

# Bulletin of The Heather Society



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Vol. 5 No. 3

Autumn 1994

## DIARY OF EVENTS

1994

22/23 Nov. RHS Show & Heather Competitions, Westminster.

23 Nov. Heather Society Council Meeting

1995

15 January Closing Date for the Spring Bulletin

21/22 Feb. RHS Show & Heather Competitions

11 March Southern Group Otters Court Nursery & Garden,  
West Camel

11 March South West Group Otters Court Nursery & Garden,  
West Camel

3 April Southern Group Garden visit , 'Floraldene', Worthing

8 April South West Group Heather Competition & Talk,  
Lytchett Matravers

27 May South West Group Garden Visit. Colden Common,  
Eastleigh

23 July Southern Group Garden visit, 'Springfield', Horsham



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Cover illustration *Calluna vulgaris* "White Mite" by Brita Johansson

## EDITORIAL

*As you will see when you read the Group Reports in this Bulletin, some of our group-leaders are feeling rather disgruntled about the lack of members' support - especially on the summer visits. It seems to be a complaint common to most group-leaders in most associations - so what is the answer? Let the Bulletin be a good way for you - the members - to tell us what sort of meeting, event, or visit would really interest you? I am sure the group leaders would love to know! I know only too well from my experience in running the Midland Group that, with ours being such a specialist Society, it gets more and more difficult each year for the poor hard-working organiser to find interesting programmes for his or her group. Heather gardens are not common, and knowledgeable (and affordable) speakers on the subject are even less so; propagation is always popular - but one can't keep on demonstrating how to take cuttings. So - now is your chance to tell us what you really would like to do, or hear, or visit, at your meetings throughout the year. Please write!*

## Report of the 1994 AGM

**held at Askham Bryan, York, on Saturday 3rd  
September 1994**

In his opening report the Chairman said there was now a close relationship between the Heather Society and the British Heather Growers' Association. One example of this co-operation was that all BHGA heather-labels are now to be vetted by the Heather Society to ensure accuracy. The Society also co-operated with the BHGA at Olympia in the spring (where the BHGA display won a Gold Medal). Later this year there is to be a BHGA 'Heather Week', when David Small will be manning the telephone for a 'Heather Society Hot Line'. The Chairman concluded his report with thanks to members of Council for their work throughout the year, and especially to Des Oliver who was retiring as Treasurer after 17 years.

The Hon. Secretary, Pamela Lee, reported that membership now stands at 866 households. She thought that the way forward for the Society might be

to set up Regional Committees in those areas without local groups, in order to encourage new members. Pamela had news to give of some long-standing members, such as the Society's first Hon. Secretary, Constance MacLeod, who celebrated her 90th birthday in June, and our past Chairman Major Gen. Pat Turpin who, she said, continues to keep well but now finds mobility a problem. There was sad news also, with her announcement of the death of an early member, Bernard Boxall, at the age of 88.

Hon. Treasurer, Des. Oliver, gave his report on the finances of the Society for the last time, delivered with his unique blend of dry humour. Although the number of members has fallen, the Society is still running on an even keel.

Ron Cleevely (Assistant *Yearbook* Editor and compiler of the *Yearbook* Index) was welcomed on to Council, and Ron Wing was appointed as the Society's new Auditor. The Society's recorded its thanks to Peter Ingall for his past work in this capacity. Council member and organiser for the Southern Group, Allen Hall, was elected as the Society's new Hon. Treasurer and was ceremonially invested with the 'Symbols of Office' by his predecessor (these being his official Treasurer's badge and the Society's cheque book). Then, on behalf of the Society, Des was presented with a Sussex crystal comport, engraved with the Society's Logo and a personal dedication. *(A comport, I am given to understand, is an individual bowl for one's pudding and, judging from the size of this one, if Des uses it very often he is unlikely to retain his sylph-like figure! Ed.)*

The AGM concluded with a few words about the 1995 Conference, to be held in Dublin (see below for details).

## **25th Annual Conference - Dublin** **8 - 11 September 1995**

The Society has accepted the kind invitation of Donal Synott, the Director of the National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin, to mark the bi-centenary of the founding of the Gardens by holding our 25th Annual Conference in Dublin. We will be accommodated at Dublin City University which is a new University about 10-15 mins walk from Glasnevin. The University will largely be used as a B+B with most of the activities taking place at Glasnevin. A field trip to the west of Ireland has been organised by Charles Nelson, our *Yearbook* Editor, which will take place just before the Conference. It will be informal and will not involve strenuous back-packing into the hinterland! It promises to be a Conference with a difference as can be seen from the following tentative plan.

### **Field trip**

4 September Assemble in Connemara (probably Clifden)

5/6/7 September Connemara/Mayo/Burren

Hotel accommodation will be provided but members of the field trip will settle their own bills.

### **Conference**

8 September	Register at Dublin City University
9 September	Morning in National Botanic Gardens with lectures Afternoon - garden visits Evening - official reception at National Botanic Gardens
10 September	Morning in National Botanic Gardens - including the AGM . Afternoon - possibly a tour of the Wicklow mountains. Evening - possibly a ceili (an evening of Irish Music) in Dublin.
11 September	Depart

The accommodation at Dublin City University is single rooms but the rooms are in pairs sharing washing facilities. The cost, as in past years, all inclusive from Friday afternoon to Monday morning, will be £130.

This is the first Conference we have held 'abroad' although Ireland has always been part of the Society's activities. Normally delegates make their own way to Conference, many combining it with a holiday. However, some members who may like come to this Irish Conference may like the idea of group travel or may be interested in a car pool arrangement. We would like to get some idea of numbers who may like to go to Ireland and how they may travel. If you are thinking of attending perhaps you could spend a few minutes completing the enclosed questionnaire and returning it to me. Please do not think that you need to be an expert on heathers to attend Conference. Many that attend are not and would be the first to say how much they enjoy the event.

David Small, *Chairman*

## The Royal Horticultural Society Show August 16 & 17 1994

The Royal Horticultural Society's August flower show in the New Hall, Vincent Square, London provides an excellent opportunity for members and enthusiasts to advertise the attractions of heathers. This year's show coincided with a strike on the railways. Regardless of this difficulty there was a fine display of heathers and there were plenty of people admiring it when Joan and I visited the show on August 17th. At the end of the afternoon we were amused to see some visitors anxiously waiting for stewards to signal the end of the show so that they could help themselves to the exhibits. How they coveted those lovely heathers! The exhibitors of the decorative baskets got there first however and retrieved their treasures. This year, a new class has been added to cater for bud blooming *Callunas*.

There were 72 entries altogether comprising 82 vases and baskets. The judges' awards are given below.

Class 1 - THREE DISTINCT HEATHER SPECIES OR VARIANTS IN BLOOM, one vase/bowl of each. There were 5 entries, 15 vases in all.

1st Mrs C M Bowerman, *Erica cinerea*, 'Margaret Bowerman', *Erica cinerea*

'Heather Bank' and *Erica cinerea* seedling

2nd Mrs C M Bowerman, *Erica cinerea* 'Carnea', *Erica cinerea* 'Alfred Bowerman', and *Erica cinerea* 'P S Patrick'

3rd Mr R A Cameron *Erica vagans* 'Lyonesse', *Erica cinerea* seedling, *Erica cinerea* seedling

Class 2 - *ERICA VAGANS*, any variant, one vase. There were 12 entries.

1st Mrs C M Bowerman, 'Rubra'

2nd Mrs C M Bowerman, 'Lyonesse'

3rd Mrs C M Bowerman, 'St Keverne'

4th Mr D McClintock, Seedling

Class 3 - *CALLUNA VULGARIS*, a single flowered coloured variant, one vase. There were 8 entries.

1st Mrs C M Bowerman, 'Elegant Pearl'

2nd Mrs J M Hall, 'Silver Knight'

3rd Mr D McClintock, Seedling

4th Mr D McClintock, Seedling

Class 4 *CALLUNA VULGARIS* double flowered coloured variant, one vase. There were 3 entries.

1st Mrs C M Bowerman, 'County Wicklow'

2nd Mrs C M Bowerman, 'Tib'

Class 5 *CALLUNA VULGARIS*, single or double flowered white variant, one vase. There were 6 entries.

1st Mrs C M Bowerman, 'Silver Knight'

2nd Mr D R Strauss, 'Stonehurst Alba'

3rd Mr R A Cameron, 'August Beauty'

Class 6 *CALLUNA VULGARIS*, any variant in which the corollas never open ("bud bloomers"). There were 5 entries.

1st Mr D McClintock 'Adrie'

2nd Mr D McClintock 'Marleen'

3rd Mr D McClintock 'Roswitha'.

Class 7 - *ERICA CINEREA*, any variant, one vase. There were 6 entries.

1st Mrs C M Bowerman, 'Champs Hill'

2nd Mrs C M Bowerman, 'Snow Cream'

3rd Mrs C M Bowerman, 'Purple Beauty'

Class 8 - *DABOECIA* any species, hybrid or variant. There were 7 entries.

1st Mr R A Cameron, *Daboecia cantabrica* Alba

2nd Mrs C M Bowerman, 'Charles Nelson'

3rd Mrs C M Bowerman, 'Praegerae'

Class 9 - ANY HEATHER SPECIES OR HYBRID NOT SPECIFIED ABOVE. There were 7 entries

1st Mrs J M Hall, *Erica manipuliflora* 'Heaven Scent'

2nd Mrs J M Hall, *E x watsonii* 'Rachel'

3rd Mrs C M Bowerman, *Erica terminalis*

Class 10 - ANY HEATHER, one vase or bowl to be judged for foliage effect.



There were 8 entries

1st	Mrs C M Bowerman,	<i>Erica arborea</i>	'Albert's Gold'
2nd	Mrs C M Bowerman,	<i>Erica lusitanica</i>	'George Hunt'
2nd	Mrs C M Bowerman,	<i>Calluna vulgaris</i>	'Firefly'
4th	Mr D R Strauss,	<i>Calluna vulgaris</i>	'Robert Chapman'

Class 11 - DECORATIVE CLASS - AN ARRANGEMENT OF HEATHERS IN A BASKET, OTHER FOLIAGE MAY BE USED BUT HEATHERS MUST PREDOMINATE. There were 5 entries

1st Mr D R Strauss

2nd Mrs J M Hall

3rd Mrs C M Bowerman

The exhibitors deserve our thanks and congratulations.

Allen Hall - Southern Group.

## Missing Issues of the Yearbook

I am anxious to obtain for editorial reference some issues of the *Yearbook*, and if any member has spare copies that they no longer require, I would be grateful if they would contact me. I need the following years (in backwards order) - 1970, 1966, 1965, 1964, 1963. I will gladly recompense anyone who can send copies, but please let me know before posting *Yearbooks* to Dublin as the cost of posting to the Republic of Ireland is *not* the same as internal UK mail.

It also occurs to me that anyone else seeking to complete sets of the *Yearbook* could let me know what issue they require and I will endeavour to match them with surplus spares and their owners.

Dr Charles Nelson - *Yearbook* Editor

## Botanical Certificate for Kurt Kramer

The Scientific Committee of the RHS alone has the power to award Botanical Certificates 'to plants of exceptional botanical interest', an encomium infrequently recommended. So it is a matter of delight to record that on 12th April 1994, Kurt Kramer was granted certificates for the clones 'Ammerland' and 'Oldenburg' of his new *Erica arborea* x *E. carnea* hybrid.

D McClintock

## Profile of Vice President - Thomas Albert Julian

Albert Julian was born in Leicester on 8th February 1908, the eldest of three children, son of a master saddler. He was educated at Alderman Newton's School. In 1924 he became a trainee in the Post Office Engineering Department but at the age of 21 he was rejected for establishment because of a heart condition. Instead he joined GEC at their telephone works in Coventry and this was the start of a varied career in radio, television and electronics. Albert had digs in Coventry but he cycled home to Leicester at weekends before marrying Evelyn (Chappie), an ex colleague in the Post Office at Leicester and setting up

home in Coventry.

At first, Albert's work involved the early domestic wireless receivers and the first generation of talking picture equipment - where the sound was produced from gramophone records and was synchronised with the film. In 1934 he was transferred to premises in Greycoat Street, Westminster, to set up a radio service department and special electronics products unit. From this unit he and his colleagues designed and produced three high fidelity radio receivers for the royal train; the train ran from its base in Wolverhampton to Euston solely for the receivers to be checked.

By now Albert and Chappie had a small flat in Greycoat Street. Albert joined the RHS and went to all the fortnightly shows in the New Hall, which was next door to his office. For the next two years he worked with experimental, high definition television receivers and when the BBC started their service from Alexandra Palace in 1936 he installed the first GEC receiver. It is believed that this was the first commercial (non experimental) domestic receiver to be delivered and installed in Britain, indeed - a world wide 'first'.

In 1939, the couple moved to Carshalton in Surrey, where their daughter Tricia was born just before the outbreak of World War II. Albert's work was then devoted to producing communication and sound equipment for RAF aerodromes and later to producing bomb location and disposal devices; probably the most notable was one which could detect mines 12 feet or more deep in the sand.

When TV transmissions recommenced in 1945/46, Albert was made GEC Radio and Television Service Manager and was on the committee of the Radio Industry's Council, which organised the annual Radio and Television exhibitions at Earls Court. The RIC sent him with an exhibit to the Damascus World Trade Fair and Albert claims another 'first' for receiving TV pictures in Syria.

In 1961, after much reorganisation at GEC, Albert and his colleagues were made redundant and he joined Clarke and Smith Manufacturing Group as Director and Secretary of their Research & Development company, before moving to their parent company as Chief Engineer. Their most notable production was the RNIB 'Talking Book for the Blind', which is still in general use today. For the last two years of his working life Albert worked at the company's optical factory in Windsor, developing their language laboratory. He retired in 1973.

In 1946 Albert built their family house 'Woodhouse Eaves' on a one acre plot at East Horsley, Surrey, where he was to practice his first serious attempt at gardening. The plot was covered with dogwood, brambles and silver birch, which, when removed, exposed 9 inches of soil over solid chalk; the hungriest and thirstiest combination one could imagine. The 'desert' was made to blossom by a strict conservation routine and by spreading large quantities of leaf mould from the surrounding woods - which was collected each weekend for the whole period of his occupation. The soil conditions did not allow an interest to be developed in heathers - Wisley Gardens were only four miles away and were visited regularly.

After retirement, Albert and Chappie moved to Chinley, Derbyshire to be near Tricia, their physiotherapist daughter. The half acre garden had a stiff clay soil but its fertility was a revelation after the chalk of East Horsley. Albert bought his first heathers from Mr Hamer of Sunnybank Nurseries, who



persuaded him to join the Heather Society. Sadly Chappie died unexpectedly and Albert moved to a 'Granny-Flat' in Tricia's home at Whaley Bridge, quite close to Fred Chapple's old house and became 'Head Gardener' of a 2/3 acre garden. Thirsty sand again, but this time with a soil that was conducive to heather growing.

Albert's hobbies in retirement have been: archaeology of the Holy Land, horticultural electronics, gardening and travel (in which he sought consolation after the loss of his wife). For many years he has assisted Dr Peter Newton of the Botany Department of Manchester University with his post-graduate students, by applying electronic methods to help solve their recording and measurement problems.

After joining the Heather Society and becoming a member of the Harlow Carr Trial plot weeding team, Albert, at Peter Vickers' request, took over the responsibility for the regular maintenance of the trials plants. Then, with the help and encouragement of successive curators, Phillip Swindells and Chris Musgrove, followed the creation of the *Calluna*, *E. carnea* and *E. x darleyensis* National Reference Collections at Harlow Carr. The Northern Horticultural Society graciously recognised his work on heathers by an award of Honorary Membership, which was presented with a citation and a medal.

Albert was nominated to the Council of the Heather Society by John Ardron, and became Chairman of the Technical Committee. He has now retired from this duty because of deafness but continues to serve as a corresponding member. His present activities on behalf of the Society are devoted almost solely to maintaining the Reference Collection at Harlow Carr and assisting Jean Sharpe with the creation of the new Plant Portrait Library. He appreciates the regard shown to him by the Heather Society in nominating him as a Vice President.

*We have our Slide Librarian Jean Sharpe, to thank for this fine Profile of Albert Julian; she must have twisted his arm quite hard for the information. Ed.*

## Brilliant Idea or Bad Mistake

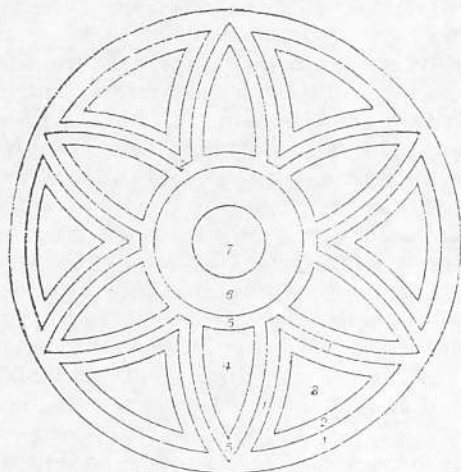
Three years ago I embarked on a City & Guilds Creative Flower Arranging Course at my local College. Apart from improving flower arranging skills, the course offered a section on Botany and Horticulture and Basic Design Principles. Each of our flower arrangements were to be 'inspired' by a 'source', either a work of art, piece of architecture, seascape and the like.

One task we were set was to make a seed collage. I thought I would make mine about 12 inches square, and mount this creation in a deep picture frame, and put it on the Dining Room wall. My 'source inspiration' was the **Victorian Flower Garden** book by Jennifer Davies, published by the BBC. In the book was a Carpet Bedding Plan, which Harry Dobson had amended and made smaller. His finished design was a masterpiece of colour, using classic bedding plants. So - this was to be it! I collected my seeds and paintbox together and the glue - but this sort of thing proved just not me, I can't stand fiddly things! Idea scrapped! However, this design kept haunting me, even the milkman delivered a bottle with the same design on the side! What could I do?

Having grasped the basics of the design, I was convinced I could produce a

feature in the garden that was going to be trouble free! Little did I realise the road that this was to take me down. Everything in the garden has been moved - even some of the large trees, but centre stage is the raised Heather Garden with its four outer raised heather beds. I had to get professional help with all the groundwork and brickwork necessary, and I have to admit, I did not personally plant all 8.400 plugs of the various heathers that made up the design. The garden has acid soil, so only a goodly stock of peat was used in the bedding process.

I show below the Carpet Bed Pattern, and this has been faithfully reproduced and measures 16 feet in diameter. We carried out Harry Dobson's instructions on how to measure and construct the design (see diagrams in book on pages 29, 30 and 31).



The quantities used in the design were as follows:

Pattern No.	Name	Quantity
1.	C.v. 'Silver Stream'	1400
2.	'Darkness'	1000
3.	<i>E. vagans</i> 'Diana's Gold'	600
4.	C.v. 'John F Letts'	600
5.	<i>E. x stuartii</i> 'Irish Lemon'	1000
5.B	'Irish Orange'	200
6.	C.v. 'Multicolor' (unsure)	200
		<u>5000</u>

The centrepiece is a bright yellow *Phormium* plant.

The outer beds measure 3ft x 16ft and surround the main design. Two colours only are used here and these took up the remaining quantity of plants (3400).

I have no knowledge of heathers - I know one when I see one, but don't ask me if it is a *Calluna* or a *carnea*. I only know a good thing when I see it. So, when the BBC Gardener's Question Time Team came to our Horticultural Society, I took my photographs along and asked the basic question "When do I trim them as they are of differing species and varieties"? The whole team thought the effect

unique and stunning. Sue Phillips wanted to see the whole lot kept trimmed and not allowed to flower, Daphne Ledward told me the correct times to prune - and then came Fred Downham! "What on earth possessed you to do a bedding scheme out of heathers"? He suggested that I take 20,000 cuttings so that I could keep on replanting, as it would all grow too big. Stephan Buczaski saw the expression on my face, and thought I might go away and shoot myself after that! However, he asked me to write to the BBC in a couple of years time, to see who was right and, as an aside, how did I keep them trimmed? I told the panel that I used bricks and a plank to stand on - and I still do this now! I have allowed them all to flower this year and kept them trimmed in their nice neat pattern. But - what have I let myself in for? **Come on you experts - you tell me!**

If any member is passing and would like to pop in and see the bedding scheme, do knock on the door (and bring your clippers). I am sure I'm going to need all the help I can get.

Glenis Smith, Lynton House, Mill Lane, Gerrards Cross,  
Buckinghamshire SL9 8AY

*Since I managed to track Glenis down and get her to tell her story she has joined the Society. Ed.*

## Birthday Greetings

Herr Fritz Kircher, the founder and President of the German Heather Society (GDF) celebrates his 80th birthday on 30th November this year. We send him our Congratulations and Best Wishes.

## Egdon Heath to Return to Heather

**From the Daily Telegraph, 25 July 1994**

Two Dorset dairy farms, which until the 1950's were part of the vast tract of land celebrated by Thomas Hardy as Egdon Heath, are to be restored from grass to heather by the National Trust.

The two 200 acre farms on the Isle of Purbeck, near Poole, adjoin Hartland Moor, a national nature reserve (partly owned by the Trust and partly by English Nature) which is one of the last fragments of Dorset heath once believed to extend to more than 100,000 acres. The aim of the joint project is to allow the farms and the nature reserve, in total 1,600 acres, to become a single block of unenclosed heath, grazed by a robust breed of beef cattle.

Mr Julian Homer, manager of the 8,000 acre Corfe Castle estate, which includes the two farms, said: "Eventually, we hope you will be able to drive into a piece of open heath of the kind that Hardy might have envisaged. It will be small compared with Hardy's day, when the heath stretched from Dorchester to Poole Harbour but it will give people an impression of the wide open space that Hardy described."

Rare species, present at Hartland Moor, the first national nature reserve to be declared in Britain, include the Dartford warbler, hobby, nightjar, common lizard, sand lizard, smooth snake and adder. Traditionally the heather, gorse

and bilberry would have been grazed and the Trust has secured an agreement at "significant financial cost" with a tenant farmer, that he will stay on and manage grazing on the whole 1,600 acres. Ironically, the tenant, Mr Grantly-Smith, is the son of the farmer who ploughed up the heath in the 1950's. Mr Homer said: "Mr Smith will have seen the land come full circle from heather to grass and back again."

Initially the land will need intense management to reduce the nutrients in the soil. This will be followed possibly by top-soil stripping, spreading of heather seeds from adjoining heath and ploughing to bring up a layer of seeds which were ploughed under forty years ago.

Mr Harvey said the heather conversion project was one of the largest ever carried out. "This is the face of the future. These areas will be the first to revert back to more natural communities."

### More Thoughts On

## "White Flowers Where the Snow Lies Longest"

At first I was inclined to regard the statement that *Calluna* often has white flowers where the snow lies longest as pure nonsense. A publication of good repute however shouldn't write rubbish should it? Having accepted the statement as true, thoughts on a possible explanation turn up immediately.

Feldberg is an area of south-west Germany, bordering both France and Switzerland. It is highland, the highest level 1484m according to my world atlas. On north facing slopes the snow can certainly lie for a considerably longer time than the 4-5 months, which is usual in Donald Mackay's garden.

It is known that plants can change their chemistry under influence from the environment. White is no colour but a lack of the substances that give colour to the flowers. I think it is possible that the plants, under extreme conditions, can stop the production of these substances. In that case, a plant moved to a more normal place, should turn to a more normal heather colour.

*Magnolia stellata* flowers on bare branches early in the spring and, as we all know, the flowers are white. Quite often a few flowers appear later in the summer and they are more or less pink. This is another manifestation of the same phenomenon, which is called in Swedish 'edafisk' difference. Plant chemistry is complex and I am no chemist, but there are people who can explain what I have touched on here. Whether this is the reason that *Calluna* on Feldberg has white flowers is another question, but it is at least a theory.

Brita Johansson - Sweden

## Wisley National Heather Collection

On Saturday 11th September 1993, the Heather Society Conference received a warm welcome to Wisley Gardens from the Royal Horticultural Society, in particular to the reshaped Howard's Field, to view the new National Heather Collection. This was my first sight of the collection and in the light of my association with the original planning of the project in 1979, I was surprised to find so many trees, albeit forming an attractive woodland landscape. The

heathers were planted in the open areas among the trees, producing a supporting carpet of flower and foliage.

Wandering around the island beds, planted randomly with most of the heather species found in the Northern Hemisphere, one could enjoy attractive vistas through the trees. The adjoining golf course extended and enhanced the views to the west.

The great storm of 1987 caused considerable damage to the trees in Howard's Field and replacement specimens, singly and in groups, have been planted since, to give variety. *Rhododendrons* are now established in one or more of the beds and ultimately they may encroach on some of the adjoining heather plants. *Pernettya* (renamed *Gaultheria*) shrubs appear in a few places and with their numerous suckers, now well in evidence, they will be filling their beds within a few years, unless vigorously controlled. The interestingly shaped island beds with their access paths have been well placed, providing a pleasantly varied interplay of the heather plants and trees. At the time of our visit most of the summer flowering plants were in full bloom and were largely responsible for the magnificent colourful effects. The widely distributed plants *Erica carnea* and the *darleyensis* hybrids will brighten the winter scene, although I would have preferred to have seen them confined to one location to give a concentrated colourful display in the dull days of winter. Distributing them over the whole plot considerably dilutes the winter interest.

There is no doubt that the combination of trees, shrubs and heathers has produced a unique and attractively landscaped area. However, as a heather purist, I regret the subordination of a National Heather Collection to the woodland landscape plan. Shade from trees, the invasion of interplanted shrubs and the distribution and accumulation of dead leaves create unsatisfactory variable conditions for the natural growth and development of what are, in general, moorland plants. The following are relevant quotations from the trade catalogue of a highly respected nurseryman member, which emphasises these points:-

"Select an open site away from deciduous trees and in full sun".

"Heathers are best planted in beds totally devoted to them except for the addition of a few specimen conifers".

"If possible keep summer and winter flowering cultivars apart".

"As a general rule, we would recommend that the planting distance should equal the spread of the natural plant".

In my opinion, a strong case can be made for planting a truly comprehensive national reference collection, sited free from all forms of shade, with adequate spacing of the plants, uniform growing conditions and the layout planned for easy reference and comparison of cultivars with similar characteristics. I hope the Royal Horticultural Society will be sympathetic to the suggestion to allocate space to create such a collection, when the planting of the present project has caught up with all the existing introductions. The area could be minimised by restricting the number of plants per cultivar to two or three. Plants of unattractive cultivars could be removed from the existing beds and placed in the reference collection to make way for more spectacular varieties. The collection of propagation material poses no problems with the donor plants on hand. Using current labour-saving planting and maintenance techniques the



work involved need not be too formidable and could be undertaken, in part, by the voluntary efforts of our member enthusiasts who live within easy travelling distance of Wisley.

T A Julian - Zone 4

## Scrapbowl Snippets of News From Members

### The Earth-Shattering Tale of *Erica multiflora*

Some years ago now, Anne and I decided to have a week's break from heathers just before Christmas and flew off to Mallorca. The weather was spring-like and conducive for long walks along the cliffs in the north of the island. On day two, we found *Erica multiflora* and of course the week's break turned into a major heather hunt culminating in finding a white plant - the first for 50 years.

Ever since then we have been in love with this species and have tried ever so hard to grow it here. Last November, we decided to go back to Mallorca, this time not for a break but to observe the plant in more detail. *Erica multiflora* never dominates the landscape as does *Calluna vulgaris* but happily grows under pine trees where the canopy is not too dense. We were lucky to find an area where it grew by the acre and we settled down to studying this species in full bloom.

Few heather enthusiasts are familiar with this species, it is superficially like *E. vagans* but grows taller (up to 9ft although 3 to 4 ft is more typical). It is erect in habit and somewhat more open than *E. vagans*, so why the attraction?

For the first few days, we could not get used to the variability of the species, the flower colour ranged from almost white to almost 'Mrs. D.F. Maxwell' colour, but why was it so attractive? Was it the wine talking? - no, it was as attractive at home, so what was it? By mid-week, it dawned on us - it was the pedicels. First of all, they appear to be much longer than in *E. vagans* held away from the stem in arching beauty, although others held them nearly erect as in *E. vagans*. These were not nearly as beautiful. Then we noticed that the pedicel was always much more deeply coloured than the corolla. We started to look for deep cerise pedicels and white corollas - and we nearly found it! So that was it - it was the pedicel that made these look so graceful.

Then, in the last two days, we hit upon something else which had gone unnoticed hitherto, the whole raceme was open together, unlike *E. vagans* where the bottom flowers fade before the top ones open. True, the racemes are usually shorter than *E. vagans* but we did find plants where the reverse was true.

So what is the earth-shattering news? Well, those interested in charting the botanical history of *E. vagans*, *E. manipuliflora* and *E. multiflora* will know that the early botanists could not distinguish these species. Perhaps, they were all the same, just different habits and locations. Anyone trying to propagate *E. multiflora* might know just how different they are but as everyone knows, the raceme on *E. vagans* opens from the bottom up, in *E. multiflora* it is from the



top downwards. Perhaps we should try putting in the cuttings of *E. multiflora* upside down!

### 'Brita Elizabeth'

At the end of the 1970's I found a double *Calluna* on a nearby peat-bog. The plant was several years old and the cuttings we took failed to root. We returned to the plant and collected more cuttings and by the third year I had three, small, weak plants. We had no greenhouse at that time and our one and only cold frame was crowded, so the plants were put outside in the shelter of a stack of wood. In the spring when the snow had melted I found that the wood had not only sheltered the three pots but also a family of voles. There was not a leaf left on the tiny twigs.

Another trip to the peat bog and, as I learnt a little more, the cuttings rooted and we could breathe again. The following years we saw the plant each time we went to the bog, but then suddenly, we couldn't find it. We thought that it had been killed by the machines they used for digging out the peat. Each year we searched for it but didn't see it any more.

In August 1992 the family 'Small' was in Sweden for a holiday and of course we went to the peat bog where, over the years, we have found so many strange things. I showed them roughly where we had found the double plant - David went a few steps ahead, stopped, and said: "Here is a double one." The plant looked identical with the one I had found and the only explanation is that it really was the same one, it was old, but not as big as the first one. I think that one stem must have survived, maybe crept a bit by its new roots and finally managed to come up into the light.

The plant was named 'Brita Elizabeth' after me some years ago but no one can deny that our Chairman is one of the few people to have found a double *Calluna*.

Brita Johansson, Sweden.

## The Declining Popularity of Heathers

Part of a letter sent to our Past Yearbook Editor, Bert Jones

..... The reason for heathers declining in popularity, in my opinion, is that they are no longer regarded as reliable hardy plants, and the blame for this falls entirely at the door of the nurserymen, who have gone in for producing plants quickly, in tunnels or under glass, with the result that when the plant is bought (usually in a Garden Centre) looking in pristine condition, it then, at best, stands still for a year or two, and at worst it dies because it is so soft, following forced growth. I realise that the method of production is not common to all growers but those who produce large numbers seem to be the culprits. I will give you examples: I have a new garden and planted about 200 heathers last year. About 160 were grown by members of the Lakeland Horticultural Society for the Annual Plant Sale, from which I bought them - and I have not lost one single plant. Most of them have increased by at least 400% since planting in June last year. Species planted are - *Erica carnea*, *Daboecia*, *E. cinerea*, *Calluna vulgaris*, *E. vagans*, *E. ciliaris*, *E. tetralix*, *E. x*

*darleyensis* and various summer hybrids. The remaining 40 or so plants came from a Garden Centre whose source of supply is one of the largest wholesale growers. Planted alongside the other 160, in identical conditions, on the same day, I have 3 plants surviving. A recent visit to the Garden Centre revealed massive stock losses of the heathers remaining with them over winter. A visit to the Lakeland Horticultural Society reveals open frames full of healthy looking heathers, with no casualties to be seen. These have been totally unprotected all winter..... In my view the Heather Society must persuade the heather producers to return to hard growing techniques. Failure to do so will totally destroy the image of heathers as reliable and hardy plants - once and for all.

Geoff Yates

*Members views and experiences on this subject will be very welcome. Ed.*

## Open Forum

*We hope that this section will be a useful feature of the Bulletin; the chance for members to ask questions, or air views, on any aspect of heathers or heather growing. The various experts within the Society will endeavour to answer your queries.*

**Question** - Which is the deepest and brightest winter flowering heather?

**Answer** - The deepest *Erica erigena* is 'Brightness' and there are few others in this species which could be called deep and bright.

The deepest and brightest *E. x darleyensis* is without doubt, 'Kramer's Rote' (Kramer's Red), again with few challengers.

With *Erica carnea* there are a few contenders. For many years 'Myretoun Ruby' was the only outstandingly deep, bright, cultivar, then, in 1986, the Dutch introduced the aptly named 'Challenger'. However, the German breeder, Kurt Kramer, has recently introduced a number of very good rich colours, and the deepest and brightest *E. carnea* is probably 'Nathalie'; slightly redder than 'Nathalie' but not quite so deep is 'Rotes Juwel' ('Red Jewel').

*E. erigena* 'Brightness', *E. x darleyensis* 'Kramer's Rote' and *E. carnea* 'Myretoun Ruby' are widely available. *E.c.* 'Challenger' is available from some Garden Centres, but the last two cultivars are not yet widely available and may need to be sought from specialist heather nurseries.

## Group News

### North East Group

One can hardly believe that the summer is over and that by the time this is read we will all be thinking of Christmas. Everyone had a wonderful summer this year and even we in our far-flung outpost in the North could boast of temperatures in the 80's. The heathers all did well and gave a good show in the garden.

Regretfully, our Committee had to cancel our Annual Outing, which had been scheduled for Edinburgh Botanic Gardens and instead we arranged, for the same date, a car outing for members to visit Howick Hall Gardens. For various reasons no members were able to come, but Geoff and I had a very enjoyable afternoon among the rhododendrons and azaleas. It is basically a wild garden with only a very small formal garden in front of the Hall on the South side, there are also lavender borders with roses and some very interesting herbaceous plants

and shrubs.

Our next car outing was to fellow member Bill Crow's nursery in August. We were pleased to welcome 11 members and spent a pleasant afternoon seeing the heathers and also the houses where the pinks are grown. Our thanks again to Margaret for the welcome cup of tea and biscuits.

Sunday, September 18th was our Annual Show. We were lucky in having a really glorious day and our new venue at Kirkley Hall Garden Centre was a great success. The number of exhibits was slightly down on last year (86 as against 98) but Mike Hurst, our Judge from Houghall, was very pleased with the standard and the benches looked really good. The results were:

Maximum Points in Show	Syd Courtney
Best Potted Heather	Bill Crow
Best in Classes 13,14,15,16	Dorothy Warner
Best Exhibit in Show	Mary Roberts

Our thanks to Dave and Beryl Mayne who came up from Kirkbymoorside to support our Show.

Now we are getting ready for our AGM which will be held on Friday, October 28th 1994, at 7.30pm in St Matthews Catholic Church Hall, Ponteland. If anyone is not sure how to get there do not hesitate to give me a ring on 06618 23299. The meeting will take its usual format with slides and a Faith Supper after the business. We look forward to seeing as many members as possible, so do come.

Dorothy M Warner

## Southern Group

### Saturday June 25th - Joint Visit With the South West Group to Windlesham Court Nursery

On Saturday 25th June, 28 members from the South Western and Southern Groups visited the Windlesham Court Nursery, which is set in a beautiful wooded site in the village of Windlesham, Surrey. We were warmly welcomed by Mr John Hall Jn., General Manager. In his opening remarks, he particularly mentioned Diane and Bert Jones, whom we were all pleased to have with us, since he was acquainted with them in the British Heather Growers Association.

Mr Hall said that the wholesale nursery was established 35 years ago. Currently, it produces over a million heathers a year, a sizeable proportion of the 15 million sold annually in Britain. The nursery offers a good range of varieties which changes progressively to include more recent, improved introductions. Thus some classic heathers such as *Calluna vulgaris* 'Sir John Charrington' are grown as well as newer varieties like 'Dark Star'. *Erica carnea* 'Ann Sparkes' is offered as well as the more recent, fine 'Barry Sellers' (Barry is, incidentally, a member of the Southern Group) and the Kramer introduction 'Red Jewel'. The hybrids are not omitted and from among these I mention only the splendid *E. vagans* x *E. Manipuliflora* 'Valerie Griffiths' introduced by our own Dr John Griffiths of Leeds. I also observed during our tour some plants of *Erica umbellata* - a species which I think deserves much more popularity. I find it perfectly hardy in the south of England (and indeed I noticed some fine examples in the Cherrybank garden, Perth during the Heather Society visit there two years ago). It needs only a well drained soil and is said to be happy on lime, though Bert Jones has reservations about this. It gives a splendid splash of colour in June.

Mr Alan Needs, Manager, showed us round. Only a few members present had been on the Southern Group visit ten years ago and they were surprised at the many improvements made in the meantime.

We went first to the propagation houses. Cuttings are taken the year round from stock plants which themselves are grown in plastic pots. The cuttings are rooted in trays divided into 150 individual cells. This makes potting-on easier. Underfloor heating and automatic mist sprays are of course features of these houses. The propagation medium is a 50/50% peat, bark mixture.

Growing on takes place first in shaded houses with capillary irrigation. A 90/10% peat, loam mixture is used. Later, the plants, fully potted-up, grow-on outside and are treated with fertiliser and fungicide. Again modern capillary irrigation is employed. Readers will imagine our round-eyed appreciation of the unending rows of splendid, healthy plants. The standards

of hygiene and care in maintaining so vast an array of heathers bring much credit to the staff.

The afternoon was warm and the violent thunderstorms of the previous day had gone somewhere else - Wimbledon probably. We were therefore ready for the refreshments which Mr Hall had laid on. Members lingered a long time talking, swapping information and advice and generally enjoying the companionship which has come to mark the outings of both Groups. Our thanks to John Hall and Alan Needs were properly profuse, and sincerely felt. Yes, another memorable visit.

### Sunday August 14th 1994 - Garden Visit, Champs Hill, Pulborough

After the torrid heat of July and thunder storms earlier in the month, August 14th dawned sunny with a light breeze which blew fleecy clouds across the sky. It was a perfect English summer day and we went to Champs Hill to see the loveliest private heather garden in the land.

The home of Mr and Mrs David Bowerman is a low roofed bungalow set on a sandstone cliff. From this elevated position, there are extensive views of the South Downs. The site has natural gradients which have been skilfully exploited in the design of the garden. There is an open area, falling gently away from the front of the bungalow to the edge of the cliff, and secluded, shrub-lined flower beds elsewhere. The heather garden merges with natural heath which itself drifts into woods at the sides and back of the house. More than 200 varieties of heather are planted and are complemented of course with conifers. However other trees and shrubs are also used including *acers*, *pittosporum* and *hydrangeas*. The tall pines of the woodlands provide an impressive background in keeping with the general theme of a heather garden.

During our visit, many varieties of *Erica cinerea* were in brilliant flower, Margaret Bowerman and Alfred Bowerman prominent among them. Long spikes of flowers were developing on *E. vagans* and in particular an *E. vagans* 'Viridiflora' was in what David McClintock described as "perfect flower". Some varieties of *calluna vulgaris* were in flower and others showing promise of good things to come. *Erica erigina*, particularly 'W T Ratcliff', looked green and glossy as they swayed gravely in the breeze, perhaps dreaming of a frosty millenium. A good description of the development of Champs Hill was given by our late Chairman, Mr A H Bowerman, in the 1972 Year Book.

A fortunate 38 members of the Society enjoyed these delights. As always there were some welcome friends from the South West and North Thames groups. Our hostess and her gardener, Mr Sid Brown, members both, made the company a round 40. We were especially pleased that General and Mrs Turpin were able to attend - it was quite like old times. We met for a picnic lunch and, towards the end of the proceedings, Mrs Bowerman provided an excellent tea. We shall carry the memory of this lovely summer day, with its flowers and friends, far into the fogs and rains of the winter!

### The Programme for 1995

#### 1995 is the 20th anniversary year of the Southern Group.

**Saturday March 11th 1995** - A joint visit with the South West Group to the garden of Diane and Bert Jones is planned. Details can be found in the South West Group programme and I am grateful to Phil Joyner for making the arrangements. As usual, a sketch map of the location will be included in the Southern Group Newsletter. Bert and Diane's lovely winter garden will make the relatively long journey worthwhile for Southern Group members and the roads are good.

**Sunday April 3rd 1995** - We are invited to visit the garden of our member John Tucker at "Floraldene", Findor Road, (A24) Worthing. "Floraldene" is about 400 yards north of the junction of the A24 with the A27 and is on the left hand side going north. John has a delightful garden and we shall be seeing the winter (lime tolerant heathers) in flower. However, John also grows successfully summer heathers, although the normal soil in the locality is chalky. Arrive at 2pm. Parking can be found in a lay-by directly opposite the entrance to the garden (Mayfield Close) and some 50 yards north of the entrance on the same side (Greatham Road).

**Sunday July 23rd** - A visit to the garden and home of Ron and Jean Wing at "Springfield", Hayes Lane, Horsham.



**Saturday 30th September.** A meeting at Wisley.

### Newsletters & Sketches

A newsletter complete with sketch maps of the venues will be available from 2nd January 1995 onwards. Please send a stamped addressed envelope if you would like a copy. My address is : 18, Albury Avenue, Cheam, Sutton, Surrey. SM2 7JT.

Allen Hall

## South West Group

Well here we are at the end of another year of local group meetings and I have 4 of them to briefly report on before I describe next year's meetings.

It was a very wet afternoon on Saturday 4th June when members met at 'Spinners', the garden owned by Peter Chappell at Boldre in the New Forest. The garden is advertised in the 'Yellow Book' and is open most days in the spring and summer. The garden is planted with shrub and herbaceous borders within woodland, and many of the plants are rare or unusual. The garden also has a nursery with many examples of the plants grown in the garden. Because of the persistent rain, members wandered briefly around the garden and then moved onto the next venue of the afternoon, the garden of Phyllis Kennedy on the edge of the New Forest, at Sway. Phyllis is one of the stalwart members of the local group and has opened her garden for us many times. Although the garden is small, it is absolutely packed, not only with heathers, but with many other gems, many of which Phyllis has grown from seed. Unfortunately the rain continued to come down and only brief visits were made into the garden. However, all was not lost because Phyllis and her helpers laid on sumptuous refreshment and we were able to chat informally in friendly (and dry) surroundings over a cup of tea and homemade cakes. I am very grateful to Phyllis for making us so welcome.

On the afternoon of Saturday, 25th June the weather was a lot better and the members of the South West Group met those of the Southern Group at the Windlesham Court Nurseries in Surrey. Allen Hall organised this very successful event and we were given a talk on the nursery by John Hall, General Manager, then shown around by the Manager, Alan Needs. Alan showed us everything, from the taking of the cuttings, the care of the cuttings, the potting on and the standing out of the finished product. The nursery produces many heather plants for the wholesale trade and the sight of so many cuttings and plants was overwhelming - and all the plants were of very good quality. At the end of the afternoon, John Hall and Alan Needs provided some welcome refreshment amongst the herbaceous borders in the adjacent garden, belonging to the nursery owner. My thanks go to Allen Hall for organising the event and to John Hall and Alan Needs for entertaining us.

The weekend of the 2nd & 3rd of July was when the local group members manned the Heather Society Stand at the Southampton Balloon and Flower Festival, on the Common in the centre of Southampton. Many visitors attended the Show, on a very warm weekend, and saw many colourful displays of various plants laid on by the trade and by specialist societies. I am grateful to Stan and Joyce Pitman, Henry and Anne Pringle and my wife, for helping me to run the Stand during that weekend and to help to 'spread the word'.

On the afternoon of Saturday, 16th July members visited the garden of 'Ashtree Cottage' at Kilminster Common, near Stourhead in Wiltshire. The garden is open to the public on certain days during the spring and summer and is advertised in the 'Yellow Book'. The garden is tended by Wendy Lauderdale and her husband, and Wendy was on hand to answer questions as members wandered around the packed, mixed borders of herbaceous plants and shrubs. The garden had a nursery in one corner and, as usual, members enjoyed picking out some new plants for their own gardens. My thanks go to Wendy Lauderdale and her husband for their hospitality.

The final meeting of the year was on the afternoon of Saturday, 17th September, at the garden of 'Sticky Wicket' in Buckland Newton near Dorchester. This garden nestles in a valley running up through the North Dorset Downs. The garden belongs to Peter and Pam Lewis and is advertised in the 'Yellow Book'. The afternoon was slightly chilly but bright, with some sunshine and the members enjoyed a garden which was a collection of four gardens; the frog garden, the bird garden, the white garden and the round garden. There was plenty to see in the collection of gardens, with herbaceous and shrub borders still displaying plenty of

colour. Pam Lewis was on hand to answer questions and to sell plants from the small nursery alongside the round garden. Peter Lewis organised refreshment for the members and this rounded off a splendid visit, and the season of visits. My thanks go to Peter and Pam for their warm welcome to us all.

At this point I should say that I was very disappointed with the attendance at one of the meetings and because of this, extra effort went into avoiding embarrassment with the garden owners. It seems to me incredible that with a fairly large membership in Zone 12, I have to rely on 'stalwart members', those members that turn up time and time again to at least 2 events during the year, and in some cases, all the events. The meetings are an opportunity for members to get together, meet each other, make friends and talk about their love of heathers. Many useful tips can be passed among members, and problems about heather culture can be shared. The local group is a way of putting a 'face' upon the Heather Society and the facility should not be wasted. As far as the South West Group is concerned there is no extra membership fee and any extra expense incurred at meetings is shared among the visitors on that day. It is not necessary to appear at all the meetings, only one person needs always to be there - and that is the organiser. All the owners of the gardens and nurseries that we visit, some of whom are members, put a lot of time and effort into opening their gardens and the only way to show our appreciation is to be there. Every effort is made to move the events around the zone so that each venue is close to at least a few of the members at least once a year. Finally - on the subject of attendance, all members of the Heather Society and their friends are welcome to local group meetings, so if a member from another group is visiting the area they will be made very welcome.

Now, to turn my attention to the first two events organised for 1995:

**Saturday, March 11th** - this will be a joint visit between our group and the Southern Group and we have been kindly invited to the garden/nursery of Bert and Diane Jones at West Camel in Somerset. Bert and Diane specialise in the winter/spring flowering heathers and have many fine examples in their garden. At this time of year many of their plants will be in flower so this will be an ideal opportunity to view the winter/spring cultivars. Members are invited to arrive any time after 11.30 am and those arriving early should bring picnic lunches to enjoy in the company of old friends, and hopefully, new ones. Otters Court Heathers is in Back Street (the turning by the village shop) in the middle of the village of West Camel, about 1/2 mile south of the A303 trunk road, west of Yeovilton.

**Saturday, April 8th** - This will be the annual indoor meeting at the Lytchett Matravers Village Hall in Dorset. Members should meet in the hall by 2 pm, where we will have a talk by John Horsey of Rivendale Alpines. John's subject will be 'Heathers and other Ericaceous Plants'. We will also have our annual two class table show:

Class 1. A vase or bowl of heathers in bloom

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

Prizes will be awarded and the Burfitt Bowl (currently held by Jennifer Turrell) will be awarded to the exhibitor with most points.

Lytchett Matravers is situated 6 miles from Poole and 1 mile west of the Poole/Blandford Road. The Village Hall is on the west side of the High Street, just north of the Rose and Crown Inn. Ample parking is available and a charge will be made to cover expenses.

For your Diary:

**Saturday 27th May 1995** - visit to the garden of Joyce and Stan Pitman at Colden Common, near Eastleigh in Hampshire. More details in the Spring Bulletin.

Finally, would members please remember that, if they require further details of the visits, they should send me 2 SAE'S, well before the first meeting of the year. If at all possible it would be appreciated if members could give me a call (on 0703 864336) ten days before the meeting, if they intend to come.

Phil Joyner