

From the Secretary

It is good to have constructive criticism. One member has said she wishes we would remember that many of our members are beginners, in need of the simplest, almost elementary, instruction in heather growing. I have therefore included with the permission of the speaker, some notes from a talk given at a local luncheon in his home town. Another has asked for simple explanations of botanical terms. These we shall try to give as we go along. That is what we aim at in these Bulletins: a mixture that we hope will appeal to all. We try to use the Bulletins for topical and short-term information while keeping the Year Books rather as a reference "library". How I wish that I could let new members have the past issues that they missed! Personally, I would like to have a re-print of some of the articles, but I have been restrained by wiser heads than mine. They have said, "Who would decide what to put in and what to leave out?" and certainly this might be invidious. One adviser spoke of what I wanted as nothing but a "bed-side book", (not to be considered by a distinguished Society such as ours!)

An intriguing photostat Mss copy from the annals of the Linnaean Society has come into my possession, by an author unknown and undated. It deals with the culture from seed of a number of ericaceous plants including heather, seed to be sown in March in a shady situation in "humus pauperata". I wonder what this is, beyond being "poor soil". The instructions are detailed and probably quite unsuited to modern conditions, but would any nurseryman like to try his hand?

To return to the present. One big advance has been made, inasmuch as we now have a skilled photographer, Mr. H.C. Prew of Northwich, Cheshire, as "Slide Custodian". Any member wishing to borrow these slides for illustrating lectures is asked to give ample notice, one month during the period March to October when he may be on his travels, visiting friends and taking photographs, and a fortnight during the rest of the year when he is hibernating (and probably taking stock of his transparencies.) Don't apply to me for the loans: you will find Mr. Prew's address in every Year Book since we began publishing the membership lists: he is one of our Foundation Members.

A few of you are availing yourselves of the Enquiry letters I sent out. Mr. P.S. Patrick deals with most of these, and here I can give the good news to those of you who did not attend the A.G.M. on April 3rd, that he has agreed to return as Editor, at least for the time being, now that we have lost Mrs. Harper. If your enquiries merit it, Mr. Patrick will put them into the Year Book. Remember, the next issue will not be until the end of March 1969, but do not be lulled into a false sense of "There's plenty of time". Don't wait till the final reminder, Sept/Oct. Bulletin, before sending in your articles or comments.

Members in the three southern groups will get with this Bulletin a supplement telling of our late summer activities, but anyone else may ask for one. We hope to stage a Heather Display at the R.H.S. on Sept. 4-5th. My apologies for not telling new members about the 6 tickets for Chelsea but I did contact several by post-card and the tickets were used. Do ask for tickets for the Great Autumn Show, September 24th 25th, 26th.

### SOME REFLECTIONS ON OUR IRISH VISIT

In 1966 we began talking about going to Western Ireland to look for 'mediterranea' heather. The idea came after David McClintock had gone there in April of that year with his son Andrew and had "discovered" it and Rosturk Castle on Clew Bay, Co. Mayo. So we who followed at Easter 1968 benefitted from the research and knowledge that went into the preparation for making this visit so memorable.

About twenty of us took part, though not all at the same time. Most of us were sheer amateurs and though we had been given lists of maps and books that we would do well to study before we went, I don't think many of us did. For my part, I like reading about places after I have seen them. I have since read with the greater delight in Lloyd Praeger's book 'The Way that I Went' about the places we saw. There was Dog's Bay near Roundstone in Connemara which has nothing to do with dogs but comes from the Irish word for plover. There we picnicked (and quoted poetry) in sight of the snowy shell beach so minutely described by Praeger. Croagh Patrick dominated our view from Rosturk, but again it was Praeger who told me how St. Patrick banished all evil creatures from Ireland until frogs were re-introduced through the agency of Trinity College, Dublin, in "Dutch William's" time.

Of course we found the heather we were looking for in many of the expected places: what we did not expect was almost to lose it on Clare Island. The party got separated, (and so did the food) but our reputations as "botanists" were saved by our youngest member, Nigella Hillgarth aged fourteen, who with Mr. McClintock struck off over the heights and found the 'mediterranea' after a five-mile walk. Had we gone the right way (maps again!) we should all have found it within a mile or so of the harbour.

This visit to Clare Island was the last expedition we undertook together, but for the two of us who went with Mr. McClintock back to Shannon it was not quite the end of the story. We found "Spider's Bay", the home of the late Mrs. Teacher on Lough Corrib, but alas, no Daboecia 'Praegerae' there. We were enchanted by Col. Lambert's heather garden at Oughterard and we found spring Gentians in flower on Burren. But if anyone, peering down into the incredible plant growth in the cracks of the limestone "pavement" should chance to see a pair of glasses lying there, he will have found what we most miserably lost. I tell this sad little "cautionary" tale by way of illustration of the moon-landscape there, where anything laid down will immediately be merged, especially at sunset, into the general greyness of the limestone slabs. Or could it be that the fairies stole them? Who knows? Did we see any fairies? Again, who knows? Certainly none of us could have come back from Ireland untouched by something of its magic, whether it be of the Connemara scenery, or the kindness of its people or the sweet-temper that made our party so much at-one.

This is a brief sketch of my own impressions of our visit. The full account for the record will be in the 1968 Year Book.

C.I. MacLeod.

MEMBERS' FORUM

REPORT from Groups 3, 4, & 5.

The Spring meeting of Northern, Midland & Wales members was held at Harlow Car on 5th May. The attendance of 57 included our President Mr. F.J. Chapple from Isle of Man, our Secretary Mrs. C.I. MacLeod from Surrey, and Mr. David McClintock from Kent. This distinguished trio were especially welcomed and coaxed into giving three topical talks and the meeting followed the usual pattern of informality which is a feature of our gatherings. Indeed we conduct the business of furthering the Heather Garden project but manage to retain the atmosphere of a social occasion.

The garden at Harlow was full of interest and Mr. Prew was very active with his camera recording some of the many heathers which were glowing in the morning sun. The sale of plants (mostly Heathers) revealed that the generosity of 'bringers' was matched by the generosity of 'buyers' who, under the spell of the lively marketing comments by Mr. G. Yates established a fund, now banked on Deposit a/c, earmarked for the purchase of plants not otherwise obtainable.

We were most pleased to observe the keen interest of several members who had joined our ranks during the past year and we look forward to the next Harlow Car meeting on SEPTEMBER 15th. Meanwhile after the close of the Spring meeting, there arose a suggestion to invite all members to another visit to the Liverpool University Botanical Garden, Wirral, Cheshire which lies between the Dee and road A.540. This has been fixed for JULY 7th, and all members who can make the trip will be most welcome. As usual, we gather in the morning, have picnic lunch and confer unceremoniously about 2.30 in the afternoon.

We take this opportunity of reminding members that this is a suitable season for sending cuttings etc. to Harlow Car as listed on the enclosure with the 1967 Year Book. Please ask for another copy of the Harlow Car 'wanted' list if you need one.

J.P.A.

Footnote I am asked to emphasise that all members of the Society are invited to both the above gatherings. The more groups represented, the better. You might make September 15th. at Harlow Car part of your Autumn holiday - visiting the Lake District, the Yorkshire Dales or Derbyshire.

No further reminder will be possible, so make a note of the dates now. C.I.M.

ARE HEATHERS SELF-FERTILE ?

Could members help in an enquiry as to whether heathers are self-fertile ? This means - does a single plant, or a group of one cultivar, i.e. one clone, produce a good seed? - or must there be another distinct, plant of the same species within reach with which it must cross in order to do this ? This is an example of a simple fact about heathers which, Prof. Webb tells me, seems to be unknown. It is particularly relevant to the very small colonies of E. ciliaris and E. vagans in Ireland.

So, would any of those who grow just one plant, or one cultivar, only of one species, with no other nearby, let me know if apparently good still is still produced, or if seedlings ever appear?

Another method would be to self-pollinate by hand the earliest flowers to open and then bag the branch, seeing in due course if seed were set. Any help in ascertaining the facts about this would be welcome. The answers may be different for different species.

David McClintock

## A TALK GIVEN AT A BIRMINGHAM LUNCHEON :

### Heathers: A Brief Guide for the Beginner

Soil      Suitable ... ordinary soil; medium loam; sandy soil with peat added.

Unsuitable ... rich soil; heavy clay; sand. All three kinds may be made suitable by adding peat and/or loam and working the texture to provide a free root run.

Planting      Dig a hole deep enough for the lower growth to be slightly below garden level. Loosen the fibrous roots and place plant on a cone of free textured soil. Fill hole, covering about one inch of lower branches of heather: these will root. Do not firm in. Keep plant and soil well watered until established.

Feeding      Nothing but a little bone meal or better still, granulated seaweed.

Pruning      As the dead blooms leave a short length of bare stalk when they fall, it is generally sufficient, to maintain healthy plants, if these are trimmed off before new growth appears in the spring. Even this need only be done when plants show signs of becoming leggy.

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The speaker at this luncheon supplied each guest with a list of his own favourite heathers, grouping them under the titles:

- (1) General garden display of flowers
- (2) Display of foliage
- (3) Cut flowers: white
- (4) Attractive dwarf nature.

After naming each of the chosen heathers he added the estimated height, colour for those grown for flowers, the variation of the colour-foliage forms, and the flowering period. Space does not permit of full details of what is a most comprehensive list of about fifty heathers.

### THE JOY OF HEATHERS.

Three years ago next July I was casually looking through the gardening section of one of the leading Sunday newspapers when I saw an advertisement for a catalogue of heathers. I sent for this catalogue and was so impressed with the contents that I soon fixed up a visit to these gardens. As I had not the vaguest idea that there were many heathers beyond 'Springwood White' and the wild heather that one sees on the moors, I was immediately spell-bound by what I saw: such colours, beautiful foliage, variation and height of plants and above all, such an immaculate and well landscaped garden. Having spent about an hour just wandering around and trying to take it all in, I then asked the nurseryman if he would come to my garden at Draycote and give me some ideas.

He duly came and inspected the site and after studying the situation very carefully and thoughtfully, he suggested that I should rip up a large part of a lawn near the shrub border and have a real heather garden. When I had recovered from the shock of the prospect of removing my precious lawn, it was agreed that this should be done, thus making a site for about 550 heathers and seven conifers. It took two friends and myself about three weeks to prepare the site, placing stones in appropriate places so that we had a path to walk through the heathers.

The exciting day came when all the plants arrived - 19 different varieties for planting in groups of 25 to 30 and the seven conifers. In the course of the next week I planted all these heathers on my own, disciplining myself to the fact that they must be planted at least two feet apart otherwise in a couple of years or so they would be growing into one another.



It really was very exciting watching this garden take shape and I was very relieved when the last heather was planted. (When planting, I had put a couple of handfuls of peat and a little seaweed manure with each plant as our soil is neutral and has little or no acid content.) I then re-engaged my two friends and the three of us put 10 tons of peat on the garden to a depth of three inches to finish the job off.

By this time, it was mid-November 1965 and the next few winter months were spent reading and digesting heathers from as many books as I could lay my hands on. It really was hard work trying to get on top of all the different names and varieties, then, suddenly, rather like trying to ride a bicycle, it 'comes', and I began, by the following spring, to be 'with it' with regard to the different names and varieties for the first time.

In the next few months, quite a lot of my gardening friends came to see the heathers and 'heather fever' began to emerge in our part of the world. People began to see, with a little persuasion perhaps, the many virtues in planting heathers, especially several farmer friends, who could see a relatively easy type of gardening, which, knowing farmers and gardening, appealed to them in a big way!

In the autumn, I borrowed some slides from the nurseryman and also from The Heather Society, and we had two very pleasant evenings showing these slides to about 30 different people on each occasion. The interest that these slides created was enormous. As a result of these two slide shows, I planned 10 different heather beds, gardens, etc. for friends and several more are interested in starting heather beds this autumn. Although it has taken up a lot of my time helping people with their heather problems, the rewards have been great as one can see the obvious enjoyment that my friends are finding in their heathers.

Heathers have now become one of my main hobbies and a day seldom passes when I do not see my plants or talk to someone about heathers. I have now planted another bed of about 130 plants and I am only too glad that I sent for that catalogue just over two years ago.

Raymond Law.

### REPORT OF A LECTURE

On the 19th March Mr. Ardron of Sheffield lectured to the Eldwick and Gilstead Horticultural Society on heathers. He illustrated his talk with colour slides taken from as far apart as the Queen's heather garden at Windsor and Edinburgh and Inverewe. Many of course showed plants from Mr. Ardron's own garden and in addition he had several exhibits to show and talk about, including some in full bloom such as E. carnea 'Eileen Porter' and E. carnea 'December Red'. Of particular interest to heather growers were the slides showing the invasion and intermingling of micorhiza with the heather root cells.

To a society situated close to Ilkley moor, some of whose members tend therefore to disregard heather as a cultivated plant, the great variety of colour both in flower and foliage was a minor revelation and aroused great interest.

The Heather Society needs more publicity in order to interest more people in these plants, and this type of lecture is an ideal way to do this. Our thanks are due to Mr. Ardron.

Dorothy Boyd, Eldwick, Yorks.

Footnote to the above:

Without knowing that Mrs. Boyd had sent this account of his lecture, Mr. Ardron has sent a plea that we should give more publicity to such lectures as other people are giving. He had been told of one given by Mr. S.C. Cutler in Hampshire. I know that Mr L.W. Smith was to give one to the Chumleigh Garden Lovers' Society in North Devon. ✓ Mr. C.

Lawrence lectures and puts on small Heather displays for his Horticultural Society in Norfolk. There must be many others up and down the country. I am sure that many of our members would like to know about them before they take place as well as after. The Bulletins are the best way of getting the news over. The pattern will now probably be a Bulletin in the Spring, (March/April), one in the Summer (June/July), and the last in the Autumn (Sept./Oct.) As most horticultural societies have to plan their programme well in advance, publication in the Autumn Bulletin is well within your power.

C.I.M.

We still want first hand reports on heather gardens seen by members. Abbotswood in Glos. planted in 1905 by Mark Fen, (present gardener, Mr. Blakeley); Nymans, Sussex, planted by Col. Messel in the same year; Tynninghame, Firth of Forth has a heather garden which may be of interest. These three have been suggested but we want to know from members who have actually seen them, and others as well.

Extracts from a Letter to the Editor.

From Mr. and Mrs. Griffith Williams, Holyhead, Anglesey.

January, 1968

One of our major causes for concern last summer was the unwelcome visitation of a mass invasion by what was later identified as a beetle species HALTICA FRIEDRI. During the summer we noticed a lot of die-back on our E.X. 'H. Maxwell' which we first attributed to drought, but on closer examination we found the plants literally swarming with little black grubs and bluey-green beetles. We are very grateful for the help we had from Mr. Glyn Davies, the Entomologist to the National Agric. Advisory Service at Bangor. Mr. Davies advised us to spray with Malathion dust or spray; this proved most effective and the plants are now (5 or 6 months later) recovering.

An interesting point is that only the one cultivar (E.X. 'H. Maxwell') was attacked though we have 5 beds of it in different parts of the garden and each bed was attacked. The grubs are revolting looking objects and make an awful mess of the plants, eating flowers and the young tips of shoots until the plant is unrecognisable.

(In May of this year Mr. Williams wrote to say all the affected plants had recovered "and at the time of writing are looking very healthy with young coloured tips").

# MEMBERSHIP.

SUPPLEMENTARY LIST: Members March 1st - May 31st, 1968

New Members Alphabetically in order of joining.

Anderson, J.N. Nurseryman & Hortic. Adviser, Broadhurst, Grampound, Truro, Cornwall.  
 Bonney, Mrs. H. 12, Old Oak Ave., Chipstead, Coulsdon, Surrey  
 Bryant, B.J., 19, Heath Ridge, Highlands, Long Ashton, Bristol.  
 Bristowe, Mrs. E. Old Field, Sea Road, Little Common, Sussex.  
 Bodenham, H.R. 101, Mount Pleasant, Kingswinford, Brierley Hill, Staffs.  
 Broomhead, R.H. The Hollies, Ashover, Chesterfield, Yorks.  
 Falconer, B.J. Merristwood, 409, Woodham Lane, Woodham, Weybridge, Sy.  
 Fleet, C.B. 90, Sleaford Rd., Boston, Lincs.  
 Featherstone, Mrs. E.C., 12, Scott Close, Farnham Common, Slough, Bucks  
 Forsyth, Dr. T.S. Lindisfarne, Haworth, Keighley, Yorks  
 Godbolt, Mrs. E. Altadena, Southview Rd., Crowborough, Sx.  
 Goulter, D., Warley, Hound Corner, Netley Abbey, Southampton  
 Hobbs, K.W., Glenthorne, Lode Pit Lane, Eldwick, Bingley Yorks  
 Harris, M., Little Watchbury, Barford, Warwick.  
 Hillgarth, Nigella, Illannanagh House, Ballinderry, Nr. Nenagh, Co. Tipperary, Eire.  
 Horsfall, M. One Acre, 361, Halifax Rd. Liversedge, Yorks  
 Heggs, A.R., 163, Coalway Rd., Wolverhampton, Staffs  
 Jonasson Snaebjorn, Laugarasvegi 61, Reykjavik, Iceland.  
 Koerper, R. Battle House Gardens, Bromham, Nr. Chippenham, Wilts  
 Le Grice, E.B. (Roses) Ltd., Yarmouth Rd., North Walsham, Norfolk  
 Lambert, Col. W.P., Clareville, Oughterard, Co. Galway, Eire.  
 Lord, J.D., Raikes Close, Skipton, Yorks.  
 Lloyd, P. (Peter Lloyd Nurseries Ltd.) Hale, Fordingbridge, Hants  
 Morris, R., 2, Benchill Cresc., Wythenshawe, Manchester, 22.  
 McNab, Mrs. N., 1, St. Teiling, Lanark, Lanarkshire, Scotland  
 McLelland, Mrs. J. 238, Chester Rd., Streetly, Nr. Sutton Coldfield, Warks.  
 Rees, I.G. Gwelfro, Pennant, Llanon, Cardiganshire.  
 Round, Mrs. D.M. Kenelm, How Caple, Hereford  
 Simpson, Mrs. L., Ladodola, Seale Hill, Reigate, Surrey  
 Stevens, Miss P.J., Honeybrook, Delgany, Co. Wicklow, Eire

Omitted from previous List:

Young, Mrs. G.R., 75, Granson Way, Washingborough, Lincoln

Correction:

Pople, H.D. Windon Birches, Old Woking Rd., Pyrford, Woking, Sy.

Re-joined

Littlewood, Mrs. M.K., Manor House Farm, Scotton, Gainsborough, Lincolnshire

Change of Address:

Bowen, A.E., Old Heath House, Heath Lane, Apsley Heath, Nr. Bletchley, Bucks  
 Croxton, Mrs. D.S., 6309, Green Valley Rd., Placerville, Calif. 95667, U.S.A.  
 Fletcher, W.A. Mere Bank, Birchwood Ave., Lincoln  
 Haigh, Mrs. A.R. 20, Charles St., Berkhamsted, Herts  
 Hanson, F.D. Crossways, 43, Wellington Rd., Bromsgrove, Worcs.  
 Radley, A.D. Lingfield, Yieldingtree, Clent, Stourbridge, Worcs.  
 Rawcliffe, J.G., The Bothy, Abbey Market Garden, Llanwryst, N. Wales  
 Tudor, Mrs. J. Moss Cottage, Moss Lane, Styal, Wilmslow, Cheshire.