

THE NEW ZEALAND NATIONAL REGISTER OF HERITAGE ROSES is part of a conservation project created in 2011 to protect the remaining heritage roses in New Zealand and was designed and is managed by four HRNZI member volunteers.

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We meet twice a year; in the spring to plan the annual bud collection and in autumn to debrief the season. We sometimes have a winter meeting to deal with any issues that have arisen, usually to do with the register itself. In the time intervening we work in our own ways to further the agenda of the project with publicity, searches, communication with members and administration

While we consult regularly and take an equal interest in all aspects of the project, Inger is our archivist, Fran our facilitator who also looks after publicity, Daphne is our secretary, the Executive representative on the project and also consults the experts. I support the project where I am able.

Initially we were funded by the Executive with a grant of \$5000.00 to be used for travel and expenses related to propagation. We have spent \$1700.00 in the time we have been operating and in January this year our remaining funding was rescinded so we operate now at our own expense.

THE REGISTER was published on the HRNZI website in 2013. It was compiled by Inger who has spent countless hours researching old documents and catalogues in order to get a base line of roses we know entered New Zealand since European settlement. Anyone seeking a rose can check the Register, quickly find the rose from the alphabetical list and see at a glance if it is still available and from whom. If the rose is in a private collection, indicated by 'PR', the member is welcome to contact one of us and we will facilitate its propagation. We encourage members to contact us if they have any questions about the availability of a heritage rose. Inger continues to receive lists of roses from various sources and the plan is to update the Register and website annually.

BUD WOOD is collected from mid December until late February and sometimes into March. As part of our initial set up we contacted five propagators around the country, two in the North Island and three in the South. They use a range of methods from budded roses, cutting grown roses, multiflora v laxa rootstock and a waxing process to protect against disease. We have found so far that the waxing method and laxa rootstock appear to suit southern conditions more than the north but we believe a range of methods and areas spreads the risk and helps ensure security.

A gratifying aspect for the team has been the number of members who have contacted us with news of interesting roses in their gardens or region and if it seems appropriate we ask them to send bud wood to one of our propagators. My nephew returned from Northland today with cuttings from an old vineyard cum restaurant where rose petal liqueur is made from an historic family recipe and rose brought from Croatia. His verdict - "amazing"! He brought cuttings to me plus the recipe. My loyalties are torn at present as to which excites me the most. We receive stories like this one frequently and if you want to tell us about a rose don't hesitate to contact us and we will guide you through the process which is similar to taking cuttings.

This season, 46 varieties have been sent for propagation, in 2013 48 varieties were collected and in 2012 we managed 103 varieties. I began sending bud wood from Brandy Hill and other collections in 2010 and collected 44 varieties up to the start of the Register project. Which means that in this short period more than 200 rare roses which were no longer in commerce have been found, registered and saved.

PUBLICITY has been a crucial aspect of our work and we must give full credit to Fran for her work in this area. In 2012 she not only toured the regions carrying the message but her eagle eye spotted gardens along the way with interesting plantings and she was not shy about approaching the owners and obtaining lists which she brought back to me. I was astounded with some of the names on these lists and in all but one case managed to persuade the owners to supply bud wood. In addition to this tour Fran arranged articles to be written in gardening magazines and of course the piece de resistance was the Dunedin Conference in 2012 which focused on lost roses and did more than anything to inform and inspire our members.

INTERNATIONAL interest is increasing in our project which appears to be unique. This year articles will appear, by invitation, in Rosa Mundi an American publication sent worldwide, the newsletter for the International Federation of Heritage Roses and recently, Daphne was invited to contribute to a Canadian publication. I have been invited to speak at the Australian Conference in Tasmania in November and the head gardener of Mottisfont Abbey, learning of our efforts during his visit to New Zealand, has written very positively about us in his blog. Go to the Mottisfont website and find the Jonny Bass blog.

THE FUTURE. Our team has many dreams for the project which we hope will go on long after us. Our next goals are to refine a system for making the roses available to members which we have found difficult up to now, to survey the North Island, to encourage more public plantings, and a goal, dear to my heart, is to find a way to import bud wood of roses we know were once here but are now lost to us. The Environment Protection Authority have been included in the information web and are delighted with it as it saves them huge amounts of time when processing importation applications.

CONCLUSION. While we meet just two or three times a year we consult frequently and spend a lot of our time working on the project. Seldom does a day go by when I do not have some contact with members throughout the country about our roses. For me it has been an adventure and I have had to learn the virtues of patience and persistence as well as become something of a detective. I have many tales of intrigue, espionage and downright thuggery. It is not simply a matter of entering a garden and collecting bud wood as my experiences with finding Miss Lowe a feeble, unlabelled little China in the Jessie Calder garden can testify. I visited her for five years before I found her in flower and could confirm her identity. Treasure! Rosa gallica took ten years of visits to the Dunedin Botanic Garden. Her label was under a large Rosa canina telling me she once lived there before a bird overhead felt a call of nature and deposited a Canina seed. As this is such an iconic rose I was determined to find her if she still existed. Finally, one year I spotted a little, deep pink bud in the depths of the large prickly rose. What visitors to the garden thought of the crazy man crawling about underneath a large briar bush I cared not as I emerged torn, tousled and triumphant with a precious cutting.

For more stories check out HRNZI Journals November 2011 "An Encounter With Mechtilde In The Garden" and

May 2012 "Three Days In February".