





Above: *Rhododendron serotinum* aff. CH7189 bracts
Below: Flower drop from *Rhododendron cinnabarinum* BLM280
Both pictures by Alan Anderson



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Cover Pictures:

Front: *Rhododendron eclecticum* C6054 new growth by Alan Anderson

Back: *Rhododendron* 'Dramatik Dark' by John Roy

Editorial

It has been an excellent growing season for me in the west Highlands of Scotland. Lots of warm sunny spells but with enough moisture to keep the growth happy. Unfortunately grass and weed growth has been abundant also. Plenty for me to do in my first year of retirement.

Those who are full ARS members will have received their Summer Journals recently. Front cover article is about Ashridge in Hertfordshire, an important historically significant garden. This Review contains a small article by Ann Mallinson, Ashridge (Bonar Law Memorial) Trust. As a lot of SRS members are not full ARS members, I hope to publish the entire article in the yearbook to be printed this winter.

The Yearbook will be the next publication for the SRS. Let me have your articles by the end of November. Yearbook articles are more in depth than those in the Review. I am so fortunate to have the depth and breadth of knowledge in the society to produce an annual publication the envy of the rhododendron world. Please do not think you have to be an “expert” or a committee member to write an article though. Many fine articles have been written by ordinary members, about their gardening experiences. That is what makes our society worth while and enjoyable.

Sadly membership numbers are falling year by year as it becomes more difficult to recruit younger members. Do you have a friend who has a rhododendron interest? Try to encourage them to join. I keep plugging our Facebook page for a free way of advertising our society. Login details are: scottishrhodos@btinternet.com and password is s1n0grande. Go in, have a look, if you have pictures of your rhododendrons, gardens, other people’s gardens etc, you can post them. The more activity there is on the page, the more attention it attracts.

Meanwhile, enjoy your Autumn Review.

John Roy

President's Column

John M. Hammond

It is late July and as I look out across the western slopes of the Pennines the sun is struggling to break through the low grey clouds that have been hanging around since depositing a short, sharp shower of rain in the early morning. It is also somewhat cooler after the better part of three weeks of hot weather that by around midday has climbed up to 80°F and has not abated until later in the afternoon. Whilst this kind of heat is a disincentive to continued working in the garden, you will be well aware that it also causes some distraction from other activities, as inevitably time needs to be found to get busy watering, as plants in containers can begin to show signs of distress, to say nothing of the effect of the heat on material being propagated.

At the end of June I started to re-pot a large number of containerised plants, a chore that should have been done earlier in the year, but the prolonged wet weather put a stop to this activity. With my re-potting material starting to dwindle, in mid July I called the local horticultural supplier, the one and only outlet on the north side of Manchester, to re-order a batch of Clover Mini-chip Bark. “We don’t have any, it’s no longer available,” was the response, “Clover have closed their depot in North Wales and moved back to Ireland. We can only have a delivery if we buy a truck-load of 24 pallets, and we can’t sell that quantity”. I asked about an alternative, only to be told that it is difficult to find a supplier of mini-chip bark at present, which is a subject I will return to later.

This is another scenario with parallels to the problems with peat-free compost that I drew attention to in this column last Autumn. Now for some background. Around the time I joined the S.R.S. in 1989 I went to my nearest ‘Cambark’ depot at Stoke-on-Trent and filled the back of the estate car with sacks of ‘Fine Chipped Bark’. I later discovered that Cambark 100 Grade, a mix with slightly larger chips, was available from a horticultural supplier in Bolton, so it was relatively easy to get supplies. Alas, a few years later the horticultural supplier closed down when the owner retired, but I got lucky and found another horticultural supplier nearby who had decided to pick-up some of the other company’s business and he decided to stock Cambark 100 Grade. But that didn’t last! Around 2005 the Cambark company was taken over by their competitor Gem Horticulture (the Joseph Metcalf Limited Group), who immediately sought to close down Cambark’s main wholesale depot at Oswaldtwistle, near Blackburn. Cambark 100 Grade remained available by the pallet load (not for retail sale) for sometime after the take-over, so it was still possible to get deliveries from the

local horticultural supplier. What none of this convoluted story tells you is that after Gem Horticulture's takeover the quality of the bark gradually diminished, it became contaminated with long spills of wood, the size of the bark increased and the contents no longer matched the product advertised on the outside of the sacks. Presumably, the stocks on-hand at Oswaldtwistle depot were being cleared, and in 2008 William Metcalf Ltd and its range of brands were taken over by Sinclair Horticulture of Lincoln. A couple of year's after the takeover I called the local horticultural supplier to find that Cambark was no longer available, but an alternative had been sourced, a Mini Chip Bark being marketed by Clover Peat Products, which was similar to the quality of Cambark product in its latter months. The initial quality of the Clover product also diminished over time, until the depot was closed in relatively recent months and operations were centred back in Northern Ireland, which is where this story began.

This past three weeks I have researched the mini-chip bark suppliers and their products, traditionally around 10 to 20mm chips, and have looked at products available in 70 litre to 100 litre sacks, which for me is within my space and storage availability. I have to say that none of the products in the retail market match the mini-chip labelling or the quality shown in the photographs on the outside of the sacks. J. Arthur Bower's 'Mini Bark Chips' contains a significant percentage of chipped wood, with some wood and bark in excess of 80mm in length, which in my view is neither mini or small. A look at other retail supplier's products in garden centres and stores produced a similar result. All you need to do is look at the contents of a damaged sack. Perhaps the worst is the 'Small Chipped Bark' sold by B & Q under their Verve brand, which contains around 25% chipped wood, some pieces are over 100mm in length, and many large pieces of bark, nothing like the photograph on the packaging of clean small chips. According to the Health & Safety Statement this product originates in Ireland, and the websites indicate the product has raised many adverse reviews and complaints from gardeners who purchased it to pot-up plants in containers, but these appear to have not resulted in any remedial action or re-labelling of the stock currently on sale in the store.

If like me you are seeking a batch good quality bark, and are having difficulty sourcing a supplier, then Sinclair Horticulture manufacture a range of professional horticulture products and amongst these are 'Fine Grade Pine Bark' (0 to 8mm particle size) and 'Nursery Grade Pine Bark' (8 to 16mm particle size); in my view these are identical to the original 'Cambark Fine' and 'Cambark 100 Grade', respectively. Sinclair Horticulture supply by the pallet load direct to professional and horticultural organisations, however, I was able to order a supply of the Nursery Grade (in red coloured sacks) from LBS Horticultural Supplies, Standroyd Mill, Colne, BB8 7BW;

www.lbshorticulture.co.uk or tel: 01282 873333. You will need to go through the process of setting up an account on the website, if you don't already have one, prior to gaining access to order products; alternatively, place an order by telephone. You may wish to consider ordering a batch of 10 sacks, as it is around 40% cheaper buying in quantity and the delivery charge is very reasonable to most parts of the U.K. The contents are exactly what it says on the label, clean small bark chips. As was the case with Cambark 100 Grade, I am able to use this product for all my various activities, from raising seeds and cuttings to potting-on young plants. By way of a disclaimer, Sinclair Horticultural is not an S.R.S recommended supplier, neither is this an advertisement, and I have no personal interest in any of the companies mentioned above. This is solely a response to a number of queries. Indeed, there will be other of our non-professional horticulturalist members who face similar problems unravelling the supply-chains in the horticultural marketplace, and who can get caught-out by the subjective labelling of products. I hope you find this information is helpful.

Editor's Note: The SRS holds an account with LBS Horticultural Supplies. I can supply our login details to any member who would like to view the website.

Now back to the subject of our local horticultural supplier finding it difficult to source supplies of bark. There are many bio-energy plants coming 'on-line' in various parts of Britain, and at least some of these are burning pelletised wood. Initially, some of these generating plants planned to use imported wood pellets manufactured on the East Coast of the U.S.A.; however, more recently I have noticed large articulated wagons on regular round-trips from wood mills carrying some form of waste wood in bulk. It may well be that the waste wood and bark is being formed into pellets at the mill for use as fuel. If this is the case it may well explain why bark is no longer as readily available as it was in the past, and it is not difficult to imagine that the price of bark in the marketplace will increase accordingly.

Now for a change of subject. In conclusion, I would like to put on record the gratitude of the S.R.S. members, who visited Germany this past Spring, to Hartwig Schepker and the German Rhododendron Society for their kindness and attention to detail. They were extremely hospitable hosts and went out of their way to ensure we all enjoyed our eight-day Tour of some wonderful Private Gardens, Parks and Nurseries in Northern Germany. We reciprocated by taking some glorious weather with us to Holland and on into Germany, which our hosts were very pleased to receive! This event fully lived-up to what it said in the brochure, most of the costs of the visits and entertainment were taken care of by our hosts, and we were well looked after by Brightwater Holidays. I would also like to thank Ken Cox, who was instrumental in setting-up the itinerary in liaison with Hartwig Schepker and myself.

Secretary's Scribbles

Katrina Clow

As I write this, strong winds and lashing rain are beating North Ayrshire but we have been blessed with the most phenomenal spell of summer weather. Eight or so weeks of sunshine and high temperatures interspersed with odd days of heavy rain, have ensured excellent growth. I do hope that members and their gardens have benefited also from this balmy summer and that we shall see good colour and abundant fruit in Autumn.

The Society has had a happy and successful past few months. In early May we staged the Scottish National Rhododendron Show, plant sale and AGM at Gargunnoch. As usual, next day a Sunday tour was arranged, visiting first Kilarden, Rosneath, courtesy of Jim and Carol Rowe (where earlier in the year, some Rhododendron Species Conservation Group members were inducted into the process of recording rhododendron gardens to help with the work of the Group); then followed a very poignant visit to Linn Botanic Gardens, where the spirit of Jamie Taggart lives on so strongly.

Our Tours Manager arranged a select tour to the gardens of Germany in mid May, and in early June we set up and manned our annual stand at Gardening Scotland Show, Ingliston. Although it is increasingly difficult to recruit new members at Gardening Scotland, the society feels that it is crucial to maintain an active presence there. So many people want advice about buying and managing rhododendrons or are frightened that all rhododendrons are *R. ponticum*! Our thanks to the volunteers who set up and did the work.

The Show and AGM, held again this year at Gargunnoch Village Hall, was exceptionally well supported with more entries than ever, vibrant colour and exceptional flowers on display. It was good to see an exhibit of tender rhododendrons from RBG Logan and after an absence of several years, an outstanding entry from NTS Brodick Gardens gained many prizes.

The Scottish National Rhododendron Show (2nd May, 2015) is to be relocated next year to the Gibson Memorial Hall, Garelochhead.

Applications have already been invited for our two day Autumn Conference at Lochinch Castle near Stranraer, in conjunction with our sister society, the Rhododendron Species Conservation Group. It should be lively, instructive and fun and

will provide an opportunity to meet like minded people and see gardens not normally open to the general public.

We especially welcome new members:

Ross Underwood from Hodnet, Shropshire

Roy and Elizabeth Gifford from Greenbank Garden, Grasmere, Ambleside, Cumbria who most generously opened their beautifully managed garden to us during the very happy RSCG Conference weekend in Windermere, jointly hosted by the Lakeland Group.

**Minutes of the Thirty First Annual General
Meeting of the Scottish Chapter of the American
Rhododendron Society
Held in “The Village Hall”, Gargunnoch, Stirling
On Saturday, 3th May 2014**

The Meeting commenced at 14.30 hrs and the President, John Hammond was in the Chair with 36 members of the Society attended the meeting.

Apologies for Absence:

Apologies for absence had been received from Hugh and Morag Thompson, Mr & Mrs Ferguson, Rick Potter, Camber Trott, Gordon and Linda Wylie and Eric Annal.

Minutes of the last Annual General Meeting:

The Minutes of the Thirtieth Annual General Meeting held at the Village Hall, Gargunnoch, Stirling on Saturday 27th April 2012, already printed in the summer review, were taken as read. David Starck was seconded by John Roy in proposing that the Minutes be accepted and this was unanimously agreed.

Matters Arising:

None

Presidents Remarks:

The President opened the meeting by welcoming the assembled members to the AGM at the Annual Show held at Gargunnoch Village Hall. The President was delighted to see probably the best entry of Hybrid Rhododendrons ever seen at the Scottish National Show and thanked the exhibitors for their contributions, many travelling long distances to attend the Show. The Show Committee was thanked for staging the

event. The President also thanked all his committee for the work they have undertaken in running the society over the past year.

The President then went on to say this was a special occasion for four members of the Society who have made outstanding contributions to the World of Rhododendrons. The Highest Honour that any ARS chapter can award is the “Bronze Medal” and the President and the Directors were awarding the following ARS members the “Bronze Award” and medal to:

David Starck – Past President

Ian Sinclair – Current Vice President

John Roy – Current Editor

David Chamberlain – Hon Vice President

The President read out the citations for each member and all were applauded by the members, making this day a special occasion.

Hon. Secretary’s Report:

Gift Aid again makes a considerable contribution to the Society and this year was slightly less than £1000. We are members of the **RHS Affiliated Societies** as well as the **Scottish Gardener’s forum**. The Society insurances are covered by the RHS Affiliated Society Insurance.

Hon. Treasurer’s Report:

The Treasurer Colin Whitehead presented the Year End Report (September) 2012 – 2013 accounts reporting of income and expenditure for the Society.

General Account – Income £7390 (£7084) less Expenditure £6681 (£6282) leaving a *surplus* of £709 (£802)

Tours Income and Expenditure – Income £1957 (£3020) less Expenditure £1634 (£2187) with a *surplus* of £323 (£833)

Overall Account – Income £9347 less Expenditure £8315 with an overall *surplus* for the year of £1032.

Bank Balance (30/09/2012) £8160 plus surplus of £1032 leaves a *closing balance* of (30/09/2013) £9192

Colin ran through the account report numbers highlighting that the publications and postage were still the main items of expenditure but was pleased to report the publications expenditure was down this year.

Colin then asked for the Annual Audit Report approval. Ian Douglas proposed the approval of the 2012–2013 audit report and was seconded by Gloria Starck and approved by the membership.

Subscriptions: The Treasurer was happy to report that last years increase in subscriptions had helped put the Society Finances on a sure footing and subscriptions would be kept at the same levels for 2014 - 2015

Membership Secretary Report:

Helen Kessell reported that this year she contacted members with Email addresses with the subscription request. This helped to keep costs down but she felt the response was a lot slower.

ARS life members	-	7
SRS life members	-	4
Individual SRS member	-	67
Individual ARS/SRS member	-	29
Family SRS member	-	29
Family ARS/SRS member	-	13
Associate members	-	2
Mail Only (Garden Visit members)	-	12
Hon. Presidents	-	3
Overall	-	166 (this was down on last year's 189)

Helen reported that the Society gained 7 new members since last year.

We have tried this year to be flexible with payments with differing success as reporting of payments through Bank Transfer is a slow process.

Election of Officers and Directors:

With only one Committee position was up for election this year, that of Honorary Secretary

Honorary Secretary – Katrina Clow nominated by Ian Sinclair and seconded by Ian Douglas and with ***no other nominations*** Katrina Clow was elected as Honorary Secretary for a period of the next three years.

Visits & Meetings Programme:

John Hammond was pleased to report that the Spring Tour of South of England gardens in 2013 was a great success, some of the iconic rhododendron gardens were visited and we were given superb guided tours by enthusiast Owners and Head Gardeners. The tour was enjoyed by 22 Society Members.

The next day after the show and AGM some 20 members would be visiting 2 local Gardens, starting at Kildarden, Carol Rowe's Garden as well as the Linn Botanic Garden.

John also reported that only 13 members would be visiting the gardens of Germany, although at one time some 45 members had indicated an interest in the trip.

Brightwater Tours had agreed to continue with the trip on a goodwill basis.

The autumn meeting would be a joint meeting with Rhododendron Species Conservation Group at Lochinch and Castle Kennedy Gardens with a full programme of

speakers and practical visits round the garden. Sunday visits had also been organised.

John Hammond was now stepping down as Tours Organiser and handing over to the Gloria and David Starck Partnership.

Future tours were outlined as follows:

Spring Tour 2015: The Gardens of Cornwall

Review, Yearbook and Website:

John Roy our editor reported that the two reviews and yearbook were completed and reminded members that articles, reports, new features and fresh ideas were always needed to keep up the standard of our publications.

Matt Heasman our publications manager confirmed that he had no problems in the printing and distribution and he was happy to continue stuffing envelopes for another year.

Matt also was looking into improvements to the website and the inclusion of a picture gallery.

Seed Exchange report:

Willie Campbell reported that the seed exchange had a reasonable year, but with fewer members seeking seeds of rhododendrons and companion plants. We still turned in a profit from the operation of the Seed Exchange.

He thanked the contributors to the Seed Exchange, Peter Cox, Ian Douglas, John Owen, Neil Batchelor, Tim Thornton and John Roy, so important to keep members interested.

The Society purchased a share in Bent Ernebjerg a Danish collector who had an expedition to Arunachal Pradesh/North Burma Border where he returned with an interesting collection of rhododendron seeds.

Willie Campbell was happy to continue as the seed exchange manager.

Technical Directors Report: None

Any other business:

1) **Arduaine** –Rick Potter to outline the current work of the Arduaine Action Group. The report would be sent to the Autumn Review for publication.

The being no further business John Hammond closed the meeting at closed at 15.15 hrs.

John Hammond, President
William J. Campbell, Hon Secretary

Scottish National Rhododendron Show – Saturday 3rd May 2014 Gargunnock Village Hall

Gloria Starck

I was really looking forward to this year's Show. The winter had been very benign, especially on the west coast of Scotland, which meant there could be some surprises at the Show. Although the winter was very wet, there was very little snow and only a few frosts. These were early in the year, so had not damaged any rhododendrons.

Things were well underway by the time I arrived on Saturday morning. It was good to see so many exhibitors preparing their blooms and the hall was filled with exhibits. I was especially pleased to see so many entries in the novice classes (45 to 48). It was also so encouraging to see a National Trust for Scotland Garden exhibiting again. As can be seen from the awards table it was well worth Brodick exhibiting this year and we look forward to other NTS gardens exhibiting in the future.

By 10.00 a.m. the exhibitors were asked to leave the hall, so that the judging could start. With 53 Classes this takes about 2 hours, depending on the amount of debate and discussion between the Judges. This year we had 3 judges: David Chamberlain and Alan Clark, our regular judges, and Richard Baines, Curator at Logan Botanic Garden. Together with the judges there are 3 stewards, who accompany the judges and keep a record of the awards given, John Roy, Ian Douglas and myself. In addition Barbara Anderson photographs the judging for the SRS Review.

This year it was a very interesting judging session as there were so many entries and some were unusual and, because of the mild weather, the condition and variety was exceptional. Apart from the awards for 1st, 2nd and 3rd, there were a lot of Highly Commended entries, showing just how tight it is at the top. Unfortunately there were also a few exhibits excluded as they were Not as Scheduled, the problem being they were too tall. The schedule is very specific about the maximum height of the exhibit from the top of the vase to the top of the exhibit, and I can assure you that a tape measure was used!

Following judging the marks are all added up and the trophies awarded. The trophy winners this year are as follows:

The Kilarden Trophy – For the winner of Class 1	Glendoick
The George Sherriff Cup – For the most points in Section 1	Glendoick
The Sir John Stirling Maxwell Trophy – For the best species in the show grown in the open	Glendoick sinofalconeri
The Harry Fairburn Cup – For the most points in restricted Classes 38 – 41	Brian Moss
The David Stuart Cup – For the best species or hybrid exhibited in Classes 38 – 41	Brian Moss edgeworthii
The John Hammond Cup – For the most points in the species and hybrid Azalea Classes (25, 34, 35)	John Hammond
The Argyll & Bute Trophy – For the most points in all Classes grown in an Argyll & Bute garden	Brodict
The Scottish Rhododendron Society Cup – For the best hybrid in the Show	John Hammond ‘Phyllis Korn’
The Keyline Cup – For the most points in all Classes grown in a garden of up to an acre	John Hammond
The Marlene Storah Cup – For the most points in all classes for gardens not open to the public more than once a year.	John Hammond
The Mervyn Kessell Cup – For the most points in Classes 42 and 43	John Roy
The Stephen Fox Picture – For the best species of wild collected origin grown from the ARS/SRS seed exchange. (A catalogue/collectors number must be clearly marked on class card to be considered for this award).	John Hammond
The Wild Argyll Cup – For the best photographic print in the Show	John Roy

There are a number of things to remember when preparing an exhibit. The size above the top of the vase, as mentioned previously, but also ensure the exhibit is in full flower and the foliage is as clean as possible. It is also a good idea to ensure the exhibit has a good ‘face’, i.e. it displays well in the vase. Exhibits also look best when the top of the vase is covered with moss.

I also want to mention an entry I was particularly glad to see and that was *Rhododendron genesterianum*. I think this an unusual plant and I have been growing it myself from cuttings. Mine is still quite small and probably a long way from flowering. The exhibit came from Brodict so it appears this rhododendron is doing well in Argyll &

Bute, so there is hope for mine.

Well, that's the lot for this year. I look forward to seeing you all in 2015 at The Gibson Hall, Gareloch-head, 2nd May.



Above: Some of the species exhibits

Left: Some of the hybrids exhibits

Right: Pondering judges.

From the Left, Alan Clark, David Chamberlain and Richard Baines



Gardening Scotland Ingliston, June 2014

Katrina Clow



As usual, The Society put on a display at this year's 'Gardening Scotland'. The stand was masterminded by Matt Heasman and set up by the usual group of hardworking volunteers with plants supplied by Glendoick and photographs from John Roy. New publicity material enhanced the stand and SRS was awarded a bronze medal.



Top: New material enhanced our stand
Above: One of our visitors to the stand,
(Right) Mrs Sheila Hirsch Kalm from
Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ontario, Canada,
a member of the American Chapter with
Katrina Clow, our new Secretary.
Right: Matt Heasman doing a stint on the
stand

Photos by Katrina Clow



Memories of the German Rhododendron Trip

Colin Whitehead, Gloria Starck

The organisation of this tour to Germany was a bit of a nail biter as we were not sure if there would be sufficient members to make the tour viable. In the end Brightwater decided to go ahead with the tour even though there were only 13 of us. The number was a bit disappointing as many more had expressed an interest in the tour.

A Canadian couple, Andy and Carol, would join us in Germany, so the 11 of us were able to spread ourselves about in our 50-seater bus. The ferry was large the accommodation very comfortable and the food was excellent. Our evening meal at a prearranged table on the ferry set the scene for a convivial group spirit during the remainder of the trip.

Departure from the docks at Ijmuden was slow and the journey across the Netherlands and Northern Germany took longer than planned so we were too late booking into our hotel in Oldenburg to have time to visit the gardens around the local schloss. We therefore went straight into the second visit planned for the afternoon, a tour of a lovely garden around some fine old buildings adjacent to the Jeddelloh Nursery. We were shown round by Sabine zu Jeddelloh, the vice-president of the German Rhododendron Society. Our hostess was very knowledgeable about rhododendrons and we had an excellent tour of this exquisite garden. At the end of the tour we were introduced to Sabine's mother, a lovely old lady in her 90s, who showed us round part of the house and led us in a toast of schnapps in traditional pewter drinking spoons. Great fun!

On returning to the hotel we found the rooms comfortable and a cosy bar for pre-dinner drinks. We had a separate dining room all to ourselves so there was good chat around the table. The served meal was generally enjoyable, though the vegetarian option was deemed below par.

The next day we were joined by Odo Tschetsch who guided us in a long journey past Bremen and through heavy traffic in Hamburg to the Hachmann Nursery. The Nursery display garden was amazing. So many different hybrid rhododendrons on display and the range of colours just was mind blowing. Holger Hachmann was our guide and his knowledge of the plants he had bred was excellent. After seeing round the display garden we went on a tour of the Nursery itself and there were fields of

rhododendrons making great blocks of colour. Inevitably, for us, we ended at the sales area! I'm not sure our coach driver was quite prepared for having his coach turned into a greenhouse, but we managed. Holger also treated us to a wonderful traditional German lunch, which went down very well. This was just an example of the fantastic hospitality we received on this trip.

On the way back, crawling through the Hamburg traffic, we stopped off at a large park in the city, Planten un Blomen. This park contained several feature gardens, among which the Japanese garden contained a good number of azaleas in full bloom. The centre piece of the park was a pond with a fountain of dancing waters beside a bandstand with an orchestra in full flow. It made for a pleasantly relaxing spot for some of us to savour our ice creams! Then back to the bus to renew our battle with the traffic and ultimately to our hotel. There was a good attendance at the bar that evening before dinner, in which the dishes, even the vegetarian option, were consumed with relish.

Another interesting and rewarding visit we made was to Bremen Rhododendron Park. This tour was led by Hartwig Schepker, who had been instrumental in organising this wonderful tour to Germany. The Park is a fantastic display of rhododendrons. David Starck was particularly interested in the Ghent azaleas and the variety they had flowering. Hartwig generously offered to collect some cuttings for David and give them to him later in the week. We were amazed when we received about 80 cuttings of various Ghent azaleas. These are now growing very happily in propagators in the Starck conservatory, and we are hoping to have examples of Ghent azaleas not normally found in this country. Although I have to tell you that customs had a good look at these when they found them in the cooler box on the coach on our return to the UK. Maybe they thought we were going to smoke them! Because of the cold winters in Northern Germany, rhododendrons grown outside need to be extremely frost-hardy. So the 'Botanika' contained many species that were too tender to be grown outside but are commonplace in UK gardens. One of Hartwig's prize plants was a *R. excellens* in magnificent bloom. However, he was rather crestfallen to be told that Gloria and David also had one in bloom outside in their west of Scotland garden. Nothing to do with rhododendrons, but later we had a tour of Bremen Old Town. This is a beautiful district with many ancient buildings and so much history, it would really need a whole day do it justice. On this part of the tour Gloria discovered a teddy bear shop, and that was like a magnet to her as she collects teddy bears. She couldn't resist the temptation - had to buy one. He was made in Bremen so he is a wonderful souvenir of this trip.



Left: Holger Hachman demonstrating some of his latest hybrids



Above Left: Timo Schroder describing his "cutting graft" technique and Above Right: A one year old rooted graft



Left: Lutetsburg where bomb craters from World War 2 are flooded and part of the landscape.



**Left: Members enjoying the
Bremen Rhododendronpark**

**Below: Tractor towed trailers to
view the nursery at Wiesmoor and
Below Left: An oasis of
refreshment**



**Above and Left: The Westerstedde
Rhodo is a four year spectacular for
nurseries to display their plants**

On the Friday we checked out of our Oldenburg hotel and travelled to Wiesmoor, guided by Jürgen Schlenz, to first of all visit the Schröder Nursery. This was a huge nursery devoted to the reproduction and sale of huge numbers of hybrids for wholesale markets around Europe. We were welcomed there by the owner, Timo Schröder. To get an appreciation of the scale of operations, we were taken round sitting on hay bales on a cart pulled by a tractor. Never before have I seen such vast expanses of parent rhododendrons, in blocks of uniform colours for the different varieties, or the thousands of pots of smaller plants in serried ranks arranged in military precision. It was explained to us how all the cuttings are grafted on to root stock of *R* ‘Cunningham’s White’, with experienced grafters able to perform up to 80 grafts in an hour. Rather humbling considering one’s own fumbling attempts at grafting!

Moving on, we were taken on a tour of the Ernst Stockmann Nursery, a much smaller operation where it was interesting to see many of the rows of plants covered with a dense netting, to shade the plans from strong sunlight (not a common problem in Scotland). We lunched in the Fährkroog restaurant, overlooking a large lake, and were treated to a range of Ammerland specialities. After lunch we were shown round the Park of Gardens in Bad Zwischenahn by the Director, Bjorn Ehsen. There were some rhododendrons, but the main displays of herbaceous plants were not yet showing much bloom. We then carried on to our hotel in Wiesmoor. This establishment was rather a disappointment, with unsatisfactory rooming arrangements for some of us, and a rather uninspiring buffet dinner.

On Saturday, under the guidance of Anne Dau and Hartwig, we toured in our bus around the local area, seeing many well-kept gardens with plentiful rhododendrons. Purple seemed a popular colour for the local rhododendrons which was perhaps less impressive for Scottish eyes accustomed to the ubiquitous, and despised, *R. ponticum*. Our tour took us to the Wiesmoor Nursery where we were again taken for a ride sitting on hay bales around this vast wholesale nursery. Some of the plants were very large but were still available to purchase, at prices upward of €3000. Fortunately none of our party felt the need for such large plants, to the relief of our driver John. A nice touch during our hay ride was a stop between rows of rhododendrons where tables had been laid out with beer, soft drinks, cheese and cakes for our refreshment. No second invitations were required.

In the afternoon we continued on to Lütetsburg for a tour of the Schlosspark. This comprised a rather grand house surrounded by a wide moat with a large ornamental garden beyond containing azaleas, rhododendrons and a variety of mature trees. We were met by the aristocratic owner who told us that the mansion and estate had been

bombed in the war and that the bomb craters in the garden were now the basis for several of the water features around the grounds. After eating our picnic lunches in a lovely sunny spot we strolled around the grounds under the watchful eyes of our guides. Departing the Schloss, we made a short visit to a small private garden of the Knospes. This was a charming mix of many flowers with meandering paths and relaxing sitting spots. Spring butterflies glided around the flowers seeking their refreshments (we settled for afternoon tea and cakes).

We returned to the hotel to refresh ourselves before the evening event, a combined dinner with the Scottish and German Rhododendron Societies. Our hosts kindly distributed us alongside proficient English-speakers so there was much good conversation. Friendly speeches were given by the Presidents of both Societies. The buffet meal was very tasty - the Germans provided the accompanying schnapps and we provided a single malt. Our hosts had also laid on a professional after-dinner speaker, which was an unfortunate let-down in the evening. He spoke only in German and on several lengthy occasions, telling stories and jokes that our hosts felt too embarrassed to translate for us. Even the German members were starting to drift away before the end. However, a hard core of us stayed on late to enjoy further good conversation, schnapps and whisky.

On our last day, the Sunday, we went to Westerstede to the huge Rhododendron Show that is held every 4 years. This show is only slightly smaller than Gardening Scotland, with masses of rhododendrons laid out in beds around the local church and in marquees. There were the usual refreshment and equipment stalls and also stalls with ranges of plants for sale, though it was perhaps surprising that there were relatively few rhododendrons for sale. So no real last minute opportunities to top up the rhododendron contents of the bus.

After a morning at the show, it was time to set off back to Ijmuden to catch our ferry back to North Shields. Abiding memories were the generous help from the GRS and its members who had accompanied us on our trips and provided such friendly company. Also the friendliness and proficiency of driver John. He manoeuvred our large coach along narrow lanes and round tight corners without the merest scratch. A final dinner on the ferry and a good night's sleep on a peaceful crossing in a flat calm and we were back in the UK, saying goodbye to John and Margaret, driver John and also to tour guide Rosemary who, it has to be said, had a very easy time as a consequence of the services of our GRS guides. But she eased us comfortably through the domestic arrangements on the ferries and hotels. She also acquired a new understanding of the delights of rhododendrons.

Our drive back to Scotland was rather a contrast to our journey down. The new driver was in a considerable hurry to get back and had to be prevailed upon to make a necessary comfort stop. But we made it home, along with our purchases which in years to come will continue to remind us of a very pleasant and interesting trip. Our grateful thanks to John Hammond for having put in so much organisational effort and to Gloria for her attention to the finer details. Also to Brightwater Holidays for having provided such a nice coach and agreeable driver.

Harry P. Leu Gardens, Orlando

Rick Potter

Whilst in Florida recently, the rest of the family was paying tribute to “The Mouse”. I however had the car, and freedom to see the non-Disney parts. One site I had researched from Scotland was a 50 acre garden and historical house in the centre of Orlando. The house dates from the late 1800s, with the garden being developed from 1936 when the Leus acquired it. They gifted it to the City in 1961, and it is currently run jointly by the City of Orlando and a dedicated Trust.

The first thing that struck me (after the heat, >92°F, and humidity, >85%) was the diversity of plants on show. The Leus’ love of horticulture is very evident, and meant they showcased plants from around the world, and the estate is set out in a mix of individual ‘gardens’ and less structured areas. The other thing that struck me was that everything, but everything, was labelled – Latin name, common name, source, and in many cases a few lines about the plant and/or its use.

The garden is situated partly around one of the many lakes (Rowena) in Orlando; the initial walk across the lawns in front of the house gave an excellent view of this, and of the wildlife, including herons, egrets and turtles. Onwards into the garden, the first area I came to was the Tropical Garden, where a wide range of bananas, birds of paradise, palms, tree (and other) ferns, ginger etc were to be seen. This led to a formal area, called the “Ideas Garden” where various plantings and designs are regularly tried. The Citrus Garden was next – anyone for a ‘Variegated Pink Eureka’

lemon? – and passing the formal rose garden (many not scented, and not really my thing) I entered the more wooded area.

Here I felt more at home, as there were areas of this that felt quite familiar, and certainly some of the conifer and deciduous planting reminded me of west coast gardens. However there were also more exotic plants amongst these, noticeably cycads and palms, and the giant bamboo *Bambusa vulgaris* (one of over 50 species) was used as a specimen “tree” to emphasise certain points and angles.

As well as roses the Leus had a love of camellias and azaleas. I was too late in the year (early July) for flowering, but there are over 200 varieties of camellia, and over 50 of azalea (most of which were hybrids I had never heard of), and I can imagine that in January, February and March the garden would be extremely colourful.

One further thing that struck me was the use of *Magnolia grandiflora* as a woodland tree planting – as well as being surprised to see it regularly used as a roadside tree, even in an urban area such as International Drive, where we were staying. I must say they tended to look shinier and healthier than they do in the UK – again it was too late to see them flowering.

By now I had been at the garden well over 2 hours, and seen around two thirds of it. Past the floral clock, inspired by the one in Princes Street Gardens at Edinburgh, I visited the arid garden (kept company by myriads of tiny lizards), and a further planting of camellias led me back to reception.

For \$10 it was more than worth the money; standout plants included *Kigelia africana* (sausage tree – look it up!), the Traveller’s Palm (*Ravenala madagascariensis*) and a range of exotic oaks. Despite the urban noise (cars, trains, helicopters etc) you could get lost in this garden, and I feel that any plant lover (especially ericaceous earlier in the year) would enjoy.

Rhododendron subansiriense

Kenneth Cox



Pictures I took this year at Brodick: Peter and Patricia Cox standing under what may be the largest plant in cultivation of *Rhododendron subansiriense* which they discovered with Peter Hutchison in Arunachal Pradesh in the hills around the Apatani valley in central AP near

the Subansiri river. It has not been found since then as far as I know.

A fine early flowering red with peeling bark. Its main drawback is its very early growth which is often frosted.

From Cox & Cox Encyclopaedia: “The combination of red flowers, the glands on the lower leaf surface and the densely tomentose ovary distinguish this species from its closest relatives *R. hylaeum*, *R. faucium* and *R. hookeri*. In cultivation its extremely early growth which is usually frosted is a distinguishing feature.

R. subansiriense has smallish but bright red flowers and a fine bark but is so early into growth that the young shoots invariably get frosted, even twice in one spring. Introduced only once under Cox and Hutchison 418 in 1965. March.”



Ashridge House and Garden

Ann Mallinson



Ashridge House, built between 1808 and 1813 for the 7th Earl of Bridgewater, is listed Grade I by English Heritage and its 190 acres of gardens and park are Registered Grade II. From life as a monastery in 1283, through to a Royal home for the children of Henry VIII in Tudor times to a great aristocratic estate lasting some 300 years, Ashridge is now home to one of the top 20 Business Schools in the world and, as the Ashridge (Bonar Law Memorial) Trust, it has a duty of care to preserve the house and garden for the benefit of the nation.

The Gardens at Ashridge today represent the best of 19th Century gardening in England. In 1813 Humphry Repton presented to the Earl designs for 15 different styles of garden in one of his famous Red Books and these Pleasure Grounds, completed in 1823, remain intact today as the finest surviving example of Repton's work. In the mid and late 19th Century, Lady Marian Alford, a



Above: View of the mansion from the rhododendron walk

Left: Ashridge House south lawns

descendant of the 7th Earl's family, added some of the grandest developments of all - a moat and bridge flanked by rhododendrons, an arboretum, a Wellingtonia Avenue and Rhododendron Walk, a skating rink and an Italian Garden.

The rhododendrons line much of the inner side of the avenue of *Sequoiadendron giganteum* and were planted in three rows on both sides of the avenue with a central grass strip. *R. ponticum* rootstocks however have taken hold and a programme of work is underway which involves hard pruning of existing hybrids, the removal of the *R. ponticum* rootstocks and their replacement with hardy hybrids over a period of three seasons - we are retaining as many of the historic plants as possible. A box of inherited Victorian plant labels has identified some of the hardy hybrids planted in the late 19th Century but many enquiries have shown they are no longer in cultivation.

We therefore discussed planting issues with the Cox family at Glendoick Nursery in Perth, Scotland and Ken Cox considers that this restoration has the potential to be one of the great rhododendron plantings in the UK, if not the world - the nursery's breeding programme has produced many of the world's best rhododendrons over the past 40 years as you may know.

Our detailed plans show the replanting will take up to 780 rhododendrons and we are using predominantly larger hybrids, including a few of the late Victorian and early 20th century hybrids but also adding a range of spectacular colours and flowers developed throughout the later 20th Century and a selection of the larger leaved species that bring added interest of leaf shape, form and colour.

There is much more to add, including a note of the 9 members of the Gardens Team at Ashridge, responsible for the maintenance and restoration of the gardens and grounds and involvement of young trainee gardeners in the care and protection of one of the UK's most beautiful and historically significant gardens.

Mick Thompson is Ashridge Head Gardener and Archivist.

White *Rhododendron complexum*

Ole Jonny Larsen

Has anyone ever seen a white *Rhododendron complexum*? I have one from the Jens Nielsen and Remi Nielsen 2009 expedition, collected in NE Yunnan, and flowered in my greenhouse last spring. There are white *R. hippophaeoides*, *R. lapponicum*, *R. nivale*, *R. rupicola* and *R. orthocladum*, but I have never before seen white *R. complexum* flowers. White flowers are not mentioned by Cox & Cox or Davidian for this species.

Some white forms get varietal names (*Rhododendron orthocladum* var. *microleucum*) while others get clone names (*R. hippophaeoides* ‘Glendoick Iceberg’). Is there a system in this? Can I call my white *R. complexum* var. *album* or let’s say ‘Norwegian Iceberg’? I would be glad if anyone could inform me about this.

Anyway, it is a fine pure white Lapponica species, and I will propagate it in due time.

Note from Peter Cox: Calling it “var. album” would be illegal. Some plants flower white indoors, and develop colour outside. Hopefully Jonny’s plant will remain white.

Thoughts on the flowering season

Jonathan Davies-Coleman

The season this year has been amazing for myself as I am still a new rhododendron lover. The lack of frosts this year allowed for longer more vibrant showing of some beautiful specimens. I am a student at RBGE and so spent a lot of time trolling the gardens and admiring different species when they first flushed into growth or flower. Some standouts for me this year were species such as *R. hookeri*, *R. orbiculare* subsp. *orbiculare* and later the likes of *R. camtschaticum* and so many more! I visited Belsay Hall in Northumberland earlier on this year and was blown away by the large flowered almost tree like specimens that grew across the paths.

My own garden was not as exciting or extravagant but the evergreen azaleas did well this year along with a few dwarf hybrids.



Left: *Rhododendron
hookeri*



Right: *Rhododendron
orbiculare* subsp.
orbiculare

Pictures by Jonathan
Davies-Coleman



**Left: Kilarden and
Matt leads the
rhododendron
identification team**



**Right: Members led
by Kilarden owner
Carol Rowe**



**Left: Members led by Jim Taggart
round Linn Botanic Garden**

Photos by John Roy

Two post rhododendron show tours to the Rosneath peninsula on the Clyde coast were enjoyed by members on the Sunday after the show. Reports follow:

Kilarden

Fred Trott

Kilarden was surrounded in mist on our arrival so a welcome cuppa and biscuits in the house was consumed whilst the present owners, Jimmy & Carol Rowe, gave us a brief history of the gardens. They purchased the house from the late Neil & Joyce Rutherford who over 50 years built up a collection of both species and hybrid rhododendrons. By the time the Rows acquired the house the garden had become very overgrown and it was a major undertaking to start clearing to discover the collection. Like any mature garden this continues today especially when the hurricane force storms of recent years have brought down many large mature trees exposing the base rock and illustrating how thin the top soil actually is. All around the garden were wood piles of logs and branches from the devastation caused.

The shelter belt around the garden was originally planted by the Duke of Argyll, owners of Rosneath Castle – more a mansion built with a massive Palladian facade – and its original purpose was to block the views to and from the castle. The castle was destroyed by fire in 1947. Many of the shelter belt trees are beeches which were either planted in clumps or possibly pollarded which gave a multi-stemmed tree from soil level, an unusual effect for a beech.

Whilst the planting was predominantly rhododendron, there was a collection of other companion plants such as camellias and magnolias. The early spring had brought a wide range of plants into flower; some quite spectacularly due to the good summer of the previous year and the damp weather really enhanced the colours of both the flowers & the foliage.

Mention must be made of the excellent lunch provided by the ladies of the local church and we all had seconds of everything!

The Linn Botanical Garden

Matt Heasman

After a superb tour of Kilarden we were headed further round the coast for a tour of The Linn Botanical Garden. We were met by our host Jim Taggart and his daughter Janet. Jim proceeded to explain that they had been at the Linn for 42 years and everything that was in the garden had been planted by them. The terrain of the garden with its narrow paths and steep hillsides make garden tours quite awkward from the point of view of hearing what is being said. So, for those who couldn't hear everything (many of you) I have done my best to take note of some of the more interesting stories and plants that Jim pointed out.

The group was led up a steep path by a burn where we were told of the three different forms of *Rhododendron neriiflorum* that were on display. There was a Glenarn, Kilarden and an Irish form on show. The Irish form was very floriferous. Further up Jim pointed out a group of large shrubs and trees that he said had come off a Clyde ferry from Arran as seedlings. Mrs Rutherford (at Kilarden) had picked two sacks full, she took the plants she wanted and left some for Jim. They were fondly known as Joyce's choice plants and appeared throughout the garden.

We came to a lower bridge that crossed the burn, and saw the first example of some of the recent wind damage that the garden had sustained (also seen at Kilarden where a mini tornado passed through). A large oak had blown over, crossed the river and smashed quite a few things on the way. There were some long spindly trunks that had been stripped off by the falling tree, plus the damage it did to a *Rhododendron* 'Fragrantissimum'. Luckily it is a sprawling type of rhododendron that will recover to its full glory in a few years. Following the path upwards we were shown two different types of ivy that had been collected in Yunnan by Jim's son Jamie. The next plant we came to was of great interest. I thought it was a *R. auriculatum*, but John Roy pointed out it looked very similar to a particular form of *R. lacteum* we had seen recently at Corroul. Both forms had the auricles (ear lobe like lugs) at the leaf petiole. On further investigation it did have *R. lacteum* type buds, indumentum and yellow flowers that were just past. Jamie had said to his father that this was an important plant and he may be right. Could it be a new subspecies? There was also a very nice member of the *Irrorata* subsect. in flower nearby with creamy coloured tubular flowers and red speckles in the corolla.

Further on we came to a long narrow pond that was in the top section of the garden. Jim said they were waiting for volunteer labour to help change the pond liner. The pond needed to be cleared out with the paving slabs surrounding it lifted to do the job properly. There were no volunteers! Considering this liner was around 40 years old it had done a good job. We followed Jim to a herbaceous border area that needed a bit of work. We wondered what a strange flowering plant was. Jim explained it was a member of the Crucifer family. Then we were shown about 100 potted small plants of a south Atlantic (Gough Island) fern *Blechnum palmiforme*. This grows into a tree fern of about 5ft and then albatrosses come to nest in them. The nest causes the tree fern to die, but other ferns sometimes grow out of the dead crown, a very unusual sight.

Next was the bulb bed, where there were fritillaries and other bulbous plants. We also saw a lot of rare *Schefflera* sp. seedlings that had been collected by Jamie. These were waiting to be planted out and distributed. Jim explained that they had given one to each of the members of "The Friends of Linn Botanical Gardens" as a thank you for their help.

Next we were shown a small conifer, *Phyllocladus* sp. that unusually has leaves (rather than needles). There was also a very unusual member of the *Escallonia* genus with quite large white flowers. There are quite a few magnolias in the garden but they were all past flowering. Jim pointed out a *Davidia involucrata* tree with a birch growing into it. He loved both and couldn't bear to cut either of them down so they will just have to get along with one and other.

In the lower part of the garden we were shown a tender tree from New Zealand. *Dacrydium cupressinum* (Podocarpaceae) was a neat conifer that Jim said the New Zealanders used for brewing beer, although it was not known what part they used. There were many ferns in this part of the garden (as indeed the whole garden) and we saw a lovely Himalayan maidenhair fern that had lovely delicate red/bronze fronds. We walked around the lower pond and saw the area where another large tree had come down. It took some months of clearing up as it had straddled the pond, then ducks had nested in it where it crossed over the island.

Following the path as it wound its way back to the house near where we had started, we passed quite a few small rhododendrons. We saw *R. orthocladum*, *R. hanceanum*, *R. imperator*, *R. cephalanthum* and *R. campylogynum* Myrtilloides Group. At the top we gathered into the drive area and thanked Jim and Janet for the tour around this fantastic garden with its unique collection of trees and plants.

Some of us went down into a nursery area and bought one or two plants to remind us of our wonderful day. This garden is a real plantsman's treasure trove and for the hard-core enthusiast it is an absolute delight to go round.

Sadly Jamie Taggart has been missing since October 2013, when he never returned from a trip to Vietnam. The Society's thoughts are with Jim and the Family.

Gold Medal Award

You joined the Scottish Chapter of the ARS in 1994 and attended your first ARS Convention at Oban 1996 where you acted as conference manager, organising the tours, accommodation and venues.

Since then you have been instrumental in the organisation of Conferences at the RBGE in 2002, 2008 and most recent 2013. These conferences have attracted speakers and delegates from all over the world.

Your Journal Articles on Historic Gardens are wonderfully researched and give the readers an in depth account of the relationships between garden owners, plant hybridisers and the rhododendron gardens. These articles are frequently featured in the ARS Journal for all to enjoy and be educated.

You have lectured extensively on rhododendron garden history and the technique of "Air Layering" as a propagation technique at many ARS Conventions.

You have acted as Director at Large for the ARS and been an inspirational voice in the Scottish Chapter for many years.

For these outstanding contributions, the American Rhododendron Society is pleased to award

John Hammond

With its highest award, the Gold Medal of the American Rhododendron Society.

Given at Gargunnock, Stirling, this day 3rd May, 2014.

Bronze Medal Awards

You are a long-time Member of the Scottish Rhododendron Society and have supported its activities in many ways. As an ardent plant-hunter you have been on many expeditions to the Himalaya, including multiple visits to Arunachal Pradesh, and have entertained our members with presentations of your adventures.

In the shadow of Glen Coe you have made a plantsman's garden, set in a glen with a fast-running burn, that you have opened on several occasions for members to visit and have freely shared plants raised from wild-collected seed.

As a Committee Member of the Scottish Chapter, some years ago you willingly stepped-up and took on the role of Editor of the Society's Newsletter and Yearbook, which at the time was major learning curve in terms of handling publications software; nevertheless, you have continued to make changes that have significantly enhanced the quality and content of these publications.

You are an active member of the Shows Sub-committee, have fulfilled the role of Show Steward for the better part of twenty years, and have consistently supported our Shows with competitive entries that helps to upkeep the standard of the Society's National Rhododendron Show.

The Directors are delighted to present

John Roy

with the Scottish Rhododendron's Society's highest award, the Bronze Medal of the American Rhododendron Society, our parent body.

Given at Gargunnoch, Stirling, this day 3rd May, 2014.

John M. Hammond
President

You have been active in the Scottish Rhododendron Society for a long time and as a relatively new member you took on the role of handling enquiries on the Registration Desk at the 1996 ARS Convention in Oban, which was a very busy week for everyone involved.

Shortly after you became a Committee Member of the Scottish Chapter, progressing to the role of Vice-President and in due course served as President for two three-year terms.

The Scottish Rhododendron Society came of age in 2008 when it celebrated on an International scale by holding a Silver Jubilee Conference at the Royal Botanic Garden in Edinburgh. You took on the somewhat challenging role of Sponsorship Manager and were very successful in securing some significant contributions from a number of organisations that underpinned the viability of the Conference.

More recently you stepped forward to take up the role of Tours & Visits Manager, which involves a considerable workload in regard to organising the multi-day events that are a feature of the Society's annual programme.

The Directors are delighted to present

David N. Starck

with the Scottish Rhododendron's Society's highest award, the Bronze Medal of the American Rhododendron Society, our parent body.

Given at Gargunnoch, Stirling, this day 3rd May, 2014.

John M. Hammond
President

You are a Senior Member of the Scottish Rhododendron Society and have been active since the Society was founded in 1983; you are also a highly regarded Honorary Vice-President. You have a wealth of knowledge and experience with Rhododendrons, in both the Herbarium and the wild, and have led the changes in taxonomy that were taken forward during a lifetime's work at the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh. In the early years of the Society there was much discussion in connection with these taxonomic changes, which you have carefully and patiently explained to our members on many occasions.

You been a valued keystone of our Annual Rhododendron Show since the early days of the Society and have judged innumerable events, always with a very keen critical eye, accompanied with wise advice to competitors when needed, and have

on many occasions been quick to recognise when unusual species have appeared on the Show benches. You have worked amiably with a wide selection of Judges, some of whom are no longer with us, including some of International status, such as was the case at the 1996 A.R.S. Convention in Oban.

Our Chapter has held many meetings at the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh, including its Silver Jubilee Conference in 2008, and behind the scenes you have graciously provided support for these activities, attended planning meetings, and led sessions during the event itself. You are an intrepid plantsman and an inspiration to those of us around you in the Rhododendron world, which benefits us all.

The Directors are delighted to present

Dr. David L. Chamberlain

with the Scottish Rhododendron's Society's highest award, the Bronze Medal of the American Rhododendron Society, our parent body.

Given at Gargunnock, Stirling, this day 3rd May, 2014.

John M. Hammond
President

You have always been something of a 'dark horse' operating behind the scenes in the Scottish Rhododendron Society, and yet you have been an inspiration to our members for many, many, years. You have a vast knowledge and a wide experience of both plants and trees, dating from your days with the Royal Botanic Garden in Edinburgh, and you readily share this expertise amongst our members in a friendly and meaningful way.

Your work with the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh and Benmore Botanic Garden, your many years as a Horticultural Consultant including a period as Curator at Ardkinglas Woodland Garden, your visits to the Himalaya, including leading expeditions, have earned you the respect of many of your peers. You have led garden visits, entertained our members with your adventures on plant hunting expeditions, and shared your experiences in a wider way with presentations to several A.R.S. Chapters in the Pacific Northwest.

You have served on the Committee of the Scottish Chapter for many years, actively providing wise advice, currently in the role of Vice President, and you are Chairman of the Shows Sub-committee that has continued to ensure that our Annual Rhododendron Show has maintained a remarkable standard of excellence in spite of the adverse weather of several recent autumns and winters.

You are a man of many talents, not least of which is your knowledge of Rhododendrons which benefits us all, and the Directors are delighted to present

Ian W.J. Sinclair

with the Scottish Rhododendron's Society's highest award, the Bronze Medal of the American Rhododendron Society, our parent body.

Given at Gargunnock, Stirling, this day 3rd May, 2014.

John M. Hammond
President

Arduaine Garden Support Group May 2014

Rick Potter

Winter visitor numbers were quite good (the mild winter helping here), and early visitor numbers have been good, with the decent weather we're having. The first event this year, the Easter Day event in conjunction with the Cadbury Easter Egg Trail which took place over the four Easter days had glorious weather and lots of visitors and locals turned up for the event. More importantly a good number of NTS memberships were sold (the Garden gets a retained percentage of these – so anyone thinking of renewing, if they do it through the Garden the Garden makes additional money), and we hope that they will spread the word and return themselves to see the Garden through the different seasons.

The next AGSG event is Macbeth presented by the Walking Theatre Company in the Garden on Saturday, 30th August. Previous performances by the Company, A Midsummer Night's Dream and a Murder Mystery play, were very popular, not only more than covering their costs, but again bringing people to the Garden from a different

demography, with the Garden providing an ideal setting for these performances. The Group will continue to promote events in the Garden (we have music, cookery and other things planned) as they bring good publicity and again attract people who are not solely interested in horticulture.

The AGSG is also working on the production of a flier promoting Arduaine Garden and the work of the group, similar to the one we prepared in 2010 (NB NTS still don't provide individual leaflets for properties). The flier should be ready for production shortly and will be available in the Tourist Information shops and distributed to accommodation providers.

A new Facebook page is currently under construction and we plan to keep people abreast of Garden and AGSG news and events on Facebook. Please visit our new page "Arduaine Garden" and help us spread the word about our "Secret Garden" by "Liking" us. We'd also love to have your comments and photos from your visits to the Garden.

Please make a note of our new e-mail address arduainegsg14@gmail.com and feel free to contact us. Your enquiry will be forwarded to the appropriate committee member.

Lastly, we're delighted to pass on the news, and to congratulate Maurice, Head Gardener, on being awarded the Scottish Horticultural Medal for outstanding services to horticulture by the Royal Caledonian Horticultural Society.

Perhaps the key change, which I mentioned before, but is now in place, is that members of the AGSG now get free entrance to Arduaine Garden. Whilst this does not appear to be detracting from NTS membership (at Easter people were taking both memberships), hopefully it will increase local visitors, and have a spin-off (through recommendations, family visitors etc) to Garden attendance.

Rhododendron Allelopathy

John Roy

I recently came across an interesting document online about whether or not rhododendrons "poison" the soil in which they grow. I have always thought that it would not be in a plant's best interests to poison the environment into which it is fastened, unless it was highly evolved to deal with the toxins of its own creation.

Some portrayers of this theory make bold statements such as:

“Rhododendron poisons the soil around it so that other plants cannot grow.” Plantlife.

“It produces toxins, and suppresses other plants by poisoning the soil as well as year-round shading.” Greenham & Crookham [West Berks.] Conservation Volunteers.

“Although considered attractive, this belies its true nature which is to shade out native species, leaving an impoverished landscape in its wake. To do this, it has a nasty trick up its sleeve – the roots are actually toxic to other plants! So not only does *Rhododendron* block out life-giving light, but it poisons the soil as well.” Ulster Wildlife Trust.

“As well as shading large areas to cut out light for other plants to grow, the bush poisons nearby soil with chemicals that kill other species.” Jenny Fyall, news.scotsman.com.

“This [*R. ponticum*] litter remains even after the plant is eradicated and can form a toxic humus layer, which is reported to retard new growth of other plant species for up to seven years.” Non-Native Species Secretariat.

Dealing with invasive *Rhododendron ponticum*, the author puts forward his own thoughts, citing lack of light and changes to the natural soil micro-organisms, summarising:

As rhododendron encroaches and the native community becomes impoverished, the biodiversity of the flora and soil biota decline in tandem.

When rhododendron has become a monoculture covering many hectares, we can justifiably suppose that very little remains to represent what was once a dynamic, mycorrhiza-supported, species rich community, other than *R. ponticum*, one or two associated ericoid mycorrhizal fungi and a handful of shade/rhododendron tolerant plants and plucky survivors.

That is a very poor landscape and a disastrous starting point for its recovery.

Recolonisation by native flora of an area cleared of rhododendron is more likely to be inhibited by: (a) soil rendered inhospitable by *R. ponticum* leaf litter; (b) poor nutrient supply and (c) low availability of nutrients due to local extinction of the soil community that normally facilitates their mobilisation, than by soil ‘poisoning’.

Whether during occupation or after clearance, it would have been better if the rhododendrons had never arrived in the first place.

If one did not consider the alternative implications of catastrophic reductions in biodiversity as discussed above, one might, influenced by rumour, incorrectly conclude that the soil had been poisoned.

The full article can be found at

http://www.slef.org.uk/userfiles/file/slef-pdfs/rhododendron_poisons_the_soil.pdf

Committee Members

Our Office Bearers are:

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Directors:

Rick Potter

Ian Douglas

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 483826

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

The views expressed in this publication are not necessarily those of the SRS committee.
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**Spring trip to Germany: Above: at Timo Schroder's nursery
Below: Dr Hartwig Schepker and *Rhododendron excellens* at the Bremen
Rhododendronpark. Both pictures by John Roy**



