

THE HEATHER SOCIETY BULLETIN

Vol. 3 No. 2.

SPRING 1981

Editor: Mrs. Diane Jones, Otter's Court, West Camel, Nr. Yeovil, Somerset. BA22 7QF.

To all our members I wish you a belated Happy New Year, and in these somewhat difficult times financially may we all derive increased pleasure from 'the simple things of life' and in particular our gardens. The winter flowering heathers and spring bulbs are a joy at present. Don't forget that if anyone now feels they would like to show members round their garden by appointment, please let Mr. Ken Farrah know, and we can add an asterisk to your address in the next Membership List in the meantime mentioning it in the Bulletin.

We have however some good news to welcome the New Year. Ken Farrah our Administrator tells me that since he took office at the beginning of September, our membership has increased by 153. Also Des Oliver our Treasurer has been delighted by the response to his plea in the Spring Bulletin last year for members to pay their subscription by covenant. This method of payment means that the Society, as a registered charity, can claim back from the Inland Revenue £1.71 on a £4. subscription and £1.29 on a £3 subscription, if you pay income tax at the standard rate. If you haven't yet changed to this method of payment, please consider it.

A plea now for more items for our scrap bowl - I do hope these 'titbits' are useful and enjoyable reading - do keep sending them to me.

Diane Jones.

11th ANNUAL CONFERENCE, 11th-13th September, 1981

The venue for this year's conference is Telford Hall, University of Loughborough, Leicestershire, and the following outline programme has been arranged:-

- Friday Evening "Little Froome Garden and My Dream", an illustrated talk by Mr. Graham Cookes, followed by: An Introduction to the Leicester Botanic Gardens" - speaker to be arranged.
- Saturday a.m. "Heathers and other Ericaceous Plants in the Wild", an illustrated talk by Dr. Hugh McAllister, Assistant Director, University of Liverpool, Botanic Gardens, Ness. 'Heathers seen through the eyes of a Flower Arranger" - a demonstration by Mrs. Dorothy Cooke.
- Saturday p.m. Visit by coach to Mr. Graham Cookes' garden at Little Froome, Fenny Drayton, Warwickshire.
- Saturday Evening "The Birth of Darncroft Nursery", an illustrated talk by Mr. Ray Warner.
- Sunday a.m. "Other Members of the Family Ericaceae" an illustrated talk by Mr. Peter Hutchinson N.D.H.
- ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING followed by an OPEN FORUM.
- Sunday p.m. A guided tour of the Leicester Botanic Garden.
- Sunday Evening An informal programme, to include a new film.

The estimated inclusive cost of the weekend is likely to be in the region of:-
Friday afternoon to Monday morning £54.50. Friday afternoon to Sunday luncheon £46.50*

Bookings should now be made by sending £2 per mailing (whether for one or more persons at the same address) to Mr & Mrs Alan Dudley, The Spinney, Little Hay, Lichfield, Staffs. This sum is to cover administrative costs and is not a deposit on the conference fee. Cheques should be made payable to "The Heather Society Conference". Single rooms only are available. Further details including a firm price and the date at which payment becomes due, will be published in the Summer Bulletin.

* (less £6.00 if leaving before dinner).

SECRETARY'S NOTES

I am delighted to announce that a new Group in the North Thames Zone will be holding its first meeting on April 11th at the home of Mr. Arnold Stow, 'Josarno' '5 Highlands, Flackwell Heath, Bucks, at 3 pm. Although this is primarily aimed to stimulate activity in Zone 10, I understand that any member will be welcome at this inaugural meeting, so please do phone 062-85-22094 if you are interested, for route directions.

It may not be widely known that there is a class for heathers judged for foliage effect in the Ornamental Plant Competitions at the R.H.S. in November. At the last Show two members competed for the first time, Mr. H. Hale and Mr. E.R. Turner, bringing the total to 18 vases and helping greatly to enhance the heather competition stand. The results were:-

1st	Maj. Gen. P.G. Turpin	<u>Calluna vulgaris</u>	'Silver Queen'
2nd	" " " "	<u>Erica erigena</u>	'Ewan Jones'
3rd	Mr. H. Hale	<u>Erica ciliaris</u>	'Aurea'
4th	Maj. Gen. P.G. Turpin	<u>Calluna vulgaris</u>	'Bonfire Brilliance'

We congratulate Mr. Hale on winning a prize with his first entry and hope this achievement will encourage other members to 'have a go'.

The other two R.H.S. Shows for heathers in February and August have always received more support, but unfortunately they fall too early for members living at a slight altitude like myself or whose garden is north-facing, in a frost pocket or exposed to the winds. However there is usually something and even one entry would be worthwhile if several members co-operated in taking turns to take labelled cut flowers in polythene bags to London by 9.30 am. on the morning of the Show itself, in order to stage them by 10 am. Vases and name cards are provided and there is no particular need to attend on the second day to collect the entries. Schedules with Entry Forms are obtainable free from the R.H.S. and these should be submitted one week before the Show (there is no entry fee). This year the summer show opens on August 11th - let's show the public what excellent results the Heather Society can produce.

Pamela Lee.

GROUP NEWS

NORTH EAST

A meeting of the recently formed group was held in the Methodist Church Hall in Ponteland on 3rd Nov. 1980, when it was evident from the attendance that this was a reasonably convenient location. A discussion took place to plan the future activities

of the group, and it was agreed that a springtime gardens visit, coupled with an autumn indoors get-together, should form the basis of our programme. It was encouraging to have an offer from a member to visit his garden.

Having conducted the business of the group, it was then open-house to visitors who really packed the hall. Some 80 people attended as the result of some local publicity aimed to promote the Society and hopefully enlist new members. From the evident enthusiasm it would seem our members will increase. One of our members, Jim Shipp of Corbridge, a well known heather enthusiast, gave a talk on heathers, their types and hints on cultivation, illustrated with superb colour slides of gardens and individual plants. Hints on propagation were illustrated by a display of cuttings. Verdict - an enthusiastic meeting with an appropriate vote of thanks from Jim Hirst.

FUTURE EVENT - On Sat. 30th May there will be a group visit to Holehird near Windermere, run by the Lake District Horticultural Society, being beautiful grounds set with heathers, shrubberies, rockeries etc. in a superb landscape. A specially chartered bus will leave Newcastle at 8.30 am. picking up members en route via Hexham. The charge will be approx. £3 per head depending on bookings. The closing date for bookings will be 30th April, to Mrs. E. Courtney, 40 Western Way, Ponteland, Newcastle-on-Tyne, NE20 9AS. After a picnic lunch we shall proceed via Lake Windermere to White Crag Gardens, Ambleside, set on a south facing hillside with heathers, rhododendrons and flowering shrubs, also a garden shop. Tea will be taken on our return route.

Edna Courtney.

MIDLANDS.

Our meeting at Winterbourne on Friday 21st November attracted a record attendance of 38 members and friends, to hear a talk entitled "Heatherscaping - An art form for the garden", given by Mr. Leighton Jones, one of our Leicestershire members. He showed some excellent slides of his garden and nursery and explained how his nursery had evolved. When Leighton and his wife Elizabeth moved house they designed a new garden from scratch making much use of heather. The need for a large number of plants for the new garden triggered off a train of events which led to the present most successful nursery. The pictures of this very attractive garden show that we must arrange a group visit as soon as possible. Unfortunately, owing to the 1981 Conference being in our area and another visit already fixed, it will not be possible this year. However Leighton has extended an invitation to anyone who is in the area to call at the nursery. (See "Heatherscaping" Page 87 of the 1980 Year Book). Then followed a short discussion on the 1981 Programme, the four planned events being set out below.

Friday 27th February - 7.30 pm. at Winterbourne. Mrs. Daphne Everett, whose garden and nursery we visited last September, will give a talk with slides on "Famous Heather Nurseries - Famous Heather Names".

Saturday 16th May - 6. pm. at Winterbourne. There will be a social evening and buffet supper on the lines of that held last year and including a tour of the Botanic Garden. Anyone is welcome but prior notice would be helpful.

Sunday 23rd August - We will visit three gardens in the Nottingham area including Crail Nurseries. Tea will be provided by kind invitation of Mr & Mrs. Bob Rope at

their home. More details will be in the Summer Bulletin, but please reserve the date. Friday 20th November - 7.30 pm. at Winterbourne. Another of our members from Leicestershire, Mr. Julian Swain, has promised to arrange a programme for the evening. A title and more details will be available later.

Again we must express our sincere thanks to David Radley for his help and co-operation in allowing us to fix a programme of events at Winterbourne. Detailed copies of this 1981 programme will be available at the meeting on 27th February, or by sending a S.A.E. to me: Alan Dudley, The Spinney, Little Hay, Lichfield, Staffs.WS14 0QD.

Change of Leadership - We are sorry to have to announce that at the November meeting of the group, Mr. Harold Street expressed his desire to give up the position of Group Organiser for what used to be known as "Zone 5". Although he and Margaret continue to attend our meetings, he finds it more difficult to act as Organiser now that he lives at Chipping Campden. I am sure that members of the Group would wish me to take this opportunity of paying tribute to Harold for the work he has put in over the last 7 years in creating and building up the Midlands Group, for it was at his instigation that the Group was formed. In expressing our thanks to Harold we would like to include Margaret his wife, who has been at his side sharing the work.

In response to a letter which Harold sent out in 1973, 15 Heather Society members visited their garden at Sutton Coldfield and from that initial meeting the Midlands Group was formed. Since then a further 26 meetings and garden visits have taken place which have given joy and pleasure to all our members. For this we say "Thank you" and we hope to see you both still attending our future meetings.

In conclusion I must add that Harold has asked me to take his place, and with his help and that of all our members, I will do my best to guide the group's activities in the tradition of high standards set by Harold.

Alan Dudley.

SOUTHERN

On the morning of the 27th September Michael Haworth-Dooth gave us a personally conducted tour of his large garden at Roundhurst near Haslemere, in which he has collected so many rare shrubs and trees, and enlivened his descriptions with many an entertaining story. He demonstrated the strength of the fibres of Phormio tenax and explained how many of his plants thrive in happy symbiosis. He showed us many varieties of Hydrangea, Cornus, and Magnolia and fine specimens of Eucryphia, Paulownia and Eucalyptus. In his greenhouse we saw Oleanders, Campsis x 'Madame Galen', which had escaped through the roof and was flowering outside, the glorious blue, but rampant Ipomoea 'Learii', Mimulus glutinosus and a twenty year old 'Paul Crampel' pelargonium which had never stopped flowering.

In the nursery area our host pointed out a vigorous rock-rose with a spread of at least 9 feet - Cistus parviflorus - which came from the mountains of Crete and has proved completely hardy here. Heathers appeared everywhere, Erica arborea 'Alpina' among the taller shrubs and self-sown seedlings of Daboecia and E. cinerea mingling with the named cultivars, among which E. cinerea 'Lady Skelton' and 'Atrosanguinea' were conspicuous with their bright red shades.

Pat Turpin.

Finally, after a picnic lunch, members were entertained to tea by Mr & Mrs Alfred Bowerman and invited to spend the afternoon enjoying their large and well maintained

garden at Champs Hill. Its great potential was initially developed with great imagination and over the years the garden has been constantly rejuvenated with fresh plantings, so there is always something new to see. Champs Hill at Coldwaltham near Pulborough, Sussex, will again be open to the public this year under the National Gardens Scheme on May 13th/14th and on August 12th/13th. I strongly recommend a visit to any member from other parts of the country who may be in the area on holiday. The garden is open on each of those dates from 2.30 p.m. I would also like to mention here that Mr. & Mrs. Bernard Boxall will be opening their beautiful garden at 'Gilridge', Sandy Lane, Kingswood, Surrey, in aid of disabled children from May 15th/17th this year, for the last time, so don't miss this opportunity to visit (to).

Next meeting - On May 10th at 2.30 p.m. the Group has been invited to visit the home of Dr. Violet Gray, a Vice-President of the Society, at Southcote, Hindhead, to see one of the first all heather gardens. If you would like to meet earlier, bringing your own picnic lunch to my house, I would be delighted to provide liquid refreshment from 12 noon onwards. (Directions: From Hindhead traffic lights take the A3 towards Portsmouth. After about a mile turn right at a crossroads "Crossways Road", then take the second on the left "Mowatt Rd. leading to Kingswood Firs". 'Birches' is a few hundred yards down on the left. There is plenty of parking space at the back of the property, so if you prefer, continue on round the block to the parallel road, park near our yellow brick garage and come in through the garden.) Please phone me (Hind.4947) if you can come at either time, and for directions to nearby 'Southcote'.

Pamela Lee.

SOUTH WEST

During 1980 we enjoyed a full programme of varied and interesting meetings and I am extremely grateful to all those people and organisations who welcomed Society members and friends to their gardens and nurseries.

The 1981 programme of events is also full of interest and I hope that members will take the opportunity of getting together at the various venues to meet each other and 'Talk Heathers'. The meetings are as follows:

On Saturday 21st March 2.p.m. at Lytchett Matravers Village Hall near Poole in Dorset. Mr. W.S. Strain will be talking on and showing slides of Cape Heaths in their natural habitat. He has been photographing plants abroad for many years and his knowledge of plants & photography has given pleasure to many at horticultural & photographic society meetings. Light refreshments will be served at a small cost

On Saturday 11th April at 2.p.m. we will meet at Hyde Crook on the A37 Dorchester to Yeovil road, 6 miles north west of Dorchester on the left hand side of the road. This is the garden of Maj. P.R.A. Birley, and although not a heather garden, it contains many plants grown in association with heathers, i.e. bulbs, Magnolias, Camellias, Acers etc.

On Saturday 4th July we are invited to West Kington Nurseries, Pound Hill, West Kington, Nr. Chippenham, Wilts. This is the nursery of a member Mrs. Barbara Ellis who has kindly offered to show us round. Please meet at the nursery at 2.p.m

On Saturday 18th July at 2.p.m. our venue is the Somerset College of

Agriculture and Horticulture at Cannington, west of Bridgewater, Somerset. Douglas Chalk who lectures at the College and is a H.S. member will show us round the glass-houses and amenity gardens. Members bringing picnic lunches may arrive at the College at 1.15 p.m. where a cup of tea will be provided. At 4 o'clock we will leave the College for Edington, to visit Polden Acres Gardens, the home of Diana and Douglas Chalk who have kindly offered to entertain us to tea and to show us their nursery garden.

On Saturday 5th September we will be visiting Brownsea Island in Poole Harbour. This will be a full day trip and our guide will be an official Brownsea Island Warden whose wife is a H.S. member. Full details of this trip will be in the Summer Bulletin.

Full details of the above visits are available from me at 84 Kinross Road, Rushington, Totton, Southampton, by sending two S.A.E. Members are reminded that there is now no membership fee for the S.W. group and that expenses incurred in arranging visits will be collected 'on the day'. I look forward to your support.

Phil Joyner.

SCRAP BOWL - Titbits of news from members

Erica cinerea 'C.G. Best' - I am prompted by David McClintock's note in the Autumn Bulletin on this attractive coloured cultivar to mention my experience of this colour variation in the wild. There are two other named cultivars, 'Frances' and 'Joyce Burfitt', which are similar to 'C.G. Best', but neither of the has quite such a bright colour. All three, I think, were found on the Great Heath in Dorset. Plants of this colour occur much more commonly in the wild than is generally realised. At first glance an expanse of Bell Heather all seems to be of the same purple colour, it is not until one starts to peer closely that one becomes aware of the amount of variation.

In July 1980 I was directed to a site in the New Forest where a number of colour variations had been seen; within half an hour we had found at least six plants of the 'C.G. Best' colour, fairly widely distributed. The next day, at three different sites in Dorset, we found several more plants of the same colour. After returning home to Surrey I thought it might be worth revisiting a site at Witley Common, where I had assumed contained only the common Bell Heather. A careful search soon revealed two or three plants similar to 'C.G. Best'. As this colour form appears so commonly in the wild, it is perhaps not surprising that a number of seedlings of similar colour should appear in David McClintock's garden.

Pat Turpin.

'Spring Cottage' Penyaemawr, Nr. Usk, Gwent - Many of you will remember with great affection Mrs. Ann Parris, one of our very knowledgeable members and a regular visitor at conferences, who has recently moved to Australia to live with her son. Before leaving she very kindly labelled her heather and shrub collection at Spring Cottage, and the new owners Mr. & Mrs. Harrison have agreed to let H.S. members visit the garden and take cuttings. (They would naturally appreciate an appointment made in advance). This is a generous offer and a garden well worth a visit.

Ed.

Erica tetralix - It seems to me that many people overlook this species when planning a heather garden. Perhaps it is less showy than Calluna vulgaris or Erica cinerea but the downy foliage has a pleasant greyish appearance and the large bells of the paler coloured cultivars have an opalescent sheen. In addition to these modest charms it has a number of interesting characteristics. It derives its vernacular name of Cross Leaved Heath from its habit of carrying its leaves in whorls of four in the form of a cross. However, the leaves are sometimes borne in whorls of three or five. It will grow in dry situations in the garden, but in the wild it is usually found in damp places. The researches of Dr. Helen Jones have shown that it can survive in waterlogged conditions which would prove fatal to Calluna or other Erica species. Under these conditions it is capable of taking up iron in quantities which would be lethal to other Heaths. Though it can withstand waterlogging and high concentrations of iron, it is adversely affected by lime. This has led to an unusual distribution pattern on the Somerset levels. Here it is not found in the wettest parts of the marsh, but on low hummocks of moss peat which stand above the rather alkaline sedge peat covering the majority of the marsh.

Perhaps one of the most interesting things about this species is the readiness with which it produces hybrids. With E. ciliaris it has produced E.x watsonii a hybrid of proven if limited fertility; with E. vagans it has produced E.x williamsii; and with E. mackaiana it has produced E.x stuartii. None of the other Heaths of the Northern Hemisphere is known to hybridise with more than one other species.

Bert Jones.

Heathers in Australia - Could the following extract from an old copy of "The Garden" refer to the first introduction of European heathers into Australia? Perhaps a member can confirm this?.. "In the ice-house with the salmon ova from England, arriving at Hobart Town in May 1866, two bundles of heather and a few shrubs were sent as an experiment to try this plan of sending plants..... these were sent to Mr. Mitchell at the experimental farm who reported "The shrubs and also the two species of heath (Calluna vulgaris and Erica ciliaris) three plants of each sent out on the surface of the ice bin arrived here in the most perfect condition.....as fresh as if they had only been lifted out of the nursery on the day they were handed to me."

Coincidentally, a member now living in Australia at Merricks, Victoria 3916 writes: "It is not easy to grow most European heathers in this part of the world as our summers are too hot and dry, but I have a successful and most lovely border of Daboecia cantabrica 'Alba' and another of Erica carnea 'Springwood Pink' (strangely 'Springwood White' is not quite so successful here) and of course good old Erica x darleyensis. The South African heathers being taller do not make such good edging plants except for Erica autumnalis which grows here very quickly and happily and appears to flower twice yearly. And, though taller growing still, we have very promising groups of Erica canaliculata 'Wilmorei' and 'Aurora'. Our garden is on acid clay, the average rainfall is 35", and we are subject to drying winds in summer being situated about 2 miles from Boss straight."

Galls - Will members please look on this year especially for 'artichoke' galls on heathers - the swellings usually leafy at the tips of shoots. Work is actively in

progress on them and the more examples members can send fresh, or pressed and dried, from home or abroad, the better. David McClintock, Bracken Hill, Platt, Kent.

A new Heather Society? - The following is an extract from a letter from Mrs. Ann Wheeler: "We are trying to establish a heather society in the eastern United States - the Society in the west seems to be flourishing. It is with real pleasure that I read all your bulletins, and really wish that some day I could visit England and Scotland to see these beautiful plants you write about. I do have a few heathers and heaths in my New England garden and enjoy them so much." Hitherto enthusiasts in the East have had a very long way to travel to meetings organised by the Pacific Northwest Heather Society, and we wish them every success in their efforts to form a group of their own. (Hon. Sec.)

DIARY OF EVENTS

- Feb. 27th Midlands Group - Talk at Winterbourne, 7.30 pm. See Group News.
Mar. 21st South West Group - Talk at Lytchett Matravers Village Hall 2 pm. See Group News.
Apr. 11th " " " - Garden visit 2 p.m. See Group News.
Apr. 11th North Thames Group - Inaugural meeting (See Sec.'s Notes) 3 p.m.
Apr. 25th CLOSING DATE for material for the SUMMER BULLETIN.
May 10th Southern Group garden visits 12 noon & 2.30 p.m. See Group News.
May 13/14th Champs Hill open to the public - See Southern Group News.
May 15/17th Gilridge, Kingswood, open to public (See Southern Group News).
May 16th Midlands Group - Social evening at Winterbourne 6 pm. See Group News.
May 20/22nd Chelsea Flower Show - A few tickets are available from Hon. Sec. (S.A.E. to Birches, Kingswood Firs, Grayshott, Hindhead, Surrey).
May 30th North East Group - Garden visits - See Group News.
Jul. 4th South West Group - Garden visit - See Group News.
Jul. 18th " " " " " " " " "
Aug. 9th Southern Group visit Claremont, and Brig. Lucas-Phillips' Garden - 11 a.m. Details to follow.
Aug. 11/12th Flower Show. Council Meeting, RHS Hall, Westminster.
Aug. 12/13th Champs Hill open to the public - See Southern Group News.
Aug. 23rd Midlands Group - Garden visits - See Group News.
Sept. 5th South West Group visit to Brownsea Island - See Group News.
Sept. 11/13th ANNUAL CONFERENCE & AGM. Telford Hall, University of Loughborough.
Nov. 20th Midlands Group - Talk at Winterbourne 7.30 pm. See Group News.
Nov. 24/25th Flower Show. Council Meeting, RHS Hall, Westminster.

Garden to Visit in Scotland - Mrs. Jean Pattullo, of Blairhoyle, Port of Monteith, Nr. Stirling, who is continuing the retail side of her heather nursery, says that she has 20 acres of beautifully laid out gardens and grounds, open to the public from time to time and under the National Trust, and would welcome visits from other Heather Society members.