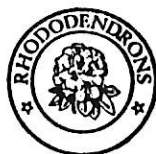


The Rhododendron & Camellia Group



BULLETIN No. 40 - April 1989

April 22	South West Branch visit to Marwood Hill and Rosemoor, north Devon (see text); Wessex Branch visit to two gardens at Milland, 7m NW of Midhurst, Sussex	May 14	NGS Open Day at Woodland Grove, Bovey Tracey (see text)
May 3-4	Flower Show including Rhododendron Competition, Vincent Square	May 20	SW Branch. Wylmington Hayes and Burrow Farm Garden, Dalwood, E. Devon
May 7	Wessex Branch members' evening and competition, Hydon Nurseries, nr. Godalming, Surrey	May 28	Irish Branch visit to gardens in Ballymena, Co. Antrim and in Co. Down, Northern Ireland
		June 20-21	Early Summer Show, Vincent Square
		July 18-19	Flower Show, Vincent Square, London SW1

'Gardens of Cornwall open in 1989', a leaflet produced for the Cornwall Garden Society and associated bodies, has been included with this issue of the Bulletin, for those members resident in the British Isles.

Chairman's Notes

It is with profound regret that I must report the death in a car accident of John Fordham, our Hon. Minutes Secretary. He will be sorely missed by his friends on the Committee and by others who knew him. Our sincerest condolences go to his wife, Jean, and to his family. An appreciation appears below.

Our Hon. Treasurer and Membership Secretary, Ray Redford, has indicated that he wishes to relinquish the Treasurership, but he will continue with Membership assisted by Alastair Stevenson whose special task will be recruiting. Peter Reynolds, formerly Treasurer of the International Camellia Society, has agreed to take on the Treasurership with effect from the next Annual General Meeting on Wednesday, 3 May 1989.

Patrick Haworth feels that he would like to be relieved of his post as Hon. Bulletin Editor, and steps are being taken to find a replacement.

David Clulow is greatly to be congratulated for his expert organisation of the Seed Exchange, and the content of the first Seed List must be seen as a very fair augury for the future ones.

Members are reminded that the Group's Annual General Meeting takes place on Wednesday, 3 May 1989 at the later time of 5.30 pm in order to enable members to attend the lecture by Dr David Chamberlain on 'The New Rhododendron Classification' 2.30 pm in the Lecture Hall in the New Hall. Free tickets for this lecture can be obtained in advance from the Secretary (Lectures), Royal Horticultural Society, P.O. Box 313, 80 Vincent Square, London SW1P 2PE.

Mr John E. Fordham

We are very sad to have to report the tragic death in a motor car accident earlier this year, of Mr John Fordham who was Minutes Secretary for the Group. He and his wife Jean were popular and regular members of our spring tours and autumn meetings. Rhododendrons apart, alpine plants were his main interest and he joined many expeditions to see and photograph them in their native habitats. His garden in Essex testified to his love of plants and to his ability as a gardener.

John was a wise and erudite man and a good friend. His counsel and his clear judgement on our Executive Committee will be sadly missed. We extend our sincere sympathy to Jean and the family.

G. R. Speed

John Fordham - some recollections

His preoccupation in recent years with family affairs and his foreign journeys meant that, although we lived within two miles of one another in Loughton, we did not often see the Fordhams. John

was the only other member of the Group in Loughton. Members are few in South East England north of the Thames, but Mr David Farnes also has pleasant recollections of the garden in Albion Park, a garden dominated by a Corsican pine and a swamp cypress, among the tallest trees in Loughton, visible on the skyline when entering Loughton by rail from the south. A visit to the Fordhams' garden did seem to shorten the long interval between the spring tours.

John had no hesitation in pronouncing scientific names correctly, and it was a pleasure to hear his use of them in his commentary on the slides he was showing, whether at home or at the Wroxton House Hotel. I shall always recall John's minute, meticulous annotations on his slide mounts, and his gorgeous studies in close-up of rhododendrons, especially of *eclectum*, *faberi* ssp. *pratii*, *insigne* and *wardii* var. *litiense*: of his more general views in woodland gardens, one of the 'Chinese bridge' in the grounds of Corsock House, Kirkcudbrightshire, was breathtaking. I think that *decorum* and *discolor* were his favourite rhododendron species.

Patrick Haworth

An apology to Mr David Clulow

We wish to apologise to Mr David Clulow for his omission for no discernible reason from the List of Officers and Members of Committee 1988, which appeared in the last, December, issue of the Bulletin. His name had also been omitted from the list of officers printed at the end of the yearbook, and in the '1989 Manual for Committee Members and Exhibitors' published by the Royal Horticultural Society. David was co-opted to the Executive Committee in May 1988 to announce and organise the Group's most successful Seed Distribution scheme. Members will have been well pleased with the scope and content of the first seed distribution list which they have recently received.

The Photographic Competition - 1989

The Lady Cynthia Postan, Hon. Yearbook Editor, looks forward to receiving more entries for the photographic competition. It is regretted that the first four lines about the competition in the December issue did not make sense. They should have read, 'For the second year in succession we are running a photographic competition. The winner will receive a prize of £10.00. Our first competition was so successful', etc. Please let our photographers do what they can to ensure that that success is repeated this year.

Corrigenda

In Bulletin No. 39, Spring Tour supplement, for the existing entry against Tremeer, substitute 'Tremeer, the garden made by the late Maj-General Eric Harrison, which won both challenge cups for rhododendrons at the Cornish Show in 1988, and now belongs to the Haslam-Hopwood family'.

The misleading description in Bulletin No. 39 is regretted.

Shrubs, by Roger Phillips and Martyn Rix

Every member is bound to ecstatically receive a copy of the latest title in the Pan Garden Plants Series, 'Shrubs', by Roger Phillips and Martyn Rix, assisted by Alison Rix. This outstanding book is a polychromatic celebration of shrubs, in gardens and in the wild, which will please both dilettante and expert. A number of major gardens and several eminent Group members have assisted in various ways with this most frequently reached for book. Seekers after the rare will find entries and illustrations (all in full colour) of *X Sycoparrotia semidecidua*, *Stewartia malacodendron* and very many more here, all for £10.95.

PH

'Rhododendrons with Magnolias and Camellias' (yearbooks): availability of back numbers, April 1989

Mr David Farnes has sold all his stock of four years' yearbooks since the last list of available numbers appeared in the August 1988 issue of the Bulletin. He still has stock for the following years:

1978	@ £1.85
1979-80	@ £1.85
1981-82	@ £3.10
1982-83	@ £3.60
1983-84	@ £3.60

All prices include postage in the UK at second class rates. Overseas members should include an additional twenty pence per copy and the books will be sent by surface mail. Books for the years 1987-88 and 1988-89 are obtainable from the Royal Horticultural Society for UK members, but can be obtained as part of a bulk order for overseas members from me (David Farnes). Stocks for some years are now nearly exhausted, so a telephone enquiry might be advisable before placing an order. Cheques should be made payable to 'The Rhododendron and Camellia Group'. My address is:

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

Tel: 04 024 40536 (evenings or weekends only please).

South West Branch Rhododendron Evening

On Friday, 25 November 1988 a record 110 members and their guests assembled at the Edgemoor Hotel, Bovey Tracey, for the Rhododendron Evening. Members began to arrive from 6.15 pm with a remarkable variety of rhododendrons and camellias for the plant sales table, while at the reception desk Christopher Fairweather, our lecturer, had kindly autographed copies of his book, 'Rhododendrons and Camellias for your Garden'. This was much appreciated by members, and forty copies have now been sold by the branch. Additionally, a special book table was arranged to display all the rhododendron books recently reviewed by Walter Magor in the current yearbook. It included the excellent 'Sichuan Rhododendron of China', much admired by many members. At 7.00 pm promptly, after a few words of welcome, the enthusiastic plant sales began, members standing six deep in front of the tables that spanned the room! Many thanks to all our donors, and to Bruce Archibold and Barry Starling who kindly helped Christine and Mary for a hectic fifteen minutes, by which time every plant was sold and £146 raised for Branch funds.

The spotlights then turned to the Quiz Table, John Bodenham's excellent quiz then posed 32 difficult species to identify. Competition was keen and after half an hour the outcome was announced:

Winner	Prize
1st (tied) Terry Vince	Copy of 'Rhododendrons' by John Street, 1987
Richard Scrivenor	R. 'Etta Burrows'
3rd (tied) Barry Starling	R. 'Yaku Queen'
Wilf Cosham	R. 'Odee Wright'
5th Kenwyn Clapp	R. 'Crossbill'

A hot buffet and coffee preceded Mr Fairweather's talk on 'The American Rhododendron Scene To-day'. He told of his indebtedness to the Rothschild family, his earlier experiences at Exbury, and then of his visit to the USA in 1987. There, he had given a talk to one of the Chapters (Branches) of the American

Rhododendron Society, and to his surprise found himself facing an audience of 900! We have some way to go yet! His slides were acclaimed and showed a great deal of planting in urban areas. R. 'Jean Mary Montague', a fine red with good foliage, is often used for 'foundation planting' at the base of buildings. Mr Fairweather suggested that it could be more widely used in the UK for this purpose. Other slides showed R. 'Odee Wright', one of his favourites, a very good yellow with glossy leaves. He had earlier donated two plants for the plant sales. He referred to the micropropagation practised by the larger nurseries, and noted how well-branched and healthy plants were produced, with vigorous young growth from the base.

Bruce Archibold thanked Christopher for his very informative and enjoyable talk. He then auctioned a copy of the Garden Book Club edition of the 'Rhododendron and Camellia Yearbook' for 1956, which had been kindly donated by Nigel Wright. This made £10.00 for Branch funds.

The SW Branch programme of garden visits for spring 1989:

Saturday, 22 April Marwood Hill. Dr J. A. Smart's lovely garden near Barnstaple, with an outstanding collection of camellias (morning): RHS Rosemoor (afternoon) for a tour by Lady Anne Palmer VMH and Christopher Bailes, the new RHS curator.

Sunday, 14 May NGS open day at Woodland Grove, Bovey Tracey, 2.00-5.30 pm. Many new varieties of rhododendron flowering for the first time. Large plant sale of species and hybrid rhododendrons.

Saturday, 20 May Wylmington Hayes near Axminster (morning). 10 acres of rhododendrons pl. 1911, numerous lakes and waterfalls. Burrow Farm garden (afternoon). Here Mary Benger has created a delightful garden out of farmland. Plantings for foliage effect, many rhododendrons and azaleas, and cream teas at the farm afterwards.

R. A. W. Reynolds

Gardening in Essex and Worcestershire: a short review of fifteen years' progression and regression

From time to time friends ask, 'How did your interest in gardening begin?' It began one spring day in Epping, Essex, with the purchase in 1974 of Alan Mitchell's 'A field guide to the trees of Britain and Northern Europe'. I felt that it was the only book which covered the subject in sufficient detail. I still think it is indispensable, and I have had the title page of that same copy signed by Mr Mitchell at Nymans. Coniferous trees interested me most at first, then broadleaves, then shrubs and herbaceous perennials, and now, all of these categories.

In those days, and until the early spring of 1986, we had a garden in what we jocularly referred to as 'the Essex Alps', high for the county at 295.27' above sea level, and in one of its most favoured spots. It was bounded across the upper end by a wall twelve feet high, facing south. It had once been painted white and had formed the rear wall of the large glasshouse in the kitchen garden of the old house on the other side. A photograph of about 1906 exists of the garden of this house in its Edwardian heyday, when a pony only a little taller than a Shetland was used to pull the lawnmower. The best legacy of that time was in the friable soil of the main part of the garden, where soft fruit and vegetables had once been grown. We would otherwise have had to reform the intractable yellow London Clay, suitable only for roses and the hornbeams of Epping Forest. Our garden was only a blackbird's flight from the five acres of 'The Summit', the late Dr Fred Stoker's garden. He was one of the most eminent pre-war gardeners, and the author of 'A gardener's progress', an easygoing chronicle of the development of The Summit from the planting of his first and favourite tree, *Arbutus menziesii*, in 1922. The house has gone and the garden has been subdivided many times for the little houses of a transient population, but the madrona still stands unperturbed and nearby are some of its contemporaries, the pines of the Pinetum, where *Rhododendron griersonianum* once blazed in their shade.

Dr Stoker served as an example and an inspiration in our first Loughton garden. He had shown that, selecting his planting sites carefully, it had not been difficult to grow many of the shrubs seen in the wooded gardens of Surrey and Sussex, even though they were on or close to their northerly limit in south west Essex.

The garden had originally and typically been more than 80% lawn. The process which in time saw the proportions reversed began with the acquisition of *Acer grosseri* var. *hersii* from Spetchley Park, near Worcester. This made a lovely, vase-shaped, many-stemmed, low-forking tree at its best in winter. The leaves did not colour well in autumn because the tree stood for most of the morning in the shade of the house. In review, the plants which did best, gave most pleasure, and indeed, seemed to revel in their situation, were *Azara microphylla*, *Camellia* 'Rose Parade' (*japonica* × 'Donation'), *Drimys lanceolata*, *Enkianthus campanulatus*, *Nothofagus obliqua*, *Pieris taiwanensis*, *Stranvaesia davidiana*, and *Viburnum cinnamomifolium* and *V. henryi*. The best rhododendrons were *campanulatum*, *fulvum*, *hyperythrum*, *maculiferum* ssp. *anhweiense*, *neriiflorum*, *sutchuenense*, 'Letty Edwards', 'Matador', 'May Day', and always the last to flower, 'Tally Ho'. *Rhododendron neriiflorum* later began to fail, encroached upon by the greedy colonist *Pernettya mucronata*, and the robble was brought down by the major storm of October 1987, after we had left. A neighbour reported that its network of roots was very superficial: it might have been described by a fighter pilot as 'a hairy pancake'.

I was tempted to try several southern hemisphere shrubs from Bodnant in 'Westernie', our west-facing border backed by a fence. They were cosseted and watered and sweet nothings were whispered in their ears. They did well for a season and went on to win my 'marzipan rabbit award' before handing in their credentials and disappearing from view. Their resonant names are now only a poignant memory: *Callistemon rigidus*, *Correa* × *harrisii*, *Grevillea rosmarinifolia*, *Fascicularia pitcairniifolia*, *Mitraria coccinea*. The saddest loss, still keenly felt, was of an *Embothrium coccineum* 'Norquince' whose rate of growth had been sensational. It had shot up to just over six feet, close to the western side of 'Kalimpong', our summer-house in western red cedar, a cosy corner. I had been looking forward to seeing it in flower in the following June, but an unusually persistent cold spell claimed it, and none of its successors even showed such promise.

I bought our second house in Loughton, 'Tirionfa', before it was built. It was a step in dispositions for marriage. I remember when it was just a pile of bricks. The garden was shown as a crisp rectangle on the architects' plans. In reality, its bounds were vaguely defined by the wave of a forearm. The 'garden' was on the course of an approach road to an erstwhile primary school. When the piles of stodgy fulvous clay had been moved aside, a ribbed expanse of concrete 'apron', fifteen inches thick, was disclosed. I pointed out to the builders that no garden could be made while the concrete was there. They offered to leave it *in situ* for me, but painted a matt green. I demurred. Shortly, however, the sound of an engine under strain was heard, emanating from our future garden. A bright yellow JCB, jets of blue-grey exhaust dissipating in the breeze, was engaged on lifting and removing the concrete. The house took shape swiftly, so small that it appeared to have been designed for the convenience of a family of marmots, and the garden was in proportion, although at a pinch it might have suited a rock hyrax. It sloped gently southwards towards the house, and when planted, it was agreeably framed by the oriel window of our 'lounge-diner',

making an inevitable and invariable talking-point during meals.

I considered all of the space at 'Tirionfa' as a single bed, and first broke up all of the ground with a mattock, then a sharp-bladed spade was used, often sideways, then a fork was used before the essential flocculant was applied and given time to act. The flocculant, Clay Breaker, is most effective and I recommend it to all who have to garden on heavy clay. One small packet was sufficient for the whole garden, and it was manifest that it had been working when I went over the ground with the fork for the second time. A painstaking preparation of the soil before planting was a necessity in Essex, and I think it has been the one vital factor in success with most of our plants. I used to take out all the soil from the planting hole, make it friable with the fork, then riddle or sieve it over a large wheelbarrow, where moss or sedge peat, shredded bark, silver sand, dried blood and sulphate of ammonia were added in proportion to the volume of sieved soil and the requirements of the new plant. I place a layer of shredded bark in the bottom of the planting hole, and when the plant has been installed and surrounded by the prepared soil, I press down with gentle firmness on all four sides with two stout wooden blocks, standing on them briefly if the soil is not too wet. I then rake off superficially, and apply a generous helping of shredded bark, or bark and oak leaves mixed, and in subsequent seasons, oak leaves alone to a depth of eight inches. The plant then looks as if it had always been there, and the garden has a look of repletion. No staking has been necessary.

We grew 123 species in the new garden, 43 of them shrubs, and the view from the oriel window was soon filled. Eight rhododendrons plus *Decaisnea fargesii* had been brought down from the previous Loughton garden, and these nine have since been moved to Worcestershire, where they will stay. It was not hard to decide which to bring to Worcestershire. *Decaisnea fargesii* is a *sine qua non*, and the indispensable rhododendrons were 'Bambi', 'Quaker Girl', *albrechtii barbatum* 'Lee Moor', *bureauii*, *hodgsonii*, *orbiculare*, *oreodoxa* var. *fargesii*, and *succothii* from LSH 19850. An unusual feature at 'Tirionfa' was the flowering of the three *Illicium* species grown in the British Isles, all of the utmost charm, *I. anisatum*, *I. floridanum*, and the red-flowered *I. henryi*. We have been able to bring the last to the Midlands, along with another eighteen desirable shrubs and a tree, *Idesia polycarpa*.

Now we are freed from the most irksome constraint to gardening in Essex, its low rainfall and humidity. In Loughton, an annual rainfall of 26 inches would have been considered a wet year. Our present garden is usefully larger than both of those in Essex combined. The soil is sandy, a light pink-brown or brick red, generally at pH7. One area contains a truly providential loam at pH6, the same colour as plain chocolate. Here the subsoil is a light grey fudge laid down in the year dot. It is pH5. Every garden has some limitations beyond the owners' control. Ours is in the Spennells valley, naturally a frost-pocket. We are occasionally assailed by smells. When there is a west south westerly wind during the sugar beet 'campaign' from October to January, there is the smell of beet undergoing conversion to Silver Spoon sugar. It resembles roasting beef, three months past its 'sell-by date'.

Election of Officers to the Executive Committee

In accordance with Rule 4 the following member of the Executive Committee retires, having served for three years, but she is willing to stand for re-election. Nomination Papers for the use of members appear below. These should be returned to the Hon. General Secretary, Mrs. J. W. French, at least 14 days before the date of the Annual General Meeting:

Dr Florence Auckland

THE ROYAL HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY RHODODENDRON AND CAMELLIA GROUP

Nomination Paper for Candidates for election to the Executive Committee on 3rd May, 1989.

Name of Candidate	Candidate's Signature
Seconded by	Signature
Proposer's Signature	Date

To: Mrs. J. W. French, Hon. General Secretary, The Rhododendron and Camellia Group, 67 Chartwell Court, Churchill Square, Brighton, Sussex, BN1 2EX.

At times there is a porcine aura from nearby Heathy Mill farm, whence the pigs regularly make enforced and nervous departures on Tuesdays for the final stage of their careers, as the bowls of bacon soup served by Kempsey WI or the packets of 'porky scratchings' in the bar of the Old Cat at Wordsley. This aura also fails to suggest stephanotis, or *Gardenia jasminoides*.

A man had been in to cut the lawns from time to time, but apart from this, the garden had not been tended in recent years and was very overgrown, especially along the boundaries. We have been here only since the end of January but much clearing and simplification has been done, with help at first from a genial Irishman with a chain-saw. Now there is more light and air all round and replanting has begun, but there are still a number of desirable changes to make in the North Garden. Attention has been concentrated on the South Garden, which is not visible from the road. I hate plants with spines or thorns, including roses, which do not do well in our light soil anyway. All but one of the barberries have gone, and all but the best example of our 'quinces', as we call them, unable to bring ourselves to refer to them as KEEN-O-MEAL-EASE (*Chaenomeles*), but aware that a quince is properly *Cydonia oblonga*. We have retained two unidentified rowans, *Cotoneaster bullatus*, two *Viburnum* \times *burkwoodii*, an ample yucca, and the very many bulbs and paeonies. The South Garden is protected from the east wind by a screen of Leyland cypresses, now squared off.

It is inconvenient to refer to 'the semi-shaded expanse of ground elder beyond the rhubarb-forcing pots', or to say, 'I'll plant it in the middle of that stand of eight-foot *Polygonum cuspidatum* over there', so we name our beds and borders. Amalthaea is a neat rectangle forming the dot to the 'I' of the Spring Border, and separated from it by steps leading down to the path bordering the lawn. It contains the best of our trio of winter-flowering cherries, *Prunus subhirtella* 'Autumnalis': the others are in line in the Spring Border, which faces south. At the west end of the Spring Border the Broader Border begins. This was once bisected longitudinally by a gravel path, now removed to make one deep border rather than two narrow and well-nigh useless ones, hence the name. This border is on our western boundary and is destined, I hope, to be the pride of 'Afon Wen', at the same time screening our neighbour's raspberry canes and vegetables from view. I have

been asked, 'If you moved to a house and garden in another part, would you still grow the same plants?' The answer is, largely, 'Yes', and it has already been both pleasure and reassurance once again to grow some of the plants first tried in our earlier Loughton garden, such as *Azara microphylla*, *Stranvaesia davidiana* and *Yucca flaccida* 'Ivory'. We will have some camellias again, and, living in the hope that our confidence is not misplaced, *Embothrium coccineum*! Those who feel unable now to dance to the music of names might prefer to omit the listed contents of the Broader Border, while the sun westers fiercely behind the Spennells alders:

Cotoneaster bullatus
Decaisnea fargesii
Dipteronia sinensis
Disanthus cercidifolius
Halesia monticola var. *vestita*
Idesia polycarpa
Kalmia latifolia 'Freckles'
Lonicera chaetocarpa
Machilus thunbergii
Magnolia sieboldii
Oxydendron arboreum
Photinia beauverdiana
Rhododendron barbatum
Rhododendron bureavii
Rhododendron succothii
Rhododendron 'Autumn Gold'
Rhododendron 'Old Copper'
Rhododendron 'Schneekrone'
Rhododendron 'Sparkler'
Ribes odoratum
Sorbus vilmorinii
Sorbus ssp. (Aucuparia Section)
Stachyurus praecox
Staphylea colchica
Styrax obassia
Trochodendron aralioides
 1 WI - Women's Institute

April 1989
 Patrick Haworth