

# *Bulletin of The Heather Society*



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*Vol. 7 No. 7*

*Summer 2009*

## DIARY OF EVENTS

**2009**

July	Yorkshire	Visit to the garden of Dr. Bryon Robert's
8 August	South West	Visit to Woodlands Nursery, near Verwood in Dorset
12 September	North East	Ponteland Flower Show
15 September	CLOSING DATE FOR THE AUTUMN BULLETIN	
19 September	Yorkshire	Meeting at Harlow Carr

### HEATHER SOCIETY PLANT-ORDERING SERVICE



The Heather Society is pleased to offer the opportunity of obtaining over 1000 cultivars including many of which are not available to the general public.



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Cover illustration *Erica ciliaris* by Brita Johansson

*What a fantastic year it has been so far as far as flower in the garden is concerned. (Let's not get on to Gordon Brown and the credit crunch!) The winter/spring heathers put on a wonderful show that lasted into May and our rhododendrons have never been as floriferous. Presumably they enjoyed the previous wet Summer – even if we didn't.*

*On the evening of July 9<sup>th</sup> we are hosting a Garden Party to celebrate the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversaries of both The Garden at The Bannut and our local Hospice. Tickets are £10 (to include a buffet supper and a glass of wine) so, if any of you are thinking of coming to beautiful Herefordshire around that time, we shall be very happy to sell you a ticket or two (all profits go to the Hospice). Otherwise, please keep your fingers crossed for a nice sunny evening for us.*

## **38<sup>th</sup> Annual Gathering & Conference** **11<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> September 2009** **Reigate Manor Hotel, Reigate, Surrey**

We are in the last chance saloon now for a place at this year's conference. That is if you require a room at the Reigate Manor Hotel. Stop thinking "you will get round to it", do it now and book your place by contacting myself or Charles Nelson, details at the back of your bulletin. But if you do not wish to stay, we shall be delighted to welcome you as a day visitor for all or part of the programme.

We promise you an informative and fun weekend with other members of *The Heather Society*.

For those who have already registered please send your full payment to Charles by 15<sup>th</sup> July. We also hope you have been busy propagating your favourite unusual heather to bring to the plant sale.

For myself, I am looking for *E. mackayana* 'Galicia'. So if anybody has this plant, I would love some cutting material.

Not only a time for swapping plants, but a time for learning and enjoying the company of heather enthusiasts, who always have fun at our annual conference.

Our programme starts on Friday after dinner with an illustrated talk by

Mr. Ed Ikin, Head Gardener at Nyman's.

On Saturday morning a coach will transport us to Nymans, where we will have a guided tour taking in the Heather Garden.

Lunch will be at your own expense and is followed by a visit to the gardens of Mary Bowerman, Champs Hill near Pulborough.

On Saturday evening, Dr. Simon Caporn will address us on the subject of "Climate Change and Heathlands".

The A.G.M. will be held on Sunday morning followed by a visit to the Savill and Valley Gardens at Windsor. Mark Flanagan, the Keeper of the Gardens, will be conducting the tour of the gardens. Again you will be responsible for your own lunch at the self-service cafeteria.

Sunday evening brings a chance of interaction between members with our famous plant & book sale and Open Forum.

Delegates will depart on Monday morning after breakfast, but one more delight is available. Mr. & Mrs. David Sprague, who live near Dorking, have invited members to tour their heather garden, which is show cased in this year's Year Book.

The cost is:	£240 per person sharing
	£303 per single room
	£5 Booking Fee – non-returnable

The above amount is for dinner, bed & breakfast, transport, entrance fees and guides, but DOES NOT include lunches.

It is possible to attend for 1 or 2 nights, or as a day visitor. Prices for this can be obtained from Susie Kay at [susiek@gofree.indigo.ie](mailto:susiek@gofree.indigo.ie), Phone 00353 95 43575.

## Notes from the Chairman, David Edge

*The British Heather Growers Association* (BHGA) heather garden for the Hampton Court Garden Show is progressing well, the design has been formulated, the constructor instructed and the plants sourced. Construction will commence in late June and hopefully the heathers and other shrubs will

be looking their best for the week of the 7th-12th July. *The Heather Society* (HS) is financing 20,000 information leaflets, which will contain details of the HS, how to become a member, plan of the garden, sponsors, details and list of plants. HS Members will be on hand to give advice to the public and to answer questions as will the design team and commercial growers. With an attendance of 170,000 people I hope that this will give a boost to the membership and reinvigorate the public's attention to our cause.

On a different note it has been disappointing to see various garden centres stocked with incorrectly labelled heathers. Whilst one can understand the occasional error, in some cases recently over 50% of the stock has been wrongly named. With upheavals and lack of supply with the commercial plant labelling companies it appears that 'careless' mislabelling is occurring and examples have been reported to me of batches of *Erica carnea* 'Golden Starlet' bearing labels describing it as a pink flowered plant, and *Erica spiculifolia* as an *Erica cinerea* amongst many others. My advice is don't always believe the

label, if you see errors then report it to the retailer, and if you wish to ascertain the correctness then compare it with others, consult the *Handy Guide* or view in a National Collection.

I and other HS members look forward to meeting you at a sunny and enjoyable Hampton Court Garden Show.

## **Tippitiwitchet Corner: The Administrator's Log Number 7 Charles Nelson**

### **New Members**

The following *new members* are welcomed to the Society, having joined since January 2009:

Irena **Brzeski**: Borth, Ceredigion, Wales.

Janice **Dimock** & B. **Fry**: New River Beach, New Brunswick, Canada.

Eric **James**: Poole, Dorset.

G. A. **Kennedy**: Locks Heath, Southampton, Hampshire.

David **O'Kelly**: Kilrush, County Clare, Ireland.

Bonnie **Waddell**: Upper Onslow, Nova Scotia, Canada.

### **Nursery members list**

I had hoped to produce a new, up-to-date list of nursery members but this is postponed in the hope of getting more responses from them – to date only five nurseries have returned the questionnaire distributed with the yearbook.

### **Heathers 6**

All of the members' copies of the Society's yearbook for 2009 were posted from Outwell by St. Patrick's Day, 17 March. If any member has not received a copy, please contact me as soon as possible and a replacement will be provided.

### **Recommended Heathers booklet**

Slightly imperfect copies are still available for members in return for postage – see the *Spring Bulletin* pp 4–5.

### **... and finally**

I spent most of April and early May in Crete, conducting tours for guests keen to see the splendid wild flowers: tulips, poppies, crown anemones, turban buttercups, grape hyacinths and bee orchids in beautiful profusion. It was a damp spring, so the flowers were in excellent condition. During the early weeks tree heaths (*Erica arborea*) were in full bloom and I managed to get some cuttings of a yellow-foliaged shrub that I have been observing for several years. I also saw whorled heath (*Erica manipuliflora*) growing within a few metres of the waves – but not in bloom, of course. They are the only heathers in Crete.

## Recent publications

D. M. Miller & E. C. Nelson. The Heather Society's Herbarium, and Ericaceae (*Bruckenthalia*, *Daboecia*, *Erica*) type specimens cited by D. C. McClintock (1913–2001). *Glasra* **4**: 109–117.

E. C. Nelson. Typification of two horticultural hybrids in *Erica* (Ericaceae). *Glasra* **4**: 107–108.

E. C. Nelson. William Kilburn's calico patterns, copyright and Curtis's botanical magazine. *Curtis's botanical magazine* **25** (4): 361–373.

E. C. Nelson. *Erica scoparia* and *Erica spiculifolia* (formerly *Bruckenthalia spiculifolia*) in interglacial floras in Ireland and Britain; confused nomenclature leading to misidentification of fossilized seeds. *Quaternary science reviews* **28**: 381–383.

## Plant Ordering Service

Allison Fitz-Earle

One year on from my last report I am pleased to advise members that 2008/9 has been a busy but rewarding year for this scheme. Not without its challenges (increasing costs and continued strength of the Euro) I have endeavoured to publicise the service where possible although more customers sourcing through the RHS Plantfinder has resulted in some interesting new clients including Buckingham Palace where a modest heather planting will form an addition to the part of the garden that will be open to the public this year for the first time. Gleneagles Hotel also purchased Scottish cultivars for their Glenmor holiday homes.

European customers have also been ordering plants for delivery to Spain, France, Italy and Greece and I hope that over the next 12 months heather enthusiasts throughout the UK and Europe will continue to support this scheme.

## How is Brian?

Arnold Stow

I was delighted to be presented with one of our new Chairman's columnar heathers when I retired from that position last September at Harlow Carr. Both the engraved Glass Bowl and the plant were most unexpected, but very welcome.

However this plant *Erica erigena* 'Brian Proudley', being four feet tall (120cms) was the cause of great amusement during the following week as Josey and I were staying on at a local hotel with Phil and Lin Joyner.

We have all, I suppose in our time, taken plants back to our lodgings whilst on holiday, but a plant of this size, which I had been warned by David Small needed plenty of water was something quite different. In addition I had also purchased some 'normal plants' so our bathroom did resemble a poor imitation of the Wisley Glasshouse.



Circumventing the plants to carry out our ablutions was an interesting experience, also the toothbrush container had to be used as a watering utensil. I was very mindful of the advice given on the watering aspect and this permeated through to our holiday companions who made sure that I was keeping the plant well watered by asking at least once a day "How is Brian!"

Surprisingly, in my view, this plant handled the heavy snowfall experienced this winter very well and the branches did not splay out as can be the case with conifers.

I am pleased to say the Brian is alive and well, has bloomed very well this Spring and shortly I will have the delicate task of pruning it to maintain the required shape.

## Heathers and Snakes

Steve Yandall

My life, selfish as it may seem, has been devoted to my family and horticulture. Working as a Brighton Parks apprentice, through private gardener, head gardener, estate manager, nursery owner, garden centre manager, to being responsible for 100 garden centres, left me at fifty years old with the option to retire.

Some ten years later I sit here, the owner of Rainbow's End Nursery, involved in plant breeding (an extension of my 'homework', started in the 1980's) and pondering a very simple problem - where have all my snakes gone?

Throughout my career I have always considered the environment and have felt great sadness at losses, and joy at gaining a species (reinforced by working for Guy Mountfort- co-author of *Collins Guide to Birds of Britain and Europe*) founder and trustee of WWF and architect of Operation Tiger, plus working for a member of the Nature Conservancy Council) so much so that David Attenborough once said of me "You have done more for the environment than anyone I have ever met". (On a physical level).

So, my Adders are important to me - they lived on my Cornish walls and in my half an acre of glass, and reward me by vermin control and the huge compliment they pay me by wanting to share my life.

I was caught in a pincer movement - an expanding charity above, which houses cats that regularly hunt over the surrounding area, and immaculately manicured gardens below (all else is scrub or farm land). Having grown nearly six hundred varieties of heather commercially in the 1970's I proposed to create 0.5 acres of heath at the nursery's rear, with various protection methods to hide snakes and lizards from predators.

A great deal of thought went into varietal use, until I was hit by a Eureka moment - both *Erica ciliaris* and *E. vagans* are under pressure in Cornwall,



so why not adopt the area for two species discovered in Cornwall, to ensure that the two *E. vagans* colonies outside the Lizard Peninsula and the many isolated colonies of *E. ciliaris* are not lost?

The threats to both species are similar. Grazing to maximise biodiversity is reducing overall numbers and affecting soil conditions, thus restricting re-colonisation. *Phytophthora kernoviae* is loose in the St. Ives area and attacking Bilberry (under DEFRA control conditions, heathers can also be attacked). Grazing damage leaves entry wounds for this disease – related to Sudden Oak Death. Further to this, the last remnants of the *E. vagans* colony that stretched from Connor Down to Camborne and Penponds to Roseworthy are restricted to 100m of railway that Health and Safety rules threaten.

I gained the support of the local wildlife trust, (from whom I received a collector's licence) and various other bodies, and set about sampling the different colonies (a maximum of two cuttings per plant). The only disappointment was the railway company, which constantly said "Yes", but failed to send a trackside pass!

Over the past two years I have developed a very close knowledge of the Cornish arm of the *E. ciliaris* "family" (discovering two new colonies). With colonies ranging from three plants to many thousands, from arid to boggy conditions, from peat to mineral soils and from sheltered, shady valleys to exposed coastal headlands, there appears to be no reason why this species is not more widely represented - unless these colonies are so finely evolved and have been isolated for so long that the arid tolerant types will not spread through the wet valley bottoms and vice versa.

I doubt that piece of conjecture myself, but it is possible and easy to prove or disprove.

As of today, I have several thousand rooted cuttings, representing 65% of colonies: bicolours, normals, whites, pink and purple flowers; silver, green and gold foliage; long and short flower spikes; early and late flowering. Planting will start next autumn and will be ongoing until I have a genetic map as insurance for their wild brethren.

As far as cultivated *E. ciliaris* is concerned, 'Aurea' is my favourite foliage heather and, given good preparation and space (2.5ft centres) the following were in flower in July and through to New Year's Day: 'Corfe Castle', 'Bretagne', 'Alba', 'Rotundiflora', 'Wych' (and yes – it is mild down here normally). The only *E. ciliaris* I have not tried is 'Fada das Serras' and alas, it is not in cultivation. If any Society members have plants or cuttings they could donate, I would very much appreciate it as it could then be perpetuated. (01736 850322).

I would commend *E. ciliaris* to all members as its differences are its attractions; pollinated by thrips, one bee species and moths, under environmental pressure, *Corydalis*-like spikes of flower, prone to hybridisation with *E. tetralix*, where both parent's virtues are combined (one heath near Truro contains a hybrid eleven feet across, in flower in May and repeat flowers until November). One of those plants that, once grown, you would never be without! And – once I have grown it – I will never be without Adders!



## Rose Cottage Ramblings -4

### David Plumridge

At I write at the end of May, the striking spring display of spring heather seems long gone. The paucity of flower power in the heather beds is relieved as usual at this time by the tree heaths and an excellent display from the rhododendrons. These are better than ever, even with the minimal dead heading. Maybe the cool damp summer suited them? The amazing absence of frost this month has meant no flower damage, unlike last year. I'm always sad when we have to prune the russet bells from the *cinereas* in early spring. They look so drab for a few weeks until at last they are now quickly greening with a hint of colour ready to give another wonderful summer display. The *Daboecias* have flowers here and there so it won't be long before they also brighten up the heather beds.

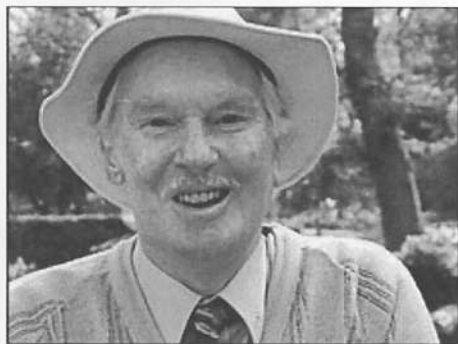
The unusually hard winter has meant some damage to the *cinereas*. It's not too extensive and they do recover. Even one area of *Erica x griffithsii* 'Valerie Griffiths' has suffered, along with Barry Sellars's 'Thing Nee'. This cone shaped *erigena* had her top nipped, but has recovered and is flowering. Rita has moved her to a more sheltered spot as she looks to be a very promising plant. That the winter was much harder than normal was demonstrated by the damage and even death to tub plants which normally overwinter without problem in the greenhouse. For example, of my three oleanders, one was killed and two very severely damaged. In the garden the all the attractively coloured *Hebes* in Rita's new bed were killed while the less striking green variety was unscathed. Another disappointment has been *Erica x garforthensis* 'Tracy Wilson'. She does not seem to have successfully crossed the Atlantic, yet she looked wonderful in Canada!

By a freak of nature, some southern gardeners seem to have had a harder winter than us up north! Richard Canovan had written an interesting article about soil problems in the *North American Heather Society's* journal. In commenting to Richard that his article reminded us how lucky we are to enjoy a naturally acid sandy soil, I also mentioned our winter damage. He responded by telling me his *erigenas* had 'split assunder' in their harsh winter! He also informed me that the Wisley heather garden had been closed for over a month after a 41cm snow fall. He said 'beat that in Consett'. I couldn't! I gloatingly sent him pictures of our beautiful *erigenas*, but annoyingly he said he couldn't download them!

The spring heather display really attracts the bees. Bees of all sizes and shapes. The drystone walls around the garden must give them a winter home. As I have sadly come to expect, there was no mention of heathers in BBC 'Gardeners World' this evening in their advice on making gardens 'more bee-friendly'. I was, however, heartened by the 'Attracting Bees' article in the June issue of the RHS 'Garden' magazine. In 'Useful plants in spring', *Erica carnea* was listed. It came last, but at least it was there. Then back to reality - 'For late summer/autumn' no *Callunas*. Have they never heard of Heather Honey? All this is par for the course. We have the 2007 BBC 'Gardener of the Year'

living nearby. At his NGS open day last week I asked him 'Why no heathers?' The reply – 'I don't like them'. No reason, he just didn't like them! Will the promised heather display at Hampton Court stir up any interest? Will it be shown on TV? I don't live in hope.

Continuing in a depressive mood, I was sorry to note the steep decline in membership of the *North American Heather Society*. In contrast to our society they seemed to be doing so well with an extremely enthusiastic membership. A change of fashion perhaps or it is a reflection of the current world wide economic situation?



I was very sorry to hear of the death of good friend to the heather fraternity. We met Geoffrey Smith several times at Yorkshire Heather Group meetings. Following his radio and television appearances I already felt I knew him well, as so many readers of my vintage must have done. He was the classic Yorkshireman – bluff, no nonsense and down to earth. Despite this he was eminently approachable with, despite his fame, no airs and graces. This no nonsense

approach was vividly demonstrated in the Radio 4 Gardener's Question Time tribute when they replayed his exchange with a pedantic Nigel Colburn regarding the pronunciation of 'aubrieta'. As well as dear Geoffrey, I can vividly remember Bill Sowerbutts, Fred Loads and Alan Gemmel from that programme. Now that's showing age! We last chatted to Geoffrey at *The Heather Society* AGM in Harrogate. Rita thought he looked very ill. Sadly, how right she was!

We have been asked to name the one cultivar that we would keep if we were allowed only one. This is difficult, but after much heart searching, my choice would have to be 'Valerie Griffiths'. She (I can't call Valerie "it"! ) gives year-round foliage colour, which raises the spirits on a dull day. She happily allows herself to be pruned to a variety of heights. Being a 'Lady', she is not as 'tough as old boots', but then she does have great powers of recovery after a set back. Another great attribute is her reproductive capability! Aided by this I could soon fill a garden with a gorgeous rolling golden landscape. Any chance of boredom would be eased by the change of shade through the season aided by the pleasant flowering.

Rita's favourite was an *Erica cinerea*. From the dozens of cultivars, she chose 'Vivienne Patricia' for her wonderful long lasting lilac-pink flower colour. As an added bonus this heather magically glows in the gloaming. Rita is quite happy to enjoy the russet bells through the winter and put up with the poor thing looking so dead during that gap between pruning and greening up at the end of May. By early June she is flowering again to give a wonderful summer display while most of the *Callunas* are just thinking about it. Rita knows her well – having lived with her for over 25 years. Despite occasional winter damage, she always recovers to give more summer pleasure.

My depression regarding the dearth of heather planting in public gardens was lifted when we visited 'Cragside' in early May. This is a wonderful National Trust property in Northumberland. Apart from being the first house in the world to be lit by hydro-electricity (which appeals to my engineering instincts), having England's tallest Douglas fir and masses of rhododendrons, it has one of the largest 'hand made' rock gardens in Europe. Amazingly, this is heavily populated with *Calluna* and even has a few *Erica australis*. The rockery has recently been renovated so we have never seen it in bloom. We will return later in the year to see how it is doing. If it looks as good as it promises to be, maybe a picture on our web site?

I was also pleased by a visit to a wholesale heather nursery in Northumberland. Rita needed to stock a new bed with *cinereas*, so we had to drive over 60 miles to do so. Local garden centres were a waste of time. The nursery was still producing a good variety of plants, but the main change since our last visit a few years ago is the change in pot size. Retailers – mainly supermarkets – are now demanding heathers in one litre pots, so our little expedition cost a little more than expected! So I finish my ramblings on the optimistic note that people are still buying sufficient heathers to keep a specialist nursery in business and that maybe a garden guru will promote their use as an economical approach to an easily maintained colourful perennial garden.

## Letters

### From Geoff Yates

I was horrified today to be told that Grange Plant Centre has stopped selling heathers as nobody wants to buy them. I was looking for 50 or so to plant a small scheme at my daughter Alison's tea room in Grasmere where we have winter flowering cultivars creating a great show at the moment. The majority of plants being sold, and there are very few of them in any garden centre or nursery locally, are not labelled, many of German or Dutch origin with no cultivar names.

Is it possible for the Society to persuade some garden writer to promote the value of the plants in the various journals and hopefully lead a campaign against the tedious and winter wasteland of hardy plants?

## Questions & Answers

**Q** I apologise if this seems an unusual request but I hope that you can help.

As part of a traffic calming scheme in one of our villages near Dartmoor in Devon, I am thinking about removing a concrete island in the middle of an old trunk road and replacing it with a larger island that we could plant up. The idea is that it would be both more attractive and also decrease the perceived width for passing traffic.

I'm not sure why, but I immediately thought of heathers. I've always liked them, they seem fairly slow and low growing (important when they'll be so

close to the road) and hopefully they'll be able to stand up to a bit of salt and grit occasionally.

I was hoping you might be able to tell me whether this is a good or bad idea – not the traffic calming bit, just the heathers bit. I've got your 'Choosing Heathers' guide printed off, but if there are any varieties of heather you think would be particularly well suited I would appreciate it if you could let me know.

**A** (From R Canovan) There are examples of heathers planted in highways, such as the Heather Harp Roundabout in Limerick on page 53 of the *Heather Society's* 2009 *Yearbook*. However, given that the location is on Dartmoor you may be looking for a planting scheme that takes its cue from the heathland ecology of Dartmoor. If this is the case you would be looking to plant with indigenous *Calluna vulgaris* and possibly *Erica cinerea*, or *Erica tetralix* if the site is rather damp.

If it were appropriate for the location to introduce different coloured flowers you could consider those cultivars that have their origins in South West England, such as *Calluna vulgaris* 'Randall's Crimson' (Devon) 'Sister Anne' and 'Mullion' (Cornwall), *Erica cinerera* 'Angarrack'; 'Eden Valley' & 'Vivienne Patricia' (Cornwall), 'C D Eason', 'C G Best' and 'Domino' (Dorset) and *Erica tetralix* 'Mebury White' (Devon) to name just a few.

These plants are normally available through the Heather Society's plant ordering service

<http://www.heathersociety.org.uk/hhg/nurseries/THS.html>

Any plants at the edge of the highway may receive some salt burn during winter months as a result of gritting roads.

The *Yearbook* referred to is available to non-members for £15.

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**A** From Bill Reed.

We live at Marnhull in North Dorset. We have an area about 12 x 2 yards with a 'sprinkling' of rockery type stones on the south side of our fairly steep driveway from our cul-de-sac 'Woodlands Mead', up to the porch entrance on the north facing side of our bungalow. I would like to see this area thickly covered with a selection of hardy heathers, with a successive flowering throughout the year.

The approximately 45 degree north-facing slope of the area is about 1ft deep near our entrance porch increasing to some 4ft deep near the road. The underlying subsoil is heavy 'Oxford' clay: possibly some more topsoil could be brought in if essential. Do you think that there is a serious practical possibility of establishing a good little heather garden in such pretty unpromising a site? If so:

1. How should we set about starting?
2. What varieties should we choose (a) for best growth prospects and (b) for interesting colour and 'succession' through the year?
3. How long would it be until we could reasonably expect a good cover of flowering heather plants?

**A** (from Richard Canovan)

Oxford Clay is usually slightly acid, and there is acid grassland

nearby, but the village is on a small limestone ridge in the far north of the county. Therefore Bill needs to check the pH of his soil as it will greatly influence the heathers that he can grow. But a small heather garden is of course perfectly possible, so this is my contribution, which shows how much choice there is to suit his taste of flower and foliage harmony.

The clay is good for *Erica x darleyensis* (Darley Dale heath), *E. erigena* (Irish heath) and probably *E. vagans* (Cornish heath). Some hybrids of the latter will thrive – certain cultivars of *E. x williamsii* (Williams's heath) and all *E. x griffithsii* (Griffiths's heath). *Erica carnea* (Winter heath) will do well given good preparation of the soil. If the soil is acid, *E. mackayana* (Mackay's heath) may be best as this is arguably the most shade tolerant of the summer-flowering heathers, but away from the property *Calluna vulgaris* (ling) should get sufficient sun to do well at the top of the slope.

The slope and rockery stones (limestone?) offer opportunities for creating one or more berms behind which freely draining soil can be held back for heathers and other plants needing such conditions. *E. umbellata* (Portuguese heath), especially, will be useful there as it flowers through late May into June when few other heathers are in full bloom.

At the boundary with the drive, taller varieties such as *E. x griffithsii* 'Valerie Griffiths' would provide good bloom in late summer and foliage colour throughout the year. 'Jacqueline' is an alternative with deep cerise flowers in summer and *E. erigena* 'W. T. Rackliff' is a neat bush, smothered with white flowers from mid-winter until late spring. In front of these could, if the soil is acid, go *Calluna* cultivars with good flowers and either coloured new growth in spring or winter foliage. Good examples to choose from are 'Con Brio' with ruby flowers on green gold foliage turning red in winter; 'Firefly' with deep mauve flowers on orange foliage that turns brick red in winter, 'Kerstin' also has mauve flowers on downy grey lilac foliage the new growth being spectacular cream, pink and red. Others available at present include 'Ruby Slinger' with white flowers and cream new growth, 'Spring Glow' with cream new foliage and mauve flowers, and 'Red Fred' or 'Rebecca's Red' both of which have lilac pink flowers and orange-red new growth.

Other cultivars that will benefit from the better drainage up-slope are *E. carnea* cultivars. Those with coloured foliage like 'Anne Sparkes', with a few rose pink flowers, 'Westwood Yellow', with yellow foliage throughout the year and pink flowers from February to April, or 'Aurea', with lilac pink flowers. Or floriferous, long-flowering varieties with green foliage such as 'Myretoun Ruby' (deep rose pink darkening to magenta), 'Pink Spangles' (shell pink) or the early flowering 'Rotes Jewel' (beetroot). These tolerate some lime in the soil. *E. umbellata* 'David Small' flowers in May until well into June is another alternative.

All those can be planted in 1s, 2s and 3s to contrast with each other. The soil for all those needs addition of much grit sand and organic matter to provide two spits depth, with perlite and ericaceous compost on planting. Lower down also needs good preparation. Any lawn turves can be upturned and dug into the second spit, with the better soil mixed with grit sand and compost above. Trench digging for such a small area will make the task easier. Create some ridges and troughs. Then Bill can plant his choice of *E. x darleyensis* using our *Handy guide*



although some of the spread dimensions may be on the low side.

Outstanding cultivars which are not too tall, spread well and tolerate some shade in my experience include, 'Kramer's Rote', 'Ghost Hills' and the early flowering 'White Perfection' which is sometimes coming into flower in late October. Between his choice of these and a mound on which a small *E. erigena* or perennial could be planted there could be a drift of *E. mackayana* 'Shining Light', a beautiful white, which flowers from July, or perhaps *E. tetralix* 'Samptfotchen', which has grey green foliage, especially beautiful in spring, with rose pink flowers starting in late June. Other possibilities instead of *E. x darleyensis* are *E. vagans* such as the cerise 'Mrs D. F. Maxwell' or the delicate shell pink and compact 'Summertime'. The planting can be finished off by a good mulch of composted bark.

## Appreciations

*It is very sad there are so many long-standing Members to list under this heading. Ed.*

### Geoffrey Smith

It was with great sadness that we learned of the death of Geoffrey Smith on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2009. He suffered a stroke last autumn and never recovered.

Geoffrey was a great supporter of the Heather Society and a heather lover. During his twenty-year period as Curator at the *Northern Horticultural Society's* Harlow Carr garden he was deeply involved with our "Heather Trials". Amongst his many plants he grew heathers in his own garden and kept a small menagerie of animals. He kept himself fit, even up to his final illness, by taking long walks in his beloved dales and moors.

He was a true Yorkshire man always smartly dressed, very dapper, but straight to the point when talking. If he did not like something he told you so but then having been born in Swaledale and living all his life, apart from a brief spell in Cornwall, in North Yorkshire that is understandable.

This is just a small appreciation of his life and work for the society of which he was an honorary member. A full obituary will be published in the Yearbook (Heathers 7).

*Jean Julian*

### Daphne Maginess

It was with sadness that I heard that a founder member of the *Heather Society*, Daphne Maginess, had passed away on 30<sup>th</sup> April, 2009. Daphne was a keen gardener with a particular love for heathers and was a great supporter of *The Heather Society* and the South West Group. Daphne lived in Broadstone in Dorset and had a good sized garden in an area adjacent to heathland and indeed her garden was an extension of that heathland. On several occasions Daphne opened her garden to



members of the South West Group and on one occasion welcomed members during a Conference weekend. Our condolences are extended to her family.

*Phil Joyner*

## **Kathleen Dyson**

The Yorkshire Heather Group was re-formed in March 1997 having been "in limbo" since 1990. We welcomed into our midst that day Kathleen Dyson of Fixby, Huddersfield, who in the interim had joined *The Heather Society* to learn about heathers.

Following the sudden death of her husband, Ken, her work had increased as she not only had to look after their home and garden but also take over the running of a painting and decorating business with 15 staff. Because of this, Kathleen, together with the help of her gardener, Lee Summers, redesigned her beautiful garden to make it easier to maintain. It was a wonderful show and she kindly invited the Yorkshire Group to visit on several occasions and see the various heather cultivars blooming. We had wonderful Yorkshire afternoon teas as well.

Kathleen was a friendly but very quiet unassuming person, a dedicated attendee at our local group meetings, whose life revolved around looking after others. She was a regular volunteer at the local hospice in Huddersfield and also helped fund raise for them.

When I asked her to become treasurer for our group in November 1999 she took less than 24 hours to reply and held the post from 1999 until November 2004 and her work was of great help to us.

Kathleen took on the task of caring for Peter Vickers both at our meetings and taking him to and from annual conferences and though I know on some occasions her patience was tested I never heard her complain. Peter was by then becoming infirm and more fractious with age.

It was a sorrowful day for all of us, when we visited Kathleen for the last time knowing that life was becoming more difficult for her as her mind had become confused and she then needed help on a daily basis from her sister-in-law, Beryl. The time had come for her to move south to live with her daughter and their family, who have looked after her for the past four years. It still came as a surprise though when Caroline telephoned to inform me that her mother had passed away, fairly suddenly and very peacefully.

*Jean Julian*

## **Donald Arthur Richards**

Donald Arthur Richards of Eskdale Green, Cumbria died peacefully Friday, 27th March 2009, in his 94th year.

Don was a retired pharmacist and long-time member of the Society. He loved his heathers and his blueberries, which he also supplied to the local pub. When the Conference was in his area we all adjourned to the pub for lunch, with 'Don's Blueberry Pie' to follow - put on the menu by the landlord especially for our benefit. Don was the inventor of the Dewpoint Cabinet. A full obituary will appear in the 2010 Yearbook.



## Group News

### North East

On Saturday, November 1st last year, the Ponteland Local History Society celebrated their 40th Anniversary by holding a Local History Day in the Memorial Hall, with 37 local organizations taking part. The North East Group of *The Heather Society* had a stand, which we dressed with colour photographs of members' heather gardens, leaflets and trophies. Even those which we won way back in 1990 at the Gateshead Garden Festival! Each organization dressed their stand with their own historic memorabilia and the Hall looked most colourful when completed. Geoff and I manned our stand all day and we were surprised at how quickly the time passed just chatting with people, especially when no-one was selling anything, as it was just an historical event. Most of the village population came and it was deemed a great success.

We had our Annual Outing on Sunday, May 3rd and our friends from the Local History Society, together with friends from the Bowling Club, joined us again. This year we visited Beningbrough Hall and Gardens, which is 8 miles NW of York.

This is a beautiful mansion built in 1716 for a York landowner, but is now a National Trust Property and is in partnership with the National Portrait Gallery. There are over 120 outstanding portraits of 18th century figures hanging in period rooms, together with important furniture and porcelain collections. The Hall is set in six acres of show gardens and we had a most interesting guided tour of these. By the time the tour was over we were more than pleased to sit down to a welcome cup of tea with home-made scones and cakes!! The 'icing on the cake' was the sun which shone all day, but sadly, there was also a chilly wind. Well, you can't have everything!

Our next event will be the Ponteland Flower Show which will be held in the Memorial Hall on Saturday, September 12th. As usual, staging will be from 9.00 - 11.00am, judging from 11.00 am and open to the public from 1.00 - 4.00pm.

Dorothy M Warner

### Yorkshire Heather Group

Four members of the Yorkshire Heather Group attended the meeting on Saturday, 30th May 2009 at Harlow Carr. Alan Venn, having crossed the Pennines from Bolton, joined us to present his ideas for increasing membership of the society.

The meeting started with a discussion on various topics including the photographs, which Chairman, John Griffiths had recently received from Kurt Kramer, the recently reported *Phytophthora ramorum* (which Jean Julian fears may have invaded her garden), the peat controversy and the growing of *Calluna* without peat in the compost, and composted bark.

Alan then made his presentation recommending the use of containers for growing heathers and the use of tree heathers for specimen plants in a container. The audience made comments and a further discussion ensued so that two rounds of tea were required.

Dr. Bryon Roberts invited members of the Yorkshire Group to visit his garden on a Saturday in early July to view the heathers, *Erica cinerea* being his favourite plant. The invitation was gratefully accepted and it is to be hoped that the weather is as kind on that day as today.

Our next meeting at Harlow Carr will be on Saturday, 19th September 2009. A programme has yet to be arranged for this meeting.

Jean Julian

## South West Area

On Saturday April 4th Lin and I visited the Hillier Gardens, near Romsey in Hampshire. However due either to illness or prior commitments, many members were unable to attend, but I am grateful to those who did attend on an afternoon of perfect weather. We were able to spend a couple of hours taking in various areas of the garden in particular the Winter Garden and The Heather Garden. The winter/spring flowering *Ericas* were a joy to see, as were many of the other plants and shrubs providing spring colour, either with flowers, foliage or with bark. An added bonus for the afternoon was a display by the local group of the Alpine Garden Society which was very much enjoyed. The afternoon was rounded off with a welcome cup of tea in the restaurant back at the garden entrance.

Now to the next get-together. On Saturday afternoon, 8th August, 2009, David Edge, our current Chairman, is inviting members and their friends to visit his nursery at Woodlands, near Verwood in Dorset. This is a wholesale nursery that provides heathers to many of the Garden Centres in Hampshire, Dorset, Wiltshire and beyond. Members of the former SW Group have visited the nursery on several occasions and have enjoyed an afternoon seeing how the professionals propagate and grow on heathers for the trade. This is a rare opportunity to visit behind the scenes and, as such, is an occasion not to be missed. However I need to know how many members are likely to attend. So, as soon as you read this article and make a decision to attend, please contact me, by letter, providing a S.A.E. for the return of directions on how to get to the nursery. Members should gather by 1:45 pm for a 2.00 pm start and are welcome to bring friends, provided I know in advance.

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 S.A.E. then I will return a map and directions to help you locate any proposed venue. Please note that it is essential to provide a S.A.E. in the case of the visit to David Edge's nursery described above. Visits to public gardens will not be pre-arranged 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. If you decide to attend then, unless otherwise stated, a short notice phone call on 023 8086 4336 will be appreciated.

Phil Joyner

## USEFUL ADDRESSES

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

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| <b>Chairman &amp; Steering Committee</b> | <i>Policy matters, major events etc.</i><br>Mr. D. Edge, Forest Edge Nursery, Verwood Road, Woodlands, Wimborne, BH12 6LJ.   |
| <b>Treasurer</b>                         | Mr. P.L. Joyner, 84 Kinross Road, Rushington, Totton, Southampton, Hampshire, SO40 9BN.<br><i>e-mail:</i> philjoyner@btinternet.com <i>Tel:</i> (02380) 864336                           |
| <b>Secretary &amp; Slide Librarian</b>   | <i>Council Matters/Hire of slides</i><br>Mrs. J. Julian, "Matchams", Main Street, Askham Richard, York, YO23 3PT.<br><i>e-mail:</i> jeanjulian@btinternet.com <i>Tel:</i> (01904) 707316 |
| <b>Yearbook Editor &amp; Registrar</b>   | <i>Articles for the Yearbook / Naming of Heathers</i><br>Dr. E.C. Nelson<br>For details - see back cover   |
| <b>Bulletin Editor</b>                   | <i>Notes, articles for the Bulletin</i><br>Mrs. D. Everett, The Bannut, Bringsty, Herefordshire, WR6 5TA.<br><i>e-mail:</i> everettbannut@zetnet.co.uk<br><i>Tel:</i> (01885) 482206     |
| <b>Administrator</b>                     | <i>Subscriptions, Orders for publications etc.</i><br>Dr. E.C. Nelson<br>For details - see back cover  |
| <b>Conference Manager</b>                | Mrs. S. Kay, Lettergesh East, Renvyle, Co. Galway, Republic of Ireland<br><i>e-mail:</i> susiek@gofree.indigo.ie <i>Tel:</i> 00353 95 43575  |
| <b>Website</b>                           | Mr. D. Small, Denbeigh, All Saints Road, Creeting St. Mary, Ipswich, Suffolk, IP6 8PJ.<br><i>e-mail:</i> heathers@zetnet.co.uk<br><i>Tel:</i> (01449) 711220 <i>FAX:</i> (01449) 711220  |
- Group Organisers** (*Remember, you will be very welcome at any local meeting or visit!*)
- |                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| <b>East Midlands</b> | Mr. A. Hall, 10, Upper Green, Nanpantan, Loughborough, Leics. LE11 3SG.<br><i>e-mail:</i> halla32@tiscali.co.uk <i>Tel:</i> 01509 238923                       |
| <b>North East</b>    | Mrs. D. M. Warner, Littlecroft, Click-em-in, Ponteland, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE20 9BQ.<br><i>Tel:</i> (01661) 823299   |
| <b>Home Counties</b> | Mr. D. Millis, 18, The Horseshoe, Leverstock Green, Hemel Hempstead, Herts HP3 8QW<br><i>e-mail:</i> Derek.Millis@care4free.net <i>Tel:</i> (01442) 254880     |
| <b>South West</b>    | Mr. P.L. Joyner, 84 Kinross Road, Rushington, Totton, Southampton, Hampshire, SO40 9BN.<br><i>e-mail:</i> philjoyner@btinternet.com <i>Tel:</i> (02380) 864336 |
| <b>Yorkshire</b>     | Dr. J. Griffiths, 9, Ashlea Close, Leeds, West Yorkshire. LS25 1JX.<br><i>Tel:</i> (01132) 863349  |