North America Meets Europe

The 2018 ARS Convention will be in Bremen, Germany. It will start around May 7, 2018, with optional tours before the convention and after the convention. The schedule may and probably will change slightly in the next couple months.

- 1st Pre-Tour: Optional 5 days visiting Dutch Gardens including Keukenhof Gardens
- 2nd Pre-Tour: Optional 2 days at RHODO 2018 Rhododendron Festival and Bremen
- 3rd Pre-Tour: Optional 6 days public and private garden visits in Denmark & Sweden
- Convention: 7-day convention in Bremen from May 20 to 26 including 3 tour days
- Post-Tour: Optional 4 days visiting gardens in Finland.

Calendar this now! It is a do-not-miss event. You can choose to start in Holland or Germany with one of the 3 pre-tours or start with the convention. Then you can choose to finish in Germany after the convention or in Finland after the post-convention tour. That means there are 8 possible combinations ranging from 7 days & nights for just the convention to 24 days & nights if you do everything which includes the 3 pre-tours to the Netherlands, Germany, Denmark and Sweden; the convention; and the post-convention tour to Finland.

Scottish Rhododendron Society

2017 Yearbook

Cover Pictures:
Front: *Rhododendron wightii*
Back: *Rhododendron arboreum* in Sikkim
Pictures by John Roy

Editorial

Welcome to the 2017 edition of the Scottish Rhododendron Society's Yearbook. There is something for everyone in this edition.

Those who were at the Autumn Conference at Ardkinglas in 2015 will remember the plant auction, where we donated all the proceedings to Kenneth Cox's Nepal Earthquake appeal. A fantastic £1313 was raised. The first article is a report on the progress made, and people will be glad to read about the good cause the money has gone towards.

Two reports on plant exploration trips to Asia are included. In these days of the Nagoya Protocol, it is virtually impossible for amateur botanists such as myself to collect any plant material on these explorations. It must therefore be emphasised that when Richard Baines describes collecting material in Vietnam, he was doing so on behalf of the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh, and with full permission from the Vietnamese authorities.

Propagation is always an interesting subject. I have included an article on a beginner's attempts at growing from seed and taking cuttings. This might give you the information you need to get started yourself, and avoid some of the pitfalls.

"Companion plants" are always worth reading about. *Sorbus* get the treatment in this issue, with a description of a few interesting bushes that can be included in the rhododendron garden.

At our AGM at Garelochhead on 6th May, Richard Firmin will be formally appointed as Technical Director. I am pleased to publish an update from him on some of the pests and diseases we might come across in our gardens.

The SRS has visited the gardens at Wentworth twice recently. An in depth article on its history and restoration is included.

Enjoy your Yearbook, and remember I am always looking for material for these publications.

John Roy

Rhododendron Nepal Earthquake Appeal
School opens December 2016

Kenneth Cox

Hangdewa lies in the Milke Dande Region of Taplejung, North East Nepal near the Sikkim Border, south of the great peak of Kanchenjunga. Like most villages in Eastern Nepal, life was never the same again after April 25th 2015. On that day:

> 'A huge magnitude 7.8 earthquake hit the Nepalese countryside close to 50 miles from the capital Kathmandu. The worst earthquake to hit Nepal for 80 years was followed by a second quake two weeks later. 8,891 people were killed, more than 22,300 injured, more than 893,000 homes were destroyed or damaged, as well as schools, clinics, temples and ancient buildings. The disaster affected over 8.1 million people, many living in remote and mountainous areas of the country.'

The day the earthquake struck, I was on my way to Canada on a lecture tour, which would culminate in a conference on Vancouver Island, of the American Rhododendron Society. Like many others, I was shocked and appalled at the destruction and loss of life and wanted to do something to help. 'Lalugiras' or rhododendron is the national flower of Nepal and this gave me the ideal to fundraise for the disaster using the rhododendron as a rallying point. My family business at Glendoick is a rhododendron nursery: we grow, hybridise and collect rhododendrons and we write books

about them. I advise on rhododendron gardens and supply them with plants. And I know many rhododendron fans around the world.

Perhaps I could persuade the international rhododendron community to raise funds and help with the rebuilding of Nepal.

I announced my plans at the Canada Rhododendron Conference and other lectures and sent out details to rhododendron societies as far apart as New Zealand and Australia, Vancouver Island, Germany, France, Norway and Scotland. Almost everyone agreed to help.
Participating groups:

- The Scottish Rhododendron Society, Rhododendron Species Conservation Group, & Matt Heasman
- Glendoick Gardens and Garden Centre
- Mount Arrowsmith Rhododendron Society (Vancouver Island, Canada)
- Nainamo Rhododedron Society, (BC, Canada)
- German Rhododendron Society
- The Rhododendron, Magnolia & Camellia Group (UK)
- New Zealand Rhododendron Association
- Norwegian Rhododendron Society
- Société Bretonne du Rhododendron
- Australian Rhododendron Association

Plant sales were held, lecture fees donated and money was raised. I wanted to make sure that the money raised went directly to a worthwhile project.

Opposite Page: April 2015 Earthquake damage

Above: The School

Right: Construction

Next Page: School opening day

Pictures courtesy of and copyright Glendoick

Happily I had good contacts in Nepal. From 1995-2000 I led treks to South East Tibet using a Nepal crew of expert Sherpas, mountain guides and cooks using the team of Exodus Expeditions. Karma Lama (son of one of Chris Bonnington's Everest team of Sherpas) suggested I contact Mingma Sherpa who worked with me in Tibet on several expeditions. He suggested helping his family's home village in the Milke Dande famous for its rhododendron treking. The village lost many buildings in the earthquake including schools, heath posts and monasteries. Mingma Sherpa organised this project for his village.

In November 2016 the new school was opened, funded by rhododendron societies around the world, and over 50 children are using it. There are several classrooms for 3 class levels from nursery upwards. There are currently 5 teachers at the school. Students are provided English medium private education with 8 subjects. English, compulsory math, optional math, Nepali, science, social studies, health & population and Tibetan language.

How long will this appeal run? The school is now open but teachers' salaries are a struggle and I would like to continue fund raising for this for 2017 if there is support to do this, to help pay the teachers in the new school.

More information is available on the Glendoick Website https://www.glendoick.com/Nepal-Earthquake-Appeal

Google 'Milke Dande Rhododendron Trek' to find out more about this region of Nepal. Better still, go and see it for yourself and help Nepal's struggling economy.

Schefflera, Spring Rolls and So much more!

Richard A. Baines, Curator, Logan Botanic Garden

Ascending Phan Si Pan Mountain

In October 2016 I participated in a three week collaborative expedition to Northern Vietnam with representatives from four other UK botanic gardens namely Andrew Luke from Kew, Will Ritchie from Glasgow, Alex Summers from Cambridge Botanic Garden, RBGE and the Institute of Ecology and Biological Resources (IEBR) in Hanoi. I would like to thank Andrew, Will and Alex for their contributions in writing this article.

During our expedition three extended trips into the Hoang Lien Mountains region were carried out to collect plant material and record the flora that we encountered. The trip built on a previous visit in 2014 where over 500 collections were made, some of them identified as new to science and others new records for Vietnam.

Our first trip took us to the summit of Phansipan Mountain, the tallest mountain in

Indochina at 3143m. Subtropical evergreen forests on the lower slopes were replaced by temperate and montane forests as we climbed to altitudes exceeding 3100m. We took the recently constructed cable car to the summit and this gave us a flavour of the mountain's floral offerings. Rice terraces filled the lower valley and forest clothed its steeper gradients and gullies. As we crested 2800m stands of *Abies delavayi* ssp. *fansipanensis* stood out, the trees forming a sparse flat-topped canopy. From the cable car we descended through bamboo thickets, a plant community resulting from degradation of the forest near the summit. Here we made valuable collections of forest remnants such as *Rhododendrons*, *Schefflera* and *Arisaem*a.

A number of interesting species occur at the summit including *R. facetum* ssp. *facetum*, *R. ovatum*, *R irroratum* and *R. valentinioides* with its stunning waxy yellow flowers. *R. facetum* ssp. *facetum* in cultivation is very useful for its late season flowering and its attractive fawny indumentum.

Above: *Rhododendron facetum* ssp. *facetum*

Right: Rhododendrons on the steep slopes

Opposite Page: *Uocodendron whartonii*

All pictures in this article by Richard Baines

As we descended below 2800m the bamboo receded giving way to a magical eerie forest of giant specimens of *Rhododendron sinofalconeri* towering above our heads. This species, like so many from Vietnam, has proved to be remarkably hardy in the U.K. Its flowers closely resemble those of *R. falconeri* and it has very attractive large leaves with attractive indumentum on the lower surface.

Overnight we camped below the towering rhododendrons where we were treated to Vietnamese spring rolls cooked from scratch on a forest fire. Few words can express just how truly delicious they tasted after a hard day's trekking!

The vegetation beneath dripped with filmy ferns and mosses along with numerous species of Gesneriaceae (relatives of the African Violet). One of the interesting rhododendron species that we observed near the base camp on Phansipan was a new species in sub-section Arborea. This has recently been brought into cultivation but as yet has to be formally named. The highlight of our first trip was *Rhodoleia championii,* a tree with silvery backed leaves that is very rarely seen in UK collections.

From here we headed to Y Ty Mountain located on the border with China. Known as "The Mountain in the Clouds" it is a remote mountain that to date has received minimal exploration and is inhabited by the local Hani population.

Starting off in a boggy forest we negotiated a myriad of giant spiders' webs. It was here we observed *Uocodendron whartonii*, a taxon new to science and a member of

Left: *Rhododendron maddenii*

Opposite page: The author amongst *Rhododendron souilenhense*

the Hamamelidaceae family.

The base of the mountain was exceedingly rich in rhododendron species such as *R. excellens*, *R. maddenii* and a number of unidentified species in sub-section Maddenia. As we progressed through the canopy of mixed deciduous and evergreen forest we were surrounded by a rich and diverse array of interesting plants such as *Rehderodendron*, *Schefflera*, *Craibiodendron*, *Huodendron tibeticum* and *Magnolia*.

We made collections from numerous rhododendrons. I was particularly excited by an epiphytic rhododendron growing approximately 1 metre high on a moist rocky outcrop, leaves with a deep green upper and a silvery surface below. Buds were narrow and barrel shaped, I believe that this could possibly be a new species (collection No. 350). Another significant collection was collection No. 356 a multi-stemmed *Rhododendron* with lanceolate leaves up to 7cm long with curved seed pods resembling small bananas.

The weather here was quick to turn and we were lashed with rain as we entered the forest proper. Massive trees such as *Magnolia* towered 30m above our heads with their trunks and limbs smothered with epiphytes and ferns. As usual our pace was slow due to intense collecting and data recording that accompanies such botanical expeditions. On the third day we set out for the summit of Y Ty and this was the hardest trek so far, the path was steep and treacherous, but our spirits remained buoyant with the many new collections that we were able to document. Along the route we observed a plethora of interesting rhododendrons such as *R. kyawii*, *R. hemsleyanum*,

R. ovatum and *R. suoilenhense* with its enormous leaves almost resembling *R. sinogrande*!

Towards the summit the forest became stunted and patchy with mosaics of open, low vegetation. Here we collected rhododendron species, *Lilium* and *Allium wallichianum*. The latter appears to be a new record for Vietnam. The views were stunning into the valley below and cloud draped over us and disappeared as quickly as it had arrived. Pseudovireya sub-sect. rhododendrons provided a welcome show of colour with their starry yellow flowers on exposed cliff faces. *R. sororium*, *R. densifolium and R. emarginatum* were growing profusely with rich green foliage. It was here that we had our first encounter with a venomous snake, which was almost sat on!

The summit (approx. 2700m) proved a step too far and after deliberation we decided that it wasn't worth risking the final 50 metre ascent due to safety concerns.

Our final trip to Bach Moc Luong Tu held much promise from information received prior to the trip. This area is very remote with minimal intrusion from people outside the region and its highest peak was measured for the first time only four years ago. It may have come as a surprise when the mountain was declared the fourth highest mountain in Vietnam in 2012 at 3,045m. It was thought that only a handful of botanists have visited this montane landscape on the western perimeter of Lao Cai province and there was much potential to observe a rich diversity of plants.

Sunday is market day in Vietnam, so as we headed into the hills each of the towns and villages we passed through were hives of activities, rich in colours, sounds and smells from the woks (and livestock). Each mountain pass was skilfully negotiated by our driver framing some spectacular views across the Hoang Lien Mountains.

The high humidity made our initial ascent though sub-tropical forest a hot and sweaty affair. At 1500m we observed *Gelsemium*, a plant rarely grown in cultivation but well known to our Vietnamese colleagues due to its poisonous properties. The initial stage of our ascent to the peak was dominated by a landscape of bamboo (*Sinoarundinaria griffithii*), rhododendrons and the occasional *Schefflera* standing tall amongst the dense thickets.

As we neared the top taking a much needed rest we stumbled across *Rhododendron edgeworthii* which we believe is a new record for Vietnam. With its characteristic pinkish/white, funnel shaped flowers this should make an excellent introduction to gardens as it was collected at over 2700m. The highly degraded landscape at the summit was characterised by the remains of burnt out mature trees. There were obvious signs of fire damage and forest clearing; a concerning sight in such an area of rich biodiversity.

At a small settlement close to the peak we observed a small, fragmented population of sub-sect. Edgeworthia sp. This highlighted the role that botanic gardens can play in the long term survival of plant species as it is only a matter of time before this small group disappears through over grazing.

At an elevation of 2100m we noted a rich number of *Camellia* species with many of them producing a mass of ripe fruit perfect for collection. I could not believe my eyes when I noted a *Camellia* tree with a girth of over 3m, truly enormous!

When we observed fragmented sections of the original forest, there were many botanical treasures that will hopefully end up growing in Scotland's most exotic garden! During the trip we made nearly 70 rhododendron collections namely in the form of DNA, herbarium and seed. Many of these currently have only been identified down to sub-section level and it is likely that some may be species new to science.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the RHS, the Stanley Smith Horticultural Trust and the Eve Bennett Trust and the RBGE for their generous financial support and assistance in making this a successful trip.

I would also like to thank Andrew Luke, Will Ritchie and Alex Summers, fellow expeditioners, for their generous contributions for this article.

Some Smaller *Sorbus*

Ian Douglas

The Genus *Sorbus* is principally split into two Subgenera: *Aucuparia* (the rowans) and *Aria* (the whitebeams). There are also a number of apomictic hybrid "micro species" between the two Subgenera, including the two rare Scottish native species *S. arranensis* and *S. pseudofennica*. (Apomictic: produces seed asexually therefore genetically true.) I shall describe only rowan species.

Rowans are shrubs and small trees mainly from mountain habitats and hence are suitable to associate with rhododendrons which come from similar habitats. Any soil which is suitable for rhododendrons will also satisfy *Sorbus*.

Sorbus poteriifolia: The most dwarf of all *Sorbus* rising to no more than three or more inches, but with typical rowan foliage of four to six sets of leaflets. The flowers are pink and the berries start pale pink but gradually fade to white. I grow it in two places, the first a shady peat bed between small rhododendrons, the other is on a ledge on the rock garden. In both cases they have a well drained humusy compost. Both are thriving.

Discovered by Handel-Mazzetti in 1919 on the Salween Irrawaddy divide, but not introduced until 1926 by Kingdon Ward (KW6968) from the Seinghku valley, upper Burma. Not freely available but can be found in specialist nurseries.

Sorbus reducta: This is a much more common species. It comes in two forms, one suckering to produce nice patches and the other being an upright shrub of

two to three feet. White flowers are followed by pink berries. The fiery autumn foliage is an added attraction. Perfect for growing among dwarf rhododendrons.

First discovered by Forrest in 1906 on the Yulong Shan (Jade Dragon) range and subsequently introduced by Yu and more recently by Chris Brickell, the Kunming-Goteborg expedition, the Chungtien-Lijiang-Dali expedition and Keith Rushforth.

Sorbus sambucifolia: Apart from my own garden, the only other place I have seen this species is the Savill Gardens at Windsor. I was told it did not produce seed because it was not self fertile. When I eventually tracked down plants, I managed to get two seedlings from wild collected seed, which were planted adjacent to each other and they have produced berries for the last three years. The height now is about two feet and they will probably eventually reach about five feet. This species has red plum shaped fruits which, unfortunately are prized by blackbirds. It may be that since this

Previous page: *Sorbus poteriifolia*

Above: *Sorbus reducta*

Right: *Sorbus setchuanensis*

Pictures by Ian Douglas

is the earliest *Sorbus* to flower, that the berries are the only ones available at that time. (Many plants from Korea and Eastern Siberia come into growth early and are susceptible to frost damage).

In the wild it ranges from the Aleutian Islands, Kamchatka, Sakhalin, to the mountains of Northern Japan.

Sorbus setchuanensis: This species, grown from seed in the early nineties, has still only reached a height of six feet. It is a particularly attractive species with possibly the smallest rowan foliage, almost fern-like in appearance. The berries are smaller than most and pure white. Autumn foliage colour is also good.

This species was introduced from Emei Shan in 1980 by Roy Lancaster (L492). It is a sexual diploid and so if grown from seed, care needs to be taken to root out any possible rogue hybrids.

Sorbus matsumurana: This is a species of which so far I have had no experience, but it seems to be a desirable plant. It was introduced in the eighties by Brian Halliwell (BH4032) and is not a common plant. However, it does sound as though it will be worth growing, with stunning autumn colour. Although its eventual height is given as ten feet, a seedling at Ness has reached only one foot in five years. It is a native of Japan.

Rhododendrons and Rowans

Mike Thornley

Being wary of any organisation that focuses on a single genus probably explains why, between Sue and I, we are members of six such societies: *Magnolia*, *Meconopsis*, Maple and three *Rhododendron* (the latter too many for sure). While the enormous range and diversity of rhododendrons taxes the brain and stimulates the mind, it is everything else, all the other connections, which feed the emotional side of gardening: relationship to the past, the sense of exploration, affinity with landscape, and the personalities of plant hunters and fellow horticulturalists.

During 2016 I have been writing a weekly log about our garden. Gillian, one of the trainee gardeners is to blame. As a leaving present at the end of her year at Glenarn, she gave us the beautifully illustrated Royal Horticultural Society's 'Treasury of Garden Poems' (London 2003) and enclosed a note to say how much she had enjoyed working here, adding "*Hope you get to stop and enjoy it sometime*". It was a kind warning that perhaps all the effort of looking after the garden was getting in the way of seeing and appreciating what we had. Hence the notes I have been writing each week, part impressions, part record, and a small amount of reflection. One of the thoughts that kept poking its head above ground is about the overlapping relationship of the garden to its local, natural environment, in our case the west coast of Scotland, and to the plant introductions from the wild and their habitats.

The following diary entry, written at the beginning of October, touches on some of these wider issues. The title might suggest an article on companion planting, and in some ways it is. As far as I know there is no specialist society dedicated to the genus Sorbus.

> On the road from Kilchoan to Sanna rowan trees stood isolated on the moor, laden with red berries which we found on rocks in the pellets left by birds, undigested and turned orange, perhaps a process that breaks down the casing and allows the seed to germinate. In the garden rowans are more retiring, not so forward as maples, nor as domineering as some of the magnolias. They loiter at the edge of the crowd, half in and out of the shadows, limbs and leaves merging into the background. Then, when the colours of late summer still linger on and before autumn fully ignites, they

cover themselves in white, pink, red, yellow berries. We went around the garden gathering samples in an effort to name all the Sorbus that we had planted in the early years, but whose details we had failed to record.

The material that we collected is lying on the table in the conservatory, sprigs of leaves paired and opposite each other as in a simple drawing, now starting to curl, and small bundles of different coloured berries, beginning to desiccate. Beside them, for reference, is McAllister's monograph (McAllister H. 'The genus *Sorbus*; Mountain Ash and other Rowans' London 2005). At first glance, the painting of *Sorbus filipes* on the cover is as life like as the samples we have picked, so realistic is the result achieved by the botanical artist Josephine Hague.

It is thought that the word herbarium originally referred to part of a garden, or a garden within a garden. A component of the herbarium was the collection of books on whose vellum pages specimens of dried plants were placed. Seed was also stored so that herbaria, in addition to being collections of plants and reference books used by apothecaries, were a resource for the propagation of plants. With the advent of printing the interleaving of plants in books was replaced by woodcuts that mark the beginnings of botanical illustration. Nevertheless the collection, pressing and drying of plants specimens and the gathering of seed continued as Europe explored and exploited the natural world.

Visiting the herbarium at the Royal Botanical Garden in Edinburgh, the sheets of specimens are taken from the tall, metal filing cabinets, laid on the table, and folded out to reveal the dried samples, carefully taped to the paper, the plant collectors notes hand written in ink in the margin. A moment in time and place is released from the darkness of the storage cabinet and travels across the intervening years into the light, a moment when Forrest, or Rock, or some other plant collector in a far off country, packed the sheets into a wooden crate for dispatching home and turned his attention to the cleaning and bagging of seed that he and his local men had gathered. It takes a few seconds to recognise that the drab specimen lying on the sheet had once been a living plant, and then the leaves and flower unfold in the mind as if they had been dropped in a glass of water.

Recently we attended a joint meeting of the Scottish Rhododendron Soci-

ety and the Rhododendron Species Conservation Group. David Purvis, who works for the RBGE, gave a presentation on his photography of living botanical specimens for another new book on the rhododendrons of China. Using digital cameras and other specialist equipment he has been able to record rhododendron species, and their dissected parts, in such detail that the captured images, floating in black space, take on an almost abstract, artistic quality of great beauty. Here, surely, is a true botanical record, even down to the microscopic, diagnostic scales on the underside of leaves, and yet there is the niggling worry that the images can be manipulated, enhanced, corrupted and wiped clean. While ultimately a garden, and by extension its plants, can only survive in the record, is there not a danger that the record replaces the reality, making conservation, particularly of plants with no utilitarian value, redundant?

Yesterday we climbed Stob a'Choire Odhair in the Blackmount, Sue's first Munro since she had her knee replacements: a brilliant day. Rowan and birch trees growing along the side of the Allt Toaig, leap-frog each other up the hill as if seeking to gain ascendancy, the rowans eventually triumphant, the highest tree hanging over a waterfall, its red berries cascading into the pool below. Or I thought it was the highest until I looked up at Creag an Steallaire that stands above the glen. Here on the cliffs diminutive rowan trees, trunks turned silver in the low angled light, evenly spaced amongst the rocks, protected from sheep and red deer, survive at 1500 feet above sea level.

By now the reader might be protesting that this is a rhododendron not a rowan magazine although, in the writer's defence, the word *magazine* nicely suggests explosive contents and conflicting ideas. So when we think about rhododendron planting in Scotland, while we connect ourselves with other places, walk in the footsteps of plant hunters, and look through the same hand lens as the taxonomist, to what extent do we engage with, damage or conserve, the landscape of our own country? Before everything else each rhododendron planting site and garden has its own natural and social history.

Geoff Dutton, at the end of one of his narratives on the garden year, includes a diagram to show how the garden, the output, or *crop* as he puts it, is the product of three inputs: environmental conditions, time, and the gardener's energy. More of some, less of the other, results in a garden that can vary from the manicured to the marginal

or both in Dutton's case (see SRS Yearbook No.12, 2010-11). I wonder if there is another diagram in which the garden is represented by three conditions: the local, natural environment, the ecology of and plant introductions from other countries and continents, and the gardener's ability to mediate between the two. Thus the garden is seen as a triangle, more acute, even unstable when one element dominates the others, more equilateral and balanced when all three conditions are in a state of equilibrium. An obvious thought; but overlay this mental doodle with another set of three variables comprising aesthetic aspirations, horticultural reality, and the gardener's technical experience as well as cultural sensitivity, and a more complex picture emerges. Planting rhododendrons, or rowans, is not a straightforward process.

My First Attempts at Propagating Rhododendrons

Paul Haynes

I write this article with some trepidation because many readers are skilled propagators. This is not for them. It is also not advice on good practice, it is just a record of my efforts. It is written with the hope that readers that haven't tried propagating rhododendrons will buy seed from the seed exchange and grow their own plants. I always feel there is some thing special about the plants we have propagated ourselves.

I must thank Willie Campbell for managing the seed exchange and Alan Anderson, Alan Clark and Peter Cox for supplying the seeds I ordered. These people and others use great skill to prepare seeds and then generously donate them to the SRS seed exchange for the rest of us to use. Without them I wouldn't be able to write this.

I started to take an interest in species rhododendrons in 2014 and having some experience at propagating easy to grow shrubs I thought rhododendrons should be no problem. Well for me so far it has been a mixture of luck followed by some failures but once I started taking more care I am very pleased with my success rate. I started by picking an old open seed pod in early summer 2014 from what I thought was *R. thomsonii*. I read that old pods usually still had some seed left in them. I crushed the pod to get some seed out of it and spread all of it, seeds and bits of seed pod on to a pot of used ericaceous compost then put it out in the sun on the south side of my garage where it was occasionally watered. I had in my ignorance done all the wrong things but I was rewarded with a pot of seedlings. I will grow some on to see what

A 30 watt CFL lamp in a foil lined shade and some recycled 300ml cream cartons. Add a time switch and you have got an automatic system.

Seedlings eight weeks after sowing

they turn out to be. After my initial success I started to read articles on the internet that suggested it is not that easy. I suggest you look at http://www.rhodoland.nl and click on the English version. I was interested in his notes on propagation. This is a site written by a very enthusiastic hybridiser in the Netherlands. I just love his enthusiasm, valuable information and style of writing.

I joined the SRS in November 2014 and bought seed from the seed exchange. I couldn't get peat locally so I used commercial ericaceous compost and sowed my seeds in trays on a north facing window sill and covered them with cling film. This didn't work very well. I lost most of the seedlings due to being too wet and the compost grew a great crop of moulds and fungi.

With fresh seed from the seed exchange I started again on 19th of March 2016. I used 50/50 peat and perlite and put a thin layer of finely sieved peat on the surface of the compost. After soaking the trays in ericaceous liquid fertiliser mixed at half the strength for foliar feeding, I sowed 12 different species of rhododendrons very thinly, then placed them in a heated propagator in my green house. Just in case the propagator got cooking in the sun, I also sowed a second lot of seed in pots with transparent lids. These were grown in my house. I used a 30W CFL (energy saving) lamp 450mm above these when they started to germinate. The seedlings grown indoors did just as well as those in the green house. Most of the seed had germinated in about 3 weeks. As the seedlings grew many of them had roots on the surface of the compost so I sprinkled fine peat over them to cover the roots and help to support them. In some cases the seedlings fell over so these were replanted and supported with peat raked around them using a bit of wire.

By mid April I was getting worried about controlling the light levels and temperatures in the propagator. Greenhouse shading wasn't enough and some days I was a bit late getting newspaper covers on the propagator so I moved them all into my

house and used a 600mm long double fluorescent light about 700mm above them. This solved the problem and the seedlings grew on well. By the 16 June 2016 I started transplanted some very small seedlings to about 1½ inches apart into trays again with peat and perlite mix, Some were almost too small to handle but had good roots. I transplanted them early because green slime was growing on the surface. The slime was because I had been so worried about the compost drying out that I had been spraying the surface every time it looked a bit dry. I found it difficult to get the watering right. It just takes a blink of sunshine and the surface dries out even though the green house was well shaded on the roof and two layers of 40% shade cloth on the sides.

By the 22 June it had become too much hassle for me to be constantly covering seedlings in the green house with newspaper when the sun comes out and then removing them when the clouds move in. The thought that I might not get the covers on quick enough one day and I could lose the lot. So I moved most of the seedlings outside to an alcove on the north side of the house where they couldn't get any direct sun. In July I put them all into a shade cage I had just built and they are doing well, all I have to do is keep the slugs away.

At this stage I realised trying to achieve the text book "bright situation but no direct sun light" is a bit optimistic and it took a while

Above: Shade cage with last years rooted cuttings planted out and this years seedlings in trays

Right: 2016 seed and some 2015 cuttings in shade cage

for me to realise that light from the north is sufficient for rhododendron seedlings to grow.

My experience with cuttings was similar to seeds. In 2015 I put cuttings in pots with ericaceous compost and covered them with plastic bags on the north side of the house and not one rooted. I then visited a friend who was a semi professional grower, although not growing rhododendrons. He suggested I get a misting system like his and assured me that the prices had dropped in recent years. The cheapest system I could find was £430 this included a small bench, heating cable, thermostat, misting nozzle and electronic controller plus the electronic leaf. Rather a lot of money for an amateurs experiment. Then I got lucky, while I was looking on the web for components to build my own system I found an identical system on ebay and bought it in August 2015 for £50. This wasn't a fluke, I bought another one a year later for £63.

The electronic leaf switches the mist on when it and the cuttings start to dry out and off after a timed spray to ensure the cuttings don't get too wet and importantly never dry out even in my greenhouse on a hot day. So I could put my cuttings into a shaded greenhouse and not worry if I was not available to add extra shade when the sun was strong.

By now I had been reading about the correct time to take cuttings. This is usually just as the new growth is starting to ripen but before it gets too hard. One author advises checking the plants every day to get them at the right stage. I did observe that shoots go from soft to very stiff in a matter of weeks but as my new system wasn't ready

Cuttings in the Mist Bench.

All pictures in this article by Paul Haynes

until the end of August I took the cuttings then even if it was probably a bit late for some species. I put them in small pots of 50/50 peat and perlite in the mist system with 20°C bottom heat. I also used Clonex rooting hormone gel. This is supposed to reduce rotting of the cuttings but lots of my cuttings rotted anyway. As the weather got cooler at the end of the year I fitted a timer and only had mist on during the day and I gradually reduced the bottom heat to 10 degrees, then when frost was forecast in December I drained the system for frost protection and covered the cuttings with fleece for the winter. I had lots of failed cuttings for many reasons: mistakes with the power supply to the mister, timing of cuttings, some species very difficult to root. I had listened to some one who said if they have not rooted by December they wouldn't root so I didn't look after the moisture levels properly during the winter. This was a mistake but some survived and actually took 9 months to root. Ignoring the failures I prefer to look at the successes. From 2015 I have rooted cuttings of *R. kiusianum* and two other evergreen azaleas with better than 50% rooting. I also succeeded with: *R. augustinii*, *R. maddenii* ssp. *crassum*, *R.* 'Fragrantissimum' *R. orbiculare*, *R. ciliatum* and *R. rigidum*.

I didn't manage to root *Rhododendron calostrotum* in 2015, so in 2016 I took a few *R. calostrotum* cuttings at intervals from March to August and the one that rooted and grew well, was taken on 15 June. I was also keen to root *R. schlippenbachii* and *R. occidentale* and a bit more reading revealed that deciduous azaleas have to be taken very early in the year and given supplementary light to get them to develop buds for next year. One author says reduce the light in September and another says continue the light and heat all winter to prevent dormancy. I took the cuttings of *R. schlippenbachii* and *R. occidentale* on the 28 May and 15 June and they are doing well with up to 4 inches of growth and good roots. The earlier ones are the best. I started supplementary lighting from 9am to 11pm on 31st July and I reduced the light and heat towards the end of October when I came back from holiday. As I write in January 2017 both *R. schlippenbachii* and *R. occidentale* seem to be doing well and I am optimistic they will survive and grow this year.

What about plans for this year? I am looking forward to the session on propagation at the spring conference because there really is a lot to learn. I have already ordered more seed and I will start them very early indoors with artificial light and then get them outside as early as possible so they can benefit from a full growing season. Also I will feed them better this time. With cuttings, more of the same and I think I will make a modified Nearing Frame as they are low tech and are known to be reliable.

People, Places & Plants: Wentworth Castle & Stainborough Park

An Historical and Conservation Perspective

John M. Hammond

Introduction:

Looking out in a southerly direction from the fringe of the gardens across the rural Don Valley towards Wortley Park, and the wide expanse of parkland of rural South Yorkshire, provides no clues to the historical background that underpinned the development of Wentworth Castle and Stainborough Park, an 18th Century estate covering an area of nearly 700 acres (268 ha), or the changes that have been wrought in relatively recent years. Wentworth Castle itself stands near the top of a conical hill, surrounded by 63 acres of pleasure gardens and parkland, of which 40 acres (16ha) are gardens, some 600ft (180m) in elevation on the eastern flank of the Pennines, two miles (3 km)

Wentworth Castle Baroque Façade, built in 1764, looks out east over Stainborough Park. Courtesy: Wentworth Castle and Stainborough Park Heritage Trust

Stainborough Castle, one of the first romantic ruined castle follies with its four towers, seen in c.1900. Courtesy: Northern College, Wentworth

to the south-east of Barnsley. It is one of the earliest designed landscapes in England, it is the only Grade One listed landscape in the county with collection of 26 listed buildings and monuments, together with a parkland containing a variety of habitats including lakes, grassland, and woodland of some 630 acres. Geographically, the monuments are scattered over the 700 acres of parkland, amongst which is a major monument to the 2nd Duke of Argyll, which raises questions as to why this should be located on an estate in South Yorkshire?

Historically, the Wentworth Family had led a very colourful life in the Georgian period and a cohesive record of these years and its impact on the estate gardens is not readily available. Decades of neglect followed the cessation of hostilities at the end of the First World War and a 1975 article in *Garden History* referred to the estate as a 'forgotten landscape'. In a similar way, the gardens and surrounding parkland have not been included in most gardening and horticultural books, and passing mention is only made in other publications until the more recent restoration projects were being planned in 2002; however, in reality, the restoration of the gardens had commenced as early as 1978. Using what reference sources that have been found, this article aims to provide a chronological historical record and, whilst considerable care has been taken in compiling the data, the estate has a complex history with conflicting details in some earlier articles; that said, any errors or omissions are those of the author. For this reason any additional details, amendments or comments will be most welcome, as in this way we all learn.

Historical Background:

The Everingham family settled in the Parish of Stainborough in c.1567, built Stainborough House and laid-out Stainborough Park. In the mid-17th Century the estate was sold to the Cutler family; however, the most significant transformation of Stainborough Park took place in the 18th century following the purchase by Thomas Wentworth, (1672-1739) of the estate and its manor house from the Cutler family in

Stainborough Castle following restoration with its two remaining towers in 2016

1708, following the death of Sir Gervase Cutler of Stainborough in 1704.

Thomas Wentworth was the son of Sir William Wentworth of Northgatehead in Wakefield, who served as High Sheriff of Yorkshire, and his wife Isabella Apsley, daughter of Sir Allen Apsley. In about 1687, he was a page of honour to Queen Mary of Modera. On 31 December 1688, he was commissioned a cornet, the third and lowest grade of commissioned officer in the cavalry, in Colchester's Regiment of Horse and served in Scotland in 1689. Thomas Wentworth saw much service as a soldier in the Low Countries, and was occasionally employed on diplomatic errands. He was appointed an aide-de-camp to King William in August 1692, was commissioned guideon and 1st major in the 1st Troop of Horse Guards in October 1693, and cornet and 1st major in the same on 20 January 1694. On 7 May 1695, Wentworth was appointed a groom of the bedchamber to the king.

When his cousin William Wentworth, 2nd Earl of Strafford, died without issue on 16 October 1695, Wentworth succeeded him as the 3rd Baron Raby. He did not inherit the Strafford fortune or the Jacobean house, Wentworth Woodhouse and its 250 acres of parkland four miles north of Rotherham, which passed to the second earl's nephew, Thomas Watson, son of his sister Anne. Thomas Wentworth was commissioned Colonel of the Royal Regiment of Dragoons in 1697 and appointed Deputy Lieutenant of Lincolnshire on 21 May 1700. He was employed as ambassador extraordinary to Berlin in March 1701, the first of several missions he undertook to Prussia.

Most of the Earl's early career was spent abroad representing Queen Anne as a Special Ambassador. Under Queen Anne, Thomas Wentworth became a Brigadier of horse on 7 January 1703 and a Major General on 1 January 1704. From 1703 to 1704 and 1705 to 1711 he was Queen Anne's ambassador to Berlin. He was a man of wealth, influence and success, but had been thwarted in his expectation of inheriting the Strafford earldom and the neighbouring estate of Wentworth Woodhouse. So, he purchased the Stainborough Park estate and its manor house from the Cutler family

in 1708, his choice of location being fuelled by what had become a bitter rivalry. The Earl's fortune was derived from the mines of the South Yorkshire Coalfield, which covered most of the County, its most famous coal seam being the Barnsley Bed. Coal had been mined from shallow seams and outcrops since medieval times and possibly earlier; however, the coal found in the Barnsley Bed was a bituminous coal that was generally used for the production of coal gas and coke; the coke being used for iron and steel manufacture in Sheffield and the surrounding area.

Whilst in Berlin he fell under the influence of the highly formalised garden styles being created on the Continent and he secured the services of Johann von Bodt (1670-1745) to design a new mansion, to replace the existing manor house at Stainborough with a grand Georgian Palace, largely directed by letter from a distance, from about 1710 to 1720. Bodt, chief architect to Ferdinand I, had moved to Berlin in 1699 accomplished the construction of the Zeughaus, a huge Arsenal complex, which was largely influenced by the French and British style of the late 17th century. Bodt also carried out design work for the Palaces of Potsdam and Schlodien. From March 1711 to 1714 the Earl was British ambassador at The Hague. On 14 June 1711, he was sworn of the Privy Council, and on 29 June 1711 was created Viscount Wentworth of Wentworth-Woodhouse and of Stainborough and Earl of Strafford.

On 6 September 1711 he married the heiress Anne Johnson, daughter of Sir Henry Johnson, Member of Parliament for Aldeburgh, in Suffolk. Sir Henry was wealthy shipbuilder and a Director of the East India Company, residing at Bradenham in Buckinghamshire, and owned several other estates. Anne Johnson brought with her a fortune of £60,000, with much more to come. Together they had three daughters, Anne, Lucy, and Henrietta; and a son, William (b.1722). From 1712 until 1714, Strafford was First Lord of the Admiralty, and in October 1712, was made a Knight of the Garter. Queen Anne became severely ill at Christmas 1713 and died the following year, which was a major blow to the Earl.

Development of the Gardens:

By 1713 the Earl had commenced the first stage of laying out the gardens, as recommended by George London and Henry Wise, being the sole partners at the celebrated Brompton Park Nursery from 1689 until London's death in 1714, they enjoyed a near monopoly on large-scale landscape design, also supplying thousands of trees to landowners for avenue planting. London and Wise specialised in an English version of the formal Baroque gardens associated with the Catholic courts of continental

Europe, of which Versailles was the pre-eminent example. These were gardens in which magnificent flat parterres spread out below one or two façades of the palace or house, defined by box hedges in patterns derived from textile designs and enlivened with coloured gravels, white or painted statuary, extravagant fountains and colourful annual flowers. At Wentworth Castle the formal gardens to the rear of the house were laid out in the form of a gigantic Union Jack, together with other geometrically designed pathways and avenues with long vistas.

After the death of Anne, the Earl was one of the Lords Justices who represented George I, (George of Hanover) until the new king arrived in Great Britain. The Earl was a representative of Great Britain at the Treaty of Utrecht, the War of Spanish Succession, and in 1715 was impeached for his share in concluding this treaty, but the charges against him were not pressed to a conclusion (although he lost his Colonelcy). So, as his political career had come to an end, together with the loss of Royal patronage after the death of Queen Anne, he retired in 1714 to Wentworth Castle to develop the house and grounds; surrounding it with elaborate gardens, monuments, pools and fountains, which has been seen as a demonstration of his ambitions to establish a grand estate and as an outlet for his energies following the end of his political career. He then purchased Boughton Hall, Northamptonshire in 1717, which he also developed as an 18th Century estate, mainly for use as a 'half-way house' during his regular travels to and from London.

He was a leading Jacobite conspirator in the 'Atterbury Plot' of 1720 to restore the Stuarts to the throne, which failed in 1722; however, the Pretender appointed him one of his 'Lords Regents' in England and commander of the Jacobite forces north of the Humber. For his role in furthering the Jacobite cause, he was created 'Duke of Strafford' in the Jacobite Peerage of England on 5 June 1722 by James Francis Edward, Prince of Wales (1688-1766) known as the 'Old Pretender'; son of the deposed James II of England & Ireland, and James VII of Scotland.

The Earl turned his attention to the Wentworth estate and in 1726 he began stage two of developing the gardens with the building of a large ruined gothic folly, Stainborough Castle, on the top of the conical hill, thought to have been the site of an Iron Age settlement, with its gatehouse keep, curtain wall and four square towers, one for each of the Earl's children, overlooking Wentworth Castle grounds, and dominating the whole of the surrounding countryside. It took four years to complete and was to be one of the first ruined castles incorporated into an 18th Century landscape design. In 1830 the Earl began building the Corinthian Temple, overlooking the great south

lawn, whose design is very similar to the Temple of Sybil at Tivoli, near Rome. It comprises a central stone drum over a basement vault with an encircling colonnade and entablature. Thomas Wentworth was also a party to the Jacobite 'Cornbury Plot' of 1731–1735 and, after a very eventful life, died at the age of 67 on 15 November 1739; much of his correspondence is preserved in the British Museum Library. He was succeeded in his titles by his only son William, who became 2nd Earl of Strafford.

The gardens and parkland were altered and embellished by the William (1722-1791), 2nd Earl of Strafford, who inherited the estate in 1739 and continued in the spirit of competition with his cousins at Wentworth Woodhouse. He was also 2nd Duke of Strafford in the Jacobite Peerage, and in 1741 William married Lady Anne Campbell (b.c1715, d.1785), the second of the five daughters of Field Marshall John Campbell, 2nd Duke of Argyll and 1st Duke of Greenwich (1680-1743) and a Senior Commander in the British Army. A statue of Minerva, the Goddess of Wisdom, sits atop the fluted Corinthian column on a mounded base, in memory of John Campbell, 2nd Duke of Argyll, who died 4th October, 1743. William's estate mason, John Bower, erected the tallest of the landscape ornaments in Stainborough Park in 1744. Indeed, for a family residing within a couple of day's drive of London, and having a property in the city itself, the Wentworths sailed very close to the wind in terms of their Jacobite sympathies, activities and acquaintances. William played less of a political role than his father, although he was appointed a Deputy Lieutenant of the West Riding of Yorkshire on 4 August 1757. William constructed a new wing to the Castle in the Palladian style, a project begun in 1759 and completed in 1764; as its principal designer, this gained him an entry in Colvin's *Biographical Dictionary of British Architects*. He enhanced the gardens and park with further monuments, using a more 'Naturalistic' style of planting that contrasted with the severe formality of his father's 'Baroque' landscape designs. William also created a serpentine lake to create the illusion of a picturesque river when viewed from the House.

The Earl and Lady Anne became part of a social set which included Horace Walpole, who considered the Countess to be a "vast beauty" and immortalised her in a poem which was published in 1765. William may have been advised by Horace Walpole, who described Wentworth Castle as 'my favourite of all great seats, such a variety of ground, of wood and water; almost all executed and disposed with so much taste' (quoted in Lemmon 1978). Walpole described the south front on 2 August 1770, in the following terms:

> 'If a model is sought of the most perfect taste in architecture, where grace softens dignity, and lightness attempers magnificence; where proportion removes every part from peculiar observation, and delicacy of observation recalls every part to notice; where the position is the most happy, and even the colour of the stone the most harmonious; the virtuouso should be directed to the new front of Wentworth-castle: the result of the same elegant judgement that had before distributed so many beauties over that domain, and called from wood, water, hills, prospects and buildings, a compendium of picturesque nature, improved by the chastity of art.'

When the Earl was widowed in 1785, society gossip quickly linked his name with that of Lady Louisa Stuart (1757–1851), causing Lady Diana Beauclerk to remark "So Lady Louisa Stuart is going to marry her great-grandfather, is she?" However, Lady Louisa looked on the Earl merely as an elderly uncle, and not as a suitor, and he for his part did nothing to promote such an alliance. William died without issue in 1791 and was succeeded by his first cousin's son, Frederick Thomas Wentworth, 3rd Earl of Strafford (1732-1799). Frederick Thomas, the last male heir of the 1st Earl, was educated at Eton and commissioned an ensign in the 1st Regiment of Foot Guards on 3 December 1760. On 29 January 1773, he was appointed a Deputy Lieutenant of Cornwall and appointed a Deputy Lieutenant of the West Riding of Yorkshire on 2 March 1793. No records have been found to suggest he had an interest in the gardens and parkland, and upon his death in 1799, his estates passed to his sister Augusta Anne Hatfield-Kaye. The estate remained in the family until 1802 when the Strafford title became extinct, after which the estate was inherited by Frederick William Thomas Vernon (1795-1885), who assumed the name of Vernon-Wentworth. Assisted by the sale of mining rights beneath the estate, Frederick W.T. Vernon-Wentworth further embellished the 18th-century landscape, which already represented an unusual survival of early 18th-century tastes in formal gardens, and arranged for additional runs of greenhouses to be constructed in the Kitchen Gardens.

Dall House, a romantically styled Scottish Baronial mansion house on the south shore of Loch Rannoch in Perthshire was designed by the architect Thomas Mackenzie for Frederick W.T. Vernon-Wentworth and built in 1854-55 as a shooting lodge with crow-stepped gables, round towers, and turrets with witches'- hat roofs. The estate had previously been a principal seat of the Clan Robertson until the Wentworths purchased the lands. Frederick would visit during the Autumn hunting season taking with him the staff from his main residence at Wentworth Castle. He was succeeded in 1885 by his son, Thomas Frederick Charles Vernon-Wentworth (1831-1902).

Thomas F.C. Vernon-Wentworth married Lady Harriet Augusta Canning de Burgh in 1859, daughter of the Marquess of Clanricarde, Ireland, and grand daughter of former Prime Minister George Canning. Thomas made many contributions to enhancing the gardens. One of his most significant contributions was a conservatory, which is a rare example of a late-Victorian glasshouse built in 1885 by Messrs Crompton and Fawkes of Colchester, and was set amongst many rare and valuable rhododendrons. It is described as an 'Iron Winter Garden' built for T. Vernon Wentworth, Esq., in the 1899 Catalogue of Crompton and Fawkes. Gentlemen of independent means could select their choice of cast-iron conservatories from the company's pattern-book, which would then be reworked by the design department to the structural outline and size required. A major structure of this type would first be erected at the company's premises, then dismantled and subsequently delivered by rail to the nearest Goods Yard as an immense kit of parts in stacks of very heavy wooden crates, requiring many journeys by horse and cart to Wentworth Castle. Crompton and Fawkes erected the conservatory, fitted it out, provided the heating system, and in its day it was at the forefront of technology, with electric lighting being provided as early as 1886. It would have been used to display some of the many exotic plants, including orchids, palms and ferns collected by the family from around the world. Thomas also planted many specimen exotic trees and hardy hybrid rhododendrons, and in 1897 built the final wing on the House, installing electric lighting throughout the property. He was succeeded in 1902 by his son, Captain Bruce Canning Vernon-Wentworth (1862-1951).

Bruce C. Vernon-Wentworth was educated at Harrow and the Royal Military College, Sandhurst, where he received a commission into the Grenadier Guards, rising to the rank of Captain. As a member of the Conservative Party, he unsuccessfully contested the parliamentary constituency of Barnsley on three

Wentworth Castle gardening team in 1897, with the Head Gardener fourth from the left. Many of the younger members did not return from The Great War. Courtesy: Northern College, Wentworth

Left: The impressive iron Conservatory in 1886 after construction, called an 'Iron Winter Garden' in the supplier's catalogue.
Courtesy: Messrs Crompton and Fawkes

Below: The Conservatory seen in 2016 after its £3.7m restoration

occasions and then entered the Commons at an unopposed By-election in 1893, when he was elected to represent Brighton. He held the seat until the 1906 General Election. Bruce was a director of the London and Yorkshire Bank and of the Yorkshire local board of the National Provincial Bank Limited.

Capt. Bruce was responsible for some of the most attractive features of the present garden. Upon taking over the baton from his father he became a particularly eager collector of hardy hybrid rhododendrons and planted a considerable collection of the various cultivars as they became available commercially over the years prior to 1939. Planted in layers alongside the long lawned ride leading to Stainborough Castle this became a major feature of the garden. In 1912 he built the terrace from which to view the Parkland from the front of the Baroque range and enclosed it with ironwork gates and a new balustrade. In 1919 he planted the magnificent avenue of Lime trees which lines the side of the historical Lady Lucy's Walk, named after the sister of the 2nd Earl, who married Field Marshal Sir George Howard. In common with all large estates the First World War had a major impact on the availability of garden staff, and the harsh economic climate that followed the cessation of hostilities, together with the heavy death duties and falling rents, made it difficult financially to keep the house in good repair and to maintain the

gardens. A Roll of Honour remembering those lost in the war was erected by Capt. Bruce and lists 29 staff from Wentworth Castle and Stainborough Park. Capt. Bruce had continued the tradition of visiting Dall House, the family's shooting lodge on the south shore of Loch Rannoch, during the Autumn hunting season and taking with him the staff from Wentworth Castle. The impact of WWII on the Wentworth Estate only served to compound the problems, as Wentworth Castle was requisitioned by the Military and occupied by the Army for purposes unknown, resulting in a considerable amount of damage and neglect. In the aftermath of WWII, when a shortage of coal became a concern for the government, open-cast mining was carried out in parts of the park; the land was subsequently restored and returned to arable and pasture land, in which use it remains. Capt. Bruce moved out to Dall House for the duration of the war, then after the cessation of hostilities decided to live there full-time. He sold Wentworth House, the outbuildings and 60 acres of gardens to the Education Committee of Barnsley Corporation in 1948, having sold the contents of the house in a separate sale. Capt. Bruce Canning Vernon-Wentworth had never married and died aged 88, without issue, at Dall House in 1951. He is buried at a private grave site by Dall Burn close to the house. Dall House was sold and used as offices by the Forestry Commission prior to being purchased by Rannoch School for use as an independent boarding school.

Restoration and Conservation of the Gardens:

Wentworth Castle became a teacher training college for women until it closed in 1978, when the site was leased to the newly established Northern College for Resident Adult Education. The Northern College found itself immediately faced with being responsible for the upkeep of the buildings and gardens, so launched a major restoration programme for the gardens. Some areas of the gardens had been left to their own devices

Derek Rogers, M.B.E., Head Gardener in charge of the earlier restoration of the gardens, inside the Conservatory in 2016

since the First World War, whilst other areas had suffered neglect since the estate was requisitioned at the outset of WWII. Native trees such as sycamore, ash and holly had spread their branches over the hardy hybrid rhododendron collections, almost closing the canopy; whilst many of the hardy hybrid rhododendrons had been grafted onto *R. ponticum* rootstocks, and having been left to their own devices many of these had suckered, overwhelmed the grafted cultivars and spread large branches over the lawns, paths and avenues.

Derek Rogers was appointed Head Gardener and placed in charge of the restoration scheme, financed as a Community Work Project by Central Government with funds channelled through the Manpower Services Commission. Using copies of the 1713 landscape plans, a team of 25 placements battled for three years to clear 40 acres (16 ha) of unwanted, diseased and dead plant material, then carefully restore the lawns, paths and avenues exactly back to their alignments, as shown on the plans. Whilst taking the restoration work forward the best of the trees and the healthiest of the old hybrid rhododendrons were retained, and then came the major task of replanting. Many new collections were introduced, including rhododendron species and modern hybrids, and for the first time, *Magnolia*, *Camellia*, *Acer*, *Sorbus*, *Enkianthus*, *Eucalyptus*, *Betula*, *Kalmia*, *Meconopsis* and Asiatic primulas. The collection of *Rhododendron* alone covered 40 acres (16 ha) and the species represented introductions from 34 subsections in Cullen and Chamberlain's revision of 1980, many of which were named clones, or award winners, or had collector's seed numbers. This bold undertaking led to the garden being awarded National Collection status by the NCCPG. Over the following years many of these were moved to find more suitable microclimates in the gardens and particular attention was given to the Falconera subsection, which was experimented with to find southerly sites with a well-sheltered microclimate

Banks of Hardy Hybrid Rhododendrons along the Main Ride, some of which are early named forms of *R. ponticum*, whilst other hybrids have been overtaken by their *R. ponticum* rootstocks

Left: *Magnolia campbellii* subsp. *mollicomata* glows in the morning sun

Below: *Magnolia campbellii* subsp. *mollicomata* is one of the large National Collection held at Wentworth Castle

and, in the passage of time, all the species in the subsection were purchased as small plants and grown on. Many years later, after a visit by the NCCPG Collections Officer the garden was awarded National Collection status for Falconera. Another experiment carried out in the same time-frame and using a similar methodology to the Falconera subsection, was the planting of 15 different clones of the Loderi Group, including the not often seen *R.* 'Loderi Julie', which proved to be very successful, the plants being floriferous and hardier than generally supposed in the cold winter climate of South Yorkshire.

Meanwhile, the first magnolia species to be introduced was *M. sinensis*, followed by *M. sieboldii*, *M. wilsonii* and *M. globosa*. After the gale-force winds began felling the shallow-rooted trees on the long south bank below Stainborough Castle, some laborious preparations of planting locations provided sites for a further 62 species and hybrid magnolias, together with a dozen or so camellias. Eventually, the magnolia collection grew to 44 different species and 64 hybrids, for which the NCCPG awarded National Collection status to the garden. Whilst the estate was in private ownership no camellias existed outdoors, so Derek Rogers began experimenting with

the *C.* x *williamsii* cultivars, growing them for two or three years in 12 inch (30 cm) pots that were overwintered under glass. When the hardwood had ripened sufficiently they were put out in the garden in favourable locations, initially surrounded by a protective wigwam of branches and bracken, then mulched with leaf-mould to counter the penetration of frost and ice. This technique proved to be completely successful, and after the cultivars survived a particularly hard winter some further batches were acquired; a total of 52 cultivars were planted on the Camellia Walk, and others around two sides of the large Azalea Garden. The NCCPG awarded National Collection status to the garden in recognition of the successful experimentation work. Camellias can be difficult to grow successfully north of the River Trent, and members may be interested in the methodology used in a cold garden.

In Conclusion:

Derek Rogers retired after 20 years of restoring and caring for the gardens and was awarded a well-deserved MBE in 1997 for services to education and horticulture. And, to quote Derek, 'It has been a privilege to work in such surroundings. Few people are able a leave a monument to their life's work.' Whilst Wentworth Castle and gardens were in the custodianship of the Local Education Authority and Council in many respects this helped to preserve many aspects of the estate, a number of subsequent developments have had a significant impact on the landscape. These have included new buildings and a car park near the house, a sewage treatment plant, tennis courts and a football pitch. In the same timeframe much of the surviving 18th-century parkland was lost to farming.

Although enormous efforts had been made in the latter part of the 20th century to recover aspects of the gardens and to

A view up the Rhododendron Walk. Many areas of the gardens are wheelchair accessible.
Courtesy: Wentworth Castle and Stainborough Park Heritage Trust

maintain the buildings, there were increasing concerns relating to the lack of the necessary financial and manpower resources required for their upkeep. Insufficient gardening staff was available to provide the level of on-going maintenance needed, despite the considerable effort invested by the people who had worked on the gardens and caring for them whilst the restoration continued. Despite all the modern garden equipment available, a team of five gardening staff were never going to carry out the work of a pre-1914 staff of around 25 men. Equally, by the end of the 20th Century several buildings and monuments were on the verge of being lost.

Some major decisions had to be taken and this led to the formation of a partnership between the Northern College and the Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council to further restoration plans for the estate, and in 2002-2003 the Wentworth Castle and Stainborough Park Heritage Trust was formed. Ownership of the main buildings and gardens was transferred to the Trust, and in 2004 the Vernon-Wentworth family donated the wider historic landscape as well. During this time, a very successful campaign for funding was initiated to halt the decline and to begin a programme of restoration. The first phase of a challenging site-wide restoration project, with a budget of approximately £15.5 million, including works involving the buildings, landscape and parkland restoration, new college and visitor facilities housed within the Home Farm, two new car parks and a new entrance garden. Funding to support the project was received from the Heritage Lottery Fund, Yorkshire Forward, English Heritage, the European Union, Natural England, Defra, South Yorkshire Forest, Waste Recycling Environmental Limited (under the Landfill Tax Credit Scheme), the Learning and Skills Council, and others. The restoration of the buildings and parkland was a complex undertaking, which began in 2004 and is beyond the scope of this article, however, the many individual projects were completed and details have been widely publicised in the media since the facilities opened to visitors in 2007.

Plans for the restoration of parts of the gardens included the re-instatement of the original 'Union Jack' garden with its yew compartments, together with other formal landscape attributes that were originally laid-out in around 1715, which was a subjective issue, as it involved the destruction of much of the completed restoration work already carried out in the areas close to Wentworth Castle and the adjacent buildings. Given that these plans proposed to eradicate carefully completed restoration work for the purposes of overlaying an earlier landscape design caused considerable controversy, particularly as it was impractical to return everything within the framework of the estate and parkland back to its early-18th Century state; as for example, the original yews forming the compartments had grown-up alongside each other into full-size

trees. In effect this resulted in the re-opening of the old wounds caused between the proponents of the formal gardens based on the model of Versailles and the proponents of the later natural style of landscape gardening. The concerns expressed about the destruction of areas of completed restoration work went unheeded by the garden history purists, who sought to reinstate a historically accurate formal garden dating to around 1715, and the work went ahead, resulting in many of the plants used in the earlier restoration project being lost; or were moved to other locations that were unsuitable, and further losses occurred. A visit to the gardens on a beautiful sunny day in early-May of this year did little to enhance the tall, dark yew compartments of the massive 'Union Jack' Garden, which has few, if any, attributes to enable a comparison to be made with Versailles.

Meanwhile, whilst all the restoration work was going on around it, the derelict Victorian iron conservatory stood in its forlorn state with camellias and other plants growing out of areas of the roof. Restoration of this remarkable structure was not encompassed in the original funding arrangements and was always visualised as a stage two of the overall restoration scheme. This phase was inaugurated by Prince Charles in January 2012 as a £3.7m project, following which the building needed to be liberated from the engulfing jungle of rampant rhododendrons and camellias. Once all the glass had been removed from the iron framework the structure was dismantled and transported to the workshop in Barnsley where the sections were restored. The building was ready to be resurrected on-site in the spring of 2013, and re-opened to visitors on 7th November 2013. The replacement plantings are representative of the temperate rather than tropical climates of the various continents, and a feature is the Blackamoor statue, which has also been splendidly restored.

There is much of interest to see now the overall restoration project has been completed and it is well worth scheduling a full day for a visit. The 19th-century influence on the site is still represented by the extensive hardy hybrid rhododendron collection, which is supported by the three more recently planted National Collections of *Rhododendron* species, *Magnolia* species and *Camellia x williamsii*, together with the plantings of modern rhododendron hybrids, many of which have matured into spectacular specimens over the last thirty to forty years. For many visitors the 'jewel in the crown' is the Victorian conservatory, whose tranquil environment provides a glimpse of a bygone age and is a reminder that conservation work plays a vital role in looking after both the structures and plantings for future generations.

Acknowledgement:
This article has significantly benefited from the discussions with Derek Rogers, who has led garden visits to Wentworth Castle garden whilst in the role of Head Gardener, also on occasion since he retired, including a visit arranged earlier this Spring. Derek has been happy to share memories of past times whilst working in the gardens; indeed, the restoration of the gardens in the late-1900s is largely due to his expertise, leadership and organisational skills.

References and Further Reading:

1. Crompton and Fawkes, 1899. Horticultural Buildings and Their Fittings. B.T. Batsford, High Holborn, London. 1899.
2. Hadfield, Miles, (Ed), 1980. British Gardeners, A Biographical Dictionary. A. Zwemmer Ltd, London. 1980
3. Lemmon, Kenneth, 1975. *Garden History V.3, No.3, 1975*
4. Lemmon, Kenneth, 1978. The Gardens of Britain, Volume 5, Yorkshire and Humberside. B.T. Batsford, London. 1978.
5. Rogers, Derek. 2000. The Restoration of Wentworth Castle Gardens. *Rhododendrons with Camellias and Magnolias, 2000 Yearbook.* The Royal Horticultural Society, London.
6. Hey, David. 2015. A History of the South Yorkshire Countryside. Pen & Sword Local, Barnsley, South Yorkshire. 2015

Pictures in this article by John Hammond, except where stated otherwise.

Rhododendron ludlowii

Peter A. Cox

My father and I paid regular visits to our great friends George and Betty Sherriff at their lovely and exciting garden Ascreavie in the Grampian foothills above Kirriemuir, Angus, some 30 miles away from my home at Glendoick. The Sherriffs were members of the famous plant hunting team of Ludlow and Sherriff who spent much time in Bhutan and neighbouring Tibet from 1934 to 1949. The Sherriffs were greatly skilled in growing high altitude plants, helped by the altitude of their garden at some 300m (1,000ft).

One day in spring 1953 on a visit to Ascreavie I spotted a magnificent dwarf rhododendron with large bowl-shaped yellow flowers with the name of *Rhododendron ludlowii.* For some time I had been thinking that there were very few dwarf hybrids other than the then well-know 'blues' such as *R.* 'Blue Tit' and *R.* 'Blue Diamond and we were in a strong position to have ready access to dwarf species in various local gardens such as Ascreavie and the Rentons at Branklyn in addition to Glendoick, for propagating material and pollen. So here was pollen of *R. ludlowii* available for the asking and this really got me going on hybridising.

So I took the pollen home and duly pollinated *R. rupicola* var. *chryseum* which produced *R.* 'Chikor' (a Himalayan partridge). I had always been keen on birds (by no means a twitcher!) and thought bird names would be ideal for my future dwarf hybrids. Very few bird names had been used and I can only think of Yellow Hammer and Golden Oriole. *R.* 'Chikor' received an Award of Merit (AM) in 1962 and after Trials a First Class Certificate (FCCT) in 1968. Subsequent crosses with *R. ludlowii* included *R.* 'Curlew', with *R. fletcherianum*, as far as I know the most decorated hybrid ever with a FCC in 1969, an AMT in 1981, an FCCT in 1986 and the Award of Garden Merit (AGM). To obtain the FCC, my wife Patricia and I took the original seedling on a plane to Chelsea Flower Show where the chief cabin steward looked after it for the journey. I was on the award committee so had to leave the room but Patricia was able to peep around the corner and listen to the proceedings. Very few plants received a FCC when first put before an award committee, especially at Chelsea. The cross was made in 1963, a few weeks before I was married and it first flowered in 1968. Other successful crosses using *R. ludlowii* were *R.* 'Swift' AGM, crossed with *R. viridescens* and *R.* 'Wren', crossed with *R. keiskei* 'Yaku Fairy', AM 1970 and AGM.

Left: *Rhododendron ludlowii* on the Subansiri-Siyom divide in 2002

Below: The best form of *R. ludlowii* from the 2002 expedition

Pictures by Peter Cox

R. ludlowii is a neat little evergreen shrub of some 5-30cm (2-12 in.) high, somewhat lacking in vigour, with little dark shiny leaves, with surprisingly large saucer or bowl-shaped yellow flowers with reddish-brown spots, freely produced. It was first discovered by Frank Ludlow on the Lo La right on the Tibetan – Arunachal Pradesh (formerly the North East Frontier Agency) border, under Ludlow and Sherriff 1895 in June 1936 in flower on an open rocky hillside facing north at 4,100m. (13,500ft). In 1938 they found it again, this time in Tsari Sama under L&S 5571 (herbarium specimen in flower), 6600 (seed number only) creeping in moss-covered rocky soil on an open hillside at a similar altitude where it was locally plentiful. Due to the present disputed frontier between China and India, no foreigners are allowed near the Lo La, which is sad as a very rich flora was found here.

This species is not too difficult to keep going in Scotland where the temperatures are

generally on the low side in summer but more difficult where summer temperatures are high. We grow it in troughs or raised beds with good drainage. It flowered particularly well in 2016.

In 2002 I was with a party including as leader my son Kenneth to explore an unbotanised pass between the Subansiri and Siyom rivers in central Arunachal. This proved to be very tough going, the toughest I have ever experienced but it turned out to be well worthwhile. I was absolutely thrilled to find a good population of *R. ludlowii,* growing very healthily along the top of the ridge at 3,450-3,725m.(11,300-12,100ft), forming wide fairly compact mats, often associated with *R. pumilum* and *R. trilectorum*, a species discovered by Ludlow and Sherriff and introduced by us. *Rhododendron ludlowii* was collected under HECC 10017 and 10050 and has proved to be a slightly better and easier plant in cultivation than the L&S introductions. Since 2002 John Roy and Hartwig Schepker have found it again to the east in some quantity in two different areas, east of Mechuka in 2009 and west of Manigong in 2012. Interestingly, in 2012, it was still in bud in late June.

So it seems that this superb, inspiring and distinct little plant is no rarity in the wild and in no danger of extinction.✪

References: *A Quest of Flowers,* Harold R. Fletcher, Edinburgh University Press, 1975
Ludlow and Sherriff field notes.

✪Editor's note: Pascal Bruggeman found the area to the west of Mechuka to be an army training ground in 2016. Vegetation had been destroyed, trails enlarged and eroded, and access denied above the tree line.

An Update on some Pests and Diseases

Richard Firmin

Plant pests and diseases are not just like buses. There are generally one or two in the near vicinity. Though of late they do seem to be forming a queue and, as with a certain bus, the associated messaging can be confusing.

When ash dieback hit the news a few years ago we feared the worst. Hearing that 90% of Denmark's ash trees had been affected we expected the row of venerable giants in our garden to be the next in line. Mental calculations were made concerning expected volume of firewood versus expected cost of tree surgeon. And efforts were redoubled to establish a substitute tree boundary under the doomed canopy – including allowing sycamore volunteers to stay put, and planting various *Abies* species, which do well in shady conditions.

Suffice it to say that the old ashes are still there – a couple of them supporting a jungle of ivy forty feet above the ground which is home to tawny owls, tree sparrows and stock doves. There is no dieback to be seen, even though it might be expected from other causes in trees of this age.

The worst pest to have affected *Fraxinus excelsior* in our garden is *Homo sapiens*. An unidentified individual of this species, some time prior to October 1983, when we moved in, had taken a chainsaw to one of these trees but then for some reason stopped; ran out of fuel, perhaps, or maybe just lost his nerve (I assume he – females of the species are less inclined to engage in this kind of activity). This act of vandalism was only revealed when, two years ago, strong winds broke the tree at the previously undetected wound caused by the cut. It fell into the adjacent tree which, up to that point, had been the biggest and most beautiful of them all.

These ash trees, many of them more than a hundred years old, will not last for ever, though pollarding could in theory increase their lifespan by many years. We recently decapitated two of these old trees which were threatening a polytunnel and they are producing vigorous new crowns.

Prior to the Chalara outbreak, ash dieback disease was the name given to a different condition, thought to be associated with scale insect infestations and resulting in the

familiar stag's head appearance created by an upper crown of dead branches, a condition from which the infected tree usually recovered.

Chalara ash dieback apparently kills young trees relatively quickly – and is caused by an organism called *Hymenoscyphus fraxinea* (formerly *Chalara fraxinea*). It was first identified in the UK in 2012 in nursery stock imported from the Netherlands but is now known to be wind-carried over considerable distances. Some mature trees have been proven resistant to attack. Chalara's frequently lethal effect begins by weakening the plant, making it more susceptible to other pathogens like honey fungus. One inference that may be applicable in a general sense to 'climate change related' pests and diseases is that by maximising the conditions for healthy growth some resistance may be expected to the current onslaught of enemies.

According to the latest Forestry Commission updates, Chalara ash dieback has been advancing up the east coast of Scotland and a 2015 map confirms an outbreak within 10km of our garden. If and when it shows up here it will have a range of potential hosts to infect: unpruned ancient trees and pollarded trees of a similar age; their numerous seedlings, of various ages; and trees of the same species, 25 years old, unpruned, coppiced and pollarded, originating from a separate, native seed source. Hopefully amongst this bran tub of possibilities some survivors will emerge.

Perhaps at a more general level this principle offers the best hope of countering the plethora of new pests and diseases. Chalara ash dieback may end up affecting a large percentage of native *Fraxinus excelsior*, but possibly not all *Fraxinus* species. We could plant others if nurseries were able to make them available.

Likewise, another disease moving up the east coast, *Dothistroma* needle blight affects pines, including *P. sylvestris*, and other conifers, but presumably not all of them. This disease is also carried on the wind and so, as with Chalara, we are involved in a waiting game. Though *Dothistroma* can be controlled, on a small, garden scale, with copper-based fungicides.

At a national level, a perverse consequence of this onslaught has been to reduce conservation effort in the fight to preserve the last vestiges of the Caledonian forest. Caledonian forests are being 'written off' because the perceived, cumulative effects of 'new' diseases, like *Dothistroma*, make the effort to preserve them a losing battle. Maybe this will prove to represent an expedient funnelling of resources. Though if maximising biodiversity is accepted as a generally sound principle then protecting

relic populations under attack must be worthwhile in the attempt to identify resistant genotypes.

Phytophthera ramorum is a different kettle of fish. Its worst affects have been experienced in the west of Scotland, where damage to larch plantations is of more serious economic consequence than its impact on rhododendrons and the other garden plants which it affects. This fungus disease is spread through the movement of infected material, so in theory we can take sensible measures to reduce the chance of importing it into our gardens. Also known as Sudden Oak Death, *P. ramorum* doesn't appear to endanger our native *Quercus* species. This is the good news.

One battle in which we feel more in control is the fungus gnat, or sciarid fly. The adults of this insect are harmless but their tiny grubs eat the roots of new seedlings and cuttings, thriving in propagation rooms where relatively high temperatures and moisture levels prevail.

Three practices have proved useful against this pest. First, the use of yellow sticky traps reveals the presence of the adults before numbers get out of hand. When detected, watering on a product called Gnat Off, which contains the biological control organism *Bacillus thuringiensis*, kills the grubs in the compost.

Alternatively, using a hydroponic propagator (or hydropod) in which cuttings are held in a constant spray of water, deprives the pest of its natural environment. No soil or compost is involved until the well-rooted plantlet is ready to be potted up, by which point it has enough roots to beat the gnats. We have had good success this way with herbaceous and semi-ripe woody cuttings – viburnums, especially – and are testing the equipment with rhododendrons, hoping that it will prove a faster method of propagating from our collection.

Adventures in Sikkim 2016

John Roy

Sikkim is a small state in the Indian Sub-continent

When the SRS spring tour of 2014 visited Germany, my good friend and travel companion Hartwig Schepker mentioned he was considering organising a trip to Sikkim for members of the Deutsche Rhododendron-Gesellschaft (German Rhododendron Society). I thought very little more about it until late in 2015 I received an email from Hartwig inviting me to join. One other Scotsman would also be welcome and Willie Campbell decided to come.

To remind you of the geography Sikkim is a small Indian state in the eastern Himalaya. It borders Nepal to the west, Tibet to the north and Bhutan to the east. The vast majority of Sikkim is mountainous.

April 22nd, Willie and I met at Edinburgh airport and flew to Delhi arriving in the early hours of the morning. There we tried to relax until our German friends arrived, then we were onward to Bagdogra by an Indian internal flight. Unusually from my previous experiences, this flight ran to time, and we met our team of drivers, guide Rajin and

15 Germans, 2 Scots, 1 Swiss and Tega at the entrance to the Barsey Rhododendron Sanctuary.

Picture courtesy of Hartwig Schepker

head guide Tega. As a Sikkim Forest Officer, Tega was invaluable as he knew exactly where to see rhododendrons. I had met Rajin on past treks, and his beaming Bhutanese smile was a tonic. We had time that day to make good a journey on to Darjeeling in West Bengal, the summer hill retreat built by the British who could not stand the heat of the plains. The roads in Darjeeling were narrow (built on the side of the hill) and packed with traffic. To complicate matters, the Darjeeling Hill Railway ran on the road.

A day was spent doing touristy things in Darjeeling. We visited the Lloyd Botanic Garden, set up in 1878 as a satellite of the Calcutta Botanic Garden. The land was provided by William Lloyd, and the garden named after him. My overall impression was that a large injection of cash was needed to repair glasshouses, and keep the plantings in good condition. There was however an excellent orchid house with many splendid varieties. After that, a trip on the very narrow gauge Hill Railway was essential. Tourists can buy tickets to travel on a steam hauled train to the highest station at Ghum.

And so forward next day into interesting plant country. We were travelling into Sikkim at the border post of Melli, where our passports and internal visas were inspected. Then west-ward towards the Nepal border, and the Barsey Rhododendron Sanctuary. We stopped on the way to view the confluence of the two main rivers of Sikkim, The Rangeet from the west, and the Teesta from the east. There were stops also to view plants like *Arisaema* and *Agapetes* and at a toilet stop, a fine *Dendrobium nobile* in

Rhododendron hybridiser Holger Hachmann pleased to stand under *R. falconeri.*

a tree.

Gradually our altitude increased until we reached our overnight stop at Okhrey at about 2700 metres. A swift walk before darkness and we spotted *Rhododendron arboreum* ssp. *arboreum*, *R. grande* and *R. griffithianum*. Much more was to come the following day.

A short drive in the morning took us to the Rhododendron Sanctuary. A *R. griffithianum* in flower (probably planted) greeted us at the entrance, but once in the sanctuary we were into proper forest. *R. grande* had finished flowering, but the new growth was beautiful. Also *R. arboreum* was pushing out new growth. Both ssp. *arboreum* and ssp. *cinnamomeum* were plentiful. Other bushes were *Acer campbellii*, *Piptanthus nepalensis* and *Pieris formosa*. Understorey plants included splendid *Arisaema nepenthoides* and *A. griffithii*.

The trails in the sanctuary were amazingly good. My last five trips have been to Arunachal Pradesh, and you may recall my tales of guides and porters hacking their way through the jungle to make a trail. Striding out, some of us got ahead of the main group and took a wrong turning. Rajin caught up, and directed us back. The others were relaxing in a forest of *Rhododendron falconeri* some still in flower. *R. barbatum* had finished flowering but Hartwig pointed out the form with no bristles on the petioles, formerly known as *R. imberbe*.

Lunch was brought to a hut in a clearing, and enjoyed while we examined some specimens. Hartwig and I had a lively discussion about the identity of an *Acer*. After trading insults about our nationalities and parenthoods we agreed to disagree.

There was much still to see, so after lunch we wandered off making sure we recalled the way back. I did not see any new rhododendrons, but notable was a climbing

Left: "Helmet" shaped spathes of *Arisaema galeatum*

Above: Willie Campbell admires a huge *A. speciosum*

Below: *A. griffithii*

plant *Holboellia latifolia* with clusters of fragrant pink flowers. Also was a cute little epiphytic fern twining itself round a trunk, and at ground level *Paris polyphylla*.

The following day entailed a long road trip to Gangtok, Sikkim's capital city. There were still interests en route, with huge pink/white flowers on a *Bauhinia* tree. We could pick out the occasional *Rhododendron dalhousiae* var. *dalhousiae* in a tree, or the edge of a cliff. Another toilet stop found the spathe of an *Amorphophallus napalensis*. One of our party, Michael from the Bonn Botanic Garden was in charge of arums at the garden, so was especially pleased to see this. Many fine forms of *Arisaema speciosum* were plentiful. The day was rounded off by a visit to the Rumtek Monastery, the largest in Sikkim.

Another long road trip awaited us as we left

Gangtok next morning. Just outside the town was a small group of green spathed *Arisaema galeatum*, and the largest *A. speciosum* I have seen. As I climbed out of the car for another toilet stop, on the cliff at eye level, grew a fine clump of the orchid *Coelogyne corymbosa.* The mountains were starting to clear of the mist that had been spoiling the view since our trip began. Waterfalls streaming down the steep hillsides were bedecked with prayer flags.

Tega's wife had recently given birth to a boy. As we were passing through his home town Chungthang, it was essential that we stop at his house to meet the wee lad called Tsering. Tega, a devout Buddhist, had written to the Dalai Lama to ask him for a name for his child, and the Dalai Lama had written back suggesting Tsering, meaning Long Life. Tega's parents ran a small liquor store from the building, so we stocked up on beer before heading on. There was a huge hydro-electric scheme under construction, damming a tributary of the River Teesta.

Chungthang was at a Y junction to our next destinations. Left to Lachen, right to Lachung and Yumthang. Taking the left turn the road climbed steadily up the valley. At a stop we found *Rhododendron virgatum*, *R. vaccinioides*, and *R. maddenii* growing on a cliff. Other finds on the way were good *Arisaema consanguineum*, *R. lepidotum*, *Disporum cantonense* and in the branch of a *Tsuga* was a fine *R. edgeworthii*.

We left Lachen at 8.30am next morning to continue up the steep sided valley. The mountainous views and the plants became better as we increased our altitude. At our first stop we saw the best yet red flowers of *Rhododendron arboreum* and a meadow of *Primula denticulata.* Also a fern I have seen in Arunachal Pradesh and called *Osmunda interrupta* (a synonym for *O. claytonia*) grew here. I grow *O. claytonia* in my garden, and it looks different.

A stop further on was rich with superb *Arisaema griffithii*, a plant we were to see in huge numbers from here on. This species is

Arisaema nepenthoides

Right: Clear yellow *Rhododendron campylocarpum*

Below Left: *R. glaucophyllum* var. *glaucophyllum*

Below Right: *R. cinnabarinum*

the one most people think of in the genus and it has three similar leaves with a very handsome broad spathe. The foliage can vary from mid green to dark purple and the spathe can have green patterning or be a dark purple. The spadix appendage is very long and thread-like.

Rhododendrons at this stop were *R. campylocarpum*, *R. thomsonii*, and a wishy washy pink hybrid between them. Fine examples of beautiful orange flowered *R. cinnabarinum* grew alongside nice pink *R. glaucophyllum* var. *glaucophyllum*. Occasional *Arisaema nepenthoides* poked its head through the more dwarf bushes of *R. anthopogon*. A big surprise was one flowering plant of the beautiful little *Bryocarpum himalaicum*, its little yellow flower shyly pointing to the ground. Seedlings were around so hopefully

Left: *Rhododendron campanulatum* ssp. *aeruginosum*

Below Right: *Bryocarpum himalaicum*

Below Left: Fine scenery as we drove up the valley

these will mature to flower in the future.

Onwards, and more altitude gain, we could see *Rhododendron wightii* on the far side of the valley over a strongly flowing river. More accessible on the roadside was *R. wallichii*. We passed through a huge army base as the terrain opened out and became less steep. The military had driven new roads north causing much erosion and damage to the environment. This had happened in the five years since Hartwig last visited the valley.

We stopped at 4000 metres and were able to botanise a small area. Although not yet in flower, the rhododendron of the area for me was *R. campanulatum* ssp. *aeruginosum*. This has thick wooly indumentum, and when the new growth emerges the leaves

Left: *Rhododendron wightii*

Below: The hybrid we nicknamed *R.* 'Tegaense'

have a lovely glaucous sheen. Other rhododendrons here were stunted *R. wightii*, and the dwarf *R. anthopogon*, *R. setosum* and *R. lepidotum*. There was not much in flower at this altitude but some pale pink *R. anthopogon* flowers were starting to emerge. Rosettes of *Meconopsis* and *Primula* leaves could be seen.

We returned down the same road to Lachen, exploring a small area with some fine yellow flowered *Rhododendron wightii*, mauve *R. wallichii* and a pink flowered hybrid we nicknamed *R.* 'Tegaense' Our head guide was happy that he had a rhododendron named after him.

Another night in Lachen and we were on the road back to Chungthang, this time taking the other fork in the road to Lachung and onward to Yumthang. A roadside stop after lunch and we saw *Rhododendron niveum*. The flowers were mostly over, likewise *R. ciliatum*. More superb *Arisaema griffithii* and the glossy green leaves of *Cardiocrinum giganteum* promised a good show later in the year. A few miles on, we entered the Shingba Rhododendron Sanctuary. Stopping, we saw *R. pendulum* grow-

Right: Willie Campbell and *Rhododendron pendulum* Photo Courtesy Hartwig Schepker

Below: *Arisaema propinquum* spathe

ing on a mossy rock. This relative of *R. edgeworthii* has smaller flowers and leaves. Here a massive landslide had carried much away, but some lovely *R. hodgsonii*, *R. campylocarpum* and *R. thomsonii* had avoided the destruction. In the undergrowth I spotted a different *Arisaema* with similar leaves to *A. griffithii* but the green patterned purple spathe was not as broad, and did not curl in on itself so much. This was *A. propinquum*.

We passed through another landslide area where the huge scar on the mountain indicated the vast amount of rock that had dislodged. I asked Tega if an earthquake had caused this massive damage. He said no, it had just fallen off in March the previous year. The rock had flowed into the valley, damming the river, forming a small lake. Seeing this kind of thing emphasises the friability of the geology of the area. Although the Himalayan range is the highest in the world, it is also one of the youngest. The rocks are mostly sedimentary and metamorphic making them relatively soft compared to the granites of Scottish peaks like Ben Nevis.

Our stay at Yumthang was at a hostel, or in tents. At 3600 metres it was our highest sleep. Next day we were to drive further up the valley to Yumesamdong or Zero Point. The altitude here was 4800 metres, so there were a lot of breathless people. Snow was lying in patches and Indian tourists were celebrating with snowball fights and sledging. We European botanists were examining the flora, most of which was still in bud, or just starting to emerge. This was well above the tree line, and in summer will be a tapestry of alpine plants. Rhododendrons, still tightly in bud were similar to those above Lachen. It was high enough for *R. nivale* and too high for *R. wightii*. We had seen good forms of this lower down in the forest. *Primula calderiana* had a vast altitude range, from good plants around the hostel, to those just starting to flower at Zero Point. Some of us got out of the cars a couple of miles from Yumthang and walked the rest of the way. We were treated with lovely deep red forms of *R. hodgsonii*, a superb meadow of *P. denticulata* with a *R. anthopogon* growing in the middle and we breathed in the wonderful perfume from *Viburnum grandiflorum*.

A second night at Yumthang and we started our journey back down the valley with a walk. A single *Rhododendron fulgens* was spotted, then we crossed prayer flag adorned bridges to look at the other side of the river. Here were *Meconopsis*

Above: *Primula calderiana*

Right: *Rhododendron anthopogon* surrounded by *Primula denticulata*

Right: Fine deep red *Rhododendron hodgsonii*

Below: *Rhododendron hodgsonii* on the left, *R. wightii* on the right, and the hybrid between them in the centre
Picture Courtesy of Hartwig Shepker

simplicifolia and *M. paniculata* just starting to come into flower. Crossing back over we walked through *R. hodgsonii* in full flower. There was another hybrid here between *R. hodgsonii* and *R. wightii* with pink trusses. Perched on a rock at the edge of the road was a single *R. lanatum* but with no flowers.

Climbing into the cars, we drove on, stopping for a better look at the rockfall area.

The lake formed by the fall was clear, reflecting the blue sky. The mountains beyond were clear of cloud, and with snowfields on the summits the views were stunning. We dragged ourselves away stopping for lunch in a clearing surrounded by rhododendrons in flower. A short excursion and we discovered another rhododendron not yet seen by us: *R. baileyi*, still tightly in bud.

After we exited the rhododendron sanctuary we stopped to look at some *Rhododendron ciliatum* still in flower. Growing in a scree running with moisture, it shared this with a lovely primula with mauve flowers with a yellow centre. This was *P. dickieana*, a primula I have seen on many Himalayan trips. It is variable in colour, from white, yellow to purple, but always with a yellow centre.

Back in Lachung we checked into a hotel, and relaxed with hot showers. Next day we drove to Gangtok where we visited the market, then the following day we did more touristy things visiting a flower show, and Himalayan Crafts Centre. Leaving the mountains, it was a drive back to the plains, and a night in Siliguri before flights to Delhi and beyond.

It was a thoroughly enjoyable trip, and importantly all participants melded together, sharing knowledge and experience. My thanks go to Hartwig for faultless organisation, Tega for sharing his forests and knowledge and Rajin for his lovely broad Bhutanese smile!

Above: *Rhododendron thomsonii* and the scarred mountainside behind

Right: *Primula dickieana*

Pictures in this article by John Roy except where otherwise noted

Committee Members

Our Office Bearers are:

President: John Hammond
Vice President: Ian Sinclair
Hon. Vice Presidents: George Argent, David Chamberlain, Peter Cox
Hon. Secretary: Katrina Clow
Treasurer: Colin Whitehead
Tours & Visits Manager: David Starck

Other Committee Members:
Past President: David Starck
Hon. Publications Editor: John Roy
Publications Manager: Matt Heasman
Shows Manager: Ian Sinclair
Membership Secretary: Helen Kessell
Tours & Meetings Co-ordinator: Gloria Starck
Advertising Manager: Philip Rankin
Technical Director: Richard Firmin

Directors:
Ian Douglas
William Campbell

President: John Hammond, The Three Chimneys, 12 Cockey Moor Road, Starling, Bury, Lancashire, BL8 2HB.
Tel: 0161 764 1116
Email: hammondsrhodies@supanet.com

Hon. Secretary: Katrina Clow, Townend of Kirkwood, Stewarton, Ayrshire, KA3 3EW.
Tel: 01560 483926
Email: katrina@kclow.fsnet.co.uk

Treasurer: Colin Whitehead, 21 Laverockdale Park, Edinburgh, EH13 0QE.
Tel: 0131 4415036
Email: colin.whitehead21@gmail.com

Hon. Publications Editor: John Roy, Brecklet House, Ballachulish, Argyll, PH49 4JG.
Tel: 01855 811465
Email: john.roy2@btopenworld.com

Publications Manager: Matt Heasman, 9 Dunbeath Grove, Blantyre, G72 0GL.
Tel: 01698 711089
Email: matthew.heasman@virgin.net

Tours & Visits Manager: David Starck, Ordha Coille, Kilberry, Argyll, PA29 6YD.
Tel: 01880 770257
Email: david@lochlorien.free-online.co.uk

Advertising Manager: Philip Rankin, 7 Hillview Terrace, Edinburgh, EH12 8RA.
Tel: 0131 334 4213
Email: philiprankin@hotmail.com

Copyright Notice

Published in 2017 by the Scottish Rhododendron Society,
Townend of Kirkwood, Stewarton, Ayrshire KW3 3EW Scotland

Honorary Editor for the Scottish Rhododendron Society: John Roy

Left and Below: Botanising in the mountains of North Vietnam

Below Left: The huge leaves of *Rhododendron souilenhense*

Pictures by Richard Baines