

The Victoria Rhododendron Society Newsletter



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Garth Homer Centre, 811 Darwin Street, Victoria, B.C.

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Twenty-seventh Year of Publication

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Sunday, June 10th

Picnic at Ann and Tom Widdowson's garden

4635 West Saanich Road

12:30 p.m.

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June Picnic

12:30 p.m. - 4:00 p.m. Sunday, June 10th

This year the not-to-be-missed club affair will be held in the garden of Ann and Tom Widdowson, 4635 West Saanich Road which is fairly close to the Wilkinson Road / West Saanich Road junction. Parking is on the road on the opposite side to the house as the near side is a bike lane. If you need to be closer there is parking for about twenty cars on the lawn of the Widdowson property. You are requested to bring a specialty of your choice

(dessert or savory) Barbecued salmon will be cooked to perfection by our VRS volunteer chefs. Punch, tea and coffee will be provided, but please bring your own utensils and plates and most important, a comfortable chair to sit upon! A free raffle ticket is issued to each member so a donation of a rhodo or a plant is kindly requested. Each person is a winner! Trophies from the Show and Sale will be presented to the winners on this grand occasion.

ARS 2007 Gold and Silver Medalists

Steve Hootman, co-Executive Director of the Rhododendron Species Foundation, a frequent and a favorite speaker at the VRS, was awarded the Gold Medal of the American Rhododendron Society, the Society's highest award, at the convention banquet in San Francisco the evening of April 14th. A variation of the citation reads as follows:

To Steve Hootman—one of the foremost international plant hunters of the late 20th and early 21st centuries, and one of the most intrepid; Co-Director of the Rhododendron Species Foundation and Botanical Garden where he maintains a determining role in making the garden a premier garden of its kind in the world, and facilitating the mandate of the Foundation beyond all expectations, especially in regard to conservation, distribution, and education; a lecturer and educator *extraordinaire* on the subject of rhododendrons; a significant contributor to ongoing scientific research on rhododendrons; Co-Editor of the RSF yearbook *Rhododendron Species*; and among the most knowledgeable people in the world on the genus *Rhododendron*—the American Rhododendron Society is pleased to bestow its highest honour, the Gold Medal.

Mitch Mitchell of Viva Vireya Club in Hawaii received the Silver Medal for his extensive work with Vireyas and for promoting them at the Hilo Zoo Entrance.

Glen Jamieson's May Presentation Summary

Dr. Glen Jamieson gave a most informative Power Point presentation, in part based on the 2005 Yunnan Plant-hunting Expedition led by **Steve Hootman**, which included our President, **Bill McMillan**, in the group.

Their route, which went west from Kunming across several major mountainous river valleys towards the borders of Tibet and Myanmar and up the Salween, was also the region where many important plant discoveries for the Western world were made. Glen briefly discussed the famous 19th and 20th Century plant explorers Fortune, Delavay, Wilson, Farrer and Kingdom Ward, and their contributions to the plant inventories of Europe and North America, but he

focused his talk on the life and plant-hunting achievements of George Forrest.

Glen, a marine biologist, gives many presentations to large groups, and he uses the latest technology now available. His lectures are indeed an educational tour de force, well organized and informative and we all came away with valuable information, as Glen illustrated some of his points by using comparisons to our British Columbian topography and river systems.

China is changing rapidly from the dark days of the Cultural Revolution of the 50's through to the 80's. To meet the demands of its enormous population, it is undertaking major infrastructure development, including new roads that now connect the cities with once relatively inaccessible rural areas, including the remoter parts of Yunnan. The greater city wealth has resulted in a rapidly increasing Chinese tourist presence throughout China, and Yunnan, with its extensive Chinese ethnic minorities and wilderness areas, is a prime destination. However, although the survival needs of all peoples are now being met, the standard of living is still quite low in many rural areas, with many still living as peasant farmers. Because of the complex mountainous topography and steep slopes of the Mekong, Salween, Yang-tse and Irawaddy regions, it is a challenge for farmers there to eke out a living.

While logging in western Yunnan is no longer practiced by the Chinese (this is not the case in neighbouring Myanmar), local harvesting of trees such as rhododendrons for firewood and other uses is impacting the abundance of some of the larger rhododendron species, although the increased light that results can allow seedlings to grow faster.

Glen showed us slides of many rhododendrons familiar to club members and grown as special plants in our gardens: the epiphytic *R. edgeworthii*, *roxianum* var. *oreonastes*, *megacalyx*, *sinogrande*, *calostrotum*, and in the alpine, *impeditum*, to name a few.

The 2005 Expedition will be remembered for its great dry weather before the Monsoon, the camaraderie of the group, the large number of rhododendrons found, and for all the interesting presentations from various members of the team.

The Seventh Annual George Fraser Day & Heritage Fair

Ucluelet, B.C. on Saturday, May 26, 2007

- **10:30 AM : Welcoming Ceremony**
- at George Fraser Memorial Park (across from Village Green at Main Street & Fraser Lane)
- Introductions
- Speech by The Honourable **Iona Campagnolo**, Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia -
- **"Heritage in Small Coastal Communities"**
- Scottish Fiddling & Piping, Highland Dancers, Aboriginal Dancers
- Garden Planting of Fraser hybrids by Lt. Governor, Children & Other Citizens of the Community
- **11:30 AM-12:30 PM : Interpretive Walking Tour**
- Enjoy a stroll with the Lt. Governor that begins on Fraser Lane to view heritage gardens/property where George Fraser lived and planted his heaven on earth.
- Quick stop en route for a "Uniquely Ukee" Greeting at the Village Square Shops!
- **12:30 PM-1:00 PM : Opening Ceremony**
- Heritage Fair, U.A.C Hall at 1510 Peninsula Rd - Doors open at 12:00 Noon - Admission - \$2.00
- Welcome Speech - Guest Speakers - Presentations to Lt. Governor
- Lunch & Refreshments available
- Silent Auction commences
- **1:00 PM-4:00 PM : Heritage Fair**
- Historical Displays - Old Time Fiddlers - Silent Auction - Door Prizes - Scottish Music & Poetry
- Jigs/Reels on George Fraser's Fiddle
- Featuring a New Book by Bill Dale '**George Fraser's Rhododendrons**'
- Plant Sale and more
- for more information, contact: Event Coordinator:
Wanda McAvoy, **email**
wmcavoy@telus.net
PO Box 152, Ucluelet BC, V0R 3A0
Ph: 250-726-7459, Fax: 250-726-7459

Lost at the VRS Show and Sale

I lost my pen at the Show and Sale; have you seen it? I think I lost it while helping Ian load his trailer. It was a gift for my 10th wedding anniversary and as such has tremendous sentimental value. The retail value is \$300-400. Jason Jones phone: 380-2001



Ball-point pen, art. no. 18 02 90

The 2007 VRS Show and Sale

by Bill McMillan

After a cold, rainy set-up day, Show Day was glorious and what a great Show! The cold unsettled spring weather made for strange mixtures of entries. We got plants that would normally have finished blooming, and missed having some that would normally be ready for the Show! In spite of that we had a great selection of plants, and some real "eye candy". According to our count, 261 people came to the Show this year despite a number of competing sales and events.

Donations in the raffle were marvelous with many items from members and nurseries. Selected items were placed into a Silent Auction, a new initiative. The auction was a great success but as would be expected the raffle ticket sales were down from last year. Taken together, however, the Raffle and Silent Auction brought the total revenue up from 2006. We offer a huge thank you to the members who donated material, the sellers who donated plants and our many sponsors. We gratefully acknowledge food donations by members Lois Blackmore, Nora Brown, Michael and Sharon Challen, Margaret deWeese, Heather Dickman, Maureen and Gerry Glaum, Sue and Bill Hyslop, Linda Kreiss, Murray and Peggy Matheson, Pat Owen, Dick and Peggy Pitfield, Jean and Norm Todd, Betty Whitlock, Ann and Tom Widdowson. Their donations and some bought items enabled the kitchen to offer teas, plates of goodies, and sausage rolls for sale, and also to feed the hungry volunteers. The sellers had a fine selection of rhododendrons again this year. RhodoHaven (Les Clay) Nursery, Firwood Nursery (Norm Todd), Ralfs Nursery, the Propagation Group and individuals had

plants for sale. Sales revenues were good, due in part perhaps to opening the sales a bit earlier this year. Changes we made this year caused a few rough spots and we will modify procedures accordingly next year.

Again the response to the call for volunteers was excellent. We had 57 volunteers, and 44 of you took on multiple chores since the show had many jobs that needed doing. It was great when someone said: "my shift has ended, is there anything else you need help with?" – and that happened often. The Show organisers, with Dick Pitfield and Ian Duncan spearheading the set-up and take-down, Bill McMillan as Chair and handling publicity, Margaret deWeese championing the raffle, Karen Morrison overseeing Admissions, Ann Widdowson and Dean Goard handling Accounting, and Lois Blackmore and Ena Vandermale managing the food and kitchen, made the event happen. Telephone and E-mail contacts were frequent in preparation for the event.

As in the past, notices were placed on our own and other gardening websites, sent to the ARS and various magazines, and I arranged to have a copy of the discount coupon slotted into the Horticulture Centre of the Pacific's newsletter. It also helped that the show was mentioned in Helen Chestnut's column in the Times Colonist newspaper and Jennifer Blyth of Black Press put our notice and a photo in their "Around the House" column. New posters were prepared and distributed to many garden centres around Victoria and signs were placed on strategic telephone poles ahead of the Show. We also advertised the Show by word-of-mouth to other clubs at various presentations. Margaret deWeese, Pat Fuller and Arthur Ralfs included digital copies of the Show Rules and Schedule in the E-mail version of our Newsletter and on our website.

Margaret deWeese wrote letters and followed up with phone calls to potential raffle donors. Liz Keay, Don Whittle and Ed Kubec helped her to pick up the donations. Ann Widdowson copied the computer program we use to track sales onto the Club computer to use on Show day. Norma Buckley, Jacq Bradbury and Keiko Alkire prepared rhododendron blooms for the delightful flower arrangements from the Finnerty Gardens collection. Thanks go to Rhonda Rose for cutting the trusses used.

Friday, the early Set-up crew of Ian Duncan and Dave Mackas arrived at Ann and Tom Widdowson's home at 9 AM and, with Tom and Ann's help, loaded up the Show materials. The table rental company delivered tables to the church and the set-up crew of Dick Pitfield, Archie Brown, Arthur Ralfs, Ev Vaneerden and Frank Neate got to work. Once the early crew arrived the two crews combined to finish setting up the hall. The Church now charges for use of the tables and our skirting clips do not fit their tables, so we opted to use mainly wooden rental tables this year.

Once the display area was assembled, Liz Keay, Don Whittle and Margaret deWeese set up the raffle area and placed all the Raffle and Silent Auction items. Just after noon, Ena Vandermale arrived with sandwiches and cookies and prepared coffee for a very welcome lunch break. We were particularly appreciative because Ena came despite a medical emergency in her family. Afterward, we completed the set-up and installed the plastic covers and table skirts; the hall was ready just before entries began to arrive. Val Murray prepared a display featuring Abkhazi Garden, Elizabeth Bigelow set up a display for Glendale Gardens and Lloyd Gilmore displayed some of his new hybrid rhododendrons and information about propagating.

Thanks are extended to Jacqueline Bradbury for collecting, cleaning and arranging engraving for the Show trophies again this year, and also for dealing with award ribbons.

Theresa McMillan and Ed Kubec filled the ginger beer bottles in preparation for opening the Entry Table. Theresa McMillan, Sue and Bill Hyslop, Bonnie Moro and Keiko Alkire received entries and helped where there were problems. Submissions filled the 'leave your entries here' tables quickly and our crew of Judy Gordon, Norma Senn, Sharon White and Burns Morrison started setting them out. During the late afternoon and into the evening, the crew placed and organized the entries into an eye-pleasing layout, despite an error I made in updating the plant list that led to a number of plants being mislabeled. Once again Abkhazi garden materials were featured in a new version of Val Murray's fascinating 'fake rock' and plant display. When I left for the night, the layout of the trusses was still under way and Burns Morrison took on the task of

helping until the crew completed the layout ,then closing down the hall and setting the alarm system.

A big thank you to Exhibitors who entered trusses, sprays and plants– entries from each person ranged from 1 to an amazing 92, with 539 in all! We strongly encourage even more members to bring in material next year. It was unfortunate this year that we had photographic entries from only two people. Bonnie Moro carefully judged those that were entered and offered well thought out constructive criticisms that were appreciated. We will rethink criteria for entry next year to encourage more participation – we know there are excellent photographers in the VRS!

Very early Saturday, Bill and Carol Dancer set out signboards to direct people to the Show. One of the Judges, Norma Senn, and I arrived at the church just after 7 AM and I carefully shut off the alarm system. We got the coffee started and set out the traditional Judge's snack (this year it was Tim Horton's muffins). The other Judges, Betty Kennedy, Ruth Cook and Agnes Lynn arrived soon afterward and we briefly reviewed judging criteria. Ruth Cook and Agnes Lynn with Clerks; Bill Gordon and Burns Morrison tackled the hybrids entries; Betty Kennedy and Norma Senn, with clerks Betty Gordon and Karen Morrison judged the species. Clerk Anne Allen and Karen Burns focused on entries eligible for trophies. Classification problems created some problems for the judges but they sorted things out and completed awarding the trophies in time to open the Show to the public at 11:00AM. We opened the sale earlier (at 10:30) this year to ease line-up frustrations and overall it was a success.

At about 7:30, the Saanich contractors delivered and erected four canopies, and Dick Pitfield and Ian Duncan coordinated the Saturday set-up crew of Caroline Marquart, Archie Brown, Tom Widdowson, Keiko Alkire and Roy Blackmore as they prepared the sales and cashier areas then helped the Sellers position plants. Admissions were coordinated by Karen Morrison and shifts ably handled by Jean Todd and Gary Shearman, Betty Whitlock and Pat Owen, Emma McMillan-Horchik and Julia McCartney. People's Choice award tickets were handed out to the 261 attendees.

We simplified the pricing of raffle tickets to \$2, which

pleased the volunteers selling tickets, and introduced a Silent Auction for specific items. Margaret deWeese coordinated, helped by Joyce Whittle, Michael and Sharon Challen, Ruth Trelawny, Murray Matheson, Maureen Thompson, Theresa McMillan, and Peggy Pitfield. Again this year, the donated prizes were fabulous. We thank Don Whittle, Milius Douglas, Moe and Johanna Massa, Evelyn Weesjes, Karen and Burns Morrison, Madeline and Ken Webb, Dean Goard, Joe and Linda Harvey, Arthur Ralfs, RhodoHaven (Les Clay) and Margaret deWeese for their Raffle/Silent Auction donations.

Local businesses that generously supported us were: **Meadow Oak Nursery, Danica Nurseries Ltd., Glendale Gardens, Firwood Nursery, Cannon Nurseries, Little Elf Garden Centre, Peninsula Flowers Nursery, Garden Works, Marigold Nursery, Elk Lake Garden Centre, Island Specialty Nursery, Russell Nursery, Cast Art Studios, Evergro Canada Inc. Integrity Sales, ELJAY Irrigation, Dig This and Brentwood Bay Nursery.**

In light of **Brentwood Bay Nursery** giving the VRS Raffle Gift Certificates monthly they were not asked to contribute again because of their ongoing generosity. Thank you letters were sent out to each business. Please support these donor businesses.

Ann Widdowson prepared floats for the cashiers Friday and Dean Goard distributed them Saturday morning and coordinated the Cashiers. Shifts looking after the two sales areas included Bill and Sue Hyslop, Roy Blackmore, Evelyn Weesjes, Linda Harvey, Heather Dickman, Michael Challen and Gerry Glaum. In the kitchen, Lois Blackmore and Ena Vandermale coordinated activity and were helped by Norah Brown, Joyce Whittle, Peggy Matheson, Sharon Challen, and others. Hungry volunteers were well fed, and sausage rolls, sweets and drinks were sold to the public. Many thanks to the many Club members who donated food; it was greatly appreciated.

The importance of the Sellers to the success of the annual Show and Sale cannot be overstated. The percentage that the club receives from plant sales provides a major source of the monies we use to pay speaker honorariums and fund other Club activities

during the year. Rhododendron Sellers this year were Firwood Nurseries Ltd. (Norm Todd helped by Gordon Pirie), Les Clay Nursery, Ralfs Nursery (Arthur Ralfs and John Hawkins), and the VRS Propagation Group.

Joe Harvey and Agnes Lynn were kept very busy answering "Questions" for attendees.

We are making more of an effort to document the Show, and this year Jason Jones, Archie Brown and Lori Ann Kenney took photos during the event. Some of the excellent results are already posted on the web page.

In the computer room, Julia McCartney, Heather Dickman, Don Whittle and Linda Harvey separated and sorted seller tags, and cash pick-ups were recounted and entered into the computer by Ann Widdowson. Tom Widdowson and Dean Goard helped with the recounts of the money. Dean and Ian Duncan made cash runs. Again this dedicated group did a first rate job; as usual they were the last ones to leave the church after the Show closed. Later, Ann Widdowson audited the sales figures; despite increased costs, overall revenues were nearly \$2000, somewhat better than in 2006.

One grower had to leave early to catch the ferry because he had another show Sunday. As Four o'clock neared, the remaining growers packed their stock, and the last cashier closed. Exhibitors who wished to retrieve their entries and ribbons and teardown got underway in earnest. Bill and Carol Dancer retrieved the directional signs and helped with tear-down. Teardown and clean-up were completed in about an hour by Ian Duncan, Dick Pitfield, Margaret deWeese, Val Murray, Tom Widdowson, Mo and Johanna Massa, Evelyn Weesjes, Archie Brown, Ken Webb, Theresa McMillan, Emma McMillan-Horchik, John Horchik, John Hawkins, Dave Mackas and others. After a last sweep for overlooked items, I passed the key to the Custodian and another Show and Sale officially came to a close. However, a number of us followed the trucks to the Widdowson's and helped offload Show supplies back into their winter storage area to ease that chore. Then about 15 of us celebrated completion of another successful Show and Sale by enjoying a Chinese food dinner at a restaurant in the Royal Oak shopping centre.

My apologies if your efforts were not recognized in this

report. With so many volunteers, it would be easy to omit someone who should have been credited.

Chairing the last four Shows has been challenging and rewarding, and a great learning experience. I have also enjoyed getting to know many of you in the process. In the final analysis, however, the success of the Show is a credit to you, the members of the Victoria Rhododendron Society. Thank you.

Trophies for 2007

The George Fraser Memorial Trophy

Best Vancouver Island Hybrid

Norma Buckley

R. "Transit Gold"

Herman & Hella Vaartnou Plate

Best Fragrant Rhododendron Truss or Spray (not an Azalea)

Burns & Karen Morrison

R. edgeworthii

Jean and Norman Todd Trophy

Best Lepidote Species in a Container

Norman Todd

R. litangense

Mary's Memorial Cup

Best Rhododendron Companion Plant

M&J Massa (Mo and Johanna)

Fothergilla monticola

The Jim Calder Memorial Trophy

Best Species Truss or Spray

Norman Todd

R. charitopes

The Mary Henderson Memorial Trophy

Best Hybrid Rhododendron

B&B Gordon (Bill and Betty)

R. "Horizon Monarch"

The de Rothschild Challenge Trophy

Best Rhododendron in Show

B&B Gordon

R. "Horizon Monarch"

The Gibson Memorial Trophy

High Aggregate

M&J Massa

The Webb Trophy

People's Choice

A.C. Brown

R. "Paprika Spiced"

Angus and Mary Boyd Trophy

Best Entry by a Novice

Roy Blackmore

R. "Razorbill"

The Alex McCarter Bowl

Best NW Hybrid

Judy Gordon

R. "Elsie Watson"



Who has seen Norma Buckley's vase?



James and Pat Fuller
enjoying the Show



photos by Archie Brown

Atlantic Rhododendron and Native Plant Society

Joe Harvey, one of the originals in this group, now living on the west coast, has done very interesting and impressive breeding of indumented rhododendrons. Over the years he has sent seeds of these crosses to our seed exchange, and ARHS members here on the east coast may have some very interesting and fine plants from his seeds. Our group would like to obtain cuttings from any such plants in order to establish a "Living Collection of Harvey Plants" at the Lake Centre test garden. If anyone is willing to provide a cutting please contact Audrey Fralic at 683-2711 alfralic@excite.com or Christine Curry 656-2513 c.curry@auracom.com or Dick Steele at 767-4310 nanddsteele@eastlink.ca

Isle of Gigha

Pat Fuller wrote excitedly about an email she had received from a reader of the Victoria Rhododendron website: victoriarhodo.ca The writer from Scotland had found R. lindeyi on the photo page by Arthur Ralfs of the entries of the 2006 Show and Sale, and the following story unfolded. Mr. Don Dennis sent the website of the garden of Achamore on the community owned isle of Gigha, Argyll, Scotland.

<http://www.achamorehouse.com/gardens.htm>

As the Rhododendron Conference is to be held at the Royal Botanic Garden of Edinburgh in 2008 it seemed like a good time to write about a visit to one of the many

astonishing gardens of Western Scotland.

This is what Mr. Don Dennis wrote:

Kitty Lloyd Jones was one of the first women to take a degree in horticulture and then work professionally as a landscape-garden consultant. Among the gardens she influenced are those of The Court House, Chipping Warden, Upton House in Warwickshire, Little Paddocks on the Sunninghill estate in Berkshire, and Achamore on the island of Gigha, Scotland.

Historically, Gigha and its neighbouring island, Cara, belonged to the Clan Macdonald, even before David II formally granted the lands to them in 1344. For many centuries, a power struggle raged between them and the MacNeill Clan who finally became the undisputed lairds in 1590 but sold the lands at the end of the 18th century.

William Scarlett, 3rd Lord Abinger, purchased the estate at the end of the 19th century and built the present house. He sold it to Lt Colonel Sir James Horlick, OBE MC VMH, in 1944. Sir James had developed skills as a plantsman at his previous home at Titness Park, Berkshire, and bought Gigha in order to extend the plant collection which he had begun to amass there. Not only did he develop the garden, but as laird of the island he introduced a series of improvements which earned him the respect and affection of the island's population. On his death, in the 1970s, the estate was sold to Mr D.W.N. Landale with the exception of the plant collection which was gifted to the National Trust for Scotland to be propagated for the future.

The island of Gigha was subject to one of Scotland's first community buy-outs in the late 1990s. In spite of Mick Jagger wanting to purchase it, the widow of owner of the island wanted the local people to benefit; thus Achamore gardens are now owned by the Island of Gigha Heritage Trust. The house remains in private hands. The garden is in good condition and is well managed. The plant collection is being propagated.

A plant list of the collection was made in the 1970s but this is due to be updated by the present staff. Concern lies in the fact that records of the Wilson 50 collection are inaccurate and cuttings of the original plants are required in order that records may be verified.

At one time there were twelve gardeners at Achamore, now there are three staff throughout the year with two full-time temporary staff during the summer. Old overgrown areas are gradually being cleared and replanted with new stock of the same plant species. A plan was made in 1955 by a friend of Sir James and this detailed map of the plants is used as a basis for replacement planting. Sir James' skill in planting for size, colour and texture has given his collection a unique value as a work of art, and reference to his planting records and old photographs will help to preserve this aspect for the future.

Roy Blackmore had the privilege of visiting Gigha and reported that the gardens are spectacular.

The Victoria Lily Society

The Victoria Lily Society invites you to the annual "Lily Day" at the Glendale Gardens (formerly HCP), 505 Quayle Road, on Sunday June 24th from 10 am to 1 pm. Visit the society's lily garden. Highlights include demonstrations on growing, propagating and hybridizing lilies. Potted lilies will be available for sale. Free admission.

The Victoria Lily Society will be holding the 10th annual "Summer Scentsation" Garden Show and Plant Sale on Saturday July 7th from 10 am to 3:30 pm at the Cadboro Bay United Church Hall, 2655 Arbutus Road. Highlights include a display of early summer garden flowers and ornamental lilies, flower arranging demonstrations, a silent auction, musical interludes, and a general plant sale (to include potted lilies). Entries by the general public are welcome for both the judged competitions and the non-judged displays. Admission is by donation. An elegant tea (with scones and homemade marionberry jam) will be available for \$3.50. Free ample on-site parking.

Show Handbook URL:

<http://www.members.shaw.ca/lilynet/viclil/ShowHandbook.pdf>

The URL will only be active at the end of May.



**Hope to see you at the picnic on Sunday,
June 10th!**