



The Rhododendron, Camellia & Magnolia Group

THE ROYAL HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY

BULLETIN - 93

www.rhodogroup-rhs.org

MARCH 2007

CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

Mike Robinson

The days are lengthening once more after yet another mild winter, though an extremely dull and wet one, with the ground in many of our gardens too sodden to encourage us to get much done, and too wet to cut the grass - which shouldn't need cutting at this time of year anyway. Time to get the machinery serviced, and time to mourn the cost of doing so. At least the reservoirs are full, though there is still a hosepipe ban in Sussex.

Things got brighter last week, though, with the arrival of the Group Yearbook - always awaited with eager anticipation which is not marred in the least by knowing, as chairman, what the contents will be. 2007 marks the end of Philip Evan's ten year tenure of the editorship, and it is very nice, but not in the least surprising, to see him going out on a high. Comparison of the recent publications with those of 30 years ago must bring all concerned, and Philip in particular, a glow of satisfaction at the progress that has been made. Of course he had the solid foundations laid by Cynthia Postan on which to build, but build he has. I'd like to express all out thanks to Philip for his hard painstaking work and his considerable initiative. We are very lucky to have an experienced and professional successor to Philip in the person of Pam Hayward, who has ably assisted the editor for the past two years.

Another annual event at this time of the year is to record our surprise and amazement that nature is behaving so oddly, with this and that in flower so early. Probably not worth recording any more, and not worth expressing the fact that a late spring frost will, of course, ruin things. What may be noteworthy this year, however, is the fact that camellias seem to be flowering not only early - and what a boon they are in early spring - but out of sequence, with the normally later *x williamsii*'s flowering with or before the *japonicas*. What does it all mean?

The 2007 seed list is as impressive as ever: we must hope it will continue to be so, and to provide interesting material for our members at home and abroad. The Group is having, though, to face up to the increasing number of regulations about importing, exporting and collecting plants, and has to pay strict attention to the rules pertaining in various countries - not an easy task. We have, to a large extent, to count on members giving us the necessary information for us to despatch seed legally, and do hope that those living outside the EU will inform us of any changes to the relevant regulations.



Camellia 'Takanini' See Letters on p.8

Photo: Jennifer Trehane

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This increasingly complex scenario makes Ole Jonny Larsen's proposal to establish a data base of seeds that are wanted by the world-wide rhododendron community extremely timely. As he says, there are quite a few species (and many hybrids) which are not going to appear on our seed lists unless they are hand pollinated in cultivation. Please support this initiative by letting us have your 'wants list'.

It is very sad to have to record the death of Chris Fairweather, who chaired the New Forest branch for many years and worked so hard to introduce the gardening public to *vireyas*. It is to be hoped that his splendid collection will not be dispersed and that some enterprising nursery will continue what Chris started with such success.

As an experiment last June the group AGM was held at Wisley, and was preceded by a fascinating and informative tour of the Battlesdon Hill led by that mine of information and enthusiasm Colin Crosbie. The idea was to make the AGM more enjoyable, and indeed it was – for your committee – who had a wonderful day. However the attendance of members outside the committee amounted to one person. If you want to miss another enjoyable and educational day this year, then don't come, even for the tour!

A final reminder to book your ticket for the Wilson day on April 4th. Tickets from the RHS ticketing department – 0845 612 4583 or see the November bulletin.

OBITUARIES

Sadly we have to report the deaths of two well-known and long standing members of the Group.

Christopher Fairweather

Christopher Fairweather loses long battle with cancer 12th Jan 2007.

Christopher Fairweather, Chairman of the Group's **New Forest branch** lived and worked in Beaulieu for most of his life and opened Fairweathers Garden Centre in Beaulieu High Street in 1961. He then added a second centre in Lymington, a business run by his wife Aline. In between times he started a wholesale nursery at Hill Top Beaulieu, which initially produced plants for his two garden centres. Today the nursery is a major liner producer selling around 1.5 million young plants, and has a reputation as an introducer of a number of outstanding plants.

As a young man Chris worked in Rhodesia and Kenya, where he managed a tea plantation. His time there marked the start of a life-long love of Africa. His return to Britain saw him develop a love of rhododendrons and azaleas under the wing of the de Rothschild family at Exbury Gardens, where he became the manager prior to branching out on his own. His particular passion was for the *Vireya* hybrids, and over the years his collection became the largest in Europe.

MARVELLOUS MAGNOLIAS & CAMELLIAS

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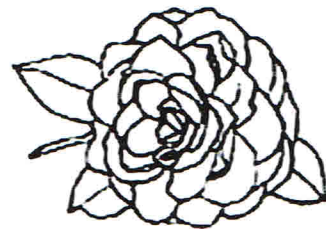
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He was a member of the RHS Rhododendron and Camellia Committee.

Chris was responsible for introducing to the horticultural industry *Cupressus leylandii* 'Castlewellan Gold', the golden form of *leylandii*, now grown throughout the world after he shipped tens of thousands of unrooted cuttings overseas.

In 1992 he made a trip with Aline to New Zealand on a plant hunting trip, and spotted two new colours of French Lavender in a private garden in Invercargill. These were imported to Beaulieu and introduced to the trade throughout Europe. Travelling and plant hunting became a passion for Chris and Aline. They travelled extensively in Asia, South America, Australasia, as well as closer to home throughout Europe and the Middle East. He loved adventure and travelled without frills, often camping and trekking independently in search of wild flowers.

He loved sharing his experiences through his writings and radio and TV broadcasts, and developed a passion for photography. For many years he wrote a regular column in *Nurseryman & Garden Centre*. He was also a regular contributor on *Topsoil*, Radio Solent's gardening show presented by Pippa Greenwood, and appeared on the last programme in November. He was due to take part in the show's successor, *The Good Life*, later this month.

Nicola Murray, the producer of *Topsoil*, said: "I know Chris will be sadly missed by many people here at BBC Radio Solent and by many listeners as well. On a personal level, I found Chris to be one of the most gentle and lovely people I've ever met. I loved the way he would often bring in flowers from his conservatory or garden and give them to Pippa. "He was always an absolute pleasure to work with. He knew so much about his subject, which he obviously adored.

His mother's side of the family were descended from Victor Hasselblad, the pioneer of the greatest cameras in the world, and he continued this tradition, converting to digital photography in recent years. He amassed in excess of 10,000 images, many are offered for use through professional photographic libraries.

Chris is survived by his wife Aline, children Patrick, Anthony and Georgina, and six grandchildren. He is being buried privately and a memorial service will take place in the spring.

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The New Forest branch have added this appreciation

Christopher Fairweather, who died on 5th January, was holder of the UK National Collection of *Vireya Rhododendron Hybrids*. He was a well-known nurseryman and broadcaster, and was a member of the Rhododendron and Camellia committee and Chairman of the New Forest branch of the Group.

His interest in rhododendrons began in the early 1950's when he spent two years at Exbury Estate in Hampshire. After a three-year contract planting tea in Kenya, Christopher returned to Hampshire and opened his first Garden Centre

in the village of Beaulieu. In 1968 he rejoined Exbury Estate as horticultural manager, where he had numerous opportunities to develop his knowledge of rhododendrons. He left Exbury in 1974 to develop his own businesses.

The *vireya* rhododendrons were Christopher's particular interest, and was active in publicising these plants, which he described as "very suave and stylish". He tested about 100 different hybrids in his conservatory in Hampshire and the majority were grown successfully. He exhibited regularly at the RHS Flower Shows in London, frequently winning first prizes for his exquisite blooms.

Christopher Fairweather's knowledge and experience will be greatly missed by his colleagues and friends, and it is hoped that others will continue the development and promotion of the fascinating *Vireya Rhododendrons*.

Martin Gates

Donald Waterer

I have received two Tributes to Donald Waterer, and I consider it worthwhile to print them both below. (Ed).

We first met Donald when we drove up to Knap Hill in search of Azaleas in November 1957. We had been advised by Lionel Fortescue of The Garden House that Knap Hill was the only place to get Azaleas on their own roots. It was at The Garden House that we first saw and fell in love with them – a fascination that remains to this day.

At our first visit we filled the car up with 39 well grown plants completely obscuring the view through the back window, at not much more than £1 apiece. It was the first of many visits to the Nursery, once or twice a year until 1966. Donald, always helpful, was very much in charge. Meticulous in labelling the plants, we never got from him an Azalea that turned out not to be what it said on the label.

Walking down the Long Drive at Knap Hill, dead straight, for hundreds of yards, with stool-beds on either side, Donald would help us to decide on the plants we should have. Little did we realise that this method of propagation, by layers, would soon be consigned to history as being too slow for increasing wage rates. The rows of plants were all fed, pruned to the ground to persuade them to send up the following year a thicket of vigorous stems that were then pegged down to take root after yet another year. These plants would then be lined out to grow on for sale.

In 1968 we moved to Sherwood, and were too busy to visit Knap Hill again during Donald's time there. As a result we missed getting hold of the large number of new varieties he introduced in the early 1970's. They are now proving extremely hard to find. This year, 2006, we have tracked down with the help of David Millais six of these to a nursery in Belgium.

We re-established contact with Donald in 1993. He had retired to Kilve, between the Quantock Hills and the Bristol Channel. His retirement from the Knap Hill Nursery had apparently not been a happy one – and subsequently he had cut himself off from the world of Azaleas and Rhododendrons in which he spent his working life.

It was a great pleasure therefore to welcome him to Sherwood on 23 May 1993 together with his wife Rozanne to see in flower so many of the Azaleas that he had bred and sold to us. That he had enjoyed his visit is confirmed by his coming to Sherwood at azalea time in 1994, 1995 and 1996. In 1999 there was an interesting visit here of Donald and Rozanne together with Walter Schmalscheidt who was shortly to publish "Handbuch der Knap Hill – Azaleen" in 2000. There is a nice photograph of Donald on that visit in the introduction to the book.

Sadly, this was the last time we met Donald. Both Rozanne and Donald died this year 2006. His friendly and knowledgeable visits to Sherwood are greatly missed.

Sir John Quicke

When I, as a complete stranger, wrote to Donald Waterer in early 1996, to ask about Knap Hill azaleas, I thought I might receive a one-off businesslike reply or perhaps no reply at all. What a wonderful surprise to have a long, friendly letter brimming with interesting information. This led to our meeting Donald and his wife Rozanne and was the beginning of a long friendship, with correspondence and many telephone conversations throughout the next ten years. During this time I realised what a charming, modest and amusing man he was, as well as learning much about his early life at Bagshot, he being a scion of the John Waterer branch of the Waterer family (his father was F. Gomer and mother Alice); his time at Knap Hill, after 1931 until service with the RAF and imprisonment in Stalag Luft III and then from 1946 up to his retirement in 1976. His life spanned 93 years from 1913 and fortunately, for most of those years, rhododendrons and azaleas were still *de rigueur*. His friends included many eminent gardeners of the period: Frank Knight, Graham Thomas, Alan Hardy, Geoffrey Pilkington, Peter Koster, Lothar Heft, Jim Russell, Edmund de Rothschild, Walter Schmalscheidt and the Wezelenbergs.

Their names often cropped up in correspondence, as well as many amusing anecdotes and reminiscences about life and characters at the Nursery or Shows. Two examples spring to mind - Donald wanted to name a new azalea "Frank Knight" but Frank declined this, so Donald called it "Mephistopheles" instead! - Donald heard noises coming from behind his Stand at Chelsea and found the Godman sisters giggling and eating their sandwiches.

It is so easy to forget or be unaware of the contribution made by former members of our Group. Donald raised and named many rhododendrons at Knap Hill nursery (now alas closed at the end of 2005). In particular, he developed the Knap Hill strain of double flowered deciduous azaleas which are recognised as being successors to the Rustica flore pleno and double Ghent azaleas. He contributed several articles to the Yearbooks and for many years was on the main RHS Rhododendron Committee. Donald's retirement in 1976 marked the end of the Waterer family's long and distinguished tradition as nurserymen - one that I suspect will never be surpassed.

Malcolm Nash.

Daily Telegraph Promotion.

Members may have been surprised as I was, to see the description in this recent offer, as the advertisement states ... "Free magnolia standard for every reader"... "Eventual height of the supplied magnolia standard is one metre" ... It also goes on to state "... In addition to your free magnolia bulbs (sic), we have some other great offers ..." etc. It should prove interesting to see these amazing (?dwarf) plants! However, the advertisement was corrected in the following days' advertisements!

**RHS Main Rhododendron Competition
at Rosemoor
21st & 22nd April 2007**

Alun Edwards, Chairman of the SW branch
and the Show co-ordinator reports:

**RHS Main Rhododendron Competition is to be held at
RHS Rosemoor, Great Torrington, North Devon**

Show Schedules for this event may be obtained from the RHS Shows Department at 80, Vincent Square, London SW1P 2PE Tel.020 7630 7422.

The **SW Branch Camellia Competition** will take place at the same time. For entry forms apply to Alun Edwards as below enclosing a SAE.

Alun Edwards, Spinney, Park Lane, Barnstaple, Devon EX32 9AJ
Tel. and Fax 01271 343324

The **SW Branch Magnolia Competition** will also take place concurrently. For entry forms apply to:

Dr. John Marston, Gorwell House, Goodleigh Road,
Barnstaple, EX32 7JP, enclosing a SAE

TOURS

Judith Hallett

**Spring Tour to South West Ireland 2007
Sun.13th to Fri. 18th (or Sun.20th) May 2007**

There has been an enthusiastic response to the Spring Tour to South West Ireland, with forty members signed up as we go to print. Since publishing the itinerary I have been alerted to several other interesting gardens which we shall include to enhance the tour. We can still accommodate a few more people so if you are interested in joining the tour please contact Jo Purkiss at Arena Travel on 01473 660 800 (joanna.purkiss@arenatravel.com) or speak to me on 01981 570401.

Judy Hallett,

Honorary Tours Organiser

**The Rhododendron, Camellia & Magnolia Group
and ICS Joint Autumn Weekend 2007
in East Sussex
19th to 21st October 2007.**

Express your interest now to Pat Short, at
41 Galveston Road, London SW15 2RZ. Tel. 020 8870 6884
E-mail: patricia_short@btconnect.com

Details of this Tour and of the interesting gardens to be visited will become available shortly.

SEED LISTS

Seed growers - which seeds do you want?

The RCM Group seed list and the American Rhododendron Society (ARS) seed list are the two best and largest lists of seeds offered every year. Together they contain more than one thousand Rhododendron seed numbers, species and hybrids. Most growers find more than they need on these lists.

But both organisations also have more sophisticated members who sow dozens, maybe hundreds, of different species every year and who go through both lists and other famous lists with a sharp look to see if their most wanted species are listed this year - very often in vain. Some species just never occur on the lists. When did you last see *RR. afghanicum*, *habrotrichum*, *ludlowii*, *indicum* and *fragariflorum* listed?

The ARS Seed Exchange has recently launched a plan which can do something to change this, and the Seed Committee has chosen me to do the job. Over the next few years the aim is to make lots of new names appear on their seed list, to give growers new challenges and to enlarge the number of species grown in members gardens. The plan is actually quite simple. First we will make a wish list of these most wanted species. When the list is finished, it will be published so that members can check their gardens to see if they can support one or a few of the sought after seeds. Some famous gardens and collectors will also be asked to pollinate some of their rare plants to make seeds for the next year.

I understand that the RCM Group also finds this plan interesting and a way to improve its own seed list. And there is of course no competition between the two organisations, they both have the same goals to support their members with good seeds and spread the interest for Rhododendrons. The wish list can be published in the Bulletin and thus encourage members to pollinate and collect seeds from rare species seldom (or never) offered.

And YOU can help by advising us of your wishes! If you grow species rhododendrons from seeds, please think over which seeds you have been searching without finding them. It may be one or two species or dozens. Please list your wishes and send them to the address below. I will collect them and put the list together. If I get enough help from members, the wish list will be published as early as this spring, maybe in time for some late pollinating action.

Email your wishes to: olejonnylarsen@hotmail.com

Or **by post** to:

Ole Jonny Larsen, Bergeplass 12, N-6010 Aalesund, NORWAY

(Ole Jonny Larsen is a European member of the ARS Seed Exchange Committee and a member of the RCM Group of the RHS. He lives on the west coast of Norway and has a collection of Rhododendrons counting hundreds of species. He also has a small collection of Magnolias which may be the most northern collection in Europe.)

MEMBERS NOTES

Plant Importation

Why go to the bother of importation when a large range of plants is readily available in garden centres and nurseries throughout the UK? In my case, as a collector of vireya rhododendrons, I am very limited as to the species which are available in the UK and have had to resort to importation to acquire some of the more interesting items. The same goes for the magnificent new hardy rhododendron hybrids from the USA and equally attractive magnolia hybrids which are only available from New Zealand.

The importation of live plant material comes under the jurisdiction of the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) in England and Wales, the Scottish Executive Environment and Rural Affairs Department (SEERAD) in Scotland and the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development for Northern Ireland (DARDNI) in Northern Ireland. These organisations are responsible for the inspection of plants for import from non- European Community (EC) countries into the UK and for ensuring that certain basic criteria have been met. Until recently the inspection would have been carried out at the importer's premises but now it is done at the point of entry to the UK. As the importer is not now present during the inspection it is essential that the accompanying paperwork is 100% correct as otherwise the inspecting officer has the authority to delay importation until he is satisfied or, ultimately, to have the consignment destroyed.

All plants which are permitted to enter the EC must be accompanied by a phytosanitary certificate at the time of importation. The "phyto" is raised immediately prior to export by a government inspecting officer in the country from which the plants are being exported and is enclosed with the consignment. Providing that all is in order the plants should arrive with the importer within an acceptable timescale.

Importation should not be undertaken lightly but with the right degree of research and commitment can be very rewarding. How do you get started? Drop me an e-mail on eric.annal@btinternet.com and I will be more than happy to give you some pointers relevant to your particular requirement.

Eric Annal

RHODODENDRONS

Winter hardiness in Rhododendrons. *David Millais*

David Millais' interesting article in the last issue of The Bulletin raised a number of questions from our members. He is currently investigating the availability to amateurs of the high potassium foliar feed concerned and additionally whether this can be made available to members in small quantities.

See the next issue of the Bulletin in July

Camellias for the future ?

One of the good things about browsing around nurseries in other parts of the world is finding gems to either bring back or to keep an eye open for in the future.

Breeders, particularly in Australia and New Zealand, are producing some interesting camellias, many of which are hybrids that are the result of the greater availability of species. Some of the species are quite stunning too, mainly worth considering by those who can provide a glasshouse or other protection from our winter weather.

Camellia pitardii var *pitardii*, which incidentally is believed by some taxonomists to be a form of *C. saluenensis*, is seldom seen in cultivation in its own right but I have seen some very beautiful examples in the wild in Sichuan, China. A very variable, hardy, drought tolerant species, it is generous with its flowers and, in reasonably warm summers, with its seed production. It has long been much favoured by New Zealand hybridists.



Camellia pitardii var. *pitardii*

Photo: Jennifer Trehane

Betty Durrant's 1979 introduction, *C. pitardii* var *pitardii* x *C. japonica* 'Nicky Crisp' is at last gaining the popularity it deserves over here, but it is not very popular with nurserymen as it is such a free flowering compact grower, slow to bring to saleable size.



Camellia 'Nicky Crisp'

Photo: Jennifer Trehane

Neville Haydon, who is probably the most innovative of New Zealand's currently active hybridisers, has introduced a number of very garden-worthy camellias, most of which are "open pollinated", ie of unknown pollen parent, and are also worth looking out for.

One of his hybrids, popular in New Zealand but not yet well known in the UK, was introduced in 1990. 'Nonie Haydon' is named after his mother and reminds me a little of *C. x williamsii* 'Elsie Jury' with its large, 13cm x 13cm peony form blooms of palest pink with darker pink overtones. I like its dense bushy habit, much tidier than young 'Elsie Jury' plants, and its ability to flower very freely from a young age.

The blooms remind me also of 'Mona Jury' and the more recently introduced 'Jury's Pearl' from the Jury family from New Plymouth.

Camellia transnokoensis has been available in the UK for a number of years now and is gaining popularity for its neat upright habit, bronze-red young growth and small sweetly scented dainty, soft pink flowers that open over several weeks. It is proving hardy enough to be grown outside in sheltered gardens in the South West. I keep mine in an open, south-west facing porch here in South Dorset and it is just starting to flower now, (mid-February), after several nights of temperatures below freezing and down to -4C one night last week. I expect to be continuing to enjoy its flowers and sweet scent while sitting outside in April, and its lovely bronzy red young growth all summer. It is proving to be a useful parent for hybridists keen to introduce similar characteristics but with greater hardiness and larger flowers in their camellias.



Camellia transnokoensis

Photo: Jennifer Trehane

Neville has also used *C. transnokoensis* to good effect, to produce scented hybrids of greater hardiness than those produced using the more tender *C. lutchuensis*. I particularly like his 'Transpink', which I picked out as something worth naming when privileged to snoop through Neville's trial area on the outskirts of Auckland in 1996. Registered in 2004, it's a scented *C. pitardii* var *pitardii* hybrid with *C. transnokoensis* as a probable pollen parent. It has a neat habit, less upright than *C. transnokoensis*, neat leaves and, over a long period, in Spring produces masses of 3cm x 2.5cm slightly trumpet shaped flowers with attractive wavy pink petals. Neville's other seedling with similar parentage; 'Festival of Lights', with smaller, paler flowers really made an impression for its

abundance of blooms when seen at Rhodoglen. It is upright too, suitable for fitting into the odd sheltered sunny corner in southern England and for growing in containers. Neville named this “after an amazing exhibition that was running during my visit to Kunming in 1991”.



Camellia 'Nonie Haydon'

Photo: Jennifer Trehane



Camellia 'Festival of Lights'

Photo: Jennifer Trehane

New Zealand hybridists have given the camellia world much to be thankful for and to anticipate in our gardens.

With recently discovered species now being brought into cultivation in China, and assessed for their potential as parents for hybridists to use the future of the camellia world looks interesting.

MAGNOLIAS

Maurice Foster

The Group's Magnolia Trials in alkaline soil at Hall Farm, Northamptonshire.

Notes on Alkalinity Tolerance

Our alkalinity trial is now nearing the end of its second season and our first observations should be made next autumn. In the meantime we have come across further anecdotal indications of alkalinity tolerance.

The most remarkable was in France on the Loire, near Saumur. We have a friend who owns a small cottage that is almost built into a cliff of porous chalk freestone that the French call 'tuffeau blanc'. It was much quarried for building the local chateaux. I had forgotten that some eight years ago I had given him a rooted cutting of Star Wars for his new

garden, unaware that he was on chalk rubble. There it was, about 12ft tall, little sign if any of chlorosis and flaunting at the top like a pocket handkerchief on an elegant summer coat, two perfect flowers together, out of season. No measures had been taken to counter the alkalinity. At its foot there were several *Hydrangea macrophylla*, by comparison yellow with chlorosis, worthy only of the bonfire.

Nearer home, in a court of Pembroke College Cambridge in a soil that must be about pH8 was an unidentified *soulangeana*, perhaps 10x10ft, perfectly healthy, with good extension growth and only the merest suggestion of a chlorotic pallor. It would easily have outgrown any soil improvement measures at planting and unless the soil had been totally replaced, would have its roots well into the alkaline stuff. I gave it an upper second without question.

LETTERS

Dear Editor,

Forty-five years or so ago, a well meaning neighbour gave me a small cactus plant and over the years my interest in cacti grew to such an extent that I now have a collection of around 400 species.

You might well ask what building a collection of cacti has to do with growing rhododendrons! My first experience of buying rhododendrons goes back to 1969 when my wife and I visited Westonbirt Arboretum in Gloucestershire. I should have learnt my lesson from that cactus plant 45 years ago, but instead I came home with five innocent looking hybrids, Titian Beauty, Sneazy and so forth. I managed to obtain my first species at a little nursery near Chepstow, called Bully Hole Bottom (you just have to visit somewhere with a name like that!) a white form of *williamsianum* and *schlippenbachii*. From here my enthusiasm for rhododendron species took over and since 2000, I have obtained plants from Millais, Glendoick and Leonardslee, plus some of the Cornish gardens.



R. proteoides

Photo: Brian Moss

We moved from Cardiff to St Austell in Cornwall in 2001 and once the new greenhouse was erected, with the cacti in their new home and the living room no longer resembling the Sonoran desert, I was able to start preparing ground for my rhododendron collection. I managed to convince my wife that redecorating our main bedroom would come a close second to this! When the removal men had come to load our household possessions back in Cardiff, they quickly realised why I had ordered an extra removal van. It was, of course, to transport cacti and rhododendron plants

which had been lifted and hurriedly wrapped in polythene for the journey south. I had joined the Group in 2000 and with my interest in growing rhododendrons rapidly gaining momentum, I now make frequent visits to some of the great gardens in Cornwall, particularly those at Trewithen and Tregrehan which are handily situated

What seem like tons of composted bark and leaf mould have been collected and forked into my previously dug beds. I have tended to dig the beds throughout (one spade depth) rather than dig individual planting pits. 40-50mm of composted bark was forked into the top 200mm or so of soil throughout the beds, with an additional amount of leaf mould and conifer needles mixed with the upper 70mm. The beds are mulched with whatever organic material I can lay my hands on, especially bark chips. This has been back-breaking work but I kept reminding myself that Kenneth Cox in his book 'Rhododendrons & Azaleas, A Hamblyn Care Manual' emphasises the importance of thorough soil preparation. I kept reciting this as I drove my increasingly worn out spade into the ground! My plants are of course, in the main, small but most seem to be thriving in their leafy soil.

Not having a large garden at my disposal, I have had to be selective with regard to plant size. I have been collecting species from the Lanata, Neriiflora and Taliensia subsections which I am fond of. In addition, John Roy, my friend in Ballachulish, Argyll, has given me several seedlings of larger growing species, from seed collected by him, including *cerasinum*, *barbatum* and *campanulatum*. Putting together my collection and visiting nurseries and gardens over the last few years has been an immensely enjoyable experience – rather like the early years of building my cacti collection. I am nibbling away at my lawns, I should have space for a few more yet!

Many of my plants are too small to flower, although I have fine displays from *RR. leucaspis*, *pachysanthum*, *schlippenbachii*, *edgeworthii*, *yakushmanum* and *neriiflorum*. *R. haematodes* flowered for the first time last September. The small rock garden is home to *RR. hanceanum nanum*, *megaratum*, *prorum*, *proteoides*, *calostrotum* 'Gigha' and *campylogynum myrtilloides* – *proteoides* flowering for the first time last year.

I would welcome a visit by other members of the Group – it would be nice to be able to amble around my patch with other enthusiasts and just talk rhododendrons.

Brian Moss, St Austell, Cornwall.

Dear Editor,

How right Diana Ward is about *C. japonica* 'Takanini'. (Letter in last Bulletin., and see front cover of this issue. Ed.) It really is a wonderful cultivar. I first saw it during the 1997 I.C.S. Congress in Auckland. Our coach was labelled 'Takanini' and the driver always had a fresh 'Takanini' flower, which he had grown himself, on his dashboard. It is not completely unknown in England as Trehane Camellia Nursery list it in the *Plant Finder*. 'Takanini' was originated in the 1970's by Neville Haydon in Takanini, a suburb of Auckland. Its parentage is 'Mark Alan' x 'San Dimas'. Jennifer Trehane obtained cuttings from him and brought them to England in 1989, but it has been slow to spread. Its main features are its very long flowering season, starting along with the sasanquas, the sheen on the petals, and the fact that, in New Zealand anyway, the mid-season flowers are red, whilst

the early and late flowers tend to be deep plum to purple. Altogether a most interesting Camellia that deserves to be more widely grown here.

David Molloy, South Devon.

Dear Editor,

I am a Camellia enthusiast living in Mid-Devon & I would like to endorse the experience of your letter writer, Diana Ward from Tasmania about her new *Camellia* 'Takanini'.

I purchased this Camellia in 2002 [from John Price in Cornwall at Towan Camellias & I have not seen it for sale elsewhere] because of its unusual plum red colouring so I had no real idea it was also going to be such a strong performer. Last year, it was in flower virtually without a break from 11th October 2005 to 9th May 2006. This year it has started later, on 9th December, but we had some frosts in November, which is unusual for us, & I believe it was probably out in Cornwall a month before that. I expect it to stay in flower right through to May unless we have a very early & mild Spring! The worst winter temperatures we experience here are in the region of minus 6-9 degrees & I grow this Camellia where it can really absorb the heat next to a South facing wall as I know it was bred in the Southern Hemisphere; it does however receive quite a bit of wind. It is planted next to some Sasanqua Camellias causing some colour clashes as originally I never expected them to be out together & now I see it is going to be an annual event!

Whilst writing, I would like to mention the 2006 Sasanqua Year; I wonder if other Sasanqua growers are also experiencing a superb year? Mine have been in flower for 8 weeks this year & most are now just starting to go over as we say goodbye to 2006 which is late. Sometimes the main display lasts only 3-4 weeks with some noticeable exceptions such as *Narumigata* which flowers from October to February here.

Caroline Bell, Devon.

OVERSEAS LETTERS

Winter news from the Pacific NW

After a delightfully warm autumn, winter rain arrived in early November with extraordinary ferocity. We received 1475mm (59in.) of precipitation from Nov.1 to Jan.31. We had a succession of gales for two months. We watched with cold fear as 50m Douglas fir did a hula dance at the front of the garden. How they managed to stay in place while bending so low was amazing. Only one toppled, and thankfully it was out of harms way. In other areas of Vancouver there was major damage. Stanley Park in particular suffered severe tree loss. Huge trees were tossed about like match sticks. Power outages were frequent and often lengthy in our area.

While the wind was dramatic, it was a sudden blast of arctic cold in early November that appears to have done the greatest damage in our garden. Rain turned to snow. Hammered by the wind, a few of the snow-covered small trees and rhododendrons were tipped out of the ground, but some effort and outside help we managed to get these righted. Branch breakage was fortunately confined for the most part to the Douglas Fir. However the real damage was soon evident as many large leaf rhododendrons defoliated. In her 40 years in this garden Margaret has never seen

this happen on such a scale. Some plants are clearly dead; others we hope will recover. Of three *R. sinogrande* two look sad indeed - mere stalks. *RR. kesangii*, *falconeri*, *niveum*, a few of the neriflorums, are all burnt and droopy-leafed. The Asian mahonias were hit badly. Interesting to us was that there appears to have been little or no damage to any of our Chilean plants such as *Crinodendron hookerianum*, *Mitraria coccinea*, *Berberidopsis corallina*, and *Asteranthera ovata* - last two well mulched for winter. On the other hand material from New Zealand & Tasmanian was hit and miss. *Pittosporum tenuifolium* defoliated significantly with the exception of one raised from seed collected high in the Remarkable Mountains. Hebes did poorly, but these are often a problem. Our Eucryphias, including the supposedly tender pink form of *E. lucida*, fared quite well. This past week we had a mountain of debris from all the storm damage and subsequent pruning chipped - enough to mulch most of the garden. We now have some excellent new planting opportunities.

Charlie Sale, North Vancouver, Canada

P.S. I forgot to say : The camellias appear to have escaped damage with even *C. transnokoensis* coming through nicely.

Charlie

Greetings from Portland Oregon, where it is wet and cold.

At Van Veen Nursery we found that our new heating system installed literally hours before the freeze was adequate. Whew. Those of you who know us know that we do things at the last moment. Winter has brought us extra rain and below normal cold temps. Still only one lathe house roof blew off in the windstorm so not much to complain about.

We enjoyed the winter rhododendron and camellia blooms of *R. 'Lees Scarlet'*, *R. 'Altaclarensis'*, *Camellia 'Our Linda'*, *C. 'Egao'* and *C. 'Winter's Snowman'*. They have been a delightful reminder that blooms are what it is all about.

Even now as *R. dauricum* and *R. 'Cornsutch'* are blooming, temperatures are warming and the cats say that spring is coming! Cheers, *Vicki Molina, Portland, Oregon, USA*

BRANCH REPORTS

Peak District Branch

David Ives

A visit to Chatsworth in Derbyshire was organised for 25th March 2006, which turned out to be cool and dull, but we had an enjoyable day, starting with lunch informally in the Stables Restaurant. We were met then by the Head Gardener. We had planned to revisit the well known camellia collection under glass, growing against the wall which runs up the hill away from the house, but these glasshouses had been found to be in an unsafe state, slipping away from the wall, and so were under repair and out of bounds. In consequence, we were privileged to be taken to the glasshouse where the personal collection of the late Duke of Devonshire's own favoured plants were housed, and then to that of the Duchess. These houses contained a considerable variety of plants from many sources including fine rhododendrons, camellias and much else, but the sources and identities of these were not always known or available to us. We were then entertained to an interesting tour of the upper part of the main garden in the direction of the early flowering rhododendrons, but

the season was on the late side and the only specimen in full flower was a fine *Rh. barbatum*. With the visit concluded, we transferred by car to the church hall at Brackenfield for tea and a talk. Here the Group Chairman, Mike Robinson, gave a lively and interesting presentation comprising a review of magnolias in cultivation, supported by a very fine collection of photographs, many of them taken in New Zealand. Helpfully, he peppered his talk with indications of the merits and weaknesses of individual species, hybrids, and forms, and identified for us his favorites and those most worth growing, often with the phrase "no garden should be without this!" The talk was very well received, and after a few questions and with warm thanks expressed, the meeting closed.

A day in two parts was organised for May 20th, seeing two gardens, the first a delightful garden in the hills and mists above Glossop, called Cloud Cottage at Simmondley (open under the NGS), personally developed over forty years by the owner, Mr Geoffrey Lomas (now a Group member!). With a full record of the planting, he showed us the arboretum and rhododendron garden of one and a quarter acres that he had created, with many maturing fine trees and shrubs, such as *Rh. yunnanense*, *wardii* and 'Naomi' (Exbury). It rained and our host added to the courtesy of providing refreshments indoors by towing some members' cars out of a muddy field.

After picnic lunches, we moved to Wentworth Castle near Barnsley, now in use as a college, with the gardens taken over by English Heritage. It has been recognised that the long established rhododendrons from 19th century plantings, by now trees crowded together to the point of excluding light from any under planting, were seriously in need of overhaul, and a programme of judicious removal, replanting and new planting made for an interesting tour, led by the recently appointed Head Gardener, Mr Steve Catchpole (also now a Group member).

The final event of the Branch's year was a get together at Haddon Hall, another delightful venue in Derbyshire, for lunch and a brief visit to the Hall and its lovely terraced gardens (no rhododendrons, camellias or magnolias though), followed by a further visit to Brackenfield's church hall. The Group's editor of the Bulletin, John Rawling gave the members a most interesting account of his travels in Bhutan in 2004, with fine illustration of plants in variety, and also of topographical features of a fascinating country. John also brought rhododendron plants which he kindly auctioned for branch funds. His talk was much enjoyed and his visit was greatly appreciated.

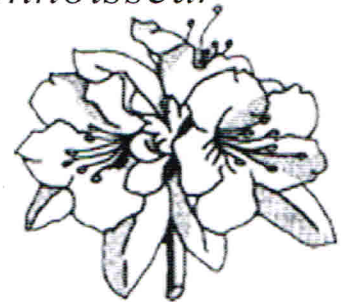
MEMBERSHIP

Rupert Eley

We are delighted to welcome the following new members, particularly to welcome so many overseas members.

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NOTICE OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2007

This is to be held on **Tuesday 12th June 2007 at 2.30 p.m.** in the Garden Room of the Hillside Centre, R.H.S Garden Wisley. Please do come.

Philip Evans will be standing down as Yearbook Editor after the 2007 edition. Philip has been Editor for ten years, succeeding Cynthia Ponstan in 1996. He has also attended every Committee Meeting during this time, an impressive record. Philip will continue on the Committee as Vice Chairman.

Pam Hayward has agreed to become our new Editor from the 2008 edition of the Yearbook. This is in addition to the many other tasks she performs so ably for the Group.

Maurice Foster

Maurice will be leaving the Group committee after the June AGM. As chairman for three years he made many successful innovations, took the Group to new standards of excellence, and inspired us all by his common sense, hard work and enthusiasm. Maurice is a plantsman par excellence, and is nowhere happier than among plants: he has done more than his share of committee work, and we wish him well in his desire to spend more time developing yet further his already fascinating garden.

THE COMMITTEE

Mr. Maurice Foster, Mr. Ivor Stokes and Mr. Brian Wright will have completed their three year term on the committee.

Mr Ivor Stokes and Mr. Brian Wright are willing to be re-elected.

The Chairman Dr. Mike L.A. Robinson

Vice Chairman Mr. Philip Evans

Hon. Treasurer Mr. Martin Gates

Hon. Secretary Mrs Pat Bucknell

Hon. Membership Secretary Mr. Rupert Eley

Hon Bulletin Editor Mr. John Rawling

Hon. Tours Organiser Mrs Judy Hallett

Together with Archivist Pam Hayward, Convenor of the Seed Bank Mr. Gerald Dixon and Webmaster Mr. Graham Mills are all continuing in post.

Other mid-term Committee members continuing in post are: Mr. Eric Annal, Mr. John Harsant, and Mr. Andy Simons and Mr. Alastair Stevenson.

Your voting form is enclosed

Please return your completed Form to The Hon Secretary: Mrs Pat Bucknell.

Botallick, Lanreath, Looe, Cornwall PL13 2PF
by Friday 8th June 2007

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

RHODODENDRONS OF SUBGENUS VIREYA – George Argent 2006

The first full monograph on Vireya rhododendrons. 382pp, illust. Full Price: **£55** Member's Price: **£39**

Postage: UK **£5**, Europe **£8**, Rest of World **£15** (Air)

RHODODENDRONS IN HORTICULTURE & SCIENCE – Eds. Argent and McFarlane 2003

Proceedings of the RBGE Rhodo '02 Conference. Contributions are diverse and relevant – ask for a list. 312pp, illust. Full Price: **£35** Member's Price: **£20**

Postage: UK **£4**, Europe **£5**, Rest of World **£10** (Air)

RHODODENDRONS & AZALEAS – Kenneth Cox

Full Price: **£29.95** Member's Price: **£24.50**

Postage: UK **£4.50**, Europe **£8**, Rest of World **£15** (Air)

HARDY RHODODENDRON SPECIES –

A Guide to Identification – James Cullen

496pp, illust. Full Price: **£35** Member's Price: **£23.50**

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**

Postage: UK **£7.50**, Europe **£8**, Rest of World **£12** (Air)

THE RHODODENDRON HANDBOOK 1998

352pp, illust. *NOW* **£19** post free. Airmail: **+£5**

YEARBOOK Back Numbers

Available for 1946 – 1971, 1980 – 2004. Please enquire.

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FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Date	Organiser	Location	Event	Contact
April 4th	RCM Group	RHS, London	Wilson Study Day, 10.00am – 5.00pm	
14th /15th	SE Branch	Borde Hill, Sussex	Branch Show (with ICS)	Barry Haseltine 01342 713132
15th-21st	Lakeland Society	S.E.England	Spring Tour, led by Christopher Bradbury	Shelagh Newman 01539 53197
21st	NW & N.Wales	To be confirmed	Visits to members gardens	Ted Brabin 0151 353 1193
22nd/23rd	RHS & SW Branch	RHS Rosemoor & SW Branch	Main Rhododendron Competition Camellia + Magnolia competitions	See p.4 of Bulletin
30th	Lakeland Society	Visit to 3 Private gardens + Evening Formal Dinner		Shelagh Newman 01539 53197
May 1st	Lakeland Society	Visit to The Gardens of Muncaster Castle		Shelagh Newman 01539 53197
4th	SW Branch	Barnstaple area	Visit to Castle Hill Gardens & Dr Bruce Osborne's Garden at Goodleigh	Colin Brown 01647 277268
5th	Wessex Branch	Richmond Park	Visit to Isabella Plantation	Malcolm Nash 01483 275013
5th /6th	NW & N.Wales	Ness gardens	Branch Show 2.30pm	Ted Brabin 0151 353 1193
8th	Lakeland Society	Holehird	Society Show	Shelagh Newman 01539 531979
10th - 20th	Group Tour	Southern Ireland		Judith Hallett 01981 570401
11th.-14th.	NW & N.Wales	Branch Tour to Northumberland & South East Scotland		Ted Brabin 0151 353 1193
17th	SW Branch	Tavistock area	Visit to the Woodland garden at Antony Ho. Torpoint and Endsleigh House, Tavistock	Colin Brown 01647 277268
19th	SE Branch	Hole Park 2.00pm	Visit to the garden of Mr Edward Barham	Barry Haseltine 01342 713132
20th	Wessex Branch	Ramster	Branch Show	Malcolm Nash 01483 275013
June 12th	Group AGM	Wisley	Group Annual General Meeting	Pat Bucknell 01503 220215
October 19th – 21st	Group & ICS	Autumn Weekend Tour to East Sussex		Pat Short 020 8870 6884
November 17th	SW Branch	RHS Rosemoor	All day programme including lecture by Kenneth Cox of Glendoick	Colin Brown 01647 277268

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 July Bulletin by 14th June 2007.

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