

From The Secretary, Mrs. MacLeod, Yew Trees, Horley Row, Horley, Surrey RH6 8DF

The Spring Bulletin, coming as it does when all efforts are being directed to the production of the Year Book, and before the RHS Heath Competitions have been held, is always the most difficult to fill. In fact, I have to gather up what crumbs may fall and this time there have been very few.

Luckily, several members have written most interesting letters, one that will appeal to many being the description given by our S.W. member Mrs. Ruth Fox, whose nephew, also a member, lives in the former home of Keble Martin. A follow-up to the report in a Plymouth paper chiding us for not visiting Cornwall last August comes from the gardening correspondent, David Rose. So, with my inevitable urging upon you to "Come to Stirling" (August 9-11/12) I hope we shall get by without too much stretching of the bare bones which is all I may have to offer this time.

The Group News will certainly have its place and before I go on with the details, I must refer to the latest one to be set up. This is the Weald Group which has been undertaken by Mrs. Godbolt of Crowborough, Sussex, with the encouraging response of 28 members. Mr. Jones of New Yeovil is still trying to decide which is the best centre in the very extensive SW and may decide on Salisbury. He has not yet sent out a circular so the response is not yet predictable. Mr. Street has an enthusiastic Midlands Group, 50 of whom replied in the affirmative to his first enquiry. Though Mr. London himself has been silent, I know that Mrs. Hurst, one of his Norfolk Group members would like me to tell you that when her husband died some months ago and the local florist had no heather, Mr. London provided what the florist said were the finest heathers they had ever seen, a sheaf as from the local group and more for Mrs. Hurst's personal tribute. Not only that, but he visited the heather garden at the crematorium and gave the director much help in improving the plantings.

I have managed so far to avoid any reference to the state of the country's economy but I fear that it has reduced our membership. In the 1974 Year Book the listed members have dropped below the thousand mark.

I must now repeat the call for bookings for the Conference at Stirling University (August 9-11/12). We were given a very low "acceptance level" for both residence and day visits by the letting officer which I asked him to increase if our bookings were satisfactory. So if you mean to come, please let me know at once, by sending the 20p. booking fee we ask for, to pay for postage and the duplication of the programme. The proposed one drawn up by the West of Scotland group is extremely interesting. Mrs. Bezzant says in her letter,

"I have heard from all the people we were hoping to get to talk to us at the Conference."

..... It only remains for us to assure a good attendance.

GROUP NEWS

West of Scotland The 1973-1974 programme was issued with the last Bulletin, much prominence being given to the Conference.

Northern Group. A combined circular is being worked out between Mr. Ardron and Mr. Street, to accompany this Bulletin.

Midlands Group Mr. Harold Street reports that the Midland branch is now well rooted and growing away nicely. 45 members very much enjoyed the visit to Mr. A. S. Turner's garden in Hall Green, Birmingham on 6th October, some of them coming from as far afield as Denbighshire and Oxfordshire. There was a general wish to follow this up with an evening meeting in the centre of Birmingham and this was held on 27th November in Dr. Johnson House in Bull Street. A box of the Society's slides was shown as well as some brought by members. Following this an interesting discussion on garden design was started, to be resumed no doubt at the next meeting. Such was the enthusiasm that it was decided to hold another meeting in the same room in February, the date February 22nd, the time 7.45 p.m.

Provisional plans were also made for a Spring visit to Mr. H. Warner's garden in Stoke-on-

Trent and to Mr. G.T. Cooke's garden in Fenny Drayton in the Summer.

Weald Group: from Mrs. Godbolt, Crowborough.

Four persons are willing to help in organising, with others making tentative offers though we have no immediate takers for the post of Secretary. The frequency of meetings appears to lie around 4 per year with a 2-1 preference for afternoons. 5 more in addition to 2 gardens already "starred" are willing to accept group visitors and a welcome comes from 3 nurseries. Though a firm date for a meeting is not yet possible, Mrs. Kitchen of Sevenoaks has kindly offered to accommodate the first meeting.

MR. H.C. PREW

It will be with a sense of deepest shock and sorrow that our members will hear that our Slide Librarian, Mr. Prew, died today. The Bulletin had been completed, ready to go to the printer tomorrow, January 30th, and in it was included the short message he had sent at my request. I think you will like to have that message, and underlying it you will see what he did for us, in spite of ill-health.

"I much regret that Boxes "C" and "S" have not yet been completed, though Box 'A' has been re-arranged and is now I think in better order. Last year was for various reasons a difficult one for me and photography was curtailed.

Slide bookings have been the heaviest yet, a total of 32 to date with bad bunching.

By some juggling I have managed to avoid an out-right refusal."

That was a high standard to have achieved, and one that will be hard to equal. But by the greatest good fortune, Mr. Ardron, who phoned me with the sad news, was able to tell me that one of our Sheffield members had stepped into the breach, ^{his husband} being himself a keen photographer.

She is Mrs G.W. Lee, 174, Psalter Lane, Sheffield, S11.8UR, to whom all requests for future bookings must be sent. I cannot say whether any boxes are at present out on loan, but this Bulletin will hardly reach any such borrower in time to prevent a box from being returned to the old address.

Our deepest sympathy is extended to Mrs. Prew and her family.

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A note from Mr. F.B. Stubbs, of the Science Group, Harlow Car.

As part of a wider study of plant galls, I should be interested to hear of any examples found on the heathers, wild or cultivated.

A gall consists of plant tissue which has become swollen and deformed through the action of a parasitic agent, often an insect or a fungus; oak apples and witches brooms are familiar instances. Several types of gall have been noted on heathers in Britain and on the continent.

It will be greatly appreciated if any readers can send me their observations, or better still, specimens. These usually carry well in a small polythene bag. Unfortunately, I cannot always promise to respond by suggesting a sound remedy, but there are no signs that the problem is serious in the Ericaceae. Should any widespread attack ever arise, however, it would be useful if our information were systematically recorded.

Fred B. Stubbs, 62, High West Road, Crook,
Co. Durham, DL15 9NT

(Note: we published a report on Midge Galls on Erica carnea in the 1966 Year Book.
Sec.)

The Year Book Index

Is this Index of any use to members who do not possess the past copies? I think it is. Take the instance of my last reference. Should I have needed to tell you that we published an account of the Gall Midge in the 1966 Year Book? If you had owned the Index, and were of an enquiring turn of mind, you would have wondered whether the Society had ever written on such a matter, and if not, why not? You would have turned to pages 27 and 29 of the Index, and would have found it under two different headings.

I am taking this as a case in point. Very few members have thought fit to buy copies of the Index and storage accommodation in my cottage is not unlimited. Add to this the fact that Mr. Cleevely who did such a splendid job for us on the Index of the Year Books (I need not say, without any payment, either for the paper he used or typing costs) has now presented me with the Index for Bulletins Nos. 1-20.

It remains to be seen whether the Council will decide to risk printing enough copies for all the present members or wait until we get definite orders. Each copy will cost considerably less than the 35p. Year Book Index, but as we limited the latter to 300 copies and still didn't sell them, who knows whether we could dispose of 1000 of the Bulletin ones?

The answer may depend on whether as a result of reading this, more of you will decide to buy the Year Book Index.

We do pride ourselves on the quality of our publications. Let us feel that our members value them at their true worth.

C.I.M.

ERICULTURA (the Dutch Heather Society)

We have been sent (through Mr. Nicholson) a translation of their 11th number. We must congratulate them on having in so short a time reached a membership of 541. A very useful feature is their quarterly "Calendar of flowering of Calluna and Erica", with a Table showing the stage reached by various cultivars, beginning, proceeding and finishing. E. carnea 'Praecox Rubra' was (as in my own garden) the first to flower. Perhaps strangely, 'Eileen Porter' is not mentioned. For those who can grow it, it is usually in flower in October.

Sometimes we lose our late cuttings from mould. Mr. Seppen suggests using Captain or Benlate to combat this.

Mr. Oudshoorn suggests growing the prickly Eryngium as a blue foil to heathers. Not for me! One of the delights of heathers is to me the pleasure of working among them without needing gloves!

Erica cinerea 'White Dale'

You may recall that in the Autumn Bulletin we asked about the fine white cinerea shown by General Turpin in the RHS Competition in September.

Mr. Brian Proudley has furnished the following information:

It was one of several fine heaths that John Letts found on the Sunningdale Golf Course. He did in fact first call it 'White Sunningdale', but dropped the first half of the cultivar name. As was his practice, he handed over the cutting material to another nurseryman to propagate. This was evidently done, to a limited extent, for Gen. Turpin bought his from Robinson's. No further trace of it seems to be found now. We can only hope that General Turpin will keep the stock going.

This ties up with the following item, submitted by Mr. McClintock.

REGISTER OF GARDEN PLANTS IN DANGER OF EXTINCTION

At a conservation conference held at Charleston Manor, Sussex (in which I took part), a suggestion was made that the Garden History Society should attempt to identify which plants are at risk and what steps might be taken to preserve them.

With this end in view the Society appointed a sub-committee consisting of Noel Prockter as Chairman, Arthur Hellyer, Will Ingwersen and Sandra Raphael as Registrar.

Would members and their friends and acquaintances who grow or know of any such species or cultivars which are of special historical interest or garden value let Mr. Prockter (110, Malthouse Rd. Southgate, Crawley, Sx.RN10 6BH) have details.

Maybe among Harlow Car's admirable activities lies just such a safeguard for elusive heathers?

OBJECTS

1. To create a register of plants, both cultivars and species, which though of real garden value or of particular horticultural interest are nevertheless in danger of becoming extinct in gardens.
2. To ascertain if possible the whereabouts of such plants and possible sources of supply of propagation material.
3. To record the names of persons who are willing to cultivate plants on the register and distribute them to other interested gardeners.
4. To obtain publicity for the plants appearing in the register.

AN IMPORTANT COMPETITION

A small prize will be awarded to the best design for

A MOTIF

to be used on our headed paper, compliments forms, Year Book, Registration Certificates, etc. to key-note the Society.

The Competition, for a heather design capable of normal reproduction at 3cmx4cm, breadth and length overall, will close one month before the next Annual General Meeting which is on August 10th, at which the result will be announced.

A panel of judges will be set up, not necessarily all members of the Society.

The competition will not be confined to members only, so do bring in your artistic friends.

Entries to be sent to:

Mrs.E.R.Turner, Filma Dene, Burstow, Surrey. RH6 9TJ.
marking the envelope COMPETITION.

Harlow Car Project

In Bulletin No. 19, page 5, Mr. Ardron appealed to members to help the Harlow Car Project (where space is now at a premium,) by writing to him giving their views on the names of heathers they consider lacking in quality compared with possible alternatives. Conversely he asked them to give a list of "those gems you have found to be outstanding in quality".

Regrettably, he has not had one reply. So we repeat the request, with Mr. Ardron's address: J.P.Ardron,

Fulwood Heights, Harrison Lane, Sheffield S10 4PA

RANDOM JOTTINGS

In the January 18th issue of Gardeners Chronicle I read with pleasure that the British Group of the International Garden Centre Association has selected the Winter Flowering Ericas as "Plant of the Month" for February, for Garden Centre promotion.

In the same issue is a well illustrated article by Geoffrey Bateman on the German IGA '73, the major international horticultural exhibition held last year in Hamburg for five months. With little to praise in the British exhibits, he did point out what we have several times in the past commented on: the use of Erica carnea as ground cover in cemeteries. He included in his list of plants used for that purpose the Cape Erica gracilis (not to be confused with Erica carnea 'Gracilis') in spot grouping for colour.

Some years ago there was a move afoot to get this Cape Erica used in England for outdoor planting, but nothing seems to have come of it. It has been pointed out to me that in order to save weight in packing, all the soil is shaken from the plants sent over from Germany. Consequently they dry out and of course, die.

Quantities of the plants were sent over as a gift from East Germany to the Cambridge colleges and the University Botanical Garden.

It would be interesting to know whether any of them survived.

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On quite a different matter: Mr. Goddard of Chingford, though not a member, has sent me three small packets of Erica carnea seed, home-saved from 'Vivellii' 'Aurea' and 'Myretoun Ruby'. He says that the 'Myretoun Ruby' was growing right next to 'Aurea' and with any luck the progeny would have the gold foliage plus the brilliant flower-colour. Well, we all have these dreams of a new-found glory, but if anyone would like to try his hand, please send me a stamped addressed envelope. Mr. Goddard says seed is best sown in July, which would be the natural time for that year's seeding, but would it work a year later? Try it, and see!

C.I.M.

MEMBERS' FORUM

ANTI-CLIPPING

Or rather, pro-natural growth. I am writing to deplore the fetish that all heathers must be cut, clipped, shaved. The result is a flat-topped graceless uniformity with perhaps, in poor compensation, for a while, rather better flower-spikes and compacter form.

Now I do know that some plants can get leggy, and some people, some, go to great lengths, or did, to hide their legs. I do know that the length of the flower spikes does lessen once their brief youthful vigour is spent, most noticeably in the extremely long-spiked clones such as 'H.E. Beale'. If these wonderful spikes are what you want, it is far better to replace plants frequently from cuttings than mutilate older ones in an attempt to prolong youth.

But for the bulk of the heathers we grow, the best results come, with reason, by letting them grow as nature intended. I just do not believe anyone could have a more rewarding heather bed than the one at the top of my drive, now some seven years planted. Here is an infinite variety of texture, colour and shape, and the only cutting it has had is dead-heading the Daboecias. That is done only in spring, for their russet heads, notably on the hybrids, is one of the best of the winter colours. They are rivalled by those of some of the Cornish Heaths and Bell Heathers. In February and March this bed shows almost every imaginable colour except blues. It is a picture of grace as well and so dense that it is a miracle how any weed can intrude. For healthy growth too, (and I

have not even top-dressed it since soon after it was planted) no-one could wish for anything finer. There are no legs to be seen, all elegantly hidden by the surrounding foliage.

Clipping reduces the potential of plants. Such constant unnatural stimulation exhausts them sooner and shortens their lives. Moreover, if I had clipped, I might never have known how fascinatingly *Daboecias* can thread their way through their neighbours, never known that the Irish Heath could reach 11'6" (and still be growing lustily, aged about a quarter of a century) or that the Cornish Heath really could reach 14'6" wide. Just compare those figures with what most catalogues say!

So I urge our clippers to give those shears and themselves a rest and see if nature will not give them more satisfactory plants than their efforts produce - a shear waste of time?

David McClintock.

IN A FARNHAM GARDEN.

I started growing heathers a long time ago. There was quite a lot of wild heather in the garden and clumps of this were included in the beds made for bought heathers.

They flourished and grew and I eventually joined the Heather Society and began to learn names.

Near a large bed there were two bushy hedges of *Erica carnea* each side of a grass path leading to a rock garden. This was invaded some years ago by wild Male Ferns which have grown large and spectacular and make a good background to the heathers.

In 1972 the weather was cold and after so chilly a summer August was dry with a very cold wind which went on day after day. By the end of September we found the *Erica carnea* hedge on the north side of the grass path, dead, *E. mediterranea* and *E. lusitanica* in the large bed also dead and several others whose names are forgotten. Another *E. lusitanica* still had a few green sprays in between the brown dead ones and we are leaving it to see if it will recover. The rest have been dug out and fresh peat put in the holes ready for replacements.

I want to get some 'Springwood Pink' because my 'Springwood White' is a great success and the best weed smotherer I have ever known. A long "carpet" of it is on one side of a *Rosa Hugonis* growing on a fence and on the other side is a wide row of *Primula Julia*. As the heather and the primula are both early flowerers they look beautiful together and then the yellow flowers of the rose open above them.

E.D. Strover, Farnham.

MEMBERS' LETTERS

From Mrs. R. Fox, Okehampton, Devon.

My nephew Lionel Edwards has retired and bought Broadymead, under Gidleigh, the home set up in 1949 by Mr. Keble Martin.

It has everything - in fact he chose it for its wild flowers, uncommon butterflies, a moorland stream and a bluebell wood!

My nephew has been busy getting it back into some order again. There are lovely trees and shrubs and heathers that Mr. Martin planted. Gentians grow with us very easily.

(Mrs. Fox then quotes from Keble Martin's autobiography, "Over the Hills")

'We were preparing a small bungalow with the help of my cousin Willy Martin (of Long Cause, Dartington), at Gidleigh, on the north-east edge of Dartmoor.'

'We had to buy a small and rather boggy field called on the tithe map "Broadymead". It had some old oak trees with buzzards nesting in them, and a sub-moorland flora. The woodland birds included two pairs of greater spotted woodpeckers. We had kind neighbouring farmers on both sides and went daily for milk from one of them. We moved in at the end of the summer of 1949 and I soon began to make rapid progress with drawing flowers. Several bog-loving grasses or sedges were added from our own field.'

Mrs. Fox continues:

The Keble Martins left Gidleigh in 1958 because they found the road up to the church too steep. (He was then 81).

The lane rambling by Gidleigh Mill and Broadymead is one of the most enchanting ever. Rich in wild flowers, beautiful granite boulders adorn the sides and it is full of history too. In a meadow called Bloody Meadow the Roundheads from Moreton Hampstead and the Royalists from Chagford had a great fight here. We had a picnic there this summer and silver-washed fritillaries flew around. They, and the tortoiseshells are also on the buddleias that Mr. Martin provided at Broadymead.

And back to her own garden, Mrs. Fox says:

"I have a lovely Dartmoor white ling from Foxtor mine, and Lionel has taken cuttings from it. Would you have a place in your garden if I saw a nice, compact little plant of the white at Broadymead?"

(How kind our members are to their Secretary! C.I.M.)

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From David Rose, Plymouth

My comments in the article (Aug. 24th., "What a pity Heather experts didn't visit Cornish Heaths!") were observation rather than criticism. I had just returned from a visit to Kynance Cove and the E. vagans were magnificent! There is altogether an interesting plant growth there on the Serpentine rocks, a kind of Nature's rock gardens, with broom, small bush roses, geranium sanguineum, autumn squills, prostrate callunas, gorse and so on.

Kynance is owned partly by the National Trust. The Cove of course is the attraction and the path down well worn, so much so that the Trust are going to alter the path layout I believe.

The cliff walk from the Lizard to Kynance of about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles is very beautiful and fortunately, standing up to wear. The E. vagans on the headland overlooking Kynance have made such a mounded close carpet together with other interesting wild plant life that altogether it is now nature's rock garden. Fires or "swaling" have burnt off the vegetation in parts but the regeneration is rapid.

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From M.S. Wale, Middx.

Probably most members who visit London know of Hampstead Heath and Jack Straw's Castle, but less known is a little gem of a compact small park called "The Hill", just down the North End Road, at the rear of Inverforth House. Administered by the Greater London Council it is worth a visit for its beauty and setting alone, but for the interest of Heather Society members it is extensively planted with heathers, some established, others newly planted. Parking your car is reasonably easy in Park Drive (the last turning on the left in North End Road coming from Jack Straw's Castle) near the entrance to Golders Hill Park, another beautiful park. Walk through this park up the hill and over part of the wild heath to the entrance of "The Hill."

This pleasant walk is most rewarding as they are two of the most beautiful parks in the area. And on your walk there is a refreshment place that is open every day during the summer.

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From P. Bessent, Eltham

A grouping of *Daboecias* would be very attractive in a border bed. In the foreground would be *D. azorica x polifolia*, Seedling No. 3, and/or *D. x 'William Buchanan'*, the former being more compact and the latter more spreading in habit. In both the flowers are a rich red colour.

Behind these would be the taller 'Pink' with its light pink & white coloration. Behind again would be the still taller *D. 'Atropur purea'* with its purple colour.

These will give plenty of bloom from June onwards provided the dead flower spikes are taken off fairly often. At present (mid-November) all four are showing plenty of bloom.

D. 'Alba Globosa' is in my opinion the finest variety but it should form a group on its own.

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From T. Cawley, Cuddington, Northwich

As you assume, I know Ness well and have been visiting there for more years than I care to remember. My first visit was made as long ago as 1935 when it belonged to a Mr. Bulley, (one of the founders of Bees, nurserymen of Sealand, Chester), and was known as "Bulley's Gardens". The house was his private residence and the greater part of the gardens was always open to the public. Liverpool University have extended and considerably improved it since they acquired it after Mr. Bulley's death. It is the beautiful heather hill-side they created which inspired me to make my own modest small heather garden when I moved to my present home in 1968.

I look forward to remaining a Society member for many years to come and to participating in its activities.

From Mrs. Pamela Harper, Seaford, Virginia.

I'm getting a bit out of touch with heathers generally but have a little patch of 'Silver Knight' coming along. A seedling from 'Mrs. Ronald Gray' (the most tolerant heather here of summer heat and humidity) is making nice patches and 'Cuprea' looks well. An odd thing, though. The gold-foliaged things (conifers etc. as well as heathers) pleased me in England, brightening the sometimes dreary days. Here they don't look right - somehow with the intense heat and nearly-always-blue skies one doesn't want yellow in foliage but rather a cool, fresh, nitrogen-rich green.

I wonder if the same thing would apply to South Africa?

NEW MEMBERS TO JANUARY 30th 1974

Mr. A. S. Bull, Stonefield, Sandy Bank, Riding Mill, Northumberland, NE44 6HT

Mrs. W. Dunn, Church Cottage, Blacktoft, Goole, Yorks

Mr. J. Gatiss, Hillside, Winthorpe, Newark, Notts.

Dr. Gordon S. Gilchrist, The Cottage, 40 Forest Lane, Chigwell, Essex. IG7 5AE

Mr. J. R. Jackson, Old Hall Farm, Winkhill, nr. Leek, Staffs.

Mr. & Mrs. P. Maher, 28 Colchester Drive, Pinner, Middx.

Mr. M. Mainwaring, 35, Robert Owen Gardens, Port Tennant, Swansea, Glam.

Mr. E. W. C. Morrant, Spindrift, Saxlingham Road, Blakeney, Holt, Norfolk.

Mr. D. Smith, 4, Meadow Way, Walkington, Beverley, Yorks. HU 17/8SD

Mr. J. B. Vickery, Timberley, Ringley Park Avenue, Reigate, Surrey.