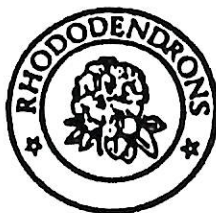


The Royal Horticultural Society

The Rhododendron, Camellia and Magnolia Group



Bulletin 68 - August 1998

Forthcoming events

23-25 Oct. Group Autumn Weekend

27-30 Oct. New Zealand Rhododendron Association.
Conference Christchurch, S. Island N.Z.

4 Nov.

Executive Committee Meeting, 2.00 p.m.
Westminster.

Editor's Notes

Early June brought the sad news of the death of our Chairman John Bond's wife, Edna, after a long illness. We send John our sympathy at his loss, made worse when he himself needed major surgery only a few days later. I know everyone will wish him a full and speedy return to health, but in the meantime he asks you to excuse him his usual Chairman's notes.

One of John's great concerns for the Group is our lack of members coming forward with an offer to serve on our Executive Committee. I am sure this is mainly due to a feeling that one may not be botanically knowledgeable enough, but please be assured that someone with enthusiasm, who feels able to give some time to help with the running of the Group and preferably able to attend Committee meetings just three times in the year, would be most welcome. I will be very happy to talk to anyone who would like to know more, as I am sure would any of the other Officers or Members of the Committee. One of the best get well presents we could give our Chairman would be several members clamouring to join the Committee!

Also news came earlier in the year of the death of Lt. Col. Sir Arscott Molesworth-St. Aubyn. Those of you who came on the Spring Tour of 1997 will remember Sir Arscott and his wife Lady Iona as warm and generous hosts when we visited their fine garden at Pencarrow House, and will wish to join in sending our heartfelt sympathy to Lady Iona and her family.

On a happier note, I have been reminded that our oldest Life Member, Mr. H. H. Davidian, is 90 this year. So many members have told me how much they owe to his encouragement and help over the years (I wish I had been lucky enough to meet him myself.) Congratulations from the Group and *Many Happy Returns of the Day*.

Our stand at the Malvern Flower Show attracted a lot of interest and we were pleased to be awarded 5th Prize for the Specialist Stands in the face of severe competition from other Societies, many of whom fielded large numbers of members from around Malvern. Seven local members helped set up and man our stand augmented by three non-members (relative of Tony Weston and her friends) and four noble members made the journey from Pembrokeshire and Carmarthen to help, as well as

providing the bulk of the plants for the stand. Sadly we feel that unless more members from the Malvern area come forward to take over, we cannot produce a Stand next year. This is a pity, for as well as being quite a lot of work, it is also great fun and a wonderful way to meet new gardeners with similar interests.

Autumn Weekend, October 23-25 1998, East Sussex.

Those members who came to the autumn weekend in Sussex in 1987 will remember that we visited Sheffield Park and Wakehurst Place immediately after the Hurricane. They will remember the distress this caused to the Head Gardener, Archie Skinner at Sheffield Park as he strove to cope with the enormous damage. We arrived to find great trees lying prostrate on the ground and in the process of being carved up into manageable sizes. It was something none of us will forget. The following three years was a time of vigorous restoration, and on the Saturday evening Archie is going to give us a talk with slides and demonstrate all the work which went into this remarkable restoration. On the Sunday we will visit Sheffield Park and see all this for ourselves. Archie has now retired and the current Head Gardener is Nigel Davies. Wakehurst too, which we will visit on the Saturday morning, was very badly affected, whole areas being devastated, particularly near the entry to the garden, so that those who knew it hardly recognised it as the same garden. Tony Schilling was the Head Gardener at that time, and gave us a talk on Nepal later.

On the Saturday afternoon a visit to Nymans Garden is on the agenda.

Wakehurst Place is a National Trust property leased by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food as an addition to the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. Owing to the hungry gravel soil, urban air pollution and lack of space for expansion Kew had for some time needed a garden such as Wakehurst Place where such factors as higher rainfall, mild climate and a richer, variable and moisture-retentive soil provide a far wider range of growing conditions.

Nymans once the home of the Countess of Rosse now belongs to the National Trust and is a garden as

enchanting and as full of surprises to the novice as to the most enlightened of highbrows. Though large in size it is essentially intimate. Imperceptibly the old has melded with the new. The Head Gardener here is David Masters.

Sheffield Park is renowned for its autumn colour and in the spring for its Loderi rhododendrons and many other choice flowering plants. It was designed originally by Capability Brown.

The cost of the weekend will be around £130.00 including two lunches and accommodation has been reserved at the Roebuck Hotel, Wych Cross, Forest Row. No single supplement - Sunday night at low extra cost if wished, to avoid travel in the dark.

Please contact me at Starveacre, Dalwood, East Devon, EX13 7HH, Tel. 01404 881221 if you wish to join the party (numbers are limited).

Mrs. Valerie Archibold, Hon. Tours Organiser.

To China in 1999

Following the successful expedition to YUNNAN in 1997, David Farnes is planning another similar trip for the Spring of 1999. The abridged account of the '97 trip is contained in the 1998 Yearbook but a copy of the full story is available on request. There are a few places remaining for anyone interested in joining David - applicants must be aged under 70 years and capable of walking 5 miles in a day. For complete details please write or 'phone David as soon as you read this. David Farnes, 5, Pine View, Ashgate, Chesterfield, S40 4DN Tel. 01246 272105

The Rhododendron Handbook 1998

The Royal Horticultural Society £30, 252pp

The long awaited successor to the 1980 issue has now been published bringing up to date the descriptions of not only the temperate species but, for the first time, of Vireyas. Both descriptions are accompanied by colour illustrations, 26 of the more unusual temperate species and 24 of Vireyas. A general Classification of Rhododendron, marked with those known to be in cultivation, is followed by a list of synonyms, invalid and unpublished names. The list of Collectors' Numbers has been brought up to date of the Coss' Spring 1996 expedition to S.E. Xizang and contains collections made by current members of the Group - although perhaps Tom Spring Smyth might be happier without the final "e" he has acquired?

With editors such as Drs. Argent and Chamberlain of Royal Botanic Gardens Edinburgh, Peter Cox, John Bond and Alan Hardy the expertise of input can hardly be doubted. The book is still just about large pocket-size and is certainly a must for all who are interested in species rhododendrons.

Bruce Archibold



Rhododendron Chart

The chart which accompanied the April Bulletin was produced and prepared by our member, John Bodenham, at his own cost as a present to members. This note to accompany the chart arrived just too late to be printed in the last Bulletin, so I include it now. He wrote:

"I have read through the recently published *Rhododendron Handbook 1998* and feel that an additional chart could be found to be of use to the enthusiast in the understanding of the latest reclassification of the *Genus Rhododendron* by Dr. Chamberlain.

In the 1980 Handbook the Balfourian System was adhered to within the general text and any reclassification left to the deciphering of two separate columns (1—'Cullen and Chamberlain Revision', and 2—'RHS Horticultural Revision'). It was obviously easier for the Membership at large to ignore those proposals. In the new Handbook only the revised Classification is used, so a much fuller appreciation of it is now imperative. Gone are the words 'Series and Sub-Series' of old. The 'new' is to think of 'Section and Sub-Section', and as, for example, new words such as 'Pentanthera' appear both as a Section and Sub-Section, I felt that a 'family history' type chart could be found to be useful. In addition, where a new name has had assigned to it other names as members of that particular division, and, due to the unfamiliarity of that name its membership is not obvious (unlike for example 'Grandia' which must contain the well known 'grande') then an example is quoted (such as for example 'Rhodora' is the Section in which to find plants such as the more familiar name 'vaseyi'). Thus is afforded a quick explanation for the unfamiliar. On the reverse of the sheet is a comprehensive list of those major species still having specific status which in the Handbook have been given a full description and are thus considered to be in cultivation. Each is assigned a Reference Number corresponding to the Reference Number in the Chart. Thus, for example, '4 arboreum', if you look on the other side, refers to 'Arborea (4)', the number '4' being the clue in that case. There would appear to be at first glance major omissions. Where, for example, is 'yakushimanum'? The answer to that is that it is now a Sub-Species of 'degronianum' and is described under that heading. Space limitations prevented the inclusion of the Sub-Species names in this list. The continuing evolvement of taxonomy as a scientific subject means that the new Classification is not yet a hard and fast fact. It will doubtless change continually well into the future, each future revision, hopefully, coming closer to 'perfection'."

Since writing this John has found a couple of errors: On the reverse of the Chart included with the last Bulletin, '14 adenogynum' should have been '24 adenogynum' (i.e. it is in Taliensia, not Glischra), and in the vireya list, '68 womersleyi' was omitted, making the vireya total 107, not 106.

Should any member require a corrected copy, please write directly to John at Hunters Lodge, Wembury Road, Wembury, Plymouth PL9 0DL and he will send them one.

John has also recently undergone major surgery ~ John, we all hope you are now well on the way to a full recovery.

List of Officers, Committee Members and Branch Chairmen following the Annual General Meeting held on 29th April, 1998.

OFFICERS

- Chairman* - Mr John D. Bond, LVO, VMH, Georgia Lodge, Buckhurst Road, Cheapside, Ascot, Berkshire SL5 7RP Tel 01344 625084
- Hon. Treasurer* - Mr Alastair Stevenson, 24 Bolton Road, Grove Park, London, W4 3TB. Tel: 0181 742 7571; Fax 0181 987 8728. e-mail stevensonmpa@compuserve.com
- Hon. Secretary* - Mrs Joey Warren, Netherton, Buckland Monachorum, Yelverton, Devon. PL20 7NL. Tel/Fax 01822 854022 (phone first).
- Hon. Membership Secretary* - Mr Tony Weston, Whitehills, Newton Stewart, Scotland, DG8 6SL. Tel 01671 402049, Fax 01671 403106; e-mail tony@rhodo.demon.co.uk
- Hon. Tours Organiser* - Vacant.
- Hon. Yearbook Editor* - Mr Philip D. Evans, Painswold, Broad Street, Cuckfield, W. Sussex, RH17 5LL. Tel/Fax 01444 450788.
- Hon. Bulletin Editor* - Mrs Eileen Wheeler, Llwyngoras, Velindre, Crymych, Dyfed. SA41 3XW. Tel 01239 820464; e-mail wheeler@nevern.u-net.com

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

- Mr David N. Farnes, 5 Pine View (off Deerlands Road), Ashgate, Chesterfield, Derbyshire, S40 4DN. Tel 01246 272105 (Re-elected 1998)
- Mr Martin D. C. Gates, 12, Marlborough Road, Chandlers Ford, Eastleigh, Hants, SO53 5DH. Tel: 01703 252843 (Elected 1998)
- Dr R. H. L. Jack, Edgemoor, Loch Road, Lanark, Scotland ML11 9BG. Tel 01555 663021. (Re-elected 1997)
- Miss Cicely E. Perring, Watermill House, Watermill Lane, Pett, East Sussex, TN35 4HY. Tel 01424 812103. (Re-elected 1997)
- Major Tom le M. Spring-Smyth, 1 Elcombe's Close, Lyndhurst, Hampshire. SO43 7DS. Tel 01703 282478 (Re-elected 1996)
- Mr Ivor T. Stokes, Pantcoch, Carmel, Llanelli, Dyfed SA14 7SG. Tel: 01269 844048. (Re-elected 1998)

BRANCH CHAIRMEN

- International Branch* - Mr Michael Jurgens, The Old House, Silchester, Reading, Berkshire, RG7 2LU. Tel: 01189 700240; Fax 01189 701682
- N. Ireland* - Mr Patrick Forde, Seaforde, Downpatrick, Co. Down BT30 8PG. Tel 01396 811225; Fax 01396 811370.
- Hon. Sec* - Mrs Andrena Duffin, 11 Grey Point, Helen's Bay, Bangor, Co. Down, BT19 1LE. Tel 01247 852668.
- S. Ireland* - Mr F. W. Vogel, Kells House, Kells Bay, Co. Kerry, Eire. Tel +353 667 7605.
- New Forest* - Mr Christopher Fairweather, The Garden Centre, High Street, Beaulieu, Hants. SO42 7YR. Tel 01590 612307; (Home) 01590 612285 Fax 01590 612519
- Hon. Sec.* - Mr Martin D. C. Gates, 12 Marlborough Road, Chandlers Ford, Eastleigh, Hants SO53 5DH. Tel 01703 252843.
- Norfolk* - Mrs J. M. Idiens, Beaconswood, Roman Camp, Sandy Lane, West Runton, Cromer, Norfolk NR27 9ND. Tel 01263 837779.
- North Wales/Northwest* - Mr Ken Hulme, Treshnish, 72 Parkgate Road, Neston, S. Wirral, L64 6QQ. Tel 01513 368852
- Hon. Sec.* Mr C. M. Reddington, Entwood, 18 Westwood Road, Birkenhead, Merseyside, L43 9RQ. Tel 01516 52 6081.
- Peak* - Mr David N. Farnes, 5 Pine View (off Deerlands Rd), Ashgate, Chesterfield, Derbyshire, S40 4DN. Tel 01246 272105.
- Scottish* - Mrs Tessa Knott, Glenwhan, Dunragit-by-Stranraer, Scotland DG9 8PH. Tel/Fax 01581 400222
- Southeast* - Mr John E. Hilliard, 99 Gales Drive, Three Bridges, Crawley, Sussex RH10 1QD, Tel 01293 522859.
- Hon. Sec.* - Mr B. A. Haseltine, Goodwins, Snow Hill, Crawley Down, Sussex RH10 3EF. Tel: 01342 713132.
- Southwest* - Dr Alun J. B. Edwards, 12 Ellerslie Road, Barnstaple, Devon EX31 2HT. Tel 01271 343324
- S.W. Wales* - Mr Ivor T. Stokes, Pantcoch, Carmel, Llanelli, Dyfed SA14 7SG. Tel 01269 844048
- Wessex* - Mrs Miranda Gunn, Ramster, Petworth Road, Chiddingfold, Surrey GU8 4SN. Tel 01428 644422.
- Hon. Sec* Mr Graham Rankin, Pump House Cottage, Hascombe Court, Godalming, Surrey GU8 4AF. Tel 01483 208569.

Yearbooks - Back Numbers

There are back numbers of the *Group's Yearbook* available for sale to members at the original cover price, plus postage. They are all mint copies and contain a range of articles of interest to those wishing to study the three genera that make up our title.

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

These prices are inclusive of postage and packing to addresses in the U.K. Overseas members please add an additional 0.45p per book; these will be despatched at surface mail rates.

Please note we have 3 ONLY of the 1992 book remaining! These will be offered at £6 each to the 3 members whose names are drawn 'from the hat' at the committee meeting on 4th November, 1998. Any member interested in this offer, please contact David Farnes (phone or postcard) by 31st October. Fairness of equal opportunity will thus be given to all members wherever they reside/garden in the world!

Also available are copies of *The Rhododendron Story* published in 1996, which is a comprehensive history of rhododendron discovery and cultivation. It is available to Members at the special price of £12.00 (published at £15) inclusive of postage and packing to UK addresses. Overseas members, please add an additional £1.50 per book.

Cheques should be made payable to "Rhododendron, Camellia and Magnolia Group". Payment may also be made by Access/Mastercard/Visa by giving us your card number, expiry date, name on card and billing address. Kindly please note that all the above sales apply to MEMBERS only. Higher rates are available to non-members of the Group. For details and all orders please send to: Mr David Farnes, 5, Pine View, ASHGATE, Chesterfield, Derbyshire. S40 4DN Telephone: 01246 272105

It could be helpful if you gave a phone number with your order in case of any difficulty with supply. Normally books will be despatched by return of post.

Rhododendrons In Yunnan ~ pH of associated soils

Dr. David Kinsman has very kindly allowed me to print this savagely cut version of his article which appeared in the March edition of "*The New Plantsman*". In its entirety there are clear and concise diagrams and much much more detail. If you want to know more you will need to buy the magazine which also has details of a new vireya rhododendron and other articles on different interesting plants. May I also thank the editor of "*The New Plantsman*" for giving her permission for me to use Dr. Kinsman's article..

Nearly all rhododendrons are intolerant of alkaline soils, yet most of us are aware that a large number of

species in Yunnan grow and thrive on thin soils over limestone.

In his article Dr. David J. J. Kinsman puts forward a reason why. During a visit to Yunnan in September/October 1996 he and his team took soil pH measurements from directly under thriving rhododendron species, at depths varying from 4 - 30 cm. He writes :

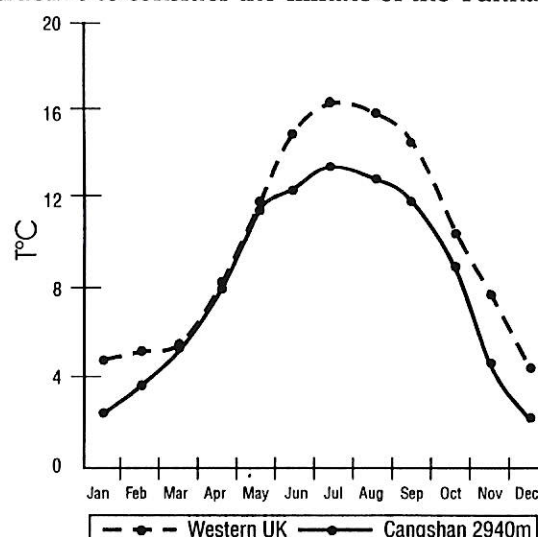
" Three of the four areas where samples were collected were dominated by hard, fairly pure limestone, overlain by thin mineral and/or organic soils. Even where soils were only a few cm. in thickness, measured soil pH values were mostly below 6. The most acid soils were generally those richest in humus and these occurred usually as the uppermost part of the soil profile and were commonly overlain by sphagnum moss.

Rhododendrons have shallow, fibrous root systems which in nearly all sample locations were seen to be restricted to the upper, acid horizons of the soil. This relationship was found for both large and small leaved species.

It is instructive to consider the sources of acidity in these soils, most of which are so closely associated with limestone. One obvious source is decaying organic detritus, particularly sphagnum mosses. The other major source of hydrogen ions is precipitation, although no measurements of rainfall pH were made. Rainfall essentially everywhere is acidic, with typical pH values of 4.5 -5.5. With precipitation somewhat greater than 1000 mm/yr., the natural addition of acidity from precipitation will be on the order of 10 gm of H⁺/m²/yr.

However acidity derived from precipitation and soil humus sources is readily neutralised by reaction with the underlying limestone as water percolates downwards.

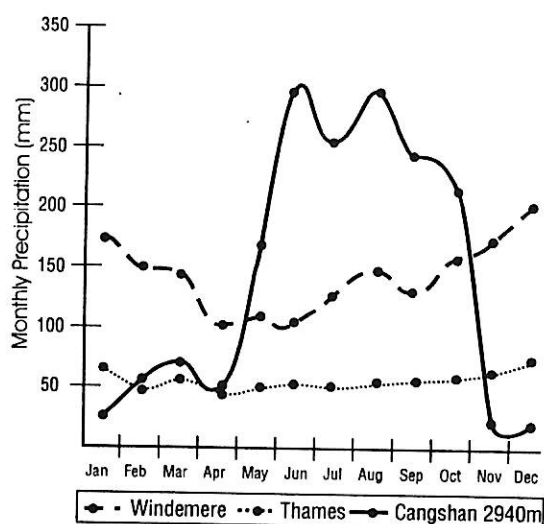
As limestone is situated so closely beneath the root zone of so many of these rhododendrons one might ask why it is that alkaline soil waters do not inhibit rhododendron growth. To provide a possible answer it is instructive to consider the climate of the Yunnan



Seasonal temperatures on the Cangshan Mountains (Fig. 1) are similar to those of the western U.K.

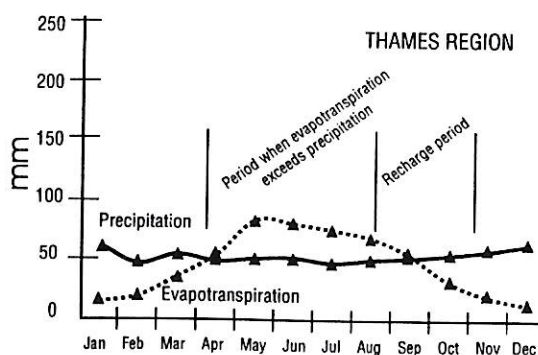
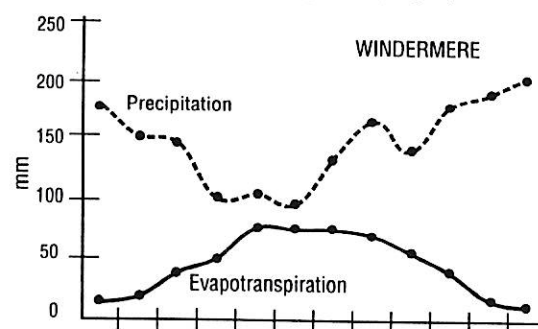
The 2,940 m station on the Cangshan averages close to 1,800 mm of precipitation per year, which is similar to that of Windermere, Uk (Fig. 2) Note, however, the very different seasonal distribution. In Yunnan, the six drier months of the year (November-April) provide barely 15% of the total, whereas the months of May-October are very much wetter. In contrast, in the UK there is little

difference in the monthly precipitation throughout the year i.e. we have no strongly developed dry or wet season.



In both the Cangshan and the western UK annual evapotranspiration losses are about 30-40% of the annual precipitation input, but in the drier parts of Britain evapotranspiration losses are higher, exceeding 60% of annual precipitation over large areas. These losses are strongly temperature dependant and are at a maximum in the warmer months of the year when plant growth, transpiration rates and simple evaporation from soils are all at a maximum.

In Yunnan, the period of maximum evapotranspiration loss will coincide with the summer period of high precipitation; as a result, soil profiles in Yunnan will not develop a net water deficit i.e. in Yunnan the water flux is downward through the soil profile at all seasons of the year. (Fig. 3)



Thus in Yunnan rhododendrons are bathed in acid water which percolates downward through the shallow soils all year long. As long as a thin soil is present overlying the limestone, the plants effectively have no knowledge of the chemistry of the underlying rock formation. In contrast, in areas such as the UK with a

seasonal net water deficit, rhododendron root zones will be affected by the chemistry of the deeper soil waters when these are drawn upward. To grow rhododendrons in the UK where deeper soils are alkaline one needs to irrigate and prevent net water deficit conditions establishing themselves. (Only in the highest rainfall areas of the UK does summer rainfall exceed summer evapotranspiration rates)."

So if you presently suffer rhododendron deprivation on your alkaline soil, you must first get a nice large storage tank and save your rainwater. Then plant your rhododendrons in as deep an amount of ericaceous compost as you can manage, and start watering with your saved rainwater as soon as you notice the first inch of soil drying out. Good luck!

Branch News

Southeast Branch

We spent the morning of a beautiful May day being shown round Leonardslee by the son of the family, Christopher Loder, who runs the nursery, **Leonardslee Plants**. He took us through the Rock Garden, where the evergreen azaleas and smaller species were giving a very fine show and it was good to see several *R. cinnabarinum* hybrids looking so healthy. We then went into the Main Garden where all the original Loderi were looking at their best. This is a very rich area; "Victory x Idealist" stood out amongst the yellows. The tour culminated at the Stone Table with the view down the valley, surely the finest prospect in any Sussex garden.

After lunch we crossed the road to South Lodge and David Lyons, the Head Gardener, gave us a very full tour of this equally fascinating garden which is full of un-named hybrids of Goodman x Loder parentage. We found two *R. griffithianum*, surely closely related to the one used as pollen parent for "Loderi", though that plant was originally in a greenhouse. Perhaps the finest and largest flowered of all the Loderi is the pink one near to the main building, now a hotel. The day concluded with tea on the terrace, looking over archery and falconry on the lawn, towards the South Downs.

In the second half of the month we visited **The High Beeches**. The sun did not shine for us on this occasion but that did not prevent the colours glowing as we were shown round by Edward and Anne Boscawen and their daughter, Sarah Bray. The great feature of the garden is its informality and the superb way that the wild woodland, marsh and meadow plants flourish amongst the rhododendrons, which were going over slightly, and the deciduous azaleas which were at their best. We stopped to admire *R* "Sarah Bray", a fine pale yellow, and "Alice" also got a lot of praise. We also saw a fine collection of hardy hybrids before having an excellent tea at the house, now occupied by the young family.

Everard Daniel

Norfolk Branch

This has been an interesting and active few months for our small Norfolk Branch. After our March visit to see the camellias at Felbrigg Hall, we had two very pleasant and informative visits to members' gardens in May. The two gardens contrasted nicely; Neil Webster has about 200 rhododendrons, with some fine blooms, on a fairly

exposed site near Boston, Lincs., on soil which has had a great deal of peat added.

In a gentler landscape, Mike Green's Broadland garden, with a stream running through it, is packed with plants and a delight to see. Mike is listing all his rhododendrons on his computer, with stunning photographs, digitally produced, showing both a close-up of the flower and another of the plant's habit. In addition he has started trying to capture on camera as much as possible of the fine collection at Sheringham Park before they fade. This work is of interest to the Warden, Keith Zealand, who may be able to make use of the material in the daunting task of identifying and cataloguing Sheringham's many fine varieties. Sheringham has 50 acres with many species, some of great age. It is good to think that a member's work may be of use in helping to record and preserve some of these rare and beautiful plants. Felbrigg Hall and Sheringham Park are both National Trust properties.

J.I.

Wessex Branch

Rhododendron Species Afternoon:

On Sunday, 19th April, a group of Wessex members gathered at the Savill Gardens for an afternoon tour of the Rhododendron species collection in the Valley Gardens. This was by kind invitation of the Crown Estate Commissioners and was guided by Mr Mark Flanagan, Keeper of the Gardens. The idea behind the event was to introduce members to the characteristics used in the botanical classification of the genus *Rhododendron* in a practical way. The species collection is well suited for this as it is arranged systematically, albeit according to the Balfourian Series rather than the more recent Edinburgh Sections and Subsections. To this end those attending were given sheets detailing the important features and hand-lenses with which to examine the plants. Mark Flanagan took us through the collection in a logical sequence and, fortunately, the rain held off long enough for the members to view the wonderful array of rhododendrons, and also to realise that the identification of the species need not be a mystery. Our thanks go to Mark Flanagan and his assistants for sacrificing their Sunday afternoon to give us such an instructive and enjoyable time.

J.D.

The Annual Wessex Rhododendron, Camellia and Magnolia Group competition

took place at Ramster, Chiddingfold, Surrey
on Sunday, 24th of May this year.

Unfortunately John Bond who was to have judged the competition could not be with us, but Graham Rankin stepped into his shoes and proved to be an excellent replacement. Graham himself put in many non-competitive entries of a very high quality - just as you would expect from someone so knowledgeable.

We had nine members showing a wide range of blooms in most classes and were very pleased that two of those members were new to our competition. All sections were closely fought especially the Elepidote Hybrids, as you would expect. From this section came the overall 'Best in Show', a perfect truss of 'Professor Hugo de Vries' shown by Richard Barber. However, the

overall winner of the Beadle Memorial Shield for the most points awarded, to everyone's delight and to her surprise, was Miranda Gunn. A just reward for kindly allowing us to avail ourselves of the beautiful surroundings of Ramster - other groups please note - a worthwhile visit!

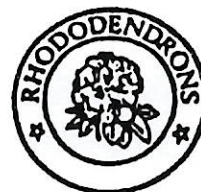
R.T.

Peak Branch

For our Spring meeting on 2nd May, we visited two gardens to the east of our Branch near Worksop - as a continuation of our policy to reach as many members, as close to their homes as possible. In the morning the venue was **Morton Hall Gardens** at the kind invitation of Lady Mason. The estate dates from around 1860 and has many fine mature trees and rhododendrons. We were guided by the Head Gardener, Mrs. Gill McMaster, who has more than 25 years' service to the Mason family and who runs a nursery and plant-selling area, well stocked with unusual plants - much to the delight of members whose cars looked more like travelling greenhouses when we left: Lady Mason generously provided lunch and wine on the lawn in glorious sunshine - a scarcity in 1998 - before our departure for the afternoon visit to **Serlby Hall** at the kind invitation of Mr. & Mrs. MacDonald. The Hall is a Queen Anne mansion, quite recently restored and the very extensive grounds have been cleared of vast overgrowth due to years of neglect. Within the woodland areas new plantings of rhododendrons have been made on the grand scale - literally hundreds if not thousands of a great many varieties. Many plants were in flower but we were perhaps a week too early for the real riot of colour. The Head Gardener, Mr. Graham Watts, escorted us around the gardens and told us something of the massive restoration work over the past five years to re-create the estate.

The **Chatsworth Flower and Garden Show**, 20th June, is a new event in the gardening calendar and the Branch received an invitation to have a publicity stand to advertise our existence and provide an advisory service for the visitors. It is most pleasing to report that we had 18 members and spouses to assist with manning the stand, which allowed all concerned to visit the rest of the Show in turn. There were several requests for membership and we were all kept busy answering questions on the many cultural problems relating to all three genera that make up the Group's title. If nothing else the event provided a pleasant meeting for the more active members of our Branch.

For our Autumn meeting we have been invited to visit a rhododendron wholesale nursery supplying the nursery trade. Computer controlled mass production sounds intriguing!



Special Offer for Members of the International Branch (and their Friends)

We have managed to arrange with Choice Hotels, a tour of **Scottish Rhododendron Gardens** led by Dr. David Chamberlain ~ a five day coach tour, starting in and returning to Glasgow including Dinner, Bed and Breakfast, all inclusive at £325 per person.

Dates: 15-20 April, 1999 13-18 May 1999

Anyone interested in visiting these superb gardens, please contact me : Michael Jurgens, International Branch Chairman, The Old House, Silchester, Reading Berks. RG7 2LU, Tel. +44 0189 700240, Fax. +44 0189 701682.

Full details and booking forms will be available later in the autumn.

Members' Telephone Numbers & e-mail Addresses

Somehow the gremlins ran riot in the last Bulletin and I managed to get most of the new telephone numbers wrong! Many apologies to the people concerned and now to put the record straight here are the corrected numbers: John Bond 01344 625084

Dr. Alun Edwards 01271 343324

Our Treasurer, Alastair Stevenson, would like me to emphasise that these are the only two numbers that members should use:

Phone 0181 742 7571, Fax 0181 987 8728

Two members have sent in their e-mail addresses:

Philippe de Spoelberch
philippe.de.spoelberch@skynet.be

Monica Johannsen
ccc16622@vip.cybercity.dk

More e-mail numbers will be welcome ~ let us start communicating with each other. Would you like a web site ?

Magnolia Content in Yearbooks ~ Back Numbers

From time to time requests are received from members about articles in past yearbooks, not in their possession, relating to magnolias. The keeper of these back numbers of yearbooks has supplied the following details relating specifically to magnolias, which may be of interest to the more recently joined members of the Group:

- 1979-80 Contains an article by Nigel Holman who grows many magnolias in his garden in Cornwall and often exhibits them in March and April at RHS Shows at Westminster.
- 1981-82 Has a long article by Brian Savage on magnolias in the U.S.A.
- 1984-85 Has three short articles on yellow magnolias
- 1985-86 Contains a long article by Sir Peter Smithers who gardens in Switzerland and who is

regarded as an authority on the genus and its cultivation.

- 1987-88 Has a short article on *Magnolia campbelli* var. *mollicomata* "Lanarth"
- 1988-89 Has a short article by Nigel Holman and also three magnolia notes.
- 1991 Has three fairly short articles - different authors.
- 1993 Contains a long article by Sir Peter Smithers and also an account of the 1992 Magnolia Conference.
- 1994 Has an article by John Bond on the reference collection of magnolias at Windsor.

Mint copies of all these yearbooks are available from David Farnes ~ see full details listed earlier in this Bulletin.

Minutes of Annual General Meeting, The Rhododendron, Camellia & Magnolia Group of the RHS. held on 29 April, 1998

Chairman : Mr. John D. Bond

Apologies for non-attendance were received from Mrs. V. Archibold, Mr. C. Fairweather, Mr. G. A. Hardy, Mrs. J. Idiens, Mr. M. Jurgens, Mrs. T. Knott, Mr. J. Sanders, Mr. I Stokes, Mr. C. A. Weston.

Papers Tabled: CVs of the three candidates for Election to the Committee.

Constitution, amended
Note highlighting amendments
Accounts for Year ended 31.10.1997
Account Balances at 29.4.1998

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 29 April 1997, which were printed in Bulletin no. 65 dated August 1997 were agreed to be a true record and were signed by the Chairman.

Chairman's Report

I have spent the last year getting to grips with the job, attempting to sort out problems, which are mainly concerned with RHS Membership. I have spent the morning at a Strategy meeting with Council: it was agreed that the strength of the RHS is *The Garden*, which is an exceptionally good magazine, as is the *Yearbook* the strength of the Group. However, there are some people who cannot afford or do not want to join the RHS.

The *Yearbook* and *Bulletins* are first class. I am so impressed; the *Bulletins* continue to be very good and helpful, a chatty link to the 700 members. The *Yearbook* is our anchor. I thank the Editors for their hard work, and also the Secretary, Membership Secretary, Treasurer and Tours Organiser.

Looking to next year and further, Alastair Stevenson wants to give up at the 1999 AGM, and Tony Weston will not stand for re-election at the 2000 AGM, and I would very much like to see someone coming forward who will do both these jobs, linking Membership Secretary and Treasurer. Also Valerie Archibold will not stand again, though she will organise the Autumn Weekend ~ a new Tours Organiser/Manager is needed. I am very grateful to all the Committee for their work and help

The Group must be seen to be doing things, although we obviously have financial restrictions. We have got well underway with the proposed Rhododendron Hardy Hybrid collection. The Bagshot area was the home of the Hardy Hybrids, there would have been 200 cultivars grown in that area some 30 years ago; now we are well under way at Ramster, forming a collection, it is a very exciting project. Alternatively we could send someone to China, but we are in danger of producing too many wild source seedlings. Themed collections of Rhododendrons in other people's gardens is a good idea which can be quite easily organised.

Publicity - David Farnes is arranging for Peak Branch to be at the new Chatsworth Show. And the stand downstairs is most worthwhile and successful, four new members have been enrolled, and I do say thank you to Cicely Perring and Cynthia Postan.

Treasurer's Report

Mr. Alastair Stevenson presented the accounts for the year ended October 1997, and said that the Group has now returned to a relatively normal year and has operated at a surplus of £5,000. This was helped by a donation of £1,000 to promote membership, and has been used for this purpose, therefore membership has been growing; advertisements in the ARS Journal has brought in Overseas members.

With regard to the *Seed List*, which Tony Weston does on his own, this generated £3,000 plus, and brought in a profit of £1,200 to The Group. The Index was not a profit-making project. The Bank Interest is down a little bit. We have healthy capital funds which bring in interest.

Mr. Stevenson suggested that for next year, The Group should stop putting the Tour Accounts into the Group's Income and Expense Accounts, as at present insisted upon by the RHS, because this makes our revenue look a lot and presents a false situation. In summary, The Group's accounts are in a healthy position, £15,000 in the bank ~ ready to be used for something.

Mr. Archibold felt he must warn The Group, with relevance to Rhododendron seed, that saturation point must soon be reached; also that The Group depends very much on one man, who has been very generous, and whose haul of seeds is far greater than other collectors: Mr. Alan Clark. He is going this year to Southwest Sichuan, China, further west than before; he always obtains a permit to bring seed out of China, always does things the correct way.

Acceptance of the Accounts was proposed by Miss Perring and seconded by Major Spring Smyth.

Constitution

The Constitution had been amended to include the following items: that Branch Chairmen may attend all meetings, and be able to vote; and that there be a postal vote to elect candidates to the Committee: John Hilliard proposed, Alastair Stevenson seconded, and it was agreed that our Chairman put these amendments to RHS Council, also the question of RHS membership.

Elections

Four places were vacant on the Committee, and three candidates, Mr. David Farnes, Mr. Martin Gates and Mr. Ivor Stokes, were therefore elected for 3 years without

ballot. Chairman welcomed Mr. Gates, new to the Committee, also Mr. Farnes and Mr. Stokes.

The Officers being willing to serve again, were proposed en bloc by Mr. Farnes, seconded by Dr. Jack and re-elected unanimously.

The RHS Auditors were elected unanimously.

Seedlings

Major Spring Smyth asked if Rhododendron seedlings, grown from the large number of seeds, were being cared for and becoming available at, say, the Savill Gardens. Chairman replied that surplus seedlings at Kew and Hillier's Arboretum are sent to other Botanical Gardens. Mr. Alan Clark was said to be selling seedlings at £3 a pot; it was suggested that perhaps a discount could be obtained by selling in bulk to Branches.

As there was no other business the meeting closed.

Date of next Annual General Meeting

Wednesday, 29 April, 1999.

Mr. Rajesh Verma writes from India

"There is now a CD-ROM available on the *Sikkim Rhododendrons*. Published by Mr. S. T. Lachungpa, who is the author of the book *Sikkim Himalayan Rhododendron* along with the undersigned who has done the CD-authoring, the CD interactively portrays all the 30 species of the Rhododendrons found in this part of the world. The CD also includes photo-quality high resolution pictures of Rhododendrons in the TIF format which can be printed on an inkjet or image-setter printer.

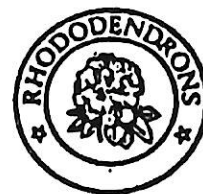
This first version of the CD is priced at only US \$19 (plus US \$3 p & p) As an organisation, engaged in the promotion of Rhododendrons, you would certainly be interested in this product. You may like to kindly place your valued order with us. Payment may be sent by Draft or Travellers Cheque to the undersigned."

Rajesh Verma, Jt Director (Telecom. & Computers), Sikkim Police Headquarters, Gangtok-737101, Sikkim India.



I have recently written to Mr. Verma to ask for a price in UK currency as I imagine those of us living in Britain would prefer to pay this way. Anyone interested, please get in touch if you wish to hear his answer.

Mrs. Eileen Wheeler, Hon. Bulletin Secretary, Llwyngorlas, Felindre, Crymych, Pembro. SA41 3Xw. Tel. 01239 820464 e-mail wheeler@nevern.u-net.com



Please remember your Winter Bulletin will be posted along with the Year Book in January 1999.