

## THE HEATHER SOCIETY BULLETIN

Vol. 4 No. 3.

SPRING 1988

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

Our Society came into being on February 20th 1963, and so my first greeting to all our members is to say "Happy 25th Anniversary", and secondly to wish you all a very happy New Year.

In this year's Year Book, members will be able to read, perhaps for the first time, about the Society's early years and about the people who gave of their interest, enthusiasm and time in order to build on such small beginnings. Today we are grateful to them all as we continue to enjoy a flourishing Society which has achieved so much during its first 25 years. Those of us who joined the Society with the only 'qualification' being that we enjoy growing heathers have, I am sure, gained in many ways, not least in having made many new friends. The Year Book, a special issue celebrating the Society's first 25 years, will be despatched with the Summer Bulletin.

### 18th ANNUAL CONFERENCE, 9th-12th September 1988 at GREGYNOG, Nr NEWTOWN, POWYS.



In our Society's 25th Anniversary year, the venue for our Annual Conference is the lovely Victorian mansion known as Gregynog, five miles north of Newtown, Powys, in mid Wales. The house and its 750 acre estate is now owned by the University of Wales as a conference and residential educational centre.

Bookings should now be sent to the Conference organiser Mrs Daphne Everett at Greenacres Nursery, Bringsty, Worcester, WR6 5TA. A booking charge of £2 per mailing is to cover administrative costs incurred by the organiser and is not a deposit on the Conference Fee. Cheques should be made payable to "Heather Society Conference".

Provisional charges are as follows:-

Residents:	Friday evening to Monday morning inc. 2 coach trips	£76.00
	Friday evening to Sunday lunch inc. 1 coach trip	53.00
	Friday evening to Sunday lunch inc. 2 coach trips	56.00

Non-Residents: Whole conference inc. 2 coach trips	34.00
Friday evening inc. dinner	6.00
Whole day Saturday inc. coach trip and dinner	13.50
Whole day Sunday inc. coach trip and 'Celebration' dinner	15.50
Sunday morning inc. lunch	4.50

N.B. We expect these costs to be correct but cannot guarantee them until Gregynog confirm their 1988 prices in April.

#### Outline Programme:

Friday afternoon	4 p.m. - 6 p.m. Reception and Registration.
Friday evening	'A History of Gregynog', Dr Glyn Hughes, University of Wales.
Saturday morning	'The Favourite Heathers of the Heather Society', Mr David McClintock.*
" "	'Heather Garden Design — A Practical Approach', Mrs Diane Jones.
Saturday afternoon	Coach trip to 'Oldfield' a garden featured on 'Gardeners' World' and Ridgway Heather Nursery.
Saturday evening	An illustrated talk on Powis Castle, Mr A.J. Hancock, Head Gardener.
Sunday morning	ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING and address by our Chairman Maj.Gen. Pat Turpin.
" "	'Further Progress on Heather Hybridisation' Dr. John Griffiths.
Sunday afternoon	Coach trip to Powis Castle and its magnificent gardens.
Sunday evening	Anniversary Celebration Dinner.
	Open Forum

\* When members pay their conference fee they will be asked to name their 12 favourite heathers. David McClintock will summarise the selected cultivars as a basis for his talk — he requests members to send their choice of 12 cultivars introduced in the past 25 years on a POSTCARD PLEASE.

#### Membership List

A full membership list will be published and sent out with the Summer Bulletin. Please notify our Administrator Mrs Anne Small of any change of address and check that your subscription was paid on January 1st — reminders are an added expense to the Society.

### ROYAL HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY SHOW, November 24/25th 1987

#### Competition for Ornamental Trees & Shrubs from the Open.

Class 11. A Heath or Heather shown for foliage effect, one vase.

1st. Winkworth Arboretum (Mr E. Barrs) *Erica arborea* 'Alpina'

There was only one entry in this class of the Competition. It was disappointing that no members of the Heather Society entered.

#### GROUP NEWS

##### NORTHEAST (NEWCASTLE)

The visit on July 18th to the beautiful garden of our members, Mr & Mrs D. Plumridge was enjoyable despite some unwelcome rain. However our hosts extended their invitation to the following weekend when further members enjoyed the spectacular plantings of bold heather groups and various conifers, with strange to say, not a weed in view - we wondered why? The soil is a natural acid loam and we envied the healthy growths and superb display. Our hostess, Rita, does not like plant labels and her memory is infallible - as we found out. Refreshments etc. concluded a very happy occasion.

Our Annual Flower Show on 27th September brought forth some 83 entries, but it would have been nice to have had more entrants. Our judge, Bobby Thompson, was very complimentary about the quality of the exhibits — particularly the *Calluna* and foliage varieties. The trophy for the best exhibit was awarded to Miss Dorothy Wild for a superb *Calluna vulgaris* 'Kinlochruel', and the overall winner with maximum points was our host David Goodchild. Mrs Dorothy Warner won the new trophy for a basket arrangement. The event was covered in the local press and opportunities were taken to publicise the Heather Society.

On the 19th October our indoor meeting in Ponteland took the form of a slide illustrated talk by Mr Stephen Anderton, the Head Gardener at English Heritage's Belsay Hall some 13 miles north of Newcastle. Various slides of Belsay Hall Gardens were shown forming the basis of a very illuminating aspect of garden design with heathers, conifers and other varied subjects grown to achieve a balanced impression of natural beauty. After the talk, a business session was concluded with the appointment of new officers, namely Dr. Roy Nichols as Group Convenor and Mrs Dorothy Warner (Tel. Ponteland 23299) as Secretary. Dorothy's husband Geoff agreed to act as Treasurer.

As retiring Group Convenor (after 7 years) I would like to take this opportunity to express my thanks to all who have assisted me and supported the activities of our Group, also for the co-operation of all the Society's Officers and Administrators past and present. I trust our members will support our newly elected officers and committee, and thus enable our Group to prosper and membership increase.

Syd Courtney.

#### MIDLANDS (BIRMINGHAM)

On November 27th, our Group enjoyed a talk with slides by Mrs Ruth Hayden about the beautiful paper collages of flowers including heathers created by her ancestor Mary Delany. We understand that there is to be an exhibition of Mary Delany's work in Bath during September 1988 — this will be well worth a visit as we were all impressed and enchanted by these beautiful pictures.

We begin our programme for 1988 with an evening meeting at Winterbourne on Friday 25th March, which will include a talk on heather propagation by David Radley and some heather competitions. Details will be sent to all members who attend the meetings at Winterbourne.

Our annual social evening will be on Saturday May 21st at 6 p.m. We are once again invited to the home of Mr & Mrs L. Hemming at 17 Grange Hill Road, Kings Norton, Birmingham. It regularly pours with rain on the evening of our social, and the last time we visited Vera and Leonard was no exception. This year we hope to have the opportunity to walk round their lovely garden. Members are asked to bring something towards a cold supper, and any slides which will be of interest to other members.

There is one more date for your diary — a visit to Julian Swain's wholesale heather nursery at Burton Overy, Leicester, on Saturday 17th September. Details will be in the Summer Bulletin.

Daphne Everett.

#### SOUTHERN.

Our plan to visit the Winkworth Arboretum near Godalming on 25th October did not anticipate the violent hurricane which wrought havoc over the whole of Zone 11 ten days before. Many of the trees were flattened whilst others assumed dangerous postures and, in consequence, the Arboretum had to be closed. Instead of the wide ranging colours which attract so much interest at that time of year, a dull brown caused by severe windburn dominated the scene. We shall have to wait and see whether the devastation precludes the merit of a visit in the autumn of 1988. Please put Sunday 30th October in your diary as a possible date for a visit — a decision will be announced in the Summer Bulletin.

Our first gathering of 1988 will be on Sunday 17th April in West Sussex. Full details of the day's events were in the Autumn Bulletin. Please come if you can.

On Sunday 31st July, Mr John Bond, the Keeper of the Gardens in Windsor Great Park, has agreed to give us a guided tour of the heather plantings including the recent changes that have been made. Members can gather for a picnic lunch before the tour begins. The exact time of the visit plus geographical details for reaching the venue will be in the Summer Bulletin.

Jock Vickery.

## SOUTHWEST

For the first meeting of the year on Saturday March 26th, we are invited to the garden and heather nursery of Bert and Diane Jones at West Camel near Yeovil in Somerset. Full details of the visit are in the Autumn Bulletin. Please come and bring your picnic lunch at 12 noon.

On Saturday May 7th we will visit North Leigh House near Wimborne, Dorset, arriving at 2 p.m. The garden, owned by Mr & Mrs Stanley Walker, is at Colehill north-east of Wimborne, and can be reached by leaving the A31 at the roundabout at the east end of the Wimborne by-pass and travelling along the B3073 towards Wimborne. Near the Winston Churchill public house turn right (in a northerly direction) into North Leigh Lane, and the garden is  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile along this lane. At North Leigh House there are several acres of parkland with many trees and shrubs, and we may be fortunate to see Early Purple Orchids in bloom. An admission charge covering refreshments will be donated to a charity.

Another date for your diary — Saturday July 9th at 2 p.m. when we will be visiting Westfield Plants near Melksham, Wiltshire. Full details will be in the Summer Bulletin. Please send a SAE for further details about these meetings.

Phil Joyner.

## NORTH AMERICAN HEATHER SOCIETY.

The annual meeting held in Portland, Oregon this year was successful in a number of ways. Important decisions were made to assure the continued growth of our Society. Members shared ideas, renewed acquaintances, and made new friends with other members. We were unsuccessful however in attracting a larger attendance at the meetings. There were several first-timers welcomed, but we wish there could have been many more. Our membership is so scattered across the continent that maybe it is not feasible to get a larger number together in one place. It was voted to hold the 1988 meeting in California and the 1989 meeting in the Northeast. In this way we hope to make it possible for members to attend at least when the meeting is in their area. Right now it is not too soon to make plans for attending the annual NAHS meetings next year. Tentative plans are for a later date, possibly mid-September when some of the Capt Heaths will be in bloom and the site will be in Northern California, either the Santa Cruz area south of San Francisco or coastal Mendocino County in the Fort Bragg area north of San Francisco. We will keep you posted as plans develop and wish for a larger group at the 1988 meetings.

Our guest speaker this year, Dr. Richard Munson from Smith College, Massachusetts, gave particular emphasis to correct cultivar names for heathers. I was personally pleased to hear this and gratified to know we have an expert among us who can assist in more technical aspects of heather nomenclature. I would like to urge all of our members to become aware of cultivar name problems such as duplicate or invalid names and assist in finding solutions to these problems. You can contact any of the NAHS officers or write a note to the editor of Heather News explaining the problem and your ideas of a solution. Communication is essential to progress in this work.

Those of us who visited the Far West Show in Portland were interested in what heathers were being sold by the many nurseries represented there. It seemed to me that almost everyone selling heathers had *Calluna vulgaris* 'Corbett's Red'. It is a good cultivar, but where did it come from? Are you growing it? I haven't seen it listed in European sources. Does anyone know its origin?

Lloyd Eighme, President.

## SCRAP BOWL - Titbits of News from Members.

**Rabbits and Heather.** I am obliged to Mr Tunnicliffe for drawing attention to my article in the Summer Bulletin last year concerning the heather reference collection in The Granada Arboretum. The statement "rabbits do not eat heather foliage" should have read "rabbits do not eat *Calluna* foliage". However I have reason to believe now that this statement is not strictly true. Small close cropped areas have appeared on odd plants, probably not more than six in all, in the Granada Arboretum and in the Harlow Car collections, and it is almost certain that rabbits must be responsible.

The *E. carnea* and *E. x darleyensis* reference collections in the Harlow Car Gardens have been so severely damaged by rabbits that we fear for their survival. At first we were reluctant to place disfiguring netting around the beds but now it has become necessary to save the collections. Wire netting is being fitted around each of the three beds. Contrary to Mr Tunnicliffe's experience, the Harlow Car rabbits seem to prefer the darker foliaged cultivars 'Loughrigg', 'Vivellii', 'Myretoun Ruby' and 'Adrienne Duncan'. - Incidentally, I recently came across a rabbit displaying the Myxomatosis symptoms on the old trials plot in the Harlow Car Nursery.

Albert Julian, Zone 4.

*Erica mackaiana* 'Dr. Ronald Gray'. The name of Dr. Ronald Gray will always be associated with the beautiful pure white sport which he found on *E. mackaiana* 'Lawsoniana'. Violet Gray once told me that the first batch of cuttings which he took from the sport all produced pink flowers. In his disappointment, he was about to throw away the second batch which he had taken a year later, but she persuaded him to keep them until they flowered. His patience was then rewarded when, the following summer, the new set of cuttings produced the white flowers which now brighten so many heather gardens.

Pat Turpin, Zone 11.

**A Weed Killer for Pearlwort?** Whilst on holiday in Scotland in September, my wife and I had the pleasure and sheer delight to visit the National Trust Gardens at Branklyn on the outskirts of Perth. This is a beautifully laid out garden of approximately 2 acres, with rock plants, azaleas, rhododendrons, and a fine collection of gentians and other alpine.

Another item of interest was to be shown at a local garden shop in Pitlochry, a heather plant in a 3" pot with a wild Sundew (*Drosera*), the 'fly-trap' plant. . . . apparently only rarely to be found in this locality. Has any other member come across this rarity?

And finally, I wonder whether it is true that Pearlwort is imported into our gardens by our use of peat, also what is the safe weed killer treatment for its removal apart from the back breaking chore with a trowel?

Syd Courtney, Zone 3.

**How to discourage cats.** Neighbourhood cats caused serious damage to a newly planted heather border. Experiments, including the use of a commercial repellent, had no effect. Finally, when the spiked prunings from *Pyracantha* were laid, still green, between the plants the uprooting ceased. The heathers are filling the spaces between themselves and this naturally reduces enthusiasm for turning the border into a cats' lavatory.

Rev. D.H. Mortimer, Zone 12.

**Two more cautionary tales.** In the Autumn Bulletin 1979 I instanced some amusing but misleading misnamings of cultivars, mischievous and otherwise. Mr Kingsford followed this up in the Spring Bulletin 1985.

Two more have now been traced home. In "The Plant Finder" appear 'Mousehole Compact' and 'Sister Anne Pink'; and all because a full stop got misplaced. They should have read 'Mousehole'. Compact; and 'Sister Anne'. Pink; in the catalogue.

What similar confusions have members noticed?

David McClintock, Zone 11.

**Any heather books for sale?** Walter Wornick of the American NE Heather Society, PO Box 101, Alstead, New Hampshire 03602, writes that his members are interested in buying books on heathers. Would anyone like to offer any to him? He suggests they would get a better price than selling to a book shop.

## DAIRY OF EVENTS

Mar.	25th	MIDLANDS (B'HAM)	Meeting at Winterbourne, see Group news.
Mar.	26th	SOUTHWEST	Visit to Otters' Court Heathers - see details in Autumn Bulletin.
Apr.	17th	SOUTHERN	Nursery visit/slide show - see details in Autumn Bulletin.
Apr.	30th	CLOSING DATE	for material for the Summer Bulletin.
May	7th	SOUTHWEST	Visit to North Leigh House, Wimborne - See Group News.
May	21st	MIDLANDS (B'HAM)	Social evening at Kings Norton, B'ham - See Group News.
May	25/27th	CHELSEA FLOWER SHOW	- Regret no tickets available through the Society.
Jul.	9th	SOUTHWEST	Visit to Westfield Plants, Melksham - See Group News.
Jul.	31st	SOUTHERN	Visit to heather gardens in Windsor Great Park - See Group News.
Aug.	16th	COUNCIL MEETING	RHS Hall, Westminster.
Aug.	16/17th	RHS Show & Heather Competitions	RHS Halls, Westminster.
Sep.	9/12th	ANNUAL CONFERENCE	Gregynog, Newtown, Powys.
Sep.	11th	ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING	" " "
Sep.	17th	MIDLANDS (B'HAM)	Visit to Julian and Swain's wholesale heather nursery at Burton Overy, Leicester.

### The Charm of Heather Gardens

by William Acworth M.A.

*(An article in "Gardening Illustrated" No. 3079, Vol. LX., March 12th 1938.)*

For those who live on a chalky or heavy clay soil it would be courting disaster to contemplate making a Heather garden. All Heathers hate chalk, and the fact that their system of rooting is a most delicate one does not allow them to grow satisfactorily in a soil that is stiff and heavy. Though many associate the Erica family with peat, peat is by no means essential for their well-being, and nothing can be more suitable than a good light sandy loam. Growing on such ground and given the other necessary conditions, one can go ahead with every hope of success.

The next consideration is position. As all Heathers are sun lovers, a good open position should be chosen, one that is free from shade, but has some shelter. Shelter is important, because *Ericas* will be used, which are just not quite hardy.

The most satisfactory way of providing protection is to plant some of the Brooms or Gorse which grow so frequently in association with the common Ling or Bell Heather of our moors and commons.

Many gardeners possess an adjoining paddock or field of which no use is made. This is the very spot to choose. Our fancies can run riot in half an acre of such meadow land, and in a year's time, with very little trouble, something can be produced which will be the envy of our friends.

The best way to begin is to think out carefully how the ground is to look when completed and boldly to peg out one large, irregular bed - kidney shaped, elliptical, or what you will - then bastard-trench the ground, keeping the turf just under the top spit. No manure will be required, even though the ground is poor.

Should the ground be dead flat, much can be done by heaping up some of the beds with soil and sinking others. This has the double advantage of giving light and shade to the work and also of providing a variety of drier and more moist situations for the different kinds. Suppose the largest cross dimension be 30 feet or 40 feet - there will be nothing mean about this, and if we can restrain ourselves and plant only three-quarters of the bed with one variety we shall have made a good start.



A choice could be made in this bed of *Erica vulgaris* 'Alportii' for the generous planting. This is a good crimson variety of the common Heather, or Ling, as it is called in many of the Southern Counties. In this bed might be placed a group of a dozen or half-a-dozen *Juniperus Hibernica*. This at once gives an idea of height, and they become a band of trim, smooth sentinels when they are established, especially in an exposed position.

To complete the bed, the remaining quarter could be planted with two varieties of the white Heather, *Erica vulgaris* 'Hammondii' and *Erica vulgaris* 'Serlei'. The former flowers before the latter, with 'Alportii'. *Erica vulgaris* 'Serlei' is perhaps the best variety of all the white Heathers.

Having formed the basis of our garden with this one large bed, we can at our leisure build up the whole scheme. Round the first large bed peg out in situ other beds of different irregular shapes, either larger or smaller. In making the beds it is as well to consider the paths which will eventually surround them. Gravel should be avoided; stone or brick is little better.

Undoubtedly the best path is formed of the original turf gradually got into order with the mowing machine. A path may be made from the entrance to the beds, and this and the paths round the beds be mown regularly, the remainder of the ground being left rough and just scythed twice during the summer.

Before varieties of Heather are discussed, it would be as well to suggest that one or two - not more - groups of trees be planted to help the design. A group of three of the Mountain Ash family - say *Sorbus Aria* 'Pekinensis', a small tree with colours well in the autumn - would look well planted in a bed by itself among the Heather beds. In another bed a group of showy *Mespilus* might be tried. This makes a fine show in the spring when in flower and when well established. It is again in the full glory of colour in the autumn. Care should be taken in planting these trees that they do not take the sun from the Heather beds.

There are many species which the enthusiast will want to grow, and the arrangement of a large collection should be well considered beforehand. One or two beds might be given up to some of the taller-growing species, always remembering to mass them in their particular kinds. An exception may sometimes be made and by planting, say, one plant of *Erica arborea* in a bed of low-growing species a striking effect may be obtained.

Of the taller-growing kinds the following should be used. *Erica arborea*, the Tree Heath, is a visitor from Southern Europe, and, as its name implies, is of tall habit. It can often in this country be seen from 10 feet to 20 feet in height, and it produces its white flowers in early spring.

*Erica mediterranea*, another tall species, is one of the most hardy, and should be massed for effect, as it is an early bloomer, coming into flower sometimes at the end of February.

*Erica codonodes* (lusitanica) flowers even earlier, but is less hardy than *mediterranea*. The flower buds show on the plants for weeks before flowering time, and the bushy foliage, thick with buds of a pink tinge, are covered in due course with masses of white blossom.

*Erica australis*, flowering about April, is one of the most beautiful of the taller species. Its home is Spain, but it is quite fairly hardy, though it is grateful for some shelter. The flowers have less blue in their pink than most of the Heathers, and the habit of growth in this species is less compact than in most of the others. There is also an albino form which is well worth growing, but it is very rare. There are other tall shrubby Heathers, but those mentioned will form a groundwork.

The *Daboecia* or *Menziesia* family is one that cannot be left out of any Heather garden. This Ericaceous shrub, often known at St. Daboec's Heath, besides being most beautiful in flower and habit of growth, has also this merit - that it is in flower from May or June right on till November or December. A very large space may be given to this - in many ways the most showy of all the Heathers. There are four distinct varieties - the common polifolia, which is a bright pink or rosy-purple, polifolia alba, white, polifolia atropurpurea, a deep crimson-purple, and polifolia bicolor. This last is most curious, for it bears different-coloured flowers on the

same stem. Nothing can look better than a large planting of this species in its four varieties, though the preponderating mass should be atropurpurea. The foliage of the *Menziesia* is striking, and the large, bell-shaped flowers surpass in size those of any other kind.

A considerable space must be given over to the winter-flowering Heathers, *Erica darleyensis* a hybrid between *mediterranea* and *carnea*, and *Erica carnea* itself. *Darleyensis* comes in to flower very often by the end of November, and goes on right through the winter, and by February *Erica carnea*, which had been in bud since early autumn, is blooming. There are being raised many good hybrids of *Erica carnea*, two of the best being 'King George' and 'Vivellii'.

*Erica vagans*, *Erica carnea*, *Erica ciliaris*, and *Erica tetralix* are Heaths which must all find their place in the Heather garden. Many of these species have varieties worth growing, but it is as well not to get too many kinds at first. One variety of *Erica vagans* should, however, be found in every collection, for it is too good to be without. This is *Erica vagans* 'St Keverne'. It is similar to the type, but is of a most beautiful shade of pink.

There are many Ericaceous shrubs which can be grown in conjunction with heather, but if too many of these are planted one loses much of the idea of a garden made chiefly for one family.

The real joy of *Ericas* is this - that there is scarcely a month in the year when one or another of them is not in bloom, and as is not the case with most flowers, the dead blooms, which often remain for months, are not unsightly, but add to the beauty of the garden as a whole. Heathers are best cut back with care every year, or else they are apt to get rugged. They are easily propagated, either by division or cuttings, but the latter is, though slower, much the better method of increasing a stock. The family has practically no enemies in the way of disease; it is immune also from slugs.