



Kilmacurragh: sourced in the wild The moulding of a heritage arboretum Text and photographs by Megan O'Beirne

Systems Publishing, 2015

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photographs. ISBN: 9781905404216
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“I am thrilled that Megan O'Beirne has created a book beautifully illustrated with hundreds of her excellent photographs. It is a delight to read, so full of the stories that will make this great garden come alive for visitors. This book will open the eyes of many to this national treasure.” - Peter Wyse Jackson, President, Missouri Botanical Garden, St Louis, and former Director of the National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin.

YOU NEVER WALK ALONE AMONG TREES, especially not in Kilmacurragh Arboretum and Botanic Gardens, Kilbride, Co. Wicklow. Besides the powerful presences of champion trees, every dip and incline in the garden is suffused with a sense of history, from medieval times through those of the Anglo-Irish Acton dynasty to the present time. In this ‘garden like romance itself’, every projecting beam, twisted branch, angled trunk and grassed-over pathway speaks of a complex and dramatic past.

During their continuous tenure, successive generations of Actons, passionate about trees, planted a wide variety of both native and exotic trees of particular heritage and conservation importance today. The prized collections of conifers and the famous Himalayan tree rhododendrons sourced in the wild by Sir Joseph Hooker represent the nucleus of the arboretum.

The political and social context of the evolution of this arboretum was marked since the seventeenth century by a continual national struggle between opposites: wealth and misery, possession and dispossession, deforestation and silviculture, Protestant and Catholic, peace and aggression, power and impotence, hierarchical administration and democratic government.

In 1996, after some decades of neglect, the management of Kilmacurragh Arboretum and gardens was transferred to the National Botanic Gardens (NBG), Dublin, of which it is now a ‘sister garden’.

Megan O'Beirne

Writer and visual artist Megan O'Beirne first visited Kilmacurragh Arboretum in 2009. She was so enchanted that she resolved to fill a vacuum, to make an art book comprising text and photographs which would capture the spirit of this precious and little-known national treasure and help to publicise it. This book, seed-funded by Artlinks, is the fruit of her research and countless photographic sessions. O'Beirne has written for *Sunday Miscellany* at Radio Éireann and is a regular contributor of articles and photographs to Crann, Ireland's voluntary tree organisation.

More information and where to buy the book: www.meganobeirne.com/kilmacurragh.htm

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