubtedly been destroyed by urban development, agricultural activities and other mechanisms ever since. The decline in occurrence of the species can be clearly demonstrated in countries where wild plant records have been kept.

In 1597, Gerard stated that it was common on the outskirts of the City of London in villages such as Knightsbridge and Fulham. Those villages are now part of the Greater London conurbation. One can imagine that many coastal villages and towns were originally developed in places where *R. spinosissima* grew and many natural coastal sand-dunes have been replaced with sea walls, golf courses or other tourist developments over the last two centuries. Inland, calcareous grasslands (such as at Towton) where *R. spinosissima* grew have been ploughed up for arable crops or the roses have been destroyed by herbicides to maximise grazing. In Britain, *R. spinosissima* has probably declined most from inland sites over the last hundred years.

The species is now being threatened in some of its native sand dunes in northern Europe through competition with the more robust *R. rugosa* that has escaped from gardens and flourishes in the sand-dune habitat which is very similar to the habitat in which it evolved in its native Japan.

R. spinosissima is also threatened in a more surreptitious way by alien 'genetic pollution'. It is a very variable species but, locally, a population may have its own unique genetic character with characteristics that suit local conditions. Such localised 'gene pools' may be in danger of genetic contamination from 'alien' *R. spinosissima* genes. The present author has observed that most of the seed-grown *R. spinosissima* sold in Britain and mainland Europe for hedging and municipal planting and possibly sometimes planted on nature reserves comes from larger-flowered, taller clones than the native variants. The plants have probably been imported from mainland Europe or grown from seed sources in mainland Europe that include southern Europe variants or even Asian variants

such as 'Altaica'. If such plantings of *R. spinosissima* take place near native populations, contamination of unique local 'gene pools' may become a concern. This might be compared with the concern in Britain for contamination of the native English Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides non-scripta*) by hybridisation with the more robust Spanish Bluebell (*Hyacinthoides hispanica*) grown in gardens.

Within the main range of the species in Europe and Asia, even though *R. spinosissima* is widespread it may be very 'local' – confined to nature reserves or places where urban or agricultural pressures have not reached it. Its distribution is more scattered than undoubtedly it was in the past. Wild populations of *R. spinosissima* are particularly vulnerable at the edges of its natural distribution. At the extremes of its distribution, populations are widely separated and often consist of only a few plants that may only flower or set seed in some years. Human interference or natural disaster in such locations can easily make such populations extinct.

In some cases, human interference may be of an unexpected kind. In Iceland, *R. spinosissima* may be at the western edge of its natural distribution or it may have been introduced by Christian or Viking settlers from Europe over a thousand years ago. Its habitats can be vulnerable to volcanic activity in Iceland but its occurrence has unexpectedly declined at some localities since the 19th century and it has been suggested that superstition may have led to its decline at some of the Icelandic sites.



R. spinosissima growing in a wall

Image: Michael Clarke cc 2.0

Apparently, some Christians in Iceland considered that any prickly or spiny plant should be destroyed because they associated it with the 'Crown of Thorns' placed on the head of Jesus Christ at his crucifixion. Fortunately, today, most Christian and other inhabitants revere the rose and wild populations are protected.

Scots Roses and other cultivars of *R. spinosissima* have become more popular again in recent years as their beauty and resilience have become 'rediscovered'. There is a resurgence of interest in the old cultivars and *R. spinosissima* itself as garden plants that are able to thrive in conditions that are difficult for other roses. There is also interest in *R. spinosissima* as a parent of new hardy, disease – and drought-resistant hybrids. It is sad, then, that the wild species may be under increasing threat in some parts of its range through human activity.

For the full version of this piece and footnotes visit:
www.peterboyd.com/rosapimp18.htm



Peter Boyd was a researcher and lecturer in Micropalaeontology, environmental archaeologist and Collections Manager and Curator for the Shrewsbury Museums Service. His interest in Scots roses started with a chance encounter with a plant at the edge of his garden near Peebles. Peter became a leading expert in *R. spinosissma*. In 2018 a repeat-flowering hybrid producing purple flowers, but looking like a 'proper' Scot's rose was named in his honour which he was invited to baptize (see above).

In tribute

Peter Boyd
1946-2026

Peter Boyd was a man of many interests and talents. We know him as the world's great authority on the Scots roses – *R. spinosissima*, its forms and hybrids – and a genial and familiar presence among delegates to the conferences of the World Federation of World Societies. His lectures were always impressive: his vast knowledge of Scots roses made it clear how little the rest of us knew about them and how he was working in a field of study that only he inhabited.

Peter was born in Essex and educated in Surrey, but he was proud of his Scottish ancestry and deliberately chose to attend Aberdeen University as an undergraduate. It was there that he met his wife Evelyn, herself a Highland Scot.

His first degree was in Geology – Evelyn remembers that, when they were married in 1969, they spent their honeymoon on the Isle of Raasay, off the coast of Ross-shire, collecting Jurassic rock and fossil samples for his research. Peter then trained as a secondary school teacher in Sheffield and continued his research at Sheffield University.

When, eventually, he and Evelyn moved to England, he taught



environmental studies in Essex, worked as a part-time tutor in Earth Sciences for the Open University and for the University of London in Micropalaeontology. He was also contracted to the Mary Rose Trust in Portsmouth as their environmental archaeologist.

Once Henry VIII's flagship was brought to the surface, he also took on a post at Chelmsford Museum. Some of his happiest years, however, were spent in north Devon, where he set up the new North Devon Museum Service in Barnstaple. The house that he and Evelyn bought was by the sea and Peter would go down at low tide to see what the Atlantic ocean currents had carried up from the coasts and rivers of the American seaboard and the West Indies. His collection of exotic seed capsules, some from as far south as Brazil, was a constant source of amazement. In Devon, too, he developed a passion for ferns and fern-growing, Finally, he worked in Shropshire as Collections Manager and Curator for the Shrewsbury Museums Service.

Peter's interest in Scots roses was prompted by a chance encounter in the mid-1990s with a plant that he spied flowering on the edge of a garden near Peebles. He was smitten by its beauty and its early flowering, and was quickly absorbed by the history of *Rosa spinosissima* in cultivation.

He met many of the Scottish gardeners who had cherished cultivars, many of them unidentified and unidentifiable. Over the years, however, he was able to build up the largest collection ever grown since the middle of the 19th century.

He also saw, correctly, that his species, forms and hybrids would be a useful resource for DNA studies of the species. His command of taxonomy was impressive, as was his memory for the distinctive features of every form and cultivar. In 2004, he was asked by Europa-Rosarium at Sangerhausen to help with the identification and ordering of the forms of *R. spinosissima* in its collection. He was intrigued to discover that their scent was a useful tool in determining the ancestry of single-flowered cultivars with *R. foetida* in their ancestry, many of which were indistinguishable at first sight from *R. spinosissima* itself. He then used scent as a way to group other cultivars of hybrid origin.

Peter established especially close links with botanists and collectors in Scandinavia and the Baltic nations. And everywhere he noted that many cultivars are known only by the name of where they were found or by the name of the person who discovered it.

The crowning testimony to his renown was the 2018 launch by Danish rose-breeder Knud Pedersen of his 'Peter Boyd' rose, the first repeat-flowering hybrid that looked like a 'proper' Scots rose but produced its purple flowers almost continuously from late spring onwards.

Peter was not a polymath, but a man deeply versed in the natural world, with a phenomenal knowledge and deep curiosity about geology, plants and animals. A rose friend whom he visited in California observed that 'he was more interested in the hummingbirds than in my roses'. Nevertheless, the friends he made wherever he went admired the breadth of his intellectual interests and his natural curiosity.

The editors of BAON send their condolences to Evelyn and to their children, Douglas and Lorna, and hope to hear more in time of the task of finishing Peter's monograph on Scots Roses and the conservation of his private collection of cultivars.

Charles Quest-Ritson

Preserving the Fineschi rose collection

In the last edition of By Any Other Name we reported on the closure of The Roseto Botanico Gianfranco e Carla Fineschi in Cavriglia, Italy. This important collection of 6,000 roses was the lifetime work of the late Professor Gianfranco Fineschi. Many of the roses in his collection are the last surviving specimens of cultivars.

Several rosarians have heeded the call of Fineschi sisters to take cuttings to preserve its rarities and disperse them.



One of those visitors was **Clément Charreyron** from Les Racines du Vent – a French nursery specialising in heritage roses. It was his first visit. Here he describes poetically the awe he felt walking among the late Professor Fineschi's rose beds, which were unusually designed to illustrate the evolution of the breeding work of breeders.





Fineschi's landscaped garden in full bloom in 2009

Image: Charles Quest-Ritson

> "There is only one action over which indifferent stars and unchanging rivers have no sway: it is the action of a man who snatches something from death."
>
> André Malraux, 8th March 1960, in his speech for Nubia's monuments.

Visiting the Roseto Botanico Gianfranco e Carla Fineschi is a commitment – like sitting in a chair, on a hot summer evening, to listen to Beethoven's Diabelli variations. One need not follow the developments in tonality, or understand the composition, to enjoy the music.

Thus, one need not follow the bloodlines, or understand rose evolution, to delight in the beauty of the garden.

It is not necessary to know that an almost anonymous breeder from Besançon in France, who created only a handful of varieties, changed the face of modern roses, by breeding the decisive 'Soeur Thérèse'.

With this creation Francis Gillot (not to be confused with Guillot) laid the cornerstone for modern roses, that would eventually lead to 'Queen Elizabeth', 'Tiffany' and 'Chrysler Imperial'.

It is not necessary to know that 'Papa Meilland' is the latter's offspring with 'Charles Mallerin', a variety honouring, and genetically descending from Mallerin's breeding work, in which he extensively used… 'Soeur Thérèse'.

Even Roy Shepherd, as far away as Ohio, used 'Soeur Thérèse' to breed the famous 'Golden Wings'.

Nor is it necessary to understand that 'Red Letter Day', planted in one of the beds in front of the house and very probably the last living one in Europe, originated a major red bloodline that,

through the 1926 hybrid tea 'J. C. Thornton', gave us the Kordes' musk roses, 'Wilhelm' and its sister sibling 'Eva'. 'Eva' sparked much of Kordes' subsequent commercial success, since it gave birth to the prolific breeder 'Pinocchio' (present in even the heritage of Austin's 'Abraham Darby') and the very successful 'Orange Triumph'.

This 1936 floribunda's genes are a major part of the widely-planted 1956 floribunda 'Lilli Marleen' and of the major breeder that has been 'Baby Château'. 'Orange Triumph' is also in the bloodlines of Meilland's major successes such as 'Polka' and 'Bonica'.

'Baby Château' bred the important 'Independence', parent of so many modern roses, including, as a second generation, Olesen's 'Ingrid Bergman'.

Faded glory

I never met Professor Fineschi. And everything I say is solely based on feelings and emotions one might experience walking among his roses and olive trees.

The Roseto was past its prime but it didn't require much imagination to see the garden in the splendour it once assumed.

It was not a ruin of a garden. But fragments of slow decay, perhaps accelerated by global warming and frequent droughts, persisted in testifying of a glory past.

Witnessing the method and rigour, the scholarly manner in which the Roseto had been designed, it became ever more obvious, with each step, with each rose bush we passed, there was a purpose in it all.

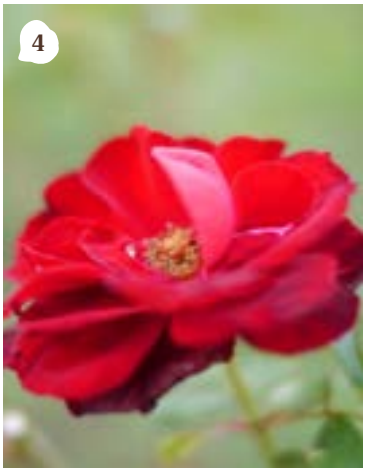






1. 'Papa Meilland' [Meilland, 1963]
2. 'Orange Triumph' [Kordes, 1936]
3. 'Soeur Thérèse' [Gillot, 1924]
4. 'Lilli Marleen' [Kordes, 1956]

Images: Charles Quest-Ritson, 掬茶 CC BY-SA 4.0 and T.Kiya CC BY-SA 2.0



The Roseto whispers of the mystery of nature's beauty. It is an avowal of the unattainable yet joyful nature of humanity's quest for beauty.

Now the show is over. But the Roseto's teaching, leading us through bloodlines back to the wild species that mankind shaped into a face of perfection, is a lesson of memory.

Call to action

In the spring of 2026, the Fineschi sisters reached out to rosarians across Europe, in a call to preserve their father's collection, by way of duplication.

The call was met with enthusiasm by many who then went to Cavriglia to collect budding material, so the garden's treasures would be preserved, though scattered.

"The Roseto's teaching, leading us through bloodlines back to the wild species that mankind shaped into a face of perfection, is a lesson of memory."

Professor Fineschi's collection was unique to him. It would be impossible if not unfair to pass it into someone else's hands. It would undoubtedly become a burden. This is why, in matters of conservation and by an almost ironic twist of fate, it is frequently most efficient to disperse parts to those who will care in order to ensure the whole collection's survival.

Because roses, for the most part, don't have museums or curators to preserve their legacy, they rely almost entirely on private and devoted gardeners.

It is not the fall of the Library of Alexandria. Neither is it the disappearance of the Romanov's treasures. It is the passing of a story to its new tellers.

I left the Roseto Botanico Carla Fineschi with a profound sadness. The sadness was filled with immense joy of something that will never be met again, of how irrevocable finitude makes the invaluableness of things.

Postcript

As a postscript, I wish to express my deepest gratitude to Silvia, who accomplished the remarkable and exhausting task of meticulously preparing and mapping out every rose we asked for in the garden. We would have most likely failed to find many otherwise.

The roses we grafted will join my personal collection – that of the rose garden of Cluny and of the Botanical Garden of Lyon. If there are some to spare, they will be put on the market for others to join in preserving Fineschi's legacy.

Planting a rose is an act of civilization. It testifies a trust, a faith, in mankind and in the human spirit. Planting a rose, and even more so a whole collection, is placing oneself in a long history of evolution; it is understanding we are but a step forward in a long walk; it is having faith in a quest; it is celebrating mankind's unique place in nature and assuming its responsibility.

Private rose gardens – endangered havens of diversity

The plight of the Fineschi collection is not unique. In this piece, **Hella Brumme**, former managing director of the Europa-Rosarium Sangerhausen, tells of her endeavours to rescue some of the rarities at Cavriglia and highlights similar issues elsewhere.



Hella Brumme with Herward Vemmer, collecting budwood in the Vemmers' garden from roses not represented in Sangerhausen. The collected material was then grafted in the Europa-Rosarium's nursery fields.

Image: Hella Brumme

Since 2009, the Europa-Rosarium Sangerhausen has coordinated the German Rose Genebank network as the first partner of the German Genebank for Ornamental Plants. The network brings together rose collections and experts dedicated to the conservation and sustainable use of the diversity of the genus Rosa L.

The Europa-Rosarium, the largest collection-holding partner, maintains approximately 8,700 different roses, which are preserved, described and verified by its staff. The network's partners include rose gardens such as the one in Dortmund, private individuals, and public and private institutions both in Germany and abroad.

For many years, the Europa-Rosarium has enjoyed a friendly and productive partnership with the renowned Roseto Botanico Carla Fineschi.

Before he died in 2010, Professor Fineschi established a foundation for his rose garden to ensure its long-term preservation. A year previously I had received an inventory from Professor Fineschi listing 7,000 rose plants there, although I cannot estimate how many different varieties these represented.

The foundation enabled the garden to be maintained for many years. Unfortunately, in recent years its funds have no longer been sufficient to guarantee the collection's preservation. Consequently, the garden was taken over by an association founded by the professor's daughters.

Through Erich Unmuth, a network member from Austria, the Europa-Rosarium learned that the rose collection in Cavriglia was in imminent danger. Its preservation could no longer be guaranteed, as the property was to be sold. The Europa-Rosarium subsequently received an official letter from the institution.

"Before he died in 2010, Professor Fineschi established a foundation for his rose garden to ensure its long-term preservation."

Thomas Hawel, Director of the Europa-Rosarium, and Gerhild Schulz, the network coordinator, compiled a list of 150 rose varieties that were missing from the Europa-Rosarium's collection. I decided to travel to Cavriglia to collect propagation material from these roses.



Hella Brumme collecting budwood with Silvia Fineschi in Cavriglia in 2026

Image: Hella Brumme

Together with my friend James Furniss, I set off on the journey, crossing the Alps in intense heat. On our arrival, Silvia gave us a very warm welcome. She had prepared everything perfectly for our work, identifying and marking the roses on our list.

The three of us set to work, locating the roses, cutting budwood and labelling it, until the heat became unbearable at around 11 a.m. After a break, we resumed work at 5 p.m. We followed the same routine on 4 July.

We also collected budwood for our Polish rose enthusiast friend Ewa Jarmulak and, on 5 July, for Helga Brichet in Italy. Both intend to establish rose gardens dedicated to preserving these varieties. The town of Cavriglia also plans to create a memorial garden in which varieties from the original park will be planted.

We are deeply grateful to Professor Fineschi's daughters, and especially to Silvia, for organising the preservation of these roses. Rose varieties have also been sent to France and the Netherlands. A look at the rose beds today reveals just how seriously endangered the roses in Cavriglia have become.

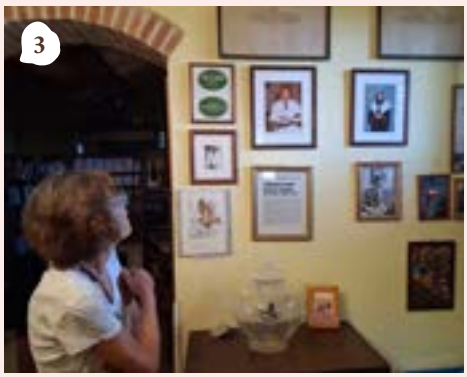
The Vemmer Garden

Another private rose garden whose varieties are now endangered after 50 years of dedicated collecting is the Vemmer garden in Wedtlenstedt, Germany.

Although Eilike and Herward Vemmer are not members of the network, their garden contains an extensive collection of Hybrid Musk roses, and they have worked closely with Sangerhausen on a professional level for many years.







1. Eilike Vemmer touring Fineschi's garden in 2009
2. Fineschi garden rose planting marked by his daughter Silvia in 2026
3. Silvia in her father's room of rememberance

Images: Hella Brumme





1. & 2.
Rosa multifora var. *adenochaeta* [1] and 'Ballerina' [Bentall, 1937] [2] in the Vemmers' garden a decade ago

Images: Eilike and Herward Vemmer

They have been growing roses in their garden for 55 years and have assembled a collection of approximately 400 different varieties. Their particular passion is for Hybrid Musk roses. Around 30 varieties from their garden are not represented in the Europa-Rosarium.

Due to their advancing age, they are no longer able to maintain their 5,000 m² garden. Roses that have been admired by countless rose enthusiasts over the years are now overgrown with weeds and self-seeded woody plants.

The Europa-Rosarium already had documentation relating to the propagation of these roses. Thomas Hawel therefore decided to collect budwood from the 30 varieties missing from the Rosarium and propagate them by grafting.

After making arrangements with the Vemmers, Thomas Hawel and I travelled to Wedtlenstedt on 3 September and collected budwood from roses not represented in Sangerhausen. The very next day, the collected material was grafted in the Europa-Rosarium's nursery fields.

The Vemmers were delighted that this initiative will prevent these varieties from being lost. We are deeply grateful to them for their tremendous commitment. Eilike had meticulously prepared the lists, while Herward, despite his advanced age, had cleared enough of the overgrown vegetation around the roses to enable us to collect the budwood.

In recent years, the rose collections of several private network partners have already been lost. Preserving the diversity of rose genetic resources requires institutions like the Europa-Rosarium Sangerhausen and the support of rose enthusiasts worldwide.

Hella Brumme is one of Germany's distinguished rosarians. She is the former managing director of the Europa-Rosarium Sangerhausen. A specialist author, Hella has co-written and number of books on historical and wild roses with Eilike Vemmer.



Book review

The Redouté Brothers – Masters of scientific illustration in Paris

by Hans-Walter Lack, James A. Compton and Martin W. Callmander

Review by Erich Unmuth

The Redouté Brothers – Masters of scientific illustration in Paris
by Hans-Walter Lack, James A. Compton and Martin W. Callmander

Conservatoire et Jardin botaniques de Genève & Muséum national d'Histoire naturelle, Genève: 2024.

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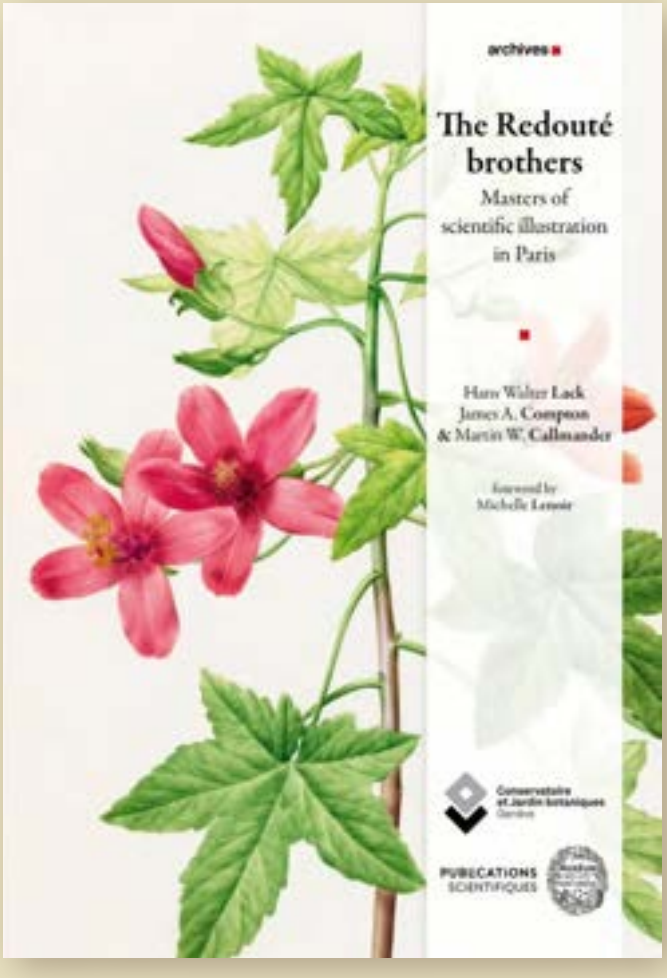


Redouté, a name widely known; depictions of roses on tableware, napkins – a constant presence in everyday life.

Rose enthusiasts are familiar with the associations: Empress Josephine, Malmaison, 'Raphael of Flowers'. But there is more, much more.

Anyone who studies old garden roses cannot do without Pierre-Joseph Redouté when it comes to identification, and will find that the artist often depicts a particular rose in greater detail in a single painting than several photographs do today.

In this award-winning book, the authors – Hans-Walter Lack, professor at the Freie Universität Berlin and former long-time director of the Botanic Garden and Botanical Museum in Berlin, James A. Compton, Department of Plant Sciences, University of Reading and Martin W. Callmander, Head Curator of Collections at Jardin Botanique de Genève – not only present the first comprehensive biography in English of the three Redouté brothers, but also take the reader on a journey to Paris during a period often referred to as the Golden Age of the Natural Sciences.

Coming from modest circumstances in the Ardennes, all three brothers settled in Paris, where Antoine-Ferdinand (1756–1809) became a decorative painter. Henri-Joseph (1766–1852), among other things, accompanied as a member of the scientific team Napoleon's Egyptian campaign, documenting plants, animals and objects. And Pierre-Joseph (1759–1840), the most prolific and famous of the three brothers, embarked on a career in which he set new standards as an illustrator and forged a path that combined science and aesthetics.

The latter is the main character of the book, whose life and artistic work are depicted in rich detail and with great vitality against the historical context of the late Enlightenment, the turmoil of the French Revolution, the Napoleonic era and right through to the Restoration.

The book opens with two sentences by Pierre Jean François Turpin (1775-1840), a contemporary colleague, which powerfully articulate the aspirations and value of the illustrator's art:

> *"The pen of the writer and the brush of the artist are the two indispensable instruments for describing any being. The botanist who uses only the first of these will be missing the more expressive of the two."*

Redouté's collaboration with the outstanding natural scientists of his time – such as Claude-Antoine Thory (1759-1827) on the three-volume work *Les Roses*, with Étienne Pierre Ventenant (1757-1808) on the two volumes of *Jardin de la Malmaison*, and with Augustin Pyramus de Candolle (1778-1841) amongst other things on *Les Liliacées* – is a perfect illustration of this very point.

The book, which runs to more than 800 pages, is divided into seven chapters, each of which is subdivided into shorter sections, and it contains six appendices which greatly enrich the text. Numerous illustrations, accompanied by detailed captions, supplement and illustrate the text.

It is also highly remarkable that the authors discovered a number of works that were held in collections and had previously been ignored.

I must admit that I began reading with *Chapter 5: 'Josephine's garden at Malmaison, Les Roses and other projects'*.

This section, which runs to more than 150 pages, has significantly altered my view of Malmaison; it was not merely a masterfully designed garden or an extensive plant collection, but rather a research centre where botanists, artists and gardeners worked on the depiction, description, classification and cultivation of hundreds of plants that were, at the time, completely unknown.

In connection with *Les Roses*, there is also a discussion as to just how large the rose collection at Malmaison actually was, and whether all the watercolours of the roses are based on specimens cultivated at Malmaison, as "surprisingly, no inventory of the rose collection cultivated in Malmaison after Josephine's death has ever been traced" (p. 531).

Nor does Étienne Pierre Ventenant's herbarium, held at the Conservatoire et Jardin Botanique de la Ville de Genève, provide any information on this.

Chapter 6, 'Pierre-Joseph, a Paris celebrity', which deals at length with the recognition and fame Pierre-Joseph Redouté received during his lifetime, stands in striking contrast to the fact that, following Pierre-Joseph's death, heavy debts necessitated a hasty sale of his property and his widow nevertheless suffered in abject poverty; 'nothing is known of where or when she died' (p. 665).

In my opinion, this is not just a book for botanists and artists; anyone with a passion for plants – particularly roses – and botanical art will enjoy reading it.

The book was awarded with the SHNH Natural History Prize 2025 and was praised by the judges as a masterpiece.

Heritage Rose conference New Zealand

Clare Haig

Heritage Roses New Zealand Inc, in cooperation with its Nelson Regional Branch, has announced plans to hold the fourth New Zealand Heritage Rose Conference next year in the sunny Te Waipounamu locale of Whakatū Nelson.

The dates are November 18-21 2027. Enjoy a uniquely Nelson setting where the beach meets ocean, and the sun sets over the distant Kahurangi Mountains. Walk on the beach in the early morning. Savour the artisanal products of the region. Most especially, renew friendships and make new ones with people who share the same devotion to heritage roses as you do.

We originally billed this a 'mini' conference because there are no pre- or post-conference tours. Instead, people travelling by car to Nelson will be given a list of gardens to visit on the way from, or to, Christchurch or Picton. On the Sunday after the conference, if there is enough interest a trip to Abel Tasman National Park or Golden Bay might be arranged. Or even to the stunning Nelson Lakes region.

Accommodation is to be paid separately and there is a choice of motels. We have organised a special discount for delegates at the Beachcomber Motel. The discount voucher will be linked to the registration information. All motels are within walking distance of the conference venue and the beautiful Tahunanui beach.

Beachside Centre is situated in the Tahunanui campground, so you can bring your tent or campervan. There is also a convenient bus to central Nelson and one from the airport.

The price is NZ$540.00/person Non-members NZ$640.00 plus General Services Tax (currently 15%)

Beachside catering has a gourmet reputation! The first dinner will be a relaxed buffet event where we can really get to know one another.

For the Gala Dinner, dress up in your rosy best and prepare to be entertained by Martin Stott from the UK – co-editor of BAON and author of the Storyteller Garden blog.







From top to bottom:
'St Nicholas', Tui roses and *R. sancta* and geranium

Images: Clare Haig

The plan is to have speakers in the morning and garden visits in the afternoons. A little taste of what has been planned so far can be found below and there will be a more comprehensive programme in the next year.

Garden visits include:

Craigholm, where we'll enjoy roses incorporated into a woodland setting.

Karetu, prepare to delight in this bloom-filled garden that celebrates an abundance of roses, giving them centre stage.

Cornerstone Roses, Riwaka. This is a busy dedicated rose nursery with a display garden. We will have retail opportunities on the day and an all-fruit ice-cream truck is already booked in! Expect a budding demo from James Armit and an explanation of the day-to-day running of a nursery.

Heritage Rose Garden at Broadgreen Heritage House – a chance to visit one of the only remaining 19th century cob houses in NZ with the newly restored glasshouse. Located in the middle of a bustling suburb, this public taonga recalls the history of orchards in the region and the ongoing and generous nature of rose nurseries in the area. Serendipitously, this conference coincides with the 40th anniversary of this garden.

Speakers

An important aspect of the Conference is the conservation of our heritage of roses in public gardens in the light of private gardens no longer being the safe, dependable places they once were. The issue of funding cuts for public green spaces and the importance of volunteers caring for them will also be addressed.

- How will this work with few specialist curators in public gardens and them changing specialist areas so frequently?
- How will the roses be chosen that represent the rose families that have been important to rose lovers in NZ since the first ones arrived in the 1800s?
- How to maintain a beautiful public garden that will attract the general public when many of the precious old roses aren't considered to look fabulous all year round.

Speakers who will address this include:

Barbara Wheeler, Manager of curators at Auckland Botanic Garden, previously at Dunedin Botanic Gardens when she had an internship at Longwood Garden, Philadelphia, USA and with input from other NZ rose curators including **Heidi Conolly** from Christchurch.

Charles and Brigid Quest-Ritson on conservation in Europe via Zoom interviewed by **Martin Stott** prompted by questions from HRNZ members.

Other speakers are **Alan Jolliffe**, Christchurch, President of the Royal New Zealand Horticultural Society and instigator of the heritage roses collection at Broadgreen Gardens, Nelson. **James Wheatley**, Nelson landscape designer and designer of his family's stand at Chelsea and Hampden Court Flower shows in the UK and imaginative floral artist **Claire Bawtree**.

"An important aspect of the Conference is the conservation of our heritage of roses in public gardens in the light of private gardens no longer being the safe, dependable places they once were."



Clare Haig is convenor of the 2027 Heritage Roses New Zealand convention. Clare was convenor of Heritage Roses Nelson from 2008 – 2022, a member of the Heritage Roses National Executive committee from 2019 – 2023, and president of Heritage Roses New Zealand from 2020-2023.

In tribute



Gwen Fagan
1924-2026

Rosarians throughout the world will be sorry to learn of the death of Gwen Fagan on 17 July 2026, at the age of 101. She was the founder and guiding star of the heritage rose movement in South Africa and her acute intellect and witty conversation were a delight to her many friends right to the end.

Gwen trained and practised as a medical doctor. Her husband Gawie was a distinguished architect, famous for blending his new buildings into the natural landscape and for restoring historic domains. Gwen developed an interest in South Africa's heritage landscapes, which led naturally into collecting old roses and planting them in gardens that she and Gawie designed or restored. She was an incomparable researcher – diligent, intelligent and sound in her judgments. Her work led to the publication in 1988 of her superb book *Roses at the Cape of Good Hope*. It is probably the best rose book in any language for the quality of its writing, illustrations and design since Ellen Willmott's *The Genus Rosa* [1910].

Gwen was born in the Karoo but educated in Stellenbosch and at the University of Cape Town. Her first language was Afrikaans – her mother's family dated back to the earliest settlers in the Cape – but she was also proud of her descent from members of the Cape Malay community. Some of her best work as a garden architect can be seen at such historic Cape estates as Boschendal and Klein Constantia. She is also commemorated by a stately pink rose bred by Poulsen in Denmark, trialled by Ludwig's Roses in Pretoria and introduced as 'Gwen Fagan' in 1991 – and still sold in South Africa.

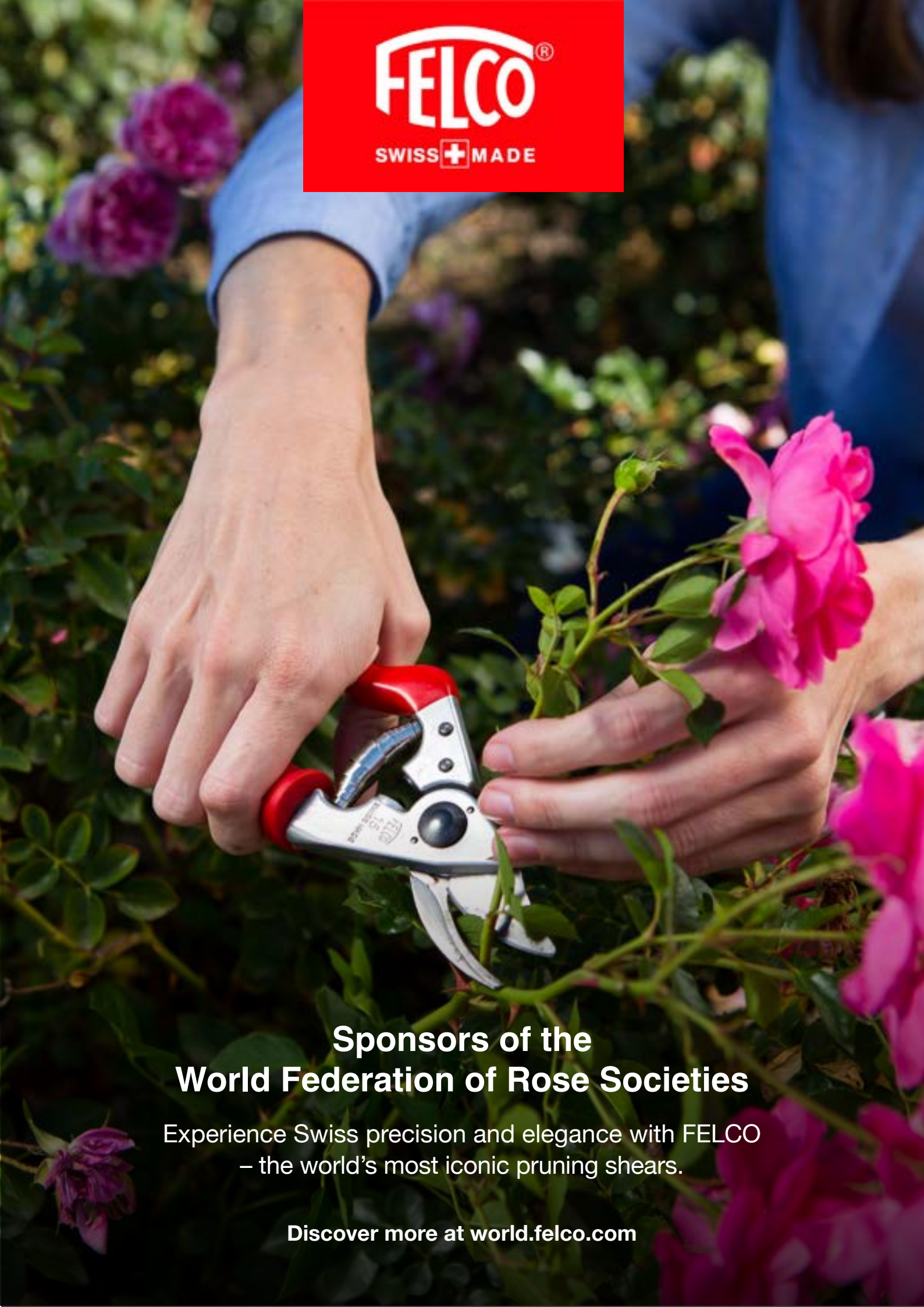
Charles Quest-Ritson

Below:
Gwen with her book *Roses at the Cape of Good Hope* in Fagan Architects office, Cape Town.

Above:
'Gwen Fagan' [Ludwig's Roses, 1991]

Images: Charles Quest-Ritson and Wild Olive Artisans South Africa

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