

Membership Secretary - Mrs. C.I. MacLeod, Yew Trees, Horley, Surrey, RH6 8DF.

A most gratifying response came as a result of sending out in September "early warning" notices about the NEW RATE subscriptions. More than 200 were sent back well before they were due on January 1st, but those who have not yet done so, whether it be by the new bankers orders or annual subscriptions must please send them to me by MARCH 21st if your names are to be included in the full membership lists promised for 1977. These will go out with the Summer Bulletin, and the names of members who would welcome visitors to their gardens (not in organised parties, but when you happen to be in their area) will be asterisked as they were until we dropped the lists in the Year Book in 1975. (Still on the question of paid subscriptions, receipts are made out but not sent until the next publication goes out, unless you send a stamp with your payment).

Disruption in the printing world was responsible for the less than adequate Autumn Bulletin. The large type used in the emergency meant that the entire Members' Forum had to be omitted, which was a pity as there was vigorous argument for and against the peat article in the Summer one. Since then have come in many reports on experiences during the drought, and then in the floods, As much as possible will be included in the Forum this time.

An interesting reference appears in the Winter number of "The Northern Gardener", the journal of the Northern Horticultural Society. The Director, in his Report says - "The plants that disappointed most this summer were the heathers. Shallow rooting as they are it was to be expected that they would suffer in a drought, but the wholesale die-back of large groups of plants was disastrous for many gardeners". This reference was to the actual Harlow Car Gardens, which contrasts with the note on Page 4 of the Trials Report, referring to the adjacent field - "only one plant has died as a result of the lack of water during the summers of 1975 and 1976". We were indeed fortunate.

ABOUT OUR PUBLICATIONS

Not quite a special delivery van for the orders after the last Bulletin went out, but there were enough on two consecutive days for my own POST OFFICE RUBBER BAND! Over half the copies of the "Heather Trials Report" have been sold and paid for. We have sent copies to the RHS Journal and other learned publications and hope they will review it for us - otherwise we rely on our members and trade and gardening press to bring the results of all this work to the notice of horticulturists who are not members of our Society. If you have any contacts with any organisations which should be interested, PLEASE tell them about it and get any publicity for it that is possible. A tremendous amount of work has been put into these trials by a few members and I know you will agree with me that we must see that the results of that work become widely known.

The demand for "Free" leaflets has far outstripped the supply, (though sadly their distribution has produced so far no more than 37 new members). I must apologise to those who are waiting for the re-print. I hope these will soon be available. Nearly all the badges have been sold and a fresh supply will be ready not long after you receive this Bulletin. The new edition of the "Pocket Guide to Heather Gardening" is now expected in May or June. IF you sent a postal order with an order from the last Bulletin and have not received what you asked for, it is because you did not give your name and address. Please write to me saying where you bought the postal order and I will send the order off at once. ORDER FORM ON THE BACK PAGE.

P.S. Discounts for bulk orders from local groups - write for details. Address on back page. (s.a.e. please).

D.B. Oliver, Sales & Distribution
Manager

THE PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION No.2

Competitors are reminded that the closing date is JUNE 30th 1977. Entry forms are available from - Mr. H. J. Fulcher, 30 Mousehold Lane, Norwich, NR7 8HE.

THE SLIDE LIBRARY

As we start the Spring period, it is probably a good idea to submit a brief report on the activities of the Slide Library during the past year. From the summer of 1975 until October 1976 the number of borrowings was as follows -

BOX A	4 times	BOX C	7 times	BOX X	6 times
BOX B	3 times	BOX D	7 times		

Boxes C and D would seem to be the most popular. The requests for loans appear to emanate from the same members - it would be nice to see the net spread more widely. Postage, which is becoming astronomical, may account for the lessening demand, and other former borrowers may have built up their own stock.

There has been some criticism of Box A, not perhaps surprisingly as it contains some of our earliest contributions. Accordingly, Mr. Ardron has kindly offered to assist me in a review of this box. It must be remembered, however, that the Slide Library can only function satisfactorily if members continue to offer new slides. For this reason the slide competition is an excellent idea. I thank Mr. Fulcher for organising and Mr. Street for suggesting, the competition held in 1976, and my thanks go also to the members who participated and donated their slides to the Library. We are happy to know that further competitions are to take place this year.

In conclusion, I would ask borrowers to be very prompt in returning boxes after their lectures. There has been slight delay in some cases which causes a little difficulty at times, otherwise I am delighted at the obvious care taken of them.

Phyllis Lee, Slide Librarian.

GROUP NEWS

Norfolk Group

Due to the vagaries of the weather and illness, attendance was lower than usual at the Norfolk Group's Social Evening on Thursday, December 16th at Taverham Village Hall. After the Chairman, Mr. B.G. London, had welcomed old and new members, sherry was served and then games organised by Mr. J. Marshall had members racking their brains competing to win prizes of heathers kindly donated by Mr. Neil Brummage.

A raffle for a large iced Christmas cake, made and donated by Mrs. J. Brooks, made a sizeable sum for local Group funds as did the sale of notelets with a heather motif. The raffle was won by Mrs. F. Stevenson, providing her with an unexpected birthday present. The ample refreshments, cooked and prepared by five lady members, earned the plaudits of the members and brought to an end a most successful evening.

B.G.L.

Farther West Group, January 17th 1977

The visit to Exeter University passed off very well. Fourteen members participated. Mr. Crouch, the Superintendent of Grounds, received us and stayed with us throughout a tour of the greenhouses and then of the two main heather plantings. His pleasant efficiency enhanced the enjoyment. It was sad to see the depredations caused by the drought on the main bank, but heartening to see the new planting and the goodly number of cuttings that are rooting.

Roy Maltby

The Midlands Group

It seems that the subject of propagation has an unfailing attraction for heather growers, and it was so again when 34 members of the Midlands Group met in Birmingham

on November 26th. Peter Hutchinson, NDH, Horticultural Lecturer of Brooklyn Agricultural College, Leicester, covered the field very thoroughly in a talk which dealt also with other ericaceous plants. He brought with him typical material for taking cuttings from as well as rooted cuttings in varying stages of growth. His interesting slides illustrated methods both ancient and modern.

Garden Visits in May 1977. On Sunday, May 15th we visit our members Mr. & Mrs. Heslop, Rockyfield, Markfield, near Leicester, to see their garden and Rhododendron and Heather Nursery. From there we go to 299 Seagrave Road, Seagrave, Leicester, to see Mr. C. J. Gennards' heathers and his extensive garden. We meet at 12.30 in the car park of Bradgate Park, 6 miles NW of Leicester, next to the Church in Newtown Linford. Please bring your own picnic lunch. This is the ONLY NOTICE, but Alan Dudley, Shenstone 481183, will gladly answer any queries.

Harold Street

South West Group

Due to the distances some of our members travel to meetings, we tend to go into hibernation during the depths of winter. However, we have one definite date planned and a number of provisional meetings - February 26th, visit to Mr. & Mrs. Stoddart's garden at Sharem Cottage, Charlton Hawthorne, and Mr. & Mrs. Jones at Otter's Court, West Camel, followed by short business meetings. Proposed meetings - to be agreed and final dates fixed - Visit to George Osmond's at Wickwar. July, visit to stands of wild Erica ciliaris on the Dorset Heaths.

Bert Jones

Weald and Thanet Group

Unfortunately, we have to announce that Mrs. Godbolt feels that she can no longer continue to run the Group. Despite a number of appeals for someone to take over we have no successor. Therefore, we can only put the Group in cold storage and hope that at some time someone will appear to resuscitate it. Mrs. Godbolt thanks those who have helped her in the past with Group activities, particularly Mrs. M. Woods, who acted as Treasurer.

Northern Groups

October 22nd 1976. The Harlow Car Group were indebted to Dr. H. McAllister, Assistant Director of Liverpool University Botanic Garden at Ness for his programme "Heathers in the Wild". His investigations on sites in the British Isles and Europe were illustrated by excellent slides and included some new evidence which we hope to enlarge upon in the 1978 Year Book. November 25th. The Sheffield Group Meeting considered "What is pH?" and soil testing was demonstrated and discussed. January 20th 1977. Sheffield Group - Mrs. G. W. Lee projected Box A for assessment of quality and a number of slides were demoted for replacement by slides of better quality. A typical note from the Recording Team acknowledging a copy of the Harlow Car "Heather Trials" reads - "We look at the plaque (on the hut) in memory of Fred Chapple and feel that we mustn't let him down if we can help it".

Mid Southern Group

On November 27th, 31 members met at Dorking for a delightful afternoon of films and a panel of experts to answer our questions. Mr. Eric Cook kindly brought his projector and Mrs. Pamela Lee presented some fine slides of heathers from the Heather Society's library and of our visit to Major General Turpin's garden earlier in the year. We were then treated to a really delicious tea, all home-made by the ladies, the highlight being some most unusual and attractive pastries and goodies so generously made for us by Mrs. Hugh Nicholson. We were pleased to welcome three visitors and hope they may soon become "one of us".

Molly Boxall

We look forward especially this year to the day at Great Comp near Sevenoaks on July 2nd, when our visit to Mr. & Mrs. Eric Cameron's seven acre garden will be followed in the evening by a recital, in the concert hall, of popular excerpts from Gilbert and Sullivan. Applications for tickets (£2.00, which will be distributed personally to save postage) can still be accepted up until May 1st. (Phone Hindhead 4947). Don't forget to bring a picnic lunch to our first gathering of 1977. We meet in the car park of the Saville Gardens, Windsor, at 11.00 a.m. on March 19th. The "host of golden (dwarf) daffodils" alone are worth the visit. In future we will have to restrict numbers visiting private gardens, so please phone me in advance if you wish to come in May or August.

Pamela Lee

DIARY OF EVENTS

- March 17th Sheffield Group, Friends Meeting House, Hartshead 7.30 p.m.
Illustrated talk on "Wild Heathers" by Mr. K.C. Barraclough.
- March 19th Harlow Car Group, Mr. L.G. Knight, NDH, FLS, AH, talks on "Heathers in Public Parks & Gardens". Details from Mr. Russ.
- March 19th Mid Southern visit Valley & Saville Gardens, Windsor, 11.00 a.m.
- March 21st West of Scotland A.G.M.
- May 15th Midlands Group visit two gardens (see Group News).
- May 22nd Northern Group (including 3, 4 & 5 Zones) Spring visit all day, Harlow Car Gardens and Heather Trials ground.
- May 22nd Mid Southern at Kingswood. 2.30 p.m. "Beech Coppice", Kingswood (Sir Maurice & Lady Banks) then to "Gilridge" (Mr. & Mrs. Bernard Boxall).
- May 18-20th Chelsea Flower Show. S.a.e. to Mrs. MacLeod for 6 Free tickets.
- June 13th West of Scotland visit Craigmarnloch Nursery, Mid Barrwood 7.30 p.m.
- June 16th Norfolk Branch, Taverham Village Hall, 7.30 p.m.
- June 26th- Sheffield Group participate when local Societies stage displays at the
- July 3rd Botanical Gardens, by showing Heathers and lecture by Box X with tape.
- July 2nd Mid Southern, Great Comp, 2.30 p.m. (see Group News).
- August 2nd West of Scotland visit Stirling University gardens, 2.30 p.m.
- August 9-10th RHS Heather Competitions. N.B. NO LONGER IN SEPTEMBER.
- August 13th Mid Southern visit Brig. Lucas Phillips' garden, Oxshott, 2.30 p.m.
- August 25th Norfolk Branch, Taverham Village Hall.
- Sept. 16-18th CONFERENCE with A.G.M., University Residences, Norwich.

TRANSLATIONS OF HEATHER BOOKS

When Mr. van de Laar's HET HEIDETUINBOEK came out, we greeted it in the 1975 Year Book as excellently complementing the Proudleys' HEATHERS IN COLOUR. Indeed, so good are both, that the latter has been translated into German and into Mr. van de Laar's own Dutch, and the former into English and German. So both will be available in all three languages - but why not in French? There is still no heather book in French, although Count de la Rochefoucauld has in hand a French translation of the next edition of Yates' POCKET GUIDE.

25,000 copies of HET HEIDETUINBOEK have been printed, and yet Moussaults of Baarn have printed 9,000 of the Proudleys' HEIDETUINEN IN KLEUR, the translation by Dieneke van Raalte. The German translation is by Frau Christine Döller. All these numbers suggest a better market for such books in the Netherlands than here.

Parey, it is who have published HEIDEGÄRTEN, the German version of van de Laar's book, ably produced by that most knowledgeable dendrologist Dr. G. Krüssman. He has also paraphrased and added to it, so here is now the combined wisdom of probably the two best ericologists on the Continent, and in a language more of us know

than Dutch. It costs DM 19.80. The English translation, also adapted, amended and added to, is to be called A GUIDE TO THE HEATHER GARDEN and should be published later this year by Collins.

D. McC.

A THOMAS HARDY HEATHER?

1978 is the 50th anniversary of the death of Thomas Hardy and the centenary of the Publication of "The Return of the Native". The Thomas Hardy Society has suggested that since Hardy was so devoted to the Dorset countryside, including the heathland which he named 'Egdon Heath', that it would be most appropriate to mark the occasion by naming a heather after him. No doubt this would help someone's sales. But heathers should bear names that have some relevance to their origin. Who therefore has a worthy and distinctive find in the Hardy country which might bear his name, or that of his heath? Mr. K. Carter, the Secretary of the Society, would like to know, at 1 Dagmar Road, Dorchester.

THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE

September 16-18th 1977, University Residences, Norwich

So far, writing in mid January, I can report that 19 rooms have been booked, but there are still 15 double or single rooms in the main block awaiting your 50p. booking fee. On payment of this, you will be sent a Reservation Form which asks for or sets out any special requirements you may have. If you will send this form back with your cheque (£16 per head for the week-end, plus £6.24 if staying over until the Monday morning) by JULY 31st, the programme and directions will be forwarded with your receipt. Cheques to be made out to "The Heather Society, No. 2 Account". Day visitors are welcome, the charge for meals being - Lunch £1.70, Dinner £2.00, but please let me know so that arrangements can be made.

B.G. London, 6 Roedich Drive, Taverham, Norwich, NR8 6RB.

A FINAL REMINDER FROM THE MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY. URGENT.

1. ARE YOU ONE OF THE 99 (ninety-nine) members who have NOT YET SENT back the NEW BANKERS ORDERS which came into force on JANUARY 1st?
2. NOTE. If this envelope does NOT CONTAIN a 1977 YEAR BOOK it will be because your usual subscription by cheque, is OVERDUE. On receipt of your payment, (£1.50 single, £2.00 joint), plus a stamp for the extra cost in postage involved, your copy will be sent. We are cutting down on the number printed so please DO NOT DELAY. We should not like you to be disappointed.

C.I. MacLeod

MEMBERS' FORUM

The Story of the Badge

The seed was sown when an item in the 1974 Autumn Bulletin suggested that Heather Motif Competition designs could be used for, among other things, a future tie or badge. I wrote to Mrs. MacLeod on the merits of the Society's having a badge and for my pains was asked to bring the matter up at the next Conference. This I did and the members present agreed that it was a good idea. What I did not expect was to be asked to proceed with it. At first, panic stations. I'd never designed anything more inspiring than a garden path before - so how to set about a badge was at first beyond me. However, I obtained some headed note-paper from Mrs. MacLeod, and using the motif as a base, painted an oval around it and filled in the flower and foliage colours. I made a dozen copies and posted them off to various badge makers culled mostly from the Birmingham Yellow Pages, asking for quotations as per design. Several replies came

quickly, mostly unsatisfactory, but I waited patiently and eventually one arrived with no ifs or buts and moreover at a reasonable price. Then having got so far, I suddenly thought, 'Now what do I do?' Having no official status I could not proceed any further without Council consent. Then out of the blue came a notice that the Mid Southern Group were to meet at Brian Malin's house in Worthing. Although not a member, I live betwixt and between them and the South Western Group. I sought permission and went to the Meeting. Members of the Council and the Treasurer, Mr. E.R. Turner, were present, so I handed over my findings to them and left it in their hands. The result is now in evidence, and, thankfully for me, it has been well received. At the recent Snowdonia Conference the badge, a year after its conception, was being worn by all the members present.

John Bridgland, Fareham.

(Note - Three Council Officers have even more reason to be grateful to Mr. Bridgland. He has donated three official brooches, Chairman, Treasurer and Secretary in red, blue and yellow enamel respectively).

C.I.M.

On Peat - Two Alternatives

From Mr. J. Pursgrove, Hathersage, nr. Sheffield

My heathers never have any peat except the small amount that comes in the tiny pots of rooted cuttings, but they do have a mulch of bracken compost gathered from a woodland source. Collect your bracken before the spores appear. I find that Spring is the best time to collect it before the new growth appears. It is best riddled through a half-inch sieve before applying. That operation will extract any coarse roots and will break up the clumps of fibre, rewarding the gardener with a first class mulch, and any weeds that do germinate can easily be pulled out.

From Commander M. Ward, nr. Chippenham, Wilts.

I am going to buy some I.C.I. Forest Bark. At I believe £1.49 for 2½ cu.ft. it seems a very possible answer and a better buy than peat.

In Praise of Peat

From Miss I.M.N. Ryan, Ottery St. Mary, Devon

The whole of the summer of 1975 was spent in the digging in of peat to improve the soil in the proposed new heather garden. I laboured to get on a 5 cm. (2 inch) mulch of peat after planting was done, beginning in November. The water supply in East Devon was not restricted quite so early as in other parts of the County so the ericas had the benefit of a hose until early July. All that died (70 of the 180 planted) were from the Spring planted ones. The outstanding fact is the sturdiness of the Autumn planted ones, but I also attribute their wellbeing to the mulch of peat. I am certain that the peat not only kept the roots cool, but also gave the young fibres something to hold on to.

From Mrs. D. Everett, Droitwich

After your article in which you pulled peat pots to pieces (metaphorically speaking) it is a wonder we are still on speaking (or writing) terms. I think they are wonderful things. However, all is forgiven.

From Mr. J. Rooke, Buxton, Derbys.

We live in limestone country, and about 1,000 feet above sea level. The heathers are growing on a rockery which is composed of two tiers of limestone, filled with peat (mainly direct from the moor), sand and beech leaf mould. The majority of the plants are about five years old. We do not appear to have lost any by leaching but a few have died as the result of the dry weather.

The Drought in Dorset

Two summers under drought conditions have reduced one part of our garden to an arid waste. In 1975 ericas grown to produce flowers most of the year on a south-facing

bank in full sun suffered only slightly, with the exception of E. Carnea 'Springwood White' and E. x Williamsii. All the plants on the bank were at least 15 years old, had been kept clipped and were in good heart. In 1976 the same bank was affected badly. Throughout the years, moorlands nearby have been burnt many times, leaving grim blackened areas. Alas, our heather bank, which has been pictured on the catalogues of a well-known Heather Nursery, has developed a similar burnt-out appearance. In spite of the heat of the fires the moorlands recover, new growth springing from the old roots. Seedlings also appear. My one hope is that the same thing will happen here. Those ericas which have suffered most are Carneas 'Springwood Pink' and 'Springwood White', 'Rubra', 'Startler', 'Thomas Kingscote' and 'Winter Beauty'. Calluna vulgaris - in patches - 'Co. Wicklow', 'H.E. Beale', 'J.H. Hamilton', 'Joan Sparkes', 'Peter Sparkes', 'Tib'. E. cinerea - 'C.D. Eason', 'Eden Valley', 'Velvet Night'. E. x Watsonii - 'Dawn', E. x Williamsii 'P.D. Williams', E. x Stuartii, E. x darleyensis 'Silberschmelze'. E. vagans - 'Mrs. D.F. Maxwell'. Daboecia cantabrica - 'Alba', 'Atro-Purpurea'. Heathers which seem oblivious of the heat are Calluna vulgaris 'Golden Feather', E. cinerea 'Joyce Burfitt' and Erica umbellata. Mercifully most of the ericas which grew on our bank have survived in less sunny parts of the garden, so that all is not yet lost.

D. Maginess, Broadstone.

Extracts from Your Letters on the Drought, and other things

October 29th - Mrs. Lovegrove, Gwent

The drought hit us in South Wales worse than most places. I have lost no end of peat-lovers (rhodos etc.) and hundreds of heathers including even 'Springwood Pink' and large established plants of 'Pink Spangles'. Flowers on callunas were almost non-existent and vagans were very poor with spikes about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch long at most. Two things however, I have discovered which have delighted me.

- a) Daboecia cuttings take far better in pure peat than in peat and sand, and
- b) E. Cinerea cuttings take well in early April. After trying with no success in July-September, I got 95% of 'Pink Ice' through, I think it was on All Fools' Day! I have 64 Daboecia 'Alba' cuttings to plant out (I do adore 'Alba') when or if the rain ever stops.

October 8th - Lt. Cmdr. T.H.R. Graham, Jersey

One thing I have learnt from the drought - it is no use, or little use, trying to save a heath or heather by starting to water when the plant shows definite signs of sickness. It doesn't seem to do any good, whereas a little water when a dry spell looks like going on may save the day. A large Dorset Heath which we nearly lost in 1975 survived and even gained growth as we watered it from the start, in 1976.

November 2nd - Mrs. Jean Humphrey, Warwick

I have dug up 52 of the ten-year olds and have cut back most of the sickly looking young ones. The ones I have dug out are the winter-flowering ones and I am going to miss the beautiful sight they made from my windows. This last summer has given me nothing but hard work, but I'm not downhearted because the garden is still smiling at me and calling me into it.

November 25th - Miss K.M. Fell, Wimborne

May I enquire through the Bulletin why my 'Vivellii' is such a shy flowerer. I got two plants some years ago. One died at once and though the other flowered a little at first and I have taken layerings off it, there was very little flower last year and little prospect shown this. It did not appear to suffer from drought. 'Springwood White' suffered badly, but not the reds.

November 9th - Miss J. Longstaff, Crowborough

The ground here did not show any signs of cracking in the drought but on handforking

around the plants the fork would suddenly disappear into large cracks below the surface and on investigation the plants were each sitting on a little island completely surrounded by large cracks. These were the plants that either suffered badly or completely departed. I wonder if anyone else came across this.

December 12th - Mr. Erik Andersen, Denmark

A gardener in a German publication advises that in warm and dry weather, mix one fifth litre of sulphuric acid with tap water and put it into water tanks for watering heather. Acid test the water company's water pH with acid testing paper. In Denmark rainwater is about 6 pH and waterworks water is about 8-9pH.

In Praise of Daboecias

October 29th - Mrs. G. Moss, Clwyd

My late husband and I imported some acid soil (the garden soil is limey) and planted Daboecia 'David Moss'. These are flourishing and have survived the drought well. In fact they have been flowering since June and continue to do so.

November 5th - Mr. A.C. Bull, Northumberland

My tetralix heathers have apparently all died except one clump of 'Alba'. No callunas were affected but carneas, cinereas and ciliaris all partly died. One bonus was with the Daboecias. During the drought they looked sick, but with 7 inch of rain in September we had a wonderful show of bloom in October and they are still flowering.

November 4th - Mr. P. Bessent, London

The effects of the drought in my light soil were very varied - 5 'Golden Feather' all died while 5 'Golden Carpet' took no notice of the drought. My biggest surprise was with my favourites, the Daboecias. In all cases the foliage showed no signs of distress but there were no flowers. Since the rain came, they have flowered freely.

A First Tribute

From Mr. F.W. Stafford, Liverpool, January 12th 1977

I should like to thank you for all your work and the enthusiasm and efficiency of your fellow officials. The Heather Trials Report is a great effort and absorbing. My soil is slightly alkaline so I could not plant 'Constance', but would you report that 'Myretoun Ruby' ignored the 1976 weather and whilst all my other carneas and hybrids have been retarded considerably, 'Myretoun Ruby' is first in the field with its lovely flowers. Another outstanding success last winter was E. erigena 'Riverslea' having grown very quickly to about 18 inch and, having defied the weather, is recovering with great promise for late spring.

Timely Watering

From Mr. A.W. Jones, West Camel, January 26th 1977

All the cultivars within E. sect Callicodon seem to have suffered. When they should have been producing their flowering wood they were suffering from the worst effects of the drought and heat of the 1975 summer. About the beginning of April (1976) I trimmed the carnea 'Ruby Glow' and began to water the plants as I planned to move them. They began to produce new growth which was absent from adjacent groups of 'King George' and 'Praecox Rubra'. I experimented by watering these, with the same result, new growth. They are now blooming quite well outside the window. The foliage colours of 'Ann Sparkes' and 'Foxhollow' have become quite magnificent and the latter contrasts beautifully with the blossom of 'King George'.