



the Rhododendron, Camellia & Magnolia group

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CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

Chairman's Report for the AGM 28th May 2014

The seemingly interminable efforts to recast our relationship with the RHS seem finally to be coming to an end. The group is now a formal partner of the RHS with both parties having responsibilities towards each other. I should stress that at this time these responsibilities are relatively limited in scope and focus on mutual re-enforcement of the aims of both organisations. It may appear to the casual observer that our negotiations with the RHS have not been friendly. I must assure you that we have at all times maintained a genuinely friendly relationship with the society and its staff. The problems we have encountered stem from a lack of mutual understanding of the issues being discussed. We could not have reached a satisfactory conclusion without a large amount of rather laborious activity by Philip Evans, Barry Haseltine and Alastair Stevenson. This does mean that, although we have successfully made the transition from an arrangement the RHS was unable to tolerate to one they can live with, the nature of the group itself needs further clarification. Whichever way you look at it the group is now an independent body. The different ways forward for standing up as a separate entity are broad and extremely diverse. However the group committee have considered these options and will come forward later within the AGM with a proposal for consideration.

In this my final report to you as group chairman I consider it appropriate to keep my address rather shorter than in other years; however I do have a few other

issues to brief you on and some thoughts as the group moves forward. Of particular note this year have been the flower shows which the group has supported the RHS in organising and, in most cases, augmenting through one of the local branches. We are starting to get the geographical diversity necessary for these type of activities (with shows at Rosemoor, Wisley and Harlow Carr), but perhaps we are still lacking in the correct approach to the timing of these events. In many ways a show is the best venue for group members to come together, in some senses even better than a garden visit as the activity and flowers are concentrated into one area. A particular effort has gone into these shows over the last year and the benefits have been seen by all those who attended one or more of them. This additional effort has yielded a much increased number of competitors and consequently an improved diversity of entries. If you have not shown before or not recently I would urge you to get involved. Many exhibitors

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Magnolia 'Princess Margaret'

Photo: Graham Mills

came with a very few plants to show but the cumulative effect is spectacular. It seems apparent that we have an opportunity to

make something more of each of these shows. Perhaps with the emphasis on smaller and less organised tour activities it may be worth considering a members' event on the afternoon or evening following a show? I think all of us should thank those who have supported this extra push in getting improvement to the shows including the RHS Shows Department, our partner societies and most importantly those exhibitors who chose to bring plants and flowers along.

Shows are not only an opportunity for existing members of the group to meet but also for us to engage with potential new members. Membership remains a perennial concern and the slow decline in the membership continues. A slight dip resulting from the introduction of Direct Debit was expected. However, efforts to address the overall decline seem not only hard to implement but actually difficult to devise for an organisation the size of the group. At one end of the spectrum a large scale and inevitably expensive advertising campaign seems inappropriate, yet at the other end simple interest and word of mouth is not pulling new members in. Keeping track of members and reminding

Continued overleaf

those who may have forgotten to pay their subscriptions is not a particularly pleasant task and my thanks go to Rupert Eley and his support team both inside and outside the group.

Irrespective of the falling membership, as we will shortly hear, the group's finances remain broadly healthy with little overall change in our position. The introduction of the previously mentioned Direct Debit was a painful activity, mainly for our ever patient Treasurer Alastair Stevenson. I suspect that in the coming months we will need to draw down on our reserves, initially to fully enact our transition to an independent organisation but also to modernise some of the group functions and improve our approach to publicity.

It is hard not to see the quality of our publications as routine. Obviously this is not the case and, although I do repeat myself over the continuing quality of the yearbook, no one should consider this faint praise. The latest volume is again wonderful. The time and commitment Pam Hayward continues to apply to this task is admirable, but when you consider the other effort she puts into the group it is unbelievable. As I say every year the journal's value still far exceeds the value of the subscription. During this last year our bulletin editor John Rawling elected to step down. The group should be thankful to John for his efforts in turning the bulletin into the excellent publication it now is and we welcome Peter Furneaux to the role of bulletin editor.

The Internet and the group's web site will become increasingly important. Whilst I recognise that not all of you are regular users of the Internet I think we must all recognise that Internet capabilities are driving communication for both small and large organisations. Without the direct umbrella relationship with the RHS a truly effective web site is even more important. Our webmaster Graham Mills is doing very well with the material provided to him, however I think it true to say that we (the entire group) are not helping him to help us. I would also like to thank Stephen Lyus at this point for all his assistance on the web site and with publications.

Our approach to group tours is evolving to better match the more independent outlook of the members. Judy Hallett, assisted by Miranda Gunn, is managing this transition and investigating alternative options for group events. Judy has elected to retire from the formal role of Tours Organiser and we thank her for many enjoyable trips and visits over the years. However, we hope she will stay on and continue to develop the role of event co-ordinator or similar.

Finally, I would like to personally thank all of you who have supported me as Chairman over the years, particularly Alastair, Barry and our ever patient Vice Chairman Philip Evans.

Andy Simons

SHOW REPORTS

South East Show, Wisley 12th/13th April 2014

For the second year running, the RHS has held the Early Rhododendron, the Main Camellia and the Spring Ornamental Plant Competitions in April at Wisley, rather than at Vincent Square. The idea was to allow far more people to show, given the relatively easy access to the marquee at Wisley for carting blooms around. The 2013 attempt was none too successful for rhododendrons, simply because of the lateness of the Spring, with the consequence that there were very few people with anything to show!

This year, what a difference! Everyone had a good choice of things to bring along.

It has been the case for many years that the South East Branch of the Group has held a show in Sussex, but it became very difficult to find a suitable venue after we lost the opportunity to hold it at Borde Hill, so we did not have a show in 2012 at all. However, with the South East Branch being close to Wisley, even if the RHS Gardens are, in fact, in the Wessex Branch area, we came to an agreement with the RHS that the South East could hold its show in conjunction with the Early Rhododendron and Woodland Plants show.

With the cooperation of the RHS shows organiser, a proper section for magnolias was included in the schedule this year for ornamental spring plants; in the past, magnolias have just been regarded as woodland plants, and have not had any specific classes, but this year the South East Schedule for magnolias was included in the main competition schedule.

A feature of South East Branch shows has been the inclusion of several classes only open to exhibitors with 3 acre or smaller gardens. This gives a 1 acre garden some chance in its own classes, as it does not have to compete with the 'big boys' like Exbury. The branch has collected five trophies for award, over the years, so this year it offered two of them for open competition, whilst retaining three for South East Branch members—largely because the donors of the trophies had given them for specific purposes.

It was gratifying to see that several of our regular exhibitors from previous years did make the journey to Wisley and competed in the whole range of classes that were available. Particularly notable was the first visit to one of our shows by Sandling Park, involving a rather long drive from east Kent, but with some tremendously good blooms very well staged.

Judging was done on Saturday morning, and the show was open to visitors from about 11.15. At 12.00 Jim Gardiner, Vice President of the RHS, was introduced by Andy Simons, Chairman of our Group and, with some pleasant comments about the quality and range of the exhibits, Jim opened the marquee and presented the prizes. The comments heard from the public when they saw the riot of colour with camellias, rhododendrons and some magnolias filling the marquee were most gratifying and good for the image of our genera.

At the same time there was a beautiful arrangement of immaculate blooms of camellias for visitors to see. The class for 12 camellia blooms, all different, went to Chris Loder and the Loder Plants team and so they won the Leonardslee Bowl.

Our local trophies that were used for the overall show were the Phostrogen Cup, this year given for the best rhododendron in the show, and won by The High Beeches, a South East branch

EDITOR'S NOTES

Peter Furneaux

**The copy date for the next Bulletin No.116
is September 10th 2014**

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Transparencies, digital images or line drawings will
be accepted for illustrations.

member as it happened, for a splendid spray of *Rhododendron primuliformum*. We gave the South East Branch Magnolia Rose Bowl to the exhibitor with most points in the magnolia classes, and this was won by Russell Beeson.



Mike Timberlake, who staged the winning Loder exhibit of 12 Camellia blooms, seen here with the Leonardslee Bowl Photo: Everard Daniel

Restricted trophies for South East Branch members only were won by:

- **John Fox Rhododendron Plate**
for most points in rhododendrons – **The High Beeches**
- **Peter Betteley Cup**
for most points in Camellias – **Nick Creek**
- **John Hilliard Cup**
for most points by a garden under 3 acres – **Barry Haseltine**

It is hoped that the early show will continue to be held at Wisley and that the South East Branch will be able to join in for its own local show. It seems to have been a successful innovation and has been well received by our members.

Barry Haseltine

Wessex Branch Annual Show, Ramster May 18th 2014

Our Annual Show featured an innovation this year. Instead of being held indoors it was held in a marquee next to the tea room at Ramster. This not only gave us more light and more room, but enabled us to invite the public visiting the gardens to enjoy our colourful display. Although missing some of our usual exhibitors, a really good number of our group produced a wide range of exhibits and led to many comments and questions from the considerable number of visitors. We estimated about 100 garden visitors admired the Show, some showing considerable interest and knowledge. Though whether this will result in any new members remains to be seen.

The “Best in Show” was a wonderful truss of the yellow *Rhododendron* ‘Harkwood Moonlight’ exhibited by Brian Long who also won the Lady Adam Gordon Plate for his three different elepidote hybrids – a *R. yakushmanum* cross, *R.* ‘Morning Cloud’ and another superb truss of *R.* ‘Harkwood Moonlight’.

It was no surprise that Andy Fly gained most points overall and carried off the Katherine Beadle Shield. This was, of course, not without considerable help from Jenny.

In the class for hybrid magnolias Rod Wild’s entries swept the board, as one would expect from his magnificent collection.

Other than those already mentioned, there were four more exhibitors, with entries in most classes, making up an excellent

Show. We were very grateful to Graham Rankin for once again undertaking the judging, and for the kind words of advice and encouragement he gave us in his summary over lunch.

Thanks were given to Paul and Miranda Gunn for their hospitality and for all the effort they put in to getting the Show ready. Without them, this most enjoyable day would not have been possible.

Richard Thornton

TOUR REPORT

In a previous Bulletin, Judy Hallett, our Events Organiser, and Miranda Gunn announced that they would be visiting the Rhodo 2014 event at Westerstedde and some of Northern Germany’s excellent *Rhododendron* gardens. They invited members to make their own arrangements and join them there. David Millais and Dan Turner visited some of the region’s specialist nurseries and joined Judy and Miranda at the same hotel for some of their tour. Here is their joint report.

Trip to Bremen and the Rhodo event at Westerstedde, Northern Germany

Never have we seen so many rhododendrons in our life as on this short three-day trip to Northern Germany. This whole area is one vast old peat bog, and in spite of centuries of peat removal there is still a lot left, several metres deep in places. This, and the flatness of the land, gives rise to a huge nursery industry, based on peat loving plants. *Rhododendrons* stretch out in rows into the far distance, and miles of beautifully clipped instant hedging in 2 metre lengths, hornbeam, box, yew, are grown ready for instant transportation. Plus thousands of cloud-pruned trees of all sizes, using pines, yew, *Ilex crenata*, *Cornus mas*, and even *Amelanchier*. A ready-made arch for your garden, a standard rhododendron, or a topiary bird? No problem, just state your size. The scale of the operation is enormous, with nurseries extending for up to 75 hectares, and one company owning 20 different nurseries in the area.

Our first visit was to Bremen Rhododendron Park where we were very kindly taken round by Anne Dau, in the absence of the Director, Hartwig Schepker. The Park, which is funded by a private foundation as well as the City of Bremen, stretches over 46 hectares, with a further 3 hectares of Botanical Gardens. The soil is pH5 with a very high water table and they do have problems with root rot. We saw drainage channels dug deep into the peat everywhere we went, which could prove a soggy wet trap for the unwary. There are over 600 species of rhododendron, and 3,000 cultivars in the Park. All the rhododendrons are catalogued on a database, and Anne has recently been engaged in cataloguing the species rhododendrons held in parks and gardens all over Germany for the Genebank, some 52 collections. Another team worked on the cultivars, resulting in a comprehensive database of all rhododendrons held in German collections. A truly massive task, stretching over three years.

The park has an enormous collection of old English hardy hybrids, some 170, starting from 1836 with *Rhododendron* ‘Lady Eleanor Cathcart’. Because of the early season these had nearly all finished flowering when we walked through the beautifully maintained woodland area. ‘Lee’s Dark Purple’, ‘Duke of York’ and ‘Marchioness of Lansdowne’ were still putting on a good show. They also hold a large number of British lepidotes, and a huge collection of Knaphill and Exbury azaleas.

Hartwig has recently planted a number of new rhododendron borders, including one dedicated to *R. yakushmanum* hybrids, and one full of 'Dane' varieties, with strikingly beautiful leaves, bred in Denmark by Svend Hansen. .

We were interested to find a large copper globe in the park, on which was marked all the places in the world where species rhododendrons can be found. This theme was carried on in the extensive heated glasshouses, where rhododendrons and a wealth of other plants were happily growing in their appropriate climatic zones, grouped according to country of origin. The propagation house was truly amazing: millions of tiny rhododendron seedlings, some wild collected seed and some from plants in the garden. Initially the seeds are planted in pure peat and covered with a thin layer of (home produced) sphagnum. As they grow they are pricked out into trays: the gardener responsible can achieve just three trays in a day, making this a very labour intensive task!

We felt we had only scratched the surface of this remarkable park, and we need to return again to see it in its full glory and uncover more of its treasures.

A short train journey took us up to Bad Zwischenahn, where we were met by Judy's friend Mariele Sudholz, a passionate gardener and plantsperson who most generously acted as our guide and chauffeur for the next two days. She whisked us off to Bruns Rhododendron Park, the woodland garden attached to the enormous Bruns nursery, the largest tree nursery in Europe. The garden, which was planted in the 1950s stretches over 25 hectares and a fine collection of rhododendrons flourishes under a canopy of large pine trees. Two that particularly caught our eye were a huge bush of *R. williamsianum*, about 15 x 30 feet, certainly the largest we had ever seen. Also an intriguing rhododendron with stamens which protruded a good inch from the closed bud, that we were unable to identify.



A corner of the Rhodofest, laid out in the churchyard at Westerstede
Photo: Miranda Gunn

We met up that evening with David Millais and Dan Turner, who had been visiting nurseries, and Luise Wolff-Boesch, who had stayed on after the German Rhododendron Society tour ended.

Our first stop the next day was the retail part of Bohlje's nursery. All the big nurseries here are wholesale, but some have a retail outlet. We were most impressed by the good quality and huge variety of plants for sale, including many species rhododendrons not easy to find at home. We wished we had turned up with a white van, we could have filled it with ease.

Then on to another highlight of our tour: the visit to 'Rhodo'. This specialist rhododendron show is held every four years in Westerstede, the attractive county town of the Ammerland region. During the show the entire town turns into a sea of

rhododendrons, when over 50 specialist nurseries mount colourful displays and even the churchyard becomes a landscape of rhododendrons.

The first stand we approached was dedicated to the recently introduced Inkarho cultivars. Despite the very hot day these plants looked strong and happy. We were particularly taken with the deciduous azalea *R. 'Whitethroat'*. Although we admired the huge variety of flower colour and shape as we wandered around, it was a restful interlude to rest our eyes as we approached Schroeder nursery's display of rhododendrons showing leaf only! What a brilliant way to show the public that there's more to rhododendrons than just flowers! On this stand and others we breathed the foliage scent of *Rhododendron taliense*; their selection is named 'Honigduft' which translates to 'Honey Scent'

Just as we thought we had finished our tour we bumped into David Millais who asked if we had been to the marquees. Thank goodness we met him or we might have missed this impressive part of the show. It was here that we saw the finest rhododendrons of the show: many displayed in a dark marquee and lit by spotlights: what a stunning way to show off individual plants! Perhaps we could adopt this idea as an innovative and exciting way to attract attention to our genera? The most breathtaking was a huge plant of *Rhododendron rex*. The most unusual display in this area was a stand of *Hydrangea macrophylla* cultivars grown in terracotta pots, placed at the top of very tall, 15', bamboo tripods. Our particular favourites were 'Libelle', 'White Wonder', 'Fantasia', 'Zorro' (an excellent blue with striking black stems) and 'You and Me together' (what a name!).



Colourful indoor exhibits at Rhodo 2014 Westerstede

Photo: Miranda Gunn

The fine display of tropical and rare rhododendrons brought from the Bremen Park tropical greenhouse was really exciting. Here we saw what in our opinion was 'the plant of the show': a fine specimen of *Rhododendron nuttallii*.

Revived by tea and one of the exceptional cakes of the area we set off to Hobbie Rhododendron Park. The park was founded by Dietrich Gerhard Hobbie, who started planting in the 1920s, and was well known for breeding, among other things, the popular range of dwarf rhododendrons, Elizabeth Hobbie Group, 'Baden-Baden', 'Bengal', 'Bad Eilsen' and 'Scarlet Wonder', using *R. forrestii* Repens Group. However there was nothing dwarf about this extensive collection (70 hectares) of wild species and many (unnamed) hybrids from thousands of crossings, which towered over our heads, creating a unique woodland garden. We wandered among the plants, set amongst tall pine trees, glad to see that the current Hobbie generation is working hard to restore the garden to its former glory as well as creating new areas of planting.

That evening we enjoyed an excellent dinner with Marielle and her husband Reinhard at a traditional Friesland restaurant.

On our final day we planned to visit Park der Garten, but on the way Marielle gave us a real treat by taking us to another breathtaking wholesale Bohlje nursery which specialises in cardiocrinums (*C. giganteum* and *C. yunnanense*). They were in full flower – not only in the ground but in also in twelve litre pots ready for sale. Perhaps this is the way forward for those of us who find them impossible to establish in our gardens?

Then on to Park der Garten: built on the site of the former State Garden Show of 2002. This garden is really over 90 ever changing theme gardens; a place for inspiration and ideas. There was even a 'gravestone garden' giving ideas for suitable plants for the departed! Beyond the theme gardens we came to a fine collection of new and old hybrid rhododendrons. Of particular interest to David Millais were the Old English varieties lost in the UK: 'Hosea Waterer', 'Bianchi' (favoured by Gertrude Jekyll at Munstead), 'Lord Beaconsfield', 'Duke and Duchess of York'. Where else would you find these planted out and labelled alphabetically in any garden!

While Miranda and I were enjoying ourselves in these wonderful gardens, David and Dan were busy visiting the Nurseries, as David now recounts.

German Rhododendron nurseries

May is our busiest time of the year on the nursery, so getting away to see other gardens or nurseries is always difficult. However, the opportunity of combining some nursery visits with the giant Rhodo event in Westerstede only happens every 4 years. This was my fourth such trip, and I was pleased to take Dan Turner, our nursery supervisor, on an action packed 3 day visit.

A ridiculously early start from Stansted landed us in Bremen just one hour later, and then we drove straight to Hachmann's Nursery, Barmstedt. This nursery is situated a couple of hours away from the main Rhododendron growing region around Oldenburg. It was started by the late Hans Hachmann in 1951 and is now run by his son Holger, both men are among the most accomplished Rhododendron breeders in the world, past and present. This 20 hectare nursery growing more than 600 different varieties of Rhododendron has rightly become a Mecca to enthusiasts throughout Europe, especially Scandinavia where Hachmann's breeding for cold tolerance is especially welcomed. To add to their range, they also grow good ranges of acers and rare conifers and other shrubs. The display gardens around the plant centre and offices are always inspirational for those seeking new varieties. Squeezed into every gap are plants with new names, sometimes only under a code number, so Holger can assess his plants and note visitors' comments about them. In the extensive plant centre, plants are plunged alphabetically into traditional peat beds, from where customers lift them out for purchase. We found a number of new hybrids which we hope to introduce over the next few years. Holger is also growing an excellent selection of foliage plants that look good all year, bred by Svend Hansen in Denmark. These are derived from interesting species and have names such as *R. campanulatum* 'Blue Dane', *R. taliense* 'Woolly Dane' and 'White Dane' (*yakushmanum* x *galactinum*).

Returning to the Oldenburg area, the scale of Rhododendron production has to be seen to be believed. First we visited Timo Schroeder, whose father drove over to Bagshot in the 1970s in his VW beetle and brought back a selection of then current hybrids

to start his nursery. Now the nursery grafts nearly 3 million plants per year, selling them as 1.5 litre plants throughout Europe. In order to have enough scion wood, they maintain 8 hectares (20 acres) of stock plants, growing the plants up to about 1.5 metres tall before flailing them back into the ground and replanting. Planted in large blocks of each variety, the flowering is spectacular every May. Timo grows around 200 varieties for the trade, but also keeps an interest in rarer plants, and near his house has lined out nearly 2000 different varieties planted in rows containing 3 of each variety collected from throughout Europe. It's a most extraordinary collection, and Timo is helped by renowned expert Walter Schmalscheidt, former curator of the LVG hybrid collection at Bad Zwischenahn, now within Park der Garten.

On areas of Weismoor, the peat is around 4-5 metres deep on top of well drained sandy soil. This spongy fibrous peat grows the most amazing plants you will find anywhere in Europe and is ideally suited for Rhododendrons, but only those that will withstand the cold winds and winter temperatures down to -18°C. At the time of our visit several nurseries were bulking up their plantings by lifting the remaining crop and re-spacing into large holes created by augers on the back of double wheeled tractors. Gangs were going through the crops dead-heading old flowers to promote better growth, and side branches were being trimmed with hedge trimmers. Sizes were generally larger than those found in the UK garden centres, and several nurseries specialized in large bushy plants about 1.5 metre height and spread. To see these in flower on 40 hectare nurseries is an unforgettable sight! The largest *R. catawbiense* we saw for sale were 4 metres high and 5 metres wide – more than 40 years old. We also saw plants trimmed as umbrellas, with clear stems exposed, giving space for under-planting in the garden.

All the nurseries are increasingly mechanised, and generally well organised and tidy. Many rely on seasonal staff from Poland, housed in accommodation on the nurseries for the spring and summer months. Hygiene was typically good, but a visit to a prestigious looking garden centre revealed some truly awful plants, sitting in water, and long shoots dripping with *Phytophthora ramorum* dieback. Our FERA would certainly have ordered their destruction!



Deadheading acres of field grown rhododendrons Photo: David Millais

In summary this was a wonderful trip with so much to see! We were sad that you weren't there to enjoy it with us: do visit Rhodo 2018: you won't be disappointed!

Miranda Gunn, Judy Hallett and David Millais

Minutes of the ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
held on Wednesday 28th May 2014
at 2.30 p.m. in Mr Eddy's Tea Rooms, Exbury Gardens

Present:

Chairman, Mr Andy Simons, Vice Chairman, Mr Philip Evans, Vice Chairman, Mr David Millais, Hon. Treasurer, Mr Alastair Stevenson, Hon. Secretary Mr Barry Haseltine.

Mr R Beeson, Mrs O Bird, Mr and Mrs P Bucknell, Lady J Coleman, Mrs V Crawford, Dr D Davies, Mr A Edgar, Mr and Mrs A Fly, Mr and Mrs M Gates, Mrs M Gunn, Mr S Harding, Mr and Mrs G Hargreaves, Mrs R Howell, Mr M Jackson, Mrs R Legrand, Mr C Loder, Lord Lansdowne, Mr and Mrs J Rawling, Mr and Mrs R Rosendale, Mr C Rowe, Mr J Sanders, Mrs C Sapcote, Mr K Sprague, Mr I Stokes, Mr J Talbot, Mrs J Totty, Mr and Mrs R Whiting.

■ **Chairman's Report** – See Pages 1 & 2 of this Bulletin

■ **Treasurer's Report:**

The income and expenditure account, and the balance sheet for the year ended October 31st 2013 were tabled by Alastair Stevenson.

Overall the finances of the Group remain in a sound state with total assets at 31 October 2013 of over £33,000. There had been a loss of £2142, a decrease from the previous year. There had been a reduction in membership, especially after the introduction of direct debits, but the 658 members had produced subscriptions very similar to the previous year, following the small increase in subscriptions. The loss could be coped with; the Treasurer hoped that the Group would be able to use the Gift Aid scheme after becoming a charity and this would help to stem further losses. Mr Rowe noted that the Charity Commissioners tended to dislike reserves being larger than needed for 18 months – ours might be a little too large. The Treasurer gave particular thanks to Martin Gates who had once again helped with the preparation of the accounts and to John Harsant, who had audited the accounts.

■ **Proposal to become a Charitable Incorporated Organisation**

The Chairman referred to the Note circulated to the AGM and explained that, now that we are independent from the RHS, we have to make arrangements to protect the Group and the officers from claims etc; we no longer have the 'umbrella' of the RHS. The committee has looked at the options, and there is now a relatively new arrangement under the Charities Commission – a Charitable Incorporated Organisation – CIO. This provides all we could ask for and is not difficult to set up, there being a standard form.

Mrs Rawling asked if it would be difficult to show that the Group is entitled to be a charity. Philip Evans pointed out that the International Camellia Society has already registered as a charity, albeit under an earlier arrangement with the Charity Commissioners and they had not found the charitable status difficult to justify. They had used a firm specialising in such things, and we have a quotation for them to the work for us as well.

The Chairman read out the draft resolution:

'It is resolved that:

The Group, being now legally an independent body, authorises the Committee

a) To apply to the Charity Commissioners for the Group to become registered as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) in accordance with the provisions of Section 11 of the Charities Act 2011 (the Act) and

For the purpose of making the application and to comply with the requirements and recommendations of the Charity Commissioners to complete (with the required information on the Group), adopt and submit their "Association" model constitution (being the constitution for a CIO which has voting members other than the charity trustees) and for the relevant Clauses of the Group's existing constitution to be simultaneously adopted as the Rules for the ongoing governance of the Group under Clause 26 (Rules) of the said model constitution.

b) In the event that the Application under a) should not be successful, to undertake the necessary procedures for the Group to become a company limited by guarantee.'

The Chairman proposed that the resolution be passed; it was seconded by Cheryl Sapcote.

On a vote, the resolution was carried unanimously.

■ **Election of Auditors:**

John Harsant was willing to continue to audit the accounts.

The Treasurer proposed that he be asked to do the audit again and it was carried unanimously.

■ **Group Events**

The Chairman thought that more events such as the one organised with the AGM would be welcome; perhaps there could be a mini-tour if the next AGM is confirmed to be held at Bodnant?

Rosemary Legrand raised the possibility of a 'big tour' to celebrate the 100 years of the Group or its predecessor – could New Zealand be visited again? The Chairman pointed out that about 3 years ago a visit to New Zealand had been costed at over £3000, and this was thought, at the time, to be too much; however, the committee was asked to consider the possibility of such a trip in 2016.

■ **Election of Officers**

Chairman: On the proposal of Andy Simons, with Philip Evans seconding, David Millais was unanimously elected as the Chairman.

David Millais then addressed the meeting:

Firstly I would like to thank the membership for accepting me as your new Chairman. It is a great responsibility and honour to be leading this Group as we enter an exciting new phase with greater independence from the RHS, but hopefully with stronger and more beneficial links both ways. It's an important and historic time for us all and we have so much to celebrate.

Secondly I pay a huge tribute to our retiring Chairman, Andy Simons, for his past few years of leadership. For more years than I care to remember there have been discussions with the RHS about the potential merger of the old RHS Rhododendron and Camellia Committee with our Group. Several Chairmen found this an impossible task and our Group was left in a state of limbo. Mike Robinson was probably on track to achieve a result, but his untimely death threw Andy into a spotlight which was not of his choosing. Andy's negotiation skills were certainly called upon, and he helped to negotiate not just one agreement, but after the RHS changed its mind, a second agreement which got us to the point where we are now. I know it has been very difficult

for him, in a period when he has had very little of his own time due to work pressures. Behind the scenes, Andy has built us a sound foundation on which we can proceed with our new status, hopefully as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation within the next few months. Andy has kindly agreed to stay on and guide us as one of our two Vice Chairman, and I hope you will all join me in thanking Andy most heartily for everything he has achieved in the past few years.

(There was enthusiastic applause at this point.)

The Committee will address our constitutional status, but it is plants that stimulate our Group, and I want us all to shout out more about our beautiful Rhododendrons, Camellias and Magnolias, and defeat any negative publicity about invasive ponticum or deathly ramorum. Let's visit each other's collections, learn from their treasures and enjoy being with fellow enthusiasts. There is so much talent in our Group, and we need to share that amongst ourselves and with new members. As we approach the Centenary of the original Rhododendron Society in 2016, I feel we are at the cusp of a new interest in our 3 genera. Let's be positive and move forward!

The following officers were proposed, seconded and elected unanimously:

Vice Chairmen:	Philip Evans Andy Simons
Hon. Secretary:	Barry Haseltine
Hon. Treasurer:	Alastair Stevenson
Hon. Membership Secretary:	Rupert Eley
Yearbook Editor and Archivist:	Pam Hayward
Bulletin Editor:	Peter Furneaux
Hon. Events Organiser:	Judy Hallett
Webmaster:	Graham Mills

■ Any Other Business:

Lord Lansdowne asked the meeting to thank Andy Simons for his leadership as Chairman and to thank the rest of the committee for their hard work, achieved with the use of modern technology, for the benefit of all. There was general applause.

■ Date of Next Annual General Meeting.

In advance it had been proposed that the 2015 AGM should be held at Bodnant on 27th May 2015. The chairman reported that there had been some disquiet about the distance that this would involve for travelling, so he asked for a view from the meeting. At least half of those present indicated that they would travel to Bodnant, so, with the likely addition of others not at the meeting, it seemed to be clear that enough people would travel there, so the venue was confirmed. The date was not confirmed, however, so as to leave some flexibility over possible arrangements for a mini-tour.

■ The Meeting Closed at 3.45 p.m.

GROUP WEBSITE

Steve Lyus & Graham Mills

www.rhodogroup-rhs.org

Seed List

By the time that you read this the seed list will have been available for some time on our web site and indeed will have had its first update as some seeds sell out. It is intended to keep the list open all year with updates to the list as seed becomes out of stock. First come first served!

Facebook

We are placing topical news such as details of special garden openings on our Facebook page so head over to www.facebook.com/RHS.Rhododendron.Camellia.Magnolia.Group have a look and preferably *Like us*.

Members' Photograph Competition

The winning entries from the 2013 competition are on the home page of the web site. The full set of submissions can be seen on the 'Members Photos' page. From the beginning of June we usually remove these in order to display the current year's entries. Unfortunately so far in 2014 we have only received pictures of 2 magnolias! It has been a great flowering time for our genera this year so you must have taken some photographs. Please send them to Steve Lyus whose email address is: emailslus@yahoo.co.uk

Website update. Response required!

We are about to undertake a massive update of the group's web site so that it can be viewed easily on tablets and smartphones. Before doing so we would like to know what the members would like the web site to contain. If you could email your thoughts to webmaster@rhodogroup-rhs.org they will be very welcome. Just a list of the bits you use and those you do not would be of value. Do you go to our site for plant information or other sites? If the latter then which ones?

MEMBERS NEWS

Roy Lancaster CBE VMH

Iam sure members of our group will want to congratulate Roy Lancaster, who is an honorary member of the RCMG, on his award of CBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours List for services to horticulture and charity work.

Editor

Graham Mills writes:

The reason we moved to Cornwall 25 years ago was to be able to grow Magnolias and see them in all their glory. This year has justified that decision; the trees are now attaining a reasonable size and we had enjoyed a mild winter with no frosts as the Magnolias opened.

The season started for us with *Magnolia campbellii* 'Sidbury' which had its first blooms open in February. This was a great way to start the season with a very floriferous plant at 17 years of age.

That was quickly followed by other *M. campbellii* varieties: 'Charles Raffill', 'Darjeeling' and 'Princess Margaret'. 'Charles Raffill' took 14 years to produce its first flower, a rather nondescript and small thing, but this year, five years on, for the first time it was completely covered in blooms. 'Darjeeling' has been a reliable flowerer for some years now and did not disappoint this year.

M. campbellii 'Princess Margaret' is one of my absolute favourites. (For photo please see Front Page – Ed.) I was bowled over by it the first time I saw it, at the Savill Gardens I believe, and I remain entranced. The perfect dark pink 'teacup' on a pale pink 'saucer' seems the epitome of a magnolia flower to me. Our tree is planted 20 yards or so in front of the house and is wonderful to view each morning whilst having one's first cup of tea. At 16 years old it has been flowering well for many years, so is a worthwhile magnolia to plant if you have space. I am looking forward to it being bigger and better over the next few years.



Magnolia 'Philip Tregunna'

Photo: Graham Mills

These earliest magnolias were followed by what I consider to be the 'mid-earlies'. *M. campbellii* 'Kew's Surprise', planted adjacent to 'Princess Margaret', comes into flower as the latter fades. On its own it is a great plant but it always seems a second class act compared with its partner. Others in this mid-early flowering-group include 'Albatross', 'Caerhays Belle', 'Lanarth', 'Mark Jury', 'Philip Tregunna', 'Peter Borlase' and 'Caerhays New Purple'. All of these have produced a great display this year. Last year we had the first flowering of *M. sprengeri* 'Lanhydrock' on an eight year old plant but this year it seems to have taken a break. From what we saw, it is going to be a great addition when flowering freely.

These were then followed by the 'late early' group: 'Athene', 'Star Wars', 'Iolanthe', 'Galaxy', 'Spectrum', 'Phelan Bright', 'David Clulow' etc. These came into flower together and filled the garden with clouds of white, pink and purple.

M. 'Black Tulip' is a willing flowerer and is certainly a plant to recommend for a small garden. When I purchased it there were three buds on a tree only two feet high. Now after eight years it is around twelve feet high, although not as fastigate as I was expecting, and probably eight feet wide. The perfect dark red globe flowers have been produced liberally every year but remain the same size as the first year.



Magnolia 'Black Tulip'

Photo: Graham Mills

One plant that we have struggled to grow is *Magnolia sargentiana* var. *robusta*. We have tried several times but have until recently failed either due to accident – the dog fell on it and broke it below the graft – or just unexpected death. We finally have a plant that seems to be established and this year for the first time had a dozen or so flowers which give us hope for the future.

Tregoning Mill is an eight acre garden developed in the last 25 years. We are on one side of a valley that runs from St. Keverne to the sea with a stream at the bottom. The soil is a clay-loam of about 3 feet deep over blue-clay subsoil and is acidic with a pH of around 6.2 to 6.5. Our biggest problem is the wind combined with a high water-table. This winter we lost 3 mature *Eucalyptus* and some smaller plants.

Whilst the initial reason for coming to Cornwall was to grow Magnolias, our tastes are more catholic. There are now in excess of 2500 different species in the collection with 124 Magnolias, 340 Rhododendrons and 80 Camellias. Other genera are well covered, especially the more UK tender plants such as *Eucalyptus*, *Acacia* and *Abelia*.

Rhododendron, Camellia and Magnolia Group members are welcome to make a pre-arranged visit, without charge, just contact Graham Mills 01326 280382 graham@tregoningmill.co.uk Details of the garden and its location can be found at www.tregoningmill.co.uk



Magnolia 'J C Williams'

Photo: Graham Mills

Mary Bradbury of Lakeland Society writes:

Three years ago I wrote a report on growing tender rhododendrons outside Windermere, Cumbria. The temperature in our garden has never been below -10oC in the coldest part, although it has been frozen for three months. I find tender plants do best when protected from strong winds in below zero temperatures, rather than from frost itself. I planted camellias close to the rhododendrons as a windbreak. They are beginning to develop and giving good protection. I also have put up a fine-mesh netting windbreak. By comparison, this has only given a little extra protection. *Rhododendron nuttallii* still lost some flower buds to wind damage, but late spring brought magnificent foliage; and a large over-hanging camellia provided enough extra protection to give a good show of flowers.



Rhododendron megacalyx

Photo: Mary Bradbury

I moved *Rhododendron dalhousiae* var. *rhabdotum* from this windbreak to near a *Rhododendrom dalhousiae* which had done extremely well (no flower loss) on a steep slope which allows the frost to roll away and is protected by a woodland. Here there are several large *Rhododendron edgeworthii*, a large *Rhododendron megacalyx*, a young *Rhododendron magnificum* and many other young tender plants that do reasonable well in this part of the garden. In spite of our heavy rainfall, 190cm, plants such as *Rhododendron souliei* do well in our gritty, rich soil on rock in the lee of the wood. Elsewhere, for plants that need well drained positions we mound up to 60cm with leaf mould.

All in all do not stop trying to grow the more tender rhododendrons. There are too many old and new species that need saving.

Stephen Harding writes:

Dear Editor,

I must address the issue raised by Andy Simons in his Chairman's Foreword to the 2014 yearbook regarding Plant Heritage being more interested in herbaceous plants and not our genera.

I am a member of both the RCMG and Plant Heritage and would like to challenge this statement. It is simply not true. The Threatened Plants Project is a valuable tool in identifying plants under threat of being lost forever. It relies solely on volunteers to research and collate a list of plants published in the *RHS Plantfinder* dating back 5 years. The fact that our three genera have not been researched yet simply means that a volunteer has not chosen to do the necessary work at the moment.

I have been asked to undertake *Rhododendron* for the TPP and when time allows, I will gladly do so. With over 5,000 entries for *Rhododendron* in the *Plantfinder* it is going to take a few months to compile the data.

The other scheme being run by Plant Heritage is the Plant Guardian scheme where members of the public can register threatened plants in their own gardens instead of having to start their own National Collections, of which our genera are well represented.

I urge all members to support the scheme and if the membership of RCMG would kindly send me lists of our genera grown in their own gardens, I can add the plants to the database in order that an action plan is implemented to ensure their survival.

If the RCMG were to contact Plant Heritage they would find that both organisations can work together to achieve a common goal, our plants safeguarded for future generations.

Contact: Stephen Harding, 171 Cliffe Road, Rochester, Kent, ME2 3DW

BRANCH REPORTS

NW BRANCH EVENTS, SPRING 2014

The branch had a very enjoyable tour to Scotland and some of its Isles, including Gigha and Bute. Great excitement was occasioned when we were marooned on Gigha, on a glorious day with cloudless skies and shirt sleeve temperatures. The ferry had a "technical issue", or in older parlance had broken down, on the mainland. We did not have to make alternative accommodation arrangements as it was soon fixed and we were back en route to our hotel.

The weekend after our return, on 10/11 May, we held our annual show at Ness Gardens. In view of the late date it was expected that there would be fewer species and more hybrid Rhododendrons. This was exactly what happened but what a collection of hybrids – a dazzling array. The J.K. Hulme Cup for the "Best in Show" was awarded to Colin Mugridge for one of his own seedlings, shown in the photo by Gill Lewis. The specimen presently rejoices in the name of SMM, pending a proper title. Colin has several thousand seedlings, some of great promise and I am sure we will see some more of them at our future shows.

Ted Brabin



R. 'SMM' – Best in Show, NW Branch Show

Photo: Gill Lewis

Continued overleaf

South West Branch

Visit to Caerhays Castle gardens, nr. St Austell, Cornwall

The Branch visit was scheduled last year for 20th March 2014, a date the owner, Charles Williams, plucked at random as possibly suitable to see the magnolia collection at its best. It was an inspired choice; the magnolias were superb and at their best. A winter with no frost had left the blooms of the enormous early magnolias unblemished. It was easy to see why Caerhays had won the Lamellen Cup (for the best Magnolia in the show) at the Early Spring Show at Rosemoor the previous weekend. Driving up the front drive and seeing the countless pink blooms covering vast trees framing the castle reinforced the view that this is one of the greatest of the great Cornish gardens. We gathered in the morning by some magnolias flowering their hearts out which was where we were met by Charles Williams, who led us, with his customary enthusiasm and energy, displaying all the while, his deep knowledge of every magnolia we saw. All the Asiatics were in full bloom, many planted by Charles Williams' grandfather and therefore of a great size and age. These probably made the most impact. An old plant of *Magnolia* 'Lanarth' had almost electric purple flowers, and the deep pinks of *M. sargentiana* var. *robusta* were tempered by the pure white of the pure *M. campbellii* 'Alba'. We halted in front of a beautiful magnolia, a three way cross of deep fuchsia purple which we had seen as an individual bloom on the show bench, and which was flowering as a small tree and waiting to be named – it was the best of five seedlings and by chance had been planted in the best place. There were many other seedlings which had grown to a great size, some very beautiful with flowers at eye level, so could be examined without a crick in the neck. Also at the show, we had seen bunches of the pale mauve *Rhododendron moulmainsense*, a tender species which normally is sparsely flowering, but this year was abundant, its effect heightened by a lovely perfume. It was a tall plant in the garden, and I had unwittingly passed under it.



Rhododendron moulmainsense

Photo: John Marston

After an excellent lunch, Charles Williams explained that we would explore the distant side of the valley, which could mean clambering over fallen trees. Forewarned, the more intrepid of the group set off to the other side of the valley where there had been some storm damage to the trees which were being removed, revealing very old plantings, not only of Asiatic magnolias, but also the tallest *Trochodendron aralioides* I had ever seen, exposed to the light after many years in the dark. There was much renovation taking place, and a cleared expanse of hillside would be home to a mass planting of azaleas. The

whole scale of the place was gigantic and at times overwhelming. It was heartening to see that the estate was being lovingly cared for, restored and renovated and added to as befits a great garden with a great collection from historic plantings to modern introductions, and Charles Williams was congratulated on his guardianship and for leading a most enjoyable tour.

John Marston

MEMBERSHIP

Rupert Eley

We welcome the new members who have joined in the last few months and hope that they will enjoy all the benefits of membership of the Rhododendron Camellia and Magnolia Group

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The following publications are offered to Group Members exclusively and sold in support of the Group.

Back issues of the yearbook from 1946, and previously advertised titles not featured here may still be available – please enquire.

MAGNOLIAS IN ART & CULTIVATION

Barbara Oozeerally, Jim Gardiner & Stephen Spongberg 268pp Kew, 2014

150 full colour botanical paintings, cultivation notes and detailed botanical descriptions

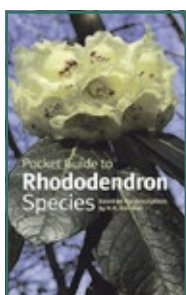
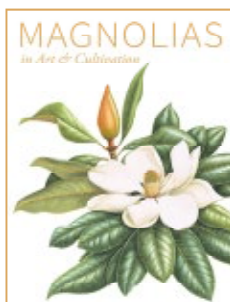
Full Price: **£90.00**

UK Member's Price: **£70**

European Member's Price: **£76**

Rest of World Member's Price: **£84**

All prices include postage.



Pocket Guide to RHODODENDRON SPECIES

John McQuire & Mike Robinson

704pp Kew, 2009

Full Price: **£59** Member's Price: **£42**

Postage: UK **£5.50** Europe **£8.50**

Rest of World **£15.50**

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PUBLICATIONS

07/14

the Rhododendron, Camellia & Magnolia group forthcoming events



OCTOBER / 2014

NOV / 2014

SEED LIST

NOTES FOR SEED DONORS 2014

It's time to begin looking at which plants have set seed and thinking about harvesting them over the coming months.

Donations from members are essential if we are to continue producing a varied and interesting seed list. Here are a few suggestions for the treatment of seeds in order to maintain maximum viability as well as easing the task of distribution.

RHODODENDRONS: Using, preferably, only wild or hand pollinated rhododendrons, pick seed pods just before they start to split open. Store the seed pods in a dry, airy place, away from direct heat, and allow the seeds to drop out naturally. Separate the seeds from the pods and store in dry place in paper packets, but, if refrigerated, place inside sealed plastic bags to prevent drying out.

MAGNOLIAS: Harvest seed pods just as the red seeds begin to show. Remove the seeds and soak them in water for a few days until the red seed coat can be washed off. Rinse the seeds thoroughly and place in plastic bags with damp perlite (not peat, compost or vermiculite). **Do not allow the seeds to dry out.**

CAMELLIAS: Harvest seed pods as they begin to split. Remove seeds from pods and place in plastic bags. **Do not allow seeds to dry out.**

Seeds other than those of the above genera are also very welcome. We will also accept seeds of species that exhibit early germination such as Aesculus, Quercus, Castanea, etc. and advertise these by email or on the Group website for early distribution before the end of the year.

All seeds should be sent in bulk – one packet for each species, with clear, waterproof labelling showing full, correct, botanical name, whether hand or open pollinated, collector's number, location collected plus any other relevant information.

If you have seeds but cannot manage to clean them then just send them anyway and we will deal with them appropriately. If you have the opportunity to collect in the wild we would particularly like to hear from you.

For inclusion in the main printed list seeds should be received by 30 November. Exceptionally, late ripening seeds may be sent up to the end of the year but notification of an intended seed donation should still be received by 30 November, where possible. Seeds received at other times of the year may be advertised using email or the Group website.

All seeds can be stored temporarily in the warmest part of a domestic refrigerator – **DO NOT FREEZE** – before sending them, in a padded mail bag, as soon as possible, to:

Mrs Julie Atkinson
184 Crow Lane East, Newton-le-Willows, St Helens, Merseyside WA12 9UA

If you are still not sure about something, queries may be sent to julie.soundgardenrhododendrons@hotmail.co.uk

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South West Branch
RHS Rosemoor

Autumn meeting
Guest Speaker:
Rosemary Legrand
*'Bhutan- Kingdom of
Rare Plants'*
Dr John Marston
artavianjohn@gmail.com
or 01271 323 202



1

South East Branch
Sheffield Park Gardens

Pub Lunch & visit to
Sheffield Park Gardens
Barry Haseltine
01342 713132
barry.haseltine@which.net
or Ros Rawling
rrawing@homecall.co.uk

