

# The Royal Horticultural Society

## The Rhododendron, Camellia and Magnolia Group



Bulletin 74 ~ August 2000

### Forthcoming Events

September 13 Committee Meeting - 2.00 p.m.

October 27-29

Group Autumn Weekend with  
Members of I.C.S.

### Chairman's Notes

The great success story of Magnolias during Spring 2000, particularly in the cooler less favourable areas of the country, prompts me to restrict my notes to their genus. The weather through February to April could do no wrong with just the odd whisper of frost and lots of balmy mild days. This resulted in near perfection whether we were admiring an ordinary *M. x soulangeana* or a much rarer Asiatic species.

I was able to observe the very extensive National Collection in the Savill and Valley Gardens and noted many exciting specimens flowering for the first time. The collection is young, there is nothing older than fifty which indicates that the specimens are at their peak and are producing near perfect displays, weather permitting. It should be noted that many of the fifty year old tree form species and hybrids are now sixty feet or more high.

The above very exciting report made me consider that a magnolia story, the story in fact of two magnolias, may be of interest to our members.

The story begins in 1950 in the rapidly developing suburban village of Westwater. The Black family had built a very pleasant mock Tudor house in Lime Tree Close and had the garden laid out very simply (the Blacks were not gardeners). The gardens consisted of some bedding and lawn at the front and a very large lawn edged with straight sided shrub beds at the back. The garden was maintained by a jobbing gardener for one or two days per week. This gardener had been an under gardener before the war at the Manor House, joined the armed forces at the outbreak of war and returned to find the Manor had been sold to a pharmaceutical company as offices and that his job had disappeared. He decided to 'go it alone' and soon found himself in great demand and became a familiar figure in the village with his spade, fork etc. tied along the crossbar of his bicycle as he headed off to work. The Blacks as has already been stated were not gardeners but the gardener persuaded Mrs Black that an important large shrub would enhance the very extensive lawn at the rear of the house. A visit was made to the local nursery (this was long before garden centres appeared) where with the help of the nursery owner a very nice specimen of *Magnolia x soulangeana* was chosen. The plant was some four to five feet high and very well furnished with two or three flower buds - cost £7/10/-.

The specimen was lifted very carefully by expert nurserymen, balled in hessian and delivered to Lime Tree Close where it was planted equally expertly by the gardener. The specimen grew rapidly and after twenty years or so had developed into a handsome tree of twenty by twenty feet. It also produced an outstanding display each Spring subject to April frosts.

After twenty five years or so as the Blacks decided to move to a small house and a smaller garden ( the jobbing gardener had retired) a young family (the Brownes's) with four children, two boys and two girls, moved into the house. Like the Blacks the Brownes were not gardeners. Mr. Browne was 'something in the City', played a lot of golf and under duress cut the grass with a very expensive ride-on mower. Mrs. Browne, in addition to being an extremely busy housewife had a part time job. The children loved the large lawns but there was a problem, the large bush dominated the area and bushes do not appear in the middle of Wembley or the centre court at Wimbledon. A strong request was made by the children for the bush to be removed, the parents agreed, the garden contractors arrived, the Magnolia was quickly felled by a chain saw, the logs and top reduced to wood chip, the stump removed and turf laid on the bare area and Wembley and Wimbledon were ready for play without the large bush. The area was much used and enjoyed by the children and their friends over the years but eventually things changed. School studies became more demanding and parties took up a lot of time and Wembley and Wimbledon became redundant. There was another major change, Mrs. Browne gave up her part time job and the children were at University and she found she had spare time - spare time for gardening. As she realised what an asset her large garden was and became really keen, she joined the Royal Horticultural Society, visited Chelsea and Wisley and spent a lot of time refurbishing and reshaping the shrub borders around the lawn. Mrs. Browne also looked at the lawn and vaguely remembered the large shrub that they had removed, some sort of Magnolia she thought. Further thought took her to the local garden centre where she met the owner, the son of the nurseryman who supplied the Magnolia to the Blacks. The garden centre had a connoisseurs corner and a lot of consideration was given



to a new American hybrid Magnolia called 'Sayonara' for the position in the centre of the lawn. Mrs. Browne then noticed another specimen Magnolia about six foot tall, the plant was in a 7.5 litre container and was named *Magnolia* 'Charles Raffill'. The garden centre owner advised Mrs. Browne that this excellent hybrid would ultimately grow in tree form to sixty feet and that she probably would not have space for such a specimen. She assured him that she had space and although the price, fifty five pounds was expensive, she would take the plant. *M. 'Charles Raffill'* flourished and grew well and developed into a fine specimen. Two flowers appeared in 1998 both of which failed to open (first flowers on Asiatic types invariably abort) Seven outstanding flowers were produced in 1999 - these were frosted five days after opening and in 2000 no less than a hundred and twenty perfect flowers virtually covered the tree. Mrs. Browne decided that they should hold a barbecue party for her friends in honour of the Magnolia. Mr. Browne was instructed to ensure that the barbecue worked well, it didn't and there was much burning of sausages which produced terrible smells not only in the garden but throughout the neighbourhood. Several of the visitors were keen to acquire plants of *M. 'Charles Raffill'* for their gardens but Mrs. Browne informed them that it was scarce in the trade, she also told them that her plant was propagated and grown in New Zealand where growing conditions were so good. Two people asked who Charles Raffill was, Mrs. Browne didn't know but was aware of a new book on Magnolias by the curator of Wisley which would certainly answer the question. In fact she was intending to ask Mr. Browne for this book for her Christmas present and maybe another Magnolia. A true story - no - but it certainly could have been.

This will be my last Chairman's Notes for I am retiring in September on health grounds, at that time I shall hand over to Maurice Foster. We are indeed very fortunate in having Maurice as Chairman. He is a most enthusiastic and much travelled gardener with particular interest in Magnolias, Hydrangeas, Deutzias, Philadelphus, Sorbus, Roses (both wild and cultivated) and of course Rhododendrons.

My very best wishes to everyone. Happy gardening.

*John Bond.*

## Editor's Notes

As you will have read above, our Chairman John Bond is retiring after an all too short term in office. During this time he has instigated the beginnings of an important collection of Hardy Hybrids at Ramster and also organised the donation of Azaleas to Wisley, both of which should help to raise the awareness in the gardening public of the value of these in their own gardens. He has also kept a firm but tactful rein on the deliberations of our committee meetings - no mean task - and added great value to Spring and Autumn Tours with his enormous plant knowledge and entertaining tales of both plants and people. We shall miss you John but hope you will keep in touch and maybe join us in person now and again.

One consolation in losing John will be the gaining of Maurice Foster as our new Chairman. A brilliant plantsman and extensive traveller his lively mind is sure to bring yet another facet to our Group and I feel we can

face the future with confidence. Welcome Maurice - we look forward to your joining us in September.

Mrs Kathryn Millar a member from New Zealand and a leading light in the New Zealand Rhododendron Association, writes to say that their conference will be in Taranaki next year, 'which would make a great focus for a trip to New Zealand for your group - what about it? NZRA council would be pleased to organise a tour that included major collections and gardens - depending on time available' Any members who might like to make that 'trip of a lifetime' please let me know and I will send any names on to Kathryn so that she can make details available when they become known.

Turning to our own Spring Tour 2001 - Mrs Valerie Archibold makes a very welcome comeback as our Tours Secretary and you can read her preview further on in this bulletin. It sounds brilliant so do read all about it, I have already registered my name for a place!

There are a very few places left on the autumn Tour, so if you are still considering coming please contact me as soon as you can.

## Edinburgh Weekend on Rhododendron Identification

### Cup-shaped hairs and other mysteries.

On April 7th. 22 members met in Edinburgh to be skilfully shepherded by Dr. Robbie Jack. We were to spend two interesting, educational and enjoyable days with Dr. David Chamberlain at the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh. (RBG). We were also joined by Dr. George Argent, the expert on *Vireya* rhododendrons. The theme for the weekend was to inform and update us about the techniques used at present in the identification of rhododendrons both in the botanical taxonomy laboratory and in the garden. We spent time in the laboratory brushing up rusty skills with microscopes and hand lenses, moved to the Garden to see plants already discussed, visited the Electron Scanning Microscope Department and looked at the *Vireya* glasshouse. The tour finished with a visit to Glendoick Garden at the invitation of Mr. and Mrs. Peter Cox.

Dr. Chamberlain took us through the stages of visual identification of plants using the keys in "Notes from the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh, Volume 39" The useful notes are " No. 1, Sub-genus *Rhododendron* Sections *Rhododendron* and *Pogonanthum*" and " No.2, sub-genus *Hymenanthus*." Plenty of examples were shown and were available for dissection and identification. The great challenge was to identify the hairs of an indumentum and to be aware of the different patterns of scales on leaves. We were able to compare the plants with some of the beautiful books available from the RBG library including those from China and Japan. To test us, plants from four different sub-sections were available for a quiz.

More modern technology to differentiate species includes Electron Microscopy and DNA comparison. DNA tests confirm morphological taxonomy in some 98% of cases. Also used is Chemotaxonomy in which chemicals in leaves, e.g. waxes, are extracted and fractionated to show the diagnostic different proportions in various species.

Dr. Argent had recently returned from Sulawesi where he had been collecting *Vireyas*. He took us to the



propagation room to view the (enviably good) results of germination of collected seed. The room had carefully controlled heat, light and humidity. He then led us to glasshouses, first to that used for public display and then to those used for research. A magnificent and varied collection of plants!

Dr. Chamberlain took us into the garden where rhododendrons are planted in their appropriate Sections. It was most useful to see the plants together in order to check the characteristics discussed in the laboratory and to compare the species side-by-side.

In the evening of the Saturday Dr. and Mrs. Chamberlain and Dr. and Mrs. Argent were our guests for dinner. The day was not yet over! Dr. Chamberlain then gave a profusely illustrated talk about his collecting travels in China and Vietnam.

Next morning, at the Science Building of the RBG, we were shown the Herbarium. It was interesting to see dried specimens collected by Forrest some 90 years ago beside those collected only last year. In the Library an original copy of Joseph Hooker's "Rhododendrons of Sikkim-Himalaya" was on view.

The visit to Glendoick was a great success. Peter Cox and Dr. Chamberlain took us around the garden that was filled with all sorts of rhododendron, a large number of which were in flower. Again we saw the use of our newly found experience to sort out one plant from another.

All of us who attended are extremely grateful to Dr. Chamberlain and Dr. Argent for the time that they spent with us, the RBG for the use of the facilities and to Dr. Robbie Jack for the organisation.

*Alun Edwards*

## **PREVIEW OF THE SPRING TOUR OF DEVON & DORSET GARDENS MAY 6-11, 2001**

*by Valerie Archibold (who has walked the course)*

It was in 1985 that we last visited gardens in Devon and Dorset; several of these gardens were newly planted at that time and we will see how much some of these gardens have matured.

The first garden we will visit on 7 May is one of these. This is **Woodland Grove, Bovey Tracey**, and is owned by Peter and Helen Reynolds. The garden is spread over 21 acres with 11 of these planted out with rhododendrons, camellias and numerous other plants. Some members will remember the beginning of this lovely woodland garden when Peter's father, Dick Reynolds began to plant rhododendrons and camellias with great enthusiasm. There are around 500 rhododendrons planted and I varieties of camellias, some species rhododendrons but mostly hybrids all delightfully displayed under high cover.

The second garden to be visited on this day belongs to the Archibolds. This is **Starveacre** (whose name belies its content). The garden was planted out at the beginning of 1983, so was fairly new in 1985, and has about 5 acres. About 100 or more young trees were planted out on fairly steep hillside, both deciduous and coniferous, some of the latter are rare. These now form a mature woodland underplanted in places with rhododendrons, mostly species also a large number of camellias and a number of

magnolias. Most of the conifers were given us by Humphrey Welch who once owned a dwarf conifer nursery in Devizes. Humphrey is a world authority on conifers and not surprisingly some his plants are rare or unusual.

On the next day, 8 May, we visit **Minterne, Dorchester** owned by Lord & Lady Digby. The garden comprises a valley, which rises to 850 feet and was landscaped by Admiral Robert Digby in the manner of Capability Brown with shelter belts along the tops of the hills to break the wind. The park plantings with lakes and cascades were added in 1785. Although the hills are chalk, the garden is situated on a mound of greensand which ensures an acidic pH; this with the humus and dappled shade provided by the large beech trees was the perfect setting for the rhododendrons and magnolias from the Wilson, Forrest, Rock and Kingdon Ward expeditions to the Himalayas.

The gardens are laid out in a horseshoe over a mile round and provide vistas at every turn, with rhododendrons and magnolias towering over lakes, streams and cascades enhanced by primulas, astilbes and waterlilies. Minterne was the home of the first Sir Winston Churchill and his son the Great Duke of Marlborough in the 17C and since 1768, of the Digby family. The house was rebuilt in 1905 by Leonard Stokes, a founder member of the Arts & Crafts movement. Stokes used soft apricot Ham Hill stone and a mixture of styles.

Minterne is still a family home and contains a magnificent set of Flemish tapestries, together with many family, naval and historical pictures. The house is not open to the public, but is open for Special Interest groups only, and we have kindly been invited to take a tour of the house. Lunch will also be arranged for us there.

In the afternoon we will proceed to **Abbotsbury Gardens**. These 20 acres of gardens are blessed with a near-tropical climate, the key factor of this being the sea, a short distance away. The topography is also a factor as great shelter belts of *Quercus ilex* divert the salt-laden gales to a large degree. Rhododendrons, camellias and magnolias thrive in this mild climate, especially the camellias some of which reach 30 feet in height.

Those members who have the 1985 Year Book will find an article by the late John Kelly on Abbotsbury.

On the third day, 9 May, we visit the **Old Glebe at Eggesford** the home of another Group member, Nigel Wright and his wife June. This is a 7-acre garden of a former Georgian rectory, with a cleverly landscaped series of lawns leading down to a small lake with a bridge, a bog garden and around the house a courtyard and a lovely walled herbaceous border. The emphasis of the garden is very much on rhododendrons, some 750 varieties altogether, mainly hybrids, and a great blaze of colour in the spring. There is also a thriving nursery with a great variety of rhododendrons for sale. Although there are some species rhododendrons, this is a great garden for hybrid lovers, built up by Nigel with enormous enthusiasm.

After lunch we visit **Rosemoor, Great Torrington**, the now famous RHS garden, which over the last ten years has developed into an amazingly varied collection of beds and areas containing a great variety of plants. It is a real plantsman's garden with rhododendrons, both species and hybrids, ornamental trees and shrubs, scree and raised beds with alpine plants, herbaceous beds, a large stream and bog plants; altogether a huge variety,



some of it set out in rather unusual ways, but I think it will delight most people.

The last day we visit **Shobrooke House, near Crediton**. This belongs to Dr Jack Shelley and his wife Clare. The garden was first laid out around 1845 and included a very fine house. Sadly this was burnt out in 1945 and the garden was neglected until 1967 when the parents of the present owner moved back to Devon and began the clearance work. In 1981 Mrs Dorothy Shelley had the present one-storey house built, followed in 1992 by Dr Jack Shelley and his wife who then set about renovating the garden up to this day. The estate consists of 200 acres of beautiful parkland with 15 acres being the garden. When it was laid out in the 19C extensive Portland stone terraces surrounded the house and are still there. The Debois Landscape Group did a historical survey of the park and garden and the restoration work has been based on their recommendations.

You will see over the 15 acres how the new plantings blend with the old 19C plantings, especially the hybrid rhododendrons, and observe what a challenge this has been and is, to the owners, and what remarkable progress has been made, with very many young rhododendrons, magnolias, acers, camellias and other plants.

On the 10 May we also visit the garden of Sir John & Lady Quicke at **Sherwood, Newton St. Cyres**, not far out of Exeter. This consists of 14 magical acres bounded by a deer fence the whole being surrounded by about 1200 acres of woodland. Set in two steep valleys this garden is probably one of the best we have seen in terms of variability of collections, each set out thoughtfully and artistically with enough space for each plant to be shown to advantage. There are collections of both species and hybrid rhododendrons, several of the same sort in groups of six or seven, collections of different buddleias and hydrangeas (to give colour in the summer) 1 a collection of *Acer palmatum* and 1960 plantings of large rhododendrons such as *macabeum* and *mallosum* hybrids. Also there is the National Collection of Knaphill azaleas, and 120 varieties of Magnolias. It is a fascinating garden sure to intrigue the serious plantsman.

### Notes on the Tour

The garden walks will be led by the garden owners in most cases, but there will be knowledgeable members of the Committee to answer questions if needed.

All the gardens, except Rosemoor and Abbotsbury, belong to Group members, and all will offer hospitality of some sort.

The numbers of members joining the tour will have to kept to around 30. Members coming by train or 'plane may be met by the hotel. The cost is around £370.00 inclusive of all lunches, coach etc. If you want to book now the deposit is £30 per person returnable up to 28 days before the tour starts. Final figures and information will be in the December bulletin, but if you reserve a place beforehand you will get these then.

A country house hotel near Honiton has been reserved for us

### New Vireya CD-rom

Chris Callard has now completed his Vireya CD-ROM. It has arrived just as this Bulletin goes to be printed so I cannot do better than quote the details on the back of the

Jewel Case. It contains a history of Vireya culture, their distribution in the wild, Vireya displays and nursery sources worldwide. Full species classification lists both by alphabetical and subsection

Also a comprehensive list of over 700 names Vireya hybrids and hybrid parentages.

Illustrated with photographs of 250 varieties of Vireyas. You may buy this with a sterling cheque £14 inclusive of p.&p. - £15 overseas, but anyone wishing to use their Credit Card will need to pay in US dollars - \$20 plus \$2.50 shipping. To purchase please get in touch directly with Chris at 26 Colwood Gardens, Colliers Wood, London, SW19 2DT. Tel. 0181 540 7893 e-mail [cjcallard@lineone.net](mailto:cjcallard@lineone.net)

### Branch News

#### South East Branch Show.

15th April 2000, Ardingly College.

Despite very adverse weather, our show was well supported (especially the camellias), and nearly 150 entries were displayed in 24 classes. This, together with the two nursery stands, made a very fine spectacle, filling the baronial splendour of the College hall.

Nymans was showing for the first time, got nine placings and took home the new Rhododendron Plate that we now have in memory of John Fox. Their *Magnolia x veitchii* was Best in Show. Mike Robinson won the Magnolia Trophy once again, dominating the spray class, and also winning the Rhododendron Best in Show with a splendid spray of four trusses of *R. 'Taurus'*. The Phostrogen Cup (Camellias) went to our newest member, Peter Betteley, with Brian Wright close behind him, the latter having won the Best in Show in the biggest class, *C. japonica*, which had twenty entries. However, as John Hilliard often says, the prizes are not really the point; each and every entry gives pleasure to us all, and the most memorable of all was on the non-competitive table - John Rawling's magnificent *R. montroseanum* seedling, with three trusses on a very strong 3ft plant. Our thanks to all, especially our sponsors, Phostrogen, the team of judges and the nurseries, for the prizes.

Everard Daniel

#### New Forest Branch

On Sunday 14 May we visited the garden of Branch members Robin and Sheila Whiting. It was a sunny afternoon, and the garden looked delightful, with some fine trees making a perfect background to the rhododendrons and other plants. We particularly noted *Rhododendron 'Alison Johnstone'* with fine foliage, *R. yakushimanum* smothered in bloom, a well furnished *R. 'Crest'* and a splendid *Betula utilis* var. *jacquemontii* whose bark sparkled in the sunshine. Sheila provided us with an excellent tea, and afterwards Robin showed us his propagation area, including small plants of *R. barbatum*, *R. glischrum* and *R. mallosum* grown from Group seed.

The following Saturday we visited Millais Nurseries where David Millais showed us his propagation process from the automated germination house through the various stages to the 3-4 year old plants ready for selling. We were then able to walk around their six acre garden with its fine examples of species rhododendrons, and the trials ground where we had some discussion on the



differences between the FCC form and the Exbury form of *R. yakushmanum*. After lunch we took the opportunity to visit the Group's new hybrid collection at Ramster which is only a short distance away.

A few members of the Branch have continued to assist the staff at the Hillier Arboretum with regular maintenance work on the rhododendron collection in Brentry.

Martin Gates

### Norfolk Branch

Brian and Paula Horrobin, long-term members from Bury-St.-Edmunds, sent in this report of a Branch visit to Larchwood, the late Maurice Mason's arboretum at Beachamwell, near Swaffham, Norfolk in May.

The Branch visited Larchwood, by kind permission of Mrs. Margaret Mason. For us, this was a second visit, as the group had been there many years' ago when Colin Grainger was Organiser. Since then Maurice Mason has sadly died, but Margaret was most welcoming, and treated us all to lunch at the village pub afterwards! Here are some impressions:-

We noticed that the tree collections were most impressive - I think we had that same opinion on our 1993 visit too. We particularly took note of an *Acer campestre* 'Pulverulentum', just opening its dusty leaves, and the *Prunus avium* 'Plenum' was certainly an eye-catcher; we must have caught it at its very best.

There were several specimens of *Aesculus indica*, the Indian Horse Chestnut, yet to reach maturity. These are very elegant when full grown and will assuredly be treasured in the future when they have developed into the space around them.

It was good to see so many trees and shrubs given adequate space to themselves so that they can grow to their full potential, and it was a useful reminder that closer planting can severely cramp their true style. Of course the *Vireya* rhododendrons and cacti grown in greenhouses at the Masons' former home - so memorable from our previous visit - were not available to us this time, and it was sad to see that more of the hardy rhododendrons planted in the arboretum area had perished. A group of relatively recent plantings of magnolias were just holding their own. Mrs. Mason thought that the main problem was the lack of rainfall in that part of Norfolk, although there was evidence of rabbit and deer damage around the arboretum too. We explored only a corner of the 120 acres and we all found plants and trees which we had never encountered before as well as areas of bluebells and oak trees presenting a more familiar scene.

Overall our impression was mostly one of the vastness of this woodland garden; almost too much to take in on a casual visit but certainly to be recommended to any tree or shrub connoisseur.

### South West Branch

We have held two visit days this Spring. On April 29 we went to Tremough, near Penryn. This famous garden, whose heyday was 100 years ago (when Mr. Shilson was owner and Mr Gill the gardener) now belongs to the Falmouth College of Art. We were assured that the

gardens would be kept and maintained. In front of the house, in the depths of an overgrown rhododendron shrubbery, there was a splendid *R. barbatum* showing off its bark. Later in the day we visited Trebah. Major Tony Hibbert took us around with many a story about the garden. He was amused at the tendency of the visitors to disagree on the names of rhododendrons!

On May 6 Kenwyn and Betty Clapp showed us round Colebrook House, Plympton. What a splendid garden, full of a great variety of rhododendrons and camellias as well as other genera. In the glasshouse there was a good display of tender rhododendrons, added to which John Bodenham had brought a display of *Vireya* rhododendrons. In the afternoon Brian and Rosemary Howell led us into their large garden at Lukesland, near Ivybridge. We saw one of the largest *Magnolia campbellii* in the country; perhaps we should have visited earlier. Species and hybrids of rhododendron are still being planted.

Alun Edwards

### Wessex Branch

Our first visit of the season was to Exbury on 7 May. Surely there can be no finer display of our genera. They were at their peak and we could hardly have chosen a better day, with the sun bouncing in off the Solent. There was so much to see and we all emerged with our own particular favourites. Perhaps the most abiding memory for many of us were the drifts of *Rhododendron* 'Crest', still as good a yellow as any, mingling with blue banks of *augustinii*. A different kind of satisfaction came from the *cinnabarinum* forms, still grown beautifully here, albeit with regular spraying to control powdery mildew.

Our best wishes go to Paul Martin, Head Gardener, still seriously ill. In his absence we were given an excellent tour by Douggie Betteridge, his predecessor. Douggie showed an astonishing memory for the thousands of plants in the 200 acre planted area.

Mention should be made of the plant centre, which has as good a selection of rhododendrons for sale as you will find anywhere. There were even rarities such as 'The Bach Choir', although stocks of these were much depleted once we had passed through!

Miranda Gunn

Our Group Competition 2000, was held at Ramster on 4 June. We want to thank all those who took part in one of our best shows. Especial thanks to Paul and Miranda Gunn for hosting our event yet again in the beautiful surroundings of their home, and to John Bond for judging. His comments on our efforts and his support each year are greatly appreciated.

After the awards, Lady Adam Gordon gave a short address thanking John Bond for all his work in instigating and overseeing the Old Hardy Hybrid Collection which is now flourishing at Ramster, and the generosity of Mr. and Mrs. Gunn in giving the collection such a good home. We hope to be able to add more plants to the collection as and when they become available and would be pleased to hear of any old varieties that might be applicable.



## Note From the Retiring Membership Secretary.

In relinquishing the appointment of Hon. Membership Secretary I would like to take the opportunity, firstly, to say how very much I have enjoyed making whatever contribution I have been able to make to the running of the Group, and secondly to offer my very sincere thanks to the Committee for presenting me, on behalf of the Group as a whole, with the 4th volume of H. H. Davidian's work on *Rhododendron* Species dealing with Azaleas. As I already have the remaining three volumes this was an inspired choice and I am very grateful for this gift, albeit undeserved.

The Committee is happy for me to continue, with Bruce Archibold's invaluable help, to run the Seed Exchange Scheme for the time being but I expect that ultimately I shall be looking for a successor to take over this chore which makes a considerable contribution to the remit of the Group as well as to the funds. If therefore any member would care to come forward with an offer to fill this vacancy when the time comes I am sure the Committee would be more than grateful.

If I have any regret regarding my term of office as Membership Secretary, it would be that I have witnessed the demise of the Lakeland Branch and my failure to put over to the Committee my conviction that the Branch has been unfairly deprived of Branch status on account of the formation of The Lakeland *Rhododendron* Society. This Society was formed on legal advice because the Branch, which had built up a credit balance from the proceeds of meetings and events, was operating and holding members' funds without a Constitution. As, I believe, is the case with at least one other Branch, meetings were not restricted to members, but members of the Branch automatically became members of the Society. It has been held that as meetings are now held under the auspices of the Society, the latter has usurped the position of the Branch and that the latter can therefore no longer claim Branch status. This means, *inter alia*, that its members now have no representation on the Executive Committee.

The Committee is well aware of my views on this subject and I pose the question as to whether the other active branches with credit balances should follow the example of Lakeland and form their own "Societies" with proper Constitutions, empowering them to hold and administer their funds in trust for their members. The Group Constitution provides for Branches to be "responsible to The Group for the administration of all their affairs, including finance". This makes it far from clear as to their position vis-a-vis their members (including invitees, if any).

*Tony Weston*

## Note from the Convener of the Seed Scheme

For some time now I have thought that there must be a plethora of seedlings/plants surplus to the requirements of members who have bought seed during the last few years and who, quite naturally, do not like to throw the products away. I am therefore planning to prepare a list of all those members, sorted by Branch area, and send them to Branch Chairmen and also to Presidents etc. of national *Rhododendron* Societies, in the hope that arrangements can be made at a local level for potential donors to bring

their plants to a central point for sale or exchange without involving correspondence, postage, packing etc.

If you live in an area where there is no active branch your name will be included in the list I shall send to the nearest branch to where you live.

Tony Weston, Whitehills, Newton Stewart, Scotland, DG8 65L.

## Book Review

Gertrude Jekyll's *Lost Garden*. by Rosamund Wallinger ISBN 1 870673 35 2 Antique Collectors Club, £25

I found this book a fascinating read. It should appeal to anyone with an interest in gardening, garden design or garden history. The author has managed to interest and inform one of what lay behind so much of Gertrude Jekyll's success.

Seeking escape from London to the country the author and her husband found Upton Grey in Hampshire, an Edwardian mansion in a somewhat derelict state and with an even more neglected garden. The house caught their imagination so in 1984 they moved in and started the large task of restoring it. It was only later that they discovered that not only had they acquired a house of interest but also a garden of potential historic value. Despite her almost total lack of horticultural know-how, Rosamund determined the garden should be restored to what Jekyll had planned in 1904. It is the story of this restoration which evolves in this book.

With the innocence and enthusiasm of a true amateur the author largely single handedly, set about the task of recreating this garden which today is considered to be one of Jekyll's most authentic gardens.

The task started with a great deal of painstaking research and she was fortunate to discover the original plans in the University of California. Following the progress of converting these plans into a living garden makes interesting reading and Rosamund tells the story with humour and humility. Accepting her own limitations she followed the original plans meticulously, thus creating one of this country's outstanding gardens - one that transcends current fashion and style which is perhaps Jekyll's particular and extraordinary talent.

The research completed, the mammoth task of cleaning up started. This she did as meticulously as she did her research, destroying weeds but rescuing any of the original plant survivors. When eventually the garden had become a comparatively weed free domain she realised that a great many plants would be required for planting and a great deal of money to purchase them. She taught herself to grow many from seed and cuttings. The plants that were missing she searched the country for; this particularly applied to some of the old roses. All the time she sought advice from experts. Despite this she admits to making many mistakes in the process of learning.

The narrative is interspersed with many amusing anecdotes of her dogs, ducks and bantams and her own early attempts at lecturing, a skill she now practises in many parts of the world.

There is an excellent photographic record of the development of the garden from wilderness back to its present state. These are mostly taken by the author herself with a few professional ones included. A lot of the "before and after" should give hope and inspiration to many of us!



This book is a story of great perseverance leading to great achievement. What better accolade could the garden have than being chosen by the late Geoffrey Hamilton as his "paradise garden"?

Nesta Fraser

## CRARAE APPEAL

Lord Airlie, President of the National Trust for Scotland, recently wrote to all members of the American Rhododendron Society to ask for their help in saving Crarae Garden near Inveraray on the west coast of Scotland. The garden has been in the care of the Crarae Gardens Charitable Trust for the past 25 years but the Trustees no longer have the resources to maintain it and keep it open to visitors. They have invited the National Trust for Scotland to take over their responsibilities, but the NTS cannot take on this additional work without additional funding.

Many of the delegates to the 1997 ARS Annual Convention, which took place in Oban, visited the garden and were enchanted by it. Many Group members will already know Crarae as a beautiful work of art with an important plant collection. Not least, Crarae is a rhododendron garden, with one of the finest collections of the genus in Scotland, of some 440 taxa. Admittedly Crarae can offer few species not already represented in the Trust's other fine collections (at Arduane, Branklyn, Brodick and Inverewe [and, maintained with its assistance, at Achamore House, Gigha - where Sir Ilay Campbell from Crarae was for many years the Trust's Consultant), and it lacks many of the tender species which are a notable feature at Arduane or Brodick. Even so, about half Crarae's fine collection consists of cultivated varieties, which is unusual in Scotland where species'

collections predominate; about half those cultivars are not currently grown anywhere in Trust Gardens; the collection includes noteworthy sets of Horlick's and Noble's hybrids, both of which will probably, in a short time, develop regional and historical 'period' significance; and even species represented in other collections (e.g. *R. macabeaenum*) are here planted on a scale and in a setting which makes them remarkable.

However, Crarae is much more than a rhododendron collection. It currently has ten 'national champion' trees and shrubs - that is, the largest specimens of their type recorded in the British Isles. It holds part of the National Collection of southern beech (*Nothofagus*) under the scheme run by the National Council for the Conservation of Plants and Gardens. It contains some extremely rare trees and shrubs, and has particularly good representations of *Acer*, *Eucalyptus* and *Sorbus*. It is well labelled and has a good records system.

An Appeal brochure available from the NTS on request explains the background in greater detail. Unless the Trust is able to find £1 million before the end of this year Crarae will close and the collection will quickly begin to deteriorate. Would you consider making a contribution, however small, towards rescuing this wonderful garden? Any donation you feel able to make can be posted, 'phoned or emailed to the Development Department, The National Trust for Scotland, 28 Charlotte Square, Edinburgh EH2 4ET. Tel 0131 243 9308 email [development~nts.org.uk](mailto:development~nts.org.uk)

As Lord Airlie writes "I am very anxious that this magnificent garden should be saved for the benefit of visitors from all over the world, and I would so much value your support."

Duncan Donald  
(Head of Gardens, National Trust for Scotland)



# THE RHODODENDRON, CAMELLIA & MAGNOLIA GROUP OF THE R.H.S.

## MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 24 MAY, 2000

**CHAIRMAN** - Mr. John D Bond, LVO, VMH

**APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE** were received from: Mrs V. Archibold, Dr A. J. B. Edwards, Mr David N. Farnes, Mr Maurice Foster, Mr P. Howarth, Mr J. K. Hulme, Mrs J. Idiens, Dr R. H. L. Jack, Mr M. Jurgens, Lady Cynthia Postan, Mr I. Stokes and Mrs E. Wheeler.

**MINUTES OF A.G.M. 1999**, published in BULLETIN No. 71, August 1999, were agreed to be a true record, and were signed by the Chairman.

### MATTERS ARISING THEREFROM:

It was agreed to publish the List of Rhododendrons planted at Ramster as a loose-leaf page in the August 2000 Bulletin.

### CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chairman had noted on his journey to London through the Great Park at Windsor a great show of *R. ponticum* flower, a sure sign that our season was over, and what a great season we have experienced. In the Home Counties perhaps the best ever.

He was grateful to the members of the Committee, many of whom live a long way away, and he is very aware that travelling is costly, duties are time consuming, and many work far beyond the call of duty. Mr. Maurice Foster has agreed to be Chairman when John Bond retires, which will be at the end of the next Committee Meeting in September 2000. Mrs Miranda Gunn is the new Membership Secretary, Mrs. Valerie Archibold has come back to organise the Tours.

It has been learnt that there is a strong call for a knowledgeable leader on the Tours. Also a strong leaning for people from the area/local Branch to help, especially with advice on gardens and accommodation; and for them to join in with the garden visits on a "look after yourself for entry fees, food and transport" basis. He hopes the Autumn Weekend shared with the International Camellia Society will be successful.

The Yearbook is the hub of the Group, and is very good, much better than the ARS Journal. The Bulletin continues to be a good newsletter, and should not have too many articles; there must be good liaison with the Yearbook Editor.

Alan Clark continues to be an avid collector and to supply the Group with seed. This year the number of species is down, but Alan Clark's list is longer than anyone else's, and he is going collecting again this year. The Seed Scheme works very well; John Bond thanked Tony Weston, Convenor of the Seed Scheme, and asked him to pass on thanks to Bruce Archibold too.

The themed planting of Rhododendrons is continuing, and John Bond is very heartened that the Committee thinks this is the right direction for the Group. A sunny/partially shaded site is sought for a planting of *R. yakushimanum*.

The Rhododendron Group has met all the requirements of the Constitution. John Bond's foreword to the Yearbook, lamenting lack of interest in Rhododendrons, both from the RHS and from the public, has brought replies; however he believes that Rhododendrons are, sadly, still in disfavour.

### TREASURER'S REPORT

Mr Chris Walker presented the Accounts, and said that income has increased by 10%, and that 40% of the income is from sale of publications (yearbooks) and sales of seeds.

Large items of expenditure were for plant collections at Ramster and Battlesdon Hill, Wisley, and this trend will continue; also for a silver salver, the Alan Hardy Challenge Cup for the Early Rhododendron Competition.

### ELECTION TO THE COMMITTEE

The Hon. Secretary had received 46 completed election voting forms, and 3 spoilt forms. Dr R H L Jack and Miss Cicely E Perring were re-elected to the Committee for 3 years.

### APPOINTMENT OF AUDITORS

The accounts are sent to RHS for audit, and the audit is always in arrears; there has been no feed back from RHS for 2 years.

### DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was decided to leave the date of the next Annual General Meeting until the September Committee Meeting, and to inform members in the December Bulletin.