

the Rhododendron, Camellia & Magnolia group

THE ROYAL HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY

Bulletin 104 / November 2010 / www.rhodogroup-rhs.org



CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

Andy Simons - Chairman

As I hope you are all well aware, the development of the group's new constitution is well in hand and after a small hiccup in voting procedures, we should be in a position to hold a general meeting in February to finally ratify the document. This work has been progressing during a period of change in the wider RHS that is impacting on plant committees, affiliated societies as well as the RHS groups such as the Rhododendron, Camellia and Magnolia Group. In many ways the work we have been conducting has set some of the pace for these changes and I am confident that they will benefit the Society and make it easier for the RCM group to work with it, I look forward to reporting more progress in the next few months.

With winter coming on fast this year I am concerned that my "exotic" show Camellias will be looking even less happy come the spring than they do now, and wondering whether my decision to delay erecting our new greenhouse until the New Year was correct.

It is clear that the last two less favourable winters have had a much more adverse effect on these less tough large flowered Camellias than the marginal Rhododendrons, indeed the notionally tender Rhododendrons *edgeworthii*, *maddenii* and its ssp. *crassum* are all looking very healthy in my collection even though the latter two have long since outgrown any chance of space in the greenhouse and despite the fact that I forgot to bring the *Rhododendron edgeworthii* under cover last year and it spent all of last winter shivering beneath the branches of *Camellia* 'Anticipation'. I find this successful survival all the more surprising as my greatly favoured *Rhododendron lutescens* planted next to the previously mentioned Camellia completely succumbed to the weather and has shown no sign of shooting from the ground, even though it was a large and well established plant. All this leads me to the conclusion that I lack any real understanding of hardiness and brings great doubt in my mind as to the traditional H1-H5 rating system. This system can only be a rule of thumb and all gardens have some form of micro climate that may well coincide with the requirements of a desired plant even if it seems unlikely, and only through experimenting will you actually find out. Some things are of course truly tender and will need space in that new greenhouse such as the *Vireya* Rhododendrons and tropical Camellias. Both of these plant areas offer an added dimension that can be a real eye opener, in particular the *Vireya* Rhododendron.

Looking back over past Yearbooks, (although given some coverage), I sense that the RCM group and possibly even the RHS did not know how to treat *Vireyas*, undoubtedly



Azalea 'Jock Coult's' at Heaslands Gardens.
See Wessex branch report on page 7.

Photo: Sally Hayward

Rhododendrons but possibly not quite "our thing". I am glad that I think this uncertainty has now ended and *Vireyas* can be put firmly on the menu. I find them the perfect bridge between the RCM world and my other plant interest in Orchids. Indeed many *Vireyas* find an excellent companion in cymbidiums, taking a summer holiday in a shady garden spot and only consuming that precious glasshouse space during the winter. If only they were as easy to obtain and as ubiquitous as Orchids have become.

I have just returned from the group Autumn weekend in Malmesbury which I consider to have been an unmitigated success. We took a risk this time around and as an experiment changed the format of the weekend to be less garden focussed and more in the form of a mini-conference with speakers covering all of our three genera with just one garden visit to Westonbirt arboretum. This format worked well, with some excellent lecturers bringing to life the subject matter. My highlight was an extraordinary lecture by Mark Flanagan (Windsor) and Tony Kirkham (Kew) who recounted their many trips to China, literally following in the footsteps of E H Wilson. It is encouraging to note that they struggled on some occasions to identify Wilson's path due to the re-afforestation that has occurred in the last 90 years!

Another fascinating and in some ways surprising lecture came from Kevin Hughes on Magnolias. The surprising angle came from

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his discussion on the variety and diversity of North American plants in general, and Magnolias in particular; something I as a regular visitor to the United States had never really considered. We will review the format of the Autumn weekend and I would welcome suggestions on areas to investigate.

I sign off now to go and build that greenhouse base.

Andy Simons.

EDITOR'S NOTES

John Rawling

The Executive Committee are urgently seeking a volunteer to fill the vacancy to manage the Advertising for The Yearbook and for The Bulletin, and also to seek wider Publicity for the Group.

If you are able to offer some help in these areas, please write to:

The Group Honorary Secretary,

Mrs Pat Bucknell,

Botallick, Lanreath, Looe

Cornwall PL13 2PF

Or email your details to: patbucknell@btinternet.com

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

I need your letters, reports from branches, articles, future events etc, to keep the members up to date!

So, please send me your letters and copy

for the March 2011 Bulletin

BY 7TH FEBRUARY 2011.

Please send to: John Rawling, Hon. Bulletin Editor,
The Spinney, Station Road, Woldingham, Surrey, CR3 7DD.

E-mail: jr.eye@virgin.net or Tel. (&Fax) 01883 653341

TOURS

Judith Hallett

Report of the Joint Weekend with the International Camellia Society at Malmesbury 29 -31 October 2010

This year our **Autumn weekend** was held in Malmesbury, Wiltshire. We returned to the format of former years, with one visit and a series of illustrated talks.

On the first evening we were reminded of the magnificence of trees throughout the year by George Hargreaves. When we visited Westonbirt Arboretum the following morning we basked in the sheer glory of the Autumn colour. On our return to the lecture room we were transported with Mark Flanagan and Tony Kirkham to Wilson's China, then introduced to the delights and variety of American Magnolias by Kevin Hughes.

On our final morning Pat and Herb Short traced the fascinating history of Reticulata Camellias and explained through their slides the technique of propagating by contact grafting. Andy brought us firmly back home – to our own kitchens and gardens – as he explained, with great clarity and with many practical tips, how to propagate camellias ourselves.

We could not have wished for better speakers, all enthusiastic to share their knowledge. The 'new' format proved very popular and we all departed refreshed, and with many new ideas and much enthusiasm for working in our own gardens.

Judith Hallett

Westonbirt through the Seasons

George Hargreaves has been a regular visitor to Westonbirt for many years and he took us on an amazing photographic journey through the Arboretum. What follows is a mere snapshot of the sights he shared...

As we were not to see our genera in flower on our visit to this great arboretum we were delighted to see slides of many familiar specimens including *Magnolia campbellii*, *Rhododendron williamsianum* and some mature camellias.

We saw Summer slides of *Liriodendron tulipifera*, *Stewartia* and some stunning *Cornus kousa*, then the Autumn colour of *Acer*s and *Cercidiphyllum japonicum* (we could almost smell it!) and finally the Winter shades of various dogwoods, *Picea omorika*, *Cedrus libani* and the incense cedar, *Calocedrus decurrens* displaying a variety of shapes, colours and textures.

George has an enviable memory for plant names, never faltering as he gave us a whistle stop tour of the arboretum, showing over 200 slides in an hour! What an excellent introduction to our visit the following day.

Judy Hallett

'Finding Mr. Wilson'

Returning to the hotel from a sunny and colourful Westonbirt, we settled down in the afternoon for a riveting lecture given by Tony Kirkham, Head of Kew Arboretum and Mark Flanagan, Keeper of the Savill Garden, Windsor, based on the journeys they made to China following in the footsteps of Ernest Henry Wilson.

When Tony and Mark set off on their quest, their plan was to follow the routes taken by Wilson's expeditions over an 11 year period and to photograph some of the scenes which he had photographed a hundred years before.

Much research was needed as the archival information was hard to find but eventually they were able to obtain copies of some of the 5,000 photographs taken on glass plates by Wilson together with extracts from his field journals which enabled them to follow his travels in China.

In the lecture room we were transported to China and it was amazing to see on the screen original pictures taken by Wilson alongside the modern day versions taken by Mark and Tony. Obviously over the years many changes to the Wilson scene had taken place but it was still possible, on many occasions, to see an almost exact replica, even trees on the hillside could be identified as those in Wilson's photograph. Frail and rickety bamboo bridges had been replaced with concrete structures but even so the original pillars supporting the old bridges could still be seen.

One incredible incident was when they came across a very tall dead tree, left standing because of its spiritual importance since it was destroyed by fire in the 1990s and reputed to be 2,000 years old. Mark felt sure he recognised it so a photograph was emailed to Kew with a request to search the archives to see if it really was the tree Mark had seen. Thanks to modern-day technology, the very next morning a photograph of the tree, alive and in full leaf, photographed by Wilson, was emailed back to them in China. The tree, *Cunninghamia lanceolata* was the largest specimen Wilson ever saw. The local population were thrilled to have a picture of this tree presented to them as a keepsake as it had once looked.

Mark and Tony were ready to put the finishing touches to their book when the earthquake struck in Sichuan during the afternoon of Monday, 12 May 2008. They were extremely

concerned for the safety of some of their Chinese friends with whom they had worked in Beichuan, the town hit hardest by the earthquake. Happily the outcome as far as their friends were concerned was not as bad as they had feared although there had been fatalities involving colleagues who had been working in the mountainous areas close to the epicentre.

Mark and Tony felt that before completing the book they should take one more journey to the site of the earthquake to record, as a final chapter, the devastation it had caused in an area where they had worked.

If you missed the lecture, the remarkable photographs taken by Tony and Mark and their account of their travels are available in their beautifully presented book entitled **Wilson's China a Century On**.

Pam and David Coombes

“Reticulatas.....as they oughta be.”

To anyone with an interest in *Camellia reticulata*, Yunnan and Kunming are something of a mecca - a place of pilgrimage at least once in a lifetime. Here, in their natural home they can be seen growing in the wild along with other species of camellia like *C. yunnanensis*, *C. crassipes* and the all-important *C. saluenensis*.

C. reticulata, being the grandest and probably the most spectacular of the genus has enjoyed centuries of selection and husbandry. This has brought them into temple and palace gardens wherein they thrived in the Yunnan “climate of eternal spring”, even to the extent of outliving the buildings that formerly surrounded them. They have a special place in the folklore of the native people and have been preserved in the field and terrace margins even as the native bush has been progressively cleared for agriculture. Very logically and naturally they have become the focus of academic study and nowhere exceeds the endeavours of the Kunming Institute of Botany.

Pat Short (the “front man” of the duo, Pat and Herb, who presented this paper) took us on a colourful journey through the gardens of the Kunming Institute where ‘retics.’ abound. They introduced us to the people who manage them, personal friends & acquaintances to those of us who have also travelled there. Then the history. The tea clipper “Carnatic” whose cargo in 1792 (albeit unlisted) contained the first camellias (japonicas) brought to England, followed in the 1820s by the first reticulatas. “Captain Rawes” came in another clipper, whose captain is forever commemorated in its name.

The story continued to the local nurserymen who propagate thousands of retics every year. They showed us the very Chinese technique of approach grafting with the japonica rootstocks in “flying” pots, aloft on sticks, side grafted to an established ‘retic’.

This progressed logically to another equally Chinese skill; that of cleft grafting to much larger *C. oleifera* rootstocks, lifted and repotted from old & redundant camellia oilseed plantations.

2012 is only just over a year away. Chuxiong (Yunnan) is the venue for the next International Camellia Congress. Chuxiong is in the heartland of all this *C. reticulata* activity and from the early planning shown to me on a visit to that city in 2007, the Congress promises to be a winner.

“Pat & Herb”, surely the leading experts on our current camellia stage, presented a colourful and interesting insight into “*C. reticulata*, and how they oughta be”.

John Price

Camellia propagation for the Amateur

Andy registered two firsts for the weekend with his presentation - it was accompanied by a Power Point display (rather than slides), and he delivered it from a sitting position, the result of having his leg in a cast. We hope you are soon fully mobile again, Andy.

He started with a few general remarks, saying how poorly served we are in this country in terms of acquisition of propagating material, compared to, say, New Zealand, where garden centres offer a far wider range of stock, which is another reason why we should attempt home propagation, and recommended looking out for mutations during flowering, marking the stem with a ribbon so that it may be used for propagation later in the year.

The first method he described was from cuttings, demonstrating preparation of a cutting from a just-ripe stem tip, a process that took him just a few seconds. He recommended preparing several at a time, holding them in the mouth, before moving the rooting powder and pot, but warned against getting the process out of sequence, as the taste of rooting powder is not nice. A comment from the floor suggested that a few such mistakes might account for Andy's substantial 6ft 6in stature! The compost must be free-draining, just 10% compost, the rest sand or grit, drenched in fungicide, and he felt that translucent orchid pots were helpful to rooting. Cuttings should be quite crowded in, and the pot covered with cling film. Reticulatas could be tricky, and he recommended using rooting gel for these.

Grafting was the best approach, as reticulatas have a poor root system, whereas sasanquas have a vigorous fibrous root system and, any non-flowering plant in a pot can be cut down and used as the root-stock. The process is best carried out between Christmas and the New Year, with the stock in a very dry pot. The graft should be tied tightly, the pot covered with a plastic bag, then left for at least a year. No water, but if looking distressed, spray fungicide through a hole in the bag, then re-seal. When you think it has taken – ‘go away for a fortnight's holiday before even having a peep’!, i.e. “patience, patience, patience!”. He passed several completed grafts around to demonstrate the desired result.

An alternative was seed. Open-pollinated seed seldom produced good plants, so we had a biology lesson on flower structure, showing how to get the right pollen to the right place. Gentle heat makes the pollen more mobile, and promotes fertilization. Ripe seed is sown on at least 3 inches of compost, and a double layer can be put in the pot. When pricking out, use a 3 inch pot, and prune the tap root. He then finished by touching briefly on layering and air-layering, saying that success rate was very low, perhaps 1 in 15, so it should only be considered as a possibility with a long branch that was due for pruning anyway.

Andy had kept his audience's attention for a full 90 minutes with a fascinating description of his techniques, and our appreciation was summed up by the first question from the floor – “When is the book coming out?” That said it all!

Keith Piper

TWO items from this report and the photographs have been held over until the next Bulletin – Issue No. 105 in March 2011.

Hon. Editor

The Group Tour of Scottish Gardens 9th to 15th May 2011

Monday 9th May / Gather at the **Erskine Bridge Hotel**, (10 minutes from Glasgow Airport) for Dinner at the hotel.

Tuesday 10th May / Depart after breakfast for a visit to **Glenarn**, This garden was acquired in 1983 by Mike and Sue Thornley and has been gradually restored by them over the last 10 years or so. We later catch the ferry from Gourock to Dunoon to visit the famous **Benmore Botanic Garden**, and for lunch. Afterwards we travel through Glen Lean and round the Kyles of Bute, to take the ferry to Tarbert and on to the **Stonefield Castle Hotel**, our accommodation for the next three nights, and for dinner in the evening.

Wednesday 11th May / After our Scottish breakfast, we depart for a private visit to **Baravalla** – the western Scottish garden of Peter Cox and Peter Hutchison with plantings from their many expeditions to the Himalayas, Tibet, China, Chile and Turkey.

Later, we travel to Tayinloan in time to catch the midday ferry to **Gigha**, a beautiful island just off the Kintyre peninsula. Sir James Horlick bought the island in 1944, principally to create a garden around Achamore House. Lunch available at the comfortable Gigha Hotel. We return to our hotel for dinner.

Thursday 12th May / We head north to Loch Melfort to visit the National Trust for Scotland's garden at **Arduaine**. This magnificent treasure trove of plants was established from 1903 by James Arthur Campbell. A woodland garden with giant rhododendrons and magnolias; and with the largest *R. arboreum* ssp *zeylanicum*. Lunch available at the nearby Loch Melfort Hotel. More time available to explore after lunch before visiting the unmissable small private garden of **An Cala** on the Isle of Seil.

Friday 13th May / We leave the Stonefield Hotel and head for a visit to **Crarae Gardens**, recently rescued following its gift to the National Trust for Scotland in 2002. After lunch at the famous **Loch Fyne Oyster Bar and Restaurant**, we continue to **Ardkinglas Woodland Gardens** at Cairndow. Later we travel over the 'Rest and Be Thankful' (Glen Croe) to Crianlarich, Lochearnhead and Crieff to Perth, where we stay at the **Huntingtower Hotel**.

Saturday 14th May / We travel the short distance to **Glendoick Gardens & Nursery**. This garden was started largely as a result of plants raised from seed from the 1919 Burma Expedition, and later of course from Peter (and Kenneth) Cox's visits to China and elsewhere from 1981. Following our visit we return to the **Erskine Bridge Hotel**.

Sunday 15th May / We check out of the hotel and disperse to our homes.

Fuller details are shown in the enclosed leaflet and booking form (enclosed for UK members) or from

Judy Hallett, Hon Tours Organiser,
The Old Rectory, Thruxton, Herefordshire HR2 9AX.
(01981 570401) - Or email: judy.hallett@googlemail.com.

Some Reflections on This Year's Weather

The Editor of The Bulletin reports:

This year's weather doesn't seem to have been so very different from any other year, when looking back over this last twelve months, with some (very) cold, some very dry and some very wet weeks and months, but some rhododendrons do seem to have suffered!

Here in the south-east, we have had temperatures down to -9C or -10C and of staying below zero for longer periods at a time. The drought in late spring or early summer this year was certainly not as lengthy as in several other recent years.

R. suoilenhense.

About 18 years ago, Alan Clark and Keith Rushforth collected some seed in North Vietnam from a large leaved rhododendron – collected under AC431 (and AC432) – described then as "*Rhododendron species* – "*aff. falconera series*"

Some of this seed was distributed at a 'Propagating Weekend' organised by the SE branch with instruction from Alan Clark. (Held at Leonardslee Gardens in Sussex).

I know that seed or small seedlings (about 2.5cm high) were distributed to members of the group, including Michael Robinson, our late chairman, and myself.

I was delighted to recently receive a photograph from the visit made by the New Forest branch in mid April to John McQuire's garden, showing Roderick White standing beside John's plants of this species, now probably about 3 metres tall – (this species was later formally named as *Rhododendron suoilenhense*). I know that Mike Robinson showed a large attractive bloom at the SE branch Show from a plant from this seed (AC432) growing in his garden near Forest Row in about 2007 and he listed and pictured (from his plant) this new species in his and John McQuire's '*Pocket Guide to Rhododendron Species*'.

I have grown this plant (AC431) outside, at 800 ft on the top of the North Downs in Surrey with moderate success. Unfortunately, my soil is heavy clay with flints, and as a result, often either too wet or too dry for healthy growth. After this last cold winter followed by a drought in this area, it has sadly succumbed.

Shown are photos of my plant in May this year, with a split trunk and very dead leaves! The cause would seem to be due to the earlier persistent heavy frosts followed shortly after by a 3-4 week drought.

The conclusions are that it is not so hardy as was indicated by previous winters and that it does require ample moisture – probably – as in the hills or mountains of N. Vietnam.



Roderick White with *R. suoilenhense* in John McQuire's garden, in Spring 2010. Photo: Robin Whiting



R. AC431 in the editor's garden in April 2010



The base of the trunk of the *R. suoilenhense* above.

R. stamineum AC4211

My plant of this species (listed as H1-2 !) has survived in my garden for some five or six years, but only this autumn, has suffered from defoliation from this year's growth, possibly from the very dry late spring here in the South east – (or from the long term effects of the cold winter). I should be pleased to hear from others about their experiences of the hardiness of this species, and others, during this period?



R. stamineum

Photos: John Rawling 25.10.10

Anne Boscawen at High Beeches Gardens writes:

At High Beeches we seem to have been pretty lucky last winter. *Drimys winteri*, *Ilex perado* ssp *platyphylla*, *Musa basjoo*, (coming up from the root,) *Pittosporum tenuifolium*, all unharmed by cold.

We had much damage on evergreens, especially camellias, from the weight of snow. No rhododendrons or magnolias suffered, in fact seem to have really enjoyed it!

The very heavy rain storms are a serious problem, washing away the banks and silting up ponds.

Dear Editor,

Members may be interested in the accompanying photographs.

About 20 years ago I obtained at a plant sale a seedling of what I was advised was "*Magnolia cylindrica*". After a few years it bloomed and is now the size of a small tree.

It has always had an abundance of blooms but never set seed until this year 2010.

It may well be to do with the very harsh/cold winter we had here in SW UK, and thus very late blooming but this year has produced what appears to be a very good crop of seed pods.

I would mention *M. mollicomata* is growing nearby.

Nigel Edwards, Bishopsteignton, Devon.



Magnolia cylindrica seedling?

Photo: Nigel Edwards

A letter (by email) was received by Pam Hayward (Hon Yearbook editor) from Anne Berry (ex Rosemoor), remarking on a superb plant of *R. auriculatum* she had seen in Vancouver in July this year. She felt strongly that a photograph of this plant, seen in the garden of RCM member Joe Ronsley should appear in a Group publication. I agree and therefore display the picture below.

Hon. Bulletin Editor



R. auriculatum seen in Vancouver in late July 2010.

Photo Joe Ronsley

North West branch

Week-end in East Anglia

I do not often report on our normal branch events but after such an enjoyable few days in East Anglia this Spring I thought that I should.

Sandringham was of general and historical interest but for me the highlights of the weekend were all crammed into one very eventful day.

This started with a full tour of Rupert Eley's garden, East Bergholt Place; Rupert generously taking us around his enormous and eclectic collection. This had been amassed by three generations of the family and is a stunning display of trees and shrubs, including the national collection of *Euonymus*. (These will require an autumn visit for their colourful display of fruit and foliage). It was a useful learning exercise, being able to see, for example, both species of *Halesia*, with obvious differences in form and habit.

After lunch nearby we then travelled a short distance to Rupert's father in law's garden at Higham Lodge. It was soon clear that there is a friendly rivalry between these two garden owners. Rupert had told me some time before this trip that there was a *Franklinia alatomahia* growing outside at Higham Lodge and which actually flowered. I have never seen a healthy specimen of this member of the *Theaceae* growing in such a setting in the UK. Rupert gave me very precise directions as to its location and it was found! It was not yet in leaf but carried flower buds which will bloom in late summer. I really needed to sit down and rest after this excitement but there were far too many other treasures to be seen and they were. A wonderful garden.

Before the trip we had received an invitation from Brian Humphrey to visit his private garden, on the way back to our hotel. Half our group took up his offer and further delights awaited us. Brian had worked at both Hilliers and Notcutts, as well as independently and his knowledge of what would "do well" and how to help them do well was phenomenal. We dallied so long, having been tempted by refreshments as well as plants, that we scraped home to the hotel with five minutes to clean up for dinner.

The highlight of our last day was Stody Lodge Gardens, which had a good collection of Rhododendrons and some useful lessons in pruning large hybrids when they become too big. We finished the weekend at Sheringham Park, which was obviously much enjoyed by the locals, who were also soaking up the sunshine and warmth.

The hotel, at Hethersett, near Norwich, was excellent, one of the best we have enjoyed. All in all, some wonderful gardens and a very enjoyable weekend.

Ted Brabin,

Chairman, North West England & North Wales Branch

A splendid report of the visits made by the:

South West Branch

Thursday, 15th April

Last year, our first day out included a visit to one of Cornwall's several 'lost gardens', Enys near Truro. This year we contrived to do just the same but this time the garden was at Carclew which is only a mile or two from Enys. Carclew was once a huge and prosperous estate belonging to the Lemon

family who made a vast fortune from their mining interests. The Palladian mansion and the extensive formal and wilderness gardens, planted with all the latest rhododendrons, camellias and magnolias were among Cornwall's most magnificent. The Lemon name will be familiar to everyone who admires the white flowered *Rhododendron arboreum* hybrid 'Sir Charles Lemon'.

Sadly, the family's fortunes waned after the First World War and the Palladian mansion burnt down in 1934. Today the entire estate has been split up into separate plots and the estate buildings have been converted into private homes. Very fortunately for us, some of the plots have been acquired by gardeners who have built their homes on them and then set about rescuing and replanting as much of the original gardens as possible.

The first area we explored was adjacent to the ruins of the mansion where its great Palladian façade still stands. In recent years many camellias have been planted in and around the ruins and have flourished, especially *Camellia reticulata* hybrids which obviously find the conditions very much to their liking. We admired new plantings made by the current owners of the ruins who have built a new home nearby and accumulated an eclectic collection of rare trees, rhododendrons and magnolias. On the other side of the house an exceptional white magnolia attracted much attention and discussion. The eventual verdict was that it was a very good form of *Magnolia x soulangeana alba*. If this was an exceptional plant it was nothing compared to the giant *Magnolia doltsopa* towering above it and in full flower. If there is a larger specimen anywhere in the South West, I have never seen it. There must be something special in the soil at this point because there was a group of colossal oaks, especially - *Q. robur*, *Q. cerris* and *x Q. hispanica* 'Lucumbeana' not many yards away.

Moving a quarter of a mile to a different part of old Carclew, another owner was putting the finishing touches to his conversion of one of the old estate buildings. His house was lovely but his garden was a show-stopper. A series of ornate 19thC. terraces marched down the steeply sloping ground in true Bodnant style but the wonderful thing was the quality of the mature original plants that had been rescued from the jungle and the sensitivity of the new plantings that supported them. I particularly remember *Magnolia sprengeri* and, of course, *Rhododendron* 'Sir Charles Lemon' – said to be the original plant. And so down the slope to a large, square, formal lake which, since this was Carclew, belonged to yet another owner!

Our thanks to Daphne Neale, John Williams and Christopher Chope, whose help and hospitality made our visit possible, not forgetting our own Barry Champion who had advised most of the garden owners at Carclew and was able to devise for us a perfectly coordinated day.

Friday, 16th April 210

We had advertised this as a day for the specialists amongst our members because the morning we were going to spend in a micro-propagation unit and, in the afternoon, visit a garden which is not opened to the public and boasts no amenities for visitors whatsoever. As a ruse this was a total failure and the large gathering on the day probably exceeded the limit that had been set. I tried not to count!

Ros Smith's Micro-propagation Unit at the Duchy College at Camborne will, by now, be well known to many rhododendron lovers. She has, for some years now, strived to rescue threatened species and hybrids from many great gardens including Heligan, Trengwainton, Bodnant and several others. But seeing her exhibits at shows and meetings cannot be compared with spending time

with her at the Unit and hearing from her own mouth how she has systematically developed the process and her common sense and response to the various triumphs, frustrations and puzzles that she has encountered. Why on earth do some rhododendron taxa respond so readily and others prove so very difficult? Why does the genus *Camellia* resist all her efforts? But the healthy young plants growing away in the tunnels are the witnesses to her success. We salute you, Ros. We are proud to have you as a member of the Group.

In the afternoon we moved from one educational establishment to another, gathering in the car park of the sixth form college at Tregye near Truro, looking across fields at the tops of trees in an unexceptional looking plantation below us. In due course and after much counting we headed down a footpath and through a small gate into the plantation.

I will never forget the next few minutes as we descended a steeply winding path into a magical botanical and horticultural world. We felt much as Conan Doyle's explorers must have done when they finally clambered on to his Lost World on its rocky plateau. Certainly I would not have been at all surprised if the odd dinosaur had scurried through the undergrowth.

The gardens at Tregye were conceived and planted by the plant collector Edward Needham, but have also received new and exciting plants from subsequent collectors. The gardens have never been open to the public and make few concessions in the way of paths and steps to any visitor. They are, however, full of amazing, rare and beautiful plants many of which we had never seen before and certainly could not identify. Even the experts amongst us went very quiet! My own recollections are of a huge *Rhododendron arboreum* ssp. *delavayi* in full bloom, of unknown climbing hydrangea species flourishing high above our heads and the danger of putting your feet anywhere without checking first for rare woodland plants underfoot.

Edward Needham died two years ago and the gardens are now in the care of John Lanyon who is also head gardener of the nearby National Trust gardens of Treliassick and Glendurgan. It is amazing that John has the capacity to cope with all three and the extent of his achievement at Tregye was not immediately apparent to me until a colleague asked me if I had seen a bramble. We started looking and my eventual count was five – small ones! The gardening and plant world is indeed lucky that Tregye is in the care of such devoted and expert hands.



R. arboreum ssp. *delavayi* at Tregye.

Photo: Colin Brown

continued overleaf

Tuesday, 4th May 2010

Most Group members in the South West have been to Marwood Hill, a lovely, peaceful and important garden in a secluded valley just north of Barnstaple but, in spite of this, a large party of us turned out for this visit. I have little doubt that the main attraction was the fact that Malcolm Pharoah, the curator and head gardener was to show us around himself. Malcolm is a very considerable expert on woody plants and their culture, especially camellias, but he also supervises National Collections of *Astilbe*, *Iris ensata* and *Tulbaghia*.

The plantings at Marwood are still being extended which means that we saw many new and often fashionable species and hybrids, especially rhododendrons and camellias, and were able to get Malcolm's assessment of them. A lot of notes were taken. A couple of weeks earlier he had won the Williams Cup for the best camellia exhibited at the Rosemoor Spring Show with *Camellia* 'In the Pink' and we were able to admire a flourishing example growing with other selected new hybrids.

Elsewhere a very healthy group of forms of *Rhododendron cinnabarinum* and some of its hybrids attracted our attention confirming our observations in several other south west gardens that this species not only grows very well in the region but seems to have become much more resistant to the ravages of powdery mildew than it was only a few years ago.

As we left for our next visit Malcolm was there at the gates wishing us farewell and presenting each and every one of us with a plant of *Camellia* 'In the Pink'. He had told us earlier of his thoughts that this cultivar should be more widely distributed and was wasting no time in doing something about it!

After lunch we drove a few miles to Gorwell House, a Georgian mansion in the eastern outskirts of Barnstaple and the home of our member John Marston. At our meeting last autumn John had delivered a highly entertaining lecture on the creation and planting of his garden at Gorwell House and now everyone wanted to see it for themselves.

Unlike many growers of rhododendrons, camellias and magnolias, John was determined that his eclectic collection of plants should grow in a classically designed garden with borders, hedges, sight-lines, view points and, above all, gazebos. His array of gazebos could well qualify as a National Collection! Above all, John is a formidable expert on "woody plants" specialising in magnolias (especially those we were once allowed to call *Michelia*). He also has a predilection for tender exotic architectural plants such as palms.

Bearing in mind that the winter temperature on the Devon north coast had dropped as low as -12degrees or worse, we were a little nervous about what could have happened to the Gorwell House palms and other tender exotics. In the event some had suffered badly and one or two were probably dead but just as many had come through relatively or entirely unharmed. Indeed this seems to be the message of the 2009-2010 winter. We need to check and revise many of our assumptions about winter hardiness. We have seen or heard of many examples of so called tender rhododendrons such as some of the *Maddenia* subsection surviving virtually unscathed. In my own Dartmoor garden the large mimosa (*Acacia dealbata*) produced its best display of flowers ever but large *Clematis montana* and *armandii* were badly damaged.

Like Tregye, the Marston garden is so full of rarities that to try to list them runs the risk of boring the reader. My own clearest recollection is of the collection of *Michelia* (sic) species

and hybrids which must be one of the most comprehensive anywhere.

Our thanks to John and Vanessa for a wonderful afternoon at Gorwell House.

Saturday, 31st May 2010

Our last garden visit of the 2010 season was the most unusual, not least in its date. When I rang the owner of Hayford Hall, Malcolm Dunstan, about a possible visit to see his collection of rhododendrons, the first thing he said was that, on no account, should the visit be scheduled before the end of May. He explained that Hayford was on the 1000 foot contour and nothing much would be in flower until then.

So we arrived on a very wet last day of May, having got lost all over high Dartmoor in the process. The entrance was well hidden by high ponticum hedges and flanked by two huge granite hounds. These rang a bell and the matter was immediately beyond doubt for anyone who had seen the film – we had arrived at Baskerville Hall.

When Malcolm had purchased the property, a few years previously, he soon realised that the grounds contained a large and important collection of rhododendrons, on the verge of being swallowed up irrevocably by rampant ponticum, common laurel and tree saplings. He is a civil engineer constantly travelling the world to build dams and set about a rescue project as only a civil engineer could. It was raining when we arrived so he had set up a tent on the lawn so that we could study the plans of the property that he had commissioned. They showed every plant of any significance located with an accuracy of under a metre. A variety of heavy machines have been used to eliminate ponticum, laurel and unwanted trees and, when required, to move rhododendrons of any size to more suitable positions.

We set off on our tour and admired a wide range of rhododendrons growing vigorously to the point of being lush. This was surprising for a garden located at such an altitude but it is in a hollow which protects it from the winter gales which pass noisily overhead, a fact attested to by the many large conifers. We did, however, see quite a lot of snow damage.

We located several different *Loderi* clones just about at their best and *Rhododendron cinnabarinum* (yellow form) growing healthily as we have come to expect. *R. yakushimanum* was grown as a hedge to which it is well suited and my own favourite, a fine turkey red hybrid which was thought to be *Rhododendron* 'Gwillt-king'.

All too often we visit gardens where the owners have undertaken major rescue programmes and where we have left wondering whether they had the tenacity, skills and resources to succeed. No such doubts exist about Malcolm Dunstan and his project. Our thanks to him and his wife for a wonderful afternoon.

Colin Brown

Wessex branch

Visited Heaselands Gardens on 22nd May, together with the **South East branch**.

It is many years since we visited this garden and we were able to appreciate its maturity. Vast banks of deciduous azaleas, for which Heaselands is famous, conjured up a cacophony of vibrant colours (see photograph on front page). The Head Gardener, Stephen Harding, kindly met us and led the group through woodland glades pointing out the many plants of interest. The group became rather straggled as we wandered

admirably around this large garden, many of us very grateful to David Millais and Malcolm Nash for their expert identification. Not only the azaleas and rhododendrons created magnificent vistas but large specimens of *Embothrium coccineum* competed for the woodland light. In one area there was a fantastic bank of azaleas well over 2 metres high reflected in the stream and lake. After our tour, thanks were given to Stephen and then we had a 50/50 plant sale (including a large group of plants from Heaslands) where some interesting plants changed hands – and we raised some money for the branches. Those from the Wessex group (and those from the SE group) had an enjoyable time.

Richard Thornton

Wessex branch Show

As with wine making in France, where the vagaries of the weather each year make for the different vintages, the annual show varies according to the preceding winter and, of course, to the all too harsh unpredictability of the late spring frosts. But these, surely, are the challenges that make the competition. This year's show, following the hardest winter for nearly 30 years and a dry spring, was no exception. As an 'early' show it meant that a rather different array of plants was exhibited in comparison to 2009's late show. It was remarkable that despite having the smallest number of exhibitors in the 8 years that I have stewarded the show, we had an impressive number of exhibits (112), and Brick Hall at Ramster looked well filled with flowers by the time the judge, John Rawling, arrived.

A welcome new exhibitor was Roderick White who not only managed to bring some exhibits of such interest and rarity that a few were taken to be pressed for the RHS herbarium at Wisley. Being an early show, we were treated to a good display of lepidotes although the corollary of this was that there were very few exhibits in the azalea classes. Trusses in the elepidote classes were plentiful and provided the 'Best in Show', which was awarded to Richard Thornton for his fine unnamed *R. wightii* hybrid, a photograph of which appeared in the July Bulletin. The Lady Adam Gordon Plate was awarded to Miranda Gunn for a splendid trio of elepidote trusses, including *R. 'Fay Norman'*, *R. 'Logan Damaris'* and *R. 'Phyllis Korn'*. The first of these, a subtly coloured and elegant *R. fortunei* cross, was recently registered as a hybrid raised at Ramster by her grandmother, after whom it was named.

John David

We extend a very warm welcome to our new members.

Rhododendron Species Conservation Group

2011 Spring Conference :

Stonefield Castle Hotel, Tarbert, Loch Fyne, Argyll

'Conservation of Rhododendron Gardens on Scotland's West Coast'

Scotland's West Coast is home to many historic gardens, whose upkeep and plant collections raise a host of conservation issues that will be discussed during the Conference lectures and visits.

Saturday, 9th April, 2011

This is a rare opportunity to visit Baravalla. 'The Two Peters' will lead the conducted tour of their Private garden on the West Loch.

A Lecture Session will follow Lunch at the hotel. The Gardens Advisor, NTS will discuss the Trust's approach to

'The Conservation of Plant Collections in the Historic Gardens Within the Care of the N.T.S.'

Michael Thornley will explain how his thoughts on conserving a mature historic garden have changed in recent years, in

'Glenarn : A Scottish West Coast Garden'

Stonefield Castle is an historic rhododendron destination in its own right, that has links dating back to the Hooker Family. A garden tour will be led by Ian W.J. Sinclair, R.S.C.G. President.

Sunday, 10th April, 2011

A wonderful opportunity to visit the little known rhododendron species garden at Stronachullin Lodge, and enjoy a conducted tour led by Mary Broadfoot, a Kenneth Family descendant.

After Lunch it is planned to visit a long-forgotten historic rhododendron species garden created by Robert Heber Macaulay in the years after 1897. The garden is being restored.

For Conference, Registration & Accommodation details, contact:

John M. Hammond, Hon. Secretary RSCG, The Three Chimneys,
Cockey Moor Road, Starling, Bury, Lancashire BL8 2HB
e.mail : hammondsrhodies@supanet.com

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MEMBERSHIP

Rupert Eley

Subscription Renewals 2010

The Group's membership year runs from 1st November to 31st October. Subscription renewals are due for payment on 1st November. **If your subscription has not already been renewed you will have received a renewal form with this mailing.** To save us time and unnecessary additional costs, please act on this and renew your subscription NOW!

Payment can be made easily online via the Group website **www.rhodogroup-rhs.org** – you do not need a PayPal account to use this facility. Alternatively, use the form provided and send it back to the Membership Secretary as detailed.

Special General Meeting on 5th October 2010**RHS Halls Westminster**

In accordance with the Notice that appeared in the September Special Issue of the Bulletin the Meeting was duly opened with the Vice Chairman in the Chair in the absence of the Group Chairman, abroad on business, with 20 members of the Group in attendance. It was ruled from the Chair that a quorum was present.

In respect of Item 1 on the Agenda the Hon Secretary confirmed that the Meeting had been correctly requisitioned in compliance with the requirements of the existing Constitution. The Vice Chairman then proposed a motion that the Meeting be adjourned until February 15th 2011 this was seconded by the Hon Treasurer and passed unanimously and the Meeting duly adjourned.

Prior to the meeting the Vice Chairman had told members attending of the procedure to be adopted and explained that this was a consequence of the requirement that had arisen to reissue the voting form and the Group Chairman's decision that there was then insufficient time for postal votes using this form to be submitted by October 5th. The meeting will reopen on February 15th at 2.00pm at the RHS Halls, Westminster when Item 2 on the Agenda, the resolution to adopt the new constitution, will be taken and all postal and electronic votes so far received will be carried forward to that occasion. Members who wish to attend the Meeting that day are encouraged to do so, and postal votes will be accepted until Saturday 12th February 2011.

Annual General Meeting 2011

This will be held on **Saturday 4th June 2011** at **RHS Garden, Wisley**. There will be a Competition/Show on "Late Flowering Rhododendrons" in the morning making this a day well worth attending.

Extremely good displays of Rhododendrons were staged at the last AGM and an excellent lecture was given by John Anderson on late flowering Rhododendrons.

Please do come to this AGM.

Committee Members

There is a vacancy on the committee at present. **A nomination form is enclosed** Please come forward yourself or nominate someone, making sure he/she agrees; a proposer, a seconder and a brief horticultural history of the nominee are all that are required. Please telephone the Hon. Secretary on 01503 220215 if you require any further details.

We finally have a photo of Camellia 'Mathotiana Rosea', so it is only 'Fire Falls' that we are now missing from the Camellia section. It received the 'AGM' in 2002 so surely someone has got one of these?

Members' Photographs

There has been a very disappointing contribution to the Members' Photographs section this year. We have new photos of 5 Camellias, 2 Magnolias, 1 Rhododendron species and no Rhododendron hybrids! If we don't get a considerable increase in the next few months, we will probably withdraw this facility next year.

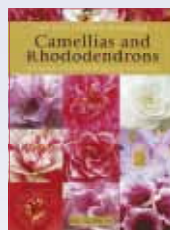
There must be lots of good plants have been snapped this spring, especially Magnolias? Further details of the competition and how to send photographs are given on the web site.

Membership renewals

When the time is appropriate please remember that membership renewals may be made via the web site. Save yourself postage and a trip to the Post office!

If there are additional features that you would like to see added to the site then please contact webmaster@rhodogroup-rhs.org

The following publications are offered to Group Members exclusively and are sold in support of the Group. Previously advertised titles not featured here may still be available – please enquire.



The Lost Gardens of Heligan
CAMELLIAS and RHODODENDRONS
National Plant Heritage Collection
Bee Robson
96pp Barman 2010
Full Price: **£9.95** Member's Price: **£8.50**
Postage: UK **£1.50**, Europe **£3**
Rest of World **£5**

Pocket Guide to RHODODENDRON SPECIES

John McQuire & Mike Robinson

704pp RBG Kew 2009
Full Price: **£59** Member's Price: **£42**
Postage: UK **£5.50**, Europe **£8.50**
Rest of World **£15.50**

SEEDS OF ADVENTURE Peter Cox &

Peter Hutchison

Full Price: **£35** Member's Price: **£27**
Postage: UK **£4**, Europe **£6**, Rest of World **£10**

CAMELLIAS: The Gardener's Encyclopedia Jennifer Trehane

Full price: **£35** Member's Price: **£23.50**
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Please make cheques (Sterling) payable to: *The Rhododendron, Camellia and Magnolia Group*. Payment may also be made by Mastercard or Visa or via PayPal to rcmgpaypal@woodtown.net
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the Rhododendron, Camellia & Magnolia group forthcoming events



DECEMBER / 2010	JANUARY / 2011	MARCH / 2011	APRIL / 2011	MAY / 2011
14 Holehird Talk on 'Complimentary Planting' by Neil Huntley from Hartside Nursery Lakeland RCM Society Robert Smith 015394 43041	11 Ness Gardens "Birches (and other things) in New England and Nova Scotia" -Hugh McAllister & Ted Brabin North West Branch Ted Brabin 0151 353 1193	4 Ardingly College "Denny Pratt Azaleas" Talk by David Millais South East Branch Barry Haseltine 01342 713132	16 White House Farm Visit to Maurice Foster's garden Wessex Branch & SE Branch Miranda Gunn 01428 644422	10 Spring Show Lakeland RCM Society Robert Smith 015394 43041
	18 Annual Dinner Lakeland RCM Society Robert Smith 015394 43041	8 Will the real Mr Macabe please stand up! Talk by Christopher Bradbury Lakeland RCM Society Robert Smith 015394 43041	16/17 Rosemoor RHS Main Rhododendron Competition in conjunction with SW Branch Camellia and Magnolia Show South West Branch Colin Brown 01647 277268	9-15 Group Spring Tour to Scottish Gardens See page 3 and the enclosed Tour Leaflet and Booking Form Judith Hallett 01981 570401
	FEBRUARY / 2011	19/20 RHS Horticultural Halls London RHS Early Camellia Competition RHS 0845 370 0148	20 Bodnant Gardens Tour led by Head Gardener, Troy Smith North West Branch Ted Brabin 0151 353 1193	14 Borde Hill Visit to Gore's Wood at Borde Hill Guided by the Head Gardener Andy Stephens North West Branch Ted Brabin 0151 353 1193
	8 Holehird Talk on Logan Botanical Gardens by The Curator Richard Baines, Lakeland RCM Society Robert Smith 015394 43041	29/30 RHS Horticultural Halls London RHS Main Camellia Competition & Early Rhododendron Competition RHS 0845 370 0148	30/1 MAY Tilgate Park S E Branch Show South East Branch Barry Haseltine 01342 713132	28-3 JUNE Cornwall Branch Tour South East Branch Barry Haseltine 01342 713132
	12 Ness Gardens Stephen Lyus - The 2010 Camellia Congress Kurume, Japan North West Branch Ted Brabin 0151 353 1193			OCTOBER / 2011
				29 Rosemoor Autumn Meeting South West Branch Colin Brown 01647 277268