

# THE HEATHER SOCIETY BULLETIN

Vol. 4. No. 7.

SUMMER 1989

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

This issue of the Bulletin is my 36th, and sadly the last one I shall edit (for the time being at least) due to pressure of work. It is 12 years now since I accepted the job and it has proved to be very interesting and enjoyable. This Society's great strength is the friendliness of its members and their willingness to share the knowledge they have acquired. Naturally this begins at the local level where members gather in a garden, or meet somewhere for a talk with slides. As members ourselves, we have learned so much in the 20 or so years since we joined the Society knowing absolutely nothing about heathers.

The three issues of the Bulletin each year and our Year Book also play their part in sharing knowledge. This does of course mean that members have to contribute items of, interest which we can all read and enjoy. So I make a plea on behalf of our new Editor Daphne Everett for your contributions large or small. Daphne's address is: Greenacres Nursery, Bringsty, Worcester, WR6 5TA.

Finally, I must say 'Thankyou' to those members who have contributed items for the Bulletins during my term as Editor, some on a regular basis and some at short notice if I have been short of material. Now, once again, I will be able to greet the arrival of the Bulletin with anticipation and pleasure, not knowing its contents!

Diane Jones

## 1989 YEAR BOOK

The Editor apologises for a further delay in publishing this year's Year Book. The combination of heavy business commitments and illness in the New Year have conspired against him, and despatch will now be with the Autumn Bulletin.

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of the Heather Society will be held during the Annual Conference at Trevelyan College, Durham University on Sunday 3rd September at 9.15 a.m. The Agenda for the meeting is enclosed with this issue of the Bulletin.

## 19th ANNUAL CONFERENCE, 1st-4th September 1989 at TREVELYAN COLLEGE, DURHAM UNIVERSITY.

Details of this year's Conference were published in the Spring Bulletin together with the charges and the outline programme.

Two additional items of information on the programme have now been confirmed. The first is that the speaker on Saturday morning, Mr Simon Maller, is the first recipient of the Bell's National Heather Scholarship studying/working at Harlow Car Gardens. The second is that Dinner on Saturday evening will be preceded by whisky tasting by courtesy of Arthur Bell Distillers, Perth.

The full fees for the Conference should be sent to the Organiser Dorothy Warner not later than July 15th, with cheques made payable to "Heather Society Conference". If you intend booking for the Conference and have not yet done so, please send a cheque for £2.00 as a booking fee to: Mrs Dorothy Warner, "Littlecroft", Ponteland, Newcastle-on-Tyne, NE20 9BQ.

## ROYAL HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY'S SHOW, FEBRUARY 21st and 22nd, 1989

### Competition for Ornamental Plants from the Open.

The entries in the Heather Classes were a little disappointing, with only five exhibitors, two of whom were members of the Heather Society. However, thanks to the favourable weather which we had been having, there was a colourful display.

#### Results:-

Class 5. A Tree Heath, in bloom, one vase. 2 entries.

- |     |                                |                           |
|-----|--------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1st | Maj. Gen. and Mrs. P.G. Turpin | <i>Erica lusitanica</i> . |
| 2nd | Mrs. B. Kitson                 | <i>Erica australis</i> .  |

Class 6. A Heath or Heather, in bloom, one plant. No Entries.

Class 7. A Heath or Heather other than those eligible for Class 5, in bloom, one vase/bowl. 7 entries.

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|-----|--------------------------------|--|
| 1st | Maj. Gen. and Mrs P.G. Turpin  | <i>E.x darleyensis</i> 'Silberschmelze'  |
| 2nd | Maj. Gen. and Mrs. P.G. Turpin | <i>E. x darleyensis</i> 'Arthur Johnson' |
| 3rd | Maj. Gen. and Mrs P.G. Turpin  | <i>E. carnea</i> 'Myretoun Ruby'         |

Class 8. A Heath or Heather shown for foliage effect, one vase or bowl. 6 entries.

- |     |                                |   |
|-----|--------------------------------|---|
| 1st | Maj. Gen. and Mrs P.G. Turpin  | <i>E. erigena</i> 'Golden Lady'         |
| 2nd | Maj. Gen. and Mrs P.G. Turpin  | <i>Calluna vulgaris</i> 'Firefly'       |
| 3rd | Maj. Gen. and Mrs. P.G. Turpin | <i>Calluna vulgaris</i> 'Silver Knight' |

### THE FIRST SPECIALIST SOCIETIES CONFERENCE

(A report from the R.H.S. Newsletter number 28.)

After last year's successful Conference for Affiliated Societies, the first Specialist Societies Conference was arranged, and held at Wisley on Saturday 15th October 1988. It was subtitled "Encouragement of co-operation between the RHS and Specialist Societies."

The opening address was given by Robin Herbert, President of the RHS, who welcomed representatives from over 40 societies. He paid tribute to the work done by the Affiliated Societies Consultative Committee under Mrs Carolyn Hardy in initiating this Conference, the purpose of which was to provide an opportunity for specialist societies to learn from each other's experiences and also for the RHS to learn from the specialist societies. The role of specialist societies was of considerable importance in advancing an interest in gardening, both in encouraging growers of special plants to grow a wider variety and also introducing general gardeners to specific plant families. The Society welcomed the support given by members of specialist societies to RHS Shows and to the trials at Wisley.

Several of these subjects were discussed during the morning session, chaired by Chris Brickell. Members of RHS staff and those of two specialist societies led discussions on specialist society shows, publicity, conferences and related occasions at Wisley and Vincent Square, and the sale of specialist society literature through RHS Enterprises. In the afternoon session with Mrs Hardy in the chair, the discussion included relationships between specialist societies, provision of information on specialist lecturers and judges, international and national registration of cultivar names, and the encouragement of young gardeners.

In his summary of the day's events, Mr Herbert said that he was certain that the members of the Council and of RHS staff present had derived enormous benefit from the dialogue that had been generated.

He was particularly pleased at the positive attitude of the specialist societies towards working with the RHS for the good of horticulture. Support had been expressed for shows in London and at Wisley, although facilities at Wisley had some shortcomings. He reminded delegates that the Society does at present absorb part of the expenses for exhibits at shows, and said that it would continue to do so. In the future there might be scope for organising national specialist society shows at the RHS member centres that were being developed.

The suggestion that Wisley with well over half a million visitors a year could be a useful focus for publicity for specialist societies would be considered further. Mr Herbert also

welcomed the idea from the National Sweet Pea Society of working with specialist societies to organise a week of special events.

On the afternoon session, Mr Herbert also felt that there was real interest in promoting joint shows, both between the Societies themselves and with the RHS. He wondered whether there would be support for a show by a substantial number of societies, maybe at the next Garden Festival at Gateshead.

Mr Herbert said that from discussions at both sessions it was apparent that there was a need for a clearing house for information about specialist societies. Much as the RHS might want to help with this, its resources were limited, and Mr Herbert suggested that this might be an area where voluntary help could be the solution.

The discussion on young gardeners and their needs had been most stimulating, said Mr Herbert, and much more thought needed to be given to how the societies might encourage them. There was much more to do in improving contacts in Europe, and the RHS was ready to give any help it could in this area.

After such an important day, said Mr Herbert, the next step was to make available a full report of the day's discussions, and then Mrs Hardy's Affiliated Societies Committee would meet and prepare a list of priorities.

In closing the formal part of the day, Mr Herbert thanked the delegates for the encouraging and constructive manner in which they had approached the discussions, which had contributed so much to the success of the day.

*(Our Secretary, Pamela Lee, attended this conference as the Heather Society's representative).*

## GROUP NEWS

### NORTHEAST (NEWCASTLE)

The *Erica carnea* varieties have never looked so lovely as they have this winter due, no doubt, to the extremely mild conditions we have experienced. Blossom and hedgerows were fully out in early February, which is at least 6-8 weeks earlier than normal, but were a joy to see.

Two dates, which will have passed before you read this bulletin, are Saturday May 13th, our outing to Edinburgh Botanic Gardens, notified in the Spring Bulletin, and Sunday, May 14th, when we have again been invited to have a stand at the "Garden Open Day" at Houghall, the Durham College of Horticulture.

On Sunday, July 9th at 2.00 p.m. our members, David and Mary Roberts, are kindly opening their garden to the public in aid of the Red Cross. Their home is at Middle Holding, Ogle, which is approximately 4 miles N.W. of Ponteland, and all members are invited. It is a delightful garden and well worth a visit.

The highlight of our year is the 19th Annual Conference at Durham University (details earlier in this Bulletin) when we hope as many of our local members as possible will attend either as Residents or Non-Residents, to welcome those who have travelled long distances to be with us.

Our Annual Show on Sunday September 14th will be once again at the kind invitation of our members David and Marjory Goodchild at 66 Darras Road, Ponteland. Full details of the schedule will be sent nearer the time.

Dorothy Warner

### MIDLANDS (BIRMINGHAM)

Our Group meeting on the 10th March was the Annual Heather Competition and a chance for members to show some of their slides. Once again the classes were well supported and the standard was high. Whether the spring is early or late our members seem to be able to produce a good show.

## GROUP NEWS Cont.

### Competition Results:

<i>Erica carnea</i> in flower	1st. John Dearn	'R.B. Cooke'	
	2nd. David Radley	'Foxhollow'	
	3rd. Betty Bishop	'December Red'	
A tree heath in flower	1st. Olwyn Warner	<i>E. x veitchii</i>	'Gold Tips'
	2nd. Evelyn Skett	<i>E. arborea</i>	'Estrella Gold'
	3rd. Vera & Len Hemming	<i>E. arborea</i>	'Estrella Gold'
An <i>Erica</i> hybrid in flower	1st. Betty Bishop	<i>E. x darleyensis</i>	'Arthur Johnson'
	2nd. Olwyn Warner	"	'Dunwood Splendour'
	3rd. Ron Bishop	"	'Darleydale'
A Heather for foliage effect			
	1st. David Radley	<i>E. arborea</i>	'Albert's Gold'
	2nd. Olwyn Warner	<i>Calluna vulgaris</i>	'Braeriah'
	3rd. Betty Bishop	" "	'Spitfire'
Heathers in a Basket.	1st. Rosemary Radley		
	2nd. Mary Hamnett		
	3rd. Mary Hatton.		

The overall winner and Cup holder for the year was Olwyn Warner.

On Saturday 19th August we are meeting at 11.30 a.m. at 'Lakeside', Whitbourne, Worcestershire to see the outstanding garden around a medieval lake created by Denys Gueroult and Chris Philip. (Incidentally, Chris Philip is responsible for that invaluable publication 'The Plant Finder' which, if you want a plant and don't know where to buy it, will tell you where it can be obtained.)

Afterwards members are invited to a buffet lunch at our nursery which is about 3 miles from 'Lakeside'. Our garden doesn't compare with the previous one but the heather beds are beginning to look quite well established and the nursery should also be looking colourful in August.

All Heather Society members are welcome to join us but a telephone call (0885 482206) from everyone who is coming would be helpful to ensure that there is enough food and drink to go round.

Daphne Everett

## SOUTHERN.

I hope you have noted the date of 20th August mentioned in the Spring Bulletin when our Group is visiting two gardens in Sussex. At 11.30 a.m., by kind invitation of Mr and Mrs Bowerman, we are meeting at Champs Hill, Coldwaltham, Near Pulborough, West Sussex. For most of you this will not be your first visit to Champs Hill, but anyone visiting this garden for the first time who would like detailed directions should send me a SAE.

## GROUP NEWS Cont.

After a buffet lunch at Champs Hill, we shall proceed to John Tucker's delightful garden at 'Floraldene', Findon Road, Worthing (A 24) where the invitation includes tea. Obviously the number attending will need to be known for catering purposes, so will you please advise me by telephone or in writing two weeks in advance of the visits. (Tel. Reigate (0737) 248211)

Jock Vickery

### SOUTHWEST.

Our first meeting of 1989 was held at Lytchett Matravers Village Hall and was attended by some 30 members. The first hour of the afternoon was spent being entertained by plant hunters Desmond and Marjorie Parish with an excellent illustrated talk entitled "Wild Flowers from Dorset to the Alps". Desmond and Marjorie have written books on this subject and they had some copies of their most recent publication on sale. A fine collection of mounted photographs was also on display. The talk was followed by refreshments and the results of the Table Show.

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

- 1st. Anne Pringle
- 2nd. Phil Joyner
- 3rd. Phyllis Kennedy
- H.C. Mike Kinshott

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

- 1st. Anne Pringle
- 2nd. Val Davis
- 3rd. Phil Joyner
- H.C. Betty Sayers

The winner of the Burfitt Bowl for the most points overall was Anne Pringle.  
8 members staged exhibits.

For your dairy — Our final meeting for 1989 will be in Dorset at 2 p.m. on Saturday 23rd September when we shall be visiting The Old Rectory, Seaborough, 3 miles south of Crewkerne. This 2 acre garden is described in the "Yellow Book" as containing a variety of plants, shrubs and rare trees. There will be an entrance fee, and refreshments will be provided at reasonable cost by the owners Mr & Mrs Wright. To reach the garden take the B3165 going south out of Crewkerne following signs for Seaborough. The Old Rectory is down the second turning to the left in the village.

I do hope that we will have a good attendance at this last meeting of the year, and that some of the Society's Far West members will be able to join us.

Finally, I would like to thank all those people who make the meetings possible, and in particular those members who provided refreshments for the Lytchett Matravers meeting.

Phil Joyner.

### NORTH AMERICAN HEATHER SOCIETY/NORTH EAST HEATHER SOCIETY

Our joint Annual Meeting is now arranged for August 19th and 20th in Freeport, ME. Visitors from the U.K. who are able to join us will be most welcome and I will send details on request. Please contact me at P.O. Box 101, Highland View, Alstead, New Hampshire 03602 U.S.A.

Walter Wornick

**The Curse of 'Robert Chapman'** (Extract from Northeast (U.S.A.) Heather Society Newsletter)  
November 1988

There must be some secret about *Calluna vulgaris* 'Robert Chapman' that I am unaware of. How else can you explain that no less than four different plants of this variety have departed this world in my garden, before even having a chance to bloom? The deceased were from different sources, and planted in different locations (though still in my heather bed, along with at least a dozen other cultivars of *Calluna* that are doing fine, thank you.) The first plant came from Hilliers, since at that time no one else I knew offered it; I attributed its rapid demise to the rigors of transatlantic travel and the loving care it received at the hands of the US DA Inspection Station personnel. Some time later I was delighted to see it offered in a domestic nursery catalogue. The little plant was tucked in with its ericaceous relatives, and within two months was pulled out again - totally, unequivocally dead. Hmmm, said I, that's odd. The next time I ordered some *Ericas* and *Callunas*, I ordered it again; the nursery was nice enough to send me an extra. I planted them several feet apart, **not** in the area of the previous one's hole, and was pleased to see all the plants looking so well. It was with considerably less pleasure that I noticed, somewhere about the second week in August, that one 'Robert Chapman' was no longer with us. No matter, I thought, there's still the other one . . . . However, there wasn't, because apparently this pair of plants had a suicide pact. Meanwhile, everything else in the bed was perfectly healthy.

I am now debating whether to order yet another, and grow it in a container this time so that I can figure out just what it is that can knock a tough *Calluna* off so quickly. If nothing else, perhaps a Gothic novel can be made out of the mystery. The ghost of some 18th century heather breeder walks my garden, and by supernatural means disposes of any *Callunas* named after persons he doesn't like. In the meantime, if anyone else can shed some light on the quirks and whims of this particular cultivar, I'd be most grateful!

Elaine Cantwell

**Burying 'Robert Chapmans' Ghost** (Extract from Northeast (U.S.A.) Heather Society Newsletter)  
Spring 1989

Elaine Cantwell's article on 'Robert Chapman' in the last issue touched a raw nerve, apparently, as judged by the several comments appended to subscription renewals. It seems a number of our members whistle at night as they pass their own cemetery of particular plants predestined for an early grave. David McClintock intimated that the ghost of Robert Chapman may be threatening to take over the body of 'Blazeaway' in some gardens in the U.K., but had not guaranteed exorcism to offer for either plant. Hugh Nicolson offered his own ghost story with *E. cinerea* 'Nell' though it was not quite so alarming as Elaine Cantwell's.

In fact, I have my own ghost story involving a whole plantation of some unlucky white heather, undistinguished by name at this distance in time, but quickly extinguished at or shortly after the time of planting. I had started a new bed on a site bearing a lot of wood ashes (at a time when we were still allowed to burn things) and assumed the alkalinity of the ash was more than I had bargained for when all six plants of a white yellow-foliaged *Calluna vulgaris* (probably 'Aureifolia') died in rapid succession in the same languid manners. But these six plants were in a mosaic pattern with other *Callunas*; and none of those others came down. First, I suspected the six were already sick when I bought them. Then I suspected some dread disease at the site, but pressure of space and time eventually forced me to plant other heathers in the same spots. This time there were no untoward consequences, so I revised my disease theory back in favour of the ash one.

Now I think I know better. And I think the answer is tied up with pale foliage for both 'Robert Chapman' and 'Aureifolia'. It's not that pale foliage *per se* is to blame, but pale foliage



means lack of chlorophyll, which means lack of chloroplasts, which are the tiny engines inside a plant cell which eventually convert sunlight and carbon dioxide into the sugar needed for cell metabolism.

Chloroplasts are separate, distinct sub-cellular units, called organelles or plastids, which are found in the cell cytoplasm and which carry their own little pieces of DNA distinct from the DNA of the cell nucleus. Like the nucleus they replicate, and in fact have to in order to ensure that the daughter cells formed by division of the parent cell contain not only the DNA from the splitting nucleus, but also their fair share of the plastids. If a parent cell is deficient in chloroplasts so will the daughter cells be. A small pale-foliaged plant thus becomes a large pale-foliaged plant, and if some pale-foliaged sport should occur on a normal plant, that pale-foliaged form can usually be preserved only by vegetative growth of cuttings taken from that branch.

There are several other kinds of plastids carried in the cytoplasm, and it seems that each kind provides the specific enzymes which, sometimes in collaboration with enzymes formed under the direction of the nucleus, eventually confer characteristic properties on the plant. Among these other properties has been found herbicide resistance, disease resistance, and what is called the cytoplasmic male sterility factor. Possibly some aspects of cold resistance are also conferred by some other cytoplasmic gene, but this is just a guess on my part.

It is a fair bet that a cell deficient in plastids for photosynthesis will also be deficient in less obvious ways, suggesting a pale-foliaged form is likely to be different from normal in other ways besides the loss of greenness of its foliage. One of these other ways is quite possibly the lack of plastids conferring resistance to disease — perhaps not disease generally but disease specific to a particular bacterial or fungal challenge. As with humans, the real puzzle is not why at a particular time we catch a particular disease, but why we **don't** succumb — all the time — to all diseases. Lack of a particular plastid may mean lacking the enzymes or the means to produce the metabolites that normally protect or "immunize" the plant to the many pathogens present in air, water and soil.

We can reach the conclusion, unwelcome though it may be, that most cultivars, **because** they are cultivars, are likely to be deficient in one or more of the defence mechanisms characteristic of the wild plant. Thus a fungus capable of forming a beneficial mycorrhizal relationship with a wild plant may well be able to invade and kill a particular cultivar. It leads further to the possibility that each different cultivar is particularly susceptible to a particular pathogen, possibly even different ones for each cultivar.

Thus poor 'Robert Chapman', because it was 'Robert Chapman', a vegetative reproduction of some historic freak event, was probably lacking the metaboalic activity of some organelle capable of producing the phytoalexins (antidotes) necessary to keep some particular or unusual fungus or bacterium present in Elaine Cantwell's garden at bay. Perhaps every garden has its own strange, unusual but characteristic pathogen waiting for the right cultivar to come along.

It is worth adding that cytoplasmic genes are subject to strong maternal influence, and that any plasmid peculiarity of the male parent is normally excluded from the offspring. In practical terms this means that attempted sexual reproduction of pale-foliaged cultivars can be expected to yield the dark green colour characteristic of the wild heather; and the lack of any other cytoplasmic gene-linked function will also be restored via maternal inheritance in what appears to be reversion to the wild form. Since white flowers represent the absence of anthocyanin pigments of normal heather, the often noted maternal influence on heather colour probably has its basis in a similar explanation.

I'd be on surer ground if we were talking bacteria instead of plant cells, but bacteria have plasmids, not plastids. Bacteria produce powerful plasmid-encoded bactericidal proteins called bacteriocins, which are highly specific for each species and which permit a bacterium to survive and compete for an ecological niche. So I find it probable that loss of a single plastid could, under a highly specialised challenge, be as devastating to a plant as the loss of a

## SCRAP BOWL Cont.

plasmid can, under unique circumstances, be to a bacterium.

At least that is my theory, and as Anne Elk says, "It is mine."

I also have another one, involving metal toxicity at the site of the plant. One of the functions of mycorrhizae associated with wild heathers is to detoxify certain metals, and to make certain soils habitable. Thus if 'Robert Chapman' fails to produce the sugars that attract the mycorrhizae in the first place, this plant will be susceptible to metal poisoning. I know this theory is almost the opposite of the first one, but as Anne Elk would say, "It is mine, too."

Donald MacKay

## An Appeal for Help.

Eleven years ago, I acquired at Grange-Over-Sands, Cumbria, a specimen of *Erica cinerea* 'Coccinea Smith's Variety', a cultivar then thought by David McClintock to have been unknown by name since the years prior to the 1939-45 war. In 1983, I presented young plants of this cultivar which I had grown on to Mr McClintock and General Turpin. Unfortunately, in the following year, I had to leave my collection of heathers behind when I moved away from Yorkshire. The two plants that I gave to Mr McClintock and to our Chairman have now both died out, so it is now probable that 'Coccinea Smith's Variety' has really disappeared from cultivation. However, as my original 1978 purchase came from a retail nursery, one that bought in its stock from a number of different sources, the presumption must be that, at that time, someone not only had the cultivar but was also propagating from it. Does any member know anything about it? I should be delighted to receive any information which would enable us to recover this plant.

R.C.D. Kingsford, Zone 4.  
(114a Balmoral Road, Morecambe,)  
Lancs. LA3 1ST.)

## DIARY OF EVENTS

Jul. 9th	NORTHEAST (NEWCASTLE) Garden visit at Ogle, 2 p.m. See Group News.
Aug. 15th	COUNCIL MEETING, RHS Halls, Westminster.
Aug. 15/16th	RHS SHOW inc. Heather Competitions, RHS Halls, Westminster.
Aug. 19th	MIDLANDS (BIRMINGHAM) Garden visit at 11.30 a.m. Nr Worcester - See Group News.
Aug. 20th	SOUTHERN - Two garden visits in Sussex - See Group News.
Sep. 1/4th	ANNUAL CONFERENCE, Durham University.
Sep. 3rd	ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, Trevelyan College, Durham University.
Sep. 23rd	CLOSING DATE for material for the Autumn Bulletin. (To Daphne Everett)
Sep. 23rd	SOUTHWEST - Garden visit to Seaborough, Dorset - See Group News.
Sep. 24th	NORTHEAST (NEWCASTLE) - Annual Show, at 66 Darras Road, Ponteland.