



# THE BEST OF KEN NOBBS

## Roses

*Lloyd Chapman*

**K**en was a prodigious hybridizer, but alas not very rigorous with his recordkeeping. He named many roses after significant people and events in New Zealand. The majority were missionaries and their wives who played a part in early



New Zealand settlement, and many are named after his family members. Unfortunately he often christened the same rose with different names, and for the rose historian this often proves frustrating.

One of Ken's great missions was to hybridize thornless Ramblers. His genetic building blocks were the multiflora ramblers TAUSENDSCHÖN and VEILCHEN-BLAU. From this work, I have selected three that I consider to represent his best:

- CHARLOTTE KEMP is a deep dark purple with small-medium single blooms produced in clusters. There is a slight white centre, amid golden stamens. Blooms exhibit a grey tinge as they age. Once-flowering, this rose is totally thornless and capable of growing to 3 metres. Growth habit is typically Multiflora Rambler. Nobbs classifies it as a Climbing Polyantha Rambler, and while the colour is a brilliant purple violet, it has no fragrance and few hips.
- MARY DAVIS is an expansive shrub, capable of exceeding 3 metres high and wide. It pro-



TOP LEFT: Mary Davies  
LEFT: The Active  
TOP RIGHT: Harriet Shepherd  
RIGHT: Charlotte Kemp  
Photos by Jocelen Janon.

duces blooms in huge corymbs in spring, with pale purple single blooms, a white eye, and a coronet of golden stamens. There is no fragrance but she has wonderful small hips (4mm). An outstanding spectacle in November, this rose stops visitors in their tracks.

Both the above roses were produced in 1984. On his International Registration form, Nobbs gives the breeding as THORNFREE WONDER × VEILCHENBLAU. THORNFREE WONDER is another TAUSENDSCHÖN seedling.

- HARRIET SHEPHERD is a tall Multiflora Rambler, producing clusters of double pinkish-lavender blooms with white throat and golden stamens. Blooms are 5cm in diameter, and pale with age. Peter Beales enthused about her in our garden. Breeding is given by Nobbs as TAUSENDSCHÖN seedling × VEILCHENBLAU and once again it has no fragrance.

Three other smaller roses deserve mention.

- THE ACTIVE is one of the stars of our garden. A strong shrub that will achieve 1.5m tall and wide, it has golden-pointed buds that open to single pale apricot blooms (5cm) that rapidly fade to white. Named after Samuel Marsden's first sailing ship, it is a healthy repeat-flowering rose. Its seed parent is claimed as *Rosa chinensis mutabilis*.
- MARTHA FORD is in the style of a small Polyantha, which flowers from spring until autumn. She has apricot-pink blooms that quickly fade to white. Unusually for a Nobbs rose, she is fragrant and very recurrent, and is claimed to descend from TAUSENDSCHÖN.
- DAUGHTER MARGARET is a Shrub-Climber with small apricot-peach buds that fade quickly as they open, eventually aging to white. The small double blooms (4cm) are plentiful, borne in clusters, and very recurrent. Registered in 1985, the seed parent is given as *R. chinensis mutabilis*. The pollen parent is probably CORNELIA. The rose is named for his daughter. Sadly, it has no fragrance.

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LLOYD CHAPMAN *has collected roses for most of his adult life. With his wife Ann, Lloyd operated Trinity Farm Rose Museum, selling own-root heritage roses. Their 3-acre garden of 1,600 old roses represented an important collection of Barbier Ramblers, Rugosas, and old European roses. Having sold Trinity Farm, they are now embarking on a new project—to restore an historic New Zealand house and create a garden of Victorian roses.*