





North America Meets Europe

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

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

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

Scottish Rhododendron Society Review No. 84 Summer 2017

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Cover Pictures: Front: Finding our way through *Rhododendron roxianum* at Inverewe

Back: Discussion around *Rhododendron sinogrande* at Dundonnell

Both by John Roy

Editorial

Welcome to the only Review for 2017. It was decided that to help me catch up time-wise, that there would only be one Review this year. I hope to be able to publish two in 2018.

The Society has had a busy year, with another very successful Show in May. Many local people showed exhibits this year. They arrived with beautiful blooms, not knowing what to do. They were soon pointed in the right direction, ensuring their exhibits went into the right classes.

The Spring Tour was well attended with twenty members. The gardens visited were all in the north and north-west of Scotland, and varied from private to famous National Trust for Scotland gardens. Our thanks go to David and Gloria Starck for the organisation.

It's coming up for the time Willie Campbell, our seed exchange manager, will be looking for seed. No open pollinated rhododendron seed please, but hand pollinated and companion plant seed wanted.

Our next publication will be the Yearbook. I will be looking for copy early in the New Year. The Yearbook has articles in more depth than the Review and are generally 1000 words upwards. Don't let the "in depth" bit put you off. Your experiences in the world of rhododendrons are worth reading.

Meanwhile enjoy this Review.

John Roy

President's Column

John M. Hammond

The march of digital technology seems to be all pervasive and matters related to its impact on both horticulture and botanical interests are no exception. It is sometimes important to take a look at a subject from a different perspective and in doing so gain an understanding on what is actually happening across the interface between analogue and digital methodologies, as there are some developments in both publishing and photography that would normally pass us by. Equally, I am aware that some members are having problems arising from failures of PC, lap-top, and back-up media, so you may find some of the following notes of interest.

One of the key changes in the marketplace is a surprising upturn in the furniture trade, driven by significant purchases of shelving of all types for storage of books. A couple of years ago few commentators in publishing would have thought that printed books would ever make a recovery, but the sales are escalating and Mintel, a market research company, is forecasting that sales for 2017 will be up 6% over last year, and this will continue to rise over the next five years. This is extremely good news for those of us with an interest in plants and trees, as it means that larger format books with high definition coloured images of flowers, foliage, in both gardens and wild locations, will continue to be published for the foreseeable future. Meanwhile, the sales of e-books are slowly falling, as the screens of e-book readers are not particularly great, and they don't really lend themselves to a wide-range of non-fiction content where high-resolution reproduction is a pre-requisite. Behind the scenes there has been a drive to produce upgraded e-book readers, but in reality the improvements are relatively minor and a simple requirement like marking your place is not always straightforward. Like many other commentators, I like the feel of holding a book with its stylish cover, and being able to skim through the printed pages and randomly pick out items of interest. Being able to skim through information quickly is also a benefit when carrying out research work, but if like me, you like to read in bed at night, then older people with tired eyes find they work better with the clear print of hand-held magazines and books.

There are those of us who like to have large format books sat on the coffee table to impress visitors; or, other members like the status of having bookshelves filled with the covers of good-looking books, much rather than DVDs that tend to become dated

much quicker. Perhaps more pertinent: Have you heard of ‘Super Thursday’? This year it is 5th October, the day in the year when the most books are published; over 500 hardbacks for the general marketplace will hit the streets, aimed for purchase in the lead up to Christmas. The days of printed books are far from over, despite the impact of digital technology!

Now, to something different. If like me you have a cupboard containing several redundant cameras of various formats that used roll film, together with a large collection of black and white negatives, and/or colour slides, and are wondering what to do with these, then you may find the following notes quite interesting.

In 1973, when I first embarked on a month’s extended tour of North America, Kodak was still expanding its Kodachrome line, and it was hard to believe that it would ever disappear. But by the mid 1980s, video camcorders and more easily processed colour film from companies like Fuji and Polaroid encroached on Kodachrome’s market share, and the film fell into disfavour. Compared to the newer technology, Kodachrome was a pain to develop. It required a large processing machine and several different chemicals and over a dozen processing steps. This film would never, ever, be able to make the “one-hour photo” deadline that customers increasingly came to expect. Finally in the early 2000s came the digital-photography revolution; digital sales today account for more than 70% of Kodak’s revenue. Kodak quit the film processing business in 1988 and slowly began to disengage from film manufacturing. Super 8 went by the wayside in 2007. By 2008 Kodak was producing only one Kodachrome film run — a mile-long sheet cut into 20,000 rolls — a year, and the number of centres able to process it had declined precipitously. Dwayne’s Photo store in Kansas latterly processed all of Kodak’s Kodachrome film — if someone in the U.S. dropped a roll off at their local Wal-Mart outlet, it would have been developed at Dwayne’s Photo — and, though it was the only centre left in the world, the company processed only a few hundred rolls a day. Kodachrome 64 slide film, discontinued on June 22, 2014 was the last type of true Kodachrome available — although the company expected existing stocks to last well into the autumn of that year. Kodak plans to donate the last remaining rolls of Kodachrome film to the George Eastman House’s photography museum. One of them will be symbolically shot by McCurry — although the famed photographer gave up the format long ago. In fact, McCurry’s photographic career perfectly traces the rise and fall of Kodak film. He shot his iconic Afghan-girl portrait on Kodachrome and returned 17 years later to photograph the same woman with Kodak’s easier to develop Ektachrome. Now, he relies on digital.

Many of us have collections of colour slides that are an important record, be they family pictures taken over a period of many years; photographs taken on overseas journeys, or garden tours, or expeditions, made in the past; or images of people, places and plants that are no longer extant and for that reason are historically important. In my case I have taken railway and railroad photographs for around 65 years and have many thousands of negatives and slides to add to those of horticultural interest taken on both sides of the Atlantic since the early 1970s. You may also have reels of Super 8 Kodachrome movie film, as I do, some of which from a personal perspective are of sentimental importance.

Although its use has significantly declined in the digital age, photographers across the internet sat up and took notice in early January of this year when Kodak Alaris, a UK based company that owns the onetime filmmaker's Still Film Division and has licensed the famous red on orange Kodak logo, announced the return of 'Ektachrome 100' film. Given the rising popularity of analogue photography, Kodak Alaris plans to begin 'Ektachrome 100' production later this year. The colour slide film known for its fine grain and clean colours was last produced in 2012. "*Film is our heritage and we remain committed to meeting the evolving needs of today's film shooters*", says Dennis Olbrich, President of the Kodak Alaris film, imaging, paper and photo chemicals division. Whilst some photographers would also like to see the return of 'Kodachrome', arguably one of the most popular colour slide films, Eastman Kodak President Steve Overman suggested that it would "*investigate*" what it would take to start producing the film. The only problem is that Eastman Kodak no longer retain the rights to make the slide film, whilst Kodak Alaris said that production of 'Kodachrome' was unlikely to comeback anytime soon because of the complex processing technique.

At the time when the sale of books is making a comeback, mainly due to the preference to be able to have a volume with high resolution images, despite the proliferation of digital technology on Kindle, I-pads and other devices, it is also interesting to note that some photography enthusiasts are seeking to return to analogue photography, which represents a significantly greater challenge to produce a satisfying image in a single 'shot'. One wonders how long it will be before computer-controlled slide film cameras become available that replicate all the nuances of their digital cousins, and at a price that the average enthusiast can afford. In the meantime, look after your old, but better quality cameras, as they still retain their value as collector's items.

Meanwhile, as Scott Othes, President & Executive Director of the Centre for Photography and Art, suggests that there is one area where slide film reigns supreme:

Archival storage. Lothes says, “It is still too soon to see how long that digital images will survive, but there’s no question about the longevity of film. From a preservation standpoint, we know how to handle slide film”, he says, “stored properly it should last for decades if not centuries”.

Go to: www.wilhelm-research.com/pdf/HW_Book_18_of_20_HiRes_v1c.pdf for further information on this subject, but you really only need to consider the basic requirements for domestic purposes.

So far as digital storage is concerned, nothing lasts forever, and CDs are now in the course of being phased out. An internet search shows that CDs have lifetimes ranging from 25 to 100 years, depending on the CD type and when the CD was manufactured. Similar to what has happened with other computer storage media (i.e., floppy disks, tape cartridges, etc.) the hardware equipment needed to read CDs may become scarce as time goes on. So, some years from now the CDs may be readable but it’s very likely that computers then will not have optical drives needed to read CDs and DVDs. This is already occurring; Apple no longer has optical drives in any computers it sells.

An I.T. professional recently suggested the use of local and remote backups is a good approach. Instead of using a traditional external hard drive, a USB memory stick can be used. The largest memory sticks available today hold 128GB and are not very expensive. Solid-state memory is more reliable than mechanical storage drives. You can store a lot of documents and images on a 128GB memory stick. USB devices will be around for a good while, but the USB connector port is certain to change over time. Finding a connector adapter in the future will likely be required, but they should be readily available.

You need to be concerned about back-up arrangements for the long-term storage of files if you are an Officer or Director of an organisation, be it commercial or voluntary, together with raising the question as to the most secure method of securing these. The options for storage of files can be very subjective, as there are a number of ‘views’ in terms of the best way of approach, and at this time there is no real methodology that can be defined as a long-term secure method for digital storage, as technology continues to evolve and with it the various forms of storage gradually become redundant and unsupported.

This problem is an equal concern at a personal level for those of us who need to

securely store both document files relating to the activities at Society level, and also in terms of storing personal files, including documents and images. A couple of years ago the hard disk on my PC crashed and was unrepairable, and at the same time it caused the back-up hard drive connected to the PC to crash and the data on it was wiped out. Fortunately, I had an independent Samsung (1TB) back-up hard drive with the majority of my files stored on it. I currently have three of these, having had problems with both Western Digital and Seagate failing in normal use. Subsequently, I stored many thousands of images on CDs as well as on the back-up drives, and stored document files on a large USB. I have found that the data on an individual CD can become corrupted over a period of time, and perhaps this is due to the environment in which the CD is stored. I have also been recommended to store all my files on a 'cloud', but I am very wary of doing this. One of my friends who has a large collection of images, and who also works in video, stores his files on Apple 'Cloud'. On two occasions whilst trying to download files from the 'cloud' he has found that the data is corrupted and he has lost large segments of stored files, and has had to re-establish his files, but has 'lost' a significant number of files in the process. Apple has been unable to explain why this has occurred. It seems to me that no storage methodology is completely secure and the best way of approach at present is to store the same files on multiple types of back-up facility; i.e., an independent hard-drive, CDs and USBs. An alternative for one of these options is to use the 'cloud' facility if you need a mega volume of storage capacity. Remember, it is equally important to take good care of your analogue and/or digital records in the same way as you would look after those physical assets that you cherish. None of this is 'Rocket Science', and storage media is relatively inexpensive.



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Secretary's Notes

Katrina Clow

The Society's events and activities covered in this issue of the Journal continue to attract and involve our membership but, as reported at our AGM in May, our numbers are declining slightly. If you have enjoyed a tour, study day or our show, perhaps you could invite a non-member to join us. At events, you can meet like-minded rhododendron enthusiasts and a nucleus of very knowledgeable members are on hand to discuss any problems you may have with propagation, pruning, identification and possible disease in your collection. There is often the additional bonus of the chance to buy unusual rhododendrons.

Our show, held for the 3rd successive year at the Gibson Hall, Garelochhead, was a great success. It was a week later than previous years and so later blooms were presented. The committee have tried hard to make entry for novice exhibitors as easy as possible by assisting with identification and class group. Even competitors with years of experience must admit that it is not always easy to get your specimen into the correct class and the judges were given more time this year to relocate entries. More local people entered and some first time exhibitors were delighted to receive awards and so we shall expect them to return next year.

The plant stall was particularly successful this year, thanks to generous donations of plants from Richard Firmin, Willie Campbell, Oliver Miller and Philip Rankin, all of whom also did a prodigious job on sales. Special thanks are due to Oliver Miller who donated a beautiful large Acer, which raised £60 when auctioned in the afternoon. If you are coming to the show in 2018, please think of bringing a plant or two for the sale, and not just necessarily rhododendrons. Anything in flower sells!

The show attracted a good number of visitors and there was a happy buzz throughout the day probably due to the splendid array of blooms and excellent catering. As ever, we are extremely grateful to Mary Gray who organised all of the local publicity.

Our AGM, held on the afternoon of the show, was well attended and chaired, in the absence of our President, John Hammond, by Vice President, Ian Sinclair. The President's notes, in which he most generously thanked all those involved in the running of the Society, were read to the meeting.

The Society was very pleased to elect Sir Peter Hutchison, Bt, as a new Honorary Vice-President. Sir Peter, sporting a large rhododendron buttonhole, gave a charming acceptance speech. Since the AGM, Sir Peter has been in poor health and so we wish him well.

Some members felt that the AGM went on rather long but important issues were raised, including recruiting new members, our education policy and ways of reaching young people involved in woody plant horticulture and the Society's grave concerns over the management of the woodland gardens in the care of NTS. The AGM is one of only a few opportunities that members have to discuss these issues and they will be on the agenda at the next SRS Committee Meeting.

As ever, SRS hosted a stand at Gardening Scotland at the beginning of June. It is always a tricky time to source rhododendrons in bloom and this year the display focused on the great variety of foliage in rhododendron species and hybrids. The plant material was less colourful than usual but John Roy's excellent photographs recording the Rhododendron Show and SRS latest tour made up for that. As usual, our stewards answered many and varied enquiries from visitors and we made 2 new members.

We can now look forward to our joint Autumn Conference with RSCG members at the very end of September. Based at St Andrews Botanic Garden, there will be much to hear, see and learn at this weekend. In the interval, it is hoped that members are coping with the huge spurt of growth in the last 4 weeks. After 6 weeks of drought in April/May, many plants looked rather stressed but weeks of soft warm weather have certainly improved vigour. Unfortunately, the slugs and snails are enjoying the abundance of greenery, too. Hostas, particularly, are in shreds.

Slightly more alarming, are early signs of autumn colour on *Euonymus*, *Cornus*, *Viburnum*, deciduous azaleas, and *Sorbus* for example. Is this global warming or something more sinister?

SRS Annual Show – Saturday 6th May 2017 – Gibson Hall, Garelochhead

Gloria Starck

Yes – it's time for another SRS Annual Show Report.

This year there was no serious problems with the weather, although the rhododendron season started earlier than usual. This had the benefit of different species and hybrids being ready for the show bench. This is the first SRS Annual Show I have been to when there have not been endless complaints about the weather. You know the sort of thing, too hot, too cold, etc.

The judges for 2017 were, David Chamberlain, Alan Clark and Richard Baines. The Stewarding Team was, John Roy, Ian Douglas and myself. Barbara Anderson was the photographer.

Ian and I managed to get the totalling of marks done in good time this year. Katrina



Clow did a great job of making sure all the cups were ready to be presented, polished and looking good. I want to take this opportunity to thank Katrina and the rest of the Show Sub-committee for all their support during the Show weekend.

The trophy winners this year are as follows:

The Kildarden Trophy – For the winner of Class 1	Glendoick
The George Sherriff Cup – For the most points in Section 1	Glendoick
The Sir John Stirling Maxwell Trophy – For the best species in the show grown in the open	Glendoick - platipodum
The Harry Fairburn Cup – For the most points in restricted Classes 45 – 48	S Campbell
The David Stuart Cup – For the best species or hybrid exhibited in Classes 45 – 48	Grace Morris – sinofalconeri
The John Hammond Cup – For the most points in the species and hybrid Azalea Classes (25, 34, 35)	Glendoick
The Argyll & Bute Trophy – For the most points in all Classes grown in an Argyll & Bute garden	Linn Botanic Garden
The Scottish Rhododendron Society Cup – For the best hybrid in the Show	G Alcorn, Mount Stewart – ‘Royal Mado’
The Keyline Cup – For the most points in all Classes grown in a garden of up to an acre	Philip Rankin
The Marlene Storah Cup – For the most points in all classes for gardens not open to the public more than once a year.	John Roy
The Mervyn Kessell Cup – For the most points in Classes 42 and 43	Willie 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).	Not Awarded
The Wild Argyll Cup – For the best photographic print in the Show	John Roy

The judging for the photographic competition was done by Ian Sinclair. Details are on the Show Schedule. Basically photos must be mounted on card and be a maximum size of A4.

As usual this Show was very well attended. Well, that’s the lot for this year. I look forward to seeing you all in 2018 at The Gibson Hall, Garelochhead, Saturday 5th May.

Post Show Tour

On the Sunday after the show, members visited two gardens in central Scotland. The following reports describe the visits.

Culbuie House

Brian Moss

Culbuie House is situated just off the A811, in the village of Buchlyvie. On arrival, we were met by the current owner, Avril Galloway, who bought the property in 1992, the garden having first been planted in the 1940s. Although not large, perhaps a couple of acres or so, the garden was well stocked with some interesting plants. From a lawned area surrounding the house, bordered by formal hedging, the main garden was accessed by a number of informal paths. As this was not a guided tour, members radiated in all directions leaving me to look for and identify, to the best of my ability, plants I considered of particular interest.

Rhododendrons are not the main theme here, although there was much else to catch my eye. Following the main path from the house, was a fine multi-stemmed Katsura tree (*Cercidiphyllum japonicum*) and nearby I spotted a nice flowering specimen of *Viburnum plicatum* 'Mariesii' and some lovely blue *Meconopsis*, plus an *Enkianthus*. The plant which made the greatest impact on me though was a Young's Weeping Birch (*Betula pendula* 'Youngii') which had a crown spread of at least six metres, by far the largest I have ever seen and probably dating back to the original planting. I briefly teamed up with several other members to admire *Rhododendron* 'Phyllis Korn', which was a winning entry in the 2015 show, plus another, as yet not flowering rhododendron with long narrow leaves which was eventually thought to be *R. calophytum*.

I should mention also, there were some interesting conifers in the garden, notably an eight metre *Abies koreana*, *Metasequoia glyptostroboides* and a fine large golden *Chamaecyparis lawsoniana* near the house, probably var. 'Stewartii'. There was also a dome-shaped weeping conifer which no-one could identify. I found out later that it was *Juniperus recurva* var. 'Coxii'. Finally, several members especially Katrina, enthused over the ground cover, this included *Epimedium*, *Trillium*, *Erythronium* and *Vinca*.

As time was now pressing, we bade farewell to our hostess and made our way to the Gargunnoch Inn for lunch.

Kilbryde Castle

Paul Haynes



Kitchen garden and house. Picture by Christine Haynes

The castle and its 12 acre garden is near Doune in central Scotland. It has been the Campbell family home since 1659 and was rebuilt in the 1870s by the present owner's ancestors. It is a turreted building, built to impress and it certainly does that, both inside and out.

We approached the castle on a level road passing through an avenue of sycamores underplanted with bulbs including daffodils, bluebells, tulips and trilliums. At this

point there was no indication that the castle is surrounded on three sides by the Ardoch burn and that on those three sides the land slopes very steeply from the house down to the burn.

We were met by and made very welcome by Sir James Campbell and his wife Carola. Sir James told us that the steep slopes are now being lightly managed to enhance the wild life and some of the formal rose beds are being prepared as wild flower meadows to reduce the maintenance. He also personally served our group with teas and home made scones in their elegant dining room, a much appreciated gesture after the tour.

The formal areas of the garden are full of vibrant colour with their mixture of herbaceous beds, *Acer*, *Magnolia*, *Camellia* and *Rhododendron*. We had the treat of wonderful fragrances from *R. 'Loderi'* hybrids, sweet rocket (*Hesperis*) and other sources I couldn't recognise. The woodland has winding paths sloping down from the avenue and among the mature trees that include massive beeches and western hemlocks there are new plantings of rhododendrons and established older specimens as well as more camellias and magnolias. Also in the woodland there are banks of bluebells and daffodils that flowed out into the surrounding fields.

As we walked we came across little gems that stood out from the many trees and shrubs, like the silver almost metallic peeling bark of *Rhododendron thomsonii*, yellow flowering *Weigela*, acers and some birches with attractive striped and peeling bark. Were they *Betula albosinensis* or *Betula jacquemontii*? Two of our members in a light hearted mood were ready to place bets on which one of them had got it right. There was plenty of light hearted banter and discussion about identification of the many plants we came across. In other areas there were dry stone walls covered in moss and highlighted with yellow poppies, also a free standing architectural feature that looks like the remains of a small section of a chapel wall with an ornate stone arch.

This garden warrants a more leisurely visit to allow a much closer inspection of the multitude of interesting plants.

Spring Tour

The 2017 Spring Tour encompassed gardens of north and north west Scotland. Altogether fourteen gardens were visited over an eight day period. The following reports describe the trip.

Gorthleck

Colin Whitehead

Gorthleck House and garden are situated on ridge facing east/west located to the south east of Loch Ness. The original house lies about a quarter of a mile down the hill and is now Gorthleck Mains Farm. Bonnie Prince Charlie is reputed to have stayed there after Culloden. The current house on the crest of the hill was originally a bothy dating from 1800 but has been subsequently greatly extended. The garden was started by Steve Smith when he purchased the house in 1995. The hillsides were originally densely covered by gorse but this was cleared with the aid of the Woodland Grant Scheme by the part-time gardeners David and Lindsay who showed us around.

After the gorse clearance, extensive planting was carried out over 1997-8 of native Scottish trees, mainly rowan, willow, alder and birch. The south side of the ridge was terraced with winding grassy paths. The hillside was very dry for three reasons: the steepness of the slope, the recent prolonged dry spell and the large number of thirsty trees. There were plans to thin out the trees, to reduce the dryness and provide more light for the plants underneath. Water from a borehole was available from taps around the hill but was not much used. The grass paths were also showing signs of distress as a result of the digging exploits of local badgers.

The hillside contained beds of various plants underneath the trees. There were several beds of azaleas, but these were not doing at all well, partly because of the dryness of the steep slopes and partly as a consequence of a fertiliser spray, which was suspected of having been contaminated with some herbicide. The sorry-looking azaleas were in the process of being replaced by *Hebe*. Other beds contained *Erythronium* and *Narcissi*. Further up the hill there were some nicely labelled rhododendrons, both species and hybrids, the first of which had been planted about 12 years previously. Two *R. augustinii* were struggling, perhaps as a result of planting too near to a dyke,

but elsewhere a dwarf blue *R. 'Ramapo'* and a *R. wardii* were both in fine flower. Several plants showed signs of vine weevil. There was also a group of tree ferns that were provided with winter protection. These areas might have benefitted from some reduction of interspersing clumps of bamboo and shading trees. At the west end of the south slope a windbreak of *Abies procera* and other evergreens protected a coniferous section. This contained several species of *Juniper* along with *Picea breweriana* and *Cedrus atlantica*.

The north side of the hill contained paths through birch trees leading to small ponds amongst bamboo thickets and groves of *Cornus*. There were also attractive groups of copper coloured *Rheum*. Further up the hill beside a bluebell wood there was a nursery area for rhododendrons waiting to be planted out. A grove of *Prunus* just coming into flower led back to the house.

The overall impression of the garden was that herculean efforts had been exerted to clear the initial gorse and plant the original trees. However, thinning of the trees was now required to bring the garden into better balance. The owner was obviously ambitious in his plans for the garden, not least in having acquired another field that was intended to be a more formal garden. It already contained windbreaks of hornbeam hedging, but the beds in between awaited planting. Perhaps a demanding task for the two gardeners considering the other work needed to maintain the main garden.



**View to Loch Mhòr
from the east side of the
garden.**

**Picture by Colin
Whitehead**

Oldtown of Leys

Grace Morris

This large garden was established 13 years ago, by David and Anne Sutherland, on a hillside overlooking Inverness. The first priority was to plant a large shelter belt along the northern boundary.

As David was a local builder, the landscaping was done with machinery from the building firm, to a design by Fawcett and Brodie. Initially there was a large elongated central area of lawn with a couple of golf holes. This has now been developed with several herbaceous beds including rhododendron and azalea displays.

Our visit began on a coldish sunny morning, which got warmer as we wandered round the triangular garden. Entering through a spectacular stand of shining white *Betula utilis* trunks on both sides of the gate, we were directly on the lawn. On one side, past a gazebo, there were three pools, increasing in size and interconnected by two streams. The edge planting consisted of *Fritillaria*, *Erythronium*, *Brunnera*, *Bergenia* and *Lysichiton*, with tall *Euphorbia characias* ssp. *wulfenii* 'John Tomlinson' giving height and structure, many green and yellow grass spikes and dark red *Astilbe*.

Once at the bottom edge of the garden we turned up a small hill to a new extensive gravel rockery which was formed in 2015, by destroying the golf holes and strategically placing huge granite slabs with the strata in perfect alignment. It has been planted with dwarf conifers of various shapes and sizes, *Lithospermum*, *Primula vulgaris*, *Primula denticulata*, *Pulsatilla* and has a backdrop of large



Enjoying Oldtown of
Leys Garden

Picture by John Roy

conifers. I think this will mature to a stunning rockery.

Many shrub beds have the theme of a specimen tree in the centre, shrubs decreasing in size towards edge planting. A long, wide area has trees at the back then lower shrubs including hybrid rhododendrons and azaleas.

The visit ended in sunshine with a welcome tea and scones on the lawn, sitting in a circle where we were joined by David and Anne and their Jack Russell terrier. They talked us through the formation of their garden up to the present, with the possibilities for the future.

Novar Estate and Ardtalla Gardens

Peter Hogbin



Part of the Water Garden. Picture by Peter Hogbin

The Ardtalla Gardens lie beside the converted stable block of Ardtalla House and next to Novar House which enjoys a prominent position over looking the Cromarty Firth. Taken on a magical tour by Ronald Monro-Ferguson, we walked through a number of different gardens within the curtilage of Novar House, a charming

property first built in 1634 but in 1720 was sensitively

and extensively extended with more over time to the present day.

We first saw the cider apple orchard which has started to produce fruit but more trees are still being planted with ‘Dabinett’ – a bittersweet variety from Somerset. Moving into a charming 5 acre walled garden, this is split into two areas. The first is being retained to grow a wide variety of vegetables and soft fruit as well as some 100 year old standard apple trees, now beginning to show their age but still fruiting heavily.

Espalier trained fruit trees were heavy with blossom. The second half of the walled garden is in the process of redevelopment being divided in to four sections. One quarter to retain the tennis court, the second to retain a large pond resplendent with a nymph, a third and fourth quarters to be planted with plums and other fruit.

We were reluctant to leave such a magnificent setting but there was better to come! Going to the House, we entered a small courtyard with a pond and an elegant fountain – water is a feature of the gardens around the House. Looking down from the front of the House we saw the deer park, well stocked with 250 fallow deer, and we were impressed by climbing roses covering the facade with its sandstone mullions looking as good as they were when carved 300 years ago. To the side of the house leading out from the kitchen, Michael Innes had been retained to create a small garden complete with a sandstone sundial, Caithness flags, views over the wall to the kennels for the working dogs and bench positioned to catch the sun, of which there was plenty on the day of our visit.

The final *pièce de résistance* was the Water Garden currently being renovated under the watchful eye of its owner. Fresh plantings of rhododendrons and azealeas will, in time, provide a suitable backdrop to the ponds that are amply filled by the burn running into the garden and contribute to the beautiful setting of Novar House.

Tea, chocolate brownies and shortbread were a welcome end to a most memorable visit. We were most grateful to Ronald who had shared with us his evident enjoyment of the place.

Leckmelm Gardens

Lars Stark

Leckmelm Gardens cannot match some of the other gardens on the trip, like Inverewe, in splendour, but it still turned out to be a very interesting garden as it contains many interesting plants. It started off in an interesting way when we arrived since the entrance into the parking area turned out to be a rather narrow hole in the wall which surrounds the upper part of the garden.

Leckmelm isn't really a garden in the more conventional sense. It's more of a collection of trees and shrubs planted on the slopes that run down to Loch Broom and in a



Enjoying Leckmelm

Picture by John Roy

very sheltered setting. One of the first plants I noticed was a very exotic looking *Abutilon* sp. growing against the wall. Living in a cold climate myself, I can only dream of growing such plants. Not to mention the *Dicksonia* that seemed to feel quite at home in Leckmelm..

Many of the trees have been growing at Leckmelm for a long time. The first plantings date back to 1870 and some of the trees are champion trees, amongst the best in the UK. Among these is a huge *Thujaopsis dolobrata* and two Lawson cypresses. Another oldtimer is a *Cedrus deodara*, also dating from the first plantings. Maybe not a champion but quite a new acquaintance for me was a big Kapuka tree (*Griselina littoralis*), a broadleaf from New Zealand.

After the plantings in 1870 the garden thrived for around fifty years it seemed to have gone into a period of neglect until it was reawakened in the 1980s with a significant restoration which continues to this day. Half way through the garden we met the man who tends to the garden who gave us an account of all the work that has been done in the garden. Quite impressive. He was secretive about who the present owner of the garden is. We were also invited to help ourselves to the masses of seeds that had been recently shed by an *Araucaria*. Needless to say I jumped to the opportunity.

Naturally, the garden also contained lots of rhododendrons. Among the ones that I particularly made a note of were big specimens of *Rhododendron irroratum* ‘Polka Dot’, *R. falconeri*, *R. rex* ssp. *fictolacteam*, and *R. niveum*. I have never before seen so many great *R.* ‘Loderi’ of different forms and *R. augustinii* as I did on this trip. There were also many splendid *R. barbatum*, or bearded rhododendron as the sign said, which inspired John Roy to make a joke with one of the ladies on the tour about the attraction of bearded men. This led to a friendly combat in which, I’m sorry to say, John didn’t come out well.

Dundonnell House

Oliver Miller

When you turn off the A832 onto the single track road to Dundonnell it's like entering another world crossing the Dundonnell river then a little further on arriving at the big house a fine simple Scots house dating from around 1769 when it was enlarged by the MacKenzie family. It is surrounded by wonderful mountains in particular An Teallach. The gardener Will Soos, who had been at Inverewe, was there to greet us and give a brief history of the place. The house is now owned by Sir Tim Rice; his wife Jane is keen gardener. They had bought the house from the 3 eccentric Rodger brothers again gardeners; one was an RHS judge. The main garden is at the rear of the house about 2 acres in size and walled. It is laid out on a cruciform pattern but is well planted and you have to explore. At the centre is a 2000 year old yew containing the tool shed. In another area a holly, emblem of the MacKenzies, is 500 years old. There is much new planting particularly herbaceous despite the ravages of voles. The vegetables and soft fruit all seemed in fine fettle particularly garlic, a hard necked variety. Apparently it loves the Scottish climate! Wandering around you come across wee individual areas a stone seat with a weeping silver leafed pear beside it, a secluded pool, an area paved with river cobbles with *Celmisia* amongst them. There was a *Rhododendron* 'Loderi' in full bloom, several camellias, *Ceanothus* on the walls and some of the *R. maddenii* which had been taken out of the greenhouse and planted in the garden with no ill effects.



We then crossed the river to the arboretum which has some fine old trees, but much new planting well protected against deer. A group of *Betula albosinensis* var. 'Septentrionalis' beside the river looked

Betula albosinensis var. 'Septentrionalis' trunks.

Picture by John Roy

really well, also notable an oriental beech and some shapely new *Sequoia*. There was a good yellow *Rhododendron triflorum* and some large leafed rhododendrons doing well.

I had a last wander round the walled garden and noticed several large bunches of mistletoe covered in berries growing on an old apple tree. Will was still around and said to help myself. They have been carefully “sown” into crevices in my apple trees. I do hope they grow as a permanent reminder of a really special garden.

Attadale

Ian Douglas



We were met at the entrance by Joanna MacPherson who now runs the estate. From the entrance to the house is a fine woodland path running parallel to the drive. Along its length are many old species and hybrid rhododendrons as well as other shrubs and small trees. Those with a keen eye will notice a number of sculptures, often in secluded niches. My own favourite was a hunting cheetah, beautifully balanced.

From the house a path leads through the vegetable garden to the fern collection. As well as hardy types and tree ferns, a large geodesic dome contains some of the more

tender species. A number of dwarf rhododendrons have been planted in this area, adding colour in season.

From here the path passes through woodland until reaching one of the highlights, the Japanese garden. It consists of a circular area of gravel with stepping stones, about thirty metres across. The gravel is surrounded by a planted area with azaleas, maples and conifers. To complete the picture is a small Zen garden of beautifully raked gravel with suitably placed rocks.

As we move around the house (originally 1760) we come to the giant sundial, three metres across laid out on slabs. The gnomon, about one metre high is supported by a cat, the emblem of the MacPherson clan, with the motto “touch not the cat but a glove”.

The final section in front of the house has an extensive selection of azaleas, on our visit just coming up to their peak. This area also has some nice Triflora subsection rhododendrons and *R. ‘Loderi’* specimens.

Inverewe and Lochalsh Woodland Garden

John Roy

These two National Trust for Scotland gardens need no introduction. Inverewe, positioned at the head of Loch Ewe, and Lochalsh on the Balmacara Estate on Loch Alsh both have a maritime climate washed by the Gulf Stream enabling many plants, not hardy elsewhere, to succeed.

We had a conducted tour around Inverewe with Head Gardener Kevin Ball, who is very knowledgeable about the plants in his care.

The garden was created in 1862 by Osgood MacKenzie on the 850 hectares (2,100 acres) estate bought for him by his mother. The original Inverewe Lodge was destroyed by fire in 1914 and replaced in 1937 by the current Inverewe House. The Garden covers some 20 hectares (49 acres) and has over 2,500 exotic plants and flowers. There is a further 2,000 acres of land managed for recreation and conservation. The garden and estate has been the property of the National Trust for Scotland since it was given



Members admire a fine flowering *Rhododendron falconeri* at Inverewe. Picture by John Roy

to the Trust along with a generous endowment for its future upkeep by Osgood's daughter Mairi Sawyer in 1952.

Lochalsh Woodland is an area open to the public, part of the much larger Balmacara Estate. We were met by Babs, an employee of NTS, and Tim who takes a keen interest in the garden as a volunteer gardener. The

woodland consists of two

acres with mature Scots pine, oak and beech as well as the ornamental plantings of rhododendrons and other genera.

Tim then escorted us to Armadale Castle where he had been head gardener for a number of years, but is now retired.

Armadale Castle Garden

John Roy

Armadale Castle, Gardens & Museum of the Isles is situated within a 20,000-acre highland estate on the Sleat peninsula in south Skye. Once part of the traditional lands of Clan Donald, the Estate was purchased by the Clan Donald Lands Trust in 1971. The Trust was established to promote an understanding of the history and traditions of Clan Donald and the Lordship of the Isles.

The Estate's principal focal points are the restored historic gardens, and the beautiful walking trails threading through the 40 acres of woodland around Armadale Castle. Part of the Castle has been restored and the striking ruined remains sensitively re-designed, to create an attractive landscape within the gardens.

Tim kindly showed us round. There are many interesting trees and shrubs in this garden, with spring interest in huge swathes of bluebells and *Euphorbia*. A lovely clump of *Arisaema propinquum* drew especial interest from myself.



Armada Castle Garden
Picture by John Roy

Larachmhor Garden

Jonathan Davies-Coleman

The garden at Larachmhor were started in the 1920s by John Holms who purchased the 28 acre site and tried to build a house but ultimately failed. However, he did succeed in starting the garden. After his death in 1938 his gardener, John Brennan, carried on his duties and maintained the garden until his death in 1959. The Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh got involved in the 1960s. Since then the garden has been maintained by a voluntary team, one of which is Ian Sinclair who was our guide for the day. Ian entertained us with stories of vestigial hairs on *Northofagus fusca*, drip tips on *Rhododendron lutescens* and of course the plight of Oliver's tree ferns. The tour took in most of the garden and allowed us to observe some of the amazing specimens it contains along with the slightly oddly shaped Jamie Taggart plants. These were identified by their interesting twisting or lollipop shapes. They were apparently flowering really well this year.

We also saw the two remaining specimens of *Rhododendron sinogrande* which were the first to flower outside in the UK. Unfortunately, they were not deserving of the Princes Street fanfare this time as they were already over. But they had flowered well this year.



Ian and George inspect *Rhododendron arboreum* ssp. *delavayi* with spongy bark and characteristic Jamie shape

Picture by Jonathan Davies-Coleman

The garden is also home to many different forms of *Rhododendron* 'Loderi' and other Fortunea subject. hybrids along with many *R.* 'Yunnceinn' hybrids (*R. yunnanense* x *R. cinnabarinum*). We were also shown some of the new developments in the garden which included two new view points along with the addition of a new wall thanks to the recent roadworks. The roadworks have resulted in the creation of a new stream which is also being planted up.

We were also shown an interesting specimen of *Rhododendron arboreum* ssp. *delavayi* with spongy bark. The garden is also over run in places with Schisandra which was in flower at the time. On the whole the garden was in fine form with many species in flower and of considerable size.

The future of Larachmhor looks bright and we thank Ian for his time and expertise whilst showing us around.

Arisaig House Garden

Marion Kinns

F. D. P. Astley, an enlightened and wealthy Industrialist from the Midlands, commissioned Arisaig House in 1863. Philip Webb, the 'Father of the Arts and Crafts movement' was the designer with a remit to create a Shooting Lodge with terraced gardens. John Holms always stayed here when planning and planting Larachmhor.

After an exciting morning at Larachmor and an extremely good lunch in the dining room of this interesting house it was tempting to sink back into one of the comfortable chairs and ‘shock – horror’ for an SRS trip, have a post prandial snooze!



***Abies procera* male flowers shedding pollen**
Picture by Marion Kinns

Ian Sinclair would not of course allow such slack behaviour so he led us out into the 20 acres of garden surrounding the

house. Once moving we found plenty of interest and initially looked at a lot of old conifers, many dating from the early plantings. The first stop was to admire a large *Abies procera* (Noble fir) with branches low enough to allow examination of reddish male cones full of pollen. Female cones at a very early stage were also visible. There were other conifers in the vicinity – a young *Cedrus deodora*, and a *Sequoiadendron giganteum* with visible holes where tree creepers may have nested. We also saw the Himalayan *Pinus wallichiana*, a tall *Abies alba* and a big broad *Cupressus macrocarpa* (Monterey Cypress). The latter is one half of the dreaded cross which produces the Leyland cypress. Rhododendrons so far were represented by many bushes of the hardy hybrid, *R.* ‘Cunningham’s White’. In the same family of Ericaceae, we saw *Gaultheria shallon* growing like a weed.

At the top of the drive we branched left into the woodland and soon Ian was showing us a choice botanical snippet. Bracken was producing nectar from glands opposite the pinnules on young foliage. The reason for this is unclear as mature fronds are known to produce a cyanide compound to deter herbivores. One theory is that this nectar attracts ants and that their presence deters herbivores as they attempt to graze on the young shoots before the ability to synthesise deterrent chemicals is acquired.

Our walk by now had become a scramble up and around Arisaig House and we skirted

a pond with hens, including a splendid and watchful cockerel and a few ducks. *Matteuccia struthiopteris* (ostrich fern) could be seen above the pond. A gate led us up a slope and down another steeper one under mature beeches and through the thick layer of beech leaves. An *Araucaria araucana* (monkey puzzle tree) was pushing through the overhead canopy to the sunlight. A characteristic aromatic smell alerted us to a *Thuja plicata* (western red cedar) and there was also a large dying *Pinus sylvestris* (Scots pine) presumably from the very early plantings here in 1880/90. From the same sort of date was a large *Chamaecyparis lawsonii* (Lawson's Cypress) and *Cryptomeria spiralis*, which is not often seen. An overheard comment made by one of our group was that it was a 'nice sort of a wood'. I would agree. There was a good feel about it...not too dense, leaves to scuff beneath ones feet, a lovely smell and a good mix of trees.

By the lower part of the slope we were beginning to find some rhododendrons amongst which were *R. sinogrande*, *R. molle*, *R. glischrum* as well as the hybrid *R. 'Cynthia'* which was a familiar sight on this trip. There was also a grand specimen of *Cercidophyllum japonicum* promising autumn scents of candyfloss.

A female pheasant accompanied our return route to the house; she probably followed us from the area of the duck pond. We passed a fallen *Nothofagus dombeyi*, the South American evergreen species. Behind the house was a lawn edged with various rhododendrons and azaleas but by this stage the first rain of the trip was upon us and some members retreated to their cars.

A few hardier folks were encouraged by Ian to go round the house and down the steep and slippery terrace steps in front of the building. Plants on these terraces were overgrown and tangled. There was a very nice old *Eleagnus* at the bottom of the steps on the right. The very wide border at the bottom was cultivated and led to a polytunnel kept for salads etc for use in the house. The terraces have had their moments of splendour when many gardening staff cared for the grounds. Now, the maximum is two, which is not many for 20 acres. Despite these reservations, the garden has a comfortable feel and must greatly contribute to the enjoyment of visitors staying at this interesting hotel.

Ardtornish

Penny Murch

The drive to this garden was spectacular. After the Corran ferry just south of Fort William we went alongside beautiful Loch Linnhe, then up into Glen Tarbert with deep V shaped valleys on both sides. At the head of Loch Sunart we turned south onto a single track road up the hill. The panorama that hit us as we breasted the top was breath taking, a wide sweep of soft grass covered mountains. Then we ran down into the open oak woods of the river Aline valley, past the fortified house. There was a high tide and then the garden in hot sun.

We were greeted by Ian Lamb, head gardener, now retired who knew and loved every plant and glade in the garden. We started with the grove of large *Cercidiphyllum* by the front lawn where they self-seed. The garden is kept semi wild with a spring carpet of woodland flowers and in front of these trees was a border hiding treasures such as blue poppies and three varieties of trilliums.

We made our way to the woodland garden and spotted a *Rhododendron campylogynum* hybrid possibly *R.* 'Merganser' draping its clear yellow flowers down a wall beside the drive. The woodland garden was filled with the scent of *R. luteum* and had open glades with many interesting trees, including *Acer*, *Euchryphia*, beech, oak and *Sorbus*. This is a high rainfall area, and what should have been a lovely glade of *R. cinnabarinum* had suffered very badly with powdery mildew, but *R. yunnanense* and *R.* 'Boddaertianum' were stunning in this gentle setting.

Asphodel lilies, which look like white *Camassia* had been planted in an open glade. They ran down into bluebells in a spread of grass above a big bank of *Rhododendron luteum*. It was a magic combination. At the head of it was a plant new to me, *Lindera obtusiloba*.

Behind us a path ran up the hill lined on both sides with the deciduous azalea *Rhododendron* 'Exquisitor', its pink and white flowers similar to *R.* 'Irene Koster', not fragrant, but light and pretty. This led us to the Rhododendron Dell all mossy and rocky, planted with various large leaved rhododendrons in the 1990s. A feature of this garden is the continual planting that has been done for well over 100 years, and it was fascinating to see how the planting shows the history of the developing interest

in plants as they became available.

We turned for home past a bright orange-red *Rhododendron* ‘Mayday’ and *R.* ‘Polar Bear’ not in flower until August and so to the loch side. A smart young fastigate beech stood in the lawn and took your eye, but it has a long way to go to reach the size of the one by the river on our way back to the cars. That one was magnificent.

Ard Daraich Hill Garden

John Roy

Norrie MacLaren and Anna Raven’s garden is situated on the Ardgour side of the Corran Ferry. Originally the holiday home of Constance Spry, Ard Daraich was purchased by Norrie’s parents Major David and Lady Edith MacLaren. David set about creating a rhododendron garden and enjoyed propagating his favourites. The garden was gradually extended up the hill to the back of the house, and across the road. The visit commenced with a delicious lunch laid on by our hosts.

Norrie has an outstanding collection of both hybrid and species rhododendrons. *R. wallichii* is so happy it is seeding itself around. A very notable bush is *Trochodendron aralioides*, a primitive plant that lacks vessel elements in its wood.

An interesting rhododendron in subsect. *Taliensia* was seen in the form of *R. pubicostatum*. The dark spotted cream flowers of *R. parmulatum* ‘Ocelot’ shone out with a

view up Loch Linnhe to Ben Nevis in the background.



Norrie continues to extend the garden up the hill with plantings of large leaved rhododendrons. It remains to be seen how these thrive out of the shelter of the lower garden.

**Norrie introducing us to his garden
Picture by John Roy**

Achara

John Roy

Situated just outside the village of Duror, Achara House is a Scots baronial mansion remodeled in the early 20th century around a farmhouse owned by the Stewarts of Ardshiel. It is now owned by a local businessman, Niall MacLean, but the woodland garden was formed by its previous owner.

Alastair MacPherson was a member of the SRS for a while, and I first visited the garden in the 1990s when it opened under Scotland's Garden Scheme. The garden was quite young then, with some of the rhododendron plantings too overshadowed by the canopy. Alastair must have heeded my advice, for when Niall asked me to have a look round the rhododendron collection, I was pleasantly surprised to find it in good health. So a visit for the SRS was agreed.

The main rhododendron garden is on a hillside above the main house. A zig-zag trail leads up the hill. A lot of the shrubs still have their name plates attached, allowing easy identification.

Achara is situated on the north west facing aspect of Loch Linnhe, a sea loch bringing warm water from the gulf stream. So it was no surprise to find a superbly flowering *Rhododendron lindleyi* on the side of the trail. What was a surprise was to find another in full exposure, at the top of the garden, where there was a fine viewpoint across to the Morvern hills. Another notable shrub was *R. cinnabarinum* 'Nepal' with gorgeous orange/red flowers.

Niall has acquired a lovely rhododendron collection of both species and hybrids with his purchase of Achara and is willing to learn how to look after it. Advice will be freely given if needed.



***Rhododendron lindleyi* growing
in full exposure
Picture by John Roy**

Mary's Puncture

John Roy

After the visit to Attadale, Wang and Kay Liston had invited members to see their garden at Tullich, close by. Although not part of the official tour, it is worth mentioning, because they have worked very hard at producing a rhododendron garden from scratch on a south east facing aspect.

While we were enjoying tea and baking, I noticed a tyre on Mary Gray's car was punctured by a sharp stick. Kay provided a decent jack, and after much reorganisation of Mary's luggage, the spare wheel was found – one of those "space saver" wheels. But it would get Mary going again.

I jacked the car and changed the wheel, unaware of all the photos being taken by Marion Kinns. So as a change from looking at plants, members were admiring the skills of wheel changing!



Formula 1 would be proud of us!

Anatomy of Risk

Richard Firmin

If an article on health and safety is the last thing you would choose to read then you have my sympathy – though slightly less than I might once have offered. My general view was that H&S is merely the mantra of a weak nanny state, born out of fear of litigation and often used as an excuse for inactivity. Life is not inherently safe, I reasoned, and taking risks can be positively enjoyable.

Now that I have an unusual opportunity to reflect on this – under doctor's orders to refrain from physical activity – I might add a couple of riders to that cavalier position.

Taking unnecessary risks is daft. I have always worn protective gear when operating machinery, particularly chainsaws; but once too often I have failed to take the same reasonable precautions when using hand tools. Doh!

Secondly, the notion that the job must be finished today, come hell or high water, is generally flawed. Though it had more apparent clout when income depended on it. I do remember working as groundsman for a tree surgeon one bitterly cold January day, braced against horizontal sleet, me down below, him up there, cutting through his rope..... I should remember it more often.

So, no more beating around the bush – pruning is a conversation in which eye contact should be avoided. My specific suggestion, as a spectacle wearer who finds using goggles completely impracticable, is to put on a face visor when doing any pruning work whether with secateurs or a chainsaw.

And on a positive note, I feel almost obliged to report my personal experience of laser surgery: while not necessarily the kind of entertainment you would choose to queue for on your day off, nevertheless, painless and effective. Good old NHS and its immigrant employees.

2015	Wuerzburg		Radlett		Glendoick	
	mm	inches	mm	inches	mm	inches
January	78.0	3.07	106.0	4.17	177.5	6.99
February	88.0	3.46	40.0	1.57	64.5	2.54
March	44.0	1.73	78.5	3.09	26.5	1.04
April	57.0	2.24	54.0	2.13	61.0	2.40
May	68.0	2.68	39.0	1.54	19.0	0.75
June	63.0	2.48	129.0	5.08	94.5	3.72
July	33.0	1.30	23.5	0.92	92.0	3.62
August	52.0	2.04	28.5	1.12	40.0	1.57
September	22.0	0.87	73.0	2.87	49.3	1.94
October	47.0	1.85	22.5	0.89	51.0	2.01
November	56.0	2.20	79.0	3.11	40.0	1.57
December	14.0	0.55	19.0	0.75	68.0	2.68
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.

2016

Glenarn		Ballachulish	
mm	inches	mm	inches
301.5	11.87	393.5	15.49
209.6	8.25	370.6	14.59
85.9	3.38	212.3	8.36
88.9	3.50	118.1	4.65
101.6	4.00	166.6	6.56
72.9	2.87	166.4	6.55
155.4	6.12	247.9	9.76
130.3	5.13	154.4	6.08
130.3	5.13	367.6	367.6
104.6	4.12	98.3	3.87
114.3	4.50	177.0	6.97
152.4	6.00	354.8	13.97
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

There has been no new data from our Dunblane station since 2014, so I have removed the station for the time being. I look forward to a new station in Aberdeenshire sending in data for 2017.

Generally a drier year for our Scottish stations, but slightly damper than last year for Wuerzburg and Radlett.

Ballachulish managed not to be wettest in October when Glenarn reigned supreme. If you have rainfall data, please consider sending it to the editor. Details at the end of the Review.

Flowering of Rhododendrons at Glenarn in 2017

Mike Thornley

This has been the best flowering season in the 34 years we have been at Glenarn. Everything came into flower, including new rhododendrons flowering for the first time since planting, while others, that had performed so badly in the past as to be ignored, put on a surprising display. Initially flowering was early, at least 3 weeks ahead of last year (which may have been late), so that *R. grande*, which we had put on the show bench on the last day of April 2016, was out by the end of March this year, to be touched by the only night of faint frost. Another feature was the extended period of flowering; for instance, the yellow trusses of *R. macabeanum* shone out across the garden for more than a month. Colour was laid on colour until the overall effect became almost unbearable, as if such unusual beauty presaged an impending disaster.

After completing the mapping of all the rhododendrons and principal trees and shrubs in the garden we returned to the task of identifying the unknowns, helped by the exceptional flowering. The second *R. sidereum* which we had long suspected had been growing near its neighbour in the Small Glen gave itself away by revealing cream to yellow trusses, perhaps encouraged by the absence of a shading oak which fell down unannounced on Easter Saturday, a year ago. Some of the hybrid rhododendrons could also be nailed. The late flowering *R. sanguineum* ssp. *didymum* made us look carefully at a straggly rhododendron, also in flower with deep red loose trusses, emerging from pointed, coronet shaped buds which, with its narrow, felted leaves, suggested that it was the cross with *R. griersonianum* (*R.* ‘Arthur Osborne’ in the garden records).

I have said before, a long time ago (SRS News and Views No 6 November 1985), that sometimes the hybrids help us to recognise the species. We have been trying for years to locate *R. decorum* ssp. *diaprepes* but it was only when I saw *R.* ‘Polar Bear’ (*R. auriculatum* x *R. diaprepes*) in flower that it struck me, with *R. auriculatum* still in bud, that it must be the *R. diaprepes* which gives the earlier flowering which, in turn, led me to realise that the *R. decorum* like tree, which flowered at the end of June into July, and with larger leaves, must be the missing *R. diaprepes* which the records, unusually, give a clue on location as being somewhere in the Low Glen, which it is.



160 year old *Rhododendron falconeri* in full flower

I am writing this at the fog end of the season, hence the references to later flowering rhododendrons, and am forgetting the impact made in March and April by the big leaf rhododendrons, notably the Gibson hybrids. These plants date back to two periods of hybridizing, in the mid 1930s and mid 1950s, and include *R. sinogrande* x *R. macabe anum* with massive leaves and huge, pale yellow, football size trusses that demand selfies from the visitors. The Gibsons also crossed *R. sinogrande* with *R. grande* to produce what are now towering trees with pink flushed flowers one of which has a rose rambling to its summit for later effect. Not to be left out, the original *R. falconeri*, reckoned to be 160 years old, covered itself with its alabaster flowers and from this venerable specimen the Gibsons made a cross with *R. macabe anum*, in effect creating a yellow flowered *R. falconeri*. They did not achieve the yellow of Rothschild's *R. 'Fortune'* but their version of *R. falconeri* x *R. sinogrande* resulted in a stately, cream truss on silver sheened foliage that is achingly beautiful.

So, what triggered this exceptional flowering: favourable conditions that produced abundance or unfavourable events that created stress, or both? 2015 had been a year

of exceptionally high rainfall, including in May when plants were putting on leaf. 2016 was a reasonable flowering season but without the high seed set that can inhibit growth. Average summer month temperatures remained at around a high of 20 C and this warmth continued late into autumn as plants were budding up, and winter was never cold. But also, there were two short periods of drought, in early June and mid-July when the temperature reached 27 C, with little rain, so that the burn almost ran dry. My hunch is that gradually rising temperatures and already high rainfall, are the most likely environmental influences, also producing an increasing number of seedlings and giving a warning of a chaotic future. Whatever the causes the result this year was a perfect storm of flowers.



Rhododendron sinogrande x *R. macabeanum*

Pictures by Mike and Sue Thornley

Minutes of the Thirty Fourth Annual General Meeting of the Scottish Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society

Held in the Gibson Hall, Garelochhead on Saturday, 6th May, 2017 at 2.30pm

The Vice President, Ian Sinclair was in the Chair; 23 members were in attendance.

- 1 Ian Sinclair, acting chairman, welcomed members to the 34th AGM.
- 2 Apologies were received from our President, John Hammond and from Mrs P. Fairley, Peter Cox and Sue and Mike Thornley.
- 3 The minutes of the Thirty-Third Annual General Meeting held at the Gibson Hall Garelochhead, on Saturday, 30th April, 2016, circulated in the previous 'Review' and tabled at the meeting were taken as read. There were no matters arising. The adoption of the minutes was proposed by Gloria Starck and seconded by Grace Morris and agreed by the meeting.
- 4 President's Remarks. In his absence, attending the ARS Chapter's Rhododendron Show in Oregon, the President's remarks were tabled and read to the meeting by Ian Sinclair. The President recorded the sad loss of Sir Islay Campbell, a Hon. Vice President of the Society who would be warmly remembered for his enhancement of the plant collection at Crarae and for his support of the great gardens in Argyll and Bute.
- 5 Secretary's Report. Secretary noted the continuing success of the show at Garelochhead with good visitor numbers and increased funds raised from an excellent plant sale and raffle. New/novice exhibitors had received more help in showing and some had won awards which hopefully would encourage them to return next year. The hall has been booked for 2018 show scheduled for 4th May.

The stand at Scotland's Gardening Show does not attract many new members but SRS recognises the importance of having a presence at the show in order to raise the profile of rhododendrons in general and to assist the public with enquiries about them. Matt Heasman called on more members to help with staffing the stand which entails 2-3 hours and gives free entry to the show.

Membership is down and recruitment is one of the important issues facing the society. Members should be encouraged to spread the word about the show, meetings and tours, which are the highlights of the SRS programme and enjoyed

by all who attend them.

- 6 Treasurers Report. Colin Whitehead reported on the accounts for the year ended September 2016 (Tabled). Total Income for the year was £5929 and expenditure £6759. The deficit was due to exceptional capital expenditure in 2016 on a new printer and updating the SRS web site.

He reported progress with the gift aid reclaim; having finally been accepted by HMR as the new name, his first submission for 2014-15 could be made.

He noted the imbalance between the General Account and Tours Account because the Tours Account may show large sums in hand when events are being booked which will take place in the next financial year and which are subsequently paid out for hotel accommodation, garden entries, etc.

The Treasurer and tours committee have agreed that, in order to clarify finances, there will be a separate balance sheet for each event/tour organised although still only one SRS account for banking purposes and income/expenditure.

The chairman thanked the Treasurer for his report and proposed that the accounts be adopted. Seconded - David Starck and Matt Heasman

- 7 Membership Report. Helen Kessel's report (Tabled) noted 151 members at 5th May 2017, down by 16 from April 2016 with losses in all membership groups. Paypal was still not working smoothly for those joining/rejoining on line as payees do not receive notification from bank that payment has gone through while the Treasurer gets a note of a payment into SRS account but no name or gift aid status of payee. It was agreed that members should be encouraged to pay by standing order so that they do not have to receive an annual reminder. Members who joined in 2016 and 2017 have to be contacted to sign up for Gift Aid. Secretary to send copy of G.A. document to M.H. for website and copies to Treasurer. Suggestions were made to recruit new members. Willie Campbell suggested that each member is able to offer an interested friend free membership for one year and encourage them to join thereafter. This suggestion to go to committee.

- 8 Election of Officers and Committee Members.

Honorary Vice President: The President, John Hammond and Secretary, Katrina Clow, were pleased to propose that Sir Peter Hutchison, Bt. be nominated as Honorary Vice President of the Society. Sir Peter, complete with rhododendron button-hole, said that he was both honoured and delighted to accept the nomina-

tion and the meeting seconded and applauded his election.

The Hon Secretary had completed her 3 year term. The President had proposed that she be re-elected for a further term. Seconded by Ian Sinclair and Ian Douglas and others and agreed by meeting.

It was proposed that Grace Morris (Tours and Events Sub Committee) and Richard Firmin (Technical Advisor), who had been co-opted onto the SRS Committee in 2016, be formally elected at the AGM meeting. Proposer - Ian Sinclair and Seconder - Colin Whitehead and agreed by meeting.

- 9 Tours and Events. David Starck tabled his report of current and future tours. He reported that the post show tour to the Highlands with 20 delegates would depart on Monday, 8th May. Plans were progressing for the Autumn Conference on 'Rhododendrons in Fife', probably using accommodation in Dundee. Details of the 2018 Spring Tour to Wales had been circulated to assess interest. It is proposed to travel by coach, departing from Manchester Marriot Hotel, with the option of leaving cars in secure parking at Manchester Airport, as there is a very reasonable weekly parking fee. DS noted that the one-day post show tour was poorly subscribed and he asked for suggestions of possible gardens to visit in the Garelochhead area. N.B. Mrs Fairlie had kindly invited members to visit her garden on show set up day and so this is a possible visit for 2018. Spring Tours to Hampstead/Sussex/Surrey in May 2019 and Ireland, by coach, in 2020 are proposed. David Starck recorded the input of Gloria who takes charge of all the bookings and travel/hotel arrangements for the excellent SRS events. The Chairman thanked David and Gloria for all of the work they do arranging tours.
- 10 Editor's Report. John Roy apologised that both the Yearbook and Reviews were late but Yearbook had been well received. He noted that the new printer was both quicker and cheaper to run. It had been proposed at a previous SRS committee meeting that there should be a single issue of the Review as often material is limited and John Roy is the editor/proof reader and printer of all but the cover. David Starck said Review was used to advertise events which could be too early/late late if only one issue but this information could be sent out by e-mail or circulated at events. It was also noted that 50-60% of members do not attend events and Reviews and Yearbooks are their main points of contact with SRS.
- 11 Seed Exchange. Willie Campbell reported an almost total sale of available seed realised £500+ even though he had reduced prices to be more competitive. This excellent result is thanks to the generosity of a small group who regularly donate

seed and to 7 members abroad who purchased 80% of available seed. 15 home members bought the rest. Members need to be encouraged both to provide and purchase seed if the exchange is to continue. Chairman thanked Willie for organising the seed exchange.

- 12 Web Site Matt Heasman reported that the web site is up and running well but always requires input from members, especially photographs with appropriate text. Willie Campbell asked if there were trackers on the web site to record number of visits. John Roy asked members to contribute to the Facebook page (even if just a 'like') as this is a way to reach younger people who browse webpages.
- 13 Arduaine and Crarae. David Chamberlain reported that the appointment of a new head gardener for Arduaine is about to be announced but no further news of a new Manager for Crarae and no further progress with the Nigel Price Memorial Garden project until this vacancy is filled. The meeting felt that it is vital the appointees have had previous experience in woodland gardens. SRS are represented on the re-formed Arduaine management committee and hopefully will have a positive input there but we do not have a formal presence at Crarae. The meeting expressed its concern over the management and future of the woodland gardens in NTS care. It was agreed that David Chamberlain would take up matter informally with NTS via Anne Steele, the NTS Gardens Advisor and Ian Douglas agreed to write formally to the Chairman of NTS expressing our concerns.
- 14 Education. Willie Campbell said that SRS should more actively pursue its educational role. Fewer young people are taking up horticulture and the opportunities to work in gardens and estates and develop knowledge of woody plants are dwindling. Pay, except in exceptional situations, is poor. SRS needs to invite young gardeners to its events and offer encouragement and financial support if this can be provided with funding from trusts and legacies. This cannot be achieved however without a larger membership and an organiser. Willie Campbell proposed that SRS elect an Educational Officer and this was approved.
- 15 There being no further business, the meeting closed with thanks to the chair.
- 16 Proposed date of next AGM-4th May, 2018.

Committee Members

Our Office Bearers are:

President: John Hammond

Vice President: Ian Sinclair

Hon. Vice Presidents: George Argent, David Chamberlain, Peter Cox, Sir Peter Hutchison

Hon. Secretary: Katrina Clow

Treasurer: Colin Whitehead

Tours & Visits Manager: Gloria Starck

Other Committee Members:

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Publications Manager: Matt Heasman

Shows Manager: Ian Sinclair

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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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Above: Our Group at Inverewe with Head Gardener Kevin Ball

Picture courtesy of the National Trust for Scotland



Above: The lovely foliage of *Rhododendron wiltonii*

Right: New growth of *Rhododendron* 'Taurus'



Pictures by Anne Guelker from Eminence, Missouri, USA

