

From the Secretary

So much good material was sent in by members in response to Mr. Patrick's request in Bulletin No. 11 that I am happy to be able to use a further selection from it as a "follow-on" to the 1971 Year Book. But before I do so, I must make amends to two of our Vice-Presidents, Mrs. Ronald Gray and Mrs. David Metheny for a certain lack of care on my part. This occurred in my use of the charming little extract from a letter Mrs. Metheny wrote to Mrs. Gray about E. multiflora in the gardens of the Greek Temple of Hephaistos. So keen was I to use the note in Bulletin No. 11 which was very soon to go to the printer that I did not wait for Mrs. Metheny's permission to use it. When her reply to my request did come, it was to say that she had been mistaken and that Mr. McClintock had identified the plant from her colour-slides as E. manipuliflora, not E. multiflora. Mrs. Gray grows the authentic multi-flora, which is wide-spread in Mediterranean islands such as Malta, whereas Mr. Brian Mulligan of the Arboretum, Washington University, had found E. manipuliflora flowering at an elevation of 500-1000 feet above Zagreb, Yugoslavia. This correction is therefore called for and with my apologies to both ladies for allowing my zeal to out-run my discretion.

The Postal strike had its effects on us, preventing the Year Book for 1971 from going out soon after it was received on February 25th. We therefore held back the bulk of them until the A.G.M. notices were ready. This delay in turn influenced the timing of this Bulletin which will now reach you in the late spring, with the Audited accounts.

In spite of the strike, there was a gratifying turn-out at the Carnea Show on Feb. 23/24. Splendid plants were brought by Valerie Proudley, winning 1st, 3rd and 4th prizes, with 'Springwood White', 'December Red' and E. x. darleyensis 'Furzey' respectively, and Mr. G. L. Pilkington with the 2nd prize for x. 'Silverschmelze'. We did less well with the cut bloom, winning no prizes, but again swept the board with the foliage cultivars, Mr. A. Taylor with 1st & 4th, Cal.v. 'Golden Feather' and 'Prostrate Orange', Hydon Nurseries 2nd with 'Robert Chapman' and 3rd, Mr. B. R. Malin with 'Beoley Gold'.

News of other Groups.

A circular has been sent round to members in Groups 3, 4 & 5 to tell them that the Spring Meeting this year is to be held at Ness Botanical Garden, Wirral, Cheshire on Sunday, June 27th, and a week end is to be spent at Grantley Hall Adult College near Ripon, Yorkshire from 20th-22nd August.

We have, as an experiment, decided to ask for space at the Royal Highland Show in Edinburgh from June 22-25th. If it is granted, I hope to send with this Bulletin a circular to all our Scottish members, suggesting that this will provide the means of letting them meet one another. I have been told that 'everybody' goes to this Show, and as I now have my daughter living in Midlothian, I look forward to meeting many of you at the show.

Subscription Covenants

We have not been able to get these organised yet. There are conflicting opinions as to whether it is feasible, and, if feasible, financially worth-while, as there are certain expenses involved. Before the next Income Tax year is upon us, we hope to have things sorted out. Meanwhile, we thank those members who have written to me expressing their readiness to help us financially in this way.

### The Society's Slide Library

In the article that follows, Mr. Prew urges members who desire to borrow slides from him to re-read his "Guide to Slide Borrowers" on Page 3 of Bulletin No. 10. As many of you may not have kept it, and I have no replacements, these were his main points, briefly:

1. Apply to Mr. Prew, not to the Secretary, when wanting slides.
2. Handle carefully to avoid finger-printing.
3. Book well in advance, giving date as well as the month.
4. Postage both ways is the responsibility of the borrower, best sent by uncrossed Postal Order enclosed when the slides are returned. Acknowledgement of safe arrival, with date and list of slide numbers used is appreciated.
5. Additional item: when asked to lecture, members are urged to give a provisional agreement "subject to slides being available", with an alternative date if possible, and give your telephone number to Mr. Prew.

### The Heather Society's Slide Library

I make no apology for again starting by referring to my "A Guide to Borrowers" (ref. Page 3, Bulletin No. 10) and asking would-be borrowers to re-read it. I have had another case of the month being given for a lecture but no date. I have also had several cases of no acknowledgment of safe arrival or with no date of arrival. I am compiling a record of transit times to various parts of the country to help me in deciding whether I can accept a Booking and so the date of arrival is important.

The number of finger-printed slides has been markedly reduced this last year. I am grateful to members for the extra care being taken. I am grateful, too, to the five members who have sent me a list of the slides used and to the few who have sent a s.a.e. with their application.

May I add item (5) to my "Guide":

If a loan of slides is essential to the giving of a lecture, I urge members to give a provisional agreement when asked and say "subject to slides being available" and also if possible to get an alternative date and then write me, adding telephone number if available. If at home, I rarely fail to reply on the day I receive the request.

Thanks to slides received from six members and a friend I have now completed a further box of 100 slides which, unlike the first box which just grew (like Topsy) has been arranged in some sort of order as follows:

Wild Heathers (3), Beds and Gardens (12), Erica cinereas in a "Patchwork Quilt" (16), Callunas - Foliage and colour changes through the seasons (18), Mainly Specimens or Clumps (34), Miscellaneous (17) Total 100.

The four boxes are prefixed by a number:

Box A 1-100 (the original box)

Box B 1-100 (the new one)

Box M 1-95 (the Metheny box, U.S.A., of which some 20-30 could well be used for ordinary lecture purposes) and finally

Box X 1-60 (Mr. Ardron's box complete with lecture script and tape recording.)

In this year April 1970/March 1971 borrowing has again increased to 24 requests. Thanks to the availability of Box X (out 7 times) and Box M (once) I have only had to make up boxes on three occasions and two of these were for rather special needs. The offers of alternative dates also helped materially in enabling service to be given.

The Library still needs slides of beds or attractive plantings in the smaller gardens and also of specimen tree heaths. Can any of the southern members help with the latter?

H.C. Prew

## MEMBERS' FORUM.

A further selection from Your Answers to Mr. Patrick's Questions.

Mrs. C. Richards, Ragdon, Church Stretton, Salop

The different species fare with me roughly as follows:-

Calluna vulgaris - Variable and individualistic. Some flourish exceedingly, and in the forefront of these I would cite 'August Beauty', 'Cuprea', 'J.H. Hamilton' and 'Multicolor'. 'Alportii' is disappointing but undying. 'H.E. Beale' and 'Hibernica' battle on: 'Hiemalis' succumbed. To date I have had no great success with the newer foliage varieties which mostly brown off into an unsightly straggle but I am keeping my fingers crossed for 'Robert Chapman' and 'Golden Feather.'

Daboecia cantabrica - Virtually deciduous here but vigorously responsive to quite brutal pruning. Flowering season thus short, late but eventually brilliant.

Erica Tetralix - Liable to be bullied by more aggressive neighbours, to sulk in off-seasons and die by degrees. In its hey-day, however, 'Alba Mollis' made an outstanding contrast.

Erica x vagans - Massed, massive and muscular; indispensable for verdure and vigour but unaccountably inconsistent in flower-colour. At the same time, too many supposedly different varieties seem too similar: a striking new colour-break could hit the Society's headlines!

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Mrs. C. M. MacIntyre Cran age, Holmes Chapel, Crewe.

(On a dry, sandy bank).

I do not give my heathers any fertiliser: they get a dressing of peat when newly planted and an occasional top-dressing of it for the first year or two. During hot dry weather I water at night (rather hard water) enough to wet the foliage; it is not possible to wet the soil as the water runs off.

The cultivars include many callunas, e.g. 'H.E. Beale', 'Hammondii' and 'Alportii'; E. vagans 'Mrs. D.F. Maxwell' and a white one; E. med 'Superba' and 'W. T. Rackliff', E. x darleyensis, and cinereas and callunas collected locally.

Plants damaged in winter were mostly those which receive mid-day sunshine. 'W. T. Rackliff' has been killed out-right after two successive severe winters. 'Superba' was cut to below ground level but has sent up strong shoots. Both these varieties survived better in a very exposed situation on top of the bank than in a more sheltered place. The overall impression is that no particular species is affected by bad weather, rather it is old plants or those which grow tall and woody.

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Mr. Thomas Elliott (for Miss C. J. Elliott.) Killowen, Rostrevor, Co. Down, N. Ireland.

I enclose a few Colour Transparencies of heathers I photographed in my sister's heather garden. One or two show the stony nature of the soil which is acid and very poor. The topsoil is about 6" deep and below that is what is known locally as "clint": one needs a pickaxe to make an impression on it. The Heather Garden was laid out here because shrubs and trees did not suit -- they wilted in the summertime. By planting heathers in little pockets of peat/soil/5 year old rotted manure it has now been possible to add such shrubs as *Cassia fulvida*, *Melaleuca gibbosa*, *Convolvulus cneorum*, *Daphne cneorum*, *Abelia rupestris grandiflora*, *Myrtus ugni*, dwarf rhododendrons *campylogynum* and *hanceanum nanum*, *Potentilla*, dwarf *Hypericum* etc., etc. All thrive together, the mass holding moisture in the summertime and providing a wealth of colour at all times be it flower or foliage.

Seedlings appear all over the place, nearly as bad as weeds, and allowed to grow until they flower when those of no value are removed. One such seedling showing promise was transplanted to a nursery bed (a Calluna with golden foliage.) It flowered and the blooms were

Mr. Thomas Elliott (Continued)

a beautiful crimson not unlike 'Alportii'; cuttings are being rooted at the moment in case anything should happen to the original.

Tree heathers are growing in the woodland here with the exotics among them

E. canaliculata.

I should like to obtain cuttings of South African heaths if this is possible. I have suitable means of rooting and growing on.

(Note from the Secretary: Mr. Elliott's excellent transparencies made a most welcome addition to our Slide Library. Mr. Prew would like me to thank Mr. Elliott publicly as I have of course done personally. A photograph of this lovely garden in Co. Down illustrated our 1967 Year Book, which you will note Mr. Patrick particularly recommended. The reason why we still have a few of these left for sale is that Mrs. Harper, the then Editor, ordered 1,000 copies, as against our usual caution in under-estimating!

While on the question of the availability of Year Books, once more I would bring to your notice the fact that we have 8 copies of the 1963-1966 Year Books bound together which we offer on loan to members, and I am about to arrange for the next 8 sets 1967-1971 (there is of course no issue dated 1968) to be similarly bound. Postage, 9½p. second class must be sent when asking for a loan. Mr. Ardron of Sheffield deals with requests from Groups 3, 4 and 5, I with the rest. Similarly, new members may not know of the free tickets to Chelsea Flower Show, 6 in number, which we receive from the R.H.S. A s.a.e. will procure one for you if still available. The Northern Horticultural Society, to which we are affiliated, offers similar privileges. Again, contact Mr. Ardron.)

While Mr. van de Laar of Boskoop was making his comparisons between cultivars in Holland and England, Mr. Harold Copeland of Chatham, Mass. U.S.A. was drawing up his list of similar if identifiable ones. He makes 18 references.

1. C.v. 'Alba Rigida' and 'Decumbens Alba'. The latter with me is dwarfer and more attractive.
2. 'Aurea' and 'Cuprea'. Sure, I know there is a difference in type of growth, but in the garden one takes the place of the other.
3. 'Sister Anne' and 'Dainty Bess'. 'Dainty Bess' is smaller, more attractive on that account and is not so subject to rot.
4. 'Darleyensis' and 'Brachysepalas Densa'.
5. 'Alba Plena' and 'Else Frye'.
6. 'Mairs Variety' and 'Pyramidalis'.
7. 'Minima' and 'Minima (Smith's var.)'
8. 'Mullion' and 'Roma'
9. 'Flore Pleno' and 'Multiplex'
10. Daboecia cantabrica 'Alba' and 'Alba Globosa'. 'Alba Globosa' with larger and rounder flowers is superior with us. I know it is heresy to even mention dropping 'Alba'.
11. E. carnea 'Heathwood' and 'Loughrigg'. We prefer the latter.
12. " " 'Pink Beauty' and 'Prince of Wales'. We prefer Royalty
13. " " 'Cecilia M. Beale' and 'Snow Queen'. We prefer the latter.
14. E. cinerea 'C.D. Eason', 'Splendens' and 'Fulgida'
15. " " 'Lady Shelton' and 'Coccinea'. The latter is better with us.
16. " " 'Frances' and 'Mrs. Ford'. We prefer the latter.



17. E. x darleyensis 'Ghost Hills' and 'James Smith'.  
18. E. x Watsonii 'Dawn,' 'Ciliaris Hybrida' and 'H. Maxwell.'

Mr. Copeland continues:

"Our heathers are all planted in what used to be a cow pasture. The soil is good (neither rich nor poor.) It has never had an application of manure or fertiliser of any kind, already possessing humus. The only time we do apply rotted manure is when large plants are removed and replaced by new small ones. In making the garden originally we incorporated a large quantity of native bog peat and baled peat. Thereafter the only additions have been compost and rotted pine needles. (The latter we use each winter to tuck in around small plants for protection.)

Our callunas, dabocias and ericas do splendidly.

I am frank to say that a friend in town grows good plants without trouble on soil which could be termed poor with a large content of sand. However, the plants are not as flourishing in size as mine, due to difference in soil.

The earliest blooming of all carneas, hibernicas and hybrids was E. x. 'Ghost Hills.' Mid November the plants were beautiful, the most attractive and brightest spot in the collection."

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Mr. P. Bessent, Eltham, S.E. 9, on early flowering in 1970 of E. carnea and x darleyensis.

I have an edging of 'Arthur Johnson' about 20 ft. long which has been established 10 years or so. In past years the buds have not shown colour until January and sometimes February. But this year the first colour showed in October and by now (Dec. 5th) about half the flower spikes are fully open. Others which showed colour early in November this year were 'Eileen Porter', 'Gracilis', 'Praecox Rubra' and 'Queen Mary'. But no colour is showing yet in 'King George', 'Silverschmelze' or 'Snow Queen'. These are growing in a light gravelly soil.

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#### The Virtues (or otherwise) of Black Polythene

Two intriguing articles on Black Polythene have come direct to me.

(1) From Mr. N. E. G. Read of Northwood, Middlesex

Dear Mrs. MacLeod,

re. Flying Heather

I recently purchased a number of heathers as I am making a new heather bed.

Most of the plants were supplied in black polythene pots and for convenience until I could plant them permanently I sunk all the pots into the ground,

Within days I was surprised to find one of the plants complete with the polythene pot had been pulled out of the ground and dumped elsewhere in my garden.

This re-occurred and continued after I had endeavoured to cover all the pots with soil.

Only plants in the polythene pots were affected and when recovered the polythene had usually been ripped up.

At first I suspected squirrels with a liking for black polythene but I am now convinced that it is birds.

Finding the plants replaced each time, the birds appeared to change tactics a little and removed the plants completely from my garden. I find it a little embarrassing asking my neighbours if one of my heathers has flown into their garden. They now look at me rather strangely and seem to be off me, I cannot think why!

From Mr. N.E.G. Read (Continued)

Has any other member had a similar experience and if so have they any helpful advice to offer other than suggesting I visit my doctor.

P.S. If any member finds that a Daboecia cantabrica 'Alba' or Calluna 'H.E. Beale' has flown into their garden will they please clip its wings and return it to me.

(2) Our member Mr. C.F.H. Addison of Ringwood, Hampshire is full of original ideas, and of immense energy. Having taken 2000 layers from 192 varieties in one year, he then set to work to plot out on squared paper the exact distance apart they should go in a bed 66 feet long ready for autumn planting. A complicated system of wire rings outside corresponding to cardboard discs on his squared paper has enabled him to judge very accurately the planting scheme. How different from mine!

This was not the first example I had of Mr. Addison's methods. I have another letter from him, and that is where the black polythene comes in. First, he dug two pits, 4' x 4' x 6' giving him 96 cubic feet capacity each, in which to store 600 gallons of rain water. The pits were lined with double layers of the 12' wide black polythene fixed to 2" x 2" battens round the edges. For safety and to stop leaves etc. falling in, wire netting was tacked over the top with a hatch cut in it for the scoop. Mr. Addison handsomely admits that a rotary or electric pump could profitably be used, but maintains that scooping, like digging, is good for the figure.

I will not go into the details of Hydraulics and how he persuaded water from his shed roof to enter the two pits! All I will say is, that during last year's summer drought his independent water supply was not only ready to hand but suited the heathers admirably.

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In Search of White Heather.

Say what you like, you will not convince me otherwise, some of the finest heather gardens are to be found where man has seldom trod. High over the hills where the mists provide the moisture, where the winds, the grouse and the sheep do the pruning and where peat beds were put down centuries ago, you will find there nature's heather beds.

White heather, they told us, was to be found on a certain hill in a certain country. Was it Scotland? We scrambled over every square yard of that hill and found very pale pink heather but no white. What did we find? Tetralix, cinerea and Calluna in bloom together coloured the slopes with their pink and purple flowers. Seedling rhododendrons grew in the hollows, cotton grass by the bogs. Gorse barred our way at times and bracken cut across our knees, but the search went on.

Cranberry plants simply glowed and bilberries delayed us as we picked a capful for tomorrow's pie. The sea below was without a ripple but up here the breeze cooled our sweating brows. On, over the rocks thick with lichen, picking our way by more bog and cotton grass we reached the peak, but no white heather.

I have never yet found a wild white heather. I suppose I never shall, but in my own garden I have Erica mediterranea 'Silverschmelze', Erica vagans 'Alba', Calluna vulgaris 'Alba Plena'. Along with them I see seedling rhododendrons, gorse, cotton grass, cranberries, bilberries and beautiful pink and purple Tetralix, cinerea and Calluna. Common or garden? Not on your life! These came from a hill where the white heather grows.

C.E. Bickerstaff, Grenoside, Sheffield.

FLOWERING TIMES OF WHITE CALLUNA CULTIVARS 1970

|                       | <u>June</u> | <u>July</u> | <u>August</u> | <u>Sept.</u> | <u>Oct.</u> | <u>Nov.</u> |
|-----------------------|-------------|-------------|---------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|
| Caerketton White      | ...         | ....        |               |              |             |             |
| Alba Praecox          | .           | ....        | ....          |              |             |             |
| Alba Dumosa           |             | ....        | ....          |              |             |             |
| Alba Jae              |             | ....        | ....          | .            |             |             |
| Alba Minor            |             | ...         | ..            |              |             |             |
| Alba Aurea            |             | ..          | ....          |              |             |             |
| Alba                  |             | ..          | ....          |              |             |             |
| Alba Carlton          |             | .           | ....          | .            |             |             |
| Alba Elegans          |             |             | ....          | .            |             |             |
| Hammondii             |             |             | ....          | ...          |             |             |
| Hammondii 'Aureifolia |             |             | ....          | ..           |             |             |
| August Beauty         |             |             | ....          | .            |             |             |
| Drum-Ra               |             |             | ....          | .            |             |             |
| Mairs Variety         |             |             | ....          | .            |             |             |
| Alba Erecta           |             |             | ....          | ..           |             |             |
| Elegantissima         |             |             | ....          | ....         |             |             |
| Elegant Pearl         |             |             | ..            | ..           |             |             |
| Alba Plena            |             |             | ..            | ....         | .           |             |
| White Gown            |             |             | ..            | ....         | ....        |             |
| Alba Elata            |             |             | .             | ....         | ..          |             |
| Kit Hill              |             |             | .             | ....         | ..          |             |
| Long White            |             |             |               | ....         | ....        |             |
| Serlei Aurea          |             |             |               | ....         | ....        |             |
| Christina             |             |             |               | ....         | ....        |             |
| Serlei                |             |             |               | ..           | ....        | .           |

With acknowledgements to Mr. H.J. van der Laar, Boskoop, Holland.

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This most interesting chart was true for 1970 in Holland, and in different areas and under different conditions differences might well occur.

We would add as "runners-up" for early blooming 'White Mite' and 'Murielle Dobson'. I spell it as given to me by Mr. Wm. Dobson in 1966, though Mr. Ponton who brought it out, spells it "Muriel". Mr. Ponton told me that it was found on the same hill very near to 'Caerketton White'. It could well be the same plant.

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From Mr. G. F. Pedrick

"Thank you for yet another most interesting Handbook of the Heather Society.

I am enclosing my subscription for the current year, and wish the Society well.

Whenever I see the list of Members my thoughts go back nearly fifty years when I was a boy at school and was often at the receiving end of a piece of chalk thrown with remarkable speed and with great sureness of aim by the young master who had the misfortune to try and teach me mathematics. His name ? H.C. Prew !! "

Extract from a letter to Mr.H.C.Prew from Mrs.Parris, Usk, Mon. following a visit he made to her last summer ....

"You will be interested in the result I obtained from a hurried watering of one extremely yellow carnea (not 'Aurea') with Magnesium Sulphate in July just before going away. In mid-September on our return it was bright green, although it shows signs of Magnesium deficiency at present, after no further Magnesium."

Mr.Prew continues "This is a second strong bit of evidence re.Magnesium. Incidentally I use Boots' 'Cattle Grade'; it is a cheaper and slightly less pure form than B.P.Epsom Salts, and contains some trace elements, as minor impurities.

There was also an article in the RHS Journal about 3 years ago saying that from many sick specimens sent into Wisley for examination there was evidence that Magnesium shortage was much more widespread than they had hitherto realised."

(So the sale of Boots' Cattle Grade Mag.Sulph. should go up.)

New Members from December 31st 1970 - March 30th 1971

Mrs.J.N.Bell, Little Barden, Sheepstreet Lane, Etchingam, Sussex.  
J.D.Bond, Wick Nursery, Wick Road, Englefield Green, Egham, Surrey  
Wm.H.Brade, 99, Warren Road, Reigate, Surrey  
P.J. Conlon, Greenan, Loughbrickland, Banbridge, Co.Down.  
C.Fowler, 6, Airlie St., Brechin, Angus.  
Mrs.D.Graver, 43, Havers Lane, Bishops Stortford, Herts.  
Dr.W P.Grove, Windrush, Nightingales Lane, Chalfont St.Giles, Bucks.  
Mrs.M.E.Haley, The Croft, Brackenthwaite Lane, Pannal, Harrogate, HG3.1P  
Mrs.D.M.Howells, 49, Woodside Rd., Downend, Bristol, BS16. 2SR  
Mrs.E.Lacey, 58, The Meadow, Cuffley, Herts  
B.A.Lynch, 60, Penrose Avenue, Blackpool, Lancs. FY4 4JS  
Miss D.C.Martin, Oakfield, Pyles Thorne Rd., Wellington, Som.  
Mr.& Mrs.R.E.H.Mills, 58, Brettingham Ave., Cringleford, Norwich, NOR.96D  
B.Neyland, 54, West Way, High Salvington, Worthing, Sussex.  
Mr.& Mrs.L.F.C.Perrin, 23, Kesters Rd., Chesham, Bucks.  
Mrs.H.Pervin, Lower Ringstones Farm, Rowarth, via Stockport, Cheshire  
B.C.F.Reynolds, 17, Grange Park, Horsell, Woking, Sy.  
J.G.Rizzo, 175, Euch.Congress Str. Mosta, Malta G.C.  
A.G.Sparks, Churchfield, Station Rd., East Preston, Sx.  
Mrs.C.E.Scrutton, Mall Cottage, Grove Park, Wanstead, E.11.  
E.Shenton, Lindisfarne, 2, Heathdene Close, Longton, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffs. ST3 1EG  
J.A.Shipp, Dilston Plains, Corbridge, Northumberland.  
R.W.T.Spaul, 33, Shelford Park Ave., Great Shelford, Cambridge. CB2 5LU  
W.Tansley, 5, Albany Drive, Burnside, Rutherglen, Glasgow  
C.Turberfield, 3, Beech View, Blyth, nr. Worksop, Notts.  
G.T.Whitlock, Heatherbank, Bleadon Hill, Weston-super-Mare, Som.  
D.S.Wilson, 36, Rivers St., Bath, Som.