

# *Bulletin of The Heather Society*



NB

Advertisement pages at end  
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*Vol. 7 No. 1*

*Summer 2007*

## DIARY OF EVENTS

### 2007

17 March	Yorkshire	Talk at Field Centre, Harlow Carr
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8 August	Yorkshire	Walk over Strensall Common.
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18 August	East Midlands	Visit to The Bannut.
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<b>7-10 September</b>	<b>CONFERENCE</b>	<b>SOUTH WALES</b>
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8 September	North East	Annual Show in the Memorial Hall
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<b>15 September</b>	<b>CLOSING DATE FOR</b>	<b>AUTUMN BULLETIN</b>
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22 September	Yorkshire	Talk - Study Centre, Harlow Carr.
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22 September	Home Counties	Meeting at RHS Garden, Wisley,.
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29 September	South West	Visit to Heale Gardens
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A Registered Charity No. 261407

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Cover illustration *Erica ciliaris* by Brita Johansson

*It is hard to believe that it is eight years since the East Midland Group last visited The Bannut. It was a very young heather garden at that time, as it wasn't planted until after we closed the heather nursery in 1997. Maurice and I would like to echo Allen's invitation to members from other groups and we would especially like to welcome any members (new or old) from the West Midlands (Zone 5). Contact Allen for directions or phone us on 01885 482206.*

## Conference 2007

### Susie Kay

**The Date** 7, 8, 9 September and leaving after breakfast on 10 September.

**The Location** Hotel Mariners, Haverfordwest, Pembrokeshire, Wales.  
Pembrokeshire is the south-west corner of Wales and is dominated by the rugged coastline, which is undeveloped and of outstanding natural beauty. Our hotel is in the heart of Haverfordwest and a warm welcome will await you in this small family hotel.

**The Price** £220 sharing, £250 single

**The Programme** As usual we shall start with registration at 4.00 p.m. on the Friday, at the hotel.

After dinner Matt Sutton, Senior Conservation Officer (Pembrokeshire) will talk to us about the Marloes Coast Project. This is another example of work being carried out to restore natural heathland. Of course the Society is always keen to hear about such projects.

**Saturday:** In the morning Matt will take us to Marloes to see the work that is being done to preserve this heathland.

We travel by coach to Picton Castle for a light lunch and a tour of the castle and gardens. The castle is still inhabited by the Phillips family who have been keepers, since the 15<sup>th</sup> century. We are lucky in choosing this weekend as Picton Castle will holding a rare plant fair, which gives an opportunity for browsing after the tour of the castle and gardens.

On Saturday night there will be a chance to see what happened on the Field Trip to Northern Spain.

**Sunday:** The day will start with the A.G.M. This is an opportunity for members to take part in the affairs of the Society. A welcome cup of coffee and then we shall travel to the National Botanic Garden of Wales. The garden has been established since the Millennium and has so many interesting features, that we hope there we will be enough time to see everything. Whatever your interest there is something that will attract you in these gardens.

Sunday evening will see the return of the "Open Forum", an occasion to discuss any aspect of heather culture that you would like "an expert" to give help with. There will be a slightly different format; any member who wishes to share aspects of their garden is invited to bring 10 slides or digital photos for showing during this informal evening. There will also be a short auction of heather books and memorabilia and we shall be urging you to delve deep into your pockets for that elusive book.

Don't forget to bring some of your own plants for our private "Rare Plant Sale", without your contributions this much enjoyed "bring & buy" opportunity would not be possible.

We shall take our leave of each other after breakfast on Monday morning.

Should you wish to come for only part of the weekend, this can be arranged, either as a day visitor or for one or two nights.

Bookings are still being taken and can be made either through Anne Small, Denbeigh, All Saints Road, Creeting St. Mary, Ipswich, Suffolk, IP6 8PJ (Tel 01449 711220) or myself. My address is at the back of the *Bulletin*. For people who have already made a reservation, please confirm your booking by paying the full amount by July 1<sup>st</sup>.

Council looks forward to seeing as many members as possible at Conference 2007.

## **International Heather Conference**

**SAVE the DATES - 31 July to 5 August, 2008 - Victoria, B.C.**

Planning for the Third International Heather Conference is now well underway. The wonderful people from the Vancouver Island Heather Society have secured a top-notch hotel close to the Victoria Harbour, and we have some terrific speakers already lined up. For starters:

Friday evening, Lucy Hardiman of Perennial Partners, Portland, Oregon, will share her garden design expertise, vast knowledge of plants, and humorous presentation style in a program about using heathers in the landscape.

On Saturday, Brian Minter, well-known radio and TV gardening personality, garden writer, syndicated columnist, and president of Minter Gardens, Chillawack, B.C. will be our after dinner speaker.

Dirk Muntean, a soils specialist who has helped many commercial growers produce better plants, will be doing a soils presentation.

There will be tours of both public and private gardens in the Victoria area, as well as workshops and panel discussions on a variety of heather-related

topics.

Mark your calendar now so that you don't miss this fantastic Conference. For more information, photos, and updates, visit the NAHS website at [www.northamericanheathersoc.org](http://www.northamericanheathersoc.org).

You can be added to the Conference mailing list by following the guidelines on the website.

## **Tippitiwitchet Corner: The Administrator's Log**

### **Charles Nelson**

(continued for the Spring 2007 *Bulletin*)... the gremlins got into my log so not everything I had written was printed in the previous *Bulletin*. Here is what was not included, and a few *important\*\** extra matters to do with credit/debit cards, and e-mail addresses.

**Contact details for The Heather Society** (see outside back cover for full details)

#### **Phone number**

The telephone number for Tippitiwitchet Cottage is 01945 774077 (from outside the UK please use international dialling code + 44). This line has a voice-mail service (BT) on it, so you may leave a message if there is no prompt answer and I will return your call as soon as possible.

Please note that in Society publications until 2005 another telephone number was given for me – that number no longer exists.

#### **Fax number**

As there is no fax in Tippitiwitchet Cottage, the fax number, 01449 711220 (from outside the UK please use dialling code + 44) will still be used. Please note that faxed message will have to be transferred to me from Creething St. Mary either by post or email, so answers may take several days.

#### **... other matters**

**\*\* UK Data Protection Act:** Under UK and European legislation, The Heather Society is obliged to inform members that personal details are held on an electronic database. The database is managed by the Administrator on behalf of the Society, and is password-protected as required. Data held on it includes the minimum required to administer the Society: each member's name and postal address, year of joining, and previous and current years' subscription payments. For those members who pay by direct debit, the sort code of your bank and your account number are held because we need these to operate the direct debit system. In a very few cases, mainly nurserymen members, telephone and/or fax numbers are recorded on the database.

The Society does not provide its membership details to any individual or organization, and the printing of a membership list for distribution only to members is therefore also discontinued, at least temporarily until Council has discussed this matter in full.

#### **\*\* Credit & debit cards details**

Given the data protection rules, we do not hold credit or debit card

numbers (or other necessary data such as expiry dates and the name on the card) on the electronic database. A record of these is kept on the "merchant's copy" of the card-slip which is completed manually. (The cardholder's copy of the slip will be sent to you with the next mailing of the *Bulletin*.)

Members who wish to use credit or debit cards to pay their annual subscriptions need to complete *and sign* the renewal form that was distributed with the Spring *Bulletin* – this signed record will be retained for future subscription renewals, but bearing in mind that cards had expiry dates, we will still need to confirm a subscription payment *every* year.

### **\*\* Surcharges on payment by credit & debit cards**

Due to the charges imposed by Bank of Scotland on credit/debit card transactions, we regret that a surcharge of £ 2. 50 per transaction, to meet those bank charges, has to be added to all payments for publications, other Heather Society goods (e.g. sweatshirts), and for plants ordered through the plant franchise scheme.

The surcharge applies immediately to all orders, and will be kept under review.

This surcharge will *not* be applied to card transactions that *only* comprise the annual subscriptions for 2007.

### **E-mail addresses**

We appreciate that members do not wish to be bombarded with unnecessary emails – spam! However, it would reduce postage and administration costs if we could make contact very occasionally by email, for example, to remind members who do not pay by direct debit, that the annual subscription is due for renewal.

To that end, it would be helpful if any member who has regular access to email could send an email to **admin@heathersociety.org.uk** so that we can record your email address – please type "THS email" in subject line (do not leave this blank), and in the main message area insert your name and town/city and post/zip code.

*By sending your email address you are confirming that this can be stored electronically on the membership database.*

... NOTE that any reply to your email will have my personal email signature on it and you should ensure that any anti-spam system in operation on your computer is told to allow message from this email address – **tippitiwitchet@zetnet.co.uk**

### **New charges for publications and other Heather Society goods**

Given that UK postage rates were changed in April 2007, there is a new price list + order form enclosed. This superseded any previous list.

### **... and a last chance: Silver Jubilee salvers**

There are a dozen of these handsome, pewter salvers in presentation boxes remaining in the Society's possession, and it would be excellent if we could find good homes for them! They were commissioned specially to mark the Society's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1988: the *Bulletin* of the time described them thus: *The Salver has been made from oxidised copper with applique pewter decoration. It is seven inches in diameter and has the badge of The Heather*

*Society in the centre, with the dates 1963-1988 encircled by sprays of heather.* The salver is robust and durable, an attractive ornament or a useful dish. It might make an unusual gift for a heather enthusiast who has everything!

Any member who would like one of these is invited to contact The Administrator. UK members are invited to send a cheque/postal or money order for £10 (made out to *The Heather Society*; to cover postage & packing, plus a donation to Society funds); overseas' members are asked to send £12, or €17.50 or US\$25, to cover the extra postage costs.

Please note that payment by credit/debit card will be in UK pounds, as stated, and the surcharge of £2.50 to cover bank changes (see above) will be added.

### ... and finally

A tippitiwichtet is a small carnivorous plant, unrelated to heathers, commonly called the Venus flytrap! There is one growing at Tippitiwichtet Cottage beside *Erica oldenburgensis* 'Ammerland' which was in full flower before Christmas, *E. erigena* and *E. manipuliiflora*. *E. umbellata* 'David Small' is nearby in its old ceramic sink, unperturbed it seems, by the rank growth of a nearby *Buddleja davidii*, and a dire shortage of rain!



## Chat From Connemara

### Susie Kay

I was sitting watching the rain hit the windows at 100 km/h and beyond in the garden any plant taller than six inches was bending in half as each blast came. I wracked my brain to try to find some reason for gardening in Connemara. Then it came to me!

At the merest hint of a couple of hours of dry weather, I would be off to gather my branches of wild fuchsia. These, I cut to the ground, haul them up the boreen and then when there is another couple of hours of dryness; out comes the shredder/chipper and before long I have a lovely pile of free mulch. The amount I have generated over the years would probably fill a warehouse at B & Q. The wild fuchsia is the best mulching material as it dries to a very acceptable colour around my heather plants. Well, that is, the plants that the Good Lord has spared this year. St. Patrick must have had some old scores to settle as this year on Paddy's Day Weekend, yes it really lasts more than one day; we were treated to a spectacular storm coming straight off the sea.

I didn't attend the local parade as it was the vilest of days. Branches snapped off trees, even more plants bent in half and the dogs refused to go out. But the aftermath was worse. The salt laden wind and rain hits the mountain behind the house, especially a little lump known as Maolbán and is then thrown back at the house. Consequently the day after the storm, all the back



windows of the house were covered in salt. Now, I am used to this, but little did I realise the effects would be magnified over the whole of the garden. I am the only possessor of "one sided" heather plants. Could this be a new fashion to complement a decking feature? Not only heathers, but every plant in the garden and along the roads.

Here on the west coast of Ireland these winter storms are a fairly usual occurrence. This time it was different, after the storm there was no rain for twenty six days. This was disastrous as we would usually have some more rain to wash away the salt. Slowly and surely the poor plants assumed a brown colouration, where they should have been looking green, gold, russet and anything but brown twigs.

As the period of drought carried on, I thanked the Lord for the free mulch. A slight break of four days with three inches of rain and then it was on with the shorts and T-shirts for another ten days, looking for some sign of recovery.

Walking the dogs, I could see the same effect on all the wild heathers by the sea it appears to be horrendous (various prayers to St. Jude for lost causes and St. Dabeoc, for floriferousness).

Now a few weeks later, I can report that there has been some slight recovery. Wild *Daboecia*, which I pass by most days, in a sheltered place had some flowers; by 10<sup>th</sup> April my own suddenly flowered. 'Jack Drake', always the first to flower is covered in bloom and to my surprise on 7<sup>th</sup> May 'Charles Nelson' has lots of his first single flowers and 'Bicolor' is doing its stuff; 'Silverwells' is looking good, but, sorry David Plumridge, 'White Blum' has yet to show anything. The hares are still with us and have had mighty feeds on *Erica cinerea* 'Goldilocks' and every other plant in a small new winter bed.

But back to the mountains of mulch. Barrow loads spread; I stand back to admire the effect, thinking how green I am being, but go back next day and at least half of the plants are now smothered with bits of chipping, which means Mr. Badger has been through looking for a late night snack. Maybe even the free mulch isn't such an advantage.

For anyone thinking "she shouldn't be cutting the fuchsia", I can report the whole area I attacked is now covered in new shoots which are 18" high. In three years time they will be harvested again and the cycle will continue.

PS. Does anyone want about 500 rooted chippings of wild fuchsia?

## **The Woodlark and Purple Glory**

**Arnold Stow**

I recently came across a newspaper article stating that this bird is misnamed because it prefers low tussocky vegetation. In fact the German name for it means *heather* lark.

Under threat for some years, it is still an endangered species, but it is now returning to areas where forestry plantations are being felled or more sympathetically managed. Heather seedlings are reappearing and reclaiming the ground that was once heathland.



The decline of the woodlark mirrors the decline of the heath, it prefers low vegetation and open spaces. They feed, nest and even sing on the ground. This nesting on the ground has its drawbacks as disturbance by walkers can flush out the parents leaving the eggs and chicks vulnerable to crows.

The woodlark is similar in appearance to the skylark, but has a sweeter song heard between March and June.

It is encouraging to learn that at least some of our disappearing heaths are being reclaimed with a resultant return of this lovely bird.

## Questions & Answers

### A query sent to Dr. Charles Nelson and answered by members of the Society

**Q:** I wonder if you could help me by way of advice regarding a garden that I wish to plant with heathers! However, this part of the garden is shaded by an old oak tree which means that it gets sun up to 11.30 am and very little afterwards (this garden faces east and the oak is to the south). Can you suggest any heathers that might grow under these conditions, please?

This part of the garden has been neglected and used for dumping contents of old flower pots and grass cuttings for the last 6 years. I have just taken it over and have found the soil to be sandy with loads of leaf-mould and, of course, the rotted grass cuttings which have given a nice acid soil, very easy to dig, etc. It faces east which can be cold here in Suffolk as we live near Beccles, 7 miles from Lowestoft.

John Reeks

**A:** [Jean Julian, Yorkshire] I am sure the gardening experts can reply better than I can but here goes: -

1. Heathers don't naturally grow under trees and therefore the leaves, which drop, will have to be removed to prevent mildew.

2. It's going to be very dry under an oak tree and for the first few years they will need watering unless there is plenty of rain.

3. They are not going to get much sun if the oak tree is to the south and they only get morning sun from the east

4. Need to stick with tough varieties of winter heathers - *Erica carnea* and *E. darleyensis*.

**A:** [David Edge, Dorset] My view is that the heathers will grow in such a position, allowing sufficient moisture levels, either natural or man-applied, to establish the plants. The results may well be variable depending on the cultivar. If soil is not a problem then I would avoid *Erica tetralix* (cross-leaved heath) and *Calluna* (ling), and choose *Erica vagans* (Cornish heath) or *E. cinerea* (bell heather). The amount of foliage colour and flower will diminish according to the degree of shade with all cultivars.

**A:** [Phil Joyner, Hampshire] When we first moved to Kinross Road there was a large oak in next door's garden and that would have been on the

west side of our back garden. We planted heathers down the length of the garden and those at the bottom of the garden would have been, in part, under the canopy of the oak and saw sunshine up to early afternoon and then no more for the rest of the day. During the summer it was very dry in that location and in the autumn the oak leaves were a nightmare. The heathers close to and under the canopy did not grow well and were eventually replaced with other plants more tolerant of the conditions. Those heathers towards the upper part of the garden and less influenced by the oak grew a lot better and certainly some of the original winter heaths (*Erica carnea*) are still there today although other species have been replaced. The oak has now gone in that the neighbour arranged for it to be cut down about three years ago and I am now thinking about having another go with heathers towards the bottom of the garden. In conclusion I would not recommend planting under the canopy of an oak as disappointment is sure to follow. Try species *Cyclamen*, especially *C. hederifolium*.

**A**: [Ella May Wulff, Oregon, USA] I'd recommend that John tries *Daboecias* (St. Dabeoc's heaths) in this spot. They should have supplemental watering for their first few summers, and occasional watering during extended periods of drought after that, to compensate for what the tree roots will use. I've found that *Daboecia* tolerate quite a lot of shade. If this spot will receive nearly a half day of sun, they should succeed. Of course, a half day of sun in Britain is not like a half day of sun in Oregon's Willamette Valley. Here, the plants seem to relish being shaded during our hot, dry summers.

I would concur with *E. carnea* as another option for dry shade, and also second the recommendation that leaves be removed (a chore in my garden that I am still dealing with this late in the season, since I never had time last fall when I was working on the heather book). Limbing up the oak tree to allow maximum sun penetration underneath will also help.

**A**: [Richard Canovan, Hampshire] Dry shade is certainly bad but this is 'part shade' which is different as there is no rain interception. With global warming, it may even be beneficial as the site is protected from the afternoon sun and so retain moisture better.

I can confirm the following as excellent in such conditions - indeed even less sun but open and not overshadowed by taller shrubs:

*Erica carnea* 'Lake Garda' (amazing), 'Eileen Porter', 'King George', 'Springwood White', 'Vivelli' and 'Myretoun Ruby'.

*Erica x darleyensis* 'Silberschmelze', 'Jenny Porter', 'Aurelie Bregeon' (but not 'Arthur Johnson').

*Erica vagans* 'Lyonesse', 'Mrs. D F Maxwell'.

*Erica x williamsii* 'David Coombe'.

*Erica erigena* 'Superba', 'Brian Proudley', 'Irish Salmon', the new *Erica terminalis* x *Erica cinerea* hybrid.

Coloured foliage cultivars need full sun, of course.

*Calluna*, *Daboecia*, *Erica cinerea*, *Erica terminalis* and *Erica tetralix* seem to all need something close to full sun but I have not seen the majority of cultivars so others may help on those.

Note: this info is not just based on my garden. If others have different experiences from the above that will be interesting.

**A**: [Daphne Everett, Herefordshire] Part of the heather garden that we planted when we moved here 23 years ago, is now in the fairly dense shade of our large walnut tree. Cultivars of *Erica carnea* and *Ex darleyensis*, while not flowering as well as those still growing in full light, cope with the situation very well and give us a reasonable show of flowers each year. I think that new plantings would be more of a problem, mainly because of the dryness of the situation. The *Callunas* and *Erica cinerea* cultivars which are now in the shade of the tree, don't thrive at all and are gradually being replaced with winter/spring- flowering varieties.

**A**: [Bryon Roberts, Yorkshire] I have problems with shade from deciduous trees. The heathers, no matter what genus, will require watering in spring and summer and fastidious removal of leaves in autumn. I find that the length of raceme is inversely proportionate to the degree of shade. In other words heathers may fail to flower in dense shade. Foliage colour may also fail to develop. This is no excuse for not trying!

[For suggestions of plants to grow in dry shade, I recommend the late Graham Stuart Thomas's suggestions as published the appendix to his book *Plants for ground-cover*. He mentioned a number of members of the heath family (Ericaceae): *Arctostaphylos*, *Gaultheria shallon* and *Vaccinium vitis-idaea*. Phil's recommendation of *Cyclamen* is also recommended by Graham. CN.]

## A pressing matter!

### Dr. Charles Nelson answers Lizzie Judson's query about the best way to dry heather (Spring Bulletin)

Dear Lizzie

Pressing heathers and ensuring they look pretty is not an easy task. African violets are a lot easier, simply because the flowers are larger.

I have looked at thousands of pressed heathers over the last three decades and none of these looked especially pretty. However they had not been pressed for their appearance, but for scientific purposes.

African violets are easy to press. The flowers are fleshy, and when pressed and dried, they form a fragile, paper-like pattern that retains colour. Heather is not fleshy but woody, and their bulk simply prevents their transformation in the same way as African violets. Moreover, if they are not dried properly, rapidly but not too quickly, all the leaves will drop off. By careful selection and careful drying, you should be able to obtain some interesting, attractive specimens that can be used for greetings cards.

The important point, bearing in mind the African violet example, is to select only sprigs that are slender and open, not too densely clothed with flowers and leaves, and with slender stems. Avoid double-blossomed or thickly-branched *Calluna* – a sprig of 'Kinlochruel' won't press as well as a sprig of *Erica manipuliiflora* 'Olivia Hall', I suggest.

Pressing technique is also important. In the Summer 1969 *Bulletin* these instructions were published, and they are not out-of-date (I've modified them slightly).

1. Choose a suitable sprig, picked in its prime on a dry day.
2. Press it immediately after picking, when the leaves and the colour will be better preserved.
3. Place it between sheets of newspaper, blotting, or other absorbent paper – if using newspaper, you'll need to enclose the specimen in 3 or 4 layers, and don't be tempted to use kitchen towel or "puppy-soft" toilet paper. These sheets should go under moderate weights (a pile of books, even under a carpet or the mattress – but make sure they sit on a perfectly flat surface). It is extremely important that they be kept dry, and the quicker the plant sprigs are dried, within reason, the better. If, however, they are dried too fast (for example close to a fire, or over a radiator), almost certainly the leaves will drop off. (I put my specimens under the piles of (dry) laundry in the hot-press (when Sue isn't watching!) because the heat there is very gentle and continuous.
4. It is also very important to ensure the paper is as dry as possible. You *must* change the paper within 24–48 hours of *first* pressing the specimen (throw the damp paper away). Ideally, you should change the paper *again* after another 48 hours and replace in the "press". If necessary, change the paper once, or twice, more.  
If you press the specimens in a plant-press, you *must* open the press and change the paper after 24 hours, and again at intervals over the first week. Don't simply close the press and hope for the best. Specimens left untouched can remain damp, and will rot or go black. Botanists often inter-leave the specimens in their newspaper folders with pieces of corrugated cardboard so that air can pass through the bundle.
5. When the specimen is absolutely dry – it will feel "cold" if it is still damp – you can remove it from the newspaper/pressing paper, and store it flat in a dark place (old envelopes make ideal storage).
6. When required, mount the specimen using a wood-working glue (e.g. Evostick), brushed on to the under-surface. Do *not* use Sellotape – it decays and makes an awful mess.

There are a few other matters worth mentioning. You can press *Daboecia*, but do not use blotting paper or any kind of fluffy or flimsy paper as the pressing medium because fibres or chunks will stick to the plant which is naturally very sticky. You may also find that flowers containing nectar will retain this sticky fluid – I have examined specimens that were collected in the early 1900's which still have nectar in the blooms.

Finally, remember that plants, like watercolours, are affected by light and their colours will fade and change over the years. Old heather specimens are dull – like woody hay!

## Letters

### From Mary Bowerman of Champs Hill

Sadly we do not take part in any of the happenings for *The Heather Society* these days. But we much enjoy keeping up with all the news from the *Bulletin*. We built ourselves a large music room (seating 150) and the concerts and art exhibitions – **and** the many charitable functions – have taken over. However we still try to keep up the standard in the garden, as many of our guests enjoy wandering around, weather permitting.

I have been prompted into writing to you, as we are always happy to receive any *Heather Society* members – either as a group – or as individuals, as long as we have plenty of warning!

Champs Hill garden, last year (2006) received an award, through the National Gardens Scheme, for having opened for 30 years. This year, Sid Brown – whom many members will remember – will receive his award for having worked in the same garden for 30 years.

This year will be our last for opening under the NGS, though we shall still be in the *Yellow Book*, as private parties are welcome.

We have many happy memories of past visits from members and send our best wishes to any who remember Sid, David and myself, and, of course, Alfred and Margaret.

(For anyone who would like to take up Mary's generous offer, the address is: Champs Hill, Coldwaltham, Nr. Pulborough, West Sussex Tel: 01789 831868. Ed.)

### From President David Small to Jean Julian

In the East of England, who wants to grow *Erica carnea*? At best we get 1 month of bloom, sometimes much shorter. We have a very cold clay soil so they are not normally in bloom until early March. Then in March we can get a day in the seventies and the flowers all keel over.

Still, this year we have no worries. Our garden is somewhat overgrown and a pair of Muntjac deer have taken up residence. We have seen them for most of the past week. Unlike experiences from the States saying that deer tend to stick to familiar trails, this pair have trampled all over our *E. carnea* beds, munching off all flower buds.

They are great to see but for how long?

David Small

*Here in Herefordshire, varieties of Erica carnea begin to bloom in January and give a wonderful show well into May, although, this year, the hot dry April finished them off sooner than usual. What is the experience of other members? Ed.)*

### Re. Tintwistle Warming (Spring Bulletin p.15)

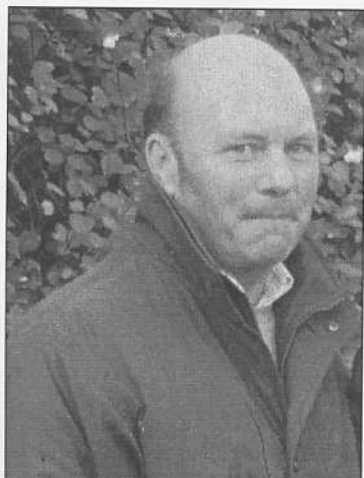
Just to let Dr. Colin Rogers know that my 'Kramer's Rote' was out early too – not as early as his, but definitely before Christmas rather than in January as is usual (it is in quite a shady spot) – so a case of Woking warming too!

Lizzie Judson



## Brian Proudley

### Part of an email to Anne Small from Valerie Proudley-Ward (formerly Proudley)



I am sorry to say that Brian died on Jan. 16th 2003 after a short illness - Lymphoma. He was just a fit hard-working man, so it came as a surprise to learn that the lumps he was feeling in his abdomen were diagnosed as Lymphoma. After a biopsy he became ill and died within a short time. He left behind three children, Sally Anne, Andrew & Lyndon. Each has a heather named after them as you probably know.

After he retired to Kerikeri in the Bay of Islands he became involved with the Department of Conservation and the local organisations and created a "Discover's Garden" of native plants discovered by Captain Cook's Botanists, including Joseph Banks.

Brian also had a heather named after him of course (*Erica erigena* 'Brian Proudley'. This picture of him was taken in 1992, when, during a visit to Britain, he and his wife, Valerie, joined us at the Dundee Conference. Ed.

### Queries through our website – [www.heathersociety.org](http://www.heathersociety.org) Answered by Charles Nelson & David Small

**Q** Do you know of any heather varieties which produce small, dark edible berries?

My sister and I remember eating them in the summer when we were children on South Ronaldsay in Orkney. We have been told that this is impossible but we both remember doing it and I'm sure we can't both be mistaken! If it wasn't heather, do you know of any other shrubs which look similar and do produce berries?

**A** True heathers – *Calluna* (ling) or *Erica* – do not have berries, so you cannot have eaten them. However, there are similar plants, small, creeping, heather-like shrubs that might be called heather by young (and old!) children not versed in botany. One is crowberry, *Empetrum nigrum*, (see picture) a heather look-alike and perhaps the most likely. It is on South Ronaldsay, I'm sure.

In the superb book by William Milliken & Sam Bridgewater, *Flora celtica, plants and people in Scotland* (2004), there is a quotation from a Shetlander, in which crowberry is described:

The crowberry was widely regarded as another moorland treat, although it had a very bitter flavour.... The plant on which it grew was called "berry-hedder"



and it was the only variety of heather that provided us with anything to eat.

Although formerly placed in a separate family of its own *Empetrum* is now included within the Ericaceae the family that contains *Erica* (heather), *Calluna* (ling), etc.

Then there are the blaeberreries, cranberries and cowberries – from *Vaccinium* – but I think these a lot less likely than *Empetrum*, because they do not really look like heather.

**Reply.** Thank you very much for your speedy and informative reply. It was very kind of you to take the time to answer my query in such detail.

You were right with your crowberry guess – I've looked at pictures and it matches my memory exactly. As far as the argument is concerned, it's really honours even since both sides were partly correct!

**Q** My father is a keen heather grower and has asked me if you would kindly help him. He will be taking cuttings this autumn and wants to know if he can use ericaceous compost instead of peat in the cutting compost mix.

**A** Any fertiliser in the cutting compost is likely to reduce yield so ericaceous compost will not be as good as peat. I know peat is getting difficult to obtain but it is worth persevering. Try a wholesaler who might be kind enough to drop off a bale of peat which will keep your father going for years. If all else fails then use ericaceous compost.

**Q** Please could you tell us the name of heather found in the west of Ireland, how it grows etc. My son is doing a project on plants and he has chosen a heather which he found this year, on a trip to see his granny. We would be very grateful if you could assist.

**A** Western Ireland is a very special place for heathers with more species than Scotland. I have no idea which species your son found but it could be any of these. *Calluna vulgaris* or ling (the most common in Scotland and England), *Erica cinerea* or bell heather, or *Erica tetralix* or the cross-leaved heath. These are the most common on the mainland. Unique to western Ireland in the British Isles are *Daboecia cantabrica*, found in Connemara, *Erica mackaiana* found in Connemara and Kerry and *Erica x stuartii*, a hybrid of *Erica tetralix* and *Erica mackaiana* until very recently only found in western Ireland. There is a very small population of *Erica ciliaris*, the Dorset heath, which nobody can explain and also on the border with northern Ireland is a population of *Erica vagans*, the Cornish heath, which all have white flowers.



## Group News

### North East

We held our Annual Outing on May 6<sup>th</sup>, going to Kiplin Hall in North Yorkshire.

This is a delightful old Jacobean House now owned by a charitable trust and full of interest. The 'garden' is mostly parkland with lawns surrounded by topiary hedging and herbaceous borders and, big thrill, we found one heather!

The weather was dry, cool with sunny spells, but everyone enjoyed the day and we were delighted that Dave and Beryl Mayne were able to join us.

The only forward date for your diary is **Saturday, September 8th**, when we have our Annual Show in the Memorial Hall, Ponteland, and we hope that all members will support this event.

*Dorothy M. Warner.*

### Yorkshire

This is a very small group now so it is difficult to organise speakers of quality but we met on Saturday, 17th March to listen to an excellent talk by Dean Peckett, Gardens Superintendent, at Harlow Carr on the current progress with planting in the garden and their plans for the future. Although there is no longer a heather reference collection, the entrance is being changed and the entrance bed containing winter flowering heathers will not only be retained but extended.

The next meeting should have been a talk on dwarf conifers but difficulty obtaining a speaker at a price we should be happy to pay and the fact that the secretary and others were not able to attend the meeting persuaded the committee to cancel it.

The summer event is on a **Wednesday, 8th August** when Caroline Thorogood from Yorkshire Wildlife Trust will take a walk with us over Strensall Common to look at the heather and the wildlife. Strensall Common is an area of lowland heath to the north east of York. It is undisturbed as it has been used as a firing range by the army for many years but I understand they do not shoot on Wednesday afternoons.

Then on **22nd September** in the Study Centre at Harlow Carr we plan to have a talk on alpenes to be used in association with heathers. There will also be an opportunity to see some of the slides from the library.

*Jean Julian*

### East Midlands

Maurice and Daphne Everett have kindly invited us to visit their 2.5 acre garden, *The Bannut*, at Bringsty near Bromyard, Herefordshire on **Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> August**. We plan to meet at 1 pm when Maurice and Daphne have kindly offered to provide a light lunch, since some members are likely to need to travel a long way to get to the garden. The garden visit

will begin at about 2 pm.

The garden is 2.5 miles east of Bromyard on the A44 Worcester road and half a mile east of the entrance to the National Trust Brockhampton Estate. I can provide a sketch of the route; please send a stamped addressed envelope to me if you would like one. My address is on the inside last page of the *Bulletin*. Members of the East Midlands Group will get one anyway with their Summer calling notice.

Please let me know by July 31<sup>st</sup> if you intend to participate so that I can inform Maurice and Daphne of the numbers they may expect. Of course members of all Groups are welcome.

The Group last visited *The Bannut* on 14<sup>th</sup> August 1999 when 27 members from around the country attended. The plantings were new then and it will be good to see how the garden has developed in the meantime. Heather beds occupy almost half an acre of the garden. There is a unique Knot Garden and, since 2005, a Demonstration Bed of the *Heather Society's* 100 Recommended Heathers.

Allen Hall

## Home Counties

The next meeting of the Group will be held at RHS Garden, Wisley, on **Saturday 22nd September**. We will meet outside the shop at 11.00 for our customary tour of the Heather Garden; the afternoon meeting, with speaker and tea, will be in the Garden Meeting Room of the Hillside Events Centre (this room is at the rear of the Garden Hall in which we have previously met – i.e. alongside the old large greenhouse) at 14.00 – please let me know by 15th September if you will be attending. (Telephone 01442 254880 or e-mail [Derek.Millis@care4free.net](mailto:Derek.Millis@care4free.net)). There will, of course, be the usual table show, please do have a go at this, – the categories are:-

1. Best flower arrangement in which heathers predominate (The Turpin Trophy).

2. Best vase of hardy heather in flower, single variety.

3. Best vase of heather chosen for foliage.

I look forward to meeting you on 22nd September.

Derek Millis

## South West

On Saturday, March 24<sup>th</sup> Lin and I were joined by several local members and a couple of not so local members for a stroll around Furzey Gardens, in the New Forest. Although the weather on the day was not perfect we were able to wander around, mostly in the dry and enjoy a collection of spring flowering bulbs and shrubs. Furzey has a collection of heathers and the winter/spring flowering heathers were providing some colour that afternoon. However time has taken toll of the heather collection but there have been some new plantings which hopefully will form the basis for a revival of the display. The tree heaths were of interest, particularly a good specimen of *Erica australis*, which I took to be the cultivar 'Riverslea' and which was at

least 8 feet in height and girth and well in flower. For the plant buyers there was a small nursery stocked by the students of the Minstead Training Project and the afternoon was rounded off by a chat over tea and cake in the tea room and art gallery. Lin and I thank those members that attended for their enjoyable company.

Once again I will remind members that the date and time of any get together in the South West area will only be announced via the *Bulletin*. However if you wish to send a SAE then I will return a map and directions to help you locate any proposed venue. Visits to gardens will not be pre-arranged and will take the form of an informal stroll. Advertised group rates for garden entry will not apply and no guided tours will be arranged. There is no need to let me know you are coming beforehand, just turn up on the day.

On **Saturday, 29th September**, Lin and I will be visiting **Heale Gardens** at Middle Woodford in Wiltshire. This is a very attractive garden that was visited with the South West Group in 2003. We invite you to meet with us at about 1.45 pm outside the entrance for entry into the garden at 2.00 pm. The gardens are situated on the river Avon and cover 8 acres. The gardens are of all the year around interest. Amongst the many items of interest is a Japanese Garden with a fine collection of *Acers* and at the time we are visiting the gardens boast displays of *Cyclamen*, *Nerines* and *Viburnums*. The gardens also have a plant sales area, a shop and refreshment facilities.

The gardens are situated on the Woodford Valley road and are signposted from both the A360 Salisbury to Devizes road and the A345 Salisbury to Amesbury road and are about midway between those two roads and approximately 4 miles north of Salisbury. The current advertised cost of entry is £4 per person.

Finally it is hoped to announce a garden visit for Spring 2008 in the Autumn *Bulletin*, meanwhile Lin and I look forward to strolling around Heale Gardens with you in late September.

Phil Joyner

## Nurseryman members

**An Alternative Glossary**  
*With acknowledgments to The Tresco times*

**Coffee** (n.) the person upon whom one coughs.

**Flabbergasted** (adj.), appalled over how much weight you have gained.

**Esplanade** (v.), to attempt an explanation while drunk.

**Willy-nilly** (adj.), impotent.

**Negligent** (adj.), absentmindedly answering the door in your nightgown.

**Lymph** (v.), walks with a lisp.

**Gargoyle** (n.), olive-flavoured mouthwash.

**Balderdash** (n.), a rapidly receding hairline.

**Rectitude** (n.), the formal, dignified bearing adopted by proctologists.

**Pokemon** (n), a Rastafarian proctologist.

**Oyster** (n.), a person who sprinkles his conversation with Yiddishisms,

**Circumvent** (n.), an opening in the front of boxer shorts worn by Jewish men.

**Syllabus** (n.), public transport on the Scilly Isles

## USEFUL ADDRESSES

**Society's Website:** [www.heathersociety.org.uk](http://www.heathersociety.org.uk)

- |  |   |
|--|---|
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