



The Rhododendron, Camellia & Magnolia Group

THE ROYAL HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY

BULLETIN - 90

www.rhodogroup-rhs.org

MARCH 2006

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

Mike Robinson

Following almost a year's work behind the scenes, I am devoting the whole of this Bulletin's 'Chairman's Notes' to an urgent appeal for financial support. I hope to do this very, very seldom, but this is a cause so pressing and unlikely to receive help from elsewhere, so please do read on.

The maintenance of rhododendron taxonomy at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh

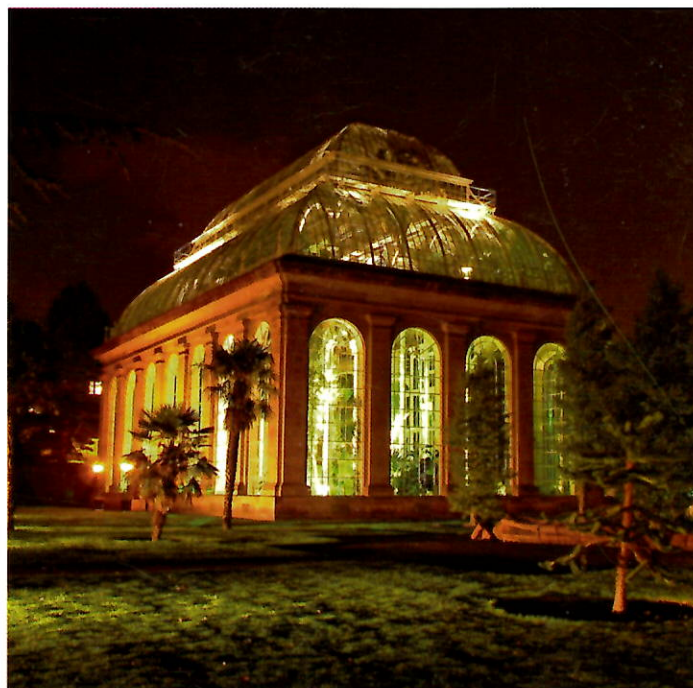
All of you will know, that for almost a century, the RBG Edinburgh has led the world in rhododendron studies. Many of you will also be aware that both David Chamberlain and George Argent have retired recently, that there is no longer a rhododendron expert working at the RBGE, and that the present climate of financial stringency prevents the appointment of even one successor. This will be the first time there will be no active rhododendron taxonomist working at the RBG Edinburgh since George Forrest's expeditions began.

There is, therefore, a real danger that both David and George's unique knowledge and experience may be lost at what, with the advent of DNA and leaf wax chemistry methods, is a critical and truly exciting time for rhododendron taxonomy

The Scottish Rhododendron Society is pursuing finance, through the Scottish Executive, for the permanent appointment of a taxonomist dedicated to rhododendron studies. Achieving this will take some time, and it is most important to ensure that the expertise available in Edinburgh is not lost in the meantime. The Group has been actively seeking to solve this problem, and has received the enthusiastic and wholehearted support of the RHS.

After some considered discussion it is thought that setting up a Ph.D. course on Hardy Rhododendron Taxonomy is the best way forward: the RHS, and in particular, their chief botanist, Dr. John David, recommends this approach. This initiative would ensure the involvement and recognition of Edinburgh in any future revision of the genus based on a modern evolutionary approach: such a revision will take place sooner or later. Dr. Richard Milne, of the University of Edinburgh, has agreed to supervise the studies, and David Chamberlain and George Argent will donate their services on a part time basis.

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The Palm House

Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh

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Apart from preventing the loss of the experience of two lifetimes, why should Edinburgh be the place where rhododendrons are studied in the future? Let us briefly examine the situation elsewhere. Other advances in rhododendron studies are likely to be made in the USA and in China, but present research in these countries gives cause for some concern. Rhododendron studies in the USA tend to concentrate on molecular methods without, perhaps, sufficient regard for morphological taxonomy. Chinese taxonomy, for understandable reasons, is most concerned with discovering and describing new species to add to those described by western botanists. At Edinburgh, however, the expertise in morphological taxonomy, the unique rhododendron herbarium and the access to molecular and genetic techniques co-exist, and permit the blending of new and traditional methods effectively. The opportunity to do this is dependent on the goodwill and present availability of Dr. Chamberlain, so needs to be taken up in the very near future.

The total annual cost of the three year Ph.D. project is estimated to be £18 – 25,000.

Thanks to the generosity of five private donors, approximately £9,500 per annum has already been pledged, furthermore, the RHS will be asked by John David to allocate £2,000 per annum from their research budget. With a proportion of funding already secured, Richard Milne will be approaching traditional sponsors of postgraduate course funding to add their support.

I am now seeking contributions for the remainder, and propose, subject to Committee's approval, to allocate £2,000 per annum from the Group's current reserves (which stand at about £30,000) to add our endorsement to this project. I hope that all our members who are in a position to support this project will donate generously. Success will be assured if we receive just 100 pledges of £200 per annum (or £17 per month). Higher rate tax payers can, of course, offset a proportion of any donation against income tax. If the minimum is exceeded, sponsoring more fieldwork in China will be possible. If we do exceedingly well, it may be possible to invite a Chinese student to contribute to taxonomy studies in Edinburgh, possibly leading to an M.Sc. after a few months work.

You will find donation and Gift Aid forms enclosed with this bulletin.

Please bear in mind that financial support is needed throughout the three year project, and that it is most helpful (and less painful) to spread payments over that period. Money will not be collected unless a sufficient amount is promised.

If you prefer to donate funds specifically to extend fieldwork in China, or to assist a Chinese student to study in Edinburgh, please get in touch with me.

It is hoped that the Ph.D. will start in the autumn of 2006, but a decision must be made in the early summer, so you will note that standing orders commence on June 1st 2006.

Please support this project. David and George have such a fund of generosity, knowledge, experience and enthusiasm. Such things must not be lost.

EDITOR'S NOTES

John Rawling

Help with identification -

arising from Bulletin 89 (November 2005)

Case 1 :- *R. hodgsonii*

I have not received any comment or suggestion as to the identification of the clone 'Poet's Lawn.'

Case 2 :- *Rhododendron* at Hall Grange

(SE Branch visit)

I have received one suggestion to identify the pretty pink rhododendron illustrated.

A member has suggested it is probably *R. 'Naomi Pink Beauty'* ('Aurora Group' x fortunei). This is illustrated in 'The Rothschild Rhododendrons' Plate 64. It is registered as "*Fls. rhodamine pink* (527/2), *shading to a creamy pink in centre of lobes, rayed crimson in tube.*"

This does appear to fit quite closely. Perhaps the members of the branch may wish to make another visit and have a close look in May 2006?

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

RHODODENDRONS & AZALEAS

A Colour Guide – Kenneth Cox

A major new work assessing over 4,000 available varieties, including vireyas. 1,200 colour photographs together with a wealth of informed practical advice. 240pp. Full Price: **£29.95** Member's Price: **£24.50** Postage: UK **£4.50**, Europe **£8**, Rest of World **£15**(Air)

HARDY RHODODENDRON SPECIES –

A Guide to Identification – James Cullen

A major reference work exploring rhododendron classification and structure. 496pp, illust. Full Price: **£35** Member's Price: **£23.50** Postage: UK **£4.50**, Europe **£8**, Rest of World **£15**(Air)

International RHODODENDRON REGISTER and CHECKLIST Second Edition – RHS 2004

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

THE RHODODENDRON HANDBOOK 1998

Includes full descriptions of all rhododendron species in general cultivation in Europe and the USA, including vireyas. 352pp, illust. **NOW £19** post free. Airmail: **+£5**

THE RHODODENDRON STORY

224pp, illust. UK: **£15** Rest of World **£20**(Air)

YEARBOOK Back Numbers

Available for 1946 – 1971, 1980 – 2004. Please enquire.

Please make cheques (Sterling) payable to:

The Rhododendron, Camellia and Magnolia Group.

Payment may also be made by Mastercard or Visa – please include expiry date and security number.

Contact: Pam Hayward, Woodtown, Sampford Spiney, YELVERTON PL20 6LJ, UK. Tel/Fax: +44 (0)1822 852122

Skype: WoodtownUK

E-mail: RCMGPublications@woodtown.net

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A REMINDER!

The RHS Main Rhododendron Competition is again being held at Borde Hill in West Sussex, this year. The dates are **Saturday 22nd** (12.00pm – 5.00pm) and **Sunday 23rd** (10.00am – 4.30pm) **April 2006**. Full details can be obtained from Sarah Owen at the RHS, on 020 7781 3345.

Are your Rhododendrons well-budded this year? If so, do consider showing your prize blooms and make this year a record show again, for entries? Showing is greatly enjoyable, and help will be available on how to display on the Friday afternoon staging (2-6pm) and Saturday morning (7.30-10am).

Setting up always takes longer than you expect! Do get there in plenty of time on the Friday evening or Saturday morning!

RHS Tatton Park Flower Show 2006

Wed. 19th July – Sun. 23rd July

John Harsant is again planning the display for the Group at the show. Do visit the stand if you are able to go. Contact John Harsant on 0151 342 3664 or e-mail: john@harsant.uk.com for any further information.

‘Chelsea 2007’

I have not received any response from Members regarding the suggestion that The Group should have a stand or exhibit at the Chelsea Flower Show (2007)
Please do let me know what you think!

Do e-mail or write to me,
The Hon. Editor, address on page 4.

Lea Gardens have sent us a delightful CD/DVD which delineates the development of their rhododendron and azalea garden over the last fifty or so years. There are many beautiful shots of interesting rhododendrons.

The garden looks well worth a visit and there must be plenty that is unusual to see: particularly striking on the CD is the late flowering hybrid ‘Rosy Lea’ which was raised there (parentage unknown, but clearly a hybrid of *R. elliottii* or *R. facetum*). Lea Gardens is open to the public from March 20 to the end of June.

Contact Jon Tye, Lea Gardens, Lea, Matlock, Derbyshire, DE4 5GH. 01629 534380/260

SEED DISTRIBUTION & PLANT EXCHANGE

Plant Exchange

I am delighted to see additional contributors to the Group list of Members’ Surplus Plants. Pleasingly, the list of Magnolia plants appears to have grown this year.

TOURS

GROUP TOUR to CANADA AND NW USA

18th APRIL to 3rd May 2006

Most will know by now that this Tour is going ahead as scheduled.

Sufficient numbers have been found for this ambitious and exciting Rhododendron, Camellia and Magnolia tour of the West Coast of North America.

If you still wish to join this Tour, please **URGENTLY** get in touch with **ARENA TRAVEL** on **01934 691200**

MARVELLOUS MAGNOLIAS & CAMELLIAS

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We offer over 450 species of grafted Magnolias. Among these are some of the latest hybrid Magnolias and selected clones of Magnolia species.

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Email: infoeisenhut@bluewin.ch

Internet: www.eisenhut.ch – now reworked with many more photos of our listed plants

**We are very pleased to welcome our new
Hon. Tours Organiser – Judith Hallett.**

**The Autumn Tour is now well under way, so read
below and get your enclosed Booking Form off to
her very soon, to ensure a place!**

**JOINT RHODODENDRON GROUP AND ICS
AUTUMN TOUR 2006
from Thursday 21st – Sunday 24th September.**

Our tour this year will be in Herefordshire, an area not visited by the group for some years.

Visits have already been arranged to 'The Laskett', the fascinating garden of Sir Roy Strong, and to 'Hergest Croft' owned by Lawrence Banks, vice president of the RHS. This garden holds one of the finest collections of trees and shrubs in Britain, including magnolias and rhododendrons and offering magnificent autumn colour. I am investigating several other gardens to complete this exciting weekend.

As we have secured a peaceful, reasonably priced hotel, near Hereford, we do not expect the cost to exceed £275. Local members are welcome to join the tour and will be charged accordingly. There are endless fascinating gardens in this area so book the date in your diaries now. We expect this to be a popular tour so book early to avoid disappointment!

To make your life (and ours) easier, we have enclosed a Booking Form as a separate insert with this Bulletin!

Judith Hallett

Hon. Tours Organiser

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 letters and**

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

MAGNOLIAS

Members Notes

Unusual ways to lose Magnolias

There are common ways to lose Magnolias, but here are some less common ones!

When we first moved to our present garden, which already had a well developed *M. x soulangeana*, I took pleasure in buying and planting a small but sturdy *M. stellata* and waited for it to flourish. It grew rather slowly for the next two and a half years, and I watched and waited for the promise of blooms with impatience. Whilst I was out at work, my good wife thought to give a little work to a neighbour who was college trained in horticulture. She was invited to cut back and tie up a series of roses trained against a wall. This duly done she thought to fill a little time by getting out a hoe and putting it to work on a patch of ground that must have looked to her in need of hoeing. Alas, my *M. stellata*, that I had been watching carefully with a deal of anticipation, was in the way and was sliced off at the base, and only the tiniest stump was to be seen on my return from work! It never tried to shoot again.

Time passed. After the passage of several years I decided to buy two yellow magnolias, and planted them with hopes of gratifying results to come in due time. I sat back and waited for time to pass. I went on holiday to the Himalayas, trekking in Sikkim with the intention of seeing rhododendrons growing in the wild. At 14,000 feet, it was impressive to see the tough conditions under which some of them survive. One night whilst I was away my wife was awoken in the middle of the night at about 3am by a lot of shouting and commotion at the bottom of the garden. She got up in some alarm, and could see a number of torches flashing 50 yards away. It proved to be the case that several policemen were chasing "hedge hoppers". These are not bugs or parasites or any ordinary kind of gardener's enemy, but people of the criminal kind, moving from garden to garden to escape detection and capture after theft or burglary. Their route over fence, hedge and flowerbed took them straight through the magnolias. We will never know whether it was heavy boot of policeman or lighter sneaker of a hedge hopper to blame but the net result was that *M. 'Butterflies'* was snapped off at the base. And again no new shoot was ever seen again. (The other 'yellow' has flowered since, but the flowers are white.)

This last winter I put two magnolias, in pots, awaiting planting when space could be made available, into the greenhouse during a cold spell for protection from cold. It seemed like a sensible thing to do. When they were next inspected it became immediately clear that mice had eaten away almost all the bark on one and started on the other, leaving behind their little black calling cards to show who had done this beastly thing!

Magnolia grandiflora, *Magnolia denudata* and one of the sisters sold to me as 'June', have defied the odds and grown away strongly, flowered profusely and given enormous pleasure every year. These are three of my most treasured plants in the garden.

David R. Ives

Birstall, Leicestershire

CAMELLIAS

Some Camellia Gardens in France, and with a nice place to stay:

Les Camellias de la Prairie

The historic collection of Jean Ignal

Early in the 20th century Jean Ignal, a local horticulturist and market gardener, specialised in growing tulips in the Prairie district on the outskirts of Ales in the Languedoc-Roussillon region of the South of France. In 1930 his former employer, an importer of teas, coffee and spices from the East, gave him his first camellia which grew so vigorously that he decided to obtain more – and so began the collection of Jean Ignal now open to the public at the Parc Floral Les Camellias de la Prairie (www.camellia.fr).

La Prairie is an area of flood plain of the river Gardon. Over the centuries the silt of the river combined with the humus formed from the many sweet chestnut trees which once grew here in abundance to provide an area of fertile, light, acid soil with a depth of four metres and the additional benefit of an underground water supply.

In his garden of 1.5 hectares Jean Ignal became passionate about camellias as he soon discovered that these near perfect conditions, replicating their natural habitat in China and Japan, allowed his camellias not only to produce fruit and seeds but for these seeds to germinate. He expanded his collection through planting, grafting, and propagation and through contacts with other camellia lovers. This passion was carried on and further developed from the 1980s by his daughter Madeleine and her husband Jean-Claude Peyrot. The Parc is still the home of the Peyrot-Ignal family.

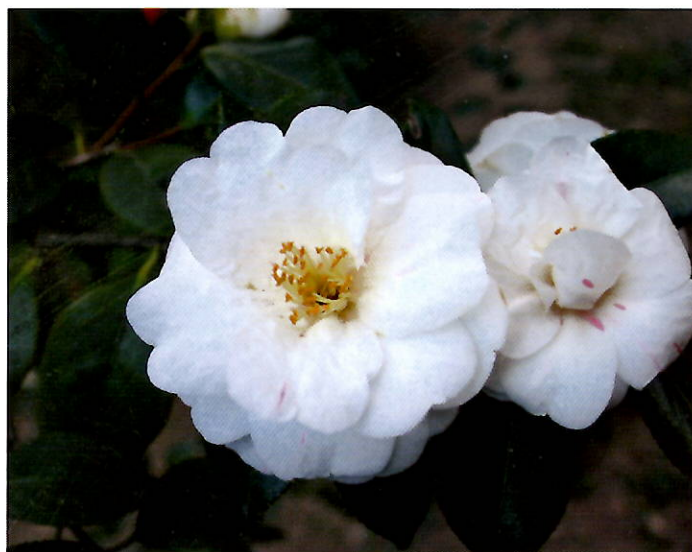
Today the garden is home to around 700 examples representing 200 varieties and cultivars, many of which are 100 years old and unique in France.

On the guided tour almost the first specimen to see is the tea plant loved by all tea lovers – camellia sinensis.

The collection comprises all major groups – the Japonicas, Reticulatas, Sasanquas and a few botanicals – together with their various hybrids. Other acid lovers are represented by magnolias, one twelve metres high, hydrangeas, azaleas and rhododendrons.

The garden has specimens in flower at all times and when we visited in February we had a taste of what is to come with plants literally covered in buds. Our guide assured us in the months to come these will become some 5 million flowers!

Our tour ended at the original camellia planted by Jean Ignal now 100 years old – and still going strong.



Camellia 'Madeleine Peyrot-Ignal'

Photo © Villa Virinn

This article and photograph were provided by Douglas Tulloch and Geoff Pople who own and run Villa Virinn – www.villavirinn.com – a Guest House only 10 minutes from the Parc. Around their home they are in the process of creating a Mediterranean garden.

Other gardens in the immediate area are La Bambouseraie de Prafrance (www.bambouseraie.com) at Anduze and the Jardins Ethnobotanique e la Gardie at Rousson. (www.jardins.ethno.free.fr)

RHODODENDRONS

Members Notes

*We are pleased to receive a response to the article by John David on *R. burmanicum**

Rhododendron Burmanicum, A New Introduction.

John David's note on *R. burmanicum* gave a fascinating and thorough account of this tender species that is of particular interest here in Ireland. There is however a further chapter to the story.

In December 1998 Dr. E Charles Nelson, author of numerous books, formerly taxonomist at The National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin, and an authority on Lady Charlotte Wheeler-Cuffe of Kilkenny, accompanied by D. Sayers retraced this intrepid lady's journey to the top of Mount Victoria.

In a letter dated 6th January 1999 he includes the following: "On the summit there was a small pagoda, with nearby *R. arboreum* in bloom. But the real glory was the display of a Cambridge-blue trumpet gentian which appears to have no name! Frank Kingdon Ward and his wife Jean had seen this in 1956, so we were delighted to find it as it was one plant that Jean primed us to find. I also found the sedum she mentioned – withered but with seed. There were a few butter-yellow flowers on Lady Cuffe's *Rhododendron burmanicum*. I should add that the pine trees and many others had colonies of *Rhododendron cufeanum*, alas not in flower, but easy to spot with binoculars.



R. burmanicum (1st January 2006)

Photo David Davison



R. burmanicum (2nd May 2005)

Photo David Davison

Dr. Nelson kindly sent me seed of his collection of *R. burmanicum* and also of the *R. delavayi* that I now believe to be *ssp. albotomentosum*. He also included seed of an unnamed potentilla now identified as *P. Montis Victoriae*, which I have found to require acid conditions.

The *R. burmanicum* seed (Coll. No. CNDS 26) germinated in 1999 and this year plants flowered for the first time being a pale cream, or butter-yellow. Although Dr. Nelson sent samples of this seed to Glasnevin and elsewhere I gave a seedling to Glasnevin along with a specimen of the potentilla. I also gave a specimen to Lord Rosse and it flowered at Birr Castle this year. I have two specimens flourishing in my garden and both are well budded as I write. I should mention that these plants and those of *R. delavayi ssp. albotomentosum* have been grown outdoors since they were pricked-out, their first over-wintering with the protection of fleece. I just hope that the threatened extra-cold winter does not materialise.

Presuming that the plants are in good fettle after next flowering I should be in a position to distribute a few cuttings.

David H Davison.

Dublin.

LETTERS

'A Letter from America'

Thinking about Vireya Rhododendrons.

O Boy, where does it all start? I joined the Tacoma Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society in 1960. In the fall of 1970 I attended the "Pacific Rhododendron Conference" that was held in both New Plymouth, New Zealand and Melbourne, Australia. If you remember that was back when the new Boeing 707-320Cs had to stop twice in order to get from America to Auckland, New Zealand. While at the New Zealand Conference I became a good friend with an Australian fellow named Don Stanton. Don was one of the very few people in the world at the time growing Vireya Rhododendrons at his home in Wollongong, south of Sidney. When I got to Wollongong Don insisted I visit his home and collection. His Vireyas were OK but I was not overly impressed. Because I lived in Tacoma, Washington where winters could get down to +5°F (not that cold any more), I was not very interested in growing tropical Rhododendrons. But, I did have a small lean-to greenhouse and before long Don started sending me Vireya seed and cuttings. So then I was stuck with Vireyas.

A friend in Seattle gave me a small rooted cutting of the old Veitch hybrid Vireya, 'Princess Alexandra.' Another friend gave me a plant of *R. commonae* and the seed was growing and most of the cuttings from Don Stanton had rooted. After probably 4 years plants began to bloom. Wow. I am really hooked now. Went with my father-in-law to a Rhodie Conference in San Francisco and brought home a few plants and cuttings from Peter Sullivan at Strybing Arboretum. Pete was one of the few people who received seed direct from Sleumer who wrote the book 'An Account of Rhododendron in Malesia'. By 1974 I had over 30 different species and hybrids.

In 1982 the 'Education Committee' of the Rhododendron Species Foundation decided to try a world Vireya Newsletter (*Vireya Vine*). Bob Badger was Editor for the first two years of the Vine and I have done it since then. Eight pages, four times a year. I just finished Issue #74. Great fun and very rewarding. I write the Vine and put it together, my wife Lucie Sorensen-Smith proof reads and makes suggestions, and Fran Rutherford gets it printed and mailed. We mail to about 400 people around the world. We do not charge a subscription fee, but ask for donations. \$10US to start getting the Vine and then when ever you feel obligated.

Now some information about Vireya Rhododendrons. There are about 900 species Rhododendrons in the world. Of that 900 about 300 belong to the Vireya group. Vireyas are Rhododendrons. Of that 300 there are probably only about 170 Vireya species in cultivation. The biggest collection by far is at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh in Scotland. They are lepidote plants with scales on leaves, branches and flowers. In their native habit they can be either terrestrial or epiphytic. Because of the requirement for light, epiphytic plants often grow in and on trees or steep banks covered with moss. In most cases they will be happy growing on the ground if there is room and light. Only a few Vireyas are probably always epiphytic all the time in nature. For instance, the species *R. rubineiflorum*, probably is always an epiphyte in the wild. We think this is so because in cultivation it sends out stem shoots under the surface that grow and bloom. There are very few Rhododendrons that send out underground shoots. The process is called stoloniferous, which Cox says means "bearing stolons which are stems which creep along the surface of the ground, taking root at intervals". World-wide, almost all species Rhododendrons grow at the edge of the forest or in open places. Vireyas are the same. In nature they sometimes tend to be tall upright plants because they need to be able to compete with the ferns, grasses and brambles. In open areas like other species they can be much more compact plants.

Vireyas are easy to grow and bloom and we have guide lines. Don't let them freeze, don't over-water, and don't over-fertilize. Grow the plants in very well draining material. If planted in the ground always build raised beds of well draining mix. In many cases tropical plants like to be root-bound so do not over pot. Overpotting causes a wet medium and root system and that is not good thing. We use fertilizer at 1/3rd strength. Vireyas do not need a lot of fertilizer. Vireyas have the same insect and disease problems as other hardy Rhododendrons and all of these can be easily controlled. Vireyas are very easy to root from cuttings but are quite slow to grow from seed. They can be grafted but we have not seen the need to do so. Our potting mix is equal parts of coarse peat, perlite and clean orchid bark. We also use coarse Oregon pumice which is a little bit bigger than perlite. I think that adding extra perlite is always a good idea.

There are a few places that you can see Vireyas growing. If you are in New Zealand do not pass up the Pukeiti Rhododendron Trust garden, it is wonderful and they have a lot of Vireyas. Also the Eden Garden in Auckland. In Australia the National Rhododendron Garden in Olinda (Melbourne area). In Germany the 'Botanika' in Bremen. In the UK, the Edinburgh Botanic Garden is a must, Kew, Savill and the Eden Project. In the US the Univ. of California Botanic Garden in Los Angeles, Lakeside Park in Oakland, California, the Conservatory in Golden Gate Park in San Francisco and if you are in Oregon please stop by The Bovees Nursery in Portland, we are always happy to have visitors, and have the biggest collection in America. On the Internet go to Chris Callard's wonderful web site at www.vireya.net and look at our web site www.bovees.com.

I must mention a few very special people currently active in the Vireya world. In Australia, Lyn Craven, Graham Snell, Brian Clancy, J. Clyde Smith, Bob Withers and Neil Puddey. In Austria, Brentel Hansvorg. In England (UK), Chris Callard, John Bodenham, Chris Fairweather, Chip Lima, Peter and Ken Cox and George Argent and Paul Smith at the RBGE. In Germany Hartwig Schepker and Martin Montholer. In Japan, Hideo Suzuki. In New Zealand, Keith Adams, Richard Currie, Graham Smith at Pukeiti, David Binney and John Kenyon. And in the USA, Lucie Sorensen-Smith, Fran Rutherford, Bill Moyles, Pete Sullivan, Pete Schick, Mitch Mitchell in Hawaii, Sherla Bertelmann in Hawaii. Sherla handles the Vireya seed exchange world wide for the American Rhododendron Society.

Here is a short list of Vireya species that we think are easy to grow and flower well. *R. aurigeranum*, tall growing bright yellow flowers; *R. caliginis*, small plant with narrow leaves and white flowers; *R. celebicum*, small bushy grower, pink and red forms; *R. jasminiflorum*, small grower with fragrant tubular white flowers; *R. laetum*, big yellow flowers and a tall grower; *R. phaeochitum*, lots of red/brown scales and pink flowers; *R. superbum*, big leaves and flowers, white and fragrant; *R. zoelleri*, tall grower, bi-colored yellow and orange flowers;

E. White Smith

Editor, Vireya Vine Newsletter

Bovees Nursery, Portland, Oregon USA

E-mail info@bovees.com Wright

A quite charming letter sent to Philip Evans, Hon. Yearbook Editor, and passed on to me for publication as suggested below. (Ed.)

Dear Mr Evans

The Rhododendrons, Camellias and Magnolias yearbook 2006 arrived this morning and I began reading it. Magnolias being my favourite plant, and I have always looked on David Farnes as a friend of mine although sadly our paths have not crossed for some time.

When I got to the 3rd article and the picture of *R. dalhousiae* *Rhabdotum* I was so excited I put pen to paper. I fell in love with that flower nearly thirty years ago and consider it the most exciting and dramatic Rhododendron flower I have ever seen and still do, whatever Kingdon Ward might think about it!

I cannot remember where I first saw it (in my 93rd year, my memory is not what it was!), I only know the first plant was given to me by my great gardening friend Keith Lister in 1979 (he has a fascinating garden in Porlock Weir). That plant first flowered in my greenhouse in 1982. I have had flowers from that plant or its seedlings ever since, plus another plant which I purchased from Peter Cox of Glendoick in 1991.

Luckily I have noted in a book all the plants I have planted in my garden here at Broadleas, or I would not have been able to remember these details!

I am sending this to you to print in the next Year Book, or the Bulletin, if you think it is of sufficient interest.

Lady Anne Cowdray

Broadleas, Devizes, Wilts.

More from our tenacious Bibliophile! John Sanders

Thai Magnoliaceae,

Responses to my 'Letters to the Editor' in Bulletin 89 provided a mixed bag! Several members immediately requested source details for the book entitled 'Thai Magnoliaceae'. They likewise had been unaware of this title and on receipt of their copies were subsequently delighted with the illustrations despite being unable to decipher the text - botanical names excepted. My own request for help to locate a copy of 'The Species of Rhododendron in Japan' resulted in complete and utter silence! I still wonder where all those copies of the 1981 edition are residing; do any members have a copy on their book shelves? I am only aware of the whereabouts of just three copies in the UK. A member from Germany has subsequently also advised me that it does not appear in any library in his country. Any public sources would be useful for the benefit of members. However - all was not lost. Just about two weeks after receipt of Bulletin 89 - my continued erstwhile search established that this title had recently been republished in June 2005. How fortuitous was that!

A bit of time spent at the computer keyboard established the Japanese source and just about ten days later my copy arrived via air mail. To whet your appetites I include the following brief appraisal. At the time of writing - I am aware that a copy/copies may shortly appear on the shelf/shelves at Wisley Library et al. 'The Species of Rhododendron in Japan' is a comparatively large and heavy book approximately 10.5 inches x15 inches complete with slipcase and protective plastic cover. It can be best described as a quality production. There are 54 species listed in the index. Each species is depicted as a full page botanical watercolour illustration (I would suggest that the book is worthy of purchase for these alone); on the face page are numerous line drawings of various detailed floral parts. A full page coloured photograph (sometimes with additional smaller photographs) depicting plants growing in the wild is also included for each species. In addition there are also separate maps identifying the various site locations. The text is in Japanese!!! Unable to make comment on this content - but who cares (!) - I can live with the illustrations etc.

If any colleagues should wish to pursue the purchase of this title - I will willingly provide contact details. At the time of writing a UK source was under consideration. Just a word or two of warning - it is an expensive publication; but there is always the chance that this edition may pass into oblivion - just like its predecessor!

John Sanders, Devon.

ewenique@eclipse.co.uk

BRANCH REPORTS

Peak District Branch

David Ives

On Saturday 6th June members met up at Rode Hall, Scholar Green, Cheshire where we were met by the owners, Sir Richard and Lady Wilbraham Baker, who kindly served us a hot drink, and then showed us round their delightful garden, set in a Repton landscape surrounding a red brick

eighteenth century Hall with subsequent additions. A striking series of white Abutilons stood against the walls around the court before the house. A fine and flourishing collection of long established rhododendrons and azaleas with a few magnolias filled a large dell below the house, running downhill towards the lake below, which incidentally encompassed an immense island heronry. Amongst the many fine shrubs the group particularly noted a fine example of *R. Albatross*, a nice *R. wardii* and *R. 'Bonfire'* covered in red flowers. There was a good group of fine, large Ghent azaleas, and our hostess pointed out a group of azaleas raised by Professor Pratt. From the terrace above the dell we had a very good view of the whole collection seen from above. We also toured a very large walled working kitchen garden.

From Rode Hall we drove to Hare Hill, at Over Alderley near Macclesfield, a late nineteenth century garden in the care of the National Trust and now divorced from the house for which it was developed. Unfortunately the Head Gardener was unable to join us at the last minute, so that we were deprived of a guided tour but nonetheless members had an enjoyable visit, seeing many fine mature trees and shrubs in flower including fine rhododendrons, azaleas and magnolias, and noted quite a number of recent plantings of good rhododendrons. The garden boasts a magnificent *Magnolia campbellii*, and groups of *R. 'Polar Bear'*, of *R. 'Loderi'* and of *R. rex ssp. fictolacteum*, but of course we did not catch all of these in flower.



Peak District branch members - Can anyone identify the Rhododendron?
(Suggestions to David Ives)

Finally, in the afternoon, we visited the beautiful garden at Henbury Hall, near Macclesfield, normally only open once a year for the National Gardens Scheme in midsummer, being the home of Mr Sebastian de Ferranti who very kindly allowed us to visit (and when my wife and I went on a preliminary visit he showed us around personally). The Head Gardener took us round the garden, being immensely helpful and very patient. There was a wide range of plants, mostly arranged around an artificial lake, on steepish banks, with fine trees for background. One area in particular was devoted to a large mature collection of hardy hybrid rhododendrons, many of which had in recent time been cut

back quite severely, illustrating how well this is tolerated. The owner and gardener were going through a process of culling the varieties with the least appeal, a point which might be of interest to those aiming to preserve less common old varieties. There were also some very nice Rustica and Ghent azaleas near the ice house. There were many other things to see such as cold frames with old iron working parts rescued from Bodnant in current use in the walled garden, and an indoor swimming pool surrounded by lush and varied hot-house plants. Of particular note was the long row of specimens of Rhododendron 'Fragrantissimum' in large pots, ready to be taken into the house in sequence to fill the place with scent (a delight to which my wife and I had been treated on our first visit).

We also enjoyed an autumn day out on October 22nd, meeting for lunch at Hardwick Hall in Derbyshire. This enabled the members present to thank David and Eileen Farnes for all that they had done to set up the branch and then to lead the branch's annual visits to gardens of interest throughout the area, always meticulously planned, and led with a warm and genial spirit. Afterwards we toured the gardens, the large borders still full of colour; no rhododendrons but many interesting and unusual plants were seen flourishing there.

South West Branch

Alun Edwards

On our garden visits we continue to have plenty of support and are privileged to have a great variety of gardens to visit. We are grateful to the owners and the Head Gardeners for the time that they give to guiding us through the gardens (and encouraging the discussions on "it is" or "it isn't" which we all enjoy).

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In April 2005 Tom Hudson showed us Tregrehan, Par, Cornwall. He continues to develop the garden and since our last visit 10 years ago much more space has been created which has enabled mature trees to be seen in their majesty.

On the same day we visited Shirley and Ray Clemo's garden at Pine Lodge, St. Austell. Ray gave us his unique tour of the garden. This is a plantswoman's garden full of surprises and delights at every turn.

In May a good number of members travelled to North Devon. Richard and Vicky Robinson, on the very edge of Exmoor moorland, astonished us with a demonstration of what could be grown at 1000 feet in a well protected coombe. Only a small height lower down, at Parracombe, Jane Keatley has well planted walled gardens and, in contrast, a woodland/stream area well conducive to growth of our genera as well as much space for future planting.

On May 7th a number of Branch members attended Abbotsbury where the collection of Kunming Reticulata was presented to the garden (and some were planted by Brian Wright who had done so much to gather together the plants). On the way home a few of us called in to Brooklands nursery near Axminster where Gerald Dixon has a large stock of rhododendron. No one left empty handed!

In July at the invitation of Pat and Peter Bucknell 13 members gathered at their house to have a practical lesson on propagation. This day was led by Mike Robinson who took us through taking cuttings, grafting and chip budding. A very successful day.

The lecture that was to have been given by Kenneth Cox in November had to be cancelled due to unseasonable heavy snow and ice.



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Lakeland Rhododendron, Camellia & Magnolia Society.

Fred Tattersall

Our Annual General Meeting took place on the 11th October. John Gledhill had served his term as Chairman and Shelagh Newman was elected in his place. Other newcomers to the committee are Kath Brown and Robert Smith. At the end of the meeting there was a slide show of our Spring Cornish Tour.

On the 8th November Tessa Knott told us how she had transformed a Scottish Moorland into 'The Spectacular "Glenwhan Garden"'. This was helped with some wonderful photography. She then also recounted her recent visit to China from where she had just returned.

On the 13th December Mike Swift from Torosay Castle and Gardens gave us a talk on the Garden and the changes that have been made during his time on The Isle of Mull. He was very free with advice on growing acid loving plants.

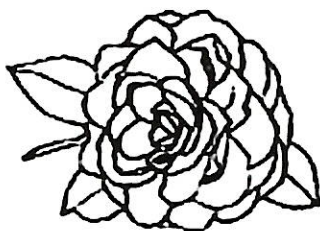
Our Annual Dinner again took place at The Windermere Hydro Hotel on January 24th. Some 39 members attended and after we had devoured an excellent meal we were entertained to a most amusing lecture by Tony Warburton on Country Life including his time spent at Muncaster Castle.

MEMBERSHIP

Rupert Eley

We are delighted to welcome the following new members. We hope they will enjoy their membership. (And I hope they will perhaps take an active part in contributing to: *The Bulletin* in the future! Ed.)

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NOTICES

Pat Bucknell, Hon Secretary

NOTICE OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2006

This is to be held on Tuesday 13th June 2006 at 2.00 p.m. in The Garden Room, Hillside Centre, R.H.S. Garden Wisley. There will be a short Garden Walk in the morning. Please do come. *[Members should assemble just inside the garden entrance at 12.00 noon. The walk around Battleston Hill will last about an hour and give you just time to have lunch before the meeting.]*

Mrs. Judy Hallett has agreed to become our Tours Organiser and we welcome her to the Committee.

Sadly Dr. Robbie Jack TD has decided to retire from the Committee after many years in office, his expertise and commitment will be greatly missed.

Mr Eric Annal and Mr Andy Simons have been proposed and seconded to join the Committee. We are very pleased to welcome them. (Their brief biographies are printed below).

Chairman Dr. Mike L. A. Robinson;
Vice Chairman Mr. Philip Evans;
Hon. Treasurer Mr. Martin Gates;
Hon. Secretary Mrs. Pat Bucknell;
Hon. Membership Secretary Mr. Rupert Eley; Hon. Bulletin Editor John Rawling; together with Yearbook Archivist Mrs. Pam Hayward; Convenor of the Seed Bank Mr. Henry (Chip) Lima are all continuing in post.

Other mid-term Committee Members continuing in post are: Mr. Maurice Foster; Mr. John Harsant; Mr. Alastair Stevenson; Mr. Ivor Stokes and Mr. Brian Wright.

Your voting form is enclosed

BRIEF (HORTICULTURAL) BIOGRAPHIES
of MEMBERS SEEKING TO JOIN THE COMMITTEE
See back page

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FORTHCOMING EVENTS 2006

Date/Time	Organiser	Location	Event	Contact
March				
14th	Group	RHS	Group Committee	Pat Bucknell 01503 220215
April				
18th-4th May	Group	Group Tour to Canada & W. USA		Arena Travel 08700 737 767
21st – 23rd	NW & N.Wales	South Walés	Branch Visit	Ted Brabin 0151 353 1193
22nd – 23rd	RHS + SE Branch	Borde Hill Gardens	Main RHS Rhododendron Competition & Branch Magnolia Competition	RHS Show Secretary and Barry Haseltine 01342 713132
22nd – 23rd	SW Branch	RHS Rosemoor	Branch Flower Show	Alun Edwards 01271 343324
23rd – 29th	Lakeland RCM Soc.	Tour to Scotland	Led by Christopher Bradbury	Fred Tattersall 01539 443963
29th – 30th	NW & N.Wales	Ness Gardens	Branch Show	Ted Brabin 0151 353 1193
May				
6th	SE Branch	Chithurst W. Sussex	Visit to “The Malthouse” the garden of Graham Ferguson	Barry Haseltine 01342 713132
7th	NW & N.Wales	Members Gardens	Branch visit	Ted Brabin 0151 353 1193
7th	Wessex Branch	Ramster	Annual Branch Show	Miranda Gunn 01428 644422
9th	Lakeland RCM Soc.	Holehird	Society Show	Fred Tattersall 01539 443963
13th	SW Branch	3 Private Garden Visits in the vicinity of Yelverton		Alun Edwards 01271 343324
25th	SW Branch	Sherwood, Crediton		Alun Edwards 01271 343324
Visit to Sir John Quick’s garden - Knaphill azaleas				
June				
13th	Hillside Centre Wisley	Group AGM- Full details in this Bulletin (see-Notices)		Pat Bucknell 01503 220215

ERIC ANNAL

I am an enthusiastic amateur gardener with absolutely no gardening qualifications. During my working life I prepared for retirement, with gardening always intended to be to the fore.

My interest in rhododendrons developed during the 1990's, benefiting greatly from the fact that I live quite near to the RBG in Edinburgh. The majority of my hardy rhododendrons are hybrids but, as the result of a behind-the-scenes tour of the RBGE, I "found" vireya rhododendrons. Vireya species have been my gardening passion ever since. At present I am reconstructing the larger of my two greenhouses to provide a suitable environment for my vireyas, so much so that it could be said that I am trying to create a small part of Borneo in Edinburgh!

I have had a collection of cacti since the 1950's and this developed my interest in taxonomy to the extent that in the 1990's I was acknowledged as having advised and collaborated with David Hunt of RBG Kew in the production of the second edition of the CITES Cactaceae Checklist.

I am a member of the Scottish Rhododendron Society, with whom I have a good relationship, and am confident that I can help provide liaison between the RCM Group and the SRS.

Eric Annal.

ANDY SIMONS

I live in a small town in central Bedfordshire and garden a plot around 1/4 acre. I am not greatly interested in ornamental gardening and the space we have is turned over to a collection of Camellias and Rhododendrons. I have in excess of 300 camellia varieties including around 30 species. I have a particular interest in the species as I believe they have a very significant potential for improving garden Camellias, the interest in species and associated hybrids means that I need to travel widely to Camellia Hybridising areas to observe the new varieties both garden and show. I am also interested in Vireya Rhododendrons and maintain a small collection of around 25 varieties in a cold greenhouse. I attempt to demonstrate the wide range of Camellia forms by showing as many of the new varieties as possible at the RHS shows, I normally field around a 100 varieties at the main Camellia show (the early show is normally too early for me).

I act as a registration secretary for the International Camellia Society, collating new registrations for most of Europe. I have been a member of the RHS Rhododendron and Camellia committee for over 4 years and a member of the group for around 15 years.

Andy Simons