



News from the History Group Research Team

The Victorian mania for exotic plants transformed our gardens, and much of it was down to the plant hunting Lobb brothers.

William and Thomas Lobb surprisingly remain virtually unknown. Both brothers were born at Lane End, Washaway, William in 1809 and Thomas in 1817. Their father, John, worked at Pencarrow as a carpenter, but the family later moved to the Carclew Estate, as John secured a job together with his sons, William and Thomas.

I then unravelled a complicated story of connections between the Lobb Brothers, Lamellen and Tremeer over the following 100 years. For nearly twenty years between the 1840's and 1860's, the Lobb brothers travelled thousands of miles through dangerous and uncharted territories in search of new and unusual plants. Thomas concentrated on orchards and tropical plants, and William discovering many plants still commonly grown in our gardens today, one that may surprise you is the Escallonia. William's most famous collection was that of 3000 seeds from the Northern Andes, of the then rare Monkey Puzzle Tree. An avenue of monkey puzzle trees were planted at Pencarrow House, where Sir William Molesworth, William's father's previous employer, said that the prickly branches would puzzle a monkey to climb, and the name "Monkey Puzzle" stuck.

William Lobb's seed collections from South America started arriving at his employers, Veitch Nurseries in Exeter, in the early 1840's, just as Veitch's talented head propagator, John Dominy, went to work for the Magors at Lamellen which was being rebuilt. The greenhouses had already been completed ready for Dominy's arrival before the building was even finished in 1849. The Magor's stayed with their cousins, the Hext family of Tremeer, during this time. John Dominy was eventually lured back to Veitch's Nurseries some five years later. Three more generations of the Magors later, found Edward John Penberthy Magor starting to garden at Lamellen in 1901, he was a meticulous record keeper. Ironically, in the early 1900's Mr Magor as he was known, was ordering seeds from Veitch's Nurseries which had been collected by the Lobb Brothers and bred by John Dominy in the 1840's some sixty years earlier. In addition to this, Mr Magor himself developed many notable rhododendron hybrids in the early 1900's at Lamellen.

Shortly before the Second World War, Lieutenant Colonel, later Major General Eric Harrison, bought Tremeer and started to plant Rhododendrons, mainly obtained from Lamellen. Apparently, when General Harrison returned to Tremeer in 1946, he found a hedge at Lamellen which was a reverse cross of a dwarf hybrid, and it wasn't doing well. Colonel Harrison then took many cuttings from this hedge, and he raised "St. Breward" and "St. Tudy", and many more rhododendron crosses for the next twenty years.

Now you know the reason why St. Tudy and this surrounding area is so important to horticulture, and once more we have uncovered trailblazers who lived in St. Tudy in the past. The next time you go to a Garden Centre, remember the Lobb Brothers of Washaway, Mr. Magor of Lamellen and General Harrison of Tremeer, and thank them for the beautiful plants they created and discovered that are still in our gardens in St. Tudy today!

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