
Trelinnoe Park

During the 2009 IDS tour of New Zealand the Chairman of Council, Sir Richard Storey, presented a plaque to Trelinnoe Park. The following citation was given at the presentation and for a further description of the garden see pages 201-202.



John and Fiona Wills with Glyn Church at Trelinnoe.

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Trelinnoe is a 12 hectare or 30 acre garden situated in the hills above Napier on the east coast of the north island. The property was named Trelinnoe after the farm in Cornwall where John's grandfather lived before emigrating to New Zealand.

Blessed with a superb climate John and Fiona Wills have created a magnificent garden over the last 50 years. The climate is cool enough to grow fine deciduous oaks and other autumn colour trees and yet is mild enough to grow sub tropical plants such as *Luculia*. It is a remarkable climate, virtually unique in New Zealand with the ability to grow such a wide range of plants.

John is a plant fanatic and is constantly updating and enhancing the garden with every new plant that becomes available. He also has a fine eye when it comes to garden design. Trelinnoe can be enjoyed by amateurs simply for the atmosphere and pleasing design. Likewise true plant enthusiasts will find a wealth of interesting material such as *Franklinia alatamaha* and *Parrotiopsis jacquemontiana*. The garden is famous for its magnificent collection of magnolias, both cultivars and wild species. Fiona is more focused on the herbaceous side of gardening and so the visitor is treated to a visual feast.

John also has a good eye for a new plant and has introduced two maples to the nursery trade. Both of these were chance seedlings in the garden; namely *Acer* × *conspicuum* 'Esk Flamingo' and *Acer pseudoplatanus* 'Esk Sunset' and

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There are several water effects at Trelinnoe Park. Above is Middle Water with some of the wide collection of acers in colour. John says that "autumn is the most colourful season although spring runs a close second!"

photograph © the Dylan Norfield



photograph © the Wills family



photograph © the Wills family



Creation of vistas both within and without the garden is a feature of design. In the Broad Walk **above**, the lawn is flanked by plantings of Mollis azaleas, *Camellia reticulata* in variety, *Camellia granthamiana* and magnolias.

Right

Chiranthodendron pentadactylon, the devil hand tree grows into to a bold large-leaved tree. It has a heavy annual crop of flowers and fruit. The flower is a simile of a hand rising from a base or keel. Our trees are much visited by one of our songbirds. Usually the tuis, a solitary gatherer of nectar, defending 'his' tree from others of his kind. Yet when the devil's hand flowers are offered the trees are full of birds. The nectar must have some intoxicating content. Some birds flop to the ground, others just wobble on the branch. Like all good parties, the next day seems to bring the cure.

Opposite

bottom left, this is *Betula davurica*. **bottom right**, every year without fail *Ginkgo biloba* turns a brilliant yellow and then as if impatient to get into winter it drops all of its leaves in a couple of nights. It is planted here in a length of conifers with the aim of accentuating varying textures while breaking the blast of the cold southern wind.

photograph © the Wills family





Trelinnoe is a tree collectors paradise and comes alive in the autumn. *Acer* and *Betula* are well represented turning every shade of orange and yellow as the season progresses.



Cardiocrinum giganteum, the Himalayan lily sets seed prolifically. The dead flower stems shown here grew the previous spring, most reaching anything between 3 and 4.5m. It flowers just before Christmas in New Zealand and has large highly perfumed flowers that hang down in flower, doing a 180° turn to face upward in seed. When conditions suit it can spread quickly, the area they cover at Trelinnoe can be measured in acres. This photograph also shows *Rhododendron nuttallii*; the polished mahogany of their trunks complement the colour of the lily stems.

known in the American trade as 'Eskimo Sunset'. Trelinnoe is in the Esk Valley.

The garden is open to the public on a daily basis, and has an excellent café to encourage the public to visit.

The plants in the garden are labelled in a subtle way, and there is a complete record of the woody plants.

Their sons Bruce and Scott now run the family sheep farm and are constantly learning from their parents about their garden, so the garden will gradually shift to another generation.

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