

The **World** *of the Rhododendron*



Summer Review No.87 ~ 2020

The Scottish Rhododendron Society

Scottish Rhododendron Society

Summer Review 2020

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Cover Pictures: Front: *Rhododendron proteoides* ‘Ascreavie’ by Peter Shotter

**Back: Some new growth:
Top: *Rhododendron argipeplum*
Below: *Rhododendron exasperatum*
Both by John Roy**

Editorial

As I write, Scotland is still very much in lockdown although some small moves have been made to relax the measures. The tour of gardens in Ireland, the Scottish National Rhododendron Show and the associated post show garden tours have all had to be cancelled. Looking to the future, the Autumn Conference and the tour of Ireland have been postponed until 2021.

As a one off experiment, this year we have staged a “virtual” rhododendron show on our website. This is now closed but has proved very popular with members sending in lots of pictures. These will be left on the website for now and you can view it by going to: www.scottishrhododendronsociety.org.uk and click on the link. Also our facebook page has been attracting a lot of attention from rhododendron lovers around the world.

So welcome to your Summer Review, very much an “Emergency Covid19 Edition”. I put out a call for pictures of your gardens and I am glad to say you responded. At the moment I do not know whether this edition can be produced as normal. The publications currently are produced by Bennetts in Glasgow professionally printing the covers. I print the inside pages on a printer provided by the SRS then take these to Bennetts for assembly to give you the highest quality we can at the lowest cost. If it is not possible to go down this route it may be possible to do the whole process in house, in the same way we do with the Rhododendron Species Conservation Group Newsletters.

It has been a strange spring. After almost no winter frost a lot of the UK was hit by temperatures below zero in the middle of May. Then in Scotland, a week later we endured wind and rain more likened to January. So a lot of blooms were destroyed or spoiled, but what is more important is the new growth that was damaged. Not just rhododendrons but acers, beech, oak. These climatic aberrations will probably become more common with increase in global temperatures.

I had hoped to produce two editions of the Review this year, but this seems most unlikely at the moment. So whatever else, here we have the Summer Edition of the SRS Review. I hope you have all come through this crisis unscathed.

John Roy

President's Column

John M. Hammond

It's late-April and the better part of four weeks of hot sunny weather have come to an end this morning, as the dull, cloudy skies suggest rain is once again on the way. We are also four weeks into an indeterminate period of being 'Confined to barracks' under the Covid-19 restrictions, but at least I have been able to spend time clearing-up out in the garden after the stormy and consistently wet autumn and winter.

The 'North – South Divide' has been in much evidence over the past year, as there has been a marked contrast between the pattern of weather. The South had long days of sunny, dry weather in the summer and autumn, with high temperatures at times, together with a relatively dry and calm winter; whereas, here in the Northwest we had no summer at all, apart from a week of sun in June when we managed to use the barbeque once, to be followed by the onset of very wet stormy weather in late-October which continually saturated the garden until March. There are some benefits to be derived from living on a hill, as in periods of torrential rain the water tends to run-off the saturated garden and quickly disappear in the torrents of water dashing down the road.

This is the second year that these unusual climatic conditions have occurred and there is much evidence to be seen in the rhododendrons in my garden, as they are far from being happy. Plants that lack sufficient air space in the soil, or lack good drainage, or have suffered waterlogging, tend to suffer chlorosis, a yellowing of part or all the leaves. Chlorosis is a complicated subject to deal with that can involve many factors, and the following notes can only be a general guide.

If there is an overall yellowing of leaves on the plant, generally more prevalent on older or lower leaves, then this suggests a nitrogen deficiency, or the nitrogen in the soil is tied-up in the decay of organic matter in the soil, such as when bark has been added or used as a mulch. So, waterlogging will only exacerbate the problems. Add ammonium sulphate, which does not increase the pH of the leaf tissues in way that adding nitrates does. The leaves should green-up considerably after five or six weeks. Note: Some less sun tolerant varieties of both species and hybrids will always be light green when grown in full sun.

If the new leaves develop a marked yellowing of leaf parts, primarily between the veins, whilst the old leaves tend to stay green, then the yellowing will vary with the

severity of the chlorotic symptoms, and the outcome looks like a herring-bone pattern along the leaf, this indicates an iron and/or magnesium deficiency. Iron deficiency can be corrected by an application of sequestered or chelated Iron. Both forms of iron are usually obtainable at a garden centre. Magnesium deficiency can be corrected by an application of magnesium sulphate, Epsom Salts, which is also available at a garden centre. I usually apply both iron and magnesium sulphate at the same time, as the plant will only take-up what it needs of the latter.

If the area immediately around the veins has turned deep green in colour, forming a deep green herring-bone pattern, with areas of yellowing chlorotic pattern towards the edges of the leaves, this indicates a manganese deficiency and, as the assimilation of iron by the plant is dependent on the availability of manganese, this can be considered as a worst case of chlorosis. Retail packs of sequestered iron often include manganese in their content (one of which is 'Chempak'), so look for this on the labelling of the packet; otherwise it is wise to use a soluble manganese chelate, as an application of manganese sulphate preparation can easily result in an overdose and create toxicity in the plant.

But for plants that have experienced having their feet wet for weeks on end, as a result of long periods of torrential rain every two or three days, interspersed with light rain, the problems are more complicated, as these conditions tend to leach-out all the fertiliser, including the minor elements, in the soil, which can give some leaves a yellow cast, whilst others develop a chlorotic pattern. Application of the remedies outlined above can only be expected to provide a short-term response to any complex soil problems, and there will need to be a layer of compost provided, or well-rotted horse manure, around any badly affected plants. This should be carefully worked in the soil to avoid any root damage and will help to provide some humus into the soil to get the bacteria actively working again. The old-time traditional Head Gardeners had a saying, 'First feed the soil, then feed the plant.' So, feed the plant with a light scattering of Osmocote around the root area, but away from the main stem.

In conclusion, it is important to differentiate between problems caused by climatic conditions, such as persistent high rainfall and/or waterlogging, and long-standing problems connected with the condition of the soil itself. If the latter is the case and the leaves of some plants were chlorotic prior to the onset of high rainfall last Autumn, then there may be other causes that need to be addressed; e.g., some species and hybrids are intolerant of soils that are too acid (a pH of 4.5 or below) and can suffer with interveinal chlorotic growth. This requires a different approach.

Secretary's Report May 2020

Katrina Clow

I cannot pretend that this will be the cheeriest of reports. I am sure that for many of our members in their 70s, the lockdown has been a period of some frustration especially for those still full of vigour and energy. Fortunately, our gardens are a great source of solace and pleasure but in these difficult times, the weather has been another mighty and unpredictable force to deal with.

Here in the West, from New Year onwards, we endured 3 months of endless rain and gale force winds. April and early May were completely dry but there were hopeful signs of spring-new leaves on *Magnolia*, *Cercidiphyllum*, beech hedging, some rhododendrons in flower and herbaceous plants springing up. On Sunday night, 10th May however, we suffered a savage frost of possibly -6°C - not forecast until the following night, when we had a second onslaught. The damage has been enormous and I doubt that some young plants will survive. All the azalea flowers lost, leaves, flower buds and new growth blackened on rhododendrons, hydrangeas, magnolias, oaks and acers; rodgersias and hostas sodden and wilting. It is hard not to be despondent when all the joy and comfort of a spring flush of flowers is demolished in one night and no opportunity to rush out and buy some replacements.

On the positive side, however, some plants came through unscathed: *Enkianthus*, *Cornus kousa*, *Hoheria*, and other plants have been exceptional this year. Narcissi and tulips have lasted for weeks, trilliums have been magnificent - taller than I can ever remember. Now the podophyllums are emerging with their wonderful spotted horse chestnut like leaves and rosy pink pendant flowers. They are always a surprise, appearing overnight, like magic parasols from bare earth.

The Irish Trip and the Annual Show at Garelochhead and post show day tour had of course to be cancelled but planning and preparation were already in place and we must thank those who had put in time and work to arrange these events. We must also hope that their efforts will 'keep' till next year when surely travel and meetings will be allowed again. Meantime, the Shows and Publications committee organised a virtual on-line show of images sent in by members of their best rhododendron blooms. This has been a great success. No prize cups, of course but the possible pleasure of seeing your best bloom on view to anyone who cares to go to our web page: www.scottishrhododendronsociety.org.uk.

In addition, we were unable to hold our AGM, scheduled as usual for show day. The SRS committee met in Gargunock in February, however and Philip Rankin was able to present the Society's audited accounts for Oct 2018 to end September 2019, which revealed a very healthy balance. The Accounts were agreed and can be sent to OSCR. Sadly, the income generated from the show and plant sales will not materialise this year but Willie Campbell's excellent seed exchange continues to make a wonderful contribution to SRS finances. There was a vast list of seed available this year and germination here, at least, has been very good. Please let us know how you have fared with your purchases and keep some surplus plants for next year's plant sale at the show!

We should have had the opportunity, at our May AGM to formally elect Bob Mitchell as our new Hon Vice President. We hope that he has not forgotten us and that he will take up office when the next AGM is arranged. All in the Society look forward to his input and horticultural experience.

I hope, when I write again that we shall be in a more normal world, looking forward to our tours and meetings and the show and all the chat and banter that comes with meeting others who share the same enthusiasm for plants and gardening. Meantime, my very best wishes to all of our dear members. Please continue to support our Society and keep well and safe.



Black parrot tulips, *Paeonia daurica* ssp. *mlokosewitschii* and double *Trillium* 'Snow Bunting', just filling out.

Picture by Katrina Clow

“The Chop”

Keith White

While exploring the famous gardens of Southern England this spring with a group from the Scottish Rhododendron Society we developed the term to describe what was needed of some mature rhododendrons.

Along the shaded paths of these beautiful gardens there were frequent mature plants that on the path side were a shamble of bare sticks and trunks. Not a pretty site. Usually the opposite side of the plant, that exposed to sun, looked great.

What is a solution for this? One can remove shade from trees or other shrubs, etc in order to give the bare side more sun. One can do nothing, which is what had been done for many years. Or one can administer “The Chop”, meaning a radical cutting back to bring the whole plant back into the light and down to “human proportions” in order to allow the plant to grow new leaves and stems and flowers from the remaining plant.

Of course there are rhododendrons that should be left “as is” because they are such fine specimens. Sometimes these fine specimens are impinged upon by plants of lesser value. In that case the lesser valued plant should be given “The Chop” pruning or “The Nuclear Chop” by cutting it down. Or it could be given the “Lateral Chop” which means moving the lesser plant. However, in moving a lesser valued larger rhododendron, there needs to be some chopping done to remove lower limbs that may impinge on digging and some other limbs given that the root structure will be damaged in

the move and thus unable to support the former full above ground foliage for a few years. No “Chop” on a plant being moved risks losing the whole plant due to malnutrition and dehydration.

I have become a fan of “The Chop” over the past few years. What follows are some pics and descriptions from my garden.

**25 year old *Rhododendron lacteum*.
Good foliage, bad flowers. Thus Nuclear
Chop**

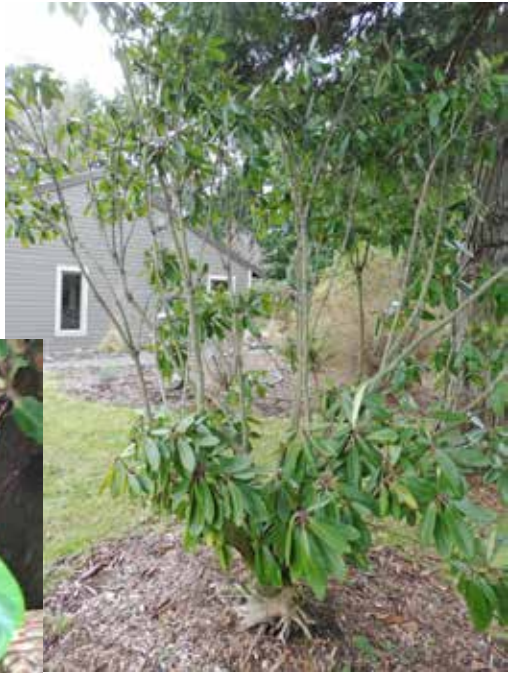




Top: The shady side of old *Rhododendron* 'Naomi'

Above: Old *Rhododendron* 'Naomi' on the sunny side

Left: *Rhododendron* 'Topsvoort Pearl' three years after "The Chop"



Top: New growth at base of previously chopped *Rhododendron* 'Faggeter's Favorite' The bare branches can be trimmed back.

Above: Hard to judge where new growth will emerge. Can cut back the stubs later.

Right: Ready to trim back and tidy.

Pictures in this article by Keith White



David Sillar writes: In my garden today I see a small tribute to Jamie Taggart. The larger tribute I would like to pay to his memory is that his enthusiasm for life in general and rhododendrons in particular, combined with his generosity with his time and knowledge, inspired me to start concentrating on species rhododendrons at Knock Cottage, now well over ten years ago.

I brought with me to my little garden at Crinan a few reminders of Jamie and his 1995 trip to Yunnan, including *Rhododendron irroratum* Ningyuanense Group (now ssp. *yiliangense*) which is currently in flower. I bought it from Jamie as a 1.5m tall seedling - everything he grew in his nursery was drawn up by the tall trees that overshadowed it. I chopped the top off a few years ago and now have a respectable bush more suited to its new location.



Kathleen Ferguson writes: Attached is a photo of our *Magnolia campbellii* in full flower at Dalnashean, Port Appin. It's the best we have ever seen it in the 20 years we have been here. Two other early magnolias have also flowered profusely this year and *M. stellata* is also doing well. The camellias have been stunning this year so we're now waiting to see how the rhododendrons do.

Favourite Plants: House Plants

Fiona Campbell



House plants are in vogue these days! Magazines have articles on the selection, care and positioning of house plants. I recently did an online survey on house plants and it got me thinking again about my collection. Many of them have sentimental associations for me. When my granddaughter was younger, I got her to count the number of plants I had. She found 53. After completing the survey, I did another count and I have 40+ that could be classed as house

plants. Also indoors are 6 rhododendrons in the conservatory.



The 4 Vireya rhododendrons came from Chip Lima about 10 years ago, and I have kept them going and flowering reasonably well, some trusses even winning at the Scottish National Rhododendron Shows. Last year Chip came to take cuttings and tells me they have been successful, (much needed pruning). All are put outside from June till October and then to the conservatory from October to May along



with *Rhododendron nuttallii* from Tessa Knott and *R. liliiflorum* from Sir Peter Hutchison. All are budded up

Some pictures of my Vireya rhododendrons.

Pictures in this article by Fiona Campbell

well for spring flowering.... maybe in time for The Rhododendron Show on May 2nd at Garelochhead. If you haven't grown *Vireya* before they are worth a try. Chip sent some seed to the SRS Seed Exchange.

Many of my house plants or the ancestors of them have been in my possession for a long time. The oldest is *Ceropegia woodii* - "String of hearts". The original plant is from my bedroom in my parent's house and I have kept bits growing ever since. They produce tiny beads along the vine like stem which can be put in soil to grow. However, the plant almost died last autumn, too much water I think and lack of t.l.c. I had one tiny caudex - woody root growth - left with a string of leaves and as I don't like to waste anything, I potted it up and now it has new growth so hope to build this back up to what it once was.

The second oldest in my collection is a scented pelargonium. The original grew in my classroom in the 1970s. I took cuttings to root and have had one ever since. Another plant from those days is the "mother of thousands" *Kalanchoe daigremontiana*. So easy to grow from the baby plants which form on the leaf edges. Beside this is another similar succulent *K. tubiflora* which I bought many years ago from a plant stall when SRS were visiting the garden Wallingham. This was on a tour of Northumberland and south Scotland about 10 years ago. These SRS garden tours are most enjoyable and often provide the opportunity to acquire new plants. When Willie is looking at rhododendrons to buy I always keep a look out for unusual house plants. Always room in the car for those which provide a memory of the visit.

Cacti next. I have *Parodia leninghausii*. The original plant came from a garden client of my father-in-law and we kept it for years growing very tall and unbalanced, difficult to handle. The spiny cactus, even wrapped in newspaper to transplant was difficult to handle. It had to go when we moved house but I kept a small offshoot, another form of propagation. An *Epiphyllum* 'Cooperi' also from the same source



has gloriously huge scented flowers and can be propagated by stem cuttings. The original long gone but I have its offspring. Next to these I have a cactus from George Argent, a gift for me when he came to an SRS meeting in Gargunock some years ago. A nice reminder of this famous *Vireya* expert who was part of the SRS committee.

***Epiphyllum* 'Cooperi'**

My father in law was responsible for starting my *Amaryllis* collection. He gave us a lovely red one in the 1990s and I always have a bulb of that on the go. Since then I have had others as gifts, and it is wonderful to see the huge flowers that appear from the buds on their long stems - most beautiful of all bulbs surely? I try to have a succession in flower by starting them off at different times. After a rest period of 2/3 months in summer they are tidied up and given a bit of fresh compost and water to start off new growth. I always hope to see the new flower bud emerging rather than new leaves. Sometimes it's disappointment with only leaves so it means feeding up a bit more for next year. Many produce offsets but I must be ruthless and put most out.



Another interesting plant I bought at an Scottish National Rhododendron Show plant stall at Garelochhead years ago is *Hoya bella*. Not sure who donated it, but it has enjoyed its new home in Doune flowering really well with wonderful scented white blossoms. Fred and Camber Trott were interested in obtaining a *H. bella*. Fred told me pieces root well in water another way to propagate house plants. They have a different *Hoya* and were keen to get *H. bella*. Now the rooted pieces have gone to the Trotts and I hope they will develop into a sizeable plant for them.

Lastly another sentimental plant is a *Cymbidium* which was a gift to my mother in her care home. When she died in 2006, I took the orchid home with me to look after. Most years it has produced flower spikes in the conservatory and has grown well. After dividing it last year I potted a small rooted section and this will eventually



replace the main plant. This is what I do with my plants once they are too big. Always bringing on some wee bits and disposing of the old ones. I'm no expert and really only have plants which are easy to look after and propagate from cuttings, offsets, rooting in water and baby plantlets. I do love to be surrounded with plants, many of them have special memories of places and people.

Top: *Amaryllis*

Left: *Cymbidium*



Grace Bergius writes: I have a very wet, exposed position on Loch Craignish. About 30 years ago we planted hedges, 400 broadleaf trees, and a dozen Scots Pine. Once we had a bit of protection added rhododendrons, amongst others. A few here flowering now mid April.

I planted *Rhododendron* ‘Sir Charles Lemon’ (top) about 14 years ago and it took 9 years to flower for the first time.



*R h o d o -
d e n d r o n*

‘Taurus’ (above) basking in the dabbled sun. An interesting shape after deer ‘pruning’ a number of years ago. Now deer fenced.

Mostly bought from from Philip Bowden Smith on Loch Awe. A few added since from Willie Campbell at Gargunnoch and from Stonefield.

Tessa Knott sent in this picture on the left of her *Rhododendron rubiginosum* at Glenwhan



Dinkie Fairlie sent these pictures from her garden in Helensburgh. Left is *Rhododendron* 'Starbright Champagne'. Above: *Rhododendron* 'Trewithen Orange'

Sandra Jenkins writes: First a rhododendron grown from a Scottish seedling many moons ago. It's now about 7ft tall but we have no idea what it is, other of course than a big leaved species.

Magnolia next to *Drimys winteri*. The *Drimys* was another Scottish purchase after we first saw it in the garden of Kildarden House, Rosneath.



Thoughts on April 2020

Anne Chambers

What a lovely spring! I like this spring, not because the sun is shining, nor that I have extra hours of leisure to enjoy the garden, but because the camellias and rhododendron are blooming in the ‘right order’! Last year was different: I have mature plants of *Camellia* ‘Anticipation’ and *Rhododendron yunnanense* Borde Hill growing side by side. Each is an attractive flowering plant, the *Camellia* covers itself in blowsy peach-pink flowers, the rhododendron clusters open with very pale flowers which soon darken to lilac. Together they make a horrible colour combination!

I grow many ‘companion plants’ under rhododendrons: four genera are particularly amenable to this. The earliest of these giving colour are the *Erythronium* species. The pink *E. revolutum* from coastal areas of western North America has already made a lovely carpet of dancing flowers under the *Rhododendron decorum* in March and has gone. The rarer *E. tuolumnense*, mentioned in the meadows of that area by John Muir, is a bright yellow, now almost over, but in its place is a mass of various attractive *Erythronium* hybrids and forms, heads constantly



moving in the cool east wind.

One of the many *Fritillaria meleagris* in the garden comes up every year with petals splayed outwards pretending to be a dancer like the erythroniums!



Above: *Erythronium* ‘White Beauty’ under *Rhododendron dicroanthum*

Left: *Fritillaria meleagris* in *Rhododendron arborescens*

Pictures in this article by Anne Chambers

Primulas love dappled shade: primroses have been out all month and now the sturdy stems of *P. chionantha* and its variants are in bloom, some white, some purple-blue, very easy from seed and if you're not careful with the labels it doesn't matter too much.



Above: *Primula chionantha*

America's woodlands have great numbers of *Trillium* species and many of them seem to be the perfect plants for part-shade. The variety is endless and this spring I'm stunned by the number of self-sown seedlings here, there and everywhere – almost untidy! *Trillium albidum* is perfection at the moment and the beautiful double forms of *T. grandiflorum* are well-budded and not far behind. I find the rarer pink forms of *T. grandiflorum*



Left: *Trillium albidum* under *Rhododendron schlippenbachii* and *R. wardii*



Above right: *Trillium luteum*



Above Left: *Trillium kurabayashii*



much less vigorous but since all the trilliums get the same treatment, I hope it absolves me of responsibility!

As April rolls on I start to look for dinosaur teeth pushing relentlessly through the ground – perhaps that’s a bit fanciful but it is what they remind me of! Several of the genus *Arisaema* are very happy under rhododendrons: of the section from *A. griffithii* to *A. utile*, the most sinister is *A. griffithii* itself, and yet those shiny black cataphylls are just a prelude to the drama about to unfold.



A good form of *Arisaema griffithii* is an astonishing sight. What’s a ‘good form’? – a spathe width of about 15 cm, spathe completely curled in on itself and dark in colour. *Caveat emptor!* There are many inferior forms.

Good growing!

Top: Jim Fuller’s *Rhododendron ciliatum* ex Milke Danda with *Trillium ovatum*

Above: *Trillium* seedlings



Above: *Arisaema griffithii* cataphylls



Left: *Arisaema griffithii* spathe

2019	Wuerzburg		Radlett		Glendoick	
	mm	inches	mm	inches	mm	inches
January	19.0	0.75	26.5	1.04	10.0	0.39
February	15.0	0.59	47.5	1.87	27.0	1.06
March	25.0	0.98	59.5	2.34	76.3	3.00
April	32.0	1.26	34.0	1.34	34.0	1.34
May	71.0	2.80	41.0	1.61	82.0	3.23
June	37.0	1.46	69.0	2.72	49.0	1.93
July	16.0	0.63	34.0	1.34	83.0	3.27
August	10.0	0.39	50.5	1.99	93.5	3.68
September	40.0	1.57	62.5	2.46	73.5	2.89
October	51.0	2.00	114.5	4.51	54.5	2.15
November	37.0	1.46	78.0	3.07	80.0	3.15
December	65.0	2.56	107.0	4.21	67.0	2.64
Total 2019	418.0	16.45	724.0	28.50	729.8	28.73
Total 2018	448.0	17.64	663.5	26.13	643.7	25.34
Total 2017	587.0	23.13	642.5	25.30	818.0	32.21
Total 2016	622.0	24.49	692.0	27.24	783.3	30.83
Total 2015	529.0	20.83	662.5	26.11	948.0	37.29
Total 2014	517.0	20.36	862.5	33.96	915.5	36.05
Total 2013	655.0	25.79	735.5	28.95	665.5	26.21
Total 2012	585.0	23.04	903.5	35.56	980.0	38.58
Total 2011	506.0	19.93	520.5	20.51	815.6	32.10
Total 2010	776.0	30.54	682.0	26.87	741.8	28.22
Total 2009	518.0	20.40	793.0	31.23	782.0	30.79
Total 2008	521.0	20.51	753.5	29.67	810.8	31.92
Total 2007	786.0	30.93	785.5	31.00	801.0	31.51
Total 2006	583.0	22.95	617.0	24.29	752.7	29.63
Total 2005			477.0	18.78	899.4	35.40
Total 2004			662.0	26.06		

The weather stations:

Wuerzburg is in Lower Franconia, North Bavaria, Germany.

Radlett is in Hertfordshire, north west of London.

Glendoick is in Perthshire, east central Scotland.

Glenarn is on the Gareloch, west central Scotland.

Ballachulish is in the Scottish west highlands.

Ellon is in Aberdeenshire, north east Scotland.

Morar is in the Scottish west Highlands

Glenarn		Ballachulish		Ellon		Morar	
mm	inches	mm	inches	mm	inches	mm	inches
79.5	3.13	209.8	8.26	50.0	1.98	166.0	6.54
117.6	4.63	290.1	11.42	32.0	1.26	148.0	5.83
187.2	7.37	324.4	12.77	54.0	2.13	178.0	7.00
38.1	1.50	47.5	1.87	38.0	1.50	29.0	1.14
69.9	2.75	111.0	4.37	84.0	3.31	130.0	5.12
101.6	4.00	190.5	7.50	76.0	2.99	140.0	5.15
111.0	4.37	215.9	8.50	78.0	3.07	159.0	6.26
276.1	10.87	382.3	15.05	76.0	2.99	275.0	11.61
177.8	7.00	233.2	9.18	91.0	3.58	164.0	6.46
165.1	6.50	310.6	12.23	88.0	3.46	196.0	7.72
66.8	2.63	40.1	1.58	142.0	5.59	34.0	1.34
292.1	11.50	439.7	17.31	67.0	2.64	288.0	11.34
1682.8	66.25	2795.0	110.04	876.0	34.49	1927.0	75.87
1577.3	62.13	2769.6	109.04	709.0	27.90	1789.0	70.43
1692.5	66.63	2759.8	108.66	918.5	36.16		
1647.7	64.87	2827.5	111.32				
2196.7	86.50	3858.7	151.92				
1933.5	76.11	3359.9	133.28				
1641.2	64.61	2654.6	104.51				
1956.3	77.01	2615.0	102.95				
2257.6	88.75	3468.5	136.56				
1403.8	55.27	1727.0	67.99				
1889.1	74.37	2980.7	117.35				
2056.6	81.00	3321.1	130.75				
1921.5	75.63	3236.6	127.42				
1722.2	67.79	3314.0	130.47				
1511.3	59.50	3082.2	121.58				
1619.3	63.50	3266.6	125.03				

Some interesting figures here. The driest year so far for poor Heinz in Wuerzburg! Radlett fairly average totals. Glendoick a bit on the dry side. Who would have thought Morar on the west coast of Scotland would have the driest November of everyone whereas Ellon, usually protected from the rain bearing westerlies by the Grampian Mountains, had the wettest November by far of the stations. Even Ballachulish had a relatively dry November but still wins the total rainfall!

Marion Kinns has sent in pictures of her woodland plants on the Rosneath peninsula



Uvularia grandiflora



Trillium chloropetalum



Sanguinaria canadensis



Chelidonium hylomeconoides



Arisaema triphyllum



Disporum megalanthum

Autumn Conference 2019

John Roy

The 2019 Autumn Conference based in Pitlochry Hydro Hotel on Saturday 5th October was attended by some forty-four delegates. The theme was “Botanical Explorers in the Modern Era”. As usual with our Autumn Conferences it was a joint affair with the Rhododendron Species Conservation Group, with SRS doing the organisation this year under the auspices of David and Gloria Starck.

After a brief introduction I was the first speaker. I have been on twelve plant exploration trips in twenty-five years from Yunnan in 1994 to Sichuan in 2019. Some have been easy, some difficult, others crazy! I described some of the highlights of different journeys to China, Tibet, Nepal and Arunachal Pradesh ending my account with the 2009 adventure to the Mechuka valley in Arunachal.

After a short break, Julia Corden gave “The Hamish Gunn Memorial Lecture”. Julia is curator of the Explorers’ Garden in Pitlochry and has been on plant exploration trips to different areas of the Himalaya. Her main interests are alpine plants and she described the highs and lows of treks to Bhutan and Arunachal Pradesh, the highs being the beautiful plants and scenery, the lows the rain and leeches.

After lunch it was the turn of Richard Baines to tell of his adventures in northern Vietnam. Richard is curator at Logan Botanic Garden, an outreach of RBGE. He and his party ascended Vietnam’s highest mountain, Phan Xi Pang, at 13,000 feet. With collection of specimens and seed now difficult under the Nagoya Protocol, Richard obtained permission to collect and share information with his Vietnamese counterparts. He is glad to report specimens are doing well at Logan, some from fairly low elevations.

Assistant at Logan is Chris Parsons who joined an expedition in spring 2016 to Yunnan and Sichuan. This was a trip focused mainly on alpinism. He visited some of the major mountain systems such as Cang Shan, Yulong Xue Shan and Tian Bao Shan in Yunnan and Zhe Duo Shan, Balang Shan and Wolong Shan in Sichuan.

After another short break “Gardens of the World with Brightwater Holidays” was the theme of Colin Crosbie’s talk. Colin has been in charge of many of Brightwater’s trips abroad to view beautiful gardens and he took us on a pictorial journey to South Africa, China, Japan and Europe, describing many of his favourites. He touched on some of

the challenges involved in ensuring all participants have a great experience.

That concluded the proceedings for the day. On Sunday 6th October we visited two superb gardens in the area.

Craigowan

Colin Whitehead

We visited Craigowan, Ian Jones' garden, on a rather wet Sunday morning. Ian had bought the property 31 years ago, with the substantial house overlooking a garden that sloped downwards to the south. The original garden had been planted with a good number of rhododendrons but over the years these had become too congested. Therefore Ian had leased some adjoining land and had



moved into it some of the rhododendrons from the original garden as well as planting others and some trees. The leased land had comprised a thin layer of soil over a thick bed of clay, so Ian had dug out the clay to a depth of about 4 feet and refilled with more top soil and incorporated field drains. The result was a sloping garden with grass paths leading downwards and around flower beds.



We were greeted on our arrival with tea and biscuits laid out on a table covered by what under more favourable weather con-

Above: Neat areas of planting with shrubs and herbaceous

Left: Members enjoying the garden in spite of the rain. *Cercidiphyllum* in the foreground. Autumn foliage smelling sweetly

ditions would have been a sun shade but which also served as an effective umbrella. Ian then led us on a tour of the garden, pointing out where the dieback fungus was killing some ash trees. We were led around the grass paths, crossing on bridges over small rivulets in full flow. Most of the moved rhododendrons were looking in good condition, though some of the plants in the original garden area were still growing into each other. The rhododendrons were interspersed with beds of *Meconopsis* and also groups of *Cardiocrinum* towering regally over the surrounding plants.

The rain was abating as we finished our tour so we were able to congregate more comfortably at the side of the house for a plant auction. Under the enthusiastic prompting of the auctioneer, John Roy, a varied collection of rhododendrons and other plants all disappeared to grace a good number of other rhododendron gardens.

Explorers Garden

Chris Parsons

After the thrilling plant auction and lunch at the Pitlochry theatre, we rounded off the day with a visit to The Explorers garden, managed by Julia Corden. Overcast though the weather was, the rain managed to hold off, and we were welcomed, not only by Julia but also by an enticing autumnal display of *Colchicum*, *Cornus* and the fading heads of *Hydrangea paniculata* as we climbed the entrance ramp to the garden. Julia explained that the garden is maintained largely by a team of 42 volunteers and the great standard of horticulture on display says much about her skill in managing a garden with minimal resources. Also, commendable, was the commitment to gardening organically – the paths are weeded by flame gun – so no glyphosate!

The garden, as its name suggests, is a celebration of those plant explorers, well-known and more obscure, who hail from Scotland. Though not all of the figures represented in the garden were necessarily collectors, as is the case with William Forsyth, a founder member

Julia Corden and Wang Liston at the entrance to the Explorers Garden



**Ian Douglas telling a wee story
about one of the explorers.**



Photos by John Roy

of the RHS; commemorated here by a sculpture of an ovary from a *Forsythia* flower, the genus that is named for him.

Paths meander through areas laid out in a mainly phytogeographical way, with accompanying interpretation boards linking the plants with their collectors. Groves of young *Araucaria*

araucana were establishing not far from where our tour began; a nod to Archibald Menzies who of course was served the seeds for dessert on a trip to Chile, leading to their first UK introduction. Plantings of *Phormium tenax* and *Kniphofia caulescens* represent David Lyall and Francis Masson and the plant hunting they did in New Zealand and South Africa respectively.

In an area of dry-stone walls and criss-crossing paths dedicated to the Himalaya, grow over 40 taxa of *Meconopsis*, part of a Plant Heritage National collection of the big blue flowered species and cultivars. Around this point in the tour we were shown some of the garden's working area too, in the form of the impressive compost bays which are emptied and refilled on a four-yearly cycle, and doubtless help nourish the *Meconopsis*, especially in the increasingly dry summers of recent years.

The two most famous Scottish plant collectors each get their own pavilion in the garden. These being George Forrest and David Douglas. The latter was of course one of the most important collectors of the 19th century and virtually started the UK forestry industry with his introductions. The David Douglas pavilion is a beautifully designed building, constructed mainly from Scottish sourced Larch and Douglas fir and the shape of its roof tiles take inspiration from the seeds of the Douglas Fir. The building as viewed from the path below looks akin to the prow of a ship; a reminder of the long sea voyages Douglas himself would have endured back in the day. The pavilion acts as a venue for various events and exhibitions and at the time of visiting, held a photography exhibition 'Plant Explorers in the Modern Era' sponsored by both the SRS and SRGC.

I look forward to revisiting this garden when the *Meconopsis* and *Rhododendron* are flowering!

Philip Rankin sent in some pictures from his garden in Edinburgh.



Clockwise from above: *Rhododendron* 'Alison Johnson', *R.* 'Harry Tagg' from Glenarn some years ago when they had a memorial sale for Mervyn Kessell, *R.* 'Dora Amateis' and *R.* 'Curlew'.



Glenavon, Roe deer and Liquid Fence

Marion Kinns

I was interested to read, ('The World of the Rhododendron', Autumn Review no 86 – 2019), President John Hammond's Notes. This concerned deer in our gardens and the use of various deterrents. Members may like to read of my experience at Glenavon and the use in particular of Liquid Fence.

I am not alone on the Rosneath peninsula to be bothered by Roe Deer. At one time these were culled by, I think, the Forestry Commission as it was then. Much of the forest on the hillsides of the peninsula has been harvested and new plantations are still very young. Evidently our gardens are more attractive.

Non-gardening visitors are in raptures at seeing 'bambi' grazing my shrubs and fail to understand my cries of anguish. Granddaughters brand me 'cruel' as I rush out to shout at the invaders. Said invaders are not easily intimidated until I am almost upon them and take a leisurely last snatch of leaf of choice before bounding away! Even my hardened attitudes were toned down the day I looked out to see a very young fawn standing lonesome under a big *Cotinus*. I looked to see if Mum was near but there was no sign. I didn't have the heart to chase the baby away from its 'safety spot' so waited till I saw Mum return and then gently herded them from the garden! I think a dog might help but that is not an option we are currently considering.

Although I occasionally see the deer, I more often find their signs. Droppings are a give away to indicate where they have been standing to feed or where they get up from a night's sleep, along with flattened grass. My plants have suffered more from nibbles rather than bark damage from 'fraying' by male deer. Notable exceptions have been a *Hydrangea heteromalla* and more expensively, a *Wollemia nobilis*. Almost too late I put on tree guards and both have fortunately survived. How the *Wollemia* managed to do so is a mystery as the bark was almost gone round a full circumference of the trunk. One strip survived and this had partially lifted from the trunk though still attached at the two ends. It still remains so under the tree guard but two years on and the tree has almost doubled in height.

John Hammond included in his article a list produced by the British Deer Society of vulnerable and deer resistant plants. I certainly agree that bluebells are vulnerable and in this case I rather applaud the visitors as they help me to cull the Spanish bluebells with which this garden is overrun. For my garden camellias are vulnerable along with

hosta and sedum. Deer manage to jump up the gabion cliff face and eat the flowers from the very early Porphyron saxifrages just as they are about to give a February show! *Rhododendron racemosum* and *R. spinuliferum* have been selected as well as an 'unknown Vietnamese species' (Alan Clark) that was almost totally destroyed here in its first year. It is recovering. Deer have also enjoyed *Polyspora*, *Viburnum*, *Euonymus*, *Stachyurus*, *Schizostylis*, *Pulmonaria*, *Bergenia*, *Eomecon* I could go on! I think their tastes change over the course of a year and of course different deer have different preferences.

Complete deer fencing is of course the best option but not a solution here because of the site and expense involved. Precious trees and shrubs are now protected in their early years by wire surrounds based on those used at Benmore and described by David Gray in his article in *Sibbaldia*, *Journal of Botanic Garden Horticulture*, no15, p109-119.

I have tried numerous deterrents over many years. Perfumed soap hung on branches was not pleasing to look at and didn't work. Smelly socks were placed around boundaries but were soon freshened by all the rain! The thought of obtaining sufficient lion dung was overfacing! Limited success came from spraying Grazers G1 concentrate but deer quickly came to ignore it. Staff at Benmore told me of a trial they were carrying out to compare the effect of Grazers with a product obtained from America called Liquid Fence. The latter was easily the most effective as shown by spraying a long row of hostas outside the east wall of the walled garden where half the row received one product and half the other.

I was warned of the disadvantages. The cost is very high and the smell is atrocious. I swallow hard and tholl the former and try not to notice the latter by covering my nose, spraying on a windless day and staying upwind of any tiny breeze. The smell disappears to the human nose after 24 hours but evidently not to that of the deer. Neither does rain appear to affect its efficacy although 6 hours must elapse between spraying and any rainfall. Following instructions on the bottle, I sprayed plants favoured by deer once a week initially, then after a month moved to fortnightly for a further month and finally to once per month. I have now been spraying monthly for around 2 years and it has been successful in that I now see little damage. If there is damage it is invariably on unsprayed plants. These are then included in the regime. Deer appear to still pass through the garden and occasionally sleep here but I understand that they retain some memory of plants that have been rendered distasteful as long as this is reinforced occasionally. So, for this three quarter acre garden, Liquid Fence is a success.

I have not been able to buy it anywhere in the UK! Early on I bought through Amazon

from the US but their sites indicate that they are not able to supply for the foreseeable future. I manage now to buy through Ebay and their supplier has always been the US 'Mr. Medical'. There are large import charges that can treble the price quoted. I buy the 40 oz bottle of concentrate and probably get through two per year. One unfortunate occasion Roger went to The Helensburgh Sorting Office to collect my bottle and pay the charges. He was greeted with much relief as the bottle had leaked during shipping. Horrified sorting office staff applied layers and layers of plastic and tape in an attempt to contain the smell; the room had temporarily become a most unpleasant place in which to work! I took photographs of the depleted bottle (about a third was lost) and after a succession of emails, Mr Medical did give me a partial refund.

I shall go on using Liquid Fence as long as it remains obtainable despite all the disadvantages. I no longer dread looking round the garden after a few days absence to see the latest casualties!



Peter Shotter writes: some of the rhododendrons and magnolias blooming this Spring on the North Downs in Kent.



Clockwise from top left: *Rhododendron chamaethomsonii*, *R. dekatanum* L&S 1360, *R. leucaspis*, *R. boothii* 'Tagin Gold'



Clockwise from above: *Rhododendron citriniflorum* C6543A, *R. vialii*, blooming outside for the first time, *Magnolia campbellii* ssp. *mollicomata* 'Lanarth', *Magnolia campbellii* var. *alba* 'Maharane', *Rhododendron coriaceum*.



Landslide

Mike Thornley

*“Never mind the weather
As long as we’re together,
We’re off to see the Wild West Show”.*

Well, not quite this year: no getting together at the Scottish Rhododendron Show, and not much show of rhododendrons in the garden either. The news from the west is of biblical amounts of rain with more than 14 inches in February here at Glenarn and nearly 2 feet at Benmore, the highest amounts ever recorded for one month - the Flood before the plagues in Egypt. And not much better in March, when one day walking down the glen towards the pond I noticed that a section of not so steep but waterlogged ground had slumped down, exposing the underlying boulder clay, fanning out it its base, not quite blocking the burn which roared on it way. It looked like a relatively minor aberration until I realised how much material can be moved by even a small landslide.

The British Geological Survey data shows that there have been 16 significant earth moving events in Scotland in the last 6 months. Landslides on the Rest and be Thankful, blocking the A83 and the route to the Promised Land, are rarely out of the news. Although on a much more modest scale, our landslide in March was not the first we have experienced in the garden. About 20 years ago, after a period of prolonged rain and some wind, we discovered that an impressive *Rhododendron* ‘Sir Charles Lemon’ had toppled over, causing the cliff above to sheer away and slide into the burn 30 ft feet below.

We dismantled the stricken rhododendron, drove in stakes along the top edge to arrest further erosion, and left the ground to heal itself, hidden from view. When we looked over the edge a few years later we found a miniature forest of rhododendron seedlings, exactly as we had seen in Arunachal Pradesh where landslides had opened up the canopy, the disturbed ground and light providing perfect conditions for propagation. The infant plants were of much interest for their different shapes, sizes and colours, encouraging us to speculate on their parents, but also posed a threat in the well-ordered garden. More recently thickets of *Caldcluvia paniculata*, a native of Chile, have appeared. The parent plant is about 50 yards away upwind, its fairly innocuous looking frothy panicles of pale yellow flowers producing copious amounts of seed. It has all the look of another invasive species.

Therefore, from time to time we climb down and pull out the seedlings and subsequently planted *Rhododendron platypodum*, perched on a kind of pulpit, to surprise anyone who ventures to look over the edge, its marvellous sculptural shape acting as a foil to the *R. yuefengense* on the other side of the burn, both sharing a similar beamy habit and thick, almost orbicular leaves.

More recently, in the great storm of 3rd January 2012, an oak, cantilevering out over the steep sides of the glen, came down into a mass of old rhododendrons bringing with it a landslide that engulfed the path below. The oak spanned the burn like a bridge, under which we could walk. After cutting off the limbs and dragging them to the bonfire site, we attached a winch to a distant lime tree with the aim of turning the trunk through 90 degrees, encouraging it to roll down the slope, which was eventually achieved. We then set about excavating the path and consolidating the slope above, by stamping down the broken ground, zigzagging upwards. Again, stakes were driven into the top of the bank.

We did not wait for Nature to take its course but sought to emulate it by immediate planting. A large *Rhododendron burmanicum* 'Elizabeth David' (which probably should now be called *R. aff. burmanicum*) that had outgrown its original site, was dumped over the edge onto a platform where it continues to expand. Further down is *R. changii*, sufficiently elevated for its rarity value to be explained to the visitor but well out of reach. *R. pachypodum* is snaking out into the sunlight, grown from a cutting off a plant labelled *R. scottianum* that used to be in the quarry below the dam at Colonsay House, now long gone. Above is *R. excellens* (or is it *R. nuttallii*?) as well as *R. faithii* with its patinated bronze new growth. Larger plants include *R. glanduliferum* which was originally collected on a hillside pock marked with coal mines and spoil heaps and should do well here. It might seem that these landslip sites favour members of *Maddenia* and *Fortunea*, or perhaps in our case it is because they were the more recent and interesting introductions that had become available from Glendoick.

Whether we like to acknowledge it or not, gardens provide clues to climate change. We see more rainfall in winter and in late summer, as well as longer, hotter and dryer periods in early summer. There is hardly any frost, almost no snow but more wind. The consequences are stressed rhododendrons and much earlier and more frequent flowering events leading to increased seeding into areas opened up by gales – or by the enthusiastic gardener. Now, even the ground below our feet is moving.

Some more pictures sent in by Peter Shotter. Left: *Rhododendron bainbridgeanum* RBGE form, below right: *R. lacteum* 'Wumeng Shan'



Above: *Rhododendron tsariense* 'Yum Yum' AM, below right: *R. floccigerum* Pink Form R 10959, below left: *R. seinghkuense* in a patch of *Cardamine quinquefolium*.



Seed Exchange Report

Willie Campbell

Once again as the seed exchange closed for another year, I offered bundles of seed for £5.00 thinking that many of our members might want to try growing rhododendrons from seed donated by our own members. Lars Stark from Stockholm was one member who asked for the £5.00 bundle and in mid-April his package was sent off.

First of all, let me thank the members who contributed seed, many taking the time to sort, dry, packet and label the seeds before sending to me to divide in smaller packets, number and label. I sit in my office for many nights preparing the seed exchange listing and sorting out the seeds to make as early a distribution as possible (early January) for you, our members to get sowing.

The following members contributed seed this year

- Jeanie Jones – Lockerbie (primula and meconopsis)
- May-Britt Hanson – Norway (primula, woodland and rhododendrons)
- Oliver Miller – Glasgow (shrubs and acer seeds)
- Marion Kinns – Rosneath (shrubs)
- Katrina Clow – Ayrshire (herbaceous)
- Braco Castle – Perthshire (trees and shrubs)
- Tim Thornton – Southampton (magnolia)
- Neil Batchelor – Sutherland (primula, rhododendron, meconopsis, bulb)
- Chip Lima – Stirlingshire (his own hybridised seeds over many years)
- John Weagle – Nova Scotia (rhododendron and species azaleas)
- Jacky Bronnec – France (seed from WC plants Dibang AP)
- Dick Fulcher – Devon (seed from his WC plants)
- Alan Anderson – Aberdeen (HP seed, has sent seed for over 20 years)
- Alan Clark – Cumbria (huge collection of over 150 different rhodos)
- Mike McCullough – California (occidentale seeds)

If I have missed anybody, apologies. From the membership thank you all.

I sent out over 40 packages of seed from the SRS and Danish seed exchange. Over the past few years we have swapped seed exchanges to give each membership a wider choice. However one downside to this is the SRS seed exchange price for rhododendron seeds is £1.00 or 1 Euro where the Danish Seed exchange is £2.50 for OP seed and £5.00 for WC seed. (Yes the Danish Society still get WC seed.) However, this year due to our interesting and varied listing the Danish group bought over 250

packets of seed from us.

Most of the seed goes overseas by number of packets, France, Sweden, Norway, Finland, Poland, Ireland, USA, Canada and Spain this year. For some reason Germany does not request seeds. Hartwig from the Bremen Rhododendronpark used to but he must have his own sources now.

So far all of our seed packages have reached their destinations and according to most growers they have had excellent germination from the SRS seeds. Many members have commented that, with early sowing they have already pricked out into trays or containers. This is always the trickiest time, especially on warm or sunny days. Seedlings must be kept shaded and occasionally sprayed with a weak rhododendron liquid fertiliser. I use Miracid. By the end of the season you may wish to transfer into small individual pots and keep under cover till the following season.

I myself after years of growing, planting and distributing rhododendrons now prefer to grow primula, meconopsis, trees and shrubs. All these plants I grow generally end up in the plant sales at the show or at conferences.

We open the seed exchange to non-members after February and reduce prices to sell off surplus seed. I had already set up packets to be sold at the show as surplus seeds. Apart from the subscriptions, the seed exchange and plant sales each year keep the society's finances in good health and over the last ten years we have been able to keep subscriptions at the same level. However, there may be clouds on the horizon as our president reported new regulations by government bodies may not allow seed to be sent overseas. I am constantly in touch with other clubs and societies on your behalf to see what can be done.

I will continue again with the Seed Exchange next year and hope we will be able to put together a bumper seed listing.

Thanks once more to all who contributed seed this year.

Committee Members

Our Office Bearers are:

President: John Hammond

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Past President: David Starck

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Tours & Meetings Co-ordinator: Gloria Starck

Advertising Manager: Philip Rankin

Technical Director: Currently Vacant

Directors:

Ian Douglas

William Campbell

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

Tel: 0161 764 1116

Email: hammondsrhodies@supanet.com

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

Tel: 01560 483926

Email: katrina.clow@btinternet.com

Treasurer: Colin Whitehead, 21 Laverockdale Park, Edinburgh, EH13 0QE.

Tel: 0131 4415036

Email: colin.whitehead21@gmail.com

Hon. Publications Editor: John Roy, Brecklet House, Ballachulish, Argyll, PH49 4JG.

Tel: 01855 811465

Email: john.roy2@btopenworld.com

Publications Manager: Matt Heasman, 9 Dunbeath Grove, Blantyre, G72 0GL.

Tel: 01698 711089

Email: matthew.heasman@virgin.net

Tours & Visits Manager: David Starck, Ordha Coille, Kilberry, Argyll, PA29 6YD.

Tel: 01880 770257

Email: david@lochloren.free-online.co.uk

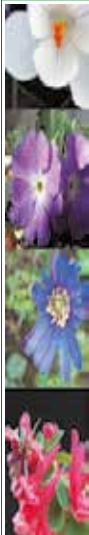
Advertising Manager: Philip Rankin, 7 Hillview Terrace, Edinburgh, EH12 8RA.

Tel: 0131 334 4213

Email: philiprankin@hotmail.com

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