

Bulletin of The Heather Society



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Vol. 5 No. 9

Autumn 1996

DIARY OF EVENTS 1996/7

1996

25 October	North East Group	AGM
26/27 november	Heather competition	RHS Vincent Square
27 November	Council Meeting	RHS Vincent Square

1997

15 January	Closing Date for Information for the <i>Bulletin</i>	
18/19 February	Heather Competition	RHS Vincent Square
19 February	Council Meeting	RHS Vincent Square
5 April	South West Group	Talk & Competition
5 April	Southern Group	Talk & Competition
20 July	Southern Group	Bodiam Nursery, Kent
16 August	Southern Group	Heathland Visit
5/8 September	Annual Conference	
20 September	Southern Group	RHS Wisley



A Registered Charity No. 261407

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

A contingent of twelve British members attended the 1996 North American Heather Society Conference, held this year in California. The Conference, and the tour which preceded it, were a delight, due in no small way to the tremendous energy and enthusiasm of the NAHS Members. A wonderful time was had by all. A full report of the trip will appear in the next Yearbook.

Be sure your sins will find you out! It seemed a very good idea at the time to avoid having to carry bottles of Californian wine (intended for gifts) around the USA, by buying them at Oddbins in Worcester on our way home from Heathrow. What we didn't know was that all the bottles would bear labels stating 'Specially imported by Oddbins'!

Pssst! Have you heard the story of how our vice-President, Albert Julian, had his pyjamas stolen in Eureka? And I could have sworn that it was a black-maria that took him and Jean off to the airport! Sorry, my lips are sealed - you will just have to ask him about it.

1997 Annual Conference, 5th - 8th September 1997

The Society's 27th Annual Conference will be held near Penrith in Cumbria. Accommodation, dining and lecture facilities have been arranged at the horticultural college of Newton Rigg. There will be a choice of accommodation between shared and en-suite facilities.

Newton Rigg is a short distance from Penrith which is easily reached by road (M6) or by rail. A programme of lectures and visits is being prepared and will be announced in the Spring *Bulletin*. Penrith is adjacent to the Lake District National Park so why not make the Conference part of a holiday to that beautiful area of England.

The approximate cost of the Conference will be £120 - £140. Bookings may now be made by sending £2 (per mailing) to: Phil Joyner, 84 Kinross Road, Rushington, Totton, Southampton, SO4 9BN. Cheques should be made payable to The Heather Society, the booking fee is non-returnable and is not a deposit on the cost of the Conference.

Report on the 1996 Annual General Meeting held at Dillington House, Ilminster, 8th September 1996

Members were welcomed to the 26th Annual Conference of the Heather Society by the Chairman, David Small. David reported that there had been changes in the last twelve months in the way that the Society is being run. A Steering Committee (consisting of the Chairman, Deputy Chairman and Treasurer) had been set up and was empowered to take necessary decisions without having to wait for Council to meet. Council had also been reorganised, with each member becoming responsible for an aspect of the running of the Society. All the Committees had been disbanded, with the exception of the Technical Committee. David told members that the International Register was well underway, with 3,500 epithets of European Heathers on computer and checked. Another 6-9 months work was required.

Membership of the Society had dropped to 757 of whom 125 are non-UK members. The Dutch Heather Society is to be disbanded on October 12th unless a new Chairman and Secretary can be found. However, the *North American Heather Society* had held a very successful Conference with twelve British members attending. There have been suggestions from various quarters in recent years that *The Heather Society* should become *The International Heather Society*; the idea will be considered.

David said that the National Heather Collections at Cherrybank and Wisley had suffered badly last winter. There is to be a new *Calluna* Collection at Harlow Carr, which will be in a much more accessible area. He congratulated our President, David McClintock on the award of the V.H.S. and also Vice President Albert Julian and Jean Sharpe on their recent marriage.

The Treasurer presented the Audited Accounts. He said that the 1995 Conference had made a profit for the Society. There had been the expected rise in resignations after the membership fees were raised but there was still an overall increase in revenue of around £1400.00. Direct debits had made a successful debut with 1/3rd of the membership now paying this way. However, if more members adopted this method the Society would be saved much expense in the future. Credit and Debit cards, which had been introduced recently had had a modest up-take so far.

Elections: The President, Vice Presidents, Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer were all re-elected. Allen Hall and Andy Collins, due to retire, were re-elected, and Charles Nelson, who had been co-opted on to Council, was formally elected. Society member Ron Wing agreed to continue to act as Auditor and was thanked for his continued help.

The next Conference will be from 5th - 8th September 1997, at Newton Rigg College, Penrith. The college is a very modern complex with 120 en-suite rooms, and is set in lovely surroundings.

The AGM was brought to a close with thanks from Pamela Lee to the Chairman for all his hard work for the Society throughout the year.

Obituaries

Major General P G Turpin CB OBE MA

It is with great regret that we report the death of Major General Patrick George (Pat) Turpin, Chairman of the Heather Society from 1977 - 1992, on September 14th after a short illness. A Memorial Service will be held at the Garrison Church of St Michael & St George in Queens Avenue, Aldershot, Hampshire, at 2.30 pm on Friday 25th October 1996.

Directions to the Church: Approach from the M3: At Junction 4 (Frimley) follow A331 (new Blackwater Bypass) to exit marked 'Aldershot Military Town'. Follow signs to the Military Museum. The Church is on the left hand side, near the end of the long straight Queens Avenue, at the Junction with Alison's Road.

Approach from the A31: Avoid busy local roads by following the A331 signed Aldershot and Camberley and leaving at 'Aldershot Military Town'.

We send our love and sympathy to Cherry and her family. A full obituary will appear in the next *Yearbook*.

Edna Courtney

It is with sadness that I report the passing of Edna Courtney on September 13th 1996. Edna had been in poor health for a number of years and had put up a brave fight this last year. She was a quiet, gentle person who gave Syd great support when he ran the first North East Group of the Heather Society and she will be greatly missed at our meetings and outings. On behalf of all Society Members we send Syd and the family our sincere sympathy.

Dorothy Warner

Anne Parris

Anne Parris, who died recently, had been a member of the Heather Society since 1968. She was a pioneer in the hybridising of European heathers and Dr John Griffiths cites her work in this field as the reason for his own interest in the subject. Anne left Britain in 1981 to live with her son in Australia, but her prolific letter writing kept her in touch with the Society, as many members can testify. An account of her life and work will appear later.

Annual Subscriptions

In 1996, The Society introduced direct debits as one of the means by which annual subscriptions can be made and requested UK members to use this facility if possible. There was a gratifying response. 60 members used the method in 1996 and 140 will be using it in 1997. I cannot over-stress how much this eases the burden of administration and I request and encourage members who have not already elected to pay by this method to do so. Please

write to the Administrator for a suitable form. The Society fully conforms to protocols established by our major banks to safeguard your interests when making payments by direct debit.

Allen Hall - Hon. Treasurer

Results of the RHS Heather Competition August 20th/21st 1996

Class 1. Three distinct Heather species or variants in Bloom - 3 entries

1. *Erica cinerea* 'Champs Hill', 'Alfred Bowerman', 'Margaret Bowerman'

2. *Erica cinerea* 'Apple Blossom', 'C D Eason', 'Snow Queen'

3. *Erica cinerea* 'Atrosanguinea', 'Carnea', 'Pentreath'

Class 2. *Erica vagans*, any variant, one vase - 4 entries

1. 'Hookstone Rosea'; 2. 'Ida M Britten'; 3. 'Viridiflora'; 'Summertime' unplaced

Class 3. *Calluna vulgaris* Single flowered variant - 4 entries

1. 'E Hoare'; 2. 'Red Pimpernel'; 3. 'Firefly'; 'Spook' unplaced

Class 4. *Calluna vulgaris* Double flowered coloured variant - 3 entries

1. 'County Wicklow'; 2. 'Kinlochruel'; 3. 'Tib'

Class 5. *Calluna vulgaris* Single/Double white variant - 3 entries

1. 'Elegant Pearl'; 2. 'Elegantissima'; 3. 'White Coral'

Class 6. *Calluna vulgaris*, any variant in which the corollas never open (Bud Bloomers) - 3 entries

1. 'Ginkel's Glorie'; 2. 'Melanie'; 3. 'Marleen'

Class 7. *Erica cinerea*, any variant - 4 entries

1. 'Champs Hill'; 2. 'Eden Valley'; 3. 'Alfred Bowerman'; 'Heidebrand' unplaced

Class 8. *Daboecia* any species, hybrid or variant - 3 entries

1. No award; 2. 'Praegerae'; 3. 'Hookstone Purple'; 4. 'Atropurpurea'

Class 9. Any Heather Species or Hybrid not specified above - 3 entries

1. *Erica manipuliiflora*; 2. *Erica mackaiana* 'Dr Ronald Gray'; 3. *Erica x williamsii* 'P D Williams'

Class 10. Heathers shown for Foliage effect - 3 entries

1. *Erica arborea* 'Albert's Gold'; 2. *Calluna vulgaris* 'Punch's Dessert'; 3. *Erica cinerea* 'Golden Drop'

Class 11. Decorative Class - An arrangement of heather in a basket - 2 entries

1. Yellow/Bronze arrangement; 2. Shades of pink

A Letter from Mary Bowerman

Dear Madam Editor and Fellow Members

You can imagine our dismay and embarrassment when Sid Brown and I arrived at the RHS Vincent Square, to be greeted by a steward who kindly informed us that we were the only entrants in the competition for Heathers, and proceeded to show us this vast table, carefully laid out for each class, which we were supposed to fill! Well, fill it we did, with 39 vases of heathers and two basket arrangements.

Please do not make much of the results - they really are almost meaningless this year, but Sid and I had great fun competing with one heather against another. In some classes we made 4 entries and, in our eyes, *Erica cinerea* 'Champs Hill' was looking its very best. We held our heads high on behalf of the Heather Society, but we missed you fellow supporters very much.

With best wishes

Mary Bowerman

I am sure that everyone will wish to join me in congratulating Mary and Sid on their mammoth task and in sending hearty thanks for their efforts on our behalf. It was unfortunate that some of our other stalwarts were either recovering from illness, or were at the NAHS Conference in California, but even so, looking back at the entrants in the same show last year, it is obvious that we have much to thank Mary Bowerman for. Ed..

Profile of the Society's Administrator Anne Small née Belcher

I was born in Lewisham Hospital, London on 4th June 1937, the eldest of 3 children of Dora Alice and Frederick William (Jim) Belcher. We lived in Mottingham, South East London - then in Kent - for the first 2 years of my life.

When my father joined the army at the beginning of the war he trained in Devon and my mother and I followed him, first to Shaldon and then to Newton Abbot. My earliest memories of that time were sitting in a field on a hillside with other children sheltered by sandbags while our mothers dug potatoes nearby. Another vivid memory is of playing on the beach at Shaldon and running for our lives when a German plane came low and machine-gunned the beach before climbing steeply over the hill behind and turning back to drop a bomb on Teignmouth on the other side of the estuary.

My father eventually went overseas and we moved back to London to stay with my grandparents in Eltham, where my sister was born. I remember sheltering either in the Anderson shelter at the bottom of the garden or under a huge heavy round table in the living room when the bombers were overhead. We again moved out of London, this time to Dunstable in Bedfordshire where we stayed for the remainder of the war, living with an aunt & uncle and a girl cousin slightly older than me.

At the end of the war we moved back to Eltham and I went to Middle Park School till the age of ten. Just before my brother was born we moved into a prefabricated house at the top of Shooters Hill, South London and I spent my last junior year at Deansfield School where I took my 11+ examination. Although I passed I was not able to get into the Grammar school of my choice and I went to Woolwich Secondary Central Girls School which later became Waverley, and is sadly no longer there. My education continued there until I was 16.

The prefabs had only 2 bedrooms so as my brother grew up we moved to a council house on the Coldharbour Estate at New Eltham. We were in a very pleasant position as we had no more than a dozen or so houses around us with a green in the front and overlooking a sports ground at the back. We had a small garden and as my father's profession was gardener/groundsman our garden always looked immaculate and he usually won the best-garden competitions. I regret that although I did enjoy the garden, I did not do much to help, maybe because my father did not really encourage it.

My first job was in the City of London with Edward Lumley & Sons, an Insurance company, where I worked as a shorthand typist for 2 years. I moved on to Provident Life Insurance for a further 2 years, where I joined their sports

club and played netball and did some athletics but was not very good at either.

By this time I had had enough of being squeezed into trains to London each day and got a job in Martins Bank in Eltham where I was the Manager's Secretary. I also *typed* bank statements and filling in *handwritten* ledgers - this was before the mechanized age came in. I cycled and played tennis and cricket in my spare time.

It was while playing tennis that I met David. We married 3 years later in September 1961 and our son Ian was born in September 1962. At this time we had bought a small end-of-terrace house in Plumstead, South London with no bathroom and an outside lavatory. This was where we developed an interest in gardening. We had a long narrow garden which had been solely used as a dog run before we moved in. We piled all the rubbish which had been left, against the retaining wall of the next garden - the houses were built on a very steep hill - and bought in some top soil which we piled on top with a few rocks and stones. We then bought a dozen 'Alpines', one of which was *Erica x darleyensis* 'Darley Dale', made a lawn and the garden was vastly improved. The front we kept purely as lawn.

In 1964 we bought a new bungalow on a small estate in Tonbridge, Kent, known as the Denbeigh Estate. We had purposely chosen a plot with one of the largest gardens and set about landscaping it, digging out a pond, piling the soil round the edge and adding a few rocks. We decided that we would plant heathers and bought a few, planning to propagate the rest. This was really the beginnings of our nursery.

Our daughter Hazel was born in August 1965. With 2 young children to look after I spent a lot of time at home and for the first time I was able to work in the garden and obtained a lot of enjoyment from it.



David heard about *The Heather Society*, joined and went to an Annual General Meeting, which was held in London in those days. He went to his first Conference at Dartington Hall and due to his enthusiasm I also joined and went with him the following year to Stirling. As the children grew up we took them along with us to Conferences and would organise our holidays to coincide. They still retain an interest in heathers to this day.

In 1972 David's job was transferred to Suffolk and we moved to our present home in Creeting St. Mary, where we started the nursery, still as a hobby. I had an office job in Ipswich for a few years but eventually the nursery was claiming more of my

time and I gave it up.

After the children went off to their Universities they never returned home. Both married in 1988 and we have 5 grandchildren, 3 boys and 2 girls, all bilingual as they all live in France.

I became Administrator in 1986 when Beryl Farrah found the job too much for her. The first thing we did was to computerise everything, which made things much simpler and as the nursery grew larger this was a real boon.

I took up bowls in 1990 which I enjoy but am finding less and less time to be able to participate in the summer and I am now reduced to playing indoors during the winter months. My other interests are reading, listening to music and travelling.

David and I are both very interested in the South African Heaths and our ambition is to see them growing in their native habitat.

News From Yorkshire

Moorland Heather Management

When walking on the Yorkshire moors near to Helmsley in 1991, we came across an unusual machine which had been used to cut the heather to within 3 - 4 cms. from the ground and to crop the stems to about 30 cm. in length. A few bales of stems, of dimensions, approximately 100 x 30 cm were stacked close by and it seemed very likely that they were intended for industrial use. Subsequently we learnt that they were destined for Holland for water filtration. We understand that they are even used for air filters in Dutch abattoirs.

All this came to mind when we came across a newspaper report that, in the same area, heather was being cropped, presumably in a similar manner, and the stems shredded and bagged for sale in North Yorkshire garden centres as an "environmentally friendly super mulch" ; prices ranging from £2.45 to £3.00 per "large" bag.

It would appear that these filter packs and mulch material are by-products of rejuvenating heather moorland by cutting as an alternative to firing. In adverse weather conditions, or even with unskilled operators, firing can be harmful, and even dangerous. Excessive temperature will completely destroy the habitats of fauna and the rejuvenation of flora.

The North York Moors National Park Authority broadly welcomes the new initiative and has issued guidance to landowners on the cutting of heather, in order to prevent over-cutting. It is interesting to note that Jurgen Schroder, editor of "Der Heidegarten" writes that in Germany regeneration of heaths is achieved by "mowing".

After firing moorland heather one soon becomes aware of myriad's of heather seedlings growing in the blackened peat and it has been generally assumed that heat, possibly by a form of vernalisation, is responsible for this massive germination. More recently work on South African heaths indicates that smoke also is an aid to germination. This raises a doubt that in the

absence of fire, repeated cropping of moorland heather could lead to a lower rate of germination and thus, to a reduction of the heather population.

I am reminded that rejuvenation of heather after firing is not only due to the emergence of seedlings but to new shoots growing from the fired stumps. At first this seems strange for when hard wood stems of *Calluna* are pruned they do not produce new shoots. So it would seem that the plant mechanism that causes seed to germinate under the influence of heat and smoke also influences shooting from the plant stumps

Heather news from Harlow Carr

To stimulate interest in heathers and the Heather Society among members of the Northern Horticultural Society and in general to gardeners in the north of England, the council decided that we should hold a one-day symposium on heather at Harlow Carr early in 1966. The Northern Horticultural Society were very co-operative and offered us all the facilities of the study centre in the gardens. They included a notice of the event in their prospectus of Courses for 1995/96:-

"An introduction to Heathers - Tutors: Experts from the Heather Society. Saturday 23rd March 1996, 10.30 am - 4.00 pm. Special fee £5.00 (includes a light lunch)"

A mention was made in the Spring 1996 *Bulletin* and an invitation was sent to all members in Yorkshire. It proved to be a successful and friendly occasion and the total attendance was 34 which included representatives of the North East group. Lectures were given by our chairman, David Small, on "Wild heather and identification of species", by vice-chairman Diane Jones, on "Garden design and choice of cultivars", and by Peter Vickers, on "Propagation". Jean Julian led the tour of the gardens and we had an interesting and informative question and answer session. Special thanks are given to Beryl Mayne who undertook the onerous task of organising the hospitality lunch and tea.

Although the attendance was disappointingly small, 14 members of the assembly signified their interest in supporting regular gatherings and this would appear to justify attempting to form a heather group based on Harlow Carr. A meeting has been arranged for Saturday, 14th September when we hope there will be adequate support for a revival of the group originally created by John Ardron and which was responsible for the Heather trials of 1970 - 1975.

The British Heather Growers Association held their 1996 Annual General Meeting at Johnson's of Whixley, Yorkshire and following their proceedings paid a visit to Harlow Carr on Tuesday, 25th June. They were welcomed by Mark Shaw, the Director of Gardens who gave a short history of the Northern Horticultural Society and Harlow Carr Gardens. Peter Vickers described the 1970/75 heather trials with which he was so closely associated and Jean Julian gave an account of the creation and developments of the National Collections of *Calluna*, *E. carnea* and *darleyensis* planted in the gardens.

Jean & Albert Julian

Workshop on Propagation

On July 27th, 28 members gathered at the home and nursery of David and Anne Small for a Workshop on propagation and the recognition of the more common fungal diseases. Although organised under the auspices of the Southern Group, members from the South Western, Eastern, North Thames and Yorkshire areas joined in.

As members gathered around 11 am, Anne served coffee and David was on hand with members of his staff to answer questions about his garden. Recently, he has remodelled the garden to get away from the classic heather/conifer beds with lawns to a more continental style where there is no lawn, the heather beds contain a greater mixture of other associated species interspersed with informal paths covered with bark and wood chips. Some of the old features remained, in particular some fine beds of *Erica erigena* 'Superba' and 'W.T. Ratcliff' - the latter being the tallest and bushiest of the clone that I have seen. *E. vagans* were beginning to flower and spectacular racemes were developing. Denbeigh has magnesium rich soil with a pH of 8. This suits *E. vagans* very well. Clearly it does not suit *Calluna*, *Erica cinerea* etc. and for beds containing such plants, David has taken extra steps for their success which go beyond the scope of this article and which would merit a separate write-up. Plants in the newer beds were developing well and held the promise of good things to come.

David's purpose of conducting this Workshop was to offer an extra and unique 'perk' to members - something which, together with other 'perks', Council have been considering for some time.

David described traditional methods of propagation employing propagators and plant pots enclosed in plastic bags. He went on to describe mist systems, the importance of water droplet size, mist burst and periodicity times. David showed his mist propagation and water treatment equipment, which is computer operated using a program he developed at Denbeigh. His talk went into some detail on the best type of cuttings to take for the various species. I am glad that he presented each participant with a printed summary of his talk because there was too much to remember at the time. We then were invited to help ourselves to cuttings from Denbeigh's enormous stock of heathers. (There were 711 varieties to choose from on the day). The staff had prepared trays each with 273 plugs ready to receive cuttings. David and his staff were on hand to help us select plants, take the cuttings and plant them.

Our trays when complete were thoroughly watered, treated with fungicide, and placed in a mist tunnel. We shall find out if we have green fingers at the Wisley meeting on September 28th, when David plans to restore the trays to us. I would add that Pamela Lee, who was unable to join us on 27th, had visited Denbeigh for her teach-in two weeks earlier. Her cuttings were already rooting! A few members brought along their own cuttings of plants they found difficult to propagate

Another important part of the workshop was a demonstration of fungal diseases. David showed examples of *Botrytis*, *Pythium* and *Rhizoctonia*,

described the precautions against the fungi and advised what to do if the symptoms appeared.

This Workshop gave us invaluable experience and knowledge. Books are good but they can't answer questions or correct you as the lesson proceeds. We had an expert teacher, an unrivalled collection of heathers from which to select our cutting material and a proven mist propagation system. I doubt if such a collection of heathers exists anywhere else in the world. Admittedly, the National Collections at Cherrybank and Wisley contain more cultivars of the hardy heaths but they have few of the Mediterranean species and none of the Cape heaths which Denbeigh Heathers stock and offer for sale.

The Southern Group has had many good meetings over the last 21 years, some of which stand out in the memory. This Workshop, I consider, will be talked about in future years as one of the vintage days in the Group's happy history. On behalf of the Group, I thank David and Anne for their generosity and congratulate the Society on having such a Chairman.

Allen Hall

The Winter 95/96 in Norway.

Jostein Liland sends his impressions of winter damage to heathers in Norway last winter.

Looking at your summer issue page 11, a short comment on my experiences after the last winter, will complete your article about winter in Scotland.

The winter 95/96 was severe in Norwegian heather gardens. My observations from my own garden and from 'The Norwegian Arboret' south of Bergen, shows a lot of damaged and killed cultivars. The winter started at Christmastime, and continued steadily for four months without snow-cover, and with hard frozen ground, all the long time.

Calluna vulgaris had the most damage, from about 60 cultivars just 20 cultivars survived in the arboretum, and were green in the end of March. Most of those damaged did not come through, the best of them giving material for a few cuttings. The following survived: 'Alba Plena', 'Arina', 'Beoley Crimson', 'Breivik' (a new Norwegian), 'Carmen', 'Darts Brilliant', 'Elegant Pearl', 'Elsie Purnell', 'J.H. Hamilton', 'Joan Sparkes', 'Loch Turret', 'Peter Sparkes', 'Radnor', 'Ralph Purnell', 'Sandhammaren (Swedish)', 'Spitfire' and 'Wickwar Flame'. In my garden most of the *Calluna vulgaris* were destroyed after many good years. 'Sir John Charrington' that has stayed for at least to decades, now it is only small tops for cuttings. In March all were still frozen, and the foliage was still green. In April the cold weather ended but by then much of the *Calluna vulgaris* foliage was damaged. What to do with this problem?

Erica carnea and *Erica x darleyensis* started flowering November/December and made a beautiful show the rest of the winter and spring. Only 'Springwood White' and J.H Brummage had some damage, but not necessarily from the cold. The best of all was *Ex darleyensis*, 'Silberschmelze' - this flowered from early December to early June. Plants of *Erica arborea*, 'Alpina' were mostly damaged, but a few survived in sheltered places. *Erica cinerea* cultivars were

all damaged, but by the end June there were some sign of life on a few. Last year we had a beautiful flowering from about 10 cultivars in the arboretum. *Erica vagans* has been a good species for at least 2 decades in my garden but this year the cold did much damage, especially in the arboretum, but also some smaller damage with splitting in my garden. *Erica x williamsii*, taken home from Scotland in 1989 was totally damaged and died in spite of covering well. Only one open group shaded by vegetation from all winter sun is standing totally unhurt.

Jostein Liland N5047 Fana.

Handy Guide to Heathers - Last call for catalogues worldwide

I hope to complete the preparation of the next edition of the *Handy Guide to Heathers* during this coming winter.

Throughout the summer, I have been writing to nurserymen members for their catalogue or lists. Many have kindly sent me copies but alas many have not. I would like the next edition to be as accurate as possible i.e. listing all cultivars in commercial cultivation. May I ask that anyone who has not sent me a catalogue in the past six months, or has revised it in that time, to do so as soon as possible. If you do not have a catalogue, a simple list of names will help. I will refund postage and the cost of catalogue if requested. *If I do not receive lists or catalogues by 31 December 1996 then I regret the nursery will not be listed in the next edition.* This request does not just apply to the UK but worldwide. Non-nurseryman members can also help me by sending any recent catalogues that they no longer require, which list a significant number of heathers. I will gladly refund postage.

Please send to:

David Small, Denbeigh, All Saints Road, Creting St. Mary, Ipswich, IP6 8PJ, England.

Visit Of Ericultura

The Dutch Heather Society paid a visit to England in May as part of its 25th Anniversary celebrations. The tour took the visitors to Great Comp on 19th May and the Southern Group was invited to share this visit. The Dutch party of 30 people was led by Mr Paul Pacilly and 16 members of the Heather Society, including David and Anne Small, joined them. Mr Cameron of Great Comp welcomed the party and described the garden and its history. The afternoon started rather cold and damp but eventually the sun came out. However, the spirit of the participants was cordial and happy from the start and we of the British group very much enjoyed helping our Dutch friends celebrate their anniversary. Later in the afternoon the party went on to Bracken Hill and were welcomed by the President, Mr David McClintock. Happily, David had recovered from the indisposition which had kept him

indoors during the visit of the Southern Group in March and he was able to conduct us round his garden. Later we had tea and continued with our fraternal conversations.

Allen Hall

NAHS Heather Convention 1996 hosted by HERE (Heather Enthusiasts of the Redwood Empire)

I couldn't resist including this potted report on the North American Heather Society Convention which was written by Blanche Darnell at a garden party on the last day Ed.

HERE'S to the heather that brought us together
Hoorah for the heathers of HERE!
They tempted our purses - and emptied them out
(and we hope they'll be growing next year).

Here's to the pre-tour, wending its way
Food served with a smile every hour of the day.
Bus full of comfort, BUT GET THERE ON TIME
or Dee with great humor will get every dime.

We planted an Erica with much attention
at a luncheon rest-stop worth highest mention
Saw Filoli's full glory, tier after tier—!
not many heathers BUT movies made here
Santa Cruz then and South African plants
Delicious supper - without any ants.

The Nurseryman's spread in Half Moon Bay
Was such a spread that it blew us away!
Acres of greenhouses, up hill and down
and the SON of the owner to take us around

Then San Francisco, and the Strybing fast trot
Some saw a tree heather, and some of us, NOT.

Next day was off to the coast at Fort Ross
and then to Jim Thompson's where there is much moss
and, Oh Yes, SOME heathers, some heaths and MUCH MORE
Then onward to Heritage House by the shore

Steak Dinner in Fort Bragg with THEIR heather group
next morning the Gardens then, closing the loop,
back to Eureka an Inn grand and gracious
with carpeted entry and rooms very spacious.

AND there in the lobby those heathers for sale
(The amounts that were purchased made some spouses pale)
Then programs began the following day
Lots to be learned before going away.
Photography, History, rare species search,
and naming the heathers (no one went to church)

AND gardens were visited, big ones and small
filled full of heathers, inspiring us all.
So here's to the Heather Convention you see
Thanks a lot Fergie and welcome to Dee!

We've had lots of good times being together
BUT, we wouldn't have come if it weren't for the HEATHER.

Blanche Darnell

Heather Society Sweatshirts

Heather Society sweatshirts and polo shirts are now being offered for sale. A heather motif is displayed on the shirt, in breast pocket position, and is an exact copy of the illustration on the front cover of the summer *Bulletin*, with the words 'The Heather Society' added underneath. The heather depicted is *Erica ciliaris* 'Stoborough' and was drawn by Brita Johansson. Both sweatshirts and polos are available in burgundy or green with the motif in white, and come in small, medium, large and extra-large sizes. See Order Form for details.

A 'wrong colour heather', or an outing to see British rarities-

**The S.West Group's visit to Furzebrook & Hartland Moor,
Dorset on 21st September, 1996.**

Following the talk given by Nigel Webb in April, the S.W. Group was invited to visit the Furzebrook Research Station for Terrestrial Ecology in order to see the diversity of Dorset heathland and aspects of its management. Over the morning, 21 members of the Society arrived from all parts of the southern counties in time to enjoy an 'al fresco' picnic lunch in the grounds of Furzebrook House. This was once the home of the Pike family, who had established their fortune by mining the local clay, used for making Wedgewood china. The Nature Conservancy had acquired the property in the 1950s and it was subsequently transferred to the Terrestrial Ecology research unit.

After assembling for a resumé by Dr. Webb, a convoy of cars - each with its full load of assigned passengers, drove to the higher part of Hartland Heath. Dr. Webb then explained the recent history of this site, pointing out that the regeneration of the heathland, primarily *Calluna*, was from the seed bank in the ground that had survived the sequence of farming usage, grazing and other exploitation since the 1950s. The vast extent of the heath ranged from the higher dry heathland, through lowland heath ('humid heath' that remains moist most of the year) down to more boggy wet heath in the centre. Until the First World War, most of the area had been covered with pine woodland.

On moving to the lower area and finding *E. ciliaris* and *E. tetralix*, everyone was soon peering through a lens at the flowers of the plants to determine the presence of awns on ovaries and the length of tails on anthers, seeking the hybrid *E. x watsonii*. Experts soon discovered plants with the distinguishing characters of fine appendages on the anthers and an awn on the ovary. Their more robust growth and distinctive rounded shape soon identified other hybrid plants. Fortunately, on moving along, we came to a group of all three types where comparison of foliage and flower arrangement served to establish more immediately recognisable features.

Having seen one of Britain's rarer heathers, we were then fortunate to find the large caterpillar of the Goat Moth *Coccus coccus* seeking a suitable site in the ground in which to pupate. After several years feeding on the rotten wood of deciduous trees - the caterpillar on becoming full size at some 65 mm, looking like a small "half cooked sausage", can be seen moving around in August (or later!). Perhaps its size and steady progress through the undergrowth, deterred anyone from confirming the identification by noting whether it did have a strong offensive goat-like smell. Once common in southern England, this moth has become very rare. During the course of the afternoon several examples of the *Calluna*-feeding Fox Moth *Macrothylacia rubi* were seen, but knowing that its reddish brown hairs were highly irritant, no one handled them.

By taking a circuitous route, avoiding the narrow channels crossing the heath, the party reached a central, lower wetter and boggy area with extensive colourful patches of the orange dead-flower spikes of the Bog Asphodel

Narthecium ossifragum and some very photogenic tall examples that grew tantalisingly on the edge of a deep pool. In these wetter parts, species of heather were less vigorous and in the more open places everyone was fortunate to find several examples of the now very rare Marsh Gentian *Gentiana pneumonanthe* with its bright blue flowers. Apparently, this benefits from occasional burning which ensures its seed sets better and that germination is increased.

The afternoon ended with a walk to the top for an extensive view over surrounding heathland across to Poole harbour. Many proceeded to a more grassy habitat near Stoborough in the hope of finding white examples of *E. ciliaris*, but had to be content with a light pink form of *E. cinerea*, or the sight of a white form of *Calluna*. Refreshed through supplies brought by the stalwarts of the SW Group, the convoy returned to Furzebrook to rejoin their own cars, indulge in more Heather Society chatter, and to conclude that Phil Joyner had 'fixed' the weather as promised in his circular and provided an excellent day!

Ron Cleevely

Group News

North East

Saturday June 8th was one of those perfect summer days when birds sing and bees buzz under clear blue skies in tranquil English gardens, and so it was when a small group of members met at Belsay Gardens. We were delighted to have Doug and Joan Lister with us as they have both been very poorly, but thankfully felt well enough to join us. We also welcomed Dave and Beryl Mayne, together with Dave's sister. The gardens were beautiful even though the heathers were 'between seasons'. We all enjoyed the walk through the quarry gardens and some of us climbed on to the castle battlements for a splendid view over Northumberland.

Our next social gathering was to fellow member Bill Crow's nursery on July 17th, where we enjoyed wandering around and choosing heathers, finishing with a welcome cup of tea. Many thanks Margaret.

As I mentioned in the last *Bulletin*, our Annual Show was to be incorporated with the Ponteland Flower and Vegetable Show for the first time this year. This was held on September 14th and thankfully it proved to be a great success, with between 300/400 people attending the Show and great interest being shown towards the heathers. Leaflets about the Society were available and very few were left on the show-bench; hopefully this venture will have netted some new members. Our show was very colourful and, even though the number of entries was slightly down this year, the benches were full and thanks must go to the members for their support.

Lastly, don't forget the AGM on Friday, October 25th 1996, in St James' Church Hall, Ponteland, at 7.30 pm. After the business is over David Plumridge will show slides taken when he and Rita attended the North American Heather Society Conference in California recently. This should be revealing! Anyone who has slides of gardens etc. is welcome to bring them. And finally - small contributions towards the Faith Supper will be gratefully received on the night.

Dorothy Warner

Southern

Iping & Stedham Commons - A Joint Visit. 23 members of the Southern and South Western Groups enjoyed a wonderful walk on Iping and Stedham Commons, West Sussex on 10th August. The visit was led by David Randall who is the honorary Warden of Stedham Common for the Sussex Wildlife Trust. The weather could not have been more pleasant for this very enjoyable outing nor could we have had a better guide. Three kinds of heather grow on the sandy soil of the heaths and all three were in good flower for our visit. We were particularly thrilled to find some white *Erica tetralix*. Mr Randall said that elsewhere on the common there was some bilberry (*Vaccinium myrtillus*) and a little cranberry (*Vaccinium oxycoccos*). There was plenty of dwarf gorse (*Ulex minor*).

The two commons, which are side by side but under different administrations, have been extensively and carefully restored. For about eighty years they had been untended and ungrazed. Bracken, pine and birch had engulfed the heather. Mr Randall explained that much hard work had been required, mainly from volunteers, to clear the bracken and lop the pines. However, the birch was more difficult to eradicate and had to be pulled out by the roots. When the ground had been cleared, it was scraped to about half an inch depth. This helped expose heather seed which then germinated. Mr Randall said that heather seed might lie dormant for eighty to one hundred years. If heather had ever grown on a site, it would regenerate once the land had been cleared of encroaching plants. It is planned to fence the commons and run cattle on them to chew the unwanted plants. Mr Randall said that characteristic heathland fauna soon returned to the restored heaths.

Some parts of the commons had been burnt as part of the restoration programme. We observed many new heathers growing out of the blackened earth. Mr Randall pointed this out and said that *Calluna* soon regenerated from old root-stock. Several members of the Society objected to this and said that *Callunas* regenerate from seed - they do not regenerate from old wood. Mr Randall promptly pulled out a young plant at random and sure enough there were new shoots springing from old root-stock. Shock Horror among well established members. Several people photographed this phenomenon (the regenerating heath not the fainting members). Ten days later, I was participating in a North American Heather Society visit to the University of California Santa Cruz Arboretum. There is a fine out-door collection of Cape Heaths there and the Director of the Arboretum was explaining to us that, in the Cape, the heathers regenerate from root stock following fires. She said that the base of the stems produce woody outgrowths called *lignotubers*. These outgrowths contain dormant buds which sprout after the shoot's are damaged by fire or mechanical means. On my return from America, I found my Summer edition of the North American Heather Society Heather News awaiting me. It contains a fascinating article by its Editor, Donald Mackay, on the subject of regeneration of European heather after fire. Mr Mackay does not come to a firm conclusion on this interesting subject and nor can I. Is there a case for investigating whether *lignotubers* play a part in the regeneration of European heathers?.

The Zeneca Garden - After a picnic lunch on Stedham Common the happy explorers set off for Fernhurst in Surrey where they were joined by six more members for a visit to the gardens of the Zeneca HQ. General Turpin described these gardens in the 1990 Year Book. The gardens are still very lovely but mainly now because of a fine collection of conifers. There are some good heather beds but sadly many of the heathers had died in the summer drought. It was explained to us that the Company no longer employ gardeners - the work is sub-contracted.

RHS Wisley - 29 members led by Andrew Collins visited the heather garden at the Royal Horticultural Gardens Wisley on 28th September. We were privileged to have among us Joyce Skjong of Norway and John & Jennifer Turrell. It was good to see that John was making a good recovery. A number of new beds had been planted bringing the number of cultivars in this National Collection to 1018, making it the largest collection of hardy heathers in the world. The plantings began 10 years ago and the garden as a whole is now mature and beautiful in its woodland setting by the river Wey. In the afternoon the party grew to 37 members and we were particularly delighted to welcome Cherry and Annabelle Turpin.

We paid tribute General Pat Turpin who was for many years a stalwart supporter of the Southern Group. We shall miss Pat greatly and remember with respectful affection his leadership and friendship. He was a considerable expert in heathers and heather cultivation and his persistent prompting and encouragement in RHS circles helped bring about the creation of the National Heather collection at Wisley. While in the garden in the morning, we had seen some good examples of the cultivars "Pat Turpin" and "Cherry Turpin".

Diane Jones presented a talk on heather garden design. Not least among her many interesting slides were some taken during the recent North American Conference and tour in California. David Small gave a round-up of the day-long workshop on propagation he had conducted at "Denbeigh Heathers" on 27th July. He said that some 4,000 cuttings had been planted by members and about 3,700 of these had rooted in his mist propagation tunnel. These were returned to the lucky participants.

David marked our success according to a scale in which 20 points were (generously) awarded if the cuttings had been put in the right way up, 20 if the correct type of cutting had been taken (he had taught us what features to look for in cuttings of the various species) 20 for the yield, 20 awarded according to the difficulty of the subjects, for example Cape Heathers are difficult to root and mackaiana is easy, and 20 for neatness. He pointed out that in the trade, buyers would want each rooted cutting in a tray to be the same size and show equal vigour. On this scale, John Collyer and Eric Davis came out best with 90 points each, more or less equally below them with points between 80 and 90 were Lyn Joyner, Pam Millis, Derek Millis, Allen Hall and David Sprague. Everyone else did pretty well too with more than 65 points each. Our gratitude to David was vigorously expressed. We appreciated the time and trouble he and Anne had been to in this exercise and also the depth of expertise and resource available at Denbeigh Heathers.

Des Perry and Gwen Eggar announced the winners of the flower competition. These were:

- Best flower arrangement in which heathers predominate - Mrs Pamela Lee
Best vase of hardy heather in flower, single variety - Mr John Tucker
Best vase of heathers chosen for foliage - Mrs Pamela Lee

Pamela was awarded the Turpin Trophy to hold until September 1997. This is the second time she has won the Trophy

Before tea, the Chairman conducted an open forum which brought out some interesting topics. This was the last meeting in an eventful and good year. Joan and I are planning to move to Leicestershire and we wish the Group good success in the future and thank members for their friendship and support over the last six years during which I have been the group organiser.

1997 Programme

Saturday 5th April 1997 - Lytchett Matravers - The South Western Group have invited us to join their indoor meeting at Lytchett Matravers Village Hall. Please see the South Western Group section for details. A sketch map of the location will be included in the 1997 Southern Group Newsletter. Please let me or Phil Joyner know if you intend to take part in this visit.

Later Events - Details of later visits will appear in subsequent *Bulletins* but you may like to note the following dates: - 20th July at 11 am - Bodiam Nursery, Kent

16th August 1.45 p.m. for a 2 p m start - Heathland visit to Thursley Common

20th September 10.45 for an 11 am start - garden visit and lecture at the RHS garden Wisley. The Southern Group Newsletter will be available from January 1st 1997. Please send me a stamped addressed envelope if you would like a copy.

Kindest Regards,

Allen Hall

South West

The last meeting of 1996 has just take place (see below) and it doesn't seem long ago that I was reporting on the last meeting of 1995. Time certainly marches on.

As you are all aware the Annual Conference took place at Ilminster, well within the area covered by this group. Several members of the group attended, together with members from all corners of the UK and from overseas. We were very fortunate with the weather and the outings to the Somerset levels and the Quantocks were very successful - with expert and enthusiastic guides providing us with plenty to see. The indoor events were well enjoyed and in particular the workshops held on the Saturday morning. My thanks go to Diane for organising the Conference.

Towards the beginning of July this group put on a display of heathers at the Southampton Balloon and Flower Festival. The weather was showery and the showground was a little damp, with running water in the marquee but the visitors came and those who showed interest in our stand were given instructions on growing and propagating heathers. My thanks go to Henry and Anne Pringle for helping me to set up the stand on Friday and for looking

after it during the weekend.

Now to the report of the last two meeting of this year:

On the morning of August 10th, members from both this group and the Southern group met at Iping and Stedham Common just to the west of Midhurst. There had been some early morning rain but by the time the meeting started the weather had cleared and the sun was out. David Randall of the Sussex Downs Conservation Board enthusiastically took us round the Common and showed us various features of the heathland management that had been carried out by himself and his team. Of particular interest was the heather burning and the new growth that was rising from the ashes. The walk was well within the capabilities of all those attending and was concluded with a picnic lunch in the sunshine back at the car park. After lunch we all set off through Midhurst and north to Fernhurst to the gardens of the headquarters of Zeneca Agrochemicals. At this garden we were able to freely wander about and marvel at the beautiful surroundings in which the Zeneca employees work. My thanks go to Allen Hall for arranging an enjoyable day and for the opportunity to meet old and new friends from both groups.

On Saturday September 21st, members gathered at the Furzebrook Research Station near Wareham in Dorset for a picnic lunch, prior to an excursion onto the nearby heathland. Despite a cloudy forecast the sun was shining and, coupled with the attractive grounds at the Research Station created a pleasant scene for eating and chatting. After lunch, Dr Nigel Webb took us on to the Nature Reserve on Hartland Moor just a few minutes' drive from Furzebrook and guided us onto what would normally be a damp area of heathland. In this area *Calluna vulgaris* was growing together with *Erica tetralix*, *Erica ciliaris* and the hybrid *Erica x watsonii*. The hand lenses came out to determine the degree of hybridisation and the cameras clicked. An additional bonus was an area where the Marsh Gentian was growing. After this an area of dry heathland, once cultivated but now reverted, was explored and many fine specimens of *Calluna vulgaris* and *Erica cinerea* were noted. The afternoon was made even more interesting by the presence of Dr Herbert Diemont, a distinguished Dutch heathland ecologist who joined enthusiastically in various discussions. The afternoon was rounded off with cold drinks and biscuits among the heather and all agreed on having enjoyed a worthwhile afternoon. My thanks go to Nigel Webb for sharing his Saturday with us.

Meetings for 1997

Saturday April 5th - this will be an indoor meeting at the Lytchett Matravers Village Hall in Dorset and on this occasion it will be a joint meeting with the Southern Group. Members should meet in the Hall by 2.00 pm, where we will have a talk by Ron Clevely, the Assistant Yearbook Editor and Ron will be talking on a Cape Heath related subject. We will also have our 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 Phil Joyner) will be awarded to the exhibitor with the most points. Southern Group members are most welcome to take part in this competition.

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 & 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.

Further information on the meetings for 1997 can be obtained by sending me two SAEs as soon as possible and if you intend to come to a meeting I would be grateful if you could let me know about ten days beforehand (tel. 01703 864336). Once again I am grateful to those people who make the visits possible and I look forward to seeing you at future meetings.

Yorkshire Group?

On September 14th 1996 nineteen people attended a meeting with a view to starting a new Heather Group in Yorkshire (see 'News from Yorkshire' earlier in this Bulletin). As the meeting took place under the auspices of the Northern Horticultural Society it is not yet clear whether the new group will be a Heather Group of the NHS or a Yorkshire Group of *The Heather Society*, but whichever it turns out to be we wish it well.

*Peter Vickers, who sent me the welcome item of news above, has been lobbying vehemently for some time for the **Group News** section of the Bulletin to be in larger type. So far I have resisted this, as a larger typeface obviously cuts down the space available for the other items of interest and I want to avoid a Bulletin which consists almost entirely of Formal Announcements, Group News and Advertisements. However - I do take his point that the **Group News** is a very important part of the Bulletin and therefore, in this edition, I have done as he asked. Your thoughts and comments will be appreciated. Ed*

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