MISS ELLEN HUTCHINS (1785-1815) AND THE GARDEN AT ARDNAGASHEL, BANTRY, COUNTY CORK.

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Ardnagashel is a very old garden with a long history. It is situated near the coast, mid-way between Glengarriff and Bantry in south-west Cork. The garden lies on the north-eastern shore of Bantry Bay, facing the northern tip of Whiddy Island.

Ardnagashel House itself is about half a mile from the main road, and is sheltered from the prevailing south-westerly winds by Hill 203 (Fig. 3) and by the extensive plants of fir and beech along the shore of the bay. West of the house is a stream that flows into the sea; part of this stream was diverted because a waterfall interfered with the sleep of the Hutchins family, and it now flows round the garden.

The rainfall in this region is high, with an average annual precipitation of 1,500 mm, falling mostly from September to March. South-west Cork has an average annual temperature of 10°C (51°F), about 1°C higher than Dublin. However the coastal strip, including Ardnagashel, would have an even higher (perhaps 1°C higher) mean annual temperature. An average of 10 days of frost is recorded on the coast, compared, for example, with Tullamore which has 50 days of frost in a year. This region is very windy; wind velocity ranges from 65 to 80 m.p.h., but higher readings have been recorded. Average relative humidity is also high, ranging from 75% to 80%.

With shelter provided on virtually all sides, there are many advantages for growing plants in this area. The high rainfall, bright sunshine, high relative humidity and frost-free days from early March to near the end of December, mean that growth conditions are ideal. Most of the trees and shrubs at Ardnagashel are larger than specimens of comparable age in Dublin, and many tender plants can be grown outside, whereas in Dublin they are kept in a glasshouse.

ARDNAGASHEL - HISTORY AND OWNERSHIP

To understand Ardnagashel's history, one must go back to the time when the O'Sullivan clans were overlords of what is now called West Cork. In their possession the land was subject to a system of inheritance called *Gavail Ciain*, succession from father to son. After the Elizabethan wars the area settled down under Owen O'Sullivan who had taken the Queen's side, but during the 1642 Rebellion, either he or his successor fell into disfavour and his lands were confiscated. After the Cromwellian conflict, the O'Sullivan land in the Bantry area was divided between three adventurers who had enlisted, with a promise of payment by land, and this later created a very complicated system of land tenure under sub-tenants.

The Hutchins family from Dorset appear to have been in Ireland from early in the seventeenth century, according to *Burke's Landed Gentry* (1958). Richard Hutchins served under the Earl of Orrery in 1666, and became one of the Commissioners of Poll Tax. He owned property at Blackrock, near Bantry, during the eighteenth century. Arthur Hutchins (1770-1838) bought

Fig. 1. Ardnagashel House about 1950.

Fig. 2. View from 'Hill 203' in 1982.

Ardnagashel freehold for £1,000 in 1800; it comprised three hundred acres. He proceeded to lay out the estate; pasture land and plantations were included. He probably constructed the ornamental arch which marks the entrance to the property, and also the avenue to the seashore. The fisherman's cottage was rebuilt as a beautiful mansion with mullion windows. Arthur Hutchins put in the stone drains which have assisted in preventing the sort of erosion that is evident in so many other places around Bantry.

One of his problems was the protection of young plants, including plantation trees, from cattle, both his own and those of other people. Enormous walls were built, both to clear and protect the land. Local tradition has it that in exposed areas west of the house, the young trees failed until others were planted to give shelter. A few of these trees, mostly firs, are still there protecting the valley in which many rare trees and shrubs have been growing since Arthur Hutchins' time.

Emmanuel Hutchins (1769-1839), Arthur's brother, practised law. He died mysteriously in Damascus while purchasing Arab horses which his groom brought back to Ireland.

Ellen Hutchins (1785-1815), a sister of Arthur and Emmanuel, was a famous amateur botanist - I will refer to her later. Her interest in botany was later carried on by other members of the family, and many specimens of trees and plants in the present gardens came from Kew. There is a Cedar of Lebanon which might have come back with one of the family from the Middle East.

Samuel Hutchins (1834-1915) went to Australia during the 'gold rush' and returned to Ireland in 1858 with over one hundred packets of seeds of Australian plants. No plant books or records were kept by the family, but it would be interesting to visit the property 'Fortlands' near Charleville, which belonged to his father, as there are a number of trees and shrubs there that may have links with those planted at Ardnagashel.

Samuel was a younger son, and succeeded his brother Emmanuel (1823-1880), who was buried in the 'Chillin' or family graveyards on the estate. This is an interesting feature of the property and some of the burial stones can still be seen.

Eventually Samuel Hutchins was succeeded by Captain Richard N. Hutchins (1876-1915). He was followed in turn by his son, who eventually passed the property to his sister Patricia Hutchins, a writer, who still resides on part of the estate. The other part of the land was sold in 1947 to Col. and Mrs. Kaulback who changed the house into a hotel and renovated the grounds. They planted extensively. The hotel was destroyed in a fire in 1958, but was later rebuilt as a private dwelling. In 1970 the part of the estate owned by the Kaulbacks was sold to a Dutch company, which planned an elaborate holiday complex. The future of Ardnagashel is in its control.

MISS ELLEN HUTCHINS

Ellen was born in 1785 at Ballylickey, the daughter of Thomas Hutchins. When she was still young she was placed in a school in Dublin. As she grew up she became delicate and when her school days ended, her health was poor. Dr. Whitley Stokes, a friend of the family, was consulted and it was decided that Ellen was to be left in his care.

She recovered but before leaving Dr. Stokes, who was a fellow of Trinity College, Dublin, and a keen naturalist, was advised to live in the open air as much as possible. Thus, with his help, she took up the study of natural history. He recommended botany, as this would encourage her to spend much time out-of-doors, and would give her a quiet and interesting occupation at home. She became an enthusiastic collector of mosses, liverworts, lichens and algae, and was the discoverer of many rare species in the area around Ardnagashel.

It is probable that Dr. Stokes introduced Ellen to James Townsend Mackay, curator of Trinity College Botanic Garden. Through Mackay she met Dawson Turner of Yarmouth, to whom, by 1807, she was supplying specimens and drawings of seaweeds for his book, *Historia fucorum*. Most of her dried plant specimens, together with a series of drawings numbering over two hundred, passed to Dawson Turner, and are now in the safe-keeping of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. A trait in her character was her natural modesty, so much so, that for some time she objected to her name being published as collector of the plants she discovered.

Ellen had to return home to Ballylickey to care for her elderly mother and her invalid brother. A field at Ballylickey, still called "Miss Ellen's Garden", is perhaps where she tended her plants including those sent to her by Mackay. In a letter in 1805, Turner instructed her how to prepare a bed for planting some shrubs he had sent her. Mackay visited Ballylickey in 1805, as he was preparing publications on Irish plants, but the discovery of the wild plants of the Bantry area was left to the dedication and keen eye of Ellen Hutchins. This she accomplished, and Sir James Smith wrote that "she could find anything".

In March 1814, Ellen's mother died and Ellen went to Ardnagashel where her brother Arthur and his family lived. She died on 10 February 1815 and is buried in the churchyard in Bantry.

It is very difficult to know where to start as regards her work. She never published papers, so all her discoveries are noted in the works of other botanists. For example, Mackay in *Flora Hibernica* (1836) recorded *Stellaria cerastoides* 'on a high mountain near Bantry, rare, Miss Hutchins'. In the section on liverworts we find '*Jungermannia hutchinsiae* - on wet faces of rocks especially of waterfalls in woods near Bantry, Miss Hutchins'. The lichens, *Lecania hutchinsiae*, *Pertusaria hutchinsiae*, *Enterographa hutchinsiae* and others, as well as the moss *Ulota hutchinsiae* commemorate her and were discovered by her.

Miss Hutchins' best work was in collecting seaweeds. The section on seaweeds in Mackay's flora was undertaken by William Henry Harvey, the famous Irish phycologist. Mackay stated that Harvey saw "a full collection in my possession, chiefly formed by the late amiable and accomplished Miss Hutchins, a lady who for many years was unremitting in her investigations of the botany of the south of Ireland". In a letter to Miss Hutchins, Mackay wrote; "*Aleyonicum digitatum* [now called *Laminaria digitata*] was named right by you". He goes on to say - "you are getting on famously in this branch. I am proud of having set you to work in it, being persuaded that for your discriminating powers and great attention you will in time make some important discoveries in this branch of natural history." Dawson Turner praised Ellen for her exquisitely preserved specimens and her finding of rarities. All the botanists to whom she sent specimens, wrote to her asking if they could name species after her. To this request she repeatedly

said "No". However she did give in - Dawson Turner wrote about one of her seaweeds that it was "one of the most beautiful plants I ever saw, either this [no. 21], or No. 5 or No. 7 must be called *Conferva hutchinsiae* - choose which you please." When William Harvey described *Cladophora hutchinsiae*, another seaweed, he wrote this "A very beautiful and strong growing species discovered about the year 1808 by the late Miss Hutchins of Ballylickey near Bantry, whose explorations of her neighbourhood were as unremitted as they were successful and whose name is deservedly held in grateful remembrance by botanists in all parts of the world. To her the botany of Ireland is under many obligations, particularly the Cryptogamic branch, in which field, until her time little explored, she was particularly fortunate in detecting new and beautiful objects, several of which remain among the rarest species to the present day."

This is by no means a complete account of her work. Praeger described her as a "botanist of great promise who died at the age of thirty". What she did was a tremendous achievement for one person, and to me it is certainly amazing in such a short life. I can find no better words than those of Dawson Turner, taken from the last page of his *Historia fucorum*:

> In every season of the beauteous year
> Her eye was open, and with studious love
> Read the Divine Creator in his works,
> Chiefly in thee sweet Spring, when every nook
> Some latent beauty to her wakeful search
> Presented some sweet flower, some virtual plant;
> In every native of the hill and vale
> She found attraction; and where beauty failed
> Applauded odour or commended use.

THE GARDEN AT ARDNAGASHEL TODAY

The main planted area lies to the west of the house and covers approximately four acres. For convenience I will relate the position of the shrubs to the trees as marked on the plan (Fig. 3).

Firstly a few words about the planted area in general. The approach from the main entrance under the archway becomes very steep as one goes towards the house. Thus the area at the back of the house slopes and is walled off; at one time it formed part of a fruit garden. In front of the house there is a gravel path and a sea-wall to prevent erosion. This path leads to the garden and 'Middle West Walk' across a flat area which includes the lawn. The 'Lower West Walk' leads along the coast at the back of Hill 203.

1) Trees

The trees at Ardnagashel are for the most part mature specimens. The smaller trees mentioned below are young, having been planted within the last twenty years.

From my survey (Fig. 3) it is evident that many common species were planted at an early stage. There are numerous beech trees along the coast to the east of the house, and in the area of the lawn, under which, in the early days, were plantings of primroses. Beech also grows at the main entrance near the archway, and throughout the garden generally. Another abundant tree is Scots pine, but there are about nine good specimens.

From the 'Middle West Walk' as one passes across the lawn there is a dense patch of *Griselinia littoralis*. To the left (near 9) and in front are *Drimys winteri*, *Prunus laurocerasus* and two specimens of *Acer palmatum* 'Heptalobum Ozakazuki' which are fiery scarlet in autumn. Going up the slope we pass *Cupressus arizonica* (6) a small tree but graceful and columnar in habit, and beside it is *Cupressus macrocarpa*.

Juglans regia (10) is hidden from view by a beech on one side and by a magnificent specimen of *Cryptomeria japonica* (20). This latter tree has layered itself, its layered stems forming trees in their own right. *Sequoia sempervirens* (11) has reddish-brown bark and makes a very long-lived tree; its lower branches are drooping. The firs (*Abies grandis* 12, 19, 49) are huge, but 19 especially stands out as it is in a fairly open position near the 'Middle West Walk'. Specimens of cork oaks (*Quercus suber* 14, 33, 40) are scattered through the garden. One (33), growing on the lawn, is a mature tree with spreading branches; the centre has rotted and beech and fir saplings are growing on the rotting trunk. *Cryptomeria japonica* 'Elegans' (16, 17), with its bronze colouring in winter, contrasts beautifully with *Chamaecyparis nootkatensis* 'Pendula' (18) with its long, drooping branches of flat foliage. Near it are two young pines, *Pinus armandii* (15) and *P. montezumae* which has long bluish-grey, drooping needles. *Thujopsis dolobrata* (22) with its flat sprays of leaves is a fantastic specimen as are *Picea omorika* (21) and *Cedrus deodara* (23).

The wattles provide contrast of foliage and are excellently positioned against a background of conifers. *Acacia dealbata* (24), the silver wattle, is a smallish tree and has lovely flat, fern-like greyish-green leaves. Yellow flowers adorn the stems at Christmas. *A. pravissima* is quite different; it has long drooping stems with incurved leaves, and is a small wide-spreading tree about 20 ft high. Near these is *Drimys winteri* with big, leathery green leaves about 7½ in long.

Tree 27 is of special interest. It is *Podocarpus salignus* (willow-leaf podocarp). According to Alan Mitchell this is the biggest specimen in the British Isles. It is a bushy tree and when measured in 1966 was 64 ft tall with a trunk circumference of 9ft 1 in. According to W. J. Bean, it is by far the most elegant and distinct of the podocarps that can be grown in these islands. This specimen is rivalled only by one at Buxton in Devon, which measured 62 ft by 3 ft 6 in in 1966.

Myrtus apiculata was first introduced into the garden in 1880. Now, this myrtle grows wild in part of the naturally regenerating woodland to the rear of this part of the garden. Young seedlings in the vicinity could be classed as weeds! According to D. A. Webb, *Myrtus apiculata* is naturalized in this area. At Ardnagashel myrtle saplings are now more abundant than holly, young oak or other tree seedlings. Bean recorded specimens from 30 to 47 ft tall and from 2 to 4½ ft in trunk circumference at Ardnagashel.

The Cedar of Lebanon (31) is said to have been brought back from the Lebanon by one of the Hutchins family. Tree 35 is also of interest; it is *Trachycarpus fortunei* (Chusan palm). The trunk is formed by a mass of hard brown fibres which are the woody bases of leaves that have been shed. The leaves are fan-like, but what is most interesting is that there is a wild rhododendron growing out of the side of the palm, about half way up; this shrub flowers each year without fail. *Magnolia campbellii* ssp. *mollicomata* (46) was planted in 1915. It has pink to rose-purple flowers and is

supposed to be a rare variety. The remaining trees are common species, except perhaps *Aesculus turbinata*, the Japanese horse-chestnut, which has wide-spreading branches. There are a few eucalypts in the garden. *Eucalyptus globulus* (51) is a fine, tall specimen - it can grow up to 180 ft. This one is said to have been planted by Frank Hutchins in 1943. *Eucalyptus aggregata* (54) is a native of New South Wales and here,is a medium-sized tree.

2) Shrubs

The collection of shrubs is dominated by *Rhododendron* species and cultivars. There are several fine and rare specimens. Between trees 1 and 7 there are plants of *Rhododendron mucronatum* (white flowers in May), *R. hemitrichotum*, *R. vernicosum*, *R. cinnabarinum* var *roylei*. Also growing here are shrubs of *Camellia sasanqua* 'Usbeni' and *C. saluenensis*, both of which have pink flowers.

Nearby are shrubs of the fern-spray cypress (*Chamaecyparis obtusa* 'Filicoides') and *Rhododendron fargesii* which is noted for being very free flowering. These are overshadowed by *Magnolia sieboldii* and *M. sinensis*. Behind tree 18 is a specimen of *Pittosporum tobira*, a slow-growing shrub from Japan and China.

In the vicinity of trees 24 and 25, rhododendrons are again prevalent, but there are also good shrubs of *Mahonia lomariifolia*, *Callistemon citrinus* 'Splendens' and *Azara microphylla*. One uncommon species of *Rhododendron* here is *R. coryphaeum*. Behind this is *Gordonia axillaris*, a small and rare evergreen with leathery, glossy green foliage. It requires lime-free soil. *Rhododendron sinogrande* 'Boreale' and *Chamaecyparis formosensis* complete this group.

In the flat area behind the lawn and tree 33, are plants of *Stranvaesia davidiana* 'Undulata', *Rhododendron calophytum* and *Pieris formosa*. Along the path leading from this area, *Rhododendron cinnabarinum* 'Blandfordiiflorum' and *Rehderodendron macrocarpum* have been planted. The latter is a small deciduous tree, native of China, that is extremely rare in Irish gardens. Also in this area is a fine plant of *Lomatia ferruginea*, an evergreen whose branches are covered in a rich brown velvet. It is a small tree and has fern-like foliage.

On the far side of the stream and on the lower slopes of Hill 203 are planted *Rhododendron heliolepsis* and *R. sinogrande*. There is also a specimen of *Grevillea sulphurea*, with beautiful yellow flowers and needle-like leaves; it is not very tender.

Beside tree 40 are good specimens of *Pittosporum tenuifolium* 'Silver Queen', and *Trochodendron aralioides*. *Pomaderris apetala* is another rare Australasian plant requiring a warm, sheltered position or glasshouse conditions. Close to tree 46, *Camellia reticulata* 'Lion Head' and *Dacrydium cupressinum* have been planted. There is also a shrub of *Stachyurus chinensis*, which according to Hillier, is a rare species of considerable merit. The other species of *Dacrydium*, *D. franklinii*, is to be found here, while beside the stream are two tree-ferns (*Dicksonia antarctica*). Behind *Dacrydium* is a specimen of *Acacia riceana*, which flowers in February, and also *Cornus chinesis*.

To the east of the house, we can find *Pieris japonica*, *Mespilus germanica*, *Ilex aquifolium* 'Fructo Luteo' (with yellow berries) and *Cornus*

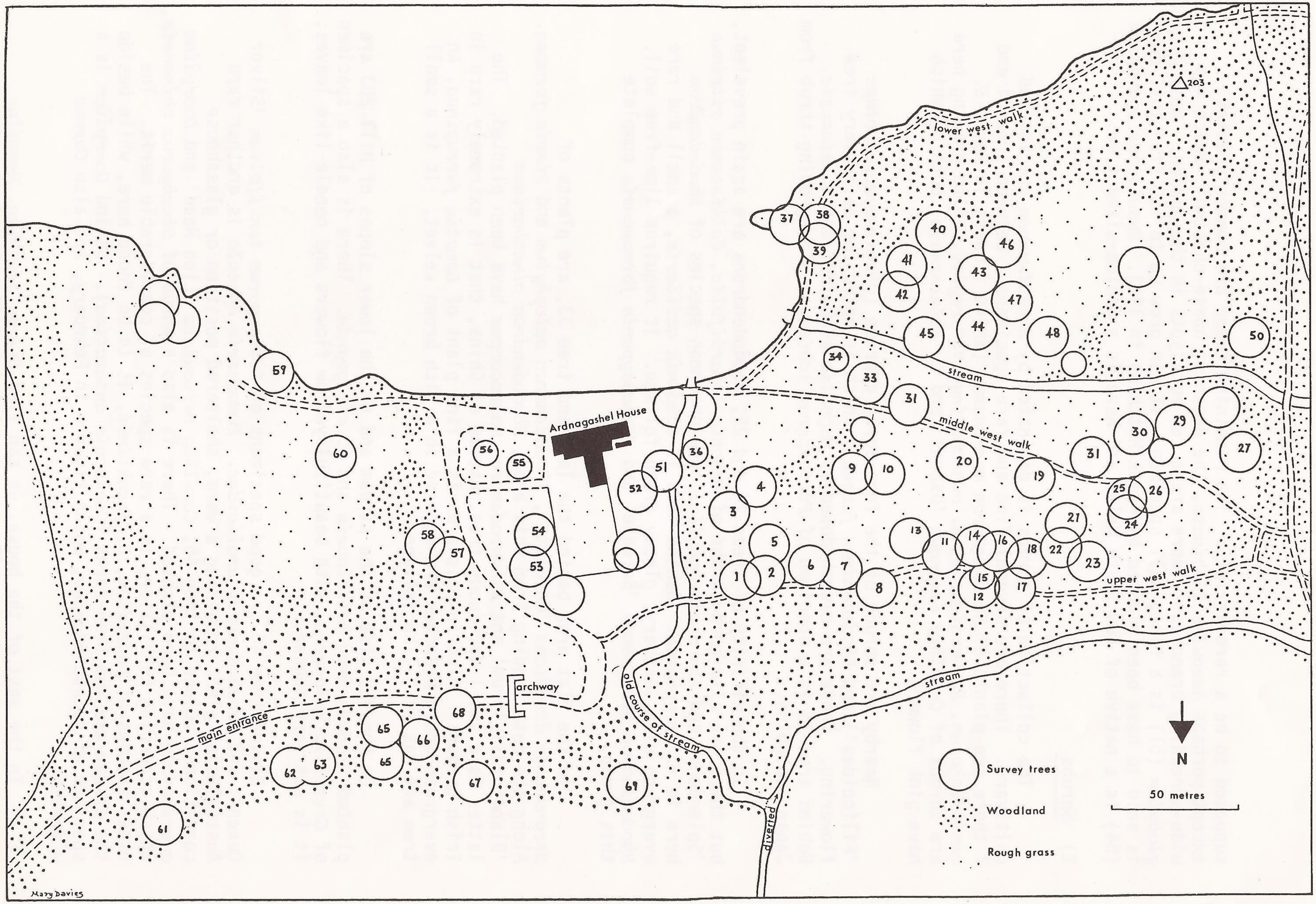
203
lower west walk
middle west walk
upper west walk
stream
stream
Ardnagashel House
archway
main entrance
old course of stream
diverted
Survey trees
Woodland
Rough grass
N
50 metres
Mary Davies

Fig. 3

List of trees (as numbered on the map)

1. *Fagus sylvatica*
2. *Fagus sylvatica*
3. *Fagus sylvatica*
4. *Fagus sylvatica*
5. *Fagus sylvatica*
6. *Cupressus arizonica*
7. *Cupressus macrocarpa*
8. *Fagus sylvatica*
9. *Fagus sylvatica*
10. *Juglans regia*
11. *Sequoia sempervirens*
12. *Abies grandis*
13. *Pinus sylvestris*
14. *Quercus suber*
15. *Pinus armandii*
16. *Cryptomeria japonica* 'Elegans'
17. *Cryptomeria japonica* 'Elegans'
18. *Chamaecyparis nootkatensis* 'Pendula'
19. *Abies grandis*
20. *Cryptomeria japonica*
21. *Picea omorika*
22. *Thujopsis dolobrata*
23. *Cedrus deodara*
24. *Acacia pravissima*
25. *Acacia dealbata*
26. *Drimys winteri*
27. *Podocarpus salignus*
28. *Rhododendron* cv.
29. *Myrtus apiculata*
30. *Robinia pseudoacacia*
31. *Cedrus libani*
32. *Cercidiphyllum japonicum*
33. *Quercus suber*
34. *Cordyline australis*
35. *Trachycarpus fortunei*
36. *Cordyline australis*
37. *Abies alba*
38. *Abies alba*
39. *Abies alba*
40. *Quercus suber*
41. *Aesculus hippocastanum*
42. *Pinus sylvestris*
43. *Pinus sylvestris*
44. *Pinus sylvestris*
45. *Pinus sylvestris*
46. *Magnolia campbellii* ssp. *mollicomata*
47. *Platanus acerifolia*
48. *Ulmus glabra*
49. *Abies grandis*
50. *Fraxinus excelsior*
51. *Eucalyptus globulus*
52. *Eucalyptus bicostata*
53. *Abies alba*
54. *Eucalyptus aggregata*
55. *Fagus sylvatica*
56. *Aesculus turbinata*
57. *Acer platanoides* 'Schneidleri'
58. *Castanea sativa*
59. *Fagus sylvatica*
60. *Pinus sylvestris*
61. *Pinus sylvestris*
62. *Pinus sylvestris*
63. *Pinus sylvestris*
64. *Fagus sylvatica*
65. *Fagus sylvatica*
66. *Fagus sylvatica*
67. *Fagus sylvatica*
68. *Griselinia littoralis*
69. *Ulmus procera*

capitata which has strawberry-like fruits. *Hamamelis mollis* grows here, along with *Osmanthus delavayi* which sometimes flowers at the same time, in the middle of February.

CONCLUSIONS

As I hope I have shown, Ardnagashel is ideally situated for growing tender trees and shrubs. It is a place of rare and unusual beauty, a haven for the horticulturist. It is part of our heritage and deserves to be better known. It is one of the great gardens for which the country is noted.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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