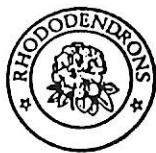


The Rhododendron, Camellia & Magnolia Group



BULLETIN No. 54 - December 1993

Forthcoming Events

January 25-26	Ornamental Plant Competition - Botanical Paintings	May 3	Group AGM - 4.30pm Rhododendron Room, RHS New Hall, Vincent Square
February 22	Royal Horticultural Society AGM. Vincent Square	May 3-4	Main Rhododendron Competition
February 22-23	Ornamental Plant Competition - Botanical Paintings	May 6-12	Ornamental Plant Competition
March 15-16	Early Camellia & Rhododendron Competitions	May 24-27	Group Spring Tour.
April 12-13	Ornamental Plant Competition		Chelsea Flower Show - Royal Hospital, Chelsea.
	Main Camellia Competition		All Shows at Vincent Square, unless otherwise stated.
	Ornamental Plant Competition		

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

As Christmas approaches the question of what to buy for that special present always arises. It was noticed at Vincent Square that there were exhibited a number of excellent paintings of mainly smaller rhododendrons. These are available from Marilyn Jones a Botanical Artist of 47, Groveland Avenue, Hoylake, Wirral, Merseyside, L47 2DP Tel. (051) 632 5986 and the price quoted was £75.

It has been agreed that the scope of the seed exchange be extended beyond the genera in which the Group is interested to those plants which might be described as "companion plants" *Meconopsis* at once comes to mind and perhaps such as *Enkianthus*, *Acer* and the like. Anyone who is able to supply such seed would find a grateful recipient in Ken Hulme, Treshnish, 72, Parkgate Road, Neston, South Wirral, Merseyside. L64 6QQ. Of course HAND POLLINATED seed of species rhododendrons is always welcome and wild collected seed of known provenance even more so.

Finally as the time of year approaches when we must consider moving those plants we put too close together and dead-heading those we can reach may I wish everyone a relatively mild winter to compensate for the new growth ruined by those early frosts.

BA

Editor's Notes

I apologise if this issue of the Bulletin is somewhat later than usual due to my being on a tour of "Botanical Exploration" in the Yunnan province of China for the last 3 weeks in company with several other members of the Group and of the IDS. A full account of the Tour will appear in the Journal in due course.

In the last Bulletin I offered a prize to anyone spotting the "deliberate mistake". This brought some hilarious response, not least because there were unfortunately (to my shame) more unintentional mistakes than the one I intended! One reply, in particular is perhaps worth quoting: Dear Editor (it reads) I think that delegates attending the N.Z. Rhododendron Association Conference 1-4 November this year would be hard put to it to start the day (November 6th) at Invercargill, tour Fiordland (perhaps going through the Homer Tunnel to Milford Sound) and still reach tropical Australia by 5pm. Sir, the mistake is Queensland. It should read Queenstown. E K & M F Hyde (Farnham). In addition there were, I regret, several spelling mistakes and, of course, 'Elsie Jury' is a Camellia not a Magnolia.

But the deliberate one was spotted by only one member, Dr H R Dingle of St. Helier in Jersey. He rightly noticed the reversal of the parentage of two of my additional Fortescue hybrids: The seed parent of Alston is Hawk and pollen parent griffithianum; likewise seed parent of Brentnor is griffithianum and pollen parent Hawk. He

receives R. Nancy Evans as a reward. Try to spot the deliberate mistake in this issue and win a packet of wild collected seed of *R. decorum* from Yunnan (2900m).

Arising out of my offer in the last Bulletin to publish a list of "wants", I have so far received four letters from members whose requirements appear later in this issue. I hope that more members will avail themselves of this facility in the future. I further propose to incorporate a "Letters Section" as the Bulletin can provide an ideal medium for the exchange of ideas between members as well as plants. Your contributions are awaited.

Copy date for the next issue of the Bulletin - March 7th 1994.

Recruitment Secretary

The Rhododendron, Camellia & Magnolia Group have been without a Recruitment Secretary since Alastair Stevenson volunteered to become our Treasurer. The Executive Committee would like the post of Recruitment Secretary re-instated and ask if any member will volunteer to do this, taking the responsibility for putting the Group's name forward at Shows and displaying our literature and Application Forms. Please contact Bruce Archibold, Chairman.

Group Annual General Meeting

The AGM will take place in the Rhododendron Room, RHS New Hall, Vincent Square at 4.30pm on 3rd May. A Nomination Form for Candidates for election to the Executive Committee will be found at the foot of page 3 which must be sent to the Hon. Group Secretary, Mrs J Warren to reach her by 19th April 1994 at the latest.

New Publications

The Cultivation of Rhododendrons by P.A.Cox - Batsford. 285pp. 75 Colour photographs. 29 Line Illustrations. £35 (£25 + £2.50 p&p to members of the Group direct from the publishers, B.T.Batsford Ltd, 4 Fitzhardinge Street, London W1H 0AH, confirming membership of the Group)

This book, written with the experience of 40 years not just as a nurseryman but also as a collector in the wild, will be welcomed by all who are interested in the genus, containing, as it does, notes on the distribution of rhododendrons divided into height, locations, suggestions for cultivation in all parts of the world and in most conditions, together with advice on planting, maintenance, including the use of fertilisers and herbicides, with many other useful hints and tips. The details of methods of propagation are, perhaps, the most comprehensive in any book to date and the notes on cultural requirements of species, divided into sections and sub-sections together with those of hybrids by parentage are invaluable. Written in a very readable manner with well produced colour photographs and clear line illustrations which relate well to the text, this book

must form part of every rhododendron enthusiast's library, be they amateur or professional.

B.A.

Camellias - A Basic Guide. Published by The International Camellia Society - U.K. Region.

Price £2.00 (post free) - 2 copies £3.50, discount for orders of 10 or more.

This booklet has been completely re-written and up-dated and gives information on all aspects of Camellia growing from basic requirements to the choice of site; from cultivation both in the garden and under glass and in containers; from choice of varieties to problems and how to deal with them.

Orders, with remittance payable to "The I.C.S. - U.K. Region" should be sent to Mr David Farnes, Hon. Treasurer, 5 Pine View, Ashgate, Chesterfield, Derbyshire S40 4DN. (Tel: 0246 272105)

(Note: no orders will be dealt with between 30th December 1993 and 31st January 1994 due to the absence abroad of Mr Farnes)

Honey Fungus (*Armillaria mellea*)

On learning that Dr Roland Fox of the Department of Horticulture at the University of Reading was researching the management of Armillaria Root Rots, I wrote to him to ask whether he would be kind enough to write a short account of the progress made to date. He kindly responded by sending me an article extending to 8000 words which he realised was too long for my purpose but gave me leave to edit it as necessary. I hesitate to do this but as it would have to be heavily pruned and in doing so the odds are that much useful information would be omitted. If, however, any member is sufficiently interested to send to me for a copy, I shall be pleased to supply one.

Apparently the presence of Honey fungus can be detected by using strawberry plants as bait but a member writing to be from Bromsgrove offers a still more interesting treatment. She was told by her niece who used to work at Kew Gardens that one should plant acorns or oak seedlings one and a half feet apart in the area affected. These should be allowed to grow on for 2 or 3 years, as, apparently some exudation from the roots of the oaks is injurious to, and eventually kills, the fungus. She says that her brother who lives in Highgate and whose garden was badly infested with Honey Fungus, has been using this method for the last 3 years and is now free of it. She, herself, only had time last year to plant a few seedlings but so far this year has only had a few fruiting bodies instead of barrow-loads.

Spring Tour - 6-12 May 1994

Two famous gardens are on the itinerary - Inverewe and Blackhills and five other very interesting private gardens which we have not previously visited. Apart from Helensburgh, the usual meeting place, there will be only two hotels; one at Inverness and the other at Dundonnell. There will probably be a total of seven nights because of the distances involved. The numbers will need to be restricted because of the hotel accommodation.

Please send for further details (and enclose s.a.e.) from me, Mrs V Archibold, Tours Secretary, Starveacre, Dalwood, E.Devon, EX13 7HH (Tel: 040 488 221).

Group Autumn Weekend at Wroxton House Hotel, 22-24 October 1993.

The Wroxton House Hotel, Wroxton St Mary, Near Banbury is viewed with affection and loyalty by those members who attended the first five "Wroxton weekends" of 1981 to 1985 inclusive, organised by David Farnes. It is remarkable that Mr & Mrs E G Millais were our guests at the last of the sequence in 1985, and again on this occasion, after an interval of eight years. The hotel has been comprehensively rebuilt and extended in this interval and its new guise was a revelation to those who could recall the less commodious Wroxton House. In their puzzled reappraisal of the architect's work they were pressed to find any corners that they recognised. Mr & Mrs Millais presence, however did much to ensure a smooth continuity, as though the long interval had never been and most of

the 31 members present were Old Farnesians who were glad to reminisce in their autumn venue.

The International Camellia Society's tie was in evidence during the weekend, but perhaps a new tie should be designed for Old Farnesians with a flawless inflorescence of *R. hylaeum* over the arms of Banbury on a navy blue ground?

In September 1992 the Millais were members of a successful expedition to the Mekong-Salween Divide, primarily to collect rhododendron seed. This was the subject of their lecture, illustrated with slides, on the Saturday morning. The area visited by the expedition is not large in terms of square miles, but it was botanised by Forrest, Rock and Ward in the years 1910 to 1937, and it is the home of more than 120 species of Rhododendron. Mr Millais' expedition was able to collect seed of 63 of them in a fortnight spent on the Divide and its associated ranges.

The slides disclosed a dramatic and improbable kingdom with many airy vistas seeming to border on the impossible to those accustomed to the gentle forms of the Malvern Hills. The area is deeply riven by steep-sided valleys, arid on their lower slopes, but holding fast brown rivers. The rainfall falls away sharply with descent, so that only the higher slopes are afforested and it is possible to pass from a tawny aridity to a rhododendron-sustaining wetness within the flight of a grackle. It was interesting that this expedition used the village of Atuntze, a name familiar to students of the writings of Ward and other plant hunters, as a base for acclimatisation, for it stands at 11,000 feet, and is now called Deqen.

The fuscous aspect of the Chinese alps is imparted by the swarms of small rhododendrons that behave in the same way as the heather of the Scottish moorland and, at any distance, when seen en masse their resemblance to heather is remarkable and the botanical affinity manifest. Lower down Mr Millais had taken some educative views to show the composition of the forest, dominated by *Abies delavayi*, and also to show the context in which such rhododendron species as *arizelum*, *praestans*, *fulvoides* and *phaeochrysum* appear. None were in flower at the time of the expedition but most displayed tiers of new growth that owners of British woodland gardens would have been gratified to see. We were not, however, deprived of flowers during the slide show because Mr Millais had recorded a proportion of the herbaceous plants, and to single out the most collectable genus, *Primula*, we were shown slides of *PP. amethystina var. brevifolia*, *chionantha var. sinopurpurea*, *deflexa*, *triloba* and the lordly *P. sikkimensis var. pseudosikkimensis*, all of them as winsome in appearance as euphonious in name.

Mr Millais reported that nearly all of the rhododendron seed harvested by him had, auspiciously, germinated in his care, and, being indefatigable, he said that he next wanted to cover the same ground in the spring in order to see the plants that had yielded seed in flower, the better to assess their worth.

Immediately following the lecture and slide show we were offered coffee before returning to the Broughton Room for an auction of plants and some horticultural literature, kindly obtained at a discount, or donated from her own collection, by Lady Cynthia Postan, and briskly conducted by Mr Bruce Archibold with assistance from Mr G R Speed. The books raised the sum of £50 which was sent to our Treasurer towards Group funds. A further £60 was raised from the sale of plants, thanks to contributions from Messrs Kenwyn Clapp and Bruce Archibold, which, as a tribute to our Tours Organiser, Mrs Valerie Archibold, who spends much time and effort on bringing about such pleasurable occasions as this, was credited to the Tours account to provide a much needed reserve. **(Further plant sales will be used to raise funds for the Jubilee issue of the Year Book in 1995. Ed.)**

We left the hotel on Sunday morning, driving westwards to the long descent of Edge Hill, giving extensive views across the Vale of Evesham. We passed through the comely Warwickshire village of Ettington, thence north to Wellesbourne, our objective being Charlecote Park. Close to Ettington is the source of the R. Dene, a tributary of the Warwickshire Avon, and their confluence is hard by Charlecote Park, whose situation so recalls "Philip's farm" in Tennyson's poem *The Brook*, An Idyl, that it is easy to modify the laureate's verse to read,

Till last by Charlecote Park I Flow
To join the brimming river,
For men may come and men may go,
But I go on for ever.

Those men had been members of the Lucy family, their tenants and retainers, for three hundred years before the present house was built at the close of the Tudor period, 1485-1558. The Lucy family is still at Charlecote, so our circular tour was confined to the principal rooms reached from the hall. The family has an exceptionally complete portraiture, and many of the portraits are in the hall, looking down on the central rectangular table of inlaid Carrara marble, some of it a deep blue. Members might, before entering the house, have noted the lustrous *Viburnum cinnamomifolium* in an angle of walls to the left of the front door. Charlecote has walls of the warm light red brick of the time, more than one fine oriel window, Dutch influence in its gables, and groups of the elaborate Tudor chimneys, circular in plan, each different from its neighbour. A very pleasing feature of the West elevation is the ornate ballustrade surmounting the lengths of wall between gables and towers, with evenly spaced finials. The semi-formal garden bordering the river is filled with the distant sound of the Dene cascading down the steps of the weir above the Avon, and the view from the windows of the house to the deep park over the river could not be better expressed than in a later verse of **The Brook**,

With many a curve my banks I fret
By many a field and fallow,
And many a fairy foreland set
With willow-weed and sallow.

Some members stayed for lunch in the Orangery Restaurant at Charlecote, but in view of the length of homeward journeys, the party had already begun to disperse. Afterwards there is an ineluctable sense of despondency, so that when, to the west of Stratford, we passed the end of a by-way on our left called Cold Comfort Lane, I remarked to Pauline that that expressed our mood concisely; that, perhaps is the true measure of the value of our congenial tours and autumn meetings.

Patrick Haworth, November 1993

Branch News

Wessex Branch.

It is with sadness that we report the death of Mrs Hazel Pelmore, a much valued member of our Committee and long-standing member of the Wessex Branch. She will be greatly missed.

Members' afternoon at Crosswater Farm by kind permission of Mr & Mrs E G Millais. Sunday 17th October 1993.

The afternoon commenced with a walk round the gardens of Crosswater Farm in rare brilliant sunshine. This was followed by a competition, held indoors, in which members were asked to identify species by their foliage. The competition was won by Mr & Mrs Clarke-Hall by one point with Mr & Mrs Beard as runners-up. The winners were presented with *R. flinckii*. After tea slides were shown by Mr Clarke-Hall and Mr Millais. Mr Clarke-Hall thanked our hosts for their hospitality.

Forthcoming events:

Sat. 19th Feb 1994: Mr E G Millais will show slides and talk on China and Tibet.

Tues. 15th March: Dr David Chamberlain will speak on Azalea species.

Sunday 8th May: Annual Competition, Plant Sale and Exhibition will take place at Hydon Nurseries by kind permission of Mr & Mrs Arthur George.

Sunday 29th May: Visit to Sandling Park, Hythe, Kent by kind invitation of Mr & Mrs Alan Hardy.

Any members from other branches who want tickets for any of the above lectures, please apply to the Hon. Treasurer, Mr Neil Usher, Applegarth, Effingham Common Rd., Effingham, Surrey KT24 5JH.

Irish Branch

The annual visit of the Branch took place on 18th April to Ardnamona, Co. Donegal, a garden owned by Amabel and Kiertan Clarke. Some 15 members met at the garden and, fortified by hot cups of tea, donned rain gear and set forth with Kiertan Clarke to see the garden. Situated on the shores of Lough Eske, beneath the shadow of the Blue Stack mountains, rhododendrons and exotic conifers grow in association with native oak. Rhododendrons probably planted in the 1870's have grown into trees. The garden of some 10 acres is informal in layout with some broad paths, and many narrow paths twisting their way through the trees.

In a lawn area near the house *RR. niveum* and *arboreum* have formed an attractive massed shrubbery. Elsewhere, many *R. falconeri* occur as single specimens and having developed into single or multi-stemmed shrubs provide a canopy of pale yellow flowers. Following a path from the entrance drive we came across what could only be described as a copse of *R. arboreum* ssp. *roseum* all 15-17 metres tall and clothed in pink flowers. Elsewhere, *RR. arboreum* ssp. *cinnamomeum* and *arboreum* were in cultivation. A pale brown peeling stem alerted us to *R. griffithianum*. The plant collection, however, is not limited to rhododendrons, as on either side of a broad ride several conifers including *Picea orientalis*, *Abies cephalonica* and *A. amabilis* have attained a large size. Elsewhere there are fine specimens of *Drimys winteri*, *Calocedrus decurrens* and *Thujaopsis dolabrata*.

The National Heritage Council has grant-aided the preparation of an inventory and garden guide. Much clearing of *R. ponticum* has been carried out by Conservation Volunteers and students from the National Botanic Gardens in Dublin. They have uncovered a circular area near the house with a network of paths and stonework, probably a rock garden.

The tour of the garden was concluded on the Crescent Walk where *RR. sinogrande*, *falconeri* and *Loderi* were planted by the last owner, Mrs West. Further along this path were large specimens of *R. arboreum* among the trees and when least expected we came across a lone specimen of *R. hodgsonii* in full flower.

Returning to the house for more tea, the visitors expressed their thanks to the Clarkes and presented them with *R. johnstoneanum*. Despite the 'soft day', and Irish euphemism for rain, it did not dampen our enthusiasm for this wonderful garden and our admiration for the challenging restoration programme now in progress.

Mary Forrest

Election of Officer to the Executive Committee

In accordance with Rule 4 of the Constitution the under-mentioned member of the Executive Committee, having served for three years, is due to retire but is willing to stand for re-election. However, it is open to any member to put forward an alternative nomination if they so wish provided they first obtain that person's willingness to stand for election. Proposers should make use of the Nomination Form below, which must be returned to the Hon. Group Secretary, Mrs J Warren at least 14 days before the date for the Annual General Meeting.

Miss Cecily E Perring

THE ROYAL HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY RHODODENDRON, CAMELLIA AND MAGNOLIA GROUP

Nomination Paper for Candidates for election to the Executive Committee on 3rd May, 1994.

Name of Candidate

Signature

Proposed by

Signature

Seconded by

Signature

To: Mrs J Warren, Hon. Group Secretary, The Rhododendron, Camellia and Magnolia Group,
Netherton, Buckland Monachorum, Yelverton, Devon, PL20 7NL

Editor's Post Bag.

From: Michael Cullinane, P.O. Box 631, Levin 5500, New Zealand.
Sir,

I have been growing and breeding *Vireya* rhododendrons for sixteen years and have recently sent plant material to Germany, Denmark, USA and Australia. I understand that *Vireyas* are rather hard to obtain in Britain, so I enclose my current plant list in case anyone is interested. I have collected in the wild in New Guinea, and am presently engaged in trying to breed some cold hardiness into some *Vireya* hybrids. Some *Vireya* species will tolerate frost up to minus 15 degrees celsius. With their frequent flowering and easy care, *Vireyas* have a good future.

I have already had some success in identifying *Vireya* species which appear to be hardier than most, and also in breeding hardier hybrids. I think that the climate here in NZ would be a little kinder than yours in Britain, but some of the *Maddenias* are more tender than some of the *Vireyas* and they are a good yardstick for assessing the hardiness of some of the *Vireyas*. Generally speaking, if the *Maddenias* can survive, then 90% of the *Vireyas* can also. I shall immediately qualify this by saying that the way in which the *Vireyas* are raised has a bearing on their hardiness. Those plants which are heavily manured, and consequently have a lot of soft immature growth will not do too well in frosts, but those which are allowed to grow at their normal rate are hardier. Damage to young growth, buds or flowers is not such a problem, as the plant will grow away again, often months after the damage has occurred.

I have found that *R. dielsianum* will cope up to or rather down to minus 10 degrees C and *R. macgregoriae* will lose flower buds at minus 6 degrees but will take up to 11 degrees. It would appear that using some of these species one could breed some cold-hardiness into *Vireya* hybrids. Most successful have been the crosses done with *R. saxifragoides* and *R. commonae*. One of course loses flower size, something which could be increased gradually by careful hybridizing. When using pollen from smaller flowers on to much bigger flowers, I have had some success by removing up to 2 cms of the style of the seed parent and then pollinating it.

The crosses using *R. saxifragoides* stood up to a particularly lousy winter last year, with frosts to 9 months, starting with a week of frosts of minus 12 to minus 14 degrees. They came through with flying colours. *R. culminicolum* would be another hardy *Vireya* to try, but I seem to have brought back the non-flowering form! *R. laetum* which is a lower altitude plant is surprisingly hardy - in fact, it was used as one of the seed parents for *R. saxifragoides* pollen.

The varieties of *R. javanicum* seem to be the most tender, and hybrids with that in their veins are not much use beyond minus 2 degrees. *R. christiana*, is quite tender, minus 3 degrees, though hybrids with it are good to minus 6 degrees. It is worth repeating that *Vireyas*, by and large, can be hardened off to a surprising extent to cope with conditions which are much colder than their accustomed environment.

Yours faithfully

Michael Cullinane.

Plants etc. Wanted

Any member able to offer any of the under-mentioned plants either as seedlings, rooted cuttings or young plants is requested to contact the advertiser direct.

Lt. Col Sir Arscott Molesworth-St. Aubyn Bart.MBE, Pencarrow, Bodmin, Cornwall PL30 3AG (Tel: 020 884 449) is looking for:

R Dr. Stocker (*caucasicum* x *griffithianum*)

R. Duchess of Cornwall (*parentage unknown*)

R. Duke of Cornwall (*arboreum* x *barbatum*)

R. Earl of Morley (*campylocarpum* x *arboreum* ssp. *cinnamomeum* var. *album*)

R. St. Keverne (*zeylanicum* x *griffithianum*)

R. St. Mabyn (Souldis x unknown)

Mr Jo Kinaghan Post House Gardens, Cwmbach, Whitland, Dyfed, SA34 0DR (Tel: 0994 484213) is looking for the following *Vireyas*:

R. Kinabulu Mandarin (a form of *brookeanum*)

R. lowii (Orange or Yellow form)

R. fallacinum

Mr Andrew Sawyer (Head Gardener) Cragside Estate (National Trust) Rothbury, Northumberland NE64 7PX (Tel: 0669 21267) is particularly interested in members of the *Ericaceae* family and especially pre-1900 introductions and hybrids of *Rhododendron*. He is looking for:

R. Sir William Armstrong (Waterer - 1871) Sir William was the owner and creator of Cragside.

They also wish to put together a collection of *Gaultheria* (which now includes *Pernetia*)

Mr Yoshiaki Andoh, 9-11 1-Chome, Yawatacho, Nadaku, Kobe 657, Japan would like to obtain:

1. *Rhododendron* Yearbook No. 7 (1953).

2. *Rhododendrons* with *Magnolias* and *Camellias* 1977.

Charlotte Stawitzski, Vordingborg Landevej 11, Vester Egesborg, 1700 Naestved, Denmark would like to obtain a copy of "Magnolias" by Neil Treseder (Faber & Faber 1978). She also asks for the address of any nursery specialising in *Magnolias*.

Reprint from "The Botanics" - RBG Newsletter No. 13.

On Wednesday 30 June 1993 the RBG's new Electron Microscope Suite was officially opened by HRH The Prince of Wales. The suite houses two new electron microscopes, to replace the old microscopes which have become obsolete. The new scanning electron microscope (SEM) is highly sophisticated in terms of image resolution and image processing, yet it is extremely user-friendly. Under the supervision of Stefan Helfer (mycologist/microscopist), Prince Charles was given the opportunity to operate the instrument himself, to examine *Rhododendron* leaf scales and fungal spores.

Images, magnified up to 300,000 times, are processed in a digital form and can be exported, either directly to a local medium such as a floppy disc, hard disc or optical disc, or else sent via a computer network to PCs located elsewhere. A printed copy of the image can be obtained within seconds by using a videoprinter. An important advantage of the new SEM system is that it allows examination of plant specimens in a frozen state. This means that no chemicals are needed to fix the specimen, and therefore the image does not suffer from the distortions or artefacts associated with specimens prepared using traditional methods.