



The Rhododendron, Camellia & Magnolia Group

THE ROYAL HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY

BULLETIN – 78

DECEMBER 2001

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

Maurice Foster

This is the very first of our new style newsletter. Apart from the different masthead and improved signposting, the investment in colour opens up the opportunity to add plant information to its traditional role as a noticeboard for group activities. Good colour photography is indispensable to providing information on garden plants, so although it undoubtedly also improves the Bulletin's appearance, the change is not just cosmetic. Our thanks are due to John Rawling for all the work he has put into this first issue. I have been able to appreciate at first hand something of the thought, time and careful attention to detail he has devoted to it. I know members will also appreciate this and I hope will share his and your committee's enthusiasm for the change.

The Group's plant collections

Development rather than change best describes our continuing work in establishing conservation plant collections in gardens with public access. This is one of the most important aspects of our role in bringing good plants to the attention of the public as well as ensuring the preservation of some that might otherwise be lost.

In addition to the Wisley collections, the Hardy Hybrid collection at Ramster is flourishing. It is now growing to the point where we may have progressively to reduce our early plantings in groups of three to single plants, to conserve space for continuing expansion. We have already planted over 150 different cultivars and our priority for further additions will concentrate on plants that have won awards, with the objective of eventually building up a comprehensive collection. While in any event Ramster is worthy of a visit in its own right, it should also be a particular attraction to members next spring to see what has already been assembled in their name as the most comprehensive collection of hardy hybrids in this country. Admission is free to members and it is well worth an entry in your diary for next May.

The John Bond Memorial Collection

Our collection of large leaf rhododendron species has already been delivered to Abbotsbury ready for planting.

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R. protistum is included in the Abbotbury planting. Illustrated is *R. protistum magnificum* KW 21602 growing at Pukeiti, New Zealand. Maurice Foster

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The Millais' nursery has provided some outstanding specimen plants, grown from seed collected in the wild and under collector's numbers. These include *R. kesangiaë*, *R. protistum*, *R. sinofalconeri* and a yellow form of *R. rex*. Stephen Griffiths the curator, Bruce Archibold and I have selected a suitable site which should show the plants off beautifully in Abbotsbury's privileged microclimate and it is planned to hold a small planting ceremony in the new year. The collection will be designated '**The John Bond Memorial Collection**' to honour our past Chairman and a great plantsman. It is particularly appropriate as not only were rhododendrons and in particular the large leaf species one of John's passions but he also had an association with Abbotsbury.

Also to be donated to Abbotsbury is the first tranche of a collection of the original 'Kunming' *camellia reticulatas* that Jim Gardiner has located in Italy and is very kindly looking after for us at Wisley until sufficiently well established to put out. These camellias enjoy damp summers and mild winters and should thrive in a first class site with plenty of light at Abbotsbury. They have become increasingly rare and the conservation aspect will be important.

Magnolia x loebneri

Further towards the other end of the microclimate scale is the Harcourt Arboretum at Oxford, part of the Oxford University Botanic Garden. Your committee is pleased that an offer of a donation of *Magnolia x loebneri* cultivars has been accepted and fits in with development plans at the arboretum. Magnificent specimens of conifers, mature deciduous trees and green aisles flanked by bays of rhododendrons provide a wonderful backdrop for precocious magnolias. The arboretum is very accessible, just off the Oxford ringroad and will provide an ideal site to show off the character and beauty of these excellent garden plants to the visiting public. *Magnolia x loebneri* cultivars are hybrids of *M. kobus* and *M. stellata*, first developed in Germany in the early 1900s and more recently in the US and Europe (see Graham Rankin's account in the 1999 Yearbook). Some fine cultivars have been introduced with a variety of habit from medium/small trees to spreading bushes, and a variety of flower form, from the rare broad-tepalled 'Donna' recently awarded an FCC, to the popular stellate 'Leonard Messel'. It is hoped to donate a dozen or more cultivars for planting at the end of next year, subject to our being able to source and graft some of the scarce new registrations.

Bud Blast

Finally, there has been no response at all from members to my notes on bud blast in the last issue and my invitation to offer suggestions for dealing with it. Can one conclude from this that it is simply not a problem, or that a suffering membership can offer no remedial suggestions? If the latter, please watch this space. The Rhododendron and Camellia Committee have it on the

agenda for discussion at their autumn meeting (end of October), so eventually I hope to be able to benefit from their collective wisdom, and report on their deliberations and recommended treatment.

EDITOR'S NOTES

John Rawling

Welcome to the "New Look" for the Bulletin. It has been somewhat of a daunting task to take over from the excellent retiring Editor AND produce it in glorious technicolour! I now know just how much work Eileen Wheeler had to put in! This is my first attempt, and I hope to improve on it over the next few issues. **Please let me have your views, ideas and criticisms!**

The Bulletin will be produced in **April** and in **October** next year, and items can usually be included if received up to the end of February and August, respectively.

I do look forward to hearing from YOU: Your articles, your tips and your letters, please. Please make a note of my address: **John Rawling, The Spinney, Station Road, Woldingham, Surrey, CR3 7DD.**

Telephone: 01883 653341. E-mail: jr.ey@virgin.net

Let me have your contributions and letters in good time for the April Bulletin.

Shows survey

I understand from Brian Wright that there has been a very good response from our members and that the results are still being analysed. These are expected early in the new year.

Unfranked Bulletin Delivery

Several members have been in touch to tell Eileen Wheeler that their August Bulletin arrived unfranked and in one case was asked for 69p surcharge. As all Bulletins were paid for fully in bulk, Eileen is asking the Royal Mail to explain this and would be interested to know whether this has happened to you? If so, please get in touch with her as soon as possible.

The ex-Bulletin Editor – Eileen Wheeler, Llwyngoras, Felindre, Crymych, Pembs. SA41 3XW.

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SEED DISTRIBUTION

Tony Weston

Wild Collected Seed

It will not have escaped your notice that by far the greater part of the seed list is made up of seed collected in the wild by Alan Clark and the time will come, inevitably – though hopefully not in the immediate future – when Alan will decide that his forays into the mountains of China and Tibet have become too demanding both in time and expense and we will need

actively to seek alternative sources of wild-collected seed. There may be members who have views on how we might do this or indeed who may be able to contribute directly themselves. If so, I would be very pleased to hear from them.

Hand Pollinated Seed

Quite apart from wild collected seed I am grateful for contributions of home-produced seed although for obvious reasons I cannot accept seed from open-pollinated hybrids. Hand-pollinated hybrids are a different matter entirely and can be very interesting. Open-pollinated seed of species, particularly of rhododendrons, unless taken from plants growing well away from others or flowering at a different times are of little or no value but I am pleased to receive hand-pollinated seed for which donors may order free packets of other seed equal to the number of varieties of seed donated. I would ask any member who is able and willing to contribute wild collected seed to have a word with me and we can come to some arrangement whereby I can offer some payment to help defray the costs of the expedition.

2001 Wild Collected Seed

Alan Clark is in China as I write these notes and expects to be able to bring back seed of some interesting species not having hitherto appeared in our list.

I had hoped to be able to have the list printed in time to be sent out with this bulletin, but sadly, due to a number of factors, this has not proved possible. It will therefore come to you with the Yearbook in January, as last year.

PUBLICITY

Alastair Stevenson

Press Coverage

We have started to get some coverage in the press and this will help build the Group's awareness. We are particularly targeting RHS members but I have established a substantial database of media contacts covering a wide range of specialist magazines and papers. We are always seeking stories of broad interest to pass on to *The Garden* as well as to individual journalists. Please let me have reports of anything you think maybe of interest and I will do his best to make use of it.

I also have an idea to try and launch a Nationwide hunt for a specific lost hybrid (something where we could issue an old illustration, ideally) or maybe for the largest specimen in the UK of, for example, *Magnolia grandiflora*. I would welcome any ideas from members with a view to launching the hunt in the early spring of 2002.

The Year Book

As well as supplying the Year Book to our members we try and sell copies through shops associated with Rhododendron/Camellia/Magnolia gardens. At present only a relatively few outlets stock the Year Book and we sell 100-150 each year (mainly through the RHS outlets). I would welcome suggestions of gardens or other outlets to approach to stock the Year Book. It would be most helpful if you could let me have the full address and a contact name for any places you think I should approach to help us *spread the word* in this way.

I can be contacted on 020 8994 0584 or at AlastairStevenson@MPAconsulting.co.uk

TOURS

Valerie Archibold

This is the situation for the Group Tours next spring.

Spring Tour to North Germany

24 – 29th May 2002

This exciting tour is a break from our tradition of visits to areas of the British Isles. The busy itinerary takes in two major rhododendron nurseries – the magnificent Hobbie collection covering 160 acres and Hans Hachmann's garden featuring the celebrated new hybrids of this major European breeder. Smaller modern hybrids can be seen along with azaleas and *Pieris* at the Gerd Dieter Bohle nursery. Two private gardens are included, both warmly recommended by the German Rhododendron Society; in addition the 89 acre rhododendron park at Bremen boasts 700 rhododendron species and Das Arboretum at Ellerhoop has an unusual miscellany of many diverse plants.

There are still some places available for this tour at the time of writing (October). So do get your applications in to Valerie Archibold, before it is too late!

The cost is approximately £640.

A Long Weekend in Devon

26 – 30th April 2002

This tour is nearly fully subscribed. Do make contact quickly if you wish to join.

Belgium – Spring 2003

Make a note in your diary for this proposed Tour, being considered for the first week in May.

For information or to book - please write to or telephone the Tour Organiser: Mrs V. Archibold, Starveacre, Dalwood, East Devon, EX13 7HH.

Telephone 01404 881221.

This being the first of a regular series of short articles on magnolias, I had better state that the views expressed are entirely my own. I shall be delighted if you disagree, and even more so if you agree, but please let me know your views about this column and the great genus in general. My own garden is in Sussex on Wealden clay and the Greenwich Meridian at an altitude of 100 metres (if that doesn't offend Eurosceptics), and I have about 160 magnolias.

The Jury Hybrids in the UK - A Judgement

These hybrids are ably described by Abbie Jury in the YearBook for 1992 (p.52 - 4). They have been planted fairly widely here, the largest collection probably being in the Valley Gardens at Windsor.

How have they performed in British gardens?

Firstly these plants should dispel for ever the too common notion that you can't get tree magnolia flowers without waiting 20 years (if this was ever true for most taxa). These and other hybrids will keep no-one waiting! Secondly they are trees - except perhaps for 'Apollo' which grows 3 metres in 10 years: You should allow 6 metres from the rest. 'Serene' is a little slower, and the fastest growing for me has been 'Milky Way'.

Thirdly the flowers: Do not rely on photographs of magnolia flowers taken abroad - particularly in Switzerland or New Zealand. The climatic differences may affect particularly the colour of magnolias a great deal.

What follows applies (as far as I can tell) to the whole of the U.K: -

'Apollo' shows a large (20cm wide) flower of a good violet colour (paler inside) opening with great poise and remaining star shaped. It flowers over a long period, with quite a burst in the autumn. Suitable for a small garden. - everyone should grow it!

'Athene' is very floriferous and reliable with large (25 cm) flowers - predominantly white and shaped like *M. campbellii* - excellent but not quite as frost proof as 'Milky Way'.

'Atlas' has lots of spectacularly enormous flowers up to 35 cm across - pink cabbages, as someone said. It opens two weeks later than 'Athene' - the only problem is that in the windy position in my garden it stains badly and the flowers easily mark in the frost. The flowers at Windsor, on the other hand, always look perfect. Annoying.



Magnolia 'Atlas'

Mike Robinson

'Tolanthe' - vigorous and early - a large pale pink, but with me flowers and young growth are often frosted and it gets bark split. I think there are now better varieties of this size and colour.

'Lotus' - cream - near white not far off the shape of a lotus, perhaps opening more stiffly, and a good size on a fast growing tree. My young plant is not flowering heavily yet. If it does so it will be excellent in the landscape - the jury (sic) is still out on this one.



Magnolia 'Milky Way'

Mike Robinson

'Milky Way' - 25cm cup and saucer flowers which appear pure white from any distance and shining in the landscape - I am very fond of this, as the flowers stand up well to adverse weather. A first class white tree magnolia flowering earlier than 'David Clulow'.

'Serene' - a small tree as yet, with large cup shaped flowers of a wonderful mid purple. Anyone who has seen the plant at Spinners Nursery will want it. Highly recommended if you like the colour, as I do.



Magnolia 'Vulcan'

Mike Robinson

'Vulcan' - how I wish this hadn't been hyped as a true red magnolia - it certainly has that colour in New Zealand, but the first flowers in the UK were very disappointing - as small as an average tulip, and of a muddy purple colour with none of the gorgeousness of Lanarth. However after eight years the flowers at the top of a tree of reasonable age are much bigger, reflex like *M. campbellii*, and seem to have a more uniform purplish colour. The large flowers open first with smaller ones lower down opening in succession over a week or two. Even though the flowers individually are sort of purple, the effect gives a splash of 'red' in the landscape (RHS Chart red purple 64C) particularly against a dark background as it is incredibly floriferous, and is a must for this alone. Very highly recommended.

Mark and Abbie Jury are continuing Felix' production of exciting magnolias, with 'Black Tulip', 'Felix Jury' and some newer exciting developments on the stocks. I hope they will be easily available here soon!

So, if we ignore the fact that they flower young, are these plants as good as the species? All I can say is that 'Vulcan', 'Apollo', and 'Serene' represent new directions of development, and that 'Milky Way' is a first class 'white', but that if I could grow only one large magnolia it would still be 'Lanarth'.

Looking last week at my tree of 'Vulcan', I was drawn to reflect on the creative, pacific, and international nature of horticulture. 'Vulcan' is a cross between 'Lanarth' - "only, I think, another *mollicomata*" according to Forest when he discovered it in 1924 in N.W. Yunnan - and a *liliflora* hybrid. *M. Liliflora* has been in cultivation in southern China for a thousand years, and has most affinity to the American *M. acuminata*. The two were crossed in New Zealand in the late 1980's and 'Vulcan' is now obtainable worldwide. How much more patience is needed to create a thing of beauty than to destroy one.

So there are my impressions, but how do these plants look and fare in the North, or in Ireland or on the Continent? Do let me share your experiences and opinions: perhaps we can publish a resume in the next Bulletin?

BRANCH NEWS & REPORTS

South East Branch

Mike Robinson and Everard Daniel

Propagation Weekend - 14th July 2001.

Members and Friends, from as far away as Norfolk and St Albans, gathered and tried out their skills, taking cuttings from all three of our genera, and grafting rhododendrons. We had a plentiful supply of Cunningham's White rootstocks this year, so were able to graft a wide range of varieties, both from well known collections and from our own plants, including some very interesting taxa such as *R. lanigerum* Silvaticum group, *R. haematodes* ssp. *chaetomallum* Xanthanthum group, the double form of *R. griffithianum* and *R. x Loderi* 'Stags Head'.

This exchange of material, thoughts and ideas is one of the highlights of the meeting, the only difficulty being to persuade members when it was time to go home as darkness fell!

We hope to repeat this event again next year, probably on 6th July, and should welcome members and friends from any of the other branches. Next year we shall be budding magnolias as well as grafting rhododendrons. It is a friendly and informal event, which suits both expert and absolute beginner alike.

(*Strongly recommended!* Ed.)



S.E. Branch Propagation Day

South West Branch

Alun Edwards

We had an unfortunate start to the season because of foot and mouth. The visits in April to two gardens in Cornwall were cancelled. We also lost a chance to see a Magnolia garden, arranged that we would go at short notice when in full bloom. However, on May 5 we visited

Dr Richard Padley's garden near Chagford. This garden is well planted and has a superb view over the Teign Valley. There was room for another plant and we presented *R. campylocarpum* CC7541. In the afternoon Mr. and Mrs. David Quicke's garden at Higher Knowle, Lustleigh was in fine shape. The presentation plant was *R. x 'Albatross'*. Mrs. Quicke provided an excellent tea.

On May 26 we were able to go to Hayford Hall on the very edge of the moor near Buckfastleigh. Here Mr. and Mrs. Malcolm Dunstan are reviving a garden that had not been cared for since before the 1940's. Detailed records are kept and on the day of our visit over 180 were in flower. We presented *R. lindleyi* L.&S collection.

Mrs Dunstan and colleagues from Dean Prior church produced tea.

The Autumn meeting was held on November 10th when Jennifer Trehane gave a profusely illustrated talk titled "Camellias of the World". She also brought some plants for description and discussion and, later, for sale.

John Bodenham again produced a successful Rhododendron Quiz which was won by Philip Evans, Editor of the Year Book. The annual Bring and Buy plant sale was, as ever, a great success.

We were especially pleased to have Group Chairman, Maurice Foster, with us for the day, but he did not have any time to see Rosemoor garden!

Norfolk Branch

Brian Horrobin

Our Branch had just two meetings this year.

Eleven members and guests visited Peter Boardman's garden at Howe Hill on 9th June this year, just ten years since a previous visit. The term 'garden' is something of a misnomer, since Peter always did treat his garden as an extension to his farming enterprise. This in itself was quite adventurous, and included a commercial Holly collection containing around a hundred varieties.

In this garden, situated at the northern end of the Norfolk Broads, Peter has excavated his own personal spring fed reservoir, as he calls it, from an unproductive marshy area. The project had unearthed roots, now adorning the paths, which had been carbon dated at 4050 years old - the same as Sea Henge. Reed warblers serenaded us as we walked around it.

He is now trying to give up farming in favour of gardening! Well, who wouldn't with fourteen feet of solid peat to explore? It certainly put a spring in our step as we explored parts that other visits hadn't reached. "We may be gone some time," one member was heard to mutter as a machete was called for to help us through reed beds two metres deep and past *Gunnera* even taller and quite the largest anyone had ever seen. Another delight was the artistic way Peter has used carved stone rescued from the churches and cathedrals of East Anglia, including a full size pulpit reassembled with dental cement. All this before we had even considered the plants in this connoisseur's garden; the perfect antidote to garden makeover programmes.

Although many of the Rhododendrons had finished flowering so late in the season their history was quite interesting, many having been originally purchased from Exbury by Peter's Uncle on Exbury recommendations. Pride of place was taken by a mesmerising and characteristically perfumed bed of azaleas raised from seed taken from the original Exbury plants; three years from seed to flower and some of them quite exquisite.

Rhododendrons seen included 'Diva' (still in bud), 'Vanessa', 'Fatuosum Flore Pleno', 'Old Port' and 'Sappho'.

Other trees included: *Metasequoia* - bought as *Taxodium*, a problem we all identified with; *Tilia cordata*; American *rubus*; Weeping Golden Beech; a very healthy looking *Ginkgo* and *Taxus baccata* 'Amberhurst'. Also seen were specimens of Bamboo, suckering well and quite capable of growing at five inches a day, Royal Ferns, Tree ferns (suffering the ravages of rabbits) and immaculate Hostas with no signs of slug damage. A fascinating visit.

Jane Idiens

We had a very enjoyable and informative Autumn meeting at Beaconswood, West Runton, on 9th September. Long-time members Brian and Paula Horrobin showed a series of beautiful slides of rhododendrons from their extensive collection, and provided a helpful and well-informed commentary. Their knowledge and love of the subject delighted their audience.

LETTERS

Fight against *R. ponticum*

Martin Gates

Martin Gates has sent Alastair Stevenson a copy of an article from *The Daily Telegraph* of 24th August, which has been passed on to me, about the fight against *ponticum* on the island of Colonsay. There, they are planning to employ three full-time *ponticum* cutters! Martin's point was that we should be doing what we can to compensate for this negative publicity!

He emphasises that we should certainly encourage members to individually respond to items such as this, via letters to the publications, pointing out the availability of numerous great Rhododendrons for gardens, and stressing **they are not all like *ponticum*!**

Ed.

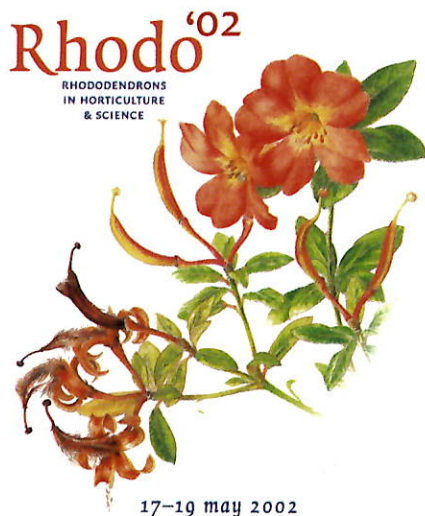
I am keen to promote a LETTERS column, and I need to hear from you. There are always a number of stimulating issues raised in each edition of the Bulletin and I am sure that you have your own views – so please let me have them. This is your Bulletin and needs to reflect members' thoughts and experiences as well as providing information and a noticeboard!
Hon. Editor.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS – Spring and Summer 2002

Date	Organiser/branch	Event	Contact
Jan. 26th	North West	Social gathering at Ness Gardens	C.Brabin
Mar. 2nd	North West	Lecture: David Millais "My species collection"	C.Brabin
Mar. 12th	Group	Executive Committee	Mrs J.Warren
Mar. 12-13th	RHS	Early Rhododendron & Camellia Competition	RHS + ICS -
		+ Camellia Symposium & Major Exhibition (Mar. 13th)	Georgina Clarke
Mar. 16-21st	ICS	Tour of Brittany	
Apr. 5-6th	S.R.S.	Tour of Devon & Cornwall	
Apr. 9-10th	RHS	Main Camellia Competition	RHS
Apr. 13th	South East	Visit to Nymans, Wakehurst and Borde Hill (jointly with the Magnolia Society)	Mike Robinson
Apr. 20th	North West	Visit to Members' Gardens	C.Brabin
Apr. 20th	South East	Annual Show – Ardingly College	Everard Daniel
Apr. 20th	South West	Garden Visits – Tregothnan & Nansawan House	Alun Edwards
Apr. 23rd	Group	AGM & Executive Committee	Mrs J.Warren
Apr. 23-24th	RHS	Main Rhododendron Competition	RHS
Apr. 26th-30th	Group	Tour of Devon	Mrs V.Archibold
Apr. 26th-28th	North West	Tour of Scottish Gardens	C.Brabin
Date to be conf.	Wessex	Visit to Sandling Park	Mrs M. Gunn
May 1st-4th	Cornwall G.S.	Annual Show at Trelissick	
May 4th	SRS	Show & AGM – Oban	
May 6th	SRS	Garden Visits – Argyll and Bute	
May 11th	South West	Garden Visits – Gorwell Hse & Elm Hse.	
May 11th-12th	North West	Branch Show – Ness Gardens	C.Brabin
May 14th	South East	Visit to Exbury	Mike Robinson
May 16th-20th	RBGE + RHS	Rhodo 02, International Conference Rhododendrons in Horticulture & Science	Dr George Argent
May 21st-29th	RHS	Chelsea Flower Show	RHS
May 24th-29th	Group	Tour of Germany	Mrs V.Archibold
July 6th	South East	Annual Propagation Day	Mike Robinson

Rhodo 02 – Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh

Rhododendrons in Horticulture & Science - 17-19th May 2002



An international Conference to be held at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh and deliberately aimed at bringing together scientists, horticulturists and the amateur grower so that each can understand what the other is trying to do. Sponsored by the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, The Royal Horticultural Society and the American Rhododendron Society (Scottish Chapter), we offer an exciting programme of 25 internationally renowned speakers. Subjects range over plant collecting in the wild, disease problems, hybridisation, cultivar registration, the latest in classification and many other subjects. There will be a poster display of recent work and an art exhibition, which aims to be the finest display of rhododendron-related art ever put together. There will also be pre- and post-conference tours, and an identification workshop hosted by Dr David Chamberlain and Dr George Argent for which there are places still available. Registration is already well under way with people coming from over 14 countries. The Conference Dinner will be held in the prestigious Signet Library in central Edinburgh.

For further information please contact:

Rhodo '02, Royal Botanic Garden, Inverleith Row, Edinburgh EH5 3LR. E-mail: Rhodo02@rbge.org.uk