

Botanical paintings by E. Margaret Stones (b.1920)

RBGE is fortunate to have this collection of watercolours, with a focus on Himalayan plants, made by Margaret Stones between 1952 and 1970 at Ascreavie, the Angus house and garden of George and Betty Sherriff. Margaret was a friend of the Sherriffs and the collection was left to the Garden by Betty Sherriff.

Number	Date	Description (from drawing)	Dimensions (h x w, mm)	Notes (Condition, annotations, etc)
1	[1967]	<i>Luculia grandiflora</i>	342 x 284	Signed in watercolour (along stem); Note on back of frame written when artist gave it to RBGE, c. 1998: "LUCULEA [sic] GRANDIFLORA L & S 17040 Cult. R. Botanic Garden, Edinburgh, 14.9.'67 Specimen taken from Edinburgh to Ardtonish on West Coast, and drawn there. George Sherriff died on 19.9.67 and drawing has remained with the artist. A note from Henry Noltie tells me this specimen still grows at the Ed.B.Grdn., Nov. 23 rd 1990. See: "A Quest of Flowers" by Harold R. Fletcher, 1975. Ed. U. Press. Page 47. See additional note by Henry Noltie ¹
2	n.d.	<i>Meconopsis napaulensis</i>	565 x 386	Signed in ink. Loose
3	n.d.	<i>Meconopsis simplicifolia</i>	550 x 335	Inscribed in ink by artist: <i>Meconopsis simplicifolia</i> (D.Don) Worp. Signed in ink. Loose
4	1952	<i>Meconopsis integrifolia</i>	519 x 390	Inscribed in ink by artist: <i>Meconopsis integrifolia</i> (Maxim.) Franch. 1952. Signed in ink
5	n.d.	<i>Meconopsis integrifolia</i>	509 x 356	Inscribed in ink by artist: <i>Meconopsis integrifolia</i> (Maxim) Franch. Signed in ink
6	1967	<i>Meconopsis sherriffii</i>	445 x 316	Inscribed in pencil by artist: <i>Meconopsis sherriffii</i> . Ascreavie, May 1967. Signed in watercolour (along bottom right leaf)

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7	n.d.	<i>Meconopsis villosa</i>	421 x 259	Inscribed in ink by artist: <i>Meconopsis villosa</i> (Hook. f.) G. Tayl. Signed in ink Note. Some of the earliest scientific line drawings undertaken by Stones after she came to England were for George Taylor, then Keeper of Botany at BM(NH). Published in 'Notes on Podostemaceae for the revision of Flora of West Tropical Africa', in the 'Bulletin of the British Museum (Natural History) 1(3), 1953. In this Taylor named a new genus for her: 'In naming this genus "Stonesia" I wish to express my deep gratitude to Miss Margaret Stones, whose beautiful illustrations, completed with infinite care and patience, have been of the utmost value in elucidating the microscopical floral structure of these remarkable plants'. According to an anecdote related to me by Caroline Whitefoord of NHM relations later cooled. Taylor had a rather ferocious housekeeper and Margaret once addressed a Christmas card to 'Sir George and the Dragon' – what she did not realise was that he was about to marry the woman in question!! [HN]
8	n.d.	<i>Lilium nepalense</i>	507 x 318	Inscribed in ink by artist: <i>Lilium nepalense</i> . Signed in watercolour (along lowest right leaf)
9	1977	<i>Rosa</i> cv. 'Betty Sherriff'	450 x 354	Inscribed in pencil by artist: <i>Rosa</i> sp. Coll: Bhutan 1948, L & S. Cult. Ascreavie. August 10 th , 1977. Signed in watercolour (along stem) Note. This was reproduced on a Christmas card for the Dr. Graham's Homes, Kalimpong, c. 1995. In the 1950's MS had produced designs for some of their earlier cards. The Homes were founded by Betty Sherriff's father [HN]
10	n.d.	[Four meconopsis leaf rosettes]	485 x 375	Signed in ink (against soil)
11	1971	<i>Primula whitei</i>	200 x 320	Inscribed in pencil by artist: <i>Primula whitei</i> , Cult. Mrs B. Sherriff, Ascreavie, March 1971. In another hand: 'HIMALAYAN BLUE PRIMULA'. Signed in watercolour (along bottom right leaf) Note: MS made several versions of this, and the fact that Mrs Sherriff's name is on the drawing suggests that it was not done at Ascreavie – perhaps bought by Mrs S from an exhibition in London [HN]
12	n.d.	<i>Primula gracilipes</i>	202 x 162	Inscribed in ink by artist: <i>Primula gracilipes</i> Craib. Signed in ink (along lower left leaf)
13	n.d.	<i>Primula tsariensis</i>	320 x 200	Inscribed in pencil by artist: <i>Primular tsariensis</i> . Signed in watercolour (along soil)
14	n.d.	<i>Primula nutans</i>	290 x 183	Inscribed in ink by artist: <i>Primula nutans</i> Signed in ink. <i>Species now = P. flaccida</i>

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15	n.d.	<i>Primula macrophylla</i>	256 x 165	Inscribed in ink by artist: <i>Primula macrophylla</i> D.Don. Signed in ink
16	[1953]	<i>Primula kingii</i>	209 x 316mm	Date supplied by artist? Inscribed in ink by artist: <i>Primula kingii</i> Watt. Signed in ink
17	1952	<i>Primula obtusifolia</i>	385 x 278	Inscribed in ink by artist: <i>Primula obtusifolia</i> Royle. 1952. Signed in ink
18	n.d.	[Four primulas]	381 x 246	Inscribed in ink by artist: <i>P. Cockburniana</i> , <i>Primula ioessa</i> , <i>P. Cawdoriana</i> , <i>P. Chumbiesis</i> . Signed in ink
19	1970	<i>Rhododendron orbiculare</i>	280 x 230	Inscribed in pencil by artist: <i>Rhododendron orbiculare</i> . Ascreavie 2.6.1970. Signed in watercolour (along stem)
20	n.d.	<i>Aquilegia glandulosa</i>	353 x 240	Inscribed in ink by artist: <i>Aquilegia glandulosa</i> . Signed in ink
21	n.d.	<i>Rhododendron glaucophyllum</i>	180 x 132	Inscribed in pencil by artist: <i>Rh. glaucophyllum</i> var. <i>Tubiforme</i> [at top], <i>Rh. glaucum</i> [at bottom]. Signed in watercolour (along margin of leaf at bottom left)
22	n.d.	<i>Rhododendron impeditum</i>	152 x 134	Inscribed in pencil by artist: <i>Rhododendron impeditum</i> . Signed in watercolour (along stem)
23	n.d.	<i>Rhododendron schlippenbachii</i>	229 x 167	Inscribed in pencil by artist: <i>Rhododendron schlippenbachii</i> . Signed in watercolour (along stem)
24	n.d.	<i>Rhododendron anthopogon</i>	152 x 134	Inscribed in pencil by artist: <i>Rhododendron anthopogon</i> . Signed in watercolour (along stem)
25	n.d.	<i>Rhododendron intricans</i> and <i>R. chryseum</i>	181 x 134	Inscribed in pencil by artist: <i>Rhododendron intricans</i> [left], <i>Rhododendron chryseum</i> [right]. Signed in watercolour (along stem)
26	n.d.	<i>Rhododendron wardii</i>	223 x 192	Inscribed in pencil [by Sherriff?]: <i>Rhododendron wardii</i> L & S. Signed in ink
27	n.d.	<i>Primula buryana</i>	225 x 147	Inscribed in ink by artist: <i>Primula buryana</i> Balf.f. Signed in ink
28	1952	<i>Primula eburnea</i>	304 x 211	Inscribed in ink by artist: <i>Primula eburnea</i> Balf. f. and Cooper 1952; Signed in ink
29	1964	<i>Primula sherriffiae</i>	267 x 281	Inscribed in pencil by artist: <i>Primula sherriffiae</i> . Cult.Kew.Drawn 28.4.64. Signed in watercolour (along soil)

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30	n.d.	<i>Primula reidii</i>	226 x 147	Inscribed in ink by artist: <i>Primula reidii</i> Duthie. Signed in ink
31	[1962]	<i>Gentiana sino-ornata</i>	232 x 153	Date supplied by artist, and somewhat doubtful – as it looks later in style; Inscribed in ink by artist: <i>Gentiana sino-ornata</i> Balf. Signed in ink
32	n.d.	<i>Crocus chrysanthus</i>	107 x 91	Inscribed in ink by artist: <i>Crocus chrysanthus</i> . Signed in ink
33	19.9.67	<i>Meconopsis superba</i>	Not known	Stolen from Inverleith House, c. 1990

1. [Drawing 1 – *Luculia grandiflora*] This drawing must have had very special significance for Margaret Stones, given her close relationship with the Sherriffs. Arntonish was the family home of Faith Hugh-Smith, whose husband was John Raven. John's sister Mary was a friend of Margaret's and it was John's father, Canon Charles Raven who was largely responsible for Margaret's coming to England from Australia. When GS died, Sophie, Lady Lyell of Kinnordy drove over to Ardtornish to take Margaret back to Ascreavie. From the artist's note it would have appeared to have been commissioned by Sherriff, but it is conspicuously better in technique and time/care taken in execution – matching her best work – than the majority of the Ascreavie drawings. The early works from the 1950s can be excused as 'early work', but many appear to have been done in the 1960s and '70s when she was doing some of her finest work (e.g. for Lord Talbot for the Endemic Flora of Tasmania) – these hastily produced works are thus probably best seen as 'holiday sketches'. When the drawings are put on display in Inverleith House in 1986 the worst were tactfully not shown, but even so MS was visibly shaken at seeing these essentially private works in a public gallery, since by then she had regarded herself as among the greatest botanical artists – especially after the great flowering of talent in her Louisiana drawings, at that point shortly to be exhibited in the Ashmolean and Fitzwilliam Museums. This is the background that doubtless prompted her to give this drawing to RBGE – as an example of her best work.

Fletcher gives the background to the tale of the discovery of this plant in Bhutan, used by L&S as a tree from which to reach the cliff on which grew '*Primula ludlowii*' and '*P. sherriffiae*'.

(H.J. Noltie, 20 vi 2007)