

A Founder Member: Roland Edgar Cooper (1890-1962)

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I have been working in the herbarium of the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh (RBGE) as a member of the Global Type Initiative team funded by the Mellon Foundation. More than 150 herbaria are creating an online database of high resolution images of type specimens. A 'type' is a herbarium specimen used when describing a new species; it becomes permanently linked with the given plant name. In six years we have processed 47000 specimens, all to be accessible via the RBGE's herbarium catalogue at www.rbge.org.uk.

While working on Bhutanese types I came across material collected by Roland Edgar Cooper in 1914 and 1915. Cooper has not received such a fanfare of recognition as the Himalayan giants Forrest, Kingdon-Ward, and Ludlow & Sherriff but he deserves our attention. The literature and his RBGE archive reveal new details about his collecting trip to Kullu and Lahoul (I have modernized the spelling of place names). He wrote very little about this trip and the resulting herbarium collections have been largely ignored relative to his specimens from Sikkim and Bhutan, which were extensively used in the writing of Long's *Flora of Bhutan*.

Cooper was born in 1890 and orphaned by the age of four. At sixteen he came under the guardianship of his aunt Emma Smith (née Wiedhofft), his mother Jessie's half-sister, and her husband, the botanist William Wright Smith. Cooper ended up in India when his uncle became keeper of the herbarium at the Royal Botanic Garden Calcutta in 1907. Here, and later in the Lloyd Botanic Garden Darjeeling, he studied botany and horticulture under the tutelage of George Thomas Lane, curator in Calcutta. He accompanied his uncle on collecting trips to Sikkim and the borders of Nepal, Bhutan and Tibet, gaining early experience of the diversity of the Himalaya.



Cooper returned to Scotland in 1910, when Wright Smith took up a post at RBGE to describe George Forrest's collections then being received from Yunnan. Intending to become a fruit farmer in British Columbia, he was tutored by Professor Isaac Bayley Balfour. However, before finishing his studies, and with the encouragement of Wright Smith and Balfour, he agreed to lead a collecting expedition to Sikkim, sponsored by A K Bulley of Ness Gardens.

Sikkim (1913)

The main purpose of Cooper's trips was to introduce horticultural novelties into cultivation, with botanical collecting only a secondary concern. He started at Kurseong, headed north to Darjeeling, then west to Pallut on the border of Nepal, before returning to Darjeeling. He went northeast to Gangtok and explored valleys and passes around the Chumbi Valley. He also explored the Lachen and Yamgtang valleys, respectively northwest and northeast of Chungthang, visiting ground

Table 1: New taxa collected by Cooper in Sikkim

Number	Type collection	Currently accepted name
20	<i>Primula calderiana</i> Balf.f. & R.E.Cooper	<i>Primula calderiana</i> Balf.f. & R.E.Cooper
118	<i>Poa cooperi</i> Noltie	<i>Poa cooperi</i> Noltie
160	<i>Euphorbia luteoviridis</i> D.G.Long	<i>Euphorbia luteoviridis</i> D.G.Long
166	<i>Sedum bhutanicum</i> Praeger: <i>Sedum cooperi</i> Praeger	<i>Rhodiola bupleuroides</i> (Wall. ex Hook.f. & Thomson) S.H.Fu
299	<i>Physospermopsis bhutanensis</i> Farille & Malla	<i>Physospermopsis kingdon-wardii</i> (H.Wolff) C.Norman
349	<i>Primula cooperi</i> Balf.f.	<i>Primula cooperi</i> Balf.f.
438	<i>Primula lacteocapitata</i> Balf.f. & W.W.Sm.	<i>Primula capitata</i> Hook.f. ssp. <i>lacteocapitata</i> (Balf.f. & W.W.Sm.) W.W.Sm. & Forrest
440	<i>Sedum pseudostapfii</i> Praeger:	<i>Sedum filipes</i> Hemsl.
508	<i>Salvia campanulata</i> Wall. ex Benth. var. <i>hirtella</i> E.Peter	<i>Salvia campanulata</i> Wall. ex Benth. var. <i>hirtella</i> E.Peter
593	<i>Potentilla tapetodes</i> Soják var. <i>decidua</i> Soják	<i>Potentilla microphylla</i> D.Don var. <i>microphylla</i>
605	<i>Delphinium aureopilosum</i> Chowdhury ex Mukerjee	<i>Delphinium viscosum</i> Hook.f. & Thomson
714	<i>Salvia sikkimensis</i> E.Peter var. <i>chaenocalyx</i> E.Peter	<i>Salvia campanulata</i> Wall. ex Benth. var. <i>fissa</i> E.Peter
725	<i>Euphrasia chumbica</i> R.R.Mill	<i>Euphrasia chumbica</i> R.R.Mill
772	<i>Lalldhwojia cooperi</i> Farille	<i>Lalldhwojia staintonii</i> Farille
793	<i>Lactuca cooperi</i> Anth.	<i>Youngia depressa</i> (Hook.f. & Thomson) Bab. & Stebbins
845	<i>Corydalis changuensis</i> D.G.Long	<i>Corydalis changuensis</i> D.G.Long
884	<i>Pedicularis cooperi</i> P.C.Tsoong	<i>Pedicularis cooperi</i> P.C.Tsoong
893	<i>Primula cooperi</i> Balf.f.	<i>Primula cooperi</i> Balf.f.
907A	<i>Parnassia cooperi</i> W.E. Evans	<i>Parnassia cooperi</i> W.E. Evans
923	<i>Sedum crassipes</i> Hook. f. & Thomson var. <i>cholaense</i> Praeger:	<i>Rhodiola wallichiana</i> (Hook.) S.H.Fu
951	<i>Primula crispata</i> Balf.f. & W.W.Sm.	<i>Primula capitata</i> Hook.f. ssp. <i>crispata</i> (Balf.f. & W.W.Sm.) W.W.Sm. & Forrest

previously covered by Joseph Hooker. A list of new species and varieties from these Sikkim collections includes almost two dozen species, although some are no longer considered to be distinct from earlier taxa.

Through Bulley, RBGE received over 500 seed collections from this trip, many of which neither germinated nor persisted in cultivation at Edinburgh. However, two forms of *Meconopsis simplicifolia* (D.Don) Walp. grew there for some years; Cooper attributed its eventual decline to a lack of moisture in Edinburgh relative to that of its home. Despite the number of collections, this trip was deemed a failure, yielding few 'novelties'. Horticulturally, his best known discovery from Sikkim is *Primula calderiana*, described by him and his mentor Bayley Balfour.

Copper later paid tribute to an important member of his company, Rohmoo Lepcha. Lepchas are indigenous to Sikkim, renowned for their knowledge of and respect for nature; several were employed as collectors by the Calcutta Botanic Garden. Rohmoo worked for William Wright Smith and George H Cave during their 1909–1910 collecting trips in Sikkim. Cooper first met Rohmoo during the preparations for his 1913 trip to Sikkim and employed him as his chief collector on his four trips in Sikkim, Bhutan and northwest India.

The literature surrounding Cooper refers to his visits to the Tibetan border while accompanying



Primula calderiana
(Photo: R E Cooper)

Rohmoo with *Meconopsis wallichii*



Wright Smith. His own pass did not allow him into the Chumbi Valley but Rohmoo was able to enter and collected what later became *Primula chumbiensis* W. W. Sm. - probably from the same spot that he had collected it in 1912 - and which forms part of the Edinburgh type collection.

Bhutan (1914–15)

After William Griffith in 1837, Cooper was the second major plant collector to enter Bhutan. He covered much of the same ground but explored more of the country than had Griffith. In 1914 his itinerary took him to the centre and western regions. The 1915 excursion repeated some of this before heading northeast. He much later (1929 to 1955) published a

Table 2: New taxa collected by Cooper in Bhutan

Number	Currently Accepted Name	Number	Currently Accepted Name
1454,1545,3936	<i>Rhododendron maddenii</i> Hook.f. ssp. <i>maddenii</i>	3816 3885	<i>Rhododendron papillatum</i> Balf.f. & Cooper
1601,1771,3470,4056	<i>Primula bellidifolia</i> King	3837	<i>Primula atrodentata</i> W.W.Sm.
1670	<i>Physospermopsis kingdon-wardii</i> (H.Wolff) C.Norman	3903	<i>Rhododendron anthopogon</i> D.Don ssp. <i>anthopogon</i>
1695	<i>Potentilla spodioclora</i> Soják	3937	<i>Rhododendron dalhousieae</i> Hook.f. var. <i>rhabdotum</i> (Balf.f. & R.E.Cooper) Cullen
1878,2952	<i>Silene indica</i> Roxb. var. <i>bhutanica</i> (W.W.Sm.) Bocquet	3943	<i>Leucophysalis yunnanense</i> (Kuang & Lu) Averett ssp. <i>bhutanica</i> Grierson & Long
1994,2990	<i>Swertia staintonii</i> Harry Sm.	3959 4083	<i>Rhododendron camelliflorum</i> Hook.f.
1996	<i>Saxifraga tsangchanensis</i> Franch.	3981	<i>Primula bracteosa</i> Craib
2134,4042	<i>Primula umbratilis</i> Balf.f. & R.E.Cooper	4000	<i>Primula calderiana</i> Balf.f. & R.E.Cooper
2148,3990	<i>Rhododendron flinckii</i> Davidian	4072	<i>Primula calderiana</i> Balf.f. & R.E.Cooper ssp. <i>strumosa</i> (Balf.f. & R.E.Cooper) A.J.Richards
2224,4009,4285	<i>Rhododendron baileyi</i> Balf.f.	4099	<i>Lobelia nubigena</i> J.Anthony
2294	<i>Delphinium cooperi</i> Munz	4115	<i>Rhododendron argipeplum</i> Balf.f. & R.E.Cooper
2367	<i>Primula denticulata</i> Sm.	4154	<i>Buddleja forrestii</i> Diels
2508	<i>Corallodiscus bhutanicus</i> (Craib) B.L.Burt	4173,4273	<i>Primula dickieana</i> Watt var. <i>aureostellata</i> (Balf.f. & Cooper) Fletcher
2508A	<i>Corallodiscus cooperi</i> (Craib) B.L.Burt	4236,4975	<i>Primula eburnea</i> Balf.f. & R.E.Cooper
2524	<i>Berberis praecipua</i> C.K.Schneid.	4247	<i>Primula dryadifolia</i> Franch. Ssp. <i>jonardunii</i> (W.W.Sm.) Chen & Hu
2744	<i>Pedicularis microloba</i> R.R.Mill	4268	<i>Cortella hookeri</i> (C.B.Clarke) C.Norman
3227	<i>Silene purii</i> Bocquet & Saxena	4304	<i>Pedicularis sanguilimbata</i> R.R.Mill
3240	<i>Kedarnatha oreomyrhiformis</i> (Farille & S.B.Malla) Pimenov & Kljukov	4344	<i>Rubus cooperi</i> D.G.Long
3301	<i>Indigofera pseudoreticulata</i> Grierson & Long	4393,4977	<i>Primula xanthopa</i> Balf.f. & R.E.Cooper
3311 3315	<i>Cotoneaster bacillarlis</i> Wall. ex Lindl.	4533	<i>Keraymonia pinnatifolia</i> M.F.Watson
3449	<i>Erysimum afghanicum</i> Kitam.	4806	<i>Gentiana lacerulata</i> Harry Sm.
3499	<i>Gentiana prolata</i> Balf.f.	4807	<i>Primula sikkimensis</i> Hook.f. var. <i>hopeana</i> (Balf.f. & R.E.Cooper) W.W.Sm. & H.R.Fletcher
3517	<i>Rhodiola bupleuroides</i> (Wall. ex Hook.f. & Thomson) S.H.Fu		

series of accounts of these expeditions.

Cooper's main objective in Bhutan was again to collect horticultural novelties, focusing on *Rhododendron* and *Primula*. However, as Bhutan was almost completely unknown, his collection of 3958 numbers was both significant and substantial. Letters from Balfour to Cooper in the RBGE archive convey the excitement of his being allowed access to Bhutan, and McLean recounted Bulley's near euphoria at securing permission for Cooper to enter the reclusive kingdom. Once there, he collected an astonishing 42 species of *Rhododendron* - eight of them new to science, and 51 species of *Primula* - 19 new to science. Subsequent taxonomic research has found most of these not to be distinct and they have sunk into synonymy. In total, 63 of his Bhutanese collections helped describe new species or varieties, with 32 still recognised as distinct.

Cooper's most important horticultural introduction from Bhutan was that of *Viburnum grandiflorum* Wall. ex DC. This was used as one of the parents for the cross that created *V. x bodnantense* Aberc. ex Stearn. The original cross of *Viburnum farreri* Stearn (syn. *V. fragrans* Bunge) and *V. grandiflorum* was made in 1933 at RBGE by the then assistant curator Charles Lamont, and again in 1934/35 at Bodnant Garden in North Wales, from which the cross derives its name.

Cooper attributed some of his most famous collections to what he called '*Plant Hunter's Luck*', when

Labellia nubigena type locality
(Photo R E Cooper)



'Baleful influences masked as livid beasts & ogres who are vanquished by the good in the dance'. Words and photo (R E Cooper)



unique plants could literally be 'fallen upon'. In 1942 such an accident resulted in a new find. While crossing steep scree the ground gave way, he was thrown to his back and began to slide, grabbing vegetation to stop his fall. Once retrieved by his men, part of a branch was pulled off a shrub to help him along. The branch had flowers and appeared to be something

new – it was pressed and subsequently described by Wright Smith as *Buddleja cooperi*. Cooper commented that his 'party were so happy-go-lucky and casually careless resulting in frequent acts of dare-devilry which might easily have meant mutilation or worse'!

One of Cooper's most interesting discoveries was a large member of the family Campanulaceae on the Black Mountain, subsequently described by John Anthony as *Lobelia nubigena*. This has a 'pachycaul' (thick-stemmed) growth habit and was then thought to be related to the tree lobelias of the mountains of equatorial Africa. Cooper described this plant's occurrence in Bhutan as 'a problem yet to be resolved'. On the southern mountain ranges of Bhutan he found *Rhododendron rhabdotum* Balf.f. & R.E.Cooper, now treated as a variety of *R. dalhousieae* Hook.f. He described this as 'a marvel with large red stripes down the 4 inch white corolla'.

Cooper published how *Primula eburnea* Balf.f. & R.E.Cooper was discovered and introduced into cultivation and he paid tribute to another member of his party, a Lepcha called Paulo. Paulo was stranded on the wrong side of a river after a bridge was washed away; he then walked for a month, the long way round, to bring Cooper the seed. During the trek Paulo fell ill with a fever and spent eight days in delirium; ignoring advice to rest from the monks who were caring for him, he returned to re-join Cooper's party. It is testament to Cooper's good relations with his collectors that Paulo volunteered for the 1916 trip, despite his still being ill.

Cooper also was fascinated by Bhutanese people. In 1933, well after the event, he wrote about the 'Daktas', people living in the east of Bhutan who had been described to him as 'tailed men'. Initial excitement at possibly discovering the 'missing evolutionary link' was short lived. The tail 'consisted of a flat, round pad nine inches in diameter, made of either yak or goat hair. The wearers said that the pad was put on in their youth and was never removed. It was said to be used as a resting pad when loads were carried.'

Kullu & Lahaul, Himachal Pradesh, India (1916)

Cooper's 1916 trip was sponsored by Bulley and took him to the northwest of India in search of horticultural novelties in what is now Himachal Pradesh. He travelled roughly north from Shimla up the Kullu valley following the Beas River, crossed the Rohtang Pass and joined the Lahaul and Spiti Valley. From here he headed northwest to Keylong and then northeast to the border with Kashmir. He took the opportunity to explore a number of side valleys off the main route north.

This trip has largely been forgotten so it seems worthwhile to quote from Cooper's diary. He left Calcutta on the 29 May on the mail train for Shimla, where he spent two weeks gathering supplies. Shimla was still the summer capital of the Indian Empire, and European news reached there quite quickly despite its remoteness. He wrote: '*The rains appeared to break prematurely & helped to deepen the general depression caused by the death of Lord Kitchener*'.

The landscape and climate of the northwest Himalaya are distinctly different to monsoon-soaked Bhutan and Sikkim. The 1916 herbarium collections are therefore characterized by plants adapted to drier parts. The major families in his collection book are Asteraceae, Lamiaceae, Apiaceae, Fabaceae, and many of the normally under-collected Poaceae. From his frequent references to it, *Cedrus deodar* (Roxb. ex G.Don) G.Don seems to have been of particular interest. However, '*Plant Collectors Luck*' was not with him this time: many seed gatherings were lost to grazing animals, although some made it back to the UK. Fifty nine seed collections were sent to Kew and *Gypsophila cerastioides* from Lahaul ended up in wider cultivation. The most impressive plant still growing at RBGE is *Rhododendron campanulatum* D.Don, collected a few miles from the Rohtang Pass in the Kullu Valley. Large and mauve-coloured with pinkish dots in the corolla, it flowers profusely in mid-April.

Unlike earlier trips, Kullu and Lahaul yielded no new species. There are a number of possible reasons for this: the collections were not as comprehensive as those from Bhutan and Sikkim; botanical diversity of the drier western Himalaya is significantly less than the wetter eastern Himalaya; and plants in the western Himalaya tend to a wider range whereas in the East they tend to a higher level of geographical endemism. Moreover, many botanists had previously worked over the area, using Shimla as a base: Alexander Gerard in the Punjab in 1812 and 1817; his brother James in Spiti Valley in 1821; William Moorcroft in Kullu in 1819; Victor Jacquemont in the mountains from Shimla to Spiti in 1829; William Parish collected ferns from Kullu in 1847, which he passed on to Joseph Dalton Hooker and Thomas Thomson for inclusion in the *Flora of British India*; Lord William Hay collected from Shimla to Kashmir; and a man called Lance collected in Lahaul and Spiti, both latter passing their collections to the Indian civil servant Michael Pakenham Edgeworth.

Cooper's Herbarium Collections

Cooper's trips were cut short by war in Europe and his collections and notes entered storage at the Calcutta herbarium. Letters written in 1952 from Wright Smith to George Taylor at the British Museum reveal the unfortunate fate of his material:

9th Feb 1952. *'Cooper was in Bhutan during the first war and his collections were all sent to Calcutta when he joined the army. There in Calcutta they were treated in an abominable fashion. They were stored in boxes in one of the outhouses attached to the herbarium and were simply neglected. Most of them were eaten to bits by insects and in some cases reduced to powder. Somehow or other certain specimens, including the Primulas, were sent to Sir Isaac Bayley Balfour and they were not so very bad but still very imperfect. The material was kept in Calcutta for some years after the war before being forwarded to this country. What was reduced to powder was, of course, simply burnt.'*

22nd Feb 1952. *'I wrote you on 9th Feb regarding Cooper material. What I said therein applied very fully to the material left in Calcutta but during the 1914-18 war Cooper, towards the end of it was on Military service and I was at Timber under the Board of Trade. But Sir Isaac must have got about that time some cases of Bhutan plants collected by Cooper which were stored away at the herbarium as Sir Isaac could not touch them and nobody seems to have much knowledge of them. The result is that there is quite a good lot of material collected in Bhutan which would be very worthwhile for Mr Ludlow to go over. It is far more extensive than I had any idea of.'*

Mclean mentioned that parts of the Sikkim collection were lost on the sinking of the *City of Westminster* in 1914. Cooper's own notes in the RBGE archives show that it was fairly intact, so the loss may relate to seed collections rather than preserved specimens. Cooper later described the material that reached Balfour during the Great War as *'the cream'*. The bulk of remaining badly neglected material was sent to Edinburgh in 1924.

The Great War (1916–1919)

Cooper was commissioned as a lieutenant in the Indian Army Officer Reserve and served initially with the 1st Reserve Gurkha Rifles on the North West Frontier of India (now in Pakistan). He was later seconded to the 4/3rd Gurkha Rifles attached to the Royal Flying Corps and transferred to Alexandria. He remained in war service until 1919. The *Scotsman* newspaper mentioned in 1934 that he trained in Egypt as a flying officer, though he *'never flew as high as he walked'*. Cooper himself mentioned his time in Egypt when he saw temple inscriptions that were the earliest record of a plant introduction. It was a time *'...spoilt by the outbreak of the riots in Egypt at the end of the Great War'*.

Rangoon (1921–1930)

Instead of joining the RAF or continuing work for Bulley, Cooper was appointed by the India Office in 1921 to be superintendent of Maymyo Botanic Garden in the Shan Hills of Burma; he was the first British-trained officer to hold the post. He also worked for the Rangoon Development Trust helping the transfer of the Agri-Horticultural Society of Burma to a new site in Rangoon. Once this was completed, he resigned his government post and took up a post with the Society. The RBGE history states that the happiest time of Cooper's life was as superintendent of the Maymyo Botanic Garden. This is probably true – he married in 1921 and his only son was born in 1922. A touching picture of him and his son Billie at their Rangoon home has survived from 1925.

Post-war, there was no opportunity for large-scale collecting; however, he collected a small number of specimens from the interesting and isolated peak of Mount Victoria in southern Burma and three collections from Mount Victoria were subsequently described as new species endemic to the mountain.

Cooper's most significant horticultural introduction from Burma came in 1927 when he despatched rose seed to the UK. He referred to it as '*Rosa Cooperi*' and mentioned it was cultivated in the RBGE rock garden but the specific name was never published validly. Presumably, it is the cultivar listed in the *RHS Plant Finder* as *Rosa* '*Cooperi*' (Cooper's Burma rose), a natural hybrid between *Rosa gigantea* and *R. laevigata*.

Table 3: New taxa collected by Cooper in Burma

Number	Type Collection	Current Accepted
5969A	<i>Vitex burmensis</i> Moldenke	<i>Vitex burmensis</i> Moldenke
6002	<i>Potentilla montisvictoriae</i> H.Ikeda & H.Ohba	<i>Potentilla montisvictoriae</i> H.Ikeda & H.Ohba
6073	<i>Agapetes moorei</i> Hemsl. var. <i>glabrescens</i> Airy Shaw	<i>Agapetes moorei</i> Hemsl. var. <i>glabrescens</i> Airy Shaw

Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh (1930–1950)

In 1930 Cooper returned to Edinburgh so that his son might benefit from a Scottish education. His first job was to lay out the grounds of the Astley Ainslie Hospital in Edinburgh for its official opening. He then re-joined the RBGE as an assistant curator, becoming curator in 1934 until he retired in 1950. During this time he oversaw the redevelopment of the rock, peat and heath gardens, and renovation of the woodland garden.

The RBGE accession books contain relevant entries from Bees Ltd (Bulley's firm) or from Cooper himself. Occasionally, his herbarium specimens are cited as a source - these must have been shaken to release precious seed! Much that the RBGE received unfortunately failed to

germinate but Cooper himself wrote about material that was successfully cultivated; at one time seventeen species of his *Rhododendron* collections grew there. There is further evidence of his living collections still in the RBGE herbarium in dried material from specimens growing in the garden.

Cowan's (1953) and Davidian's (1960) two-part article *Rhododendrons at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh* overlooked Cooper's contribution to the rhododendron collection. Both omitted his plant hunting, his redevelopment of the areas essential for rhododendron cultivation, and only his introduction of *Rhododendron nivale* Hook.f. was credited for its performance in the rock garden. Nevertheless, even today, a small number of Cooper's plants still grow across the four RBGE gardens.

During his curatorship, Cooper lived in the East Gate Lodge with his wife Emily and Billie. There were numerous pets: budgies, fantailed doves, guinea pigs, hens, rabbits, a Pekinese and a Red Setter; a world away from the building's current dual role of coffee bar and garden rangers' station. Pauline Scott recounted how during the Second World War Cooper would organize school holiday garden tours for family groups. After a 1941 mid-air collision over Edinburgh between two Spitfires, one crashed into Inverleith Park and the other into the garden of the East Gate Lodge. During redevelopment of the East Gate entrance in 2010 an archaeological dig recovered parts of the Spitfire. However, the war had a more personal

Table 4: Cooper collections growing at RBGE (various accession numbers)

Name	Cooper	Garden	Country
<i>Viburnum grandiflorum</i> Wall. ex DC.	3023	Inverleith	Bhutan
<i>Rhododendron maddenii</i> Hook.f. ssp. <i>maddenii</i>	3601	Inverleith	Bhutan
<i>Ligustrum compactum</i> Hook.f. & Thomson	3563	Inverleith	Bhutan
<i>Euonymus grandiflorus</i> Wall.	3562	Inverleith	Bhutan
<i>Rhododendron campanulatum</i> D.Don 'Roland E. Cooper'	5768	Inverleith	India
<i>Rhododendron barbatum</i> Wall. ex G.Don	3507	Inverleith	Bhutan
<i>Viburnum grandiflorum</i> Wall. ex DC.	3023	Logan	Bhutan
<i>Rhododendron maddenii</i> Hook.f. ssp. <i>Maddenii</i>	3601	Logan	Bhutan
<i>Rhododendron maddenii</i> Hook.f. ssp. <i>Maddenii</i>	3601	Benmore	Bhutan
<i>Rhododendron campanulatum</i> D.Don 'Roland E. Cooper'	5768	Benmore	India
<i>Rhododendron barbatum</i> Wall. ex G.Don	3507	Benmore	Bhutan
<i>Rhododendron campanulatum</i> D.Don 'Roland E. Cooper'	5768	Dawyck	India
<i>Rhododendron campanulatum</i> D.Don ssp. <i>Campanulatum</i>	5926	Dawyck	India

and tragic aspect because Billie, who followed his father into the RAF volunteer reserve, was declared missing in action on 12 September 1942.

Founder Member of the Scottish Rock Garden Club

Cooper was one of the seven who discussed and founded the SRGC in July 1933. He likened the concept to the formation of societies during the Scottish Enlightenment, when like-minded people would meet in Edinburgh's teahouses to discuss and share ideas. However, he conceded that the club started in the less salubrious surrounding of a 'darkish parlour at the back entrance to a pub at the west end of Princes Street, where we sat below the high windows of the Rutland and commenced proceedings with a glass of beer'. He was its second official speaker in November 1933, wrote the Club's first leaflet in January 1934, and was an editor of the club's 1935 'George Forrest Book'. He became the first editor of the *Journal of the Scottish Rock Garden Club*, a post he held until 1937, and contributed eleven articles to the journal. His earliest three were

Meconopsis bella collected by Cooper as a type specimen, in the herbarium at the RBGE



devoted to heaths and heathers: introducing them (1937); cultural requirements (1938); and their growth at RBGE (1947).

In 1949 Cooper described the landscape and plants of the western Himalaya on the basis of his 1916 expedition to Lahaul and Kullu. An article followed on plants from the eastern Himalaya, primarily based on his early work in Sikkim and Bhutan. During the 1950s he wrote several pieces about his beloved primulas - a theme he continued in the *Quarterly of the American Primrose Society*. In 1953 he wrote an amusing and sentimental article about the development and

evolution of the rock and heather gardens as well as some of his plant introductions that did well in Edinburgh.

Cooper's entry in Hadfield's *British Gardeners* mentions his thesis on the influence of the landscape painter John Constable on the RBGE garden at Inverleith. This is overstated and simply refers to Cooper's final short article in the SRGC journal. Once his impenetrable prose is deciphered, he speculates that William McNab (who laid out the Inverleith garden in the 1820s) may have been influenced by Constable's paintings through McNab's Ayrshire-born friend, the landscape painter John Thomson of Duddingston. Another of Cooper's legacies to the SRGC is the award at the Edinburgh show for the best Asiatic primula. This impressive trophy incorporates a wooden drinking cup with silver base and lid, another gift that Cooper received from the Maharajah of Bhutan in 1915.

Final days (1950–1962)

After retiring from the RBGE, Cooper moved to the Essex resort of Westcliff-on-Sea. His retirement became his most prolific period of articles for the SRGC, the American Rhododendron Society and the American Primrose Society (APS); in 1955 he became the 'English Editor' for the APS. He died at Southend-on-Sea in 1962 aged 71. Some of his papers remain at RBGE, but unfortunately the whereabouts of his pioneering photographs of Bhutan is unknown.

I would like to hear from any members with further information about Cooper or who know the whereabouts of any of his photographs. We know that Henry Tod was gifted a set of landscape shots from Bhutan just before Cooper died but have been unable to trace them. If you can help, please contact me at a.elliott@rbge.org.uk.

Space does not permit the long list of references relevant to this article but they may be obtained directly from me on request.

Cooper's official RBGE portrait

