

Occasional Papers from
The RHS Lindley Library



Cover illustration:

Citrus 'Buddha's Hand', from the RHS Reeves Collection (see p. 60).

Occasional Papers
from the
RHS Lindley Library

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The botanical art collections
of the RHS Lindley Library

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Introduction

The RHS Lindley Library is renowned for the significance of its botanical art collections. Comprising some 30,000 pieces dating back to the 1630s, the collection represents both artists and plants from across the world. The development of botanical art practice, a tradition that seeks to create a faithful record of a plant, can be tracked along with changes in scientific thinking. Many of these original art works provide a rare view of plants as they were first identified, some of which have since been lost to cultivation. From the earliest days, the Society commissioned paintings of flowers and fruit to support its identification work. Botanical art continues to play an important role helping to raise the awareness of new, endangered or even invasive plants. Contemporary botanical art has greatly increased in popularity over the past 20 years, with countless talented artists across the world now engaged in the practice. The Library actively collects work by artists that is of the highest standard, often by those who have been awarded RHS Gold medals. These illustrations complement the historic works and are used for research, teaching and exhibition. A desire to extend the scope of the art collections to include 'garden art' has led to recent purchases that include vignettes of gardeners at work and interior drawings of the Greenhouse at West Dean. The Library seeks to maintain this important art collection that helps tell our stories of plant histories and gardening.

Volume 16 of *Occasional Papers from the RHS Lindley Library* presents the story behind four special artists (Barbara Regina Dietzsch, Caroline Maria Applebee, Edith Helena Adie and Rory McEwen) alongside the cross-cultural links to be found in nineteenth-century Chinese plant names, via the RHS Reeves Collection.

Botanical Art in the Age of Enlightenment: Barbara Regina Dietzsch and her circle

Charlotte Brooks

c/o The RHS Lindley Library, The Royal Horticultural Society, London

On 29 January 2013 the RHS Lindley Library acquired three new paintings at auction. These paintings, attributed to Barbara Regina Dietzsch (1706–1783), help to tell a story of decorative floral art that runs alongside the emergence of botanical illustration as a scientific discipline. During the Age of Enlightenment, the role of artists gained in significance as they became supporters of the development of scientific botanical knowledge.

Barbara Regina Dietzsch was one of the few documented women who flourished as a commercial artist in eighteenth-century Europe. The eldest of seven children of the landscape painter and engraver Johann Israel Dietzsch (1681–1754), the family came from Nuremberg, Germany, where she continued to live and work throughout her life.

Taught to paint by her father, Barbara Regina is recognised as the principal flower painter in the family, executing highly skilled and accurate single plant portraits, studies of bouquets tied with ribbon and floral arrangements in vases. Dietzsch was also an accomplished painter of animals and insects; all of her portraits and bouquets include insects.

Margaretha Barbara (1726–1795), the youngest in the family, is also well known for her plant portraits with insects. Taught by her elder sister, she followed her father by engraving and etching works for publication. She worked closely with Barbara Regina and in turn became a teacher of art; both sisters had a following of students who emulated their style. For most women in artistic circles, it was necessary to have the support and protection of their father or a male patron, to gain access to the necessary public forums (Witzling, 1997, p. xxix). Four of the brothers are also known to have painted fruit, flower and vegetable studies. Johann Christoph (1710–1769), one of the brothers, was well recognised for his paintings of flowers with many pieces attributed to him.

The family seems to have worked closely together and it is thought they shared the same workshop. Many of the pictures available for consultation in public collections are attributed rather than signed. It is likely that more than one artist contributed to each piece. The three paintings in the RHS Lindley Library exhibit many of the features typical of the Dietzsch style.



Fig. 1. *Passiflora caerulea*, attributed to Barbara Dietzsch.



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Fig. 2. Tied bouquet with ranunculus, attributed to Barbara Dietzsch.



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Fig. 3. Tied bouquet with tulips, attributed to Barbara Dietzsch.

Barbara Regina typically painted on vellum or hand-made laid paper, using gouache heightened with gum arabic. Her studies are offset by a dark black or brown ground, giving them a dramatic quality enhanced by close attention to the texture and form of both foliage and flower heads. The single plant portraits are near-life size depictions, with compositions that were clearly intended for display. As was typical of this period, the decorative paintings do not include scientific detail or magnifications.

There is a specific combination in Dietzsch's pictures of a faithful imitation of nature on the one hand and artistic idealisation on the other; her paintings fall in between the genres of still life and natural history illustration. (Gaze, 1997, p. 457)

According to the Nuremberg Record Office, Barbara Regina was repeatedly approached to join the Bavarian court as a resident artist; however, she refused, preferring to stay in Nuremberg and work with her family. Nuremberg was considered the most important 'Free City' of the Holy Roman Empire until 1806, when financial difficulty meant it was absorbed into the kingdom of Bavaria (*Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 2016). It had enjoyed a reputation for impressive gardens since the late sixteenth century, and with a flourishing print and publishing industry the city had become a centre for learning and scientific enquiry. The long tradition of printers and engravers in Nuremberg meant it was one of the great centres for publishing in Germany. Scholars and artisans would come together in the printers' workshops (Eisenstein, 1979, p. 248).

Conditions for artists had started to change in 1704 when the Nuremberg Academy of Arts offered fine art training for the first time. Previously, artists had been apprenticed to a Master, which involved a long period of training, often involving itinerant work. Within ten years the traditional guild system of apprenticeships had been abolished and in 1713 painting became a liberal art (Nickelsen, 2006, p. 35).

At the same time, women were slowly being allowed greater freedom for professional pursuits and there was an increased interest in commercial activity surrounding the home and domestic space. Although the European art academies remained almost exclusively for men and tended to focus on life study classes and historical subjects, flower painting was considered a 'safe' pursuit for women. This was largely because it avoided the intimacy of portraiture and because flowers were considered a domestic subject. Floral



RHS LINDLEY COLLECTIONS

Fig. 4. *Iris germanica* var. *florentina*, original watercolour by August Sievert.



RHS LINDLEY COLLECTIONS

Fig. 5. *Iris germanica* var. *florentina*, engraving from Trew's *Hortus Nitidissimis*, based on the original by August Sievert (as seen in Fig. 4).

art was popular as flowers were also easily obtained and could be painted comfortably either indoors or outside. A dominant strain of theological thought in Germany during this period was the physico-theological discourse that sought to rationalise the existence of God through the beauty and order found in nature. The devotion of the artist and patron could be demonstrated by creation of beautiful, natural subjects in art.

This ready market for plant portraits created for decoration and devotion therefore ensured that Dietzsch's work was popular with local audiences in Nuremberg, but also overseas. She accepted commissions of garden plants that would have been familiar to purchasers. The wealthy merchant classes had created a strong demand for illustrations with aesthetic appeal and as such 'painters of flowers were among the highest paid artists of the time' (Chadwick, 1990, p. 117). Dietzsch's decorative works were intended for a domestic setting, hanging in salons and private sitting rooms across Europe. Records suggest that they were purchased in some numbers and often exported (Gaze, 1997, p. 459). Twenty or thirty pieces would be hung together to create the impression of an interior garden, or of a private cabinet containing curiosities of objects and images from the natural world. With dark backgrounds and luminescent flowers, a wall hung with Dietzsch paintings would have created a striking effect. The Dietzsch sisters not only produced the decorative pieces on a dark background for commercial consumption, but also contributed illustrations for publication.

The eighteenth-century Enlightenment period through which Dietzsch lived saw significant changes to the cultural and intellectual life of Northern Europe. Characterised by a widespread interest in exploration and the development of scientific enquiry, the desire to record, categorise and list the natural world was one of the tangible results. The sciences, as typically taught at European universities, were part of the requirement for medical training by physicians and most botanical knowledge was gained in relation to medical need. A brief outline of some key dates associated with botanical positions and institutions in Europe helps to put these developments into context:

- The oldest botanic garden in the UK is at the University of Oxford, founded in 1621 'to promote the furtherance of learning and to glorify nature' (University of Oxford, 2018). The University at Altdorf just outside Nuremberg was unusual in having extensive facilities for scientific research; its *Hortus medicus* or medicinal garden was established in 1626 (de Ridder-Symoens and Rüegg, 1996, p. 473).

- Although the term ‘botany’ was used by Captain Cook in the 1690s, with reference to Botany Bay in Australia, the term ‘botanist’ as a paid professional position did not come to bear until much later (Harper, 2017).
- James Sutherland (c.1638–1719) held the first position of ‘Professor of Botany’ at the University of Edinburgh in February 1695. Charles Alston (1685–1760) held the position of ‘King’s Botanist and Regius Professor of Botany’ in Scotland from about 1715 (for a stipend of just £50 a year) but his academic training was still to be in medicine (Allen, 2004).
- The short-lived Botany Society of London was formed in 1721 with Johann Dillenius (1681–1747) as its first President. It was not for another hundred or so years that a similar society would surface, this time the Botanical Society, formed in 1836, with an express focus on botanical science.
- The University of Cambridge appointed its first Professor of Botany in 1724 (University of Cambridge, 2017). It took rather longer for the position of Professor of Botany to be established at the University of Oxford, as although it was proposed by James Sherard in 1728, Dillenius did not take up the post until 1734 (Boulger, 2017).

Dillenius, also originally from Germany, was a contemporary of Carl Linnaeus (1707–1778), the most famous and significant of the botanical thinkers of this period. The Linnaean system of plant classification was widely adopted in the mid-eighteenth century and his focus on the reproductive system of plants altered popular botanical understanding, and in turn transformed the depiction of plants for identification.

A pivotal person in this arena was Christoph Jakob Trew (1695–1769), an eminent physician who was at the centre of botanical, artistic and scientific life in Nuremberg. He and Linnaeus exchanged correspondence and ideas. Like Linnaeus, Trew collected, commissioned and published botanical art in numerous works. These works included most notably *Plantae Selectae* and *Hortus Nitidissimis*, both produced in 1750. *Hortus Nitidissimis* sees the work of a number of artists brought together, including August Wilhelm Sievert (d. 1751), Barbara and Margaretha Dietzsch and Georg Dionysius Ehret (1708–1770). The preface to *Plantae Selectae* sees Barbara Dietzsch described as ‘iam satis ubique celebris Virgo nostras, BARBARA REGINA DIEZSCHIA’ (our countrywoman, Miss BARBARA REGINA DIETZSCH, now quite famous everywhere).

It is here that the intrinsic connections in this circle become apparent. Ehret had started his early career as a gardener but always held a desire to be an artist. For a period in the 1720s he was employed as a gardener by Karl Wilhelm, the Margrave of Baden-Durlach. During this time he came into contact with the renowned artist August Wilhelm Sievert, who was painting the illustrious plant collections, including tulips, at the Margrave's castle. Following this Ehret made the transition to become a full-time artist and in 1731, he was introduced to Trew by his cousin Johann Breuer. Under instruction from both Trew and Linnaeus, Ehret's botanical painting technique was refined to incorporate aspects of a plant required for identification. Ehret moved to London in 1736 but maintained correspondence with Trew. Whilst Trew was apparently happy to leave the design of a picture to the artist, he was exacting in his requirement as to which features should be incorporated. The illustration was to be presented with clarity and show an accurate likeness. As such it was not uncommon for him to request a page be re-drawn if it did not meet his expectations. At some point he sent a painting by Barbara Dietzsch to Ehret, to use for inspiration. Trew apparently suggested that a contrasting background colour may help make an illustration clearer, a feature we obviously see in all of Dietzsch's paintings. By 1750 Ehret was considered the finest botanical artist in Europe.

Trew also employed Barbara Dietzsch to copy eleven illustrations of tulips from an album of paintings in his possession for inclusion in *Hortus Nitidissimis*. These clearly originate from an album of illustrations by Sievert now held in the Library's art collections, known as *Hortus Florum Imaginum*. It is likely that this features at least some of the plants from the Margrave's Castle. In addition to these copies, eleven of Barbara Dietzsch's own illustrations were also supplied, engraved by Seligmann and Wirsing, with a further five illustrations by her sister Margaretha Barbara.

The production of botanical illustration in the eighteenth century was expensive and difficult so pictures were often copied or adapted for re-use. Artists would also copy the work of those considered particularly talented as a teaching aid, to better learn how to execute their own pieces, as seen in the exchange of pictures between Dietzsch, Trew and Ehret. A hand-coloured proof illustration would have been produced as the basis from which subsequent colouring could be undertaken, thus necessarily simplifying the colouring process for publication and distancing it from the original picture.

The Dietzsch paintings are therefore situated at the centre of an important time in the history of botanical art, but they represent much wider cultural

and scientific changes in Europe. The sphere of influence cast wide across Europe, with an active network of correspondence and drawings passing between physicians, botanists and artists. In an effort to disseminate their knowledge and encourage new thinking the illustrations proved to be vital in the communication of this information. Pictures were copied, re-purposed and re-used by artists and engravers for publication and reference. They are also beautiful, highly skilled pieces that continue to inspire us today.

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Unravelling the mystery: Caroline Maria Applebee

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Occasionally in the past art works were taken into the RHS Lindley Library and then for reasons unknown, little attention was subsequently paid to them. Either information about the pictures and artist was scarce in the first place, or when passed on, it was not properly documented. In line with best practice, the RHS Lindley Library's acquisition policy has developed in recent years, but in the early twentieth century material was often acquired by other departments within the Society, to then make its way to become part of the Library collections. Such was the case with one set of over three hundred paintings by Caroline Maria Applebee, about which very little was known until quite recently.

This extensive collection of early nineteenth-century watercolours of flowers is beautifully painted and with advances in imaging technology has become widely recognisable on RHS chinaware, stationery and textiles. The subjects featured range from common garden and hedgerow plants such as blackberries, bindweed, daffodils and snowdrops, to exotic introductions from the Americas. It was not just the number and range of plants depicted that served to make them so popular, but Applebee's talent for design and composition. However, whilst these drawings had become significant for their decorative qualities, their history and that of their creator had been lost.

By fortuitous coincidence Applebee was chosen to be the subject for the 2017 RHS desk diary at the same time that researcher James Akers expressed an interest in finding out more about her. He raised the spectre of misattributed plant names; as an expert in historic tulips, he recognised that some of the cultivar names given to our illustrations were inconsistent with their dates. James undertook much of the preliminary research, following which we took the opportunity to re-evaluate the catalogue information and also to re-photograph the paintings. In doing so, we were able to start to piece together something of the story of an amateur plantswoman and artist, not untypical for her time, but little noted in the present history of horticultural practice.

The old-fashioned card catalogue entry for Applebee detailed three albums, comprising a total of 324 watercolours of plants, purchased from three different vendors: Mrs Romney of London, Mrs M. Sugden of Dover and Mrs Frances Masee Taylor of Reading. They were received on behalf

of the RHS Lindley Library by Reverend Wilks. Frustratingly, the acquisition dates were not retained, although with the knowledge that Reverend Wilks was the Society's Secretary at the Vincent Square office 1909–1919 (the address featured on the correspondence), we can at least reduce the period of accession to some point during those 10 years.

The prices for two of the albums are listed as £8 for album two and £6 for album three; the price for album one was not documented. Using the currency converter from the National Archives, this translates as approximately £500 per album, so a reasonable amount of money. However, the names given for the vendors at first glance appear unconnected and their relationship to the artist and drawings remained a mystery:

No record has been found of the nature of the connection between the third vendor and the other two. No catalogue entry for the drawings has been found in the Lindley Library and they do not appear in the printed catalogue of 1927.

The catalogue entry updated in the 1990s recorded the removal of the drawings from their albums, as the bindings had failed and they were no longer deemed safe for handling. The empty albums, bound in dark brown calfskin with gilt embossed decoration and marbled endpapers, were retained, boxed and sent to storage. At this point some additional research had been undertaken, as Applebee's death date of 1854 and an approximate date of birth were added (recently discovered to be incorrect). The inventory listed individual drawing dates of 1808–1852 and there had also been an attempt to identify the plants featured therein (albeit not always accurately).

The drawings themselves had been re-housed loose in boxes, ordered alphabetically by genus, as was curatorial practice during this period. This prioritised the subjects in the drawings and allowed for easy access to particular plant varieties. However it resulted in a complete dislocation from the original order and more significantly from Applebee's own documentation.

At this point the research followed several directions: biographical searches; a close examination of the albums and drawings; investigation of the plants represented in the drawings and potential sources for the specimens.

With biographical research it is often easier to work backwards through a person's life. Somewhat surprisingly, for someone about whom so little is known, notice of Applebee's death appeared in eleven regional newspapers, including the *London Evening Standard*:

Died: On 16th. [September 1854] at Blackheath, aged 69, Caroline Maria Applebee, of St. Mary's Colchester, and eldest daughter of the late Rev. John Applebee, Prebendary of Lincoln, and Rector of East Thorpe Essex (Anon. 1854).

These three short lines offered the key to locating more information. Subsequent searches of census reports, local newspaper archives and the National Archives revealed some tantalising details. Applebee's father made provision for her in his will (he died in 1825), with specific instruction that property should be sold and the funds transferred to her. The 1841 census lists Applebee's address as Crouch Street, St Mary at Walls, Colchester, following which the census of 1851 gives the house as number 53. She maintained a staff of up to five servants, indicating again that as the unmarried head of the household, she was independent and wealthy. Applebee's will can be read online and although difficult to decipher in parts, it is generous in providing for members of her extended family, her household and local charities. The final codicil of her will dated 21 April 1853 records what she describes as 'minor articles of property to which I feel an attachment'. These pictures, clocks, jewellery and antiques were shared between her family. In addition she was careful to allow for financial support for those who had cared for her 'I wish each of my servants to have a years wages & mourning & to Elizabeth Hobling the sum of £19.19.0 in acknowledgment of her tender nursing through a severe illness & her undeviating kindness & attention through a long & trying attendance.' It is clear the family was close and she felt great fondness for her sister, nieces and nephews, being keen to ensure fair distribution of her chattels. Of most pertinent interest for our purposes is reference to the watercolours left to one of her nieces, Louisa Williams:

I wish Louisa to have the three books of flowers painted by myself and Emily having often asked for a drawing of mine may also like to possess my scrap book in which there are many productions of my pencil.¹

It seems quite likely therefore that the paintings came to the RHS Lindley Library via a connection to the artist's niece. Sadly, the scrap book of pencil drawings has not materialised.

Applebee's grave is still visible at St Mary at the Walls Church in Colchester,

¹ Applebee, Will, 1853.

just a short distance from her home in Crouch Street. The inscription does not help us to pin down a precise date of birth, as it claims she was sixty-eight not sixty-nine when she died: ‘to the memory of Caroline Maria Applebee who died September 16th 1854 aged 68 years.’ However, it does mean we can be closer in our approximation that she was born in around 1787.

The society pages of the local Essex newspaper describe charitable balls and flower shows to which Applebee contributed and attended, as well as numerous benevolent funds to which she subscribed. Balls and dances were held regularly at the Cups Assembly Rooms on the High Street in aid of the Essex and Colchester Hospital. Applebee attended these with a party of friends and her niece, Miss Williams.

Amongst the donations detailed in the papers throughout the 1830–1850s, Applebee helped to support the widow of a respected eye surgeon, the ‘Distressed Irish Clergy’ as well as the Colchester Literary Institution to whom she donated books.² Colchester was a thriving town with a Horticultural Society, of which she was a long standing member, which held shows at the Botanic Gardens and in the private gardens of the Round family estate. She is listed as one of the stall holders at the June Show of 1839.³ In 1850 she exhibited a ‘*Eucoma punctata*’ [*sic*], now known as *Eucomis comosa*, or pineapple flower, winning second prize for the ‘plants in pots’ category.⁴ Although *Eucomis punctata* was introduced to Europe from South Africa in 1783, for a long time it was considered a hothouse plant that was difficult to look after and too tender for most gardeners (Keen, 2004).

The pictures are intriguing; they are delightfully executed and composed while representing some of the most fashionable plants of the early nineteenth century. A closer look at the albums revealed they were compiled in chronological order and bound in Colchester. The first is dated 1808–1825, the second is dated 1832–1842 and the third 1842–1852, just two years before her death. Applebee painted almost continually for over forty years.

Each of the illustrations, executed on small sheets of watercolour paper, was adhered to the album pages. The year was handwritten at periodic intervals and each illustration was named using local common or trade plant names. Albums one and two bear a handwritten index, which cross-references the plants and page numbers in alphabetical order. There was clearly an intention

² See *Essex Standard* 10 March 1843, 18 December 1835 and 1 March 1850.

³ *Essex Standard* 14 June 1839.

⁴ *Essex Standard* 18 January 1850.

with these albums of drawings to record and document these plants, not just to paint them as an idle pastime. However, only two of the pictures record the origin of the specimen: 'Yellow Holly and Spindle, 1828' bears the inscription: 'from Sir William Watson's Garden, Dawlish, 30 December 1828'; the other is described more simply as 'Ferns, from Yorkshire'. It can only be a matter of speculation as to why this was the case, perhaps these were the only plants that came from further afield. The spelling of the plant names is also notable as this is not always consistent or accurate according to our own accepted standards. For example 'Fuchsia' is repeatedly misspelt as 'Fuschia', an easy mistake to make if one is spelling it phonetically and is not familiar with German botanist Leonhart Fuchs, for whom the genus was named.

As Applebee was the daughter of a clergyman from a middle-class family, it is most likely she was educated at home. Her charitable donations indicate she was keen to promote the education of women and girls. It is possible her talent as an artist developed in some part with the aid of books and instruction manuals. Botany as a discourse was not a professional practice and horticultural knowledge was passed down or shared through word of mouth, journal articles, part-works and other publications.

With limited information about Applebee as a plantswoman and artist, sources in the RHS Library Collections help to give context to her work. Early nineteenth-century publications on gardening practice, new plant introductions and flower painting manuals present an atmosphere of discovery and exploration that permeated both the professional and the amateur gardening worlds.

Applebee's style of painting is typical of early Victorian flower painting. A survey of some of the popular illustrated publications of the time (*Curtis's Botanical Magazine*, *Botanical Register*, *Transactions of the Horticultural Society*, Redouté's *Les Roses* and *Les Liliacées*, to name a few) reveal that these are not copies or imitations of images found in published works. Applebee is not listed as a contributor to any of the popular gardening journals or as a published artist, but she clearly had an eye for design and detail as well as extensive knowledge of garden plants.

Watercolour gained in popularity as a medium throughout the late 1700s, with the formation of the Royal Watercolour Society in 1804 indicating its widespread appeal in Britain. Most commonly used for the depiction of landscapes and flower painting, it suited a genteel audience, being easily portable and relatively clean to use. Available either loose in dried cake form, or later on in tubes or pre-packed in artists' boxes, the colours could

be purchased with ease. William Reeves had opened his first shop near St Paul's Cathedral in London in 1766 selling cakes of dried pigments, followed by Daler-Rowney who began producing artists' pigments in 1783. These were intended for the professional landscape painter, but as new colours were introduced and the stability of the pigments improved, cheaper pigments could be purchased that were aimed at the amateur market. By the 1830s the 'shilling colour box' was available commercially. At the same time paper made specifically for artists was also being developed. James Whatman produced one of the first woven papers for use with watercolours in the 1780s. Although there are a number of different types of papers in the Applebee collection, some of them bear the watermark of Whatman, indicating that she was conscious of the quality of the materials she selected.

Alongside such improvements in the manufacture of papers and paints, instruction manuals were produced that described how best to use the pigments. These were often written by the manufacturers to promote their own set of colours. Campbell-Orr observes that 'botanical drawing was considered to be an ideal field for women amateurs and a number of manuals were written for them' (Campbell-Orr, 1995, p. 165).

Edward Pretty identified an opportunity to update the literature on flower painting in his *Practical Essay on Flower Painting in Watercolours*, published in 1810. In the introduction the author explains how he conceived 'the necessity of an Improved Essay on Flower Painting is obvious. The present Work is offered to the Public; and, it is hoped, may claim some degree of notice' (Pretty, 181, p. [i]). His detailed instructions cover outlining, shading, colour and composition with an emphasis on drawing from nature, undertaking accurate observation and the study of other highly regarded artists' work. The novice is led step by step, approaching first single flower stems then moving on to more complicated group compositions. The plants described by Pretty were all common to English gardens and would have been readily obtainable. Applebee's own group compositions are very similar to those described in the painting manuals and feature many of the same plants, albeit in different arrangements.

Following on from the success of Pretty's essay, George Brookshaw appealed specifically to women to take up their paintbrushes in *A New Treatise on Flower Painting, or, Every Lady her own Drawing Master*, published in 1816. In the preface he states: 'I am much inclined to think, that ladies would sooner arrive at perfection than men, were they at first taught its [flower painting's] proper rudiments' (Brookshaw, 1816). His treatise also included



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Fig. 1. Schyzanthus Retusus, 1835.

directions on how to mix colours to accurately match elements of a plant. A watercolour wash considered suitable for the green of an apple could be achieved by ‘mixing gamboge and a very little Prussian blue’ (Brookshaw, 1816, p. 9). Brookshaw recommended that artists should limit their palette to just ten colours and mix accordingly to generate the correct tones. The books by Brookshaw and Pretty were typical of the kinds of new instruction manuals that were intended to meet the needs of the inquisitive, leisured classes. Instruction manuals that dealt with flower painting and landscapes were by far the most popular of the genre and found a ready audience of women to subscribe to them. This is still a popular method of instruction for botanical artists today. *The Art of Botanical Painting* published by the Society of Botanical Artists features a chapter dedicated to mixing combinations of pigments for foliage (Stevens, 2015).

The excitement generated by exotic plants that arrived from overseas in the eighteenth century had helped to foster a taste for decorative and ornamental plants. Specimens and seeds were sent from all over the world and specialist suppliers became more widespread. At the beginning of the nineteenth century more leisure time and a burgeoning market in plants meant the middle classes extended their interest in horticulture. Local horticultural societies, plant shows, exhibitions and the journals to publicise them all fed the enthusiasm of the plant specialist. In London there were plant nurseries, seed traders and market gardeners in every borough, while the newly formed Horticultural Society of London (1804) helped to galvanise the nation.

The range of exotic and ornamental flowers represented in Applebee’s paintings describes the array of new introductions to British gardens, many of which originated in the Americas and East Indies. In developing the skills to understand and care for the new introductions, gardeners also created opportunities for cultivating and hybridising new varieties that would be both decorative and stood a chance of surviving the British climate. Early nineteenth-century gardeners therefore saw many changes take place in the accessibility and affordability of exotic plants. This was however a pastime for someone with financial means. Glasshouses and stove houses were required to maintain many of these plants and in some cases their survival in the British climate was not easy to predict. A tax on sheet glass, in place until 1845, meant that greenhouses were beyond the capacity of most people (Gorer, 1978, p. 130). Although Applebee was in a comfortable position financially, there is no evidence to suggest that she had her own greenhouse. However, there were gardens with greenhouses in the local area.



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Fig. 2. *Zinnia Coccinea*, 1834.

Many of the plants featured in Applebee's work had only recently become known to British gardeners. The illustration of 'Schyzanthus Retusus, 1835' (now known as *Schizanthus grahamii*) came from Chile and its first appearance in *Curtis's Botanical Magazine* was in 1831 (Curtis, 1831, plate 3039). Only four years later Applebee had obtained a specimen and painted its likeness. Similarly, seeds of 'Zinnia Coccinea, 1834' (now *Zinnia elegans* var. *coccinea*), sent from South America by J.S. Mill, were first seen to flower in the gardens of the Horticultural Society in 1829 (Lindley, 1829, plate 1294.). Again, this was only a few years prior to Applebee producing her picture.

Horticultural writers described many of these new arrivals and methods of caring for them, with recommendations for the amateur gardener. The illustration of 'Spigelia marilandica 1834', a plant native to North America, was described in *Curtis's Botanical Magazine* as 'not easily propagated in England [...] so the plant is not common in English Gardens' (Curtis, 1789, plate 80). By 1824 *Loddige's Botanical Cabinet* reported, 'we have succeeded in growing it [*Spigelia marilandica*] in a cold frame in winter, and placing it in the greenhouse in summer to flower, which in such a situation it will do in great perfection' (Loddige, 1824, plate 930). There was a significant amount of trial and error involved in caring for these exotics.

Fuchsias had been known about in Europe since the early eighteenth century when Charles Plumier described them in *Nova plantarum Americanarum genera* (1703). Applebee painted a number of varieties of this plant. One was *Fuchsia fulgens*; also known as the 'Brilliant' or 'Glowing' fuchsia, it was the first long-flowered variety to be brought to England. At the time it was thought all fuchsias would thrive best in hothouse conditions, due to a misunderstanding of their native South American climate. As such, prized fuchsia plants were expensive and could sell for as much as 20 guineas each. *Fuchsia fulgens* was only introduced in Britain in 1837, and once gardeners had gained a better understanding of its needs, it was actually surprisingly easy to grow. By the mid-nineteenth century a great number of hybrids were in cultivation and fuchsias appeared in the gardening press, being popular flowers to grow and exhibit. Applebee's picture of *Fuchsia fulgens*, dated 1840, was painted at this turning point, just before a proper understanding of its preferred environment had been established. In 1843 Jane Loudon had identified that *F. fulgens* would best flower in the open air, rather than under glass, although it was still listed as a greenhouse plant (Loudon, 1843, p. 90). By 1848 she claimed there was 'scarcely a garden in the kingdom that does not possess a plant of *Fuchsia fulgens*, at least during the summer months' (Loudon, 1843, p. 136).



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Fig. 3. *Spigelia marilandica*, 1834.



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Fig. 4. *Fuchsia fulgens*, 1840.

Fuchsias sit alongside paintings of pelargoniums and calceolarias as other examples of ornamental plants that are well represented in Applebee's works. These plants were all introduced from overseas, extensively hybridised and made fashionable in the mid-nineteenth century. The great range of plants depicted here suggests Applebee was a keen plantswoman with access to some impressive collections. But the question remains as to where she might have sourced her specimens. In trying to find out more about our artist, census records lead us to her home address at 53 Crouch Street, St Mary at the Walls, Colchester. A visit to the Essex Records Office revealed the location (now sadly built upon) with a description of the house from an auction sale catalogue of 1879. The property was 'a very desirable small freehold residence [...] with two tastefully laid out walled gardens, one of which is planted with a choice selection of wall and pyramid trees'. Therefore it seems there was certainly space for her to have grown at least some of her specimens herself (Sexton and Grimwade, 1879).

However, a more likely source of plants was to be found in the local town. The Colchester and Essex Horticultural and Botanical Gardens must have been inspirational for Applebee. Opened in 1823 and visible on a map of the area from 1848, the Gardens were designed to feature a range of types of plants, including 'American and British departments', a greenhouse with a division for stove plants and a seed shop (Cromwell, 1825, p. 352; Monson, 1848). In addition, there was the estate belonging to George Round Esq. with its gardens and pleasure gardens, where the Colchester and East Essex Horticultural Society held its show and Applebee won a prize for her potted *Eucomis*.

A further, tantalising, piece of the jigsaw was uncovered by Brent Elliott, when he stumbled across a poem entitled 'Caroline Maria Applebee' by Charles Lamb, published in his *Album Verses* in 1830:

Caroline glides smooth in verse,
And is easy to rehearse;
Runs just like some crystal river
O'er its pebbly bed for ever.
Lines as harsh and quaint as mine
In their close at least will shine,
Not from sweetness can decline,
Ending but with *Caroline*.

Maria asks a statelier pace –
 “**A**ve Maria, full of grace!”
Romish rites before me rise,
 Image-worship, sacrifice,
And well-meant but mistaken pieties.

Apple with Bee doth rougher run.
Paradise was lost by one;
Peace of mind would we regain,
Let us, like the other, strain
Every harmless faculty,
Bee-like at work in our degree,
Ever some sweet task designing.
Extracting still, and still refining.

Charles Lamb travelled to Bury St Edmunds in Suffolk in 1830 and was at this time engaged with writing acrostics for friends, although there is sadly no record of how he might have known Caroline Applebee.

The long-standing statement on the Library’s catalogue entry that Caroline Maria Applebee ‘appears to have been the daughter of a wealthy middle-class family with conservatories and greenhouses’ is therefore not entirely inaccurate, although there was clearly more to this artist than her family’s status. As the daughter of a wealthy clergyman she was undoubtedly afforded a number of luxuries, not least an independent lifestyle. Through her paintings we have the chance to see some of the most fashionable plants of the early nineteenth century and appreciate her talent as an artist. These works were not just the result of an idle pastime but the dedicated attention of a woman who painted throughout her adult life until illness overtook her. It seems the paintings did stay in the family as Applebee’s niece, Louisa Clare Williams, married a Mr Turner. Louisa’s daughter, Maud, married a Mr William Sugden. It therefore seems most likely that the ‘Mrs M. Sugden of Dover’ who sold one of the albums to the Society was Louisa’s daughter.

As is often the case with the most interesting of collections, there is always scope for further research. We are delighted that Julie Wing is now conducting further research into the Colchester Botanic Gardens and local nineteenth-century horticulturists. We hope there will be opportunity to find out more about our now celebrated artist.

Acknowledgments

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The RHS Reeves Collection: what's in a name?

Kate Bailey and Charlotte Brooks

c/o The RHS Lindley Library, The Royal Horticultural Society, London

In 1812, John Reeves, a recently widowed middle-aged tea inspector, left his four children in the care of his sisters and sailed for Canton on the East India Company (EIC) ship, HCS *Alnwick*. He was employed by the EIC to sample and advise on the purchase of consignments of teas sold by a group of about a dozen Chinese merchants, known as the 'Hong merchants'. The Hong merchants were appointed by the Emperor himself to trade in tea and other important commodities with Western merchants. This trade was conducted from within a small enclave along the northern bank of the Pearl River at Canton (now Guangzhou) from a line of factories or business premises, known as 'Hongs'. Each nation had its own Hong, its national flag waving in the breeze along the waterfront. The Swedes and the French were there, as were the Americans, but by far the most important of the tea traders were the British who leased two factories from the Hong merchants.

Hearing of Reeves' impending first voyage to China in 1812, Sir Joseph Banks, who had become horticultural and agricultural advisor to George III and who was the first unofficial director of Kew Gardens, invited Reeves to his house in Soho Square. Here, Banks gave Reeves instructions about what and how to collect. He almost certainly also showed Reeves his collection of Chinese coloured botanical drawings, some of which had recently been sent back by Kew gardener William Kerr. There is some evidence to suggest that he lent these drawings to Reeves to take to China with him to avoid duplication. As his only collector in China at the time, Reeves became an invaluable correspondent for Banks. He sent shipments of potted plants, dried specimens, pictures and snippets of diverse information ranging from the manufacture of lead sheets and 'josses' (gods), to the children's gaslight toys and the inlaying of snail shells on lacquered wood, a pastime he thought most suitable for ladies. Following Banks' death in 1820, Reeves continued to write to his librarian, Robert Brown, who went on to become the first Keeper of Natural History at the British Museum.

From 1812 until 1831, with the exception of two short periods when he returned to work in London, Reeves lived and worked in the two British factories during the trading season, which ran roughly from October to February each year. Here, he was confined to the narrow factory area, about



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Fig. 1. *Chrysanthemum indicum*, pink semi-double, white double and yellow double grafted onto one bush, in a pot.

330m in length, through which ran three streets, Hog Lane, China Street and New China Street, each lined with little shops. He also ventured into the maze of dark, narrow streets forming the suburbs outside the main city walls where he collected some Chinese medicines and was met with shouts of *fan qui* ('foreign devil') by the locals.

One source of pleasure for the gentlemen of the factories was the boat trip across the river to the landing place on the island of Honam, where there was a large Buddhist temple at which the monks received visitors. Further along the seafront lay the Fa Tee Gardens, a series of orderly nursery gardens where visitors could buy or hire plants in pots, observe Chinese horticultural practices and in Reeves' case discuss the plants which were being cultivated with Chinese gardeners. Plants from these gardens had already been sent back to Britain by earlier collectors. Nevertheless, John Reeves was always on the lookout for something new. He also used to go for walks into the interior of the island where he collected specimens of tea bushes for Banks.

The most entertaining excursions, however, were visits to the mansions of the Hong merchants on Honam. Here, Reeves and other guests enjoyed wandering in the elaborately landscaped gardens of artificial ponds, outcrops of rock, pavilions and bridges. Reeves was most interested in the plants being cultivated. His letters to Banks and an obituary he wrote on the death of Consequa, one of the merchants, reveal nothing about the jolly chopstick dinners he ate or the operas he would have seen. Rather, he wrote about a sweet orange which the merchant Puanquequa gave him and a *Wisteria sinensis* which he found in Consequa's garden, the plant having been brought from the north by Consequa's nephew. Many more plants were sent back from these gardens, specifically chrysanthemums, as these were favoured by the Chinese and little known about in England.

During the summer months when the business of the tea trade temporarily halted, all Westerners were obliged to leave Canton and make a short boat trip down to the Portuguese colony of Macau. Here, Reeves was free to make excursions into the countryside and to the outlying islands to gather new plants. These early plant hunting trips were made in the company of a medical colleague, Dr John Livingstone, surgeon to the EIC's China establishment. In a letter written at a much later date, held at the RHS Lindley Library, it appears that Reeves was also interested in wild flowers, although he was unable to collect them as he was not in Macau at the right time of year. The drawings are therefore the only record of these plants, many of which have only been tentatively identified.



Fig. 2. Detail from *Chrysanthemum indicum*, white double, showing Chinese names and their transliteration.

Macau was, and still is, noted for its gardens. Casa Garden was an imposing single-storey house rented from the Portuguese and used by the EIC to house visiting dignitaries. Reeves had access to this garden and to the surrounding countryside, which was noted for its beauty and for its connection with the Portuguese poet Camões. It was here, beneath a large rock, that Camões wrote his famous poem *The Lusiads*. Today the house is used as a cultural centre and still has a fine garden.

The most visited garden in Macau belonged to Reeves' friend Thomas Beale. The house and garden were situated above and a little way back from the Praya Grande, a wide bay on the eastern coast of the peninsula. There seem to be no painted records of this garden, which was a great tourist attraction, but there are a few detailed descriptions. There was a fish pond and a large aviary immediately adjoining the dining room so that the occupants of the house could watch the birds, as well as a superb collection of plants. Beale had hundreds of potted chrysanthemums, which, he claimed, he himself did not much care for but kept merely to please his Chinese gardener. He made his garden and his gardener available to Reeves which enabled him to keep potted specimens until they were ready to be packed for the voyage to London. Sadly, the house and garden have long since disappeared but it seems that at least some of his plants were transferred to a garden in Hong Kong after his death in 1841.

Livingstone also kept a garden at his home at the far end of the Praya Grande and Reeves certainly obtained plants from this and other private gardens on

the peninsula. There is a suggestion that Reeves had a garden of his own at Macau, but he lived in a suite of rooms at the EIC's buildings on the seafront where there was no garden, so its whereabouts remains a mystery. Apart from gardens, there was also the possibility of finding new plants at the flower markets, both in Canton and Macau.

There was an increasing appetite at home for new varieties of plants, exotics as well as garden-ready ornamentals. On Reeves' first return visit to London in 1817, possibly through Banks, Reeves met with officers of the Horticultural Society of London, including John Lindley. An agreement was reached with great enthusiasm whereby Reeves was to become a Corresponding Member of the Society and would be paid his expenses for furnishing the Society with specimens of plants (some of which were dried as herbaria) and drawings. The subsequent collection of over 900 individual drawings, now known as the Reeves Collection of Chinese Paintings of Plants, or the RHS Reeves Collection (1817–1831), represents the legacy of thirteen years of Anglo-Chinese collaboration in collecting, painting and naming plants from Southern China.

Reeves was particularly well chosen for the Horticultural Society's endeavour to introduce new plants to the gardens of Britain. He was an assiduous researcher and a keen amateur botanist whose attention to detail helped ensure the survival of an unprecedented number of plants on the perilous journey from Southern China to the EIC docks on the Thames. Evidence of his dedication can be seen in the paintings themselves, which have long survived the original plants, and in the archives of the RHS Lindley Library where minutes, letters and articles provide documentary insights. The inscriptions found on many of the paintings reveal something of Reeves' working practice and the ways in which the pictures were used.

There are several types of inscriptions, the most unusual of which is an 'HS' seal mark and discrete number, applied by Reeves at the bottom right-hand corner of the page in iron gall ink. He also occasionally added little details such as the name of the location or artist and sometimes also a date. The name of the plant is given in Chinese characters, written with a Chinese brush and black Chinese ink, thought to have been added by the painter. Alongside these, the Cantonese sounds or transliteration of each character were added at a later date by a clerk working at the Society. Finally, a botanical name was also added, possibly at the same time, meaning many of the paintings bear a local Chinese plant name as well as a first attempt at a Western botanical identification. This makes this collection very rare in that so much of its history is presented on the face of each painting.

Wisteria sinensis

[Fig. 3, opposite]

The identification of these nineteenth-century plant illustrations with their modern botanical names has been a preoccupation for Western specialists and serves to inform the history of plant nomenclature. For instance the *Wisteria sinensis* mentioned earlier was originally named *Glycine chinensis* by Linnaeus. It was re-named in the early nineteenth century following its introduction to the West. Reeves helped to transport the early specimens to England following which its name was reconsidered. Reeves felt it should become *Wisteria consequa* in honour of his Chinese friend. The name *Wisteria sinensis* was finally settled on by the botanist Thomas Nuttall, in recognition of Caspar Wistar, an American doctor. The picture Reeves sent back did not feature a Chinese name, and there does not appear to be a local equivalent for it. This can be explained by the fact the plant was brought down from the north and was therefore not indigenous to the southern provinces.

As many of the pictures of cultivated varieties bear the Chinese names, recent work undertaken by sinologists Professor Andrew Lo and Dr Frances Wood has meant that it has been possible to translate these for the first time. Lo and Wood observed that many of the characters were poorly formed or that an incorrect character had been used. This may have come about because in Cantonese the same sound can be represented by more than one character, each having an entirely different meaning.

Papaver

[Fig. 4, p. 40]

YINGSU – poppy

The illustration of a poppy demonstrates this beautifully, as only the Chinese character is given. In this instance Reeves did not provide any transliteration; this was provided by Lo and Wood. The picture shows two characters 鶯宿 which produce the sound *yingsu* and translate as ‘nightingale abode’, i.e. the place where the nightingale lives. It is highly likely the wrong characters were used here as clearly a nightingale does not live in a poppy. The two characters should be 罌粟, also pronounced *yingsu* but meaning ‘poppy’. This kind of error suggests that the writers had a poor level of education, which would have been entirely consistent with their status as tradesmen or artisans rather than traditional scholar painters. It is therefore assumed that the artists applied the Chinese plant names, as they would have recognised the plants but would



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Fig. 3. *Wisteria sinensis*.



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Fig. 4. *Papaver*.

not necessarily have had the written vocabulary to accurately describe them.

The difficulty with naming is further complicated by that fact that the original transliteration found on the pictures was almost certainly added once they had arrived in London. This may have been based upon Reeves' own plant lists or taken down as he dictated them. Some errors and inconsistencies have been found which suggests Reeves may have misheard the spoken Cantonese or misread the Chinese characters, or, conceivably, that Reeves' handwriting from his plant lists was misread (as at times he did not have the clearest hand!).

Despite these difficulties, the local dialect plant names are of particular interest, as they reveal something of Chinese naming conventions, which varied from place to place. In some cases the names are descriptive of the habitat or location in which the plant was commonly found or its physical characteristics. Alternatively, plant names may reflect cultural references to well-known stories and historical or religious figures. Interestingly, some sources of plant names do not differ very much from those traditionally found in common use in England. In both cases familiar objects often served as reference points.

Characteristics

Clematis

[Fig. 5, p. 42]

‘Crossing ditch snake’

Some of the Chinese names reflect the physical characteristics and habits of the plant, which in principle is not dissimilar to Latin naming conventions. However, where in English a plant is designated a ‘creeper’ or ‘climber’, the Chinese were more imaginative in their descriptions. They would relate the plants’ habits to the characteristics of other living things by analogy. For example, one of the *Clematis* illustrations bears a name that translates as ‘crossing ditch snake’, which suggests that the plant is a creeper, its smooth stems growing with stealth and speed, in twists and turns.

Bignonia grandiflora

[Fig. 6, p. 44]

LING SEU – ‘reaching for heaven’

An illustration of *Bignonia grandiflora*, now known as *Campsis grandiflora* (trumpet creeper), bears the transliteration *Ling Seu* and again demonstrates



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Fig. 5. *Clematis*.



Fig. 6. *Bignonia grandiflora*, Ling Seu.



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Fig. 7. *Cleisostoma paniculatum*.

the confusion that can arise with Chinese characters. Those that feature on the drawing are incorrect and translate as ‘spiritual heaven’, whereas they should be ‘reaching for heaven’, which is clearly intended to convey the climbing habit of this plant.

Cleisostoma paniculatum

‘Relying on tree orchid’

The orchid *Cleisostoma paniculatum* bears the Chinese characters 依樹蘭, which translate as ‘relying on tree orchid’, arguably a more sympathetic description than the English word ‘parasitic’.

Magnolia coco

YAY HOP – ‘evening closing up’

Magnolia pumila, now known as *Magnolia coco*, contains Chinese characters with the transliteration *yay hop* meaning ‘evening-closing-up’. Native to Southern China and at its most fragrant at night, the unopened flowers are said to resemble coconuts. A similar principle can be observed with the English name for *Bellis perennis*, the common daisy, so named as the ‘day’s eye’, because it opens its petals to face the sun each morning.



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Fig. 8. *Magnolia pumila* (now known as *Magnolia coco*), Yay Hop.

Location

Citrus

[Fig. 9, opposite]

SE HWUY KUM (SHIHUI GAN) – ‘Shihui orange fruit’

In some instances the plant names reflect their original locations. A good example of this is the picture of a large yellow-coloured orange with the transliteration *se hwuy kum*. The modern Pinyin (a contemporary system of transliteration) renders this as *Shihui gan*. *Shihui* is the name of a place in the central part of Guangdong province, the province in which Canton was located. *Kum* or *gan* means ‘orange fruit’. There are a number of types of citrus fruits depicted in the collection. It is not certain whether all the varieties are still in cultivation. Knowing the region and local names may, in future, help to identify these plants more accurately.

Rhododendron (azalea)

[Fig. 10, p. 48]

DINGHU SHAN DUJUAN

Another place name referred to more than once is Dinghu Mountain, also in Guangdong province, not far from Canton. The Chinese characters on the painting of the azalea *Dinghu shan dujuan* (鼎湖山杜鵑) point to this important location. Dinghu Mountain was designated as a National Nature Reserve in 1956. It was the first in China and was included in the International Man and Biosphere Reserve Network of the UNESCO in 1979, as a global conservation spot for the research of ecosystems in tropical and subtropical forest. It is still renowned for the rhododendrons and azaleas that grow there.

Ardisia japonica

[Fig. 11, p. 49]

‘Dinghu Mountain false hanging bells’

Likewise, an illustration of *Ardisia japonica* is annotated with the characters 鼎湖山假吊鐘, which translate as ‘Dinghu Mountain false hanging bells’. The name is reminiscent of the bluebells and harebells found in European woodlands, but the bell shape differs slightly.



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Fig. 9. *Citrus*, *Se Hwuy Kum* (given as Orange var. Largest Yellow).

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Fig. 10. Azalea.



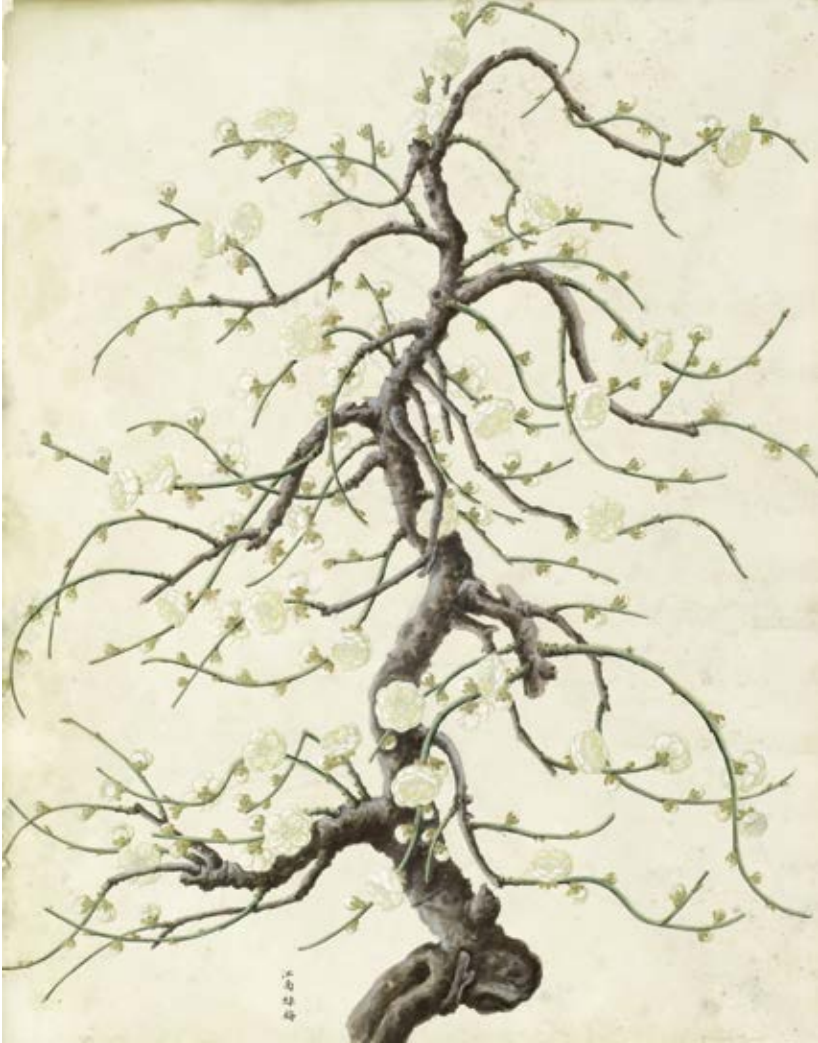
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Fig. 11. *Ardisia japonica*.

Prunus mume

[Figs 12, p. 50; fig. 13, p. 51]

Two pictures of *Prunus* varieties feature characters that refer to Jiangnan, a delta region south of the Yangtze river. *Jiangnan hong mei* means 'Japanese apricot from the Jiangnan area' and *Jiangnan lu mei* translates as 'Jiangnan green Japanese apricot'. The names therefore indicate that both trees originated from Japan but at that time were being grown in the Jiangnan area.



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Fig. 12. *Prunus mume* (white).



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Fig. 13. *Prunus mume* (pink).



Fig. 14. *Clematis florida* var. *flore-pleno* 'Plena'.

Clematis florida var. *flore-pleno* 'Plena'

XIFAN LIAN – 'Western barbarian lotus'

Some of the names do not always refer to a specific location, but more generally indicate that a plant was non-native. *Clematis florida* var. *flore-pleno* 'Plena' has the characters 西番蓮, which translate as *Xifan lian* or 'Western barbarian lotus'. For the Chinese, the word 'barbarian' meant non-Chinese, and denotes that the plant was introduced from overseas.

Rosa roxburghii f. *roxburghii*

HAI DONG HONG – ‘sea east red’

Likewise the Chinese name *Hai dong hong* for one of the rose illustrations translates as ‘sea east red’, possibly meaning either that the colour, or the plant, originated from an unspecified place to the east of China. This particular variety was originally identified as *R. microphylla* Roxb. ex Lindl., which is now known as *R. roxburghii* f. *roxburghii*. The Latin name makes reference to Dr William Roxburgh, a Scottish doctor and botanist who worked extensively in India. He was chief botanist for the EIC and was appointed Superintendent for the Calcutta Botanic Garden. The origin of this rose is somewhat clouded, though, as early descriptions of it were dependent on paintings rather than specimens.



Fig. 15. *Rosa roxburghii*.

Culture

Lawsonia inermis

CHEE KAP – ‘red fingernails’

Other examples of plant names are intertwined with cultural references. The drawing of a plant of *Lawsonia inermis* was commonly referred to by its Chinese name ‘red fingernails’. A plant known to have grown widely in Guangdong province, this epithet was appropriate because henna was extracted from it and used by Chinese girls and women to dye their fingernails.



Fig. 16. *Lawsonia inermis*, Chee Kap.



Fig. 17. *Hibiscus mutabilis*, Fu Yong.

Hibiscus mutabilis

[Fig. 17, p. 55]

FU YONG – ‘drunken flower’

The Chinese name for *Hibiscus mutabilis*, *Fu Yong*, translates as ‘drunken flower’. *Mutabilis* in Latin means ‘changing’; here the Chinese name describes the colour transformation akin to the effects of alcohol creating a blush on the skin. When the flowers unfurl they are a pale yellow or white and gradually change to pink as they mature.

Chrysanthemum indicum CHUY YANG FE

[Fig. 18, opposite]

Rosa semperflorens TSUY YONG FEE

[Fig. 19, p. 58]

Two very different illustrations in the collection both bear names that translate as *Zui Yangfei*, or ‘Intoxicated Imperial Concubine Yang’: the dark red rose *Rosa semperflorens*, *Tsuy Yong Fee*, and a white *Chrysanthemum indicum*, *Chuy Yang Fe*, which flowered with a pale pink centre (the name is also given as ‘Blush ranunculus’ on the painting). On first observation, they are apparently unconnected to one another, but both relate to the red blush colour associated with the story of Yang Guifei. This woman was a notorious beauty and consort of Emperor Xuanzong of the Tang Dynasty (685–762). She was also the inspiration for numerous poems, plays and operas. ‘Intoxicated Imperial Concubine Yang’ refers to a Peking opera of the same name and tells the story of how one night the favoured concubine feared the Emperor had tired of her; consoling herself with wine, she became drunk and danced amongst the flowers (Lovrick, 1997, p. 67). Her name is used to describe a beautiful or precious red, synonymous with the pink of her cheeks. Its application has also been discovered in relation to a red glaze used for Chinese ceramics, known as ‘drunken beauty’ (Ting, 2008, p. 25).

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Fig. 18. *Chrysanthemum indicum*, Chuy Yang Fe ('Blush ranunculus'); *C. indicum*, Wang Hack Lung ('Tasselled Yellow').

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Fig. 19. *Rosa semperflorens*, Tsuy Yong Fee.



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Fig. 20. *Podocarpus macrophylla*.

Religions and mythical beasts

Podocarpus macrophylla

[Fig. 20, p. 59]

LO HAN TSUNG

Reeves was aware of the three principal philosophical or religious teachings in China: Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism. However, in his letters to Sir Joseph Banks he seems to have muddled them up and it was only later that he was able to distinguish between the separate deities. Amongst the plants Reeves sent back to Banks in the early days before his involvement with the RHS was the Lohan pine (羅漢松), which had first been seen in Britain in 1804. *Lohan* is the Chinese term for a Buddhist *Arhat* or saint-like figure. Reeves' letter to Banks on 15 January 1815 describes his difficulties in obtaining this plant:

'No 6. the *Lo Han Tsung* was planted out in a pot in our garden as the '*Pinus Lanceolata*' – but upon its coming into flower I found it a female plant consequently not a pinus – I was fortunate enough to find the male plant in another garden – where I sent my plant and by this means procured some ripe seeds – most of which are coming up pretty strong – the plant sent you is a male plant – I tried the Chinese mode of making you a plant off the female but it did not succeed...' (Letter from Reeves to Banks, 15 January 1815; British Library MS33.982 ff81–82.)

A picture of a Lohan pine in the form of a deer was later sent to the Society. It reveals its use as a subject for topiary. Reeves would have seen that this was a popular form of living ornament in the Hong merchants' gardens.

Citrus 'Buddha's Hand'

[Fig. 21, opposite]

HEONG YUEN

One of the oldest fruits in cultivation is the distinctive *Citrus* 'Buddha's Hand'. It is still available in China and grown commercially in the UK as a specialist plant. Its thick rind means it is not as fresh and juicy as other citrus fruits, but it can be used for marmalade. In China it is said to symbolise happiness and long life.



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Fig. 21. *Citrus* 'Buddha's Hand' (given as 'Fingered Citron'), Heong Yuen or Fuh Show.



Fig. 22. *Chrysanthemum indicum*, Yok puon lung (left) and Wang kum tap.

Chrysanthemum indicum cultivars

[Fig. 22, opposite]

WANG KUM TAP – ‘gold pagoda’

YOK PUON LUNG – ‘white pagoda’

Chrysanthemums were not successfully imported to Europe from Asia until the later eighteenth century. Their origin is disputed, having variously been credited as native to Japan and Tibet as well as China, where Confucius was writing about them in 500BC. The plants introduced by Reeves for the Society were some of the earliest varieties to be made available to British gardeners.

Joseph Sabine (Secretary to the Horticultural Society at the time) dedicated two separate articles in the *Transactions of the Horticultural Society* to the identification and naming of the newly acquired varieties (Sabine, 1821, 1824). He ensured the inclusion of the relevant Chinese names when describing the plants. Significant religious figures and buildings feature in some of these names, such as *Chrysanthemum indicum*, *Wang kum tap* or ‘gold pagoda’, and *C. indicum*, *Yok puon lung* or ‘white pagoda’. Originally used as temples or tombs, the pagoda was introduced to China from India, with the rise in popularity of Buddhism. Whilst this chrysanthemum is given the specific epithet *indicum*, meaning Indian or from India, there is no evidence to suggest this particular variety came from India, but more likely the name reflects a confluence of Indian and Chinese influences. One of Reeves’ first sights as he approached Canton would have been the famous nine-storey pagoda at Whampoa, where the EIC men had to dock. This important landmark would have been known to all and featured frequently in landscape paintings from the period.

Ipomoea cairica

[Fig. 23, p. 64]

‘Five-clawed dragon’

Ipomoea cairica or the ‘five-clawed dragon’ has leaves that are meant to resemble the imprint left by the feet of an imperial dragon. This dragon was particularly associated with the Emperor and is identified by having five claws on each foot. This plant is typically found with five lobes on each leaf, although the shape of the lower two can sometimes be mistaken and appear as though there are an additional two lobes.



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Fig. 23. *Ipomoea cairica*.



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Fig. 24. *Homalium hainanense*.

Homalium hainanense

YIN YANG HUA – ‘yin and yang flower’

A plant identified as *Yin yang hua* literally means ‘yin and yang flower’, because it features both white and pink flowers on the same branch. This name demonstrates the Chinese philosophical concept of a harmonious balance of opposites. The notion of ‘yin and yang’ has become popular more recently in the West.

Chrysanthemum indicum cultivars

[Fig. 25, opposite]

Lou KWUN MEE – ‘purple dragon whiskers’ (left in picture)

TOZE LUNG SOU – ‘Lao Tze’s eyebrows’

Somewhat confusingly, the Chinese names on this picture do not seem to match the appearance of the flowers. The appellation *Toze Lung Sou* is adjacent to the quilled pink variety, and translates to mean ‘Lao Tze’s eyebrows’. Lao Tze was the founder of Taoism and legend has it he was already an old man when he was born, with eyebrows like crescent-shaped moons. His name is used eponymously to suggest the accumulated wisdom of old teachers. At first glance, it may seem that the description has more in common with petals of the white flowerhead.

The accompanying white chrysanthemum, however, is named *Lou Kwun Mu* or ‘purple dragon whiskers’. The Chinese believed that the dragon has purple whiskers measuring 3 feet in length. It is not clear whether in the application of these names there was a confusion, with transcription alternatively from left the right and right to left, or whether the names are in fact only meant to convey associations with traditional ideas. Dragons feature extensively in Chinese myths and have long been used as decorative emblems. Within the collection, there are several references to dragons; they appear in numerous forms and describe various aspects of each plant.

Solanum lyratum

[Fig. 26, p. 68]

‘Fire dragon pearls’

Solanum lyratum has the Chinese name 火龍珠, ‘Fire dragon pearls’. The fire dragon is synonymous with physical power as well as strength of character. Here the pearls refer to the shape and size of the red fruit on the plant. *Solanum lyratum* has long been used in traditional Chinese medicine.



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Fig. 25. *Chrysanthemum indicum*, Lou Kwun Mee (white-flowered) and Toze Lung Sou (quilled pink).



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Fig. 26. *Solanum lyratum*.

Animals

Chrysanthemum indicum cultivars [Fig. 28, p. 70]

HEAE CHAVU PAK – ‘white crab claw’

TOO CHAVU WANG – ‘yellow tiger’s claw’

Animals and their body parts frequently feature in Chinese plant names. Claws were often used to denote the shape of fruit and petals. The chrysanthemums depicted opposite are described in Chinese as ‘white crab claw’ and ‘yellow tiger’s claw’.

Euphorbia tirucalli [Fig. 29, p. 71]

‘Shrimp’s claw’

The *Euphorbia* on the right in the picture on p. 73 is given the name ‘shrimp’s claw’ in Chinese. The plant on the left is *Lonicera japonica*.



Unknown species

‘Dragon teeth banana’

One illustration of bananas (left) has not been identified with a botanical name and is only known by the Chinese name ‘Dragon teeth banana’. The picture shows that the fruit grows in the shape of a dense and pointed hand, which reminded the Chinese of rows of dragon teeth.

Fig. 27. ‘Dragon teeth banana’; unidentified cultivar.



Fig. 28. *Chrysanthemum indicum*, Heae Chavu Pak ('White Crab's Claw') and Too Chavu Wang ('Yellow Tygers Claw').



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Fig. 29. *Lonicera japonica* (left) and *Euphorbia tirucalli*.

References to objects

Nepenthes mirabilis

[Fig. 30, p. 72]

ZHULONG CAO – ‘pig cage plant’

Just as English common plant names refer to domestic objects, so do those adopted by Chinese gardeners. The *Nepenthes mirabilis* or pitcher plant is so called because it gathers moisture and retains it much like a jug or vessel. Its equivalent in Chinese is *Zhulong cao* or ‘pig cage plant’. Chinese farmers traditionally carried their pigs to market in long baskets, slung over their backs.

Viburnum plicatum

[Fig. 31, opposite]

MUBEN XIUQIU – ‘tree type embroidered ball flower’

Likewise, *Viburnum plicatum* or *Muben xiuqiu* was known to the Chinese as the ‘tree type embroidered ball flower’. It is similar in appearance to *Hydrangea macrophylla*, commonly known in English as the lacecap hydrangea, as it is reminiscent of the caps worn by European women throughout the eighteenth century and into the mid-nineteenth century.

Conclusion

The RHS Reeves Collection presents a rare resource of accurately drawn, coloured and identified plants that can be dated to within a specific time frame, from specific locations. The paintings were working documents used as aids to identification and also as a form of catalogue from which particular

Fig. 30. *Nepenthes mirabilis*.



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Fig. 31. *Viburnum plicatum*.

plants could be ordered. They were never exhibited but were referred to in articles, notably by Lindley and Sabine, and were known to specialist nurserymen to whom the plants were passed for propagation and circulation. As such the pictures offer an indication of what these plants looked like as they were grown in China and in some cases perhaps this is the only record.

We are fortunate to have such a rich resource in these paintings, as they reveal so much about how the plants were named in Canton and Macau. It cannot be assumed that the same names were adopted elsewhere in China, as these are local common names specific to this region. From the recent translations, we can now begin to appreciate both of the cultural similarities and differences between the way in which the Chinese and English thought about their plants. Whilst dragons do not regularly feature in English common names, the effects of drunkenness are universally well known.

The RHS Reeves Collection represents a story of collaboration between Reeves and his painters, and between gardeners and enthusiasts on both sides of the world. Joseph Banks was instrumental in initiating this endeavour to identify, transport and paint Chinese plants for a Western audience, but John Reeves was the man to complete it for the Horticultural Society of London.

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Edith Helena Adie (1864–1947)

Ray Crozier, Sandra Crozier and John Devonshire

c/o The RHS Lindley Library, The Royal Horticultural Society, London

In the summer of 1923 Edith Helena Adie was commissioned by Reginald Cory, a prominent member of the shipping and coal mining family which owned Dyffryn House in South Wales, to paint a series of eighteen watercolours of the gardens at Dyffryn. The paintings are now in the RHS Lindley Library along with *A Fantasy* (dated June 1923 and probably produced at Dyffryn), five watercolours of Italian gardens and one of St John's College, Cambridge. These pictures, all from the Cory bequest, represent the only collection of paintings of gardens in the RHS Lindley Collections. Dyffryn House, along with its gardens designed by Cory and Thomas Mawson with construction commencing in 1906, were taken over by the National Trust in 2013. In 2015 the National Trust began the Three Garden Rooms project, aiming to recreate the Paved Court, Reflecting Pool and Pompeian Garden. The project drew *inter alia* upon Adie's watercolour paintings and an album of black and white photographs taken by professional photographer Edward Neame Roff (1869–1953) in 1910 and 1920, all owned by Cory (Glamorgan Archives, Cardiff). In this context an outline of Adie's life and work is perhaps timely.

The Cory bequest to the Lindley Library arrived in 1936 (two years after Cory's death) and remains the most significant single donation the RHS Lindley Library has ever received. It comprises a large collection of botanical and horticultural books and pictures, including many rarities. It took several years to catalogue this extensive addition to the Library. Unfortunately, although it is assumed that Adie's paintings formed part of Cory's bequest, scarcely anything is known about how they arrived there. Cataloguing was interrupted by the Second World War and paintings of gardens were perhaps less easily catalogued or received less attention than the other items in the bequest. For whatever reason they were belatedly discovered by the Librarian Dr Brent Elliott in the 1980s, wrapped in brown paper on a shelf in the storeroom. To compound this dearth of information, there exists no documentation at Dyffryn concerning the circumstances through which Adie came to undertake the commission. Cory ordered the destruction of all his papers to be carried out after his death and so far, we have been unable to discover any documentation that Adie herself may have left. More generally, information about Adie's life and career as an artist is scarce. In this short paper we set out what we have uncovered.



Fig. 1. *The Swimming Pool*, now called the Reflecting Pool, at Dyffryn.

Adie and her family

Edith's father, Scott Adie, was the son of another Scott Adie, Edith's grandfather (1785–1857). Scott Adie senior was born in Rugeley, Staffordshire and served for at least twenty-five years as a valet to the Anson family at Shugborough Hall, who became Earls of Lichfield in 1831. He married twice; his first wife Martha Brindley (1787–1813) died after just eight months of marriage. His second marriage, to Catherine Mathers, which took place in St James's, London on 24 April 1814, resulted in five children. Edith's father was born in 1823 in Colwich, Great Heywood, close to Shugborough. Edith's mother, Elizabeth Hannah Everall, was born in London in 1836. The daughter of a hotel keeper, she and Scott were married on 30 October 1860 in the parish of St George's, Bloomsbury. His occupation is given on the marriage certificate as woollen draper.

The fortunes of the family were transformed by Scott's relocation to London and his foundation in 1854, at the age of 31, of the company Scott Adie Ltd, of the Royal Scotch Warehouse, 115 and 115a Regent Street. It proved a successful business, which would hold royal appointments. Scott Adie Ltd specialised in tweeds and Highland wools, boys' kilt suits, ladies' waterproof cloaks and jackets, summer and winter dresses and petticoats. The family was evidently well off, residing in fashionable areas of London with their household including several live-in servants over the years. The family home for many years in Brechin Place was situated in a terrace of five-storey houses in South Kensington which had seven bedrooms and two bedrooms for servants. Scott Adie died in London on 6 October 1883. The National Probate Calendar described him as a 'Scotch warehouseman', late of 115 Regent Street, London, having died at 2 Earls Terrace, Kensington. At probate on 17 November 1883 his estate was valued at £47,543 6s. 2d., a very considerable sum of money for those times. His widow, Elizabeth Hannah Adie, died on 27 April 1917. Edith was the third of seven children: Scott, 1862–1918; Frederick Everall, 1863–1902; Edith Helena, 1864–1947; Millicent Hannah, 1867–1906; Alice Elizabeth, 1869–1889; William Scott, 1871–1923 and Catherine, 1873–1942. Two of Elizabeth Adie's nephews joined the household as teenagers and lived there until adulthood.

Edith Helena Adie was born on 27 December 1864 at The Boundaries, Balham, Surrey. The birth was registered in Wandsworth on 7 February 1865 and she was baptised on 25 February 1865 (Ancestry UK Parish Records and Births, 1865, Jan–March, volume 1d, p. 530). We have no information about the careers of her siblings other than that her brother, Scott, was also identified as a 'Scotch warehouseman' (he succeeded his father at Scott Adie

Ltd in 1883)¹. Frederick was a solicitor and William Scott succeeded his elder brother at Scott Adie in 1918, following William's premature death. There seems to have been no involvement in art within the family other than Edith's. Nor do we have information on Edith's schooling, whether this took place in a school or at home. Her entry in *Who's Who in Art* (1934) states that she attended three art schools: South Kensington School, Westminster School of Art and the Slade School.

Adie the artist

South Kensington School, which was located near the Victoria and Albert Museum, was a forerunner of the Royal College of Art, changing its name in 1896. It had initially been founded in 1837 as the Government School of Design and was based in Somerset House in London. In 1853 it was renamed the National Art Training School and was relocated to Marlborough House, before moving to South Kensington in 1857. Westminster Art School was founded in 1876 and was originally located in Dean's Yard, Westminster, until 1904 when it merged with the Westminster Technical Institute and moved to Vincent Square in Pimlico (coincidentally where the RHS Lindley Library is now located). Its alumni include Aubrey Beardsley, David Bomberg, Emily Carr, Duncan Grant, Mark Gertler and Walter Sickert. Frederick Brown served as headmaster of the school from 1877 to 1892 before moving to the Slade School.

We have as yet no records of Edith Adie's time at either of these institutions but a little more is known about her studies at the Slade School. Her registration card, which gives her address as 9 Brechin Place, confirms that she attended from 1893 to 1895. She would have been around thirty years of age, which seems relatively old for a student, particularly considering that students regularly joined the Slade from sixteen years of age (Thomas, 1994, p. 9). Nevertheless, there would have been other students of her age. Nor would she have been exceptional in being a female student. In 1910–1912, for example, there were 125 women students and 54 men at the Slade and women had a successful record of achievement, frequently winning prizes, often in competition with men. The Slade was unusual at that time in providing full-time art training for women although this had been changing since the mid-nineteenth century. The Royal Female School of Art and Design, for example, was founded in 1842

¹ A catalogue for Scott Adie Ltd (*Scott Adie Ltd 1854–1954*) is in the National Library of Scotland. The company specialised in knitwear and Highland dress and held a royal appointment to 'the late Queen Mary' for Scotch tartan.

with an emphasis on craft rather than fine art and was based in Queen Square, Bloomsbury, until it merged with the Central School of Art in 1908. Anne Mew, sister of the poet Charlotte, studied bird and flower painting at the school, which was aimed at the daughters of gentlemen who might find themselves in need of employment and who initially had to produce a letter from a clergyman to confirm their predicament and eligibility (Fitzgerald, 1994, p. 47). Another option for financially challenged gentlewomen would have been to study embroidery at the Royal School of Art Needlework in Kensington. Work could be sold discreetly through organisations such as The Association for the Sale of Work of Ladies of Limited Means, The Ladies' Industrial Society and the Working Ladies' Guild, all based in London. Edith Adie's family circumstances meant that she had no need for such outlets.

Attendance at art school might have served as a kind of 'finishing school' for many gentlewomen, preparing them for marriage. For Adie, the training provided her with the opportunity to become a professional artist. She exhibited and sold work through prestigious galleries, for example being selected for the Royal Academy Summer Show (open to women since the 1850s), alongside earning an income by undertaking commissions (Thomas, 1994, p. 4). While a student at the Slade, Edith had two watercolour paintings selected for the Royal Academy Summer Show: *Emanuel Hospital, Westminster* in 1893 and *Harvest* in 1894. She also exhibited at the Academy in 1909, with *Bordighera Viewed from La Mariola* and in 1912 with *Villa Sicilio, Taormina*. It was a 'respectable' career, bringing her into contact with the affluent and well connected while it was an appropriate means of employment for her gender and social class.

The Slade School opened on 2 October 1871. Under its professors and tutors Frederick Brown, Henry Tonks (who had been a student of Brown's at Westminster) and Philip Wilson Steer, it soon gained a reputation as a cutting-edge school, a pioneer of modernism in British art. Full-time students worked from 9.30am to 5pm each day, with a break for luncheon, except on Saturdays, when all classes finished at 1pm. Part-time students attended three days a week. Most of each day was spent drawing in the Antique Room and the Life Room. Women attended life classes, although segregated from men for this activity. Students, or mostly their parents, paid their own fees. In 1910–1912 fees were £21 a year for full-time study; part-time students paid £5 5s. per term.

Edith Adie was a near contemporary at the Slade of both Gwen and Augustus John. Gwen was a student there from 1895 to 1898 before leaving

for Paris where she remained for the rest of her life. Augustus attended the Slade from 1894 to 1899. While Augustus soon became one of Britain's best known artists, not least because of his flamboyant bohemian lifestyle, his reputation has since faded somewhat. In contrast Gwen's reputation has grown markedly in recent years and she is now one of Britain's most highly regarded international artists. Adie and Gwen John both worked in watercolours at the Slade. However, Gwen John is known for her oil paintings and has become a valued figure in the international art world, appearing in art history books, with her work attracting high prices at auction. Adie remains a relatively unknown niche painter, attracting modest prices. Adie's fate is shared by many artists who specialised in paintings of gardens at the turn of the twentieth century. Perhaps the most famous of these artists is Beatrice Parsons (1870–1955), who studied at the Royal Academy School and who is known for scenes of flower-filled gardens and landscapes (see below).

Edith Adie spent most of her life in and around London until she moved to Sevenoaks in Kent some time around 1917. In the 1861 census the family address is listed as 115 Regent Street and when she first appears in the census in 1871, the family is resident in Upper Tooting. In 1881, when Edith is seventeen, it is 2 Earls Terrace, which is where her father died in 1883. In the census returns of 1891, 1901 and 1911 her address is listed as 9 Brechin Place. This was also the address given on her registration card at the Slade (1893–1895), when she exhibited at the Royal Academy (1893, 1894 and 1912) and when she exhibited at the Royal Hibernian Academy (1901 and 1904). In 1909 she was teaching students at her studio in Kent (GFL Fine Art, 2015). Other addresses listed are 26 Cheyne Row, Chelsea in 1895 and 9 Dartmouth Square in Dublin in 1902 and 1904. The Dublin address comes from the records of the Royal Hibernian Academy; presumably this was a temporary address while Adie exhibited there. In 1920 her address is given as 4 Suffolk Place, Sevenoaks in the Chelsea Flower Show Guide. In 1933 her address is listed as Copperfield, Kemsing, Sevenoaks, Kent on shipping records when she is travelling to Tangier, the same address as William Penfold (aged 84) and his wife Charlotte (aged 50) who accompanied her on the voyage. Her 1934 entry in *Who's Who in Art* lists as her address 5A South Park, Sevenoaks and her death notice in the *Sevenoaks Chronicle* and *Kentish Advertiser* on 23 May 1947 states that she had resided at that address for some thirty years. Adie spent the years of the Second World War in Nottingham, where her sister lived, returning to 5A South Park in Sevenoaks in 1945. Adie's will of 1946 gives her address as the Ormiston Hotel, Oak Lane in Sevenoaks. She died on 16 May 1947 in

Tonbridge, Kent, aged 82.² The cause of her death is recorded on the death certificate as ‘dilatation of the heart and valvular heart disease’. The date of probate was 20 October 1947 and her effects amounted to £12,156 14s. 11d. (a sizeable sum of money). The death notice states that the funeral service took place at St Nicholas’ Parish Church followed by cremation at Charing, near Ashford in Kent.

Travelling

While she never lived very far from her birthplace, it is evident that Edith Adie travelled widely. Titles of her paintings suggest that she worked from Kent to Derbyshire and from Cambridgeshire to Stratford-upon-Avon. The 1934 edition of *Who’s Who in Art* listed motoring and walking as among Adie’s hobbies; one wonders if she drove herself to any of these sites. Records state that in addition to teaching from her studio in Kent, Adie taught painting in Bordighera, which is located between San Remo and the French border on the Italian Mediterranean coast (Gray, 2009, p. 11). The town was attractive to British tourists and from the later years of the nineteenth century had an established British community with its own Anglican church, built in 1873, meaning there would have been ample opportunity to teach painting. Lawrence Johnston, who developed the garden at Hidcote Manor, also established from 1924 a garden at Serre de la Madone, which is a short distance from Bordighera. A further artistic connection is that Claude Monet spent three weeks in Bordighera in 1884, attracted by the Mediterranean light and the exotic plants, where he undertook several oil paintings including *Small Country Farm at Bordighera* and *Moreno’s Garden at Bordighera*, both displayed in the *Painting the Modern Garden: Monet to Matisse* exhibition at the Royal Academy in 2016. Francesco Moreno’s garden, which no longer exists, was famous for its palm trees, which were painted by Edith Adie (including one in the Greatorex Gallery exhibition of 1920) as well as by Monet.

Teasdale states that Adie painted periodically in Fiesole near Florence between 1901 and 1910 and from 1921 to 1922 (Teasdale, 2014). Of the five paintings in the RHS Lindley Library Collections painted in Italy, three are of scenes in Fiesole. Two of these depict the Gardens of the Blue Nuns, Villa San Girolamo, Fiesole and another has the title *Belriposo, in the Garden of Mrs Gregory Smith, Fiesole*. In addition to these is a scene of a lemon garden overlooking the sea in Levanto and a view of Lake Garda from Bogliaco.

² Registry of Deaths, 1947, April–June, volume 5b, p. 753.

Twenty-five paintings of the town of Fiesole and its environs were included in Adie's solo exhibition in the Fine Art Society in Bond Street, London in 1907 and four in her 1910 solo exhibition at the same gallery. These exhibitions also included paintings of Nice, the Italian Lakes, Florence, Naples and Sicily.

Adie also travelled further afield. On 17 April 1915 she left London on the *Demosthenes* bound for Albany in Western Australia, arriving on 28 May and staying in Claremont in Fremantle. She had relatives there and stayed with her Aunt Elizabeth Everall (formerly Noaks) who was the widow of her mother's brother, Henry Everall, who had died in China in 1887. Her aunt returned to England after his death but records show that she travelled with her son Robert Raynor Everall, described as an auctioneer, from London and arrived in Fremantle, Western Australia on 4 August 1908, where he married. Edith came to Perth in 1916 and may have attended Robert's wedding. She painted a watercolour in the environs of the city, *Oleanders, Government House, Perth*, in December 1915, which is in the National Gallery of Australia's collection in Canberra.³ Two paintings with the same title were exhibited among the Australian watercolours shown by Adie at the Greatorex Gallery in October 1920. *The Sunday Times of Perth* reported that she exhibited pictures including a cottage at Kalamunda with its garden of snapdragons, as well as paintings of local gardens. The report noted that a painting by Adie, *Water Lilies in Hampton Court Gardens*, had been purchased by Queen Mary and another by Mr Hall Walker, owner of a famous stud (Anon., 1917a, p. 20). Local press also reported an exhibition at the Book Lovers' Library in Perth in November 1916, where the works on show included views of the bush after a bush fire, King's Park, the Swan River, a local beauty spot called the Mundaring Weir and gardens of local residents (Anon., 1916, p. 40).⁴

Adie left for Adelaide on 9 April 1917. Thirty-six of her paintings undertaken in Perth were exhibited in 1917 at the Society of Art Rooms in North Terrace, Adelaide. Ten of these were for sale; the remainder were apparently reserved for an exhibition in England, presumably at the Greatorex Gallery (GFL Fine Art,

³ The dimensions are 25.4cm x 17cm. Inscribed on the frame backing in blue ballpoint pen is 'Swan River seen from govt. house gardens. about / 1900?' The painting was a gift in 2011 to the Gallery from Rosamund Dalziell in memory of her great-uncle, Dr Herbert Tymms and was possibly bought from Adie's exhibition in Perth in 1917. We are grateful to the National Gallery of Australia for this information.

⁴ Paintings of these locations were also shown in the Greatorex Gallery exhibition in 1920.

2015). Other paintings have appeared at auctions in Australia: *Red and Blue Water Lilies From a Study Made in Queen's Gardens, Perth, 1916* (at Canterbury in 2014), a watercolour of the same name and *Watercolours of a Fair Australia*⁵. *The Mail* (Adelaide) of 11 August 1917 reported that an afternoon tea was given in her honour to acknowledge her success (Anon., 1917b, p. 12).

Adie left Sydney on 28 April 1918 on the *Niagara*, arriving in Seattle on 29 April and travelling on to Victoria in British Columbia on the same day. William Montgomery Everall (1873–1942), who boarded with the Adies in Brechin Place as a child, was living in Victoria with his wife and daughter, Eleanor, who, as Eleanor Sanderson, would write the family history, *The Everall Story*. The ship's documentation describes her as aged 52, a tourist and professional artist, with Adelaide the last place of permanent residence. The name and address of nearest friend or relative is given as her aunt, Mrs Elizabeth Everall of Claremont, Western Australia. Shipping records next show her arriving in London from New York on the *Adriatic* on 15 June 1918. Her forwarding address is given as 96 Burlington Road, Sherwood, Nottingham, where her sister, Catherine Heazell, was living. Finally, at the age of 67 she sailed from Southampton for Morocco on the *Indrapeora* on 7 April 1933, we have no details of her return trip.

Reception of Adie's work

Edith Adie established a reputation as a watercolour painter of gardens. According to an exhibition catalogue in Christie's in 1995 and Hobhouse and Wood (1988, p. 4), Adie was active between 1892 and 1930, when she would have been sixty-six. She was elected a member of the British Watercolour Society in October 1920 and gained medals for flower painting at the Royal Horticultural Society (*Who's Who in Art*, 1934). Her submissions were selected for the Royal Academy Summer Show on four occasions and for the Royal Hibernian Society on five occasions (1895, three works; 1901, three works; 1902 and 1903, one each; 1904, three works). She had two solo exhibitions of watercolours at The Fine Art Society in London. In June to July 1907, the show was titled *Gardens and Italian Rock Villages*, and included 75 paintings. The 1910 exhibition titled *Sunshine in England and Italy* comprised 63 paintings. She had a solo exhibition in the Greatorex Galleries, New Bond Street, London in October 1920 with the title *Fair Australia and Gardens of Italy and England*, where she showed 70 watercolours. Of these 39 were

⁵ See e.g. Invaluable.com and GFL Fine Art, 2015.

scenes in Western Australia, 21 of England and 10 of Italy, including gardens at Bordighera, Villa Capponi in the hills above Florence, and Sicily.⁶ Adie had (and attended daily) an exhibition of 40 watercolours of British and Italian gardens in an exhibition titled *Gardens Gay* at the Sevenoaks Salon at the Park Café in High Street, Sevenoaks in May 1924.⁷

Adie's work was also exhibited at the Royal Society of British Artists (1892 to 1894); at the 8th annual exhibition of the Women's International Art Club in the Grafton Galleries, Bond Street (where a commended painting was *The Duck Pond*); at the Society of Women Artists in 1914; at the Royal Institute of Painters in Watercolours and at the New Watercolour Society (Gray, 2009; *Benezit Dictionary of Artists*, 2006, p. 115–116). *A Garden with a Rose Arch* was exhibited in the Christopher Wood Gallery Summer Exhibition, London in 1991 (Witt Library catalogue). A painting by Adie was exhibited at the Chelsea Flower Show in 1920. She held an exhibition of her work with the British Watercolour Society in Leamington Spa in 1927. According to Adie's entry in *Who's Who in Art* (1934) her work is also held in public collections. Queen Mary purchased paintings; in its account of Adie's exhibition in Sevenoaks in 1924 *The Chronicle and Courier* reported that the Queen had bought four ivory miniatures of the Villa Medici in Florence, where the Queen had spent part of her honeymoon (*The Chronicle and Courier*, 23 May 1924). *Hever Castle* and four other paintings were purchased by the Mayor of Leamington for the town's new art gallery and to be exhibited at the County Art and Craft Federation at Tunbridge Wells (*The Chronicle and Courier*, 30 September 1927). Adie's work occasionally appears in auctions. Her paintings still sell, although prices tend to be moderate.⁸

Adie's work has been reproduced in books. *The Gardens of England in the Southern and Western Counties*, edited by Charles Holme, published by The Studio in 1907 included two reproductions of watercolours of garden views of Hampton Court near London (*Grass Walk at Hampton Court* and *The Long Water, Hampton Court*). There were only a few colour illustrations in the book and two of these are Adie's. The RHS Lindley Library holds a copy

⁶ Greatorex Gallery Catalogues, available at National Art Library, London.

⁷ *The Chronicle and Courier*, 23 May 1924. The subjects of paintings included Hever Castle, Knole Park and Gardens, Kew Gardens and Hampton Court; several works were sold.

⁸ Auction sales prices in London from 1985 to 2009 have an average (median) of £1,000, with a range from £500 to £3,360.

of this book, which was part of the Reginald Cory bequest. *Painted Gardens: English Watercolours 1850–1904* by Penelope Hobhouse and Christopher Wood reproduces *Hampton Court* (a view of the Privy Garden in the 1900s), which was also included in the *Studio Special Number on Gardens* but is not the painting in the book owned by Cory.

Adie and Dyffryn

One interesting, albeit unresolved question, is how Adie came to gain the commission at Dyffryn. There are several reasons why Reginald Cory might have admired her watercolours of gardens. As reported above, coloured reproductions of her paintings were included in an illustrated book of gardens comparable to Dyffryn that he owned. She was an established artist of repute with a long career specialising in watercolours of gardens. She painted prestigious locations such as Hampton Court. She advertised her services in the *Journal of the Royal Horticultural Society*. Her work was exhibited at the Royal Academy and elsewhere and she had solo exhibitions at the Fine Art Society in London. As we have seen, she exhibited at the 1920 Chelsea Flower Show and the Show catalogue includes an advertisement for her services, painting watercolours of gardens. Cory might have seen her exhibition at the Greatorex Gallery in 1920 since it regularly held exhibitions of paintings of gardens and country estates. In short, she was the kind of artist Cory would commission. Hobhouse and Wood suggest that the subject matter of Victorian watercolours of gardens falls into two types: formal gardens and ‘cottage idylls’. Adie represents the former (Hobhouse & Wood, 1988, p. 13). She would, we imagine, be known to members of the Garden Society, which Cory helped instigate in 1920. Membership was restricted to male Fellows of the Royal Horticultural Society and the society provided an opportunity for wealthy owners of gardens to meet, usually at the time of the annual Chelsea Flower Show. It is possible that these paintings, which are small and do not seem to have ever been framed, were commissioned to be passed around at meetings of the Society or during less formal gatherings of owners of gardens.

On the other hand, there were rivals whom Cory could have employed. The *Dictionary of British Women Artists* and Hobhouse and Wood’s survey of watercolour paintings of gardens from 1850 to 1914 both demonstrate that there were many watercolour artists specialising in gardens and flowers who were contemporaries of Adie. One in particular, Beatrice Parsons, ‘the queen of the blazing border’, had been trained at the Royal Academy Schools and was highly regarded, exhibiting her work regularly in major galleries and being

RHS LINDLEY COLLECTIONS



Fig. 2. *The Paved Court.*

RHS LINDLEY COLLECTIONS



Fig. 3. *The Fountain Court*, now called the Pompeian Garden, at Dyffryn

admired by Queen Mary who purchased her works (Hobhouse & Wood, 1988, p. 29). Parsons was commissioned to produce paintings of the gardens at Blickling Hall in Norfolk and she regularly worked at Lord Battersea's garden, The Pleasance, near Overstrand, the wealthy seaside resort in the same county. Parsons' first solo exhibition, in 1904 at Dowdeswell's Gallery in New Bond Street, London, entitled *Old English Gardens (Spring, Summer, Autumn & Winter)* resulted in the sale of forty of the forty-four paintings in the show (Scholes, 2015). She also had five further exhibitions at Dowdeswell's Gallery and at the Greatorex Gallery in 1920 (*Gardens Gay and Joyous*), 1924 (*English Gardens*), 1928 (*English and Italian Gardens; Water-colour Drawings*) and 1938 (also called *English Gardens*).⁹ It would be fascinating to find evidence relating to the reasons for commissioning Adie in the summer of 1923. One imagines that Cory would have been pleased with his decision since the paintings are beautiful and sufficiently detailed to prove a valuable resource for the reconstruction of the gardens which he and Mawson were instrumental in designing.

It seems probable that the paintings arrived at the Lindley Library along with the rest of the Cory bequest. There have been speculations that E.A. Bowles, the garden designer, author, illustrator and member of the Garden Society, was involved in introducing Adie to Cory and that Bowles inherited her paintings of Dyffryn. Upon Bowles' death in 1954, the paintings were bequeathed to the RHS Lindley Library Collections. However, a search of Library Minutes (1936–56), the *Journal of the Royal Horticultural Society* (1936–56) and the RHS Bowles archive has found no evidence of this. The pictures are not listed as being part of the Bowles bequest to the RHS Lindley Library, which is documented and the recent (2016) cataloguing of the Bowles archive in the Lindley Library found no mention of Adie or Cory.¹⁰ No such bequest was mentioned in Bowles' will of 1947 and the Bowles Society could locate no supporting information.

Adie's paintings have proved invaluable to the National Trust's Three Garden Rooms project at Dyffryn, which began in 2015. Her paintings are being used in the planning of the revival of all the gardens at Dyffryn for the 1923 centenary of the Adie paintings (Hughes, 2016). They complement the master plan drawn up by Mawson in 1906, evidence gleaned from Ordnance Survey

⁹ Greatorex Gallery Catalogues, available at National Art Library, London. The 59 paintings in the 1928 exhibition include 14 of Italy, one which is of Fiesole, where Edith Adie painted and taught.

¹⁰ Research carried out at the RHS Lindley Library by Charlotte Brooks, Art Curator.

maps, contemporaneous newspaper articles and photographs of the period, particularly those taken by Neame Ross. In conjunction with photographs the paintings show the evolution of the garden from Victorian formalism to a more flamboyant Edwardian style and chart the Mawson and Reginald Cory collaboration.¹¹ The paintings are unique. They depict the colour schemes of the planting in the herbaceous border and garden rooms as they appeared in the summer of 1923. Where no paintings are available, as of the Rose Garden, there is no information available about the colours or the effect of the planting scheme. While the colour in some paintings is impressionistic, in many it is detailed. For example, the painting of the Paved Court is sufficiently defined to allow identification of specific varieties of lilies and provides a level of detail which gives a good idea of plants that might have complemented the lilies in that style of planting.¹² The value of the paintings for reviving the gardens is not confined to garden rooms, to colour or planting schemes. For example, a painting of the herbaceous border shows a summerhouse at the west end of the border, consistent with details in Mawson's original plan; this seems to be a viewpoint from which a photograph by Roff was taken.¹³ There is no sign today of the structure, and while the depiction might reflect artistic licence, the painting suggests the value of a search for its foundations. Adie's paintings depict features now missing, for example double doors in the temple and ornate decoration on the portico stonework in the Pompeian Garden along with vases and statues in the same garden room.¹⁴ Another painting depicts a series of urns on the South Terrace of the House that are no longer there.¹⁵

Tall yew hedges form borders between several garden rooms and the paintings, for example of the Theatre Garden, can be analysed to infer the heights and extent of the hedges in 1923.¹⁶ Her watercolour *Dyffryn, the Cloisters* shows that the grass evident in this room in 1920 had been replaced by gravel by the time she painted it. Similarly *The Paved Court* shows that the original gravel path and lawns, as appearing in Mawson's master plan and in a photograph taken by Neame Roff in 1910, had been replaced by stone flag

¹¹ We are grateful to Chris Flynn, Head Gardener at Dyffryn, for explaining the plans described in these paragraphs.

¹² *The Paved Court*. RHS Lindley Library catalogue number 54116-1001.

¹³ *The Italian Terrace*. RHS Lindley Library, catalogue number 54135-1001.

¹⁴ *The Fountain Court*. RHS Lindley Library catalogue number 54142-1001.

¹⁵ *Wisteria, Dyffryn*. RHS Lindley Library catalogue number 54267-1001.

¹⁶ *The Cloisters, Dyffryn*. RHS Lindley Library catalogue number 54120-1001.

paving and flower bedding when she came to paint it.¹⁷ The painting *Wisteria* depicts the planting of wisteria up the pillars of the portico on the South Terrace. In addition its oblique view of the Great Lawn is informative about the location of trees, and together with photographic evidence is valuable for the future planning of the appearance of the lawn. The white wisteria on the double columns, which is no longer there, is to be reintroduced. Whatever Reginald Cory's motives were for commissioning this set of watercolour paintings, they provide a wonderful record of these gardens in their heyday and facilitate their revival for the benefit of visitors to Dyffryn nearly one hundred years on.

Conclusion

Edith Adie was one of Britain's leading watercolour painters specialising in gardens from the 1890s to the 1930s. A single woman, she travelled in Europe and across the world to Australia, painting, exhibiting and selling work. Extrapolating from the number of paintings exhibited at the Fine Art Society in 1907 and 1910, she must have produced a substantial body of work over her career. Yet she has proved an elusive person; biographical details have been difficult to find. Recently we were able to find a black-and-white photograph of Edie with two members of her family (Sanderson, 1995, p. 42). It seems entirely consistent with this dearth of information that even the circumstances surrounding Cory's commissioning of the Dyffryn paintings and their acquisition by the RHS Lindley Library are poorly documented. In one way, this is not specific to Adie and consistent with Hobhouse and Wood's review; many of the archivists whom we approached in preparation of this paper have advised us that neglect has been the fate of the many painters of gardens of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Their work remains largely unappreciated.

The contribution of Adie's paintings to the successful revival of some of the garden rooms at Dyffryn in 2015 and 2016 by the National Trust, with further restoration of the gardens to take place in coming years leading up to the centenary of the paintings in 2023, should renew interest in this artist and draw the attention of a wider audience. We also hope that it will elicit more detail about her life and work.

¹⁷ *Dyffryn, the Cloisters*. RHS Lindley Library catalogue number 54263-1001.

Acknowledgements

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Authenticating a Rory McEwen painting

Katherine Tyrrell

c/o The RHS Lindley Library, The Royal Horticultural Society, London

This is the story of how I authenticated a totally unknown watercolour painting by the celebrated and influential botanical artist Rory McEwen (1932–1982). In 2017, this painting was added to the RHS Lindley Collections.

Just before Christmas 2016, I received a very unusual request. A gentleman emailed me and asked for my help in his task of researching a watercolour painting. The painting was titled *Fritillaria gibbosa*, it was dated 1976 and signed by Rory McEwen. The purpose of his research was to establish the value of the painting on behalf of a client whose mother was minded to sell. They wanted to know the best way to go about doing this.

I have a very popular website about botanical art and artists. I frequently get asked by people around the world for opinions about botanical paintings and botanical artists, especially ‘What’s this painting worth?’ Mostly they are of little significance and my polite and short response takes but a couple of minutes.

However, Rory McEwen is a well-regarded botanical artist of considerable significance and influence within the history of contemporary botanical art. The query piqued my interest and I was happy to invest more time than usual in seeing if I could help.

My initial response to this request for help eventually turned into a comprehensive exercise in detective work and authentication. This, in turn, resulted in my identifying that the painting was indeed by McEwen and that it had never been exhibited or published. It was completely unknown to the Executors of the Estate of Rory McEwen.

The request for my help had been triggered by the fact that the painting was not listed in the detailed listing of McEwen paintings that I had developed for my page about Rory McEwen on my website Botanical Art and Artists. Both the page about the artist and the listing of his works were my best effort at trying to provide a resource online for the many artists (and botanical art collectors) who are interested in his work.

In developing the page I had spent some considerable time collecting material and details about his paintings, such as titles, dates, exhibitions, owners and collections. This included finding and collecting catalogues, before developing as complete a list of his paintings as I could.



Fig. 1. *Fritillaria gibbosa* (1976) by Rory McEwen.

The point at issue was that there was a *Fritillaria gibbosa* on the list. However the date for this one was 1981, not 1976. Could there be two paintings with the same title, painted five years apart?

About Rory McEwen (1932–1982)

Rory McEwen was described by Wilfrid Blunt, author of *The Art of Botanical Illustration*, as ‘perhaps the most gifted artist to pass through my hands’ (quoted in Rix, 2013, p. 52). McEwen had painted flowers from the age of eight. He had no formal art school training. As a child, he received instruction from his French governess at home who taught him about drawing from nature. On going up to Eton he was also taught drawing by Blunt who was the art master at Eton and he continued to enjoy drawing from life. Blunt also encouraged him to study the works of the botanical art masters of the past.

Wilfrid Blunt, then engaged in his magnum opus *The Art of Botanical Illustration*, taught me to look at Robert, Redouté, Ehret, Aubriet, for which I will always be grateful. (McEwen, 1988, p. [15])

McEwen’s talent for drawing and painting his chosen botanical subjects demonstrated the two skills required of any botanical illustrator of note. He displayed both skills in botanical accuracy and scientific precision plus the artistic flair and complete mastery of his chosen media which enabled him to transcend pure scientific illustration.

While a student at the University of Cambridge, McEwen started painting flowers in watercolour on vellum, as the past masters had done. This became his favoured surface over time. Indeed his stock of unused vellum was bequeathed to the Hunt Institute of Botanical Illustration (Pittsburgh) and has subsequently been used by leading botanical artists around the world.

McEwen also completed a number of botanical illustrations while reading English at Trinity College Cambridge (1953–55). Most of these were for publication. Notably he painted specimens of old carnations for *Old Carnations and Pinks* by C.O. Moreton (1955). Blunt subsequently employed him in the 1970s to paint many of the plates for his book about tulips. *Tulips and Tulipomania* (1977) was published in two volumes of text with tipped-in colour plates, illustrations and a portfolio of lithographs of the tulips.

In his early years, McEwen’s painting ran in parallel with his musical career (he played twelve-string guitar and used to appear on a BBC music programme). The latter took priority for some years. However as he grew

older, got married and his family started to expand, his travelling reduced somewhat and his art career became much more important.

Other than commissioned work for publications by third parties, McEwen seemed to favour developing a lot of his botanical artwork in series. One of the most important of these was his series of paintings of fritillaries, which were apparently created in two sequences, in 1977 and 1981–1982.

Martyn Rix, botanist, plant collector, author and editor of *Curtis's Botanical Magazine*, said the following about Rory McEwen and *Fritillaria*:

Rory's paintings of *Fritillaria* are perhaps the finest he ever did; he was enthralled by the romanticism of the subject, their rarity and their habitats in inaccessible semi-deserts and mountains. The flowers also have a subtlety of colouring, surface texture and markings, which tested and confirmed his skill as an artist. His enjoyment and love of these particular flowers remained until the end of his life; almost the last images he painted were of fritillaries. (Rix, 2012, p. 146)

His career as a painter came to a premature end when he became seriously ill and died aged 50 in 1982.

Interest in McEwen's paintings, by both botanical artists and collectors of botanical art, has typically surged following exhibitions of his work. Three in particular have had a notable impact on his reputation and these are listed below by year of the exhibition:

- 1974. His first important exhibition in London was *Rory McEwen: True Facts from Nature, Recent Paintings* at the Redfern Gallery in London. This exhibition stimulated a new generation of botanical artists. Today it is considered to be one of the key points in the development of contemporary botanical art.
- 1988. The retrospective exhibition of his botanical artwork *Rory McEwen (1932–1982): the Botanical Paintings* at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh and the Serpentine Gallery in London triggered another significant wave of interest.
- 2013. Finally *Rory McEwen: the Colours of Reality* was a major retrospective exhibition of his artwork and career at the Shirley Sherwood Gallery at Kew. This served to consolidate his status as a major and notable contemporary botanical artist. Botanical artists and collectors from around the world visited Kew to see his work.

About the authentication process

After initial discussions, it became quickly apparent that a valuation could not be given without first identifying the provenance of the painting and verifying as much as possible. The creation of both a provenance statement and a valuation required:

- Photographs of the artwork and its condition.
- Inspection of the artwork.
- Tackling the lack of any paperwork relating to the purchase. Hence there was a need to both identify and verify the trail from artist's studio to the owner (Mrs L.).
- Research into what value a McEwen painting might achieve given records of recent sales on the open market.

Matters became more than a little tortuous at the outset. I was relaying information to the gentleman who made the enquiry who then passed this on to the son of the owner who then came back to me direct, with yet more questions. After a few sessions of Chinese whispers, I decided that we needed to streamline the process if I was to continue to be involved.

At this point, the younger son of the elderly lady who had originally purchased the painting decided to commission me direct to undertake the research to establish both the provenance and to identify potential parties who might be interested. This is how I came to learn how to write a detailed fourteen-page provenance document! I decided that the best approach was to work on the basis that the total lack of documentation meant that every aspect of the painting needed to be verified. Nothing should be assumed. Every fact should be crosschecked to any other records or sources which might validate the painting.

Professional photography

Professional photography was the critical first step. I had not seen the painting, which was on a wall in the owner's home in Wiltshire. Some initial iPad snaps sent to me had persuaded me that it was worthwhile for the owner to arrange for proper photography. I provided a specification of what I wanted to see: a close-up of the title, the signature, the reverse, any markings on the reverse, the work in its frame and close-ups of the work itself.

The high-resolution photographs that I subsequently received established that:

- The painting appeared to be in excellent condition. There were no obvious repairs or attempts at restoration to either frame or painting (so far as this can be ascertained from a photograph).
- The reverse had no marks by dealers or auction houses. The owner had written 'McEwen' on it.
- Very fine striations typical of crisscross brush marks associated with the application of a plaster of Paris coating to the vellum could be detected in the leaves when viewed at a macro level. These brush marks were completely invisible to the naked eye. This also confirmed that the painting was not on paper.
- The signature and title were very clear. The size and placement of both matched those on other paintings of about the same period, with the plant species name on the bottom left and signature and date on the bottom right. The signature, which was clearly in pencil, was also a very good match with those seen on other paintings.
- The brush marks used within the body of the painting were also very obvious on screen when the high-resolution macro photographs were magnified. I knew from studying his paintings using a loupe magnifier at Kew that they were very similar to the style I had seen him use (very small fine strokes of paint on top of watercolour glazes). Essentially, he worked using techniques used by miniaturists but on a very large scale. The hatching strokes are invisible in plain sight without the aid of magnification.

I then showed the photographs to a former Gallery Assistant at Kew who I knew and who had been involved with the hanging of the McEwen Exhibition at Kew. I asked whether she recognised anything about the presentation. She confirmed that the green satin mount and frame were exactly the same as one of the other paintings received for the exhibition, but not hung. The profile and treatment of the rear, in terms of the brown paper seal, the wiring and profile, was also consistent with a number of other McEwen paintings in the exhibition. The vellum is mounted on a board for support and this then stands proud of the frame at the rear. This profile was evident in the photograph of the rear of the 1976 painting. She also commented that they were heavier than one might expect because of the weight of the board.

I subsequently tested the weight of the painting myself when receiving it from the owner's son by carrying it home from central London. This was so that it could stay in London for a while for viewing by any interested parties. It

was noticeably heavier than a normal watercolour on paper of about the same size. A renowned collector of his paintings also recognised his signature and handwriting and the brown paper backing on the reverse.

The importance of this information is that of course the reverse of numerous paintings is something that is very rarely seen, except by collectors, galleries and those who assist with the hanging of solo exhibitions by an artist. All the information collected about condition and appearance strongly suggested the painting was by McEwen and had not been removed from its frame since the framed painting left the artist's studio.

Date of the painting

Some artists date their work when they complete it, some just before they exhibit it. Others never date their work on the front of the painting at all. It is not known what practice McEwen adopted with respect to all the other *Fritillaria* in the series, as images of all the paintings were not available. However, the evidence from other paintings of the same era (e.g. his paintings of tulips in the mid-1970s for *Tulips and Tulipomania*), generally suggested it was his usual practice to date paintings after his signature.

One of the things I had been able to do when listing McEwen's paintings was identify the decades for the sequences of his various series of paintings. These were not easily evident when looking at catalogues in isolation. *Fritillaria* had two sequences, one in 1977 and the other in 1981–1982. This meant that the date of 1976, if correct, would make this particular painting the first known painting of *Fritillaria* after his 1965 painting of 'Fritillary Crown Imperial' (*Fritillaria imperialis*, crown imperial), now owned by Shirley Sherwood.

McEwen had started work on a series of twenty-five paintings for an intended *Fritillaria* monograph by Martyn Rix and Roger McFarlane, which was subsequently cancelled (Rix, 2013, p. 146). In the catalogue for the 2013 exhibition at RBG Kew (*Rory McEwen: the Colours of Reality*) Rix provides a detailed commentary on McEwen's interest in fritillaries and how he sourced them for paintings from collectors and specialist growers:

I provided most of the fritillaries, which were used as models. There was not time to paint all of the species directly from nature, because often six or more would be in flower on the same day. Each plant was carefully recorded in a notebook, with sketches and paintings of details of flowers, leaves, stamens and bulbs, and the whole plant was photographed from

different angles. The final paintings made use of these records and were finished later in the studio. (Rix, 1988, p. [8])

It is evident that McEwen was very enthusiastic about *Fritillaria*. The new painting suggested that the series of *Fritillaria* paintings actually started in 1976, continued in 1977 and progressed further in 1981–1982.

My initial theory was that *Fritillaria gibbosa*, 1976 was a trial run by McEwen for developing a series of paintings from the plant material and documentation provided by Martyn Rix in the absence of a live specimen growing in the UK.

Fritillaria gibbosa is known to be notoriously difficult to grow away from its natural habitat of the steep slopes and dry steppes of Iran and Afghanistan. Bulbs are usually only available from specialist suppliers. However, a recent statement from Martyn Rix indicates that *Fritillaria gibbosa* was actually being grown in the cold frames at RHS Garden Wisley in the 1970s. This was from specimens collected by Admiral Paul Furse and his wife Polly, Dr Chris (Kit) Grey-Wilson and Professor Tom Hewer, during their respective plant collecting trips to the region. McEwen is also known to have visited RHS Garden Wisley. At that time it was possible to borrow specimens from the garden and McEwen is known to have borrowed one of the *Fritillaria* plants to take home and paint; however, exactly which specimen(s) was not recorded.

Two paintings of *Fritillaria gibbosa*, 1976 and 1981

A work with the same title (*Fritillaria gibbosa*) and dated 1981 was included in the *Rory McEwen: the Colours of Reality* exhibition of his work at the Shirley Sherwood Gallery in 2013 at Kew Gardens and also in the catalogue. It was similar but different to the 1976 painting that I was researching. I decided to compare the two paintings side by side in detail. When the images are placed next to one another it is immediately apparent that, while both are very similar, there are also some distinct differences.

The 1976 painting had been sold to its current owner prior to the 1981 painting being completed. However, it appeared to be a slightly later version of the subject of the 1981 painting in terms of bloom development. It also has three additional leaves at the bottom and one more bloom. Nonetheless, many of the leaves are in the same or a very similar position. In conclusion, it seemed very likely that the two paintings were both painted from the same or very similar reference photos studies and/or photos.

The 1981 painting is described on p. 221 in *Rory McEwen: the Colours of Reality* as follows:

Page 149 *Fritillaria gibbosa* 1981

Fritillaria gibbosa Boiss., a native of Iran and Afghanistan

Drawn from specimens collected by C. Grey-Wilson and T. Hewer (G-W & H 448) near Herat, NW Afghanistan in 1971

Exhibited 1982 Staempfli Gallery, New York.

David Pitcher Jnr.

Given these details provided about the 1981 painting, it seems extremely likely that both were either painted from the same set of studies of the plant collected in Afghanistan, or were started at the same time. The second painting was either finished or released at a later date.

The lack of a paper trail

The development of a provenance began from some ‘known’ facts. The owner (Mrs L.), to the best of her recollection, purchased the painting via David Ogilvy, son of the Earl of Airlie. David was both a good friend of her eldest son and a fellow student at Oxford University, who was apparently very well acquainted with Rory McEwen. However any paperwork from the purchase transaction that might have existed has been lost.

It subsequently transpired, after I corresponded with the McEwen Estate (see below), that the late Romana McEwen (Rory’s widow, died 2014) and the Countess of Airlie were both born in America, were good friends at school, came to the UK, both married gentlemen from ancient families in Scotland and remained lifelong friends. Romana McEwen was also the godmother of David Ogilvy. Thus the two families knew each other well.

At some point in the 1980s, Mrs Romana McEwen wrote to Mrs L. to ask if the painting could be exhibited. Unfortunately the letter asking whether it would be possible for the work to be included in an upcoming exhibition was sent to Mrs L.’s previous home during a period when she was away from home and hence the letter was never answered. Subsequently this letter was also mislaid, probably during the move to her current home. It seemed very likely to me that the painting was requested for the retrospective exhibition that was held at the Serpentine Gallery in 1988 following Rory McEwen’s death in 1982.

However, the written request to exhibit the painting was significant in terms of authentication. Mrs McEwen could only have got the address of Mrs L.’s former home from the original sale documentation or via her godson David Ogilvy who had visited the house on a number of occasions.

By this point I was also looking for any documentation of the painting via the Estate as I remembered that McEwen seemed to keep a written record of completed paintings.

A friend gave me the email address of one of McEwen's daughters. I contacted her and subsequently spoke to Sam McEwen, one of his daughters, about what I was trying to do and provided her with the information I had already collected. She confirmed that the Estate had no record of the painting. Unfortunately the written record of paintings that I had seen in the Kew exhibition had only been kept for a short period of time. However, the Estate was also eager to clarify the situation and, on the basis of the information I was able to provide, Sam offered to contact Lord Ogilvy to find out what in fact had happened. He subsequently confirmed to the Estate that the painting came direct from McEwen's studio and that he had facilitated the private sale between McEwen and Mrs L. At which point everything else that I had done seemed somewhat academic! However it was very nice to have the confirmation.

Exhibition and publication

Identifying records of exhibition and publication are a normal part of any statement of provenance. Indeed exhibition records often prove to be very informative in creating a paper trail of owners. However, in this instance, once we had confirmation of the purchase, it became obvious that the painting has never been seen or published anywhere outside the owner's home, with the exception of the Statement of Provenance. This made it somewhat unique to say the least.

The statement by the Estate of Rory McEwen

Once I had finished the Statement of Provenance I sent a copy of it to a representative of the McEwen Estate for their review. I received this statement in return:

The Estate of Rory McEwen can confirm the painting *Fritillaria gibbosa*, 1976 is by Rory McEwen. It is watercolour on vellum, the botanical title *Fritillaria gibbosa* is on the lower left and it is signed and dated 1976 in pencil on the lower right, also in pencil. The series of fritillaria lasted from 1976 throughout 1977, and continued in 1981. Fritillaria as a subject were among the last paintings he made. This painting can be considered a very early painting of the series. Martyn Rix brought him a specimen of *Fritillaria gibbosa* in March 1977. Since it is so similar to *Fritillaria gibbosa*

1981, and is signed 1976, it must be assumed that it was also drawn from specimens collected by C. Grey-Wilson and T. Hewer (G-W & H. 448) near Herat, NW Afghanistan, 1971.

This provided a very satisfactory conclusion to the Statement of Provenance.

Valuation

For those interested in adding a Rory McEwen painting to their collection I will also add a few words about valuation.

Initially it seemed likely that reputable auction houses might be the best people to provide a proper valuation once a proper provenance was established. However, I completed a very detailed analysis of all the recorded sales at auction in recent years (in the UK and the USA) and was surprised to find they had one consistent feature. The ‘realised values at auction’ of McEwen original paintings had consistently outstripped ‘expected valuations’ provided by the same auction houses since 2008. In part this is because very few original watercolour paintings by Rory McEwen are known to have sold and changed hands in the last ten years. This is at the same time that interest in his artwork has considerably increased. He is very much an artist that anybody developing a collection of contemporary botanical art would want to have in his or her collection. Valuation is also complicated by the fact that even fewer examples of his ‘classical’ botanical paintings associated with his series of flower paintings ever surface for sale at auction.

No third party records are kept of private sales so it is very difficult to know what sort of values are used in these situations. The only requirement to report a secondary sale occurs when a royalty under the provisions of the Artists Resale Right is incurred (Government Digital Service, 2018). This happens on secondary sales above €1,000 with the involvement of an auction house, gallery or dealer. The royalty would go either to the artist or the artist’s estate. Exemptions include work being resold that was bought directly from the artist less than three years previously and it is being resold for €10,000 or less. Any sum involved is collected from the relevant agent via a collecting society.

So if you buy via an auction house, gallery or dealer the amount you pay also includes a royalty as well as any commission levied on the sale via the relevant agent of sale plus VAT. By way of contrast, a private purchase can exclude commission, royalty and VAT as monetary considerations. However in turn this means that a purchaser is extremely unlikely to pay the sums asked

by galleries or reached at auction for an equivalent painting. Any offer made to a seller is very likely to abate any sum reached at auction to that likely to be received by the seller, after all relevant deductions from sale proceeds of royalty, commission and VAT are taken into account.

Arrival at the RHS Lindley Library

I declined to be involved as an agent of sale. However I was happy to nominate those who I thought might be interested and to make initial enquiries (given I personally knew specific collectors or representatives of organisations that might be interested) in order to effect introductions. One such was the RHS.

Once I finalised the Statement of Provenance, I was able to introduce the painting to various parties as being available for sale. The RHS expressed an interest in buying it since the RHS Lindley Collections had no paintings by McEwen and had already identified him as a ‘painter of interest’ who would be a valuable addition. Purchase discussions and legal matters were then set in motion between the owner and the RHS. A little while later, I found myself carrying the painting to Vincent Square for viewing by the Curators, prior to final conclusion of the purchase.

While neither the owner nor the purchaser of the painting, I have to say it was very exciting to play both detective and a ‘midwife’ intermediary role in the ‘birth’ of a new McEwen painting. However, it was somewhat nerve-racking when I had the painting temporarily in my care in London to make it easier for people to view it. When asked by my insurers to provide an expert valuation for my temporary house guest, I found myself in the rather odd situation of having to say: ‘that expert is probably me!’

About Katherine Tyrrell

Katherine Tyrrell has developed a top compendium website (www.botanicalartandartists.com) and writes extensively about botanical art online.

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Future volumes

Volume 17, 'A world under glass', will explore the architectural, horticultural and social history of glasshouses, drawing on examples from RHS Lindley Collections.

Occasional Papers from the RHS Lindley Library

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