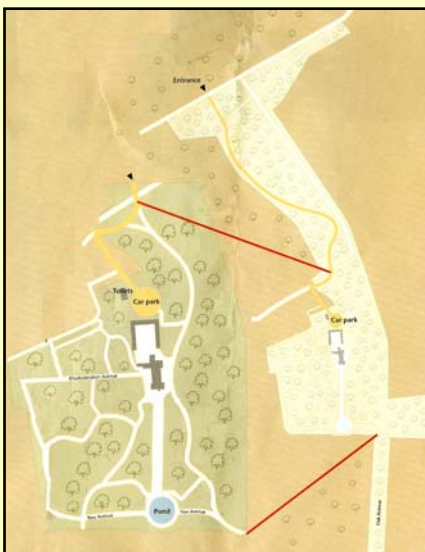


KILMACURRAGH ARBORETUM: DEVELOPING A SATELLITE GARDEN FOR THE NATIONAL BOTANIC GARDENS OF IRELAND

Peter Wyse Jackson* & Seamus O'Brien**,
* National Botanic Gardens of Ireland, Glasnevin, Dublin 9. Ireland
** Kilmacurragh Arboretum, Kilbride, Co. Wicklow, Ireland



Map of the Kilmacurragh Arboretum

The Arboretum at **Kilmacurragh**, Kilbride, Co. Wicklow, south of Dublin, Ireland's capital, is an important and **historic garden** now managed by the **National Botanic Gardens of Ireland**. A major **restoration** programme has been undertaken since 1996. Following decades of neglect, a new development plan is now being implemented.

The Arboretum is particularly famous for its **conifers** and **calcifuges** and was planted during the 19th Century by Thomas Acton, in association with the curators of the National Botanic Gardens at Glasnevin. Planting began on the estate in the 1850s when a wide range of plants were introduced that could not be grown in the less favourable climate and soils at the National Botanic Gardens Glasnevin. During the early part of the twentieth century the estate passed from the hands of the Acton family and fell into a state of neglect. In 1970 the property was taken over by the government. A 58 acre portion comprising the house, arboretum, walled garden and entrance drive-way was handed over to the State before becoming part of the National Botanic Gardens in 1996.

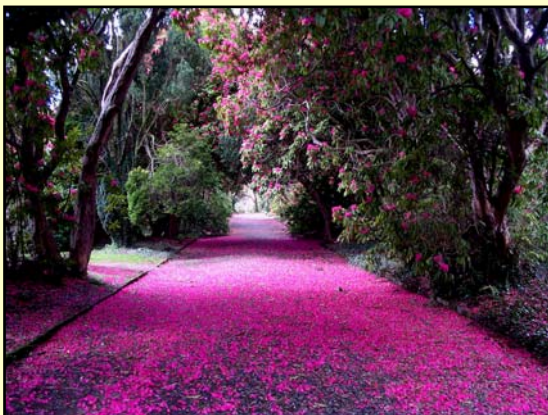
Thomas Acton and his sister Janet began planting the arboretum in 1850. It is said he had a rule of thumb to plant three of every tree or shrub: one to be planted where others told him it would definitely survive, one where he thought it would thrive, and one where he was informed it would definitely not survive. Alas we do not know of any surviving records as to which was which.

An avenue of *Rhododendron arboreum* and Irish yews (*Taxus baccata* 'fastigiata') runs from the rear of the house, surrounded by glades of southern conifers and many other rhododendron species. Central to the estate is Kilmacurragh House, built in 1697. Disastrous fires in 1978 and 1982 destroyed the roof timbers and now the house is in ruins. Restoration of the house may be considered in the future.



Future Plans

In recent years a major programme of replanting the Arboretum has been put in place. This includes sections for plants of **China**, **Chile** and the **Himalaya**. A Visitor Services and Educational programme has been established, including programmes of guided tours, workshops and other educational opportunities. The ecological restoration of native woodland and grassland ecosystems is also being undertaken, including proposed genetic collections of native tree species. Kilmacurragh Arboretum provides not only an important new area where the scientific research and conservation programmes of the National Botanic Gardens can be developed further but also an important visitor and environmental education amenity for the growing metropolitan population of Dublin.



Rhododendron avenue at Kilmacurragh Arboretum

The **National Botanic Gardens of Ireland** welcomes the development of new links and collaboration with institutions worldwide.

Opportunities are available at Glasnevin for:

- Horticultural placements and training
- University post-graduate opportunities
- Collaboration in science, conservation and horticulture

Please contact us for further information.

Email: botanicgardens@opw.ie

Website: www.botanicgardens.ie



Araucaria araucana avenue