

THE HEATHER SOCIETY BULLETIN

Vol. 3. No. 15.

SUMMER 1985

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

What a joy it is to be enjoying some warm weather, although rain would be very welcome too. After an excessively cold and dry spring, we suffered more damage on the young heathers this year than in any previous year. *E. Erigena* is known to be more tender than other species, so the losses here were no surprise. What did come as a shock was the extent of the damage to *E.x darleyensis* cultivars. Some plants which looked dead in March have since recovered and bloomed later than normal despite a heavy loss of leaf; and these after trimming are looking reasonably healthy. Some plants however did not recover and had split stems which we have only seen previously on *E. erigena*. We would be interested to hear of members' experiences in other areas of the country, so please do write.

When members send us their observations, comments or other interesting items in the form of a letter, we trust they will be happy for us to use extracts for our news letter (Bulletin) or for the Year Book. A letter requesting permission to use each item is both time consuming and expensive, so we hope this arrangement is acceptable to everyone. Incidentally, more items from members would be most welcome!

Diane Jones.

15th ANNUAL CONFERENCE, 6th-9th September 1985.

Details of the Conference were published in the Spring issue of the Bulletin. For easy reference the Conference charges are repeated below.

Residents :	Friday evening to Monday morning	£52.00
	Friday evening to Sunday afternoon	42.00
Non-residents :	Coffee, lunch and dinner, per day	12.00
	Sunday coach trip, including entry to Nymans gardens	5.00

Payment for the Conference charges should be sent to Mrs. P.B. Lee by the 15th July.

Cheques to be made payable to :- "Heather Society Conference". Requests for special diets or preferences for ground-floor bedrooms should be notified to Mrs. P.B. Lee in ample time for arrangements to be made.

Conference members should bring thermos flasks for the excursion to Nymans.

In place of the talk which was to be given by the late Mr. O.J. Clayton, Mr. C.D. Brickell, President of the Society, will give a talk on "Nomenclature". Mr. Brickell is Chairman of the International Commission for the Nomenclature of Cultivated Plants. For any queries regarding the Conference, members should get in touch with Mrs. P.B. Lee, Birches, Kingswood Firs, Grayshott, Hindhead, Surrey GU26 6EX. (Tel. Hindhead (956) 4947)

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, 1985.

The Annual General Meeting of the Heather Society will be held during the Conference at Lodge Hill Residential Centre, Watersfield, Near Pulborough, West Sussex, on Sunday 8th September at 9.00 a.m. The Agenda for the meeting is enclosed with this issue of the Bulletin.

16th ANNUAL CONFERENCE, 1986.

The 16th Annual Conference of the Heather Society will be held at the University of Leeds during September 1986.

Dr. Kenneth Barraclough has kindly agreed to be responsible for the organisation of the Conference.

In Memoriam. O. J. Clayton, A.M.H.

It was a sad day for the Heather Society when we heard of the untimely death of John Clayton, one of the best friends which the Society ever had. All those members who knew him and appreciated his kind friendliness and his enthusiasm for heathers will mourn his passing and greatly miss his cheerful company.

In recognition of the great help which he gave to the Society in its early days, while he was responsible for the heather garden at Wisley, he was made an Honorary Member. Afterwards, when he was Public Relations Officer at Wisley, he went out of his way to welcome and to guide visiting parties from the Heather Society Groups. On the 15th May 1980 he guided a large party of the Dutch Heather Society around the Wisley gardens.

Since his retirement from Wisley he settled on the edge of the New Forest near Ringwood and has been a great supporter of the South West Group of the Heather Society. Phil Joyner, the organiser of the Group, represented the Heather Society at his funeral.

We had been looking forward to having John Clayton as one of our guest speakers at this year's Heather Society Conference at Pulborough. Instead we shall have to rely on our memories of him. For many, our last meeting with him will have been during the 1984 Conference, at Bodnant and Ness Gardens, where he was conducting a party of S.A.G.A.

We shall all greatly miss him. We offer our heartfelt sympathy to Mrs. Clayton and his family. P.G.T.

ROYAL HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY SHOW, 19th/20th FEBRUARY 1985.

Competition for Ornamental Plants from the Open.

Class 5. A tree heath such as *Erica lusitanica*, *E. arborea*, *E. x veitchii*, in bloom, one vase. 5 entries.

1st National Trust, Coleton Fish Acre.	<i>E. arborea</i> .
2nd National Trust, Nymans Gardens.	<i>E. lusitanica</i>
3rd Major General and Mrs. P.G. Turpin	<i>E. lusitanica</i> .
4th Hon. Mrs. Edward Boscawen.	<i>E. lusitanica</i> .

Class 6. A heath or heather, in bloom, one plant. 2 entries.

1st Mrs. T.N. Forbes.	<i>E. x darleyensis</i> 'Dunreggan'
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Class 7. A heath or heather other than those eligible for Class 5, in bloom, one vase/bowl. 9 entries.

1st Mr. B.G. London	<i>E. carnea</i> 'King George'
2nd Mr. B.G. London	<i>E. carnea</i> 'December Red'
3rd Mrs. D. Mayne	<i>E. erigena</i> unnamed
4th Mrs. T.N. Forbes	<i>E. carnea</i> 'Myretoun Ruby'
H.C. Mr. B.G. London	<i>E. x darleyensis</i> 'Darley Dale'

Class 8. A heath or heather shown for foliage effect, one plant. 2 entries.

2nd Mrs. T.N. Forbes	<i>Calluna vulgaris</i> 'Ruth Sparkes'
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The Heather Society stand had a selection of heathers in containers, including *E. x darleyensis* 'Arthur Johnson', *E. carnea* 'Ann Sparkes', 'December Red', 'Heathwood' and 'Myretoun Ruby', *E. vagans* 'Valerie Proudley' and *Calluna* 'Beoley Gold', 'Multicolor', 'Robert Chapman' and 'Sir John Charrington', kindly provided by Windlesham Nurseries. Major General and Mrs. Turpin were assisted at the stand by Mr. and Mrs. Mayne, Mr. London and Mr. Bridgland.

GROUP NEWS

NORTH EAST (NEWCASTLE)

Our annual indoor 'get-together' took the form of a members' presentation, in fact four of our members made their contribution to a very enjoyable evening and, judging by the fact that we overran our time schedule with many questions and a discussion, it was an informative occasion. Mrs. Margaret Hale gave an illustrated talk on the propagation and culture of heathers, David Goodchild devoted his section to 'Colour in the Garden', whilst Syd Courtney together with Jim Skipp showed many slides on 'Garden Design'. As is usual, some local publicity brought several non-members along and no doubt in due course our membership will grow.

MIDLANDS (BIRMINGHAM)

On May 18th the Midlands Group met at Winterbourne for our now almost traditional Spring Social & Buffet Supper. The weather was reasonably kind and most members took the opportunity of looking round Winterbourne's lovely gardens before we ate, drank and made merry.

This is probably the last time I can refer to our Group as 'Midlands', as one of our members, Leighton Jones from Leicester, announced at the meeting that he hopes to start an 'East' Midlands Group. We all wish Leighton success.

Our next meeting on August 17th is a visit to Mr. & Mrs. Law at a new heather nursery : Brooklands Heathers, Brooklands, Nuneaton Road, Mancetter, Nr. Atherstone, Warks. Tel. Atherstone 2959. (If anyone who was not at the last meeting would like a map please get in touch with me Tel. 0885 82206).

This nursery has only been established about 12 months and it will be interesting to visit it in its early stages, with the hope that we can re-visit it some time in the future. We are invited to meet at 1 p.m. with our packed lunches which we can eat on the lawn. (Please bring rugs or chairs.) After lunch we can look round the nursery and garden.

To make a day of it, we also have the opportunity to visit Mr. Graham Cooke's outstanding heather garden in the morning. His address is : "Little Froome", 2 Drayton Lane, Fenny Drayton, Nuneaton, Warks. Graham Cooke's garden is only about 2 miles from our afternoon visit, so I suggest that we meet at Fenny Drayton at about 11 a.m.

The Autumn meeting is on November 22nd. The room at Winterbourne will be open at 7.30 p.m. but the meeting will start at 8 'clock at the request of members with long distances to travel. Mr. Peter Hutchinson, whose serious illness prevented him from giving his illustrated talk on 'Rhododendrons and other Ericaceous Plants' last March, hopes to be fit enough to come and give it then.

N.B. The winter meeting has been provisionally fixed for 7th March 1986.

Daphne Everett.

MIDLANDS (LEICESTER)

I have been approached by several members in the East Midlands to take the initiative in setting up an East Midlands Group of the Heather Society. I have written to a number of members in the Leicester area, but I shall be pleased to hear from anyone in the East Midlands Zone or adjacent Zones who would find it convenient to attend meetings in Leicester. I would also particularly like to hear from anyone who would be prepared to assist in the running of an East Midlands Group, and to have any suggestions for an alternative meeting place to Leicester. Please contact me at : Linden Lodge, Station Road, Broughton Astley, or Tel. Sutton Elms 282505.

Leighton Jones.

SOUTHERN

We have held two meetings so far this year which will be reported in the next Bulletin. In September the Annual Conference will be held in our area for the first time since 1975 and it is an opportunity for anyone not wishing to come for the whole weekend to attend for one or both of the two days (beginning Friday evening). This booking may be made with me later than for residents - up to 31st August.

It is perhaps of interest to record that this year both the South West and the Southern Groups celebrate their 10th anniversary. In the South only two couples who attended our inaugural meeting at Hindhead are still regular participants, but a very large and ever changing membership has attended gatherings since then. During the first four years we held five annual meetings and for the next four years there were four annually. Attendances occasionally reached 43 members from 6 counties. Last year, when my family commitments had to take precedence, I was glad to hand over arrangements to other members and three successful meetings were organised.

For 1986 one invitation has been received for a day in April and details will follow, but help is now urgently needed in the planning of our future programme if you want your Group to continue to flourish as it has done in the past. Please write to me with any suggestions or, better still, if any of you would be willing to take on the organisation of a programme of events for the forthcoming year. Pamela Lee

SOUTH WEST.

Saturday March 30th was a wet and windy day but fortunately our meeting was indoors at Lytchett Matravers Village Hall. Our Chairman/Maj.Gen. Pat Turpin entertained members with a talk describing many aspects of heather gardening. The talk was well illustrated with many excellent slides showing both the cultural side of heather gardening and the end results.

On the same afternoon and after some refreshments, a small table Show was judged, and the results for a vase of 6 stems of winter-flowering Ericas was as follows :-

1st Phil Joyner; 2nd Bill Vicary; 3rd Val Davis.

Hopefully the table Show can be expanded to include another couple of classes, but the continued success of this venture is only assured if members support it in sufficient numbers. My thanks go to Pat Turpin for his enjoyable and informative talk, and Joyce Burfitt, Val Davis, Mrs. Joyner Snr. & Jnr, and Miss Joyner for providing and serving the refreshments.

A blustery but sunny day on Saturday April 27th saw members visiting the garden at Stowell Hill near Templecombe in Somerset. This garden, owned by Mr. & Mrs. R.J. McCreery, is mentioned in the "Yellow Book", and contained a dazzling display of naturalised Narcissii, Daffodils, and Fritillaria growing alongside and under Rhododendrons and large Magnolias. The front of the house, built in local stone, faces south looking over the Blackmoor Vale and the North Dorset Downs beyond. After wandering around the garden, members sat on the patio and enjoyed some refreshment whilst taking-in the breathtaking views. We are grateful to Mr. & Mrs. McCreery, their housekeeper and gardener for their hospitality.

Future Plans : Another garden visit is arranged for Saturday 29th June when we shall be going to the Cobbles at Shillingstone Nr. Blandford. Please meet there at 2.00 p.m. The garden is described as a large cottage garden on chalk, and is to be found in the village of Shillingstone opposite the Old Ox Inn on the A 357 between Blandford and Sturminster Newton.

On Saturday 31st August, we then have an opportunity to visit Heatherwood Nursery at Ashington near Wimborne, locally famous for its Minster brand of potting composts. To reach the nursery, turn off the A 349 one mile south of Wimborne into Merley Park Road going west, and then after one mile turn into Ashington Lane.

Looking ahead now to 1986. I would welcome an invitation from a Group member for the Group to visit **their** garden (however large or small) - perhaps we can arrange a date now ?

Phil Joyner.

SCRAP BOWL - Titbits of news from members.

Heather cuttings Mr. P.L. Joyner in his interesting article "From Heathland to Garden" in the 1985 Year Book says, when discussing the taking of cuttings (p.39), that these can be tips "but are preferably half-ripe laterals taken with a heel". Can Mr. Joyner advance any experimental evidence for either of these propositions, one - that laterals make better cuttings, and two - that they must be taken with a heel, or is he speaking solely from personal experience ? Certainly, my personal experience (unscientific) has been, at least with regard to taking cuttings with a heel, that this is quite unnecessary, but I would be perfectly happy to be proved wrong by Mr. Joyner.

R.C.D. Kingsford, Zone 4.

When is heather not heather ? An extract from "The Oxford Book of Bird Names" by Prof W.B. Lockwood (OUP, £7.95) p.80. Heather Bleat. A widespread northern and Scottish term for the Snipe . . . essentially a folk - etymological development of a single original name seen in Old English (11th cent.) meaning "billy goat bleater". The expression alludes to the characteristic drumming, that resonant neighing or bleating sound heard from the air borne male, especially during courtship.

David McClintock, Zone 11.

Heather perfume - Heather ale, heather honey, and now heather perfume is on the market. A company - Chevy Chase Perfumes Ltd. - has recently been formed at Otterburn in Northumberland to make perfumes from heather - mostly Ling.

We do not usually associate scent with the common species of heather, ling, bell-heather and cross-leaved heath. And yet they have a strong attraction for bees, butterflies and moths.

Some forms of *E. arborea* have the strongest scent of all heathers, rather like that of hawthorn. *E. lusitanica*, *E.x veitchii* and *E. australis* and also scented *E. erigena*, after it has been warmed by the spring sunshine has a delightful fragrance of honey, and so have some of the *E.x darleyensis* hybrids, especially 'Arthur Johnson'. *E. manipuliflora* has a most pleasant perfume to add to its other excellent qualities, not least of which is its hardiness. In Surrey it was proof against all the low temperatures of January and February 1985, without any protection whatever.

Pat Turpin, Zone 11.

Heather bark splitting 147 years ago. "Happening to be in Kew Gardens, I was much struck with the effects of the severe frost on different species of heath in the open garden. The species, I think, were *E.stricta* (terminalis), *E.mediterranea* (erigena), *E.australis* and *E.multiflora* (was probably *E.vagans*) and perhaps some others. In these, the branches both large and small were bruised and split from nearly the points of the shoots down to the very surface of the ground as if they had been laid on a board and beaten with hammers. The bark was in some cases separated from the wood, but not generally. I have since seen the same appearances in some gardens near London, but never on any other shrubs but heaths. Now, what I am anxious to know is how this splitting is to be accounted for

in a kind of wood apparently containing very little moisture." I.B.A. London. January 1838.

(Extracted from London's Gardeners Magazine vol 16.)

(Nobody seems to have answered Mr. London's question, although there are later lists of how plants fared in the winter of 1837/8) David McClintock, Zone 11.

Can we please have some details of how plants fared this past winter in different areas of these islands? Ed.

Erica replant disease? I thoroughly agree with the suggestion in the Editorial of the 1985 Year Book that "Erica replant disease" may be due to replanting in near-dry soil. (We experienced hot dry summers in 1983 and '84. Also in '84 in this area we had a long dry spring with very cold nights. There were only two or three weeks of good growing weather before we were plunged into the drought.) I have had no trouble replanting when Ericas have been growing for 15 years or so, provided adequate moisture is available to the roots until they are established. I have experienced more difficulty with moving three to four year old plants into an existing bed, even when adequate moisture has been provided.

I replanted part of my front summer-flowering bed last November with E.cinerea 'Grandiflora', Calluna 'Snowball', 'Peter Sparkes', 'Annemarie' and 'Cramond' and E.x stuartii, 'Irish Orange'. Everything appears fine so far, and I expect it to remain so; I do have two large rainwater butts which are reserved for use on Ericaceae should we have a dry summer. If anything untoward should occur with this replanting, I will send a further report.

Bob Rope, Zone 6.

Heathers in Canada "I know that you have been having very bad weather over there, however it is supposed to go down to - 30° C in Toronto tonight which is pretty cold even for us. I grow heathers at my cottage which is 100 miles north of Toronto and where winter temperatures can hit the - 40° C mark. Normally we get fairly good snow cover and I have yet to lose one plant out of my 150 collection."

Barrie Porteous, Ontario.

SOME OBSERVATIONS ON ERICA ERIGENA.

1. My much photographed (e.g. in "The Englishman's Garden" pl.118) ungainly 'Superba', the tallest ever recorded, is now at least 35 years old, and has reached a length of 11ft. Now, Feb. 1985, however it is a shadow of its former bulky self. This drastic shrinking is due to two events. One was that the poles it needed for support (or it would fall over, as had happened three times) rotted. Removing them and the netting to curb its embonpoint inevitably broke a number of the brittle branches. Furthermore, the cold winter three years ago had compacted snow inside, breaking branches, where they could not be reached. The chance taken to remove them broke more, so did tying the sinuous stems to their supports. All this left a sadly thinned, gawky, but still tall bush. This open-ness may have let in more of the intense cold early this year, nearly all the stems bursting or splitting, although a few tall ones so far retain fresh green leaves. So now I have but a tiny fraction of the original fatty left. There is fresh green growth at the base, but not yet the height.

2. I now see that erigena is not really a tree heath, for it forms no sturdy trunk. I expect that what enabled my plant to soar to its quite exceptional height was the support it had. The stems themselves are sinuous and thin - the thickest remaining is only 4 ins. round at the base. They could never stand up on their own.

I do not know what keeps it down in the wild, except genetic inheritance. In the west of Ireland lowness must have been induced and selected for by the wind, I have a photo of one in a thicket near Mularanny in 1968 rather over 9 ft high, the next tallest I have heard of. In Spain in sheltered open spaces I do not remember it over about 5 ft.

I think E. australis is much the same. Contrast these with E. terminalis, whose stout trunks, here some 9 ft high, are 9½ ins round at the base; let alone E. arborea, which is on record at 6½ ft! Even E. lusitanica here has been 6½ ins round, and 11 ft 9 ins long; while an unnamed plant, which Gen. Turpin considers a form of E. x veitchii, is 11 ins at the base of the most conveniently measured trunk 15 ft long. Notice that I write "long" and not "high", for all of these, except E. terminalis grow somewhat aslant.

3. Shortly before John Letts went to New Zealand, he sent me some well-grown plants to make a hedge. I asked for 'Superba', but only a year or two later did I find that some of them were of the ordinary dull wild colour. This winter I found another difference. These poorer ones (and, curiously, not 'Superba', no doubt better protected than its lofty congener) were also tenderer and nearly all of them split fatally, leaving me a very gappy hedge, which may no longer be worth keeping. It had suffered three winters ago by the weight of snow pushing much of the upper parts over from which it never recovered its shape.

There are two lessons from this. One is to ensure that your hedge is of the same cultivar throughout; the other that E. terminalis is stouter and more reliable for this purpose. I do not know how long the one at Bodnant has been there, but longer than my 36-year old plant, which is less brittle too.

4. I have long known that 'Irish Salmon' was less hardy than 'Irish Dusk', even though the original wild plants grew only a few yards apart. This has been sadly confirmed by both the original propagated plants here of 'Salmon' being stone dead except for a few wisps at the base, while 'Dusk' close by is untouched.

5. 'W.T. Rackliff' adds to its numerous merits that it has not turned a hair this winter, and is thick with buds and promise.

David McClintock.

GETTING AWAY FROM IT ALL.

After a hectic year, my wife Anne and I decided that a winter break would be beneficial. So the week before Christmas, we decided to forget heathers and go to Majorca for a week. Not being ones for the sandy beaches, we decided the mountainous north of the island was more to our liking.

We booked a package holiday and on our arrival in Majorca, we were duly herded into our coach for the trip across the island. The trip was in the late evening, so we saw little of the island that day.

The next day, we decided to walk from our hotel round the coast, and, on a rocky headland we found to our surprise E. multiflora still in full flower. Our week in Majorca now turned into a week of heather hunting, so much for getting away from it all!

We hired a car and toured the Formentor peninsula, finding large tracts of E.multiflora in full bloom, ranging in colour from very pale pinks (H16) to a deep cerise reminiscent of 'Mrs. D.F. Maxwell'. As the plants are much stouter than E.vagans and the flowers larger, on longer pedicels, they made a very attractive sight in the December sun.

After a couple of days on the Formentor peninsula, we discovered, to our surprise, a genuine white form with golden anthers. Many of the very pale pink forms could easily be mistaken for white flowers but the brown anthers indicated that they still contained the pink colouring agent.

At the time, we thought we had found a 'first' because we had not heard of a white form but after our return, we discovered that white forms have been reported before, the last being in the 1930's in Majorca!

For the record, the site is best described as follows. Take the road from Puerto Pollenca towards Cabo Formentor. At the turn for Hotel Formentor, continue on the road for Cabo Formentor for about one mile. At this point you travel through light woodland with E.multiflora growing as scrub under the trees. The white plant is about 5 metres from the right hand side of the road, nearly opposite a cart track leading into the wood.

Cuttings were taken but as E.multiflora is by far the most difficult of the European heaths to root and the cuttings were taken out of season, we will be very lucky indeed if this white form roots.

So, if you want a 'get away from it all' break from heathers, we cannot recommend the northern part of Majorca, not even in December!

David Small.

DIARY OF EVENTS.

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| June 29th | South West Group - Garden visit to Shillingstone Nr. Blandford.
See Group News. |
| Aug. 6th | COUNCIL MEETING - RHS Halls, Westminster. |
| Aug. 6/7th | RHS Summer Flower Show & Heather Comps., RHS Halls,
Westminster. |
| Aug. 17th | Midlands Group - Visits to Fenny Drayton & Mancetter Nr.
Atherstone. See Group News. |
| Aug. 31st | South West Group - Visit to Heatherwood Nursery, Ashington Nr.
Wimborne. See Group News. |
| Sept. 7th | Northeast Group - Heather Flower Show, Darras Road, Ponteland. |
| Sept. 6/9th | ANNUAL CONFERENCE, Pulborough, West Sussex. |
| Sept. 8th | ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, Lodge Hill Residential Centre,
Watersfield, Nr. Pulborough, West Sussex. |
| Sept. 14th | CLOSING DATE - Material for the Autumn Bulletin. |
| Oct. 31st | " " - Material for the 1986 Year Book. |
| Nov. 22nd | Midlands Group - Meeting at Winterbourne - See Group News. |
| Nov. 26th | COUNCIL MEETING, RHS Halls, Westminster. |
| Nov. 26/27th | RHS Show & Ornamental Tree & Shrub Competition inc. a Class
for Heathers, RHS Halls, Westminster. |