

Bulletin of The Heather Society



Volume 8, number 7.

Spring 2016

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volume 8 number 7

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DIARY 2016

17 February	Council Meeting, London
26 March	Yorkshire Group (see page 10)
28 May	Yorkshire Group (see page 10)
15 May	Closing date for Summer 2016 <i>Bulletin</i>
15 June	Council Meeting, London
5–10 July	RHS Hampton Court Palace Show
9–12 September	Annual Gathering & AGM, Perth
15 September	Closing date for Autumn 2016 <i>Bulletin</i>
25 September	Home Counties Group (see page 10)
19 October	Council Meeting, London
31 October	Closing date for 2017 yearbook, <i>Heathers</i> 14.

For contact details of the Society's Officers, Editors, Group Organizers, and Administrator, see inside back cover.

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Forewords

As I look out of the window in my little study, the sun is shining in a brilliant blue sky, but the temperature is still below zero. A touch of winter at last! The 300 Erica carnea that we planted last year in our new front garden, are looking superb, in spite of the never-ending rain and waterlogged soil of the past couple of months. At least we are better off than the village in Wales, which, by the middle of January, had had rain every day for 81 days! Also better off than the owner of the lovely gardens at Plas Cadnant, which we visited at the Snowdonia Conference in 2014. Horticulture week reported in January that the gardens were "all but destroyed by a "tidal wave" of water during Storm Eva. Owner Anthony Tavernor, who had spent 20 years restoring the gardens, was devastated at the destruction but plans to pick up the pieces."*

Daphne Everett

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* For more on the destruction at Plas Cadnant, including video, see BBC TV. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-north-west-wales-35186881>

Chairman's chat David Edge

It comes to mind that I refer to unusual weather conditions in the majority of my monologues, and so it

continues with the wettest December on record, and January looking to compete. How this will affect our heather gardens we have yet to see bearing in mind their dislike of being waterlogged.

I am pleased to note that, despite initial concerns, we have had a good response with many new members joining from the THS website, utilising the easy pay facility. The website is the avenue for attracting members as well as acquainting viewers with information about the Society and heathers. If you have not yet visited the site then a cold rainy day could be a good opportunity to view and plan for the coming year.

In discussion recently with another Society member, the issue of "good garden plants" versus "garden centre availability" was explored. This discussion revolved around the issue of heather cultivars that are good garden plants but are not available in garden centres due to commercial factors taking precedence. Bearing in mind that the garden centres are visited in the main around spring and autumn, and always wishing to stock attractive "good looking" flowering plants, it may well be seen as the end of the line for heathers that blossom out of these seasons. There is no doubt that the demand for the mid-summer flowering *Erica* is limited, due to the reduced footfall in garden centres at this time of year – as can also be seen with the early winter-flowering *E.*

carnea cultivars. Whilst *E. carnea* 'King George' and 'Eileen Porter' provide invaluable early colour, they are rarely to be seen in the modern garden centre. Gardeners wishing to locate plants of "out of seasonal commercial availability", have little choice but to seek on-line specialists in their chosen field. These enthusiastic nursery men and women remain the backbone of the industry, poorly recognised, but an invaluable source of plants and knowledge despite the lack of tea rooms and other modern retail facilities.

A visit to shows such as RHS Hampton Court, where The Heather Society stand can be viewed again this year in the floral marquee, is one way that specialist nurseries can be located and supported. Do come and see us there and, hopefully, view the Gold Medal!

Society news & events

Annual Gathering 2016

This year our gathering will be held in Perth, Scotland, from 9 – 12 September and our base will be the Royal George Hotel situated in the centre of the city. The costs per person are

- double occupancy £260
- single occupancy £290

and includes three nights dinner bed-and-breakfast, all entrance charges, coach trips, lunches and tips.

There are still a couple of double rooms available and Council would urge you to contact either myself or Charles Nelson as soon as possible to secure your place for a very convivial and informative weekend.

The main reason for our trek north is to visit the Riverside Development, which is the new venue for heathers, after the demise of Cherrybank. The development is situated only a short walk from the hotel. Many volunteers have helped make this garden in to a "must see" when visiting Perth.

In case you have not seen enough heather at Riverside, after lunch we will visit Perthshire Heathers. This is a small heather nursery normally only open to wholesale visitors.

On Sunday, after the AGM, we visit Drummond Castle and will have a conducted tour of the gardens.

As usual we shall be having speakers on Friday and Sunday nights; these will be Mark Hancock and Euna Scott. For those members who have bewailed the recent absence of "Open Forum", the good news is that we are organising a session when discussions can take place about any aspect of your favourite plant – from flower to finance to furling in the wild! This can only happen if attendees come armed with questions and photographs.

For those of you who attended last year in Connemara and who might have given a thought to the garden in Lettergesh during the recent bad weather. We have had six named

storms in seven weeks. Tree heathers were wrenched from the ground, but the majority of the low growing heathers have survived. Weekly pruning is still being carried out by the resident hares.

Susie Kay

Cuttings exchange scheme

This scheme facilitates members who are interested in propagating their heathers from cuttings. Members generously offering heather cuttings have sent lists of the cultivars they have available. These have been added to the Society's website. Members who would like to extend their heather collection can look through the list and request the cultivars they want.

This is a golden opportunity to obtain cultivars only very rarely found in garden centres and nurseries these days, and, at the same time will help to preserve some of these lovely plants for posterity. **Additions to the list of cultivars being offered will be very welcome, too.**

The way the scheme works is simple:

1. Go to the Cuttings Exchange section on Members' page of our website to find the list of cultivars available (<https://www.heathersociety.org/cuttings-exchange/>). Members who are not on the internet can write or telephone me, Daphne Everett, and I will send it to them. My address and phone number are inside the back cover of this *Bulletin*

2. Choose the cultivars you would like (up to a maximum of six) and send me your selection.

3. I will contact the supplier, or suppliers, to make sure that the cuttings are available at that time, and will send you their names and addresses. You can then send your request directly to them, enclosing, **most importantly**, a stamped, self-addressed envelope for the return of the cuttings.

Please note: If you are requesting cuttings from more than one supplier, a stamped self-addressed envelope will be required for each one.

Due to plant health regulations, those participating in the scheme should be resident in the UK and other EU countries.

Daphne Everett

Society's business

Help at the 2016

RHS Hampton Court Flower Show

The Heather Society has put on a display, with a sales stand, for the last three years at the RHS Hampton Court Flower Show within the Floral Marquee. The displays have been designed and erected by the Society's Chairman, David Edge, and his nursery staff and manned with the support of David, his staff and a handful of members – mainly council members.

The Society's application for a stand at the 2016 Show has been accepted. The dates are 5 to 10 July. In order to run the stand and give a break to those members manning it a minimum of three persons is required, two to man the stand at any one time, and one person to go off and have a break. The Society is allocated free entry tickets on each of the six days so this is an opportunity for free entry to the Show and an opportunity for a look around the site during the breaks. This may be especially appealing to those members within easy travelling distance of Hampton Court. I therefore request contact from interested members who are willing to put their names forward, so that a rota can be created to cover the six days. The manning of the stand involves selling heather plants and chatting to members of the public about growing heathers. Don't be put off if you think your knowledge is limited, as you have your own experiences to relate. Opening times, to the public, are 10am to 7.30pm (4.30pm on Sunday) – those manning stands can enter the site earlier.

Please contact me if you are interested in helping, using my contact details printed elsewhere in this Bulletin. Please indicate which day(s) you would be able to attend.

Phil Joyner
Hon. Secretary

Tippitiwitchet Log Charles Nelson

New members

We welcome the following members who have joined (or rejoined) since **October 2015**

Brian **Berry**: Woking, Surrey.
Jackie **Bibby**: Aberdeen, Scotland.
Sean **Bowyer**: Pulborough, Sussex.
George **Parkinson**: Aberdeen, Scotland.
Chris **Swann**: Southampton, Hampshire.
Helen **Todd**: Littlewick Green, Berkshire.
Pauline **Trusler**: Helston, Cornwall.

Annual subscriptions: reminder

Members who have not yet renewed their annual (or 3-year) subscriptions and who have a current email address (and who have provided this to the Society) were recently sent a reminder by email. Thank you to those who responded.

If you **do not have an email address**, a reminder, if one is appropriate, is included with this newsletter. The annual subscription remains at £20 for UK residents, and £25 for those living outside the UK. The 3-year subscriptions are £60 and £75 respectively. Details about how to pay are also enclosed.

Please note that the Society no longer processes credit or debit cards, but you can still use one to pay your subscription through PayPal: login to

the website and follow the instructions to renew by PayPal.

2016 yearbook, and 2017

Due to some unexpected, late contributions from far and wide, the 2016 yearbook was filled by the middle of November, and it has since been edited and indeed it has gone to press. The 2016 issue contains an interesting and varied series of articles.

Last year the Society changed its printer, following competitive tenders, and subsequently also engaged the printer, Page Bros of Norwich, to despatch the copies directly to members. All current members should have received their copies by now – if you have not, please contact me as soon as possible.

Contributions for the 2017 yearbook will be very welcome at any time - the deadline for submissions is, as always, 31 October.

'H. E. Beale'

Do you grow 'H. E. Beale', the double, pink-flowered *Calluna* first released in 1929? If you have one or more plants, I would like to have a few small specimens (such as side shoots an inch or so long) from each plant to examine. I do not need flowers, fresh or otherwise, *only foliage*. I would especially like material for **old**, long-established plants. Pop the specimens in a small envelope and post to me – you *do not need* to use a plastic bag or

wrap them in moist paper or cling-film (they will not be used to make cuttings). If you know where you obtained the original plant, please also let me know.

Colour charts

I recently found some of the "first generation" colour charts on which the colours are indicated by separate patches individually glued in place. Alongside each one are the several equivalent RHS colour chart codes. If you would like to obtain one of these, please contact me. The number is very limited so they will be sent out on a first-come, first-served basis.

... and finally, the fascinating weather

Yes, it has been wet in places, but East Anglia seems to have received less of a drenching than other parts of Britain – not to mention Ireland. What has been most remarkable, given we have experienced only one frost (until last night, 7 January, as I start to write this) since last Spring, is the early blooming of so many plants. Winter aconites were open in the local churchyard a week before Christmas Day, and are almost finished now (17 January). There were snowdrops in bloom on Christmas Day, and a few days later, driving through west Norfolk, we saw numerous clumps of daffodils in flower. As for heathers, 'Kramers Rote' is almost at its maximum bloom in a neighbouring garden on Boxing Day, while in ours *Erica erigena* 'Ivory' is

putting on a great display. 'Ammerland' has been gradually opening for the past few weeks but, strangely, 'W. T. Rackliff' is still in tight bud. 'Charnwood Pink', as usual, has been in flower for weeks, while Johannes van Leuven's new hybrid (and name sake – described in the 2016 yearbook), being a tiny plant, has just a few flowers.

There was a very sharp frost last night, and if the newspaper headlines are to be believed, we are due for some very cold weather in coming days. It will be interesting to see what happens, if these forecasts are correct.

Saving a "Maiden's Blush"

John Hall

(proud father of Molly Hall)

The afternoon of Wednesday 2 December 2015 turned out to be an emotional one for the son and daughter of the late Richard (Dick) Ide. Dick was a member of The Heather Society and a keen plant-hunter, finding many new varieties in the wild. He passed away over 30 years ago.

On 5 June 1972, Dick discovered a cream-and-red tipped *Calluna*, which he originally named "**Maiden's Blush**", but subsequently registered as 'Trinklet', because he had found it on Trink Hill, Cornwall. He propagated from it and drew an illustration of its outstanding features (see *Heathers* 11

2014). He was a graphic designer by profession, and designed The Heather Society logo.

His widow Elsie (now 94 years of age) contacted The Heather Society in 2012 asking if they could save the one remaining very old 'Trinklet' that she had, barely surviving in a pot, in the hope that Dick's find (and memory) would live on. The society asked me to investigate, as I was the nearest nurseryman to her house in Camberley.

The solitary potted 'Trinklet' was transferred to quarantine at RHS Gardens Wisley, where they made attempts to propagate it without any success. This is where my 14-year old daughter Molly stepped in and successfully propagated approximately 60 cuttings from the ailing 'Trinklet' last year. These were grown on, with the intention of planting a dozen in the National Heather Collection at Wisley. It was decided to arrange a formal planting, inviting Dick's widow Elsie, son Mike and daughter Penny to do 'the planting'. Unfortunately, on the day Elsie was not well enough to attend, so Molly and I visited her the Saturday before, with a tray of six 'Trinklet', to show her the 'offspring' from her original plant. We were also able to tell her the plans for Dick's "Maiden's Blush", which her son Mike and daughter Penny would plant at Wisley. Molly and Elsie got on like a house on fire; it was a joy to behold.



We met and proceeded to the Heather Collection in Howards Field. The group (see front cover, centre) consisted of Mike Ide and his wife Sue, Penny Buck (née Ide) and her husband Clive, Alistair Penstone-Smith (RHS Woody Team Leader), Andy Collins (RHS Woody Team and THS Council member), Stewart Hall (RHS Woody Team and THS member), Molly and myself (both THS members), and Liz Dobbs and Catherine Payne (from Plant Heritage). Mike, Penny and Molly planted the fresh new 'Trinklet', in between posing for photographs. The Ide family were quite tearful, as the events brought back memories of their father.

Opposite: Mike and Penny planting 'Trinklet'.

I have subsequently heard that Elsie is extremely grateful to The Heather Society for what they have done to preserve *Calluna vulgaris* 'Trinklet', and Dick's memory.

Group photograph (front cover), from left

Clive Buck (Penny's husband);

Penny Buck (née Ide): *Calluna vulgaris* 'Penny Bunn' named after her by her father;

Sue Ide (Mike's wife);

Mike Ide: *Calluna vulgaris* 'Mickkle-Dickkle' named after him by his father;

Molly Hall, and

Andy Collins, Alistair Penstone-Smith, Stewart Hall.

"White Heather" Colin Rogers

The almost complete absence of references to heather among song titles is remarkable. True, "Heather" and "Erica" have appeared (well, you wouldn't expect *Daboecia cantabrica* now, would you), but only when they refer to a girl's name (for example Paul McCartney's "Heather") rather than the flower. What few songs there are seem to have originated in Scotland, such as the variously named, and variously worded, folk-song "Queen among the heather", and "Purple heather" (also known as "The wild mountain thyme") for which there are YouTube versions by Rod Stewart, Van Morrison and Joan Baez.

It takes some sort of genius – or a peculiar single-mindedness – to see

undulating hills covered with heather, and immediately think of modern jazz. But that's what happened to Ed Lee in 1968, triggered no doubt by having just met his future wife whose parents were from Ayrshire. For her, he wrote "White Heather", yet another Scottish connection.

The catchy, almost haunting, theme is cocooned in the informality and idiosyncrasy of improvisation reminiscent of the irregularity of heather in the wild, unconstrained by the essential needs of a formal (or even an informal) garden controlling the direction in which it tries to develop. In the wild, we see heather in a pattern determined by botany and geology, with vales and troughs, and jagged outcrops; it is always irregular, and no two views are the same. The musical picture is not woven, for that would be too formal; it is painted, and not by numbers; there is dissonance, as well as harmony.

Perhaps you already think that jazz, ancient or modern, is not for you. Think again, with the added bonus of a free download from the internet. Think of it as a lucky gift from one of Ed Lee's gypsy ancestors. You can hear the piece recorded at a 1970 performance by the Contemporary Music Unit (CMU). Go to www.elmvillagearts.co.uk, select "Music", then "Leeds University Concert", scroll down to the "The Three Part Work" where you will find

it as 'Part One'. Click on 'Listen to the track'. For other versions see www.elmvillagearts.co.uk/shop.

Media watch

In *Garden* magazine, November 2015, there was an article on ground-cover plants, with a tiny mention of heathers for ground cover and winter flowers.

From **David Plumridge**: Maybe you were listening to "Gardeners' Question Time" on 13 November? If you were, I wonder if you were as delighted as I was with the reply to the question on heather pruning? Chris Beardshaw surprised me by giving a very comprehensive response. Even Christine Walkden chipped in with advice on rejuvenating old plants by burying.

I was further delighted by Chris Beardshaw's pronunciation of *Daboecia* "da-bo-e-se-a". I have never been happy with "Dab-eesh-a" as currently employed by Heather Society *cognoscenti*. I have mentioned this before, to no avail! Chris's pronunciation coincides with that given in *Plant names simplified*. I suppose I'm being somewhat pedantic – as long as we know what is meant, does it matter? (** see p. 9)

Josey Stow sent an eye-catching article, by Martyn Cox, from *The mail on Sunday*, 15 December. Mr Cox praises the many virtues of winter-flowering heathers: "These pint-sized

stars are tough, reliable – and guaranteed to add winter colour to any home", he writes. *Calluna* and *Daboecia* get mentioned as well, and there is some advice on pruning. The article is illustrated with a close-up photograph of *Erica carnea* 'December Red' (looking rather pale) and a very floriferous *E. × darleyensis* 'Kramers Rote' in a pot.

The Garden magazine, January 2016, has a double-page spread showing "A winter planting palette at Rosemoor": Coloured dogwoods, white-stemmed birches, cone-shaped conifer and large expanses of winter-flowering heathers. Also, pictured in the background but not mentioned – a tree heath in bloom.

More from **David Plumridge**: *The Garden* for February 2016 just received and I was delighted to see 'Pink Spangles' featured (p. 32). Then I read on and note that it appears to need acid soil. How sad – otherwise it could have had universal appeal ... But then I was cheered up by news of heather trials (p. 79) [see *Heathers* 13].

Charles Nelson has added: Keen watchers of BBC TV's *Countryfile* will have been pleasantly surprised to see a short segment about heathers on golf courses on edition of Sunday 10 January (at about 47mins from the start, in case it is still available on BBC iPlayer). It was filmed at the Mid-Herts Golf Club, and there is a follow-up report on the Club's own website. Described as Hertfordshire's "Classic Heathland Golf Course", they strip

back the "turf" to the old soil horizon, where there is a *Calluna* seed-bank, and to encourage more germination cover the bare patch with heather brash.

The Irish garden magazine, January / February 2016, included a segment about *Calluna* 'Crimson Glory', a cultivar introduced Clive Benson, Preston, Lancashire before 1977. It was last listed in the *Handy guide* in 1992. The name apparently alludes to the colour of the flowers, but the *Handy guide* does not support this.

** You cannot pronounce *Daboecia* in any sensible way because it is a nonsense word, a mistake, a misspelling. The usual pronunciation of the Irish name is dav-ock – see the 1984 *Yearbook* – so dav-ock-ee-a (a hard ock in the middle) is probably best, but that is not the point: the Latin word is corrupted. Oddly, dav-ock-ee-a almost rhymes with Jaberwocky. *Charles Nelson*

Group News

All members are welcome to attend any of the local group events

Home Counties Group RHS workshops

On 4 November 2015 I attended the workshop "Sharing our experience". Several items of interest were covered during the day. One of the aims was to work with plant societies, helping them to raise their profiles and attract new members. There was discussion also of use of social media, digital

marketing, plant breeders rights, new pests and diseases, and many other aspects of interest. A fuller report can be downloaded from our website <https://www.heathersociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Royal-Horticultural-Society-Workshops.pdf>.

At the "Plants for the future" workshop on 19 November 2015, three members were present. The highlight of the day was a talk by Molly Hall and her father, John, on the discovery and subsequent propagation of *Erica cinerea* 'Molly Rose'.

There will be a society event at RHS Garden Wisley on Sunday 25 September 2016 including a walk around the National Collection. We will meet at the entrance between 10.30am and 10.45am. In the afternoon, Molly and John Hall will reprise and update their talk (from the RHS workshop in November 2015) about *E. cinerea* 'Molly Rose'.

Barry Sellers

Yorkshire Group

The Group toddles along, I cannot say it thrives as there are so few of us but more are always welcome.

The formal meetings for 2016 are booked at RHS Harlow Carr on Saturdays, 26 March and 28 May. We meet at 2.30pm in the Jubilee Room of the Bramall Learning Centre, which has full facilities, so we are able to look at pictures, videos or whatever as well as discuss heathers.

The major topic will be "How have the heathers coped with the excessive rainfall?" Fortunately mine have coped better than many other plants but then we live at the top of the hill. Today they are feeling the cold as the first snowfall of the winter came yesterday.

We intend to visit a garden probably in late spring/early summer but no decision has been taken as to which one. Unfortunately there are no gardens growing heathers that I know of in this part of Yorkshire. We shall be pleased to have recommendations. One suggestion is that we visit the Himalayan Garden, Harewood House.

Then in late summer we hope to visit Rose Cottage to view the heather garden, which I understand has had some unusual additions recently. This visit will have to fit in with the annual gathering and the Ponteland Show.

Jean Preston

North East Group

Water, water everywhere and not a drop ... ? As I write this, the weather, and particularly the rain, is on everyone's lips and tales of what they have seen or experienced, abound.

We were over in the well-named Lakes for Christmas and saw first-hand what people were going through, which was heart-breaking. But, here in Ponteland we were lucky, being on the East side, and missed the worst, although Hexham and Corbridge suffered badly.

And what about the heathers in all this? We are fortunate that we have a slightly sloping garden and good drainage, so the heathers are looking really good. *Erica* × *darleyensis* 'Arthur Johnson' is one mass of colour. With the weather being so mild before Christmas *Daboecia* lasted well, and 'Alba' was still blooming in December. Surely, we'll get a good spring and summer after all this? With fingers crossed and wishing all our members a Happy New Year.

Dorothy Warner

Jean McCrindle

It is with sadness that the Society announces the passing away of Jean McCrindle on 17 October 2015.

Jean's association with The Heather Society all began with her husband, Ken, reading a library copy of Fred Chapple's *The heather garden*. Ken enjoyed the book so much that Jean bought him a copy and in that book was an advertisement to join The Heather Society. So, subsequently, in 1966, Jean enrolled Ken into the Society. In 1973 Jean also joined the Society and, with Ken, was very much a stalwart member, and a regular attender of the annual Gatherings. Just after Christmas 1991, Ken passed away. At the time he was in the throes of organising the 1992 Dundee Conference, and, despite her grief, Jean bravely decided to take on Ken's



Some of the members at the 2012 Gathering in Falmouth including Jean McCrindle (seated right). [Photograph from 2012 Annual "Society's life in pictures" CD].

role, and put in place a successful event. Jean and Ken lived in Dunblane throughout their membership years and on many occasions, since Ken's passing, Jean has invited members to visit the area and view her heather garden. In recent years she did not let failing health deter her from keeping in touch with the Society, and continuing to attend Gatherings, but, regretfully, illness prevented her from being at the most recent one in Ireland.

Jean was a friendly and generous person, and members who had met her were pleased to have done so. She was considered very much "part of the furniture" within the Society. Jean will be sorely missed, especially at Conferences. The Society and its members extend sincere condolences to her family.

Phil Joyner

Heather Photographer Competition 2016

The Heather Society is pleased to announce the launch of the **2016 Heather Photographer Competition**, in memory of Julian Fitz-Earle. The first prize will be £100 plus a silver trophy, and there are two £50 runner-up prizes. The prize-giving ceremony will take place during the 2016 Annual Gathering in Perth.

Full details (terms and conditions), together with an entry form, are included with this *Bulletin* or can be downloaded from the Members section of the Society's website: <https://www.heathersociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Photographic-Competition-details.pdf>.

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Front [top left & centre] Planting ceremony at RHS Garden Wisley, with Mike and Penny Ide and Molly Hall (John Hall): see pp 6–8; [top right] Riverside Garden, Perth (courtesy of Elspeth Bruce); [lower left] *Erica carnea* in Brita Johansson's garden (Sten-Börje Sörensson).
 Back: [upper left] *Erica holosericea* (Takayuki Kobayashi); winter heaths in Budleigh Salterton, January 2015 (Sheila Jelley); Rose Cottage after January snowfall (D. Plumridge).



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