

75 Jahre Deutsche Rhododendron Gesellschaft -
International Rhododendron Symposium in Bremen May 18 - 20, 2010
by Martin Monthofer, Bremen, Germany

It began at the evening of May 18th, 2010. The German Rhododendron Society celebrated its 75th Jubilee with an International Rhododendron Symposium in Bremen, where all started 75 years ago. This jubilee was worthy not only to be celebrated within the German society, but also with the Rhododendron Societies around the world. On the evening of May 18th, at the registration desk for the conference in the swissotel in the city of Bremen. I was surprised how many friends I met and how many faces I knew. The evening was perfect for a 'come-together' and I got the chance to get to know the persons.



The conference started with the International Symposium with international lectures spoken in English. There were three topics; Rhododendron in Europe, Rhododendron around the World and Rhododendron in Nature.

In the morning we heard about "Rhododendrons in Europe". Speakers included:
-Marc Colombel from France: *Rhododendron in France: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*;
-Svend Hansen from Denmark: *The 'Danes' - New Rhododendrons from Denmark*;
-Wilbert Hetterscheid from The Netherlands: *Rhododendron in The Netherlands: A Wining Story*
-David Millais from England: *British Rhododendron: Breeders and their Hybrids*;
-Hartwig Schepker from Germany: *The German Rhododendron Genbank Project*;
-Philippe de Spoelberch from Belgium: *Rhododendron and Azalea Culture in Belgium*.

The topic for the afternoon was: "Rhododendron around the World". Speakers were:
-Robert Hatcher from Australia: *Rhododendron in 'down under' under the influence of global warming*;
-Tony Fitchett from New Zealand: *Strangers in a strange land: Rhododendron in New Zealand*;
-John Weagle from Canada: *Rhododendron for cold climates*.
-John Roy from Scotland: *Rhododendron hunting in Arunachal Pradesh (Northeast India)*. John ended the first conference day with his presentation at the Symposium dinner held that evening.

The second conference day started with the topic "Rhododendron in Nature". Speakers were:
-George Argent from Scotland: *Joy and Sorrow for collecting Vireya Rhododendron in Southeast Asia*;
-Steve Hootman from USA: *Rhododendron habitats in the sino-himalayan region*;
-Don Hyatt from USA: *The deciduous Azaleas from North America*;
-Kenneth Cox from Scotland: *From nature to 'Woodland Gardening' with Rhododendron*.

*There was a book signature by Peter and Kenneth Cox during the lunch break, where they presented their new book and made a book sale.

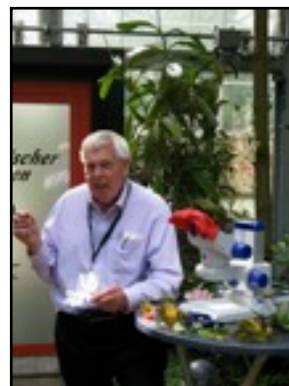
*Around the time of the lunch break the membership conference of the German Rhododendron Society started at the old jury court room.

*There was the great banquet that evening celebrated in the Bacchuscellar of the Bremen Ratskeller, which is the home of perfect german wines. The banquet was the official ending of the symposium, but not the end of the program.

Left: Peter Cox



Center: George Argent



Right: Steve Hootman



The next day started with perfect weather for our workshop day at the Rhododendron-park Bremen. There were several workshops done in both German and English, one in the morning and the same one in the afternoon. You had the chance to see and learn a lot from *George Argent on Vireya Rhododendron* and *Identification of Rhododendron species with Peter and Kenneth Cox and Steve Hootman*. Besides the workshops, there were guided tours through the park, the botanical garden, the propagation centre and the Botanika greenhouse, rare and historical Rhododendron. The Tour program started with a tour only for German guests through the embankment-park of the city of Bremen while our international guests had the chance to take a guided tour through the Botanika greenhouse. There was a baptism at the end of the program for a new Rhododendron Hybrid named after the former president of the German Rhododendron Society: *Rh. 'Bernd Adolf Chrome'*. This was followed with a dinner in the Botanika greenhouse where a film was shown on how Botanika was built.



The next four days were expedition days to several interesting and wonderful -Rhododendron places in Northwest Germany. The first day started with a trip to the RHODO in Westerstede, a rhododendron show made by Rhododendron nurseries every four years. The whole city is filled with Rhododendron (www.rhodo.de)! The day ended with a visit to the nursery of the Rhododendron breeders Gerstenkorn (www.gerstenkorn-baumschulen.de) und Ernst Stöckmann (www.stoeckmann.eu) with a stop along the way to the world famous nursery of Bruns (www.brunns.de).

The second day was the "nursery day". Stops were made at the Rhododendron production nurseries of Diderk Heinje (www.heinje.de) and of Fredo Schröder, where the motherplant field silenced the visitors. Hundreds of rhododendron were in flower of one cultivar only. The day ended with afternoon spent in the Park der Gärten in Bad Zwischenahn (www.park-der-gaerten.de).



The third day took us to East Frisia and Oldenburg. We visited the castle grounds of Lütetsburg close to the city of Norden in East Frisia (www.schlosspark-luetetsburg.de) in the morning and on the way back to Bremen we stopped at the well known Rhododendron-park of D.G. Hobbie in Westerstede (www.hobbie-rhodo.de). The last stop was in Oldenburg where we visited the castle grounds of Oldenburg castle (www.schlossgarten-oldenburg.de).



The fourth and last expedition day took us to Schleswig-Holstein and the world famous Rhododendron nursery of Hachmann (www.hachmann.de). Then on to the city of Hamburg in the heart of the city to Planten un Blomen (meaning plants and flower) to see a garden that made time jump back to the garden architecture of the 70's (www.plantenunblomen.hamburg.de). The great ending of the day was a guided boat trip through the harbour of Hamburg.



I can say that it was one of the best International Rhododendron Conferences I have visited and that there was no one who said anything different. Our guests, national and international, had very impressive days here in Bremen and during the field trips. But it was not only the organization, the location and the wonderful guests that made it perfect also a warm thank you to the weather that was also perfect. Thank you so much to all who visited us here in Bremen and made this conference perfect. Thank you! Martin Monthofer - european-vireya-world.MM@web.de

