

The most interesting orchids we found were the plants of Pterostylis foliata. This species was previously known on Banks Peninsular only from Kaituna Valley.

It is satisfying to be assured that in spite of farming operations, fires, spread of noxious weeds there are still many native orchids to be seen and enjoyed on the Port Hills.

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NEW ZEALAND PLANTS IN FARAWAY PLACES

INVEREWE GARDENS

Norman S. Sutherland

Inverewe,



A chance remark as we motored out of Fort Augustus for the north west coast of Scotland on a recent trip to Britain "that we shouldn't miss Inverewe Gardens" provided a delightful interlude in the day and a wish that we could have stayed longer.

Inverewe Peninsula described by its Gaelic name Am Ploc Ard - the high lump - is a mass of red Torridonium sandstone and over a 100 years ago it was almost void of vegetation and the only soil was the rawest acid black peat. It catches nearly every gale that blows and is continuously being soused with salt spray but to counter the more vicious of the elements there is a benevolent warm flow of air emanating from the Gulf Stream which has been an important factor in the development of the gardens.

Three people have played a major part in the making of the Gardens. The founder, Osgood Mackenzie, bought the estate in 1862 and he began then the work of transforming a barren little headland into a sheltered and fertile spot where plants from many lands could but flourish, almost the identical time that our own Christchurch Botanic Gardens was founded. This task occupied him until he died in 1922. Mrs. Mairi T. Sawyer, his daughter continued to work during her lifetime and in 1952 a year before her death handed the garden over to the National Trust for Scotland with an endowment for

its upkeep. The work of the founder and his daughter was continued by one of Scotland's leading horticulturists Dr. J.M. Cowan who after retiring from the office of Assistant Regius Keeper of the Royal Botanic Garden in Edinburgh in 1954 cared for Inverewe on behalf of the Trust until his death in 1960.

Serendipity was however to lead us to more New Zealand plants in far away places before we returned home as on Garnish Island Reserve in Bantry Bay in Southern Island the gardener was pleased to point out to us, Olearia mollis, Clianthus puniceus, Leptospermum scoparium and finally two 35 year old rimu trees, Dacrydium cupressinum, still very much in a juvenile form.

Of particular interest to me was to find in a far away place such a selection of New Zealand plants made use of in various areas of the gardens. At the main gate there is a fine planting of the Chatham Island Olearia semidentata in flower at the time of our visit and in other areas we found the New Zealand Flax and a fine specimen of the wide leafed Cordyline indivisa as well as australis. Extensive use has been made of Griselinia littoralis as a wind break. A surprise was to find a bed of Chatham Island Forget-me-not Myosotidium hortensia which was flourishing and the guidebook informed us that Mrs. Sawyer had read an article by a newspaper correspondent who had seen it growing in its natural home in the Chatham Islands amongst seaweeds and rotting sharks carcasses, she goes on to say "I collected seaweed from the shore, for sharks substituted herring fry left by the ebb tide, and with this mixture as a fertilizer the giant Forget-me-nots began to flourish and have become thoroughly established".

Inverewe House itself is a modern building completed in 1937 and built on the site of the original house which was destroyed by fire, although the house is not open to the public. In front is a long curved herbaceous border running along one side of the wide lawn leading down to the rock garden and here another surprise was in store because there were many New Zealand alpine and rock garden species represented including Raoulia, Hebe, Helichrysum, Hypericum, Aciphylla, Corokia, Coprosma, Celmisia and Gentian. While examining the alpine area we were continually being attacked by a very annoying small biting insect which reminded me of our sandfly and I remarked to a gardener "you have done a marvellous job here, not only have you managed to establish an area of our native alpiners but you can even be bitten by our sandflies while you are admiring it" and he then rather dourly informed me that this particular fly was quite common in the Highland peat bog areas and was a type of midge.

The day of our visit was a beautiful summers day with lovely views unfolding of the surrounding mountains, lochs, sea coast and as we wandered along the suggested shorter circuit on the map provided it was obvious in the short time we had available that we would not be able to do justice to the something like 2,500 species of plants from many countries which are represented in the gardens and it was with some reluctance that we made the decision that it was time for us to go.

As we drove away we reflected that serendipity has a sadder side - when you find something rather beautiful where you least expect it you don't always have the time to fully enjoy it!!

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