

SECTION IV

Trees and shrubs at Ardnagashel

In this section I want to write about the trees and shrubs growing at Ardnagashel. As was already mentioned at the end of Section I, the climate, shelter and high rainfall favour the growth of many tender species. The main planted area lies to the West of the house and is approximately 4 acres. For convenience I will relate most of the shrubs and their positions to the trees of the survey plan provided, or to other features in the garden; Upper West walk, Middle West walk etc...

Firstly a few words on the planted area in general. The approach from the main entrance under the archway gets very steep as one goes down towards the house. Thus the area back of the house is very steep sloped and is walled off and at one time formed part of the old fruit garden. In front of the house there is a gravel path and a wall constructed to prevent any further erosion by the sea. This gravel path then leads to the garden and middle west walk, a flat area to the west of the house which includes the lawn. The lower west walk leads one along by the coast at the back of Hill 203, which then slopes down to the stream. Thus this part of the stream flows between Hill 203 and the middle west walk. The middle west walk also leads one to the "Chillin" mentioned earlier.

TREES

The trees at Ardnagashel for the most part can be referred to as mature specimens. Thus the smaller trees mentioned later in the shrub section are only young specimens, planted within the last twenty years.

From the survey plan it is evident that many common trees were planted at an early stage. Thus *Fagus sylvatica*, near the upper west walk No. 1 to 5 and its vicinity, along by the coast to the east of the house, and in the area east of the house called the 'lawn', No. 59, under which in the early days were plantings of primroses. This area today is minus many of its beautiful Beech trees and is a wilderness of ferns, briars and rough grassland. Beech is also growing on the main entrance near the archway No. 64 to 67 and throughout the gardens generally.

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Another tree generally planted in abundance within the garden is *Pinus sylvestris*. - our only native pine. There are roughly nine specimens but many more could be planted within the dense woodland to the east of the house, tree numbers 13, 42 to 45, 60 to 63.

From the middle west walk across the lawn near tree No. 4, one passes through a dense planting of *Griselinia littoralis*; while to the left near tree No. 9 and in front of same lies *Drimys winteri*, *Prunus laurocerasus*, and two specimens of *Acer palmatum* '*Heptalobum Ozakazuki*' which were a glow of fiery scarlet in Autumn. This leads one up the slope to tree No. 6, *Cupressus arizonica*, a small tree, but graceful and columnar in habit, beside which is a *Cupressus macrocarpa*, the very common 'Monterey Cypress'

Juglans regia No. 10 'Common Walnut', the timber of which is very valuable, is very much hidden from view by the beech on one side and a magnificent specimen of *Cryptomeria japonica* No. 20 or 'Japanese Cedar'. This tree has layered itself, its layered stems now forming trees in their own right.

above; Close up of the layered stems of the *Cryptomeria japonica*
(No. 20)

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Above; *Cryptomeria japonica*(No. 20).

The *Sequoia sempervirens*, No. 11, also known as 'Californian Redwood', the bark of which is dark reddish brown, and makes a very long lived tree, the average being five hundred years old, its lower branches drooping and Yew like foilage.

The giant Firs, *Abies grandis*, No. 12, 19 and 49 make huge specimens, but No. 19 especially stands out as it has a fairly open position near

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the middle west walk. Its lower branches grow out at first and then turn sharply upwards, nearly at ninety degrees, giving it a characteristic shape.

Above; *Abies grandis* showing its characteristic
shape.

Specimens of *Quercus suber* are also scattered within the planted area, 14, 33, 40, but one stands out both for its mature shape and its 'inhabitants'. No. 33 growing on the lawn near the middle west walk is a very mature specimen with big low growing spreading branches, the centre of which has rotted and a small beech tree and fir are growing in the rotted area.

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Above; *Quereus suber* (No. 33)
beautiful mature specimen.

Left; the small fir tree growing
in its rotting trunk.

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The *Cryptomeria japonica* 'Elegans', No. 16 and 17, with its bronze colouring in winter contrasts beautifully with No. 18, *Chamaecyparis nootkatensis*, 'Pendula' with its long drooping branchlets of flat foliage.

Above; *Chamaecyparis nootkatensis* 'Pendula'.

Nearby two young specimens of Pine - *Pinus armandii*, No. 15 and *Pinus montezumae* with its long bluish grey needles in drooping fashion.

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Thuyopsis dolabrata, No. 22, with its flat sprays of foliage is a fantastic specimen as is *Picea omorika*, No. 21 and *Cedrus deodara*, No. 23, a weeping Cedar quite distinguishable as the tips of the shoots descend gracefully.

Left; a young specimen of
Pinus montezumae.

The Acacias in the garden provide a deep contrast in foliage and are excellently positioned against a background of conifers. *Acacia dealbata*, No. 24, the most common and also called 'Silver Wattle', a smallish tree here and has lovely flat fern like grey green foliage. Yellow flowers adorned the stems at Christmas time.

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Acacia parvissima is completely different. It has long stems in drooping incurved fashion, "the phyllodes set densely against the stem and remarkable for the lobsided way they are set edgewise to the shoot". It is also a smallish widespreading tree at Ardnagashel, about 20 ft. high. Near these is *Drimys winteri* with big leathery green leaves up to 7½ ins. long and also called 'Winter Bark'.

Left; the unusual *Acacia parvissima*.

Tree No. 27 is of special interest. It is *Podocarpus salignus* or 'Willow Leaf Podocarpus'. According to A. Mitchell it is the biggest specimen in the British Isles. It forms a bushy tree and when measured in 1966, it was

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64 ft. high and 9 ft. 1 ins. in width. Its position is very sheltered, due to woodland to its rear. The *Podocarpus salignus*, according to W.J. Bean, is by far the most elegant and distinct of all the podocarps that can be grown in the British Isles. The specimen at Ardnagashel is rivalled only by a specimen at Buxton in Devon, measuring 62 ft by 3½ ft wide in 1966.

Above; *Podocarpus salignus* which is the biggest specimen in the British Isles

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Myrtus apiculata was first introduced into the garden in 1880. At this stage it forms part of the natural 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 in the Irish Naturalists Journal, vol.19, no. 10 1979, p 369, he talks of *Myrtus apiculata* being naturalized in the area. The further proof of what was said earlier, as at Ardnagashel they are now more common than holly, young oak and other tree seedlings. In W.J. Bean's 'Trees and Shrubs Hardy in the British Isles', he has recorded specimens of 30 - 47 ft. high, 2 to 4½ ft. wide at Ardnagashel.

Tree No. 30 is *Robinia pseudoacacia* while *Cedrus libani* No. 31 is said to have been brought back by one of the Hutchins family from the Lebanon on one of his trips there. Some of the trees in the garden have a family history behind them, and the *Abies grandis*, No. 19, is also said to be one of the bigger specimens in Europe.

Cercidiphyllum japonicum, No. 32, is only a small specimen and is really hindered by the immensity of the *Cryptomeria japonica* and also by a big specimen of *Rhododendron* growing near it. *Cordyline australis* also here, near the bamboos on the lawn area near the stream, No. 34 and also near the house, No. 36.

No. 35 is also of interest, planted behind *Rhododendrons* on the middle west walk. It is *Trachycarpus fortunei* or 'Chusan Palm'. Its trunk is formed by a mass of hard brown fibres which are the woody bases of leaves that have been shed. Leaves are fan shaped at the top of the tree, but what is more interesting on this specimen is that there is a *Rhododendron ponticum* growing out of the side of the trunk about mid-way up. According to the former owner, this flowers without fail each year.

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Left; Trachycarpus fortunei
showing Rhododendron
pontium growing out
of the trunk.

X On the seaward side of the lower west walk is Abies Alba - common silver fir, and also throughout the slope of hill 203. Used also for sheltering the garden from high winds. There are very few plantings of trees on the lower slope of hill 203, and most of these have been referred to earlier, Quercus suber, Pinus sylvestris etc... No. 46, Magnolia campbelli molloycomata was planted before 1915 and has grey bark, long upcurved branches, flowers pink to rose purple, leaves pubescent and is supposed to be a rare sub-species.

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Platanus X acerifolia, London plane, No. 47, is now called Platanus X hispanica, and most of the other trees are fairly common - Beech, Pine, Elm, except maybe Aesculus turbinata, Japanese horse chestnut, with wide spreading branches, a tree which can reach up to 60 ft. Here also (but not included in the map) near No. 46 are Acer macrophyllum or Oregon Maple, and Sorbus sargentiana. These are both very small specimens - only about 10ft. high.

There are also a few Eucalyptus species present in the garden. In this area is Eucalyptus perriniana which is in very poor condition with a twisted trunk and foliage only at the tip which is said to have a silver tinge. Other species present are closer to the house. Eucalyptus globulus, No. 51, is a fine tall specimen and can grow up to 180 ft. with young leaves, glaucous, adult foliage up to 12 ins. long. This specimen is said to have been planted by Frank Hutchins in 1943. Eucalyptus bicostata, only a small specimen here, and Eucalyptus aggregata, No. 54, also called the 'Black Gum' which is a native of New South Wales. It is a medium size tree at Ardnagashel, but can grow up to 70 ft.

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Above; Eucalyptus globulus at Ardnagashel, also
showing gable of the house (far right).

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Left; *Abies grandis*, one of
the bigger specimens in
Europe.

Below; View from Hill 203 to
opposite slope with
Cryptomeria japonica
in centre.

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SHRUBS

The shrubs at Ardnagashel vary a great deal. It is evident, though, that the soil is acid as the most common genus there is definitely *Rhododendron*. A colony of *Vinca minor*, periwinkle, near the upper west walk behind the house, looks very natural as ground cover with its tiny purple flowers. The area with the most plantings is between the upper west walk and the middle west walk.

In the area around trees No. 1 - 7 is *Rhododendron mucronatum*, a wide-spreading low growing shrub with white flowers in May. Here also is *Camellia sasangua* 'Usbeni' and *Camellia saluensis*, both with pink flowers. This area, though, is mainly planted with *Rhododendrons* - *R. hemitrichotum*, a small shrub, *R. vernicosum*, *R. cinnabarium roylei*. Lower down the slope is *R. keysii* and near this is *Chamaecyparis obtusa* 'Filicioides', beautiful characteristic shape, deep green foliage, branches long and commonly called 'Fern spray Cypress'. Beside this is *Rhododendron yunnanense*, and *R. venator*. In the same locality is *Eucryphia* X *Hillieri*, a hybrid between an Australian and a Tasmanian species. This plant likes a non-calcareous soil. Beside this is *Rhododendron griffithianum*, a striking species and also *R. fargesii*, noted for its floriferous qualities. Nearby *Magnolia sieboldii* and *Magnolia sinensis*, both with large white flowers.

Near No. 13 is *Prunus laurocerasus*, *Juniperus communis*, the black fruits still on the older wood, and also *Rhododendron fulgens*, oval shaped leaves, petioles tinged yellow. At the rear of No. 20 are *Rhododendron makinoi*, *Hebe salicifolia*, *Pieris formosa* and *Rhododendron johnstoneanum* with creamy white flowers with red spots and a yellow blotch in May. Near these a beautiful young ornamental Fir, and *Rhododendron yakushimanum*, a dome shaped bush and also an erect and compacted cultivar of *Taxus baccata*.

To the rear of No. 18 in deep shaded conditions is *Pittosporum tobira* from Japan and China. It is a very slow growing shrub, leaves green in whorls. Lower down the slope is *Prunus pisardii nigra*, in flower in February. In front of the *Cedrus deodara* No. 23. is *Callistemon rigidus*, the flowers of which are dark red and behind this young pines, probably *Pinus pinaster* and *contorta*, and a *Picea* species about 20 ft. high.

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In a flatter area near the middle west walk between No. 19 and No. 24&25 are many Rhododendrons, but also of interest is Mahonia ~~lamarifolia~~, in flower before Christmas, Callistemon citrinus splendens and ~~Azara~~ microphylla with its minute yellow flowers under the branchlets of foliage. Near the path two specimens of Cephalotaxus fortunei and also Rhododendron macrostemon behind these. Also near the edge of the path beyond the Cephalotaxus is Rhododendron coryphaeum, with white undersides on the large leaves and is an uncommon species according to Hilliers.

Above; Cephalotaxus fortunei or 'Chinese Plum Yew'.

Beyond this, near the middle west walk, is mainly woodland, but at the end of the upper west walk, between two Myrtles, is Cordonia azilliaris, a small specimen, but a rare evergreen - foliage leathery and glossy green but requires a lime free soil. Nearby Rhododendron sinogrande Boreale and a

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rounded bushy-shaped specimen of *Chamaecyparis formosensis*, foliage bright green, stems light orange to tan, but slow growing in our climate.

Returning by the middle west walk behind No. 20 is *Desfontanea spinosa* - 'Harold Comber' and *Camellia* 'Cornish Snow' in flower in late February.

Also *Rhododendron* plantings and the *Trachycarpus fortunei* and the *Acers* mentioned earlier. Outside these is the main lawn area leading to the *Quercus suber*, No. 33.

Above; *Rhododendron coryphaeum*, an uncommon species.

The next area is a flat waterlogged section between the middle west walk and the stream. Just behind No. 33 in boggy conditions is *Abies pinsapo glauco* and thus its growth is very slow. Further back are two *Abies delavayi* 'Georgi', these are about 20 ft. high, cones barrel shaped and purple-black in colour at the top of the tree. Also here is *Stewartia sinensis*, liking lime free conditions and forming a large shrub. Near the

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middle west walk, behind *Griselinia*, is *Stranvaesia davidiana undulata*, with wide spreading branches and a specimen of *Chamaecyparis nootkatensis pendula* about 10 ft. high. Other shrubs here include *Fuschia*, *Pieris formosa*, *Rhododendron calophytum* with conspicuous large leaves.

Across from the *Abies grandis* the area gets very wild with a young colony of Myrtles and briars, ferns and tall grass. In this area *Leptospermum* species, *Rhododendron agustinii* and *Hebe salicifolia*. In the thick undergrowth further back is *Pittosporum undulatum* forming a large shrub, much branched at the base, leaves large wavy edged, dark green above, pale green beneath and only suitable for the mildest districts.

Near the *Podocarpus salignus* is a specimen of *Drimys lanceolata* with deep red young stems. In the dense undergrowth towards the stream surrounded by Rhododendrons and *Prunus laurocerasus* are *Rhododendron cinnabarium blandfordiiflorum* and ~~Rhododendron~~ *Rhododendron macrocarpum* which is a native of China and forms a deciduous small tree.

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Left; Pittosporum undulatum

Below; View from the upper west
walk overlooking the trees
and shrubs.

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Near the middle west walk and to the rear of the *Podocarpus salignus* is *Lomatia ferruginea*. A native of China it forms an evergreen small tree, much branched, branchlets covered in a rich brownish velvety down, the foliage is fern like and also only suitable for mild areas. Behind this dense woodland is a specimen of *Phormium tenax variegatum*.

Left; *Lomatia ferruginea* at Ardnagashel but a native of China.

The next area is at the far side of the stream on the lower slopes of hill 203. Near the sea are Bamboos, *Gunnera manicata* and *Rhododendrons*, while in flower in February was a magnificent specimen of *Berberis darwinii*.

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From the seaward side up the slope in the vicinity of trees No. 40 - 47 are *Rhododendron heliolepis*, *R. sinogrande* and *Grevillea sulphurea*, yellow flowers and needle like leaves but only suited to mild districts outdoors.

Above; *Rhododendron sinogrande*.

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Left; *Grevillea sulphurea* in flower at the end of December. This is supposed to be a summer flowerer.

Towards the sea, *Cercidiphyllum magnificum* and in front of No. 40 are *Pittosporum tenuifolium* 'Silver Queen', and *Trochodendron aralioides*, an evergreen shrub about 8 ft. high, leaves oval, rhododendron like, leathery and toothed at the upper end. Nearby is *Pomaderris apetala* which requires a warm sheltered position or glasshouse conditions. Behind these *Cupressus arizonica* 'Bonita'.

Between tree No.'s 40 and 46 are *Rhododendron* 'Elizabeth and R. 'Blue Diamond', also *Camellia reticulata* 'Lion Head'. Up from No. 46, near

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Myrtus apiculata and *Rhododendron croceum* is *Dacrydium cupressinum*, about 8 ft. with its light coloured pendulous string like branchlets, below this is *Stachyurus chinensis*, which according to Hillier is a "rare species of considerable merit". Lower down here are *Pinus griffithi* and *Rhododendron wightii*.

Down the slope towards No. 47 and 48 is *Viburnum rhytidophyllum* and various specimens of *Rhododendron sinogrande*. Near the stream are two tree ferns.

Above; Tree fern at Ardnagashel.

Up the slope again now towards tree No. 49 is *Dacrydium franklinii*, still only a small specimen at 6 ft. high. Behind this in full flower in February is *Acacia riceana*, flowers yellow and abundant on the branches, leaves needle like, also here is *Cornus chinensis*. To the rear off No. 49., as can be seen from the tree survey plan, is the woodland providing the shelter for the rare and tender plants in the garden.

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Left; *Dacrydium franklinii* at Ardnagashel. Its wood is highly prized for furniture and cabinet making in Tasmania.

The only other area of importance is east of the house in the vicinity of tree No.'s 54 - 58. Here are *Pieris formosa*, *Mespelius germanica*, *Ilex aquifolium* 'Fructo-Luteo', Camellias, Rhododendrons and Bamboos. Across the path is *Cornus capitata*, distinguished by its strawberry-like fruits and also *Hamamelis mollis* for its sweetly scented yellow flowers in the days of Winter. Near this *Osmanthus delavayi* in flower in late February, two months before its usual flowering time.

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Above; *Cornus capitata*, showing
the distinct fruit.

Left; *Hamamelis mollis* or 'Chinese
Witch Hazel'.

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SECTION V

Conclusion

As was seen from the foregoing, Ardnagashel is ideally situated to grow these tender trees and shrubs, and there is a fine collection present there. It is thus a great pity to see the grass and briars smothering the beautiful shrubs there. I would therefore like to see the garden and grounds being restored to their former glory and perhaps see the place opened as a public garden. After all it contains some of the finest specimens of mature and tender plants growing out in the open, without the help of man-made devices.

Thus it is a haven for the horticultural enthusiast, botanist, and for anyone interested in rarity and beauty. It is part of our heritage, both historically and horticulturally speaking, and therefore deserves to be better known as one of the great Irish gardens for which this country is noted.

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Above; A view across the lawn from the Middle west walk, showing *Quercus suber* far left, *Trachycarpus fortunei* middle centre and *Acer palmatum* 'Heptalobum Ozakazuki' far right with its beautiful autumn tints.

THE END
