

## REPORT FROM THE REGISTER – May 2013

With the announcement in this Journal of the publication of the Register on the internet it seems appropriate to remind ourselves of the goals and aspirations of this project especially for new comers and for members who were unable to attend the Dunedin Conference in December.

The New Zealand National Register of Heritage Roses was initiated by a group of four volunteers and supported by HRNZI in 2011 as part of a larger project to find and rescue the rare and commercially unavailable heritage roses in New Zealand. A small committee chaired by our President meets periodically and communicates regularly to further the aims of the project.

Our first task has been to research the names of the roses which were brought into New Zealand and to find as many of them as we can. Both the lost and found roses have been recorded into a Register which can now be viewed on the internet. An introduction to the Register gives some background and explains how it may be used. I urge all of our members to have a look at it and give us your feedback.

At this pivotal moment for our group it is appropriate to congratulate and thank Inger Gledhill who is our archivist and has spent untold hours researching and recording the information. This Register is her work and we are indeed indebted to her. Sadly, perhaps, for Inger, the work is not over. The Register is a living document and will be added to over time.

Of course a Register without the roses is not of much value to rose lovers and so the next strand of our project has sought to collect bud wood from all of the rare roses we can find and have it propagated to ensure their survival. Over the last decade we reached a crisis point of supply of heritage roses in New Zealand with the decline in the number of roses planted either in private or public gardens and with the demise of nurseries supplying these roses. Numerous varieties have also disappeared from nursery catalogue as the demand for these varieties dropped off.

We recognize that once a variety is no longer available for purchase it becomes endangered unless we know where it is growing and can find a way to propagate it and spread it around other gardens. To this effect, for two seasons, we have collected bud wood from every source of rare rose we can find even enlisting the support of the guardians of the public collections, particularly in the South, who have been very generous with their donations. There is much more work we can do in this area. To date about one hundred and fifty varieties have been found and propagated over the two seasons and some of these varieties are coming on stream to the market.

Concern has been raised with us by some members about correct identification of these varieties. This is a very important issue and is dealt with more fully in the introduction to the Register but stating it briefly here it is an issue we are aware of and we are taking as many steps as we can to verify that each rose is correctly named. We encourage members to inform us if they become aware of mistaken identity.

Our most important determination with this project is that from now on HRNZI will take control of the national collection of heritage roses so that we do not find ourselves in such a dangerous situation again. Once a rose is lost to us it is probably lost forever given the barriers of expense and regulation to importing bud wood.

We will achieve this goal by keeping track of our roses through the Register, by building positive relationships with the propagators of our roses and with the guardians of the public collections and by establishing flourishing collections around the country.

Here at Brandy Hill I am doing all I can to grow as much of the National Collection as I can find and I know of one or two other people throughout the country who have very respectable and valuable collections but this alone does not secure our roses. People get old and sick and they die and very often, as we have witnessed in the past, their collection often dies with them.

I would like to see us work to create national collections or at least large portions of the national collection in gardens throughout the country. These could be in private hands or in public gardens with joint responsibility of HRNZI and the councils or guardians of the gardens in that area. In an ideal world every region would have a collection which it shared responsibility for. If the monitoring and relationship is good enough we can work together to add to these collections and replace roses when they die. This may sound idealistic to some but we have found already an enormously positive groundswell of support both from public garden staff and from the public in support of what we are doing.

Finally, on a personal note, I want to express my thanks and gratitude to the many members throughout New Zealand who took up the baton this season when I became sick and collected or donated bud wood for propagation. I am very moved by your efforts and it has even occurred to me that a positive outcome of my illness has been to witness this support. Ultimately, a project is only as strong as the commitment of the members who believe in it and this season we witnessed the control move out of the hands of four people and into the hands of the members where it belongs. Inspirational!

Murray Radka – for the National Register Team.