



The Rhododendron, Camellia & Magnolia Group

THE ROYAL HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY

BULLETIN – 84

MARCH 2004

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

Maurice Foster

Lime tolerance in magnolias

'A rhododendron set in lime,
Looks like a curate doing time' *Reginald Arkell,*
via Frederick Street, 'Rhododendrons'.

Also true for some magnoliaceae, but the general position is more equivocal - good in parts, like the curate's egg. Some magnolias are supposed to tolerate lime and even thrive; others in the same situation are likely to refuse to grow, let alone flourish. Of course there is a big difference between say, an exposed hot shallow soil over chalk - which presents a physical as well as a chemical challenge - and a moisture retentive medium loam with a high pH and a modicum of shade. While there is no precise consensus as to the relative tolerance of species, most authorities make the general point that physical soil conditions and moisture availability are important. It could well be that, perhaps contrary to general belief, quite a number of species may tolerate or even prosper in pH conditions of 7.5 or even 8.0.

pH is measured on a scale of 1 to 14, with a neutral soil at pH7. Most soils in the UK fall between pH4 and pH8. The scale is logarithmic, so that pH 8 is ten times more alkaline than pH7. Quite small differences in the scale are thus not marginal in practice.

So far as we are aware, no formal trial of lime tolerance of magnolias has been carried out to date. To attempt to remedy this, the Group is setting up a trial project to measure the capacity of 15 species of magnolia to grow and flower satisfactorily in alkaline conditions. We believe the results could be of considerable interest and value to everyone who gardens on what they may regard as 'unmagnoliaceous' soils by providing guidance on the range of planting possibilities.

We are very grateful to Mr Tim Whiteley, a member of RHS woody plant committee B, for providing the Group with an excellent trial plot in his woodland garden at Evenley, near Brackley, Northamptonshire. Mr Whiteley has both acid and alkaline soils in his woodland, so it will be possible to compare the trial magnolias with others already growing in acidic low pH conditions in the same environment.

The assessment criteria will include general vigour, extension growth, incidence of chlorosis, foliage size and colour, and number and colour of flowers.

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Camellia 'C.M.Hovey' – See LETTERS 'The late C.M.Hovey'.

Photo. Iris Wright

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First indications for the trial plot indicate a pH of around 8 and Wisley has kindly undertaken to make a scientific analysis of the soil, which is a moisture retentive medium loam. There is good wind shelter, but plenty of light.

The Group will provide and install the plants and manage the trial in cooperation with Mr Whiteley, who has also kindly agreed to a visit once a year by any members wishing to view it. The plants will be assessed annually over a minimum ten year period and the Group will report their observations and make the information public.

Members have already offered to supply most of the species required for the trial and it is planned to begin planting in March 2004.

I would be interested to hear from any members with experience of growing magnolias in soil of pH over 7.5, preferably with data on rainfall and irrigation, on the physical character of the soil, on mulching and on measures taken to lower the pH, if any. Such additional information would be of great use in supplementing our findings.

Bowing out

This is my swansong with Chairman's Notes as I am stepping down from the chairmanship at the AGM in April. It may not come as a surprise to many members that I am bowing out with another magnolia project having launched one with our top ten survey when I took over three years ago from the late John Bond.

It has been an enjoyable three years and I would like to thank most warmly my colleagues on the committee for their support and also those members whose enthusiasm and encouragement has been appreciated more than they will know. I am delighted that Mike Robinson, current Chairman of the SE Branch has come forward for election to the Group chair at the AGM. At the same time of course, any other member who feels he could be of service to the Group is also invited to come forward.

May I wish all members 'delight and refreshment of mind' from their gardens and in particular from the rhododendrons, camellias and magnolias that flourish there in splendour.

EDITOR'S NOTES

John Rawling

I REMIND MEMBERS OF THE SPECIAL EVENT organised by the Group at the RHS Show on the day after our Annual General Meeting: -

George Forrest Centenary Seminar
2004 marks the centenary of George Forrest's first visit to Yunnan.

Date: 7 April 2004

Venue: RHS Conference Centre,
Lawrence Hall, Greycoat St, London SW1

Time: 10.00am – 4.00pm

Cost: £15, including coffee and tea.

To book your ticket just phone 020 7821 3408

See 'Our Stand at the Show' at the top of the next column

Our Stand at the Show: - Forrest Centenary – Vincent Square 6th - 7th April 2004

Ted Brabin, NW Branch Chairman, would be delighted to hear from anyone who might be able to bring Forrest discovered or introduced species, or hybrids originating from them, for inclusion at the Show in London. Material would need to be available for the 5th April so that it might be included in the stand. If you are able to help he is available on 0151 353 1193.

Members may have noticed that the name and address to contact, on the advertisement in the last issue for the **Group Publications** had disappeared off the bottom of the panel. My apologies, I missed it on the proof!

See the new advertisement on the back page of this Bulletin.

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 28th MAY 2004. 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. (To make the Editor's life a little easier, Articles and letters etc. are preferred by E-mail or on disc.)

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Rhododendron *ponticum* Conference
Sheffield Hallam University
– June 3rd to 5th 2004

The Ecology and Management of
Rhododendron ponticum

I hear that several members of the Group will be attending this interesting conference, from around the country and from around the World. I can send outline details of the programme for interested members, or you can contact Dr Ian Rotherham direct to register your interest and obtain up-to-date information.

Dr Ian Rotherham,
Centre for Environmental Conservation
and Outdoor Leisure, SLM,
Sheffield Hallam University,
City Campus, Pond Street,
Sheffield S1 1WB.

There are speakers listed coming from England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland, India, Germany, Turkey, Spain and USA etc.

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TOURS

Valerie Archibold

**The Group Spring Tour of Gardens in West
Scotland – 25th to 30th April 2004**

This Tour has proved very popular, and is now
Fully Subscribed.

Mrs Valerie Archibold, retiring Tours Organiser, is now at:
Andrews Hayes Cottage, Dalwood, East Devon EX13 7DY.
Tel: 01404 831011 (Mobile: 07855 892956)

**The Autumn Weekend, held jointly with the
International Camellia Society – 21st to 24th
October in the Home Counties North region.**

This annual event will be held in an area not visited before by the Joint Societies. At the time of going to press, arrangements are at an early stage (end January), but to receive full details as they become available PLEASE REGISTER YOUR INTEREST NOW and if possible by Eastertime (9th – 12th April).

This places you under no obligation or firm commitment to the weekend at this stage but it greatly helps the organisers in their planning. A postcard or telephone call with your name is all that is required.

Contact: **David Farnes, 5 Pine View, Ashgate,
Chesterfield, Derbyshire S40 4DN. Tel. 01246 272105**

MEMBERS NOTES

Micorrhizal Fungi

Some years ago I described to the Group some problems relating to low soil calcium levels, and this was followed by an article in the November 1991 issue of *The Garden*. Apart from a small area that originally formed part of the neighbouring field, our plot is on old forest ground, and has never been farmed, so calcium is but one of the soil deficiencies.

In 1968, soon after we moved in, I transplanted a 12' high specimen of *Acer palmatum atrosanguineum*. A year or so later this tree started to suffer die-back. I suspected that honey fungus was the culprit, and dug a trench around the plant to see how matters stood. There was no honey fungus, but the soil proved to be a compacted dry sandy loam, very barren-looking, so I tipped a quantity of garden compost into the trench and from that time the plant began to recover. It has grown well ever since this medicine was applied.

The same magic formula has been used for numbers of other unhappy subjects and with similar results. One case was *Davidia involucrata*. For several years it did not grow at all; it was then transplanted into a bed of leaf mould. Within six months growth started, and it began to shape up as a tree. Twenty years later we are still waiting for it to flower.

Nutrients in the compost could have a beneficial effect for a season or two, but this magic has operated for long periods, over thirty years in one case.

Clearly the plants acquired something from the initial dose of compost, and this has stayed with them ever since. The most likely candidate is micorrhizal fungus, which could well have been present in the compost and which, having entered the root system, remained there subsequently.

Plants absorb water and nutrients via root hairs, which are very small structures. Micorrhizal fungi act in the same way, absorbing plant requirements, but their hyphae extend for some distance through the soil and greatly enhance the root function. Most plants, and trees in particular, make use of this symbiotic relationship. There are many species of micorrhizal fungi, each of which may serve one or a group of plant species. The type of micorrhizal fungus that is significant in horticulture does not produce toadstools; the spores, which are relatively large, develop at the tips of the hyphae (fungal strands).

Dry preparations containing spores and chopped roots are now commercially available and are used on a large scale in landscaping operations. The granular or powder substrate is mixed with soil in contact with the roots of newly planted trees, so that they are inoculated with appropriate fungal species. This is of particular value in disturbed and barren soils, such as may result from motorway construction. Survival and growth rates are dramatically improved by such treatment. Two years ago I used this method in planting a barerooted *Malus* 'Harry Baker' in the area where the *Davidia* had refused to grow. It doubled in height in the first year and, for a young plant, flowered and fruited quite generously. Micorrhizal products are now available at some garden centres, where the trade name is "Rootgrow"; there are three types, one for trees, one for house plants and the other for shrubs and herbaceous plants.

But what of rhododendrons? I once bought half a dozen *Azalea mollis* seedlings, which Borde Hill was selling very cheaply, and planted them in the corner of a bed. For several years they did not grow at all, so eventually I decided to replant them with a generous dose of compost. Some died, but the survivors have since grown and flowered normally. Also, evergreen rhododendrons planted in our deprived soil grow at about two-thirds the rate of similar species planted at Nymans, so micorrhizal treatment might be beneficial here. Unfortunately, preparations suitable for ericaceous plants are not commercially available – the demand is too small. For magnolias and camellias there are no such reservations, and the "Rootgrow" product could be used.

A useful science-based article on micorrhizal fungi appeared in the November issue of "The Garden".

I am indebted to Dr John Dodd of Plantworks for his helpful suggestions.

John Lancaster,

Balcombe, E.Sussex.

In defence of *Rhododendron ponticum*!

It is hard to write affectionately of *R. ponticum*. I know, as I live in South Kerry where my eight acres is largely engulfed, and I have come to the sad realisation that it will never be eradicated – the most I can hope for is to keep it vaguely in check and, in a way, to garden with it rather than against it. For example, a large *ponticum* will provide a welcome windbreak and shelter for more delicate hybrids and species. It is ironic that the first *ponticum* must have been planted with such enthusiasm in the 19th Century having been collected in the wild and brought to the UK, and great excitement must have been felt when it started doing so well!

Here in South Kerry the two worst infestations are clearly traceable to escapees from Ascendancy Gardens (Killarney National Park) to Muckross House and Kenmare/Beara to Derreen Gardens. (Both gardens still flourishing and are open to the public – not for *ponticums* however!).

Nothing grows beneath them, not because they render the soil sterile, but simply because they exclude all light. Each year the Killarney National Park Board award contracts for its eradication in selected patches of their indigenous Oak forest. It's all very well clearing the big ones and poisoning the new growth on the stumps but the seeds carry everywhere and germinate quicker than the acorns and grow faster – it is a losing battle.

And yet..... For the last two weeks of May and the first in June there can be no more impressive sight than the *ponticum* in full bloom here. Against my better judgement I have become fascinated by them and am constantly amazed by the variety. They hybridise very easily, so there is a tremendous difference, one from another. The colours range from very pale pink through all shades of lilac, mauve and violet to deep purple; and the flare varies dramatically – on this side of the bay they are orange to pale yellow and on the Sneem side they are purple to navy blue - but they are all rampant!

My favourite hedgerow *ponticum* I have named "Cinnamon Patricia" purely for my own amusement – don't worry, I'm not about to register her – but she is so pretty that she would surely grace any collection, yet here she is, growing wild and bad mouthed as a *ponticum*! Also the deep purple I have is miles better, colourwise, than a 'Lees Dark Purple' that struggles, and though not quite the intensity of 'Purple Splendour' it is so much healthier.

In South Africa the government have officially classified a whole raft of plants and trees as "alien invaders"; these are not allowed to be sold in Nurseries, and there are clubs in the Country Districts that go out on weekends to tackle the menace of, mainly, Australian Wattles and Eucalypts. There is even a proposal that you will not be able to sell property unless you provide a certificate that the land is free of specified "Invaders". Perhaps our Governments should take note, but on the plus side, I may say that *ponticums* suppress Fuchsia, Montbretia, Gorse, Broom, Holly, Silver Birch, Sally (Willow) and Oak which otherwise in this benign climate would be just as big a nuisance. And they do not bloom spectacularly for three weeks in the Spring!

H.V.Gardiner.

Lauragh, Co. Kerry, Eire



Wild hybrids *R. ponticum*

H.V.Gardiner

RHODODENDRONS

The Main Rhododendron Competition Leaves London.

For the first time since it was held on April 27th 1926, the Main Rhododendron Competition will move out of the RHS Halls at Vincent Square and will take place at **Borde Hill, West Sussex**. It will be part of the famous garden's Camellia, Magnolia and Rhododendron Festival on **April 18th**. Although this move may be by no means permanent, Borde Hill is among the most appropriate venues to host this Competition.

Colonel Stephenson Clarke, who was responsible for much of the planting at Borde Hill, was one of an eminent band of rhododendron enthusiasts who took part in that historic 1926 Competition. I doubt though, that he ever thought that the event would be held at his own country seat. But what could be better: an exhibition of rhododendrons set in the award-winning heritage garden that he did so much to create, particularly in terms of its now mature rhododendrons, camellias and magnolias.

It has been reported that the first Competition attracted so many entries that the organisers were hard-put to find space for them all. Happily they did and among the huge swell of colour were some outstanding vases of *arboreum*, *argyrophyllum*, *augustinii*, *faberi*, *falconeri*, *griffithianum*, *haematodes*, *niveum*, *nuttallii*, *orbiculare*, *thomsonii*, *wightii*, 'Loderi King George' and 'Loders White'. It is interesting to think that 78 years on these blooms could well be shown again, along with, of course, some far more recent introductions.

But for all the historical interest that attaches to the rhododendrons at the Borde Hill Festival, it is not, as its' title makes clear, just about rhododendrons. The ICS (International Camellia Society) is staging a Camellia Competition, and the South East Branch of the Group is organising a Magnolia Competition. Across the three competitions, there will be a total of 93 Classes (including smaller garden and novice Classes) to enter, which should be enough for any would-be entrant to choose from.

Edmund de Rothschild, whose father Lionel also took part in the 1926 Competition, will officially open the show and present the trophies to the winners.

The competitions are open to everyone and, with stewards on hand to help with staging, are not at all daunting to enter.

This is not simply an event for those who love to compete but rather an excellent opportunity to show and promote the plants we so much enjoy to a wider gardening public. There are at least nine Challenge Trophies to be won as well as a generous number of cash prizes.

If it is half as successful as that very first rhododendron competition, it will be a triumph indeed.



R. falconeri A prize-winner at the first Rhododendron Competition in 1926

Photo Mike Robinson

How to enter: To enter the Rhododendron, Camellia or Magnolia Competitions contact the RHS Shows Department for details and application forms now! Tel: 020 7630 7422, Fax: 020 7233 9525 or georgina@rhs.org.uk.

Staging times: Exhibits may be staged on Saturday April 17th from 2 to 6pm, and on April 18th (the day of the Festival) between 6 and 9 am. Display vases will be provided.

Borde Hill: The garden can be found on the Balcombe Road, near Haywards Heath, West Sussex, and is open to the general public from 10 am to 6 pm.

CAMELLIAS

Brian Wright

Kunming reticulata Collection – A Progress Report.

When this project was first proposed over three years ago, it was clear that the focus of such a collection should centre on the camellias that were first introduced to the West by Walter Lammerts and Ralph Peer from 1948 to 1950. During this period, it is believed that the two camellia-philas brought in over twenty different varieties from Kunming. Later this quantity was rationalised to a lower figure but since later imports, up until the mid-sixties, came from the same source (see Bulletin article March 2003), our own analysis suggests that Lammerts and Peer would have been directly or indirectly involved with 22 different identifiable introductions.

The Group's task then was to bring together these twenty two different varieties in order to present them to Abbotsbury Tropical Gardens as part of a Group conservation plan. I use the word 'task' in a literal sense as the search for these now scarce plants has taken us to four continents. This means that contact, including personal visits, has been made with gardens and specialist nurseries in Europe, America, Asia and Australasia. The result to date is that, if all goes according to plan, we should have 17 different varieties to present to Abbotsbury in the Spring of next year.



Camellia reticulata 'Noble Pearl'

Iris Wright

One of the Lammerts Peer collection being assembled for the Group.

The five remaining plants we require are: **Early Crimson** (Zaotahung), **Early Peony** (Zaomudan), **Osmanthus Leaf** (Xiaoguiye), **Spinel Pink** (Mayehyinhung) and **The Dwarf** (Hentienko).

If anyone can help us locate these, please contact me on 01892 653207.

MAGNOLIAS

Mike Robinson

Magnolia Vulcan – the plot thickens

Following observation of two very different neighbouring plants labelled Magnolia Vulcan at The Hillier Arboretum, a news item in the July 2003 issue of *'The Garden'* reported that there appear to be two clones of this cultivar in the UK, the one most often seen having inferior purplish flowers.

After visiting the Jury nursery at Taranaki, North Island, NZ, and looking at plants of Vulcan growing in diverse parts of that country last September makes me think that the real explanation is different. Mark and Abbie Jury are adamant that only one clone of M. Vulcan was ever released, but that it may be more variable than is usual with other magnolia cultivars. Certainly the full range of flower size and colour could be seen in New Zealand, sometimes on the same tree. The biggest flowers were to be found mostly on trees growing on North Island and, although there were some superb flowers as far south as Dunedin, plants on South Island more often had the smaller less intensely coloured flowers that we see in the UK. The largest flowers on young trees, as in the UK, were to be found higher up.



M. 'Vulcan' at The Barretts' Garden, North Island, N.Z.

Mike Robinson

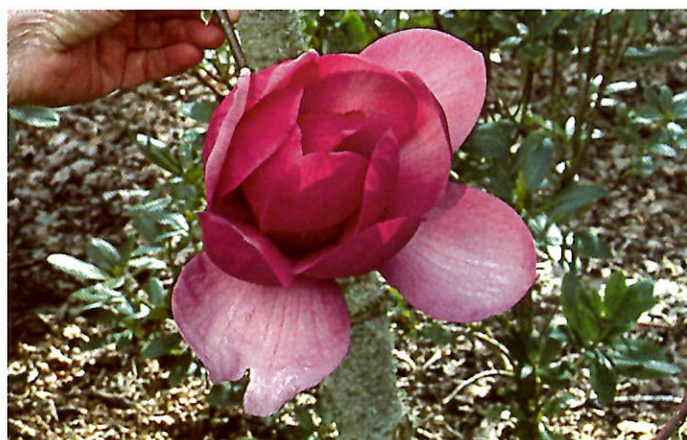
The flower colour seemed to be affected by soils as well as climate. The deepest richest red flowers were on plants growing on the Jury nursery, where the rich volcanic soil has such a high iron content that it is almost magnetic, and there was considerable variation on the flower colour in different gardens throughout New Zealand.



M. 'Vulcan' at The Barrett's Garden, N.Z.

Mike Robinson

It appears therefore that the flower size and colour is greatly affected by three factors: the maturity of the tree: the soil: the climate. A warm climate with short winters and an iron rich soil seem to suit it best, but the very marked variation in the plants at Hilliers' remains a mystery. Perhaps one of these plants is not Vulcan after all. It is just conceivable that it could be the root stock often used by Duncan and Davies, which has now been named M. 'Eleanor May'.



M. 'Eleanor May' – the rootstock.

Mike Robinson

It would be interesting if gardeners growing Vulcan in Europe and the USA could share their experiences by contacting the RCMG Group by post or through the webmaster at www.rhodogroup-rhs.org.

LETTERS

Powdery Mildew

Peter Cox writes from Glendoick, suggesting that the paper presented by Dr Steven Helfer at the 'Rhodo 02' International Conference in Edinburgh should be published in the Bulletin.

(*This I hope to do, subject to permission and space.* - Ed.)

He continues:

The correspondence (in the Bulletin) shows how different plants seem to be ultra susceptible in different places. Here at Glendoick I first noticed it on *R. succothii* and it has remained susceptible but not killed. Most members of subsection Thomsonia are amongst the most susceptible species but the disease varies from clone to clone. Perhaps the worst of all was *R. 'Elizabeth'* and yet its sibling *R. 'Creeping Jenny'* is almost completely resistant. I suggest that John Greswell grows the latter or a different clone to the one we had.

As Stephen Helfer says, the fungus that attacks deciduous azaleas is different from that commonly on rhododendrons, or there may be two fungi involved on the azaleas. Our first attack on azaleas was on some plants bought in from a nursery in the south and it rapidly spread on to neighbouring susceptible clones. Somehow we managed to get rid of it only to have it reappear on a large group of selected *R. occidentale*. We cut these to the ground, removed the top soil and leaves and sprayed the ground and later the regrowth with sulphur spray alternated with Systhane, and it is now fairly well under control.

I think Michael Jurgens's *R. luteum* vary in susceptibility because of the considerable variation in susceptibility within species such as *R. thomsonii*, and that his *R. luteum* would likely have been seedlings which were grafted on to. Some deciduous azaleas are definitely resistant to mildew.

Peter Cox,

Glendoick, Perth Scotland

The 'late' C.M.Hovey

Look in more than one Camellia reference book and you will find that the japonica C.M.Hovey is given as a late season flowerer, although it is true some writers describe it as a mid-season flowerer. My plant usually flowers in early April, but this season produced its first full bloom on December 20th. This uncommon promptness must rank as a new world and Olympic record; at least, I'm claiming it as such until someone in the northern hemisphere tells me that their C.M.Hovey, grown in the open, flowered even earlier.

C.M.Hovey may not be known as a record-breaker but it is a plant that should be in every camellia collection. For those who don't know it, it is an elegant formal double – a bright scarlet red that is true to colour. This is unlike some rhododendrons which are described as being 'blue' but are really lilac, mauve or purple, or somewhere between the three.

And unlike magnolias which are described as 'red' but are really wine or purple in tone. No, C.M.Hovey is proper rich red poised on holly-green leaves that are plump and glossy with a toothed edge.

This gem of a camellia was first produced as a seedling around 1850 by the distinguished American nurseryman C.M.Hovey. It was awarded a gold medal by the Massachusetts Horticultural Society in 1853 and later a FCC by the RHS.

Although it has attracted something like eight different synonyms (gross overnaming, a malaise which does tend to dog the world of camellias) it does not seem to interrupt the fact that, in the UK at least, the plant is popularly and rightly known as C.M.Hovey.

See photograph on the front page of the Bulletin

Brian Wright

Crowborough, East Sussex.

BRANCH REPORTS

North West England & North Wales Branch

Ted Brabin

Our winter talks started with a skilfully photographed excursion round the Kamchatka Peninsular, recorded by Brian Rhodes, which included *R. camtschaticum* and a broad range of other delights. On 22nd November, Ted Brabin assembled a broad selection of autumn and winter flowering Camellias for his talk on this subject, and in January we enjoyed our annual New Year gathering at Ness Gardens. Every one of the home-baked cakes and biscuits deserved a prize but as everything was devoured there was nothing remaining to be awarded a prize.

At the time of writing we are eagerly anticipating Peter & Patricia Cox' account of their travels along the Salween.

Wessex Branch

Malcolm Nash

Lady Adam Gordon very kindly hosted a members' afternoon at Hethersett, Littleworth Cross on 19th October 2003. We began with a walk around the garden and admired much autumn colour, although due to the prolonged summer, we were still too early to see the full seasonal splendour. Some *acers* had coloured well, the chokeberry leaves were scarlet (an underrated shrub), and *oxydendrum* was just beginning to change. It is always a pleasure to visit Hethersett and after our stroll we were invited indoors for a slide talk, "In the footsteps of George Forrest", given by Richard Thornton, following his recent visit to China. This was an aperitif for a full-scale talk that he will be giving to us next year. Then came tea and our usual lively rhododendron conversations.

David Millais gave a very interesting and stimulating evening on 15th November last, showing slides and recounting his experiences on recent visits to the nurseries of north-western Germany. Public appreciation and the profuse planting of rhododendrons in this area inspire admiration and envy. The rhododendron festival at Westerstede is superb and attracts thousands of visitors who come to admire the show and have a festive time. Many beautiful hybrids are displayed, thriving on the peaty soil, mainly produced by local nurseries.

David showed slides of Elisabeth Hobbie at her Linswege nursery, then pictures of Hans and Holger Hachmann's hybrids from Barmstedt – their introductions combine the virtues of old Hardy Hybrids plus compact growth, superb colour combinations and frills. Schneeperle, Goldzauber and Tigrina were particularly desirable. We also saw slides of the Bruns nursery at Bad Zwischenahn. David brought along for sale some of the new Inkarho plants which are well-known hybrids grafted onto lime-tolerant rootstocks.

We were most grateful for the enjoyable evening and were spurred to consider arranging a branch trip to the next Westerstede Festival which will be in 2006.

SE Branch

Mike Robinson

The annual propagation event was held on July 12th at Hindleap, Forest Row, with most attention being given to cuttings of rhododendrons and camellias, but some grafting of *C. reticulata* forms and chip budding of magnolias was undertaken. The results seem to have survived the subsequent tropical temperatures in the green house surprisingly well.

On October 19th members spent a pleasurable afternoon in Maurice and Rosemary Foster's garden, the high turn out speaking volumes for the quality and quantity of the plants we saw. It was an exciting and fascinating experience, inspiring us all to do more to provide autumn interest.

On November 8th at the usual venue within Ardingly College, Chris Franks, the head gardener at Heaselands, gave us a beautifully delivered talk about old and new things there, from the national collection of Knap Hill azaleas, some beautifully grown rhododendrons, conifers, hydrangeas, water side plantings to the wild flower meadow he has developed there. His remarks on propagation were of especial interest.

The Group has recently renewed its association with the Lakeland Rhododendron, Camellia and Magnolia Society, and it has been agreed to publicise and report on each other's activities:

Report from The Lakeland Rhododendron, Camellia & Magnolia Society

Bill Revell

John Gledhill was elected as chairman at the October AGM, taking over from the widely known and respected Jim Fuller who, sadly, died earlier in the year. The season's programme then got underway with an illustrated talk on the 2003 spring tour to Northumberland, allowing the 24 participating members to reminisce on the varied gardens and nurseries which were visited.

In October our nurseryman member, Colin Mawson, gave an interesting talk on his last plant-hunting trip to the western Himalaya – despite the privations and numerous hair-raising hazards, he and his wife still make this an annual event! December saw the first of our two scheduled external speakers when Keith and Rachel Lever, owners of the excellent Aberconwy Nursery, presented an illustrated tour of their own well-stocked garden, pointing out examples of good companion plants for rhododendrons and drawing attention to many unusual and attractive varieties of other genera.

In January, 37 members attended the Society's 3rd annual dinner when the guest speaker was Patrick Gordon-Duff-Pennington, owner of Muncaster Castle which has a famous old rhododendron garden, partly restored and replanted in 2000/1 by Alan Clark. We were both entertained and amused by his light-hearted review of his life and how he came to live permanently at Muncaster despite his best endeavours!

February sees our second outside speaker, Dr. David Chamberlain, talking to members on aspects of rhododendron identification – the highlight of our winter programme; then in March, President Peter Howarth rounds off the lecture season with a talk on winter colour in the garden.

Our spring Show is earlier than usual this year (20th April), to allow for the later date for the spring tour to Argyll (11-16th May), around which will be a series of evening garden visits in Cumbria.

Work has continued through the winter to improve paths in the recently-planted species rhododendron woodland at Holehird, near Windermere, and any National Group members wishing to visit Holehird (which has the only authenticated example of *Rhododendron purdomii* donated by William Purdom's sister) would be made most welcome. Contact secretary Bill Revell (billrevell@lineone.net) for further information.

MEMBERSHIP

Miranda Gunn

News from the Membership Secretary

Many thanks to all our Members who paid their subscriptions on time, enabling me to spend more time in my garden and less time slaving over the computer, a sentiment which I am sure everyone will appreciate. Also, so many thanks to those Overseas Members who sent me lovely Christmas cards from all corners of the globe: they were much appreciated.

We are delighted to welcome the following new members:

UK

Mr. J. Borrett, (SW)
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NOTICES

Joey Warren

The ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2004

To be held on Tuesday, 6th April 2004 at 2.00pm in Room 21 of RHS Lawrence Hall.

Please do come to the AGM on 6th April and to the GEORGE FORREST CENTENARY DAY on 7th April.

Maurice Foster has served 3 years as Chairman, and is now standing down. Under his Chairmanship Group membership has increased, following a policy of improved membership benefits plus increased activities of promotion. The policy of donating themed plant collections to gardens open to the public has continued.

Mike Robinson has agreed to come forward for election as Chairman. He is already a member of the RHS Rhododendron & Camellia Committee, as also is Robbie Jack, so liaison is assured.

Pat Bucknell is taking over from me as Hon. Secretary, and will be a great asset. I have indeed enjoyed my 13 years as Hon. Secretary, and feel very privileged to have worked for the Group.

The other Officers, Martin Gates, Hon Treasurer; Miranda Gunn, Hon. Membership Secretary; Philip Evans, Yearbook Editor; and John Rawling, Bulletin Editor are still continuing in post; and so are the mid-term elected Committee Members, John Harsant, Robbie Jack and Alastair Stevenson.

Ivor Stokes is seeking re-election (fourth 3-year term); both Rupert Eley and Brian Wright are seeking election.

Valerie Archibold is organising the Spring Tour to Scotland, and will then retire.

Referring to page 11 of the October Bulletin, David Farnes will continue to sit on the Committee both as Vice-Chairman and Chairman of Peak branch; Cecily Perring has retired; Jane Idiens, Chairman of Norfolk Branch, has for 5 years arranged meetings and garden visits, thus creating events where members could meet each other and share experiences, and the Committee is very grateful to her. She has now resigned, leaving Norfolk and all East Anglia,

without a Branch. Will someone please come forward to organise a Branch there?

Short horticultural biographical notes on Pat A. Bucknell, Rupert L.C.Eley, Dr Mike L.A.Robinson and Brian E.Wright are given below. Your Voting Form is enclosed.

Patricia Bucknell

I was born in Cornwall and grew up in South Devon. Prior to my marriage I worked as a Trainee Draughtswoman. Peter and I were married in Brixham. We have four daughters and now eight grandchildren.

I trained as a Medical Secretary at Christie College in Cheltenham and have worked both in Cheltenham General Hospital and General Practice.

We have always been keen gardeners, but because of my husband's career, we moved house fairly frequently, thus we were able to have new gardening projects.

After Peter took early retirement, we were able to move back to Cornwall in 1993, to plant a "Cornish Garden" with all our favourite Trees, Rhododendrons, Camellias, Magnolias and other acid loving plants.

I have been Show Secretary of our local Produce Association for the last two years.

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Rupert Eley

Rupert Eley is a great grandson of Charles Eley, a founding member of the Rhododendron Society – a forerunner of the present Rhododendron, Camellia and Magnolia Group.

He was fortunate to have had two grandfathers both of whom, with wonderful but quite different gardens – one at East Bergholt Place in Suffolk and the other at Barrington Court in Somerset – which influenced and instilled in him a love of plants from an early age.

He studied commercial horticulture at Hadlow College, Kent, before leaving to work in the nursery industry.

He moved to East Bergholt Place, with his wife Sara, in 1995 with a view to restoring the gardens there and jointly they founded The Place for Plants, a retail nursery and specialist plant centre.

A long term member of the Royal Horticultural Society and also the Rhododendron, Camellia and Magnolia Group, and currently serving on Floral 'B' Committee.

Mike Robinson

An Oxford Graduate and retired teacher of physics, I have been gardening in Sussex for over thirty years and a member of the Group for nearly twenty, being chairman of the South East Branch for the past three years. My interests extend to woody plants in general, especially wild collected taxa and new magnolia hybrids. My first love is magnolias, closely followed by rhododendrons – species and scented hybrids, and a recent tour of New Zealand has opened my eyes to the fascination of camellia species.

One of my main concerns is the danger of taxa dying out in cultivation, and this led me early into propagation of all three

genera: with others I have run a propagation workshop in the South East for the past seven years.

I am a member of the Rhododendron & Camellia Committee and an active worker within the Magnolia Society.

I shall seek to continue the able work of Maurice Foster in raising the profile of the Group within the RHS organisation, its members and the general public, and wish to co-operate more fully with appropriate specialist groups within and outside the RHS.

Brian Wright

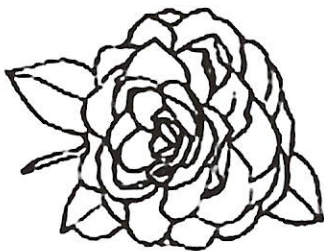
I have a keen interest in collecting, growing and exhibiting rhododendrons and camellias, and to a lesser degree, magnolias and other woody and woodland plants. I have successfully exhibited at the RHS shows and won many prizes. I conducted a survey for submission to the RHS and the Group on the falling numbers of exhibitors at the RHS London Rhododendron Competitions. Consequently, I support experimental moves to hold these events outside London.

I am currently assembling a collection of 'Lammerts/Peer' Kunming reticulata camellias, on behalf of the Group for their presentation to Abbotsbury Tropical Gardens in 2005.

I have been a contributor since 1980 to the Group Year Book and also to the Bulletin, and I am currently advertisement manager to both. I am a member and a past Chairman of the South East branch and initiated and organised the SE Branch Show for some years.

I have previously served on the Group Committee under Walter Magor, Bruce Archibold and of course Maurice Foster.

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FORTHCOMING EVENTS 2004

Date/Time	Organiser	Location	Event	Contact
March				
9 Mar	Lakeland Society	Holehird Gardens	Talk on Winter colour in the Garden by Peter Howarth	Bill Revell 01539 448574
12 Mar	Wessex Branch	Wisley	Mark Flanagan on Eastern Asia	Miranda Gunn 01428 644422
April				
6 Apr	Group	Vincent Square	AGM and Executive Committee	Joey Warren
6/7 Apr	RHS	Vincent Square	Main Camellia Show and Competition	
7 Apr	Group/RHS	Vincent Square	Forrest Centenary Day	RHS 020 7821 3408
16/17 Apr	RHS	Torquay	RHS Plant Roadshow	RHS 020 7821 3408
18 Apr	RHS/S.E.Branch	Borde Hill Garden	Festival of Rhododendrons, Camellias and Magnolias and Main RHS Rhododendron Competition	Mike Robinson 01342 822745
20 Apr	Lakeland Society	Holehird Gardens	Rhododendron, Camellia and Magnolia Show	Bill Revell 01539 448574
23-26 Apr	N.W./North Wales	S. W. Scotland	Branch tour	Ted Brabin 0151 353 1193
25-30 Apr	Group	Scotland	Group Spring Tour	
May				
1/2 May	N.W./North Wales	Ness Gardens	Branch Show	Ted Brabin 0151 353 1193
8 May	S.E. Branch		Hydon Nurseries and private gardens	Mike Robinson 01342 822745
9 May	Wessex Branch	Ramster	Branch Show	Miranda Gunn 01428 644422
11-16 May	Lakeland Society	Argyll	Garden tour lead by Dr. Bill Harpur	Bill Revell 01539 448574
5 May	N.W./North Wales	Various	Visit to Members' Gardens	Ted Brabin 0151 353 1193
22 May	Wessex branch	Various	Visit to Members' Gardens	Miranda Gunn 01428 644422
July				
24/25 July	S.E. Branch	Forest Row	Propagation day	Mike Robinson 01342 822745

Group's Hardy Hybrid Collection at Ramster.

The collection is budding up well and hopefully we will have a lot more flower than last year, which was disappointing. But we have had problems during the summer with the drought, necessitating a great deal of watering. The clay soil baked rock hard, and cracked. The mice, of which there seem to be a plague, tunnelled into the softer watered soil round the plants, sometimes closely followed by the moles. The result of the mice, the moles and the cracks, was cavernous underground tunnels beneath the poor plants many of which were left with nothing but air round their roots. It was only when one or two started to look sick that we discovered the problem, as the mouse holes were hard to spot under the mulch which surrounds the plants. We then had to examine the ground round every plant, (and there are over 400 plants and young trees) spot the holes, and then try our best to open up the ground, without breaking the spade, and fill in underneath the plants with mulch or top soil, only to find, more often than not, that the next day there was another tunnel. My neighbour was muttering darkly about razor blades and spikey wire but the size of the problem defeated us. We had the resident buzzard, a pair of kestrels and a few owls on our side, and looking very well fed all summer. Otherwise I could not find any simple solution. I have just been up to the wood; to admire Christmas Cheer in full flower, and was congratulating myself on the fact that all the hardy hybrids seem to have survived, and are looking healthy, when I could not help noticing, although I must admit I tried not to look, new mouse holes appearing in the mulch. I am busy knocking up some owl nesting boxes.

Ramster Gardens is open every day from 24th April until 27th June this year, and members have free admittance.

Miranda Gunn

Ramster, Surrey

The following publications are available to Group Members:

THE RHODODENDRON HANDBOOK 1998

Includes full descriptions of all rhododendron species in general cultivation in Europe and the USA, including Vireyas. 352pp, illustrated. Members (worldwide): £30 post free. Airmail surcharge: £5

THE RHODODENDRON STORY

200 Years of Plant Hunting and Garden Cultivation 224pp, illustrated. UK Members: £12 post free. Overseas: £13.50 (Surface mail) £17 (Airmail).

YEARBOOK Back Numbers

New copies are 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.

CUMULATIVE INDEX 1946 – 1997

Covering the first 50 editions of the Yearbook, this comprehensive reference work will prove invaluable to researchers and enthusiasts alike. UK Members: £19 inc. post. Overseas Members: £20 (Surface) £23 (Air).

A selection of related second-hand titles is also available – please enquire.

Please make cheques (Sterling or Euros) payable to: The Rhododendron, Camellia and Magnolia Group.

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