

International Camellia Congress

Brighton, England. May, 1985

Le Congrès de Brighton

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MAYDA REYNOLDS and LOUISE HARMON

Jersey, C.I.

(see colour section)

Our party of four from Jersey, Channel Islands, arrived at the Old Ship Hotel a day early and we are delighted to find several delegates already installed, including Mr. & Mrs. Milton Brown (U.S.A.) Dr. & Mrs. John Pedler, (Australia) and Mr. & Mrs. Richard Clere with a large group from New Zealand.

The Old Ship Hotel is Brighton's only large privately owned hotel and prides itself on its service and excellent food. The Hotel is full of character and it was felt our overseas visitors would appreciate its "olde worlde" charm!

Brighton is a good centre for that area known as "The Garden of England", beautiful countryside and many gardens of botanical interest. The Congress organiser, Miss Cicely Perring, promised us a full and varied programme and this was certainly fulfilled.

The gardens we visited all showed some evidence of a severe winter, but not as much as expected, considering the low temperatures we had experienced. Fortunately, the Camellia season was late this year and we saw more in bloom than is usual in May.

Thursday, 9th May

There was a fever of excitement in the morning as final touches were put to the I.C.S. Reception Lounge and to the "Shop". John Meade was in charge of the Shop which was well stocked with items of interest including Camellia notelets, Camellia silk scarves, Camellia brooches and back copies of Camellia Journals; paintings of Camellias by Mrs Joyce Wyndham who was also responsible for the beautiful floral arrangements in the reception rooms.

The official registration commenced at 2.30 p.m. 170 delegates from America, Australia, France, Italy, Japan, New Zealand, South Africa, Spain and the United Kingdom; all were warmly welcomed and given Congress Bags containing a map, pamphlets and brochures of the gardens to be visited and details of lectures — plenty to read!

As always on these occasions, there was a marvellous atmosphere as old friends met and new friendships started.

In the evening, we attended a Civic Recep-



John Roberts and Kenwyn & Betty Clapp



John Tooby and Jean Laborey

Greg Davis

tion in the Banqueting Room of the Royal Pavilion and much enjoyed the splendid decor of the room — walls painted with Chinese figures, a marvellous domed ceiling, large chandeliers in tulip design and an enormous table set for a formal dinner. The Deputy Mayor, Mr. Charles Jermy, welcomed the delegates, commenting that the Pavilion, which is being beautifully restored will take another two years to be finished. Our President, Mrs. Vi Lort-Phillips replied on behalf of the I.C.S. and we returned to the Hotel for an excellent dinner.

Friday, 10th May

Our first garden visit was to Leonardslee, a spectacular woodland garden created by Sir Edmund Loder in 1889. He was an athlete, big game hunter, traveller and artist and became a keen botanist when he purchased Leonardslee from his father-in-law. The natural streams of the forest were dammed to create a series of Hammer ponds. The soil is a deep loam over sandstone, free from lime and well sheltered from the North. Ideal for the growing of Rhododendrons, Azaleas and Camellias.

Rhododendrons and Conifers were Sir Edmund's main interest; after his death, his son Sir Giles Loder continued to improve the garden and planted many Camellias — he has won numerous prizes at the Royal Horticultural Society's shows. Sir Giles, a well-known I.C.S. member and former Vice-President, retired in 1981 and his son Robin is now in charge.

Robin's wife met us as the coaches arrived — it was a fine sunny day and the first thing we noticed was the marvellous perfume from the Rhododendron Loderi. We walked through the Loderi area down to the Dell where we found many fine Camellias including 'Alba

Casoretti', 'Donation', 'Contessa Lavinia Maggi', 'Elegans' and 'E. G. Waterhouse'. We wandered down to the Lakes and saw a nesting swan. We admired the banks of Azaleas and the interesting variety of Conifers and walked through the Camellia Grove and Rock Garden to the Coaches. It had been quite a long walk and we were ready for Lunch, this was a packed lunch supplied by the Hotel. Some enjoyed Lunch in the Coaches but many opted for a picnic and sat on the grass or on wooden logs.

After lunch we went to Heaselands. Unfortunately it became overcast and a little cold but this did not affect our enjoyment of this beautiful garden which is open to the Public only on certain days and on this occasion was open just for the I.C.S.

Mrs Ernest Kleinwort and her late husband came to live at Heaselands (part of his family's estate) in 1932 and they created this garden from what was originally a meadow and oak-pine woodland. It is a series of small gardens each distinctive: the formal area near the house has a two acre lawn and beds of heathers, roses and azaleas. A well planted Rock Garden is opposite the front door and against the house is a large *Hydrangea petiolaris* and several Camellias, 'Adolphe Audusson', 'Donckelarii' and 'St. Ewe'.

The walled garden at the side of the house has many shrubs including Rhododendrons, Azaleas, Eucryphia 'Nymansay' and *Magnolia stellata*. There is a Rose Garden, Paved Garden, Warm Garden, in which we found a lovely C. 'Lady Clare' and, after strolling through these, we came to the water garden — four ponds formed by damming a stream, a wild garden and beyond this, the woodland with many Rhododendrons and Camellias.



Lady Anne Cowdray and Violet Lort-Phillips

Greg Davis



Mrs Jack Pedler, John Tooby and Vi Stone

Greg Davis

The stream flows from the ponds through a valley banked by azaleas and bluebells, a lovely picture.

The whole garden is so neat and well maintained, but near the ponds, it was good to see areas of grass left uncut because cowslips and primroses were growing. It was interesting to see a Japanese delegate photographing the cowslips. This native plant has become so rare.

We came back to the house through the South Garden with its fine Golden Scots Pine and Blue Atlas Cedar and enjoyed a most welcome tea and delicious cakes.

This garden seems labour intensive and the Head Gardener, Mr. Staples, has a good team of five undergardeners, but even so it would be impossible to maintain a garden to this high standard without the right machinery. But it is the finishing touches, the hand edging which gives this garden that "well cared for" look, plus the interest of Mrs. Kleinwort and her son.

We returned to the Hotel and after Dinner there was an excellent talk and well-presented slide show by Mr. A. V. Skinner, the Head Gardener of Sheffield Park, the National Trust Garden we were to visit the following day. Meanwhile, the Society's Directors were "enjoying" a lengthy meeting!

Saturday, 11th May

We had three interesting and informative lectures in the morning. The first two were Japanese papers with slides.

- 1) The distribution of wild *Camellia Japonica* in Japan and South Korea.
 - 2) The effects of temperature changes.
- The third lecture was given by Margaret Scott,

of the Efford Experimental Horticultural Station. Her illustrated and interesting talk included advice on the use of pine bark and peat as a medium for rooting cuttings.

After lunch at the Hotel we sallied forth in our four coaches to Sheffield Park Gardens. We were met by Mr. Skinner who conducted us round the gardens pointing out special vistas and plantings. The Garden has one of the finest collections of autumn colouring, flowering and coniferous trees and shrubs in the British Isles. Even in Spring the diversity in form and colour, and the glorious reflections in the Lakes are a delight to behold.

There are five Lakes — Fish Pond; 10ft. Pond; Middle Lake; Upper Woman's Way Pond and Lower Woman's Way Pond. These last two intriguing titles refer to the legend of a headless woman who sometimes appears and then vanishes into thin air!

Much of the spring colouring came from the large areas of Rhododendrons and Azaleas and some Camellias. We saw several Camellias which were planted in the early 1900s including 'Donckelarii' and a fine 'Lady Clare'. Camellias planted in the new "Queens Walk" area which has been developed since 1977, include 'Tomorrow', 'Konron-Kuro', 'Guilio Nuccio', 'Debutante' and 'Magnoliaeflora'.

There are so many paths to follow, so many different scenes to enjoy, the afternoon passed all too quickly. I liked Mr. Skinner's quotation from Alexander Pope's epistle to Lord Burlington, 1731; it rings true for this truly beautiful garden:

Let not each beauty everywhere be spied
When half the skill is decently to hide,
He gains all points who pleasingly confounds
Surprises, varies and conceals the bounds.



Greg Davis



Greg Davis

Tom Perkins and Edith Mazzei

Dr. & Mrs Carroll, Frank & Jean Pursel and Greg Davis

We enjoyed a quick tea at the Cafe and then returned to the Hotel. In the evening, a Baron of Beef Dinner was served in the Ballroom Suite, the Baron was piped in with great ceremony and deftly served.

After dinner we had a most interesting slide show by Mrs. Yvonne Cave, FPSNZ (ARPS) entitled "Camellias in New Zealand". There were over 300 slides of excellent quality which confirmed what we already knew — they do grow beautiful Camellias in New Zealand. It was a long show but many people felt they would like to see all the slides again — so much to absorb at one sitting.

Sunday, 12th May

Our first lecturer was Mr. John Brooks, well-known English Landscape Designer. He gave an interesting talk on the development of Gardens through the ages with particular accent on the 20th century garden. He presented garden design as an art form using plants, styles and fashions as garden furnishings. He referred to the work of Lutyens and Gertrude Jekyll and although he admitted he was not a great Camellia fan, we all enjoyed his well illustrated talk.

Our next lecturer was Dr. J. Crézé who gave an interesting and informative talk on his work in grafting 'in vitro'. He followed up his talks given in Kyoto and Sacramento, giving the results of his experiments in this field.

Mr. Milton Brown gave the next lecture entitled "The Yellow Camellia". This was a fascinating account of the search for and development of the *Camellia chrysantha*. "Brownie" painted a glowing picture of more colourful Camellias in the future, through hybridization with *C. chrysantha*.

After lunch at the Hotel we split into groups and visited one of four gardens according to choice. We had been looked after so well, guided and organised, it was difficult for some of us to decide!

Wakehurst, High Beeches and Borde Hill were three of the gardens of which more anon.

Nymans was the garden we selected. Another National Trust property, it retains the charm of a family home. Nymans was purchased by Mr. Ludwig Messel nearly 100 years ago; he introduced a rich variety of plants from all over the world. His son, Leonard continued the work and became an enthusiastic hybridiser and his daughter and her husband, the Earl and Countess of Rosse, continued the family interest, introducing many plants from abroad. Lord Rosse, an I.C.S. life member from the Society's early years, died in 1979 but Lady Rosse still lives at Nymans.

Indeed, Lady Rosse was there to greet us individually on arrival and we were all enchanted! Lady Rosse took charge of our party and led us round this beautiful garden, so lovingly planted and maintained. Although a large garden, there is a feeling of intimacy and peace which is remarkable considering the proximity of the main London — Brighton road.

Nymans is famed for its Camellias, Magnolias and Rhododendrons and many were raised here — *C. 'Leonard Messel'* and '*Maud Messel'* and *Eucryphia* × *nymansensis* to name but a few.

Nymans is really several gardens, each distinctive and blending into the whole and full of surprises. Pamphlets are issued for each season to ensure the visitor does not miss the highlights of the particular time of year. But we had



Greg Davis

Boyd McRee and Jean Pursel



Greg Davis

Dr. Crézé

no fear of missing anything — our charming guide saw to that!

The walled garden, so secluded, so beautifully designed, the centre paths meet at the Italian Fountain framed by topiary yews. The herbaceous borders here must be a wonderful sight in the summer months.

The Pinetum and Park with its huge Conifers interplanted with Rhododendrons and Eucaryphas, the Temple, the Sunk and Heather gardens with a fascinating assortment of quality plants, the Pergola with its amazing old *Wisteria floribunda*; all were admired but our particular interest was in the famous Camellias. Lady Rosse indicated all those in the Wall gardens she brought back as cuttings from Portugal and the new additions from Australia and the famous 'Leonard Messel', a cross made by Lady Rosse's father between *C. williamsii* 'Mary Christian' and *C. reticulata* 'Captain Rawes'.

Photographs were taken of our group and we all said goodbye to Lady Rosse and enjoyed a welcome cup of tea at the picturesque teahouse near the entrance.

We returned to the Hotel by another country route and our enjoyment of the English countryside was increased by the sight of several cricket matches and a gymkhana.

In the evening, a drinks party was given by our President. This was another opportunity for friends old and new to meet and discuss life in general and Camellias in particular. We enjoyed yet another delicious Dinner and most of us retired early, a little tired and looking forward to the full day's tour the following day.

Wakehurst Place is a National Trust property leased by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food as an addition to the Royal

Botanic Gardens, Kew. The soil and terrain of the garden are ideal for many rare plants which do not thrive at Kew.

The house is a grand 400 year old Mansion and has been owned by many families, but the garden itself was largely started by the Boord family — Lady Boord of the 1890s created the Rock Garden which is still a feature today. In 1903 it was sold to Gerald Loder, later Lord Wakehurst, who worked to improve the great natural beauty of Wakehurst Place. The property was bequeathed to the National Trust by its late owner Sir Henry Price in 1965.

Near the house are the usual formal lawns, rock and heath gardens, shrub borders and a pinetum which is approximately 12 acres. There are many interesting conifers here, including the *Pinus patula* from Mexico and *Taiwania cryptomerioides*. Paths lead steeply downward to a wooded valley and a picturesque watercourse linking several lakes and ponds. Most of the New Zealand delegates chose this garden and no doubt they were interested to see the many plants from the southern Hemisphere. In the Border west of the Mansion were *Iris histrioides*, *Nerine bowdenii* and *Sternbergia lutea*, *Hedychium*, *Cauleya spictata* and *Eucomis comosa* L.

The heath garden is divided into a series of beds and here are some of Gerald Loder's original planting from Australasia and South America including *Leptospermum flavescens*, *Telopea truncata*, various species of *Hoheria*. Here also are several *Cupressus torulosa* and *Athrotaxis selaginoides*, a Tasmanian conifer, *Hakea epiglottis* and *Phyllocladus alpinus*, the Celery Pine.

At the south end of the Heath garden is a border of Lapponicum series Rhododendrons.



Margaret Scott and Bill Read



Boyd McRee and Lew & Annabell Fetterman

A walled garden stocked with old fashioned cottage garden flowers in pastel shades has been dedicated to a memorial to Sir Henry Price. At the head of the Slips valley is a stone sundial, erected to the memory of Gerald Loder and his head gardener Alfred Coates. It bears the words:

“Give fools their gold and knaves their power,
let fortunes bubbles rise and fall,
Who sows a field or trains a flower
Or plants a tree, is more than all”

(J. G. Whittier)

High Beeches is the home of the Hon. Edward & Mrs. Boscawen. Our delegates spoke highly of the kind hospitality of their hosts who provided a delicious tea and who personally conducted the I.C.S. Party round this beautiful garden.

“High Beeches” was originally a Loder planted woodland and there are some fine trees, Magnolias, Maples and Camellias — ‘Drama Girl’, ‘Donation’, ‘Leonard Messel’, ‘Lady Vansittart’. Mr. & Mrs. Boscawen are keen conservationists and they are encouraging natural plants — for example, orchids — to colonise.

Borde Hill is another garden famed for its Rhododendrons and Camellias, Azaleas and Magnolias.

This was a different type of garden from the others we had seen. There is a large lawn in front of the house with a small woodland to the left and a much larger woodland to the right, with Rhododendrons and Camellias interplanted and enjoying the shelter of the trees. The style is informal and paths meander through woods and glades.

Colonel Stephenson Clarke acquired Borde Hill in 1893. He was a well known amateur plant collector, and it was he who planted the many rare shrubs found here. He produced the Camellia ‘Donation’ from a cross between *C. japonica* ‘Donckelarii’ and *C. saluenensis* and ‘Salutation’ which was a cross between *C. reticulata* ‘Captain Rawes’ and *C. saluenensis*.

The Camellias seen were excellent although much propagating material was lost in the severe frost of this year. It was very interesting to see the stock plants from which *C.* ‘Donation’ was produced.

Monday, 13th May

The day started dull and some rain fell in the early morning. Savill and Valley Gardens was

our destination for the whole day. The journey was longer than those of the previous days so we enjoyed a cup of coffee and delicious homemade shortbread on our arrival.

The Savill Garden is part of the Windsor Great Park which is administered by the Crown Estate Commissioners, and is named after Sir Eric Savill, who was at first Deputy Surveyor then Deputy Ranger. It was originally landscaped in the 18th century when the native oaks and beeches were planted; some still remain. Sir Eric saw the possibilities of a natural woodland garden and he was encouraged in his ideas by the Royal Family. The gardens are now 50 years old and are a wonderful testimony to Sir Eric’s imaginative landscaping and plantsmanship.

After coffee we were taken by coach to the Valley Gardens, a large area developed after completion of the Savill Garden. Our guide was Mr. John Bond, the Keeper of the Gardens, who gave us an interesting account of the plantings. He emphasized the value of three storey planting: tall trees to provide the shade canopy, or the top storey, strong flowering and foliage shrubs fill the middle storey “the main crop” and the floor of the woodland, the final storey is clothed with ground cover.

Rhododendrons, both species and hybrids, predominate in these gardens and this is the home of the British National Reference Collection of Rhododendron Species as well as that of Magnolias, Hollies and dwarf conifers. A spectacular sight was the Punchbowl — a natural amphitheatre planted with thousands of evergreen azaleas. The Azalea Valley contains hundreds of taller deciduous azaleas including the Knaphill and Exbury varieties, and many bred here at Windsor.

There are two Camellia areas, containing hundreds of williamsii hybrids and japonicas. These must be a marvellous sight earlier in the year: as it was, some were still in bloom due to the late season.

We saw the National Collection of Hollies, Ilex species and cultivars planted a year ago, and then the Heather garden (1950) with a good variety of natural, unclipped plants.

We returned to the coaches and after the long walk, enjoyed our picnic lunch. We next proceeded to the Savill Garden where we spent the afternoon exploring on our own, strolling quietly through the woodland beside the Upper Pond admiring the lovely reflections of the old trees, maples and shrubs and herbaceous waterside plants. On to the Willow Garden, the area first developed by Sir Eric

Savill in 1932. There are hundreds of *Lysichitums* and Primulas and rare Magnolias, Pieris, Mahonias and Corylopsis and large specimens of *Acer palmatum*, 'Dissectum' and Rhododendrons 'Blue Tit', 'Elizabeth' and 'Brocade'.

The Temperate House contains many interesting tender plants including a collection of *Camellia-reticulata*, some Chinese cultivars which came from Kunming in the late 1940s.

Near the Temperate House is a south-facing wall which affords shelter for tender sun-loving plants. This wall was built with bricks salvaged from bombed buildings in London during the war. To quote Lanning Roper, the American garden expert: "Here beauty and life have become the by product of destruction and death".

On to the woodland garden with its wide range of rhododendron species and numerous hybrids and many Camellias. Here we encountered fellow I.C.S. members wandering around examining the vast array of shrubs.

We returned to the Entrance and spent some time in the Shop buying plants, books and souvenirs before boarding the coaches for the return to the Old Ship.

A Banquet was held in the evening in the Ballroom Suite of the Old Ship. We enjoyed a superb meal after which we were entertained by an "Ole Thyme" Group singing old Music Hall Songs, well known to the British, but not so familiar to our visitors. However, everyone joined in singing "Waltzing Matilda".

After this there were speeches and presentations to our retiring President, Mrs Violet Lort-Phillips, by the representatives from the overseas countries.

The President thanked all the delegates for attending the Congress and praised Miss Cicely Perring for making all the arrangements so successfully.

Although the weather was not at its best, it was a most interesting and enjoyable conference and many of us are looking forward to meeting again in Australia in 1986.

The Elephant Camellia

Camellia kissii Wall

(syn. *C. keina* Buch. Ham. ex D. Don)

Le camélia "éléphant" — *Camellia kissii*

La camelia elefante: *C. kissii*

La camelia elefante; *C. kissii*

TONY SCHILLING

Deputy Curator, Wakehurst Place

*see colour section

Camellia kissii a species native to the eastern Himalaya and is recorded from the warm temperate zones of Nepal, Sikkim, Bhutan, Aranachal Pradesh (N.E.F.A.), Assam, Burma, W. and C. China and parts of Indo-China between altitudes of 900-2,200 metres. It flowers in the sunny post-monsoon season between October and November, and its musky fragrant flowers are a frequent delight to those who tread the lowland trails of Nepal and beyond.

The evergreen leaves are elliptic to obovate-elliptic, 5-8 cms long and finely glandular-toothed at the margins. When mature they are a glossy dark green but the young growth is especially attractive, the best examples exhibiting shades close to peach.

The single white erect and almost stalkless

flowers are 2-4 cms across and generally solitary and axillary, but somewhat terminally situated on the stem. The obovate petals (usually 4 or 5 in number) are of short duration and the attractive yellow anthered stamens are bunched and very numerous.

In the wild, *C. kissii* is frequently lopped by the villagers for various domestic uses, but if left uncut it will form a laxly-branched small tree or large bush 4 metres tall and half as much across.

The leaves are sometimes used as a substitute for tea by the Nepalese, but it is said to possess only a slight degree of flavour. This is probably due to the casual manner in which the foliage is gathered and dried. The local people also extract an oil from the seeds by pressure and this is valued for its medicinal properties.