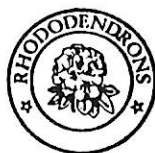


The Rhododendron & Camellia Group



BULLETIN No. 25 — March 1984

Forthcoming Events

6/7th April, 1984
17th April, 1984
1/2nd May, 1984
1st May, 1984

Truro Flower Show
Camellia Show
Rhododendron Show
Group A.G.M.

9/15th May, 1984
22/25th May, 1984
12/13th June, 1984
10/11th July, 1984

Group Tour
Chelsea Show
Flowering Tree & Shrub Competition
R.H.S. Flower Show

Group Officers

Chairman: Hon. H. E. Boscawen, The High Beeches, Handcross, Sussex, RH17 6H0.

Hon. Gen. Secretary: Mrs. B. Jackson, 2 Essex Court, Temple, London, EC4Y 9AP.

Hon. Tours and Membership Secretary: Mrs. V. M. Archibold, "Starveacre", Dalwood, East Devon, EX13 7HH.

Hon. Year Book Editor: Mr. J. Sanders, Badger Cottage, 101, Guildford Road, Bagshot, Surrey, GU19 5NS.

Hon. Treasurer: Mr. D. N. Farnes, Corton Lodge, 7, Burntwood Avenue, Emerson Park, Hornchurch, Essex, RM11 3JD.

Hon. Bulletin Editor: Mr. B. Archibold, "Starveacre", Dalwood, East Devon, EX13 7HH.

Honours and Awards

Hearty congratulations are extended to the following members of the Group:

Major A. E. Hardy of Sandling Park on the award of the Victoria Medal of Honour.

Mr. J. S. Basford of Brodick Castle for his Associateship of Honour.

Mr. J. D. Bond, V.M.H. for his award of the Loder Rhododendron Cup.

Also, though not a member of the Group, to:

Mr. J. Humphris of Borde Hill, on the award of the A. J. Waley Medal, awarded annually to a Working Gardener, who has helped with the cultivation of rhododendrons. This medal was also awarded in 1976 to Mr. J. R. Vass of Borde Hill, a garden which has exhibited some very fine rhododendrons in recent years.

Midlands Branch

The meeting mentioned in the last Bulletin took place on the 11th November last and Ted Millais gave a very entertaining illustrated talk on his trip to Sikkim which was greatly appreciated by the twenty or so members who attended. Neil Maybury followed with some slides of the visit he and his wife made earlier in the year to Kiloran House on the Island of Colonsay.

A plant sale was held which helped to raise funds for this new Branch.

It is hoped to hold another meeting in March to visit a Camellia garden, followed by one to a Rhododendron garden at the end of May/beginning of June.

South East Branch

Mr. Millais has given a talk also to this Branch — the main content has been reported by Mr. Millais in the Year Book and, again, a very enjoyable evening was held.

On 23rd March there was a Branch meeting at The High Beeches by kind invitation of Hon. H. E. and Mrs. Boscawen, when Archie Skinner of Sheffield Park gave an illustrated talk.

On Friday 27th April Tony Schilling will be guiding the Branch around the gardens at Wakehurst Place in the morning. This will be followed by a tour of Stonehurst, home of the late Mr. Robert Strauss, in the afternoon.

South West Branch

Walter Magor kindly invited the Branch to visit Lamellen on 31st March to view the garden. A snack lunch was provided, following which there was a visit to Tremeer. Over 80 people came, and it was a good opportunity for members to meet each other, which went some way to make up for rhododendrons not flowering in North Cornwall this year.

Wessex Branch

Crosswater Farm and its owners — Ted and Romy Millais — kindly acted as hosts for our last lecture entitled 'Magnolias', by Sir Peter Smithers. Internationally famous as an acknowledged magnolia expert, Sir Peter provided us with a most enjoyable and informative evening punctuated with his superb colour slides.

For the writer, it was the culmination of a wish fulfilled. For several years I had been anxious to hear first-hand how he managed to grow so many of this genus in his garden in Switzerland.

Gardening in what he describes as the ideal magnolia climate, situated at 1200' with a SE facing slope down to the lake, he is blessed with 75" of rain and 2001 hours (his words) of sunshine per year. No late frosts, but lots of wind. He plants each magnolia with approximately seven metres between trunks and provides a foliar feed — both under and on top of the leaves — once a week. It would be fair to say that the majority of the slides that he showed us depicted magnolia hybrids. But at regular intervals, the audience was able to discern as background to some of the hybrids, just enough of some of the species to whet our appetites for more of the same! Your committee has it in mind to ask Sir Peter to give us another lecture in the not too distant future entitled 'Magnolia Species'.

Wednesday, March 28th Mr. Alfred Evans' lecture was held at the Savill Garden Restaurant, starting with a buffet meal at 7.30 pm, provided by Mrs. Neuman, the Restaurant caterer. For those of you who are not fortunate enough to have heard him lecture before — you are in for a treat. He is the Assistant Curator, in charge of the Herbaceous and Alpine Plant Departments, at the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh. He has many attributes — he lectures extensively

in this country and abroad; judging at shows, broadcasting, presenting television programmes on BBC and STV, regularly writing articles for *The Scotsman* and contributing to gardening journals are just some examples of how his wide knowledge and skill in cultivation is shared with others. As an author he has enriched the bookshelf with his book, *The Peat Garden & Its Plants* and with the more recently published RHS Wisley Handbook, *The Peat Garden*.

His lecture to us is on *Rhododendrons & Associated Plants*, and the lecture will be followed by a Plant Auction.

Saturday, April 14th Our first garden visit this spring is to the Valley Gardens when Mr. John Bond has generously offered to lead our party round the unique collection of rhododendron species. We meet in the Savill Garden car park in good time to move off at 3pm to drive in convoy to the Valley. By about 5pm we should be back at the Savill where the restaurant is open until 6pm. Members who are lucky enough to have the 1954 Year Book may like to look up Sir Eric Savill's article on moving this famous collection from Tower Court, Ascot to its present home — the photographs show what a monumental task this was. The collection when it was still at Tower Court, is described in the 1948 Year Book.

Evening of April 14th Following our walk in the Valley Gardens we have a lecture in the evening, again in the Savill Garden Restaurant. This will be at 7.30 pm with a buffet meal as before, and Mr Bond has promised us the freedom of the Savill Garden until Mrs. Neuman has cleared the Restaurant and is ready for us; so if you choose to spend the interval in the Garden you will not be turned out at closing time! *We stress that you are very welcome to attend either the afternoon or the evening meeting or both — although on the same day this was fortuitous.*

The lecturer will be Mr. Kendal Gambrill, Curator of the Rhododendron Species Foundation Garden near Tacoma, Seattle, on the west coast of the USA. He will be talking about the *History of the Rhododendron Species Foundation*, and their *propagating methods* — if time permits. The R.S.F. is a non-profit organisation founded to create one of the outstanding centres in the world for the acquisition of rhododendron species; it endeavours to study, cultivate, display and distribute plants from the collection whilst disseminating information on the species to all who are interested.

Cost for the evening meeting will be £5 per head.

Saturday, May 5th 2pm. Visit to Ramster, a large woodland garden of exceptional interest half a mile south of Chiddingfold, Surrey. Following that Mr. Arthur George has invited us to visit Hydon Nurseries at 5pm. Plans for this day are still being concocted.

Open Day — The High Beeches

There is a private view day, by invitation only, at The High Beeches, Handcross, West Sussex on Sunday, May 20th from 2.30 pm, and Anne and Edward Boscawen will be delighted to see any Group members who would like to come. For the benefit of those members who have not previously visited The High Beeches, the garden lies one mile to the East of Handcross village on the B2110 road between Handcross and Turners Hill.

East Anglian Branch

Branch Visits for 1984

S.A.E. to Branch Organiser for location maps and details of lunch.

Sunday, April 29th 2.30 pm. "Olivers", Olivers Lane, Birch, Nr. Colchester. 20-acre garden featuring Rhododendrons and Camellias. By kind invitation of Mr. and Mrs. Edwards.

Sunday, May 6th 10.30 am - 12.30 pm. 40-acre plantation, Danbury. Annexed gardens of Ramsden Hall featuring 2½ acres of Rhododendrons. By kind invitation of The Danbury Fencing Company.

Followed at 2.30 pm by Hyde Hall, Rettendon, Near Chelmsford. 8-acre garden (a further 4-acres just being taken in)

plus 12-acre car park planted with trees. By kind permission of Mr. and Mrs. Robinson.

30th April, 1983 Bulwood Nurseries, 54 Woodlands Road, Hockley, Essex. By kind invitation of Derek and Betty Fox. This superb woodland garden of just over one acre has been planted out for just over 25 years. High tree cover comprises Birch, Eucalypt, Magnolia, Pine and Sorbus. These are underplanted with Rhododendrons and Camellias. *R. macabeum* and *montroseum* sported enormous leaves, while those of *R. coryphaeum* and *grande* were not far behind. *R. grande* has proved sufficiently hardy to provide handsome trusses. *R. arizelum* and *eximium* with fine pale yellow to white flowers had handsome leaves with fine rufous indumentum, while *R. campanulatum* and *fulvum* displayed superb, felted indumentum. Excellent specimens were also seen of *Rhododendron calophyllum*, *campylocarpum*, *cinnabarinum*, *decorum*, *diaprepes*, *discolor*, *griersonianum*, *fargesii*, *hodgsonii*, *johnstoneanum* (single and double forms), *oreodoxa*, *smithii*, *sutchuenense* and *thomsonii*. The *R. diaprepes* had grown into vigorous trees with strapping limbs and large, leathery leaves. (I returned in July to see the flowers and can confirm that these were stupendous). The species were complimented by a good selection of hybrids. *R. Conroy* in particular caused gasps of amazement from the members; the colour of the flowers being particularly arresting. A good selection of Derek's *R. Lady Chamberlain* × *R. yunnanense* hybrids displayed charmingly delicate flowers of varying shades.

The Magnolias were really over but the Camellias were performing resplendently. Many *C. saluenensis* seedlings were admired. Many forms of *C. japonica* sported generous crops of flowers, among which *C. Adolphe Audusson* looked superb.

Generous plantings of evergreen azalea supplied a floral display down to ground level in various pastel shades which contrasted with the *triflorum* series Rhododendrons and Blue Diamond type hybrids.

Ground cover comprised *Erythronium*, *Hostas*, Lilies and *Primula* together with many other sympathetic genera. A lower area featured a pond surrounded with *Gunnera* and *Lysichitum* in splendid vigour. The garden also featured very large specimens of *Cordyline australis* and *Trachycarpus fortunei*.

Hundreds of small plants were available for sale and we took the opportunity to purchase some souvenirs and in some cases to stack our car boots with goodies.

Derek and Betty very kindly provided handsome quantities of refreshments which were greatly appreciated.

This is a magnificent woodland garden which has developed into a small family nursery offering an exciting range of extremely reasonably-priced young plants.

29th May, 1983 Glebe House, Langham, near Colchester. By kind invitation of Mr. and Mrs. Leslie.

The large house is set in 4-acres of garden and access is by a picturesque drive flanked with fine Rhododendrons and azaleas. The dappled shade contrasted with the cool white of several Azalea Palestrina, *R. Beauty of Littleworth* and *R. Mrs. Charles Pearson*. Flanking these were fine specimens of *R. Crest*, *R. Pink Pearl*, *R. Carita* and *R. Lodgers White*. Nearby were impressive forms of *R. fictolacteum* and *R. rex*. These were supported by the hybrids *R. Sappho*, *R. Fabia Tangerine* and *Vanessa*, plus several plants of *R. Azor*.

Further on were *R. Royal Purple* and *R. Purple Prince* in contrast to the exceptional quality of *R. Loderi King George*. Close by were *R. Dr. Endiz*, *R. Matador* and *R. augustinii*.

Beyond the drive a spacious lawn flanked the house. Edging the lawn was a bed of *R. yakushimanum* hybrids including *R. Grumpy*, *R. Chelsea Seventy*, *R. Golden Torch*. These three were greatly admired for their prodigious quantities of choice flowers of delightful colour. *R. Venetian Chimes* was a good red. Other varieties included *R. Dopey*, *R. Bashful*, *R. Titian Beauty*, *R. Happy* and *R. Sleepy*; the

last-named we thought to be unattractive. The lawns featured cedars *Deodara* (complete with characteristic balancing leg) and *Libani*. Shrub borders separated the house from the lawn. Beyond this was another area of lawn planted with fine specimens of Birch in variety. Adjacent to this were large specimens of *Ilex* through which enormous, spreading, climbing roses rambled. They included Kiftsgate, Wedding Day and New Dawn.

The last area to be visited contained mixed plantings of *R. Pink Pearl* and *R. Britannia* combining together into a riot of colour.

Mrs. Leslie had baked especially for us and Mr. Leslie treated us to several bottles of the wine he produces commercially and especially fine it was. This treat was a delightful end to a most enjoyable day.

Powdery Mildew on Rhododendrons

Only four years ago this fungus was so rare in this country that it had not been positively identified; however it is now appearing in gardens in the south of England. At the present little is known about it and its long term effects.

The fungus, which is spread by wind borne spores, is identified by a thin white powder on the leaves and round brown spots on the underside, which grow into each other so that they finally cover the whole surface.

The leaves then fall and in the worst cases totally defoliate the plant, and if no steps are taken the new growth is reinfected resulting in the death of the plant.

Spraying with INAZALIL is effective in killing the fungus, this fungicide is at the moment only available in commercial packs under the name Fungaflor, from Applied Horticulture, Marringdean Road, Billingshurst, Sussex at £27.50 plus VAT per litre.

From observation plants growing in the open with hard leaves and an indumentum are probably resistant. However in glasshouses or tunnels young plants of these species are at risk.

Plants on the following list are known to have died when not treated. The list is not complete but will give an indication as to the type of plant at greatest risk: *R. cinnabarinum*, *campylocarpum*, *forrestii*, *fortunei*, *griffithianum*, *thomsonii*, and their hybrids such as *R. Cynthia*, *Gladys*, *Lady Chamberlain*, *Shilsonii*, etc.

If you have any doubts about one of your Rhododendrons the best thing to do is to send a sample leaf to the plant pathologist at Wisley for checking and advice.

Craftsmanship

During the course of local wandering the Hon. Editor has come across something of a rarity in these days which he feels may be of interest to members. At a small village in Devon there is a man who specialises in hand making Shepherd's Crooks, Thumb Sticks and Walking Sticks of all shapes and sizes from wood cut by him locally. The standard of workmanship is extremely high and for any who may be interested his name is Mr. E. C. Blake and his address is Higher Cleave, Wilmington, Honiton, Devon. Tel: Wilmington 277. The thumb sticks particularly are an excellent aid when visiting the steeper gardens!!

Back Numbers of Year Books

Mint copies of the following years are available from the Hon. Treasurer (see front page). Prices include second class postage U.K. and surface rate overseas.

1978, 1979/80	... £1.75
1980/81	... £2.25
1981/82	... £3.00
1982/83	... £3.50

For orders of 4 or more books at same time, deduct 25p from total bill.

An Irish Garden For Sale

Mr. Ronald Harrington writes to say that, due to family

reasons, he must sell his house and garden at Combermere, Glounthaune, Co. Cork. This must be a sad blow and it would no doubt go some way to lightening it if he were to know that the new purchaser would give both garden and house the loving care he and his wife have lavished on it. The garden is mentioned by Mrs. Anne Boscawen in the 1983/84 Year Book on page 48 but for those who have not a copy it is described as "a very pretty and personal garden". The family was connected with that of John Millais and the garden contains a fine collection of some twenty of his Magnolias, planted by the Uncle and Aunt of the present owners some sixty years ago. They include *M. denudata* × *Lennei*, *M. liliiflora*, *M. Veitchii*, *M. Rustica Rubra*, *M. Alexandrina* and *M. Alba Superba*.

The contents of the garden are in process of being catalogued and labelled in readiness for the purchaser and this would appear to be an excellent opportunity for anyone who wished to obtain an established garden in a lovely part of the world.

Early Flowering Camellias

Mr. R. P. Wakeford who lives in Wimbledon writes on the 14th January to say that the first flowers on *C. Yoibijin* opened the previous day to be followed by another letter saying that *C. St. Ewe*, *L'Avenire*, and *Saccho Vera* were in flower in the week prior to the 13th February.

1984 Tour

The Hon. Tours Secretary advises that the tour of gardens in Cheshire and North Wales is now fully subscribed. Places would become available only by reason of cancellations and any new applications can be accepted only on that basis.

International Symposium

In 1985 the Research and Selection Institute of Ornamental Gardening at Pruhonice is organising an international symposium with a section on The Results of Theoretical and Experimental Rhododendron Investigations. They are also interested in the presentation of papers on the Selection and Planting of Rhododendrons. Anyone interested please write for further details to the Hon. General Secretary (see front page).

Hand Pollinated Seed

Following the suggestion in the last Bulletin that hand pollinated seed from good and authenticated species plants might be made available offers have been received from two sources but potential suppliers would prefer to know what people want rather than go to a lot of trouble producing seed for which there is no demand. The Editor is quite prepared to pass on "wants" to his sources of supply but, of course, cannot guarantee that any particular species will be available.

Another suggestion has been received regarding excess seedlings produced from reliably pollinated species plants. Most members growing plants from seed will have experienced the dilemma of what to do with the excess plants from a really good germination. Branch plant sales are, of course, one method but often do not take enough. Again, the Editor is prepared to run a "Surplus Seedlings" column to put suppliers and potential recipients in touch.

Coomb Dale

Mr. Anthony Barbour who lives at Malpas in Cheshire has sent the following fascinating account of the construction of his garden. Any member who would like to visit it would be welcome (it is very near the start of this year's tour) but a previous phone call to (082-925) 369 would be appreciated.

Getting married is a considerable event in itself but in our case in 1976 it coincided with moving into Coomb Dale and making a start in furnishing both the house and its garden. We face south on the side of a hill and are surrounded

by light woodland including a few good deciduous trees. As in life so in gardens it seems that every advantage carries with it its disadvantage. A hillside gives splendid views but in our case the soil is thin and sandy and dries out very quickly. However, it is acid and rhododendrons seem to like it and they also like the good air drainage as we witnessed during the bitter winter of 1981/82. We are also exposed to the wind but at the same time are lucky to have a sheltered valley or coomb behind the house and a fair amount of protection from established ponticum. We had some lawn but no borders to speak of and certainly no choice plants of any description. In short the canvas was there to be painted upon.

My previous gardening experience was minimal but I had nevertheless taken to heart at an early age the lessons of Michael Haworth Booth. For those who have never read him I should say that he was an early enthusiast for the totally shrub garden. He also never ceased to remind his readers that there was a great deal of summer between the last rhododendron and the coming of the autumn tints and that the gap had to be filled with a succession of flowering shrubs that were not rhododendrons or azaleas.

With that basic principle in mind but little else I set out to plan a garden. A J.C.B. tore up all the Victorian laurel. My dislike of laurel blinded me to its value as a windbreak but I do not regret it for one moment. Shrub borders were laid out informally round the house. Further away and in the valley I had it in mind to create both a small woodland rhododendron garden and also an arboretum concentrating mainly on the more beautiful conifers. The hills then reverberated to the sound of the chain saw as the birch scrub was cleared away and space made for the trees to be planted. As a garden designer my repertoire only ran to one rule and that was that there should be no straight lines. The contractor who laid down the drive was the chief sufferer from this dictum but even he got the message.

With all this groundwork done we now needed shrubs and rhododendrons and the latter in particular as despite the balance that I hope is now present in the planting these remain my first love. A voyage of discovery now began to find what rhododendrons to plant. Luckily I realised at an early stage that leaf had its part to play as well as pure colour. I had previously been aware of the merits of hardy hybrids and a selection of these were planted in the more exposed parts of the garden. A chance visit to the Lea Rhododendron garden resulted in the first of our planting ideas. From there we bought several well established *R. Loderi*, *Naomi*, *Glow*, *Nautilus* and *Exbury*, *Corona*, *Damozel* and *Winsome*. Two of our favourites from Lea are *Wallace's Unique* and *Temple Belle*. We also bought several species namely *R. sutchuenense*, *fulvum*, *fulgens*, *decorum*, *campylocarpum* and *cinnabarinum*. Close reading of the Hillier's catalogue yielded a lot of ideas and that marvellous nursery provided many of our varieties such as *Trewithen Orange* and the pink form of *Penjerrick*, which both survived 1981/82, *Dawn's Delight*, *Arthur Stevens*, *Norman Shaw*, *Letty Edwards*, *Halcyone* and *wardii*. No rhododendron lover can last long without making pilgrimages to *Bodnant* and *Exbury*. *Exbury* gave rise to the planting amongst others of *Crest*, *Carita* and *Fred Wynniatt Trianon*.

Bodnant inspired the inevitable experiment with the large leaved species. *R. falconeri* perished in 1981/82 as much I think from drought as from cold. *R. macabeum* is holding its own and growing quite well. *R. eximium* is just surviving. The most successful are *rex*, *fictolacteum* and *hodgsonii*. These are fully hardy and are sheltered enough not to be affected by the wind.

We also visited many of the famous Cornish gardens. From *Trewithen* we bought *Alison Johnstone*. *Cornish Cross* is growing well. The garden I most enjoyed from the point of view of new planting ideas was *Tremeer*. We discovered that many of their varieties were available at the *Hydon Nurseries* and we bought *Brocade*, *Lunar Queen*, *Pensive* and *Pink Pebble*.

We have also bought from *Glendoick*. I think that the most attractive hybrid from there has been *Virginia Richards*.

However many of the dwarf rhododendrons from the nursery have been less than successful. That is no reflection on the plants which were excellent but I think we planted them in the wrong place as regards soil and dryness. Nevertheless the well known favourites such as *Blue Diamond*, *Blue Tit*, *Curlew*, *Phalarope* and *Cilpinense* are all doing well. Evergreen azaleas have also been difficult and we have only had success in the open with the hardiest ones such as *Vuyk's Rosy Red*. Under the cover of trees we have had success with such varieties as *Hinomayo* and *Blaauw's Pink* and *Leo*.

In a short article one cannot name every rhododendron planted but I hope I have given readers an idea of the rather random selection of rhododendrons which are now getting established seven years after we began. No gardener is really to be believed who says that he is not going to enlarge his garden any further. However, planting now is limited to filling up existing parts of the garden as and when a new plant is found. I am very glad on reflection that we took our time to plant as an enormous burst of planting at the beginning, when our knowledge was even less than it is now, would have led to many more mistakes being made. In addition one's taste changes and one also discovers at a gentle pace what does and does not thrive in the locality. Developing a garden is a most absorbing pastime and we have been very lucky to have a site to match our gardening inclinations, and the enthusiastic gardening helps to put our ideas into practice.

Plant Wants

Inquiries have been received, through the National Council for the Conservation of Plants & Gardens (N.C.C.P.G.), for three rhododendron hybrids: '*Captain Jack*' (*eriogynum* × '*Mars*'), '*Lady Linlithgow*' (*sutchuenense* × *thomsonii*), and *praevernium* × *strigillosum* (not a named, or registered hybrid).

Of these, the first is an American hybrid, at one time distributed from *Glendoick*, and the latter two originate from the *R.B.G. Edinburgh*, but it appears that none of the three is now available there.

If any member is in a position to supply a plant of any of these hybrids, or provide propagating material, will they be kind enough to contact: Mrs. Thompson, Greenhills, Oaken, Wolverhampton, WV8 2HN? (*Postscript*: Scions of '*Lady Linlithgow*' have been made available, and are being grafted).

Mrs. Norman Colville, of *Penheale Manor*, nr. *Launceston*, Cornwall, would be grateful to anyone who could let her have a plant of *R. quinquefolium*, preferably the pink form which she obtained from Germany some years ago, and which she has recently lost, but the type form would be equally acceptable.

Lecture by Dr. David Chamberlain

Dr. David Chamberlain of the Royal Botanic Gardens at *Edinburgh*, who carried out the revision of the elepidote rhododendrons (*Hymenanthes*) will be judging the rhododendron classes in company with our member, *Brother Vincent*, at the *Truro Show* on April 6th, 1984 and will be giving a talk for members of the South West Branch of the Group at the County Demonstration Garden at *Probus* at 7 pm on Sunday, 8th April, 1984.

Special Offer to Members of the Group

Camellias

H. T. Zhang & Bruce Bartholomew

In this book, a revised and updated translation of a work first published in China in 1981, almost all of the *Camellia* species are treated, including some 90 described here in English for the first time; others covered here are not yet in cultivation in the West, and would contribute greatly to ornamental horticulture. There are also sections on the listing of *Camellia* introductions, their horticultural potential, geographical distribution and economic use.

Hardback 240 pages 74 line illustrations £25.00

This book is to be published by B. T. Batsford on June 28th and is available to members of the Rhododendron &

Camellia Group at a special price of £20.00 carriage free. Members may pay by cheque or by ACCESS or BARCLAYCARD.

Please send your order or request for further details to: Batsford Books, 4 Bakers Mews, London, W1M 1DD.

A Visit to East Bergholt Place on 20th May, 1984

It may seem strange to members to report on a visit that took place nearly two years ago but, unfortunately, lack of space precluded it at the time and in the interim, sadly, Mr. Maxwell Eley, the owner, died in January 1983. In these circumstances the Editor felt that the article contributed by Colin Grainger, the Branch Organiser of the East Anglian Branch should appear in the original form as a tribute to a great gardener.

Members of this branch previously visited East Bergholt Place on the 19th May, 1979, and a brief account of the occasion was contained in Bulletin No. 11. It was not possible on that visit to see all the planted areas, so the main purpose of last year's visit was to view those areas not previously seen, though the opportunity was taken to look again at some of those seen before.

Most regrettably, Mr. Eley was not able to accompany us, owing to ill-health, but we were familiar with many of the paths through the garden and woods, so we explored the plantings without a guide. (Fortunately we did not get lost too often).

The garden and arboretum occupy an area of about 16 acres excluding the house, at about 125 feet above sea level, and down a slope into an area known as 'The Swale'. Additionally plantings extended uphill into an uncharted, informal woodland garden which runs down into 'The Dell'. The main areas were laid out between 1900 and 1914 by Mr. Eley's father, Mr. Charles Eley, V.M.H. with the help of William Goldring. The soil for the most part is a light loam with a pH of 5.

Mr. Charles Eley was the Secretary of the Rhododendron Society from its foundation, and he subscribed to George Forrest's expeditions. He was closely associated with J. C. Williams of Caerhays Castle, and his cousin P. D. Williams of Lanarth, both in Cornwall, and many 'Cornish plants' are to be seen growing, or rather thriving, at East Bergholt Place.

This garden is probably the most exciting in eastern England, and it contains an enormous number of mature specimen trees and shrubs which, if listed, would probably resemble Hillier's Manual. A visit to East Bergholt Place is an elevating experience; this is one of the most enjoyable gardens in the country with, admittedly, less rhododendrons than say Exbury or Leonardslee, but a considerable number nonetheless (at least one thousand).

We began our tour at the area surrounding the croquet lawn where some fine *Arbutus menziesii*, *andrachne* and \times *arachnoides* were admired; the bark of *A. andrachne* being perhaps the finest. (We could not resist running our hands over its smooth texture). Mature specimens of *Magnolias Soulangiana*, *Brozzonii* and *Lennei* were also here, but no flowers were on show.

We then went through a gap in a clipped yew hedge into a section of the garden containing a formal pond, bordered on all sides by contrasting areas. On the house side are large plantings of camellias, which we were only able to view briefly because "rain stopped play", forcing us to retreat to an area offering more top cover, but *C. Donatone* could easily be recognised as we ran. Here too, I am sure, were *C. Lady Clare*, *C. Latifolia*, and very many other fine plants. Not far from here are further plantings of camellias sheltered by mature hollies. The latter have been cut back in recent years, and the additional light thereby created has encouraged the thick old trunks of the camellias to send out new growth. Some particularly fine plants of *C. saluenensis* were seen here.

Close by, we viewed several fine *Acers*, including *A.*

capillipes, *A. hersii*, *A. japonicum* 'Aconitifolium', and *A. palmatum* 'Heptalobum Osakazuki'.

Returning to the pond, we admired a bogside planting of *Hostas* and *Primulas*, which was particularly pleasing, and a bold and representative collection of evergreen azaleas, before moving on to praise a 12-15 ft plant of *Pieris formosa forrestii*, with splendid young red foliage. (The best forms of *Pieris* have so much to offer but, until they reach 4-5 ft in height, they can be frustratingly damaged by spring frosts). *P. 'Forest Flame'* is probably a safer form but its leaves are much smaller than *P. formosa forrestii*. Here also was a fine large specimen of *Embothrium coccineum lanceolatum* 'Norquinco', a free-flowering hardy form, but which, nevertheless, should be planted in a sunny spot.

We then moved down towards the area called 'The Swale', an area abundantly rich in rhododendrons. Here, we found an unlabelled hybrid not unlike *R. Loder's White*, but it was pink. Close by was another large-flowered hybrid, *R. 'Mrs Beale'* (a seedling of *R. 'Betty Wormald'*). An enormous white-flowered hybrid here bore the label (actually it lay beneath it) *R. 'Mother of Pearl'*, but looked like *R. 'White Pearl'* to me. This old hybrid (which is often called *R. 'Halopeanum'* or 'Gauntlettii') is not now stocked by the trade, but it is a very good white for less favoured areas. Many of the older hardy hybrids have been planted here, but Mr. Maxwell Eley is planting out an extensive range of *R. cinnabarinum* hybrids, including *R. 'Golden Orfe'*, *R. 'Conroy'*, and *R. 'Peace'*. The colour tones of these hybrids are very soft and blend together harmoniously, while the contrast with their glaucous foliage is equally attractive.

An enormous *Davidia involucrata* was seen here, and at least one of us collected some seed pods. Not far away was a fine *Acer griseum*, a magnificent *Acer pseudoplatanus* 'Brilliantissimum' over 30 ft high, and a large *Magnolia* \times *Watsonii*, with its pineapple scented flowers. A number of other mature magnolias were seen here of good size, being about 30ft high, particularly *M. Soulangiana* and *M. wilsonii*, together with several *Sorbus* of 40 ft or more, including *S. hupehensis*.

From 'The Swale', we went through a small gate, and made our way uphill, encountering an unbelievably large *Acer griseum*, said to be at least 45 ft high. At the top of the ridge, we came across a number of *Rhododendron* hybrids of *R. cinnabarinum* and/or *R. yunnanense* (or similar) parentage. The end of these plantings was marked by a large specimen plant of *R. calophytum* \times *R. sutchuenense* (Robin Hood g.), a J. C. Williams hybrid, with a bold and arresting quality but, alas, no flower (nor had there been). Beyond this was a thicket of bamboo and brambles, through which we caught sight of some large-flowered, sharp pink rhododendrons. With some difficulty, we fought our way through. I have not seen anything quite like them before, but *R. thomsonii* probably featured somewhere in their parentage. There were several of them, and they were all very good.

Making progress further downhill, we found a number of forms of *R. decorum*, ranging from white to pink, one of which had keeled over towards a small stream, but continued to grow strongly. From here, we edged back and around the stream to a point where an enormous 'Beauty of Littleworth' had fallen to the horizontal, with part of its roots pointing skyward, but seemed none the worse for the experience. Water certainly was not lacking in this area, and boots were essential.

At this point (after walking for 2½ hours), we adjourned the expedition and made our way back to the house to join Mr. and Mrs. Eley for tea. Mrs. Eley very generously provided a veritable feast and pots of tea to refresh us. We enjoyed Mr. Eley's company for about an hour, and he entertained us with interesting stories of a distant era, featuring the Williams cousins. Apparently it was not just rhododendrons that they had in common with Mr. Eley's Father, Charles Eley, but gundogs also (many famous

rhododendron plantings began as cover for pheasants).

After tea, we headed back to the wood, and continued our venture beyond the bamboo thicket, splashing around in a very wet area that, surprisingly featured several gigantic *R. Loderi* (how they grew in such wetness, I know not!). Beyond here, we entered the area of the Dell, in which we had paused for some time in 1979. Sadly, the large *R. sinogrande* was now quite dead, as was 'Glory of Leonardslee', and also the beautiful lemon-coloured hybrid *R. aucklandii* × *croceum* (*griffithianum* × *wardii* — NOT registered). The magnificent beauty of this hybrid is now probably lost to the world. (What really needs implementing is a programme of propagation to perpetuate the more unusual rhododendrons, which are probably unique in this garden, but sadly this is now beyond Mr. Eley's capabilities, with only 1½ gardeners).

We progressed along the river bank, and passed under a *Nothofagus* of 60 ft or more, and found a large-leaved form of *R. fulvum* labelled *R. fulvoides*, and retaining Forrest's seed number F.25744. The leaves were much larger than in typical *R. fulvum*, being up to one foot long, but the indumentum was not so rich as in some forms that I have seen.

Close by were more *R. Loderi*, including the clone 'Patience', which is later flowering than the majority of *R. Loderi*, and has slightly smaller, perfectly formed, white flowers with red and green markings at the base of the corolla. The scent is enchanting, and it flowers profusely.

On the other side of the stream at this point is a fascinating hybrid, which George Johnstone created, *R. 'St. Probus'*. The old metal label could not be read very easily, and there appeared to be three parents quoted, two of which were *R. aucklandii* and *R. 'Luscombei'*, but the third was indecipherable. This is an exceptional hybrid, about 12 ft high and of open habit but flowering profusely from all branches. The large loose trusses contain 4" waxy bells of classic shape which basically feature the delicate colours one would find in a sea-shell, from pink to white, while the throat of the flower is stained a rich crimson. (According to the International Rhododendron Register, 1958, *R. 'St. Probus'* should be intense crimson). This hybrid is especially delightful and I dearly hope it can be preserved for the enjoyment of future generations.

From this point, we thought we should head back to the house, and we passed several top class, mature, unlabelled rhododendrons, at least one of which had *R. fortunei* as a parent. We also passed the largest *R. 'Loder's White'* I had ever seen. This had tumbled over somewhat many years ago, and grew as a thicket, from which new stems had made vertical growth to about 12-15 ft. A pink hybrid, not unlike some of the old Mangles *R. griffithianum* hybrids, was a few yards away and the colours contrasted well.

A variety of late-flowering, scented hybrids of unknown origin were our next stop. These were remarkable for their differences, but each bore a slight resemblance to the others. We could not decide whether the common factor was *R. griffithianum* or *R. decorum*, but the substance of the flowers probably favoured the former. In general the flowers were white, large and waxy. Some were marked internally with green and several were scented. Most had handsome foliage, thick, elliptic-lanceolate on long petioles. Perhaps they had both species in their parentage.

From here, we passed back under the large-flowered pink seedlings, then through the bamboo, and back to the wooden gate. Heading uphill, we took a different, more open path past a *Viburnum rhytidophyllum* with such large leaves it almost equalled an *R. falconeri*! We paused here to admire two large birches towering upwards out of 'The Swale', namely *Betula papyrifera* (50 ft +) and *B. pendula* (70 ft +).

Further up the slope was a large *Trachycarpus fortunei*, rivalling the Leonardslee plants while, sheltered by another

yew hedge, there were flowering plants of *Magnolia lilliflora* 'Nigra' and *M. fraseri*, a seldom seen species.

Towards the gate fronting the main road is *Malus eleyi*, named after Mr. Charles Eley, but regrettably this is not the tree that originated in this garden, for that has died, and the replacement, grafted specimen is not so attractive.

Finally, at the gate itself, is a superb *Arbutus menziesii*, over 40 ft high, and of perfect symmetrical proportions, a most fitting sentinel for these magnificent gardens.

The gardens are tended by Tom Cooke, a seasoned and dedicated first-class man possessing a great love for his plants. Tom commenced 13 years ago under Alec Clifton (who spent his working life in these gardens). When Mr. Clifton retired in 1973, Tom succeeded him, having obtained his NCH. Almost unbelievably he manages to cope with the acreage assisted by only one part-time man. I don't know how he is able to maintain the gardens under such circumstances, let alone succeed to such a high standard. I understand that when the gardens were first laid out in 1904, there were rarely less than 10 men at work at any one time.

Note: East Bergholt Place is open annually in aid of charities such as The Red Cross and the Constable Memorial Hall, East Bergholt (but visitors are not allowed into the wood for reasons of safety).

ERRATA

List of Members at 1st November 1983

K. W. H. Adlam, Esq., Kings Gatchell, Higher Metcombe, Ottery St. Mary, Devon.

A. G. Barbour, Esq., Malpas, Cheshire.

Hon. Mrs. David Bigham, Pulborough, Sussex.

Mrs. R. E. Budge, Barnstaple, Devon.

Mr. & Mrs. D. Clarke-Hall, Iping, Nr. Midhurst, Sussex.

Dr. V. Challinor Davies, Chysbryn, Bareppa, Mawnan Smith, Nr. Falmouth.

J. R. Galling, Esq., Horley, Surrey.

A. Grills, Esq., Daisy Hill Nurseries Ltd, Newry, Co. Armagh, N. Ireland.

P. A. T. Horder, Esq., Gardener's Cottage, Trengwainton, Penzance, Cornwall, TR20 8RZ (omitted from list).

Mrs. Christopher Jennings, Kidwelly, Dyfed. (Not Kennings)

Mrs. J. B. Lyon, Lower Compton, Plymouth, Devon.

R. W. Parr, Esq., Goleu, Welshpool, Powys.

P. W. H. Randy, Esq., Bocking, Essex.

Hardiness of Rhododendrons

The Hon. Editor is most grateful to all who have taken a lot of time and care to write to him on this subject. The results are being analysed and tabulated and will appear in the next Bulletin.

Bulletin No. 26 Due End July 1984

The last date for receipt of material for this issue is the 10th July 1984.

All correspondence concerning matters reported in the Bulletin, except where otherwise indicated, should be sent, together with material for publication in future Bulletins to: Hon. Bulletin Editor, Mr. Bruce Archibold, "Starveacre", Dalwood, East Devon, EX13 7HH.

Important Notice

In accordance with Rule 4 of the Constitution and Rules of the Rhododendron and Camellia Group the following members of the Executive Committee retire this year, but are eligible for re-election.

Mr. J. T. Gallagher

Miss C. E. Perring

In accordance with Rule 10, candidates for election to the

Executive Committee shall be proposed and seconded by members of the Group, and must sign their nomination papers. These must reach the Returning Officer not less than 14 days before the Annual General Meeting on the 1st May 1984.

A Nomination Paper for use of members appears at the end of the Bulletin.



THE RHODODENDRON AND CAMELLIA GROUP

Nomination Paper for Candidates for election to the Executive Committee on the 1st May, 1984.

(1) Name _____ Seconded _____ Candidate's
Signature _____

(2) Name _____ Seconded _____ Candidate's
Signature _____

(3) Name _____ Seconded _____ Candidate's
Signature _____

Member's
Signature _____

Date _____

To: Mrs. B. Jackson, 2 Essex Court, Temple, London, EC4Y 9AF.