

Scottish Rhododendron Society

Summer Review 2008

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Cover pictures: Front *Rhododendron oligocarpum*. Photo by Stephen Fox

Back *Rhododendron luteiflorum*. Photo by John Roy

Editorial

The dust has settled after a busy year. My major part in the Conference 2008 was the editing of the 2008 yearbook. My thanks go to anyone who made a contribution to this mighty publication. As a relatively small society we can be justly proud of ourselves for producing such a high quality magazine.

Production of your publications has been a learning curve for me. From the start the curve was very steep, then as I got into the job, it levelled out a bit and I was lulled into a false bed of *Rhododendron bureavii* leaves. As I started on the 2008 yearbook, some of those cosy leaves turned into brambles. When my job was done, and handed over to Matt our Publications Manager, more brambles emerged, but bore fruit. The result was the magazine, which you will all have received a copy of.

In Yearbook No 9 2006, I was delighted to print an article by Vladimir Kodat from the Czech Republic. This time, I have received correspondence from Vitalija Pribusauskaite of Lithuania. This is included in this issue. We may be called the Scottish *Rhododendron* Society, but our membership is increasingly from outside Scotland. It gives me a warm feeling, that mutual interest in our favourite genus crosses borders, boundaries, creeds and colours. The internet and email have made this so much easier.

Winter at Ballachulish was the usual wet, but the windiest I remember for a while. No particular gale to remember, just many days the same. A cold snap around New Year didn't last at sea level, and it continued relatively frost free. May was hot and sunny. When I went to the conference at the start of the month, buds were just emerging. Six days later, some had gone over.

My conference days were very enjoyable, good company, old friends, and new. I have put together some snapshots in this issue.

John Roy

President's Patter

Well, once again it's June, perhaps not as flaming as last year. The rain is not falling at Wimbledon, but it is here and for that I am glad because it means that I do not have to be out watering the new plantings. So what am I doing? Not a lot actually with the result that I can sit down and write another burble for you, so here goes!

The Conference is now but a memory, it seemed an awful long time coming but was over in a flash. I think that the event was a great success and I had the opportunity to meet a lot of very nice people all of whom I think enjoyed the whole thing. John Hammond has compiled a review of the conference and it appears further on in this edition of The Review.

Once again I should like to thank everyone who helped in whatever way, whether they had a large strategic input, or a smaller but none the less important part to play. Without you the whole week would have been very different. Some of those involved can now take it a little easier but some, John Hammond for instance, are "at it" again working on the autumn meeting that is being held over the weekend of 11th/12th October to capture the change of leaf colour on the Cowal peninsula (Benmore area). For those planning to attend, will you please register early as Gloria and I are away playing on trains in the US between the end of August and mid September. Can I take this opportunity remind you, that the A.G.M. is being held at Benmore on 11th of October.

I am sorry but I have not written up the Ordha Coille saga but suffice it to say that I have taken 10 trees out of the garden side of the southern wind-break, ground out the stumps, installed a new 10' x 12' garden shed, dug out drainage channels, planted rhododendrons and various Sorbus trees (what's the plural, Sorbuses or Sorbi?). Apart from that I have just potted about.

Finally, we have a number of Silver Jubilee commemorative items, Lapel Pins, Pens and Conference Bags for sale; please see the "For Sale" page for details.

David Starck

Secretary's Scribbles

I am writing these notes in early-June in the middle of a very dry spell here at Gargunnoch, we have not had any rain for the last 6 weeks and things are looking thirsty so we could do with some rain.

With all the excitement of the Anniversary Conference, Rhododendron Show and Gardening Scotland now over, it's back to the day-to-day Society business, with Gift Aid and OSCR returns beckoning and the welcoming of new members who joined at the Conference and Gardening Scotland.

My favourite memory and most others of the Conference week was the talk and signing session by that famous double act the "Two Peters" (Cox & Hutchison) and of course their new book "Seeds of Adventure". I purchased a signed copy.

Our show this year in the Exhibition Hall at the RBGE was a show with a difference, a non-competitive event staged by Glendoick and RBG Edinburgh, Benmore and Logan who between them put on a wonderful display of species and hybrid rhododendrons. The display was much admired by the conference delegates and the general public.

The Show committee would like to thank David Knott and his Staff at the RBGE for all the help we received in setting up the show, Peter Baxter Curator RBG Benmore, Richard Baines Curator RBG Logan and of course Ken Cox and his staff at Glendoick

At this point I would like to say some words of encouragement to new members of the Society to come along next year to the show at Oban. I met a young lady at the Show who grows rhododendrons on the South side of Edinburgh and her mum says "they look braw and fit for any show" so hopefully Yvonne will be encouraged to come along and show in the novice section next year.

By the time you read this "Review" all the fun of the autumn meeting and the AGM will be coming up. I hope you at-

tend and enjoy it. Maybe I will see you on the committee!

If you took part in the seed exchange this year, it was massive. Let's hear of your successes and any fine new plants you are raising. I have some super magnolias seedlings from Tim Thornton's seed collection. Let's hope there will be more next year.

We welcome the following new members to the Society and hope you enjoy an active time as a members:-

Drs Michael & Janice Siburn, Birnham, Perthshire

Angela G Thomas, Glossop, Derbyshire

Shelagh Hardie, Starthaven, Lanarkshire.

Fiona Margaret McCulloch, Gatehouse of Fleet, Castle Douglas

Iain Haywood, Glenrothes, Fife (Special welcome back to Iain who was one of our original members)

Keith Sprague, St Albans, Herts.

Catriona Graham, West Preston Street, Edinburgh

Dorrie and David Bell, Aberuthven, Perthshire

Keith & Marion Ingram Walker, Meigle, Perthshire.

A special welcome to overseas new members to the Society:-

Karl Fredrik Nilsen, Hosteland, Norway

Kirstain Theqvist, Uusimaa, Finland

Jean Francoi Saint Jalm, Segliem, France

Simon Begg, Victoria, Australia

Danguole Liagiene, Kaunas, Lithuania.

Vitalija Pribusauskaite, Vilnius, Lithuania.

As usual the committee would always welcome any suggestions to improve the way your Society functions, operates our practical workshops, our tours, the shows and publications, we want to hear from you.

Willie Campbell

Please note my email address is william.campbellwj@btinternet.com

Treasurers Tittle Tattle

Most of you will be aware of the Rhododendron Conference held in Edinburgh in May this year, and this has dominated the financial activities of the Society. With a turnover for the conference nearly ten times the society's annual income, it was down to hard work and a lot of begging letters to put the monies in place. As well as the Lottery award of £10,000.00, we had corporate sponsorship from Dobbies Garden Centres, and Brother, who manufacture the labelling machines.

You will read elsewhere in this publication how successful the event was. I am also pleased to report that the event was also a financial success, with not only all expenses covered, but also a small surplus to be returned into the SRS funds.

This leaves the Society's finances in a good state, and I expect to be able to announce an increased balance in the September AGM at Benmore. This has been enhanced by a very generous anonymous donation of £1000.00, as well as equally welcome contributions from garden openings from members of the society - thanks!

Rick Potter

Errata

In the Yearbook no 10, 2008, a number of mistakes occurred in the article by George Argent:

Page 104 *R. maxwellii*.

Page 109 *R. glabrifolium* photo Hansjörg Brentel.

Page 115 *R. gardenia*.

Ian Douglas writes: In my list of ARS Medal holders, I inadvertently omitted an important silver medallist. The late John Basford was a long-time head gardener at Brodick Castle. A founder member of the society and early vice-president, John was always willing to give advice in his quiet unassuming way.

2008 International Rhododendron Conference

R.B.G., Edinburgh

John M. Hammond

It only seems a few months ago that I wrote to Professor Stephen Blackmore, Regius Keeper of the R.B.G.E., to propose that an International Conference was held in Edinburgh for the third time. Yet, a glance in my files confirms the date of the letter was October 2005 and a year earlier the S.R.S. Committee had sat around the table to agree unanimously to embark on what at the time seemed like a replay of 1996 in Oban. All the voices around the table said, Yes! but, some of the eyes told a different story, something like, ‘What have we let ourselves in for this time?’ I am sure that the R.B.G.E. Management Team had similar thoughts along the way. So, in retrospect, here are a few thoughts that come to mind.

Major conferences, on an international scale, don’t just happen; right from the start they take a considerable amount of organisation, resources and commitment. In some ways it is akin to setting sail across the ocean in a small boat; the destination seems a long, long way off, and there is no guarantee that the crossing won’t be stormy. What is certain is that there comes a time when the conference takes on-board a momentum all of its own, and there is nothing anyone can do except to sit back, take a deep breath and hope that you enjoy the ride.

Hasn’t technology moved on apace since the 2002 Conference? In the Lecture Theatre there was almost a monopoly of digital presentations and three colour-co-ordinated projectors and screens at the banquet; the latter all driven by Margaret’s laptop – amazing! Gone were the heavy ‘walkie-talkie’ line-of-sight handsets, replaced by a pay-as-you-go mobile telephone that I carried around in my shirt pocket. The availability of desk-top publishing software and colour printers for use at home meant that we were able to produce most of the documentation and booklets ‘in-house’. More to do for the ‘workers’, some might say, however, there

was wonderful ‘team’ spirit amongst the organisers in both the S.R.S and the R.B.G.E.

One of the most intriguing aspects of the Conference was the Rhododendron Show, which came together in the face of all the protective measures that were introduced in the wake of the *Phytophthora* outbreaks on the West Coast. The content of the Show replicated the standards of the events in Oban in recent years and was a credit to the gardens of the R.B.G.E. and Glendoick. A very impressive display. And, we will await the appearance of photographs of delegates waving their fingers in deep discussion over some particularly superb specimen.

And, then there was the Art Exhibition, which we all thought was being arranged by the Botanical Artists Group. But, nobody seemed to know who was in charge, or what was happening. Yet, this juggernaut was slowly gathering pace, with seemingly no hands on the rudder. Occasionally, a couple of faces would peer around the door at a progress meeting to confirm that the artists were all busy, but the mounting of the exhibition seemed to be somebody else’s problem so, it was pass the parcel time all over again. Talk about ‘It’ll be alright on the night!’ All credit to the Botanical Artists Group, who somehow were able to fill the walls of the Caledonian Hall with a well executed, high quality exhibition.

In total, 239 happy smiling delegates from 19 countries had the opportunity of visiting 26 glorious gardens and listening to 30 speakers on a wide range of topics. Each will have gone home with their own impressions of the Conference, the gardens, the City of Edinburgh and Scotland. But, the last word belongs to the delegates themselves, so let’s finish with an extract from one of the many complimentary letters and emails:

“Thank you very much for sponsoring the recent Conference at the Royal Botanic Gardens. I enjoyed the lectures which were stimulating and at times entertaining. They provided much food for thought. The bus tours were excellent with a good sampling of the large gardens for which Scotland is well known. Of course, some gardens were more interesting

than others, depending on individual taste.

The conference was well organised yet relaxed for which your committee deserve a large round of applause. The friendly atmosphere made it easy to ask for help and directions.

The best part of a conference is the opportunity to meet new people and to visit with acquaintances. This conference had such an international gathering that it felt wonderful to be involved in a “global atmosphere”. I enjoyed very much sharing ideas with people from other countries.

After the conference a friend and I drove to Benmore and Brodick Castle to view more rhododendrons and other fascinating plants. This was my first trip to Scotland and I must find an excuse to make another visit.

Thank you again for an outstanding conference.”

Surplus Conference Memorabilia

The Society has a number of items from the conference for sale to recoup costs. Prices include postage.

Conference Bags: £2.50

Pens: £1.00

Lapel Pins: £1.00

These items can be purchased by contacting:

David Starck,

Ordha Coille,

Kilberry,

Argyll.

PA29 6YD

Phone 01880 770257

Email david@lochlorien.free-online.co.uk

“The Show Must Go On”!

Willie Campbell

The Show Committee consists of Matt Heasman, Philip Rankin, Ian Sinclair, John Roy, Janet Gibson and Willie Campbell with Rick Potter looking after the financial matters. Our first planning meeting was after autumn lectures at Ingliston last year and Matt first words were “*right this has to be special, we can’t fy by the seat of our pants this time*”.

We all agreed that this was our chance to convince the high and mighty of the rhododendron world that “***The Scottish National Rhododendron Show***” was not only the best in the British Isles, but in the world. This was going to be big one. I was taking the minutes that night, and ideas were coming thick and fast. First we would contact everybody that has a rhododendron garden from Castle Kennedy and Logan in the south west, the Ayrshire gardens, Glenarn, Benmore, Arduaine, Brodick, Crarae and others in the west. Let’s try and get John Christie at Blackhills to exhibit from the North, Inverewe and Ardkinglas, then of course Glendoick, plus the many small gardens of individual members. This would be some show; we were already congratulating ourselves.

The Show was to be held in the Exhibition Hall at the RBGE, a super venue plenty space and just what every show committee wanted.

The Plan: this was no fag packet stuff:

- 1) Contact the gardens: owners, garden staff, Ann Steele of NTS, all our members. Contact north, south, east and west. Each committee member would be allocated an area to contact.
- 2) The hall: we had a plan of the hall to start with. We use 42 tables at Oban plus another 6 or 7 for the plant stalls, membership and questions area. We had to make sure these would fit in.

3) A site visit to see David Knott the new Curator of the outdoor collections at the RBGE and view the hall.

4) Plan the schedule, the classes, update the entry forms, publicity, posters etc. etc.

5) The Trophies were all to be engraved, we could also design large “Silver Anniversary” certificates to be handed out with each of the Trophies.

6) This show would need a Big Name to present the Cups. Could we get a celebrity gardener or the First Minister? We were expecting all these delegates after all.

7) Plant stalls: good way to make some extra money.

8) Trade Stands, posters and pictures, NTS and SGS displays. Could we fit it all in?

So these were our plans,. We did meet with David Knott some weeks later to view exhibition hall, parking arrangements, plant stall areas and decide on the numbers of staging tables.

Parking was the first topic. Very little parking was to be had at the hall and it was clear we would need Stewards on the rear gates of the RBG nursery to allow exhibitors in. They would have to check in at the reception first, get a security pass, come to the gate, be parked awaiting a slot to unload, *“Matt have you got all that down you will need to issue a list of instructions to each exhibitor”*.

It was clear from the outset that it was not going to be easy. The “big show” would take a lot of managing, and we already doubted ourselves.

Plant stalls: too complicated and maybe too messy to be set-up in the hall and no room outside. No plant stalls that was one less hassle.

The hall was fine, big with good lighting, but we were reminded that

school parties would be visiting the various education projects ongoing at the RBGE, so we would have to work round them. Treasured plant trusses and sprays, and screaming school children!

At Oban we get 25 staging tables from the Corran Halls, 10 from the “Church of our Lady of the Isles” round the corner and the rest from a hall that Janet Gibson has contacts with. It’s a complicated job. Any volunteers? But yes the Yellow Pages came in handy. A catering firm would deliver 48 tables to the hall on Tuesday, the day before the show set-up. Perfect and sorted.

By Xmas we were organised, 4 months to go before the show, well done team.

On first hearing that three west coast gardens were quarantined with *Phytophthora ramorum*, the committee felt we could still put on a show, even without these 3 main exhibitors. Matt started to ring round all the other main gardens to encourage them to come. However the RBGE were having to look at the spread of this disease to its own collections. Measures like

disinfectant foot mats were in place.

I met Kenneth Cox at Glendoick Garden Centre and it was suggested the show be cancelled. Kenneth suggested that instead of a competitive show

we could have a display of rhododendrons from the RBGE gardens and Glendoick. We all accepted this might be a way of saving the Show. At the next 2008 Conference Committee meeting it was agreed this was the way forward: a non-competitive show.

It had been a difficult decision for the show committee, after the work that had gone into the preparation so far. John Roy and I are keen exhibitors so it was doubly difficult for us, but there is always next year.

Tuesday May the 5th the show committee team arrived at the RBGE to set-up the show in the exhibition hall. The tables had arrived and Matt arrived with his little trailer with the hundreds of vases, water butt, watering can, etc, etc, but “*hold it*” the hall was reserved for a

book launch that evening. So it was Wednesday before we could set-up and prepare the hall. Lunch time, all hell was let loose as Benmore, Logan and the Edinburgh gardens rhododendron trusses and sprays arrived. All hands on deck, the hall was awash with wonderful plant material. The first van load arrived from Glendoick around 12.30pm. Vases and water everywhere. Kenneth was shouting instructions, which sections to stage the exhibits. It took about 4 hours to stage all the material, set-up the display unit for the photographic competition, Brother Printers Display, Ian Sinclair's video of his latest trip to China displayed in the corner. Mop the water and sweep away the leftovers. The "***Scottish National Rhododendron Show***" was ready for its first customers.

By 6.30 pm the delegates from the conference were filing in to admire the display, busy snapping away and agreeing this was a wonderful show. Only we knew the problems with the display. The show committee were able to take a well earned rest and a few glasses of wine after a hard day.

The Show was open to the public for the Thursday and Friday. Some 200 delegates and 250 members of the general public came in to view some of Scotland's finest rhododendron and azalea trusses and sprays.

The Show, as always, has to finish and was dismantled at 3.30 pm on Friday. Everything was sealed in black plastic bags and quarantined. Matt loaded up his little trailer his way. The Show was over for another year.

Thanks to all the staff at the RBG Edinburgh, Dawyck, Logan and Benmore, Ken Cox and his Glendoick team, along with our Show committee assisted by Brian Moss and Eric Annal. Over and out till next year at Oban where the show will go on again.

“THE SHOW DID GO ON”

Silver Medal Award

After the banquet at the George Hotel, we witnessed an award of the Silver Medal of the American Rhododendron Society. This award has to be presented by the ARS. Chapters such as the Scottish Rhododendron Society can only award the Bronze Medal.

The following is the citation:

Silver Medal Award: Marc Colombel

Your efforts “to educate” and “to promote” the genus Rhododendron are widely recognized by your peers and support major goals in the American Rhododendron Society’s mission statement. You initiated enthusiasm for Rhododendrons in France by founding the Societe Brettone du Rhododendron in 1993. Through your creative and energetic leadership the Societe now has more than 160 members involved in many impressive activities.

By authoring and publishing a book, writing ARS Journal articles and creating and maintaining an Internet Web Page in both French and English, you have provided valuable Rhododendron education internationally. You willingly volunteered to put the ARS Seed Exchange catalogue on the internet to facilitate the acquisition and distribution of Rhododendron seeds worldwide.

**M a r c
C o l o m b e l
receiving his
Silver Medal
A w a r d
from Frank
F u j i o k a
(left) and
M i k e
S t e w a r t
(right)**

Below: Delegates enjoying the post-banquet talk by Frank Fujioka

More Banquet Moments

Below: Willie Campbell presents Mary Crofts with the Wild Argyll Certificate



At the City Chambers

Conference Delegates enjoying the Art Exhibition

Radlett Walk About

David Coombes

We opened our garden to members of the Radlett Horticultural Society on Sunday 25th May for a general walk about. I was concerned that by this time many of the blooms would be over but happily there was still

much to see.

The Society has a membership of some 750, many of whom are very keen, with gardens of a considerable size. The committee decided to keep the numbers down to 50, by ticket only. When we arranged the date last September, we failed to notice that it was a bank holiday weekend. Despite this 32 tickets were sold.

The day dawned with pouring rain, but undaunted we went ahead with last minute preparations. It certainly concentrates the mind when visitors are expected. During the preceding days I whipped through my list of things to do.

These have been on the agenda for many months, including finishing off the job of labelling all the plants, a job I started about eight years ago!

By 2.00pm, luckily, the rain had stopped and 25 members arrived gathering in the garage where I had set up one or two items of information to illustrate world distribution of species, the current lay-out of the genus and a list of my plants with a translation of the Latin names.

I gave a short introduction to the

origins of my passion for rhododendrons which was inspired many years ago by Euan & Peter Cox's book 'Modern Rhododendrons' and explained and demonstrated how I managed to keep my plants watered from a bore-hole during dry spells and hose-pipe bans.

I really did feel like Peter Cox himself as I led the group around the garden answering their various questions. (Apologies to Peter!)

Although only three-quarters of an acre, my garden is simply packed out with rhododendrons, some 200 species and hybrids, but, despite this we were inspired by our visit to Holehird two or three years ago, and have now introduced some hydrangeas to give some colour later in the summer.

Originally I was reluctant to open the garden but I'm glad I did as the members of the local society were very enthusiastic and seemed to enjoy their visit. I hope I have inspired a few future enthusiasts who may feel that membership of the SRS would be advantageous

Radlett is situated in Hertfordshire, southern England.

Pictures by Pam & David Coombes

Rainfa

2007	Wuerzburg		Radlett		Dunk	
	inches	mm	inches	mm	inches	
January	2.76	70.0	2.52	64.0	6.09	1
February	2.83	72.0	3.52	89.5	2.94	
March	2.00	51.0	2.20	56.0	3.14	
April	0.12	3.0	0.04	1.0	0.94	
May	4.65	118.0	5.00	127.0	3.14	
June	4.33	110.0	3.13	79.5	4.00	1
July	5.39	137.0	2.68	68.0	3.34	
August	2.28	58.0	2.72	69.0	4.08	1
September	2.40	61.0	1.00	25.5	2.12	
October	0.08	2.0	2.01	51.0	2.18	
November	2.24	57.0	3.50	89.0		
December	1.85	47.0	2.68	68.0		
Total 2007	30.93	786.0	31.00	785.5		
Total 2006	22.95	583.0	24.29	617.0	41.87	10
Total 2005			18.78	477.0		
Total 2004			26.06	662.0		

The weather stations are:

Wuerzburg, Lower Franconia, Bavaria, Germany

Radlett, Hertfordshire, south-east England

Dunblane, near Stirling, central Scotland (gauge broke a

Glendoick, near Perth, east Scotland

Glenarn, on the Gareloch, near Glasgow, west Scotland

Ballachulish, west Highlands, Scotland

II 2007

plane	Glendoick		Glenarn		Ballachulish	
	inches	mm	inches	mm	inches	mm
154.7	4.19	106.5	13.25	336.6	24.70	627.4
74.7	2.98	75.8	7.26	184.4	9.80	248.9
79.8	1.47	37.3	7.88	200.2	15.87	403.1
23.9	0.46	11.8	2.63	66.8	5.74	145.8
79.8	2.22	56.4	4.37	111.0	11.87	301.5
101.6	3.94	100.0	5.25	133.4	5.20	132.1
84.8	5.75	146.0	4.36	110.7	6.36	161.5
103.6	3.42	86.9	7.88	200.2	8.20	208.3
53.8	0.72	18.3	5.75	146.1	7.51	190.8
55.4	1.28	32.5	4.13	104.9	8.56	217.4
	3.15	80.0	4.25	108.0	9.57	243.0
	1.93	49.0	8.63	219.2	14.04	356.6
	31.51	801.0	75.63	1921.5	127.42	3236.6
063.4	29.63	752.7	67.79	1722.2	130.47	3314.0
	35.40	899.4	59.50	1511.3	121.58	3082.2
			63.75	1619.3	125.03	3266.6

(after October)

Cornwall Spring 2008

Brian Moss

The first couple of weeks of April saw damaging cold easterly winds and some night frosts, which is unusual for Cornwall. Early growth and flowers on my two magnolias (*M.* ‘Caerhays Surprise’ and *M.* x *soulangeana*) suffered some damage, as did some of the flowers on *Rhododendron leucaspis* and *R. pachysanthum*.

Subsequently we have had another quite cool wet start to the growing season with plants putting on good shoot growth as a consequence. Several of my young plants have also flowered for the first time this year with *Rhododendron tsariense* (photo opposite) excelling itself. One of my first purchases (Leonardslee, 2001) was *R. aureum*. This species has aborted every one of its buds until this year when, for the first time, it revealed its rather disappointing flowers: whitish cream of transparent texture. *R. aureum* is not happy in our stronger Cornish sunshine and has pale foliage as a result. This is a pity because it has made a neat low dense mound. Not a good buy, but seven years ago I was really “feeling my way”. I am reluctant to move it to a shadier spot as this will spoil its tight habit of growth.

Rhododendron bureavii has produced its first trusses for me, white with dark red spotting. *R. makinoi* on the other hand, covered in flowers last year, has not managed anything this year. On the rock garden, one of my alpine species, *R. hanceanum* ‘Nanum’, always puts on a good show and 2008 has been no exception. (Photo on next page.) I have had good results with flowers on some of my hybrids this year. (I do not have many of these!) *R.* ‘Egret’, *R.* ‘Fragrantissimum’ and *R.* ‘Saffron Queen’ have been especially good.

In a shadier spot, I have recently constructed some small raised beds, 150-200mm above the surrounding soil and I have filled these with a very organically enriched mix, which is also very freely draining. Plants here include *Rhododendron haematodes*, *R. dichroanthum* and *R.*

lanatum (Aff Muncaster)
- so far so good. The new growth on *R. lanatum* is excellent, with smallish leaves, intermediate between *R. tsariense* and my original *R. lanatum* (C. & S. 1647).

I have mentioned in a previous article (Spring 2007 Newsletter, No. 64) my use of plastic netting to provide some shade until young *Sorbus* spp. get a bit larger. The photograph on the next page shows the rather Heath Robinson structures which I use to support the netting. Some of my plants can also be seen. *Rhododendron* 'Egret' dominates the centre foreground with the pale new sunlit foliage of *R. tsariense* behind and slightly to the left. Immediately behind *R. tsariense* and mostly in shadow is John Roy's *R. campanulatum* from seed collected by him during the 2000 expedition to Langtang, Nepal

Our esteemed Publications Editor asks what we thought of the Silver Jubilee Conference in Edinburgh. This was a thoroughly enjoyable experience, with many happy memories. Having been assigned to the display in the exhibition hall, the days were taken up with routine spraying of the exhibits which were suffering badly in the warm hall, coupled with occasional sorties out to the rock garden and woodland garden, and attendance at a couple of the lectures. It was great to meet so many interesting people from around the world.

I recall chatting about the use of glyphosate

as a stump treatment to prevent re-growth or coppicing. Just to clarify matters, this is a winter treatment and is not, as far as I am aware, effective if used in the summer. Amcide (containing Ammonium sulphamate) used to be the summer treatment. I presume this is still the case.

Shame about the banquet: good company marred to some extent by such meagre rations! However, Friday evening for some of us continued in the Cafe Royale bar which more than compensated for the humble offerings back at the George Hotel!

Editor's note: Sorry Brian, the George was not forewarned of your hollow legs.

I am informed "Amcide" is no longer available, but I cut down a willow out of mycroft shelter belt in June last year. Its roots were appearing in a nearby vegetable bed. I cut a cross into the stump, and poured in neat glyphosate. Two weeks later, it was sending up shoots, which promptly withered and died, and there has been no further regrowth.

Do other members have any thoughts or experiences with stump killing?

Photos by Brian Moss

Hazelhead Park

Ken Cox

This from my forthcoming (2009) book *Scotland for Gardeners and Garden Lovers*

Hazelhead Park, Groates Road at Hazelhead Avenue, Aberdeen.

Aberdeen boasts the best public parks in Scotland. This substantial tract of land (180 hectares) granted to the city of Aberdeen by Robert The Bruce in 1319 can be considered Aberdeen's lungs. Apart from sports fields, extensive woodlands and golf

and pitch and putt courses, there are well maintained gardens with two of the best plant displays in Scotland. The first, reaching a peak in the last week of May most years, are several acres of Mollis (and some Exbury and species) azaleas, mainly in reds, oranges and yellows. This is by far Scotland's largest display and rivals Exbury on the south coast of England for the scale. The azaleas are planted with large blue-leaved hostas (not sure this is particularly pleasing) complemented by a range of stone and metal sculpture, some of which have been rescued from other parts of the city when development took place. I would have preferred to see some more colour-coordinated plantings and a bigger range of azalea varieties used; the spectacle is Keukenhof-like in its garish clashing of colours. But exuberant and spectacular it undoubtedly is. The azalea garden leads into the two-part giant formal rose garden, which looks very well maintained; every rose I saw had been meticulously pruned and

mulched. The garden consists of two large rectangles, The Queen Mother Gardens to the west, and the eastern section The North Sea Memorial Gardens, a memorial to the 1988 Piper Alpha disaster in which 167 people lost their lives.

The roses are best in July and August. The heather and conifer garden has had considerable refurbishment, but it won't amount to much unless someone has the courage to take out some of the trees and conifers, which are now overshadowing the area. Heathers need full sun as anyone who has seen them grow on moorland can attest. The notoriously difficult-to-escape-from privet maze was planted in 1935. It has an emergency exit but it was closed when I visited. Voted Britain's best park 2004 I would certainly consider it one of Scotland's best parks with a pet area, playground, café and terrace to keep the whole family occupied.

Pictures by Ken Cox

Meconopsis at Gargunnoch

Fiona Campbell

The “big blue Himalayan poppies” are sprouting up in great numbers in the walled garden and main gardens of Gargunnoch House. There were quite a number here in the main garden when we arrived 9 years ago. They are excellent companion plants for rhododendrons and grow well here in the fairly wet conditions. Now we have many more groups of them to care for.

The reason for the recent increase in numbers is because my husband Willie Campbell just can't say no to a planting opportunity. This opportunity came from Dr. Evelyn Stevens who, along with the late Mervyn Kessell and other *Meconopsis* growers set up the Meconopsis Study Group in 1998. This group is affiliated to the Scottish Rock Garden Club and supported

the confusion which seems to surround the genus *Meconopsis* in naming and identifying plants, also to study cultivation and propagation needs, and to work on conservation of *Meconopsis*.

Willie made contact with Dr. Stevens who came on a Gargunnoch Garden visit last year with the Stirling Branch of the Scottish Rock Garden Club. At the time there was a good display of *Meconopsis* in the main garden along with the rhododendrons and other companion plants, which let her see that planting conditions were good here. Dr Stevens asked Willie if he would be willing to plant some of the

collection which the Meconopsis Group were studying and this he agreed to do. This would give the study group a different *Meconopsis* planting area for comparison. He received a number of plants in November last year, all with code numbers and some with names as well, to care for at Gargunnock House. A number of them have been planted in the walled garden in trial beds and others are in the main garden beside the House. Another selection of plants was brought here in May this year and these have been potted up.

Meconopsis have been grown for more than a century, when they were propagated from seed collected from plant hunting expeditions, and are a genus of mainly mountain plants in the poppy family, Papaveraceae, which like fairly wet conditions. They don't have a common name other than "big, blue Himalayan poppies". This is not entirely suitable as some of the *Meconopsis* species are quite small. Others are not blue and several do not come from the Himalaya but other regions of Asia, and one group *M. cambrica* the Welsh Poppy is of European origin. This may in time be renamed by botanists as it does not fit with the others.

Meconopsis species number about 40-50 with perhaps more still to be found. It is thought that the species *M. betonicifolia*, *M. grandis* and *M. simplicifolia* and others were grown together in gardens last century after being "discovered", when in the wild they would be in separate regions. Their close proximity has resulted in hybrids produced by insect pollination in gardens rather than by specific cross breeding. Many of these hybrids are sterile.

Several of the plants have been donated to Dr Stevens from other growers who are interested in the research the experts are doing. There are five sections of *Meconopsis* for study:

1. Three species mentioned above.
2. The George Sherriff group (previously *M. grandis* GS600) e.g. *M.* 'Jimmy Bayne'.
3. The infertile blue group e.g. *M.* 'Slieve Donard'.
4. The fertile blue group e.g. *M.* 'Lingholm'.
5. Distinct hybrids, e.g. *M.* 'Willie Duncan'.

Our task at Gargunock apart from looking after the *Meconopsis*, is to report on any basic differences or similarities in certain of the named plants, and also to bulk up those which could be useful named garden plants. We have been taking photographs of them at varying stages showing emerging leaves, flowering stems, flowers and seed capsules and sending these to Dr. Stevens.

The study group are keen to have information on *Meconopsis* from gardeners: e.g. historical background, cultivation requirements and longstanding named clones, which would be of help to the study group. They can be contacted through the *Meconopsis* web site: www.meconopsis.org.

Photos by Fiona Campbell

Plant Hunting in Europe

Marlene Storah

Plant hunting is something I have always done. There has always been a list of plants in my head that I search for in garden centres and nurseries etc. There are also those that you don't know you want until you see them.

I have visited Gardens from Cornwall to the North of Scotland. For species rhododendrons our west coast gardens are unbeatable, and the availability of species rhododendrons in specialised nurseries makes it possible for me to obtain most of the plants I want. I don't think I ever leave a garden without a plant name written down. It could be a tree or a small herbaceous plant, another to add to my wish list. The other day, I found a piece of paper I had written "*Rhododendron* 'Lady Digby': good red, nice foliage". I don't remember where I saw the plant, possibly Minterne. It isn't listed in any catalogue I have. Perhaps one day I will find it.

**Caught
in the
act!**

**Pictures of Trompenburg
Arboretum,
by Marlene Storah**

Wherever I go on holiday I visit gardens and arboreta. So far I haven't found a continental garden to rival the best of our British gardens for rhododendrons. I have found trees and shrubs new to me in Dutch, Belgian, and French gardens and arboreta. I often pick fallen seed, or ask if I can take some. I find if I ask I'm usually invited to take other things. I have grown *Quercus coccinea*, the scarlet oak, named for its autumn colour, from acorns collected in a French arboretum. They don't fit in my envelopes but in

the ladies toilet they provided little bags to collect them in. Ok I'm no saint and if there is no one to ask and lots of seed I will sometimes take a little. If I see a beautiful rhododendron in flower with the previous year's seed still attached, I see no reason not to take a capsule. I know this open pollinated seed will not come true but I have had some good results. If the plants are not good quality I throw them out.

Kalmthout arboretum in Belgium, and Trompenburg and Von Gimborn arboreta in Holland are wonderful places with many unusual trees and shrubs. In Von Gimborn I first found *Heptacodium miconioides*, with its panicles of white flowers and red starry calyces. When we arrived, my husband, David, put money in the automatic machine to get tickets. It behaved like a fruit machine when he pressed the button. Money just gushed out of the change slot. He had both hands full of Euros. We had trouble getting someone to come and take the money. In Kalmthout I realised the beauty of *Halesia monticola*. I had seen this before but never as a tree of such size, and covered in flower. Kalmthout is free to RHS members.

Some years ago I found a then member of our society who lived in Boskoop. I had a friend in the same town and asked "who is Mark Bulk". I was told he has a small family nursery growing quality trees and shrubs. I phoned and arranged to look around. I asked why he was a member of our society. He told me he had worked for Peter Cox before going back to the family business. When I'm in a nursery I'm like a child in a sweet shop. Lots of magnolias, hydrangeas rhododendrons and other choice trees and shrubs are purchased.

When I'm in a garden or arboretum on the continent, and I find something wonderful, I stand by the plant and phone Mark to ask "have you got...". The answer is usually either "yes", or "I know a man who has. When will you collect it?" Much better than The Plant Finder. I collect the plants before we leave for home, but sometimes in plant centres I buy things that must travel with me. I find putting a shower cap from the hotel bathroom on the bottom of the plant pot useful to keep them watered without wetting the car. At home, I find the shower caps useful for putting

over plant pots or small seed trays. Once, going through security at the port, a man said to me “you have a lot of our trees in there”. I replied “I’ve left a lot of my money”.

I always seem to arrive home with seed envelopes, or a closed capsule I have collected, shedding seed in the glove compartment, the bottom of the camera case, my pocket, or door pocket of the car. These can be saved if you put a cloth handkerchief over the end of the vacuum nozzle, pushing it a little way in and holding it while you vacuum. That way I have saved a lot of seed.

My best rhododendron finds from the continent are *R.* ‘Graziela’, not available here back then, and a *R. yakushmanum* x *R.* ‘Elizabeth’ with fantastic indumented foliage and Elizabeth’s red flowers that don’t fade. To my mind it’s the best ‘yak’ hybrid. So far the *Heptacodium miconiodes* hasn’t flowered. It had a little set-back, being eaten by deer, but now with protection it’s growing well. I look forward to the day *Halesia monticola* is a tree instead of a large bush.

This morning I went to the local garden centre for some canes. I can never resist a look around. Some months ago I had noticed some small *Cardiocrinum* plants priced £5.99. Today the plants looked very sad, with more slug holes than leaves. I offered £20 for them, and I now have to pot on 18 *Cardiocrinum*. That’s what I call good plant hunting.

An unusual site for a chaffinch's nest!
Photo by Hugh Rose

Letter from Vilnius, Lithuania

Last winter was unusually mild and all our rhododendrons wintered very well although we had some late frost (20th April) and some species of young plants suffered especially those of oriental origin.

The flowering was exceptional: better than normal. We had warm weather and some rain. The most abundant flowering lasted from about end of May through mid June.

I really enjoyed the conference. It was well organized. Lectures were very interesting especially those of “The Two Peters”, “Taxonomy Debate” and “Evolution of *R. ponticum*”. And of course I loved all the gardens we visited on pre-tour and during conference. It was very useful to see rhododendron species and cultivars, which we cannot grow in Lithuania. We also met so many people and it was great to talk to them and share experiences. I’m looking forward to receiving a copy of the SRS Yearbook. It might help me to write my articles better, thus improving my English, and see what the others write about.

Yours sincerely,

Vitalija.

Vitalija Pribusauskaite.

**Left: *Rhododendron*
'Golden Eagle'**

**Right: *Rhododendron*
'Alma Mater'**

**Left: *Rhododendron*
'Antonin Dvorak'**

**Pictures by Vitalija
Pribusauskaite**

**Pictures from Gardening
Scotland 2008**

**Above and right: Kevock
Garden**

Left: Glendoick

Right: MacPlants

**Left: SRS stand
Pictures by John Roy**

Gardening Scotland 2008

John Roy

The SRS had a stand at Ingliston again this year. The show was very busy especially on the Saturday. My own impression was that the floral hall contained less horticultural material, but more in the “arts & crafts” section, some of which seemed out of place in a gardening show.

Kevock Garden once again did superbly, and writes:

Dear John,

Some good news to share with you! We have just returned from Gardening Scotland where our display of plants won Best in Show for the third year running. We have been overwhelmed by the response we received from the judges, who loved the range and the quality of the plants, and from the public who bought Meconopsis and Primula as fast as we could load them on to the tables. It has been a great encouragement to the team and makes all the hard work worthwhile.

The weather, which hit some of our material very hard over the winter, has certainly helped the seed germination. It has been the best we have seen for many years and some very rare items are popping up. We shall soon start preparing the new catalogue for the autumn. Meanwhile our bulb catalogue is on line at www.kevockgarden.co.uk. This is for the supply of dry bulbs in September and there are many unusual items in the list. We hope you enjoy browsing.

Best wishes,

Stella and David Rankin, and David Ross, Sales supervisor.

**Photos from Stephen
Fox's garden**

**Above: *Rhododendron
selense* ssp. *jucundum***

**Right: *Rhododendron
citriniflorum***

**Below: *Rhododendron
sphaeroblastum***

Book Review

Ian Douglas

**Garden Plants for Scotland by Kenneth Cox,
Raoul Curtis-Machin,**

The concept of the book is good. Most gardening books are either written in, or for the south, so it is refreshing to find one written specifically for a Scottish audience. Weather conditions being so different between, for example, Southampton and Sutherland, it is surprising that it has taken so long to realize the need for this publication.

The book consists essentially of two sections:

An introductory chapter which explains in some detail growing conditions in Scotland (climate, shelter, soils and selection of plants, etc.)

A main listing of plants suitable for growing in Scottish conditions. This listing is split into shrubs, conifers, hedges, ornamental trees, fruit and perennials (including alpine and bulbs). I would not have separated trees and shrubs into different sections. This leads to unnecessary cross-referencing (Hillier's Manual, for example, does not find the need to separate the categories). It begs the question, when does a shrub become a tree?

A worthwhile innovation is the use of the Scottish Garden Plant Award. This has evolved from the realisation that many AGM plants do not do well in our conditions. This new award is likely to be of particular value to those starting in gardening.

I suppose it is incumbent on a reviewer to find the weak points in a publication as well as praise the good. No publication is perfect and the following will hopefully be amended in a new edition – this book I expect will extend through many editions.

The section on wind and shelter in the introductory chapter makes the statement that on Colonsay, Gerald Loder waited twenty to thirty years

for the shelter belts to mature. I suspect that this would come as rather a surprise to the current Lord Strathcona's father. (There is a Loder connection; one of the Loder daughters married into the Strathcona family).

In the listing of ferns there are a number of native species that do not carry the 'native species' symbol. *Blechnum spicant* ("hard" not "hand" fern), *Athyrium flix-femina*, *Osmunda regalis* and *Polystichum aculeatum*.

The dimensions given for *Salix lapponum* and *Salix lanata* I suspect have been reversed (1.5m x 1.5m) and (50cm x 1m) respectively. *S. lapponum* will seldom approach 1.5m in gardens whereas *S. lanata* easily reaches 1.5 x 2m+. It is basically a much bigger plant. Also *S. x boydii* should have the 'native species' symbol (a natural hybrid found only once).

In summary, a worthwhile addition to the gardener's bookshelf. It will certainly be of inestimable value to the new or inexperienced gardener. The more experienced though finding it useful, will no doubt continue to 'push the boundary' of what can be grown. A bibliography is included for further reading.

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Letters to the Editor

Dear John,

Re the conference Grace and I tried to book the pre conference tour and also two or three of the events in Edinburgh. However we were told after filling out the necessary forms that it was all or nothing and we had to register and pay for everything including accommodation. As we stay reasonably locally and had other commitments especially in our garden at that time we decided it was not worth while which was a great pity as we missed seeing a lot of our local and international friends. We later caught up with several of them on the successful International Dendrology Tour of the big trees in Perthshire. We believe that at the upcoming meeting of A.R.S. in the USA (where we also visit), locals are being encouraged to join in and can “cherry pick” what and how they attend. I wonder how many other Scots were put off by this inflexibility.

Grace and Greg Morris

John M. Hammond Conference Chairman replies:

The highly successful meeting in May of this year, based at the R.B.G., Edinburgh, was not organised in the style of an A.R.S. Convention where its members are able to pick and choose the activities they wish to participate in. The event in Edinburgh this spring was a free-standing International Conference, including lectures, tours and social activities that were specifically organised for the delegates who had paid the Conference Registration Fees. There were quite a number of enquiries and applicants, particularly from Overseas, who wanted to participate in the Pre-conference Tours, the Conference Tours and the Social activities, but did not want to participate in the lectures or pay the Registration Fees. It was made clear to all such applicants that at least one person on each Registration Form had to pay the Full Conference Registration Fee if a delegate, and their partner, wished to participate in the Tours and Social activities, as these activities were partly financed by the Registration Fees. Any other way of approach would have undermined the financial viability of the Conference.

The Conference organisers were not involved at any time with booking hotel accommodation for the delegates.

Dear John,

Report from Knock Cottage, Lochgair.

Generally, flowering of rhododendrons was poorer than last year with some not flowering at all and others with only one or two trusses e.g. *R. niveum*. A few appear to have flowered normally but they are in the minority (one yellow one which has never flowered before and is probably

10 -15 years old (see pictures below – any clues as to name?) has flowered for the first time. Azaleas are less affected but still not as good as 2007. We have had a few fatalities in the winter, amongst recent plantings; probably due to water-

logging. Although vulgarly brilliant last year *R. ‘Loderi King George’* (above) did very well again in 2008. After a later start than in 2007 (by about a week), all species have caught up and are nearly all over, rather earlier than

expected – the disadvantage of a month of lovely sunny warm weather and only 44mm of rain compared to the average of about 120mm. Some people are never content!

Regards, David Sillar

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