

Glasgow Botanic Gardens dates from 1817 when Thomas Hopkirk realised his dream of establishing a new botanic garden for the city. Hopkirk was the author of the first ever book about the indigenous plants of the Clyde area. His vision was for the botanic garden to be utilised as an educational and scientific resource in association with the University of Glasgow. The teaching of botany and medicine would be greatly enhanced by the new garden and its plant displays. Thomas Hopkirk raised sufficient funds to purchase a suitable site between Sauchiehall Street and Dumbarton Road, in an area later known as Sandyford. On May 20th 1817 the '*Botanic Institution of Glasgow*' was formally approved.

1817

Hopkirk wanted to use his own, large collection of plants from his family home at Dalbeth as the basis for a Botanic Garden. Ultimately a resolution was passed, "*That the establishment of a Public Botanic Garden would be highly conducive to the benefit of science, to the establishment of the City and to the recreation of the inhabitants and therefore deserving of every encouragement*". Stewart Murray, the first curator of the Botanic Gardens was responsible for the structure of the Gardens we know today. He lived on site with his family in the Curator's House designed and built by Glasgow architect, Charles Wilson in 1841. In 1818 the Crown issued a Royal Charter to the Botanic Institution of Glasgow and the Gardens name changed to Royal Botanic Garden Glasgow.

Illustration courtesy of University of Glasgow





David Douglas (1799-1834)
© Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh



William J. Hooker (1785-1865)
© Trustees of the British Museum



Begonia octopetala from
Curtis' Botanical Magazine,
1830, plate 2962. Illustration
by W. J. Hooker.

William J. Hooker, the Regius Professor of Botany at Glasgow, became the editor of the eminent *Curtis' Botanical Magazine*. The magazine contained hand-painted drawings of flowering plants with scientific descriptions and background information. Hooker was an influence

on David Douglas (gardener), but best known as the namesake of the Douglas Fir. Douglas trained at Glasgow Botanic Gardens from 1820 to 1823. Hooker recommended Douglas to the (now 'Royal') Horticultural Society for collecting plants in North America.

1827

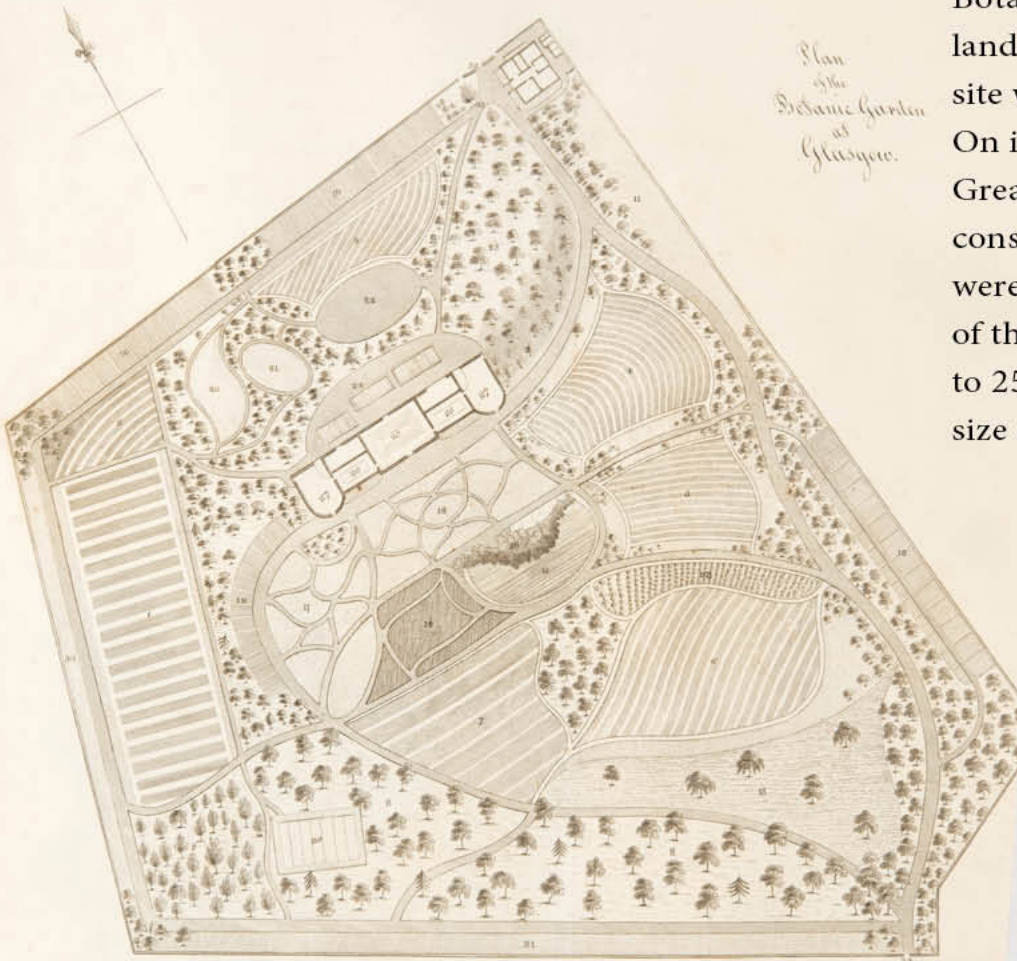
1825



1832

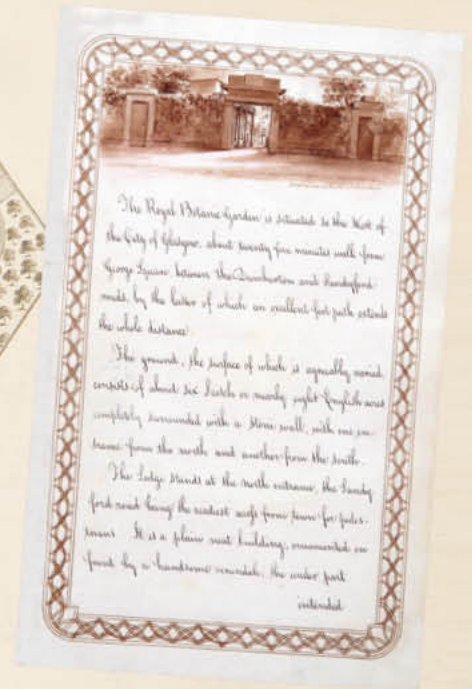
A cholera epidemic in 1832 killed nearly 3000 of Glasgow's residents. Consequently, people were reluctant to visit public spaces resulting in a catastrophic drop in revenue for the Gardens.

Image source *The Glasgow Looking Glass*



Plan of the Botanic Garden at Sandyford circa 1825.
Illustration from the publication 'Companion to the Botanic Garden'.

In the late 1830s the Royal Botanic Institution sold the land at Sandyford and a new site was found for the Gardens. On its south side, the new Great Western Road was under construction. On the north side were the steep wooded banks of the River Kelvin. It extended to 25 acres, three times the size of the Sandyford site.



Images courtesy of University of Glasgow

1837

On the 20th June 1837 the Victorian era began with the coronation of the young Queen at the age of eighteen. So began an era in which Britain led the world in botanical exploration and research. Queen Victoria remained the longest reigning British monarch right up until our current Queen Elizabeth II.



1842

Glasshouses and plants had been transferred over to the new Kelvinside site including the 'Weeping Ash Tree' which had originally been supplied by nurseryman Robert Austin in 1818 which can still be seen today to the south of the main lawn.



Coat of Arms of the Royal Botanic Institution of Glasgow

1847

1858

Long delays in developing the West End caused serious problems for the Botanic Gardens. With the continuing National Depression and the Gardens' increasing debt, there was pressure to increase revenue. This meant growing more plants for sale and increasing the Gardens' popularity. Instead of free admission a charge of one penny (1d) was made to the 'working classes' and annual tickets were introduced for families. This made a valuable contribution to funds.





▲ *Madeleine Smith*

The trial of Madeleine Smith was one of the most talked about murder cases in Victorian Glasgow.

It had everything: sex, blackmail, poison and murder.

Smith's father had forbidden the relationship between his daughter and Pierre Emile L' Angelier, but clandestinely the lovers continued seeing one another, sending each other intimate love letters.

The romance soured; Madeleine Smith broke off the relationship and asked L' Angelier to return her letters. The jealous L' Angelier refused, threatened to use them to expose her, coercing her to marry him.

Madeleine was in an awkward position, but in late March 1857 L' Angelier was found dead from poisoning.

1857

The police discovered that Smith had purchased arsenic in a chemist's and with the death of her lover by poison, suspicion fell on Madeleine. She was arrested and charged with murder most foul.

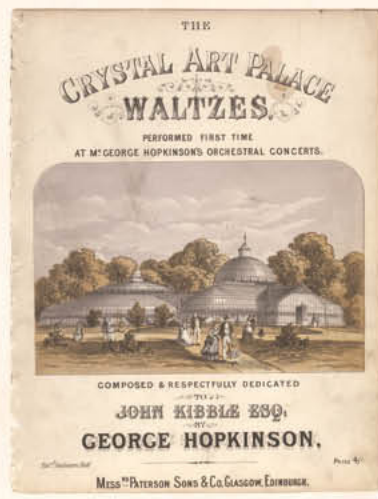
L'Angelier, had been an apprentice nurseryman, who, for a while, lodged at the Curator's House (pictured right) within the Botanic Gardens. Mrs. Clark, the Curator's wife, gave evidence at the trial to vouch for L'Angelier's respectability. During the trial, Smith's letters were used in evidence against her. It looked bad for Smith but blurred dates on the envelopes, bungled evidence and no witnesses to corroborate Smith's and L'Angelier's meetings meant a Not Proven verdict came back from the jury. Madeleine emigrated to America and lived to the ripe old age of 90.



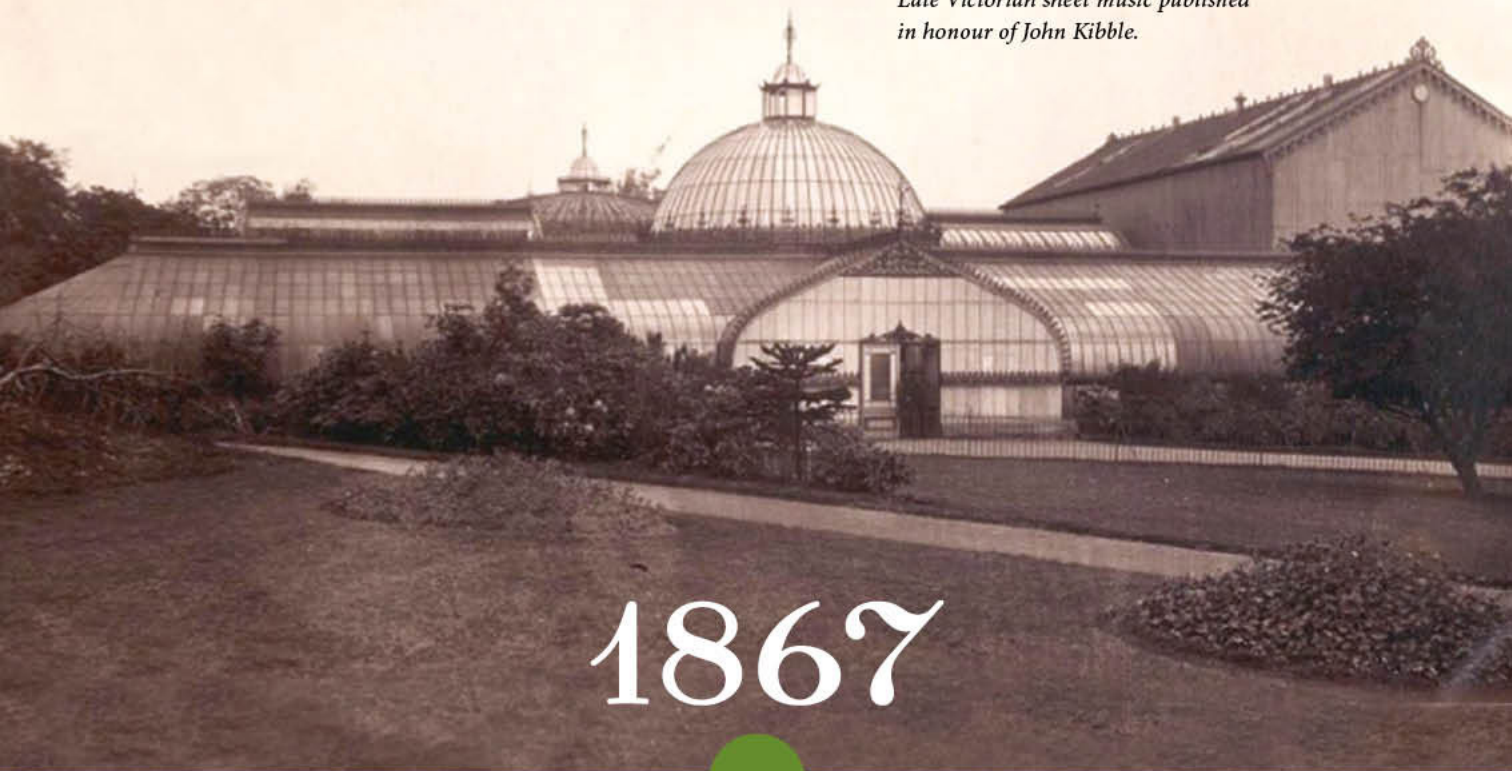
▲ *Pierre Emile L' Angelier*
Smith and L' Angelier images
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Special Collections.



An agreement was signed in October 1871 that John Kibble would re-erect his conservatory in the Gardens. He was required to maintain the structure and its contents for 21 years. The conservatory was dismantled at Coulport in May 1872 and brought to the gardens via the River Clyde, and up the Forth and Clyde Canal to Port Dundas. The building on the right of the picture is where John Kibble projected large scale lantern slides for the public.



Late Victorian sheet music published in honour of John Kibble.



1867

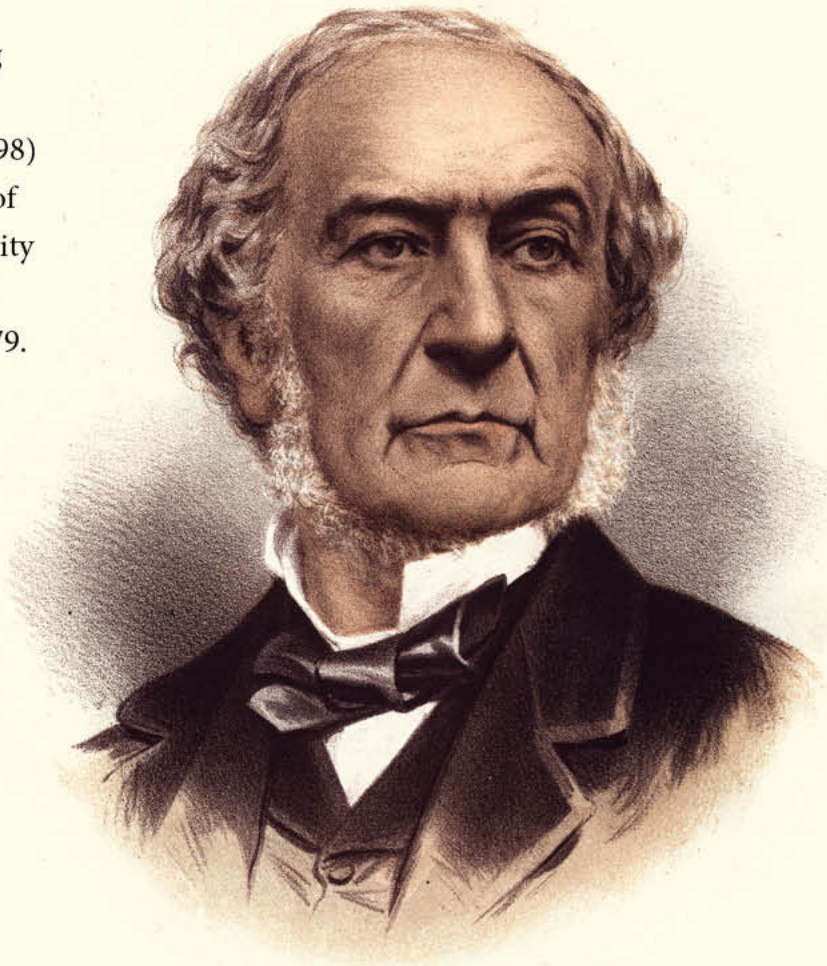
1871



John Kibble (1819-1894) was born in Glasgow, the son of a wealthy wire and metal merchant. He was an entrepreneur and innovator. One of his early commerical enterprises (in the 1840s) was the retail of ladies' zebra shawls made popular and fashionable by Queen Victoria. In 1861 the independently wealthy Kibble commissioned Glasgow architects Boucher & Cousland to design and build his family home – Coulport House situated on the shores of Loch Long. They also designed, as an addition onto the House, a glasshouse.

It was this 'conservatory' which eventually became the Kibble Palace. Kibble was an early pioneer of the increasingly popular Victorian activity of photography. He designed and built a camera – which at the time was one of the biggest in the world. Transported on a horse-drawn cart, his camera had a 13 inch diameter lens, and produced photographic glass plate negatives that measured 44 by 36 inches. Kibble's interests were wide-ranging and he is credited with modifying a bicycle by attaching flotation buoys to it and cycling it across Loch Long!

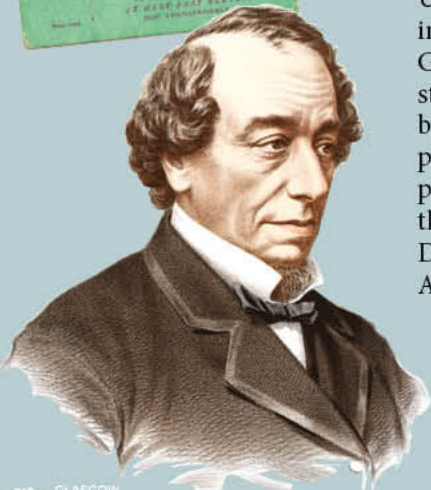
A varied range of promenade concerts, displays and meetings continued through the late 1870s with the Glasgow Fair Holiday fetes drawing in record crowds of 20,000 people. William Ewart Gladstone (1809-1898) four-times Liberal Prime Minister of Great Britain, delivered his University of Glasgow rectorial address in the Kibble Palace on 5th December 1879.



1877

1873

Benjamin Disraeli, 1st Earl of Beaconsfield, (1804–1881) twice served as Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. When installed as the Rector of Glasgow University the students marked the occasion by organising a rousing programme of popular and patriotic music played by the Crystal Palace Band. Disraeli delivered his Rectorial Address in the Kibble Palace.



1879

A sample of a share certificate that subscribers were able to purchase over a number of years which helped during times of increasing debt and hardship for the gardens.



Tree ferns were planted in the early 1880s. The specimens were received from many sources as a result of an appeal following the conversion of the Kibble Palace in to a plant display house. An important new feature was the raising of the central dome for the purpose of ventilation. On the 1st April 1887 Glasgow Corporation entered into possession as creditors and the Gardens were closed. Maintenance work continued at the Corporation's expense.



1887

1883

The Victorian 'Main Range' of glasshouses (on the hill) were originally built in Burmese teak to house a wide range of tropical plants, including: orchids, ferns, cacti and succulents, palms, begonias, and plants used in commerce and aquatics.

The City of Glasgow Act 1891 provided that *the gardens and the property and effects of the Botanic Institution should be transferred to and vested in the Corporation, to be kept open, preserved and maintained as a public area and Botanic Gardens for all time.* The 'Royal' title was lost at this time.





*Late Victorian nannies,
with their young charges,
wheel their 'perambulators'
around the Gardens.*

1897

1894

The Botanic Gardens Station was built in 1894 for the Glasgow Central Railway and designed by the Scottish architect, James Miller (1860-1947), the staff architect for the Caledonian Railway Company. An unusual and attractive station, the platforms and waiting rooms were below ground as the railway ran mostly underground from Stobcross Junction – now the Scottish Exhibition and Conference Centre (SECC) – up the valley of the River Kelvin to Maryhill.





In the early years of the 20th century there are references to the heavy industrial pollution in the city and its effect on plant life.

A report was made on the '*Decay of Glasgow Trees*'. The principal cause

was that of smoke from domestic fires and the chemical impurities from various manufacturers within the City. These problems continued until the passing of *The Clean Air Act 1956*.

1907

1900

Kirklee Bridge, linking Kelvinside to Maryhill was opened in 1900. A fine red sandstone bridge with granite pillars and balustrades, it has high narrow arch linking the two parts of what is now the arboretum. The City's Coat of Arms is carved into the stone in each spandrel of the main arch over the River Kelvin.



1908

The Hump-Back Bridge connecting the Gardens to the north side of the River Kelvin was built in this year by Messrs. Orr, Watt & Co. Ltd. of Motherwell.



The bridge as it is today.



A serious incident occurred at the Kibble Palace in the early morning of 24th January 1914.

“David Waters, a night watchman, observed a burning fuse attached to a box, and with great presence of mind cut and extinguished it. Unfortunately another bomb exploded and caused damage to the building. Only 27 panes of glass were broken and no damage was done to the plants.”.

The police found a lady’s black silk scarf nearby, and marks on the soft ground bore the impression of high-heeled shoes: the Suffragettes had been at work!



During the war, King George V and Queen Mary visited Glasgow on a morale-boosting mission, travelling to the city by the Royal Train. They are said to have alighted from Kirklee Station where they returned to spend the night on the train

underneath the Botanic Gardens. The photograph shows officers, soldiers and civilians wearing decorations at an Investiture Ceremony held at Ibrox Park in Glasgow during the Royal Visit to the city on 18th September 1917.

1917

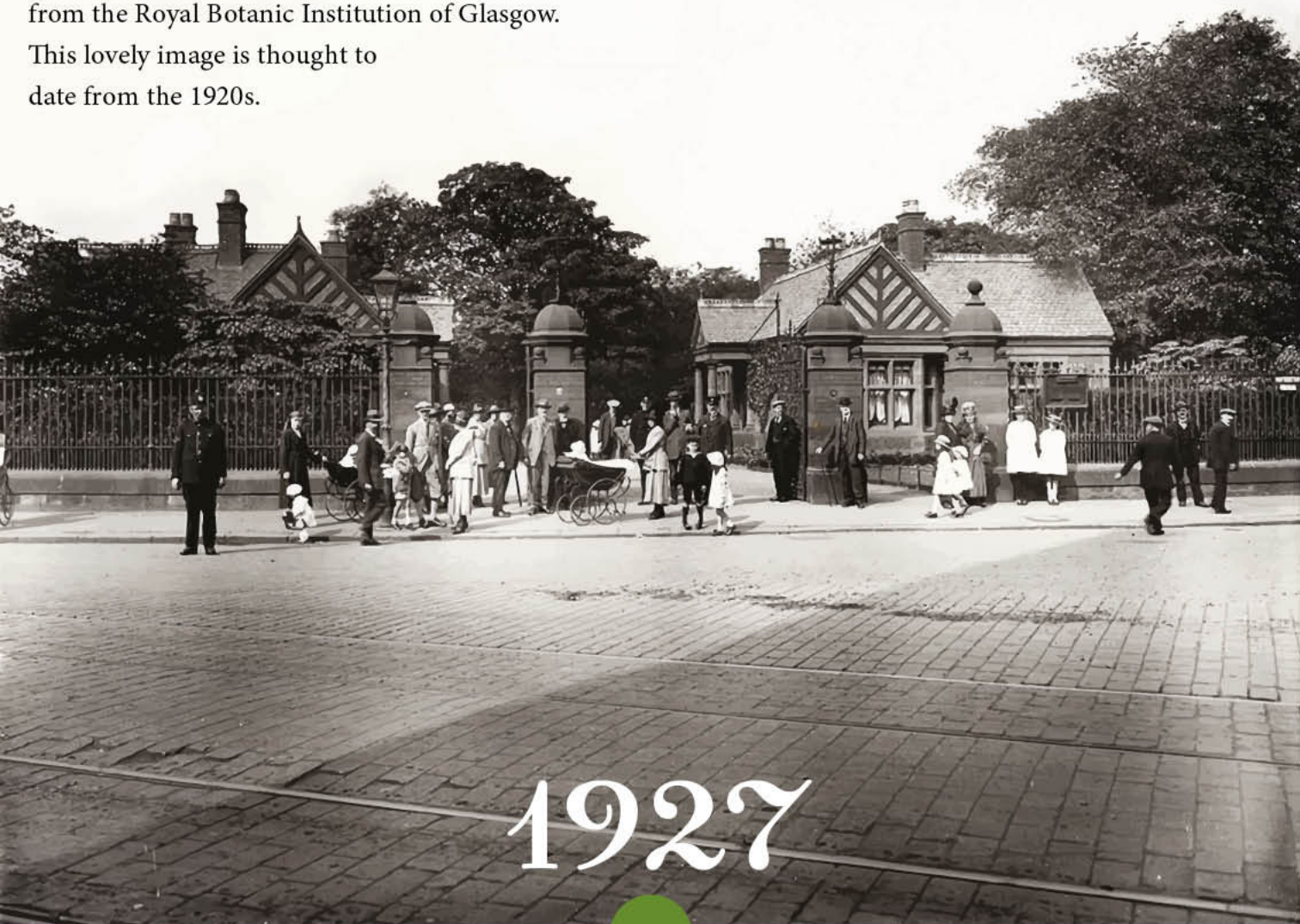


The poisonous berry of *Atropa belladonna*, Deadly Nightshade

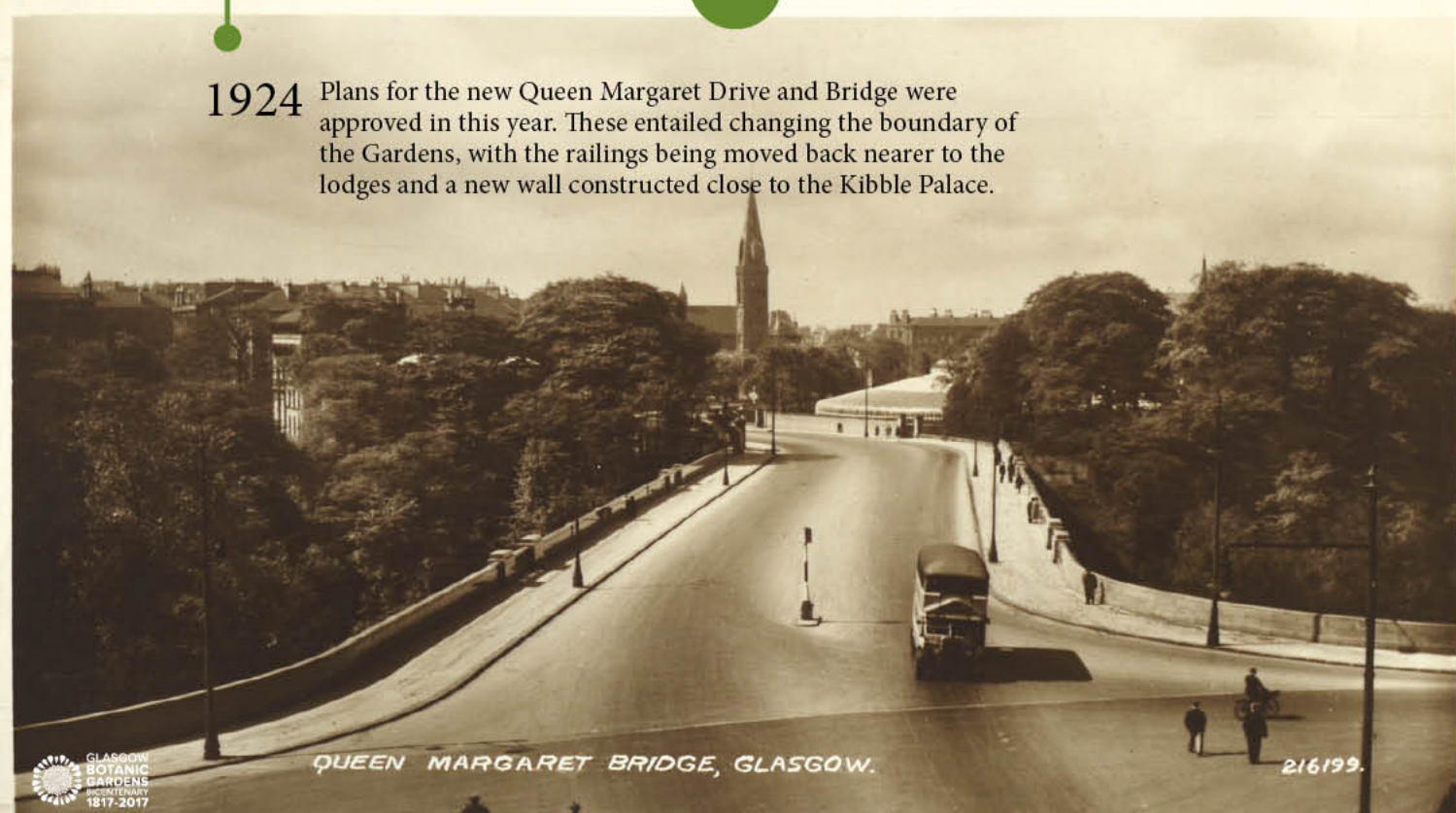
1920

A court action was raised against the Corporation following the death of a six-year-old boy who had eaten berries from the plant known as Deadly Nightshade (*Atropa belladonna*) in the Botanic Gardens. The case went to the House of Lords where the Corporation's appeal was dismissed and a payment of £300 was made. Fencing and notices were erected as a precaution against any repetitions.

The main entrance and decorative lodge houses were constructed by the Corporation of Glasgow in 1894 as they invested in the Botanic Gardens which they had recently taken over from the Royal Botanic Institution of Glasgow. This lovely image is thought to date from the 1920s.



1924 Plans for the new Queen Margaret Drive and Bridge were approved in this year. These entailed changing the boundary of the Gardens, with the railings being moved back nearer to the lodges and a new wall constructed close to the Kibble Palace.



Seven marble statues including *Stepping Stones* (1878) by William Hamo Thornycroft were moved from the Kelvingrove Art Gallery and placed among the plant collections in the Kibble Palace.



1937



The Botanic Gardens Railway Station, then run by London Midland and Scottish Railway Company, was closed. In September 1939, World War II began and, as in World War I, the staff numbers dipped with some workers leaving to join the armed forces. Although we have little information on this time in the Gardens' history it is known that tomatoes were grown in glasshouses as part of the war effort.



The wartime and post-war years were very difficult ones for managing the Botanic Gardens, with shortages of trained staff and finance. However, the facilities for the public had to be maintained, with colourful bedding displays thought to provide cheer in an otherwise drab world.

In the past local authorities had relied on employing trained gardeners from private estates, but after the war this source was virtually gone. The parks committee therefore agreed to the introduction of a five-year apprenticeship scheme to increase the supply of trained gardeners.

1947

1941

During the Clydebank Blitz (March 1941), a landmine was dropped onto the opposite bank of the River Kelvin and damaged the structure of the Kibble Palace. It was then closed for the duration of the war and not re-opened until November 1946.



Glasgow's Clydeside and Clydebank were extensively bombed during the Blitz.

© Imperial War Museum IEM (HU 36232)

Eric Curtis arrived from the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew taking up the post of curator and introducing a formal accession system to ensure that all new batches of plants and seed coming into the Gardens received a unique number. The manual accession system evolved into a computer database by the late 1980s which by 2017 had progressed further to the international BG-Base system. Accurate plant records supported by comprehensive labelling is crucial in a modern botanic garden.



This photograph dates from the 1950s and shows families taking advantage of some fresh air in front of the Main Range.



Calliandra inaequilatera: The 'Powder Puff Tree', a South American winter-flowering tree which has been a popular sight over many decades in the Palm House.

1957



Picture of the glasshouses, including behind the scenes. This undated photograph was probably taken in the late 1940s or early 1950s. Note the circular design of the rear sections of the Main Range glasshouse. In the mid 1950s these sections were rebuilt to a simpler, square design, probably as a cost saving. This sort of modification is unlikely to have been approved under modern planning rules, especially as the Botanic Gardens sits within a conservation area.



In early January 1968 a hurricane hit Glasgow during the night causing extensive damage throughout the city. Around 2,000 trees were decimated within the City's parks.

The Botanic Gardens were fortunate in losing only 24. The Kibble Palace was unscathed but the other glasshouses lost a total of 430 panes of glass.

1967



After sixteen years of service, Donald the cart-horse retired in 1970 to Linn Park. He was a popular and hard-working member of staff. Here Donald can be seen being led around the grounds by Hugh McNeish, carter.



The arboretum was officially opened becoming an important new feature within the Botanic Gardens.

As 1977 was the year of Queen Elizabeth's Silver Jubilee a concert of Elizabethan court music was held in the Kibble Palace in aid of the 'Silver Jubilee Appeal'.

This was the first concert to take place there since Victorian times.

1977



1979

The Hopkirk Building (below), named for Thomas Hopkirk one of the Botanic Gardens' founders, was opened as a multi-functional facility.

A young botanist at work in the Hopkirk Building's learning centre.



Begonia macintyreana

Begonia macintyreana was described in 2006 in honour of the founder of the MacIntyre Trust, Mr Malcolm MacIntyre.

The M. L. MacIntyre Begonia Trust (from 1985)

Malcolm (Mac) MacIntyre, was born in Edinburgh in 1905. He worked as a surveyor eventually becoming a senior partner with his firm. A love of music and fishing led to 'Mac' becoming 'hooked' on Begonias when he saw an advertisement for the sale of the 'Trout Begonia' (*Begonia argenteoguttata*). He produced numerous hybrid Begonias in his own glasshouses at home in Cheshire. He became a regular visitor to Glasgow Botanic Gardens from the

early 1970s. Many of his hybrids were well-known in the USA of which several can be seen today in Glasgow Botanic Gardens. After MacIntyre's death in 1983 his widow arranged for a trust to be set up in his memory at The Botanic Gardens for the study of the genus *Begonia* and for the promotion of the National Collection of Begonias held at the Gardens. The *M. L. MacIntyre Begonia Trust* was established in 1985 with trustees including representatives from Glasgow Botanic Gardens,

the University of Glasgow and Glasgow City Council. On the death of Mrs MacIntyre in 1989, a second trust was set up using her legacy. Administered by the same trustees, this had the specific purpose of providing a research scholarship. In 2008 the two trusts were amalgamated to form *The M. L. MacIntyre Begonia Trust*. Over many years the Trust has funded research into Begonias and has proudly supported published works, individual projects and post-graduate research.



In advance of the 1988 Glasgow Garden Festival an expedition to Papua New Guinea was led by Dr. James Dickson of the Botany Department at the University of Glasgow. He was accompanied by Ewen Donaldson, deputy curator of the Botanic Gardens. Two young botanists, Keith Watson and Graham Steven and photographer Norman Tait – all from the University’s Botany Department, completed the team. They collected around 1200 specimens and many of these were displayed in the Hugh Fraser Tropicarium at the Garden Festival.

A view over Lake Kutubu situated in the Southern Highlands Province of Papua New Guinea.

1987



In the early 1980s the Gardens’ collection of Begonias became a ‘national collection’ under the auspices of the National Council for the Conservation of Plants and Gardens (NCCPG) – now known as Plant Heritage. Later on, part of the Tree Fern and Dendrobium orchid collections became ‘national collections’. Plant Heritage is one of the world’s leading plant and conservation charities.



Dendrobium cuthbertsonii



April 1997 saw the first of
what would become the
popular annual 'Orchid Fair.'

1997

2003

In July of 2003 the 'World
Rose Convention' was
held in Glasgow.
To mark the occasion a
World Rose Garden was
created near the flagpole
and officially opened by
Princess Tomohito of Japan.

*Ewen Donaldson, the Gardens'
General Manager leading
Princess Tomohito and guests
around the Kibble Palace.*

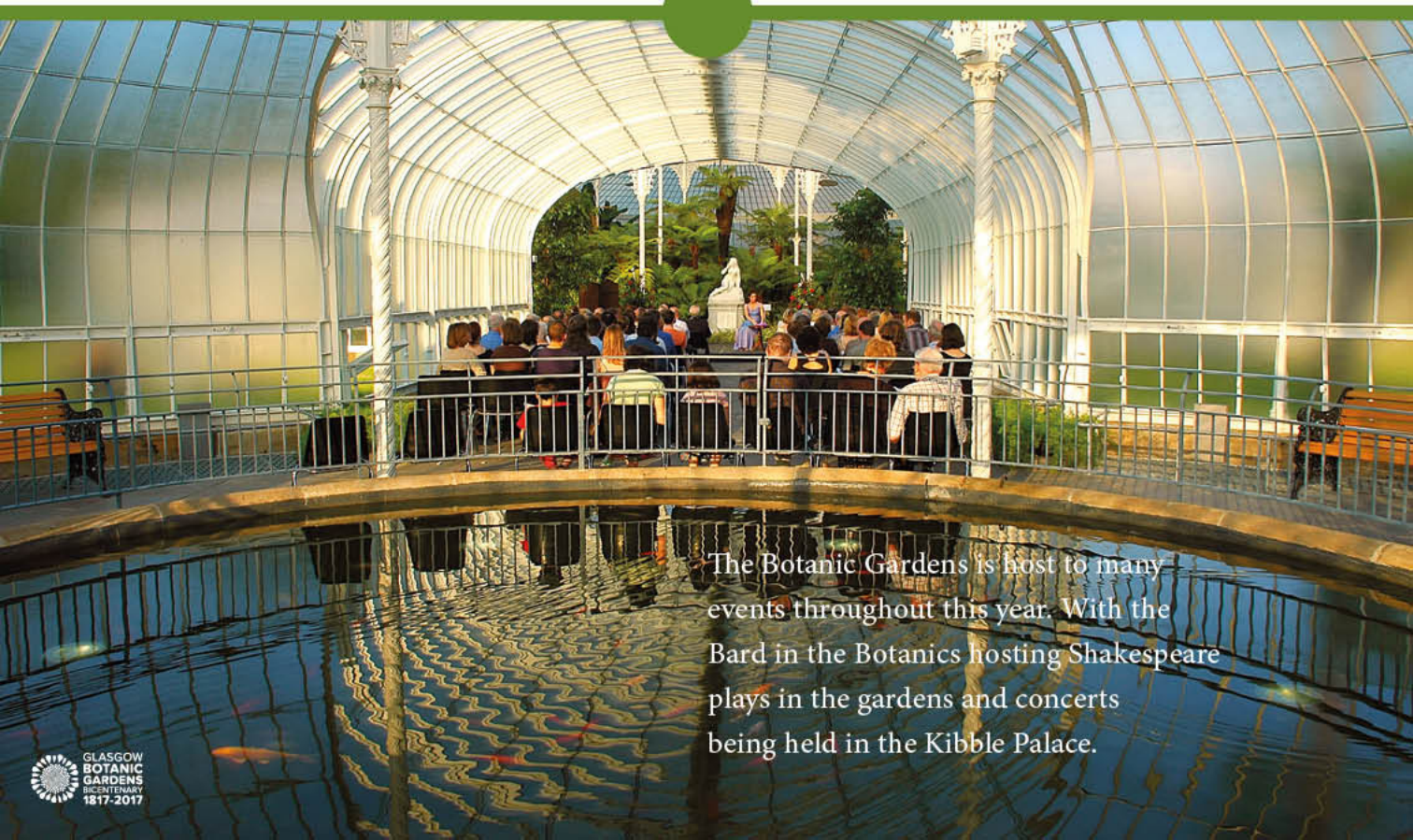




Photographs of the restoration 2004-2006

2007

A survey in the Kibble had found still intact the original 'Orchestral Pit' under the main dome but the deterioration of the structure of the Kibble Palace had been causing concern for many years and considerable funding was needed for a complete restoration. With the support of Historic Scotland, the city applied to the Heritage Lottery Fund for a grant to make this possible. This was to prove successful and a contract was put out to tender. The Kibble was closed to visitors to allow all the plants, including over 400 tree ferns, to be removed before the handover date in October 2004. The Kibble re-opened on 30th November 2006.



The Botanic Gardens is host to many events throughout this year. With the Bard in the Botanics hosting Shakespeare plays in the gardens and concerts being held in the Kibble Palace.



2017

Begonia polypetala

A tuberous species with large, hummingbird pollinated flowers. Known only from two localities in northern Peru and photographed during fieldwork supported by the Trust in 2016.

The MacIntyre Begonia Trust has supported a huge amount of Begonia science through sponsoring scholarships, fieldwork, labwork and publications. The supported projects have been based throughout the distribution range of Begonia, in Peru, South Africa, Socotra, Nepal, Peninsular Malaysia, Sumatra, Sulawesi and the Philippines. The fieldwork in these areas has brought many rare and beautiful species into cultivation for the first time, and resulted in the description

of many species new to science – currently 48, with many more in currently press and in preparation. Our understanding of the evolution of Begonia has been transformed by the support of the Trust, through research on phylogenetics, genomics, biogeography and ecology. Current MacIntyre projects are a new classification for all 1,825 species in the genus, and DNA-mining Begonia herbarium specimens from New Guinea to look at their record-breaking speciation rate.