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Snail Mail

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Summer

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The Summer of 2011 is drawing to a close. It was a mixed bag to be sure and those negative/realists among us might say it was a washout without much to recommend it. True, the barbecues and outdoor dining moments were few and far in between, still I must say my garden is looking quite good with lots of colour and most of the plants nicely recovered from the nasty winds (nice euphemism) we had earlier on. The garden walks, the outing to No. Ireland, and the Garden Trail are now all a fond memory and we are looking forward to a new season of DGS meetings kicking off the first one on September 5 in PORTNOO — **don't forget.**



This will be a one-page newsletter the main purpose of which is to send out (a tad late) your 2011 directory. One of the problems is that our members sometimes take their time to renew their membership — or just plain forget—(I was one of the guilty ones last year) so we plan to tighten up our procedure somewhat. With this mailing you will also get a membership card which, upon producing it at the Ashtree Garden Centre, will entitle you to a 10% discount on all plants for the year. This card will be valid until April 30, 2012 by which time I am sure you will all have renewed your membership for 2013 and therefore the new directory should be in your hands by May next year.

MONTHLY MEETINGS

VENUE;	Salthill House, Mountcharles
TIME:	8 p.m. Plant sale and chit chat. 8:30 (PROMPT) Program begins,
September 5	Ralph Sheppard, "Birds of Donegal (<u>THIS MEETING IS IN PORTNOO</u>)
October 3	Michael Classon, "A Year in my Garden"
November 7	Klaus Laitenberger, "Organic Gardening"
December 5	Christmas Social



Jack Maguire writes on the visit to Derry.

Despite the poor weather forecast the previous evening, the sun was shining brightly when twenty members of the DGS boarded the coach at the Mill Park Hotel on Saturday the 2nd of July for a trip to Derry to visit five gardens. After a brief stop at Bridgend for refreshments it was back on the road and onward to Limavady to visit the first garden.

Streeve Hill, is the home of Joan Welsh who met the group on arrival and conducted the tour of the garden. The house was a plantation house built in 1607 and has a walled garden but two walls had been knocked down to build a later extension to the house. The garden has a terrace and a long border filled with scented climbers and herbaceous plants. There was an enclosed rose garden and kitchen garden with a magnificent mixture of fruit and vegetables. Around the house there is a planting of mature trees and shrubs. In one corner there is a beautiful wild flower meadow of which Joan is very proud.

Next came **Walworth House** at Ballykelly, the home of Noreen Brown. This again was a lovely plantation house built in 1603 with its original four defensive bawn towers and dove cote. The house is surrounded by magnificent mature trees and shrubs. At the back of the house there is a beautiful restored walled garden with a pergola, fish pond, roses, shrubs and climbers. In an adjoining smaller walled garden is a awesome display of philadelphus with beautiful double cream flowers.... truly breathtaking. In this garden there is a wall in which are inserted stones from famous ruins and buildings from around the world.

After a quick lunch break at the White Horse Hotel Eglinton it was on to **The Manor House** on Main Street. We were met by the owners, Mr. And Mrs. Alistair Davidson. Yet another plantation house but with a smaller walled garden than the previous two. There was a large selection of shrubs, roses, perennials, a herb garden and a sunken vegetable garden. There were also a number of rare fowl wandering around, which Alistair said were an efficient slug control.

Back on the bus and into Derry City. First stop, **Hamstead Hall**, Culmore Road. This is a beautifully restored Georgian House with its back garden divided into two sections of Japanese and Italian style. There is a formal garden at the front of the house. Here we were entertained by the owner Liam Green who also offered us refreshments. Liam at present is involved in creating a 'Peaceful Garden' on the grounds of the Foyle Hospice.

Next stop was the **Bishop's Palace** in Culmore Road to visit the Sea of Peace Garden on the grounds. This garden has been restored and maintained by inter-denominational groups from the dioceses of Derry and Raphoe with the theme of peace for Northern Ireland. A beautiful place for quiet reflection.

It was a tired and exhausted party who arrived back in Donegal Town that evening, but certainly a day enjoyed by all. No-one realized that such magnificent gardens were on our doorstep so another visit would be enjoyable but maybe only two gardens. We would be able to have more time to fully explore the gardens and also to have the full history of the places.

After having spoken to a few of the member who went on this trip I might just plan an outing to Derry, only this time not for shopping but to visit some of the gardens mentioned. Thanks Jack for this from all those of us who wish we could have been there as well.

Salthill Plant Sale:



High marks to all those who contributed plants to the Fete at Salthill. Many DGS members diligently planted seeds, divided and potted up plants only to see them shredded during the terrible storm. Dismayed but not defeated, they salvaged what they could and potted up yet more plants with the result that the plant sale was yet again a big success. This meant money for charity and also some to give to our treasurer to make sure we are solvent. Oh we could show our banks a thing or two about staying in the black!!! Thanks to Rosemary Tindal and all who helped her on the day.