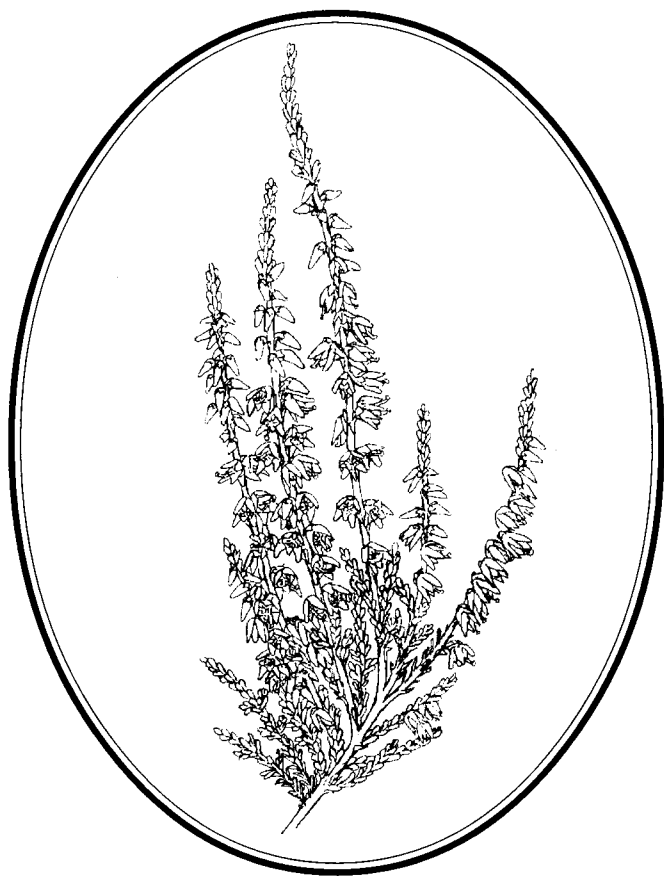


*Bulletin of The  
Heather Society*



*Vol. 6 No. 16*

*Autumn 2005*

## DIARY OF EVENTS

### 2005

October 28            North East Group            A.G.M

**October 31            CLOSING DATE FOR 2006 YEAR BOOK**

### 2006

**January 15            CLOSING DATE FOR SPRING BULLETIN**

March 4th            South West                    Sir Harold Hillier Gardens

March 18            Midlands Group            Garden Visit

May 13th            South West                    Exbury Gardens

**September 8-10    Annual Conference At Buxton**

September 30       Home Counties Group    Meeting at Wisley



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Cover illustration *Calluna vulgaris* by Brita Johannsson

*The Bournemouth Conference has come & gone, with the high standard set by Phil Joyner, being maintained by Susie Kay and her helpers. Maurice & I spent our honeymoon in Bournemouth 53 years ago and decided to spend the night before the Conference in the same little hotel. And did we enjoy our night of nostalgia? No – because when we arrived, we found we had been moved into the hotel next door!*

*Our Registrar tells me that white heather became known as a 'good luck charm' on 29<sup>th</sup> September 1855 (150 years ago), when Crown Prince Friedrich Wilhelm and the Princess Royal became engaged. For more – read the next edition of 'Heathers'.*

*My local greengrocer recently arrived back from the wholesale market, triumphantly bearing a tray of 'Himalayan Heathers'! Nothing I said could convince him they were actually from South Africa.*

## **2006 Conference**

### **Susie Kay**

Now that everybody has gone home from Bournemouth laden with plants and memories of the Conference, it is time to start thinking about 2006, the dates are 8, 9, 10 September.

The Conference will be held in Buxton in Derbyshire, a beautiful town with many attractions in the Peak District. Once again we hope to be able to provide an interesting and varied programme to suit all tastes.

If any member has knowledge of speakers in the area, we would like to hear about them with a view to including them in the weekend.

The accommodation will be at The Palace Hotel and to book your place, please send a £2.00 deposit, which is non-returnable, to Anne Small. Of course if you live near Buxton, we would love to welcome you as a day visitor.

Attending the annual conference is a great way of meeting new friends, who all have one thing in common: the love of *Erica*. It is a chance to catch up with old friends and make new ones and maybe learn something new about our favourite plants. Hope to see you there.

## **Report on the AGM, held on Sunday, 11 September, 2006.**

The Chairman, Arnold Stow opened the meeting and expressed his thanks to the various members who help to keep the Society ticking over – the Secretary, Treasurer, *Yearbook & Bulletin* editors and the Conference organisers.

The Secretary, Jean Julian then reported that the Society had had a stable year, with three Council Meetings taking place. Meeting rooms were becoming a problem as RHS rooms were free of charge only on Show days (otherwise there was a charge of £297 + vat). Some future meetings may be held at a venue in Bayswater.

Membership of the Society is still declining slowly. It dipped below 500 for a week or two – the first time for thirty years! Overseas membership continues to grow.

Council was concerned about some of the Local Groups. The Southwest Group had recently held its final meeting, the Midlands Group struggled to attract members to meetings and the Yorkshire Group's numbers were dwindling – mostly due to age. So far, the Northeast and Home Counties group numbers were holding up.

David McClintock's herbarium was being catalogued and also papers from the estate of Major General Pat Turpin.

The second volume of the International Register (Cape Heaths) was now completed and was available for purchase. Jean said that some members had questioned the amount of money being spent on the project, but said that, as the Society was the International Registration Authority, it was a legal requirement.

The National *Calluna* Collection at Harlow Carr had now gone, but will be replaced when the RHS are up to date with their reorganisation. A plot in South Field had been outlined. At Cherrybank there are major changes taking place in the garden, but the heather garden will remain. At Wisley, the National Collection is flourishing in the care of Andy Collins. A bed of the 100 Recommended Heathers is about to be planted at 'The Bannut', in Herefordshire. There is already a well established bed in Kent.

Pamela Lee has captioned all the photographs in the Conference Albums.

The Treasurer, Phil Joyner, presented the accounts. He explained that the unexpected profit made at the 2004 Conference was due to the generosity of Betty and David Lambie, who not only provided a free meeting room for the 2004 AGM, but also very generously gave everyone a free lunch.

Charles Nelson and Julian Fitz-Earle were elected as new Council Members. Diane Jones and Daphne Everett were standing down.

Conference Organiser, Susie Kay, reported that the 2006 conference would be held in Buxton, Derbyshire.

The Treasurer expressed his appreciation that Harry Reilly had agreed to continue to act as Auditor.

Under AOB, Charles Nelson said that it was hoped that a Spanish field trip could be arranged in 2006 to see *Erica umbellata* and other heathers in the wild. However, so far there were difficulties in finding a travel agent to cover the trip.

## A Well Deserved Tribute

At the start of the visit to David Edge's nursery Phil Joyner was surprised to find present several members of the South West Group (Henry and Anne Pringle, Val & Alan Davis, John Plowman and Diane Jones and Maureen Clark), who had all arrived to make a surprise presentation to him - their group organiser of many years. As Phil is an ardent steam buff, the gifts, presented by Anne and Henry Pringle, of a Hornby OO gauge locomotive (British Railways (SR) "Merchant Navy" class, number 35011, named "General Steam Navigation") with a Hornby OO gauge two road engine shed - plus a cheque for something extra, could hardly have been bettered. However, Henry Pringle added even more to the moment with his poem:

## An Ode To Phil and Lin

Down in the remote South West,  
Our branch is of the very best -  
It was led by our friend Phil  
Who now administers your till.  
Phil taught us nearly all we know  
About the heathers we should grow,  
Of *carneas*, *cinereas*, and *Callunas* too,  
He dreamt up all the names we knew,  
He made us all the greatest fans  
Of the cultivars of *E. vagans*;  
Oh! We had many picnic do's  
While seeking Ericaceous views,  
And a tea party every Spring,  
When the Burfitt cup we sought to win.  
Yes, we've had many happy days  
Viewing botany's many ways;  
So now we wish you both great joy,  
And do have fun with your new toy.



*Photograph by John Plowman*

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Sadly, as the time of the presentation had had to be changed, South West Group members, John and Michelle Keenan arrived after we had left the nursery.

## Your Photographs Required Arnold Stow

Don't keep them to yourself, share them around!

The Society is proposing on a trial basis to issue a CD based on heather events during the year. Members are invited to send slides, prints or e-mail pictures to that led to a wet area had been largely overcome. Richard was happy to pass

David Small at [heathers@zetnet.co.uk](mailto:heathers@zetnet.co.uk) to reach him by December 31<sup>st</sup>. Please note it will not be possible to return your entries, so please keep a copy.

Pictures of heather gardens or favourite heathers, member's gardens, local group events and or members themselves with a heather content will be welcomed. Heathland, Council roundabouts and public gardens are all suitable for inclusion. Most DVD players will accept a CD so a computer is not essential to view the pictures.

We need at least 100 entries, there will be no limit as to how many you may send.

Subject to the response it might be possible to make this an annual competition event with a modest prize to the winner.

## **The Family Silver: Heather Society Trophies and the Winners.**

**Charles Nelson**

Since their evolution as organizations to promote the arts and crafts of gardening, horticultural societies have awarded prizes for the biggest, the best and the brightest. Sometimes the prize-winners get little more than a mention in the society's newsletter or local newspaper. Sometimes they get a cup or medal to keep in perpetuity. Sometimes it's just on loan until the next person wins. *The Heather Society* is no exception! However, there is no (inter)national trophy\*, cup or medal bestowed on a winner by the Society as a whole. The trophies all have their origins within our various groups, and as far as I can tell no-one has ever provided an account of these trophies. So I contacted all the group organisers and obtained from them the histories of their trophies.

Finding out the winners was a relatively easy matter using the index to past issues of the *Bulletin*. Unquestionably the trophy for the largest number of trophies must go to the North East Group: the story of that group's trophies has been elucidated in detail by Dorothy Warner, but the winners were not always recorded by name in the *Bulletin* so the lists below are incomplete.

Nowadays if your desire to win a trophy, exhibiting with the North East Group must be the surest bet! Move north, in search of "silver".

### **Midland (Birmingham) Group Silver Cup: 1988-1992**

- |      |                                         |
|------|-----------------------------------------|
| 1988 | Mary Hamnett                            |
| 1989 | Olwyn Warner                            |
| 1990 | Olwyn Warner                            |
| 1991 | Daphne Everett                          |
| 1992 | Betty & Ray Bishop, &<br>Daphne Everett |



*Daphne Everett with the Midlands' Group Cup*

The cup does not have "a particularly interesting history. It is just an ordinary cup that Maurice and I bought for the group during the time I was organiser." **Daphne Everett**

The Summer 1987 *Bulletin* records the occasion in March 1987 when the Midland Group's table show attracted about 50 entries in 5 classes – "interest was very keen and the standard remarkably high." The heathers were all arranged in blocks of "Oasis" and the first prize for each class was "a most 'valuable' Easter Egg." No trace of these exceptional trophies can now be found.

### **Southern Group Challenge Bowl: The Turpin Trophy: 1992–**

1992	Josie Stow
1993	John Tucker
1994	Pamela Lee
1995	Mary Bowerman
1996	Pamela Lee
1997	Audrey & David Sprague
1999	Pam Millis
2000	John Tucker
2001	Jean Merrin
2002	John Tucker
2003	Derek Millis
2004	Derek Millis



*Pam & Derek Millis with the Southern Group's trophy*

Named after Major-General Pat Turpin, with his permission, the trophy is a cup obtained by Allen Hall. Small plaques were added over the years giving the names of winners of the trophy.

Its first outing was described by Allen Hall in the Spring 1993 *Bulletin*, in his report of the Southern Group's meeting at Wisley on 19 September 1992 at the RHS Garden Wisley. Phil Joyner was the guest lecturer.

Phil was pressed into service again to judge heathers in our competition.... Mrs. Josie Stow won the award for the best flower arrangement, which was also judged to be the best overall display; she therefore became the first holder of the South Group Challenger Bowl and is entitled to hold it until September 1993. I am happy to say that Major General Turpin has graciously consented to his name being associated with the Challenge Bowl – which will henceforth be called 'The Turpin Trophy'.

The Turpin Trophy is still active, and is the only one ever recorded pictorially in the *Bulletin* – in the Autumn 2001 and Autumn 2002 issues. (There was no winner in 1998 because there was no Wisley meeting that year.)

### **Southwest Group: The Burfitt Bowl: 1988–2005**

1988	Anne Pringle & Val Davis
1989	Anne Pringle
1990	Joyce Allen
1991	Bob Allen
1992	Jennifer Turrell
1993	Jennifer Turrell
1994	Jennifer Turrell
1995	Maureen Clark & Anne Pringle
1996	Phil Joyner

- 1997 Phyllis Kennedy & Anne Pringle
- 1998 Anne Pringle
- 1999 Anne Pringle
- 2000 Maureen Clark
- 2001 Anne Pringle
- 2002 Jennifer Turrell
- 2003 Anne Pringle
- 2004 Anne Pringle
- 2005 Anne Pringle & Phil Joyner



The Burfitt Bowl was introduced after the death of Joyce Burfitt and in her honour. Joyce was a lovely lady and of

*Phil Joyner & Anne Pringle with the Burfitt Bowl.*

course very knowledgeable on heathers. It was Joyce who first suggested an indoor meeting at Lytchett Matravers and then later suggested a table show which at that time had no trophy associated with it. It was awarded to the exhibitor with the most points overall. **Phil Joyner**

With the retirement of Phil Joyner as the Group Organiser and the consequent ending of the group's meetings at Lytchett Matravers, 2005 may be the last year of competition for the Burfitt Bowl.

#### **North East Group trophies**

I hope it won't come as too much of a disappointment when I tell you that there is no silverware at all! All we have are three very small wooden shields with a smaller chrome shield centrally attached and with no inscriptions whatever. I can't say for sure where these originated, but I would guess that a member or members at the time would donate them.

Up until 1990 the "Heather Show", as we proudly called it, was really just a social get-together and a bit of fun. We met on a Sunday afternoon in David Goodchild's garden and our exhibits were proudly shown in his greenhouse. David had to go to a lot of bother to clear out his plants to accommodate ours! The vases for the exhibits consisted of a motley assortment of egg cups and small china and glass vases, and the "prize cards" were just pieces of red, blue and yellow paper with 1st, 2nd and 3rd written on in pen! Nothing posh! So it would be around this time that the trophies appeared.

In 1988 we were asked if we would put on a weekend show for the forthcoming Gateshead Garden Festival which was then being organized for the Summer/Autumn of 1990. Naturally, we were very flattered, but also very worried as we knew the expense of putting on a heather show of this calibre would be very costly to say the least and, furthermore, we had no experience of how to go about such a project. Fortunately, Bobby Thompson was our Chairman at that time and his knowledge of such things was invaluable. Not only was he a rose breeder but also a showman and judge and he had spent all his life in horticulture. Under his guidance, together with the wonderful hardworking Committee that we had, and also because the Garden Festival refunded all the exhibitors their costs for staging their projects, we were able to go ahead.

We realized that our egg-cup vases would not do, nor would the coloured



paper prize cards be acceptable, so we invested in small Lakeland stone pots for the heathers. Prize cards were supplied by the Garden Festival and were uniform. At the end of the show we were able to buy back our own pots from the Festival and for our efforts we won a Silver Medal Certificate.

Later, after the sad death of Bobby Thompson, our members bought a Lakeland stone vase with a suitable plaque in commemoration and this has been competed for each year for "The Best Exhibit in Show".

In so many horticultural events nowadays the number of exhibitors and public attending are going down, and we are no exception. A few years ago we joined forces with the Ponteland Flower and Vegetable Show as a separate entity, but two years ago we joined in with their Heather Classes, so now it is just an Open Class. Sadly, the only trophy to compete for is the Bobby Thompson Memorial Trophy awarded to "The Best Exhibit in Show".

To re-cap. The only trophies we hold are the three shields which were for "The Best Exhibit in Show", "The Most Points in Show" and "The Most Points in Classes 13, 14, 15 and 16". When the Bobby Thompson Trophy came into existence this then became "The Best Exhibit in Show" and for a few years one of the shields was used for "The Best Potted Heather." This Class never really caught on and is now defunct.

So we hold three shields and a Lakeland stone vase! **Dorothy Warner.**

**Trophy for best exhibit in show**

- 1984 Mrs. D. McArthur
- 1985 Joan Lister
- 1986 Mr. & Mrs. R. Scott
- 1988 Dorothy Wild
- 1989 Mary & David Roberts
- 1990 Vera Scott

then renamed and replaced by a Lakeland stone vase

**Bobby Thompson Memorial Trophy**

- 1991 Mary & David Roberts
- 1994 Mary Roberts
- 1995 Dorothy Warner
- 2001 John Turner
- 2002 Rita Plumridge
- 2004 Rita & David Plumridge



*Rita & David Plumridge with the North East Group's Lakeland Stone Vase.*

**Trophy for best exhibits in classes 11-14/13-16**

- 1988 Mary & David Roberts
- 1989 Dorothy Warner
- 1990 Dorothy Warner
- 1991 Vera Scott
- 1994 Dorothy Warner
- 1995 Dorothy Warner
- 2001 John Turner
- 2002 Dorothy Warner

**Trophy for maximum points**

- 1986 Mr. & Mrs. R. Scott
- 1988 Mary & David Roberts
- 1989 Mary & David Roberts
- 1990 Mary & David Roberts
- 1991 Mary & David Roberts
- 1994 Syd Courtney
- 1995 Mary & David Roberts
- 2001 Dorothy & Geoff Warner
- 2002 Dorothy & Geoff Warner

- Postscript. There is one international trophy, which the author admits to holding *pro tem*, and that is the Daneri-Wiksten Tour Leader's Challenge Vase, first competed for in 2003. Its terms are obscure but seem to have something to do with taking a party of *Heather Society* members the longest way to the nearest restaurant in torrential rain. It is a uniquely tasteful collage of blue translucent plastic and silver, mounted on a polished marble base. It is not inscribed.

**And Finally** - *Charles' article wouldn't be complete without a report on the presentation to him of the 'Danari-Wiksten Tour Leader's Challenge Vase' - as mentioned in his postscript! The occasion was at the end of an expedition in June 2003, when fifteen heather enthusiasts, led by Charles, explored the Azores, looking at heathers. Both the account below and the picture, were taken from the North American 'Heather News Quarterly' Winter 2004: 7. (With acknowledgements to, the writer, Dee Daneri, the photographer, Judy Wiksten and to 'Heather News Quarterly'). Ed.*

..... Alison Stein had written a most poignant poem which received cheers from everyone, and then together we all presented him with the *pièce de resistance*. Charles carefully unwrapped the lavishly wrapped gift of suspense. Careful not to damage the fragile contents, he soon revealed a glistening VVSI clear aquamarine genuine plastic trophy, gleaming with an authentic sterling-silver-painted tin cup. It was one of the finest trophy cups in the entire shop at Madalena. With great throngs of laughter and cheers, we all toasted Charles for giving us this most memorable and enjoyable holiday.

**Capturing *the moment!***

Charles Nelson, moved from laughter to tears, is overwhelmed by the gift selected by co-conspirators Dee Daneri and Judy Wiksten (the latter submitted the accompanying photo). Sharing the hilarity is long-time NAHS member Eileen Pettersen from Norway.

After arriving back in Tippitwitchet Cottage, Charles reported via email, that "The Daneri-Wiksten vase gleams on the windowsill, its limpid blue stem glowing in the afternoon sun and its gold-and-silver bowl gleaming." — but he concluded his message by wondering "What am I going to do with it next?"



Meanwhile, Charles had moved from laughter to tears, and then back again. He may have been temporarily hysterical. He seemed quite speechless, really, as cameras captured the joy of the moment'.

## **Handy Guide to Heathers - 4th edition**

**David and Anne Small**

We have just started to prepare the fourth edition of the *Handy Guide to Heathers*. We would appreciate up-to-date catalogues or lists, together with trading details so that we can make the sourcing of cultivars as accurate as possible. Details of on-line catalogues would also be appreciated in case we have missed some.

Many thanks in advance.

## **Heathers 3 (Yearbook of The Heather Society 2006).**

**Charles Nelson**

The deadline for articles for the 2006 yearbook is, as usual, 31 October. I will be pleased to receive contributions, no matter how short, from members. We have some articles already in hand – topics include the foliage colour of *Calluna* cultivars, George Sinclair, “lucky” white heather, and heathers on Porto Santo.

## **Mingling? David Plumridge**

The average horticulturist might think that there can't be much more to heather growing than sticking a collection of those small shrubs into acid soil and letting them get on with it. How wrong can they be! Some heather aficionados are interested in the botanical aspects, growing specimens of the more unusual species and hybrids for their intrinsic interest. A few even produce hybrids, which turn out to be plants of garden worth. For others their passion is Cape Heaths. The rest of us enjoy heathers for their garden worthiness, giving as they do a wonderful year round display of easily managed colour in flower and foliage.

The other day Dorothy Warner, our North East Heather Group secretary and treasurer husband Geoff paid us a visit. While wandering round the garden it was brought home to me that even amongst heather gardeners there are differing approaches. Dorothy prefers each variety to be grown in a distinct manner whereas Rita and I love to see them mingling together. We feel that this gives a more natural appearance which we see on our local moorland where *Erica cinerea* and *Calluna* entwine.

At the time of writing, a favourite is a combination of the lilac-pink *Erica cinerea* 'Vivienne Patricia' and the yellow *Erica carnea* 'Foxhollow'. Another is *Erica cinerea* 'Hookstone White' with the deep purple flowered *Daboecia cantabrica* 'Rainbow' and its variegated foliage. 'Hookstone Purple', 'White Blum', the pink 'Bubbles' and red 'William Buchanan' also look pretty good together.

Many of our North American heather friends have a totally different

approach, with individual cultivars carefully trimmed and spaced with a mulch. This can look very impressive - its formality and style highlighting the attributes of the variety. However, informality can go too far if you are not careful! Rita has spent time this summer ripping out excess *darleyensis* which were not simply mingling but swamping their neighbours. She has replaced them mainly with *cinereas* so we can enjoy even more of their splendid summer colour.



*Heathers mingling in the Plumridge's garden*

So what do members think? Should we strive for the natural look in our heather gardens or accept that gardening is truly artificial and try to show cultivars at their individual best?

### ***Erica erigena* 'Ivory'** **Charles Nelson**

Among the many interesting heathers that members were able to acquire at the recent annual gathering in Bournemouth was this fine Irish heath, thanks to our Chairman, Arnold Stow, who had propagated it, and Alan Kay who was in charge of plant sales. Arnold sang its praises at the Council meeting that preceded the weekend gathering. Alan expertly badgered everyone to buy.

Unfortunately the plants were not labelled *Erica erigena* 'Ivory'. The word "Irish" had somehow become interposed between *erigena* and 'Ivory' (I do not believe our Chairman is to blame for this expanded name). Any member who acquired one of these plants is asked to carefully remove the geographical adjective from the label and allow 'Ivory' to stand alone, unadorned by any implication that the clone might have come from that greenest of islands "across the water". By that means, I hope, this name will remain correct in print.

*Erica erigena* 'Ivory' has white flowers with pink sepals, and grey-green foliage. It is a compact plant (35cm tall, 50cm spread) according to the *International register of heather names*. It is also stated there to have aborted anthers and flattened stamen filaments, which all makes me wonder if it is not seriously misidentified.

Hardwicks Nursery, Newick, Sussex, introduced 'Ivory' before 1975 and it is now a rare plant. Anyone growing it is asked to contact me, please, so I can arrange to obtain samples when it comes into bloom in the late winter.

## Heather Crossword

The crossword sent in by Dr. Colin Rogers for the Summer *Bulletin* had everyone beaten I am afraid. The answers are printed below. He has offered to produce an easier one for us some time in the future.

### Across

- 7 Anther  
8 Carnea  
9 Dart  
10 untimely  
11 petrol  
13 brae  
14 Eve  
16 ashy  
17 Alette  
19 vulgaris  
21 sign  
22 German  
23 Elaine

### Down

- 1 Annabel  
2 shot  
3 Proudley  
4 Scot  
5 Brummage  
6 Wells  
12 Rosy Gems  
13 Bearsden  
15 staging  
18 Super  
20 rank  
21 Star

## Major-General Pat Turpin's Archives Charles Nelson

Last year Mrs. Cherry Turpin donated to *The Heather Society*, books and papers accumulated over the years by her late husband, Major-General Turpin. The books have already found good homes with members, and I am holding a series of bulky files containing an interesting collection of botanical notes about the various heather species. Several scrap-books and a photograph album are now being browsed by the *Bulletin* Editor for interesting nuggets.

One important set of papers, including correspondence, relates to Pat Turpin's work on the Lizard Peninsula in Cornwall and Council has agreed to place this material for safe-keeping in the Royal Institution of Cornwall, Truro.

## Royd Moor Viewing Point, Penistone.

**An extract from 'Country Air' -  
the news magazine of the Yorkshire Rural Community  
Council, sent in by Jean Julian:**

"Wednesday, 8th June 2005 was a gloriously sunny day and was the occasion of Penistone and District Society's Royd Moor Viewing Point being officially handed over to Penistone Town Council, in perpetuity, with over 30 people from the area in attendance.

The viewing point is above Thurlstone and Millhouse Green (700 feet above sea level and with a potential for views covering a 50-mile radius). It features a drystone wall made from stone recycled from a local farm, a central metal disc giving information on the heritage sites within the area, together with

interpretation boards, seating (produced from recycled plastic - and looking very convincingly like wood!) and waste bins as well as a tethering rail.

The project was suggested in 2003 to commemorate the Golden Jubilee of H.M. Queen Elizabeth II by John Smith (a past president of the Penistone and District Society), on land purchased and donated for the purpose. In addition to the Rural Target Fund, other funders were the Countryside Agency (Local Heritage Initiative) and the Community Investment Fund.

The initial building work began in August 2004 and was completed in early 2005. Penistone and District Society has involved local people in the completion of the project. Local firms were used for building, as well as volunteers from Yorkshire Water and local groups. Penistone and District Community partnership has supported throughout the project."

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**Jean continues:** In February 2005 the Society realised that it was going to have a dead area around the outside of the dry stone wall and decided to plant it up. Heathers were the obvious choice, as the viewing point is on the moor. They asked Harlow Carr for advice and *The Heather Society* became involved. I visited the site and together with David Small drew up some plans.

On his visit to Holland to collect plants for *The Heather Society* he brought over 100 plants on behalf of Penistone and District. The volunteers from Yorkshire Water prepared the ground and then in April members of the Penistone Society planted the *Calluna* around the south side of the site and *Erica carnea* and *Erica x darleyensis* in the north eastern bed. It looked excellent this spring and hopefully will flourish well for many years to come.

## **Garden Survey** **Charles Nelson**

My thanks to those who responded to my recent note about the survey – the trickle of completed forms continues, but it is now just a dribble! The overseas response remains the best; perhaps members in Britain have been putting off their contributions because of the need to watch cricket on the telly? Now that the Ashes have been returned and the evenings are drawing in, I do hope some more members will dust off their forms, fill them in, and turn the dribble into a deluge? Who knows, I might one day have enough information for a proper article for the *Bulletin* all about the heather we all grow and love?

## **30 Years Ago - from the 1975 Year Book**

### **Some random thoughts on rooting cuttings** **A. W. Jones**

My wife and I became interested in heathers in the summer of 1967. At that time I read Fred Chapple's book "The Heather Garden" (Collingridge), but it

was from John Letts' beautiful garden at Windlesham that we finally contracted incurable Ericaphilia. In the autumn of that year we began to grow heathers in our tiny garden at Taplow, and in November 1969, we joined *The Heather Society*. Ericaphilia proceeded apace and by the following June I was trying to root cuttings. Those first attempts resulted in some spectacular failures, but there were enough successes to ensure that I would persist in trying to propagate heaths and heathers from cuttings. It was however necessary to find out why there had been so many failures.

In October of 1970, in reply to a cry for help, I received a letter from Mrs. Macleod [the Secretary at the time]. That letter was full of encouragement and in a subtle way pointed out how I might help myself towards success. I hope Mrs. Macleod will not object if I reproduce a part of it here. "I read somewhere, and wish I had taken note of it, that the critical time for success with various kinds can be as little as six days. That is to say, if one is lucky enough to take them at the right time they will 'take', so this explains why success or failure seems inexplicable."

I felt I must test the truth of that assertion that a short critical period for success existed and, if this proved to be the case, find out when it was. It may have been possible to do what I wanted by taking batches of cuttings from a single cultivar at intervals of two or three days over a period of several months. However there were several drawbacks to this method. A large number of identical plants of one cultivar would be required, it would tie up the greater part of the equipment I had available for taking cuttings and it would make too great a demand on my available space and time. Furthermore if I had succeeded in identifying a critical period by this method, it may have been valid only for the cultivar I chose to study, and for the year in which I studied it. Alternatively if I worked with a reasonable number of cultivars over a number of years, the effect of various factors influencing success would probably tend to even out as I amassed data, and I would obtain a broad general picture of the best time to take my cuttings. I would also, incidentally obtain the plants I needed for the garden. I began to make records of my attempts at rooting cuttings. I decided to concentrate on cultivars of *Erica carnea* and *Erica x darleyensis*.

The information I recorded was the name of the cultivar, the number of cuttings taken, and the number of cuttings which rooted and the date on which they were potted on. Where necessary I also made notes of subjective observations such as the condition of the cutting material or the state of rooting of the little plants.

I take my cuttings into flower-pots. The rooting medium is silver sand. I stand the pots on the ground in a shady position in the open air and cover them with plastic propagating domes. I know that the number of cuttings I have taken pales into insignificance when compared to the number taken by members of the Society, but I now have records of 145 completed batches containing 7,500 individual cuttings of *Erica carnea* and *Erica x darleyensis* cultivars.

There are a further 1,800 cuttings in 26 batches at present awaiting potting on. I have taken cuttings as early as the 12th April and as late as the

1985 Mr. & Mrs. D. Goodchild

17th July. This represents a reasonable amount of work and I felt that the time had come to examine my records.

Let me say at once that I do not have an answer to the question I set out with, but I do now have some new questions! It may however be of some interest if I set down some of the things I have noticed while I have been keeping records and perhaps some more knowledgeable members could supply answers to some of the questions which have been raised.

I have found that cuttings of some cultivars are ready for transplanting in as little as fifty days, and most are rooted by the autumn of the year in which they were taken. It is possible that some over-winter in the cutting pots before rooting in the following spring. My results show little or no difference in success rates between cuttings transplanted the year they were taken and those that remained in the cutting pots until the following spring. There is however, a practical point here. If well rooted cuttings are left too long in the cutting pots it will be more difficult to separate the fine roots without damage during transplantation. I am led to wonder why different cultivars of the same species should take such different times to root.

Cuttings normally root from close to the point where they were separated from the parent plant. In a few cases I have seen rooting occur in both *Erica carnea* and *Erica x darleyensis*, from the point where the cuttings met the surface of the silver sand. These cuttings almost certainly took a long time to root. It is probable that the cutting material was too ripe and the fine new roots could not rapidly penetrate the hard surface skin in the normal areas. The skin may however have been mechanically damaged by the sand at the surface as a result of slight movement, thus allowing fine roots to form at that point. Engineering theory suggests that the highest stresses induced by bending of the cuttings will occur in the surface skin at the point where it enters the sand. Surface roots seem to break more easily during transplanting than normal roots.

I have noticed that cuttings sometimes root in well-defined areas in a cutting pot while failing in the remainder of the pot. I have a few tentative explanations of why this happens but I will not go into them here. I would however be interested to hear if others have noticed this phenomenon and of any explanations they may have of it.

I have done a number of experiments on the effect of rooting hormone on *Erica* cuttings. The hormone I chose was May and Bakers' "Seredix" No. 3 (Hardwood grade). The active ingredient of the preparation is 4-(3- Indalyl) - Butyric Acid. I should like to reproduce the results of these experiments in their entirety.

<b>Cultivar</b>	<b>Date Taken</b>	<b>Date Potted On</b>	<b>% Success</b>	
<i>Erica carnea</i>	26.5.73	13.8.73	34.4	hormone
'Jennifer Anne'	26.5.73	13.8.73	7.5	no hormone
<i>Erica carnea</i>	25.5.73	29.3.74	23.3	hormone



'Vivelli'	26.5.73	29.3.74	20.00	hormone
	26.5.73	29.3.74	37.5	no hormone
<i>Erica carnea</i>	8.6.73	23.3.74	33.3	hormone
'Ruby Glow'	8.6.73	23.3.74	1.7	no hormone
	13.4.74	28.7.74	0.0	hormone
	13.4.74	28.7.74	16.0	no hormone
<i>Erica carnea</i>	13.4.74	18.7.74	44.4	hormone
'Springwood White'	13.4.74	18.7.74	37.2	no hormone
<i>Erica carnea</i>	13.4.74	1.9.74	17.3	hormone
'Springwood Pink'	13.4.74	1.9.74	13.3	no hormone
<i>Erica x darleyensis</i>	19.5.74	28.7.74	72.5	hormone
'Jack H. Brummage'	19.5.74	28.7.74	0.0	no hormone

These results seem to show that in the case of *Erica carnea* 'Jennifer Anne', the first batch of *Erica carnea* 'Ruby Glow' and *Erica x darleyensis* 'Jack H. Brummage' the hormone helped in rooting the cuttings. However in the case of the second batch of 'Ruby Glow' and the 'Vivellii' better results were obtained with the untreated cuttings. The differences obtained with the two 'Springwood' cultivars are not thought to be significant.

These results may be interpreted as meaning that hormone rooting powder has no effect in the rooting of *Erica* cuttings or that other variables entered the experiment and outweighed the effect of hormone rooting powder. I am continuing these experiments and would be pleased to hear of other members' experiences.

Finally I should like to return to my starting point. I set out to find if a critical time existed for success in rooting cuttings and to find out when that time was. I reasoned that if when I had collected sufficient data, I plotted success rate against the date on which the cuttings were taken then good results would tend to cluster in one part of the calendar. As I have already hinted, in the event I did not find this to be the case.

Let us now consider the factors which may affect the rooting of cuttings on a single site. For a cutting to root, the original material must have been in a suitable condition and it must have found favourable conditions in the cutting pot. My own results show that a certain percentage of suitable material is present on the parent plants over a considerable period of time.

Support for this view is provided by a letter I received from Mrs. Maginess earlier this year in which she says that she has successfully rooted cuttings taken as early as February and as late as October.

The percentage of suitable material present at any time probably depends not only on the time of year but also on the rainfall and temperature in the proceeding period. I do not know how long a particular shoot remains in a suitable condition for rooting, but this is also probably due to the factor already mentioned. The conditions in the cutting pot are largely under the control of the individual gardener, but if cuttings are rooted out of doors the temperature of the rooting medium and of the cutting itself will probably have

an effect on rooting success.

I realise that there may also be other factors at work, but in the first instance it will be necessary for me to examine my results in the light of weather conditions and cultivars I have used in my experiments. Such an analysis will reveal the presence of other factors but will not necessarily identify them. Techniques, which may be suitable for this type of multivariable analysis, have been developed in the field of agricultural research and have been described by M. Ergekiel and K. A. Fox (*Methods of Correlation and Regression Analysis*, John Wiley and Sons, New York 1966).

I have been very fortunate in that the Royal Naval Air Station at Yeovilton, which maintains a weather recording station only a mile and a half from where I have done most of this work, are making their recordings for the past four years available to me, and I am at present preparing to carry out the analysis. This may take some time to complete, but I hope to report my findings in a future issue of the *Year Book*.

*Later, Bert Jones became a commercial heather grower (he and his wife Diane ran Otters' Court Nursery at West Camel). He also became a highly valued Member of Council and, from 1979 until 1994, was Editor of the Society's Yearbook. Ed.*

## Group News

### North East

It was unfortunate that our planned car outing to Bide-a-Wee Garden on July 6th had to be cancelled, but after a spell of really glorious weather it changed completely and on our outing day it just poured from morning till night. I dread to think what state the garden must have been in.

Saturday, September 10th, was the day of the Ponteland Flower Show in which we compete in the Open Classes for Heathers. The number of entries was down, but overall the show bench was pleasing and the Judge said the exhibits were uniform but not quite up to last year's standard. The Bobby Thompson Memorial Trophy, belonging to our Group, was awarded to Geoff and Dorothy Warner for the "Best Exhibit in Show," and the Bill Crow Memorial Quaich, which belongs to the Ponteland Flower Show was awarded to Dorothy Warner for "The Most Points in the Heather Classes." Six spikes of 'Kinlochruel' won the Best Exhibit.

**Friday, October 28th, 2005**, is our A.G.M. and will be held in St. Matthew's Church Hall, Ponteland, at 2.30pm. Please note the new time. Tea and biscuits will replace the Faith Supper, and we will have our usual show of slides. We look forward to seeing you all there.

*Dorothy M. Warner.*

### Yorkshire

The second meeting of the Yorkshire Heather Group in 2005 was on Saturday, 4th June in the Field Classroom at Harlow Carr. It took the form of an interesting illustrated talk on *Daboecias* led by David Plumridge. David and Rita grow many varieties of *Daboecia*, which flourish in the Castleside / Consett soil. Many people have problems growing them in Yorkshire and even those planted at Harlow Carr tend to be rather poor so a good discussion ensued on the soil conditions required by *Daboecias*.

We had some difficulties organising a weekend visit to the new walled garden at Scampston Hall as this new garden is very popular with horticultural societies at present. So the date was changed to Wednesday, 3rd August and 15 members had an enjoyable afternoon looking around this different garden. We had to cope with the wind and one or two sharp showers but fortunately the sun came out in between.

On Saturday, 17th September we had our autumn meeting in the Study Centre at Harlow Carr. The planned speaker was not able to come due to family illness but a good entertaining meeting was held with our Chairman, John Griffiths talking for the first part of the meeting about photography. He compared photographs taken on slides by SLR camera with digital photographs projected on to a screen, explaining how the images can be adjusted as required.

In the second half, Jean Julian gave a short illustrated talk on bud-bloomers, which are becoming so popular, particularly in Europe.

*Jean Julian*

## Midlands

Regrettably, it was necessary to cancel our Summer visit because of the indisposition of our host, Mr. Bob Rope. A number of members have spoken to me expressing the hope that Bob is now recovering, and on behalf of all the members of our Group, I extend our good wishes to him.

**Spring Meeting:** Joan and I invite members to visit us at 10 Upper Green, Loughborough on Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> March 2006 to see the winter heathers in bloom. We propose a 2pm start, with tea at about 4 pm. If you wish to come, please let me know by February 25<sup>th</sup> 2006. Details of how to communicate with us are given on the last page of the Bulletin. In your response, please provide a contact telephone number or e-mail address. I can supply a sketch of the route if asked.

*Allen Hall*

## Home Counties

On Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> October 2005 Home Counties Group members and their guests met for their annual end of season meeting at the RGS Gardens, Wisley. The weather was sunny and warm for the morning walk around the Heather Gardens accompanied by member Andy Collins who is responsible for conifers and heathers in this beautiful part of Wisley. The heathers were looking very good and were in far better shape than when we last visited in September 2004. Members were particularly struck by the appearance of *Calluna vulgaris* 'Monika' with its large reddish double flowers which in some cases were tinged pale lilac, almost bi-colour, a beautiful sight.

Two talks were given during the afternoon session in the Garden Meeting Room. The first, by Chairman, Arnold Stow, was on David Edge's 30 best heathers. David is a member of the Society and owner of Forest Edge Nursery, Wimborne, Dorset, he had very kindly loaned us his slides to illustrate this talk.

The audience was asked to participate by listing their five favourite heathers and the reasons for their choice. This produced some lively discussion and it was interesting to note that old favourite *Erica carnea* 'Myretoun Ruby' was on many lists.

Richard Canovan then gave an illustrated talk on 'How not to use a site' which was based on the layout of his own heather garden over the course of many seasons. Problems with vigorous growth, plant spacing and a sloping site

on lessons learnt the hard way and his slides showed the lovely garden he now has, with many specimen heathers.

Prior to an excellent tea with cakes kindly provided by Audrey Sprague, Josey Stow and Pam Millis (thank you ladies!), Josey judged the table show and the winners were as follows:

- 1) Best flower arrangement in which heathers predominate - Pamela Lee (Turpin Trophy)
- 2) Best vase of hardy heather in flower, single variety - Derek Millis (*Erica x griffithsii* 'Jacqueline')
- 3) Best vase of heather chosen for foliage - Pamela Lee

It was agreed by those present that it had been an enjoyable meeting and thanks are due to Arnold and Richard for their contributions.

The Garden Meeting Room has been booked for next year's meeting, which will take place on **Saturday 30 September 2006**. Further details of activities for the 2006 season will be sent early next year to those members who are on my circulation list and to those who request inclusion on the list.

*Derek Millis*

### South West Area News

As you are already aware I have now retired as the South West Group organiser but so that we don't lose touch with each other, I will now put the promised casual arrangement into place. I will announce via the Bulletins only, that Lin and I will attend a public garden(s) on a certain date and you, the members, will be welcome to join us for the walk around that garden.

However, before I announce the gardens and dates, I am sad to report the recent passing away of one of the stalwart members of the former group, Roy Henvest. Roy and his wife Jean had been members of *The Heather Society* for several years and attended the majority of the local group meetings. Roy was a resident of Totton and was a member of the local horticultural society to which I belong and so our paths crossed frequently. Roy will be sadly missed and I am sure you would like to join me in offering our condolences to Jean.

At the 2005 Conference visit to David Edge's nursery I was "caught on the hop" by members of the former South West Group who presented me with several gifts to mark my retirement as group organiser. Anne and Henry Pringle had organised a collection of funds for the gifts and I would like to extend my sincere thanks to Anne and Henry and the rest of the members who contributed towards those gifts. Henry also went to great trouble to compose an ode which you will find printed elsewhere in this Bulletin. I was indeed humbled.

Now to two gardens that Lin and I will be visiting in the first half of 2006 and I have chosen gardens we have visited in the past and the locations of which you are familiar with. The first visit will be to the **Sir Harold Hillier Gardens at Romsey on March 4th** where the winter garden and the heather garden will have plenty to admire. The second visit will be to **Exbury Gardens on May 13th** when it should be the peak flowering time for the azaleas. Both dates are Saturdays and I suggest that Lin and I will be in the vicinity of the entrances at about 2.00pm. There will be no arrangements made with the gardens, no guides and no group entrance fees. There will be no reminders, other than in the Bulletins and there will be no need to let me know you are coming, just turn up and we will walk around together viewing and chatting as we go. It's an excuse to get out and about and meet old friends and perhaps make new ones so Lin and I hope to see you there.

*Phil Joyner*

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