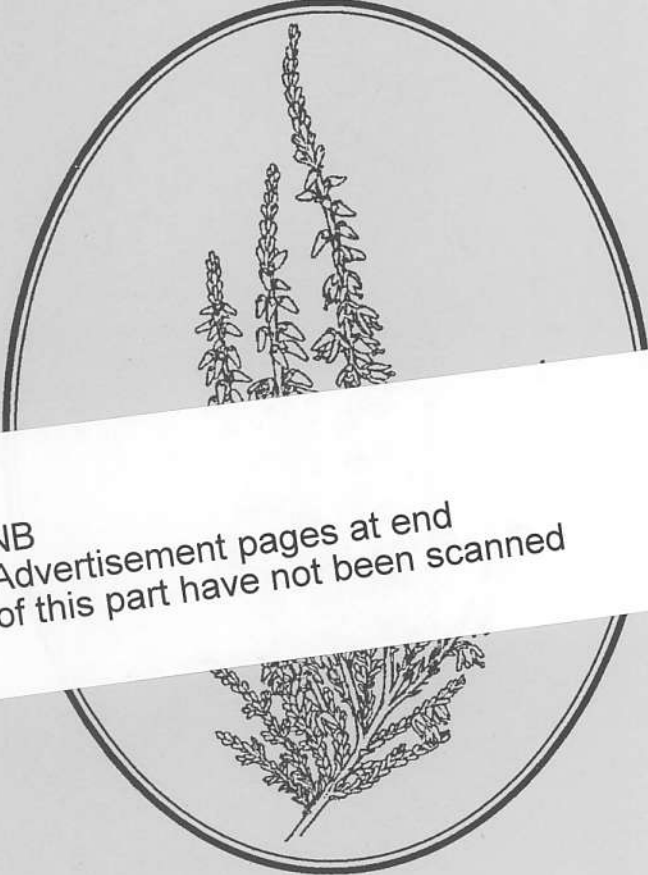


*Bulletin of The
Heather Society*



NB
Advertisement pages at end
of this part have not been scanned

Vol. 5 No. 6

Autumn 1995

DIARY OF EVENTS 1995

27 Oct.	North East Group	AGM
21/22 Nov.	Heather Competition	RHS Vincent Square
22 Nov.	Council Meeting	RHS Vincent Square
1996		
20/21 Feb.	Heather Competition	RHS Vincent Square
21 Feb.	Council Meeting	RHS Vincent Square
9 March	Southern Group	National History Museum
9 March	Southwest Group	National History Museum
30 March	Southern Group	Visit to Bracken Hill
30 March	Southwest Group	Talk & Table Top Show
27 July	Southern Group	Visit to Suffolk
10 August	Southern Group	Visit to Iping & Stedham
10 August	Southwest Group	Visit to Iping & Stedham
21 September	Southwest Group	Visit to Moorland
28 September	Southern Group	Indoor Meeting, Wisley



A Registered Charity No. 261407

Editor: Daphne Everett, Greenacres Nursery, Bringsty, Worcester, WR6 5TA.
Telephone: 01885 482206

Cover illustration *Calluna vulgaris* 'White Mite' by Brita Johannson

The Yearbook Editor has prevailed upon my 'other half' to write a report about the recent Field Trip in Ireland, for the next edition. So, sadly, unless the Society is prepared to pay my share of the divorce proceedings, I am afraid I won't be able to tell you about all the wonderful heathers we found in Connemara, or about the day we climbed a mountain to find Erica erigena beside a mythical lake, or about the lovely sunny weather we enjoyed each day (while it was raining back home). Nor can I tell you about the superb food we had each evening at our Hotel (even though it took all evening to get it) or about all the new American friends we made, and how we briefly met a coach-load of German members in the Connemara National Park. I can't mention how we paid a brief visit to the Burren, or how "Charles Nelson" was found hiding (skulking even) in a wall. Ah well - I think I had better just say nothing at all!

Report of the 1995 AGM,

Held at the National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin, Dublin

The Chairman, David Small, welcomed members to the 25th Annual Conference and thanked the Director, Dr Donal Synnott for his kind invitation to hold it at the National Botanic Gardens at Glasnevin; an important year for the Gardens, this being their bicentenary year. He reported that the British Heather Growers would be holding a 'Heather Week' from 9th - 17th September. The Heather Society would be participating in the event, with members manning stands at Garden Centres in various parts of the country. He mentioned the successful Field Trip which had taken place before the Conference and said we looked forward to the next one - maybe in Northern Spain or South Africa. The Chairman concluded by thanking everyone who had helped him in the running the Society throughout the year.

The Secretary, Pamela Lee, began her report with a tribute to the Society's first Secretary, Constance MacLeod, who died earlier this year at the age of 91. Pamela told members that a new structure plan is being prepared for Council, which it is hoped will make the running of the Society more efficient.

The Heather Competition at the RHS Show in August had been saved largely through the efforts of Mary Bowerman - although it was recognised that this had been a very difficult growing season. The Registrar, Bert Jones, is closing the list of new entries for the International Register at the end of 1995; the information is being put onto a computer data base. Ron Cleeveley has once again put much work into the preparation of the latest *Yearbook* Index (for the ten years up to 1992). It will be supplied to members on application. As in many other Societies, the Heather Society membership is continuing to fall. A new campaign to advertise the Society will be starting shortly - with a stand at the February 1996 RHS Show. New coloured leaflets have been produced to advertise the Society and a *Roadshow* will visit various locations, starting next March with Harlow Carr. The Secretary would be pleased to know of suitable locations for future *Roadshows*.

The Treasurer, Allen Hall, announced a proposed increase in subscriptions - the first for nine years. The new rates will be: £5 Student, £10 single, £12 family membership and £12 for Nurserymen members. Charles Nelson thought that Nurserymen and Institutions should pay more than £12. The Chairman said that the thinking on this matter by Council had been that Nurserymen should pay the same as families, as they received no extra benefits, but he agreed that Council would seriously consider whether to charge more to Institutions. An Italian member, Mr. Lupo Osti, objected to the extra postage charge made to overseas members for their *Bulletins* and *Yearbooks* etc. He proposed that Council should look into the matter and this was agreed. The Treasurer announced that arrangements were being made to introduce a Direct Debiting system for those members who would prefer to pay their subscriptions in this way and he had also been looking into the possibility of the Society having a Visa number, as overseas members in particular would find it a much more convenient way to pay. There was much discussion over whether the users of the system should pay the 4.5% commission that the Bank of Scotland would charge on each transaction. It was finally agreed that the Society would bear the cost. Apart from these matters, which are to be decided later, the new subscription rates were agreed unanimously.

The proposals for Life Membership, circulated with the Agenda, were amended at the AGM. However, the table of Life Membership fees was not accepted and was referred back to Council for further consideration, regarding the surcharge for foreign members. Council was given leave to implement the scheme once this has been re-considered. The AGM agreed that Life Membership should be based on - age of member, assumed life, and current interest of Government Stocks at par.

The Election of Officers then took place. The President, Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer, plus those members of Council who were due for re-election, all declared themselves willing to continue and were re-elected en bloc.

The AGM came to an end with a few words from Diane Jones about the 1996 Conference to be held in Somerset. (See elsewhere in this Bulletin).

Covenants and Gift Aid

Each year, tax refunds from the Inland Revenue increase our income from subscriptions by about 10% because a number of members have made covenants in respect of their membership fees. I know that some members think that even the new membership fees are really quite low and that reclaiming the tax refund on them is barely worth the trouble. However, when multiplied over a number of memberships, this extra income adds up to a valuable sum - £480 in 1995. I should therefore like to encourage UK members who are taxpayers at the standard rate or above and who have not yet covenanted their membership fees to do so - please write to me or the Administrator for covenant forms.

Hitherto, there has been little scope for members to make use of Gift Aid since membership fees fall well short of the minimum sum of £250 specified by the Inland Revenue. However members thinking of making donations of £250 or above may like to consider this option. I am able to provide suitable forms.

A Hall, Treasurer

The Royal Horticultural Society Show

August 15th & 16th 1995

Due to the exceptionally difficult drought conditions this summer, entries were down on last year. Many heathers had finished early or had shrivelled in full bloom, and *Callunas* were held back by lack of rain. However, we send our full congratulations to those exhibitors who did manage to put on a colourful show, despite the problems. The judges awards are given below:

Class 1 - Three Distinct Heather Species Or Variants In Bloom, one vase/bowl of each. There were three entries, 9 vases in all.

- 1st Mrs. C Bowerman,
Erica cinerea 'Margaret Bowerman'
Erica cinerea 'Alfred Bowerman'
Erica cinerea 'Champs Hill'
- 2nd Mrs. C M Bowerman,
Erica cinerea 'P S Patrick'
Erica cinerea 'Snow Queen'
Erica cinerea 'Autumn Pink'
- 3rd Mrs. C M Bowerman
Erica cinerea 'Purple Beauty'
Erica cinerea 'Heidebrand'
Erica cinerea 'Atrosanguinea'

Class 2 - *Erica Vagans*, any variant, one vase. There were 8 entries.

- 1st Mrs. C M Bowerman,
Erica vagans 'Ida M Britten'

- 2nd Mrs. J M Hall,
Erica vagans 'Rubra'
- 3rd Mr. D McClintock,
Erica vagans seedling

Class 3 - *Calluna Vulgaris*, a single flowered coloured variant, one vase. There were 6 entries.

- 1st Mrs. C M Bowerman,
Calluna vulgaris 'Silver Rose'
- 2nd Mr. D McClintock,
Calluna vulgaris seedling
- 3rd Mr. C M Bowerman
Calluna vulgaris 'E Hoare'

Class 4 - *Calluna Vulgaris*, a double flowered variant, one vase. There were 3 entries.

- 1st Mrs. C M Bowerman
Calluna vulgaris 'County Wicklow'
- 2nd No award
- 3rd Mrs. C M Bowerman
Calluna vulgaris 'Dark Beauty'

Class 5 - *Calluna vulgaris*, single or double flowered white variant, 1 vase. There were 4 entries.

- 1st Mrs. C M Bowerman
Calluna vulgaris 'Elegant Pearl'
- 2nd Mrs. C M Bowerman
Calluna vulgaris 'Elegantissima'
- 3rd Mr. D R Strauss
Calluna vulgaris seedling

Class 6 - *Calluna vulgaris*, any variant in which the corollas never open ('bud bloomers'). There was only one entry and no award was given.

Class 7 - *Erica cinerea*, any variant, one vase. There were 6 entries.

- 1st Mrs. C M Bowerman
Erica cinerea 'Champs Hill'
- 2nd Mrs. C M Bowerman
Erica cinerea 'Alfred Bowerman'
- 3rd Mrs. C M Bowerman
Erica cinerea 'Purple Beauty'

Class 8 - *Daboecia*, any species, hybrid, or variant. There were 4 entries.

- 1st Mr. D R Strauss
Daboecia cantabrica 'Alba'
- 2nd Mrs. C M Bowerman

Daboecia cantabrica 'Snowdrift'

3rd Mrs. C M Bowerman

Daboecia cantabrica 'Waley's Red'

Class 9 - Any Heather Species or Hybrid not specified above. There were 6 entries.

1st Mrs. J M Hall

Erica manipuliflora 'Heaven Scent'

2nd Mrs. C M Bowerman

Erica tetralix 'Silver Bells'

3rd Mrs. C M Bowerman

Erica manipuliflora

Class 10 - Any Heather, one vase or bowl to be judged for foliage effect.

1st No award

2nd Mrs. J M Hall

Erica arborea 'Alpina'

3rd Mrs. C M Bowerman

Erica cinerea 'Golden Drop'

Class 11 - Decorative Class - An Arrangement of Heathers in a Basket. Other Foliage May Be Used But Heathers Must predominate

There were 6 entries from 4 exhibitors. No award was made: the judge commented that some of the entries were not strictly according to schedule.

Pamela Lee

26th Annual Conference, September 6th - 9th 1996

The Society's 26th Annual Conference will be held near Ilminster in Somerset.

Accommodation has been arranged at Dillington Conference Centre situated about 1 mile north east of Ilminster. Dillington House is one of the finest houses in Somerset. It is steeped in history and part of it dates back to the sixteenth century. The Main House is the "hub" of the Conference Centre with reception rooms, dining room and some bed rooms. Other parts of the complex include conference rooms, a theatre, a bar, and more bedrooms. We can be confident we will be well looked after at Dillington in comfortable accommodation, and in a lovely parkland setting for those who enjoy an early morning stroll in the fresh air.

Travel to Dillington is made easy by its situation:-

By road it is 5 minutes from the A303 or 20 minutes from the M5 (Junction 25, Taunton). **By rail** it is 12 miles from Taunton, Intercity service from Paddington, 7 miles from Crewkerne, Intercity service from Waterloo. **By air** - 45 miles from Bristol Airport, 38 miles from Exeter Airport.

The cost of the Conference weekend, from Friday afternoon to Monday morning, inclusive, will be £140 - £150. The programme will include visits to all or some of the following:- Exmoor National Park, Quantock Hills National

Park, the peat moors on the Somerset Levels.

A detailed programme will be published in the spring *Bulletin*, and bookings may now be made by sending £2 (per mailing) stating whether single or double room is required, to:-

Phil Joyner, 84 Kinross Road, Rushington
Totton, Southampton, Hants. SO4 4BN

Cheques should be made payable to The Heather Society.

Elusive Heathers

Our Administrator, Anne Small, is anxious to obtain cuttings of *Erica ciliaris* 'Arne' and *Calluna vulgaris* 'Crimson Beauty'. Neither of these plants appears to be in general cultivation at the present time and may indeed be lost for ever - unless a member of the Society still has plants in his/her garden and would be prepared to share them. If you can help, please telephone Anne Small on 01449 711220

Threat to Heath and Moorland Heather

The many threats to the well being of heather on both upland and lowland moorland, heath, and hillside habitats continue to cause concern despite a general recognition of the problem and the encouragement, in the form of cash grants, given by conservancy organisations to landowners and farmers to improve management methods. Overgrazing by sheep, poor or non-existent burning and bad management generally, continue to be the major causes of the deterioration of heather on moorlands and heaths.

Well established burning procedures for grouse moors create the best growing conditions for heathers. A typical system is to divide areas for shooting into 10 or more strips, 20/30 m. wide, which are burnt singly in successive years. This leads to the dominance of heather over other plants. Alternately, overburning and general neglect create open spaces which encourage the establishment of competing plants and grasses. Burning which is too hot can destroy the peaty top soil thus preventing rejuvenation of the heather.

Overgrazing has a catastrophic effect on moorland heather. It has been shown that the loss of 40% of the current year's growth is not harmful but an increase to 80% causes very serious deterioration. If sheep are confined to the moors throughout the winter they find that their normal sources of food, grasses etc., become less palatable and they revert more and more to eating the young heather shoots. Management experts recommend that flocks are taken from the heather moors in the winter months. A recently published report on an award winning farm in South Yorkshire states that 25% of the flocks are removed from the heather for the period 1st November to the end of February. On the face of it this would appear to be an inadequate precaution.

Lowland heaths are open, treeless areas of altitudes less than 250m. above sea level and carpeted by heather and other dwarf shrubs. They arose in Neolithic times from forest clearance on acid soils followed by grazing, turf stripping and peat cutting. Skipwith Common, six miles south of York, a grade 1 site of Special Scientific Interest and the largest expanse of wet lowland heath in Yorkshire, was allowed to revert to dry woodland for 75% of its area by the removal of sheep in the 1940s. It is now being restored to its pre-1940 state by an English Nature Wildlife Enhancement Scheme by the removal of the trees, followed by light summer grazing. A flock of primitive Hebridean like sheep, sponsored by the English Nature's Wildlife Enhancement Organisation, for their preference for plants other than heather, now occupy the common. (Hebridean sheep are being introduced experimentally to other heather habitats.)

Bracken is a threat still to heather but in recent years the spraying of herbicides has proved effective in its elimination. Grants to cover the cost of spraying are available to owners in most regions. A High Peak owner sprays 100 acres a year by helicopter as part of a general scheme of the restoration of heather. Rollers have been used on some lowland moors and heaths to prevent the spread of bracken by destroying the new shoots and retarding the general growth.

It has long been established that air borne nitrogen is being deposited continuously on our heaths and moorlands producing an unwanted increase of soil fertility. This encourages the establishment of competing grasses and other plants, sometimes to the almost total exclusion of the heather. The resulting increase of nitrogen uptake by heather plants is also considered to be harmful. The highest levels of precipitation of nitrogen occur in Eastern England where the annual fall-out of air borne nitrogen is more than 30 Kg. per hectare. This is six times greater than that in North West Scotland. The main causes are the polluting emissions from oil, gas and coal fired power stations, and vehicle exhausts, which are deposited as acid rain.

The Institute of Terrestrial Ecology in Edinburgh has shown that there has been more than a tenfold increase of aurally deposited nitrogen in Europe during the last 20 years. They also confirm that air borne gaseous ammonia from animal urine can be a major source of unwanted nitrogen in some lowland heaths. The largest concentrations have been found in the region between Cheshire and Dorset/Somerset. Norfolk, Suffolk and Eastern Essex also have high deposits. Research aircraft have recorded a tenfold increase of air borne ammonia when flying over rich cattle pastures. Holland, where pigs and cattle outnumber humans, suffers to a much larger degree and ammonia is thought to be the main cause of the decline of heather on Dutch heaths.

A new threat to the rejuvenation of moorland heather has been reported from the North York Moors National Park. An alien moss, *Campylopus introflexus*, imported in 1941 from the southern hemisphere, has gained a foothold in the Park. Although it is similar, in many respects to the indigenous moss, it spreads much more rapidly creating unfavourably dry conditions for the germination of heather seed. The resulting slowing of the re-generation of heather cover is causing considerable concern in the absence of a known

method of control.

One unusual competitor for heath and moorland habitats is the common *Rhododendron ponticum* which, over the years, was planted extensively to provide cover for game birds and, now, has invaded huge tracts of land. (*R. ponticum* thrives on free draining, acidic heathland soils.) The National Trust has started to remove some of the thousands of bushes which continue to spread on Exmoor and the Quantock Hills. It is a time consuming operation as persistent new growth from the stumps of felled bushes has to be eliminated.

Despite the continuing threats to our heather habitats we can take consolation in the concern which is being shown by so many conservation organisations and the grants which are made available for improving moorland management procedures. The Institute of Terrestrial Ecology is one of fifteen component grant aided research organisations within The Natural and Environmental Research Council, which conducts specialist ecological research embracing our particular heather interests. Their report "Heather in England and Wales", editor R.G.H. Bunce, was reviewed in the Heather Society 1991 Year Book. It makes very good reading.

Postscript

The current newspaper reports of the temporary closure of moorland footpaths in the Peak National Park, in order to minimise the risk of fires, is a reminder of yet another hazard which heather moors have to face. The following is an extract from a news item referring to Skipwith Common, appearing in the 7th August 1995, Yorkshire Evening Press :-

"Firefighters spent most of yesterday putting out a grass and woodland fire on Skipwith Common nature reserve. They were called to the common, one of the largest expanses of heath in the north of England, at 6 a.m. and after bringing the flames under control, spent the rest of the day trying to stop undergrowth smouldering and re-igniting."

T A (Albert) Julian - Vice president

Profile of Des Oliver -

Recently Retired Treasurer of the Heather Society

Des was born on the 22nd April 1914 at Acocks Green, near Birmingham, one of the two children of Bert and Lizzie Oliver. His father was a Kitchen Engineers Manager in Birmingham and London. Des attended the Glendale County Grammar School at Wood Green in London and, in his working life, became a Representative for a firm selling animal foods. He has a son and a daughter.

Before and during the Second World War Des formed a local group of Dick Shepherd's *Peace Pledge Union*, and was part of a Group which published its

Journal 'Peace News'. When the newsagents eventually refused to handle it, he used to distribute the paper around the East Midlands, and Leicester in particular,. Des was a Conscientious Objector and says that he is (as far as he knows) the only one in the East Midlands to have received unconditional exemption. During the war Des also started a commune.

After the war Des moved to a country hamlet near Leicester and was soon involved in local life - as Clerk to the Parish Council (for 17 years) and as a preacher in the local Methodist Church. He says that the purchase of a 'Country House' (made famous by the 'Yellow Earl' of Boney fame) as a home for local preachers, was invaluable to him as a warning of the dangers of old age and convinced him that he would never go into a 'home' unless carried.

Des developed an interest in heathers when (he says) he inherited a six inch wide bed, with no soil and in about 1970 he decided to join the Heather Society. Later, at a Yorkshire Group Meeting, Des met Peter Vickers, and Peter put to him the idea of becoming the Society's Treasurer. Des dismissed the idea out of hand. Peter also asked Des if he would take over the selling of the Society's literature and in particular the *Heather Trials 1971-75*, which had just been published, and this he agreed to do. In 1976 Des became a member of Council and served on both the Finance and Publications Committees, he also took over the job of Treasurer from Roy Turner. In the heyday of the Midlands Group, Des was one of its leading lights and he always had a friendly welcome for new visitors to the Group (as your editor remembers well).

Whilst on a holiday in Russia in 1983 (travelling from Samarkand to Pukhara in the Mid-Asian Republic) Des met his present wife, Joan. Having found that they enjoyed each other's company, they were soon off to Russia again, this time travelling the Trans-Siberian railway ("Lots of fir trees." commented Joan). He and Joan were married in 1984 and Des left Leicester for good, to live in Cumbria. A visit to China was their somewhat delayed honeymoon.

Des retired as Treasurer in 1994, having served in that capacity for eighteen years. With typical modesty he says "An elder brother who finally retired a couple of years ago as Governor of the Bank of Swaziland, was my sole qualification for Treasurer and I have been most happy to pass on the responsibility to a far better man." However, judging from the new Treasurer's remarks at the Conference: his thanks for all the help he had received from Des during the transition, and his praise for the clear book-keeping he had inherited - I think we can take that remark with a pinch of salt.

From the Guardian, 5th July 1994.

Grubs up Among the Bonnie Heather

Scotland's mellowing climate may be responsible for a plague of omnivorous super-moths at present eating their way across the country's most distinctive habitat. Scientists investigating the appetite for Scottish moorland recently developed by the *Operophtera brumata*, alias the Winter Moth, believe more

benign temperatures are behind a switch of diet which has alarmed both conservationists and the shooting lobby. Dr. Susan Hartley, who heads a team of four, investigating the insects' voracious feeding habits, said yesterday that the evidence suggested recent warmer winters have made it easier for moths to survive at heather-friendly higher altitudes. "Some genetic adaptation has probably taken place" warned Dr. Hartley, based at the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology, at Banchory, near Aberdeen. The possibility that nitrogen-rich acid rain has improved the meagre upland menu is also being explored.

Apparent at the end of the 1970s. But the clear threat to nesting sites and Scotland's lucrative grouse shooting industry recently prompted the Scottish Landowners' Federation and the RSPB to contribute towards Dr. Hartley's research. "The moths have killed off several hundred acres of Perthshire moorland already" she revealed. The damage is caused by the larva, which nibbles new heather shoots between May and June. Infestations can vary, but the band of moth-busters has counted 1,500 caterpillars within a square metre of moor.

Eric Meek, the RSPB's officer in Orkney, estimates that scores of the Society's 20,000 acres, spread over the west mainland and the islands of Hoy and Rousay, are now serving as Operophtera brumata canteens. "There is fairly extensive damage." The depredation, which removes ground cover for grouse, meadow pipits and merlin, also opens the way for more unwelcome incomers like bracken and purple moor grass. Unfortunately, Dr. Hartley has not yet evolved a solution. "I can't do much about the climate or acid rain. The best thing may be to wait and eventually the population will go down. It is not very scientific, but it is ecological."

A T Julian - Vice President

Members' Letters

Two letters in connection with Brita Johansson's thought provoking article on the subject of heather hardiness, in the Summer 1995 Bulletin.

From Brita Johansson

May I ask you to put a correction in the next *Bulletin*? I got response from some people after my article in the last one. This was very nice but also revealed a mistake. Mr. Ketelar, the finder of *Calluna vulgaris* 'Easter-bonfire' selected the plant six years before it was named and brought into the trade. I had the wrong year and as it may seem that he had not tried long enough before naming it, I would be pleased if you would give him justice by telling the truth.

From Bert Jones - Heather Society Registrar

I found Brita Johansson's article on new *Calluna* cultivars in the summer *Bulletin* (1995) compulsive reading. I would like to discuss some of the points she raised, but I think I must increase the range of the subject to include *Erica* species and cultivars.

I must accept her accusation of parochialism on the part of British heather enthusiasts, but it is all too easy to overlook the difficulties which may occur when plants are grown elsewhere while you are struggling with your own gardening problems. Furthermore, there is ample anecdotal evidence to show that particular cultivars thrive in one district while performing badly in another. For me that is probably the sole justification for retaining so many virtually indistinguishable cultivars. However, assessment of the hardiness of cultivars is always worthwhile.

I cannot agree that reluctance on the part of nurserymen to offer newer cultivars is contributing to the perceived decline in interest in heather gardening in Britain. Specialist nurseries still regularly make their own new introductions. However, their percentage share of the market is much smaller now than it was even fifteen or twenty years ago.

During that time we have seen a remarkable growth in garden centres which have now taken over most of the retail horticultural trade. These establishments sell garden tools and machinery, garden furniture, books, hard landscaping materials, garden gnomes etc. etc. Sales of all types of plants probably account for only five or ten percent of their business, and they certainly cannot spare any of their valuable sales and car parking space to actually grow plants. They buy them in together with the rest of their merchandise.

In the case of heathers, they are supplied by the big growers of the BHGA, but it is the retailers who control the growers' output. They are only interested in plants in full bloom which will attract impulse buyers. In order to satisfy these requirements soft plants have been offered which had been grown under polythene. These do not establish well when planted out. Mass production techniques have led to the spread of some diseases which affect heathers. The use of "preventative" anti-fungal treatments which may suppress symptoms in infected plants is morally questionable.

These facts may be responsible for turning many beginners against heathers. These same people may also have been disappointed by being given insufficient advice on siting and soil preparation or by being sold calcifuge species in an alkaline area.

Erica cinerea cultivars are losing favour with the garden centres since they bloom at the same time as many bedding annuals. They do not want *E. vagans* because its lower flowers are fading before those at the top of the racemes have opened. It is pointless to look for cultivars of *E. ciliaris*, *E. tetralix* or most other species or hybrids in garden centres. They offer only a limited range of *Calluna vulgaris*, *E. carnea*, *E. x darleyensis* and *E. erigena* cultivars. It may be possible to purchase expensive examples of some tree heaths in a few centres.

I cannot accept that new cultivars always take a long time to "get over the nursery wall". Blooms ensured that *Calluna vulgaris* 'My Dream' and *E. erigena* 'Golden Lady' rapidly became well-known. During the early 1970s *E. carnea* 'Myretoun Ruby' took off with remarkable speed. More recently the BHGA have given such new plants as *E. carnea* 'Ice Princess', 'Isabel' and 'Whitehall' a wide distribution through the garden centres within months of their introduction. However, it remains difficult for a small grower to achieve

such rapid market penetration with even the best of cultivars.

Now I should like to drag my coat a little. Would it have not been an advantage if cultivar names had not been introduced at about the turn of the century? We would then have retained the use of botanical forms and sub-forms for groups of near-identical cultivars. Beijerinck has set them out for *Calluna vulgaris*. Forma *alba* has been published for most *Erica* species. Surely they could be set up for the rest. For example - *Erica carnea* forma *vivellii* would include the cultivars 'Vivellii', 'Adrienne Duncan', 'Challenger' and 'Red Shift' at present. This would have a number of advantages. Commercial growers would only need to grow one clone of each taxon. They could then offer a much more comprehensive range of heathers from the same number of stock plants. They would obviously choose those clones which perform best in their area. They would also be wise to check each newly introduced clone to see if it was superior to the one they were currently growing in that taxon.

It would render it less attractive to grow large numbers of a particular clone in, say, Argyll and then transport the resultant plants all over the country. It would also mean that anyone who found or bred a totally distinct form or variety would have to publish a name for it, thus drawing such a rare occurrence to everyone's notice.

There are, of course, disadvantages to this system. How is one to treat a plant with, say yellow foliage and white flowers which thus falls into two categories. Furthermore, there are the inconsiderate plants which are intermediate between two categories and thus destroy the validity of the whole concept.

A. W. J

.....
 "These plantations are of fir, or at least, I could see nothing else, and they never can be of any more use to the nation than the sprigs of heath which cover the rest of the forest".

William Cobbett, 7th August 1823, in Rural Rides.

The forest he mentions is Woolmer Forest which was in Hampshire. It had been written about, more sympathetically, by Gilbert White in *The Natural History of Selborne*, published in 1789. Cobbett's views about fir plantations may strike a chord with some members.

A. W. J.

Scrap Bowl

Snippets of Information From Members

The 'Dublin Deluge'

No! this is not a descriptive term for the influx of Heather Society members to the 25th Annual Conference held in Dublin between 8th - 10th September, 1995. As usual a full report of that Conference will be published in the forthcoming *Yearbook*, and I certainly have no intention of pre-empting that

I must accept her accusation of parochialism on the part of British heather enthusiasts, but it is all too easy to overlook the difficulties which may occur when plants are grown elsewhere while you are struggling with your own gardening problems. Furthermore, there is ample anecdotal evidence to show that particular cultivars thrive in one district while performing badly in another. For me that is probably the sole justification for retaining so many virtually indistinguishable cultivars. However, assessment of the hardiness of cultivars is always worthwhile.

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In the case of heathers, they are supplied by the big growers of the BHGA, but it is the retailers who control the growers' output. They are only interested in plants in full bloom which will attract impulse buyers. In order to satisfy these requirements soft plants have been offered which had been grown under polythene. These do not establish well when planted out. Mass production techniques have led to the spread of some diseases which affect heathers. The use of "preventative" anti-fungal treatments which may suppress symptoms in infected plants is morally questionable.

These facts may be responsible for turning many beginners against heathers. These same people may also have been disappointed by being given insufficient advice on siting and soil preparation or by being sold calcifuge species in an alkaline area.

Erica cinerea cultivars are losing favour with the garden centres since they bloom at the same time as many bedding annuals. They do not want *E. vagans* because its lower flowers are fading before those at the top of the racemes have opened. It is pointless to look for cultivars of *E. ciliaris*, *E. tetralix* or most other species or hybrids in garden centres. They offer only a limited range of *Calluna vulgaris*, *E. carnea*, *E. x darleyensis* and *E. erigena* cultivars. It may be possible to purchase expensive examples of some tree heaths in a few centres.

I cannot accept that new cultivars always take a long time to "get over the nursery wall". Blooms ensured that *Calluna vulgaris* 'My Dream' and *E. erigena* 'Golden Lady' rapidly became well-known. During the early 1970s *E. carnea* 'Myretoun Ruby' took off with remarkable speed. More recently the BHGA have given such new plants as *E. carnea* 'Ice Princess', 'Isabel' and 'Whitehall' a wide distribution through the garden centres within months of their introduction. However, it remains difficult for a small grower to achieve

such rapid market penetration with even the best of cultivars.

Now I should like to drag my coat a little. Would it have not been an advantage if cultivar names had not been introduced at about the turn of the century? We would then have retained the use of botanical forms and sub-forms for groups of near-identical cultivars. Beijerinck has set them out for *Calluna vulgaris*. Forma *alba* has been published for most *Erica* species. Surely they could be set up for the rest. For example - *Erica carnea* forma *vivellii* would include the cultivars 'Vivellii', 'Adrienne Duncan', 'Challenger' and 'Red Shift' at present. This would have a number of advantages. Commercial growers would only need to grow one clone of each taxon. They could then offer a much more comprehensive range of heathers from the same number of stock plants. They would obviously choose those clones which perform best in their area. They would also be wise to check each newly introduced clone to see if it was superior to the one they were currently growing in that taxon.

It would render it less attractive to grow large numbers of a particular clone in, say, Argyll and then transport the resultant plants all over the country. It would also mean that anyone who found or bred a totally distinct form or variety would have to publish a name for it, thus drawing such a rare occurrence to everyone's notice.

There are, of course, disadvantages to this system. How is one to treat a plant with, say yellow foliage and white flowers which thus falls into two categories. Furthermore, there are the inconsiderate plants which are intermediate between two categories and thus destroy the validity of the whole concept.

A.W.J

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"These plantations are of fir, or at least, I could see nothing else, and they never can be of any more use to the nation than the sprigs of heath which cover the rest of the forest".

William Cobbett, 7th August 1823, in Rural Rides.

The forest he mentions is Woolmer Forest which was in Hampshire. It had been written about, more sympathetically, by Gilbert White in *The Natural History of Selborne*, published in 1789 Cobbett's views about fir plantations may strike a chord with some members.

A.W.J.

Scrap Bowl

Snippets of Information From Members

The 'Dublin Deluge'

No! this is not a descriptive term for the influx of Heather Society members to the 25th Annual Conference held in Dublin between 8th - 10th September, 1995. As usual a full report of that Conference will be published in the forthcoming *Yearbook*, and I certainly have no intention of pre-empting that

article. I merely wish to add something that might interest everyone who managed to get out to David Robinson's marvellous garden at 'Earlscliffe' on the Howth Peninsula. A sub-tropical garden that was described in the '95 Yearbook.

On the Sunday, after touring the gardens at Glasnevin, then an important AGM that was followed by a hasty lunch, delegates boarded assorted transport to travel out to Howth. Unfortunately, that was the only moment when the weather decided to turn against us during the entire visit to Ireland. A torrential thunderstorm deluged the centre & northern districts of Dublin - roads were 6 inches deep in water within minutes and the levels continued to rise. The coach leading the procession of cars had no problems but created a wash that added to the difficulties of the rest of the convoy. Fortunately, the majority of those driving the Heather Society delegates had aspirations to be, (- or had been ?) rally drivers. Without hesitation they sought the shallower route and were up on the pavement beneath the avenue's trees maintaining progress. However, Dr. Charles Nelson, the conference organiser had a small car, which together with the fact that he was due to give another lecture at an important symposium in Trinity College within a few hours, decided him to find an alternative route nearer Dublin Bay. The minibus following at the rear of the convoy had to suddenly imitate his U-turn amidst the waves and for a while all was well. But eventually these vehicles met an even deeper flood. Only a few higher vehicles managed to get through. Of course, within a mile or so, the road was found to be dry and clear! Fortunately, all intended visitors eventually reached their goal of Cape heaths and afternoon tea.

My purpose in this 'shaggy-dog' preamble is to inform the Howth adventurers, of the accounts in the newspapers the following day. "Lightning disrupts Dublin Airport"; - "Radar devastated by storm". Undoubtedly, our trials were nothing to those suffered by Dublin Airport and its passengers. Both the main and back-up radar systems controlling all movements there were put out of action for hours and not completely operational the following day. Incoming aircraft with adequate fuel were stacked and circled around until visual or alternative landing procedures could be implemented, whilst other aircraft had to be diverted. All departures were cancelled. That deserved the headlines! The rainfall was reported to be between 12 and 25 mm. in places (whatever that is in inches!).

The scene in the city centre was described as 'Absolute bananas'. It was also interesting to note the only other incidents in the havoc of Dublin that were thought to be news-worthy were those affecting access to the many bars in the districts that were flooded. The papers were full of the difficulties of obtaining and supplying the nourishing national liquid refreshment these establishments are renowned for. Many bars had to close owing to the floods but this was regarded as only "a serious inconvenience" rather than a disaster. Others were more philosophical and practical - "the show must go on" and told staff and customers who had fought their way there "Get those shoes off and roll up your trousers!" Luckily that evening we were scheduled to dine at the conference venue where the Bar was open and we were all able to enjoy a lively 'Open Forum' without baring our ankles.

Heather Seed

Some members may be interested by the 1995 catalogue issued by Chiltern Seeds of Bortree Stile, Ulverston, Cumbria LA12 7PB. I do not know how many species they list in total but, in 270 closely printed pages, they include 15 genera from the Ericaceae. Among the 38 species, are to be found *Bruckenthalia spiculifolia*, *Calluna vulgaris*, *Daboecia* (described as "hybrids"), *Erica discolor*, *E. mammosa*, *E. pinea*, and "Mixed S. African species".

A.W.J.

An Unusual form of *Calluna vulgaris*

On 29th August 1995 Mr. and Mrs Bamford presented me with an unusual plant of *Calluna vulgaris*. They had propagated it from a seedling which had grown from the peat used in the potting compost on their Haythorne Nursery in Ringwood, Dorset. It has rather sparse, minute, mauve (H2) flowers and curling stems of fine, dark green foliage. I judged this to be an example of *Calluna vulgaris* f. *parviflora*. This is probably the first time this form has been reported since it was published by W. Beijerinck, in "Uebersicht der bis jetze bekannten Formen von *Calluna vulgaris* (L.) Hull", *Rec. d. trav. bot. Néerl.*, 1937, Vol. 34. In 1940, he wrote on p. 132 of his monograph on *Calluna* -

"3a Flowers small, sepals at the utmost 4 mm long, but always longer than the corolla Fa. *parviflora* W. Beijerinck, 1937. Pl. VIb and Fig. 133. Flowers light violet-pink, very small, mostly 2 - 3 mm long. Short-shoot leaves also small, ± 1 mm long. The twigs bend and the plant spreads when it has reached a height of 2 dm.. Blooms richly in Aug.-Sept. Only once found in the Netherlands".

A. W. J.

Information Required on *Erica ciliaris*

The Society has received a request from Dr. Rob Rose of the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology at Furzebrook for information, or references to plant parasites and diseases of this species. None of the general books on heathers give details of its susceptibility to disease or pests.

Dr. Rose together with Professor Peter Bannister (University of Otago) is preparing a monograph on *E. ciliaris* for the *Biological Flora* series published by the British Ecological Society. The main draft on the distribution and characteristics of this species has been completed, but the paucity of information on these other aspects has prevented completion. If any member has any precise information, observations, or records of insect pests or diseases that have attacked their *ciliaris* plants, Dr. Rose would be very grateful if they could send them to him at:

Institute of Terrestrial Ecology, Furzebrook Research Station, Furzebrook Road, WAREHAM, Dorset BH20 5AS - before 31st December 1995.

Looking through past copies of the *Yearbook*, I noted that some members visited Furzebrook in October 1977 and that Bert Jones wrote an article

dealing with the species and its hybrids ('78:49-52); in two other articles ('84:50) & ('86:38) he mentioned the first records of the species in the U.K. dating from 1828. Our longest-serving Chairman 'Pat' Turpin ('83:5) noted that although the leaves of *E. ciliaris* were normally in threes it was not difficult to find instances of leaves "in whorls of four or more"; David McClintock in his article 'Heather Records' ('89:57) has recorded the figures: 90" nr. Penryn (Curnow, 1877); 6 ft. at Soussons Down, Devon (1973); and growing up to 1,000m. in North Africa (Hansen, 1960:54); while the Comte de la Rochefoucauld had reported that everyone of his plants were completely destroyed following weeks of severe weather & frost in France during 1985. The useful accounts in the *Yearbook* 'Pests and Diseases of Heathers' by Audrey Justice ('89:17-29) and 'Insects associated with Heather' by Dr. N.R. Webb ('90:14-24) are essentially descriptive of the organisms.

Ron Cleevly.

Book Review

The New Naturalists. Half a Century of British Natural History.

Peter Marren. The New Naturalist Library, No. 82.

Harper Collins Publishers, London, 1995: 304 pp., 16 col. pls., b&w illustr.

Hardback £30, ISBN: 0-00-219998-X; Paperback £14.99, ISBN : 0-00-219997-1

In recent issues of the Society's publications, I have been able to draw the attention of members to a worthwhile natural history book. To many naturalists - of whatever persuasion ! - the most significant influence on natural history publishing in the past fifty years was the establishment by Collins at the end of the War of the "New Naturalist" series. Their intention to link professional science to the more general interest of the 'naturalist' in a succession of well-produced books surpassed initial expectation and hopes. The emphasis of 'NN' was to convey the 'natural surroundings' by illustrating living plants and animals through the newly available process of colour photography .

With more than eighty books and some twenty-two monographs or special volumes, the 'NN' logo has contributed to our wider understanding of British natural history. This has led to the current interest in ecology & biodiversity and the growth in awareness of the need for conservation and experienced management. To commemorate their achievement, the publishers commissioned Peter Marren to write a history of their successful enterprise, beginning with its conception in an air raid shelter during 1943 to its status today, when it has become "*the most avidly collected series of natural history books in English*" [in recent times].

The author is one of its many devotees, but is also one of several naturalists whose life seemed to have been caught up within the numerous strands of the natural history subjects that form its web of books [see pp. 295-99]. Consequently, his wide experience has ensured that every aspect of

natural history knowledge dealt with is adequately covered. The instant and subsequent success of the 'New Naturalist' venture is described in a separate chapter on the first publication *Butterflies* by E.B. Ford. Others provide a general review of the entire series, its various authors, the many problems encountered, and the titles that 'never made it'. Like me you will have appreciated many of the distinctive dust jackets - now you can learn the 'How?' and 'Why?' of their production. The author assesses the role of the series on British nature study and its influence on political and public attitudes to nature conservation. For those addicted to collecting this series (something that the Collins management of the 1980's had not appreciated when they tried to alter the pattern of production) - Peter Marren has used his own detailed knowledge to provide appendices listing the entire production of the series. Further, recognising its 'collectability' he has produced an authoritative rating of each book based on his own experience and the publishers printing records.

Few 'naturalists' will be unaware of the 'New Naturalist Library', or not have - at some time or other - "used" rather than read one of the books in that series [- only a very keen individual would have 'read' one from cover to cover !]. Many members of the Society have a wide interest in both plants and natural history, but to those asking the question "What has this to do with heathers?" I would answer that Nigel Webb's Book *Heathlands* was published as No. 72 in the series in 1986. However, the many titles that are devoted to regions of the British Isles, e.g. *The New Forest*, (73), *The Lake District* (53), *Snowdonia* (13), *The Weald* (26) &c., or others with more 'all-embracing' titles e.g. *Mountains & Moorlands* (11) *Natural History of Wales* (66), or *The Common Lands of England & Wales* (45) will be found to contain relevant information. But by reading this commemorative history you will discover that for yourselves. At the same time you will become fully informed about developments in British natural history over the past 50 years and have a wide range of topics for worthwhile dinner-table conversation. These days £15 for a paperback of such quality is good value - but a need for frequent reference, or a love of good books, will more than justify the purchase of the hardback (although watch out that it isn't a poorly produced copy that has slipped through control!). All should find this thorough account of the history of the NN series extremely readable, very informative, interesting and entertaining.

Ron Cleevely (December 1994)

Ericas of South Africa

At the recent Conference in Dublin, there was a wonderful display of Cape heaths on display, brought over from South Africa by Ted Oliver. Ted also had on show a copy of the book 'Ericas in South Africa' by Dolf Schumann and Gerhard Kirsten, which he edited (it was reviewed in both the Bulletin and the Yearbook several years ago) and several members were keen to obtain a copy. As we were informed that this book is now available from Timber Press of Oregon, USA I undertook to get up to date information and publish it in this

Bulletin.

Timber Press in Oregon say that the book can be obtained from them, at \$59.95 plus \$8.00 shipping and handling. The address is Timber Press Inc., 133 S.W. Second Avenue, Suite 450, Portland, Oregon 97204 - 3527. Tel. 001 800 327 5680, 001 503 227 2878. Ed.

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It is surprising just where you can come across references to the use of heather. Recently reading an account of the friendship between Daphne Du Maurier and Oriol Malet - a writer that she encouraged throughout their lives - I came across a description of a small farmhouse in Normandy that was bought by friends of Miss Malet in 1952.

" ... The garden was enclosed by walls of baked earth, thatched with heather upon which was placed a row of wild iris. Nowadays, when these walls crumble with age, they cannot be replaced as this art has now disappeared". p. 150 in *Letters from Menabilly. Portrait of a friendship* Daphne Du Maurier edited by Oriol Malet.

Ron Cleavelly.

Group News

North East Group

1995 will probably be remembered as the year of weather extremes. We in the North East had very wet and cold conditions right up to the middle of June. Then, suddenly, it was like opening a door, and we were in blazing sun which produced the severe drought lasting into early September. Fortunately we had no water shortage, Keilder Reservoir being our life-saver, but non the less the heathers did suffer badly, and we lost a number.

We had a good response to the Car-Outing to fellow member Bill Crow's nursery on July 19th and we all enjoyed experiencing the improved lay-out for the heathers. Sales were brisk and, to end the warm summer's evening, Margaret kindly gave us a welcome cup of tea and biscuits.

Many of us were worried about staging our Annual Show this year, as we all thought we had nothing worth showing. However, thanks to all those who rallied round, our entries of 104 were up on last year and the Judge complimented us on the good standard. The benches really did look most colourful when all the entries were massed together, and we all agreed that it was due in no small measure to the rain we had had the previous fortnight. The results were as follows:-

Class 1. 6 *Calluna vulgaris* spikes - single white

1st Roberts, 2nd Plumridge, 3rd Courtney

Class 2. 6 *Calluna vulgaris* spikes - double white

1st Roberts, 2nd Roberts, 3rd Courtney

Class 3. 6 *Calluna vulgaris* spikes - other than white

1st Roberts, 2nd Roberts, 3rd Roberts

Class 4. 6 *Calluna vulgaris* spikes - double other than white

1st Warner, 2nd Roberts, 3rd Warner

Class 5. 6 *Calluna vulgaris* - foliage to predominate, any variety

1st Courtney, 2nd Plumridge, 3rd Roberts

Class 6. 6 *Calluna vulgaris* - spikes of not less than 3 dissimilar varieties single.
1st Roberts, 2nd Courtney, 3rd Courtney

Class 7. 6 *Calluna vulgaris* - spikes of not less than 3 dissimilar varieties double
1st Roberts, 2nd Courtney, 3rd No Award

Class 8. 6 *Ericas* - any variety
1st Warner, 2nd Roberts, 3rd Plumridge

Class 9. 6 *Ericas* - foliage to predominate
1st Courtney, 2nd Wild, 3rd Roberts

Class 10. 6 *Erica vagans* spikes
1st. Roberts, 2nd Roberts, 3rd Nichol

Classes 11. & 12. Potted heathers - No entries

Class 13. 1 lady's spray - heathers to predominate
1st Warner, 2nd Plumridge, 3rd Scott

Class 14. Gents buttonhole - with heather material
1st Scott, 2nd Courtney, 3rd Plumridge

Class 15. Basket of heathers - not exceeding 12" in width
1st Warner, 2nd Warner, 3rd Wild

Class 16. An arrangement of heathers in a container - not exceeding 3" in diameter

1st Roberts, 2nd Warner, 3rd Warner

The trophies were awarded as follows:-

Maximum Points in the Show - David & Mary Roberts

Best in Classes 13, 14, 15, 16 - Dorothy Warner

Best Exhibit in Show - Dorothy Warner

There were no entries for the trophy - **Best Potted Heather**

The Heather Society always flies the flag at our local Ponteland Flower and vegetable Show, and each year the Bob Wooley Trophy is awarded to a different flower class. This year it was the turn of the Heather Class and I was fortunate enough to be the winner of the trophy, with 6 spikes of C.v. 'Allegro'.

The AGM will be on October 27th, 1995, in St. Matthew's R.C. Church Hall, Ponteland, at 7 p.m. We do hope to see you all there, and after the business is over we will have slides of the Irish Conference, followed by our usual Faith Supper. Contributions towards this will be gratefully received on the night.

Dorothy M Warner

Southern Group

Springfield - On a sunny Sunday in July, 25 members gathered at Ron and Jean Wing's bungalow "Springfield" in lovely Slinfold, Sussex. Ron & Jean wrestle with a clay soil to wonderful effect. Ron describes the garden as being a collection of conifers (150 varieties) and heathers (250 varieties) and these are displayed as individual plants and not in large drifts. Summer flowers of other genera are interspersed among the heathers. The effect is one of considerable interest and charm. Members had much to see and discuss and Ron was kept busy talking about the plants. Meanwhile, Jean provided a delicious tea which helped the afternoon fly by too quickly. But sunny Sussex logged another happy memory.

Saturday March 9th 1996 - Visit to the Natural History Museum, Kensington. See main

advertisement for details - I look forward to seeing you there!

Saturday March 30th, 1996 - Our President, David McClintock, invites us to see his garden. Gather at his home - "Bracken Hill", Platt, Sevenoaks, Kent at 2 pm. Platt is about a mile and a half South of Junction 2 on the M26 motorway and six miles east of Sevenoaks. The drive to the house is 100 yards West of Platt village hall and Platt Mill (now a store) on the South side of the A 25, half a mile or so East of the cross roads at Borough Green. There is little scope for parking at the house, except for those with limited mobility, and members are asked to park behind Platt Mill. This is a splendid opportunity to meet our President and see his collection of heathers and books.

Saturday July 27th, 1996 - A visit to our Chairman's garden in Suffolk. Let me know if you need help with travelling arrangements.

Saturday August 10th 1996 (Joint with the South West Group) -In the morning, there is a visit to Iping and Stedham Common led by Mr. John Mycock of the Sussex Downs Conservations Board. In the afternoon, a visit to the Zeneca Garden at Fernhurst, Haslemere, Surrey.

Saturday September 28th - Indoor event, RHS, Wisley

Of course members from other groups will be welcome at all these events.

Newsletter & Sketches

A newsletter complete with sketch maps of the venues will be available from January 1st. Please send a stamped addressed envelope if you would like a copy. My address is : 18, Albury Avenue, Cheam, Sutton, Surrey. SM2 7JT. Telephone 0181 224 7775.

Allen Hall

Southwest

On the afternoon of Saturday May 27th local Group members gathered at the 'Yellow Book' garden of Mr. and Mrs Ward at 53 Ladywood, in Boyatt Wood, near Eastleigh in Hampshire. Sue Ward is a member of the Hardy Plant Society and her garden was packed to the brim with many examples of those plants so loved by that Society. Sue Ward told me that she grew over 60 species and cultivars of hardy Geraniums and this was only one of the genera represented in her small and colourful garden. Many of the plants in her garden were available from the nursery area of the garden and, as usual, members took advantage of this.

After a while we said good-bye to Sue and her husband and moved on a stone's throw to Colden Common and the garden of Oak Hill Cottage, the home of Heather Society members Stan and Joyce Pittman. Stan and Joyce have a garden many times larger than the one at Ladywood and it is currently under restoration. Brambles were being removed, opening out the garden, giving fine views over surrounding fields and allowing the many shrubs, including Rhododendrons, to be shown to their full advantage.

In the area in front of the house there are several plantings of heathers and these are being added to as more space becomes available. In the garden at the rear of the house there are several connecting ponds which are being restored to their full glory. Joyce and a friend provided us with sumptuous refreshment as the afternoon drew to a close, and we were grateful for the weather having stayed dry after rain earlier in the day. My thanks go to Sue Ward and Stan and Joyce for their hospitality.

Aurelia Gardens in West Moors, Dorset was the venue for the meeting on the afternoon of Saturday, 15th July. Robert and Magdelane Knight, who have created the garden on a field site, invited members to view the garden with its unusual design and full of gold and variegated foliage plants. Robert has designed this attractive garden and spends many hours tending it, whilst Magdelane looks after the nursery area. Robert spent all afternoon with us, showing us the various plantings, and inviting members to identify individual plants. There were coloured foliaged heathers in some of the beds and also heathers with flower colour that fitted the overall theme of the garden. For many of us the drought was just biting, but Robert had avoided watering so far because of a high water table, and he showed us that the soil was quite damp just two inches below the surface. The afternoon was rounded off with refreshment in the picnic area adjacent to the garden, where many plants were bought by the members. My thanks go to Robert and Magdelane for a delightful afternoon.

Now to the events so far arranged for next year:

Saturday, March 9th 1996 - An all-day, behind the scenes visit, to the Department of Botany, of the Natural History Museum, organised by Ron Cleveley. Please see elsewhere in this Bulletin for details. I recommend that members take this unique opportunity to see behind the scenes of one of London's Museums.

Saturday, March 30th 1996 - this will be the annual indoor meeting at the Lytchett Matravers Hall in Dorset. Members should meet in the hall by 2 p.m., where we will have a talk by Dr Nigel Webb of the Institute of Terrestrial Ecology at the Furzebrook Research Station. Nigel's subject will be the 'Ecology of the British Heathlands'.

The talk will be followed by a visit to the heathland south of Wareham (the home of *Erica ciliaris*) later in the year. 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 jointly by Anne Pringle and Maureen Clark) will be awarded to the exhibitor with the most points.

Lytchett Matravers is situated six miles from Poole and one 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 close to the Hall and a charge will be made to cover expenses. There will be refreshment supplied after the talk.

Dates for your diary:

Saturday August 10th 1996 (Joint visit with the Southern Group) - to Iping and Stedham Commons in the morning and then a visit to Zeneca Garden at Fernhurst, Haslemere, Surrey in the afternoon.

Saturday 21st September 1996 - Afternoon visit to Hartland Moor and possibly Stoborough Heath in Dorset, to view *Erica ciliaris* and its hybrids with *Erica tetralix*. The tour will be led by Dr Nigel Webb.

Finally I would like to thank again those people who invite the members to their homes, gardens and nurseries; without them the local groups would cease to exist. My thanks also go to the members who have attended this year's meetings. Please come again next year and we will also welcome new members from any group, including the Southwest Group. Once again, please give me an indication about ten days beforehand if you intend to come to a meeting (01703 864336) but, if you forget to tell me, then come anyway. I look forward to seeing you all again at next year's meetings.

Phil Joyner

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Suffolk, IP6 8PJ. Tel: (01449) 711220 FAX:(01449) 711220
- Secretary** *Council matters*
Mrs. P.B. Lee, Birches, Kingswood Firs, Grayshott, Hindhead, Surrey,
GU26 6EX.. Tel: (01428) 604947
- Registrar** *Naming of heathers*
Mr. A.W. Jones, Otters' Court, Back Street, West Camel, Yeovil,
Somerset, BA22 7QF. Tel: (01935) 850285
- Slide Librarian** *Hire of slides*
Miss J. Sharpe, 3 Selby Road, Fulford, York, North Yorkshire,
YO1 4RD. Tel: (01904) 632263
- Yearbook Editor** *Articles for the Yearbook*
Dr. E.C. Nelson, National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin, Dublin 9,
Ireland. Tel: (010 353) 1 8 374 888 FAX: (010 353) 1 8 360 080
- Bulletin Editor** *Notes, articles for the Bulletin*
Mrs. D. Everett, Greenacres Nursery, Bringsty, Worcestershire,
WR6 5TA. Tel: (01885) 482206 FAX: (01885) 482206
- Advertising** *Adverts, advertising rates etc. for the Bulletin*
Mr. A. J. Stow, Widmour, Limmer Lane, High Wycombe,
Buckinghamshire, HP12 4QR. Tel: (01494) 449397
- Administrator** *Membership, Subscriptions, Orders for publications etc.*
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Suffolk, IP6 8PJ. Tel: (01449) 711220 FAX:(01449) 711220
- Finance Committee** *Society's finances*
Mr. A. Hall, 18 Albury Avenue, Cheam, Sutton, Surrey, SM2 7JT.
Tel: (0181) 224 7775
- General Purposes** *Suggestions for improving the Society*
- Committee** Mrs. D.H. Jones, Otters' Court, Back Street, West Camel, Yeovil,
Somerset, BA22 7QF. Tel: (01935) 850285
- Publications Committee** *Society's publications - or lack of!*
Mr. P.L. Joyner, 84 Kinross Road, Rushington, Totton, Southampton,
Hampshire, SO4 4BN. Tel: (01703) 864336
- Technical Committee** *Any queries regarding culture of heathers*
Mr. D.J. Small, Denbeigh, All Saints Road, Creeting St. Mary, Ipswich,
Suffolk, IP6 8PJ. Tel: (01449) 711220 FAX: (01449) 711220
- Group Organisers** *(Remember, you will be very welcome at any local meeting or visit!)*
- North East** Mrs. D. M. Warner, Littlecroft, Click-em-in, Ponteland,
Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE20 9BQ. Tel: (01661) 823299
- Southern** Mr. A. Hall, 18 Albury Avenue, Cheam, Sutton, Surrey, SM2 7JT.
Tel: (0181) 224 7775
- South West** Mr. P.L. Joyner, 84 Kinross Road, Rushington, Totton, Southampton,
Hampshire, SO4 4BN. Tel: (01703) 864336