



The Rhododendron, Camellia & Magnolia Group

THE ROYAL HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY

BULLETIN – 85

JULY 2004

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

Mike Robinson

Maurice Foster

While it is a great honour and a privilege to take on the chairman's job, it is doubly daunting to follow someone so active, friendly and successful, and I was aghast when Maurice told me he was going to resign the chairmanship of the Group. When one considers how much he has achieved it is hard to remember that he had been in post for just three years. He has involved the Group in many new initiatives and personally ensured that these have all been carried through to fruition: membership has grown to over 800, and the qualities of the Group have become much more appreciated within the ranks of the RHS. I am very glad to report that he will remain on the committee so that we can all continue to benefit from his plantsman's expertise, his experience of publicity, and his wide range of contacts inside and outside the RHS. On behalf of you all I express my heart felt thanks for all he has done for us.

Where do we go from here?

This seems an appropriate time to examine what the Group is doing, and what it should and should not be doing, and my first and most important task as Chairman is to solicit the views of you all – members in the U.K. and abroad. Accordingly you will find **enclosed with this issue a personal statement of what the Group is doing and a list of what it might do** – this is not meant to be exclusive in any way, but to provoke thought and, above all, a response. Please find the time to set down your thoughts, ideas, grumbles, complaints and comments about the Group, its relations with the RHS and external relations, its publications and its activities, and post or e-mail them to me. As I hope to discuss and work out priorities for the future at the committee meeting on September 14th. I ask only that your responses reach me by the end of the first week in September.

The Borde Hill Show

The experiment of moving the main RHS rhododendron show out of London has been a resounding success. 200 feet of bench space - more than twice the space allocated to rhododendrons at Vincent Square was filled to overflowing. There were about four times as many entries as in last year's London Show, and more than four times the number of competitors.

With the exception of Wakehurst, all the historic gardens in the South East exhibited, and it was a pleasure to welcome a delegation from the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh and the return of Windsor, Riverhill, and Sheffield Park to competition.

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Edmund de Rothschild presents The Loder Challenge Cup to Brian Wright at the Rhododendron Show at Borde Hill

Photo: The Editor

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The high standard of the exhibits was evident from the considerable number of fourth prizes awarded, first prizes were won by entrants who would not have considered themselves good enough to enter a Vincent Square competition. The SE branch magnolia competition attracted over 60 entries and anyone from the West Country looking at these must have thought they were in Truro. The ICS hosted a camellia competition of the highest quality. Details will appear in the 2005 Yearbook.

We had visitors from throughout the kingdom, and I should like to thank all members of the Group who attended, and especially those who entered the competitive classes. Gratitude is due to all those from the South East and Wessex branches who worked so hard to ensure the show was of at least as high a standard as it would have been at Vincent Square, and to Edmund de Rothschild for his support in opening the event and presenting the prizes: I know he was delighted to have so much competition after years when he was easily the main competitor. The support received from the RHS was excellent, and made the daunting task of hosting relatively straightforward, and it was, once again, a delight to co-operate with the ICS.

Having the show outside London is clearly a good option for the future, and I hope the Group will act as host again in other parts of the country. The essential prerequisites for success at any location are:-

- A sufficient density of local rhododendron gardens
- A garden willing to host the event
- A local branch with sufficient volunteers to encourage gardens and members to show and to help generally

Where the next Rhododendron competition will be is at present uncertain, but Rosemoor, where the SW Branch show was also a great success, Ness, Borde Hill and Vincent Square have all been suggested.

Seed List

The seed list and distribution is one of the most important parts of the group's activities. It has developed steadily over the years to become a must for serious plant collectors and a mainstay of our finances. This is due in the main to the efforts of Tony Weston, aided nobly by his wife Daphne, and by other members of the family in times of need, as this year when Tony had to undergo a serious operation. Now that the Weston family has decided to pass on this onerous job I am sure that you will all join me in expressing our gratitude for all they have done for the Group.

I am grateful that Chip Lima has agreed to take over their duties: Chip is an American who re-settled in Scotland eighteen months ago. He has advanced degrees in horticulture, and he has owned, at various times, a nursery specialising in Camellia oleifera hybrids, and a landscape design business. He has developed hybrids of Rhododendrons, Pieris and Daphne, and started growing hardy rhododendrons and vireyas from seed nearly thirty years ago.

The Website

The considerable amount of work in starting the group website was done by Chris Callard who is well known as author of the Vireya website (www.vireya.net). He has done a very great deal of work for the Group and I should like to express our heartfelt thanks for all his efforts now that he is retiring from the post of webmaster.

Graham Mills, a member of the South West branch, has generously agreed to take on the job. Graham is an I.T. professional and he and his wife have a wonderful collection of plants in his garden near St. Keverne in Cornwall. His specialities are magnolias, rhododendrons and trying out woody plants of borderline hardiness. His garden can be viewed on his website (www.tregoningmill.co.uk).

Both of us would like many more contributions to the website from members. The Internet is the ideal medium for communicating your excitement about something flowering for the first time, a query about a problem, or a request for identification. Simply contact either of us by email, or send your note and a photograph in the traditional way.

Graham's email is graham@tregoningmill.co.uk and mine is mlarob@hotmail.com

Tours

I know that everyone who went on this year's tour of Scottish gardens this spring thoroughly enjoyed the experience, and regretted that an accident prevented Valerie Archibold joining them. This is the last tour that Val will organize for the Group, and very many members will recognise the very great deal of painstaking hard work that she has put in for many years, and will join me in thanking her once again for the time and effort so willingly given.

At present no-one has volunteered to take up the post of Tours Organizer, which means that next spring will be the first time for many years that there will be no Group tour. There are of course the ICS tour and the Magnolia Society tour to Northern Italy and Switzerland next spring, but there is still room for a Group tour within the UK.

In 2006 the Group is hoping to organize a visit to the Pacific North Western USA, but in the absence of a tour organizer this will have to be placed in the hands of a commercial travel company with the consequent loss of control and increased price.

Any volunteers?

EDITOR'S NOTES

John Rawling

Kathryn Millar, the New Zealand Rhododendron Association President, has been staying with the Group Hon. Secretary and left this note when leaving:-

Ed.

Dear Pat,

Would you please convey to members of the R.H.S. – Rhododendron Camellia & Magnolia Group the warmest thanks of the N.Z.R.A. during the 60th Jubilee Party: so many kindnesses throughout our journey have been heart-warming. I do hope members will make contact with me, if travelling in the South Island; it would be my pleasure to arrange hospitality, or as Michael Jurgens did – a reception for a group.

With warmest good wishes from N.Z.R.A.

Kathryn

15th June 2004

Kathryn's details are as follows:-

Kathryn Millar,

President N.Z.R.A.

"Wendrum" RD3 Leeston nr. Christchurch New Zealand 8151

Phone/Fax (0064) 03 3242511

e-mail wendrum@paradise.net.nz

Obituaries: We are saddened to have to report the deaths of two prominent members of the Group.

The Lady Adam Gordon

Pamela Gordon, who died in April this year, aged 83, will be remembered for her passionate interest not only in gardening in general but above all for her love of rhododendrons and her irrepressible enthusiasm for everyone and everything associated with them. For many years she was an active member of the Rhododendron, Camellia and Magnolia Group, culminating in being Chairman of the Wessex Branch for 11 years. Under her chairmanship the Branch grew and flourished. Her knowledge of rhododendrons and their associated genera was extensive, and she inspired many members with her help, advice and unfailing encouragement.

Her 30 acre garden, Hethersett, at Littleworth Cross near Farnham was her great love. She managed it on her own, after the death of her husband, with the help of one gardener. An old garden, with many plants of historical importance, it was started at the end of the 19th century by James Mangles and his sister. It contains some of the earliest hybrids in the country as well as a large and carefully selected number of species. She was a successful hybridiser, with many of her own crosses flowering in the garden. A regular exhibitor at the rhododendron shows in Vincent Square, she won many awards, of which she was immensely proud, including the Loder Cup in 1995.

Miranda Gunn

There will be a fuller appreciation of Lady Adam Gordon in the 2005 Yearbook, which appears in January.

John Hilliard

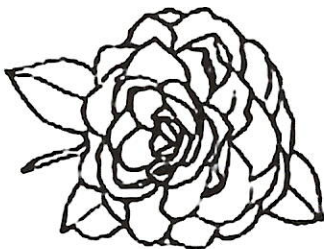
Visiting John, you might miss the house but not the front garden forest of Camellias; this was the home of a remarkable individual. He was always so welcoming. Straight out into the back garden, packed with beautiful and unusual Magnolias and rhododendrons and taken to meet his great friends, the ducks and Himalayan pheasants and then to see his unique collection of remarkable plants. Back indoors, with one of his legendary gin and tonics, conversation was one of his great delights. He had such a full and interesting life that he had a limitless fund of anecdotes, coupled with a delightful sense of humour.

His career as soldier and diplomat took him first to the North-West frontier with the Gurkhas and then to Malaya, Somalia, Iraq and Arabia. Anything that John got interested in rapidly became an all-consuming passion. He was a considerable historian and the English Civil War would keep him up far into the night. When he settled in Crawley, his gardening really took off and was most successful with Magnolias and Camellias. He collected so many that the garden became in his own description, a jungle. He was a pioneer with Camellia reticulata varieties, encouraging many of us to try these superb giant flowers out of doors (see the 2001 Yearbook).

Our thanks to John for running the South East Branch and starting our Spring shows, lately held at Borde Hill Garden.

Everard Daniel

*Camellias from the purest
white to the richest red.*



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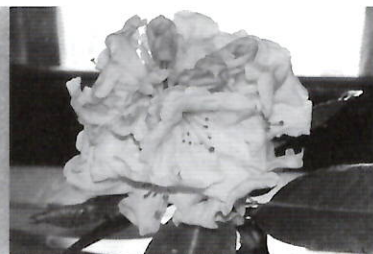
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This year has seen the addition of many of the best hybrids from the USA, in particular those of the breeder Jim Barlup

- Amber Touch
- Cassie
- Coral Mist
- Fire Rim
- Honey Butter
- Ice Music
- Invitation
- Laramie
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breeders.

REPORTS FROM EVENTS

Our Stand at the Show

George Forrest Centenary at RHS Vincent Square 6th and 7th April 2004

For those of you who have not done something like this before, the following account may help you to decide whether to undertake a similar exercise in the future.

Two years ago, I suggested to our then Chairman, Maurice Foster, that we should mark the centenary of Forrest's first trip to China. He quickly said "Yes, let's and your branch could stage a display of some of Forrest's material." Two years ago it did not seem an epic, if short adventure. Having done it, it was.

I asked Paul Cook, Curator at Ness Gardens, where the branch holds its meetings and which was the home of Forrest's first sponsor, Arthur Bulley, if he would join us. (The "us" was actually me but I am not sure Paul realised this then.)

Not much happened until we needed to inform ourselves which plants Forrest had discovered, introduced, or both. The "Jackdaw of Rheims" springs to mind, as we were looking "here and there like a dog in a fair". W.J. Bean produced some information on *Rhododendron* species, which Michael Jurgens revised mightily, adding collection numbers and dates, deleting some and adding others. A similar routine was followed for other species. All of the lists were variable, dependent upon which authority had been consulted. The phrase "would benefit from further research" springs to mind.

Much nearer the event we were inspecting at Ness and other local gardens, what might be in flower on the day. Some specimens bloomed and fell and others just would not move towards flowering. Some were dug up and put in glasshouses and still would not move. With just a little "holy anger and pious grief" we sought help from other sources, including, as first reserve, Rachel Foster, Head Gardener at Exbury. Questions such as "Have you got a *R. sinogrande* in flower?" were sent to her and it was a great relief when she replied positively.

We then started to exhume plants with some promise and gather them at Ness. By then we had promises of plants, both from Exbury and members' gardens in the south.

At 0800 hrs. on Sunday 4th April, Paul Cook and I started loading the van at Ness. Added to the rooted plants were branches of other choice specimens, which all had to be kept in water. After two hours of packing, we set off for Vincent Square, the Curator at the wheel, arriving at 1515 hrs. Then the unpacking started, with all the specimens, some sloshing water over the floor but mostly on us, having to be trolleyed a considerable distance to our stand in the Laurence Hall. That was the easy bit. All of this material now had to be arrayed in as glorious way as possible, even if we could not match Solomon, never mind the lilies of the field. This was where the Curator stepped in. One after the other, I handed him a bit of this or a lot of that. A litter bin full of water or an empty plantpot, for raising something up. Before my eyes, a lovely display started appearing. This went on till 2100 hrs., when we decided to quit

for the night, as we had to be back the next morning, Monday, at 0730 hrs. We were and carried on until about 1700 hrs. All this creative work had taken its toll on the Curator. He looked like a Zombie. Thank goodness I could not see myself – I felt like a Zombie! We adjourned for a coffee but the machine had been put away for the night and we scoured Victoria searching for an open coffee shop. After a sticky bun and drink we were slightly refreshed and again carried on until 2100 hrs. No labelling had been done but, due to no more time being available, the display was deemed finished. Paul Cook had done a remarkable job, which I could never have achieved, with or without help. He did us proud! Adjourning for a brief sleep, we were again back for 0730 hrs., to do the labelling. This was completed at 0950, just ten minutes before judging started. After judging, we eventually discovered that the display had been awarded a silver-gilt medal.

Included in the stand were many specimens from Exbury and a large number brought by Maurice Foster, Mike Robinson and Brian Wright. The best of these were incorporated with the best of what we had brought. Thank goodness, we had far more material than we needed.

Then followed two days of meeting, talking, explaining, reminiscing, admiring other stands and refreshing ours. On Wednesday evening after the show closed we had to dismantle the stand, retrieve all the potted plants, fill the van up and get home. We finished unpacking the van at 0045 hrs. Thursday morning. We enjoyed it so much we have offered to give all the help we can to celebrate Forrest's bicentenary celebration in 2104. This may be more of a spiritual than temporal nature.

Thank you from Paul Cook and from me, to all who provided plant material, information, advice and who enthused us. Despite the strenuous efforts we both enjoyed the experience and learned much, if only not to agree to do another display in the near future.

Ted Brabin

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

The Ecology and Management of *Rhododendron ponticum*.

The Conference was opened by David Farnes on behalf of The Group; he welcomed the delegates from many places throughout the world and considered it awesome for him to meet such a gathering assembled to discuss a single species within one of the largest and diverse plant genera.

Comparative studies of *R. ponticum* & *R. maximum*

On the first day speakers and subsequent discussion concentrated on the genus *rhododendron* and its distribution worldwide, with Dr George Argent giving an overview and David Chamberlain discussing *R. ponticum* in context. Prof. Eric Nielson from the USA introduced the effect of evergreen shrubs on canopy dynamics and compared studies of *R. maximum* with those of *R. ponticum*. Dr Ian Rotherham considered the factors in the success of the species. He examined the spread and distribution of *R. ponticum* together with any methods of control reported from Lundy Island, from natural woodland in western Scotland, from the Black Sea

region of Turkey and the Caucasus range of Georgia. In the evening of the this first day a coach trip was arranged to visit Lea Gardens in the Peak National Park – this was hosted by members of this Group's Peak District branch and the Tye family who have been involved with the gardens since its creation in the 1930s.

Invasion of *R. ponticum*

On the second day, speakers and discussion centred on ecology, genetics and invasion of *R. ponticum*. Dr John Cross from Ireland gave an overview of the shrub in the British Isles and two speakers from Turkey reported the results of their studies from two different regions of their country. Dr Richard Milne from St Andrews University gave a fascinating account of his genetic research involving electron microscopy and DNA typing not only with reference to *R. ponticum* but to many other species within the genus. Reports and results from the two surveys within the British Isles carried out at the Universities of St. Andrews and York and by Dr Jane Stout of Trinity College Dublin, gave an insight into the impact and control costs of the invasion of *R. ponticum*. Dr David Kinsman gave an account of his studies into soil pH with special reference to rhododendrons growing in Yunnan, China, where they are seen growing amongst limestone rocks. In the evening, coaches carried us to visit the gardens at Stainborough Castle with a guided walk led by Harry Leigh before the conference dinner in the Castle.

Control & Management

The theme for the lectures and discussions on the third day was "Control & Management". Speakers from Snowdonia National Park were heavily in favour of total eradication but this was proving too difficult. Other speakers said that control had to be part of a balanced programme and that limited areas were necessary to prevent recolonisation in the wake of a clearance. Trees are always slower to regenerate and can easily be swamped by rapid growth of rhododendron seedlings. Chemical control was considered of limited value and the possibility of biological control was being explored but there were potential hazards of introducing alien predators. Actual physical removal of entire plants was time consuming and very labour intensive – therefore very expensive. A case study by the team from Killarney National Park clearly showed that a planned and balanced programme can and does work providing that all factors were taken into consideration, including especially wind direction and consequent seed dispersal. An interesting and innovative paper from the University of Wales, Bangor, entitled "Uses of *R. ponticum*" raised the possibility of recycling the products after removal. Charcoal from the stems and branches has a very high calorific value but its production creates highly poisonous fumes. At present, economic factors rule out the possibility of any useful gains.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it was obvious that much work and thought had gone into the preparation and presentation of the Papers and Lectures. Much useful information had been exchanged and discussed between delegates. It was most unfortunate that no delegates had been enabled to attend from Spain and Portugal, thus losing the chance of a balanced viewpoint between the two regions in which *R. ponticum* occurs naturally in the wild. In Britain it would seem that problems arise with *R. ponticum* in areas with highest rainfall.

David Farnes

TOURS

David Farnes

Joint Societies Autumn Weekend **21st to 24th September** **in the Home Counties North region.**

REMINDER

Those members who registered an interest in this event will have received fuller details and a booking form for the weekend which is to be held in Buckinghamshire, based at The Crown Hotel in Amersham. Nine gardens are to be visited with lectures on two of the three evenings. IT IS NOT TOO LATE TO APPLY TO JOIN THE WEEKEND as there are a few places still available. Please contact David immediately – by return of post or telephone - as soon as you have read this note. As always, Day Visitors will be welcome, especially as there are two train-lines direct to Amersham from London.

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

SPECIAL ITEMS

I have persuaded the new Chairman to undergo a short interview with the Editor.

I asked him some difficult questions – perhaps a little prematurely – which should give members an overview of the future for The Group.

With a background in Teaching and in Research in Physics, what is it that attracted you into Rhododendrons, Camellias and Magnolias in particular?

"To start with, as with most beginners, I was simply interested in the beauty of the flowers of all three genera, but an appreciation of the new growth and the mature foliage followed very shortly. However, it became clear very quickly that the identification, breeding, taxonomy, origins and history of the three genera are just as much academic a study as is physics. Indeed, with physicists hoping to produce a 'theory of everything' that study is probably more open ended! The education of gardeners to appreciate fully the diversity of camellias, magnolias and rhododendrons must be an important part of the Groups aims, and is naturally one that I am very concerned to expand."

And what is it about Magnolias that makes them your strongest interest of the three genera?

"Well, John, I'm not sure it is the strongest – it may be a sign of my old age (or maturity, though this is doubtful) but species rhododendrons are becoming something of an obsession at present. But to answer your question directly, my interest in plants started in childhood with a fascination about trees, and of course magnolias are trees with two outstanding qualities – the spectacular flowering of the *yulania* section on the naked branches in the spring, and other sections' flowering in the summer when there is, in our climate, a dearth of good flowering trees. In addition, of course, almost all magnolias have the most delicious scent."

How do you see the Rhododendron, Camellia and Magnolia Group developing over the next five years or so?

“What a question! The way things change will be determined by what the members want and by how much effort people are prepared to make: ours is, after all, a group run by volunteers. All I and the committee can do is to make suggestions, but it is the response of members and their willingness to get involved that will determine if these are translated into action and progress.

However in five year's time I dream of seeing the following:

- Continued success for the seed list.
- The Group recognised as having expertise about magnolias and camellias, and in rhododendron taxonomy.
- Fruitful and friendly co-operation with the relevant specialist societies worldwide.
- A programme of rescuing endangered cultivars.
- Involvement in running national flower competitions and shows.
- A plant identification scheme for members and in old or historic but undocumented gardens.
- Continued involvement with RHS and other trials, particularly of species judged as marginally hardy.
- Adequate publicity being given to our activities by the RHS.”

What do you see as your early priorities for the Group?

“The establishment of a clearing house involving exchange for new and rare taxa – plants, scions and cutting material.

A scheme for the identification of both new and historically important taxa.

Establishing a trial of michelia cultivars.

Establishing the Camellia reticulata collection at Abbotsbury and assessing the hardiness and quality of these plants.

One of the immediate concerns must be the review by the RHS of plant committees and their possible reform in 2005. It is vital that the Group finds itself well placed following these.

I need to know members' views on the development of our activities as soon as possible – hence the questionnaire enclosed with this bulletin.”

Are there any subjects you would like to see discussed in The Bulletin?

“I should like to see more members contributing informal notes and photographs of new plants flowering in their gardens, or submitting photographs of plants for identification, and believe that a review of what topics are most appropriate for the yearbook and the bulletin is needed following the enormous success of your ‘new look’ bulletin.”

BOOK REVIEW

Tales of the Rose Tree, by Jane Brown, Harper Collins, ISBN 0-00-712995-5, hardback, 308pp, £20

This is a very unusual book which charts the introduction of rhododendrons to cultivation and their present distribution and prestige in various parts of the world, with an eye to the future of the genus in its homelands and in cultivation. The author concentrates her history into how the genus arrived into Great Britain, but there are appreciable sections on the United States, Australia and New Zealand as well as continental Europe.

The amount of research that has gone into producing the book is simply staggering. It is a fairly safe bet to say that no reader

will leave the book without some new knowledge: for the reviewer, for example, the history of early introductions to the UK from America, and their subsequent neglect, was new and fascinating. The introductions from China in the nineteenth century are better known, but the author was able to find new minutiae even here.

With its concentrations of fact, and with its frequent asides into contemporary related topics the book left me somewhat breathless, and the author's tendency to inform anecdotally the reader of what she feels is politically correct is both breathless, whimsical, and, on occasions, irritating. However her views on the present state of the rhododendron world are interesting, fair and to the point.

Nevertheless this book is a contribution to rhododendron literature that I can recommend to all members. It is a pity that the unfortunate title will not help sell the book to a wider public.

Mike Robinson

RHODODENDRONS

J. McQuire and M.L.A. Robinson

R. coeloneuron at Benmore

Two adjacent plants of this newly introduced species were seen in flower at the Younger Botanic Garden on April 21st this year. They are located behind the house on the drive. It was the first time we had seen this species in flower, and the flowers merited a careful examination.

On both plants the truss had floccose pedicels, and was flat topped with 15 funnel campanulate flowers of a pale magenta pink with the upper three lobes heavily spotted and with a dark blotch in the throat. There were 9 or 10 glabrous stamens: the calyx was densely floccose: the ovary is conoid truncate and the style glabrous, leading to a stigma which is a flattened disk.

The significant point, though, was that, in spite of all the similarities noted, on one plant all the ovaries examined were floccose, and on the other the ovaries were glabrous.

This is, of course, an important diagnostic feature. It leads us to believe that *R. coeloneuron*, at least as represented by these two plants, may be a natural hybrid. It is, in any case, clearly derived from *R. floribundum* or the closely related *R. denudatum*, and some collections at least were made close to drifts of these species.



R. coeloneuron

Photo: John McQuire

MAGNOLIAS

I have received a letter from Philip Evans, the Hon. Editor of the Group's Yearbook, sending a photograph of Magnolia nitida, which adds a useful illustration to Jim Gardiner's article in that publication. Ed.

Dear Editor,

In the 2004 edition of the Yearbook there is an article by Jim Gardiner entitled 'Forrest's Legacy : Magnolia Introductions of George Forrest'. I would particularly like to have included with the article illustrations of three of the species described – *M. nitida*, *M. rostrata* and the Chinese form of *M. globosa* – but I could not lay my hands on slides of any of them in flower. Hardly surprising since all three are only marginally hardy in our country. I have myself a plant of *M. globosa*, from seed collected in 1997 on the Dulongshan in western Yunnan, growing well in our Devon garden, but has not yet flowered. In March I had a look at Sir John Quicke's fine specimen of *M. rostrata* at Sherwood, his garden near Crediton, which he told me had just once produced one flower.

So far as the evergreen *M. nitida* is concerned, a pure coincidence occurred which has given rise to this letter. Only a week after the Yearbook had gone to the printer, Barry Starling, my near neighbour and a well known member of the Group (and who, of course, then knew nothing about Jim Gardiner's article), presented me with a slide he had taken of *M. nitida* in flower, because he knew I collected transparencies of magnolias. It is of Nigel Holman's plant at Chyverton in Cornwall, flowering in 1999.



M. nitida

Photo: Barry Starling

I thought, if you had room, the picture might be of interest to members who have read the Yearbook article, but, like me, had never seen *nitida* in flower.

Philip Evans (Hon. Editor Yearbook).

BRANCH REPORTS

New Forest Branch

Robin Whiting

In mid May members of the New Forest Branch visited Coles, a garden of some 25 acres at Privett, near Petersfield in Hampshire. One of the only 2 staff who maintain this immaculate garden, escorted us round, and told us some of

the garden history. Although parts of the garden date from much earlier, our guide only knew from when Brigadier Otto Nicholson bought the property around the end of the Second World War, and developed the garden, very much as it is seen today.

The garden is 600 feet above sea level and has a clay soil overlying chalk and below that flint. Along one edge of the garden a huge pit showed where the flint had been extracted for local building.



Coles Garden, Hampshire

Photo: Robin Whiting

Brig. Nicholson knew, and was on very good terms with the Rothschild's at Exbury. Many rhododendrons and azaleas were sent from there to form the framework of the garden.

Our Branch Chairman Christopher Fairweather was working at Exbury at the time and remembers this well. The garden was landscaped to draw the visitor forward to explore the many vistas that open up round the gently winding paths.

Our guide related an apocryphal story about Brig. Nicholson who often dined at the Hilton Hotel in London, where the table decorations were often made from evergreen azaleas. On leaving, he would ask for the decorations, and propagate from them.

Not many species rhododendrons were seen but there was a notable *R. pseudochrysanthum* of spectacular size.

The large banks of deciduous azaleas, for which the garden is justly famous, had become rather overgrown. To stimulate new growth these had recently been cut back. A pity from our selfish point of view, but it is good to see work being done that will bring its rewards in future years.

This garden is open occasionally under the NGS scheme and well worth a visit.

Lakeland Rhododendron, Camellia & Magnolia Society

Bill Revell

The absence of late frosts, which have plagued recent past years, meant that this year's blossom has been quite stunning and a busy programme during April and May enabled members to make the most of this.

Our annual Show was held in April, earlier than the traditional May date, and the change enabled many more magnolias and camellias to be entered than in the past. M.'Caerhays Surprise' won the Magnolia class and an unnamed Camellia (one of many) scooped its class award. It is interesting that so many members have fine camellias in their gardens but are unable to

be certain of their names; Macoboy's encyclopaedia is helpful, but not sufficiently comprehensive.

Among the rhododendrons, *R. macabeum* and *R. russatum* were class winners, but the "Best in Show" went to a perfectly formed truss of an unnamed hybrid. The photography classes were also well supported.

In May, 23 members went on our tour to Argyll, visiting Brodick on Arran and Torosay on Mull as well as many mainland gardens. We were delighted to be taken round Baravalla by Peter Cox and Peter Hutchinson and to have the benefit of their unrivalled knowledge and experience. We all picked up useful cultivation tips!

Around the tour we also fitted in three visits to local gardens, including Muncaster Castle which was quite magnificent, and concluding the season with a visit to our chairman John Gledhill's garden, although I hasten to add that his wife Ann is an equally enthusiastic gardener and rhodoholic!

SE Branch

Mike Robinson

Saturday February 28th. was an occasion for members' talks: John Rawling, Brian Wright and Mike Robinson gave short presentations on rhododendrons, camellias and magnolias (respectively) in New Zealand following the Magnolia Society tour in Autumn 2003, and Brian set the scene with some outstanding slides of New Zealand scenery. Noteworthy were the big leaf rhododendrons – especially the Kingdon Ward *R. protistum* in full flower at Pukeiti, the Reticulata camellias, and the new 'red' and purple magnolia hybrids being raised over there.

As is reported elsewhere the branch, in conjunction with the RHS and the ICS, hosted a Festival of Rhododendrons, Magnolias and Camellias on Sunday April 18th. at Borde Hill Garden. We were delighted by the success of this event, and that some branch members, who would not normally consider showing at national level, won prizes and trophies in the face of competition from the great gardens. We can also report that the arrangements were no more onerous than usual, because of excellent support from the Shows Department of the RHS, who did not only the setting up of show benches but also the clearing away. Hosting a national show is well within the capability of any of the Group's branches.

On Saturday May 8th. there was an outing to Surrey. In the morning we went to Hydon Nurseries where Arthur George showed us his comprehensive and beautifully tidy nursery and his interesting garden. As well as his famous hybrids we noted some new ones and plenty of species too. *R. 'Golden Clipper'* ('New Comet' \times *fortunei*) sticks in the mind as a lovely golden yellow with none of the faults of *R. Hotei*.

After lunch Rod White led us round his plantsman's garden in Worplesdon. This is so full of rare, delightful and unusual plants of many genera, with an outstanding collection of woodland perennials, for example *meconopsis chilonifolia*, *saxifraga fortunea rubra*, and *epimedium 'Enchantress'* and bulbous plants such as *trillium grandiflorum plenum* and *uvularia 'Linda Windsor'* as well as a collection of fine forms of rhododendron species; but if the only thing we had seen had been Rod's large *R. ovatum* with its pale pink fragrant flowers we should have thought the journey worthwhile. Rod was presented with a wild collected *R. traillianum*.

Following this we moved on to the nearby garden of Rod and Val Wild, where we were treated to a gourmet tea in their fascinating 15th century farmhouse. Theirs is a different garden altogether, semi formal plantings near the house with great use of water and with a real 'English landscape' garden carefully planted for views and surrounding a lake further away. As well as an impressive collection of magnolia hybrids we saw many thriving and rare trees – notably *glyptostrobus pensilis* very happy near the lake, and two species of *maytenus*. We presented the Wilds with *Cornus 'Gloria Burchett'*, and returned home with that warm glow that comes from receiving a day's generous hospitality.

MEMBERSHIP

Miranda Gunn

We are delighted to welcome the new members listed below:

UK

Mrs. A.R.Bigham,
Hurston Place, Pulborough, West Sussex, RH20 2EW
Tel. 01903 742428

Dr. H.F.Brown,
Shieldaig Cottage, Gairloch, Ross-shire, IV21 2AN
Tel. 01445 741275 mcbroon@aol.com

Mr. Paul Cook,
University of Liverpool Botanic Gardens, Ness,
South Wirral, Cheshire.

Mrs. M.C.Fergusson,
Brookvale, La Rue du Pont, St. John, Jersey, JE3 4FF,
Channel Islands.
Tel. 01534 864864 maxine@sensosft.com

Dr. P.J.S.Furieux,
Southway House, Church Street, Hartfield,
East Sussex, TW7 4AQ
Tel. 01892 770820 peterandjenny@southway.co.uk

Mr. H.B.Jackman,
9 Foxhill Drive, Leeds, West Yorkshire, LS16 5PG.
Tel. 0113 2751197

Mr. J.L.Jemmett,
44 St. Brannocks Road, Ilfracombe, Devon, EX34 8EH
Tel. 012271 862177

Mrs. E.Lewis,
29 Oarside Drive, Wallasey, Cheshire, CH45 5HZ.
Tel. 0151 6391853

Mr. A.R.Lucas,
Orchard Lea, Ambroth, Narberth,
Pembrokeshire, SA67 8NQ.
Tel. 01834 813922

Mr. R.J.Milne,
Little Park House, Picton Castle, Rhos, Haverfordwest,
Pembrokeshire, SA62 4AS.

Mrs. A.Sowerby,
Bladeley House, Buckland Newton, Dorchester,
Dorset, DT2 7BS.
Tel. 01300 345288

Mrs. I.S.Toms,
Ridge Cottage, Church Street, Morchard Bishop, Crediton,
Devon, EX17 6PJ.
Tel. 01363 877708

Mr. R.R.Walker,
Longthorns West, Spaxton, Bridgewater, Somerset, TA5 2PE.
Tel. 01278 671695

Rev. Dr. Robin Ward,
St. John's Vicarage, 62 Quakers Hall Lane, Sevenoaks,
Kent, TN13 3TX.
Tel. 01732 451710 stjohns7oaks@tinyworld.co.uk

Mr. D.R.Warren,
18 Birch Tree Avenue, West Wickham, Kent, BR4 9EJ
Tel. 0207 6683316

Mrs. Jane Whiteley,
Hall Farm, Evenley, Brackley, Northants. NN13 5SH.
Tel. 01280 703329

NORTH & SOUTH AMERICA

Mr H.G.Berg,
1900 E. Gunn Road, Rochester, Michigan, 48306 USA
Tel. +1 248 652 3141 habberg@aol.com

AUSTRALIA & NEW ZEALAND

Mr. T.A.Garbutt,
Unit 4, St. Lukes Place, 47 Eden Street, Oamaru,
NEW ZEALAND.
Tel. +64 3434 6543

ASIA & AFRICA

Mr Brian Pavier,
Applegarth Gardens & Nursery, PO.Box 23, Hogsback,
5721 SOUTH AFRICA.

NOTICES

Pat Bucknell

The ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2004 was held on Tuesday, 6th April.

Present: Chairman – Mr. M C Foster

Mr. CEJ Brabin, Hon. HE Boscawen, Mrs. A Boscawen, Mrs.
PA Bucknell, Mr. RLC Eley, Mr. PD Evans, Mr. C Fairweather,
Mr. DN Farnes, Mr. MDC Gates, Mrs. M Gunn, Mr. JD
Harsant, Dr. LRA Jack, Mr. M. Jurgens, Lady C Postan, Mr. JA
Rawling, Dr. MLA Robinson, Mr. RE Rosendale, Mr. AT
Stevenson, Mrs JM Warren, Mr BE Wright.

Apologies: Mrs. VM Archibold, Mrs. M Miles, Mr. IT Stokes,
Mr. CA Weston.

The Chairman thanked Mrs. Joey Warren for her dedication
and hard work as Secretary for the past 14 years. She was
presented with a Samba Reclining Garden Chair.

The Minutes of the Annual General Meeting 2003 held on 29th
April and printed in Bulletin 82 July 2003 were agreed to be a
true record and were signed by the Chairman.

Matters Arising: There were no matters arising.

Chairman's Report

Membership trends are a reasonable indicator of a society's
health and the steady growth of the Group seems to be going
counter to the generally static or downward trend of many
specialist plant societies today. Group membership is now at
around 820, which represents encouraging improvement.

This is largely a function of improved benefits to members,
particularly through the quality of our publications, our seedlist
and our website (which has already yielded 22 new members)
We have also raised our profile with a publicity campaign and
developed our archive, tours, plant collections and programme
of meetings, shows and lectures in the branches.

Improvements have involved investment, but as you will hear from
the treasurer, we have not had to draw down from reserves to
finance this, but have been able to fund it from growth in income.

For this we have to thank growth in income from subscriptions,
but rather more from the effectiveness and energy of revenue
producing committee members, notably Pam Hayward who has
grown book sales by a quantum amount, Brian Wright who has
had great success in attracting advertisers into our publications
and Tony Weston, who has continued to run our seed
distribution with great efficiency.

You will all wish to join me in wishing Tony a complete recovery
from his operation and a speedy return to full health - and to
thanking his wife Daphne for taking on his role in his absence. The
seed list remains of high value to members, particularly overseas.

Our publications remain of central importance to members. The
increase in frequency of the Bulletin has been well received and
members have been responding with letters and contributions.
More are always welcome, so do not be shy about sending in
material to editor John Rawling. We have this year also invested
further in the Yearbook with full colour illustrations throughout
and it remains a model of its kind in the hands of Philip Evans,
who has now been editing it for 8 years. I'm sure members
would like to thank both editors for the tremendous work they
put into providing enjoyment and value for us all.

The website is of growing importance. Chris Callard has
indicated that he wishes to step down having made an invaluable
contribution to its development. Mike Robinson is now seeking
assistance with what has become an increasingly important
aspect of presenting the public face of the Group.

We are also seeking a new Tours manager after the resignation
of Valerie Archibold who has done service to the Group over
many years. Last years trip to Belgium was another European
success; our Scottish tour starts shortly and there is prospect of
visiting gardens further afield on the US west coast for 2005.
Our joint autumn meetings with the ICS continue to be enjoyed.

Our plant collections grow in both senses - Ramster, Wisley,
Abbotsbury and Oxford BG all house collections and Brian

Wright has assembled a further collection for Abbotsbury of the original Kunming *Camellia reticulata* hybrids – from sources in UK, China, USA. It is planned to start planting next year.

We have recently initiated our first plant trial – a test of alkalinity tolerance of some 17 magnolia species/varieties. Tim Whiteley has kindly provided us with a plot in his garden near Brackley, Northants and member Tom Wood has generously donated nine excellent plants. The pH is 8.0 and an annual assessment over 10 years is planned. In the branches a programme of lectures, shows and garden visits were generally well supported. Having said that, I would urge those members who at present do not join in their local activities to do so. Meeting people of like enthusiasms and talking plants is greatly enjoyable and what the Group is in business to make possible.

The Group's Forrest centenary celebrations begin today with the excellent plant display in the hall organised by our NW Branch and our thanks and congratulations are due to Chairman Ted Brabin and the curator of Ness Gardens, Paul Cook who put in a lot of hard work to win a silver gilt medal for the Group. Tomorrow we have some 120 attending our series of lectures and thereafter there will be a programme of Forrest guided tours and trails in some of the great gardens across the UK.

I am delighted to report that liaison with the RHS has improved and advice and help from various departments has been willingly and effectively provided. Such active support sustains the belief that a Group like ours can make a positive contribution to serving the wider objectives of the Society as a whole.

It remains for me to thank two other officers for their largely unheralded but essential work. Many do not appreciate how much detailed work is put in by our Membership secretary Miranda Gunn in handling our subscription arrangements. May I also remind late payers that she is ruthless in expunging non-renewals from our lists.

Martin Gates took over the crucial role of Treasurer in 2002 and is highly efficient in managing our finances and a true sheet anchor to the Group.

Finally there are some people changes. We are very sad to lose our secretary of 14 years, Joey Warren. She has given unstintingly of her time, knowledge and energy over this long period. In our minds she had become a permanent asset of the Group and she will be missed as much for her person as for her work.

We are very glad to welcome our new secretary, Pat Bucknell and wish her a successful and enjoyable tenure of office.

Mike Robinson becomes our new Chairman following this meeting as I am stepping down after 3 enjoyable years. I shall continue to serve the Group as a member of the committee.

Treasurer's Report: The income and expenditure account, and the balance sheet for the year ended October 2003 were tabled. Mr. Gates spoke on the accounts, referring to an increase in

income of £3,051. Publications were much improved which accounted for the increased costs. He proposed to write off the cost of the display stand over five years. The Surplus for the year was £1,573. Reserve for the year stood at £26,009.

Postal Vote: 31 completed postal votes were received by the Secretary confirming all officers in post.

Appointments: Chairman Dr Mike L A Robinson, Secretary Mrs Pat Bucknell, Mr Ivor T Stokes – 4th term in office, Mr Rupert L C Eley – new to committee,

Mr Brian E Wright – change from Co-opted member to full Committee Member and Mr Maurice Foster – filling vacancy on Committee

Appointment of Auditors: John Harsant had approved the accounts. Mr Gates thanked him and proposed that he do so again next year. This was agreed.

Any Other Business: No notification of items for discussion had been received.

The Committee wished to convey their thanks to Mrs Daphne Weston and her family for continuing to send out the seed orders in the difficult circumstances of Tony's serious operation.

Date of next Annual General Meeting:

Tuesday 12th April 2005 at 2 pm in RHS Lawrence Hall.

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

GEORGE FORREST – Plant Hunter

Highly acclaimed new biography published to celebrate the centenary of Forrest's first plant hunting trip to Yunnan. Superbly illustrated. 239pp. Full Price: **£29.50** Member's Discount Price: **£25**. Postage: UK **£3.50**, Europe **£7**, ROW **£7** (Surface) **£13.50** (Air).

VIREYA Rhododendrons – National Plant Collection

A clear, concise and colourful introduction to all aspects of growing species and hybrid Vireyas. 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

UK: **£19** post free. ROW: **£20** (Surface) **£23** (Air).

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SUBSCRIPTIONS

Advance notice from the Treasurer

It is necessary to increase certain categories of subscription with effect from November 1st 2004.

Overseas subscriptions will have to rise to cover higher postage rates and UK members who pay by debit or credit card will pay an extra charge to compensate for the cost and time involved in processing the cards.

There will be no increase for UK members paying by bankers order or cheque. The revised rates will be as below:

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION

United Kingdom

– payment by bankers order or cheque £15.00

– payment by debit or credit card £17.50

Europe £18.00 (€25)

Rest of the World £20.00

PAYMENT FOR THREE YEARS IN ADVANCE

United Kingdom (any method of payment) £45.00

Europe £50.00

Rest of the World £55.00

The subscription will entitle each member to a copy of the Yearbook, three issues of the Bulletin, a copy of the Seedlist, the triennial Membership List and access to a variety of publications available from the archivist. UK members also enjoy access to the branch of their choice. I hope that all members feel that they will continue to receive good value for money.

A bankers order form is enclosed for UK members who would like to pay by this method; overseas members should contact the membership secretary or myself.

Martin Gates

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 October Bulletin by 18th September. 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.

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FORTHCOMING EVENTS 2004

Date/Time	Organiser	Location	Event	Contact
July				
24/25 July	S.E. Branch	Forest Row	Propagation day	Mike Robinson 01342 822745
September				
14th	Group	RHS	Executive Committee	Pat Bucknell 01503 220215
October				
12th	Lakeland Society	Holehird Gardens	AGM & slides from Argyll tour	Bill Revell 01539 448574
21st-24th	Group	Amersham, Bucks	Autumn Weekend	David Farnes 01246 272105
23rd	Wessex Branch	Wisley	Talk by Gordon Hartmann on "Native Trees and their variants"	Miranda Gunn 01428 644422
November				
9th	Lakeland Society	Holehird Gardens	Talk by Shelagh Newman on "Rhododendrons & companion plants"	Fred Tattersall 01539 443963
12th	Group	RHS	Executive Committee	Pat Bucknell 01503 220215
13th	S.W. Branch	Rosemoor	Talk by Graham Rankin on "Magnolias"	Margaret Miles 01326 270229
20th	Wessex Branch	Wisley	Talk by Colin Crosbie, on "The Woodland Garden in all its Glory"	Miranda Gunn 01428 644422
December				
14th	Lakeland	Holehird Gardens	Talk by George Argent on "Vireya Rhododendrons"	Fred Tattersall 01539 443963



The Silver Gilt Medal winning Group Stand for the George Forrest Centenary at the Show at Vincent Square – 6/7th April 2004. See the report from Ted Brabin on page 4.



How will they survive? The Magnolias – not the people!

The Group Magnolia Trial

The satisfied group of planters at Hall Farm, Evenley, Brackley, Northants, after planting the first 14 species in soil of pH 8.

Photos: The Editor