

# The Rhododendron, Camellia & Magnolia Group

THE ROYAL HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY

BULLETIN - 87

MARCH 2005

## CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

Mike Robinson

This is a delightful time of the year, with flowers emerging everywhere: Camellia 'Showgirl' (*C. reticulata* x *C. sasanqua*) is the outstanding plant in the garden, closely followed by *C. x williamsii* 'J.C. Williams', *R. ririei*, *R. moupinense* and *R. dauricum* in its white and purple forms. *R. dauricum* 'Midwinter' is practically over. The urge grows strong to 'seize the day' and get into the garden.

It has been a very mild winter with few real frosts, which, though often forecast, have almost always failed to materialise, and it seems that the season is about two weeks early across the country: *M. campbellii* in flower at Burncoose at Christmas, *M. campbellii alba* fully out at Lanhydrock as I write, *M. doltsopa* 'Silver Cloud', *R. irroratum* and Camellias 'Cinnamon Cindy' and 'Lady Clare' in flower in Cornwall and in Sussex, *C. 'Gloire de Nantes'* and *C. saluenensis* in the Wirral, and *R. x nobleanum*, *Hamamelis* and *Prunus 'Pissardii'* early in Scotland. Fuchsias have stayed in leaf and *Rosa chinensis* has bloomed throughout the winter in Maurice Foster's garden. Global warming? Is it for good or ill?

It is certainly exciting to find more marginally hardy plants thriving across the country. More *maddenii* rhododendrons are succeeding in flowering outside. Many *Camellia reticulata* varieties survive and flower outside in the South East (and the Group's collection will have no problem surviving at Abbotsbury – do come to the opening ceremony on May 7th - see p.8). Evergreen magnolias (those that used to be known as michelias) doing well here in Sussex, with *M. maudiae*, *M. crassipes*, and *M. doltsopa* all undamaged, so far. *M. doltsopa* is covered in flower bud, as it was last year, but it repaid my optimism by almost all getting frosted in March, but then so did the flowers on *M. campbellii alba*.

### Pests & Diseases

On the other hand fungal diseases burgeon in the milder climate – bud blast is everywhere, and not just on *R. ponticum* and the 'Hardy Hybrids'.

Camellia petal blight seems here to stay, and *Phytophthora ramorum*, as Charles Williams reports in this bulletin, continues to cause difficulties. There is a new strain of the beast – one that has apparently infected two English oaks in Cornwall, and which Defra in their wisdom are proposing to call *P. kernoviae*.

That will irritate the Cornish!

(See [www.forestry.gov.uk/phytophthora](http://www.forestry.gov.uk/phytophthora) for details).

Continued on page 2



Kunming *Camellia reticulata* 'Shot Silk' or 'Dayinhong'  
Photo: Jim Stephens

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It is strange the mild weather doesn't seem to have much increased the incidence of powdery mildew on rhododendrons, and one sees species and hybrids of the *Cinnabarina* subsection thriving again in many gardens.

The deer population is out of control (now that really is a reason for wanting a hard winter), but thank goodness deer dislike the great majority of rhododendrons. Perhaps our three genera are not the most difficult to grow in today's conditions: I have had to discard quite a number of roses because they are so prone to Black Spot, but can grow even more rhododendrons, camellias and magnolias!

It was heavy rain today that reminded me that these notes and other paper work are becoming urgent: we have had very little throughout the winter and this is potentially quite serious in Sussex, though not, of course in other parts of the kingdom, which seem to have been wetter than usual. Perhaps wise gardeners in the South East, and possibly elsewhere, should undertake the expense and trouble of installing really substantial rain water tanks in order to safeguard the future of their rhododendrons.

There is, in fact, no doubt that global warming is happening, and that it is affecting our gardening. Debate about how much the human race has contributed to this phenomenon continues, but what is certain is that it's foolish to pump billions of tons of greenhouse gases into the atmosphere and accelerate a natural trend. Whether we, as individuals or as a species, are powerless to affect climate change for the better continues to concern and perturb us, but for the moment at least, gardeners can make the most of the short term advantages.

*Carpe diem* – at this time of year, no problem – there is so much incentive.

Seizing the decade (whatever the Latin for decade is) will be even more exciting with all the new plants that can be grown, the many new introductions from the wild, and lots of hybrids from the milder parts of the world.

As to the century – I am sure I'm not alone in worrying about the problems our descendants will face, but still one of most civilised things we can do is to plant trees (and shrubs!) for the benefit of future generations, so let's get on with it!

P.S. "It is now snowing"

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## EDITOR'S NOTES

John Rawling

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### Member's Plant Exchange

I am pleased to see that the surplus plant exchange is now under way, although we only have two contributors of plants so far. However, enquiries are coming in via the website contact, and the editor has already disposed of some plants.

Other members with spare plants, be it one plant or many, are invited to contribute the details to Stephen Lyus at email: [slyus@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:slyus@yahoo.co.uk) or to 13 Manor Drive Surbiton, Surrey KT5 8NE.

I look forward to the results from the circulation of the list with the Group's Yearbook.

### Rhododendrons at Chelsea for 2005

I was delighted to see the press release from Millais Nurseries that they will be showing at the Chelsea Flower Show (24th-28th May 2005). This will be the first time for nearly ten years that we have seen a rhododendron display there. My congratulations to David Millais for taking this courageous step – perhaps others may follow?

### Plant 'sale' from John Hilliard's garden

Further to the obituary of John Hilliard (lately the Chairman of the South East branch) and the note I enclosed in that Bulletin to many members in the South East region. It referred to the disposal of many interesting and unusual plants from his garden. I can report that a number of members came to the plant "sale", and the donations given amounted to £660. This amount raised was donated to the Motor Neurone Disease Association and St. Catherine's Hospice in Crawley.

The Hilliard family would like to express their grateful thanks to those generous members who helped them commemorate John and Helen, and are delighted that so many of their plants have found homes where they will continue to be cherished.

### Plant wanted

"The Chairman would very much like to hear from anyone growing *R. longipes* from seed numbers AC 1144 or AC 1147, as Alan Clark's other introductions under this species are turning out to be all *R. hunnewellianum*. Spare plants, scions or cuttings would be most welcome."

### NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

**I still need your letters, reports from branches, articles etc, to keep the members up to date! So, please send me your copy for the July Bulletin by 14th June. Please send to: John Rawling, Hon. Bulletin Editor, The Spinney, Station Road, Woldingham, Surrey, CR3 7DD.**

**Tel. 01883 653341 or E-mail: [jr.eye@virgin.net](mailto:jr.eye@virgin.net).**

### Obituary

We are saddened to have to report the death of another prominent member of the Group.

### Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan al-Nahyan

President of the United Arab Emirates  
and Honorary Member of the Group

It is with great regret that we record the death in November 2004 of His Highness Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan al-Nahyan, an Honorary Member of the Group since 1997. During the last two decades, a programme initiated by His Highness has transformed much of the hitherto arid regions of the UAE into a vast green world of crops and gardens. Where rhododendrons were concerned the conditions were not favourable, even for tropical vireyas. However, his love for the English countryside encouraged him to settle in 1989 at Tittenhurst Park in Berkshire. This will be a familiar name to all rhododendron lovers as the estate had earlier in the century been the home



of Tom Lowinsky, a member of the original Rhododendron Association. Taking over a great tradition of Hardy Hybrids, His Highness was soon able to exhibit plants, long established in his garden, first at Vincent Square and then in 1994 in a splendid display in the great marquee at the Chelsea Flower Show. However the main reason the Rhododendron, Camellia and Magnolia Group have to be grateful to His Highness is for his generosity in making possible the publication of *The Rhododendron Story*, celebrating the Golden Jubilee of the Group's Year Book, first published by the Royal Horticultural Society in 1946. This act of benevolence is further reason that we mourn his death and celebrate his memory. He has been an Honorary Member of the Group since 1997 and his name will always be honoured by us. It has to be remembered that His Highness was a true friend of this country and used his great wealth from oil resources to fund many charitable and medical causes over the years since independence.

*Cynthia Postan*

## SEED DISTRIBUTION

*Peter Betteley sends these comments*

Chip Lima's request for contributions of camellia seeds for the seed bank struck a chord with me. I had previously felt some disappointment when only a few types of camellia seeds were offered in the annual seed distribution lists compared to the huge range of rhododendrons and other trees and shrubs available. Surely this cannot be a barometer for the relative

popularity of camellias compared to the other genera covered by our Group?

So far as I am aware the camellia societies are not currently offering a camellia seed distribution service to their members. Perhaps the time is now right for our Group to take a lead and promote the raising of Camellia seedlings. In an effort to practise what I preach I wrote to Chip informing him that I would send some camellia seeds and several hundred were despatched a week or so later in a stout box. Alas, a month later I had a telephone call from Chip who said the seeds had not arrived and he would shortly need to arrange printing of the 2005 seed distribution list. Perhaps we will have more luck next season in getting seeds from plants to the distribution list! I am aware that the odds of raising a new variety that improves upon the many now available are rather long - but if you don't try you will not succeed.

In the last issue of the bulletin our chairman reminded us of Lionel de Rothschild's words "do start hybridising - you get years and years of pleasurable anticipation, and only one day's disappointment - when your hybrid flowers for the first time". I would add that when the seedling flowers and, if you are unlucky, you gain some consolation from the understocks you have available for grafting scions from established varieties or, seedlings, from someone who has been luckier (or more skilled) with their hybridisation.

*See the next issue of the Bulletin - for the continuation of this note by Peter Betteley;*

**"Camellia seeds - the need for a radical approach"**

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## REPORTS FROM EVENTS

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### Joint Societies Autumn Weekend - Oct.2004

The fifth joint Tour with the International Camellia Society was based in Amersham at the Crown Hotel, a Tudor coaching Inn made famous in recent times by its use for scenes in the film, "Four Weddings and a Funeral". The irony of this association was marked when the members of the societies began to arrive just as an earlier funeral party was dispersing. Much muddle, confusion and chaos ensued! There was almost equal representation of the two societies amongst the 38 who gathered for this popular event, though most were members of both societies.

The first visit was to Waddesdon Manor where, after a short introduction and welcome, the party divided; some to tour the house with its famous collection of porcelain and 17th Century furniture whilst the rest went on a conducted tour of the The Water Garden in the private part of the estate, only available to escorted tours.

Later, we visited "Turn End", Haddenham, the home and garden of Mr & Mrs Peter Aldington, who, sadly being unable to welcome us, had recalled their former gardener to show us round. Peter Aldington believed that the garden should be designed as an extension or continuation of the house, so we were treated to a series of small rooms, separated by hedges and fences, each planted to suit the available light or shade. This fascinating concept was one which provoked much discussion on our way to visit the famous Waterperry Gardens, near Wheatley, Oxfordshire. Even at this late time of year, there was much colour in the herbaceous borders and the section devoted to autumn interest was a riot of colour.

The following day, three gardens were visited in nearby Wendover and Missenden. Firstly Bucksbridge House, the home of Mr & Mrs Jeremy Nicholson, whose large garden could truly be called a garden for all seasons and all tastes. We particularly noted *Clerodendrum trichotomum* with its bright blue berries and maroon-red calyces, and the greenhouses were a sight to behold with fuchsias in a wide variety of flower forms and colours. Amongst the many trees within the lawns and borders we particularly noted *Fraxinus ornus*, the Manna Ash, a very dainty tree.

The other two gardens were close together and conveniently close to "The Old Swan Inn" where we later enjoyed a hearty lunch. The first garden we visited was the wild garden of the Swain family, finding many hidden surprises and good autumn colour amongst the woodland and the rough grass areas. Despite the heavy rain which had begun by the time we reached the second garden at Kingswood House, the home of Mr & Mrs Hart, there was much to see and enjoy, as well as the views over the distant countryside. In an area of predominantly alkaline soils, it was pleasing to see rhododendrons and other ericaceous plants flourishing.

David and Eileen Farnes gave a talk on 'Some wild flowers from around the world', showing pictures taken during their many plant-hunting trips.

After dinner we were treated to an illustrated talk on Japanese Pottery by Mr Gas Kimishima.

Sunday morning took us to Ashridge College, where bright sunshine filtered through the golden foliage of the beech forest. We were greeted with refreshments – if we hadn't eaten a hearty breakfast only a short while earlier! The Gardens Manager, Mick Thomson, gave us a brief history of the estate and produced a large bundle of maps and garden plans, some of them, the original designs of Humphrey Repton. We were told of the history and future plans for the estate, with appropriate plans produced at each stop. Our guide kept such rapt attention of the group, that very few members wandered off! The estate is built on an acid sandstone ridge and consequently we saw many banks of rhododendrons. It would seem likely that we may be invited in springtime and help to identify some of the old Hardy Hybrids. We admired the many mature trees, but the spectacular avenue of fifty or more *Liquidamber styraciflua* was outstanding with autumn foliage of red with pinks and yellows interspersed. The transmitted light from the bright sunshine gave the appearance that the avenue was on fire – such was the brilliance!

The final visit was to "Bryher", the home and garden of Group Members Andrew and Judith Hallett, at Potten End, Berkhamstead, who had helped in the planning stages for the 'weekend'. Here was a mature garden with many plants of those in the group title. Perhaps the finest of the rhododendrons was a 25 foot (7.5m) *R. 'Leonore'*, an Exbury July flowering hybrid. Also we noted a 6ft by 8ft wide *R. williamsianum* and a 10ft x 10ft *R. macabeum* which we were told has flowered regularly for many years.

David Farnes.

Photograph of the Tour Group – see back page (p.12)  
For next year's 'weekend', see **Tours** below

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## TOURS

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### **The Rhododendron, Camellia & Magnolia Group Spring Tour 2005**

**Sunday, 17th - Saturday, 23rd April**

*I have received an urgent message from Joey Warren*

"There are currently 4 spaces still available for this Tour, visiting 12 historic and important, mostly private, gardens in Devon and Cornwall, from two Hotel centres - Plymouth Holiday Inn and the Arundell Arms at Lifton.

Full details were published in the last Bulletin, October-November, No. 86, pages 4 and 5.

Group Members from Australia, Russia and Sweden are coming.

**"Why not you ?"**

Please apply straightaway to Mrs Joey Warren, Netherton, Buckland Monachorum, Yelverton, Devon PL20 7NL, Telephone/fax 01822-854022, e-mail: WarrenJosephine@aol.com



## Joint Societies Autumn Weekend in Cumbria -

**Thurs. 13th to Mon. 17th October 2005**

### Outline of the proposed ICS/RHS Autumn Tour 2005:

**Thursday 13th** Assemble at the Hotel for an informal dinner.

**Friday 14th** Morning visit to Holker Hall. Hugh Cavendish will greet us and show us his garden & arboretum. Afternoon visit to Levens Hall and gardens. Informal dinner at the Hotel.

**Saturday 15th** Coach via Honister Pass to Roman Fort then to Boot Station in Eskdale. Take "Li'l Ratty" train to Ravenglass. Coach to Muncaster Castle with lunch at The Buttery. Afternoon, escorted tour of the Gardens and Owl Centre. Return to the Hotel for Formal Dinner, followed by a Talk.

**Sunday 16th** Visit to Lakeland Rhododendron, Camellia & Magnolia Society Garden at Holehird. Then a visit to Kath. Brown's garden near Bowness. Afternoon boat trip on Windermere. Then to Brockhole National Park Centre.

Disperse or return to hotel for dinner.

**Depart** Monday morning 17th October.

Register your interest with **Mrs Pat Short**, 41, Galveston Road, London SW15 2RZ. Tel. 020 8870 6884

e-mail: pplayman@compuserve.com and full details will be sent to you as soon as they are confirmed.

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## SPECIAL ITEM

by Charles Williams, Caerhays

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### PHYTOPHTHORA RAMORUM

#### Gardening Nuisance or National Threat To Our Trees?

In 2003 when Defra first discovered the extent of *Phytophthora ramorum* (a then little known plant pathogen with effects very similar to the rather better known pathogen, honey fungus) their reaction was straight out of the Foot and Mouth handbook. Burn and Destroy! With a level of spin unmatched since the animal epidemic Defra were quick to introduce and foster the alarmist title "Sudden Oak Death" (SOD) to the media to bolster their destruction policy.

As most interested parties should by now know the one tree which laboratory trials have so far failed to infect with *Phytophthora ramorum* is the English Oak. The name SOD relates to *P. ramorum*'s similar, but not identical, cousin which is killing large tracts of Tan Oak, *Lithocarpus densiflorus*, and its undercarpet of *Umbellularia* in the coastal counties of California and, to a lesser extent, in Oregon.

To understand *P. ramorum* in the UK and the extent of its spread throughout the country which has so far gone largely unnoticed one has to understand where it has appeared from and in what form:-

1. A very early RHS press release confirmed that *P. ramorum* had been in existence in Europe "for at least 10 years". Those in the nursery and garden centre trade had for several years been highly suspicious of the high mortality rate among Dutch imports of several species but especially *viburnum* and *hamamelis*. The plants would come into leaf normally then collapse and die and finally reshoot lower down the stem often

with no further problems. Out of the first 350 findings of *ramorum* in the UK over 75% were in garden centres on or close to imported European plants.

Significantly, Defra only started visiting and testing Garden Centres for the first time in 2003 because of SOD.

Pause and consider the logical outcome over many years of these unwitting imports from Europe? It is a raging certainty that many thousands of private gardens throughout the country already contain bought in infected plants and have quite probably done so for some time. Stop and ask the next group of gardeners you come across how many of them have seen a branch of their favourite *viburnum* recently turn brown and die. The number of nods one gets at lectures speaks for itself. If the public really knew what to look for, many more positive findings would emerge.

2. The majority of the larger and better known Cornish gardens have had at least one confirmed finding of *P. ramorum* in the last 18 months. In the main *ramorum* has been found only in rhododendrons and, numerically, virtually all of these have been on *Rhododendron ponticum*. Many of the Cornish head gardeners are adamant that they have seen the disease for many years although the very dry summer of 2003 certainly made it more obvious. Infected *ponticum* which is typically elderly and over mature has dieback with resprouting lower down the stem but this is not at all obvious, even to the initiated, except perhaps in August to October.

To compound matters the scientists have more recently discovered on *ponticum* in Cornwall another, supposedly more virulent *Phytophthora* bearing the name *P. kernoviae*. This also infects *ponticum* often in parallel with *ramorum* and is indistinguishable except under a microscope. *P. kernoviae* has also recently been discovered in Wales. The extent of the spread of this second *Phytophthora* is still unknown, as indeed is much of the science associated with it. Quite whether this explains why only about half of Defra's thousands of tests on (visually) obviously infected *ponticum* prove to be positive is, as yet, unknown. However, without wishing to cast aspersions on Defra's testing techniques, this remains one of the great mysteries.

The end result of *ramorum* and honey fungus on a *Rhododendron ponticum* plant do look much the same. Certainly there is a strong argument at Caerhays and in several other infected woodland gardens that *ramorum* and honey fungus are usually to be found in very close proximity.

The author has no direct experiences of *P. ramorum* outbreaks in Hampshire and Sussex or indeed in the many other locations stretching from Northern Ireland to the Channel Islands. However, increasing numbers of outbreaks do seem to involve *ponticum*, and *ponticum* in proximity to the Channel coastline seems to be more likely to be infected.

In California it is thought that the *Phytophthora* sporangia are moved in water droplets and there is evidence in Cornwall and Hampshire that this may also be the case here.

With the exception of the outbreaks at Heligan and Caerhays, Defra have, quite correctly, been very discreet about identifying infected gardens and nurseries. Equally owners



have, for obvious reasons, sought to play down any potential threats to their businesses. This is why the 300+ confirmed outbreaks in 2004 shown on the Defra website map have had little direct publicity.

It can therefore readily be argued firstly that *P. ramorum* is ALREADY much more widespread in the UK than the public realise. Secondly, any area of the country with *ponticum* thickets or woodland undercarpeted with *ponticum* may well still be secretly harbouring the disease possibly well away from any cultivated gardens in a genuinely wild mountain or forest environment.

Defra both challenge and tacitly conceal these logical conclusions deriving from their own findings. From Ben Bradshaw's ministerial perch, if he admits that *P. ramorum* is as widespread as it probably is, then he and his Plant Health Inspectorate who have failed to contain it might one day be held responsible for its eventual spread into the British tree population. Equally if it is already widespread anyway there may well be nothing the Inspectorate can actually do to contain and eradicate it.

Defra's initial attempts to stamp out the supposedly new disease involved formal Destruction Orders requiring owners to destroy infected plants and associated topsoil down to half a metre. They came close to demanding the closure and total quarantining of some gardens and did close some nurseries. However, a better understanding of the realities of the disease, coupled with the desperate fear of having to pay compensation to owners whose businesses were restricted, has produced a far more sensible and workable set of solutions.

Infected plants and associated leaf litter (or plants in a garden centre/nursery situation) are still being compulsorily burnt with compensation only being offered on a few sites which are the subject of in depth scientific study under a separate management agreement. It is still early days but it does seem that the removal of infected plants genuinely does prevent a build up of sporangia which might accumulate to a level where an associated tree's natural resistance could be overcome so that the disease jumps from the woodland undercarpet to the tree canopy.

At Burncoose, where the nursery is extensively tested every month, we have still remained clear of the disease although infection has been found in *ponticum* on the nursery boundaries.

There would be few people who could possibly argue that Defra and all garden owners should not be doing their utmost to prevent *P. ramorum* gaining hold in British trees. In laboratory tests beech and spruce seem to be especially vulnerable.

In Cornwall *P. ramorum* and *P. kernoviae* has been discovered in some elderly beech trees, *Quercus ilex*, *Quercus cerris* and *Nothofagus*. Most recently it was discovered on 2 oak trees in an isolated woodland site nowhere near a public garden or where there is any public access. In Hampshire and Sussex the tree list appears to extend to some imported oaks and one or two other exotics.

The worry is of course how many infected trees with cankers and bleeding black pores on the face of the bark may still remain undiscovered. However there are perhaps some tentatively encouraging signs:-

- a) The few infected trees have largely been elderly and over mature.
- b) *P. ramorum* was only one of several phytophthoras invading these elderly trees already in their decline. In no cases has the tree actually been killed by the new infection.
- c) When trees decline they are all invaded by phytophthora as part of the evolutionary process of death and decay. Perhaps ramorum is only one of the many plant pathogens at the party?
- d) Infected trees have usually been in close proximity to, if not in fact actually touching, infected *ponticum*.
- e) US scientists from Oregon have recently explained that the UK infection is dissimilar to the US outbreak in one key respect. In the US it is the tree canopy which is infecting the undercarpet and not the other way around. This may be significant.
- f) Burning infected trees quickly seems to work although it would appear that the sporangia can survive for many months. In some instances however cankers and bleeding pores can literally be cut out and successfully removed altogether.

Only time will tell whether Defra's current approach will work to contain *P. ramorum* or whether the containment plans will be quietly dropped if the pathogen is eventually found to have spread rather more widely than the very small countryside team of Plant Health Inspectors have yet discovered.

Only time will tell if *P. ramorum* is a significant threat to some of our trees (even if not to our native oaks) and if we can actually still prevent its spread. US scientists think that they have identified a relatively benign phytophthora in a Chinese forest context which may well be the parent of our *P. ramorum* and which has transformed itself and become more virulent in a totally new environment. If this is true then is it not possible that this Chinese disease has lain hidden or dormant in our woodland gardens for even longer than we all think bearing in mind the origins of so many of our favourite plants?

In 5 or 10 years time hindsight will probably allow us to evaluate the mistakes which will have been made. It may be that *P. ramorum* rivals Dutch elm disease in its destructiveness of our native trees. Equally it may be that *P. ramorum* is by then regarded as just another of the many nasty plant pathogens that are sent to kill a few of the nicer plants in our gardens. We must sincerely hope for the latter outcome.

One thing is however certain. When, over the last 10 years, our holly trees became infected and started to die with a very similar *phytophthora* called *P. cinnamomi* nobody paid any attention and no extra research money was forthcoming because the holly has no economic value or political clout. Similarly nobody pays much attention to the new *phytophthora* killing alders on river banks in Northern England.

It is only because of the use of the term SOD and the public's perception of the traditional significance of our oaks in our landscape that *Phytophthora ramorum* has, perhaps mistakenly, jumped up the current political agenda. Actually the Forestry Commission have for some time been concerned at the damage being done to our native oaks\* by *P. cinnamomi* but that too is far less exciting than SOD. Time will tell when the spin has subsided.

\*Phytophthora Pathogens of Trees : Their Rising Profile in Europe by C.M.Brazier 1999.



## RHODODENDRONS

### NEW RHODODENDRON SPECIES

#### New Species introductions from the wild, now flowering for the first time. Kenneth Cox

I thought that members might be interested in information about some recently introduced Rhododendron species.

A recently introduced species *R. glanduliferum* flowered last summer at Glendoick for the first time. A member of subsection Fortunea, this species has long handsome leaves not unlike those of *R. auriculatum* and its young growth is a handsome bronze or reddish colour. It flowers in July and what we have seen so far are pale pink, in large rounded trusses with quite a good scent. It has not turned a hair so far at Glendoick, as regards hardiness, but will probably be best with some wind protection on account of its large leaves. It is very vigorous and will probably reach 3-4m or more.

#### Subsection Monantha.

Until recently, none of the four species in subsection Monantha were in cultivation. These lepidote species are often epiphytic and their most note-worthy characteristic is that they flower in Autumn. Corolla lepidote, yellow (or purple) in small trusses of up to 3. This subsection is related to subsections Boothia and Uniflora. The distinctive corolla shape and exserted stamens and style and the winged and finned seeds (characteristic of subsection Vireya) are identifying features. This little known group of species may form a link between section Vireya and section Rhododendron.

*R. monanthum*, with small yellow flowers, was introduced by Cox, Chamberlain, Hootman & Hutchison from the mountains bordering the Salween in 1997. This charming but not spectacular plant has flowered both indoors and out at Glendoick in August to December. It is said to reach 1.4m in the wild.



*R. monanthum*

Photo: Kenneth Cox

*R. kasoense* (photo on page 12) was discovered by Kingdon Ward on the Arunachal Pradesh-Tibet border but not introduced. We found it in full flower in autumn 2002, just to the south of where Kingdon Ward collected it, and introduced

it for the first time. It has larger bright yellow flowers than *R. monanthum* and is more vigorous, making a sturdy shrub which might reach 2-3m. I compared the very poor herbarium specimen at the RBG Edinburgh of this species with that of its near relative *R. flavantherum*, from the Tsangpo Gorge, also discovered by Ward, and never introduced.

I think the two are probably synonymous and therefore *R. flavantherum* would take preference. But until the botanists pronounce, and they probably won't until we find *R. flavantherum* in the wild, we will keep the name *R. kasoense*. The 4th species in this subsection, *R. concinnoides* has purple flowers. Another one still awaiting collection.



*R. glanduliferum*

Photo: Kenneth Cox

What we are hoping is that we can cross these Autumn flowering species with some of the spring flowering dwarf species to create a race of autumn flowering rhododendron hybrids. Time will tell.

#### *R. monanthum* Balfour. f & W.W. Smith 1916 H3?

Height 0.3-1m, usually epiphytic. Young growth densely scaly. **Leaves** ovate-elliptic, 3-4.5cm long, upper surface dark green, scaly, lower surface finely papillose, brownish or silvery, densely covered with unequal, broadly rimmed flat scales. **Inflorescence** 1(-2 or more) -flowered, pedicels 2-5mm, densely lepidote. Calyx minute, densely scaly. **Corolla** tubular-funnel-shaped to tubular-campanulate, lobes scarcely spreading, 1.4-2cm long, greenish to bright yellow, style impressed, glabrous, elepidote, exceeding the stamens. **Distribution:** N.E. Burma, Yunnan and S.E. Tibet, 2,450-3,650m (8,000-12,000ft), usually epiphytic.

The most important feature of this species from a horticultural point of view is that it is autumn flowering, September-October in the wild. Two other species are almost certainly better considered forms of *R. monanthum* (*R. flavantherum* and *R. kasoense*). The fourth member of subsection Monantha is the purple-flowered *R. concinnoides*. *R. monanthum* was first introduced in 1997 by Chamberlain, Cox, Hootman, and Hutchison 8208, 8133. So far October to December in cultivation.

For more information, or a catalogue listing these and lots of other fine plants: Glendoick Gardens, Glendoick, Perth, PH2 7NS. [www.glendoick.com](http://www.glendoick.com)



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## CAMELLIAS

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Brian Wright

### The Kunming Reticulata collection.

### The donation of the collection to Abbotsbury Subtropical Gardens will take place on 7th May at 11.30am.

Members will gather at 11.00am for 11.30am to plant the historic collection at the gardens.

Members may remember the articles in the March 2003 Bulletin (No. 81) and subsequent issues, listing the Lammerts/Peer Kunming reticulatas and their history.

Camellia enthusiasts will be aware that this wide range of cultivars were introduced by the two determined Americans, Walter Lammerts and Ralph Peer, to the West, aided by the Australian nurseryman Walter Hazelwood. These were distributed to many parts of the camellia-growing world.

Although quite a number of these plants were received in England, few are to be found growing here today, and none is available through the UK trade. It is largely because of this scarcity and therefore rarity that the Group decided to put together a conservation collection. Abbotsbury was approached as a suitable garden to successfully grow and maintain the collection because of its sheltered and virtually frost-free environment, its staff expertise and ready access to the public.

The search to gather this collection has taken the Group to gardens from Kent to Cornwall and to specialist growers in Europe, the USA, Australia and New Zealand and to Kunming itself in Yunnan, China. A generous amount of propagating material was released to the Group via our colleagues in the International Camellia Society.

Members are welcome to join us at the gardens for the planting. Members will be able to also view the collection of large leaf rhododendron species planted here by the Group in the spring of 2002. (See Bulletin 79 – page 12).

### Cultivars to be planted:

Crimson Robe,	Chang's Temple,
Willow Wand,	Cornelian,
Shot Silk,	Butterfly Wings,
Buddha,	Confucius,
Purple Gown,	Moutancha,
Tali Queen,	Noble Pearl,
Pogada,	Professor Tsai.
It is hoped that further cultivars can be added in 2006.	

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## MAGNOLIAS

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Mike Robinson

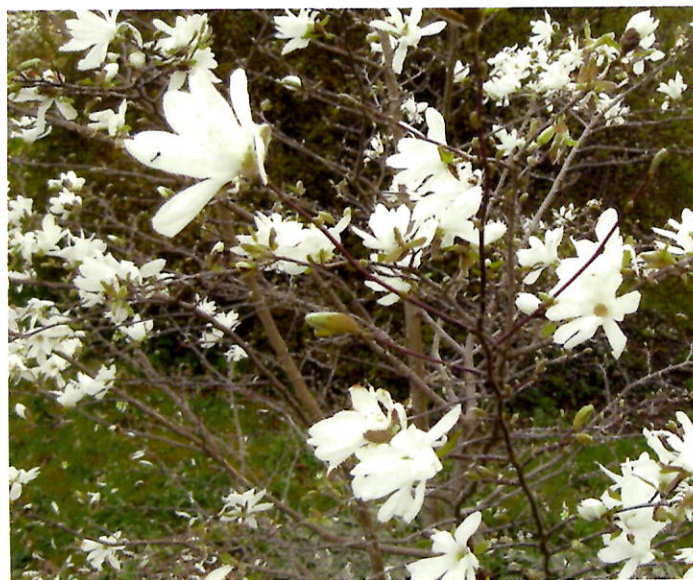
### *Magnolia stellata* – an update

In my review of *Magnolia stellata* in the 2003 yearbook (1) I gave faint praise to two recent introductions from the United States: it is time to inform members of their progress.

Sir John Quicke, who, to my knowledge, is the only person growing *M. stellata* 'Scented Silver' in Great Britain (in Devon)

told me at the autumn 2004 South West branch meeting that he is now very impressed with this cultivar. The photograph confirms the original report that it is pure white and has comparatively upright growth. The significant point however, is that it is now fully living up to its name, being genuinely very much more fragrant than most of his stellata cultivars.

*M. x loebneri* 'Pink Perfection' in my own garden has also begun to impress. In its third season, the grafted plant is now a shapely young shrub about 1m. tall and wide, and is carrying almost 100 flower buds, having also flowered well in 2004. Being so floriferous at an early age is perhaps living up to half its name. 'Perfection', yes, but in the climate of the South East of England it is barely noticeably 'Pink'.



*Magnolia* 'Scented Silver'

Photo: Sir John Quicke

- (1) Robinson, MLA (2003), *Magnolia stellata* – The Species and The Cultivars, *Rhododendrons with Camellias and Magnolias 2003 (RHS)*: 42-48.

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## BOOK REVIEW

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### The International Rhododendron Register and Checklist 2nd Edition

Compiled by Dr Alan C. Leslie,  
International Rhododendron Registrar

*The names of all rhododendron cultivars and groups known to have been used up to 31 December 2002. It covers all azaleas, azaleodendrons and vireya rhododendrons as well as the 'core' of hardy rhododendrons. Includes plant category, parentage, names of those involved in the development of each plant, detailed descriptions, synonyms. Also includes a glossary of terms, and names and addresses of all individuals, nurseries and estates mentioned in the book. Lists 14298 hardy rhododendrons, 12989 azaleas, 108 azaleodendrons and 680 vireyas.*

Paperback 1544pp; 2 volumes in a reinforced slipcase.  
ISBN 1902896505 Price £90

It is a great pleasure to give a brief welcome to this long desired publication and to congratulate Alan Leslie and his colleagues



on completing the enormous amount of labour involved in compiling and producing it. The comprehensive descriptions of registered cultivars are a compliment to those who designed the current registration form, and a contrast to the sparser details given for some older and the unregistered introductions. Alan has made the work especially useful by including many unregistered cultivars. Having an interest in rare and usually unregistered late flowering hybrids, I was surprised and delighted to have found everything for which I searched.

This is a publication every specialist nursery and hybridiser will wish to have, and it is a pity no canvassing was done to test the market for a hardback, as the books will be heavily used by the majority of those who purchase them. Will the next edition be on the Internet, and can one hope for photographs? I am sure members of the Group would be able to provide more than a few!

The books are available through the Group at the special price of £75 plus postage. Please contact our archivist, Pam Hayward, Woodtown, Sampford Spiney, Yelverton PL20 6LJ (Email: RCMGPublications@woodtown.net Tel: 01822 852122)

A full review will appear in the 2006 yearbook

Mike Robinson

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## BRANCH REPORTS

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### Lakeland Rhododendron, Camellia & Magnolia Society

*Fred Tattersall*



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We held our AGM on the 12th October when Bill Revell retired as Hon Secretary having completed his 3-year term in office and Fred Tattersall was elected to replace him. Christopher Bradbury was elected as Treasurer and Shelagh Newman joined the committee. After the official business Bill Revell revisited our Spring Argyll Tour reminding us of the wonderful gardens we had the pleasure of visiting. Bill's photographic skills caught members in many unexpected poses as they gazed in admiration at the many splendid plants.

We were then enthralled by Shelagh Newman's talk in November Entitled "The Rhododendron, Camellia, Magnolia.....and Hydrangea? Society". Shelagh is in charge of the National Collection of Hydrangea at Holehird and has a marvellous Library of Photographs, which she used to illustrate her talk. She convinced many of us that Hydrangeas should play a more important role in our gardens.

In December Dr George Argent gave us a talk on Vireya Rhododendrons. We were given detailed knowledge of his many plant hunting trips to the Far East and the plants that are available in the various regions. He also talked about the Royal Botanical Gardens Edinburgh, which should be included in our next visit to Scotland.

Our Annual Dinner took place on 25th January and Anne Hopper gave us a most interesting talk on her life working on Radio Cumbria. We had 39 members present and a most enjoyable event for everyone.

As I write this report a Deer Fence is in the process of being erected round the Rhododendron Woodland Garden at Holehird. The recent storms caused tremendous damage in Cumbria and over 500,000 trees have been lost. Fortunately not too many trees came down at Holehird.

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## MEMBERSHIP

Miranda Gunn

Many thanks to all of you who paid your subscriptions on time, and particularly to those UK members who have now filled in Bankers Order forms. I hope you have all safely received your Yearbook and Seedlist. We are very pleased to welcome the following new members, some of whom joined early in 2004, and were not mentioned in the previous Bulletin, for which I apologise

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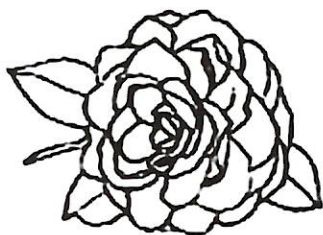
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## NOTICES

Pat Bucknell

### The ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2005

To be held on Tuesday 12th April 2005 at 2.00p.m. in  
Room 21 of RHS Lawrence Hall, London.

#### Please do come to the AGM on 12th April

Mike Robinson, Chairman, Martin Gates, Hon Treasurer, Pat Bucknell, Hon. Secretary, Philip Evans, Hon. Yearbook Editor, John Rawling, Hon. Bulletin Editor are all continuing in post.

There are **vacancies** for Vice Chairman, Hon. Membership Secretary and a Tours Organiser, and we should very much welcome nominations.

Also continuing are the mid-term elected Committee Members, Rupert Eley, Maurice Foster, Dr. R.H.L.Jack TD, Ivor Stokes and Brian Wright.

John Harsant, who will be taking over as co-ordinator of Events and Publicity, and Alastair Stevenson are seeking re-election to the Committee.

#### Branch Changes

Dr David R. Ives, 18 Park Road, Birstall, Leicester, LE4 3AU  
Tel. 011622675118, has taken over as Chairman of Peak Branch following the retirement of David Farnes. David has served on the Committee for 27 years and will be greatly missed. We wish him and his wife Eileen a very happy retirement enjoying their many interests.

Dr. Alun Edwards, Spinney, Park Lane, Barnstaple, EX32 9AJ  
Tel. 01271 343324, has taken over from Margaret Miles. Margaret wishes to have more time to devote to her studies. We wish her every success.

The following publications are available to Group Members and are sold in support of the Group:

#### **International RHODODENDRON REGISTER and CHECKLIST Second Edition - RHS 2004**

As featured. Full Price: £90 Member's Price: £75.  
Postage: UK £7.50, Europe £8, Rest of World £12 (Air)

#### **GEORGE FORREST - Plant Hunter**

Highly acclaimed biography. Superbly illustrated. 239pp.  
Full Price: £29.50 Member's Price: £25. Postage: UK £3.50, Europe £7, Rest of World £13.50 (Air)

**VIREYA Rhododendrons - National Plant Collection**  
46pp, illust. £5.95 post free. Airmail: add £0.50.

#### **THE RHODODENDRON HANDBOOK 1998**

Includes full descriptions of all rhododendron species in general cultivation in Europe and the USA, including Vireyas. 352pp, illust. £30 post free. Airmail: add £5.

#### **THE RHODODENDRON STORY**

224pp illust. UK: £12 RoW: £13.50 (Surface) £17 (Air)

#### **YEARBOOK Back Numbers**

Available for 1979 - 2003, except 1980/81 and 1992.  
Prices are per book and include UK postage. Add £0.50 per book for overseas addresses (Surface mail). Airmail surcharge at cost. Price: £7.50 except 1981/82, 1998 and 1999: £15.00. Second-hand copies are available for most years from 1946 onwards - please enquire.

#### **YEARBOOK CUMULATIVE INDEX 1946-1997**

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## FORTHCOMING EVENTS 2005

Date/Time	Organiser	Location	Event	Contact
<b>March</b>				
March 5th	Wessex Branch	Wisley	Talk by Herb Short on "Early Camellia Introductions from China"	Miranda Gunn 01428 644422
March 5th	S.E. Branch	OA Room Ardingly College	Talk by Colin Crosbie, on "The Woodland Garden in all its Glory"	Barry Haseltine 01342 713132
March 8th	Lakeland Society		Talk by Prof. Derek Ellwood "Plant and Atmosphere Interaction"	Fred Tattersall 01539 443963
March 9th- - April 3rd	RHS	Wisley	Magnolia Festival	Wisley 01483 224234
<b>April</b>				
April 3rd-9th	Lakeland Society	Spring Tour to Gardens of Cornwall		Fred Tattersall 01539 443963
April 12th	<b>Group</b>	<b>RHS</b>	<b>Group AGM and Executive Committee</b>	Pat Bucknell 01503 220215
April 17th	Wessex Branch	Ramster	Branch Show	Miranda Gunn 01428 644422
April 17th-23rd	<b>Group</b>	<b>Spring Tour of Devon &amp; Cornwall</b>		Joey Warren 01822 854022
April 23rd -24th	<b>RHS + SE Branch + ICS</b>	<b>Borde Hill</b>	<b>RHS Main Rhododendron Competition &amp; Branch Magnolia Show &amp; ICS Camellia Competition</b>	Barry Haseltine 01342 713132 ICS & RHS
April 23rd -24th	N.W. & Wales	Ness Gardens	Branch Show	Ted Brabin 01513 531193
<b>May</b>				
May 7th -8th	Wessex Branch	S.W. Wales	Branch Weekend in S.W.Wales	Miranda Gunn 01428 644422
May 10th	Lakeland Society	Holehird	Society Show	Fred Tattersall 01539 443963
May 14th	S.E. Branch	Heaselands	Spring Garden Visit	Barry Haseltine 01342 713132
<b>June</b>				
<b>July</b>				
July 16th	S.E.Branch	Forest Row	Propagation Day	Mike Robinson 01342 822745

Details of the Autumn Events will appear in the July Bulletin



*R. kasoense*

Photo: Kenneth Cox

See New Rhododendron species on page 7.



The Tour Group visiting Ashridge College. Photo: Louise Wolff-Boresch  
See Report on Autumn Weekend 2004 on page 4.