

International Rock Gardener

ISSN 2053-7557



Number 126

The Scottish Rock Garden Club

June 2020



Six months into the year and still everything is in uproar – in the UK at least. There is little chance of international travel and even local meetings are in question as restrictions continue because of the Covid-19 pandemic. Thankfully there is some relaxation in the opening rules for plant nurseries, which is a real boon for nursery folk and gardeners alike, and some gardens have been able to welcome visitors again in a limited fashion. It seems that for many of us, it will be some time before “normal” life can resume. Envious eyes may be cast at countries where “social distancing” is not an issue and public gatherings are able to take place – but there are many in our circle who are still considered at risk and who

prefer to take the cautious route to a post-pandemic life. Those of us with our own gardens or outdoor space have been the most fortunate in all this – we must indeed be grateful for this privilege. I have heard friends say that their own gardens have never been so well-tended as they have been during the “lockdown”! Others have taken the chance just to “sit and stare” and that too has likely been something for which they can give thanks! Small mercies have gained mega importance lately, and each new flower has been welcomed with extra appreciation and affection.

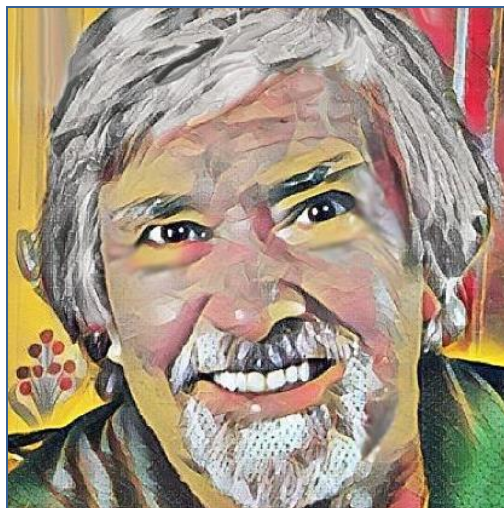
The inability of SRGC to host the many events planned which had to be abandoned is a matter for great regret but you may be sure that efforts will be made to bring us all together in safety in the future. It is particularly sad that our eagerly expected international guests are not able to visit. We hope to welcome them in the future, to have them share their expertise with us – this includes the return of Paul Spriggs (from Canada), Kenton Seth and Nick Courtens (from Colorado) and Jacob Mares from the Cheyenne Botanic Garden.

There is good news, however – IRG contributor Martin Sheader who suffered Covid-19 and has been very ill, is now getting much stronger and hopes to return home soon to continue his recovery.

This month the IRG has articles which may galvanise readers into action to follow the examples shown for projects. Ian Christie gives tips on grafting – for *Daphne* in this instance, though the system is of course similar for other woody plants too.

New contributor John Beaulieu, from Midhurst, Ontario, Canada, had a plan to repurpose an old metal tub - and made a neat miniature rockery with it. John’s portrait here is something else he made - playing with photo-effects!

J. Ian Young revisits an SRGC crevice garden venture at Inverewe Gardens on the west coast of Scotland and expresses his sorrow at the cancellation of this year’s planned follow-up event.



Ian Christie, John Beaulieu and J. Ian Young

Cover photo: Zdenek Zvolanek and Paul Spriggs at work on the rock garden at Inverewe in 2019 – photo J.I.Young.

---International Rock Gardener---

---Practical Workshop---

DAPHNE GRAFTING WORKSHOP - Ian Christie

Grafting Daphnes can pretty much take place at any time, providing the scion stock is not too soft. Firstly you will need some rootstock i.e. something to graft on to and most importantly, a good Daphne stock plant or you might be lucky and have a good friend who will allow you to have a small cutting or scion, try and get *D. petraea grandiflora*, several clones are around, or *D. x rollsdorfii*, *D. 'Tremaltzo'* for instance. Of course, these grafting techniques can be used on other plants as well, such as Acers. Daphnes can be grown on their own roots, from cuttings, but grafting is generally a little faster. Late Winter, early Spring and Autumn for grafting and late Spring and summer for cuttings is a rule of thumb.



Daphne plant in seed



Daphne mezereum seedlings

I use mostly *Daphne tangutica* as my rootstock but others such as *D. mezereum*, *D. retusa*, *D. pontica* etc can be used. *D. longilobata* is not good for us in Scotland as it will not survive the winter here.

Daphne tangutica is best for me as it is easy to grow from seed and just takes a year to be big enough to use. Seed is also available from SRGC seed exchange.

Several tools will also be needed, a sharp knife or blade. I use Stanley knife blades, some grafting tape, (the green tape is from our local florist) or thin elastic bands again from any corner shop.....



grafting tape....



mini clothes pegs.....

and sterile wipes.



---International Rock Gardener---

I use young *Daphne tangutica* and *Daphne mezereum* seedlings as root stock. These are first year seedlings potted in spring probably should wait for them to be bigger but I manage, with great care.



Daphne tangutica seedlings



First pictures show the seedling plant. Cut off the top of the seedling, with the pencil placed behind the rootstock to avoid cutting fingers on the sharp blade.



First, take your rootstock and cut the top off the plant - a good clean cut, then place blade over centre of the trunk cut down trunk a centimetre or

so. Take your scion (small cutting) - again making a clean cut across the trunk.



Then with great care cut the end of your scion (the trunk) to form a V make sure you have left some of the bark (cambium) on uncut scion (either side of the cut).



---International Rock Gardener---



Take your elastic band, cut it open, then make a simple cross-over loop, place band over rootstock and tighten slightly.



Then insert the scion into the cut trunk of the rootstock, make sure you match the uncut edge with the cambium to the outside edge of your rootstock (on the outside edge of the rootstock) i.e. marry the two close together.



Pull the two ends of the elastic band tight; this is important and you will know this is done well when you look at your new plant.

Other ways to secure the graft site....

We have also used tape as shown to wind round the new joint you have made, this must be tight.



---International Rock Gardener---

Should you find a good craft shop which sell these mini plastic clothes pegs, then once you have inserted the scion, simply clip the peg on the joint. This can usually give a good closure on the graft area.



Once you have made your grafts then place in a propagator which can be purchased from superstores, mine cost £9.95) leave all in a shaded place, under bench in glasshouse etc. If you can't find a propagator then use a large fish box or similar with some glass over the top. I keep the lid closed for 3 weeks; have a look now and again. I then open vents on lid and leave for another 3 weeks, plants should be growing now. I also put some fleece over if very hot. They will need around 6 weeks to take, keep watch every so often, very little water is needed. After 4 weeks remove the pegs if plants look healthy.



Note how graft has grown around inserted scion.



---International Rock Gardener---

One other important point is that it is best to sterilise your blade after each cut; this can be done by wiping blade on a Steret; these can be purchased from your local chemist and come sealed in foil so they are very easy to use. You can also pass your blade through a flame (candle etc) to sterilise it. The next point to consider is the growing medium.



pumice



3-5mm grit

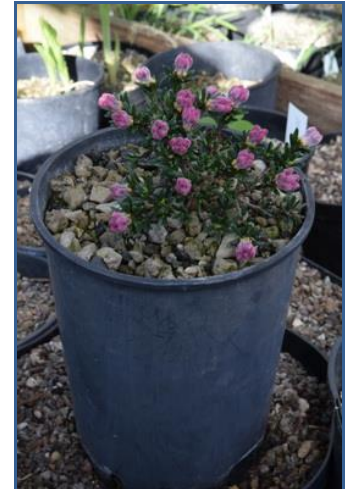
Compost bags, John Innes and loose Melcourt Bark



Compost mixed

I grow the plants in deep plastic pots - watch the watering! With care I have added some pumice to the compost for extra drainage: pumice is mixed size and light so does not make the mix solid. I have built a Daphnetum in the garden which was a raised bed terraced with old granite doorsteps where I have added new John Innes no 3 mixed with around 50% pumice - probably mixed gravel would do the same.

I do not promise success first time with grafting but if you are careful then all should do well. Please remember sharp blades can be very dangerous so take great care. I hope you can follow these instructions.



---International Rock Gardener---



Grafted Daphnes growing on.



Daphne x rollsdorfii in the garden



Daphne arbuscula



Daphne kosaninii



More *Daphne arbuscula* forms.....



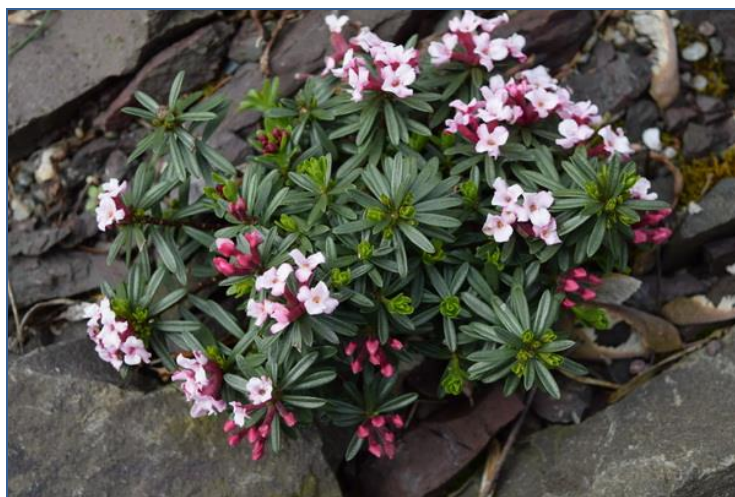
---International Rock Gardener---



Cyril Lafong's magnificent hybrid 'Bonnie Glen' photographed in different lights.



Daphne 'Kelsey Anne'



Daphne x 'Liberton'



D.x 'Maisy Larae'

Daphne 'Marion White'

---International Rock Gardener---

---A recycling opportunity---

Create A Miniature Rockery by John Beaulieu

We see a lot of major rock garden installations in this magazine, and I'm sure many readers would love to have the space to build such features, but often we simply do not have the space for doing so. However, do not let that stop you from having fun with a miniature rockery in whatever container you might happen to have.

I'm fortunate to have an acre to play with here in central Ontario (USDA zone 4), and I have sure hauled my share of rocks into the garden over the 20 years that we have lived here. When we moved here it was mostly lawn, and in the middle was a steel tub, about 3 feet in diameter (nearly 1 metre), that the previous folks had used as a fire pit.



I had moved it aside and used it as a planter for many years, growing things like cannas or hybrid pelargoniums in it. A few years ago, having a few spare rocks from a recent collecting trip, (is there really such a thing as a **spare** rock?) I got the idea to build a miniature rock garden in this steel tub, which I had positioned beside the driveway. I figured it would be a small introduction to all the rocks that are in the back yard garden.

Overview of the tub

---International Rock Gardener---

I was not sure what to plant in it, as container gardening can be tricky here in Ontario compared to the more moderate climate in places such as the UK. Our 35°C summers can bake plants in containers, especially if in a sunny exposure, and the opposite is also a challenge when our -35°C winters will freeze containers beyond what many plants can handle. The one good thing about this location was that snow from the driveway would get piled to a depth of 4 or 5 feet (over 1 m) on top of the tub!



Rocks arranged in tub

As it turned out, I had just enough rocks to completely cover the surface of the tub, leaving only narrow crevices for planting. I did not want a lot of exposed soil, as this is a sunny location and without the protection of the rocks, the soil would dry very quickly. I had plenty of seedlings (mostly geraniums and erodiums) from various club seed distributions, to try a variety of plants.



The seedlings in place

---International Rock Gardener---



A few months later, in September

The plants were thriving, and at first the dominant plants were *Erodium manescavii* and some of the hardy geraniums. These were some of the nicest *Erodium manescavii* that I had ever grown from seed. These storksills can be a very variable species.



Erodium manescavii

---International Rock Gardener---



Geranium argenteum and a *Draba* sp.

There were smaller plants too... Probably too many, but I was not sure which would survive the winter in the tub. It would be interesting the next spring to see who had survived.



In March, the winter snow is leaving

---International Rock Gardener---



Geranium argenteum

To my surprise, the star of the tub turned out to be the *Geranium argenteum*, a small cranesbill with wonderful silvery foliage. The wonderful *Erodium manescavii* did not survive the winter in the tub, even though they flourish here in the ground. Always a gamble in extreme climates when you try different out-of-zone plants... And very rewarding when it works!

J.B.



Geranium argenteum flower.

---International Rock Gardener---

The Scottish Rock Garden Festival at Inverewe 2019 – J. Ian Young



Natural shoreline crevice garden at Inverewe.

---International Rock Gardener---

In early September last year I was across at the National Trust for Scotland's Inverewe Garden where we had gathered together an international team of rock garden experts to rebuild a small part of the large terraced rock garden in a crevice style landscape.

The project is a co-operation between the Scottish Rock Garden Club and the Inverewe Garden and this phase was to restore part of the historic rock garden in a modern crevice style as well as staging a series of workshops and talks as part of the SRGC David Boyd scheme of reaching out and sharing our knowledge and passion for rock gardening with the wider community.



Before I report on the talks, workshops and the building of the crevice garden at Inverewe, I want to explore a little beyond Inverewe garden to put the rock garden we created into context. On the Sunday with the construction work behind us, Paul Spriggs and I, on my by then weary legs, took a walk towards Loch Kernsary and Beinn Airigh Charr which at 791m is described in Scotland as a 'Corbett' - higher mountains in Scotland with a height over 3,000 feet (914.4 m) are defined as 'Munros'. When I was younger I was dropped from the Munro hill walking group because I was too slow, rarely having time to achieve the summit.



---International Rock Gardener---

The reason for my tardiness was not as it is now, my fitness, but my curiosity and fascination with nature especially in the plants, the geology and the relationship between them that is still the same today.



Both rocks and plants are interesting to me but when they are combined they become even more fascinating and most of my inspiration for our garden comes directly from observations I have made in nature. This magnificent exposed weathered and fissured chunk of bedrock, bearing the scars of glaciation, is a natural rock garden full of crevices and cracks where the first pioneers are the lichens, then mosses and eventually humus builds up in the cracks and crevices allowing plants to grow.

It is not just the exposed bedrock that can become a natural rock garden or provide us with inspiration and ideas that we can interpret and mimic in our gardens.

Here it is an exposed bolder dumped by a retreating glacier that over time has become split and sufficiently cracked to allow plants such as *Calluna vulgaris* and *Alchemilla alpina* to grow.



---International Rock Gardener---



These beautiful silvery white lichen-painted boulders stand out against the dark peaty water forming an interesting water garden that could easily be interpreted into a garden feature with a pond with a marginal area rising up to a rock garden bed.



---International Rock Gardener---



A simple 'V' shaped cleft left by a fracture sometime in the history of this rock is all that it takes for some debris to collect allowing nature and plants to take over.

This rock has split into two parts and again if the only type of rocks that are available to you are rounded boulders than you could copy this idea and split them by drilling holes then driving in wedges. Interestingly the presence of Paul Spriggs' boot in the top of this picture forms a strong link and if my memory serves me well it

was David Sellars from Vancouver that has used this very method to create a rock garden by splitting such large boulders to form planting crevices in his garden.



Both around and within Inverewe Garden you will discover a wide range of habitats and garden types such as the walled kitchen garden facing south on the shores of Loch Ewe that has been fertilised by seaweed hauled up from the shore since it was first built in the nineteenth century, using soil brought in by boat to supplement the rocky land.

---International Rock Gardener---



Walking round the garden you find yourself moving through many different habitats and plantings, some quite surprising such as this area around a pond planted with *Sarracenia*.

I suspect that this feature was aimed at attracting the attention of children visiting the garden – it certainly attracted me!



I was fascinated by this thriving planting of insectivorous plants including the *Sarracenia*.

---International Rock Gardener---



Also growing very well in this moist bed is the Venus flytrap (*Dionaea muscipula*).



I think that this is a form of *Cordyline australis* one of many New Zealand plants which are a feature throughout the garden – I am prepared to be corrected by anyone with more knowledge of these.

---International Rock Gardener---



Nymphaea alba - I am more used to seeing this scene in the spring before the waterlilies make their annual appearance and when the magnolias are in flower. The foliage of the *Gunnera* in the background was showing great colour in September.



---International Rock Gardener---



Tree stump



Despite its small stature the rotted, hollowed out trunk of this *Salix lanata* reveals its great age.

---International Rock Gardener---



This was the view before me as I walked along the foreshore and salt marsh towards the Inverewe peninsula.

The superb propagation glasshouses at Inverewe have a magnificent view across the sea-loch to the mountains beyond.



---International Rock Gardener---



Low tide reveals the seaweeds which when used as a mulch provide a rich source of humus and nutrients.



---International Rock Gardener---



The whole rocky peninsula of Inverewe provides many natural rock outcrops and here, by the main visitor path, the gardeners are slowly clearing some of the overgrowth revealing the rocks and opening up planting opportunities for some of the smaller plants.

It is away from the public paths, down on the shore, that I find the most fascinating rock formations - many creating beautiful natural rock gardens which relate directly to the crevice bed we worked on.



---International Rock Gardener---



From the shore the land rises steeply up to the garden but for the next sequence of pictures I stay on the level of the loch.



Words are not necessary with these images please enjoy and take inspiration from the natural beauty of the rocks and plants.

---International Rock Gardener---



Armeria maritima grows in the rocks at the shore.



Armeria maritima and some rather luxuriant lichens.

---International Rock Gardener---

I love this transition from seaweed garden through salt marsh, to rock garden rising up to the woodland.



A stunning sequence of rock formations provides a home to many wild plants.

---International Rock Gardener---



Armeria maritima has a root hold in the cracks of the rocks with *Cochlearia danica* growing among the scattered rocks.



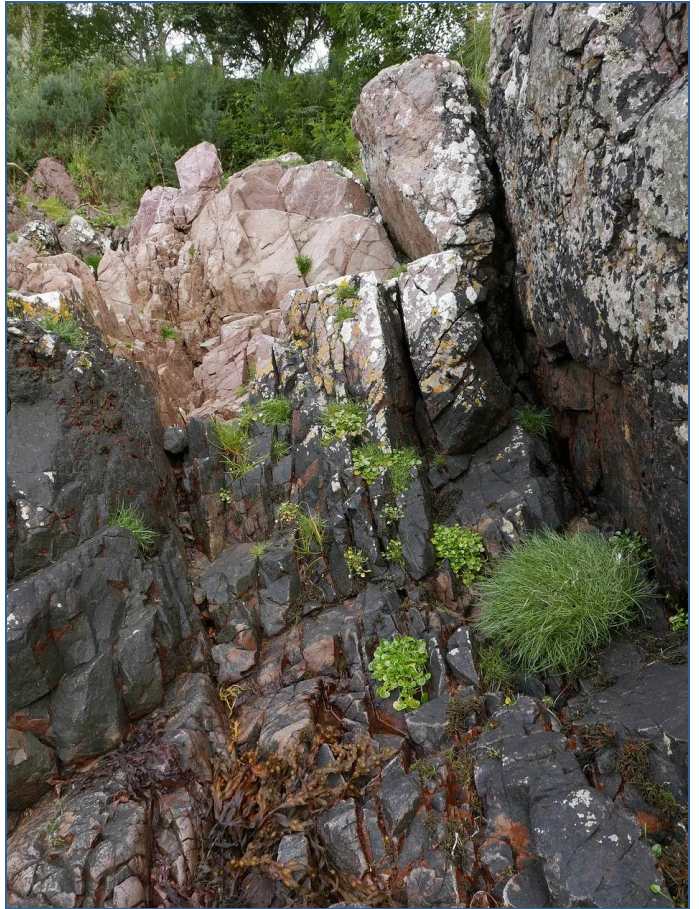
Seaweed, salt marsh and rocks.

---International Rock Gardener---



Here is the natural crevice garden shown earlier with *Armeria maritima* and *Cochlearia danica* growing in the narrow crevices.

---International Rock Gardener---



The dynamic nature of this section of sandstone can be seen both by the scattering of sharp fractured fragments lying around the base as well as by the colour which has not been disguised by the growth of lichens which are unable to gain a hold on the constantly changing surface.

---International Rock Gardener---



Natural crevice gardens with *Armeria maritima* and *Cochlearia danica*



---International Rock Gardener---

The inspiration for the type of garden we worked on at Inverewe lies in natural crevice gardens such as this one with *Armeria maritima* and *Cochlearia danica* among the plants: compare that with our newly made version below, as the plants are added. I hope in time the plants will grow and settle in and more will join them so that the new bed matures to have an almost natural look – overlooking the fact that there are New Zealand plants growing there !



Newly planted crevice garden at Inverewe.

---International Rock Gardener---

It was important to us that this new garden blended well with the surroundings to give as natural a look as possible to every view of the area – the surroundings are too attractive to “interfere” with!



The foreshore at Inverewe.

---International Rock Gardener---



You can see our crevice work sitting to the left above these natural rock gardens.

Now to the actual events of the Scottish Rock Garden Festival – beginning with the material used by the National Trust for Scotland to publicise the event.

INVEREWE
THE SCOTTISH ROCK GARDEN FESTIVAL

NATIONAL TRUST for SCOTLAND

Where to find the Rock Garden

Inverewe House, Sazerac Gallery and Pithie Café
Inverewe Garden Café
Visitor Centre

Rock Garden

INVEREWE
THE SCOTTISH ROCK GARDEN FESTIVAL
5 – 9 SEPTEMBER 2019

nts.org.uk

nts.org.uk

The National Trust for Scotland is a Scottish charity 100940

For the love of Scotland

---International Rock Gardener---

The Project

The chosen site for the Rock Garden Project is situated in front of Inverewe House, in the first area reached on the path leading to the lower terraces approximate size of 8m by 4m, with a second area further round that path around the natural rock outcrop.

Materials

Materials provided for the project include 5 tonnes of rock in different shapes and sizes, 5 tonnes of sharp sand and around 1 tonne of light top soil and a selection of wonderful rock garden plants!

SCOTTISH ROCK GARDEN CLUB EXPERTS

Ian Young

Ian Young has been interested in plants since he was a boy, he has focused much of his attention on bulbs, alpine and rock garden plants.

The garden created by Ian and his wife Margaret is full of many innovative features and within it they have moulded a range of habitats from alpine troughs to woodland to suit the equally wide array of plants they grow.

Formally a President of the Scottish Rock Garden Club Ian writes a weekly garden diary, the Bulb Log, which appears on the website www.srgc.net

As well as his writing Ian is a popular speaker and has lectured widely both within the UK and internationally.



Paul Spriggs

Paul is an avid plant explorer, photographer, mountaineer, owner of Spriggs Gardens Landscaping company, and current President of the Vancouver Island Rock and Alpine

Garden Society. He has a passion for all wild plants especially those of dwarf stature and collects and cultivates them at various gardens in his hometown of Victoria, BC, Canada. Paul has learned the craft of crevice garden building directly from one of it's innovators, Zdenek Zvolanek, of the Czech republic, and in the past decade and a half, has built many gardens in public parks and private homes that range in size from small feature troughs, to large installations involving many tonnes of stone. Paul is passionate about spreading the word of this style, through speaking to garden clubs all over the west, and by giving workshops for those keen on learning the finer points of this developing art form. He is currently working on the first North-American book about crevice gardens with Co-author Kenton Seth. He has been rock gardening for roughly 22 years and building crevice gardens for about 15 years.



Zdenek Zvolanek

Zdeněk Zvolánek (known as ZZ) is a famous Czech crevice gardener, designer and builder who has been creating crevice gardens around the world, such as those at the Botanic Gardens of Montreal in Canada, Bangsbo in Denmark and RHS Wisley in the UK, as well as more than 20 gardens in Bohemia and many private gardens elsewhere. ZZ has been gardening for 40 years at his own garden in a vertiginous former quarry in the Czech Karst. ZZ, also a musician, is a popular speaker who has travelled extensively as a speaker and visiting wild plant habitats. He is closely involved in the Czech Rock Garden Society (CZRG), editing their journal and he is a founder member of the editorial team for the magazine for the Scottish Rock Garden Club, 'International Rock Gardener'. He wrote The Crevice Garden and its Plants, published by the Alpine Garden Society 2006, ISBN 9780900048784.



Walks and Talks

In addition to the project work there will be two talks which will be held in the Inverewe Garden Café.

Friday 6 September

14.00

Demonstration of landscaping in troughs and containers (subject to weather)

Venue: Near to the Rock Garden

19.00

Rock Gardening in Troughs and Containers – Ian Young
Venue: Inverewe Garden Cafe

Saturday 7 September

14.00

Demonstration of landscaping in troughs and containers (subject to weather)

Venue: Near to the Rock Garden

19.00

Crevice Gardens - Paul Spriggs
Venue: Inverewe Garden Cafe



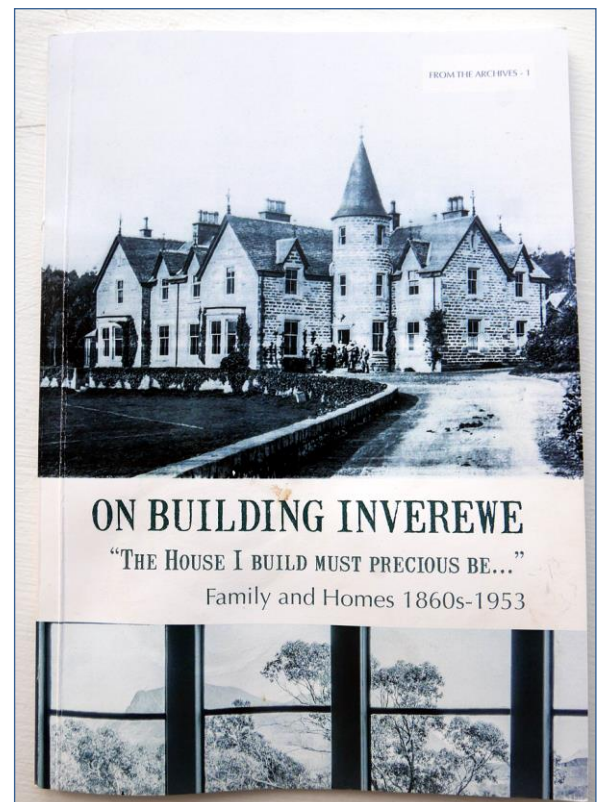
The publicity leaflet for the project from the National Trust for Scotland, and the entrance to Inverewe Garden.

---International Rock Gardener---

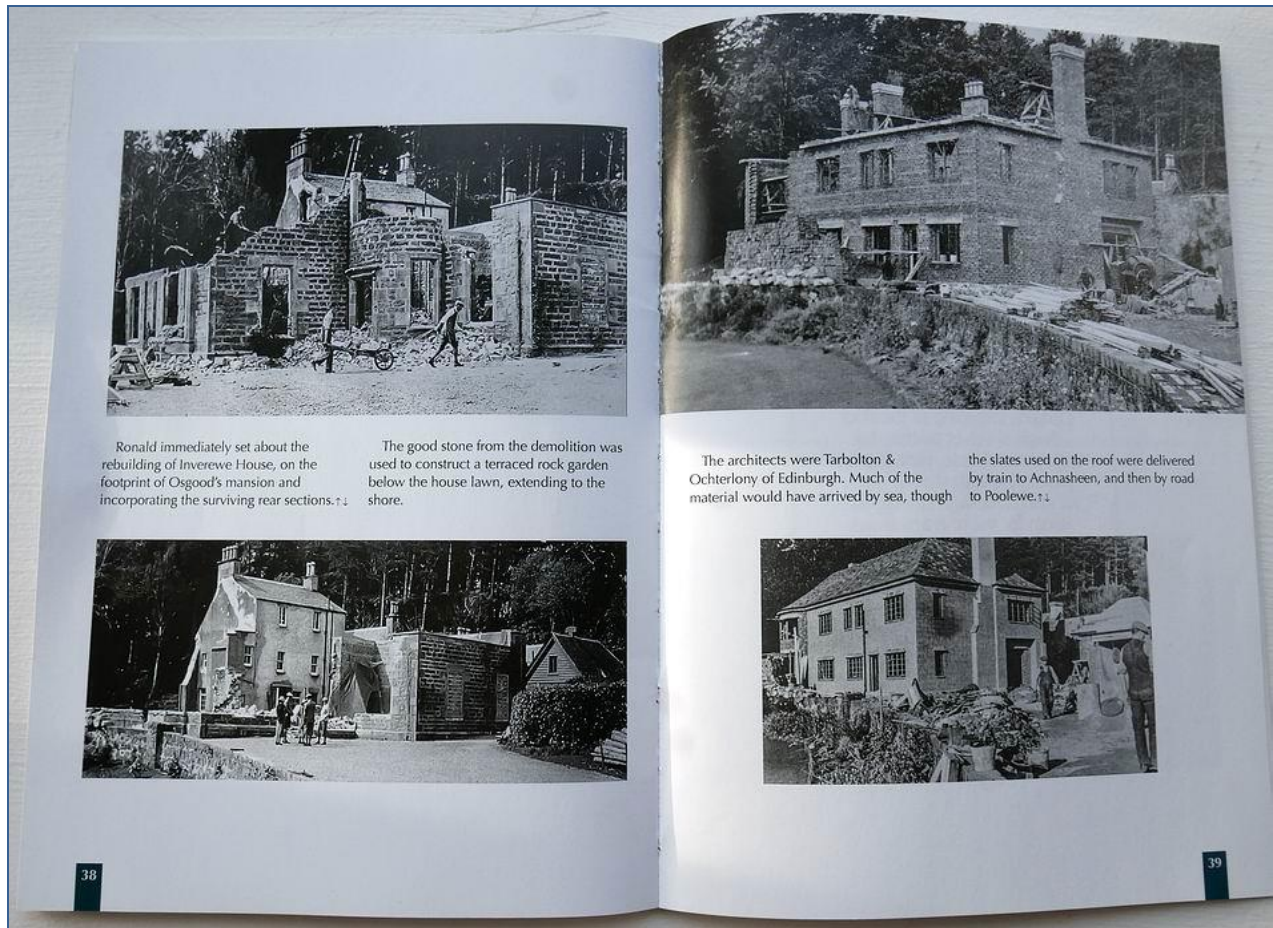


The core team consisted of myself, Zdenek Zvolanek from Prague, Paul Spriggs from Vancouver Island and the Scottish Rock Garden Club President, Julia Corden – both ZZ and Paul have experience of building many such gardens across the world.

Inverewe Garden has a long interesting history which is well worth reading about and the NTS has published an excellent booklet on building Inverewe, ISBN 978-1-9997516-0-9, here I will concentrate on the history of the rock garden. The original house, built by Osgood Mackenzie in the 1860s, burnt down to a roofless ruin in 1914. The family moved into one of the gatehouses until the remains of the ruins from the fire could be demolished and a new house built in its place; only the remains of a back wing stayed intact and survive today.



---International Rock Gardener---



Ronald immediately set about the rebuilding of Inverewe House, on the footprint of Osgood's mansion and incorporating the surviving rear sections. 71

The good stone from the demolition was used to construct a terraced rock garden below the house lawn, extending to the shore.

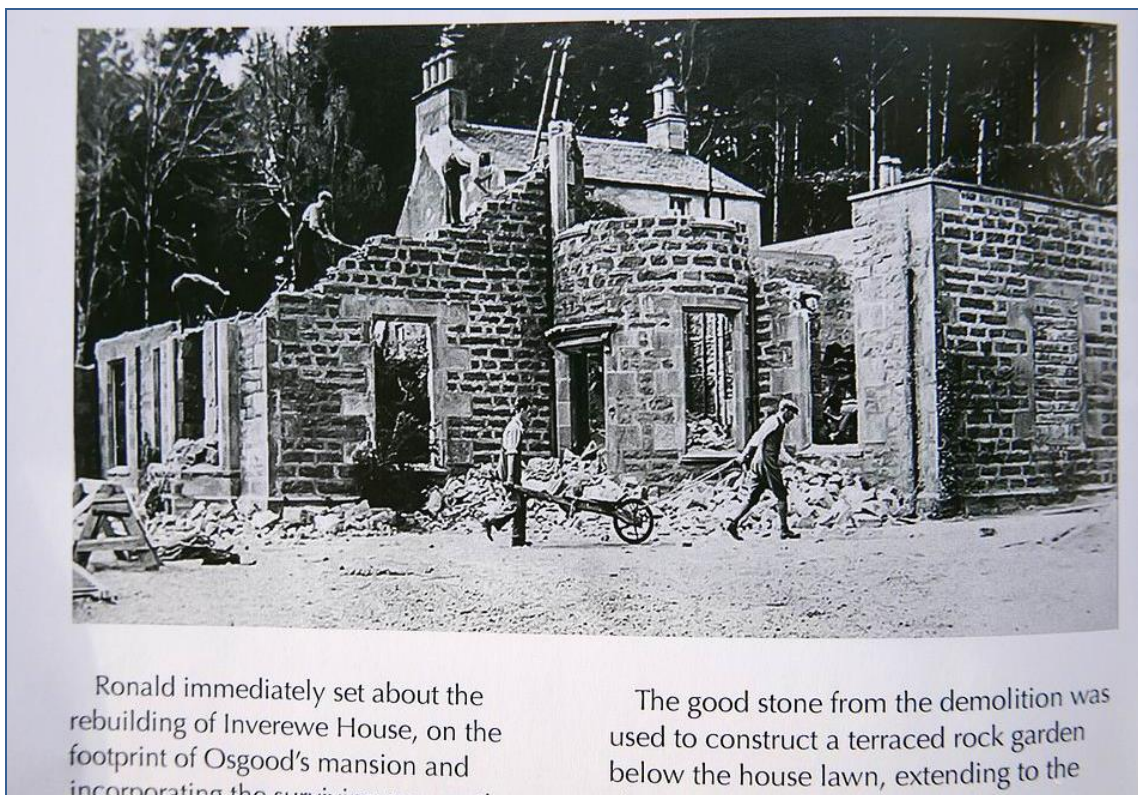


The architects were Tarbolton & Ochterlony of Edinburgh. Much of the material would have arrived by sea, though

the slates used on the roof were delivered by train to Achnasheen, and then by road to Poolewe. 71



The reason that this is relevant to the rock garden now becomes apparent because the original house was built of red Torridon Sandstone and it was these very blocks of stone that Maire Sawers, Osgood's daughter, used to construct the original terraced rock garden, some of which we were using in the new construction.



Ronald immediately set about the rebuilding of Inverewe House, on the footprint of Osgood's mansion and incorporating the surviving rear sections.

The good stone from the demolition was used to construct a terraced rock garden below the house lawn, extending to the

---International Rock Gardener---



Much of the original rock garden terraces remain intact and it is hoped that in coming years they can be restored.



A unique feature of this rock garden is this reclining Eucalyptus tree which has become a popular tactile and visual feature with the many thousands of visitors who admire and scramble across the beautifully marked silky smooth trunk.

---International Rock Gardener---



The core team had the honour of staying in the upper apartment of Inverewe house where we enjoyed the very same magnificent views across Loch Ewe towards the mountains of Torridon that attracted Osgood MacKenzie to build his mansion here. This accommodation was particularly handy as it overlooked the rock garden and we could see the top of the site from our bedroom windows as well as the sitting room.



View from the sitting room window.

---International Rock Gardener---



View from the terrace, across the lawn and Loch Ewe towards the village of Poolewe and the mountains.



This is the view from the bedroom window looking across the lawn with the eucalypt and the rock garden on the ground that falls down towards the shores of the loch; the top of our site can be seen on the left (where the pallets and barriers are) with the towering Beinn Airigh Charr in the distance.

---International Rock Gardener---

This project has been discussed over a few years and when I was over at the Inverewe Erythronium Festival in April we selected the area that we would work on and during the spring and summer months the Inverewe Garden staff cleared it of all perennial weeds, such as couch grass, so it was ready for us to start into the work on 5th September.

The garden staff also gathered around 10 - 12 tonnes of the materials that we had asked for, to the nearest location accessible by mechanical means.



When we arrived the gently sloping site below the terraced wall was cleared of all the weeds and ready for us to get started on building the new crevice garden.



---International Rock Gardener---



Although I had sent a number of pictures of our work area to Paul Spriggs, the main designer and builder, he only saw the site for the first time when we arrived on Wednesday, 4th September – above Paul, ZZ and myself are surveying and discussing the plan with some of the main Inverewe Garden staff.



The bed with some of the rocks viewed from lower down the slope (which falls off steeply down to the shore line).

---International Rock Gardener---



The first thing we had to do on the site was to lift the old large edging stones along the path edge as well as the other stones few large stones that remained buried in the area.



Originally these large edging stones had been laid flat and our intention was to reuse them by standing them on their edge as part of the crevice work. Some were pretty heavy and moving them gave a good indication to the amount of heaving and grunting that we had let ourselves in for over the next four days of the build.

---International Rock Gardener---



Paul Spriggs, Ian Young and Zdenek Zvolanek.

The idea behind this style of crevice gardens is that they should mimic a natural rock outcrop where the often tilted strata degrade to form natural crevices in which plants can establish - and you do not have to go far to find examples for inspiration. If we happened to stumble and fall down the slope we would land beside this outcrop which sits directly below where we are working - fortunately no one fell but I did explore the shore line.

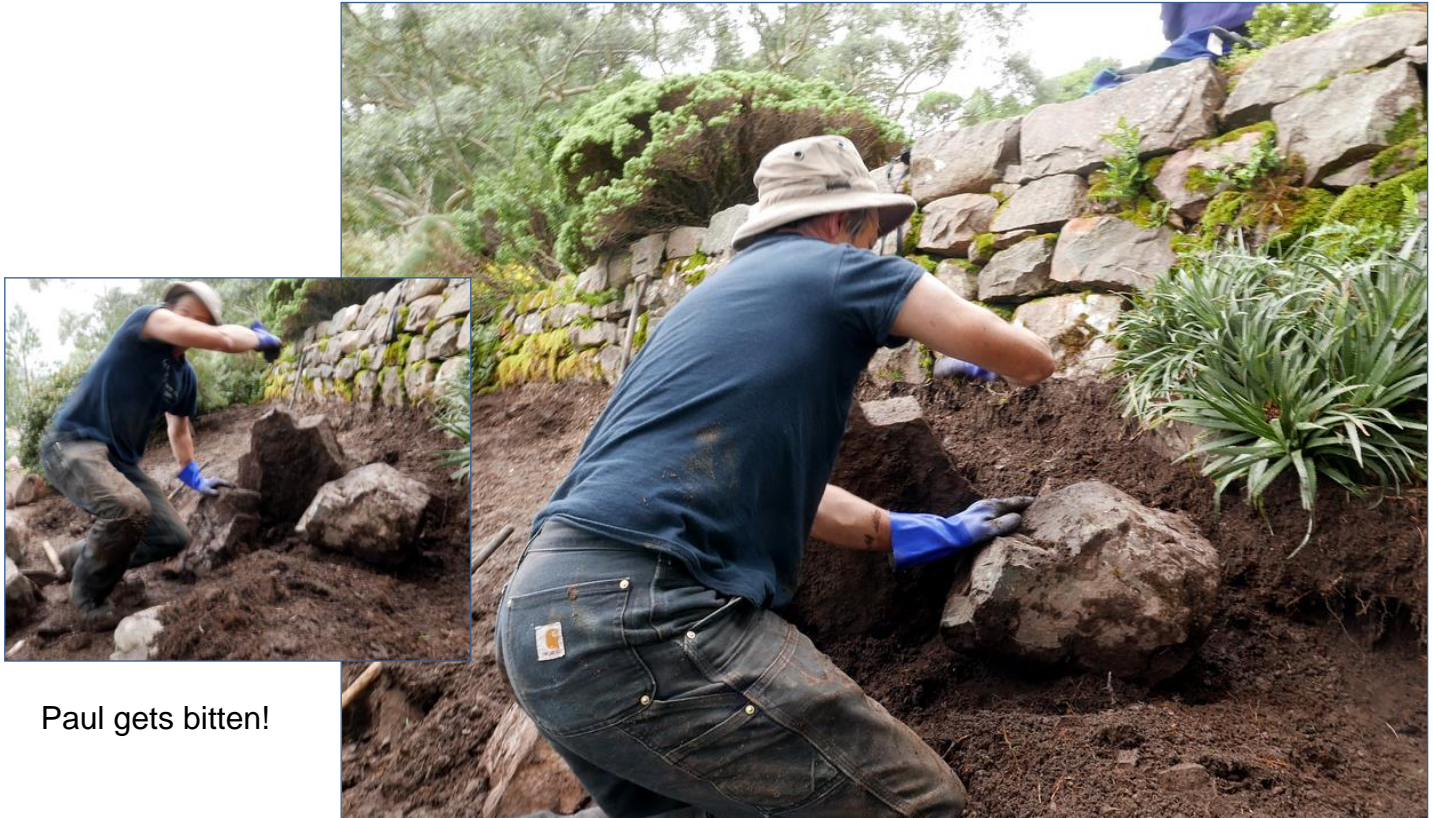


The rock outcrop on the shore, directly below the working area.

---International Rock Gardener---

The next decision is to decide on the angle of the crevices and it is always preferable to have the crevices sloping diagonally across a bed and not parallel or at right angles as that provides the most effective view of the rock faces and landscape we are creating. We chose an angle so those approaching along the main access path to this level would be faced with a lovely oblique view of the rock faces we were forming with the rocks.

During the process of setting the first few stones Paul became introduced to the Scottish Midge, a fearsome insect that likes a bit of blood.



Paul gets bitten!



The next stage was to start building up the ground levels with an infill of sand, loam and grit to create height.

We used at least 10 to 12 tonnes of material on this project: the sand and grit came in 20kg bags while the loam and rocks were loose and all of this material had to be moved by hand some distance often down several levels to where it was required and much of it had to be handled a number of times, all of it at least twice.

As well as the famous midges we also had some experience of the West Coast rainfall which luckily

mostly came at night or during our breaks but it did make the ground very muddy so we spread out some of the silver sand to make it cleaner to walk on.

---International Rock Gardener---



The heaviest rain, and it was torrential, came on Thursday night after the first days build and we were delighted to see there had been no wash-out of the material from between the crevices we had constructed.

We received permission to break through the wall continuing the crevices right up linking the main construction right up onto the upper level.



While you can form a rough impression of the finished landscape in advance, there are so many variables that arise along the build that you have to be adaptable, constantly reviewing the design and now that we had permission to break through to the upper level we needed to reassess. Rather than a single summit we decided to go for two high points on the lower level reaching a third and highest point on the upper level. Building a rock garden is an art and much like working on a drawing or painting

where each mark (or rock) you lay down influences where and how the next one should be placed.

---International Rock Gardener---

Each rock has four orientations in one plane and two in the other and we did end up turning some rocks, often the heaviest, in all possible variations until we found the way we all liked best. We would take it in turns to stand back as the spotter while the others manhandled the heavy weights around heaving and rocking until we got the thumbs up that we had a good position.

The placement of the rocks is an aesthetic choice so having an artistic eye helps plus the decision becomes easier with experience – the most experienced among us, ZZ, would often call out “higher higher”! Have you ever tried to roll an extremely heavy rock up a hill?



With the exception of rocks from the wall and the few we dug up on site all the other materials had to be brought in by hand from the nearest access point some distance and two levels up from the main working site: how much easier our work would have been if the new mini digger with its range of attachments could have had access all the way down to the site.



Mini-digger and the pallets of our materials.

---International Rock Gardener---



We are very grateful to all the young Inverewe Garden staff, both permanent and temporary, who worked so hard and enthusiastically, staying on well beyond their required hours of employment delivering the material down to the work site from the storage area and then helping heave and manoeuvre some of the heaviest rocks as we moved them into the final position.

I was very thankful for this help - we could not have done it without them.

---International Rock Gardener---



Gradually the build gained height as we approached the top of the wall and the upper level.

Friday, the second day of the build, the weather improved and we enjoyed the most magnificent day with blue skies and sunshine.

Early on The Midge was out and biting so we rushed for the repellent, some choosing to wear midge nets, but the fearsome beasts were soon forced into retreat as the sun gained in strength.



With much of the major rock work on the lower level now in place it is time for another break. Sometimes it is good to stop and get away from the site for a break coming back refreshed to view the work with a fresh eye.

---International Rock Gardener---



Gone for lunch! The scene outside our accommodation during a break.



While inside.....we eat cake! Zdenek Zvolanek, Zdena Kosourova, Paul Spriggs and Julia Corden.

---International Rock Gardener---



As well as working on the garden Zdena Kosourova, ZZ's partner, was an important member of the team: as the most skilled cook she kept us fed with the delicious food that she prepared from fresh vegetables picked for us from the Inverewe walled kitchen garden.



There were many gatherings and discussions held around our dining table during the course of our stay: some were more serious than others, such as here on our first day where Paul is explaining our outline and vision to Head Gardener Kevin Ball.



---International Rock Gardener---



Later in the build two more former SRGC presidents, Ian and Carole Bainbridge, arrived - helping with the lighter tasks of planting, top dressing, cleaning the rocks behind the construction team, as well as demonstrating how to make a fish box trough to some of the constant stream of garden visitors.

The Scottish Rock Garden Club's David Boyd Events are intended to reach out, taking our enthusiasm and expertise on Rock Gardening to outlying areas as well as cooperating with other organisations such as the Inverewe Rock Garden Project. In addition to the fish box trough demonstration Paul and I



both gave demonstrations on the lawn beside the rock garden showing how you can landscape and plant a container creating your own small scale crevice garden.

---International Rock Gardener---

Right: Ian Young landscaping a container and below - the next day Paul Spriggs demonstrates his version.



On Friday and Saturday evening Paul and I gave illustrated talks covering all aspects of crevices landscapes large and small from the construction of small troughs, raised beds all the way up to some of the large scale crevice gardens that Paul has constructed both by himself and alongside Kenton Seth.

---International Rock Gardener---



Kevin Frediani, Ian Young, Paul Spriggs, Zdenek Zvolanek and Head Gardener, Kevin Ball.



After the talk in the evening and as a relaxation we showed that we could also rock out in another sense with an unscheduled jam session when Kevin Frediani, the Property Manager provided us with a couple of guitars and a magnificent banjo he built himself : click the link to see a short [video clip](#).

---International Rock Gardener---



On Friday we had the most magnificent weather with bright blue skies and by the end of the day the construction had moved to the top level.



As the construction team completed the lower section we handed it over to Julia Corden who was in charge of both the acquisition and the planting of the plants which, as per the brief from Inverewe, consisted mostly of New Zealand alpine plants. Many of the plants came from Ardfearn Nursery.

---International Rock Gardener---



As the planting team worked away on the lower section other garden workers and volunteers helped out on the top.



---International Rock Gardener---



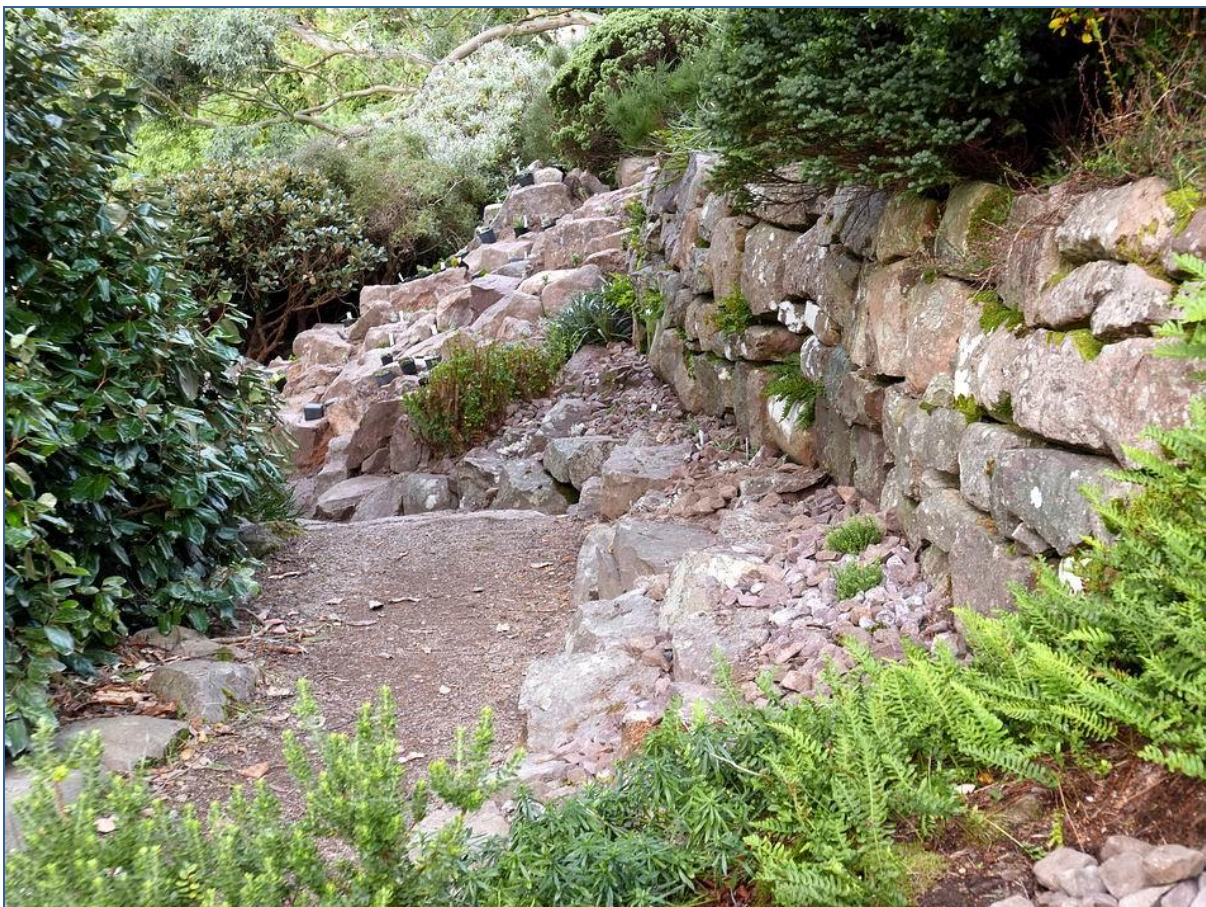
It was critical that we could break through the wall and continue the crevice work onto the top flat border where this small crevice section has become an instant eye catching feature which draws visitors towards it and as they approach the larger connected area of the crevice work will be revealed.



---International Rock Gardener---



We also tidied and planted up the narrow border between the wall and the path, cutting back a *Berberis* shrub to allow a view of the crevice bed to be slowly revealed as you approach.



---International Rock Gardener---



With all the construction work completed the last of the plants were laid out ready to be planted.



---International Rock Gardener---



I was up early on the Sunday morning while the others enjoyed a well-earned extra hour in bed, so I took the advantage to spend a couple of hours exploring the sea shore and garden. The picture above and the next two below were taken starting from the low water line looking towards the natural rock formation and up towards our constructed crevice which can be seen between the pine and the birches.



---International Rock Gardener---



The natural rock outcrop with our rock work sits perfectly, just above the very natural rock structure it is imitating.

It is a pity that most will walk past and never be aware of what lies below - how wonderful it would be if one day all these features natural and manmade could all be incorporated into a visitor experience as it perfectly explains what this style of gardening is all about.

All planting is now completed and our work here is over, for now.

---International Rock Gardener---



The rain will wash off the rocks, settle in the medium of sand/grit and loam we used to build up the landscape and water the plants, most of which we hope will grow well - time will tell.



Some of the team who had a part to play in the project.

---International Rock Gardener---



The final task for Paul was to wash off his well-worn boots, as we all did, in a disinfectant bath as part of the bio-security measures onsite.

I was excited about this project but it succeeded way beyond my expectations in the way it brought together an international team of gardeners from the SRGC and the NTS where we could pass on our passion and experience to a younger generation of gardeners. I want to thank Kevin Frediani and Kevin Ball for trusting us and letting us loose on their precious 100 year old rock garden to create something that will hopefully last for the next hundred years.



Despite all the hard work I was flying high.

I am grateful to the NTS for permission to use the historical pictures of Inverewe, also to Julia Corden and Zdena Kosourova for some of their pictures mostly those, as above, where I am in front of the camera.

---International Rock Gardener---



This image shows the link between our crevice garden creation sitting above the natural rock outcrops rising from the shore line.



That is all from Inverewe meantime, though I had hoped to bring 2020 updates from more work at Inverewe planned by an international band of SRGC folks including Jacob Mares (from Cheyenne Botanic Garden), Kenton Seth and Paul Spriggs, sadly this project had to be cancelled due to the Covid19 pandemic - but for now I will leave you with one of the casualties of the good time that we all enjoyed at Inverewe - Sláinte !

J.I.Y.