



the Rhododendron, Camellia & Magnolia group

Bulletin 109 / July 2012 / www.rhodogroup-rhs.org



CHAIRMAN'S NOTES

Andy Simons - Chairman

Chairman's Report to the AGM
30th May 2012

There are surely fewer more dispiriting things than to have concluded a difficult and complex task only to discover that your work was actually nugatory and that it will need to be conducted again with a revised set of guidelines and constraints; unfortunately this is exactly the situation that the Rhododendron, Camellia & Magnolia Group and I find ourselves in. As you will be aware from my briefing at last year's AGM we concluded the process of refreshing the group's constitution and getting the Council of the RHS to agree its contents; however you will also recall that the group's relationship to the original Rhododendron and Camellia Plant Sub-Committee was still being worked on and that the RHS was continuing a review of its governance and that of all its committees. I am unclear if the analysis of its governance or some other financial or legal review caused the RHS to reconsider its position with respect to the RCM Group; however it has been regrettably necessary for the RHS to do so. What is clear so far is that the existing RCM Group constitution cannot be supported by the RHS in the longer term; it is non-compliant with the society's legal and financial obligations as a national charity.

I should emphasise that the RCM group is not being singled out and this issue is equally applicable to the Fruit, Lily and embryonic Herb groups, but the situation is more acute for us as we pushed ahead of the other groups in devising and enacting our new constitution. The RCM group situation is further complicated by the work devolved to our committee when it merged with the plant sub-committee, namely the recommendations for a number of individual awards in the gift of the RHS, evaluation of plants for RHS award and the deep integration between the group and RHS shows department with respect to the RHS Rhododendron and Camellia Competitions and Shows. The RHS have accepted they are largely responsible for this situation, and the wider changes within the society over recent years meant that they could not keep as close an eye on evolving group and committee governance as would have been ideal. Many of you know that the RHS President is a group member and I wish to thank her for the apology she recently gave me concerning this matter.

I have met on a couple of occasions with the RHS to discuss the best way forward. My current understanding is that the RHS Committee and Group liaison officer will draft an options paper that the group and RHS can consider, and this paper may be RCM specific or it may attempt to encompass the 3 other groups

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Rhododendron 'Mrs Furnivall' Photographed at the AGM 30th May 2012. (Caucasicum hybrid x *R. griffithianum* - Waterer, pre-1930) From the Group's Collection of 'Hardy Hybrids' growing at 'Ramster', Chiddingfold, Surrey - where the Annual General Meeting was held.

This paper is likely to put forward 2 broad alternatives: either greater integration within the RHS with a resulting reduction in autonomy or a devolved partnering arrangement with the group re-constituting fully outside the RHS umbrella but with use of naming and certain other resources. I will not seek to address the pros or cons of each option as the details are far from being produced by the RHS, however, whatever the underlying characteristics it will be necessary for the group as a whole to consider these options and decide how it wishes to proceed. I am willing to represent the group along with the committee in developing the options and through any negotiations, but I must stress that such fundamental changes must be a group decision.

I wish to thank all those who have corresponded with me directly or through the letters section of the bulletin with respect to membership. As reported we have seen a further small reduction in membership again this year. I consider any reduction to be unacceptable but I think I must now recognise that until the economy improves it will be difficult to increase the membership without measures that make little sense in terms of the cost and benefits they yield. As an example the idea of the group developing a presence at the Chelsea Flower Show akin to that of the Alpine Garden Society has been considered but not thought practical for an organisation the size of the RCM Group. Rupert Eley, Pam Hayward and others do an excellent job in keeping tabs on the membership and tracking down those

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who have neglected to pay up. Uncertainties over the group's status will do little to aid in the retention or recruitment of new members, but I can report some progress in making the group more nationally inclusive. Specifically, plans are now well advanced for a third RHS Rhododendron Competition, augmenting the London Early Show and the Rosemoor Main Competition. This third competition will be slightly later, although not yet the fully late-flowering show once envisaged. It will be held in the excellent facilities of the RHS Harlow Carr Garden just outside Harrogate. This is an RHS show and the society's shows department has been very forward leaning and supportive of the concept, the garden itself is looking forward to the event and we expect the local group to be fully engaged. I would like to thank John Harsant for doing much of the chasing; we expect final details to be confirmed by the end of June this year. I think shows are the best way to get our message out to prospective new members, even if they do not join immediately, as they have made a commitment to visit the show which is a step much further than "cold contacts" at a more general or unrelated event or venue.

The group's finances remain strong and the committee should be congratulated in their efforts to stop the chairman spending the money on harebrained schemes – more seriously our treasurer Alastair Stevenson brings the calm and efficient approach to the job that makes my job easier. Alastair has been working closely with the RHS on an approach to Direct Debit and making the collection of group funds more efficient in the round. However this is another aspect of group activity that may at least be delayed by the further developments in our relationship with the RHS. Even so, I believe that the planning should continue for the implementation of Direct Debit even if this eventually becomes unnecessary if closer union with the RHS is chosen as the way forward.

The 2012 yearbook is again a wonder of editorial variety and production quality; the 3 genera are beautifully illustrated in a series of articles by world leading authorities. This year an historical or retrospective tone with a number of articles looking back at familiar and less familiar plants and individuals was well balanced with items covering the latest developments. Pam Hayward continues to amaze me with the professional quality of the Yearbook and we must all remember that it is not a paid undertaking but it still looks a million dollars.

Pam needs to watch out though as the Bulletin is rapidly becoming a little book in its own way. John Rawling is really making the most of the format and the ability for the membership to write in and get issues aired in one of the group's publications is of great benefit. I hope the members will look to the Bulletin as their preferred way of communicating with the committee as it allows others to see developing issues from a broader perspective. As I stated last year it is essential that the entire membership get behind both of our editors in order that the burden of producing such high quality publications is at least minimised.

The continued financial and all round popularity of the seed list is a thing that we will need to monitor carefully, as dealing with plant material on a commercial or even semi-commercial basis is an area fraught with regulations, national and international laws. I personally believe that the time will come when conducting the seed list in its present form may well not be possible. I know this will disappoint many members but they need to be assured that when and if that time comes the decision will not be taken lightly; however the group must function within the regulations. My personal thanks go to Margaret Miles, Pam and the rest of

those involved in working through this year's seed process.

Although used by only a small percentage of the group one thing that really shines out as a great characteristic of group membership is the spring and autumn tours. This year's spring tour to the Lake Maggiore region has been described to me as the best tour ever and other reports would seem to confirm that it was both horticulturally and socially exceptional with local hospitality a particular highlight. Suffice to say Judy Hallett has done it again and we all thank her with the expectation that next spring in the West Country will be even better!

Graham Mills continues to refine the web-site into a really useful tool for both members and non-members; I still believe we are not making the best use of our website though. Many organisations function almost exclusively through their websites; clearly we are not in that class and neither should we try, at least for several years. Yet I still think we should be trying harder, on the adage you only get out what you put in I think we should all consider how the content of the website can be further increased.

Notwithstanding the success of securing an additional Rhododendron Show the RHS plant competitions remain of concern. With one of the London halls under a different management regime the timing of these events will inevitably become harder to align with the flowering season. Of particular concern is the early Rhododendron Competition and to a lesser extent the early Camellia Competition. Whilst the early Camellia Competition is dominated by weather conditions and has waxed and waned in the number of entries accordingly, the Early Rhododendron Competition is poorly supported on a fairly consistent basis. Indeed, without the support of Exbury Gardens this show would be indeed poor if not empty. I think the time has come to move one or both of these competitions to an area that may secure an increased number of entries; we should expect such a recommendation from the RHS Shows department accordingly.

I would finally like to thank all those who have assisted me in the last 12 months, the Regional Branches, Vice Chairman Philip Evans and our ever willing and efficient committee secretary Pat Bucknell. Pat will shortly be formally leaving her role as Secretary and she will be badly missed.

Andy Simons, Chairman April 2012.

EDITOR'S NOTES

John Rawling

NOTE FROM THE EDITOR

I need your letters, reports from branches, articles, future events etc, to keep the members up to date!
So, please send me your letters and copy for the next issue

BY 8TH October 2012

for the November 2012 Bulletin

Please send to: John Rawling, Hon. Bulletin Editor,
The Spinney, Station Road, Woldingham, Surrey, CR3 7DD.
E-mail: jr.eye@virgin.net or telephone 01883 653341



YOUR URGENT ATTENTION IS REQUIRED

The position of Honorary Secretary

For the Urgent Attention of all Members of the Rhododendron, Camellia and Magnolia Group

Since the AGM on May 30th the Group has been without an elected Hon Secretary. If this cannot be quickly rectified there are extremely serious implications for the Group's well being and ability to function properly.

We now desperately need someone to come forward who has a love of the three genera for which we exist and an interest in playing a role in the affairs of a thriving and successful specialist Group.

Membership of the Group Committee is congenial, interesting and friendly. There are four meetings a year, two in London and two elsewhere. A contribution towards travel expenses is available. Committee members are presently entitled to a Pass to the opening Monday of Chelsea.

The duties of the Hon Secretary were set out in full in the last issue of the Bulletin. For anyone wishing to have a more personal view of these duties, our previous Secretary Pat Bucknell would be very happy to have a chat. Call her on 01503 220215 or email patbucknell@btinternet.com

It is appreciated that anyone considering volunteering might wish to have a preliminary talk with one of the Officers. As our Chairman is often out of the country on professional business it is suggested that for convenience, and in the first instance, he or she might contact one of the following Officers:-

Vice Chairman: Philip Evans
01647 281285 or email philip.d.evans@talk21.com

Bulletin Editor: John Rawling
01883 653341 or email jr.eye@virgin.net

Yearbook Editor: Pam Hayward
01822 852122 or email pam@woodtown.net

This is an emergency situation and we ask every Member of the Group within the UK to give it very serious thought, whether for yourself, or someone you can suggest whom you believe might be interested and approachable.

TOURS

Judith Hallett

Joint RCM and ICS Autumn weekend 2012 to Derbyshire - 8th - 11th October

(Starting at 6.00pm on Monday with a talk, and ending after breakfast on Thursday.)

Programme

- A whole day at Chatsworth with head gardener, Steve Porter
- Visit to Bluebell Arboretum and nursery accompanied by owner, Robert Vernon
- Private visit to Thornbridge Hall, home of Emma Harrison
- Talks by Andy Simons (Camellias) and Maurice Foster (late flowering Hydrangeas)

See the full [Details and Reservation Form](#) - enclosed in this Bulletin. If you have any queries, contact Judy Hallett - Hon. Tours Organiser - Tel. 01981 570401 or judyhallett@gmail.com

All members are very welcome on our tours - you don't need to be an 'expert' and indeed most of us are not!! Cost: £395 to include dinner, bed and breakfast and all garden visits.

SPECIAL EVENTS

'What's new in Magnolias' - a date for your diary

Members of the Rhododendron, Camellia and Magnolia Group have received an invitation to attend a Magnolia weekend at Arboretum Wespelaar in Belgium.

Magnolia Study Weekend - 13th-14th April 2013

"Arboretum Wespelaar in Belgium (founded by Philippe de Spoelberch) will be organizing a Magnolia weekend in April 2013. I would like to invite members of the Belgian Dendrology Society, Magnolia Society International and the RHS RCM Group."

The first day, Saturday 13th April, will be international with talks and guided walks in English. Philippe de Spoelberch, Andrew Bunting and Jim Gardiner have already confirmed their presence.

And on Sunday 14th April, welcome from Jozef Van Meulder and guided visit of Magnolia collection in Arboretum Bokrijk, and a free visit of the Bokrijk Arboretum.

Costs: 60,00 EURO for both days (or 30,00 EURO per day)

More details are available on www.arboretumwespelaar.be and will appear in future Bulletins.

The Rhododendron Red List:

Establishing Priorities and Action
Saturday 20th & Sunday 21st April, 2013

The Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh and the Rhododendron Species Conservation Group are planning to jointly host a two-day Conference with key-note speakers on **Saturday 20th & Sunday 21st April, 2013**, in the Lecture Theatre of the R.B.G.E., to discuss the contents and impact of *The Rhododendron Red List* and will work towards answering the question: Where do we go from here in terms of conservation priorities and actions?

This is advance notice of dates for the diaries of R.C. & M. Group members and a detailed Conference Programme and Registration Form will be available in the early-Autumn, when information will appear in a future issue of the Bulletin.

John M. Hammond

The Gardens of Lake Maggiore

Spring Tour to the gardens of Lake Maggiore - March 2012

One of my nightmares as tours organiser for the group is WEATHER! Setting the dates to ensure seeing plants and flowers in their prime is rather a lottery, but this year we were incredibly fortunate! After the ghastly winter in Italy and Switzerland mentioned in many of the following reports we were thrilled to enjoy warm weather during our tour and to see a profusion of perfect camellia and magnolia flowers. The enjoyment of our tour was greatly enhanced by the superb hospitality afforded by all our garden hosts: at times we were simply overwhelmed by their generosity.

Judy Hallett

Tuesday 20 March / Villa Taranto

After a very early start from Heathrow we were delighted to drop our cases at our hotel, enjoy our first Italian meal and head off for Villa Taranto. Here we were greeted by our delightful English guide, Sylvia. Sylvia was to impress with her botanical knowledge as well as her familiarity with every plant in the garden! This was a private visit: Villa Taranto opened to the public the following day, so we could wander at ease around this amazing collection of thousands of plants from all over the world.

The history of Villa Taranto is extensive: in summary the garden was purchased by Captain Neil McEacharn in 1931 and it is the result of his work that we see as the garden today. The garden is now extremely well maintained by the Italian state, to whom it was donated by the Captain.

As we entered the garden we noted a most interesting 'grass': very green, very short, and weed free – a gardener's dream! Sylvia named it as *Agrostis stolonifera* and explained that it is drought resistant. This is important as the garden is in drought conditions for seven months of the year. We noted that many of the old conifers are quite small and we wondered if this could be attributed to such dry conditions? (In contrast, *Mahonia* 'Charity' towered over us at six metres!)

One of the most notable features of Villa Taranto is the 'Valetta': the irrigation system which pumps water directly from Lake Maggiore into a large holding tank which then feeds every corner of the garden, including many pools, waterfalls, and fountains.

There are many ancient trees in the garden, planted long before Captain McEacharn arrived at the Villa. The oldest is thought to be a *Castanea sativa* planted in 1600. Another *Castanea sativa* is home to a *Rhododendron leucaspis*, growing happily on its 'host'. In 1947 the rare *Emmenopterys henryi* was planted in the garden and patience was rewarded when it flowered in 1971.

Later in the year we would have enjoyed a good display of rhododendrons and azaleas but on our visit we were content to see some excellent magnolias (including a good *M. campbellii* subsp. *mollicomata*) and a host of camellias standing like sentries. The shape was somewhat of a surprise to many of us but as the tour progressed we realized that pruning camellias with shears after flowering allows space for far greater numbers to be grown. Certainly the camellias were extremely floriferous and did not appear to suffer from this seemingly rather extreme treatment! (Everard Daniel is now thinking of giving all his camellias a similar treatment so that he can grow even more cultivars!)

Our early visit allowed us to marvel at the structure of the garden and the impressive shapes of so many of the trees: the old *Davidia involucrata* for example was most impressive even without its showy inflorescence. We marvelled at the tiny buds of *Corylus avellana* 'Contorta' just about to open, and the huge and healthy *Itea ilicifolia* made me realize that Herefordshire is not the place for such trees!

Very soon 30 specimens of *Dicksonia antarctica* will be wheeled out of the greenhouses where they enjoyed the winter and placed in the deep holes we saw prepared as their summer quarters. A laborious task, though perhaps the only certain way to avert disaster from low temperatures.



R. ririei

Photo. Richard Chaplin

This is a fascinating garden, immaculately maintained and all plants labelled. If this was the standard of gardens to be seen during our tour we were in for a treat.

Judy Hallett

Wednesday 21st March / Villa Anelli

We spent Wednesday morning exploring the forest of neatly clipped camellias at the home of Andrea Corneo, who is President of the Italian Camellia Society. The garden, which overlooks Lake Maggiore and runs steeply down from their tall traditional villa, contains an unbelievable collection of camellia varieties of all types. Each is kept to its allotted space by careful pruning, done just after flowering, and generally giving tall, neat, cylindrical columns, so different to the informal way they tend to be grown in the UK. This seems to work best with the *Camellia japonica* varieties. These predominate in this area and this garden, including very ancient ones such as the *C.* 'Vergine di Collebeato' the formal double white growing on their terrace, through to modern varieties such as the latest Nuccios. One area is planted predominantly with formal double white camellias, and it was very interesting to compare them.



C. 'Giovanna Barbara' – with the lady herself!

Photo. Richard Chaplin

The garden is divided by a lovely steep ghyll running down the middle, filled with palms, *Trachycarpus fortunei*, which self-seed everywhere, and with steps leading down and up the other side. This must be a lovely cool shady retreat in the midsummer heat. Up the other side is an interesting group of *C. reticulata* varieties, with the original Kunming variety 'Purple Gown' of special interest. The path then took us back to the terrace for the wonderful hospitality of the Corneo family, and a hedge of Higo varieties to enjoy. Like all our Italian hosts, Andrea and his mother and sister were so welcoming and we were especially grateful to Andrea for fixing up and accompanying us on subsequent visits, acting as translator and arranging a superb lunch in a lovely venue high above the Lake.



C. 'Stalin'

Photo: The Editor

So which other plants stood out? *Camellia* 'Stalin' is a large informal mix of very rich red and white and very variable.

C. reticulata x *japonica* 'Aztec', though a hybrid, has magnificent rich pink-red typical 'retic.' flowers. The Higo *C. 'Azuma Nishiki'* is a classic very pale pink with darker stripes with a magnificent splayed boss of stamens; what the Japanese call umi-jin, meaning apricot-heart, comparing it to the stamens in *Prunus mume*, the Japanese apricot. Perhaps most memorable of all is the truly gargantuan clump of *Phyllostachys sulphurea* f. *viridis*, the largest bamboo we had ever seen, with a height and spread of crown rivalling the mature trees nearby.

Everard Daniel

/ Villa Rusconi Clerici

Our afternoon visit was a short walk from our hotel, to Villa Rusconi-Clerici. The first sight that greeted us was an amazing grotto, built from tufa, in a conservatory on the side of the house. It was now looking tired and neglected, covered with self-sown ferns and mosses but must have been wonderful in its heyday.

Outside was an interesting Orangery consisting of vertical glass doors that could be opened on warm days and a fixed glass roof, the whole being no more than eighteen inches from front to back, filled with various citrus, underplanted with *Convallaria*.

Moving down towards the lake we saw a collection of very large unnamed camellias and then a magnificent *Magnolia grandiflora* thought to have been planted around 1870. It was in excellent condition, probably due to good humidity provided by the lake. We then moved along the shore terrace past an unusual and colourful hedge of *Nandina domestica* – covered in bunches of burnt orange fruit, also an ancient hollow *Sophora japonica* 'Pendula', now home to a newly planted young *Sophora* growing from the base.

The lower ground floor of the villa is now used mainly for weddings and we were shown around these rooms and given cool drinks (peach tea!) and cookies.

Andy Hallett

Thursday 22nd March

'Impressive' is the description of the **Two nurseries** we visited on Thursday March 22nd.

The first, **TECHNOVERDE** produces mainly ericaceous plants, primarily camellias, which are grown from cuttings. They also buy micro-propagated plants of kalmia and rhododendron from Belgium and Poland.



One of the glasshouses.

Photo: Rosemary Legrand

The company director Gianni Morand told us that the nursery started in 1996 with funding from the EU. Now their annual production is 1–2 million rooted cuttings from direct propagation into paper potted plugs made by their own machine. Paper is ideal as not only does it absorb oxygen, but it is degradable. For propagation they use a mix of peat, coir and perlite, rooting is usually encouraged by bottom heat. When they pot on they use a mixture of 40% coarse peat, 40% fine peat and 20% perlite. We noticed that they use Swedish sphagnum peat. In their humidity greenhouse they start their azalea cuttings from mid to end of April.

The nursery supplies both liners and 1 litre plants to the trade who request bushy plants. To achieve this, the nursery put in 3 or 4 rooted cuttings per pot.

Each glasshouse is around 3,000 square metres and accommodates 175,000 cuttings per house, on rolling benches. They do not feed the cuttings but use Osmocote 8-9 months release and an overhead spray of foliar feed for growing on the rooted plants.

No grafting is undertaken on this nursery. They buy grafted plants from Schroder, a German nursery that grows *R. 'Cunningham's White'* for understocks in 16 hectares of fields.

The company has two directors, eight full-time staff, plus extra labour at peak periods and everything is controlled by computer.

At **COMPAGNIA del LARGO**, the director Paolo Zacchera also gave us a most comprehensive tour of his 75 acre nurseries, where he employs 25–30 staff. They grow splendid 2.5 litre camellias, in variety, where they add 20% pumice to the loam and peat mix for porosity. In addition they grow azaleas, 50% of which are containerized and 50% are open grown in the local sandy loam soil, *Photinia*, *Nandina*, *Skimmia*, *Sarcococca*, and 10,000–15,000 rhododendrons, some of the largest of which are used for landscaping in the UK. They also supply David Austin Roses.

It was a memorable sight to see huge plants being grown as topiary specimens, also 12 year old evergreen azalea 'Purple Splendor' trained as a screen.

Noticeable was the severe scorching suffered by much of the open grown stock caused by the extreme conditions they endured in January 2012, with temperatures of minus 13 and 14 degrees. I gather that they anticipate a hard winter about every 30 years. Nevertheless Paulo was confident that with pruning, the huge plants would recover.

It was also an opportunity for many of our group to purchase excellent camellias from the Compagnia del Largo. Most of our members opted for well-grown 3 yr old plants of the unusual deep red *Camellia x williamsii* 'Night Rider' and several extra plants were picked up as gifts for our hosts during the tour. During a very hectic time in the industry's season both of these growers generously afforded us their time and expertise.

Rosemary Legrand

Friday 23rd March / Villa San Remigio

The Villa San Remigio lies next to the Villa Taranto on the hillside of Castagnola at Pallanza. The gardens were created at the end of the 19th century by the newly married Marquis & Marquise Della Valle di Casanova to fulfil a romantic dream of creating a fantastical place combining natural beauty with allegorical gardens reflecting a series of emotions.

These allegorical gardens are in the Italianate style of architectural structure with statues and geometric greenery. When we visited it was apparent that they were in need of substantial attention. A series of terraces rises from the south to the impressive villa and falls away to the north-west. The lowest level is the Garden of Melancholy which is surrounded by camphor trees and tall conifers, has no flowers, is backed by a series of curved porticos, and lies in deep shade. The next level is the Garden of Joy which had originally contained roses and other flowers in colourful beds set among dwarf box hedges and surrounding a statue of Venus in a shell carriage drawn by two horses. Sadly there was no sign of flowers when we visited and the grotto which backed the terrace had been abandoned to nature as had the orangery on a higher terrace which formerly held sub-tropical plants. The remaining three terraces rising to the villa showed little flower except for some mature camellias including the varieties 'Henri Faure' and 'Incarnata'. Much of the stonework on the terraces was in need of repair. To the north-west a double curving stairway flanked by clipped laurel and yew hedges descends to the Garden of Sighs where an imposing rotunda containing statues and mosaics looks down onto the Garden of Memories. Again the principal features are statuary and clipped hedges.

Surrounding these Italianate Gardens is the English Garden which combines sweeping lawns and specimen trees and a wooded area. These areas of the Gardens are in good condition and hold a variety of trees and shrubs originating in Japan, China, Kashmir and North and South America among them *Castanea crenata*, *Pseudolarix amabilis*, *Cupressus cashmeriana*, *Pseudotsuga menziesii* and *Taxodium distichum*.

The tour concluded with a visit to the adjacent Chapel of San Remigio, a splendid example of Romanesque art with recently discovered mediaeval frescoes.

Mike Reddington

Friday March 23rd / Villa Motta, Lake Orta

We arrived at Villa Motta to be welcomed at the gate by the Countess herself. The beautifully situated 0.9 hectare gardens slope down to Lake Orta. In January the garden endured temperatures of -10C for a week and the damage was very evident particularly at the lower levels. A more unusual sign of damage to one of the large rhododendrons was due to a woodpecker.



The Group at the lakeside of the Villa, with a beautiful view across the Lake, and with the Countess Mirella Motta – (Front row - R).

Photo: The Editor

The garden is arranged so that as you walk around you appreciate both the extensive collection of plants and the beautiful views over the lake. There were a number of spectacular plants but my particular favourites were a large and extremely floriferous *Camellia reticulata* 'Valley Knudsen', a *Camellia japonica* 'Oki-no-nami' and best of all a large specimen of an unnamed *Camellia saluenensis* hybrid.



Camellia saluenensis hybrid

Photo: The Editor

After a most enjoyable guided tour the Countess treated us to Prosecco and nibbles on the patio before being presented by the group with *Camellia* 'Night Rider'.

Roger Newton

/ Dr Ghirardi's garden in Besnate

This small garden is unique in that it contains the only complete collection of named Higo camellias in the world. These camellias were originally created by the Samurai and the garden, which was once an orchard, was grubbed out as Dr Ghirardi's interest in Higo camellias and Japanese gardens increased. The January weather was particularly severe in this garden with night time temperatures of -17C and day time temperatures of -4C being recorded for ten days. As a result there was some bud damage.

The garden is very cleverly laid out so that within a restricted space the winding paths lead past the collection of more than 130 different Higo camellias. There are in addition several beautifully cloud pruned conifers, more than 40 different daphnes and a collection of *Acer palmatum* cultivars. Dr Ghirardi has visited Japan ten times since his first visit in 1996. He led us around the garden and showed us his propagating unit where he grows

Higo seedlings and grafts named cultivars onto them. I found their elegant simplicity very appealing, my favourite being the tricoloured 'Mikuni-no-Homare'.

Dr Ghirardi presented the group with 5 signed copies of his book 'Higo Camellias' and treated us to drinks and cakes before being in turn presented with a plant of *Camellia* 'Night Rider'.

Roger Newton



Contrasting *Camellia Higo* blooms.

Photo: The Editor

Saturday 24th March / Morning visit to **Isola di Brissago**

This was the first of our three island visits on the Tour. The island, long coveted by a local woman, was bought by her in 1885 with the help of her husband's money when she became Baroness Antoinette St Leger Fleming. She started a great collection of plants from round the world, especially palms and eucalypts to take advantage of the damp sub-tropical climate which is more like that of Japan than the Mediterranean, the annual rainfall being around 2000mm (80").

But a hard winter occurs every 20–25 years, and they have just had two in succession with devastating effect, especially around the promontory to the south of the island, where many plants from Australia and South Africa were looking dead.



Grevillea juniperina

Photo: The Editor

Among the many interesting plants that had survived the cold was a group of *Taxodium distichum* growing on the shore, with catkins, and "knees" in the sand. There was a lovely low-spreading *Grevillea lanigera* with red flowers from SE Australia, an *Acacia vestita*, a small-leaved scented *Camellia oleifera*, a curious little forest of yellow bamboos, and a fascinating walled garden with a "Roman" bath surrounded by medicinal plants; there was a lovely *Edgeworthia papyrifera* with small white flowers on bare branches, and a splendid *Loropetalum chinense*.

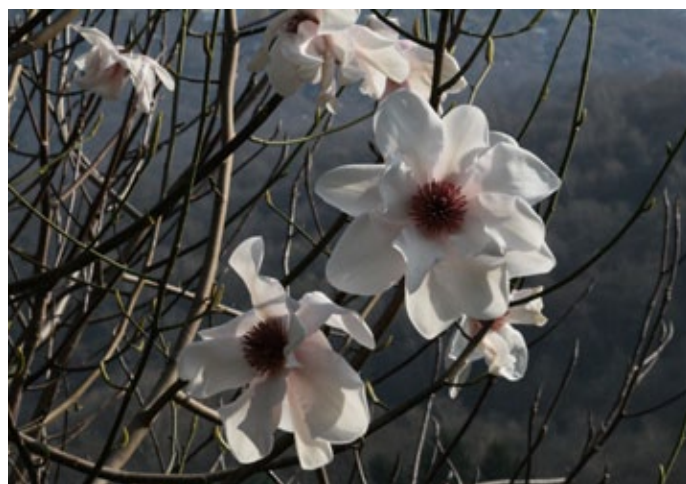
The Baroness had built a large villa, with water having to be brought from the mainland, and she instigated projects like papier mache making and an artists' colony, but she fell on hard times and had to sell the island, dying poor in 1940. In 1949 the nearby villages bought the island for the community and it was opened to the public in 1950. The present large house with new marble staircase is used for parties and weddings and holiday lets and the garden is kept up by enthusiastic local gardeners. The island was an interesting, if a rather sad sight – but it would be a pleasant place to stay and wander round in the peace of the evening.

Rosemary Howell

/ **Eisenhut's nursery & Parco Botanico [di Gamborogno]**

Visiting at the prime time to see many of the garden's 600 magnolias and 950 camellias in full bloom, and on a perfect afternoon, no wonder there was traffic congestion even before we arrived in our minibuses up the zig-zag road to 365m above the top end of the lake, facing northwest across to Ascona and the Alps. However, transport links are easy to this stunning one-stop place to see the remarkable range of richly coloured mother plants, several 50 feet high, and the source of many definitive photos.

We enjoyed a very fine welcome and were privileged and fortunate to have both Otto and Reto, father and son, as joint guides on a tour of the working nursery and of the adjacent garden donated by Otto to the locality in 2000. Neither had been able to go round it for some time and Reto still faced 2 months work in 3 weeks – delayed by February's low temperatures of –11C and a fortnight of –6C preceded by a very warm January. The microclimate is still better than even Vico Morcote or lakeside towns, owing to its hillside setting, protected from winter sun but ripening well in summer. The very fertile dark soil is mainly based on acidic gneiss and a small area of clay. Two streams meet below the nursery and add to the natural feel. Conifers intersperse the garden, having been part of Otto's original trade from 1955 pre-dating Sir Peter Smithers introducing him to magnolias, and he is especially proud of his high-altitude selection of *Taiwania cryptomerioides*.



Magnolia 'Burncoose Tennis Court'

Otto's current favourite, *Magnolia campbellii* 'Darjeeling', proved to be the group's general consensus too. Reto liked its seedling *M.* 'Betty Jessel', and both opted for *M. pseudokobus* 'Kubushi-modoki' and *M.* 'Elizabeth' or, in the reflection of their special evening light, *M. denudata* 'Gere'. For Reto, *M.* 'Felix Jury' is one of the best of many new varieties. He likes Jurys' hybrids generally, and as a commercial grower supporting a list of 750 magnolia varieties alone, he also appreciates their discernment in registering only genuinely different new hybrids. He values independent selective assessment on the flood of new

crosses, particularly on which local climatic conditions make them perform well. Some of his others include *M.* 'Vairano', named after the hamlet around the nursery, *M.* 'Daybreak', *M. x gotoburgensis*, *M.* 'Aurora' and *M.* 'Leda' which do well in many places, and their *M. sieboldii* 'Michiko Renge' for summer.

The *M.* 'Princess Margaret' that converted Otto to magnolias was impressive. So was *M.* 'Caerhays Belle' at the entrance; its fine seedling, formerly CB#5, is now named *M.* 'Cedullo' after an alpine meadow further up the mountain. A "pale year" was good for the whites. *M.* 'Wildcat' was interesting and the 'Greshams' were in great shape generally, as were *M.* 'Sir Harold Hillier' and the delicate *M. salicifolia* 'Van Veen', *M. zenii*, and *M.* 'Mag's Pirouette'. However, colours on e.g. *M.* 'Star Wars' 'Leonard Messel', 'Eric Savill' or *M. dawsoniana* 'Chyverton' were at least as strong as those good performers back home. *M. campbellii* 'Wakehurst' was paler, but going over, while *M.* 'Vulcan' in full flight was testimony to just how it doesn't look in the UK! Also, strongly coloured, *M. sargentiana* var. *robusta* 'Blood Moon', *M. x veitchii* 'Rubra' and *M.* 'Ruth' and *M.* 'Ian's Red', look spectacular here. Many more of the large Caerhays' and other UK contingent showed up well: *M. sprengeri* 'Copeland Court', 'Lanhydrock', 'Burncoose' and 'Burncoose Purple' stood out, though 'Diva' was past its best. Sadly the local *M. dawsoniana* 'Villa Taranto' had an off year but *M. sargentiana* 'Multipetal', 'Broadleas', *M.* Philip Tregunna and *M.* 'Mark Jury' compensated.

Bringing a printout of their list was helpful, and I spotted lots of coveted *M. campbellii* subsp. *mollicomata* 'Werrington', looking good in the nursery too, as 'No.80', along with many other grafts all growing on very strongly for this autumn, when the availability lists are updated.



Reto Eisenhut demonstrates his grafting techniques, whilst Ivor Stokes strains to observe it more closely in the confined space!

Photo: Rosemary Legrand



Grafted Magnolias from early 2012

Photo: The Editor

Reto demonstrated to us his skill at grafting. That is normally done in January and February, but "summer" budding or grafting is deferred to September or October because growth goes on late. Rootstocks used are *M. denudata* for *M. campbellii* types or for milder places, and *M. kobus* for the north. Investment in good analysis equipment ensures high quality potting media and Reto proudly showed us the healthy root growth. Switzerland's good testing facilities enable them to export widely, including to the US for which many former *Manglietia* species are coming on. Larger plants are grown now too.

There were so many other very nice things!....Acers, Rhododendrons, Azaleas, Cornus, Paeony and much else will gradually take over through spring into summer, citrus in autumn and back again to the 950 camellias.

But after this visit, many of us said quietly "I must plant more Magnolias".

Alan Young

Sunday, March 25 / Sir Peter Smithers Garden

Our group's visit to the late Sir Peter Smithers Garden was a highlight of the trip for me. My previous visit (several years ago) had occurred on a cold and rainy day. On this bright morning we enjoyed a beautiful, sunny day with the Magnolias and Camellias at peak bloom. It looked just like many of the pictures I have seen of this famous garden in books and magazine articles (and just like the Tour's brochure), with *Magnolia campbellii* in full bloom against a storybook blue Swiss sky.

The garden is set down a steep hillside in a series of narrow terraces. Wandering along each path, down steps to the next level, and across the bridge to a wilder ravine area brought new surprises at each turn. The under plantings of Camellias beneath towering Asiatic Magnolias were quite remarkable. Cyclamen, hellebores and violas sparkled in the shadows below them.



Underplanting of Erythroniums ('Pagoda?') (below the magnificent Camellias and Magnolias).

Photo: The Editor

Although the tree peonies were not yet in bloom, there was a good selection of these including 'Dojean', named after Sir Peter's wife.

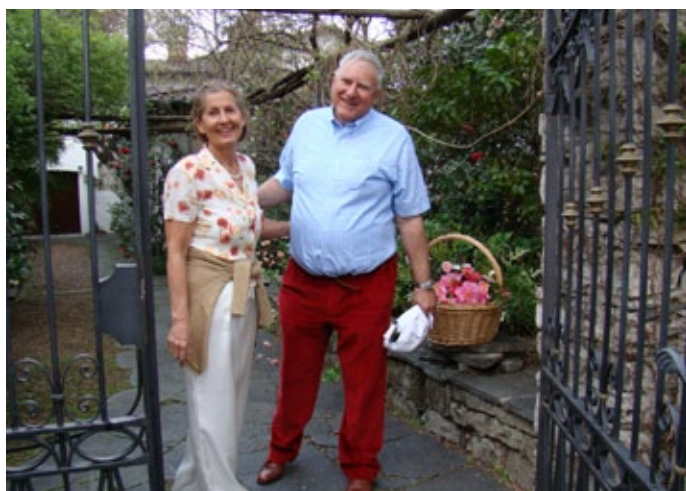
We were guests of the garden's new owners, Sheila and Adolf Winter. We were also welcomed with a delightful introductory talk by Sir Peter's daughter, Amelia Smithers, about the garden and her father. She brought along two volumes of the plant catalogue list that Sir Peter had maintained continuously since his school days at Harrow. Each plant purchase and donation was carefully listed in his neat script. Amelia noted that one of the books was originally given to her by her father, but when he saw she wasn't using it he appropriated it for his own extensive record keeping.

Sheila Winter explained that she and her husband originally decided to purchase the property because it had some flat lawns suitable for their two elderly dogs to enjoy. Apparently this is a very difficult feature to find in that part of Switzerland! Prior to moving in, they were given a copy of Sir Peter's book, *Adventures of a Gardener*, by his stepson. That is when the Winters realized they were not only buying a dog-friendly home, but also a very important garden. Since that time they have proceeded carefully to ensure that the garden's features are maintained and enhanced. They are in the process of trying to identify specific varieties and cultivar names where the labels have disappeared or become hard to read. They have welcomed visitors to the garden, and it is clear that they cherish the garden and willingly take responsibility for its care. It is good to know that this renowned garden is in the hands of capable and appreciative new owners.

Beth Edward

/ Visit to the garden of Dr Rolf Stockmann

We knew when we arrived at the gate to Dr. Rolf Stockman's garden and saw a large wicker basket filled with perfect camellia blooms put out to welcome us that we were in for a treat – as indeed we were. Rolf is the Director of the Swiss International Camellia Society and has a garden of half a hectare on a steep south-east facing hillside outside Montagnola. The hillside is volcanic rock, and the soil is acid and rich in iron. It was formerly a vineyard, but the previous owners planted conifers, and a few camellias. When Rolf and Esther Stockman bought the property 30 years ago, he became fascinated by the camellias growing there, and has since travelled all over the world collecting them. The garden now boasts over 300 different varieties, as well as 50 magnolias, many rhododendrons and azaleas, and a fine collection of conifers.



A very warm welcome from Dr Stockmann and his wife.

Photo: Rosemary Legrand

Planted below the terrace by the house, a *Magnolia* 'Star Wars' was making an impressive show, we were nearly at eye-level with its huge blooms, while in flower around the lawn were the camellias 'Nuccio's Carousel', 'White Purity', 'Kumagai', bright red with contrasting yellow stamens, and 'Dahlongea' just coming out, showing its deep cream, nearly yellow buds. A large number of sasanquas, (flowering from October to February), plus roses, irises, hellebores and tree peonies ensure that the garden has year round interest. Even the vegetable garden has been abandoned in favour of more camellias and here some chance seedlings are allowed to grow and flower. Luckily the garden had not suffered as much damage in the cold of last winter as other gardens we had visited, although the temperature reached -12C. Here the camellias are allowed to grow naturally, and are not pruned into cones in the Italian style. Among the wealth of magnificent



Magnolia 'Star Wars'

camellias lining the narrow paths along the hillside was a fine collection of Nuccios, which Rolf confessed were his favourites. Among them, 'Silver Triumph', an outstanding semi-double, 'Moonlight Bay', with huge pale orchid-pink flowers, 'Nuccio's Gem', 'Nuccio's Cameo', 'Royal Velvet', a dark ruby red semi double, and near the gate, the lovely velvety coral red 'Guilio Nuccio'. The antique camellias of Lago Maggiore were represented by 'Glory of Verbania' and other older varieties in this comprehensive collection included 'Donckelaeri' and 'Chandleri Elegans'.

A fine blue Atlantic Cedar had been used to good effect to show off the magnificent white-flowered Gresham magnolia hybrid 'Tina Durio' with the flame-red camellia 'Terrell Weaver' in the foreground. Further on, *Magnolia* 'Athene' was in flower, with the pure white blooms of *M.* 'Sweet Sixteen' beside it, and the dark red semi-double *Camellia* 'Midnight'. Rolf pointed out the Japanese cultivar 'Oki-no-nami', or 'the gathering storm', a striking semi-double, white with brilliant orange red stripes and slashes. A spectacular plant, 5m high, of 'Jean Purcel' with huge leaves, and peony-form flowers of soft mauve pink had us groping for our cameras, while next to it was 'Eleanor Martin', cerise red, blotched with white, large golden stamens, and the handsome 'Paul Jones Supreme', creamy white striped with carmine. The semi-double *Camellia japonica* 'White Nun', with enormous flowers, 5" across, contrasted admirably with its more delicate neighbours, 'Cornish Spring' and the charming little 'Fragrant Pink'. A recent addition to this ever expanding collection was 'San Dimas' a gorgeous dark red, with nearly black buds, very dark foliage, and yellow anthers.

Returning to the terrace, we wished we had time for another tour round this gem of a garden, but fortified by glasses of Prosecco and a wonderful Black Forest Gateau, we said goodbye to our kind hosts, and thanked them with a present of *Camellia* 'Night Rider'.

Miranda Gunn

Monday 26 March

The last day of the tour arrived and what a splendid trip it had been: the timing could hardly have been better with everything (well almost everything) in bloom, and we had been so lucky with the weather and the sun was still shining for the last phase.

This morning we drove back down the narrow winding lakeside road, across the border back into Italy, past Verbania and so to Stresa where we boarded our water taxi to take us out to Isola Madre. Like so much in the area this was owned by the Borromeo family who made their fortune in years gone by taxing both locals and travellers alike. They have owned the Island which was previously home to a monastery since the 1500s. Nowadays they are more philanthropic, and the sixteenth century palace has been open to the public since 1978.

Isola Madre like the other islands we visited also has its own micro-climate for which the deep waters of the lake are to be thanked, though this winter they had experienced -9C on three consecutive days, with cold North winds from the Alps. However the banana plants had survived. The 8 hectare "cool subtropical" island has a grand collection of plants from around the world, but here with more thought to garden design of a more naturalised style than most of the other gardens we visited. We were guided by Gianfranco Guistina, Curator and Head Gardener, who in times past had lived on the island but now commuted from Stresa. Having been on the Islands so long he had a wealth of knowledge not only of the plants themselves but also the history of the gardens. Our visit was made even more enjoyable by having the services of an excellent interpreter, originally from England, and with a genuine enthusiasm for the islands and for gardening.

We were treated to the usual feast of camellias, some stunning magnolias, and even a few rhododendrons in flower together with a most interesting collection of trees.

Of the magnolias, two fairly recent plantings were especially worthy of note: *Magnolia* 'Daybreak' and *M.* 'David Clulow'. Amongst the trees *Paulownia tomentosa* were everywhere; there was an interesting *Quercus alnifolia*, the Golden oak of Cyprus; and an unusual *Sophora japonica* 'Pendula' which without foliage looked rather more 'Contorta' than 'Pendula'.



The gigantic resurrected (but truncated) *Cupressus cashmeriana* in front of the Palace, with peacocks strutting below. Photo:Richard Chaplin

But by far the most interesting tree was the great *Cupressus cashmeriana* grown from seed brought back from the Himalayas for the Borromeos by William Pentland in 1862, and claimed to be the earliest to be planted in Europe. This tree had attained a truly majestic form and size when on the night of 28th June 2006 it was blown over by a tornado which swept across the island. A huge effort was then mobilised to resurrect the tree using cranes flown in by helicopter, and steel cables to guy it in position, which are still much in evidence today. From photos on display the tree

is probably around half its size before the tornado, but still quite a specimen with the peacocks strutting around beneath it.

Richard Chaplin

Isola Bella

We were greeted on Isola Bella by Gianfranco Guistina, curator and head gardener on both Isola Madre and Isola Bella, intimately involved with these gardens for the past thirty five years! We were also fortunate in the excellent interpreter and very knowledgeable guide who accompanied him.

Isola Bella was originally a base rock inhabited by a few fishermen and artisans known as 'Isella'. During the second half of the fifteenth century and in the 1500s, the powerful Borromeo family acquired vast tracts of land on the shores of Lake Maggiore and also what became known as the Borromeo Islands.

It was in the 1630s that Charles Borromeo decided to build a villa surrounded by gardens on 'Isella' which he intended to dedicate to his wife Isabella d'Adda. He called it 'Isola Isabella', a designation of which still remains in the contracted form of Isola Bella.

On his death, in 1652, the project was far from being concluded and it was Charles' third son, Vitaliano VI, a dynamic and cultured man who carried it almost to completion. Almost.....indeed this amazing work of art in many ways continues to evolve to this day.

The villa, a palace, a showpiece of the most extravagant baroque style, a model of self-celebration and the gardens were conceived from the beginning as a single, creative effort: the islands being an imaginary pleasure ship in placid repose on the blue expanse of the lake.

The main part of the gardens consists of superimposed terraces in the form of a truncated pyramid, as found in the hanging gardens of Babylon. The large top terrace is 300 metres above sea level. The Teatro Massimo is situated just below it, a sumptuous, grandiose backdrop for performances which were particularly dear to the Borromeos. Initially, the planting of the terraces was of fruit and vegetables until the beginning of the 18th century when decorative plants began to arrive. All this embellished by pools and fountains.

Today we admire a variety of fine mature trees and shrubs such as conifers, camphors, myrtle, magnolias, camellias, azaleas, rhododendrons, *Buxus* etc. We were particularly taken with a collection of 'agrumi' in one area, amongst others 'Buddha's hand' and *Citrus medica*.

Along our walk through the gardens we encountered peacocks, all of them white, symbols of nobility and immortality. Time took a hand in modifying these amazing gardens, with maturity increasing their natural beauty and vitality. Their maintenance is a constant challenge taking into account all that is growing on so little soil.

Isola Bella is like a jewel box, beautiful, delicate..... bellissima!

Rose-Marie Punch

MAGNOLIAS AT HODNET HALL

Hodnet Hall is a 2,500 acre estate in Shropshire and at its centre is a 70 acre garden begun in the early 20th Century. The garden has been the vision of two men, Brigadier Heber-Percy its creator, and the present owner Mr A.E.H. Heber-Percy, who inherited the estate in the 1960s.

The planting in the garden is heavily reliant on Rhododendrons, Camellias, and other calcifuges as well as Acers and forest trees. The collection of Magnolias was begun in the 1950s the main body of which is sited on the periphery of the garden. Prior to the construction of the current hall Hodnet Manor was a half-timbered cloistered building bordered on its eastern side by four flights of sandstone steps. These terraces now hold the heart of the Magnolia collection which has become known as the 'Magnolia walk'.

Most of the Magnolias are precocious, flowering in March or April. The season begins with a reliable and impressive flowering of *Magnolia sargentiana* var. *robusta* which lights up one of our woodland gardens. Prominent amongst those early to flower on the Magnolia walk is *M. 'Athene'*. Not only is this Magnolia notable for the flower size but also its knockout scent. Our tree is only about twelve to fifteen feet tall but blooms generously and spectacularly. I even have photographs of the blooms dusted with snow against a clear blue sky!

Magnolia x proctoriana is an altogether different kettle of fish. Although we grow both parents *M. salicifolia* and *M. stellata* (the *M. stellata* as shrubs in mixed plantings and the *M. salicifolia* as an isolated specimen) the former has not reached maturity whilst *M. x proctoriana* is a mature specimen. Loosely pyramidal in outline it is one of the best early whites that we grow.

*Magnolia 'Athene'*

Photo. The Author

Elsewhere in the garden, near the house on top of a south facing bank, *M. denudata* has made a handsome small multi-branched tree of approximately 15 feet. Its exposed southerly position helps bring it out early although the blooms can be lost against a clear blue spring sky. Although planted in an open sunny site with sharp drainage the planting at the base helps shade the roots from direct sunlight and keeps the soil from drying out.

We grow lots of old favourites at Hodnet, Magnolias that will be known to every enthusiast. *Magnolia 'Heaven Scent'* has made a substantial multi-branched tree and is an excellent partner to *M. 'Athene'* on the lower terrace. However the plant has spawned numerous watery growths which will have to be tackled before

they spoil the shape of the tree. *M. 'Woodsman'* and *'Daybreak'* and *M. liliiflora 'Nigra'* are always reliable and no collection could fail to offer these.

*Magnolia obovata*

Photo: The author

Soulangeanas are very much in evidence including *'Coates'*, *'Alba Superba'*, *'Pickard's Coral'*, *'Brozzonii'* and *'Rustica Rubra'*. These look impressive lining the gravel paths and stairways on the Magnolia Walk.

Elsewhere in the garden we took advantage of a large area which opened up when a substantial Ash tree had to be felled. This area, a shaded bank, was replanted with Magnolias arranged in groups of three including *M. 'Olivia'*, *M. 'Donna'* and single specimens including *M. macrophylla*. Inevitably as these become established questions will arise as to whether planting in groups seems incongruous with the deciduous woodland around it. We shall just have to wait and see. *M. macrophylla* has made a good companion to Rhododendrons and 'flowering' *Cornus* and its foliage is appreciated as a contrast throughout the year.

It is always sad to lose a *M. campbellii* as we did following the 2010/2011 winter when a handsome tree succumbed to Honey Fungus. Yet each loss creates an opportunity and after suitable precautions were taken, re-planting was deemed possible. *M. 'Pegasus'* and *M. 'Beaujon'* are growing happily along with *M. 'Daphne'*, one of the few yellow Magnolias we grow.

In my humble opinion the best magnolia in our collection is *M. obovata*. We have tree specimens at different ages. One has passed its peak and beginning to decline, suffering from crown dieback which has become progressive and I suspect, terminal. Of the other two, one is in the prime of life and floods the area around it with scent. The last is a young small tree but showing promise.

I hope that this article has given some small introduction to the garden. We continue to plant new magnolias and try to grow our plants well. Whilst our collection is not specialist I hope it is worth a visit.

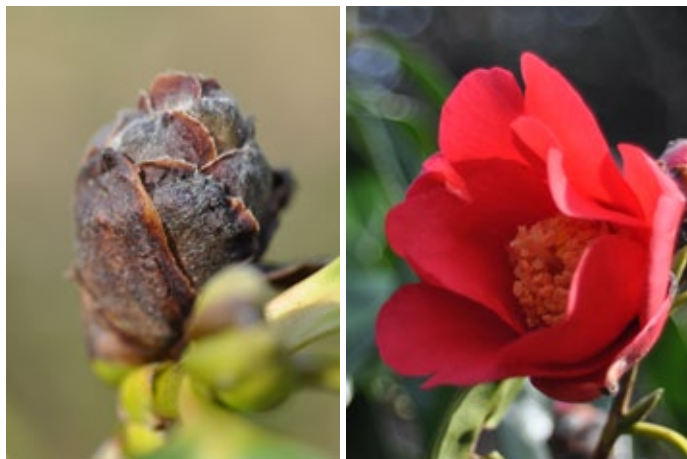
Ross Underwood, Hodnet Hall Gardens

A BUDDING PROBLEM

I have a very handsome seedling of *Camellia chekiangoleosa* and for a couple of years, as one does, I had been impatiently inspecting it for the first flower buds. I was delighted when last year, 2011, I spotted five burgeoning buds. We were off at last. Not long to wait to see the flower. Had I got a really good red form?

On closer inspection, the buds were dead. The outer scales were brown and shrivelled, the edges crisply reflexed by a low of -9°C and a succession of -3°C to -5°C 's in one of the toughest winter spells we had experienced. What a disappointment, as with a heavy heart I picked them off.

Later, in a conversation with Tom Hudson, I mentioned that it was such a pity that *C. chekiangoleosa* had turned out to be bud tender as I had seen images of it and it looked quite special as one of the most intensely red flowered species. I described the buds and told him I had picked them off. I'm pretty sure he didn't laugh, but he pointed out that my description fitted a perfectly healthy, fat, expectant *C. chekiangoleosa* flower bud. That's what they looked like - and I had just carefully destroyed the first crop. I went to bed early.



'The buds'
Camellia chekiangoleosa

'The flowers'
Photos: Maurice Foster

This year I was rewarded with 12 flower buds, intact after a further testing spell of winter. As the weather warmed, they began to swell and reveal a nice red point at the tip of the rough brown casing. And what a flower when they finally emerged from their dark chrysalis. A glorious clear and vivid red, up to 4 inches across, cupping a bold bunch of golden stamens, which did not fade, but kept their colour. And set off by elegant glossy foliage, with a nice acuminate tip to the leaf. Seeing these first flowers was one of the great moments of spring for me. Promise completely fulfilled.

In the 'Collected species' it states, for me unwittingly ironic, 'In preliminary trials... it has proven to be resistant... to winter cold' It goes on to note the 'striking' flower colour - 'its flower is larger and is a stronger, clearer red than *C. japonica*.' Early attempts to hybridise it with *C. japonica* has produced hybrids with 'excellent red coloration'. It goes on - 'It develops into a handsome small tree that because of its hardiness and adaptability offers great potential for landscape usage.'

From my very limited experience of this species outlined above, I can warmly endorse this view of *C. chekiangoleosa*. It appears to exhibit all the best qualities of the most wonderful evergreen flowering shrub for UK conditions, in spite of its flower buds.

Maurice Foster

Preservation of rhododendrons

Conservation of Rhododendron Species. John M. Hammond

Brian Humphrey's letter on rhododendron conservation in the Members Notes column of Bulletin 108, March 2012, covered a range of aspects related to propagation by grafting, but at the outset of his notes he made reference to what he perceived was a lack of information concerning 'the strategy and results of the R.S.C.G.' [Rhododendron Species Conservation Group]. As the R.C. M. Group Committee are aware, the R.S.C.G. is very much alive, active, and there is an ongoing liaison operating between the two organisations with the intention of their working together for mutual benefit in some areas of conservation.

The R.S.C.G. is now three years into its programme of surveying gardens, which encompasses detailed plant identification work, plant labelling and data recording for subsequent downloading onto the Group's database at the R.B.G., Edinburgh. As a separate exercise the Group has identified around 100 significant rhododendron gardens in Scotland and these are currently being assessed, on a preliminary basis in terms of the collections they hold, prior to be considered for a full survey at a future date. The first garden visited in April of this year was a large species garden on the shores of Loch Fyne, in Argyll, and a representative of the R.C. & M. Group attended the two-day exercise to monitor and record the methodology used in the survey. Around 280 plants were identified, recorded and labelled in difficult weather conditions, a further 80 plants remain to be surveyed at a future date.

In May the Group completed a complicated four-day exercise to survey a major rhododendron collection at Balbirnie Park in Fife, which was originally the home of a branch of the Balfour Family. This survey has been carried out over a two year period at the request of Fife District Council to enable the plantings, which range over many segregated areas in the public park, to be permanently labelled for the benefit of the Local Community and visitors to the extensive grounds. A team of garden staff have been working in liaison with the survey team and have carried out a major exercise to remove a large number of saplings and trees, clear a huge amount of *R. ponticum* and a vast quantity of undergrowth. Interestingly, the exercise has been monitored by members of the Local Community who have taken an interest in the survey, have noted the robust labelling methodology and have stopped by to discuss the extent of the work. Fife District Council have produced a large-scale set of plans of the rhododendron collection and intend to produce a brochure to explain the history of Balbirnie Park and its rhododendrons, which includes many species raised from seed brought back by the early plant hunters. This is a 'win-win' project for all concerned.

Whilst further surveys are gradually being taken forward, such as that in Larachmhor Garden near Arisaig, others are actively being planned in other parts of Scotland; however, it should not be assumed that the activities and interests of the R.S.C.G. are confined to gardens 'North of the Border'. Earlier this year the Group responded to a request for assistance from Blickling Hall, in Norfolk, but this was dealt with on an 'arms length' basis with the aim of encouraging the garden staff to continue their interest in the rhododendron collection at the garden. It goes without saying that the Group does not have the resources to carry out

surveys in gardens in Central and Southern England, or in Wales and Ireland; nevertheless, it is currently working with the aim of increasing its survey teams and may well gather data from gardens in Northern England at a future date.

On the Gargunock Estate, near Stirling, the R.S.C.G. have established a propagation and growing-on facility in the Walled Garden, and last Autumn held a full-day propagation workshop as a means of enhancing the skill-base of its active members. In addition, the Group have recently agreed arrangements with the Forestry Commission Scotland for the use of three areas of Glenbranter Glen, near Benmore in Argyll, to establish a rhododendron collection.

From a wider perspective the R.S.C.G. is taking forward initiatives related to the establishing of priorities in terms of rhododendron conservation. Next Spring the R.B.G.E. and the R.S.C.G. are planning to jointly host a key-note two-day conference on Saturday 20th/Sunday 21st April in Edinburgh to address issues arising from the relatively recently published *The Red List of Rhododendrons*, with a view to discussing the establishment of priorities and aims for conservation, both in the wild and in cultivation. Further details of the Conference will be available in the Autumn. I would note that if information is being sought on the activities of the R.S.C.G., its publications and future events, then it would be prudent to get in touch directly with the Group for details at matthew.heasman@virgin.net. Now to Brian Humphrey's notes on grafting.

Early on an April morning, around twelve years ago, I received a telephone call from a friend who had an interesting and well maintained garden on the south of the Clyde Estuary, which contained a large collection of old hybrids he had assembled over many years, including a selection of rare cultivars that were his pride and joy. Before I could say more than, 'Hello', I was bluntly asked, 'Do you want any cutting material? I have plenty available!' His voice sounded very annoyed and vexed. So, given there would not have been any viable new growth so early in the season, I quietly asked for an explanation. Late the previous evening a major storm system had come in from the North West and, having gathered pace across the wide expanses of the Clyde Estuary, it struck the Renfrewshire Coast with hurricane force; indeed, there is a history of damage from major storms in the Greenock and Paisley areas. All the grafted cultivars had snapped-off at the graft and had blown around the garden for the duration of the storm, whilst a number of hybrids on their own roots had been toppled over. It was very sad story and he was devastated at the loss of so many mature plants. Our conversation finished with the rejoinder that, 'I have no further interest in Rhododendrons and I shall not be renewing my membership'. And, true to his word, rhododendrons were a taboo subject throughout the rest of his life.

The grafted plants had been acquired from many sources, including nurseries and well known gardens throughout Britain, so this appeared to suggest there was no particular common cause for the failure of the grafts involved. With any doubt, this was an extreme case of graft union failure, nevertheless, over the years I have been made aware of many losses of individual mature plants due to the graft snapping. In the past three years Britain has suffered an increasing number of severe storms, and during this last Autumn and Winter alone there have been three storms

of hurricane intensity along the West Coast of Scotland and Northern England, which have resulted in significant damage to both specimen trees and ornamentals in many public and private gardens, including locations well inland from the coast. In my view, it is important to consider placing grafted plants with larger leaves in a position where they are less likely to present a 'sail' to the wind and thus hopefully avoid being badly bent over in a storm.

In regard to propagating small batches of plants for conservation purposes, for which longevity of life is a prerequisite, I would be concerned if grafting was used as a propagation method for plants that can be readily raised on their own roots, either by cuttings, or by layering, or by air-layering. These latter two 'old-fashioned' methods present a viable, non-commercial, way of raising many plants that are difficult to root and, whilst in they take three years on average to develop a root system, in my experience the plants quickly begin to catch-up in growth in years 4-. But from my perspective, what really matters is that plants raised from the layering methodology tend to be hardier in a damp, cold Northern England climate than those raised from cuttings under glass and polytunnels. Quality, not quantity, matters in terms of conservation work.

Whilst I am currently raising a batch of *R.*'Cunningham's White' for use as grafting rootstocks, many years ago I was recommended by friends in Oregon to try *R.*'County of York' (syn. 'Catalode') as a rootstock. This old *R.*'Catawbiense Album' x *Loderi* Group 'King George' cross, with its long shiny leaves, vigorous open growth, and sun and wind tolerance, is said to have performed well for grafting a large range of species and hybrids in the Pacific Northwest, and in more recent years has been used by the Rhododendron Species Foundation & Botanic Garden. I am currently growing-on a couple of plants of this hybrid to use for cuttings to raise a batch of trial rootstocks, and perhaps other members with an interest in grafting may wish to do likewise.

Preservation of Species. *John Harsant*

I much enjoyed Brian Humphrey's letter and I am very pleased that the subject has been broadened by him in this way. I take three of the points he raises.

Circumstances where micropropagation is applicable

Bodnant Garden has a unique collection of the hybrids raised by the late Lord Aberconway. Although many have been lost to cultivation, about half, well over a 100 remain, and for which every effort is being made to preserve them. These are aging plants, many not in good health, for which reason alone, are difficult to root and others for which rooting of cuttings in the past has proved a failure. Apart from this there is the threat that DEFRA will condemn a plant, perhaps the only known remaining plant of that cultivar, thus demanding its immediate destruction. In these circumstances rooting even if it is successful would be of diseased tissue, leaving micropropagation the only choice.

Distribution of Plants raised by micropropagation

I am concerned to see that the best use is made of the plants raised and currently a partial success has been achieved although more is to be done. In the case of the Bodnant hybrids plants surplus to the needs of the garden and the Group, which is only able to distribute a small number to the members and anyway does not wish to enter or to compete with the commercial

distributors, will be distributed by the Bodnant Garden Nursery adjacent to but apart from the garden. Only 10 of these hybrids were financed by the Group which has no direct interest in any of the others.

There are many other gardens using micropropagation and for which there must be a multitude of surplus plants which ought to be used but for which I am not aware of any arrangements having been made. All that is needed for those gardens to agree to the surplus plants being weaned by a commercial nursery and the rest will follow; this is an area in which I seek help from all.

Propagation techniques

Brian says "Procedures for propagation by cuttings has developed greatly in recent years" and I am sure this is so. I am equally sure that the knowledge of these procedures is not shared by all and I would welcome a wider debate and dissemination. While here is not the place to discuss how this may be achieved I would be glad to take it further later (not too much later I hope).

To conclude it is great to have the involvement of one with such experience as Brian.

LETTERS

Dear Editor

One of the highlights of my gardening year is to receive my copy of the Group's Yearbook - a publication that, over the forty plus years that I've been taking it, has continued to grow in quality until, today, it has reached the very high standard that any commendable publication should. What caught my eye among this year's many good and informative contributions was a simple but charming photograph of *Rhododendron* 'Soldier Sam', a truss of which was reported as being shown by Trewithen at Rosemoor last year.

The caption referred to it as an 'uncommon gem' and it is true that, in my experience, it is not a much seen plant, although I was privileged to be given two plants of 'Soldier Sam' by Mr. Gene Reuthe in the early part of this century. At the time, I understood that the plant was produced by his father, W.S. Reuthe, and was to be named 'Souvenir of W.S.Reuthe'. I guess that this was during the 1920s when there were more 'Souvenirs' about than you could shake a rhododendron spray at. Anyhow, the name was re-considered and the plant was finally called 'Soldier Sam' as a tribute to its raiser who was a veteran of World War 1.

In 2003 I entered it in The Main Rhododendron Competition at Vincent Square in which it was awarded 2nd prize in The Loder Cup Class for the best single hybrid truss. On the same day the Society also awarded it a P.C. My feeling is that it would have achieved a higher award had I been able to show more of the plant. But awards aside, 'Soldier Sam' is nice garden plant to grow and enjoy.

Brian Wright

Dear Editor,

Attached are some reflections from Margaret (Charlton) triggered by Kevin Hughes mention of Vic Paulowski. (in Bulletin 108).

Charles Sale (604-929-5706) buckethill@gmail.com

Vic Paulowski

In his article in the March 2012 Bulletin, *Magnolias to Grow and Love*, Kevin Hughes mentioned that John Gallagher received some 30 years ago *Magnolia sieboldii* ssp. *sinensis* 'Grandiflora' from his late friend, Vic Paulowski "the renowned propagator".

This would have been about the same time that I was visiting in the vicinity of Dartmoor, Devon in early April.

I met Vic by accident, I think when asking directions. We started talking and I learned that he had retired from a large nursery (Exbury? my memory fails me). Vic told me that because he couldn't stop working he rented a walled garden, part of a large estate. As we chatted, I was fascinated by his surroundings and actions. In a long shed he sat on an aluminium lounge chair, a pot-bellied stove keeping him and his dog warm, while from two baskets beside him he grafted with great rapidity. One basket held the under stock sticks and the other scion material. And I soon learned how very successful he was. I was taken to a long frame filled with established grafted cuttings. The frame lights were covered with a heavy fibrous material to retain the heat. In my travels to nurseries in the area I had seen many small choice plants, including fine Daphnes. Now I knew where they originated.

I have never forgotten my chance encounter with this extraordinary propagator in his simple quarters. Perhaps others could tell us more about him?

Margaret Charlton, Vancouver, Canada

**Do members have other memories of Vic Paulowski?
The Editor would be pleased to publish them.**

SHOWS

Due to pressures on the busy lives of your show reporters (including business, and gardening), we have not been able this year to provide the detailed reporting and results of the main shows held during the spring this year. Results have been printed in recent years either in the Year Book or in the Bulletin - often in considerable detail, which is very time consuming and adds to the costs of production of the publication.

However, we intend to continue to provide overall reports of the main shows, and possibly with detailed results only being available by special request.

I wish to express our appreciation of the very strong support given by many of the large gardens to both the National Shows and to the more local Branch Shows.

John Rawling, Honorary Bulletin Editor.

Main Camellia Competition 10th - 11th April 2012

The number of entries were not large - with just 6 entrants, although one of these had been sorely restricted to only one vase due to cancelled national rail transport links.

Nevertheless, the standards were good, and in spite of the recent weather, a large proportion had been grown outside, rather than under glass.

An excellent contest for the Class 10, 'Any 12 cultivars' and the award of 'The Leonardslee Bowl' was won by a 'short head' with an excellent showing by Andrew Simons with C. 'Takanini'; C. 'Gay Time'; C. 'Anticipation'; C. 'Mrs D.W. Davis'; C. 'Valentine Day'; C. 'Nuccio's Gem'; C. 'Tricolor'; C. 'Lemon Drop'; C. 'Mark Alan'; C. 'Debbie'; C. 'Waltz Time' and C. 'Aaron's Ruby'.

RHS Early Camellia Competition 2012

RHS Main Camellia Competition 2012

RHS Early Rhododendron Competition 2012

Main RHS Rhododendron Competition 2012

Full results are available on request from Pam Hayward at: pam@woodtown.net or Tel. 01822 852122.

New Forest Branch Robin Whiting

Brentry woodland in the Sir Harold Hillier Garden near Romsey has a fine collection of rhododendrons and azaleas. We timed our first visit there to see the species rhododendrons in late March. It was a glorious day but only seven people turned up, however it proved to be most enjoyable, as we had the company of Dick Fulcher and John Anderson, both very knowledgeable members of the group. For several of us, this was a welcome change from our usual role of working as volunteers in the woodland. There are no permanent staff allocated to work in Brentry, and so much of the work amongst the rhododendrons is undertaken by the volunteers. Almost as soon as we entered Brentry we were pleased to see one of our recent plantings of *R. pachysanthum* with two flower buds on the point of opening. We were well rewarded with our choice of date as many of the species were in flower. *R. recurvoides* was rather shy of flowers but looked well against its glossy foliage. Further down into lower Brentry was a superb *R. macabeianum* hybrid.

Discussion centred for a while round a rather fine *R. barbatum* 'Hooker'. It is known that Joseph Hooker collected *R. barbatum* in the 1850s, but there was no collection number on the label to indicate whether it originated from his collection, or whether it was a particularly fine form named for him. It was a lovely plant and easily the best *R. barbatum* in the collection in Brentry.

Ramster Garden in Surrey was the venue for our second visit in mid May. An old established garden of about 20 acres, it was first laid out around 1900 by a then famous nursery, Gauntlett's. Much of their planting of trees and rhododendrons remain and is a fine testimony to their work. Miranda Gunn kindly showed us round the garden. We were astounded to learn that she only has the help of one gardener to maintain the garden. We were very pleased to see a planting of evergreen azaleas raised by George Hyde, particularly as it was only last year when we had seen the garden he had been creating in the New Forest. Quite close to this area was a charming tableau sculpted by Christine Charlesworth of Miranda's Grandchildren playing 'Oranges and Lemons'. *R. 'George Hardy'*, bred in the 1880s and obviously one of the original plantings, was in full bloom. Acers too, also from the original plantings, were superb, many with trunks and branches twisted into bizarre shapes after more than a century of weathering. Recent plantings were much in evidence. It was pleasing to see *R. 'Hampshire Belle'* thriving, particularly as it was a plant originating from the Sir Harold Hillier Garden. *R. Loderi* Group 'White Diamond' was a lovely sight in full flower, rather late in the season to see a *Loderi* in flower but very welcome for all that.

In the late 1990s John Bond, then Chairman of the Group suggested that it would be a good idea to find somewhere to create a collection of hardy hybrid rhododendrons. Ant Wood, an area of some 2 acres at the highest point in the garden, was considered to be eminently suitable. The reservoir that stores the water for the garden is sited here. It was interesting to learn that it was fed from a stream at a much lower level by a hydraulic ram; real use of green energy! (If you want information on its action, type 'hydraulic ram' into a search engine.)

The first rhododendrons were planted early in 1999. There are now over 400 plants in the collection. It was lovely to wander along the paths and admire so many of the older varieties such as 'Sappho', 'Faggetter's Favourite' and 'Mrs. Furnivall' in full flower. We all thought it a really splendid day.

The South East Show Barry Haseltine

After a break in 2011 for the royal wedding weekend, we again held our show at Tilgate Park Nature Centre, Crawley, sponsored by The High Beeches Gardens Conservation Trust and with the kind permission of Crawley Borough Council. The International Camellia Society also held their annual show at the same time.

Following the same arrangements as in 2010, we were honoured that the Mayor of Crawley, Councillor Carol Eade, came to open the event. The date for the show was a little early, but we are constrained by the date of the RHS Main Rhododendron Competition at Rosemoor, so we had to hold it on 14th and 15th April. Not only was this a little early, but it followed days of awful weather – late frost, heavy rain and hail storms!

We were pleased to welcome a number of members with smaller gardens including Eileen Lancaster, whose late husband, John, had been a staunch supporter of the show, as well as Nymans Gardens, Exbury Garden, and of course High Beeches, from the large estates.

Given the lead up to the show, it was remarkable that there were so many really good blooms to be seen in the rhododendron and camellia classes. Magnolias fared less well, and the usual gorgeous big flowers were all but absent, although a few yellows did help the display. There were several potential winners for the 'best in show' accolade, but it finally went to Nymans for their perfect bloom of *Rhododendron* 'Taurus'.

After some concern about entries, the ICS Competition had a good turnout of excellent camellias to fill their tables with the usual multi-bloom classes. A number of trophies are competed for, both for the South East branch rhododendron and magnolia competitions and for the ICS ones. It was particularly gratifying to see our Bulletin editor, John Rawling do so well in the ICS competition.

The winners were:

South East Branch Rhododendrons and Magnolias:

Best overall rhododendron performance – Exbury Gardens.

Best overall Magnolia performance – Exbury Gardens

Best bloom in SE Branch competition – Nymans Garden.

John Hilliard Cup for under 3 acre garden –

best total score – Barry Haseltine.

ICS competition:

Peter Betteley Cup, SE Branch member best in Camellia competition – John Rawling.

Best Camellia bloom in show – John Rawling.

Marigold Assinder Cup, 12 Camellia blooms, all different – Exbury Gardens.

We are delighted to welcome a substantial group of New Members. We hope that they will enjoy their membership and make full use of the facilities and advantages available. *The Editor*

GROUP NOTICES

Pat Bucknell, *Hon Secretary*

RHODODENDRON, CAMELLIA and MAGNOLIA GROUP of the RHS

Minutes of ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING held on Wednesday 30th May 2012 at 2.30 p.m. in The Great Drawing Room, Ramster, Chiddingfold, Surrey.

Present:

Chairman, Mr. A Simons,

Mr. E Annal, Mr. R Beeson, Mrs Pat Bucknell, Mr. Peter Bucknell, Mr. Roy Carter, Mr. David Coombes, Mrs. Pam Coombes, Mr. P Evans, Mr. RC Eley, Mr. Andy Fly, Mrs. Jenny Fly, Mr. MC Foster, Mr. Martin Gates, Mrs. Miranda Gunn, Mrs. J Hallett, Mr. B. Haseltine, Mr JG Hillier, Dr. David Ives, Mrs. Rosemary Legrand, Mr. Brian Long, Mrs. Diane McLaren, Mr. John McLaren, Mr. D Millais, Mr JA Rawling, Mrs. R Rawling, Mrs. Georgina Ray, Mr. K Sprague, Mr. Barry Starling, Mrs. Pam Starling, Mr A Stevenson, Mr. I Stokes, Mr. R Whiting, Mrs. Davina Wood, Mr. T Wood.

Apologies: Mr EJ Brabin, Mr. CHT Brown, Mr. MDC Gates, Mr JD Harsant, Pam Hayward, Sally Hayward, Dr. RHL Jack, Mr. S Lyus, Mr. T Methuen-Campbell, Mrs. M Miles, Mr G Mills, Mr. J Sanders, Mrs. Cheryl Sapcote, Mr. M Slocock, Mr. C Tomlin, Mrs. J. Warren, Mr. C Williams.

Chairman thanked Miranda Gunn for her hospitality and welcomed everyone to the meeting. He thanked everyone who had brought the many plants and trusses for the "Show and Tell" Exhibition which took place prior to the AGM.

The Minutes of the Annual General Meeting 2010 held on Saturday 4th June 2011 and published in Bulletin No. 106 July 2011 were agreed to be a true record and were signed by The Chairman.

■ **Matters Arising:** There were no matters arising.

■ **Chairman's Report:**

See Chairman's Notes on the front page of this Bulletin.

■ **Treasurer's Report:**

The income and expenditure account, and the balance sheet for the year ended October 31st 2011 were tabled by Alastair Stevenson. At the time of the meeting the accounts had not been audited. He had thought that they would be audited by the RHS and that the Account Year would come into line with their year end – 31st January, but this had not happened.

John Harsant would audit the accounts and sign them off.

Overall the finances of the Group remain in a sound state with total assets at 31 October 2011 of £37,800, an increase of almost £2,000 over the year. However in terms of annual income and expenditure the year showed a small deficit of £150.

Subscription income has remained broadly stable in the year at £12,400. Profit from the sale of seed and publications remains an important source of income for the Group, together contributing some £3,300.

Overall costs are well controlled, with many costs in the current year being below 2009/10. Areas where costs have been greater than the previous year are publicity (promotional displays and advertising) and office costs (equipment purchases).

The major area of cost for the Group remains our publications and their distribution. Between the Yearbook and Bulletins, both now produced to very high standards, the total cost (net of advertising sales) is some £12,000, an amount almost equal to our subscription income.

There are plans in the current year (2011/12) to spend more on publicity and supporting Micro propagation at the Duchy College. Additional costs will also result from the increased postal charges as Year Book and Bulletin distribution accounted for almost £3,000 of the total costs.

With healthy reserves and in the light of anticipated pressure on membership numbers consideration of subscription increases has been deferred. However I have no doubt that it will be necessary to increase subscription levels from November 2013. It is planned that this will coincide with the introduction of Direct Debit collection of subscriptions which will allow us to make gradual increases whilst minimising the administrative burden.

My particular thanks to Martin Gates in once again helping with the preparation of the accounts. Philip Evans proposed a motion to adopt the accounts. This was seconded by Ivor Stokes and carried unanimously.

■ Election of Auditors:

John Harsant was willing to audit the accounts. The Treasurer proposed that he be asked to do the audit again. Rupert Eley proposed the motion, seconded by John Rawling. It was then unanimously agreed that he be asked to audit the accounts again and that he be given a vote of thanks.

■ Membership:

Rupert Eley reported that Membership was down by 12 from 765 in June 2011 to 753 in at the present time; however new members were still joining, many attracted by the Group Stand at Shows. It was acknowledged that the Seed List attracts many members, especially from overseas and it was agreed to continue to seek ways of encouraging new people to join.

■ Group Tours:

Judy Hallett reported that the Spring Tour to Italy and Switzerland had been a huge success. A full report will be published in the July Bulletin.

The Autumn Tour to the Peak District would include a visit to Chatsworth and the Bluebell Nursery. Full details will be in the July Bulletin. The Spring Tour 14th to 19th April 2013 would be to Devon and Cornwall based in Truro.

A Sound System for garden tours had been purchased and used on the Spring Tour. It has not been entirely successful but improvements were being sought.

■ Confirmation of Officers:

Following the adoption of the New Constitution, the present Officers and Committee Members would now serve for five years before offering themselves for re-election.

The Secretary, Pat Bucknell was retiring from her post but all other Officers and Committee members were continuing.

The Chairman reported that it was now imperative that a new Secretary be found as soon as possible.

■ Report on the Group's status relative to the RHS and Plant Committee:

The Chairman had covered this item in his report.

■ Nomination of Cups and Awards:

A list of the Cups and Awards has been drawn up and some nominations received. This will be circulated to the Committee for further nominations.

■ Any Other Business:

Keith Sprague asked whether expenses could be paid for car travel into Westminster Halls with the Group Stand. The Congestion charge is £10 per day plus parking. This amounted to a considerable amount over the two day show.

The Treasurer confirmed that this would be paid if requested. Pat Bucknell is retiring as Secretary and was thanked by the Chairman for her work on the Committee. She was presented with a signed book "Higo Camellia", A Flower for the Third Generation and a Reticulata Camellia "Frank Houser".

Pat thanked the Group for the wonderful gift and for the opportunity to be part of the Committee. She had enjoyed her work and would miss it very much.

Philip Evans gave a vote of thanks to Miranda and her family for their hospitality. It had been a very enjoyable and successful day.

The guided walk around the garden and through the Hardy Hybrid Collection was much enjoyed. The collection was looking in excellent shape with almost all the plants in flower.

■ Date of Next Annual General Meeting.

Philip Evans believed that The Marquis of Lansdowne would be willing to have the 2013 AGM at Bowood, Chippenham, Wiltshire. He would liaise with Lord Lansdowne. Further details and a date will be announced later.

■ The Meeting Closed at 4.05 p.m.



Rhododendron 'Frank Galsworthy' from the Hardy Hybrid collection at Ramster.
Photo: The Editor

The Members' photos page has now been updated to only show the images that have been supplied in 2012. Previous submissions can still of course be found in the Dictionary sections. We have had our best start to a year so far, with 10 Magnolias, 6 Camellias and 6 Rhododendrons already on display. The big question is, can anyone knock Russell Beeson from his all-conquering perch this year?

Seed List

The seed list will be open all year with updates to the list as seed becomes out of stock. First come first served!

Garden visits

Our favourite season is about to arrive, so please look at the large number of wonderful gardens that we have compiled on our website (under Services and then Links). Each name is a link to that garden's own website, so that you can easily find out opening times and directions. Hopefully you will be reminded of ones you have enjoyed before, as well as ones that you always meant to visit.

If there are additional features that you would like to see added to the site or you have any other comments then please contact webmaster@rhodogroup-rhs.org



Part of the colourful display of late flowering rhododendrons (and a fabulous kalmia!) jointly staged by the Sir Harold Hillier Gardens, Exbury Gardens and the New Forest Branch at Jermyns House in June.

Photo: Sally Hayward



Are YOU missing out on Group events?

We know that not all members choose to communicate by email but there are more and more opportunities for those that do to share in Group events, be kept up-to-date and take advantage of Group services.

For example, if you didn't receive an email about the recent Late Flowering Azalea Workshop or an invitation to see the web album which celebrated that event it means we don't have your email address!

If you want to make more of your membership send an email TODAY to pam@woodtown.net to be added to the list. *Email addresses are never shared or made public.*

The following publications are offered to Group Members exclusively and sold in support of the Group.

Back issues of the yearbook from 1946 and previously advertised titles not featured here may still be available – please enquire.

PLANT HUNTING TITLES

SPECIAL OFFER FURTHER EXTENDED!

- Flowers of the Amazon Forest – Margaret Mee £16.95** (RRP £25)
 - John Lindley – William T. Stearn £13.95** (RRP £19.95)
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 - Seeds of Adventure – Peter Cox & Peter Hutchison £24.50** (RRP £35)
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Price as quoted for each title **plus**

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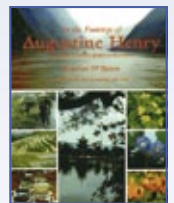
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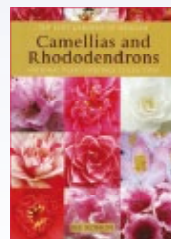
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Pocket Guide to RHODODENDRON SPECIES

John McQuire & Mike Robson

704pp RBG Kew 2009

Full Price: **£59** Member's Price: **£42**

Postage: UK **£5.50** Europe **£8.50** Rest of World **£15.50**

Please make cheques (Sterling) payable to: *The Rhododendron, Camellia and Magnolia Group*. Payment may also be made by *Mastercard* or *Visa* or via *PayPal* to rcmgpaypal@woodtown.net

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the Rhododendron, Camellia & Magnolia group forthcoming events



JULY / 2012	OCTOBER / 2012	NOVEMBER / 2012	MAY / 2013
11 North West Branch Cholmondeley Castle Garden <hr/> Branch summer meeting Ted Brabin 0151 353 1193	8-11 Group Peak District <hr/> Group Autumn Tour Judith Hallett 01981 570401	27 South West Branch RHS Rosemoor <hr/> Autumn meeting Colin Brown 01674 277268	3 New Forest Branch Hillier Garden <hr/> Annual lecture by Mike Buffins Martin Gates 023 8025 2843
			8-11 North West Branch/ RHS Harlow Carr <hr/> Rhododendron Show JJohn Harsant 0151 342 3664

JUST RECEIVED

RHS COMPETITION AND GROUP DATES 2013

■ **Raising Rhododendrons from Seed - 18th January**
 The first of a series of rhododendron propagation workshops to be held at Millais Nursery.
Further details will be included in the November Bulletin.

■ **RHS Early Camellia Competition - 16th/17th March**
 Next year, to be moved outside London and the South East, and relocated to RHS Garden Rosemoor where it will form part of an Early Spring Show incorporating SW Branch Early Magnolia and Rhododendron competitions, together with display and trade stands.
Further details will be included in the November Bulletin, or contact Pam Hayward (pam@woodtown.net or 01822 852122) for more information.

The above event is in addition to the:

■ **RHS Main Rhododendron Competition - 20th/21st April**
 Which will once again be held at Rosemoor together with the SW Branch Camellia, Floral Display and Late Magnolia competitions.

■ **RHS Northern Rhododendron Competition - 4/5th May**
 A brand new event to be hosted at RHS Garden, Harlow Carr.
Further details will be included in the November Bulletin



The Early Camellia Show 2012

Photo: Sally Hayward



Camellia 'Contessa Lavinia Maggi'

Photo: Sally Hayward