

THE HEATHER SOCIETY BULLETIN

Vol. 3 No. 6.

SUMMER 1982

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

Since the publication of our 1982 Year Book and Spring Bulletin, we have received the sad news of the death of Mr. Alfred Bowerman one of the founder members of the Society. He will be missed by all of us who remember him as our past Chairman and as a welcoming host to his lovely garden Champs Hill. Constance MacLeod has kindly written an obituary which we felt should be published in this bulletin and not kept for inclusion in the 1983 Year Book.

Our Society continues to grow and flourish thanks to the vision of all our founder members.

Diane Jones.

MR ALFRED BOWERMAN

It is with deep sorrow that I have to tell you of the death on 22nd February of Mr Alfred Bowerman.

Twenty years ago he and his wife Margaret responded to Sir John Charrington's appeal to those gardeners who loved heathers to support him in the founding of a Heather Society, to take its honoured place among the many other specialist gardening societies. I well recall not long afterwards meeting them at John Letts' garden when Margaret said "We are busy making a heather garden: there is not much to see yet, but when there is, we hope you will come and visit it." How wonderfully they fulfilled that wish is reflected in the many hundreds of members who have visited Champs Hill, and have enjoyed their gracious hospitality and the beauty of their garden.

Neither of them joined the "Committee" (as we then were) immediately but in 1966 with typical diffidence, Alfred suggested to me that Margaret would like to take her share in the responsibility of running the Society, and as they always liked doing things together, he too joined us in 1970, bringing his wise counsel as a countryman to our deliberations. It was therefore very apparent, when Sir John relinquished his position as Chairman in 1971 to become President, following the resignation of Mr Fred Chapple, that the Committee with one accord proposed that Mr Bowerman should become the new Chairman. This he accepted, attending conferences and with great devotion putting his supreme talents as a mediator to the new task, which included the elevation of the "Committee" to a "Council" in 1973.

I as Secretary was proud to serve under him until my resignation in 1977 which proved to be his last full year as Chairman. Declining health in 1978 forced him to resign in favour of General Turpin, but again, never one to presume his authority, he reverted to being an ordinary member of Council, attending when he was able.

We extend our affectionate sympathy to his wife, son and daughter in their great loss.

Constance MacLeod.

R.H.S. SHOW RESULTS Cont.

Class 7. A HEATH OR HEATHER SHOWN FOR FOLIAGE EFFECT, one plant.

6 entries from 3 entrants.

1st. Mr. D. McClintock

Erica vagans 'Valerie Proudley'

2nd. Major General P.G. Turpin

Calluna vulgaris 'Golden Rivulet'

Class 15. A TREE OR SHRUB GROWN UNDER GLASS, one vase.

2nd. Borde Hill

Erica canaliculata.

Heather Society Stand

Large round containers.

1. Calluna vulgaris 'Serlie Aurea'

2. Calluna vulgaris 'Robert Chapman'

3. Erica carnea 'Myretoun Ruby'

4. Erica carnea 'Prince of Wales'

5. Erica carnea 'Vivellii'

6. Erica carnea 'John Kampa'

Small square containers.

A. Erica carnea 'Carnea'

B. Erica carnea 'Cecilia M. Beale'

C. Erica carnea 'Aurea'

D. Calluna vulgaris 'Winter Chocolate'

3 Flower arrangements.

Awarded a Banksian Silver Medal.

Helpers:- Tuesday - D. Mayne, B.J. London, Mrs. Turpin.

Wednesday - E. Wiseman, B.J. London, Maj.Gen. and Mrs. Turpin.

The new Heather Society set of leaflets on "How to Grow Heathers", "How to Choose Heathers" and "How to Propagate Heathers" were ready just in time for the first R.H.S. Show of the year on the 16/17th February and were on sale at the Heather Society stand, where the public showed great interest in them and the Heather Society.

BEST GARDEN OF THE YEAR: Organised by ICI, with the prize of a video recorder for the Society with 3 gardening cassettes, this competition is open to any member of a Society such as ours. The best 10 gardens will receive prizes of either ICI garden products or horticulture trade association gift vouchers to the value of £25 each. Judging will be from colour photographs, to be submitted by 1st October 1982, by a panel from ICI Garden Products and the Editor of Popular Gardening, and the garden can be either flower or vegetable or both. Entry forms are available from the Popular Gardening Magazine.

Hon. Sec.

R.H.S. SHOW - HEATHER COMPETITIONS - AUGUST 10/11th 1982

Even the owner of a very small bed of heathers could be the winner of one of the Classes for Heathers at the Show on August 10/11th. One class which should be particularly attractive to the ladies is for a flower arrangement of heathers in a miniature basket - please let us see more than the two entries there were last year! Write to the Secretary of the R.H.S. - or to me - for a Schedule.

Hon. Sec.

NEW MEMBERS - Three Interesting Records

Earlier this year, and during the same week, three new records were established during the registration of new members. The first precedent was set by enrolment of our youngest new member - an enthusiastic seven-year old who is appropriately named Heather! The second record was created at the other end of the age-scale by our oldest new member who, at the age of eighty, has decided to adopt heather gardening as a hobby of fascinating interest. Thirdly, we registered what must surely be the most northerly group of heather gardeners in the world - the Armeria Gardening Club in Shetland who plan to bring some horticultural colour to the neighbourhood of the oil terminal there.

HELP PLEASE!

The Spring Mailings sent to the following addresses have been returned by the G.P.O. marked 'Gone Away'. I would be very pleased if anyone who knows the present address of these members would inform me so that we may be in touch once more with them.

Mr. J.W. Baker, Frensham, Blue Mills Hill, Witham, Essex.

Mr. & Mrs. S.K. Chantry, 5 Hindburn Close, West Bessacarr, Doncaster.

Mrs. J.M. Browne, The Narrows, 4 Woodlands Glade, Beaconsfield, HP9 1JZ.

Mr. R.E. Ratcliffe, The Maples, Hampers Lane, Storrington, Pulborough, Sussex.
RH20 3HZ.

Invitations to members. Mr. C.A. Richards, Rydal Mount, Eskdale, Holmbrook, Cumbria, invites members who are holidaying in the Lake District or attending our Conference at Lancaster to visit his garden. This is a most interesting garden and members will be full of admiration at the successful way Mr Richards has overcome the problems of a difficult terrain.

Members travelling to the Continent are invited to visit the gardens of Mr Curt Brose (Germany) and of Count B. de La Rochefoucauld (France).

Ken Farrah.

GROUP NEWS

NORTH EAST (NEWCASTLE)

Favoured by fine weather and good company, our Group and a few friends visited the Edinburgh Botanic Gardens on 17th April. We were surprised to find that despite the severe winter there was a wonderful display of magnolias, rhododendrons, azalias and various flowering shrubs, also the recently laid out rock garden and alpine displays. The heather beds appeared to have suffered, and recent new plantings had not yet become established. The great variety of trees and shrubs within the gardens and glasshouses were fully explored and enjoyed by the party just in time for a meal in the City, and a return home via coastline scenery and a wonderful sun set.

Our autumn indoor meeting will include a showing of some Heather Society colour slides followed by a 'hints and tips' discussion on Monday 22nd November at 7.30pm in the Ponteland Methodist Church Hall. Do come along and bring an interested friend.

Syd Courtney.

MIDLANDS

The Midlands Group is happy to report that two successful meetings have been held during the winter months, in each case the speaker being a member of the Group.

On November 20th ('81) 27 members enjoyed a talk and demonstration at Winterbourne given by Mr Julian Swain. With the use of visual aid charts and live material, Julian demonstrated the various methods of propagation including seed, layering, division and cuttings and showed numerous items of equipment and compost which he uses.

The practical nature of the demonstrations combined with the technical information proved to be a great attraction.

At our meeting on 26th February also at Winterbourne, 35 members were entertained by Mr Des Oliver, who gave an illustrated talk using slides from the Society's Slide Library. He described the various modules of slides which are available on loan and suggested that members giving talks to local Horticultural Societies might find it helpful to borrow a set of slides to assist their talks.

The slide show was followed by useful discussion during which the view was expressed that the emphasis should be more on views of heathers in small gardens rather than spectacular examples in large estates. This led to the suggestion that members should take photographs of their own or their friends' gardens during the coming year which might form the basis of an interesting meeting for 1983 and also additional slides for the Library. Our thanks go to Julian and Des for two enjoyable meetings.

Future Plans - On Saturday 21st August (10.45 - 3.30), Leighton and Elizabeth Jones are arranging an 'Open Day' for us at their heather garden and 'Landscaping Nursery' at 109a Station Road, Broughton Astley, Leicester. They have kindly offered to provide hot drinks at 11am, 1pm and 3pm and if we bring our picnic lunches we shall be able to eat these in the garden. Broughton Astley is on the B581 east of Hinkley.

The Birmingham Show, 3rd, 4th and 5th September, unfortunately coincides with our Annual Conference at Lancaster, but Bernard Skett has arranged to stage a Heather Society Stand, similar to last year's one, and will be grateful for volunteers to help man the stand.

At Winterbourne on 19th November, 7.30pm, we will have a talk by Stewart Warner, the title of which is yet to be announced. Stewart has now completed his training at Loughborough and as a qualified Horticulturist, has joined his parents Ray and Olwen in running their Barncroft Nursery.

Further details from:- Alan Dudley, The Spinney, Little Hay, Lichfield, Staffs.
WS14 0QD. Tel: Shenstone 481183.

Alan Dudley.

SOUTHERN

A total of 37 members travelled on March 20th from as far away as Kent, East Sussex, Essex and Hertfordshire to participate in a full day of activities attractive enough to encourage seven members who had not previously attended a meeting to join us. Wisley is not just a series of beautiful gardens covering every aspect of the art, with something to admire at any time of the year: it is a garden of teaching and demonstration, with results clearly visible for the public to learn from. This was how our guide John Clayton the P.R.O. presented it on this comprehensive tour, telling many interesting stories about plants and the design history of various features. The weather remained dry and windless and our warmly clad members were undeterred by the low temperatures. It was sad to see how the severe winter frosts and snow had affected many precious plants and trees, but it was at that time too early to ascertain to what extent they would recover.

Although some members bade farewell at lunchtime, another half dozen joined us at St. George's Hall, Esher. Maj.Gen. Turpin again delighted and amazed the audience with the diversity and quality of the many transparencies he has taken over the past 12 months, of heather gardens, individual plants and members at the Annual Conference and Group meetings. This was followed by a lively Open Forum, when a panel of experienced gardeners answered new members' questions. Tea was given and organised by Mrs Wiseman, whose tasty home-made biscuits were very much appreciated.

Next Meeting: Despite the sad news reported in this Bulletin, Mrs Margaret Bowerman is kindly continuing to open her garden to the public this year and will be welcoming members of the Heather Society from 2.30pm onwards on the afternoon of Saturday August 21st - a very beautiful time of the year at Champs Hill, Coldwaltham, near Pulborough in Sussex. If anyone would like to bring a picnic lunch, it is suggested that we meet first around 12 noon in the sand quarry below the garden, the entrance to which is a little farther along the lane. (From Pulborough on the A29 turn right in Coldwaltham onto Fittleworth Road; the entrance is 300yds along on the right. From Petworth, approach through Fittleworth.)

Future Plans. On Sunday 26th September, we will be meeting at 2.30pm in the garden of Brig. and Mrs Smith near Farnham. Some of you may remember our spring visit to Greenoge, Seale, four years ago, but it is advisable to send for a sketch map - maps are available from me for both visits but please send a SAE.

Pamela Lee.

SOUTH WEST

On Saturday 27th March, members met at the usual Spring rendezvous of Lytchett Matravers Village Hall in Maxwell and Beale country near Poole, Dorset. The weather was sunny and warm and more appropriate to an outdoor meeting rather than an indoor one. Mr John Kelly, the Curator of Abbotsbury Gardens had been invited to give an illustrated talk about the Gardens, but due to illness was unable to attend. Fortunately Mrs Kennedy came to our rescue, and at very short notice gave members an illustrated talk on the flora of South Africa with many botanical references. The talk was of great interest to the members and I can only express extreme gratitude to Mrs Kennedy. After the talk, refreshments were served, and members had the opportunity to meet our guests Maj.Gen Turpin and his wife Cherry and the Far West Group Convenor Mrs June Randall. The afternoon was rounded off with a few more slides of heaths and heathers. My thanks to Joyce Burfitt, Mrs Joyner Snr. and my wife for organising the refreshments.

Future Plans. A visit has been arranged to George Osmond's nursery at Wickwar, near Wotton-under-Edge, Gloucestershire, on Saturday 3rd July at 2.0pm. The meeting will take the form of a walk around the nursery, and Midlands Group members will be most welcome to join us.

Then on Sunday September 19th at 2.0pm we will be visiting Coombe Quarry at Keinton Mandeville (Nr Somerton) Somerset at the invitation of Mr & Mrs John Burton. This 3½ acre garden has been created on a reclaimed Quarry within the last 10 years and contains an interesting collection of lime-tolerant trees and shrubs.

Further details of both these visits are available on receipt of a SAE.

May I once again ask Group members to open their gardens for a Group visit - if we can visit two or three gardens on the same afternoon then each visit can be appropriate to the size of the garden - large or small. Please contact me with your offers and suggestions.

Phil Joyner.

SCRAP BOWL - Titbits of news from members

Calluna vulgaris. Th the Spring Bulletin, Mr R.C.D. Kingsford discussed early flowering Callunas. Conditions in Surrey are rather different from those N.E. of Lancaster. Here 'Mullardoch' and 'Caerketton White' are usually the earliest in flower, with 'Inshriach Bronze' and 'Tenius' not far behind. June 10th is about usual for 'Tenuis'. 'Tib' is by far the earliest double-flowered cultivar and is usually fully out by mid-July. I have an early-flowering lilac seedling, which appeared near 'Caerketton White' and flowers at about the same time - in full flower by the 17th June 1981. Of course, the dates vary, as much as by a fortnight or three weeks, depending on the weather.

(STOP PRESS - 'Lochturret' and 'Betty Baum' are in the lead this year, the former with a few flowers already, and the latter with the buds just beginning to open. 7.6.82.)

Pat Turpin.

Heathers for Spring Colour. What a reward we had to feast our eyes on after the snows had gone! All our winter-flowering heathers showing forth their beautiful colours, and the foliage plants shouting out their attributes. This winter, although a few flowers were frost-burnt it seemed the heathers were richer in colour than ever before. Even Erica carnea 'Vivellii' which never flowered much for me either on red clay or on this rich acid soil, has a profusion of flowers. The only cultivar I lost(?) was Erica erigena 'Irish Salmon' but even its roots may have survived.

We moved to our present house just over 3 years ago and the laying out of the garden was done with much energy. I now have 69 cultivars mostly in clumps of ten. My job in the late spring and early summer is to propagate approximately 55,000 heathers. My garden is mainly for my stock plants but it is also a garden of pleasure. I derive so much pleasure from heathers, even weeding them is better than housework!

Pam Raxter, Zone 7.

Heather Wine. Further to the article on this subject in our current Year Book, may I suggest a few amendments which in my experience will ensure that members will not be disappointed with their efforts.

1. A flower wine is delicate and so as not to destroy the flavour and bouquet I personally would avoid boiling (a method recommended only for roots as in parsnip wine). A simple and safe way is to soak the petals for 24 hours in a gallon of cold water to which one Campden tablet (Sod.Metabisulphite) has been added.
2. To ensure an immediate and successful fermentation, the squeezed fruit juices should have been placed the previous day in a small bottle with the crushed yeast and yeast nutrient tablets plus a teaspoon of sugar. If this is plugged with cotton wool and kept in a warm place for about 48 hours, an active "Starter" will be ready to add to the "Must".
3. Peels from citrus fruits can impart a bitter flavour to wine unless all the white pith is pared away, before adding to the petals and sugar. (2lbs of sugar is usually sufficient for a dry wine and 3lbs at most for a sweet one). Add the starter bottle and allow to ferment in the covered bin for 4 days. Strain liquid into a demijohn and secure with a fermentation lock.
4. For the dry wine: Leave until all the fermentation has ceased and the wine perfectly clear before racking off the thin sediment into sterilised bottles.

5. For the sweet wine: Check at intervals during fermentation with a hydrometer and when the reading is down to 1.010 add one teaspoon of Pot.Sorbate to arrest the fermentation before all the sugar is converted.

6. It is never wise to use as much as 4lbs of sugar in a gallon. This amount would inhibit the yeast, leaving a non-alcoholic citrus syrup. The slow process of "feeding" wines gradually with small quantities of sugar after 3lbs has been converted, is only successful when making the specialist richer wines of the Port and Sauterne types.

- One last tip - Try to let the wine mature a little before drinking it!

Pamela Lee, Zone 11.

DIARY OF EVENTS

- July 3rd SouthWest Group visit to George Osmond's nursery, Wickwar. See Group News.
 Aug. 10th COUNCIL MEETING, RHS Halls, Westminster.
 Aug.10/11th RHS Summer Flower Show and Heather Competitions, RHS Halls, Westminster.
 Aug.11/12th Mrs. A.H. Bowerman's garden open to the public - Nat.Gdns.Scheme, 11am-7pm.
 Champs Hill, Coldwaltham, Sussex.
 Aug.21st Southern Group visit to Champs Hill, see Group News.
 Aug.21st Midlands Group visit to Broughton Astley, see Group News.
 Sept.3/5th Birmingham Show, see Group News.
 Sept.3/6th ANNUAL CONFERENCE, Lancaster University.
 Sept.11th CLOSING DATE for material for the Autumn Bulletin.
 Sept.19th SouthWest Group visit to Coombe Quarry, Keinton Mandeville. See Group News.
 Sept.21/23rd Great Autumn Show, RHS New Hall Westminster - SAE to Hon.Sec. for limited tickets.
 Sept.26th Southern Group visit to Greenoge, Seale, Nr Farnham - See Group News.
 Oct.31st CLOSING DATE for material for the 1983 Year Book.
 Nov.19th Midlands Group - Talk by Stewart Warner at Winterbourne - See Group News.
 Nov.22nd North East Group, Talk with slides at Ponteland Methodist Church Hall, 7.30pm. See Group News.
 Nov.23rd COUNCIL MEETING, RHS Halls, Westminster.
 Nov.23/24th RHS Flower Show inc. Class for Heathers.