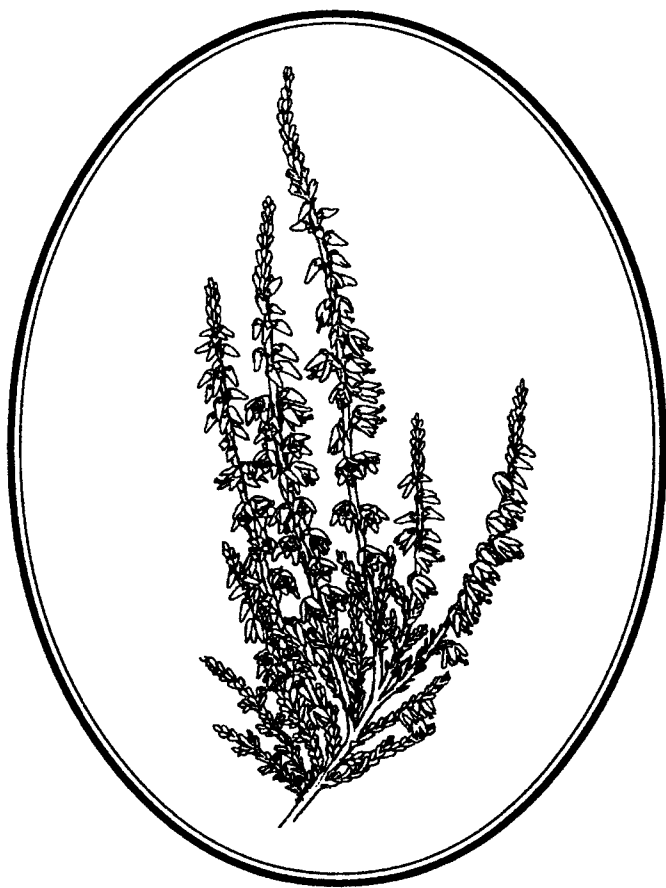


*Bulletin of The
Heather Society*



Vol. 6 No. 4

Autumn 2001

DIARY OF EVENTS

2002

- January 15 CLOSING DATE FOR THE SPRING BULLETIN
- March 9 Yorkshire Group Subject to be announced
- March 23 South West Indoor Meeting& Table Show
- May 15 CLOSING DATE FOR SUMMER BULLETIN
- June 8 Yorkshire Group Subject to be announced
- July 26 North American Heather Society - Conference
- July 27 East Midlands Talk on Close-up photography of heathers.
- Aug.30 - ANNUAL GATHERING - Washington, Tyne & Wear
Sept. 2
- September 14 Yorkshire Group Subject to be announced



A Registered Charity No. 261407

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Cover illustration *Calluna vulgaris* by Brita Johansson

Earlier this year, the Price family, who have only recently joined the Society, visited our garden. Dr. Price introduced herself to us as Heather, which was a very good start. However, even better, they had travelled all the way from Oxford to Bringsty, with their lovely five week old daughter, Erica, especially to introduce her to her very first heather garden.

Annual Gathering of the Heather Society 31st Annual Conference, August 30th - September 2nd, 2002

The 2002 Annual Gathering of *The Heather Society* will be held in the town of Washington, in Tyne and Wear. Accommodation, dining and lecture facilities have been arranged at the George Washington Golf and Country Club, set in extensive grounds with two golf courses. The hotel has an indoor pool, a jacuzzi, a garden and a putting course as well as the golf courses. The hotel is within easy reach of junction 65 of the A1(M) and the nearest station is Newcastle Central. The counties of Northumberland and Durham are near by and the area is full of attractions, so why not have a holiday in the area around that weekend.

This particular hotel belongs to the same group as the St. Michael's Hotel, which the Society used when in Falmouth in 1999, and those who went to that Conference will remember that enjoyable weekend. The accommodation booked consists of 16 single rooms and 8 double rooms. A programme of talks, open forums and garden visits is being prepared and will be announced in the *Spring Bulletin*. This is the opportunity to meet old friends and make new ones and there will be plenty of time to relax and discuss our favourite subject.

The all inclusive cost for the whole weekend will be between £205 and £210 and will be announced in the *Spring Bulletin*. Bookings may now be made by sending £2 per mailing to: **Phil Joyner, 84 Kinross Road, Rushington Manor, Totton, Southampton, SO40 9BN**. Cheques should be made payable to **The Heather Society**, the booking fee is non-returnable and is not a deposit on the cost of the conference. If all the booked rooms are taken then there may be the possibility of booking more rooms, otherwise subsequent

bookings will be accepted as day visitors and those persons will be asked to arrange their own bed and breakfast accommodation. In this case a telephone number for the local Tourist Information office will be provided to aid bed and breakfast enquires. I will be pleased to answer any queries relating to the 2002 Gathering by telephone (Tel: 023 8086 4336 evenings and weekends).

Advance Information

In 2000 the 1st International Heather Conference was held in Germany. It is the intention of *The Heather Society* to host the 2nd International Conference in Scotland in 2004. It is hoped that many heather lovers from Europe, the USA and other countries will join members of this Society at this gathering. The International Conference will be held in early September and will take place instead of our usual Annual Gathering

Report on the Annual General Meeting, Three Counties Hotel, Hereford, 8th September 2001

It was quite a select group of members who gathered for the AGM in Hereford. Several of our long-standing attendees were missing for one good reason or another. Even Pamela Lee was absent – her record of attendances, right back to the very first Conference, was finally broken, in order to attend a family wedding. Anne and David Small were also missing, due to the ‘small’ matter of their Ruby Wedding celebrations.

The Chairman, Arnold Stow, welcomed everyone to the 30th Annual Conference. He began his report by paying tribute to Vice President, Albert Julian, “a dedicated heather-man”, who had died earlier this year.

Arnold told the meeting that, due to personal circumstances, Ron Clevely had resigned from the position of Hon. Secretary earlier in the year. Arnold paid tribute to the hard work that Ron had put into the position over the last four years. His very high standards had meant that he had taken on many commitments over and above what had been expected of him, during his time in office.

Fortunately, our Registrar, Jean Julian, had already been persuaded to take on the position of Hon. Secretary and had been co-opted until she could be formally elected at the AGM – which she duly was!.

We were told that Barry Sellers had represented the Society during the year at various conservation meetings and that David Small had prepared a plan (and had it approved) for heathers to be planted at the Royal National Rose Society’s garden at St. Albans. Arnold thanked them both for their commitment. He also thanked the Group-Leaders, Members of Council, and the *Yearbook & Bulletin* Editors for the work they did for the Society. Special thanks were due to Phil Joyner for organising the Conferences so efficiently.

The Secretary’s report, which set out the events of the last year, had been prepared by Ron Clevely and was read by Jean Julian.

The Hon. Treasurer, Tony Princep, had prepared the accounts, but, due to the difficulties which had been experienced in finding a new Auditor

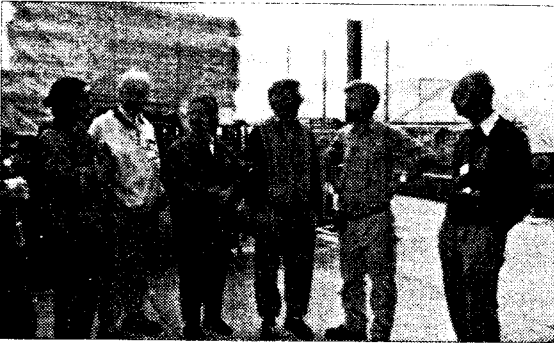
(following the sad death of Ron Wing), these were presented to the meeting unaudited. However, the Treasurer was able to announce that Mr. H Reilly, of Belbroughton in Worcestershire, had now kindly agreed to act as the Society's Auditor.

Tony had taken on the job of Treasurer to the Society purely as a favour to his friend, Ron Cleevly; he freely admitted that he did not even like heathers. However, with his usual dry sense of humour, he announced to the meeting that he will continue to act as temporary Treasurer until he "either, gets fed-up, or begins to like heather".

It was announced that the venue for the 2002 Conference was being explored. (Since then a very good venue has been confirmed, at Washington, Tyne & Wear)

(Our Treasurer did not appear to be too fed-up at the end of the Conference and was even beginning to show a little cautious interest in heathers, so hopefully he will be with us for a while yet! Ed.)

Conference 2001 - Hereford



Visit to John Richards' Nursery, John - 2nd from right.



Members on Hartlebury Common, Worcestershire

There will be a full report on the Conference (now called the Annual Gathering) in the 2002 Yearbook.

Welcome to the Silver Anniversary Conference in Nanaimo

**Joyce Prothero, President, Vancouver Island Heather Plus
Chapter, NAHS**

On Friday July 26, 2002, the Vancouver Island Chapter will proudly welcome heather enthusiasts from Canada, the United States, and Britain and beyond, to Nanaimo, British Columbia, Canada for the twenty-fifth annual meeting of the *North American Heather Society*. Nanaimo, the "hub city" of Vancouver Island is a fitting location for NAHS' Silver Anniversary Conference.

Nanaimo is just a ferry ride away from Vancouver where, on October 29, 1977, a small group of heather enthusiasts gathered in Ken Wilson's office at the Botanical Gardens on the campus of the University of British Columbia. That meeting led to the formation of the Pacific Northwest Heather Society. By 1984, membership had expanded beyond the Pacific Northwest to include thirteen additional states and provinces, so the Pacific Northwest Heather Society renamed itself the North American Heather Society.

The Silver Anniversary Conference in July 2002 will celebrate NAHS' origins in the Pacific Northwest and its growing prominence within the international heather community.

On Friday evening, Dr. Hans Roemer, a plant ecologist whose research focus is the forest vegetation of southeast Vancouver Island, will speak on "Alpine Flowers on the Pacific Coast." This illustrated talk describes changes in the habitats and their mountain flora extending from the Olympic Mountains of Washington State to the Queen Charlotte Ranges north of Vancouver Island. As a follow-up, Saturday's bus trip to Paradise Meadows on Mount Washington in Strathcona Park will introduce conference participants to an alpine bog whose vegetation includes the ericaceous genera of *Phyllodoce* and *Cassiope*, our native North American heathers.

Saturday evening's speaker, David Small, President of *The (British) Heather Society*, will talk about "Heaths and Hybrids." During this presentation, David will trace the history of *Ericas* and their hybrids from those naturally occurring in southern England to those being bred by Kurt Kramer, John Griffiths, Barry Sellers and David Wilson. He also will discuss how DNA analysis has helped to unravel some of the hybrids' secrets and has created some surprises along the way. Prior to his election last year's as President of The Heather Society, David served as its Chairman. He has also co-authored and published the *Handy Guide to Heathers* and the *International Register of Heather Names*.

Other program highlights — more details "next time" — include activities such as:

- a Heather Sale featuring heather cultivars with special connections to the Pacific Northwest — and, yes, phytosanitary clearances are being arranged so that the heather plants can cross international boundaries
- a demonstration of a "tubie test" — our Chapter's approach for the

close-up study of heather racemes

and, on Sunday July 28, a festive send-off in the tradition of NAHS' 1994 Conference at Cowichan Bay.

To receive a personal mailing of the registration form when it becomes available in January 2002, please send your name and address to: Vancouver Island Heather Chapter (Attention: Norma Dirom), P.O. Box 82, DUNCAN, BC, Canada, V9L 3X1. Or, requests can be e-mailed to Norma at <dirom@cowichan.com>.

To reserve a room at the convention rate of \$75 (CDN) for single or double occupancy, contact the Howard Johnson Harbourside Hotel in Nanaimo at 250-753-2241 or 1-800-446-4656. Be sure to mention the "North American Heather Society" meetings.

Finally, to find out more about happenings in Nanaimo, Vancouver Island, and British Columbia — other than NAHS' Silver Anniversary Conference on July 26-28, 2002 — or other accommodations, try snooping through www.nanaimonow.com and/or www.nanaimo.com — and follow the links.

The Heather Society's Award Of Honour

In the year 2000, *The Heather Society* established the **AWARD OF HONOUR**, in order to recognise **individuals** who have made "especially noteworthy contributions to heather research or horticulture". The first Award of Honour was presented to Kurt Kramer of Germany "in recognition of his pioneering work on hybridising heathers"

The **AWARD** may be awarded annually to an individual who has made an outstanding contribution to Heathers, whether by cultivation, research, illustration or writing. If, in the opinion of the Council of *The Heather Society*, no suitable candidate has been nominated in any year, an award will not be made.

The Society's Council will be pleased to receive nominations for the **AWARD** at any time and all nominations will be considered by the Council at the first meeting of each year, (usually held in February).

To facilitate Council's discussions, the closing date for nominations for the **AWARD** to be presented at the Society's Annual General Meeting in September, will be 31st December of the previous year.

Nominations will be accepted by either the Secretary or the Chairman.

Azores 2002 – A Special Holiday for members of The Heather Society & their Friends Accompanied by David Sayers and Dr. Charles Nelson

Outline programme departing 10 June 2002 - 8 nights with most meals included.

10 June - Depart Heathrow via Lisbon to Ponta Delgada on Sao Miguel. Transfer to Furnas and Terra Nostra Garden Hotel for 3 nights.

11 June - Day in Furnas. Morning tour the Terra Nostra Garden with David Sayers, who advised on its restoration, and Fernando Costa, the Head

Gardener. After lunch explore Furnas village with its 1930's atmosphere, and see the fumaroles of boiling water and mud.

12 June - Tour by coach to Lagoa do Fogo, a volcano crater now a nature reserve. First sighting of *Daboecia azorica* and other endemic plants. Continue to Nordeste in the northeast of Sao Miguel; little visited by tourists this is often called the 10th island of the Azores because of its relative isolation. Visit the little forestry park and then take an 18km forest road to Povoacao passing some of the most extensive remnants of the endemic forest around Pico da Vara. Return to Furnas.

13 June - Transfer to airport for flight to Pico. Transfer to Hotel Pico near Madalena for 4 nights.

14 June - Taking a small coach we explore various locations to see the vegetation on Pico mountain. More *Daboecia azorica*

15 June - Further exploration of Pico island.

16 June - Take the early morning ferry from Madalena across to Horta on Faial and make a half day tour by road. First the caldeira, another nature reserve, then to Capelinhos to see the results of the 1958 eruption. Finally the little botanic garden devoted to the Azorean endemic flora. Afternoon free to explore the town, before returning by ferry to Pico.

17 June - Transfer to airport and flight to Terceira. From the airport visit the volcanic caves at Algar do Carvao and then continue to the Hotel Angra for 1 night, in the centre of historic Angra do Heroisma, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Afternoon free to explore the town.

18 June - Transfer to airport for flight to Lisbon and connecting flight to Heathrow.

Price: £987 including light supper on arrival and dinner all subsequent nights including wine plus 3 lunches, international flights London/Azores, domestic inter-island flights, boat tickets. All hotels are comfortable with bathrooms en suite. **This price is based on a minimum of 15 people participating.**

For further details contact Dr. Charles Nelson, Tippitiwichee Cottage, Hall Road, Outwell, Wisbech, PE14 3PE, UK (fax 01945774077) (tippitiwichee@zetnet.co.uk).

The Royal Horticultural Society's Wisley Flower Show 21 -23 August 2001

Letter from Pamela Lee:

You may like to know what happened (or rather didn't) at the RHS Wisley Flower Show, 21-23rd August.

Mary Bowerman had phoned to say that she could no longer exhibit due to pressure of other activities - her frequent garden openings and the new Concert Hall venture. I did a phone around and was hoping that two members from Kent would put in some entries. In the event there was just me - a little ridiculous

as it was still set out as a competition and it was only a set of exhibits ?

I put in fifteen, plus two contrasting flower arrangements' However the stand attracted a certain amount of attention and on the last day, when I laid out fans of *Heather Society* pamphlets, 42 were taken A third of the marquee was devoted to the 75th Anniversary Show of *The British Gladioli Society* and the rest to nurserymen showing and trading - in everything except heathers?

Can anyone living nearby help Pamela in her valiant efforts to fly the flag for The Heather Society? If so, please give a ring her on 01428 604947. Ed.

Society Speakers

Arnold Stow (Chairman)

A few members of *The Heather Society* give talks to local Horticultural Societies and it is proposed that these should be listed in the *Bulletin*, as they could be of potential interest to other members. I know, from past experience, that local Societies are only too willing to welcome non members to their functions.

Would speakers please advise the Editor of the date, time and place of their talk, together with their telephone number.

To start the ball rolling:

Arnold Stow (01494 449397) 'Heaths and Heathers'.

Thursday 21st February 2002 Bourne End H.S. Bucks

Thursday 11th April 2002 Welwyn & District Garden Club, Herts.

Monday 20th May 2002 Kimpton Garden Club, Hitchin Herts.

All talks commence at 8.00 pm unless otherwise stated.

Daphne Everett (01885 482206) 'From Crofter's Bed to Queen of Spain - the Story of Heather'

February 5th 2002 - Lyppard Garden Society, Worcester.

April 18th 2002 - Newent Gardening Club, Glos.

May 20th 2002 - Moreton & District Gardening Club, Glos.

November 9th - Worcestershire Hardy Plant Society, Drakes Broughton, Worcs.

Letters from members

Just recently my wife came home from shopping and told me she had seen some blue heather for sale at a local florist shop. I didn't really believe her, as surely we would have heard through the Society of such a major breakthrough. Never-the-less I rushed into town thinking that it might be possible that a small nursery had made a breakthrough without realizing the significance.

When I saw the *Callunas* I was excited at the colour but there was no label. I enquired about the variety and where they were grown, then the truth came out - the plants were dyed for decoration. I declined to purchase!

Since then we have seen another outlet selling both blue and orange dyed *Callunas* in the same town. Has anyone else come across this swindle?

David Glue - Nottingham

These dyed heathers are appearing in all sorts of locations now – garden centres, DIY stores, florists and greengrocers. Several stands at the Malvern Autumn Show had them for sale in all sorts of unlikely colours - some were labelled 'coloured winter heathers'! Remembering that David Small had looked into the origin of this phenomenon some years ago, I have asked him to put you in the picture. Ed.

David Small says: The craze started in France and has now spread to most of western Europe. A nursery near Strasbourg was left with some *Calluna vulgaris* 'Melanie' about 5 years ago. They hit on the idea of dyeing them and they sold like hot-cakes. Since then, this practice has been done every year in increasing numbers. I doubt if it is now confined to just the one nursery.

Bud-bloomers are ideal for this treatment as the buds remain on the stems until about March. The dye (a development of the dyes using on dried flowers) is usually applied by spraying over the whole plant just as the buds are fading.

'Melanie' is protected by Plant Breeders' Rights in Germany and the Netherlands, but not in France thus making it very difficult to stop. Kurt Kramer who loathes this practice, as any heather-lover would, has tried to stop it but without success. Anyone who has purchased one of these dyed plants will find that it will revert to normal next year.

PS. The yellow flowered one is best!

A Heather Related Stop After the Hereford Meeting

Walter Wornick - New Hampshire, USA

I always enjoy visiting south Cumbria and stopped there (among other places) for a few days, after attending the meeting in Hereford. I thought it time to visit Sizergh Castle, once again. Sizergh is located south of Kendal on the A591, off Exit 36 on the M6. It is a National Trust Property and rated a one star garden by the *Good Gardens Guide*.

As I was walking through the house I was amazed to see a collection of dishes in the Dining Room; Royal Worcester, in the Royal pattern created in 1870 - each dish bore a picture of a different South African Heath.

There were at least 16 different plates on display and the docent (guide) didn't know how many were in the total collection.

After some questioning, I was able to determine that Sir Gerald Strickland, whose house it had been, had served as Governor of Australia and Tasmania. The dishes had been a present from the Australian government, upon his retirement and I assume that is why they bore pictures of heaths from that part of the world. As I showed more interest in these plates than the regular visitors to the room, more guides and supervisors came in to be of assistance. In attempting to determine additional information on this gift they consulted the family's genealogical history and found that Sir Gerald would have only been a baby at the time of the gift, (maybe he also received a box of nappies?) but, while the history of the dishes is clouded, the dishes themselves are a joy to a heather enthusiast.

There are also heathers to be seen in the various gardens around the castle and a very worthwhile fern border, at the back of the rock garden, along a long stone wall. Each fern is well grown and carefully labelled. I was also impressed by the large Medlar orchard, something which one does not usually see.

Profile of Bulletin Editor – Daphne Everett

You may have noticed that, for several years now, I have been featuring Profiles of Members of Council. I have always found it fascinating to find out about other people's lives and especially how, out of all the plants they could have chosen, they became interested heathers. There are still one or two Council Members who I haven't managed to bully into submission yet – but hopefully I will. However, in the meantime you will have to put up with me.

I was born in 1930, the eldest daughter of Ivy and Frederick Ives. My father and several of his brothers had built up a small chain of butchery and provisions shops in London and it had always been his ambition that his two daughters and his son would become part of this mini -Empire, but, in this he was to be disappointed.

I first went to the local primary school, where unknown to me at the time, my husband-to-be, Maurice was also a 'Mixed Infant' (we went to the same Sunday School too). However, when war broke out, my father packed his family off to live in a rented thatched cottage at Great Munden in Hertfordshire, while he stayed behind in London.

For my poor Mother, who had to cope alone with four young children (we three, plus a nephew), in a cottage with only oil lamps for lighting, a range for cooking, no running water, no indoor toilet and no shop within two miles – it was hell on earth. For me however, life in that tiny country hamlet was Paradise and was the start of a love of the countryside which has never left me!

When we returned to London a couple of years later, most of the schools were closed, and we three children were sent to one of the few still open, a Catholic Convent School. The school was run by nuns and was a model of order and cleanliness. The school premises were kept meticulously polished throughout and the children changed from outdoor shoes to 'plimsolls' as soon as they arrived. The uniform was gymslip, itchy back woollen stockings, blazer, velour hat and white gloves and the girls were expected to be 'young ladies'. I am not quite sure where it all went wrong as far as I was concerned.

After leaving school I escaped from the family business by joining the Women's Land Army. We were based in a large Lodge House situated by the gates of Wrest Park House at Silsoe in Bedfordshire and we worked on a local farm owned by the Council. Wrest Park House itself had been taken over by the National Agricultural Engineering Institute (I think that was its title), so you can imagine that the proximity of a hostel full of landgirls and another full of young engineering students led to some lively times.

To cut a long story short, I was eventually worn down by family pressure, and joined the business just in time for my father to have a massive stroke at the age of 46. However, through going back to London, I did get to meet up with Maurice, and we were married in 1952. You might be interested to know

that, rather than ask me out, he sent me (anonymously) a ticket for a concert at The Royal Albert Hall, and it wasn't until I turned up for the concert that I discovered who had sent it!

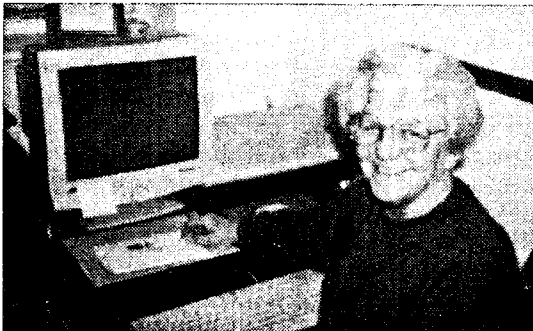
In 1953 we moved to Cheshire, where Maurice was working for Unilever. When our three daughters had all reached school age, I wanted something more to do with my time than housework. With a young family to look after, farming was obviously not an option any more- so I turned to my second love - horticulture. I went to work for Goredale Nurseries, which is now a thriving Garden Centre and, while I was there, did a four year, day-release course in Horticulture at the Cheshire College of Agriculture, at Reaseheath.

Even in those days we both loved gardens and would frequently visit Ness Gardens ('Bulley's Gardens' as it was known locally, **and** it was free in those days). Terry Underhill had recently been responsible for planting a two acre bank of heathers, which were looking absolutely beautiful - a kaleidoscope of colour and all meticulously labelled - I was hooked! This wonderful heather garden was entirely responsible for my ambition to start my own heather nursery and for the thirty years I subsequently spent specialising in these lovely plants.

The opportunity to strike out on my own came in 1970, when Maurice was appointed as a lecturer at the University of Birmingham. We found a cottage with an acre of ground at Abberley, in the heart of the Worcestershire countryside and *Abberley Hill Nurseries* was born.

It was not a perfect site, being situated in narrow lane, on the side of a 1 in 4 hill - but we fell in love with it. The garden was also very steep, with almost nowhere flat lay to out a nursery, but we were young and energetic and we managed to set out a nursery area where the slope was not too extreme. Maurice was very supportive of my ideas and, being an engineer, he was very useful for such necessary things as building frames and installing irrigation. He always said that it was his ambition to have a wife who earned more than he did, but, as he knew quite well that it wouldn't happen, I was never able to call his undoubted bluff. 1970 was also the year that I joined *The Heather Society*.

As, in that first year, I only had around 4,000 heather plants to sell, and because we were off the beaten track, with very little space for customer parking, I decided that the best idea would be to offer 'Heather Collections' in the garden magazines and national newspapers. This little mail order venture



went quite well, and lifting and packing plants even provided employment for some of the local people, but, unfortunately, it didn't have the desired effect of keeping calling customers away. People would see our advertisement and, without bothering to get in touch in advance, would arrive at the cottage at all times of the day

- and especially at weekends – only to write us very peevish letters if they found we were out when they called! Our most unusual customer in that first year arrived in a Rolls Royce and announced that he had been sent by his gardener.

We stayed at Hill Cottage for four years, by which time the nursery had completely outgrown the site, so we moved to an old farmhouse with several acres, near Droitwich. Once again, we knew it wasn't perfect (we couldn't afford perfection). The water supply was from a well and a nearby stream and we hoped to be able to manage until we could put in a mains supply. What we didn't count on were the two severe drought years of 1975 and 76 – the worst for 200 years – and, although our water supply never actually dried up, we just could not get enough water through the system to keep the plants going in that incessant heat and we lost a large proportion of our stock. So, in 1977, we gave up the struggle at Mount Pleasant Farm and moved a mile or so, to a house with a good water supply. (We had been gone less than a year, when the Water Board laid on a mains water supply to the farm!).

Throughout those two awful drought-years I had at least managed to increase the production of heather cuttings and I decided that, once these had been grown on, I should have sufficient stocks to start selling heathers wholesale. So, the mail order side of the business was gradually phased out and the wholesale heather nursery was born.

It must have been in 1982 that I was asked (by long-time member, Harold Street) if I would join the Council of *The Heather Society* and I was pleased to do so.

For some years Maurice and I had been keen attendees of the Midlands Group Meetings, which were run by Alan Dudley. In 1983, ill health forced Alan to stand down and I agreed to take over until he was well enough to return – which he sadly never did. I ran the Group for ten years and by Spring 1993, felt that it was time to hand over to someone else. Unfortunately no-one was prepared to take it on, so the once flourishing Midlands Group was forced to close.

In 1984, Maurice took early retirement from the University and we took the opportunity to move to Bringsty in Herefordshire, where we were eventually growing $\frac{1}{4}$ million heathers annually.

In 1989, after twelve years as Editor of the *Bulletin*, Diane Jones had decided that, due to pressure of work, she wanted to retire from the post. At the Conference that year, the then Chairman, Pat Turpin asked me if I would take it on – and, twelve years later, here I am still! Maybe twelve years is the shelf-life for *Bulletin* Editors? Perhaps I shall soon be receiving a letter informing me that I am now well past my sell-by date?

As some of you may know, (especially if you read our advertisements in the *Bulletin*) we eventually retired from the nursery business, and, probably not very sensibly, set about converting the nursery into garden. We now have a $2\frac{1}{2}$ acre garden, which we open to the public during the summer, and a small mixed nursery, where I (with the help my 96 year-old Mother!) grow the plants, including heathers, to sell on the days when we are open.

They say that a change is as good as a rest and, so far, we have certainly found it so.

Preserving Heathers By The Victorian Wax Method

Karen Oudean

**With acknowledgements to *Heather News*, the Newsletter
of the North American Heather Society – Summer 1993**

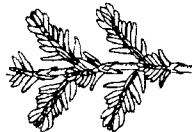
In the 1840's, the petroleum industry began producing a by-product called paraffin wax. Victorian ladies soon discovered they could preserve fresh flowers and leaves with this inexpensive translucent wax. Bridal bouquets and funeral wreaths, dipped in wax and encased in glass, became favorite parlour and family museum room decorations of this era. Under glass and away from direct light these flowers lasted for generations. In the open air, waxed heather will last several years, and can be used in any craft where you would use dried flowers.

The wax coating slightly mutes some colours, resulting in a patina that is quite unique. The low melting point of paraffin makes it possible to dip heathers without cooking them. This is the best way to preserve *Erica carnea*, *E.x darleyensis* and *E. cinerea*, but is also very effective for any other heather. Foliage sprays with or without flowers can be preserved any time of year. Flower sprays hold up best if they are picked when the lowest buds are fully open and the rest of the buds are showing colour.

Clustered flowers should be just starting to open fully. In the winter and early spring, I pick plant material at the warmest part of the day and allow it to come to room temperature, blotting it with paper towels if it is wet. I melt paraffin in the microwave using a heavy glass bowl covered with a paper plate, or use an old saucepan on a conventional stove over low heat. When the paraffin reaches a temperature of 135-138°F, I remove it from the heat source. Holding the heather by the base of the stem I quickly dip each piece, first in paraffin, and then in cold water, and place it on paper towels or in empty egg cartons to dry. I dip four or five stalks, then bring the wax back up to 135-138°F. You can continue to dip your material as the wax cools and forms a skin, but the coating will thicken as you work. I prefer a translucent patina rather than an opaque and obvious coating. It just depends on the effect you want. When you are done, set the wax in the refrigerator for an hour or so. The wax shrinks from the sides of its container and can then be removed and stored for re-use.

You can colour the paraffin by adding wax crayons or coloured candles. Scented candles or oils can also be added. Cedar branches and other evergreens can be dipped and used with waxed heather to create wreaths or arrangements. Try making a candle ring of scented wax-dipped heather.

Experiment! Creating is fun.



Queries Through our Website - (www.heathersociety.org.uk)

David Small

QUESTION: Someone told me that heather is a symbol of good luck - for example brides would have some in their bouquet. I am interested to know if that is fact. Catherine.

ANSWER: It has to be WHITE heather to be lucky. The story basically is that white-flowered heather is very rare and so you are 'lucky' to find it in the wild. All sorts of luck has been attached to white heather over the centuries and little sprays of it are widely sold in Europe by travellers.

The best white heather to have in bouquets is *Calluna vulgaris* 'My Dream'. This flowers about now (August/September) but sprays of it can be cut on a dry morning after any dew has evaporated, put into a polythene bag and placed in a freezer (not fridge). It can be taken out any time later and it will last about a week.

QUESTION: Could you please tell me if it is possible to buy wild bell heather plants that have not been cross bred with another type of horticultural heather? I am based in east Devon on acid soil (green sand). Many thanks. Looking forward to hearing from you at your convenience. Anthony Norton.

ANSWER: Many of the cultivated varieties of *Erica cinerea* are selections from the wild. No-one has ever been able to cross *Erica cinerea* with another species or indeed little deliberate breeding work has been done on this species. I mention this as I am unaware of any nursery selling wild *Erica cinerea*. The best you can do is to grow from seed (try Chiltern Seeds, <http://www.edirectory.co.uk/chilternseeds/>) or arrange with a nursery to grow you some wild plants from cuttings taken randomly from the wild. Alternatively, we could tell you which cultivars were found in the wild in the south-west and most closely represent 'typical' *E. cinerea*.

David also says: "I had an interesting phone call from a Nigel White of Pitlochry. In the conversation I discovered a new common name for *Erica tetralix* - Cat heather! Apparently, wild cats love to roll in *Erica tetralix* hence the name. A friend of his has actually seen wild cats rolling in *Erica tetralix*".

Peat Blocks

Can anyone tell Viv Mann where she can obtain peat blocks?

If you can help, please get in touch with David Small (Tel: 01449 711220 - email: heathers@zetnet.co.uk) and he will pass on the information to Viv. A note to the *Bulletin* would also be very useful, as other Members might find the information interesting.



An Appreciation of Bill Crow

Dorothy M. Warner

(With the Editor's sincere apologies for missing it from the Summer Bulletin)

Sadly, I have to report the death on March 16th, of fellow member and Nurseryman, Bill Crow of Scots Gap.

Bill had been a Heather member, with Margaret, for many years and had helped the North East Group in so many ways. He provided all the heathers for us to create our heather garden at the Gateshead Garden Festival in 1990, which ultimately won us a Silver Medal, and he also supplied us with heathers when we used to have our stall at Houghall. We shall also miss Bill for our Group meetings at the Nursery when it was very pleasant to wander round the heathers, deciding which ones to buy, and then chatting over a cup of tea to round off the evening.

Bill and his Nursery will be a great miss to many people throughout Northumberland and we send our sincere sympathy to Margaret.

Thirty Years Ago - From the Autumn 1971 Bulletin -

Heathers; The Harlow Car Project - Geoffrey Smith

Five years ago, almost to the day, in a two acre field along the eastern boundary of Harlow Car*, a wagon tipped the first of the four hundred tons of stone which two Ukrainians and myself were expected to build into a rock garden. The two mud stained wagon drivers, on being informed of the projected scheme, departed with a cryptically expressive reflection on our sanity.

Looking at some of the boulders, over 5 tons in weight, then at our primitive, home made, sheer legs I can only conclude, now the site is completed, the age of miracles is not past. Imagine our feelings two grime bespattered, blood blistered, years later, when *The Heather Society* suggested filling up the near completed outcrops with a collection of plants, not carefully selected by us, but culled from gardens scattered all over the British Isles.

That the co-operation has been singularly free from incident is due entirely to the enthusiasm of Mr. Russ and his recording team. I finally accepted the inevitable one miserable February day on discovering Mr. Russ, practically paralysed with cold, looking for two plants of *Calluna vulgaris* 'Humpty Dumpty' lost in transit from the nursery.

Having watched the meticulous attention to detail, the recording and checking of names done by the group members, in particular Mr. Russ, I have some small conception of the hours devoted to what is, after all, voluntary work. Judging by the comments made direct, or overheard from visitors to the garden, the Heather project is launched, but more important, doing work which even in my most optimistic moments I expected would take five years.

Last Monday, September 20th, saw the co-operation carried a stage further. Mr. Russ assisted by four ladies pegged out the field, sorted the plants into groups so that in four hours we, the staff of Harlow Car, could plant up the new 'museum' of Heather varieties. Yesterday September 23rd and today Mr. Russ has been busy checking that each plant is indeed correctly labelled, and in the right station.

The vigour of a Society is only to be measured by the quality of the working members; *The Heather Society* achieves an enviable standard in this area.

* 'Car' was later changed back to its original spelling - 'Carr'!

Group News

North East

Our Car Outing to Hall Gardens Belsay on June 6th was very disappointing. It was a dull, chilly day which quickly turned to a very wetting drizzle as soon as we arrived but, having made the effort, the 5 members went as far as Joan and Doug's memorial garden to see the progress of the new heather bed. We weren't disappointed. They obviously liked their environment and were thriving so, hopefully, they should make a good display in a couple of year's time. A second re-planting is due to take place in September.

The second Car Outing to Chipchase Castle was more successful with 9 of us meeting and enjoying a pleasant afternoon wandering round a most interesting Nursery. It was full of unusual plants and shrubs growing on a south facing slope overlooking the North Tyne Valley. A really delightful setting. Many purchases were made and then we all met up again in Bellingham for a welcome cup of tea.

September 8th was our Annual Show and sadly, I have to say, it was the poorest we have ever put on. For various reasons some of our regular exhibitors were away, which meant we only had 32 exhibits on the bench. This in comparison with 149 in 1991! One could say it is a sign of the times but, nevertheless, it is very demoralising. The results were as follows:

Best Exhibit in the Show - John Turner

Best in Classes 13, 14, 15 and 16 - John Turner

Maximum Points in Show - Geoff and Dorothy Warner

Congratulations to all.

Once again the N.E. Group would like to thank Dave and Beryl Mayne from Kirkbymoorside for coming to support us and for bringing 3 superb Cape Heaths for display purposes. These were much admired by the public because they were so unusual. Our thanks again to you both.

Our final meeting for the season is the A.G.M. on Friday, October 19th in St. Matthew's Church Hall, Ponteland at 7.30 p.m.

Dorothy M. Warner.

Yorkshire

The Yorkshire Heather Group meeting on Saturday, 9th June saw 18 members come together for a talk by Colin Hawes of the Harrogate and Ripon Beekeepers Society. The subject was "Heather and Honey". Colin brought along an empty beehive to demonstrate how hives are made up in layers, showing us the various wax cones and explaining about beekeeping and

honey preparation. We learned the differences between the various types of honey, heather honey being the only type, which is thixotropic.

Then on Saturday, 7th July we had 12 members who gave up the opportunity to watch the rain pour down at Wimbleton and instead enjoyed the sunshine in Dr. Bryon Roberts garden in Roundhay, Leeds. We discussed the relatively new *Erica cinerea* bed in the front garden with its various cultivars and inspected the more mature winter heathers and tree heathers in other parts of this interesting hillside garden, formed in an old quarry. The heathers grow well considering they are planted beneath some fine specimen trees. We were very grateful to Mrs. Roberts for the wonderful afternoon tea partaken on their delightful terrace.

14 members attended the autumn meeting, held earlier than usual on Wednesday, 8th August and were privileged to hear a talk by Martin Vallance, former chairman of Harlow Carr about moor management. Martin owns a moor "Arkleside" in Coverdale and manages many acres of moorland for others. He has made a study of the problems of overgrazing by sheep and successfully reduced their number to a maximum of one sheep per half acre to allow the heather to thrive. He has employed teams to clear the moor of unwanted vegetation and sown *Calluna* seeds in order to get the heather to regenerate. This process is very slow as the yield is so poor. Following the customary tea and biscuits, our slide librarian showed several slides of heather moors, followed by pictures of the various heather species in the wild.

The committee will meet later in 2001 to plan talks for the meetings next year, which will take place on Saturdays, 9th March, 8th June and 14th September, with hopefully a visit to Helmsley Walled Garden in July 2002. The suggested topics are "DNA, Genetics and Heather" and "Heathers in the Lake District" in association with those growing in the Lake District Horticultural Society garden. A notice of these meetings will be posted to members when the programme has been drawn up.

Volunteers continue their work on the *Calluna* Reference Collection at Harlow Carr, weeding, mulching, renovating paths and preparing new beds. The plants are looking much better at present following this warmer drier summer and look beautiful in flower.

East Midlands

A meeting of the East Midlands Group is planned for July 27th 2002 in the new Chapter House, St. Mary's Church, Forest Road, Nanpantan, Loughborough. We propose a 2 pm start

St. Mary's Church was once the estate Church of Nanpantan Hall and is set in woodland. It is conveniently near the Priory Inn which serves an adequate pub lunch.

The event will take the form of an illustrated talk by myself called "Heathers in Focus" in which I propose to describe close-up photography of heathers. This activity yields pictures which aid the identification of heather species and illustration of the characteristics of some species using close-up slides will be a sub-plot of the talk.

Joan and I cordially invite participants to have tea with us afterwards at our home which is a mile away from the main venue. Further details will be given in the Spring bulletin when a sketch map of the route will be available. Kind regards to all our members,

Allen Hall

Home Counties

Members had a very interesting outing to Kenwood House and adjoining Hampstead Heath on a warm and sunny day. We were hosted by the voluntary, *Heath Hands Society*. In fact we were told that *The Heather Society* were the first to visit this organization, with its approximately 150 members, who carry out all sorts of essential tasks under the guidance of the Corporation of London, in order to keep the Heath maintained.

We met with *Heath Hands* at 11.00 a.m. and were given a guided tour of the impressive Kenwood House, bequeathed to the nation by the Guinness family. This has one of the finest collections of paintings in the country.

At lunch we were met by more *Heath Hands* members at the Spaniards Inn, a famous London landmark, where we sat in the garden to enjoy our meal.

After lunch we were introduced to Richard Payne who is responsible for Hampstead Heath conservation. He took us to the various *Calluna vulgaris* plantings on the Heath. *Heath Hands* had assisted in these projects. Some areas had been seeded with seed obtained from Dunwich Heath, whilst others had been planted out with hundreds of *Calluna* plug modules; all appeared to be succeeding - bringing areas of heathland back to as it was in Victorian times. I hope to cover this restoration work in a later article for the *Bulletin*.

Tea was taken in the West Lodge gatehouse of Kenwood. We thanked the *Heath Hands* members and organiser, Bobby de Joia, for a most interesting and informative visit. We hope to maintain our contact with them.

On 6 October 2001 the Group met for its yearly visit to the RHS gardens at Wisley and it was good to see new members amongst the large gathering. Although there were several huge downpours whilst we inspected the heather gardens, the beds were in pristine condition. Well done Andy Collins and team!



Photograph by John Plowman.
Josey Shaw presenting the
Turpin Cup to Roy Merrin, on
behalf of his wife Jean

After lunch we reconvened in the Lecture Room for a fascinating and humorous talk by Chairman, Arnold Stow, entitled "Heather, Plants and People". Arnold's slides covered many of the conferences and visits during his many years of membership and brought back happy memories to many of those present. For my part I can now picture some of the people that many of my heathers are named after.

Before tea was taken Josey Stow and President, David Small, judged the table show and the results were as follows:

- i) best flower arrangement in which heathers predominate (Turpin Trophy) - Jean Merrin
- ii) best vase of hardy heather in flower, single variety - Pamela Lee
- iii) best vase of heather chosen for foliage - Derek Millis

This was altogether an enjoyable meeting, with so many old friends and acquaintances.

The Group's Programme for 2002 will be published after Christmas, in the next edition of the *Home Counties Newsletter*, which will be circulated to those members who have requested it (ref. my Newsletter No. 2, July

2001). Details will also be added in the next edition of the *Bulletin*.

I look forward to meeting as many of you as possible in the New Year.

Derek Millis

South West

It is with regret that I have to report the passing away of a South West Group member, John Prior from Hill Head, near Fareham in Hampshire. John with his wife Janet were enthusiastic supporters of the Local Group but John's poor health prevented them from regularly taking part in the Group's meetings. On your behalf I would like to extend our deepest sympathy to John's wife, Janet.

Now to the description of the last meeting of the year for the Group. On Saturday 21st July the members of the South West Group were joined by our Chairman Arnold Stow and his wife Josey as well as our Registrar Jean Julian for a two-visit meeting to gardens normally open under the National Gardens Scheme. The morning visit was to Aurelia Gardens just outside of the village of West Moors in Dorset and the afternoon visit was to the garden of Highbury in West Moors.

The day started fine and warm with the members meeting in the car park of Aurelia Gardens. We were greeted by Robert Knight who with his wife Magdalene started to create the garden from a flat field site in 1992. This was our third visit, the last being in 1997, and we were eager to see how much further the garden had developed in the intervening years. The themes of the garden are golden foliated plants, plants with golden variegations and plants with flowers of shades of red and orange. On this occasion, after walking through a mini maze of neatly clipped conifers we were greeted by the wonderful sight of a garden approaching maturity. Colour foliage heather cultivars created bold displays of gold and bronze and the health and vigour of the plants was a superb advertisement for our favourite plant. I was surprised to see the tall *Crococsmia* 'Lucifer' growing in association with the heathers but all looked as though they were enjoying each others company. Robert and Magdalene have a large collection of rare breed fowl on the outer edges of the garden and visitors are welcome to walk around and marvel at the unbelievable plumage of these birds. A small nursery is adjacent to the entrance to the garden and members were able to buy examples of some of the plants growing in the garden.

In the pleasant sunshine members were able to enjoy a picnic lunch in the grassy car park and in peaceful surroundings. My thanks go to Robert and Magdalene for inviting us back for a third time to their superb garden.

After our visit to Aurelia Gardens we travelled about a mile to the second venue of the day, the garden of Highbury. This is a half acre garden owned by Stanley Cherry who is an Assistant County Organiser for the National Gardens Scheme in Dorset. Members visited this garden in 1992 during the month of May and saw a garden of rare plants and shrubs. Stanley now describes the garden as a peaceful woodland garden with many of the smaller shrubs and trees at the time of our last meeting having matured markedly. Indeed the garden was well stocked with trees and shrubs and the shade they provided was welcome, as the sun had now become quite hot. We were also invited to enter the house and look at the large collection of books in the horticultural library and also at a large collection of an historical and military nature. The library was indeed extensive and members spent some time browsing through some of the collection. Stanley and his garden helpers provided refreshment in the orchard at the end of the afternoon and we were able to have a chat in some very pleasant surroundings. My thanks go to

Stanley for his warm hospitality that afternoon in particular trusting us to look after his marvellous collection of books.

Dates for your Diary

A Further

Saturday 23rd March 2002 - This will be the annual indoor meeting at the Lytchett Matravers Village Hall in Dorset. Members should meet in the hall by 2.00 pm, where I will be giving an illustrated talk on a heather related topic. At the time of writing the title of the talk has not been decided upon but the intention is to announce the topic in the circular issued in February and also in the Spring *Bulletin*. At this meeting there will be a two class Table Show.

Class 1. A vase or bowl of heathers in bloom.

Class 2 A vase or bowl of heathers shown for foliage effect.

Prizes will be awarded and the Burfitt Bowl (currently held by Anne Pringle) will be awarded to the exhibitor with the most points overall. Lytchett Matravers is situated six miles from Poole and one mile west of the Poole-Blandford road. The Village Hall is on the west side of the High Street, just north of the Rose and Crown Inn. Ample parking is available close to the hall and a charge will be made to cover expenses. There will be refreshment supplied after the talk.

Further information on the meeting above and the rest of the meetings to be planned for 2002 can be obtained by sending me two SAEs by the end of January 2002. I finish this report by thanking you all for your support during this year and I hope for your continued support during the next.

Phil Joyner

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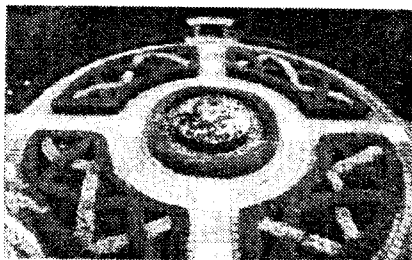
Open (2001) Wednesdays, Sundays and Bank Holiday Mondays 2-5 pm, from Easter until the end of September. Adult £2.00p, Child £1.00. Heather Society members also welcome at other times by appointment.

Afternoon teas available. Plants, including heathers, for sale. For further details about the garden and directions send SAE for leaflet, or see our entry under 'Gardens to Visit' on the Heather Society web-site.

Maurice & Daphne Everett Tel & Fax 01885 482206

E-mail: everettbannut@zetnet.co.uk

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