

# the Rhododendron, Camellia & Magnolia group

Patron: HRH The Prince of Wales

Bulletin 132 / March 2020 / [www.rhodogroup-rhs.org](http://www.rhodogroup-rhs.org)



## CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

When I started to write this it was raining and it seemed to have been raining throughout the winter. Then for three days we actually had a frost but since then and even now whilst I finish these notes it is raining again. So far it has been a warm wet winter but February can often be the coldest month here in Cornwall.

The Sasanqua Camellias continue to make a good display and other early spring Camellias are coming into flower. I noticed today, 3rd February, that *Magnolia campbellii* 'Sidbury' had started to flower. It may even have been flowering in January but I have not been in the garden much because I may not have mentioned it but it has been raining a lot. As a Magnolia man I am of course looking forward to the rest of them coming into flower this year. From looking at the buds which are filling out, it could be a good year.

## Spring Tour

We have had to cancel the intended spring tour of Brittany. By the end of January there were only 6 people signed up although over 30 originally expressed an interest. Unfortunately that was obviously not enough to cover the costs of the tour and so we had to withdraw. I am disappointed that this has happened since it suggests that we were out of touch with your needs. I don't know if this was due to location, dates, cost or other factors. I would therefore like to hear any of your views so please feel free to contact me.

## Shows

The 2020 Show season will soon be upon us. If you have not regularly attended any in the past may I please encourage you to do so. Amongst other benefits that I have received from my visits over the years there are a number of plants, such as *Camellia japonica* 'Augusto Leal de Gouveia Pinto', which would not be in my garden if I had not seen them in flower at a show and decided I needed to have one.

## Seed importation regulations

Just as final calls for seed list donations were being sent out across the membership, we became aware that a new EU regulation was about to be applied. Part of the 'Smarter Rules for Safer Food' package, the *Plant Health Regulation (PHR)* and *Official Controls Regulation (OCR)* came

*We hope that small societies such as the RCMG may be exempted from recently announced restrictions on seed exchange.*



*Rhododendron arboreum* ssp. *albotomentosum* at Tourin House, March 2017. Photo: Seamus O'Brien

into force in the UK on 14 December 2019. Under this regulation 'all plants and living plants, including seeds intended for planting will need to be accompanied by a Phytosanitary Certificate for import into the EU unless they are exempted from this requirement.' Sadly, our three genera, albeit they are not food items, are not exempted; the only items currently excluded being pineapple, coconut, durian, banana and dates. Smarter Rules for Safer Food? Sledgehammers and nuts come to mind.

Luckily, we were just in time to secure various imports to add to our seed list for this year, if the UK chooses to continue with this regulation once the Brexit transition is over and we cannot negotiate an exemption with DEFRA for small societies such as our own, our seed list offerings will be permanently diminished. Conversely, if the UK rescinds the regulation after the transition

period, we will be unable to send our seed to Europe in the future unless satisfactory arrangements for small societies can be devised.

Moreover, as members of other international specialist societies, such as the American Rhododendron Society or the Magnolia Society, we will, as individuals, no longer

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be able to (legally) share in their seed exchanges. Anyone who has imported plants into the UK from outside the EU will know that Phytosanitary Certificates are very expensive and completely out of the question for our 'outside Europe' donors to contemplate!

My experience of the civil service is that it is loath to make life simpler by removing regulations once imposed so I am not hopeful. I would suggest that we might lobby our MPs but I suspect that they will have much more important things to argue about this year.

Nagoya and now this!

### Volunteers

This is probably the section that you skip over each bulletin but bear with me since we have some good news. We have managed to attract a replacement Yearbook Editor in the person of Mary White and she is currently working with Barry on the 2020 yearbook. Next year she will take the lead with Barry providing support.

We also have appointed a Communications Officer namely Mark Bobin who is charged with getting our message out there and attracting new members, particularly younger ones. He will be using a full panoply of social media to achieve this. You can find more information on his activities and how you can help elsewhere in this bulletin.

On the negative side we still have a vacancy for a Webmaster although the incumbent seems to be able to keep the web site operational but we now have a need for two more volunteers. Unfortunately, Chris Legrand who has been very effective in his role of Events Organiser has announced that he needs to stand down due to health reasons. We will welcome someone who thinks that they could possibly fill that role.

In the longer term, our excellent Treasurer has announced that she will step down at the 2021 AGM so we will need a replacement next year. If you have any bookkeeping experience please get in touch.

### Philip Evans

I am really sorry to note the passing of Philip Evans who over many years did outstanding work on behalf of the group including helping to steer us to our current charitable status. I will always remember when I first met Philip at the committee

meeting of the group that we were both attending in 2004. It was my first meeting and Philip went out of his way to introduce me to the other members and explain what was happening. On subsequent meetings my initial feelings of his friendliness and helpfulness were confirmed. You can read more about Philip later in this bulletin.

Graham Mills

chairman@rhodogroup-rhs.org

01326 280382

## PLANT FOCUS

We are all thrilled when we learn more about plants that interest us, especially rhododendrons, camellias and magnolias. Special focus days are run for Groups such as the RHS Woody Plant Committee, where they focus on a particular group of plants at an appropriate venue, with speakers enlisted to enlighten the gathering and a walk to see the plants themselves. It has been suggested that our Group should run focus days along similar lines to this. We think they will be of interest to our membership and non-members alike. Anyone with the slightest interest or an absolute expert would be welcome to attend. We want to pitch the content so that there will be something for everyone and we can all share the experience and be the richer for it. Our plan is to hold the first of these at Windsor in 2021, with the focus on *Rhododendron* subsection *Falconera*, where they hold about 180 examples of this relatively small subsection in the Valley Gardens. Rod White, John Anderson and I are working out the details for you.



*Rhododendron basilicum* (Falconera Gp A) exhibited at the Savill Show 2018 by the Crown Estate. Photo: Polly Cooke

Plant Focus days are something we could hold at many different places across the country with varied topics and speakers. The real focus is about our three genera, sharing our knowledge as widely as possible and learning from each other. Does this interest you? Please take the time to send me a short email, putting Plant Focus in the subject line, with your views on this.

Contact me at [bj.cooke@btinternet.com](mailto:bj.cooke@btinternet.com)

Barry Cooke  
Vice Chairman

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## SOCIAL MEDIA

Our newly-appointed Communications Officer, Mark Bobin, writes:

The RCM social media accounts – Twitter, Instagram and Facebook – all have the potential to reach a huge and varied audience. With the Group's aim to promote education and the conservation of our three genera, let's use this tool. The aim is to broaden our reach and increase our following. So, with this in mind, we will be adding much more content. It should be used to promote events and share news. I also want to post more regularly about the plants in our genera.

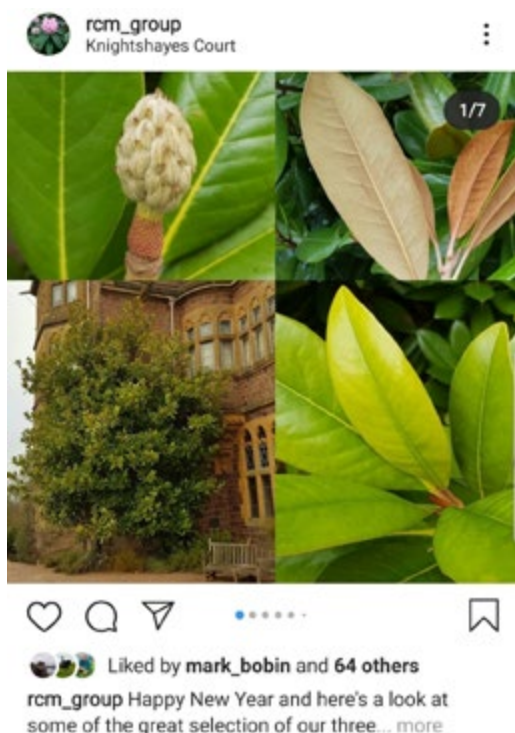
If anyone can help with supplying current photos of interesting plants for our social media feeds (or photos of anything else related to the three genera) along with a bit of information – whether that is from your own garden, visitor gardens or shows – please can you bear me in mind. These will go onto the Group's pages:

-  **Twitter:** [www.twitter.com/rcm\\_group](http://www.twitter.com/rcm_group)
-  **Instagram:** [www.instagram.com/rcm\\_group](http://www.instagram.com/rcm_group)
-  **Facebook:** [www.facebook.com/RHS.Rhododendron.Camellia.Magnolia.Group](http://www.facebook.com/RHS.Rhododendron.Camellia.Magnolia.Group)

What I would like is:

- Close-ups of leaves plus the flower, bud or seed (depending on the time of year) and wide shot of the plant, plus any other images of the location that may be interesting to our audience.
- I also will need the plant details – name, location, etc.
- Send it to my email [markbobin@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:markbobin@hotmail.co.uk)
- It doesn't need to be much to Tweet or for an Instagram post but will make a massive difference to have posts from around the country. Let's share your passion for our plants!

Here's an example



## 2020 AGM at BOWOOD

Lord Lansdowne has kindly offered to host our 2020 AGM in the Bothy at Bowood (Derry Hill, Calne SN11 9NF). This will be held on Saturday 9th May 2020. The programme for the day is:

10.30 am Arrive. Coffee and biscuits in the Bothy

11 am AGM

12.30 pm Guided tour of Lord and Lady Lansdowne's Private Walled Garden

1.15 pm Buffet Lunch in the Bothy

After lunch, you are free to explore the Gardens and arboretum near the house, or drive to the outstanding Woodland Garden to see the rhododendron collection.

[www.bowood.org/bowood-house-gardens/gardens-grounds](http://www.bowood.org/bowood-house-gardens/gardens-grounds)

If you wish to be included in the guided tour and the buffet lunch, the cost is £20 per person, payable on the day.

Entry to the House and Garden (normally £13.50) and the Woodland Garden (normally £7.25) is free to all members registered as attending.

All those wishing to attend must let me know on or before April 23rd 2020 stating whether they are visiting for the AGM only or wish to join the tour and lunch. If you are bringing a guest please

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## MILLAIS NURSERIES

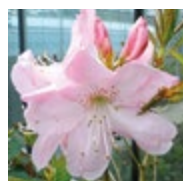


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### Recent RHS Chelsea Flower Show Gold Medals

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say so. If you have any special dietary requirements please let me know and I will pass this on to Bowood.

The Group will be paying for the guided tour and lunch in advance, in accordance with the terms requested by Bowood. There is no scope for late booking. Members who decide to attend after the above date will need to pay both the normal garden entrance fee and for their lunch at one of the restaurants, they will not be eligible to attend the guided tours.

We welcome offers from members willing to serve on our Management Committee. In particular, we are looking for an Events co-ordinator and a Webmaster this year, and in 2021 we will need a new Treasurer with experience of using the Sage bookkeeping package. If you think you can do any of these, please don't be shy, get in touch and ask for details. Nominations should be made to me by Friday 13th March 2020.

*Polly Cooke*

Group Secretary.

[polly.cooke@btinternet.com](mailto:polly.cooke@btinternet.com)

## APPRECIATION

### Philip Evans (1934–2019)

The name Philip Evans will be familiar to many of you, having appeared so often on the Committee pages of the yearbook announcing his many and various roles, at the very front of the yearbook for ten years when he served as Editor, or on the pages of both the yearbook and the Bulletin as a frequent contributor.

A full appreciation will appear in the forthcoming yearbook and, for now, I hope this short tribute will suffice to provide an acknowledgement of the great service he gave to our Group.



Philip Evans preparing for a rhododendron competition.  
Photo: Robin Evans

Those of you who knew him will remember Philip not just for his great knowledge of our three genera, about which he could write and talk with the authority of both the plant hunter and the gardener, but just as much for his gentility and kindness. He was one of the most courteous people you could wish to meet, blessed with endless patience and yet with a tremendous sense of fun and an unrestrained competitive streak when he was showing rhododendrons!

The RCM Group has Philip to thank for his steadfast guidance as we navigated our way through the various relationship struggles with the RHS and our eventual path to charitable status – without him, chaos and disorder would have certainly wrecked the ship.

When I first joined the Group, many years ago, we had an intriguing entry on the Committee list – the title of ‘Godfather to the Group’. I never met the holder of that title, knew nothing of its origin, and the role disappeared without comment shortly afterwards. Well if ever we had revived that position in the following years, Philip would have needed no interview to fill it. To my mind he was the Group’s ‘Godfather’ right up until the moment he retired not so long ago.

He will be missed personally for his friendship and generously shared knowledge, and by all of us for those selfless qualities of service on which Groups such as our own depend.

*Pam Hayward*

## AWARDS

The Horticultural Trades Association has awarded the Pearson Medal to John Ravenscroft for his outstanding services to horticulture. He and his wife Elizabeth founded and ran Bridgemere Garden World and, later, Cherry Tree Arboretum (magnolia specialists). Boyd Douglas-Davies of the HTA, on presenting the award, said that John was always generous in sharing his knowledge and expertise with horticultural students many of whom are now enjoying success in other nurseries and garden centres.

*David Millais*

Vice Chairman

## VISIT TO DEER DELL GARDEN

Deer Dell has been described as probably the best private rhododendron species collection in the world. It contains all the best forms of species from Cornwall to Scotland and beyond. These were collected over a lifetime by the late John McQuire, and initially planted out in their subsections to enable comparison. John’s self-taught knowledge of botany enabled him and the late Mike Robinson to write ‘The Pocket Guide to Rhododendron Species’, a book that should be on every enthusiast’s bookshelves.

Thanks to the kindness of his widow Sylvia, Deer Dell will be open on 18th April 2020 in memory of the late John McQuire. It



will be an opportunity to enjoy the rhododendrons he spent the last 50 years of his life collecting.

**Admission:** by *advance booking only* with a limit of 30 people per session.

**Opening times:** 10.00am – 1.00pm or 2.00pm – 5.00pm.

**Address:** Deer Dell, Botany Hill, The Sands, FARNHAM, Surrey GU10 1LZ

If oversubscribed a further opening can be arranged for Sunday 19th (morning only).

Entry by donation to Phyllis Tuckwell Hospice at Deer Dell on the day.

Plants & books will be on sale. Teas and coffees will be available from the WI.

Anyone unable to visit and wishing to do so can make a donation to [www.pth.org.uk/get-involved/ways-to-remember/donate-a-memory](http://www.pth.org.uk/get-involved/ways-to-remember/donate-a-memory)

There are still a few places available on Saturday 18th April.

To make your booking, email the Group Secretary, Polly Cooke: [polly.cooke@btinternet.com](mailto:polly.cooke@btinternet.com)

## TREASURER'S REPORT

Thanks to you all for your continued support of the RCMG with your subscriptions. Gift Aid has been a further contribution to the income of the Group since we became a Charity, allowing us to claim back 25p in the pound on UK members who are taxpayers.

I took over the role of Treasurer in 2016 and started the process of computerising the accounts to streamline the everyday process of recording transactions in banking, Paypal and credit cards. I believe the accounts are now in a position for someone with bookkeeping knowledge to be able to step in and take over the role when I plan to step down at the AGM in 2021.

I look forward to hearing from any member who would consider this. I am happy to work alongside anyone who is considering this position for a couple of months until they are comfortable to take over the position in its entirety.

*Jenny Fly*

## BRANCH REPORTS

### South West Branch

The South West Branch annual Autumn Meeting and AGM took place on Saturday 26th October in the Peter Buckley Learning Centre at RHS Garden Rosemoor. We had Roy Lancaster as our guest for the day and almost 70 members and their guests attended, in spite of the atrocious weather. A good number of younger gardeners came along which was excellent. Once we had gathered in the morning, a display of plants was set up as was the plant sale and raffle. Once raffle tickets and plants had been bought we settled down to our ever successful 'Bring and Tell' session. About ten members had volunteered to talk for

five minutes on the plants or plant material they had brought. Diverse topics included some *Impatiens* species, *Albizia* (now *Paraserianthes*) *lophantha* which led to discussing the German/Australian polymath Ferdinand von Mueller who distributed its seeds in the 1850s, a large leaved *Corylopsis* from China, *Sorbus scalaris* in abundant fruit, and many other things which provoked much interest and discussion. All the while, a general plant quiz set up by John Marston and a specialised Rhododendron quiz by Pam Hayward set minds whirring. After lunch, quiz answers were given and prizes were awarded to the winners. A short AGM followed at which our Treasurer, Sarah Chesters, outlined the finances of the Branch which remain healthy. Sarah is taking over organising the Branch garden visits from the Chairman. John Marston outlined the very successful year for the Branch in 2019, and Roy himself said how impressed he was at the range of knowledge and enthusiasm he found at the present meeting. Pam Hayward, who remains an essential part of the Branch in the distribution of e-mails and information to members, gave the date of next year's Spring Show at Rosemoor. She and sister Sally reiterated their appeal for more people to send lists of the plants of our genera growing in their gardens, which has already proved a very valuable exercise. More members need to send their lists. After the AGM, Roy gave a fascinating, wide ranging and highly enjoyable talk on 'A Plantsman's Pleasures' with photographs of plants both familiar and unfamiliar which he had enjoyed over the years, and many of which he grows in his one third of an acre garden in Chandler's Ford. He paid tribute to the many unsung

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Plant Hunters in the past who did sterling work introducing many plants without the fame of names such as Wilson, Farrer, etc. Special tribute was paid to his friend, Devonian Len Beer who accompanied him on his expeditions to Nepal in the 1970s and who died tragically young. Rousing applause for Roy brought the meeting and a very successful day to an end.

John Marston



Roy & Saul discuss at the Bring and Tell

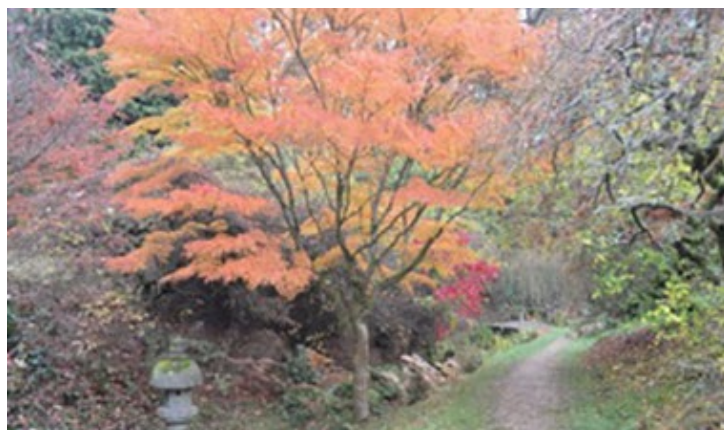


Some of the audience at the Bring and Tell session. Photos: John Marston

### Wessex Branch

We arrived at Ramster Gardens at 10.30am and members enjoyed tea, coffee & biscuits before we all set off in different directions on a really enjoyable garden ramble. Heavy skies but no rain thank goodness!

Considering the very violent winds the week before, there was still a lot of autumn colour to see. Not far into our Group's walk, we sighted a magnificent *Acer palmatum* 'Seiryu' (Dissectum Group) and various forms of *Acer* 'Dissectum Group'.



*Acer palmatum* 'Seiryu' (Dissectum Group)

*Parrotia persica* was just coming into its own as was *Metasequoia* 'Gold Rush'. Many of our native trees, especially the oaks, with their many hues of colour stood out against the dark green of mature conifers, such as the Wellingtonia, *Sequoiadendron giganteum*.

The bog garden has now become quite eye catching with many different ferns to view, and the new Group Centenary garden already looks well established. Trees were even producing unusual fungi.

There was so much more to admire, but we had to get back to the tea rooms for lunch and the raffle. The timing was just right as the rain forecasted started to fall!

I was delighted at the attendance for our first AGM and the plants and gifts donated for the raffle. This turned out be a great day with winners being able to take home some lovely specimen plants and prizes. Two donations were so good we decided to auction them and the money raised went into branch funds for future projects.



Rod White conducted the auction. Photos: Jenny Fly



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After the auction, we started the AGM where the usual matters were discussed. Very interesting and constructive ideas were put forward and it ended a most enjoyable day. Members were sincerely thanked for their continued support of the Wessex Branch.

My hope for the future is to encourage more younger members to join us. Many ideas on how to achieve this were suggested and some were quite brilliant. I am now more optimistic that we can achieve this.

Andy Fly

## Irish Branch

One of Ireland's best-kept secrets is her gardens. On the Emerald Isle, the birthplace of William Robinson, we prefer a wilder style of gardening, similar to Cornwall and the west coast of Scotland, and Irish gardens are famed for their botanical collections. This is in greater part, due to the influence of the early directors and curators of the National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin in Dublin. Like her former sister gardens at Kew and Edinburgh, Glasnevin is not ideal for the cultivation of certain plant groups, particularly lime intolerant taxa. During the 19th and early 20th centuries the golden era of plant exploration, Glasnevin stocked many of the great estates like Fota, Kilmacurragh, Powerscourt and Rowallane, for example, with a deluge of new exotics then arriving in from the far-flung regions of the globe.

Many of the owners of Irish estates became patrons of the famous plant hunters and their introductions are still to be found in notable woodland gardens today. The Marquis of Headfort is one notable example. He was to become a personal friend and sponsor of George Forrest and also sponsored Captain Frank Kingdon Ward. The same may be said for Lady Londonderry, Edith Vane-Tempest-Stewart, who, during the same period, created the famous gardens at Mount Stewart in Co. Down and raised Forrest and Kingdon Ward plants in staggering numbers.

Driving along an Irish country roadway, it's not uncommon to pass the high walls of a great demesne, with rhododendrons and camellias enveloping historic gate lodges. Though not all gardens focusing on our three favourite genera – rhododendrons, camellias, magnolias – are within the big estates, many others are of a more recent era, growing the best of the newly introduced species and cultivars. The aim of the Irish Branch of the RHS RCMG is to promote the cultivation of these three taxa and associated genera (like *Enkianthus*, *Kalmia*, *Lyonia*, *Pieris* and *Schima*, for example) throughout the island of Ireland and to gather like-minded enthusiasts to visit collections both large and small. Throughout 2020 we plan to visit several noteworthy collections and would like to encourage UK and overseas members to join us. The following is a brief account of planned visits.

### February

Given its highly alkaline soil and low rainfall, the National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin in Dublin might not seem an ideal candidate for our group to visit, though within the confines of Richard Turner's elegant curvilinear range of glasshouses is

housed one of the largest collection of *Vireya* rhododendrons in Britain and Ireland. Our visit on February 20th is timed to catch many of the species and hybrids at peak flowering season.



Richard Turner's curvilinear range of glasshouses at the National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin which house the *vireya* collection.

### March

Mount Congreve needs little introduction. Developed by the late Ambrose Congreve (1907-2011), his many visits to Exbury, and his friendship with Edmund de Rothschild, persuaded him to create a woodland garden on a grand scale that now houses one of the largest and best-known collections of rhododendrons, camellias and magnolias in the world. The avenue of *Magnolia campbellii* is justly world famous and our visit on March 12th will see it at its spectacular best.

### April

April sees a large party of Irish Branch members travelling across to visit the RHS Early Rhododendron, Main Camellia and Spring Ornamental Competition at the Savill Gardens, Windsor Great Park on April 4th. In the following days Irish members will travel on to Nymans, Leonardslee and a number of private woodland gardens in Sussex and Kent.

The Blackwater Valley in County Waterford is studded with many historic manor houses with good woodland gardens. On April 9th we will visit two of these and it is pleasing to report several English Branch members will join us. Our first stop is at Tourin, a splendid Italianate Victorian villa surrounded by extensive gardens and parkland. Home to the Jameson family of Irish distilling fame, the tour will be led by Kristin Jameson who has added much to the gardens in recent decades. Nearby is Dromana House, a Jacobean pile on the banks of the Blackwater river. Home to the Villier-Stuart family for the past eight centuries, the present owners are restoring the woodland gardens with great gusto, with a very wide range of rhododendrons, camellias and magnolias.



The Indian gate lodge at the entrance to Mount Congreve.

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*Rhododendron* 'Dromana 800', one of the many good hybrids grown at Dromana, Co. Waterford.

The National Botanic Gardens, Kilmacurragh is Glasnevin's country estate in County Wicklow with Ireland's earliest and oldest *Rhododendron* collection. The visit on April 16th is timed to see the historic Broad Walk of *Rhododendron* 'Altaclerense' at its billowing best, alongside species and other cultivars. The visit will also allow members behind the scenes and hear restoration and expansion plans. Tour led by Seamus O'Brien.



HRH the Prince of Wales with Seamus at NBG Kilmacurragh. Broad Walk of *Rhododendron* 'Altaclerense' on the left.

Photo: © Press Office, NBG Kilmacurragh



The 18th c. pond vista at NBG Kilmacurragh with rhododendrons reflected in the water. Photos: Seamus O'Brien, except where otherwise indicated.

## May

On May 8th, to coincide with 'Rhododendron Week' the Irish Branch of the RCMG joins forces with the John F. Kennedy Arboretum in County Wexford, to host a day of walks and lectures. Speakers include John Anderson whose lecture is entitled **Windsor's Woodland Treasures and Beyond** – a look at big leaved *Rhododendrons*, sumptuous *Magnolias* and delicate woodland jewels, and Seamus O'Brien whose talk **The Irish Rhododendron Story** – will highlight the history of rhododendron growing and woodland gardening in Ireland.



*Rhododendron sinogrande* with Paddy Mackie at Mahee

Photo: Mary O'Neill Moloney

On May 13th the group travels to County Down to visit the Ringdufferin Estate near Killyleagh. Home to Tracy Hamilton MBE, Ringdufferin is beautifully situated on the edge of Strangford Lough and consists of a mature arboretum alongside a beautifully planted woodland garden and walled garden. That evening we drive to Mahee Island, a drowned drumlin in Strangford Lough, to see the remarkable garden of Paddy Mackie (Tracy Hamilton's father), created over the past six decades. Mahee is one of the largest privately owned *Rhododendron* collections on the island of Ireland and contains the best of the 20th century hybrids and many of the newly introduced species.

## August

August is not the best season for rhododendrons, camellias or magnolias, though there are other good woodlanders that extend the season in Irish gardens. One of the best of these are the many species and hybrids of *Eucryphia*. On August 28th we return to County Down to visit the Annesley Garden and nearby Seaforde Demesne to catch the *Eucryphia* collections there at peak flowering. At the Annesley Garden at Castletwellan, Seamus O'Brien will deliver a taxonomic workshop on *Eucryphia* species and hybrids followed by a tour by Head Gardener Alwyn Sinnamon.

Seaforde, an extensive estate with a very grand Georgian manor at its heart, is home to the Forde family, including the late Patrick (Paddy) Forde, a former RHS RCMG Branch Chair. A plantsman's heaven may be an overused cliché, but Seaforde is simply wonderful and hosts a National collection of *Eucryphia*



which, alongside rivers of blue hydrangeas, gives a mass of bloom in the walled garden and woodland garden areas.

Members are reminded that they may attend events only having pre-booked through [seamus.obrien@opw.ie](mailto:seamus.obrien@opw.ie) and entry fees apply to several of the gardens listed. Further details are available at [www.rhodogroup-rhs.org/current/events/](http://www.rhodogroup-rhs.org/current/events/)

*Seamus O'Brien*

(Accounts of the RCMG Spring Tour of Northern Ireland which included visits to Mahee, Ringdufferin and Seaforde can be read in Bulletin 127, August 2018, Ed.)

#### MEMBER'S NOTE

### John Bond – a little bit of history...

(For those who don't know he was Keeper of the Gardens in Windsor Great Park for 27 years)

**W**earing my bibliophile's hat I thought like minded members might be interested in this following snippet.

The late John Bond of Savill Garden & Valley Garden repute was – alongside his incredible plant scholarship – also a bibliophile with his own extensive botanical library and was in addition a 'GWR' railway enthusiast. To this end he combined both these latter two interests.

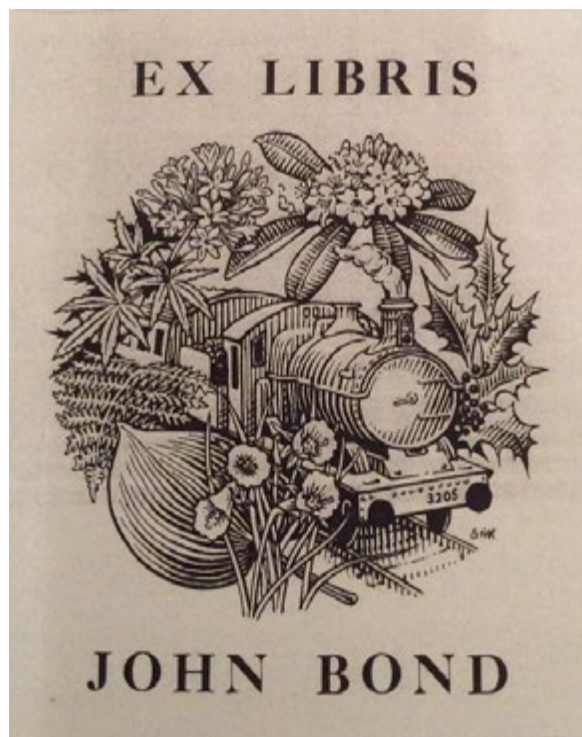
His chosen colours selected for the various signage boards – particularly in the Savill Garden – during his time as Keeper of the Gardens were presented in 'GWR's so called chocolate and cream livery.

Following the theme of John's enthusiasm for all things 'GWR' his personal ex-libris bookplate is printed on acid-free 'GWR' cream paper. The small bookplate is 8 cms x 9.5 cms and was affixed to the front endpaper of all his own library titles. In fact some of you might have been fortunate and acquired an ex-copy of his and not been aware of the interesting historical perspective.

The illustration depicts his own favourite locomotive as the central figure being GWR 0-6-0 No 3205 that has appeared pulling rolling stock on several heritage lines. It is currently housed at Buckfastleigh working on the South Devon Railway between Buckfastleigh and Totnes.

Surrounding the central locomotive image are a series of artworks which illustrate the seven individual genera representing the National Plant Collections managed by the Crown Estate Commissioners in the two Gardens in Windsor Great Park during John's period at the helm. Latterly the number of National Plant Collections extended to nine which included dwarf Conifers; obviously following on after the original design of his bookplate.

The artwork shows *Narcissus*, *Hosta*, hardy Ferns, *Acer*, *Agapanthus*, *Rhododendron* and *Ilex*.



John Bond's bookplate

Sometimes bookplates and pencilled annotations discovered in second-hand book purchases brings their own new and added dimension – and perhaps if you are fortunate, even additional information!

*John Sanders*

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## The Group's Archives

A chance purchase of a Rhododendron, Camellia and Magnolia Group yearbook at National Trust, Lanhydrock became my unwitting entry ticket to a whirlwind progression from non-member to full-time Committee Member in just a matter of months! Quickly taken by the 'Rhododendron Bug', I craved earlier editions to feed the condition and having spoken with David Farnes, who held the stock of back issues at the time, as many as were available found their way to me in a large brown paper parcel of delight. For better or worse, David recognised in me a likely candidate for a 'job' on the Committee and to be honest it took very little to persuade me to take on the responsibility of holding and distributing the back issues. A Committee role was conjured for this – 'Group Yearbook Archivist' – so at its inception the word 'archivist' had very little to do with holding historic records!

The word 'Yearbook' disappeared from the job title some time ago; keeping a stock of them (a joist-threatening amount) is only a small part of what I do now as archivist. I thought it might be of interest to readers to know what the archives are and are not.

First and foremost, the yearbooks form the core of the records and like many members, I hold an entire set from 1946 to 2019 with spares of most years available for purchase. Donations from members or their families, purchases online or in charity shops, and other chance acquisitions have meant there is a constant supply.

Over and above that, I have personally gathered every published item of RCM-related material I can lay my hands on, such that I now have access to a mind-boggling amount of information, not to mention a constant fear of waking up to discover my ceilings have failed under the strain!

It was when Joey Warren retired as Secretary that the 'archives' began to take on a more customary character. Joey had already allowed me to photocopy her entire set of Bulletins but at this point she passed on to me the records from her years as Secretary. Her retirement came just at the time when emailing was becoming the norm, so that the majority of her records were hard copy traditional correspondence, carbon copies even! Anyone who knows Joey will not be surprised to hear that these records were immaculately kept and presented – she had been a Mistress of the Art of the Perfect Secretary – and they have been an invaluable source of information and 'record-straightening' over the years I have had them in my care. Subsequent secretaries, Pat Bucknell and Sally Hayward, have both added their excellent records to this collection but the reliance on email and diminishing number of letters is sadly evident. Currently the only Group records I add to this element of the archives are the electronic copies of agendas and minutes from the various committee meetings, now mostly held via Skype.

We have been fortunate to add to the Group's burgeoning stores of knowledge through the deposits of records made by prominent members. I have, for example, all of Lady Cynthia Postan's records of the production of *The Rhododendron Story*;

all of former Bulletin Editors Kenneth Lowes and Geoff Taylor's notes and correspondence, and John Bodenham's extensive research into Vireyas.

I have also gathered together a good collection of nursery catalogues and garden guides, and am working on building a complete set of the Field Notes of all the various collectors.

Lastly, I have a complete set of the Group's many Seed Lists, which have proven useful time and time again in identifying plants from numbers.

What I don't have, simply because there is no time at present to produce one, is a catalogue of what I hold here, nor can I offer material out for loan. What I can say is that everything I have exists as a research reference for you. If there is anything you are looking for that I might have here, I will be able to find it, scan it and email or post it to you.

Furthermore, if you are ever seeking spare copies of books, do send me an email with your wants – I have quite a number here available, just no time to make a list right now!

*Pam Hayward*

## Membership

We welcome our new members and hope they will enjoy all the benefits of membership of the Rhododendron Camellia and Magnolia Group.

*Rupert Eley*

### UK

Mr Chris Sanders Eccleshall, Staffordshire

Mr Michal Dvorak Westonbirt, Gloucestershire

Mr Oliver Ross-Macdonald Sithney, Cornwall

Dr Geoffrey White Tavistock, Devon

Mr Matthew Brewer Guineaford, North Devon

c/o Jess Evans NT Knightshayes Court, Devon

Mr Paul Bygrave Forde Abbey, Somerset

c/o Mr Ashley Brent NT Greenway, Devon

Mr Andrew Frostick Chester, Cheshire

Mr Michael Lear Oxford, Oxfordshire

Mr Trevor Nicholson Ilkley, West Yorkshire

Jude Millard Largs, Ayrshire

Helen Oakes Castle Semple, Renfrewshire

Mr Alan Pedrick Dorchester, Dorset

### IRELAND

Mr Nicholas Grubb Cappoquin, County Waterford

Mary O'Neill-Moloney John F Kennedy Arboretum, County Wexford

c/o Mr Alex Slazenger, Powerscourt Estate, County Wicklow

Mr David Koning Kilgarron Hill, County Wicklow



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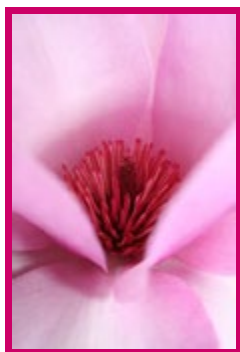
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# the Rhododendron, Camellia & Magnolia group

## Group and Branch Meetings and Events

Members are more than welcome to attend events at any branches

### MARCH 2020

**Sat 7<sup>th</sup> at 2pm**

#### North West Branch

The Lecture Theatre, Ness Botanic Gardens

**Bill Warrell, Head Gardener at Plas Newydd and Penrhyn Castle, on his two gardens**

Ted Brabin  
angela.brabin@btinternet.com  
0151 353 1193

**Sat 14<sup>th</sup> / Sun 15<sup>th</sup>**

#### RHS and South West Branch

RHS Garden Rosemoor  
Torrington, Devon EX38 8PH

**RHS Early Camellia Competition and the Branch Magnolia, Rhododendron and Spring Ornamental Competition**

Georgina Barter  
georginabarter@rhs.org.uk  
020 7821 3142  
Dr John Marston  
artavianjohn@gmail.com  
01271 267091

**Thurs 19<sup>th</sup> at 11am**

#### Irish Branch

Mount Congreve Estate,  
Co. Waterford

**Tour led by Curator Michael White**

Seamus O'Brien  
seamus.obrien@opw.ie

### APRIL 2020

**Sat 4<sup>th</sup> / Sun 5<sup>th</sup>**

#### RHS

Savill Garden

**RHS Early Rhododendron, Main Camellia and Spring Ornamental Competition**

Georgina Barter  
georginabarter@rhs.org.uk  
020 7821 3142

**Thurs 9<sup>th</sup> 11am and 2pm**

#### Irish Branch

Tourin House and Gardens and Dromana House and Gardens, Cappoquin, Co. Waterford.

**The Blackwater valley is noted for its many historic manor houses with good gardens. We will visit two notable piles with fine woodland gardens. Booking essential Admission fee.**

**Seamus O'Brien**  
seamus.obrien@opw.ie

**Thurs 16<sup>th</sup> at 10.30am**

#### Irish Branch

The National Botanic Gardens, Kilmacurragh, Co. Wicklow

**Tour led by Head Gardener, Seamus O'Brien.**

**Booking essential, no admission fee.**

Seamus O'Brien  
seamus.obrien@opw.ie

**Sat 25<sup>th</sup> / Sun 26<sup>th</sup>**

#### RHS and South West Branch

RHS Garden Rosemoor  
Torrington, Devon EX38 8PH

**RHS Main Rhododendron Competition and the Branch Camellia, Magnolia, and Floral Display Competition**

Georgina Barter  
georginabarter@rhs.org.uk  
020 7821 3142  
Dr John Marston  
artavianjohn@gmail.com  
01271 267091

### MAY 2020

**Sat 2<sup>nd</sup>**

#### Wessex Branch

Ramster Gardens, Petworth Road, Chiddingfold GU8 4SN

**Branch Show including Centenary Cup competition**

Andy Fly  
pineroftgarden1@btconnect.com  
01903 742350

**Sat 2<sup>nd</sup> / Sun 3<sup>rd</sup>**

#### RHS Harlow Carr Branch

RHS Harlow Carr

**RHS Late Rhododendron Competition**

Georgina Barter  
georginabarter@rhs.org.uk  
020 7821 3142

**Sat 2<sup>nd</sup> / Sun 3<sup>rd</sup>**

#### North West Branch

Ness Botanic Gardens  
The Bulley Room

**Branch Show**

Ted Brabin  
angela.brabin@btinternet.com  
0151 353 1193

**Sun 3<sup>rd</sup> at 2pm**

#### South East Branch

Hoads Cottage Maidstone Road, Ashford TN25 4NP

**Visit to the garden of Tom and Davina Wood**

Barry Haseltine  
bhaseltine@btinternet.com  
01342 713132

**Fri 8<sup>th</sup> at 10.30am**

#### Irish Branch

The John F. Kennedy Arboretum, New Ross, Co. Wexford.

**Details can be found on p.8 of this bulletin.**

**Booking essential, no admission fee.**

Seamus O'Brien  
seamus.obrien@opw.ie

**Sat 9<sup>th</sup>**

#### RCM Group

A.G.M.

**Bowood House**

Polly Cooke  
polly.cooke@btinternet.com  
01932 863719

**Wed 13<sup>th</sup> at 11am and 2pm**

#### Irish Branch

Ringdufferin Estate and Mahee Island, Strangford Lough, Co. Down

**Ringdufferin House lies on the west side of Strangford Lough and is home to Tracy Hamilton, the current Irish vice-chair of the International Dendrology Society who will lead the tour of the gardens**

**Paddy Mackie is one of Northern Ireland's best-known plantmen and from 1960 began a garden on a windswept island in Strangford Lough (See Rhododendrons, Camellias, Magnolias, pp. 27-34. 2019).**

**Booking essential. No fee.**

Seamus O'Brien  
seamus.obrien@opw.ie

**Wed 13<sup>th</sup> at 11am**

#### Wessex Branch

Spring Hanger, Bedham, Pulborough, West Sussex RH20 1JP

**Garden visit to the home of Jane & Ian Anderson.**

**Please be aware that some of the paths are steep and uneven, but many more are accessible.**

Andy Fly  
pineroftgarden1@btconnect.com  
01903 742350

### AUGUST 2020

**Fri 28<sup>th</sup>**

#### Irish Branch

The Annesley Gardens, Castlewellan and the Seaforde Demesne, Seaforde, Co. Down.

**Full details to follow**

Seamus O'Brien  
seamus.obrien@opw.ie

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