

THE HEATHER SOCIETY

BULLETIN No. 14. Vol.2.

SUMMER 1978

Editor - Mrs. Diane H. Jones, Otters Court, West Camel, nr. Yeovil, Somerset,
BA22 7QF.

Soon after editing the Spring Bulletin and getting it safely off to the printer, we were snowed-in and cut off from the outside world for three days by the freak blizzards which swept the west country. Our heathers came through it all unscathed, apart from a group of mature *E. erigena* 'Superba', whose branches were laid low with the weight of snow and some were sadly broken. When the thaw came, there were our *carnea* and *darleyensis* varieties still in full bloom, and also the snowdrops and crocuses to remind us that spring was 'round the corner'.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE - Mr. Ardron tells me that the accommodation for our weekend conference in September is almost fully booked, so if anyone wishes to attend and hasn't yet booked, would they write to him immediately - details are in the Spring Bulletin.

HELPERS PLEASE! - Can you help man the Society's stand at the RHS August Show (8th and 9th)? If you can spare a few hours between 11 a.m. and 8 p.m. on the 8th, or between 10 a.m. and 5 p.m. on the 9th, please let our Secretary, Pamela Lee, know. On the stand there will be a display of summer-flowering heaths together with some of the Society's literature. Anyone who can help needs only to chat informally with the visitors and encourage them to join the Society.

SOME MORE WANTEDS. - (Please write direct to the member).

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|----------------------------------------------|---|--------------------------|
| <u>BOOKS</u> - 'The Low Road', D.F. Maxwell. |) | |
| 'Gardeners Thumb', D.F. Maxwell. |) | Miss J. Burfitt, Zone 8. |
| 'Designing Gardens Today', J. Grant White. |) | |

SCRAP BOWL - A new idea for our Bulletin. Contributions and comments please:
Titbits of news and information from members.

Diane Jones.

SECRETARY'S NOTES

Year Book

Unfortunately Mr. Arnold Stow will not be editing the Year Book for us next year because his new job requires him to spend more and more time away from home.

Arnold became assistant editor to 'Pat' Patrick during 1972, and editor in 1974 when sadly Pat died. Since then he has produced for us each spring a very readable 'bedside' book containing articles on the many aspects of growing heathers. We are indebted to him for all the hard work he has put into this task for the last six years and hope he will accept our very sincere thanks.

We extend a warm welcome to Mr. A.W. Jones, Council member and South West group convenor, his successor. He will be pleased to receive any contributions you may have for the 1979 Year Book by mid-November.

Affiliations

Following the formation of the German Heather Society (see Autumn Bulletin), we have now become affiliated to each other and have a similar agreement with the Dutch Heather Society for the mutual exchange of information and publications.

P.F.S. Chow

I would like to draw your attention to the Heather competitions and flower arrangement classes at the R.H.S. Show, August 8th-9th. Schedules can be obtained from the Show Secretary, R.H.S., Vincent Square, London, W.1. I am sure many of you would be thrilled to see yourselves among the prizewinners in so distinguished a show. As yet the competitors are few, so do enter soon, while you still have a good chance!

Pamela Lee.

NEW RATES OF SUBSCRIPTION

The Finance Committee has now made a detailed assessment of the Society's finances and recommended to the Council that the annual subscription from the 1st January 1979 should be:-

| | |
|-------------------------------|---------|
| Single membership | - £3.00 |
| Joint husband/wife membership | - £4.00 |
| Organisation membership | - £4.00 |

The Council has endorsed this recommendation and will propose a Resolution to this effect at the Annual General Meeting in September. As far as can be foreseen, it should be possible to maintain the subscription at this level for the next three years.

On the assumption that these rates will be approved by the A.G.M., new Bankers Orders and Covenant Forms have been prepared and are being distributed with this Bulletin, to avoid any unnecessary delay.

To make it easier for members to pay their subscriptions, it is suggested that use should be made of Bankers Orders, whenever it is convenient. In addition, members can help the Society by completing a seven year Covenant, which enables the Society to recover the income tax paid on the amount of the subscription. Yearly certificates are no longer required, after the first year. So the system is now simplified and postage saved.

Please read the instructions on the enclosed forms very carefully and deal with them as quickly as possible.

A NOTE ON THE FROST TOLERANCE OF SOUTH AFRICAN ERICAS

In the south of England where I live, I grow my South African Ericas in the garden, but protected during the winter months by a large frame of my own construction, and without the addition of any heating. The recent severe weather in February proved to be a very real test of their hardiness. All of the plants are between two and five years of age. Erica cruenta and Erica mammosa, which both produced a brilliant display of red tubular flowers between September and December last year, suffered the worst effects; their fresh new growth on the upper parts of the plants turned brown and withered, but the new growth on lower branchlets was completely unaffected. Erica gracilis, now in its final stages of flowering (the first flowers having opened back in August) and Erica verticillata were completely unaffected by the severe weather. The temperatures recorded during the cold spell fell on several occasions to -4C and -5C, and on two occasions as low as -7C.

I hope more members are encouraged to grow South African Ericas outside, especially in Southern England.

B.M. Sellers,
Chandler's Ford, Hants.

(It is now thought that E. verticillata Berg. - the Cape Heath - is extinct in South Africa. This name is sometimes wrongly used for the Eastern Mediterranean species E. manipuliflora Salisb. of which E. verticillata Forskal is a synonym. Ed.)

BIRDS AND HEATHER

There have been records of birds nesting in heather in earlier bulletins. Last year I had a pleasant surprise on a visit to the Isabella Plantation in Richmond Park, when I found a pair of Long-tailed Tits nesting in a bush of E. X veitchii. This was unusually low-down for this species, as the nest was only three to four feet above the ground. I was even more surprised last April when I went to get some peat from a large pack of Shamrock sedge peat standing outside our back door. When I lifted the flap I was greeted by three small Robin nestlings in their moss-lined peat nest. There was only a narrow opening through which the parents could enter, but the brood was successfully fledged at the expense of a fortnight's delay in potting operations.

The rare Dartford Warbler is particularly dependent on moorland country and makes its nest in heather and gorse bushes. Its main stronghold is the R.S.P.B. Reserve at Arne in Dorset, where E. ciliaris flourishes. In spite of the disaster to the neighbouring Hartland Moor in the summer of 1976, when a large area of the Dartford Warbler's habitat was destroyed by fire, the Warden of the R.S.P.B. Reserve has reported a good breeding season for the bird in 1977. When we visited the Reserve in June, the cold and blustery weather unfortunately prevented us from getting a sight of these charming birds.

Pat Turpin.

R.H.S. WINTER FLOWERING HEATHER COMPETITIONS

AT THE R.H.S. NEW HALL, LONDON, FEBRUARY 21-22 1978

Class 5: A Heather in bloom, one plant. 6 entries.

| | | |
|------|-------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| 1st: | Maj. Gen. P.G. Turpin | <u>E. carnea</u> 'Springwood White'. |
| 2nd: | The Wellcome Foundation | <u>E. x darleyensis</u> 'Silberschmelze'. |
| 3rd: | The Wellcome Foundation | <u>E. carnea</u> 'Vivellii'. |

Class 6: A Heather in bloom, one vase. 9 entries.

| | | |
|------|-----------------------|----------------------------------------|
| 1st: | Maj. Gen. P.G. Turpin | <u>E. x darleyensis</u> 'J.W. Porter'. |
| 2nd: | Maj. Gen. P.G. Turpin | <u>E. x darleyensis</u> 'Darley Dale'. |
| 3rd: | Mr. B.G. London | <u>E. carnea</u> 'December Red'. |
| 4th: | Maj. Gen. P.G. Turpin | <u>E. carnea</u> 'White Glow'. |

Class 7: A Heather shown for foliage effect, one plant.

| | | |
|------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1st: | Maj. Gen. P.G. Turpin | <u>Cal. vul.</u> 'Bunsall'. |
|------|-----------------------|-----------------------------|

Class 13: A tree or shrub grown under glass, one vase.

| | | |
|------|-------------------|---------------------------|
| 1st: | Mr. R.C.N. Clarke | <u>Erica Canaliculata</u> |
| 2nd: | Mr. B.G. London | <u>Erica</u> 'Limelight'. |

The Heather Society stand, which was arranged by Major General and Mrs. Turpin, gained a Flora Medal for its most attractive display of bowls of winter flowering and colour foliage plants, together with vases of cut flowers from eight other varieties, all provided by Windlesham Nurseries.

Whilst Council members held meetings on the Tuesday, the stand was attended by Mrs. Turpin and Mrs. MacLeod, and on the Wednesday by Major General and Mrs. Turpin and Mr. London. The results were five new members for the Society and the sale of some membership badges.

(Members will appreciate how much we all owe to the Turpins for the vast contribution which they continue to make by arousing public interest in heathers at the R.H.S. Shows. We are most anxious for more members to enter the competitions and would be pleased to advise anyone who wishes to enter plants or cut flowers or the flower arrangement classes, on how to prepare entries for the Show. - Sec.)

DENDROFLORA

Very very few libraries in Britain have this invaluable joint periodical of the Royal Association of Boskoop Nurseries and the Dutch Dendrological Society. But, so good is their basically annual report, that it is well worth the trouble to try and see it, indeed of acquiring it oneself. No other country has anything like it. In it are described, often pictured, the species and cultivars of various groups of trees and shrubs, with recommendations (made by a special committee) as to which should be grown, and which should be discarded.

No. 7 in 1970 contained a good account of Callunas and Ericas. But many new ones have come in since, and No. 13-14, just out also by Mr. van de Laar, deals with the yellow-foliaged cultivars, 88 in all, 50 of them duly assessed. The facts are useful and reliable, even if we over here may not always find that their opinions agree with ours. But their evaluation is, naturally, for the Dutch climate, hence, for example, the sad downgrading of 'Valerie Proudley'. E. vagans cannot withstand the Dutch winter, although this cultivar does it better than most. Standards are however high, and only four plants are awarded *** - 'Boskoop', 'Orange Queen', 'Sunset' and 'Robert Chapman' (on which there are interesting comments, and a change of opinion on 'Blazeaway'); six ** and ten *. Four are recommended for special purposes.

In this issue too are six pages on Daboecia, ('Praegerae' and 'William Buchanan' ***). But 'Pink' is the original name for the Slieve Donard plant.

It should be said that all this is written in Dutch. But those with a knowledge of German will manage it, others will get the general sense and there are English summaries. The way to obtain these excellent productions is to send 10 Dutch florins for each to: Dendroflora, Postbus 133, Boskoop, Holland.

David McClintock.

'COBBETT' 20th OCTOBER, 1825

Many members will be familiar with Cobbett's description in his Rural Rides of the heather at Frant. This was reproduced in the 1964 Year Book and in the Bulletin for Autumn 1973. There is however another item in that book which may be of some interest to members of the Heather Society.

In the entry for 20th October 1825 there appears the following:

"Having done my business at Hartswood today about 11 o'clock, I went to a sale at a farm, which the farmer is quitting. The farm, which belongs to Christ's Hospital, has been held by a man of the name of Charrington, in whose family the lease has been, I hear, a great number of years. The house is hidden by trees. It stands in the Weald of Surrey, close by the river Mole, which is here a mere rivulet, though just below this house the rivulet supplies the very prettiest flour-mill I ever saw in my life."

The "man of the name of Charrington", was of course an ancestor of our late President. "The very prettiest flour-mill" has long since disappeared; but by one of those odd coincidences one of the millstones from it has rested for some time in the heather garden of our newest Vice-President, Mrs. C.I. MacLeod, at Yew Trees, Horley.

INCREASING OUR MEMBERSHIP

In last Autumn's Bulletin, Mr. Bridgland, Zone 8, wrote a short article on ideas for increasing our membership. Since then he has taken part in a Quiz in the Portsmouth Guildhall and met the Editor of the Federation of Hampshire Horticultural Societies' bulletin. In the course of conversation Mr. Bridgland asked the Editor if he would consider including a note on heathers in the next issue of the bulletin. The Editor agreed

and the following paragraph was published. (This bulletin is distributed to 85 affiliated societies in Hampshire and so the message was spread over a wide area.)

"Ericas - Any nurseryman or garden centre will tell you that these versatile plants are very popular now, and I think that Societies should consider including a Class for them in their Shows as we do at Catisfield in Spring and Autumn. They have created another item of interest and entries have increased each year. The presence of chalk or lime in the soil restricts varieties grown, but E. carnea, E. x darleyensis, E. erigena (Mediterranea), E. terminalis (stricta) and the Tree Heaths are possible, especially if given a good dressing of peat at planting time and an annual mulch of peat. There is a flourishing Heather Society with an international membership"

The Norfolk Group have been active with the same theme in mind - they have now become affiliated to their local Horticultural Society and staged a display of heathers at the Spring Show as well as encouraging more people to enter the heather classes (see Group News).

Also, the Sheffield Group are staging a display of heathers for the Sheffield Botanical Gardens Weekend in September.

PUBLICITY should be our common aim!

GROUP NEWS

NORTHERN

The Harlow Car Group met on Saturday 18th March when Messrs. V.J.A. Russ and J. Ardron gave most interesting accounts of the Harlow Car heather trials plot from its inception seven years ago, to the present. Mr. Russ who is responsible for the organisation of the recording and for receiving visitors to the trials by appointment, spoke of his, and his team of ladies' work in compiling their observations which they recorded over a period of five years. This effort was the basis of our recent publication "Heather Trials 1971-75".

Mr. Ardron described how the plot was prepared and how the trials were started with the help of Geoffrey Smith, the N.H.S. Garden Superintendent, on a half acre plot adjoining the main gardens. His accompanying slides illustrated its development over the years. The thanks of the audience of 50 or so were due to our lecturers for a most absorbing afternoon of nostalgia. To round off the day, members walked across to the trials and were rewarded with a brilliant display of carneas; many in full bloom.

Our Chairman, Major General Turpin, accompanied by Mrs. Turpin, visited the trial grounds on Tuesday 25th April, and were given a warm welcome by John Ardron and members of the trials recording and weeding teams. Interest was aroused by several of the plants and it was a unique experience to be able to move from a mature plant of one variety to make comparisons with another of the 300 varieties grown. The *Erigenas* and hybrid *Ericas* were particularly colourful, but it was sad to relate that a few of the *Callunas* are showing signs of serious deterioration which is thought to be the long term effects of the 1976 drought.

To reduce the large amount of weeding effort required, chemical weedkillers are being used now to eradicate the many pernicious weeds that we have at Harlow Car. However, there is a pressing need still for volunteers to help the stalwarts of our weeding team, to keep the plot tidy. We meet on the first Sunday of the month throughout the year and new colleagues would be most welcome.

T.A. Julian.

MIDLANDS

Members of the Midlands Group joined forces with the South West Group on Sunday 23rd April, for a visit to the famous Cotswold garden of Abbotswood.

At lunchtime, members enjoyed their picnics in Harold and Margaret Street's garden in Chipping Campden, supplemented by the coffee which Margaret kindly provided. The garden has recently been re-designed and planted with an interesting collection of shrubs and other plants. Effective use has been made of most of the lime-tolerant species of heather and they also have a small area where they are trying out various Callunas.

In perfect spring weather the party then made its way to Abbotswood, a garden open only occasionally under the National Gardens Scheme, where a wide variety of plants, including heathers, are grown to perfection. The heathers, primarily winter flowering varieties, are used in great sweeps and drifts and, although the range of varieties was small, the effect in this large garden was most appealing. Other areas of the garden contain formal parterres, rocky streams, pools, terraces and other features, all set amidst an extensive collection of trees, shrubs and naturalised bulbs; a very fine garden indeed.

The strength of the Heather Society was demonstrated by the attendance of 73 members and friends - not counting the children - surely a record?

Robert Cole.

Next Meeting - The Group's next visit will be on Saturday 23rd September to Ray and Olwen Warner's Nursery. Although they have been in their new garden and nursery in North Staffs. for only $2\frac{1}{2}$ years, they are already growing 500 varieties of heather together with conifers and other shrubs. Their old garden was most impressive and we are sure the new one will be equally interesting. The address is - Barncroft Nurseries, Dunwood Lane, Longsdon. Off the A53, three miles south west of Leek, there is a turning to the right marked Dunwood Lane; the nursery is $\frac{3}{4}$ mile down the lane. The visit will be from 12.30 onwards and if you would like to bring a picnic lunch you will be welcome to do so.

Harold Street.

NORFOLK

On 10th March, 23 members attended the Group Meeting at Taverham Village Hall. At the members request, the Chairman, Mr. B.G. London, showed how to arrange a vase of heathers for competition; distributed cuttings suggesting they try the 'Jam Jar method' of propagation, and discussed other methods.

Although it was cold and windy, on the 19th March seventeen members were rewarded by seeing a really beautiful display of winter heather foliage and flower colour on the large raised beds in the garden of Mr. and Mrs. D. Tunmore at Fornsett St. Mary. Unfortunately it soon started to rain, preventing the taking of many photographs, but our hosts kindly invited members into their bungalow and dispensed tea and cakes whilst the merits of growing heathers were discussed. Mr. London's thanks to our hosts were heartily endorsed by the members.

On the evening of Wednesday 12th April we were advised we could stage a Heather Society display at the Norfolk and Norwich Horticultural Show on Friday 14th April; so on the Thursday morning in pouring rain I was out cutting the sprays of heather whilst my wife, Mrs. North and Mrs. Stevenson arranged them in vases and a three tier holder.

In the meantime, Mr. Fulcher had borrowed some foliage Callunas in pots from Mr. Banthorpe and set them in peat on the stand as a miniature garden, helped by Mr. Gooch.

For the first time we were allowed to compete in the class of five varieties of heather. At previous shows we had only seen two entries, so Mr. Fulcher showed three carneas, Mr. North three darleyensis, and myself three tree heaths which out of the five entries won 1st, 2nd, and 3rd prizes respectively and received favourable comment in the press report.

Messrs. Fulcher, North, Gooch and myself took turns in manning the stand.

'Jack' London.

MID SOUTHERN

Two dozen of us awoke from hibernation to attend the Group's first meeting of the year on 25th February in the very convenient Friends' Meeting House, Dorking.

After the initial flurry of greetings had subsided, we settled down to watch 150 very varied slides which Major General Turpin had made of heathers growing in a number of different locations, notably his own garden. Apart from their technical excellence and his stimulating and shrewd commentary, the pictures were of great interest as they illustrated cultivars at different times of the year generating some lively discussion. Contrast was provided by some pictures from annual conference outings, on Dartmoor, Anglesey, and at Bressingham Gardens.

The second part of the proceedings consisted of a magnificent spread provided by some of the ladies of the Group. Then members turned their attention to some bonny plants, mostly foliage varieties in their richest colour, brought by the Turpins from a wholesaler and offered at a bargain price, after allowing a percentage for our local Group funds. A raffle for a heather book also raised a small sum.

Mr. & Mrs. R.G. Chateaufain.

The Next Meeting will be at 2.30 p.m. on the 19th August in Sussex, visiting the beautiful heather garden in secluded natural surroundings of our former Chairman, Mr. Alfred Bowerman, and his wife. If any member has a surplus of potted rooted cuttings, this could be an excellent opportunity for exchange or sale. Directions: from Petworth, take the 283 and half-way to Pulborough fork right (2138) signposted Arundel, over the stream (R. Rother). Take first left (Coldwaltham) and 'Champs Hill' entrance is some way along on the left. From Pulborough, take the 283 and half-way to Petworth turn left (2138) signposted Arundel continue as above. Champs Hill will then be on the right.

Pamela Lee.

SOUTH WEST

Our first meeting of the year was on Saturday 18th March when we met at the Eling Community Centre, Totton, near Southampton, to hear Phil Joyner, one of our SW Group members, talk about Cape Heaths. He brought with him a fine collection of these plants (some of which were fortunately still in bloom) to illustrate his talk, and then showed us slides of still more species.

We were fortunate to have as guests at this meeting Ann and David Small from Creeping St. Mary, near Ipswich, who have done so much to encourage interest in these very beautiful and interesting plants.

After Phil's talk we ended the meeting with a question time during which tea was served by Mrs. Joyner, when it became obvious that a lot of interest had been aroused in the Cape Heaths and in particular their hardiness in different parts of the country.

Our Next Meeting is a one day conference on Saturday 8th July at Parkstone, nr. Poole in Dorset. The subject of the conference will be Garden Design.

We are hoping that the speakers on the day will include a professional landscape gardener, a hospital gardens superintendent, and a member who has designed and built several gardens for himself. There will also be an open forum for questions and general

discussion.

Prior registration will be required for this meeting and a small fee charged to cover our costs. We would particularly welcome members from other Groups. SAE please for full details from me, to: Otters' Court, West Camel, nr. Yeovil, Somerset, OR TELEPHONE Marston Magna 285.

Bert Jones.

FARTHER WEST

A meeting will be held at the home of Mr. and Mrs. L. Hurrell, "Moorgate", near South Brent, on Wednesday 13th September at 2.30 p.m. Please bring any food you may require, but a cup of tea will be provided. Mr. and Mrs. Hurrell are kindly permitting us to view their lovely garden. Please bring flowers of Callunas, vagans etc. that you wish to compare with other named varieties, especially examples of 'Mrs. D.F. Maxwell'. Bring any cuttings you may like to exchange.

The map reference for "Moorgate" is 677/597, being the last house on the Moor road, one mile from Owly.

June Randall.

DIARY OF EVENTS

- June 16th Norfolk Branch visit to Mrs. Ellis' garden, Beechwoods, St. Faiths Rd., Old Catton (opp. Church St.), 7.30 p.m.
- June 17th Northern Group visit to Mr. & Mrs. P. Vickers' garden, Dinnington.
- July 8th SW Group, One Day Conference, Parkstone, Dorset. (see Group News).
- August 8/9th RHS Summer Flowering Heath Competition, New Hall, Vincent Sq., London SW1.
- August 19th Mid Southern Group visit Mr. & Mrs. Bowerman's garden, Coldwaltham. 2.30 p.m. (see Group News).
- August 23rd Norfolk Branch meeting at Mackintosh & Caley's Social Club, The Elms, Unthank Rd., (corner Park Lane) Norwich. 7.30 p.m.
- August 26th Closing date material for Autumn Bull. & Diary Events to March 31st 1979.
- Sept. 9/10th Sheffield Group, preparation of plants for display at Sheffield Botanical Gardens Weekend.
- Sept. 10th Lecture/Discussion by Mr. D. McClintock, on 'Plants from Bracken Hill, Great Comp. & other Kentish Gardens' at Great Comp, Borough Green, Sevenoaks, Kent. 2.30 p.m. *
(Tickets are £1.20 inc. tea, from Mr. & Mrs. R. Cameron at Great Comp: SAE please).
- Sept. 13th Farther West Group visit to Mr. & Mrs. L. Hurrell's garden, "Moorgate", South Brent. 2.30 p.m. (see Group News).
- Sept. 15/17th Annual Conference and A.G.M., Losehill Hall, Castleton, Derbys.
- Sept. 23rd Midlands Group visit to Barncroft Nursery, Longsdon, nr. Leek (see Group News).
- Sept. 26/28th Great Autumn Show, RHS Hall, Westminster. SAE to Mrs. Lee for tickets.
- Sept. 30th Mid Southern visit Merrist Wood Agric. College, Worplesdon, Guildford.
- October 1st Northern Group visit to Liverpool Univ. Bot. Gdns., Ness. 2 pm in car park.

* This is part of the Great Comp Festival, August 31st to September 10th, which annually presents concerts and lectures in the most delightful setting, and includes an invitation to stroll in the extensive gardens, floodlit on these occasions. SAE (5" x 8") to Mr. & Mrs. Cameron for programme.