

RHODODENDRON AND CAMELLIA GROUP. BULLETIN NO. 17.
HON.EDITOR:- K.J.W.LOWES,ROUT LODGE,COLWOOD LANE,WARNINGLID,SUSSEX.

CALENDAR FOR NEXT FEW MONTHS.

1981.

OCT 18 The High Beeches. Autumn Colour Opening. See Editorial.
NOV 3 RHS Show. The Late Autumn Show.
4 - do -
24 RHS Show.
25 - do -

IMPORTANT NOTICE.

RETIREMENT OF THE GROUP'S HONORARY SECRETARY.

The Hon. Secretary, John Owens, is retiring on 31 October 1981, i.e. at the end of the current Group year. We have not so far found a successor, and any member who would like to consider taking his place should contact him for details at Jubilee Lodge, Yarpole, Leominster, Herefordshire HR6 OBA. Telephone YARPOLE 423.

MATTERS OF IMMEDIATE OR CURRENT INTEREST.

1. TREASURER'S NOTICE - OVERDUE SUBSCRIPTIONS. A notice from the Hon.Treasurer, of particular importance to members who are in arrear with their subscriptions, appears overleaf.

2. THE EDINBURGH CONFERENCE AND THE GROUP'S 1982 TOUR.

MEMORANDUM TO ALL MEMBERS FROM THE CHAIRMAN, MR ALAN HARDY.

An International Rhododendron Conference is to be held at the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh, from 11 to 13 May 1982. The Conference Organiser has undertaken to send to all members of the RHS Rhododendron and Camellia Group a copy of the Conference Brochure and booking forms, together with information about tours planned to take place before and after the Conference. Members should have received these by the time they receive this bulletin. The Conference programme itself will not include visits to gardens.

Scotland's Gardens Scheme is arranging a tour of gardens in SW Scotland from 5 or 6 May to 10 May. Tours are also being arranged by the travel agents Travel England/Travel Scotland.

Our own tentative plans were for a Group Tour in NW England and SW Scotland from about 5 May to 10 May, but support for this might be affected by the other tours on offer. If you might support the Group's own tour would you please complete the form below and send it as soon as possible to Nigel Glass, Tour Secretary, 8 Nuns Walk, Virginia Water, Surrey GU 25 4RT. If the response is prompt and sufficient we will go ahead with planning.

I take the opportunity of saying that there will be a Group outing on Wednesday 19 May 1982 (Chelsea week). Details will be announced later.

PLEASE RETURN COMPLETED SLIP AS SOON AS POSSIBLE TO:-
NIGEL GLASS, TOUR SECRETARY.

N.B.
TELEPHONE NO.

NAME.....

099 04 2333.

ADDRESS.....

TELEPHONE NO.....

I would prefer the Group to arrange its own tour in NW England and SW Scotland and to have the opportunity of joining the Group tour.

SIGNATURE.....

EDITORIAL. Number 17 is going to arrive later than any bulletin of the last two or three years, and members may have noticed already that there is no date in the usual place at the head, beside the serial number; this is deliberate. If the "July" issue arrives in August it is not too absurd, since it inevitably contains a lot of material originating in July, and can not therefore be begun in June. But when a "July" issue arrives after August it is likely to be confusing. Reference to the serial number should, of course, put things in order.

I am sorry that this has happened, and that the next issue will be influenced to some extent. For some months now my family life has been disturbed and congested, partly by illness (of others, not of myself) and partly by other pressures. It is all a question of priorities, and for having put my family first I apologise.

For the moment things have eased and I intend to produce Bulletin No. 18 before the end of the year if there is adequate material.

CONTRIBUTIONS. The last five words obviously implicate potential contributors - the people who keep the bulletin going when they are not impeded by the Hon. Editor's private life. There is always someone somewhere thinking up, or writing down, a contribution whose arrival in the post at Rout Lodge is going to brighten his morning. He is always grateful for them, small or large. As the intention just stated is to recover some of the ground recently lost, it is clear that help from members, to arrive by the middle of November, will be keenly appreciated.

GARDEN OPEN - THE HIGH BEECHES, HANDCROSS, A.23, SUSSEX. By kind permission of the Hon. Edward and Mrs Boscawen, the gardens of The High Beeches will be open for the benefit of the Gardeners' Royal Benevolent Society and the Royal Gardeners' Orphan Fund through the Gardeners' Sunday Organisation, on Sunday October 18th 1981. The garden is on the B.2110 road, about a mile east of Handcross, which is on the London-Brighton road A.23. Opening times are 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and admission is 80p, with OAPs 40p and children 20p. Car park free, but no dogs. Other attractions include Ploughman's Lunch, Refreshments, G.R.B.S. stall, Plants for sale, and a Flower-arranging exhibition by Balcombe Flower Club.

I recommend anyone who does not yet know this well-kept garden, and who can get there on the day, to take this opportunity. Even without flower or autumn colour - and I cannot imagine this condition - it would be a notable example of the English Woodland Garden, with a peaceful open character that remains in the memory. Given only reasonably favourable weather it colours up beautifully in autumn. A wide range of shrubs and trees ensures this. To awaken interest I mention two outstanding examples of less common shrubs which can be spectacular. One is a very fine large plant of Acer vitifolium (a japonicum form), which goes a rich flame-orange, and not far away is the other, a good-sized Disanthus cercidifolius whose colouring is a striking carmine-red, of great intensity when at its best.

GLENARN IN SCOTLAND. I understand that this famous garden is to be sold, and therefore append a brief note for the sake of those who do not know Glenarn but are interested in the great rhododendron gardens and their future. Glenarn is certainly one of them.

To begin with, it is one of those West of Scotland gardens which already existed when seed from Sir Joseph Hooker's 1849 collections was being distributed, sown and grown. By the time of the Rhododendron Year Book 1946, two plants believed to be of this provenance were notable enough to be mentioned in notes (prepared in 1939) by Mr F.R.S. Balfour (pp.32-34). They were a R. falconeri and a R. thomsonii, both by then 25 feet high and of noteworthy circumference. In the 1950 Year Book, a letter from Mr A.C. Gibson tells of what I take to be the same two plants; the falconeri was by then 90 feet around, but the thomsonii had expired before reaching its centenary. A photograph, Fig.46, shows the falconeri in full bloom in April 1950. In 1964, after other mentions in the interval, this plant crops up again in an article by Sir Ilay Campbell which has itself become a standard reference, "Giants of the West". Another portrait of the falconeri illustrates its estimated dimensions of 30 feet high by 94 feet circumference.

The garden has now been in the hands of the Gibson family for rather over 50 years. Until recently the Gibson brothers were regular correspondents of the Year Books, so a great many of their plants, including successful crosses, have been commented on since 1950. I think the overall impression gained by a visitor to the garden is that of a natural glen (whether Scottish or Himalayan), dominated by the "Big Leaves". But the range of plants is far wider than that, and there are aristocrats and rarities of all dimensions. I have visited the garden several times in the last ten years, and my clearest and most persistent memory-pictures are of a R. meddianum var. atrokermesinum and a R. rude, both in the medium size range, and both in the category "unforgettable".

I do not know details of either house or garden; the former looks substantial and the latter is, to say the least, a good glen. The location is near Helensburgh, on the Gareloch north-west of Glasgow; the site is neatly tucked away a few hundred yards from a good main road, and civilization is near at hand. I understand the asking price is around £110,000. Further particulars from:-

Mr J.F.A. Gibson,
Glenarn,
Rhu, Dunbartonshire.

E.H. WILSON, 1876-1930. In the August 1981 issue of "The Garden" a note in Tradescant's Diary on page 316, under the heading "Wilson's roots", draws attention to the plan for a memorial garden to be made in Chipping Campden, where Wilson was born. Any member contemplating making a donation or wishing to have further information may be interested in a leaflet which contains more details, as well as messages of support by the Town Mayor, by the Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, and by the Director of the Arnold Arboretum of Harvard University. I expect that a request for a copy of the Appeal Notice would bear fruit if addressed to Mr R.W. Smith, Town Mayor, Chipping Campden Town Council, Glos.

A sentence in the Appeal caught my eye as having particular relevance - "It was felt that as there is hardly a garden in the West which has not in it some plant introduced by Wilson, gardeners over a wide area would like to contribute to a memorial of this kind". I have not at hand any record, or even an estimate, of the total of his introductions; but it is simple to point out that the 1980 Species Handbook records about 250 numbers for rhododendrons. Yet Wilson is not referred to particularly as a rhododendron specialist, for his net was cast wide and he was successful with many genera, especially with trees and shrubs such as members of any Rhododendron Group must use and appreciate as association plants.

Many gardeners will know something about his collecting for the firm of Veitch of Davidia involucrata, the Handkerchief Tree, Ghost Tree or Dove Tree, from which over thirteen thousand plants were raised. What may not be so familiar, however, is an intriguing piece of information, which I quote from memory with my fingers crossed for its accuracy, about the photographs he took of the top of one of the davidias he found. Wilson is likely to remain for a long time the only man who ever photographed - and this with a large plate camera - a tree of Davidia involucrata from high up a neighbouring tree - of Tetracentron sinense, no less.

As it happens, specimens of the two forms of the davidia and the Tetracentron sinense are to be found within yards of one another at The High Beeches, the garden of the Group's Vice-Chairman.

SUBSCRIPTIONS - TREASURER'S REMINDERS. (note by Bulletin Editor).

The present financial year ends on 31st October, and next year's subscriptions - still at the rate of £3-00, or £1.50 without the Year Book - become due on 1st November 1981. A number of members have still not paid the subscription which fell due on 1st Nov 1980, and the Hon. Treasurer's personal reminders to them are enclosed with this bulletin. They are exhorted to pay for the year 1981-2 at the same time, thus saving themselves the cost of a cheque and

stamp, and the Hon. Treasurer time and inconvenience. In fact, in various ways, early payment of subscriptions is good for the Group's finances, and in this connection a further plea for payment by Bankers Order is relevant. The number of members doing this has been increasing steadily since the Treasurer's campaign for the method began, and I feel sure that his immediate target must be to pass the half-way mark which is now in his sights. Any member now prepared to initiate Bankers Order payment has only to contact Mr Farnes, by post or by telephone. I am sure he will be most grateful for this co-operation. His address is:-

Mr D.N.Farnes,
"Corton Lodge",
7, Burntwood Avenue,
Emerson Park, Hornchurch, Essex RM11 3JD.
Telephone HORNCHURCH 40536

REVIVING A GARDEN.

(note by the Bulletin Editor)

There is something exciting about the revival of a garden which has become badly overgrown during a period when the full-scale attention needed to keep it in good condition has not been forthcoming. The Second World War and the difficult decade which followed it were responsible for a number of cases of overgrowth. Generally, attempts at revival are handicapped by restrictions of finance and labour resources; thus great courage and determination are called for if these attempts are to be meaningful, even to the point of a partial success. Yet success has been achieved in a number of cases where rhododendrons are a prominent feature, as we learn from time to time by reading accounts in the Group's Year Books.

The first such account to catch my imagination was that by our recently-retired Chairman, Major E.W.M. Magor, when he returned to Lamellen in 1962. (1965 Year Book, pp.29-32). No wonder! "re-surfacing three quarters of a mile of drive"; "thinning nurseries 20 feet high with plants still three feet apart"; "half an acre of bamboo"; "three flattened relics of what appear to be R. macabeaunum"; "treasures that are on their last legs". Then, an account by A.D. Schilling of revival work in Westwood Valley at Wakehurst appeared in the 1972 Year Book. In the 1979-80 issue, Edmund Wright gave an account of the work being done by his brother and him at Arduaine in Argyll, after acquiring the garden in 1971. I have paid several visits to Arduaine, and ten years from starting the results of their work are something approaching the spectacular. These are three outstanding instances of new life being breathed into gardens which had almost reached the jungle state. Others of which I have first-hand knowledge are Penjerrick, Eckford and Ardanais, and there are of course others about which I know little or nothing.

Recently, however, I have had news of another old garden which is being given life-saving treatment. This is Portmeirion, near Portmadoc, and I understand work is already well advanced. One kind of help is going to be needed, that of the naming of "the hundreds of rhododendron species and hybrids planted there over the last 50 years or more." I shall do what I can to find out more about the precise position there, and report through the bulletin. It seems that Group members who can visit the garden may be able to help by giving their views on the identities of many so far unlabelled plants. So I hope to be able to enlarge on the possibilities in a future issue.

K.J.W.L.

ALKALINE WATER SUPPLY, HONEY FUNGUS AND THE CURES.

by Sir Peter Smithers.

A number of members of the Rhododendron and Camellia Group were kind enough to write to me about our problem with Armillaria mellea and its possible connection with the use of a slightly alkaline water supply in the hot weather conditions of our summer.

After taking soil tests at varying depths, I came to a tentative conclusion that the two things are not connected, and that our trouble arises from other causes.

In this part of Switzerland the steep mountainsides are covered with the native forest, mainly sweet chestnut and oak. In the interests of controlling soil erosion, it is forbidden to grub the stumps of trees after felling. In the chestnut woods with which we are more or less surrounded, this has resulted in a paradise situation for *Armillaria mellea*, and also in a bonus for the local inhabitants who very much appreciate that fungus in the kitchen. So far as the garden is concerned, it means that the soil on the margins of the woodland is permanently occupied by *Armillaria*, and there is no hope of eradicating it. This has resulted in the loss of many large *Rhododendrons*, and with them eight years or so of growing time.

We have been experimenting with Bray's emulsion. In the circumstances described above, any attempt to treat the entire area would obviously be impossible. It now becomes clear, however, that if about five litres of the emulsion at *Armillaria* strength are poured into the collar of the plant immediately that suspicious symptoms are noticed, the fungus may be arrested. The plant has, of course, already suffered a serious check before the symptoms are evident. However it is also clear that the emulsion has a stimulative effect on the plant, a flush of healthy new growth resulting, usually from the lower portion of the old wood. After three seasons, if flower buds are removed, growth will have returned to normal. The same treatment is given as a prophylactic to nearby plants and appears to have been effective.

With young *Magnolias* which have been attacked the treatment is much more difficult to evaluate. *Magnolias* growing amongst the *Rhododendrons* in the *Armillaria* area, seem more resistant to the fungus, and we have yet to lose one to it. One, however, was not diagnosed until three years after its first symptoms, at a time when we were still worrying about other causes of loss amongst the *Rhododendrons*. This plant seems to have retired into a permanent sulk and is not stimulated by the emulsion so far as I can tell. Two other *Magnolias* seem to have been attacked but responded to the treatment. More interesting is a case with *Daphne bholua* v. 'Gurkha'. A plant of this (grafted) standing at the time about 8' high on three equal sized stems, began to show signs of distress, and I sent a cross-cut of the two affected stems to Wisley for Mr Brickell to see as a sample of the die-back or sudden-death propensities of *Daphnes*, not yet noted by me in the many *D. bholua* growing here. I received a reply that death was due to *Armillaria* !

I thereupon immediately advanced upon the remaining stem, showing no signs of distress, with Bray's emulsion and gave it the collar treatment. After two seasons' growth it appears to have been quite unaffected either by *Armillaria* or by the Emulsion.

I am no chemist, but the product of Mrs Bray's work still seems to me mysterious. It instantly destroys all green matter with which it comes in contact. When I left a Haws watering can full of the emulsion while I had lunch, I returned to find that it had stripped all the stove enamel paint from the interior of the can. Yet the roots of our plants, far from resenting this ferocious agent, appear to enjoy it.

This year we have from the Cantonal Plant Health authority, a Japanese product labelled simply "S.N.K.D.", a powder to be sprinkled around the surface of newly planted *Rhododendrons*, 50 grams per plant. This is said to confer immunity from *Armillaria*, but I have been unable to establish the identity of the product and my Japanese gardening friends tell me that *Armillaria mellea* is happily unknown in their country.

We have yet to make tests with *Armillatox*, which is I believe similar to Bray's Emulsion.

I would like to express my warmest thanks to all members of the Group who wrote to me about our problem.

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- - - - - Peter Smithers. - - - - -

THE RHODODENDRON AND CAMELLIA GROUP SPRING TOUR 1981. NORTH EAST ENGLAND AND SOUTH EAST SCOTLAND. (from a member).

I write as one who cannot tell the difference between R.praestans and R.coryphaeum but I was on this tour and I enjoyed it thoroughly. I am sure everyone did. It was a happy tour, I think, because it had been so well organised by Major Walter Magor. Major Magor had made his own expedition to the North East in the previous November to reconnoitre the area and to pinpoint our route and the gardens to be visited. I ask the Tour Secretary to forgive me for thinking that his own task was made a very easy one.

We were 26 in the coach, an excellent coach specially fitted up for the Leeds United Football Club, and there were up to 6 others in their cars. We assembled at the Northern Horticultural Society's garden at Harlow Car on Tuesday 12 May, and were welcomed by Mrs Arnold Rakusen, the Honorary Director of the garden, and by Sir Charles Richmond Brown. The welcome and hospitality were a characteristic at all the gardens we went to. At Harlow Car there were not only the rhododendrons to see, but also the supremely interesting plantings in the rest of the garden.

Each evening after dinner we gathered together for a seminar on a chosen series, led by Dr Florence Auckland. These seminars were a great success. Our first hotel was the Viking, in York. An appropriate name. Were we not going into a wild and barbarous land? Perhaps north of the border we should meet the Picts. As a southerner I did not know what to expect. But we went into a country of rolling hills and green valleys and beautiful gardens.

On Wednesday 13 May the party was conducted by Mr James Russell round the young but ambitiously extensive plantations of rhododendrons at Castle Howard. This is a venture to follow with great interest. We then visited Sir Charles Richmond Brown's collection of species at Stonely Woods. I am quite sure that the coach driver (splendid fellow as he was) and the Tour Secretary would never have found Stonely Woods in the heart of the hills on their own. But Sir Charles came to Castle Howard to lead us.

A night at the Scotch Corner Hotel and then we visited Lady Serena James's garden at St Nicholas near Richmond, where I particularly remember not the rhododendrons but Lady Serena's kindness and personal effort in giving us all morning coffee. In the afternoon we were in Northumberland, at Mr Aidan Cuthbert's garden at Beaufront Castle, near Hexham. We saw the beautiful maddenii in his greenhouse and then the gardens. Mr Davidian joined Mr Cuthbert for the occasion. In Mr Davidian's heart the quality of mercy is not strained. I can see him now, musing by a rhododendron of mysterious origin, murmuring gently and magnanimously "It is doing no harm. Let it live".

We stayed two nights at the White Swan Hotel, Alnwick, and from there on Friday, a glorious day, visited two gardens. Lady Mary Howick showed us the rhododendron garden at Howick, which was at perfection in bloom. In the afternoon Mr H.A.Potts showed us his interesting garden and greenhouse at Eglington, and gave us a most welcome afternoon tea.

On Saturday we were in Scotland, near Duns in Berwickshire. Manderston in the morning (where we ate a picnic lunch) and Whitcheater in the afternoon. There was much to see in both gardens. And so to the Peebles Hydro Hotel.

On Sunday morning we were at Dawyck, near Peebles, in the gardens part owned by the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh, and part by Lt Col Balfour. Mr D.M.Henderson, Regius Keeper of the RBG, joined Colonel Balfour in showing us the garden, famous for its rhododendrons and even more so for its collection of conifers. Colonel Balfour gave us sherry and we sat down to a picnic lunch in a sunny and sheltered spot outside the house. This, sadly, was the end of the tour; the coach sped us back to Harlow Car Gardens in the afternoon, and there we collected our cars and dispersed.

THE EDINBURGH REVISION. (See Bulletin No. 16, p.4). The "Alphabetical Checklist of Rhododendron Species" (and comparative tables listing all names on pp.66-92) is now ready. Price £2-50 from RHS, plus 50p for postage. A description of contents will be given in Bulletin No. 18.