





**Members enjoying gardens on the Spring
Tour of Cheshire, Shropshire and
Staffordshire**

Pictures by John Roy

Scottish Rhododendron Society

Autumn Review 2016

Editorial.....	2
President's Column.....	3
Secretary's Report.....	5
SRS Annual Show Saturday 30 th April 2016 Gloria Starck.....	8
Peter Fairley and his garden at Tighcreag, Rhu Mike Thornley.....	12
Rhododendron 'Polar Bear' Philip Rankin.....	15
Kanuka Ridge Gretchen Henderson.....	16
A Gardener's Garden Fiona Campbell.....	19
South Wales: An Update Brian Moss.....	23
Spring Tour of Cheshire, Shropshire and Staffordshire.....	25
Minutes of the Thirty Third Annual General Meeting of the Scottish Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society.....	50

Cover Pictures: Front: *Rhododendron* 'Loderi Venus' by John Roy

Back: *Rhododendron platypodum* by Sir Peter Hutchison

Editorial

It has been a busy year and the “Spring” Review did not get to you until autumn. This “Autumn” Review should be a bit more timeous, and I hope to have the Yearbook published not too far into the New Year. At the recent committee meeting it was agreed that in 2017 we would go down to one Review in order that I should be able to catch up, with a further decision at the meeting in autumn 2017 to see if this is the road we should go down in the future.

I made an appeal for feedback in the Spring Review, and I thank everyone who has been in touch. The overwhelming majority want to continue to read the garden reports from our tours, and you are interested in the rainfall data that is published yearly. A new rainfall station in Aberdeenshire has volunteered data. If you collect any rainfall data please consider sending it to me. It does not need to be Met Office accurate. I collect mine in a plastic gauge nailed to a post.

This Review contains a broad spectrum of articles. Many thanks to all my contributors. There is a report on the Scottish National Rhododendron Show, garden reports from the Spring Tour, plus articles about your gardens and plants.

Please take a moment to read the AGM Minutes. These give you a great insight into what your society is doing behind the scenes.

John Roy

President's Column

John M. Hammond

As autumn comes around I usually have a good look around my garden to consider what work needs to be done in terms of moving plants, or maybe taking out a plant or two that are not performing well, or are beginning to die back. Whilst we aim to bestow as much care as is practicable on our plant collections, there are some factors that are simply beyond our control; one of which is the unusually high levels of rainfall over these past four years. Here in Starling, on the edge of the West Pennine Moors between Bury and Bolton, the rainfall 'norm' for as long as I can recall has averaged around 55 inches a year; but in recent years the persistent rain from mid-October to early-April has raised the average to 85 inches, mainly as a result of the storm systems coming in from the south-west off the Atlantic. The effects can be seen this autumn in the extension growth of the plants, particularly the large-leaved rhododendron species and hybrids with larger leaves, which have put on up to 18 inches. It is also evident in the magnolias. These have suddenly had an amazing spurt of new foliage, which is acting as a sail in the recent gales, so I am expecting some of the tops to get blown-out in the storms; however, magnolias are fast-growing and tend to recover well.

Of more concern are the difficulties that arise from the soil being consistently saturated and, despite residing almost on top of a hill, at times there has been nowhere for the water to go. Our garden gradually slopes from north to south, and from west to east, but the rain has often fallen faster than the flooded ground and drainage systems can carry it away. These conditions can ultimately lead to *Phytophthora* problems with rhododendrons and azaleas. In my experience, over these past few years the excessively wet conditions over the autumn and winter are resulting in slow dieback of some mature plants, particularly the varieties that have yellows, oranges and multi-coloured flowers, which have been carefully placed in locations that normally suit their requirements. Many of these varieties need good drainage, so this should not be entirely unexpected, but none of us are happy about losing plants that have performed well for many years.

Inevitably, this is a difficult problem to even begin to resolve and I am certain I will not be the only member with plants suffering from waterlogged roots. Nevertheless, it is important not to become disheartened, and I would suggest it is better to take a

step backwards instead, and then consider what scope there is to make a difference. I made an early decision that I wanted to maintain the existing plant structure in the garden, both in the front and the back of the house, and in doing so replace the plants on a 'like for like' basis, using the same species or hybrid wherever possible. In my case the subsoil is orangey-red clay, which is not helpful in regard to providing drainage, so when I landscaped the garden sixteen years ago I dug out 120 tons of clay, that went away in skips, and dug into the remaining top-soil dozens of bags of bark, compost, grit and some cindery soil. This 'mix' has worked well in practice and the plants have thrived and are clearly happy.

In the late-spring, where I have taken out a large, mature plant that is dying back, I have enlarged the planting hole, then where the ground slopes away from the hole I have dug a small trench, to the same depth as the base of the planting hole, leading downhill away from the hole. I then placed a 2ins layer of pebbles in the hole and in the trench, followed by a one-inch layer of horticultural grit, which enables the water in the planting hole to drain away. Where this has been done on the top of a terrace I have directed the trench to a drainage hole in the base of the wall. I then place a mix of bark and compost in the base, followed by a layer of composted leaf-mould, then use the bark and compost, with a scattering of Osmocote mixed in, to plant a large mature rhododendron with its root-ball protruding above ground level. When the hole has been filled and firmed-down to ground level I make a circular trough around the perimeter of the root-ball, then irrigate the root-ball well, making sure the water reaches almost to the top of the trough. This begins to remake the 'connection' between the roots and the soil. If the water vanishes immediately, I irrigate the root-ball and fill the trough a second time. After the water has had opportunity to drain away I mound-up the root-ball with the bark and compost mix up to the level that the rhododendron was originally planted in the ground. Finally, I prune around 12 inches off all the tall branches of the plant, making sure I leave some foliage on each branch to drive the new growth, as the roots will not maintain all the foliage until the plant has had time to recover. Two or three weeks later, when the plant has had an opportunity to settle down, I will give it a two-gallon bucket full of Levington's Tomato Food, which provides the plant a boost.

Later in the summer the plant will begin to break new buds, but it will take around a year for the plant to begin to grow strong new extension growth, and to date I have not had any problems with this way of approach, despite the persistently wet period from mid-October 2015 to early-April, 2016. If your plants are suffering with waterlogged roots then I recommend you try this methodology, as it is relatively straightforward

and requires no specialised tools and materials.

Meanwhile, in the early-morning yesterday, Tuesday 18th October, there was an exceptionally stunning sunrise, with scattered bright red clouds in a largely clear sky as far as the eye could see; often an indicator of a major change in the weather. By mid-morning the rain had settled-in for the day, by mid-afternoon the rain was torrential and it continued until late-evening. I am hoping this is not the precursor of another wet autumn and winter!

Secretary's Report

Katrina Clow

After a cold, slow spring, we in the west of Scotland have just experienced a memorable autumn, the best for many, many years with little rain and six weeks of still, warm and mainly sunny days. The autumn colours were brilliant and lasted until the start of November. Highlights were vivid crimson *Euonymus europaeus*, yellow, orange and plum foliage on deciduous azaleas, purple *Parrotia persica* and *Viburnum plicatum* 'Mariesii', scarlet maples, wine red *Liquidamber*, cascading leaves like gold coins on white barked birches and ruby red 'elephant ears' on the bergenias, to mention but a few of the show stoppers. The fragrance of burnt toffee wafting from the yellowing leaves of *Cercidiphyllum japonicum* was a sensory bonus. It is a great regret that rhododendrons do not colour in autumn but their beautiful glossy foliage made a fine contrast to the fireworks around them and several produced a second flush of flowers in the extended growing period.

The rhododendrons certainly came into their own at our annual show. The committee's decision to exhibit at Garelochhead for a second year proves that this is a good venue for us. Although the cold spring meant that some classes were rather thin, the overall spectacle was as colourful as ever and all the show cups were awarded. Peter Fairley, a first time exhibitor scooped two cups. It is with great sadness that we have to record Peter's passing shortly afterwards.

Thanks to Mary Gray, the show received excellent publicity and later featured in a double page coloured spread in the Helensburgh Gazette. More members of the public attended and several exhibited for the first time. We welcome new entrants but the

number of classes and finding the correct one for an exhibit can prove quite daunting for a beginner and Ian Sinclair was kept very busy helping newcomers to identify and place their specimens. Set up periods on Friday night and Saturday morning are hectic and we missed John Roy and Willie Campbell (trekking in India) and Matt Heasman and look forward to their invaluable help in 2017. If you are able to offer a little help at these busy show times, please contact Ian Sinclair or the Secretary.

Thanks to very generous donations of plants and prizes, both the plant stall (manned by Philip Rankin and Oliver Miller) and the raffle did a brisk trade and with more visitors helped raise additional funds for SRS. The committee extends warm thanks to all of those who supported the show, with help, publicity, set-up, donations, judging and stewarding and in the big clear up at 4pm.

Next year's show, plant sales and AGM will be held again at the Gibson Hall, Gairlochhead on Saturday 6th May, 2017. Please come and support this event. Bring your friends and perhaps bring a good plant or a prize for the raffle. All details, including show schedule, will be available on our web site.

Two weeks later, a group of members set off for the annual gardens tour, this year to Cheshire, Staffordshire and Shropshire, a beautiful part of England. As usual, the many garden visits arranged were varied and interesting, the weather fair and the company jolly. These tours are highly recommended and our thanks to Gloria and David Starck and John Hammond for their meticulous planning.

Next year's spring tour in the north west of Scotland is planned to follow on after the show so that visitors from the south who wish to participate in both events are saved a return journey. All details from Gloria Starck (gloria@lochlorien.free-online.co.uk).

The Society set up its annual publicity stand at Scotland's Gardening Show, at the beginning of June. Building and planting a small demonstration garden on site, a new venture, took rather longer and required rather more plants than anticipated. We are very grateful to Alan Clark who rescued us with extra rhododendrons and more compost. On the whole, the public seemed to admire our efforts and we received a bronze award. Three new members were recruited and the volunteer stewards answered a multitude of questions, not all on rhododendrons.

Our membership is on the increase again and we are pleased to welcome:
Prof. George G. Browning, Glasgow

Grant Moir, Langholm, Borders

Andy and Jenny Fly, West Sussex

Richard and Lorna Fulcher, Pine Cottage, Devon (Pine Cottage Nursery)

Graham Alcorn, Mount Stuart, Isle of Bute

Stewart Finlayson, Manchester

Paul Haynes, Mallaig (rejoined)

And John and Grechen Henderson from Dunedin, New Zealand who joined us on the spring tour.

Dr Beatson, Troon, has tendered his resignation.

Gift Aid allows the SRS to claim back 25% of your subscription from the government. There was an excellent response to our request for members joining in 2014-15 to sign up. If you are eligible (ie a UK tax payer) but have not signed the gift aid form, it can be found on our web site; alternatively, contact the secretary for details.

At our Autumn Conference, arranged jointly with the Rhododendron Species Conservation Group, the subject of recruiting new members was on the agenda. Most people present agreed that the best introduction is through personal contact and word of mouth. All societies require new members to bring fresh vigour and ideas to the organisation and SRS is no exception. If you enjoy our show, events and publications and are keen on rhododendrons, you may well have friends who would like to join us too. Membership forms are always available at our events or from the Secretary or John Roy, our Editor. A Membership subscription to SRS could make a very acceptable gift.

SRS is concerned in monitoring and informing our members about current and threatened plant pests and diseases, particularly those affecting rhododendron species and hybrids. The committee is pleased that Richard Firmin, our member from Ellon in Aberdeenshire, has agreed to take on the role of Technical Director and he will keep us abreast of developments in plant health. We welcome him to the committee.

Now that work in the garden has slowed up and the days are shorter, it is hoped there will still be time to collect for the seed exchange scheme, run by Willie Campbell or why not consider your potential entries for next year's show. Whatever the weather throws at us in late April, there are always the rhododendron foliage and companion plants classes to consider!

SRS Annual Show Saturday 30th April 2016 Gibson Hall, Garelochhead

Gloria Starck

The annual Rhododendron Show seems to come round quickly these days. I think time and life must be flying by.

As usual there was concern as to whether there would be any flowers to show. There was the same problem as always, too cold, too hot, too wet, too dry, or any combination thereof. I've never been to an SRS Annual Show when the weather has been perfect.

The judges for 2016 were, David Chamberlain, Alan Clark and Richard Baines. As usual the judging started at 10.00 a.m., and took less time this year, finishing at around 11.30 a.m.

Ian Douglas, one of the Stewards, assisted me with the totalling of the marks and preparing the list for the presentations, which took place in the afternoon. Katrina Clow had ensured that the cups/trophies had been returned by last year's winners, and were also very well polished.

The judging for the photographic competition was done by Ian Douglas. He had a huge number of photos to admire this year. If you don't have a rhododendron you can bring to the Show, then the photographic competition is for you. Details are on the Show Schedule.

This Show was very well attended, by locals as well as those who had travelled some distance to be with us.

Well, that's the lot for this year. I look forward to seeing you all in 2017 at The Gibson Hall, Garelochhead, Saturday 6th May.



**Well filled benches at this
year's show**

**All photos in this article
by John Hammond**



Top: Judging

Bottom: Plant sales outside the Gibson Hall

The trophy winners this year are as follows:

The Kilarden Trophy – For the winner of Class 1

**Mike & Sue
Thornley, Glenarn**

The George Sherriff Cup – For the most points in Section 1

**Mike & Sue
Thornley, Glenarn**

The Sir John Stirling Maxwell Trophy – For the best species in the show grown in the open

**Glendoick
*R. spilotum***

The Harry Fairburn Cup – For the most points in restricted Classes 38 – 41

Peter Fairley

The David Stuart Cup – For the best species or hybrid exhibited in Classes 38 – 41

**Peter Fairley
R. falconeri x #
John Hammond**

The John Hammond Cup – For the most points in the species and hybrid Azalea Classes (25, 34, 35)

The Argyll & Bute Trophy – For the most points in all Classes grown in an Argyll & Bute garden

**Mike & Sue
Thornley, Glenarn**

The Scottish Rhododendron Society Cup – For the best hybrid in the Show

**Brodict Castle
*R. 'Fortune'***

The Keyline Cup – For the most points in all Classes grown in a garden of up to an acre

Philip Rankin

The Marlene Storah Cup – For the most points in all classes for gardens not open to the public more than once a year.

Wang Liston

The Mervyn Kessell Cup – For the most points in Classes 42 and 43

Philip Rankin

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).

Not Awarded

The Wild Argyll Cup – For the best photographic print in the Show

Alex Gray

See article by Mike Thornley

Peter Fairley and his garden at Tighcreag, Rhu

Mike Thornley

Those of us who attended the prize giving at this year's Scottish National Rhododendron Show at the Gibson Hall in Garelochhead, will have noticed a tall but frail man come forward to receive the Harry Fairburn Cup for the most points in Section 4 and the David Stuart Cup for the best species or hybrid rhododendron entered by a first time competitor. This was one of our members, Peter Fairley who died on 25 June 2016.

Peter's first passion was sailing but in 1971 he and his wife Dinkie moved to Armadale, a Victorian house on the front at Rhu, set in a mature garden laid out in the 1850s. This was where Peter began his gardening, driven by a well held prejudice against *Rhododendron ponticum*, replacing the thickets that he had torn out with other, mainly species, rhododendrons as well as many more interesting plants that he knew would thrive on the west coast.

Perhaps he had always envisaged building a new house in the grounds behind the existing mansion, and when his plans began to crystallise he started to move some of his plants to establish the framework of a new garden, a garden within a garden, for a house that was completed in 2003. It is this overlaying of one garden on another and the foresight in its inception, as well as the wonderful collection of young plants, that makes Peter's garden so interesting and rewarding.

The garden benefits from a borrowed landscape, dominated by well spaced, very tall trees, often *Sequoia giganteum*, a skyline of spires, originally planted as individual specimens in the neighbouring gardens, once large now mostly subdivided. Anchoring the new garden to the corners of its site are native trees – a gean, a spreading oak, and a solid beech – while a narrow band of oak, Scots pine, and ash, provide a backdrop along the northern boundary, the canopy lifted high to allow rhododendrons to grow in their shelter.

To the front of the house are two lawns. One, on the former site of the drying green, is contained and mowed tight, and the other, on the old orchard, is outward looking, awash with daffodils in spring, and treated as a meadow.



These paired but contrasting lawns are joined but divided from each other by old and new plants: a dark yew behind, a silver *Oleria* to the side, a venerable *Acer griseum*, purple *Cotinus* and a vigorous *Enkianthus*, throwing new growth into the sky. This block of planting confronts and confounds the axial view from the house, turning conven-

tion on its head. Likewise the falling ground between the house and the lawns is planted right up to the building, allowing no immediate outdoor space and yet, with its clipped and architecturally shaped shrubs, it mediates between the house and the garden.

The other major feature is the outcropping rock face, exposed by the excavation works, and running across two thirds of the site, between the back of the house and the northern boundary, up to 3m, high in places. The short entrance drive sneaks in

**Above: Petr Fairley
and a large *Magnolia*
flower**

**Right: The
Rhododendron
faloneri hybrid that
won the David Stuart
cup**

**Pictures by Mike
Thornley**



along the side of the emerging rock which curves round and rises, topped and softened by azaleas, to block any view of what lies beyond, springing a surprise on visitors as the garden opens out before them. However in this very modern composition, evidence of the older garden remain: the cast iron drying green pole, the old apple trees in the orchard, the sandstone gate posts removed when Colonel Barge could not manoeuvre his car between them, and the gardener's bothy, now restored and covered in climbing roses. Linking all of this together is Peter's prodigious planting over the last 40 years, including many fine rhododendrons which are young and shapely, a burgeoning well documented collection.

Most of the rhododendrons were obtained from specialist nurseries, notably Glen-doick. However Peter also attended the plant sale on Open Days at Glenarn. He would arrive early to make sure that he secured the best plants and each year his ambitions expanded, both in terms of rarity value and, particularly, in size. It became a kind of game; Sue setting aside ever larger specimens to tempt Peter who always protested that he would never be able to transport them back down the road. Somehow we always managed so that over the years huge rhododendrons were transplanted, without any losses, and when meeting Peter in the town, he would keep us abreast of their progress and flowering.

Earlier this year, in mid April, Dinkie phoned to report that one of Peter's rhododendrons had flowered for the first time and he was wondering if I might come down a help to identify it (some hope). While Peter stayed in the house Dinkie and I went out to see the new arrival and to say that I was disappointed would be an understatement. Here was a strange hybrid, a stunted big leaf rhododendron, the trusses still tight, not fully open, cream colour with a grey topknot, or so I seem to recall. It was like one of those peculiar dog crosses, a labradoodle, distasteful to the eye, and I said so, pronouncing it worthless, to be cut out to make space for a better plant. However I did suggest, given the display of rhododendrons in flower in the garden, that Peter might consider putting some entries into the Rhododendron Show.



Ten days later Dinkie arrived at the Gibson Hall with the flowers that Peter had selected and helped by the Show Manager, these were put into vases and placed on the benches in the appropriate classes, to win the two cups, which pleased Peter greatly. The strange hybrid, about which I had been so dismissive, had fully opened to what Dinkie has described as a 'pink candy sweet' cream in colour with raspberry stripes and grey calyx. It carried off the award for the best species or hybrid in Section 4.

This raises the question of its parentage. No one has owned up to writing '*x neriiflorum*' on the entry card, which patently is not the case. The Show Manager's more considered view, on the evidence of the character of the leaf, the cream in the flower and the shape of the truss, is that *R. falconeri* may be one parent, while the pink, fading to white, suggests that a member of subsection *Grandia* might also have played a part. Obviously this is not a commercially produced plant and probably is an open pollinated seedling from Peter's garden, which, as I recall, is what he said, although sadly there is no way of being certain now. Finally, and with supreme irony, the plant has died, indisputably giving Peter the last laugh, tinged, no doubt, with some annoyance at the loss.

SRS members are invited to visit Tighcreag on the day of the Scottish Rhododendron Show on Saturday 6th May 2017. Please park cars on one side of Armadale Road only.

***Rhododendron* 'Polar Bear'**

Philip Rankin

A few years ago I was given a plant of *Rhododendron* 'Polar Bear'. I must confess I didn't know a lot about it other than it looked as though it might be quite vigorous, white and tall growing so I put it in a slightly shaded spot at the edge of my garden. For several years it grew very strongly producing annual growth of up to 30cm and narrow oval mid green leaves of similar size. So far nothing remarkable. It did produce attractive buds but despite looking like flower buds no flowers appeared.

Then in mid July of this year to my surprise and delight... I was cutting the hedge at the time, I saw several pure white flowers which had a delightful sweet scent. (Picture on opposite page.)

A quick check of its credentials told me all I should have known. Its parentage is *Rhododendron decorum* ssp. *diaprepes* x *R. auriculatum*, hence scent and late flowering.

It's a great plant if you want to extend the season. It does require some shelter as I discovered in a wet windy spell, which caused some marking on the flowers. And it will grow quite tall in good conditions. Definitely a worthwhile addition... if you have the space.

Kanuka Ridge

Gretchen Henderson

We had the good fortune (or skilful planning) to be able to shift some quite sizeable rhododendrons from our farm garden three hours south, when we retired to Dunedin. Using a hired closed 'furniture' trailer pulled by our small truck we made many weekend trips up to Dunedin through the year 2001, shifting our favourites of smaller trees, shrubs and perennials. We didn't come to live on site until 2003 but most plants coped well, some in temporary, others in their permanent site. The surrounding native forest and some native trees on site gave an appropriate setting.

We already had a long association with the Dunedin Rhododendron Group as well as our national Rhododendron Association, and once retired here our commitment to the Dunedin Group expanded. This Group has 170 members and an annual Bulletin, newsletters, an annual plant sale list, and in winter, six meetings with speakers. The most popular participation is with the two Spring and one Autumn series of garden visits. Plus the Group has its own three and a half acre garden run by dedicated members.

The terrain in our own garden is a fairly level three-quarter acre, with a fall of 5 metres from one corner to that diagonally opposite, with quality soil though low in sulphur. We have a good proportion of species rhododendrons, not because we are 'species purists' but because this is a way to collect the interesting foliage types that appeal to us. Moreover, if we especially like a rhododendron we are inclined to get several, so we are not aiming to have the largest range.

The impression gained from our three trips with the Scottish Rhododendron Society (2008, 2015 and 2016) is that the members are most inclined to admire a natural style



Rhododendron ‘Sir Charles Lemon’ with tall Kanuka (*Kunzea ericoides*) behind. Our garden is named after the Kanuka because it is the dominant native tree in the adjoining reserve.

of planting, in an informal layout. This garden we have planned for future old age (hopefully), with a very firm structure to give easier maintenance and time away with all our other interests. The planting within that structure is very much determined by aesthetic considerations for we are very conscious of colour combinations and the visual balance of planting shapes. Hence the great interest in rhododendron foliage of especial merit. Varieties with great indumentum such as *R. bureavii*, *R. elegantulum* and *R. fulvum* do very well here, and it is plants of *R. maki-noi* that give the most trouble. Extra grit and gravel need to be added to all the rhododendron areas, and especially with dwarf varieties.

Some of the larger and more majestic rhododendrons that we relocated here, that are flowering well, are *R. protistum*, *R. macabeaenum*, *R. rex*, *R. calophyllum*, *R. argyrophyllum*, *R. decorum* and *R. fulvum*, plus the smaller statured *R. crassum* and *R. pseudochrysanthum*. Also came large hybrids such as *R. ‘Sir Charles Lemon’*, *R. ‘Polar Bear’*, *R. ‘Lemon Honey’* and *R. ‘Loderi’* varieties. *R. sinogrande* and *R. montroseanum* have yet to flower, and *R. decorum* ssp *diaprepes* has only flowered



sparingly. Most of those mentioned are 30 years old now, with some 25 years. Older rhododendrons we had to leave behind along with unimportant ones. The climate here near the coast gives us the opportunity to plant many more of the Maddenia subsection for we have a mild climate. Our average maximum temperature in summer is only 20 C, and the average minimum in June/July is 0.0 C, though we have frosts some mornings and of course occasional days in summer are hotter than average. Our rainfall is less than 800 mm annually, about 31 inches, and it is spread throughout the year. With careful siting we now have young plants of *R. excellens*, *R. nuttallii*, *R. megacalyx* and some hybrids between *R. lindleyi*, *R. dalhousiae* and *R. nuttallii*.

(John and Gretchen Henderson are New Zealand members of the Scottish Rhododendron Society)

Above: *Rhododendron macabeanum* in flower and *R. longipes* in foreground.

Right: *Rhododendron* 'Polar Bear' with *Arthropodium cirratum* (Renga Renga) left foreground and *R. sinogrande* left.

Pictures by Gretchen Henderson



A Gardener's Garden

By his wife Fiona Campbell

A chance remark from someone at our house recently has inspired me into print. He said to Willie that it was good to see a gardener's garden. I think I know just what he meant. It is chock-a-block with plants of all kinds: bulbs, herbaceous plants, alpine, heathers, trees, climbers and shrubs - especially rhododendrons.

It is now nearly 5 years since we took up residence in our bungalow in Doune having had tenants renting the property for 3 years before. When we bought it in 2007 the garden was mainly in grass and had part landscaping in the front with a few shrubs, trees and also 5 rhodies. Initially we left it just as we bought it to have a basic, easy keep garden for tenants to look after. When we eventually moved in 2011 I was keen to have some space to myself as I enjoyed gardening as a hobby and I didn't want "Willie the gardener" to take over everything. We agreed to have part of the front garden each. One side was for my choice of perennials, bulbs and shrubs and the other was the "Rhody Garden" for Willie to plant up. The soil in the Woods of Doune area thankfully is excellent for ericaceous plants as we could see in the gardens around. One 94 year old neighbour has a garden full of plants with many lovely rhododendrons and azaleas. (She's still fit and potters about nearly every day).

My side of the front garden has a mixture of bulbs, perennials and shrubs which I like. I was able to bring some plants from the previous garden and also took cuttings preparing for a move 6 years ago. Some have memories attached... *Forsythia*, my mother's family name, a small shrub rose an old friend gave me, a shrub rose from my son's first job on leaving school, a *Geranium sanguineum* from a very good friend who died aged 62. I am also sentimental enough to have in pots, *R. 'Teal'* - the name of one of our dogs and *R. 'Oban'* - a favourite place of ours.

On his side, Willie immediately set to removing most of the grass, creating beds. Rhododendrons began to arrive, some his seedlings, some transplanted from our previous garden at Gargunnoch and others purchases of more unusual rhododendrons. Most are low growing as space is limited, but they have been packed in to cover the soil; no space for weeds is Willie's policy. He has chosen many rhododendrons for their interesting foliage e.g. *R. 'Everred'*, *R. pachysanthum* and *R. lepidostylum* to keep the interest all year. *R. forrestii*, a gift from Willie's dad for our first garden 40

years ago, has travelled with us ever since. Four pieces are established in Doune and together with *R. radicans* form the low level creeping plants. Our largest leafed one is a seedling of *R. sinofalconeri* now 3 feet tall. It will eventually need a shift in a few years, perhaps to Gargunnock woodland. Many others may require a bit of pruning to keep in shape, but with care this can be done. Some other favourites with interesting foliage or indumentum we have put in are *R. lutescens*; *R. 'Winsome'* and *R. 'Teddy Bear'* and they are even now getting sizeable. It was pleasing to see at the end of May the three *R. campylogynum* plants have transferred well from my Gargunnock garden: *R. campylogynum* Myrtilloides Group, *R. campylogynum* 'White Form' and *R. campylogynum* 'Salmon Pink'. Sadly the frost earlier in the year spoiled many flowers on our rhododendrons such as *R. 'Snow Lady'*, *R. pachysanthum* and four *R. calostrotum*.

Amongst the rhododendrons as companion plants are many trilliums and primulas, as well as spring bulbs and autumn crocus. There are also some ground cover perennials and other young trees and shrubs such as *Enkianthus*, *Magnolia*, *Acers* and *Viburnus*. Many of the primulas Willie has grown from seed as were many of the perennials dotted about. Another source of plants for us is the sales bench at Dobbie's Garden Centre - such a handy place for us passing to and from Stirling. Stopping for coffee is always combined with a search of the sales tables. There the "Weston's Woundeds" can be split and given t.l.c. to bring them on for ourselves or the sales bench at Gargunnock.

After the erection of a kennel for Joe, 2 greenhouses and a potting shed in the back garden, (essential for all the seed sowing and propagation) we were still left with a large plot to fill once most of the grass was removed. Inspired by an area of planting I saw during the SRS garden visit to Briglands House in Perthshire, I suggested we have a similar large paved area with spaces for planting and this was done adjoining the original patio. Here we have many plants in pots with some rock plants in gravel spaces. Perennials fill the borders behind, along with trees, shrubs, rhododendrons and climbers covering the back fence. Much of this area is experimental, nothing really planned, with plants put in to see how they do. Willie is always splitting/propagating herbaceous plants and growing from seed and many left over from Gargunnock have found their way to Doune. Some wee things get a bit smothered when taller plants take over, like other gardeners we forget what is there and plant on top or too near! Part of the area is rather wet so some trial and error is necessary, unfortunately with quite a number of failures. The flag irises are doing well though!



Before and after

This year some rhododendrons new to us have been purchased – *R. diversipilosum* ‘Milky Way’, *R. amundsenianum*, and *R. farinosum*. We watch with interest to see them settle down in the front garden. There are still many in pots which can be moved around when in or out of flower e.g. *R. ‘Praecox’*, *R. ‘Ginny Gee’* and *R. ‘Molly’* and these may



Above: Contrasting foliage

Left: Companion planting

All photos by Fiona Campbell

eventually find a planting space. The tender *R. spinuliferum* stays in its pot and is moved into the protection of a greenhouse in winter and my collection of 4 vireya rhododendrons goes indoors too.

The garden in Doune is now rather full. So much so that the clock has gone full circle and Willie is now raiding it for things to split and propagate and pot on for the gardens and the plant stall in Gargunnoch. Perennials now total nearly a hundred different varieties throughout the garden. We have so far amassed over 50 rhododendrons (a mix of species and hybrids) and azaleas with only one or two casualties over the last 4 years. Plenty there to keep us busy in later years. It certainly is a gardener's garden with a bit of everything.



South Wales: An Update

Brian Moss

In Review No.80/2015, I mentioned the raised bed that I was constructing using soil delivered from Norfolk. Most of the planting was undertaken in the spring of 2015 so as I am writing this article (September 2016), the plants have had two growing seasons. So far, fingers crossed, everything is doing fine. None of these plants have been fed. The original seven tons of soil proved insufficient so I had to purchase a further four tons. I enclose a photograph showing part of the bed, (opposite page), which is constructed using sandstone 'bricks' from a local stone merchants. The largest plant in the centre is *Rhododendron recurvoides*, one of the plants I brought with me from Cornwall. This year's foliage suffered from a late frost and displays the crinkly leaves often associated with this problem, however, it is going to flower for the first time. Immediately left is *R. tsariense* and in front of this with the silvery foliage is one of Willie Campbell's *R. bureavii*. This is in temporary quarters, given its ultimate size, and will therefore be moved in a few years time. Notice how *R. 'Nancy Evans'* has crept into the picture.

I mentioned in Review No.80 some leaf wilt affecting *Rhododendron flinckii*. Having removed some of the leaf mould referred to and replaced this with some of the Norfolk soil, the plant now seems fine - I have not observed any leaf wilt during this year's growing season. Other members of the Lanata Subsection (*R. lanatoides* and *R. lanatum*) have not displayed these wilt symptoms, however, they too have had some of the leafy soil replaced with that from Norfolk. The *R. lanatum* is Alan Clark and Ian Sinclair's plant I bought in 1999, the seeds collected by Alan and Ian in Bhutan in 1994. When on earth is this plant going to flower? It now measures at least 4 feet by 5 feet!

As many of you will know most of my plants are young and therefore quite small. However, several of these have produced flower buds for the first time and they include *Rhododendron haematodes*, *R. tsariense*, *R. balfourianum*, *R. ochraceum* (just one bud!), *R. dekatanum* and of course *R. recurvoides* mentioned above. I have recently had the odd inflorescence opening from what I had hoped would be next year's flower buds. I imagine this has resulted from a sudden, albeit brief, period of hot weather in August. I hope this has not spoilt next year's display. *R. charitopes*, another new acquisition, has gone one better - it has produced all its flowers in the

last three weeks so it clearly was not prepared to wait until next year! I enclose three additional photographs - *R. calostrotum* ssp. *keleticum* (Rock 58) from Glendoick last year, *R. calostrotum* (from seed collected by Alan Clark) and *R. 'Peter Chappell'*, also from Glendoick, two and a half years ago.

I was disappointed not to have any entries for this year's show although winning the bottle of Famous Grouse in the raffle somewhat compensated for it!! Everything was so late this year, however, all being well, especially with new plants producing flower buds for the first time, I hope to rectify this for next year's show and I look forward to seeing you all then.



**Left: *Rhododendron calostrotum*
ssp. *keleticum* (Rock 58)**

Below left: *R. calostrotum* AC

Below right: *R. 'Peter Chappell'*

