THE RHODODENDRON HYBRIDISERS: CROSFIELD, GILL, LODER, RAMSDEN, SMITH & WILLIAMS

Julian Taylor-Whall

The Rhododendron Hybridisers:

Joseph John Crosfield, of Embley Park, Hampshire; Richard Gill, of Tremough, Cornwall; Sir Edmund Loder, of Leonardslee in West Sussex; Sir John Ramsden, of Bulstrode Park, Gerrard's Cross, Buckinghamshire, and Muncaster Castle in West Cumbria; Samuel Smith, of Penjerrick, Cornwall; and John Charles Williams, who gardened at both Caerhays Castle, near Gorran, on the Cornish riviera, and at Werrington Park in the north of the county, close to Launceston: the six rhododendron hybridisers who are the focus of Volume Four.

As before, an array of photographs portraying their most widely planted crosses feature throughout, these preceded by historical articles on each hybridiser and the gardens they created, plus a listing of all their registered combinations.

THE RHODODENDRON HYBRIDISERS

Julian Taylor-Whall

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- *Title Page* -
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- *Joseph Crosfield* -
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- *Richard Gill* -
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- *John Ramsden* -
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Joseph Crosfield:

Joseph John Crosfield (1866-1940).



The Nursing Profession Loses A True Friend.

The Nursing Profession sincerely mourns the loss of a very true friend by the death on May 9th of Mr. Joseph J. Crosfield, of Embley Park, Hants, whose funeral took place on May 11th. The formal service, held in St. Margaret's Church, East Wellow, was followed by interment in the churchyard, which is the resting place of Florence Nightingale, and which has become a place of pilgrimage for nurses from all over the world. Great simplicity marked the service, which was attended by many devoted friends and by representatives of many institutions which owed so much to this most sympathetic philanthropist. A list of the benefactions of the late Mr. Crosfield, including hospitals, nursing institutions, health centres and public institutions would fill a column. Never was public duty more earnestly performed or with greater modesty than that which inspired this generous friend of his fellow men, whose wealth was spent lavishly for the benefit of those in need; he now rests in a sacred spot of exquisite sylvan beauty close to the historic St. Margaret's Church - of 900 years foundation, the restoration of which owes so much to his devotion, and which contains the organ, a gift in memory of his younger son, Lieutenant Guy Crosfield, who gave his life for his country during the last war. A wealth of lovely flowers placed on the grave from devoted friends included a golden basket containing gold and purple blossoms, symbolising future glory, from the National Council of Nurses of Great Britain - inscribed with an expression of "Affectionate Gratitude".

We asked permissions that the tribute from the National Council of Nurses might be placed on the grave of its kind friend on the following Sunday. From Mrs. Crosfield we have received the following letter:-

"Dear Mrs. Bedford Fenwick,

"Owing to absence from home I have missed seeing the lovely basket of flowers that you and the National Council of Nurses so very kindly sent to be put upon my dear husband's grave.

"This was duly carried out, because my son, Captain Crosfield, was at Embley Park when it arrived, and he has written telling me of it and has described how perfectly exquisite it was. I *do so* thank you and the Council for your beautiful thought and for such a lovely tribute.

"With very kind remembrances,

"Yours sincerely,

"Lilian Crosfield".

The late Mr. Crosfield acquired Embley Park, near Romsey, a former home of Florence Nightingale, some 15 years ago, and its perfect restoration, exquisite furnishing, in which Nightingale's tradition was sacredly preserved, and the perfection of its surroundings has made this beautiful house and grounds one of the show-places of England.

Be it remembered that Mr. Crosfield was one of the great horticulturalists in this land of gardens, and the gardens at Embley are recognised as of superlative beauty. Azaleas, rhododendrons, magnolias, heaths, roses and flowering shrubs grew to perfection, and much attention was paid to coloured grouping.

He went in deeply for hybridisation and had many successes and won many awards, sharing this exquisite home and its surroundings with others, and that is how we nurses came into touch with Mr. and Mrs. Crosfield, linked together by admiration for Florence Nightingale.

- opposite -

A portrait of Joseph John Crosfield of Embley Park, Romsey, Hampshire;
an oil on canvas by John Collier (1850-1934).

Our first visit to Embley Park was made many years ago, but it was in the year 1932 that during "Nightingale Week"' organised through our National Council of Nurses of Great Britain, when, in Conference in London to consider the organisation of "The Florence Nightingale Foundation", that an epoch-making visit was made to East Wellow and Embley Park, and delegates from 32 countries were brought into personal touch with the Nightingale tradition. On Tuesday, July 5th, 1932, the delegates to the Conference, as honoured guests, drove through lordly London, and passed through 80 miles of England's loveliest sylvan beauty. We drew up at the gates of the churchyard at East Wellow, hidden away so peacefully from the ordinary thoroughfares, the nurses of many nations gathered quietly and silently round one of the world's graves of honour with only the letters "F. N." on its stone to show that here has been laid back to earth the garment that a great spirit used for its earthly pilgrimage. Flowers are the symbols of our thoughts for the dead, and very beautiful must have been the thoughts sent to Florence Nightingale that day if they were comparable to the glory of colour in the flowers laid reverently on her grave from many nations, most of them tied with the colours of the countries whose gifts they were.

Later, the nurses went into the old country church, so full of that strange, half-mystical "personality" that belongs to and is inseparable from old buildings of this kind. From the eleventh century the country folk of East Wellow have worshipped here; the remains of old frescoes and the odd paintings of the heads of King John and King Henry I helped to remind us of this and the stone and lime sank into insignificance in thoughts of the years, one piled on another, that this old church had seen to come and pass away. How blessed indeed was the childhood of Florence Nightingale - all the week the loveliness of Embley Park, its gardens laden with flowers that are the thoughts of God; then, on Sunday, this peaceful old church wherein the thoughts of men have risen to God for a thousand years or so. The temptation to linger in the pervading elusive atmosphere of things untranslatable was insistent enough; but Embley Park with all the delights of beauty and inspiring associations lay still before us. So the nurses of many nations mounted their chariot again and soon they had entered the policies of Embley.

Il Paradiso Terrestre.

Surely this is sacred ground to nurses from near and far! Embley is on the edge of the New Forest and the rich woods of oaks and beeches are little altered maybe since the time, a hundred years ago, when little Florence must have rambled in this mossy woodland and through the far stretching park, with her beloved pets (amongst them a pet pig), a charming sprite, enjoying the lovely surroundings with her animal friends, listening to the sweet singing and calls of birds - always a music she loved.

And then the beautiful house of Elizabethan character, in which so much of her eager unsatisfied youth was spent, came into view. On arrival we were most courteously made welcome on the garden front by our very kind hostess Mrs. Crosfield - to whom all the guests were presented - who eagerly availed themselves of every item of information to be gathered about Miss Nightingale. First was pointed out the window of her bedroom usually occupied by her - and the windows of the drawing-room which are recognised as those referred to in a letter penned in the year 1851 in which Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell wrote:

> "Walked with Florence in the delicious air . . . at Embley Park. As we walked on the lawn in front of the noble drawing-room she said: do you know what I always think when I look at that row of windows? I think how I should turn it into a hospital and just how I should place the beds."

A Garden of Rare Delight.

Then the head gardener arrived and it was a liberal education to listen to all his wonderful knowledge of trees and flowers. We were shown by Mrs. Crosfield the lovely grounds and gardens on either side of the long walk which extends for a quarter of a mile from the house. We passed through wonders of sylvan beauty, first by the rose garden - in which a quaint fountain with Italian characteristics which is supposed to have been brought by Miss Nightingale from Italy was greatly admired; then we came to the rock garden and on to the erica garden. Thickets of flowering shrubs, rhododendrons and azaleas, which make this demesne a gorgeous paradise in Spring. Now in high summer it is equally supreme. Read what an entranced visitor writes:-

> "Nothing could have been more delightful than the stroll through the grounds of Embley Park typical of the stately homes of England, of which alas! so many are passing from our ken.
>
> "We started on the path leading by the great cedar tree, where Miss Nightingale taught the youth of the village on summer days; we leave the rose garden behind on our right to find a heavenly herbaceous border, in summer splendour.
>
> "Wishing we could stay and gaze, we passed under spreading trees of great variety, and shrubbery-skirted lawns on either hand, where Japanese maples of palest tender green, bright red and bronze, were ablaze in the sunlight; shady nooks misty with the soft blue of the Himalayan blue poppy, and magnificent royal ferns of great dimensions, seven and eight feet in height. Then we wandered up hill into wilder growth by a meandering stream at intervals broadening into pools brilliant with colonies of rare iris and primula, when reaching the crest of the hill, we came to the Wishing Seat, sometimes known as Cromwell's Seat, on which we are told he was supposed to have rested. Here we had opportunity to dwell on the beauty of rocky terraces, carpeted with heather just ascended, outlined by spreading beech, and where luxurious conifers flourished and white-foliaged eucalyptus trees peeped. A garden of rare delight, in which to spend days not hours, and get the fragrant memory of its beauty, never to be forgotten by those of us privileged to pass through its shade".

We, of course, all sat on the Wishing Seat and no doubt longed for delights which never will be ours!

Tea in the "Noble Drawing-room".

When we came again to the garden front of the house we entered the mansion by the garden entrance and through a small room to the Library, still panelled with the white fixture bookcases of the Nightingale occupation. It took but a glance to realise we were passing through a treasure house indeed. From the Library we came into a magnificent Hall, running the width of the house where the antique furniture and fittings were very fine Jacobean chairs with rose puce velvet seats, a fine refectory table, magnificent old masters on the walls and exquisite rugs, far to precious for shoes to step on. Leading from this beautiful Hall we passed into the "noble Drawing-room" which Florence Nightingale "longed to turn into a hospital ward". Instead, a most delicious feast of welcome was spread and here in groups the nurses from far and near enjoyed the generous hospitality of Mr. and Mrs. Crosfield, some no doubt realising just here Florence Nightingale had dispensed tea for her lady mother and many distinguished guests.

Florence Nightingale's Bedroom.

After tea, following our kind hostess, we were taken up the panelled oak staircase, which gleamed like silver in contrast to the glowing rose-coloured carpets, along a corridor, up a little stairway, and then we entered the bedroom used in the days long passed by Florence Nightingale and from the windows gazed out over the sunlit park, a scene exquisitely English upon which her eyes must so often have rested.

It was indeed a solemn moment fraught for nurses with deep and loving gratitude to be associated for all time with this woman of supreme genius.

We came quietly from the room in strange and joyful serenity.

On the hour of departure, much to everyone's pleasure, Mr. Crosfield arrived in his becoming Court dress straight from attendance as High Sherriff on the Judge at Winchester. This was great good fortune, as his guests were enabled to express thanks to their gracious host for the great privilege of visiting Embley Park, and for the delightful hospitality extended to them.

Gathered in front of the stately mansion, its very kind owner and Mrs. Crosfield waved their guests good-bye. "What lovely people", someone whispered. Yes, indeed.

Life may have many blessed hours in store for those present, but this one golden day will remain for ever an imperishable memory for those who realised its significance. To have stood by the Grave of Honour in silent homage, to have passed where her feet passed! Surely a never-to-be-forgotten experience. From now onward the "Nightingale Foundation" should acquire a forceful influence in lands where these things can be told by pilgrims who have returned from their pious journey.

Our chariot passed slowly under magnificent trees towards the beautiful wrought-iron gates, flanked on either side by picturesque "pepper-pot" lodges, and we went on our homeward way through counties of far stretching sylvan beauty and little rose-red towns of the Georgian era; somewhat subdued in spirit as those having touched a sacred shrine.

We watched the dusk of a July night stealing softly over the beauties of English wood and meadow, and meditated on what seemed like a day of beautiful melody, melody falling into a lovely solemn movement there in East Wellow churchyard. As we had stood there time had suddenly become space. Spread out before us was the long vista of years. The simplicity of the last resting place of one of England's greatest daughters was swallowed up in the victory of vast achievement. Soon the moon would come forth and shed beams over the hallowed spot, and behold a shroud of many colours woven by the love of many nations' nurses.

Another Golden Day.

And yet another golden day illuminates memory, July 16th, 1937, when with their unfailing kindness Mr. and Mrs. Crosfield entertained right royally the members of the Grand Council of the International Council of Nurses, then in Congress in London, from all the civilised countries of the world, the aim of all amity and service. The lovely garden was in glorious summer beauty, and the scent of the lavender bed with its misty sweetness lingers to this day. Never in all the far lands to which each visitor returned can this soul to soul communion fade away.

And now the kind friend who gave special facilities to our Nurses on so many occasions to share his splendid domain, has passed to rest. Our hearts ever grateful for past joy in so much beauty, and for the touch of his kindly hand, will hold this great and good man in affectionate remembrance all our days.

This appreciation of Joseph Crosfield was published in *The British Journal of Nursing,* June 1940, with the author credit given simply as E.G.F.



Four photographs of Embley Park taken between 1890 and 1920.

- *above* -
'Cromwell's Seat' at the east end of the long walk.

- opposite *page 13* -
A view across the lawns.

- *overleaf page 14* -
A fountain in a small pond in the gardens of Embley House.

- *overleaf page 15* -
Looking towards the south elevation of Embley House from the gardens.





The Garden at Embley Park.

A Woodland Garden whose plant furnishing is a mirror of recent horticultural discovery.

by G. C. Taylor.

Situated a mile or two from Romsey, on the ridge that separates the valley of the Test, that lies to the north, from the edge of the New Forest which extends southwards, Embley Park, the home of Mr. J. J. Crosfield, like its neighbour Melchet Court, must have formed originally a northward extension of the New Forest. The many great oaks and beeches, the descendants of those under which the wild boar was energetically hunted by the Plantagenet kings, which still remain in the grounds and stretch out into the landscape, afford ample and convincing evidence of its ancient origin. The former home of Florence Nightingale, Embley is, in the strictest sense, a mid-Victorian house possessing more of the merits and fewer of the defects of its period than the large majority of its contemporaries. It is a very good example of its kind, a Victorian version of the Elizabethan fashion which for some thirty years or so occupied the attention of the later nineteenth century architects, and, unlike many other houses of its time, it reveals in its design and external details a wise restraint in the use of excessive ornamentation and other Renaissance 'features' which were so characteristic of the architecture of the period.

It is not so much with the house, however, interesting as it is, as with the garden that has been developed around it, that this article is concerned. The early years of this century were a time of great garden making activity. With some it was a real joy to make and develop a garden; with others it was the fashion. Mr. Crosfield belongs to the first school, and the beginnings of the garden at Embley date back to a time when woodland gardening and the cultivation of rhododendrons and azaleas, in which Embley is so rich, were in their infancy.

Following the lead given by the presence of a few veteran rhododendron hybrids, one which is now a magnificent specimen about 35ft. high [10.7m], it was natural that Mr. Crosfield should follow the example of his predecessors and turn his special attention to a race of shrubs which were coming greatly into vogue with the numerous additions to their ranks through intensive exploration and discovery in China and its borderlands. The wisdom of his decision is proved by the success that has attended the efforts of himself and those responsible for translating his ideas into practice. Developed on proper lines by the creation of natural vistas through the disposition of the existing trees and the skilful arrangement of a simple system of paths and walks, and well planted to afford striking and picturesque incidents at various points, the piece of natural woodland at Embley has been transformed into a place of enchanting loveliness when spring melts into summer, as well as a delight to the eye at other seasons of the year.

Not only is the situation, with its dappled shade and cool lime-free soil, well adapted for the successful growth of most of the recent newcomers to our gardens, but the natural framework of trees forms an excellent background for the incomparable beauties of many of them, especially the rhododendrons and azaleas, lilies, primulas and meconopsis, which always require a foil to show themselves to the best advantage. In the open clearances, in the recesses of the woodland, and by the edge of paths and walks, everything has been done with a sense of freedom and harmony, and proper stress has been laid on the individual beauty of a plant as well as on the broad general effect. In its whole lay-out, which is simple and unassuming as it should be, and in its plant furnishing, it reveals the work of a trained eye combined with artistic taste and a knowledge of the habit of growth and cultural needs of the various plants, a combination which is essential if any attempt at woodland gardening is to be successful.

From the garden front of the house, a path leads past a magnificent Lebanon cedar, which, to judge from its size and the grandeur of its branching, must be one of the originals planted in the later half of the seventeenth century, to a small rose garden, a geometrically planned pattern of beds set in grass. It is here where the formal ends and the wild begins, and the lie of the land happily suggested a dovetailing instead of a rigid boundary between the two. A charming introduction to a broad and open woodland clearance carpeted with an expanse of mown lawn and framed by wide and irregularly shaped borders filled with rhododendrons and azaleas, is provided by a stream and pool whose margins are furnished with ferns, Siberian and Kaempferi irises, Kingcups, and a variety of other moisture-loving things. So skilfully have colonies of the wild yellow Azalea pontica and the richer-toned mollis, sinensis and rustica hybrids been arranged, that many attractive vistas are afforded both along and across the lawn, some opening out on to a broad sunlit glade, others terminating in the deep shade of the wood beyond. The background of oaks provides a splendid setting, and full advantage has been taken of the presence of several conifers, including a fine sequoia, to secure the best effects from the inner plantings.

Embley can be justly described as one of the original homes in this country of the dwarf Japanese azaleas, for it was here that Mr. Crosfield began planting the now well known 'Hinomayo' and its cousins the purple amoena and the carmine 'Hinodegiri' about twelve years ago. From the humble start made then with about a dozen or so plants, has come the magnificent effects that are to be seen in some of the accompanying illustrations. The rapidity with which these shrubs have grown is quite remarkable, and it is evident from their luxuriance and behaviour that they have found a congenial home at Embley. The borders enclosing the woodland lawn show to perfection the luxuriant effects that can be obtained in late May by the combination of these free-flowering Japanese azaleas with their larger cousins the rhododendrons. The lovely pink 'Hinomayo' has been used with a generous hand along the front line of many of the borders, and when in full bloom affords a magnificent pageant of colour. Here and there some charming picturesque incidents are to be seen provided by the association of that peer among rhododendron hybrids, the handsome white R. 'Loderi', with a broad groundwork of the pink 'Hinomayo'. Elsewhere by the margins of the grass walks and woodland paths it provides a striking and gorgeous edging combined with heaths and numerous other hybrid rhododendrons.

In the woodland there is a great wealth of rhododendrons, not only the more common species and varieties, but also many of the rarer members of the genus and a large number of the latest hybrids, many of them of Mr. Crosfield's own raising, for he is as notable as a rhododendron hybridist as he is as a gardener and has many successes to his name, including the fine variety called 'Tally Ho'. These are not crowded together in clumps, as one only too often sees them arranged, but planted in large masses and with liberal space in the glades of oak and beech. Here in the chequered sunshine and shade these princely shrubs not only attain their highest development but retain their purest tones. The rhododendrons and azaleas, although they play the most prominent part in the display, by no means constitute the sole planting. They are well supported by a full cast of trees and shrubs, each of established reputation. Fortunate enough to have lime-free ground, most of the members of the heath family besides rhododendrons and azaleas, have been given a place. At the far end of the main woodland walk lies the heath garden, where the undulating banks, furnished with masses of the winter, spring and summer flowering varieties, provide a long season of colour and flower. Pieris, enkianthus, kalmias and the rest keep company with the rhododendrons in the borders, where magnolias, too, are well represented along with maples, Japanese cherries and various ornamental crabs.

Of the magnolias there are particularly fine examples of the handsome-leaved M. macrophylla, which is now some twenty-five feet high [7.6m], and the lovely M. Wilsoni, which has topped the twenty-foot mark [6.1m]. Room has been found for colonies of the Asiatic primroses, which delight in a cool dell and on the rocky slopes of a natural rock and water garden in an open clearance by the woodland path, many of the dwarf species of rhododendrons find a comfortable home, as well as by the path edge, where they consort well with many other choice denizens of the woodland.

G. C. Taylor's portrait of Embley Park was published within the July 6th, 1935, edition of *Country Life.*

Photographs accompanying the article:

- *opposite above* -
The house from the garden.

- *opposite below* -
A path in the woodland.

- *overleaf page 18 left* -
The handsome R. 'Loderi' with a groundwork of Japanese Azaleas.

- *overleaf page 18 right* -
A woodland vista: the margins of the path fringed with heaths and dwarf azaleas.

- *overleaf page 19 left* -
Wild Azalea Pontica [*R. luteum*].

- *overleaf page 19 right* -
Across the lawn.

- *overleaf page 20* -
A veteran rhododendron hybrid in full splendour: a magnificent specimen thirty-five feet high [10.7m].

- *overleaf page 21* -
The pageant of the Japanese Azaleas.









The Lepidote & Elepidote Registrations:

Aladdin
griersonianum X *auriculatum*
AM 1935
Flower Colour: Vermilion
Flowering Time: Late June
Height: Tall

Arthuria
griersonianum X 'Master Dick'
AM 1952
Flower Colour: Rose Madder

Arthur Stevens
souliei X 'Coronation Day'
AM 1976
Flower Colour: White-rose

Blue Diamond
'Intrifast' X *augustinii*
AM 1935 & FCC 1939
Flower Colour: Purple-blue
Flowering Time: April
Height: Low

Chaste
campylocarpum X 'Queen of the May'
Flower Colour: Creamy-yellow

Cool Haven
'Chaste' X *wardii* Litiense
Flower Colour: Greenish-yellow
Flowering Time: May
Height: Tall

Coronation Day
'Pink Shell' X 'Loderi'
AM 1949
Flower Colour: China-rose
Flowering Time: May
Height: Tall

Embley Blush
thomsonii X *campylocarpum*

Embley Pink
thomsonii X *campylocarpum*
AM 1930
Flower Colour: Rose-pink

Fairy Bell

Fire Glow
'Roseum Superbum' x 'H. M. Arderne' X *griersonianum*
AM 1935
Flower Colour: Turkey Red
Flowering Time: May
Height: Tall

Firetail
'Britannia' X *facetum*
AM 1934 & FCC 1937
Flower Colour: Scarlet
Flowering Time: Late May-June
Height: Tall

Glow

Grapefruit
'Chaste' X *wardii* Litiense
Flower Colour: Greenish-yellow

Jersey Cream
'Mrs Lindsay Smith' X *campylocarpum*
AM 1939
Flower Colour: Creamy-white
Flowering Time: Early May
Height: Medium

Lorien
souliei X *wardii*
Flower Colour: Creamy-white
Flowering Time: Late May-June
Height: Tall

Marie Curie
thomsonii X *fortunei* hybrid
AM 1992
Flower Colour: Pink
Flowering Time: May
Height: Tall

Master Dick
griersonianum X 'The Don'
AM 1936
Flower Colour: Carmine-scarlet

Old Cardinal
Flower Colour: Blood Red

Radium
griersonianum X 'Earl of Athlone'
Flower Colour: Geranium Scarlet
Flowering Time: Late May-June
Height: Tall

Red Lamp
'The Don' X *facetum*
Flower Colour: Red

Roman Pottery
dichroanthum X *griersonianum*
Flower Colour: Orange
Flowering Time: May
Height: Medium

Rosabel
'Pink Shell' X *griersonianum*
AM 1936
Flower Colour: Pink

Rosy Dawn
fortunei hybrid X *thomsonii*

Rubina
didymum X 'Tally Ho'
Flower Colour: Blood Red
Flowering Time: Late June

Silver Pink

Strawberry

Sun Glow

Tally Ho
griersonianum X *facetum*
FCC 1933
Flower Colour: Pink
Flowering Time: June
Height: Tall

Touchstone
griffithianum X 'Roseum Superbum'
AM 1937 & FCC 1939
Flower Colour: Neyron Rose
Flowering Time: May
Height: Tall

Treasure
forrestii Repens X *williamsianum*
Flower Colour: Pinkish-red
Flowering Time: April
Height: Low

R. ‘Aladdin’

griersonianum x *auriculatum*

Hardiness - Flowering Period - Height & Spread

H5. June-July 4m x 4m

Pollen from *R. auriculatum* was placed onto the stigma of *R. griersonianum* during the early summer of 1930, and the result of J. J. Crosfield’s pairing was R. ‘Aladdin’, which won an Award of Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society when it was introduced just five years later. For when they first open, the flowers are ravishing.

Up to fourteen large, trumpet-shaped, bright vermilion corollas fill each loosely held truss and a mature shrub will easily sport a hundred or more of these globes across its domed superstructure. Unfortunately, they quickly fade to a soft rose-pink, and in strong sunlight, pale almost to white. The throat is coloured deeper vermilion, with lines and flares of the same hue extending out to the edges of the lobes along the ribs, and the corolla outer surface is graced with an initial orange flush.

The cross is furnished with leaves that are narrow spears ending in a sharp point, thinly tomentose below and superior to those of R. ‘Azor’, a similar late-flowering hybrid. Youngsters are usually very fast growing at first, often hitting 1.8m high and 2m wide in little more than six or seven years post purchase, but their deportment is open and rangy, exacerbated by foliage that is only held for one year, and if left unchecked, such growth will result in a large, straggly and leggy plant. Regular pruning to attain a much better shape is therefore de rigueur. Very few rhododendrons require such treatment, but this is one of them, and a far nicer dome-shaped individual will ultimately emerge following several well considered effectuations with the secateurs.

To prolong the deeper corolla colour when the flower buds first open, ‘Aladdin’ is best suited to a woodland glade in dappled shade, especially in the southern counties of the UK, with such a locale also likely to best demonstrate the pest resistant qualities of the foliage. The cross is both heat tolerant and fully winter hardy, provided an early autumn frost does not strike the new growth before it has fully hardened-off.



R. ‘Aladdin’ AM 1935

R. ‘Aladdin’ AM 1935



R. ‘Aladdin’ AM 1935

R. ‘Aladdin’ AM 1935

R. ‘Aladdin’ AM 1935

R. ‘Arthur Stevens’ AM 1976

R. ‘Arthur Stevens’ AM 1976

R. ‘Blue Diamond’ AM 1935 & FCC 1939

R. ‘Blue Diamond’ AM 1935 & FCC 1939

R. 'Blue Diamond'
'Intrifast' x *augustinii*
Hardiness - Flowering Period - Height & Spread
H6 April 2m x 3m

J. J. Crosfield's 1930s-vintage cross remains the most popular and widely planted 'blue'-flowering rhododendron in the UK, as well as in Europe, the United States, Australia, New Zealand, and indeed, wherever hybrids of the genus are grown, though as the apostrophe marks allude, the corollas are violet-blue rather than true blue. Or nearer purple if anything other than the FCC clone is planted. And of course there are any number of charlatans in circulation masquerading as the real thing.

The placing of pollen from *R. augustinii* onto the stigma of R. 'Intrifast' - the Thomas Lowinsky *intricatum* x *fastigiatum* dwarf hybrid - was apparently Crosfield's only attempt at a lepidote cross (although there are six Embley Park *IRRC* entries where the parentage has not been registered). That astute combination however, produced a medium-sized upright shrub that will ultimately graze the 2m-mark if left unchecked for thirty years or more. It does best in full sun, remaining compact and densely filled with foliage, though gardeners in the southern counties should as usual opt to provide light dappled shade for at least part of the day to avoid the leaves scorching in a summer heatwave or the flower colour paling after a week or so of strong sunlight. Appearing in April, those blooms are carried in trusses of 4 or 5, with multiple buds often gathered together in knots or clusters. The corollas are unspotted and individually up to 5cm wide at the mouth, 5-lobed, and deeply divided. Yet the leaves are no more than 2.5cm long and half that in width, which means that any specimen found bearing more rotund specimens of such is an obvious phoney.

Hardiness is good enough for all but the very coldest UK gardens, as mature specimens up and down the length and breadth of the country will readily confirm.


R. 'Blue Diamond' AM 1935 & FCC 1939


R. 'Blue Diamond' AM 1935 & FCC 1939

R. ‘Blue Diamond’ AM 1935 & FCC 1939

R. ‘Cool Haven’


R. ‘Cool Haven’

R. ‘Cool Haven’
‘Chaste’ x *wardii*
Hardiness - Flowering Period - Height & Spread
H5 Late April-May 3m x 3m

J. J. Crosfield (1866-1940), horticulturist, garden designer, philanthropist and renowned rhododendron breeder, is principally associated with Embley Park, in Wellow, near Romsey, Hampshire, previously the home of Florence Nightingale between 1825 and 1910, which he purchased in 1925. It was here in the 1930s that he developed hybrids such as ‘Aladdin’, ‘Blue Diamond’, ‘Coronation Day’ and ‘Tally Ho’, as well as ‘Cool Haven’, though little remains of his garden today, the property becoming a school in 1946 that is currently a co-educational independent establishment for 3–18 year olds. Thankfully, soon after the end of the Second World War, many of Crosfield’s best plants were rescued, propagated and distributed by the Hillier Nursery, located a few miles distant at Jermyn House, Ampfield, where many of his best crosses will be found growing to perfection in Sir Harold’s Brentry Woodland rhododendron plantation.

R. ‘Cool Haven’ is gifted with gorgeous, slightly scented Dresden-yellow flowers, held in a compact, balled truss of up to 20 broadly funnel-shaped corollas, their dorsal lobe lit with a speckling of crimson spots and the outer surface initially stained with the same tone. The leaves are oblong-ovate in shape, dark green in colour, around 10cm long and firmly rigid, the majority held horizontally at right angles to the stems. But they are mostly only carried for a year or two, which can give the 3m-high latticework of branches formed by a mature shrub a bare appearance. The hardiness value requires good winter protection in inland and northern gardens if the flower buds are to avoid damage, with dappled shade in the south helping to prolong the bloom pigmentation.

‘Grapefruit’ is a selection from the same pairing.


R. ‘Cool Haven’

R. ‘Coronation Day’ AM 1949

R. ‘Coronation Day’ AM 1949



R. ‘Coronation Day’ AM 1949

R. ‘Coronation Day’

‘Pink Shell’ x ‘Loderi’

Hardiness	Flowering Period	Height & Spread
H5	May	4m x 6m

‘Blue Diamond’ and ‘Tally Ho’ are the most well-known of J. J. Crosfield’s rhododendron hybrids, but that distinction should really go to another, one he named ‘Coronation Day’, which is simply stunning.

For a start, the flowers trusses are huge despite being populated by just eleven corollas, as each one forming the composite is over 11cm long and equally as wide at the mouth. Their base colour is white, but as the photographs evidence, this is deeply stained with a delicately mottled China-rose. Each of those funnels boast six or seven lobes and a darker crimson blotch down in the throat, with the stamens and style tightly grouped in the centre. And if that were not enough, they are also scented and produced with abandon by mature plants.

Foliage-wise, the leaves are elliptic-oblanceolate in shape, 15cm long and a third that in width, mid green in colour, matt, and with somewhat wavy margins. Any inheritance from the ‘Loderi’ pollen parent has not manifested itself in the habit, which is compact and spreading, most bushes extending far wider than they grow high. They need the protection of a woodland surround, both from the sun and the wind, as well as from the cold, as the H5 rating testifies. Dappled shade is sufficient swaddling from the sun in northern climes along the west coast, but for the blooms and foliage to shine in the south, rather than bleach and burn, a heavier cloaking is required. The planting site in Brentry Woodland at the Sir Harold Hiller Gardens, near Romsey in Hampshire, for instance, is in a shallow dell, hemmed in by adjacent screens of taller shrubs and trees.

The cross was made in 1937 - presumably on May 12th, the day King George VI was crowned - and won an Award of Merit when exhibited by Sir Harold in 1949. That a First Class Certificate has not followed is basically criminal.

‘Pink Shell’, the seed parent, is an AM-winning Thomas Lowinsky cross that was made sometime before 1923, its combination being *griffithianum* x ‘H. M. Arderne’.

R. ‘Coronation Day’ AM 1949



R. ‘Jersey Cream’ AM 1939



R. ‘Jersey Cream’ AM 1939

R. ‘Jersey Cream’ AM 1939

R. ‘Master Dick’ AM 1936

R. ‘Master Dick’ AM 1936

R. ‘Roman Pottery’

R. ‘Roman Pottery’
dichroanthum x *griersonianum*
Hardiness - Flowering Period - Height & Spread
H5 May-early June 1.5m x 2.5m

‘Roman Pottery’ is J. J. Crosfield’s take on ‘Fabia’.
The pairing was made sometime before 1934, when the plant was introduced, which by coincidence, happened to be the exact same year that Henry McLaren unveiled his own *dichroanthum* x *griersonianum* cross, thereby throwing a rather large spanner in the works. The pale orange flowers of ‘Roman Pottery’, brown spotted and with darker coppery-hued lobe margins, therefore missed out on an award from the RHS as a consequence, though many consider the blooms superior to the plants distributed by Bodnant. The leaves are sometimes wider than those found on either ‘Fabia’ or ‘Fabia Tangerine’, but are otherwise virtually the same, each around 11cm long, elliptic through oblanceolate, dark green above and with a thin brown indumentum below.
Habit matches the medium-tall clones of ‘Fabia’, hitting around 1.5m in height and spreading a metre or so further, with the bushes compact in form though often with drooping branches, especially when loaded down with bloom.



R. ‘Roman Pottery’

R. ‘Roman Pottery’

R. ‘Roman Pottery’

R. ‘Rosabel’ AM 1936

R. ‘Rosabel’ AM 1936

R. ‘Rubina’

R. ‘Rubina’

R. 'Tally Ho'

griersonianum x *facetum*

Hardiness - Flowering Period - Height & Spread

H4-5. June 4m x 6m

On May 27th 1933, two eminent rhododendron hybridisers arrived at the same flower show each with a new cross sporting stunning vermilion-coloured blooms: Joseph John Crosfield, and Dowager Lady Muriel Rolls Loder.

A preternatural prequel to the 1934 'Roman Pottery' and 'Fabia' clash?

Well, not quite.

For the Embley Park pairing was *griersonianum* x *facetum.*

While that from Leonardslee was *facetum* x *griersonianum.*

Yet all present still agreed that the two plants were virtually indistinguishable.

So the First Class Certificate that the RHS judges awarded that day went to both hybrids, which were each christened 'Tally Ho'.

In 1933 that may well have been the perfect compromise to head-off a potential handbags-at-dawn fist fight, but fast-forward through ninety-plus years of genetic research and you soon bump into chloroplasts and mitochondria.

Organelles.

Which are solely the gift of the female parent.

Thus a *griersonianum* x *facetum* hybrid is not the same as the plant resulting from a *facetum* x *griersonianum* pairing, despite their supposedly mirrored outward appearance.

Because the organelles that carry out the process of photosynthesis or power their individual cells - the chloroplasts and mitochondria, to mention just two of the roles such specialised genetic structures carry out within each cell, albeit two of the most important - are not the same. This is down to the fact that each set evolved over time to meet the different challenges faced by their host species - *R. griersonianum;* or *R. facetum* - so their efficiency in accomplishing those set tasks will be at variance. And while these performance factors are not likely to be poles apart, they will subtly effect the morphology of each cross, having a bearing on hardiness, size, robustness and flower bud set, for instance.

Of course it is far too late to even consider re-dividing the two and applying a 'Leonardslee Tally Ho' tag to the Loder plant (as the Crosfield hybrid is believed to have been the first raised), as both have been widely distributed by the nursery trade and totally mixed-up across the nine decades that have since passed. Plus there is a third aspirant potentially muddying the waters even more; a Lionel de Rothschild crossing of the two species, made at Exbury, though not officially registered. And trying to ascertain which form of 'Tally Ho' was subsequently used as a parent in the array of hybrids conceived after those three introductions, is basically an impossibility.

Oh, and down under, a fourth mating has taken place, this also sheltering under the 'Tally Ho' epithet, the plant apparently paired by Edgar Stead of Christchurch, New Zealand, but later flowering than its three UK cohorts.

And in addition, the Leonardslee *facetum* x *griersonianum* combination was also duplicated at Minterne, the home of Lord Digby, in 1939, but was introduced under the name 'Jacquetta' in 1953, so it at least can be differentiated from the other three.

Assuming no subsequent substitutions were surreptitiously staged by the nursery firms propagating the plant.

Lionel de Rothschild was often quoted as saying that he 'could see no difference between the three forms' grown in the UK, which meant that the hybrid's description in the *IRRC* and elsewhere consequently became an amalgam, a construct, 'made from several plants, all very much alike' to quote from the online edition of *Bean's Trees & Shrubs*.

Those specifications detail 9 through 14 funnel-campanulate corollas, vermilion or orange-scarlet in tone and spotted darker, each up to 6cm in length and 9cm wide at the mouth, these held in a relatively compact truss on glandular pedicels. The stamen filaments and style tube are coloured as the corolla, with the latter also tomentose and glandular throughout its length.

The leaves have a bullate upper surface and are basically oblong-elliptic in shape, matt green above, with a persistent, pale brown, floccose or tufted indumentum below. Blade length is variable, usually between 9 and 15cm long, and correspondingly 3 to 4.5cm wide, but sometimes extending to 24cm in length and almost 8cm in width, with the Leonardslee form said by the authors of *Bean's T&S* to be even longer, which would appear to speak volumes for the *R. facetum* organelles and rather less for Mr. de Rothschild's eyesight and morphological observations.

'Tally Ho' will ultimately top 4m in height when fully mature and extend out to at least 6m, with the habit somewhat open and straggly, especially when grown in too much shade, though a woodland placement is de rigueur given the maximum winter hardiness figure of -12ºC. Some shade is also essential for the leaf blades, which are notably 'sensitive' to prolonged spells of unbroken blisteringly hot sunshine across the summer months. Severe cold is the worst enemy however, with bark split and bud tenderness known to be widespread problems away from the milder gardens of the southern counties and those along the west coast. Early autumn frosts can also wreak havoc, damaging the young growth, which begins to extend quite late in the season and is therefore not fully hardened-off should winter arrive early. Peter and Kenneth Cox report that the plants of 'Tally Ho' growing at Glendoick, their garden and nursery business to the east of Perth in Scotland, regularly suffered such damage and in the end, died because of it (*The Encyclopaedia of Rhododendron Hybrids,* Batsford, 1988).

A number of texts credit the Leonardslee pairing to Sir Edmund Loder instead of to his daughter-in-law, the Dowager Lady Muriel Rolls Loder, the expert authors of those publications failing to take cognisance of two facts: one, that *R. griersonianum,* discovered in 1917, first flowered in UK cultivation at Borde Hill and Caerhays Castle during the spring of 1923; and two, that Sir Edmund had passed onwards and upwards to that great woodland rhododendron garden in the sky, on April 14th, 1920, so would have been unable to bring the procreation into effect.

R. ‘Tally Ho’ FCC 1933

R. ‘Tally Ho’ FCC 1933

R. ‘Tally Ho’ FCC 1933



R. ‘Tally Ho’ FCC 1933



R. ‘Tally Ho’ FCC 1933

R. ‘Tally Ho’ FCC 1933

R. ‘Touchstone’ AM 1937 & FCC 1939

R. 'Touchstone'
griffithianum x 'Roseum Superbum'
Hardiness - Flowering Period - Height & Spread
H5 Late April-May 6m x 4m

'Touchstone' is another of the fabulous introductions from Embley Park in Hampshire, a J. J. Crosfield pairing likely made in the late 1920s that used the *R. catawbiense* hybrid 'Roseum Superbum' to pollinate *R. griffithianum*. The result of that pairing is a tall-growing shrub bedecked with large balls of neyron-rose from late April into May, the strawberry-pink blooms an instant eye magnet. But if that unique hue were not enough, the corollas also have a mottled streak of white running down the centre of each lobe to further catch your attention, most intensely on the lower petals, with the yellow-green blob of the stigma providing visual punctuation. Broadly campanulate in shape, 7.5cm long by 10cm across, they are carried in a loose truss of ten or eleven bells, these paling to a softer pink over time. An irregularly lobed, reflexed, glandular and ciliate calyx, usually coloured to match, will be found at the base of each bloom.

The 'Touchstone' foliage is dark green and semi-glossy, elliptically-shaped, often with a very shallow V-profile and the veins and midrib are distinctly impressed into the upper surface. Glabrous, the blades may be up to 14cm long by 4.5cm wide and held on the bush for two years.

A vigorous, open, yet well-branched habit will produce a fine upright shrub with the potential to hit 6m in height, while spreading out to around 4m in width. If this is grown in a spot gifted a modicum of dappled shade in west coast gardens, that scintilla moderately augmented in more southerly locales, flower bud set will be maximised, the deeper hues of the corolla pigmentation prolonged, and the best shaped specimens of produced.


R. 'Touchstone' AM 1937 & FCC 1939


R. 'Touchstone' AM 1937 & FCC 1939

R. ‘Touchstone’ AM 1937 & FCC 1939

R. ‘Touchstone’ AM 1937 & FCC 1939

R. ‘Treasure’



R. ‘Treasure’

Richard Gill:

The Late Mr. Richard Gill and his Rhododendron Hybrids.

by the Hon. H. D. McLaren.

I am told that it might be of interest lo the readers of the *Notes* if a few words were written as to the work of the late Richard Gill, that skilful gardener who has given us so many first-class hybrid Rhododendrons.

Richard Gill was born nearly eighty years ago. He began his career in the garden and acquired his knowledge of plants by handling them rather than from books.

He was for many years head gardener to Mrs. Shilson at Tremough, near Penryn in Cornwall, a garden where Rhododendrons introduced from the Himalayas were early planted and throve to perfection. In later life Mr. Gill, in conjunction with his son (already a nurseryman) leased the old walled garden at Tremough from the owners, and devoted himself to a nursery business which was recently, on the ending of the lease, transferred to a site nearby. Thus Gill's hybrids have been widely distributed in our gardens, and as on his death this year his business descended to a son, with a grandson to follow, it is pleasant to think that in all probability his hybrids will continue to be accessible to those who wish to grow them.

One of Gill's earliest hybrids was the well-known R. 'Shilsonii', named, of course, in honour of the owner of Tremough. This was a hybrid between *R. barbatum* and *R. thomsonii.* Although usually a thin grower it is of fine upstanding habit, with leaves intermediate between those of the parents and with the beautiful bark of *R. barbatum*.

It has a reputation, I think deserved, of not being the easiest of plants to grow, and undoubtedly Sir Edmund Loder's reverse cross has the better constitution, although Gill's hybrid has, as a rule, the finer flowers. The cross, however, is a fairly hardy one, and the flower-buds are rarely injured by winter frosts.

Probably Gill's best known and most successful hybrid was that between his very fine form of *R. aucklandii* [*R. griffithianum*] and a very good blood-red *arboreum,* of which there are several large specimens at Tregothan today.

The plants he raised from this cross vary fairly widely, and, as numbers of the original seedlings were distributed, different individual plants received different names.

Thus this cross produced in our gardens 'Gill's Triumph'. 'Beauty of Tremough', 'Glory of Penjerrick', 'Trebiana', 'Trebah Gem', 'Glory of Leonardslee', 'Gillii', 'Gill's Goliath', and other named varieties. It was not a new hybrid, as the first, and it is said the best, of this cross has been made at Heligan and named 'John Tremayne', and in another form 'Mrs. Babington'. The same cross was also made at Tregrehan ('Carlyon's Cross'), at Scorrier, ('Scorrier Pink'), and at Caerhays, but as these hybrids were in private hands they were but little distributed, so that it is Gill's cross which is chiefly found in gardens.

It is a tall, very vigorous plant, retaining in some cases the tree habit of *arboreum* rather than the bush habit of *aucklandii* [*R. griffithianum*]. Its flowers vary from self rose-red ('Gill's Triumph' and 'Glory of Penjerrick') to a white flushed and feathered with pink ('Beauty of Tremough' and 'Trebiana'). They are very large (12.7cm across), in loose trusses, of rather flimsy petal, and the bud is always deeper in colour than the expanded flower, a factor which adds very greatly to the beauty of the plant in bloom. Gill appears to have kept good forms of 'Gill's Triumph', 'Beauty of Tremough', 'Gillii', and 'Gill's Goliath', and to have propagated these by layers and, in recent years, by grafts. It is these layers that one sees principally in gardens, although there are old-established plants of the original seedlings at Trebah, Penjerrick, Leonardslee, Anstie Grange, and elsewhere. The cross is only hardy in southern and western counties, and even there the flower buds are apt to be killed by winter frosts.

Individuals vary somewhat in their hardiness, 'Glory of Leonardslee' and 'Gill's Triumph' being, in my experience, the hardiest, and 'Gill's Goliath' one of the most tender.

The flowers, however, are so beautiful when they come to perfection that the plant is well worth growing even if only a proportion of the flower buds survive the winter frosts.

Gill's other hybrids are less well known and less widely distributed than these two. One of the finest in my opinion is one of which I believe only a very few plants were raised, and which was sent both to Exbury and to Bodnant as "Crimson Seedling". Mr. Lionel de Rothschild flowered this and obtained an Award of Merit for it at the Chelsea Show in 1924, it being named by him 'Coalition'. It is a free-growing, upstanding plant, with deep green leathery leaves and large waxy deep blood-red flowers of fine form. It has no stamens. If one had to guess at the parentage one would say that this might very possibly be similar to that of 'Barclayi', namely, one of the 'Gill's Triumph' set crossed with *thomsonii,* or perhaps in this case with 'Shilsonii'. Against this theory must be put the fact that it seems to be quite a hardy plant, which 'Barclayi' is not.

Another fine set of seedlings raised by Gill were his "Aucklandii Mottled" crosses. He distributed many of these seedlings, but one of the best of them he kept and named 'William Watson'. They are good hardy plants, with shiny, deep green leaves, upstanding in habit, with a pale pink flower striped crimson on the reverse, reminding one somewhat of Mangles' 'Dawn's Delight' but flowering much earlier.

Another good cross was his "Luscombei Hybrid". This, I believe, was *aucklandii* Roseum Superbum crossed with 'Luscombe's Scarlet'. The flowers of these hybrids vary much: some are quite first-class, some are poor, but the best ones compare quite favourably with Sir Edmund Loder's *thomsonii-fortunei* hybrids. The leaves have less of the *thomsonii* in them than has the latter cross. The flowers are rather smaller, but the truss is much better filled.

A cross which has been widely distributed is 'Kewense' x *thomsonii*. This can hardly be distinguished from Sir Edmund Loder's *fortunei* x *thomsonii,* and it is possible that Gill may be in error in thinking that he used 'Kewense' and not *fortunei*. The best examples of Gill's cross are a trifle larger in flower than the Leonardslee ones. On the other hand, there are one or two of the Leonardslee plants that have a very pleasing distribution of the colour, with a deeper edge to the petals. This variation I have not noticed in any of Gill's seedlings of this cross. Good examples of this cross have been named 'Richard Gill' and 'Mrs. Richard Gill'.

Gill's 'Rose Perfection' is a most effective hardy shrub. The dull green, somewhat rounded leaves betray a strain of *thomsonii* in it, and it is reputed to be *aucklandii* x 'Ascot Brilliant'. It has a flower that varies in different plants from rose-pink to scarlet, and is unspotted, smooth-edged, and in good trusses effectively held. This is a noteworthy plant in any company.

'Gill's Crimson' with flowers of a fine "Soldier's Coat" scarlet, is a really good thing, quite unique in colour. It has the upright habit of an *arboreum,* dull green leaves, with a matt surface, and is free-flowering. This is a rare plant, not often seen in gardens. The parentage is unknown.

Gill also crossed 'Kewense' with his good form of *aucklandii,* and distributed the progeny as "Kewense Hybrid". This has a very large flower, up to 14cm across, but by reason of its pale colour and lack of substance it falls a good deal behind R. 'Loderi'. It flowers a week earlier than the latter, and is not far behind it in size.

There was also a cross, or an attempted cross, between *fortunei* and *aucklandii* which Gill sent out as "Loderi Unproved" before it had flowered. When it did flower most of the plants proved to be an exceptionally fine form of *fortunei* - indeed a form, as far as I know, quite unrivalled elsewhere.



Richard Gill, photographed alongside one of his rhododendrons, in the garden at Tremough.

Of a batch of seedlings from a second crossing were some which seem to have had *aucklandii* blood in them.

Fine though some of these seedlings are, again, none of them quite rival the true R. 'Loderi' in beauty.

Lastly, I must mention Gill's seedling *arboreums*. He raised a great number of these, possibly two to three thousand. They evidently did not sell freely as young plants, and have mostly been disposed of at about fifteen years or so of age, when they were of flowering size. Some were pure *arboreum* the pink shades predominating; many were crossed with *barbatum* making an exceptionally fine vigorous strain with rose-pink flowers, first-class plants in every way. This cross is very fully described in Millais's *Rhododendrons* Vol. II.

The most outstanding of all Gill's *arboreum* seedlings was his *arboreum* var. Mrs. Henry Shilson, one of an earlier generation of seedlings, a plant of fine tree shape, with long leaves with a silver back, and very large, loose flowers appearing in batches from the earliest spring. It is apt to grow too early, but its remarkable vigour enables it to make strong new shoots when its first growth is cut, and its bark does not, in my experience, suffer from splitting even in the severest weather. Whether this is some hybrid, or merely an exceptionally fine variety of the species, I know not. One or two plants from the same seed pod are now at Bulstrode Park.

Gill raised many hybrids beyond those I have mentioned, many of them, however, referable to the crosses I have named. Others have doubtless some different parentage, but Gill was not very methodical in recording his crosses; indeed, the importance of this was probably not recognised when he first started his work, and undoubtedly the parentage of some of his named varieties can only be guessed.

'Gloriosa', which recently received an Award of Merit, is, however, said to be *aucklandii* Roseum Superbum x 'Pink Pearl'; the truss is one of exceptional size. 'Bernard Gill' is *zeylanicum* Kingianum x *aucklandii* Roseum Superbum, and 'Elspeth', with a magnificent white truss, is *aucklandii* Roseum Superbum x 'White Pearl'.

Undoubtedly the fact that he possessed an exceptionally fine variety of *R. aucklandii* contributed much to the success of Gill's work in hybridisation. R. *aucklandii* Roseum Superbum, as he called the variety, was sent to him by a friend of Mrs. Shilson, who had noted his interest in Rhododendrons. He believed it to have been a graft or a layer from a large plant in the Italian Lakes. It is thought by some that this is the true *R. griffithianum;* but, however this may be, its merits as a parent are undoubted. Gill was, I understand, accustomed to use this plant as the seed parent, not as the pollen parent of his crosses.

A plant went from Tremough to Tittenhurst many years ago, and was the parent of many of Mr. Lowinsky's fine hybrids, such as 'The Don' set. This plant, now of great size, has recently been moved to Muncaster Castle.

Originally Gill propagated his plants almost entirely from layers, and as this was a slow process a good variety was often sold out and even the stock plant was disposed of. Since the war, however, Messrs. Gill have started grafting their best hybrids on a large scale, and they will doubtless be yet more widely distributed.

Richard Gill had a real love of his plants, and was a most excellent judge of the merits of a flower.

Although he was a keen man of business, one always felt in going round his nursery with him that one was talking to a gardener rather than to a nurseryman. Horticulture suffers a severe loss in his death.

Henry McLaren's appreciation of Richard Gill and his hybrids appeared in Volume 3, Number 3, of *The Rhododendron Society Notes,* which was published in 1927.

A history of rhododendrons at Tremough.

by Sarah Benney.

Tremough has long been famed for the beauty and variety of its rhododendrons. William Shilson was in occupation of the Tremough estate, near Falmouth in Cornwall, from 1865 to 1875 and had a passion for gardening. It was he that adopted the Victorian craze for rhododendrons which brought Tremough to the forefront of the horticultural scene and it was one of his Head Gardeners, Richard Gill, who elevated the hybridisation of rhododendrons from a skill into an art.

As the plant hunters brought back seeds from the newly discovered specimens in the Himalayas, the fashion for rhododendrons swept the country, and estate owners vied with each other to produce ever finer varieties through hybridisation. Tremough was ideally placed for this, with its moist temperate climate and acid soils providing an ideal environment, it became famed for its rhododendron production.

It has oft been reported, as yet unproven, that William Shilson was sent a large number of seeds from Joseph Hooker's first Sikkim collection by Joseph's father, William Hooker, Director of the Royal Botanical Gardens at Kew. (Because of the time frame, it is possible that Shilson was sent seedlings to grow on.) The cultivation of these precious collections was entrusted to Tremough's Head Gardener, Richard Gill, who developed considerable skills in the culture of rhododendrons. William Shilson had always been a keen horticulturalist and regular competitor in local garden society shows, and it was entirely fitting that his greatest legacy should be the outstanding red hybrid Rhododendron 'Shilsonii', a glorious first cross between two Hooker collections, *R. thomsonii* and *R. barbatum* justifiably given an RHS Award of Merit in 1900.

Daniel Henry Shilson was the third son of William and Anne Shilson and became the owner of Tremough after his father's death. Anne, who stayed on at Tremough, shared her husband's interest in horticulture, and a friend's gift to her of a particularly good form of *R. griffithianum* from the Italian lakes made a valuable contribution to the hybridisation programme. Daniel maintained the association with the Royal Botanical Gardens at Kew through his donation of a huge consignment of Himalayan rhododendrons to be planted in Kew's new Temperate House. The selection comprised a wide variety of specimens including a large specimen of R. 'Shilsonii'. These flourished in the Temperate House for many years but eventually grew too large and they were finally transferred to the RHS garden at Wisley.

Richard Gill was a talented hybridiser of rhododendrons and worked on Hooker's recently discovered Himalayan species to produce a number of outstanding varieties, and together with his family he was to acquire a worldwide reputation. Gill's list of 'New and noteworthy hybrid Rhododendrons of own raising' included forty varieties, many of which won acclaim from the RHS. Richard Gill was particularly proud of R. 'Gill's Gloriosum', which had massive pyramidal trusses of clear pink flowers and in 1925 also received an RHS Award of Merit. He commented 'It is considered by many to be the finest Rhododendron ever raised'. R. 'Gill's Goliath' was another form, with enormous soft pink flowers, and other successful varieties included R. 'Duke of Cornwall' (*arboreum* x *barbatum*) AM 1907; R. 'Ernest Gill' (*arboreum* x *fortunei*) AM 1918; R. 'Delight' AM 1929; R. 'Fireball' AM 1925; R. 'Trelawny' AM 1936; R. 'William Watson' AM 1925. Nine of Gill's hybrids received RHS Awards of Merit. His greatest success however, winning the coveted RHS First Class Certificate in 1902, was R. 'Beauty of Tremough' (*griffithianum* x blood red *arboreum*) AM 1893, which was a free grower with fine foliage and flowers of blush pink with a bright pink edge. Seedlings were sent to other Cornish gardens and to Sir Edmund Loder at Leonardslee. Clones of this hybrid range in colour from the white with a slight pink flush of R. 'Trebah Gem' to R. 'Gill's Triumph' with large crimson scarlet flowers. Different clones have been awarded one FCC and five AMs: one from Bodnant as recently as 1981 as R. 'Treetops'.

At one point Richard Gill was believed to hold the largest stock of hybrid rhododendrons in the world. The grounds of Tremough were planted with scores of varieties and shades; numerous examples grew to a height of 25 to 30 feet [7.6 to 9.1m] and many carried enormous flowers. Gill considered that 'such gigantic trusses as we grow must be the envy of many gentlemen'.

Richard Gill began his career in the garden at Tremough and he was a hands-on gardener learning from working with plants rather than from books. Nevertheless, his knowledge and ability gained widespread recognition for he became a Fellow of the RHS.

Gill leased the old walled garden at Tremough to set up his nursery business from where he cultivated his most successful hybrids on a commercial basis. At the end of the lease he joined with his son and the nursery was removed to Kernick Manor, lower down the hillside but still within sight of Tremough.

Gill believed that 'thoroughness' was the key to his success. Rhododendrons needed individual care, not only during propagation, but also as mature plants if they were to be shown at their best. His favourite method of propagation was the raising of plants from seed, for species raised this way had the advantage of 'being true to their kind and of possessing robust constitution'. As a practical man he did however recognise the advantages in time offered by budding, grafting or layering. It was Gill's considered opinion that 'Tremough ranks as the Rhododendron Garden of Cornwall and here, if anywhere, tile cultivation of these beautiful plants has reached tile acme of perfection …'.

Richard Ernest Gill began his horticultural career as assistant to his father Richard at Tremough. As a result of a meeting with William Watson, the Assistant Curator at Kew Gardens, he entered Kew in 1899. While there he studied geographical botany, physics, chemistry, oceanography and systematic botany and, before leaving in 1901, submitted a collection of British flora. He learned the nursery trade, before returning to Cornwall to work with his father at Kernick Manor. Here they set up the Himalayan Nurseries and erected what were thought to be the largest greenhouses in the West Country. The Gills soon outgrew their 10 acres at Kernick and purchased a further 23 acres of land at Carclew where they could grow their rhododendrons in a woodland setting.

The Gills' nursery consolidated its reputation as a firm of world repute, and in their catalogue they offered for sale a vast range of species and hybrids, including those produced by Richard Gill in his years at Tremough. Gill also continued his experimentation with new types and crosses, helped by a continued acquisition of new plant material from the East. The Gills received material collected by two of Richard Ernest's brothers, Herbert and Norman, both of whom held appointments in botanical gardens in India and also employed their own native plant hunters in the remote mountain regions of Tibet. The Gills' reputation led to orders from many parts of the world; rhododendrons were despatched to New Zealand, the United States, South America, Japan and Italy.

Richard Ernest Gill was acknowledged as an expert in his field and was proud to advise members of the Royal family on the planting of their estates. At horticultural shows, the Gills won outright the prestigious Rothschild Challenge Cup for trade exhibits by gaining first place on three successive occasions.

Today the rhododendrons are still the glory of the grounds at Tremough, now a University Campus, and there are currently nine gardeners, led by Head Gardener David Garwood, who continue to tend them.

There has been much work done, in feeding, and mulching, and in pruning overgrown

specimens, cutting out old *ponticum* rootstocks and some relocation of plants that have outgrown their sites. A policy has been adopted to plant only rhododendron species from the Sikkim Himalayas or hybrids that are found in the Gill catalogues, within the old Tremough Estate.

Over the past century Gill's hybrids have become difficult to obtain and, as a valuable conservation measure, Tremough continues to work with Ros Smith from Duchy College at Rosewarne who has taken rhododendron buds to micropropagate in order to conserve this rare collection.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This article is based on Margaret Grose's fine book, *Tremough, Penryn: The Historic Estate,* M. H. & G. M. Grose, (2003). I would like to thank Margaret for allowing me to use large sections for this article, as well as helping the gardening team at Tremough with valuable research.

Sarah Benney is a member of the Tremough campus gardening team and her article on the rhododendrons still thriving in the grounds was published in *Rhododendrons, Camellias & Magnolias 2013.*



A fine group of rhododendrons at the front of the house at Tremough.

Himalayan Rhododendrons.

Transcript of a paper read at the Devon and Exeter Gardeners Association, January 12th, 1898, by Richard Gill, of Tremough, Penryn, Cornwall.

Himalayan Rhododendron culture in Great Britain may be said to have had birth concurrently with the publication of Sir J. D. Hooker's Journals. Until this intrepid explorer returned from his memorable travels in Sikkim, Rhododendrons were the exception rather than the rule in our conservatories, and few persons seemed to have thought that this beautiful class of plant was adapted to outdoor work.

The peculiar climatic advantages which the south-western counties offered for the cultivation of a tender vegetation. were either not understood in those days, or, if understood, did not inspire sufficient confidence to induce horticulturists to introduce into their grounds many subjects which are now almost universally cultivated. Only within recent years has the barest justice been done to the favoured conditions under which gardening can be carried out; and it must be confessed that, in spite of what has been done during the past quarter of a century, much has yet to be accomplished before we can claim to be fully in league with Nature, or to have appropriated a tithe of the opportunities which our insular position and climate offer.

To say that the introduction of many of the tenderer forms of Rhododendrons instituted a new era in outdoor operations, is to assert what every student of the subject knows to be a fact. After a few of these noble plants had passed through half-a-dozen of our winters with but little or no injury, the scales fell from the eyes of the profession, and in an amazingly short time not only were most parks and gardens stocked with Rhododendrons, but the startling manner in which they evidenced the mildness of our winters led our gentry to carry the experiment to still more astonishing issues. Side by side now with the forests of Rhododendrons which are grown on many a south country estate, may be seen a sub-tropical flora embracing such children of a sunnier clime, as *Coboea scandens,* Daturas, Lapagerias, Cassias, Nicotianas, the Citron, the Orange, the Banana, and a host of others which the gardeners of fifty years ago regarded as the aristocracy of the glasshouses.

To be frank, it must be confessed that it is only in the southern counties of England and Wales that such sub-tropical work can be carried on with anything like satisfaction, and that Rhododendrons find those requisites of soil and climate which are so essential to their healthy growth. Nor is this surprising, when it is known that meteorological observations go to prove that the two westernmost counties have a climate in many respects superior to that enjoyed by the Riviera, and that plants which have been known to be killed off in severe winters in South France, pass through our own almost unscathed. In developing Falmouth as a winter resort, much importance has been attached to meteorological statistics. While admitting their value, it does seem to the writer that the evidence of the vegetation should carry a greater weight. Shy as the public ever are of figures, they cannot get away from the testimony of the flora; and of Nature's several ways of showing the geniality and equability of a climate, this is, by all the difference, the most reliable. To walk through some of our Cornish gardens from January to April, when our sweeps of Rhododendrons are tricked off in the most gorgeous of colours, is, for the time, to forget that one is in a small country where scarcely a winter passes without from 12° to 20° of frost being registered in some of the northern counties [-6° to -11°C]. Anything more beautiful than such collections of Rhododendrons as can be seen at Tremough, Tregothnan, Scorrier, Carclew, and Killiow, in Cornwall, can scarcely be conceived. Whether regarded from the standpoint of landscape gardening, valued for the length of their blooming season, or considered for the beauty of form and variety of colour of the individual flowers, we are obliged to confess, after a close acquaintance with these plants in Cornwall and South Wales, that they more than repay the time and money lavished upon them. The pity of it is, that in many places which might be named as admirably suitable for their cultivation they are relegated to a very subordinate position.

It is often urged as an objection against the culture of Himalayan Rhododendrons, that the earlier blooms are liable to be destroyed by the sharp frosts which are all too prevalent during the early spring. While granting the risk, it does seem like bolstering up a case with sham evidence to exclude the Rhododendron on such a pretext. If a few blooms are destroyed by frost, surely the display which follows later is a sufficient recompense for the labour; while the fact that, even in the severest weather, our Rhododendron walks are rarely without bloom from the middle of January onwards, is an ample set-off against the few buds that fall victims to the frost.

As far as Devon, Cornwall, and South Wales are concerned, it is, I think, quite probable that, in addition to the mildness of the climate, the humidity of the atmosphere greatly favours the Rhododendron. To the majority of them an over-dry atmosphere seems almost as fatal as a parched soil. This observation, which has been growing on me for years, finds plenty of evidence in its support in Sir J. D. Hooker's Himalayan journals.

Experience has taught me the wisdom of selecting a site fairly elevated but sheltered from high and cutting winds. In any case, low-lying and damp situations must be sedulously avoided, as they invariably spell ruin to the early flowers by their susceptibility to frosts. Northern aspects, where they enjoy a minimum of sunshine, and the shelter of a wall with a north exposure, have given us good results at Tremough.

While it is somewhat of a fallacy to say Rhododendrons will only flourish in a peaty soil, the fact remains, as anyone who has had much to do with them can aver, that they are great lovers of peat in some form or other. If this is liberally administered to the soil when planting, the plants make a vigorous start at once. Granite sand in the proportion of one-third may be added to the peat with beneficial results. What they do not like is a limey or chalky soil, or a stiff water-logged clay. In our well-drained, gravelly loam at Tremough they root freely and luxuriantly, but I have known them grow almost as well on a properly-drained clay bottom. Being surface-rooting plants, it is obvious they will not stand prolonged droughts, so that in a very dry season the hose must be freely used in the shrubbery. Equally important is it to prevent the accumulation of superfluous and stagnant water around the roots. By way of protection against drought, the natural habit of Rhododendrons must be encouraged. Their lowest branches have a predilection for bending down so as to cover the roots; and if these branches be carefully preserved, and are encouraged, by the shade they offer, they will keep the soil around the roots comparatively moist in the driest season. Plants which fall the easiest victims to a dry summer are almost invariably those which have lost their lowermost branches, and whose roots are exposed to the full play of the sun.

PROPAGATION.

When we come to propagation, we touch a much-discussed problem, and here, again, I shall only speak from experience. While budding may commend itself to some, grafting to others, and layering to a third class, the raising of plants from seed, although confessedly a work requiring patience, has always been my own favourite method. In addition to the general interest connected with this process of stocking the garden, species raised from seed have the twofold advantage of being true to their kind, and of possessing a robust constitution. Tremough may be cited in evidence thereof, the majority of the older plants there being raised from seed sent to my late employer, William Shilson, Esq., by Sir William

Hooker. Of course, hard-and-fast lines cannot be laid down. Oftentimes one has to comply with temporary exigencies, when, if he is an advocate of raising seedlings, he will be obliged to have recourse to budding, grafting, or layering, and *vice versa*.

PLANTING.

The mode of planting-out which I have followed for nearly thirty years is to place the shrubs in specially-prepared pits, and to surround the ball of roots with a lining of peat and sand, to which I frequently add one-third of decayed leaf-mould. A surface-dressing is given as occasion may require. A good mulch of decaying leaves - Nature's own method of manuring - is a wonderful help to keeping the roots cool, but in kept beds and borders this cannot at all times be carried out, because of the untidy appearance it gives. In such cases, peat or fully-decayed leaves must be resorted to as a surface-dressing. In a paper read before the Royal Horticultural Society on June 6, 1893, Sir John T. D. Llewelyn, Bart., stated that a good top-dressing was to be found "in the dead last season's bracken Fern, which, if dry and well forked in, will be found very beneficial to the roots, and the stiffer the soil the more advantageous will it be, for it acts mechanically, as it were. Each stick or stem of Fern is a little hollow pipe forming a miniature subterranean tunnel, in which the delicate Rhododendron rootlets can travel, and which afterwards, rotting down, affords nutriment to the growing root". Sir John may be correct when speaking for stiff soils, while admitting certain manurial virtues in the bracken, I should be driven to direst extremities before using it on ordinary free soils, fearing the results of this increased porosity in a dry season. In the application of top-dressing and in cleaning operations, the hoe and spade must be used with extreme caution. The best roots of the Rhododendron are near the surface, and to injure these is to damage the plant, in some cases irretrievably.

THE SPECIES.

Of the forty-three species of Himalayan Rhododendrons described by Sir J. D. Hooker, I shall pass under notice only the more important; and because of its general utility in the shrubbery, and the great variety it gives, I must assign foremost rank to:

Rhododendron arboreum.

The old scarlet arboreum is to be found in many of our Cornish gardens as trees thirty feet or more in height. At Carclew, the residence of Colonel Tremayne, grow some of the finest I have ever seen, one of them being probably the first planted out of doors in Great Britain. At Tremough we have arboreum in all its varieties as huge bushes twenty-five to thirty feet high [7.6 to 9.1m], the whites, of which album and cinnamomeum are the types, being objects of exceeding beauty. Of the scores of varieties and shades scattered over our grounds, the best are those whose soft purplish pink flowers are delicately frilled at the edges. Such gigantic trusses as we grow must be the envy of many gentlemen whose grounds are not so well adapted for Rhododendron work.

Rhododendron argenteum, a synonym of grande, is one of the early flowering of the large-leaved section. Its trusses of flowers greatly resemble those of Falconeri, but they bloom much earlier, and are therefore by some more highly prized. Growing to a height of 40 feet in favoured situations [12m], its massive leaves covered on their under surface with a beautiful silvery tomentum, argenteum is well worth growing for the sake of the effect of its foliage on the shrubbery in winter alone.

Rhododendron Aucklandii of gardens (*R. Griffithianum* of Wight), is a gem of the first water, named after the late Lord Auckland, Governor-General of India. In its native habitat it is mostly found at an elevation of 9,000 feet [2,743m]. The individual flowers are 5 inches across [12.7cm], and as there are generally from seven to nine to a truss, the appearance of a tree when in full bloom is such as does not easily lend itself to a description. Some of the varieties have pure white flowers with a delicate pink tinge, others are enriched with a claret-blotch in the throat. Of the several hybrids which owe their parentage to Aucklandii, few, if any, outstrip the original for general beauty, and I should be sorry if, in our hurry to increase varieties, we lost sight altogether of the type. The finest plant to be seen in Cornwall is at Killiow, the residence of J. C. Daubuz, Esq., height 10 feet, breadth about 10 feet [3m x 3m].

Rhododendron barbatum is another magnificent species, readily distinguished by the barbs at the base of the leaf. Its flowers are of a dazzling scarlet, arranged in a very compact, globose truss, and when seen as we grow them at Tremough, adorning plants 20 and more feet high [6.1m], the grandeur of oriental gardens becomes by comparison tame; and fairyland itself cannot be more dazzling than a group of these trees seen in full flower on a sunny day after a shower.

Rhododendron campylocarpum is a yellow flowering bush of 4 to 6 feet high [1.2 to 1.8m]. Coming from altitudes ranging from 11,000 to 14,000 feet [3,353 to 4,267m], it is perfectly hardy, and the wonder of it is that it has not commanded a greater favour. Sir J. D. Hooker considered it the most charming of all the Himalayan species.

Rhododendron campanulatum is a mauve flower, very delicately shaded in some varieties, and of sufficient distinction to be included in any collection.

Rhododendron ciliatum is a most useful species of dwarf habit, and flowering every year in abundant profusion, making it a suitable plant for the front row of the Rhododendron-bed.

Rhododendron cinnabarinum and Roylei are two most beautiful kinds, with drooping flowers of peculiar habit, and are among the latest to flower.

Rhododendron Dalhousiae is found at an elevation of about 6,000 feet [1,829m], growing as an epiphyte on Magnolia, Oak, and Laurel trees. We have grown it at Tremough for twenty years, but its tender constitution causes it to suffer under our more severe winters, the flowering buds being occasionally destroyed, and the young shoots cut back to the old wood.

Rhododendron Edgeworthii, another epiphyte, resembles the preceding in point of hardiness. Even in Cornwall it is not a safe subject for the open, but the powerful fragrance of its showy blooms entitles it to a place in the house during winter. It would be difficult to find two handsomer subjects than these.

Rhododendron Falconeri is the giant of the Himalayas, growing to a height of 40 feet [12.2m], and confined for the most part to an altitude of 10,000 feet above sea-level [3,658m]. Apart from its flowers, it is a most desirable shrubbery plant, its noble foliage forming an agreeable foil to other kinds of vegetation. No Rhododendron garden can be said to be complete which does not find liberal room for Falconeri; and, what is still more in its favour, it is rarely, if ever, injured by frost with us. Many gardens in Cornwall grow it to nearly 20 feet in height [6.1m].

Rhododendron eximium, although an undoubted variety of Falconeri, is sufficiently distinct from it to be included in any collection.

Rhododendron Hodgsonii is another of the large-foliage species which cannot be omitted. In its native home, like Falconeri, it has the remarkable peculiarity of seeking the company of *Abies Webbiana* [now a synonym of *Abies spectabilis*].

Rhododendron thomsonii will always hold a place among the leading crimson species and varieties. In addition to its deep blood-red corolla, it stands out very distinctly from its compatriots by virtue of the lax and graceful form of its corymb of from six to eight flowers. Of the hybrids raised from it, 'Shilsonii' is far and away the best. This was obtained

by the late Mr. Shilson by crossing *thomsonii* with *barbatum,* and well perpetuates the memory of one of the keenest observers and growers of Sikkim Rhododendrons.

R. camelliiflorum, R. x candelabrum, R. lepidotum, R. fulgens, R. glaucophyllum, R. lanatum, R. maddenii, R. niveum, R. triflorum, R. virgatum, and *R. x wightii,* are also species [and natural hybrids] of Sikkim.

The number of hybrids raised from the aforementioned are legion, but in a paper purporting to deal with species only, no place can be found for them.

A CONCLUDING HINT.

No one has a right to expect his Rhododendrons to give satisfaction, or to pass muster with the specialist, who is not devoted heart and soul to their welfare. Whether the start is made with seed, layers, buds, or grafts, it is essential that the work be carried out systematically, and not in that half-hearted, spasmodic manner which is all too frequent. Neglect at any one of the more critical periods of the life of the plants is bound to result in ill-kempt and unlovely specimens; while a happy-go-lucky sort of treatment after the plants are fully established cannot fail to court starved plants, which yield little or no flower. With Rhododendron culture, as with every other human enterprise, thoroughness is the only road to success. The operator's only maxim should be, "What is worth doing at all is worth doing well". No royal path is open to him; his only passports are care, patience, and an observant mind. No greater fallacy can be imagined, no greater blunder perpetuated, than to suppose that, once placed in position, Rhododendrons are capable of looking after themselves. It must be distinctly understood, and cannot be too often or too strongly emphasised, that in our gardens the majority of them are being grown under very unnatural conditions, and the manifest duty of the cultivator is to study their requirements. To woo them into obedience, to see them, as travellers have seen them in their native wilds, arrayed in magnificent splendour, he must first acquaint himself with the conditions under which they thrive there, and then, as far as is possible, become, not a slavish, but a judicious imitator of Nature.

The transcript of Richard Gill's lecture to the Devon and Exeter Gardeners Association, was split between two editions of *The Gardeners' Chronicle:* that published on January 29th, 1898; and that of February 5th. A year later, Gill submitted a short note regarding a donation of plants from Tremough to the Royal Botanic Garden, Kew, which was published in the January 7th edition of 1899:

REMOVAL OF RHODODENDRONS FROM THE GARDENS OF
D. HENRY SHILSON, ESQ., TREMOUGH, FOR KEW.

An interesting event recently took place at Penryn, Cornwall, in the removal to the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, of a collection of Himalayan Rhododendrons, presented to the Gardens by D. Henry Shilson, Esq., the owner of Tremough.

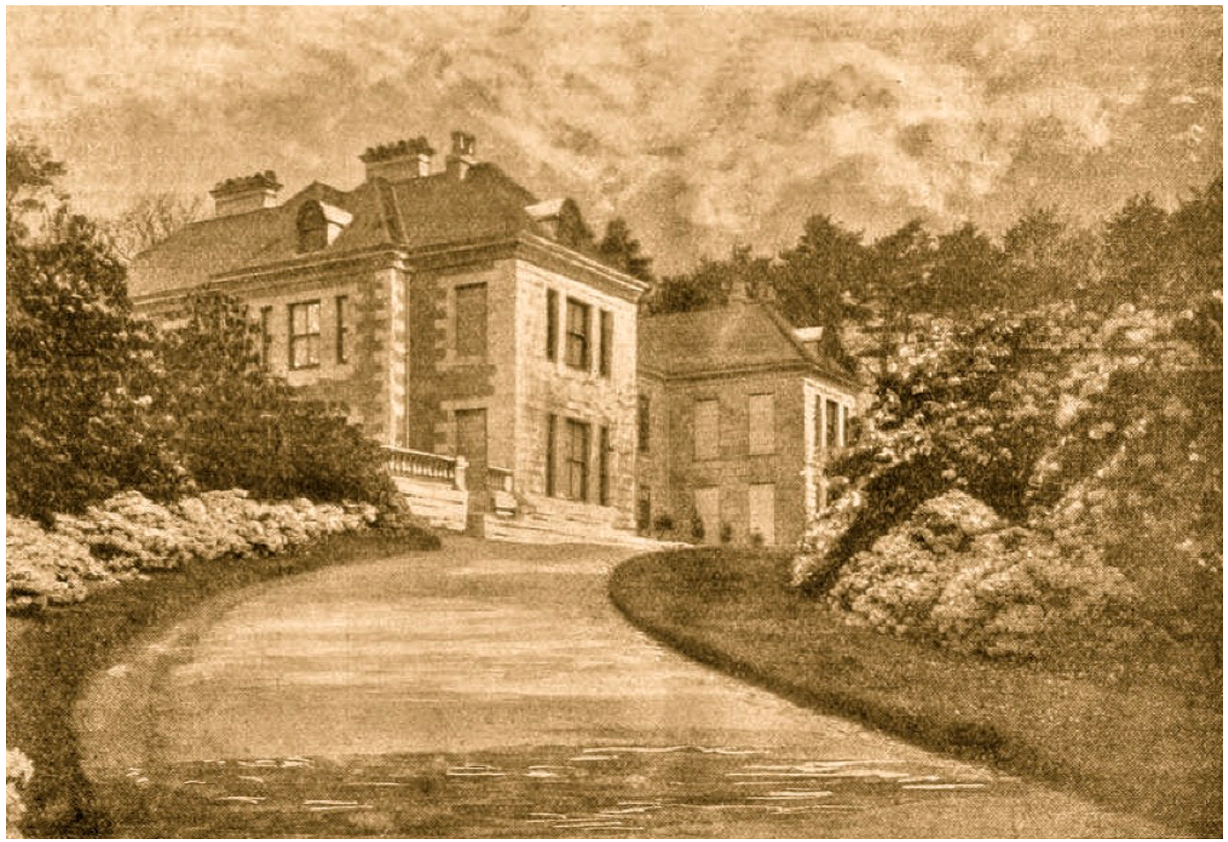
There has lately been added a wing to the Temperate House at Kew, this, we understand, is to be largely occupied by Rhododendrons, and the plants removed from Tremough will be planted therein. They comprise such species as Falconeri, Thomsonii, barbatum, niveum, Aucklandii, ciliatum, and arboreum, in several varieties, including that triumph of hybridisation, to which the name of Shilsonii has been appropriately given. This gem was raised by the late Mr. Wm. Shilson, by crossing R. Thomsonii with barbatum. Kew already possessed a plant of this much-coveted variety, but it is a pigmy compared with the one now sent, for so large was this plant that it was found necessary to allot it a separate railway truck to itself, and, to ensure its safe passage under the arches, was packed lying on its side. Several of the plants were noble looking specimens, ranging from 12 to 15 feet high [3.6 to 4.6m], and of nearly two tons in weight.

Tremough ranks as the Rhododendron Garden of Cornwall, and here, if anywhere, the cultivation of these beautiful plants has reached the acme of perfection - climate, soil, and situation suiting them admirably.

The late Mr. Shilson was one of the first in this country to take up the cultivation of these noble plants, and at Tremough there may be seen some of the most wonderful Himalayan Rhododendrons in the country.

Mr. Watson, of Kew, superintended their packing and removal, and his name was a sufficient guarantee that they would arrive safely at their destination.

R. Gill, Tremough.



Tremough, Cornwall, in 1900.

- *opposite* -

Removal of specimen rhododendrons from the gardens of D. Henry Shilson, Esq., Tremough, Penryn, Cornwall, to the Royal Gardens, Kew.



Rhododendrons at Tremough.

by S. W. Fitzherbert.

In the gardens of D. H. Shilson, Esq., at Tremough, Cornwall, is to be seen the most representative collection of Himalayan Rhododendrons, and hybrids of the same section, in the British Isles. Many of the largest specimens, some of which have attained a height of about 30 feet [9.1m], were raised from seed brought from the Himalayas by Sir Joseph Hooker, and presented by him to the father of the present owner of Tremough. Kew has been enriched in its turn by a fine assortment of Rhododendrons from the Tremough gardens, six truckloads of large bushes having been lifted under the superintendence of Mr. Watson, of the Royal Gardens, and safely transported to the Temperate House, where they may now be seen in the best of health by visitors to those famous metropolitan gardens (see *The Gardeners' Chronicle,* January 7, 1899). At Tremough, near the southern coastline of Cornwall, the robust health exhibited by the Rhododendrons in the open air is sufficient evidence that, in that equable climate, glass protection is happily unnecessary. Peat is afforded when planting, but the seedlings evidently appreciate every whit as much the subsoil of gravelly loam, which is eagerly laid hold of by their spreading rootlets. In order that full justice should be done to the charms of this unique garden, several visits during the spring of the year are requisite, since the blooming periods of the various species and hybrids are not simultaneous. Perhaps the finest display is provided during the month of April, when hundreds of noble Rhododendrons are smothered with blossom. These chiefly consist of the Himalayan species, together with innumerable hybrids.

The drive to the house is edged with *R. ciliatum,* backed by splendid specimens of *R. arboreum* and others. On the right, towers an enormous *R. arboreum* forma. *roseum* [now synonymous], shown in the centre of one of the illustrations [opposite], 25 feet in height, and 30 feet through [7.6 by 9.1m]. The trunk of this giant is, a little way above the ground, divided into three stems, one of which is 3 feet in circumference [0.9m]. On the left hand is *R. arboreum* var. *cinnamomeum,* and on the right a hybrid *arboreum*.

In another part of the grounds is a tall specimen of *R. arboreum* forma. *roseum* fully 30 feet in height, while examples of *R. arboreum* forma. *album* [again, now synonymous], and *R. arboreum* var. *cinnamomeum,* exceed 20 feet in height in some instances [6.1m], the latter having a very protracted season of bloom, being in flower for two months. The largest specimen of the crimson flowered *R. barbatum* is 15 feet high and 30 feet through; while R. 'Shilsonii', a hybrid between *barbatum* and *thomsonii,* raised by the late Mr. Shilson, is represented by several fine bushes. The flowers of this hybrid are deeper in colour than those of *R. barbatum,* and larger, being over 2 inches in diameter [5.1cm]. A flesh-coloured variety of *R. barbatum,* 15 feet in height and nearly 30 feet through [4.6 by 9.1m], with beautifully shaped trusses of softly tinted blossoms, forms a most attractive picture; while the scarlet-flowered *R. fulgens,* 10 feet in diameter [3m], *R. ciliatum,* of which species the largest example is 6 feet in height and 17 feet through [1.8 by 5.2m], the magenta-hued *R. niveum,* that takes its specific name from the white reverse of its leaf, and is represented by a bush 15 feet high and as much in diameter [4.6 by 4.6m], *R. argenteum* [*R. grande*], R. 'Cunninghamii', bearing very large, pure white flowers, and the hybrid 'Mrs. Henry Shilson', with enormous trusses of soft pink bells of great size, are, one and all, objects of great beauty and interest.

Hybridising has been consistently carried on ever since the time that the late Mr. Shilson started his collection of Himalayan Rhododendrons; and the head gardener, Mr. R. Gill, is able to point with pride to numerous lovely hybrids of his own raising. At the date of my visit, many of these were blooming for the first time, amongst them was a batch of *thomsonii* hybrids bearing handsome flowers, a *barbatum* seedling with a fine conical truss of rose-pink blooms splashed with crimson, the petals being much reflexed and of great substance; a seedling *arboreum,* white with rose spots; another, flesh-tinted, and a third unnamed *arboreum* seedling bearing large flowers of a light pink hue, profusely spotted, the individual blooms being nearly 4 inches in diameter [10.2cm]. Many other seedlings equally worthy of note with those above mentioned were comprised in the collection, but the time at my disposal admitted of but a cursory view.

All the species and hybrids above enumerated were in full bloom in the third week of April, and are at their best at a considerably earlier period in less backward seasons than the past spring. Later on, other and even nobler species reveal their beauties, amongst these being the queen of Rhododendrons, *R. griffithianum, R. Aucklandii* of gardens. Of this glorious plant the largest specimen is 15 feet in height, and 13 feet through [4.6 by 4m], and is, in its flowering season, a perfect cloud of white, it having during the past season borne over 400 bloom trusses. The individual blossoms are from 5 to 6 inches in diameter [12.7 to 15.3cm], and are produced in clusters of from four to eight. In the bud state they are of a pinkish tint, but are pure white when expanded, and very sweetly scented. The leaves are noble in form, and are often 10 inches in length [25.4cm]. There is also a good specimen of a pink form of *Aucklandii,* and a hybrid between *Aucklandii* and *thomsonii.* There are several large examples of *R. falconeri,* the finest of which is 15 feet in height, and 28 feet through [4.6 by 8.5m]; while *R. dalhousiae, R. campanulatum,* R. 'Standishii', *R. campylocarpum, R, cinnabarinum, R. cinnabarinum* Roylei, *R. formosum,* and *R. hodgsonii* are also well represented.

In the most exposed situations the hardier section of Rhododendrons, introduced at a far more recent date than the Himalayan species, which are ill-adapted to such sites, have been planted, and are doing well.

In the conservatory, amongst a fine collection of flowering plants, were Rhododendron 'Albescens', with large, widespread, fragrant blossoms of snow-white; R. 'Fragrantissimum', R. 'Lady Alice Fitzwilliam', R. 'Sesterianum', and R. 'Williamsii'; also the handsome, brilliant red *Camellia Mathotiana*.

In the open, Camellias grow like Willows, and splendid bushes meet the sight on every side. *Azalea indica* also flourishes in the most robust of health, and a long and wide bank is covered with the white variety which blooms profusely in the late spring.

At the side of a lawn, on a bank at the foot of some Elms a few corms of *Cyclamen Coum* were planted about thirty years ago. These have now spread over the whole bank, and across the gravel path into the adjoining tennis-lawn, where, though regularly mown down, small plants are to be found in their hundreds.

About ten years ago an extensive alteration in the grounds was carried out, and numerous Conifers were planted. These have made fine growth, and bid fair to become one of the features of the gardens, *Abies nobilis, A. firma, A. Nordmanniana, Picea polita,* and others already providing many symmetrical specimens.

Embothrium coccineum, a subject to be met with in every garden of note in southern Cornwall, and without doubt by far the most brilliant of all spring flowering trees, is represented by several healthy examples; while fine effects are afforded by large beds of *Yucca gloriosa,* which has flowered with unusual abundance this season, and *Arundo conspicua*.

A pretty spring picture is obtained from Daffodils and *Triteleia uniflora* planted on grassy banks, the white stars of the latter flower quite hiding the sward beneath. In one of the walled kitchen gardens, used for the most part as a nursery for seedling Rhododendrons and Azaleas, there was a fine show of healthy young plants, *R. Aucklandii* and *R. falconeri* being readily recognisable amongst them.

In the same garden Freesias were in fine flower in the open, as were Persian Cyclamens, one of the blooms of the latter that I measured being 4½ inches in diameter across the extended petals [11.4cm].

S. W. Fitzherbert's portrait of the gardens at Tremough was published in the December 15th, 1900, edition of *The Gardeners' Chronicle.*



Hardy rhododendrons at Tremough, Cornwall, with *R. arboreum* forma. *roseum* featured in the centre.

The Lepidote & Elepidote Registrations:

Aurora
'Kewense' X *thomsonii*
AM 1922
Flower Colour: Pink
Flowering Time: April-May
Height: Tall

Beauty of Tremough
arboreum X *griffithianum*
FCC 1902
Flower Colour: Rose-pink
Flowering Time: March-Early April
Height: Tall

Bernard Gill
barbatum hybrid
AM 1925
Flower Colour: Rose-red

Blushing Beauty
arboreum hybrid
Flower Colour: Blush Pink

Coalition
AM 1922
Flower Colour: Cerise Pink

Coronation
'Ernest Gill' X 'Kewense'

Delight
ciliatum X 'Praecox'
AM 1929
Flower Colour: Apple blossom Pink

Duchess of Cornwall
barbatum X *arboreum*
AM 1974
Flower Colour: Purplish-pink
Height: Tall

Duke of Cornwall
arboreum X *barbatum*
AM 1907
Flower Colour: Crimson
Height: Tall

Edmondii
arboreum X *barbatum*
Flower Colour: Orange-scarlet
Flowering Time: April
Height: Tall

Elspeth
'Halopeanum' X *griffithianum*

Ernest Gill
fortunei X *arboreum* or 'Luscombei'
AM 1918
Flower Colour: Cerise Pink
Flowering Time: March-April
Height: Tall

Fireball
barbatum X 'Ascot Brilliant'
AM 1925
Flower Colour: Carmine-scarlet
Flowering Time: March-April
Height: Tall

Gillii
griffithianum X *arboreum*
AM 1919
Flower Colour: Rose-pink
Flowering Time: May
Height: Tall

Gill's Crimson
griffithianum hybrid
Flower Colour: Blood-crimson
Flowering Time: March-April
Height: Tall

Gill's Gloriosum
griffithianum hybrid
AM 1925
Flower Colour: Cerise
Height: Tall

Gill's Goliath
griffithianum hybrid
AM 1914
Flower Colour: Pink

Gill's Nobleanum Album
arboreum X *caucasicum*
AM 1926
Flower Colour: White

Gill's Triumph
arboreum X *griffithianum*
AM 1906
Flower Colour: Strawberry-red
Flowering Time: May
Height: Tall

Glory of Leonardslee
arboreum X *griffithianum*
Flower Colour: Strawberry Red
Flowering Time: May
Height: Tall

H. T. Gill
fortunei X *thomsonii*
AM 1921
Flower Colour: Rose
Flowering Time: April
Height: Tall

His Majesty
AM 1926
Flower Colour: Rose-pink

Kernick Gem
barbatum X 'Luscombei'
AM 1928
Flower Colour: Pink

Mabel
thomsonii hybrid
Flower Colour: Apricot-red

Manglesii Delicatum
Flower Colour: White-pink

Meteor
barbatum hybrid
Flower Colour: Red

Miss Watson
Flower Colour: Blush

Mottled Aucklandii
griffithianum X unknown
Flower Colour: Shell Pink

Mrs Dr. Blamey
Flower Colour: Blood Red

Mrs Hamilton
Flower Colour: Heliotrope

Mrs Henry Shilson
arboreum hybrid
AM 1973
Flower Colour: Purplish-pink
Flowering Time: January-March
Height: Tall

Mrs Richard Gill
arboreum X *campanulatum*
Flower Colour: Salmon-rose
Flowering Time: May
Height: Tall

Norman Gill
'Beauty of Tremough' X *griffithianum*
AM 1922
Flower Colour: White-pink
Height: Tall

Penelope
Flower Colour: Rosy-carmine

Penelope Vesuvius
Flower Colour: Red

Pink Delight
arboreum hybrid
AM 1926
Flower Colour: Pink
Flowering Time: March-April
Height: Tall

Pink Perfection
'Pink Pearl' X 'Cynthia'
Flower Colour: Lilac-pink
Flowering Time: Late April-May
Height: Tall

Pride of Kernick
Flower Colour: Pink

Princess Ena
Flower Colour: Mauve

Richard Gill
fortunei X *thomsonii*
AM 1920
Flower Colour: Pink
Flowering Time: May
Height: Tall

Rose Beauty
thomsonii hybrid
Flower Colour: Rosy-pink

Rose Perfection
Flower Colour: Rose-crimson

Salmon Giant
Flower Colour: Salmon-pink

Salmon Perfection
Flower Colour: Salmon

Seagull
Flower Colour: Lavender-blue

Shilsonii
thomsonii X *barbatum*
AM 1900
Flower Colour: Blood Red
Flowering Time: Mid March-April
Height: Tall

Springtime
praevernum X *cinnamomeum* var. *cinnamomeum*
AM 1945
Flower Colour: White
Flowering Time: March
Height: Tall

Trebah Gem
arboreum X *griffithianum*
Flower Colour: White-rose-pink
Height: Tall

Trelawny
arboreum X *barbatum*
AM 1936
Flower Colour: Carmine

William Watson
AM 1925
Flower Colour: Shell Pink

R. ‘Aurora’ AM 1922

R. ‘Aurora’ AM 1922

R. ‘Aurora’

‘Kewense’ x *thomsonii*

Hardiness - Flowering Period - Height & Spread

H5-6 April-May 8m x 5m

Richard Gill, the head gardener and steward at Tremough, Penryn, Cornwall, which was then the home of Henry Shilson, had been hybridising and raising rhododendrons for his employer long before venturing into the nursery business with his son, Richard Ernest Gill, in the early 1900s. At its height, the family business employed acreage at Kernick and Carclew, had the largest glasshouses of any nursery in the West country, and won the Challenge Cup and the Gold Medal at the London Rhododendron Show three years in succession. They also supplied plants large and small to amateur growers and botanic institutions across the whole of Great Britain, and one of those customers was a certain Lionel de Rothschild.

Amongst the many plants purchased for the garden he was developing at Exbury was a seedling from a cross between the hybrid R. ‘Kewense’ and the species *R. thomsonii*. When it flowered for the first time, opening soft-pink, trumpet-shaped and sweetly scented corollas in trusses of eight to ten, L. de R. immediately knew he had a winner on his hands and he introduced it in 1922, after ‘Aurora’ had garnered an Award of Merit from the Royal Horticultural Society on its debut.

The plant’s foliage follows the pollen parent, being olive to mid-green in tone, oval in shape, and more often convex than flat. In time, this tree-forming shrub will top the 8m-mark and it needs the protection of a woodland environment to fully prosper despite the H5-6 hardiness rating. Given such succour in dappled shade, the flowering is prodigious, and arresting, when literally hundreds of blooms decorate a mature specimen.

Not unsurprisingly, ‘Aurora’ would go on to feature in the parentage of many of the best Exbury hybrids, these including ‘Cara Mia’, ‘Naomi’ and ‘Yvonne’.



R. ‘Aurora’ AM 1922



R. ‘Aurora’ AM 1922

R. ‘Aurora’ AM 1922


R. ‘Beauty of Tremough’ FCC 1902

R. ‘Beauty of Tremough’
arboreum x *griffithianum*
Hardiness - Flowering Period - Height & Spread
H3-4 Late March-April 4m x 3m

Richard Gill made his *arboreum* x *griffithianum* cross during the spring of 1888, but there is some confusion over the parentage because the description for the award plant - the hybrid received a First Class Certificate from the RHS in 1902 when introduced by his employer Henry Shilson - purports it to be *griffithianum* x *thomsonii*. Equally, several eminent authors have reversed the *IRRC*-accepted pedigree in their publications by listing *R. griffithianum* as the seed parent. However, Henry McLaren has detailed repeating the cross at Bodnant in 1928, then registering R. ‘Bodnant Beauty of Tremough’ as *arboreum* x *griffithianum,* which rather tips the scales on the argument.

The shrub itself has an upright tree-like habit and boasts quite long and deep green, narrowly elliptic-ovate leaves without any indumentum. Out of flower it will be passed-by without notice, unremarked, but when a mature plant is covered with hundreds of white-flushed-pink trusses, expect a crowd to gather. For the corolla margins are deep rose pink, fading to pale pink in the throat, and they are held in a flat-topped inflorescence of 9 to 12 individual blooms.

If the hardiness rating was higher, ‘Beauty of Tremough’ would be far more widely planted than it is, but the two parents restrict their offspring’s range to gardens along the west coast or in the south, or to those with the mildest of microclimates on the east coast.

Seedlings from the cross were sent to other Cornish and southern gardeners, while Richard Gill himself named and propagated several different clones from the mating, and of course, other hybridisers in addition to Lord Aberconway duplicated the combination, so the resulting list of doppelgänger lookalikes is fairly long.

Yet none best the original named form.


R. ‘Beauty of Tremough’ FCC 1902

R. ‘Beauty of Tremough’ FCC 1902



R. ‘Duchess of Cornwall’ AM 1974

R. ‘Duchess of Cornwall’
barbatum x *arboreum*
Hardiness - Flowering Period - Height & Spread
H5 Late March-April 6m x 4m

However strange and outlandish it may sound, given the sheer number of crosses made over the past two hundred years, only one nursery has registered a hybrid with a *barbatum* x *arboreum* parentage: the Cornish firm of Richard Gill & Sons.

For ‘Duchess of Cornwall’.

Which was paired sometime before 1912.

Several other gardens have indeed made the cross, and fine specimens of such can be found in many a mild UK woodland, with Wakehurst Place in West Sussex, having a particularly splendid example. Yet none have logged them into the pages of the *IRRC.* Hilliers showed the award clone back in 1974 and it is that plant which features in all of the photographs.

‘Duchess of Cornwall’ presents her flowers in a dense ball-shaped truss of between 20 to 24 tubular-campanulate corollas, each one 4.5cm in length, but slightly less in width. Their colour is a deep and clear purplish-pink, which can appear crimson-scarlet in some lights, while a few darker spots are speckled on the upper lobes and a tight ring of stained-crimson nectar pouches will be found at the base of the throat.

The leaves are dark green daggers, technically oblong-obovate in shape, 12cm long and a third that across, the underside of the blades covered with a thin and felted, silvery indumentum. The shrub’s habit is tree-like, usually growing taller than it is wide, although the dense interweave of branches is only partially clothed by the foliage.

Of course, every ‘Duchess’ requires a husband, and in this case, an older gentleman, born of an equally distinguished, though reversed parentage - *arboreum* x *barbatum* - takes on that role. Which means that the ‘Duke of Cornwall’ and his consort can no longer be members of the same grex-group-pride as had previously been documented by some commentators, modern-day genetics negating any potential consanguinity issues.

R. ‘Duchess of Cornwall’ AM 1974

R. ‘Duchess of Cornwall’ AM 1974

R. ‘Duchess of Cornwall’ AM 1974

R. ‘Duke of Cornwall’ AM 1907

R. 'Duke of Cornwall' AM 1907

R. ‘Edmondii’

R. ‘Edmondii’


R. ‘Elspeth’


R. ‘Elspeth’


R. ‘Elspeth’

R. ‘Elspeth’



R. ‘Fireball’ AM 1925



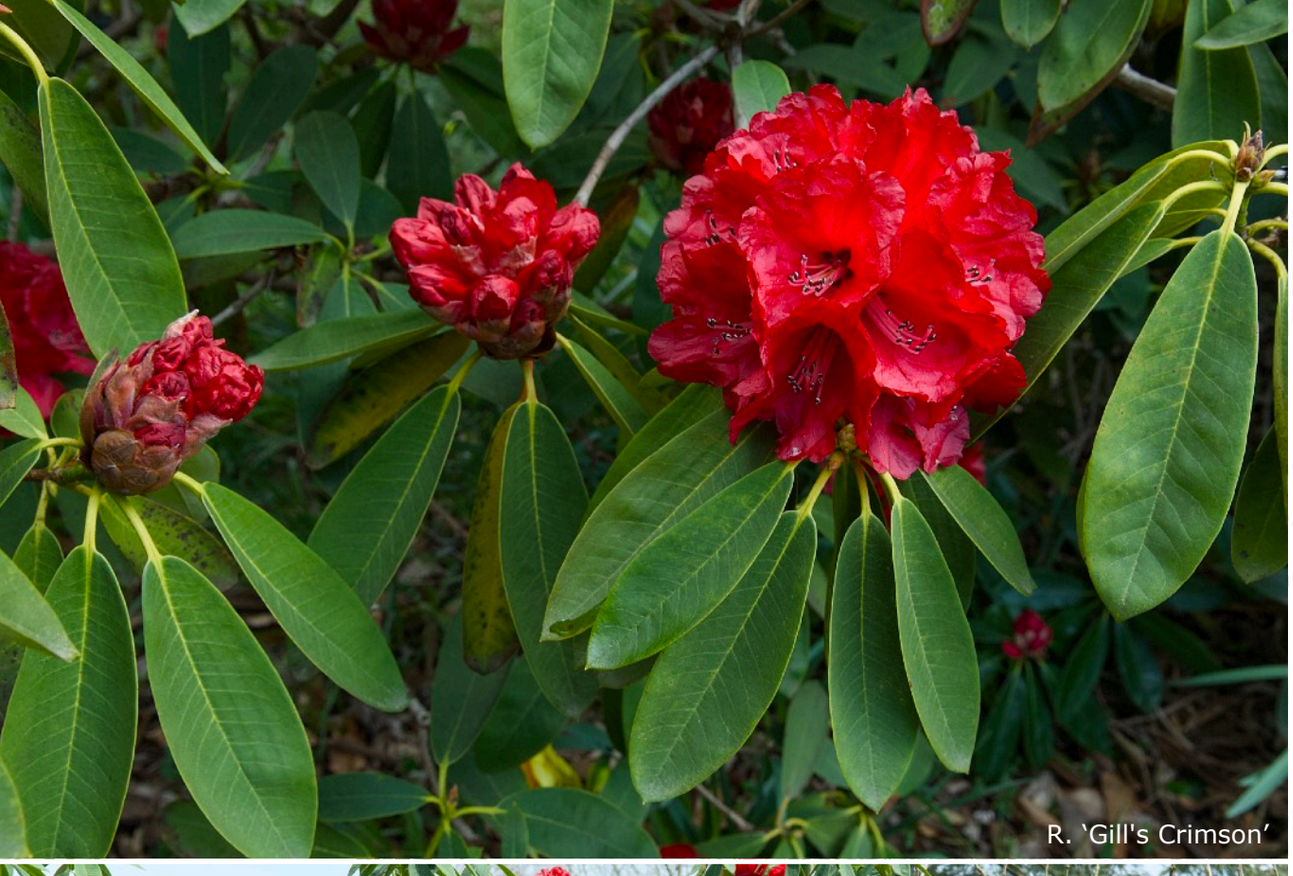
R. ‘Fireball’ AM 1925



R. ‘Fireball’ AM 1925

R. ‘Fireball’ AM 1925

R. 'Gill's Crimson'


R. ‘Gill's Crimson’


R. ‘Gill's Crimson’


R. ‘Gill's Crimson’

R. 'Gill's Triumph' AM 1906

R. ‘Gill's Triumph’ AM 1906

R. ‘Gill's Triumph’ AM 1906

R. ‘Gill’s Triumph’

arboreum x *griffithianum*

Hardiness - Flowering Period - Height & Spread

H4-5 April 6m x 4m

The parentage of ‘Gill’s Triumph’ has wandered over the years, with William Watson in 1911 indicating the *R. griffithianum* pairing was with *R. thomsonii* (*Rhododendrons & Azaleas,* T. C. & E. C. Jack), while Henry McLaren and Eustace Wilding opted for *R. arboreum* in their hybrids table of 1926 vintage (*The Rhododendron Society Notes,* Volume 3, Number 2). The latter is the accepted combination detailed in the *IRRC* and followed by most other authors, but the ascribed hue in those publications varies from strawberry-red to blood-red. However, the discrepancy is not referable to any poor colour vision in the eyes of those beholders, but to the hybrid’s initial distribution, which was as seedlings rather than cuttings, layers or grafts. The tonal range is therefore accurate, but dependant on which clone is being viewed. Note too that all will fade out to pink after a couple of weeks, especially if a specimen is grown in a decidedly sunny spot within the woodland.

Working as head gardener and steward to Henry Shilson at Tremough, Richard Gill (1849-1927), was responsible for the planting and upkeep of one of the best Himalayan rhododendron gardens in the country at that time, which as part of the Penryn Campus of the University of Exeter - https://www.exeter.ac.uk/our-campuses/penryn-campus/ - can still be visited today. He was also a gifted hybridiser, first while still in Shilson’s employ, then on land leased from the family when he started his own nursery business.

‘Gill’s Triumph’, named and introduced in 1906, is not as widely planted as ‘Aurora’, ‘Beauty of Tremough’ or ‘Shilsonii’, but it is still popular and will develop into a huge plant in the right conditions when left to its own devices. Prime among those requirements is a need to assure winter temperatures fall no lower than -12ºC, as the H4-5 hardiness rating denotes. The shrub is more open and leggy than some of its doppelgängers and sister seedlings, with stretched-out internodal growth, so despite the downward-hanging dark green whorls of extra-long, narrow leaves, the underlying infrastructure of branches is clearly visible. This situation is not helped by the low percentage of concave blades that are held on the shrub for more than a single year.

The domed-to-rounded loose flower trusses are composed of between 9 and 12 widely funnel-shaped corollas and open in April.



R. ‘Gill's Triumph’ AM 1906

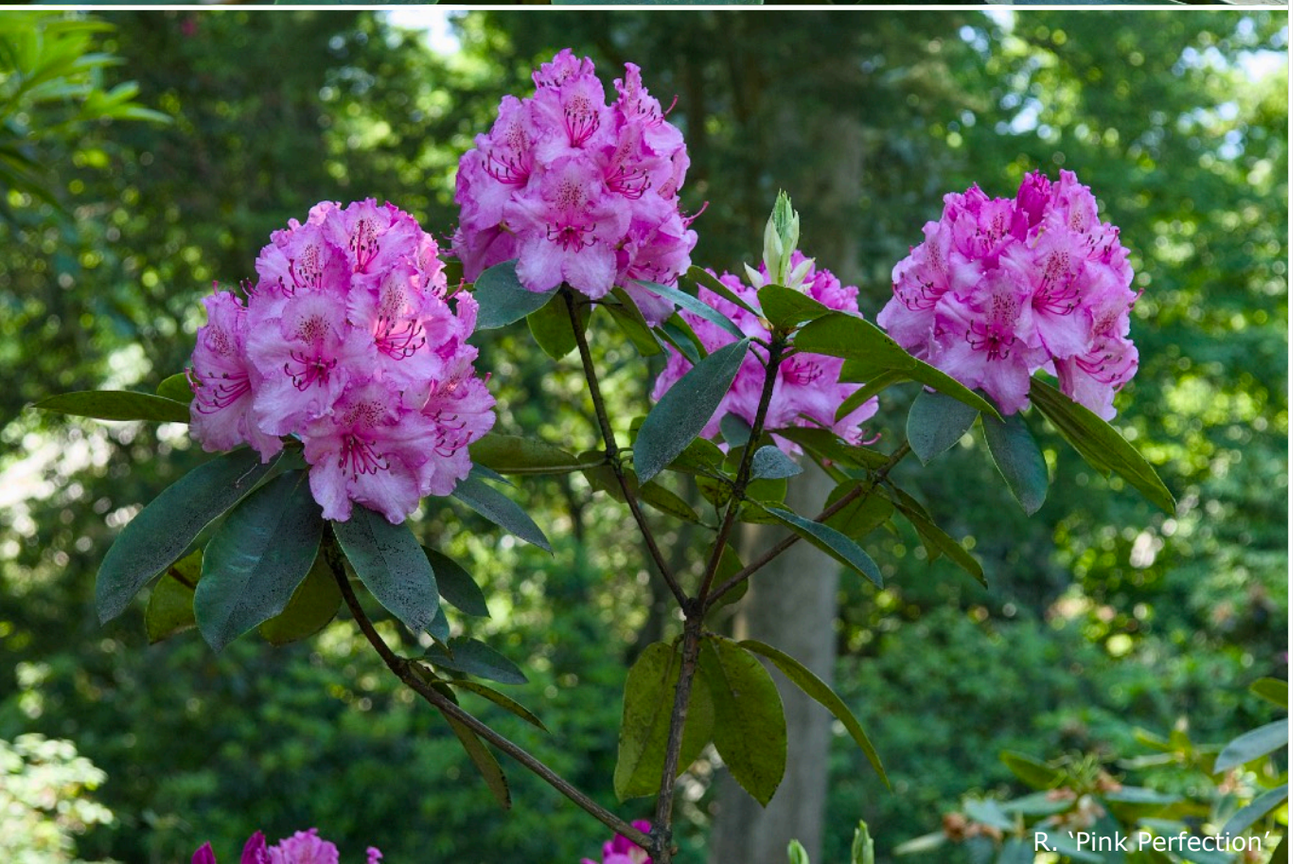
R. ‘Mrs Hamilton’

R. ‘Mrs Hamilton’

R. ‘Pink Perfection’



R. ‘Pink Perfection’



R. ‘Pink Perfection’



R. ‘Pink Perfection’

R. ‘Richard Gill’ AM 1920

R. ‘Richard Gill’ AM 1920



R. 'Richard Gill' AM 1920

R. 'Richard Gill'
fortunei x *thomsonii*
Hardiness - Flowering Period - Height & Spread
H5-6 Late April-May 6m x 4m

Tremough was one of the Cornish gardens that received seed from Sir Joseph Dalton Hooker's Sikkim expedition of 1849-51, and the species rhododendrons he collected in that northeastern Indian state thrived in the balmy environs of the woodland. Richard Gill was the head gardener at the time and encouraged by his employer, D. Henry Shilson, crossed the various plants with each other when they began flowering, producing a host of award-winning hybrids. It was a selection from a *fortunei* x *thomsonii* pairing, introduced in 1920, which was deemed good enough to bear his name.

Yet 'Richard Gill' is not the only hybrid arising from such parentage as John Luscombe of Coombe Royal, Kingsbridge, Devon, was the first rhodophile to make that combination, sometime before 1880, which resulted in the still popular R. 'Luscombei', as well as four other named selections. Next to marry the two was James Henry Mangles, though no named selections from this mating were ever introduced from Valewood, or later on, Littleworth Cross. Gill, and Sir Edmund Loder of Leonardslee, West Sussex, who added 'Betty', 'Hullaballoo' and 'Pride of Leonardslee' to the ranks, were in fact the last, likely making contemporary matches around the turn of the century.

A second selection from the Tremough seedlings, named 'H. T. Gill', was introduced in 1921, and it has also been suggested that 'Aurora' - as detailed above, sold as an unnamed seedling to Exbury, but later baptised by Lionel de Rothschild following its Award of Merit win in 1922 - might too be from this pairing and not the result of a 'Kewense' x *thomsonii* combination. The reason given for this speculation is down to the fact that Richard Gill 'was not very methodical in recording his crosses; indeed, the importance of this was probably not recognised when he first started his work, and undoubtedly the parentage of some of his named varieties can only be guessed' (to quote from *The Late Mr Richard Gill and his Rhododendron Hybrids,* by Henry McLaren and published in *The Rhododendron Society Notes,* Volume 3, Part 3, 1927). Lord Aberconway also reports that Gill 'began his career in the garden and acquired his knowledge of plants by handling them rather than from books'. And became a 'skilful gardener' in the process. Moreover, from close acquaintance, the author concludes his text by stating that 'Richard Gill had a real love of his plants, and was a most excellent judge of the merits of a flower. A keen man of business, one always felt in going round his nursery with him that one was talking to a gardener rather than to a nurseryman. Horticulture suffers a severe loss in his death'.

The flat-topped trusses of bloom that open in profusion on mature specimens of R. 'Richard Gill' each comprise thirteen funnel-shaped corollas that are individually 7.5cm long by as much as 9cm across at the mouth. They are five-lobed and a clear deep pink in tone, unblemished by spot or speckle, with a ring of five small crimson nectaries at the base of the throat. Stamens and style are held in a circular central cluster.

Dark green oblong-obovate leaf blades, 12cm long by 6cm wide, complement the flowers at each branch tip, but do little to mask the supporting framework as they are only held for one year, with the shrub's tree-like habit and upward-ascending limbs not helping the problem, even though they most often form a multi-stemmed open dome.

'Richard Gill' was gifted an AM by the RHS in 1920.

R. 'Richard Gill' AM 1920

R. ‘Rose Perfection’

R. ‘Rose Perfection’

R. ‘Shilsonii’ AM 1900

R. ‘Shilsonii’ AM 1900

R. 'Shilsonii'

thomsonii x *barbatum*

Hardiness - Flowering Period - Height & Spread

H5-6 March-early April 6m x 6m

Richard Gill, head gardener at Tremough, Henry Shilson's estate near Penryn in Cornwall, was the first hybridiser to make a *thomsonii* x *barbatum* pairing, the window when pollen probably met style between 1890 and 1892. The cross was of course named for his employer, and in 1900 when it was first exhibited, won an Award of Merit from the RHS. Yet following its introduction into rhododendron gardens up and down the land, 'Shilsonii' soon gained a notoriety for being a difficult plant to please.

Lord Aberconway, writing in 1927:

> 'It has a reputation, I think deserved, of not being the easiest of plants to grow, and undoubtedly Sir Edmund Loder's reverse cross has the better constitution, although Gill's hybrid has, as a rule, the finer flowers. The cross, however, is a fairly hardy one, and the flower-buds are rarely injured by winter frosts.'
> *The Late Mr. Richard Gill and his Rhododendron Hybrids,*
> Henry McLaren, *The Rhododendron Society Notes,* Volume 3, Number 3.

And J. G. Millais a decade earlier:

> 'The vivid scarlet of the large waxy flowers, produced in the first week in April, have attracted nearly all Rhododendron lovers, who have seen the Tremough specimens in bloom, but with the exception of a few Cornish gardens I cannot hear that many gardeners have been successful with this hybrid. It gets along well enough until it begins to flower freely and then the plant (especially if grafted) seems to suffer a considerable shock, even if it does not die outright. I have lost many, and now only possess one in good health, and that is retained by liberal disbudding.'
> *Rhododendrons and the Various Hybrids,*
> John Guille Millais, Longmans, Green And Co., 1917.

The reverse cross was indeed made at Leonardslee, as Henry McLaren reports, and the original combination duplicated as well, with different forms of the species to those used by Richard Gill employed to correct the vexations, a practice that had already been successfully exploited by Sir Edmund Loder to disenfranchise the lacklustre 'Kewense'. And as night follows day, the pairing was also made elsewhere, Millais documenting that 'Sir John Llewellyn has raised a similar hybrid, and has planted many groups of them in the open at Penllergare' (*ibid,* p. 127). Remember too that at the time, the progeny from a *thomsonii* x *barbatum* pairing were thought to be no different from those of a *barbatum* x *thomsonii* cross, so the clonal mix-up that followed was virtually predestined to happen.

Today therefore, even though most of the forms found in commerce and gardens are 'believed' to have originated from Leonardslee, outwith a fully equipped DNA genetics laboratory, it is beyond the bounds of possibility to identify which of the pair matured the seed, as opposed to merely providing the pollen. Equally, given the date it was introduced, some non-vegetatively propagated individuals are almost certainly part of the jumble.

The 'Shilsonii' technical specs encompass blood red, crimson and scarlet flowers, and the campanulate corollas are usually held in loose through compact trusses of 12 to 15, of a waxy texture, often with darker veins, and are sometimes graced with discreet brown speckles or spots on the dorsal. Their dimensions are around 4.5cm long by 5cm across at the mouth. Constantly present are five blackish nectar pouches gathered around the ovary at the base of the throat, while the stamens are typically white with black anthers, the style glabrous, often whitish but sometimes flushed yellow, and the stigma svelte or stocky. A pale-green-flushed-crimson calyx while glabrous, is irregularly petaloid, with the lobes up to 2cm long.

The 'Shilsonii' foliage is said to resemble the blades of *R. thomsonii,* each being around 11.5cm long by 7cm wide, dark green in tone, apiculate at the apex and cordate at the base, and basically elliptic in shape. More often however, they are a halfway house between the two parents.

Habit is consistently tree-like, with 6m high and wide shrubs the norm, many of these graced with beautiful metallic or copper-coloured bark.

A sheltered woodland planting site for 'Shilsonii' is de rigueur, needed to prevent the blooms succumbing to frost when they open in March through early April, and the shrub from being stripped of its foliage during a gale, not to mention its branches being broken by the fiercest gusts. Where such provision is to hand and a long-established mature specimen has been allowed to fully develop, the annual floral display will simply take your breath away. Such as in the grounds of Muncaster Castle, on the Irish Sea coast of west Cumbria, where a dozen or more Goliath's are scattered throughout the Gulf Stream-protected woodlands to astound an onlooker each spring.



R. 'Shilsonii' AM 1900

R. ‘Shilsonii’ AM 1900

R. ‘Shilsonii’ AM 1900

R. ‘Shilsonii’ AM 1900

R. ‘Shilsonii’ AM 1900

R. ‘Shilsonii’ AM 1900

Edmund Loder:

Rhododendrons at Leonardslee.



by J. G. Millais.

At least twenty-five years ago, Sir E. Loder, following the lead of J. H. Mangles, perceived that if rhododendrons were to be improved as garden plants some new strain must be introduced to create hybrids that would in future become good flowering shrubs. This theory he put into practice by acquiring a fine collection of the Himalayan species and a few of the best Chinese then known and crossing them together, as well as using them as pollen-parents on the best of the *caucasicum, arboreum* and *catawbiense* hybrids already in existence.

It has already been proved that the intercrossing of hybrids usually results in failure, so he was careful to avoid this error, and what mattered most in eventual success was that he spared no pains to obtain exceptional examples of the various species from which to breed. For instance, in the case of R. 'Loderi', without doubt the finest hybrid rhododendron ever raised and one that as a hardy shrub is never likely to be surpassed, he used a remarkable *R. fortunei* as well as an exceptional *R. griffithianum*. To prove the success of his experiment it may be mentioned that at least five other workers have produced the same hybrid, commonly known as R. 'Kewense', but with indifferent results.

It takes many years before a man's work can be seen or judged, because the majority of hybrids, especially those from Himalayan parents, do not flower until they have reached from 6 to 15 years of age. In fact some of the 'Loderi' seedlings already over 20 years of age have not flowered yet. Nevertheless at least fifteen or twenty of Sir E. Loder's hybrids have flowered out of some 200 yet to bloom, and the majority of these are exceptional rhododendrons, which are great additions to our gardens. It must be stated, however, that most of the Leonardslee hybrids are early flowering and not suitable to all gardens, and that they require some cultivation and careful placing in semi-shady and sheltered situations. It remains now for other hybridisers to create a race of late-flowering hybrids, mid-June to August; these we shall await with interest, as it will give us a series of fine shrubs extending over a long period.

Mr. J. C. Williams, Mr. Magor in Cornwall and Mr. L. de Rothschild have already done some good work in this respect, using the finest forms of *R. auriculatum, R. fortunei* (Hupeh form), *R. decorum, R. maximum*, *R. discolor, R. ungernii* and some of the old American-Indian hybrids. The four species with which Sir E. Loder achieved most success, using them both as seed or pollen parents, were *R. griffithianum* and *R. arboreum,* blood-red (Kermisimum variety), *R. thomsonii* and *R. fortunei.* With *R. caucasicum,* a lovely and very hardy species, he worked but little except through species on hybrids, and omitted the already overworked American species except in the case of the very best hybrids, and even these he used but sparingly.

The Leonardslee hybrids which have now flowered will be chiefly successful in gardens of medium temperature and good shelter. In most cases they flourish best when planted in a mixture of peat and sand with a plentiful mixture of good, rich, friable loam. In later years Sir E. Loder was much prejudiced against the use of leaf-mould, a point on which, I think, most gardeners would not agree. When used in the house leaf-mould is apt to go mouldy, owing to improper drainage, but used with discretion in the open garden I have only seen beneficial results. After all, rhododendrons when they grow large and shelter their own roots, are always creating their own food, which is leaf-mould or peat formed by natural vegetable decomposition. The following are some of the best Leonardslee hybrids which have already flowered. I have tried to keep them somewhat in their order of merit.

- opposite -
Sir Edmund Loder. A portrait by John Henry Hudson, *c.* 1890.

R. 'Loderi'.

This magnificent hybrid, in the estimation of the best judges the finest hybrid rhododendron ever raised, was bred from an exceptionally fine sweet-scented *R. fortunei* and a very large flowered *R. griffithianum* that existed in Mr. Fred. Godman's green-house at South Lodge. The cross was made in 1901, and the first seedlings flowered in 1907 and afterwards in succession until 1921. Twice *R. griffithianum* was the male parent and once *R. fortunei,* but it was when *R. fortunei* was the seed-bearer that the greatest success was achieved, quite 80 per cent, being the large-flowered true R. 'Loderi'. In the case where *R. fortunei* was the male parent only 12 per cent, of the seedlings were good.

R. 'Loderi' at 20 years old has formed a large, well-habited round shrub up to 4m. high, and there seems no reason why in time it should not reach 9m. in height. The leaves are about 20cm. long, 10cm. wide, the new growth forming beautiful crimson bracts. It usually makes its growth a little later than R. 'Kewense', a plant of similar parentage, and so escapes the destructive spring frosts.

The flowers are of extraordinary size, substance and beauty, usually over 15cm. across (two in 1920 had flowers over 18cm.), sometimes rich pink, but more often pink turning to waxy white. Many examples from *R. griffithianum* and others have pure waxy-white flowers, of which the varieties 'White Diamond' and 'Sir Joseph Hooker' are the best. Out of the whole batch of seedlings two only have exhibited lovely cream flowers. The whole truss of from 7 to 10 flowers measures as much as 79cm. round.

Not only have we size, substance, scent and colour in this wonderful hybrid, but, what is rare in such a category of superlatives, we have charm and refinement. Many large flowers are apt to be coarse, but this is not the case with R. 'Loderi', which in my garden stands out in quality high above all its compeers. Sir Edmund named many of the best varieties, and all of the following present slight individual characteristics of colour and form: 'White Diamond', 'Pink Diamond', 'Sir Joseph Hooker', 'Gamechick', 'Patience', 'King George', 'Queen Mary', 'Pink Coral'. One I have recently named as 'Maximus', as it had not previously flowered and exhibited flowers over 18cm. across. Besides these exceptional plants there are still in the garden at Leonardslee many which are equally good and deserve a name. The variety most generally admired is 'King George', and I have seen one truss with no fewer than 12 flowers.

R. 'Gauntlettii' and R. 'Loderi'.

Spurred by the success of R. 'Loderi', Sir Edmund made many crosses from it, but so far none have flowered except this cross. Up to date (1922) only three examples have flowered, but these have proved to be something exceptional. The habit and leaves as well as the flowers take after both parents but with a strong tendency to R. 'Loderi' and all its waxiness and refinement combined with greater hardihood. The flowers and leaf growth come later in the season, all great assets for gardens of colder temperature. The flowers unfold pink, but turn white after a week's development. About May 25th this hybrid with perhaps the best forms of *R. decorum* and *R. griffithianum* are the finest white rhododendrons to be seen, and in time we shall see them in front of even the superb R. 'Loderi' white.

Sir Edmund made a number of crosses between R. 'Loderi' and other species and hybrids, but they are all small up to date and unlikely to flower for many years. Of these the raiser thought highly of R. 'Loderi' and *R. arboreum* (blood red) and R. 'Loderi Pink Coral' and *R. arboreum* (blood red). The latter has all the characters of both parents and possesses fine leaves. If it proves to be a red 'Loderi', as there is every reason to hope, it may be a wonderful plant.

***R. decorum* and *R. griffithianum*.**

A very large number of crosses were made at Leonardslee with *R. griffithianum* both as the pollen and the seed plant. A few have flowered, but none are so good as the above-mentioned cross. At one time it was considered that *R. decorum* gave no good hybrids, but Sir Edmund has proved that his judgment was too hasty, for crossing this species (sparingly) he has made some fine hybrids worthy of a place in the most select company. Some twenty plants of the above-named white have now flowered and prove to be a high-class waxy-white (almost cream) rhododendron. The flowers possess a very thick corolla of large size which remains in beauty for a long period. There is little scent and the leaf habit is not very good, but as a flowering shrub it will take high rank in the future.

R. 'May Queen' (*R. decorum* and R. 'Standishii').

A hybrid with very large flowers, habit poor and without much vigour. The flowers, however, are very large and beautiful; the style and anthers are a lovely rich pink. Only one plant exists of this hybrid.

***R. fortunei* and *R. thomsonii*.**

This may be described as a glorified R. 'Luscombei' or R. 'Luscombeanum'. In every way, colour, size of leaves and flowers, and habit, it is far superior to the old plant and R. 'Luscombeanum splendens'. The large, rich, satin-rose flowers develop in April and make a charming colour scheme with the other *R. thomsonii* hybrids and early examples of R. 'Loderi', *R. caucasicum* hybrids and magnolias. Many good judges consider this to be Sir Edmund's second best plant, and its beauty and vigour far surpass the hybrid made by Mr. Luscombe. The reverse cross *R. thomsonii* and *R. fortunei* was also created, but as yet it has not flowered nor does it appear to be so virile a hybrid.

***R. thomsonii* and R. 'Otto Forster'.**

One of the mysteries of hybridisation is the variation of seedlings. In this case quite 50 per cent, are useless plants with pale, early pink flowers without character or beauty; 30 per cent, more have nice, waxy, pink flowers, 18 per cent, good rose-pink and perhaps 3 per cent, magnificent deep crimson flowers of great substance and beauty.

Although about 18 years old no good examples appeared until the spring of 1921, when three examples flowered, showing splendid crimson red trusses. With the sun shining through them on a spring evening the effect of this fine-flowered plant is glorious, far surpassing any of the other red hybrids in bloom in April. Its habit and thick glossy leaves are also very attractive. In time this red variety should be in every good garden. R. 'Otto Forster' (*R. arboreum* Album and *R. griffithianum*), one of the parents, is a difficult plant to grow, being fickle and requiring frequent moisture. In the case of this hybrid it is one of the easiest to cultivate, and remained in the best of health without being given water during the great drought of 1921.

***R. thomsonii* and *R. decorum*.**

A very charming rhododendron with rich rose-pink flowers very similar to *R. fortunei* and *R. thomsonii,* but not quite as good. Habit and leaves rather poor. First flowered in 1920.

R. thomsonii and R. 'Ascot Brilliant'.

A neat, well-habited plant of even, upright growth with fine trusses of red flowers midway between both parents. Some examples have flowers almost black-crimson. Stands drought far better than either parent and makes a noble show about April 15th. The best varieties, such as 'Torch; 'The Flame' and 'Firefly', are almost as brilliant as *R. thomsonii* with a better habit. A plant with a future.

R. barbatum and *R. thomsonii*.

A similar cross to that of R. 'Shilsonii', but without the poor constitution of that plant. In this case the plant is perfectly hardy. The flower trusses of those that have bloomed are not so large as R. 'Shilsonii', but the colour is as good. These hybrids are exceptionally vigorous and good-natured in almost any soil, and should be planted where the beautiful but fitful R. 'Shilsonii' does not succeed. Like the parents, however, it requires a fair amount of shelter from hot sun.

R. 'Luscombe's Scarlet' and *R. thomsonii*.

Flowers a good glowing scarlet, and habit upright and tree-like like the seed parent.

R. 'Mangles' Scarlet' and *R. thomsonii*.

Flowers similar to the preceding, but habit more like *R. thomsonii*.

R. 'Gauntlettii' and *R. griffithianum*.

A good pinkish white with more substance than R. 'Gauntlettii', a fast grower, very floriferous and hardy.

R. 'Combe Royal' and *R. griffithianum*.

A tall rather leggy grower with large drooping leaves. Flowers in large trusses midway between both parents.

R. arboreum Album and *R. griffithianum*.

The majority of these seedlings are not so good as the same hybrid raised by J. C. Williams, but so far two examples have exhibited their character in flowers which are large, waxy and pure white.

R. griffithianum and *R. campylocarpum*.

This hybrid is similar in appearance to those raised by Smith of Penjerrick and Mr. J. C. Williams. Up to date only three have flowered, and these showed trusses of pink externally and cream in the interior of the corolla. In Cornwall, Smith's hybrid is greatly admired by many good judges. The Leonardslee plants may be considered as very similar. They resist drought well and are fairly hardy. I have known them to make two growths in one season.

R. campanulatum and R. 'Otto Forster'.

A fine pink for April with robust and glossy dark-green leaves. It is a plant that does not flower until some 10 or 12 years of age, but will when mature make an attractive specimen. The influence of *R. campanulatum* coming through the mother is predominant.

R. campanulatum and *R. arboreum*.

Here the influence of the male parent (*R. arboreum* strain) is evident, but the flowers are good pink and campanulate like the seed parent. It does not flower until of considerable age.

R. 'Methven's hybrid' and *R. barbatum*.

In this case the influence of *R. barbatum* is very strong, whilst the *R. thomsonii* strain combined with *R. catawbiense* floriferousness make the plant a regular bloomer in April. It is very hardy, with small rich red trusses, and stands drought and poor soil better than its parents.

R. arboreum Album and *R. campylocarpum*.

This is a very interesting hybrid partaking equally of the parental characters. In 12 years it has reached 3.7m. in height, being cone-shaped like *R. arboreum* and with the rounded leaves of *R. campylocarpum*. About 15 examples have flowered, of which the majority take after the tree rhododendron in the shape of the truss, but with a nice cream tinge of colour. Two have been a pure cream, and one magnificent example came in April 1921 with splendid cream-yellow flowers. This fine example remains at Leonardslee, and it is to be hoped that other examples which are still to flower may prove as good. In its best form a remarkable rhododendron, and one that in the future will be coveted by experts.

R. campanulatum and *R. barbatum*.

A robust grower with leaves shorter and more rounded than *R. barbatum*. A plant of high class.

Sir Edmund Loder's brother Gerald presented a very beautiful silver-gilt Challenge Cup (from an ancient Irish design), to the Royal Horticultural Society in 1921, in memory of Sir Edmund Loder, for the encouragement of the cultivation of rhododendrons (including azaleas). The award is to be made annually by a Committee of seven, four appointed by the R.H.S. and three by the Rhododendron Society.

The first award of the Cup (for the year 1921) was to Sir Isaac Bayley Balfour, K.B.E., F.R.S., Regius Professor at Edinburgh. In 1922 the award went to Mr. J. C. Williams.

John Guille Millais wrote his assessment of the Loder rhododendron hybrids for Sir Alfred Pease's book *Edmund Loder, naturalist, horticulturist, traveller and sportsman: a memoir,* which was published in 1923 by J. Murray, London, and is now available online courtesy of the *Internet Archive,* to be read or downloaded, at:

https://archive.org/details/edmundlodernatur00peasuoft/edmundlodernatur00peasuoft/

The botanical nomenclature and British Imperial measurement units used throughout the original text have been updated to reflect modern-day terminology.



One of the former Hammer Ponds at Leonardslee.

People, Places & Plants: Sir Edmund Giles Loder, 2nd Baronet.

by John M. Hammond.

His formative years, the development of Leonardslee Garden, the creation of Rhododendron 'Loderi' and the impact of the Great War and its aftermath.

'It has been my good fortune to know nearly all the most brilliant students and writers who have specialised both in outdoor and museum natural history during the past forty years, and whilst many have done more in writing standard works on various subjects than Sir Edmund Loder, none of them brought to the task more brilliant gifts or were more accurate either in the observations or the conclusions from the works of previous writers. Whilst I have known Sir Edmund for nearly thirty years and have constantly discussed with him questions relating to zoology and botany I have never known him to make a single error.'
Lieutenant-Commander
John Guille Millais.[1]



Edmund Loder (seated, centre), with a group of friends, the photograph likely dating to the 1880s.

INTRODUCTION.

There will be very few rhododendron enthusiasts of all persuasions who do not recognise the name of Sir Edmund Giles Loder (1849–1920), or the garden he developed at Leonardslee in Sussex, or the extremely attractive Rhododendron 'Loderi' hybrids he created, which grace gardens in many corners of the globe. And yet, most enthusiasts know little of this remarkable hybridiser, who excelled in many walks of life and was an inspiration, father-figure and a kindly mentor to many of his friends and associates. The words of his close friend and neighbour, John Guille Millais, taken from *The Times* notice of Sir Edmund's death in 1920, provide an insight to this reserved gentleman, who could be somewhat abrupt and did not suffer fools gladly; but this natural shyness, when in the company of strangers, vanished as soon as he became comfortable with those around him and he became delightful company who was completely at home discussing a vast array of subjects.

Sir Edmund was something of a latter-day Renaissance man, who understood optics and optical instruments, he was an expert photographer, a great zoologist, a practical naturalist, a botanist, a great horticulturist and arboriculturist, he understood ballistics, and was a skilled mechanic and armourer. In addition, he was a thoroughly equipped and experienced sportsman, a hard rider to hounds, a good shot with a gun and one of the best with a rifle, and a good fisherman; he had been a fine athlete, and till quite late in life was an energetic dancer. Sir Edmund could draw well and knew more than most people guessed about art, music, gems, jade, carving and curios. He knew the insides of countless books and had great powers of discrimination as to their intrinsic merits; he was a good judge, too, of the accessories to literature, illustrations, processes and the like. In common with many other brilliant scholars, Sir Edmund preferred to use his time and talents creatively, or for seeking solutions to complex problems; so he tended to leave the writing-up of reports to family members and close friends. Whilst this article is aimed at providing an insight into the life of Sir Edmund, the garden he laid out on the Leonardslee Estate and the development of the world-renowned rhododendron hybrid that bears his name, it is inevitable that some strands of his wider interests and activities need to be woven into the story as a means of establishing a chronological order of events and placing various aspects in context.

Of necessity, this article has evolved over many years, as it contains a significant amount of research related to the Rhododendron 'Loderi' cross, of which a staggering number of varieties have been named over the span of the 20th Century, and the following notes are aimed at creating a record for future reference. This is a particularly complex subject, for whom a detailed historical perspective has not been previously published and, whilst considerable care has been taken in compiling the data, any errors or omissions are those of the author. For this reason, any additional details, amendments or comments will be most welcome, as in this way we all learn. In response to queries from the Pacific Northwest, an embryonic and less comprehensive version was published in the *Newsletter* of the ARS Eugene Chapter several years ago, as there is considerable interest in the 'Loderi' hybrids in the Pacific Northwest; and several of the original named clones are available on the West Coast that are no longer available in Britain.

The introduction of the 'Group' epithet in *The International Rhododendron Register and Checklist Second Edition* 2004 has had unintended consequences for our historical understanding of these hybrids. In some cases this treatment has resulted in a regrettable 'lumping-together' of early hybrids whose full parentage and historical background have been suggested subjectively, due to a lack of detailed research or in some cases being genuinely unknown; and whose leaf, and flower characteristics, are not exactly the same or

in some cases are unknown; thus sometimes leading to an incorrect historical attribution.[2] This article does not use the 'Group' epithet, as the present methodology of its application to crosses made by the early hybridisers is often erroneous, as is the case with some Rhododendron 'Loderi' crosses. Unfortunately, the current use of the epithet is counter-productive to historical research work.

EDMUND GILES LODER'S FORMATIVE YEARS.

In 1847, at the age of 24 years, Robert Loder (1823-1888) had married Maria Georgiana, the fourth daughter of Mr Hans Busk. On August 7th, 1849, Edmund Giles Loder, the eldest of ten children and known as 'Eddie' within the family, was born at 16 Montagu Street, Portman Square, the London home of his aunt, Julia Clara, Mrs William Pitt Byrne, his mother's sister. Queen Victoria was but 30 years old and Edmund was to live through 52 years of her reign. The Loder Family originated from Haselbury Bryan in Dorset, where they had become established by the mid-16th Century, and had ample financial means at their disposal that came from merchant trading in Russia.

Robert Loder inherited the bulk of the large fortune accumulated by his father, being the only surviving son of his father's first marriage. His brother Edmund had died at an early age and, acknowledging the gap it left in his life, in 1849 he called his first son Edmund. In 1847, Robert Loder, then owner of the Heale Estate in Wiltshire, bought The High Beeches Estate, near Crawley in Sussex, and commenced rebuilding the house in 1856; he was MP for Shoreham in 1887, and was created a 1st Baronet in the same year.

Edmund Giles Loder, when not either at Eton or Trinity College, Cambridge, followed in the family tradition in terms of hunting wild game, and until the very last years of his life he never missed a season's deer-stalking, except when he was abroad; and on every occasion when he was abroad in the deer-stalking season, he was stalking chamois or other game. The Forest of Amat, near Bonar Bridge on Dornoch Firth, and Corriemulzie in Sutherland, in the Northern Highlands of Scotland, was the choice of Edmund and his brother Wilfrid, who went off to find an estate to their taste and made a selection that the family never regretted. Amat and Corriemulzie (which remains one of the finest red deer estates in Scotland) were rented from Mr George Ross of Pitcalnie from 1872 to 1885 (inclusive of both seasons); and in 1876 Sir Robert Loder took in addition Glen Diebidale, north of Ullapool, from Sir Alexander Matheson and remained the tenant until 1885. In 1873, Sir Robert Loder had also purchased the highly-regarded Whittlebury estate in Northamptonshire, with its 600 acres of parkland and large red deer herd, from the Trustees of Lord Southampton.

On reaching 24 years of age, in June 1874, Edmund Loder left England to see the World, returning home for Christmas in December 1875. During this time, he spent a considerable period hunting in various parts of India and on 16th February, 1875, wrote to his brother Wilfrid from 'a hut in the west of the Neilgherry Hills' (what we now know as the Nilgiri Hills, in Tamil Nadu):

> 'The Neilgherry Hills are very curious, they rise quite abruptly from the surrounding country on the western side; there is nothing but immense rocky precipices, reminding one more of those of the Yosemite Valley than anything else I have seen… . The plateau is not by any means level; sometimes on the bottoms of the valleys it cannot be more than 4,500ft above the sea, while some of the highest hills are 8,500ft. The western Neilgherries are much like the South Downs about doubled in scale, green grassy hills; but the peculiarity is that the bottoms of a great many of the valleys and a large number of the slacks and small corries running up the hillsides are filled with shrubberies or Sholahs as they are called here. These are of all sizes from hundreds of acres to only an acre. These shrubberies are composed of shrubs the names of which I do not know, but they look much like box, bay, laurestinus, etc., but the principal tree is the rhododendron, which grows here to a very large size – I have measured some whose trunks were 11ft in circumference (*Rhododendron arboreum*) … they are now all in bloom and look very fine'.[7]

Following an 'attack of bricks and mortar', which wrought major changes to Whittlebury House, Sir Robert left The High Beeches in 1877 to live in Northamptonshire and resided there until his death. Meanwhile, Edmund Loder was married on November 21st, 1876, to Marion, the third daughter of Wilham Egerton Hubbard of Leonardslee. Up to the time of Edmund Loder's marriage, The High Beeches had always been his home; and at his insistence, his father retained the estate. However, having bought Whittlebury, it seemed natural to Sir Robert that when his son and heir married he should wish to provide him with a home in the County of Northamptonshire. Sir Robert purchased an estate of about 300 acres near Weedon called Floore, originally created by the Enyon Family, who had purchased the two manors in Floore in 1610 and 1623, and they commenced building Floore House in 1608, the original Jacobean part of the structure dates back to this time. The house was later remodelled in the Georgian era and Edmund settled down with his wife at Floore in what was, 'not a very large house'.

Edmund Loder organised the construction of a 'Pulhamite' rock garden at some distance from the house, which flowed into the parkland beyond, filled his garden with interesting plants, and in spite of the bleak climate, he established a collection which became well known in horticultural circles. He specialised in narcissus, and was very successful in raising hybrids. By now he had become thoroughly interested in particular branches of horticulture and botany, and had directed his studies and attention to the curious family of the Cacti. To see them in their native habitat and to collect them was a principal object of his 1878 plant-hunting expedition to America with Marion. They collected great quantities of cacti on the prairies in Colorado, along the Mexican border and elsewhere in the USA, which they sent home to Floore and these formed the nucleus of a marvellous collection. For his cacti he built, with his usual practical skill, a special house with cast-iron heating pipes, so made of iron and glass, without wood, that the maximum amount of light and sun should reach the plants.

It was not long after his marriage that he first met James H. Mangles, who he referred to in his notes as 'the Father of the Aucklandii (*Rhododendron griffithianum*) cult', and this meeting was to have a profound impact on his horticultural interests. He soon acquired sufficient of the best species and hybrids to form a representative collection to use for an experimental hybridisation programme, including a fine collection of the Himalayan rhododendron species, together with the best Chinese species then available. Then following the progress already made by Mangles, he began crossing them, as well as using their pollen on the best *R. catawbiense, R. caucasicum* and *R. arboreum* crosses raised by other hybridisers.

Many years can pass before a hybridiser is able to see the results of their work and judge the flowers and foliage, especially those of Himalayan parentage, as many crosses do not flower until they have reached an average of six to fifteen years of age, and even then, the juvenile flowers often do not indicate the full potential of the cross until some years later when the plant has reached full maturity.

Given the fairly long timeframe taken for the results of a cross to be determined, it was important to have taken every aspect into consideration when making the cross. So he

established a large reference library to use in his deliberations.

After studying Sir Joseph Hooker's two-part monograph, *Rhododendrons of Sikkim-Himalaya,* published in 1849 and 1851, Edmund went to India on a plant-hunting expedition in 1879 to see the rhododendron species in the wild for himself, then as time went on he became more and more interested in the results of hybridisation. To him it opened his mind to a rewarding branch of study that was of perpetual interest in his travels abroad and in each garden he visited.[3] He increased his knowledge not only by the study of the best books of which he was a collector, but was in constant touch with the English, Japanese, Dutch and other foreign nurserymen, and corresponded with the curators of Botanical Gardens at home and on the Continent. He would spend days at RBG, Kew, RBG, Edinburgh, and Cambridge University BG, or travel to Geneva and even to Mexico to get something new in the way of information or plants. He made a very detailed tour of the beautiful gardens in Cornwall between Falmouth and Penzance, where he was a delighted at what could be achieved in that relatively temperate and sunny climate with sub-tropical plants and trees. He would go to see what his friend J. C. Williams at Caerhays Castle was doing, for he had similar hobbies, and like Edmund had made a special study of rhododendrons and narcissi.

Early in Edmund's life at Floore he strained his heart whilst following a wounded bear when hunting in Cashmere in 1874, as he vehemently believed it was wrong to leave a wounded animal to suffer. At Floore he became so ill with his heart's weak and irregular action, and consequent nervous depression, that for some months he was wheeled about in a Bath chair. It is true that his heart recovered sufficiently to live a life of activity, albeit abnormal; but in reality it would probably be more accurate to note he was constantly liable to have symptoms of heart trouble. He often complained to close friends about his heart, but he led so healthy, so regular and so temperate a life that his moral strength triumphed over this physical weakness until he was well advanced in years.

Whilst life in the Victorian era was considerably more leisurely, it was governed by strict formal codes of etiquette amongst the aristocracy and the country house set, something many present-day enthusiasts have great difficulty in comprehending. There were very few opportunities for gentlemen of independent means to meet and discuss their rhododendron interests, other than at the infrequent horticultural events, or RHS Committee meetings, and it would be another 40 years before 'The Rhododendron Society' was founded in Cornwall. A formal invitation to dinner was usually the mechanism by which discussions could be facilitated, and sometimes that would lead to a walk around the grounds and an exchange of plant information. Plant hybridisation was carried out under a veil of secrecy, as the status of a garden was measured by the rarity of the plants it contained, so current work with crosses would not be discussed, other than the results of crosses made at an earlier stage. Some information could be gleaned from the occasional reports in the *Gardeners' Chronicle* and the *Curtis's Botanical Magazine,* or hand-written notes in the post mentioning the availability of new species and hybrids from the key rhododendron nurserymen; so, it is not difficult to imagine the important role the 'bush-telegraph' played in an era when letter post was the prime medium of communication!

A second plant-hunting expedition took place in 1883, this time to the Dolomites, where he and Marion sought alpine plants for the rock garden at Floore.

Edmund Loder's son, Robert Egerton Loder, was born on 27th July, 1887 and named after his grandfather, but known as 'Robin' amongst family and friends. For the last three years Edmund Loder was at Floore, from 1886 to 1888, he was on the Council of the Royal Horticultural Society, and it was through love of gardening that he formed friendships with such men as the Reverend C. Wolley Dod, Sir Trevor Laurence, Sir Michael Foster and Sir Joseph Hooker. There were at least two highly appreciative entries in the Guest Book at Floore by Sir Joseph Hooker in regard to the gardens, expressing surprise at the numbers of plants in the collections and remarking on the charms of Floore. And, so the years passed between Floore and Amat, with weeks spent in London or abroad, together with visits to Whittlebury and many other country houses.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF LEONARDSLEE GARDEN.

Sir Robert Loder, who passed away suddenly at the Beach House, Worthing, on 27th May, 1888, had been determined that his eldest son should be the leader of the Family, reside at Whittlebury, and inherit his title along with the bulk of the family fortune. There were seven brothers still extant, although one of the three daughters died at an early age. Sir Robert's will resulted in 'musical chairs' being played with the other main Loder estates, as Edmund's home at Floore was left to Sydney Loder; The High Beeches was left to Wilfred Loder; and the Beach House, a Regency villa at Worthing purchased in 1878, was left to Sir Robert's wife, Maria. These arrangements did not meet with the approval of Sir Edmund who did not want to live at Whittlebury, and there is little doubt he had his eyes on The High Beeches in the more temperate climate of Sussex where he would have been able to continue his hybridisation interests and use the more tender rhododendron species. Whilst the arrangements in Sir Robert's will were being discussed and enacted, in 1889 Sir Edmund purchased the 240 acre (100ha) Leonardslee Estate from his ageing father-in-law and this provided him with the opportunity to leave Northamptonshire and to return to his native Sussex. So, his wife's old home, Leonardslee, located just five miles from The High Beeches, was to be their home until the end of his life, and he never resided at Whittlebury, which remained vacant for many years. Sir Edmund later sold the Heale estate, his father's family home in Wiltshire, in 1894.

When he left Floore in August, 1889, Sir Edmund presented the whole of his cacti collection to the Royal Botanic Garden at Edinburgh, and changed his interests to trees and ornamentals. Once he had made his mind up, he was steadfast in his decisions; this enabled him to move on and not be concerned about what had gone before. Thirty-two years later, Professor Bayley Balfour writing to Lady Loder (January 1921) recalled:

> 'I have a most vivid recollection of the splendid collection of cacti, presented to us by Sir Edmund Loder, coming here. It was in the year after I came to Edinburgh and I find on looking up our records that there were 250 species of cacti and of other succulent plants in the gift - truly a sumptuous one and one that I valued very greatly because it really was the foundation of our collection. I am glad to tell you that nearly the whole of them are still alive and thriving here … . Many of them of course have had to be propagated, the older plants dying out, but I can safely say that the gift is still the backbone of our collection. It has always been a very pleasant thought to me that Sir Edmund was so kind to us.'

As the years passed, the empty cacti house at Floore was converted by the new owners into an orchid house and in later years it became an aviary, then a fernery. Floore still retains the framework of the 19-acre garden created by Sir Edmund.[5]

There must have been a period, prior to the 19th Century, when the forests around Leonardslee suffered severely through the felling of its ancient oaks for the Royal Navy, together with the felling of timber more generally to provide charcoal for the Sussex furnaces and foundries. Crabtree Pond, the lowest in the chain of ponds, lying within Leonardslee woods, served the Gosden Furnace operated by Roger Gratwick in 1580. Some

- *opposite right* -

The front of Leonardslee House is graced by some of the rhododendrons that Sir Edmond particularly liked.



ruins of the furnace structure remain by the dam, and Gratwick probably obtained ore from the northern area of St Leonard's Forest near Colgate, where there were mine pits.[6] However, the passage of two hundred and fifty years had given time for the recovery from any desolation wrought by the iron industries. Such traces as survive of ironworking in the county tend to add rather than detract from its valley scenery. The uninformed would never guess, for instance, that the chain of ponds and lakes in the main valley at Leonardslee, studded with gem-like Nymphaea, reflecting gigantic-leaved Gunnera and aquatic wonders of plant life along their borders, had been evolved out of the old 'Hammer Ponds' - the ancient reservoirs which ensured the continual running of the water-wheels which drove the batteries of stamps used to crush the iron ore.

In about 1803, a thousand acres in the south of Lower Beeding parish were sold from the St Leonard's Forest Estate to Charles George Beauclerk, who commissioned the architect John Johnston to design a house made of local stone. This was completed *c.* 1808, and the estate was known as St. Leonard's Lodge. Around 1852 the estate passed to W. Egerton Hubbard, a Russia trading merchant in the City of London, and a new house was designed in the Italianate style by T. L. Donaldson, being built of local sandstone in 1853. Much of the property had originally been covered by scrub, birch and oak, and sometime prior to 1852, Beauclerk had begun to lay out the 40-acre grounds in the style of an 'American Garden', containing rhododendrons, azaleas, magnolias and other ornamental shrubs. The Redwoods and Wellingtonias, which were planted shortly after the house was built, would have been from the original introduction of seed by William Lobb; *Sequoia sempervirens* in late 1851, and *Sequoiadendron giganteum* in late 1853, respectively, and raised by James Veitch & Son at Exeter. Around 1870 St. Leonard's Lodge was renamed the Leonardslee Estate, by William Hubbard, Sir Edmund's father-in-law.

John Guille Millais, the artist and prolific natural history author, was the fourth son of the famous artist John Everett Millais, and lived at Compton's Brow in Horsham, Sussex where he had a sixteen-acre garden running down to a valley in St. Leonard's Forest; and had both a like-minded friend and neighbour in Sir Edmund Loder when he came to live at Leonardslee.

The following observation about Sir Edmund is taken from an article written in *Country Life:*

> 'When he took up zoology and botany he did it first by acquiring a great library and then reading every book on the subject before beginning to propound his own new theories. His memory and analytical powers were extraordinary and he seemed almost incapable of making mistakes. One wet day we sat in the library at Leonardslee and I gave him a new book on Africa I had brought with me. He kept turning the pages at such a rate that he did not seem to be reading it at all, and when he threw it down after an hour, I asked him what he thought of it. Then he began: "You will see the author says on page 22" – then followed an analysis of the writer's views, which he proved were completely wrong, as was the case. "On page 35" – a further long quotation from the book, almost word for word, and his own reason for disagreement. And so on throughout the whole volume, examining every error and praising every good point, as if he knew the whole of it by heart. I confess it amazed me, and though I had read the book twice very carefully, Edmund Loder had read and digested the whole matter in one hour, and what is more, could remember all about it afterwards'.[10]

- opposite left -
Relaxing on the lawn around Leonardslee House, the photograph most likely taken in the 1890s.

Millais was an avid do-it-yourself gardener and this came to the fore in the opening chapter of his 1917 monumental work titled, *Rhododendrons and their Various Hybrids:*

> 'In the formation of the garden and its surroundings … it is much better that he who will always live there should create his own even if he does make the most colossal errors. In time by the study of others gardens he can correct most of the mistakes, and will appreciate any success he may achieve in far greater proportion than if it had been created by others. The very essence of the enjoyment of gardens is to do things yourself … one point, too often missed, that is of importance is that the owner should introduce into his garden his own individuality …' [4]

The main topographical feature of Leonardslee garden is a very long deep valley, narrow and wild at the high end, running down from north to south, deepening, widening and opening itself more and more to the sun. In the bottom a stream flows down through a chain of pools, ponds and lakes, the waters becoming larger and wider as the valley broadens out. On the edge of the western plateau stands the house, commanding an extensive view of the valley, of the lake with its various waterfowl below, of the hills, of woods, and to the right, away over 10 miles of Sussex, to the South Downs. With great skill Sir Edmund exploited, over a 30-year period, these natural features and immediately began planting trees and shrubs on a grand scale, cleverly integrating the native forest trees to form a backdrop for the ornamentals, to create an 82-acre woodland garden from the somewhat empty valley on the Wealden sandstone to the south of Horsham. It is not difficult to see Millais' approach to landscape gardening reflected in the laying-out of Leonardslee and the two of them probably spent many hours discussing the details. Sir Edmund was a man with a mission, and engaged the services of James Pulham & Sons, the famous landscaping company of Woodbridge in Suffolk, to create the massive sandstone 'Pulhamite' rock garden near the House.

The following is taken from Sir Edmund Loder's own notes made in 1913, some 25 years after acquiring the Leonardslee Estate, reflecting on the conditions under which he pursued his hobby of acclimatising rare and beautiful plants and trees:

> 'Leonardslee is 270 feet above sea-level: 9 miles from the northern slopes of the South Downs and 13 miles in a direct line to the sea near Shoreham. The ground planted occupies both sides of a valley running nearly north and south. It is partially sheltered from south-west gales by trees and by the configuration of the ground. The soil varies considerably in different parts, generally, however, containing sand, mixed more or less with clay. Geologically it is 'Upper Tunbridge Sand' and 'Cuckfield Clay.' The natural growth is heather, bracken and birch-trees.'

By 1913 the garden also contained a significant collection of camellias, magnolias, Cornus and Prunus, as well as many interesting and rare conifers. Many of the specimens performed very well, including some that are often considered tender, however, Sir Edmund's development of these collections is beyond the scope of this article.

SIR EDMUND BECOMES DEEPLY ENGROSSED WITH HYBRIDISATION.

Following the lead of James H. Mangles, whose pioneering work with *Rhododendron griffithianum* created a large range of hybrids from the primary species available between 1860 and 1880, and who probably had commenced a programme of secondary crosses prior to his untimely death in 1884, Sir Edmund became engrossed with hybridisation and took up the torch that Mangles had carried for over twenty years. Sir Edmund visited the house of Harry and Clara Mangles, at Littleworth Cross, which was where many of Mangles'

most important hybrids had been planted after his death, and then carried out a detailed study of the crosses that Mangles had raised.

Mangles had been struck down with a serious illness in 1884 and, when it became clear he would no longer be able to care for the seedlings from his on-going hybridisation programme, a load was sent by horse-drawn wagon to his friend Colonel Frederick DuCane Godman (1834–1919) at South Lodge in Horsham to be grown on. Mixed in with the plants were a few seedlings raised by another of Mangles' hybridising friends, Mr Luscombe of Coombe Royal, Devon and, as the hardiness of the seedlings was uncertain, Colonel Godman placed them all in a cold greenhouse. Colonel Godman had purchased South Lodge estate in around 1880 and had started to develop the gardens prior to rebuilding the house in 1883. One of the beautiful flowering seedlings did particularly well, but by around 1900 it became too large to continue growing under glass, so he cut off the branches and gave some to his new neighbour, Sir Edmund, on the other side of the road at Leonardslee. It was probably one of Sir Edmund's skilled gardeners who grafted numerous cuttings on to plants of *Rhododendron ponticum* and some of these were planted in various parts of the garden, and one was placed in a cold greenhouse, to determine their hardiness.[8]

The plant in the greenhouse grew well, producing in April the typical clear brilliant white flowers characteristic of its *Rhododendron griffithianum* parentage and, when it was possible to ascertain the grafts were hardy, Sir Edmund provided specimens to his friends in Cornwall for trial in their benign climate. Sir Edmund took his son Robin, then aged 17 years, with him to visit J. C. Williams and stayed at Caerhays Castle from 7th – 11th April, 1904, and this may be the occasion that the specimens were taken to Cornwall.[11] It quickly became clear that the cross flowered somewhat later outdoors, was very hardy, and this milestone in the annals of hybridisation became referred to in Cornwall as 'Loder's White'. Sir Edmund returned to visit Caerhays on 3rd April, 1911 and in the same year he exhibited, introduced and registered Rhododendron 'Loder's White', when it received an Award of Merit.[11] Several original specimens are planted at Leonardslee and one overhangs the pathway leading to the Daffodil Lawn. There has been much debate as to the origin and parentage of the cross, and the 'officially' suggested parentage of *R. arboreum* ssp. *cinnamomeum* var. *cinnamomeum* x *R. griffithianum* is probably incorrect.[2] Frederick Street, whose knowledge of old hybrids was extensive, and who had the ability to recognise them from their leaves, is probably much nearer the mark:

> 'The habit is compact and the foliage is dark and shiny. The shape of each leaf is very similar to that of the old hybrid called 'Album Elegans' which was used [by James H. Mangles] to raise 'Alice Mangles', and were it not for the compact habit of the plant, I would say it was another seedling of the same cross'.[9]

Despite James H. Mangles being particularly meticulous with his hybridisation programme, as is evident from his regular column in the *Gardeners' Chronicle* from 1879 until his untimely death in 1884, his records have never been found, but it would not be unreasonable to suggest that he had progressed to make secondary crosses using Rhododendron 'Alice Mangles' and *R. griffithianum*. 'Alice Mangles' was a cross between *R. griffithianum* and the common purple form of *R. ponticum*.[9 & 25] R. 'Loder's White' was the first hardy, if unscented, hybrid of *R. griffithianum,* which Sir Edmund and many of his friends used to make a plethora of new crosses.

In the late 19th century the 'key' rhododendron enthusiasts of the era, together with many famous rhododendron nurseries, made their own replica crosses of plants that had been exhibited, gained awards and became highly sought after by gentleman gardeners of the era. Sir Edmund was no exception in this regard and he endeavoured to repeat the crosses using the best specimens of species and hybrids available. He was very successful in creating better forms of several well-known hybrids, but that's a story for another day. Sir Edmund perceived that if rhododendrons were to be improved as garden plants, then some new strain must be introduced to create hybrids that would in future become good flowering shrubs.

THE CREATION OF RHODODENDRON 'LODERI' AND ITS VARIETIES.

History, in many walks of life, is made by those individuals who never give up their quest. Throughout his life Sir Edmund set himself complex problems to solve, with which he wrestled tirelessly, to the amazement of his close companions. He perceived that if rhododendrons were to be improved as garden plants then some new strain must be introduced to create hybrids that would be good flowering shrubs. As was the case with his zoological studies and interests, what mattered for eventual success was that he spared no pains to obtain exceptional specimens of the various species with which to breed. As a result of detailed deliberations, Sir Edmund had expressed doubts as to the parentage of Rhododendron 'Kewense', said to be a cross of *R. griffithianum* and *R. fortunei* raised many years earlier at RBG, Kew, and this presented him with a problem to solve.[26] In 1901 he selected a particularly sweet-scented and large-flowered form of *R. fortunei* amongst the several he had, as the seed parent in an experiment to investigate the true composition of the hybrid. But, as he did not consider any of the *R. griffithianum* forms he had was good enough, he sought to locate a better specimen of this species. Sir Edmund was extremely fortunate to discover a particularly good form of *R. griffithianum* growing in a cold house, across the road from Leonardslee, in the South Lodge garden of Colonel Fred Godman. Could this have been the form that James H. Mangles had used in his very successful hybridisation programme and had sent to his friend in 1884 for safe-keeping? Circumstantial evidence would suggest this was the case, but given the passing years we will never really know the answer to this question; nevertheless, Colonel Godman kindly allowed Sir Edmund to take pollen from the plant back to Leonardslee.

Dozens and dozens of seedlings were raised from this cross, and they proved to be vigorous growers, some with leaves a foot long. The original cross was raised in three batches: twice *Rhododendron griffithianum* was the male parent, and once *R. fortunei;* meaning that, in the latter instance, the pollen was taken across the road to South Lodge. Sixty to seventy per cent were successful when *R. griffithianum* was the male parent while only about twelve per cent were successful when pollen from the *R. fortunei* was used, a characteristic which the seedlings tended to replicate, perhaps indicating a genetic problem.[13] The first plant to flower in 1907 at Leonardslee was 'Diamond', later renamed 'White Diamond', producing a handsome truss with individual flowers 6 inches in diameter.[15] William Watson (1858–1922), Curator at RBG, Kew, came to visit Leonardslee in June, 1911 and was much taken with the new seedlings, so he suggested the name 'Loderi'. The following year Watson authored *Rhododendrons & Azaleas,* the first popular book published on the subject, being in the series 'Present-day Gardening'.

Those varieties planted by Sir Edmund in the Loderi Garden, on the slope at the north-west end of the Rotunda Walk, are said to be all from the original 1901 cross. These are 'Loderi Fairy Queen', 'Loderi King George' (AM 1968, FCC 1970), 'Loderi Pink Coral', 'Loderi Pink Diamond' (FCC 1914), 'Loderi Pink Glamour', 'Loderi Sir Joseph Hooker' (AM 1973) and 'Loderi White Diamond' (FCC 1914).[16] This planting may have originally included

- *opposite* -
Sir Edmund Loder at Leonardslee (left), and Lady Marion Loder, née Hubbard (right), both photographed in later life.





'Loderi Queen Mary', which is likely to have been named at the same time as 'Loderi King George', and from the 1901 cross, but is said to be no longer extant at Leonardslee; we will return to this subject later. Also, the plant of 'Loderi Venus' at Exbury Gardens was confirmed by Sir Robin Loder in 1993 to have been from the 1901 cross.[22] Leonardslee has two plants raised from this variety, the first on the Middle Walk beyond the Daffodil Lawn, and the second, a specimen over 30ft tall on the way down the hill on the east side of the Top Garden. The other varieties named at Leonardslee can be found in various parts of the garden. 'Loderi Sir Joseph Hooker' is on the walk to the Daffodil Lawn, 'Loderi Georgette' is close to the giant Wellingtonia on The Middle Walk, 'Loderi Game Chick' is close to the magnificent *Magnolia campbellii* at the north end of the gardens, 'Loderi Patience' named after Sir Edmund's daughter is at the north end of The Top Garden, 'Loderi Princess Marina' and 'Loderi Georgette' are on the Rotunda Path, whilst 'Loderi Pink Coral' and 'Loderi Sir Edmund' are close to the Rotunda Path's intersection with Middle Walk. 'Loderi May Pink' (AM 1946) and 'Loderi Pearly Queen' may not be extant at Leonardslee.

Some plants were not named until after Sir Edmund's death, as they did not produce mature flowers for many years. Amongst these was 'Loderi Sir Edmund' (AM 1930), the last to be named in 1921 at Leonardslee from the original 1901 cross. Over the following years many of the seedlings at Leonardslee were named after members of the family, or personalities, whilst some of the seedlings taken to The High Beeches were named after famous racehorses, 'Loderi Spearmint', 'Loderi Pretty Polly' and 'Loderi Superlative'. All three are said to be no longer extant at The High Beeches, however, a plant of 'Loderi Spearmint' was located in the Coronation Garden at Leonardslee around twelve years ago.[18] We will return to this subject shortly.

The best varieties are not necessarily those first named by Sir Edmund, but reports made over many years suggests that in Britain the best are 'Loderi King George' (which carries 10 to 12 flowers, often 7 inches across), 'Loderi Sir Edmund' (immense pink, waxy flowers, which retains pink in the veins), 'Loderi White Diamond' (a handsome truss with individual flowers 6 inches in diameter), 'Loderi Sir Joseph Hooker' (white, prominent pink veins), 'Loderi Pink Coral' (retains its lighter pink colour), 'Loderi Pink Diamond' (opens pink and quickly fades to greenish white), 'Loderi Game Chick' (flowers a week later, opens pink and fades to white) and 'Loderi Venus' (flowers around a week later, opens pink and fades to blush). These latter two are useful for extending the flowering season of the grex and may be from the batch which had *Rhododendron fortunei* as the pollen parent.

Two later batches of crosses were made with the same parents sometime after 'Diamond' flowered in 1907, however, the progeny has never replicated the quality of the original 1901 cross, and actual dates of any flowering and naming are not known. At least six other 'key' hybridisers in the same era, and several 'key' nurseries, have made the same cross without obtaining the grand size and quality of the flowers in Sir Edmund's hybrid; whilst countless enthusiasts across the years have used Rhododendron 'Loderi' in their hybridisation programmes.

Rhododendron 'Loderi Sir Joseph Hooker' is a very interesting plant. It is occasionally seen in old gardens in southeast England and could be classified as relatively rare, despite it being said to be occasionally available commercially in the UK. This cultivar is not part of the 'Loderi Group', despite what some records suggest. In fact this is a cross probably made by Sir Edmund around 1910, and is likely to have been experimental, using *R. griffithianum* and R. 'Lady Digby'. The latter cultivar was a cross made by Lord Digby at Minterne and has an intense blood-red flower that it inherits from its parents, *R. facetum* and *R. strigillosum*. It would not be unreasonable to conjecture that Sir Edmund was seeking to use the intense red to put more colour into the 'Loderi' strain of hybrids, and it would appear he was only partially successful in this endeavour, as *R. griffithianum* is relatively dominant in any crosses made with it. Nevertheless, 'Loderi Sir Joseph Hooker' is one of the two crosses that are the pinkest of all the 'Loderi' hybrids; the other is 'Loderi Sir Edmund', and both are usually very floriferous and the flowers open around a week later than most of the other clones. Three other registered crosses should also not have been listed as part of the 'Loderi Group', as they too are likely to have been experimental using 'Loderi King George' x 'Loderi Sir Edmund' as parents; these are 'Loderi Georgette', 'Loderi Pearly Queen' and 'Loderi Princess Marina' (AM 1948).[2]

Perhaps the most unusual flowers in the long list of Rhododendron 'Loderi' varieties are those belonging to the somewhat scarce, yet highly regarded, R. 'Loderi Julie' (AM 1944), a pale creamy-yellow, large-flowered form produced by the pre-WWII highly-respected hybridising duo, Lord Swaythling and Fred Rose (his Head Gardener) at Townhill Park in Southampton. There has been much debate over the years as to which of the two 'Loderi' forms were used as parents in this cross, however, Fred Rose explains:

> 'To obtain the best hybrids, the best forms of both parents must be used … R. 'Loderi', the best form of which is 'King George', is perhaps the most famous of all Rhododendron hybrids'.[12]

So, we know one of the parents of the cross, but not the other. Perhaps it was Rhododendron 'Loderi King George' selfed? Townhill Park could be classified as a victim of WWII, as Lord Swaythling did not return to the estate after the war, so Fred Rose went to work with Harry White at Sunningdale Nursery and the records for their hybridisation work at Townhill Park are presumed to have been lost.[13] Writing in 1923 about the 1901 batch of seedlings, John G. Millais notes:

> 'The flowers are of extraordinary size, substance and beauty, usually over 6 inches across (two in 1920 had flowers over 7 inches), sometimes rich pink, but more often pink turning to waxy white … of which the varieties 'White Diamond' and 'Sir Joseph Hooker' are the best. Out of the whole batch of seedlings only two have exhibited lovely cream flowers'.[14]

So, there definitely were cream flowers within the 1901 batch of seedlings but, for whatever reason, there is no record of these seedlings being named, and their present whereabouts is unknown.

Another most unusual cross made in 1939 at Townhill Park is Rhododendron 'Red Loderi', as Fred Rose explains:

> 'At Townhill we crossed 'Loderi' with the 'Earl of Athlone' … and grew on forty-three of the seedlings. Of these, forty-two were very poor – mainly pink in colour – and we destroyed them. The one seedling we kept produced a loose truss like its parent 'Loderi' but in colour it was a slightly deeper crimson than even the 'Earl of Athlone'. It is very floriferous and I believe it to be a first class garden plant'.[12]

Rhododendron 'Red Loderi' was distributed in the Pacific Northwest from the Seattle nursery of Halfdan Lem, however, the only known specimen on this side of the Atlantic was planted in the Valley Garden at Windsor.[14] It is not known whether this is still extant.

Many commentators have noted that too many seedlings have been named, as there are often only minor differences in the volume, colour or placement of the spotting in the throat to distinguish between named clones; or there may be an element of vein marking present; or there are slight tonal differences in the shades of pink, blush and white; or a particular plant may fade to white slower than others.

To complicate matters even further, the colour of spots on the sunny side of a plant can be different on the side of the same plant that is out of the sun, or the colour of the flowers changes with differing light conditions.

As the named seedlings flowered, Sir Edmund made a sequence of crosses between the various varieties of Rhododendron 'Loderi' and a range of other species and hybrids. This is another story, however, the following examples confirm that he was very successful in his endeavours: a cross with *R. sutchuenense* produced R. 'Seagull' (AM 1938) and R. 'Seamew' (AM 1940); the cross with *R. irroratum* produced R. 'White Glory' (AM 1938) and R. 'Pink Glory' (AM 1940); a cross with R. 'Queen Wilhelmina' produced R. 'Sunset' (AM 1931); a cross with R. 'Halopeanum' produced R. 'Snow Queen' (AM 1934); and a cross with R. 'Barclayi' produced R. 'Cretonne' (AM 1940), to name just a few.

THE WIDER DISSEMINATION OF THE RHODODENDRON 'LODERI' CLONES.

Sir Edmund Loder provided other members of his family, and some of his rhododendron friends, with 'Loderi' seedlings, and the recipients named some of them, (which was probably the case with those that found a home at The High Beeches, as referred to above). In 1919 two 'Loderi' seedlings found their way to Exbury when Sir Edmund supplied a large batch of plant material to Lionel de Rothschild at the time the gardens were originally being laid out, and it is thought that 'Loderi Venus' was named by Lionel, as was 'Loderi Exbury'. Not only did Sir Edmund supply Exbury with plants, Lionel's first Head Gardener was from Leonardslee. In a similar way, John Guille Millais named 'Loderi Maximus' in around 1923 at his Compton's Brow home, as it had flowers over 7 inches across, and he probably named 'Loderi Millais Pink'. Between 1907 and 1910, King Edward VII stayed at The Beach House several times whilst visiting family members, a Loder residence in Worthing, and perhaps this led to a 'Loderi' seedling being given to the King, as one later found its way to London and was named 'Loderi Buckingham Palace'.

Sir Edmund's friends, many of whom had supported his horticultural activities at both Floore and Leonardslee over the years, were members of the Establishment, being gentlemen of independent means with country estates. They received unnamed 'Loderi' seedlings that came from the 1901 batch, or the later batch made after 1907, and many of these veterans, some around 35ft tall, still light up the woodland collections at Bodnant, Bulstrode Park, Colonsay House, Exbury, Muncaster Castle, Nymans, South Lodge and Windsor Great Park gardens. Some were distributed from Wakehurst Park. One particular gentleman was extremely fortunate and received two very large batches of seedlings from the 1901 and *c.* 1907 crosses, but that's a story for another time. Reports of visits to these gardens over many years suggest that the flowering of a few individual un-named clones is the equal of, if not better than, many named clones. Indeed, the late Cameron Carmichael, who had a rhododendron garden on the south bank of the Clyde Estuary and was an expert on old hybrids, always maintained that the best 'Loderi' seedling is in the garden at Kiloran on the Isle of Colonsay and should be propagated. Unfortunately, where specimens have needed to compete with trees for light in a woodland location, it is no longer practical to compare the flowers of many of these tall veterans, as their blooms face the sky and can only been seen from a distance. After WWII similar problems existed at Leonardslee with many of the 'Loderi' varieties, so Sir Giles Loder (Sir Edmund's grandson) layered all of the named forms and in 1952 planted them all together around a massed display of azaleas in the new Coronation Garden, created in a glade close to The Top Garden.[16]

It will be evident from the above notes that from the outset, the dissemination of Rhododendron 'Loderi' plants was limited to Sir Edmund's friends and acquaintances within the aristocracy and the 'country house set' and, as other enthusiasts of independent means became aware of the performance of these hybrids, there was an increasing clamour to obtain specimens for their gardens. Sir Edmund was not in the nursery business and so was not in a position to deal with the demand. One of the 'key' personalities in the nursery business was Harry White, the highly-regarded manager of Sunningdale Nurseries of Windlesham, who regularly visited many of the 'key' rhododendron personalities in the 1890s and early 1900s that in 1916 became the founder members of the elitist Rhododendron Society. In this way, Sunningdale Nursery continued to receive wild seed direct from the collector or sponsor, together with rare plant material.

Probably on Sir Edmund's behalf in 1913, Mr FRS Balfour of Dawyck Estate, near Peebles, provided Harry White with plants of all the 1901 batch of named Rhododendron 'Loderi' hybrids and these flowered at the nursery in 1918.[19] This led to the 1901 batch of named 'Loderi' plants being gradually propagated and distributed; however, it doesn't take much imagination to realise that there would have been an 'under the counter' trade in terms of favoured customers. Most clones of 'Loderi' are very difficult to root and at Sunningdale Nurseries, Harry White would have laid the plants on their side, mounded the roots with good soil, and pegged the branches down to provide multiple ground layers. This method is far too slow for current commercial propagation and the clones are usually grafted or, in recent years, raised by tissue culture. The author has developed an air-layering methodology that has proved to be successful with 'Loderi' cultivars and is a useful means of propagating old and difficult-to-find plants for conservation purposes.

In the spring of 1949, George Grace (1897–1971), of Portland in Oregon, a founder member and first Secretary of the American Rhododendron Society, attended the RHS Rhododendron Conference held in London, and on Friday 29th April he participated in a Day Excursion to Wakehurst Place and Leonardslee Gardens. He was very impressed by the varieties of Rhododendron 'Loderi' that were unavailable in the Pacific Northwest and subsequently imported a collection in two small batches, direct from Leonardslee, to plant in the garden of his home. In the warmer climate of the Pacific Northwest the plants grew quickly, so he was able to compare their flowers and, as the years passed, the giant 'Loderi's became a major attraction each spring in southwest Portland, which attracted many visitors to George's door. In 1951 he started the West Oregon Nursery which was still in business at the time of his death in 1971. Amongst the varieties George imported were 'Loderi Queen Mary', 'Loderi Pretty Polly' and 'Loderi Superlative', and he provided cuttings of these to other Oregon nurseries.[20] Interestingly, these three cultivars have remained available in the Pacific Northwest, whilst they continue to be unavailable in Britain and are said not to be extant at Leonardslee. So, 'Loderi Pretty Polly', named at The High Beeches, is not extinct, as indicated by its registration details.[2] Equally, there are some 'Loderi' varieties that have never been available in the Pacific Northwest, whilst some others in commerce appear to be incorrectly labelled.

THE YEARS LEADING UP TO THE GREAT WAR AND ITS AFTERMATH.

Robin was never to know any other home than Leonardslee, although it was many years before he took to a rifle or a gun, he very much enjoyed the times in Scotland in the deer forests. The first time he went North of the Border was to the Benmore Estate of the Younger Family in 1898. Henry Johnston Younger (*d.* 1913), owner of the Edinburgh brewery company, had purchased the Benmore Estate, near Dunoon in Argyll, in late 1889 and he and Sir Edmund would have had much to talk about as they had similar interests in terms of ornamental plants, forestry, wildlife, fishing, shooting and photography. The year 1898 was a marked one in the Loder family's annual visits to Scotland, for there, a collie named 'Ross' became a part of the family circle, playing a very important part in their lives,

and was indeed the ‘Pride of Leonardslee’ for thirteen years and Sir Edmund's inseparable companion. It would never do to leave Ross out in any account of either Sir Edmund or Robin. It was the proprietor of the hotel at Inveran in Nairn who in 1898 gave Ross to Robin, and Sir Edmund's daughter Patience says of Ross:

> ‘For many years our dear old collie Ross went with my father stalking, and if he wounded a stag Ross was always trusted to chase it; and he seemed to understand his job, for he never made a sound till he brought his stag to bay in a burn – then he would bark from pleasure and excitement. Ross’s exploits and accomplishments were many, and varied from hunting a stag to sitting up on his hind-legs and holding a biscuit on his nose for my mother’s Borzoi ‘Masha’ to take! We were all devoted to him and he was father's closest companion for many years’.

In 1899 the Loders were hunting at Clunie Lodge, twenty-five miles from Invermorrison, and at the end of the season Lady Loder had a very terrible accident whilst out deer-stalking. She fell over a precipitous rocky brae and was very nearly killed. The man who got down to her did not expect to find her alive, and years passed before she recovered from the effects of her injuries. Robin was at school when this happened, and it was not till the Christmas holidays that his mother described to him how nearly she had been killed; but she had to stop and change the subject, as the boy's eyes filled with tears.

Sir Edmund’s brother, Gerald W. E. Loder, later Lord Wakehurst, purchased the 500-acre Wakehurst Place estate, some six miles north of Haywards Heath in Sussex, in 1903. Here Gerald landscaped and developed the great garden that in January 1965 became an outstation of RBG, Kew. In later years he would also become more heavily involved with Leonardslee. Meanwhile, Leonardslee gardens were first opened to the public for a few days in the spring of 1907.

After Sir Edmund gave up hunting in Schwarzensee, Austria, he had several forests in Scotland, including Glencarron, Rothiemurchus, Achdalieu and Glenclunie. It was during this same period that he probably had Ben More Asynt, which provides a good illustration of how deeply he became involved in everything he did. After Glenclunie Sir Edmund took Hopfreben in Tirol for three years and then came back to Scotland once more. Amongst other places he took Forest Lodge for one season. A year or two later he took Dundonnel on a lease, and that was the last forest he had. Dundonnel was a most attractive place, though at that time the stags were not very good. Lady Loder killed one very heavy stag on the low ground, around 20 stone, but the general run of stags was much smaller. The fishing was good, as there were several lochs and the Gruinard River. The best of the fishing was earlier in the summer, but in August there was still an amount of sport to be had.

When hunting, Sir Edmund's spare time was spent on colour photography, and nothing that he took up showed more clearly his determination to do a thing well or not at all. He was never quite satisfied with his work, though to the ordinary individual his results seemed perfect. There was a certain rowan tree near the lodge at Dundonnel which was scarlet with berries and, as this tree made an excellent subject for colour photography, it was often photographed. If the light seemed extra good or different from a previous day, another plate would be exposed in the hope of eliminating some tiny defects in previous pictures. To attain perfection in his work seemed almost an obsession, but those who attended an exhibition of his colour photographs agreed that his striving after perfection was justified. He had mastered the technique by sheer hard work and constant repetition, and his scientific mind enabled him to select and use to the greatest advantage the best lenses and apparatus.



A woodland path at Leonardslee in May - a watercolour painting by Beatrice Parsons.
(Reproduced herein courtesy of the estate of Beatrice Parsons).

Whilst at Cambridge, Robin formed a very close friendship with Charlie Williams, the son of his father's friend J. C. Williams of Caerhays Castle. They had known each other at Eton, and after their Cambridge days they went off together on a shooting trip to New Zealand in 1911 and returned home across America. On August 9th, 1913, Robin married Miss Muriel Hoare, the daughter of Mr. and Mrs. J. Rolls Hoare of Horsham.

In the same year Sir Edmund took on-board a somewhat different challenge. He pored endlessly over the proof of his first publication, *List of Trees and Shrubs Grown in the Open Air at Leonardslee,* a somewhat rare book of 122 pages published in 1913 by the Army and Navy Co-operative Society of London. Meanwhile, with the clouds of hostilities on the horizon, Sir Edmund finally decided to dispose completely of the Whittlebury Estate, which had been a 'White Elephant' ever since he had inherited it in 1888. The House and Park were sold at auction on 7th July, 1914, however, the impact of The Great War meant it took many years to sell the rest of the estate.

On August 4th, 1914, Robin Loder was with his regiment, the 4th Sussex, on the way to Salisbury Plain when war was declared. Robin's son Giles was born on 10th November, 1914, whilst Robin's regiment was being mobilised for action and they were sent to the War Station at Newhaven till May 1915, then once more he was at Cambridge for three days when en-route for Bedford. The regiment remained at Bedford till July. On July 17th they sailed from Devonport and eventually landed at Suvla Bay as part of the Gallipoli Campaign. At this time Robin was machine-gun officer, he was then seconded as Brigade Machine-gun Officer on September 3rd, and was in the Gallipoli Peninsula until the evacuation. He stood the hardships of this awful campaign and was one of three out of twenty-nine officers who were never in hospital. Even during the blizzard and the privations of the evacuation he took no harm.

Sir Edmund continued to pursue his interests in the early months of the war and whilst out deer stalking at Dundonnel in 1915 his heart strain showed itself again due to over-exertion, and that year he made a decision to give up stalking. The lease came to an end during the war, and he never took another forest, it seems he had no longer the energy or desire for the sport, and there was no Robin to help him to enjoy it.

Writing in *The Garden* in June, 1916, William Watson noted that Rhododendron 'Kewense' had been raised many years ago at Kew by the late William Binder from a cross of *R. griffithianum* x *R. hookeri* at the suggestion of the late James H. Mangles, the pioneer hybridiser.[26] The actual date of the cross was recorded as 1874.[27] Despite the parentage of 'Kewense' Group being confirmed as not being *R. griffithianum* x *R. fortunei,* the cultivars retained nomenclatural priority, so the 'Loderi' Group cultivars still presented a problem in terms of registration, and they were not incorporated into the records until the publication of the first Rhododendron Register in 1958. *The International Rhododendron Register and Checklist, Second Edition,* states:

> 'However, in view of some degree of uncertainty about the origin of 'Kewense' and the almost universal use of 'Loderi' the latter was sanctioned by the International Registration Authority (June, 1986) as the collective name for plants derived from crosses between *fortunei* and *griffithianum*'.

Meanwhile, the 53rd Division was sent to Egypt, and on May 1st, 1916, Robin was seconded as Staff-Captain. In that year General Sir Archibald Murray, KCB, mentioned him in dispatches for his distinguished services between June 1st and September 30th. He was again mentioned in dispatches, then his regiment moved up towards Gaza, and on March 26th, 1917, in the Battle of Gaza, he was fatally wounded. Three days later he gave up his young life in the hospital at Khan Yunis. He was re-buried on May 13th, 1919, at Deir el Belah, between Kasa and Gaza; his body lies in Grave 72, Plot C. His General noted, 'He was one of the bravest soldiers ever seen.'

Sir Edmund wrote on 10th April, 1917, to Sir Alfred Pease of Pinchinthorpe, Guisbrough in Yorkshire, his long-time companion on his hunting and fishing forays:

> 'Dear Alfred,
> If anything could lessen my sorrow it would be a letter like yours written from the heart. The boy was everything to me: he entered into so many pursuits with keenness and worked hand in hand with me in all our little schemings in the garden, woods and lathe-room.
> We were just good pals and partners; he was to me a dear friend, an able colleague and a charming companion as well as a loving son, nothing could have been further from his character than fighting and soldiering; but yet from a sense of duty he joined the Territorials some years before the War, and since that time he does his work with energy and efficiency. He has been on the Staff of 5 or 6 Generals in Gallipoli and in Egypt, and besides being mentioned in despatches, they have all spoken very highly of his conduct.
> I try and comfort myself by thinking of his 30 years of blameless life well lived, and of his work well done, but I shall always miss him terribly.
> I remain, Yours aff, E. G. Loder'.[7]

Sir Alfred Pease later recalled:

> '(Sir Edmund) was badly bitten with the salmon fever, and determined, as he said, to have one real good time with the fish before he died. He therefore took the Lower Scone water for the next two or three springs, and, I think, realised his ambition. I went up for a fortnight with him in 1919, and during that time he killed a lot of fish. He had also done very well before I joined him, killing one fish over 30lb, and several over 20lb.
>
> It was during this time that he was at work on his Conifer List [Sir Edmund's second publication, *Conifers at Leonardslee,* a privately published 15-page list of his Conifer collection and their attributes]. The first and second proofs had been corrected by himself and then sent to my brother for further correction. The third and final proof arrived while I was staying with him at Perth. We set to work on the final revision, and he was not satisfied until we had both been through those proofs five times. They were then sent again to my brother. This incident will perhaps give an idea of the care he took with all his work and his intense desire to make anything he did as nearly perfect as possible. This trip to the Tay was the last sport that I enjoyed with him, and in many ways it was one of the pleasantest fortnights I ever spent in his company'.[7]

In September, 1918 Sir Edmund compiled a list of the Rhododendron species at Leonardslee, and the list of 208 species was published in *The Rhododendron Society Notes,* Volume I, No. IV, in 1918. His daughter Patience (Mrs W. Otter) described in some notes how the garden that he had laid-out in the 1890s became his refuge in the latter years of his life:

> 'The years slipped by and after a time Father came to realise that he was not quite so strong as he had been. He had a pony 'Toby' to ride about the Garden, up and down the hills.
>
> Toby had to wear a net muzzle – someone asked the reason why – Father said "He

eats the shrubs". "But does that matter much? There seem to be a good many," asked his friend.
"No," answered Father, laughing, "it wouldn't, only Toby always chooses the rare ones."
The Garden was really his greatest interest, and during those terrible years of war, when the blow fell which broke his heart it was to his garden he went for comfort and found it, I think, and strength as well to take up life again and to face the world like so many fathers who had given their best'.

And, so it falls to Sir Alfred Pease, Sir Edmund's long-time hunting and fishing friend, to bring this story to a close:

'Some time before the outbreak of the Great War, Sir Edmund wrote to me saying that he was troubled with his heart and asking me whom I had consulted about mine in London. I told him he could with confidence go to Sir James Mackenzie. He wrote again to me and gave me the opinion and results of the diagnosis – how that his was an incurable case and that he would have to go slow and avoid worry and physical exertion. In March 1920 he went to the Tay, as he had done for several years, for the only form of sport that was still within the limits of his strength, salmon fishing and harling from a boat. But even this was now too much for him. He became ill, and accompanied by a nurse he arrived once more at Leonardslee. He walked into the house and went straight into his little room near the entrance hall to see his letters, exactly in the same old way. Lady Loder suggested to him that after his long journey he had better leave his pile of papers and correspondence and come upstairs. He "supposed he had better" – and in his own room and in his own home he passed the last weeks of his life. He suffered discomfort but not much actual pain, and then without a struggle on Wednesday night, April 14th, 1920, the wonderful light went out of those eyes, the clever nervous hands had done all they had to do and he left the body behind him which had served him so well for more than seventy years. On April 19th, without pomp but in the company of many mourners, his body was carried in a moss-lined farm wagon drawn by four horses to the old parish church at Lower Beeding. On the coffin rested a full-length cross of the beautiful rhododendron 'Glory of Leonardslee'; lovely blooms of the same plant were massed beneath the memorial window to his boy Robin'.[7]

IN CONCLUSION.

It is a tragedy for the parents when a son or daughter's life is suddenly taken away whilst they are still relatively young, and its impact can sometimes spread well beyond the immediate family. Being an only child, Robin's death had taken away the heir to the Leonardslee Estate, and so it was Robin's only son, Giles, who inherited his grandfather's mantle at the age of five.[7] His mother, Muriel, ran the estate until Sir Giles came of age, whilst his uncle, Sir Gerald W. E. Loder, who resided at Wakehurst Place, cared for the garden.

In memory of his brother, Sir Gerald presented in 1921 the very beautiful silver-gilt 'The Loder Rhododendron Cup', from an ancient Irish design, to the RHS, to be awarded annually in October, but not more than once in seven years to the same individual, and in awarding it the judges should consider not merely floral display of rhododendrons and azaleas, but the value to horticulture of the work of the recipient, whether such work shall include the production of flowers or not.[3 & 23] The list of recipients reads like a 'Who's Who' of the rhododendron world; and Sir Edmund would have been well pleased that one of the first to receive the award was John G. Millais.

After Sir Edmund's death around 900-acres of the estate forestry to the west of the Lower Beeding to Cowfold road were sold, and whilst the gardens were opened to the public in the 1920s, they gradually deteriorated. World War II was to leave its mark on the estates of the Loder families. All fit and able staff were needed to support the war effort, and growing vegetables in the kitchen gardens and elsewhere on the property, to feed the armed services, was given priority. There was no fuel to be spared for heating hothouses, whose contents, including Sir Edmund's collection of tender camellias, slowly withered away. In Sir Edmund's time there were between 20 and 30 gardeners, but the number quickly dwindled to a handful in the early months of the war, and as the war progressed the number looking after the gardens fell to none. Sussex soon became overrun by Canadian forces whose task it was to defend the South Coast, and a large part of Leonardslee House was requisitioned for use as an Officer's Mess for the Canadian Army, and by 1946 the gardens were said to be 'derelict'.

On Thursday 11th March, 1943, the aircraft crews were scrambled at bases across East Anglia and Yorkshire for an Operation code-named MP-H. A total of 314 aircraft, including 152 Lancasters and 109 Halifaxes of Bomber Command, were airborne at 19:15hrs for an attack on Stuttgart, commanded by the legendary Leonard Cheshire of 76 Squadron based at Linton-on-Ouse, near York. Unfortunately, the operation did not go to plan, as the main force was late in arriving over the target, and a number of aircraft were hit by enemy fire. DT492, a Halifax of 76 Squadron with a Canadian crew, was seriously damaged by flak shortly after releasing its bombs. Too severely damaged to return to its base at Linton-On-Ouse, the aircraft succeeded in crossing the South Coast where the aircraft was successfully abandoned. Unfortunately, the stricken aircraft travelled some distance whilst losing height and at 02:06hrs crashed onto the house at The High Beeches; the family home of Lieut-Colonel Giles H. Loder, MC, High Sheriff of Sussex. He and his family survived, but three maids at the rear of the house died and the house was completely destroyed by a fire that is said to have burned for ten days. The house was never rebuilt. The crew of the Halifax all survived and were, F/Sgt T. Gallantry, Sgt Middleton, Sgt Webster, Sgt Myers, Sgt Exton, Sgt Whitmore and F/Sgt Farrer.[24] After the war The High Beeches was fortunate to get new owners in Anne Boscawen and her husband, who came from a family of expert horticulturists, and it continues to be an inspirational garden where rhododendrons have been given adequate space to develop their own characteristics.

Sir Giles Loder was trained for a professional career in engineering and in WWII was commissioned in the 98th (Surrey & Sussex Yeomanry) Field Brigade, RA. He had a life-long interest in boat design, and for many years was a member of the Royal Yacht Squadron, frequently skippering races at Cowes, which led to his transfer from the Field Brigade to the Vosper Shipyards in the Solent to work on the vessels being built there. At the end of the war Sir Giles decided to give up a career in engineering and devote his life to the restoration and development of the Leonardslee Estate, which he took over in 1946. He was immediately faced with the mammoth task of the restoring what observers had referred to as a 'derelict garden'. Whilst some observers can look at a garden and feel it is derelict, there are others who have the ability to look beyond what is immediately visible, and so it was that the 'luxuriant' Leonardslee was chosen as the location for the 1947 Powell & Pressburger film of Rumer Godden's novel *Black Narcissus,* set in the Himalayas. Sir Giles Loder also had a vision of how the restoration of the garden could be taken forward, and within four years the main elements of the gardens had been restored.[21] The more recent history of Leonardslee is very well documented and is beyond the scope of this

article.

Our story began with a testimony by John G. Millais who, like Sir Edmund, had a razor-sharp mind, a photographic memory and an abiding interest in zoology and botany. He was also a prolific author, and had been Sir Edmund's close companion and confidant for around thirty years. It would seem most appropriate that this narrative should finish as it started, and the following observations about Sir Edmund are taken from *The Rhododendron Society Notes* in 1926:

> 'It takes many years before a man's work can be seen or judged, because the majority of hybrids, especially those from Himalayan parents, do not flower until they have reached from 6 to 15 years of age. In fact some of the Loderis already over twenty years of age have not flowered yet. Nevertheless at least fifteen to twenty of Sir E. Loder's hybrids have flowered out of some 200 yet to bloom, and the majority of these are exceptional rhododendrons, which are great additions to our gardens.
>
> He achieved no outstanding hybrids amongst the dwarf or the large-leaved sections, and did not appreciate the Chinese species at their true value. In consequence, the collection at Leonardslee of the latter is only a small one, and he did not use them in hybridisation.
>
> Considered as a whole, Sir Edmund Loder achieved a high percentage of successes by his efforts, and gardeners will always owe him a great debt for the series of splendid hybrids he has given us to enrich our gardens'.[23]

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.

The author is particularly grateful to Christopher R. Loder and his father, Robert R. Loder, for perusing the draft manuscript, discussing its contents, and seeking photographs to accompany the article.

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The Lepidote & Elepidote Registrations:

Betty
fortunei X *thomsonii*
AM 1927
Flower Colour: Pink

Calomina
'Queen Wilhelmina' X *calophytum*
Flower Colour: Pink

Coralia
'Loderi Pink Diamond' X 'Cornish Cross'
Flower Colour: Salmon-pink

Dame Nellie Melba
'Standishii' X *arboreum*
AM 1926
Flower Colour: Pink
Flowering Time: April-Early May
Height: Medium

Euphrosyne Ruby
arboreum X 'Loderi'
Flower Colour: Rosy-red

Gay Lady
'Cornubia' X *griffithianum*
AM 1938
Flower Colour: Rose

Harry White
arboreum X 'Ascot Brilliant'
Flower Colour: Red
Flowering Time: March
Height: Tall

Hullaballoo
fortunei X *thomsonii*
AM 1974
Flower Colour: Purplish-pink
Height: Tall

H. Whitner
'Loderi Pink Diamond' X 'Cornish Cross'
AM 1935
Flower Colour: Pink
Height: Tall

Jubilee Queen
'Loderi Venus' X 'Rose du Barri'
AM 1935
Flower Colour: White

Judy
falconeri X *pachytrichum*

Leonardslee Brilliant
'Halopeanum' X *thomsonii*
Flower Colour: Red

Leonardslee Cream
'Halopeanum' X 'Loderi Pink Diamond'
AM 1930
Flower Colour: White-rose-pink

Leonardslee Flame
'Ascot Brilliant' X *thomsonii*

Leonardslee Gem
Flower Colour: Rosy-red

Leonardslee Gem of the Woods
ciliatum hybrid X *virgatum*
AM 1925
Flower Colour: White

Leonardslee Gertrude
'Halopeanum' X 'Loderi Pink Diamond'
Flower Colour: White

Leonardslee Giles
'Standishii' X *griffithianum*
AM 1948
Flower Colour: Pink
Flowering Time: April-Early May
Height: Tall

Leonardslee Peach
thomsonii X *campylocarpum*
Flower Colour: Orange-pink

Leonardslee Primrose
campylocarpum X *cinnamomeum* var. *cinnamomeum*
AM 1933
Flower Colour: Primrose

Leonardslee Sunset
'Queen Wilhelmina' X 'Loderi'
AM 1931
Flower Colour: Flesh Pink

Leonardslee White Glory
irroratum X 'Loderi'
AM 1938
Flower Colour: White-pink
Flowering Time: April
Height: Tall

Loderi
fortunei X *griffithianum*
Flower Colour: White-pink
Flowering Time: April-May
Height: Tall

Loderi Cream
fortunei X *griffithianum*
Flower Colour: Blush White
Flowering Time: April-May
Height: Tall

Loderi Dairymaid
fortunei X *griffithianum*
Flower Colour: White
Flowering Time: April-May
Height: Tall

Loderi Diamond
fortunei X *griffithianum*
Flower Colour: White
Flowering Time: April-May
Height: Tall

Loderi Fairyland
fortunei X *griffithianum*
Flower Colour: White
Flowering Time: April-May
Height: Tall

Loderi Fairy Queen
fortunei X *griffithianum*
Flower Colour: Pink
Flowering Time: April-May
Height: Tall

Loderi Game Chick
fortunei X *griffithianum*
Flower Colour: Pink
Flowering Time: April-May
Height: Tall

Loderi Georgette
'Loderi King George' X 'Loderi Sir Edmund'
Flowering Time: April-May
Height: Tall

Loderi Helen
fortunei X *griffithianum*
Flower Colour: Pink
Flowering Time: April-May
Height: Tall

Loderi King George
fortunei X *griffithianum*
AM 1968 & FCC 1970
Flower Colour: White
Flowering Time: April-May
Height: Tall

Loderi May Pink
'Cornish Loderi' X 'Loderi Sir Edmund'
AM 1946
Flower Colour: Fuchsine Pink-Solferino Purple
Flowering Time: April-May
Height: Tall

Loderi Millais Pink
fortunei X *griffithianum*
Flowering Time: April-May
Height: Tall

Loderi Patience
fortunei X *griffithianum*
Flower Colour: White
Flowering Time: April-May
Height: Tall

Loderi Pearly Queen
'Loderi King George' X 'Loderi Sir Edmund'
Flowering Time: April-May
Height: Tall

Loderi Pink Coral
fortunei X *griffithianum*
Flower Colour: Pink
Flowering Time: April-May
Height: Tall

Loderi Pink Diamond
fortunei X *griffithianum*
FCC 1914
Flower Colour: Pink
Flowering Time: April-May
Height: Tall

Loderi Pink Glamour
fortunei X *griffithianum*
Flower Colour: Pink
Flowering Time: April-May
Height: Tall

Loderi Pink Topaz
fortunei X *griffithianum*
Flower Colour: Pink-white
Flowering Time: April-May
Height: Tall

Loderi Pretty Polly
fortunei X *griffithianum*
Flower Colour: Pink

Loderi Princess Marina
'Loderi King George' X 'Loderi Sir Edmund'
AM 1948
Flower Colour: Pink-white
Flowering Time: April-May
Height: Tall

Loderi Queen Mary
fortunei X *griffithianum*
Flower Colour: Pink
Flowering Time: April-May
Height: Tall

Loderi Sir Edmund
fortunei X *griffithianum*
AM 1930
Flower Colour: Pink
Flowering Time: April-May
Height: Tall

Loderi Sir Joseph Hooker
griffithianum X 'Lady Digby'
AM 1973
Flower Colour: White-Shell Pink
Flowering Time: April-May
Height: Tall

Loderi Stag's Head
fortunei X *griffithianum*
Flower Colour: White-pink
Flowering Time: April-May
Height: Tall

Loderi Venus
fortunei X *griffithianum*
Flower Colour: Pink
Flowering Time: April-May
Height: Tall

Loderi White Diamond
fortunei X *griffithianum*
FCC 1914
Flower Colour: Ivory-white
Flowering Time: April-May
Height: Tall

Loki
'Cornubia' seedling
AM 1933
Flower Colour: Crimson

Margaret Rose
'Loderi Venus' X 'Rose du Barri'

May Queen
fortunei hybrid
Flower Colour: Blush Pink

Muriel
falconeri X *grande*
AM 1925
Flower Colour: Creamy-white
Flowering Time: April
Height: Tall

Nestor
barbatum X *thomsonii*
AM 1969
Flower Colour: Red
Flowering Time: March-April
Height: Tall

Pink Bride
'Halopeanum' X *griffithianum*
AM 1931
Flower Colour: Blush-pink
Height: Tall

Pink Glory
irroratum X 'Loderi'
AM 1940
Flower Colour: Blush-pink-Rose Madder
Flowering Time: April
Height: Tall

Pink Queen
'Mrs Randall Davidson' X *campylogynum*
AM 1972
Flower Colour: White
Height: Medium

Pride of Leonardslee
fortunei X *thomsonii*
Flower Colour: Pink-mauve
Flowering Time: Early May
Height: Tall

Red Glow
'Halopeanum' X *thomsonii*
Flower Colour: Rosy-red

Red Star
'Ascot Brilliant' X *thomsonii*
Flower Colour: Blood Red

Reversi

Rosa Bonheur
'Loderi' X 'Cornish Cross'
Flower Colour: Pink

Rosa Bonheur Luna
'Loderi' X 'Cornish Cross'
Flower Colour: Rose-pink

Rosamond
'Cornubia' X 'Loderi'
Flower Colour: Pink

Rose du Barri
decorum X 'Standishii'
Flower Colour: Pink

Ruthelma
'Loderi Pink Diamond' X 'Cornish Cross'
Flower Colour: Rose
Height: Tall

Seagull
'Loderi' X *sutchuenense*
AM 1938 & FCC 1976
Flower Colour: White
Flowering Time: April
Height: Tall

Seamew
'Loderi' X *sutchuenense*
AM 1940
Flower Colour: White
Flowering Time: April
Height: Tall

Sea Mist
'Loderi' X *sutchuenense*
Flower Colour: Pink
Flowering Time: April
Height: Tall

Selig
maddenii X *cinnabarinum* Blandfordiiflorum
FCC 1937
Flower Colour: Pink-salmon-pink-orange

Snow Queen
'Halopeanum' X 'Loderi'
AM 1934 & FCC 1970
Flower Colour: White
Flowering Time: Early May
Height: Tall

Sunkist
'Loderi Pink Diamond' X *griffithianum*
Flower Colour: White

White Lady
'Halopeanum' X 'Loderi Pink Diamond'
Flower Colour: White
Flowering Time: April-May
Height: Tall

R. ‘Calomina’

‘Queen Wilhelmina’ x *calophytum*

Hardiness - Flowering Period - Height & Spread

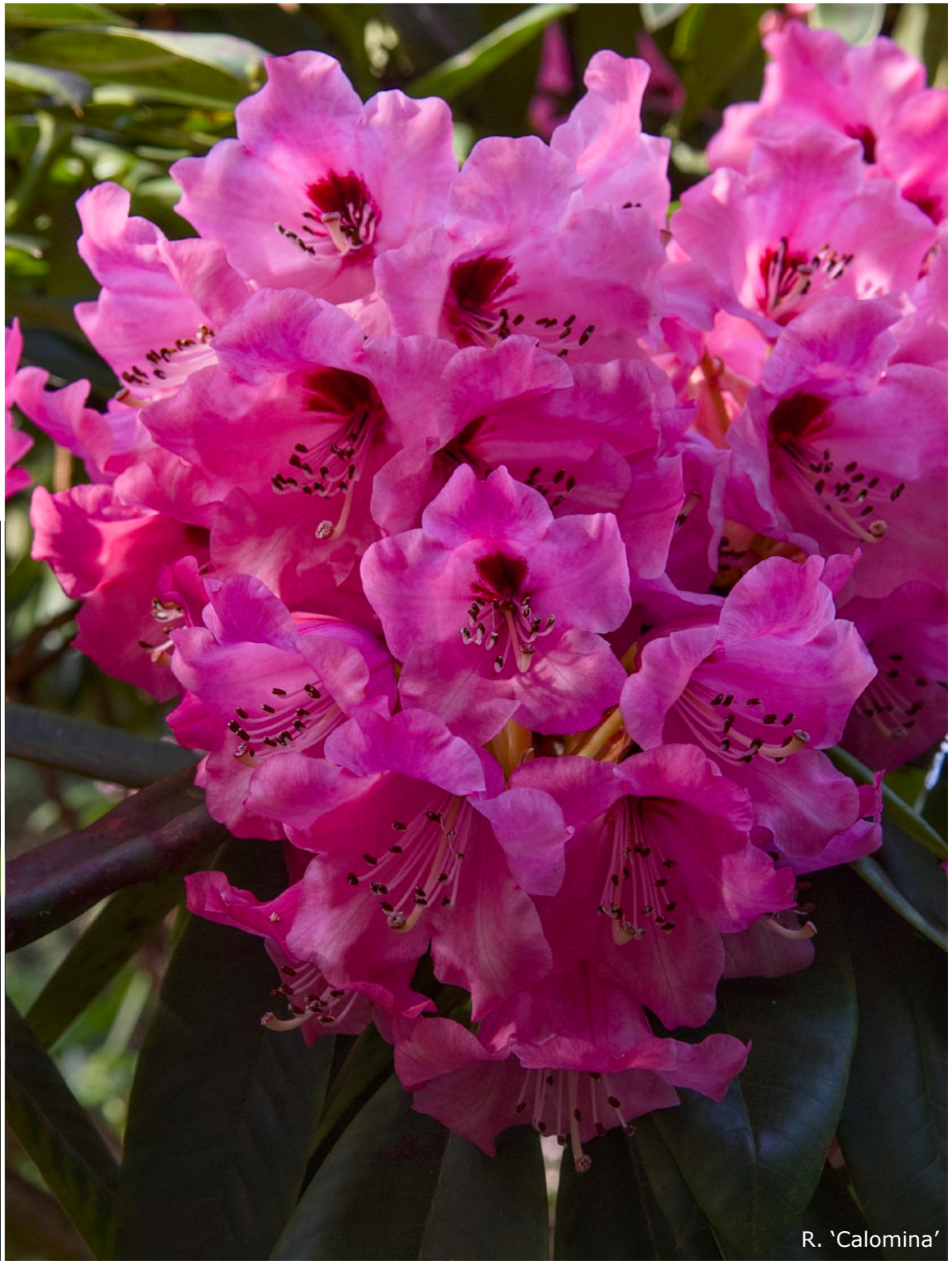
H5 Late March-April 7m x 4m

R. ‘Calomina’, like many of Sir Edmund Loder’s hybrid crosses, was introduced fourteen years after his death in 1920 by his daughter-in-law, Dowager Lady Muriel Rolls Loder. It is a cross between R. ‘Queen Wilhelmina’ and the Subsection *Fortunea* species *R. calophytum,* which has a bare-bones official description in the 2004-published *International Rhododendron Register and Checklist,* namely that it has pink flowers with a darker blotch. Expand the entry however, and the foliage will be seen to reflect the pollen parent rather than Otto Schulz’s 1890-conceived *griffithianum* hybrid - this named for the then Queen regnant of the Netherlands, Wilhelmina Helena Pauline Maria of Orange-Nassau (1880-1962) - for the elegant leaves are clearly long, oblanceolate-shaped, dark green in colour and V-profiled. The flower truss and the corolla shape too come from *R. calophytum,* but their colour is pure Dutch royalty, and although that dark rose-pink pales with age, the blooms never appear washed-out, even when hit for much of the day by strong sunlight.

Given a placement in dappled shade within the woodland, R. ‘Calomina’ develops into a gem, with a tree-like and strongly branched habit. That it is not more widely planted is a true injustice.



R. ‘Calomina’



R. ‘Calomina’

R. ‘Calomina’

R. ‘Calomina’

R. ‘Dame Nellie Melba’ AM 1926

R. ‘Dame Nellie Melba’ AM 1926



R. ‘Dame Nellie Melba’

‘Standishii’ x *arboreum*

Hardiness - Flowering Period - Height & Spread

H5-6 April-early May 5m x 4m

Nellie Melba was the stage name of the world-renown Australian operatic soprano Helen ‘Nellie’ Porter Mitchell (1861-1931), created a Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire in March 1918 for her fund raising charity work during the First World War. The ‘Melba’ comes from Melbourne, her hometown, and the pseudonym was immortalised in French chef Auguste Escoffier’s mouth-watering mix of peaches, vanilla ice cream and raspberry sauce that he named the ‘Peach Melba’ in her honour.

There is also:

Melba sauce - a purée of raspberries and red currants.

Melba toast - crisp and dry.

And Melba Garniture - chicken, truffles and mushrooms ensconced in tomatoes with a velouté sauce.

All are Escoffier gastronomic inspirations dedicated to the Diva.

And then there is R. ‘Dame Nellie Melba’, named and introduced in 1926, the year of the singer’s farewell concert at the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden.

Sir Edmund Loder made the cross at Leonardslee, placing pollen from a blood red form of *R. arboreum* onto the stigma of R. ‘Standishii’, of which there are two possible candidates: a Standish & Noble oeuvre of 1851 vintage, with R. ‘Altaclerense’ as the seed parent; and a *griffithianum* hybrid introduced around 1910 that has been attributed to either the Veitch Nursery or James Mangles.

Sir Edmund died in 1920, but Lionel de Rothschild of Exbury stepped up to the plate and as so often, chose the perfect epithet for his friend’s creation:

‘Dame Nellie Melba’ has rich pink flowers, darker on the exterior surface, which on the inside pale towards the centre of each lobe and have two narrow fans of brown spots on the dorsal. At the base of the throat five small, crimson-stained nectar pouches encircle a tight ring of contrasting white stamens. Each corolla is large, 6.5cm long, the funnel flaring to near 9cm across at the mouth, and they are carried in big conical trusses of a dozen individuals. Over time the deeper hues fade, becoming light pink and then white, but the blooms retain their flamboyance and flare throughout.

The foliage is dark green and glossy, the leaf blades oblong-obovate in shape and close to 16.5cm long, and as they are held for just over two seasons, deliver a bushy mien to the shrub’s upright structure.

In the southern counties, devotees will need to select a site with enough shade to prevent leaf burn from the sun’s strongest rays, but which will still allow through sufficient light to maintain a good habit and prodigious flower bud production. To that end, the abundance of bloom may sometimes bow the branches.

R. ‘Dame Nellie Melba’ AM 1926



R. ‘Dame Nellie Melba’ AM 1926



R. ‘Dame Nellie Melba’ AM 1926

R. ‘Dame Nellie Melba’ AM 1926

R. ‘Gay Lady’ AM 1938

R. ‘Leonardslee Primrose’ AM 1933

R. 'Loderi'

R. ‘Loderi’

R. 'Loderi'

fortunei x *griffithianum*

Hardiness - Flowering Period - Height & Spread

H5-6 Late April-May 10m x 8m

Named Forms:

Loderi Cream (blush white).
Loderi Dairymaid (white, blotch green).
Loderi Diamond - FCC 1914 (pure white).
Loderi Fairyland (white).
Loderi Fairy Queen (pale pink, blotched).
Loderi Game Chick (pale pink, faintly blotched).
Loderi Helen (pale pink).
Loderi King George - AM 1968 & FCC 1970
(pure white, faintly flushed reddish on outside at first, two faint green bands in the throat).
Loderi Millais Pink.
Loderi Patience (white, crimson and green flash at tube base).
Loderi Pink Coral (pale pink, blotch puce).
Loderi Pink Diamond - FCC 1914
(delicate pink, flushed crimson, [passing to green flushed brown]).
Loderi Pink Glamour (very pale pink).
Loderi Pink Topaz (pink, fading to white, blotch green).
Loderi Pretty Polly (pink).
Loderi Queen Mary (pink).
Loderi Sir Edmund - AM 1930 (waxy, veined pink at first, fading to clear blush pink).
Loderi Stag's Head (white, tinted pink).
Loderi Venus (deep pink, fading with age to soft pink, with a faint greenish flash).
Loderi White Diamond - FCC 1914 (ivory to white, faintly blotched).

Within the fraternity of rhododendron hybrids and hybridisers, a few names have achieved almost mythic status. Rothschild and Waterer are prime examples, Loder another. And while most acolytes of the genus could chant a long litany of the plants introduced from Exbury, Bagshot or Knaphill, they would quickly fall silent after two or three pairings from Leonardslee, if indeed they could actually link that garden to the crosses they know so well: the 'Loderi' family and 'Loder's White'. They might also be genuinely surprised to learn that the latter was not even crossed by Sir Edmund and the former was basically made to establish the true parentage of 'Kewense' rather than create another new hybrid (William Watson, *Gardeners' Chronicle,* Volume 50, 1911).

'Kewense' at that time was believed to be a *griffithianum* x *hookeri* cross, but Loder and many others were convinced that the pollen had actually come from *R. fortunei*. So in the spring of 1901, he made three pairings at Leonardslee, his garden in West Sussex: two matings were *fortunei* x *griffithianum;* one, *griffithianum* x *fortunei*. And some 700 seedlings were raised, of which 80 to 100 could be classified as 'Loderi' - namely, those with 'enormous flowers in a big truss and very large leaves' (J. G. Millais, *Rhododendrons and the Various Hybrids,* 1917).

But for these three specific unions, Sir Edmund did something different from the other hybridisers of the time…

He sought out 'the very best material for the intended cross' (Sir Giles Loder, *The Rhododendron Yearbook, 1950*).

His article continues:

'In this case, he selected a particularly sweetly scented and large-flowered *R. fortunei* amongst the several he had, as the seed parent. But as he did not consider as good enough any of the *R. griffithianum,* which he had, Colonel Fred Godman kindly allowed him to use the pollen from a particularly fine plant of that species which was then growing in the cold house at South Lodge'.

The first seedlings started flowering in 1907, but they had small flowers and foliage. Switching back to J. G. Millais:

'The influence of the sire on the size of the flowers is apparent when it is seen that about 60 to 70% of the seedlings of *R. griffithianum* are large, whilst only 12% are exceptional when the pollen of *R. fortunei* was used. In fact a large proportion of the latter turned out very like *R. fortunei,* with only a very few indistinguishable from the best forms of the reverse cross'.

When William Watson, accompanied by Sir Frederick Moore, curator of Glasnevin, the National Botanic Garden of Ireland, saw some of the young plants in bloom at Leonardslee in June 1911, he wrote:

'We agreed in the opinion that they were most valuable additions to garden Rhododendrons, probably the most valuable of all the direct hybrids so far raised directly from *R. griffithianum*. Sir Edmund had named the best of them in compliment to various people, but it was clear that they must all be brought under one family name. It was decided to call them R. Loderi'.

Three were exhibited in 1914 - 'Loderi Diamond', 'Loderi Pink Diamond' and 'Loderi White Diamond'.

And the fact that each was gifted a First Class Certificate by the RHS is an indication of the commotion they generated.

For those fragrant flowers were carried in a tall, somewhat open truss of nine to twelve funnel-campanulate through tubular funnel-shaped corollas, each up to 9cm long and often 15cm across. Six or seven-lobed, they are all pink in the bud, but open white, blush or soft pink, or more rarely deep pink. Some clones have a small blotch, others display subtle greenish or brownish speckles in the throat.

Foliage-wise, the leaves are elliptic through oblong-lanceolate in shape, and 20 to 30cm long, the blades medium green in tone and held on usually purple-flushed petioles.

Returning to Sir Giles Loder's 1950 account:

'In favourable surroundings 'Loderi' grows to a large size, and indeed the original plants are still growing well. In some cases they have reached a height of around 8m and some have a circumference of 24m, being well "clothed" down to the ground. The amount of flower that these plants carry is staggering, the buds first standing up like pink candles on a Christmas tree. Then as they gradually open, the trusses obliterate all sign of the foliage beneath. The number of trusses on a large plant runs into several thousand, so that the weight of this crop of flowers runs into a matter of hundredweights'.

For those of a purely metric disposition, the old British Imperial one hundredweight measurement is the equivalent of almost fifty-one kilograms.

All the 'Loderi' clones are creatures of a woodland environment, where the surrounding trees will shelter the leaves from strong winds and dappled shade prolong the deeper pigmentation in the flowers. Late spring frosts are generally past when the buds begin to break, so offer no danger to either the blooms or the new growth.

However, the timing of the latter is one of the few adverse characteristics associated with the hybrid, as the young leaves and their long, bright crimson bracts, appear at the same time as the corolla trusses, and thus may tarnish the display.

Leaf spot too can sometimes be a disfigurement, as can a proclivity for the leaves to become chlorotic between the main veins, but otherwise, the plants usually grow without problem.

Back in the day, and until quite recently - when the geneticists made the discovery that mitochondria, chloroplasts and all the other cell organelles were the exclusive gift of the female parent - *fortunei* x *griffithianum* pairings were considered to be the exact same thing as *griffithianum* x *fortunei* crosses, with absolutely no need to differentiate between the offspring (despite the shrewd observations of John Guille Millais reported above). For this reason the clones of 'Kewense' and the clones of 'Loderi' were consolidated into one big Group. Technically, this should have been Kewense Group, which had the nomenclatural priority, having been bred at Kew in the 1870s.

However, to quote from the *IRRC* Loderi Group entry:

> 'In view of some degree of uncertainty about the origin of 'Kewense' and the almost universal use of 'Loderi', in June 1986, the latter was sanctioned by the International Registration Authority as the collective name for plants derived from crosses between *fortunei* and *griffithianum*'.

Except science has now shown that the two are genetically not the same.

Those matured in a *R. griffithianum* seedpod have mitochondria - the organelles that supply energy to a cell - and chloroplasts - the organelles central to the process of photosynthesis - along with all the other specialised structures working away within a living cell, that are unique to *R. griffithianum.* While those present in the seeds carried in a *R. fortunei* capsule will be unique to that species. And the efficiency with which they each carry out their tasks is different.

As the Millais percentage figures unintentionally demonstrate.

For with all else constant, *R. fortunei* produced 60 to 70% of seedlings that were considered to have 'large' flowers when it nurtured the seed, while *R. griffithianum,* when it took on that task, managed only 12%.

And because their genetic makeup is disparate, the two sets of clones can no longer be grouped together. Moreover, to avoid confusion with what has gone before, as well as with the Royal Horticultural Society's choice to use the term 'Group' for forms of species otherwise lost to the synonymic whims of the classification botanists - *R. forrestii* Repens Group, being the obvious example - a new delineator was required. Hence the use of the term 'Pride' in the *Temperate Rhododendrons* series (https://www.rhodogroup-rhs.org/publications/books/temperate-rhododendrons). So all the offspring from a *griffithianum* x *fortunei* mating should now be gathered together under a 'Kewense Pride' banner, while those grown from a *fortunei* x *griffithianum* pairing, will now be members of the 'Loderi Pride'.

Casting science to one side, most commentators would agree that too much of a good thing is bad; most rhododendron doyens, that far too many 'Loderi' clones have been introduced: both from the original cross; from later pairings with each other; from selfed seedpods; or when combined with other hybrids. There are also individuals traditionally included within the old Group that had absolutely no business being there:

'Loderi Sir Joseph Hooker', the progeny of a *griffithianum* x 'Lady Digby' cross, albeit made by Sir Edmund Loder at Leonardslee, but using a pollen provider derived from a *facetum* x *strigillosum* mating.

'Loderi Julie', an F2 pairing from Townhill Park.

And 'Loderi May Pink', another Sir Edmund creation according to its *IRRC* entry, but a 'Cornish Loderi' x 'Loderi Sir Edmund' cross where the seed parent is actually *griffithianum* x *discolor,* and the given pollen parent - according to most sources - only opened its flower buds for the very first time several years after Sir Edmund's death in 1920 (this same exiguous conundrum equally applicable to 'Loderi Georgette', 'Loderi Pearly Queen' and 'Loderi Princess Marina'). Hence their absence from the 'Named Forms' listing opposite.

Putting any negatives that are applicable to 'swamping' aside, if space in the garden is no problem, seek out one of the better clones, 'Helen', the AM and FCC-awarded 'King George', 'Pink Diamond', 'Pink Topaz' or 'Venus', and then let it do the business. But if space is limited, yet cultivation conditions are just right, stick one of those mentioned in that choice spot and when it gets too big, simply cut it back or even cut it down. For nine times out of ten the shrub will sprout from the base and soon resume flowering.

Sir Giles Loder, the hybridiser's grandson, reports in his 1950 year book article that Sir Edmund only 'turned his versatile brain to gardening when he found his eye and body could no longer follow the more active pursuits in which he excelled' and a full and detailed account of those avocations titled *Edmund Loder, naturalist, horticulturist, traveller and sportsman: a memoir,* which was written by his friend Sir Alfred Pease and published in 1923, can be read online at the Internet Archive.

One last point.

'Loderi' of course does not exist as a specific entity; rather, it is the coverall family name for those twenty or so clones. Except that it has been registered as such in the combinations of many other hybridisers, and shrubs bearing a 'Loderi' label and nothing else will be found in most UK rhododendron gardens open to the public. The majority of these are unnamed surplus seedlings despatched from Leonardslee to gardens all over the UK in the first two decades of the 20th century. That some will still take your breath away when a mature specimen in full bloom is encountered speaks volumes…



R. 'Loderi'

R. ‘Loderi’

R. ‘Loderi’

R. 'Loderi Game Chick'

R. ‘Loderi Game Chick’

R. 'Loderi Helen'

R. ‘Loderi Helen’



R. ‘Loderi King George’ AM 1968 & FCC 1970



R. ‘Loderi King George’ AM 1968 & FCC 1970



R. ‘Loderi King George’ AM 1968 & FCC 1970

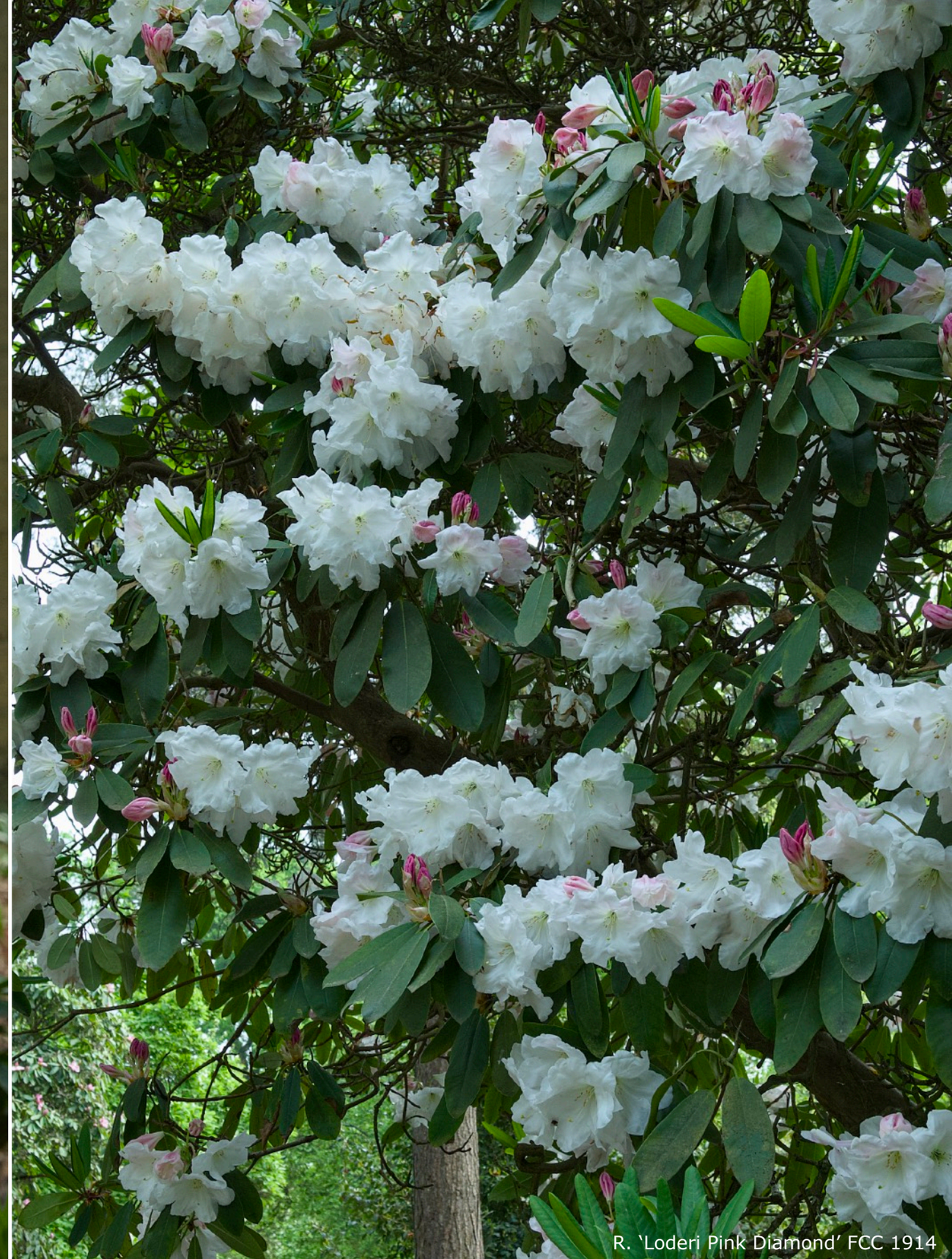
R. ‘Loderi King George’ AM 1968 & FCC 1970

R. ‘Loderi King George’ AM 1968 & FCC 1970

R. ‘Loderi Patience’



R. ‘Loderi Pink Coral’



R. ‘Loderi Pink Diamond’ FCC 1914

R. ‘Loderi Pink Topaz’

R. `Loderi Pink Topaz'

R. ‘Loderi Sir Edmund’ AM 1930

R. 'Loderi Sir Edmund' AM 1930

R. ‘Loderi Venus’

R. ‘Loderi Venus’

R. ‘Loderi White Diamond’ FCC 1914

R. ‘Loderi White Diamond’ FCC 1914 - (Benmore Accession Number - 19901495)

R. ‘Loderi White Diamond’ FCC 1914

R. ‘Loderi Georgette’ & R. ‘Loderi Princess Marina’

‘Loderi King George’ x ‘Loderi Sir Edmund’

Hardiness - Flowering Period - Height & Spread

H5-6 April-May 8m x 6m

Neither ‘Loderi Georgette’, nor ‘Loderi Princess Marina’ can be grouped together with the other shrubs bearing that prefix for they are not F1 *fortunei* x *griffithianum* crosses, but rather F2 (*fortunei* x *griffithianum*) x (*fortunei* x *griffithianum*) pairings, despite the clear and obvious morphological similarities.



R. ‘Loderi Georgette’



R. ‘Loderi Princess Marina’ AM 1948



R. ‘Loderi Princess Marina’ AM 1948



R. ‘Loderi Sir Joseph Hooker’ AM 1973

R. ‘Loderi Sir Joseph Hooker’
griffithianum x ‘Lady Digby’
Hardiness - Flowering Period - Height & Spread
H5-6 May 6m x 4m

And that sanction regarding the prefix holds even more true for ‘Loderi Sir Joseph Hooker’ despite any number of authors considering the white flushed shell-pink blooms of the cross to be the equal of the pure white globes that decorate ‘Loderi King George’.

The problem, is that those two plants are completely different.

Genetically.

With the latter the result of a *fortunei* x *griffithianum* pairing; while the former arose from a *griffithianum* x ‘Lady Digby’ combination, which meant the pollen parent introduced the genes from both *R. facetum* and *R. strigillosum* into the mix.

And while the widely funnel-shaped corollas would be completely at ease mixing it up with any of the true ‘Loderi’ clones - they are, after all, individually 9cm long by up to 13cm across and carried in a large truss of around twelve strongly scented trumpets - the foliage - at just 19.5cm long by 6.5cm wide - would prefer battle not be joined.

The blade shape is also elliptic through oblong, rather than oblong-lanceolate, with some leaves adopting a concave longitudinal profile, others a convex one, while an equal number remain flat. And although dark green in colour, they are susceptible to chlorosis, which often injects a greenish-yellow tone between the veins.

Ultimate height and spread is a touch less than a mature ‘Loderi’ clone would attain, 6m being the likely height, rather than 10m or more.

Of course, there is absolutely no doubt that the hybrid was birthed at Leonardslee from Sir Edmund Loder’s very own hand, but just because it ticks those boxes does not mean that the epithet can be prefixed with the ‘Loderi’ pride name. Indeed, the *IRRC* entry for the shrub specifically states that ‘Loderi Sir Joseph Hooker’ is not part of the ‘Loderi’ family, although as indicated above, those responsible for penning many of the standard works on rhododendrons seem not to have taken cognisance of this fact. That Sir Joseph Hooker, Kew’s pre-eminent curator, and Sir Edmund Loder’s superb rhododendron cross should not be linked is risible, but the association should solely encompass that knighted botanist’s name and not include that of the hybridiser. Moreover, such an epithet would currently find no duplicate within the list of registered rhododendrons and its adoption clarify, rather than muddy, the waters…

R. ‘Loderi Sir Joseph Hooker’ AM 1973

R. ‘Loderi Sir Joseph Hooker’ AM 1973

R. ‘Muriel’ AM 1925

R. ‘Pink Bride’ AM 1931

R. ‘Pink Glory’ AM 1940

R. ‘Pride of Leonardslee’

R. ‘Red Glow’

R. 'Rosamond'

R. ‘Seagull’ AM 1938 & FCC 1976

R. ‘Seamew’ AM 1940



R. ‘Snow Queen’ AM 1934 & FCC 1970

R. ‘Snow Queen’

‘Halopeanum’ x ‘Loderi’

Hardiness - Flowering Period - Height & Spread

H5 Late April-May 5m x 6m

‘Halopeanum’, raised by the French nurseryman Félix Halopé in 1885, and ‘Loderi’, paired by Sir Edmund Loder in 1901, are both very fine rhododendron hybrids, so in combination their offspring were bound to produce something special. The mating was consummated at Leonardslee under Sir Edmund’s direction, with named selections from the cross first detailed in 1926, six years after the hybridiser’s death. Writing in Volume 3, Number 2, of *The Rhododendron Society Notes,* published that same year, in an article titled *The Leonardslee Rhododendrons,* John Guille Millais reported that ‘Snow Queen’ was, in his estimation, ‘the finest pure white Rhododendron yet raised’. Unfortunately, he gave the parentage as ‘Gauntlettii’ x ‘Loderi’ - for at the time, ‘Halopeanum’ was considered to be nothing more than a synonym of that French hybrid.

Millais went on to state that R. ‘Snow Queen’ was:

> ‘an exceptional seedling out of the above-named cross. The flowers are nearly as large as ‘Loderi’, very thick and waxy, and of a pure whiteness that even surpasses R. ‘Duchess of Portland’. R. ‘Pink Queen’ (the same breeding) is nearly as good; the flowers are the same size and shape, but rich pink in colour. About thirty of these seedlings were distributed, and all are good, but the two named varieties are of outstanding merit. They flower in late May, and never get their growth cut’.

‘Duchess of Portland’ is the Fisher, Son & Sibray *arboreum* x ‘Handsworth Early White’ cross that was introduced in 1903, while ‘Pink Queen’ is something of a quandary. It appears in the *IRRC* as a ‘Mrs Randall Davidson’ x *campylogynum* combination, an unlikely elepidote x lepidote pairing, which was registered by the Waterers’ Knap Hill nursery in 1972 shortly after they introduced the plant. The ‘raised by’ credit in the entry remains with Sir Edmund, but the associated ‘*c*. 1930’ date is clearly wrong given that the hybridiser had passed on to that great rhododendron garden in the sky a decade before.

Of course, John Guille himself could have erred, confusing ‘Pink Queen’ with ‘Pink Bride’, the latter a selection from Sir Edmund’s ‘Halopeanum’ x *griffithianum* mating, except for the fact that ‘Pink Bride’ was officially not named or introduced until 1931 and the pairing is not mentioned in the Millais article. The pot is stirred further by *Bean’s Trees & Shrubs* reporting that John Guille’s involvement was not distant, but hands-on, as he is credited not only with naming ‘Snow Queen’ - for the hybrid did not flower until after Sir Edmund’s death - but also supplying plants to Knap Hill (who then introduced the shrub into commerce, probably around 1934, the year it was gifted an Award of Merit).

Parking the unsolved mystery off to one side, the ‘Snow Queen’ blooms are purplish-pink in the bud, opening pure white except for a tiny crimson-red blotch at the base of the dorsal lobe. Two small, variable rays of speckles and spots extend out from this, but barely match the shortest of the stamen filaments in total length. The corollas, 7.5cm long by 9 to 10cm wide and five-lobed, are carried in a conical truss of 9 to 15 funnels. They are also deliciously fragrant.

Foliage is elliptic in shape, dark green and matt, the blades 20cm long by 6.5cm wide, and held on the bush for two years. Regrettably however, the leaves are sometimes susceptible to chlorosis and more importantly, will burn in the southern counties if the hybrid is grown in full sun, so a placement in dappled shade is the order of the day. As a consequence, if the overhead leaf cover blocks out too much light, a lanky and decidedly untidy shrub will be the result, plus flower bud set will also suffer.



R. ‘Snow Queen’ AM 1934 & FCC 1970

R. ‘Snow Queen’ AM 1934 & FCC 1970

R. ‘Snow Queen’ AM 1934 & FCC 1970

John Ramsden:

Sir John Frecheville Ramsden, 6th Baronet (1877-1958).



The son of Sir John William Ramsden and Lady Helen Guendolen Seymour, John Frecheville was born on January 7th, 1877, becoming the 6th Baronet Ramsden of Byram in the County of York, following his father's death on April 15th, 1914. He was educated at Eton College, Windsor, and at Trinity College, Cambridge, and played polo for the University, serving as Master of the Drag between 1898 and 1899. He continued to play for many years after he left Cambridge and encouraged the game's development. To his many friends he was always known as 'Chops', a nickname that dated from his time at university when he grew side-whiskers.

In 1901 he married Joan Buxton, the daughter of Lieutenant-Colonel Geoffrey Fowell Buxton and Mary Harbord. He was commissioned into the Army and served with the Norfolk Yeomanry during the First World War, gaining the rank of Captain. Later, he held the office of Deputy Lieutenant of West Riding, Yorkshire; was the High Sheriff of Buckinghamshire between 1920 and 1921; and a Justice of the Peace for Cumberland.

The Ramsden family owned substantial estates in England, Scotland and Africa, which included most of the town of Huddersfield (until this was sold for £1.25m in 1919); some 11,248 acres of the West Riding; a 138,000 acre deer forest at Ardverikie (in what was then known as Inverness-shire); 800 acres of Lincolnshire; 70,000 acres in Kenya; rubber plantations in Malaya; plus Bulstrode Park, to the southwest of Gerrards Cross in Buckinghamshire, which was inherited on the death of the 12th Duke of Somerset by his daughter, Sir John's mother; and Muncaster Castle in Cumbria.

Sir John's father was regarded as a shrewd, decisive and ruthless businessman, but his son did not inherit those skills, this reported by Meriel Buxton in *A Ramsden Family Perspective,* Chapter Seven of the book *Power in the land: the Ramsdens and their Huddersfield estate, 1542-1920, edited by Edward Royle:*

> 'The path of duty had little appeal for John Frecheville. His main struggles at Cambridge were to avoid being sent down from the university. His time and his dreams were focused on dancing, wine, horses, the internal combustion engine and the sister of an old school friend. Her name was Joan Buxton. Three years later he sought his father's approval, gladly given, before making her his wife. It was one of the best decisions of his life'.
> *A Ramsden Family Perspective,* pp. 203-5.

> 'For such an intolerant and demanding man, John William was remarkably patient and tolerant with his son. Believing as he did that he himself had been idle and ineffective as a young man, without even the excuse, as he would have been the first to admit, of filling his time with all the social and sporting activities so dear to the heart of John Frecheville, he never doubted that the young man would eventually shoulder his responsibilities. There is no evidence that he in any way excluded John Frecheville from business matters: on the contrary, he did his best to involve him in everything, delighting in any sign of interest and grieving only when, as all too frequently occurred, John Frecheville found that important meetings clashed with his private amusements and he invariably prioritised the latter'.
> *A Ramsden Family Perspective,* p. 207.

> 'John William's death was immediately followed by the outbreak of the First World War. John Frecheville's letters home are full of plans for ways in which he might spend money once peace came, at his home in Northamptonshire, at Ardverikie and at Muncaster Castle in Cumberland. This had passed to him on the death of the last Lord Muncaster and his wife, both in 1917, following an agreement made by John William seven years before. His letters contain few references to Byram or to Huddersfield. By

1918 the world had changed immeasurably from John William's time, which in itself would justify to John Frecheville a reversal of his father's policies. Further, the Huddersfield estate was no longer showing a profit. How much this was due to factors beyond John Frecheville's control and how much to bad management it is impossible to tell. Either way, this situation did little to increase his interest in or enthusiasm for the town'.
A Ramsden Family Perspective, p. 209.

'John Frecheville was generous but not a good judge of character and he always kept his own counsel. His closest confidante was his wife, Joan. Their marriage was exceptionally close, despite the willingness of both to spend months apart when he was in Kenya and she was happier in the garden at home. In many ways they were very like each other but, in common with most men of his generation, he would not have discussed financial matters in depth with her'.
A Ramsden Family Perspective, p. 213.

'[John Frecheville's] strengths and weaknesses were quite different from those of his father. John William only really flourished once he entered the commercial world. This was never an environment with much allure for John Frecheville, cultured, with wide interests, undoubtedly a 'people person'. John Frecheville was an urbane man with a large circle of friends, playing a prominent part in the social and sporting worlds of England, Scotland and Kenya, well-travelled, well-read, an immensely knowledgeable plantsman, interested in history and a number of scientific subjects where he was keen to attempt to turn such knowledge as he had into successful business ventures'.
A Ramsden Family Perspective, p. 217.

John Frecheville's activities in Africa must also have been widely documented, as a recent article in *Old Africa* - No. 119, June-July 2025 - reports that:

'Ramsden enjoyed parties, motorcars, horses, dogs, sport, fine food and fine wine, spending time with his family and entertaining his friends. He loved gardening and discovering new plants, collecting beautiful things and designing and building houses. He was interested in scientific developments and full of plans to turn them to commercial advantage. He wrote well and was a gifted speaker. He loved travel. Africans nicknamed him 'Kimondo', in reference to the bag of tools and nails which accompanied him everywhere, a name he later gave to his Nairobi house. By 1924 he owned more than 100,000 acres in Kenya adjoining or linked to Kipipiri. In addition he had land elsewhere in the country, some of which he owned jointly'.

The *East Africa and Rhodesia Journal* of October 9th, 1958, carried a detailed obituary (Sir John had died at his Ardverikie Estate on October 6th, aged 81), which included the following exemplifications:

'He was a simple, natural person, who set no great store by possessions. He was a keen and good gardener, with a special love of rhododendrons; and only last month he arranged for the permanent loan of his fine collection of East African books to the East African Office in London. He is known to have declined a peerage and in Lady Ramsden had a devoted wife, who shared his love of East Africa'.

The *Journal's* obituary concludes by quoting 'an old friend', who wrote that:

'A very great gentleman has passed on. Service was certainly the motto of Sir John Ramsden, who notwithstanding his established position in society, was a reserved, even humble man of a very kindly manner with a dislike for ostentation in any form. His contribution to Kenya will remain a lasting monument to his memory, for he had devoted a large part of his life and resources to industrial development in that country and Malaya'.



Sir John and Lady Ramsden at the Goodwood Week polo tournament, Cowdray Park, 1929.

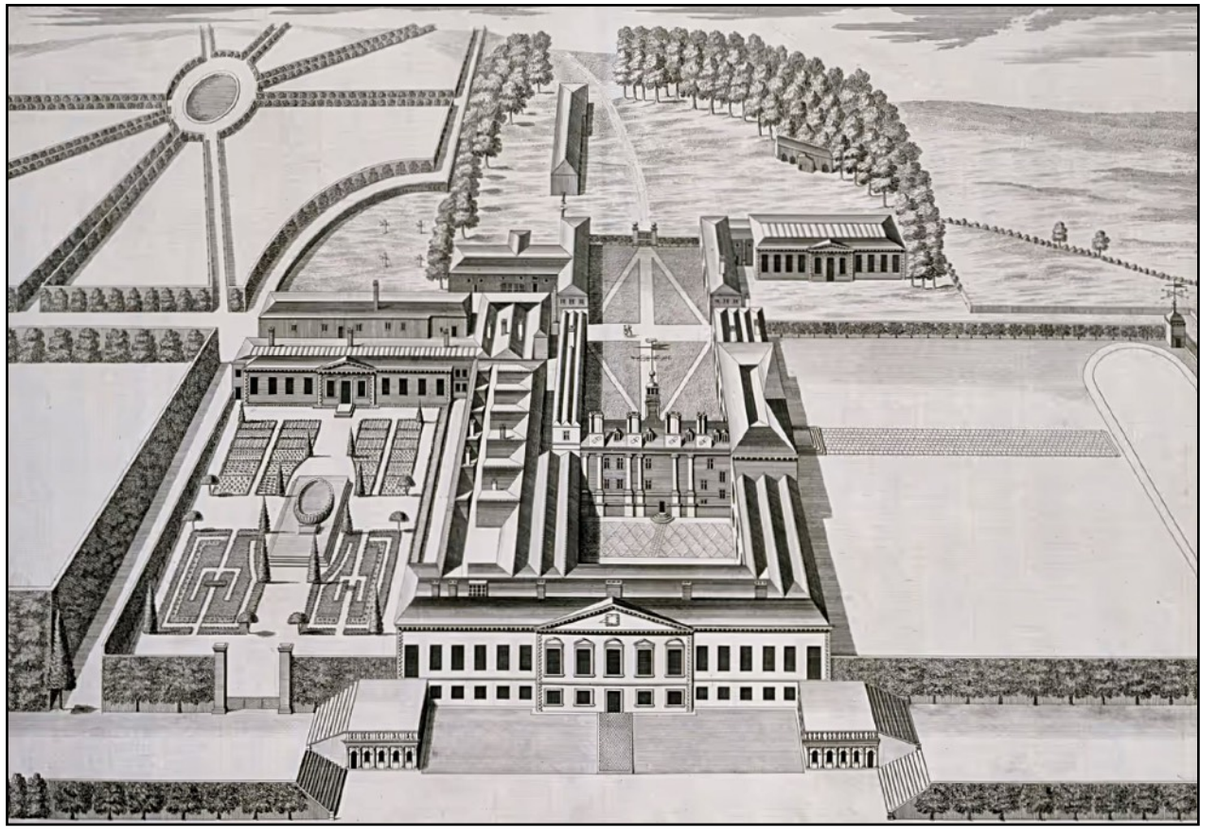
And somehow, amidst that whirl of social and sporting activities, Sir John Ramsden also found the time to create not one, but two, woodland gardens - at Bulstrode and Muncaster, the latter, now one of the finest examples of a rhododendron fairyland to be found anywhere in the UK - and to hybridise and register close to thirty new introductions.

In 1922 he wrote a report on the rhododendrons at Bulstrode Park for Volume 2, Part 3, of *The Rhododendron Society Notes:*

In claiming the forbearance of my fellow Members for my first contribution to the Society's Notes, I feel that I owe a special apology, in that, till four years ago I was unaware that rhododendrons - other than hardy hybrids - were possible for a Buckinghamshire garden. I had always been brought up to believe that to plant "Sikkim rhododendrons" elsewhere than on the South and South-west Coast was folly, and I aspired to nothing more risky than 'Pink Pearl' and 'George Hardy'. Then in 1914, a Sussex friend, to whom I owe a great debt of gratitude, ordered for me - notwithstanding my protests - twelve different species of Himalayan rhododendrons from Mr. Gill; knowing them to be tender, I naturally planted the poor things in the hottest and sunniest places I could find, and confidently awaited their demise. But although the rabbits ate the greater part of my *R. cinnabarinum,* they lived through the war and are all alive and well to-day, in pleasanter situations. The fact of their survival coupled with - to me - the wonderful revelations contained in Mr. Millais' book which was just published, brought me from darkness into the light and made me a rhododendron enthusiast, and a bore to all who garden on lime soils. Having read in Mr. Millais' book the statement that he believed he had made every mistake possible in the cultivation of rhododendrons, I decided that I could not do better than place myself under his tutelage. The first difficulty encountered was the absence - owing to the war - of any stock in the hands of nurserymen, of the rhododendrons needed to make a collection. This was remedied to a certain extent by Mr. Millais robbing his own garden for the benefit of mine, and by making up the remainder with plants many years from the flowering age.

In 1920 the disposal of some of the surplus plants from Leonardslee, enabled a real beginning to be made. The garden at Bulstrode lies on high ground 300 feet above the sea, about 20 miles west of London and to the North, and some three miles distant from the slopes of the Thames Valley. The soil, no doubt once covered by a layer of the Bagshot sand, now absent through denudation, is red clayey flint gravel overlying a band of red clay of incredible stodginess, these two soils alone compose the garden; the slopes of the hills reveal that sand and then more gravel intervene before the great underlying mass of chalk is reached, which, outcropping to the North and West forms the Chiltern Hills. The chalk, however, does not affect surface conditions except in so far as it precludes the use of well water for ericaceous plants, and also possibly has a favourable influence by forming a reservoir of subterranean warmth in winter.

The garden may best be described as a wilderness varied by three ponds, the ground is undulating and falls away on three sides. It contains an avenue of fine lime trees, planted (no doubt as a profession of faith to the Hanoverian dynasty) about 200 years ago, and many large trees, among which cedars are especially notable. It overlies a part of the ruins of a vast formal garden created by the Dukes of Portland, who were the owners for the greater part of the 18th century, and which is recorded in its majestic dimensions in the bird's-eye view prints of the time. Regarded as a home for rhododendrons it presents both advantages and difficulties. The advantages are those of shade, shelter, background, and a plentiful water supply; the difficulties, those of soil and climate. Climate being beyond a gardener's control, the soil remains the one opponent to be overcome. On the higher ground, the gravel prevails, and the healthy growth of many old *R. ponticum* and long-established garden hybrids and azaleas shows this to be to their taste, and even on the



Bulstrode Park, Buckinghamshire, *c.* 1720.

clay, which occupies many otherwise desirable situations - so long as their roots are shaded - all rhododendrons do well.

Before venturing to attempt to establish the large plants which had been acquired, it was thought well to supply the best that circumstances would allow; this took the form of the addition of a mixture of about two-thirds of top spit from old pasture, and one-third peaty humus from a neighbouring oak wood on the higher level of the Bagshot sand. This was applied to the depth of about a foot and forked into the natural soil previously trenched two feet deep, keeping as far as possible to the gravel; where the clay was encountered it was either dug out to the depth of two feel and removed, or soil was added to the depth of eighteen inches. The results have been up to the present time (touch wood!) surprisingly successful. Some 100 plants were planted in 1919, but the first extensive planting was in the early autumn of 1920, when four hundred or more, mostly large plants, and among them some twenty-five R. 'Loderi', 20 years old and up to 12 feet high [3.7m], were moved, and these flowered (so much as they were allowed), and put on growth as well or better than they had in their own home, without one failure.

The drought of 1921 necessitated constant watering, which was carried out with an 'Evinrude' motor pump, and all plants were kept in good health, though many cases were seen of plants - especially 'Loderi' - which produced fine trusses in 1921, showing a great falling off in size and number of pips in the second year; on the other hand, many which flowered poorly in 1921 showed a great improvement in 1922 - the particulars having been recorded on labels on the plants.

As the result of the experience of one disastrous delay on some sent by rail the previous year, the rhododendrons were all moved from Sussex by motor lorry and in few cases were they out of the ground for more than a week; from the nearest point of access by lorry they were moved to their new homes on sledges, whereby the turf is saved from damage, and a great deal of lifting and damage to the balls is avoided. A cart with a caterpillar track is also in use which can go anywhere with a ton load, without making a mark on the softest turf.

The rhododendrons were for the most part grouped in beds where conditions of shade and soil seemed favourable. In two places an attempt was made to obtain a bold colour effect by planting 'Luscombe's Scarlet', 12 feet high, in masses with smaller plants of 'Bodartianum' in front of them. Unfortunately in 1921 the latter flowered early and were over before the 'Luscombe's Scarlet' were fully out so the next autumn the 'Bodartianum' were removed and 'Loder's White' substituted, with the annoying result that the 'Bodartianum' in their new retreat, at a distance, hit off the 'Luscombe's Scarlet' exactly, while the 'Loder's White' were too late. The only remedy appears to be to have both. For the most part, plants of the same and related species are massed together, though advantage has been taken of dark backgrounds, such as yew trees, to place single plants of 'Loderi' where they will show to the best advantage.

In the autumn of 1921 a further 340 rhododendrons were brought from Sussex and planted successfully, the same methods being adopted.

Mistakes have been made in some places in planting too near the roots of trees, horse chestnuts have been proving themselves especially objectionable by their greed for the new soil. Some rhododendrons have too much shade, others too much sun, but on the whole they seem pleased with their new home, and these which appear discontented, will, it is hoped, be appeased by a move.

Among the newer Leonardslee hybrids several flowered for the first time in 1921 and 1922, their relations having no doubt also flowered at home.

R. *campanulatum* Campbellii x *thomsonii*. Two plants of this have produced one truss each year of a fine dark red, another plant - never yet flowered - has numerous buds for next season.

R. *thomsonii* x *griffithianum* Aucklandii. Two plants of this have produced two or three trusses each, low down; they are a fine bright dark pink gradually fading to a pale pink, and notable for lasting three weeks or more.

R. *campylocarpum* x *barbatum.* This is a very fine dark red in a close well-formed though rather low truss. This was taken to Vincent's Square, in April, where its parentage was regarded with some scepticism, but it is difficult to see, supposing the Leonardslee records at fault, what else it can be. *R. arboreum* Blood Red seems the only alternative to *R. barbatum,* it shows no signs of the *thomsonii* calyx, which is very apparent in every *thomsonii* hybrid I have ever seen. On the other hand, there are no hairs on the leaf stalks though both parents have them, the leaf resembles in shape but is less coriaceous than R. *arboreum* Album x *campylocarpum.* Of this latter, one plant flowered for the first time with a few trusses low down this year, the truss follows too much the pollen parent in shape, but trusses higher up may be better, it was a fine yellow, and I hear that some of this cross at Leonardslee have turned out well.

R. *campylocarpum* x *griffithianum* Aucklandii flowered for the first time this year, a beautifully-shaped pyramidal plant, it was covered with flower from top to bottom, pure white when fully out, but flushed with apricot at first. I believe this is the same cross as R. 'Mrs. Kingsmill'.

R. 'Kewense' x *griffithianum* Aucklandii. Though on the borderland of tenderness at Bulstrode as regards buds, several of these flowered well this year, the one-quarter *fortunei* shows hardly at all except in the shapeliness of the bush. Out of four plants that flowered, one was as good as a fair Aucklandii, flowers 5 inches across [12.7cm], and 8 in a truss. For those with gardens where Aucklandii is hopeless this seems a plant worth having. The best 'Loderi' crossed with the best Aucklandii might be better still.

R. 'Gauntlettii' x 'Loderi'. Some five plants of this flowered, all very distinct, none so good as one I saw at Leonardslee. The best at Bulstrode has a fine truss almost pure white (touched with pink) with a peculiar crispness which is most attractive.

R. *campanulatum* Campbellii x *barbatum* are now about 4 feet [1.2m]. Have not yet flowered here nor - I believe - at Leonardslee. They are plants of beautiful shape and foliage and very vigorous growth. If it turns out as fine a red as Campbellii x *thomsonii,* it will be a very fine thing indeed.

R. *thomsonii* x 'Otto Forster'. Out of six of these, all varying in shade, some are a horrid magenta, only one is a fair red, and that is rather raw beef coloured, but there are some good ones among those at Leonardslee.

R. *fortunei* x *thomsonii.* This Leonardslee cross is well known. Eight large plants have flowered magnificently for the last two years. I have been shown a small plant from Mr. Slocock of the reverse cross which had flowers over 4½ inches across [11.4cm], a great size for so bell-shaped a flower, those of this cross from Leonardslee have not flowered yet.

R. 'Ivory's Scarlet' x *thomsonii* and R. 'Ascot Brilliant' x *thomsonii,* of varying quality in colour and size, flowered for the first time, one of the latter had an especially large truss and well closed for a *thomsonii* hybrid.

Almost all *thomsonii* hybrids at Bulstrode had a few second flowers in July, many combining flower and growth on the same shoot. One large 'Loderi', which flowered magnificently in 1921, only had about six flowers this year, and all of the combined flower and growth character, but this flowered in May. It is curious that Pallas figures *R. ponticum* like this, which suggests that he took as typical what someone sent him as a curiosity.

The last three winters have been very kind to the rhododendrons at Bulstrode, except for some lost buds on the tender kinds, the only serious loss has been some six promising young plants of *arboreum* just at the flowering size, which had their bark split, presumably by a November frost in 1921, and have had to be cut almost to the ground.

To try and counteract the naturally scraggy habit of *R. thomsonii,* all leading buds on plants 3 to 5 feet high not yet flowering, have been picked off in the autumn, with the result that there is a tendency to produce three or more shoots from each point instead of only one, and shapely well-furnished plants are promised.

Much cross pollenisation was done on *R. auriculatum* in 1921 and 1922. All done in 1921 failed to ripen. In 1922 two plants were taken in under glass, and flowered at the beginning of July. Everything available of good colour was put on them, but with poor success, except for the pollen of other *decorum* blood all of which have produced enormous pods now ripening.

The Rhododendron Bug, which made itself very apparent in 1921 and 1922 (R. 'Luscombe's Scarlet', R. 'Fastuosum Flore Pleno' being the most affected) has been dealt with, apparently effectively, by removing all old leaf and spraying.

The promise of flower on nearly all rhododendrons at Bulstrode for 1923 is very poor indeed.

JOHN F. RAMSDEN,
Bulstrode, Bucks, November, 1922.

The following year, for Volume 2, Part 4, of *The Rhododendron Society Notes,* Sir John submitted an article describing the gardens at Muncaster:

Muncaster stands on a broad shelf which juts out midway on the southern slope of a hill. This hill, the seaward end of Muncaster Fell, lies crescent-shaped and thickly wooded, sheltering the Castle and its garden from the prevailing North-west winds. Here some 300 feet high [90m], it rises rapidly inland until the top is reached a mile away and 750 feet [230m], above the winding reaches of the tidal Esk below. Eastward, the wooded slopes of the river valley form a vista closed at the end by the dominating mass of Scafell, now and for many weeks covered with a glistening mantle of snow. Westward lies arable land and a broad estuary where three rivers meet and flow through a single channel between yellow sandhills to the sea.

Muncaster Fell is of grey granite much stained with red from the overlying mass of New Red Sandstone, now removed by denudation, but which has been the mother of the red sandy loam which mixed with granite grit forms the soil. This, with a rainfall of about 40 inches [1m], and a gulf stream climate, combines to produce favourable conditions for the growth of rhododendrons.

About the house are many old hybrids, mostly planted about 40 years ago. Among the most interesting are a series which appear to be seedlings of one raising, as among six much alike, no two are exactly the same. They are plants ranging from 12 to 18 feet in height [3.7 to 5.5m], probably a *campanulatum* x *griffithianum* Aucklandii cross, with large pink flowers and a leaf showing *campanulatum* type. Many plants of R. 'Altaclerense' type form tall masses of scarlet in early April, and a white hybrid, probably *caucasicum* x *arboreum,* prevails in March. Only one tree of true *arboreum,* about 26 feet [6.6m], a good pink form with a very tawny underleaf, appears among them. One very old plant has a curiously strong resemblance to R. 'Queen Wilhelmina' both in flower and leaf. The ordinary garden hybrids of June flowering kinds are present in numbers and large size, but little planting can have been done in the last 30 years.

There are many fine old azaleas, some of the Ghent hybrids being especially well grown and up to 8 ft. high [2.4m].

In 1919, 1920, and 1921, the first planting of Himalayan and Chinese rhododendrons and modern hybrids was begun. *R. falconeri,* 21 ft. by 14 ft. [6.4 by 4.3m], travelled from Tremough, and has flourished exceedingly and promises to flower all over for the first time in 1924.

A representative selection of the rhododendrons from Leonardslee has been added. R. *thomsonii* x *barbatum* have been especially chosen, and more than 100 planted of this variety. Of four of *R. grande* one of them 10 ft. high [3m], all have grown well and rapidly, but none have flowered in three seasons. *R. sinogrande,* a present from Caerhays, has produced leaves of 23½ inches [0.6m]. *R. ciliatum* and *R. edgeworthii* hybrids have flourished, notably a very gnarled old tree of 'Lady Alice Fitzwilliam', which had spent all its previous life under glass, has grown vigorously and flowered well since it has been planted out.

If our records are to be trusted, and it is not certain that they can, not more than 9° of frost have been experienced in the last 20 years [-5°C], and this year, while at Bulstrode there was 14° in November [-8°C], at Muncaster 4½° so far is the worst [-2.5°C], not enough to spoil flowers of three *Schizostylis* or *Coronilla glauca,* though too much for hydrangeas.

The garden, favourable in most ways as a home for rhododendrons, suffers from too many beeches which monopolise situations otherwise desirable. At present all goes well, but it is fully recognised that all the garden's troubles are in front of it.

A bed of Azalea 'Hinodegiri' surprised everyone by producing some very fine autumn and colouring effects, which investigation shows to be due to bark split, which it seems most probable dates from an April, 1923, frost of 6° [-3°C]. R. 'Hinomayo' near by were not affected. At Bulstrode the November frost of 14° [-8°C] appears to have done terrible damage to buds, all *R. eximium* especially, which made their shoots late, even for their kind, have probably all gone; among some 20 removed, not one sound one was found.

R. *barbatum* x *thomsonii* appear to be all right, but *decorum* seem mostly spoilt, and *R. arboreum* (except 'Windsorii') the same, and even 'Loderi' in some cases. Among the Leonardslee crosses at Bulstrode, young plants of R. *fargesii* x *arboreum* Blood Red, and 'Loderi' x *arboreum* Blood Red are both promising flowers, I believe for the first time. Their precocity is due to tight labels. That in Buckinghamshire we shall have many disappointments in 1924 seems very certain.

J. F. RAMSDEN.

December, 1923.

Thirty years later, when Patrick Synge visited Muncaster to profile the gardens for *The Rhododendron Year Book 1953,* they had been completely transformed under Sir John's direction. As the upcoming pages will detail…



An aerial photograph of Muncaster taken in 1925.

- *opposite* -

The Castle in 1880, drawn by the illustrator and engraver Alexander Lydon and featured in *The County Seats of the Noblemen and Gentlemen of Great Britain and Ireland,* by the Rev. Francis Morris.



Rhododendrons at Muncaster Castle.

by Patrick M. Synge.

Muncaster Castle stands on a spur of the hills which separate the Lake District from the Cumberland coast and is not very far from the village of Ravenglass. It is thus a very favourable situation for Rhododendrons, being within three miles of the sea but yet for the most part sheltered by the hills. The rainfall is high, in the neighbourhood of 1m per year, but not nearly so high as that experienced in many parts of Western Scotland, while the influence of the Gulf Stream seems to be almost as strong, enabling many otherwise tender species, particularly those of Subsection *Maddenia,* to be grown.

By the kindness of Sir John Ramsden we were able to visit Muncaster early in May 1952. From the terrace of the Castle there is a view which we will not readily forget. Below the Castle the ground falls rapidly away into the winding valley of the Esk while in the distance rise Scafell and other mountains.

Directly below the eastern side of the Castle, however, is a small glen with a stream while on the other side the hillside rises steeply and is planted with a wonderful display of Rhododendrons and Azaleas, backed by old Oaks and other trees, curving into the distance round the hillside, from which the ground falls quickly away into the main valley. Near the head are massed banks of old *R. arboreum* hybrids, very large plants, crimson and deep pink in colour and including 'Altaclerense' and 'Nobleanum'. These were covered in flower and contrasted well with the masses of yellow Azaleas and Rhododendrons which completed the bank. They had all grown together making a solid mass, as one images they may appear on some Himalayan or Caucasian mountain side. The old yellow Pontic Azalea (*R. luteum*) was most lovely in great masses contrasting well with the very dark purple of the old hybrid 'Royal Purple', while at the foot of the slope was a big plant of the old white hybrid 'Duchess of Portland' covered with flower. Among the yellow Azaleas some red hybrid Rhododendrons were growing and flowering freely, while we also noted plants of *R. thomsonii* and *R. neriiflorum.* Towards the foot of the bank were large specimens of the purple-leaved Japanese Maple and *Berberis stenophylla* in flower, while towards the back of the Azaleas were large trees of *Magnolia kobus, M.* 'Soulangeana' and *M.* 'Veitchii'. Below the Castle the near slope was grass covered and must have been a wonderful sight earlier with masses of Narcissi, while at the foot of the glen, planted just where it began to curve round the base of the hillside, was a fine Silver Birch which helped to give perspective to the plantings behind. At the head of the little valley were masses of Hydrangeas which we were assured flowered blue in the late summer. Although composed largely, perhaps entirely, of plants well known to most Rhododendron growers, this was one of the finest and most spectacular sights that I have ever seen in any garden, and it made a perfect foreground for the more distant view of valley and mountain.

It is impossible in describing an estate of the size of Muncaster with four hundred acres planted with Rhododendrons and other trees and shrubs to mention more than a small proportion of the fine plants we saw. One particular feature of the garden lay in the variety of the plantings and in addition to the Rhododendrons we saw many fine Nothofagus, including a very large specimen of *N. betuloides,* numerous Eucryphias, including a 5m *E. moorei,* Cornus, Stewartias, Pieris, Magnolias and even *Michelia doltsopa,* growing against a wall but flowering freely. Thus the flowering season is prolonged through the summer.

The plantings have been made with great skill, often with large groups of plants of the same species or variety so that a great colour display was obtained, but at the same time the natural effect had not been lost. The masses of ferns, forget-me-nots and bluebells contributed not a little to this. We were assured that the majority of the plantings had been made between the two world wars and the great size of many of the plants bears testimony to the very rapid and luxuriant growth at Muncaster.

Crossing the head of the valley, we were led along the terrace walk, a wide grass walk half a mile long which curved round the hillside and from which we obtained magnificent views over the valley. We were told this had been made about 1750. We passed behind the big *R. arboreum* hybrids previously mentioned and were able to look at their massive trunks. Here also were large white *arboreum* hybrids, probably 'Bodartianum'.

Along the edge of the terrace bordering on Eskdale, a formal hedge of clipped box had been grown with at intervals taller plants of golden and dark green Irish Yew appearing to ascend in steps as the terrace sloped upwards and curved round the hillside. On the slope below we were able to look down on a large group of different coloured forms of *R. augustinii,* all good and showing the influence of the dark purple eye in the centre, or the paler green eye, in giving a prevailing purplish or blue tone respectively to the flowers. Along the other side of the terrace was a long tree and shrub border in which were many Magnolias, Pieris, Ericas, Drimys, Stewartias, Crinodendrons, Acers, Pittosporums and other shrubs. Towards the end was the largest tree of the Gean, *Prunus avium,* which I have ever seen. It had several great, wide-spreading trunks and a vast span, and while then nearly over, had obviously flowered very freely. I don't think that 15m in height and twice that span would be an exaggeration.



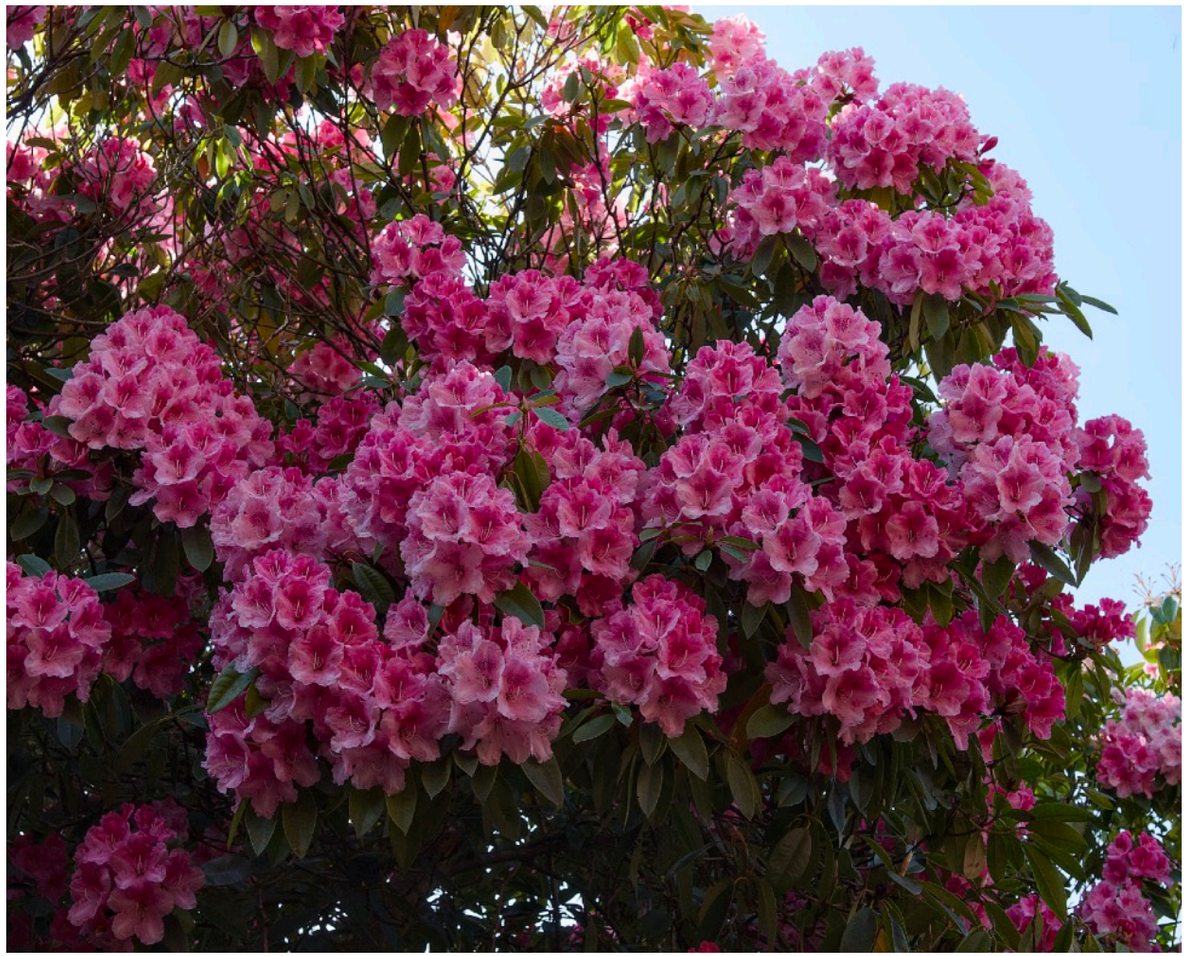
The eastern aspect of Muncaster Castle.

- *opposite* -
View across the glen towards the bank of old *R. arboreum* hybrids.





Behind the terrace border was "Church Wood" a large area containing many very fine Rhododendrons. Particularly lovely were large bushes of *R. campylocarpum,* some 3.7m in height and as much across, while the very fine deep pink 'Muncaster Hybrid' had grown to a great size and was laden with flower. Acquired about 1860 from a local nursery which has long since disappeared, no other name had been given to this hybrid which was one of the finest Rhododendrons of the 'hardy hybrid' type I have yet seen. It has the appearance of being related to 'Pink Pearl' but is without the purple anthers. Another particularly fine plant raised at at Muncaster was 'Red Dragon' [Henry McLaren's *thomsonii* x *griersonianum* hybrid]; brilliant scarlet in colour, a vigorous grower and very free flowering, it made great splashes of colour through the woods. One particularly effective planting I noted bordered the drive close to and below the Castle; backed by larger trees and without any competing flower colours it was a splendid sight. This cross has also been made at Bodnant and is shown in the Stud list under the name 'Hecla' [a sister seedling from the 'Red Dragon' pairing of 1931 vintage].



'Muncaster Hybrid' in Church Wood.

- opposite left -
Another view from the Castle terrace, this towards the Lakeland fells.

In Church Wood we saw many more plants of *R. augustinii;* one planting adjacent to a large group of the dwarfer pink 'Hinomayo' made an attractive combination. The Kurume Azaleas were well represented here as was also Subsection *Triflora,* with good plants of *R. yunnanense, R. davidsonianum, R. rigidum,* a good form of *R. ambiguum* and *R. concinnum* Pseudoyanthinum Group, the deep plum-coloured form. A 2.7m plant of *R. hookeri* also attracted special attention, as did a very unusually deep coloured bush of *R. orbiculare* and a good form of *R. habrotrichum,* with a well-filled truss of deeper coloured flowers than is often seen in this species.

R. williamsianum was well represented and several of the bushes, placed conspicuously at the junction of paths were over 1.5m in height and as much in diameter. I have never seen larger specimens. We also saw a small secluded garden, surrounded by a bamboo hedge and planted largely with *R. williamsianum* in raised beds. Here also were hedges of 'Blue Tit' and plants of a small free-flowering deep purple hybrid probably raised from *R. saluenense.* This little garden was carpeted with ferns and primulas and was most attractive.

Another special enclosure contained a pool and along one side were two huge plants covered with flowers of the good, deep pink-budded R. 'Loderi King George'; they were at least 3.7m in height and more in diameter and flowering right down to the ground.

A very successful combination was made by a long low hedge of R. 'Mucronatum', backed by large plants, flowering freely, of such lovely hybrids as 'Penjerrick', the ivory-white form, and 'Sunrise', as well as tall yellow *R. campylocarpum.* In front of the 'Mucronatum' was an edging of the dwarf salmon-pink and semi-double *R. indicum* Balsaminiflorum. Other interesting plants in this part of the garden were *R. heliolepis,* an unusually large specimen, *R. lanatum, R. vaseyi* and *R. schlippenbachii,* as well as many of the Kurume Azaleas. In the top garden was also a notable plant of *R. griffithianum,* now about 6m in height. This plant was originally at Tittenhurst where the late Mr. Lowinsky protected it in winter with a canvas tent.

Along the drive from the gate to the Castle there are a number of fine plants including several of the large-leafed species which grow particularly well at Muncaster. Here were groups of *R. falconeri* and *R. sinogrande,* mingled with some very large old plants of the red form of *R. arboreum* and such old hybrids as 'Purple Splendour'. Here also were clumps of 'Red Dragon' making a most brilliant splash of colour and numerous Magnolias, Nothofagus and Azaras.

Even larger trees of *R. sinogrande* and other large-leaved species were seen in the woods above the Castle. A few Beeches and some fine *Abies pectinata* had been left, but very large plantations of Rhododendrons had been made along the grass rides. There was also a large plant of 'Elsae', a hybrid between *R. grande* and *R. falconeri.* It had large leaves, a thick yellowish indumentum below and a huge single truss of creamy flowers. At the edge of the wood we found the largest and finest specimen of *R. falconeri* I have ever seen. It was unusual also in that the large size of the leaf had been retained although the tree was flowering and between 9 and 12m in height and probably as much in diameter. It was a very impressive tree and an indication of the very favourable climate for Rhododendrons at Muncaster. This plant was bought from Tremough in 1920 and was then about 3m high.

There were groves of such rare and tender large-leaved species as *R. protistum* and *R. kyawi* (the Forrest form grown previously as *R. prophantum*) and these must later present a fine sight when in flower. Although this is probably the way in which they are found in China and the Himalayas, one could not help regretting that more of these choice plants had not been singled out, for growing as specimens, most particularly in the case of

the early flowering *R. protistum.* Where specimens had been grown as in the case of *R. grande* (the form usually known as *Argenteum*), the effect was superb and fitted well with plantings of the size and scale of those at Muncaster, especially with the large plants of 'Penjerrick', 'Red Dragon' and the banks of R. 'Amoenum' which were close. Among the *grande* was a very large plant about 7.6m in height with a truss of pale pink flowers which was described as *R. grande* Argenteum Roseum but may possibly have been a hybrid between *R. grande* and *R. eximium.* There was also a tall *R. grande* of 11m which came as a small plant from a nursery bed at Leonardslee. *R. macabeanum* was represented by a group of which the largest was very tall and carried big trusses of a good yellow. It was good to see a large plant of *R. strigillosum,* showing well the brilliant red of its young growth and buds. Near this section also we noticed a very large-flowered form of *R. cinnabarinum,* a big bush 3.7m high by 4.6m through, and throughout the woods we saw a great variety of forms of *R. cinnabarinum, R. concatenans* and *R. xanthocodon,* the latter two almost merging into one another. A great clump of R. 'Cinnkeys', in full flower and 4.6m across by as much in height showed well the great garden value of this hybrid when it attains a certain size and becomes literally smothered with bloom. The orange and red combination of the flowers are very striking against the surrounding carpet of bluebells.

The tender species of the *Edgeworthia* and *Maddenia* subsections were particularly well represented. An unusually attractive sight was a large plant of *R. edgeworthii,* flowering freely and growing out of the rocks on the side of an old quarry, a very protected situation. Here also grew plants of *R. protistum, R. megacalyx, R. polyandrum, R. elliottii* ssp. *facetum* and a fine plant of *R. kyawi* in the centre of the quarry. There was also an interesting hybrid between *R. johnstoneanum* and *R. edgeworthii* well budded but unfortunately not in flower. We saw many plants of *R. polyandrum* again, mostly heavy budded and up to 3m in height, growing against the shaded northern and eastern walls of the lower garden. During June and July they must have made a fine display. After the *R. polyandrum* come *R. manipurense,* flowering in early July. The season at Muncaster is carried on through July and into August by large numbers of late flowering hybrids such as 'Lodauric', crosses of *R. auriculatum* with *R. serotinum, R. diaprepes* and *R. facetum,* as well as crosses of 'Lodauric' with *R. facetum,* and *R. diaprepes* with *R. facetum.*

Another very unusual sight was a large clump of about twelve specimens of *R. lindleyi* (Ludlow & Sherriff 2744). The individual flowers of this form did not seem as large as some I had seen, but they were borne in trusses of up to eight flowers each which is rather more than usual and were of the heavy waxy texture we associate with this species as well as being heavily scented. The calyx lobes were reddish and the outside of the corolla was very lightly flushed with pink. The plants were 2.4 to 3m in height.

We also saw flowering plants of *R. lindleyi* var. *taggianum,* R. 'Princess Alice', R. 'Suave' and a rather unusual white-flowered species under the number K.W. 8546, which had been provisionally identified as *R. headfortianum,* a species very rarely seen [now classified as *R. lindleyi* var. *taggianum* Headfortianum Group].

One of the most beautiful spectacles was a great thicket of *R. johnstoneanum,* where the plants had grown together and were all flowering freely with that attractive blend of creamy-lemon colour and deeper yellow blotch that characterises this lovely species. There were several unusually good forms among them with flowers larger than the average. We were able to look down on them from above since so much of the ground in the woods is on the slope. Near this planting was a group of a hybrid between *R. boothii* and *R. burmanicum* with very bright yellow flowers. They were much deeper in colour than the *R.*



- opposite -
R. strigillosum.

johnstoneanum near them.

Later flowering Rhododendrons were also well represented such as 'Polar Bear', *R. praestans, R. facetum* and *R. kyawi* and must have been a fine sight later. Among the unnamed plants we particularly noted a good hybrid of *sutchuenense* x *griffithianum* but with a truss of very large flowers, carrying the deep crimson blotches. Another interesting plant was a white Rhododendron with rather flat and very large slightly crinkled flowers. It was very fragrant and Dr. Cowan, who was with us, suggested that it might be *Chlorops,* a large-flowered form of *R. decorum,* but very rarely seen [now thought to be a cross between *R. vernicosum* and *R. wardii,* so classified as *R. x chlorops*]. Alternatively it might have been of hybrid origin. A plant under this name received an Award of Merit in 1938 when shown by the Earl of Stair.

Practically every other subsection seemed to be represented in this great collection and we saw numerous plants from the *Neriiflora, Campanulata* and *Fulva* groupings to mention only a few.

Undoubtedly the thick layer of leaf mould in the woods overlying a good loam and a basic clay have contributed with the high rainfall and conditions of mild climate and shelter to the growth of this outstanding collection.

It was good to see that in spite of its size the garden was so well maintained and I would like to express my thanks not only to Sir John Ramsden for the pleasure the visit gave me and for his help in amending the draft of this article, but also to Mr. Blair, the head gardener who accompanied our party. My thanks are also due for much help in naming of the plants to Dr. J. MacQueen Cowan and Mr. E. E. Kemp of the Edinburgh Botanic Garden who accompanied us, as well as to my colleague Lanning Roper and to Mr. R. Eudall of Edinburgh who took a number of photographs.

Through the kindness of Sir John Ramsden this great garden is open to the public on Wednesdays and I can most confidently recommend all Rhododendron lovers to pay it a visit.

Patrick Synge's portrait of Muncaster Castle Gardens was published in *The Rhododendron Year Book 1953,* while the current opening times can be found online at:

https://www.muncaster.co.uk/planyourvisit

Addendum:

The account of the origin of 'Muncaster Hybrid' was given to Patrick Synge by either Sir John Ramsden himself, or the head gardener of the time, Mr Blair, who conducted the tour of the grounds. That same story has been related to many other visitors since, myself included, but it has a number of flaws, the most obvious being the 1860s date and the fact that 'Muncaster Hybrid' is clearly a second-generation *griffithianum* cross not an ironclad. For as Volume 84, Tab 5065 of *Curtis's Botanical Magazine* details, *R. griffithianum* only began flowering in UK cultivation during May 1858. And two years - or even twelve years - would have been nowhere near enough time to make, raise and flower an F1 pairing - such as the Mangles *griffithianum* x *catawbiense* hybrid 'George Hardy' - then combine it with another species or hybrid - 'George Hardy' x 'Broughtonii' (as in 'Pink Pearl' for instance) - and raise, flower and propagate that hybrid. Even if, to speed up the process, top grafting techniques were employed and seedlings distributed instead of vegetatively produced juveniles.

Oh, and not to mention the fact that those blooms would have caused an absolute sensation if marketed in the 1860s, 1870s or 1880s, indeed at any time before 'Pink Pearl' spectacularly arrived on the scene from Bagshot in 1896.

So where did this fantastic creation come from?

We can discount it being one of Sir John Ramsden's own crosses, for he surely would have taken credit for such and exhibited the blooms at any number of shows in search of an RHS award even if the pairing duplicated that of 'Pink Pearl' or one of the stream of Continental near-copies arriving in the UK during the early 1920s, perhaps 'Betty Wormald' or 'Rosamund Millais' - 'George Hardy' pollinated by an 'Un-named Red Hybrid' and 'Doncaster' respectively - with both introduced by the Dutch firm of M. Koster & Sons. And returning to those spectacular blooms, 'Muncaster Hybrid' is probably not a named cross whose label was lost in transit. For if it was, at least one of the many experts who have visited the gardens in the last ninety years or so would have identified it as such.

But two possible avenues of inquiry remain open:

Most of the original rhododendron planting at Muncaster was carried out between the two World Wars and amongst the mix of species and hybrids installed throughout the woodlands are many crosses made by Edward Magor of Lamellen, Cornwall. John Hammond, rhodophile and garden historian, includes information on how those plants were distributed in an appreciation of this master hybridizer he wrote for the Rhododendron, Camellia & Magnolia Group's 2012 Year Book, the essay titled *The Rhododendron Legacy of the Magor Family of Lamellen, Cornwall: An Historical Perspective.*

The article reports that:

> 'One of the most significant, and perhaps least known of Mr Magor's activities was his involvement in distributing both species and hybrids to "gentlemen gardeners" by the circulation of a 'List of Surplus Plants for Sale'. This list was being distributed as early as 1918 and by the 1920s there was a 'network' in place whereby the landed gentry were able to sell or exchange surplus plants and thereby service each other's needs; however, it was not realised until recently just how large a volume was involved'.

A number of examples are then given, one being a set of deliveries to Larachmhor Garden in the Highlands, where:

> 'between November 1926 and November 1930, ten batches of plants were supplied comprising 102 species, 90 small species seedlings, 64 hybrids (including some of Mr Magor's best crosses) and 32 small hybrid seedlings. Many were large plants around 5 to 6ft high'.

So 'Muncaster Hybrid' might have been included in a Lamellen consignment along with batches of 'Arbsutch', 'Fargarb', 'Fulgarb' and a host of other Magor hybrids, as multiple clones of each - individually differing slightly one from another - can be found dotted across the grounds and may have been sent as unflowered seedlings.

Patrick Synge tangentially details the second possible source in his 1953 Year Book article when referencing the specimen of *R. griffithianum* that was originally at Tittenhurst. Because along with Lionel de Rothschild, Sir John Ramsden too had managed to purchase some of the plants Thomas Lowinsky had amassed at Tittenhurst Park between 1898 and 1926, successfully relocating them to Muncaster.

From *The Rothschild Rhododendrons* by C. E. Lucas Philips and Peter N. Barber (Cassell, 1967), we learn that:

> 'Lionel spent three days at Tittenhurst and was glad to find many good specimens of rhododendron species, as well as the hybrids of the time. There were also some thirty *discolor* crosses and a prodigious number of Mr Lowinsky's own unnamed hybrids'.



One of those unnamed crosses might have been the nascent ‘Muncaster Hybrid’ and its acquisition by Sir John would explain why no one to date has been able to match it with any other registered hybrid.

Twenty-six years later in 1952, benefitting from the very favourable climate and high rainfall along the Irish Sea coast that powers ‘the very rapid and luxuriant growth at Muncaster’ - again quoting from the 1953 Year Book - an already well-developed shrub could easily have added several metres to its height and girth, becoming the paragon Patrick Synge observed.

Of course all the above is pure speculation, but given that Lionel de Rothschild used Lowinsky Hybrid No. 1284 in a combination with *R. griersonianum* to produce ‘Fantasy’, and pollinated *R. facetum* with Lowinsky Hybrid No. 3630 to create ‘Retreat’, the blooms of Lowinsky Hybrid No. 1860 might well be lighting-up Church Wood and other areas of the garden, for individuals are dotted throughout the grounds.

‘Muncaster Hybrid’ has dark green narrowly elliptic through elliptic-ovate leaves that are 16.5cm long by 6.5cm wide, the blades somewhat shiny or matt, pointed at the apex, flat or sometimes curved longitudinally, and often with a gentle V-shaped profile. They are held on the shrub for between two and three years.

The corollas are pinkish-red in colour fading out through soft pink to white, with two wide rays or a fan of black spots on the dorsal. They are five-lobed, widely funnel-shaped, with white stamens and style, the stigma of which is crimson. Flower trusses are globular, or tall and conical, tightly packed with between 10 and 12 corollas, each of which is 6.5cm long by 9cm across at the mouth.

The shrub’s habit is upright and spreading, with the various specimens all vigorous and thriving in full sun at Muncaster. They likely have a hardiness rating down to around -18ºC, this not matching the -21ºC figure assigned to ‘Pink Pearl’.

Towards the end of May or the early part of June, if you walk unawares into the ‘Muncaster Hybrid’ glade in Church Wood, which is about halfway along and bordering the Terrace Walk, you will literally be rooted in your tracks. Stopped dead. By a vast semi-circle wall of pink bloom hemming you in on both sides, as well as ahead. There is an escape, the path slants off to the left passing beneath a tangle of overhanging branches, but rhodophiles will want to absorb every facet of the scene before them and it will be many minutes before they finally move on.

For the flowers on display are simply riveting.

Why a registration form has not already been completed and sent off for this gem is a complete mystery. Moreover, the few remaining specialist nurseries in the UK should also be encouraged to offer grafted youngsters to their paying clientele.

- opposite left -
‘Muncaster Hybrid’ by the car park entrance gate to the Castle.

- opposite right -
The ‘Muncaster Hybrid’ glade in Church Wood.



The Lepidote Registrations:

Blue Haze
hippophaeoides Fimbriatum X 'Russautinii' seedling
Flower Colour: Blue

Helena
edgeworthii X *formosum*

King Fisher
heliolepis X *polyandrum*
Flower Colour: Lilac
Flowering Time: May
Height: Tall

Muncaster Bells
cinnabarinum X *concatenans*
Flower Colour: Apricot
Flowering Time: April
Height: Tall

Muncaster Trumpet
cinnabarinum X *polyandrum*
Flower Colour: White-apricot

Phillida
'Forsterianum' X *edgeworthii*

Polyroy
polyandrum X cinnabarinum Roylei
Flower Colour: White flushed reddish-pink
Flowering Time: May
Height: Tall

Russautinii
russatum X *augustinii*
Flower Colour: Lavender-blue
Flowering Time: April-May
Height: Medium



R. 'Blue Haze'

R. ‘Blue Haze’

R. ‘Blue Haze’

R. ‘Blue Haze’

R. ‘King Fisher’




R. ‘King Fisher’


R. ‘King Fisher’


R. ‘King Fisher’

R. ‘Muncaster Bells’

R. ‘Muncaster Bells’
cinnabarinum x *concatenans*
Hardiness - Flowering Period - Height & Spread
H5 Mid April-early May 3m x 3m

The ultimate accolade any hybrid can receive is the acknowledgement from a legion of rhodophiles and expert observers that the cross is better than its individual parents. Yet within the vast pantheon of registered rhododendron hybrids, the majority would fail to receive such praise, as the explorer, botanist, plant hunter and author Frank Kingdon-Ward has succinctly pointed out, noting that ‘there are more hybrids than species in cultivation today, yet except in the Azalea group, it is doubtful whether any hybrid superior to the parent species has ever been produced’ (*Rhododendrons,* 1949).

‘Muncaster Bells’ is one of those few exceptions.

The match was made by Sir John Ramsden (1877-1958) and later introduced around 1964 by his son, Sir William Pennington-Ramsden (1904-1986), the pairing chosen being *cinnabarinum* x *concatenans,* which remarkably, has not been duplicated by any other hybridiser working within the genus. The flower trusses that that combination produced are loose and pendulous, each holding between six and ten 7.5cm-long tubular-campanulate bells of a deep and unblemished apricot-yellow, the hue darker on the outside of the tube. And when hit by the merest glimmer of sunlight, they glow from within.

The sole representative of the mating encountered to date is set in a now too shaded spot at Muncaster, on the sloping western bank along the main drive to the castle from the entrance gate, the site drawing the shrub up into a 3m high and wide stretched dome that is very open, the habit not helped of course, by the susceptibility of those *cinnabarinum* grey-green and glaucous leaves to the powdery mildew fungus, which has denuded much of the foliage.

But somehow the plant struggles on through this adversity and every few years, manages to set an above average number of flower buds. And on those occasions, come mid April, when the corollas start to expand and emerge, it puts on a stunning display.


R. ‘Muncaster Bells’


R. ‘Muncaster Bells’

R. ‘Muncaster Bells’

R. ‘Muncaster Bells’



R. 'Polyroy'

R. 'Polyroy'

polyandrum x *cinnabarinum* Roylei

Hardiness	Flowering Period	Height & Spread
H5	May	3m x 3m

'Polyroy' is an exquisite but unregistered hybrid. It can be found growing in the woodland garden at Brodick Castle on the Isle of Arran, Scotland; at Caerhays Castle, Cornwall; at Glendoick, near Perth; and likely at many other UK locales as well.

The first site mentioned might suggest it was raised by the late John Basford, who was head gardener at the property for a staggering span of 33 years, especially as a number of very similar-looking plants may be found dotted about the grounds, suggesting different selections grown-on from the same pairing. However, only one of these plants is labelled with the 'Polyroy' epithet and none of John Basford's registered crosses use the chopped-up parentage name formula in their epithets. So his is not amongst the names put forward for the hybridizer credit.

Caerhays, where a group of five plants may be found growing in a clump near "George's Hut", believe it to be a Millais cross and give the parentage as *polyandrum* x *cinnabarinum* Roylei Group, though apportionment to John Guille or Edward Gray is not made. The same combination of parent plants was probably used to produce the hybrid 'Polycinn', but although this cross does appear in the *IRRC,* it only has a 'listed in the UK (1988)' entry.

Kenneth Cox however, writing in his book *Rhododendrons & Azaleas: A Colour Guide* (Crowood Press, 2005), reports that Sir John Ramsden made the pairing and that three colour forms are to be found in gardens: bright pink; reddish; and apricot. He notes that the hybrid is similar to 'Lady Rosebery', but much less susceptible to the powdery mildew fungus. Sir John, who was responsible for much of the rhododendron planting at Muncaster Castle on the west Cumbrian coast, is known to have exchanged plants with the Duchess of Montrose at Brodick when the gardens on Arran were being developed. Moreover, many of his registered crosses follow the condensed naming formula first proposed by Sir Isaac Bayley Balfour. Ramsden hybrids so christened include 'Griersims', 'Lodauric', 'Russautinii', 'Shilsoneri' and 'Venapens', which if nothing else, at least roll off the tongue.

The labelled 'Polyroy' plant at Brodick is a 3m tall and wide bush that in May redefines the concept of 'free-flowering' by several orders of magnitude. Its tubular-funnel-shaped 5-lobed corollas are each around 7.5cm long by 5cm wide and held in a loose, open truss of between four and seven trumpets. These are reddish-pink in the bud, opening white flushed pink within, the pointed lobes deeper on the reverse and the exterior of the tube retaining the original pigmentation. The base of the dorsal lobes and the throat is stained orange-pink, these rays becoming more obvious as the overall pink flush fades over time.

The foliage is a dark glossy green, the leaf blades oblanceolate through elliptic in shape and up to 7cm long by 2.5 to 3cm wide. Held for just one year, they still manage to provide the crisscross framework of branches with an adequate level of decorum.

Despite diligent attempts to find and photograph it, the original 'Polyroy' plant appears to have upped roots and departed the 400-acre rhododendron woodland at Muncaster for vistas new. As the epithet is also absent from the estate's plant database, it may not have made the journey north from Bulstrode Park, Buckinghamshire, which was Sir John principal residence over the period when he was hybridising and developing the two gardens. Two unlabelled bushes of 'Rose Mangles' were found during the search, but although very similar in corolla pigmentation, the rounded as opposed to pointed lobe tips rule out any chance of a misidentification.

R. ‘Polyroy’

R. 'Polyroy'

R. ‘Polyroy’

R. 'Polyroy'

R. ‘Polyroy’

R. ‘Russautinii’

R. 'Russautinii'

russatum x *augustinii*

Hardiness - Flowering Period - Height & Spread

H6 Mid April-mid May 1.5m x 2.5m

'Russautinii', Sir John Ramsden's *russatum* x *augustinii* pairing, was introduced in 1936 and sets both terminal and axillary flower buds, unlike either named parent. The latter buds will be found in the upper leaf axils, though their presence is somewhat hit-and-miss, like the corolla colour, and dependent on which clone is being grown, as a number were distributed. Funnel-shaped flowers, four or five to each fairly tight truss, are around 5cm across at the mouth and may be almost blue, lavender-blue, bluish-purple or violet. Some fade to white in the centre, and the intensity and the colour of the two rays of spots and speckles found on the dorsal lobe varies considerably, but all have a downy tube within and stamen filaments coloured to match the corollas. The style is more often pinkish-red.

The hybrid's foliage follows *R. augustinii,* the blades being elliptic through oblong-elliptic in shape, up to 5cm long, dark green in tone and they are held for two years, which provides the shrub with a fairly dense mantle of leaves despite the upright habit, although leaf spot is an acknowledged problem.

All the clones flower prolifically from a very young age, but the quality of the blooms is contingent on the selection. All are hardy enough to thrive in any UK garden where the soil is right for rhododendrons.

The species combination was later duplicated by John and Roza Stevenson at Tower Court, who introduced 'Azamia' in 1947, and by the German hybridiser Dietrich Hobbie, his 'Blue Wonder' joining the ranks in 1967.



R. 'Russautinii'



R. 'Russautinii'

R. ‘Russautinii’

R. ‘Russautinii’

The Elepidote Registrations:

Aries
thomsonii X *neriiflorum*
AM 1932 & FCC 1938
Flower Colour: Red

Bulstrode Beauty
'Loderi King George' X 'Loder's White'
Flower Colour: White

Bulstrode Belle
'Loderi King George' X 'Loder's White'
Flower Colour: White

Ember Glow
campylocarpum X *forrestii* Repens
Flower Colour: Blood Red
Height: Low

Griersims
'G. A. Sims' X *griersonianum*
Flower Colour: Red

Joan Ramsden
'Loderi' seedling X 'Snowdrop' seedling
Flower Colour: White
Height: Tall

Lady Catherine
'Corona' X *auriculatum*
AM 1936
Flower Colour: Rose
Flowering Time: Late June-July
Height: Tall

Lodauric
'Loderi' X *auriculatum*
Flower Colour: White
Flowering Time: Late June
Height: Tall

Lodauric Iceberg
'Loderi' X *auriculatum*
AM 1958
Flower Colour: White
Flowering Time: Late June
Height: Tall

Muncaster Icicle
'Lodauric' X *griffithianum*
Flower Colour: White

Muncaster Mist
campanulatum X *floribundum*
Flower Colour: Mauve-blue
Flowering Time: Late March-April
Height: Tall

Muncaster Ruby
orbiculare X *thomsonii*
Flower Colour: Rose-pink

Pinkie
griersonianum X 'Lady Gwendoline Broderick'

Ramona
'Huntsman' X *neriiflorum*
Flower Colour: Red
Height: Tall

Rowena
'Hebe' X 'Red Dragon'
Flower Colour: Salmon-red

Shilsoneri
'Shilsonii' X *neriiflorum*
Flower Colour: Blood Red
Flowering Time: Late March-April
Height: Tall

Shot Silk
campylocarpum X *dichroanthum*
Flower Colour: Creamy-white flushed pink
Flowering Time: April-May
Height: Medium-tall

Troas
thomsonii X 'Cornish Cross'

Venapens
venator X *forrestii* Repens
Flower Colour: Crimson

Yellow Dwarf
'Goldsworth Yellow' X *dichroanthum*
Flower Colour: Bronzy Yellow

R. 'Griersims'


R. ‘Griersims’


R. ‘Griersims’


R. ‘Griersims’

R. ‘Griersims’

R. ‘Joan Ramsden’

R. ‘Joan Ramsden’

R. ‘Lodauric Iceberg’ AM 1958

R. ‘Lodauric Iceberg’

‘Loderi’ x *auriculatum*

Hardiness - Flowering Period - Height & Spread

H5-6 June-early July 8m x 6m

The pairing, we know - ‘Loderi’ x *auriculatum*.

As we do the hybrid’s basic facts and figures: pure white and fragrant funnel-campanulate corollas, each 10cm long by 12.5cm wide, with a set of small crimson rays at the base of the dorsal lobe; held in in a flat-topped truss of thirteen, the blooms opening in June and fairly resistant to scorching; pale olive-green foliage, each leaf up to 22.5cm long by 7.5cm wide, elliptic-lanceolate in shape; the shrub a small tree, easily topping 6m in height, often reaching higher.

But who made the cross?

The Slocock nursery is listed in the *IRRC* entry for ‘Lodauric Iceberg’ as having selected the hybrid in 1936, naming and introducing the plant from their Goldsworth base in Woking during 1946. Separately, J. J. Crosfield of Embley Park, Hampshire, introduced ‘Lodauric’ in 1939, but it is the poorer clone with just seven trumpets in the truss and yet again, no hybridiser detailed. Crosfield is assigned as the procreator in some publications, Sir John Ramsden credited by others, while Peter and Kenneth Cox, in their *Encyclopaedia of Rhododendron Hybrids* (Batsford, 1988), report that G. Taylor made the original pairing, which means the correct answer will probably elude us forever…

Except that the epithet itself may give a hint:

‘Lodauric’ is coined from the ‘combination method’ first proposed to E. J. P. Magor of Lamellen in 1918 by no less an authority than Sir Isaac Bayley Balfour, the Regius Keeper of Edinburgh Botanic Garden. His proposed naming system took a chunk from the epithet of each parent and stuck them together in as ‘euphonious’ a pairing as was possible. Magor and several other hybridisers took this suggestion as akin to the Word of God and adopted the formula with near religious zeal, which in some cases resulted in truly horrendous amalgamations. Thankfully, most of their contemporaries and the succeeding generations ignored it completely, unless the concocted jumble was truly pleasing to the ear. A glance down the hybrid name listings shows that not a single cross emanating from Embley Park followed Balfour’s appellative advice, but a few originating from Bulstrode Park or Muncaster Castle - ‘Griersims’, ‘Russautinii’ and ‘Shilsoneri’, for example - did.

So ‘Lodauric’ and ‘Lodauric Iceberg’ are assigned here to Sir John Ramsden.

A report on the rhododendrons at Bulstrode, dated November 1922 and written by Sir John for Volume 2, Number 3, of *The Rhododendron Society Notes,* confirms that *R. auriculatum* was being paired with ‘everything available of good colour’ both that year and the year previously. Additionally, a report on the rhododendrons growing at Muncaster, written by Patrick Synge for the 1953 Rhododendron Yearbook, notes that:

> ‘The season at Muncaster is carried on through July and into August by large numbers of late flowering hybrids such as ‘Lodauric’, crosses of *auriculatum* with *serotinum, diaprepes* and *facetum,* as well as crosses of ‘Lodauric’ with *facetum,* and *diaprepes* with *facetum*’.

History tells us that Sir John lost his fortune and had to sell much of the Bulstrode Park estate in the early 1930s and it may have been this event that led to the disposal of some of his surplus rhododendron seedlings. At which point enter J. J. Crosfield and one of Walter Slocock’s sons. Yet once back on his feet, ‘Lodauric’ and *R. auriculatum* were an integral part of his breeding programme at Muncaster.

Conjecture stemming from a few known facts? Yes. But accurate? Who knows…



R. ‘Lodauric Iceberg’ AM 1958

R. ‘Lodauric Iceberg’ AM 1958

R. `Lodauric Iceberg' AM 1958

R. ‘Muncaster Mist’

R. ‘Muncaster Mist’

R. ‘Muncaster Mist’

R. ‘Muncaster Mist’

R. ‘Muncaster Mist’
campanulatum x *floribundum*
Hardiness - Flowering Period - Height & Spread
H6 Late March-April 4m x 6m

‘Muncaster Mist’ is probably the best known and most widely distributed of Sir John Ramsden’s rhododendron hybrids, a *campanulatum* x *floribundum* pairing made sometime before 1958 and introduced by his son, Sir William Pennington-Ramsden in 1964.

The foliage will be seen to be very close to some forms of the pollen parent, the leaf blades large, broadly elliptic, grey-green or dark-green, deeply veined and often convex in profile, and 16 to 20cm long by up to 7.5cm wide. They also have a thin, but persistent, greyish-fawn indumentum cloaking their underside and are held on the shrub for two years.

Any notion that the hybrid will remain medium-sized and compact will be quickly dispelled by a jog around the largest specimen extant in the Castle grounds, which has twice layered itself, so although still only a modest 4m or so high, from end to end the span is approaching 10m.

The flowers can open as early as mid March if the weather is mild, with new growth following, so a frost-free site is essential and although the locale of Muncaster’s champion might appear unprotected in the photographs above, in reality the grassy plateau on which it is set is only a few dozen metres from a hillside that plunges steeply down to the valley of the River Esk, so its out-of-the-woodland residence ticks two essential drainage boxes and as can be observed, the shrub is certainly thriving in a near full sun placement. On the other hand, a specimen grown in the Valley Gardens at Windsor Great Park - 233 miles to the south as the crow flies - and set in dappled shade amongst trees, is equally fine, the selected planting spot prolonging the deeper tones in the blooms that would otherwise soon be bleached by the stronger sunlight.

‘Muncaster Mist’ opens widely campanulate corollas that are 5cm long by 7cm across, their hue described as smoky-blue by some, though lilac-mauve is nearer the truth. These have a dark purple-black blotch at the base of the dorsal lobe and a smattering of similarly coloured spots extending upwards. The conical trusses can be packed with between nine and twelve bells and are produced in abandoned profusion by mature shrubs, but with more restraint by younger plants in their early years.


R. ‘Muncaster Mist’


R. ‘Muncaster Mist’

R. ‘Muncaster Mist’

R. ‘Muncaster Mist’

R. ‘Muncaster Mist’

R. ‘Shot Silk’



R. ‘Shot Silk’

campylocarpum x *dichroanthum*

Hardiness	Flowering Period	Height & Spread
H5	April-May	2.5m x 2.5m

Shot silk, the name of the fabric from which Sir John Ramsden borrowed the epithet for his *campylocarpum* x *dichroanthum* cross introduced in 1933, is woven from warp and weft yarns of two or more colours, the interweave producing an iridescent effect and the ‘shot’, down to the single throw of the bobbin that propels the weft thread through the warp. Garments produced with this material can be described as having a warp colour shot with a weft colour, so a blue warp may be shot with a pink weft, or the shot silk suit shown in the photograph on the left and dating to around 1790, have a purple warp and green weft.

Rhododendron ‘Shot Silk’ has a creamy-white warp and pale pink weft, all the corolla lobes having a smattering of darker pink spots and the dorsal bearing a crimson-red flash at its base. Like the cloth, the widely funnel-shaped and frilly-edged blooms are easily stained, wind-hurled raindrops being the principal culprit at Muncaster. Flesh-pink in the bud, seven or eight trumpets are carried in each rounded to conical truss.

Foliage-wise the hybrid has medium-sized leaves that are elliptic-lanceolate in shape, dark green in colour and somewhat glossy, the blades distinctly ribbed and often graced with a V-shaped profile. They are carried for two years, so the upright framework of branches though well-cloaked above, often bares its knees below.

Sir John might also have chosen to name his hybrid ‘Changeant’, although the alternate term for changeable silk doesn’t have quite the same ring.



R. ‘Shot Silk’

R. ‘Shot Silk’

R. ‘Shot Silk’

R. ‘Shot Silk’

R. ‘Venapens’

R. ‘Venapens’

venator x *forrestii* Repens

Hardiness - Flowering Period - Height & Spread

H5 Mid April-May 1m x 1.5m

‘Venapens’ is probably Sir John Ramsden’s most unappreciated and overlooked hybrid, but why this should be so is a mystery:

The epithet?

Adhering strictly to Sir Isaac Bayley Balfour’s appalling naming scheme, the parental combination used to generate the appellation - *venator* x *forrestii* Repens - for once rolls off the tongue.

The flowers?

Shiny, crimson-scarlet bells that are produced freely across the whole bush and are a joy to behold, with the row of plants alongside the main path at Muncaster, just down from the top of the hill, rarely failing to proffer an admirable display year on year.

The leaves, then?

But here too, no. For the dark green and glossy leaf blades, small and rigid ellipses with a distinct mucro and recurved margins, are more than fine, even though they are somewhat prone to spotting. Could it be that they do little to hide the branch structure beneath? As most are only held for a single year, with few remaining attached through a second winter.

That framework is composed of a multitude of upward-ascending limbs, tightly packed, congested even, which barely top 1m in height and that are gathered into a circle little more than 1.5m in diameter. So no great shakes visually, even when mottled with moss and lichen, but not hideous.

Hardiness too is good, not outstanding, but sufficient to cope with the wiles of most British gardens, though not the coldest of locales.

So why is ‘Venapens’ not challenging the dominance of the Hobbie Repens hybrids?

In hindsight, introducing the cross in the spring of 1940 can’t have helped its chances, but unlike others, ‘Venapens’ seems not to have re-emerged after the cessation of hostilities and the rollback of rationing, which is a pity, for the cross is a cracker.



R. ‘Venapens’

R. ‘Venapens’

R. ‘Venapens’

Samuel Smith:

Penjerrick Garden.

by the Hon. H. D. McLaren.

Mr. Barclay Fox's garden at Penjerrick has two claims to fame - for its own beauty and for the hybrid Rhododendrons that it has produced.

As for the first, the house stands, within view of the sea, at the top of a sloping hollow lawn, flanked by great trees that shade fine groups of Rhododendrons, and ending in a wooded dell where trees and Rhododendrons are yet more closely planted.

The garden achieves its beauty without apparent effort. One is not in the least conscious of any striving after effect, yet the ground has evidently been laid out originally by an owner of great taste and knowledge.

The Rhododendrons seen today have, however, with few exceptions, been planted by the present head gardener, Samuel Smith, since his appointment in 1889, but in this planting the tradition of the original maker of the garden has been well maintained. The sweep of the lawn has been left clear; the Rhododendrons shaded by the trees are of a scale even with trees as they grow at Penjerrick; there is interest and variety without overcrowding or fuss.

The success of the recent planting is perhaps due in part to the fact that the Rhododendrons, which are the main under planting, are kept in the nursery, not only until they are big enough to flower regularly but, above all, until they are big enough to be in scale with the large trees beside and beneath which they are to grow. Such a procedure is of course only possible where the new planting is restricted within comparatively small limits, and where the intention is to produce an effect rather than to make an extensive or complete collection of many different kinds. At Penjerrick, too, such procedure carries with it this corollary - that no plant shall leave the nursery unless it has the merit to shine in a most distinguished company. How many plants have failed to pass the test I do not know, but I know that few have passed it that were unworthy, for the head gardener has a keen eye for a good flower, and a ready bonfire for a bad one.

When a Rhododendron is planted out great care is taken in the preparation of an ample hole, and the plant receives frequent top dressings. This, with the deep soil and climate that obtain at Penjerrick. brings about a general air of well-being in the plants.

One other thing has contributed to the effectiveness of the planting. Perhaps two-thirds of the Rhododendrons are of but five kinds - *arboreums* and the home-raised hybrids ‘Barclayi’, ‘Penjerrick’, ‘Cornish Cross’ and ‘Lilianae’.

In appraising the value of these hybrids one has, first of all, to decide whether one's ideal Rhododendron bloom must have, in the words of the catalogue, ‘a well-filled conical truss’. If that is a *sine qua non* one visits Bagshot and not Penjerrick. On the Show bench, other things being equal, the conical truss has it - as any one must admit who has struggled to display effectively in a vase a single truss of ‘Barclayi’ or ‘Penjerrick’, with its curving stem and drooping bells. But on the plant the shower of drooping bells, where one truss seems to melt into the other, has a beauty, so the writer would urge, that is unobtainable with the other type of flower.

To adduce a proof, let us leave Penjerrick for a moment and tum to that other Cornish garden where there are to be seen, growing to great perfection, practically all the Rhododendron species that are known to cultivation, as well as the best of the hybrids.

Here, there is a Rhododendron uninteresting in shape, good but not specially good in its flower colour, with a lop-sided truss whose bells droop in every direction, which, when it is in flower, puts into the shade every other Rhododendron on the place - it is *R. orbiculare,* and a substantial part of its beauty is due to the hanging flowers.

Take three other beautiful species - *R. fargesii, R. williamsianum,* and *R. callimorphum;* much of the effect again is due to the fact that the flowers droop.

Now the hybrids ‘Barclayi’, ‘Penjerrick’, and ‘Cornish Cross’, are essentially of the class with the drooping truss, and in the writer's view they gain and do not lose from this.

‘Barclayi’ is the result of crossing ‘Glory of Penjerrick’ (a bright red form of Gill's hybrid between *R. arboreum* Blood Red and *R. griffithianum* Aucklandii) with *R. thomsonii*. Unfortunately the *thomsonii* blood has not made ‘Barclayi’ any hardier than its parent, ‘Glory of Penjerrick’, and with its early growth and flower it requires a garden of Cornish climate to make it really happy. But the beauty of the big deep red shining bells make it well worthy of a wall or greenhouse shelter in colder districts.

Three specially good forms have been named ‘Robert Fox’, ‘Ellen M. Fox’, and ‘Avis’, the latter paler in colour and not perhaps so effective as those of richer hue.

The form - ‘Robert Fox’ - has been propagated by grafting both at Penjerrick and by Messrs. Veitch of Exeter, and whether it is that this form be hardier in itself than the bulk, or whether the *ponticum* stock by retarding the growth, or otherwise, has some effect on it, I do not know, but I have certainly found these grafted plants to be much better doers than others from the original seed bed.

The hybrid named ‘Penjerrick’, was bred from *R. griffithianum* Aucklandii with *R. campylocarpum* as pollen parent. Others have made the same cross or the reverse cross. It has been made, I believe, at Caerhays, at Leonardslee, and at Lamellen, where the lovely deep red hybrid ‘Gilian’ is believed to be of this parentage.

The ‘Penjerricks’ of Penjerrick are however all of pale tints - pale yellow (only a shade paler than *campylocarpum* itself), pale pink, white flushed pink, yellow flushed pink, and white itself. The buds are of a deeper colour than the expanded flowers, and in some forms the bells are over four inches across [10.2cm]. The plants are quick-growing and free-flowering, with pale green leaves, looking a little sparse perhaps when out of flower, because the old leaves are not retained very long. They are a little early in flower and growth to suit a ‘frost hole’, but otherwise they proved quite hardy.

If the writer were confined to growing one hybrid Rhododendron he would, without hesitation, grow ‘Penjerrick’.

‘Cornish Cross’ is *R. thomsonii* crossed with *R. griffithianum* Aucklandii. It is very vigorous and hardy. It has large orbicular leaves and red blooms 4¼ inches across [11.4cm], lightened in some cases with a paler tint.

The plants are a very level lot, and it takes an expert eye to pick one that is better than another.

The colour, unlike that of ‘Barclayi’, is on a white foundation, and from a distance the plant is not so brilliant as that hybrid or as ‘Lilianae’, but the size, substance, and shape of the bloom place it very high. Indeed, all these three hybrids are remarkable for the substance and shape of the individual bloom, which has no crinkle in the petal or frilling at the edge.

‘Lilianae’ is a cross between a blood-red *R. arboreum* growing at Penjerrick and Gill's hybrid ‘Shilsonii’ (*R. barbatum* x *R. thomsonii*) as pollen parent. It has the qualities and defects of *arboreum*. The leaves are very fine, and of a deep green, long retained; the plant is upstanding, hardy, and a good grower. It flowers most freely everywhere but in North Wales; the flowers are a brilliant red, of varying shades in the different forms; the truss is fairly compact, but the *arboreum* blood prevents the flowers from being quite of such substance as are those of the hybrids previously mentioned.

There is a very fine late flowering form of this hybrid, which should be specially useful in the colder districts.

A large batch of these plants were raised, and a number of the surplus seedlings were

obtained by Messrs. Gill, who were the first to show it, and did so under the name 'Cornubia'.

These are the hybrids that predominate at Penjerrick, and a great show they make, 'Barclayi', and 'Lilianae' in great numbers flowering early in the season, with 'Penjerrick' and 'Cornish Cross' to follow.

The other hybrids raised at Penjerrick should be mentioned, though they are less well known. Three plants of *R. arboreum* x *R. barbatum* are known as 'Werei', and are judged by Mr. Millais to be the best pink of the *arboreum* type - the *barbatum* blood shows but little. It is one of a big batch of *arboreum* seedlings raised at Penjerrick.

'Tregedna' (*R. thomsonii* crossed with a pink form of *R. arboreum* as pollen plant) [the cross now listed as *arboreum* X *thomsonii* in the IRRC] is a very good hybrid, with finely shaped red flowers in a very compact truss, with splendid foliage, upright in habit and perfectly hardy. Apparently only a few plants were raised, and the original plants no longer exist at Penjerrick.

There is a fine plant, however, at Lanarth which is conspicuous for its beauty, although in very select company.

Lastly, there is a small batch of 'Budock' - a hybrid from *thomsonii,* the pollen parent being a deep red hybrid from *R. griffithianum* Aucklandii.

This is said by the raiser to have the best truss of any of his seedlings. It is a plant too tender for anything but a Cornish climate, growing very early, and with buds not too resistant to frost. It has a high truss of good light red colour.

Samuel Smith has only raised all told eleven Rhododendron crosses. Apart from the successful ones already mentioned, one - 'Lady Alice Fitzwilliam' x *keysii,* was a curiosity merely. One - *arboreum* (blood-red) X *R. griffithianum* Aucklandii, was discarded owing to war conditions. One - *thomsonii* x *campanulatum,* proved to be of no great merit. Another - *thomsonii* Grandiflora x *campylocarpum,* was first exhibited by Veitch under the name of 'Exminster'.

The plant of *thomsonii* that was used as a parent in several of these hybrids is a good bright form, but in no way remarkable - at any rate, to the inexpert eye. The *R. griffithianum* Aucklandii was a specially good and large-flowered form, itself raised at Penjerrick among a batch of seedlings from a plant that came originally from Menabilly.

The large proportion of successes out of so small a number of crosses constitutes a most remarkable record, the more remarkable because the raiser of these hybrids had no knowledge of the science of heredity, and he had necessarily but rare opportunities of visiting other gardens, of discussing his work with other hybridisers, or of obtaining pollen from far afield. Close observation of the qualities of a flower, and fine judgment in selecting the parents, have evidently been the mainspring of this success.

It was only fitting that Samuel Smith's work in raising Rhododendron hybrids should have been recognised by the Royal Horticultural Society in 1929 by the award to him of a Veitch Memorial Medal.

Finally, a brief mention must be made of some noteworthy plants of other genera at Penjerrick. The huge tree of *Laurelia serrata* is unique, *Laurus camphora,* and the *Anopteris glandulosa* are represented by fine specimens, while the rare conifers *Fitzroya patagonica, Podocarpus chilensis,* and *Araucaria Bidwillii* have few plants their equal in the country.

Dacrydium franklinii, Pinus insignis, P. montezumae, and *P. teocote* are also noteworthy, and big plants of the two best Magnolias - *M. campbellii* and *M. conspicua* - are worth going a long way to see when they are in flower.

In fine, those who, by Mr. Barclay Fox's ready courtesy, visit his Penjerrick garden - and they are many - may deem themselves most fortunate in having so fine an object lesson to show how a garden should be planted, and how Rhododendrons should be mated.

HENRY D. McLAREN.
BODNANT, 1928.

Henry McLaren's portrait of Penjerrick and its head gardener/hybridiser Samuel Smith, was published in *The Rhododendron Society Notes,* Volume 3, Number 4, in 1928.



Samuel Smith at Penjerrick, standing in front of *Podocarpus salignus, c.* 1930.



Penjerrick Garden in 1890 - a view across the lawn.



Penjerrick House in 1890.

Penjerrick Garden and the Legacy of Samuel Smith.



by Ned Lomax.

Some readers may know Rhododendron ‘Penjerrick’, a beautiful old hybrid which found particular favour amongst the founders and early members of the Rhododendron Society. H. D. McLaren, Second Lord Aberconway of Bodnant, thought so highly of it that he wrote, ‘if the writer were confined to growing one hybrid Rhododendron he would, without hesitation, grow Penjerrick’. [1]

A smaller number of readers may even know Penjerrick itself: a shadow of its former glory but still a wild and romantically beautiful garden near Falmouth in Cornwall. Towering American conifers grown from original seed introductions and enormous rhododendron specimens now in their senescence hint at the extensive collection once grown there, whilst contemporary reports published in popular gardening periodicals of the time are a reminder of the illustrious position which Penjerrick once held as one of the most significant British gardens of the 19th century. The garden’s fame waxed and waned over time and by the early 20th century its renown was chiefly for the hybridisation work of a now almost completely forgotten figure in the story of British rhododendron cultivation: Samuel Smith.

Penjerrick was one of a number of gardens created in the 19th century by members of the Fox family; a dynasty of Quaker businessmen who, over time, purchased extensive properties in the area and took a keen interest in the development of grounds and gardens, many of which survive today. The Falmouth branch of the family can be traced back to George Croker Fox who, in 1759, settled in the town before going on to found his shipping agency business, Messrs. G. C. Fox and Company.[2] He built a family home, Bank House, on the waterfront near the original quay in Falmouth, and leased the land behind known as ‘The Grove’ where his son, also George Croker, would later build the impressive property, Grove Hill. The family expanded and acquired more land around the town, but as time went by, it seems that the urge to get away from the hustle and bustle, and perhaps even the crime and disease associated with a busy port, increased. The country homes and gardens created by the family at this time, such as Glendurgan and Trebah, survive and flourish to this day as popular visitor attractions, but it was the farm of Penjerrick, leased by George Croker Fox in 1762[3] which was to become the most famous. George Croker died at Penjerrick in 1781[4] and the lease passed to his nephew Robert Were Fox. Precise details concerning the ownership of the farm and surrounding land over the coming years are unclear, but by 1844 the tithe apportionment showed that the land was jointly owned by George Croker’s grandsons, George Croker Fox III (from his first son George Croker II) and Robert Were Fox II (from his second son Robert Were) although the main house continued to be occupied by George and Robert’s Aunt Mary until her death in 1839.[5] The purchase of the freehold following her death appears to have been the catalyst for the development of the garden within its modern day boundaries.

Credit for the design and creation of the garden at Penjerrick can, on the whole, be attributed to three main figures: Robert Were Fox II (1789-1877), and two of his three children: his son Robert Barclay Fox (1817-1855) and his daughter Anna Maria Fox (1815-1897). The Quaker tradition of journal keeping was one which was practised by all of Robert Were Fox’s children, most significantly by his youngest daughter, Caroline, whose diaries were later published in 1881 and provide a valuable social account of the period. It is the diaries of Robert Barclay Fox, however, that reveal most about the development of the garden.

On March 19th 1837, Robert Barclay wrote:

- left -
Robert Were Fox, Anna Maria Fox & Robert Fox, pictured outside Penjerrick House.

'Walked two miles before breakfast & to Pennance Point before dinner & to Penjerrick before tea. On my return from the latter my father made me the following proposition, which of course I jumped at like gold, viz. Penjerrick estate (which is now let to Uncle G.C. at £20) together with the cottage & four fields adjacent, the croft & all the orchards at the same rent, with the proviso for him to take one or two of the fields at any time should he want to plant &c. & half the produce of the orchards… This is an object which would suit me best of any I could name'.[6]

Over the following couple of years Robert Barclay appears to have concerned himself mainly with the management of his farm estate. His journal records his taking possession of Penjerrick at the end of September 1837 and the following month contains details of a heated disagreement and eventual departure of an unsatisfactory employee.

On October 13th he writes:

'A man called Evans came up in the evening to offer himself as Matthey's successor. I hear a good character of him & I mean to give him a fair trial'.[7]

His faith was repaid and it proved to be the beginning of a long and fruitful association with Thomas Evans as manager of the Penjerrick farm estate. By 1839, Robert Barclay had set up bachelor quarters in the cottage at Penjerrick, whilst the main house continued as a second home for his father. During this period there are frequent records of his involvement with the design of the expanding grounds around the estate and it seems that he was very active in assisting his father in the continued development of the beautiful gardens already known to surround the main house too.

On June 24th 1839 he wrote:

'A grand day of havoc at Penjerrick. The new owners, Uncle G.C. & my father, made a day of it, slashing the big trees right & left. We had 7 men with hatchets, ropes and saws, & by evening the lawn looked like a battlefield - heaped with prostrate corpses of trees.'

A couple of days later more trees were felled, with Robert Barclay satisfied that the 'place [was] wondrously improved'.[8] The following year, father and son set about digging out the ponds and Robert Barclay takes credit for laying out the new sweeping drive.

In February 1841 he recorded:

'Spite of deep snow & furious easterly wind, my father and I trudged to Penjerrick & accomplished some very effective grouping and building with the large rocks carried yesterday. The snow enabled us to slide them into their allotted sites with great ease'.[9]

The pair were obviously very 'hands on' in their garden landscaping but they were of course assisted by labourers and, later, professional gardeners.

Mention has already been made of Thomas Evans, Robert Barclay's long term farm manager, and safe to say, friend. Throughout his journal, Robert Barclay makes frequent references to his interactions with 'honest Thomas Evans' as he calls him. It is perhaps only to be expected given his Quaker faith that Robert Barclay, like all members of the Society of Friends, would treat his loyal servant with respect and even a great deal of affection. He writes of spending his 21st birthday celebrations at Penjerrick where 'we all stowed away in Evans's parlour, pretty close work, and attacked the cake built for the occasion, the syllabub, peaches &c. with much satisfaction'.[10] And each Christmas day after concluding the year's accounts for the farm, he would sit down to a roast beef dinner with the Evans family. His entry for Christmas 1841 is quite revealing; 'Henceforth he [Tom] is to share the profits, in addition to his wages, as the just meed of his zeal and industry. Tom's wages are advanced to 10/-, half his time to be mine & the other half spent in the higher and lower gardens'.[11] Not only does this show the value placed on Thomas Evans as an employee but also reveals that whilst the farm was certainly Robert Barclay's venture, the garden was still primarily the domain of his father.

After 1843, mention of Robert Barclay's involvement at Penjerrick becomes less frequent as other business affairs, travel and his marriage to Jane Backhouse in 1844 occupied his attention. The marriage went on to yield five children but was to prove tragically short, as ill health forced Robert Barclay to travel to Egypt in 1855 in the hope that the climate might aid his recovery. He died of tuberculosis at Giza, Cairo, on March 10th of that same year,[12] at the age of 38. More tragically still, only five years later, his wife Jane also passed away leaving the children to the care of their grandfather, Robert Were Fox - by now a widower himself - and their two spinster aunts, Anna Maria and Caroline. The eldest child, Robert, was only ten years old. Little mention is made of the garden at Penjerrick in the coming years save for a few references in Caroline's journal. We know that by 1861, Thomas Evans' long tenure of service as Estate Manager and gardener had come to a close and that he had been succeeded by his son, also Thomas (1822-1889), who by this time was referred to as the Gardener, having previously been employed by the family as a coachman. Penjerrick had continued as a family country retreat until 1872 when Robert Were Fox retired and made it his permanent residence. Robert Were Fox was perhaps the most famous of his family, both for his horticultural achievements, and more particularly for the numerous scientific papers he published. Elected a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1848, his studies largely centred around innovations in mining (his main business interest), the temperature of the earth and magnetism. He also invented the Dipping Needle compass which was employed by Sir James Clarke Ross in his voyage to the Antarctic Ocean in 1837, which of course included the young naturalist, Joseph Dalton Hooker. His position within the scientific community meant that he frequently entertained important guests, one of whom was Captain Fitzroy recently returned from his voyage in HMS Beagle with Charles Darwin, who brought with him the gift of a brain coral which can still be seen in the garden at Penjerrick today. Significantly for the garden, Robert Were Fox's position also meant that he was often gifted interesting or untested plants by other horticultural enthusiasts of the day. Frederick Hamilton Davey, in 1897, mentions a few specimens in Robert Were Fox's renowned conifer collection: *Cedrus atlantica*, a gift from Mr. Pendarves Vivian, *Athrotaxis doniana* from William Shilson of Tremough, and *Pinus webbiana* from Mr. Rashleigh of Menabilly.[13] Writing in 1917, J. G. Millais, the great rhododendron historian of his day, recorded that 'Penjerrick was one of the first places to receive the seeds and young plants of Himalayan Rhododendrons, and all of the first species sent home by Sir Joseph Hooker are represented there by huge bushes or small trees'.[14] Of course it is well known that only a fraction of gardens which lay claim to possessing plants from original Hooker seed introductions can actually prove the connection, but in light of known correspondence between Robert Were Fox and William Hooker[15], his connection to Joseph Dalton Hooker and, at the very least, his friendship with the Shilsons of Tremough, who are known to have received seed for distribution to selected gardens in Cornwall, it seems likely that Penjerrick's claim can be upheld. Certainly the 1871 account of Henry Mills, Head Gardener at the nearby Enys Estate, which recorded 'a fine plant of *Rhododendron falconeri*' between 9 and 12 feet high [2.7 to 3.7m], as well as *Rhododendron thomsonii,* both of which had flowered the previous season, seems to lend further weight to the claim.[16]

Robert Were Fox's scientific interests and passion for experimentation appear to have influenced the creation of his garden. Many writers over the coming decades wrote at length on the beauty of Penjerrick and its unique setting and micro-climate, but it was in 1864 that interest was first drawn to his pioneering work with exotic plants. An article published in the *Journal of the Royal Institute of Cornwall* contained a list of plants growing at Tresco Abbey Gardens, Grove Hill and Penjerrick, taken from Professor Charles Daubeny's Lectures on Climate.[17] The list is extensive and diverse, and certainly portrays a plant collection drawn widely from all corners of the globe. An 1865 visitor to Rosehill, the family's primary residence in Falmouth at the time, recorded that 'Mr Fox has naturalised more than 300 exotic species; he has thus brought together the plants of Australia and New Zealand, the trees of the cold countries and those of hot countries, loaded all year round with flowers and fruit; large aloes, not imprisoned in a box or under glass houses, but planted freely in the ground… they grow as if they were at home'.[18]

Following the Henry Mills account of 1871, a number of further articles brought Penjerrick national acclaim. One from 1874 gives a detailed account of Robert Were Fox's famed conifer collection, but it is the description of the house which reveals more about the wonder which must have been experienced by visitors to Penjerrick. The writer describes how, after gaining entry to the house via a small door overgrown with fuchsias, they passed through a long glazed passageway filled with plants, to a drawing room containing all manner of books, microscopes, birds, animals, aquaria and even live tree frogs. They then followed the 'amiable daughter of the house' (presumably Anna Maria) with pet marmoset in tow, through a subterranean tunnel to a grotto covered in ferns and containing pools of golden carp, then through rooms with cockatoos, weaver-birds, monkeys and green parrots, before finally emerging onto the terrace to 'stop almost spell-bound at the fairy-like scene before us'.[19]

On July 25th 1877, Robert Were Fox died at the age of 88. The garden, now seemingly coming into its prime, passed to his sole remaining child, Anna Maria, who, at the age of 61, had spent much of her life residing and gardening at Penjerrick. Anna Maria had inherited her father's love for both science and horticulture, and she shared his passion for conifers in particular. She was also passionate about art and nature, and contemporary reports credited her with the wild beauty carefully cultivated in the garden; most particularly in the lower gardens known as the 'Wilderness'. She was a familiar figure to most residents of the Falmouth area and was very much part of the fabric of local society. Some years after her death one man said of her, 'I regarded Miss Anna Maria as a sweet evangelical Christian… She organised prayer meetings on Sunday afternoons in one of the Penjerrick cottages, and generally took a personal part in them'.[20] In fact, Anna Maria organised far more than prayer meetings. In 1832, at the age of just seventeen, Anna Maria and Caroline founded the Cornwall Polytechnic Society, later the Royal Cornwall Polytechnic Society under the patronage of King William IV, for the promotion of sciences, arts and literature. Following a long life characterised by charitable works, her obituary of 1897 stated 'Her life was one of the longest, simplest and most beneficent ever lived by a Cornish woman. By her death Falmouth in particular and Cornwall generally have lost a friend whose memory will long be fragrant. She was the connecting link between the past and present generation, and Penjerrick was a rich centre which her many friends will not soon forget'.[21] In the same way she also acts as a connecting link in our story of the garden at Penjerrick, for it was she, who in 1889, employed a young man who was to create the plants which were to characterise the next phase of the garden's development.

On July 27th 1889, Thomas Evans junior, Head Gardener and Steward of Penjerrick, died aged 67. Obviously such a garden would require a talented and proficient successor, as well as a man whose temperament suited that of his devoutly religious employer. To find such a man, it seems that Anna Maria turned to personal recommendation, and in particular that of the nephew that she had helped to raise. Joseph Gurney Fox, the youngest son of Robert Barclay Fox, had been only four years old when his father died. As a young adult, he left Falmouth for Newcastle, and then Eastham in Cheshire, where in 1873 he married Margaret May Just, daughter of the Managing Director of the Pacific Steam Co. By 1881 he was living with his wife and his younger sister Jane, at Eastham Vicarage, next door to the home of a retired merchant, whose household included a young under gardener by the name of Samuel Smith. It's unclear how the relationship between Joseph Gurney and this nineteen-year-old gardener developed, but we know that in 1889 Samuel travelled to Cornwall to take up his new position as Head Gardener at Penjerrick.

Born in Eastham on June 1st 1861, to Joseph Smith, an agricultural labourer, and his wife Sarah, Samuel was the third of nine children. Nothing is known of his early life until the 1885 record of his marriage in nearby Allerton, Lancashire, to Sarah Hughes, the daughter of a Welsh Farmer. Parish records continue to give us a glimpse into his life, though, through the reports of the births of his four children, three of whom survived: Mary (1887), Sarah (1890) and Annie Conway (1895). A newspaper report from 1900 gives us a valuable insight to the man and his principles. 'Samuel Smith, of Penjerrick, Budock, summoned in respect of the non-vaccination of a child, said he did not secure an exemption order because of ignorance of the law. But was not ignorant of vaccination. Let the law do what it would, he would not have animal matter inserted in his children'.[22] Although this statement was reportedly met with applause, he was still ordered to have his child vaccinated within a fortnight and to pay costs of £1 0s 6d! As a staunch advocate of temperance and a dedicated churchgoer, (he was superintendent of Budock Wesleyan Methodist Sunday School for 32 years and laid the foundation stone of Budock Wesleyan Chapel on behalf of the Band of Hope)[23] it is easy to see how, combined with their shared love of horticulture, a close working relationship could have developed between himself and Anna Maria. In Samuel Smith she had found a gardener whose passion for Penjerrick matched her own. He was to work for a further three generations of the family after her death, including Robert Fox, Robert Barclay Fox (or Barclay Fox as he was known), and finally Waldo Trench Fox, before his eventual retirement in 1935.

First mention of Samuel in connection to the garden at Penjerrick comes in an 1890 report on the Royal Cornwall Polytechnic Chrysanthemum Show, where he was awarded a prize for a collection of vegetables.[24] A few years later, and on the larger stage of the Royal Cornwall Agricultural Show, he won multiple prizes for a diverse range of plants including begonias, ferns, rhododendrons and vegetables.[25] By the time of Anna Maria's death in 1897, glowing reports of the garden were continuing to be published in the national press, and Samuel was even being mentioned by name. One author reported a fine specimen of *Chamaerops excelsa* (now called *Trachycarpus fortunei*) maturing several healthy looking fruit, which he proclaimed as 'a triumph of Mr Smith's, he having last summer tried an experiment in artificial pollination'.[26] Was this experimentation a precursor for his later work in hybridisation? The celebrated results of Samuel Smith's work as a raiser of rhododendron hybrids came to fruition over the following 30 years, but before we examine in more detail those plants for which he is remembered, let us first consider his work in the context of the day.

The Rhododendron Society Notes for 1928 include a fascinating article on Penjerrick Garden, submitted by H. D. McLaren. After discussing Samuel Smith's plants, he praises his success, particularly in light of the fact that 'the raiser of these hybrids had no prior knowledge of the science of heredity, and had necessarily, but rare, opportunities of visiting

Anna Maria Fox

Samuel Smith, in the garden at Penjerrick, *c.* 1930.



Penjerrick House from the pond, *c.* 1900.

other gardens, of discussing his work with other hybridisers, or of obtaining pollen from far afield'.[27] This could certainly be said to be true when compared to Lord Aberconway and his peers in the Rhododendron Society, but it seems to rather play down the significance of the Cornish horticultural community at the time. As we have already seen, Samuel was a regular exhibitor at local and county shows, and a quick scan through the various lists of exhibitors, winners and judges, reveals the names not only of large estate owners, but also their gardeners: Mr. Symons of Carclew, Mr. Sangwin of Trelissick, Mr. Eddy of Glendurgan, and perhaps most significantly, Mr. Gill of Tremough. These were the men with whom Samuel might have discussed his work, and in Richard Gill he would almost certainly have found an inspirational tutor. Richard Gill was Head Gardener to Henry Shilson at Tremough, near Penryn, and was a pioneer of Indian rhododendron hybridisation. Perhaps most famed for the creation of rhododendrons such as 'Shilsonii' and 'Beauty of Tremough', in later life he founded R. Gill and Son's Himalayan Nurseries, which became a major supplier of new species and hybrids to the great woodland gardens of the day. In 1888, sometime after the death of his first wife, he was married to Miss M. A. Evans, daughter of Thomas Evans (the younger) of Penjerrick. Although his new father-in-law died within a year of the wedding, it seems likely that Richard would have taken an interest in the garden at Penjerrick, even if only for the sake of his wife who grew up there and his mother-in-law who continued to live nearby for a further nine years. What words of guidance could this experienced head gardener have therefore given to the young Samuel Smith as he began his tenure at Penjerrick? It's amusing to speculate on the degree to which advice may have been exchanged between these two men, but one thing of which we can be certain is that they did exchange plants. As mentioned, one of Richard Gill's early successes was his 'Beauty of Tremough', a hybrid raised from a blood red form of *Rhododendron arboreum* crossed with *R. griffithianum*. The clone of 'Beauty of Tremough' received a First Class Certificate in 1902 but the remaining seedlings from the cross had been distributed to a select few gardens before they had flowered, and of course one of these gardens was Penjerrick. In April 1904, 'Glory of Penjerrick', with its large blooms showing the influence of *R. griffithianum* but coloured bright carmine, was exhibited for the first time and granted an Award of Merit by the Royal Horticultural Society. Along with 'Shilsonii' it was to go on to feature as a parent in the hybridisation work of Samuel Smith.

Following the death of Anna Maria Fox in 1897, ownership of Penjerrick passed to her nephew Robert Fox (1845-1915), by now a partner in the family shipping agency business and living at Grove Hill in Falmouth. Although records show that Robert Fox continued to support the garden at Penjerrick, and that prizes were awarded for exhibits made in his name, it seems that he was less involved than his aunt and never lived in the house at Penjerrick itself. By 1901 therefore, Samuel and Sarah Smith had become stewards of the estate, living in the main house with their three daughters, and presumably managing the garden with slightly less input from their employer. The relationship between the two families remained strong though. When Robert's son, Barclay was married in February 1900, Samuel and Sarah sent a gift of a silver and glass tea caddy,[28] and we know that Samuel later acted as a bearer at Robert Fox's funeral in 1915.[29] It was during this period of relative creative freedom that the majority of Samuel Smith's hybridisation work appears to have been undertaken. One account from 1904 states 'Mr Smith is very keen on hybrid Rhododendrons, and of these he has many thousands in various stages of growth'.[30] Presumably these 'thousands' may have been the results of relatively few crosses which were later selected or discarded, but even so, given the length of Samuel Smith's career at Penjerrick, it is perhaps a little surprising that he produced only a handful of named varieties. It should of course be pointed out that neither Samuel Smith nor his employers had the money, space or inclination to collect and breed rhododendrons on the scale of gardens such as Caerhays, Bodnant, Exbury or Borde Hill, but it is possible perhaps that this modest rate of production was a creative choice rather than due to limited resources. McLaren attributed a great deal of the success of the planting at Penjerrick to the fact that two-thirds of the rhododendrons used were of just five varieties: *Rhododendron arboreum,* 'Barclayi', 'Penjerrick', 'Cornish Cross' and 'Lilianae'. Credit he felt also lay in the fact that 'the head gardener has a keen eye for a good flower, and a ready bonfire for a bad one'.[31] Whether it was by careful design not to water down the effect or, as McLaren had earlier suggested, it was due to the limited range of plants with which Samuel Smith had to experiment is open to debate, but it is true that records from the period up to Robert Fox's death in 1915 don't include a great number of rhododendron species from which to hybridise.

Although much of Samuel Smith's hybridisation work was carried out during the lifetime of Robert Fox, the plants first flowered and were first exhibited by his son, Robert Barclay Fox (1873-1934). Like his father, Barclay Fox continued to use Grove Hill as his primary address, leaving Samuel and Sarah to run the house at Penjerrick, but records show that he definitely took a keen interest in the garden and was an avid plantsman himself. Fox family archives from the time include correspondence from notable figures such as W. J. Bean, curator of Kew Gardens, Professor Augustine Henry of the College of Science for Ireland, and Frederick Moore of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin, as well as garden owners including many of the founding members of the Rhododendron Society. These letters reveal a great deal of trade in new and interesting plants, with requests for propagation material from the garden at Penjerrick being made in return for gifts such as a group of plants sent to Samuel Smith from Kew in 1923, or the first layer of Rhododendron 'Loderi Pink Diamond' taken from the plant given to Colonel Stephenson Clark by Sir Edmund Loder. The warmth of these letters sent to Barclay Fox suggest a great deal of respect not only for him and his garden, but also for his head gardener. On the same day that a newspaper reported the first flowering of Reginald Farrer's introduction of *Rhododendron facetum* at Penjerrick,[32] Barclay Fox received a letter from Lionel de Rothschild, obviously in response to an earlier correspondence notifying him of the flower and thanking him for the plant, in which he said 'I am delighted you are pleased with the Facetum… Some day I hope you will come to my garden, or if you cannot manage it you must let your gardener come again in case there are any other seedlings he would like to have. We all owe so much to the glorious rhododendrons which you have produced at Penjerrick that any little thing we can do in return is a great pleasure'.[33] Whilst great estates such as Exbury were still in their ascendancy and had taken on the baton of rhododendron hybridisation following the huge influx of new Chinese species being introduced, change was unfortunately soon to come to Penjerrick and with it a close to my story of the garden.

Following the death of Barclay Fox in 1934, and in the absence of any children to pass Penjerrick on to, the estate was left to his nephew Wallace Talbot Trench on the proviso that he adopted the surname Fox, which he duly did, becoming Waldo Trench Fox. The following year, Waldo auctioned much of the contents of the house at Penjerrick before demolishing and rebuilding it. Care of the garden continued under Waldo Fox and his new Head Gardener, Bert Evans, but Samuel and Sarah, now in their mid 70s retired to the village of St Germans, near Plymouth, to live with their daughter Mary and her husband. Sarah died on June 3rd 1939 and Samuel followed her six years later on August 23rd 1945. They are buried together in the old churchyard at St Germans. The following accounts and descriptions include all the known crosses and selections made by Samuel Smith during his

long career at Penjerrick. The parentage (in brackets), where known, is given as it appears in the Rhododendron Register.

'Cornubia' (*arboreum* × 'Shilsonii'). Millais wrote 'If Mr. Smith has raised no other plant we are indebted to him for R. Cornubia'.[34] Raised around 1901 by crossing a red *Rhododendron arboreum* with 'Shilsonii', itself a cross between *R. barbatum* and *R. thomsonii,* 'Cornubia' was Samuel Smith's first attempt at rhododendron hybridisation, and it proved to be one of his best. The batch was raised at Penjerrick but half of the 400 or so seedlings were given to Richard Gill to grow on, and it was he who named and distributed it more widely. Samuel Smith recalls, 'the name Lilianae was given subsequently by the raiser when one of this cross was shown by him and awarded first prize at Truro in 1911, and he was asked to name it'.[35] It was shown by Gill at the RHS show the following year where it received an Award of Merit under the name of 'Cornubia'. The form 'Lilianae' which had been shown at Truro, also later received an Award of Merit when it was shown to the RHS by Robert Fox in 1914. Millais and McLaren both report quite some variation across the batch and this is certainly borne out in the surviving plants I have seen at Penjerrick. 'Cornubia' can still be found in larger historic collections although most plants alive today originate from a much smaller genetic stock and are therefore far more consistent. Flowering in March and April, but sometimes earlier, and with a succession of flowers, Millais reports that in a mild year one of his plants flowered continuously for two and a half months! Unfortunately, the original 'Lilianae', a large-flowered form named at Penjerrick as 'Naomi', and another form named 'Maeve' all now appear to be lost.

'Tregedna' (*arboreum* × *thomsonii*). Smith gives the parentage of this cross as *arboreum* × *thomsonii,*[36] the same as the earlier and perhaps better known 'Harrisii'. However, Millais and McLaren both record it as the reverse cross, with McLaren giving the extra detail that a pink form of *Rhododendron arboreum* acted as the pollen parent. Regardless, 'Tregedna' is now an extremely rare plant. A single specimen survives in the woodland garden at Antony in Cornwall, a gift from Bodnant in 1933, and the only other plant known to the author is at Pukeiti in New Zealand. A very small batch was raised, and by the time of H. D. McLaren's article of 1928, the original plants had already died at Penjerrick. Millais describes the flowers as larger and more brilliant than those of 'Harrisii'.

'Barclayi' ('Glory of Penjerrick' × t*homsonii*). Raised around the year 1908, Rhododendron 'Barclayi' unites the *R. griffithianum* and *R. arboreum* blood of Gill's 'Glory of Penjerrick' with a third Himalayan species, *R. thomsonii*. Millais records that the cross first flowered in 1913 and describes it as a glorified *R. thomsonii*. Several plants were raised and grown on in the garden at Penjerrick, of which five of the best were selected and named. The form 'Robert Fox' A.M. 1921, thought to be the best, was propagated and distributed by the Exeter Veitch nursery and is the most likely to be encountered today. 'Ellen M. Fox', or 'Helen Fox' as it appears in the *Rhododendron Register,* is a form with a deeper crimson flower and was named for Robert Fox's wife. 'Avice', or 'Avis' as it appears in the register, was a larger growing form with paler, unmarked flowers, which along with the forms 'Romala' and 'Waldo' now appear to have been lost. Avice, Romala and Waldo Trench were nieces and nephew to Barclay Fox.

'Werei' (*arboreum* × *barbatum*). A chance seedling which was selected from a batch of *Rhododendron arboreum* raised at Penjerrick, 'Werei' was described by Millais as 'the finest rose-pink arboreum' he had ever seen. Very little influence of *R. barbatum* can be seen in the flower although it does show in the leaf and bark. 'Werei' received an Award of Merit in 1921 and although the remaining plant at Penjerrick recently fell over, it survives in collections such as those at Bodnant, Exbury and Windsor Great Park.

'Penjerrick' (*campylocarpum* Elatum Group × *griffithianum*). Perhaps the best known of all of Samuel Smith's hybrids, 'Penjerrick' is still loved and grown by many rhododendron enthusiasts today. Writing in 1917, Millais records growing this cross (which was yet to flower at that time), indicating that the batch was raised sometime around 1912. No clonal names were ever attributed to these plants and therefore examples of the 'Penjerrick' Group may be encountered in a range of flower colours from ivory-white or pale yellow, through to flushed pink or pure pale pink. The second Lord Aberconway admired these plants so much that he obtained the surplus raised at Penjerrick and planted them as an avenue at Bodnant. This avenue has in recent years been reinstated. 'Penjerrick' received an Award of Merit in 1923. Although the *Rhododendron Register* records *Rhododendron campylocarpum* Elatum Group as the seed parent of this cross, Samuel Smith was keen to correct this when writing in 1926, 'the Rho Penjerrick is *griffithianum* × *campylocarpum,* and not the reverse as stated in your list'.[37]

'Cornish Cross' (*thomsonii* × *griffithianum*). In 1924 Millais wrote of 'Cornish Cross', 'by many judges this is considered to be the best new hybrid raised in Cornwall of recent years'. Although attempted by a number of earlier hybridisers, it is Samuel Smith's cross of *Rhododendron thomsonii* and *R. griffithianum* which proved most successful in its day and has continued to stand the test of time. 'Cornish Cross' was first exhibited at the Falmouth Show of 1923, suggesting that the cross was made slightly earlier than the date of 1920 given by W. J. Bean. It was propagated and distributed by the Veitch nurseries and can still be found in many collections today. Flowers emerge a deep reddish pink and quickly fade to flushed pink. It has perhaps been surpassed by the darker flowered form 'Exbury Cornish Cross' which was later bred from the F.C.C. form of *R. griffithianum* and received an Award of Merit in 1935.

'Budock' (*thomsonii* × unknown seedling). McLaren records that the pollen parent for this cross was a deep red hybrid from *Rhododendron griffithianum,* whilst Smith himself records the cross as '*thomsonii* Grandifolia' × 'J.C.W. Seedling',[38] presumably a large-leaved form of *R. thomsonii* crossed with a *R. griffithianum* hybrid obtained from J. C. Williams of Caerhays. McLaren goes on to say that Smith considered 'Budock' to have the best truss of any he had raised and it's certainly true that it is a very handsome plant when in flower. Only a small batch was raised at Penjerrick and it seems that it was not shared with many of the great rhododendron gardens at the time, perhaps due to its very tender nature. Two elderly plants are known to have survived at Glendurgan in the 1980s and, fortunately, propagation material was collected before they both died. 'Budock' is now represented by a single specimen replanted at Glendurgan in the early 1990s.

'Exminster' (*campylocarpum* × *thomsonii*). Raised at Penjerrick but then named and put into commerce by the Veitch nursery at Exeter, 'Exminster' received an Award of Merit in 1923. Smith's own notes give the parentage as '*thomsonii* Grandifolia' × *campylocarpum';* the reverse of that given in the register and most likely using the same parent plant as 'Budock'. McLaren records the seed parent as 'thomsonii Grandiflora' which seems more likely as a form collected and distributed by Messrs Gill under that name is known to have been in commerce at the time. Described in Gill's catalogue as 'a delightful variety with large bell-shaped flowers, hanging in a laxed truss. The colour varies in shades of apricot, sometimes paling to buff and sulphur pink', unfortunately 'Exminster' now seems to have been lost.

Two further crosses are recorded in the *Rhododendron Register.* 'Aphrodite', a white *arboreum* × *barbatum* hybrid, shares the same parentage as 'Werei'. 'Glorious' was a cross between an unnamed red hybrid and *Rhododendron thomsonii* and is mentioned by Millais in 1924, most likely seen by him during a visit to Penjerrick two years earlier, although it was not mentioned in Smith's 'official' list of 1926.

Both crosses now appear to be long since lost.

Mention is also made of a few other crosses which were quickly discarded, including 'Lady Alice Fitzwilliam' × *keysii,* which Millais saw in flower at Penjerrick in 1915. He described it as a crinkled form of *R. edgeworthii,* and of a dull bronze-yellow unattractive colour.

I began my research into the life and work of Samuel Smith some years ago and initially it proved difficult to find any information about him, beyond his name listed by a very few authors as the raiser of a number of historic rhododendron cultivars in a small garden in Cornwall. As time went by and I discovered more, I was pleased to find that he did receive recognition for his incredible work during his lifetime. Letters from the Fox family archives show that he was known to, and respected by, the great and the good of the 20th century rhododendron world, with praise for the garden and his work being offered by numerous correspondents and visitors including the great Ernest Wilson. In 1928, he was awarded the Veitch Memorial Medal by the RHS and in 1933 he was even elected an Associate of Honour for his distinguished service to horticulture, an accolade which was obviously a source of great pride to him and is marked by the inscription on his head stone, Samuel Smith (A.H.). The plants he produced were grown by enthusiasts across the country and were used widely in their own hybridisation work. A quick scan through the *Rhododendron Register* reveals how many new hybrids were raised by the likes of Magor, de Rothschild, Loder and particularly Lord Aberconway, all from Penjerrick plants. Although they never found great commercial success, Smith's plants were offered for sale by nurseries in Britain and as far away as New Zealand. This distribution has meant that, even one hundred or so years after many of them were bred, rhododendrons created by Samuel Smith survive in cultivation today. Some are unfortunately now lost and some only exist as a very few old specimens, but with the assistance of many members of the Rhododendron, Camellia and Magnolia Group, the National Trust Plant Conservation Centre and the micropropagation unit at Duchy College, Rosewarne, I am pleased that most of his plants can be saved and replanted in our gardens for future generations to enjoy. If nothing else, I hope that this article will highlight the importance of the work and legacy of a forgotten figure in the story of rhododendron cultivation, and that maybe a few more of us will remember the name Samuel Smith.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

During the course of writing this article I have received a great deal of help from a wide range of sources. My particular thanks go to Pam Hayward for her assistance in tracking down plants scattered across the country, members of the Rhododendron, Camellia and Magnolia Group for responding to my calls for information, Rachel Morin for allowing me such free access to Penjerrick, its plants and archives, and also to Charles Fox for access to his family photograph albums. I'm very grateful too to Charles Williams for allowing me to use his personal library, to the Cornwall Garden Society for reproducing articles from historic journals for me, and to the descendants of Samuel Smith for their fascinating memories.

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Rhododendron Camellia and Magnolia Group member Ned Lomax, who is also the Assistant Head Gardener at the National Trust's Glendurgan Garden, wrote this exhaustively researched article on Samuel Smith's hybrid legacy and the history of Penjerrick Gardens for the Group's *Rhododendrons Camellias & Magnolias 2019* Year Book. The botanical nomenclature has been updated in a few places to reflect the current classification, with some of the hybrid epithets and parentage equations also changed to mirror their entries in the 2005-published *International Rhododendron Register and Checklist,* rather than as they were known back in the 1920s.

The Elepidote Registrations:

Aphrodite
arboreum (white) X *barbatum*

Avis
thomsonii X 'Glory of Penjerrick'
Flower Colour: Crimson
Flowering Time: March-April
Height: Tall

Barclayi
thomsonii X 'Glory of Penjerrick'
Flower Colour: Crimson-red
Flowering Time: March-April
Height: Tall

Barclayi Helen Fox
thomsonii X 'Glory of Penjerrick'
Flower Colour: Crimson-scarlet
Flowering Time: March-April
Height: Tall

Barclayi Robert Fox
thomsonii X 'Glory of Penjerrick'
AM 1921
Flower Colour: Crimson
Flowering Time: March-April
Height: Tall

Budock
thomsonii X unknown

Cornish Cross
thomsonii X *griffithianum*
Flower Colour: Rose-pink
Flowering Time: April
Height: Tall

Cornubia
arboreum X 'Shilsonii'
AM 1912
Flower Colour: Scarlet
Flowering Time: February-Early April
Height: Tall

Exminster
thomsonii X *campylocarpum*
AM 1923
Flower Colour: Cream-pink

Glorious
'Red Hybrid' X *thomsonii*

Glory of Penjerrick
arboreum X *griffithianum*
AM 1904
Flower Colour: Strawberry Red
Flowering Time: April
Height: Tall

Lilianae
arboreum X 'Shilsonii'
AM 1914
Flower Colour: Blood Red-carmine
Height: Tall

Penjerrick
campylocarpum Elatum X *griffithianum*
AM 1923
Flower Colour: Pink
Flowering Time: April-Early May
Height: Tall

Penjerrick Cream
campylocarpum Elatum X *griffithianum*
Flower Colour: Cream
Flowering Time: April-Early May
Height: Tall

Penjerrick Pink
campylocarpum Elatum X *griffithianum*
Flower Colour: Pink
Flowering Time: April-Early May
Height: Tall

Romala
'Glory of Penjerrick' X *thomsonii*
Flower Colour: Crimson

Tregedna
arboreum X *thomsonii*
Flower Colour: Rosy-scarlet

Werei
arboreum X *barbatum*
AM 1921
Flower Colour: Rose-pink
Flowering Time: March-April
Height: Tall


R. ‘Barclayi’

R. ‘Barclayi’

R. ‘Barclayi’



R. ‘Barclayi’

The R. ‘Barclayi’ Pride
thomsonii x ‘Glory of Penjerrick’
Hardiness - Flowering Period - Height & Spread
H4 March-early April 5m x 4m

Named Forms:
Avis (glowing crimson).
Barclayi (intense crimson).
Barclayi Helen Fox (deep crimson-scarlet).
Barclayi Robert Fox - AM 1921 (blood red).

Any of the four named varieties of R. ‘Barclayi’ can light up a woodland garden in early spring, but only where frost-free conditions prevail.

That requirement, along with the H4 hardiness rating, would technically restrict the shrub’s planting sites to those along the west and south coasts, but specimens sometimes succeed in much colder gardens, at least where microclimates have been established, one such being Ray Wood at Castle Howard in North Yorkshire, where a mature plant of ‘Barclayi’ thrives and flowers annually, Jack permitting.

The cross itself was made at Penjerrick in Cornwall by the then head gardener Samuel Smith, sometime before 1913, the various clones later named and introduced by his employer, Robert Barclay Fox. All are tree-like shrubs with obovate leaves, the midribs of which are often tinted red. The flowers are basically crimson through blood red, the tone dependent on which clone is to hand, those corollas somewhat fleshy, furnished with blackish nectar pouches at the base of the tube, and graced with long white styles that stand out against the red hue of the blooms. Their supporting calyx has large lobes that are coloured as the corollas, which also have a glaucous bloom.



R. ‘Barclayi Robert Fox’ AM 1921

R. ‘Barclayi Robert Fox’ AM 1921

R. ‘Barclayi Robert Fox’ AM 1921

R. ‘Barclayi Robert Fox’ AM 1921

R. ‘Cornish Cross’

R. ‘Cornish Cross’

R. ‘Cornish Cross’

The 'Cornish Cross' Pride
thomsonii x *griffithianum*
Hardiness - Flowering Period - Height & Spread
H5 March-April-May 8m x 5m

Named Forms:
Cornish Cross (mottled rose-pink, outside darker).
Exbury Cornish Cross - AM 1935 (crimson).
Gilian - AM 1923 (cardinal red, faintly spotted).
Marquis of Lothian (vivid red to deep pink, flushed deeper).
Pengaer - AM 1911 (crimson-red).
William Dallimore (unknown).

If precedence were strictly enforced within the ranks of hybrid rhododendrons, then plants with a *thomsonii* x *griffithianum* parentage would be grouped together under a 'Marquis of Lothian' banner, for it was William Martin's cross, registered in 1977 but actually introduced in 1880, so paired sometime in the early 1870s and therefore conceived fifty years before R. 'Cornish Cross' made its debut on the horticultural stage, which kicked the ball rolling.

Martin was a Scottish settler to New Zealand, arriving in 1848, who had trained at the Royal Botanic Garden, Edinburgh. By 1880 he had established a thriving nursery business at Fairfield, the farm he named and built near Dunedin on the south island. And so successful was his enterprise that a printed *Catalogue of Plants Cultivated for Sale by William Martin & Son, Nurseryman and Seedsman* was issued that year listing some 1400 different species and hybrids across a wide range of genera. Moreover, 'Marquis of Lothian' was the first commercially available rhododendron bred in New Zealand.

The Welsh Conservative MP Sir John Talbot Dillwyn-Llewellyn made the second pairing of the two species at Penllergaer, his estate near Swansea, sometime before 1891. He named his selection from the offspring 'Pengaer' and the hybrid had fine crimson-red flowers with a rose sheen in the centre. Those corollas were 9cm wide at the mouth and carried in a loose truss of twelve, and the plant won an Award of Merit from the RHS when shown by Llewellyn in 1911.

The third repeat mating occurred the following year at Lamellen, the home of E. J. P. Magor, near St. Tudy in Cornwall, although the cross was mis-registered as a *campylocarpum* x *griffithianum* hybrid. Magor realised his error in later years - confirmed by his son, Major Walter Magor (reported in the online edition of *Trees & Shrubs Hardy in the British Isles,* by W. J. Bean, or rather, a team of ghostwriters) - although the original parentage still features in the 2004-published Second Edition of the *IRRC*. 'Gilian' has large, campanulate corollas of cardinal red that also seduced an Award of Merit out of the RHS in 1923, possibly in relief that the cross hadn't been christened 'Campyiffithianum' or 'Thomsogriff' (had the true parentage been remembered at the time).

The fourth and fifth duplicate combinations were both made around 1920:

At the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, the hybridiser can now only be tracked down to an anonymous member of staff, though the chosen epithet fares better as it honours one of the establishment's renowned luminaries, William Dallimore, author of *The Handbook of Coniferae and Ginkgoaceae,* published in 1923, and the man who was chiefly responsible for setting up the National Pinetum at Bedgebury in Kent.

At Penjerrick, near Falmouth in Cornwall, then the residence of Robert Barclay Fox (1873-1934), the hybridiser was of course Samuel Smith, who had been appointed as head gardener by Fox's older cousin, Anna Maria, in 1889, some years after she had inherited the property from her father Robert Were Fox (1789-1877), as her brother, the first Robert Barclay Fox (1817-1855), had predeceased them both.

Smith's plant, which was propagated and widely distributed by the Veitch Nursery, is of course the 'Cornish Cross' familiar to all rhodophiles. It has peeling, pinkish-brown bark, an open tree-like habit, elliptic through obovate leaves some 15cm long and 9cm wide that are deep green and glossy but very susceptible to the powdery mildew fungus. The flowers are large and heavily-textured, carried in a loose truss of six to nine funnel-campanulate corollas, 5-lobed and 8cm long and wide. Their colour is a mottled rose-pink inside, darker outside, with 5 crimson nectar pouches at the base of the throat, and at a distance, this produces a two-tone effect. Each corolla also comes with an equally large and irregularly-lobed calyx, usually dressed in a matching hue.

Many commentators have suggested that the parent plants used in the mating were inferior forms of the species and this may indeed be so, but Samuel Smith himself made the selection and probably decided that the luminous character of the blooms was far more important than offering up yet another tonally pristine concoction. A decision vindicated by the shrub's continued worldwide popularity.

Detractors should also note that Samuel Smith, despite only raising 18 named hybrids, was described as a head gardener with 'a keen eye for a good flower, and a ready bonfire for a bad one', who permitted no plant to 'leave the nursery unless it has the merit to shine in a most distinguished company' and showed 'fine judgement in selecting the parents'. Those three quotes are compliments paid by no less an authority than the 2nd Lord Aberconway, Henry McLaren of Bodnant, and they appear in the portrait of Penjerrick Garden he wrote for *The Rhododendron Society Notes,* Volume 3, Number 4, published in 1928, which is reproduced in full on pages 258 and 259. And of course, the RHS too were big fans, awarding the Cornishman a Veitch Memorial Medal for his hybridising work.

'Exbury Cornish Cross' is the epithet registered for the final pairing of the species, though a 'to date' caveat probably needs to be appended to that statement. Lionel de Rothschild made the match in the late 1920s and the two parent plants he used were indeed 'superior' forms, with the cross entered as LR 107 in the Exbury studbook. So when compared side-by-side, expert observers and rhodophiles alike will find it is as different to the Penjerrick plant as 'Kewense' is to 'Loderi'.

It goes without saying that the FCC-winning form of *R. griffithianum* supplied the pollen, while the *R. thomsonii* clone, which came from the Sunningdale Nursery, was propagated from the very best specimen of the species they grew, one that could trace its origin back to Sir Joseph Dalton Hooker's premier introduction of seed from Sikkim in 1850. Combined, the result mirrors the Smith plant in habit, bark and foliage, but gone is any mottling on the corollas, the flowers being pure crimson, their hue only varying in depth, with the outer surface graced by a soft bloom and the nectar pouches smaller and darker. In 1935 it too won an RHS Award of Merit, but for every garden that can boast a clone, a hundred more will ascribe to its far more personable predecessor.

All six members of the 'Cornish Cross' pride are creatures of a sheltered woodland glade, their hardiness rating only really sufficient long-term for gardens along the west coast and in the south. Those with spring frost problems should note that the Exbury clone begins opening its blooms in mid March, earlier if the season is mild, while the Penjerrick plant starts to dazzle onlookers almost a full month later. A height of 3-5m is more often quoted than the 8m shown here, but how many devotees have seen the specimen at Benmore in all its glory? Note too that only the Penjerrick and Exbury hybrids are available from the UK's dwindling number of specialist rhododendron nurseries.

R. ‘Cornish Cross’

R. 'Cornish Cross'

R. 'Cornish Cross'

R. ‘Cornubia’ AM 1912


R. 'Cornubia' AM 1912

R. 'Cornubia'
arboreum x 'Shilsonii'
Hardiness - Flowering Period - Height & Spread
H4-5 February-April 8m x 6m

An account in W. J. Bean's *Trees and Shrubs Hardy in the British Isles,* now freely available to read online, explains why there is so much variation in the hybrids of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It details the fact that the 'Cornubia' cross, made by Samuel Smith in 1901, has some 200 variations in cultivation, and 'Lilianae', from the same *arboreum* x 'Shilsonii' pairing, an equal number.

For the cross:

> 'was named 'Lilianae' at Penjerrick, but half of the 400 or so seedlings raised were made over to Messrs Gill, who named their share 'Cornubia', with the plants variable in the shade of red of their flowers'.

So much for vegetatively propagating named clones, yet this somewhat unethical practice - at least when viewed from today's standpoint - does at least answer the question of how the nurseries of the time were able to bring their new hybrids to market so quickly. Likely, it was assumed that all the seedlings would turn out to be the same, any side-by-side differences noted in the cold frames or nursery beds ignored and put down to different growing conditions post sale.

John Guille Millais thought differently:

> 'About 400 examples of this hybrid were raised by Mr Smith, and about half of these were transferred to Mr Gill at Tremough. I have seen the majority of these in flower, and was much struck by the variability of the plants, which, in their leaves, flowers, and habit, take after all three species from which it owes its origin. Some have bluish stems, leaves and flowers like *R. barbatum,* others again favour *R. thomsonii* or *R. arboreum,* whilst many are types in which either of the species predominate or are composite examples of all three parents. I have 23 examples, and notice that those which possess the most brilliant flowers are those which seem to have the smallest leaves. The big-leaved examples favouring *R. barbatum,* with the coriaceous upper surface of *R. arboreum,* all have grand red flowers, but they are not so brilliant as those that incline towards the *R. thomsonii* like truss'.
> *Rhododendrons and the Various Hybrids,* Longmans, Green and Co., 1917.

So the blood-red blooms of 'Cornubia' will come in slightly different shades dependent on which of the original 200 clones you are viewing. Or whichever one was subsequently propagated by the other nursery firms. Yet all are held in a balled truss of around twelve corollas, campanulate in shape, unspotted, but with darker nectar pouches at the base of the throat. The leaves too, as Millais confirms, will vary slightly from plant to plant, but fall within an elliptic through obovate descriptor and be some 15cm long. Matt green in colour, they have a thin indumentum across their abaxial surface.

Alternatively, 'Lilianae' holds around eighteen corollas in the truss, the blood-red hue shaded carmine, so presumably, one of the gardening staff at Penjerrick must have been sent round to dig-up those clones with a less populous inflorescence and set them aside for Richard Gill to collect.

The Penjerrick-retained clone or clones received an Award of Merit in 1914, but is or are now rarely found in gardens, at least with a 'Lilianae' label, a fact which might prompt owners of its or their near-twin to pop out and make a corolla count of their own.

'Cornubia' can grow into a fine, wide-spreading small tree when set in a woodland environment, or be kept more compact if grown in full sun, but should only be planted where winter lows stay above -12ºC, the mid point of the H5 rating. Flowering can commence as early as February and extend over many weeks if frost is held at bay, although the display is normally at a peak from late March into early April.

A last note regarding the epithet:

Contrary to popular belief, the chosen appellation does not in fact reference a species of mite from the *Epicriidae* family - *Cornubia ornata* - but comes from the latinisation of the word 'Cornwall', traceable to a deed from the mid 9th Century that professes to be a copy of one written more than two hundred years earlier in 705.


R. 'Cornubia' AM 1912

R. ‘Cornubia’ AM 1912

R. ‘Exminster’ AM 1923

R. 'Exminster' AM 1923

R. ‘Penjerrick’

The 'Penjerrick' Pride
campylocarpum x *griffithianum*
Hardiness - Flowering Period - Height & Spread
H4-5 April-early May 6m x 4m

Named Forms:
Penjerrick - AM 1923 (pale-pink).
Penjerrick Cream AM 1935 (creamy-white).
Penjerrick Pink (pink).

'The Most Beautiful Rhododendron Of All' ™

A hard sobriquet to live up to.

Especially when hardiness is lacking and the sheltering surrounds of a large woodland garden are required to produce even half-decent mature specimens.

But if resident and long-established in such a hallowed locale, then Samuel Smith's *campylocarpum* x *griffithianum* cross is an undoubted star.

The 'Penjerrick' pairing was made sometime between 1889 and 1917: the first date being when Anna Maria Fox - the daughter of Robert Were Fox II (1789-1877); who was the brother of Robert Barclay Fox (1817-1855); both of whom were sons of Robert Were Fox I (1768-1848) - appointed Smith head gardener at Penjerrick, her house and garden near Falmouth in Cornwall; the second, when John Guille Millais briefly noted its existence in his *Rhododendrons and the Various Hybrids,* though only as an unnamed pairing, the nine-word aside included in the *R. campylocarpum* x *R. griffithianum* paragraph on page 135. It was named in 1923, when the hybrid garnered an Award of Merit from the RHS, thereafter quickly taking on near mythical status - Henry McLaren, for instance, stating just five years later - in 1928's Volume 3, Number 4, of *The Rhododendron Society Notes,* (reproduced above) - that if he "were confined to growing just one hybrid Rhododendron he would, without hesitation, grow 'Penjerrick' ".

Regrettably, Lord Aberconway muddies the waters by reversing the parentage, writing that *R. campylocarpum* was used as the pollen parent. Other authors add to this confusion by associating 'Penjerrick' with the James Mangles hybrids 'Mrs Kingsmill' and 'Mrs Randall Davidson', which are indeed *griffithianum* x *campylocarpum* pairings, often declaring them 'an older introduction from the same cross', to quote from the Peter and Kenneth Cox tome *The Encyclopaedia of Rhododendron Hybrids* (Batsford, 1988). But Millais is equally guilty of the same association (and of reversing the parentage equation of the Valewood plants in the process), as are those experts responsible for past updates of *Bean's Tree and Shrubs*. In fairness, these three hybrids, along with other duplicate pairings made at Caerhays, Lamellen, Leonardslee, Trewithen and elsewhere - the majority currently unregistered with the *IRRC* - are very similar in general physical as well as floristic appearance. However, only 'Fay Norman', crossed in 1937, named in 2007 and registered in 2008, is genetically identical to 'Penjerrick'. Because as we now know, part of the DNA coding present in each newly conceived embryo is the exclusive gift of the female parent, be it a rhododendron seed or a human foetus. In a plant, amongst others, these include the chloroplast and mitochondria organelles, respectively crucial to the photosynthesis process and generating chemical energy within an individual cell. And their efficiency varies, in this case between different rhododendron species. So although historically *campylocarpum* x *griffithianum* crosses were considered the same as *griffithianum* x *campylocarpum* pairings, recent scientific research published over the last thirty years, has proved that this is not the case and such associations can no longer stand.

The original distribution of 'Penjerrick' consisted of seedlings, with Bodnant reportedly 'procuring some of the surplus' (Aberconway, *Journal of the Royal Horticultural Society,* Volume 76, 1951). So although three named clones are registered - 'Penjerrick', 'Penjerrick Cream' and 'Penjerrick Pink' - only the flowers of the 1923 AM form are committed to being pale pink, the gamut of the other seedlings encompassing white, ivory-white, white flushed pink, cream, pale yellow, pale yellow flushed pink, and pale pink.

Those blooms are carried in lax to pendent trusses of six through nine campanulate corollas, each bell 10cm across at the mouth with a ring of small, crimson-coloured nectar pouches encircling the ovary at the base of the throat. And most clones, but not all, are also slightly scented.

The leaf blades are elliptic through oblong in shape, obtuse at the tip but with a distinct mucro, rounded or somewhat cordate at the base, up to 15cm long by 7.5cm wide, mid to dark green above and glossy, a paler grey-green below. But they are only held for one year and in wetter locales can be prone to mildew and leaf spot.

'Penjerrick' is a vigorous grower, forming a small tree in time, often with a single, smooth-barked trunk. Most specimens adopt an umbrella-shaped form, though some clones may be quite sparsely branched. All flower freely, mature shrubs usually awash with bloom from mid April onwards. However, the hybrid is not suitable for a 'frost hole' - to again quote Mr. McLaren - and it only 'just survives with us in Scotland, but suffers badly in severe winters' - to once again quote the owners of Glendoick Gardens.

Yet two hundred miles south of Perth, in the far from balmy climes of Ray Wood on the Howardian Hills of North Yorkshire, the 'Penjerrick' clones thrive, though as with the resident specimen of 'Barclayi', Jack may occasionally trounce the flower buds.


R. 'Penjerrick'

R. `Penjerrick'

R. ‘Penjerrick’

R. ‘Penjerrick Cream’ AM 1935

R. ‘Penjerrick Pink’

J. C. Williams:

J. C. Williams.

by the Rt. Rev. J. W. Hunkin, Bishop of Truro.

J. C. Williams was a very private man and the following article was written as an obituary by the Rt. Rev. J. W. Hunkin, who was an enthusiastic amateur gardener and friend.

John Charles Williams was born at Caerhays Castle on September 30th 1861. The Castle had been bought in 1854 with all the land in the parish, excepting the glebe, by his grandfather, Michael Williams, Sheriff of Glamorganshire 1839, MP for West Cornwall 1853-1858, chairman of the Cornwall railway, who renovated the building and developed its grounds. During a period of unemployment he engaged a large number of Cornish miners to remove the top of a hill which obstructed the view from the Castle towards the sea. His son, John Michael Williams, the father of John Charles was a very busy man; he was Sheriff of Cornwall 1865, and took a leading part in finance and banking in the county. In 1852 he married Elizabeth Maria, elder daughter of Stephen Davey of Bochym, near the Lizard. The garden was one of his great interests but he had little time to give it. John Charles, his second son was sent to Rugby school. From the first, independent in mind, he did not take very kindly to school life. His sister, Mrs. Powys Rogers, remembers that for three terms running he was set to draw an Ivy leaf! He left Rugby without regret and went for a tour of the Continent with a tutor, though in point of fact, as things turned out, John Charles looked after him.

John Charles's great interest at the time was Mineralogy, and in Caerhays Castle there used to be no less than three considerable collections of minerals. On his return from the Continent he went up to Cambridge, where he matriculated in 1881 as a member of Trinity Hall. The entry in the Tutors Book reads as follows:

> "6 Sept 1881. Williams - John Charles, age twenty, brother of Michael Williams Esq., Gnaton Hall, Yealmpton, Plympton, S. Devon".

As the form of the entry suggests, his father had died in 1880. John Charles only resided at Cambridge for about a year; he then went travelling with a cousin and stayed a few days with the sister who had married Mr. Powys Rogers and was living in Queensland.

His mother went on living in Caerhays Castle until her death, and John Charles bought himself a place at Werrington, near Launceston. His mother died in 1884, and in the same year he married Mary Christian, second daughter of Sir Frederick Martin Williams Bart., M.P., of Goonvera, Perran-ar-Worthal. They lived partly at Caerhays and partly at Werrington. The first of their children were born at Werrington Park.

By this time Mr. Williams had begun to take up horticulture as a serious pursuit, one of his first interests being Orchids, of which he grew a number at Werrington. At the age of twenty-eight, in 1889, he was elected to the County Council, and was one of that Council's original members. The year previously he had been appointed High Sheriff of Cornwall; from 1918 to 1936 he was Lord Lieutenant.

Mr. Williams was very conscientious in carrying out his duties as a County Councillor. He was among the small number who would sit through long, tedious meetings to the end; he seldom spoke, but he was always listened too with the greatest attention. He was a distinguished speaker, always clear and to the point, with a telling word or epigram to throw in just at the right moment. In a turbulent political meeting he could always get a hearing and when heckled he was at his best.

For some years Mr. Williams was Chairman of the County Highways Committee. At this, as at most Committees, the members have from time to time to put up with a good deal of nonsense. On one occasion, when some perversely opposing a reasonable scheme of widening a certain road, Mr. Williams, tired of the bickering, ironically proposed that the



J. C. Williams.

road should be narrowed. He was also at one time Chairman of the Sea Fisheries Committee, and for many years he did outstanding service as a member of the County Education Committee. His own work for education was largely done behind the scenes; no one knows how much education in Cornwall owes to him. He was the leader in the movement to provide playing-fields in the country; and there were literally hundreds of children who received help at some critical period of their lives without knowing from whom it came; the instruments of his generosity were strictly forbidden to disclose its source. The big chiming town clock of Truro city was one of the lesser of his anonymous gifts; a better example of his unobtrusive generosity was the provision of the first instalment of the heating system of the cathedral church. He was a very generous benefactor to the National Trust, to which in 1931 he presented 108 acres in order to preserve the Nare Head for the nation. It is to him more than anyone else that the Royal Institution of Cornwall is indebted for its present convenient premises.

A former Director of the County Education, Mr F. R. Pascoe, describes how, many years ago, he once took Mr. Williams with "Q" (Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch) to visit a remote country school without notice. They found the place very untidy, and on leaving Mr. Williams remarked: "Well, I've had all the disadvantages of a public school education, but I must say I don't think the masters top boots ought to be in the wash basin".

Mr. Williams was a keen student of European politics and of European history. On one occasion he was seen at the County Hall between Committee meetings in earnest conversation with his cousin Mr. H. H. Williams, of Pencalenick. Someone asked, "What are you two plotting now?" But the actual question on which the two cousins were so intently engaged was whether or not Napoleon used eye-glasses or not!

From 1892-1895 Mr. J. C. Williams sat in Parliament as Member for the Truro-Helston Division, but he did not seek re-election. He frankly disliked London and he held very strongly that his children should not be brought up there and also that he should be with them as they grew up. Moreover, he thought he could do as good work in Cornwall as at Westminster. These were his serious reasons. Among his friends more frivolous ones passed round. Some said that he could not bear sitting up late; others that in London he could not see his Water-lilies opening. And that may bring this brief narrative back to the great garden at Caerhays.

The entrance to the garden is through the lodge gate at the top of the drive which leads gently down to the Castle. It is an amazing half mile, through a spacious planting of Cherries, Magnolias, Maples, beds of Azaleas, mountain Rhododendrons, with Lilies among them, and great clumps of blue Hydrangeas further up the hillside where the natural wood mounts guard against attacking wind. Then, when the visitor's attention is wrested from the planting to turn a corner in the drive, it is riveted upon the beautiful little sandy beach at the bottom of the gully beyond the Castle, framed in a setting where man has not tried to outdo nature but to pay tribute to it. At length the visitor approaches the house. As he passes through the archway he glances through the door of the holy of holies, where so many creations were initiated, and finally comes up to the front door itself, outside the porch, and finds Mr. Williams awaiting him, always with one of the long bamboo sticks which he himself had cut and bound round with string at the handle end. Here, opposite the front door, he grew the Fuchsias which were one of his specialities in later years.

The Caerhays Garden Book begins on January 1 1897, and contains entries on over 1650 days in Mr. Williams's own handwriting. Through the great kindness of Mr Charles Williams, MP, who succeeded his father at Caerhays in 1939, I have been able to make a close study of this most interesting document. It consists of three hundred and sixty-five pages for three hundred and sixty-five days of the year, with over twenty extra pages crowded with records of plantings for each year from 1895 to 1934 inclusive.

Mr. Williams interests extended to birds, wild flowers and ferns, as well as a large variety of cultivated plants. The Garden Book contains many notes of observations of very varied kinds, from those on weather conditions, to those recording the first sight of a swallow. A few examples must suffice:

"We had lately had a terrific easterly gale, it cut the boughs of the yew as if a man had worked with his clippers for hours" (February 1, 1921);

"Saw the blackthorn open" (February 8, 1931);

"Great storm of hail and wind to beat down all the daffodils did its work well" (March 3, 1897);

"Bob saw the first martins" (March 22, 1907);

"On the day before yesterday May saw three whales in our bay" (March 29, 1935);

"I saw the first swallow" (March 31, 1897);

"Cherries much injured by birds and bad shooting" (April 3, 1934);

"I saw the first goldfinch yesterday" (April 18, 1918);

"We saw may out near St Blazey a fortnight since" (May 1, 1913);

"Rain and slugs are the main crop this season" (November 14, 1924).

Mr. Williams was mainly interested in plants as beautiful in themselves and as fitting into their surroundings. Often when riding he would ask a road-man to refrain from cutting a Polypody Fern or wild Orchid; and he would frequently stop to look at a single plant in a cottage garden. When in 1906 he had given up hunting for public work he often used to say that he regretted it for one reason only - because it took him into nice places. He hated a motor car because it went too quickly for him to see things in hedges, although for his work he had one of the first in Cornwall.

The chief plantation at Caerhays lies on rising ground situated, as has already been indicated, round the castle from south-east to north-west; the south-east wind sweeps up into it from the cove below. Thus the soil being naturally acid and enriched with leaf mould, the first requisite was to provided shelter, to which Mr. Williams's father had contributed when he put in some of the plants grown now to large size. In 1911 (April 2) Sir. E. Loder estimated the height of a big *Pinus insignis* in the grounds at 105 feet [32m]. Mr. Williams himself set to work systematically to improve shelter conditions. About 1900 a great Laurel hedge was planted all along the side of the hill, though there are gaps here and there; these Laurels are now 25 to 30 feet in height [7.6 to 9.1m]. Laurels are also planted freely elsewhere over the ground to form large numbers of little retreats. To walk through the woodland is to come constantly upon them, and the sights that suddenly meet the eye are unforgettable. The visitor bursts in upon, not one or two, but a whole group of great Rhododendrons, trees rather than bushes, blazing with large trusses of magnificent flowers, white or pink or red. The whole planning has been carried out with masterly and at the same time unobtrusive skill, and the effects are often marvellous.

Another form of shelter is provided by the thick clumps of Bamboos. These were planted as early as 1895 and 1896; especially *Bambusa fastuosa,* which have grown to a height of 25 feet [7.6m].

Mr. Williams's outstanding contributions to horticulture are connected with the Chinese expeditions of E. H. Wilson and G. Forrest (1901-1932).

Wilson's expeditions to Japan brought to light the Kurume Azaleas; and of these there was a complete collection at Caerhays sent by Wilson himself.

Some of Mr. Williams's other interests may be briefly mentioned. The Garden Book in its first years shows him watching the growth of his Bamboos and Tree Ferns and caring for his Water Lilies, Ferns, Irises, Cyclamen, Anemones, Hamamelis, Lapageria; and first and always the Rhododendrons, Camellias, Magnolias and Daffodils. He did a good deal of work with Daffodils and the first entry in the Garden Book (January 1, 1897) reads:

"Narcissus, Minimus, Crocus, C. Coum, aconites, snowdrops in flower, most of the daffodils showing above ground".

In 1898 the "new" Daffodil ground in the 'electric light field' was made, and there is a note:

"Big lot of two year old daffodils from Appleshaw and new varieties 207 to 218".

"Two year olds in new ground 7,000, over 2,000 in lower ground" (July 20, 1989).

Earlier we find a note on January 30, 1898:

"I have made my first cross, minor with soleil d'or".

Appleshaw was where lived the Rev. G. H. Engleheart, a great personal friend of Mr. Williams and his chief guide as to Daffodil growing. He came to Caerhays every spring up to about 1914. Mr. Williams was in constant touch also with his cousin, Mr. P. D. Williams of Lanarth, St Keverne, near the Lizard, who became perhaps the greatest Daffodil grower of his day. A special interest therefore, attaches to a note in the Lanarth Garden Book on April 5, 1897:

"I went with J.C.W. to see Engleheart's seedlings and was astounded at his great success."

Mr. Williams Presidential Address to the Royal Institution of Cornwall in 1900 was on the subject of Gardening. In this he referred to Irises and Rhododendrons, as well as to Daffodils, and pointed out the possibilities of their development for providing flowers for winter and early spring: Irises from November to January, Rhododendrons from December to May, Daffodils from January onwards; and when we come to the middle of May, he said, the garden would take care of itself. He paid a tribute to the work of Mr. Shilson in producing early flowering Rhododendrons and mentioned the fact that he himself had managed to produce a trumpet Daffodil which flowered before the end of January.

Mr. Williams began raising Daffodils in 1893. Many of his varieties have never been registered and have never appeared in commerce, for he particularly desired not to disturb the market for the professional grower, but from the Classified List published by the Royal Horticultural Society the following may be mentioned: 'Victory' a bicolour Imcomparabilis, and 'Fleetwing' a yellow Imcomparabilis, produced in 1907; 'Bedouin' another bicolour Imcomparabilis (awarded the A.M., April 21, 1914), 1908; 'Gadny' a bicolour Imcomparabilis, and 'Charm', 'Red Chief', and 'White Star,' all bicolour Barrii 1910; 'Rubellite,' a Tazetta, 1912 (A.M., March 19, 1912); 'Croesus,' a yellow Imcomparabilis (F.C.C., April 2, 1912, A.M., April 7, 1914), 1912; 'Midas' a yellow Barrii, 1913; 'Dragoon' and 'Sealing Wax,' both bicolour Barrii, 1913; 'Hospodar' and 'Tamerlane,' both yellow Imcomparabilis, 1914; 'Syphax,' a Jonquil hybrid, 1914 (A.M., March 24, 1914); 'Red Beacon,' a bicolour Barrii, 1916; 'Glorious' a famous Tazetta, 1923 (F.C.C., March 23, 1926, and the A.M., three times); 'Magician' a bicolour Barrii, 1927; 'Osprey' a Leedsii, 1927; 'Tipperary Tim,' a yellow Trumpet, 1929; 'Florinda' a yellow Imcomparabilis, 1931; 'Pepper,' another yellow Imcomparabilis, 1933 (A.M., February 28, 1935); 'Bartley,' a Cyclamineus hybrid, 1934; 'Goldilocks,' a Jonquil hybrid, 1937.

Mr. Williams was one of the initiators and chief supporters of the Truro Flower Show, which was first held in 1892 and continued, with a break during the late war, right up to 1939. At first the Show was chiefly for Daffodils, but before long it included flowering trees and shrubs, and one of its principal attractions year by year was the stand of Rhododendrons from Caerhays. The R.H.S. sent deputations to the Show from time to time.

A further word may be added here about Werrington Park. Parts of it were laid out with great skill, especially the 'Terrace' or 'Chinese' garden across the valley from the house, made to take the early Wilson rhododendrons and then extended for Forrest's. Mr. Fitt, the head gardener here for a number of years, was a particularly skilful raiser of seedlings. Eventually the Park passed to Mr. Williams's son Alfred, who after distinguished service in the Royal Navy in the last war, is again serving oversees in this. Here are to be seen fine hedges of *Stranvesia undulate* and *Osmanthus delavayi,* and the famous clump of *Rhododendron lacteum* from which Mr. Alfred drew the exhibit which was awarded the F.C.C. in March 1926. Here also was produced the fine hybrid 'May Day' (*haematodes* x *griersonianum*) which received the Award of Merit in May 1932.

Mr. Williams started growing Rhododendrons about 1885. He began with Waterer hybrids, 'Sir J. Whitworth' among them. He aimed at raising earlier flowering forms by using Hooker's introductions; 'Sappho' (white with a dark blotch) was the only one he always liked and there is a very big group of this at Caerhays. Constant reading of J. H. Mangles had taught him, he tells us (*Rhododendron Society Notes,* 3, p.63), to cross species rather than hybrids.

The first of E. H. Wilson's four journeys to Western China was undertaken for Messers. Vietch, 1899-1902, and Mr. Williams immediately realised the importance of his discoveries. Thus we find in the Caerhays Garden Book, under the date October 1903:

"Bought Chinese rhododendrons, 25 sorts from Veitch,"

And a little later in the same year:

"Some Chinese plants from Veitch."

Wilson's second journey was again financed by Veitch (1903-1905) and in January 1906 Mr. Williams writes in his Garden Book:

"Have agreed with Veitch for the right to select 15 of Wilson's second Rhododendrons in which are several yellows".

And then on March 14:

"The second lot of Chinamen arrived and were planted; all were very small".

It is not too much to say that Mr. Williams did more for the cultivation of Rhododendron and other Ericaceous and woody plants in the earlier stages of the modern Asiatic plant exploration than anyone else (*The Gardeners Chronicle,* April 8, 1939, p. 223). He was the patron of George Forrest's three expeditions to Yunnan and a sharer in others. Wilson and Forrest were among the many visitors to Caerhays.

Thus there is an entry in the Garden Book, July 16, 1911:

"Wilson here and saw his Buddleias at their best".

Mr. Williams was particularly fond of Forrest, and it is pleasant to recall the evening of

November 16, 1920, when Forrest (who had visited Caerhays in May) gave a fascinating lecture on "Recent Discoveries of Rhododendrons in China" with Mr. Williams in the chair. Some years later (May 6, 1925) he was taking the chair at a similar gathering to hear an address by Captain Kingdon-Ward.

It was at Caerhays that a number of the plants introduced by Wilson first reached their flowering stage in Europe. *Rhododendron fargesii* flowered there in 1911; Mr. Williams describes it as "a lovely shrub but not a wonderful flower." *R. sutchuenense* flowered the same year; March is its flowering month at Caerhays. *R. auriculatum* opened its white sweet-scented flowers at Caerhays in 1912 and probably the finest plants in the country are there. *R. calophytum* on April 22, 1915, was "very good indeed" at Caerhays. Mr. Williams was the first grower to appreciate *R. orbiculare* with its round foliage and its symmetrical form; there are several references to it in the Garden Book; on April 28, 1920, for instance, "*R. orbiculare* is the best thing we have."

The Rhododendron called after him, *R. williamsianum,* with its beautiful flowers curiously large in proportion to the size of the shrub, was introduced by Wilson in 1908. A finely grown specimen was awarded the prize for the best plant exhibited at the first of the Rhododendrons Society Shows (April 27, 1926).

In the first volume of the Rhododendron Society's *Notes* (1917), Professor Bayley Balfour enumerates forty-seven of Forrest's introductions which had been raised by Mr. Williams. In the same volume Mr. Williams himself gives a list of Rhododendron species growing at Caerhays in July 1917; the total number of species and natural varieties enumerated at that date was 264. It is interesting to note that on March 15, 1917, ten species were recorded in the Garden Book as showing colour; there was a good deal of frost that March; ten species, some of them the same were in flower on March 27. It had been a very cold winter and it was a very late season; Mr. Williams remarks (April 11) "Nearly all the stuff is or has been frosted." But by April 26 thirty-four species were open. On May 4, *R. virgatum,* which had been in flower on March 27, remained "the best Rhododendron." On May 16, the Garden Book note reads: "the Aucklandii [*R. griffithianum*] just about its best and 50 other species more or less in flower. It is very dry for May." On July 7 Wilson's *fortunei* were at their best. Later, on August 5, Mr. Williams notes: "Went round the garden with Harrow of Edinburgh, we found some flowers on" - and then he mentions twelve species. Three days later (August 8) he adds, "several kinds of mountain Rhododendrons show flower." Nine Rhododendrons were showing "bits of flower" on September 1; these had been reduced to six or eight by September 7; twelve were open on September 23. It was still a late season, for there is a note on October 17, "We have corn out now"; and some was still out on the Barton on October 21. The last Rhododendron note for the season occurs on November 5: "Several bits of *R. oreotrephes* showing flower with perhaps a dozen other species." The next season 1917-1918, begins with the record on November 27: "*R. mucronulatum* starting." This is followed on December 4 by the observation "*R. venustum* (*nudiflorum*) [*R. periclymenoides*] is nice"; and on the following day (December 5): "One plant of *R. moupinense* open." The following year 1917 closes with a significant entry (December 31): "We have just put about 200 fine Chinamen in the rockery … a very cold start for them."

Plantings on a considerable scale were, of course, being undertaken at Caerhays. Some of the first entries in the Garden Book recording the planting of "230 named Waterers" in the spring of 1895, of "120 named Rhododendrons and 160 ditto" in the spring of 1896, and of a large lot of Aucklandii seedlings [*R. griffithianum*] to form what was known as "the Aucklandii garden" south of the house. No one knows the number of Rhododendron species eventually planted at Caerhays; it must run into many hundreds if not into thousands. Mr. Williams made very careful notes of them; he had a marvellous power of concentrating on a difficult and complicated subject and becoming a master of it. A slight indication of the labour involved appears in a short article on "Rhododendron Series" contributed by him in October 1923 to *The Rhododendron Society Notes,* Volume 2, Number 4, pp.208-209. "Perhaps some may not care for the labour of doing this" he wrote (i.e. studying the immense number of Rhododendrons which had been discovered and of grouping them in series), "but there is no easy way of learning any difficult thing, except by close contact with it." He himself was not content until he knew not only the height at which collected plants grew as well as their position, but also the geology of the district. The notes appended to the plates in the *Botanical Magazine* of plants grown at Caerhays often illustrate Mr. Williams's painstaking study of the conditions most suitable for their cultivation, e.g. *R. stamineum,* t. 8601, *R. brachyanthum,* t. 8750, *R. oreotrephes,* t. 8784, *R. dichroanthum,* t. 8815.

The situation of Werrington Park is some ways a contrast to that of Caerhays. Mr. Williams would never grow Indian Rhododendrons at Werrington because the climate was not suitable for them and, he said, it was only stupid to put beautiful plants where they could only become stunted and ugly. He was keen on experimenting, but once satisfied that a situation was wrong he took the line that there was always some other plant that would do there and look well. Unfortunately he had many of his most valuable records stolen while he was travelling, a loss which he bore with characteristic stoicism.

Altogether Mr. Williams contributed sixteen short articles to the privately printed *Notes* of the Rhododendron Society, which he was largely instrumental in founding; and they are as brilliant as they are brief. There was no better judge of a good plant, and his appraisements are worth recording. Only a few examples can be given here:

R. edgeworthii - "The scent has hardly a rival".

R. moupinense - "Probably in flower and out of flower this is the most attractive small rhododendron now in cultivation out of all the many rhododendrons Mr. Wilson has given us".

R. scintillans - "On the whole, if I had to begin again, and only to have one of these species (the reference is to the Lapponicum Group), I should choose this".

The triflorums - "I believe from what I have seen that amongst the *triflorum,* and particularly in the *yunnanense* branch of the family, we shall get plants of a toughness and a readiness to meet the carelessness of the average man with a garden which, joined to their lovely colours and the freedom with which they will grow from seeds, cuttings or layers, will make them known where other rhododendrons will hardly be seen at all".

R. Aucklandii - "As far as my own taste goes, I do think that, in all the discoveries of the last 30 years, there is as yet no sign of a species which will eclipse *R. Aucklandii,* mature and at its best, but it does not do well in many places, and is not really hardy".

Mr. J. G. Millais, in his great book on Rhododendrons, published in 1917, tells how he saw in the part of Caerhays park known as Forty Acre Wood seven grand specimens of this Rhododendron, all raised from seed in 1887 by the owner, which he regarded as probably the finest group of this Rhododendron in the British Isles. And here is a note form the Garden Book to make the mouth water (May 10, 1928): "Martin and I agreed that we never saw so many Aucklandii in bloom here as two nights ago".

Martin was the head gardener at Caerhays for many years; *R. martinianum* was called after him.

Among the Rhododendrons which appear to have flowered at Caerhays before they did so anywhere else in the British Isles, the following may be mentioned: *R. adenopodum,* Forrest's *R. beesianum* (April, 1927), *R. callimorphum* (1917), *R. campylogynum* (1920), Kingdon-Ward's *R. chryseum* (May, 1919), Forrest's *R. cuneatum* (April, 1917), Kingdon-Ward's *R. facetum* (April, 1926), *R. floccigerum* (April, 1922), *R. trichostomum* (1917), *R. leptothrium* (May, 1920), *R. mallotum* (March, 1931), *R. mollicomum* (1917), *R. sulfureum* (April, 1920), all Forrest's introductions, and Wilson's *R. thayerianum* (July, 1922).

Mr. Williams was also very successful in growing in the open plants which are generally reckoned tender, for example: *R. grande, R. carneum, R. championae, R, edgeworthii, R. facetum* ("very fine indeed" on May 7, 1926), *R. lindleyi, R. moulmainense, R.megacalyx, R. ovatum, R. thayerianum.* In the case of *R. ciliicalyx* he had to wait for more than twenty years - April 16, 1927, "*R. ciliicalyx* is at its best, it has never been really good before this in twenty or more years we have had it".

Mr. Williams had an unusually good type of *R. glischrum* and the best plant in the country of *R. stamineum*. Perhaps the best of Wilson's forms of *R. fortunei* were grown at Caerhays. Thus, in Mr. Williams's own words (July 7, 1915), "I have found the best pink form of Wilson's *fortunei* in the Beech Walk I have ever seen". The figure in the *Botanical Magazine* of *R. bracteatum* (t. 9031) was made from a plant growing at Caerhays; which reminds me that on one occasion Mr. Williams gave as a wedding present to a friend all the plates of Rhododendrons which had ever appeared in the *Botanical Magazine* bound up in a handsome volume.

The height of Rhododendron blossom at Caerhays is usually reached in March or April. There is a note in the Garden Book on April 27, 1920, that seventy to eighty species were in flower; on March 31, 1923, seventy-five species and many dozens of hybrids; on March 25, 1925, fifty to sixty species; on March 5, 1926, over seventy species. And so on. But, of course, things at Caerhays tend to be early. By about the middle of January a dozen or more species may be opening; there were about twenty showing flower on January 25, 1920; thirty-four on February 14, 1926; these had increased to fifty and more on February 23.

For many years Mr. Williams interested himself in producing Rhododendron hybrids. He would make perhaps twenty or thirty crosses a year. It would take about four years to see what a small hybrid was like, and eight to twelve to judge a large one, Mr. Williams's standards were exceptionally high and he discarded ruthlessly.

Almost every year he spent some weeks at his house in the Scottish Highlands. A friend once asked him when did he get his greatest thrill, and he replied it was when he came back to Caerhays about the second week in October and went around the garden to see from the buds which Rhododendrons would be flowering for the first time. Here are two notes from the Garden Book:

> October 11, 1911 - "Many, probably all, the big Chinese have set for flower, and many of them for the first time";
>
> October 8, 1920 - "Returned from Scotland, a great Rhododendron year. Martin's seedling Rhododendrons quite unbeaten by any thing I have ever seen".

Mr. Williams's successful hybrids were many, and many of them have never been named. The following are recorded in the Rhododendron Stud Book:

- *opposite* -
A 'Collo Colour' postcard of Caerhays Castle, *c.* 1900.

'Blue Tit' (*impeditum* x *augustinii*), 1933;

'Crossbill' (*spinuliferum* x *lutescens*), 1933;

'Humming Bird' (*haematodes* x *williamsianum*), 1933;

'Kittiwake' (*lutescens* x *edgeworthii*), 1933;

'Moonstone' (*campylocarpum* x *williamsianum*), 1933;

'Red Admiral' (*arboreum* x *thomsonii*);

'Robin Hood' (*calophytum* x *sutchuenense*), 1933;

'Robin Redbreast' (*discolor* Houlstonii x *orbiculare*), 1933;

'Royal Flush' (*cinnabarinum* x *maddenii*);

'Snow Bunting' (*arboreum* Album x *sutchuenense*);

'Sulphur Yellow' (*souliei* x *campylocarpum*);

'Yellow Hammer' (*sulfureum* x *flavidum*).

Of these, 'Blue Tit' is the beautiful well-known dwarf Rhododendron with almost sky-blue flowers; 'Kittiwake' is one of the most remarkable crosses made by Mr. Williams, with its large flowers of pale creamy-yellow; 'Royal Flush' was regarded by no less an authority than the late Mr. Lionel de Rothschild as the finest hybrid ever produced; 'Snow Bunting' was a notable success at Caerhays - "The white to pink cross of *arboreum* by *sutchuenense* dominates most things now" (March 16, 1926); 'Sulphur Yellow' was "very, very pretty" at Caerhays on May 2, 1926; 'Yellow Hammer' is one of the most desirable Rhododendron yellows, which are, of course, comparatively uncommon.

From other combinations registered under other names Mr. Williams obtained in a number of cases a specially good form of plant. His *moupinense* x *ciliatum*, his *auriculatum* x *discolour* ("more serviceable than *auriculatum,* and not so hard to please"), his *brachyanthum* x *flavidum* (awarded the A.M. in 1924) are good examples.

Notes from the Garden Book like the following illustrate the experiments Mr. Williams was continually making:

> August 4, 1914. "Very few things open except *R. auriculatum* which I am crossing with *R. ungernii* from Tregrehan, a clean white form".
>
> April 15, 1915. "*R. calophytum* is in flower very fine. I crossed it with *R. grande*".
>
> Sept. 12, 1915 "Have been crossing *R. flavidum* with *R. trichocladum*".
>
> June 1, 1919. "*cinnabarinum* x *yunnanense* - very pretty, and I had them dressed and wired (to keep off the rabbits)".
>
> June 25, 1923. "Have been crossing *souliei* with the best orange *dichroanthum*".
>
> May 21, 1932. "I put yellow *maddenii* hybrid on the whole of Ward's honey yellow *cinnabarinum* Roylei. I picked the seed in Oct. 1934."

The story told in connection with his 'Cornish Loderi' is that he first saw this cross (*griffithianum* x *fortunei*) [now *griffithianum* x *discolor* in the *IRRC*] at Sir E. Loder's and years later Sir Edmund came to visit Caerhays and was astonished to see many specimens of almost the same cross which Mr. Williams had in the meantime produced himself and called the 'Cornish Loderi'.

It may be noted in passing that Mr. Williams was awarded the Loder Cup in 1922; his other awards are too many to enumerate. I think he regarded them as awards to his plants rather than to himself. He several times declined the V.M.H., having a strong aversion from publicity of any kind.

With his Rhododendrons he was as generous as with other things. When Mr. C. P. Raffill of Kew came to visit him at Caerhays in 1927 he sent back with him a railway truck full of Rhododendrons for the new Chinese Rhododendron house he was building at Kew. The plate of *R. megacalyx* in the *Botanical Magazine* (t. 9326) was taken from plants raised by Mr. Williams and presented to the Temperate House in 1923; they first flowered in May 1930.

The records of Kew contain many entries such as the following:

> "1911, from Mr. J. C. Williams, half the seedlings raised from seeds collected by Forrest in Autumn 1910";
>
> "1913, May 20th, 213 packets of seeds from Mr Williams".

Numbers of the Primulas figured in the *Botanical Magazine* were raised at Kew from seed so presented, e.g., *Primula anisodora* (t. 8752). *Primula sinopurpurea* (t. 8777). "And when I was visiting Kew in April this year it gave me particular satisfaction to find a well-grown plant of *R. hippophaeoides* labelled 'J.C.W. 1923'; another of *R. orthocladum* 'J.C.W. 1911'; and there were many other such".

Mr. Williams had even closer relations with the Royal Gardens at Edinburgh. He never let slip the chance of going there, and Professor Bayley Balfour was a personal friend and a constant correspondent. The *Botanical Magazine* figures *Gentuana stragulata* (t. 8897) raised from seedlings given to Professor Balfour by Mr. Williams; similarly *Clematis napaulensis* (t. 9037).

It will of course, be realised that a short note like this can only illustrate its subject, and by no means do full justice to it. Mr. Williams had very remarkable powers of thought and action, and in this field both his judgement and his practical knowledge were extraordinary. It has been my endeavour to convey some sense of them in this brief account.

Next to Rhododendrons the plants most characteristic of Caerhays are the Camellias and Magnolias.

The first entry on a Christmas Day in the Caerhays Garden Book is for the year 1897, and reads thus: "A good many camellias, a good few roses, some snowdrops well open, *Iris stylosa* and *bakeriana*." A double white Camellia was always out about Christmas. *Camellia sasanqua* was at its best in December - in 1900 it is so recorded on December 7; in 1901 it was earlier - "24th November, *C. sasanqua* quite fine". It could be as early as October e.g. October 14 1921: "*Camellia sasanqua* good one with strong scent". In 1918 a note on November 19 says: "The old *C. sasanqua* as good as it has ever been"; and on the same date in 1932: "The best *sasanqua* year I have seen."

A note on December 22, 1921, records: "Several Camellias, *sasanqua, theifera* A, *theifera* B, *japonica* and various *speciosa* of Forrest". *C. speciosa* is now called *C. saluenensis;* it was discovered by Forrest on mountains near the Salwin river in China and first grown in this country by Mr. Williams. There are fine plants of it on a north-west wall at Caerhays and finer still in the wood; and Mr. Williams notes that it can flower between and on the dates of January 7 and April 21, "and then come the hybrids from it". Of the crosses with *C. japonica* there are two splendid varieties, one of a lighter shell-pink colour, now known as 'J. C. Williams' recently awarded the F.C.C. (March 17, 1942). The other, of a darker shade now known as 'Mary Christian' (after Mrs. Williams), was awarded the A.M. on the same date. The beautiful form now called 'Mary Williams', raised from Forrest's later collections of seeds in Western Yunnan, received the A.M. on the same day as the other two Camellias (March 17, 1942).

Mr. Williams's biggest Camellia is a plant 25 feet high [7.6m], and as many thick with double flowers of pink. The garden also contains a number of other varieties: *cuspidata, oleifolia, magnolifolia,* the old 'Lady Clare' "a fine double white without a name", etc. etc. A cross of *saluenensis* with *cuspidata* gives white flowers larger than those of *cuspidata* itself.

Mr. Williams's collection of Magnolia species was probably unique; the earliest references in the Garden Book are to *M. stellata,* e.g. March 4 and 17, 1897. In 1903 we read of the planting of two Magnolias "as shown in the first *Flora and Sylva*"; in 1904 of a *M. campbellii* "below the big wall"; in 1912 of two 374 (i.e. *M. wilsonii*); in 1913 of Magnolia 688, and *M. obovata;* in 1921 of three big specimens of the hybrid M. *conspicua* x *campbellii* (Veitchii) and two of *salicifolia;* in 1923 of 11 Magnolia species, "say 2 of Forrest's (1919 lot of seeds), 3 *macrophyllas* and some *dawsonianas*"; and so on. Another example of activity with magnolias is given by the entry in May 1926: "put our best *M. nitida* in a shelter near Tin Garden".

Mr. R. M. Gregory now head gardener at Werrington, has told me that when he came back to Caerhays after serving in the late war Mr. Williams pointed out to him a Magnolia and said it was the only one then to be found west of China, adding "And I want to get it distributed everywhere". I repeat the story here as a good illustration of Mr. Williams's passion for as wide a distribution as possible, the only limitation being that the recipient must like the plants and not merely want them.

In 1928, in a short paper in the Rhododendron Society's *Notes,* on "Deciduous Trees and Shrubs for the Wood Garden", Mr. Williams referred to two old Kobus Magnolias which came to Caerhays about twenty-five years previously, "very lanky objects in pots." These must be the two mentioned in the 1903 note already quoted. He said they gave more bloom at Caerhays "than any other Magnolia so far." On April 12, 1928, the Garden Book has a note: "Bean put the best *kobus* down as having 2,000 blooms open."

In the same paper Mr. Williams mentioned *M. rostrata, M. mollicomata* and Wilson's *M. officinalis* with its lovely foliage. Of *M. sargentiana* he says that it had been at Caerhays about twenty years and was over 20 feet high [6.1m], but there had so far been no sign of a bud; actually he still had about three years to wait. On April 4, 1931, the Garden Book records: "*M. sargentiana* came into flower"; and eight days later: "*M. sargentii* opened its first flowers, very large purplish pink flowers, quite a fine tree." In April 1934 it was "smothered in bloom".

In his 1928 paper Mr. Williams also said that there were flowers on his *M. grandiflora* and his *M. delavayi* in the November of the previous year. He said, moreover, that of the smaller Magnolias he preferred *sieboldii* to *stellata* (the Garden Book has a note, June 23, 1931: "*M. sieboldii* has many flowers, perhaps 1,000 on the big plant"); and he mentioned his famous *M. denudata* Purpurascens (Wilson 688), now *M. sprengeri* forma Diva, which he saved for cultivation from Coombe Wood.

Mr Bean greatly admired the plant at Caerhays in April, 1919, then about 30 feet high [9.1m], with beautiful blooms erect at the end of leafless shoots. On March 28, 1931, the Garden Book has a note: "Seedling *Magnolia denudata* Purpurascens shows colour in the bud of a pale pink."

In his book *Magnolias* (1927), Mr. J. G. Millais said that he had only seen one specimen of *M. rostrata* as yet placed in the open garden and that was at Caerhays, where the plant was 5 feet high [1.5m]. He thought that the two plants of *M. delavayi* close together in the high wood above the Castle, were the best he had ever seen and "about the

finest evergreens in that wonderful garden". It was about 1903 that Mr. Williams first bought this Magnolia, and it was always one of his favourite plants on account of its foliage.

In 1931 Mr. Williams contributed another most interesting paper to the Rhododendron Society's *Notes* on "Magnolias as Companions to Rhododendrons in Woodland or Shrub Gardens". "One thing," he observes, "Magnolias demand, like all other plants in the garden, when they have delivered a big crop of flower and seed: that is cleaning and feeding and a good mulch to keep the sun off the roots so as to retain the moisture." He points out that *M. obovata* has four periods in which it gives particular satisfaction: when in young leaf, when the scented flowers are opening, when in fruit, and finally just before the leaves fall when they have become a dark chocolate-brown. Of *M. salicifolia* he says, "Speaking for myself only, I would sooner live with the plant of the fastigiated form now at Kew than any other single flowering tree in that wonderful collection".

It was on April 24, 1931, that Mr. Williams saw *M. mollicomata* flowering for the first time. Large specimens of this Magnolia, in more than one form, flower splendidly at Caerhays; they may be in full bloom for four or five days, or, in mild weather, as much as a fortnight. *Magnolia dawsoniana* has of late years become finer at Caerhays, and though not equal to *M. sargentiana* Robusta is now in the first class.

A number of other Magnolias are mentioned from time to time in the Garden Book, e.g. May 17, 1920, "*M. wilsonii* is the best thing open with the Engine House Azaleas"; May 26, 1920 "I found a *Magnolia watsonii* last night"; May 18, 1930 "the small *nicholsoniana* (now called *sinensis*) has four wonderful flowers about 6 inches across, the big plant *nicholsoniana* just opening, it looks well… *M. Veitchii* had 18 flowers between the two plants"; on the same date in 1931, "Of the Magnolias, *brozzonii* is the best, *speciosa* (a form of *soulangeana*) the next"; May 23, 1934, "Trade forms of *M. conspicua* are excellent"; February 22, 1935, "Our *Magnolia campbellii* is very good indeed". One of the most beautiful of all the Magnolias, *M. nitida,* came through a sever frost at Caerhays in 1931 without a trace of injury. Its foliage was then the most brilliant in the garden, but it was not until 1936 that it flowered, for the first time in England.

When we leave Camellias and Magnolias and turn to other plants we scarcely know where to begin, the selection is so rich. It must suffice to mention a few of the most notable. *Michelia doltsopa* seems to have first flowered in cultivation at Caerhays in 1935, and so did *Meliosma veitchiorum* in June 1930. *Gordonia axillaris,* Mr. Williams describes as a very fine evergreen indeed at all seasons, and adds: "The one plant which has flowered well here did so for several weeks on end in the middle of last winter" (*The Rhododendron Society Notes,* Volume 3, Number 3, p. 203, 1927). *Clethra delavayi,* in the form with black anthers to the flowers, grew to be from 15 to 20 feet in height [4.6 to 6.1m].

The white variety of *Erica australis* known as 'Mr. Robert', was found by one of Mr. Williams's sons in the mountains of southern Spain in 1912. Stuck into the Garden Book is the original page from Mr. Robert's pocket diary: "H.R.C. Algeceiras, Spain, Monday December 30, 1912 - went riding as usual, searching all the time in the hills for a white form of *australis;* luck favoured me, and I found a good plant of it. Naturally we shall take some home. Father has been mad keen to get it." Notes in the Garden Book on April 8, 1918, read: "Bob's white *australis* is in flower well for the first time"; April 8, 1923, "Bob's white is splendid".

Two of Wilson's Prunus were outstanding at Caerhays: *P. conradinae* and *P. mume.* Of the first Mr. Williams said (*The Rhododendron Society Notes,* Volume 2, Number 2, p. 86) that it was the earliest and best, sweet scented and very fast growing; it first flowered both at Kew and Caerhays in January 1916. Of the second (Wilson 4146) he wrote on February 8, 1920, saying that it had flowered very finely indeed: "It has a great mop head to it and you could hardly see through the mass of small white scented flowers". Later in 1928 he wrote (*The Rhododendron Society Notes,* Volume 3, Number 4, p. 263), "The Prunus are all good when they are doing well, and I am not sure that the double sloe is not the best of all, with the double Avium nearly as good. If limited to one species, I would have every form of *P. subhirtella* I could get". The Garden Book also speaks well of *P. pendula, P. cerasifera* var. *pissardi, P. incisa* and *P. sargentii*.

Rosa moyesii first flowered in this country at Caerhays; it is several times referred to in the Garden Book. e.g. June 28, 1923: "The pink *moyesii* is the best thing we have."

"*Acer griseum,*" Mr. Williams says (*The Rhododendron Society Notes,* Volume 3, Number 4, p. 262), "gives us the best colour in autumn, if one plants it out of the wind. Wilson's 4102 (*Acer tertramerum* var. *betulifolium*) is really my favourite, being so good in its foliage right through the year. *Acer henryi* has been spoken very well of, but, as far as I have seen it, there is nothing to be said for it, excepting that it is scarce, and so troubles few people".

Corylopsis pauciflora, (Wilson 4406) etc., is lovely at Caerhays about the end of March. Mr. Williams points out that "the beautiful drooping flower should be above the level of ones face to see it well". *Staphylea holocarpa* Rosea first showed its flowers at Caerhays; Mr. Williams observes that "you have to crack the seed to insure germination." There is a note in the Garden Book, March 18, 1926: "*Staphylea holocarpa* shows bud"; and another May 5, 1933: "Staphylea very good for about three weeks". *Tetracentron sinense* "is to me," Mr. Williams says, "the most beautiful deciduous tree I have seen, though *Nothofargus obliqua* runs it close."

Wilson's *Betula albo-sinensis septentrionalis* (4106) is notable for its foliage and the colour of its bark; "and a form of *B. utilis* from Edinburgh runs it very close". Of Styrax there were at Caerhays eight species and a self-made hybrid, "for the family does for us in May and June what hardly any other does." *S. langkongensis, S. shweliensis* and *S. wilsonii* may be specially mentioned; and an old plant of *S. helmsleyanus* from Coombe Wood was best of all.

In 1926 Mr. Williams drew up for the Rhododendron Society's *Notes* "a list of Enkianthus believed to be in cultivation". "The most beautiful member of this family" he writes," is *E. quinqueflorus,* or *reticulatus* from Hong Kong (*Botanical Magazine,* 40, t. 1649). I have seen it live outside for two winters; but it declines to grow so far." "After the Magnolias, the Enkianthus family," he remarks in another paper, "are the most sulky things at being transplanted, unless the young Oaks hate it more."

A number of Oaks were raised at Caerhays. Here, for instance, are two notes in the Garden Book: April 19, 1921 - "Just (two days since) had 5 kinds of Oaks in 10 of each from Japan. They took 8 weeks to come and all look very well"; November 6, 1921 - "Sowing some rare evergreen acorns from Bruce Gardener." "The best evergreen oak," Mr. Williams says (*The Rhododendron Society Notes,* Volume 3, Number 3, p. 202) "is Wilson's *cleistocarpa*. It came from Coombe Wood in about 1912 and has grown farther than any other, whilst the cold of 1917 made no mark on it". This plant has become the finest in the country.

The fine white Escallonia found in Caerhays garden as a natural hybrid by one of the gardeners, Mr David Ivey, is called after him E. 'Iveyi'.

On November 7, 1915, the following entry occurs in the Garden Book: "*Primula helodoxa* is looking very nice in flower and would seem to be the best yellow primula by far". That, and also *P. nutans* and *P. agleniana,* first saw the light of day in England at Caerhays; and the *Botanical Magazine* (Dedications Volume, p. 364) adds: "Appropriately enough, it remains, the one place in Britain, where Forrest's primrose, seems thoroughly at

home". A note in the Garden Book, November 7, 1923, reads: "I have made a big bed of *Primula forrestii*". This bed did not last; these Primulas seldom go for more than three years on the ground. They grow for years in a hole in the wall or a Cornish hedge: and some of the originals are still strong. This was one of Mr. Williams's greatest favourites both for foliage and flower.

The Garden Book refers to several species of Clematis, e.g. *cirrhosa, chrysoconia, paniculata;* and the *Clematis armandi* on a wall behind the Castle was once the biggest in England. Mr. Williams was much interested in Loniceras, e.g. *L. tragophylla* and *L. tellmanniana,* and in Paeonies. He did not care for Pittosporum, though there is a fine tree of *P. tenuifolium* in Caerhays garden. Asked on one occasion whether he grew a certain Berberis he replied, "No - are there not enough prickly people in the world without growing prickly plants?" Still, he could write in the Garden Book on April 16, 1922, "The Berberis hedge has been good for a long time."

In taking leave of this wonderful garden I am reminded of a story I was told some time ago of a well-known French horticulturist who had come over to see Cornish gardens. His host noticed how he came back day by day after a visit to a garden and made very careful notes of what he had seen, but the day he returned from Caerhays he wrote nothing. When asked why - "But it is impossible," he said" for they will no longer believe me".

As has already been indicated, Mr. Williams had an eye for familiar as well as for unfamiliar beauty. "*Jasminum nudiflorum,*" he notes on January 5, 1916, "is far the best thing in the countryside"; "foxgloves are very good" (June 13, 1918); "the wild clematis (old man's beard) on the silver fir is our best thing now" (October 9, 1923). He was particularly fond of a double Blackthorn in the garden and of a white Ribes which came years ago from a garden at Tregony, a few miles away. He loved the quiet and simple life of the Highlands on his summer holiday in Scotland. He had a large car for his wife, but he himself preferred to go about in a "tin Lizzie". His chauffeur kept on hinting as broadly as he dared that the Lord Lieutenant should have something better' and at last one morning Mr. Williams informed him that he had bought a new car and sent him to the garage to get it. He set out in great expectation, only to find a new "tin Lizzie".

In the war of 1914-1918, Mr. Williams lost two of his four serving sons, John and Robert; between him and Robert there had always been a particularly close bond of understanding affection. These blows he bore in silence, inviting no sympathy. His wife, who during the war, had been in charge of the V.A.D. hospital at Launceston and had supervised the conversion of Werrington Park into a hospital, died in October 1922. These losses affected him deeply. He had constantly consulted Mrs. Williams even about the details of his correspondence, and if she was not satisfied with a letter he would tear it up and write another. He had many acquaintances, not many close friends. The Rev. G. H. Engleheart was one; Mr. Gerald Loder, afterwards Lord Wakehurst, whom he got to know at Cambridge, was a life-long friend. His cousin Mr. P. D. Williams of Lanarth, also a great gardener, was another, and to him Mr. Williams wrote almost daily. His notes were generally extremely brief, just a line or two on some plant or happening. High among his friends Mr. Williams himself counted several of his gardeners, particularly Mr. Ivey, who did practically the whole of his Daffodil work, and Mr. Martin and Mr. Michael, who were largely responsible for the shrubs. Mr. Williams loved to talk over a plant and its habits with them and felt himself deeply indebted for the pleasure and wisdom he gained from their friendship. He also had the highest regard for Mr. W. J. Bean, whose opinion on shrubs he put above that of anyone else.

In 1931, when another great friend who was a very keen gardener had to lie for two months on his back, Mr. Williams picked each day a carefully chosen flower from his garden, packed it with his own hands and sent it in a package addressed in his own handwriting.

Many of the Cornish clergy have been hard put to find the education they desired for their children and to make provision for a rainy day or a little holiday; and for twenty years or more Mr. Williams was the greatest benefactor they had, though they did not know it. No man in our time has come nearer the Gospel ideal of giving - "let not thy left hand know what thy right doeth".

On March 29, 1939, Mr. Williams after breakfast went through his garden, as he often did at that time of day, along the Battery walk to his favourite spot overlooking the sea; and seated there he died. For a long time previously, tenderly watched over with devoted care by his daughter, Miss May Williams, he had been gradually fading out; it was a good and fitting end.

Mr. Williams had won the gratitude and respect of his contemporaries. They knew his powers and were not a little in awe of him. They regarded him as the greatest Cornishman of his time. He was, what so few dare to be, himself; and it was a great self to be. His influence lives and will live, especially among the county's leader. In magnanimous devotion to duty he set the pace, and they are gamely endeavouring to keep it up.

In preparing this account I have been greatly indebted first to the kindness of Mr. Charles Williams, who has succeeded his father at Caerhays; and then to the help of several others whom I would mention: Mr. Charles Michael, the head gardener at Caerhays; Mr. R. M. Gregory, the head gardener at Werrington; and especially Mr. G. H. Johnstone, who has most generously placed his great knowledge at my disposal.

J. W. Hunkin's portrait of J. C. Williams and the development of the gardens at Caerhays is available to read or download on the Caerhays Estate website, while a short biography of the author can be found on Wikipedia.

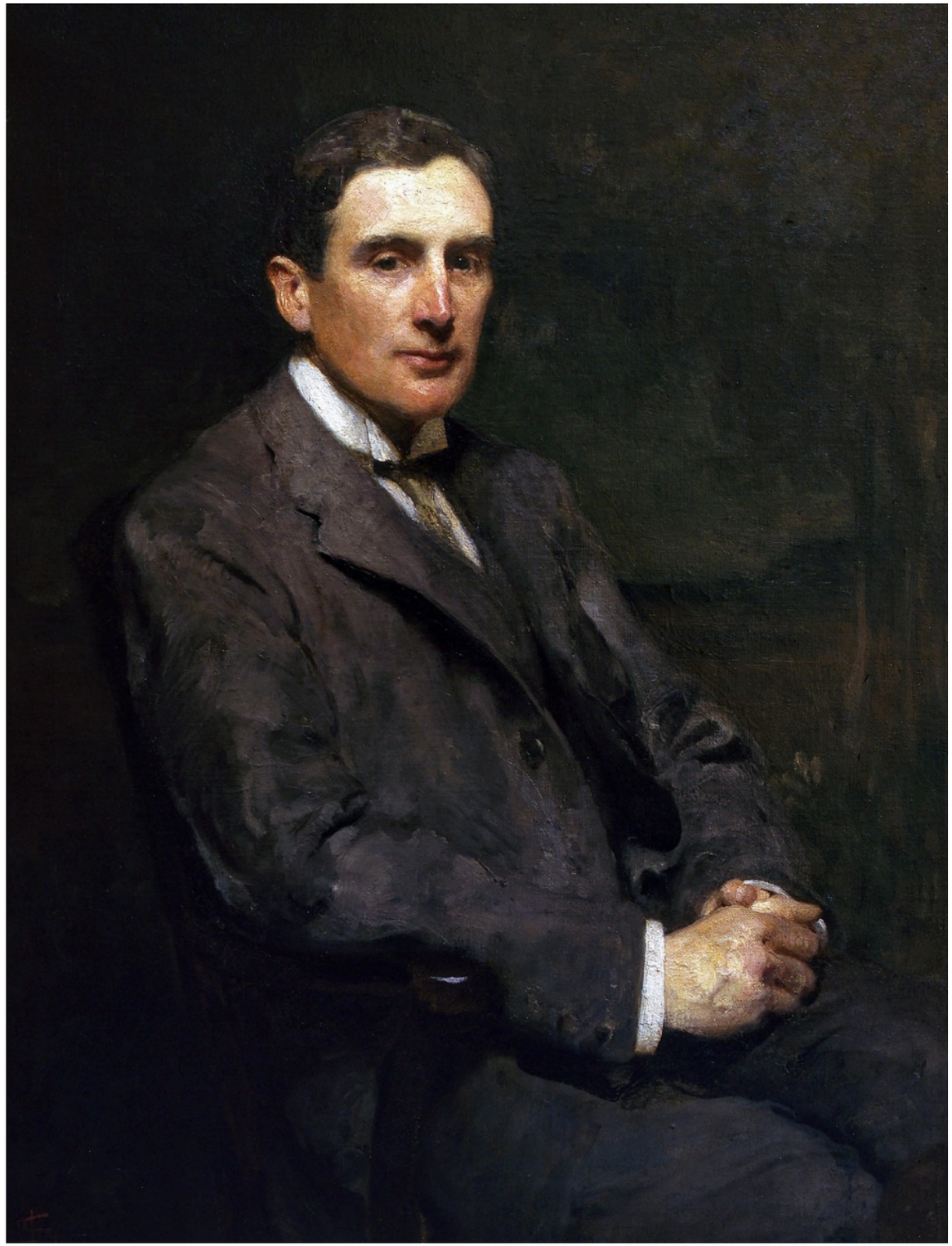
https://visit.caerhays.co.uk/the-estate/jc-williams/bishop-hunkin/

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joseph_Hunkin_(bishop)

- *opposite* -
Another postcard image of the Castle, this one taken around 1904.



J. C. Williams - An Enthusiast.



by F. J. Williams.

Presidential Address to the Royal Institute of Cornwall, November 1998.

This talk will inevitably cover too much in a superficial way, but it is primarily an attempt to assess the contribution made by Caerhays and J. C. Williams to the development of modern gardening, especially in the spheres of daffodils, rhododendrons, camellias and magnolias. The central theme will be the life and interests of 'J.C.', one of a long line of Cornish gardeners who made great and similar contributions, and to try to put his own particular enthusiasms into perspective in the context of plant exploration and hybridisation. The main thrust of this talk will cover the period 1895-1914.

J. C. Williams: The Background

John Charles Williams or 'J.C.', as he was always known, was born in 1861. He was the second son of John Michael Williams, industrialist and banker, and Elizabeth Maria Davey of Bochym. He was educated at Rugby and Trinity Hall, Cambridge. At John Michael's death in 1880, his elder son, Michael, inherited most of the family's business interests, while J.C. inherited a large capital sum and the expectations of his father's landed estate, Caerhays in Cornwall, which was left to John Michael's widow for her lifetime. Records of this part of J.C.'s life are sparse on the extreme. He purchased Werrington Park which then straddled the Devon-Cornwall border, it is said partly for the rabbit shooting, and partly because it ensured his immediate independence.

In 1884 his mother died and he inherited Caerhays.

In the same year he married his cousin, Mary Christian Williams, daughter of Sir Fredrick Martin Williams of Tregullow.

Werrington Park was retained and both it and Caerhays were extensively refurbished.

It was soon after this that J.C. began his long association with the Scottish Highlands where he rented Strathvaich in Ross and Cromarty which he subsequently purchased in the 1930s. His interests here were deer stalking and fishing, but it would later become the place where he could collect his thoughts and try to catalogue the plants that by the early 1920's had begun to flood into Caerhays and Werrington from China.

He led a very active public life, both locally and nationally. In 1888 at the young age of twenty seven, he was made High Sheriff of the county. In 1889 he became a member of the first County Council and remained an elected member (never an Alderman) until 1931.

1892 saw him enter Parliament as Liberal-Unionist member for the Truro-Helston Division. He was a loyal follower of Joseph Chamberlin and later of his son Austen, both keen gardeners, their buttonholes of orchids being one of their trademarks. The Liberal-Unionist were a definite force in their own right, being particularly strong in Birmingham and in Devon and Cornwall. The Parliament of 1892 was Gladstone's last and came to an end in 1895 when Lord Rosebury's ministry was overthrown. J.C. left Parliament with some relief: he hated the stuffiness of London life, and was a countryman through and through. He remained active, however, in the Liberal-Unionist interest in the county. In 1918 he became Lord Lieutenant, one of the first commoners to receive that honour.

His interests were varied: he was much involved in the County Playing Field movement which came into being after the Great War. He was keen to see that those who had survived the war and wished to run their own farms could have a chance to do so. He was concerned about the effects of tourism on the environment and was instrumental in raising money for a survey of Cornwall, 'its Coasts, Moors and Valleys, with suggestions for the Preservation of Amenities'. The survey was carried out by a Mr. Harding Thompson - for the Cornwall branch of the CPRE - and was published in 1930. Financed entirely from public

subscription, the list of subscribers has a very familiar ring to it, as it contains many of the names of Cornish families who had also over a very long period supported the Royal Institution of Cornwall. J.C. was the first chairman of the Cornwall Music festival, the brainchild of Lady Violet Trefusis, which started in 1910, is still going strong and receiving support from all parts of the county. There was an irony about this particular involvement: J.C. was tone-deaf and the only tune he could recognise was Albert Whelan's 'The Whistler and His Dog'. But his interests, and his activities, were varied, and he worked hard for his county. His personal and abiding interest, however, was in his garden, in the collection and development of plants.

As one tries to trace the development of J.C.'s gardening interests one is infuriated by so little direct evidence. He was a good letter-writer, but the earliest sequence of his surviving correspondence begins in 1911. He wrote to his eldest son at least twice a week from 1913 onwards and to my father once or twice a week in the First War and into the 1920's. The letters are concise - terse, even - with very few words wasted, and very well written.

Gardening out-of-doors in the 1880s was characterised by formal gardens, those of Versailles being particularly admired. Garden designers and experts dictated to their clients the formalities and fashions of the day. Indoor plant collections would have centred round the conservatories and glasshouses of the wealthy where the orchid reigned supreme. Orchid hunters pillaged the Equatorial regions of the world for new species to amaze those at home, almost certainly to the exclusion of all other plants. These were generally commercial undertakings with money-making a major objective. Werrington certainly had a giant conservatory, which I think may well have been built by the former owners of the house, the Dukes of Northumberland. As well as being a great political family (they sent four candidates of their choice to serve as members of Parliament for Newport and Launceston) they were also keen gardeners. They delighted in experimenting with new exotic plants coming in from abroad. The Werrington conservatory has a good selection of contemporary books on orchids. The conservatory was considerably reduced in size by the 1920s, but Werrington grew orchids for the Covent Garden market from 1922 until 1955. There was also an orchid house at Caerhays but no one living can ever recall seeing an orchid in it.

Daffodils

By 1893 while still a Member of Parliament, J.C. Williams had joined the Royal Horticultural Society. At this time the Society was expanding its interests and those of its members. Among these interests was the daffodil, and one suspects it was at this time that J.C.'s first gardening passion took root.

One of the spheres which really interested him was that of hybridisation. In the late nineteenth century the independent and amateur approach was generally frowned on by the professional experts, but in the sphere of daffodils amateur hybridisers had already started to experiment. It is perhaps worth mentioning that with daffodils, as with roses, the new outlook was fostered by Anglican clergymen. The original amateur hybridiser seems to have been William Herbert (1778-1847), who was the first in a long line of amateurs. Until his time, the main sources of new plant varieties had been nurserymen and florists.

William Herbert was an extraordinary man. He was the third son of the first Earl of Caernarvon, whose seat lay at Highclere in Hampshire. He was educated at Eton, was a Member of Parliament in 1806-07 and in 1811-12. In 1814 he took Holy Orders and was appointed to the parish of Spofforth in Yorkshire, a family living. In 1840 he became dean of Manchester. While at Spofforth he started to study botany and to hybridise daffodils. His analysis of Amaryllidacea appeared in an early *Botanical Magazine*. He wrote extensively in the gardening press of his time, and went out of his way to encourage his readers to produce new varieties and to experiment with the varieties that they already knew. He was the first amateur to hybridise camellias and to describe the parentage of his new varieties. One sees his hand in one of the first new rhododendron hybrids Rhododendron Altaclerense ('Highclere'). The *Botanical Magazine,* usually very scornful of hybrids, did illustrate this new rhododendron in 1835. Dean Herbert seems to have been interested in most areas of gardening and on his death in 1847 he was described as 'one of the most learned and accomplished persons of his age'.

Nearly fifty years later a kinsman of the Dean's, the Rev'd George Engleheart (1851-1936), a Hampshire parson, began experimenting with the hybridisation of daffodils. One of his first appearances in print comes in a letter to *The Garden* magazine enquiring what had happened to the daffodils that Herbert had left behind at Spofforth. The immediate catalyst for the renewal of interest in daffodils was the Daffodil Conference and Exhibition held by the Royal Horticultural Society at Chiswick in April 1890. A great many varieties were on display and many papers were read, including one by George Engleheart. The Proceedings of the Conference, together with another lecture delivered by Engleheart in 1894, were bound together by J. C. Williams in a slim volume which looks as though it provided the basis for his future programme as he took up his first consuming garden interest. He had joined the Royal Horticultural Society before 1893, the year after Engleheart's revolutionary new daffodil, 'Golden Bell', had received the Society's highest award of a First Class Certificate. In 1893 the bloom was shown in colour in *The Garden* and it created a sensation. In 1895, J.C. purchased the first of his garden diaries, and the early entries show the high importance that he attached to daffodils. By 1897 he had enclosed a large area of one of the Caerhays fields and this was to be where new varieties would be produced until the death of his eldest son Charles in 1955.

The purpose of experimentation was to produce new varieties which would appeal to the public and which would have strong constitutions. The 1880s and 1890s saw the launch of commercial daffodil growing for the flower markets of London and the Midlands. The man responsible for this was Algernon Dorrien Smith of Scilly, who toured the Channel Islands, Belgium and Holland to see if there was a niche in the market for new suppliers. He found the Channel Islands were concentrating on fruit and vegetables and that the daffodils produced in Belgium and Holland for the London market were a month later than those produced on Scilly. An added advantage for the Scillonians was the arrival of the railway at Penzance which meant speedy and reliable access to the metropolitan markets of the mainland. Exports of daffodils from Scilly rose from 68 tons in 1855 to 197 tons in 1889. It was evident that west Cornwall farmers might also benefit from the trade.

This would have given to J. C. Williams extra encouragement and purpose. He and a few enthusiasts formed a committee to put on a daffodil display in Truro for the public to see the range of varieties available at that time. In 1897 the first Daffodil Spring Flower Show was held. J. C. Williams was its President, Algernon Dorrien Smith was Vice-President, and, most important of all, its secretary was the Honourable John Boscawen of Tregye, who remained secretary and organiser of an ever-growing show until the arrival of the First World War brought such activities to a halt. Among the judges at that first show was the Rev'd George Engleheart. It is highly likely that it was the first occasion at which J.C. met Engleheart: it was to be the beginning of a lifelong friendship.

J.C.'s great friend and ally was his cousin Percival Williams ('P.D.') of Lanarth in St Keverne who shared J.C.'s enthusiasm. Within three weeks of the first show the two cousins had visited Engleheart's garden at Appleshaw, in Hampshire, and purchased a great

many of the Engleheart daffodils which in turn were to become the basis of the new varieties produced by the cousins over the next thirty years or so. The central feature of the Spring Flower Show, and one of the reasons for its continuing success, was the developing rivalry between the cousins in the main classes. And the Show did succeed in its aim. Small farmers in west, central and south-east Cornwall were given the opportunity to grow a new crop which was of great value and provided extra employment during the 1930's and the years of agricultural depression.

Mention has already been made of the family's political support of Joseph Chamberlain and the shared interest in gardening. The Midlands were also seen as an area where the daffodil would flower and flourish. In 1898 the first Midlands Daffodil Show was held in Birmingham: Joseph Chamberlain was President, J. C. Williams a vice-President. He sent up material for a daffodil stand at that first show, while P. D. Williams was for many years a major figure in the Midlands Society. Again, the desired result was obtained, and the Midlands farmer found that they had a new choice of crop.

Over the years J.C. produced about forty new varieties of daffodil which were named by others. He was a very private man and did not like publicity. Up to 1914 he showed his new varieties at the Truro Show, always under numbers. He sold them to a few people who subsequently named them. He was not interested in making a profit: rather, one suspects, he used the proceeds to obtain further varieties. Of his forty named blooms in the 1998 Daffodil Register ten had received awards from the RHS. The earliest was Narcissus 'Croesus', which received a First Class Certificate in 1912; the latest was 'Bartley', which received an Award of Merit as recently as 1981.

There is no doubt that he was an extremely successful hybridist. Alex Wilson, another bulb breeder of the time, states that he bought the stock of eight daffodils of 'Croesus' (named by Wilson) from J.C. for £100, 'getting my money back in the next two years. Croesus was a good friend to me', he wrote, 'for I sold over £2,000 worth of it before I gave up growing it'. In a highly ephemeral environment J.C.'s influence can still be seen. The production of new varieties continued with Mr. E. Martin of Compigney in Truro, whose father was head gardener at Caerhays and who produced 'Silver Chimes', one of the best dwarf daffodils of the time. Dr. Favell of St Buryan, F. A. Secrett of Kenwyn Valley, George Johnstone of Trewithen and Lord Rendlesham of Mawnan all made further progress and today new varieties are being produced by Dan du Plessis of Landulph and Ron Scamp of Falmouth.

Rhododendrons

Around the time that J.C. was taking in new ground for his daffodils, he started to expand the garden at Caerhays in other directions. Reaction to formal gardening was at hand with the arrival of the great protagonist of the wild garden, William Robinson, a self-made man with strong views and a wide and forceful vocabulary. His aim was to jolt the middle classes out of their devotion to formality and persuade them to 'go wild'. This was opportune, as the scene for the development of Asiatic temperate plants had already been set with the introductions which arrived in the United Kingdom as a result of Sir Joseph Hooker's 1848-51 expedition to Nepal. Tree rhododendrons had already arrived but Hooker gave a new impetus to change in gardening practice. The previous influx of Himalayan plants had taken a long time to percolate through the gardening world. The fault might lie with the greatest plant hunter there has ever been, now largely forgotten, namely William Griffith (1810-1845). He arrived in India in September 1832 as a surgeon. In the next thirteen



- opposite -
J. C. Williams and George Johnstone comparing notes in the wood at Caerhays.

years he botanised in the Khasia Hills, Assam, the Malacca, Simla, Afghanistan, Bhutan and the Hindu Kush, Southern India and Burma. He also spent two years in charge of the Calcutta Botanical Garden. The number of plants he discovered was prodigious and the scope of his plant collecting was amazing. Transport must have caused great problems, but there were other circumstances which prevented his discoveries from being more widely known.

Griffith had an unfortunate temper which involved him in continual argument with his brother officers, and must have occupied much of his time. Certainly he did not before his death complete the arrangement and tabulation of his herbaria specimens, which were left in a chaotic state. He had in fact discovered many plants which later eager plant hunters in the following century had thought to be new when they in their turn had discovered his plants. *Rhododendron griffithianum* is a good example of the problems which his collecting raised. In 1848 Joseph Hooker, son of the Director of Kew, was sent to India by the government (the minister responsible, and his biggest supporter, was Lord Auckland, former Governor-General of India). Hooker collected many new rhododendrons in the mountainous territory of Sikkim where he had an adventurous time. He found a variety which excited him very much and which he called *Rhododendron aucklandii*. He then discovered that Griffith had already found it, though his specimen was a poor one. Hooker's introduction flowered for the first time in 1858 and is illustrated in the *Botanical Magazine* in that year, though it seems that the picture gave little idea as to the plant's full beauty, and consequently attracted hardly any interest.

In 1881, however, a coloured plate appeared in *The Garden,* accompanied by an article by one of the first great amateur rhododendron enthusiasts, J. H. Mangles. Over the years Mangles wrote frequently about rhododendrons and their virtues. These articles were collected together by J. C. Williams who studied them with great assiduity. When in 1916 J.C., together with Charles Eley, formed the Rhododendron Society, one of its rules was that all members should contribute an article to the Society's annual publication. The second issue consisted entirely of articles on rhododendrons written by Mangles thirty years or so before.

J.C. had retired from Parliament in 1897 and was beginning to expand his garden: the newly-heralded 'wild-gardening' clearly had its attractions though the material at his disposal was not spectacular: there were to hand bamboos, ferns and a few hydrangeas. About that time, the Treseder family began to send tree ferns from Victoria State in Australia, where they had nursery interests. While the Caerhays garden in the 1890's was on the dull side, J.C. had already spotted the potential of the rhododendron and was seeking large quantities of *Rhododendron arboreum* which he wished to grow in mass. A bog garden was being made around the lake and up the valley a wood was being cleared.

In 1899 William Robinson came to Caerhays. He wished to describe in his magazine the development of the garden in the same way in which he had treated other new gardens. J.C. hated publicity and the struggle must have been a fierce one, but an article duly appeared in the pages of *The Garden* on 18th November 1899. It was signed 'V': one is tempted to suspect that the 'V' stood for 'Victory'. No other journalist so far as I know wrote an article on Caerhays during J.C.'s lifetime. 'V' does rather labour the point that the proprietor of the garden was 'nameless and faceless'. I do not think he was actually shown much. While *Rhododendron falconeri* and *R. thomsonii* must have been well established by this time he did not see *Rhododendron aucklandii* which flowered at Caerhays for the first time in 1898. He was however surprised to see the Japanese banana growing with great vigour, azaleas and hydrangeas in mass, and tree ferns and New Zealand flax flourishing. Certainly the *aucklandii* garden was to be a major feature of Caerhays for the next seventy years until a cold spell killed the lot; the banana bed has long since gone and I have never seen a plant growing in the open; but the tree ferns, azaleas and hydrangeas which Robinson saw still survive a hundred years later.

Around this time Sir Harry Veitch, head of Veitch's nursery at Coombe Wood in Surrey and a great figure in the gardening world, decided to send a plant hunter to Western China to see if it was possible to bring back seed and plant material. It was here that the four great rivers of Asia, the Yangtze, the Mekong, the Salwin and the Irrawaddy come very close to connecting with each other. The county was very wild and the borders of Burma, India and Tibet were close by. For fifty years French missionaries, mostly Jesuits, had been exploring and botanising and had found a wealth of amazing new plants. Their findings had been sent home to the Jardin des Plantes in Paris, but the seeds had produced disappointing results except for two rhododendrons, *R. rubiginosum* and *R. yunnanense.* Both were in 1898 depicted in the *Curtis Botanical Magazine,* the oldest botanical journal of the time, and whose editor sought out and illustrated the newly imported plants.

Veitch's nursery had in 1894 supplied Kew with plants, and the article mentioned the quantity of new rhododendrons which were beginning to appear. This and similar articles could not have escaped J.C.'s notice: he was a keen reader of the magazine.

Some British plant hunters had visited China but not many had gone far into the interior. Veitch had been disappointed by the visit in 1879 of their collector, Charles Maries. In *Hortus Veitchii* he is described as 'possessing enthusiasm but lacking in staying power', though he did penetrate eight hundred miles up the Yangtze before he turned for home. It must be said that the Chinese were hostile to foreigners and there was a great deal of unrest. It is perhaps worth noting that the first two travellers sent by Veitch were the Cornish brothers William and Thomas Lobb, and that the most interesting discoveries of their last great collector, Birmingham-born E. H. Wilson, were to receive their first trials at Caerhays. The successful culture of the new plants was a matter of great responsibility. The plants would have come from different altitudes and thrived in different locations in the wild. They had to be settled into entirely different conditions. The first group of Chinese rhododendrons was planted out in 1905. There is a list of these plants and they are still there. J. C. Williams and Mr. Martin must have taken extreme care with the new arrivals. The advantage of running the two estates of Werrington and Caerhays soon became apparent. Werrington had a large run of greenhouses but a colder climate, while Caerhays had fewer glass houses but larger spaces and a better climate where new specimens could be planted out. The hardier plants were grown at Werrington, the softer ones at Caerhays.

Wilson's first area of exploration was the province of Hubei, which he had been advised to visit by the great Mr Augustine Henry. It was he who when in the employ of the Customs service and stationed at Ichang began to explore the country round about. He later served in Taiwan and South Yunnan where he continued to botanise. It is said that he sent to Kew over 150,000 dried specimens during his time in China. Henry was able to guide Wilson to the most promising areas.

Between 1899 and 1902 Wilson collected around the Ichang area and the first rhododendron seeds soon arrived at Veitch's nursery. The great debate would have been the plants suitability for outdoor growing, and if so, where would be most suitable. Perhaps Mr Robinson's article in *The Garden* had been remembered; more probably J.C. had met Sir Harry Veitch during his visits to RHS shows. At any rate it was to Caerhays that the first consignment of Wilson plants came.

The Caerhays plant diary for 1903 notes: 'bought 25 sorts of Chinese Rhodos from Veitch'.

These were planted out in 1905.

In 1906 the diary records: 'I have agreed with Veitch for the right to select 15 of Wilson's second lot of Rhododendrons of which several are yellow'.

J.C. must have purchased over thirty new varieties. Many of the notes record the original numbers allocated by Wilson which amazingly remain unchanged in the 1998 *Rhododendron Handbook*.

Wilson appears to have been dissatisfied with plant hunting for a nurseryman. Veitch's nursery at Coombe Wood too was in decline. An offer was made from the Arnold Arboretum (Harvard University) run by the great American botanist and plant collector, Professor Charles Sprague Sargent. By May 1907 Wilson was back in China. The change of employer did not cut the ties between Wilson and Caerhays: rather the reverse. Soon a close relationship developed between Caerhays and the Arnold Arboretum, with a regular correspondence. In return for the dispatch of seeds and plants, garden proprietors were expected to record the progress of new species, including growing conditions and altitude. Very scarce plants arrived in 1911: J.C.'s reaction is recorded in his letter of thanks:

> "I feel like a man who has been left sole guardian of a family of fourteen, all under age, when he has a family of his own - but a good parent should not count heads"

In about 1908 Wilson had discovered a new rhododendron in the area of Wa Shan [a mountain in western Sichuan]. When the seed had been sent back to Britain and the plants survived, it was decided to name it after J.C. *Rhododendron williamsianum* therefore came into existence.

Wilson was a fine photographer, and a set of his photographs was sent to Caerhays. They show clearly the sort of terrain he was expected to cover and the plants he discovered, in their native habitat. His explorations in the extreme west came to a halt when he suffered a severe fall, damaged his leg badly and had to return to America. While his expeditions into China had produced mainly rhododendrons Wilson also collected roses, rubii, ribes and berberis; after his accident he turned his attention to Japan, Korea and Taiwan, providing the world with magnificent azaleas from each of these countries, which are seen at their best in south Cornwall in the springtime.

Wilson's departure to America had left only one British plant hunter in western China. This was George Forrest (1873-1932), a Scot who learnt his botany when young and whose early resolution to go to the east stayed with him all his life. Between 1904 and 1932 he completed seven expeditions to China, Burma and Tibet and collected 30,000 herbaria specimens. He was the most successful collector of his time and his success lay mainly in the mutual trust he established with the peoples of the districts which he visited. His first employer was A. K. Bulley of Bee's Nursery, Cheshire (now the National Trust gardens of Ness) who unfortunately seemed not to have the resources to deal with so much new material. J. C. Williams also visited Bulley in 1911 and wrote to Wilson that he was 'quite sad to see stuff so knocked about, thousands of things are dead through sheer ignorance of how to handle them'. Already Forrest was dissatisfied and wanted to work for amateur gardeners, with the support of botanic gardens such as Edinburgh and Kew. Enthusiasm and money were in short supply and it seems that J.C. came to the rescue as one of the main backers of Forrest's 1912-1914 expedition. The two men met for the first time in March 1911: in a letter J.C. described Forrest as 'a very small compact man with a fine chest on him, built for fatigue. Has done much and can probably do much more'. Forrest came to work for J.C., and, as with Wilson, they remained lifelong friends.

In 1914 Professor Sargent came over from America and with the great W. J. Bean of Kew visited Caerhays, Heligan and Tregrehan. He would have wanted to see how the seeds and plants from Wilson's expeditions were flourishing. He later told J.C. that he considered Tregrehan 'one of the best things of its kind in the world'. Alas the visit took place in July 1914: two weeks later the country was at war. J. C. Williams' family sustained great losses, as did most other families in the land, but throughout most of the war George Forrest continued to send large quantities of new seed to Caerhays, Werrington and elsewhere. The new arrivals continued to be handled at the two estates at this time. As the war dragged on garden staff became fewer and fewer, so that it is a near miracle that any of George Forrest's wartime introductions survived. By 1917 Forrest had returned to China, the expedition being funded by a syndicate which included J. C. Williams. The results of earlier plantings were by now well grown; in 1916 the Rhododendron Society had been formed, consisting of twenty four amateur gardeners from all over the British Isle. The Society also included representatives of the chief British botanical gardens, with Edinburgh, then under Professor Issac Bayley Balfour, taking special responsibility for rhododendrons. It was a garden that J.C. visited regularly after the war, for Caerhays was until the mid-1920's still a recipient of many of the new introductions.

J.C.'s gardening interests were anything but specialist, and by the time of Forrest's 1924-26 expedition he was of the opinion that most of the fruitful fields for exploration were nearly exhausted. His interest moved to two new areas.

Camellias

Despite the fact that Japanese camellias had been known for nearly a century, and had been shown to thrive out-of-doors in Cornish Gardens such as Tregothnan and Scorrier, the popular concept in Britain was that the camellia was a conservatory plant. This view was encouraged by the nurserymen of the day. However, conservatory space was limited, camellias could become large plants, and the current fashion was for orchids.

When J.C. was beginning to create the garden at Caerhays he had purchased large quantities of camellias to grow out of doors, and had even spotted the rarest and most spectacular camellia of the time, *Camellia reticulata* 'Captain Rawes'. These plants still survive and when fully in flower take a good deal of beating despite the fact that in the last fifty years literally thousands of new camellia varieties have appeared and are being grown by enthusiasts in Europe, the United States, Australia and New Zealand. J.C. could see the potential of the camellia and must have been greatly excited when Forrest began to send home camellia species. From the 1917-19 expedition came *Camellia saluenensis,* named after the Salwin river. J.C. crossed this newcomer with the well-established *Camellia japonica* and produced a very much hardier group of hybrids which successfully brought the camellia out of the greenhouse. Some years after his death in 1939 this new family of hybrids was given the collective name of 'williamsii'. The driving force for this recognition came from Lord Aberconway who for many years was chairman of the RHS, founder of the great garden at Bodnant in North Wales and chairman president of English China Clay.

The new hybrids were extremely floriferous, thrived out-of-doors and had generally the added advantage of shedding their blooms when the flowering season was over: some japonica varieties retain their old flowers until they rot off the plant many months later.

Magnolias

The weekly magazine *The Garden* had for many years brought to the notice of a wide public a chance to see in colour the new plants that had begun to flood into this country from Asia, as well as recording the success of amateur hybridisers in such areas as roses and daffodils. The magazine had depicted *Rhododendron griffithianum/aucklandii* in 1881, Engleheart's first breakthrough in advancing the form and substance of the daffodil through Narcissus 'Golden Bell' in 1893, and finally in 1895 came *Magnolia campbellii*.

This was a large magnolia with pink flowers which appeared before the leaves. It had been discovered both by Griffith and by Hooker, but the gardening world's enthusiasm was muted, partly because a flower display without foliage was at that time regarded as 'vulgar', partly because although new plants grew well, they took between twenty-five and forty years to bloom. (One seedling of this magnolia took forty years to flower in my time, being planted in 1930 and not flowering until 1970). In 1897 one magnolia only was growing at Caerhays - *Magnolia stellata* - and it is there today, fit and well, in front of the house.

In 1900, William Robinson ceased to be controller of *The Garden,* which was taken over by Miss Jekyll. One of the problems the magazine had faced was Robinson's preference for etchings over photographs. In 1903 Robinson started a new and rather upmarket monthly periodical which he called *Flora and Sylva,* an attempt 'to marry Flora to Sylva - a pair not far apart in nature, only in books'. It was not surprising that one of the first groups to be tackled was the magnolia. *Magnolia campbellii* was clearly continuing to disappoint. In 1898 a tree grown by Veitch at Exeter had apparently flowered, while almost certainly the first flower of this magnolia to be seen in Cornwall came from Southern Ireland and was exhibited at the Truro Daffodil Show in 1904.

Fortunately however, in China, Wilson had begun to find and send home seeds of different species of tree magnolia, as George Forrest was to do later from Yunnan. One of the first exciting new arrivals at Veitch's Coombe Wood nursery in 1901, identified as number 688, produced several plants from seed. Wilson named this *Magnolia denudata* var. *purpurescens* and described the saucer-shaped flowers as varying from rose-red without to rose/pale-pink within. When Veitch's great nursery sale was held in 1912, garden owners from all over Britain attended, and lists were made of the destinations of the plants as they changed hands. J. C. Williams purchased *Magnolia denudata* and planted it out at Caerhays. On 20 April 1919 this magnolia flowered for the very first time, at which J.C. commented 'very good': he did not rise to hyperbole. The botanists named it *Magnolia sprengeri* 'Diva'. Only seven years to come to flowering instead of the forty-year wait for *M. campbellii* suggested that attitudes to deciduous tree magnolias might be about to change. The plant also set seed, which were grown on, but proved a great disappointment at flowering, seeming to err on the promiscuous side.

Some of the second batch of seedlings raised were very similar to the mother plant, and later, when *sprengeri* 'Diva' was crossed with *M. campbellii* and with other new Chinese varieties, the results were to prove startling. More important, most of them came into flower within eight to twelve years. They are handsome trees, the major feature of Caerhays after a frost-free winter.

Some of these magnolias set seed fairly often when the spring conditions are right. Windblown seedlings have flowered very well and we have planted them out here and there over the past decades. There is one growing well today in Tregolls Road on the right-hand side going into Truro, and another good one a couple of hundred yards to the west of St John's Hall in Penzance. They should be much more widely grown: they advance the feeling of spring and shine out from a distance as if asking winter to retreat. Landowners might well include one or two when they are tree planting. They brighten up the county at a very bleak time of year.

Conclusion

John Charles Williams was only one of a long line of Cornish gardeners who have contributed to the development of plants throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Sir Charles Lemon of Carclew was one of the first to grow Himalayan rhododendrons; the Rev'd John Townshend Boscowen of Lamorran was one of the few people consulted by the great rhododendron expert J. H. Mangles in the 1880s. Algernon Dorrien Smith was the real founder of the Cornish daffodil trade. Caerhays could not have come into being without the efforts of explorers like Wilson and Forrest, and its success depended to a great extent on the support and involvement of the Royal Horticultural Society, Kew, Edinburgh and the Arnold Arboretum. After J.C.'s death his work was carried on by George Johnstone of Trewithen and by the Bolitho family of Trengwainton and Trewidden. The plant life of China is still being explored, and new plants are being introduced into Cornwall thanks to the work of Nigel Holman of Chyverton and Tom Hudson of Tregrehan. New varieties of daffodil continue to delight.

But it was J. C. Williams who founded and fostered many of these links and friendships, and whose dedication and enthusiasm ensured the success of many experiments in hybridisation: his legacy is evident every springtime in the sights and scents of Cornwall's gardens.

Acknowledgements

As J. C. Williams would have been the first to admit, he was served, as have been his successors, by excellent gardeners. Christian names were never used, the gardeners always being referred to as Mr. Martin (head gardener from the 1890's to the 1920's), Mr. Ivey, the daffodil propagator who ruled his world absolutely, and Mr. Michael, at Caerhays from 1923 to 1956, while at Werrington the head gardeners were Mr. Fitt and Mr. Gregory. Since 1956 Caerhays garden has been looked after for 40 years by Mr. Phillip Tregunna, and for the last three by Mr. Jaimie Parsons.

Gratitude must be expressed to Christine North, our County Archivist, for her great help, and Sarah Rundle of Caerhays and Debbie Palmer of the RIC for their help in typing the first two attempts.

F. J. Williams's Presidential Address to the Royal Institute of Cornwall, given in November 1998, is available online - with a set of Appendixes listing J. C. Williams's daffodil hybrids; the plants sent to Caerhays by E. H. Wilson from the Arnold Arboretum No. 4 Expedition; the 'Williamsii' Camellias that originated at Caerhays and Burncoose; and J.C.W.'s own article *A Note Upon Rhododendron Series,* from the 1923-published, Volume 2, Part 4, edition of *The Rhododendron Society Notes,* plus a register of the Society's members at that time - to read or download from the Caerhays Estate website at:

https://visit.caerhays.co.uk/the-estate/an-enthusiast/

The age of Rhododendrons at Caerhays - An Update.

by Charles Williams.

The rhododendron species collection at Caerhays, which was largely the result of Forrest and Wilson introductions between 1902 and 1934, came into its absolute prime here in the 1960s and early 1970s. This was just when I was starting to get interested and involved in my father's hybridisation work with Philip Tregunna, the head gardener at Caerhays for over 40 years.

In the subsequent 50 to 60 years, very large numbers of these rhododendron species have died upon reaching the end of their natural lives. The key question for large gardens with rhododendron collections in this centenary year is, therefore, at what point must the owners or curators consider starting these species off again from cuttings, seed or layering or perhaps from external purchases from the very limited number of specialist rhododendron nurseries which remain in the UK today.

There is a very real danger that many of the species discovered up to 100 years ago in China will be lost to, and maybe even because of, our generation of gardeners. With the arrival of the absurd and counterproductive Nagoya Protocol, field trips to collect and distribute rhododendron seed from the wild will become ever more difficult, if not impossible.

Thus the longevity of rhododendrons and consequent replacement plans should be an area for thought and research. The Rhododendron Camellia & Magnolia Group is seeking to collate records of surviving rare rhododendron species and hybrids but surely the rather more relevant question is how long have these plants actually got to live and what can we do now to reproduce them for the next 50 years?

My great grandfather, J. C. Williams (JCW), published a list of the species of rhododendrons growing at Caerhays in 1916. The further list, published in 1919, is more useful as very many more species had, by then, acquired names rather than simply collectors' numbers. The 1919 list records 333 named species and a further eleven, as then, unnamed ones. Many of the names have of course been altered and reclassified over time but that is perhaps of less importance than determining for how long they have actually survived.

It is now time to pause and reread what my father, Julian Williams, wrote in 1976 about the longevity of rhododendrons. He was writing just before the great drought in Cornwall in the summer of 1976 which decimated all of our mature big leafed species.

The age of Rhododendrons at Caerhays.

by F. Julian Williams.

There is probably no more opportune time to write about the age of rhododendrons in this garden than when, after an extraordinarily mild winter, with the early magnolias in full flower, the first spring frost has struck, and the blooms have turned to blotting paper and much new foliage growth to pulp.

In this garden, which has been in existence since at least 1897, it is extraordinary how relatively few of the older specimen plants of rhododendron species have survived. The planting programme was intense between 1906 and 1934, mostly from the Wilson and Forrest collections. The losses can be explained by so many circumstances, many of which arise slowly and others as a result of sudden gale disaster, or infestation by rabbits or grey squirrels. Some plants will have been weeded out deliberately as poor forms, others will have died from neglect.

During the past few years in our planting programme, we have seen high mortality blighting our efforts - whether through honey fungus, fallen trees and branches, or by salt being carried inland from the sea by the gales. Other reasons may lie in the fact that some plants have done too well, grown too rapidly and weakened themselves. Others may not have been cut back in time when they have become overgrown. The old *arboreums* on the drive - planted probably between 1870 and 1890 - are still cut down regularly and really appreciate savage treatment, but here again when this is not done in time, the plants tend to wither.

A planting diary was kept by my grandfather, John Charles Williams, and I have made stern efforts to satisfy myself that the plants listed below survive - though in places I may have erred or been too optimistic. This list consists only of the species rhododendrons referred to in his notes, and for the reader's convenience they have been arranged in their series.

Anthopogon series.
There is one sickly plant of the rare *R. anthopogonoides. R. kongboense* died six years ago, and in spite of many attempts in the last sixty years it has not proved possible to establish *R. sargentianum.*

Arboreum series.
A large neglected plant of the blood-red *arboreum* was recorded as looking well in 1902. In 1931, some layers of this were made, which in 1975 were looking well though straggly. Some layers from the old plant of *hypoglaucum,* made in 1927, were flourishing in 1975; plants of *thayerianum,* dating from 1919, had grown big by 1975, but were overcrowded. An *argyrophyllum* from Wilson's seed is large and healthy.

Auriculatum series.
A plant of *R. auriculatum* W920, planted in 1911, seems to have reached its limit, and has not grown much since it was measured in 1948.

Azalea series.
A batch of seedlings of *R. albrechtii* on the drive, planted in 1928, were cut back hard in 1968 and about half survive. *R. obtusum amoenum* was planted much of the length of the drive in 1895, and still survives harsh treatment. The white striped form of *R. mucronatum,* planted in 1933, was moved recently.

Barbatum series.
Old plants of *R. barbatum* are dying back.

Boothii series.
Once established, *R. auritum* grows well.

Campanulatum series.
Has proved difficult. *Rhododendron fulgens* and *lanatum* have died out, and only one stunted plant of *campanulatum* survives.

Cinnabarinum series.
R. cinnabarinum roylei, planted in 1928, is dying back through lack of light, but big plants of *R. keysii,* planted in 1914, still look well.

Dauricum series.
Plants of *R. mucronulatum* planted in 1927 are in decline.

- opposite -
Rhododendron decorum Pink Form.



Falconeri series.
Out of 10 plants of *R. arizelum* planted in 1928 under various Forrest numbers, three survive. A plant of *R. basilicum,* planted in 1925, is dying. Six plants of *R. falconeri* were planted in 1906, of which the last died in 1960, leaving true seedlings. *R. fictolacteum* was planted in 1925, and still looks well.

Fortunei series.
The original plants of *R. calophytum,* planted in 1919, have died, but they have produced true seedlings in their place. Some of 1902 planting of *R. decorum* survive; the 1918 planting look well, but they may be hybrids. *R. fargesii,* planted in 1911, are feeling their age; a 1919 planting is still holding on, but look straggly and do not like rough treatment. *R. orbiculare* planted in 1917 is going back. *R. sutchuenense,* W. 1232 and W. 1232B, planted in 1912, survive in spite of neglect.

Glaucophyllum series.
R. brachyanthum var. *hypolepidotum,* a Forrest plant, is struggling to survive.

Grande series.
Several of the big plants of *R. grande* survive from the 1907 planting, some of them re-planted in 1914 and 1919. *R. praestans,* planted in 1925, is in fair condition. *R. sinogrande* were planted in 1917, 1920 and 1931, and nearly all these look well.

Griersonianum series.
Twelve plants of *R. griersonianum,* planted in 1922, survive despite grave neglect.

Heliolepis series.
R. bracteatum W. 4253 flowered in 1922, but is very flower-shy though the plant looks fairly well. It may have flowered in the last 18 years.

Irroratum series.
R. araiophyllum planted in 1922 still survive and look well, as does a plant of *R. eriogynum* of the same age; layers of this, made in 1927, look very well. *R. eritimum,* planted in 1919, survives with its ugly flowers. *R. kyawi* F. 17928, planted in 1924 in a cold site, survives.

Lacteum series.
R. beesianum, planted in 1925, is dying. *R. lacteum, R. phaeochrysum, R. traillianum* and *R. wightii* have not survived.

Lapponicum series.
R. flavidum W. 1773 planted in 1919; the last survivor died about 1960. *R. russatum,* planted in 1927, looks well.

Lepidotum series.
R. baileyi, grown from seed sent home by Colonel Bailey in 1913, survives and benefits from being cut back hard.

Maddenii series.
R. burmanicum received from Lady Cuffe grows well, but is rather bud tender. *R. crassum,* planted in 1918, forms a very good clump in spite of a tree having fallen on it. Large plants of *R. megacalyx,* planted in 1926, are now going back through overseeding. *R. lindleyi* and *rhabdotum* do quite well, while *taggianum* and *dalhousiae* are more difficult; the *dalhousiae* hybrids do well.

Micranthum series.
R. micranthum, planted in 1920, looks well and has been cut back more than once.

Moupinense series.
R. moupinense, planted in 1918, still survives.

Neriiflorum series.
R. apodectum, planted in 1920, is still alive. *R. haematodes,* a clump planted in 1917 looks well. The last of four plants of *R. mallotum,* planted in 1928, died in 1962. A clump of *R. neriiflorum,* planted in 1920, is showing signs of decline. Plants of *R. forrestii* var. *repens,* planted in 1925, look fit and well.

Ovatum series.
R. ovatum, planted in 1915, still look well.

Stamineum series.
R. wilsoniae, planted in 1915, survives.

Taliense series.
There are good plants of *R. adenogynum* F. 5868 and F. 5871, which have survived neglect. A clump of *R. bureavii,* planted in 1930, looks well.

Thomsonii series.
R. callimorphum, planted in 1920, died about 1973. *R. meddianum* - F. 15676 - a batch planted in 1928 is nearing the end of its life; a difficult plant in this garden. *R. williamsianum,* W. 1350; the old plants are now dying.

Triflorum series.
A clump of *R. augustinii* planted in 1915 is very tall and needs pruning; another planted in 1919 still survives though neglected. *R. davidsonianum* planted in 1929 exists in several different forms; the best pink form looks well, but needs more sun. *R. hanceanum* W. 4255, planted in 1929, has survived a cut back, but is a straggling plant in poor light. *R. lutescens:* two groups planted in 1927 survive. *R. oreotrephes:* 4 or 5 plants still survive out of a large clump planted in 1917, but they are nearing the end of their lives.

It is difficult to draw any definite conclusions from these records, other than that there seems to be little difference in the life span of the large leafed and of the small leafed rhododendrons. The *R. forrestii* var. *repens* look as healthy and well as any of the Grande series.

My father's article makes, I suspect, deliberately, deeply pessimistic reading. He, like JCW, always did his utmost to downgrade his own achievements at a time when the garden here was not open to the public and there was no need or desire to promote its existence.

There are no conclusions offered at the end of the article so, another 40 years on, I thought I might attempt several based on what we know today, as well as being a bit more positive.

I have indicated with an asterisk those species which we have replaced and replanted here afresh in the last 30 years:

- *opposite* -
R. moulmainense (left); *R. lacteum* (centre left above); *R. vernicosum* (centre left below); *R. lutescens* (centre right above); *R. griersonianum* (centre right below); *R. arboreum* (right).
R. lacteum and *R. vernicosum* are centenarians growing at Werrington Park.





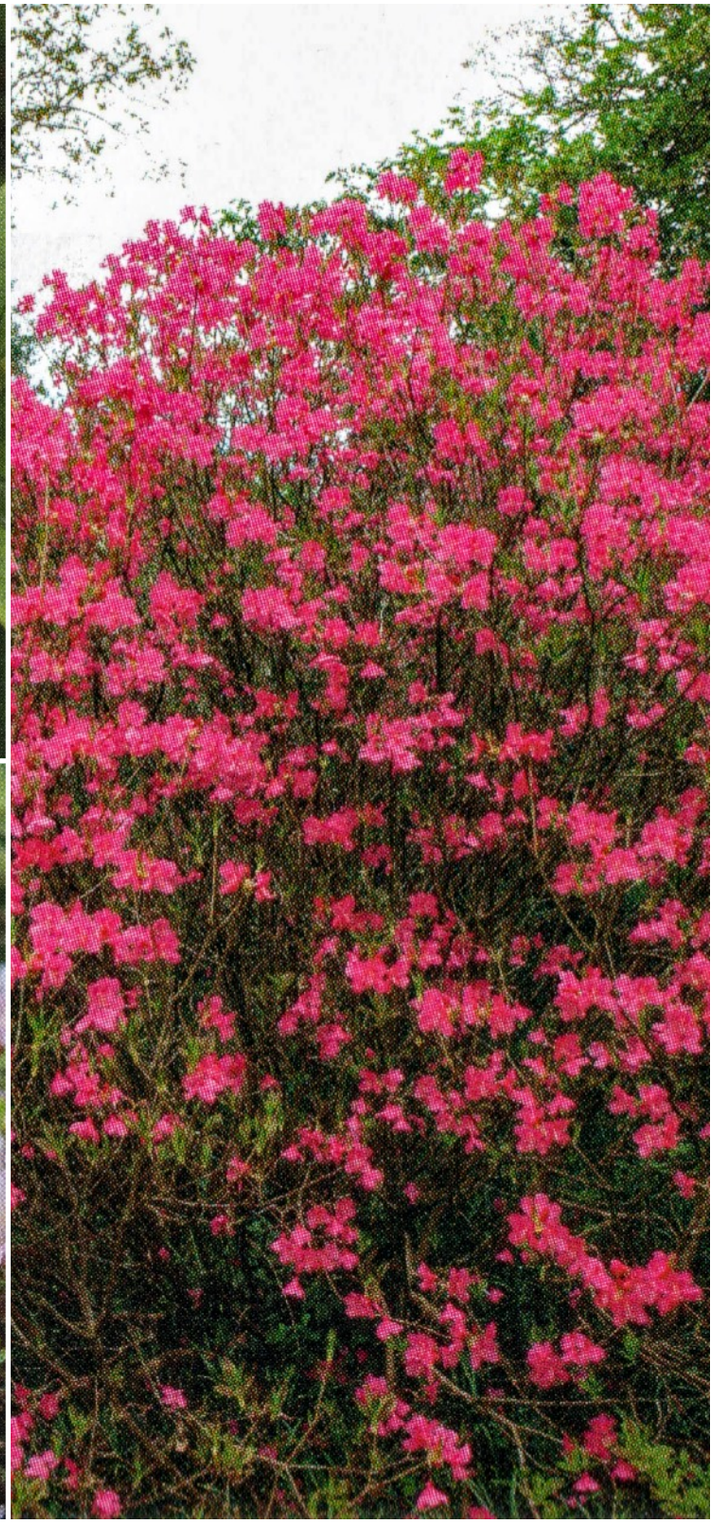


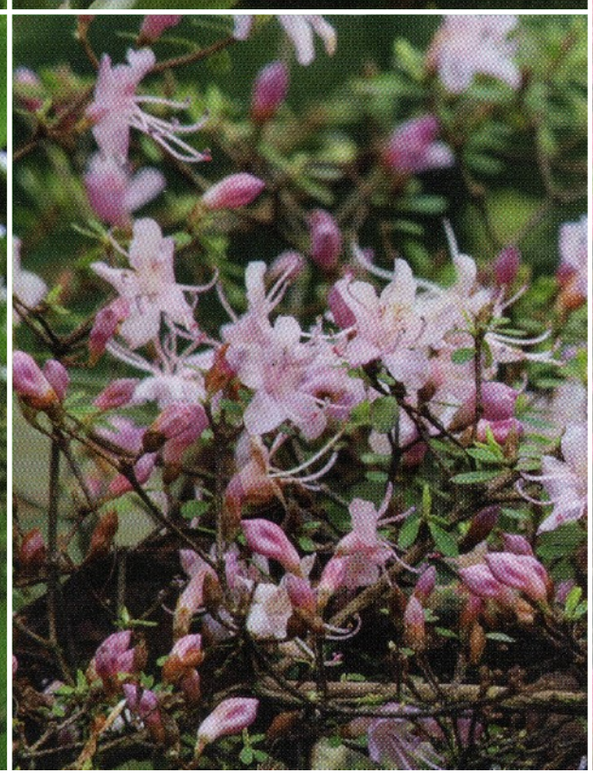








Original 'Centenarians' which have survived around, or over 100 years:

R. arboreum (red, white, pink and blood red - but not *arboreum* variety 'Sir Charles Lemon')
R. albiflorum (now *R. albrechtii*)
R. amoenum (now 'Amoenum' Obtusum Group)
R. argenteum (now *R. grande*)
R. barbatum (just!)
R. balophyllum or *R. zaleucum* (now *R. yunnanense* - just alive)
R. cardioeides (now *R. oreotrephes* - a huge clump which self-seeds)
R. crassum (now *R. maddenii* ssp. *crassum*)
R. davidsonianum
R. decorum
R. delavayi (now *R. arboreum* ssp. *delavayi*)
R. dichroanthum (now *R. dichroanthum* ssp. *apodectum*)
R. discolor or *R. houlstonii* (now *R. fortunei* ssp. *discolor*)
R. fargesii (now *R. oreodoxa* var. *fargesii*)
R. griersonianum
R. hanceanum (tall growing form)
Indica series (Wilson's wild forms in various colours)
R. kaempferi (several clumps)
R. leptothrium (huge clump which self-seeds)
R. lutescens (self-seeds prolifically)
R. micranthum
R. molle (Azalea mollis)
R. moupinense (just)
R. mucronatum (several clumps)
R. mucronulatum (one plant of ten)
R. obtusum (now Obtusum Group)
R. ovatum (several clumps)
R. ponticum! (despite Defra's best efforts)
R. racemosum (pink and white forms)
R. rhombicum (now *R. reticulatum*)
R. roxieanum (one plant only - now *R. roxieanum* var. *roxieanum*)
R. rubiginosum
R. russatum (just)
R. schlippenbachii
R. serpyllifolium
R. spinuliferum
R. stamineum
R. stenaulum (now *R. moulmainense* - pink form, but not white form)
R. valentinianum (just)
R. wilsoniae (now *R. latoucheae*)

So only about 10% of the 1919 listings exist today, which is hugely significant in terms of survival, continuity and replacement.

- opposite -

R. maddenii ssp. *crassum* (above left); *R. kaempferi* (below left); *R. indicum* (centre left above); *R. schlippenbachii* (centre left below); *R. hanceanum* (centre right above); *R. serpyllifolium* (centre right below); *R. albrechtii* (right).

Centenarians which have survived by being cut down hard to reshoot once, twice or even three times in 100 years:

R. 'Amoenum' (some will benefit, some not)
R. maddenii ssp. *crassum*
R. davidsonianum
R. hanceanum (will only partial survival)
R. kaempferi
R. lutescens
R. micranthum
R. ovatum
R. racemosum (some)
R. schlippenbachii (some)

We failed to rejuvenate *Rhododendron mucronulatum* and *R. russatum* using this technique although I strongly suspect all the deciduous species would respond just as well to this treatment.

The conclusion, in very simple terms, is that any species with smooth and peeling bark and any species with thick striated bark cannot be cut down to reinvigorate them and prolong their life.

Species which would probably have survived as centenarians:

…if they had not been crushed by fallen trees in the 1990 hurricane or other natural disasters of this nature in the last 20 years.

R. aucklandii (now *R. griffithianum,* was destroyed in a freak whirlwind in 1976). The Aucklandii Garden is at Caerhays.
*R. bureavii**
*R. hunnewellianum**
*R. quinquefolium**

1919 species which have died out in the fairly recent past:

Aged 75 to 90 years
*R. auriculatum**
R. baileyi
*R. campylogynum**
*R. facetum**
R. haematodes (both original clumps)
*R. heliolepis**
*R. keysii**
*R. martinianum**
R. megacalyx
R. megeratum
*R. neriiflorum**
*R. niveum**
*R. orbiculare**
R. repens (now *R. forrestii* ssp. *forrestii* Repens Group)
*R. ririei**
R. sanguineum
*R. strigillosum**

Centenarians which still look in their prime and which should survive for another generation or two:

R. 'Amoenum'
R. davidsonianum
R. grande
Indica Series
R. kaempferi
R. lutescens
R. molle
R. Obtusum Group
R. ovatum
R. schlippenbachii
R. stamineum

The 1919 lists do not include the following (mainly) deciduous species. However, because of their size and location in the garden, it can be determined that they were planted shortly afterwards, in the 1920s. These are therefore all nearly centenarians as well.

R. prinophyllum
R. luteum
R. maddenii ssp. *maddenii* (formerly *R. polyandrum*)
R. tephropeplum
R. weyrichii

With the help of Mary Ashworth, curator at Werrington Park, a review of the centenarians still surviving there and flowering today has been undertaken. At the time when the Forrest and Wilson introductions were arriving, J. C. Williams owned and created gardens at both Caerhays and Werrington. The Chinese Garden at Werrington on the Devon/Cornwall border near Launceston is, however, very different climatically to Caerhays. The garden faces north and is near the top of a hill with many more days of exposure to cold winds and frost, and it has 15 to 20 inches less rainfall annually [38 to 51cm].

One might therefore have expected greater longevity in many species. This is borne out by the survival, for instance, of *Rhododendron lacteum* or *R. williamsianum* at Werrington, but not at Caerhays. On considering the list more closely, it is obvious that the larger leafed rhododendrons have survived the century far better at Werrington than at Caerhays. Nevertheless, there are only four centenarian species which appear on both lists.

It could be argued that JCW perceived certain species as being too tender for Werrington's climate and that is certainly borne out in his garden notes. However, if one compares today's list of Werrington survivors, even back to a 1995 survey, it is apparent that quite a number of species have died out in the last 20 years (eg *Rhododendron arboreum, R. arizelum, R. floccigerum, R. irroratum* and *R. morii)*.

It seems that the overall centenarian survival rate of no more than 15% of the species originally planted is just as true at Werrington as at Caerhays.

100 Year old Rhododendrons still flowering at Werrington Park:

FORREST COLLECTIONS
R. anthosphaerum
R. callimorphum
R. campanulatum
R. cyanocarpum
R. decorum
R. dichroanthum
R. facetum
R. fulvum
R. glischrum
R. haematodes
R. hippophaeoides
R. hormophorum/yunnanense
R. lacteum
R. neriiflorum
R. racemosum
R. rex ssp. fictolacteum
R. zaleucum

WILSON COLLECTIONS
R. ambiguum
R. augustinii
R. auriculatum
R. calophytum
R. concinnum
R. davidsonianum
R. floribundum
R. hunnewellianum
R. lutescens
R. pachytrichum
R. pseudochrysanthum
R. strigillosum
R. sutchuenense
R. vernicosum
R. williamsianum

Conclusions:

So what conclusions can we draw from all this?

• Evergreen and deciduous 'azalea' species demonstrably have the greatest longevity.

• Deciduous rhododendron species are also nearly all centenarians.

• The lifespan of some of the most attractive and highly scented species is only 20 to 30 years in our mild climate with an average annual rainfall of 55 inches [1.4m]. In this category I would include *Rhododendron burmanicum, R. lindleyi* and *R. dalhousiae* var. *rhabdotum*. The short lifespan of the latter two may well be because they are epiphytes in the wild.

• The lifespan of the majority of the later flowering scented species (and their hybrids) is a maximum of 40 to 50 years.

*R. ciliatum**
R. dalhousiae
*R. edgeworthii**
*R. formosum**
*R. johnstoneanum**
*R. leucaspis**

*R. maddenii**
*R. veitchianum** *(formerly R. cubittii)*

• Of the smaller growing species (and their hybrids) a lifespan of 40 to 60 years is about par for:
R. aureum
*R. bauhiniiflorum**
*R. dauricum**
*R. ferrugineum**
*R. floribundum**
*R. hippophaeoides**
*R. impeditum**
R. longistylum
R. minus var. *chapmanii**
R. radicans (now *R. calostrotum* ssp. *keleticum* Radicans Group)
*R. sulfureum**
*R. williamsianum**
*R. vaseyi**

• 1976 drought casualties aside, some of the larger growing and larger leafed species live for 60 to 80 years and die slowly. I therefore disagree with my father's conclusion that, in broad terms, small leafed and large leafed rhododendrons have the same longevity.
*R. arizelum**
*R. calophytum**
*R. callimorphum**
*R. campanulatum**
*R. elliottii**
*R. falconeri**
R. fulgens
*R. hookeri**
*R. irroratum**
*R. macabeanum**
*R. morii**
*R. montroseanum**
*R. praestans**
*R. protistum**
*R. rex**
*R. sinogrande**
*R. wardii**
*R. zaleucum**

• Those species which succumbed to rust and powdery mildew in the 1980s and 1990s and would probably have lived only 40 to 60 years anyway:
*R. cinnabarinum**
R. cinnabarinum ssp. *xanthocodon* (at Burncoose)
R. cinnabarinum ssp. *xanthocodon* Concatenans Group*
R. cinnabarinum Roylei Group*
R. triflorum

• Those medium sized species which regularly 'overflower' here and wear themselves out by 'overseeding' and die quickly after 40 to 50 years:



Rejuvenation in action:
R. augustinii regrowth after regularly being cut back hard.

R. rubiginosum Desquamatum Group* (formerly *R. desquamatum*)
R. keysii*

• These species dislike our high rainfall, grow poorly and die to spite our efforts:
R. falconeri ssp. *eximium*
*R. thomsonii**
R. sargentianum

• Early Caerhays first generation (1920s/1930s) hybrids which have survived and still flourish after at least 80 years:
'Moonstone' Group (*campylocarpum* x *williamsianum*)
R. 'Caerhays Crossbill' (*spinuliferum* x *lutescens*)
'Red Admiral' Group (*arboreum* x t*homsonii*)
'Humming Bird' Group (*haematodes* x *williamsianum*)



R. ‘Penvose’ (*tephropeplum* x *cinnabarinum* ssp. *xanthocodon* Concatenans Group) - cut down once.

The hybrid with the most outstanding longevity is undoubtedly Rhododendron ‘Cornish Red’ (*ponticum* x *arboreum*). These plants are now up to 140 years old, and many, but not all, have been cut down hard but quickly recover and grow again to 40 feet or more.

Of the twenty species of dwarf rhododendrons I planted together in a bed 40 years ago only *Rhododendron campylogynum, R. flavidum* and *R. impeditum* survive today.

Therefore, the average lifespan of all the rhododendrons which have been planted here is around 70 to 80 years, with a very broad range either side of this. While only 10 to 15% of the wild collected and original species at Caerhays have made it to receiving the royal telegram I very much doubt any will become double centenarians except perhaps the evergreen azalea species if cut down once or twice.

On a more cheerful note, I also include a few from a list of species collected mainly by Alan Clark which we planted out last year in new clearings in Old Park Wood:

R. aganniphum (as *R. doshongense*)
R. cyanocarpum
R. farinosum
R. galactinum
R. luteiflorum
R. mengtszense
R. pachytrichum
R. vernicosum
R. strigillosum
R. taliense

Charles Williams is the current custodian of Caerhays Castle Gardens and owns Burncoose Nurseries. His species longevity update was originally published in the Centenary Edition of the RCMG Year Book *Rhododendron Camellias & Magnolias 2016.* The botanic nomenclature reflects the classification systems in use at the time of writing.

- opposite left -
R. stamineum.

- opposite right -
Three members of the Caerhays gardening staff midway through replanting an area of the Old Park.



The Evergreen Azalea Registrations:

Caerhays Lavender
AM 2008
Flower Colour: Lavender
Flowering Time: April-May
Height: Low

Greenway
AM 1975
Flower Colour: Pink



R. 'Greenway' AM 1975

The Lepidote Registrations:

Blue Tit
impeditum X *augustinii*
Flower Colour: Mauvy-blue
Flowering Time: April-May
Height: Semi-Dwarf

Brachydum Primum
brachyanthum (W 6771) X *flavidum* (W 1773)
AM 1924
Flower Colour: Yellow

Crossbill
spinuliferum X *lutescens*
Flower Colour: Yellow-red
Flowering Time: April
Height: Medium

Kittiwake
lutescens X *edgeworthii*

Penvose
tephropeplum X *concatenans*
Flower Colour: White-purplish-pink
Flowering Time: Late May
Height: Tall

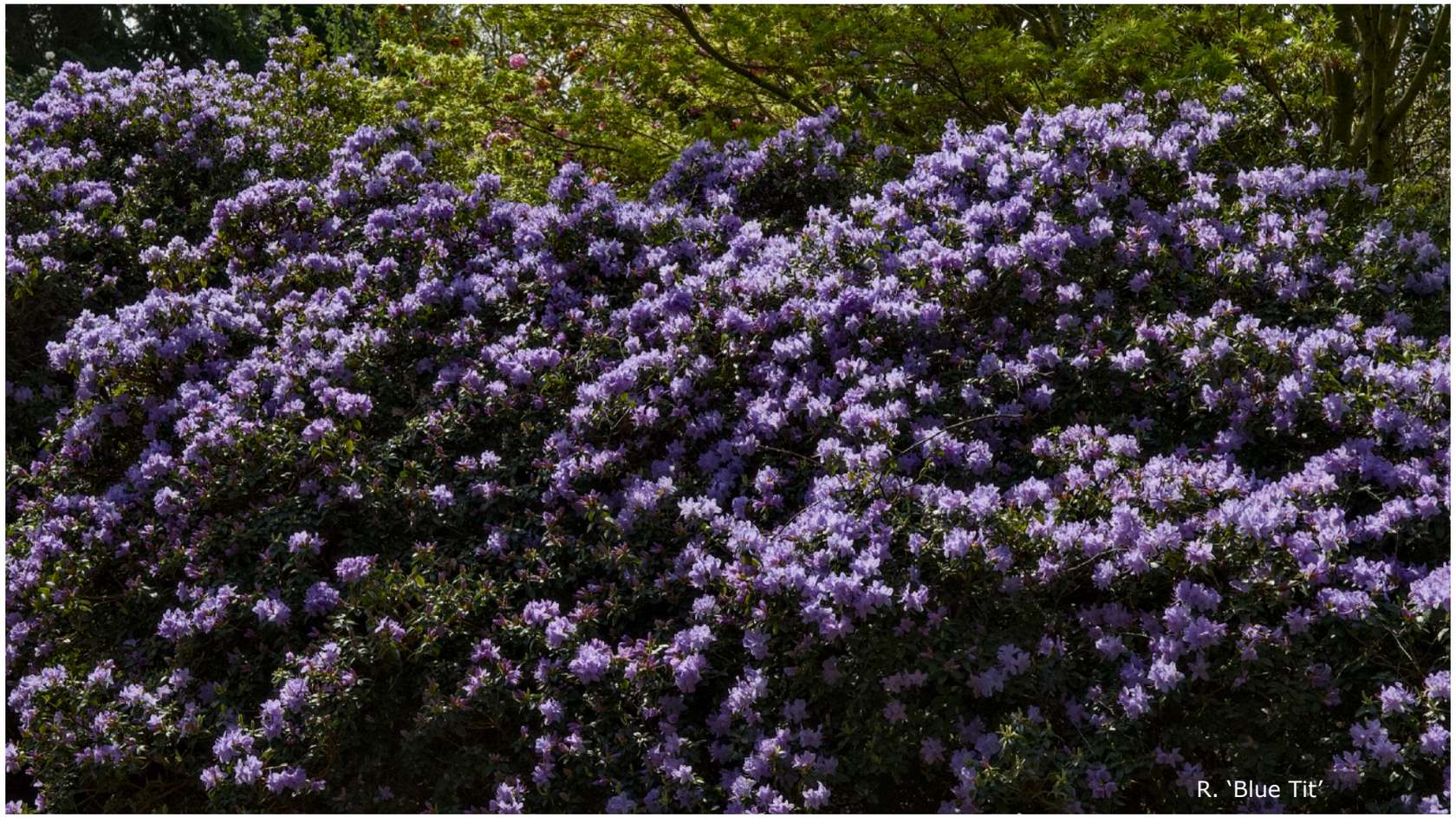
Polgrain
tephropeplum X *cinnabarinum*
Flower Colour: White-purplish-pink
Flowering Time: Late May
Height: Tall

Royal Flush
cinnabarinum X *maddenii*
Flower Colour: Yellow-bronze-copper
Flowering Time: Early May
Height: Tall

Saffron Queen
xanthostephanum X *burmanicum*
AM 1948
Flower Colour: Sulphur Yellow
Flowering Time: Late April-May
Height: Medium

Spinlut
spinuliferum X *lutescens*
Flower Colour: Lemon Yellow-Rose

Yellow Hammer
sulfureum X *flavidum*
Flower Colour: Empire Yellow
Flowering Time: March-April
Height: Medium



R. 'Blue Tit'

R. ‘Blue Tit’



R. ‘Blue Tit’

R. ‘Blue Tit’

impeditum x *augustinii*

Hardiness	Flowering Period	Height & Spread
H6	April	1.3m x 2m

Writing in *Plantae Wilsonianae,* first published in 1913, Ernest Wilson describes J. C. Williams as the first amateur gardener in Britain to appreciate the horticultural value of the rhododendrons of western China, and he notes that Williams has the best collection of these new varieties to be found. Two of those plants, thriving in the woodland of Caerhays Castle above Porthluney Cove in Cornwall, *R. impeditum* and *R. augustinii,* were paired to create the hybrid John Charles named for a small passerine that flitted about amongst the branches of his trees: *Cyanistes caeruleus* - R. ‘Blue Tit’.

The cross combines the best characteristics of each species, with ‘Blue Tit’ forming a low growing, wide-spreading shrub that covers itself with mauve-blue flowers throughout April. In southern climes a placement in dappled shade achieves the best form while maximising the floral display, but to achieve this state in the gardens of northern England a position in full sun is required, and as expected, the performance tails-off in the higher latitudes of Scotland.

Those corollas are broadly funnel-shaped and carried in trusses of three to five, each having two barely visible rays of small olive-green spots on the dorsal lobes. Their stamen filaments are coloured as the flowers, while the style flaunts a contrasting purplish-red. And the flower colour actually intensifies with age, though it fades eventually, just before the corollas fall.

The leaves are mid- through dark green, matt, scaly above and below, elliptic or rounded in shape, and around 2cm long. Paler foliage en masse indicates an unhappy plant, especially if the young growth is chlorotic and leaf spot is a problem, with more sunlight and better drainage usually the cure.

The Williams hybrid was introduced in 1933 and it was quickly followed onto the market by a duplicate pairing of the same species made independently by Edward Magor at nearby Lamellen. Different clones of the two species were used by Magor, so his plant has slightly larger leaves and flowers, but is reportedly a touch less hardy. It is now known as R. ‘Blue Tit (Magor)’.

Two other clones from the Lamellen cross were named and introduced in the early 1960s by a neighbouring and fellow rhododendron enthusiast, Eric Harrison of Tremeer: ‘Saint Breward’ and ‘Saint Tudy’, both of which gained FCC awards from the RHS. More recently Frank Fujioka, a Washington State hybridiser from Whidbey Island, has repeated the cross, registering ‘Vibrant Violet’ in 1986.

Prospective purchasers should note that the Williams and Magor plants are often mixed up in the nursery trade, with some proprietors viewing them as interchangeable. Other ‘selections’ have also been spotted.

R. ‘Blue Tit’

R. ‘Blue Tit’

R. 'Crossbill'

R. ‘Crossbill’

R. ‘Crossbill’

R. 'Crossbill'
spinuliferum x *lutescens*
Hardiness - Flowering Period - Height & Spread
H5 February-April 3.5m x 2.5m

'Crossbill' is probably the weirdest rhododendron hybrid J. C. Williams ever paired and registered, though given the variety of clones found in British gardens today the inspiration to place pollen from *R. lutescens* onto the stigma of *R. spinuliferum* was not restricted to just the south-west peninsula of England. 'Spinlut' - pale lemon yellow, faintly tinged rose - is another Caerhays selection logged with the international registrar though rarely encountered, at least under an accurate label, while any number of pretenders, including at least one clone from Exbury, remain unregistered.

The original introduction from 1933 has yellow flowers tinged red, the small corollas tubular-campanulate in shape and emerging from the inflorescence singularly, as a pair, or in a trio. Multiple buds occur at most branch tips so in combination, a fairly dense cluster of bloom is the usual outcome. Stamens and style are markedly exserted (protruding), while the corolla tube length varies, especially between the unregistered clones, with the flowers nearer open-campanulate in shape on some plants.

Foliage-wise the leaf blades are elliptic in outline with an acuminate apex and convex profile, each a little under 9cm long, bright green in colour and with both upper and lower surfaces scaly. Initially, the foliage and new growth are tinged dark red, but this soon fades, the hue only returning if a hard frost damages the leaves over winter. Up-close, this can mar the subsequent flower display, as a disfigured leaf often remains stubbornly in place. The shrub's habit is upright and straggly, and growth is vigorous, with specimens easily reaching the height and spread shown above in little more than fifteen years.

Regrettably, 'Crossbill' has one drawback to impinge on its widespread cultivation: the given hardiness is not sufficiently robust enough for many northern or east coast gardens, with that rating further challenged by flower buds that are supposed to open in late March through April, opting instead for a February-March arrival. Which is a shame, for the sheet of bloom is certainly impressive on a mature specimen or when a group of bushes are grown in a clump and covered in hundreds if not thousands of corollas as the photographs above evidence.


R. 'Crossbill'


R. 'Crossbill'



R. ‘Saffron Queen’ AM 1948

R. ‘Saffron Queen’

xanthostephanum x *burmanicum*

Hardiness - Flowering Period - Height & Spread

H4 April-May 1.7m x 2.5m

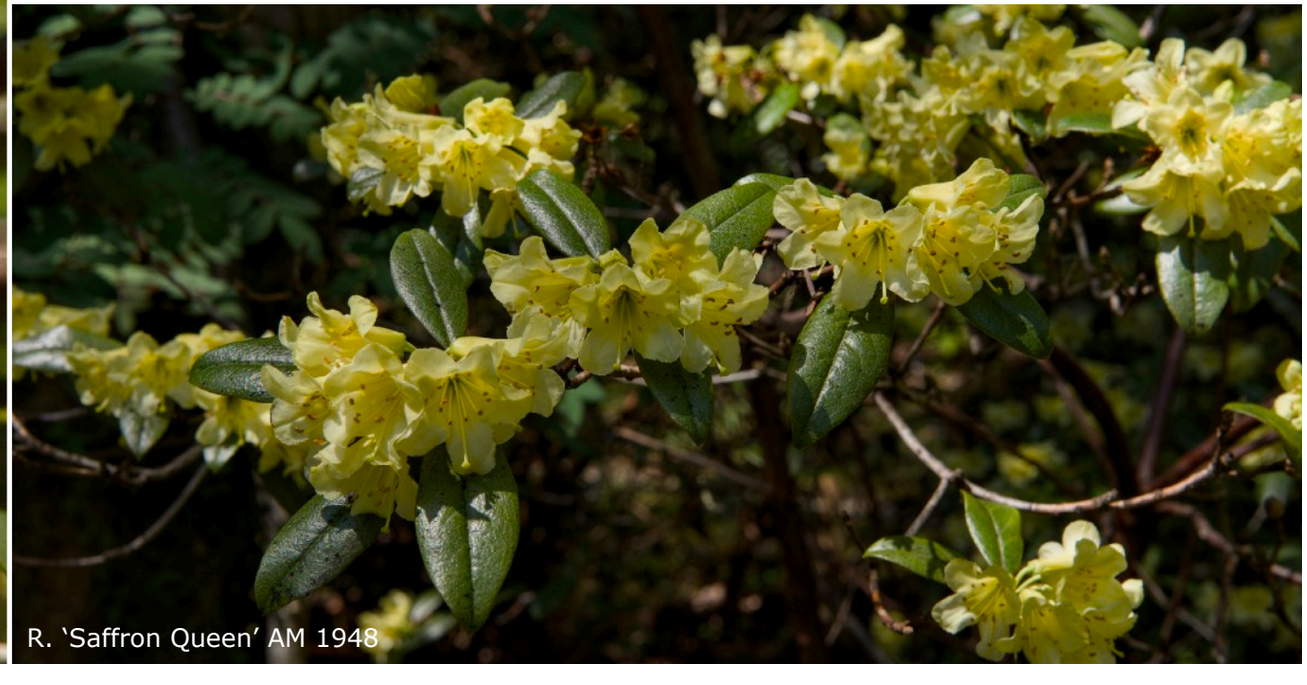
While perfectly suited to the climate at Caerhays, ‘Saffron Queen’, the J.C.W. *xanthostephanum* x *burmanicum* pairing introduced in 1948 following its Award of Merit showbench success, is regrettably not hardy enough to survive a “Beast from the East” winter in the majority of UK gardens unless additional frost protection can be put in place. So outwith a few favoured havens along the western seaboard and a lesser scattering of such locales in the south - those where the -10ºC temperature minimum is never breached (climate change notwithstanding) - this fabulous yellow-blooming hybrid is condemned to a potted existence under glass. Thankfully, the cross is relatively tolerant of a regular secateur-delivered short-back-and-sides, with such an application needed to restrain its leggy nature. However, the joy of its copper-brown, peeling bark, will then be lost.

Yet prospective purchasers with the necessary ceiling height in their winter-heated conservatory/greenhouse should also note that a second, lower-growing clone, which lacks such flaking bark, has also been distributed under the same epithet, so buyer beware.

The sulphur-yellow blooms, spotted darker on the dorsal lobes, are carried in a loose truss of 8 or 9 funnel-shaped corollas, each of which is around 4.5cm long and wide. Too much sun will quickly bleach their hue, so despite an open position in the garden being the best locale for the shrub’s overall deportment, a placement in dappled shade in the southern counties would be an expedient compromise.

The foliage is a glossy mid-green in tone, the blades lanceolate through oblanceolate in shape and up to 9cm long by 3cm across, with a scattering of brown scales on their underside.

Free-flowering from a young age, mature bushes will spread to around 2.5m in width and 1.7m in height and offer a dazzling sea of bloom from mid April into May.



R. ‘Saffron Queen’ AM 1948

R. ‘Saffron Queen’ AM 1948

R. ‘Saffron Queen’ AM 1948

R. ‘Saffron Queen’ AM 1948



R. ‘Yellow Hammer’

R. ‘Yellow Hammer’
sulfureum x *flavidum*

Hardiness	Flowering Period	Height & Spread
H5-6	April	2m x 3m

No self-respecting rhododendron garden in the UK would dare be without a mature specimen of ‘Yellow Hammer’ prominently placed close to their visitor entrance. Or so it would seem, for the shrub’s presence is nigh on ubiquitous at all such establishments from Land’s End to John o’Groats.

In fact the hybrid originates from a locale fairly close to England’s southwestern tip, Caerhays Castle, just a stone’s throw from Porthluney Cove on Cornwall’s riviera coast, the pairing made sometime in the 1920s by J. C. Williams, who used *R. flavidum* to pollinate *R. sulfureum.* On the surface that combination would appear not to bode all that well for winter hardiness, yet despite the H2-3 rating of its seed parent, ‘Yellow Hammer’ has been found to be tolerant of winter lows down to -18ºC, although out-of-the-blue sudden plunges can inflict damage. The standard advice to ‘prune after flowering’ and ‘pinch yearly’ paints a picture of the shrub’s leggy mien that ‘willowy’ - the politest and most oft used adjective to describe the impenetrable tangle of bare stems - doesn’t adequately portray. And any faint hope that the foliage might fill in the gaps can immediately be dashed for the leaves - dark green and glossy ellipses just 3.5cm long by 1cm wide, scaly above and below - simply don’t cut it, the branch tip whorls barely held across a single year and their resemblance to dead matter after a hard winter categoric, though they do usually rally in the spring. So ‘Yellow Hammer’ would be a sure candidate for the bonfire if not for its one saving grace: those flowers.

Produced from terminal and axillary buds, each one holding a pair of corollas that often form a compound truss with their fellow blooms throughout much of April, ‘Yellow Hammer’ is nothing less than a sea of colour. Individually the tubular-campanulate trumpets may only be 2cm long with a mouth less than 1.5cm across, but they are produced in such quantity that the effect, especially when backlit, is ethereal: a veritable haze of empire-yellow. And rarely does a year go by without a second, equally extravagant display lighting up the woodland in early autumn.

A modicum of dappled shade will extend the life of the deeper corolla hues, but allow that overhead canopy to shut out too much light and the result will be to draw the stems up to 3m or more, the criss-cross scaffold of bare branches then a certain disfigurement. Swift drainage must also be maintained.

A number of ‘Yellow Hammer’ clones apparently exist, the tendency towards legginess supposedly varying between them, though this is hardly noticeable across the specimens encountered at Arduaine, Muncaster, Windsor and elsewhere. On the pruning front, if a large mature bush is to hand, go at it with the secateurs when the plant is in full bloom, for fine cut flowers will result, which will light up your home. And finally, to save any potential hybridiser from wasting their time on match making, the shrub is sterile, failing in pairings as seed or pollen parent with all the various lepidote polyploids available, its own genetic chromosome count currently unknown.

Of tangential interest, most recently, the epithet was borrowed and conjoined by the staff of Her Majesty’s Treasury for its use as the coverall code name for their no-deal Brexit contingency planning. Whether this was suggested by some unknown rhodophile within their ranks we shall probably never know, but their endeavours proved just as bare as the stems.

R. ‘Yellow Hammer’

R. ‘Yellow Hammer’

R. ‘Yellow Hammer’

The Elepidote Registrations:

Assaye
calophytum X *sutchuenense*
AM 1963
Flower Colour: White
Height: Tall

Caerhays
griffithianum hybrid
Flower Colour: White

Cornish Loderi
griffithianum X *discolor*
Flower Colour: White

Dimidiatum
callimorphum X *neriiflorum*

Harrisii Superbum
thomsonii hybrid
Flower Colour: Crimson

Humming Bird
haematodes X *williamsianum*
Flower Colour: Crimson-scarlet
Flowering Time: Late April-May
Height: Medium

Moonstone
campylocarpum X *williamsianum*
Flower Colour: Cream-ivory-pink
Flowering Time: April
Height: Medium

Moonstone Pink
campylocarpum X *williamsianum*
Flower Colour: Pink
Flowering Time: April
Height: Medium

Moonstone Yellow
campylocarpum X *williamsianum*
Flower Colour: Yellow
Flowering Time: April
Height: Medium

Red Admiral
arboreum X *thomsonii*
Flower Colour: Red
Flowering Time: Late March-April
Height: Tall

Robin Hood
calophytum X *sutchuenense*

Robin Redbreast
discolor Houlstonii X *orbicular*
Flower Colour: Pink
Flowering Time: May
Height: Tall

Snow Bunting
arboreum X *sutchuenense*
Flower Colour: White

Sulphur Yellow
souliei X *campylocarpum*

Susan
campanulatum X *fortunei*
AM 1948 & FCC 1954
Flower Colour: Purple
Flowering Time: Early May
Height: Tall

Veryan Bay
pseudochrysanthum X *williamsianum*
Flower Colour: Pink

Williams' Seedling A
'Broughtonii' X *griffithianum*
Flower Colour: White

Williams' Seedling B
'Broughtonii' X *griffithianum*
Flower Colour: White

R. ‘Moonstone’

The ‘Moonstone’ Pride
campylocarpum x *williamsianum*
Hardiness - Flowering Period - Height & Spread
H6 April-early May 2m x 3m

Named Forms:
Moonstone (cream, ivory and pink).
Moonstone Pink (pink).
Moonstone Yellow (yellow).

‘Moonstone’ is likely the most widely planted J. C. Williams elepidote hybrid as ‘Humming Bird’, his *haematodes* x *williamsianum* cross, has been duplicated at Bodnant, Exbury and a number of other gardens, and in consequence, multiple, unregistered clones have been distributed commercially, swamping the original Caerhays plant. (The Williams pairing has a large, coloured-to-match, fleshy calyx with spreading lobes supporting each of the four broadly campanulate corollas that make up flower truss, so the pretenders - minus that august and distinguished attribute, and with decidedly tubular-campanulate corollas - are easy to identify and today, the only clones to be found in gardens).

‘Moonstone’ was introduced in 1933, with *R. campylocarpum* receiving the pollen from *R. williamsianum* instead of *R. haematodes,* and the result is a gem: an open, intricately branched bush that is awash with ivory, pink or creamy-yellow bells through much of April into May. Technically, the pink and yellow clones are separate registrations, but they are now so completely mixed-up in the trade that the pride name covers them all.

When first planted, those shrubs will take a decade to cross the 1m-height mark, but then, in defiance of the semi-dwarf, fairly dwarf, compact or low-growing labels the doyens have foisted upon them, they will quickly continue their skyward and sideways progress to approach 2m, with a spread of 3m or even more. That crisscross tangle of branches is lightly dusted with a fringe of matt green, ovate-shaped leaves, 6.5cm long by 4.5cm wide, typical of a *R. williamsianum* cross, and held on the bush for one or two flowering seasons. Youngsters begin blooming from three to five years of age, the display bettering itself year-on-year so a mature specimen of ‘Moonstone’ will be deluged in ivory-flushed-pink or deeper pink bells. Plants with creamy-yellow corollas now appear to be quite rare in cultivation - at least with a ‘Moonstone Yellow’ label attached. Campanulate in shape, the flowers open from dark red or yellow buds and have erect or slightly reflexed lobe margins. They are carried on flushed-red glandular pedicels in loose trusses of three through six.

Flowering and new growth occur in April, so late spring frosts will wreak havoc if shelter to avoid such is lacking. At the other end of the year, milder gardens along the west coast may find a second flush of growth kick-starting in September or October, with the branchlets then not able to harden-off properly if winter sets in early and so again be liable to damage by even mild dips below zero that would otherwise be shrugged-off without effect. And while a position in full sun is relished in northern climes, toleration turns to endurance further south, where dappled shade would prove the better option.

‘Moonstone’ is one of those quietly charming rhododendrons, perfect even when the corollas begin to fade, though now basically ousted from gardens by the brash and the luridly kitsch.

A label on one of the bushes photographed had the addendum ‘FCC Form’ on its engraved data set, but such should regarded as Trumpian reality rather than actual fact.


R. ‘Moonstone’

R. ‘Moonstone’

R. ‘Moonstone’

R. ‘Moonstone’

R. ‘Moonstone Pink’

R. ‘Moonstone Pink’

R. ‘Moonstone Pink’

R. 'Red Admiral'

R. 'Red Admiral'
arboreum x *thomsonii*
Hardiness - Flowering Period - Height & Spread
H4 March-early April 6m x 4m

The 'Red Admiral' cross, made by J. C. Williams sometime during the 1920s, was named and introduced in 1937 and mature specimens will be found in most of Cornwall's major rhododendron gardens, as well as in similar establishments all the way up the west coast to Inverewe in Wester Ross (and possibly beyond). The mildest of south coast venues - such as Exbury in the New Forest - may also grow the hybrid, but it will not be found elsewhere for the cross is only reliably hardy down to -10ºC, which rules out successful cultivation across the rest of the UK. Regrettably, many of those specimens benefitting from the temperature uplift provided by the North Atlantic Drift will be without a label, so identification is somewhat fraught, especially as the hybrid flowers just as early as its seed parent, although fewer corollas in the inflorescence and a more distinct calyx may help with the keying - at least, from mummy dearest.

In fact, ten through fifteen 5-lobed campanulate bells will comprise the flower truss, each one 5cm long by around 7cm across, their tone a glowing blood-red, the style whitish, the dorsal with a dusting of black spots - this more extensive on some clones – and five black nectar pouches set around the ovary at the base of the throat. The calyx lobes are close to 1cm long and coloured grey and the flower buds tend to test the waters before opening en masse, so the bloom period can last for a month or more, Jack permitting.

The leaf blades, only held for a single year, are elliptic in shape, 12cm long by up to 5cm wide, and without a cloak of indumentum below, while the shrub's habit is open and erect from the get-go, a small tree the ultimate result. Favourable sites with high annual rainfall totals can expect the 6m x 4m figures given above for height and width to almost certainly be exceeded, so providing space is not at a premium and your patch of woodland is snug and warm, 'Red Admiral' will make a fine addition to your garden. Unfortunately, commercial sources of supply may be lacking, as even the specialist nurseries appear to have dropped the hybrid from their propagation lists.


R. 'Red Admiral'

R. ‘Red Admiral’

R. ‘Red Admiral’

R. ‘Robin Hood’

R. ‘Robin Hood’

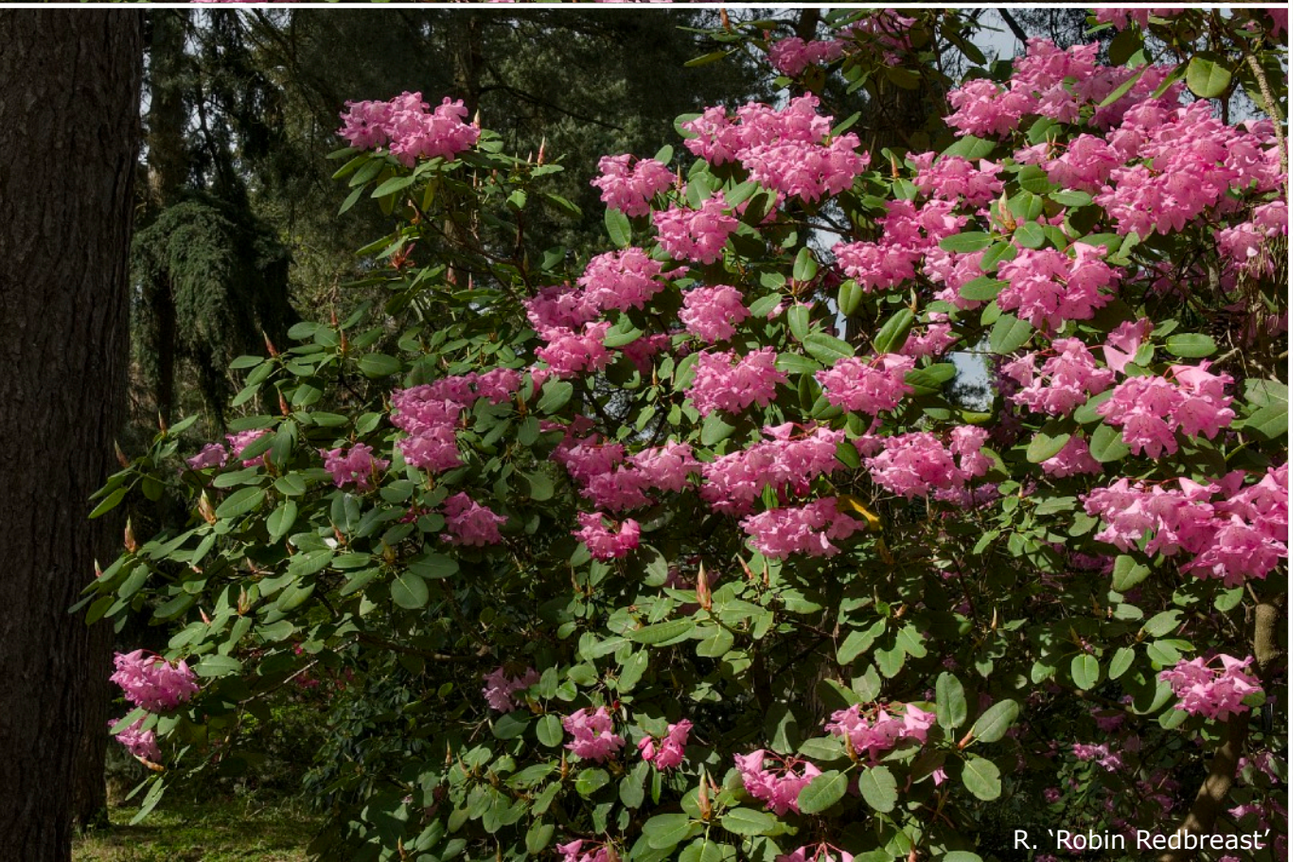
R. ‘Robin Redbreast’

R. ‘Robin Redbreast’

R. ‘Robin Redbreast’



R. ‘Robin Redbreast’



R. ‘Robin Redbreast’



R. ‘Robin Redbreast’

R. ‘Susan’
campanulatum x *fortunei*
Hardiness - Flowering Period - Height & Spread
H6 Late April-May 4m x 6m

J. C. Williams is the only hybridiser to have officially registered a *campanulatum* x *fortunei* pairing and his clonal choice of pollen parent was clearly critical in maintaining the near-blue pigmentation of the flowers. Technically, that hue is described as ‘Amethyst Violet’, though pale purple and bluish-mauve are equally accurate. The colour is deeper on the three dorsal lobes than it is on the two below, this triad also heavily spotted maroon. Of course, the blooms fade-out to white over time, remaining darkest for longest around the lobe margins, but such is life for a rhododendron’s pigmentation. An average of twelve funnel-shaped and five-lobed corollas fill each rounded truss, the trumpets individually 7.5cm long by 9cm wide at the mouth when fully expanded.

If the blooms were not sufficient of themselves, ‘Susan’ displays foliage that is their equal, elliptic-shaped blades 14cm long by 6.5cm across, dark green, glossy and glabrous above, paler and matt below with a thin tomentum at first, the leaves retained on the shrub for two years. So despite a strong and vigorous constitution, mature specimens preserve a well-cloaked and compact habit, forming a dome around a third wider than it is high. Expert opinion is in agreement on the shrub’s placement, a spot in dappled shade recommended as the best planting site for preserving the flower colour, even in England’s northern counties and across the border into Scotland - at least, as the written word goes, as far north as Perth - the fact that the hybrid is fully hardy and able to thrive in full sun regarded by the doyens as immaterial.

Sadly, it is at this point that those pundits diverge:

For the *International Rhododendron Register and Checklist* credits J. C. Williams as the hybridiser, while most other sources opt for P. D. Williams and question whether ‘Susan’ is in fact a hybrid at all.

For instance, the entry in *Bean’s Trees & Shrubs* online reports that:

‘Unfortunately, its history is not fully known’,

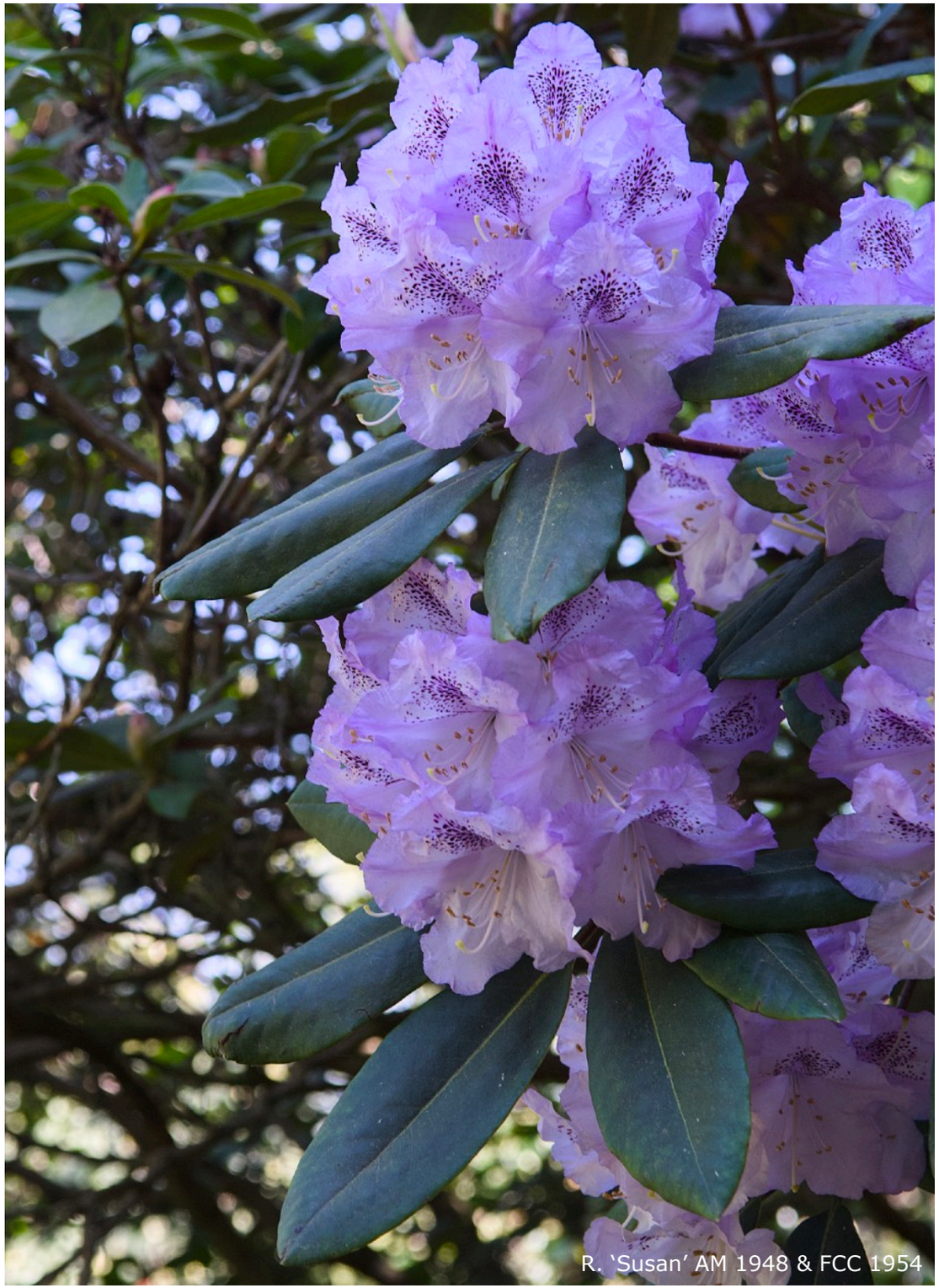
But then goes on to state that:

‘It was raised by P. D. Williams of Lanarth, Cornwall, and originally known as “Williams’ Campanulatum Hybrid”, but later named ‘Susan’ and put into commerce by Messrs W. C. Slocock. It is near to *R. campanulatum,* but it is difficult to believe that it is a hybrid between that species and *R. fortunei,* as stated by Lionel de Rothschild, and later in the *International Register*’.

On the second point, Frederick Street can also be quoted:

‘Susan’ is said to be a hybrid between *R. campanulatum* and *R. fortunei,* but there seems to be very little influence of *R. fortunei,* and it could almost be a very good form of *R. campanulatum.* The leaves are dark green with a brown underside and the plant has a neat habit of growth’.
Classic Garden Plants: Rhododendrons, The Globe Pequot Press, 1988.

The gift of an AM in 1948 and an FCC in 1954, both after trials at Wisley, confirm just how good ‘Susan’ is, regardless of its lineage or which member of the Williams clan actually made the selection or pairing. One positive, however, has, over time, changed to a negative, as the leaves, which were once considered to be mildew resistant, must now be regarded as somewhat susceptible to the fungal disease.


R. ‘Susan’ AM 1948 & FCC 1954

R. ‘Susan’ AM 1948 & FCC 1954

R. 'Susan' AM 1948 & FCC 1954

R. ‘Susan’ AM 1948 & FCC 1954

R. ‘Veryan Bay’

R. ‘Veryan Bay’

Photographic Acknowledgements:

Mirroring the earlier volumes in this series, details of where each of the plant portraits was photographed is set out below, along with the website details of those collections visited. Thanks is again extended to each establishment for allowing images taken in a private-use capacity, to be reproduced herein. Gratitude is also due the institutions, organisations and individuals who allowed the portrait photographs of historical and noted figures associated with the genus to appear alongside the text.

Key: AL - above left; AC - above centre; AR - above right; BL - below left; BC - below centre; BR - below right; L - left; R - right.

Arduaine Garden, Oban, Argyll:
https://www.nts.org.uk/visit/places/arduaine-garden
p. 285; p. 286 - R; p. 334 - BR; p. 337; p. 340.

Benmore Botanic Garden, Argyll:
https://www.rbge.org.uk/visit/benmore-botanic-garden/
p. 162; p. 163; p. 176 - R; p. 282; p. 283.

Bowood House & Gardens:
https://bowood.org/house-gardens/woodland-garden/
p. 346; p. 347.

Brodick Castle Garden, Isle of Arran:
https://www.nts.org.uk/visit/places/brodick-castle-garden-country-park
p. 220 - L; p. 221; p. 222; p. 223; p. 224; p. 225; p. 290; p. 334 - L; p. 335; p. 336; p. 364; p. 365.

Caerhays Castle Estate & Gardens, Gorran, St. Austell, Cornwall:
https://visit.caerhays.co.uk/
p. 88; p. 89; p. 308 L - J. C. Williams, image produced by Cameracraft, Truro, included in *The Rhododendron Story,* edited by Cynthia Postan, and published by the Royal Horticultural Society in 1996; p. 315 - *Rhododendron decorum* Pink Form; p. 317 - *R. moulmainense* (left), *R. lacteum* (centre left above), *R. vernicosum* (centre left below), *R. lutescens* (centre right above), *R. griersonianum* (centre right below), and *R. arboreum* (right) - *R. lacteum* and *R. vernicosum* are centenarians growing at Werrington Park; p. 318 - *R. maddenii* ssp. *crassum* (above left), *R. kaempferi* (below left), *R. indicum* (centre left above), *R. schlippenbachii* (centre left below), *R. hanceanum* (centre right above), *R. serpyllifolium* (centre right below), and *R. albrechtii* (right); p. 321 AR - rejuvenation in action - *R. augustinii* regrowth after regularly being cut back hard; p. 322 L - *R. stamineum;* p. 323 - three members of the Caerhays gardening staff midway through replanting an area of the Old Park; p.324.

Combined Universities in Cornwall:
https://www.exeter.ac.uk/our-campuses/penryn-campus/
p. 67 AL - Richard Gill, photographed alongside one of his rhododendrons, in the garden at Tremough. The image was posted online at Prezi.com - https://prezi.com/rn_dkpbp4hgd/where-are-we-a-brief-history-of-the-penryn-campus/ - in *'A brief history of the Penryn Campus'* by Sarah C Jane, Archivist and Special Collections Officer, Combined Universities of Cornwall.

Country Life:
https://www.countrylife.co.uk/
p. 17 AR - the house from the garden; p. 17 BR - a path in the woodland; p. 18 L - the handsome R. 'Loderi' with a groundwork of Japanese Azaleas; p. 18 R - a woodland vista: the margins of the path fringed with heaths and dwarf azaleas; p. 19 L - wild Azalea Pontica [R. luteum]; p. 19 R - across the lawn; p. 20 - a veteran rhododendron hybrid in full splendour: a magnificent specimen thirty-five feet high [10.7m]; p. 21 - the pageant of the Japanese Azaleas. All eight photographs have been reproduced from the July 6th, 1935, edition of the magazine.

Crarae Woodland Glen, Inveraray, Argyll:
https://www.nts.org.uk/visit/places/crarae-garden
p. 62; p. 63; p. 157 - BR; p. 178 - BL; p. 341.

Exbury Gardens, Hampshire:
https://www.exbury.co.uk/
p. 9; p. 50; p. 51; p. 54; p. 55; p. 56 - R; p. 78; p. 79; p. 80 - R; p. 164 - L; p. 180; p. 211; p. 212; p. 213; p. 231; p. 294; p. 295; p. 345; p. 354; p. 355.

Michael Galsworthy:
p. 310 R - J. C. Williams and George Johnstone comparing notes in the wood at Caerhays, included in *The Rhododendron Story,* edited by Cynthia Postan, and published by the Royal Horticultural Society in 1996.

Historic England:
https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1000215?section=comments-and-photos
p. 12 AR - Cromwell's Seat at the east end of the long walk (CC52/00269), 1890-1907, from the William James Day Collection; p. 13 - a view across the lawns (BL24910/006), May 1920, courtesy of the Bedford Lemere and Company; p. 14 - a fountain in a small pond in the gardens of Embley House (CC52/00265), 1890-1907, from the William James Day Collection; p. 15 - looking towards the south elevation of Embley House from the gardens (BL24910/005), May 1920, courtesy of the Bedford Lemere and Company.

The Huddersfield Daily Examiner:
https://www.examinerlive.co.uk/news/west-yorkshire-news/new-book-reveals-ramsden-family-13929822
p. 196 - Sir John Frecheville Ramsden, 6th Baronet (1877-1958).

Inverewe Gardens, Poolewe, Wester Ross:
https://www.nts.org.uk/visit/places/inverewe
p. 110; p. 111; p. 112; p. 113; p. 170; p. 171; p. 189; p. 284; p. 287; p. 330; p. 333 - BR.

Leonardslee Lakes & Gardens, Horsham, West Sussex:
https://www.leonardsleegardens.co.uk/about-us
p. 125 - one of the former Hammer Ponds at Leonardslee; p. 126 BL - Edmund Loder (seated, centre), with a group of friends, the photograph likely dating to the 1880s; p. 128 - the front of Leonardslee House is graced by some of the rhododendrons that Sir Edmond particularly liked, the photograph provided courtesy of Robin Loder; p. 130 - relaxing on the lawn around Leonardslee House, the photograph most likely taken in the 1890s; p. 133 L - Sir Edmund Loder at Leonardslee, photographed in later life; p. 152; p. 153; p. 182; p. 188; p. 271; p. 273; p. 274 - L.

Logan Botanic Garden, Stranraer:
https://www.rbge.org.uk/visit/logan-botanic-garden/
p. 30; p. 31; p. 32 - BL.

Los Angeles County Museum of Art Image Library:
https://collections.lacma.org/node/214555
p. 249 L - shot silk man's suit, *c.* 1790.

Melba Opera Trust, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia:
https://www.melbaoperatrust.com.au/about/
p. 148 - Dame Nellie Melba.

Muncaster Castle Gardens, Ravenglass, Cumbria:
https://www.muncaster.co.uk/
p. 1; p. 23 - R; p. 24; p. 25; p. 26; p. 27; p. 32 - R; p. 33; p. 98; p. 99; p. 100; p. 101 - R; p. 104; p. 105 - AL, BL, R; p. 114 - BR; p. 115; p. 116; p. 117; p. 118; p. 119; p. 154; p. 155; p. 166; p. 174; p. 175; p. 195; p. 200 BR - an aerial photograph of Muncaster taken in 1925; p. 202 BR - the eastern aspect of Muncaster Castle; p. 203 - the view across the glen towards the bank of old *R. arboreum* hybrids; p. 204 - another view from the Castle terrace, this towards the Lakeland fells; p. 205 BL - 'Muncaster Hybrid' in Church Wood; p. 206 R - *R. strigillosum;* p. 208 L - 'Muncaster Hybrid' by the car park entrance gate to the Castle; p. 209 - the 'Muncaster Hybrid' glade in Church Wood; p. 214; p. 215 - L, AR, BR; p. 216; p. 217 - BL, R; p. 218; p. 219; p. 232 - BL; p. 233; p. 234; p. 235; p. 240; p. 241; p. 242; p. 243; p. 244 - AR, BR; p. 245; p. 246; p. 247; p. 248; p. 249 - BR; p. 250; p. 251 - L, R; p. 252; p. 253; p. 254; p. 255; p. 274 - BR; p. 275; p. 276; p. 277; p. 278; p. 279 - L, R; p. 281; p. 297; p. 338 - L; p. 339; p. 348 - L, R; p. 349; p. 350; p. 351 - R; p. 352; p. 353; p. 361; p. 362; p. 372 - AL, BL, BR.

The National Portrait Gallery, London:
https://www.npg.org.uk/
p. 133 R - Lady Marion Loder (née Hubbard), photographed by Bassano Ltd, whole-plate glass negative, 13 March 1920.

Beatrice Parsons:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beatrice_Emma_Parsons
p. 136 R - a woodland path at Leonardslee in May, a watercolour painting by Beatrice Parsons, reproduced herein courtesy of the estate of Beatrice Parsons.

Public Domain:
p. 72 BR - Tremough, Cornwall, photograph published in the December 15th, 1900, edition of *The Gardeners' Chronicle;* p. 73 - removal of specimen rhododendrons from the gardens of D. Henry Shilson, Esq., Tremough, Penryn, Cornwall, to the Royal Gardens, Kew. Photographed by Mr, Arthur H Huss, and published in the January 7th, 1899, edition of *The Gardeners' Chronicle;* p. 75 C - hardy rhododendrons at Tremough, Cornwall, with *R. arboreum* forma. *roseum* featured in the centre; p. 122 L - Sir Edmund Loder. A portrait by John Henry Hudson, *c.* 1890. Reproduced in *Edmund Loder, naturalist, horticulturist, traveller and sportsman: a memoir* by Sir Alfred Pease, published in 1923 by J. Murray, London, available online courtesy of the Internet Archive at https://archive.org/details/edmundlodernatur00peasuoft/edmundlodernatur00peasuoft/; p. 197 BR - Sir John and Lady Ramsden at the Goodwood Week polo tournament, Cowdray Park, 1929; p. 201 - Muncaster Castle in 1880, drawn by the illustrator and engraver Alexander Francis Lydon (1836-1917) and featured in the six-volume series *The County Seats of the Noblemen and Gentlemen of Great Britain and Ireland,* authored by the Reverent Francis Orpen Morris (1810-1893); p. 259 R - Samuel Smith at Penjerrick, standing in front of Podocarpus salignus, *c.* 1930, photograph included in the book *British and Foreign Trees and Shrubs in Cornwall,* by E. Thurston, which was published by the Royal Institute of Cornwall and Cambridge University Press in 1930; p. 260 - Penjerrick Garden in 1890 (view across the lawn) and p. 261 - Penjerrick House in 1890, both images are from postcards available in the Falmouth area through the late 1890s/early 1900s, and posted online at the Penjerrick Garden website (http://penjerrickgarden.co.uk/history/?i=1); p. 262 L - Robert Were Fox, Anna Maria Fox & Robert Fox, pictured outside Penjerrick House; p. 266 - Penjerrick House from the pond, *c.* 1900, originally published by a Valentine & Sons, Ltd, Dundee and London, (Postcard Number 5006); p. 302 - a 'Collo Colour' postcard of Caerhays Castle, *c.* 1900, originally published by a Valentine & Sons, Ltd, Dundee and London, (Postcard, Number 1490); p. 307 - another postcard image of the Castle, this one taken around 1904.

Ray Wood, Castle Howard, North Yorkshire:
https://www.castlehoward.co.uk/visit-us/the-gardens/the-woodland-garden
p. 44; p. 45 - B; p. 46; p. 47; p. 272; p. 291 - BR; p. 333 - AR.

Royal Academy:
https://www.royalacademy.org.uk/art-artists/work-of-art/bulstrode-park-buckinghamshire
p. 198 AR - Bulstrode Park, Buckinghamshire, by T. Willson (fl. ca. 1720), engraved by Thomas Bowles the elder, originally published by T. Badeslade and J. Rocque, in *Vitruvius Brittanicus,* Volume 4, London, 1739.

Royal Botanic Garden, Kew:
https://www.kew.org/
p. 298 R - J. C. Williams.

Royal Botanic Garden, Wakehurst Place:
https://www.kew.org/wakehurst
p. 236; p. 237 - R; p. 238; p. 239.

Royal Cornwall Polytechnic Society:
p. 265 L - Anna Maria Fox.

Royal Horticultural Society, Wisley:
https://www.rhs.org.uk/gardens/wisley
p. 39; p. 69 BC - a fine group of rhododendrons at the front of the house at Tremough. The photograph was taken by Claudio Pavana and appeared in Sarah Benney's article *A history of rhododendrons at Tremough,* which was published in *Rhododendrons, Camellias & Magnolias 2013;* p. 169 - L, R; p. 172; p. 173.

The Saleroom:
https://www.the-saleroom.com/en-gb/auction-catalogues/candt-auctioneers/catalogue-id-srct10148/lot-d4110aa7-2859-4104-be2a-ac3f010330cc
p. 10 L - a portrait of Joseph John Crosfield of Embley Park, Romsey, Hampshire, an oil on canvas by John Collier (1850-1934).

Savill Garden, Windsor Great Park:
https://www.windsorgreatpark.co.uk/en/experiences/the-savill-garden
p. 92 - L, AR, BR; p. 93; p. 107; p. 108 - L; p. 109; p. 164 - R; p. 165; p. 167; p. 179 - L; p. 181; p. 187; p. 210; p. 257; p. 288; p. 289; p. 292; p. 293; p. 325; p. 326; p. 327 - L; p. 328; p. 329.

Sir Harold Hillier Gardens, Ampfield, Romsey:
https://www.hants.gov.uk/thingstodo/hilliergardens
p. 28; p. 34; p. 35 - L, BR; p. 36; p. 37; p. 38 - L; p. 40 - L, R; p. 41; p. 42; p. 43; p. 48; p. 49; p. 53; p. 56 - L; p. 57; p. 58; p. 59 - BL, R; p. 60; p. 61; p. 80 - BL; p. 81; p. 84 - L; p. 85; p. 86; p. 87; p. 94 - L, AR, BR; p. 95; p. 96; p. 97 - AL, BL, R; p. 143 - BL, R; p. 144; p. 145; p. 146; p. 147; p. 149; p. 150 - L, R; p. 151; p. 160; p. 161; p. 176 - L; p. 177; p. 183; p. 190; p. 191 - R; p. 192; p. 193; p. 226; p. 227 - BL, R; p. 228; p. 229; p. 232 - AL, R; p. 344 - R; p. 356; p. 357; p. 358; p. 359 - AL, BL, R; p. 360 - R; p. 363.

Valley Gardens, Windsor Great Park:
https://www.windsorgreatpark.co.uk/en/experiences/the-valley-gardens
p. 5; p. 29; p. 82 - L, BR; p. 83; p. 88; p. 89; p. 90; p. 91; p. 102; p. 103; p. 106; p. 121; p. 158; p. 159; p. 168; p. 178 - AR, BR; p. 184; p. 185; p. 186; p. 331; p. 332; p. 343; p. 372 - AR.

Anne Walker:
p. 265 R - Samuel Smith.

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About the Author.

Julian Taylor-Whall was born in Lowestoft at the end of November, 1957. He received a grammar school education before embarking on a three-decades-long career with the BBC at Television Centre. During that time he worked on many of the now classic shows made in the production facilities there, the studios at Lime Grove and Elstree, and at the Television Theatre.

He retired early in 2008, moving to a small village in West Cumbria, just outside the Lake District National Park.

His interests include landscape and plant photography, music, film, writing, and of course, the cultivation of rhododendrons. His previous multivolume treatise on that genus can be freely downloaded at:

https://www.rhodogroup-rhs.org/publications/books/temperate-rhododendrons.

- above -
Atop Great Gable, a self portrait against cloud.

- back cover images -

R. ‘Blue Diamond’	R. ‘Loderi Venus’
R. ‘Gill’s Triumph’	R. ‘Barclayi Robert Fox’







