



the Rhododendron, Camellia & Magnolia group

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CHAIRMAN'S AGM REPORT

May 2015

The most important event this year has been the granting of charitable status to the Rhododendron Camellia and Magnolia Group. After a detailed application process, the Charity Commissioners recognised the conservation, research and educational roles of the Group, and as from 13th April 2015 it has been a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) as mandated to Committee at last year's AGM. This new status gives the security of limited liability with the benefits of being a recognised charity. We are hopeful that at least part of our annual subscriptions will be eligible for Gift Aid, and in due course we would welcome legacies to increase our charitable activities which include public shows, travel sponsorship of young horticulturists, commissioning the micropropagation of rare plants, the sponsorship of several notable plant collections, and our work in supporting the RHS. Our charitable activities can be seen across our three genera, they help the public at large, and are not just for the benefit of paid up members.

In practical terms, there will be some statutory requirements to meet the obligations of the Charity Commission, and these will be managed by the four Trustees who are ultimately responsible to the Charity Commission to ensure we operate the charity correctly and for the public benefit. The initial Trustees are Philip Evans, Barry Haseltine, Alastair Stevenson and myself. One Trustee will retire in rotation annually, starting in 2016. I would like to publicly thank these Trustees for everything they have done to help achieve our charitable status this year. It's a major milestone in the history of the Group.

Now we have this framework in place we can concentrate our efforts on what we should be doing, and that's promoting and working with our 3 genera. The recent membership survey has produced an outstanding response from more than 25% of the membership. It has highlighted our strengths and weaknesses, and will give the Committee plenty to think about in the direction we take over the next few years. I would like to thank Graham Mills for all his work on this, and of course for the significant rebuild of our website, so that it is now dynamic and viewable from tablets and smart phones. Graham has also set up a Facebook page for the Group, so do get involved and share your pictures and news.

I am delighted to welcome three new Branch Chairmen this year, and they are all trying hard to re-invigorate membership in their areas. Branch Chairmen play a key role in making contact at the local level, and help to build friendships amongst like-



Magnolia sieboldii at Crŷg Farm, North Wales. Photo: Richard Fulcher

minded enthusiasts. Friendship spreads knowledge and love for our genera, and will help to draw in others who should be welcomed and encouraged to join us. Offers to create Branches in other areas would be gratefully received.

I am also pleased to welcome Stephen Harding as our first Conservation Officer. Steve is exactly the right person

The Charity Commissioners recognised the conservation, research and educational roles of the Group, and as from 13th April 2015 it has been a Charitable Incorporated Organisation

to be taking on this important role as he is familiar with managing plant collections and has well established links with Plant Heritage. With an

aging membership and poorly labelled plants, we only have a short timeframe in which to set up a database of rare plants, both species and hybrids, which need rescuing. We then need to propagate them and establish them in public gardens to safeguard them for future generations. Time is of the essence, and I do hope that you will help us with this huge project. In our Centenary year, and with our Charitable status, we can leave no better legacy than to ensure that the best plants collected from the Himalayas by intrepid plant collectors years ago, or hybrids raised as a result of a detailed breeding programme are not lost to obscurity but planted out for all to enjoy. Please help Steve as we embark upon this huge programme.

The Centenary sub-Committee are busy putting together our Centenary Programme, based at RHS Wisley Garden on 7-10th May 2016, with two days of activities and an exhibition at the

Continued overleaf

Hillside Events Centre, including archive material and a display of our Top 100 Rhododendrons. There will also be day trips to a selection of the best private and public gardens in the area. I do hope we can welcome as many local and international members as possible to this major four day event; it will represent a chance to look forward, as well as back, and a great opportunity to promote our Group and to gain new members. Preferential hotel deals will be announced shortly.

Over the years we have all been amazed by the quality of Pam Hayward's yearbooks, and this is reflected in the universal high esteem they were given in the membership survey. The superb 2015 edition is no exception. She has promised a bumper Centenary edition for 2016, which will be the ninth Yearbook that she has produced. After this, Pam has indicated that she wishes to handover to another editor, so now the hunt is on for someone to come forward and take on this role so we can continue to offer a great Yearbook.

Finally, I would like to appeal for more participation from within our membership to help with manning Shows, and to take on roles within the Committee. Our large membership rightly demands a high standard in everything we do, but at present the duties fall on the shoulders of just a few. Our longstanding Yearbook Editor, Treasurer, and Events Co-ordinator have all indicated that they wish to stand down after many years' of fantastic service. Each will be a hard act to follow, but it is only right that they be allowed to step down, and for others to step forward to take on these important roles. Please also consider volunteering at Shows or for the Committee; you will find it immensely rewarding to meet many other enthusiasts and share knowledge about our plants.

David Millais

EDITOR'S NOTES

Peter Furneaux

I need your letters, reports from Branch events and articles.

**The copy date for the next Bulletin No.119
is 9th September 2015**

Please send your contributions to:

email: peterfurneaux@gmail.com

or post to: Peter Furneaux

Lucton Court, Lucton, Herefordshire HR6 9PQ

Letters or articles on any aspect of our three genera are very welcome as also are illustrations.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Note from the Group Secretary

In order to reserve space within the Bulletin for articles and photographs, it has been decided to publish the Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at Bodnant on 27th May 2015 on the Group website. If you are unable to access the website and would like a copy of the Minutes posted to you, please contact RCM Group Secretary Sally Hayward

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Note from the Yearbook Editor

It is almost ten years ago that our late Chairman, Mike Robinson, asked if I would take on the editorship of the yearbook . . . for just five years! Eight editions later and a ninth in the making, the time has now come to throw out the net to catch my successor.

Long before I took on the editorship, I had been involved with the publication's production, first helping my predecessor, Philip Evans, with the more mundane aspects of proof reading and sending out complimentary copies, moving on swiftly to take on print and despatch.

The yearbook was what drew me into the RCM Group in the first place and from our recent survey, it appears many other members value it too. It is a most important publication with a long and illustrious history, slowly evolving from a single genus title to one fully embracing the three genera now under our wing, along with all things ericaceous and suitable for companion planting.

Bringing each edition to publication is a satisfying journey of developing ideas, grasped opportunities and proffered gifts of words, envisaging them on the page, planning their development and finally getting them to print.

It's now time for the publication to move on again and for someone else to stamp their personality on the pages.

I won't pretend it's not a lot of work, but I can promise that it is rewarding and worthwhile.

So if you find yourself with time on your hands and in need of the kind of stimulation being an editor provides, and you have an imagination and vision for our yearbook's future, please do get in touch with me and I'll be happy to talk you through what's involved.

One thing is certain: I will be stepping down and a new editor must be found. Don't let our yearbook disappear, step up to the challenge!

Pam Hayward

ADVERTISEMENT - BULLETIN FOLDERS

In the past, the previous editor, John Rawling, sourced and produced for members a bulletin folder which contained special inserts for easy reading and storage, which he despatched (at cost) to members. Following our recent move, we find we have four folders (with inserts) left over for which we have no room and would like to dispose of.

It is possible that someone would like to take over the running of this process entirely and continue to supply the group with the folders. However, for the moment, we are offering these last four folders, with their inserts (we have lots of those too) at a reduced price of just £5, plus postage, first come, first served. The original cost in 2003 was £11.75.

Please email or phone your interest, so we can see what any future demand might be, if someone within the Group wished to take it on.

Contact jr.eye@virgin.net or 01883 348577

Ros Rawling

Group Tour and AGM 26–28 May 2015

Our new tour 'recipe' seems to have membership approval! A shorter tour with more flexibility and the opportunity to attend some or all elements attracted some fifty members over the course of the tour. Many attended for the whole time, either staying at the Quay Hotel in Conwy, with friends or at nearby inns. Some members joined us for our day at Bodnant and it was a delight to have four charming young trainees with us for the duration of the tour studying under the Heritage Horticulture Skills Scheme: their enthusiasm and botanical curiosity was infectious. The reports that follow indicate how much we enjoyed the garden visits: our thanks to all garden owners and garden staff for their hospitality. On the first evening Bleddyn Wynn-Jones gave a fascinating account of his travels in Vietnam and on the second evening David Millais organised a raffle and auction which raised £228 for group funds.

Judy Hallett

TOUR

Tour of Bodnant Garden

A windy but generally fine day greeted us on our visit to Bodnant, a short run from our Hotel at Deganwy. We were received by a group of enthusiastic staff from Bodnant led by the head gardener John Rippin and assistant head gardener Adam Salvin, and joined by Alison Clarke, Bodnant's botanist.

Bodnant is considered to be the finest garden in North Wales and a visit could easily warrant a whole day – however we used our few hours well and were shown some magnificent trees, shrubs and borders. Bodnant is set against a backdrop of the finest scenery in North Wales with Snowdonia on the horizon to the west and the estuary of the river Conwy below and to the north. The current garden comprises around 80 acres, first established by Henry Davis Pochin in 1874, much improved by his daughter and son-in-law, the first Lord Aberconway. It was laid out in a series of terraces by the 2nd Lord Aberconway from 1901 onwards, the garden being given to the National Trust in 1949. The 3rd Lord Aberconway continued to administer, and his son Michael is the garden manager to this present day.



A view in Bodnant Garden.

Photo: Philip Evans

The estate is made up of a core 80 acres of terraced gardens, water features, mature trees, follies, fountains, ponds and buildings – further woodland and meadows bringing a total of land in care up to 300 acres. New projects include the renovation of rose terraces, the recent creation of a winter garden, the opening of large private areas of the garden including the Old Park Meadow, the Yew Dell and The Far End. 'The Far End' of the garden includes the old Skating pond with islands, with many original water features. Furnace Hill with its fantastic wild flower meadow is also partly open to the public. New planting and maintenance of older trees and shrubs are also proceeding here.

Within our particular interest, the gardens are planted with collections of camellias, magnolias (49 species), rhododendrons, including many which were specifically bred at Bodnant (300 were bred, and 150 are still in the collection and labelled as such), as well as fabulous collections of trees and shrubs of all round interest. The gardens contain National collections of *Embothrium*, *Eucryphia*, *Magnolia* and *Rhododendron*.

Our journey started at the old Mill where we saw a typically Welsh stream bubbling over rock formations, planted round with many azaleas, rhododendrons and over-canopied with many older pines and deciduous trees from the original plantings. We walked slowly along the Magnolia Walk, where there are so many of the original Bodnant hybrid rhododendrons planted amongst acid-loving trees and shrubs. *Rhododendron* 'Cilpinense' was one of the first hybrids to be bred at Bodnant in 1828 and is one of the earliest to flower. Due to its flower and reliability it is still a very popular plant for gardens. We saw fine and floriferous specimens of *R. augustinii*, and *R. 'Vanessa'* which is another very popular and well known hybrid to come out of Bodnant. We observed a *Magnolia sargentiana* var. *robusta* planted in 1919, now a good size. There are two enormous specimens of *Magnolia x veitchii* 'Peter Veitch' and many other specimens including *M. x wieseneri* and examples of *M. sieboldii*. *Enkianthus* of several species and varieties dangled delicate trusses of bell flowers in jewel shades of red and bicolor, cream and white. *Sequoiadendron* feature as part of an upper layer of trees, along with *Abies grandis*, *Ginkgo biloba*, *Tsuga heterophylla*, *Cedrus atlantica* and *Cedrus libani*.



A view near the Old Mill.

Photo: David Millais

Continuing upwards, we reached the amazing 50 metre long herbaceous border situated above the top and front lawns, where colourful perennial plants both new and of some antiquity had been recently joined by a new alpine garden area of immaculate execution.

Turning around at the high point of the top terrace, we headed downwards over the terraces into the Deep Bath area,

where we observed ferns mixed with bright red embbothriums and multi-coloured azaleas, all vying for the most dissonant colour combination – and a love it or loathe it viewing experience. We enjoyed seeing some venerable old trees providing canopy to more of our genera. At the top of the terraces in front of the main buildings, a new alpine garden is being established with a fascinating collection of smaller shrubs and herbaceous plants providing seasonal displays.

Moving on, across the shrub border were yet more collections of *Magnolia*, acid-loving shrubs, *Enkianthus* and rhododendrons. Snaking slowly round some of the terraces, stopping here and there to admire the many stunning examples of trees and shrubs, we covered as much area as we could in the time allotted and were now on a downwards clamber. This included a walk down to newly reclaimed Yew Dell, past a waterfall with interconnecting lakes and streams leading to the magnificent ponds and islands with their plantings of trees, shrubs and primulas. These areas took in a hitherto private area of arboretum as well as ponds that had been used for skating in the past.



Rhododendron 'Sunrise', an Aberconway *R. griersonianum* hybrid
Photo: Philip Evans



Rhododendron 'Gretia', another Aberconway *R. griersonianum* hybrid
Photo: Philip Evans

We finally arrived at what is known as 'The Far End' where we reassembled for restorative cups of coffee and chocolate. Many of the party then explored the wooded upper areas known as Furnace Hill, where much new planting has been taking place over the last ten or so years and incorporated in to the existing mature woodlands. There is a magnificent view of Conwy bay from the top of the woods.

One of the highlights of our morning was the opportunity to

view a newly planted avenue of twenty *Rhododendron* 'Penjerrick'. There are a number of good clones at Bodnant, but the best pale creamy clone was selected and successfully micropropagated by Ros Smith at the Duchy College, to prevent its loss from *Phytophthora ramorum*. This propagation programme took place as a result of a RCMG initiative organised and enthusiastically monitored by retired Committee member John Harsant. The plants looked strong and healthy and are planted in a new long walk across the valley from the house. In time they will make an impressive sight for future visitors, and may even rival the famous Bodnant Laburnum arch!



The new planting of *Rhododendron* 'Penjerrick' at Bodnant.

Photo: David Millais

A truly delightful morning enjoyed by all. Never enough time to take everything in, and this would be a garden to visit at least in each season and for more than a day at a time!

Cheryl Sapcote

Bodnant Nursery

After lunch and the AGM at the Bodnant Welsh Food Centre, we drove a mile and a half around the estate to the main garden entrance. In common with the Food Centre, the Bodnant Garden Centre and Nursery are not connected with the National Trust, but are owned by Michael McLaren QC, whose grandfather, the second Baron Aberconway, donated the gardens to the NT in 1949. Thousands of garden visitors are able to pop into the adjoining well-stocked garden centre after their garden visit, to stock up with souvenirs and plants that originated in the gardens.

The nursery is not normally open to the public, but grows a good proportion of plants for sale through the garden centre. Unlike so many National Trust and RHS gardens where the plants for sale bear little relation to the plants in the garden, the nursery at Bodnant tries to propagate some of the key signature Bodnant plants, such as the original form of *Rhododendron* 'Elizabeth' (which is completely different from every other commercial offering), and of course all those 'Bodnant Bloody Reds'. Many garden visitors are on holiday in the area, so smaller sized plants predominate, as these take up less space amongst all the holiday luggage.

The range of plants is diverse, and includes over 400 different varieties, made up of woody plants such as rhododendrons, camellias, magnolias and acers, and a wide range of herbaceous plants too. Propagation is mainly by cuttings and seed, but with such a wide range of plant material being handled, it is difficult to obtain perfect results across all genera, when different plants need

different requirements. To save time pricking out rhododendron seed, these had been sown directly into small cells, but 3 or more seedlings in the same cell can produce a variable plant, and moisture control is difficult. Cuttings are rooted on benches under polythene and mist, before being potted on and placed in an adjoining glasshouse and polytunnel for growing on. Most shrubs are grown up to 3 litre size, in a Bodnant branded pot, before being transferred across to the garden centre for sale.

Thank you to Graham Marsh for enthusiastically showing the Group around the nursery.

David Millais

Visit to Aberconwy Nursery

Our first visit on the Thursday morning was to Aberconwy Nursery, owned and run by Keith Lever and his family. The nursery specialises in alpine plants and Keith treated us to an inspiring guided tour of a world of 'miniatures', so different from the huge mature rhododendrons we saw the day before at Bodnant.

The main propagation area occupied the centre of a medium sized glasshouse, where newly-taken cuttings were placed under a fogging system on a heated bench-polytunnel for a short period, to maintain their turgidity and encourage rooting to start. Rooted plants were then potted and placed on capillary sand benches, a system developed at the, now defunct, ADAS Efford Experimental Station, before eventually making their way out onto the sales benches. The whole process seemed to work like clockwork, the plants were all of superb quality, not a weed to be seen anywhere and the experience was quite inspirational.



Dwarf rhododendrons propagated at Aberconwy nursery.

Photo: David Millais

The Nursery's Spring Catalogue lists getting on for a thousand varieties and there were yet more interesting plants, in too limited a quantity to make it onto the list, all waiting for us in the sales area after the tour. The result was a bit like a 'jumble' or 'rummage' sale, with us elbowing each other out of the way, as we scrambled to fill our baskets with rarely seen little gems – some very nice dwarf rhododendrons and other ericaceous plants, along with several tiny 'woodlanders' made their way into mine and are now gracing a peat-filled sink in the garden. I look forward to the flowering season next year.

This nursery is now a 'must visit' on any trip to North Wales.

Ivor Stokes

Visit to Crûg Farm Plants

The weather continued fair on Thursday morning as we made our final visit to Crûg Farm Plants where we were met by Sue and Bleddyn Wynn-Jones. This proved to be a most interesting visit with such a range of plants to see including our own three genera. Bleddyn had already whetted our appetite with his illustrated talk on the Tuesday evening so you can imagine the anticipation.

We gathered together amid the old Farm buildings that were clothed in various creepers and climbing plants, all collected by Bleddyn and Sue on their many world-wide expeditions. *Holboellia brachyandra* collected in Vietnam was in full flower and nearby various climbing hydrangeas making new growth. Pink flowered *H. anomala* subsp *glabrescens* 'Crûg Coral' (BSWJ 3117) from Taiwan and *H. anomala* subsp *anomala* 'Winter Glow' (BSWJ2411) from the Himalaya a more tender species. Close by was *Viburnum betulifolium* 'Hohuanshan' but my eyes fixed on a purple leaved young *Betula insignis* subsp. *fansipanensis* BSWJ11751 and a lovely small *Sorbus* species collected by Keith Rushforth, *S. aff. filipes* Group KR 5000.



Anopterus glandulosus

Photo: Richard Fulcher



Holboellia brachyandra

Photo: Richard Fulcher

Continued overleaf

As we moved off around the garden it was at times difficult keeping within earshot of Bleddyn due to the narrow paths and labyrinthine layout. The number of rare and unusual plants was indeed overwhelming. Large *Schefflera taiwaniana* and *S. rhododendrifolia* added a sub-tropical atmosphere. Around the corner a specimen of *Malus sikkimensis* in full flower spread its branches overhead. Nearby stood a lovely specimen of the Korean form of *Magnolia sieboldii* with its darker than usual central boss of maroon stamens. At this point I caught a strong scent in the atmosphere. I thought I had stepped on something unpleasant, but no it was in fact a *Viburnum*, *V. sieboldii* which despite the strong odour was worth growing for its attractive flowers. This area was full of interesting shrubs, nearly all of which were B&SWJ introductions, many from the island of Ullüngdö. Bleddyn pointed out another viburnum grown for its attractive fruit *V. dilatatum* BSWJ5844 and, from the same island, *Sorbus takesimensis* syn. *commixta* var. *sachalinensis*. The number of different *Sorbus* and *Acer* were obviously favourites. Aside from the woody plants, Sue and Bleddyn had not neglected herbaceous perennials. *Angelica*, *Rodgersia* and *Maianthemum* were just a few which caught my eye.

As we snaked up a narrow path brushing shoulders with numerous species, a lovely young specimen of *Anopterus glandulosus* came into view. This brought back memories of my days at Inverewe with its rich Southern Hemisphere collections. A little further on a specimen of *Rhododendron roxieanum* var. *oreonastes* (I think) came into view. The larger rhododendrons nearby were, according to Bleddyn, brought from Portmeirion. These appeared to be hybrids of *R. macabeanum* and other species. Even David Millais had difficulty in naming some of the apparent *R. fortunei* hybrids. I would imagine these were simply seedlings from the well known Clough Williams-Ellis estate where *R. 'Gwillt King'* had its origin in 1938. (Y gwillt in Welsh means the wild)



Deutzia calycosa.

Photo: Richard Fulcher

Bleddyn's collection contained a number of plants from other collectors, such as Maurice Foster's lovely *Deutzia calycosa* which was in full flower as we made our way back to the front of the house, then under a towering *Holboellia* and through the wall into a protected courtyard stacked full of rare plants including *Exbucklandia tonkinensis* and *Trevesia* aff. *burckii*. Passing under a fragrant *Holboellia latifolia* subsp. *chartacea* dark flowered HWJK2213d we eventually ended up in the sales area where many acquisitions were made and finally with a vote of thanks from David we made our way back to the cars.

Richard John Fulcher

Visit to Pen Y Graig

Five of us visited this young and impressive garden on the Thursday, the others having visited two days earlier. Tucked away in the hills near St Asaph, in the designated Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty of the Clwydian Range, the old house and a few fields were bought by Colin and Margaret Mugridge in 1998, and Colin set about making a rhododendron, camellia and magnolia garden on limestone.

He explained the science behind his success: briefly, all ericaceous plants take up all the manganese available in the soil, but rhododendrons and azaleas take up a lot more than what would be toxic to other plants, and store it in their leaves. Colin plants groups of at least three rhododendrons in a mulch of peat and garden compost ON TOP of the soil, and eventually the manganese-rich leaf litter feeds the plants.



Box hedges line a path at Colin Mugridge's garden.

Photo: David Millais

The 2.5 acre garden is beautifully landscaped with lawns edged by winding beds of shrubs (a large-flowered *Drimys winteri* and several magnolias stood out among the rhododendrons), interspersed with geraniums and other bee-loving plants, and some envy-making trilliums. Margaret proudly told us that Colin had made the garden himself ('not bad for one man!') and she pointed out some of his successful hybrid rhododendrons, including one registered and named after his mother, Phyllis Rees.

We saw Colin's greenhouse, full of his new hybrids, flowering for the first time. 'A number need to be registered', he said. But he told us, and Ivor Stokes agreed, that out of 100 new hybrids you will probably only end up with two or three that are successful and worthy of registration.

We were entertained to tea in the new upstairs extension to the house, with great views over the unspoilt North Wales countryside and thus ended a very interesting tour.

Rosemary Howell

Visit to Plas Cadnant

Although some members had travelled to the area earlier and were able to enjoy the morning at Colin Mugridge's garden, most of the tour members arrived in time for the visit to Plas Cadnant. What an exciting surprise this garden visit turned out to be! We were fortunate to be guided round the garden by owner, Anthony Tavernor. As we walked, he explained the history and recent restoration of the garden, while Anthony's garden advisor, Philip Brown, a noted plantsman retired from Portmeirion was on hand to identify and discuss individual plants.



Rhododendron 'Drum Major' Group at Plas Cadnant.

Photo: David Millais

Plas Cadnant garden was originally developed in the mid-1800s by the Price family who owned 3,400 acres of estate in North Wales. It had been laid out in the Picturesque style but had been left to grow wild since the 1940s. With great tenacity, Anthony has reclaimed the extensive gardens, discovering a walled garden, waterfalls, a folly and many footpaths and pools. When Anthony began restoration work in 1996, the area was engulfed by seedling sycamore, ash and laurel, with just the remnants of stone walls. Today, valleys and vistas have been recreated, waterfalls have been re-landscaped and stone walls, steps and rock work have been restored with the help of a specialist. Many interesting levels have been created, allowing visitors to admire magnolia flowers from above and see bog alpine at eye level.

While Anthony did not set out to create a garden of our genera, we saw some fine rhododendrons and magnolias as well as many other spring flowering plants. Of particular note were *Rhododendron barbatum*, *R. 'Carita Inchmery'* with its long lasting flowers, *R. oreotrephe*s, and a member of *R. 'Drum Major'* Group. In the courtyard is a particularly fine *Magnolia delavayi*.



*Rhododendron oreotrephe*s at Plas Cadnant.

Photo: David Millais

To ensure a long season of interest, Anthony has planted over a hundred varieties of hydrangeas, a *Rosa banksiae* (bearing profuse flowers on the day of our visit) and a fascinating tunnel of *Styrax japonica* (will its hanging flowers one day rival the Bodnant Laburnum Arch?). In the woodland setting *Saxifraga hirsuta* and the Chilean hard fern, *Blechnum chilense* are thriving, while maples provide autumn colour. Anthony is a member of the

European Boxwood Society: a lasting memory of Plas Cadnant will be the large box pyramids 'marching' across the lawn.



Box pyramids at Plas Cadnant.

Photo: David Millais

What has been achieved at Plas Cadnant in such a short time is remarkable: Anthony's passion and love for the garden have resulted in a garden to visit and watch over the years ahead.

Judy Hallett

BRANCH REPORTS

New Forest Branch

Our first visit of 2015 in late April set out to be a pruning workshop in Exbury Gardens under the tutelage of John Anderson, the Head Gardener. Several members of our branch and a student from the Sir Harold Hillier Gardens gathered, armed with secateurs, saws and loppers to be shown the correct and safe way to use these tools. After the demonstration we were invited to attack some of the rhododendrons in the garden. It is one thing to prune plants in one's own garden where a bad cut will probably only be noticed by one or two people, but it is daunting to say the least to prune plants in such a famous garden where bad work would be seen by hundreds of visitors. John Anderson seemed quite relaxed about this. It has to be said that one plant that we were invited to prune with John's fearsome saw was due to be winched out later.

A great deal of the pruning in the garden has to be done to keep pathways clear and to allow access for the garden machinery. Interspersed with pruning, John showed us where watering with sprinklers was under way to keep the plants in top condition. In fact two members of staff out of the ten employed in the garden devoted their time to irrigation. It was not all work for us, and we were able to coax John without much difficulty to talk about the many lovely rhododendrons coming into bloom.

John's time as Head Gardener is valuable, so we expected to finish our workshop at lunch time. But he invited us to stay on afterwards for a further exploration of the garden. So still clutching our secateurs, but with less inclination to use them, we rejoined John. It was fascinating to hear of the plans for rejuvenating and renewing plants in the garden, both by micropropagation and the more conventional methods of cuttings and grafting. Amongst the many lovely rhododendrons blooming in the garden were *R. 'Boddaertianum'* and *R. 'Queen Wilhelmina'*. Good to see the very rare *R. quinquefolium* 'Five Arrows'. We learned that it is extremely difficult to propagate, even by micropropagation.

Our second visit, in May, was to see the garden of Roger Newton, a branch member. His home is near Bridport in south west Dorset.

The garden of about 3 acres is on a fairly steep slope. There were several mature trees in the garden when Roger and his wife moved into the property, including *Metasequoia*, *Ginkgo* and *Alnus* planted by a previous owner in the 1960's. They give the garden a much more mature feel as Roger has only been cultivating since 2006. Nevertheless his planting of many rare trees and shrubs including sixty magnolias have grown very well. Almost the first tree we saw was a beautiful elm *Ulmus x hollandica* 'Dampieri Aurea' glowing with its almost yellow foliage. Further on was *Magnolia* 'Daphne' in full flower. Herbaceous plants are obviously a passion and some of the plants grown do not make for an easy and trouble free life. *Meconopsis* are grown in a raised bed and as well as the superb blue varieties more usually seen, Roger grows the gorgeous red *M. punicea* 'Sichuan Silk', and white 'Marit'. Hostas are manna to slugs, but by choosing varieties that were found to be less delectable and with the deployment of slug bait the lace work that is usually seen was avoided. Rodgersias, ferns, podophyllums, and primulas abound throughout the garden. An area of the garden was set aside as a wild flower meadow and looked lovely in the spring sunshine. Quantities of yellow rattle seed are scattered each year to reduce the vigour of the grass.

An electric fence wire was noticed around the garden. I enquired if this was to keep deer out. 'No' said Roger 'It is to keep the dogs in!' Further explanation revealed that Irish wolfhounds were family pets and that deer did not relish encounters with these very large dogs and never venture into the garden after the first meeting.

Although rather late in the season for camellias, *Camellia* 'Spring Fling' and 'Spring Formal' were flowering well. *Rhododendron* 'Albert Schweitzer' looked splendid with gorgeous full trusses. *Cercidiphyllum japonicum* 'Rotfuchs' as yet still a small tree attracted much attention for its handsome foliage.

At the end of our visit to this superb landscaped garden, Roger's wife Doreen provided us with a very welcome cup of tea and delicious cakes.

Robin Whiting

Peak District Branch

Mark Carr, our new Chairman, has always loved creating a garden. His interest in rhododendrons started when he lived near Ashbourne in Derbyshire.

When he moved to Woodpeckers in Burton Joyce, Nottinghamshire he was able to let all his ideas and creativity flow into the four acres of mature woodland and garden that has had very little landscaping or gardening done to it in the last 50 years. 600 rhododendrons/azaleas/magnolias, 150 roses and ten years later, his dreams (and garden) are maturing! Now semi-retired he finally has time to enjoy his love of gardens to the full. He and his wife Lynn run a Cookery School and Catering Business; they also share an interest in horses, gardening and entertaining.

Visit to Dunge Valley Rhododendrons

In 22° Celsius temperatures with wall-to-wall sunshine, fifteen members of the Group met at 11am for a memorable day out.

A post-1982 garden made around an old stone farmhouse in the Peak District, this garden lies in a beautiful small valley. It is a lush woodland garden with moisture-loving plants and good views.

Listen to the sound of skylark and curlew overhead and the scent of bluebells filling the air in a beautiful wooded valley in the rolling Pennine Hills! This is the setting for Dunge Valley Rhododendron Gardens, a real haven in the countryside. Spectacular views across the valley with a kaleidoscope of colour gives visitors a wonderful day out.

Started in 1983 by David and Liz Ketley, the gardens have matured into one of the most spectacular in the Peak District. A classic rhododendron, magnolia and azalea garden with a huge variety of plants brought in from America, Germany and David's treks to the Himalayas. Rhododendrons feature from April onwards with many new introductions such as the eye-catching *Rhododendron* 'Midnight Mystique', *R.* 'Orange Flirt', *R.* 'Lemon Dream', and old favourites like the wonderfully scented *R.* 'Loderi King George'. Not forgetting, of course, the blue poppies and a Chilean Fire tree.



Peak District Branch members at Dunge Valley Rhododendrons

Photo: Mark Carr

We stopped for lunch, with members pooling their food to create a feast of Honey Roast Gammon, salad, roast chicken, speciality breads, homemade cake, wine and soft drinks; consumed in the house, all seated at a long banqueting table together. Another walk around a different part of the garden, and more homemade cakes from Liz completed the day. What a day to remember, too!

Many, many thanks to Liz and David for their kind hospitality and their enthusiasm for rhododendrons.

Mark and Lynn Carr

Visit to Lea Gardens and Pond Cottage

On Tuesday 19th May our second visit comprised visits to two gardens within a 10 minute drive of each other.

We met in the teasshop at Lea Gardens, near Matlock in Derbyshire and enjoyed a delicious slice of homemade cake baked by Jenny Tye, who together with her husband Jon and her son Peter own the gardens. Jon gave us a history of the gardens, which were begun in 1935 by John Smedley, who, at the age of 68, set about building his own rhododendron garden on the site of a mediaeval millstone quarry. The gardens are on a south-west facing slope at a height of 700 feet about sea level, which ensures the plants sold from their nursery are hardy enough for most gardens. Woodland paths meander round three and a half acres, giving access to over 500 varieties of rhododendrons, azaleas and other plants. As we wandered along these paths, the rhododendrons could be viewed from below and above, as well as close up, thus creating stunning vistas.

In the afternoon we visited 'Pond Cottage' at nearby Brackenfield. Jenny Millward and her late husband Ralph developed this beautiful garden, covering about three quarters

of an acre, from a field. Many of the rhododendrons are from seed collected and brought back by Ralph from plant-hunting expeditions in China and North India. The layout of the garden, with islands of plants and a tranquil pond (originally used for tanning hides), completed a very satisfying visit. The day ended as it had begun, with a slice of homemade cake, this time provided by Jenny Millward.

Margaret Turner

Wessex Branch

Visit to Merton Place

On Tuesday 5th May 2015 we visited the garden of Peter Winkworth at Merton Place, Dunsfold. The attendance was extremely good with group members coming up from the New Forest and down from Hertfordshire.

We were greeted with refreshments and a brief history of the garden before setting off on the tour, guided by our host and his head gardener Rodney Longhurst, who used to be the head gardener at Hydon Nursery.

This is a new garden which is being set out under mature trees, forming a beautiful woodland garden that holds such an incredible and huge collection of plants that no doubt in the future will become of national importance. More or less the whole of the Hydon collection was clearly evident. There must have been close to 1,000 different hybrids and species on view. These were complemented by various hydrangeas, acers, magnolias and camellias.

The garden meanders around the woodland as well as the newly formed lakes and we were told it is still continually evolving, with yet more rhododendrons being propagated by Rodney in the new nursery area as well as many other accompanying plants, trees and shrubs.

After the tour, we were sent home with various plants on offer. What a visit! Thanks to Peter, it was great to meet up with Rodney again and to see how he is still so involved in cultivation after a long and successful career at Hydon Nursery.

Andy Fly

Wessex Branch Flower Show – 10th May 2015

Our annual show was held at Ramster which is a splendid venue with the bonus of a walk round the beautiful grounds during judging. We would like to thank Miranda for allowing us to continue our shows there and for Graham Rankin for judging the show, with Richard Thornton being an excellent steward.



Rhododendron 'Colonel Coen', R. 'Hotei' and R. Queen of Hearts' won the Lady Adam Gordon Bowl. Photo: Andy Fly



Rhododendron 'Apricot Fantasy' won Best in Show. Photo: Andy Fly

The turnout was good and we were delighted to see John Talbot who has returned from France, and Paul Strike the head gardener at the Malthouse.

When we all returned to the marquee after our walk, Andy and I were delighted to see that we had won Best in Show with our *Rhododendron* 'Apricot Fantasy' and The Lady Adam Gordon Bowl for our entry in the class for three hybrid rhododendrons – 'Colonel Coen', 'Hotei' and 'Queen of Hearts'. To top it all we also won The Kathleen Beadle Shield for the most points in the show. Come on group members, we want to see more of you at the annual shows!

We finished off the day with a delicious tea at prize giving time. A lovely day, good company and good food.

Jenny Fly

MEMBERS' LETTERS

Dear Editor,

I am in the process of removing a large area of very old rhododendrons from the garden here at Ramster. It is mostly *Rhododendron* 'Gomer Waterer' which is full of dead wood and reverting to *ponticum*. As we have plenty of this rhododendron in other parts of the garden, and in the hardy hybrid collection it will not be a loss. I will be left with an area about 40m x 20m where I am planning to create a new planting to be called 'Rhododendrons and Companion Plants for the 21st century'. This would tie in well with our Centenary Celebrations in 2016, and I would like it to demonstrate to visitors to the garden how rhododendrons and azaleas can be used for year round interest, in association with a wide range of other shrubs, small trees, bulbs, and under planting, for a, hopefully, low maintenance area which could be adapted for the smaller garden. Planning the planting for this is quite a daunting task, and I would be so pleased if readers would email me with their suggestions as to what they would include in such a bed. I need your 'absolutely must have', best and most trouble-free varieties, preferably not too hard to access. The bed is on a sandstone outcrop, faces south, with shading from several large trees, and the soil is neutral rather than acid, as it is through most of this garden, though all our genera seem to thrive on it. I am hoping to start planting this autumn, though it will be an ongoing project over a few years. Do email any thoughts, tips and planting ideas to Miranda@ramstergardens.com

Miranda Gunn

THE 2016 CENTENARY TOP 100 RHODODENDRONS

Our plans to celebrate the Centenary are well underway now, with a very special weekend at RHS Wisley being arranged giving all members the opportunity to join in and enjoy a feast of rhododendrons! During the following few days there will be a programme of garden visits and specialist speakers.

A central and very important part of our celebrations will be the presentation of the Group's 100 Favourite Rhododendrons. In 1916, the Rhododendron Society published a list of recommended rhododendrons. Our plan to produce a list reflecting the Group's 2016 recommendations, which will include the additional species discovered and hybrids registered over the hundred year interval, is an important milestone for us and, if you like, a marker in the sand for the next 100 years.

I announced the project in the last edition of the Bulletin. To date, as I write this, only 20% of our membership has submitted an entry form listing their **Ten Favourite Rhododendrons**, which is most disappointing. My sincere thanks go to all of you who have already sent in your entries. I hope that you will encourage your fellow members to do the same. The results so far are extremely interesting and the accompanying anecdotes supporting the various choices made are providing some most enjoyable reading. A full report on the survey will be made in the Centenary yearbook.

In order to give you more 'thinking time', the deadline for submitting a list has been changed and is now **31st August 2015**.

You can choose species or hybrid rhododendrons, including deciduous or evergreen azaleas and vireyas, but please remember that your hybrid choices must have been registered.

For those of you who have not yet submitted your form, I do hope that your reluctance is due to your problem with limiting your choice to just ten rhododendrons! I know that it is challenging and difficult, but please make an effort to take part in this – **every vote counts towards a most important legacy for the next 100 years**.

Our members around the world are also really encouraged to get involved. I have so far heard from just 8 overseas members which, again, is disappointing – I really want to hear from all members of the Group, wherever you live around the world! In 1916 the Rhododendron Society had an elite British membership. Please help to make our 2016 efforts trans-global.

All of the information about the project can be found on the Group website, including the fillable entry form which you can download. If you have any problems with this, please do not hesitate to contact me at rhododendron100@outlook.com or telephone me on 01227 761369. I will of course be happy to provide a replacement form to any member who has lost the original and has no access to the internet.

I really hope you will take part in this project whether you are a UK member or overseas. Your help with building this list will contribute to the creation of a legacy for the next 100 years of the Group and a true record of what we, as a Group believe to be the very best rhododendrons for the Centenary.

*Sally Hayward
a member of the 2016 Centenary Planning Group*

A CONSERVATION PROJECT

Stephen Harding

I have been asked by the committee to come on board as the Group Conservation Officer and would like to ask you all for your involvement in a rather unique project. With the help of Plant Heritage, we would like to gather as much information on the whereabouts of as many rhododendrons, camellias and magnolias in the UK and Ireland as possible. This is a mammoth task which will take time to achieve but with everybody's help we can do it. There is a real urgency to do this work before more and more varieties fall victim to disease or are lost in the mists of time due to poor labelling and an aging population. All information sent to me will remain confidential and only names of plants, and not the owners' details, will be forwarded to Plant Heritage for use in their 'Threatened Plants Project'. They will assess the rarity of the plants and provide us with the information needed to help conserve those plants deemed in danger of being lost forever. Camellias are currently being recorded by Plant Heritage and *Rhododendron* species in some collections have been listed by The Rhododendron Species Conservation Group. There are over 300 *Rhododendron* species on the Red List of endangered plants and the work of RSCG has been invaluable.

The information we require is the **plant name** (including named forms, eg *Rhododendron* 'Angelo' Exbury Form), **when** (pre October 2014, the implementation date for the Nagoya Protocol), **from whom it was purchased** (the nursery name helps greatly in correct naming), and the **condition of the plant**. Once the information comes back to us, we can see if any

Plant name	Form or Collection number	Location	Obtained from	Approx year	Approx size	Condition of plant	Importance of plant
Angelo	'Exbury'	Bed 7	Exbury	1982	4m	Good	High
principis	KW5656	Bed 4	Hydon	1985	3m	Poor	High
Paprika Spiced		Bed 3		1996	1m	Poor	Low

endangered plants need to be propagated within the Group.

I am also interested in any species plants with or without collector's numbers, as many recent introductions have never been recorded. I appreciate that this is a lot of work, but you will end up with a useful inventory of the plants in your garden, (from which you can create your own labels!). Think of this project as a lasting legacy for without this information we will lose countless plants because we kept putting it off. The Group currently has a wealth of knowledge at its disposal when it comes to naming plants, especially the older Hardy Hybrids from the early 20th century, and we can offer help where possible, especially where records are a bit vague.

If you can send information, email is best but I am happy to input lists manually. Please see the suggested format (see below). The plant name is the main information needed, but the more you can provide, the better, even if there are gaps in your knowledge. The Condition and Importance are your assessments, and can help us prioritise the propagating of rare plants.

*Stephen Harding (address in Yearbook)
hebeexpert@gmail.com 07743 939490*

NOTES FOR SEED DONORS

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 even more important now and absolutely 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 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 a 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.

CAMELIAS: 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.

www. **LODER-PLANTS** .com

AZALEAS &
RHODODENDRONS





HYDRANGEAS

CAMELIAS



01403 891 412

MARKET GARDEN, LOWER BEEDING, HORSHAM, RH13 6PP

We have an encyclopaedic website, which contains a wealth of information.
We have something here for both connoisseur and absolute beginner.

OPEN: MONDAY. - SATURDAY 10 - 4

All seeds should be sent in bulk – one packet for each species, with clear, waterproof labelling showing the 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.

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 WA12 9UA

Queries to: julie.soundgardenrhododendrons@hotmail.co.uk

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

New!

Rhododendrons of subgenus

Vireya Second Edition

George Argent

454pp, RBGE/RHS, 2015

Enlarged second edition with new species, updated descriptions and over 300 colour illustrations.

Full Price: **£60.00**

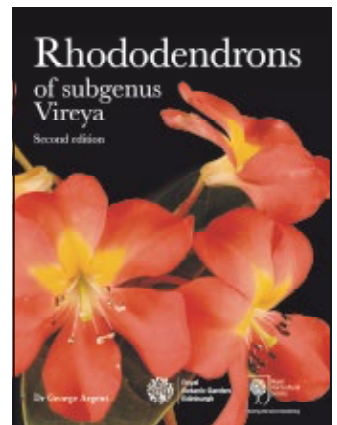
UK Member's Price: **£45**

European Member's Price: **£52**

Rest of World Member's Price:

£60

All prices include postage.



The Encyclopedia of Rhododendron Species



Further chance to buy!

The Encyclopedia of Rhododendron Species

Second Edition

Peter & Kenneth Cox

396pp, Glendoick Publishing, 2009 (Final Printing)

Full descriptions of almost all hardy rhododendron species in cultivation; guide to recognition and cultivation. 1500 colour illustrations.

UK Member's Price: **£33**

European Member's Price: **£44**

Rest of World Member's Price: **£50**

All prices include postage.

Please make cheques (Sterling) payable to:

The Rhododendron, Camellia and Magnolia Group. Payment may also be made by Mastercard or Visa or via PayPal to rcmgpaypal@woodtown.net

Contact: Pam Hayward, Woodtown, Sampford Spiney, Yelverton PL20 6LJ

Tel/Fax: +44 (0)1822 852122

Email: rcmgpublications@woodtown.net

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

PUBLICATIONS

the Rhododendron, Camellia & Magnolia group forthcoming events



OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	JANUARY 2016	APRIL	MAY
<p>18 North West Branch Ness Gardens</p> <p>Talk Charles Brabin 'Oxford Botanic Garden' Ted Brabin angela.brabin@btinternet.com 0151 353 1193</p>	<p>11 New Forest Branch Sir Harold Hillier Gardens</p> <p>Annual Lecture Barry Starling 'Plant Hunting in Western China' Martin Gates mgates@talktalk.net 02380 252 843</p>	<p>16 North West Branch Ness Gardens</p> <p>Talk Ted Brabin 'The Great Smokies and Blue Ridge Mountains' Ted Brabin angela.brabin@btinternet.com 0151 353 1193</p>	<p>9/10 RHS RHS Wisley</p> <p>RHS Early Rhododendron and Main Camellia Show South East Show Georgina Barter georginabarter@rhs.org.uk 020 7821 3142 Sally Hayward schaywar1@btinternet.com 01227 761369</p>	<p>6-10 RCM GROUP Wisley</p> <p>Hillside Events Centre Wisley and local garden visits. 4 day Centenary Celebrations including the 2016 AGM David Millais david@rhododendrons.co.uk 01252 792698 Sally Hayward schaywar1@btinternet.com 01227 761369</p>
<p>24 Wessex Branch Handcross, West Sussex</p> <p>Guided tour at Nymans Garden Andy Fly pinecroftgarden1@btconnect.com 01903 742350</p>	<p>21 North West Branch Ness Gardens</p> <p>To be confirmed Ted Brabin angela.brabin@btinternet.com 0151 353 1193</p>	<p>MARCH</p>	<p>10 Wessex Branch Worplesdon, Surrey</p> <p>Visits to gardens of Rod Wild and Rod White Andy Fly pinecroftgarden1@btconnect.com 01903 742350</p>	<p>14/15 RHS Harlow Carr</p> <p>RHS Late Rhododendron Show Georgina Barter georginac@rhs.org.uk or 020 7821 3142</p>
<p>24 South West Branch RHS Rosemoor</p> <p>Autumn Meeting Plant Sale & Lecture Roger Clark 'Spring in Japan' Dr John Marston artavianjohn@gmail.com 01271 323202</p>	<p>21 Wessex Branch Ramster</p> <p>Talk & Slide Show John David 'Daffodils' Andy Fly pinecroftgarden1@btconnect.com 01903 742350</p>	<p>5 North West Branch Ness Gardens</p> <p>Talk Tim Baxter To be confirmed Ted Brabin angela.brabin@btinternet.com 0151 353 1193</p>	<p>18-22 North West Branch Hampshire & environs</p> <p>Branch Tour Ted Brabin angela.brabin@btinternet.com 0151 353 1193</p>	<p>23/28 RHS / RCMG Chelsea Flower Show</p> <p>Centenary Display David Millais david@rhododendrons.co.uk 01252 792698 Sally Hayward schaywar1@btinternet.com 01227 761369</p>
		<p>12/13 RHS / South West Branch RHS Rosemoor</p> <p>RHS Early Camellia Competition SW Branch Early Rhododendron and Spring Ornamental Competitions Georgina Barter georginabarter@rhs.org.uk 020 7821 3142 Dr John Marston artavianjohn@gmail.com 01271 323202</p>	<p>23/24 RHS / South West Branch RHS Rosemoor</p> <p>RHS Main Rhododendron Competition and SW Branch Camellia, Magnolia and Floral Display Competitions Georgina Barter georginabarter@rhs.org.uk 020 7821 3142 Dr John Marston artavianjohn@gmail.com 01271 323202</p>	<p>JUNE</p>
				<p>19-21 RHS and RCMG Wisley</p> <p>'All About Plants' event David Millais david@rhododendrons.co.uk 01252 792698 Sally Hayward schaywar1@btinternet.com 01227 761369</p>