

The Rhododendron & Camellia Group



BULLETIN No. 35 - August 1987

Forthcoming Events

August 11, 12
September 15 - 17
October 6, 7
October 23 - 25

RHS Summer Flower Show
Great Autumn Show,
Flower Show
Group Autumn Weekend,
Forest Row, Sussex

October 27, 28
November 24, 25
November 27

Late Autumn Show
Flower Show
SW Branch Rhododendron Evening,
Bovey Tracey

This issue has been honoured by essays from two gardeners of verve and infectious enthusiasm. Members present on the spring tour of May 1984 will recall how the Marquess of Anglesey met our party at a point close to his rhododendron woodland, and how he later escorted us to the gardens closer to the house, where less assertive but no less select shrubs and trees are the foreground for the stupendous view across the Menai Strait to Snowdon and her court.

Dr Hugh Dingle has with characteristic *élan* made the most of his garden in the Jersey sun, and his account is a record of his achievements and reverses at L'Ecluse, written on the eve of his move to another house soon to be surrounded by his eclectic plantings.

The minutes of the Group's Annual General Meeting and the audited accounts will appear with the December issue.

The Rhododendrons of Plas Newydd, Llanfairpwll, Anglesey

Nowhere else in Britain, so far as I can make out, does the large-leaved *Rhododendron montroseanum* (lately *mollyanum*) seed itself in dozens every year as it does at Plas Newydd. Sometimes the seeds lodge, maddeningly, at the very base of some distant rhododendron: more rarely, a plant appears in the very place one would like to see it, but the mass of seedlings occurs within a space of about three square yards on a bank shaded by three of the five original plants established by my father in the late 1930s.

These are now getting on for twenty-five feet high, and near them is the finest and largest specimen which, when looked at in the 1950s by the late Lord Aberconway, he declared to be the most magnificent rhododendron he had ever seen. These five plants were, I gather, given to my father by the late Lord Digby. Each differs from the others in some degree, one having a larger truss, another the more perfect pink blossoms, another a more oblanceolate leaf and yet another a more fastigiate form of growth. The flowers of all start a true pink, without a hint of blue, and fade to almost pure white, while the leaves all have the characteristic silvery-white indumentum. (I have never seen the FCC clone in the Younger Botanic Garden, Benmore, Argyll, but one of the Plas Newydd varieties may well be the same). Every year I transplant some of these self-sown seedlings so that whole groves of them have been formed in different parts of the garden. I have also been able to give some away, which is always a delight.

The wild garden, of which the *montroseanums* are perhaps the jewel, was created by my father before the Second World War in a part of the woods three-quarters of

a mile from the house. He chose this site because the trees consisted chiefly of almost mature Scots pines, oaks and birches, providing a good high canopy. The ground slopes gently down towards the banks of the Menai Strait and faces SSE.

Among the rhododendrons planted in the 1930s which have now reached considerable size are different varieties of *R. thomsonii*, including one of var. *candelabrum* (now *R. × candelabrum*), and a lovely *R. 'Shilsonii' AM* with its peeling bark and grey trunk. I have taken numerous layers from this which are now almost as tall as their parent. Perhaps the most spectacular of the original plants are three *R. 'Loderi'*, one 'King George' and two 'Sir Joseph Hookers'. Just as vast is a specimen of *fortunei*, one of 'Loderi's' parents. This flowers profusely every year in spite of the difficulty of even attempting to dead-head it because all its lower branches have died long ago.

One of the largest plants of the slow-growing Bodnant AM form of *williamsianum* I have seen has been allowed to expand unrestricted all round. It was given to my sister in 1937 when about twelve inches high. It is now approaching fourteen feet in width and six in height. Long ago our children christened it the 'Queen Mother's Hat'! It is now much too big to fit that description!

Of the other original plants, three yellows stand out: a free-flowering *falconeri*, a wide-spreading *wasonii* and a slow-growing, pure yellow *campylocarpum*. As 'nurses' my father planted fast-growing *ponticum*-type rhododendrons possessing a very pleasing pink flower. I have retained many of these as they flower late, considerably extending the season.

By 1948, after ten years' neglect, the garden had been enveloped by a mixture of *R. ponticum*, brambles and sycamore seedlings. My wife and I had no intention of rescuing it until we noticed some very non-*ponticum* leaves amongst the *ponticum* and began, in a desultory way, hacking at the pervasive invaders. Later on, as the proper job of rehabilitation proceeded, I began to add new plants every year. Beside rhododendrons I introduced *Magnolia campbellii* (now beginning to flower with more profusion each season), *M. × veitchii*, *M. × soulangiana 'Brozzonii'*, *Drimys winteri*, masses of *Pieris formosa forrestii* 'Wakehurst' in the darkest corners, *Prunus subhirtella* 'Autumnalis', *Prunus 'Amanogawa'* and 'Ukon'.

I transferred the largest quantity of rhododendrons from unsuitable sites near the house, where they had been placed in 1948, '49 and '50. In each of those years these plants had arrived in a lorry sent from Bodnant by the late Lord Aberconway as his extremely generous wedding present to

my wife and myself. With them came men bearing well-polished spades with which to plant them! These rhododendrons were what the donor called his 'thinnings'! Most were hybrids with the very distinctive Bodnant red flowers. It was chiefly the advent of this marvellous gift that spurred us on to fully restore the garden.

None of the pre-war plantings included particularly frost-tender plants. In the 1950s I decided to try some the white scented rhododendrons. In due course groups of *R. 'Fragrantissimum'*, *'Princess Alice'* and *'Lady Alice Fitzwilliam'* sprang up, and except after a peculiarly severe winter, flower freely, as do *bullatum* and *crassum*.

The rhododendron garden has now been open to National Trust visitors during the spring for five years. To reach it they have to walk along a Strait-side woodland path for about three quarters of a mile and then to return by the same route. This ensures that not too many pairs of feet tread the narrow mown-grass tracks. There is no need for gravel, let alone concrete paths, thank goodness. The air of a private garden is therefore fully retained. No attempt is made to cut the long grass, bracken and nettles more than once a year, and that takes two men only two days with modern machinery, so that except for new planting in late winter and the occasional removal of corpses, the area is not labour-intensive. I undertake the dead-heading and some measure of dead-wooding.

ANGLESEY

L'Ecluse: a Jersey Garden

We are moving house. It is a Jersey sport, but after eight or nine years newly planted trees and shrubs have had a chance to put their toes in and reach a satisfying size, and it is sad to turn one's back on them.

The streamside valley garden at L'Ecluse, is chosen for the shelter it could provide against the damaging winds, is well shaded by full-grown oaks, but the only other mature trees nine years ago were a large *Cupressus macrocarpa* and a Lombardy poplar. The cypress divides the northern from the southern half of the garden, and on its south side I planted an *Embothrium coccineum* purchased at Trewithen during the 1980 Spring Tour. This first flowered in 1985. It is now over thirty feet tall and was in flower this year for seven weeks. *Camellia × williamsii 'Julia Hamiter'*, also from Trewithen, is one of my special favourites, a superb creamy white with a warm blush. My final purchase on that tour was *Magnolia tripetala*. This has grown well, is now twenty feet tall, and flowers regularly. The flowers are short-lived, narrow-tepalled and of interest rather than delight; I have not discerned their reputed goat-like smell, but the large red autumn 'cones' are striking. The foliage is quite magnificent, the leaves two feet long and arranged in great terminal rosettes. *Magnolia × thompsoniana* flowers freely in July and has a gorgeous scent; it is happy on an old bonfire site. Other young magnolias growing well are *M. hypoleuca* and *M. sprengeri*, while *M. sieboldii* and *wilsonii* are easy and flower delightfully.

I first visited Westonbirt in the early 'sixties and it has been the inspiration behind a number of selections. Of non-flowering trees, *Cercidiphyllum japonicum*, the first tree I planted, has almost the aspect of maturity! Over twenty feet tall, the trunk is a solid nine inches in diameter. In April the new leaves make a stippled pink haze like an Impressionist painting, and the lush foliage is a delight the summer through. *Pinus × holfordiana* is in dry soil at the edge of an underground German bunker from the Second World War. This pine is a fast grower, twenty-five feet after eight years, and with exceptionally long 'needles'. Then there have been so many autumn ideas gleaned from Westonbirt, besides the *Cercidiphyllum*: *Acer cappadocicum*, *A. triflorum*, *Picrasma quassoides*, *Viburnum betulifolium*,

and *Carya ovata*. The last, a vigorous tap-rooter, has to be planted out very small; eight inches in 1979, it is now ten feet, and its large horse-chestnut leaves turn a full butter yellow in October. Nearby is *Ptelea trifoliata 'Aurea'*, a modest but graceful plant, its ultra-modest flowers having the most delicious honey scent in early July. *Acer capillipes*, *A. rufinerve f. albolimbatum* and *A. forrestii* satisfy my thirst for the snakebarks, while in each case the bark of *Betula jacquemontii*, *B. nigra* and *Prunus serrula* has won them a place in the garden.

Many plants have been selected for the scent of flower or leaf. For the late summer, *Clethras* are indispensable. Near the house are two *C. alnifolia* planted before our time. In a garden whose next most exciting denizens were *Rhododendron ponticum* and *Viburnum tinus*, the *Clethras* stood out like Schubert at a Eurovision Song Contest.

Though *C. alnifolia* cannot be called a handsome shrub, the cultivar *C. a. 'Rosea'* is quite bright with glossy leaves. (*C. alnifolia* is perhaps prettiest in new leaf, when they emerge a light yellow-green, at a steep angle with the poise of butterflies closing their wings. Ed.) I have not tried *C. delavayi*, and *C. arborea* succumbed in its first winter. The clethras' fragrance is undoubtedly one of the year's highlights. Some flirtations with less familiar scented plants have been happy, others frustrating. *Viburnum odoratissimum* has grown well: a solid evergreen of upright growth with laurel-like leaves, it is now eleven feet tall but has yet to flower. *Lonicera fragrantissima* flowers quite sweetly in winter, but it has the soul of its sister *L. japonica*, leap-frogging across the garden with some abandon, and has been expelled. *Calycanthus floridus* is a good-looking six footer, with dark green entire leaves and interesting dusky red flowers, but for the life of me I cannot discern any aromatic quality! A real winner was found in *Comptonia peregrina*: only three feet tall, its fern-like foliage is sweetly scented of nutmeg – quite outstanding. My plant is suckering freely in rather damp soil in sun.

A nutmeg scent in voluptuous extravagance comes from *Rhododendron edgeworthii*. This survived the recent vicious winter which killed so many things: *R. lindleyi*, *Hoheria populnea*, *Melianthus major*, many myrtles, and I think all the acacias in Jersey as well as many eucalypts and *Cordylines*. On a wall above the drive is the dwarf rhododendron bed. Wafts of aromatic scent envelop the heads of passers-by. *R. anthopogon 'Betty Graham'* is my favourite, with *R. trichostomum*, but doubtless the mass of *Lapponicas* and *Saluenensis* help to spice the air. A ten foot *Chimonanthus praecox* guards the bed. Its flowers have a super scent within a radius of one inch like the Witch Hazels, and guests have to be encouraged to stick their noses into the somewhat dingy damp flowers.

Hamamelis have such bold foliage. *H. × intermedia 'Diane'* has exceptional crimson autumn colour and its red flowers are bright and enjoyable. It is happy in a very damp place. In a drier position near a second German bunker is *Sorbus 'Joseph Rock'* (R23657), an outright autumn winner. *Parrotiopsis jacquemontiana*, a shrub for spring (and one-upmanship) has papery flowers resembling those of a strawberry; it is a quiet upright shrub with *Parrotia* foliage, and is ten foot at twelve years. (I earnestly hope it can be moved to the new garden, Hugh. Ed.) Another Himalayan is near the *Parrotiopsis* – *Rhododendron cowanianum*, deciduous, rather spindly, with bright rosy flowers, it has been transferred from subsect. *Trichocladia* to *Lepidota*. An unusual evergreen I like a lot is *Trochodendron aralioides*, an easy slow-growing shrub, glabrous in all its parts. The flowers are the same bright green as the leaves. I have only tried it in shade, but it would not look out of place in a formal setting.

A dozen species roses are featured in the garden,

occupying positions too sunny for rhododendrons. I particularly enjoy *Rosa forrestiana*, *roxburghii*, *setipoda*, *sweginzowii* and *woodsii* var. *fendleri* (of gardens). Some of these have reached twelve feet, while *R. wichuraiana* scrambles over the sunny bunker and exhales scent in July. In contrast I have had a couple of failures with *R. moyesii*, the king of them all.

All through the bottom garden, beneath the oaks by the stream, are the rhododendrons and camellias: seriously overplanted, and theoretically assigned to spacious new quarters, they do appreciate the wind shelter they produce together.

Camellias are marvellous in Jersey, the climate suiting them perfectly. They are far easier than rhododendron species, not many of which can be grown away from shade. The light soil is fast-draining and an effective sprinkler system is advantageous. However hard I try, I cannot grow *R. souliei* or a healthy *campylocarpum*, and in *wardii* the flower buds often abort. *R. auriculatum* has grown well and I love its large scented china-white flowers in early August, but a month later its delicate young leaves invariably burn at the edges and thereafter grow warped and spoilt. Sprinkling in all hot weather at the growth stage has not prevented this annual disfigurement. The Cinnabarinas are not happy. They dislike the sun but will not flower in the shade. Powdery mildew has killed one and damaged others, and has been attacking *diaprepes* for five years.

Are there any rhododendrons which thrive? Certainly! *R. wiltonii*, six feet tall with deep-veined healthy foliage and flowering well; *crassum* covered with superbly scented flowers every June; *griersonianum*, *thomsonii*, *recurvoides* and *falconeri* are all happy, although I have not yet flowered any big-leaf. Flowering for the first time this year were *eclecteum*, *floribundum*, *fulvum*, *spilotum* and *sutchuenense*; *mallotum*, twelve years old, flowered well for the second season. *R. occidentale* must be one of the happiest plants in the garden. The Smith and Mossman selections have dramatic flowers with heavy scent in June. They follow *atlanticum* with its elegant glaucous foliage. The reward of scent in July comes from *arborescens* and *viscosum*. (Why don't more members try the deciduous North American species like this? Ed.) *R. amagianum* is invaluable for its gorgeous peach-red flowers, freely produced in heavy shade. *R. serotinum* comes at the end of July and has flowered from a young age. The Fortuneas do well, and I have high hopes for some of Jim Fuller's seedlings from *decorum* seed collected in Lijiang in 1985. The RBG, Edinburgh, have sent me eleven plants grown from my Nepal seed collected in 1984, and in my mind's eye I already see a small wood of *R. hodgsonii* in the new Vallee des Vaux. First, however: carriage exercise! "Anon methought the wood began to move".

HUGH DINGLE

Powdery Mildew

Mr Bernard Culverwell, Minehead, Somerset, reports his recent conversation with Mrs David Farnes when she said that she had used a proprietary anti-mildew spray for roses on affected rhododendrons nearby, and they had revived.

A daughter of one of Bernard's employees has been studying fungi and spores at Reading University. She has suggested that causes of powdery mildew could be a deficiency of potash or excessive nitrogen in the soil, and that we try, as a wettable agent spray, any or all of these (except on sulphur-shy species): Benomil, Bupirimide, Dinocap, Flowers of Sulphur, Imazalil, and two more which sounded on the telephone like 'Clyde-les-Amide' and 'Do de Morph'. Readers who are *au fait* with agrochemicals might recognise their real names.

Excursions by Animals

Bernard's garden is on the seaward slopes of Exmoor, one of the haunts of red deer. In 18 years of residence he has not encountered deer in the garden although they, and stags especially, regularly lie between his hedge and an outer fence of wire netting, six feet high. Bernard expresses surprise at Mr and Mrs Archibolds' problem with roe deer in East Devon, and says that badgers and rabbits have been more irksome to him.

He writes that farmers all over the West Country are installing the Gallagher Power Fencing System, a three-wire system ideal for excluding cattle, deer, sheep and rabbits. The energisers cost from £80-£150 and are effective over perimeter lengths of from 5 to 40 miles. The fence is easily installed by an amateur, and is largely a question of poles and wires. Anyone requiring further details should ring Mr Clifford Frost at Minehead Sawmills, tel. 0643 4381.

Treatment of Honey Fungus with Copper Carbonate

Mrs Milne, a visitor this spring to Chyverton, Zelah, has been told by Mr Nigel Holman there of his six years' success in treating honey fungus with copper carbonate. There has been no recrudescence of the disease at Chyverton in this time. The garden is a large one and Mr Holman has been treating his shrubs regularly. He thinks that copper carbonate might be more successful on acid soil. Mrs Milne points out that, although she is not a chemist, Cheshunt Compound, another remedy for honey fungus, contains copper sulphate and ammonium carbonate. The copper sulphate would be diluted by the first shower, and she thinks the copper might combine with some of the carbonate to form a long-lasting solution which will only work in the presence of the acid sulphate of ammonia. Most members have gardens on acid soil so no problem should arise by just using copper carbonate.

A problem is the high cost of copper carbonate, available only in quantities of 1 cwt at £200, inclusive of postage and VAT. Mrs Milne kindly offers to buy a bag for distribution to other members. Nigel has been using the same bag for six years and he now has 20lb left. A number of members in the south west have expressed interest in copper carbonate, which is inexpensive in view of the cost of Armillatox at £4.50 for treating a stump of six inches in diameter. Members who wish to acquire some copper carbonate from Mrs Milne are invited to ring or write to her:

Mrs. S. B. Milne,
Woodborough, Porlock Weir, nr. Minehead,
Somerset TA24 8HZ.
Tel. 0643 862406

International Rhododendron Conference 1988

Attention was drawn to this event of 1-5 October 1988 in the April issue of the Bulletin. The editor has received five card slips from the Conference Organiser for members who wish to receive details of the conference programme and application forms for attendance. He will promptly send a slip to each of the first five applicants. The return of the slip does not commit anyone as bookings will only be made on the official application form which will be issued during July 1987.

Bound Volumes of 'The Garden' and the 'Journal of the Royal Horticultural Society'

A kind and unusual offer has been made by Mrs Olive Judson, Flat 2, Warberry Lodge, 11 Cyprus Road, Exmouth, Devon EX8 2DZ. She wishes to move from her flat, and, before doing so, to dispose of a number of books. She is offering her late husband's 29 attractively bound and mint volumes of the 'Journal' from 1948 to 1976 to any

interested member of the Group. She also has, unbound, the other years' issues. Bound copies of the 'Journal' and its successor, 'The Garden', are rare. The tendency in recent years has been to provide binders for loose issues, and these are not as desirable.

SBEC – The Sino-British Expedition to China, 1981

A party of five rhododendron enthusiasts from this country visited China in May 1981 and, with a party of eleven from the Kunming Institute of Botany, paid four visits to camps on different parts of the Tali Range (now the Cang Shan Range) to the west of Erhai Lake in West Yunnan. The expedition was jointly led by Professor Feng Guomei of the Institute of Botany, and Mr R. J. Mitchell, Curator of the University of St Andrews Botanic Garden.

The British members returned to this country at the beginning of June and, by a superb effort, Peter Cox produced his splendid and very readable account of the expedition in time for inclusion in 'Rhododendrons 1981-82, with Magnolias and Camellias'. Three years later the official report was published by the University of St Andrews and at the end of 1986, by courtesy of Hugh Syngle, lately of Kew, and Lady Anne Palmer, a copy of this report was given to the Group. This is entitled 'Cang Shan. The Report of the Sino-British Expedition to China, 1981'. ('In' might have been more appropriate than 'to' as most of the members were already resident in China). This makes most interesting reading, in amplification of Peter Cox's account.

Tourists rather than collectors are now encouraged in China, and enthusiasts from several countries have been disappointed to find that they were not permitted to collect plant material. As far as I know this is the only expedition which has been allowed to do so in the last forty years, and both the official report and Peter Cox's account make clear the amount of negotiation and meticulous planning that made this possible.

It is of passing interest to note that Guan Kaiyun, Assistant Director of Kunming Institute of Botany, who was in England in spring 1986 and visited the RHS Camellia Show and the Cornwall Spring Flower Show (vide 'International Camellia Journal', October 1986, p.105), acted as interpreter on this expedition, as he had for an American expedition to NW Hupeh six months earlier. He was known to members of this expedition as 'Clyde'. The official report includes a photograph of him threading his way along 'one of the few tracks' on the western side of the range.

Well illustrated, the official report contains a good map of the Cang Shan Range drawn by Sir Peter Hutchison, and a chapter on the area's geology by the Department of Geology of St Andrews University. The range is the result of a granite intrusion through the limestone strata, and this is one of the factors which make it botanically important. A footnote to Peter Cox's account recorded the pH of soil samples from the root zones of some of the species collected, from *R. cephalanthum* growing in almost pure lime rubble at pH 8.14 to *R. lacteum* in the very acid pH 3.71. Magnesium was present in most samples but not in the expected concentrations.

A footnote to Peter Cox's article explained that there was not room in the yearbook to print the list of seed numbers, but the official report lists this fully, with 85 rhododendron seed numbers from the Cang Shan Range and 6 elsewhere, in addition to a number of other genera.

There is an article by Dr David Chamberlain of the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh, on the forty-one rhododendron species and three natural hybrids collected on the expedition including the six native to Hong Kong, shown to the party by the Governor's wife. Peter Cox has

contributed a note on natural hybrids and inter-specific variation of rhododendrons in China. Roy Lancaster is the author of a most interesting account of the dominant woody vegetation at each of the four camps on the Cang Shan Range.

There are also articles on the Primulas, Trilliaceae, Orchids and Hypericums seen. One of the appendices lists the sponsors of the expedition, who include the Royal Society, the Alpine Garden Society, the Rhododendron Species Foundation, five of the chapters of the American Rhododendron Society, the RHS, and three members of the Group's Executive Committee at that time. I cannot recall that the Group itself was ever invited to participate, which may account for its only now receiving a copy of the official report, by the back door as it were.

WALTER MAGOR

Irish Branch

The branch's annual visit was to Mount Usher, Ashford, Co. Wicklow, on June 7th 1987. Situated on the river Vartry, Mount Usher extends to 20 acres of woodland and waterside planting. The rhododendron collection ranges from the dwarf to the arborescent species. The dwarf *Rhododendron campylogynum* was clothed in tiny purple campanulate flowers. The medium-sized species *R. griersonianum*, *R. neriflorum* and *R. decorum* were in bloom. It was evident from the spent flower heads that *wightii* had given a good display of yellow flowers.

One of the features of the garden is the Azalea walk, a grass walk, planted on either side with a selection of large-flowered deciduous azaleas. The vivid yellows and oranges were splendid against a green background. We saw it looking at its best.

There is an interesting collection of magnolias in the garden. *Magnolia × watsonii* and *M. hypoleuca* were in flower. (Dr Dingle praises the second in his article. Ed.).

Rhododendron maddenii can be a leggy plant but a specimen at Mount Usher formed a large mass of luxuriant foliage. Flower buds were also evident. Other plants that have yet to flower are *R. 'Polar Bear'* and *Magnolia delavayii*. While our main interest was in rhododendrons, we saw fine specimens of *Davidia involucrata*, *Embothrium coccineum*, and the conifers *Tsuga canadensis*, *Pinus montezumae* and *Juniperus recurva*.

We had a very enjoyable visit to Mount Usher and were grateful to the Head Gardener, John Anderson, for guiding us round the garden. It is a credit to him and his staff that it is looking in such good condition despite the serious flood damage caused by Hurricane Charlie in June 1986.

MARY FORREST

South West Branch

On 11th April, 46 members of the Branch and their guests assembled at Burncoose and South Down Nurseries, where we were welcomed by Mr Charles Williams, our host, and Mr Arnold Dance, the Head Gardener for the past 32 years. A conducted tour of the 30-acre woodland garden followed in bright sunshine.

By the lodge all stopped to admire a large bush of *Camellia 'Monica Dance'*, a fine semi-double pink × *williamsii* raised by the Head Gardener and named after his wife. The drive was alive with colour. An upright *Camellia 'Brigadoon'* was in full flower, and a group of five 'Donation' looked their best. There were three tall magnolia seedlings of *sargentiana* var. *robusta* above the 'tennis courts' and another by the house, planted by Arnold Dance many years ago, with lovely deep pink flowers memorable when viewed against a clear blue sky. We saw a new rock garden planted with hybrids of *R. yakushimanum*, and, in the nursery, thousands of camellia cuttings on the

mist benches. Later Terry Vince conveyed our thanks to Charles Williams and presented him with a large R. 'Henry Street' (*yakushimanum* × 'Mars').

We travelled to Chyvertion from Burncoose, where were we welcomed by Nigel and Elizabeth Holman. In the walled garden near the house we saw *Magnolia nitida* and the huge-flowered Camellias 'Arch of Triumph', 'Francie L', and 'Royalty'. Nigel explained that this year all the camellias had smaller flowers than usual because of the cold winter. Walking down the garden past the hedge of *Myrtus apiculata*, we crossed the stream to the area of giant magnolias for which the garden is renowned. *Camellia reticulata* 'Crimson Robe' was behind a hybrid of *R. arboreum*, with white heavily freckled flowers, which not even the late Roza Harrison could identify. A big R. 'Ethel' glowed redly in the Memorial Garden, and, beyond, a new clearing has been made to exhibit some fine large-leaved species. Our visit ended all too soon, and, gathering in front of the house, we presented Nigel with a *Rhododendron argyrophyllum* to express our thanks for a very enjoyable visit.

On Saturday, 2nd May, 60 Branch members arrived at Heligan, to be greeted by Mr Ivor Herring MA., our host. He gave us a history of Heligan House and the Tremayne Estate, and guided us round the woodland garden. This has become largely overgrown, with *arboreum* stems lying across the paths, old camellias up to thirty feet high, and some splendid large-leaved rhododendrons, notably *falconeri*, *grande* and *sinogrande*. In the centre *niveum* grows at the base of a tall *Magnolia campbellii*. The many outstanding *arboreums* grow as they do in the Himalayas, covering the ground with a deep leaf litter under a high flowering canopy. Mrs Kay Vince expressed our thanks and presented Mr Herring, her former headmaster, with R. 'Gill's Crimson'.

After lunch in our cars on the shore at Porthluney Cove, below Caerhays Castle, the afternoon was devoted to the garden there, and as our convoy approached, the bright sunshine lit up the white magnolias behind the grey walls of the castle and made a majestic scene. On arrival we were welcomed by Mr Julian Williams and his son David. A splendid conducted tour followed, half the party with Julian Williams and half with Philip Tregunna, Head Gardener since 1956. (*Philip pointed out nearly all of the Asiatic oaks and other unusual trees in a list of items which the editor had been hoping to see at Caerhays, and many more besides*).

We climbed the steep hill, with its towering tree magnolias, behind the castle. Various *williamsianum* hybrids were flowering close to *keysii* on the main ride, and here was a huge 'Crossbill' (*lutescens* × *spinuliferum*) raised by J. C. Williams at Caerhays in 1933.

The pink, slender-flowered *Magnolia 'Caerhays Surprise'* was magnificent. (*One of the best individual plants of the Cornwall Gardens Festival, seen at Penheale Manor, too. Ed.*). Other interesting plants were *R. stamineum*, *baileyi* and *bracteatum*. In the absence of a grand show from *Michelia doltsopa*, heavily pruned after three hard winters, the plant of the day was R. 'Veryan Bay' (*williamsianum* × *pseudochrysanthum*), named after the bay which we could see below, as we walked under an arch of its lovely pink bells and descended to the castle lawns. Here David Quicke thanked Julian Williams and gave him a *Rhododendron pocophorum* var. *hemidartum*.

N.B. Our autumn lecture will be given by Barry Starling on "Dwarf Rhododendrons" at the Edgemoor Hotel, Bovey Tracey, on Friday, 27th November, 1987.

R. A. W. REYNOLDS

nursery and garden at Boldre, Lymington, and spent an enjoyable morning browsing in his most interesting and beautiful garden. In the afternoon the Branch visited Pylewell Park. Mr Whittaker and his sister were most kind and showed the members all round and then most generously provided a delicious tea in the house.

In response to a request from Mr Archibald, this Branch invited the German Rhododendron Society to visit the garden at Hethersett, Littleworth Cross, Seale, during their tour of the gardens of the UK. They came in two separate parties, one on May 24th, the other on June 1st. On both occasions several members of the Branch were present to show them round. From both points of view these were most interesting and enjoyable occasions and from all that was heard, our visitors were very appreciative of being asked to visit a private garden.

On May 30th, the Branch held a members' evening at Hethersett, which included a competition with six classes: Class 1 for elepidote hybrids subdivided into colours—pink, white, yellow and red; Class 2 for any azalea hybrid, and Class 3, any species. These were kindly judged by Mr Arthur George and the prizewinners were Mr B. Radford, Mr R. Thornton, Mrs O. Bird, Mr P. Urlwin-Smith, Mr R. F. Mousley, Lady Adam Gordon, Mr R. Mitchell, Mr and Mrs Linney and Mr and Mrs Clarke-Hall. Fortunately it was a fine evening and after a walk round the wood, members foregathered on the lawn for refreshments.

N.B. Dates for the autumn include a talk by Mr E. Millais on his trip to China, and one by Mr Peter Cox on rhododendron species and hybrids at Glendoick.

PAMELA GORDON

Next Year's Annual Tour - May 6th onwards

By popular request, the May tour in 1988 will once more be in Scotland, but this time more or less confined to Argyll.

Some interesting private gardens will be in the programme, in particular, Mr Peter Cox has very kindly agreed to let us visit the 20 or so acres of "wild" garden (his description!) by West Loch Tarbert. Here he and Sir Peter Hutchison have found room for the many plants grown from seed collected in China and the Himalayas. We will be the first group allowed to see this collection. Dr Severne Mackenna has also said he will be delighted to welcome our party to his "little" garden, which he says has been considerably enlarged since some of us stole off from Stonefield in 1979 to visit Dun Alasdair.

There are other exciting gardens on the agenda, but the programme is not yet complete. So far Gigha has not been visited by the Group and it is hoped to include this garden. Also Glenarn, where we shall be having lunch, this had to be missed last year because the owners, Mr and Mrs Thornley, were showing at the Glasgow Festival. Our first visit will be to the Festival, where some of our garden hosts will be showing their own rhododendrons.

The full programme will be in the next Bulletin, usually out before Christmas, but it will also be available earlier at the Autumn weekend in Sussex.

The Sussex tour was very enjoyable and some fine gardens were seen; this will be reported in detail in the Year Book as usual. It is likely that Surrey will be the venue for the 1989 tour.

A questionnaire kindly answered by regular members of the annual tour showed that the large majority were satisfied with one evening of lectures, most members opting for one hour's duration for the talk and time after for questions and perhaps plant identification.

A useful idea was suggested by one member regarding presentations to garden owners, and that was that a metal label with the plant name and the name of the Group

Wessex Branch

On April 25th, members visited Mr Peter Chappell's

printed on it, should be given to commemorate the occasion. This idea will be taken up.

In the same questionnaire members also stressed that they would like to stay at as few hotels as possible, and this is always borne in mind by the Hon. Tours Secretary.

The Autumn Weekend, October 23-25 1987

This year the autumn weekend will be held at the Roebuck Hotel near Forest Row, our venue for last May's tour in Sussex. This is at the request of many members who found the Roebuck very comfortable and pleasant. On the Saturday morning we will make an early visit (to avoid the crowds) to Sheffield Park, famous for its wonderful autumn colour. Mr Archie Skinner has very kindly consented to take us round. We will probably return to the hotel for lunch, as it is only ten minutes or so away.

After lunch we will visit the Hon. Edward and Mrs Anne Boscawen's lovely garden, High Beeches at Handcross, and Mrs Boscawen has very kindly said she will provide tea for us.

We are having to confine garden visits to the Saturday, as the Sunday seems to be *the* day for everyone else to see the autumn colour. 2,000 persons are expected on that day by both High Beeches and Sheffield Park. Therefore Sunday morning will be taken up with a talk and slides, and followed by lunch at the hotel for those who would like it, before we disperse as usual.

The hotel is charging £32.00 half board per day. A total of £64.00 for the Friday and Saturday but this does not include lunches. If you wish to come please send a deposit of £10.00 per head and send with the form below. We will all meet for dinner on the Friday evening.

VALERIE ARCHIBOLD

Increased subscription from 1st November 1987

The Group has maintained the £5.00 subscription for 4 years since 1982, the first year making a surplus, the second and third a small loss. By careful budgeting for this year (1st November 1986 to 31st October 1987) I hope we shall just break even. The scales are finely balanced.

This year we have been faced with considerably increased postage and printing costs, and by ensuring subscriptions are paid, and by making great efforts to recruit new members, we will remain solvent. I could not however recommend to the Group's Committee that the £5.00 subscription remain for the new year beginning 1st November 1987. The Committee accepted this recommendation and agreed that the Group's subscription should be increased from £5.00 to £7.00 for a full member and from £1.50 to £2.50 for those not requiring the Year Book.

This extra money will allow the Group to meet the increasing costs of its publication and perhaps increase the content of the Bulletin, our main vehicle of communication between members. We would, I hope, build a small surplus beyond the Group's present General Fund to allow money to be available, perhaps to finance wider activities.

I am very sorry to have to announce an increase in subscriptions but I can assure members that their money is very carefully used and that we shall endeavour to give them value for money.

HON. TREASURER

To: Mrs. V. Archibald, Starveacre, Dalwood, Nr. Axminster, Devon, EX13 7HH
I enclose £10.00 deposit for the Autumn Weekend, September 23-25, 1987. Please reserve a single/twin bedded room at the Roebuck Hotel. I shall/shall not stay for lunch at the hotel on Sunday.

Name

Accompanied by

Address

Tel: