

The Royal Horticultural Society
The Rhododendron, Camellia & Magnolia Group



Bulletin No. 62 ~ August 1996

Forthcoming Events

Aug.13-15 Harrogate Gt. Autumn Show, Gt. Yorks. Showground

Aug.14-15 Wisley Flower Show

Sep.16-17 Great Autumn Show, RHS Hall Westminster

Sep.27-28 Malvern Autumn Show, TCAS Showground, Malvern
Nov.5 Group Executive Committee meeting

Chairman's Notes

The vexed question of the Constitution continues to rumble on and, just when it was considered that a final draft had been agreed by both Executive Committee and RHS, the Committee had a change of mind and put to the AGM certain amendments which were passed at that meeting and must now go back to the RHS for their consideration and approval or otherwise.

As members will see from the proceedings of the AGM I will not be standing for re-election to the Committee at the next AGM. I have done the job for a number of years and feel that it is now time for fresh blood to be infused. My wife, who has so ably run the Tours for even longer feels the same way and she, too, will not stand again after she has done the next Tour. Lady Cynthia Postan whose editing of the Yearbooks has been beyond praise will do the next one and she too, will resign as Editor.

From the above it will be seen that, if the Group is to continue to function, these places will have to be filled and I would earnestly ask that any member who feels able to take up any of the vacancies to let the Hon. Secretary know as soon as possible.

As regards the Chairmanship, the Vice-Chairman does not wish to become Chairman but is prepared to stand down if a suitable candidate for Chairman in due course appears so that that candidate may serve as Vice-Chairman until his election to Chairman at the 1997 AGM, thus giving the candidate some experience of the Committee before taking office.

Whilst on the subject of Committee members it might be as well to remind members that they have the right to put up candidates for election to the Group's Executive Committee. Candidates must be members of the RHS and Group and should provide a short CV with their Nomination Paper which appears in the December issue of the Bulletin each year. Each nomination must be proposed and seconded by members of the Group and RHS. The candidate must, of course, express willingness to stand for election.

B.A.

Editor's Notes

From our Chairman's notes you will be aware that many changes have to be made within our Group, and with three excellent officers retiring at the same time, I do hope that any member who feels they have the talent or experience to take on one of these posts will not hesitate to speak up. This is no time for false modesty, and someone with an interest in helping the Group with its administration will, I know, get all the help and encouragement possible from the rest of the Committee. Please do get in touch with our Secretary if you feel you could help.

I have only very recently discovered that Michael Jurgens has been writing a once yearly newsletter to our overseas members which has been included with their August Bulletin. If any members in the U.K or Eire would be interested in receiving this, would they please get in touch with me, and I will see they get a copy, probably with the Christmas bulletin.

Some of us may also like to invite overseas members visiting our area, to see their own gardens or give advice on what is on offer locally (from horticultural or other aspect); if so, would you please let Michael Jurgens know? His address is on the list of officers accompanying this bulletin.

Sadly, I have had no requests in for plants, seed or propagation material for difficult to find items. If you are chasing a particular plant of any genus, it would be worth seeing if one of our members can help. A quick note to me, Eileen Wheeler, Llwyngorlas, Velindre, Crymch, Pems, SA41 3XW and your request will go in the next Bulletin.

Membership Secretary's Notes

Scottish members please note that the Scottish Branch now has a Branch Organiser, namely Mrs. Tessa Knott, Glenwhan, Dunragit, By Stranraer. Tessa and her husband Bill have a most lovely garden on a south-facing slope with a fantastic view overlooking Luce Bay. Their garden is open to the public at all reasonable times and contains a wide collection of rhododendrons and azaleas, as well as many other interesting plants. There is also a tea room and a garden centre.

As a new Branch Organiser, she will be glad of the support of as many members as possible and I hope that her appointment will result in providing the Scottish members with a sense of belonging to the Group instead of, as previously, being rather out on a limb. She hopes to be able to arrange branch meetings during the winter months and perhaps the odd week-end. Venues will be as central as can be arranged as the branch covers a vast area.

Seed Distribution Scheme. Members' attention is drawn to the progress report on page 6 of Bulletin no. 61 (April 1996). In it I announced that the Availability List will be issued with the December bulletin and indicated that there would be a cut-off date after which any seed received would be kept under refrigeration until the following year.

Would members please note therefore, that any seed donated, or precise details of what is promised (which must be with me by 15 January), should arrive before 15 November. Remember donors of 5 packets or more, will receive seed to the value of £5 in addition to that which they order.

Send seed to C.A. Weston, Whitehills, Newton Stewart, Scotland. DG8 6SL

Year Book Editor's note

May I draw members' attention to the fact that the copy of "The Rhododendron Story" which they received in the Spring, although not named as such, is the 1996 Year Book. It is twice the size of the usual annual and sells to the public at three times the price. To remind, it is to celebrate fifty years of publication (1946-96).

The Year Book in its usual format and numbered consecutively from no. 47 published in 1995 will be resumed in 1997 as no. 48-49.

C. Postan.

Year Books, back numbers and new prices

The recent increases in U.K. postal charges have necessitated a revision in the costs of the available back numbers of our Yearbooks. The prices include postage at 2nd class rate (inland U.K.) Orders from outside the U.K. should add an additional 45p. per book and these will be despatched by surface mail.

1979/80 -£2.00	1985/86 -£3.80	1991 -£5.20
1981/82 -£3.20	1986/87 -£4.10	1993 -£5.50
1982/83 -£3.70	1987/88 -£4.00	1994 -£5.60
1983/84 -£3.70	1988/89 -£4.60	1995 -£5.60
1984/85 -£3.70	1990 -£5.00	

Cheques and Money Orders should be made payable to "The Rhododendron, Camellia and Magnolia Group" and sent with the order to:- Mr. David Farnes, 5, Pine View, ASHGATE, Chesterfield, Derbyshire, S40 4DN. The books will normally be despatched by return of post. If members wish to confirm availability before ordering, David Farnes can be contacted on Tel. 01246 272105 - most days at most times.

Honours and Awards

Sincere congratulations go to our member Dr. David Chamberlain on his award, by the American Rhododendron Society, of their highest honour the Gold Medal, in recognition of his services to the genus and to horticulture in general.

Autumn week-end, 11-13 October

The week-end will again be held near Bath - last year's visit did not give us sufficient time to enjoy this beautiful city. We will stay at the same hotel - the Leigh Park Hotel at Bradford-on-Avon (tel. 01225 864885). A garden visit will be arranged on the Sunday and there will be time to visit Bath on the Saturday; in addition there may be a lecture on some topic of horticultural interest.

The cost will be around £115.00 per head; slightly more for single members.

Please write for further details and enclose a deposit of £20.00 if you wish to join the week-end., to Mrs. V. Archibold, Tour Organiser, Starveacre, Dalwood, E.Devon EX13 7HH Tel. 01404 881221, enclosing SAE.

Branch News

Formation of the Peak District Branch

The inaugural meeting of this new Branch was held on 30 June 1996 at "Lea Rhododendron Garden" near Matlock, at the kind invitation of the Tye family. After an informal tour of the gardens, in which many plants were still in flower due to the continued lateness of the season, sixteen members gathered for a discussion on aims and objects for the Branch and plans for future meetings.

No formal agenda was needed nor an election of officers at this early stage but David Farnes, with nearly twenty years

experience on the Group's main committee, agreed to act as Convenor and Organiser for the time being.

The next meeting will be held as an all-day affair on Saturday 5 October in conjunction with "The Friends of Wentworth Castle" nr. Barnsley, S. Yorks. when a garden visit and a showing of members photos/slides are planned. Two invitations have already been received for garden visits next Spring in the Leicestershire area. Full details will be sent to all registered members of the Branch but any Group member from anywhere in the country will be most welcome at all future meetings, which will be announced in the Bulletin.

D.F.

South West Branch, Visits in 1996.

On May 11th, some 55 members and guests went to see two gardens at Bovey Tracey, Devon.

Mrs. Christine Reynolds's garden at Woodlands is a large wooded area leading up to Dartmoor. Many rhododendrons had been planted all with plenty of room to spread. Mrs. Reynolds is about to move to another house but all is well as her son, Peter, is taking over the house and garden. Chudleigh Mothers Union provided tea. It is difficult to select the most memorable plant on these occasions as all of us may have a different idea but there was a very good specimen of R. "Katherine Fortescue" in full bloom. The Branch presented R. "President Roosevelt".

Mrs. Pauline Thompson cultivates a very full garden at Sweet Chestnuts. It is packed with a great variety of plants with rhododendrons well represented. The memorable plant was a cross between R. "Katharine Fortescue" and R. "Crest", a beautiful clear yellow. The cross had been made by Mr. Frank Lavin, a member, who helps in the garden. We presented R. "Titian Beauty".

May 18 Porlock and Minehead. Despite the distances, this trip to West Somerset was well supported by some seventy visitors, including some South West members of the International Camellia Society.

Miss Joan Loraine's garden at Greencombe is celebrating its fiftieth anniversary, an appropriate reason for a visit. The mild climate enables such plants as Rhododendrons *lindleyi*, *burmanicum*, "Princess Alice", and "Lady Alice Fitzwilliam" to thrive in the wood. We presented R. *liliflorum*.

Mr. and Mrs. Roy and Barbara Milne, at Woodborough, have developed a full garden on a steep wooded slope. The plant of the day was a magnificent Rhododendron Loderi "King George" in full bloom, with huge trusses and heady scent. The presentation plant was Rhododendron "Sir Charles Lemon".

Mr. and Mrs. Bernard and Diane Culverwell at Beatlands, Minehead, were our hosts for the third visit of the day. Again a garden with a great variety of plants. Several suggestions were made for the species name of a well flowered Staphylea. We presented Rhododendron "Percy Wiseman".

Two enjoyable days, blessed with good weather.

A.E.

Wessex Branch Activities.

On Sunday, 5 May, 1996, some twentyfive members, friends and family gathered for our annual competition which was held this year outside the temperate house in The Savill Garden, Windsor Great Park, by kind invitation of the Crown Estate Commissioners. The wide range of species and hybrid rhododendrons made a very colourful show which was

admired by members and many of the passing public who took a great interest in our efforts. It was noticed that quite a few people took notes on the plants shown and details from the information poster outlining our activities.

The competition itself reflected the lateness of the season with fewer hybrids and more species than one might expect for May. The main hybrid class was as usual well supported and produced The Best in Show, which was a very fine truss of *Rhododendron* x "Boddaertianum", winning the cup for Lady Adam Gordon who also collected the Kathleen Beadle Shield for the most points awarded. It was however a magnificent head of *Magnolia* "Star Wars" which caused most interest by the passing public. Two huge blooms some 20-25 cm. wide dominated the "Any Other Shrub" class.

We are most grateful to Mr. John Bond, VMH, not only for kindly agreeing to judge our competition again but also for making all the arrangements for us at The Savill Garden.

On Saturday, 27 April 1996, members visited the gardens at Hascombe Court by kind permission of Mr. and Mrs. O. Poulsen. Many of those visiting Hascombe Court had attended Mr. Graham Rankin's lecture the previous month so were able to appreciate even more the history of the garden and the effort which has gone into it in the past few years. We enjoyed a leisurely and fascinating walk on a pleasant spring afternoon and extend our thanks to the owners.

For information about the Wessex Branch please contact the Hon Secretary: Mrs. Margaret Hall, Rivendell House, Monks' Well, Moor Park, Farnham Surrey GU10 1RH (Tel. and Fax: 01252 783222); or the Hon. Treasurer: Mr. Neil Usher, Applegarth, Effingham Common Road, Effingham, Leatherhead, Surrey KT24 5JH (Tel. 01372 52652)

South East Branch Show

Handcross Park School hosted a magnificent display of rhododendrons, camellias and magnolias on Saturday, 20 April.

The show which was organised by the South East Branch to try to encourage more Group members to show and compete at the Vincent Square events, attracted some notable gardening names such as Exbury, Leonardslee, The High Beeches and Heaslands.

Some 200 exhibits were shown in 15 competitive classes and, in terms of the number of competitors who took part, the show was bigger than last year's national rhododendron main competition held at Vincent Square. The quality of flower and foliage was so good that the show judges considered the competition to be superior to that of the 1995 London event!

During the show, a lecture on "A Beginner's Guide to Showing" was given by Mr. Archie Skinner MBE former head gardener of Sheffield Park.

After the lecture, prizes were awarded by Mr. Skinner and Mr. Tony Schilling (former curator of Wakehurst Place) to all class winners and to those judged to have entered the show's best rhododendron, camellia and magnolia.

Although our hosts, all show organisers, judges and stewards have been officially thanked, this report does provide the opportunity to say a more formal thank you to:- the RHS Shows Department who kindly lent the display vases, those who kindly donated prizes including Coghurst, Leonardslee Gardens and Starborough nurseries and all those who exhibited and thereby made the show the success it was.

South East Branch News and Visit.

Magnolias and Hascombe Court.

After introducing us to the delights of Hascombe Court and some of the magnolias that he has been involved with, Graham Rankin followed his March talk to the Branch by very

appropriately taking it's members on a tour of the garden itself in May. Graham, who will be remembered from his days tending an outstanding collection of magnolias at Tilgates, is now head gardener at Hascombe Court and it was by kind invitation of the owners Mr & Mrs. Poulsen that the S.E. Branch was allowed to visit the garden.

Hascombe Court is situated in one of the most picturesque parts of the Surrey countryside, reminiscent in many ways, of Scotland. The house, which commands breathtaking views over the natural landscape and gardens, was designed by J.D. Coleridge, a pupil of Sir Edwin Lutyens, while the gardens and early plantings were the work of Gertrude Jekyll whose plans were later interpreted by her pupil, Percy Cane.

While the gardens offer many historical and admirable features such as the classical paved terraces, the herbaceous borders and the Japanese rock garden, (which Graham has re-restored); it was done over ten years before under the previous owners, Mr. & Mrs. Pinto who carried out an extensive restoration programme on the gardens. Hascombe Court was, and is, not known for its magnolias. This omission - if it may be so called - appears to be in the process of being addressed.

When Graham arrived to take up his post three years ago, there were only about six mature magnolias. Now there are over one hundred selected new plantings including *M. campbellii* "Charles Raffill", *M x loebneri* "Scented Silver", *M dawsoniana* "Valley Splendour", *M "Albatross"* (*cyllindrica x veitchii*) a recent FCC plant submitted for award by Branch member Mr. Maurice Foster, *M. "Spectrum"*, *M. "Star Wars"* and the "yellows" *Ms. "Yellow Bird"*, "Yellow Fever" and "Butterflies".

Another feature of Hascombe Court is the rhododendron area. Lying on a hillside this had become thickly overgrown but under Graham's stewardship has been cleared to reveal some enjoyable walks furnished with several large leaves such as *R. falconeri*, *macabeum* and *sino-grande* which were clearly feeling the benefits of the deep mulching that Graham was undertaking. We also noticed *Rs. decorum*, *principis vellereum* group *fortunei*, "Sir Charles Lemon", various *R. "Loderi"* and a whole range of once popular smaller growing hybrids.

Of course we hope that the garden's development plans include a contingency for increasing the rhododendron collection, but if this is not the case, Hascombe Court is one of those special English gardens well worth all the care and attention that is currently being spent on it.

Autumn Programme

The S.E. Branch is planning an October visit to Nymans and a November meeting at which various members will be recalling the year and naming, with the aid of photographic material, the plant or plants that most impressed them and why they were so impressed. Dates for both events to be confirmed.

B.W.

Letter to a Potential Vireya Grower from John Bodenham

Some members may have read the paragraph in the April "The Garden" from Mrs. Yolanda Pedraza Gaitan of Colombia, S. America. A heartfelt cry from one who wished to grow rhododendrons and did not know anything about Vireyas. Characteristically John wrote her a long very helpful letter, and on seeing it I thought it too good to be kept for one pair of eyes only, so I am allowed to abstract some paragraphs which may help some members toying with the idea of growing these beautiful tropical species:-

"This country (U.K.) even now has very few Vireya enthusiasts. I know of only three current locations where Vireyas can be purchased, and I am unable to tell you whether they would send their plants abroad. Maddeniis are more generally available than Vireyas and most nurseries stock a few. In this country a few will survive outside but lots of them are really too tender and, like Vireyas are greenhouse subjects here. Many are scented too, but white is the overall prevailing colour along with other pastel tinges whereas vireyas often have bolder more tropical colours.

Most Vireyas in our greenhouses seem to produce one or two flowers at any time of the year. Only a few behave in the normal way by having one set time to produce all at once. This may well be due to the altitude of the sun in the winter. We sometimes try additional lighting to prevent unnatural winter dormancy. Vireyas are indigenous to the rain forests of SE Asia, in particular Borneo, New Guinea, Java, Sumatra, etc. The most concentrated area to find them is in Mount Kinabalu National Park in Sabah, northern Borneo. Living where you do you would have no problems with day length as regards Vireyas.

My son (a meteorologist) tells me that in Bogota there is 'permanent Spring and no frost', so you must be favoured with better conditions than most of us. Evidently you get a maximum high temperature of 75F and a minimum low of 40F, but more normally between 48F and 68F. Rainfall occurs in each month with the driest being July (2 inches) and the wettest being October (6.3 inches), the total for the year being an average of just over 40 inches. There are a total of about 177 days during the year when at least some rain falls. I wish such predictable conditions existed here.

Prices of plants seem to be relatively higher in this country than in the USA. My intuition tells me that the USA would be the best source for you. It might be to your advantage to join the Vireya Vine, R.S.F. PO Box 3798, Federal Way, Washington, 98063, U.S.A. for the sum of (US)\$10.00, which is a collection of letters from readers world-wide and which might form the basis for you to contact others of like interests. Two nurseries are Bovees Nursery at Portland, Oregon and Cape Cod Vireyas, Dept JARS, 405 Jones Road, Falmouth, Massachusetts, 02540 U.S.A. Should you prefer the more dynamic American approach to the subject of rhododendrons, perhaps you might investigate joining the American Rhododendron Society (at \$25.00 per annum) Barbara Hall, Executive Director, PO Box 1380, Gloucester, Virginia, 23061, U.S.A.

Books on the subject of Vireyas are somewhat obscure, the most comprehensive, extracts from *Flora Melanesta* by Dr. Hermann Sleumer, is long out of print, but to my mind the best in layout and value is a small handbook issued by Sabah Parks. It is entitled *Rhododendrons of Sabah*, by George Argent, A Lamb, A. Phillipps and S. Collette and is Sabah Parks Publication no.8. It is a little gem. If you write direct to the Royal Botanic Gardens, Edinburgh, EH3 5LR Scotland, they should be able to supply it."

Eat More Venison !

At Branch meetings, garden visits or lectures a recurring topic of conversation is that of deer, the damage that they do and how to keep them away from choice plants. Recently I asked members of the South West Branch for their comments on their search for the answer. I received a few replies, the most comprehensive of which was from Mr. Dick Hickmott of Loxhore Cottage, North Devon. He seems to live in a state of siege by armies of red deer. This article is heavily influenced by Mr. Hickmott's comments.

The first suggestion that arrived was that "we should eat more venison". No doubt enraged gardeners would wish to take up this idea but, first catch your deer! In "The Garden" of March 1996 there was published a letter suggesting that bars of strong coal-tar soap hung at five metre intervals would deter roe deer. A rope soaked in diesel oil hung around the property is another idea. On Classic FM's "Gardeners Question Time" in June the idea that human hair hung on trees would act as a deterrent produced the response, "only if made into a fence six foot high!". The deer at Loxhore Cott are not deterred by lion dung especially collected from Bristol Zoo.

The main object of deer damage prevention is to keep them away from the plants either by ring-fencing each plant or by fencing the whole property. Small areas can be protected from roe deer by stock fencing three feet (0.8 metres) high around an area at least four feet (1.2 metres) diameter. A similar but larger system may work for red deer. However, "all animals actively, cunningly and bravely seek to enter the fenced area and they persist in doing so", writes Mr. Hickmott. Total property protection by a meshed fence at least two metres high seems to be the best way. Do not forget that not only do deer jump over fences, but they will squeeze through any gap large enough to take their head (stags have a disadvantage here) and will squeeze under a fence if there is enough space; "they will scramble under". Hinds have been seen inspecting a fence to find where a stag on the other side might pass through. On a local estate I noticed that the upper section of the fence consisted of two parallel wires. Deer also hurl themselves at the fence to force a way through or to bring it down. Sloping ground may effectively lower the height of the fence. Two inch (5cm.) wire netting can be effective in the short term but foxes and geese have been known to tear their way through and inevitably the hole made will be enlarged.

There seems little doubt that a fence is the only almost certain way of keeping deer out. The fences need to be high enough to cope with the appropriate species with mesh small enough to prevent them squeezing through and with absolute integrity with regard to possible gaps at ground level and where the fence abuts onto buildings or trees.

A.E.

Are There Any Good books to Read?

As a Branch Organiser I am sometimes asked for advice about books on rhododendrons that a person newly interested might find useful and helpful to read. I thought that members may like to send me a list of up to five books that they would recommend. I will collate the responses and publish them in a future Bulletin ~ Alun Edwards, 12 Ellerslie Road, Barnstaple, Devon. EX31 2HT.

The Gardeners Royal Benevolent Society

May we remind our members, that in addition to bequests and legacies, this charity is always grateful for donations of quality bed linen. Shopping by mail order from GRBS (Enterprises) is another way of helping and some members may like to consider opening their own garden to the public for a day and donating the proceeds.

Never Say Die !

The following letter arrived in the postbag of our Secretary some time ago. When she showed it to me I felt it worthy of a wider audience and I hope on reading it one of our members living in the Southport area may find the time to get in touch with Mr. Bridge to see if they can help. A *Camellia* which has survived such trauma and which has had such loving attention from its original purchaser surely deserves some encouragement. The writer is Mr. H.H. Bridge, 2 Haigh Court, Peel Street, Southport, Merseyside PR8 6JL, Tel. 01704 548490

"In the late eighties I had a change of landlord, when the elderly lady over whom we had lived quite happily for a quarter of a century decided to retire, to be replaced by a young couple (unmarried) with small boy and a dog.

They soon made it clear that they wanted me out, and began a systematic campaign of harassment which, after three years was successful. Included in their hostile acts was the cutting off, at ground level, of *Camellia alba simplex* (Snowgoose) in full bloom.

I have now become on good terms with the present owner (the house has now become commercial premises) and during one of my visits I noticed some glossy green leaves where the *camellia* had been.

It transpired that the plant had taken on a new lease of life and, in the fullness of time, the single shoot was joined by another exactly opposite. Each year growth has continued until I began to look out for the fatter buds that denoted a flower. I confided to the present owner that I wondered if I'd live to see that day (I was long into the sere and yellow) and in the manner of those much younger he assured me with the requisite amount of heartiness that I would indeed do so. This year he has been proved right and this pessimist (they say Leo people are negative) has been proved wrong.

How glad I am that I specified "on its own roots" when I ordered the plant from Waterers all those years ago!

The plant has a certain legginess, with shoots crossing one another and tending to crowd in the middle, and I've wondered if I could find someone, not too far away, who would tackle any necessary cutting. Could you perhaps help in this quest?"

Garden Damage and Theft

After this sad/happy story, members may like to know that JSJ Insurance Services Ltd. in association with Norwich Union, are promoting a new Home Contents insurance policy with additional cover for both loss of plants and ornaments from the garden, and any loss resulting from the failure of greenhouse heating systems.

Interested members could contact them at 20 Marple Road, Offerton, Stockport SK2 5QB Tel. 061 483 8800 Fax 061 456 2888.

Minutes of Group AGM held on 30 April, 1996

1. Apologies for Absence - Dr. A. J. B Edwards, Mr. A. Stevenson, Mr. C. A. Weston
2. Minutes of Annual General Meeting held on 2nd May 1995, and printed in the August Bulletin 1995, were agreed to be a true record, and were signed by the Chairman.
3. There were no matters arising.
4. Mr. McIlveen, who has been a member for a long time, asked how a person could be a member of The Rhododendron Group without being a member of the RHS; he has recently joined the Fruit Group, where everyone is a member of the RHS. Chairman replied.

6. Hon Treasurer's Presentation of Accounts - unaudited accounts were passed round to members, in the absence of the Treasurer. The accounts show a satisfactory position, their adoption was proposed by Major Tom Le M. Spring-Smyth, and seconded by Dr. R. H. L. Jack, and agreed unanimously. They will be sent to the Auditors, also those for 1995 which remain unaudited; then they will be passed to the RHS.

7. Election of Committee Members - Mr. Clive Collins and Major Tom Le M Spring Smyth, who have served three years, and are willing to serve a further three years, were duly elected, there being no other candidates.

The Chairman and Officers, who are re-elected annually, had all expressed their willingness to serve again, and were all declared re-elected for a further year, in the absence of any other nominations.

Mr. G. A. Hardy expressed a debt of gratitude to all the Committee, but particularly to the Chairman who had had a difficult time, especially with the Constitution. Mr. Archibold thanked everyone for their help.

8. Constitution - Chairman had intended that the draft Constitution, already agreed with RHS Council, be ratified by the Annual General Meeting. However, many amendments had been made by the Executive Committee at the preceding meeting; therefore the Secretary read out the new amendments to the members present. Major Spring Smyth proposed, Mr. G. A. Hardy seconded, and all present voted in favour of the new alterations to the Constitution.

The Chairman proposed to call a meeting with RHS to discuss these new amendments and ask our Liaison-with-Council and Vice-Chairman of the Council also to be present.

9. Date of next Annual General Meeting - to be advised.

Chairman's Address to Annual General Meeting, 30 April 1996.

Firstly may I welcome you to this Annual General Meeting.

There have been one or two alterations in the composition of the Executive Committee during the year. Tony Weston retired as Bulletin Editor and was replaced by Eileen Wheeler. Tony continues on the Committee, however, as Hon. Membership Secretary. Michael Jurgens joins ex officio as Organiser of the International Branch as do Christopher Fairweather as Organiser of the new New Forest Branch and John Hilliard as Organiser of the South East Branch. Sadly, Colin Grainger who has so efficiently run the East Anglia Branch for the past 22 years has felt that he must now stand down but has indicated that he will act as caretaker until a replacement is found. If none can be found then regretfully, the Branch will close.

The membership subscription has now been increased to £15 from £10 and previously £7. I am told by the Hon. Membership Secretary that some members are still paying the last mentioned figure and a letter will be sent to them asking that they pay the sum of £8 to bring this year's subscription up to date by 31 May after which date it will be assumed that they no longer wish to continue membership. There are other members who have paid no subscription and the same remarks apply to them.

Fully paid up members will by now have received their copies of "The Rhododendron Story" which, I am sure that they will agree, is a first class publication for which the Hon. Editor, Lady Cynthia Postan and the RHS team are to be highly congratulated. It will not have escaped notice that the price

of £15 on this one occasion takes up the whole of individual members' subscriptions.

It is my sincere hope that members will feel satisfied at the outcome of what has been a rather long drawn out process in the formulation of a new Constitution for the Group. Even today further alterations have been made and these I will read out for your approval (the Chairman then did this). The Executive Committee recommends its acceptance as so amended.

I am pleased to say that, after a slow start, a very comprehensive seed distribution has been arranged through a great deal of hard work by Tony Weston. The list contains seed of rhododendron and associated plants but mainly the former and to a large extent wild collected. I am told that there is still seed available and lists are to be had from Tony.

A very successful tour took place in May last year based on Derbyshire and my wife Valerie with her usual quiet and unobtrusive organisation, ensured that there were a first class selection of gardens to be seen. This year the tour is to be on both sides of the border in Ireland. Members will have seen from the Bulletin that Valerie feels that she has been acting as Tours Organiser for long enough and regretfully, seeks a replacement. She will do next year's tour and she will then retire.

Members of the Group who are not members of the RHS have the opportunity to join the latter for a reduced fee of £5 for a period of one year and application forms are available from the Hon. Membership Secretary, Tony Weston. To get copies of "The Garden" and free entrance to a number of very good gardens all for a small sum seems almost too good to miss!

The Branches continue to provide excellent programmes for the benefit of people who find it difficult to travel to the regional RHS centres. Lectures, plant sales and garden visits are much appreciated as are the efforts of the Organisers who plan them.

Members will have seen in the Bulletin that a number of our Group have been honoured by awards from the Society and our congratulations go to them.

It would be invidious to pick out any individuals from amongst the Committee since we all work together but I must express my heartfelt thanks to the Officers for their hard work - and believe me it is hard!

Finally, I do feel that the time has come when I should step down and let someone else take over as Chairman. Therefore I give formal notice that I shall not stand for re-election at the next AGM. This will allow my successor time to find out about the job before I go.