

*Bulletin of The
Heather Society*



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Vol. 5 No. 17

Summer 1999

DIARY OF EVENTS

1999

- 17 July South West Group Visit to 'Dominey's Yard',
Buckland Newton in Dorset
- 21 July North East Group Visit to Bill Crow's Nursery
- 14 Aug East Midlands Group Visit to 'The Bannut', Bringsty,
Herefordshire
- 10-13 Sept ANNUAL CONFERENCE
- 11 Sept North East Group The Annual Show, Memorial Hall,
Ponteland
- 15 Sept CLOSING DATE FOR BULLETIN
- 25 Sept Southern Group Visit to Wakehurst Place
- 25 Sept South West Group Visit to Furzey Gardens in the
New Forest
- 23 October North East Group Outing to Cragside, Rothbury
- 29 October North East Group AGM - St Matthews Church Hall,
Ponteland

2000

- 25-28 Aug. INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE



A Registered Charity No. 261407

Editor: Daphne Everett, The Bannut, Bringsty, Herefordshire, WR6 5TA.
Telephone/Fax: 01885 482206

Cover illustration *Erica ciliaris* by Brita Johannson

Last winter we demolished an old shed in order to put up a heather-thatched tea room! A bit of a cheat really, as is not genuine Scottish heather, but is almost certainly Erica scoparia. It arrives in this country in long strips, bound together with wire, rather like carpet runners and its main use is for screens, but it makes quite a convincing thatch (as first seen by us on 'Groundforce'). However, the swallows, which for many years had built their nests on top of the fluorescent lights in the old shed, have recently arrived as usual, only to find their home gone. They keep flying into open doorways looking for their nest site - and I am feeling very, very guilty.

29th Annual Conference of The Heather Society, 10 - 13th September 1999 St. Michael's Hotel, Falmouth, Cornwall

Full details of the Conference were included in the Spring *Bulletin*. If however you have not yet booked and would like a copy of these details, please telephone Phil Joyner on 01703 864336 as soon as possible. Otherwise, bookings may be made by sending £2 (per mailing) to Phil at the address below. **Please note - the visit to the Tresco Abbey Gardens on the island of Tresco in the Isles of Scilly, arranged for the Thursday prior to the Conference weekend, is now fully booked.**

Cheques should be made payable to *The Heather Society*, the booking fee is non-returnable and not a deposit on the cost of the Conference. Would couples please indicate whether a twin or a double room is preferred. If all of the available accommodation is booked then further bookings will be considered as day visitors and those persons will be asked to arrange their own bed and breakfast accommodation. Please note that the latest date for full payment for those members already booked is the **17th July, 1999**. Those members making a booking as a result of this *Bulletin* article should only send the booking fee and then you will be advised of the full amount depending on the accommodation available. Members are reminded that payment by VISA or MASTERCARD credit cards is acceptable.

Please send payment to : Phil Joyner, 84 Kinross Road, Rushington

Manor, Totton, Southampton SO40 9BN

Details of accommodation may be obtained by phoning the Cornwall Tourist Board on 01872 274057 or by writing to: Cornwall Tourist Board, Daniell Road Centre, Lander Building, Daniell Road, Truro TR1 2DA

Proposed programme for Conference 2000, Elmshorn, Germany from 25 August to 29 August 2000

Base: Hotel Royal, Lönsweg 5, 25335 Elmshorn.

Friday 25 August	until 16:00	Arrival of participants
	18:30	Welcome Party
Saturday 26 August	08:30	Depart from hotel
		Visit to private gardens and a visit to Heidepark, Heidberg.
		Lunch
		Visits to specialist nurseries
	18:30	Return to hotel
	19:30	Dinner
Sunday 27 August	09:00	Open Conference then Talk 1*
	09:45	Talk 2*
	10:30	Coffee Break
	11:00	Talk 3*
	11:45 - 12:30	Talk 4*
		* These talks will be in English although there may be parallel talks in German.
	13:00	Lunch
	14:45	Visit to the Arboretum Ellerhoop
	17:00	Return to hotel
	18:30	Dinner
Monday 28 August	08:15	Depart from hotel
	09:30	Visit to a porcelain factory
	11:00	Visit to the Westermann heather nursery
	12:30	Lunch
	13:30	Visit to the heather garden at Schneverdingen
	14:30	Walk on Schneverdingen Heath
	about 16:00	Return to Elmshorn
	about 17:00	Arrive at hotel
	from 18:30	Farewell Party
Tuesday 29 August	until 10:00	Departure of participants

The following are approximate prices assuming 100 participants

Double room per person 741Dm (approx. £250)

Single room per person 781Dm (approx. £270)

This includes:

4 bed and breakfast in the hotel; 4 dinners (1 x 5 course, 1 x Gala Buffet, 1 x 3 course and 1 x Buffet.); 1 lunch at the hotel; 2 lunches on outings; Coffee and soft drinks during coffee breaks and coach transport.

In addition The Heather Society is planning an excursion by coach.

- August 23 Ferry from Harwich to the Hook of Holland then travel to Gouda, Holland (famous for its cheese).
- August 24 A day visiting Boskoop, famous for its nurseries in a very typical Dutch setting and the Horticultural Research Centre at Boskoop. Return to the hotel at Gouda.
- August 25 Travel to Conference, visiting a German nursery or two en route.
- August 29 Travel to southern Holland visiting a superb private heather garden
- August 30 Return to the UK

As everything is still so vague, I have yet to cost this excursion.

I would appreciate members informing Phil Joyner, our Conference organiser, whether they are interested in going to this Conference. Judging from the 25th anniversary celebrations of the German Heather Society attended by David McClintock, Anne and myself, I know everyone will be given a very friendly welcome even if they cannot speak a word of German.

David Small
Chairman

A Presidential Predicament

Mount Cofano - Friday 16th April 1999 - David McClintock

We had a picnic lunch by the forest of dwarf pines skirting the Golfo di Bonagia and then started ascending, ever so cautiously, over the slippery limestone screes of Mt. Cofano (659 m) 20 km or so north of Trapani on the NW coast of Sicily, to see the area of the type of *Erica sicula*, ssp *sicula*.

We were four at that time: my old friends Patrick and Louise Grattan and an excellent young Sicilian Botanist, Pasta Salvatore. I have scrambled and climbed on many a mountain over the years, without mishap, so I know well how to ensure foot and hand-hold for every step. This time, I was seen to stand up, perhaps to get a better view through binoculars, of our quarry, and then to fall backwards and start bounding apace down a 50 - 60 m scree. How I lost both hand and foothold I cannot guess. I remember rolling uncontrollably faster and faster, but stopped, most fortunately, just short of a much longer scree. My horrified companions hurried down as fast as the screes would allow, to find me, face down, bloody and unconscious, but breathing heavily.

Patrick and Louise stayed with me, not without difficulty on the shifting scree. While Salvatore raced down (we were well up the mountain) to get assistance. The reward for his promptness was to fall and break his wrist (luckily his left one). But on he went until he had roused the police, firemen,

ambulance and a doctor, all equipped with mobile phones.

After an hour or so the bell from the ambulance was heard and more than a dozen men arrived. I was given first aid and some of my tangled and bloody hair cut off. Before lunch we had seen next to no-one, but word got around and my predicament attracted some 200 people.

Luckily I was relaxed and just dimly aware of things, but I had not the slightest idea how I really was or looked like until days later. What I constantly felt was cold, so I kept calling "freddo". The response was to wrap me in swathes of tin-foil, silver on one side, gold on the other, but I still felt cold until I got right into the hospital, presumably an effect of shock. I also remember clutching instinctively at tufts of grass as I was taken down.

I was lifted and wedged on to the wooden stretcher and firmly strapped down. Since it was high on the mountain it took time for help to arrive and more to bring me down, sometimes sliding over scree, belayed to a rock above. Eventually the ambulance was reached, which drove me to the waiting helicopter to fly me to Palermo. I was then taken on another ambulance, which clanged its way, non-stop through the whole of the City until we reached the Villa Sofia Hospital in the north, where they put forty stitches in my head - painfully! Only much later did I hear that I was taken into intensive care for the first 48 hours, having been given an x-ray and a brain scan; that showed nothing serious and a second scan a week later, no change.

I am told that, for some time after my rescue, I was in trauma, only vaguely, or not at all, aware of what was going on, or in what condition I was. An example of this is that when they took my damaged clothes off (my coat and shirt had to be thrown away, the latter being replaced by Angela with another fine one, which I am still wearing). That meant putting on my pyjamas, which had to be specially fetched from the hotel, but I have no recollection of this being done.

If this had to happen, it could not have been more fortunate in so many ways. It had rained a bit in the morning, so I was wrapped up and insulated from damage, but it was dry in the afternoon. If the day had been warm and I had just a short-sleeved shirt on, and if this had occurred earlier, before seeing the main object of the visit, rather than just after

Despite rolling over and over, nothing fell out of my well-filled pockets, nor was money or anything taken from them by my rescuers. Even the field glasses were intact, the glasses I was wearing, unbroken, and no bones broken - only bruises, contusions and abrasions.

The news got around. On the 18th April, the *Giornale de Sicilia* told of one 'Count MacClintock', aged 87 (who has no camera) falling while taking photographs. Just what they said on TV I shall never know. A reporter and photographer from *Oggi Siciliana* came to my bed and promised me a copy of his photos. However, none came, and there was no mirror in the wards, so I do not know how I looked in those earlier days. When, five days later, I did see myself, I was aghast - huge black eyes, bloody face and scalp, and tangled hair. My hair was not dealt with until some more was cut just as I left hospital, nor could it be washed until later. Word also reached the Mayor, whom I have never met. He sent "David MacClintock" a nice note.

I should perhaps explain that our original introductions were to Dr. Angelo Troia, a botanist at the University (who showed us the heather - on which I am writing a special account for next year) and Princess Stefanie de Raffedali - both helped a lot initially, but had soon to be away. So, he introduced us to Pasta Salvatore, a very good young botanist, and she to Angela Planeta (both spoke good English - she was born in Hertfordshire). Our old friend Lady Anne Glenkinglass was a member of the party, but knew little Italian and could not drive a car there. She could not have taken more trouble, helped by the other two. Later my elder son, Andrew flew out and helped relieve her. My gratitude to everyone, but especially these four, is unbounded - I could not have been better cared for.

P.S. (12 June) After ten days we flew back, my head wrapped up to hide its unsightliness, and a stream of friends came to be with me at home. So, I was kept quiet and, as the result of their help, have made a most remarkable, full (I think) recovery.

I am sure that everyone in the Society will join me in wishing our indomitable President a speedy recovery to full health and fitness. Ed.

Profile of Council Member - Derek Millis

"Where is Creeting St. Mary", I asked? Pam and I were in our caravan on a farm in Suffolk for a weekend break in August 1995. With our customary rush to get going from our home in Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire, I had not opened the morning post until now. Amongst the post were details of the Heather Society sent by the Membership Administrator, Anne Small. Imagine our surprise when we discovered that Anne and David were only a mile away. I made a 'phone call and a meeting was arranged for the Sunday morning.

If we had any doubts about joining the Society these were quickly dispelled as David and Anne made us feel most welcome. David's knowledge and enthusiasm convinced me that heathers were worth growing and that with careful ground preparation the clay and flint soil of Hertfordshire could grow a variety of heathers including the *Callunas* that we liked, he made the subject interesting and understandable. A pleasant two hours were spent with Anne and David and we left as joint members, complete with Society publications, brooch, tie and a large 'Ann Sparkes' as a welcome to the Society gift. This must surely be one of the fastest enrolment of members on record, from "receipt of membership forms" to finished product.



Derek Millis

Born in the centre of London (Royal Free Hospital, Greys Inn Road) on 25 May 1937 my earliest claim to fame must be that I am a true Londoner. The first eighteen months of my life were spent in London (Highbury) until with the onset of war, and my father's promotion to Manager of Potters Bar Bus Garage (London Transport's northern-most outpost), we moved the 12 miles to the northern environs of

London and to the country.

Except for a few interruptions brought about by the war, like the removal of ceilings and windows in our house from bomb blasts and devastation and death in the nearby High Street from a stray V2 rocket, these were very happy times. We were lucky to remain largely unscathed, as many bombs fell around us and visits to relatives in London during this time proved how fortunate we were.

All schooling took place in Potters Bar from primary to secondary level. The secondary school was only the second in the country to go fully comprehensive; this proved a novelty at the time with visits from government officials and educationalists from abroad to our new school to see how we performed as a mixed ability group, pupils with and without the 11 plus qualification. We were given many tests by these people and felt as though we were truly unique and special.

My love of the countryside stems from these formative years in Potters Bar, I cycled (on a very heavy bike by present day standards) many hundreds of miles around the leafy lanes of unspoilt Hertfordshire taking an interest in the area's flora and fauna, I also became a keen lepidopterist. My father's interest in gardening must have rubbed off on me - he set aside an area of the garden for me to grow vegetables and flowers and "dig for victory"! One early recollection of this time was my construction of a rock garden on the site of our disused air-raid shelter, the rocks being reclaimed concrete pieces from its base; not, I suppose, the most interesting of material but I was very proud of my achievement and when the plants grew they covered most blemishes on this "poor Fido is dead" mound.

At senior school I enjoyed distance and cross country running, participating in District Sports events.

In 1953 we moved to Hendon in north west London and, having completed my schooling and wishing to be a draughtsman, I joined a telecommunications company called T S Skillman in nearby Collindale. An Australian company from Sydney, they were trying to establish themselves in this country and I was their first trainee attending Hendon Technical College for 5 years on day release to obtain ONC and HNC qualifications in Mechanical Engineering.

The Company set up a Sales Office atop Harrow-on-the Hill, adjacent to the famous school, and it was here that I met Pam Cargill who came as a secretary in 1957. We were married in 1961 and after a period of nine months in Ealing, West London, we purchased a new house in the area where we now live, Hemel Hempstead.

With the closure of Skillmans in 1958, brought about by many trials and tribulations including industrial sabotage, I was offered a job in their Sydney company. This I declined for personal reasons.

My next job was with an independent design organisation and consultants (BSP later to become Giltspur) in Borehamwood, Hertfordshire, from 1958 until 1986. During this time I served as a draughtsman, section leader and project engineer on a variety of design tasks from aircraft and guided weapons through to printed circuit design and building services. One unique facet of this company was that although it was the largest design organisation of its

kind in Europe, with approximately 700 staff at one time, they never employed women until the Equal Opportunities Act came in. We were the subject of media interest with newspaper articles and TV programmes; all staff, including secretaries, had to be male - a somewhat monastic experience for my colleagues and myself until "close of play" on a working day.

One memorable contract with which I was associated as a Project Engineer was the building and equipping of two new film studios that were built in Borehamwood, one of which was the largest of its kind in Europe and was used for the famous Star Wars trilogy films. We were also involved in the design of full scale working spaceship models for these films. Being on site daily gave me an insight into a completely different working environment with the film stars and exotic scenery.

Our two daughters were born in 1964 and 1967 and, both on the domestic and work front, life was very settled; our small garden kept us busy along with bringing up the family. The highlight of our back garden was the rockery, fountain and fish pond which we built with a magnificent weeping maple (*Acer palmatum dissectum atropurpureum*) providing the finishing touch. I had a keen interest in rose growing, joining the *National Rose Society* whose trial grounds are near to where we live. I planted briar stock (bought and also obtained from local hedgerows) for the grafting of several hundred rose bushes and trees, these soon filled up the front and rear gardens and limited my horticultural experiences until I purchased at Chelsea a nine-sided conical greenhouse. This enabled me to start a collection of about 200 cacti and succulents. Pam and I joined the *British Cactus and Succulent Society* whose local branch had monthly meetings and I served for a period on the Branch Committee. Although fascinated by the flowers and geometric form of these plants my small greenhouse curtailed the size of my collection so I began to seek new gardening interests. By this time many roses had their environment and with a small greenhouse with a large influx of mealy bugs I decided that I needed to look around for pastures new.

On the work front Giltspur sent me to Airship Industries in Baker Street, London, in 1984 for a period of one month to help them complete the airworthiness documentation associated with their first ever sale of an airship, this was to Japan. It proved to be a milestone in my career as after working for Giltspur for 26 years I never returned and have now been employed by Airship companies for the last 15 years. During this time I have been proud to have been associated with the new generation of airships and the first ever certification of an airship in Britain for the carriage of fare-paying passengers, not even the famous R100 and R101 airships achieved this distinction.

The Company became the largest airship company in the world. Airships were built and operated world-wide until 1990, regular passenger flights were flown over many cities, including London, New York, Tokyo and Sydney. In 1990 the Company went into liquidation due to the downfall of its owner, the Australian entrepreneur Alan Bond. I was lucky to be one of those who were re-employed by the Westinghouse Company of America who bought part of the previous airship business, this was an American Navy contract for the

design and build of a giant airship which would be fitted with the latest radar technology and would act as the "eyes and ears of the US fleet", capable of flying non-stop for 30 days it would be fitted out with lounge, cabins, showers and fitness equipment. Having completed the design this contract was shelved in 1995 due to the easing of world tension.

Westinghouse sold the Company in 1996 and we re-grouped as Airship Technologies, a totally British organisation with most of the original design team of which as Configuration Manager I form part. Our Design Office is on the top floor of Bedford Town Hall with a panoramic view of the town, the River Ouse below and our new production facility nearby in part of the original R100 hangar at Cardington. We are designing a new generation of multi-role airships, suitable for civilian and military use, and hope within the next few years to have a 50 seat airship again flying regular passenger flights over London.

Bedford has long been associated with airships; the Royal Airship Works at Cardington was established in 1920 and the two large hangars that housed the famous airships (R100 and R101) are two of the largest buildings in Britain and are Grade II listed - they are certainly landmarks which can be seen from many miles away and especially from the main railway line into St. Pancras. It is intended that the National Airship Museum will be housed here in the future. Little did I think, when as a small boy taken by my parents to view the graves of the Zeppelin crews shot down at Potters Bar and the adjoining village of Cuffley, that I would be associated with these giants of the sky in later life (5 Zeppelins were shot down over Britain, 2 of these fell in this area within a month, one almost obliterated Potters Bar High Street).

A move to another house in 1992, only $1/2$ mile away from where we had lived for 31 years, gave us a larger garden with more potential although it required a lot of hard work. From 1992 to 1995 time was taken up with building a new terrace and a large pond, waterfall and rockery. With this completed I realised that new flower beds needed to be cut and trees removed or pruned. What should I grow? Our local nursery, Ayletts, had a superb selection of heathers and the colour and form of the young plants caught my eye. Having previously steered clear of planting heathers, due to their straggly, overgrown appearance in neighbours' gardens, I decided to give them a try. 30 plants were carefully selected for foliage, form and colour. Having got them home I realised that some of the plants were unsuitable for our soil conditions, this I quickly rectified by exchanging the *Callunas* for more *Erica carnea* which were lovingly planted near the rockery and pond.

Needing to know more about the subject of heathers and while visiting the RHS gardens at Wisley, I purchased a copy of the Society's *Handy Guide to Heathers*. This was to prove the start of my interest, as heathers were more varied than I had imagined and on seeing the Society's address in the guide I decided to drop them a line. This also coincided with the initial small *E. carnea* planting looking extremely attractive and I wanted more plants for the new beds. Having joined the Society as described earlier, I was pleased to receive within one week two letters of welcome - one from the Southern Group

Chairman at that time (Allen Hall) and the other from Arnold Stow. This I thought was excellent and duly responded by 'phoning them to find out more about the Society's local activities. As Zone 10 does not have its own group we have attended the Southern Group's activities as often as we can, sometimes driving considerable distances to attend their events, and now that Allen Hall has formed the Midlands Group we will travel north to attend their meetings whenever possible at Nottingham University's Agricultural Faculty in the village of Sutton Bonington - an area where Pam spent her childhood and where relations still live.

Having been told how good the annual conferences were, Pam and I decided to attend the 1996 conference at Dillington House, Somerset. This was a totally new experience for us and we thoroughly enjoyed it. Our enjoyment was largely due to the friendliness of members and the varied nature of the programme which included interesting trips to areas of outstanding beauty. Since then we have attended the conferences in Penrith and Norwich and look forward to meeting up with members again at future conferences.

As most members know only too well, once started the proliferation of new heather beds is hard to stop - especially as new plants are continually being introduced or propagated. The current project of turning the front garden over to heathers and dwarf conifers is nearing completion. David Small's propagation workshops held at his nursery (ref. Spring 1997 Bulletin "Heathers are Dangerous") and the Penrith Conference enabled us to propagate about 700 plants of which nearly 200 have gone into the new front garden beds. New heather beds have been planned and prepared over a period of three years; the soil pH has been lowered from 7.1 to 5.4, a fact born out by Jean Julian's excellent soil analysis service undertaken on behalf of the Society. I now grow a variety of heathers including *Calluna vulgaris*, *Erica cinerea*, *E. mackaiana* and *E. tetralix* as well as those that are lime tolerant. With the addition of a greenhouse and the use of containers I have started a collection of Cape Heaths. More heather beds are planned for the rear garden although I have been asked by the family to leave some grass areas.

Outside of heathers my other interests have been associated with the Rotary Club, of which I was a member for 11 years, and with sport. Since 1992 I have taken an interest in what I consider to be one of the most demanding sports of all, Rugby League. After years of being played in the north of England the game is becoming more established in the south of the country and at professional level it is now a summer sport. Pam and I are founder members of London's only Super League side, the London Broncos, and we attend all the home games - this entails a round trip of 70 miles to the Harlequins Rugby Union ground at Twickenham. The two codes of Rugby Union and Rugby League sharing facilities and actually talking to each other is something which would have been totally unheard of in the past 100 years. In addition to this I have become a Director of Hemel Hempstead Stags professional Rugby League Club, and with the building of new facilities we hope to be admitted to the National Second Division in the future.

As the new boy in the Society I felt honoured to be asked to join the Council

in 1997 after only 2 years' membership and still learning about the subject. I believe that with the friendliness of members I have met to date, the hard work put in by Society officials coupled with the professionalism of the Society as a whole, the future should be bright and I hope I can help towards this in some way.

Williams' Heath **David Wilson - British Columbia**

Erica x williamsii is a rare hybrid between *Erica vagans* and *Erica tetralix* that has been found only 11 times in 140 years, all in the Lizard Peninsula of Cornwall, England. The name commemorates Mr. P D Williams, the first to find the plant and to record its parentage. This plant was given the cultivar name 'P D Williams'.

The second *E x williamsii* was found before 1920 by Miss Gertrude Waterer, a gardener with a keen eye and interest in her native heaths. She lived surrounded by her wild garden in Cornwall. Here her favourite heathers became overshadowed by tree heaths, rhododendrons and other shrubs. The cottage where she lived was off the main road and not easy to find; even from the gate it was hidden by trees and shrubs. Here she stayed until 1974 without electricity or running water. It is said "she conceded nothing to fashion and was usually dressed in heavy brown material of a very pleasant shade, heavy tweed in winter, heavy cotton in summer, with a brown wool cap or straw hat. Her face was brown too, so she was 'of a piece' with her garden." It is fitting that this collector of unusual forms of heather found this *Erica*, which was given the name 'Gwavas', after a farm she visited near Goonhilly Downs.

Both cultivars have similar lilac-pink flower colour, with 'P D Williams' being slightly darker and having a tighter, more upright growth habit. The flower arrangement is reminiscent of *E. vagans*. Being sterile (as most hybrids are) they offer the advantage of a long flowering season - from July to November. Colourful yellow-gold new growth in spring is also a benefit of this match.

Like most heathers they enjoy a well drained sandy loam, with the addition of organic matter like peatmoss or leafmould when planting and a mulch of bark chips or similar material. To enjoy the colourful new growth of spring and early summer, trim the plants lightly when growth begins in early spring. Removing more than an inch or so may reduce flowering. The plants are said to perform better in the garden than in the wild and have done well in trials during the severe winters at Harlow Carr Gardens in Northern England.

Heather history has been enriched by the use of wonderful place-names from the Lizard area: Kynance, Mullion, Mousehole and now *E x williamsii* 'Cow-y-Jack', found in 1983 and named after a village on the Lizard. This plant has the most brilliant yellow tips in spring of any *E x williamsii*.

I have not explored the Goonhilly Downs, looked near Gew Graze, or strolled down the lane to Bochym in search of *E x williamsii*, but I do feel a

connection with the heather plant hunters of the early part of this century. They were able to combine recreation and a need to find and introduce new and distinct forms of heather to the trade. The parents of this hybrid, *Erica vagans* and *Erica tetralix*, flower in the wild mostly in tones of pale pink or mauve-lavender. I believed that crossing cultivars of superior flower colour might result in hybrids of improved colour.

In 1984 I began pollinating *E. tetralix* cultivars with two of the best *E. vagans* cultivars, 'Mrs. D F Maxwell' and 'Lyonesse'. From the seed produced I was able to germinate about 700 seedlings, and two years later these began flowering. Most produced flowers of poor colour and were discarded immediately. Some with a more magenta-pink colour and what I believed to be the first white form were grown on in pots but did not always get the best of care. The poor things were constantly shuffled around the nursery.

Eventually a corner of a stock bed was planted with a few promising seedlings. In true *E. x williamsii* fashion they grew well with little attention and would peek out from their hidden corner as if they were trying to be rediscovered. Cuttings were sent to David Small of *Denbeigh Heathers* in England with the request that the best one be named Ken Wilson to commemorate my father's efforts to bring together heather enthusiasts in 1977. The resulting cultivar 'Ken Wilson' was introduced in 1992.

Similar attempts at hybridizing were made by Dr. John Griffiths of Leeds University in England. He very cleverly used the golden form of *Erica vagans* 'Valerie Proudley' resulting in a neat, compact gold *E. x williamsii* with pink flowers, named 'Gold Button'.

When we started collecting heathers for the nursery in the early 1970s 'P D Williams' and 'Gwavas' were among the first to arrive and be propagated. They are utilized for their spring foliage effect. The young plants in 4" pots are trimmed and the resulting flush of colourful new growth makes them attractive for spring sales.

Over the years at our nursery a number of cultivars of other species have been lost to production for one reason or another, but *Erica x williamsii* varieties are trusted survivors that have always been with us. I feel this may be the true nature of the plant: even if it faces difficult odds, it will make a solid effort to succeed.

The 1999 Conference of *The Heather Society* will be held in Cornwall, with the theme being 'The Heathers of the Lizard'. A field trip is planned, to follow in the steps of early plant hunters and perhaps even find a new clone of this most rare of heaths. There are people in *The Heather Society* that have a wealth of direct knowledge of the *E. x williamsii* of the Lizard Peninsula, as well as other heathers, related plants and wildlife to be found there. Perhaps it will be attended by Dr. David Coombe who has the distinction of finding this hybrid twice. One of these bears his name. The cultivar 'David Coombe' is an excellent plant with flowers that open shell pink and fade to more lavender tones. The foliage is rich green but shows a creamy gold variegation to the tips throughout the year. New growth is yellow and the plant has a bushy, upright habit. The original plant, found in 1977 between Bochym and Goonhilly was destroyed by fire but cuttings had been taken and three years later it was

replanted on site. Now that is survival!

With acknowledgements to the Northeast Heather Society of America, from whose January 1999 Newsletter, 'Heather Notes', the above item has been adapted.

Letters to the Editor

Your request for information on 'heather and a quarter, (Spring Bulletin - P8, Vol. 5, No 16) reminds me of something I overheard in busy Regent Street, London.

Following two American guys, they were approached by a Gypsy offering (lucky) white heather. Declining the offer, one turned to the other and asked "What's with the weed?" "Don't know" replied the other!

Doesn't sound like an American tradition!

Michael Warren

Our faithful member, Eileen Petterssen, and her husband, Anton, recently celebrated their Golden Wedding with a visit to Portugal. As they were leaving the airport at Lisbon, she noticed a 100 \$ (E 0.50) stamp, with an excellent depiction of *Daboecia azorica*, from the National Park of Mt. Pico on the Azores. Is there any other stamp with a *Daboecia* on it?

Eileen added that the Heather Garden at Bergen was opened in June!

David McClintock

Book Reviews

Ireland, by David Cabot. New Naturalist No 84. Harper Collins 1999. £17.99 and £34.99.

This magnificent account, 512 pages long, makes fascinating and informative reading. The heathers are given their due place and are most impeccably dealt with. The only statement that needs correction is claiming *Erica x watsonii* (though not named as such) as coming from Connemara - that is based on a mislabelled plant in the nursery at Glasnevin. I am not the only person who has searched diligently at Craiggamore for this hybrid, with never a sign of it the sterility of the *Erica ciliaris* there no doubt precluding it. The main accounts of the special heathers are good but could have been fuller - useful papers by Charles Nelson and others unlisted and no mention of *E. terminalis*. However, these are tiny holes in a masterly survey, well worth seeing, even for the heathers.

David McClintock.

*When David sent me this review earlier this year, he enclosed a note telling me he was shortly off to Sicily to see *Erica sicula* in the wild. Little did we know what a dramatic trip it would prove to be. (Ed)*

The Pocket Good Gardens Guide 1999, edited by Peter King £7.99.

The *Good Gardens Guide* has been our constant companion for many years. It is an invaluable book if you like to spend your holidays garden visiting as we do.

The book is arranged by counties and the gardens within the counties are listed alphabetically, with Ireland, Scotland and Wales being listed separately. Each garden is described in some detail, and the best (in the opinion of the inspectors and the editorial team) are given a two star rating, while others, which are considered of high quality, are given a single star. All the entries in the book are pinpointed on a county road-map to assist in planning an itinerary.

Over the years, with the help of the *Good Gardens Guide*, we have found some real garden gems in various parts of England, as well as in Scotland and Ireland. We have not always agreed with the star ratings given, but, wondering who the idiot was that gave **that** particular garden two stars, while the one we fell in love with did not even get one, all adds to the interest. Now, having a pocket sized version of this most useful little book will even make travelling a little lighter. DE.

Obituaries**Ronald Eustace Hardwick, Newick, East Sussex,
Died 23rd February 1999.**

Ronald Hardwick trained at Wisley and, in 1929, went to work for the late Lionel Cox at *Chez Nous* Nurseries at Newick, eventually becoming Manager. On the retirement of Lionel Cox he bought the nurseries and from then on he specialised in heathers and shrubs, as well as developing his fruit garden; his strawberries and gooseberries won him many awards at the County shows. He was active in his local community, being at various times: Head ARP Warden, Special Constable, Parish Councillor, and, for many years, Chairman of the local branch of the NFU. In 1981 he visited New Zealand and met up with his old friend and colleague, John Letts, for whom, back in the 1960's, he had grown many thousands of heathers. For more details on the life of Ronald Hardwick, see page 22 of the 1986 *Year Book*

Peter Davis, Haslemere, Surrey

Peter Davis was one of the first, if not the first, specialist heather nurseryman. He joined the Society in 1958, enrolled by Constance McLeod, and was frequently in touch with 'Papa' Horace Hale, who planted one of the first all-heather gardens nearby. Peter gave a delightful talk to members at the 1975 Heather Society Conference. He named two heathers after his sons - *Erica cinerea* Stephen Davis and *Calluna vulgaris* Anthony Davis.

Peter's great hobby was birds and he was BTO's bird ringer for this district

for several decades. He kept a detailed record of Stonechats and Nightjars breeding in the area and often contributed to 'Bird Study' magazine. In 1982 he published 'Nightingales in Britain' following the nationwide survey of 1980.

Peter Davis died in April 1999 after a short illness.

Pamela B Lee

Second Hand Heather Books for Sale

<i>Hardy Heathers</i> by A T Johnson. Published 1959	£5.00 plus 50p postage.
<i>Heaths and Heathers</i> by Terry Underhill	£5.00 plus £1.20p postage.
<i>Heathers in Colour</i> by Brian & Valerie Proudley	£3.00 plus 50p postage.
<i>Hardy Heaths & the Heather Garden</i> by John F Letts	£3.00 plus 50p postage.

Please contact Peter Vickers, 139 Swinston Hill Road, Dinnington, Sheffield S25 2RY. Telephone: 01909 565510.

Group News

North East

Our annual outing to Traquair House, near Peebles, on May 8th was a great success. It was a dull start to the day but the sun shone all afternoon which made it very pleasant for walking in the grounds. Traquair does not have any formal gardens, as is usual for large houses, but they do have a delightful woodland walk, a maze and many peacocks, which were all displaying.

On July 21st we will be visiting fellow members Bill and Margaret Crow's Nursery at Scots Gap, meeting there at 7.30 pm.

The Annual Show will be held in the Memorial Hall, Ponteland, on Saturday, September 11th, 1999, and staging will be from 9.00 - 11 am, when judging will commence. The show will be open to the public from 1.00 - 4 pm, after which time all exhibits are to be removed. Schedules will be sent nearer the time.

If you remember, we had to abandon our visit to Craggside last year because of the rain, but we thought it was well trying again as it is so beautiful at that time of the year. So, on Saturday, October 23rd we will meet in the car park at Craggside, Rothbury and hope to see the autumn colours. Weather permitting, bring a picnic or, if you wish, use their facilities.

Our final meeting for the year will be the AGM at St. Matthew's Church Hall, Ponteland, at 7.30 pm. there will be the usual Faith Supper.

Looking forward to seeing you all at these events.

Dorothy Warner

Yorkshire

The Yorkshire heather group were privileged to hear an illustrated talk by chairman, David Small, on South African Cape heaths, in the Northern Horticultural Society's Study Centre at Harlow Carr on Saturday, 14th March 1999. He introduced his programme with a short photographic tour of the European countries where around 20 species are to be found. South African Erica species number 650 or so and are distributed over the South

Western and Southern corner of South Africa. David's talk was a tour de force of the Cape heath growing areas and their outstandingly beautiful flowers. He also covered many aspects of growing plants in gardens and cold houses in the northern hemisphere and displayed a few plants in pots of which, unfortunately, because of the season, only one had flowers. Cape heaths are experiencing an upsurge in popularity as florist's pot plants and more varieties are likely to be seen in garden centres in the near future. The twenty members and visitors present wished him good luck in his forthcoming trip to explore the Cape heath habitats, in South Africa.

Arrangements for our next meeting have been confirmed. We are to meet in the lane outside Mrs. Foster's home at Sleightholme Dale Lodge near Kirkbymoorside at 2 pm on Saturday, 10th July. There will be an entrance fee of £2.00 to the garden.

This winter's abnormally heavy rains have prevented work on land drains on the *Calluna* collection plot at Harlow Carr. However it has been possible to prepare a few of the drier upper beds for mulching in the next few days. The *E. carnea* collection has provided a lovely winter spectacle and has been greatly admired by visitors. Unfortunately this year's display will be its swan song as it is to be replaced in the autumn by new herbaceous borders. The *E.x darleyensis* bed promises to be equally spectacular.

Jean Julian

East Midlands and Calling West Midlands Members!

Our summer meeting is a visit to the exciting 2.5 acre garden of Daphne and Maurice Everett at The Bannut, Bringsty, Herefordshire. 11,000 heathers have been planted on the site and we have scheduled our visit for Saturday 14th August 1999 when many of the plants should be in flower.

Daphne and Maurice suggest that since members may have a long way to travel they might like to arrive at around 1.15 pm with a picnic lunch. They will provide drinks at lunchtime and have kindly said that they will provide tea at the end of the visit. They have also generously said that the usual admittance charge will be waived for members of our party. The garden visit will begin at 2 pm

As always, members of other Groups will be welcome to join us at this meeting and a special invitation is given to members of the West Midlands Group.

I am happy to say that I have already had a good response to the advertisement in the Spring *Bulletin* for this event. There is still plenty of scope for other members to join the party. It would be helpful if you would let me know if you intend to participate, if you have not already done so.

If you would like a sketch map of the location of the venue please send me a stamped addressed envelope – my address is on the inside-back page.

I much regret that I had to cancel the spring meeting of the Group because so few members said they would attend. I had hoped that a date in May would have been more convenient for members than a summer one but this evidently is not so. I would appreciate comments from members on what times of the year they would like to have meetings.

Mr. Arnold Stow is still willing to present his talk "Heather, Plants and People", if members would like it. He has helpfully pointed out that some Groups find March to be a good month for indoor meetings. I am happy to go along with this but before I make arrangements, I would like some indication from Members of the Group that they would be interested in attending. Do write or send me an e-mail.

Allen Hall

West Midlands

Maurice & I would like to echo Allen Hall's words and to invite any members of the Society who can manage it, to our garden on 14th August - with an **especial** welcome to West Midland members, old or new.

Allen always paints a glowing picture of our garden, however, to save any disappointment on the day, we would like to make it clear that, although the garden covers 2¹/₂ acres, only around ¹/₂ acre is actually laid down to heathers. However, the other heatherless two acres should be looking quite good at that time, so there should be plenty to see.

If you are planning to come, please let Allen know in advance so that we can arrange the catering for afternoon tea. We look forward very much to seeing you on the day.

Daphne Everett

Southern

We were pleased to welcome fifteen members of the Society to our home and heather garden in Dorking on 27th March. We were blessed with perfect weather. Over tea it was decided that the venue for our autumn meeting, on **25th September**, would be held at Wakehurst Place, which is owned by the National Trust and has been run by the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, since 1965. It is reached on the B2028, between Ardingly and Turners Hill. Entrance costs £5 or £3.50 for Senior Citizens. Members of the National Trust can, of course, get in free.

Wakehurst Place lies in an area of outstanding beauty on the Sussex High Weald. Within the main garden, in the area surrounding the Tudor mansion, built in 1590, the emphasis in recent years has been to arrange plants geographically, combining the scientific and educational functions of the collection, with the beauty of the historic estate. Here, for example, are the new Asian Heath Garden (no heathers) and the Southern Hemisphere Garden.

If we follow normal practice, as with the visit to Savill Gardens last year, we would meet outside in the car park, visit the heather garden, have lunch and take a walk afterwards. But the heather garden is not large and the lunch facilities are modest. I propose therefore, that we meet at a public house - the Farmers Arms, between Ardingly and Wakehurst Place on the 2028, at 12 noon. We can have a drink and lunch there and then proceed to Wakehurst Place. We could meet up with those who chose differently in the car park at 1.30 pm.

Would those coming please let me know by 24th September.

I have booked Wisley for **4th March 2000**.

David Sprague

South West

Please find below the report of the first two meetings of the year held in Somerset and Dorset respectively.

Diane Jones invited members to meet in the garden of Otters' Court from lunch-time onwards on Saturday 6th March and although a cold north wind was blowing we were sheltered in the garden and warmed by the sunshine. Diane together with her late husband Bert have over many years created a garden on alkaline soil and consequently specialised in the lime tolerant heaths. The display on that afternoon was marvellous with plenty of colour being provided by *Erica carnea*, *E. x darleyensis* and *E. erigena*. The new hybrids between *E. carnea* and *E. arborea* were also much in evidence and showed what a super display that they could make. Also of interest was a fine display of *Cyclamen coum*, a collection of *Hellebores* and many other plant items. I was very pleased with the attendance at the meeting with several members from the Southern Group joining in. As always, Diane provided us with warm hospitality and, not only did she produce drinks with our picnic lunches, she gave us refreshment later in the afternoon. Diane has my thanks and the thanks of the members who attended for providing us with an appropriate setting for an excellent meeting.

On Saturday 20th March, South West Group members met at the Lytchett Matravers Village Hall in Dorset for a lecture and Table Show meeting. Although the morning had been bright, the weather had started to cloud over as the members gathered, but the view from the Village Hall across Poole Harbour and the Isle of Purbeck was still breathtaking. I was pleased to have many of our regular members present and also a couple of members who came along to one of our meetings for the first time. The speaker for the afternoon was myself and I was able to give the talk with slides that I give to local horticultural societies and whilst a lot of the content was familiar to the members I hope that there were one or two items that were of fresh interest. After my talk and several questions the members enjoyed the social part of the afternoon taking refreshment and chatting on our favourite topic. The Table Show was then judged and the results were as follows:

- Class 1 A vase or bowl of Heathers in bloom
1st, Anne Pringle; 2nd, Maureen Clark; 3rd, Jennifer Turrell
- Class 2 A vase or bowl of Heathers shown for foliage effect
1st, Anne Pringle; 2nd, Phil Joyner; 3rd, Maureen Clarke

Anne Pringle was the winner of the Burfitt Bowl for the most points overall but prizes were presented to the members placed in the competition. My thanks goes to my wife Lin and several of the members for their work in the kitchen. Thanks are also due to Jean Henvest for judging the Table Show.

The third meeting of the year at the garden of Little Barn in the New Forest will be held during the time of the preparation of this *Bulletin* and will be reported on in the Autumn *Bulletin*.

Meetings for the Remainder of the Year

Visit to **Saturday 17th July** - Visit to the garden of Domineys Yard in the village of Buckland Newton in Dorset. This garden is owned by Mr. and Mrs. Gueterbock and is open under the National Gardens Scheme (Yellow Book) but on this day at 2.00 pm we have a private viewing. The garden is described as a garden for all seasons and contains many unusual plants, shrubs and trees covering an area of 2 acres. There will be an entry fee of £2 per person with an additional £1 for a cup of tea and a piece of cake. All proceeds will go to charity and if the weather is suitable we have been kindly invited to use the swimming pool. Buckland Newton is on the B3143 which runs north from the A35 just east of Dorchester to the A3030 to the west of Sturminster Newton. The garden is reached by turning west at the school and following the road to the *Gaggle of Geese* pub. The entrance is 200 yards on the left along the "no through road" just past the pub. Parking will be in the paddock which will be open from 12.00 noon and may be used for picnics.

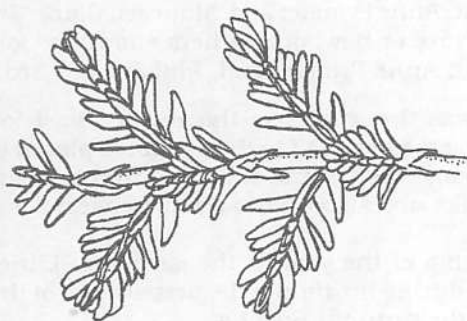
25th September - Meet at the Furzey Gardens at Minstead in the New Forest at 2.00 pm. This is a garden (also described in the Yellow Book) which is open every day of the year to the public. The garden is described as an informal shrub garden with an extent of 8 acres. Although there are collections of Azaleas and Rhododendrons there are also summer flowering shrubs and Heathers. The entrance fee is £3 and refreshments are available at extra cost. Minstead is situated west of the A337 Cadnam to Lyndhurst road and can be reached by turning off of that road or by turning south off of the west bound carriageway of the A31 at the top of Malwood Hill. The garden is adequately signposted.

Dates for your Diary:

Saturday 25th March 2000 - Annual indoor meeting at 2.00 p.m. at the Lytchett Matravers Village Hall. A talk will be arranged. - more details in the *Autumn Bulletin*.

Further information on the meetings described above can be obtained by sending me a S.A.E. as soon as possible and if you intend to come to a meeting then I would be grateful if you could let me know about 10 days before the meeting (Tel: 01703 864336). Once again I am grateful to those people who make the visits possible and I look forward to seeing you at one or more of the above meetings.

Phil Joyner



USEFUL ADDRESSES

Society's Website: <http://www.users.zetnet.co.uk/heather>

- Chairman** *Policy matters, major events etc.*
Mr. D.J. Small, Denbeigh, All Saints Road, Creeting St. Mary, Ipswich,
Suffolk, IP6 8PJ. *e-mail:* heathers@zetnet.co.uk
Tel: (01449) 711220 *FAX:* (01449) 711220
- Secretary** *Council matters*
Mr. R. Cleeveley, High Croft, Gunswell Lane, South Molton, Devon
EX36 4DH. *e-mail:* sec-hsoc@eclipse.co.uk
Tel: (01769) 573833
- Treasurer** Mr. A. Hall, 10, Upper Green, Nanpantan, Loughborough, Leicestershire
LE11 3SG. *Tel:* (01509) 238923
- Registrar** *Naming of heathers*
Mrs. J. Julian, "Matchams", Main Street, Askham Richard, York, YO23 3PT.
Tel: (01904) 707316
- Slide Librarian** *Hire of slides*
Mrs. J. Julian, "Matchams", Main Street, Askham Richard, York, YO23 3PT.
Tel: (01904) 707316
- Yearbook Editor** *Articles for the Yearbook*
Dr. E.C. Nelson, Tippitwiche Cottage, Hall Road, Outwell, Wisbech
PE14 8PE. *Tel:* (01945) 773057 *FAX:* (01945) 774077
- Bulletin Editor** *Notes, articles for the Bulletin*
Mrs. D. Everett, The Bannut, Bringsty, Herefordshire, 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.*
Mrs. A. Small, Denbeigh, All Saints Road, Creeting St. Mary, Ipswich,
Suffolk, IP6 8PJ. *e-mail:* heathers@zetnet.co.uk
Tel: (01449) 711220 *FAX:* (01449) 711220
- Technical Committee** *Any queries regarding culture of heathers*
Mr. D.J. Small, Denbeigh, All Saints Road, Creeting St. Mary, Ipswich,
Suffolk, IP6 8PJ. *e-mail:* heathers@zetnet.co.uk
Tel: (01449) 711220 *FAX:* (01449) 711220
- Steering Committee** *Suggestions for improving the Society, publications, etc.*
Mr. D.J. Small, Denbeigh, All Saints Road, Creeting St. Mary, Ipswich,
Suffolk, IP6 8PJ. *e-mail:* heathers@zetnet.co.uk
Tel: (01449) 711220 *FAX:* (01449) 711220
- Group Organisers** *(Remember, you will be very welcome at any local meeting or visit!)*
- East Midlands** Allen Hall, 10, Upper Green, Nanpantan, Loughborough, Leics.
LE11 3SG. *Tel:* 01509 238923
- North East** Mrs. D. M. Warner, Littlecroft, Click-em-in, Ponteland, Newcastle-upon-
Tyne, NE20 9BQ. *Tel:* (01661) 823299
- Southern** Mr. D. Sprague, Steps, 5, Deepdene Drive, Dorking, Surrey. RH5 4AD.
Tel: (01306) 886356
- South West** Mr. P.L. Joyner, 84 Kinross Road, Rushington, Totton, Southampton,
Hampshire, SO4 4BN. *Tel:* (01703) 864336
- Yorkshire** Dr. J. Griffiths, 9, Ashlea Close, Leeds, West Yorkshire. LS25 1JX.
Tel: (01132) 863349