

# *by any other name*

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**Newsletter of the World Federation of Rose Societies**

Conservation and Heritage Committee



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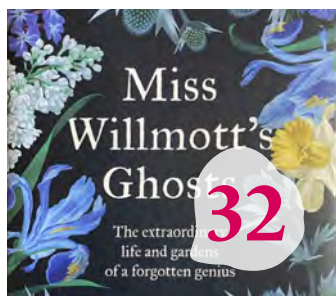
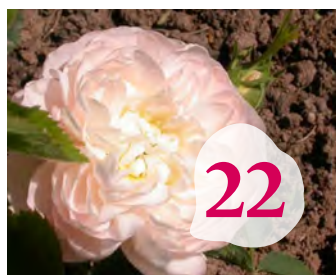
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**Cover image: Emanuele Dotti**

**'André Brichet' [DvP & Best Select, 2009]**

An international prize-winner that is disappearing from rose catalogues and will soon be in need of positive action to conserve it for future generations of rose-lovers.

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**Magazine design**

Laura Wells from [www.bulletin.co.uk](http://www.bulletin.co.uk)



# Editors note

The last issue of BAON was generally well received by readers. This edition is longer and we hope it will provoke rose-lovers into thinking about what they can do to conserve the old roses that are such an important part of our horticultural history

Many readers will shortly be attending the WFRS Convention at Adelaide. The climate of South Australia is warm and dry, which means that delegates can expect to see large numbers of roses flowering profusely on disease-free bushes. The programme includes several lectures that touch on Australia's early introductions of roses from Europe. These have been the subject of some inspired rose-rustling and conservation initiatives – readers will remember Patricia Toolan's account of making her collection of 'found' roses in the Barossa Valley, published in the last issue of BAON. And many of the early Australian rose-breeders also came from Britain and had to adapt to a climate that was completely different from conditions back in Europe. Alister Clark's hybrids of *Rosa gigantea*, some more than 100 years old, will be a major feature of the lectures and garden excursions. Their value is much more widely appreciated now in other parts of the world with a suitable climate, including California, Chile and Mediterranean countries.

Next year brings the long-awaited 15th International Heritage Rose Conference in Brussels, the historic heart of Belgium. The conference was originally planned for 2020 but postponed by the arrival of Covid and will now take place from 5 to 9 June 2023. The main hotel is near the Royal Palace and has three stars, which will make it affordable for many rosarians who have not been able to travel to Adelaide. The programme is packed with interesting lectures and the excursions are all to excellent rose-gardens and historic sites. There is also a pre-conference tour for those who would like to learn more of Belgium's history, culture, and rose-gardens. A post-conference tour is also planned for rose-gardens in Switzerland. The conference is called 'Rosa Belgica 2023' and full details are available from [www.rosabelgica2020.com/program](http://www.rosabelgica2020.com/program)

Charles Quest-Ritson and Martin Stott

Please email any questions to [questritson@aol.com](mailto:questritson@aol.com)



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



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

# The Story of a Rose Garden and a Collector



**Emanuele Dotti**

[translated by  
Charles Quest-Ritson]

*“What do I love about roses? Their colours, their scent, the way they hold themselves, the shape of their flowers, the leaves, the hips and even the prickles (some of them!).”*

I have loved all plants ever since I was a child, when I worked with my two grandmothers in the garden of our seaside holiday home. As a teenager, I started to work a little harder and built up a small collection of camellias – I loved the perfect shape of the flowers and their elegant and composed bearing. In 2003, thanks to the arrival of a mail catalogue from an important Italian nurseryman, I discovered roses. I began to know them, admire them and study them, from which sprung a love and a passion that have remained unchanged to this day.

What do I love about roses? Their colours, their scent, the way they hold themselves, the shape of their flowers, the leaves, the hips and even the prickles (some of them!). In 2004 I started making a collection of roses in large pots and tubs on the terrace of my sixth-floor flat in Rome, growing the most important representatives of each class from ancient Gallicas to modern Hybrid Teas. After a few years of terrace-gardening, I had about 320 different species and hybrids, space was running out and the excessive weight began to worry my neighbours in the building.

So, at the beginning of 2009, I started to think about making a rose garden where I



Emanuele Dotti's garden at Magliano Sabina on 27 April 2022.



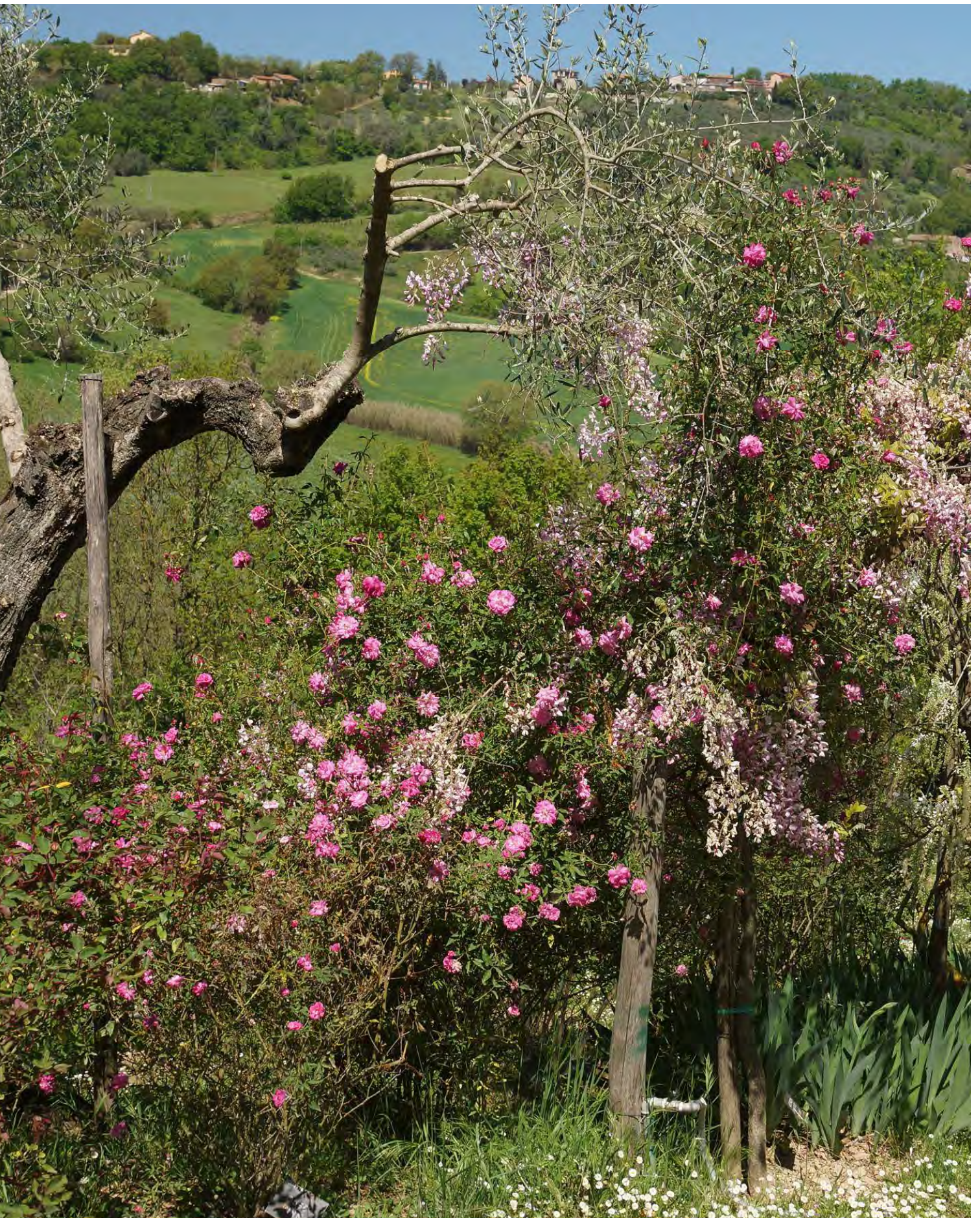


Image: Charles Quest-Ritson



“Every name tells its own story – it may be a portrait of a lady or just the promise of pleasure”

‘Frau O. Plegg’  
[Nabonnand, 1909] at  
Magliano Sabina

Image: Charles Quest-  
Ritson



could plant out most of the roses on my terrace. Work began in August 2009, at a family property in a hilly area near Rome. The land had not been cultivated for more than 20 years so we had to eliminate all types of weeds and work the land with agricultural machinery to a depth of about 50 centimetres (20 ins) to make it suitable for growing roses. During the winter of 2009, I began planting the first roses.

My passion for roses continued to grow day by day. I studied rose books in Italian and foreign languages, and I discovered that no other ornamental plant has such a complex and ancient history – the evolution of modern man could be told through the history of the rose. Every name tells its own story – it may be a portrait of a lady or just the promise of pleasure: the Gallica ‘Jenny Duval’ [c.1800],

Centifolia ‘Blanche Moreau’ [Robert & Moreau, 1890], Moss rose ‘Zoé’ [Forest, 1829], climbing Tea ‘Crépuscule’ [Dubreuil, 1904], Wichurana Rambler ‘Albertine’ [Barbier, 1921], Hybrid Perpetual ‘Yolande d’Aragon’ [Vibert, 1843], Hybrid Multiflora ‘Ghislaine de Féligonde’ [Turbat, 1916], Floribunda ‘Nancy Steen’ [Sherwood 1976], English rose ‘Constance Spry’ [Austin, 1961], polyantha ‘Edith Cavell’ [de Ruiter, 1917], Hybrid Tea ‘Ellen Willmott’ [Archer, 1935] and many more.

The obsession of which all rose-lovers – rosomanes – are victims is just like that of bibliophiles, so well described by Umberto Eco, the great scholar and lover of libraries. My rose garden is my collection. I see it as a library, where everything is rigorously catalogued and everything is represented by a different story – a different variety of rose. And, like a good librarian, I fantasise about the items that are still missing, hunting for roses, searching in catalogues, stalking them down in private gardens, finding lucky breaks, missing them by a whisker and then suffering from the frustrations.

It is so important for a collector to go on searching and never give up, which is why I say that bibliophiles and rosomanes share the same dreams and methods. The acquisition of another book or rose is always a step towards completing the collection. In my case, I aim to collect every old or modern rose still in existence, even those that have not been identified and named. People say

that collectors live longer than other people because their obsession keeps them active and defies the rules of ageing. 'We and the labouring world are passing by' says Yeats in his poem *The Rose of the World*, but the beauty lives for ever.

The first rose garden I visited was Prof Fineschi's at Caviglia in Tuscany. I remember the date very clearly – 15 May 2010 – and the Professor had recently died, so unfortunately I never knew him personally. I made the visit in the company of my dear friend Claudio Cinti, who today supports and helps me in running the 'Roseto Chilanti', and with my dear friend Helga Brichet who, thanks to her experience and her extraordinary generosity, has given us many rare varieties to enrich our collection. I greatly regret not having met Prof Fineschi, but his garden continues to represent everything that he did for roses. It is an extraordinary collection, a 'Sanctuary of Roses'. I do not deny that I would like to be able to equal his achievement.

The second rose garden I visited was that of Sangerhausen in June 2011. I was speechless in front of a profusion of roses that I had never seen in such quantity – and all arranged with great scientific rigour. In June 2012 it was the turn of the Roseraie du Val de Marne. The work of Jules Gravereaux is remarkable in terms of aesthetics and architecture as well for its roses. In June 2013 I visited the Rose Garden of Mottisfont Abbey in England, designed and planted by Graham Stuart Thomas whose

books *The Old Shrub Roses* (1955) and *Climbing Roses Old and New* (1965) had already made a great impression on me.

I hope that visitors to my own rose garden will see the influence of these extraordinary rose gardens and that they will visit it time and again, because a rose garden is always changing and must be re-assessed year after year.

It was a direct result of visiting extraordinary rose collections in Italy and abroad that I began to understand the importance of biodiversity. I realised that some varieties are present only in one or two collections and that they are in danger of being lost forever because their genetic heritage is unique and lives only within them. This prompted me to start making contact with other collections and their curators to replicate those rose varieties at risk of extinction.

We are currently propagating some of the roses from the 'Gianfranco and Carla Fineschi Botanical Rose Garden' thanks to the kind collaboration of Antonella, Cristina and Silvia Fineschi who have now been working on preserving the Rose Garden for several years. I began by making a careful study of all the specimens listed in the updated catalogue that the Fineschi sisters gave me. Then we began to propagate all those varieties present only at Caviglia or in countries where it is difficult to obtain exchanges of plant material. We have been working our way through in alphabetical order for about three years now and have arrived at the letter 'I' so far. Our relationship

**"It is so important for a collector to go on searching and never give up, which is why I say that bibliophiles and rosomanes share the same dreams and methods."**

with the Fineschi sisters has a double value because, if the varieties we have propagated should be lost in their own rose garden, we will be able to propagate them and give them back again.

The Piccolo Roseto Giovanni Chilanti currently houses a collection of about 1,900 species and hybrids, which is constantly expanding. The roses are arranged according to their botanical classification with examples of all the hybrid classes.

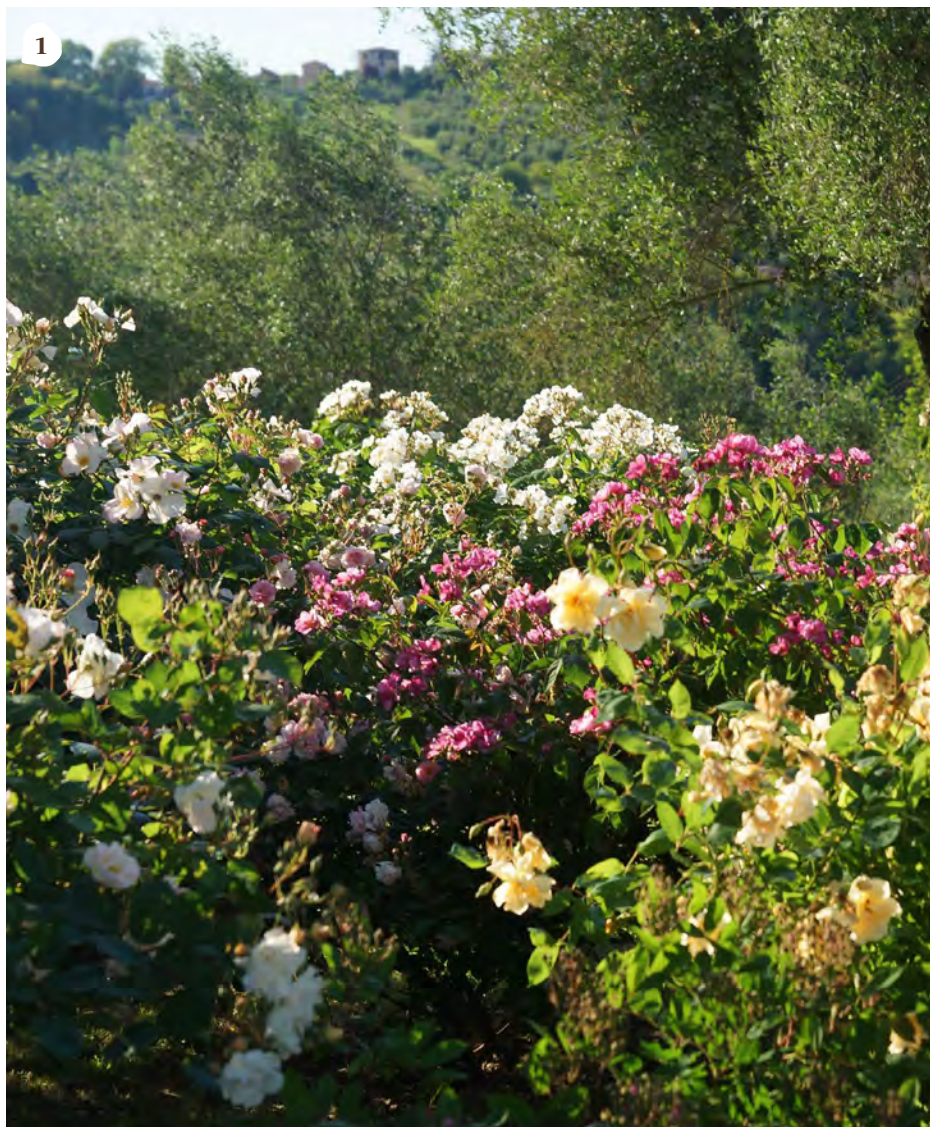
The most numerous groups are:

- 124 species
- 175 Gallicas
- 184 Teas
- 89 China roses
- 54 Wichurana hybrids
- 49 hybrids of *Rosa gigantea*
- 220 Hybrid Teas.

The Rose Garden covers an area of three hectares (7½ acres) and is spread over three levels, which in turn are divided into seven sectors and thirty-two flower beds. There are also 45 olive trees that support the *Gigantea* hybrids and the great ramblers.

The Rose Garden, in addition to the roses, also hosts an oak-tree over





1. Emanuele Dotti's garden at Magliano Sabina on 4 May 2016
2. 'André Brichet' [DvP & Best Select, 2009] at Magliano Sabina
3. 'Clotaria' [Sanremo, 1936] at Magliano Sabina

Images: Charles Quest-Ritson





“The rose garden is named after a deceased friend of mine, Giovanni Chilanti. Had I not met him, the Roseto would never have come into existence.”

150 years old, six pomegranates, two young specimens of *Pseudocystodonia sinensis*, *Salix* ‘Contorta’, *Halesia carolina*, *Paulownia tomentosa*, *Cercis siliquastrum*, *Xanthoceras sorbifolium*, *Koelreuteria paniculata*, *Parrotia persica*, *Liriodendron tulipifera*, *Acacia caven*, *Acer tutcheri*, *Chionanthus retusus*, × *Chitalpa* (a cross between a *Chilopsis* and *Catalpa*), plus some fruit and ornamental trees and herbaceous underplantings like irises and hemerocallis.

The rose garden is named after a deceased friend of mine, Giovanni Chilanti. Had I not met him, the Roseto would never have come into existence. We are planning a gradual but methodical expansion in the future, since we still have about 12 hectares (30 acres) of land available. What slows down the expansion is the increasingly difficult climatic conditions, with summer temperatures peaking now at 37-38C° and no rainfall for 3 or 4 months in a row.

In the spring of 2022, the garden was established as a non-profit association with the name ‘Associazione Piccolo Roseto Giovanni Chilanti’. The constitution stipulates that the Association will ‘carry out initiatives in the cultural and environmental sector with particular reference to the promotion and enhancement of the genus *Rosa* and the goal of collecting as many authentic specimens as possible for study and research’, while at the same time offering rose-lovers a living museum of rare beauty. We are also preparing a small Library Room where we can welcome visitors and hold themed meetings.

As many will know, keeping a rose garden and a large collection of roses today is a major commitment and, occasionally, we feel the weight of this responsibility, both financially and physically. On the other hand, it must be said that it does give immense satisfaction and that I would never willingly give it up. I was very happy when Charles Quest Ritson revisited us this spring and suggested that I should write an article about it for *BAON*.

At the entrance to Roald Dahl’s garden in England, there is a plaque that made quite an impression on me. It says:

‘Watch with glittering eyes the whole world around you because the greatest secrets are always hidden in the most unlikely places. Those who do not believe in magic will never find it!’

I hope that anyone who comes to visit my garden of roses will find beauty and perhaps even a little magic.

**Emanuele Dotti** is an engineer by profession and lives in Rome as well as Magliano Sabina, some 50 kms north of the Eternal City. He is one of a growing number of young Italians for whom the conservation of old roses has become a passion and a moral obligation.

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This cross between  
'Erinnerung an Brod' and  
'Champlain' [Rojewski,  
2013] is variously known  
as 'Silent Night', 'Stille  
Nacht' and 'Cicha Noc'.

*Image: Łukasz Rojewski*





# *New roses from old*



**Łukasz Rojewski**

[translated by  
Madeline Quest-Ritson]



I am obsessed with roses, and breeding them has become my profession. I am obsessed, too, by the achievements of Rudolf Geschwind [1829-1910], the Austro-Hungarian forester who bred roses as a hobby but never enjoyed financial success.

My early encounter with Geschwind's roses made a great impression on me. I recognised him as a real prophet among rosarians. As I got to know his creations better, I began to realise that his big idea – very avant-garde for his time – was to create winter-hardy roses.

Geschwind thought and created entirely on his own intuition, quite independently of trends. And he was an excellent observer who sought to 'understand roses'. One remark of his proved extremely valuable to me: "Some varieties may not be fertile until the plant is mature." Thanks to this observation, after many years of trying, I managed to obtain a few seedlings from triploid 'Albertine', the Wichurana Rambler bred by the Barbier brothers and introduced in 1921.

Geschwind experimented with such species as *R. multiflora*, *R. arvensis*, *R. pendulina* and *R. rugosa*. And he made crosses with the dog rose (*R. canina*) and the prairie rose (*R. setigera*). The prairie rose is unique in the genus *Rosa* because it is diecious – plants are either male or female, which insures against self-pollination. It is very hardy and overwinters in the

**"My early encounter with Geschwind's roses made a great impression on me. I recognised him as a real prophet among rosarians."**

punishing cold temperatures of USDA zone 3. It is true that American breeders headed by Samuel and John Feast were the first to use it for breeding – in 1843 they introduced 'Baltimore Belle' and 'Queen of the Prairies'. However, it was Rudolf Geschwind, working with *R. setigera*, who brought into the world such creations as 'Aurelia Liffa' [1886], 'Erinnerung an Brod' [1886], 'Eurydice' [1886], 'Virago' [1887],

'Princess Helena Radziwiłłowa' [Rojewski, 2013]



'Alpenfee' [1890], 'Ovid' [1890] and 'Himmelsauge' [1894].

I was inspired both by Geschwind's work and by the man himself, so it is no wonder that in my own breeding I took up with his varieties so keenly. But this came with consequences because, although his roses are winter hardy, they are often infected with fungal diseases. Many of them lose their leaves soon after their first flowering. My breeding experiments with Geschwind's roses were many, perhaps too many, so I will describe just one of his roses that I chose as a parent for my own rose-breeding – 'Erinnerung an Brod' (*R. setigera* × 'Génie de Châteaubriand').

'Erinnerung an Brod' is characterised by its very deep mauve or purple colour. The petals are silky soft to the touch and it has a wonderful old rose fragrance, but it flowers only once. It is an excellent shrub for difficult conditions: winter-hardy, shade-tolerant and happy in poor soils. Unfortunately, however, it is susceptible to fungal diseases, which means that I had to breed thousands of seedlings (which took up much time and space to test) to select the best ones. Here are two of them:

**'Princess Helena Radziwiłłowa':** Originally 'Ksiezna Helena Radziwiłłowa', 'Princess Helena Radziwiłłowa' [2013] is an unusual hybrid because the pollen parent was a hybrid of *R. persica* called 'The Sun and The Heart' [Harkness,

2009]. Her 'otherness', just like the beauty of Princess Helena herself, immediately catches the eye. The original Princess Helena was born with near-white hair and very pale skin. She masked it with lots of pink make-up on her cheeks and by pinning a rose in her hair. She built the romantic park called Arkadia near Łowicz, perhaps the most famous landscape garden in Poland. 'Princess Helena Radziwiłł' is very much in the style of old roses, but different from David Austin's hybrids, and distinguished by its short growth (60 cm) and erect flower stems. The flowers are large, with a colour that is difficult to define – somewhere between dark pink and purple – and have a strong, persistent Damask scent. The plant is extremely frost-resistant and does not require winter protection. It also tolerates summer drought. It has dull, leathery, grey-green leaves and is one of the first to bloom. And it is a good repeat-flowerer.

**'Silent Night':** 'Silent Night' syn. 'Stille Nacht' ('Cicha Noc' in Polish) [2013] is a cross between 'Erinnerung an Brod' and 'Champlain', one of Felicitas Svejda's super-hardy Explorer roses, introduced in 1982. This is a shrub rose that has inherited its rich, deep purple colour from its seed-parent. If it is grown in partial shade, then the colour is even more intense. Its habit resembles a wild rose but it is almost thornless, with a hint of red in the stems. Its flowers are scented, and borne in panicles, all through the season. It is a tall, sprawling shrub, which makes it

very suitable for the wild garden and it looks especially well when clematis are allowed to grow up into the branches. It is completely hardy and grows well in poor soils – a rose to plant and then forget about. Unfortunately, it is completely sterile and not suitable for further breeding work.

### Beyond Geschwind

My search for winter hardiness and resistance to disease was not limited to Geschwind roses. I experimented with varieties derived from *Rosa × kordesii*, fantastically described by Jeff Wyckoff in the April issue of *By any other name*.

**'Queen of Warsaw':** This is one of the most interesting varieties in the line from *R. × kordesii*.

'Queen of Warsaw'  
[Rojewski, 2017]



Images: Łukasz Rojewski

Originally released as 'Królowa Warszawy' [2015], 'Queen of Warsaw' is a Hybrid Tea with a long and varied family tree. It is a cross between 'Morgengruss' × 'Comte de Chambord' and 'Morgengruss' × 'Constance Spry'. 'Morgengruss' is itself a cross between *R. × kordesii* and 'Cleopatra'. 'Queen of Warsaw' is an unconventional bedding rose with the features of a Portland rose. The flowers are large and magnolia-white. When fully open they show their cheerful orange-yellow stamens. It is a vigorous, winter-hardy plant, not resembling either of its parents in appearance or habit. It is closer to modern bedding roses.

**'Winterfell':** Another variety, derived from 'Morgengruss', which meets all my original breeding criteria, is 'Winterfell' [2012]. The pollen parent of this rose was 'Alexander MacKenzie' from the





- |                                     |                                             |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| 1. 'Winterfell'<br>[Rojewski, 2012] | 3. 'Spanish<br>Caravan'<br>[Rojewski, 2017] |
| 2. 'Polonica'<br>[Rojewski, 2013]   | 4. 'Hidden People'<br>[Rojewski, 2018]      |



Images: Łukasz Rojewski

Canadian Explorer series. 'Winterfell' is a vigorous climbing rose with large peony-shaped flowers in a shade of apricot-pink. It has a strong, fruity aroma with a hint of peach and spice. It is completely frost-resistant and does not require winter cover, regardless of whether it grows in Poland or in frosty Iceland. It is characterised by great vigour, which manifests itself in rapid re-blooming on long new shoots. It blooms continuously until the first frost.

### Gene quest

**'Polonica':** In my search for new genes, I looked at roses from the *Rosa alba* group. From them, I have selected seven varieties. Their progenitor was a seedling from the cross 'Maiden's Blush' × 'Rose de Rescht', which I called 'Polonica' [2013]. I was very lucky because in the F1 generation I had already raised a repeat-flowering rose with excellent characteristics. Its habit is erect and bushy; the flower is single, medium-sized and pink; its scent is strong and spicy. However, the most interesting features are those that cannot be seen with the naked eye: resistance to fungal diseases and to frost, plus the vigour that means that it is a born survivor, which is readily passed on in its genes.

**'Hidden People':** One of the roses derived from 'Polonica' is 'Hidden People', syn. 'Huldrefolk'. This modest rose has a lot of natural beauty and the flowers last up to several weeks. The flower clusters are so dense that they barely let the

**"Today my breeding and selecting are directed towards health at such a level that the gardener is not obliged to use chemicals."**

light through. It is not tall and can simply hide itself among perennials and grasses and become almost invisible. The original name of this rose is Scandinavian: it is said that 60% of Icelanders still believe that invisible people live in the forests. Children are forbidden to throw stones blindly, so as not to provoke the huldrefolk by accident. The parents of this rose are 'Polonica' and 'Pleiades'. 'Pleiades' cannot be found on [helpmefind.com](http://helpmefind.com). I received it over a dozen years ago from the Canadian amateur breeder Joyce Fleming. I used it because of the excellent health and longevity that characterise this short shrub of unknown origin.

### Heavy beauty roses

All the varieties described here are included in my series of Heavy Beauty Roses, which represents a period of my breeding work. The series amounts to sixteen varieties that show resistance to harsh winter conditions, succeed in poorer soils, and are able to compete with perennials and weeds. Basically, it can be said that Heavy Beauty Roses like a challenge.

**'Spanish Caravan':** Some of the varieties tolerate periods of drought

very well, as does the miniature 'Czesław Miłosz' ('Spanish Caravan'). This rose has a spreading habit and, in the absence of water, is able to keep its flowers coming out in good condition for two months. It gained awards at the International Rose Novelties Competitions in Baden-Baden, Rome, and Nyon in Switzerland.

Working on this series turned out to be very difficult. With the knowledge that I have today, I am not sure if I would take up this particular challenge again. Measuring the winter hardiness factor stretches the time needed to make selections. In recent years, due to climate change, it is almost impossible to carry out a thorough audit of resistance to cold.

Today my breeding and selecting are directed towards health at such a level that the gardener is not obliged to use chemicals. I also care about the abundance of flowering, combined with the durability of the flower, and the presence of fragrance. I am interested in obtaining compact shrubs for flower beds and pots, and a group of roses suitable for urban planting. I will finish with two varieties that meet the parameters of this new programme.

**'C'est la Vie':** A short, compact shrub, 'C'est la Vie' syn. 'Wspomnienie Lata' [2012] has small, pale lilac flowers, and a very distinctive scent of Roibos tea, rowanberries, resin and musk. It has won many awards in trials of new roses – including a gold medal



in Baden-Baden and a prestigious special award by the German Rose Society (Deutsche Rosengesellschaft e. V.). It is a cheerful bedding rose which is very attractive to pollinating insects. The parents of this variety are 'Lavender Dream' [Ilsink, 1983] × 'Ghislaine de Féligonde' [Turbat, 1916].

**'Iwona':** 'Iwona' syn. 'Ivona' [2013] has vivid green, juicy leaves that contrast beautifully with the colour of the flowers and buds. The first impression when you see this rose is 'freshness'. The flowers and buds are long and straw-coloured, fading to white after opening. The rose blooms profusely throughout the season and does not need to be trimmed after its first flowering – it continues to push out new flowers. This groundcover shrub requires no special care – it establishes very quickly and even in its first season shows its flowering power and its compact habit. 'Iwona' has a scent of cloves and a hint of white musk. Like 'C'est la Vie', it attracts numerous insects. This variety was also noticed at competitions for new roses in Germany and the Czech Republic. The name Iwona is the female equivalent of the name Iwo. It comes from the Germanic 'Eibe' and means 'yew tree' or 'woman with a yew-wood bow'. For me, it also has a sentimental meaning because it is named after my wife.

**Łukasz Rojewski** is Poland's leading rose-breeder, a member of the Breeders' Club of the World Federation of Rose Societies and founder (and first President) of the Polish Rose Society.



Above:  
'C'est la Vie'  
[Rojewski, 2012]

Below:  
'Iwona'  
[Rojewski, 2013]



Images: Łukasz Rojewski

“The name Iwona is the female equivalent of the name Iwo... For me, it also has a sentimental meaning because it is named after my wife.”



# *The Roses of St. Eloi Cemetery*



Among the monuments in the St-Eloi Cemetery in La Rochelle (Cimetière de Saint-Éloi) are many old roses, some not yet identified. This plant could be the American China rose 'Burbank' [Luther Burbank, 1898].

*Image: Stephen Hoy*





Stephen Hoy

**“A splendid variety of heritage roses can be found at the St. Eloi Cemetery.”**

Below:  
'Yvonne Rabier'  
[Turbat, 1910]



In August of 2019 I received an email from French rose enthusiast, Cyrille Albert, written in response to an article I had published about the Lawrenceana/Dwarf China class of roses. Cyrille lives near the village of Breuillet, roughly 45-50 kilometers south-west of Paris. We began an email correspondence in which he shared and continues to share fascinating accounts of his quest to discover, identify when possible, and propagate heritage roses found in a number of historic French cemeteries.

One such site, the St. Eloi Cemetery, is located in the northeastern quadrant of the port city of La Rochelle. Founded in the 10th century, the city became an important harbor for ships traveling the Atlantic Ocean several hundred years later. Today La Rochelle is

known as la belle et rebelle (the beauty and the rebellious), a city democratic before its time, once Protestant when the rest of France was largely Catholic, always contested in times of war, picturesque in its architecture, and a city proud of its connection to the sea. The cemetery was created in 1794 and is the site of hundreds of 19th and 20th century memorials (including the grave of Sgt. James Merry, an American pilot who served in Britain's Royal Air Force during WWII).

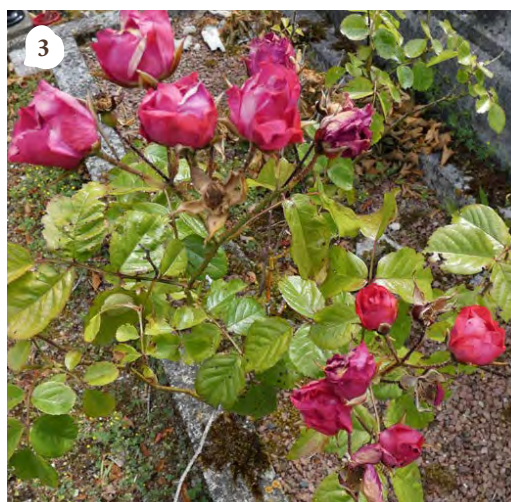
A splendid variety of heritage roses can be found at the St. Eloi Cemetery. On Cyrille's initial visit in 2015 his first find was a beautiful pure white-flowered rosebush situated beside a memorial between two small chapels. Its double flowers appear in clusters, cover the plant throughout the growing season, and perfume the air nearby. He described the base of the bush as “absolutely huge” suggesting a plant of some vintage. After a number of visits and thorough research he believes it to be the Polyantha ‘Yvonne Rabier,’ bred by Eugène Turbat in 1910.

Roughly thirty feet away he found a rose planted at the foot of a grave stone dedicated to a young girl whose death occurred in 1871. He described it as soft pink or flesh colored, delicate in appearance, and delightfully scented. Other traits include small prickles, a short peduncle, rounded leaflets, and flat double blooms with quartered centers. Based on these observations

and the plant's growth habit and tendency to rebloom, he suggests it may be one of two Hybrid Perpetuals, 'Caroline de Sansal' (Desprez; 1849) or 'Mademoiselle Berthe Lévêque' (Cochet; 1865).

Nearby is a coral red Polyantha type obstinately clinging to life. Of it Cyrille wrote, "Such resistance to abandonment deserves a closer look." It has lightly fragrant double flowers that appear in clusters, scattered prickles, and bright green, finely serrated leaves appearing in leaflets of five to seven. Perhaps another of the Turbat Polyanthas – 'Baby Lyon Rose,' or 'Suzanne Turbat?'

Several identifiable roses can be found in close proximity. 'La Marne,' a Polyantha, was bred in 1915 by the firm founded by Albert Barbier. The plant is unusually large and leaning under its weight. 'La Marne' is found throughout the cemetery in tribute to soldiers that fought in that region in WWI. Just fifteen feet away is the well-known China, 'Old Blush,' under a 90-year-old monument. Another recognizable variety is 'Little White Pet.' The double white-flowered 2-3' tall bush is known as a reblooming sport of the once-blooming 'Félicité-Perpétue.' Although American in origin (Henderson; 1879) it was cultivated in the Rosaraie de L'Hay as early as 1902. Its reputation as a durable cemetery rose in France is documented by rose collector Jean-Claude Nicholas in an article entitled "Roses of the Ardennes (*Rosa Mundi: Journal of the Heritage*



"Nearby is a coral red Polyantha type obstinately clinging to life. Of it Cyrille wrote, "Such resistance to abandonment deserves a closer look.""

1. 'Parson's Pink' syn. 'Old Blush' [Parsons, 1793]
2. 'Caroline de Sansal' [Desprez, 1849] or possibly 'Mlle. Berthe Lévêque' [Cochet, 1865]
3. Unidentified crimson Polyantha

Images: Cyrille Albert



“Another section of the cemetery is reserved for veterans and civilians killed in WWII. There stands a tall, double-flowered red rose whose lightly fragrant blooms were nodding after a good rain.”

1. ‘Burbank’ [Luther Burbank, 1898] – perhaps.

2. Unidentified red Polyantha or early Floribunda



3. ‘Little White Pet’ [Henderson, 1879]

4. Unidentified pink Alba rose



*Rose Foundation*, 2007, Vol. 21, No. 2, 18-23).”

Adjacent to this group is a space dedicated to French WWI veterans. At a memorial known as the Firefighters Monument he found a rather large Tea rose. Cyrille initially considered ‘Burbank’ a possible identity but remains undecided. The plant is perpetually covered in flowers and clearly very heat-tolerant. The presence of hips late in the summer may provide clues to its name.

Another section of the cemetery is reserved for veterans and civilians killed in WWII. There stands a tall, double-flowered red rose whose lightly fragrant blooms were nodding after a good rain. With its twiggy stems, heat-loving bloom productivity, and non-fading color, Cyrille believes it to be a China but has yet to attach a possible name.

Two other mystery roses are close neighbors. The first is a red blend, single-flowered Polyantha/early Floribunda that in view of its base must be quite old. The second, with very large red velvety blooms of Hybrid Tea form, but as yet unidentified, is planted by a marker dated to the middle 1960s. It has a rich fragrance and is clearly surviving with very little in the way of care.

More can be found in the oldest part of the cemetery. The first, a cerise pink rose hinting of China heritage, grows implausibly in very little sunlight and between slabs of stone

at the base of a series of memorials. He has observed it in several other cemeteries suggesting that at one time it must have been a popular variety. Cuttings he has rooted prove it to be quite easy to grow.

Just feet away is a rose from the Alba family planted beside a very old monument. Its smallish light pink flowers are strongly scented having a hint of lemon, and its sepals have a fern-like appearance. When cuttings rooted in 2018 get more established, he hopes to have more clues as to its identity. Lastly, several examples of a rose that resembles ‘Gloire des Rosomanes’ in all but color are also in this section of the cemetery. Each has fifteen to twenty rose pink petals that are occasionally streaked with white and a white base. Botanical traits point to China rose heritage, including a smooth calyx, red tinted stipules, prickles appearing mainly on older stems though sparsely, small reddish-orange hips, and red tinted new growth. One plant in particular appears quite old having a base that is almost sixteen inches in diameter.

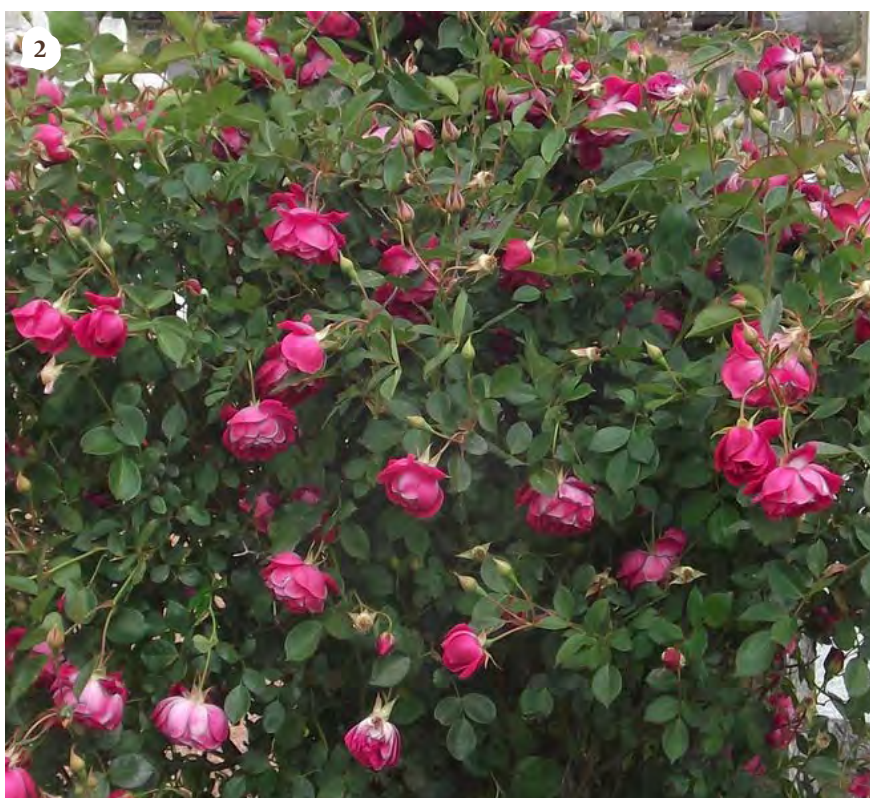
This special cemetery is home to the majority of the “finds” Cyrille has made, but there are more! His passion to search for these unique roses, to preserve their horticultural heritage, and to share them is one we all can appreciate. I may never visit France or meet Cyrille face to face. However, his generous effort to share is a reminder that there is a vast community of people with whom we have much in common.

**“This special cemetery is home to the majority of the “finds” Cyrille has made, but there are more!”**

1. Unidentified China rose, wrongly identified as ‘Gloire des Rosomanes’ [Vibert, 1825]

2. Unidentified China rose after rain

**Stephen Hoy** is a professional musician from Warner Robins in central Georgia in the United States. He produces a free online magazine called *Singularly Beautiful Roses*, rich in information and beautiful pictures of single and semi-single roses. We cannot recommend it too highly.



Images: Cyrille Albert



# *The collection and classification of Alba roses at Reinhausen in Lower Saxony*

Karin Schade

[translated by  
Charles & Brigid Quest-Ritson]

'Joséphine  
Beauharnais' [Vibert,  
1823] in the Maiden's  
Blush Group

Images: Karin Schade

This project arose from the need to identify some of the Alba roses I found in the Göttingen region of Germany, because that is how I became aware of problems with Alba roses.

Most Alba cultivars were bred and introduced in the early decades of the 19th century. I estimate that more than 200 cultivars were described at that time, but the contemporary descriptions and synonyms are now inadequate to distinguish between them. I made it my goal to find out how many different types of Alba are still available both commercially and in rose collections, and whether there are still 'lost' Albas in old gardens that are no longer available elsewhere. Over the centuries many of these cultivars have been lost. Many of the few cultivars remaining on the market are wrongly named.

I started to lobby online for rose lovers, rose gardens and rose nurseries to help me to make a collection. Then, in the autumn of 2006, we laid out the first trial beds for Albas in the rose park at Reinhausen, near Göttingen, which was just being built at that time – and the first 80 Alba roses were planted. 2007 was therefore the first year in which we could make comparisons between them. They were also documented photographically, from the emerging leaves to the flowers, the hips and then the leaf fall, among other things. The observations that we

made in 2007 led to an expansion of the trial beds in the autumn of the same year and helped me to put the roses into groups and classify them according to their phenotypes – or observable traits.

These phenotypes are largely based on the following characteristics of white Albas:

- Foliage and young shoots have a greyish-bluish bloom that can be wiped off.
- Stems smooth, without bristles
- Pointed, narrow prickles, often curved in a sickle shape
- Buds appear cut off
- Flowers open dark, mostly pink, then lighten
- Sparse, upright habit, vase-shaped
- Rose hips and calyces elongated
- Very frost hardy
- Also a susceptibility to rust

I do not include roses that lack these essential traits, such as Rolf

The Maxima Group contains the fully double, white-flowered cultivars that are so typical of Alba roses. German expert Rudolf Bergmann found this form in a cemetery at Lauterbach in Hessen





Sievers' Alba hybrids, bred with 'Small Maiden's Blush', which is a synonym for the Hybrid China 'Duchesse de Montebello'. This is an area, however, where genetic studies are very desirable.

In the autumn of 2008, thirteen reference beds were then replanted according to these phenotypes. Now, in 2022, there are sixteen beds in the Alba reference plantings. A total of some 260 roses have now arrived here under the 'Alba' label. However, a number of the 'found' roses turned out to be members of other rose classes, usually pink gallica hybrids, masquerading as 'Maiden's Blush', 'Königin von Dänemark' (syn. 'Queen of Denmark') or 'Félicité Parmentier'. These gallicas are not part of our comparative plantings and were transplanted to other parts of the rose park the following winter. Then there are the roses that are sold as Albas but are either of

**“I made it my goal to find out how many different types of Alba are still available both commercially and in rose collections, and whether there are still ‘lost’ Albas in old gardens that are no longer available elsewhere.”**

doubtful attribution or definitely not Albas, including 'Belle Amour', 'Blush Damask' or 'Chloris'.

Europarosarium Sangerhausen investigated the collection's ploidy levels – the number of sets of chromosomes in a cell. This confirmed that my classification of the Albas according to phenotypes matched the results. All white Albas are hexaploid. According to

this study, 'Königin von Dänemark' is also hexaploid (see A.V. Roberts, Th. Gladis, H. Brumme: *DNA amounts of roses (Rosa L.) and their use in attributing ploidy levels*. Plant Cell Rep (2009) 28:61-71) All other roses designated as Albas are either tetraploid, like most Old Roses in the various rose groups, including 'Blush Damask', 'Minette' and 'Mme Legras de St. Germain' or triploid, like the group around 'Mme Plantier'. 'Félicité Parmentier' is pentaploid.

The roses in the Reinhausen rose park are divided according to their characteristics into the following groups, listed alphabetically:

- **'Alba Bischhagen Blech' Group.** Characteristics: a white 'Maxima' with yellowish-apricot tones when it starts to flower, no bloom on the leaves and shoots, smaller than white Albas, shoots brown with age. This 'found' Alba is unique so far – it is not in any rosarium, nor is it in commerce.
- **'Blanche de Belgique' Group.** Characteristics: like 'Maxima' but with coarser, larger foliage, earlier onset of flowering and larger, brighter white flowers, with shorter stalks. A group of great garden value!
- **'Cannabifolia' Group.** A sport of a semi-double Alba. Characteristics: small white 'Maxima' flowers, calyx glabrous, leaves hemp-shaped, not grey or bloomy, shoots turn brown with age, thornless.
- **'Celeste' Group.** Characteristics: young shoots reddish-brown,



"Bischhagen Blech" is a found rose, shorter than most Albas, that Karin Schade places in a Group of its own.



1. "Schütt" is a found rose in the Celeste Group
2. 'Blanche de Belgique' [unknown origin, pre-1820] represents Karin Schade's Blanc de Belgique Group.
3. "Tertin Kartano". Pirjo Rautio found this Alba at Tertti Manor in the Mikkeli region of Finland. It belongs to the Maiden's Blush Group.
4. A form of 'Cannibifolia' known as "Giuseppe" that German rose-scholar Josef Distl has introduced from France. Sometimes it reverts and resembles the Suavolens Group.
5. A form of 'Chloris' known as "Christiane", one of several closely-related pink Albas in the Chloris Group
6. This form of 'Félicité Parmentier' [Parmentier, 1836] from Europarosarium Sangerhausen is typical of the Félicité Parmentier Group of Alba roses

Images: Karin Schade



then turning green. Pink flowers, semi-double. Typical Alba prickles – very thin – rounded, leaflets colour dark blue-green, no bloom.

- **‘Chloris’ Group.**

Characteristics: large, double pink flowers, almost thornless. Dense, large shrub. Calyces glandular. Turbinate hips. Leaf undersides slightly felty, young flowers slightly ‘Tea-shaped’.

- **‘Félicité Parmentier’ Group.**

Characteristics: calyces rounded, reddish-brown and glandular, densely filled flowers, pink flowers; broad Alba-type prickles, usually in large numbers, with small bristles and smaller prickles, usually dark brown; no grey dusting on the shoots or leaves.

- **‘Maiden’s Blush’ Group.**

Characteristics: pink flowers, fading. The calyces often have reddish glands; flower buds look as if they have been cut off. The petals in the bud are initially strikingly light green, then medium pink when opening, becoming paler and flesh-coloured; shoots covered in bloom, usually also slightly reddish-brown; long hooked prickles, red when young.

According to rose literature, there should be a ‘Great Maiden’s Blush’ and a form that is smaller in everything but otherwise identical, called ‘Small Maiden’s Blush’. The latter is described in the older (and, to some degree, also the newer) literature as being very similar to ‘Great Maiden’s Blush’. For example, Austin writes in *Old Roses*

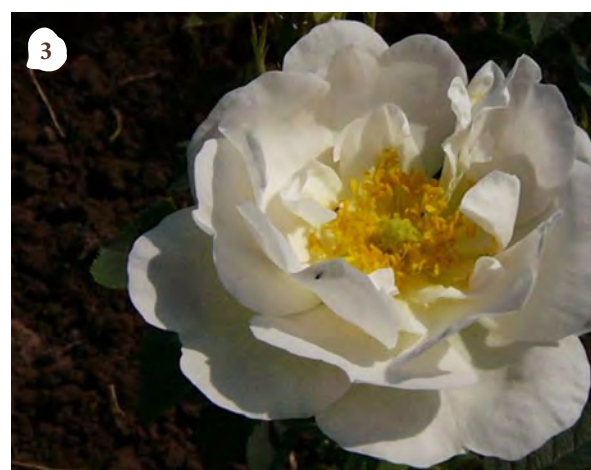
and *English Roses* [1992]: “This rose has smaller flowers than [Maiden’s Blush] and grows to only 1.2m in height. I do not know whether it was a sport or a seedling from ‘Maiden’s Blush’ but it is similar in every respect except size.” By contrast, *Roses* [1988] by Roger Phillips and Martyn Rix describes “a smaller version of ‘Great Maiden’s Blush’, with slightly smaller flowers on a bush up to 3.3m tall. Known since the end of the 18th century.”

The descriptions contradict each other throughout the literature, but the distinguishing features are always said to be the different heights and different sizes of the shrub. But, as mentioned above, all roses purchased as ‘Small Maiden’s Blush’ or acquired from rose collections have been found to be identical to the probably triploid Gallica sold as ‘Duchesse de Montebello’.

- **‘Incarnata’ Group.** This is named after the rose ‘Incarnata’ in the *Europarosarium* Sangerhausen. Characteristics: no bloom covering the leaves and shoots, small pink flowers with sometimes yellowish tones at the start of flowering; many prickles. Sometimes reverts to a white ‘Suaveolens’ form.

- **‘Königin von Dänemark’ Group.** Characteristics: leaves mostly with seven leaflets; large, pink, very regular flowers; sometimes forms slightly rounded rose hips; strong brown prickles; glandular calyces.

- **‘Maxima’ Group.** Characteristics: usually no



“All roses purchased as ‘Small Maiden’s Blush’ or acquired from rose collections have been found to be identical to the probably triploid Gallica sold as ‘Duchesse de Montebello’.”





1. 'Königin von Dänemark' [Booth, 1816]. This cultivar from Europarosarium Sangerhausen represents the fully double, pink Königin von Dänemark Group of Alba roses
2. 'Princesse de Lamballe' [Miellez, c.1830] heads up a Group of outstandingly tall Albas, white or palest pink in flower
3. "Heiler Esebeck". Roses in the Suavolens Group have a multitude of prickles sometimes more than 1 cm long.
4. The popular hybrid 'Ännchen von Tharau' [Geschwind, 1885] is one of the oldest – and best – of the Group of Newly Bred Albas.
5. "Schöne aus Angeln" may be identical with Daniel Schwartzkopf's 'Vix Spinosa' (almost thornless) 18th-century Alba. The smooth stems and paucity of rose-hips are typical of this Group.
6. Variegated Group. A few Alba cultivars exhibit some form of variegated foliage. Christiane Frost found this form at Isernhagen near Hanover.

Images: Karin Schade



stamens, very full flowers; calyces slightly glandular, mostly towards the base; flower stalks with red glands, stems green and excorticating when old, frosted grey when young, buds and young flowers tinged pink or flesh-colored. A very heterogeneous group. Flowers vary from semi-double to double, so in reality the group contains cultivars with almost all types of double flowering.

- **Variegated Group.**

Characteristics: white 'Alba Maxima' with yellowish variegated foliage and slightly earlier leaf fall. Examples include: 'Weidenbach', 'Isernhagen', 'Bischhagen II', 'Schlenke Turowsky'.

- **'Princesse de Lamballe' Group.**

Characteristics: 'Alba Maxima' with taller growth.

- **'Schöne aus Angeln' Group.**

Characteristics: turbinate calyces, empty after flowering, no hips. Pink flowers, often somewhat asymmetrical, small. Young shoots bloomy. I believe that it may be synonymous with 'Vix Spinosa'.

- **Semiplena Group.**

Characteristics: Elongated calyces, mostly smooth-surfaced; hips long; flowers single or lightly semi-double; shoots green and excorticating when old, with grey bloom when young; prickles long, very thin, pointed, hooked, red when young.

- **Suaveolens Group.**

Characteristics: flowers are

usually semi-single or semi-double, stamens present, prickles longer than 'Maxima', less curved; green and excorticating shoots when old; grey dusty bloom when young. Hips.

- **Newly bred Albas.** This group includes all those that have been bred in recent years. Some have different characteristics. Geschwind's 'Ännchen von Tharau' falls into this group, because we know the breeder and date of introduction (1880s). It is still available commercially and in rose collections. It has not been confused with other cultivars. And there are other Alba roses that have been bred in recent years whose breeders and parents are known. Since they can thus be clearly distinguished from the older Albas, they should not be classified in the existing groups.



White Albas with semi-double flowers belong to the Semiplena Group. Broadcaster and writer Marita Protte found this form near Ellingen in Bavaria.

Image: Karin Schade

There is also a group of once-flowering 'old roses' that are sometimes listed with the Albas but do not meet the criteria of an Alba. These include 'Minette', 'Mme Plantier', 'Mme Legras de St Germain', 'Blush Damask', 'Hurdalsrose', 'Amelia', 'Belle Amour' and 'Pompon Blanc Parfait'.

In principle, I have always tried to grow Albas on their own roots for the purposes of comparison. This is to rule out the possible influence of different rootstocks. Unfortunately, the 'pure' Albas (including the white cultivars) cannot be grown from cuttings (apart from 'Königin von Dänemark'). The ungrafted suckers

on found roses were therefore particularly welcome.

Over the years, however, I have been able to make the following observation: there is considerable variation among double-flowered Albas between their fullness at the sites where they were found and their fewer petals when planted in the reference beds. At first, I explained this phenomenon by saying that these double-flowered Albas must have been grafted onto single forms (Albas were actually used as rootstocks at times) and the new growths would then have come from this Alba rootstock. But over the years, these roses stabilised and bloomed more and more fully.

Grafted Albas are more stable in their petalage right from the start. But we also find that semi-single, semi-double and double flowers can appear on the same stem. Difficulties in comparing or classifying (especially in the classic groups of ‘Semi-plena’, ‘Suaveolens’ and ‘Maxima’) are therefore a particular problem among the large number of white Albas. And it is impossible to classify these individual ‘Maxima’ types on the basis of descriptions in older literature.

Describing all the existing cultivars in the rose park at Reinhausen is beyond the scope of this short article. However, all the Alba roses in the collection are described group by group and fully illustrated with a large number of pictures on my [website](#).

At the time of writing (2022), the reference collection contains 191

“At the time of writing (2022), the reference collection contains 191 Alba roses.”

Alba roses. They have come from a wide variety of commercial and private sources as well as found roses. They have come from France, Austria, Germany, Denmark, the Netherlands and Finland. A few are still being propagated, mostly newly bred Alba hybrids from ‘Maiden’s Blush’ and ‘Félicité Parmentier’ (e.g. from Sweden). Well over half of the Alba roses in the collection belong to the ‘Maxima’ and ‘Semi-plena’ groups.

When I began the making of this collection and its classification I had some illusions. I hoped that my findings would somehow be accepted by rose gardens, nurseries and books. And I hoped that rosarians who write about Alba roses would look at the realities of the Reinhausen rose park, which sometimes differ greatly from the descriptions and assignments of Alba roses in books. None of this has happened. I am therefore very grateful that I can once again make the findings from my many years of comparative study accessible to a specialist audience, before the work of trialling and comparing gradually winds down over the next few years. The Reinhausen rose park is private and must be financed privately. The maintenance of such a large area is no longer financially feasible for us. To the best of our ability, we will dig up clearly identified duplicates and keep only a single specimen at a time.

Other Albas from the various groups will take their place. The Alba collection will no longer be as traceable and organized, but we will try to preserve every variety that is unique. The freed-up area will be allocated to a new project that will hopefully contribute a little more to the preservation of the park as a whole than the large area of Albas that some visitors find ‘boring’ – an amateur breeder’s garden. This will be created with roses raised by breeders who often find it difficult to persuade professional breeders to trial their seedlings. The hope is that amateur breeders will be able to display their handiwork far from the mainstream breeders and free from the need to maximise sales. Exciting!

**Karin Schade** work with Albas is only part of her efforts to promote the conservation of roses. Her garden at Rosenpark Reinhausen, open to the public, provides budwood for her nursery Grönloof, which offers a remarkable number of rarities.

#### Editors notes

This article should be read in conjunction with Karin Schade’s website, which carries pictures of all her roses. It is <https://blog.staudenundrosen.de/rosenvergleiche-startseite/alba-rosen/>

If you click on the name underneath one of her pictures, you will find images of the cultivars that she places in the classification that the picture heads up.





**Pictured above left and right:** Albla flower beds in the rose park at Reinhausen. **Middle:** 'Oléni' is a very short and bushy plant that occurred as a seedling in Sabine Schumacher's garden at Asch (Fuchstal) in Bavaria

Images: Karin Schade

**Editorial comment.** It is regrettable that Karin Schade's collection is under financial pressure and we must hope that it remains intact. The responsibility for ensuring its future does not fall just upon German individuals and organisations that are concerned with conservation. National and international rose societies need to have systems in place that will help to conserve and publicise important rose collections, especially when there are problems of money or inheritance. The recent disappearance of David Ruston's rose collection in Renmark is a grievous loss, though much credit must be given to the South Australian rosarians who did their utmost to save what they could.

Karin Schade's work on Albas is important and her collection of Alba roses is unique. They have come not just from nurseries and gardens but also as 'found' roses from several European countries. Karin Schade's classification is important, because it is based on many years of studying Albas in cultivation. However, future genetic research may lead to a consolidation of our

understanding of how her cultivars relate to each other. It may also make possible the identification of some of the foundlings.

A substantial volume of work has been carried out on the DNA of old rose cultivars, mostly in Japan and France, but it has not received the publicity it deserves. Much has also been achieved in Sweden and recorded in *Rosarvet i Nationella genbanken* (Lars-Åke Gustavsson & Henrik Morin, 2021) which we reviewed in BAON earlier this year. We learn, for example, that the Albas known as 'Maxima', 'Semiplena', 'Suavolens' and the five-petalled 'Gudhem' (probably identical with the cultivar 'Simplex' recorded by Jäger in his *Rosenlexicon*) are identical genetically i.e. that DNA tests could not distinguish them. Phylogenetic testing is an imperfect science and much depends on the markers that the researchers choose to use. Nevertheless, it is not difficult to accept that these four Albas represent a series of sports. And botanists and horticulturists over the years have tended to regard them as the core cultivars of the group.

The origin of the Alba roses is said to be a cross between *Rosa corymbifera* (a white-flowered member of the Caninae group) and a white-flowered Damask. We shall not know whether this is true until much more genetic research is done upon the *R. canina* aggregate and upon early Damasks and other old cultivars. Double-flowered Alba roses can be identified in western paintings as early as the 14th century, so we should assume that the class is an ancient one. The Swedes have also shown that the principal pink Albas like 'Maiden's Blush' share about two-thirds of their genome with the core white forms, which may suggest that they are descended from *R. corymbifera* crossed with another species closer to *R. gallica*. It is too early to know, but the work of Lars-Åke Gustavsson and his team on the DNA of cultivated roses – not just Albas – is of great importance and will not be absorbed into mainline rose studies until *Rosarvet i Nationella genbanken* is translated into English.

## Book review

# *Il Roseto Fineschi*

by Franca V. Bessi

Review by Charles Quest-Ritson

This is the first proper guide to the Fineschi rose-garden in Tuscany. It seems incredible that such an important and fascinating collection has never before had a book dedicated to it. Roseto Fineschi is second only to Europa Rosarium at Sangerhausen in the number of different roses that it grows. It is pre-eminent for its collection of 20th-century cultivars, most of which are no longer sold by nurseries anywhere in the world. Many are otherwise extinct – and each has played a part in the history of roses and of gardens more generally. And the collections of old roses, ramblers and climbers are exceptional.

Professor Gianfranco Fineschi (1923-2010) was a collector of roses. His family estate at Caviglia in the Chianti hills is dedicated to olives and vines, while he himself worked in Rome as an orthopaedic surgeon, returning home at weekends. His three daughters – Cristina, Antonella and Silvia – have tried to preserve his collection of roses and welcome visitors in May and June, which is the high season for flowering.

Professor Bessi is a botanist from the University of Florence, with a particular interest in the genus *Rosa* and an extensive knowledge of the history of roses in cultivation. She writes clearly and with authority. The book begins with descriptions of species before moving

on to the sections into which cultivated roses belong. An excellent map then guides the reader on a virtual tour through the many distinct areas into which Professor Fineschi's garden is divided.

One of the problems that Professor Bessi mentions is the fact that most of the 5,500 different species and cultivars at Caviglia are represented by only one plant. This emphasises the fragility of the collection and the importance of distributing budwood so that duplicates can be grown in other gardens.

This is not Prof. Bessi's first book on roses. Her first, *La rosa in fila* [Firenze University Press, 2018], is an excellent history of roses from the earliest selections from *Rosa* species through to modern times. It can be downloaded *gratis* from the website <https://books.fupress.it/catalogue/le-rose-in-fila/3523>

A final thought. The Italian language is not so widely taught as in centuries past and many fine Italian writings on horticultural subjects go unnoticed by the world at large. If this is true of Italy, we should also reflect on the writings of knowledgeable rosarians in other languages that are waiting for us to re-discover them and bring them into the mainstream of our knowledge about roses.

**Il Roseto Fineschi**  
by Franca V. Bessi

Nicla Edizioni  
(Rome)  
€20.00





## Book review

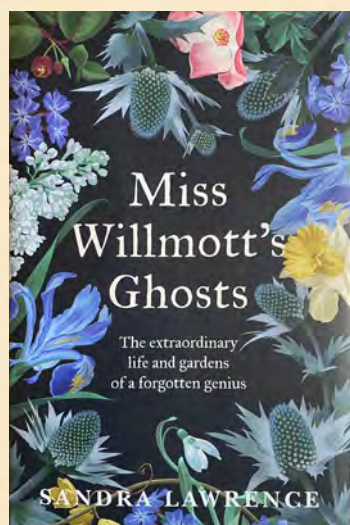
# Miss Willmott's Ghosts

by Sandra Lawrence

Review by Martin Stott

**Miss Willmott's  
Ghosts** by Sandra  
Lawrence

Blink Publishing  
ISBN: 978-1786581310  
£25.00



To many people Ellen Willmott is best known as a wealthy but cantankerous miser who used to maliciously sow eryngium seeds into people's flower beds from a secret stash in her handbag. As these seeds took root later, they became known as Miss Willmott's Ghosts.

Rose lovers may associate her name with the pretty species rose *R. willmottiae*, discovered by planthunter Ernest Henry 'Chinese' Wilson on his first trip to Szechuan in 1899 – a trip she helped finance.

Or perhaps for her book, 'The Genus Rosa', published at great personal expense in four volumes between 1910 and 1914. Graham Stuart Thomas says the book falls just "short of the word 'great' in view of its mistakes, inconsistencies and limitations". But it is seen by some as a 20th century equivalent of Redouté's 'Les Roses'. This exploration of the rose family includes 132 beautiful portraits of roses from Willmott's own gardens by the great artist Alfred Parsons. (The original watercolours lie today in the Lindley Library in London.)

Willmott was a charismatic figure – plantswoman, gardener, botanist, landscape architect. In 1897, to

celebrate Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee, the Royal Horticultural Society awarded 60 inaugural Victoria Medals of Honour to the great and good of gardening. Ellen Willmott and Gertrude Jekyll were the only female recipients. Willmott failed to turn up to the ceremony, to the disgust of the President, who scathingly addressed the "lady and gentlemen".

And yet around 200 plants have been named after her. So why such a bad reputation – and is gardening's "bad girl" epithet really warranted?

Writer Sandra Lawrence has tried to answer both questions using material never seen. In 2019 she was given access to hundreds of newly discovered letters, notebooks, lists and receipts found in a damp basement by descendants of Ellen's sister. This book is as much the story of Lawrence's exploration of this material – much of it mouse-chewed and decayed – as it is of Willmott.

Together with archivist Karen Davidson, Lawrence painfully recovered everything possible, creating complex spreadsheets to log the findings and cross reference with other known material to give as detailed a picture as possible of





'Stanwell Perpetual' painted by Alfred Parsons in watercolour for Ellen Willmott's *The Genus Rosa*

the Willmott story. And what a story. A tale of squandered inheritance, forbidden love, drive and ambition, prodigious creativity and trailblazing talent.

### A 'rocky' start

Ellen Willmott was born in 1858. Money was something she learned to take for granted. As a teenager, she would receive a £1,000 cheque each birthday from her godmother – a rich countess. In today's money the gift was worth over £125,000.

Ellen's father was a wealthy lawyer, and she seemed able to persuade him to finance her various projects, too. These included creating a rockery in their garden, which turned out to be a spectacular three-acre Alpine scene, featuring a 65-metre-long ravine.

As an adult she became recognised as one of the country's greatest horticulturists, with three spectacular homes and gardens – Warley Place in England, Tresserve near Aix-les-Bains in France and Villa Boccanegra in Italy. At one point she was said to employ over 140 gardeners.

Her garden at Tresserve, which no longer survives, was where she

focused her passion for French roses. By 1904 she had one of the finest collections in the world – more than 12,000 roses of over 900 varieties. She would visit each May and June to enjoy them.

She befriended plant breeders, funded planthunting trips and was more successful than anyone in nurturing the seeds and cuttings brought back. Her knowledge of plants and gardening was unrivalled.

But by 1907 she had blithely worked her way through inheritances worth millions. Her money was running out and her behaviour becoming more eccentric. As her gardens were sold or disintegrated around her, and unable to admit her situation, her reputation for meanness grew. Certainly, she seemed little blessed with the gift for empathy. She

could be rude and downright cruel to loyal staff and friends – “complex, brilliant and confrontational,” Lawrence concludes.

Whether this book rehabilitates her reputation and helps us understand her much better is difficult to say. We are given a plausible reason for her absence from the RHS medal ceremony that so shocked the Victorian gardening press. But she still leaves the reader exasperated and confused – full of admiration for her energy and gifts, infuriated by much of her behaviour. I suspect Lawrence feels the same way.



# Conserving our rose heritage

The chairman of each of the committees of the World Federation of Rose Societies is required to submit a report on its activities as part of the proceedings of WFRS's triennial congresses. **Brigid Quest-Ritson** has chaired the Conservation & Heritage Committee since 2018. In this report she highlights the important work of the group.

## The Position in 2018

Two areas for action emerged from the last meeting in 2018 in Copenhagen: [1] a desire for more communication between meetings, to share information about conservation projects; [2] the establishment of an international panel of experts to help with the identification of unknown roses.

## Communication

The new website introduced in 2018 gave the Conservation & Heritage Committee a page of its own. All past editions of BAON were placed on the website, with new ones added as they appeared. In March 2019, an index to Nos. 1-18, initially compiled by Crenagh Elliott, was added. The index is revised annually. Web access to BAON is a useful resource as, regrettably, not all member and/or associate societies circulate it among their own members. The page provides links to reliable databases to help with rose identification and

research. Short descriptions of the principal old rose groups have also been uploaded. Paul Hains's resignation as Webmaster in 2021 led to an inter-regnum of 12 months with no activity on the website. In 2022, the site was taken over by an outside firm of professionals, funded by the new sponsors, Felco. It is gradually being updated. Unfortunately, however, access to the C & H page is now restricted to WFRS members only. This impedes the free circulation of information about heritage roses that we exist to encourage.

I have tried to establish and maintain email contact with committee delegates, and I have done so whenever I seek or share information. I am very grateful for their co-operation and support. Much of rose interest has come from delegates writing about what has been happening in their areas. They have enabled me to share information of rose activities, rose problems and rose successes all over the world.

As chairman, I have reported to the President and at regional conventions, for example at Kolkata in January 2020. This also helps to keep committee delegates up-to-date, since they receive copies, whether present at the convention or not.

BAON has proved to be an invaluable forum for keeping in touch with other interested and active rosarians, as well as with the committee delegates. In occasional short reports, I have been able to draw attention to points raised by delegates, such as the commercial availability of heritage roses, the importance of conserving roses that are part of a national heritage, and the damage wrought by weather and a changing climate.

## Rose Identification Panel

I set up the Rose Identification Panel to share rose knowledge beyond national boundaries and local societies. In May 2019, I asked all committee delegates to suggest rosarians who could be





*'Mme Pierre Euler'*  
[Guillot, 1909]



### Rose Identification Panel

This rose was sent for identification from Buenos Aires province in Argentina. It was immediately identified by an expert in the south of France. The Argentine member then confirmed this strongly scented early Hybrid Tea was known to have been grown in Buenos Aires before 1938.

invited to join the panel, both those with a wide general knowledge of rose groups and those with expertise in a particular area, e.g. species, Gallicas, Teas. A panel of some 30 members was established from their nominees, supplemented by other contacts with particular expertise. The panel was launched with an announcement in BAON 20 in September 2019 and added to the C & H page on the website.

The arrival of the covid pandemic created problems for members of the panel because rosarians were unable to meet together to see and discuss roses. But, by working through photographs and internet contacts, a number of rose descriptions and photographs have been circulated and considered during the past two and a half years. These are not sent to every panel member each time, but to those with knowledge of that particular type of rose.

Here are some successful examples: 1. A pink Hybrid Tea growing in Argentina was

identified by a member of the panel as R. 'Madame Pierre Euler' [Guillot 1907]. And research in Argentina confirmed that this rose grew in the area at that time. 2. A red China rose from Java was thought to be very close to R. 'Cramoisi Supérieur' [syn. 'Agrippina']. There was a lively discussion between a particularly eminent group of panel members about distinctions and similarities between the early crimson China roses. The conclusion was that

they were probably part of a large grex (a closely-related group), often grown from seed. 3. A pink Tea rose from Iceland, pot-grown as a house plant for almost a century, has been identified as R. 'Bon Silène' [Guérin, 1834].

### Conservation

The problem of conserving rose collections when circumstances change is a continuing concern. A collection made by a private



### Rose Identification Panel

This was sent from Iceland where it has been grown as a house plant since at least the 1920s. Tea roses do not survive outside in the Icelandic climate and they are notoriously difficult to identify because the colouring of their flowers is so variable. This was identified, without hesitation, by an Australian expert in Tea roses.



*'Bon Silène'*  
[Guérin, 1834]





### Rose Identification Panel files

This was sent for identification from Java in Indonesia to Michael Marriott in England. He sent it to the Panel and it was then distributed among several experts in China roses. Their conclusion was that it was probably a seedling, not a named cultivar. China roses set copious quantities of seed and this is the usual way of propagating them in tropical and subtropical parts of the world. Further discussion of the variability in their height and petalage led to the suggestion that red China roses of the 'Slater's Crimson' type are best treated as a grex i.e. a variable group of seedlings.



*Rosa chinensis* cv.

individual can shut down suddenly when they die, as happened with the collection at Jardin de Jumaju in Normandy. Fortunately, prompt action by the French National Horticultural Society and heritage rose societies ensured that the rarest roses were rescued and entrusted to a rose nursery for safe-keeping and propagation. Likewise, the hugely important Ruston Collection – once the largest in the southern hemisphere – no longer exists in its original form, though many important cultivars have been collected and propagated by Australian Heritage Groups. Sometimes, individuals take on a collection, as was the case in Italy when Emanuele Dotti was given the care of the Tea Rose collection of the late Sergio Scudu. Or societies can take responsibility for conserving a collection: in the USA, the American Rose Society is discussing the possible transfer of Ann Belovich's collection of Rambler roses to its garden at Shreveport, Louisiana.

Changes in policy or funding can also cause concern for public collections. The WFRS was contacted in 2019 by worried local rosarians when the Royal Botanic Gardens in Melbourne, as part of a new twenty-year management plan, wanted to 'retire' their collection of species roses. Several members of the WFRS, including me as Chairman of this Committee, wrote in protest. I later received a reply saying that, in view of the public response to their proposals, a collection of roses with a focus on those more suitable to the climate would be kept in the gardens. The taxa that did badly in Melbourne would be moved to more suitable gardens to ensure the genetic material was conserved. The plan, as published, includes a 'Climate-Ready' Ornamental Rose Collection.

Delegates have expressed concern in the past two or three years by the closure of important rose nurseries (though smaller new ones do start up). They are also

worried to note that nursery lists are getting shorter: fewer cultivars are available on demand. Sometimes, though, keen rosarians can ask to have specific cultivars propagated to order. This deserves our active support.

There is a further complication, which affects all rosarians outside the European Union. Importing and exporting roses – be they species, older and historic roses, or modern roses – between one country and another is almost impossible, because of the number and complexity of the regulations that govern the movement of plants. It requires money, determination and time to be successful.

Finally – this is my last report to the Committee. I wish the incoming Chairman – a very knowledgeable rosarian – an interesting and stimulating term of office, taking the work of the Committee forward.

# **15th International Heritage Rose Conference**

**June 5 to June 9 2023**  
Brussels and region

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**Charles Quest-Ritson**