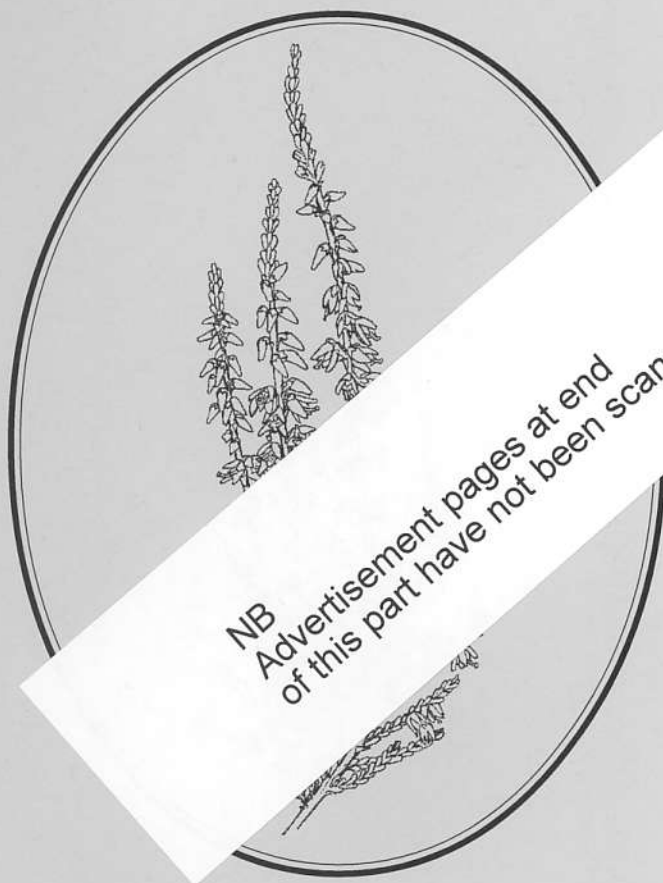


# *Bulletin of The Heather Society*



*Vol. 7 No. 8*

*Autumn 2009*

## DIARY OF EVENTS

**2010**

15 January

**CLOSING DATE FOR THE SPRING BULLETIN**

6 March

Yorkshire

Harlow Carr The World of Flowers





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Cover illustration *Calluna Vulgaris* by Brita Johansson

*At long, long last the Bulletin has colour! I do hope you enjoy the colour photographs as much as I have enjoyed being able to use them. I am sure you will join me in sending best wishes to our recently retired Chairman, Arnold Stow, who was taken ill whilst on holiday in the West Country. Arnold was taken to Yeovil hospital, where he underwent a couple of operations for kidney problems. The latest news before taking the Bulletin to the printer is that, although still quite poorly, he is back home and, hopefully, on the mend. Best wishes also to Josey who has had a difficult and worrying time.*

**Please note the new email addresses:**

**Bulletin Editor:** everett@bannut.co.uk

**Administrator:** tippitiwitchet@phonecoop.coop

## Chairman's Message

**David Edge**

With the HS 2009 Conference now over it's time to look forward to the coming year and the issues that face the Society.

As, in common with other societies, we face the problems of an ageing and declining membership, our available free time has many demands on it in the modern electronic age, and our subject plant gains little publicity in the media. Despite this we have a dedicated team representing *The Heather Society* as its Council, providing valuable skills, and bringing years of experience to the running of the Society. Without the efforts of these members the Society could not function to the high standard that it currently maintains and our universal thanks go to all involved. The Society has two vacancies on its Council and welcomes enquiries from interested persons, with or without knowledge of heathers!

Whilst heathers have remained in the doldrums for the many of the past years, now is the time for them to come out from the cold and be viewed as having a place in the modern garden and landscape. Getting this message out to the public is one of the functions of the Society and hopefully will re-invigorate interest in heathers and our Society.

On another note, it was disappointing to see the colourful red-flowered *Erica gracilis* being displayed in the UK's major chain of garden centres

without any cultural information shown, or warning that the plant, originating from South Africa, is not frost hardy. As a grower we often hear in the garden centres the public's comment 'I bought a heather but it died, my soil must be wrong so I won't get any more'. Garden centres have a duty to provide accurate information on the plants being sold and this situation potentially dissuades gardeners from choosing heathers. Perhaps if more purchasers returned them to the centre as dead plants in the spring, retailers would think twice.

## **Annual Gathering 2010**

**Susie Kay**

We have just had the gathering for 2009. To those who attended, I would like to say 'thank you' for your support and trust that you found it an enjoyable occasion.

Plans are well underway for the next Annual gathering in 2010.

This will take place in Kings Lynn. The hotel chosen is the Ramada King's Lynn and the dates are 10<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> September 2010. The cost will be approximately £290 per person.

Visits will include a trip to Kingfisher Nurseries, owned by Peter Bingham, The Butterfly and Wildlife Park at Long Sutton and Sandringham House gardens. We shall have a speaker on "Plant Hunting in Bolivia" and, hopefully, someone to talk to us about conservation of Norfolk's heathlands.

For those who didn't fill in a form whilst at Reigate, please use the enclosed flyer to secure your place for 2010 and return this to the Administrator at the usual address.

If you prefer to use other accommodation, please make your own arrangement and we would be pleased to welcome you as a day visitor.

Council would be delighted to meet you at this event, where there is always time to discuss every aspect of the heather world.

## **Report on 38<sup>th</sup> Annual Gathering, Reigate, Surrey**

**E. Charles Nelson**

We had glorious weather for our annual gathering in 2009, especially on Saturday when we visited the gardens at Nymans, formerly the home of the Messel family, and later the Bowermans' Champs Hill. Sunday at Savill and Valley Gardens in Windsor Great Park was not so sunny but there was no rain and that helps keep everyone happy.

But, let's begin at the beginning. On Friday evening after a convivial dinner we all carefully side-stepped the bride's train to get to the lecture by Head Gardner, Ed Iken which set the scene for our visit to Nymans; we were all intrigued by the "compost tea" which the heathers are given yet wondered why it is not simply called liquid manure? The wedding and a birthday party provided a boisterous background of sound for the rest of the evening and (alas) into the wee small hours. Some members were a little bleary from want of sleep the next morning but we set off punctually for Nymans,

taking the scenic route by way of Gatwick Airport's perimeter.

At Nymans, neither Ed Iken nor member Philip Holmes was available to escort us because they both were on holiday, but we were expertly led around by Colin Alves. With an endearing, wry sense of humour he led us, via sumptuous herbaceous borders resplendent with dahlias, to the "Potting Shed" where we had a brief discourse on plant nomenclature and pronunciation and the history of Nymans. Colin directed us to the heath garden, which is on the edge of the estate with fine views across the countryside beyond. Cornish and St Dabeoc's heaths were in full bloom, and some new plantings were scrutinized closely for rogues. After a while we trotted off after Colin across the main lawn resplendent with naked ladies (his joke!) to the charming "Compost Zone" (Ed had explained all about this the night before and it evidently is a "must" for visitors to Nymans). Nymans has a fine mix of formal walks and informal planting and we wended our way to the "Prospect" for views across the estate. Then back to the ruins of the house with subtropical plants nestling in the apses. Into the walled garden, passing the rose garden, and on to the Top Garden, where the extraordinary fruits of *Magnolia* 'Anne Rosse' caught everyone's attention. They look like giant pink slugs with bulging tummies.

After *alfresco* lunches we re-boarded the coach and proceeded by motorway and winding, narrow lanes to Champs Hill, where we were welcomed by Mary Bowerman. Cyclamens in all shades of pink, and white, sparkled among the sunny heathers: 'Champs Hill', 'Alfred Bowerman', 'Margaret Bowerman', 'Pat Turpin', 'Cherry Turpin', 'Sid Brown' and some (sadly slug-eaten, as Sid explained) 'Valerie Griffiths' (not looking "her" best). This is a heather enthusiast's paradise, and there were scones and cakes for tea in the Music Room, too. We concluded a wonderful afternoon by posing for the group photograph on the lawn with the Bowermans and their two dogs. Champs Hill is, so David Bowerman told me, much loved by Dame Felicity Lott and she is to be honoured with a new heather, a sport from 'Blossom Time', soon to be named.

Back in the hotel, after dinner, we were addressed by one of our members, Dr Simon Caporn of Manchester Metropolitan University, on the topic of "Heathlands in a changing climate". Simon explained experiments, which are being carried out in various parts of Britain to examine what was happening to heathland plants in the present "climate-change" era, and kept the audience enthralled for almost two hours – no mean feat when accompanied by the thud of "music" from yet another party! Simon's research work is clearly very much a family enterprise with his dad and son all roped in to do the hard work such as watering the heathers with liquid fertilizer or sitting in a hole on the moors covered with a glass canopy, in the aid of science, of course.

Sunday was dull (cloudy!) compared with Saturday. After the essential AGM, we headed for the grandly titled "The Royal Landscape" – aka Windsor Great Park – and for the first couple of hours wandered through the Savill Garden where there is a splendid new sinuous-roofed visitor centre. It was 14 years since I was last there, in springtime, and this was my first visit for maybe 25 years in early autumn. The herbaceous borders were sumptuous with daisies of all sorts and dahlias, while a raucous mob of parakeets swept from tree to tree. More naked ladies under the magnolias, of course! After lunch,

we reassembled at the coach to be "escorted" to the Valley Gardens – some had dreamed of an escort of the Household Cavalry, or maybe just a police outrider with his blue lights a-flashing! We had an even more impressive escort – the Keeper of the Savill and Valley Gardens, Mark Flanagan – so we swept into Windsor Great Park passing the polo fields with behatted ex-Guards controlling the Sunday revels. Mark gave us a brief introduction to the Heather Garden and we were able to amble through these at our own pace. As usual, lots of conversations about identities and names. The Valley Gardens are now mature, with lots of variety provided by the undulations of the ground and the rich collection of evergreen and deciduous trees under planted with low shrubs and ornamental grasses. Mark explained that the dwarf conifers have long since ceased to be dwarfs and many of the "slow-growing" ones were not that slow to overwhelm heathers. There are impressive clumps of Corsican heath, some very tall *Erica arborea* 'Alpina', and 'Kerstin' (unpruned) close to three times its "official" height of 30cm (1ft). Yet, the Valley Gardens' heathers are getting a bit tired and old, and could do with a major overhaul. It was good to see there has been quite a lot of new planting done recently, but rabbits are a serious nuisance.

Sunday evening, in the very much quieter hotel, provided Alan Kay with his moment of glory – the now famous auction of books and bric-a-brac. He raised members' enthusiasms for all sorts of arcane ware and ingeniously managed to award two anniversary salvers as prizes for guessing the number of different heathers in collection of the "thank-you" presentation baskets – 18! Congratulations to Barry Sellers and Arnold Stow, and two more pewter salvers go to good homes. Books donated by members were sold to high-bidding devotees of Ericaceae and Coniferae. Jean Julian's name came out of the "hat" as the "winner" of the copy of "Small & Wulff" for her "good companions" photographs. A slight argument between the computer and a compact disc – the computer won! – deprived us of some pictures from Cherrybank, but Richard Canovan explained the present situation there, asking members to "put pressure" on the Scotland's Gardens Trust to stop negotiating and allow the local council to take over the garden. He said that many enthusiastic local people wanted to help but were prevented by the long drawn-out negotiations.

The evening concluded with a discussion of the Society's future chaired by the Honorary Secretary. Suggestions included closer links with local horticultural groups especially during our annual-gathering weekend; a new-look and more interactive website; colour pictures in the *Bulletin*; a new edition of the "Handy Guide"; and reconsideration of the Society's status as a registered charity which restricts some of its freedom to act in the best interests of members.

On Monday, although the formal proceedings and events had all concluded, more than a dozen of us went to Steps, the Spragues' garden in nearby Dorking, a stone's throw from the roundabout with the silver cockerel. "Steps" is an intricate, and intricately irrigated, garden created on an almost vertical slope. David had pegged photographs of the garden as it looked in springtime at strategic points so we could more easily visualize it at that time, when it is in its prime. But a rambunctious, hummocky, splendidly floriferous 'Mrs D. F. Maxwell' was certainly memorable. We were able to name a few of David's



anonymous heathers, all raised from cuttings from a propagation day at Creeping St Mary (as explained in *Heathers* 6); it was good to see a thriving plant of *Erica azorica* here – it was also at Champs Hill.

As ever, it was delightful to meet new members and renew old acquaintances, but sad to hear of the passing of others. Susie's and Alan's arrangements were excellent, and their hard work on our behalf is greatly appreciated.

## Report on AGM held 13 September 2009

The Chairman, David Edge, reported that in March of this year membership of the Society stood at 303. Direct debit payments had had to be discontinued, due to the high cost of bank charges.

The British Heather Growers Association had put on a colourful display at the Hampton Court Flower Show and the Society had provided help to man the stand, as well as distributing nearly 1800 leaflets to publicise the Society.

The future of the National Heather Collection at Cherrybank remained uncertain. At Wisley there was concern about the profile of the collection in the current management agenda. Harlow Carr still had a limited planting.

The 39<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference will be held on 10<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> September 2010, at the Ramada Hotel, Kings Lynn.

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

### Emails

The summer was marked by an extended period of chaos in the Society's electronic mail. This also affected individual members. We have established a new e-mail address for administration and we urge members who have e-mail to make sure that they record this address and ensure that any anti-spam systems that are installed on their computers know that messages from it are not to be treated as spam. Members whose e-mail addresses are on record should have received at least one e-mail from me in recent weeks with "heather photographs, please" as the subject. If you did not receive this, please check your spam box.

The **new e-mail address** for all Heather Society business, including registration of names, is: [theheathersociety@phonecoop.coop](mailto:theheathersociety@phonecoop.coop)

Please also note the following new *personal* email addresses

Mrs Daphne **Everett**: [everett@bannut.co.uk](mailto:everett@bannut.co.uk)

Dr Charles **Nelson**: [tippitiwitchet@phonecoop.coop](mailto:tippitiwitchet@phonecoop.coop)

### New Members

D. M. **Deeprise**, Bedworth, Warwickshire

Mrs E. **Evans**, Tenterden, Kent

are warmly welcomed to the Society, having joined since the start of June 2009.

## Subscriptions & Gift aid for 2010

The time is coming around again for payment of annual subscriptions. Please remember that in 2010 there will be no direct debit payments requested; due to the huge increase in the cost to the Society of this type of subscription Council cancelled our arrangement. If you have previously paid by direct debit, please make sure that you have filled out and handed to *your own bank* a standing order mandate in favour of The Heather Society.

A subscription reminder is enclosed with this *Bulletin*, as well as a standing order mandate and (for any UK member who has not signed it already) a gift aid form. Gift aid allows the Society to reclaim any income tax paid on your subscription at the rate of 28% – that means the Society gets an extra £4.20 per UK subscriber but only if they have signed the form.

## Bargain of the year! Society Sweatshirts – ‘Must Clear’

The Society's special, cosy, hardwearing, **sweatshirts** are being offered at a special price (“ $\frac{2}{3}$  off” as the shops would say) to all members; stocks are limited so please e-mail or phone your orders.

We have two colours: bottle green and red (it is called maroon but is closer to the H13 crimson); and we have three standard sizes: medium, large and XL.

The special offer price is **£7, €10, US\$15** (postage included); euro notes and US dollar bills are acceptable in place of cheques or money orders. We can accept credit card payment but please note the extra cover charge of £3, making the total **£10**. They would make ideal gifts for friends and family and as they have an attractive logo on them – Dorset heath by Brita Johansson – they help advertise the Society.

## Recommended Heathers Booklet

And remember that slightly imperfect copies of this booklet are available for members in return for nothing but a postage stamp – see the Spring *Bulletin* pp 4-5.

## Photographs for the Society's Annual CD

There was an excellent response to the request sent by e-mail to members asking for photographs for the CD, which should be enclosed with this *Bulletin*. Thank you to all who responded.

The request for photographs of companion plants is still in place so if you have any photographs of heathers and their companions in your own garden, please consider making them available to the Society.

## Heathers 7 (2010)

At the time of writing these notes, the deadline for submitting articles (of any length!) for the 2010 yearbook, *Heathers 7*, is still six or seven weeks away. By the time you read this that will have fallen to two or maybe three weeks. If you want to contribute to the issue, please let me know by e-mail, if you have not already done so.

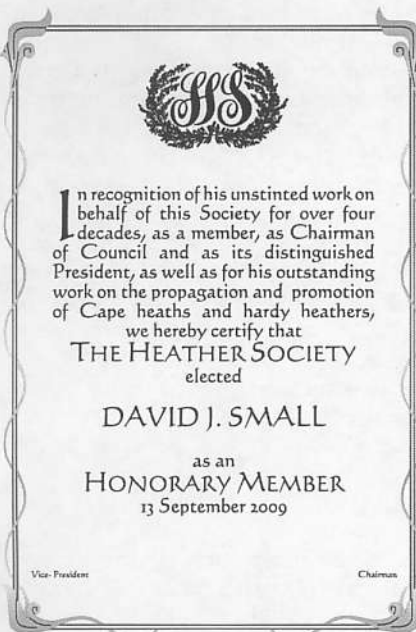
We hope to be able to send out the 2010 yearbook with the Spring *Bulletin*.



### ... and finally

It is getting rather late in the year for examining flowers on Cornish heath, but I would welcome any information that members may be able to provide about the colour of the anthers in white-flowered, or pale-flowered cultivars. The colour should be noted just as a floret opens. I have noticed that some so-called whites have very dark anthers, not pale tan or golden anthers as would be expected, and one clone I looked at even had strawberry coloured anthers. Information can be sent by e-mail or ordinary mail, and if you have a digital camera with a close-up facility a picture would help, please (it does not have to be perfect, just close enough to see the anthers clearly).

### Honorary Member: David J Small



David needs no introduction to members of *The Heather Society*. He has been a member since 9 March 1966, served on Council for many years and was its Chairman between 1992 and 2000. He was elected President in succession to David McClintock at the Annual General Meeting held in Buxton on 30 September 2000. In addition, he was a member, and Chairman, of the Technical Committee, ran propagation workshops, organized field trips, and established the Society's 5-star web site. Even that list is not complete: David has been the personification of The Heather Society for many more years than anyone else. He has patiently and expertly designed and printed the Society's publications, scanned countless slides into electronic format, teased out problems of identity and nomenclature, and managed to find time to propagate heathers, too.

In some ways *Gardening with hardy heathers*, which David wrote in collaboration with Ella May Wulff, is the culmination of his long experience. In it, his knowledge is distilled for the present generation of heather enthusiasts, and future generations of gardeners will surely also benefit.

David's interest in heathers is very broad. He has a particular fondness for Cape heaths and has grown them for many years. He rescued several cultivars from extinction, including 'Ghislaine', named after his granddaughter. His technical expertise is akin to wizardry at times. For example, he built a mist-unit to fit inside the back of his Talbot Rancho, which could operate "on the road". This enabled us to bring back hundreds of heather cuttings from Spain

in 1982 – I well remember David's delight at discovering that some had even rooted before we crossed the Channel on our homeward journey. From that trip came the incomparable *Erica mackayana* 'Shining Light', as well as *Erica umbellata* 'David Small', a hardy and floriferous clone that, as we say, should be more widely grown.

David's electronic and computer skills arose from his profession; he was a Chartered Electrical Engineer in British Telecom. He tutored not a few members of The Heather Society and personally created and built web sites for them. He is most generous with his knowledge and his time.

His love of heathers and skill in their propagation developed after Anne and he moved from Plumstead to Tonbridge and wanted easy-to-grow, ground-cover plants. The story has often been told, that at the first Society AGM, which he attended, David noticed that Constance MacLeod was wearing a sprig of a heather he did not recognize – he was given the buttonhole to propagate and, using another mist-unit that he had built, raised his first Cape heath plants.

For a number of years David wrote a column for *Amateur gardening*, and has also been author or co-author of several other books including the two-volume, eight-part *International register of heather names* – he also typed, designed and printed it from start to finish. The *Handy guide to heathers*, with Anne as co-author, has been through three editions and remains the essential reference work for heather gardeners throughout the temperate zone. While conceived as an ephemeral work, an all-encompassing and detailed source book, it has become the "bible" of the worldwide coterie of heather enthusiasts.

No one else can be said to have made such a broadly based contribution to the Society's Objects, as stated in the Rules, "... in particular the improvement of and research into the growing of heaths and heathers": President, Chairman, propagator, printer, councillor, technician, advisor, designer, author, web-master, even driver. We owe David our immense gratitude.

ECN.

## **Honorary Member: Ella May Thomson Wulff**

Ella May Wulff is known to members of The Heather Society, and indeed the gardening public at large now, as co-author with David Small of *Gardening with hardy heathers*, published last year to considerable acclaim. She served as President of the North American Heather Society for three years from 2001, and remains a stalwart of heathers in the USA. Beginning in 1993, she created her own "accidental" heather garden on a hillside in Oregon, and described the process of creation in this Society's 2002 *Yearbook*.

Quoting from the dust jacket of the book, Ella May has been "keenly interested in living things for as long as she can remember." She bought her first heather and planted it in her parents' garden when she was a teenager; we are not told what that heather was, alas! Ella May studied botany at Smith College in Massachusetts, earned her master's degree in marine science from the College of William and Mary in Virginia, and later studied landscape architecture at Oregon State University. She is a lady of many interests and has many talents including performing and composing music – she sings soprano with perfect



In recognition of her work to promote better awareness of the horticultural potential of hardy heathers, as well as for her unstinted work for our 'sister' societies throughout North America, we hereby certify that

THE HEATHER SOCIETY  
elected

ELLA MAY WULFF

as an  
HONORARY MEMBER  
13 September 2009

Vice-President

Chairman

pitch, plays the organ in her local church, and has had some of her compositions performed in Corvallis.

Ella May's interest in heathers was renewed in the 1980s when she was invited to the organizing meeting of the Northeast Heather Society. She soon joined the North American Heather Society and served as the NAHS's official representative at the First International Heather Conference in Germany, returning again as the NAHS's representative for the Second one in Scotland. Needless to say, she was on the organizing committee for the Third, which took place in Victoria, British Columbia, during 2008.

The jointly written book is not Ella May's only publication. She has written articles for American gardening magazines, and writes frequently for *Heather News*, the North American

Heather Society's quarterly. She has also contributed to *The Heather Society's Bulletin* and *Yearbook*, and it was a pleasure to join with her in naming *Erica* ♢ *gaudificans*; a comment from her prompted the unusual and happy name! We also hope we have persuaded the botanical world to conserve *Erica manipuliflora* from nomenclatural oblivion.

In the Winter 2002 issue of *Heather news*, Ella May wrote: "From where I sit, the heather web stretches to all parts of the world. From my own little neighbourhood in Philomath, Oregon to the usual suspects in Europe and South Africa, and the less usual in Australia and New Zealand, there are heather enthusiasts and heather plantings awaiting discovery." She is a very significant participant in that heather web, and her work on *Gardening with hardy heathers* has established her as a "name" in that web, a worthy successor, with David, to A. T. Johnson, Fred Chapple, D. Fyfe Maxwell, P. S. Patrick, Dorothy Metheny and others whose books are utterly essential to all heather enthusiasts no matter what hemisphere they inhabit.

May she continue to make music and grow heathers for many years to come!

ECN

## Hampton Court Flower Show

In July this year members of the *British Heather Growers Association* (BHGA) exhibited a heather garden at the 2009 RHS Hampton Court Palace Flower Show. This project was part funded by the Horticultural Development Council and *The Heather Society* and the garden, entitled 'Back to Front', was designed by Claire Bryant and Jackie Edwards ([www.downtoearthdesign.co.uk](http://www.downtoearthdesign.co.uk)).





*'Heather Moorland' in Walter Wornick's garden.*



*An assembly of HS members in the heather garden at Nymans.*



*The romantic ruins of the house which was burned down in 1947.*



*Some of the garden's famous topiary.*



*Herbaceous borders, topiary and fountain.*



*Group photo, 2009 Conference.*



*Part of the magnificent heather garden at Champs Hill.*



*British Heather Growers' Association stand at the Hampton Court Palace Flower Show.*



*Susie Kay was one of the several HS members who helped to man the stand.*



*Daboecia cantabrica "Amelie" with Erica cinerea and Agapanthus.*



The garden was constructed by Nigel Jeffries Landscapes Ltd. Opens in a new window ([enquiries@nigel-jeffries.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@nigel-jeffries.co.uk) based in Surrey and was awarded a Silver Gilt medal to the great joy of everyone involved

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The theme, **Back to Front**, illustrated the qualities and habits of heathers throughout the year, bringing heathers back to the forefront of the public's attention. It consisted of winter and summer flowering plants linked with *Agapanthus* and herbaceous plants. Linking in with this theme was the contrasting colour schemes for winter and summer.

The diversity of use of the heathers was shown by the background 'living wall' consisting of *Erica carnea* 'Foxhollow', topiary specimens of *Erica erigena* and ground cover *Erica carnea*, *Erica x darleyensis* and *Calluna vulgaris* 'White Lawn' amongst others. Centre of attraction quickly became evident by the number of enquires regarding the colourful display of the red flowering *Daboecia cantabrica* 'Amelie' and the upright flowered white *Daboecia cantabrica* 'White Blum' planted amongst differing shades of flowering *Erica cinerea*.

The stand was manned by members of the *BHGA*, *The Heather Society* and the designers who were kept busy handing out leaflets and advice to the numerous and varied enquiries. The garden was greatly admired and complimented by members of the public, many of whom described it as the best in the show!

The aim was to destroy the myth that all heathers need acid soil and to encourage the re-appraisal of their use in modern gardens. The message was that heathers have many diverse, yet over-looked qualities and year-round appeal; being colourful, low-maintenance and drought tolerant, and providing wonderful ground colour as well as encouraging biodiversity.

It is hoped that the *BHGA* will be successful with a further application for funding to enable a further garden to be planned for the year 2010, continuing the promotion and message to the public that heathers continue to be a plant for 'today's' garden.

*The BHGA conveys its gratitude to The Heather Society for financial support and the time given by its members: Barry Sellers, Susie Kay, Alan Venn, Arnold Stow, Phil Joyner, Richard Canovan, Andy Collins, Julian and Alison Fitz-Earle, at the show.*

## **The Latest on Cherrybank and Wisley**

### **Richard Canovan**

After a year of negotiations with no progress, local politicians lost patience with the *Scotland's Garden Trust (SGT)*. *The Courier* reported that Deputy



Provost, Councillor Willie Wilson, had written to Sir Andrew Cubie CBE, Chair of the SGT, about the delay in the transfer of the garden/visitor centre to Perth & Kinross Leisure. This can be accessed at: <http://www.thecourier.co.uk/output/2009/09/16/newsstory13792412t0.asp>

The Council now think it is time to bring pressure on SGT, as the garden has deteriorated and needs formal handover of the assets so the public can enter; there are plenty of enthusiasts in the Perth area awaiting this. Ella May Wulff responded with a letter published in *The Courier* on 21 September. I have responded to that with another. Sir Andrew's reaction to Councillor Wilson contrasts with the reception at Bells Distillers some of us were privileged to be at in the September 1992 Conference when Bells were awarded a plaque for maintaining a world class garden and the promotion of heathers. Members may wish to write to Sir Andrew. One SGT address at The Bells Cherrybank Centre is out of date. That held by the register of the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator as charity SC030417 is: Woodend, Craigmill, By Stirling FK9 5PP.

I made two visits early in March and June to advise the Perth & Kinross Council's garden staff and get together some evidence on the state of the garden. After pruning and some feeding the general appearance was better in June but whole plantings of some cultivars have died and not been replaced. Some cultivars do not appear to have been pruned for several years. *Callunas* are probably in the worst state and those with coloured spring foliage have clearly not been pruned after flowering for some years. Some new plantings had not been mulched and frost had heaved the plants out of the ground exposing the roots to hot sun and heavy rain. It has been an exceptionally wet summer on Tayside but the garden staff have been working hard these last few months to restore the garden. However, as Ella May has pointed out in her letter, seedlings threaten the integrity of the collection. There was also some evidence of reversion or sports and disease.



Meanwhile *The Heather Society* was informed by Surrey County Council that the planning application for an enclosed in-vessel composting facility near Wisley submitted by Wharf Land Investments (Jersey) Ltd was not determined within the statutory period and an appeal had been submitted to the Secretary of State. It has been recovered for his decision and a public inquiry has just been held. So there will now be a report on the issues raised and a recommendation of whether permission should be granted. This must be seen as a positive development as all the issues including the *Phytophthora* threat will get considered in a balanced way. With the disease and other problems and after 41 cms of snow in February (that is official) this heather garden needs some good news. We are requesting a copy of the Inspector's Report and the decision letter. Hopefully it will be refused permission.

## **Connemara Chat**

### **Susie Kay - Connemara**

How was it for you? I'm talking about the summer of course.

Here in the west of Ireland we started with a drought and ended with a deluge; and what I found interesting when talking with Egil Sæle at the conference, was that the West coast of Norway had experienced the same rainfall as also had the West coast of Scotland.

Also this year we have been plagued by midges from the beginning of May. A trip to the veggie garden not only required wellies, but also plastering myself with anti-midge spray. Ours are tiny little things, but they get right inside your clothes and hair and are very unpleasant. Swallows took up residence in the shed, but even they couldn't keep up with the daily supply of the beasties. However the swallows gave us great entertainment every evening with their daredevil diving and soaring. Much better than any television programme. Esmeralda and Gertrude played their small part in trying to rid us of a few midges. They are spiders, one lives in the conservatory and on the next pane of glass the other has her web outside. Even the arachnophobe (Alan, the Under Gardener) was fascinated by their activities.

Simple pleasures for simple minds, which brings me to the fun of my propagation experiments, which is a fine occupation when the garden is waterlogged.

I am not giving you a treatise on this subject, as I am sure all of you know much better than me on how to propagate.

Having the protection of the tunnel, I take up this job on wet days, no problem this year. As I have so many deaths, I always need to put in more plants to cover the gaps.

Having collected the empty plastic fruit cartons, which conveniently have holes in the bottom for drainage, I run out in the rain to select, which plants are going to have the honour of being reproduced. The Under Gardener makes me a wheelbarrow of the compost I use for cuttings. Half peat, yes I am aware that it is not ecologically correct, and half perlite. Sometimes I throw in a bit of sand. I am always trying different mixtures. For some reason the winter heathers are first to be done. My supplier, a well-known nurseryman from Dorset has usually given me the original plant, but some of these mother plants date back a long time. I know this is not ideal, but it does work occasionally. This work is not all done in one day, but happens over the course of a few weeks. It did rain a lot of days this year. Slowly the containers are lined up and at this stage a label is inserted. I manage to put 15 - 20 cuttings of each plant in each box.

Then the turn of the summer flowering heathers and maybe because I do have a little optimism, some cape heaths.

I gaze with pride at around 35 containers and do the sums - I have more than 400 cuttings. But deep down I already know that this will not progress to 400 plantlets. It always calls to mind my mantra of "the triumph of hope over experience".

Not too long after, I am back in the tunnel, anxiously giving a little tug here and there to see if the magic roots have appeared. I do try to resist this exercise, but cannot; it is nice to know something is happening.

I don't know anything about any percentage of rooting, as none of this is scientific; it is just for fun, filling in wet days.

So imagine the joy, come February, March time when I realise that I have an awful lot of little rooted cuttings and I had better do something about potting them up. Another barrow load of compost. I discovered a few years ago a wonderful product produced by Chempak™, which when added to peat makes an ericaceous compost. A bit of sand, more perlite and a cautious handful of slow release fertiliser and away I go.

I am afraid I do talk to the little plants, telling them what a wonderful, fairly wet life they will have in Connemara and ask them to do their best for me.

Of course there are some failures, but at the moment all seems going reasonably well.

The numbers of trays builds up and are daily watered and prayed for. Once again some don't make it and the labels get lost when I am trying to fill a tray with the one or two from each cultivar that have survived so far. Occasionally a whole container has made it to this stage.

By June they have to go outside to make way for the tomatoes, as we do have to eat. Life is very busy now with the veggie having being planted out, so lots of time is spent watching all my little babies and urging them to grow.

Again there are more casualties, but hope is still there and life goes on. Come September, I start to plant out some of the heathers that have survived this far.

There was an occasion when a whole new bed was planted with my own efforts at propagation. The satisfaction as I stood back and regarded the exercise was immense. Despite my haphazard techniques, I do have some success and I really do love growing my own.

Every year I try that little bit harder to listen to my mentors at Conference, but even one plant from the 400 odd was worth the trying.

No doubt many of you have much better results than me, but did you have the fun and the joy in the rainfall? I have just finished throwing out the poor things that didn't make it. There is always next year!

This article was printed and being proofread when I discovered yet another reason why my propagation exercises are not too successful. During the night a pair of bullocks had forced their way through the fence and dry stonewall, which backs on to the mountain.

They had spent the night eating plastic trays and pots, trampling over my plants, which were ready to be planted out. About 50 winter heather plants have been smashed. A corner of the tunnel has been chewed, a precious plant of *E. ventricosa* destroyed, a 10 litre pot of watercress totally eaten; I could go on. Ever heard the expression "a heifer in a heather garden?" Let me tell you, it makes an awful mess. I know one is supposed to hollow time the lawn to improve it, but our grassy area now has lots of large holes where their feet have gone in.

## Letters

### An open letter to Geoff Yates

Dear Geoff,

I was interested and, like you, horrified to learn from your letter in the Summer *Bulletin* that a Plant Centre had ceased selling heathers.

You asked whether the Society could persuade some garden writers to promote the value of these plants.

Before I stepped down as Chairman last September, our administrator and *Year Book* editor Charles Nelson had prepared a **Journalist's Pack** which included copies of Society publications and a covering letter offering any advice that they may require to prepare an article for their particular publication. In fact Charles spoon-fed them and very little work on their part was needed to submit an article to their Editor and get paid for it!

Councillors were asked to suggest names and at the last count I believe that seventeen packs were sent out. I have not heard of any journalist using this material yet. It is very disappointing, especially after the sterling work that Charles put into the project.

I am writing this letter just after returning from the *Hampton Court Flower Show*. The *British Heather Growers' Association* and *The Heather Society*, aided by two young lady designers, obtained a Silver Gilt medal. The aim of the garden was to improve the popularity of heathers. Our thanks must go to our new Chairman David Edge whose idea this was. With other members I spent a day there handing out leaflets and offering advice when asked.

Only time will tell whether this rather delightful garden has achieved the aim of promoting our favourite plants.

Arnold Stow

### Cuckoo in the Nest

In 2004, I planned and planted a whole new bed of heathers, having decided that, in order to complement the remainder, the main part should consist of *Erica cinerea* 'Cindy'. I knew that finding it in my area would not be easy, so I was delighted to discover about a dozen on sale in a large, reputable garden centre. I bought them all, filling half the space available.

About a month later, I was able to visit a very well known nursery, and bought enough to fill the remainder, but realised almost at once that the flower colour was slightly different, a variation even more marked when the bed matured. Flowers on those bought from the nursery are slightly darker in colour, and appear about a week or two later, but the foliage is equally dark green all the year round. Both are very attractive and reliable.

Looking at the descriptions of *E. cinerea* 'Cindy' in various sources, my conclusion is that the darker flowered heather is correctly named, and the cuckoo in the nest, more amethyst than purple, is from the garden centre. It could fit any one of eight or nine cultivars described in the *Handy Guide*, but it has one characteristic which marks it out as quite different from any other *E. cinerea* in my garden - its ability to self-seed. It has invaded all surrounding

beds to a distance of some ten metres, spreading along the edge of garden paths, and generally making an attractive nuisance of itself.

Does any member recognise this characteristic in a cultivar whose identity is known?

*Dr Colin Rogers*

### **Part of a letter from Walter Wornick, New Hampshire USA.**

*Walter's health prevented him from attending the conference this year.*

We had a very wet, cool summer and things grew well. My ability to care for the garden has become more limited. That is why, a few years ago, I asked about the best way to create a moor from my various heather beds, at a *Heather Society* meeting. I have done that with the bulk of my heather in the front and will try to attach a picture, if I am able to. [see centre pages]

I continue to be bothered by deer this summer, really more than usual, as they usually visit more in winter. However, they never bother with the heather. I have a *Cedrus deodara* that I got as a one-foot plant and it is now almost 40'. Some of the drooping edges of branches started to turn brown, so as I looked for some cause of that I saw that there were evenly spaced, small holes around the bottom area of the trunk and these circles of holes were evenly spaced about 6" from one another, in rings around the trunk. I contacted the Arnold Arboretum and was told they were made by birds, sapsuckers, and did little damage to the tree, as they were very small. They suggested attaching a plastic owl to some branches to scare them away. So will see if that does the trick....

My house and garden are located on a granite cliff that has only about one and a half feet of soil on top of the rock, in most places. The saving grace is that there are cracks in the rock and larger shrubs and trees are able to send their roots down into them to survive. My well is 450 feet deep. The heather moor faces north (towards Vermont). I have planted shrubs like rhododendrons and kalmias, etc and left some trees to provide some protection from the winds. It is our horticultural zone 4. However, it is amazing what will grow, such as a Japanese maple tree and an Israeli Apple Tree that was bred to bear in zones 9-11 or something like that. I got it as a premium with some other trees for Zone 4. They are dead from the cold wind and that tree continues to bear fruit.

### **From Steve Yandall**

Could I extend my thanks, via the *Bulletin*, to Allen Hall who, within a few hours of the delivery of the Summer *Bulletin*, had contacted me and offered cuttings of *Erica ciliaris* 'Fada das Serra'. Not only did he supply cuttings, but valuable advice on hardiness/performance and provenance

**From Mary Bowerman**, (*whose lovely garden we visited at this year's Conference*)..

This is just a note to say how thrilled we all were to have the honour of welcoming members - some new, and some long-standing - to Champs Hill again, after quite a long time. We are just so sorry that other interests have got in the way of our being able to attend meetings, and to take an intelligent



part - however, we do take a real interest in all that the Society does.

Apart from the fact that we were so pleased to see such knowledgeable and esteemed people, it did us good to get the garden 'up to scratch', especially as far as the heathers were concerned (labelling, in particular!!), and we are very grateful for the wonderful gift of new heathers, so beautifully presented, which we shall add to our collection.

We are delighted that Dame Felicity Lott has agreed to allow us to use her name "Flott" for the new *Erica Cinerea*, which we hope Dr. Nelson will be able to register for us. Dame Felicity, a dear friend, opened our Music Room ten years ago this October, and earlier this year, opened our little Studio in the woods, and it was Sid who very astutely suggested we use her name if possible. After all, Sid is the person who has the gift of knowing his heathers around here, having been at Champs Hill for well over 30 years

## Group News

### North East

There is no report from Dorothy Warner this time, due to the fact that, at the time of writing (end of September) she was in hospital with a broken hip and wrist. Her husband, Geoff, said she was progressing well. I am sure you would all like me to send her our best wishes, via the *Bulletin*.

### Yorkshire Heather Group

What a change, a meeting on a Friday. Due to our six regular members' frequent commitments in July, the Yorkshire Group met at Dr. Bryon and Audrey Roberts's house in Leeds on Friday, 24<sup>th</sup> July to visit his garden. We were lucky. Following frequent rain showers on and off for several days we had a cloudy but dry afternoon for this visit. It was good to see that the large bed of *Erica cinerea* was thriving even putting up new shoots from seedlings in many places. It is unusual to have the opportunity to view a bed like this with the *E. cinereas* mixed in with grasses and other plants. The men were brave enough to venture to the bottom of this quarry garden to see the many excellent plants growing there, whilst the ladies were more interested in the orchids in the conservatory. We all had an absolutely excellent afternoon tea and our thanks go to Audrey for providing this.

On Saturday, 19<sup>th</sup> September a small but select band of members met in the Study Centre at RHS Harlow Carr to view a DVD of "Heathers for the Rock Garden" given to David Plumridge by our new honorary member, Ella May Wulff, of Philomath, Oregon USA. It was an excellent opportunity to view pictures of dwarf, compact heathers if not the real thing, as these plants are not widely grown and in fact can be difficult to rear. This was followed by a quick preview of the CD Rom to be provided to members with the autumn bulletin.

Although we are now a very small group, not large enough to invite a speaker, we shall continue to meet in March, May and September as Harlow Carr is kind enough to provide us with a room free of charge. We continue to advertise our programme in the entrance in the hope that one day we shall have some new visitors to our meeting.

Our next meeting is on Saturday, 13th March 2010 in the Study Centre when we will have the opportunity to view a recording of Geoffrey Smith's *World of Flowers* programme from the early 1980s about heathers..

Meanwhile it is good to note that the gardeners at Harlow Carr have planted many new heathers. There is now quite a large planting of various varieties of *E.*



*carnea* and *E.x darleyensis* along the winter walk and smaller swathes of *Calluna* have been planted at the front of the summer beds. I shall watch these with interest to see the effect of the recently installed drainage on the *Calluna* growth in an area where they were previously difficult to rear.

Jean Julian

### South West Area News

On Saturday afternoon, 8<sup>th</sup> August, members and their friends visited the heather nursery of our Chairman, David Edge. This wholesale nursery is situated in Woodlands, near Verwood in Dorset and supplies quality heathers to many of the garden centres along the south coast and well beyond. The weather was sunny and warm making for a pleasant afternoon to be outdoors amongst all the heather plants. David and his delightful assistant Trisha started off the proceedings by extending a warm welcome to all of us followed by a description of the business. We all then moved on to the potting shed where we were given a description and demonstration of the production of a saleable plant from taking cuttings, rooting them and then potting them up. After our demonstration we moved outdoors and were guided around the nursery. Our first stop was the area where the stock plants were being grown in large pots and here we were shown the nursery's method of taking the cuttings. We then moved on to the tunnel house where the shaded cuttings were being rooted with occasional misting. The rest of the afternoon was then spent looking at the demonstration garden and the many plants in their various stages of growth prior to the finished article. Finally the afternoon was rounded off with a cup of tea and with David kindly allowing members to buy plants. I wish to extend my thanks to David and Trisha for giving over a Saturday afternoon to provide members with an interesting and enjoyable experience.

Once again I will remind members that the date and time of any get together in the South West area will only be announced via the *Bulletin*. However if you wish to send a SAE then I will return a map and directions to help you locate any proposed venue. Visits to 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. Hopefully I will be able to announce a venue for a get together in the next Spring *Bulletin*

Phil Joyner

## USEFUL ADDRESSES

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

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