

Bulletin of The Heather Society



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Autumn 2008

DIARY OF EVENTS

2008

31 October CLOSING DATE FOR THE 2009 YEARBOOK

2009

4 April South West Hillier Gardens, Romsey

15 June CLOSING DATE FOR THE SPRING BULLETIN

July BHGA Stand
 Hampton Court Show

Stop Press – 18 October

Gardening With Hardy Heathers by David Small and Ella May Wulff is now available and members who placed pre-publication orders should have received their copies.

As is to be expected from two such expert heather enthusiasts as our President, David Small and Ella May Wulff from Oregon, USA, the book is a mine of information, covering every facet of the subject of heathers, as well as being beautifully produced and illustrated. It will be reviewed by Chris Brickell in the 2009 *Yearbook*.

The price of the book is £30.00 – it can be ordered from all good bookshops or over the internet.

Also – look out for an article on heathers by the RHS's Matthew Wilson, in the December 2008 edition of the BBC *Gardens Illustrated* magazine.



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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

Whilst looking back through some old Bulletins recently, I discovered, to my amazement, that with this edition, it is twenty years since I took over from Diane Jones as Editor of the Bulletin. I can still remember the trepidation I felt when I was asked to take the job on, by our then Chairman, Major General Pat Turpin. To make the task a little easier, we bought our first Computer - an Amstrad, with 5 1/2" floppy disks and no hard drive, which probably cost as much then as some that are on sale today. I have a much faster machine these days but, some years ago, our President (David Small), who is a 'wizz' with such things, wrote a programme for the Amstrad, converting it to a very useful plant labelling machine - and I WAS going to say - it is still going strong - but, sadly, it has just given up the ghost.

CONFERENCE 2009

- WHAT? ANNUAL GATHERING AND A.G.M. 2009
WHERE? BEST WESTERN REIGATE MANOR HOTEL, SURREY
WHEN? 11th to 14th September 2009
WHY? To meet old heather friends and hopefully make new ones, with a theme of climate change and its effect on heather.
HOW? By booking your place NOW!!

As usual, the number of rooms available is limited and early booking will ensure your room is reserved.

The programme will include visits to Nymans Gardens, Mary Bowerman's garden and The Savill Gardens at Windsor. Our speakers will be Mr. Ikin, Head Gardener at Nymans and Dr. Simon Caporn. We hope to run a plant sale, a book & memorabilia auction along with some fun and games.

The A.G.M. will take place on Sunday 13th September in the morning.

The approximate cost will be £290 for single accommodation and £230 for double or twin. This is per person and includes all meals, coach and entry to the gardens. To secure your place for 2009, a non-refundable registration fee of £5 per person is required. This should be sent to Dr. E. C. Nelson at the address in the back of the *Bulletin*.

2008 Mini Conference & AGM

held at RHS Harlow Carr, Harrogate 27/28 September

Derek Millis

As the International Conference was held on Vancouver Island, Canada, this year a Mini Conference and AGM was held later at RHS Harlow Carr on Saturday 27 and Sunday 28 September.

The programme commenced at 2.00 pm on Saturday, in the Study Centre at Harlow Carr, when Chairman Arnold Stow welcomed members to the AGM, before introducing Jean Julian (*THS* Secretary) who gave a most interesting illustrated talk on "The History of Harlow Carr."



Group photograph at Harlow Carr

Harlow Carr is the most northerly of the four RHS Gardens. 'Harlow' meaning hill and 'Carr' meaning bog, aptly describe its location and the conditions facing the developers of the garden.

In 1946 the *Northern Horticultural Society (NHS)* was founded and it then started looking for a northern counterpart to the *RHS* garden at Wisley. Harlow Carr estate was considered the perfect site for this. The *NHS* merged with the *RHS* in 2001 who subsequently took over the running of Harlow Carr and contributed much needed extra funding for a number of exciting projects.

It was a pleasure to welcome to Jean's talk the celebrated gardener, broadcaster and *THS* member Geoffrey Smith, who was the longest serving curator at Harlow Carr (1954 - 1975) and responsible for much of the development work that led to the present day garden including most of the tree and rhododendron planting.



Jean Julian with Geoffrey Smith

Jean Julian having been warmly applauded for her talk was presented with a large *Erica erigena* 'Thing Nee' by David Edge (*THS* Council Member, soon to be appointed Chairman).

This was followed by tea with the splendid refreshments provided by members of the Yorkshire Group.

The AGM then formally commenced with an opening statement by Arnold Stow who said that this would be his last AGM as Chairman as he was standing down as Chairman and Council member. He outlined the highs and lows of his 8 years in office and thanked those Council members who had so



Dean Peckett from Harlow Carr
with our own Andy Collins
from Wisley



Arnold receiving a gift of *Erica*
erigena 'Brian Proudley'

ably assisted him during this period.

Following approval of the Minutes of the AGM held on 9 September 2007, Secretary, Jean Julian, presented the Annual Report for 2008 outlining the objectives and activities of the Society, its achievements and performance plus a review of the year. Heather education via its publications, web site and the media was most important. Membership had continued to decline slowly and local groups had struggled to keep going.

Treasurer, Phil Joyner, then presented the Society's Financial Review which had continued to show an excess of expenditure over income; two factors contributing to this had been the gradual decline in membership and increased costs. Council had therefore decided to increase subscriptions in January 2009. Council member Richard Canovan was praised for his financial advice that ensured investments were in good order.

There was no change to the Appointments made by the Council but for the agenda item Election of Officers, David Edge was elected as

Chairman and Andy Collins and Derek Millis were re-elected to Council.

Arrangements for the 2009 AGM and Conference in Reigate, Surrey, were outlined by Susie Kay and under Any Other Business Derek Millis stated that the National Collection at Wisley required an increase in support from the Society if it was to be kept up to date. Pamela Lee mentioned that the *British Heather Growers Association* has been allocated a stand at the RHS 2009 Hampton Court Show and they would appreciate help from the Society prior to and during the show.

With formalities completed, David Plumridge (North East Group) gave an excellent illustrated talk on his visit to this year's International Conference.

Phil Joyner presented to David on behalf of the Society a large specimen of *Erica erigena* 'Thing Nee' in appreciation of his talk.

At the conclusion of the afternoon session, THS President, David Small, presented Arnold Stow with an engraved glass bowl, and David Edge presented him with a large specimen heather plant of *Erica erigena* 'Brian Proudley' in recognition of his services to the Society.

The Saturday evening dinner was held at the Swallow St. George Hotel in Harrogate where some of the members were staying for the weekend.

On Sunday morning members reconvened at Harlow Carr for a guided tour of the gardens led by Dean Peckett, Garden Superintendent. Dean's enthusiasm for the gardens was apparent and contributed to our enjoyment of this fine garden.

The AGM had been extremely well organised by the *THS* Conference Manager Susie Kay and was well attended, and with the added bonus of fine weather it had been a most pleasurable weekend.

Third International Heather Conference **Susie Kay, Connemara, Ireland**

Eight members of *The Heather Society* gathered in Victoria, Vancouver Island, everybody coming from different directions. Barry Sellers & Richard Canovan had enjoyed a pre-conference tour with Dee Daneri through California, Oregon & Washington State, whilst Jean Julian & Mike Preston had a wonderful train ride from Calgary and Rita & David Plumridge, who had been staying with the Safstroms in the Canadian Rockies, had an arduous journey by car to avoid a landslide. David Edge and I just met up in Seattle and took a short plane ride to the island. Also joining from Europe were six Germans, from Holland one member and from Italy, Jaimie Fagundez and his wife with the youngest attendee, just 13 months old.

But, it was to work straight away, as each Society & Chapter had to



*The Brits - minus Mike Preston,
David P., Barry, Rita, David E., Susie,
Richard & Jean.*

assemble a poster to demonstrate their activities. Ours had been researched and collated by David Small, for which we were very grateful. It showed some of the history of The Society together with photographs of some of the members' gardens. The organising committee had provided the necessary glues & sticky stuff so the job was not too difficult. We were surrounded by lots of beautiful heather plants provided by David Wilson, a grower and nurseryman from the mainland. There was one container with a fabulous plant of *Erica cruenta*, which I longed to stuff into my

suitcase and bring home. All of the plants were in wonderful condition and we saw varieties which would not be available in the U.K.

At pre-dinner drinks we met some members of the *Victoria Historical*

Society dressed in period costume. They included the Town Crier, whosummoned us to dinner. These people would also greet cruise ships throughout the year and had to rush off for more welcomes. It was a very busy time as British Columbia was celebrating its 150th anniversary.

Our lectures varied in their content and ranged from "seeds of *Erica*" to "how to make a container trough using a fish box" with "propagation on two coasts" and "garden design" in between. But Barry Sellers is going to write about all of these for the *Yearbook*.

Saturday was garden tour day. What wonderful gardens we were taken to. Driving up the coast and glimpsing views of the sea and all the inlets. Each garden had been lovingly constructed and cared for and we heard the stories behind their finished (if a garden is ever finished) design.

Before dinner we had to vote for the best poster design. Despite David Small's wonderful efforts, we did not win. Jurgen Schroeder and his team, which included Kurt Kramer, took the prize. It was a fascinating display of the work done to make over an old coal mine and also showed fantastic photos of heather taken by Kurt.

We were all really enjoying ourselves by this time, making new friends and catching up with previous acquaintances. The socially unacceptable, i.e. the smokers, had little meetings six metres down the street and two ladies of this group were responsible for bringing in a First Nation's person and showing him heather in all its glory, hoping he would join the N.A.H.S.

Sunday evening was the big event in Victoria with a symphony orchestra playing from a barge moored in the harbour to thousands of people gathered on the edge of the land. There was not a spare inch of space as people settled down for the entertainment, which lasted most of the evening and then continued the next night. It was strange that any pop artist playing at this event could be heard twenty blocks away, but for the symphony we had to strain our ears. Several of us had repaired to my hotel room with suitable beverages and were able to enjoy the fireworks which seemed to be directed straight to my balcony.

My little bit of participation was to sit up at the front and try to talk about growing Cape Heaths outdoors in the West of Ireland, but I learned more than I talked about, as Mario Abreu, N.A.H.S. President told us of his way of pruning *E. verticillata* by cutting it to the ground and then watching it re-sprout.

To round off our five glorious days, we were treated to several turns by a team of lady dancers and a lovely buffet lunch.

Despite the long journey, it really was worth going. Many congratulations must go to the team who organised the conference, at least two years in the planning. Everything ran smoothly and everybody was looked after.

Therefore - *North American Heather Society & Vancouver Island Heather Society* - stand up and take a bow. I say "didn't they do well".

So, post Conference tour day arrived and our first adventure was to find our ferry to Port Angeles. Somehow we all managed the form-filling to enter or re-enter the United States. I think it was only a joke when over the loud speakers came the announcement for Ella May Wulff to organise her party in a proper manner. It appeared that our bags were going to be loaded for

another destination. But soon we were almost flying across Puget Sound to a wonderful vista of snow capped mountains and another country and more gardens and lots more fun, but if you really want to know about this, please read your *Yearbook* where an in- depth article will appear

[Some pictures of the pre-conference tour and two days of the Conference appear on the enclosed CD. Ed.]

Tippitiwitchet Corner: The Administrator's {& Registrar's} Log Number 5

Charles Nelson

Changes of Addresses

Please note the following amendments to the members' addresses:
CANOVAN, Mr. Richard A. e-mail: richardcanovan@vodafone.net
POWELL, Mr. Adam: Talaton Plants, Egremont Barn, Payhembury, HONITON, EX14 3JA, Devon. e-mail: adam.powell2@btopenworld.com

"Lesley Sparkes"

Lesley Sparkes has sent me an e-mail pointing out an error in information that *The Heather Society* has issued for many years. Her mother was Joan, not Ruth. At my invitation, Lesley is writing an article for the 2009 *Yearbook* about her family, and especially about her grandfather, J. W. Sparkes: "Joe Sparkes was a wonderful character, First World War veteran and entrepreneur."

Gardening With Hardy Heathers by David Small and Ella May Wulff

Timber Press has informed me that copies will be available in early October; members who availed of the special offer will receive copies as soon as possible after the consignment is delivered to the Society.

Heather and weather

I noticed the following interesting use of heather in an item entitled "Watching the way the wind blows" by Freya McClements, which appeared on the BBC News website.*

According to the County Donegal postman, Michael Gallagher, from Glenfinn, quoted by Ms. McClements, there are several "natural signs" that are useful in predicting the weather that's ahead. "This year, the flora and fauna around his postal route in the Blue Stack mountains [told] him it's going to be a good summer." Mind you, Mr. Gallagher doesn't define what he means by "good".

Among the signs Michael watches for is the growth of heather – the species isn't specified, but ling (*Calluna*) and bell heather and crossed-leaved heath all occur thereabouts. "You have to watch the heather coming up", says Michael, "if it comes up a wee bit early that's bad, but this year it started to come up nicely, at the right time."

Of course, that was 4 July, at the beginning of a month summarized by Met

Éireann**, the Irish National Meteorological Service, as "Very wet and dull in most places; becoming warm after cool first half." In July, Malin Head, in the far north of Donegal, received 126mm of rain, almost twice the mean monthly rainfall. In August, which we must also count as a summer month, over 123mm of rain fell on the Head, well above the average precipitation for that month. Met Éireann reports that August was "exceptionally wet and dull", a summary confirmed by the friends in the Londonderry area.

I wonder who got the forecast wrong, not the wild heather surely?

With acknowledgement to

*http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/northern_ireland/foyle_and_west/7488075.stm

** <http://www.met.ie/climate/monthly-summary.asp>

After an apostrophe

Lock away your copy of *Eats, Shoots and Leaves* [by Lynne Truss] before reading this (and if you have never read the book, do so, please!).

The *International code of nomenclature for cultivated plants* includes rules (Arts 32.14 & 32.15) about cultivar names that contain possessives. It requires, for consistency, that when the possessive noun is singular, the apostrophe should be followed by an "s" even when the final letter of the noun is "s".

Thus a cluster of cultivar names needs to be modified from their present familiar forms, as follows (with particular apologies to Jos Flecken and the late Mrs. Ann Parris for the alternation of their names).

Erica x darleyensis 'Cross's Puzzle'

Erica tetralix 'Jos's Creeping'

Erica cinerea 'Jos's Golden'

Erica cinerea 'Jos's Honeymoon'

Calluna vulgaris 'Jos's Lemon'

Calluna vulgaris 'Jos's Whitie'

Erica erigena 'Mrs Parris's Lavender'

Erica x darleyensis 'Mrs Parris's Red'

Erica erigena 'Mrs Parris's White'

Erica carnea 'Rubens's Palette' " E.2006:08

There are instances in languages other than English where singular possessives require an apostrophe + "s", but not in German (unless the noun itself ends in "s"). Thus the correct forms of the following cultivar names, which are in German, should not have any apostrophe:

Erica carnea 'Kramers Weisse'

Erica x darleyensis 'Kramers Rote'

... and finally

I spent an interesting morning at the Umbra Nature Reserve in County Derry, Northern Ireland, recently. Corsican heath is naturalized in a nature reserve on the coast. The shrubs were in full flower – there is more to be said, and I hope to include an article in *Heathers* 6. (The deadline for articles is 31 October, for everyone still itching to put pen to paper!)

Cherrybank: New Developments

Richard Canovan

The excellent report in the Summer *Bulletin* on the tragic situation concerning the Cherrybank garden, following the collapse of the Calyx project with the failure to secure lottery funding, prompted me to explore the situation in greater depth, as there had been no response from the Scottish Garden Trust after five months. The silence was deafening. The analysis revealed a stark problem and we certainly could not await developments.

A key issue was the local planning policy for the area. The garden is actually allocated for business use in the adopted Perth Local Plan (1995) which is the starting point for considering development proposals. The relevant policy (69) in the plan for this use requires business development to be compatible with adjoining residential areas and to contain a high proportion of landscaping and open space. The plan should have been reviewed but the draft plan was pulled because of impending planning reform legislation. The Council could not recall whether any objections were made to this 2004 plan which proposed carrying forward the policy of business use for the garden site. That it was again allocated for business uses is quite surprising given the importance attached to the garden locally.

Scottish planning policy for open space (SPP11) is strong with a presumption against development of open spaces, and asks local planning authorities to identify and protect them in local development plans. But for this policy to bite, the garden should be identified in the plan protected in line with an open space strategy to co-ordinate policy and assess provision and need for open space. The relevant guidance, Planning Advisory Note, PAN 65, supports this policy. It also encourages a partnership approach to seek mechanisms and funding arrangements for their maintenance.

Therefore, the planning system appeared to offer little protection and, as *The Heather Society* is a UK charity, *Planning Aid for Scotland* were approached to see if this interpretation was up-to-date and whether anything useful could be done to help protect this garden of international importance. They agreed with this analysis but had some ideas and advice.

"Cherrybank Garden is not only a national treasure, it is an international treasure," said Stefani McRae-Dickey from Oregon, secretary of the North American Heather Society, reported *The Courier*. She continued, "It has one of the largest collections of heath and heather in the world and is the standard we use to compare and identify cultivars. Heather lovers around the world aspire to visit Cherrybank Garden". "The garden is well known, even to those who have yet to visit, by the photographs, books and slide shows in which it has been featured." In view of this, and as the plan is not going to be updated in the near future, could anything be done? Its history has been described in various *Yearbook* articles.

Members of both the UK and Scottish Parliaments for Perth fiercely opposed development of the garden. The 3,000 signature petition is a material consideration in any decision by the Council. There was a legal document,

which was some reassurance. Complications arose because there were other buildings involved, hence the lengthy negotiations. The land is owned by the *Scottish Garden Trust* but the visitor centre and car park are being sold off.

One positive item of news revealed by *Planning Aid for Scotland* was that Perth & Kinross Council was considering a masterplan for the Cherrybank area which would exclude the garden and hence protect it from development. That would not have to await the revision of the local plan. There has been some development on the site immediately to the west, including sheltered housing and a hotel, and a park and ride is proposed nearby but these do not threaten the garden. *Planning Aid for Scotland* offered to comment on a draft representation to the Council ready for a proposal to develop the garden. We could even seek call-in of an application for decision by the Scottish Minister and ensure a public inquiry.

There was news from BBC Scotland that the garden had been saved. Then the Perthshire Advertiser announced that the *Scotland Garden Trust* was "gifting" the garden to the people of Perth but that a planning application had been submitted to Perth & Kinross Council's planning department seeking permission for a change of use of the visitor centre to offices. Checking the weekly list of planning applications on their website revealed the application on behalf of the *Scotland Garden Trust*, dated 8 September (reference 08/01819/FUL). The neighbour notification plan, reveals that the five beds nearest the entrance, A, B1 and 2, E and most of W plus the historic Bell, are inside the application site boundary so under threat (this can be compared with the *Handy Guide* and Barry Sellers article which will show over 100 cultivars at risk). We have, at the time of writing, sent a draft objection to Planning Aid for Scotland. Our sister societies could make their own representations reflecting its international importance. We are also informing the National Council for the Conservation of Plants and Gardens of the application as an objection from them will carry most weight. Time is short as the statutory consultation period has passed, but representations submitted prior to the case officer's site visit will be taken into account.

It may be possible for *THS* to arrange a small group of volunteer heather enthusiasts to assist Perth & Kinross Leisure maintain the garden in this transitional phase by undertaking the specialist pruning work. We should follow the example set by *HERE* in the US. It is unclear whether this was done in 2008, and some of the plants are in poor shape, so careful pruning may be necessary in 2009. One visit could be in early March for the summer flowering varieties and another later in the spring for the winter and spring flowering varieties. We should be able to involve as volunteers some of those that campaigned for the retention of the garden and pass on some of the skills needed to deal with the pruning work. As the main part of the garden is being passed to the people of Perth, such community involvement should encourage a sense of pride and ownership.

The Heather Society was not consulted. Subsequent developments including the decision on the application, due on 3 November 2008 will be described in the *Spring Bulletin*.

References

- 1992 Bell's National Heather Collection, Cherrybank Gardens, Perth, Norrie Robertson, *Yearbook* Volume 3, No 10, p27 - 31.
- 1993 The 22nd Annual Conference, University of Dundee, September 11th - 13th 1992, Walter Wornick, USA, *Yearbook* Volume 4, No 1, p7 - 11.
- 2005 International Heather Gardens 2: Cherrybank, Scotland, Barry Sellers, *Yearbook*, *Heathers* 2, p59 - 60.
- 2007 Scottish Planning Policy 11: Physical Activity and Open Space.
- 2008 Planning Advice Note PAN 65 Planning and Open Space. Handy Guide 3rd Edition
- 2008 Loss of Garden would be felt far beyond Perth, *The Courier*, 3 March.
- 2008 Garden "gift" to people of Perth, *Perthshire Advertiser*, 19 September.

Connemara Chat

Susie Kay - Connemara, Ireland

I spend long amounts of time wondering which of nature's trials is the most damaging. Having read David Plumridge's trials with frost, I felt I should challenge him and that salt laden winds are the worst.

I know I have previously talked about the damage that salt wind can do, but in March we had the worst salt storm for years. We watched in dismay over the following week as the North Western side of all the plants turned a becoming shade of brown. And, as is the norm, no rain followed to wash the salt off. This event just helped to deepen the depression that was sitting in this little corner of Ireland.

Although I had made a new bed for heathers, it now only contained the ashes of the beloved Geis, our nearly three year old Irish Wolfhound. It was ready to be planted, but I had decided to wait for the weeds to come up, so that they could get a blast of "Round-Up". Mulch was ready from the gathered fuchsias. Eventually I was able to plant up half of it. It is to be all bud bloomers, one of which I found in the wild. The exact location is a secret, but I had managed to get eight plants going from cutting material. Remembering Kurt Kramer's "Garden Girls", I christened my find "Connemara Colleen". This plant is only for my own use and probably not remarkable, so I shall not be registering it. In April, pruning the plants down, ready for planting out, I took the new top growth and made cuttings. Within three weeks they had rooted enough to transfer to individual pots and now, in August, are ready to plant out - another 20 plants. I must have done something right this time. I have more fun with cuttings and seeds, because as everybody knows I am not a gardener.

Just over a year ago, another wild plant took my eye. I was with Ted Oliver and his son Thomas and we had enjoyed a good long walk along the green road by the Killary. We spotted an *Erica cinerea*, which was bicoloured the opposite way round to *E. cinerea* 'Eden Valley'. More cutting material, with some sent to my professional grower, David Edge. He was more successful than me and has raised twenty plants, which I have named 'Ted Oliver' and hopefully I shall be able to register that.

Like everybody else we have had a funny year, weather-wise. May brought wonderful warm days and everything really grew. Even some of the heathers written off by the salt started to go green and some optimism returned, brought along by the acquisition of a new wolfhound puppy. Only a few heathers have been flattened by his enormous feet. This has also been the year of hacking down. Considering that planting did not really begin until 1996, growth of many shrubs and trees has been phenomenal. Please could somebody tell me why the heathers won't grow the same way? I have been learning and lamenting that *Calluna* are really a no-no for me and I should stick to *Daboecia*, *Erica x watsonii*, *E. x williamsii* and some *cinerea* for the summer. The winter garden is less of a problem and I get some favourable comments from visitors, but *E. carnea* does not do well so we have lots of *E. x darleyensis* & *erigena*. The cuttings I took off the wild *erigena* from just down the road are now 12 inch high plants and are fascinating to watch as they open white and slowly turn to pink.

No report should be written without mention of the under-gardener, who has done a sterling job with his chainsaw, picks and lump hammer, hedge trimmer etc. But I do find sometimes an under-gardener needs to be watched. I have nearly lost a prized *restio*, which was dug up in error. I have almost forgiven him.

The Cape heaths continue to survive, well, most of them - particularly *E. annectens* and the hybrid 'Helena' & *E. verticillata*.

One should say that the plants that really thrive are the weeds. Some of you may regard these as ornamental, but they are a nuisance here, especially *Gunnera tinctoria*, which is colonising every piece of land that is disturbed. A few hundred metres down my breen, a neighbour dug out a piece of land; this is now covered in it. The road alongside the Killary is totally infested, but at last the Council have applied some noxious substance on it and we shall see if there is any effect.

I have had, for the last two years an on-going project. Alan had hand dug an open drain across the field, into which he introduced some curves to make it ornamental. After my visit to Oregon, also two years ago, I asked for a water feature, which was put in place. Nothing fancy with pumps and fountains etc, but just some natural stone slabs and a pipe brought from the stream to feed it. Further to this I decided to line the banks with heather that liked wet feet. The drain is about 130 ft. long, and with both sides, this makes a fairly large area to cover with plants. With a lot of cuttings, I am gradually planting it up with *Erica mackaiana* 'Shining Light', 'Errigal Dusk' and what I call 'Kerry Mac', which came from the find by David Edge in Co. Kerry of *E. mackaiana*; also *E. stuarti* 'Irish Lemon' & 'Irish Orange'. There are still gaps to be filled so there is an on-going propagation exercise. All of these plants are doing well, but funnily enough *E. tetralix* does not seem happy here.

I am now just back from the Third International Conference, which was a great experience. The gardens we saw were magnificent and put me back into reviewing my own miserable piece of land, but my motto now when I am planting is "The Triumph of Hope over Expectation".

As I write this we have experienced monsoon like conditions with just under 8 inches of rain in six days. Our wettest week since records began, 11 years ago. This produced two flash floods down our stream with damage to the banks, but we are still surviving and trying to have a heather garden.

In Praise of Heather

Michael Kirby

Membership of *The Heather Society* is falling. The public awareness of the benefits of growing heather is at a low point. What can we do about it?

What is required is a high profile promotion.

If a certain Domestic Goddess were to mention that sun-dried cabbage leaves were the latest culinary delight and to do so on television, radio or in the press, the shops would soon be full of them and the air sulphurous with the stench of broiled brassicas.

If only someone would, in a gardening context, promote the delights of heather cultivation. Is there anyone out there with media contacts? Do you know of anyone in television, radio or publishing of a high profile, a personality who could do a piece on heathers? It would work wonders.

The only gardening expert that I can recall who has from time to time mentioned heathers for the garden on radio is (bless him) John Cushnie. There may be others but he has certainly done so.

I live just outside the Derbyshire Peak District. As I write this it is August and the moors around the Hope Valley, especially those close by Hathersage, are magnificent. Housman wrote of the Shropshire blue remembered hills but here the hills are alive with colour, the hum of the bees and the heady honeyed scent of masses of *Erica cinerea*, *E. tetralix* and *Calluna* in full bloom.

This is Bronte country. Jane Eyre, some believe, was named after Bronte had visited the area and realised that Eyre is a common but well respected name in these parts. Charlotte stayed in Hathersage. The *very* name proclaims heather.

Everything is subject to the whims of fashion so it is high time that we heard it again for this ubiquitous plant.

It is appreciated that in writing this for *The Heather Society* I am preaching to the converted. How do we convince others of our opinion?

Well, a consistent show of interest for the subject from one of the many self-styled gardening experts would not go amiss. Set the camera rolling, film the reality and in the words of an unknown author:

"There are few things in the flower garden calculated to become so thoroughly interesting as a bed or group of the hardy species of heath. There is something about the heaths that always produce pleasing sensations." From the *Annals of Horticulture* 1847.

One final thought – I wonder if Delia has ever tried beef in heather ale casserole?

Questions & Answers

Q: Overwintering cuttings

Can you please advise me on overwintering heather cuttings? I have a number which seem to be suffering in the conservatory. Should they be watered regularly? Many thanks for your help. *Derek Yirrell*

A: Assuming the cuttings are already rooted – keep them out of strong sunlight & water regularly. Pot up in April.

If they have no roots – keep them out of strong sunlight – water regularly and cover with plastic film or bags to conserve moisture. Pot up when they have made good roots. *Daphne Everett*

A: All my cuttings are left in the cold frame over winter and losses are few. As you know nurserymen use a little bottom heat on sand beds and I would think that it could probably be too warm in Derek Yirrell's conservatory and they are drying out. *Arnold Stow*

A: I have to say I do not take many cuttings. I usually leave the job to Andy at Harlow Carr. It is his life's work! When I have done any I find I lose them from over-watering rather than insufficient and HC have the same problem. They have to mist heather cuttings separate from all others as they need less moisture. *Jean Julian*

A: I have noticed on the few occasions when I have over-wintered cuttings of hardy heaths in the greenhouse, my success rate has been poor.

The majority of my cuttings are taken in July/August, in seed trays or multi-cells supported in a seed tray. The trays are then watered from the bottom, covered in a transparent dome and then placed into a closed frame and shaded. The cuttings are then left to face the ravages of winter. The cuttings will experience cycles of freezing and thawing throughout the winter. By using the transparent domes it is not usually necessary to do any additional watering. Usually by the spring the cuttings have rooted, with my greatest success rate being with the winter-flowering heaths and my least success rate being with *Calluna*.

I would suggest that a reason for my greater success with cuttings "outside" rather than inside is the lower temperatures. An indicator of this may be that I tend to lose cuttings earlier rather than later, i.e. whilst they are still experiencing a relatively high temperature in the late Summer and early Autumn.

I should point out that Cape heath cuttings are transferred from the frame into the glasshouse when the first frosts threaten. Incidentally my success with Cape Heath cuttings is poor so perhaps I should leave them outside as well (tongue-in-cheek comment).

Not a very scientific answer but a method that may help Derek Yirrell next time he takes cuttings.

Incidentally for shading I used to use an internal frame lid supporting a net curtain but these days I use the painted-on greenhouse shading on the outside of the frame lid. That latter method of shading should have the effect of keeping the temperature lower in sunny weather than when using the net-curtain shading within the frame. *Phil Joyner*

Q: Another wedding, more flowers!

I would like your help please. My son is getting married in Tiree (Inner Hebrides) in July and his fiancée would like the theme of the wedding to be heather. The bridesmaid dresses are H1 amethyst. Unfortunately it is unlikely that the heather on the island will be in bloom in July so I was planning on buying some plants to grow at home in troughs and then transport to the island. Could you suggest which plants I should grow, where I could get them and any growing tips that may help? I live in Hertfordshire but would be happy to travel to get the right plants.

Apart from using them in table arrangements we would also like to put a sprig in glasses of champagne, would that be a safe thing to do with all types of heather? We do not want to poison anyone! *Amanda Pardoe.*

A: Thank you for your interesting and unusual email. Heather at weddings are usually white - amethyst is very out of the ordinary. I have done a preliminary search of our database and there are no cultivated varieties of ling (*Calluna vulgaris*), often called Scotch heather, with amethyst flowers that bloom in July. In fact there are only about 15 *Calluna* cultivars with that flower colour, and most seem to start flowering in September or later.

Your better bet would be to use bell heather (*Erica cinerea*); there are quite a few cultivars and they could be in bloom in July. There is one called 'My Love' - it has the right colour of flowers at least.

The other choice is St. Dabeoc's heath, a native in western Ireland (not in Scotland) although it grows in Scottish gardens and there is even a hybrid called *Daboecia x scotica*. There are amethyst flowered clones.

Regarding putting heather in champagne, I would never adulterate champagne with heather, nor subject heather to such an indignity. But if you are intent on this, all I would advise is to use heather from a place where you can be sure it is not affected by pesticides or other chemicals. In other words, heather will not poison anyone as long as it has not been treated with sprays of any sort. Using garden-centre or nursery-grown plants might not be wise as you will have no idea what may have been put on the plants. You might consider using just the bells from bell heather instead of a whole sprig. *Charles Nelson*

A: I agree that bell heather (*Erica cinerea*) would be the best bet for amethyst bloom in July. 'Atropurpurea' is a good one. Also 'Miss Waters' and 'Purple Beauty'. I'd suggest that instead of trying to get all the heathers H1 same as the bridesmaids' dresses, that they also use H2, mauve, which is a good colour blend and would add interest. 'Cevennes' and 'Iberian Beauty', for instance. And, of course, some of the early blooming *Calluna* are white: 'Caerketton White', for example. *Ella May Wulff*

A: I would think that *Erica cinerea* would be an ideal choice particularly a cultivar with the name 'My Love', if it were easily available. I would suggest that *Daboecia* would be a bad choice as my limited cut-bloom experience would indicate that the flowers would drop quickly. The only *Calluna* that would come close to flowering at that time of year would be 'Tib' but the colour may not suit as it is described as H12. *Phil Joyner*

A: I think *Erica cinerea* are bit small for a bouquet but you may get away with *Erica x griffithsii* 'Jacqueline' or even *E. terminalis* but they are not the right colour to go with amethyst. *Jean Julian*

Q: ... and also more on pruning old heathers: south-western Scotland

I have three *Erica arborea* (tree heath) shrubs of well over 30 years old and 6-8 feet high which have not been pruned in any way since at least the last 25 years. They are now straggly with large lengths of bare lower branches. Our garden is exposed to winds from all directions, although the shrubs are in a relatively sheltered part of the garden, at 500 feet above sea-level and four miles inland (near the Galloway coastline at Gatehouse of Fleet in SW Scotland). How best to treat these venerable specimens to entice them to look more attractive and produce more flowering? Any advice would be appreciated. *David Hawker.*

A: The fact that you have three shrubs means that you can try an experiment. *Erica arborea* has remarkable powers of regeneration, so you could cut one of the shrubs down to almost ground level and it should sprout. I don't think there is a "best time" to do this, so I suggest you try it now. I would leave one of the plants alone and not try any surgery. You could hard prune the other to whatever height you need because it should break along the trunks as well as from the base. I suggest you don't try all three at the same time, or in the same way. Variety is the spice of life, after all. Good luck! *Charles Nelson*

Q: Scottish heather garden
I come from a small town just outside Glasgow at the foot of the Campsie Hills. For many years my life-long friend and I explored the hills and the surrounding areas while we were kids. Now a little older and slower we only see each other once or twice a year, due to the fact he works and lives in Ireland. Here comes the tricky part ... his wife of many years is in the process of having the garden landscaped. As a surprise for him when he returns home from work, ... she would like to recreate a little piece of Scotland in the back garden in the form of a heather garden. ... Is there any way you could help me with any information on the types of heather that are regarded as native to or grow in Scotland. *Stephen Page*

A: There are three indigenous heathers in Scotland – and they also are abundant in Ireland: *Calluna vulgaris* (ling; often called Scottish/Scotch heather because it is the one that is predominant); *Erica cinerea* (bell heather) and *Erica tetralix* (cross-leaved heath). That's it – nothing else.

Thus, if you want to plant only the indigenous heathers, avoid everything else that may be available. That also means the garden must be on lime-free soil, which may not be so easy in parts of Ireland. *Charles Nelson*

Ella May Wulff, from Oregon USA writes:

I've just glanced through the summer *Bulletin* and noticed the bit about hard pruning. I'd like to contribute my two cents to the discussion.

Because I've been so busy during the last few years (OK, more than a few), my plants of *Erica vagans* 'Mrs D. F. Maxwell' did not get pruned for several years. By the time I got to them, they had partially grown over a stepping stone that I need to use to reach the ropes for the greenhouse shades, so I had to do a severe pruning on that side.

I cut the side of the plant completely back to bare wood in May. By August, you could not see any bare wood. The plant had produced lots of new growth and even some flowers. There is a pair of 'before' and 'after' pruning photos of the cultivar in chapter two of *Gardening with Hardy Heathers*. Note, however, that I did not cut the entire plant back to bare wood, only one side. Had the entire plant been cut to bare wood, it might not have had sufficient strength for re-growth. I'm not about to test that hypothesis, as I'm very fond of this cultivar.

(There are three plants here where one would have sufficed. This was among the first heathers I planted, along with 'White Lawn' and 'Pink Ice', right after our Oregon house was built and long before I made my heather garden. I had never grown *E. vagans* before, nor had I grown heathers in Oregon, where the climate encourages them to grow larger than they do in the much colder climate of New England, or even in England.)

Gardening Weekend Breaks

Society member, Alan Venn, who has been running musical holidays for the last twenty years, has recently launched a new service, called 'Garden Services and Holidays' and, from Friday 3rd to Sunday 5th October 2008 and Friday 24th to Sunday 26th April 2009, he will be running two gardening weekends, based in Llandudno, North Wales.

During these weekends, there will be a full programme of gardening activities, including, among other things, a visit to Bodnant Gardens, led by nurseryman, Peter Clough of Holden Clough Nursery. There will also be some live musical entertainment.

For more information telephone 01204 840279

Another Manip! Richard Canovan

A weed seedling in my garden has proved to be a gem of a plant. Totally unlike existing cultivars and my unnamed clones of *Erica manipuliflora*, this one has a much less open habit and is very erect and neat. It also differs in that the long racemes of pink flowers are very narrow. They are also less interrupted than the others giving an impression of more solid bloom. The foliage is mid-green.

It therefore appears ideal as a specimen plant for planting among summer flowering cultivars with dark flowers. I will give it another year and then take cuttings. Due to its very different habit and early flowering it is a candidate for registration as a new cultivar. It was found near 'Toothill Mustard', so is probably a seedling of that, but there are five other possible parents.

***Erica cinerea* 'C G Best'**

For the last few years I have been trying to maintain a bed of the Society's One Hundred Recommended Heathers, in our garden (The Garden at The Bannut) in Herefordshire.

Although our soil is slightly acid, it is also rather heavy and wet in winter, so I struggle to keep the *cinereas* going and have to replace them rather regularly. Unfortunately I have lost *Erica cinerea* 'C G Best' completely and am unable to find a source of replacement. The plant-ordering service can't help and nor can Wisley.

If anyone is growing this plant in their garden and could send me a few sprigs to propagate I would be most grateful. My address is on page one of the *Bulletin*.

Daphne Everett

PS. Heather Society members are always welcome to visit the garden free of charge – but please telephone in advance to identify yourselves and let us know you are coming. The best times to see the heathers gardens are February to May or mid August to mid October.

The Glorious Twelfth Arnold Stow

Whilst it is not so glorious for the grouse, there is no doubt that for those landowners who maintain our moorlands for the benefit of these birds, (and themselves, for the revenue during the shooting season), also help our favourite plants.

It was interesting to note recently that more than 5,000 acres of heather are to be regenerated in Co. Durham to restore Wemmergill moor which has been damaged through neglect and overgrazing.

The estate was owned for four centuries by the Bowes-Lyon family of the late Queen Mother. It was purchased in 2006 by wealthy entrepreneur Michael Cannon.

Whilst the main purpose of the regeneration is to improve the moor for the grouse at a cost of £5m, Mr. Cannon states that moorlands are his passion and literally our rainforest.

It is comforting to think that the reseedling of the moor, although primarily for the grouse shooting, will halt the decline of our disappearing moorlands.

Photographs needed – win a copy of: *Gardening with hardy heathers* by Ella May Wulff & David Small (just published!).

We are looking for photographs – slides, prints or digital images – suitable for use in the Society's proposed new booklet about "companion" plants. As this indicates, the booklet will discuss plants suitable for growing *with* heathers, or for growing heathers *with*.

Eligible photographs will show a heather and another plant co-existing happily, or a heather bed with mixed planting! Examples may include spring or autumn bulbs, shrubs, perennial herbs, annuals, even trees.

We will also accept pictures showing "dwarf" and slow-growing conifers but the principal idea of the booklet is to show that a huge variety of *other* plants can be grown in close association with heathers.

All photographs received will be put into a "hat" and one will be drawn as the winner of the book. The draw will take place at the 2009 Conference when the best and most interesting of the photographs will also be shown.

Photographers will retain copyright of any images selected for use, and two complimentary copies of the booklet will be provided to each photographer in return for the right to use his or her images.

Please send your photographs (by recorded delivery) to The Administrator [whose address is on back cover of this *Bulletin*] or to President, David Small [see address under Website, inside back cover of this *Bulletin*]. If you want to send digital images or scans, please place these on a CD-ROM – please do *not* send these as email attachments.

There is no closing date for photographs. All originals and CDs will be returned when no longer required.

Jean Julian

20 Years Ago **Daphne Everett**

In 1988, the Society celebrated its Silver Jubilee and I was asked by the then Editor of the *Yearbook* to write an article about its early years. Now, twenty years later, I thought that some of our more recent members might be interested to read about some of the highlights from that time:

The Heather Society came into being after Sir John Charrington (of Charrington's Coal fame), sent a letter to the RHS Journal. The letter, written in 1962, is reprinted below:

During the past two years, in an attempt to reduce the tedium of some forms of gardening, I have planted a large number of heathers and have come to realise what an attractive hobby they provide. The wide variety, the prolonged period of flowering, and the attractive colours, all make heathers delightful plants to grow.

In these days, when so many people must be seeking to reduce drudgery in their gardens. I can imagine that the interest in heathers is becoming widespread. I wonder, therefore, whether it is time for a Heather Society to be formed. Such a Society would surely be of value to dealers in heathers, and if they could take the lead, I believe that an ever-increasing number of enthusiastic amateurs would come to realize the benefits which, through the formation of a Society, have accrued to the cultivation of so many other plants. Will anyone interested in the above proposal please communicate direct with me at the address below? If sufficient response is forthcoming it is proposed to hold an initial preliminary meeting of those interested in London.

SIR JOHN CHARRINGTON

High Quarry, Crockham Hill, Nr. Edenbridge, Kent.

On 20th February 1963, an inaugural meeting took place at *The Royal Horticultural Society*, Vincent Square. The weather was atrocious, but around fifty people battled through snowdrifts to get there. A decision was taken to form *The Heather Society* and a formative committee was set up under the

Chairmanship of Sir John Charrington. Mr. Fred J Chapple, who was a great advocate of heathers in his many articles and whose pioneering book, *The Heather Garden*, was published back in 1952, became the Society's first President.

The first Committee Meeting was held on March 8th that year, with a Committee consisting of several illustrious names from the heather world – such as Mr. F J Stevens from the nursery of Maxwell and Beale in Dorset and Mr. J F Letts, whose nursery was set in a magnificent heather garden at Windlesham in Surrey. The subscription was set at one guinea per annum.

The task of editing an annual *Yearbook* was entrusted to Mr. P S Patrick and the first one was published later that year.

The Society's Secretary was the very energetic Constance Macleod, who, in the early days, was not only Secretary, but also Treasurer, and later (in 1967) the first Editor of the *Bulletin*. The idea of the *Bulletins*, which were to be published twice a year, was that they should be a Members' Forum (and hopefully, they still are). Sir John was against the idea as he thought that a newsletter would detract from the *Yearbook*, but he later had to admit that it had been a great success.

By 1965, membership had grown to around 350 (much as it is now in 2008), rising to 654 by 1968 - by which time several local groups had been formed around the country.

In 1971 heather trials were started at Harlow Carr, with five plants of over 300 cultivars planted out on a half-acre field, next to the gardens. A group of volunteers spent the next five years recording details of height, spread, colour and flowering time of each cultivar as well as attending to all the weeding and pruning. The result, at the end of five years, was a very useful publication - *Heather Trials 1971-75*, edited and compiled by Peter Vickers.

By now, membership had risen to over 700 and there was concern that the list of members' names and addresses, which had always been printed at the back of the *Yearbook*, was becoming too long and would have to be omitted. However, this caused an outcry among members, who found the list very useful for meeting up with other heather enthusiasts, and it was retained until 1974.

The first weekend conference took place in this year - organised by John Ardron of the Northern Group and held at Grantley Hall, near Ripon. Sixty one people attended at a cost of £5 per person. Although, from what I understand, the accommodation at these early conferences could be rather Spartan. The abiding memory of some who attended the second conference at Westham House near Warwick, is of dormitory accommodation and communal washing facilities. And at Moor Park College near Farnham in 1975, water dripped rhythmically into buckets strategically placed to catch the rain water from the roof.

In 1973 the Committee of *The Heather Society* became a Council, with Committees to deal with different aspects of the Society and a Cape Heath Group was formed. Membership stood at 1070.

Subs were raised to £3 single and £4 double in 1980 and, as a result membership dropped to 930. But, by the following year, probably due to the

Administrator, Ken Farrah's, enthusiastic personal letters to all enquirers, it had risen to 1377.

The 1983 Conference was held at the Falmouth Hotel in Falmouth, Cornwall – the first time a hotel had been used as the venue. It wasn't an unqualified success, as the hotel wasn't geared up for conferences, so meal times were very slow – making deadlines for meetings etc hard to keep. Also, the lecture room provided was far too small for the eighty six people who attended that year and lectures were accompanied by loud music from the party next door. However, the Conference itself was a great success.

In 1986 the Conference was held at Tetley Hall, part of the University of Leeds. On the programme was a visit to Harlow Carr to see the trial grounds (now fifteen years old) and the newly planted reference collections of *Calluna vulgaris*, *Erica carnea* and *E. x darleyensis*. These were all in the capable hands of Albert Julian, who had looked after them for the previous ten years.

By 1986, membership had reached 1700. However, rates were set to rise in January 1987 to £6 single and £7 joint membership and it was expected that membership would drop once more.

At the 1987 AGM the Secretary announced that membership stood at 1350, however, by October of that year it was up again to 1416.

In 1988 a commemorative salver was produced to celebrate the Society's first twenty five years; ours has place of honour over the door in my office. The Silver Jubilee Conference was held at Gregynog in Wales, with seventy eight attendees.

Now, another twenty years on, heathers are no longer the darling of the media and, unfortunately, we have no present-day celebrity, such as Adrian Bloom, to raise awareness of what wonderful plants heathers are. Looking back through some of the *Yearbooks* of the 1970's I was struck by the large number of nurseries that advertised heathers in those heady days – most of which are sadly no more.

However – we are fortunate to have the *British Heather Growers' Association* (of which our new Chairman, David Edge, is a member). It will be putting on a superb display of heathers at the Hampton Court Show in 2009, with the aim of educating the public about the conditions needed for growing heathers. The 6m x 4m plot will have a garden theme and will consist of a front garden, with summer flowering heathers in pots and containers, and a back garden planted with winter/spring varieties. Surely the media won't be able to ignore such an unusual and spectacular (as I know it will be) display!

Jack Platt

Jack Platt, who joined the Society in 1970 passed away in May of this year. An appreciation of Jack, who registered many new cultivars and contributed to the *Yearbook* over many years, will appear in the 2009 edition of *Heathers*.

Group News

North East

In spite of the serious flooding our region had experienced on September 5th and 6th, the Ponteland Flower Show went ahead as planned on September 13th. The almost continuous rain we have had all 'summer' did not seem to affect the heathers and the Heather Classes looked good. Many thanks to all our members, who supported the show and submitted so many entries to make the bench look so colourful. It was much appreciated.

If only heathers were made known in TV gardening programmes more people might grow them and then perhaps we would get more entrants participating in the shows. We live in hope!

We have had no Car Outings this year with our little group due to the weather, and, for the same reason, Geoff and I have not been away in our caravan. Maybe the winter will give us some long, sunny spells!

Dorothy M. Warner

Home Counties

On Saturday 20th September Home Counties Group members met for their annual meeting at the RHS Gardens, Wisley. At long last the weather was magnificent, very warm and sunny for our walk around the Heather Gardens National Collection.

The heather gardens are undergoing some changes which include replanting but this has been somewhat disrupted by new stock being infected with virus problems which has meant destroying large numbers of stock prior to planting.

The afternoon session was held in the Lecture Room, when Colin Crosbie (Superintendent, Woody, Ornamental and Alpine Plants Department, RHS Wisley) gave an illustrated talk on *Wisley Through the Seasons*. This proved to be a most entertaining and informative lecture given by an enthusiastic speaker who is responsible for a large area of these beautiful gardens, including the heather gardens. A very lively session ensued when Colin answered the many questions posed by the appreciative audience.

Julian and Alison Fitz-Earle provided plants for sale, kindly donating the proceeds to Group funds which was greatly appreciated.

Prior to an excellent tea with cakes kindly provided by Josey Stow 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 - Pam Millis (Turpin Trophy)

2) Best vase of hardy heather in flower, single variety - Julian Fitz-Earle

3) Best vase of heather chosen for foliage - Pamela Lee.

During tea members discussed with Colin the difficulties in maintaining the National Collection of Heathers and especially ensuring that it includes the many new varieties which have become available in recent years. Colin emphasised that he had a limited annual budget for the purchase of all plants within his Department and he would welcome any assistance that heather growers and *The Heather Society (THS)* could offer in keeping the Collection up to date. This was duly noted by the many THS Council Members present and it was felt that this should be discussed further at the next Council Meeting.

An announcement was made by Pamela Lee that the *British Heather Growers Association* is to have a stand at the 2009 RHS Hampton Court Show and THS

has been asked to assist with volunteers to participate in running the stand.

Derek Millis

South West Area News

I open the SW area news by saying that it is my pleasure to offer congratulations to Des and Sybil Perry who are celebrating their Diamond Wedding anniversary on October 30th. Des and Sybil were founder members of the former South West Group of the Society and Des was present at the inaugural meeting of that group organised by Bert and Diane Jones at Queen Camel on 5th April 1975. Des and Sybil made a point of attending as many of the South West Group meetings as possible including hosting meetings in their own garden on several occasions. Des and Sybil are stalwart supporters of the Society having been regular attendees at the Annual Conferences. Regrettably ill health in latter years has prevented them attending both local meetings and the Conferences but has not prevented them enjoying their heathers and retaining their interest in the Society. I am sure that you would all like to join me in wishing them 'all the very best' on this momentous occasion.

The walk in Hilliers Gardens, arranged for Saturday September 6th, was affected by the wet weather and has been postponed until the spring. I therefore invite members to join Lin and me on a spring garden walk through Hillier Gardens, near Romsey in Hampshire, on Saturday April 4th, 2009. We will be in the vicinity of the entrance from 1.45pm and will be entering the gardens at about 2.00pm. There is a heather garden in the grounds and the winter flowering ericas should still be putting on a good display. Lunch time refreshments are available from the restaurant near the main car park and afternoon tea is available from the same location. There is also a well stocked garden centre adjacent to the car park and a gift shop adjacent to the entrance. At the time of writing the entrance fee is £7.50 (£6.50 concessions). As for the location of the garden, it is adequately signposted from major routes and is easily found on maps of the area. Let us hope for some sunshine on this occasion.

As usual 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 with the garden owner and will take the form of an informal stroll. Any 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 if you are coming beforehand, but a phone call on 023 8086 4336 is always appreciated.

Phil Joyner

Good advice from our President

Increase your chances of living longer.

Avoid driving in cars because they are responsible for 20% of all fatal accidents.

Do not stay at home because 17% of all accidents occur in the home.

Avoid walking on streets and pavements because 14% of all accidents occur to pedestrians.

Avoid travelling by air, rail or water because 15% of all accidents involve these forms of transport.

Of the remaining 34%, 32% of all deaths occur in hospitals. So, above all else avoid hospitals.

For the golf players among us

John came home from a morning at the golf course and threw his clubs on the floor. "That's it" he shouted, "I am not playing golf again".

"What's the problem?" said his wife - "you always play golf".

"Not any more" was the reply. "My eyesight is getting so bad I can't see where the ball goes".

"That's a shame. Why don't you take my brother William with you" his wife suggested.

"Your brother! What the good of that -he is 103".

"He might be 103 said his wife - but he still has perfect eyesight".

"OK" said John "I will give it a try".

The next morning John and William set off for the golf course. John sent the ball soaring into the distance. "Did you see where it went" he asked William.

"Of course I did" said William - "I've got perfect eyesight".

"Well - where DID it go"?

"I saw it go alright" said William - "the trouble is, I can't remember **where** it went".

USEFUL ADDRESSES

Society's Website: www.heathersociety.org.uk

- Chairman & Steering Committee** *Policy matters, major events etc.*
Mr. D. Edge, Forest Edge Nursery, Verwood Road, Woodlands, Wimborne, BH12 6LJ.
- Treasurer** Mr. P.L. Joyner, 84 Kinross Road, Rushington, Totton, Southampton, Hampshire, SO40 9BN. *e-mail:* 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 *Tel:* (01904) 707316
- Yearbook Editor & Registrar** *Articles for the Yearbook / Naming of Heathers*
Dr. E.C. Nelson
For details - see back cover
- Bulletin Editor** *Notes, articles for the Bulletin*
Mrs. D. Everett, The Bannut, Bringsty, Herefordshire, WR6 5TA.
e-mail: everettbannut@zetnet.co.uk
Tel: (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
For details - see back cover
- Conference Manager** Mrs. S. Kay, Lettergesh East, Renvyle, Co. Galway, Republic of Ireland
e-mail: 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
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
Tel: 020 8777 5161 (Home) 0790 582 5818 (Mobile)
- 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 *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 *Tel:* (01442) 254880
- South West** Mr. P.L. Joyner, 84 Kinross Road, Rushington, Totton, Southampton, Hampshire, SO40 9BN.
e-mail: pjoyner@supanet.com *Tel:* (02380) 864336
- Yorkshire** Dr. J. Griffiths, 9, Ashlea Close, Leeds, West Yorkshire. LS25 1JX.
Tel: (01132) 863349