

The next visit was to see part of the fabulous collection of botanical art explained by Maureen Lazarus. She showed us works from contemporary local artists and also by artists of international repute eg Ehret. Graham Oliver then showed us a new web-based taxonomic tool to study the Marine Bivalves of the British Isles. Andy Mackie told us more about the marine invertebrate research at the Museum including distribution surveys of benthic invertebrates in the Irish Sea. Michael Wilson completed the tour by explaining some specimens from the extensive entomological collection held at the Museum.

We then went to the University of Cardiff to view a fascinating display of rock art by Richard Weston (Professor of Architecture) who has used scanned pictures of rocks as the inspiration for wonderful fabric designs for scarves and rugs (now on sale at Liberty's no less!). We then moved to the Council Chamber for a splendid buffet.

Our grateful thanks to the organisers and the presenters for taking time to show and discuss their work with us – their passion for their subjects was very evident.

HAZEL MARSDEN

David Lyall MD FLS RN (1817-1895) gets a blue plaque in Cheltenham

A small ceremony took place on 26 June 2010 when the Mayor of Cheltenham, Councillor Anne Regan unveiled a plaque on 24 London Road Cheltenham, the house occupied by David Lyall, naval surgeon, explorer and plant collector after his retirement. David Lyall was the subject of the biographical article which I wrote and is published in *The Linnean* (Vol. 26(2), July 2010, pp. 23-48). My brothers, who live in Cheltenham, brought the draft article to the attention of Dr Roger Woodley, chairman of the Plaques Committee of the Cheltenham Civic Society, and the Society subsequently decided to include David Lyall in their programme. The plaque was sponsored jointly by the Cheltenham Civic Society and by my brothers and me, who are distant collateral relatives of the botanist.

The plaque features a representation of *Ranunculus lyallii*, the giant New Zealand buttercup, the largest of the genus, which is probably the best-known plant collected by the prolific Dr Lyall.

Also present at the unveiling were Martin Horwood, MP for Cheltenham, Mr and Mrs Howells, the owners of 24 London Road, Stephen Clarke, chairman, Cheltenham Civic Society and Dr Roger Woodley. We were also delighted and honoured to be joined by Professor Dianne Edwards FRS FLS of the Council of the Linnean Society who travelled up from Cardiff especially to be there. Roger Woodley organised the whole event with great efficiency.



The blue plaque on 24 London Road, Cheltenham.



Plaque ceremony, 26 June 2010, at 24 London Road, Cheltenham. Left to right: Cllr Anne Regan, Mayor of Cheltenham; Dr Andrew Lyall FLS; Martin Horwood MP; Mrs Howells and Mr Howells, owners of 24 London Road; Prof Dianne Edwards FRS FLS; Mr Stephen Clarke, chairman, Cheltenham Civic Society; Mr David Lyall.

After the ceremony Mr and Mrs Howells invited us into their house and gave us an informal tour. 24 London Road is one of a row of Regency villas built in 1829 in the typical Cheltenham style with verandas on the first floor level, which were popular with military families who had retired from service in India. Mrs Howells is a keen gardener and has the ambition to grow *Ranunculus lyallii* in her back garden. I had to warn her that I tried in my garden in Dublin, using seeds obtainable from Chiltern Seeds, so far without success, probably because the native habitat of the plant is the slopes of Mount Cook in South Island, New Zealand and requires melted ice water trickling through its roots – not an easy condition to reproduce in an English garden. The RHS Plant Finder also lists two nurseries in Scotland who stock the plant, but that seems a bit like cheating and it would in any case be more exciting and interesting to grow it from seed. If any Linnean members have succeeded Mrs Howells and I would be delighted to hear from you. A friend of mine, Dr Mary Toomey, a professional botanist and lecturer, formerly of Trinity College Dublin, and author of several books on clematis, succeeded in growing *Ranunculus lyallii* in her garden in Dublin and it produced flowers, but sadly it only survived for about two years. But we wish Mrs Howells the best of luck.

After the ceremony those present repaired to a nearby church hall for a reception sponsored by the Civic Society. Roger Woodley reminded me that I had said in the article that David Lyall, the botanist, was better known from his plants in North America than in the country of his birth, and that the Civic Society had now taken some steps to correct that omission. A satisfactory outcome and an experience enjoyed by all, on a hot and sunny summer day.

ANDREW LYALL

Library

The initial phase of the Smith Correspondence Project, funded by the Wellcome Trust, has now been completed. Our part-time Cataloguing Archivist, Gabrielle St John-McAlister, has been creating records for all the Smithian letters, using CALM for Archives software. I am delighted to be able to report that further funding has been secured, from a different source, which will enable Gabrielle to start working with us