

by any other name

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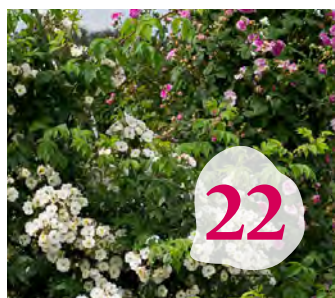
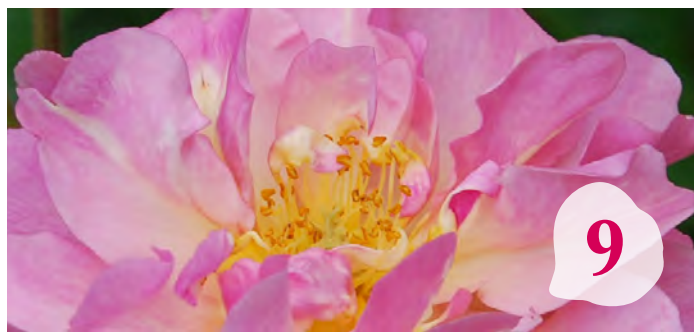
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Cover image: Charles Quest-Ritson
William Allen Richardson [Ducher, 1876]

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Magazine design

Laura Wells from www.bulletin.co.uk

Editors' note

I write this at the same time as I'm starting my packing list for Japan. In just a few days rose lovers from around the world will be gathering in Fukuyama for the 20th World Rose Convention. Charles Quest-Ritson offers us a taster of what is to come. The convention promises to be another great event – not just interesting lectures but also some exciting rose gardens to visit.

This will be followed by the 17th International Heritage Rose Conference, to be held in the China provinces of Nanyang and Shanghai respectively between the 25th and 29th of April, 2026.

If you have never been to a World Federation of Rose Societies convention, take a closer look. They are an amazing way to see great gardens and make new friends.

But you do not have to empty your bank account and jump on a plane to meet rose lovers from around the world. In this edition of *By Any Other Name* we bring several of them to your doorstep.

We have pieces from the UK, the US, all parts of Europe, and – as already mentioned – Charles' tribute to Japan. Our writers tell the story of great roses, great breeders and great characters. One of those characters we honour is the late Robert Calkin, a man who taught some of the world's leading rosarians how to discern the different notes when they put their nose in a rose. We have reproduced an abridged version of a fascinating guide he wrote on the distinct scent traits of old roses.

You can share this magazine with other rose lovers – view the digital version [here](#) in your web browser. Enjoy!

Charles Quest-Ritson and Martin Stott

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Charles Quest-Ritson is a writer, historian and journalist, with a column in the lifestyle magazine *Country Life*. He is the author of *Climbing Roses of the World* (Timber Press, 2003) and, jointly with his wife Brigid, of an *Encyclopedia of Roses* that was first published in UK by Dorling Kindersley in 2003 and has since been translated into seven languages, including American English.



Martin Stott is a former journalist who has made programmes for the BBC World Service and Radio 4 in 21 countries and written for most of the UK's national press. Passionate about roses and garden history in general, he has also written for *Gardens Illustrated* and *Hortus* magazine. Martin's garden history blog can be found at www.storyteller garden.co.uk.

“A rose by any other name would smell so sweet.”

William Shakespeare,
Romeo and Juliet

‘Falstaff’
[Austin, 1999]







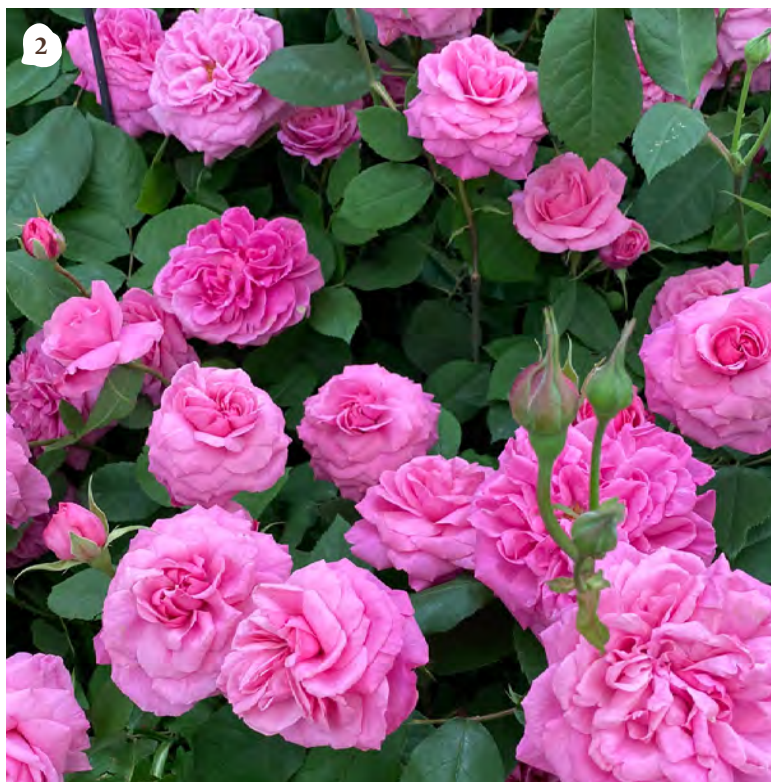
Smelling a rose's ancestry

Robert Calkin

This is an extract from “*The Fragrance of Old Garden Roses*”, by Robert Calkin, who died recently. Robert was the man “who taught David Austin how to smell roses”. Michael Marriott, who was Head Rosarian at David Austin Roses, pays tribute to his old friend on page 40.

Opposite: Robert Calkin, who died late last year, in his garden in St. Albans.

Image: Martin Stott



Of about 150 rose species which grow in the wild, only some 9 or 10 are thought to be the main ancestors of garden roses. Each of these species has its own characteristic fragrance, the influence of which can still be found in many of its descendants.

The 'old rose' perfume of the European roses, descended from the wild *Rosa gallica* and still found in its original form in many cultivated varieties, is one of the most loved and recognisable of all flower fragrances. In the Damask roses, which found their way to Europe via Damascus (hence the name) the fragrance is brilliantly warm and 'heady' with a spiciness coming from the rose's other ancestors, the musk-scented *Rosa moschata* and the curiously bran-scented *Rosa fedtschenkoana*. In the Alba roses, descended from a cross between *Rosa gallica* and a member of the Dog Rose group, the fragrance is notable for its sweetness and refined simplicity.

English roses: The pedigree of many classic David Austin roses is "closely linked to the old garden roses and some have superb fragrances".

1. The myrrh-scented 'Constance Spry' – David Austin's first rose.
2. 'Gertrude Jekyll'

Images: Martin Stott

"Many old roses have the ability to float their perfume on the air, filling the garden with their delightful perfume."

By comparison, the Tea-scented roses, coming originally from China and first introduced into Europe in the 19th century, have a somewhat severe character. If the Gallicas and their descendants are the noble red wines amongst the roses then the Tea-scented roses are the malt whiskies! They are none the less extraordinarily beautiful, if also something of an acquired taste, often including in their perfume the scent of violets, which blends perfectly with the tarry character of the tea note. Although many explanations are given for the description 'tea-scented', the most obvious one is probably correct since in some varieties the fragrance does in fact closely resemble that of a freshly opened packet of China tea.

Many old roses have the ability to float their perfume on the air, filling the garden with their delightful perfume. This is particularly true of the musk-scented roses, which produce their fragrance in the



stamens rather than in the petals. To this group belong the true Musks, such as *Rosa moschata*, as well as many of the Multiflora ramblers. Some of their descendants, such as the Damasks and a few of the Noisettes (which are partly Chinese in origin) as well as the more distantly related Hybrid Musks, have inherited this extraordinary carrying power – a character described by the English philosopher, Francis Bacon, in his essay ‘*Of Gardens*’ (1625), “as the breath of flowers... far sweeter in the air, whence it comes and goes, like the warbling of music”.

The first roses introduced into Europe from China arrived at the end of the 18th century. These included the descendants of the wild rose, *Rosa chinensi*, such as the famous ‘Old Blush’, a charming variety still found growing in many gardens. These repeat-flowering roses were to have a profound effect, not only on rose-breeding in general, but also on the fragrance

3. **Fruity:** An important rose ancestor, ‘Old Blush’ – “of a rich sweet pea character with hints of grape, apple and pepper”.
4. **Tea:** ‘Lady Hillingdon’ is an “outstanding” example of a true tea rose “with its characteristic fragrant blend of tea and violet”.

Images: Martin Stott

of their descendants, introducing a fruity character not found in the old European roses. This is particularly noticeable in the Bourbon roses, which originated from a cross between the Autumn Damask, ‘Quatre Saisons’ and ‘Old Blush’ China. This mating took place spontaneously in the early 1800s on the French island of Reunion, then known as Ile de Bourbon, in the Indian Ocean. At about the same time in South Caroline, USA, the Noisette roses occurred, resulting from a cross between ‘Old Blush’, once again, and the Musk Rose, *Rosa moschata*. Curiously, the fragrance of ‘Old

Blush’ is not in itself fruity but occasionally produces a fragrance reminiscent of Sweet Pea. Another China rose, ‘Slater’s Crimson’, used for the brilliance of its colour in the development of the Hybrid Perpetual roses during the 19th century, may have been responsible for a freshness of odour in these roses, a note which is reminiscent of bergamot, the fragrance of Earl Grey tea.

Probably no two roses have exactly the same fragrance. However, it is one of the fascinations of growing them that it is often possible to have some idea of the ancestry of a rose simply by smelling it.

Copies of Robert’s booklet, “*The Fragrance of Old Garden Roses*”, are available from the Historic Roses Group in the UK for £5 plus postage and packing. Contact info@historicroses.org





A selection of
Pemberton roses.

Clockwise from top left:
'Pax' [1918], 'Dan  ' [1913],
'Cornelia' [1925], 'Vanity'
[1920], 'Francesca' [1922],
'Felicia' [1926], 'Nur Mahal'
[1923]

Image: Debbie Symes

Genes, generations and genius

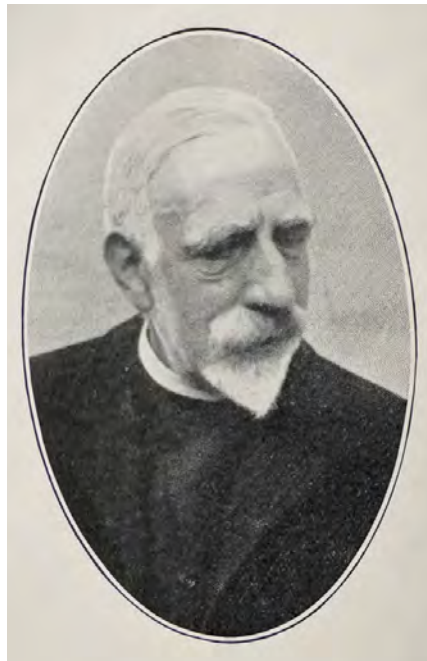
Debbie Symes

Thunder crisp the grass underfoot, and a long walk through a churchyard. Tombstones, rows old, broken, illegible, but not the one I want. I catch the attention of a gardener. He thinks he knows the gravestone but has no idea where. However, he leads me to the neighbouring church hall where two parish officers give me a reference row and plot number. Returning to the parched burial ground, I walk and walk, without luck. I then spot a faded modest cross, weather-nibbled almost to obscurity. I read: 'Rev Joseph Hardwick Pemberton laid to rest'. Lichen spots hide the remainder.

Everyone knows the story of Joseph Hardwick Pemberton, don't they? He was a vicar; lived with his sister, Florence; grew and showed roses; was President of the UK's National Rose Society; retired, started rose-breeding and created a new class of roses – the Hybrid Musks. What more can one say?

This is a tale of two intertwined families – the Pembertons and the Barnes. A tale of inheritance and heritability; wealth but not health; healthy genes, and those carrying a key darkening the future.

Note: This article includes descriptions of illness used at that time. There is no intention to offend. Additionally, both families used the same two names repeatedly across the generations – Joseph and Ann. I number these (I) and (II) respectively. Joseph Hardwick Pemberton is referenced as JHP.



Rev. Joseph Hardwick Pemberton, rosarian and once President of the National Rose Society UK

Image: TBC

“This is a tale of two intertwined families – the Pembertons and the Barnes. A tale of inheritance and heritability; wealth but not health; healthy genes, and those carrying a key darkening the future.”

The Families

In 1822 a tenant farmer, Joseph (I) Pemberton, his wife, Honour, and their fourteen children in Beauchamp Roding, Essex, enjoyed a generous inheritance from a wealthy friend. The farm's owner, Robert Barnes, gifted them the property on his death.

The wealthy Barnes family were speculative builders and developers in the Stepney district of London who had amassed a considerable property portfolio. In today's terms the annual rental income with a current value of alone would run to several millions of pounds. Robert's brother, John, was the sole heir to the rest of the Barnes estate. John had youth and money – perhaps good looks – but, tragically, not good health.

In 1820 those harmful Barnes genes exert their shadowy influence. John was 'placed' in the notorious Whitmore House Asylum in Hoxton, otherwise known as 'Warburton's Private Mad-House'. Many patients died there, from extreme physical abuse, and poor care. Despite the appalling odds John recovered from his psychotic episode. (Diagnosis of historical illness is problematic. Given the symptoms, John suffered from what was likely schizophrenia.) He returned to the outside world and married Ann (I) Smith. They had seven children, although four died very young.

John bought a large estate in Havering atte Bower, Essex in

1833. The family moved into the elegant Georgian elliptical house – the Round House. The Barnes and Pemberton families – now living just 14 miles apart – remained the firmest of friends.

All was well in the Pemberton family. All was well in the Barnes family. Until it wasn't. One period of 'madness' behind him, in 1843 John slid into another dark world. Ann (I) Barnes takes the inevitable but daunting step of declaring her husband to be 'of unsound mind'. This was proved in a 'Lunacy Trial' and reported in the press in a manner unacceptable today. His affairs were taken over, and he slowly declined until dying in 1849.

Family life

The close friendship between the Barnes and Pemberton families resulted in John's eldest two daughters marrying two of Joseph (I) Pemberton's sons, linking their fortunes and struggles. Ann (II), the eldest, married William, and took the surname Pemberton Barnes. Amelia Elisabeth married Joseph (II), JHP's father.

JHP was born in the Round House in October 1852. His sister Amelia Florence, known as Florence, followed in December 1858. JHP was educated in Dorset, then Worcester College, Oxford.

JHP's family was privileged – his father a landowner, his mother a beneficiary of the Barnes estate. His affluent aunt and uncle, Ann (II) and William Pemberton Barnes,



Cross marking the grave of Rev. JH Pemberton and his sisters Florence and Helena. Lichen hides most of the text on the headstone.

Images: Debbie Symes

“JHP and Florence begin their own stellar career in rose exhibiting, and their influential work in rose-breeding.”

and their nine children lived next door in the New Hall.

JHP's grandmother, Ann (I), had filled the Round House garden with roses. On her death JHP's family move into the house. Joseph (II) was likewise fond of roses, and had indulged in the fashionable pastime of rose exhibiting.

Following their father's death in 1873, JHP and Florence begin their own stellar career in rose exhibiting, and their influential work in rose-breeding.

JHP could live the life of a country gentleman. However, he chooses a religious path. He is ordained in

1881 and opens the Church of the Ascension, Collier's Row, in 1886, remaining Curate in Charge until retirement in 1923.

But the darker side of the Barnes genetic heritage are about to fling open doors to shame, sadness and horror.

Madness

Those malign genes snap awake in two Pemberton Barnes sons – JHP's cousins. Percy, graduate of Jesus College, Cambridge and the Royal Agricultural College, enters the Flower House Asylum, Kent, in 1886, dying there 50 years later. Sydney Willie is admitted to Springfield House Asylum in Bedfordshire in 1888. He believed he owned this house, enjoyed fishing, and rode a horse he thought powered by electricity. His mother visited just once, and Sydney died in private care in 1915. Both are described as 'lunatic'.

Two of their sisters do not escape the genetic inheritance. Gertrude,

the youngest, was labelled ‘feeble minded’. Lilla was hospitalised in Heigham Hall Private Mental Hospital in 1896, dying shortly afterwards.

Schizophrenia, a lifelong condition with fluctuating symptoms, is generally diagnosed between late teens to early thirties. It was known – even then – to run in families, with a heritability estimate of approximately 80%. There was no pharmaceutical intervention at this time. Instead, only huge shame, resulting in those afflicted and unmanageable being incarcerated.

Did JHP spend his early adulthood hybridising his roses wondering when it was coming for him? He of all people had the depth of knowledge about heritability to understand the threat. Was he also affected? Schizophrenia can have mild symptoms. JHP and Florence took the limelight in their family with their mysterious elder sister Helena very much in the shadows. Illegitimate, she was born after an illegal marriage between JHP’s parents in 1847. Her long life of 71 years barely glimmered in the records. Just bare census returns, she had no obituary notice, nor funeral report in the local press. Her silence though speaks for her. One could infer that, like one of her Pemberton Barnes cousins, she may not have enjoyed a robust life. She lived with JHP and the capable Florence at the Round House for many years. They may well have cared for their sister as well as their many roses.

Perhaps without this tragic genetic legacy JHP might have married and raised a happy family rather than roses. There would be no Hybrid Musks. There is no conclusive evidence to support this hypothesis, but it is an intriguing question.

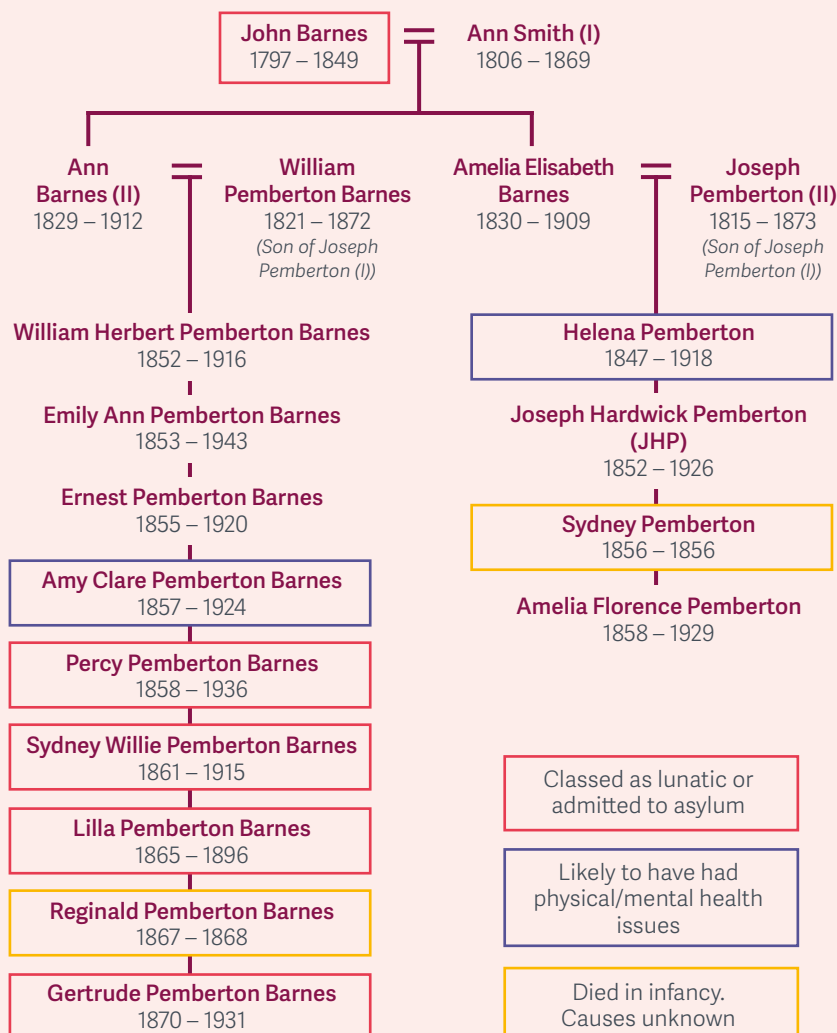
Creation and commerce

The first Hybrid Musks were introduced in 1911 as Hybrid

Teas, but JHP and Florence started hybridising much earlier. By 1896 they were growing four thousand cultivars and raising 10,000 to 15,000 seedlings annually. JHP would have been inspired by his visits to La Parc de Bagatelle in Paris, and the masses of new roses in the exhibition halls.

Before his retirement, JHP and Florence set up a rose nursery,

Generations of the Barnes and Pembertons



'J H Pemberton', selling 'Pemberton's new pedigree roses'. The early list included roses 'grown and cultivated by the Rev J H Pemberton and Miss Florence Pemberton primarily for their own personal enjoyment. Friends, however, have desired plants, so the Roses are now offered to the general public.'

At least three new cultivars were added to the catalogue each year. JHP died in 1927, but Florence continued the business until her death in 1930. The business was taken over by JHP's gardeners, Ann and John Bentall, and the remaining Hybrid Musks were introduced posthumously until 1939.

The roses

JHP introduced at least 43 roses in his lifetime:

- 14 HTs – four extant
- 25 Hybrid Musks – 20 extant.
- Three Hybrid Multifloras, all in commerce.
- One Hybrid Foetida – in commerce.

From JHP's death in 1927 to Florence's death in 1929:

- Two HTs – both lost
- One Hybrid Musk – in commerce.

From 1929 to 1939 the Bentall family went on to introduce:

- Nine HTs – one extant.
- Eight Hybrid Musks – six extant.
- One Hybrid Multiflora – in commerce.
- One Polyantha – in commerce.

“The first Hybrid Musks were introduced in 1911 as Hybrid Teas, but JHP and Florence started hybridising much earlier. By 1896 they were growing four thousand cultivars and raising 10,000 to 15,000 seedlings annually.”

'Callisto', ('William Allen Richardson' x 'William Allen Richardson') on introduction in 1917 was described as an HT. By 1920 the definition is Hybrid Musk, although the bloodline is straight Noisette. 'Moonlight', 'Danäe' and 'Francesca' were likewise initially classified as HTs before settling as Hybrid Musks.

Clues to the 'Musk' parentage

JHP's 1917 article in the NRS annual, 'Rose Perfumes' spoke of *R. arvensis* as being 'the good old English musk'. He reflected on the perpetual flowering *R. moschata* or 'Musk', and classified the Musk perfume by giving the best examples – *R. moschata*, *R. brunonis*, 'The Garland', and 'Seagull'. None is perpetual flowering. Considering blends of perfume which he felt superior to pure perfume, he thought the musk and tea blend were the most enchanting. The examples he gave are 'Lamarque' and 'Maréchal Neil'. Again, neither has any rebloom. Are there clues here for the roses he selected as

breeding stock? Recollecting his grandmother's garden at the Round House he recalls 'Lamarque' growing on the kitchen garden wall.

JHP's book *'Roses: Their History, Development, and Cultivation'* (1920) states in the description of the Hybrid Musk – *'The Hybrid Musk is a rose of recent development, and of which race there are already several popular varieties. The original parent, R. moschata, is described on page 40, and reference is made there to its perfume. Until the last decade or so hybrids of R. moschata were all summer flowering varieties. Now the perpetual flowering in a remarkable degree has been obtained in addition to the musk fragrance.'*

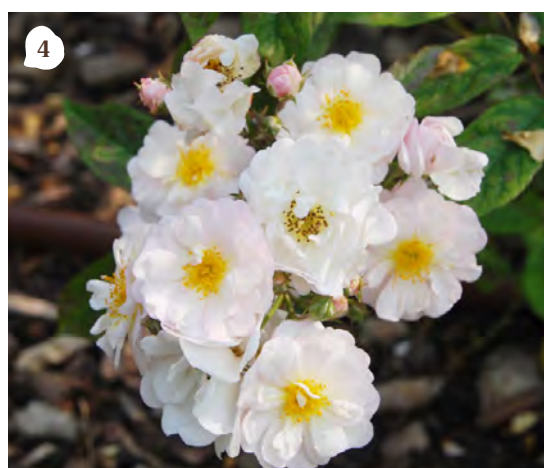
Let's apply some critical analysis to this paragraph. What did JHP say, and what did he not say? We know he was fond of the musk perfume, particularly the blends from mixed crosses. He believed the original Noisette was a *R. indica* x *R. moschata* cross, and used the Noisette 'William Allen Richardson' as both seed and pollen parent for 'Callisto'. How likely is it that he used Noisettes again? Highly likely I believe. Did he use *R. moschata* and then crossed with resulting seedlings to achieve a perpetual flowering rose? He did.

JHP kept records of his hybridising. Haphazard does not come into it. In his book, he related *'We shall naturally wish to keep a record of all the roses thus artificially crossed. A notebook, therefore, should be at hand.'* An explanation of the numbering of the cross followed.

This recording was vital to proceed along scientific grounds *‘for as in the animal kingdom so with roses, the principle of heredity plays an important part in the perfecting of the breed.’* He discussed the importance of breeding with the seedlings even where the seedling appeared inferior. Rather than discarding the seedling it should be used as a parent in the hope of good offspring in the next generation. *‘That is to say, the raiser, to obtain the best results, will inter breed with his own crosses, and to do this intelligently he must keep a register.’*

Oh, to have that little notebook! Except it may have required Bletchley Park skills to decipher the code. Just 20 of his roses have known recorded parentage. JHP favoured the prepotent ‘Trier’ (1904) as a seed parent for seven of his Hybrid Musks, and the pollen parent for his Hybrid Foetida ‘Star of Persia’. Three times the pollen parent is recorded as an ‘unnamed seedling’. His own ‘Danäe’ is twice a seed parent, ‘Daphne’ once for seed. ‘Miriam’ and ‘Nur Mahal’ once for pollen.

The other parents include two light yellow Teas, ‘Perle de Jardins’ (Levet 1874) and ‘Sulphurea’ (Paul 1900). JHP also used the colour-bright HTs, crimson HT ‘Liberty’ (1898 Dickson), red HT ‘Gloire de Chédane-Guinoisseau’ (Chédane-Guinoisseau 1907), and the yellow/orange HT ‘Sunburst’ (Pernet-Ducher, 1904); the little pale pink 1913 polyantha ‘Marie Jeanne’ (Turbat, 1913), and the hybrid China ‘Gruss an Teplitz’ (Geschwind, 1897);



1. ‘Callisto’ [Pemberton, 1920]
2. ‘Danäe’ [Pemberton, 1913]
3. ‘Kathleen’ [Pemberton, 1922]
4. ‘Daphne’ [Pemberton, 1912]

Images: Debbie Symes



Left: Rosa 'Robin Hood' [Pemberton, 1927]. Right: One of the world's best known roses – Rosa 'KORbin' or 'Iceberg' [Kordes, 1958] bred from Rosa 'Robin Hood' and Rosa 'Virgo' [Mallerin, 1927].

Images: Debbie Symes and Stan Shebs, CC BY-SA 3.0

and, as previously mentioned, the yellow Noisette 'William Allen Richardson' (Marie Ducher 1875). Adventurous choices it seems.

The legacy

Examination of the incidence of JHP's Hybrid Musks in hybridising reveals a scatter of descendants. Some appear to have not been used at all. However, to qualify that comment, they may have been used but proved to be poor parents. History neglects failures. Some have a few children – 'Callisto', 'Daphne', and 'Kathleen' have between 40 and 50 offspring each.

Two roses however are conspicuous with their flood tide of progeny.

The 'Robin Hood' x 'Virgo' (1958) cross from Kordes resulted in one of the most famous white HT roses – 'Iceberg'. Such a famous

“Considering blends of perfume which he felt superior to pure perfume, he thought the musk and tea blend were the most enchanting.”

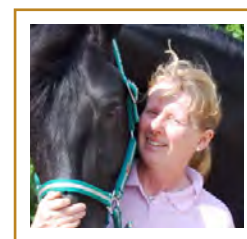
rose! There is little I can add to the literature, other than confessing that my shameless grandmother stole cuttings from the massed bedding 'Icebergs' in our local park. I was her accomplice, tucking the cuttings into my school gym bag.

'Danäe', a rose I think to be the most modest of JHP's creations, is likewise a seminal stud rose. Not from a direct cross, but a fourth generation cross gave the 1956 yellow Floribunda 'Little Darling'. Extensively used by Ralph Moore in the US, this rose is described as a

machine for breeding miniature roses.

To conclude

Thunder the clouds groan, and I turn from discovering the dilapidated gravestone of Joseph, Florence and Helena. I walk to the air-conditioned cool of my car and consider that the gravestone might be modest but Joseph Hardwick Pemberton's legacy to the rose world is incalculable.



Debbie Symes lives in Suffolk, England, and is the holder of the national collection of Hybrid Musk roses introduced by Pemberton & Bentall from 1912 to 1939.

J H Nicolas – international special agent

Martin Stott

“Gradually his fascination for growing roses and experimenting with those he imported from France became too strong. After the First World War and his father’s death he decided to quit the textile industry and become a professional rosarian.”

J. H Nicolas pollinating a bloom.

Image: Nicolas family collection





During WW2 rose nurseries across Europe were uprooted to make way for vegetables and other crops. In the painful aftermath of the war, several of Europe's most successful rose breeding families owed their survival and recovery to their relationship with America's two biggest rose nurseries and, perhaps, the work of one remarkable man – Jean Henri Nicolas.

Nicolas was a Frenchman who became well-known as a breeder in his own right. He is credited with introducing the term 'Floribunda'. But his greatest influence was arguably as an international agent. Through the 1920s and 1930s he

“Through the 1920s and 1930s he regularly travelled to Europe, identifying talented hybridisers whose roses his employers could market in the US.”

Nicolas performing a 'rose wedding'. Small paper bags are used to protect the newly hybridized blooms.

Image: Originally published by Doubleday, Doran & Company, Inc., in The Rose Manual, 1930. Courtesy of Mike Stewart



regularly travelled to Europe, identifying talented hybridisers whose roses his employers could market in the US.

Born in 1875 in Roubaix near Lille, the textile centre of northern France, Nicolas was the son of a rose-loving cotton manufacturer. (His sprightly 92-year-old great niece insists to her fellow Americans that his name should be pronounced 'Nee-co-lah'). His father's rose garden alone covered one and a half acres. Nicolas completed arts and science degrees in Roubaix and at the famous Parisian university, the Sorbonne. (He was later awarded an honorary degree of Doctor of Natural Sciences.)

His first encounter with the US was as an agent buying raw cotton for his father's mills, but while there he fell in love and married. He won his father-in-law's blessing with a promise to become an American citizen and to move to the US.

Gradually his fascination for growing roses and experimenting with those he imported from France became too strong. After the First World War and his father's death he decided to quit the textile industry and become a professional rosarian.

He retained his French accent throughout his life but joked: "I... do not need my hands to talk!"

His daughter, Lucy Tappan Nicolas, said her father's career took off in 1924 when Robert Pyle, head of the Conard Pyle nursery in West Grove, Pennsylvania – and President of the American Rose



Above left: 'Eclipse' hybrid tea [Nicolas 1932]. Above right: 'Dr. J. H. Nicolas' climber [Nicolas 1937]

Images: Johnno and Pamela Temple

Society at the time – came to Indianapolis to meet him.

Maybe he knew of Nicolas through the Frenchman's contribution to the 1923 ARS annual – an article on rose hardiness that starts with characteristic humour. "In my missionary work to make rose-lovers out of golf players and other wasters of time..."

Pyle was not disappointed by his visit. Lucy (after whom Nicolas had named one of his Hybrid Bourbon creations) later wrote: "To his amazement [Pyle] found Dr. Nicolas' basement divided into four corners. In one corner he made wine from grapes he grew; in a second corner, he grew mushrooms; in the third he made beer; and in the fourth corner were the roses. Mr. Pyle was intrigued and offered him a position with his company."

For the next six years Nicolas worked for the Conard Pyle company, criss-crossing Europe to find great roses.

He was the right man at the right time. In May 1930 Herbert Hoover signed the US Plant Patent Act, giving the holder of the patent exclusive rights for 17 years.

Though it was around 30 years before similar legislation would be crafted in Europe, it meant that breeders selling their roses into the US could expect a commission. And Nicolas was the man to help them make the most of that.

In 1930 he joined the rival Jackson & Perkins Nursery in Newark, New York, where he headed the Research Department. There he originated many roses, including the award-winning 'Eclipse' rose and 'Dr. J. H. Nicolas' – a climber

found occasionally in gardens today. But he still continued his travels to Europe.

Nicolas wrote many articles and guides to rose growing, but arguably his best work was the travelogue, *A Rose Odyssey*, published in 1937. (My copy is signed by Nicolas – a gift to the Secretary of the UK's National Rose Society, Courtney Page.) It is full of wonderful anecdotes.

In one story he tells how he came to meet the great Spanish breeder, Pedro Dot. It was 1925. Nicolas was still working for Conard Pyle and one day visited J. C. N. Forestier, the man who had launched the world's first rose trials at Bagatelle. Forestier told him about his young protégé, Pedro Dot, who had served an apprenticeship at Bagatelle and was now hybridising near Barcelona.

One of his seedlings had won a certificate of merit in the recent trials (probably the pink Hybrid Tea, 'Margarita Riera') and Forestier strongly advised Nicolas to meet Dot. He wasted no time setting off. "That same evening I was on the train for Barcelona," writes Nicolas.

He arrived at the Spanish frontier station of Port Bou at four in the morning to discover that, contrary to the advice received on departure, he needed a visa in his passport. The nearest Spanish consul was at Perpignan 50 miles behind him. Having missed the last train back, he was advised his best bet for reaching Perpignan in good time the next day was to walk through a three-mile rail tunnel in the dark to make a connection on the other side. He enlisted the help of a local "station idler, a perfect impersonation of the bandits of dime novels, who volunteered to guide me through the tunnel. He held a candle lantern in one hand and a big club in the

"Forestier told him about his young protégé, Pedro Dot, who had served an apprenticeship at Bagatelle and was now hybridising near Barcelona."

Pedro Dot with JH Nicolas in Dot's garden near Barcelona. They are inspecting the rose 'Condesa de Sástago'

Image: Originally published by Doubleday, Doran & Company, Inc., in 'A Rose Odyssey', 1937. Courtesy of Mike Stewart

other, 'to hit the rail,' he said 'so we will not smash ourselves against the wall'... A blacker hole I have never seen... I had two pockets full of coins jingling at each step and re-echoing in that tunnel. I began to realise what a temptation I was, and every time the guide's club was slow to hit the rail, I was sure it was coming on my head."

At one point a smoky freight train comes through as they press themselves against the wall, anxiously. "When we came out the sunlight never appeared more beautiful," he wrote. Visa secured, he resumed his journey, with Dot meeting him at the station. The Conard Pyle company quickly became the Spaniard's agent, paying a commission for every Dot rose sold in the US – an arrangement that presaged what was to come once patenting legislation was introduced.

Nicolas also signed up the Kordes family in Germany – this time for



his later American employer, Jackson & Perkins. Nicolas would visit the Kordes nursery in Sparrieshoop every year looking for roses that would thrive in the US.

In *A Rose Odyssey* he shows the strength of his connections and his knowledge in a prescient passage about Francis Meilland. He writes first about Antoine Meilland, praising his rose fields. Then adds: “Meilland’s son, Francis, is rapidly coming to the front. He is an energetic and strictly modern youth of about 25, has travelled much, and made a tour of America in the spring 1935, which was a marvel of nerve. Knowing but little English, he bought a car in New York and started on the road, going alone from coast to coast, from Canada to Mexico! A young man with such undaunted spirit is bound to succeed! Francis has taken up hybridizing, which his father never had the time to do. A student of recent developments in genetics and under the guidance of Mallerin, today the most scientific hybridizer in France, Francis follows modern methods. First, he visualizes what is desired; second, selects parents likely to produce that idea; third, makes his crosses in large series (‘a la Ford’). With that system, which is now followed by most successful hybridizers, the goal is more likely and more quickly reached than by fiddling along with small doses each year. We will hear from Francis, and I predict for him a great future.”

The respect was mutual. Francis Meilland wrote of Nicolas: “Each of us tries to imitate, consciously or not, the men we most admire. In my case, the ‘ideal’ was Doctor Nicolas.”



Nicolas signed up the Kordes family in Germany for the great US nursery, Jackson & Perkins. Pictured here: Charles Perkins and Wilhelm Kordes II.

Image: Kordes family

“Francis Meilland wrote of Nicolas: ‘Each of us tries to imitate, consciously or not, the men we most admire. In my case, the ‘ideal’ was Doctor Nicolas.’”

Despite this it was Nicolas’ former employer, Robert Pyle, who won the rights to market Meilland’s roses in the US. Pyle had visited Mallerin in France in 1932 and been introduced to the enthusiastic, if then still unproven, Meilland. At the end of the meeting he offered the Frenchman a contract as his distributor in the US. Hot on the heels of this offer came another from Nicolas at Jackson & Perkins, but too late.

Consequently, it was Pyle who got to name and sell Meilland’s famous ‘Peace’ rose. Had Nicolas signed up Meilland first, might Jackson &

Perkins have marketed ‘Peace’ – and would they have had the foresight to name it so astutely? We will never know.

What we do know is that Pyle quickly patented it and after the war the US royalties from ‘Peace’ poured into the Meilland family coffers, giving them the resources they needed to flourish.

It was a similar story in Germany. When many other Germans had resorted to the horse and cart, the Kordes brothers, Wilhelm II and Hermann, were both able to buy Volkswagen Beetles with the post-war cheques they received from Jackson & Perkins. The Americans had honoured the agreement with their German friends and resumed the partnership when hostilities ended.

Nicolas was to see none of this. On September 25th 1937, he died of a heart attack in a hotel in Albany, New York, while on a tour of rose gardens. He was just 62.

A peaceful palace rose garden

Dovilē Rylienē tells the story of a remarkable rose garden in Latvia with over 13,000 roses. The Rundāle Palace rose garden was only created in 2004 but its roots go back to the 18th century. Maintaining it requires ‘heroic’ effort.

“Latvia has a long tradition of growing roses. Despite the cold and severe winters, there were rose nurseries here during the 19th and the first half of 20th century”

The name of Rundāle comes from the German placename, Ruhenthal (Valley of Peace). Rundāle Palace was built during the 16th century. In 1735 Ernst Johann von Biron bought the Rundāle property and two years later became the Duke of Courland and Semigallia – historic Latvian lands later ceded to the Russian Empire.

Ernst had the old palace completely torn down. The stones, bricks and even the mortar were used in the construction of the new palace. Very little information can be found about roses during his time, though there is mention of roses in pots amongst the greenhouse plants of the duke’s palaces.

During the time of his son, Duke Peter von Biron (1724–1800), there was an order (circa 1786) for 160 roses:

50 centifolia (*Centrolia*), 50 Provins Rosen, 30 Monthly roses (*Monat Rosen*) and 30 *bunteenglisherosen*.

Roses are listed also during the period of the Counts Shuvalov (1826 – 1914), who later inherited the property. Again, they are among the greenhouse plants: *Rosa centifolia*, *Rosa multiflora*, *Rosa × noisettiana*, *Rosa semperflorens*.

In 1889 French rose breeder Louis Levêque created a Hybrid Perpetual rose ‘Duchesse de Dino’, dedicated to the youngest daughter of Dorothea, the Duchess of Courland – Dorothee de Courlande, the Duchess of Dino.

Roses in Latvia

Latvia has a long tradition of growing roses. Despite the cold and severe winters, there were rose nurseries here



The Gallica rose collection in front of the Rundāle Palace. There are about 70 varieties on display across three flowerbeds.

Image: TBC

during the 19th and the first half of the 20th century – the nurseries of Johann Hermann Zigra, Christian Wilhelm Shoch and Count Alexander von Sievers. They offered an extensive range of roses, including the newest varieties. Latvians love roses, so it's not strange that such a big and beautiful rose garden was created in the park of Rundāle castle.

The creation of the Rundāle Palace rose garden started in 2004. It stands in the outer areas of the big central ornamental parterre, which is made from clipped boxwood, lawn, red bricks and white marble. The Rundāle Palace Park was not affected by the 19th-century European fashion to create landscape parks instead of regular gardens. So this new rose garden was also designed to create the feel of the Baroque garden. There are low, hard pruned hedges of *Ligustrum vulgare*, thuja topiaries and a big collection of historical and modern roses, planted by colour and in circles, dedicated to individual breeders or countries. There is a collection of Latvian roses, 22 varieties (Rugosas) bred by Latvian breeder Dzidra Rieksta. The most popular rose in Latvia is Rieksta's 'Ritausma' (1963). In many countries this variety is still known by the wrong name 'Polareis'.

A huge job was done by Lauma Lancmane, who devoted 45 years of work to the palace and rose garden creation.

Now Rundāle's rose garden lists more than 2,000 varieties (and more than 13,000 plants). Roses have been purchased from many countries



1. The Rugosa rose collection containing 22 varieties bred by Latvian breeder Dzidra Rieksta. These are pruned very hard every 3 – 4 years.
2. Climbing roses
3. Jute bags from coffee beans are used to cover the roses during winter.
4. Lauma Lancmane (left) and Dovelē Rylienē. Lauma Lancmane is the "soul" of the rose garden having devoted many years to its creation.



Images: TBC

(Germany, Britain, France, Italy, Belgium, Denmark, Finland). If you are a rose enthusiast like me and have only one day to visit, seeing the museum, the palace and the rest of the gardens is impossible. I can spend half a day in the rose garden alone. The beds with roses, without paths and lawn, occupy about 1 ha. Later I always regret that I could have had more time for other parts of this magnificent park, which occupies 85 ha. The museum in the palace is also huge, but I have only visited once. I have been to the rose garden 15 times!

Old roses

The rose flowering season begins in the second half of June and the garden is the most beautiful when the old roses are in bloom.

Old roses (*Gallicas*, *Albas*, *Centifolias*, *Damascenas*) are pruned according to the John Scarman method, described in his book *Gardening with Old Roses*. Thanks to this method of pruning, bushes are compact, dense, dome-shaped, flowering from the base – better fitted to a Baroque style garden.

Former director Imants Lancmanis said about the annual care of the rose garden: “It’s some kind of a heroism. All people, who take care of this rose garden are heroes. Because of the severe climate a rose garden in the northern part of Europe involves a lot of care and risk. To grow and take care of such rose gardens in warmer climates is easier. Rundāle’s rose garden is like a patient who needs permanent medical care. Visitors often don’t realise how much casual hardy

“Rundāle’s rose garden is like a patient who needs permanent medical care. Visitors often don’t realize how much casual hardy work it needs...”

work it needs – they notice only the result and think that roses grow here without much care.”

It is true. There are a lot of jobs in the rose garden (deadheading, weeding) but the most important and hardest job is to prepare these roses for winter and to uncover them in spring.

Bending and covering

In October they start bending the rose canes to wooden frameworks – about 20 people work about two weeks bending roses. Just Climbing roses are untied from structures and also bent to the ground. After bending, the basal part of the bushes is covered with peat and manure (each year they have to order more than 50 tonnes). Usually at the end of November roses are covered. Twenty years ago they used reed (*Phragmites*). Staff went to the lakes, ponds and cut reed, wove carpets from it and built a “wigwam” around the roses. They also used Ruberoid and plastic film. Today though they cover the roses with fir branches (though not all of them because it’s too expensive) and jute fabric (they use jute bags from the coffee bean industry).

Only Rugosas, Spinosissimas and some wild roses are left without cover. Rugosas are covered only with peat or manure, and only on the basal part of the bush. The rose-covering usually finishes by Christmas.

Some might wonder why they need such covering when the climate is becoming warmer. Aren’t winters also becoming warmer? But winters in Latvia are still unpredictable. January and February are the coldest months. Last year, in the first week of January 2024 temperatures in Latvia varied from -7° to -17°C. Temperatures at night in north-eastern parts of the country dropped as far as -20° to -23°C. The coldest day during 75 years of observations was reported in Daugavpils (about 200 km from Rundāle rose garden). Here the temperature dropped to -29.5°C in January 2024. Rose gardeners are afraid of such unpredictable winters. Little wonder, then, that they still cover roses as in the old days.

This article first appeared in the World Federation of Rose Societies’ Middle & Eastern European Members’ Regional Newsletter, edited by Angela Bokor.



Dovilė Rylienė is a rosarian, author and owner of a small rose nursery. She studied botany at the Vilnius University and has a specific interest in local Lithuanian old cultivated roses and *Rosa* species.

Japan a-hoy!

The forthcoming World Federation convention in Fukuyama will put a spotlight on the wonderful collections of roses that delegates will discover in Japan. Those roses are almost all 'modern' and few of them are of Japanese origin. This could be said to illustrate an interesting feature of Japanese history, which is that much of the culture of this island nation's identity over the centuries has traditionally been taken from abroad.

Charles Quest-Ritson

The love of roses is an important part of western culture. Roses are generally less significant in Japan, the country of cherry trees and camellias, wisterias and paeonies, lilies and water irises. The cultivation of these exquisitely Japanese genera has given us thousands of beautiful cultivars to grow in our own gardens elsewhere in the world. But not roses. When westerners began to explore the riches of Japanese nurseries in the second half of the 19th century, they found very few garden roses.

From time to time, before American aggression forced Japan to open its ports to western commerce, western botanists were able to explore its native flora through the tiny Dutch settlement at Deshima. The Swedish botanist Carl Peter Thunberg spent one year at Deshima, now part of Nagasaki, and in 1784 he published his *Flora Japonica* which included, for the first time in the west, a description of *Rosa multiflora*. Thunberg was followed by the German Philipp von Siebold, who arrived at Deshima in 1823 and remained in Japan for eight years. Siebold was a doctor, and he was permitted to visit the mainland and dispense medicine in Nagasaki. Then his reputation as a medical doctor grew so great that he was invited to travel to Edo, modern Tokyo. And he collected plants all along the way. After he returned to Europe, he published his *Flora Japonica*, which

Opposite:

Admiration for Western roses at Gifu

includes a full-colour picture of *Rosa rugosa*.

Japan's foreign policy remained strictly isolationist until the Americans attacked Yokohama in 1853 and demanded that Japan be open to foreign trade. Japan was forced to sign a series of unequal treaties with the Western nations, but it was not until after the end of the Tokugawa shogunate and the Meiji restoration in 1867, that Japan was open to western influence.

Westerners – foreign gardeners and nurserymen – began to buy many plants from Japanese nurseries, notably paeonies, lilies, irises, camellias and ornamental cherries. But not roses. The few cultivated roses that the Japanese grew before the Meiji restoration were almost all Chinese cultivars. Everblooming or repeat-flowering China roses had been grown in Japan for many centuries – certainly as early as the Heian period (between 794 and 1185). We see them in the beautiful woodcuts of Iwasaki Kan'en dating from the early years of the 19th century. It is clear, too, that the Japanese imported forms and hybrids of *Rosa banksiae*, which can be seen in images dating to the early years of the 18th century. But these were already known to western gardeners because they had been imported into Europe through the British trading base at Calcutta.

“After the Meiji revolution, the Japanese discovered the garden roses bred in France and England, which became popular throughout the archipelago.”

Westerners in 1867 knew very little about Japanese roses apart from the wild species that botanists had studied. Some began to be available from Japanese nurseries and could also be grown from seed. As a result, the genes of *Rosa wichurana*, *R. luciae* and *R. multiflora* are present in many Western rose hybrids. But it is interesting to note that no Japanese hybrids of these ultra-Japanese species were ever developed by Japanese horticulturists or nurserymen. This parallels the way Europeans ignored their own native species of *Rosa* when developing garden roses and, to an even greater extent, replicates the relative reluctance of American rose-breeders to turn to wild American species to breed new classes of rose that would be seen to be “100% American”.

After the Meiji revolution, the Japanese discovered the garden roses bred in France and England, which became popular throughout the archipelago. Then they translated English and American books about the cultivation of roses into Japanese. And this fascination

with western roses has continued right to this day. At a time when rose societies and rose gardens in America and Europe are losing their overall popularity, roses have never been more widely grown and admired by the Japanese.

Delegates to the Fukuyama convention will see this in the gardens that they visit. One measure of the Japanese willingness to import their culture from abroad is the creation of the extensive English Rose Garden at Hanasaki Farm in Osaka, which is composed solely of roses raised by David Austin. Some delegates will also see the rose garden at Gifu which has more rose varieties than any other garden in Japan – 6,500 cultivars, of which 3,000 came directly from the Fineschi garden in Tuscany. The size of its collection and the rarity of so many of its cultivars puts Gifu in the front rank of gardens worldwide, alongside Europa-Rosarium at Sangerhausen in Germany, the two gardens in Paris (Bagatelle and l'Hay-les-Roses) and the Fineschi garden itself. Delegates from north America and the southern hemisphere do not have the opportunity to see so many rare roses in their own countries, so the visit to Gifu will reveal a cross-section of the roses grown in the Europe's best rose gardens. It will also inspire them to marvel at the Japanese ability to absorb foreign culture and take on a leadership role in developing it.

A family name in roses

The name Verschuren is strongly associated with the cultivation of roses, and not just in the Netherlands. This year (2025) the Verschuren rose growers will celebrate their 150th anniversary as hybridizers. This occasion has triggered **Jacques Verschuren**, great-grandson of the founder, H.A. (Hens) Verschuren, to dive into the family history, resulting in a jubilee-worthy book of over 300 pages.

Generations of the Verschuren family standing in their rose breeding fields. **Right:** Hein Verschuren with son Max who is the fifth generation to take over the company. **Centre:** Dries, nephew Dirk, Michiel. **Far right:** Marc Verschuren.

Image: Verschuren



On January 20, 1844, Hendrikus Antonie Verschuren was born as the third child of 'Toontje' Verschuren and Anna Vink in Dreumel in the Betuwe. Because of his baptismal names – Hendrikus Antonie – he was called Hendrik, but in the village of Haps, where he settled, he was known as Hens.

After finishing his training as a primary school teacher, he started teaching in Gendringen in 1862. He was just 18 and earned 150 guilders a year. He was able to earn more (300 guilders) in Druten, and then he moved to Veulen near Venray, where he was a lodger with an aunt, Goemans. She was the foster mother of the Heesen children and in 1882 Hens married one of them (Johanna Huberdina). In 1867 he was promoted and at the age of 23 settled in Haps, where he accepted a position as headmaster of the public primary school.

At Haps he met education inspector Boerkamp (the school inspector in Grave), who shared his interest in roses. They became friends and undoubtedly Mr Boerkamp inspired and encouraged Hens to get more involved in roses. In any case, Hens Verschuren started growing roses in stone pots in his garden, next to the schoolhouse. He budded them or grew them from seed. The range was still very limited in those days: it is said that only 19 cultivars were grown in the Netherlands.

Soon, his garden and greenhouse became too small to accommodate all the rootstocks. So he leased a patch of land behind the primary

“With his expertise and passion for the rose, Hens succeeded in raising several new roses.”

school and that is where the roses were planted. We consider September 15, 1875 to be the actual start of the nursery. Because he was not allowed to practise another profession while teaching, Hens hired a foreman who started a nursery with and for him. Apparently, Hens was a skilled teacher, because between 1876 and 1880 he also lectured on agriculture in the district of Cuijk and in the wider area.

It was because of these 'lectures' that Hens realised that scientific knowledge of and about agriculture was too fragmented or non-existent. As a result, he founded the 'Association *Land van Cuijk* for the Promotion of Horticulture' in August 1878.

This activity and his agricultural lectures undoubtedly influenced the awarding to him of the Management Prize at the Exhibition of Agriculture, Horticulture and Livestock, held in Boxtel on September 14-17, 1878. The first successes of Hens's knowledge and skills were also celebrated at this exhibition: he won no fewer than two first prizes in the categories 'the most beautiful collection of apples' and 'the most beautiful collection of roses in pots'. His knowledge of fruit, acquired in the Betuwe, was undoubtedly useful to him.

There was also a lot for him to discover in the library at the Crosiers monastery in St. Agatha, where, according to oral tradition, he also spent many hours.

By 1887, all his acquired knowledge and experience was consigned to paper as the basis for the 160-page book *'De Roos, korte handleiding voor het kweeken en zorg van rozen door H.A. Verschuren, H.d.S. en Rozenkweeker te Haps'* (The rose – a short manual for growing and caring for roses by H.A. Verschuren, H.d.S. and rose-breeder in Haps).

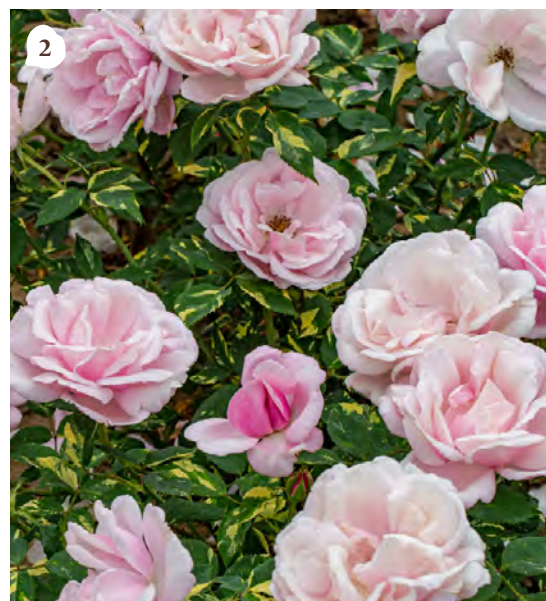
With his expertise and passion for the rose, Hens succeeded in raising several new roses and in July 1892 he sent his first rose to the editors of *Floralia*, the Dutch weekly magazine for horticulture, floriculture, tree-raising and agriculture, which published it with the header "A new rose"! All this attracted visitors from all over the Netherlands:

"However, if you want to see something new and beautiful in the field of rose cultivation, you can visit Mr Verschuren's rose nursery in Haps... Two new roses he produced himself are also in full bloom... Mr Verschuren receives everyone kindly."

Grave, June 29, '98.
C. WALTER

It is in 1897 that we first see an article, in which Hens actually introduced a new rose to the Dutch market:

"We have seen home-grown, new roses in full bloom. One of them will be marketed under the name



of 'General von Bothnia-Andreae'. It is certainly a rose of great value, large, well filled, beautiful in shape, beautiful red in colour without turning pale or purple and both a good grower and a good bloomer."

1. 'General von Bothnia-Andreae'
2. Rosa Verschuren

Images: Verschuren

And thus in 1899, it officially became the first Dutch rose to be raised on Dutch soil by a Dutch rose grower: 'Generaal van Bothnia-Andreae'.

By now his children, the oldest in their teens, were helping to expand the rose nursery. In 1900 H.A. Verschuren & Sons showed about 80 varieties at a rose exhibition in Trier (Germany), including three entries from countries other than Germany: the Netherlands (H.A. Verschuren with 'General von Bothnia-Andreae'), Japan (Böhmer & Co, from Yokohama) and the USA. (J. Cook, in Baltimore).

Hens worked steadily to expand his range of new roses. In the 1899

"In 1899, it officially became the first Dutch rose to be raised on Dutch soil by a Dutch rose grower: 'Generaal van Bothnia-Andreae'."

price list the roses are numbered up to no. 976, so we assume that almost 1000 different types were being grown. This list also mentions *'five new acquisitions intended for the trade, for which no name has yet been determined'*. Note that all this happened with Hens still working as a principal in Haps. 1904 was the year in which Hens retired as Head of School. He had been a teacher and headmaster for more than 40 years.

He moved to the edge of the then village with his nursery. New roses were being created: 'Koningen Emma', 'Koningen Wilhelmina' and 'Prinse Hendrik'. In 1904 'Rosa Verschuren' was launched, almost the only rose up to this very day with variegated leaves.

Heated greenhouses were built near the house in 1910, 1911 and 1913. Hens was not only the grower of the first Dutch rose; he was also the 'inventor' of so-called winter propagation. We again see his craftsmanship and extensive knowledge of roses and their qualities and possibilities in this innovative cultivation method.

When he died at the age of 74 he had given the world no fewer than 39 roses, amongst them cultivars we still cherish today, like 'Etoile de Hollande' and 'Rosa Verschuren'.

His seven sons witnessed their father's activities and they all

“In Haps three sons set up their own business, initially working under the old firm name ‘H.A. Verschuren & Sons.’”

became keen rose growers. In Haps three sons set up their own business, initially working under the old firm name ‘H.A. Verschuren & Sons’. To honour their father they named their first new rose after him: ‘Souvenir de H.A. Verschuren’. In 1925 the firm’s 50th anniversary was celebrated with an extensive catalogue in three editions (Dutch, English and German), in which the merits of the late Hens Verschuren were highlighted. The nursery by then employed at least 60 people and grew over 1 million roses annually. The Dutch Queen Wilhelmina awarded the firm the royal title ‘Purveyor to the Royal Household’.

By 1931 all the brothers had their own nurseries in Haps and Oeffelt and more roses were created by them. Despite the depression, roses were being exported to the U.S.A as well as the rest of Europe.

After World War II the two major rose nurseries in Haps suffered a great loss with the death of their hybridizers, Hens’s sons Hens (1947) and Jac (1946). Their widows ran the businesses until their own sons were able to succeed their fathers. And, thus, the third generation stepped in.

Jac’s son Harry bred new roses with his company, Jac. Verschuren-



1. ‘Etoile de Hollande’
2. Harry and his father Jacques in the greenhouse
3. ‘R.M.S. Queen Mary – Mrs. H.A. Verschuren’
4. ‘Souvenir de Jacques Verschuren’
5. Jac. Verschuren-Pechtold, Rose nurseries
6. Ted Verschuren, son of Hens
7. Het Roozenhuys with waterfall roses in the foreground

Images: Verschuren





“The Verschuren hybridisers have always been able to stick to their roots, and as of today they still grow roses in Haps.”

Pechtold, and exported his roses to the U.S.A., where they were patented and brought onto the American market by Jackson & Perkins. The American nursery's Chief Researcher, Eugene Boerner, became a personal friend of Harry and was a guest at Harry's wedding in 1954. In the 1960s one of Harry's children was named after Eugene.



Hens's firm, H.A. Verschuren & Sons, was run by sons Hens and Ted and, although father Hens was not alive to pass his breeding skills and knowledge onto his children, Ted became a successful breeder. In 1975 H.A. Verschuren & Sons was awarded 'by Royal Warrant' on the occasion of its 100th anniversary. In 1980 his rose, 'Amsterdam', won the prestigious Golden Rose of The Hague for the best rose of that year. In 2004 Ted launched his Waterfall series. This group of climbing roses/ramblers is characterised by an explosion of flowers – very healthy, with lots of body, on branches up to 4-6 metres long and very decorative after flowering due to the number of hips.

In 2008 Het Roozenhuys was built – a mansion-like country house at Haps, that houses a family museum, meeting rooms, accommodation

and a beautiful Verschuren-roses rosarium. In this rose garden the Verschuren family endeavours to bring as many Verschuren roses as possible 'back home'. The worldwide search for missing Verschuren roses continues to this very day, with a 2024 acquisition of a missing rose from Budapest. The house is situated on the grounds of the ancestral H.A. Verschuren & Sons nurseries.

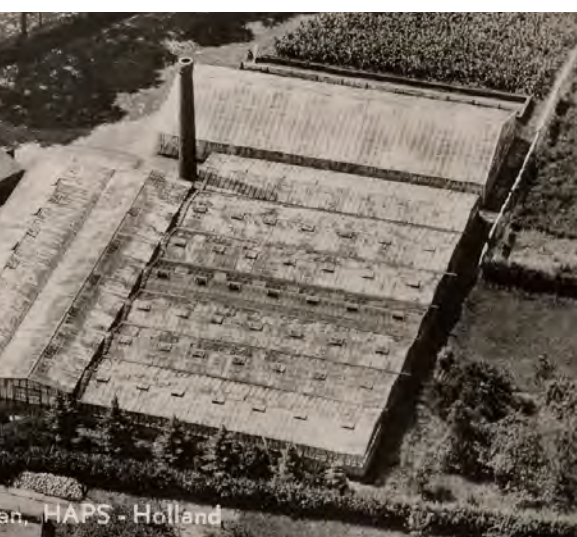
The Verschuren hybridisers have always been able to stick to their roots, and as of today they still grow roses in Haps. Recently a start has been made with the growing of certified biological roses.

In 2025 the fifth generation will lead the company into the future, with great-great-grandson Max taking over Jac. Verschuren-Pechtold from his father Hein, son of Harry.

On the occasion of the 150th anniversary, 2,300 Verschuren roses have been planted in the main street of Haps, in the vicinity of the still-standing old schoolhouse. In these 150 years the Verschuren rose breeders have created over 200 new roses.



Our book will be published on July 6th 2025 and can be ordered via our website Foundation Heritage Verschuren Rosegrowers: <https://erfgoedverschurenrozenkwekers.nl/en/home-en/>



By Any Other Name / May 2025

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The rose florist trade in North America

Steve Jones

Roses are the most popular flowers sold at florists and flower markets in much of the world. They have become a symbol of love, affection, and friendship. If your spouse is mad at you, or you want to impress your new sweetie, what do you usually do? Send a dozen roses of course. Roses have become so popular that the colors represent some sign of emotion. But roses were not always the top florist bloom.

Before the 1850s, roses were not as popular as they are today. There were several reasons, but mostly they didn't bloom very well and didn't take to forcing in greenhouses. Roses were once-flowering only. During this time, Hybrid Perpetuals were just being introduced and a few Tea roses as well.

'Hermosa' was the first rose to make a big splash in the florist market. It was the first rose that could be forced to bloom during the winter. At this time,

roses were sold largely as buds for use in corsages and small bouquets. Stems 2-6 inches long were the norm, even though they could produce an occasional 10-12 inch stem. However, long stems were not the rage and few cared. Foliage and stems didn't matter, since most of the roses ended up in corsages.

After 'Hermosa', the tea rose, 'Safrano', became the most popular rose. Next was the Tea, 'Bon Silène', aka the 'Boston Tea Rose'. Its reddish color made this rose quite popular. Other Tea roses and Hybrid Perpetuals came into the market, 'Isabella Sprunt', 'Niphetos', 'Catherine Mermet', 'Anna de Diesbach', 'Magna Carta', 'Maréchal Niel', and 'Ma Capucine' to name a few. In the late 1800s, 'Anna de Diesbach' was the rage, to be eventually replaced by the long stems of 'American Beauty', which in turn was replaced by 'Mme Falcot'. Even Noisettes were sold as florist roses, often to people who used them in their breeding program.

Opposite: An Advert for 'Hoosier Beauty' [Frederick Dörner & Sons, 1915] in Miss Ella V. Baines' *The Woman Florist* in 1918

Image: Biodiversity Heritage Library, CC BY 2.0



1. 'Hermosa' [Marchesseau, 1832]

3. 'Safrano' [Sourdeau de Beauregard, 1837]

2. 'Bon Silène' [Guérin, 1834]

4. 'Meteor' [Geschwind, 1887]

Images: Malcolm Manners and TKiya, CC BY 2.0

'American Beauty' made one of the biggest splashes in the florist industry, but it almost didn't. One story is the rose was imported from France into the US by the rose historian George Bancroft. The rose produced deep red, long-stemmed roses. It was a very fussy and temperamental rose and was almost discarded until the growers found what conditions made it grow and produce well. The stems were legendary and in one of the earliest American Rose Society (ARS) rose shows, there was a class calling for the longest stemmed 'American Beauty'. The winner that year had a stem 9 feet long!

However, 'American Beauty' was not the most popular red rose at the time, nor was it the rage for so long as 'Meteor'. 'Meteor' was from Rudolf Geschwind and classified as a Noisette. It was just another rose destined for the trash heap when by accident a nursery left a few plants next to the boiler and sitting in water. They found it flourished in heat and needed a lot of water.

It was around 1900 that roses became one of the most popular florist flowers, replacing carnations, and helped the fledgling American Rose Society become a serious plant organization. It had just separated from the Society of American Florists. Roses claimed the title of the Queen of Florist Flowers, and it still continues today. The first 14 ARS Presidents were either florists, rose growers, or nurserymen. ARS was originally formed as a professional organization, but amateur gardeners were never

An illustration for 'American Beauty' [Lédéchaux, 1875] in the *Dingee Guide to Rose Culture: 1850 1910*, a nursery and seed trade catalogue.

Image: Internet Archive/Public Domain

“It was around 1900 that roses became one of the most popular florist flowers, replacing carnations.”



An illustration for Killarney rose varieties in the *Dingee Guide to Rose Culture*, 1920

Image: Biodiversity Heritage Collection, CC BY 2.0

discouraged from joining. It wasn't until 1916 that they made a serious attempt to appeal to the casual gardener and form the basis of the organization as we see it today.

The time came for Hybrid Teas to replace the older rose classes. With Hybrid Teas came more colors, longer blooming periods, and a greater amount of bloom. 'Liberty', 'Killarney', and 'Richmond' were

some of the popular red Hybrid Tea roses. 'Killarney' and its sports dominated the market. A former President of the ARS, Wallace Pierson, wrote that 'Killarney' and its sports "make a family all their own and have done more for American varieties than any other rose". This was true, because 'White Killarney' and 'Double White Killarney' were the best whites for many years from the 1910s on.

'Ophelia' and her sports were quite popular and 'Radiance' and her sports also dominated the market for a while. One of the best winter blooming hybrid teas was 'Hoosier Beauty'. Other top roses were 'Hadley', 'Talisman', 'Wellesley', 'Mrs. Francis Scott Key', and 'Mrs. Charles Russell'.

Yellow was a difficult color to get into roses and the Noisette 'Maréchal Niel' held the top yellow place for many years after it was introduced in 1864. Other early yellow roses were 'Mrs. Aaron Ward', 'Lady Hillingdon', and 'Souvenir de Claudius Pernet'. The best yellow in 1916 was 'Sunburst', but it was never the best yellow overall.

Some roses were better known at certain times of the year. Some were spring-blooming; others flowered best in fall or winter. 'Richmond' was the best red rose at Christmas.

In their early years, 'American Beauty', 'Bride' and 'Bridesmaid' were the only roses commonly seen at florist shops. However, in time, people tired of them and looked for other roses. It wasn't to say they were bad roses; they



just fell victim to the changing tastes of the public. Starting in the 1920s, Hybrid Teas pretty well dominated the florist-rose market, which continues to this day.

During the 1930s, some of the most popular florist roses were the yellow, 'Captain Glisson'; red 'Peerless'; yellow blend 'Yellow Dot'; and the pink, 'Sweet Adeline'. 'Captain Glisson' proved to be a valuable breeding rose as it was used to produce several florist varieties. In the 1940s several fine florist roses hit the market, including the yellows, 'Barbara Mason', 'Yellow Beauty', and 'Nuggets'; the reds, 'Coral Sea', 'Glamour Girl', 'Hill Crest', 'Lucile Supreme', 'Red Delicious', 'Spitfire' and its sport, 'Spitfire Improved'; and the pinks, 'Jean MacArthur' (named for the wife of General MacArthur), 'Mrs. Jeannette G. Leeds', 'Peter's Briarcliff', and 'Rosy Glow'. During the 1950s, some floribundas made their way into the florist market, including 'White Garnette', 'Feurio', and 'Fire Opal'. Hybrid Teas from the 1950s include the yellow, 'Alice Manley'; red 'Christmas Cheer'; white 'Halo'; and pink 'Pink Glow'.

Florist rose imports

Until recently, the Netherlands was the largest source of imported roses in America. In 1992, we visited the flower market at Aalsmeer, Netherlands. It was interesting to see the bidding and the mass of flowers being moved around. My understanding is they start with a high bid and work their way down. The building is massive. It is so long that from one end of the building

you cannot see the other. The guide told us that most of the flowers, once they are bought, go immediately to the airport and are flown around the world. So many of the roses we purchased then may have been in the Netherlands only a few days before.

Since then, there has been a big push from South America, especially Ecuador, to supply cheaper roses.

Illustration from a 1924 trade catalogue of Conard & Jones Star Roses including 'Ophelia' and 'Radiance'

Image: Biodiversity Heritage Library, CC BY 2.0



These Four Roses
are from our
"RELIABLE SET"
See Catalog, page 52

No. 1. Duchess of Wellington
No. 2. Ophelia
No. 3. Red Radiance
No. 4. Radiance

The other eight Roses in this set, named and described on page 52, not shown here for lack of space, are of the same type as these four.

The entire set of above
12 2-year, Field-grown,
★Star Size Roses for **\$10.00** □

ASK FOR OFFER No. 52
If bought separately, price \$1.00 each □
(See other prices, page 52)

THE
CONARD ★ ROSES
& JONES CO. West Grove, Pa.
Robert Pyle, Pres. Antoine Wintzer, Vice-Pres.

SEE OPPOSITE PAGE

REMEMBER—THESE ROSES ARE GUARANTEED TO BLOOM THIS YEAR

“There is also a niche market, occupied by half a dozen farms around the world, which is the ‘garden style’ cut-flower rose.”

The roses are grown outdoors and they have all the qualities of the greenhouse-grown varieties. By some accounts, Ecuador is now the number one producer of florist roses in the world with Kenya and Colombia right behind.

Of the close-to-one-billion stems imported into the United States, Ecuador and Colombia account for the majority. Colombia has transformed many of the old cocaine fields for the cut flower trade, and in 2023, for example, it exported over two billion US dollars’ worth of flowers.

The leading countries of florist rose production are:

- For the EU: Kenya, Ethiopia, Tanzania
- For North America: Ecuador, Colombia
- For their own use: Brazil, Mexico, Japan, China, India.

‘Lady Hillingdon’ [Lowe & Shawyer, 1910]

Image: Charles Quest-Ritson



In South America (Colombia/Ecuador), most of the production goes to USA, with the two top florist roses being the reds Freedom ‘TAN97544’ and Explorer ‘INTeronotov’. In East Africa (Kenya/Tanzania/Ethiopia), most of the production goes to the EU, with the top selling rose being the red Rhodos ‘RUICF1398B’. From Meilland, there is Samourai (‘Meikatana’) which is the number one red in Japan, Australia, Mexico, Brazil, and Top Secret (‘Meiflemingue’) in India, as it is one of the best for hot and humid conditions. In China, two ‘unprotected’ varieties are taking the lead: Carola/Mme Delbard (‘DELadel’) and Peach Avalanche (‘Lexhcaep’). The latter is the only top florist rose that is not red.

There is also a niche market, occupied by half a dozen farms around the world, which is the ‘garden style’ cut-flower rose. David Austin is leading with his ‘Wedding & Event’ rose collection, and Meilland following with its ‘Jardin & Parfum’ collection with such varieties as Yves Piaget (‘Meivildo’) and Princesse Charlène de Monaco (‘Meidysouk’).

Exhibiting florist roses

Florist roses are very popular with rose exhibitors. They typically have good exhibition form with lots of petal substance to hold up for judging. However, most florist roses do not grow well outdoors. They were developed for greenhouse growing only and never tested outside. Over the years, only a few florist roses succeeded in growing well outside the greenhouse. ‘Sonia’

was the first of these. This long time standard for peach roses did very well outside. Next was the deep red 'Kardinal 85'. Perfect form, but the blooms shrink in the heat. It is still grown and wins today. Frank and Cherrie Grasso had one of the best specimens I have ever seen at the 1994 national in San Diego, where it won the Queen award. 'Crystalline' did well outside and has become one of the top white exhibition roses in the nation. In our heat, the rose wants to form a spray and produces a lot of thin wispy growth. It does much better in cooler climates. 'Raphaella' is another long-time orange florist rose that had been grown outdoors with some success. It is a terrible mildewer and you have to spray a lot. The petals have so much substance, the exhibitors have to force the petals open while it is still on the bush. It is not for the casual gardener. A good one for our heat is 'Black Magic', because the flowers are of good form on a clean plant with long stems. Blooms can be a tad small for the show, but it still wins, even today. Others that seem to do well outside right now are 'Hot Princess', 'Exotica' and 'Fantasy'.

Hybridizing florist roses

For the hybridizers, creating a good florist rose is a gold mine and most will test roses specifically for the greenhouse. Compared to the general rose market, the odds of hitting a good florist rose is about ten times higher than a good garden rose. When we toured the Jackson & Perkins testing facility a few years back, we were told that only one maybe two will ever make it to the

next cut for the florist market. Tantau of Germany has been a big producer of florist roses in recent years.

From the 1900s through the 1940s, most of the American florist roses were developed by E.G. Hill. Starting in the 1950s, Jackson & Perkins created many of the florist varieties, especially roses hybridized by Eugene Boerner. Most of the American florist roses today are from Weeks Roses.

The rose has been big in America for over a century and will continue to be the top flower for many years to come, both in the yard and florist shops.

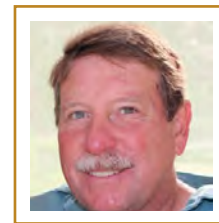
The original article was published in *Rose Ecstasy* in July 2004, and won an Award of Merit from the American Rose Society. It has been partially updated for *By Any Other Name* by the author.

'Magic Black' [Evers, before 1995]

Image: Johnno



“The rose has been big in America for over a century and will continue to be the top flower for many years to come, both in the yard and florist shops.”



Steve Jones is a Past President of the American Rose Society and WFRS. He is a Master Rosarian, author, photographer and hybridizer. He grows about 500 roses of all types, including many old garden roses.

In tribute

Robert Calkin

1934-2024

You only have to smell a few different varieties to realise that there is a huge array of completely different types of fragrance to be found in the rose world. David Austin Snr wanted to be able to describe the fragrance of his English Roses more accurately and was very fortunate to find Robert through a mutual friend. He was the perfect person for the job.

After graduating from Cambridge in botany and biochemistry, Robert had trained as a perfumer with the London-based company, Yardley – eventually becoming its chief perfumer. His work took him to exotic parts of the world, visiting the places where perfumery ingredients were produced. Later, he was headhunted to establish Holzminden's first perfumery school in Germany. For over a decade, he shared his perfumery expertise with many students, providing them with a foundation for successful careers.

He took a deep interest in the science of scent. He once explained that there were 300 known chemical components in the smell of a rose – many of them actually unpleasant! He spent many years building what he called an “olfactory memory” and brought it to bear on his work with David Austin.

It was my job to accompany Robert around the garden, noting his descriptions and discussing the fragrances with him. Such a tough job! Most of us might note some broad scents but struggle to articulate what we smell. Robert had the amazing ability to identify the constituent parts of a fragrance with just a few thoughtful sniffs.

This ability to identify the various fragrances was combined with delightful turns of phrases. My favourite is for the species rose *R. fedtschenkoana* which he described as “a little bit of blackberry (not blackcurrant you will note!) jam on Hovis [brown] bread!” Another is for ‘Quatre Saisons’ (*R. damascena* var. *semperflorens*): “If sunshine had a smell this would be it.” Other favourites of his were the Portland ‘Comte de Chambord’ with its very pure old rose fragrance, which he described as “brilliantly warm and heady”. Of the Hybrid Musk ‘Buff Beauty’ he wrote: “Delightfully rich tea and violet fragrance with a fruity, banana-like character”. A particular favourite of his was the Tea rose ‘Lady Hillingdon’, which to him smelt like a “freshly opened packet of loose China tea leaves but with some added violet”.

During the very many times that we met up there was only one

variety that he couldn't accurately describe and that was ‘Buttercup’. He decided in the end that it was simply a delicious fragrance. Perhaps because of this it became one of my great favourites and one that I always made sure to smell whenever I went down to the garden. Robert encouraged you to linger and take much more interest in a rose's scent. Amazingly once, but only once, this rose smelt to me of dark chocolate. That was something else we learned from him – rose scents change from day to day.*

It was always a great delight when Robert came up to the nursery – he was such a lovely man, so kind and always interesting to talk to on many subjects. Here is part of the eulogy that Andrew Tan, his partner for 36 years, said about him.

“He was amusing and interesting; kind and generous. He loved life. Music, geology and history sparked his interest. So did botany, archaeology, evolution, and travel. Even religion fascinated him. He loved to read. You only have to look at the hundreds of books on his bookshelves to know that he was a voracious reader.”

Robert was treasurer to the Historic Roses Group and wrote a very wonderful and informative

booklet, *The Fragrance of Old Garden Roses*, which is available through the HRG website. He was always very happy to share his knowledge with people and wrote a number of articles. Jennifer Potter gathered information from him for the chapter on fragrance in her book, *The Rose*. He loved roses and always had many in his various gardens.

He died on 5th December 2024 having lived a very full and varied life and having made a strong mark on very many people.

Michael Marriott is the former head rosarian at David Austin Roses

***Martin Stott adds:** "Taking me round his garden in St. Albans once, Robert stood under 'Mme Alfred Carrière'. As we buried our noses in the roses, he turned to me and said: "That's an interesting example of a fruity smell. It's got quite a complex ancestry. It begins when the flowers first open in the spring. It's got a lovely light old rose, fresh clean, beautiful fragrance, slightly citrus – a little bit lemon. As it ages it goes to grapefruit and then to blackcurrant. And as it ages even further it can smell of cat pee. And in fact grapefruit, blackcurrant and cat pee are all chemically related!"

Right: Robert Calkin in the grounds of David Austin Roses.

Image: Michael Marriott



Felco is the headline sponsor of the World Federation of Rose Societies

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**Charles and Brigid Quest-Ritson,
authors of the RHS Encyclopaedia of Roses**