



The Rhododendron, Camellia & Magnolia Group

THE ROYAL HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY

BULLETIN - 95

www.rhodogroup-rhs.org

NOVEMBER 2007

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

Mike Robinson

As the leaves begin to fall on deciduous trees and shrubs the remarkable amount of extension growth this season becomes more and more obvious. Nature has more than compensated UK gardeners for the arid summer of 2006, even if the light levels have been sadly gloomy day upon day. Magnolia bud set for 2008 looks to be very good once again, and there is a very heavy seed set for the second year running – perhaps this is the new norm? If so, then close pollinating magnolias may become as worthwhile here as it has been in New Zealand and the US.

This has led me to wonder how else the cultivation of our plants will change. Hardiness assessment is one obvious thing - plants not considered hardy years ago can now be grown in much of the UK. It was a salutary reminder of just how much this has changed to read an article on marginally tender shrubs written by E.H.M. Cox in 1935. At that time *osmanthus delavayi* was not considered worthwhile in much of the country, and neither were *solanum crispum* or *viburnum grandiflorum*. Today we see, from a member's letter in this bulletin, that *R. kwayi* is flowering out of doors in Helensburgh in Scotland – a mild, but not ultra-mild, part of that country.

However, the mere fact that a cultivar will survive our present winters does not mean that it will be worth growing. The cultivars of *camellia sasanqua*, *camellia hiemalis* and their hybrids is a case in point. Anyone seeing the Paradise range of autumn and winter flowering camellias developed by Bob Cherry in New South Wales, and growing wonderfully there and in the warmer parts of New Zealand, must wish to grow most of them. Many of them are now available from UK nurseries, and look just as delicious on the show bench as in their native land. Nevertheless the sad fact is that they do not all flower well in UK gardens, some not producing much flower even if baked on a South wall. *C. 'Paradise Belinda'* does well for me, but I'm still waiting for a show of flower from 3 or 4 others. Some of the more traditional varieties of these plants disappoint also – *C. sasanqua 'Narumigata'*, for example, which, although it flowers sporadically throughout the winter, is never spectacular. On the other hand *C. sasanqua 'Hugh Evans'* is a winner for me, as is *C. hiemalis 'Sparkling Burgundy'* – both are rightly AGM cultivars. But what about the varieties that you grow?

Continued on page 2



Camellia sasanqua 'Hugh Evans' (1943) Photo: Everard Daniel
'One of the most reliable cultivars grown in the UK'

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It would be very useful to hear of your successes or failures. Ideally we need three lists – cultivars that will flower well in any position in the garden throughout the UK, those that flower well only on a sunny wall, and thirdly those that don't flower well in the UK at all. The lists would almost certainly be different for Scotland.

Similar information on the *Maddenia* rhododendrons would also be interesting, particularly as more and more of these can now be grown outside in many places. Of course the prime law of contrary nature means that the part of the plant most prone to cold damage is the flower bud, so that mere survival of these often ungainly plants is no recommendation. I am successfully flowering *R. lindleyi* (the L&S forms long considered hardy), *R. lyi*, and two out of eight plants of the *R. nuttallii* from Vietnam (the other six from the same seed numbers are bud tender). *R. 'Lady Alice Fitzwilliam'* and *R. 'Countess of Haddington'* are pretty reliable, and I have heard reports of *R. 'Fragrantissimum'* (if it is truly that) flowering well in central southern England. What are your experiences?

I think that we shall need to explore the reliability of flowering of the *Michelia* section of genus *Magnolia* in the future as well. At present, of the species, I know only that *M. doltsopa* and *M. dianica* flower reliably, but as there will be a major article on the topic of *Michelia* in the next yearbook I will say no more here.

The other noticeable features of the summer have, in this part of Sussex at least, been leaf hoppers and powdery mildews. I use the plural in the latter case as there must be more than one mildew that affects rhododendrons – plants that are free of the beast here suffer from it in Scotland and vice versa. I am near to despair with *R. succothii*, but have seen it in perfect health in collections in which powdery mildew is present. I grow *R. 'C.I.S.'* without a trace of mildew, but Glendoick have had to abandon it. Here in Sussex much of subsection *Fortunea* is badly affected, almost all of subsection *Thomsonia*, and a lot of Subsection *neriiflora*. Leaf hoppers are beginning to affect taxa outside the usual hardy hybrids and subsection *pontica*, and bud blast appeared last spring on *R. arboreum* and some species in subsection *fortunea*. Of course even these problems are not enough, at least yet, to dampen my enthusiasm for the great genus!

Judy Hallett and Arena Travel have arranged a wonderful Group tour of Yunnan next year, and the £2000 cost is considerably less than anticipated. The tour begins in Kunming, and visits various famous sites in Yunnan ending almost as far north as the Sichuan border before returning to Kunming. Participants should see very many rhododendron species in flower, including, fitness and weather permitting, the stupendous *R. lacteum*. The only drawback has been that places have had to be very limited and have been allocated strictly only to paid up members of the Group. If you have booked successfully congratulations! On the other hand, if you have been disappointed, please let Judy or me know: if there is sufficient demand we shall try to organise a similar tour in 2009.

Very briefly the Wilson Study day in London last spring was a great success: an account will appear in the yearbook. Your committee would welcome suggestions for topics for further study days, though the occurrence of the SRS International Rhododendron Conference in Edinburgh will preclude anything in London next spring.

Finally it is with great satisfaction and some *schadenfreude* that I am able again to report an increase in Group membership: that of most other specialist plant societies and even the RHS itself, is falling, but perhaps I am tempting that most fickle of mistresses – fate!

EDITOR'S NOTES

John Rawling

Dates for your 2008 Diary

International Camellia Society International Camellia Conference

Falmouth, Cornwall - 2nd – 5th April 2008

RHS Main Rhododendron Competition will again be held at RHS Rosemoor in 2008 - on 26th & 27th April .

International Rhododendron Conference

Jointly Hosted by the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh
and the Scottish Rhododendron Society –

May 7-11, 2008

Rhododendron 2008: 50 Years of Modern Day Exploration, Hybridising & Conservation.

Details were sent with the July Bulletin, but I draw your attention to the block advertisement on page 11, with all the details.

To obtain an application form apply to:

Marjory McFarlane, Conference Registrar,

14 Loaning Crescent, Peebles, Tweeddale, Scotland EH45 9JR

e.mail : rhodo08@btinternet.com

Report of the RHS Tatton Park Show 2007

The Group had a very successful and colourful stand at the Tatton Park Flower Show in Cheshire, winning a Bronze Medal. The Group Stand was again organised by John Harsant and was manned by members largely from the surrounding area.

It achieved some seven or so new members and answered queries and questions from the public on many aspects of the culture of all three of our species, ericaceous plants and trees.

Typical questions were about diseases and pests, when to prune Magnolias and Camellias and seeking help in identifying varieties of Rhododendrons.

I believe it was well worth displaying The Group and its activities and our grateful thanks for all the work put in by John.

It is hoped that a Group stand can again be organised at this Show for the fourth year, in 2008. A new organiser and assistance is being sought and would be assured of help and advice. Contact John Harsant (0151 348 4015 or Email: john@harsant.uk.com) or contact the Editor or your Branch Chairman.

Dates for 2008 – 23rd to 27th July

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

I need your letters, reports from branches, articles, future events etc, to keep the members up to date! So, please send me your letters and copy for the March Bulletin by 14th February 2008.

**Please send to: John Rawling, Hon. Bulletin Editor,
The Spinney, Station Road, Woldingham, Surrey, CR3 7DD.
Tel. (&Fax) 01883 653341 or E-mail: jr.eye@virgin.net**

DEATHS

Sadly I have to report the death of Cecily Perring at her home in Pett near Hastings in East Sussex. She died peacefully at the end of September in her conservatory overlooking her garden. She was an active member of the Group's Committee up until 2003.

TOURS

Judith Hallett

Report of the Group Tour to Southern Ireland.

Due to a number of reasons, including running out of space, two reports of the garden visits had to be omitted from the extensive report in the last issue of the Bulletin.

I am very pleased, therefore, to publish these missing reports: both gardens were fascinating and very enjoyable. My grateful thanks to the contributors for this issue.

VISIT TO DERREEN

We set off from Killarney on Tuesday morning, travelling through the green countryside of Kerry with wonderful white hawthorn blossom on the trees, to Derreen beside the village of Lauragh. We were welcomed with coffee and biscuits by the owners, Anthea and William Alexander. We divided into two groups and were escorted by our hosts around their old and impressive 90 acre garden, which had been started by Mr. Alexander's great-grandfather, the fifth Marquis of Landsdowne. Thus the shelter belts that had been planted, particularly to the west and south, are mature and effective. As well, because the gardens are old, there are some wonderful, aged and enormous trees- *Pinus nigra*, *Thuja plicata*, *Cupressus macrocarpa* as well as others. There are also very tall *Abies alba* and some huge and ancient sessile oaks. Among the eucalypts perhaps the most remarkable is a gigantic *Eucalyptus globulus*, the blue gum, which in its native Australia is probably the tallest broad-leaved tree in the world.

These trees are the spines of the shelter and they are supported by *Griselinia littoralis* and the much maligned

Rhododendron ponticum which is invaluable as shelter, with *Gaultheria shallon* and *Pernettya* forming an underlayer.

The rhododendrons are magnificent. Huge *R. arborea* types of various shades of red, pink and white, with differing times of flowering, are a prominent feature, though many were, of course, not in bloom.. Not only are the size of the plants and the flowers of interest. The differing leaf patterns are fascinating. There are many tall and huge subsection Grandia trees, and some were still in flower. There are lots of the white tender varieties, 'Fragrantissimum', 'Lady Alice Fitzwilliam', and *R. lindleyi*, etc. Maybe they were just past their very best, but still very good. There are azaleas galore and some very good reds such as 'Tally Ho' and other *griersonianum* crosses among countless others. The rhododendrons are only part of this amazing garden. There are tree-ferns in abundance, *Dicksonia antarctica*, *squarrosa*, *dealbata* and others, which seed themselves all over the property, with many other Australiasian and Chilean plants, The *Drimys winteri* here, as in the other Irish gardens should get a special mention, as they are formidable.

The whole garden, of which we only saw a part, was a really memorable, life enhancing experience. I think it demonstrated how a personal, family signature can produce a special effect on a garden. It is now looked after by the fifth generation of the same family. To a Scot, the smell of the adjacent sea and a few midges added something special. I will return another day.

Wang Liston

LAKEMOUNT at Glanmire

The garden of Brian Cross, is a three acre sloping garden created by a true artist; but Brian is above all a real plantsman.

The garden is composed of many parts, all flowing informally one into another; and yet there is no end to the surprises as a corner is turned or a gate opened. The home looks out over a long rectangular pool, the only touch of formality. Where plantings meet paving there is a textural mix of dwarf shrubs and perennials. Grass paths follow land contours and outline the garden. Rhododendrons, camellias, and magnolias define the lower edges and provide shade and protection for a stunning collection of woodland plants. In there shade are an eclectic mix of ferns, hostas, polygonanums, and smilacinas.

A flagstone-paved area with dry-stone walls provides the perfect setting for creeping sun loving plants. Dwarf shrubs are accommodated in the paved spaces, and a dwarf red weeping *acer japonica* is most dramatic. A small circular pool cut out of the paving is backed with a handsome 4' urn. This in turn is highlighted by a bronze phormium and the deep mahogany *Pittosporum tenuifolium* 'Tom Thumb', all in contrast to silver leaved collection. The grouping is completed by the graceful *Hakonechloa macra* 'Albo aurea' softening the paving edges. Dwarf conifers and stipas are used to great effect in this sunny area.

Walls are well clothed with plants; three that are unusual for that purpose are the sun-loving *Coronilla valentine*,

Teucrium fruiticans, both slightly tender and so appreciating the protection of the wall, and the demure evergreen *Ribes laurifolium*. The last provides early spring interest. Clematis is used throughout the garden. One eye-catcher was *C. montana* 'Marjorie', an old rose-pink. A small fruit and vegetable garden comes as a surprise as another corner is turned

It is always a delight to spot a never before seen shrub. Today's treat was *Vallea stipularis* growing against the house. This evergreen grows to five metres and is covered with clusters of deep pink cup shaped deeply veined flowers. It comes from the Bolivian Andes.

Just when one has concluded that Brian has created the perfect garden, a return visit brings further amazement. Such was our experience today.

Margaret Charlton and Charlie Sale

GROUP TOURS

The Rhododendron, Camellia & Magnolia Group and ICS Joint Autumn Weekend 2007

We are very sorry indeed to see that the Autumn Tour has had to be cancelled through lack of support.

We are now planning for and looking at possible locations for Autumn 2008. Possibly Wales ...?

Ideas and suggestions for 2008 and other years to Judy Hallett at, judy.hallett@googlemail.com or 01981 570401

Group Tour to Yunnan Province, in China

18th May to 6th June 2008

This exciting tour, led by Guan Kalyun, Director of Kunming Botanical Garden, **is now fully booked.**

SEED DISTRIBUTION & PLANT EXCHANGE

NOW is the time to dry your seeds and to be looking at your cuttings and seedling plants for the seed and plant distributions.

Cleaned SEEDS should be sent to Gerald Dixon for storage and listing for next years Seed List.

For spare plants, see the note from Stephen Lyus below.

Surplus Plants List

New members may not be aware of this service that we offer, whereby members that have successfully propagated more plants than they need notify me of their surplus list. This list is then made available from our website and will be enclosed with the Year Book. If any member wants to acquire some of these they should let me know (see below) using either of the contact methods shown on the Group website and I will put them in touch with the vendor.

Many of our members have clearly found this a useful service as a large proportion of the plants that have been offered have now been acquired.

The list is now severely depleted, so we could do with some new sources of surplus plants. If members with spare plants are in areas other than the South East that would be even better as it will give members in other areas the opportunity for interesting acquisitions.

If you have any spare plants of interest, please contact me: Stephen Lyus at 13 Manor Drive, Surbiton, Surrey, KT5 8NE, or Tel: 0208 399 4122. E-mail: emailslyus@yahoo.co.uk

If you have any spare plants please get in touch with Stephen Lyus: I have already sent him my preliminary list. The information he should have, is shown below with an example:

Genus:	Rhododendron:
Species plus seed number if any:	brevinerve AC 4296
Provenance (i.e. where the plant originated):	Yunnan
Type: *	wcs
Size (in cm. Preferably):	20
Price if any:	£3.00
Source (i.e. where you obtained this plant):	Group seed exch.
Location (town or county):	E. Sussex

Clearly this represents the ideal, and all this information will not be available for every plant, but send what information you have!

Key:

g = graft,

c = cutting,

l = layer

wcs = seedling from seed collected in the wild

ops = open pollinated seedling,

cps = close pollinated seedling – deliberate cross

self, *selfed* = close pollinated from a plant of the same species or hybrid

b = bulb

d = division

I have had an unusual offer from the owner of a garden near Chippenham, Wiltshire. They have recently acquired the property and would like to return their pond structures back to the original water feature. These ponds currently contain some 150 healthy rhododendrons (up to 7 feet tall), including around 40 azaleas, in specially imported ericaceous soil. A large number are said to retain their labels.

If any members would like any of these, please contact Emma Amati on 01249 721777.

They will be available on a first come first served basis and will need to be removed over the next month or so.

Stephen Lyus

RHODODENDRONS

Following on from the previous paragraphs, we have received a note from an inveterate propagator: Geoff Taylor.

“A Proven Model for raising rhododendrons and azaleas from seed.”

After half-a-century of growing this genus from seed, I offer a timetable for producing results quickly and efficiently.

Flowering time: If possible, hand pollinate the selected plants, remembering to wash and dry the camel hair brush between operations.

Early October: Collect pods, discarding remnants of stem and pistil. Store in open envelopes at a high point in a heated room. My ‘drying room’ is the top of a corner cupboard! Labelling is essential.

Late November: Some pods will have opened, spilling seed, while others require crushing or splitting with a knife. Clean seed of dust and particles, preferably by using two tea strainers, each having a different gauge of mesh. Store seed in a cool dry place.

Mid-January: Prepare seed trays by filling with a good grade of ericaceous soil-less compost, sieving if necessary to achieve a firm level surface. Soak trays in water until moisture appears on the surface and then drain. Place in closed propagator at 20°C to warm up.

20th January: The natural light ratio is now at its best for germination. Providing the trays are still moist, scatter seed thinly and do not be tempted to add that remaining in the packet. Seed should not be covered and direct sunlight should be avoided, while ventilation must be consistent with maintaining temperature. Germination should occur within 28 days. Should trays dry out, water by soaking, not spray and if mould develops (usually a sign of poor harvesting or adverse storage conditions), mist with a weak fungicide. Sadly, those used decades ago, such as potassium permanganate and acetyl-salicylic acid, are not authorised today and should not be employed.

March: When first true leaves appear, transplant into 10cm deep wooden boxes, previously washed and sterilised with boiling water. Use original type of compost and space plants at 5cm intervals. Place on warm bench and shield from direct sunlight. After hardening off, move to a cold greenhouse, shaded by 50% shade netting. Attend to pests whenever seen. Water with fine rose.

June: Transplant seedlings to 8cm pots and set beneath shade netting.

Mid-August: Move on to 2L pots and transfer to a slightly warmer house. I prefer a lean-to for this final stage.

By successive re-potting with a good quality compost, there is no need for additional fertilizer, which is not to the liking of some rhododendrons, especially when in close contact. Without sophisticated equipment, achieving a homogeneous mixture is most difficult.

NB Compost should contain iron as a trace element.

Geoff H Taylor, Llandysul, Ceredigion SA44 5ST

MEMBERS NOTES

We are very grateful to Alan Duncanson, a member living in Sweden, for this article about the Sofiero Gardens.

He wrote in the November 2006 Bulletin, offering to provide this ‘Member’s Note’

(Ed.)

Sofiero Castle Garden, Helsingborg, Sweden.

Sofiero lies just north of the city of Helsingborg, on the west coast of the southern tip of Sweden, in the district of Scania. Denmark and the Danish town of Helsingör and Hamlet’s Castle are just a short distance away across the narrow sound and can clearly be viewed from the garden. Sofiero is one of two major rhododendron collections in Sweden, the other being in the Gothenburg Botanic Garden.

The main feature of Sofiero Castle Garden is the steep sloping ravine right in front of the house, complete with small streams and ponds and paths, the slopes crammed with rhododendrons and azaleas, shaded by a huge umbrella of ageing beeches. Most years, the best time to visit would be during the first few days of June.

The estate was given by King Oskar II to his grandson Crown Prince Gustav Adolf and his bride Margaret of Connaught, as a wedding present in 1905. It was perhaps inevitable that Margaret should have an interest in gardens and gardening, raised as she was at Bagshot.

It was she, a granddaughter of Queen Victoria, who blended her considerable knowledge of horticulture and her interest in the arts with a personal desire to create something special in what she called the “enchanted garden.”

She initiated several projects within the basic framework of the garden that stand to this day.

She described her work in two books, “Our garden at Sofiero” and “From the flower garden.”

The marriage was blessed with five children, but sadly Margaret died far too young in 1920.

Gustav Adolf re-married, three years later, Louise Mountbatten. Many happy summers were spent, in both marriages, at Sofiero. Upon the death of King Gustav Adolf VI in 1973 the estate was left to the city of Helsingborg, complete with, among other things, some 5000 rhododendron plants. The collection has, since then, been doubled to over 10,000 with some 350 different species and hybrids.



Sofiero Castle

Photo: Alan Duncanson

It is perhaps appropriate to write a few words about this lovely garden in 2007, given that the very first rhododendrons received from Bagshot (where else!?) are believed to have been planted one hundred years ago in 1907. I have visited Sofiero almost every year since arriving on these shores (chasing a lady!) in 1970.

Notes from a recent visit on Friday the 25th of May, 2007.

It took, as usual, one hour to drive from my home to Sofiero and after parking I headed for the rather grand entrance, paid my 5 pounds, received my ticket and entered into the garden. Straight ahead I saw the house at the end of the lawns that sweep down to it. To the right large clumps of iron-clads in almost full flower and to the left, azaleas in all their dazzling glory. Between the azaleas and the house I could see the newly planted area with, I had been told, many rhododendron species.

I drifted past the first huge clump of *R. 'Grandiflorum'*, the mass of purple broken at the far end by a section of *R. Catawdiense 'Album'*. I continued towards the ravine to the right of the house, passing the first pond framed with azaleas and with pink bluebells on its banks. Soon the small paths started to dip down into a sea of rhododendrons, most of which were in flower. Above, a great canopy of mature beech trees, guarding the treasures below.

The small stone path fell steeply downwards as I passed several *R. 'Blue Peter'* and *R. 'Pink Pearl'* in flower and brushed past a fair sized *R. strigillosum*, its new growth glowing and its flowers long gone. Great wafts of intoxicating perfume from *R. luteum* and other deciduous azaleas on the embankment below the house engulfed me as I reached the main pond at the point where the left and right ravines merged into one. A gorgeous *Acer atropurpureum* of some 25-30 feet in height towered majestically at the far end of the pond. Up to the right a fine embankment of evergreen azaleas in brilliant full flower. Onwards, downwards and into a tunnel of the gardens very oldest rhododendrons – the 1907 Bagshot *R. 'Grandiflorum'*s, their flowers now way above the twisted naked trunks. I was now at the bottom of the ravine and pondered a while as I looked out over the sound to nearby Denmark, wondering what Will Shakespeare would have thought of Hamlet's Kronborg Castle, if he actually had seen it, and if he would have approved of the lovely Sofiero?



A quiet spot in the steep valley

Photo: Alan Duncanson

With the help of a map of the garden I then ascended and eventually located many of the fine collection of species that thrive within it's boundaries. A couple of fine *R. maximum*, *R. degronianum ssp heptamerum var. hondoense*, *R. makinoi*, *R. galactinum*, *R. rex* and the King's personal favourite, *R. fortunei ssp. discolor*, not yet in flower. Among the older material you can find more than 110 different species and at least 240 hybrids, far too many to mention in this short introduction.

Other sections of the garden include several large herbaceous borders, rose garden, topiary garden and the newly planted area with a good mix of rhododendron species and hybrids.

I rounded off my very enjoyable day with a coffee and large slice of gateau on the lovely castle terrace, overlooking the main ravine ablaze with flower and finally parting company, Scot as I am, with approximately 50 pounds in the delightful little garden centre on one

R. yakushimanum x adenogynum and one compact form of *R. brachycarpum*.

To visit Sofiero catch a (cheap!) Ryanair flight from Stansted to Malmö, airport bus shuttle into Malmö Central Station, local train (35 minutes) to Helsingborg and local bus (or taxi) north a couple of miles to Sofiero. Piece of cake.



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The new millennium at High Beeches

The Boscauens retired from the management of the gardens in January 2007. Their elder daughter Sarah Bray, and her husband, Jeremy, have taken over. Sarah grew up at High Beeches, and has lived there for most of her life.

Colonel Loder started planting in the Woodland Garden in 1906, and continued until he died in 1966. The Boscauens arrived then, and they had a great deal to learn at first, but the Colonel's gardener, and importantly, his meticulous garden records, helped them to learn fast. They had much support from many experts, anxious about the future of these important gardens, including Eric and Rosa Harrison, Walter Magor, Heino Heine, Davidian, Desmond Clarke, Alan Mitchell, David McClintock, and many valued friends today.

Success at the RHS Shows soon made evident that High Beeches plants were still of the highest quality. Colonel Loder had always insisted on this, and refused all grafted plants. This meant that the gardens survived both wars with little attention, but when he bought newer hybrids, they would often be seedlings. The policy today is to concentrate on species, especially with rhododendrons, and preferably those of known wild provenance.

High Beeches was right in the eye of the storm of 1987, and there were grievous losses, but few rhododendrons fell, although the drought of 1976, followed by the loss of much of the wind shelter and tree canopy, in 1987, has affected many.



'Little Jessica', a natural hybrid grown at High Beeches (Purchased in 1914 as *R. hodgsonii*) Photo: Ann Boscauwen

The priority remains the beautiful landscape, with its own special atmosphere. This, together with the changing climate, does restrict new planting but more discoveries about the plants we already have are being made all the time.

Colonel Loder subscribed to Forrest's collection in 1921-22, and our records, now on computer, yield many original numbers, including those of Forrest, Wilson, Rock and Kingdon-Ward. Lots more plants arrived from the famous sale at Veitch's Nursery, in 1914, and most were recorded then. They are all now being checked against the Colonels notes, and many original plants identified.

New management will mean some changes, but the Brays know the gardens very well, and with a young and enthusiastic staff, the future here is well assured.

Anne Boscauwen

LETTERS

Dear Editor,

With reference to the Chairman's Notes in a recent Bulletin *, he questioned "Does anyone grow *R. kyawii*".

This prompted me to send this note and I thought that the Members might be interested in seeing the photograph, taken on 2nd August this year, of *Rhododendron kyawii*. It was grown by me, from seed given to me by the late H H Davidian about 20 years ago, and has been flowering here at Kildarden Rosneath in the open but in a very sheltered spot. I brought it from my greenhouse in Edinburgh in 1999 when it was about about 12 years old and had not flowered and started flowering about 4 or 5 years ago. As can be seen it has a loose habit of growth but due to the amount of shelter it is probably etiolated. The flower does not have white patches: those that appear are part of the photographic process.

Carol A Rowe, Kildarden, Rosneath, Helensburgh G84 0PU

*See **Bulletin 89** – Chairman's Notes, p.1.

(Ed.)



R. Kyawii

Photo: Carol Rowe

NOTES FROM THE YEARBOOK EDITOR

Contributions to the Yearbook

a message from the Editor

The Group has published a Yearbook continuously since 1946 – a record we should be truly proud of. All through those years editors have faced the same challenges and now it is my turn. Maintaining the high standard of one's predecessor is a tall order and with Philip Evans as mine, it will prove an extremely tough task. However, both Bulletin and Yearbook Editors can only publish the material they are offered!

If we were to combine the years of experience our membership has of collecting, raising, hybridising and gardening with our chosen genera we would amass several millennia! 840 members, many of them with decades of

gardening behind them, are a terrific knowledge base and judging by the conversations I have had with just a few of them, we could fill several yearbooks quite easily with tales of worthwhile and enriching adventures in rhododendrons, camellias and magnolias.

Writing for the yearbook need not be the intimidating prospect it might appear to be initially. I am happy to work with handwritten, typewritten or electronic scripts and translation presents no problem. I can scan photographs and slides as well as digital images, and articles don't have to be biblical in size! What is important is that if you have an in-depth knowledge of a particular aspect of growing or showing our three genera, or another that you think would enhance them; if you have successfully experimented with a technique of cultivation or propagation and broken new ground, we should be publishing it.

If you have conducted research or garden in an unusual or unlikely location, we should be reading about it. The past is just as important as the future and I am as keen to record the unwritten history of our rhododendrons, camellias and magnolias and the people and gardens associated with them as I am the ongoing scientific discoveries and developments in taxonomy, conservation and hybridisation.

I believe it is so important to record our knowledge for future generations of growers to benefit from, just as we can gain from reading past editions of the Yearbook ourselves.

*Pam Hayward, Woodtown, Sampford Spiney,
Yelverton, Devon PL20 6LJ*

Tel: 01822 852122 Email: pam@woodtown.net

REPORT FROM OUR GROUP FUNDED PhD RESEARCH STUDENT

at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh

Report on Rhododendron Fieldwork in China

25th of August - 24th of September 2007

By Tobias Marczewski

As part of the PhD project on hybrid zones in Rhododendron, a collection trip to south west China was undertaken. The main aim was to obtain silica dried leaf material from Rhododendron populations of subsection *Taliensia* containing individuals of uncertain taxonomic status and/or obvious hybrids. During the planning phase Dr. Gao Lianming from the Kunming Institute of Botany (KIB) was of great help and everything from the arrival in Kunming on went remarkably well. We (Dr. David Chamberlain, Dr. Richard Milne and myself) were joined by Liu Jie a masters student at KIB, who acted as interpreter, and Yang Song, a professional and experienced driver from KIB.

After using the first few days in Kunming to set up everything for the fieldwork and inspecting relevant herbarium specimens, we headed off to Lao Jun Shan Hotel, situated at an altitude of 3800m, where we had scheduled a longer stay to acclimatise to the altitude. This site was chosen by Dr. Chamberlain based on observations of hybrids made during

previous field trips to that area. One downside of the chosen season was that the Rhododendrons would not be in flower, leaving us with one character less for the identification of hybrids. But having a specialist like Dr. Chamberlain with on board this was a minor problem and considering the possible gain of the opportunity to collect seeds this was a reasonable decision.

The site at Lao Jun Shan offered much more than we expected and we were able to collect samples from various species representative of the different problems in hybridisation and speciation. We sampled one whole ecological plot of 20 by 20 meters in a grid like fashion, representing a seedling recruitment area in a Rhododendron forest, composed of *R. beesianum*, *R. traillianum*, hybrids of the former two, and a few *R. roxieanum* individuals.

On other sites around Lao Jun Shan population samples were obtained involving *R. clementinae*, *R. roxieanum*, *R. traillianum* and, (according to our field observations) of special interest, *R. roxieanum* var. *cucullatum*.

Very much to our disappointment the weather conditions during the flowering season had been very bad and hardly any plants had managed to set seed, limiting us to a hand full of seedpods we were able to find.

Having completed the work on Lao Jun Shan after one week, we spent further six days in Yunnan Province collecting mainly different population samples of *R. phaeochrysum* and *R. aganniphum* including the taxonomically equivocal *R. aganniphum* var. *flavorufum*. Thereafter, crossing to southern Sichuan Province, we acquired further populations of *R. phaeochrysum* so that the collection of this species now covers a wide sample of populations throughout the distribution range.

Due to time problems we were not able to collect desired allopatric reference populations of some of the species from Lao Jun Shan but overall the collected material is more than sufficient for the intended work to follow.

Summarising the fieldwork was a complete success in terms of collecting the desired plant material and furthermore yielded most valuable observations regarding the population structure and hybridisation behaviour of rhododendrons.

BRANCH REPORTS

Wessex branch

We had a most enjoyable afternoon on 5th May at the Isabella Plantation, in Richmond Park where we were shown around by Jane Braham (former Assistant Superintendent), Jo Scrivener (present Assistant Superintendent) and several members of their team. We admired their outstanding collection of evergreen azaleas, including most of the Wilson 50 which they are propagating in their nursery. The date of this visit had been chosen so we could see them in season, but because of the exceptionally warm April, some of them were unfortunately past their best. The deciduous azaleas prompted discussion over the problem of identification, and it was most fortunate that Jim Inskip and

Malcolm Nash were able to help with the naming in a few cases. We also saw a fine young *Davidia involucreata*, many magnolias and a range of Exbury rhododendrons that had been donated to the plantation at the time they were raised. We also saw at first hand the devastating effect of the Tortrix moth caterpillars on the oaks and other ornamental trees. It was a fascinating afternoon, and we made most welcome by the garden staff who plied us with a splendid tea before we left. It was very nice to meet some of the new members who joined us for this outing, as well as many old friends.

The Wessex branch Show was held at Ramster on Sunday May 20th, and although we all agreed that, owing to the early season and the recent rain it was one of the most difficult years for finding choice blooms that we ever had, we ended up with a very good display, which Arthur George was kind enough to come and judge for us. We had 7 exhibitors, showing 114 exhibits between them.

The cup for the Best in Show was won by Brian Long for his outstanding R. 'Pink Pearl'. The Lady Adam Gordon Plate for the 'Best Three Elepidote Hybrids' was won by the Group's Hardy Hybrid Collection with a fine display of R. 'Lady Eleanor Cathcart', R. 'Purple Spendour' and R. 'Lavender Girl'. This is the first time that Miranda Gunn has entered exhibits for the Group's collection in the Wessex Show, and the Group also won the 'Best Red Elepidote' with a very nice R. 'Earl of Athlone'. Miranda also won the Katherine Beadle Shield for gaining the most points in the Show. It was perhaps the lateness of the show that meant we had very few entries in the rhododendron species classes but it would be

good to see more of these in future. We were most grateful to Arthur and Anne George who donated some lovely plants to be raffled.

The number of Hardy Hybrid Rhododendrons in the collection at Ramster is currently small when compared with the hundreds that were bred and named in the 19th and 20th Century. The Wessex branch committee have agreed that any money surplus to the branch's requirements would be made available to buy more plants to enlarge the collection – if they can be sourced – the difficult part!

John David & Miranda Gunn

NOTICES

Pat Bucknell, Hon Secretary

The 2008 Annual General Meeting will be held in June 2008 (date to be confirmed) in the Garden Room, Hillside Centre, Savill Garden, Windsor. At 2.00p.m.

Committee Members.

Mr. John Harsant and Mr. Alastair Stevenson will have served their present three-year term on the Committee in 2008.

A nomination form is enclosed Please come forward yourself or nominate someone, making sure he/she agrees; a proposer, a seconder and a brief horticultural history of the nominee are all that are required. Please telephone the Chairman on 01342 822745 or the Hon. Secretary on 01503 220215 if you require any further details.

Your Nomination Form is enclosed

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MEMBERSHIP

Rupert Eley

All subscriptions become due on 1st November, each year. Those who pay annually by cheque (but NOT by Standing order) will find a reminder with this Bulletin.

Please pay PROMPTLY to ensure your Yearbook arrives in Jan/Feb.

For any membership enquiries, contact :

Rupert Eley, Hon. Membership Secretary,
East Bergholt Place, East Bergholt, Suffolk, CO7 6UP.
Tel. 01206 299224 ; or by e-mail: sales@placeforplants.co.uk

New Members

We are very pleased to welcome the following new members., notably those who joined at the Tatton Park Flower Show. We hope they will enjoy their membership.

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The Group stand at the Tatton Park Flower Show 2007

Photo: Ros Rawling



A corner of the display, including cut branches of *Magnolis grandiflora* (which came into full flower and scent during the Show) and *R. bureavii*, *R. auriculatum* and *R. 'Pink Polar Bear'*.

Photo: Ros Rawling

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

CAMELLIAS – The Gardener’s Encyclopedia – Jennifer Trehane 2007 – See flyer enclosed

RHODODENDRONS OF SABAH – George Argent, Anthony Lamb and Anthea Phillipps 2007
New edition, revised and updated, hardback, 280pp, illust.
Full Price in UK: **£55** Member’s Price: **£30**
Postage: UK **£5**, Europe **£8**, Rest of World **£15.50** (Air)

RHODODENDRON SPECIES 2007
The yearbook of the Rhododendron Species Foundation.
150pp, illust. UK **£7**, Rest of World **£10**, including post

RHODODENDRONS OF SUBGENUS VIREYA – George Argent 2006
Full Price: **£55** Member’s Price: **£39** Postage: UK **£5**, Europe **£8**, Rest of World **£15** (Air)

RHODODENDRONS & AZALEAS – Kenneth Cox
Full Price: **£29.95** Member’s Price: **£24.50**
Postage: UK **£5**, Europe **£8**, Rest of World **£15** (Air)

International RHODODENDRON REGISTER and CHECKLIST Second Edition – RHS 2004
Full Price: **£90** Member’s Price: **£75**
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THE RHODODENDRON HANDBOOK 1998
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FORTHCOMING EVENTS 2007 ~ 2008

Date	Organiser	Location	Event	Contact	
November					
10th	SE Branch	Ardingly College	Talk by Mike Robinson on Plants & Gardens in British Columbia, Washington and Oregon.	Barry Haseltine	01342 713132
13th	Lakeland Society	Holehird	Talk by Christopher Bradbury "The Society's 2007 Tour to the South of England"	Robert Smith	0153 944 3041
17th	SW Branch	RHS Rosemoor	All day programme including lecture by Kenneth Cox of Glendoick	Colin Brown	01647 277268
24th	NW & N.Wales	Ness Gardens 2.30pm.	Peter Bland on Hybridisation of Rhododendrons	Ted Brabin	0151 353 1193
December					
11th	Lakeland Society	Holehird	Talk by Jennifer Trehane on "The wonderful world of Camellias".	Robert Smith	0153 944 3041
<u>2008</u>					
January					
12th	NW & N.Wales	Ness Gardens	Lecture by Peter Ratcliffe	Ted Brabin	0151 353 1193
22nd	Lakeland Society	Windermere Hydro	Annual Dinner	Robert Smith	0153 944 3041
February					
2nd	NW & N.Wales	Ness Gardens	Peter Cunnington on "Rhododendrons & Alpines of some high Chinese Passes"	Ted Brabin	0151 353 1193
12th	Lakeland Society	Holehird	Talk by Alan Clark on "Plant hunting in North Vietnam"	Robert Smith	0153 944 3041
March					
11th	Lakeland Society	Holehird	Talk by Jens Nielsen on "Propagation"	Robert Smith	0153 944 3041
15th	SE Branch	Ardingly College	Charles Williams on "The National Collection of Magnolias at Caerhays and other plants raised there"	Barry Haseltine	01342 713132
18th	Lakeland Society	Holehird 9.30am	Working Party	Robert Smith	0153 944 3041
April					
13th - 19th	Lakeland Society	Spring Tour	Tour to Devon led by Malcolm Bradbury	Robert Smith	0153 944 3041
19th - 20th	SE Branch	Borde Hill	Annual Show in conjunction with the ICS	Barry Haseltine	01342 713132
24th - 28th	NW & N.Wales	West Coast of Scotland	Branch Spring Tour	Ted Brabin	0151 353 1193
26th - 27th	RHS	Rosemoor	RHS Main Rhododendron Competition		
May					
3rd.- 4th	NW & N.Wales	Ness Gardens	20th Annual Show	Ted Brabin	0151 353 1193
7th - 11th	International Rhododendron Conference at R.B.G Edinburgh				