

# *Bulletin of The Heather Society*



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*Vol. 7 No. 2*

*Autumn 2007*

## **DIARY OF EVENTS**

**2008**

**15 January      CLOSING DATE FOR SPRING BULLETIN**

15 March      Yorkshire      Field Classroom, Harlow Carr

26 April      South West      Date to be confirmed

10 May      South West      Date to be confirmed

**15 May      CLOSING DATE FOR SUMMER BULLETIN**

31 May      Yorkshire      Field Classroom, Harlow Carr

**3-5 August      INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE, VICTORIA BC**

20 September      Home Counties      Garden Meeting Room, RHS Wisley

**27-28 September      AGM & MINI CONFERENCE, HARROGATE**



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Editor: Daphne Everett, The Bannut, Bringsty, Herefordshire, WR6 5TA.  
Telephone/Fax: 01885 482206 e-mail: everettbannut@zetnet.co.uk

Cover illustration *Calluna vulgaris* by Brita Johansson

*What a strange season this has been. Well before the end of September we had Rhododendrons, Magnolias, Hellebores and Hamamelis, as well as several Erica x darleyensis, in flower in the garden.*

*Earlier this year Maurice and I were very pleased to welcome members from the East Midlands and beyond, who braved a day of non-stop rain to visit us at the Bannut. (The picture shows members scrutinising the '100 Recommended Heathers' bed). We are always very happy to welcome members of the Society to our garden. So - if you are visiting beautiful Herefordshire, or anywhere nearby - just give us a ring.*



## Conference 2008

**Susie Kay**

We all enjoyed ourselves in Pembrokeshire and were delighted to meet three new Heather Society couples. Plans are now underway for 2008.

As you are probably aware by now, there will be an International Conference in Victoria, Vancouver Island in 2008 - therefore our own Conference will be a shorter weekend than usual and will include the A.G.M.

Date: 27<sup>th</sup> - 28<sup>th</sup> September

Location: Harrogate. Swallow St. George Hotel, in the middle of the town.

Programme: Saturday 27<sup>th</sup> September

2 pm - Talk by Jean Julian on 'The History of Harlow Carr'.  
A.G.M.

A slide Presentation of the International Conference.  
Dinner at Swallow St. George Hotel.

Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> September

10 am - Leisurely walk around Harlow Carr Gardens, led by Dean Peckett,  
Garden Supervisor.

Accommodation at the Swallow St. George is very limited. Many people have already indicated that they will be coming, but if you are interested, I do need to know if you will be requiring a room at the hotel.

Prices at Swallow St. George are as follows:

Double Room (to include Dinner, Bed & Breakfast) is £120 per night

Single Room (to include Dinner, Bed & Breakfast) is £60 per night

The fee for this gathering will be minimal and it may be possible that members will settle their own hotel bills.

If you are attending as a day guest only, I shall need to know if you will be requiring dinner on Saturday evening, which is priced at £20.

Remember this is your chance to attend the A.G.M. of *The Heather Society* and have a voice in the running of the affairs of our Society.

Enquiries to Charles Nelson or me. Addresses at the back of the *Bulletin*.

## **International Heather Conference 31 July to 5 August, 2008 - Victoria, B.C.**

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.

You can be added to the Conference mailing list by following the guidelines on the website. [www.northamericanheathersoc.org](http://www.northamericanheathersoc.org).

## **Short report on the AGM, held at the Hotel Mariners Haverford West, Sunday 10 September 2007.**

The Chairman apologised for the late arrival of the *Yearbook* and *Bulletin*, which was due to problems with the printing of the *Yearbook* [see *Administrators Log*].

Expenditure continued to exceed income, due to falling membership numbers. It is inevitable that subscriptions will have to be increased in the next year or so. The Chairman still felt, however, that members receive good value for money with the *Yearbook*, the *Bulletins* and now the new annual CD ROM, for which thanks are due to our President, David Small.

Arnold also announced that he will be standing down as Chairman at the next AGM. However, the Society is fortunate that there are members of Council willing to take on the responsibility. He appealed for more members of the Society to join Council as there are places to be filled. Council holds three expenses-paid meetings a year.

The Minutes of the 2006 AGM were read and approved.

A copy of the 2006 Annual Report & Accounts, as required by the Charity Commission under its new rules, had previously been circulated and were taken as read. The Treasurer, Phil Joyner said that the Society must be run as a business, with profits paid back into the Society.

In future, the accounts will be approved by an independent examiner, instead of an auditor. This is allowed under the Charity Commission rules and is a much cheaper option. *[I feel I should add that, until this year, the Society's Auditors have given their time for free, but this is not now feasible. Ed.]*

The Society has 384 members. The subscriptions from such a small membership do not now cover expenditure, as administrative costs continue to rise.

Re-election of Council members, Vice Presidents and the President were all approved.

The Fourth International Conference will take place in Victoria BC in 2008 - the AGM therefore, will be held at Harrogate in Yorkshire, over the weekend 27-28 September. The weekend will include a talk on the history of Harlow Carr Gardens and a garden tour.

The 2009 Conference will be held in the London area, with visits to Savill Gardens and Wisley.

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*Another enjoyable Conference has come and gone – with lots of good fun and fellowship! I hope the pictures below will show anyone who is deterred by the word 'Conference', that ours is anything but a serious affair. Ed.*



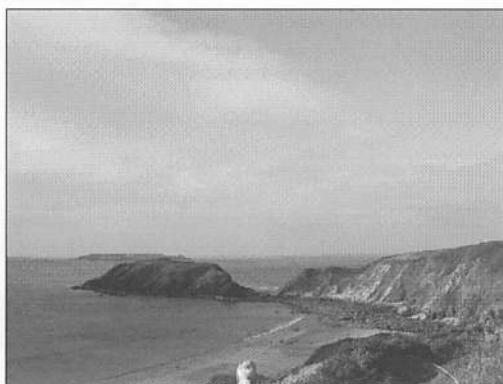
*The serious business of the Conference being conducted at the National Botanic Garden of Wales. Motion carried - Good ice cream!*

*No expense is spared by Conference Organiser, Susie Kay, to ensure comfortable travel during the Conference.*



*Alan Kay pays homage to Jean Davidson, the Queen of the mobility chariot.*

*A fetching photograph of Richard Canovan, with a view of Marloes Beach in the background.*



*PS. We did see some heathers and had some very informative talks and visits as well - but you will have to wait for the 2008 Yearbook to read about them. Ed.*

## **Tippitiwitchet Corner: The Administrator's Log Number 3**

### **Yearbook for 2007**

As you all realise, I wear several different "hats" within *The Heather Society*, not just that of Administrator. As both Editor of the *Yearbook* and Administrator, I should apologise for the long delay in sending out the *Summer Bulletin* and *Heathers* 4, but the circumstances that caused this delay were well beyond the control of the Society and its "staff".

The main problems arose from difficulties in getting the printer's computer to accept the file that we provided for printing the *Yearbook*, especially in obtaining high resolution images for the colour photographs. A longer explanation could occupy many pages, and would be a further waste of valuable time!

We held over the *Bulletin* to save the expense of additional postage, and consequently I was unable to pack and post the two publications until 2 August. All copies were posted by 4 August and from e-mails received I know copies reached the shore of the Pacific less than a week later. It took a little longer for one copy to reach Holland – but the mysteries of the world's postal systems are beyond scope of explanation.

If anyone reading this has *not* received the *Summer Bulletin* and *Heathers* 4, not to mention the Society's 2007 CD-ROM, please contact me immediately and replacement copies will be sent.

Useless fact: the total weight of the members' copies of yearbook, bulletin and CD-ROM, as posted was more than 80kg!

Unsolicited (edited slightly) comment: "Thank you for the extra copies of my article, and especially thanks for the stamps: Beatles on the yearbook and ice cream with beloved Cadbury's Flake on the other – I was back in the 60s again! I do notice stamps and I appreciate the thoughtfulness in sending interesting ones. Cheers, Judy [Wiksten].

### **Yearbook for 2008**

Copy-deadline for the next year's issue of *Heathers* is, as always, 31 October. Articles of interest to members, no matter how short, are invited from members. We particularly would welcome short contributions about interesting or unusual heathers, and your experience in growing them.

### **E-mail addresses**

Thanks to the members who sent their e-mail addresses. These have been recorded for use only on Society business such as subscription reminders.

Members who have powerful anti-spam software should ensure that my personal e-mail address – [tippitiwitchet@zetnet.co.uk](mailto:tippitiwitchet@zetnet.co.uk) – is permitted as that is the address from which any Society e-mails will originate.

## Subscriptions for 2008

Reminders about payment of next year's subscriptions are enclosed for members who have not set up direct debit or similar automatic payments.

## Sweatshirts – now in M, L & XL

Medium-sized sweatshirts are now available, in green or maroon; these cost the same as the large and extra large sizes.

## Membership of The Heather Society

As of the end of August 2007 the Society has **212** individual members, **55** dual/family members, **26** nursery members, **8** life members, and **7** honorary members. The Society also sends publications, by subscription or gift, to **32** gardens, societies or libraries, as well as to **6** copyright libraries in the UK and Ireland.

The distribution of members is as follows (dual/family members are counted as 2; institutions and libraries excluded)

England : East : .....	12	Northern Ireland : .....	3
England : East Midlands : .....	18	Scotland : .....	36
England : Far West : .....	13	Wales: .....	13
England : Home Counties : .....	54	Republic of Ireland : .....	8
England : North East : .....	17	Europe : .....	46
England : North West : .....	27	Australasia : .....	5
England : South West : .....	51	Canada : .....	5
England : West Midland : .....	16	Far East : .....	2
England : Yorkshire & Humberside : ..	19	South Africa : .....	1
		South America : .....	1
		USA : .....	18

... **and finally!** The annual gathering at Haverford West was most enjoyable, not least because Susie had managed to lay on splendid weather to complement the outdoors activities at the seaside and in the gardens. A full report will appear, as usual, in the 2008 yearbook. Meanwhile, thanks to everyone who participated, and especially to the absent friends who contributed books and plants.

Charles Nelson - Administrator

## ***Erica carnea* Seedlings** Allen Hall

I read with interest Dr. Rogers article *In Praise of Foundlings* (Heathers 4 2007) and agree with his comments on the value of seedlings. I find many in my garden and, like him, generally wait to see them flower before pulling them up (or putting them to use). It is part of the fun of heather gardening.

I have never sought to name any of my finds, at least not formally, and



certainly have made no attempt to introduce any to the Trade. I confess I do name some informally. I get a number of attractive golden foliage *Calluna* seedlings and I sometimes lift and pot one of these and present it to a visiting lady, naming it after her. I have a "Joan Margaret" in the garden. It has golden foliage in the spring and, later, good flowers like those of *Calluna vulgaris* 'Darkness'. The foliage does not keep its attractive colour long and the plant is therefore not worth a wider distribution, but naming it made for a happy wife!

Dr. Rogers mentions that it is rare to find *E. carnea* seedlings in English gardens in contrast with Brita Johansson's Swedish garden. He suggests that this may be because ambient temperatures are higher in England than in Sweden or because insect activity is lower when they are in flower. I do not think that either of these reasons is valid. Some years ago I read an article by a Danish botanist who said that *carneas* are wind pollinated. I have discussed this with friends in the Society who do not support the view. But there is no doubt that *carneas* emit great clouds of pollen when the racemes are touched and late in the season their anthers are well exerted. At least there must be a strong chance of self pollination. And, anyway, the bees are buzzing late in the season.

In the Summer *Bulletin* 2005 (Vol 6 No 5) I recalled an experiment I conducted around 1994 when I sprinkled dust containing *carnea* seeds onto compost in a seed tray. I subsequently selected 20 seedlings and about a dozen of these are now mature plants in my garden. These are all good garden plants with characteristics ranging from a plant similar to 'Springwood White' to a 'Vivellii' look-a-like. These germinated and grew at normal summer temperatures.

In 2006, I collected seeds from one of these plants (a *carnea* with foliage somewhat like that of *Ex darleyensis* 'Jack H Brummage' and flowers similar to *E carnea* 'Bells Extra Special'). These were mixed with a little horticultural sand and sprinkled onto some seed compost. The compost was kept moist by covering the container with a plastic bag but no other precautions were taken to ensure success. In a few weeks, seedlings appeared and earlier this year I pricked out the most interesting of them, judged by colour of foliage and vigour. I now have 24 strong young plants that could be ready for planting sometime next year. Some have golden foliage with bushy habits and some dark green foliage and spreading habits. One of them however has long upright stems and mid green foliage and I ask myself if this might prove to be a hybrid. I shall enjoy finding out.

## **Rose Cottage Ramblings**

### **David Plumridge**

In direct contrast to last year's summer desert conditions this year has had the feel of temperate rain forest. Ferns have been popping up among the heathers and are so pretty it seemed a shame to pull them out! Companion plants that we have enjoyed are a couple of paeonies planted on the perimeter of the garden along with the rhododendrons. These added welcome colour

before the *cinereas* started to give their breathtaking display. From a distance, they could be mistaken for their then fading companions in both flower and foliage. We wait with some apprehension to see whether our lack of deadheading the rhodies has had any detrimental effect. They seem to be budding up OK and only one looked unsightly with blackened stamens.

The wet and cool summer hasn't diminished the heather display at Rose Cottage or on the nearby moorland. The *vagans* are a little later than normal, particularly 'Mrs. D F Maxwell' and 'Lyonesse' but here at the end of September they are looking wonderful. Last year we needed a list of drought resistant heathers – this year it's just the opposite. We haven't heard much about 'Mediterranean Gardening' this year from the pundits!

Heathers glowing in the gloaming still give us much pleasure. The effect shows up particularly well with the *cinereas* and on one special evening, reflection from a low cloud illuminated by the setting sun gave the best display yet. I get a similar effect with my new sun glasses, but it's not as pleasing.

'Plants for Wildlife' articles continue to annoy. *Gardening Which* again neglected to mention the obvious (to us!). An email querying this, elicited the response that it's because heathers are fussy about soil conditions. The ignorance of almost the existence of heathers among the gardening elite is depressing. On a recent *Saga* gardening holiday to India we were accompanied by Chelsea Gold Medal winner Cleve West. I am hoping to enlighten him with pictures of the Everett knot garden and their 'Arthur Johnson' hedges to let him see what can be done with those little known shrubs. Do any Members have similar examples of heather use? It would be no use sending pictures of our boringly dated heather garden! Incidentally, although we annoyingly just missed seeing the rhododendrons flowering in the Himalayas, the trip was very worthwhile with many prejudices completely squashed. These included not getting 'Delhi Belly' and surviving 46C at the Taj Mahal!

*Odla barrvaxter*, although a conifer book, does contain pictures of heather which complement the trees. Could this be because it was written by our well known Swedish member, Brita Johansson? It is beautifully illustrated, both with Brita's own photographs, and her exquisite line drawings. The Swedish text isn't too off-putting thanks to the botanic and English names. It appears to be very comprehensive, describing conifers suitable for the Swedish climate - not too dissimilar from ours here at Rose Cottage! A glossary of the main descriptive terms would make the book quite usable for the English reader. We were delighted to receive a copy of her book from Brita – just because she had used a couple of photos she had taken in our garden. So far we have only found one of them!

Once again we enjoyed a Heather Conference, this time in our old stamping ground of Pembrokeshire. We spent a delightful two years there 35 years ago until the job sent me to Scotland. It was wonderful to take the opportunity to remake acquaintance with old friends – even if one couple did take some ferreting out due to being ex-directory. It was also a pleasure to see old – and new – heather friends at the Conference. For those who didn't go – you missed a treat! (There was a little help from the unusually dry South Wales weather.) We particularly enjoyed the members' pictures. They laid lie to Susie's self

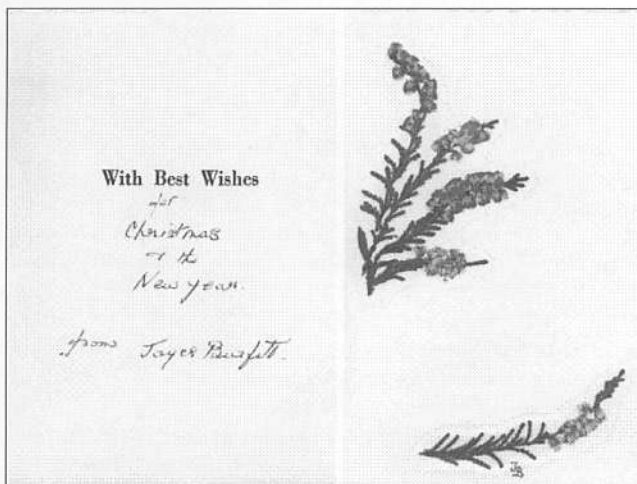
deprecating remarks about her Irish garden! My query regarding the Society CD exposed just how much time our President had spent on this worthwhile venture. I was especially glad that he had seen fit to include my pictures of our local moorland. People just don't seem to know about the magnificent stretches of heather up here in the North Pennines.

Before Conference, we 'enjoyed' a visit to Yorkshire Wildlife's Strensall Common, just north of York. This was arranged by Jean Julian for the Yorkshire Group with good weather laid on. We saw a most magnificent display of *Erica tetralix* – but at a price! One of the party stepped onto a less than solid tussock and fell full length into the bog. Then the bugs attacked! My hand started to swell immediately. Others also provided sustenance for the ravenous creatures, with Valerie Griffiths later needing medical attention! I was luckier – although my hand stayed swollen for several days, it wasn't painful.

In contrast, at the next meeting of the Yorkshire Group at Harlow Carr, we were thankfully only mentally stimulated. John Griffiths, following months of my bullying, gave a typically modest lecture on his hybridising techniques and subsequent achievements. It was fascinating to see the birth of 'Valerie Griffiths' and how she alone was selected from her many siblings. It would be good if John could repeat this at next year's Conference. RHS Harlow Carr is well worth a visit and even has heather!

## From the Turpin archives: some pressed *Calluna* Charles Nelson

In the last issue of the *Bulletin*, I responded to Lizzie Judson's query about pressing heathers. I had hoped to illustrate the comments with a card that I knew was among the papers and specimens that Mrs. Cherry Turpin handed to the Society, but I could not find the item. I have now traced it.



Joyce Burfitt used pressed heathers to make Christmas cards, and the one illustrated above was made by applying sprigs of pressed *Calluna* to a pre-printed blank 'card' – in fact it is heavy paper rather than card. The specimens are held in place by a plastic film which I assume was applied using heat and some pressure. There was

a fashion for "laminating" items several decades ago, and the technique was used by Major-General Turpin and others to produce herbarium specimens. However, the long term effect of the sticky plastic film is as disastrous as Sellotape, which should never be employed to attached specimens. The specimens are useless from a scientific point of view; even as ready-reference vouchers they have little value.

Joyce Burfitt's card probably was made using 'Peter Sparkes', but the colour is gone completely; the flowers are now "hay-coloured", although the foliage is still green. The effect isn't unpleasing but it was achieved using very short pieces of pressed *Calluna* arranged "artistically" - in this instance there are five separate pieces.

## A Life Among Shrubs : Heathers

The following paragraphs are extracted from an unpublished work about shrubs which was written by Leslie Slinger (1907-1974), well-known as the proprietor of the Slieve Donard Nursery at Newcastle, County Down. The manuscript of "A life among shrubs" was left incomplete on his death in November 1974: the centenary of his birth also falls in November.

The Slingers were good friends of Fred Chapple, and, as can be deduced from these extracts, Leslie was, like Chapple, a heather enthusiast. The cultivars of *Calluna vulgaris* 'Leslie Slinger' and 'Ruby Slinger' (named after Leslie's wife) were wild-collected clones that Chapple found and gave to the Slieve Donard Nursery. These extracts have only been edited to update the Latin names. They are printed here by kind permission of Mrs. Evelyn Deane. A second series of extracts will be included in a subsequent Bulletin. E. C. Nelson.

Heaths and heathers are sufficiently numerous and interesting to fill a book and, of course, several have been written on these subjects. Thus, I am faced with the impossible task of squeezing into a few pages, some helpful remarks about these attractive plants. As in the case of other large genera such as *Rhododendron*, I fall back on the rather obvious way out by giving some of my views and making a selection of cultivars which appeal to me.

I can think of no other group of plants which can give so much pleasure over so long a period and at the same time require so little attention. They can be used for all sorts of purposes or in almost any size of garden an area can be devoted to heathers with only a few contrasting small shrubs or conifers to break the monotony of the heather foliage. This area can be quite small to suit the modern garden or where space is available a feature can be made with a well-planned layout of heathers covering practically the whole of the year in flower. It is an interesting fact that no heathers flower in May and early June when there is such a glut of other flowering species. I hasten to point out however, that *Erica umbellata* is a species which links up in flower with the April and mid-June flowering varieties. However, it is not sufficiently hardy to recommend out of hand but where it does grow well it is a helpful little shrub.

If you garden on an alkaline soil your choice of heathers is restricted to the winter and spring flowering varieties of *Erica carnea* and *Erica erigena* and

some hybrids between these two species. On no account would I recommend anyone to force the issue by making up peat beds to sustain others which abhor lime. They may do well for a year or two but ultimately rain washes traces of lime into the specially prepared beds and the outcome is one of disappointment. The times of my life that I have met people who will insist on going to a great deal of expense in preparing conditions suitable for lime-hating plants is extraordinary. While I admire their zeal and determination, they always finish up disappointed. The only way to garden is to appreciate the possibilities and shortcomings of the area you are cultivating and plan accordingly. Obviously at times there are borderline cases – for example, elsewhere I have encouraged people to try *Embothrium* and *Eucryphia* where conditions may not be ideal. This, however, is rather different in so far as there is always a chance where one insists in trying to grow lime-hating plants on an alkaline soil.

It is interesting to record that I first wrote this [account of] heathers in 1963 and since that time so many good, new cultivars have become available that my choice was completely out of date. I take a small amount of satisfaction when I realise that the varieties I chose ten years ago are still good and worth growing. But one likes always to be as up-to-date as possible. Nevertheless, as time marches on other good, new heathers will be on the market and there is just nothing I can do about this.

As the seasons pass and different heathers come into flower, it becomes very difficult indeed to pick just a few tip-top cultivars which would be helpful to many people who simply cannot accommodate a large number. I will therefore go through a number of different species of heathers and indicate my likes and dislikes in each section. It would have been nice and simple if all heathers could be called *Erica*, but botanical differences made it necessary to split them into two different genera. *Calluna*, generally regarded as the heather of Scotland, is however found in most parts of the British Isles but there is no doubt that in late Summer and early Autumn the marvellous aspect of heather on the mountainside in Scotland is such that no-one should dispute with the Scot for claiming this to be his very own heather.

*CALLUNA VULGARIS*. Cultivars have a flowering period extending from June until December and despite of the fact that the majority of them are in bloom during the warmest period of the year the individual period of beauty is very satisfactory. No doubt the most noteworthy varieties are those which produce long stems of double pink flowers in September and October. The first of these was the famous and probably the most popular of all heathers, 'H. E. Beale' which has been available for quite some time. More recently it has found two rivals in 'Elsie Purnell' and 'Peter Sparkes'. The former has similar flowers but the grey-green foliage makes it somewhat distinct. In 'Peter Sparkes', however, we have a definite improvement as it bears flowers of a much deeper shade of pink. I will have something to say about pruning heathers later on but these three types must, without fail, be pruned not later than March to remove the previous season's flower heads. These flower heads on vigorous plants will measure a foot or more, though as the plant ages, or with neglect, these spikes decrease in length. If I am restricted to one word of



advice on any shrub it would be to emphasise the necessity to keep heathers fresh and healthy by pruning and an occasional modest feed. 'County Wicklow' and 'Radnor' are varieties with identical flowers to 'H. E. Beale' but they are low-growing with shorter flowering spikes; in particular, the mat-like growth of 'County Wicklow' appeals to me so much that it must come in any short list of heathers which I favour. It is possible that I should have started this paragraph by praising the white heather. Other species of heathers possess white varieties but *Calluna vulgaris* has almost a monopoly in its claim to be the white heather of Scotland. There is almost no end to cultivars available. I could well brush under the carpet a selection of whites but the following do appeal to me. 'Alba Carlton', 'Alba Plena' (this is a double-flowered variety which is most attractive), and 'Drum-ra', (a sturdy plant with the whitest of white flowers). The old 'Hammondii' is still in the forefront. 'Mair's Variety' has the longest stem of flowers but to me it is untidy but I daresay useful for cutting. For late bloom I recommend 'Serlei'. Those who want a large, tough variety can do no better than pick 'Alportii' which has crimson-purple flowers. This good old plant has rivals in the more modern 'Barnet Anley', 'C. W. Nix' and 'Goldsworth Crimson'.

I suppose no one will disagree with me when I say that the greatest strides in the heather world occurred with the introduction of many varieties with coloured foliage. Of course, most of us have lived all our lives with good old *Calluna vulgaris* 'Rubraefolia' and 'Aurea' which, for a season, produce coppery-red or yellow tints respectively, and indeed there are others. However, every year for some years now a new *Calluna* has hit the market for which a claim is made that it is the best heather for coloured foliage. Having looked at some of the more recent ones and some not so recent, my conclusion is that 'Robert Chapman' is a plant that has come to stay.

Unlike the older varieties with coloured foliage, these newer varieties maintain their colour throughout the year but this does vary with the seasons. 'Robert Chapman' has young foliage of gold and this ripens and matures to flame and red and this colour is held throughout the winter. Few of these varieties have much claim to beauty in flower but the soft purple flowers of 'Robert Chapman' are better than most. An attractive and most reliable plant is 'Golden Feather'. A small branch with its branchlets does indeed resemble a feather to some degree but what I like particularly about the plant is the fact that the golden hue never varies throughout the year. I have never known it to produce a flower. 'Gold Haze' came into cultivation with a great reputation but it disappoints me; maybe this is because with me the plant has always a hard look and will quite quickly grow into a plant which only maintains its golden colour at the ends of the branches. On the other hand, 'Beoley Gold' is good, while 'Fred J. Chapple' with its compact, erect habit and a multitude of colours in the new growth is a very pleasant plant. 'Prostrate Orange' is quite good but I think we can do without 'Orange Queen' and 'Sunset' if only on the score that few of us can find the room for every cultivar. I conclude this paragraph on heathers for foliage effect by modestly referring to *Calluna vulgaris* 'Leslie Slinger' and 'Ruby Slinger'. My plant might be best described as a strong multi-colour with foliage varying from orange

to bronze and red. The flower is poor. My wife's plant, on the other hand, is a really fine, white heather in August and September after it has given a fine show of creamy yellow foliage earlier in the year.

*ERICA CARNEA*. It is difficult not to think of placing *Erica carnea* at the top of the list in terms of usefulness and reliability. In any reasonable soil whether it be acid, neutral or alkaline it will thrive and for hardiness there cannot be any plant so impervious to frost and exposure. Perhaps this is not surprising as its home is fairly high in the mountains of mid-Europe.

The flowering period extends from late October until April but as in other heathers there are a few cultivars which are very difficult indeed to distinguish one from another. Thus, once again I am confronted with the problem of selecting varieties for a short list at the expense of other first-rate types. I regret that I have to omit from my list some very good plants indeed and I would not be surprised to find some opposition to my selection. However I must put forward the claim that the selection has great merit. I would briefly clear up the matter of white varieties by stating that 'Springwood White' is the only one worth considering and this low growing variety must rank highly in a short list of all heathers. This and most others are at their best after Christmas but the excellent red 'Eileen Porter' will start to show some colour as early as October. It improves all the time and will still be in good form in April. Not the easiest variety to obtain as it is slow growing and many nurserymen do not think it worthwhile to give it the extra time and trouble required to produce a good saleable plant. For the gardener purchasing a reasonable plant there are, however, no problems. The curiously named *Erica carnea* 'Carnea' is a fine pink, large flowers and a long season of beauty ending up in April. A little deeper in pink is 'Furzey', again a plant with great lasting qualities and in bloom for most of the winter. A grand old plant is 'James Backhouse', one of many splendid varieties produced by the Backhouse

nursery firm. It is just about the only variety with pale pink flowers that appeals to me. The near red flowers of 'King George' are so similar to those of 'Winter Beauty' that I cannot distinguish between them. 'King George' has, for some reason or other, a reputation far greater than 'Winter Beauty'



Fred Chapple with Ruby & Leslie Slinger, Isle of Man 1971. Photograph from Evelyn & David Deane (Evelyn is one of the Slingers' daughters and David is a member of THS).

but pick either of these for late winter flowering. The nearest to purple flowers in this section of heathers is 'Loughrigg' and its pleasing foliage contrasts attractively with the flower.

In any older list of heathers you will not find the name 'Pink Spangles'. When it was first introduced not many years ago it was classified as a cultivar of the hybrid *Erica darleyensis* but I think its proper place is here. Big pink flowers appear early in the New Year and the colour deepens as the flowers age – an excellent plant. Mention of the improvement in the flower colour with age brings me to the fine 'December Red'. I won't go as far as to say this plant is badly named but the truth is that in December the colour of the flower is anything but red. In fact the first colour you see is near white which must bring endless complaints to nurserymen. However, as the flowers mature the colour is undoubtedly red and through all its stages it is a very beautiful variety. I always have had a great liking for 'Praecox Rubra' which is easily recognised by its comparatively small flower of deep rich red. High in the list of red-flowered varieties 'Ruby Glow' must be placed and it must be one of several upon which all knowledgeable people would agree. Finally the very distinct 'Vivellii' must be found a place. In some ways it can be bracketed with 'Eileen Porter' and I wouldn't be surprised if the latter was a seedling from it. However, its unusual bronze foliage distinguishes it from all others and its red flowers come quite late in the winter.

[To be continued.]

## Queries through our website – [www.heathersociety.org](http://www.heathersociety.org) answered by experts

**Q** I would like to fill my very small front garden with heathers. I have been reading on your web site that they require full sun, my front garden faces north-west, and the soil is acid. Perhaps you could advise me whether the site is suitable, before I go to any unnecessary expense. My garden is in Neath, West Glamorgan, and the plot size, if it's of any use, is 15 ft x 8 ft. June Evans

Dear June

Here are a few replies – they are all positive. Yes, heathers will work. Good luck.

If you need some (more) recommendations for heather varieties, the Society publishes a booklet about *Recommended heathers* (lists 101 of the best).

**A** Definitely, a carpet! June Evans will need approx. 40 plants at standard recommended planting distances. With an acid soil the world is her oyster, plants to select a matter of personal choice. Has she a copy of *Recommended heathers*? If not sell her one! [She bought one!] Only provision will be not to plant near the house as lack of water might be a problem. Arnold Stow

**A** Personally I cannot see a problem. Obviously full sun is better but I would be more concerned about shade from trees or drainage. If it



is an open, well-drained site they should grow fine. *Jean Julian*

**A** I have some experience of such gardens. Some early morning sun in winter (except perhaps for the darkest few weeks) and some evening sun so, as this is a fairly mild, moist location with cool summers, *Erica carnea* cultivars or *E. x darleyensis* might be best for a carpet (but avoiding 'Arthur Johnson' and 'Furzey') with an *E. erigena* such as 'Brian Proudley' for some height. *E. carnea* 'Lake Garda' will bloom splendidly but its colour initially adds to the chill of a winter day! 'Eileen Porter', 'Myretoun Ruby' and 'Vivellii' are deep-coloured varieties. 'Rotes Jewel' may also be suitable. Paler shades/white are provided by the *E. x darleyensis* cultivars 'Aurelie Bregeon', 'Jenny Porter' and 'Silberschmelze', and *E. carnea* 'King George' and 'Springwood White'. If summer bloom is wanted, the white-flowered *E. vagans* 'Lyonesse' does splendidly in such a location, 'Mrs. D. F. Maxwell' is also good. Also seeming to do well in such a location are 'Ida M. Britten' and 'Summertime'. Most other summer- and autumn-flowering varieties are best avoided in my view, but try *E. x griffithsii* 'Jacqueline' as a contrast plant, giving some height but not too much spread, in the corner getting the most sun. Those that flower well benefit from not getting the flowers scorched as quickly as those in full sun and from better moisture.

Foliage varieties, even those with coloured spring growth, will not be good. The one exception in my experience is *Erica x williamsii* 'David Coombe'.  
*Richard Canovan*

**A** By coincidence, I am currently supplying 60 Heathers for a similar plot in Fordingbridge, Hampshire. For semi-shade Daboecias, *Erica carnea*, *E. x darleyensis* and *E. vagans* are all suitable and by creating contours and adding a few slow growing conifers (*Picea* or juniper) these will provide excellent contrast. I certainly do not think it is unnecessary expense as the plants will provide year round foliage/flower colour and interest for many years to come. *Julian Fitz-Earle*

**A** June does not mention whether the garden, which faces north-west, is overshadowed by trees. Assuming it is not it would be OK to plant heathers. Even a north-west location gets sun at some time in the day. Any heathers planted close to the house may not flower as well as those planted away from the house. Instead of a carpet, I would suggest introducing some verticality, such as tree heathers, *Erica erigena*, *E. arborea*, *E. x veitchii* and *E. australis* planted towards the front boundary. They would not overshadow any lower-growing species. *Erica carnea* and *E. x darleyensis* would go well with these if a winter-flowering garden is preferred. For a summer-flowering garden I would plant *E. terminalis* on the front boundary, with *E. manipuliflora* and *E. vagans* cultivars. *Barry Sellers*

**June's reply:** Delighted to hear my little plot is suitable for heathers. Can't wait to get started! Many thanks for your help, and for the information provided.

**Q** I wonder if you would be able to advise me ? I have a very dear friend called Heather ! She is from Melbourne, Australia and she and her husband are leaving the UK to return to Australia but not before some 5 month travelling to South America and Indonesia. My question is how would I go about finding out if I could arrange to have a Heather plant named after my friend Heather Smith? [surname changed]

My reason behind it is that it would be a gift to her from me for life and if she travels she can't take much with her and also, perhaps she could have her own plant in Australia - her home which she loves and adores.

This is a very random email but any information, including an honest no would be most welcome. I appreciate your time and consideration and wait to hear from you.

Samantha Jones.

**A** Dear Samantha  
Thank you for your enquiry. It is a very nice idea and we have had similar questions in the past. Unfortunately I cannot be very helpful.

The only way you could have a heather named after your friend is to find a heather breeder who has unnamed plants and wants a name for one. There are very few heather breeders - most are based in Germany and Holland - and they don't generally have unnamed plants "a-begging". And they like to choose their own names - the current fashion is for girl's names, but you cannot name any heather called 'Heather' as that would be against all the rules.

The only other way is to discover a remarkable heather in the wild, propagate it and then name it. But again, the finders of such plants usually chose the names themselves.

There is another problem - perhaps more serious - and that is that some heathers are very unwelcome in Australia. Heather has become pests especially in Tasmania, New South Wales, Victoria and South Australia, and so their introduction is not now considered to be a good thing. The Australians, rather late in the day, are trying to prevent new weeds coming in and heathers of European origin are not going to be favourably considered in years to come.

Already New Zealand has banned the import of ling (Scotch heather, *Calluna vulgaris*), and gardeners are even forbidden to propagate or plant this heather (except the double-flowered clones). Nurserymen cannot sell it and preference is given to native species.

Charles Nelson

## John Bridgland 1907 - 2007

The Society is sad to announce that John Bridgland, a member of *The Heather Society* since 1972, died on August 15<sup>th</sup>, 3 days after celebrating his 100<sup>th</sup> birthday.

John was for many years an active member of our Society growing heathers, attending Conferences, helping out with Society stands and giving talks on heathers. John was a resident of Fareham in Hampshire and was a well respected member of the Hampshire horticultural community and, up to

a few years ago, was on the speakers list for the Hampshire Federation of Horticultural Societies.



*John Bridgland in his garden in the late 1980's.*

John not only gave talks on heathers but talks on roses, fuchsias and other subjects. In 1979, at the age of 72 such was John's popularity as a speaker he had to recruit a novice to take on the heather talks in the west of the area. He had met the novice at the Weymouth Conference and such was John's ability to install horticultural enthusiasm into people the novice was dropped into the deep end and I am still giving talks now.

If you possess the 1985 *Year Book* you will find a photograph of John manning *The Heather Society's* 21<sup>st</sup> birthday stand in the Royal Southampton Horticultural Society's marquee at the Southampton Show and this was the first of several years of John and *The Heather Society* exhibiting at the Southampton Show. John also had a deep love for fuchsias and for many years, and up to his death, he was the President of the *Solent Fuchsia Club*. John was an expert at hybridising fuchsias and created several cultivars which are still grown today. When John reached his 90s he said that he was beginning to forget a few of the names and he decided to give up the talks. How many of us can say that we don't forget names at a much younger age?

I am sure you would wish to join me and many others from the Hampshire horticultural community and say a final farewell to John, a true enthusiast for his plants and an ambassador for *The Heather Society*.

*Phil Joyner*

*As a footnote to Phil's appreciation of John Bridgland, I thought this would be fitting time to remind members of John's contribution to a little bit of the Society's history. Ed.*

Back in 1974, in the *Autumn Bulletin* (Vol 2, Number 3) it was reported that there had been a competition for a *Heather Society* motif to be used on letters, compliment slips, notelets etc.

Of the twelve designs submitted, two were judged (by a professional painter who attended the Conference) as outstanding. One, by Mr. Ide of Camberley, Surrey, was said to be ideal as a formal letter heading. Whereas the other, by Lieut. Commander J M C Fenton from Inverewe, Scotland, lent itself to notelets, compliment slips, ties or brooches. It was therefore decided that these two should be joint winners.

Then, in 1977, in *Bulletin* Vol 2, Number 4, John Bridgland wrote an article that he entitled **The Story of the Badge:**

He said: The seed was sown when an item in the 1974 *Bulletin* suggested that the Heather Motif Competition designs could be used for, among other thing, a future tie or badge. I wrote to Mrs. MacLeod [the then Secretary] on the merits of the Society's having a badge and for my pains was asked to bring the matter up at the next Conference. This I did and Members present agreed that it was a good idea. What I did not expect was to be asked to proceed with it.

I'd never designed anything more inspiring than a garden path before – so how to set about a badge was at first beyond me. However I obtained some headed notepaper from Mrs. MacLeod and, using the motif as a base, painted an oval around it and filled in the flower and foliage colours. I made a dozen copies and posted them off to various badge makers culled mostly from the Birmingham Yellow Pages, asking them for quotations as per design.

Several replies came quickly, mostly unsatisfactory, but I waited patiently and eventually one arrived with no ifs or buts and moreover at a reasonable price. Then, having got so far, I suddenly thought "Now what do I do?" Having no official status I could not proceed any further without Council consent. Then, out of the blue came a notice that the Mid Southern Group was to meet at Brian Malin's house in Worthing. Although not a member, I live betwixt and between them and the Western Group. I sought permission and went to the Meeting. Members of the Council and the Treasurer, Mr. E R Turner, were present, so I handed my findings over to them and left it in their hands.

The result is now in evidence and, thankfully for me, it has been well received. At the recent Snowdonia Conference, the badge, a year after its conception, was being worn by all Members.

\*\*\*\*\*

Constance MacLeod added a footnote to this account, to tell members that John had donated three official brooches to the Society - for the Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer, in red, blue and yellow enamel, respectively.

## Group News

### Yorkshire

The Yorkshire Heather Group met on Wednesday, 8th August 2007 for field study trip on Strensall Common, one of the low land heaths to the north east of York but still within the city boundary. These 200 acres belong the Ministry of Defence and have been used for training troops for the past 150 years. At present they are very active with training for troops on their way to Afghanistan. Fortunately the red flag does not fly on Wednesday afternoons, so we were able to walk the common guided by Caroline Thorogood of the Yorkshire Wildlife Trust staff.

The trust manages the remaining acres of common not owned by the army. It was an exciting afternoon, with twelve in the party, including two new members, Simone and Maxine. I had suggested stout footwear, knowing that the

land can be boggy and had been flooded earlier in the spring but goodness me did we wish we had worn wellies, especially Brian who when jumping quite a deep ditch managed to find a very spongy landing and ended up with a wet bottom. We all had to dodge the mosquitos and everyone of us suffered from bites, although only one required medical treatment. It was worth the effort though as members appreciated seeing a large expanse of flowering *Erica tetralix*, the biggest they had ever seen. They were also very interested in the reeds and molina grass and other wild flora and fauna. There were one or two clumps of *E. cinerea* present and quite a lot of *Calluna* on the drier part of the heath across the road. As there are no catering facilities there a few of us retired afterwards to a local farm shop for refreshment.

The Yorkshire Heather Group has since met at the Study Centre at Harlow Carr on Saturday, 22nd September 2007. There were only seven members present but as Yorkshire is now down to a precious fifteen members in the whole of the largest county in England and several of these are of mature years and not able to attend meetings it was a good turnout. We do quite often entertain members from Cumbria but they were unable to attend this meeting. It was a pleasure however to see a couple of North East members present.

The talk was given by our Chairman, Prof. John Griffiths on simple methods of hybridising heathers, followed by member's slides including some of the conference at Haverford West. Whilst drinking our tea and biscuits a discussion was held on the future of the Yorkshire Group. As we are wonderfully well supported by RHS Harlow Carr we intend to carry on as long as possible. They have given us free facilities on Saturday afternoons, **15th March 2008, 31st May 2008** and 20th September 2008. We shall certainly take up the first two of these and our meetings on these Saturdays will be held in the Field Classroom. We may forgo the 20th September as the Heather Society's Annual General Meeting is to be held in the Study Centre Harlow Carr on the following **Saturday, 27th September 2008**.

As this small group can neither afford to pay an eminent speaker, nor would it be fair to bring one along to such a small number, it is intended to go back to basics for our talks i.e. How to grow heathers, how to prune heathers etc. and to advertise them both in "The Garden" and at the entrance in the hope that some RHS members and visitors will attend alongside *Heather Society* members. A regular visit to a garden or field study will be organised in the summer, maybe to Skipwith common on the south side of the city, where there are several acres of wild *Calluna* and birch, kept low by hebridean sheep but no mosquitos or deep water filled ditches.

## North East

The Annual Ponteland Flower Show, in which *The Heather Society* participates in an Open Competition, was held on Saturday, September 8<sup>th</sup>, 2007. Although it has been a very 'odd' year weather-wise, it seems to have suited the heathers admirably and the quality was very high; a point which the Judge was quick to notice. Another pleasing factor was that there were three new exhibitors who had not participated before so, all in all, it made for a good show and the bench was full and colourful.

No other events are planned for this year but dates for next year will appear in the Spring *Bulletin*.

Dorothy M. Warner.

Dorothy enclosed with her report, a copy of Ponteland's very impressive 30th Show Schedule, as she thought I might be interested to see the type of show the village puts on each



*year. She says that there have been shows in Ponteland since the late 1800's, although with gaps in between over the years. As far as I know, this is now the only show in England which continues to hold classes for heathers – although maybe Scotland and Wales have some? Ed.*

## East Midlands

I was unable to attend the East Midlands Group meeting at The Bannut on 18<sup>th</sup> August 2007 because my wife, Joan, has been seriously ill following hospital treatment and she needed me to look after her at home. (She still does at the time of writing). Joan and I were deeply disappointed to miss the event – we had been looking forward to it for more than a year. We missed seeing this famous garden, we missed the fellowship of friends and we missed the opportunity for happy chatter about heathers with our fellow enthusiasts.

A distinguished company did attend however and our Chairman, Arnold Stow, kindly stood in for me and prepared a report of the visit. His report follows but I would like to take this opportunity to thank Daphne and Maurice for their hospitality on the day and congratulate them on the creation of their very lovely garden. I want to thank Arnold for preparing the report that follows and all the participants for braving the rain and turning up.

*All good wishes, Allen Hall*

## Report on the visit to The Bannut Arnold Stow

Eleven members arrived at The Bannut, the home of Daphne and Maurice Everett on the 18<sup>th</sup> August to be greeted with what had become quite normal for the Summer of 2007 - Rain! However this did not deter members from enjoying a delicious lunch where we made the acquaintance of two new members Richard and Barbara Bowater who were attending their first Society meeting.



After lunch, umbrellas were raised and a tour of the garden followed. There is so much to see and admire about this skilfully designed garden. The heathers naturally were a delight, although Daphne had to apologise for the *cinereas* which did not appear to find her heavy soil to their liking.

The Knot Garden, well documented in the Society's writing and indeed in the RHS Garden Magazine, was pointed out to the new members and naturally they were impressed

by the heathers being used instead of the normal Box. Most striking on the day however were the sumptuous displays of blue and white *Agapanthus* surrounding the house. Apart from the plantings there is also much humour in this garden, but you have to visit to appreciate it.

Eventually we retreated to the dry refreshment area for tea and a final chat before making our way home - in the rain!

## Home Counties

On Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> September Home Counties Group members met for their annual meeting at the RHS Gardens, Wisley. The weather was sunny and very warm for the morning walk around the Heather Gardens National Collection. It had been a year since the Home Counties Group had met and it was nice to see old friends again and to welcome two new faces, John Martin (nurseryman member) and John Mooney.

The theme of the afternoon session in the Garden Meeting Room was "A Miscellany of Heathers". HS Chairman, Arnold Stow, gave a talk with slides on heather gardens which he had visited and which included shots of members at past conferences. This was followed by HS Treasurer, Phil Joyner's talk with slides on African heathers. HS Council member, Richard Canovan, finished the slide show session with shots of his heather garden and favourite plants. Thanks to these three gentlemen for providing an interesting and well balanced programme.

Arnold Stow provided plants for sale and auction and John Martin also provided plants for sale, the proceeds of which have been kindly donated to Home Counties Group funds.

Prior to an excellent tea with cakes kindly provided by Josey Stow, Lin Joyner and Pam Millis (thank you ladies), Josey judged the table show and the winners were as follows:-

- 1) Best flower arrangement in which heathers predominate - Pamela Lee (Turpin Trophy)
- 2) Best vase of hardy heather in flower, single variety - Derek Millis
- 3) Best vase of heather chosen for foliage - Pamela Lee.

It has to be said that once again there was a disappointing number of entries for the table show, it would be nice to have more entries next year so we could make the judge's job more difficult!

The Garden Meeting Room has been booked for next year's meeting which will take place on **Saturday 20th September 2008**

*Derek Millis*

## South West Area News

The visit planned for **Heale Gardens** near Salisbury is still 10 days away at the time of writing and will be reported on in the *Spring Bulletin*. The garden to be selected for the get together in the spring of 2008 has not yet been chosen but will be announced in the *Spring Bulletin* and the visit will be arranged for the afternoon of either **Saturday April 26<sup>th</sup>** or **Saturday May 10<sup>th</sup>**.

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. The gardens will not necessarily be heather gardens as the purpose of any get together is to exchange information on topics of heather culture and to meet old friends and make new ones. There is no need to let me know you are coming beforehand, just turn up on the day.

*Phil Joyner*

## **They were 85 years old, and had been married for sixty years.**

Though they were far from rich, they managed to get by because they watched their pennies. Though not young, they were both in very good health, largely due to the wife's insistence on healthy foods and exercise for the last two decades.

One day, their good health didn't help them, when they went on a rare vacation and their plane unfortunately crashed, sending them off to Heaven.

They reached the Pearly Gates, and St. Peter escorted them inside.

He took them to a beautiful mansion, furnished in gold and fine silks, with a fully stocked kitchen and a waterfall in the master bath. A maid could be seen hanging their favourite clothes in the closet. They gasped in astonishment when St. Peter said, "Welcome to Heaven. This will be your home now."

The old man asked Peter how much all this was going to cost.

"Why, nothing," Peter replied; "remember, this is your reward in Heaven."

The old man looked out the window and right there he saw a championship golf course, finer and more beautiful than any ever built on Earth.

"What are the greens fees?" grumbled the old man.

"This is heaven," St. Peter replied. "You can play for free, every day, any time of day that you want."

Next they went to the clubhouse and saw the lavish buffet lunch, with every imaginable cuisine laid out before them, from seafood to steaks to exotic desserts, free flowing beverages. "Don't even ask," said St. Peter to the man. "This is Heaven - it is all free for you to enjoy."

The old man looked around and glanced nervously at his wife. "Well, where are the low fat and low cholesterol foods, and the decaffeinated tea?" he asked.

"That's the best part," St. Peter replied. "You can eat and drink as much as you like of whatever you like, and you will never get fat or sick. This is Heaven!"

The old man inquired. "No gym to work out at?" "Not unless you want to," was the answer.



*The Heather Society Badge designed by John Bridgland, see page 17.*





## **The Heather Society**

**Your Council are in dire need of a  
"Minutes Secretary"**

This involves attending the three Council meetings per year, 1.00 pm to 4.30 pm in February, Junee and November in Central London.

You will be required to take down the minutes of these meetings (long hand works well), word process and email them to Councillors.

Lunch, travelling expenses and stationery costs etc. are paid

For further details please contact:-

**Chairman**, Arnold Stow  
Tel: 01494 449397  
stow.limmer@btinternet.com

**Secretary**, Jean Julian  
Tel: 01904 707316  
jean.julian@btinternet.com

**HEATHER SOCIETY  
PLANT-ORDERING SERVICE?**



## USEFUL ADDRESSES

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

- Chairman & Steering Committee** *Policy matters, major events etc.*  
Mr. A. J. Stow, Widmour, Limmer Lane, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire, HP12 4QR.  
*e-mail:* [Stow.limmer@btinternet.com](mailto:Stow.limmer@btinternet.com) *Tel:* (01494) 449397
- Treasurer** Mr. P.L. Joyner, 84 Kinross Road, Rushington, Totton, Southampton, Hampshire, SO40 4BN.  
*e-mail:* [pjoyner@supanet.com](mailto:pjoyner@supanet.com) *Tel:* (02380) 864336
- Secretary & Slide Librarian** *Council Matters/Hire of slides*  
Mrs. J. Julian, "Matchams", Main Street, Askham Richard, York, YO23 3PT.  
*e-mail:* [jeanjulian@btinternet.com](mailto:jeanjulian@btinternet.com) *Tel:* (01904) 707316
- Yearbook Editor & Registrar** *Articles for the Yearbook / Naming of Heathers*  
Dr. E.C. Nelson, Tippiwiche Cottage, Hall Road, Outwell, Wisbech PE14 8PE.  
*e-mail:* [admin@heathersociety.org.uk](mailto:admin@heathersociety.org.uk)  
*Tel:* [int +44] 0 845 3240 580 *FAX:* (01945) 774077
- Bulletin Editor** *Notes, articles for the Bulletin*  
Mrs. D. Everett, The Bannut, Bringsty, Herefordshire, WR6 5TA.  
*e-mail:* [everettbannut@zetnet.co.uk](mailto:everettbannut@zetnet.co.uk)  
*Tel:* (01885) 482206 *FAX:* (01885) 482206
- Advertising** *Adverts, advertising rates etc. for the Bulletin*  
Mr. D. Small - details as Website
- Administrator** *Subscriptions, Orders for publications etc.*  
Dr. E.C. Nelson, c/o Tippiwiche Cottage, Hall Road, Outwell, Wisbech PE14 8PE  
Cambridgeshire UK...*e-mail:* [admin@heathersociety.org.uk](mailto:admin@heathersociety.org.uk)  
*Tel:* (01945) 774077
- Conference Manager** Mrs. S. Kay, Lettergesh East, Renvyle, Co. Galway, Republic of Ireland  
*e-mail:* [susiek@gofree.indigo.ie](mailto:susiek@gofree.indigo.ie) *Tel:* 00353 95 43575
- Website** Mr. D. Small, Denbeigh, All Saints Road, Creeting St. Mary, Ipswich, Suffolk, IP6 8PJ.  
*e-mail:* [heathers@zetnet.co.uk](mailto:heathers@zetnet.co.uk)  
*Tel:* (01449) 711220 *FAX:* (01449) 711220
- Plant Sales** Mrs. A. Fitz-Earle, 78, Woodland Way, West Wickham, Kent BR4 9LR.  
*e-mail:* [allisonfitzearle@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:allisonfitzearle@yahoo.co.uk)  
*Tel:* 0790 582 5818
- Group Organisers** *(Remember, you will be very welcome at any local meeting or visit!)*
- East Midlands** Mr. A. Hall, 10, Upper Green, Nanpantan, Loughborough, Leics. LE11 3SG.  
*e-mail:* [halla32@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:halla32@tiscali.co.uk) *Tel:* 01509 238923
- North East** Mrs. D. M. Warner, Littlecroft, Click-em-in, Ponteland, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE20 9BQ.  
*Tel:* (01661) 823299
- Home Counties** Mr. D. Millis, 18, The Horseshoe, Leverstock Green, Hemel Hempstead, Herts HP3 8QW  
*e-mail:* [Derek.Millis@care4free.net](mailto:Derek.Millis@care4free.net) *Tel:* (01442) 254880
- South West** Mr. P.L. Joyner, 84 Kinross Road, Rushington, Totton, Southampton, Hampshire, SO40 4BN.  
*e-mail:* [pjoyner@supanet.com](mailto:pjoyner@supanet.com) *Tel:* (02380) 864336
- Yorkshire** Dr. J. Griffiths, 9, Ashlea Close, Leeds, West Yorkshire. LS25 1JX.  
*Tel:* (01132) 863349