





**Pictures from the Tours
associated with the
ARS Convention in and
around Bremen 2018**

**Above: Holger
Hachmann showing
some of his new
Rhododendron
Hybrids**

**Right: Looking
around Gothenburg
Botanic Garden**



**Left: Zen Garden,
Denmark**

Pictures by John Roy

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Cover Pictures: Front: *Rhododendron* 'Redwing' at Bodnant

Back: ARS Convention at Schroder's Nursery. Hartwig Schepker in a sea of
Rhododendron Flowers

Both pictures by John Roy

President's Column

John M. Hammond

Inevitably, the continuing extremes of weather this year will be high on the agenda of many members, particularly if you reside in a region where the drought has been long in duration. Here in Starling, on the edge of the West Pennine Moors, after seven weeks of very hot sun, with high temperatures in the shade and no rain, there have been, and will continue to be, losses of plants in the ground, losses of plants being raised to maturity in containers, and losses of plant material being propagated. Even though regular irrigation has been an ongoing chore using a hosepipe and a watering can, this action is often only partially successful, as even when the plants have been given a good soaking, the moisture in the ground tends to dry out relatively quickly in the dry and breezy conditions; whilst plants in containers often dry out completely and need to be left to soak in a bucket, which can be a time-consuming activity. Unfortunately, it can take some weeks/months for some plants to die, so the jury is still out in regard to the full impact of the drought. Whilst I moved dozens of containers into whatever shade was available, and the material being propagated in the greenhouse got moved to behind the north wall of the house, this does not disperse the consistently high level of heat that still burns the leaves on some specimens in the shade. It is extremely unusual in Northern Britain for there to be a need to consider what plant material is heat tolerant; this is a parameter don't normally take into account, apart from my conservation work on the Oregon Coast, where the summers can be very hot and dry for weeks at a time and plants usually require plenty of shelter from trees and an irrigation system installed that covers the whole of the garden. Eventually, the rains arrived in Starling on Saturday 11th August and from the irrigation perspective some normality returned to the pattern of daily life. A few days later I spent an afternoon tidying-up and moving the propagation material back into the greenhouse, hoping that normality has returned and the extremely hot weather was a past aberration. Fixing the losses in the garden and in containers will be a more time-consuming task. What do I know to be able to make a judgement about the rest of the summer? Perhaps I'll have it all to do again! I noted an item in the national press suggesting the high extremes of temperature this summer is forecast to be the first of a five-year cycle.

In past issues of the *Review* I have taken the opportunity to discuss issues and concerns related to sacks of the various types of compost marketed in the retail trade at

‘do-it-yourself’ outlets, garden centres and supermarkets. This subject came to the fore again recently when, on behalf of our sister organisation the Rhododendron Species Conservation Group, I organised a full-day Rhododendron Propagation Workshop at the Royal Botanic Garden in Edinburgh [RBGE].

This workshop comprised of several independent ‘clinics’ covering all types of propagation through the medium of PowerPoint presentations, demonstrations, and practical sessions involving the delegates. At relatively short-notice, for Health & Safety purposes, I was asked to complete a ‘Risk Assessment’ for the Workshop, to stand alongside the RBGE’s in-house ‘Risk Assessment’, covering the whole of the day’s activities from the time the delegates entered and exited the RBGE’s property. As the delegates would be handling compost during the practical sessions, amongst the items listed to be covered were the risks associated with using compost, including Legionnaires Disease and the measures to be taken to control the risks. This was one of several subjects that I was required to brief on at the start of the morning session.

In many ways it was fortuitous that I had some previous background knowledge to fall back on in regard to concerns connected with handling compost, as the points that the RBGE wanted to be covered replicated many of the issues and concerns I have mentioned in the past pages of the *Review* (see *Autumn Review No.81, 2015*). As it happened, in May I had purchased several 40 litre sacks of ‘Miracle-Gro, Moisture Control, Enriched Compost, Pots and Baskets’ to use for a trial of its claimed water retention capabilities, and I aimed to use it in seven hanging baskets containing fuchsias and six large ceramic pots containing petunias, etc. On the day I opened the first sack the weather was hot, the sack was warm, and the compost was very wet and sticky. I immediately had concerns about the compost being a carrier of Legionnaires Disease. Closer inspection of the small writing on the outside of the bag recommended wearing gloves when handling the compost and use in a well ventilated area. I then scanned the bag for a list of the compost contents, but it was no surprise that none was to be found, as this has been a problem that has been around for many years. The main wordage on the bag made reference to the fact that the mixture contained between 40% - 70% peat, together with the following statement that implies it contains recycled green waste:

‘Did you know you’re part of one of the world’s largest recycling efforts? Each year Scotts Miracle-Gro reuses thousands of tonnes of material from gardens and forests in many of our compost mixes’

I then checked to see if there was any mention of the compost being heat-treated to sterilise the mixture but there is no such indication on the sack. Neither is there any

mention of heat-treatment on the supplier's website, or any detailed information of the ingredients. The Safety Data Statement available on the website does not list any significant hazards for workers and users; it does include the following paragraph in conclusion:

Miracle-Gro Moisture Control Pots & Baskets Gel Pages:12&13

Version: 1.0 Date of issue/Date of revision: 30.10.2017 Date of previous issue: 00.00.0000

‘To the best of our knowledge, the information contained herein is accurate.

However, neither the above named supplier, nor any of its subsidiaries, assumes any liability whatsoever for the accuracy or completeness of the information contained herein. Final determination of suitability of any material is the sole responsibility of the user. All materials may present unknown hazards and should be used with caution. Although certain hazards are described herein, we cannot guarantee that these are the only hazards that exist.

Conforms to Regulation (EC) No. 1907/2006 (REACH), Annex II, as amended by Regulation (EU) No. 2015/830’

There is a major deficiency in terms of identifying the ingredients of the product; so the purchaser (user) has little, if any, opportunity to understand what actions they should take to ensure their safety when opening, emptying and using the product in a garden environment out in the open air, other than the small print I have referred to above. Fortunately, as the compost was wet and sticky there was significantly less risk of any spores being released when opening the sack.

Locally, on the edge of the West Pennine Moors, the continuing extreme weather conditions was evident when a very hot, sunny and dry period commenced at the end of June, then ran for seven weeks until rain arrived late in the day of Saturday 11th August. These hot conditions are ideal for causing spores of Legionnaires Disease to be developed in sacks stacked out in the open air in hot sun at the premises of retailers. In Australia and New Zealand where similar weather conditions usually exist throughout the summer it is a requirement for sacks of compost to carry warnings, as listed in *Autumn Review No.81, 2015*, including, ‘Always wash hands after handling growing media, even if gloves have been worn, as Legionella bacteria can remain on hands contaminated by growing media’. This is very pertinent advice to take note of.

As the weeks passed by during the extremely hot weather this summer I continued to use a watering can to irrigate the hanging baskets in the evening and I noted that

eight weeks after filling the hanging baskets the compost gradually began to lose its coherence as the plants grew and reduced the enrichment of the medium, it then became dusty on the surface and resistant to being watered, so the top layer of the medium tended to float on the surface of the water as the compost gradually absorbs the moisture; so, I suspect this is the remaining peat content. I had inserted a piece of pipe in each of the baskets and containers to ensure that the water reached down into the lower regions of the compost, with the aim of not letting the compost completely dry out, but the large hanging baskets were dry after a 24 hour period and I have the notion that the water retention capabilities of the compost was life-expired. Perhaps more importantly, the dusty surface is prone to spread spores in the breeze, so keep your face clear of any windborne dust when working on hanging baskets. There is also an increased risk of contamination with Legionnaires Disease if you are near to dripping hanging baskets, or you are eating and drinking after gardening without washing your hands. Hanging baskets that are placed at, or are close to, head height, together with other containers positioned in the direct sun, can contain standing water that can readily reach the 20C to 45C temperatures that enable harmful levels of the disease to occur.

It is excellent news that organisations such as the RBGE are taking notice of the concerns when using compost and are addressing the risks involved, even if the horticultural trade bodies continue to contend it would be alarmist for their products to carry labelling addressing the issues noted above. Seemingly, nothing has changed over the three years since I wrote the original article following the death of Andrew Murphy of Lanarkshire from Legionnaires Disease he contracted from a sack of garden compost he purchased at his local garden centre, except more types of compost available in the retail trade have recycled green waste in their ingredients.

Now for something completely different. At the time I was finalising the above notes to send to the Editor, the following notification came to hand from the Office of the Chief Plant Health Officer for Scotland:

In response to recent interceptions of Oak Processionary Moth (OPM) (*Thaumetopoea processionea*) on larger imported oak trees, new import and movement controls are being put in place to protect against the imminent danger of introducing this pest into the UK OPM Protected Zone.

The OPM Protected Zone consists of all areas of the UK outwith London and surrounding areas, where OPM is already established.

The new measures will be in effect in England from **Tuesday 21 August 2018** and are being implemented by Defra through the Plant Health (England) Order, in consultation with the UK Plant Health Authorities. This reflects that fact that the majority of these trees are brought into the UK through English ports.

Similar requirements will be introduced later in the year by the rest of the UK Plant Health Authorities and you will be advised accordingly.

The new rules apply to imported oak trees (*Quercus L*) other than *Q. suber*, whose girth at 1.2m above the root collar is greater than 8cm. They set out very specific conditions, which if not met, will prohibit the movement of plants into – and movement within - the OPM Protected Zone. These trees are still subject to the existing statutory notification requirements. (Smaller oaks will also continue to be subject to the notification scheme and targeted inspections.)

These conditions are that the trees concerned:

- ☐ have been grown throughout their life in places of production in countries in which OPM is not known to occur;
- ☐ have been grown throughout their life in a protected zone which is recognised as such for OPM, or in an area free from OPM, established by the national plant protection organisation in accordance with ISPM No. 4;
- ☐ have been produced in nurseries which, along with their vicinity, have been found free from OPM on the basis of regular, official inspections carried out at appropriate times in the vegetation cycle and additionally as close as practically possible to their movement.
- ☐ have been grown throughout their life in a site with complete physical protection against the introduction of OPM and have been inspected at appropriate times and found to be OPM free.

OPM caterpillars cause significant damage to oak trees and can pose risks to human and animal health.

Information has been included on the UK plant health portal. **Your support in passing on these new requirements to others within and outwith your organisation would be most appreciated.**

Secretary's Notes

Katrina Clow

2017-18 has been a very positive year for SRS. The committee has endeavoured to explore different avenues in order to interest potential new members in all aspects of rhododendron culture and provide them with the opportunity to meet likeminded enthusiasts through our meetings, tours and our rhododendron show, at Garelochhead, Argyll.

Gloria and David Starck organised an energetic 8 day tour of Welsh gardens in April which began at Bodnant and ended in Ross-on-Wye. The party was enhanced by the addition of delegates from Canada, America and New Zealand, 5 of whom joined the Society afterwards. Though it was cold and wet most of the time, it was an exhilarating experience. Their next tour, to Surrey—is already fully subscribed.

The SRS decided not to have a stand at 'Gardening Scotland', this year. Instead, the committee have investigated locations where we can meet with rhododendron buyers and chat to them about our Society. Glendoick Garden kindly offered us a weekend in late April and 4 volunteers enjoyed a happy and successful two days on our stand, offering advice on choosing rhododendrons and their cultivation. New members were recruited and we hope to repeat the exercise in other venues in 2019. Further publicity was gained from an article which appeared in 'Scotland on Sunday', highlighting rhododendrons and the SRS and our competition and show.

The Show was held for the 3rd year in succession at Gibson Hall, Garelochhead. Committee and members who turn up year after year to lug tables, put out banquetting roll, man the doors and help exhibitors over 2 gruelling days deserve our very special thanks. They were rewarded this year with new fleeces, giving show helpers a smart corporate image. We are beginning to gather a loyal band of local people who come to view the exhibits, buy plants and even enter the show. It is a cause of huge delight when a trophy is awarded to a novice (2, in the case of Marion Kinns) or a new exhibitor (who won the photography competition and found out only when she came to collect her exhibit!) Added drama came from the presence of 'The Beechgrove Garden' team who were on site all day from 8.30 am when the first interview took place until the last cup was presented. The subsequent programme gave us great coverage and a number of members are now immortalised on the cd, kindly sent to us afterwards by the BBC.

In spite of the difficult weather conditions experienced over the winter, the display in the hall was excellent, vibrant and colourful and well up to standard. It will be interesting to see if the drought has affected bud formation for next year.

Members should know by now that the secretary's plant passions are not restricted solely to rhododendrons and there is life and flower after the rhody season. With a new garden rapidly filling up with treasures, many provided by generous friends, the long cold, wet winter, followed by 3 months of drought caused huge concern.

Carting buckets of water from the pond to the plants became a daily, arduous chore but now seems worth the effort, as most plants including rhododendrons burst back into ruddy heath as soon as the rains arrived in late July. The flowers in August have been exceptional. *Hydrangea paniculata* is a real show stopper and pretty easy anywhere. Flowers are produced on new wood and plants need no more than a good hair cut in late April to produce the same show each year. Strong shoots can be lined out in any spare ground and will be rooted and flowering 4 months later-providing great gifts or stock for the plant sale. Other lovely autumn shrubs are *Hoheria* and *Eucryphia* - even my young specimens flowered well. These are white flowered, as are most *Clethra* but *Clethra alnifolia* 'Rosea' is a sturdy fast growing cultivar with gorgeous fragrant pink spires. It runs a bit but the layers can be potted up and planted elsewhere. *Clethra* (spice bushes) are little known and underrated but great plants here as they tolerate wet. There is only one National Collection - in Wrexham - but mature plants can be seen at Benmore which is where I first encountered them. Those we saw in the woodland garden at Portmeirion were treelike. Then, of course, there are *Styrax* and *Stewartia* but I must be patient and wait a good few years for them to flower.

The time is approaching to start thinking of the seed exchange, one of the great benefits of SRS membership. As well as named rhododendron seed, companion plants are welcome and seed production on *Podophyllum* and *Trillium*, for example, has been excellent this year. Collect a few seeds from your choice plants, dry and send to Willie Campbell. Not only will you share something special, you will help Society funds.

Thank you for your continued support of SRS and please tell your friends about us. Most new members are introduced through word of mouth. Please let us know if you need membership brochures!

The Scottish Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society

Minutes of the 35th Annual General Meeting held in the Gibson Hall, Garelochhead, Argyll on Saturday, 5th May, 2018 at 3pm

The President, Mr John R. Hammond presiding; 19 members in attendance

1 The President welcomed members to the 35th AGM of the Society

2 Apologies were received from Sir Peter Hutchison, Sir James Stirling, Ian Douglas, Christine and Paul Haynes, Oliver Miller, Grace Morris, Marlene and David Storah and Sue and Michael Thornley.

3 The Minutes of the 34th AGM, held at Garelochhead on 6th May, 2017 had been circulated and were tabled. There were no comments and their adoption was proposed by Gloria Starck and seconded by Ian Sinclair and agreed by all.

4 There were no matters arising

5 The President thanked the committee for its work in 2017-18 and particularly the shows committee for an excellent, well run show.

He noted that, in addition to circulating members of the Scottish Chapter with the new Data Protection legislation consent forms, he had also written to the Secretary of ARS about the possible requirement for our American members to give consent and had received an immediate response to make enquiries and notify. Deadline for responses is 28th May.

6 Secretary's report is appended.

7 Treasurers Report. Colin Whitehead presented the audited Accounts to 30/09/2017 He noted a closing balance of £10,430, excluding monies paid for the April tour to Wales, The increase in funds was due to increased income from gift aid reclaim and a reduction in capital expenditure.

There were no questions and the adoption of the Accounts was proposed by David Chamberlain, seconded by David Starck and approved by all.

The president thanked both the Treasurer for his report and the Auditor, Philip Rankin, who agreed to continue the audit and the independent examination of the SRS accounts.

8 Membership Report. Helen Kessell reported 154 paid up Members since 2017 AGM, an increase of 3 overall but 7 new members since October. She noted that ARS members need to pay the subscription timeously or they will not receive the Journals.

David Starck reported that The Society had given a years' free membership to our garden hosts/guides on the Welsh Tour.

The President thanked Helen for her report.

9 Election of Committee. Those committee members due for re-election after a 3 year term (Colin Whitehead, Helen Kessell, John Roy, Matthew Heasman, Gloria Starck, Philip Rankin) had all agreed to stand again and the President proposed that they be elected en.bloc by the AGM. All agreed.

In addition, in September, 2017, the committee discussed the educational remit of SRS and William Campbell agreed to organise this. Accordingly, his election as Education Director was formally proposed by the President and seconded by Katrina Clow and agreed by all.

10 Tours and Conference Report. David Starck reported a successful tour to Wales. The additional delegates from Canada, America and New Zealand contributed to its success. He noted that the Americans had googled 'Tour of Wales' and found our SRS tour. D.S. was asked if he intended to advertise our tours to ARS/ Canada/ America/ New Zealand. President said details were sent to the ARS Board with his report. He suggested we advertise in the ARS journal and on our web site.

D.S. reported 24 delegates attending Sunday post show tour to Glenarn and Ross Priory. The showdate for 2019 confirmed for 4th May and Mrs Fairlie had offered a visit to her garden in Rhu for Sunday visit. D.S. asked for suggestions for other gardens in the locality. Mary Gray to advise.

The Spring Tour 2019 to Surrey and Sussex, mid-May. (13th to 18th) Planning is underway for a 6 day tour. Proposed that delegates use their own transport but if overseas members apply, a mini-bus may be a better option. It was suggested that we offer a pre-tour visit to Valley Gardens on Sunday.

2020 Tour. It is proposed to visit gardens of Southern Ireland by coach.

Future Tours. "Gardens of Northern France" has been suggested.

Autumn Conference 6/7th October, at Scone, Perth on "Rhododendrons, Meconopsis and Woodland Gardens". President reported that the programme details would be sent out in following week.

11 Editor and Publications Manager Reports. Both John Roy and Matt Heasman had little to report though both, as usual, requested articles and images for 3 annual publications (to J.R. hand written, typed, by e-mail- all accepted!) and the web site articles, comments, images(to M.H.)

12 Due to time limitations, the following items were tabled: Seed Exchange Report, William Campbell, Technical Director's Report-Richard Firmin.

13 Date 2019 AGM. 4th May, Show Day was proposed *but not confirmed*.

!4 Secretary reported that no additional items for discussion had been received and the meeting closed at 3.30pm, with thanks to the chair.

KC May 2018

Secretary's Report

Last years' show proved very successful and provided a colourful spectacle as reasonable weather preceded the exhibition. Increased publicity, through the efforts of Mary Gray and Philip Rankin, meant that a wider audience attended and exhibited in 2017 and this has been matched in 2018. The plant sale and the auction of a single plant raised an excellent £560 and our thanks to those generous members who provide good, interesting plants and those who man the stall with considerable charm and skill. Undoubtedly, the presence of the Beechgrove Garden team at this year's show will have attracted some people today who hope to achieve a moment of fame on the box but hopefully, they will have been introduced to the joy of rhododendrons and encouraged to join us.

Our membership remains fairly static and the shows committee felt that our stand at 'Gardening Scotland' was failing to reach and recruit potential rhododendron enthusiasts. We were invited by Peter and Kenneth Cox to host a weekend publicity stand at Glendoick Garden Centre, in mid-April. This proved to be a most beneficial and enjoyable exercise. SRS volunteers were very pleased with the interaction with customers and hope that new members were recruited. Glendoick were pleased with the rhododendron sales resulting from advice offered by the team. The shows committee hope to repeat this exercise at other venues in 2019 and will be exhibiting at the Plant Explorers' Garden, Pitlochry, in Summer 2019.

As usual, many visitors asked about pests and diseases and we are delighted to have recruited Richard Firmin onto the SRS committee as our Technical Director to assist us with updating us on this ongoing issue. His highly informative and very readable article in the recent Yearbook is an invaluable source of information on this topic and teaches us not to be too alarmist about potential threats to our personal paradise.

The tours committee continue to organise excellent events; some of us have just returned from an energetic tour of Welsh gardens which took us from north to south and south to east in 6 days.

Gloria and David Starck are to be congratulated on their excellent powers of organisation, their skill in finding charming coach drivers and their confidence in the stamina of their participants. Please continue to support these tours as they can only be run with a minimum of 25 participants.

The committee were asked to consider alternating the show date, which most years coincides with Scottish Rock Show and Competition in Glasgow and the Helensburgh Hort. Society Plant Sale. The consensus was that we should keep to the first weekend in May. This is a busy time of year and there are bound to be clashes with a variety of horticultural events but the committee felt that it was important to establish our show date in the calendar and differences in weather mean that we will receive quite

different entries from one year to the next which provides a wider spectrum of exhibits and greater opportunity for new prize winners.

As usual, the Seed Exchange, organised by dedicated Willie Campbell was well supported and made a substantial sum for the Society. Again, the majority of purchasers were from abroad. Please think of both supplying and buying seed next season, in order to keep this valuable asset flourishing.

The recent letter sent out by our President about e-mail security and confidentiality has received a 50% response so far. Please respond if you have not already done so as The Society wishes to keep in touch with all of its members in the most cost efficient way possible.

KC May 2018

Technical Director's Report

There is some progress in developing better control measures for *Phytophthora*. ARS are funding research into root zone ecology which may restrict the spread of *P. ramorum* and other fungal pathogens. It is now known that *Phytophthora* entered Britain on the root systems of imported container grown rhododendron stocks, but the fungus is not visible in its early stages and no border inspection is likely to detect it and prevent the entry of infected material into Britain.

Members should be cautious about buying plants from abroad e.g. Holland and Italy and purchases on the Internet may also be suspect as plants can be sourced anywhere outside the UK and there are no border controls or inspection when these plants enter Britain

The problem is compounded by growers in the UK who export young seed grown plants e.g. ash from Britain to warmer Continental nurseries who grow them on and then ship them back to the original grower without inspection on re-entry and possibly harbouring disease. This procedure is quite legal and unrestricted. We need to nurture our own native populations of plants as there are certainly resistant forms of e.g. ash to die-back or native oaks to sudden oak death. Fortunately, the government is investing heavily in this.

Several other new tree diseases have been reported, usually due to an insect or beetle arriving which may also transmit pathogenic bacteria. 634 pests and diseases are listed on the Scottish Plant Health Website alone but Members should not be over alarmed, as long as we all observe good horticultural practice, i.e. check plant sources, buy healthy plants from reliable growers, quarantine for a period if doubtful, garden organically, practice bio-diversity and be vigilant; patrol your borders!

Richard Firmin May 2018

Seed Exchange Report

First of all let me thank all the seed donors:

Alan Anderson, Alan Clark, Ian Douglas, Oliver Miller and Tim Thornton for their donations of rhododendron seeds, acer seeds, magnolia seeds and seed of companion plants. Without these donations there would be no seed exchange.

Where has the seed gone to members:

Overseas (Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, France and Spain)	12
England	5
Scotland	6

So a total of 23 members used the SRS seed exchange. We did get one new member joining the SRS just because of the seed exchange from a Botanic Garden in Northern France.


We have also had access to the Danish Seed Exchange and 7 members asked and received seed from Denmark.

In the past couple of years I have reduced the cost of donated seed in line with other garden groups, but we still took in a total of £327.50 + €155 (we accept Euros as a payment from overseas) which still adds to help our Society funds.

Now is the time to think of next year Seed Exchange by hand pollinating rhododendron seed, collecting seed from companion plants etc.

I am happy to continue next year as Seed Exchange Manager.


Willie Campbell May 2018



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SRS Annual Show Saturday 5th May 2018 Gibson Hall, Gairlochhead

Gloria Starck

Wow! The time flies between Shows. This year was going to be a bit different as we had a Film Crew from The Beechgrove Garden attending the Show to make a piece to be aired later in the month. For those of you who live outside Scotland, The Beechgrove Garden is a Scottish gardening programme, similar to Gardener's World.

The weather had the usual impact on flowering, the winter seeming to go on forever, and thus the flowering season was a little delayed, although the differences in flowering season were very varied, there being many regional variations.

The Beechgrove film crew carried out interviews with Carol Rowe, an exhibitor, Katrina Clow, an organiser of the Show and John Hammond, our President, before the judging took place. These are only the ones I saw, there may have been others that I did not notice as the hours before judging can be a little hectic.

The judges for 2018 were, David Chamberlain, Alan Clark and Richard Baines. The Stewarding Team was, John Roy, Ian Douglas and I. Barbara Anderson was the photographer. The film crew were very discreet during the filming so we hardly knew they were there.

This year the Show ran to a particularly tight schedule, because of the Film Crew, but also because we wanted to get the Society's AGM completed in as short a time as possible to allow Committee Members to be circulating with the public to answer any questions. Ian and I did our calculations in record time. A contributing factor to this was that exhibitors are now being asked to complete a registration form, giving details of their garden and themselves, and they were also issued with an Exhibitor's number that had to be shown on the exhibit card. Both of these made allocating prizes much easier.

The trophy winners this year are as follows:

The Kilarden Trophy – For the winner of Class 1	Glendoick
The George Sherriff Cup – For the most points in Section 1	Glendoick
The Sir John Stirling Maxwell Trophy – For the best species in the show grown in the open	Brian Moss <i>R. edgeworthii</i>
The Harry Fairburn Cup – For the most points in restricted Classes 45 – 48	Marion Kinns
The David Stuart Cup – For the best species or hybrid exhibited in Classes 45 – 48	Marion Kinns <i>R. rigidum</i>
The John Hammond Cup – For the most points in the species and hybrid Azalea Classes (25, 34, 35)	John Hammond
The Argyll & Bute Trophy – For the most points in all Classes grown in an Argyll & Bute garden	Mike & Sue Thornley, Glenarn
The Scottish Rhododendron Society Cup – For the best hybrid in the Show	Chip Lima <i>R. nuttallii</i> x <i>R. lindleyi</i> ‘Patricia Marie’
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.	Carol Rowe
The Mervyn Kessell Cup – For the most points in Classes 42 and 43	Fiona 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).	Mount Stuart Trust, Isle of Bute
The Wild Argyll Cup – For the best photographic print in the Show	Stella Irvine

As usual the judging for the photographic competition was done by Ian Sinclair. There are three categories in the photographic competition: rhododendron portraits, other plant portraits and animal portraits (including birds and insects). This year



the trophy went to Stella Irvine for her photograph of a Siskin. Details of how to enter this competition are on the Show Schedule. Basically photos must be mounted on card and be a maximum size of A4.

The Beechgrove Film Crew left well satisfied and as I write, await the airing of the piece. I look forward to seeing you all in 2019 at The Gibson Hall, Gairlochhead, Saturday 4th May.

As usual there will be a Post Show Tour on Sunday 5th May 2019. We are planning to visit Dinkie Fairley's garden in Rhu in the morning and Marion Kinns' garden in Gair-

lochhead for lunch and an afternoon visit to her unusual garden. Interest forms have been sent out to members so if you have not returned yours now is the time to take action.

Post show tours of Glenarn and Ross Priory were enjoyed by some of the entrants, and members.

Judging at the show

Pictures by Barbara Anderson



South Wales - A Further Update, November 2017

Brian Moss

A year on since my last offering, I thought it about time that I mentioned progress. In the Autumn Review 2016, I mentioned how reluctant my *Rhododendron lanatum* was to produce any flower buds. The same could also have been said for *R. flinckii* a couple of yards away. I am delighted to report both plants have now budded up well so I look forward (hopefully) to seeing these next spring. Further along the border, *R. lanatoides*, now about five feet tall seems quite content to just grow, putting on about seven inches of stem growth annually. It did actually produce one flower bud last year but this aborted, however, it has the most superb foliage. Last year I mentioned that *R. charitopes* flowered in September, clearly too impatient to wait until the spring. It has done the same thing again this year! I have a few more plants, budded up for the first time. These include *R. burmanicum*, *R. valentinianum*, *R. elegantulum* (I think they are flower buds!), *R. campylogynum* Myrtilloides Group and *R. 'Egret'*. In the Review 2016, I wrote that *R. recurvoides* had copied *R. charitopes* by producing some flowers in the autumn. I am pleased to report that this year it has behaved itself and is covered in flower buds for next spring.



In the past, I have stated that my *Rhododendron cinnabarinum* Roylei Group has suffered very badly from powdery mildew despite periodic spraying with fungicide. Back in April, I pruned the plant from over four feet down to nine inches - drastic treatment, I know! The resultant new growth has been remarkable. The plant is now nearly two feet tall with the most delightful, quite intense blue foliage. At first, the early re-growth suffered again from powdery mildew, however, later growth in July and August is quite unaffected. I shall see what happens next year. Whilst on the subject of disease, I have to report the almost certain loss of *R. balfourianum* and *R. megeratum* due to Honey Fungus. Apart from these disappointments, my

Good growth on *Rhododendron lanatoides*



Rhododendron pocophorum

plants appear to be doing really well, especially those planted in my raised beds made with the imported topsoil from Norfolk. I will conclude this article with a description of how the beds were constructed, including a cross-section of same.

Rhododendron haematodes produced just one truss for me, but this is a delightful

species with good foliage. This is the first time it has flowered. Apparently *R. haematodes* is not that easy to please in southern Britain, preferring a cooler climate. My plant is close to my rock face and avoids most of the afternoon sun, as it faces east. It clearly appreciates this as it is doing fine (so far). *R. pocophorum* flowered very well this year, although very early.

In a previous article, I included a photograph of the two raised beds I had constructed using imported topsoil from a site in Norfolk. I now enclose a diagram showing a cross-section through them. The letters shown on the diagram describe the following features:

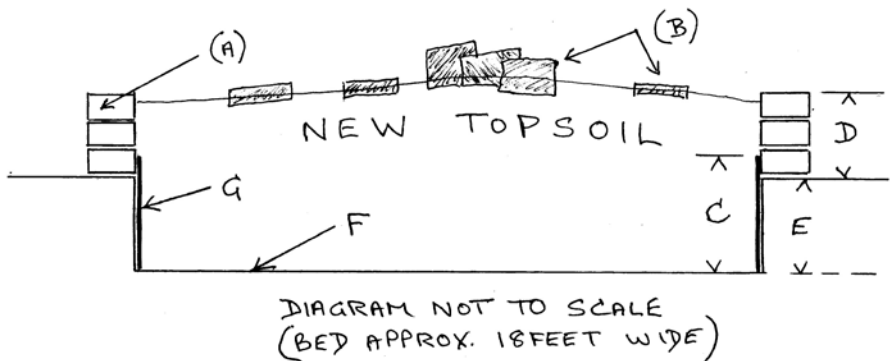
- A. Low dry stone wall using sandstone “bricks” sourced locally.
- B. Sandstone blocks, some quite large and angular and covered with moss set into the surface of the bed. Some flat rocks are used as stepping stones.
- C. 230 mm deep damp-proof course.
- D. 200 mm, being the depth of the dry-stone wall.
- E. 200 mm of clay removed.
- F. Clay extended below this level and prior to back-filling with my new soil, I checked on downward drainage following heavy rain. Some standing water was observed but this quickly soaked away.
- G. 230 mm deep damp-proof course.

My decision to include the damp-proof course was to prevent the lateral movement of ground water into the beds from the surrounding garden where the soil has a pH

rather too high for rhododendrons. I discussed this with John Roy in Helensburgh last May and we also both agreed that it should lessen the chance of Honey Fungus rhizomorphs invading the site. Peter Cox has used polythene placed vertically in the ground to protect new planting from Honey Fungus in his woodland garden. This was discussed with Peter during the Members visit to Glendoick in 2011. It would be useful to know how effective this has been. I just happened to have a roll of damp-proof course in my shed so I used that instead.

Messrs. Baileys of Norfolk Ltd. who supplied the soil included an analysis report. This roughly corresponds to the following, viz: gravel 6%, coarse sand 16%, fine/medium sand 50%, silt and clay 28%. Although clearly there is bound to be some variation, the soil contains organic matter up to 20% and has a pH in the range 4.5-5.5. When planting, a small amount of acid beech and oak leafmould from our local woodland was added to the backfill. This imported soil is seemingly ideal for rhododendrons. No fertiliser has been used, however, growth rates and foliage are excellent. Planted on the cooler north side of some of the larger angular blocks are *Rhododendron pronum* and *R. proteoides*. Alan Clark's *R. lanatum* acquired at the 2015 Show has superb quite rain resistant silvery indumentum on the upper leaf surface. This is one of several larger growing plants which will be moved from the raised bed eventually to allow them more room.

My garden is less than a third of an acre and is rapidly filling up with plants. With the need to reserve some ground for relocating overcrowded plants, I will have to think very carefully before buying any more, although I would like to replace my *Rhododendron megeratum* (it's the Bodnant form).



Pictures in this article by Brian Moss

Gardens Of Wales 2018 Tour

Willie Campbell

I write as we come to the end of another Scottish Rhododendron Tour. It seems only fitting to say a few words of thanks to those who do all the organisation of these tours. They as always, run like clockwork, garden owners or head gardeners are waiting at their gates to welcome us with a smile and are all delighted to show us round their gardens.

None of this happens without meticulous organisation, lots of endless phone calls and emails to hotels, bus companies, gardens, food stops and on this occasion even to the Welsh Mountain Railway. The attendees are told costs for bus, garden, hotels, food stops and even water bottles on the bus.

Our happiness on tour is down to two people David and Gloria Starck, who I personally cannot thank enough. I am sure all who were on this tour of Wales will feel as I do, so thank you David and Gloria.

As always we saw some stunning gardens, some not so good but the company and friends we met will remain in our hearts for a long time. A big thanks to our Canadian and USA friends who shared our company over the week.

Please read the following reports, think what you missed and look out for the next year's Scottish Rhododendron Society Tour to South East England Gardens.

Bodnant

Camber Trott

Bodnant Garden is a National Trust garden which covers 80 acres, set on a hillside of the lovely Conwy Valley. The River Hiraethlyn flows through the garden, giving it a sense of tranquility.

On the day we visited it was raining and it was hard to realise the scope and scale of the garden. Many of the rhododendrons had not yet come into flower due to the

long cold winter and late spring. However there were some wonderful displays of daffodils and bulbs.

We were shown around the garden by Alison Clarke, who has been at Bodnant since 2008 and is the gardener in charge of propagation. She is currently cataloguing all the plants at Bodnant for the National Trust database of plants.

The house, Bodnant Hall (not open to the public), is owned by Lord Aberconway. It is surrounded by formal flower and water gardens, with lovely cedars either end of the Lily terrace, and graceful Italianate gardens. Around these are many specimen trees and shrubs, including rhododendrons, azaleas and camellias. The garden is famous for its long Laburnum Arch which flowers in June.

The trees were wonderful and there are 42 champion trees listed. It was hard to understand how tall the trees in the gorge were as they were mostly seen from above. The magnolia border had trees of 30-40 ft high. Trees we admired included a large *Ginkgo biloba* and a *Sciadopitys verticillata*. We also admired the wonderful bark of a large *Stewartia sinensis* and the bright red young stems of an *Acer palmatum* 'Phoenix'.

Bodnant has national collections of *Magnolia*, *Rhododendron forrestii*, *Eucryphia* and *Embothrium*. The original plants of these collections were brought back by plant hunting expeditions from the 1900s onwards from the Far East by Ernest Wilson,

George Forrest and Frank Kingdon Ward and later from Chile by Harold Comber. Production of the Bodnant rhododendron hybridisation began soon after. Many of our own gardens will include Bodnant



Bodnant hybrid

Picture by John Roy

hybrid rhododendrons such as *R. 'Elizabeth'*, *R. 'Fabia Tangerine'* and *R. 'Winsome'* from this era. Lady Aberconway's favourite plant was *R. 'Penjerrick'*, a creamy white Cornish hybrid; a walkway of these has been planted on Furnace Hill and will soon form an impressive display. Rhododendrons that were admired included a Bodnant form of *R. davidsonianum* (pink with a brown eye), *R. 'Snowy River'* (a *R. ririei* / *R. niveum* hybrid), a pink *R. 'Grace Seabrook'*, a red *R. 'spinuliferum'* and a *R. rigidum* 'Album' which was covered in white flowers.

Many of the azaleas were imported from Japan in the 1920s and are still thriving. Fifty Kurume hybrid azaleas collected by Ernest Wilson were planted close together to form an impressive hedge.

Frederick Puddle became head gardener in 1920 and later founded the Camellia society. We saw original plants from George Forrest's collections of *Camellia reticulata* and *Schima argentea*.

Lastly mention must be made of the wild violets blanketing many grassy banks, tiny in comparison to the champion trees but equally captivating.

Quarry Garden, Bodnant

John Roy



Situated adjacent to the main garden, this has been created out of an old stone quarry. There is a pleasant waterfall down the quarry face, and the stream runs through the garden which contains many mature trees and shrubs, based on the idea of a Nepali glen with overhead canopy, and rhododendron understory.

Picture by John Roy

Owners Hugh and Harriet Geddes showed us round. Harriet is a direct descendant of the Aberconway McLaren family.

Maenan Hall

Sue Murray

Our Scottish Rhododendron tour group met with our garden tour guide, The Honourable Christopher McLaren on a very wet Monday afternoon. The dell garden he lead us through was a beautiful display of the fresh new leaves of deciduous trees just unfolding and splashes of bright pinks and yellows of the rhododendrons . The walk through an overhanging thicket of camellia in full bloom was a treat. A long walk up the road to the main garden and house rewarded us with views of a pond, walled rose

garden. An 18th century tower provided an excellent borrowed view while a carpet of delicate purple and white *Fritillaria meleagris* delighted the eye. An excellent garden visit to end our first day touring.



Above:: View of pond

Right: *Fritillaria meleagris*

Pictures by Sue Murray

Portmeirion

Katrina Clow

This was a day of contrasts: a very relaxing ride on the Welsh Highland Railway, an excellent lunch at Porthmadog Station and then a tour of a part of the gardens at Portmeirion Estate. Thankfully, the train journey and lunch offered shelter; the garden tour was conducted in unrelenting rain and note taking and photography were well-nigh impossible.

I first visited the famous Sir Clough Williams-Ellis village as a child, when my family camped at Talsarnau, on the other side of the bay. We could see the village opposite and catch glimpses of colourful buildings and glinting spires. We used to walk across the sands on the old railway track, or take turns pushing ourselves across on the old redundant rolling stock. Just as well, as we later discovered that there are treacherous quick sands en-route, which presumably the old railway avoided!

We used to go into Portmeirion through the rhododendrons, unaware that there was a charge to get in (probably prohibitive, even then, for four children) and entered a magical, romantic world of exotic buildings and arbours painted a vivid Mediterranean blue, all basking in glorious sunshine. (Yes, tour members, there are sunny days at Portmeirion.) Even then, we knew that there was a large garden and I was aware of the vast flowering rhododendrons at the edge of the village but we never ventured beyond. I suspect that things have changed little over those intervening years; most visitors are lured by the village and rarely stray beyond it, not realizing that there are acres of exotic planting a few steps on through the archway.

The history of the building of Portmeirion, by the architect Sir Clough Williams-Ellis, and his development of the gardens around it can be sourced very easily but the history of the earlier extensive planting beyond is more difficult to access. Sir Clough was responsible for the layout, water features, paths, planting and garden structures in the lesser estate around the village but he was fortunate to acquire a larger area of garden later which was already stocked with rare plants.

Hence, the entire estate contains an important collection of rhododendrons and other choice Himalayan plants in a wild garden stretching for 70 acres, blessed by the gulf stream. The main planting, the Gwyllt gardens, were begun by George Henry Caton

Haigh, a renowned Himalayan plant expert and ornithologist in his time. He planted varieties of *R. arboreum* and some of these venerable specimens can still be seen today. On Caton Haigh's death, Sir Clough acquired the Gwyllt gardens and added them to his holdings at Portmeirion Estate. From 1953, his daughter worked with him on the development of these gardens, introducing paths, creating ponds and planting many more rare trees and shrubs. She continued working on the woodland garden after her father's death, in 1978, aided by the trust, established by Sir Clough. In spite of the maturity and size of the estate, shortage of labour and financial limitations, the trustees continue to introduce new plants and the list of additions from 1980s onwards is impressive.

We were guided on our tour by Tony Russell and the enthusiastic and dedicated woodland garden manager, Meurig Jones --- and in spite of the rain, it was a memorable visit. Most plants are familiar from our Scottish west coast gardens but their size is dramatic. The garden boasts many champion trees and tender rhododendrons but the highlights are undoubtedly the water features with their pagodas and bridges, surrounded by large leaved rhododendrons and magnificent acers. No short note or short visit can do this woodland garden justice and it is certainly worth a second look in the future.



**A wet walk round
Porthmeirion**

Picture by John Roy

Caer Beris Manor Hotel

Willie Campbell

After a very wet visit to Portmeirion Gardens it was a long bus journey through the heart of Wales to Builth Wells and our overnight stop at the Caer Beris Manor Hotel. We were greeted by the manager who quickly summoned us to order our evening meal, albeit from an excellent menu. It was a bit of a “Fawlty Towers” kind of place and after a long walk I found myself in the “Gardeners Room” with views over the river. The evening meal was pleasant and the company as always excellent as we were all getting to know each other.

I was wakened from a sound sleep at 6.30 am by a high pitch buzzing noise, thinking it was my alarm going off started pressing every button on my tablet. The noise seemed to get louder and it was then I realised it was the fire alarm. After pulling on my clothes and looking out over the courtyard I saw my fellow guests all out in the morning sunshine, some in various forms of dress and undress. The manager after some twenty minutes appeared in his night gown shouting the obvious “It’s the fire alarm, but it’s a false alarm and I do not know how to put it off”. Yes this was a pure Basil Fawlty moment.

After breakfast we were given a guide to the Hotel grounds tree trail and we were to be back at 12.00 for lunch.

I have to report although the grounds did have some mature trees, rhododendrons and a lovely riverside walk, much of it was in dire need of some form of love and care.

So it was a long morning after our early rise and quickly away after lunch to the next garden Llysdydd House, which was thankfully more interesting as we were given a guided tour by the Head Gardener.

Llysdinam Hall

John Roy

Evolving from the 1850s with a walled kitchen garden and beautifully planted grounds surrounding Llysdinam Hall, it has been in continuous use by the same family for 150 years. The gardens are now run by the Llysdinam Trust which is working to maintain its historical importance whilst developing it further as a garden.

The 20 acre garden is romantic and naturalistic in style and includes a walled kitchen garden with extensive greenhouses, mixed herbaceous borders, a shrubbery, bog garden, woodland walks and newly restored lakeside planting. The main influence on the gardens as they are today was Lady Delia Venables Llewelyn who gardened here from the 1950s to 2005. She was still gardening at 96 and her love for the garden can be seen in the many choice and unusual trees and shrubs she planted here.



Members enjoying Llysdinam Hall Garden

Picture by John Roy

We were guided round by head gardener Becky Keeble-Payne. As others settled down to tea and cakes I went round the woodland area with Becky to spot and where possible name, rhododendrons.

Picton Castle

Jonathan Davies-Coleman

This was and is an amazing Victorian garden filled with an eclectic mix of woodland plants and perennials as well as a well maintained walled garden. The garden has something for everyone and probably something from most corners of the temperate world. We were shown round the garden by the head gardener, Rod Milne and garden consultant, Ivor Stokes. Some of the highlights were the majestic specimens of *Rhododendron macabeaeanum*, a number of so called *Rhododendron* “hodg-coneri” and a fantastic Myrtle walk (*Luma apiculata*).

The woodlands in the garden were extensive and alongside Rhododendrons we saw everything from evergreen magnolias (syn. *Michaelia* sp.) to Bromeliads in Oak trees. Picton Castle also has a few own grown hybrids such as *R.* ‘Picton Tetra’ and *R.* ‘Salomon Jubilee’ of which only the former was showing any colour.

The walled garden was beautifully maintained and has large herb borders filled with everything from burdock to lavender. As well as this, there was a small lean-to fernery along the edge of the walled garden which had an interesting collection of ferns, *Fuchsia microphylla* and a number of forms of *Agapetes* sp.. Along with the closeness of the woodlands and the formality of the walled garden was large areas of open park-

land which had impressive hybrid Rhododendron specimens along their fringes. The lunch wasn’t bad either!



Luma apiculata walk

Picture by John Roy

Colby Woodland Garden

Richard Firmin

From the perspective of someone whose woodland garden adventures began with planting the trees I have often thought it would be nice to have started with a few acres of established forest. At Colby Woodland Garden they might have thought otherwise, as disease and severe weather have created numerous holes in the landscape. But our enthusiastic guide Geraint Hughes is a garden-half-full person, believing gaps are merely planting opportunities.

In the past 250 years here ideas about health and safety have been turned on their head. An ominous mound bears testimony to the deaths of children as young as five who were obliged to work on all fours, pushing carts of coal through the mine tunnels below today's garden. These days the National Trust spends a significant part of the budget on a variety of arboricultural practices designed to prevent bits of tree falling on visitors.

Some specimens remain statements of hope from a previous generation, including a *Cryptomeria* estimated at 140 feet in height. Geraint was just as excited by an ancient sycamore. Donations of plants, including rare Kazakhstani pears and various species of *Podocarpus* have been used to fill spaces between the trees. And a band of keen volunteers is on hand to assist in restoring a promising garden.



As one of only two full-time staff employed to manage this 9-acre project – and unfazed by the ‘brand-new dead’ - Geraint’s only lament was that many visitors mainly remember the excellent cakes available in the cafe that adjoins the walled garden. I can certainly recommend the warm apple cake with clotted cream.

Giant *Cryptomeria*

Picture by Richard Firmin

Llwyngarreg Garden

Gretchen Henderson

This is a 3.5 acre informal garden with *Ilex* and *Pinus nigra* used as windbreak. A group of *Acer pensylvanicum* grown from seed, and many living-willow constructions (including a tower with a crow's-nest) add interest to the entrance garden. Opening the main garden is a low-grafted *Acer japonicum aconitifolium* 'Green Cascade' as a very effective ground-cover shrub. Owners Paul and Liz O'Neill have the enthusiasm and skill to propagate from seed and cuttings, and to resurrect successfully some bargain plant material. Their peaty soil is ideal for woodland plants and a serious interest in rhododendrons developed after a rhododendron retirement gift. Some in flower for our visit were *R.* 'Taurus', *R.* 'Picton Tetra', *R.* 'Wee Bee' and *R. siderophyllum* with its attractive hanging white bells. Some stand-out trees were *Magnolia* 'Yellow River', *Nyssa sylvatica* 'Red Range', *Tetracentron sinense* and an extremely good form of *Acer capillipes* with pin stripes green/purple/white. There were several *Cercidiphyllum japonicum* and one in particular backed a *Pittosporum tenuifolium* with several *Rhododendron* 'Elizabeth' flowering along the front.



There were also very effective planting combinations using perennials. Running through a large area of mixed candelabra primulas was *Persicaria* 'Red Dragon' in a sinuous line. The fern *Mateuccia* formed another bold grouping, also *Corydalis flexuosa* 'Père David' and *C. elata* and *Meconopsis*. There were several small groups of the attractive *Erythronium* 'Joanna' with its soft pink/yellow colouring. A bold group of the mauve *Primula denticulata* framed the *Tetracentron*. A yellow flowering *Geum* associated well with *Spirea japonica* 'Gold Flame' and a golden *Stachys lanata*,

Cercidiphyllum japonicum with *Pittosporum tenuifolium* and *Rhododendron* 'Elizabeth' in the foreground

Picture by Gretchen Henderson

with *Sambucus racemosa* ‘Sutherland Gold’ further along.

Helleborus were well-sited above a stone retaining wall to show off their hanging flowers to best advantage, and many rock garden treasures grew happily above stone walls built by Paul. Natural rocks and a few old stone strainer posts are carefully sited for their sculptural value in this most interesting garden.

Upton Castle and Garden

Sean Rafferty

It may be a stretch to regard Upton as a castle in the customary sense; perhaps it is better described as a fortified mansion. It lacks the intimidating magnitude generally associated with such strongholds. Nevertheless, it is an interesting structure. There are three towers of medieval Norman construction, two of which have been made uninhabitable by the ravages of time and are now reduced to a façade for the present, more modern living quarters - possibly constructed during the Victorian age.

Adjacent to the castle is an intriguing stone chapel dated to the mid-12th C., with an addition constructed at a later time. Contained within are the effigies of both William and Margaret Malefant. Interestingly, the chapel is still in use for weekly services.

The earliest recorded inhabitants of the castle, in the mid-14th C. were the Malefant family. They are also notably, and sadly, recorded as having raised the princely sum of £12 2s 8d in 1400 to aid the English in repelling the Welsh revolutionary hero, Owain Glyndŵr.

In 1927, a Cardiff ship owner, Stanley Neale, acquired the property and landscaped and developed the garden. The stone for the garden terraces was quarried locally in Pembrokeshire, and he planted many of the magnolias, rhododendrons and camellias that are still in the garden today. It must have been a fine time to start a new garden, especially with the stream of exotics flowing in from Asia. The estate was later sold by Neale's daughter, in 2007, to the present owners, Stephen and Prue Barlow. Happily, many of Neale's purchase orders for the plants still remain at Upton.

The Barlows have undertaken a large task in renovating this 35-acre parcel which had fallen into disrepair prior to their takeover. There is no affiliation with the National

Trust, but there is some funding through the Welsh Assembly Government and the Environmental Agency Wales. The Barlows only other help comes from volunteers and two part-time, paid employees. Considering all, the garden looks in rather fine shape, but I am sure that some more volunteer help would be welcome.

The garden contains some very fine specimens of *Magnolia*, with *M. campbellii*, *M. delavayii* and *M. obovata* carrying champion designations. Magnolias continue to be added to their collection. Another champion noticed was *Sciadopitys verticillata* a very large specimen of a generally slow-growing tree. Also offering up its beautiful, mahogany, exfoliating bark was a fine architectural example of *Acer griseum*. Included in their list of rare and worthy trees are *Fagus heterophylla*, *Davidia involu-crata*, *Ginkgo biloba*, *Cunninghamia lanceolata* and *Aesculus californica*. Between the Castle and the stone chapel is a *Taxus baccata* recorded as being one thousand years of age. Possibly planted for the tree's religious significance at the time when the chapel was constructed?

The terraces constructed by Neale are still in use and contain a traditional herbaceous border, a rose garden, and a winter garden, with the rose garden slowly transitioning from hybrid teas to David Austin roses. The 18th C. walled garden is still solid and is being used for fruit and vegetable production.

Upton castle is built above the tidal estuary of the River Cleddau and the garden is situated in a low valley protected from all but the most vicious winds. The climate is mild and the garden has an acidic soil that is ideal for the ericaceous plants. Many of the tender rhododendrons would live very happily in such a mild climate. Large specimens of *Camellia* are growing, and there are several large specimens of species *Rhododendron*. Their recent *Rhododendron* plantings have, however, concentrated on hybrid varieties. This is understandable as hybrids generally bloom at an earlier age and give some bright colour to a landscape being developed for the general public.

Their list of species *Rhododendron* includes *R. arboreum*, *R. augustinii*, *R. thomsonii*, *R. falconeri*, *R. griersonianum*, *insigne*, and several others. My most memorable moment while touring the garden occurred when rounding a bend and confronting a magnificent specimen of *R. thomsonii*. Fifteen feet tall and equally wide, smooth and peeling bark, yellowish-green calyces and blood red flowers – it would be my response to the question “if you could only take one with you ...?”

Prue and Stephen Barlow are undertaking an enviable endeavor and I have warm wishes for their every success in this adventure.



Left: *Rhododendron arboreum*



Above: *Champion Magnolia campbellii*

Pictures by Sean Rafferty



**Left: Members
enjoying the
garden at Gliffaes
Country Manor**

**(No write up
available)**

**Picture by John
Roy**

High Glanau Manor Gardens

Willie Campbell

This was our last garden on the Welsh Tour and after a walk up a long lane we were greeted by Helena Gerrish. Helena ushered us all into an elegant sitting room with open fire and comfy seating. We were given a very instructive slide show detailing the History of High Glanau Manor. It was an important Arts and Crafts house set in 12 acres of gardens designed by H. Avary Tipping in 1922. Tipping was the Architectural Editor of Country Life Magazine from 1907 until his death in 1933. He had worked with Gertrude Jekyll and drew inspiration from her to create his own gardens.

The Gerrish family bought the house and began the garden restoration to bring it back to its former glory. We were guided by Helena along the long border, planted with repeat perennials which would provide colour all summer long, then on to an immaculate kitchen garden and orchard. The glasshouses had been refurbished and made ready for tomato production for the season ahead. We then toured the grounds and terraces which had spectacular views over a woodland garden towards the Brecon Beacons.

Helena suggested we walk round the woodland garden to view the rhododendrons. Some of us did via a cliffside path, however it had very few interesting plants.



This was not an interesting rhododendron garden but as always on these tours you come away with extra knowledge and meet interesting garden owners. The cream scones were not that bad also.

Members enjoying a guided tour of High Glanau Manor Garden.

Picture by John Roy

Thank You

Charlie and Joyce Higgins

“You are going to Wales with the Scottish Rhododendron Society?” our friends asked. Yes! We found the tour online and David and Gloria kindly let us join your group.

The tour was great – we really enjoyed visiting all the gardens – especially the private ones. It was obvious that the garden guides were very impressed by the Society and the depth of the members’ knowledge.

Everyone was friendly, the hotels fine, the food delicious and (too!) abundant and the week sped by.

We appreciate being allowed to be a part of the group. Great memories, thank you.

Woodland Gardening

Landscaping with Rhododendrons, Magnolias & Camellias by Kenneth Cox

Publication May 2018 400 pages HB. 560 colour photographs. 15 b&w 290mm x 230mm, 416 pages ISBN 978-1-5272-1787-4

Despite being one of the most common gardening styles in Britain and other parts of the world, this is **the first** colour, large format book on Woodland Gardening with acid-loving plants.

History of Woodland Gardening, including plant hunters, hybridisers and the outspoken opinions of William Robinson in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

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The Author:

Scotland's best selling garden writer, **Kenneth Cox** is uniquely placed to cover this subject, a 3rd generation woodland gardener at Glendoick, Scotland a nurseryman and author of 11 books on Scottish gardens, gardening and rhododendrons. Ken is a plant hunter, rhododendron breeder and managing director of the family firm Glendoick Gardens, Scotland, which specializes in rhododendrons, azaleas & ericaceous plants. Ken's last two books were selected by the Garden Media Guild as U.K. Gardening Books of the Year.

Woodland Gardening £40 will be published and distributed by Glendoick Publishing in May 2018

New Zealand, & North American Exclusive Distribution Rights are being offered to rhododendron societies in each country/continent. Australian distribution by Peribo Pty Ltd. In North America distribution is from the Rhododendron Species Botanical Garden, Federal Way.

Events & Lectures:

Kenneth Cox presents a spectacular 1 hour lecture on this book which covers many of the most inspiring woodland gardens, large and small, from Australia, New Zealand to North America and Japan to Britain, France and Italy. The talk covers history, advice on designing planting, managing and restoring woodland gardens. Talks are suited to a gardening and general interest audience. An extended two part (2 x 45 mins) presentation can be given which covers more practical advice on how to grow acid-loving plants. Ken is happy to lecture to both specialist gardening audiences and general audiences and has appeared at the Edinburgh Book Festival, the Boswell Festival, Borders Book Festival, The Wigton Book Festival, the Royal Scottish Geographical Society, the Royal Horticultural Society, the Royal Society for Asian Affairs and many more. Ken can lecture in English, French, Spanish and Italian.

Media:

Ken is a confident media performer and has appeared on *Gardeners World*, *The Beechgrove Garden* and Monty Don's *The Secret History of the British Garden* as well as many radio programs.

Scope:

This book has an international scope from China and Japan to Australia and New Zealand to UK and the continent of Europe and to North America, tracing the cross-cultural influences of this gardening form.

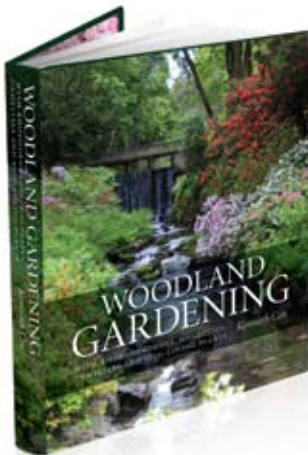
The book examines design and planning in the woodland garden, including colour, contrasts, foliage effects, the use of bridges, statues, and the borrowed landscape.

The 100s of gardens featured include Inverewe, Dawyck, Glendoick, Branklyn, Bodnant, Exbury, Leonardslee, Caerhays, Mount Stewart, Mount Usher, Mount Congreve, (UK & Ireland), Le Vasterival, Bremen Rhododendron Park, Vico Morcote, Villa Taranto (Europe), Bloedel Foundation, Van Dusen BG, Polly Hill Arboretum, US National Arboretum, Longwood Gardens, The Jenkins Arboretum, Magnolia Plantation, The Highline, (N. America), Tokachi Millennium Garden Hokkaido, Akagi, (Japan), Emeishan, China, Emu Valley Rhododendron Garden, Olinda and Blackheath Rhododendron Garden (Australia) and Pukeiti and Maple Valley (New Zealand). Many smaller private and urban gardens are also covered.

Gardeners and plant hunters featured include William Robinson, Gertrude Jekyll, George Forest, Frank Kingdon Ward, J.C. Williams, Lanning Roper, Eric Saville,

The Puddle family, Graham Smith, Charles Sargent, Steve Hootman, Dan Hinckley, Arabella Lennox Boyd, Dan Pearson and many more.

Ken is keen to examine the received wisdom on woodland gardens, praise as well as criticism, from William Robinson to Vita Sackville West and to Germain Greer and Christopher Lloyd. He's happy to take them on and in some cases to provide evidence that they might be wrong!



2017	Wuerzburg		Radlett		Glendoick	
	mm	inches	mm	inches	mm	inches
January	11.0	0.43	94.5	3.72	36.5	1.44
February	6.0	0.24	36.5	1.44	85.0	3.35
March	39.0	1.54	29.5	1.16	50.5	1.99
April	19.0	0.75	3.5	0.14	0	0
May	98.0	3.86	70.0	2.76	65.5	2.58
June	60.0	2.36	38.0	1.50	190.0	7.48
July	114.0	4.49	76.5	3.01	135.5	5.33
August	45.0	1.77	77.0	3.03	82.5	3.25
September	53.0	2.09	56.5	2.22	48.5	1.91
October	39.0	1.54	21.0	0.83	49.5	1.95
November	64.0	2.52	34.0	1.34	44.0	1.73
December	39.0	1.54	105.5	4.15	30.5	1.20
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.

2017

Glenarn		Ballachulish		Ellon	
mm	inches	mm	inches	mm	inches
111.3	4.38	185.4	7.30	49.5	1.95
235.0	9.25	298.7	11.76	56.5	2.22
136.7	5.38	251.7	9.91	48.5	1.91
69.9	2.75	126.2	4.97	29.0	1.14
50.8	2.00	71.6	2.82	37.0	1.46
146.1	5.75	220.5	8.68	129.5	5.10
123.9	4.88	181.6	7.15	93.0	3.66
168.1	6.62	278.9	10.98	119.0	4.69
111.2	4.38	205.5	8.09	95.0	3.74
206.3	8.12	406.1	15.99	73.5	2.89
155.4	6.12	242.8	9.56	122.0	4.80
177.8	7.00	290.8	11.45	66.0	2.60
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 warm welcome to our new station, Ellon. I was expecting a lower reading from here, as Aberdeenshire is in the rain shadow of the Grampian Mountains. Otherwise a generally similar year to 2016 but with Glendoick having no rain in April at all.

Keep the figures coming.

Obituary

Edmund A.T. Wright

Ed and his rather dominated older brother Harry were perhaps somewhat surprising buyers for the then rundown Arduaine Garden that was sold separately by tender by the Campbell family from Arduaine House, which became a hotel. The bachelor brothers came from Cranham, near Upminster in Essex, where they owned and managed the Royal Oak Nursery, which sold a large range of trees and shrubs, and it must have been a big change for them to settle in wild Argyll. Initially, they bought a hotel in Duror, to the north of Appin, where they set about creating a garden, but were intrigued by the opportunity to purchase Arduaine Garden, for which they submitted a low bid. One of Peter's oldest memories of Harry and Ed was finding Harry up to his knees digging out a pond while Ed gave instructions from the bank. Ed was undoubtedly the dominant brother and Harry would invariably keep in the background while Ed was present. One had to get Harry on his own to get to know him. Harry and Ed set about acquiring as many rhododendron species as they could lay their hands on and these grew well in the benign climate near the Atlantic Ocean where one of the finest collections of rhododendron species was established. They also gathered a collection of subsect. *Maddenia* hybrids which have grown well.

Ed achieved three good things in his time at Arduaine, the establishment of a magical garden planted with great skill and perception; the founding of the Scottish Rhododendron Society (SRS) in 1983, which then became a Chapter of the American Rhododendron Society in 1984; he then oversaw the early planning stages for the 1996 ARS Convention held in Oban. The founding of the SRS came about because Ed fell out with the committee of the then Rhododendron and Camellia Group of the Royal Horticultural Society, as a result of the bias of its Show judges towards entries of trusses from well-known gardens in Southern England to the Rhododendron Shows, then held in London. So, he then set about organising the holding of an annual Scottish Rhododendron Show, which continues to this day.

Ed and Harry were faced with an unenviable task when they began restoration of the garden they acquired on November 11th, 1971. On the night of January 14th, 1968 a hurricane had devastated Arduaine Garden, felling a large number of the taller trees, and these were strewn about all over the place. Some trees were supported by others, whilst others leaned dangerously on their neighbours, covering the under-plantings, and large areas of the garden were inaccessible. Returning from Essex in early-January, 1972 they set-about clearing the paths covered by years of undergrowth and fallen trees. Smoke hung over the garden for the remainder of the winter and

became a familiar sight to a neighbour who lived on the Isle of Luing. In the spring she came to see Ed and Harry saying she was curious about the cause of the clouds of smoke that had risen from the garden all winter. The Wright Brothers had no illusions that years of work lay ahead of them and it was not until 1978 that Ed felt able to review the progress that Harry and himself had made over the past seven years in the *1978 Yearbook of the RHS Rhododendron, Camellia & Magnolia Group*. In the midst of all this the Wright Brothers retained the ownership of their nursery in Essex and this distraction resulted with Ed disappearing south every few months to oversee the management of the business, which probably underpinned the financial cost of restoring Arduaine.

Ed was a knowledgeable and enthusiastic plantsman, and ring-leader of the leaf-turning brigade that during a garden visit would seemingly stand for ages discussing the characteristics of an individual species, whilst the members stood around waiting for the identification verdict to be delivered from on-high!

After many years of heavy work the brothers began to feel their age and in early 1992 decided to gift the garden to the National Trust for Scotland [NTS]. A few years earlier Harry and Ed had built a house in the north-west corner of the garden known as Arduaine Lodge, which provided an excellent view of the garden, so they were able to monitor the way of approach of the Trust in regard to managing the garden, which not surprisingly was in many ways markedly different to their own, which began to cause consternation between Ed and the NTS, and some problematic actions taken by the Trust only served to add fuel to the fire, including cutting off the water supply to Arduaine Lodge. Trouble had started earlier between the Trust and Ed after the appointment of Maurice Wilkins as head gardener/property manager, and how Maurice stuck out the abuse he received from Ed over the years we will never know. In fact it came to the point when Maurice did not attend meetings himself if Ed was present. Typical of Ed's complaints was about *Rhododendron leptocarpum* (formerly *R. micromeres* which Ed would insist in calling as he was a follower of Davidian's old classification), which he went on and on about accusing Maurice of having lost it when in fact he had moved it. Both Ed and the Trust were determined not to be seen to compromise; indeed, Ed consistently maintained that the NTS never kept their word in regard to what was agreed in terms of the maintenance arrangements, during a visit of the Trust's hierarchy prior to the garden being handed over to the Trust.

Soon after the Trust took over the garden an advisory committee was set up known as AGLAC of which Peter was an original member. To begin with Ed would come around the garden on the regular morning tour and then attend the afternoon meeting in the hotel but gradually Ed's relationship with members of the committee deteriorated until he gave up attending. Highly incensed and frustrated, Ed erected a notice

board in the bottom of their garden where the public walked past within the Trust garden. This was full of criticism of the Trust and its management of the Garden. Over the years the committee was partly replaced and Ed would suck up to new members for a while until they too received abusive letters which were often almost libellous. I certainly received my share. To give Ed his due, there is little doubt that there were faults on both his and the Trust's sides but the long letters full of abuse sent to Trust employees, AGLAC members and SRS committee members was inexcusable. Sadly, Harry passed away suddenly in late 1996; he was nearly 80. Harry was the opposite of Ed, quiet, caring, a conscientious gardener, and interesting person if you took the time to talk to him.

Peter recalls the AGLAC Committee members were asked to lunch by Harry and Ed. Peter remembers Ed saying to Harry 'give the guests the full meal'. 'Well, I have never had another lunch when after we had finished I felt hungrier than I did at the beginning. No wonder Harry and Ed were always skin and bone!'

Peter A. Cox and John M. Hammond

Ed Wright and his brother Harry were nurserymen in Essex, in a family business. In the late 1960s they left the nursery in the hands of a manager and moved to Scotland, first buying the Stewart Hotel as a going concern where they also started a garden on its steep slopes. However, not long afterwards they heard about the possibility of acquiring Arduaine which they purchased in 1971. This marked the start of the huge restoration and development of the garden which Ed described in "Arduaine Revived" (Rhododendrons with Magnolias and Camellias 1979-80) and "Arduaine Today" (Rhododendrons with Magnolias and Camellias 1987-88).

The 1978 RHS Rhododendron Show in London was reported at the time as marking the emergence of Arduaine as a formidable competitor. In 1980 Arduaine was second to Blackhills and ahead of Bodnant in Class 1 (8 species) where Ed's "colossal truss of *macabeanum* was a very good yellowish colour with remarkable green leaves formed like a great screw of a ship having a South Sea island effect". Perhaps it was the 1981 Rhododendron Show, where Arduaine was edged out by Bodnant, that caused the rift with the RHS but Ed never showed again in London. He returned to Scotland, black affronted by the treatment he had received, raging at being told that certain vases were reserved for Lord Aberconway, and convinced that the establishment had ganged up against him.

Whatever the cause, he decided to make a break with the RHS, and turned to the

American Rhododendron Society and Herb Spady, who had been in Scotland in 1982, for support, resulting in the formation of the Scottish Chapter of the ARS in 1984. Ed was highly persuasive and managed to enlist the support of not only the Argyll ‘mafia’ but also a wide spectrum of rhododendron interests across the country, bringing enthusiasm, energy and the ability to have feet in both camps when it came to the debate that was in full swing over the Edinburgh Revision and the naming of rhododendrons.

This coincided with Sue and I acquiring Glenarn which became the subject of the SRS’s first garden visit, to make sure that the new owners understood the importance of the rhododendron collection. This could have been potentially tricky but Ed on the day was excellent: helpful, and willing to give us our place. He encouraged us to show, gave us plants, dragged me in to the Newsletter under false pretences and opened up a suite of doors into the rhododendron world. It was the start of a friendship that, unfortunately came to an abrupt end.

When we got a little depressed with how things were going at Glenarn we would take a day off work and go and visit Arduaine. After all, our minor problems paled in to insignificance compared with what Ed and Harry had achieved: remodelling the garden, building paths, carving out lakes from clay that had the consistency of concrete. Perhaps their biggest task was erecting a deer fence around the entire garden and I recall meeting an exhausted Ed labouring over a hole that he was cutting in to the solid rock, the spike on his punch bar worn almost flat. In the end, it was the physical effort that took its toll mentally. (Not only did the brothers excavate the holes and erect the fence themselves but they also felled the trees for the posts. On one occasion Ed noticed that Harry had not returned for lunch and, going up to the Big Wood, found him unconscious under a larch that he had brought down on top of himself).

In the early days at Arduaine, the Wright brothers’ address was The Garage, Watts Cottage a fact that I revealed in the Newsletter to the members, much to Ed’s annoyance as I imagine he had not quite clarified the details of his living abode with the authorities. They lived a frugal life, lunch being orange, cheese and a pan loaf, and over a cup of tea Ed would get down Millais’ great tome on rhododendrons and we would study the coloured plates, before going for a walk around the wonderful garden. We drove home thinking that anything was possible.

Eventually Ed wanted a proper house and asked if we would be his architects, which

is when we broke the time-honoured rule of never designing a project for a friend. We explained the dilemma but, as I have said, Ed was very persuasive, and in the end, there were recriminations and lawyer's letters, the house being built to Sue's design although not as Ed's architect. But these things fade and our memory is not of Ed in his combative, troubled later years but as a pioneer who established the SRS and did so much to encourage Sue and I and many like us.

Mike Thornley

Early years of the SRS Newsletter

Mike Thornley

Willie Campbell, writing in the 2018 Year Book, describes some highlights from the early years of the Scottish Rhododendron Society, culled from the Newsletters of the time.

The first two Newsletters were edited by the secretary and founder of the SRS, Ed Wright. The second, June 1984, reports on the society's first garden visit, to Glenarn and the Glasgow Show at Milngavie. It was at the latter that I rashly offered to help with the typing and distribution of the Newsletter. A few months later Ed phoned to thank me for taking on the editorship. It was a deliberate misunderstanding on his part and an absurd idea to have a complete amateur and beginner in rhododendrons as editor but Ed persisted, feigning deafness and a bad telephone line to deflect any argument. I explained this, by way of an apology, to the readership in my first issue.

There were three "drivers" in this period. The first was the formation of the SRS itself, bringing together rhododendron enthusiasts from all over Scotland and beyond, many of whom were unknown to each other, but all keen to share their interest with other like-minded gardeners. It filled a void, and in to the void came people who were happy to write articles about their own gardens: Ian Jenkins at Greenhill, Largs, Bill Davidson at Langlee, Jedburgh, and Mavis Paton at Barnhourie Mill, Colvend, for instance. This became a regular feature, well worth reviving, that now provides a record of many gardens that have changed markedly or have even disappeared.

The second "driver" was the timing of the SRS's formation in 1983, soon after China had re-opened to plant hunters and botanists. Peter Cox and Peter Hutchison were

always prepared to provide articles immediately on returning from their latest foray abroad, before longer versions appeared in the RHS Rhododendron Year Book or the ARS publication.

We felt as if we were there, part of this new era of exploration, a feeling that was reinforced when the new plant introductions became available commercially.

The third “driver” (not entirely unrelated to the formation of the society itself and the new opportunities for studying plants in the wild) was the controversy surrounding the nomenclature of rhododendrons, which could have easily killed off the SRS in its infancy, avoided not least by the diplomacy of David Chamberlain, the quiet authority of Peter Cox, and the pragmatism of Ed Wright who had stressed the importance of the SRS getting involved in the debate which was subsequently reported at length in the Newsletter. Soon after joining we attended an SRS meeting at the RBGE where grown men almost came to physical blows over the naming of a rhododendron. Writing in the Newsletter, I compared a rhododendron society (note the carefully ambiguous wording) to a constituency Labour Party: collectively comrades in common cause, divided by damaging debate. The old guard disapproved and the word got back that I was *persona non grata* with Davidian.

In addition to the main articles the Newsletter had the usual regular features such as a detailed report on the annual Rhododendron Show. There were the occasional plant portrait, plus items on propagation and book reviews. Also, the society’s garden visits were written up, describing wonderful and sometimes weird places, not more so than to Silverhills, close to Edrom Nurseries in the Borders, where George Arblaster, at his holiday home, experimented with hybridisation, including the use of Colchicine to produce doubling of chromosomes, the countless results of which he planted in lines in a field, trimming them in to hedges when they threatened to get out of hand, a bizarre landscape of rhododendrons.

At that time, the Newsletter was published three times a year and eventually ran to 16 closely typed A4 pages (with no illustrations). Looking at the early editions, bound together with a treasury tag in a dilapidated file, I wonder at their fragility. Some of the articles, for instance Hamish Gunn’s “Gardening on a Postage Stamp” which took years of negotiation to extract from the author and managed to cram in more than 70 rhododendrons into the text, would be well worth re-publishing in a compendium. Better still would be for the society to digitise all of its publications: only then will the SRS have a proper record.

If single genus plant societies have a fault (only one?) it is that they take themselves a little too seriously. The Endpiece was used to fill the space left over at the end of the Newsletter and became a vehicle for me to let off steam, to record some of the more unusual comings and goings in our garden as well as in the wider rhododendron world, and to tilt at a few windmills. After 13 editions, I signed off with a mock obituary to a fictional Len Stubbs, a rhododendron polymath who had created an entire new range of hybrids, all named after single malts and blended whiskies, notably *R. 'Black Label'* which had *R. didymum* (as it was called at the time) and *R. cubittii* (now sunk in to *R. veitchianum*) in its parentage. Peter Cox saw through it straight away and sent a note saying how sorry he was to hear of Len's death while pointing out some errors in the naming of the new hybrids. On the other hand, the late and still much-lamented Mervyn Kessell said that he didn't know we had a member called Stubbs and wished that he had met him.

When I took over the Newsletter from Ed, I asked how he had managed to justify the pages on his old typewriter (we had a new-fangled word processor). "Haven't you got a ruler?" he replied, "I typed it up, measured the lines and retyped it." Looking at his immaculate scripts 34 years later I now realise that he had been pulling my leg. Who says rhododendron people didn't have a sense of humour.

Book Review: Head Gardeners

Ambra Edwards Photographs by Charlie Hopkinson

Willie Campbell

I was pleased to have received this book as Christmas present from my wife Fiona, normally it's the usual hankies or socks but no this year it's a book. (My present to her was an electric blanket.)

Now normally I find these books are usually written by some gardening celeb and they're really not interesting, or all about themselves rather than the subject matter. So when the weather was awful this Xmas and there was no gardening, I opened the book to discover it covered some of the gardening lives of 13 Head Gardeners from around the country. They were responsible for some of our country estate gardens, restoration projects, roof gardens, one where the gardeners had been asked to grow weeds and another about a reformed character who was acting as a social service to bring gardening to society drop-outs.

Ambra sets the scene in the first chapter “On behalf of Gardeners”. She says “Its difficult to imagine a class of people who have such tremendous skills, who contribute so much to society, and who are so thoroughly undervalued”. She then talks about the need for an extraordinary amount of energy, a born passion for their work, with an intelligence, diligence and eye for detail, that is humbling to the amateur gardener like herself.

Today’s Head Gardeners not only have to be passionate plantsmen but may be variously project manager, conservationist, historian, educator, scientific investigator (plant health), social worker, public relations supremo, events planner, health and safety expert and lastly most importantly a budget cost controller.

It starts by talking about how undervalued Head Gardeners are in the big scheme of things. We all know that visiting gardens in all weathers cheers us up and puts a smile on our faces. We in the SRS discuss at length where are the new Head Gardeners or any gardeners coming from. In this book these Head Gardeners all provide their views on the future workforce; is it the young, the career changers or the old hands who volunteer their two afternoons a week’s dedication to a local garden.

It’s the Head Gardener personnel and social skills that will provide tomorrow’s gardeners, whether the reformed character, newbie or some fresh youngster from out of the great teaching institutions, Kew, RHS Wisley, RBGE or indeed the few colleges that still have a horticultural course. Some say bring back apprenticeships and learn on the job. Others remember the great Head Gardeners they worked under or the parks departments where they started their careers.

The one thing that links them all is “passion” for the job and the gardens they care about, its not really about reward. How they channel that passion in organising their workforce, teams of volunteers and of course themselves.

This book is really written by the Head Gardeners, each of them whether it’s the “Generous Gardener”, Fergus Garrett at Great Dixter or the superb section on Alistair Clark at the Garden of Cosmic Speculation at Portrack which used to be a fabulous rhododendron garden or to the chapter called “Mission Impossible” with Martin Ogle at Lowther Castle who has been charged with a restoration project with no budget.

I only wish that the gardener’s wife was more involved in the book. Having been an estate gardener much involved in opening to the public, it’s the gardener’s wife that

spends all her time leading up to the opening organising the catering for the visitors and in my “Book” she is the unsung hero. Oh I really should say the gardener’s partner nowadays!

Ambra Edwards has taken time to listen to each one these Head Gardeners and writes a wonderful story about them and their gardens, it’s just a great read. The photographs are excellent as well. I would recommend you read it.

Editor’s note: Although I wasn’t a member in 1988 when the following was first published, I read it some years later when I became Editor and thought it hilarious. So when Mike Thornley mentioned it in his article on early days of the Newsletter, I thought it would be great to give it an airing thirty years on. I have reproduced it in as similar a format as I can to its original.

ENDPIECE

In Memorium

Len Stubbs 1916 - 1988

Len Stubbs, who died in the unfortunate accident in Glen Branter the day after the last Spring Meet, was an enigma. A naturalised Scot, hailing from Yorkshire, he taught physics at St Josephs in the East End of the city and supported Glasgow Rangers, rarely missing a home game. In later years, he developed an interest in Buddhism. It was, he claimed, his Insurance Policy. “Look what happened to Souliei” he used to say, flicking the ash with some force from the tip of his Turkish cigarette as if to indicate the sudden demise of the good brother.

Len’s legacy to the rhododendron world was the product of his hybridisation work. He signalled his intentions with a cheeky cross, using one of the Glendoick dwarf hybrids, calling the results “The Original Grouse” which he was the first to admit was not as an attractive plant as the original itself. From then on he produced a wealth of new rhododendrons which he continued to name after brands of whisky, despite being a total abstainer. His first generation hybrids were called after single malts, while the second generation were given names of blends such as “Black Label” which, with its didymum and cubittii background was an absolute stunner. How he achieved the white stripe will probably never now be known. As his hybridisation continued to become more complex, Len was forced into calling his creations after whisky based cocktails and he would often be seen in the better hotels in Glasgow discussing nomenclature with the barmen.

Len did most of his hybridisation in the attic above his top floor tenement flat in Pollokshaws, which strictly speaking was illegal. But his co-proprietors were quite happy to overlook this given Len's efforts in the backcourt. Gardening for Len was not a private preoccupation but an activity in the public domain. He was quick to realise the potential of the sheltered backcourt as a home for rhododendrons and persuaded his neighbours that a macabeanum would not look out of place by the bins. Len was always generous with his plants, as many of us can testify, and soon had all 35 closes joining his programme of planting. At first he tried to arrange the individual backcourts into Series but soon gave up the struggle to create order where it did not exist and was happy to see any plant so long as it was in his words "Al". Len's backcourt was the first to be opened to the public under the Scotland's Gardens Scheme.

Len did not have much time for Shows. "Big gardens with the same old flowers" was how he put it, but it did not stop him entering and encouraging others to do so. Len was a regular attendee at the Spring and Autumn Meets and used his long holidays to good effect biking all over Scotland in search of new plants. He enraged many people by publishing his own "Guide to the Rarer Rhododendrons in Scottish Gardens" but made it up by establishing the Species Exchange which has been to the benefit of the whole Society and its members.

He was a regular contributor to the Newsletter, sending a stream of articles on his latest finds, hints on propagation, the results of his hybridisation experiments and a host of other subjects. The articles in his neat school teacher's handwriting were always botanically correct and sprinkled with quotations from his favourite writers from Pascal to PG Woodhouse. Titles that stick in the memory include:

"The Aphrodisiac Qualities of R. heliolepis : a controlled experiment"

"Brillo Pads and Iron Bru : Aids to Showing"

"Commercial Sources of R. prunum in Britain, Europe and USSR"

Len was an enthusiast and an editor's dream. We will all miss him. Our condolences go to his wife Maisie and his eight children all named after rhododendrons, Len was proud to say.

Editorial

Welcome to the Autumn Review for 2018. This will be the only Review I can produce in 2018 because of time restraints. I had hoped to get back to two reviews this year. The good news is that I have had an offer of help for reading through articles when they come in and formatting ready for inclusion in the publication. This is a large part of the work I do, ensuring correct grammar, spelling (especially of plant names), punctuation and that it reads easily and correctly. So in 2019 surely I can get back to producing a Yearbook and two Reviews.

The American Rhododendron Society left the shores of North America for their Convention this year for only the second time. The first was when the Convention was held in Oban in 1996. This year the venue was Bremen in Germany, with pre-tours to The Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden and Germany, and a post-tour to Finland. I was able to take in the Denmark, Sweden tour along with the Convention and associated garden visits. It was superbly organised by the Deutsche Rhododendron-Gesellschaft (German Rhododendron Society) and my good friend Hartwig Schepker. Everyone had a great time, the weather was superb (too hot at times withering the blooms) and some fascinating presentations all in English. It's just a pity more SRS members did not join the events. I met lots of old friends, and made some new.

New data regulations came into force in May this year regarding how your data is protected. The Society does not hold much information on members and it is not shared outside the Society except with HMRC for gift aid purposes. The regulations cover all 28 member states of the EU, so if you do not live within the EU you are not affected. This is aimed at companies that hold far more data than we do, but we still come under its umbrella as we hold names, addresses, phone numbers and email addresses. It requires us however to get your consent to use your home address, or business address if applicable, phone number and email address. The easiest way to do this is to return the form that was posted out to members in May, which required you to indicate how you would like to be contacted. Many members have not returned this yet. In order to get the maximum benefit from your membership this needs to be done soonest.

Members who do not return the form will cease to receive the circular emails I send round about events etc, will cease to receive letters or phone calls about Society business, and cannot appear in any future Membership List.

If you have lost your form, please let me know, and I will arrange for you to be emailed the document so you can print and return, or for those without email, a paper copy to be resent. A lot of funds have already been spent on stamps for this exercise, so please help reduce costs.

John Roy

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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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**More Pictures from
the Tours associated
with the ARS
Convention in and
around Bremen 2018**



**Above: Sven Hansen's
Garden, Denmark**



**Left: Looking round
Brun's nursery, Bad
Zwischenahn**

**Right: Van den Berk
Nursery Rastede**



Pictures by John Roy

