

# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HERITAGE ROSES ANNUAL REPORT - MAY 2020

This year sees the tenth anniversary of the Register Team's work to secure the New Zealand collection of heritage roses.

The idea for a national register was mooted in 2010 during the Dunedin celebrations for the 30th anniversary of HRNZI as a response to the rapidly dwindling supply and predicted permanent loss of many or most of our well-loved varieties.

The situation was not good then, but we could not have known how much worse it was to become. Although late to the rescue, we are grateful now that we began the fight back when we did.

## FOCUS 2020

While our broad goals have remained constant throughout the past ten years—i.e. find, register and save our endangered roses—our process has had to remain fluid within that period so that we might respond to changing circumstances and challenges as they arose. A narrow view and fixed mode of operation would not have worked for us nor produced the results we have achieved.

With the demise of D&S Nurseries last year and the need now for Tasman Bay Roses to delete less popular varieties, the importance of the public gardens has become paramount, so in the past twelve months our emphasis has been largely on building and cementing our connections with the managers of these public collections and developing mutually supportive relationships with them.

We began with a two-day seminar in 2019 involving the managers at the Wylde Willow Garden in Dunedin where we held full and frank discussions, allowing them to describe and discuss the problems they face on a day-to-day basis to maintain their collections and us to explain our purpose and need for their support. The seminar achieved our goals and was an unqualified success.

## THE REGISTER

Maureen Viggo, a Dunedin member, has joined our team and brings her own special expertise to the group. Two things stand out with Maureen—her passion for the roses and her knowledge and care when identifying an unknown variety.

Another person we are very proud to welcome is Clare Haig, the Nelson convener and a member of the National Executive who has taken on the role of liaison between the Register and the administration. Clare and our new President attended our November meeting at Brandy Hill so that they might familiarise themselves with the team and with our work. We greatly appreciated the gesture and hope to welcome them back again.

Inger Gledhill continues to manage the online register. She created the original document from detailed research and her work now involves adding, deleting and responding to requests for information. Recently she went through the document deleting references to D&S Nurseries and has

added Wairere Nursery. Inger has noted that since Clare's interview on National Radio she has received offers of assistance from across the country which is another indication of how our work, when understood, captures the imaginations of many people.

As we find, confirm the identity and distribute lost or rare roses, Inger makes the changes to the status of these roses on the Register and also aims to make the updated version available online once a year. Our Register is unique and has created significant international interest.

## **ISSUES**

### **Propagation**

We have been very fortunate to secure the services of three propagators to replace Doug and Sue Pacey. Two of these are professional budders and one operator does cuttings for us. It is early days but the results so far have been excellent with a wide range of roses propagated.

### **Ageing**

An issue that became apparent this year are the problems we face because of ageing plants and growers. When a variety becomes rare, we check the Register for people or gardens that still grow it. This year we were able to find all of the rare plants somewhere around the country but ran into problems obtaining suitably healthy bud wood or cuttings.

Ours is an ageing population and the people who grow roses in large numbers tend to have had them for years and no longer bother to upgrade when a plant is old or sickly, probably because many of our members are in the older age group

as well. This is true also of the public collections where many varieties have been in the ground for years and are at risk.

Our seminar highlighted this issue and we are gratified that our concerns were taken on board and there are now monitoring and replacement plans in most of these gardens. The Register Team has been active in helping to identify at-risk varieties and finding replacements to support the public collections.

### **Ordering**

At present a glitch has appeared with our ordering address [roserequests@gmail.com](mailto:roserequests@gmail.com). Until this is resolved members are encouraged to make their requests directly to one of the team members or to the National Executive. If it can't be resolved a new address will be opened and members will be informed.

### **Anonymity**

The Team has struggled with this issue. We want to acknowledge publicly the individuals who have helped us either with information or bud wood, but to do so would mean identifying the area or person who has a rare rose and many of you have asked us to keep that information private. Consequently we had to make a blanket rule that such information must be kept confidential — meaning we can only acknowledge privately and generally.

## **NEW RELEASES**

In 2019, thanks to the generosity of one of our new propagators, we were able to gift in excess of 100 rare roses to the public collections and to various members who had expressed

an interest in these varieties. While we do not expect to receive the next crop of plants for free, we do hope to make

this an annual event whenever we have surplus roses from the previous year's propagation to distribute.



*Charles Lefebvre (1861)*



*Frühlingsschnee (1954)*

## NEW FINDS

- **Charles Lefebvre:** Discovered by our members growing in the South Island region, this is a healthy, deep, blackish red Hybrid Perpetual.
- **Christopher Stone:** Not always easy to grow but a very beautiful example of a 1930s deep red Hybrid Tea.
- **Ethel:** an obscure and very beautiful Rambler.
- **Frühlingsschnee:** the only white form of the Frühlings (spring) roses. An earlier introduction proved not to be correct. We now have all forms of these Kordes roses except for Frühlingstag.
- **R. carolina:** the true *R. carolina* has eluded us for years but we believe this seed import to be correct.
- **R. macrophylla:** the Himalayan rose. From imported seed, this variety grows in the hills of Brandy Hill and is particularly striking when in flower but noticeable all year round with strong growth, lovely foliage and large hips.
- **R. nanothamnus:** From seed brought to New Zealand by an expedition sponsored by Lady Ann Berry. This obscure rose is a dwarf, white form of *R. webbiana* that flowers early and reliably. The foliage is ferny and delicate looking, and this rose is the Queen of our hill during its flowering season.
- **R. prattii (white):** the usual form of *R. prattii* is of slender, willowy growth with deep-pink to red flowers. Daphne discovered this variety growing in Timaru. It is a seed variation which has the growth habit of the original but is a delicate, stunningly beautiful white rose.
- **R. Roxburghii normalis:** a special clone of this lovely rose that came in as a seed.

## RECOGNITION

Our 2019 Pratt Family Scholarship recipient, Ann Speight, continues her survey of Central Otago locations for historic roses. This is a massive project taking Ann to far flung, often isolated destinations for just one rose. The roses are in cemeteries, on historic farms, on the roadside, and around deserted cottages and buildings. She propagates the cuttings, collects the stories wherever possible and keeps immaculate records. I have been the lucky recipient of many of her successes and have yet to identify many of them. One group that excites me very much are those that resemble **Penzance** hybrids and I suspect she may have found “**Amy Robsart**” and “**Greenmantle**”.

In conclusion our team has been gratified over the year with the widespread support of the public gardens’ managers and the active participation of many of our convenors who are surveying their members and districts, helping with the discovery of lost varieties and supplying us with bud wood. A number of individual members have also been very generous to the cause with bud wood.

To all members, convenors and members of the public who have fed us information, supplied us with bud wood or contributed in any way please accept our heartfelt gratitude.

Ngā mihi nui.

**Murray Radka**  
(For The National Register Team)