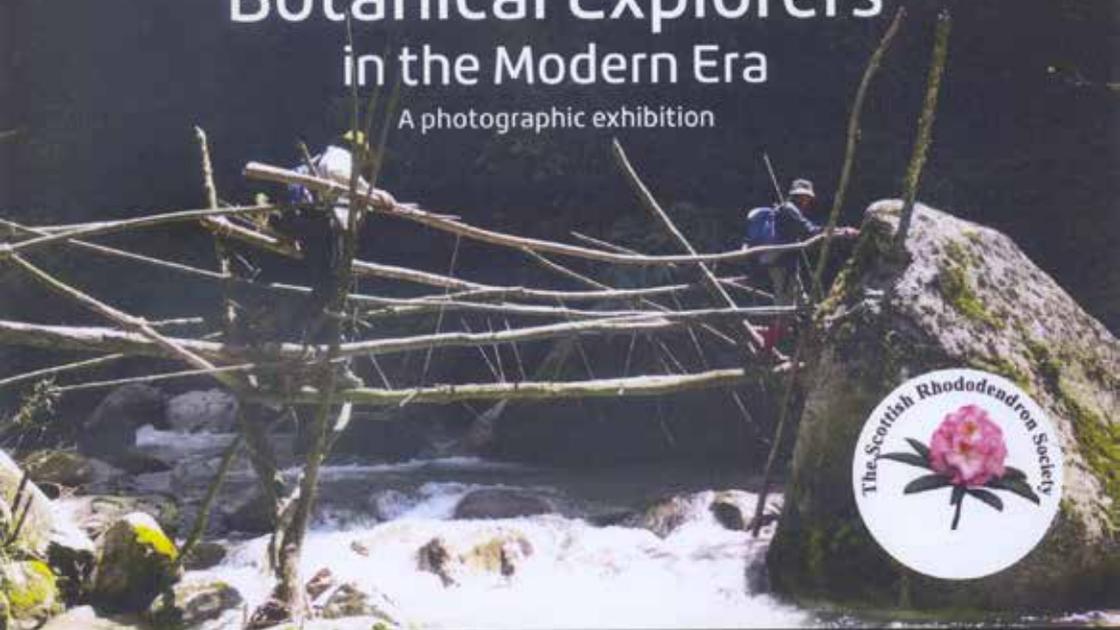




Botanical Explorers in the Modern Era

A photographic exhibition



Explorers Garden, Pitlochry - 1 April to 31 October 2019

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Scottish Rhododendron Society

Summer Review No 86

| | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Editorial..... | 2 |
| President's Column..... | 3 |
| Secretary's Report..... | 6 |
| Tours and Conferences Programme for 2019 to 2021..... | 8 |
| SRS Annual Show..... | 9 |
| 2019 Spring Tour of Gardens of Sussex, Surrey and West Kent..... | 14 |
| Himalayan Weekend..... | 37 |
| Rainfall 2018..... | 39 |
| Early Spring at Ordha Coille..... | 40 |
| Garden visits in Sweden..... | 43 |
| A Good Gardening Read..... | 46 |
| Notes from Devon..... | 49 |
| Welcome surprises from North Vietnam..... | 50 |
| <i>Cardiocrinum giganteum</i> (The Seven Year Myth?)..... | 52 |
| Donald Euan Palmer Howard..... | 53 |
| Seed Exchange 2019..... | 60 |
| Final Word..... | 61 |
| Committee Members..... | 63 |

Cover Pictures: Front: A good form of *Rhododendron edgeworthii* at Marion Kinns' garden. Picture by John Roy.

Back Top: *Rhododendron ovatum* AC5671

Back Bottom: *Rhododendron kendrickii* AC5284

from Vietnam. Pictures by Chip Lima. (See page 50).

Editorial

I had hoped to get back on track and publish two Reviews in 2019, but time has not allowed, and this will be the only Review this year. However, it is a bumper issue with many interesting articles and I thank all the contributors. Not all members are as willing to write articles. I asked two different people to write up the gardens on the post-show tour but was met with negative responses. I feel if you participate in the activities, you should be prepared to share with the rest of the Society. All members of the committee work hard for the Society and sometimes it feels like banging on a brick wall.

The 2019 Scottish National Rhododendron Show was particularly successful. A full report is in this Review. Also included are reports from the Spring Tour of gardens in south east England and private visits to gardens in Sweden.

Katrina Clow raises an interesting question about *Cardiocrinum giganteum*. What are your own experiences regarding growing this wonderful plant? I think Katrina's have produced offshoots from the start, so these have now taken over.

John Hammond regularly contributes historical articles and has written about the Strathcona family and the late Fourth Baron and his garden on the Isle of Colonsay. I had the pleasure of meeting him on the SRS trip to the island in 1997. The First Baron bought huge tracts of Glencoe in 1896. When the last remaining land owned by the family came up for sale in 2002 donations and loans secured it for a descendant of the Glencoe Macdonalds, Alistair MacDonald. Thus Glencoe Heritage Trust was formed of which I am a Trustee and volunteer.

Our Facebook page continues to advertise our Society to the world. Not that we get new members that way, but it does present rhododendrons as a wonderful asset in our gardens. Admins are Willie Campbell, Chip Lima, Matt Heasman and myself. If you have anything that you would like posted, send one of us an email with information and pictures.

John Roy

President's Column

John M. Hammond

In the year 2000, when we came to live in Starling, roe deer could be seen on the higher elevations of the West Pennine Moors, some six miles to the north of our home and, in a cold, snowy winter they would wander down from the moors to the outskirts of properties in the local villages, around a mile away in the Rossendale Valley, to search for food and shelter. Around five years ago the deer began to infiltrate the villages of Holcombe Hill and Bradshaw, some four miles from our home, and this incursion, at a rate of approximately one mile per year, through woodland and fields in the moorland foothills at around the 500ft contour skirting populated areas, has continued until last winter when a Roe deer was seen in the field behind our house, which is at the 500ft level. In the same timeframe the roe deer have found their way down the Rossendale Valley itself to the south side of Bury. To date there have not been any deer in our back garden, but I am conscious it can only be a matter of time before this occurs, perhaps when we next get a really cold and snowy winter. Our back garden is three feet higher in elevation than the field, so with the additional height of the fence the deer would have to clear over six feet to gain entry. But that is not the problem. With our home being on a hill the house two doors up the road has a back garden that is level with the field and has a low fence, so deer could easily gain entry, then jump over the low fences between the gardens, as both our neighbours' gardens are mainly grass with little to interest the deer. Fences must be at least 6ft (1.8m) with a mesh no greater than 3in x 3in (7.5 x 7.5cm) to keep roe and fallow deer out. If your property is bounded by a large pond or lake, then you need to be aware that roe deer can swim.

Unless you actually see deer in your garden, the only evidence may be damage to vegetation. Male roe deer, bucks, can cause 'fraying' to young trees and bushes where bark is rubbed from the main stem and left hanging in tatters. 'Thrashing' damage is caused by males whipping woody plants and low branches with their antlers, whilst 'browsing' damage to shoots and tips is caused by feeding from January to April. Plants damaged by deer can be distinguished from rabbit damage by the ragged edge, or tail, left at the tip. This is caused by the lack of incisors in the deer's upper jaw. Rabbits have upper incisors and so make a clean, sometimes angled, cut, like that of secateurs.

You may find the following list, published by the British Deer Society, of interest

in terms of the differing plant preferences so far as deer are concerned:

Vulnerable Plants: Bluebell, Calluna, Clematis, Crocus (some species), Fuchsia (hybrids), Geranium, Holly, Honeysuckle, Lupin, Pansy, Pines, Rose, Rowan and Sweet William.

Deer Resistant Plants: Camellia, Cistus, Crocus (some species), Fuchsia, Hellebore, Hosta, Hydrangea, Iris, Lavender, Poppy, Primula, Rhododendron and Sedum.

According to this listing, rhododendrons do not appear to be a significant problem in terms of vulnerability. There will be some members who would contest this classification! Members have noted over past years that small leaved species such as dwarfs, Triflora, Cinnarbarina subsections and azaleas are preferable, but if these are not available the deer will make a meal of larger leaved species. There are some thoughts that deer feed on what is preferable to them at the time, which in turn depends on the wider scope of plants in the garden, and on other occasions they will return and feed on something else.

As far as I am aware, there are no measures in place to control the escalating numbers of the roe deer that are making their way into populated areas and, like foxes, are able to find sufficient food in wooded areas, parkland and gardens in the local community. Some of these deer no longer return to the higher moorland elevations in late-spring and summer. In reality, it is unlikely that any controls will be implemented within the populated areas as 'Bambi' has a 'cute' image that will lead to it being protected. Some lowland parts of Britain also have problems



with fallow and muntjac deer on the outskirts of towns and cities. Deer can be a menace in gardens, they are territorial and, as the deer population increases and the competition for territory becomes more intense, more deer are likely to find alternative stamping grounds. If

Deer in the garden

they discover a food source, they are likely to return, adopting your garden as a feeding area.

What can be done to deter deer? There are all kinds of ideas on how to ward off these unwanted guests in the garden. This can be a somewhat subjective subject, as the experience of gardeners varies widely and what works for one person doesn't necessarily work for someone else. Those who have tried the 'folk remedies' such as, tresses of hair, Lifebuoy soap, blood meal, Tabasco sauce, garlic powder, etc., have had some success in the short-term, but have needed to introduce some form of rotation of the remedies, as the deer become tolerant of a remedy that is consistently used. A homemade recipe from the University of Minnesota Extension service is to put two eggs in 1-2 cups of cold water. Blend at high speed. Add this to one gallon of water and let sit overnight. Spray on foliage. The egg mixture does not wash off the foliage easily. Reapplication two or three times a season may be required. Ultrasonic sound emitters have proved to be unsuccessful with deer, as in a relatively short time they find that no harm comes to them if they ignore the sound and move into the garden away from the directional emitter.

Black-tailed deer are a big problem in the Pacific Northwest and eat many plants; so, in my regular visits to Oregon, deer control often comes-up in discussions about protecting rhododendrons, as the homes of many ARS members back on to forested areas. Chemical remedies don't have the same effect in all the U.S. States, but the following have been found to work consistently in Oregon: Deer Away Big Game Repellent, Bobbex Deer Repellent and Plant Nutrient, Liquid Fence Deer and Rabbit Repellent, and Repellex Flower and Ornamental Deer Repellent. The latter type is not recommended as it has a residual odour that is offensive. Liquid Fence Deer and Rabbit Repellent is available in the U.K., as is a similar product, Havahart Deer Off, the latter works for up to 90 days. Harold Greer, of Greers Gardens Nursery, in Eugene Oregon, has suggested Plantskydd Repellent, which emits an odour that stimulates a fear-based response; it can also be applied during rain or snow. The manufacturer claims that it also acts as a foliar feed for several different plants. This product is available in the U.K. on the internet at a reasonable cost. Whilst users in Oregon have found that a single application can be effective for up to five months, this does not mean the product will be effective for the same duration in the climatic conditions we experience in the U.K. Safe handling of all chemicals requires the user to carefully read the label and follow directions. The user may need to keep the formulation well mixed during application (perhaps by shaking the sprayer), and there may be temperature limitations for when the chemicals can be applied and how they should be stored.

Articles dealing with the control of deer in gardens are relatively rare and tend not to deal with damage to rhododendrons. So, whilst these notes have been collated from my own researches, they can only provide an introduction to a problem that is not going to go away anytime soon and are intended to draw attention to the subject. Comments and suggestion from members would be welcomed by your Editor, as in this way we all benefit.

Secretary's Report

Katrina Clow

After a glorious final week in June, and a spell of soft rain, the rhododendrons at Townend are at last putting on new leaves. A late frost at the end of May caused a large amount of damage on new growth: beeches, rhododendrons, both species and hybrids, magnolias, *Cercidiphyllum*, *Enkianthus*, hydrangeas and many more shrubs suffered. It is very fortunate that we had our show at Garelochhead in early May, with no hard frosts in the run up to disappoint wouldbe exhibitors.

Many members reported that rhododendrons were in flower 1-2 weeks earlier this year and so there were different specimens on show and more hybrids than in 2018 but, as usual, the hall looked spectacular and the winners more varied. The accolade must go to Glenarn which scooped 4 cups. Sue and Mike Thornley consider that 2019 was almost their best rhododendron season ever and those of us privileged to visit the garden in May and June must heartily concur.

Fiona and Willie Campbell won 3 cups –a joint force to be reckoned with and John Roy, 2. Another winner was Laura Cameron who received the Harry Fairburn cup. Laura runs the Gibson Hall and gives us invaluable help on show days. Nothing is too much trouble - extra printing, straws to mark the class divisions, lighting, tape; we ask and it appears! Perhaps as a result of her win, Laura has joined SRS and we are delighted to welcome her to the membership.

The photographic competition had more entries this year but Stella Irving won the Wild Argyll cup for the second year running.

The plant sale this year was even more successful than in 2018. The volunteers (Willie Campbell, Chip Lima, Oliver Miller and Philip Rankin) who provided

good, unusual plants and worked tirelessly on the stand throughout the day are to be thanked and congratulated for their efforts. The sales were over £800. Thanks also to Mary Gray's excellent local publicity, word has gone round that there are good plants to be had at fair prices, including rhododendrons from Alan Clark and keen customers are waiting to buy well before our official opening time of mid-day.

The show could not go on without the support and help of our volunteer committee members and our 3 judges and we thank all of those involved in realising another successful Rhododendron Show and Exhibition.

Several members who grow a variety of plants, not just rhododendrons, have mentioned that our show date always clashes with the Scottish Rock Garden Club show and Competition in Glasgow, where they would like to attend and compete. The shows committee is considering alternating the show date in future years to accommodate the SRGC event.

Members will recall that SRS has not set up a publicity stand at 'Gardening Scotland' for two years as we were failing to attract new members. Alternative venues have been sought and in a hot weekend in June, Willie Campbell and I attended an event organised by SRGC on Plant Collecting in the Himalayas. The event was well attended and our little publicity stand was busy during lecture intervals. We made new contacts, met old friends and two new members joined. In addition, Willie has organised and collected the 60 images which are on show in the Douglas Pavilion, at the Explorers Garden in Pitlochry.

Our joint meeting with The Rhododendron Species Conservation Group will be held at Pitlochry and the Explorers Garden this October when there will be an opportunity to visit the exhibition but do visit the show if you are in the area; you will recognise many of the 20th Century Plant Hunters portrayed. ("Celebrating Modern Scottish Plant Hunters." Exhibition sponsored by SRGC and SRS www.explorersgarden.com)

It is sad at this juncture to remember 3 great explorers, plant collectors and plantsmen who have died this year; Sir Peter Hutchison, George Argent and Jim Taggart. Their contribution to gardening in Scotland is immeasurable and their knowledge and experience irreplaceable. Members will have treasured memories of these 3 men and we send our condolences to their families.

On a brighter note, we welcome the following new members:-

Laura Cameron, Claire Nicholson and Dr James Harrison who joined at the show and all from Gairlochhead.

Mike Russel from Elsmere Port, Cheshire

Eric Allen from Blairgowrie, who joined at the Lockerbie meeting.

I hope that members will continue to support our events and participate in the show. We are a small organisation but keen to introduce more people to the wonderful world of rhododendrons. Our show is a great introduction to the variety of species and hybrids available or hidden in someone's garden. You are always assured of a warm welcome and so bring your friends too.

Tours and Conferences Programme for 2019 to 2021

David N Starck

2019 Joint RSCG & SRS Autumn Conference: 'Botanical Explorers in the Modern Era'

Pitlochry Hydro Hotel, Pitlochry: Saturday 5th & Sunday 6th October 2019

The proforma for this event has already been circulated. If you are interested please complete and return to Gloria Starck gloria@lochlorien.free-online.co.uk
The outline programme and registration form are expected to be available later in Spring.

2020 Spring Tour: Gardens of Southern Ireland: Sunday 19th April – Monday 27th April 2020

This will be a coach tour starting from the Manchester Airport Marriott and then travelling to Holyhead for the fast crossing to Dublin. Planning for this tour is almost complete and we are currently planning to visit 13 gardens during this Tour, including some of which are well known as well as some private gardens. We will be using 6 hotels for this Tour. An outline Itinerary and Booking Forms will be available later this year. To register your interest please complete the Interest Form, included with the Yearbook, and return to Gloria Starck. Alternatively you can email Gloria at gloria@lochlorien.free-online.co.uk to register your interest.

2020 Post Show Tour: Sunday 3rd May 2020

We are deviating from the normal practice of visiting gardens local to the Show to go further afield. We are therefore planning to go south of the Clyde for this Post Show Tour. Planning is currently underway.

Interest Forms with details will be sent out with the Autumn Review.

2020 SRS/RSCG Joint Autumn Conference: Early October 2020

Planning for this event is underway.

2021 Spring Tour: Pacific NW of the USA

Planning is in its early stages, but we are hoping to visit some very interesting gardens. Interest forms with finalised dates for this tour will be issued early 2020. Again if you wish to register interest now please contact Gloria Starck at gloria@lochlorien.free-online.co.uk and detailed forms will be sent as soon as they are available. Registering interest does not involve you in any firm commitment.

**SRS Annual Show – Saturday 4th May 2019 –
Gibson Hall Garelochhead**

Gloria Starck



As usual there had been an enormous amount of work done by the Show Sub-committee to get everything organised for when the exhibitors arrived on Friday evening to set up their entries. I gather it was extremely

busy. On Saturday morning more exhibitors arrived and had to hurry to get their exhibits staged before 10.00am when the judging starts.

This spring the rhododendron season was quite early and some of the usual entries were well over, but this allowed for entries at this year's Show of some later flowering plants.

It was also good to see we had a number of exhibitors who had not entered previous shows as well as some who were making a welcome return. It was good to see Brodick exhibiting once again. We have missed them over the past few years. Their exhibits included two of my favourite plants; *Rhododendron genestierianum* and the azaleodendron *R. 'Glory of Littleworth'*.

I was fulfilling my duties as Steward along with Ian Douglas, John Roy, and the Judges were David Chamberlain, Alan Clark and Richard Baines. Barbara Anderson was the photographer during the judging.

The exhibits were looking fantastic and in some Classes the Judges found it very difficult to select the 1st, 2nd and 3rd places. Consequently there were many Highly Commended entries.

The trophy winners this year are as follows:

| | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| The Kildarden Trophy – For the winner of Class 1 | Glenarn |
| The George Sherriff Cup – For the most points in Section 1 | Glenarn |
| The Sir John Stirling Maxwell Trophy – For the best species in the show grown in the open | Glenarn <i>R. habro-trichum</i> |
| The Harry Fairburn Cup – For the most points in restricted Classes 45–48 | Laura Cameron |
| The David Stuart Cup – For the best species or hybrid exhibited in Classes 45–48 | Paul Haynes Unknown Hybrid |
| The John Hammond Cup – For the most points in the species and hybrid Azalea Classes (25, 34, 35) | John Roy |
| The Argyll & Bute Trophy – For the most points in all Classes grown in an Argyll & Bute garden | Glenarn |

| | |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| The Scottish Rhododendron Society Cup – For the best hybrid in the Show | John Roy R. ‘Horizon Monarch’ |
| The Keyline Cup – For the most points in all Classes grown in a garden of up to an acre | W & F Campbell |
| The Marlene Storah Cup – For the most points in all classes for gardens not open to the public more than once a year. | W & F Campbell |
| The Mervyn Kessell Cup – For the most points in Classes 42 and 43 | W & F Campbell |
| 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). | Chip Lima |
| The Wild Argyll Cup – For the best photographic print in the Show | Stella Irving |

I think the Annual Show is getting better and better and we are now encouraging members who have never exhibited before to join in. It is fun.

The 2020 Annual Show will be held on Saturday 2nd May in the Gibson Hall, Garelochhead. Exhibits can be staged late afternoon or early evening on Friday 1st or on Saturday morning before 10.00am.

The Post Show Tour is still in the planning stage, but we will let you know details as soon as these are available.

Page 9: Lots of good entries

Right: *Rhododendron* ‘Horizon Monarch’ wins best hybrid in show





Above: Judging the show

Left: Willie and Fiona Campbell receive one of their trophies

Pictures in this article by Barbara Anderson

On the Sunday, post show tours had been organised to visit Dinkie Fairlie's garden in Rhu and Marion and Roger Kinns' garden in Clynder.



Plant discussions at Dinkie's garden

Pictures by John Roy

Below: Marion meets us by one of her huge Monkey Puzzle trees

Right: Marion has a collection of arisaemas coming along



2019 Spring Tour of Gardens of Sussex, Surrey and West Kent

Willie Campbell

Once again the Society hit the road, this time to South East England and the heartland of some of the best rhododendron gardens in the world. Many of these gardens were at the forefront of rhododendron hybridisation including the gardens of the Loder Family and their famous “loder group” hybrids (*Rhododendron fortunei* x *R. griffithianum*).

We started at Millais Nursery at Crosswater Farm, where the highlight was a tour of the propagation facility with owner David Millais. Then on to Ramster to see the conservation collection of hardy hybrids with Maranda Gunn leading our group of 26 with various fitness levels.

Day 2 saw us at Wakehurst Place where we had local guides show us many wonderful plantings old and new. Some made a special visit to the Millennium Seed Bank, something out of science fiction with seeds locked in secure fireproof vaults. Then on to High Beeches another stunning landscape looking over the Sussex Downs. We all had a rather long tour round this very mature garden and were glad to sit down to a cream or savoury tea.

Bright and early day 3 took us to Wessex and Emmetts where Matthew the Head gardener guided us round his pride and clearly joy. His enthusiasm for his work was inspiring and we were all sure he would go places in the gardening world. Riverhill in the afternoon was a long established garden that is slowly being brought back to life, again by a young head gardener.

Day 4 Sheffield Park, a huge garden, massive plantings around a series of lakes giving the eye some pleasant vistas. Plenty of special trees and plants to keep us all happy. Nymans home of the Messel Family was a favourite of many in the group, again special plants everywhere you looked, with banks of Kurume Azaleas a collection of the “Wilson 50”.

Last day 5, and Leonardslee which had just reopened to the public and we all could see massive investment in car parks, gift shop, plant centres plus various cafes to meet everyone’s requirements on a big day out. Big it certainly was in

plants, trees and views. Some views in the distance were woods and gardens that still had to be reopened and tamed. After lunch in the marquee we made the short journey to Borde Hill and home of the Stephenson Clarke family who planted with passion these lovely mature gardens. Many of the rhododendrons are in need of a bit of TLC, but as the Head Gardener explained “This is not the Honeypot area” meaning very few visitors make their way through the woodlands. More tea and cake and it was back to our Hotel for the final meal together.

Clearly the trip was a huge success, each garden visit was carefully co-ordinated arriving each day as the gardens opened, we were met at the gate and guided round these beautiful places by gardeners, owners and guides who passed on their knowledge and information to the group. Yes, we had fun naming plants, was it this or that. Lunches were a delight and afternoon teas were delicious. All this does not happen without meticulous planning, timing and hours of work on behalf of the tour members. David and Gloria, as a group, we met, we saw and we enjoyed, so we say thank you.

Willie Campbell presented David and Gloria with two plants, so they remember the trip to Kent, Sussex and Surrey 2019.

The Saturday morning we travelled to Caxton Hall, a garden with Japanese inspiration, and soft landscapes all around the hall. Peaceful and just a short walk round the lake full of big carp. Before we all journeyed on our separate ways, we re-fuelled with huge pieces of Victoria sponge cake.

Millais Nursery and Garden at Crosswater Farm

Penny Murch

Preparations were under way for Royal Chelsea Show when we arrived at David Millais’ nursery. Since November, £25,000 worth of stock has been set aside for the display in three different stages of flowering to catch the perfect one. And this year, because it is the centenary for Exbury Gardens, they have an Exbury theme. Scented Exbury hybrids will be on the stand and the representation of the well-known train. Chelsea supports the strong retail and online brand that David has built up over the last eight years and he hopes to add a fourth gold medal to his collection. David also has a Royal Warrant from Prince Charles of which he is justifiably proud. With this has come encouragement to reduce peat use and David has managed to get it down to 55%, replacing it with coir and bark.

Spraying is kept to a minimum and we were shown the water treatment plant where 3ppm of copper is added to the water and helps keep fungal infections at bay by forming a minute coat of copper on the leaves. Also at this plant, but separately, compost tea is added to the water where it boosts micro bacterial growth and plant health. All plants are grown in pots, and careful attention is paid to drainage where they stand outside. In answer to a question, David said weevils were a constant problem, and nematodes were applied in the watering system to help control them. All watering is overhead spray systems.

The first part of the nursery that we were shown was the propagation house run by Dan which raised much interest. He uses polythene covered tunnels on a table, and roots 35,000 cuttings a year, concentrating on unusual or rare cultivars and species, many of which are difficult to root, and his success rate is 70%. Success depends very much on the vigour of the parent plant. Humidity is controlled with an 'Evaposensor'. Rooting begins in December with azaleas and the best time to take cuttings is early July when new wood is nice and soft, and a rooting compound is used. In answer to a question from Matt Heasman, David said he uses 'Tref' peat with and without perlite, there was no fertilizer in the rooting medium but a foliar feed or top dressing is given later. Some grafting is done, and there is a growing demand for big leaved species.

Once rooted the plants are left in cells over winter and potted on in spring. They then go into a tunnel where they are pushed along to form their first flush of growth. They are then ready to be lined up outside, and join the modern hybrids that are bought in. The potting machine was a source of interest and also the pot washer that cleaned pots before they went into their especially designed boxes for on-line sales.

David's Father came to Crosswater in 1970 and began planting the garden and collecting plants in the wild, so there was much of interest here. My eye was drawn to a beautiful *Rhododendron* 'Phyllis Korn', this of course, a much later hybrid from USA. David showed where he was bud-rubbing old plants in an effort to get rejuvenated growth that would root. Nothing is perfect and the garden is planted on deep white sand that is poor and either too wet or dry as dust. As the week went on we saw other gardens on acid clay with a more consistent water supply and their advantage was evident. We took our refreshment with gratitude and several people were able to buy plants that they had always wanted and they popped them in the boot.

Ramster

Alan Duncanson

We arrive at Ramster on a beautiful sunny windfree day and enjoy a light lunch in the pretty Tea House before being met by our guide for the afternoon, Miranda Gunn. We were honoured to be shown the garden by Miranda herself, who together with her husband Paul has passed on this paradise to Malcolm and Rosie Glaister (Paul and Miranda's daughter).

The garden was first laid out in 1890 by local nursery Gauntletts of Chiddingfold, whose main interests were Japanese plants and ornaments. Sir Henry and Lady Norman (Miranda's grandparents) bought Ramster in 1922. Lady Norman was the daughter of Lord and Lady Aberconwy and granddaughter of Henry Pochin who started developing Bodnant in 1875. The once considerable staff at Ramster has been succeeded by two gardeners who keep this jewel of a garden in trim.

The striking entrance to this lovely garden is guarded by many huge examples of *Rhododendron* 'Cynthia' all of which were in full flower for our visit and quite spectacular!! Miranda considers *R.* 'Cynthia' her best friend!!

The earth at Ramster is acid to neutral and the setting ancient oak woodland, interplanted with all manner of woodland plants, guarded by huge oaks and mature rhododendrons, some of which are up to and over 20 meters high!! Statues are cleverly placed and some have been beautifully carved out of fallen trees.



We pass a huge tulip tree and orchids appear all around us as we meet the lovely perfume of *Rhododendron* 'Fragrantissima'. We come to Rosemary Hyde's collection of azaleas, clipped piles of kurume azaleas and now more than 30 of the Wilson 50's have

Enjoying Ramster

been added to the collection. Azaleas from Ghent, Knaphill and Exbury. We pass a huge *R. 'Pink Pearl'* and a massive bamboo in full flower, going out with a great display! We come to a *Kalopanax septemlobus* var. *maximowiczii* (a member of the ivy family) and a Champion tree in this garden. Many oaks have reached a great age and one in particular huge fine specimen is believed to be from the 1500s.

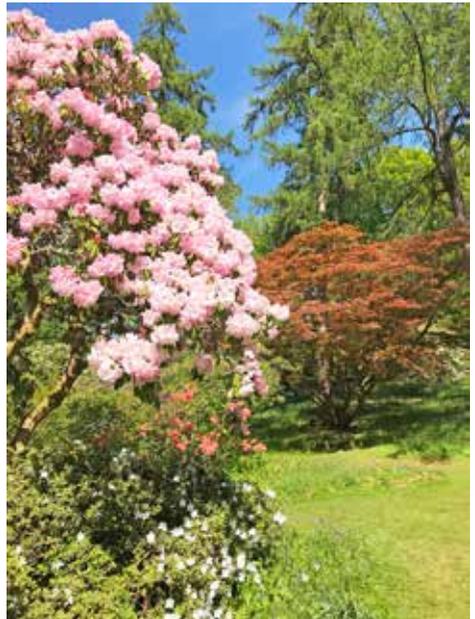
The Loderi Walk was looking wonderful and the scent was heavy as we climbed to the RCMG collection of hardy hybrids. In many gardens in this part of England, water is a constant worry. At Ramster, water, when abundant, is pumped up to a reservoir at the top of the garden where it is stored and feeds a downward stream.

We pass a brilliant white *Rhododendron 'Helene Schiffner'* and *R. 'Zuiderzee'* in whitish yellow and I stop to catch a few views on camera. Unfortunately, I lose the leading group at this point and they have obviously moved on towards The Pond. I later apologised to Miranda for getting lost but the experience made me decide to revisit this lovely garden, perhaps together with the South of Sweden RS in the not too distant future. This wonderful garden needs more time to be explored at leisure.

As our guide, Miranda knew her garden and its inhabitants well, with a wealth of knowledge and with some humour thrown in like "before you accept a seat on any committee, you should get your escape plan worked out!!" Another thing Miranda passed on was to plant when you can – for instance, *after* an extended dry period or *well after* an extremely wet period and thereby avoiding giving new plants a difficult start.

You can see this garden is not standing still with new plants being added and old faithful friends like the acers, rhododendrons and oaks well looked after. I conclude that a visit to this lovely garden was a real joy and I will be back.

Rhododendron 'Pink Pearl'
Pictures by Alan Duncanson



Wakehurst Place

Fiona Campbell

Members of SRS had a guided tour of parts of the huge estate at Wakehurst in West Sussex. This is a NT property but managed by Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. It has a walled garden, water gardens woodlands and conservation areas all spread out over 500 acres and also houses the Millenium Seed Bank in a modern building. We were put into 2 groups and the guide, Martin proved very knowledgeable and was able to point out many interesting plants as we walked along.

Although an old Estate the main “planting” was done by Sir Gerald Loder in the early part of the 20th century after buying the property when he introduced many Loder Rhododendrons and tree specimens from around the world including many acers for autumn colour.

After the great storm of 1987 when Wakehurst lost 20,000 trees new geographical areas were developed, one with the help of Tony Shilling known to many rhododendron people. This district has been short of rain for much of spring and it was sad to see many of the smaller rhododendrons in the Asian Heath area had suffered in this drought. Some replanting was needed. However there was a good group of *R. yakushimanum* ‘Koichiro Wada’ which seemingly has been voted the most popular rhododendron in the garden world.



Further on we were interested to see the *Emmenopterys henryi* from China which made garden headlines last year when it flowered for the first time in 37 years, and a fine specimen of Chilean *Embothrium* grew nearby. We passed a fine tulip tree a *Ginkgo* and golden rain tree on our way to the Himalayan Glade. The upper path allowed us to look down on many mature rhododendrons

**Pictures of Wakehurst Place by
Fiona Campbell**



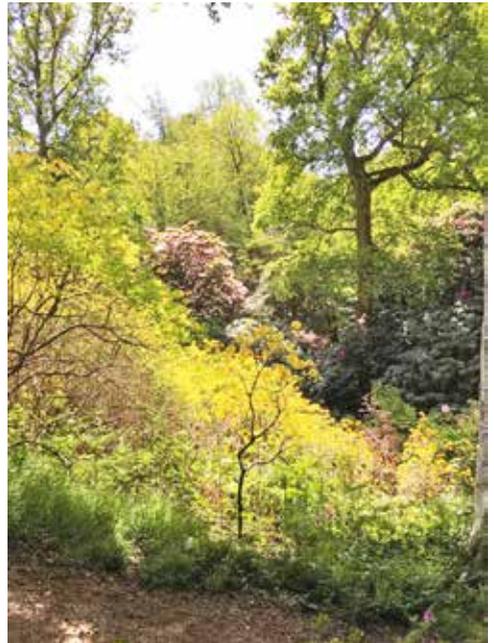
and plants in the valley. Then our route took us through the pinetum to the Southern Hemisphere Garden where another tree of interest was a rather brown New Zealand *Dacrycarpus dacrydioides* which has no smell on any part and was used to make packing boxes to export butter long ago. The route took us back towards the formal walled garden with many colourful herbaceous plants and shrubs.

As this is a Botanical Garden the plants were well labelled. Conservation is a major part of the work here. Parts of the gardens are laid out as wild flower meadows and cut only once a year. There was an area set aside for seed recently arrived from Kyrgyzstan and

sewn to form a meadow. We saw black poplar, a tree native to Sussex and with only a few left recently they have been propagated and spread out in the county. Martin also explained the de-compacting operation which has been done on some old special trees to help them survive many more years. This procedure blows air into the root system to loosen the compacted ground.

The Millennium Seed Bank in the grounds is a huge storage area of millions of seeds from all round the world. The exhibitions here gave an insight into the work that is done in preparing the seeds for storage and showed the vaults that house the largest collection of living seed in the world. Priority is given to those most threatened and those most useful.

This is a Garden that would need many visits to appreciate all that is there, but we got a flavour of it with the 2 hour tour.



High Beeches

Matt Heasman

Sarah Bray, Anne Boscawen's daughter met us at the gate. She called herself the curator and as we went around it became clear she was an excellent curator as she knew her plants and trees inside out. We couldn't have picked a better afternoon as the sun was warm and bright with a light breeze to keep me cool. I had been to High Beeches before on the SRS tour many years ago and remembered that it was my favourite garden and had lots of interesting plants including their own collection of plants from a recent trip to Bhutan.



We started off at the top of the hill with a fantastic view of the colourful garden below us and the Sussex High Weald on the horizon. Sarah explained a little about the history of the garden then introduced us to a fit looking young man at the back, Robin, and declared that he was 50% of the workforce. So that put the workload into perspective a lot!! Starting to walk down the hillside towards the valley we some of the first azalea beds, Sarah mentioned that she had a couple to show us and was hoping for some suggestions as to their

Top: View over azaleas

Left: *Primula prolifera*

Pictures in this article by Matt Heasman



names. One of the first larger rhododendrons we came to was their own hybrid called *R. 'Hullabalu'*, a large shrub with an attractive pink flower truss. Then we went through an area of large mature rhododendrons with *R. falconeri* ssp. *eximium*, as a backdrop, with a lovely yellow *R. cinnabarinum* in the foreground.

In the area called Forrest's Bridge all along the path the lovely bright yellow *Primula prolifera* was flowering. In the sunshine it looked so natural as it ran along the ditch. Further round a small embankment was covered with old mature dwarf rhododendrons (Forrest's Collection), including a large *R. primuliflorum* that had just finishing flowering. On the other side of that path there was a *R. tephropeplum* that was in full flower. It had us fooled for a time as I thought it was a *R. glaucophyllum* with short tubular flowers. Thank goodness for labels.

Following the path up we came through a wooded area and to The Loder Walk and the *Rhododendron 'Loderi'* were all heavily laden with flowers as well as scent. This is the area with the larger leaved rhododendrons and it was here where I found some of their own Bhutan collections that I remembered as newly planted shrubs. They have grown somewhat in the intervening years. The area was now fairly well shaded as the overhead trees were in leaf, but in the spring when they are flowering it must be a great sight. At the bottom of this valley we could see the vast expanses of the garden (25 Acres) on the other side of a burn. There was a large field with a few trees of note and presumably more planting space one day. Sarah showed us one of her special trees, the rare *Quercus oxyodon*, and she felt it should be a champion tree but seemingly there is another in the area that has got that award. All the same it was nice to see a well grown tree



Top: *Rhododendron 'Hullabalu'*

Right: *R. tephropeplum*

with plenty of room for expansion.

Walking up the path on the other side of the valley there was some lovely azalea beds with some interesting plants that were the cause of usual great debate. A magnificent cut leaf beach was a real show stopper. Then there were lots of trees that have been planted that are now coming into their prime. On this hillside there is their famous Tupulo tree, *Nyssa sylvatica* that is an absolute riot of colour in the autumn. Indeed it is fair to say that High Beeches is a garden for all seasons with its bluebell woods, magnolias and rhododendrons, moving onto summer shrubs like the *Cornus*, *Stewartia*, *Eucryphia*, then its autumn colour. The garden still looks fantastic and will have lots of interest for many years to come.

At the end we were treated to a superb cream tea (coffee for me) that was loved by everyone. Thank you very much for having us again to High Beeches.

Emmetts Garden

Marion Kinns

Day three of the tour was in the Sevenoaks area of Kent so involved little driving from our hotel in Haywards Heath.

The National Trust has managed Emmetts since 1967 and we were lucky to be guided round the eight acres of formal landscape by Head Gardener, Matthew Scott. Matt was full of energy and enthusiasm and has clear plans for the restoration pruning of much of the garden as many plants are getting to the end of their lives and others will benefit greatly from radical pruning.

Rainfall in the garden is around 20 inches per year. Emmetts lies on a ridge of green sandstone with a pH of 5 and thin soil lying over a layer of rubble. Large trees in the garden probably reach the water table but this has dropped over the years making it harder to establish new specimens. As with many gardens that we visited on this trip, the great storm of 1987 caused great devastation and 97% of the trees in the outer woodland were lost.

Between 1890 and 1927 the banker, Lubbock, owned Emmetts and began his major work on the garden in 1910, heavily influenced by his friend and advisor, the designer William Robinson. Robinson wrote widely on gardening topics



and was influential in the development of a more informal style of gardening. Robinson's vision was that the garden would lie along the ridge of the North Downs with woodland giving rise to formal garden and then gradually returning to woodland. With this site lying 600 ft above sea level, Robinson was keen to create many vistas, taking advantage of the magnificent views over the Kentish Weald. 55% of the designed garden was to be filled with rhododendrons.

Distinct areas of the garden were planned: the rockery/scree garden, the rose garden, the north or alpine garden and the south garden.

After Lubbock's death in 1927 Charles Boise, a wealthy American geologist, bought the garden. He and his wife Hazel added to Lubbock's design rather than changed it. He did however fill in many of Lubbock's ponds as, having contracted malaria in Africa, he did not wish to encourage the breeding of mosquitoes on his property. He also added large blocks of limestone from Westmorland to supplement the structure in the rock garden. Boise left Emmetts to the National Trust in 1967.

The rock garden was full of colour at the time of our visit from acers, small rhododendrons and various bulbous and herbaceous plants. This area was to give the feel of being on top of a mountain with outcrops of scree and low plantings. A big restoration of the area had been carried out under Head Gardener Mark Nelson during his tenure 2006-11.

Top: The Rock Garden

Right: The Rose Garden

Opposite page: *Rhododendron smirnowii*

Pictures by Marion Kinns



The rose garden was laid out in 1910/11 to the instructions of Catherine Lubbock. Although the roses were not in bloom for our visit we were all very impressed by the quality and health of the plants. Matt told us that there would be blooms from June to November and that he selects sweet scented varieties. He praised the special microclimate for the success of the area but credit must go to his management of hard pruning, regular dead heading and a regime of spraying with alternately SB invigorator and an insecticide/fungicide.

The north garden is in the middle of a five-year restoration which will see 90% of the present planting removed although good specimens will be kept. The area has a wilder feel after the structured areas of the rock and rose garden. On entry to the area we saw the remains of four and a half thousand early tulips informally planted in the grassy area beneath cherry trees. Even the finished blooms gave us an idea of how effective this display must be. The colours of pink, black and red have always been used. We moved on along a path through rhododendrons and azaleas and other plants of interest such as *Decaisnea*, *Crinodendron*, *Magnolia*, and *Cotinus*. The intention of this area is to give the feel of being halfway down a mountainside with specimens and drifts of herbaceous plantings.

The south garden, the largest area of the designed landscape, was created in 1912/13. It is a much more open area and is planted with a collection of specimen trees and shrubs, including many larger rhododendrons. For this area, advantage was taken of the closing down sale of nearby Veitch and son, to obtain

many Wilson and Lobb introductions. A restoration project was in its third year as we visited. 40% of the collection had been lost in the great storm of 1987 and Matt was having difficulty replacing some specimens such as *Emmenopterys henryii*, a tree that rarely flowers in the UK and needs a long hot summer to do so. Another species being sought is *Ehretia dicksonii*, a tree in family Boraginaceae from China and Taiwan. The latter can tolerate temperatures down to -18°C but is rarely seen in the UK. The north garden contains 16 champion trees and is a large enough area for their form and structure to be appreciated. Notable was a large *Eucryphia* x *nymansensis* 'Nymansay' which was a cutting from the



original 'Seedling A' that Harold Coomber, Head Gardener at Nymans, brought back from South America in the 1920s. Others catching my attention were a very large *Cercidophyllum*, an *Albizia* (yet to come into full leaf), an *Illicium anisatum* and many Tupelo trees. A rhododendron of note was *R. smirnowii*, from the Caucasus Mountains. The frilled edge to the corolla has made this species popular with hybridisers.

Matt finished by taking a few of us to an area outwith the open garden where a collection of Ghent, other hybrid azaleas and some other rhododendrons were to be found. He was keen to identify many of these and John Hammond was able to oblige with several of them. It was a good finish to a wonderful morning and we moved on to enjoy lunch in the Kent sunshine.

Riverhill Himalayan Gardens

Roger Kinns



The afternoon of 15th May found us at Riverhill Himalayan Garden in the Weald of Kent. It was yet another lovely Spring day with bright sunshine and a cooling breeze. The house and garden have been owned by the Rogers family since 1840, building on early introductions that stemmed from sponsorship of plant hunters in China and the Himalayas and seed from Sir Joseph Hooker. It has evolved with successive generations, through crises that

included the great storm of 1987 that uprooted so many mature trees in the south of England, to its present form with new plantings and fresh layouts. It is hard to imagine now the scale of destruction and sheer determination required to recreate a garden on the scale of Riverhill. Adam Roberts, the young and enthusiastic Head Gardener, gave us an excellent tour, keeping the attention of SRS members who are always tempted to linger by some newly sighted horticultural treasure. One of the first things he did was point out that there never had been a river at

Riverhill; the name stems from distortion of a Saxon word for hill. The meaning of weald is clear enough, but centuries have passed since the area could be described simply as woodland: the demand for oak from an expanding Royal Navy, the growth of the City of London and the Industrial Revolution saw to that.

The views across the Downs were striking enough by themselves. We could see fine specimens of Turkey Oak (*Quercus cerris*), Giant Redwood (*Sequoia-dendron giganteum*) and Cedar of Lebanon (*Cedrus libani*) in the more distant recesses of the garden, all over 150 years old. The Turkey Oak comes with a story: Colonel Rogers returned from the Crimean war with an acorn in his pocket and planted it at Riverhill. Palmerston was Prime Minister then. Some of the grand rhododendrons are even older. The *R. niveum* dates from 1849 and *R. falconeri* from 1850, both predating the Great Exhibition. We saw a rare natural hybrid between *R. niveum* and *R. falconeri* with lovely pale lilac flowers that had been discovered by Col. Rogers in young plants he had received from expeditions. It was eventually named after him as *R. 'Colonel Rogers'* in 1917, decades after its discovery. There are many handsome *R. decorum* too, all flowering magnificently in 2019 and that's just a sample of trees and shrubs to admire. There is an attractive Himalayan shelter in the original walled garden, facing a fine water feature and sculpture as the centerpiece on the lawn.

Adam Roberts showed us the work he has been doing in recreation of a part of the garden that had become overgrown, re-establishing rockery stonework and a pool that provides a place of solace and contemplation. Towards the end of our visit, many of us were drawn to *Rosa banksia* with its profusion of tight golden flowers and stopped to admire the house and its newly developed rose beds. I especially liked the ghostly leaves of a variegated Norway Maple (*Acer platanoides* 'Drummondii'). There's much to enjoy and learn at Riverhill, with help from an excellent guidebook.

Opposite page: Water feature and sculpture

Right: 'Drummond's Maple'

Pictures by Roger Kinns



Sheffield Park

Keith White



When entering the Park through the garden house I had little idea of the historic significance of this place. My mind was on the grand views, great trees, rhododendrons and the congeniality of our tour group members. I later learned that this great place was the product of a succession of inspired

owner/gardeners and famous landscape professionals.

Our tour guide, Cecil, took us around his best route for we ‘mostly plant interested’ folks. Fairly knowledgeable, he pointed out many of the 80 champion trees. He also introduced us to many of the other special trees. Memorable were the redwoods, umbrella pine, *Cunninghamia*, giant red beech and *Larix*. Too bad my memory is all I have, since there were many other special trees I have pictures of but whose names I did not record. Most spectacular, however, were the views along the 5 ponds and lake shores. Prior owners, beginning in the mid 1700s turned the brook flowing through from Arnos Springs on the upper property into, after much excavation and re-excavation, the lakes, ultimately draining through Arnos Brook into the River Ouse, which bounds the south and east half of the property. The garden and great house was approximately 40 ha but now greater than 80 ha with the acquisition of the “South Park” which is the more open countryside past the lake and garden view with the signature groupings of trees in threes and fives, characteristic of the design by Capability Brown.

Regarding rhododendrons, there are oodles of beautiful, big hybrids. Amongst them are big *R.* ‘Loderi’ and the pride of Arthur Soames, his hybrid, *R.* ‘Angelo’, with a pinkish white fragrant huge flower much similar to *R.* ‘Loderi’. Soames is the man responsible for the wonderful plantings with rhododendrons, camellias, and azaleas interspersed with shoreline trees with the special feature of brilliant

autumn colour. Upon inspecting some of the azaleas I observed that they were of the Ghent type. Since then I have learned that Sheffield Park contains the Plant Heritage Collection of Ghent azaleas.

Also very memorable is the imposing, visible on high ground from every vantage point, grand neogothic Sheffield Park House, remodelled from its original Tudor design by famed architect, James Wyatt for the first earl, Lord Sheffield, John Holroyd.

Until I began researching for this article I had no idea of Sheffield Park's interesting history. King William the Conqueror, soon after his victory at Hastings in 1066, set about dividing up England to reward his supporters with large grants of land. To his half brother, Robert, Count of Mortain and Earl of Cornwall, William gifted lands which included the division named "Seffelle", from which, presumably, the word "Sheffield" is derived. "Seffelle" means a place cleared for sheep to graze. In 1086 King William sent forth his agents, according to the Anglo Saxon Chronicle, "All over England into each shire, commissioning them to find out how many hundreds of hides were in the shire, what land the king himself had and what stock upon the land, or what dues he ought to have by the year from the shire". This was to be the Domesday Book, The Great Survey. "Domesday" meaning doomsday, a later appellation, the assessments for which there was no appeal. In the Domesday Book the lands of Sheffield Park are listed and accounted for.

Through the centuries this place has had many famed associations. In 1264, Simon de Montfort bivouacked his army of knights here before defeating King Henry III at the Battle of Lewes. In 1538 Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk, uncle of Anne Boleyn (whom Henry VIII had executed 2 years earlier hosted Henry here on a deer hunt. Edward Gibbon,

Opposite page: Sheffield House

Right: "Ten Foot Pond"

Pictures in this article by Keith White





John Hammond and the bole of a Giant Redwood

guests have included botanist Sir William Banks, writer Virginia Woolf, the Prince of Wales, guest of the cricket crazed Third Earl. Also Robert Baden-Powell, founder of the Boy Scouts; Queen Mary, wife of King George V; Queen Victoria's granddaughter, Princess Alice and her husband, the Earl of Athlone; and George VI, Queen Elizabeth's father.

The lakes, ringed by blooming rhododendrons and azaleas, with a brilliant show of color from the trees in autumn (Japanese maples, *Fothergilla major*, swamp cypress, sweet gum, red oak, and silver birch) were the work of Arthur Soames, last owner (1909 - 1942). Today, along with the National Trust, they are the benefactors and we are the grateful beneficiaries.

Nymans

Marlene Storah

Another spectacular garden with so much to see. A large *Davidia* covered in white handkerchief blooms greeted us as we walked through the gate. We met our guide Sylvia who is a National Trust volunteer; her knowledge of the house and the people who lived in it throughout history, going back to before William the Conqueror, was immense. The house was rebuilt in 1928 in medieval style but a large part of it burnt down in 1947. We were told about the Swedish composter that dealt with all kitchen waste before we started the tour of the garden.

The things I feel of interest to us start in the 1890s with Ludwig Messel and his gardener James Combra. Over the next 100 years there were 3 owners and 3 head gardeners. The son of James Combra, Harold, was a plant hunter and

Magnolis x weiseneri

Picture by Marlene Storah

collected many plants in Chile and many of these are still found in the garden as well as the Chilian collection. Ludwig Messel sponsored some of the Himalayan plant collectors. The pinetum was developed and now contains many champion trees. His son Leonard Messel and his wife Maud continued developing the garden, Maud designing the rose garden. The house and garden then passed to their granddaughter Anne, Countess of Rosse and in 1958 to the National Trust.



As we were shown around the garden we were escorted by 2 other N.T. volunteers who tried to keep us together - anyone who has been on our trips will know what a difficult task that is. It is a wonderful garden with something to delight everyone, romantic ruins, herbaceous borders, rose garden, wonderful well trained *Wisteria chinensis* and a stately Lime Avenue, informal planting contrasting with clipped yew and topiary. The things that delighted me most were the scented *Rhododendron burmanicum* and *R. lindleyi* growing in a sheltered area and *R. 'Loderi King George'* in full bloom.

We were too late for many of the stately magnolias but *Magnolia obovata* still bloomed and *M. x wieseneri*, a champion tree, was magnificent. *M. grandiflora*, I think another champion, was also in flower with many buds to come. We walked on past a large group of *Cercidiphyllum japonica*, some multi stemmed and another champion tree. *Paulownia* was in full bloom, so many wonderful plants I can list only a small percent. *Rhododendron 'Coombe Royal'* and *R. macabeanum* stood out, the azalea collection included the Wilson 50. There was a large planting of *Schefflera*, *Crinodendron* and *Staphylea colchica* in full bloom. At every turn there was something to delight the eye and the nose.

This garden is where *Magnolia x loebneri* 'Leonard Messel' and *Eucryphia x nymansensis* were raised. Some of us stopped to talk to a young gardener who asked questions about rhododendrons and she was so enthusiastic, it was a joy to talk with her, but we were moved on and asked to keep together. On the other

side of the road is a wild woodland garden of 250 acres with free access with many rhododendrons but time and energy were running out.

Leonardslee

Ian Jones

This was a keenly awaited visit of a very interesting and dramatic garden which since 2010 had been closed, lying ‘dormant’ with two successive owners following the sale by the Loder family who had originally purchased it in 1889.

The Loder family with a nationally known reputation in the 19th and early 20th centuries in industry, politics and public service is a name now revered for their horticultural legacy. Three great gardens, Wakefield Park, High Beeches and Leonardslee were owned by the same family. The Rhododendron ‘Loderi’ hybrids are justifiably renowned.

In 2017 Leonardslee was purchased by Mrs Penny Streeter who has brought financial and management resource to recover and develop the garden and its enormous plant collection. It is worth mentioning that Mrs Streeter was apparently originally looking only for a country house and, after an initial viewing, Leonardslee House was tentatively chosen. The selling agent advised there was also ‘a garden’, actually quite a large one. Many might have been put off but on then visiting the 240 acre ‘garden’ Mrs Streeter’s enthusiasm for purchase was intensified rather than stifled and the ongoing major rescue is the result. The horticultural community must be grateful and perhaps the Loder legacy has made its ‘own’ deserved luck.

The scale of work was immediately clear on arrival by ongoing car park development of almost airport scale. Empty when we arrived, it was almost full when we left. A unique vision in the reception desk was the next surprise - a largish but judiciously shaped *Rhododendron macabeaenum* planted in the underlying soil, stretching to the roof and in fine condition. If it was uncertain before we arrived, it was clear that the ‘new’ Leonardslee was open for business and had the right ideas.

We were taken round by the Head Gardener, Ray Abrahams, ex. Savill and Minterne Gardens, who heads up a team of 7 full time gardeners and external contractors who are now 18 months into a major renovation and recovery

programme, which is shortly to be extended with a nursery and propagation team and appropriate facilities. In the first phase the garden emphasis had been on paths, identification, clearance and renewal including the waterways and 6 'ponds' all of which are quite large. These lie at the base of an elongated coomb which is 85 feet deep below the surrounding ground and on whose slopes there are set the plant collection of shrubs and trees with a foundation of species and hybrid rhododendrons and major broadleaf and evergreen trees, many of monumental proportions and some very rare indeed. The full number is not known but there are 15,000 'towering' specimens which are listed, including very rare plants - 190 on the endangered list, including a Sicilian pine, one of only 45 in the world. Size and scale is also a strong feature and the magnolias are already up to 60 feet high. The Leonardslee listed hybrids only number 58 but many more were raised and are in the collection.

The party followed Ray in a northerly direction on the 'Middle Walk' looking down to the ponds lying beneath with their surround of massed Mollis and Ghent azaleas showing great colour notwithstanding a rather grey day. There were other numerous plants pointed out – *Rhododendron* 'Georgette' a clone of *R. 'Loderi Venus'*, *R. 'Leonardslee Primrose'* (*R. campylocarpum* x *R. arboreum* ssp *cinnamomeum*) a *R. yakushimanum* with variegated leaves and some very tall conifers including a rare *Cryptomeria japonica* 'Araucarioides'. As we proceeded with admiration, and for those of us with younger gardens, respect for the height and scale that large leafed species rhododendrons can achieve there might have been an element of fear of what we may be leaving behind for our successors, but what a legacy!

We descended to pond level but not without seeing the dramatic vistas that can open up where judicious clearance has been introduced. Top to bottom seemed rather more than 85 feet. There was an ascent up the other (east) side to the Coronation Garden. The joke from our guide was that the Coronation was that of Queen Victoria but we realised it was actually her successor, King Edward as we were shown a large collection of *R. 'Loderi'* hybrids, actually rather special ones, the original plants from the 1901 hybridisation of the very careful selection of the *R. griffithianum* and *R. fortunei*. There are 58 named plants mainly from this combination, all of which are still at Leonardslee. A quick slip into the nearby undergrowth presented 11 of these of which only *R. 'Loderi King George'* and *R. 'Loderi White Diamond'* were familiar. A reference to J G Millais has made clear that the foundation of this hugely successful marriage was careful selection of parents. To quote from the 1917 Volume. p.31 'Sir Edmund Loder discovered a fact that has not been fully appreciated by other breeders of plants, that you

must only reproduce from the very best parents'. At the time there was a strong competitive instinct amongst the major land-owner/gardeners and horticultural espionage and even theft but, also co-operation and the *R. griffithianum* was actually a carefully chosen South Lodge plant. The owners of South Lodge were of course next door neighbours.

After our walk up to the *Rhododendron* 'Loderi' the time had passed and lunch was due. The morning had gone in a flash - so much to see in the parts of the garden we had accessed. We had walked through about a third of the total area but the whole of the Southern end, including 60 acres of unique Leonardslee hybrids, the famous rock garden, the Camellia Grove and Walk, no doubt many more monumental plants and the Wallabies were sadly for another day. Much is happening at Leonardslee, all of it good.

Borde Hill

George Browning

The tenth garden on the afternoon of the fifth day should have found our group exhausted. But no! We had been exhilarated at every visit and the camaraderie of the group was strong and resilient. Our backgrounds varied considerably but conversation was always easy and convivial. As someone without any real botanical knowledge, the tone of the tour was set by Gloria's first class organisational skills. The only time that a group split off was when the head gardener, in a garden being visited, requested an opinion of what the antecedents of a particular rhododendron were.

Historical background to Borde Hill: The house was built in 1598, with Edwardian additions added by Col Stephenson Robert Clarke aged 30 years. It was then that the large lawn with a ha-ha was created where his descendants now frequently hold open air opera events.

It was Col Clarke who funded expeditions to the far corners of the world to collect plants and shrubs. The main legacy of this is the trees of which there are several that have been given Champion status. The Clarke family made their money from coal mining and the Col Clarke's best view from the parkland was a railway viaduct that carried his coals to ? Newcastle. The trains can still be heard but the trees in the large parkland now obstruct the view of the viaduct. This outstanding parkland was fortunate not to have been severely damaged in

the South Downs' storm of the 1980s unlike many of the other gardens visited.

The Gardens: Of all the gardens that we had seen this perhaps was more of the scale that one might manage on one's own, with the help of a good head gardener backed by seasonal help. The fact that there were seven different types of clay in the garden, means that one could try moving the plants around to find the best place.

There was a very colourful, very long border of rhododendrons around a long curved, horseshoe border that was in full bloom. The rose garden was not too large to maintain, as was the rectangular pond with an interesting, central balancing water feature.

The current chatelaine regularly hosts sculpture exhibitions but the one on view at the time could only be best described as 'interesting' as was her 'tin house' purchased from a Chelsea flower show.

Conclusions: Borde Hill was pleasant to visit and unlike many of the other gardens we visited was not over-mature. The same can quite definitely be said of our group who were at their peak.

Caxton Manor

Willie Campbell

Having taken Alan Duncanson our Swedish friend, who incidentally hails from Gala in the Scottish borders, to the station, We filled up with fuel for the journey home and Fiona and I set off for Caxton Manor Hall.

The Manor Hall has been owned by Jules and Adele Speelman for about 38 years and they inherited a garden with many mature rhododendrons, azaleas and acers surrounding a large pond (full of large carp) with rustic boathouse and a waterfall trickling down into the lake.

After Adele visited Japan, the garden evolved in a very authentic Japanese style with many of the lakeside shrubs clipped and many fine Japanese ornamental sculptures dotted around the lake.

This was a lovely garden to finish our tour round Sussex, Surrey and West Kent

with lovely plantings, super views and with seats around the garden to enjoy the tranquil and peaceful setting with the Manor Hall always in the background as a dominant feature.

We had another lovely surprise waiting for us before we said our goodbyes, as Jules and Adele were opening for the National Garden Scheme in the afternoon and we were delighted to be asked to try out some of the various cakes on offer for later in the day.

Another successful trip over, so many of the finest rhododendron gardens were visited right here on London's doorstep. M25 here we come.



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Himalayan Weekend

Willie Campbell

Our Society was invited to join the Scottish Rock Garden Club David Boyd weekend at Lockerbie town hall. David Boyd events are to promote and encourage the cultivation of rock garden and woodland plants. David Boyd left a legacy to fund these events and with the healthy attendance I feel sure it was very much self funding.

Katrina Clow and myself attended with our membership stand which included seed sowing in a plastic bucket and cutting demonstration in a plastic clothes box. We attracted lots of attention to our stand and hopefully will gain a few new members.

Speakers at the weekend were as follows:

David Knott RBGE “The Himalayas”; David Chamberlain “Rhododendrons in the Wild”; Margaret Thorne “Meconopsis in the Wild”; Tim Lever (Aberconwy Alpine Nursery) “High Himalayan alpiners”; Ian Christie “Cultivation of Woodland Plants”; finally a super and passionate talk by Mike Thornley “History of the Rhododendron Garden”. Mike used his own garden at Glenarn to develop a well constructed talk which included the “Glenarn” way to propagate rhododendrons.

Because it was a sponsored weekend by the SRGC David Boyd fund, the costs were minimal at £5 per day with teas and coffees on tap all day. Most brought a picnic lunch and enjoyed a good chat at lunch time.

This prompts me as your Education Director to ask if any of our members would like to leave a legacy in your will to further educate our future members on the wonders of the genus *Rhododendron*.

| 2017 | Wuerzburg | | Radlett | | Glendoick | |
|------------|-----------|--------|---------|--------|-----------|--------|
| | mm | inches | mm | inches | mm | inches |
| January | 45.0 | 1.77 | 69.5 | 2.74 | 77.0 | 3.03 |
| February | 15.0 | 0.59 | 49.5 | 1.95 | 34.5 | 1.36 |
| March | 14.0 | 0.55 | 85.5 | 3.37 | 93.0 | 3.66 |
| April | 45.0 | 1.77 | 57.0 | 2.24 | 46.0 | 1.81 |
| May | 115.0 | 4.53 | 57.5 | 2.26 | 27.0 | 1.06 |
| June | 38.0 | 1.50 | 1.5 | 0.06 | 18.5 | 0.73 |
| July | 31.0 | 1.22 | 17.0 | 0.67 | 48.5 | 1.91 |
| August | 7.0 | 0.28 | 65.5 | 2.58 | 61.5 | 2.42 |
| September | 21.0 | 0.83 | 34.5 | 1.36 | 44.5 | 1.75 |
| October | 0.0 | 0.00 | 67.0 | 2.64 | 32.5 | 1.28 |
| November | 9.0 | 0.35 | 89.0 | 3.50 | 103.5 | 4.07 |
| December | 108.0 | 4.25 | 70.0 | 2.76 | 57.2 | 2.25 |
| Total 2018 | 448.0 | 17.64 | 663.5 | 26.13 | 643.7 | 25.34 |
| Total 2017 | 587.0 | 23.13 | 642.5 | 25.30 | 818.0 | 32.21 |
| Total 2016 | 622.0 | 24.49 | 692.0 | 27.24 | 783.3 | 30.83 |
| Total 2015 | 529.0 | 20.83 | 662.5 | 26.11 | 948.0 | 37.29 |
| Total 2014 | 517.0 | 20.36 | 862.5 | 33.96 | 915.5 | 36.05 |
| Total 2013 | 655.0 | 25.79 | 735.5 | 28.95 | 665.5 | 26.21 |
| Total 2012 | 585.0 | 23.04 | 903.5 | 35.56 | 980.0 | 38.58 |
| Total 2011 | 506.0 | 19.93 | 520.5 | 20.51 | 815.6 | 32.10 |
| Total 2010 | 776.0 | 30.54 | 682.0 | 26.87 | 741.8 | 28.22 |
| Total 2009 | 518.0 | 20.40 | 793.0 | 31.23 | 782.0 | 30.79 |
| Total 2008 | 521.0 | 20.51 | 753.5 | 29.67 | 810.8 | 31.92 |
| Total 2007 | 786.0 | 30.93 | 785.5 | 31.00 | 801.0 | 31.51 |
| Total 2006 | 583.0 | 22.95 | 617.0 | 24.29 | 752.7 | 29.63 |
| Total 2005 | | | 477.0 | 18.78 | 899.4 | 35.40 |
| Total 2004 | | | 662.0 | 26.06 | | |

The weather stations:

Wuerzburg is in Lower Franconia, North Bavaria, Germany.

Radlett is in Hertfordshire, north west of London.

Glendoick is in Perthshire, east central Scotland.

Glenarn is on the Gareloch, west central Scotland.

Ballachulish is in the Scottish west highlands.

Ellon is in Aberdeenshire, north east Scotland.

Morar is in the Scottish west Highlands

| Glenarn | | Ballachulish | | Ellon | | Morar | |
|---------|--------|--------------|--------|-------|--------|--------|--------|
| mm | inches | mm | inches | mm | inches | mm | inches |
| 209.6 | 8.25 | 384.3 | 15.13 | 40.0 | 1.57 | 213.0 | 8.39 |
| 139.7 | 5.50 | 183.6 | 7.23 | 42.0 | 1.65 | 158.0 | 6.22 |
| 98.6 | 3.88 | 117.9 | 4.64 | 110.0 | 4.33 | 68.0 | 2.68 |
| 95.3 | 3.75 | 118.6 | 4.67 | 33.0 | 1.30 | 79.0 | 3.11 |
| 38.1 | 1.50 | 127.3 | 5.01 | 29.0 | 1.14 | 65.0 | 2.56 |
| 56.4 | 2.25 | 160.3 | 6.31 | 35.0 | 1.38 | 59.0 | 2.32 |
| 79.3 | 3.12 | 85.6 | 3.37 | 74.0 | 2.91 | 103.0 | 4.06 |
| 117.3 | 4.62 | 291.6 | 11.48 | 53.0 | 2.09 | 181.0 | 7.13 |
| 184.2 | 7.25 | 459.7 | 18.10 | 61.0 | 2.40 | 256.0 | 10.08 |
| 177.8 | 7.00 | 300.7 | 11.84 | 82.0 | 3.23 | 295.0 | 11.61 |
| 136.7 | 5.38 | 315.7 | 12.43 | 89.0 | 3.50 | 148.0 | 5.83 |
| 244.3 | 9.62 | 224.3 | 8.83 | 61.0 | 2.40 | 164.0 | 6.56 |
| 1577.3 | 62.13 | 2769.6 | 109.04 | 709.0 | 27.90 | 1789.0 | 70.43 |
| 1692.5 | 66.63 | 2759.8 | 108.66 | 918.5 | 36.16 | | |
| 1647.7 | 64.87 | 2827.5 | 111.32 | | | | |
| 2196.7 | 86.50 | 3858.7 | 151.92 | | | | |
| 1933.5 | 76.11 | 3359.9 | 133.28 | | | | |
| 1641.2 | 64.61 | 2654.6 | 104.51 | | | | |
| 1956.3 | 77.01 | 2615.0 | 102.95 | | | | |
| 2257.6 | 88.75 | 3468.5 | 136.56 | | | | |
| 1403.8 | 55.27 | 1727.0 | 67.99 | | | | |
| 1889.1 | 74.37 | 2980.7 | 117.35 | | | | |
| 2056.6 | 81.00 | 3321.1 | 130.75 | | | | |
| 1921.5 | 75.63 | 3236.6 | 127.42 | | | | |
| 1722.2 | 67.79 | 3314.0 | 130.47 | | | | |
| 1511.3 | 59.50 | 3082.2 | 121.58 | | | | |
| 1619.3 | 63.50 | 3266.6 | 125.03 | | | | |

A big welcome to our new rainfall station in Morar which is to the north and west of Ballachulish. The much lower rainfall figures are significant as there are far fewer and much lower mountains in the area.

Wuerzburg and Glendoick have recorded their lowest rainfall yet, with others on the low side but once again Ballachulish is king!

Early Spring at Ordha Coille

Gloria Starck

For those of you who do not know, Ordha Coille is situated in Kilberry, Argyll on the West coast of Scotland overlooking Islay. It consists of about 3 acres mostly bordered by a narrow belt of Sitka spruce. I am writing these notes on the 30th March. On glancing through my garden diaries I noticed that on 30th March 2013 we were under a thick layer of snow (very unusual) and having regular power cuts (one for four days!)

The weather over the winter has been very mild with few big frosts. This has caused the rhododendrons to flower early (about 2 - 3 weeks in some cases). We had good bud ripening weather last summer so many of the plants are well covered with bloom. The only down side of the weather has been the rain! It has poured for weeks on end and the ground is saturated and some plants do not like this at all. Fortunately over the past couple of weeks we have had some good dry, warm weather.

Early spring flowering has its obvious benefits, if like me you suffer a bit in the winter when it is dark so much of the time. Spring flowering of any plant always cheers me up, and everything was/is early this year: witch hazel, snowdrops, daffodils, hellebores and now the primroses are with us.

The early rhododendrons started with *Rhododendron mallotum*, followed closely by *R. rirei* and *R. sutchuenense*. That was in late February and things have only got better. The large leafed rhododendron species are flowering very well this year and our small collection of *R. sinogrande* are in flower. Most of them came from a nursery in Harlow in Essex, but one came from Crarae. They are similar but with slight variety in the purple blotch to the throat. The only downside of growing this species is that its large leaves can be damaged by the high winds we get on the west coast of Scotland. Another of the larger leafed species flowering at the moment is *R. preptum*. A member of the Falconera subsection, it has flowered here for many years and is currently about 12 feet tall and covered with large trusses of creamy yellow flowers with a dark purple throat.

We have areas for the smaller rhododendrons and one that is flowering this year for the first time is *R. tsariense* x *R. proteoides*. I have had this plant for many years and it is still only about 15 inches tall by the same across. The foliage is

fabulous – small dark green leaves with dark brown indumentum on the underside of leaves and around the new shoots. Flowers are white speckled with dark pink. A beautiful plant to grow, even if it is only for the foliage.

David likes to adopt plants and is always collecting from people who have spares or wish to get rid of a rhododendron that is growing too large for their garden or is in the wrong place. We were around a few years ago when Arduaine Garden was removing a few rhododendrons, and we offered to adopt some of them. We took a large trailer to the garden and loaded 3 large *R. arboreum* x *R. niveum* and a *R. griffithianum*, as well as a few smaller specimens. The three *R. arboreum* x *R. niveum* are well settled in and are of three different shades ranging from pale pink (almost white), to mid pink and a dark cerise pink. The *R. griffithianum* is now growing well and flowers a bit later in the spring, although David had to do a bit of careful pruning as it was leaning at a dangerous angle. It has beautiful white scented flowers and is one of those plants that lift the spirits.

Other adopted plants were collected from the ditches on the roadside. We live on a long single track road and we noticed that there was a good *Rhododendron arboreum* (about 4 feet) growing and flowering in one of the ditches by the road. We also noticed a young Scots Pine (about 4 feet) growing in another ditch. We spoke to the local council and they told us we could help ourselves to the plants as they would eventually block the ditches and have to be removed. Both these plants are now growing beautifully in our garden.

One of my favourites that is currently flowering is *Rhododendron barbatum*. We have had this plant many years and it has flowered before, but has a tendency to hide its flowers amongst the foliage, but this year it has decided to cover itself in the most amazing bright red flowers and it looks spectacular.

So far I have only mentioned species as it is a bit too early for many of the hybrids to flower. David and I are not species snobs, so if it looks good it will find a place with us. One that is flowering at the moment is *Rhododendron* ‘Winter Sun’ which we acquired from Chip Lima a few years ago. It is a subsecy. Maddenia cross so it is planted in a sheltered spot to keep the cold winds and frost off. I think this is one of Chip’s own crosses. It has pale peach flowers in 3s and 4s, but so far has not developed any scent. I think it might need a bit more sunshine.

We have a plant of *Rhododendron alutaceum* var. *iodes* which I am very fond of and I have had it planted in the garden for about 10 years. It is such a lovely shade of green and has a very good neat round shape. However, I am not sure

when/if it will flower. It is currently about 2.5 feet tall and the same across. If anyone can tell me when I can expect flowers I would be very grateful.

We have a number of young seedlings that are currently living under cover, before being planted out in their final positions. We have a beautiful young plant of *Rhododendron valentiniodes* and a couple of *R. changii* JN11029. These have been grown from seed by Chip Lima from material collected by Jens Neilson and are currently flowering. One has large white flowers with a cream throat and the other is white with pink edges and slightly smaller. We have two others that have not flowered yet so it will be interesting to see what colour they are.

One other rhododendron that is flowering at the moment is a cross that David made. He crossed *Rhododendron chrysodoron* with *R. 'Else Frye'*. The resulting plant, which we have called 'Elsedor' has butter yellow flowers about 2 inches across. It started off rather leggy but is now shooting well from the base and looks as if it could be a good medium sized rhododendron. It probably will need a little shelter, but nothing major.

Like a lot of gardens we have a few rhododendrons that do not have labels, and therefore we have no idea what they are. That 'label fairy' gets everywhere and the labels just vanish.

In case you are wondering we do have many other types of plants in the garden, including a lot of hydrangeas, azaleas, pines, rowans, alders and birches, as well as one or two magnolias, eucryphias and camellias. One of the magnolias, *M. stellata* 'Rosea King' is flowering at the moment, and this is its best year so far. It is a lovely small tree, about 5 feet tall and its flowering is very reliable.

Well, I think that is all for now. I hope you enjoyed my ramblings. I may do some more later in the year.

Garden visits in Sweden

Fiona Campbell

In June this year Willie and I cruised on Fred Olsen ship “Balmoral” to the Swedish waterways. After crossing the North Sea we spent a day cruising the fiord region, not so spectacular as Norway though. Shore days were to be at Malmo, Stockholm and Gothenburg. Part of the attraction for going on this trip for Willie and me was a stop at Gothenburg where we hoped to see their famous Botanic Gardens. Shore tours at all cities could be arranged by Fred Olsen but we had other plans.

First stop at Malmo we were met by SRS member Alan Duncanson who has lived there for 30 years with his Swedish wife Inga. It was a rather wet morning, but welcome rain for the locals who had had very dry weather for weeks. Alan took us to visit the garden of Stefan Salomonson, a past Chairman of the Swedish Rhododendron Society, to see his species rhododendron garden in a woodland setting. This is a relatively new garden planted up in the last 12 years or so. His planting areas are all done in rhododendron species family groups and is a work in progress. Most attractive was the new growth on the plants, with a few later rhododendrons still in flower.



Next was a run through the Malmo countryside to Alan’s garden. Superb hybrid rhododendrons were everywhere along with species rhododendrons, azaleas, many companion plants and lovely magnolias. *R. ‘Gomer Waterer’* looked great, a lovely mature specimen and nearby *R. decorum* well budded. Alan’s is a great collection of rhododendrons with wonderful planting combinations. Many are getting rather large after all the years there and already he has started moving and



removing some. Unfortunately Inga was in hospital recovering from a fall but Alan prepared a delicious lunch for us before a further tour through the Lund/Malmö area then back to the ship.

At Gothenburg we decided not to use the ship's guided tour but make our own way to the Botanic Garden. A shuttle bus took us from the quay side to the city centre and then a "Hop On Hop Off" bus took us within walking distance of the Gardens. On our own we could visit the areas we wanted to see, while those on the tour had a rather quick walk up the hill to the rock garden and back down.

Our aim was to walk to the Rhododendron area then to the rock garden. A fairly steep uphill path led past some interesting mixed planting with shrubs and herbaceous plants. One area of interest was a group of covered beds where bulbs were allowed to dry off. Further on we came to the Director's house with its formal garden. Continuing uphill we passed many rhododendrons which had finished flowering and we realised there were too many to look at in detail. The pathway then opened out in the Rock Garden area where planting is done in geographical areas. Needless to say, the Asian section proved to be of most interest to Willie and he found lots to see there. A new planting of small rhododendrons attracted his attention and a chat with a gardener proved interesting as he produced the planting guide to confirm a plant from Jens Nielsen seed.

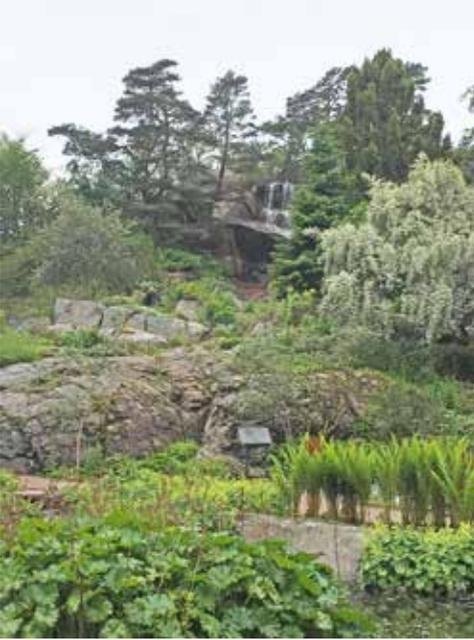


Previous page: *Rhododendron orbiculare* at Stefan Salomonson's garden

Above: Alan Duncanson's garden

Right: Alan's *R. 'Gomer Waterer'*

Pictures in this article by Fiona Campbell

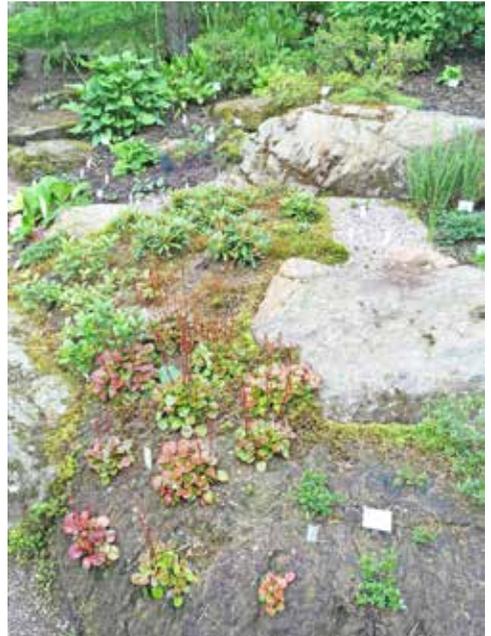
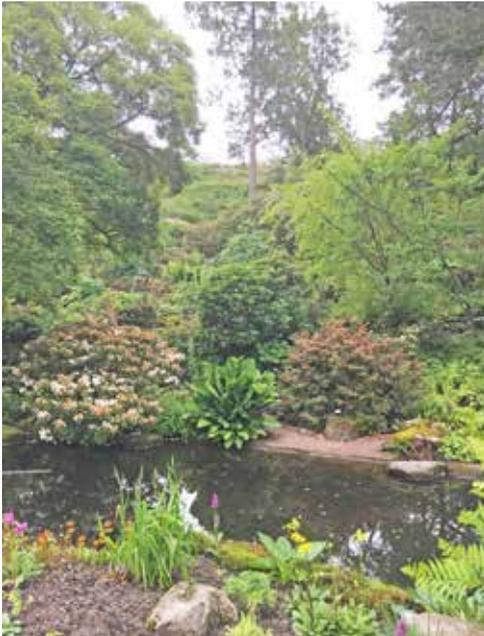


I was able to sit and enjoy the surroundings with the vast granite rocks, waterfall and pools and a multitude of flowers to see. The waterfall is man made with water pumped up from the lower level. I particularly liked the lady's slipper orchids, with the *Kalmia cuneata* nearby. The Rock Garden was the best I've ever seen and would need several visits to appreciate it. Our visit was brief as we had to make sure we got back to the ship in time for sailing at 5pm.

No garden to visit in Stockholm but a beautiful anchorage right in the centre of the old town after several hours cruising through the archipelago.

Overall a most enjoyable holiday with good company on board and plenty of food and drink – some of the highlights of cruising life!

Views of Gothenburg Botanic Garden



A Good Gardening Read

Wang Liston

I heard a very good lecture by Ken Cox recently on the Woodland Garden, and he has also produced a handsome book on this subject. In his lecture he mentioned another book that he would recommend. That was “Adventures of a Gardener“ by Sir Peter Smithers. Smithers was a spy, an MP, an international civil servant and a gardener. He was a friend of Ian Fleming and some say he was the model for James Bond. He built a wonderful garden at Vico Morcote on Lake Lugano. After the lecture I bought the book second hand (it is out of print) and found it to be really excellent. It is charming. If you want to know about his errors in gardening, or about the sex life of kalmias, or about all manner of different plants, this is the book. There is humour. There is philosophy. It is written in fine English and decorated with beautiful photographs of plants and gardens. He won many photographic medals. It is very good on magnolias but rhododendrons are not so successful in the rather hotter climate of Lake Lugano. They, in general, prefer the wet and soggy west of Scotland. He has a lovely section on *Daphne bholua*. Indeed, I corresponded with him about this plant many moons ago and he kindly sent me some seeds. I did not get them into a pot soon enough, so they did not germinate. I thank Ken Cox for recommending the book and urge you to read it too.

Reading this book made me think about my other gardening books on my shelf. They are an eclectic selection and certainly lack many very good volumes. Perhaps my interest in garden books and gardening was aroused by my grandfather, who spent much of his life in Bombay but in his retirement years gardened near Arisaig. His prize plant was his *Rhododendron macabe anum* (pronounced Macawbe anum by him), and every Easter holidays we would go up to Garramore, beside Camusdarrach, and he would take me to see this wonderful plant in all its glory. He would also take us to Larachmhor at Arisaig. We called the place “Brennans“, because the garden was looked after by John Brennan and we would always get a cup of tea in his hut. The way to get more interest from young people in gardens and rhododendrons is to take your grandchildren to visit gardens. As a parent there are too many other pressures, work, schooling and earning a living, whereas a grandparent has perhaps more leisure.

But I digress from the subject. My grandfather had on his shelf the fifth edition of W J Bean’s “Trees and Shrubs in the British Isles” from 1929 and I

have the same green three volumes on my shelf now. As a child I used to leaf through these books and wonder at the amazing Latin names. It meant that learning “amo” and “mensa” made some sense. When I retired, I bought the more modern five volumes at some expense second hand. Some were being discarded from public libraries, presumably because no one was interested in them. These Bean volumes are wonderful, if not always completely up to date with the delight that taxonomists have in changing names. The fifth volume contains fascinating information about where fine specimens of plants, particularly trees, can be found. Maybe such knowledge exists somewhere on the net, but it seems more fun to read it in print and then go to find the trees. When I am potting up a tiny *Pterocarya fraxinifolia* or *Pinus lambertiana* or whatever, it is good to learn where I might find a good specimen. The chapter on oaks makes particular reference to the oak collection at Kew. If you have not seen these, you should go forthwith.

I must return to my books. A couple of years ago, I called in at an architect’s office on Sleat, the southern peninsula of Skye, also known as the garden of Skye. I was with my son, an architect himself, and we were thinking of building an extension to a house in Ardnamurchan. We discussed the possible building with the very pleasant woman architect. Just as we were leaving, I noticed her name on the desk, “Arnold-Forster”. I, to my son’s amazement and embarrassment, said to her, “Shrubs for the Milder Counties”. She looked back at me with some surprise but replied, “Not me, my grandfather”. W. Arnold-Forster lived in Cornwall and produced, just after the War, an invaluable book on the trees and shrubs which he felt would do well there and in the other mild counties of the western seaboard. Some of the plants, including rhododendrons, have changed their names since his day and other new plants have appeared. It remains, however, a very trusted book and an old favourite of mine. He makes use of his knowledge of the gardens and gardeners of Cornwall and the Scilly Isles. His advice on the problem of wind and the proper use of suitable plants for wind breaks is useful, especially for me, living in a windy place. *Rhododendron ponticum* gets an honourable mention in this regard. Arnold-Forster manages to convey something of the atmosphere of that time. Life was tougher and more Spartan. There was scarcity and rationing, but at the same time there was a greater confidence and certainty in society and in the future. If you can find a copy, read it.

I have not mentioned books primarily about rhododendrons. I value the various Cox family volumes. From a long time ago I have owned a copy of “Modern Rhododendrons”. This is a useful tome, particularly commenting on those spe-

cies which can do well in the drier and harder winter gardens of the east coast. I have lived in Aberdeen and in Edinburgh, working in a profession that moved me about the country. In each place I started gardens, often quite small, and the comments in this book were invaluable. Another Cox book is the one on hybrids, which I pore over in May when the garden that I have inherited is aflame with Cynthia and many other of her pink and purple friends, most of which I still cannot name. To help with rhododendron identification I have the Cullen volume and the ubiquitous McQuire and Robinson. They are very useful, but not as good as a home visit from a Chamberlain, a Sinclair, a Heasman, a Roy or a Campbell. It is even better to get two of them together, for you can often get two names for one plant.

There are as well the plant collectors' books, of which I have a few. I particularly enjoy the Kingdon Ward volumes such as "Plant Hunter's Paradise" and "Burma's Icy Mountains". He obviously had a great time wandering through these remote places before they were destroyed by overpopulation, "civilisation" and tourists. Perhaps the best of these has been edited and brought up to date in a beautiful illustrated volume by Ken Cox, "The Riddle of the Tsangpo Gorges". This is a fantastic book, brought alive by wonderful photographs and by amusing anecdotes about Kingdon Ward, especially his slightly strained relationship with his travelling companion, Lord Cawdor. Ward could go for 2 to 3 days without speaking and was obviously quite difficult to camp with. To identify birds, he would shoot them. Just get the book and read it. Another plant hunter book is "Seeds of Blood and Beauty" by Anne Lindsay about Scottish plant explorers, a treat to read. There is a pamphlet in French on the Missionaire Chretien au Tibet, which includes sections on Armand David and Delavay. One other gardening book I also really enjoyed and would add to any collection was "The Naming of Names" by Anna Pavord. This gives a fascinating and scholarly account of how plants got names and how they were systematised from Theophrastus and Dioscorides to Linnaeus. A classical education never goes wrong.

I could go on forever, as I have many other plant and gardening books on my shelves. No doubt I have left out many peoples' favourites. Let me know what they are. I have gathered lots of other volumes but am no doubt missing ones which should be essential.

Notes from Devon

Dick Fulcher

The year 2018 will be remembered here in mid Devon for the lovely hot summer with little rainfall from late April until middle of September. In my woodland a small pond which is fed by a spring dried up and I soon emptied two 50 gallon drums of water saved off the shed roof. In order to keep my young rhododendrons alive I resorted to filling two black trays with two litre empty milk cartons, 12 in each, placed them in the back of the land rover before filling up with water. In addition 6 x 5 litre containers were also filled in this way. Each visit to the wood involves an 18 mile round trip. Once you start watering you have to keep it up. Those species which are normally late flushing into leaf I ignored for a while and noticed that the dry conditions seemed to put them on hold, a natural reaction it would seem.



While those flushing earlier became more vulnerable and suffered. I lost some nice young *R. arizelum* KR 10428. While *R. magnificum* aff. RF 069 suffered first from late frost then again with the drought. *R. magniflorum* NN 0959 although I had given them a drink in August were very late producing young growth as can be clearly seen from the picture taken on September 8th. Generally most of my collection recovered after the first rains but without those repeated life saving visits with the milk cartons there would have been many more losses.

Welcome surprises from North Vietnam

Henry ‘Chip’ Lima

Wow! That’s what I recall saying when I walked under a huge *Rhododendron nuttallii* tree in the San Francisco Botanical Garden in the 1990s. It’s now gone due to the Arctic cold that swept through shortly after my visit. I think of these giants as nearly tropical, so I never thought I’d be able to grow something like this in Scotland, but I was wrong.

In 2006 I was helping Pam Haywood run the RCM seed exchange and so I was there at the right time when Alan Clark, Vaughan Gallavan and their companions went on a seed collecting trip to North West Vietnam. I greedily bought up seed of *Rhododendron sino-nuttallii* and *R. excellens* as they looked in books to be similar to my old inspiring tree of *R nuttallii*. Twelve years later and I have several collections of *R. sino-nuttallii* and *R. excellens* growing well in my garden in Callander, Scotland and in my cold greenhouse. What is left of my plants from this collection have survived the awful winters of 2009 and 2010 when we had weeks of steady frozen weather and extremes of -18°C. The flower buds are only hardy to about -10°C, but the plants are much hardier. I keep some in the greenhouse in case I lose the buds outdoors.

The two species are similar, but the obvious difference between the two is that *Rhododendron sino-nuttallii* flowers in May and early June while *R. excellens* flowers in July to August and it has an intoxicating fragrance reminiscent of banana and fermenting strawberries!



Following the trip to Vietnam I was looking greedily at the list of seeds available and spotted other interesting rhododendrons which I bought. Some of the successes include *R. facetum* ACVG5664, *R. ovatum* ACVG5689, *R. tanastylum* affinity

ACVG5729 and *R. protistum* affinity ACVG5728. The *R. facetum* flowers in August and is the typical velvet red. This *R. ovatum* collection is really special as it completely covers itself with pretty pink flowers in May at the same time as its new growth turns maroon brown. Most Chinese *R.*



ovatum needs a hot summer to do well, not this one. The *R. protistum* has grown through its juvenile stage when there were bands of fawn coloured indumentum on the edges of the leaves, now the under sides of the leaves are solidly covered with it. The flower is cream with a red eye and a bit too early to miss the frost. It came from only 1750m at Ban Kuana village, and I'm lucky to have an image of the mature parent from Vaughan. It really stands out as exotic in my garden.

I hope this year to cross several clones of the wild collected rhododendrons and offer the seeds to seed exchanges.

It is a sobering thought and a wonderful thing that from this previously war ravaged country such beauty still shines.



Opposite page:
Rhododendron sino-nuttallii AC

Top: *R. excellens*
AC5737

Left: *R. facetum*
AC5664

**Pictures in this
article by Chip
Lima**

Cardiocrinum giganteum (The Seven Year Myth?)

Katrina Clow

I bought two good sized *Cardiocrinum giganteum* bulbs 5 years ago. They took 2 years to settle in a sheltered fertile bed. In the 3rd year each produced one spike (spire!) and so, I thought, several years wait until a new offset matures and had a tea party to celebrate them. But no; last year each bulb produced 2 spikes and this year, a 3 and a 2. There are offsets growing on but the flowers seem to appear from the original bulb. Perhaps I have been misinformed and new selections flower annually.

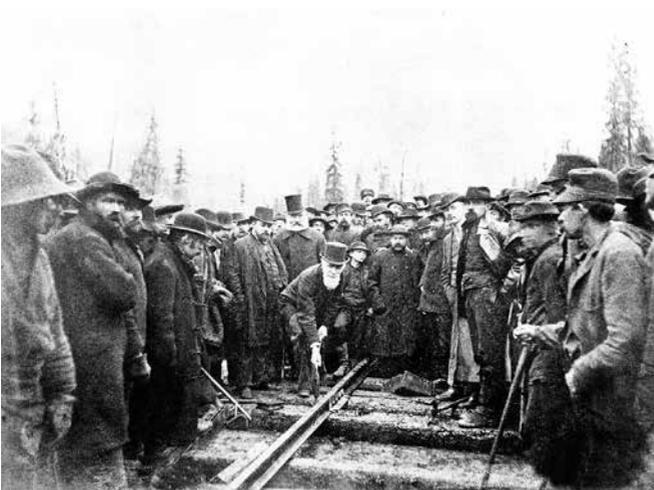


Donald Euan Palmer Howard, 4th Baron, Lord Strathcona and Mount Royal An Appreciation

John M. Hammond

I am writing these notes towards the end of June, having only heard by chance a few days ago that Euan Strathcona passed away back on 16th June 2018. As Euan was a member of the Scottish Chapter from the time it was originally formed, until he handed over the running of the Colonsay Estate to his son Alex in 2003, I will take this opportunity to write a few words about a key member of our Society and add a few memories of my many visits to Colonsay House and gardens.

Donald Euan Palmer Howard was the son of the 3rd Baron, the title dating from 1900 through Donald Smith, a Canadian financier born in Forres, Scotland, who became a major shareholder in the Hudson's Bay Company, a Director of the Bank of Montreal, had co-founded the Canadian Pacific Railway, and can be seen in one of Canada's most important historical photographs driving home the last spike at the completion of the Transcontinental railway at Craigellachie in Eagle



Pass near Revelstoke on 7th November 1885. Donald Smith had loaned his friend John Carstairs McNeill £40,000, a fortune at the time, being half the purchase price of the Isle of Colonsay Estate in 1877 and, on the death of his friend in 1904, he purchased the Colonsay Estate from the Neill Family

On November 7th, 1885 at 9:22 am at Craigellachie in Eagle Pass B.C. the last spike of the Canadian Pacific Railway was put into the ground by the CPR railroad financier Donald Smith, later Lord Strathcona & Mount Royal, to complete the construction of the Transcontinental railway.

Photo: CPR, courtesy Euan Howard, Lord Strathcona

executors, as the loan had never been repaid. Shortly after acquiring the estate he added two floors of bedrooms to Colonsay House to enable him and his entourage to visit the island for a month each year on a chartered yacht. In the meantime, Donald Smith had returned to Britain in 1896 as the London-based High Commissioner for Canada, when he received the title of Lord Strathcona and Mount Royal, then purchased the 64,000 acre Glencoe Estate and built a massive mansion in the likeness of a Canadian Pacific Railway hotel. Donald Smith was as rich as any man could be at this time, with homes in Winnipeg, Montreal, Nova Scotia, London, Essex, Glencoe and Colonsay. He died in 1913 and is remembered by a stained-glass window in Westminster Abbey for his financial support of universities and other educational administrations.

The origins of Colonsay House gardens date back to the early years of the 18th century, whilst their development began in 1850 when a large number of *Rhododendron ponticum* plants were obtained from Ardlussa on the Isle of Jura to form shelterbelts, but over the years its rampant growth and prolific seeding enabled it take over large tracts of the woodlands. It was not until Donald returned from India in 1926 after inheriting the title to become the Third Baron and made Colonsay House the family residence that work started in 1928 to create a more significant garden around the house. Clearing, draining, path-making, cutting large bays out of *R. ponticum*, and planting began in earnest with up to 12 gardeners working under a Head Gardener trained at R.B.G., Kew. Planting commenced in 1930 and maximum use was made of tender and unusual plants



that would thrive in the temperate climate, as well as a wide range of both species and hybrid rhododendrons. Donald's meticulous accession lists showed he had obtained most of the species that were in cultivation in Britain in the early 1930s, together with a high proportion of the hybrids that were in cultivation in the 1930s,

The rear of Colonsay House looks directly out across the expansive lawn, which runs down in tiers to the stream



Euan Howard, 4th Baron, Lord Strathcona and Mount Royal.

Photo: Courtesy Euan Howard, Lord Strathcona

1940s and early 1950s; some single cultivars being ordered in enormous batches to create hedges and, whilst the nursery beds showed a tally in 1935 of 274 plants still to be planted, almost every steamer arriving at Scalasaig jetty for many years had a consignment of plants labelled for Lord Strathcona, so an overflow nursery was created in Sawmill Wood. WWII caused a major interruption to the programme of creating new areas for planting in the woodland, due to the loss of staff to the services and Donald himself being away assisting with the war effort in London Docks.

Meanwhile, Euan attended Eton and Trinity College, Cambridge, serving in the Royal Navy from 1942 on motor torpedo craft patrolling the South Coast of England until he was de-mobbed with the rank of Lieutenant in 1947, having gained a liking for sailing that he retained for the rest of his days. He then attended McGill University in Montreal to study engineering, after which he returned to Northumberland to take-up a post with Urwick, Orr & Partners, industrial engineering consultants. In 1957 he moved to Somerset and became joint managing director of Kelston Engineering, living in some splendour in a large Georgian house overlooking Bath. He inherited the Colonsay Estate and became the 4th Baron upon his father's death in 1959 and by this time impetus with extending and planting new areas of the garden had been lost and they slowly begun to decline. The financial position in 1959 dictated that there were many other priorities that needed attention on the wider Colonsay Estate that came before the upkeep of the garden, so gradually the woodland garden went to sleep and became overgrown, very much against the wishes of the new Lord Strathcona, who had many other business commitments in the South, as well as attending the House of Lords.

In the early 1970s Euan was very involved with the project to recover Brunel's famous passenger ship *SS Great Britain* from the Falklands; she sustained significant damage whilst trying to round Cape Horn in treacherous weather and

took refuge at Port Stanley. She was bought by the Falklands Island Company and became a floating warehouse for the next 47 years in the harbour of Port Stanley before she became too unsafe and was scuttled in shallow waters at Sparrow Cove. As the 'S.S. Great Britain Project' representative on the salvage team, Euan was involved with re-floating the hulk and organising its towing on a gigantic pontoon for the incredible 8,000-mile journey across the Atlantic back to Avonmouth Docks, en-route to Bristol; some say the most daring marine salvage project ever attempted. The whole event was covered by Lord Strathcona for a national newspaper from a converted wooden Chinese junk, and the homecoming was given a tumultuous reception in Bristol by an estimated 200,000 onlookers.

His seat in the House of Lords slowly got him more deeply involved in politics when Edward Heath appointed him a government whip in 1973, and within a year he became parliamentary under-secretary for the RAF, but his tenure was cut short after eight weeks when Heath called, and lost, a General Election. In 1979 Margaret Thatcher appointed him a defence



Above: To provide employment in the aftermath of WWII for those on Colonsay, in 1946 work began on the clearance of a natural amphitheatre that was to become Sino Valley, where many large-leaved species were moved from other parts of the garden to provide more room for growth, and *R. 'Fortune'* is seen in the distance

Right: Huge yellow trusses, with a crimson blotch, and the long shiny leaves of the F.C.C. form of the *Rhododendron 'Fortune'* Group that came from Lionel de Rothschild at Exbury in the early 1950s



On the mossy bank to the east of Sino Valley hundreds of self-sown seedlings of large-leaved species cover the ground. Euan Strathcona is encouraging SRS members to dig them up and take some home as a memento of their visit



minister with responsibility for military procurement, but when he opposed Thatcher's defence cuts in 1981 the Prime Minister asked for his immediate resignation.

Euan was then able to devote more time to the Colonsay Estate and, especially, his garden. By the 1980s the Estate finances had improved sufficiently for a programme of *Rhododendron ponticum* clearance to begin and by 1993 he had cleared a substantial part of the woodland garden with minimal help. Euan had a reputation on the island as being something of a carpenter and he rebuilt bridges and other supports needed during the restoration of the gardens. Many of the original plants were "re-discovered" in the course of the work, new areas were cleared and planted-up, and around 1995 Euan contacted the S.R.S. with a view to hosting a group visit to the garden. At this date the Society was heavily engaged with organising the 1996 ARS Convention that was scheduled to be held in Oban and, due to the infrequency of the Colonsay ferry service and the time involved in visiting the gardens, it was not practical to include the gardens in the Conference Programme. A visit was arranged the following Spring via the Wednesday summertime-only early-morning sailing from Kennacraig on West Loch at Tarbert, which returned from Colonsay the same evening. It was dark when we boarded the ferry in the morning and dark when returned in the evening, but the weather was glorious all day and we were met on arrival by minibus on the jetty to speed us to the garden. We were well looked after by the Strathcona's who provided a light lunch in the House and it was a memorable visit to a landscape garden full of surprises and interesting plants and trees, with Euan reminiscing with tales from the pages of life as he led the way along the winding, undulating paths. Some tired and happy members disembarked in the inky-darkness at the West Loch that evening with tall large-leaved seedlings protruding from their rucksacks and carrier bags!

Over the next decade the restoration work continued at a rate dictated by the



Sea breezes coming off the Atlantic permeate the woodland gardens and dislodge the blooms that gradually form a carpet along the pathways. Euan Strathcona provides a sense of scale to these bushes of *Rhododendron thomsonii* hybrids and *R. neriiflorum*

resources available. Further clearance work took place, access was improved, paths were re-laid, wooden bridges were replaced, and some replanting was taken forward. Much of the replanting and woodwork was by Euan him-

self. Only by visiting the 30-acre garden was it possible to realise just how much effort over the past 25 years Euan had put into restoring what had become his life-long passion, and yet this was but one of his interests, as he spent a lot of time repairing, sailing, some say ‘messing around’, on wooden boats, but then he was President of the Steamboat Association.

However, Euan had a problem in regard to attracting more tourists to come to

Large batches of *Rhododendron ponticum* were planted to provide shelter from the Atlantic winds and storms, which in the temperate climate grew to become large trees. In the early 2000s Euan Strathcona began a grant-aided clearance project to keep *R. ponticum* within the perimeter of the woodland gardens and provide employment on the island. Note the regeneration and flowering two years after being cut to the ground



Pictures in this article by John Hammond except where otherwise credited

Colonsay, part of the problem being that his gardens were not widely known or well publicised. So, following some discussions I agreed to write an historical article about Donald Smith's life, the Colonsay Estate and its Gardens, whilst Euan and Lady Patricia reminisced with tales about the family and the early years on the island, and provided access to old records from the archives during my visits to Colonsay House.¹ In due course this would lead to visits by A.R.S. members from North America and mainland Europe who brought the gardens to the notice of many other overseas members.

In 2003 Euan decided the time had come to take a lesser role in the affairs of the Estate and handover the running to his son, Alex Howard and his wife Jane. After leading a very full life he went to live at Millers Cottage on the island for the next 15 years where he remained actively gardening, or engrossed in his workshop, or walking his dogs, until he passed away quietly on 16th June 2018.

Note 1: Colonsay House Gardens: Kiloran: Isle of Colonsay, Argyll, Scotland. *Journal, American Rhododendron Society* Vol.59 No.3 Summer 2005

Seed Exchange 2019

Willie Campbell

Once again the seed exchange provided society members with a full range of seed of rhododendrons, magnolias and companion plants.

The seed list of nearly 180 lots proved to be interesting to our members here in the UK and overseas. None of that would be possible without our contributors of seed this year, Jeanie Jones from Lockerbie, Katrina Clow from Stewarton, David and Shella Rankin from Edinburgh, May Britt Hansen from Norway, Chris Parsons from Logan, Tim Thornton from Southampton, Alan Clark from Cumbria, Ian Douglas from Fife and Alan Anderson from Aberdeenshire.

We also exchanged our seed listing with the Danish Rhododendron Society where they were offering wild collected seed from a trip to Sichuan.

As your seed exchange manager I urge you all to look at sharing your seed through the seed exchange again next year. I would also like to hear of your successes or failures with seed sowing. We have a strong team of experts to help you sow and grow your seeds. If you have excess plants please bring them along to our plant sale at The Rhododendron Show or at one of our conference weekends.

Lastly, I would like to pay tribute to the work that Alan Anderson has done for the seed exchange in providing a huge range of hand pollinated rhododendron seed for as long as anyone can remember.

Please send your 2020 seed to:

Willie Campbell

13 Fir Road

Doone

Perthshire

FK16 6HU

Final Word

In the last Review we published obituary contributions on Ed Wright the founder and leading light of the Scottish Rhododendron Society in its early years. Here are two consecutive items from the spring Newsletter in 1986 when Mike Thornley was editor, republished now to commemorate Ed's work in restoring Arduaine and the lighter side of the rhododendron world.

WHERE WILL YOU FIND THE RAREST RHODODENDRONS IN THE HIGHLANDS?

Members, intrigued by this billing advertising the February edition of the Scottish Field, were seen flocking to local railway stations to furtively discover the answer for themselves on the newstands there. They were not entirely surprised to find that this rhododendron paradise was not in the Highlands after all but in the Promised Land - at Arduaine Gardens to be more precise - where previously undiscovered varieties included a "R. sinogrande, the white flowers of which scent the woodland in August". Awful photographs as well but much deserved praise for Ed and Harry who even got a plug in for the Scottish Rhododendron Society.

ENDPIECE

Regular readers of this Newsletter will recall that the telephone line between here and the Promised Land leaves a little to be desired. I 'phoned Ed about that article.

"Oh hello - I'm just repairing a herring."

I had obviously interrupted his tea.

"A herring?"

"Yes - a heron - mending its leg."

I was impressed. Ed I knew could turn his hand to almost anything but this was something different.

"Mending its leg?"

"Yes - made out of lead."

Visions of Harry struggling with the beak began to dissipate.

"You see", he continued, "we want to stock the ponds with fish and they say if you put a lead heron in a pond it frightens away the real ones."

"What about the otters?" I asked.

"The others? I've told you, it frightens the others away - terrible line this - now what have you 'phoned about?"



**Some later flowering
rhododendrons:**

R. serotinum



R. 'Arthur Osborn'



R. auriculatum

Committee Members

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Directors:

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President: John Hammond, The Three Chimneys, 12 Cockey Moor Road, Starling, Bury, Lancashire, BL8 2HB.

Tel: 0161 764 1116

Email: hammondsrhodies@supanet.com

Hon. Secretary: Katrina Clow, Townend of Kirkwood, Stewarton, Ayrshire, KA3 3EW.

Tel: 01560 483926

Email: katrina.clow@btinternet.com

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. The committee, however, support the right to freedom of speech.

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In June I joined a trip to the mountains of Sichuan. As usual with trips to the wild many questions about identification were raised, this year involving subsection Taliensia. Here are a few taster pictures.



I shall write fully about the trip for the 2020 Yearbook.

Top: *Rhododendron bureavioides*
Middle: Different indumentum in *R. bureavii*

Below: Is it *R. phaeochrysum*, *R. sphaeroblastum*, or *R. clementinae*?

John Roy.

