

RHS Rhododendron, Camellia & Magnolia Group



WESSEX BRANCH NEWSLETTER – AUGUST 2016

Email: pinecroftgarden1@btconnect.com Tel: Andy Fly 01903 742350

Well what a year! So hard to realise how we were all worrying on whether we would have any flowers out to show at the early shows and more importantly our Centenary Show at Wisley.

RHS Early Rhododendron, Camellia & Magnolia Show at Wisley – 9th April 2016

Like many of you, we found it very hard to find anything to take of show quality. The show however, was still a great success and even if the display stands were a bit light on rhododendrons, camellias and magnolias, the spring flowering woody plant display was magnificent. This created incredible interest with the visiting public. The bar for this section of the show has definitely been raised to a completely new level.

Garden Visit to Frosbury Farmhouse & Sarum, Worpledon on the 10th April 2016

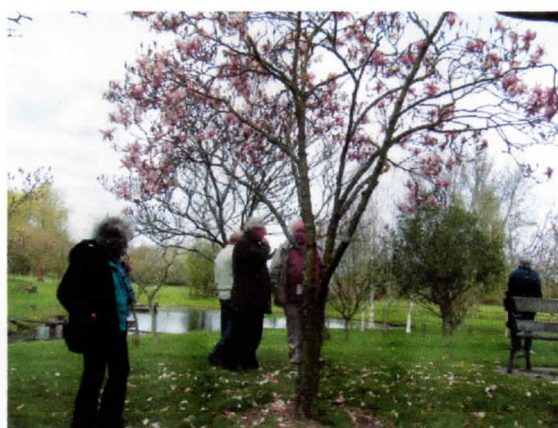
Our first visit was to Frosbury Farmhouse. Rod and Valerie Wild have created a garden of magnolias as their soil condition is not acid enough and too wet for rhododendrons. They have created an impressive collection, around 60 I believe. Like us all, their display was not what they had hoped for but there was still plenty to be admired including the striking magnolia Genie, but the plant of the morning for most was magnolia stellata hybrid Jane Platt which was near the house.

Their arboretum is staged around a large pond which they had excavated complete with jetty, bridge and rowing boat. The soil from the excavation was used to create undulating mounds into which their specimen trees are planted. A clever idea lifting the trees slightly higher as the ground is very heavy.

The whole scene was pleasing to the eye including their picture box cottage and granary. We would love to go back on a milder Spring day in the future to see their collection at their very best.



Beautiful View of Frosbury Farm House



Members Enjoying the Arboretum

After lunch we drove on to Sarum, the garden of Rod and Mary White. They grow many rare species of rhododendrons and it seems they grow everything else and I mean everything!! What a display and what is even more incredible is that Rod knows their exact origins.

The garden gently slopes down from the house giving a pleasing woodland view and glimpses of a mature pond with established planting.

A beautiful well attended garden again created from scratch which they both must be very proud of.



Rh. arboreum Tony Schilling



Rh. elegantulum

We were spoilt with refreshments by both hosts and all in all it was a great day out enjoyed by over 30 members.

RHS Main Rhododendron, Camellia & Magnolia Show at Rosemoor – 23rd April 2016

We were so looking forward to this show but like Wisley, all we could do was scabble around trying to find as many blooms as possible from the few that were in bloom and even more importantly, suitable to enter in as many classes as was possible.

But luck was on our side. We got a 1st for hippophaeoides (Haba Shan) and we won the Loder Challenge Cup for Rhododendron Taurus.



Rh. Taurus

Rosemoor is a fantastic show which is superbly run and supported. I would whole heartedly recommend anyone in our branch to enter next year. To ensure we enjoy the show and have time to meet members at Rosemoor, we make sure we arrange a long week-end of it.

RHS Centenary Rhododendron, Camellia & Magnolia Show at Wisley – 7th May 2016

The marquee was a feast of colour and showed a huge range of our genera. Even though we were all still struggling to find worthwhile blooms, the display was magnificent and hugely appreciated by the public.

A massive triumph despite the weather this year.

Centenary Visit to Valley Gardens & Pyrford Court – 9th May 2016

Valley Gardens – This was Jenny's and my first visit. Incredible landscape and our host Harvey taught us so much. There was so much to see I could not begin to cover it. A report of this visit I believe can be read in the bulletin.

Pyrford Court – Personally I found this quite disappointing. It was or must have been a beautiful garden at some time, but now it seemed unloved. However, I really enjoyed its national collection of wisterias.

Centenary Visit to The Coach House, Cranleigh – 10th May 2016

This is the garden of Tony & Carolyn Townsend. A beautiful garden which is under continual extensive restoration. I have written a report about this garden to appear in the bulletin.

This had to be a flying visit as time was pressing. We need to go back at a more relaxed time to really appreciate the landscape and planting.

The day was completed by our annual AGM and a superb Centenary lunch at Ramster.

Chelsea Flower Show – 24th – 28th May 2016

A couple of weeks breather and then it was off to Chelsea to help build the group stand along with Sally and Jenny.

We worked as a team and it was a wonderful experience to be behind the scenes to see what goes on before a show is opened. Sally had the unforgettable experience of presenting the floral bouquet of rhododendrons to the Queen. These flowers were from Miranda's garden at Ramster. A true group effort.

David Millais had his own show garden next to the groups. He supplied more or less all of the plants and advised us on how best to display them. He knows what he is talking about as he got another Gold and our stand won a Silver Gilt medal.



Part of the Display at Chelsea



Andy, Jenny & Sally Feeling Tired but Proud of Themselves!

I really did not think things could get much better than this, the perfect ending to a thrilling but tiring year but

Garden Visit to Royal Lodge

This trip was superbly organised by Jim Inskip for the Wessex Branch which we really appreciate.

This was originally scheduled for the Centenary visits but was then offered to the Wessex Branch as the go ahead could not be arranged for an earlier date. There could only be very limited numbers so it was only fair these were offered to the people who attended our events on a regular basis.

We were greeted at the entrance to Royal Lodge by the head gardener, Mark Liske. We felt privileged as the garden had not been opened to visitors for over 30 years. He guided us through the beautiful grounds of magnificent ancient trees, rhododendrons and azaleas. We were allowed to see the beautiful miniature royal cottage which had been enjoyed by the Queen and Princess Margaret and of course the royal children of today.

Prince Andrew had left instructions for his butler to provide us with tea and cakes in the conservatory after our tour of the garden. What a wonderful table arrangement and spread that greeted us when we arrived.

Being partial to cream cake I was quite eager to make sure I was near the front of the queue. I was midway through my first bite into a delicious Victoria sponge and suddenly noticed that the conversation had gone quiet. Turning round I was face to face with Prince Andrew – why does this always happen to me!! He was very cordial to everyone and especially to Jim who he knew. His staff used Jim and the late Malcolm Nash to identify lost named azaleas.

After advising us about various trees and plants in the garden he asked if there was anything else he could do to complete our day. Mark suggested a group photo to which he whole heartedly agreed. Surely this was the perfect ending to a wonderful season.



Group Photo After Garden Tour



Group Photo with Prince Andrew

Summer Barbecue/Picnic – 23rd July 2016

This was planned so that ALL members could relax and talk over the years successful events.

It was well attended with people travelling from Dorset and St. Albans and the afternoon was great fun. All of us reflected on the year gone by and the expectation of the forthcoming year. Some wonderful plants were brought by members for us all to try and identify. So nice to see young members attending -

Raul Conde Vila, William Stanger, Rama Lopez Rivera and Aya from Japan. They were truly inspirational with their enthusiasm.

Future Arranged Events:

Sunday 9th October 2016 - The Water Garden, Warren Road, Kingston-upon-Thames KT2 7LF

(Only open for one day). Admission £5. 9 Acres with ponds, streams and waterfalls. Meet 1.30pm (opens at 2pm but will probably get busy). Part of the former site of Veitch's Coombe Wood Nursery.

Saturday 29th October 2016 - Walk & Slide Show at Ramster about Meconopsis in the Wild

£3 each towards speaker and funds for future events.

- 2pm Walk round the garden**
- 3pm Tea & cake**
- 4pm Slide show and talk on Meconopsis by Richard Thornton**

Saturday 4th March 2017 – Slide Show at Ramster on Micro Propagation

£3 each towards speaker and funds for future events.

- 10am Meeting for Tea, Coffee & Biscuits**
- 11am Slide show and talk on Micro Propagation in the 1980's by John Talbot**

Ramster Flower Show, 20th May 2017

The emphasis will be on rhododendrons and azaleas for a small garden. We want to show and prove to the public that they are a much more diverse genera than many think. More information about this event will be available in our Spring newsletter.

Lastly, Jenny and I would like to thank all our volunteers for all your support this year. Every time I was asked for help you all came to the forefront to offer your services. The support from Wessex Branch Members and Affiliated Members is now better than I can remember for many years and we both thank you all.

Best Wishes

Andy Fly
Chairman of the Wessex Branch
Pinecroft, Bracken Close, Storrington, Pulborough, West Sussex RH20 3HT

Email: pinecroftgarden1@btconnect.com Tel: 01903 742350