

THE ROCK GARDEN IIZ



JANUARY 2004

RHODODENDRON SPECIAL:

Michael Thornley on GLENARN

Peter & Kenneth Cox on GLENDICK

Margaret Young on her FAVOURITE DWARF RHODODENDRONS

Also Ian Christie, David Shaw, Alastair McKelvie, Peter Bland

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The ROCK GARDEN

The Journal of the
Scottish Rock Garden Club

January 2004

Number 112

COVER: *Rhododendron* 'Ronald'
is one of the plants that originated at
Glenarn and about which Michael Thornley
writes in his article (photo Michael Thornley)



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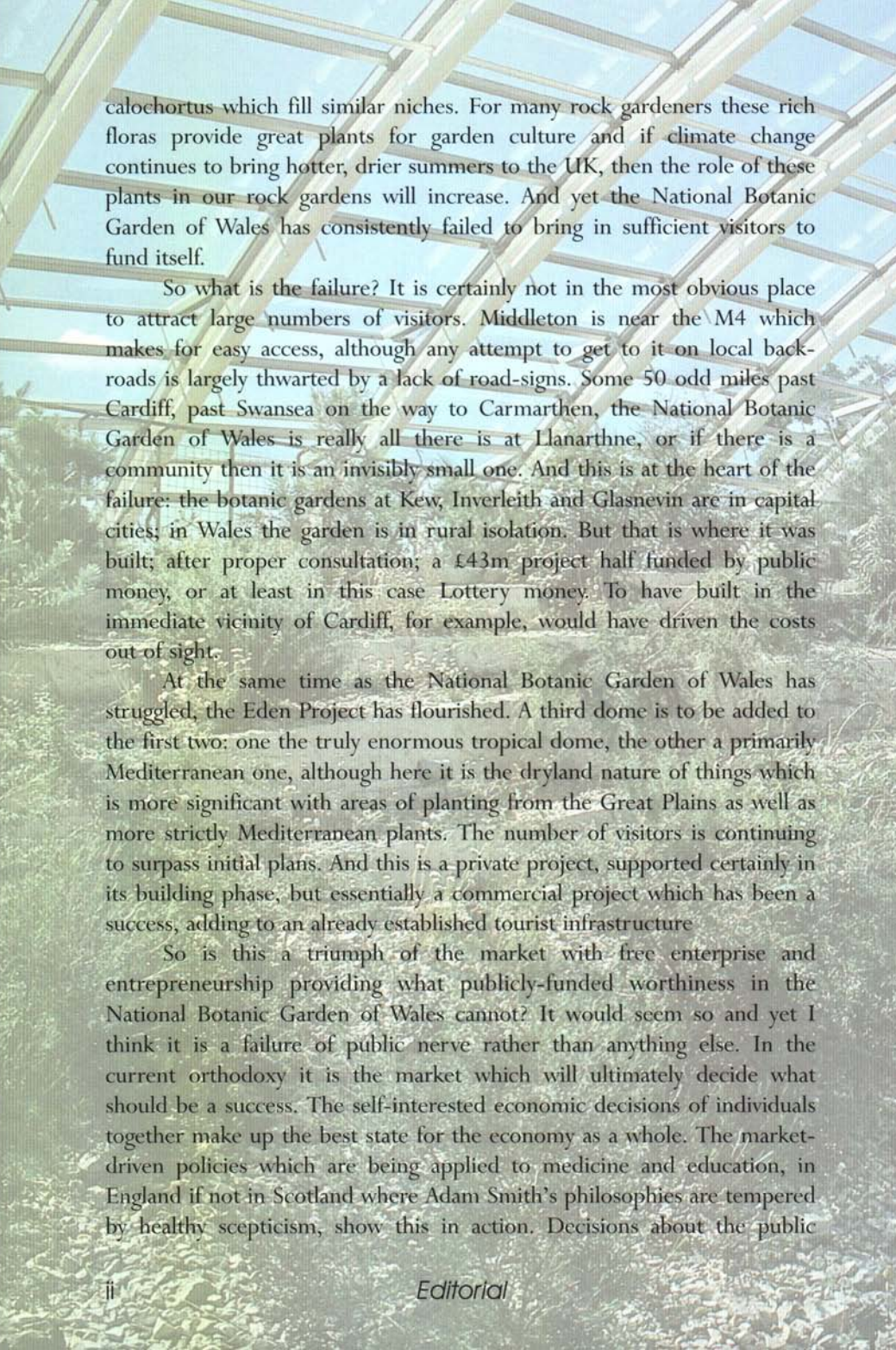
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Goodbye to Llanarthne?

I HAD NOT INTENDED TO WRITE AN EDITORIAL but the news that the National Botanic Garden of Wales at Llanarthne, or Middleton as it was rebranded, may have to close because of lack of money, has made me think again. The situation is changing rapidly. The Board of Trustees were meeting last night, Monday 15 December, so by the time you read this the situation will have moved on. For those who have not visited the gardens, and obviously that is too many, a few things should be said. The first has to be that at its heart it has a magnificent, low-span glass house which sits in its landscape as well as anyone could have hoped. The collection it houses is of plants from the various regions of the world which can be seen as having Mediterranean-type climates with hot dry summers and relatively cold winters, so as well as the Mediterranean itself, there are sections showing the plants of Western Australia, the Cape, and California. It is a fascinating place but it is not a collection of plants which would bowl over the non-specialist – not often at least. It is characteristic of these floras that they have dramatic but short flowering seasons as the rains come in autumn and again in spring. In the wild the spring shows of anemones and ranunculus in the eastern Mediterranean are paralleled by the spectacular displays of the composite-rich flora of the Western Cape, or in California by the wonderful bulbous plants: irises, moracae, crocuses,

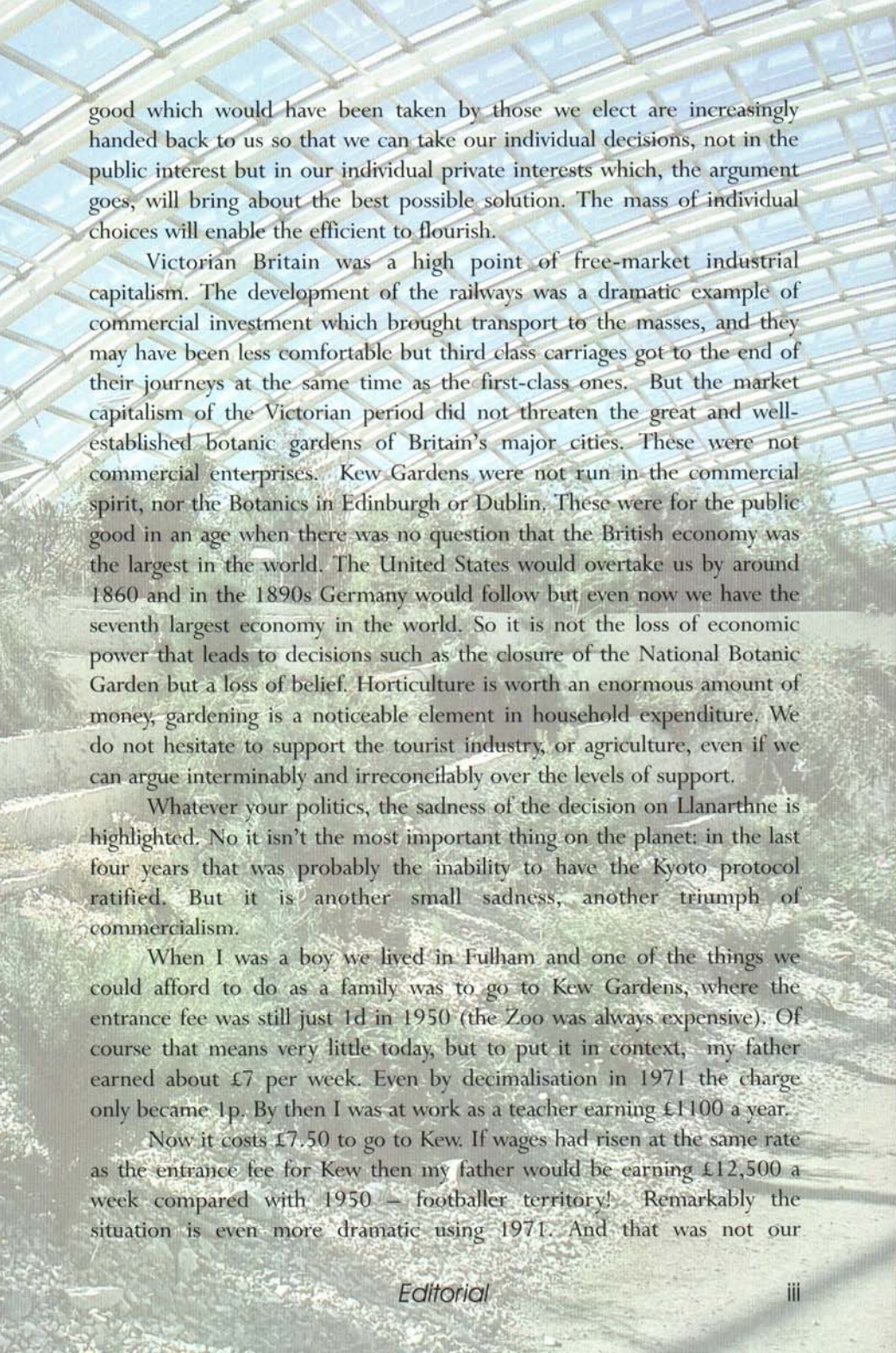


calochortus which fill similar niches. For many rock gardeners these rich floras provide great plants for garden culture and if climate change continues to bring hotter, drier summers to the UK, then the role of these plants in our rock gardens will increase. And yet the National Botanic Garden of Wales has consistently failed to bring in sufficient visitors to fund itself.

So what is the failure? It is certainly not in the most obvious place to attract large numbers of visitors. Middleton is near the M4 which makes for easy access, although any attempt to get to it on local back-roads is largely thwarted by a lack of road-signs. Some 50 odd miles past Cardiff, past Swansea on the way to Carmarthen, the National Botanic Garden of Wales is really all there is at Llanarthne, or if there is a community then it is an invisibly small one. And this is at the heart of the failure: the botanic gardens at Kew, Inverleith and Glasnevin are in capital cities; in Wales the garden is in rural isolation. But that is where it was built; after proper consultation; a £43m project half funded by public money, or at least in this case Lottery money. To have built in the immediate vicinity of Cardiff, for example, would have driven the costs out of sight.

At the same time as the National Botanic Garden of Wales has struggled, the Eden Project has flourished. A third dome is to be added to the first two: one the truly enormous tropical dome, the other a primarily Mediterranean one, although here it is the dryland nature of things which is more significant with areas of planting from the Great Plains as well as more strictly Mediterranean plants. The number of visitors is continuing to surpass initial plans. And this is a private project, supported certainly in its building phase, but essentially a commercial project which has been a success, adding to an already established tourist infrastructure.

So is this a triumph of the market with free enterprise and entrepreneurship providing what publicly-funded worthiness in the National Botanic Garden of Wales cannot? It would seem so and yet I think it is a failure of public nerve rather than anything else. In the current orthodoxy it is the market which will ultimately decide what should be a success. The self-interested economic decisions of individuals together make up the best state for the economy as a whole. The market-driven policies which are being applied to medicine and education, in England if not in Scotland where Adam Smith's philosophies are tempered by healthy scepticism, show this in action. Decisions about the public



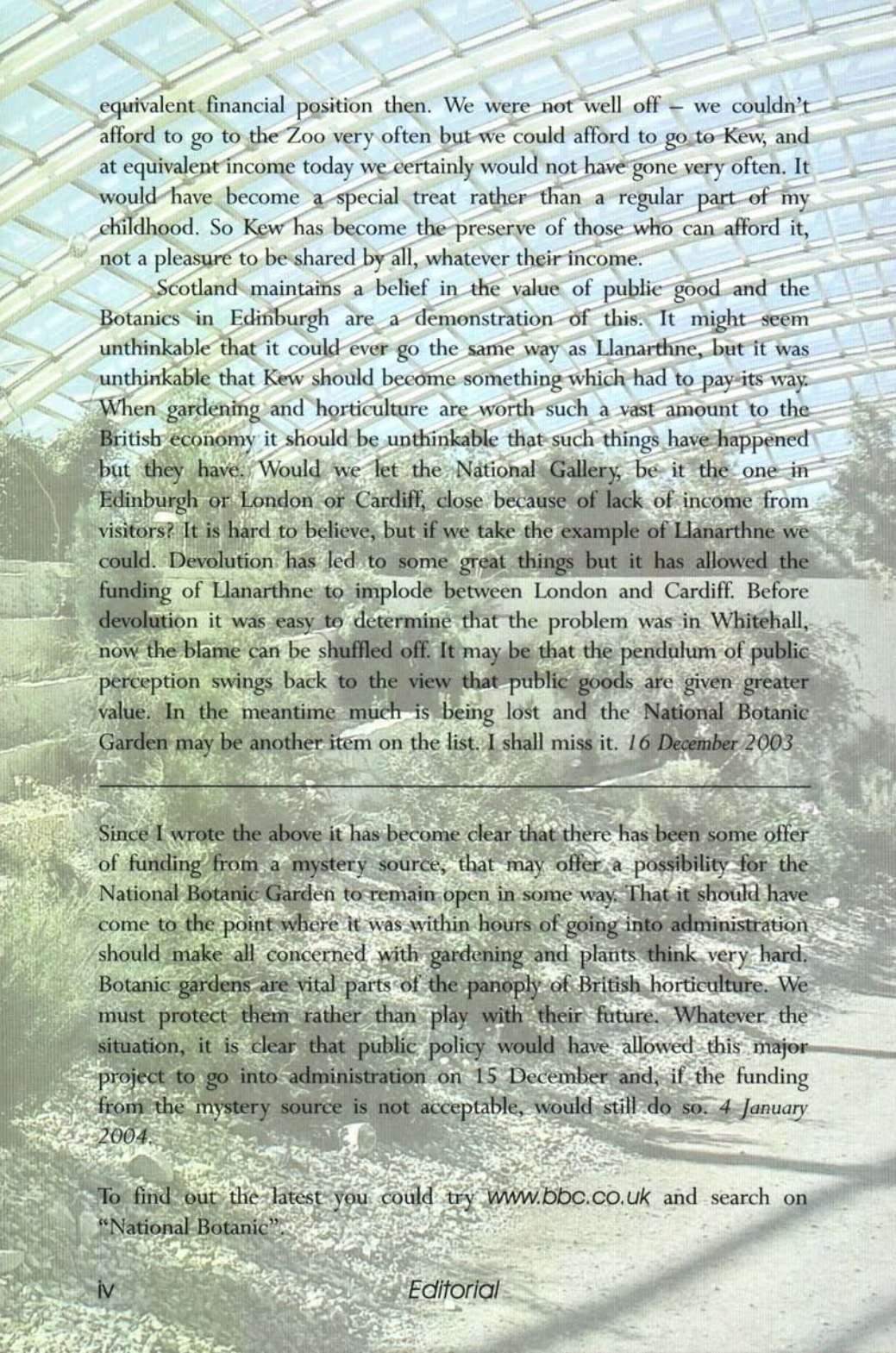
good which would have been taken by those we elect are increasingly handed back to us so that we can take our individual decisions, not in the public interest but in our individual private interests which, the argument goes, will bring about the best possible solution. The mass of individual choices will enable the efficient to flourish.

Victorian Britain was a high point of free-market industrial capitalism. The development of the railways was a dramatic example of commercial investment which brought transport to the masses, and they may have been less comfortable but third class carriages got to the end of their journeys at the same time as the first-class ones. But the market capitalism of the Victorian period did not threaten the great and well-established botanic gardens of Britain's major cities. These were not commercial enterprises. Kew Gardens were not run in the commercial spirit, nor the Botanic in Edinburgh or Dublin. These were for the public good in an age when there was no question that the British economy was the largest in the world. The United States would overtake us by around 1860 and in the 1890s Germany would follow but even now we have the seventh largest economy in the world. So it is not the loss of economic power that leads to decisions such as the closure of the National Botanic Garden but a loss of belief. Horticulture is worth an enormous amount of money, gardening is a noticeable element in household expenditure. We do not hesitate to support the tourist industry, or agriculture, even if we can argue interminably and irreconcilably over the levels of support.

Whatever your politics, the sadness of the decision on Llanarthne is highlighted. No it isn't the most important thing on the planet: in the last four years that was probably the inability to have the Kyoto protocol ratified. But it is another small sadness, another triumph of commercialism.

When I was a boy we lived in Fulham and one of the things we could afford to do as a family was to go to Kew Gardens, where the entrance fee was still just 1d in 1950 (the Zoo was always expensive). Of course that means very little today, but to put it in context, my father earned about £7 per week. Even by decimalisation in 1971 the charge only became 1p. By then I was at work as a teacher earning £1100 a year.

Now it costs £7.50 to go to Kew. If wages had risen at the same rate as the entrance fee for Kew then my father would be earning £12,500 a week compared with 1950 – footballer territory! Remarkably the situation is even more dramatic using 1971. And that was not our



equivalent financial position then. We were not well off – we couldn't afford to go to the Zoo very often but we could afford to go to Kew, and at equivalent income today we certainly would not have gone very often. It would have become a special treat rather than a regular part of my childhood. So Kew has become the preserve of those who can afford it, not a pleasure to be shared by all, whatever their income.

Scotland maintains a belief in the value of public good and the Botanic in Edinburgh are a demonstration of this. It might seem unthinkable that it could ever go the same way as Llanarthne, but it was unthinkable that Kew should become something which had to pay its way. When gardening and horticulture are worth such a vast amount to the British economy it should be unthinkable that such things have happened but they have. Would we let the National Gallery, be it the one in Edinburgh or London or Cardiff, close because of lack of income from visitors? It is hard to believe, but if we take the example of Llanarthne we could. Devolution has led to some great things but it has allowed the funding of Llanarthne to implode between London and Cardiff. Before devolution it was easy to determine that the problem was in Whitehall, now the blame can be shuffled off. It may be that the pendulum of public perception swings back to the view that public goods are given greater value. In the meantime much is being lost and the National Botanic Garden may be another item on the list. *16 December 2003*

Since I wrote the above it has become clear that there has been some offer of funding from a mystery source, that may offer a possibility for the National Botanic Garden to remain open in some way. That it should have come to the point where it was within hours of going into administration should make all concerned with gardening and plants think very hard. Botanic gardens are vital parts of the panoply of British horticulture. We must protect them rather than play with their future. Whatever the situation, it is clear that public policy would have allowed this major project to go into administration on 15 December and, if the funding from the mystery source is not acceptable, would still do so. *4 January 2004*.

To find out the latest you could try www.bbc.co.uk and search on "National Botanic".

A few words from our new President



IT'S VERY HUMBLING to get home from the AGM, writes *Ian Bainbridge*, and take a proper look at the SRGC President's Salver, which Ian Young passed on to me at my election. The twenty-three names engraved on it make me realise what an honour it is to be elected the twenty-fourth President of the Club.

I am following a long line of strong Presidents, each of whom has made his or her mark on the progress of the Club, and Ian Young has been a great example. He has been hard working, thoughtful and thought-provoking, and his presidency has definitely been a case of "what he could do for the Club, not what the Club could do for him". He has presided over a stable membership; a major development of the Club's website; a step change in the Journal to the excellent standard it is today; repeated success at Gardening Scotland; the success of Alpines 2001 and more. Don't get me wrong, he's not done all this alone; but providing the right atmosphere for the Club and its active members to go out and be successful, as well as working his socks off, is great credit to his stewardship. I also must express the Club's thanks to "the flower behind the throne" – Maggie – who has supported him throughout his term in office.

A number of other officers have demitted office at the AGM, and I must mention and thank Robert Ives, who has been a diligent, positive and good-humoured Treasurer. Also my rock garden, alpine house and I offer many thanks to Jean Wyllie, and the entire St Andrews seed despatch team, for many years of hard work in keeping the Club's seed exchange truly successful. Ian and all will be hard acts to follow, and it's my responsibility for the next three years to make sure the Club continues in good heart.

So, what do we need to do? There are a number of things we must keep doing well, and a number of areas we must build upon to ensure our continuing success:

- We must keep the high standards we have set ourselves in the Journal, the Seed Exchange and the Club's shows across the country. Each one is a vital part of our 'shop window', and these

are often the reasons why rock gardeners across the world wish to remain members of the Club.

- We must do all we can to maintain and grow the membership. The Gardening Scotland Show at Ingliston and reciprocal deals with other clubs have helped, but we need to keep thinking of new ways to attract folk to the Club.
- We should spend as much of our income as is possible on the Club's aims (we are a charity and that is what our income is for) but we must maintain our sound financial footing: I know our new Treasurer, Jim Divers, will help to achieve this.
- We must continue to develop the SRGC web site; it has come on tremendously under Ian Young's guidance, and he has agreed to keep his hand on this tiller.
- We must continue to provide for the membership, including those from outwith Scotland as well as those at home. We have, for example around 300 members in each of Scandinavia and northern Europe, and I am very pleased that Council has agreed to the sponsorship of SRGC speakers at conferences at Tromsø in Norway and in the Netherlands over the next two years.
- We also have many members in the north of England, and we hope to explore, with the Alpine Garden Society, the prospect of a joint event (for the two clubs) in the north of England.

There is, though, one key area that I want the Council to pay particular attention to over the next three years, and that is the question of attracting new young active members. The Youngs and the Bainbridges, to name but four members, got the rock gardening bug in their twenties, and while we might want to grow old less than gracefully, we do need to see the arrival of the next generation of growers, showers and activists in the Club. I am sure that further development of the Web Site is part of this, but what more can we do to attract student members and young gardeners? Council will be thinking of ways to do just this, but if you have suggestions, I'd be very pleased to hear from you, just as I would over any other issue. Just e-mail me at the club's address – enquiries@srgc.org.uk – or drop me a line.

So there is much to be done, and I'll put in every effort I can, but I will be looking to everyone to help in keeping the Scottish Rock Garden Club at the forefront of gardening in Scotland and of rock gardening the world over.



The Clubs new President Ian Bainbridge (above) with the Alpine Garden Society's new President John Richards at the 2003 Discussion Weekend in Elgin

A photograph of a lush garden with a large tree and a house in the background. The scene is filled with dense foliage, including a prominent tree with bare branches in the foreground and a house with a grey roof visible through the trees in the background. The lighting is soft, suggesting an overcast day.

Glenarn

Michael Thornley

The 2002 John Duff Memorial Lecture

WHEN PADDLE STEAMERS PLIED THE RIVER CLYDE it was possible to reach any number of destinations on the west coast of Scotland from the Broomielaw in the centre of Glasgow. In the upper reaches the river was hemmed in by shipyards and docks but the views soon opened up across the flat fields of Renfrewshire. At Bowling, the Forth & Clyde Canal enters the river and the next landmark is the volcanic plug of Dumbarton Rock. The navigation channel sweeps on down to Greenock at which point the steamers crossed the estuary to Helensburgh before making the short trip to the village of Rhu, one of the settlements on the Gareloch. Glenarn was built in the 1840s when 15-acre plots were being laid out across the hillside above the village. The house was first occupied as a holiday home but, with improving communications by steamer and by train, it soon became a permanent residence and was extended, both upwards and outwards, at least twice in the following 20 years.

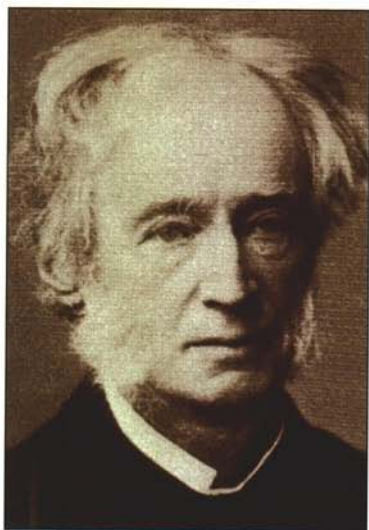
The first owner was Andrew Macgeorge, a lawyer and near neighbour to William Hooker who was Professor of Botany at Glasgow University and also Curator of the Botanical Garden then located in Anderston. William Hooker also had a holiday home in Helensburgh, to which he dispatched his family during the summer. He would walk out on Friday night from Glasgow and return on foot late on Sunday in order to be able to lecture to his students on Monday morning. William Hooker was an acquaintance of Andrew Macgeorge who was a lawyer and came to act for Hooker, both in Glasgow and after Hooker had moved to Kew in 1843.

At the side of the house at Glenarn there is a huge plant of *Rhododendron falconeri* dubbed, by Sir Islay Campbell, as one of the “Giants of the West” and reputed to have been grown from seed collected by Joseph Hooker’s expedition to India and Sikkim in 1848-51. To mark this rhododendron’s 150th year we wrote to Kew to ask if there was any information that might corroborate the story and the archivist kindly provided a photocopy of the herbarium material, originally collected by Joseph Hooker, in the Tonglo mountains. But while there is information on seed that arrived in London (the second



3 Glenarn from the air

batch of which had arrived over land by post from India) as well as details of organisations to which the seed had been distributed, no direct connection could be traced to Glenarn. Perhaps this famous rhododendron had been purchased from one of the local nurseries, of which there were four in Helensburgh at that time.



4 Andrew Macgeorge

In any event, it appears that Andrew Macgeorge was not interested in gardens. In a letter that he wrote, following a dinner party at the Hookers' family home, there is no mention of plants or horticulture which seems improbable in that company. He laid out large hybrid rhododendrons to define the front lawn and had a vegetable patch at the back of the house to feed the household. The main legacy, apart from the ubiquitous *Sequoiadendron giganteum* which towers over the



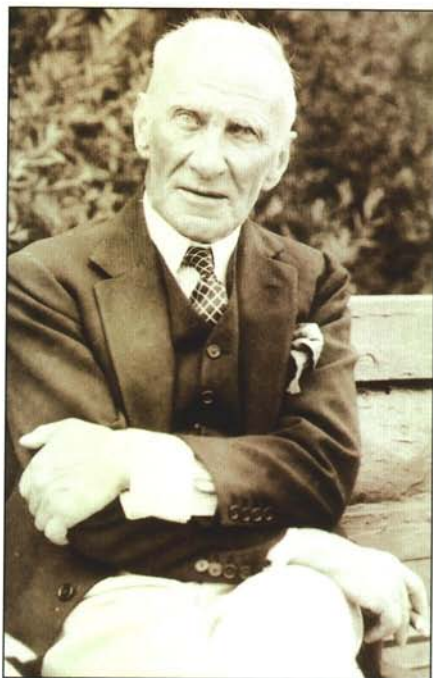
5 The house at Glenarn c.1850

garden like a lighthouse, is the network of Victorian paths that spread out from the small quarry, now the rock garden, which supplied the stone to build the house and for the boundary walls of the property. These paths wind their way around the garden, up small glens, under a canopy of oak, sycamore and birch with lime trees marking the western boundary.

There was little further development until the mid 1920s when James Bogle Gibson of Portencross on the Ayrshire coast purchased Glenarn. He died before the sale was completed but subsequently his widow, her three children and grandmother Gibson, along with various dogs and hens, moved into Glenarn. The two sons, Archie and Sandy Gibson, were in their late teens or early twenties and were training to be chartered accountants, travelling into Glasgow every day. Archie subsequently married Betty Graham and these three created the garden that we see today. In 1928 a huge storm swept down the west coast of Scotland, knocking over 60 trees in the garden and it was in the aftermath of this disaster that rhododendrons were planted in clearings that had been made in the *Rhododendron ponticum* and laurel that had been smashed flat by the falling timber, the Gibsons being encouraged

in all of this by John Holms of Formakin.

John Holms' father had made his money in the mills of Paisley and his son took it upon himself to lose the family fortune on two occasions. He was a friend of William Burrell (whose fabulous collection of antiques, historic artefacts and paintings is preserved in Glasgow) and competed against him in the auction houses. The third



6 John Holms of Formakin

member of this triumvirate was Scotland's premier architect of the time, Robert Lorimer, who designed a Scotch tower house at Formakin for Holms. Even before the building work commenced, Holms laid out a many compartmented walled garden, in the Arts and Crafts style, divided by yew and beech hedges, with herbaceous borders and roses on trellises, all looked after by 23 gardeners. By the end of the First World War Holms was in deep financial trouble and his army of gardeners much depleted. But being an insatiable collector, and not a

man to give up a fight easily, he turned his attention to rhododendrons which were beginning to flood into the country, notably from Forrest's plant hunting expeditions. Realising that Formakin did not have suitable conditions he scoured the west coast for a more favourable site and started to create another garden or (more accurately) planting, at Larachmhor, near Arisaig.

John Holms introduced the Gibson brothers to other major landowners in Scotland who were also avid collectors of rhododendrons, the first being John Stirling Maxwell of Pollok in

Glasgow, who supplied *Rhododendron orbiculare* (21) and *R. caloxanthum*, which is to be wondered at not only for its beautiful pale lemon flowers, but also for the glaucous blue new foliage which follows a month later. The next port of call was Lochinch and Lord Stair who provided the two tall white *R. arboreum* that stand like pillars in the lower garden as well as *R. crassum* which grows in thickets about the place. Balfour at Dawyck swapped choice plants for Chinese pheasants with the Gibsons before directing them to the Royal Botanic Garden

A. M. 1958 RONALD 105
under name

Sino Grande x *Hodgsonii*.

Cross made at Arisaig, Aft. 1933. Seed sown March 1934. This was the first time *Sino Grande* has flowered in Scotland. We crossed it with *argentinum* also (set left of seed), *lacteum* & several others which failed. With *Hodgsonii* it set very little seed, & after giving J.A. his share of our seedlings we have only 5 left. These into permanent places July 1938.

one given to Dawyck, Oct. 1939. Only 4 left. One to E. Burg about the same time. One of the remaining 4 put up to the Gernon clearing, on 25/10/47. About 6 ft.

4. pl. 1962. more winter but hardy than *Sino G.*

7 One of the Gibsons' record cards - for *Rhododendron* 'Ronald'

Edinburgh which is the source of *R. strigillosum*, "the best form", with its black red flowers of early spring. Thomas North Christie of Blackhills, near Elgin, handed out packets of seed including *R. augustinii*, as well as a plant of *R. eximium* which covers itself in flower down to the ground, a bride in the woodland going to her wedding.

Thus the first influx of species rhododendrons to Glenarn came not from plant hunting expeditions abroad, but from weekend forays in Scotland when, presumably, the two young men were welcomed with open arms by collectors of rhododendrons who were being almost overwhelmed by their ever-expanding beds of seedlings. By this time,



8 Archie Gibson holding Jimmock and a Pekinese



9 Betty and Sandy Gibson with another Pekinese

in the early 1930s, the Forrest introductions must have been coming into flower for the first time and it is for this reason, we believe, that the garden has particularly good forms which had been hand picked from the profusion of material that was available. However, this leaves us with a problem of now finding equally good replacements as it is an unfortunate fact that a 70-year-old woodland garden is a kind of horticultural eventide home, with a distressingly high death rate.

Other sources of rhododendrons were from further afield, in England, with Magor sending *Rhododendron haematodes* and the extraordinary *R. quinquefolium* which, if it is the original 1933 plant, is a true bonsai, standing less than a metre high and hardly putting on any growth each year. Some plants came from nurseries such as Gills and White, including *R. 'Loderi'* (22). Archie Gibson purchasing this scented and voluptuous hybrid to celebrate his honeymoon. That we have such detailed information is due to the fact that the Gibsons maintained an accession book, the "Bible", that gives the dates, size and source of all new rhododendrons. From time to time the records were passed between the two brothers, who lived in either side of the house, for comments, and queries; as to where they had been planted, and had they survived, all of which helps to build up an overall picture of the garden.

However, by far the greatest contributor in this period was John Holms himself who, for instance, provided *Rhododendron valentianum* which grows on stumps, for good drainage, and acts as navigation marks on the paths. The records indicate that some of these were 'in lieu of interest' plants which suggests that the Gibsons were helping Holms financially, while others are designated as 'RIP JAH', i.e. they were obtained after his death in 1938, when the bank requisitioned his properties and sold off his collection of antiques. Likewise his creditors arranged for his rhododendron collection at Larachmhor to be catalogued for an intended sale in Glasgow. But being greedy men, they instructed Brennan, the gardener, to load the largest rhododendrons on to the goods train. It became stuck in the first tunnel and the rhododendrons were returned to Larachmhor where they reside to this



10 Rock garden c. 1939

11 *Rhododendron falconeri*, 1930



12 Rock garden steps, 1964



Photograph by Carol Cobb

GLENARN, DUNBARTONSHIRE



13 *Rhododendron falconeri*

14 Rock garden steps in 1999
– the same view as 12



15 *Rhododendron falconeri* in 1996
– the same plant as 11





16 *Rhododendron falconeri* x *R. macabeanum*

day. In the circumstances Betty Gibson's slightly guilty comment that "John Holms always meant us to have this" is understandable.

What is more difficult to comprehend is the huge amount of work put in by these three young people to develop the garden in its first ten years, assisted by only one full-time gardener who was largely confined to the vegetable patch. The first planting took place in the sheltered lower glen, which had been hit hardest by the storm, but the clearing process continued throughout the garden: in Melrose, named after relations from the Borders who came to help, Betty's clearing at the top of the drive, in Germany where two prisoners of war felled the trees, and to Granny's Hens where granny kept her hens.

At this time the Gibsons were also starting to hybridise and, with time on their side and aided and abetted by John Holms, they cocked a snook at the Establishment and concentrated their efforts on big leaf crosses, notably *Rhododendron* 'Ronald' (front cover & 7) where they took the vibrant but tennis ball size truss of *R. hodgsonii* and blew it up, using *R. sinogrande*, into a strawberry pink confection which, unfortunately, exhibits the same failings of *R. hodgsonii* and quickly fades away to white. An even better, but unregistered, cross is *R. falconeri* x *R. macabeum* (15), where the primrose yellow of the latter is introduced, losing neither the parliamentary green leather foliage, nor the shapely truss, of the former. Another fine hybrid, a chance cross with *R. williamsianum* blood, is *R. 'Pook'* (19), named after one of the Gibsons' Pekinese dogs.

The Second World War marked a change of direction. Having established the backbone of the rhododendron collection, the Gibsons now started to obtain rarer or new introductions notably from Ludlow & Sherriff and, later, Kingdon Ward expeditions. For instance *Rhododendron viscidifolium* came as seed of *R. thompsonii* var. *pallidum* from the Ludlow & Sherriff 1938 expedition and, after correspondence with the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh, was subsequently confirmed as a new species. *R. luteiflorum*, with its acid green and moderately tender flower was one of Kingdon Ward's introductions from upper Burma. Another relative rarity is the frothy yellow flowered *R. zaleucum* var.



17 Michael Thornley clearing up after a storm

flaviflorum (KW 20837) with the white underside of the leaf evenly scaled with tiny pointillist dots. However, the best known introduction from this period is *R. lindleyi*, which thrives outside and sometimes sports 12 flowers in its crown like trusses that hover in the dusk, scenting the oncoming darkness. The Gibsons named the pink striped *R. lindleyi* 'Geordie Sherriff' (18) in honour of their friend and great plant collector.

In the late 1950s and early 1960s, the garden must have reached some kind of peak of perfection with burgeoning plants exhibiting all the beauty of youth, with plenty of sunlit space in which to grow, gracefully and erect. The Gibsons themselves must have been in their physical and intellectual prime with Archie contributing acerbic and witty notes to the *Rhododendron Year Book* and Sandy chairing the National Trust for Scotland's Garden Committee. Peter Clegg recalls a visit to Glenarn at that time, when he was a trainee gardener elsewhere. Having attended to his business with Sandy, Peter was dispatched off to Archie and Betty's side of the house where he was liberally entertained. Next day he woke with an acute hangover and, looking out into the rain in the early morning, was appalled to see all three of his hosts already hard at work in the rock garden.



18 *Rhododendron lindleyi* 'Geordie Sherriff'



19 *Rhododendron* 'Pook'

New plants continued to arrive, including an interesting collection of straggly *Rhododendron yakushimanum*, from seed collected by Doleshy and distributed by the Royal Horticultural Society. *Rhododendron* 'Avalanche' (20) came from Gigha and carpets the ground in a snowfall of petals sending its scent sliding away down the garden on the cool evening air. Later the Gibsons started to obtain rhododendrons from Peter Cox at Glendoick who has continued to be the main source of new introductions to this day including the foxy eared *R. bureavii* and *R. pachysanthum*, neither of which had been previously represented in the garden. However, it should not be forgotten that rhododendrons and many other interesting and unusual plants arrive as gifts to the garden from individuals from all over the world. John Basford, for instance, when on his occasional forays from his island fastness at Brodick Castle, would leave boxes of plants on the doorstep for us to discover when we returned home from work and this generosity has been repeated on countless occasions by many other visitors to the garden.

Betty Gibson died in May 1975, pre-deceasing Archie by six months. Sandy Gibson soldiered on, suffering from Parkinson's Disease, and died in 1982. Towards the end of his life he would leave the nursing home where he was staying in Helensburgh and return to his bedroom at Glenarn to watch the garden he had created come into flower once again in the spring. It was on such a day, at the end of March in the following year, after a bitter winter, that we first saw Glenarn and were amazed to find such a remarkable collection in its sheltered garden so close to Glasgow. By the time we had reached the top of the drive we had decided that we would try to restore Glenarn, a resolve that was sorely tested by the sight of the derelict house that came with the garden.

It was Peter Cox who advised that, as we were going to spend most of our time outside, we should immediately take action to make the house more comfortable and manageable. This was achieved by the simple expedient of demolishing half of it, and constructing a 2-storey conservatory that re-connected the previously inward-looking house to the garden. There then commenced a seven-year period during which





21 *Rhododendron orbiculare*



22 *Rhododendron 'Loderi'*

we gradually cleared our way through the overgrown garden, moving from one area to another until, finally the jigsaw pieces started to interlock. While we were clearing, lifting the canopy, felling sycamores and making huge bonfires, we mapped the areas where we were working, recording the fallen tallies and the labels on the plants. We would spend the evenings putting this information together with the accessions' book and slowly began to identify the collection of rhododendrons. Even now, twenty years later, new ones come to light.

Rhododendron enthusiasts quickly arrived to check that we were not destroying rare species and warned us of the threat of honey fungus which we took seriously enough to purchase a winch that could lift 5 tonnes. The problem was how to deal with 5 tonnes of stump when it had been prised from the ground. Between the demolition material from the house and the removal of fallen and rotten trees in the garden more than 100 skips went down the drive. Out of necessity we re-cut all the paths, to gain access to the furthest reaches of the garden and replaced all the step fronts. (17 years later I have repeated the operation, ordering the new step fronts from the original invoice

and, in more philosophical moments, wonder whether I will be replacing them again 17 years hence).

By far the greatest problem was the rock garden which had disappeared beneath invading birch and brambles, although a remarkable number of far from dwarf rhododendrons had survived under this rampant regeneration and the attention of people seeking to liberate the plants from the hands of the developers who were threatening to purchase the garden and top field where they planned to build 200 houses. We decided that we would not start on the rock garden until everywhere else had been cleared as we knew that, to do otherwise, would have been like entering the Labyrinth, with no hope of escape.

A photograph from a box of negatives discovered in the attic revealed a quite different rock garden to that which we had found. Probably taken in the late 1930s (10), it shows a kilted figure, standing in the quarry, surveying a classical rock garden of scree, boulders, small scale plants, including conifers and dwarf rhododendrons. Now the Umbrella Pine, *Sciadopitys verticillata*, is over 10 metres high and dominates the rock face, taking the light away, while huge clumps of *Rhododendron lepidostylum* and *R. williamsianum*, dwarf rhododendron for the rock garden *par excellence*, stand well above head height blocking the path behind. The decision as to whether or not to attempt to restore this part of the garden to its original state has resulted in endless debate. In the meantime the rock garden remains a rather overblown and colourful version of its original neat self, a kind of faded music hall artiste who has seen better days.

Fortunately Glenarn is more than a collection of rhododendrons. Archie Gibson planted thousands of daffodils: small, elegant old hybrids rather than the buxom versions that are popular today, as well as species narcissus that seed themselves in the short turf, one of the benefits of taking off all the grass from the garden in the late summer, an unpleasant and fly-ridden job. The major impact, however, comes from the tree magnolias which are like huge beacons of light in the spring, drawing the eye down through the garden and out into the landscape beyond. The Gibsons were rhododendron enthusiasts of the highest order but their greatest contribution was to create a truly wondrous sense of place, by immense physical work and an encyclopedic knowledge of plants, that is impossible for us to emulate.



23 *Rhododendron haematodes*

Therefore what is the purpose of seeking to restore a garden such as Glenarn which is travelling away faster in time than the gardeners can keep up? We would suggest the following reasons, or objectives, which are to

- Record the history of gardens, both their social history and that of the collections of plants
- Identify the particularly important or good forms as well as rhododendrons under threat, and seek to propagate these wherever possible
- Continue to provide a destination for new introductions (a task that is not easy to achieve when space is at a premium, particularly in an ageing collection)
- Maintain and conserve that sense of place which so often creates such strong and emotional responses from visitors. Many people come to gardens because they provide the security of continuity, proof that the world continues from season to season, but paradoxically everything they see that engenders these feelings lies in the past

If we understand and achieve this last objective we may unlock the interest and enthusiasm that will be so necessary to achieve the first three objectives.

Glenarn is open from 21 March to 21 September, dawn to dusk.

Further reading:

- J F A Gibson, 'The Garden at Glenarn', *Journal of the Royal Horticultural Society*, August 1967
- J F A Gibson, 'Forrest Rhododendrons suitable for the Rock Garden', *Journal of Scottish Rock Garden Club*, Vol XIII Part 3 March 1973
- Sylvester Christie, 'Rhododendrons in the Space Age', *Rhododendrons 1974 with Magnolias and Camellias*, Royal Horticultural Society
- Sir Islay Campbell, 'Glenarn and the Gibson Family', *Rhododendrons 1983/84 with Magnolias and Camellias*, Royal Horticultural Society
- Ian C Hedge, 'The Garden of Larachmhor, Arisaig', *The Rhododendrons and Camellias Year Book 1967*, Royal Horticultural Society
- M G Thornley, 'Gardening Against Time: The Maintenance of Glenarn', *The World of Rhododendrons Yearbook 2000 No. 3*, The Scottish Rhododendron Society
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A version of this article first appeared in *Rhododendrons in Horticulture & Science* edited by George Argent and Marjory McFarlane (see Book Reviews).



Shona Taylor (right), daughter of Margaret and Henry, at Glenarn in 1964
Photo: M&H Taylor





28 *Gentiana bellidifolia*

The *Celmisia* on Teddy Bear Island

Ian Christie

THIS IS A BRIEF ACCOUNT of our visit to South Island, New Zealand in January 2002. On our touchdown at Christchurch we were greeted with pouring rain and immediately hailed a taxi to take us to the garage where we picked up our hired 4x4 jeep. That done, we then found a motel to stay at for a couple of nights. The following day turned out to be wet and misty but, not deterred, we headed for our first excursion to Mount Hutt. On the lower pasture we had our first sight of *aciphylla*, *celmisia* and *bulbinella*, then continuing up the steep winding track, nearing the top at around 1000 m we came across an outcrop of large, dripping wet rocky cliffs where we spied several silvery cushions growing amongst the rocks. With great care I

climbed up to take a closer look and you can imagine my delight at finding *Raoulia mammillaris* (29) and *Raoulia rubra*. Some of the cushions were in excess of 60 cm in diameter and so solid I could have used them as stepping stones. There was no sign whatsoever of any soil or grit for the roots to grow through but certainly an abundance of water which I would guess must bring down nutrient-rich mud and mineral-rich schists. Many young seedlings grew alongside the mature plants and I am led to believe the parent plants were several hundred years old. The nickname “vegetable sheep” suited this plant in the wild yet at home we need to cosset them in the alpine house to achieve prize winning specimens at just 15–20 cm across.

For our next botanical trip we met up with that loveable local plant expert Steve Newall who gave up much of his time and energy to take us to several interesting locations bringing along keys to gates which allowed us access to many very basic mountain tracks. We were also introduced to Ross Graham, a New Zealand botanist who assisted us on identification of plants together with our two Scottish experts, Jean and Jim Wyllie from Dunblane. All the input assured us of a memorable trip. Meeting up with Steve and the local alpine group we all headed up the bumpy track of the Old Man Range. Once again on the lower level at the roadside were numerous *Aciphylla aurea*. The long, sharply pointed leaves formed impressive rosettes and were topped by tall, golden-bronze, flower spikes; the common name, speargrass, warned us that this was not a plant to be meddled with. On reaching the car park we were well advised to wrap up because a cold blustery winter’s wind caused quite a chill factor. Here among the low scrub was *Celmisia sessiliflora* in full flower and onwards and upwards we passed many interesting plants including several varieties of *Celmisia* which were not flowering. A hail storm with icy blasts greeted us at the top but once there we forgot about the cold.

The area on top of this mountain resembled a lunar landscape with huge vertical weathered rocks, some about 10 m high, whilst others looked like huge jagged elephants. Many hundreds of *Gentiana bellidifolia* (28) braved the elements to light up the dull day with their





30 *Myosotis albosericea*

masses of white flowers set amidst bright green rosettes of leaves.

Our next trip took us on an interesting hair-raising drive up the steep rough winding track to Dunston Range, at an elevation of 1600 m. This gave us spectacular views overlooking the Clyde Dam way below us. Growing in abundance on the rocky hillside, *Myosotis pulvinaris* formed wonderful tight silver cushions, some covered with a mass of tiny white flowers. Steve then came up trumps, taking us to the only location for *Myosotis albosericea* (30), bright golden-yellow flowers covering the superb compact dome of silver leathery-leaved rosettes. Thankfully the weather was sunny and flowers were open. Also on the scree and at every turn were thousands of *Gentiana divisa* aptly named the snowball gentian. These plants were generally very compact, only a few centimetres tall, the pristine white flowers completely covering the deep green foliage – a spectacular sight. I must have used up 3 rolls of film on this one plant.

In abundance on each mountain range were celmisias of every description and Mount Pisa was no exception. Steve had taken us along several rough tracks to reach one of his favourite locations at approximately 1000 m. Near a small mountain hut set amidst rolling grassy plateaus with several small streams running through, one such

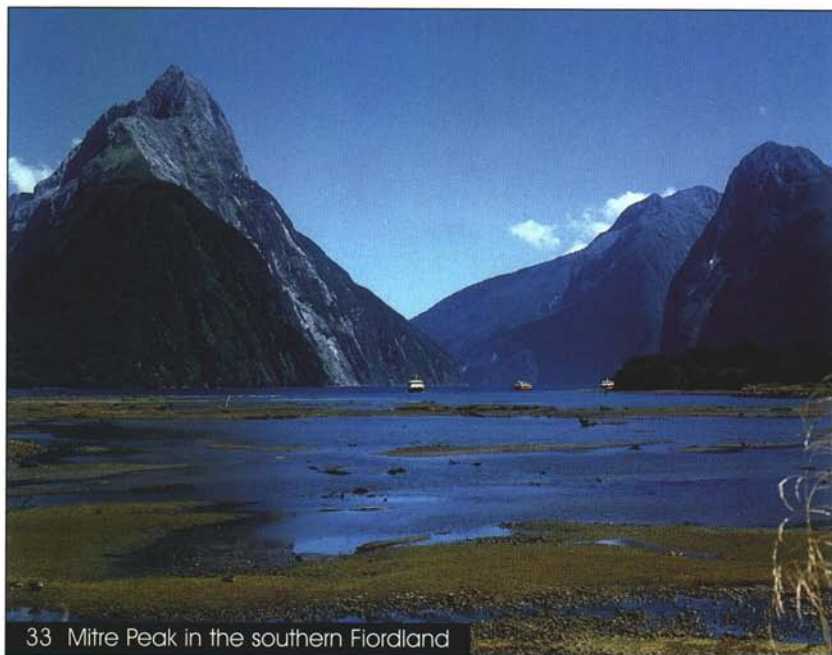


31 The celmisia of 'Teddy Bear Island'

stream had cut out an island the shape of a teddy bear in the grass which was christened by Steve's children "Teddy Bear Island". Here is one of the only known celmisias of its kind – an exceptional specimen at least two metres in diameter (31). The green rosettes of toothed lance-shaped leaves formed a dense tufted plant with the underside of the leaves being white and each rosette producing a perfect white daisy. Steve has taken a few plant experts to this site and many arguments have followed as to whether this is a hybrid or a new species; a possible hybrid could be between *Celmisia densiflora* and one of the larger leafed forms like *Celmisia verbascifolia*, however there are no large leafed celmisias in the locality with the exception of *Celmisia lyallii* which has long, very narrow, stiff, sharply pointed leaves. This makes it very difficult to make an educated guess about the possible parents of this plant. A hybrid? How did it find its way to this location? A mystery cross or a new species? I was just very happy that I had come all this way and had seen this very special, unique plant. Many myths surround other wonderful celmisias: one such is the famous "pink" celmisia – not that we expected to find this here. But we decided to spend the rest of the afternoon walking up the hill and taking time to enjoy the



32 *Aciphylla crosby-smithii*



33 Mitre Peak in the southern Fiordland

many cushion plants growing along and above the banks of the stream. Imagine our surprise when Ann shouted to us from a distant grassy bank that she had found a yellow-flowered plant. We all rushed over with excitement and certain disbelief but sure enough there was a celmisia with pale yellow flowers growing amongst the turf. Steve and Ross Graham were flabbergasted, the camera shutters were red hot. The plant resembled *Celmisia densiflora* in habit with silvery green tufted foliage, and two or three pale lemon flowers per stem (34). We hunted around for more plants without success. We did receive a message from Ross after returning home to say he had found more plants in flower on a later visit: he continues to keep an observant eye on these so watch this space. Our final highlight of the day and on the other side



of the hill was a colony of *Aciphylla simplex*. Growing on an exposed rocky ridge, the sharp spiny foliage formed compact golden-bronze tufted domes, if only I could have brought some home!

Although we did not make it to Mount Cook, as a special treat we flew by helicopter over South Fiordland (33) and landed on a saddle near the top of Mount Burns. Ann achieved her desire here to actually see the Mount Cook Lily, *Ranunculus lyallii*, in flower and growing in its natural habitat (27). Climbing amongst rocks and short turf we found more *Ranunculus lyallii* and near at hand Steve pointed out many plants of *Ranunculus buchananii* none of which were in flower, and several obvious hybrids between the two. Winding our way down the





mountain we came across *Astelia nivicola* growing amongst the short turf bearing masses of bright orange fruit, and, on the rocky slope, colonies of *Aciphylla crosby-smithii* (32), whilst *Aciphylla pinnatifida* (35) grew happily in and alongside a fast flowing stream.

On our way home via Invercargill, we made a detour to the south coast and, following Steve's instructions, we found *Gentiana saxosa* (36) flourishing on the beach and sand dunes. Clusters of creamy-white flowers sat above low-growing, glossy green, mats happily surviving in a mixture of grit and crushed shells with waves crashing against the shingle just a few feet away. It is little wonder we struggle to grow this plant perhaps we should try this method of cultivation.

In visiting New Zealand we had hoped to better identify our celmisias growing at home, instead we returned even more confused because of the vast number of species and variations that we had not even realised existed. We must plan another extended trip in the not too distant future.

Fritillaria Group

THE recently described *Fritillaria frankiorum* honours Ronald and Erna Frank, whose enthusiasm for the genus led to the formation of the Fritillaria Group within the Alpine Garden Society. This specialist Group, which has around 375 members is now in its seventh year.

The first meetings were held in conjunction with the AGS Autumn Show at Horsham. Subsequent meetings expanded to fill entire days at the Hillside Events Centre at Wisley, the last one having as speakers Bob and Rannveig Wallis and Janis Ruksans from Latvia. The spring meeting consists of a non-competitive show plus one or more well-known speakers. We continue to expand our activities, seeking to cater for an ever wider audience. Meetings have already been held in Harrogate, Rugby and an entire, most marvellous and entertaining weekend in Wales, whilst in 2004 there will be an early May Bulb Day at Leeds in conjunction with the AGS West Yorkshire Group. Speakers for that include Ian Young, Fred Bundy, Trevor Whitaker and, in the afternoon, Mike Salmon on Moroccan Monocots. We have high hopes of organising another fascinating trip in 2005, but that is, as yet, only a twinkle in someone's eye!

For the Scottish Fritillaria fan the main attractions of the Group are likely to be the twice-yearly colour illustrated journal and the seed exchange. Donations for the 2003 list were packeted separately and the sources listed. The distribution is handled extremely swiftly so that members can sow seeds at the optimum time in September and expect good germination the following spring.

For further information please feel free to ring Mary Randall on 01276 66058

McKelvie's unique rockery

Alastair McKelvie

I HAVE BEEN SET THINKING about rock garden construction by a black-and-white photograph (reproduced overleaf) which I came across in the recently renovated Winter Gardens in the Duthie Park in Aberdeen and which naturally intrigued me by its title: "McKelvie's Unique Rockery". The photograph was by the eminent Aberdeen commercial photographer George Washington Wilson (1823-1893) who from 1850 onwards pioneered black-and-white photography and produced thousands of wonderful prints of Aberdeen and its inhabitants.

McKelvie's Unique Rockery was constructed by a Dundee architect William McKelvie (no relation) in 1881 on a south-facing bank in the Duthie Park. William McKelvie had been responsible for designing the Duthie Park policies and glasshouses after the Park had been donated to the citizens of Aberdeen by Miss Elizabeth Crombie Duthie of the well-known firm of Aberdeen shipbuilders. Just as it is quite a coincidence that I with my interests in rockeries should have the same name as the man who built this particular rockery it is also quite a coincidence that my wife's mother was called Elizabeth Crombie, but again no relation.

McKelvie's rockery is a supreme example of what Reginald Farrer would have called a "plum pudding" or perhaps because the stones were on end an "almond pudding" and it was interesting that just about the same time as I came across the photograph I received a copy of a new book on rock gardens which served to reveal the huge gulf between what we regard as good taste nowadays with what passed muster in the late 19th century. This book was *Rock Garden Design and Construction* published in October 2003 by the North American Rock Garden Society (NARGS) and written by 42 of its members. It set me thinking about how acceptable rock garden design has changed over the last 150 years.

It is impossible to see what plants are growing in McKelvie's rockery but what there are do seem to be quite happy as well they



37 McKelvie's Unique Rockery
with a hansom cab in the background



IN DUTHIE PARK, ABERDEEN. 3035. G.M.Y.

might be because although the construction is not very aesthetic there are plenty of fine pockets of soil for the plants among the pink granite rocks. Even Farrer conceded that rock plants could grow quite happily in a monstrosity of a rock garden. When he arrived on the scene at the beginning of the 20th century he railed on about the dreadful rock gardens that were the norm, dominated by spiky rocks where plants were a secondary consideration. Interestingly towards the end of his short life he was beginning to feel that plants were becoming too dominant at the expense of the rocks.

This emphasis on rocks at the expense of plants lingered on well into the 20th century and was a major topic of discussion at the founding of The Alpine Garden Society in 1930 when there was almost a successful move to create two Societies, one devoted to alpine plants and the other concentrating on rocks. The alpine plant lobby obviously won the day. I don't know if there is any significance in our Club being called The Scottish Rock Garden Club rather than The Scottish Alpine Plant Club but the aims of the two bodies do seem to be pretty close and our Club certainly doesn't concentrate on rocks at the expense of alpiners.

This emphasis on rocks lasted for many years as shown by the magnificent constructions every year at the Chelsea Flower Show until quite recently. The high priest of this movement was B H B Symons-Jeune who wrote his book *Natural Rock Gardening* in 1932. His philosophy was to create a picture of interest and beauty irrespective of season where there is always rest and peace. A place where even in winter there are not only dead flowers to contemplate but beauty of line will satisfy. To this end his large tome was devoted almost entirely to construction with total emphasis on rock strata and joints. Proportion, balance and simplicity were his keynotes and he was adamant that we should refrain from adding "just one more stone". For all his reliance on rock construction he was firmly against trying to recreate some outcrop or bluff seen in nature nor must we forget that the ultimate purpose is to grow plants. Having said that, apart from a few conifers and dwarf shrubs for autumn colour, he makes no mention of rock plants. All in all it is a book to assist with rock garden construction although it is an acme of perfection to try to follow his instructions on how to place the rocks. He seems to forget that nature very often leaves its rocks lying around in a higgledy-piggledy fashion.

Symons-Jeune agreed with Farrer that rocks such as sandstone and granite were fatal to a successful rock garden. Indeed he gives the impression that tufa and limestone are the only permissible rocks to use. Nowadays, of course, we have to use what rocks are available locally so that up here in Aberdeen we have to make do with granite. Thankfully limestone pavements are no longer being pulled up on any big scale to make our rock gardens. There are still, however, people who feel that nobody can use rocks properly. George Schenk for example, has advocated, in his 1997 book *Moss Gardening*, the complete abandonment of rock.

Rock gardens have made great strides since the days of McKelvie, Farrer and Symons-Jeune. Perhaps the biggest change has been the extension of rock gardening to include woodland gardens, water features, raised beds, retaining walls, troughs and alpine houses. This NARGS book shows just how the hobby has changed over the years. One hundred years ago there would have been no mention of bulb frames, balconies, path construction, woodland gardens and artificial fertilisers. It is now generally accepted that a rock garden plant is anything that looks good in a rock garden but I wonder how many of us would extend this to the planting of annual lobelia, beautiful as it is.

The NARGS book takes over from people like Symons-Jeune and summarises the succeeding developments showing just where we have got to since. Much of the book's content will be familiar to rock gardeners world-wide but one interesting development is the use of berms as the backbone of construction. Berm is not a term we use in the UK but the Americans use it to define a substantial ridge of soil into which rocks are then set. My dictionary defines a berm rather differently as a ledge, an area of level ground between the raised mound of a barrow or other earthwork and the ditch surrounding it. This book is full of details of construction of these berms or mounds but whatever the correct definition the merits of American berms are to provide areas of privacy, separate areas of the garden and to create interest, but the main values are the provision of better growing conditions and the provision of more plant space than is achievable on the flat.

Most Americans grow their alpines outside as opposed to the UK where many alpines are grown in frames or alpine houses and Japan where many alpines are grown in pots of ground pumice and dried

seaweed, placed on benches in the summer and under the benches in winter to protect from snow and frost. The NARGS book gives details of the construction of hyper-tufa troughs but omits any mention of polystyrene troughs from fishboxes which are now so common and worthwhile in the UK.

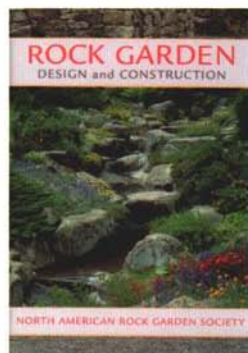
Old books on the subject ignored microclimate and regional variation. America is a huge country so that the section in the book on growing requirements in six disparate areas of the States must be of immense help to growers there but it is also of use to folk in the UK where differences in climate are quite large and require different growing techniques. I know that the year 2003 in Aberdeen where we had almost no rain for three months in an exceptionally hot summer has meant plant losses and an urgent need to alter techniques to cope.

The 300 pages and 100 colour plates of this book are fully comprehensive and will provide a splendid reference for anyone wanting guidance (in America or not) on rock garden construction in all its aspects as well as advice on planting and maintenance. The subjects covered include moraines, screes, crevices, walls, raised beds, tufa, troughs, alpine houses, bulb frames and propagation facilities.

The 42 contributors read like a Who's Who of American rock gardening.

**ROCK GARDEN DESIGN AND
CONSTRUCTION**
edited by Jane McGary

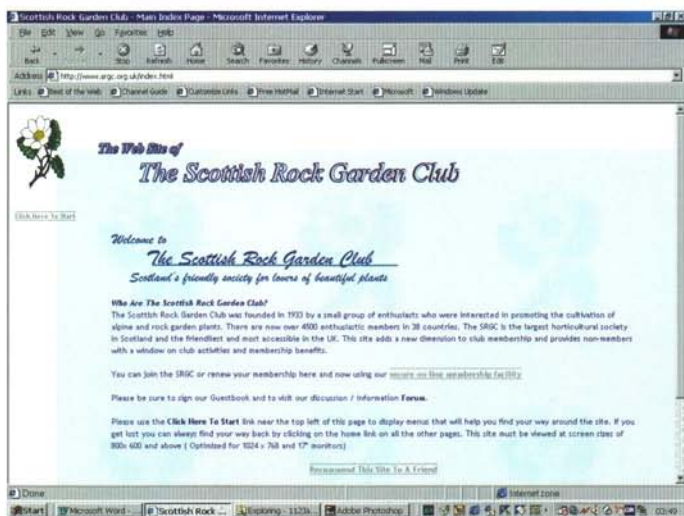
**The North American Rock
Garden Society**
Published by Timber Press
300 pages 100 colour plates
ISBN 0-88192 583-7
Price £25



Acknowledgement is made to Aberdeen University for permission to publish the George Washington Wilson photograph.

Fred Carrie

THIS SHORT PIECE highlights the latest developments and some of the future plans for the SRGC web site. At the outset it should be stressed that the club web site was never intended to compete with or replace the Journal, but rather complement it and offer additional advantages for members. Anyway, the thought of being tucked up in bed with tower case, monitor and keyboard is vastly less appealing than doing the same with the handy A5 format Journal and a cup of cocoa.



The web site has developed over the years to a point where it now attracts hundreds of visitors every day. This is entirely due to the excellent content provided by a core group of SRGC members. No matter how much technical wizardry one has available, there is no substitute for dynamic content. This article will hopefully encourage more members to go and take a look if they have not done so before and perhaps even consider contributing material themselves.

It would take many pages of this Journal to describe the web site in full, so it would be best for me to highlight one or two of the newer features, leaving full exploration to yourself.

Membership

The web site has become another “shop window” for the club and has helped recruit many new members. New members can sign up there and then online, “striking while the iron is hot” so to speak, using a secure credit card system. Members can also renew their subscriptions by the same method. This is very convenient, especially for overseas members.

Features

There is an extensive section of feature articles submitted by members. These take a form not too dissimilar to a Journal article but with many more photographs.

Local Groups Section

Here members can find out what’s going on in local SRGC groups, read newsletters and view lecture programmes. This information relies on contributions from each local group to keep it up to date, and is very useful, especially if you have lost your lecture programme!

Show Reports.

Up-to-date reports from the SRGC shows, with a wealth of photographs. Sandy Leven in particular is singled out for special praise here as it is he who provides the vast majority of the reports and photographs. This feature enables you to visit the shows you missed and is a great advert for the club and the skill of its members. It also features the Forrest Medal winners.



What's On Next

For an up to date preview of coming events, visit this area.

Picture Library

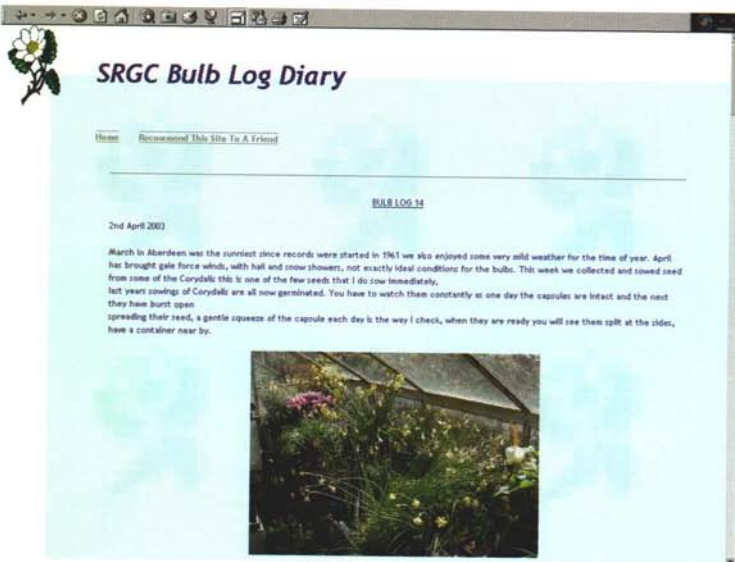
An extensive library of plant pictures. This is one of the most visited areas of the site as you would expect. It does however need more material and members are encouraged to contribute if they can.

The screenshot shows a web browser window titled "SRGC Photograph Library - Microsoft Internet Explorer". The address bar shows the URL "http://www.srgc.org.uk/photos/photoib.htm". The page content is organized into three main sections:

- SRGC Photograph Library:** A section with a heading and a paragraph: "To quickly locate a plant genus use the A to Z below. If the genus column does not move there are no plants of the genus in the library". Below this is a grid of letters from A to Z, with a "Home" link at the bottom.
- Plant Genus:** A section titled "Click to show species" containing a vertical list of plant genera: [Pulicaria](#), [Pulsatilla](#), [Ranunculus](#), [Rhododendron](#), [Rumex](#), [Salix](#), [Saxifraga](#), [Sedum](#), [Sedum](#), [Sempervivum](#), [Sium](#), [Silene](#), [Soldanella](#), [Sorbus](#), [Thalictrum](#), [Thymus](#), [Townsendia](#), [Trillium](#), [Tropaeolum](#), [Tulipa](#), [Vaccinium](#), [Veronica](#), [Viola](#), and [Waldsteinia](#).
- Plant Detail:** A section titled "Click on the plant name for pictures. Then use the back arrow on your browser to get back to the main list." It features a photograph of a plant with small yellow flowers. Below the photo is the caption: "Saxifraga boydii 'Hindhead Seedling'" and "Photo - Tough Alpine Nursery". A small text block below the caption reads: "Saxifraga boydii 'Hindhead Seedling' 'Hindhead Seedling' has the same parental species as 'Faldenside' and again has spiky foliage and single pale yellow flowers this time with softly veined petal surfaces. I find it easier going than 'Faldenside'. A very nice and distinctive cultivar." Malcolm McOvgor

Bulb Log

Ian Young's excellent bulb log is one of the newest, most successful features of the web site and has received much praise from visitors, some even claiming it was their main reason for joining the SRGC. It takes the form of a weekly updated gardener's diary, it is fully illustrated with Ian's excellent digital photographs, is practically oriented and the content comes from personal experience rather than regurgitated "facts". This was originally a one year, 52 entry project but happily Ian has agreed to continue it in 2004. This is a "must see" area of the site.



Forum

The discussion forum has now been running for about a year and a half and is perhaps the most popular area of the web site. The forum has been recently upgraded, preserving all of the previous discussions. It is now much easier to post and add photographs, and posters can even edit their own posts within a fixed time period if they realise they have made a mistake! The forum now also handles self-registration of user accounts, passwords being emailed to the user immediately. These improvements should add to the general user-friendliness of the forum and encourage more participation. The forum is your instant access to an international audience and “panel of experts”. Please do consider visiting and using *your* forum. It is great fun and has been a wonderful success, especially some of the more recent topics such as “Flowering Now”, where members have posted photos of flowering plants each month since January 2003. What a way to cheer up on a bleak winter’s day and share it with like-minded people!

Future Developments

It is always difficult to be absolute about future developments but there are some on the back burner right now. Already as a reference

the new seedlist is on the site as a reference source – very helpful when your seed arrives and you finally decide that your paper copy has got irretrievably lost.

We hope to add a Journal Index that has been compiled by Glassford Sprunt. This monumental task was undertaken by Glassford on his own initiative and an online version would be a great addition to the web site. It does present some technical difficulties but we envisage an online database linked to a search engine that can be used to list references to plants within all the SRGC Journals since day one. This could be linked to online Journal articles, photographs and so on. The possibilities are endless.



All in all, the web site has been a great success story for the SRGC. But most importantly please remember that it is the property of *you* the SRGC membership. It is *your* web site. Please try to use it as often as you can and hopefully you too will be inspired enough to make a contribution to it.

Show Reports 2003

STIRLING SHOW 2003 – 5th April

Yellow in the morning – I like to tell you about our show using a recurring theme. This year that theme is the colour yellow. Donovan sang, “Yellow is the colour of my true love’s hair, in the morning.....”. At the Stirling Show, yellow was the prevailing colour, not only in the morning but even more obviously in the afternoon when the sun shone brightly through the high windows. The most notable exception was the Forrest Medal winning *Orchis italica*. This terrific plant was shown by Cyril Lafong and well deserved the top prize.

It is impossible to write about all the plants and I intend to pick out those which have not been written about at Stirling in previous reports. Fred Hunt challenged for the medal with his huge pan of *Pleione confusa* (38), which was in superb condition.



Is this the first time that the Forrest has been fought over by two orchids?

Two large pans of pale creamy yellow *Fritillaria pallidiflora* welcomed you to the first classes, while just beside them in the new and rare class was Cyril's fantastic plant of *Gentiana oschtenica* (39), similar to *G. verna* except in pale yellow colour. As I remember, this is a native of west Central Asia. It was greeted with sighs of admiration and envy when it first appeared at our shows 20 years ago. Today's plant would have taken the top award back then. An example of rising standards? Or, are we becoming used to high standards? Another yellow gentian relative on show from South Africa was the chrome yellow *Sebaea thomasii*.



Although it has pale rose flowers it was impossible not to admire the South American composite *Leucheria hahnii*. It has superb leaves as well as perfect pale pink daisies and is as near perfection as a plant can be. *Verbascum acaule* is a wee shrubby thing pretending to be a cushion plant and it is very successful in its mimicry. *Erigeron* 'Canary Bird' in good flower at Stirling surprised me as I associate it with later shows. The superb *Ranunculus abnormis* (40) was like sunshine on a stick. And there were yellow Erythroniums as well: *Erythronium tuolumense* with solid yellow petals and *E. citrinum* whose petals are lighter at the edges. The latter has nicely marbled leaves. Another exception to the yellow is beautiful rule is *E. revolutum* 'Johnsonii' whose leaves are similar to those of *E. tuolumense* but which has the most fabulous pink flowers.



Another plant vying for “most beautiful plant in the show” was the incomparable *Jeffersonia dubia*. It has unbelievable flowers in a solid white with a boss of golden yellow stamens.

There were lots of narcissi but one that is not seen too often is *Narcissus eystettensis* (41) known colloquially as ‘Queen Anne’s Double Daffodil’ having been named for Queen Anne of Austria. ‘Rip van Winkle’ is similar but is a richer yellow.



Another exception to the colour yellow was Edith Amistead’s *Primula* ‘Aire Mist’ (42), which won the Spiller Quaich for Best *Primula* as well as a Certificate of Merit. A great day out for Edith who has supported the Stirling Show since its inception. When Brian Davidson came in with his pan of *Primula auricula* ssp. *bauhinii* we all were amazed at the size and quality of its leaves. It resembled a farinose glaucous lettuce (now there is something for the salad buyers at Tesco to look out for!). This would have had yellow flowers, if it had had any flowers but it was shown for foliage. As fine a plant for foliage class as any.



A very interesting bulb was *Massonia pustulata* which has two shiny green leaves that have near parallel rows of tiny pustules. It is a bulb, native to South Africa and is named for the Scots plant hunter Francis Masson. The flower appears in autumn like a little bristly Allium. There were several yellow Fritillaria. The most enchanting was *Fritillaria conica* and the strongest yellow was *Fritillaria aurea* "large form". Two beautiful fritillaries which were formerly rare in cultivation but which have recently been bulked up in Holland are *Fritillaria aurea* 'Golden Flag' and *Fritillaria glauca* 'Goldilocks' (43). They used to be expensive but are now readily available in garden centres in the autumn. Look out for them. I certainly will.



Fred Hunt and Ian and Margaret Young stunned us by bringing two superb Fritillaria displays. Both exhibits were exceptional in the range of species and the quality of the plants. Thank you all for expanding the interest at the show and for the trouble to which you went.

Carole and David Shaw won the Fife County Trophy and the SRGC Bronze Medal for most points in Section 2. I don't think they will be in section 2 next year. They had a marvellous 6 pan exhibit (77) which included the rarely exhibited *Primula latifolia*, *Androsace pyrenaica* and *Dryas suendermannii*, a hybrid between circumpolar *Dryas octopetala*

and *Dryas drummondii* from the USA and Canada. It is quite beautiful and Carole and David must be commended for growing it so well and we thank them for bringing it to our show.

Sandy Leven won the Institute of Quarrying Quaich for most points in Section 1, helped by wins in the 6 pan bulb classes. Best exhibit from a first time exhibitor was the spectacular *Pleione pogonoides* shown by junior member Miranda Radley from Auchterarder. Well done Miranda. If I remember correctly your dad won this prize many years ago.

Thank you to all exhibitors, and our judges Lyn Bezzant, Margaret Young, Harley Milne, Ron MacBeath, Neil Huntley and Ian Young for making this one of the best ever Stirling Shows. *Report and photos Sandy Leven*

ABERDEENSHIRE SHOW - 13th May

In the run-up to every show, especially those early or late in the schedule, the Show Secretary is liable to be a nervous wreck, fretting daily, and through the night, over how many plants will arrive to grace the Show Hall. This year in Aberdeen we had so few entries midweek



that we thought that we would have to make major changes to the layout of the stalls and benches to disguise a serious lack of show plants. Happily, on the morning of the show the well-filled benches, full of colour and looking very fresh and attractive, led to a heart-felt sigh of relief.

Of course, everyone visiting a show takes pleasure from seeing so many fine plants but there is nothing to compare with the satisfaction gained from such a sight by a harassed show secretary! If the beauty of the exhibits is being enjoyed by a large crowd, so much the better! In this, the seventieth year of the SRGC, we were delighted to welcome exhibitors from the south, Ponteland (by Newcastle) and the north, Forres (in Morayshire) to swell the entries at the show with

car-loads of great plants. While there was a lot of colour about, some white plants were looking cleanly charming, among them *Androsace vandellii* (44), shown by Alan Newton in a split pot to great effect and Nick Boss' *Saxifraga caespitosa* (45), grown in a naturalistic manner.



Carol and David Shaw (46), quite new to showing, are in hot pursuit of this year's Rutland Trophy and brought a large entry to bolster Section II to make this section's entry one of the best seen at an SRGC show this year. Ian Minty, from Huntly, brought five plants, even though he was in sole charge of his charming young daughters and en route to collect his wife from hospital! [Note: The third Miss Minty arrived safely!] Our members will go to considerable lengths to support the show, and we are extremely grateful to them for this. Local members fared well in Section II, with some major awards staying in the area.



Ron Arthur won both the Brian Bull Trophy for Class 63 and a Certificate of Merit with a big fat cushion of *Silene acaulis* 'Frances'.

There were a couple of handsome *Primula forrestii* on the benches, but the Judges were more impressed by a very well presented pan of *Primula veris*, in Section II. This was shown by Jean Evans and won both the Helen Craig Cup for best Primula and the Aberdeen Quach for the best plant in Section II. Jean and her husband Doug had some other attractively dressed plants which showed to advantage.

There were super exhibits from many of “the usual suspects”, as might be imagined. The Glenrothes Greenfinger, aka Cyril Lafong, nabbed another Forrest Medal with *Silene hookeri* ssp. *bolanderi* and also the Esslemont Quaich for the three pan, new, rare or difficult. Margaret and Henry Taylor and Fred Hunt kept up the Invergowrie honour with their expected style.

Edith Armistead, from Edinburgh, sent up this really terrific *Telesonix jamesii* (47). Edith grows this plant to perfection and always supports the Aberdeenshire show with an entry.



Bob Maxwell, local Group Convener, had a large entry of quality and won a Certificate of Merit for his large pan of *Trillium grandiflorum* ‘Plenum’. Bob’s grandson, the wizard of the junior section, Mark Tosh, (who is not above a successful raid in Section II,



by the way) showed *Trillium luteum* (48) which won him the Elizabeth Bowl for best Junior Exhibit. Local Gesneriads mavens, Maureen and Brian Wilson showed one of their favourite Haberleas, *Haberlea fernandi-coburgi* ‘Connie Davidson’. I

have never seen them stage this plant looking better and was not surprised when it was awarded both a Certificate of Merit and an FCC from the Joint Rock Plant Committee.

Our furthest travelled visitors were Brenda and Alan Newton,

from Ponteland, by Newcastle. Brenda always looks smart, even at her busiest during their shows and you can see here that Alan scrubs up well, too. Alan was on duty as a judge and heeded our squeaks of anguish midweek by bringing a grand batch of plants to grace the Show. A Show Secretary himself, at Hexham, Alan well knows the sinking feeling of the fear of too few entries and rallied round magnificently!



Judges Barry Caudwell, Alan Newton and Sandy Leven

He did so well that he won the Walker of Portlethen Trophy for the most points in the show. The Newton effect was to be seen all round the hall, but particularly eye-catching was his winning entry in the six-pan class, that holy grail of top exhibitors! Alan showed six orchids, all cypripediums. We may have seen bigger cypripedium plants at our show, but it was a treat to see these six together. There were two forms of *Cypripedium macranthos*, as well as *C. debile*, *C. fargesii*, *C. tibeticum* and *C. flavum*.

I am running out of space and still have made no mention so many other noteworthy plants, or of Carole and Ian Bainbridge's Gold Medal exhibit of New Zealand plants, almost thirty perfect specimens to tempt those of us who do not grow these plants or to tease those who do with their quality! The plants were not only super, they were supported by excellent written material, too. If this display did not

make folk determined to visit Aberdeen to learn more about the plants of New Zealand, for “New Zealand Day” on 2nd August, I don’t know what will!!

To close, another “People pic” ... one of our oldest Members, the painter and writer Mrs Mary McMurtrie (50), was brought to the Show by her daughter, Elspeth. While well-known for her books of flower paintings, Mary McMurtrie is most fondly remembered in Aberdeen for the wonderful displays of built-up Rock Gardens she used to stage at Aberdeen Shows when she ran her nursery at Balbithan Castle. She first advertised plants for sale in the *Journal of the SRGC* when she lived not one hundred yards (okay, metres, then, if you must) from your Reporter! It was a delight to see her still enjoying a Show and greeting many old friends. [Mrs McMurtrie has died since the Show and her obituary can be found elsewhere in *The Rock Garden*.]



Thank you to all the local members who worked so hard to meet, greet, feed and sell plants to all the visitors. You were FAB!! We are grateful, too, to all those who made journeys, long or short to see the Show, we look forward to welcoming you again next year. *Report Margaret Young, photos Ian Young.*

SRGC DISCUSSION WEEKEND Elgin - 3rd-5th October

Summer has been long and hot but there were autumn tints aplenty to be seen on the drive to Elgin for the Discussion Weekend Show. Through occasional rain showers and with a rapidly cooling wind rising



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Scenes from Elgin

51 Show Secretary Ronnie Loveland

52 Plants on the showbench

53 Publications Manager Scott Cook in
a quiet moment

54 *Pernettya* 'Pearls'

55 *Fuchsia procumbens*

56 Jacques Amand and others at the
dinner – a highlight of the weekend

it seemed the year was finally turning to the “proper” type of weather. The privations of a drought-ridden season were not evident on the crowded benches of the show hall. All these plants looked to have revelled in the weather that has so vexed the gardeners. Lovely cyclamen are to be expected at this show but there was a greater variety staged than usual. The Forrest Medal was won (again) by Sandy Leven’s fat and luscious *Cyclamen africanum*. Roma Fiddes gained a Certificate of Merit for a fine *C. rohlfianum*. Not the easiest cyclamen to grow and flower well, this was an exception and a tribute to Roma’s fondness for the genus. There were good examples, too, of *C. mirabile*, *C. cilicium*, *C. hederifolium* and yummy *C. graecum* forms shown for both flowers and seemingly endlessly variable foliage.

It might be expected that after a warm season that a good set of fruit might result but there were only three fruiting plants shown. Two were *Fuchsia procumbens* (55) - one, awarded the East Lothian Cup for best plant in Section II for Carol and David Shaw, was about a foot across and just covered with the pretty (but bland tasting, I tested!) fruits. Also in Section II was a lovely pot of *Pernettya* ‘Pearls’ (54) shown by Johanna Leven. Miss Leven, a veteran of Discussion Weekends, though still a teenager, was not in Elgin, but had troubled to send her entry to support the Show via her Mum and Dad.

There were not many gentians, perhaps they have peaked already. There were, however, plenty crocus on display, but none so charming as the little pot of *Crocus cambessedessii* from Helen Greenwood. Fewer frens than usual made it to the benches, but those that did were in tip-top order. Harvey Shepherd’s *Cheilanthes myriophylla* was just unfurling new spikes and looking very fresh.

Other members contributing to the colourful display were Margaret and Henry Taylor, John Richards, Tony Rymer, Jean Wyllie, Joan Whelans, Glassford Sprunt, Liz Holland and Weekend Registration Secretary Lorna Milnes. Scott Cook won the Photographic competition with his Piedmonte entry, beating Christine Thomson, who also brought show plants. Just cannot imagine when the busy Scott ever has time for holidays and cameras!

Anne Chambers delighted with her presentation of flower and figure studies of Tibet.

Thanks to all who participated in the Show, and to the great local

team and the speakers who gave us all such a memorable weekend.
Report Margaret Young, photos Ian Young.

NEWCASTLE SHOW – 11th October

Show secretaries are always anxious before a show; ‘will there be any entries’, ‘will it be well-attended’ must never be far from their minds. It must have been especially worrying for Mike Dale, taking over at the helm of the Newcastle Show after such a warm dry summer that saw many cyclamen in the garden flowering early and being finished long before the round of autumn shows. In the event, I hope he had no sleepless nights over this, as nature co-operated admirably, to allow a splendid display to grace the show benches at



Ponteland. Fine examples of cyclamen, gentians and crocus, the big three genera of autumn flowering alpiners were to be seen amongst an impressive number of entries that graced both the open section and section B.

An indicator of the quality of exhibits was that no less than five Certificates of Merit were awarded. One of these plants, *Narcissus serotinus* (57), shown by Bob and Rannveig Wallis, perfumed the area surrounding the large potful of delicate white flowers, which formed a cloud of dainty white stars at a height of about 15 cm above the topdressing. Another of the Certificate of Merit plants was *Cyananthus longiflorus*, which Alan Furness had raised from seed, originally from an

ACE collection. This plant exhibited a range of flowers, from bud to fully open, which dotted the low-growing mat of foliage with intensely blue flowers, similar in colour to some of the better gentians, and just as difficult to record accurately on film. The Chinese cyanathus have been difficult to maintain in cultivation and regular propagation seems to be the key to success.

Much of the trophy haul available was taken away by cross-border raiders: no not Scots, but Bob and Rannveig Wallis (58) from



Carmarthen in the far south of Wales. In addition to their two other Certificates of Merit for cyclamen, they won the Forrest Medal with a lovely neat pan of *Cyclamen graecum* ssp. *anatolicum* which had a mass of the bright pink blossoms floating (there really is no other way to describe it) just above the boldly marked foliage to give a two-tiered effect to the display. Many other

cyclamen were obviously to be seen, but a particular favourite of mine was another of Bob and Rannveig's – *Cyclamen graecum* var. *candicum*, which had the typical heavily patterned leaf which is such a feature of *C. graecum* and which they have carefully selected over the years. This was topped by a sea of white flowers, which seemed to have a luminous glow in the show hall, each with a purple nose. It may not have been as compact in flower as their Forrest Medal plant, but the purity of the white flowers made it a more attractive plant to me.

Foliage classes make up a large part of the autumn shows, and there was a wide range of spectacular foliage displays to rival some of the floral classes. In particular, there were a wide range of celmisias on display from the familiar, with two varieties of *Celmisia semicordata* (var. *stricta* and var. *aurigans*, with its spectacular golden pellicle) to the rare

and new *Celmisia ramulosa*, shown by Alan Furness, was present in its true form – very compact, unlike the probable hybrid which has previously been sold under this name, forming a tiny shrublet of about 5 cm after three years' growth from seed. In the silver classes, there was a spectacular example of *Celmisia insignis* shown alongside its better-known relative *Celmisia spedenii* by George Young. Both have narrow grass-like leaves covered with silver hairs, but the slightly larger *C. insignis* was rather more heavily felted with silver and had more impact as a result. This may just be the growth habit of these two specimens; a good example of the variation amongst plants in one species was shown by three plants of *Pyrethrum leontopodium* in the small silver pan classes. The smallest of the three, which were all seed raised by different growers, was very compact, and about half the size of the largest, which overflowed its pot with large rosettes of the incredibly hairy leaves that characterise this recent introduction from central Asia.

Some plants which had rarely been seen before on the show benches were a range of *Petrocosmea* species, members of the Gesneriaceae, which had been raised from seed by Alan Newton. The three species he exhibited, *Petrocosmea minor* (59), *P. sericeae* and *P. rosettifolia* were all raised from Chinese seed over a five year period, and although the appearance of the delicate, hairy leaves, somewhat reminiscent of the saintpaulias which are found on many kitchen windowsills, caused some mutterings



of doubt about frost hardiness, they have survived several episodes of light frost in the alpine house. All showed typical gesneriad flowers in blues and purples, but the rosette of *Petrocosmea rosettifolia* was spectacular; about the size of a small plate, with overlapping, slightly hairy leaves of shiny, dark green, with a brighter green centre to each leaf.

As it was an autumn show, one would expect to see plants in autumn colour or in fruit, and whilst the autumn foliage colours may not have been as spectacular as in some years, there were some interesting berried displays to be seen. Barry McWilliam's *Pratia angulata* about 30 cm across, which won a Certificate of Merit last year, was covered in small, claret-coloured berries about the size of a small pea. The fact that it also retained about thirty small, white flowers may have counted against it in the judges eyes, as it lost out in its class to *Coprosma* 'Violet Drops', shown by Wilma and Jim Wright. This cross was raised by County Park nursery, and has buried in its low-growing mat of foliage a mass of tiny berries of a colour best described as translucent, milky white heavily veined with fine violet lines.

To finish this report, it would be remiss of me not to mention two significant exhibitors at the show. Toby Brown (shown on the left - (60) was awarded his SRGC bronze medal in section two at the show in only his second year of showing. Good progress, especially when you consider that, at ten years old, he is younger than many of the plants



on display. Impressive as that may seem, he may have fierce competition in future from his sister, Kira Brown, who at the age of five managed to win section C of the show – her plants may not have been large, and at her age I'd be surprised if they were, but they were well grown. To those of you who haven't tried showing before and are a bit afraid of the mystique of it all, they have provided an inspiration and hopefully some encouragement that one day, it could even be you whose plants are being described in this Journal. *Report Peter Maquire, photos by Peter Maquire and Mike Dale.*

RHS Joint Rock Garden Plant Committee

Recommendations made at SRGC Shows in 2003

Blackpool – 15th March

Awards to Plants

First Class Certificate

Corydalis popovii exhibited by C & I Bainbridge, Easter Howgate.

Certificate of Preliminary Commendation

Saxifraga 'Coolock Kate' exhibited by E Rainford, Leeds.

Saxifraga cinerea x *dinniki* (= *Saxifraga* x *concinna*) exhibited by J Mullaney, Wakefield.

Colchicum szovitsii exhibited by D Clement, Wolverhampton.

Recommendation for AGM assessment

Corydalis popovii exhibited by C & I Bainbridge, Easter Howgate.

Stirling – 5th April

Awards to Plants

Award of Merit

Gentiana oschtenica exhibited by C Lafong, Glenrothes.

Orchis italica exhibited by C Lafong, Glenrothes.

Narcissus rupicola subsp. *watieri*, subject to the application and registration of a cultivar epithet, exhibited by C & I Bainbridge, Easter Howgate.

Fritillaria pluriflora exhibited by I & M Young, Aberdeen.

Certificate of Preliminary Commendation

x *Kalmiothamnus* 'Sindleberg' exhibited by C Lafong, Glenrothes.

Narcissus 'Craigton Coquette' exhibited by I & M Young, Aberdeen.

Awards to Exhibitors

Certificate of Cultural Commendation

C Lafong, Glenrothes for a pan of *Orchis italica*.

C & I Bainbridge, Easter Howgate for a pan of *Narcissus rupicola* subsp. *watieri*.

I & M Young, Aberdeen for a pan of *Fritillaria pluriflora*.

Perth – 19th April

Awards to Plants

Award of Merit

Trillium decumbens exhibited by F Hunt, Invergowrie.

Certificate of Preliminary Commendation

Primula albenensis exhibited by M & H Taylor, Invergowrie.

Awards to Exhibitors

Certificate of Cultural Commendation

R Maxwell, Kemnay for a pan of *Fritillaria hermonis* subsp. *amana*.

C Lafong, Glenrothes for a pan of *Viola delphinantha*.

F Hunt, Invergowrie for a pan of *Trillium decumbens*.

Glasgow – 3rd May

Awards to Plants

First Class Certificate

Pleione aurita exhibited by F Hunt, Invergowrie.

Award of Merit

Glaucidium palmatum var. *leucanthum* exhibited by R Meaden, Penpont.

Recommendation for AGM assessment

Glaucidium palmatum var. *leucanthum* exhibited by R Meaden, Penpont.

Aberdeen – 17th May

Awards to Plants

First Class Certificate

Silene hookeri subsp. *bolanderi* exhibited by C Lafong, Glenrothes.

Haberlea ferdinandi-coburgii ‘Connie Davidson’ exhibited by B & M Wilson, Cults.

Certificate of Preliminary Commendation

Gypsophila cerastioides ‘Rosy Stripe’ exhibited by M & H Taylor, Invergowrie.

Myosotis capitata exhibited by M & H Taylor, Invergowrie.

Eriophyton wallichii exhibited by I & M Young, Aberdeen.

Awards to Exhibitors

Certificate of Cultural Commendation

C Lafong, Glenrothes for a pan of *Silene hookeri* subsp. *bolanderi*.

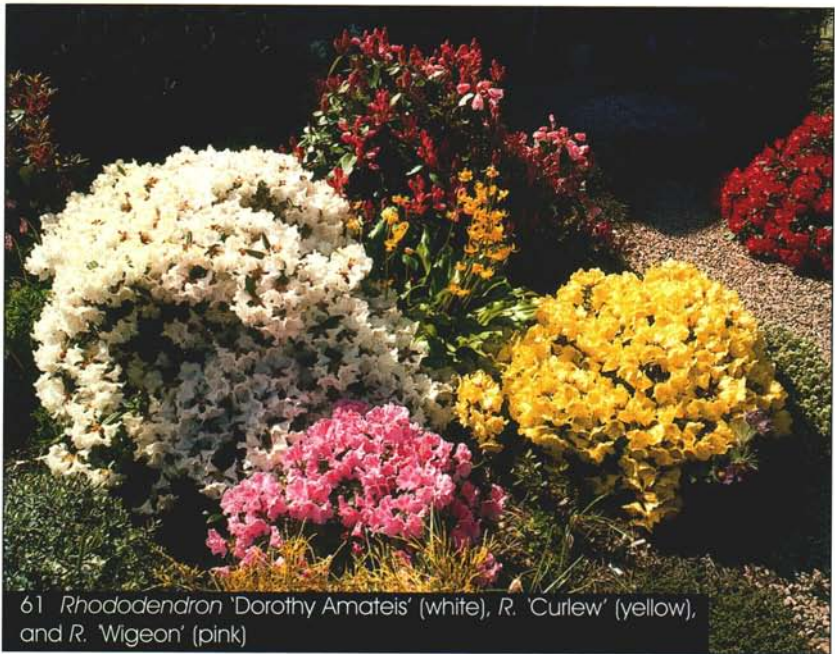
B & M Wilson, Cults. for a pan of *Haberlea ferdinandi-coburgii* ‘Connie Davidson’.

I & M Young, Aberdeen for a pan of *Eriophyton wallichii*.

Recommendation for AGM assessment

Haberlea ferdinandi-coburgii ‘Connie Davidson’ exhibited by B & M Wilson, Cults.

All awards to plants; First Class Certificate, Award of Merit, Certificate of Preliminary Commendation are to a plant “as a hardy flowering plant for exhibition”.



61 *Rhododendron* 'Dorothy Amateis' (white), *R.* 'Curlew' (yellow), and *R.* 'Wigeon' (pink)

My favourite dwarf rhododendrons

Margaret Young

LOVE ERICS! The family Ericaceae is to my mind one of the most important groups of plants for building and supporting any garden, particularly in the Scottish climate, but also in any other similar situation. They ask only that the temperature is not too hot in summer, that the ground does not freeze below 20 degrees all winter, that there is a good amount of humus in a reasonably acid soil, and that they be given a drink in hot times and a little feed or tonic when poorly and they will repay you with years of pleasure (almost the requirements to keep a good spouse!). Here, though, I will restrict my comments to those most versatile and accommodating Erics, the Rhododendrons.

A selection of dwarf Rhododendrons can be made which will offer a backbone of colour, texture and form for year round interest. The variations of the plants' growth habit, leaf size, colour and scent (these often varying as the year progresses) and flower colour, not to mention the myriad further variations of flower shape, substance and times (and duration) of flowering, make rhodos some of the most exciting and hardest working of our garden plants. Being usually long-lived and requiring little upkeep, they surely give great



62 Part of Margaret and Ian Young's rhododendron collection

value for money and time, considerations not to be overlooked. They can also be grown with many other types of plant, enjoying the close company of a crowded border or the luxury of a neat rock bed. Here in Aberdeen, we are most fond of the heady combination of Eric and Lil, for the members of the Ericaceae and Liliaceae were certainly made as a match in heaven, they look so well together.

Now for a brief listing (it had better be brief: we grow about 350 rhodos, of all sizes!) of some favourite dwarf rhododendrons. Where to start? With species, I think.

These rhodos on this list will all give you extra flowers at other times in the year, if they feel inclined. I am not sure what prompts them to this generosity, since it seems to vary by year but I am sure that it does not harm the amount of flowers you may expect in the next "proper" flowering season. It is always good to dead-head rhodos as much as possible, if only to avoid the rather untidy fruiting heads



and encourage a quick concentration on new leaf growth.

Rhododendron lapponicum var. *parviflorum* flowers for several weeks in the first months of the year, the Siberian form will open flowers in January, the Japanese form will wait until February. Mostly lilac-purple, the flowers are frost hardy and the bushes upright and neat with tiny aromatic leaves. In fact, most of the smaller rhodos, especially the lepidotes, have very aromatic foliage, though the scent is not always the same and is an added bonus for the gardener with a fragrance-friendly heart.

For yellow flowers and larger (1cm x 2cm) hairy leaves of a limey green, choose *Rhododendron lepidostylum*. For purple flowers and tiny leaves on a very compact plant, try *R. russatum*, or any of its forms. If you prefer magenta mauve flowers and very bristly leaf margins and branchlets, there is *R. saluenense*, also in various forms. Any of the





65 *Rhododendron russatum*

forms of *R. calostrotum* are lovely. They can be absolutely flat to the ground, with huge, flat-faced flowers of clear pink or purple.

Actually, the Saluensia subsection of rhodos is one of the best, along with Lapponica and Ogyna s.s. You will hardly find a duffer! Just check that you are buying one of the smaller types, if size does matter to you.

You might prefer a little mixture of colour in your flowers. The enchanting little *Rhododendron shweliense*, from the Glauca s.s. has pink flushed yellow flowers which are much prettier than you might imagine! The habit is neat and the foliage dark and handsome. All of the plants I'm listing are steady creatures, not given to rushes of growth, most will not exceed 60 cm across or 70 cm high after twenty years.

Perhaps my most precious little rhodo is the utterly charming



66 *Rhododendron campylogynum*



67 *Rhododendron roxianum* var. *oreonastes*

Rhododendron primuliflorum. Various forms of this beauty are around, the best, 'Doker-La', has daphne-like heads made up of many of the clearest dark pink flowers, each only 6 mm across in a cluster of 4 cm which will catch the eye from across the garden. The aromatic leaves have a heavy indumentum and maintain a good colour.

It is nice to have some change in size, so what about the long narrow, 7 cm x 9 mm, leaves of *Rhododendron roxianum* var. *oreonastes*? This compact, congested little chap takes a while to produce his white, blackberry spotted, flowers, but the year-round foliage show passes the time. The young leaf growth has a pale indumentum overall, fading to

a ginger underleaf in maturity. If you really cannot give a home to *Rhododendron bureavii*, one of the most fabulous of all rhodos, in any stage of leaf, let alone flower, but one of the larger specimens, then you will surely have room for *R. roxianum* var. *oreonastes*, which has all the attributes of *R. bureavii*, in a tiny package. Our roxie is only about 60 cm across and 75 cm high after nearly twenty years, he's been flowering for about twelve years! It can be handy to have a rhodo that is a bit taller, but still has dainty foliage. One of the hardiest is *R. tatsienense*, with aromatic leaves 4.5 x 2 cm and masses of pale pink bell flowers. At this point I sense a digression to hybrids! *Rhododendron* 'Yellowhammer' is an old *R. sulfureum* x *R. flavidum* var. *flavidum* cross with a habit much like *R. tatsienense*, though sometimes a little leggy. The leaves are dark green and the bright yellow flowers are produced



68 *Rhododendron calostrosum*

throughout the year. The leggy habit makes it handy for cutting for a vase at any time and shoots can be brought indoors to open blooms for your festive table. This is one of the few rhodos that does need some pruning. How kind of it to give us cut flowers as a reward for our efforts!

Many old hybrids are available, from 'Intrifast' and 'Sarled' to 'Blue Tit' and 'Sacko'. You can find an enormous range to please any taste by seeking out the bird-named hybrids raised by the Cox family, of Glendoick, Scotland. 'Curlew', one of the very best spotted yellows; 'Wren', a smaller yellow; 'Wigeon', a pale pink; 'Ptarmigan' a tiny flowered sharp white; 'Merganser' with campylogynum-like waxy yellow bells; 'Phalarope', taller with pink, open flowers; 'Egret' with tiny waxy white bells . . . these are our best of the best, but they are truly all good plants.

But what of 'Cilpinense', 'Snow Lady', *R. valentinianum* and . . . or all my other darlings? Good plants all, but I promised a brief list of specials!

These are the ones that we have found to be the hardiest and happiest here in Aberdeen and I have little doubt that you will find

they will give good service elsewhere. Of course there are many fabulous hybrids, from Europe and the Americas for example, but a line must be drawn somewhere. I have tried to list the rhododendrons which give us the greatest pleasure, are easy to grow and keep and which are likely to be readily available to purchase.

I urge you to embrace Eric and enhance your garden.



69 *Rhododendron* 'Egret'



Highland One Day Workshop

Creating And Planting Alpine Troughs And Dishes

Come and join us for a **FUN** 'hands on' practical day at Mosstodloch Village Hall. During the day, there will be the opportunity to attend 2 workshops. One will be to create a trough from a polystyrene box and then plant it up. The other will be to plant up a small dish with appropriate compost and alpine plants and after care will also be considered.

Date	Saturday 31 st July 2004
Time	9.30am – 4.30pm approx
Venue	'Speymouth Village Hall', Mosstodloch, near Fochabers
Cost	£12.50 (This covers everything required except for plants. There will be plants available to buy on the day.)
Bring	Picnic lunch (Tea and coffee will be provided) Stanley knife (or equivalent to carve polystyrene) Old clothes (Creativity can be messy!)

Fill in the Booking form with the Secretary's Pages
and send it with a cheque for £12.50 (made payable to
SRGC Moray Group) to

**Mrs. Margaret MacPherson,
Loanhead Farmhouse, Rathven, Buckie, Banffshire,
AB56 4DE**

To arrive before 1 July 2004

North Carolina in the Spring

Annual NARGS Meeting in North Carolina May 5 – 8, 2004

THIS YEAR'S ANNUAL MEETING of the North American Rock Garden Society will be held in the Research Triangle Park (Raleigh-Durham area), North Carolina, May 5 – 8, 2004. We picked the title, "Rebellious Rock Gardening: Piedmont Surprises" because it reflects the tenacity of our members in gardening in the U.S. Southeast with piedmont clay and summer heat and high night-time temperatures. Still, with the right soil amendment, drainage, knowledge of plants, and a green thumb we in North Carolina are able to grow a respectable palette of plants. Members of the Scottish Rock Garden Club are invited to come see them for yourselves.

Fortunately the annual meeting is in the springtime, the best time of the year to see native flora as well as gardens and arboreta. Your editor of *The Rock Garden*, Malcolm McGregor, spent a few days last year hiking around North Carolina woods and can attest to the diversity of plants.

There is a pre-conference ecological tour of the Green Swamp (a savannah) located in eastern North Carolina, a canoe ride, a coastal visit to the barrier islands, and the Sandhills, an ancient sand dunes in south-central North Carolina.

Other tours include three renowned private gardens, one each in Greensboro, Kernersville, and Hillsborough, N.C., the last being Montrose, a National Trust Property, managed by Nancy and Craufurd Godwin. May 2004 is the 100th anniversary of the birth of southern garden writer, Elizabeth Lawrence. At Montrose, Lawrence will be remembered at afternoon tea led by Emily Wilson, Ms. Lawrence's biographer.

The opening dinner speaker will be Roy Dicks discussing the wit and wisdom of English garden writer Beverley Nichols.

There will be presentations in the morning and tours in the afternoon. The speakers consist of Jim Archibald giving two talks, one on plant hunting in Turkey and the other on seed collecting. Tony Avent of Plant Delights Nursery will tell us of “Humidity and Humility— a Rock Garden in the South.” Pam Harper will speak on “Gone But Not Forgotten,” a tribute to the gardeners she has known, remembered through the plants in her garden. Todd Lasseigne will talk about travels and travails in searching for new plants. Brian Mathew will speak on the A to Z of bulbs. Carl Schoenfeld, on new plant introductions from Mexico. The Saturday night banquet and business meeting will close with Bobby Ward talking about “Contemporary Plant Hunters and Their Introductions.”

Tours include visits to the JC Raulston Arboretum, the North Carolina Botanical Garden (native plants), and the Sarah P. Duke Gardens (Asian and native plants). Private garden visits include those of Tony and Michelle Avent, Norman Beal, Dick and Judith Tyler, and Norris and Helen Post.

One of the meals will be a North Carolina pig pickin’ (barbecue).

After the conference, there is a NARGS Expedition to western North Carolina, from May 9 to 14. The group will travel to Asheville in the Southern Appalachians and will take day trips to Mt. Mitchell (the highest mountain east of the Mississippi River), Craggy Gardens Recreational Area, Blue Ridge Parkway, Pisgah National Forest, the Biltmore Estate, and public and private gardens, including that of rock gardeners Ev and Bruce Whittemore.

For information, check the NARGS web site <www.nargs.org> or contact the registrar, Karen Duch <kmduch@bellsouth.net>. You can also register on line at the NARGS web site.

For those in the United Kingdom, there are daily, direct (non-stop) flights from London (Gatwick) to Raleigh-Durham (RDU) on American Airlines.

Y’all come.

Bobby J. Ward
President, NARGS

Mary McMurtrie

– Artist, Gardener and Countrywoman

ON 6 NOVEMBER 2003, with the sunlight streaming through the windows of the parish Church at Skene, Aberdeenshire, a funeral service was held for Mary McMurtrie. Her large family and many friends gathered to celebrate the remarkable life, 101 years long, of a gracious lady whose life since childhood had revolved around plants, painting and the countryside.

The daughter of the dominie at Skene, her first acquaintances in the plant world were the wild flowers around the village. After graduating from Gray's School of Art in Aberdeen, she returned to Skene as the wife of the parish minister, raised four children and many, many more plants at the Manse. Saxifrages, double primroses, pinks and auriculas were favourites of both John and Mary McMurtrie and they remained her passion for more than fifty years after his death in 1949. Before then, the urge to grow a wide range of plants including alpiners, led to the first of many catalogues of plants for sale. Many members of the Scottish Rock Garden Club will still have one of these tucked away somewhere in a drawer for the beautiful line illustrations which decorated the cover.

Moving to Springbank Lodge in Aberdeen with its large garden, the challenge of running a nursery consumed the daylight hours, and almost certainly some midnight oil as well. The original stock taken from Skene expanded and soon Mrs McMurtrie was a familiar figure at the Club's shows in the Music Hall, Aberdeen, selling plants and also paintings. As a newly arrived, fresh and green undergraduate I can well remember gazing longingly at pale and delicate watercolours of coltsfoot and butterbur, but being unable to raise the very modest cost of even a small painting. With no garden, I could only gaze at the rock garden treasures on offer.



Mary McMurtrie

Exhibiting and selling with her in those days were two old friends, the Misses Edith and Mollie Logan Home who ran Edrom Nurseries. With their gardener Alec Duguid, originally from Glen Gairn in Aberdeenshire, they formed a formidable group of enthusiastic growers of very special alpines, many arriving from China and the Himalaya. Mrs McMurtrie and Miss Mollie travelled to Yugoslavia in search of new plants and there were visits to Chelsea to see and sell.

With Miss Nan Patullo, Mrs McMurtrie travelled widely in Scotland helping her with her books on 'Castles, Houses and Gardens of Scotland'. They travelled also to the Algarve, and after Miss Patullo's death Mrs McMurtrie continued an annual association with the Algarve which lasted some twenty-five springs, ending only in her 98th year.

In 1954 she sailed for East Africa with her daughter Jean, now a graduate in botany and with holiday experience at Edrom. After seeing Jean safely married in Kenya, she set to and painted many examples of the exotic flowers she found there, and these were exhibited at a show in Aberdeen in the early sixties. With this launch into painting plants she continued with Scottish ones when she returned home.

After attending lectures on Scottish buildings by the late Dr Douglas Simpson of Aberdeen University, a passion to restore an old laird's house took root and in 1959 the nursery, plants, paints, brushes and easel were moved to Balbithan House, Kintore, also in Aberdeenshire, and not so far from Skene. Soon Mrs McMurtrie became her own clerk of works, garden designer, chatelaine and guide to a historic house, and of course dedicated artist. Before my first visit to Balbithan to buy plants, I was told by a friend that that I would probably have to find my desiderata myself as there was so much to see, so rich and full was the planting with nursery and garden intimately intertwined. Strategically placed wooden fish boxes contained weeds plucked in the passing. "If you see a weed, just pick it now and it will be one less" was the maxim. And there was always a dram of sherry hidden in the big desk in the Library, for sustenance on a cold day.

Painting continued apace and soon there were exhibitions in



71 - Feverfew, one of Mary McMurtie's flower paintings

London and at the Royal Horticultural Society. Roy Genders book *Growing Old Fashioned Flowers* (1975) has plates of Mrs McMurtrie's specially commissioned. Since then she has had a succession of books of her own. A large format, limited edition *The Wild Flowers of Scotland* was commissioned by Marc Ellington in 1982. In 1991 *Plantas do Algarve*, *Scots Roses* in 1998, *Scottish Wild Flowers* in 2001 and the most recent, *Old Pinks*, will be out for Christmas 2003. There were also six small pocket books on the plant life of the Algarve and many nursery catalogues from Balbithan.

Moving to stay with her daughter Elspeth and husband in Milltimber, Aberdeen in 1990, she lived in a bright, airy extension designed by Patrick, one of her many grandchildren. Surrounded by books, paintings and papers, and with an easel and something to paint by it, she continued to welcome friends and visitors until two weeks before her death. There was always some puss or other to watch over her and accompany her on sorties into the garden. At Sunhoney, with some help with the difficult bits, she made another garden full of old favourites – trilliums, primroses, dusty millers, pinks, old roses, hepaticas and others. Many friends will now treasure more than ever, the bits and pieces she so generously dispensed.

At Sunhoney in recent years, as at the Manse of Skene, Springbank Lodge and Balbithan before, Mrs McMurtrie received all callers with a friendly interest. Encouraging the diffident, praising the talents of those less talented than herself and always keeping a calm sough with that sunny smile, her long full life has been a lesson in living for all those privileged to know her, whether for an afternoon or for long years.

Coming out into the amazing November sunshine at Skene Church, with the leafless trees around, it seemed like spring and to find a few celandines, coltsfeet and primroses would not have surprised us. One of the grandchildren remarked to me that "Granny would have been too busy to get to the church. She would have been too busy out working in the garden".

We have all lost a true friend, a consummate gardener and a talented artist. *Gordon Smith*



72 Carol and David Shaw at Elgin

Who won the Rutland Salver?

David Shaw

In 2003 Carol and David Shaw won the Rutland Salver for gaining most first prizes over the year in Section II at Scottish Rock Garden Club shows.

CAROL AND I live in the small village of Dyke in Moray and are members of the Inverness Group. To make sure that we did not get too 'swollen headed' about winning the trophy, the Editor of the Journal suggested that I write an article explaining that what we did was unexceptional and could be achieved by most other club members; talk about being deflated! This short description of our experience as alpine gardeners illustrates some of our successes and failures and I

believe that most members will recognise aspects of themselves in the story.

Our interest in alpines really started with a move to Dyke twenty years ago. My work on the rivers of north-east Scotland enabled me to acquire a collection of nice river-washed stones and, unusually, water-smoothed house bricks downstream of certain distilleries! Car boot loads of this potentially useful material led to the almost accidental construction of our first raised beds and rockeries. These were planted up with rockery plants from garden centres and certain 'native to Scotland' varieties acquired along the wayside. Beware! If a plant grows well in the wild it will romp away in a cultivated garden. I learned this the hard way with *Crepis mollis* from a riverbank in Turriff and again with a nice little horsetail from the bed of a lochan in the Mohnadliaths.

We are primarily organic gardeners so the making of garden compost is important. This first Dyke garden did not have much space for bins so I made simple compost with a loose heap of green waste in a corner of the garden. The lack of quality of this compost came to light when we tried to use it as surface mulch on the rockery. It looked great for the first few days and then the whole thing just turned green!



73 Compost is a cheap and effective soil conditioner

It took a long time to clear all those weeds out and now we make compost properly in three bins.

Just before we left that garden our involvement in alpines took an exponential leap upwards when we made our first visit to Jim Sutherland's nursery and proclaimed that we were not there to buy rockery plants but alpines! We came away with the first of our many loads of plants from Jim, a back copy of *The Rock Garden* which Jim gave us and an SRGC membership application form which he just 'happened' to have. The first journal of our own is dated June 1992 and the rest, as they say, is history.

Shortly after this we moved two hundred yards up the road to a larger garden. It was mostly covered in grass and I was later to describe this as an artists' 'blank canvas'. Our skills and knowledge were very limited then and we progressed slowly making many mistakes. Stone collection continued and our first raised bed was constructed from the locally available material which is fluvio-glacial rounded boulders available from farmers' field heaps. The two-tier construction looked good but I had dumped a lot of unsuitable rubble in the bottom to save on compost fill. Eventually the compost filtered down between this rubble and the whole thing collapsed, meaning I had to build it all again – without the infill!

Years later we constructed a series of raised beds in what had been the lawn area. I firstly stripped off some of the turf and laid it aside, prepared the first part of the beds and then replaced the turf, face downwards, within the walls and added turf from the second section to give some height. I continued in this manner until the series of beds was completed.

Construction in our garden is unstructured. There will be a quick sketch on the back of a hypothetical envelope but the design develops and changes as we progress. If the vision for the next phase is not clear we stop work, even for a year, until we can 'see' it. A while ago a garden designer friend was shocked to find me standing in a deep hole without any drawings. I think the finished article met with her approval.

An early benefit of SRGC membership was the seed exchange.



74 A new bed consumes a lot of plants

We started with the, not always, Easy Ten and managed to produce a few nice plants. This led to a first, tentative, order from the full list and now we order freely; collect and donate our own seeds and even order excess seed on occasion. We gain considerable enjoyment from all aspects of the Seed Exchange but might never have started if it had not been for the Easy Ten. I do so hope that the new seed group retain this aspect of the service.

Raising seeds produces lots of baby plants to care for and a lot of potting compost to find. I begrudge paying good money for soil when I have a whole garden full of it out there so we began mixing our own potting composts. These composts are based on the John Innes formula but as the literature is full of so many variations of the 'best' mix we are happy to vary the composition (within limits) as the mood takes us. Our current basic compost consist of loam derived from our own lawn turf, leaf mould or B & Q composted bark as a peat alternative and 6mm grit, this being the smallest size available locally. Fertiliser is bonemeal for the first potting and garden compost for



75 The alpine house

larger plants. Using garden compost can result in some weeds growing in the pot but we reckon that by this stage the plant is large enough to tolerate the small weeds being removed from around it.

It is often suggested that an alpine house is essential for growing alpine plants. I would disagree about it being essential but I find ours a great asset. Before I go any further I should add that our grandly

named “alpine house” is an aluminium framed lean-to greenhouse which came with the garden. It is now slapped onto the gable end of the potting shed through which I have cut a doorway and a large window with a bench beneath it to act as our potting bench. The



76 Our plunge bed

outside door of the shed is normally left open to provide ventilation, extra ventilation being provided in summer by removing panes of glass from the greenhouse walls. When the weather is such that everything has to be closed down, I find that the body of the shed allows for sufficient air circulation which would not be available in a closed greenhouse.

Watering in the alpine house was first achieved by taking growbag trays and filling them with grit. When filled with water they allow plants to take up water from below. In summer the plants readily take up all the water and in winter I laid wicks over the edge of the trays and this disposes of excess water after about twenty-four hours. In the summer of 2003 we built our first deep plunge bed based on that of Carole and Ian Bainbridge. It looks fantastic – we just have to learn how to use it properly.

Carol and I are able to link our other interest, mountaineering, with our gardening through botanising. We used to be serious mountaineers but then discovered the lazy way of doing things. When we feel tired we spot a flower in the grass and stop to get the guidebook and camera out. This gives us at least a ten-minute rest break and we don't have to walk nearly as far! There are many places in Europe suited to both the fit and not so fit botanist. We started off with a package holiday to the Wilder Kaiser mountains in Austria. Although these mountains are only about 2000 m high they encompass a wide variety of habitats. We were lucky in that we chose the village of Scheffau as our base because we could sit on the hotel steps to lace up our boots in the morning and set off walking without having to wait for buses. There are gentle meadow rambles, stiffer walks along the base of the peaks and then serious climbing up to the limestone summits – all amongst a wealth of flowers. Another village set right in the heart of the mountains is Obergurgl, adjacent to the Italian border of Austria. This village is located at 2000 m and the paths go upwards over glaciers to the peaks. To botanise here you need to be seriously hill-fit but for those who are it is a fantastic experience. There are many other places that we have been fortunate enough to visit from the Pyrenees to Bulgaria and even Tunisia; twice a year if possible, in spring to

appreciate all the flowers and then in late summer for some seeds.

For many years we enjoyed attending shows and thinking, but definitely not saying out loud, that we had plants just as good in the garden at home but would not demean ourselves by entering them in a competition!! However, we gradually came to appreciate that as we gained so much pleasure from looking at other people's plants it was only right that we should do something in return.

We grow some of our show plants in pots and lift and pot others directly from the garden. One technique we have adopted is that of double potting pot-grown plants (plants from the open ground do not need this). In pots, plants like to grow tight with as little spare room round the roots as possible without being pot-bound. This often results in the foliage overlapping the edge of the pot and can look untidy. Our way to improve on this is to place the plant, still in its pot, into a larger pot. The second pot is sized to show the plant off to its best advantage and can be cleaned and polished before the plant is inserted, packed round with grit or polystyrene and dressed with our



chosen medium. This is often done several days before the show and the plant may well need watering at some point. Rather than the embarrassment of a wet table liner beneath our plants we used to place a square of polythene over the drainage hole of the pot but found this to be too efficient, especially when we decide to retain the dressed up plant for our own pleasure after the show. We now use a small piece of newspaper as this will break down if it gets too soggy and let the water out.

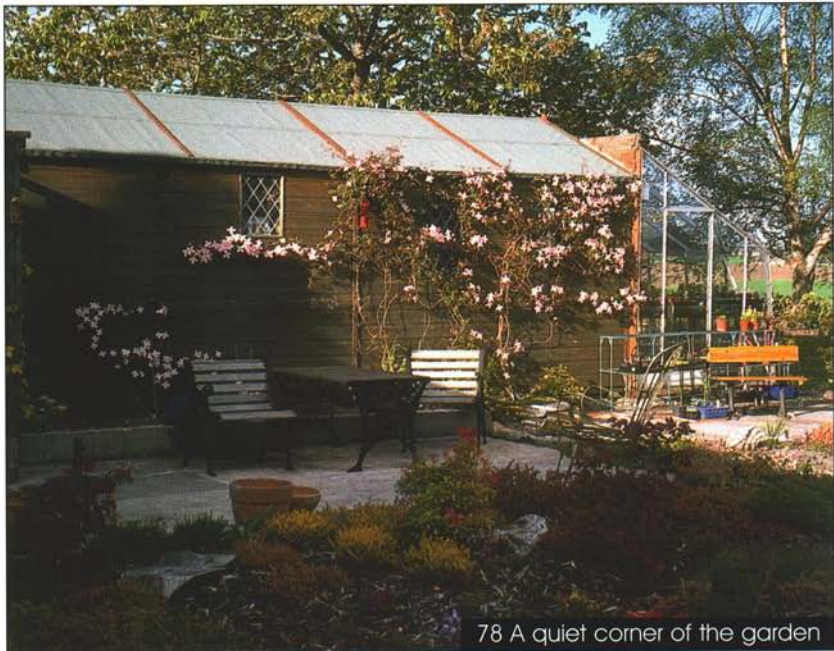
We exhibited at our own small show in Inverness for a few years before taking the plunge at Aberdeen Show in 2002. Apart from getting a couple of prizes we were delighted by the welcome we received. Suddenly, we were elevated from those who come and look to those who take the trouble to present a plant or two. And believe me, there is a difference. Suddenly the door was open to those gods of the SRGC who float six inches higher off the floor than us lesser mortals. A second revelation was that these god-like figures were actually very warm, friendly human beings happy to chat and share a drink but in real life as shy of approaching strangers the rest of us. Just putting some plants on the bench provided a link across the barrier and gave us a common discussion point. These contacts have given us a new source of information for all the, sometimes, stupid questions we ask and I think that just standing in the aura of these people has allowed some of their energy and enthusiasm to rub off on to us.

There were two factors which helped us win the Rutland Salver. One is our location. Living near Inverness means that we have to travel a long way to any qualifying show. Aberdeen, Perth or Stirling are all the same to us and each is equally 'local'. Having decided to exhibit at one there was no reason not to exhibit at them all. The other factor was the lack of competition in many classes. Frankly there is little sense of achievement in winning with the only entry in a class and we felt quite guilty about this. It was pointed out that the problem was not ours who had taken the trouble to put an entry on the bench, it lay with everyone who could have staged an entry but didn't. Carol and I are no longer able to exhibit in Section II so hope many other 'first timers' will come along in 2004 to take our place. There is nothing

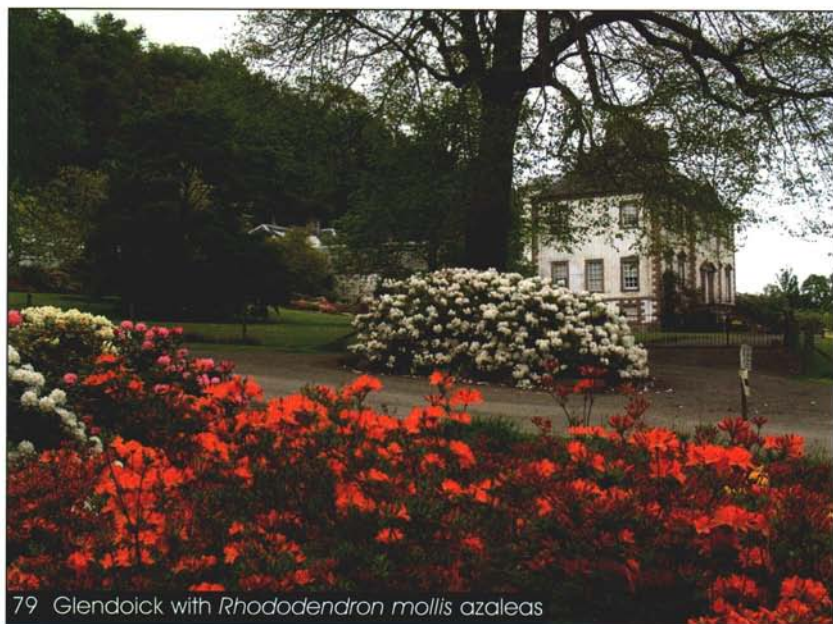
more disheartening for a hard working show secretary to see than an empty show bench.

I hope that this article has achieved its purpose in proving that the Rutland Salver winners of 2003 are nothing exceptional. We allowed our experience to build up over the years (60 in my case) and then swapped a weeding day in the garden for a visit to one of the shows. The effort involved was not excessive and well worthwhile in that we spent most of the day blethering to friends as well as admiring other plants and buying next year's potential winners from the commercial stands and the 50/50 stall. If nothing else, we got our plant names and spellings corrected by the judges. It is a long time since we found the time to go shopping in Perth or Aberdeen. If we can do it, so can you!

I hope that you all have as much fun in 2004 as we had in 2003.



78 A quiet corner of the garden



79 Glendoick with *Rhododendron mollis* azaleas

Glendoick

Peter & Kenneth Cox

This is the story of Glendoick Gardens, Perth, PH2 7NS Scotland, a world renowned garden and nursery owned by 3 generations of Coxes: Euan, Peter & Kenneth.

IN 1919, Euan Cox was invited by the well-known plant hunter and garden writer Reginald Farrer to accompany him to upper Burma on a plant collecting expedition. This decision was to have far-reaching consequences and lead to the Cox family's more than 80-year involvement with rhododendrons and plant collecting.

The 1919 expedition was a considerable success; several important new plant introductions were made including rhododendron species among which were *Rhododendron mallotum*. Later in that year,

Euan Cox returned to Britain leaving his companion in the field in Burma to carry on the expedition into the following spring. During the winter Farrer fell ill and died in Burma at the age of 40 with the consequence that it fell to Euan Cox to sort out and distribute the collections they had made together. Euan later published the first of his many horticultural books *Farrer's Last Journey*, recounting the story of the expedition. Euan Cox lived in London in the 1920s and edited a magazine *New Flora and Silva* which described the new plant introductions flooding into the West from plant hunting expeditions from all over the world. In 1931 Euan was forced to return to his native Scotland to help run his family jute business. He had started developing the garden at Glendoick from 1921 onwards and was able to devote more time to it in the 1930s.

Peter Cox, Euan's only son, was gradually drawn into horticulture, but was very nearly put off for good when his father asked him to prune vicious berberis plants in the garden at Glendoick. Peter studied horticulture in Edinburgh, followed by nearly a year at Notcutts nursery in Suffolk, south-east England. Euan had already started growing soft fruit and young flower and vegetable plants for sale locally and the rhododendron nursery started in a very small way when Peter settled back at Glendoick after leaving Notcutts in 1953. Three small plots were taken in one after the other and as the nursery expanded, other areas of field and parts of the old walled garden were gradually given over to cultivating rhododendrons. From time to time Euan and Peter used to require Norah Cox, their wife and mother, to move her herbaceous borders further and further away from the house as they needed more and more space for their rhododendrons. In return, they promised never to discuss rhododendrons at meal times. In the early days of the nursery, Euan and Peter did all the work on their own but later enlisted help from the fruit workers and finally, a permanent nursery staff of five were employed, with seasonal extras. Glendoick is most unusual for the UK in that we have resisted the temptation to change from field to container production of rhododendrons. We are convinced that better and more easily-

established plants are produced by open ground production methods and many species cannot be produced in containers at all.

In 1963, Peter married Patricia Sherrard from Ireland, having met due to a mutual interest in rhododendrons. Glendoick Gardens was a small retail mail-order business until 1973 when Glendoick Garden Centre was opened under the direction of Patricia Cox. Peter and Patricia had spent several years visiting as many garden centres as they could before taking the plunge. Glendoick Garden Centre, including its restaurant, now employs over 30 people and is one of the best known in Scotland. It features Glendoick plants of course and the best trees, shrubs, perennials and other gardening items we can locate in the UK and Europe. The nursery has expanded gradually over the years and is now the largest retail rhododendron and azalea specialist nursery in Europe – perhaps in the world. Bucking the current trend to grow everything in containers, we still grow more than 80% of our stock outside in nursery beds where they form large and vigorous root systems and good plant habit. We export as far away as Japan, Australia and New Zealand, the USA and Canada and all over Europe. We recently supplied plants for an enormous rhododendron planting at Crystal Palace Park, London. In addition to our huge range of rhododendrons and azaleas, we specialise in hardy camellias, *Kalmia* and ericaceous subjects, Asiatic *Primula*, *Meconopsis*, *Lilium*, *Nomocharis* and other plants, particularly those collected by the Cox's' own expeditions.

Kenneth Cox showed a remarkable ability to learn plant names by the age of two: he was able to name all the illustrations in his plant book and he used to impress Mr Davidian, the rhododendron expert, by pointing out indumentum on rhododendron leaves. Kenneth was not particularly interested in rhododendrons until he spent 6 months in America working for Ted Van Veen and Harold Greer when he was 17. He found to his dismay that the Americans expected him to be a rhododendron expert. Luckily he had time to absorb the Cox rhododendron books and by the time he returned to Glendoick he had begun research on the book which would become *The Encyclopaedia of*

Rhododendron Hybrids. Kenneth did not settle permanently at Glendoick until he was in his early 30s but has now taken over as managing director. Despite Kenneth's wife Jane's keen interest in perennial gardening, their sons Jamie (2?) and Finn (1?) as yet show no interest in plants. It's early days!

Plant Hunting

From the 1950s onwards, access to the mountains of China and most of the Himalaya were no longer accessible to plant hunters. Peter was enthralled by Sherriff's plant-hunting exploits and developed a desire to go off to the wilds himself. In 1960, Peter



80 *Rhododendron dekatanum*

Cox met Peter Hutchison and the two discovered that they had a mutual interest in plant hunting. In due course the two Peters mounted an expedition to Turkey in 1962. In 1965, with Patricia Cox they set off for north-east India to an area never before explored botanically. Peter and Patricia left their one-year-old son Kenneth behind with his godmother. Despite the itinerary being severely curtailed due to political upheaval following the Chinese invasion in 1962, they managed to discover and introduce several new rhododendron species. These were from fairly low altitudes and have not proven to be very hardy.

It was not until 1981 that it was once again possible to visit China. Peter Cox was one of the participants in the SBEC expedition to the Cangshan in Yunnan. This was a joint expedition with Chinese and British experts working together. It led to the first availability of large numbers of rhododendrons from wild seed for almost 30 years



81 *Rhododendron dendrocharis*

and the SBEC seed and plants were distributed all over the world. Many German gardens hold examples. Since then Peter, Kenneth and now Jens Nielsen have been to part of China, Tibet and the Himalaya almost every year. Many resulting new plant species have been introduced by Glendoick. Some of the most notable rhododendrons introduced since 1981 are *Rhododendron*

dendrocharis, *R. ochraceum*, *R. platypodum*, *R. denudatum*, *R. miniatum*, *R. trilictorum*, *R. luciferum*, *R. laudandum*, *R. kasoense* and *R. huianum*. Other plants include *Gentiana ternifolia*, *Primula moupinensis*, *Ilex nothofagifolia*, *Primula odontocalyx*.

PLANT-HUNTING EXPEDITIONS

Euan Cox With Reginald Farrer
1919 Burma

Peter Cox, mostly with Peter Hutchison, sometimes with Patricia Cox
1962 N.E. Turkey

1965 Arunachal Pradesh (N.E.F.A.), India. Discovered 3 new species of rhododendron and introduced several other new plants

1981 Sino British Expedition to China- N.E. Yunnan 1981 with Roy Lancaster, etc

1985 Nepal

1986 Yunnan, (Lijiang) Sichuan, China.

1988 Bhutan

1989 China, (Sichuan)

- 1990 China (Sichuan U.K.-U.S.A. trip)
- 1992 Sino Scottish Expedition to N.Yunnan (Chungtien, Bei Ma Shan)
- 1993 Yunnan China, Salween-Mekong divide
- 1994 Salween Mekong divide (Spring), Yunnan
- 1995 S.C. Sichuan and N.E. & S.E. Yunnan.
- 1996 S.E. Tibet, Tsangpo Gorges, Pemako, Namche Barwa (with Kenneth Cox)
- 1996 S. Chile
- 1997 Salween, Yunnan, China
- 1998 Tsari, S.E. Tibet. (With Kenneth Cox)
- 1999 Sichuan & Guizhou, China
- 2000 Salween, Yunnan, China
- 2002 Arunachal Pradesh (with Kenneth Cox)

Kenneth Cox

- 1992 Sino Scottish Expedition to N.W. Yunnan (Chungtien, Bei Ma Shan)
- 1993 N.W. Yunnan (leader)
- 1994 N.W. Yunnan (Weixi) (leader)
- 1995 S.E. Tibet, Namche Barwa region (leader)
- 1996 S.E. Tibet, Tsangpo Gorges, Pemako, Namche Barwa (leader)
- 1997 S.E. Tibet, Zayul, Pome (leader)
- 1998 Tsari, S.E. Tibet. (leader)
- 1999 Tsari S.E. Tibet (leader)
- 2001 Arunachal Pradesh, upper Siang.
- 2002 Arunachal Pradesh, Subansiri-Siyom divide



82 *Rhododendron cephalanthum*

Hybridising at Glendoick

The great plant hunters Ludlow and Sherriff returned to Britain in the 1950s. George Sherriff and his wife started a garden only 50 km away from Glendoick and they became great friends of the Coxs. On an early visit to their home, Ascreavie, Peter spotted a dwarf yellow-flowered rhododendron species with enormous bowl-shaped flowers for the size of the plant which turned out to be a Ludlow and Sherriff introduction: *Rhododendron ludlowii*. The Sherriffs allowed Peter to take some pollen home which he applied to *Rhododendron chryseum* (now *R. rupicola* var. *chryseum*.) In due course, the hybrid *Rhododendron* 'Chikor' was selected and named from this cross and was given an Award of Merit, and later a First Class Certificate, by the Royal Horticultural Society. A chikor is a game bird and this started the theme of naming all dwarf lepidote hybrids after birds, another prime interest of Peter's. From then on, several dwarf crosses were made every year. There are now around 25 Glendoick birds which are popular with gardeners and rhododendron collectors in many parts of the world.

GLENDOICK RHODODENDRON INTRODUCTIONS: species selections & hybrids. Euan, Peter & Kenneth Cox 1953-present.

1. SELECTED CLONES OF SPECIES RHODODENDRONS

- R. brachyanthum* 'Blue Light' A.M.
- R. bureavii* 'Ardrishaig' A.M.
- R. eudoxum* A.M. form
- R. fletcherianum* 'Yellow Bunting' A.M.
- R. forrestii* Repens Gp. 'Seighku' A.M. R. 59174
- R. formosum* 'Khasia' A.M. C&H 320
- R. hippophaeoides* 'Glendoick®™ Iceberg'
- R. oreotrephes* 'Pentland' A.M.
- R. racemosum* 'Glendoick' A.M.
- R. vernicosum* 'Sidlaw' P.C.

2. DWARF LEPIDOTE HYBRIDS.

Date given is of registration/introduction.

- 'Arctic Tern' (*trichostomum* x *ledum*) white fls. Cross by Larsen. Reg. 1982.
- 'Brambling' – see notes below
- 'Chiffchaff' (*hanceanum* Nanum Gp. x *fletcherianum*) yellow flowers. 1976.
- 'Chikor' (*ludlowii* x *rupicola* ssp. *chryseum*) yellow flowers. 1962.
- 'Crane' (*keiskei* 'Yaku Fairy' x *racemosum* 'White Lace') White flowers. 1993.
- 'Curlew' (*ludlowii* x *fletcherianum*) Yellow flowers, red spotting. 1970.
- 'Eider' (*minus* Carolinianum Gp. x *leucaspis*) pure white flowers. 1981.
- 'Egret' (*campylogynum* white x *racemosum* 'White Lace') tiny white flowers. 1982.
- 'Euan Cox' (*ludlowii* x *hanceanum* Nanum Gp.) Bright yellow flowers. 1981.
- 'Goosander' (*ludlowii* x *lutescens*) yellow flowers with red spots. 1981.
- 'Grouse' (*campylogynum* 'Bodnant Red' x *calostrotum* 'Gigha') red flowers. 1977.
- 'Merganser' (*campylogynum* (white) x *luteiflorum*) yellow bell-shaped flowers. 1981.
- 'Oban' ('Grouse' x *keiskei* 'Yaku Fairy') deep pink flowers. 1995.
- 'Phalarope' (*pemakoense* x *davidsonianum*) pinkish-lavender flowers. 1969.
- 'Pintail' (*racemosum* x 'Snipe') bright pink flowers. 1999. (not registered)
- 'Pipit' (*lowndesii* x *lepidotum*) natural hybrid, pink flowers. 1971.
- 'Ptarmigan' (*orthocladum* var. *microleucum* x *leucaspis*) white flowers. 1965.
- 'Quail' (*keiskei* 'Yaku Fairy' x *glaucophyllum* Peter Chapell form) red buds, deep pink flowers. 2001 – see also notes below
- 'Razorbill' (*spinuliferum* seedling) pink tubular flowers. 1976.
- 'Snipe' (*pemakoense* x *davidsonianum*) lavender pink flowers. 1978.



'Teal' (*brachyanthum* x *luteiflorum*)
yellow flowers. 1977.

'Tinkerbird' (*ciliatum* x *edgeworthii*)
white scented flowers. 1998.
See also notes below.

'Tree Creeper' – see notes
below

'Turago' – see notes below

'Waxbill' (*keiskei* 'Yaku Fairy' x
spinuliferum) pale pink flowers.
1998. See also notes below.

'Wheatear' (*keiskei* 'Yaku Fairy' x *spinuliferum*) cream flowers with pink
markings. 1998. See notes below.

'Wigeon' (*minus* *Carolinianum* Gp. x *calostrotum* 'Gigha') pink flowers.
1982.

'Woodchat' (*brachyanthum* x *ludlowii*) yellow flowers, late. 1982.

'Wren' (*ludlowii* x *keiskei* 'Yaku Fairy') yellow flowers. 1984.

3. ELEPIDOTE RHODODENDRONS

'Glendoick®™ Gold' ('Loch Rannoch' x 'Cupcake')

'Glendoick®™ Ruby' ('Lampion' x 'Charmaine') – see notes below

'Glendoick®™ Vanilla' (*yakushmanum* x *hemsleyanum*)

'Glendoick®™ Velvet' ('Rasputin' x 'Azurro')

'Loch Earn' ('Hotei' x 'Cupcake')

'Loch of the Lowes'

'Loch Leven'

'Loch Rannoch'

'Loch Tay' ('Hotei' x *caucasicum*)

'Loch Tummel' (*pachysanthum* x *morii*) natural hybrid

4. EVERGREEN AZALEAS

'Arctic Fox' ('Panda' x 'Mucronatum') Large pure white flowers.

'Chinchilla' ('Chippewa' x 'Vida Brown') Hose-in-hose light red flowers



84 *Rhododendron* 'Turaço'



85 *Rhododendron* 'Wheatear' (left) & *Rhododendron* 'Waxbill'

- 'Chipmunk' ('Chippewa' x 'Vida Brown') Hose-in-hose bright pink flowers, very compact.
- 'Glendoick ®™ Crimson' ('Squirrel' x 'Red Red') Dark red flowers in May.
- 'Glendoick ®™ Dream' ('Panda' x 'Rokoko') Double, ruffled purplish red flowers in May.
- 'Glendoick ®™ Garnet' ('Squirrel' x 'Red Red') Hot deep red flowers May.
- 'Glendoick ®™ Glacier' ('Panda' x 'Rokoko') Double white flowers.
- 'Glendoick ®™ Goblin' ('Squirrel' x 'Red Red') Hot red flowers, petaloid stamens.
- 'Lemur' (*nakaharae* x 'Vuyk's Scarlet') Deep pink flowers, low growing.
- 'Panda' ('Everest' x *kiusianum*) White flowers. Our best seller.
- 'Raccoon' (*nakaharae* cross) Bright red flowers in June-July, compact, spreading.
- 'Squirrel' ('Galathea' x *nakaharae*) Bright scarlet flowers in June.
- 'Wombat' (*nakaharae* 'Mariko' x 'Gaiety') Pink flowers, spreading ground cover.

Climate note.

Glendoick is on the east coast of Scotland, a few miles from the Tay estuary. The coldest winters recorded have reached -18° C but this happens only a few times a century. A cold winter is usually more like -12° C. Summers have few summer days over 27° C. Rainfall is 600–760 mm annually. Our greatest problem is late spring frosts after periods of mild weather: flowers and growth are often frosted and bark-split can result.

RECENT INTRODUCTIONS OF SPECIES AND HYBRID RHODODENDRONS SUITABLE FOR THE ROCK GARDEN.

Recent years have seen some important new introductions from the wild, some for the first time. The Glendoick hybridising program of dwarf rhododendrons and azaleas continues and we have named several



more in the last few years. The following is a selection of some of the recent introductions which might be of interest to Scottish gardeners.

Hardiness Ratings

H5 Very hardy -24°C (-10°F) and below. Coldest UK inland areas amongst hills.

H4 Hardy -18°C (0°F) minimum. Other UK areas fairly well inland.

H3 Fairly hardy -15°C ($+5^{\circ}\text{F}$) minimum. Low elevations and sheltered gardens, fairly near east coast. Limit of hardiness at Glendoick. Such plants are damaged in our severest winters.

H2 Rather tender -12°C ($+10^{\circ}\text{F}$) minimum. Low elevations fairly near west coast and on east coast. Not reliably hardy outdoors at Glendoick.

Species

- R. cephalanthum* Nmaiense Gp. C.V. 9513 from S.E. Tibet 45-60 cm. H4. Pale yellow flowers (though some forms are cream or pale pink) in early May. Quite easy. First introduction by Kenneth Cox from the 1995 Doshong La expedition in S.E. Tibet. So far fairly easy to please and vigorous.
- R. dekatanum* 1m. H(3-)4 Clear yellow flowers in March-April. This was introduced by Ludlow and Sherriff but unrecognised and was occasionally sold as *R. sulfureum* aff. Peter Cox keyed it out a few years ago and realised that it was *R. dekatanum*. Fine peeling bark. Good on a sheltered wall at Glendoick.
- R. dendrocharis* 30 cm. H4-5. Relatively large, pale to deepest pink flowers in April. Tiny dark green leaves and neat compact habit. No sign of any winter damage at Glendoick. Needs good drainage. Probably the finest new dwarf species to be introduced in recent years, this is now starting to appear at SRGC shows and it is a show-stopper. Two named selections are 'Glendoick ®™ Gem' from CC&H 3915 (clone #D) Fine deep pink flowers in April. Dark green leaves. Upright habit. The selection with the most handsome foliage. 'Glendoick®™ Jewel'. Pale pink. Later than the other forms.
- R. monanthum* 1 m. H2-3? 1-2 per truss tubular bright yellow flowers; in 2002-3, flowering indoors from September to January. One of two newly introduced autumn-flowering species. We are not sure how hardy these are going to be yet. We have already started breeding with this to try to get a race of autumn-flowering hybrids. I collected the second species *R. kasoense* for the first time last year in Arunachal Pradesh. It seemed to be more impressive than *R. monanthum*.
- R. petrocharis* Guiz 120. 60 cm. H4. Fine funnel-shaped pure white flowers in March-April. Compact with larger leaves than *R. dendrocharis*. This needs very good drainage but is otherwise fairly easy to please. We also have a pale pink clone which is not as striking.



Hybrids

'Brambling' ('Razorbill x *racemosum*) 90 cm. H4. A promising new Glendoick hybrid with brightest pink flowers in multiple clusters in April. Fine dark foliage. This is vigorous and easy and we have high hopes for it.

'Glendoick ®™ Ruby' (REP) 50 cm. H4-5? Very fine waxy deep red with a large calyx and no stamens in April-May. Slow-growing with fine foliage. Ideal to grow with the bird hybrids.

'Quail' 30 cm. H4. Bright red buds open to deep reddish-pink in April-May. Compact habit. Very free-flowering, the flowers last best in part-day shade. Almost a true red lepidote dwarf. See also

- its sister seedling 'Tree Creeper'.
- 'Tinkerbird' 75 cm. H3-4. Masses of scented cream-white flowers in early May. A real breakthrough: a compact, scented dwarf which grows outdoors at Glendoick. Best in a sheltered site. Surprisingly bud hardy. Also good as a pot plant.
- 'Tree Creeper' (*keiskei* x *glaucophyllum* C) 30 cm. H4. Pink buds opening to flower pink on outside cream inside, giving an attractive two-toned effect. Compact habit. Very free-flowering. Flowers last best in part day shade.
- 'Turaço' (*keiskei* YF x *spiciferum*) 75 cm+. H4. Masses of pale pink flowers in April-May. Like a pinker version of 'Ginny Gee', on a vigorous but tidy dwarf. We think this is the best pale pink hybrid of this type.
- 'Waxbill' & 'Wheatear' 75 cm. H3-4 Two sister seedlings (*keiskei* 'Yaku Fairy' x *spinuliferum*) Eye-catching flowers: tubular pale pink ('Waxbill') and cream striped pink ('Wheatear') in April. Vigorous but tidy growers with bronzy new growth. Perhaps not for gardens colder than Glendoick.



88 *Rhododendron* 'Treecreeper'



S.R.G.C.

at

GLENDOICK GARDEN CENTRE

A90 Perth-Dundee Road

Saturday & Sunday, 24-25 April 2004

11am-4pm

In association with Glendoick Garden Centre the SRGC will feature a display of alpine plants supplied by members along with information relating to the club. A team of members will be in attendance offering advice on the cultivation of alpine plants and answering queries.

A large selection of alpine and woodland plants is available at the garden centre.

As a concession to SRGC members, Glendoick Garden Centre will offer free access over both days to the world-renowned gardens which should be approaching their best around this time of year. Admission passes to the gardens will be available from the SRGC display area on both days.

Restaurant facilities are available.
Enquiries to Fred Hunt, Tel 01382 562101

Highland Discussion Weekend Elgin 2004



1st to 3rd October 2004

Eight Acres Hotel, Elgin, Moray

'America, South Africa, China and Home'

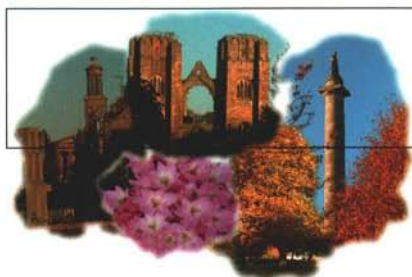
Once again the Moray and Inverness Groups bring the 2004 Highland Discussion Weekend to Elgin, the capital of Moray. The City and Royal Burgh of Elgin is on the main A96 road, almost equidistant between Inverness and Aberdeen. There are rail links from Aberdeen and Inverness. By road it is accessed from the A9 via Aviemore and Strathspey. The nearest airports are Inverness and Aberdeen.

Elgin has historic links with the past e.g. the Cathedral, Spynie Palace (the Bishop's Palace), Ladyhill. Elgin is at the entrance to Speyside's whisky industry and has two distilleries (a visit has been arranged). There is good High Street shopping and a Saturday farmers' market as well as two 24-hour Tesco and Asda supermarket. Of garden interest are the Cooper Park, the unique Biblical Garden and nearby (5 miles approx) Blackhills Rhododendron Garden.

The hotel itself is set in 8 acres of manicured grounds on the western approaches (A96) to Elgin. Facilities include a pool, spa-bath, sauna, gymnasium and squash courts, all to be found in the leisure club.

Those who attended this year know to book early if they want a room at the Eight Acres Hotel. Once again the overflow will be accommodated at the sister hotel, the Ramnee Hotel in Forres. Transport will be laid on so delegates can participate in the full programme.

Due to requests from the 2003 delegates, the programme format, including the optional activities, will remain similar, with one or two subtle changes to the Saturday evening dinner.



Elgin 2004 Programme

FRIDAY 1st OCTOBER

- 4:00 Registration
- 7:45 President's welcome Address
- 8:00 The Bulb Group Lecture - Tony Rymer (Yorkshire)
"Growing hardy orchids - Are terrestrials tameable?"
- 9:30 Small Bulb Exchange

SATURDAY 2nd OCTOBER

- 8:00 Registration
- 8:00 – 09:30 Setting up plants for show
- 9:00 Optional Activities including Distillery Tour
- 11:15 Rod Saunders (South Africa, Silverhill Seeds)
"South African Bulbs from higher altitudes"
- 12:30 Show Opens
- 2:00 – 4:00 The Harold Esslemont Lecture
Ian Christie and Ron MacBeath on their 2003 seed-collecting
trip to China
- 7:15 Dinner
- 10:00 Plant Auction and Raffle

SUNDAY 3rd OCTOBER

- 09:00 Registration
- 09:30 The William Buchanan Lecture
Rod Saunders (South Africa, Silverhill Seeds)
"Alpine plants from South Africa"
- 11:00 Tony Rymer - "Puzzling Penstemons, Luscious Lilies and other
Pacific North West gems"
- 2:00 The John Duff Scottish Lecture
John Christie – Rhododendrons at Blackhills

All accommodation at the Eight Acres Hotel will be in double, twin or single rooms. If single members prefer to share a room, it will be greatly appreciated if, before booking, they could arrange this between themselves. Tell us the name of the person with whom you will be sharing. Otherwise, we will use our best judgement when allocating single delegates to the twin rooms. Extra nights on the Thursday night before and Sunday night after can be booked at a specially negotiated rate of £45 per person per night, sharing a twin room to include breakfast. Tell us on the reverse of this form if you need this extra accommodation and we will book it for you. There is no ground floor accommodation available, access to accommodation is by stairs.

Star attractions will be the PLANT AUCTION, RAFFLE and 50-50 PLANT SALE, PLANT SHOW, and HOLIDAY PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION. Details are in the Year Book.

Please use the booking form enclosed with the Secretary's Page.

Members should make sure that the form and remittance reaches Lorna not later than 10th September 2004.

The Registration Secretary, Mrs. Lorna Milnes, Dunbarney, Myrtlefield Lane, Westhill, Inverness IV2 5BP (Tel. 01463 791605)

Members wanting further information should write to Davie Sharp, Kincaig, 4 Walker's Crescent, Lhanbryde, Elgin, Moray IV30 8PB. (Tel. 01343 843111)

RESIDENT	
Friday Dinner - Sunday Afternoon Tea	£165
Saturday Lunch - Sunday Afternoon Tea	£110
NON - RESIDENT	
Saturday (morning coffee, lunch, afternoon tea)	£30
Saturday Evening - Dinner	£21
Saturday (morning coffee, lunch, afternoon tea, dinner)	£51
Sunday (morning coffee, lunch, afternoon tea)	£30

Book Reviews

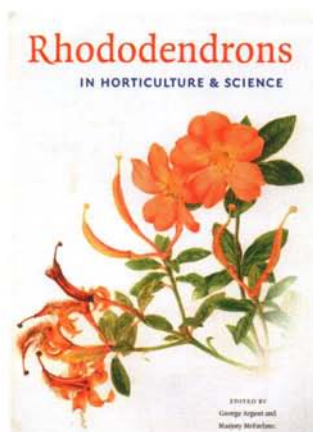
RHODENDRONS IN HORTICULTURE AND SCIENCE

Edited by George Argent & Marjory
McFarlane

ISBN 1 872291 49 X

Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh

Softback, 320pp with 56 full colour
plates, £35.00 + £3.60 postage &
packing.



IF, LIKE ME, you missed the conference in 2002 at RBG Edinburgh, and have an interest in rhododendrons, you will find lots here to interest you. This is a major work on the genus, very well presented with over 300 pages and over 50 colour plates. It covers a diverse but well-balanced series of topics. The conference brought together scientists, horticulturalists and rhododendron-fanciers from all over the world.

Three major rhododendron gardens, Glenarn in Scotland, Exbury in the south of England, and Pukeiti in New Zealand are described in separate articles. At Exbury the task of checking the names of the hybrids and species grown there has been proceeding for the last ten years. There is an account of Lionel de Rothschild's efforts to breed late flowering hybrids. The much larger task of co-ordinating the collections of species and hybrids in over 400 major gardens throughout the world is ongoing.

An article by James Cullen stresses the importance of these living collections as an aid to study and further understanding of the genus, as well as providing an amenity for those fortunate enough to live nearby. He outlines the great difficulties facing those who aim to curate these collections. David Chamberlain relates how taxonomists are having to leave their herbaria and get out into the wild to study the plants in their natural habitats if they are to identify wild hybrids and varieties and sub-species. There are accounts of several recent plant hunting expeditions, and a tribute to one of the great pioneers Frank

Kingdon-Ward. David Rankin describes how it is possible to unravel some of the complexities of Sub-section Taliensia by analysing the chemistry of leaf waxes.

One section of the genus given prominence in the book is that of the tender vireyas found mainly in Malaysia. RBG Edinburgh now has a large collection of these plants, and their method of growing them is described. There is an article on searching for them in the wild and one by a nurseryman producing them – they are much more readily available now. A challenge awaits those of us who have filled our gardens with hardy rhododendrons.

On the theme of conservation it is heartening to see that the Chinese, with the help of RBG Edinburgh are setting up a collection in the mountains at Lijiang. Conversely, there are thought-provoking articles on the two black sheep of the family; *Rhododendrum ponticum* in Britain and *Rhododendrum maximum* in the Southern Appalachian Mountains in America, both of which are impeding the development of native tree species.

At the end of the book there are reports of nine posters, which were set up at the conference. This book represents good value for £35. Buy it and enjoy it. *Peter Bland*

COLUMBINES

Aquilegia, Paraquilegia and Semiaquilegia

Robert Nold

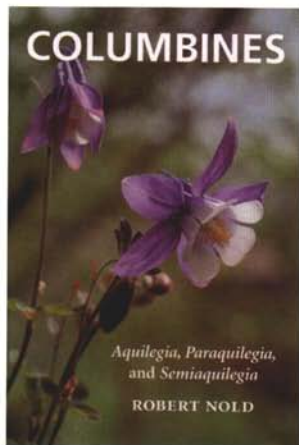
ISBN 0 88192 588 8

Timber Press

158 pp, 8 full page colour paintings, 45 colour photos

£17.99

Aquilegias are very widespread in the wild – the Far East, Himalayas, Europe and North America – and vary from tiny dwarfs of high mountains to plants of lowland meadows and woodland. There are easy-going border plants and some beautiful challenges. They come



in an enormous range of colours, predominantly red and yellow, and blue and white, or blueish-purple. Seed is fairly readily available and is much more amenable in viability than is typical of some of the Ranunculaceae, to which the aquilegias belong. Although some of the species are well known many are not, and there is not a readily available book on the genus and the monograph by Munz from 1948, which is a very valuable work, has got rather out of date.

Robert Nold will be well known to many members as the author of *Penstemons* and this new volume is what one would expect: readable, well-informed with quite thorough treatments of the species as well as discussions of hybrids. Nold writes with a disarming honesty which makes this a much more readable study than is often true of such specialist volumes. The main body of the book is a species-by-species survey which discusses species boundaries sensibly and effectively. There are three keys, one each to the species of Asia, Europe and North America, although as all too often you need to know which one of these you are looking at before you start. As always with volumes looking at a single genus it is the detailed study, working through the genus one plant at a time, that will be the major reason for most people to buy such a book, but in this case the other parts of the book stand up very well. These other chapters make up a rather larger part of this volume than they often do in such productions with very convincing chapters on cultivation, pests and diseases, propagation, morphology and distribution, taxonomy and naming, the semiaquilegias and paraquilegias, and on hybrids. Not only are these valuable but they are an easy and entertaining read.

The very best of the illustrations are superb. The paintings by the Cindy Nelson-Nold, the author's wife, are very good. Charles Mann's photograph of *Aquilegia coerulea* on a hillside makes you want to jump on a plane to Colorado but not enough of the others live with this. The other criticism (and I don't particularly want to criticise – this is a valuable book) is that the chosen photographs are sufficient to whet the appetite rather than sufficiently exhaustive. While Nold makes no bones about not being able to manage some species it feels as if an opportunity to show some of the American species, for example, was lost here. In one or two cases the photographs appear rather dark and the absence of more than a couple of line drawings is a shame.

Somehow this feels as if an opportunity has been missed. If

aquilegias are your thing then this book is pretty essential but somehow it doesn't quite convince me that it would convert many people. – some of the species not illustrated certainly should be and the absence of photographs of some species is not made up for by the rare line drawings. Worthy rather than inspiring and Munz's monograph will still be of value. *Malcolm McGregor.*

THE DAPURI DRAWINGS

Alexander Gibson & The Bombay Botanic Gardens

H J Noltie

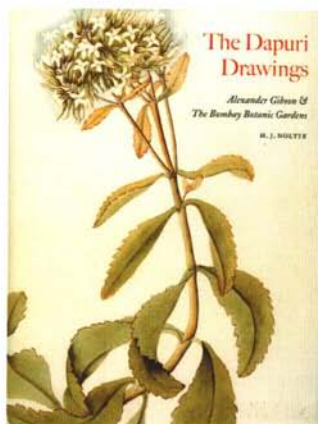
ISBN 1 85149 422 7

Antique Collectors' Club

in association with Royal Botanic Garden
Edinburgh

240pp, 205 colour illustrations, 10 b&w

£35.00



This book is not about rock gardening or rock garden plants, it is a book which makes available beautiful reproductions of the paintings which were produced to illustrate the *Bombay Flora* which was published in 1861. This was authored by two men: a Scot, Alexander Gibson from Laurencekirk, a surgeon for the East India Company who rose to manage the District Gardens at Dapuri near Poona from 1838 to 1860 and his successor Nicholas Dalzell under whom the gardens continued only until 1865. The paintings which are reproduced were the work of an unknown local painter and by an uncertain route are part of the RBG Edinburgh's collection.

Henry Noltie has produced a fascinating history of Dapuri and Gibson which fully complements the beautiful work which is reproduced, uncovering much that illuminates not only the particular case of Alexander Gibson and Dapuri, but in so doing, incidentally, much that is typical of the Scottish role in the development of Empire in the 19th century. Running India as it did, it was the needs of

Britain, as determined through the prism of the East India Company, that dictated the way in which the Indian economy was organised. The development and exploitation of Indian plants was just part of that but a typical one and one which goes on today across the world as indigenous people have their local plants commercialised by foreign, often trans-national, companies.

Western science, in the 19th century as today, named and classified plants and the need for type specimens and formal illustrations was part of this process. In Europe the tradition and conventions of botanical illustration were well-established but in India the East India Company needed pictures of the plants, and trained local artists in what was wanted. The Dapuri drawings are part of that: stylistically these can be seen as at the interface of Indian painting and British botanical illustration. The decorative traditions of Indian art emphasise the shapes of leaves, and the layout on the actual page, often flattening the subjects so that the drawings can feel as if they have been derived from pressed rather than living specimens. However the unknown Dapuri Artist, while often sacrificing three-dimensionality, produced some startlingly beautiful images including a number which RBG Edinburgh are selling as individual reproductions. Obvious are the poppies which are remarkable in the unconventional way in which they use the page.

This is a lovely book. Although the drawings are the major part of the work, the 170 drawings are reproduced in full with commentary of each of them, Noltie's introductory chapters are of great value: Alexander Gibson's story, the history of Dapuri, and the genesis of this book are all bound together extremely well, and at some 80 pages of *very* large format pages, contribute substantially. It may seem expensive but it isn't – wonderful! *Malcolm McGregor.*

NOTICES

The Crosland Award

This prize is awarded annually by the Aberdeenshire Group in memory of the late Jack Crosland for the best contribution to *The Rock Garden* in that year. Writers, photographers and illustrators are all eligible.

The award for 2003, the third such award, is to Vojtech Holubec for his beautifully illustrated article on the Tien Shan – *The Celestial Mountains* – which was published in the July 2003 issue – congratulations to him.

The Aberdeenshire Group have decided to invite another local group to be involved with them each year in deciding to whom the award should be given. This year that other group was the Angus Group.

SEED EXCHANGE 2004

Seed Exchange Manager: Prof G Stuart Pawley, Acres of Keillour, Methven,
Perth PH1 3RA
email: gsp.srgc@tesco.net

Requests for seed to Dr Alan J Hayes, 31 Liberton Brae, Edinburgh EH16 6AG
Donations of seed to Prof Pawley

Next issue

In 2002, Ian Young won the Crosland Award for his photo-essay on the small yellow fritillaries. In the July 2004 issue of *THE ROCK GARDEN* will be publishing the second part of this survey of these beautiful plants

Fritillaries 2



Cox & Kings
FOUNDED IN 1958

NATURAL WORLD TOURS

For 2004 Cox & Kings is pleased to offer a programme of botanical, garden and natural history tours, all of which are accompanied by expert tour leaders.

BOTANY & WILDFLOWER TOURS

Brazil 8 – 24 March	Tour Leaders: Ray Harley & Ana Maria Giulietti Price: £2295
La Gomera 2 – 9 March	Tour Leader: Lance Chilton Price: £995
Northern Cyprus 9 – 20 March	Tour Leader: John Montgomery Price: £995
The Algarve 24 – 31 March	Tour Leaders: Brian & Eileen Anderson Price: £995
Majorca 27 March – 3 April	Tour Leader: Robert Callow Price: £675
Crete 29 March – 5 April	Tour Leader: Lance Chilton Price: £995
Southern Turkey 14 – 24 April	Tour Leaders: Brian & Eileen Anderson Price: £1145
The Peloponnese 19 – 27 April	Tour Leader: Lance Chilton Price: £995
Gargano 23 April – 4 May	Tour Leader: John Montgomery Price: £1295
Romania 27 April – 8 May	Tour Leader: Martin Sands Price: £1195
Lesvos 8 – 15 May	Tour Leaders: Brian & Eileen Anderson Price: £845
Slovenia 18 – 30 May	Tour Leader: Mary Briggs Price: £825
Hungary 1 – 11 June	Tour Leader: John Montgomery Price: £1045
China 1 – 22 June	Tour Leader: Philip Cribb Price: £2495

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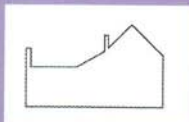
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