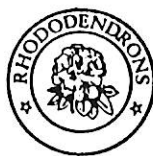


# The Rhododendron, Camellia & Magnolia Group



BULLETIN No. 55 - April 1994

## Forthcoming Events

April 12-13	Daffodil Show, Main Camellia Competition	May 6-12	Group Spring Tour (Fully Booked)
	Ornamental Plant Competition	May 6-8	Malvern Spring Gardening Show,
April 21-24	Harrogate Spring Show, Valley Gardens, Harrogate		Three Counties Showground, Malvern
April 27 - May 1	Cincinnati Flower & Garden Show	May 24-27	Chelsea Flower Show
	in association with the RHS	June 15-19	BBC Gardeners' World Live, NEC Birmingham
May 3	Group AGM, Floral B Room, Vincent Square. - 4.30 p.m.	June 21-22	Ornamental Plant Competition (see text on p. 2)
May 3-4	Main Rhododendron Competition	July 4-7	The Royal - Stoneleigh
	Late Daffodil, Tulip and	July 5-10	Hampton Court Palace Flower Show
	Ornamental Plant Competitions		(July 5 - Preview Day)

## Chairman's Notes

It is always pleasant to start a new year on a happy note, so it is with the greatest pleasure that I am able to send, on behalf of the Group, heartiest congratulations to Alan Hardy on his well-earned VMH. Alan has done, and indeed is still doing, an enormous amount of work on behalf of the RHS of which the members hear very little - indeed at present he is engaged with others in the production of a new handbook on Rhododendron species, apart from his normal duties on various committees.

The Hon. Edward and Mrs. Anne Boscawen are also to be congratulated on the award of the Loder Rhododendron Cup for their work with the genus over the years at their fine garden at High Beeches in Sussex.

Our overseas contingent have not been forgotten and our warmest congratulations go to the following members on the award of a Golden Veitch Memorial Medal for the advancement and improvement of the science and practice of horticulture:

Sir Peter Smithers

Mr. Hideo Suzuki

Turning to the Chelsea Show, we congratulate the following for their stated awards:

The Lawrence Medal for the Outstanding Exhibit of rhododendrons, azaleas, hostas, ferns and other woodland plants: Savill and Valley Gardens, Windsor Great Park under the direction of John Bond.

The Rothschild Challenge Cup for the Best Exhibit in which rhododendrons predominate: G. Reuthe Ltd.

Last but by no means least congratulations to Mr. Edmund de Rothschild on his award of the Reginald Cory Memorial Cup as the raiser of the excellent rhododendron "Pearl Betteridge". At a time when British registration of hybrids are reaching an all time low it is encouraging to see that Exbury, that home of so many fine plants, is still producing them.

These recognitions for members of the Group show that not merely are we in existence but are working hard for the betterment of the genus in which we have a particular interest.

B.A.

## Editor's Notes

In my notes in the December Bulletin I said that a full account of the Oct./Nov. tour of the Yunnan would appear in the journal. However, I am informed by the Editor that in view of

the ever increasing number of these expeditions she is short of space, especially as the 1996 Year Book is the Jubilee Number devoted to the last 200 years of rhododendron cultivation. In spite of this, the issue must be restricted for reasons of economy to 100 pages. I have therefore prevailed upon Maurice Foster to write an account of the tour which appears later in this Bulletin.

I regret that no-one spotted the deliberate mistake in the last Bulletin. Patrick Haworth wrote a very interesting account of the Group Autumn Week-end in Warwickshire including quotations from Tennyson's poem, "The Brook". The last two lines of the second verse which he quoted goes:

And many a fairy foreland set  
With willow-weed and mallow

I substituted the word "sallow" for "mallow" but maybe that was a little unfair since sallow associates so well with willow both in the wild and phonetically.

Copy date for the August Bulletin - 7th July, 1994.

Please send contributions to me, Tony Weston, Whitehills, Newton Stewart, Scotland, DG8 6SL. Please also note my Telephone and Fax numbers are now 0671 402049 and 403106 respectively.

## Notes from the Tours Secretary

The Spring Tour of Scotland was fully booked by Christmas, the numbers being restricted owing to the limited hotel accommodation at Poolewe especially of single accommodation.

The Autumn Week-end will be in Cambridge on October 23rd and we will be having a lecture by Dr. Cullen on the Saturday.

## Arduaine Gardens

Members of the Group may have seen the article written by Kathryn Bradley-Hole in the February issue of Gardeners' World and may be concerned, as was the Chairman, at the lack of any mention or acknowledgement of the immense amount of work which was put in over some 20 years by the brothers Edmund and Harry Wright. The Wright brothers took over the garden when it was little better than a wilderness and created one of the finest collections of species rhododendrons, not only in the United Kingdom, but also in the world, in which condition they handed it over to the National Trust for Scotland. Neither is the collection confined



simply to rhododendrons, although that is probably what it is most widely famous for. Representations were made by the Chairman as well as some of our members and those of the Scottish Rhododendron Society to the Editor of the magazine suggesting that a further article might be appropriate to put the record in order, to which the Editor has now responded, offering to publish a letter from Ed Wright giving details of their part in the creation of the garden.

#### **Obituary - Miss Esther King**

Esther King of Barnhourie Mill, Colvend, By Dalbeattie died on 27th December 1993, one month short of her 94th birthday, after a short illness.

She was born in Wimbledon in 1900. From an early age she developed a passion for flowers and for gardening and this remained with her all her life. At school she was awarded a scholarship in design and this training helped with her work in designing gardens in later years. Her artistic ability was not confined to gardens and could be recognised in everything she touched.

In 1927 she moved to Scotland and remained in this country for the rest of her life, first in Ayrshire and then from 1952 in Galloway.

The nursery firm of King and Paton was founded in 1956 at Barnbarroch, By Dalbeattie, with Dr. M. R. Paton as her partner. Esther King became a skillful propagator of difficult plants, especially rhododendrons. She lectured widely all over Scotland on that subject, and on other aspects of gardening, to many horticultural societies.

She was an early member of the Scottish Rock Garden Club when it was revived after the war and was the Convenor of the Kirkcudbrightshire Group from 1955 until 1963. She also served for two periods on the General Council in the 50s and 60s.

For the last years of her long life she lived at Barnhourie Mill, Colvend. This seven-acre piece of natural land with its old oaks and rocky outcrops, enlivened by the sound of the Barnhourie Burn running through on its way to the sea, presented a wonderful opportunity to create a unique garden. This is exactly what Esther King made.

The garden at Barnhourie Mill has been seen and enjoyed by hundreds of people over the years and will remain a lasting memorial, not only to a clever plantswoman, but to a kind and generous person.

**M.R.P.**

#### **Group Annual General Meeting**

The AGM will take place in the Floral B Room, RHS New Hall, Vincent Square at 4.30 p.m. on 3rd May. A Nomination Form for Candidates for election to the Executive Committee was printed on page 3 of the December Bulletin and must be sent to the Hon. Group Secretary to reach her by 19th April. In addition to the vacancy created by the retirement of Miss Cecily Perring, who is willing to stand for re-election, a further vacancy occurs due to the resignation of Dr. Florence Auckland. Dr. Auckland's resignation was due to the fact that she was finding it increasingly difficult to get to London to attend meetings. Her decision was received with utmost regret by the Committee who expressed their appreciation of services rendered over many years. Mr. Maurice Foster has been proposed and seconded but, of course, further nominations will be in order.

#### **Ornamental Plant Competition - June 21-22**

The Group is staging a promotional exhibit at Vincent Square for this competition. Any member who is likely to be in or

within reach of London on Monday, 20th June, is requested to bring a truss or so and give prior notification to Ivor Stokes, Pantoch Cottage, Carmel, Llanelli, Dyfed. Tel: 0269 844048.

#### **Publications - New and old**

**MAGNOLIAS** - By Dorothy J. Callaway, Batsfords 308 pp. 142 colour, 18 black/white photographs 24 line drawings £35.

This book is written by an American botanist and horticulturist who has not only researched the taxonomy but also been involved in the propagation, cultivation and breeding of Magnolias, also acting as official registrar of the genus. As the author says in the preface, the book is not intended as a monograph but rather as a compilation of her own experiences with those of others, and she states that she personally has not seen all the magnolias of which she writes. This is not surprising in view of the very comprehensive cover of the genus.

There are short paragraphs describing the various uses of Magnolia, its timber and medicinal properties followed by details of pollination and biology.

Cultural requirements are discussed in depth, as are the various pests and diseases which evidently can affect the genus but do not appear to present a great problem in the U.K. The description of the various methods of propagation is full and interesting, covering seed, cuttings, grafting and tissue culture. The paragraph on taxonomy is helpful in that it first describes how the various rules are applied across the board and then relates them to magnolias in particular.

The description of the various species is wide-reaching, but of the 80 or so species described only some 45 are shown as being in cultivation. Where applicable, cultivars and hybrids from given species are listed.

The mechanics of hybridization and a list of hybridizers is followed by descriptive lists of hybrids.

The appendices contain lists of valid/invalid names, a glossary, tables of blooming periods and details of specialist suppliers. A well-researched and comprehensive work, perhaps more intended for the American market, and whilst most lovers of magnolias will find much of interest, there is also much which will appeal only to a small proportion of the cognoscenti. The colour illustrations are well-produced and the line drawings are clear, relating well to the text. The comprehensive bibliography is useful to those who wish to pursue further study.

**B.A.**

#### **MAGNOLIAS by J. M. Gardiner**

Copies of this book which is out of print are available for purchase from the Magnolia Society for \$15 a copy (including p. & p.)

Send orders to Hazel E. Tarpley,  
Treasurer, Magnolia Society  
5637 South Ryan Street  
Seattle, Washington, U.S.A.

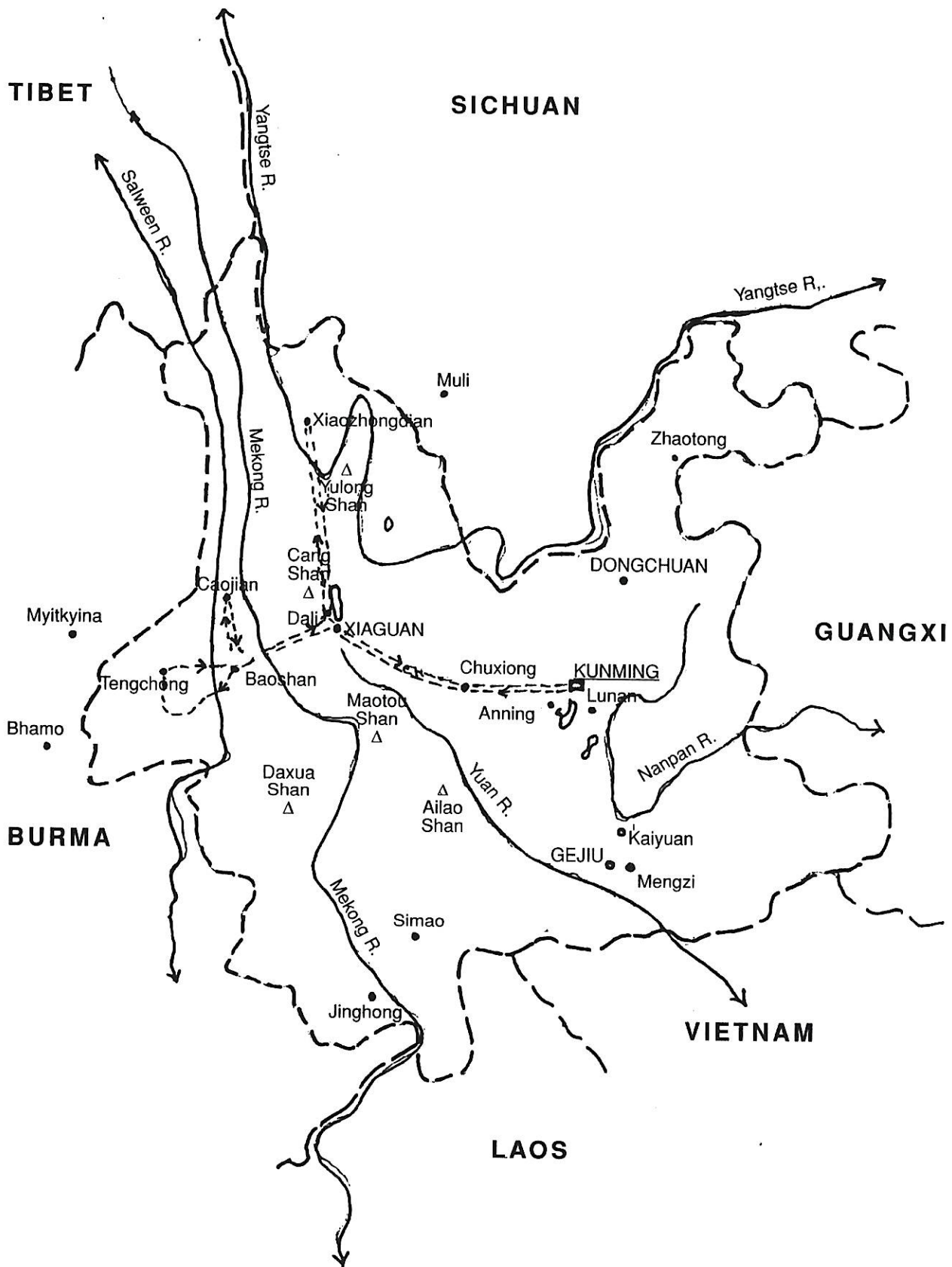
enclosing cheque or International Money Order. Payment may also be made by Credit Card quoting account number and expiry date of Visa or Mastercard. Remember to enclose your name and full address for delivery. The original cost in this country was £14.95 so not only is it a first class book but the price represents very good value.

#### **B.T. Batsford Ltd - Concessionary prices for members**

A leaflet is enclosed with this Bulletin describing the entire range of rhododendron and related titles published by Batsfords. The publishers have very kindly offered discounts to members on all these titles.



# YUNNAN PROVINCE



SCALE 1" = 160 km (100 miles)



## Photographic Competition

Once again members are invited to submit their photographs for the competition. The winner's entry will be published in the Jubilee Year Book as well as being awarded a prize of £10; alas, no more than the cost of a couple of films but we hope it is enough to show that we, the judges, enjoy our task and that the Year Book gains in artistic worth.

The notes supplied by last year's winner were sufficient to stimulate others to describe how *R.sinogrande* had fared in their gardens. This year's entry should therefore be accompanied by a few words (not more than 200-300 words) describing the plant and the reasons for its choice. Magnolias and Camellias are eligible as well as rhododendrons, and both slides and prints are acceptable.

Please send your entry by 30th June 1994 to Lady Cynthia Postan, 83 Barton Road, Cambridge, CB4 9LH, and enclose a stamped addressed envelope.

## Tour of Yunnan - Oct./Nov. 1993

Forrest's journeys in Yunnan spanned 28 years from 1904 to 1932. He established his base at Tengyueh (now known as Tengchong) in the far southwest of the province, near the Burmese border. The town has been little visited by Europeans since Forrest's day and it was the furthest west reached in October last year by a party of twelve on a botanical exploration by botanist Keith Rushforth and Guan Kaiyun, Assistant Director of the Kunming Institute of Botany, who was our guide and host for the visit.

The tour began in the provincial capital of Kunming before heading west to Tengchong via Chuxiong and Xiaguan and along the old Burma road via Baoshan, diverting south to avoid rockfalls and landslips caused by a prolonged and heavy rainy season. The route crossed the rivers Mekong, Salween and Schweli, entering the drainage basin of the Irrawaddy. After exploring forest on the Goaligongshan, the Salween/Schweli divide to the north and east of Tengchong, the party moved northeast to the small town of Caojian to investigate an area on the Mekong/Salween divide which had evidently been by-passed by Forrest. This was mainly cut-over mixed cool temperate forest with a number of rhododendrons at altitudes of up to 3200m. The next stop was the old town of Dali from where an area of the eastern flank of the celebrated Cangshan range was explored, approaching the crest. Finally from Dali the expedition headed north across the Yangtse and up to the Zhongdian plateau to the village of Xiaozhongdian. In all the tour covered an estimated 2700km and explored some areas only rarely visited by recent expeditions, if at all.

Comparatively few rhododendron species were encountered until altitudes of around 3000m or above were achieved. The exceptions were *RR.decorum*, *spinuliferum* and *arboreum* var. *delavayi*. *R.decorum* was seen on the Cangshan at no more than a foot high on a single stem and, remarkably, bearing a cluster of flower buds. *R.sinogrande* was found on the Goaligongshan at around 2850m with leaves up to 50cm long by 25cm across. It was also locally abundant with *R.gratum* (?*basilicum*) and *R.fulvum* in the open on the crest of the Mekong/Salween divide at 3200m above Caojian, where seedling regeneration was spectacular among scattered trees such as *Sorbus harrowiana*, *S.vilmorinii*, *S.thibetica* and *Juniperus recurva coxii*. The cut-over forest on this range also yielded, inter alia, species of the Irrawaddy and Maddenia sections as well as *RR.neriiflorum* and *sidereum*. On the Goaligongshan, *RR.facetum* and *diaprepes* were identified and the *Abies delavayi* and rhododendron forest on the Cangshan confirmed its reputation with many species

including, for example, *RR.lacteam*, *fictolacteam*, *rubiginosum*, *yunnanense*, *trichocladum*, *balfourianum*, *taliense*, *cyanocarpum*, and *stewartianum*. *R.racemosum* covered considerable areas both here and further north on the Zhongdian plateau where it was a dominant scrub plant with the dwarf *Quercus minimatricha* and *Sorbus reducta* in open *Pinus densata* forest with *Betula czechuanica*.

Magnoliaceae were well represented during the tour with *Manglietia insignis*, *Michelia doltsopa*, *Michelia yunnanensis*, and *Magnolia delavayi* in the broadleaf forest, as well as coppiced trees of *Magnolia rostrata* at 2500m north of Caojian. In the same area at higher altitudes scattered plants of *Magnolia mollicomata* had been cut over and only saplings and regenerating old stools were found. A recently felled tree of *Magnolia nitida* was also found. On the Zixishan near Chuxiong there was an ancient specimen of *Magnolia campbellii alba*, reputedly some 600 years old, in the precincts of a Buddhist temple, planted in the Sung dynasty. (Seen in flower on a later visit it was quite magnificent). It was a hollow-trunked, picturesque veteran, and nearby was a Gingko claimed to be over 1000 years old.

Most of the Camellias seen were on the Zixishan, although it was too early for other than perfunctory flowers. A Camellia garden is being established on the mountain, a conservation area, principally for *C.reticulata* forms. Large specimens of this species were seen in the forest, some with a few single pink flowers, accompanied by *C.forrestii* and *C.yunnanensis*. A particularly fine 4m specimen of the latter was seen arching over the roadside bank between Baoshan and Tengchong. Its 6cm single white flowers were sweetly scented, the petals reflexing to give prominence to a conspicuous bunch of yellow stamens, splayed out to fill the centre of the flower, somewhat after the fashion of a Higo camellia; the multiple trunk was pale fawn and as smooth as kid, rivalling *Stewartia sinensis*. A group of *Camellia saluenensis* were opening early flowers sufficiently to demonstrate their colour variability. They were scattered in *Pinus yunnanensis* scrub on a south facing bank that appeared excessively dry and on the face of it unsuitable for camellias; rainfall of around 1000mm falls mainly between March and October, right through the growing season.

For those on their first visit to Yunnan, this quite extensive botanical journey revealed the great diversity of the province - the topography of the high mountains, deep river gorges, fertile valleys with neatly terraced hillsides and an extraordinary contrast of forest types. Add to this the immense richness of the flora which one estimate puts at 14000 species, almost half the total for the whole of China, and the varied, colourful, and friendly people, with no less than 24 recognised 'minorities' making up a third of the population, and it becomes very clear why Forrest found its appeal irresistible and why, subsequently, other botanists and plantsmen return at every opportunity.

Maurice Foster

[A sketch map of the route taken by the party has been reproduced and is enclosed separately.]

## Branch News

### Wessex Branch

Those of us who braved the foggy weather on 27th November to attend Mr. Archie Skinner's illustrated talk on Ghent azaleas were well rewarded by the dazzling colours of the Ghents which are now in a National Collection at Sheffield Park. It was just the right antidote for a dark autumn evening. Mr. Ted Millais' illustrated talk on 19th February was about his 1992 Expedition to China and Tibet. He and his companions



travelled to the Mekong-Salween divide, a remote area on the Burmese border not visited by the westerners for 50 years. The expedition was primarily to collect seed so we saw few photographs of rhododendrons in flower but many in their natural habitat amidst magnificent scenery. Mr. Millais showed slides of alpine flowers which they found as well as one of the towns, villages and countryside through which they travelled. It was an altogether fascinating evening.

On Saturday 30th April at 10.30 a.m. we plan to visit The Old House, Silchester by kind permission of Mr. & Mrs. Michael Jurgens. Enquiries to the Branch Secretary, Mrs. Margaret Hall, Rivenndell House, Monks' Well, Moor Park, Farnham. Tel: 0252-783222.

On Sunday 8th May our annual competition, plant sale and exhibition will take place at Hydon Nurseries, Clock Barn Lane, Hydon Heath, Nr. Godalming. Staging from 2.30 p.m. followed by judging at 4 p.m. by John Bond and Arthur George.

On Sunday 29th May at 11 a.m. Mr. & Mrs. Alan Hardy have kindly offered a conducted tour of Sandling Park. Members may like to bring a picnic lunch.

Any member willing to share the enjoyment of their garden with some fellow enthusiasts are asked to contact the Hon. Sec. who will compile a list and arrange ad hoc informal visits, possible by telephone at short notice. Anyone wishing to be notified of such visits should advise the Hon. Sec.

#### **South West Branch**

On 19th November 87 members and guests met at the Gipsy Hill Hotel, Exeter for our Autumn Meeting. The Plant Sales assisted by improved lighting and access were an immediate sell-out, more than covering the cost of quiz prizes etc. to the benefit of Branch funds. Thanks are due to the sales team, John and Joan Cox, Bob and Veronica Spooner and June Wright.

Thanks also to Joey Warren who acted as receptionist for the evening.

John and Margaret Bodenham once again kindly organised a very successful quiz on rhododendron species in which previous winners and runners-up were handicapped by not being given suggested answers.

A Gardeners' Quiz compiled by Nigel Wright was well supported. 1st prize in the Species quiz was won by Peter Reynolds and Richard Fulcher won the Gardeners' quiz.

After supper, Richard Scrivener, a member who is also a noted geologist, gave a most interesting talk with slides on "Rhododendrons and the soils of South West England". He managed to draw a fine balance between rocks which are 300 million years old and the excellent photos of rhododendrons which he had taken. The hour allocated to his talk was over all too soon and one felt that there could be much more of interest on this subject.

Garden visits have been arranged as follows:-

Saturday 23rd April - Heligan, Caerhays Castle and Nansawsan House.

Saturday 7th May - Lukesland, Higher Knowle, and St. Olaves.

Refer to January Branch Newsletter for further details or contact Nigel Wright.

#### **Irish Branch**

The annual garden visits will take place on Sunday May 22nd to gardens in Limavady and Brook Hall, Derry. Further details from Mary Forrest on 353-1-2985099.

#### **High Beeches Gardens Conservation Trust**

Following the award of the prestigious Loder Rhododendron Cup to Anne and Edward Boscawen referred to in the Chairman's Notes, the Boscawens, who have managed High Beeches Woodland Gardens for twenty-five years, have now formed a Charitable Trust to conserve the gardens for the future, with all their important and exotic and native plant collections. The gardens are open to the public every afternoon, except Wednesdays, from Easter Monday.

#### **The Argyll & Bute Gardens Festival - 21-28 May 1994**

During the week of the Festival, in an area noted for its beautiful gardens, the public will be able to enjoy seeing many wonderful gardens not normally open. The opening weekend of the festival is being held at Crarae Gardens at Minard, situated between Inverary and Lochgilphead, on 21-22 May 1994, where, in addition to the outstanding collection of rhododendrons, other attractions will include plant workshops, cookery demonstrations, garden and flower arranging exhibits, plant sales, falconry displays, and pipers and dancers. Further details may be obtained by sending a s.a.e. to: Mrs. Bell, The Anvil, Front Street, Inverary. PA32 8UY.

#### **New Lease by Clive Collins**

It is the custom for a member of the Rhododendron, Camellia and Magnolia Group, when taking part in the Spring Tour, to be deputed to voice our thanks to the garden host. On a very wet day in 1993 the person so delegated, with a few suitable rhododendron remarks to hand, found himself speechless with only the Tilstones Magnolias in his eye and mind.

As a gardener for some 15 years in the English Lakes, my attention has almost entirely been devoted to rhododendrons and camellias. In the 1993 issue of Rhododendrons with Camellias and Magnolias an article entitled "Which Magnolia?" by Peter Smithers appeared, from which, in spite of the age caveat, it seemed there might still be time to see new magnolia varieties, newly planted, show their virtues.

The Smithers article was a fine introduction, the visit to Tilstones (I had never heard of a yellow) an eye-opener, so where to find some plants? Well, for most of them I had to go to Lymington, whence little knowing what I was about, I returned with a mixture of Jury and Gresham hybrids. Apart from two, these were planted in my Keswick garden, one, Apollo being lost within weeks due to drought and/or slugs; the rest were alive by December. The remaining two I placed in Wirral in poor, but prepared soil in a much more exposed site and so far these two have held their 1993 flower buds (one is Apollo). It is early days but I am encouraged to place more. Apart from the 1993 Smithers article, I began to look back to parallel contributions in 1992 and 1991. It is now evident that the source of this craze does not rest entirely in New Zealand but, unlikely context, in Brooklyn - "The Yellows"! When, therefore, I looked in vain for Yellow Bird for my collection, I was informed that only a few years ago David Clulow had not only paid a four-figure sum for his (such was its originality) but that he had had to journey to the U.S.A. to collect it! Whichever hemisphere the new hybrids may come from, it seems evident that a new era for the genus is with us and magnolias of new and beautiful size and colour will soon be freely available and, above all, because of the greatly reduced time to flowering, there will be room for late starters.

Bibliography, Peter Smithers, R.W.C.&M. 1993

Maurice Foster, R.W.C.&M. 1991