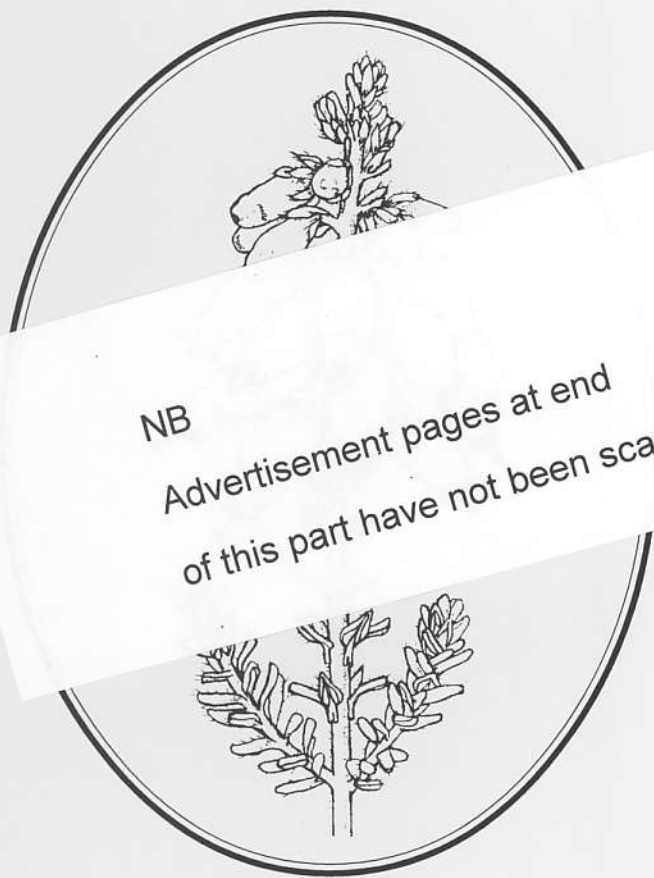


*Bulletin of The
Heather Society*



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DIARY OF EVENTS

2010

10-13 September Annual Gathering & Conference. Kings Lynn

11 September Northeast Annual Ponteland Flower

15 September Closing Date for Autumn Bulletin

18 September Yorkshire Harlow Carr - Details to be arranged



Erica × *darleyensis*
'Lucie'

2009 Premier Award

available from selected licensed nurseries
and garden centres



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Cover illustration *Erica ciliaris* by Brita Johansson

Although some of our garden plants suffered in the hard winter – hebes in particular – the Erica carnea and E. x darleyensis cultivars seemed to have really enjoyed it and put on a wonderful display this spring. Luckily the muntjac deer that visit the garden don't seem to find them appetising.

Earlier this year, our hard-working Hon. Secretary, Jean Julian, became Mrs Michael Preston. I am sure you would wish to join me in sending Jean and Michael our heartiest congratulations and our best wishes for the future.

39th Annual Gathering & Conference
10th – 13th September 2010
Ramada Hotel, Kings Lynn, Norfolk

Conference time is drawing near again. Those of us who attend regularly look forward to seeing old friends, catching up on triumphs and disasters in the garden, having interesting talks and visiting gardens & nurseries. There are one or two places left, so if you have been considering whether to attend, now is the time for a positive decision.

Our programme will start on Friday evening with a speaker on plant hunting in Bolivia.

On Saturday we shall visit Kingfisher Nurseries near Spalding. This is a large wholesale nursery owned by one of our members, Peter Bingham and his wife Maggie. After lunch we go to Peckover House & Garden in Wisbech. Then an early return to the hotel where we shall have a presentation on "The Brecks" by Mr. James Parry who is the author of the book titled "Heathland". The Brecks area is famous for its dry heaths. They are the nearest thing in Britain to continental heaths and steppes. Dinner will follow our late afternoon talk.

Sunday morning will kick off with the A.G.M. and follow this with a visit to one of the sites within the Brecks. Our coach will take us on to Foggy Bottom and Bressingham Gardens. Hopefully, Adrian Bloom will take us on a guided walk through the most heathery part of Foggy Bottom.

In the evening we will have a programme allowing attendees to share information, photographs & views and hopefully a book auction.

A plant sale will be running throughout the weekend, which enables members to acquire rare and special plants.

The cost will be £290 for the weekend and this includes bed, breakfast, dinner each night. It also includes lunch on Saturday & Sunday and all entrance fees to gardens, coach ride and tips. There will be no single supplement for attending this conference.

Should you choose to stay in alternative accommodation you will be very welcome to join us as a day visitor. Appropriate fees for this can be obtained from Susie Kay at susiek@gofree.indigo.ie, Phone 00353 95 43575

How to book?

By filling in the flyer that was included with the *Spring Bulletin*, and sending it to The Administrator, The Heather Society, Tippitiwitchet Cottage, Hall Road, Outwell, PE14 8PE, Cambridgeshire, as soon as possible. Please include your £5 non-refundable fee. (Extra copies of the flyer are available on request from The Administrator: 01945-774077.)

Booked already?

Those of you who have already booked, your places are reserved and all you have to do is send final payment before 1st July 2010 to The Administrator (address as above). The preferred method of payment is by (UK) cheque, please; a surcharge of £3 applies to any credit/debit card payment.

So, having sent in your cheque, the next thing is to start some propagation and bring along one or two of your favourite heathers to share with other members. All monies raised from this sale will go to The Heather Society.

For the last five annual gatherings we have enjoyed wonderful weather, now, I cannot guarantee this again, but Council will keep their fingers crossed that we shall be blessed again.

Susie Kay

Tippitiwitchet Corner: Administrator's log no. 9

Email: theheathersociety@phonecoop.coop

New members since February 2010

We welcome these new members:

Graham Ackers: Dorking, Surrey

Pascale Egon: Jardin de Clairbois, Brix, France

Mrs Isla McGowran: Ulveston, Cumbria

Ian Grant: Poplar, London

Mr & Mrs James Krafft: Tunbridge Wells, Kent.

José Manuel Esteves: Arouca, Portugal

2010 yearbook, *Heathers* 7

The 2010 issue is enclosed with this Bulletin. My apologies for the delay in distribution. The Society thanks Emily Robinson for undertaking the layout and typesetting, and Witley Press for printing. You will notice the

difference – this one is 'perfect bound', as they say, instead of stapled. (for *Heathers* 8, see below).

Wolski wrzosów i wrzo[ćów

Our Polish member, Rafał Wolski, has sent me copies of his new catalogue of heathers. It is a very fine production with ten pages of colour photographs of different cultivars, usually in close-up; 83 *Calluna* and 28 *Erica*. Some of the photographs show plants not often illustrated. Those that caught my attention were *Calluna* 'Carngold' (an Irish clone with yellow foliage), 'Kir Royal' and 'Kaiser'. Each photograph is accompanied by brief information about height, spread and flowering months.

I have four copies to distribute to UK members (in return for a 2nd class stamp, please). Or, you can contact download the catalogue as a pdf file from <http://www.wolski.com.pl/>.

***Erica cruenta* request**

Does any UK or EU member have young or surplus plants of *Erica cruenta*? Matt Norris has emailed asking for help to find this, as it is not commercially available according to the RHS plant finder 2010–2011.

Fires in Connemara and the colony of Dorset heath

Susie Kay alerted me to the news of serious "gorse fires" in Connemara which have had a serious impact on the Irish colony of *Erica ciliaris*: for a discussion of its status see Dr Tom Curtis's article in the 2000 *Yearbook*. The Connemara National Park was among places in which fires burned. Dr Noel Kirby (National Parks and Wildlife Service) is quoted in *The Irish Times* (13 May 2010) as saying that "grouse would have been seriously affected if fire had spread to Diamond Hill" in the centre of the National Park. According to the newspaper "Nesting sites for many birds were "wiped out", along with dry sedge and purple moorgrass on bogland and Dorset heath, a type of heather only found in the Roundstone bog." I will be in Connemara in August and will undoubtedly visit this area to see what damage the fires have caused.

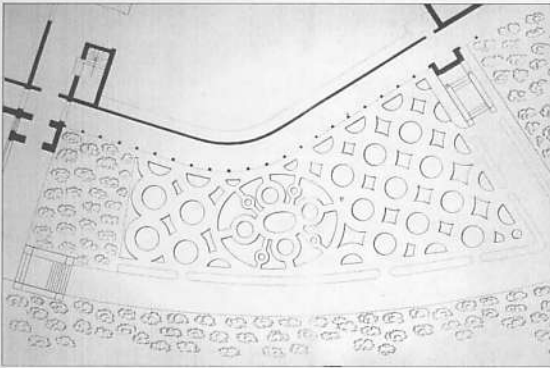
Reminder - your photographs please, and articles for *Heathers* 8!

We need lots of photographs for the 2010 CD! Please! You may send digital images by email, but please remember that some email systems automatically reduce the file size. If possible, set the size to "original" or "large" because small images do not work so well. Slides or prints are also welcome and the originals will be returned promptly.

And, we need articles for the 2011 yearbook, *Heathers* 8. I already have one contribution; I am most grateful to Bernard de La Rochefoucauld for providing an interesting article about his splendid garden in France. This will be the opening piece in the 2011 issue. Some of his photographs of Les Grandes Bruyères were included on the 2010 CD.

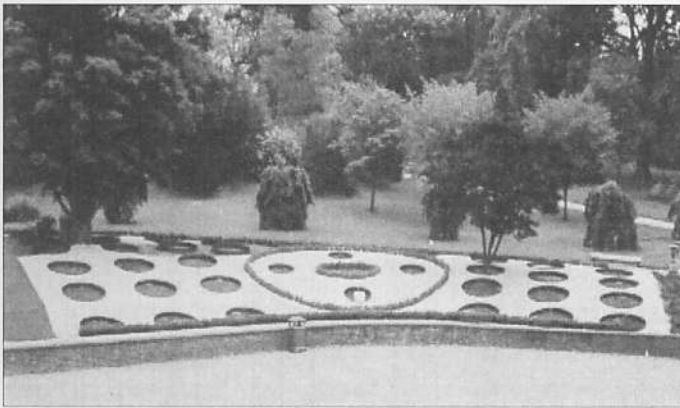
... and finally: heather garden at Woburn Abbey recreated

Woburn Abbey, the home of the dukes of Bedford, has a very significant



place in the history of the cultivation of heathers, as explained by Denise Padley in *Heathers 3* (2006), and by Ron Cleevely in *Heathers 6* (2009). Martin Towsey, Gardens Manager at the Abbey, and Andrew Grout, Head of Abbey Gardens, have informed us that a new heather garden was recently installed, the design being based on that of the heath parterre illustrated in

George Sinclair's *Hortus ericaeus woburnensis* (1825). Indeed, the new garden is on the site occupied by the original parterre. Andrew Grout describes the heath garden as comprising "36 individual borders each with a single *Erica* or *Calluna* variety planted in it, some of the rings are mirrored on either side of the border meaning that our original planting contained 21 varieties in total."



2010 is the bicentenary of the completion of the landscaping of Woburn Abbey by Humphry Repton. The Woburn Garden Show on 17 and 18 July is one of the events celebrating this milestone, and for the first time

the Duke of Bedford's private gardens will be opened to the public. Another recent addition is a bog garden with carnivorous plants.

Woburn Abbey's website states that the house is "set in a beautiful 3,000 acre deer park, with 10 species of deer roaming free..." but we have to assume these deer are not free to roam in the recently planted heather garden!

See <http://www.woburn.co.uk/abbey/> for more information about events and opening times, as well as a map of the gardens.

Ken Hulme (Honorary Member)

Ken Hulme was Director of Ness Gardens in Cheshire (the Botanic Gardens of the University of Liverpool), from 1957 to 1989. Among many other things, he, with Terry Underhill, was responsible for creating Ness's spectacular 2 acre heather bank and, for his services to heathers, he was created the Society's first Honorary Member in September 1968. In 1989 he received the Veitch Memorial Medal from the RHS and, in 1990, an OBE for services to Botany.

The gardens were created back in 1898 by Arthur Kilpin Bulley (later of Bees Seeds fame) and he opened them for local people to visit, free of charge. In 1948, the gardens were given to the University by Arthur Bulley's daughter, Louise.

Maurice and I lived in Cheshire in the 1950s and 60s, and, when we got our first car, Ness Gardens were one of our favourite destinations. At that time they were still known to everyone locally as Bulley's Gardens and, to the best of my memory, they were **still** free of charge.

The gardens had suffered during the war years and over the time he was there Ken Hulme extended them and completely transformed them. But, it was the wow factor of that wonderful heather bank that I remember best. It was like opening my eyes to a new world and was the main reason that I became a commercial heather grower for nearly 40 years.

Daphne Everett

Connemara Chat **Susie Kay**

No doubt there are many horror stories out there concerning the winter that has just passed. Here in Connemara, they say it was the worst in living memory. Frost, frost and more frost and sometimes with the wind from the East & North East, it seemed to come all the way from Siberia. It started on Sunday 13th December. On a journey home from Westport, Co. Mayo, the car thermometer dropped to 0°C, which was low for the time of year, but a couple of elderly brothers said that there was "a strange light in the East, which presaged bad weather". And they were right, snow came to the mountains around, but not a flake fell in Lettergesh. We just froze solid with any moisture turning to ice and staying that way for weeks. There was no daytime respite for us as our house is under the shadow of the mountain and does not receive any sun from the middle of November until 1st February. Have you ever tried to dig leeks out of frozen ground on Christmas morning? It didn't do my fork any good and I had to get a man on to the job. Of course, we lost our water supply on Christmas Eve for 36 hours, but some of our neighbours had no water for 2 - 3 weeks.

Our lowest temperature was -5°C, now I know in England and elsewhere they have lower temperatures, but here on the West coast of Ireland this is unexpected. Had the Gulf Stream really been switched off overnight? Even

after a break in South Africa for 3 weeks, where we had temperatures of 40°C, we still came back to frost and more frozen ground.

But we were not the only beings feeling hard done by as I kept being begged by robins and blackbirds to give them something to eat by digging through the frozen ground. As we pruned and hacked at an old scrub willow hedge, the birds would be hopping over my wellies and we were soon on first name terms.

I had gathered from my reading of newspapers and gardening magazines that bumble bees are in serious decline. I can tell you where they all are: Lettergesh, Co. Galway, Ireland. To walk past the winter flowering heathers or to touch a plant becomes a dangerous exercise. From the middle of February and even now in May every plant seems to be abuzz with bees. Never before have I noticed so many. They did help keep the granddaughters on the grass as they are frightened of them, even though the grandmother keeps explaining their purpose in the scheme of things.

Not only was there unprecedented cold, but also very little rain and now at the beginning of May, we have had less than half our usual amount of rainfall for the year.

Proper rain came when our Chairman paid us a visit at the end of January. He had to cope with dense fog and the pitiful state of our roads. Vast stretches just disintegrated with the ice and there was little money in the Council's kitty to repair them.

So how have the dear heather plants coped? These things seem to take a while to produce their full effect. The winter heathers continued to bloom, having started back in October. 'Phoebe' being the first one out soon followed by the other *darlyensis* and *erigena*. A New Year's Day stroll to see the wild *E. erigena* showed it to be well in flower even though the banks of the river where it grows were frozen. At first I thought the Cape Heaths were coming through OK, but after a few weeks I noticed that a couple of small plants of *E. caffra* I had grown from cuttings were now a delicate shade of brown. On close examination, I found the stems had actually split. A white *E. mammosa*, of which there were three plants have succumbed, but some of the *E. verticillata* have survived along with *E. annectans* together with the hybrid 'Helene' (?)

The cold dry weather meant we were able to cut down trees and do very extensive pruning, which leads to the over use of the shredder for mulch, and Alan's log pile grew. At least we shall be warm next winter even if the turf cutting is banned.

All this phenomenal weather delayed all the signs of spring. March brought the annual pruning of the summer heathers even those that appeared to have died a cold and lonely death. These days I always think of Ella May, who finds the collecting of the debris quite a chore. So do I, but I usually solve it by putting fresh mulch down. This sometimes results in seedlings appearing, which can be quite exciting in the find of a new colour.

Despite the freezing cold winter, or perhaps because of it, the three winter beds produced the best show of flowers ever with a long blaze of colour bringing a stunning show. I am not very good at keeping labels and therefore cannot name all of the varieties in bloom, but they include *E. erigena* 'Brian

Proudley', *E. x darlyensis*, 'Lucie' and 'Phoebe'.

But we took advantage of the dry weather to completely enlarge and renew one of the original heather beds. It had been in place since 1992 and was planted with a mixture of winter and summer plants. Alan did a superb job with the enlargement; first of all finding fairly large rocks that had completely disappeared under the growth of heathers over the years. Having re-sited these he then brought up the clay (soil to you) from the very bottom of our site to the very top; a distance of about 100 metre and it's uphill all the way. He informed me that this involved more than 40 barrow loads. We do not need to join a gym as gardening here is in the "green gym" and has been for our 23 years of tenure on this little piece of Ireland.

It may seem strange to visitors that I struggle with summer varieties when I am surrounded by heather on the mountain. When our President visited a few years ago, he told me to look where the *E. cinerea* and *Calluna* were growing, i.e. on old walls and raised ground and suggested that maybe I should employ this technique. The restored bed is planted now with all summer heathers, including some of my own which survived the visit of the bullock last summer. Bud bloomers seem to do fairly well except for *Calluna vulgaris* 'Larissa', which I keep trying in different locations without success.

The bed which has spider legs radiating out has also been mostly replanted, again with summer flowering plants, so hopefully there will be some summer colour.

In the winter of 08-09, I cut down my *E. erigena* 'Superba', which had grown to a height of almost 2 metre. This year it is a reasonably compact bush about 60 cm high and is totally covered in flowers – so that worked. I have been contemplating cutting down more of the *erigena* and *darlyensis* as opposed to pruning them as I noticed that if I prune them, I seem to end up with little spikes with a whorl of five or six even stubbier shoots which I do not find attractive. I have read all the books and articles appearing in the *Bulletins* to gain some tips, but still do not come to a conclusion as to what the best approach should be. Maybe I will be given advice at this year's conference in our Open Forum slot.

So what have I learned from this winter just past, apart from the oil bill rocketing?

1 Never take the weather for granted, it will always hold surprises. I am a climate change sceptic and believe we are just in a different cycle to what we were used to in the previous twenty years. It seems that a garden is more dependant on the vagaries of the weather than on anything the so called gardener (me) can do to create a tamed space.

2 Do not prune in the autumn as there is bound to be frost or a terrible drying East wind, which will desiccate everything in its path.

3 Enjoy the wildlife, even though you curse the birds as they dig and throw the mulch over the precious plants.

Should anybody from The Heather Society ever visit me and then I find out they have made rude remarks about this garden, I shall resign and join the Clematis Society. I have about twenty *Clematis* and they are coming up every year. *C. viticella* is a very good variety for me as it can be pruned down in

February after the winter has done its worst.

But I had better finish on a more positive note after all the gloom and doom. Thinking the real spring would never come, on the day Daphne asked me to contribute these few words, our swallows appeared and have hopefully taken up residence in the shed. And the very next day came the plaintiff call of the cuckoo. We had given up hope of ever hearing them this year. A walk around all the beds also revealed the spring tips were beginning to colour the plants and there was quite a bit of growth. This all lifted the spirits and made me feel that I might be learning a little about gardening with heather.

(See Susie's garden on centre pages. Ed.)

Winter Survivors: A few snippets

Richard Canovan

Introduction

Much will be written about the damage to, and loss of, heathers resulting from the severe winter of 2009/10 in much of Europe and parts of the USA. What is almost as interesting is looking at some of the heathers that came through the winter unscathed and as strong as ever. The most severe weather was in January and at Lyneham, only a few miles away from Swindon and at a similar altitude, the mean maximum temperature was only 3.2 degrees C.

Variation in *Erica erigena*:

Whereas several cultivars suffered badly and some plants may not survive, 'Glauca' 'Brian Proudley' and 'Irish Salmon' had no damage. Although late blooming, they appear in perfect health with no defoliation or other damage other than a few short unripened stems being broken by the snow on 'Glauca'.

Another to do well is 'Rosslare' which shows no sign of defoliation. "Irish Silver" and 'W T Rackliff' are blooming very well.

Some surprising survivors:

Given the damage to most *Erica manipuliflora* cultivars in the last two winters, it has been a surprise that 'Corfu' should not suffer damage from either snow or the cold. It is especially noteworthy, as it is a very exposed location and is an erect plant so, for most of the time, partly above the snow. Despite that, the tips were fresh and green and I used some for cuttings.

Another *E.manipuliflora* cultivar I have lost in past severe winters is 'Ian Cooper'- but this has done well this year.

Erica bocquettii also suffered no damage and has been pruned. This is a particular surprise. Indeed it seemed healthier than for several years and already has a few of its delightful pink flowers.

Erica x gaudificans 'Edeweicht Belle' looks fresh and healthy with new growth already being made. Even a plant of this in a pot (in a trench) survived. The hardiness of the *Erica spiculifolia* parent has clearly been evident in this plant which has sustained a wide variety of extremes.

One that is surprising, only because of its dreadful soil conditions, is an *Erica x darleyensis*, kindly given me by Barry Sellers (who hybridised it) in

1989. It is planted in the south London garden I look after, in what used to be an old fashioned border dominated by roses. But as the latter have deteriorated or died, heathers have filled the gaps. Last year one of the three plants appeared to sport. The result is very long spikes of up to 8 inches more like 'Erecta' with slightly deeper flowers than the parent, but the same coloured new tips. The whole bed which has either been inundated or frozen for months, is a riot of colour almost all from *Erica erigena* and *Erica x darleyensis* cultivars.

And from Dr Colin Rogers

My *Erica x darleyensis*. 'Jack H Brummage' has not behaved normally, this spring bearing far more flowers than usual, and having much darker red foliage.

Has anyone else had the same experience as Dr Rogers? In our garden they seemed much the same colour as usual. Ed

Letters to the Editor

From Donald Mackay in the USA

The reprinted articles on white calluna and long-lasting snow cover (Volume 7, No.9, Spring 2010) – one of which I contributed – have made me think what have I learned about this topic in the 18 years since David McClintock asked who could suggest a causal relationship. The direct answer is not much, though I have a few additions to make to bolster my bleaching theory.

I said I had not found white heather in endless tramping and camping over and on hundreds of square miles of heather. That statement is still nearly true. I am still red-green color blind – which got me turfed out of flying school shortly before I was to solo – but can easily distinguish white from pink except for those very pale-colored calluna heathers that are obviously not truly white when compared to a white background. These pale pinkish whites are often found on emergent buds, generally on shaded branches, and I can now add to that comment as a result of close observation of some white heather clones given to me for performance evaluation in my garden.

Others given the same plant have reported differences in blooming time and in color. This calluna called 'Harry's Grace'¹ - a sport on 'Chase White' found in Dr. Harry Bowen's garden on Cape Cod – blooms very late and sparsely and takes a long, long time for buds to form and open, leading some to classify it as a bud bloomer, but I am not one of them.

When I scrape away the snow to look at it – at this moment it is under two feet of snow - I see a prostrate plant with a few down-facing flowers that look

continued on page 12

¹'Harry's Grace' has been formally named and registered by the Northeast Heather Society. I agree with Donald; it is a multibracteate plant. Registrar



Susie Kay's Garden in Connemara



from page 11

whitish. But under the lens the whiteness is either due to faded persistent flowers or to incanescence – a felting of tiny white hairs that gives a mildew look to it. Botanically it is surely – at least the sample given to me – a multibracteate form with very few flowers to crown the tips, although 'Chase White' is not, so I recall. The felting – I strongly doubt it is mildew – does give it a white appearance. So do the few old down-facing flowers that by now are a dirt-stained white. However, it is clear that even a group assessment of white-flowered calluna can be suspect.

My powers of botanic observation as a youth climbing, camping and biking over much of Invernessshire, Rossshire and Sutherland were not nearly as acute as they are now. As a youth, heather was a weed, mostly an impediment and only rarely useful as stepping stones across old peat hags or as handholds on uncertain cliffs. To be honest, in those days I barely distinguished ling from bell heather, apart from the difference in flowering times.

In those wartime days my brothers and I had the hills to ourselves. Today people forget passports were needed to get north beyond Fort William at one end of the Great Glen and Inverness (by train, Dingwall by road) at the other. There was no muirburn for several years - to avoid guiding the Germans it was said - but the Highlands north of Loch Ness were ceded to enemy parachutists and U-Boats, anyway.

The heather on the grouse and deer moors and around the abandoned hunting lodges of the departed aristocracy grew waist high and covered over what few paths there were. Since my bicycle carried camping gear and what food could be scraped together for these trips – this was the time of rationing and food coupons, very few food stores or traveling food vans - I well remember the need to take pedals off the bike to get it through the heather, and for a rope in case the bike became trapped in a peat hag. By the 1940s and probably even earlier, peat cutting in remote areas stopped and the cuttings flooded. One had to walk knee deep in the streams draining the watershed on Glen Affric to find a way through the morass on the watershed.

So it is just possible this bloody-minded attitude to heather colored my view of it, making even the white heather I may have encountered appear pink to bloodshot eyes. All I can say is my first conscious recognition of white heather was on Tom-na-hurich, a hillside cemetery just outside Inverness. My next conscious viewing of white heather – apart from cultivars sold at tourist sites like Killiecrankie – was in Ireland at a Heather Society meeting in 1995. It was growing on a knoll, right next to a path close to the Connemara National Park Visitor Centre – and I would have missed it if not drawn to my attention by Eileen Petterssen and Dee Daneri. That was a true white.

Other 'whites' I've seen in the wild and about the same height as Feldberg (4897') in Northern Italy or Austria or France were not really white, just pale or whitish or with white immature buds, invariably tinged with pink.

So, to set the record straight, my failure to find white heather in Scotland was due to wartime conditions, lack of muirburn, lack of Royal Attendants like John Brown (his real name was Mackay, by the way) to pluck sprigs of white heather for Queen Victoria, to begin the fallacious belief in Lucky White

Heather, [For the story of 'Lucky' white heather, see *Heathers* 3 (2006)] or my lack of color perception, or the utter lack of interest in any kind of heather by the local population, or perhaps the actual absence of white-flowered forms in a sea of colored heather, or most likely just my un-interest or incompetence.

Perhaps today white heather is not uncommon in Scotland, especially around Balmoral where John Brown found it for his Queen. Probably it is commoner in Mayo in western Ireland where snow rarely falls, but that makes the answer to David McClintock's question no easier.

Already most of New England has had twice as much snow-fall in February as is usual for the whole of the winter. I have two feet of white cement here in Westchester County (40 miles north of New York City) and three feet of compacted wet snow in Vermont. It will take a long time to melt and give me time to contemplate what I will find when the snow does go, and to prepare to record what color changes, if any, will be found later this year.

If the reported whiteness of heather is due to a long lasting snow cover, this will be the year to find it. Otherwise I stand by my original story. Snow cover, either here or in Vermont, certainly bleaches the color of *Erica carnea*, but does not bleach calluna flowers. Perhaps the original German observation was on *E. carnea*, certainly a likely plant on Feldberg. A bleaching effect in calluna flowers could be possible, I suppose, if the snow lasted to late July, with a sudden thaw just before the heather emerged from the snow in time to bloom, but Feldberg may not be high enough to have reliably long-lasting snowfields.

Calluna is not completely flattened by long-lasting snow the way *Erica carnea* is appressed to the ground. *Erica x darleyensis* (not to be found in Feldberg, anyway) is not so much flattened by heavy snow as broken and shattered by it. One can find dried whitish or pale flowers when the snow goes, but they, along with the leaves and branches that bear them, have died long ago.

I will not be so direct as Brita Johansson on casting doubt on the accuracy of the original report, but I have still no direct answer for McClintock. Just possibly it wasn't calluna after all. There are more than fifty folk names for heather in Germany, so perhaps the confusion was in naming. Linnaeus was right after all.

The German translates as "(found) on long (lasting) snow-covered places of the Feldberg district (where it is) often white-blooming." I see no comparative statement, but the "bleaching" effect would be best observed where the snow has lain the longest.

However, if there is a scientific explanation, it may lie in the following:

It has been known since 1799 that, while most flowers need light to develop their color, tulips and crocus can do so in darkness as well. By 1863 two types of coloring plants were recognized, those that did, or those that did not, require the flower buds to receive light, in order for color to develop. The color of the light itself was a factor, blue being effective, red slightly and green not at all. By 1925 it was known that production of anthocyanins (the color) was affected not just by light but by temperature, oxygen, water stress and sugar and acid content of the plant tissues. These factors, plus day-shortening, play

a major role in the foliage coloration in winter of some of our heathers. Clearly light has most effect, but on some plants the timing may be crucial for color development if light does not get to the opening flower bud in time.

So, it perhaps it is not surprising that *Erica carnea*, an early spring bloomer, could still be deprived of light while its buds form under the snow and then show colorless flowers. Strictly speaking, the flowers are not bleached because color did not form in the first place.

As for fall-blooming calluna (or better early summer-flowering kinds) one has to suppose that if the snow lasts long enough while the buds are forming, light will not reach the buds in time to initiate the anthocyanin production. Heather apparently belongs among the plants that require light to reach the buds before some critical stage of development in order for the flowers to develop normal color.

With this critical time frame I would assume that the Feldberg heathers color normally in many years, but not in years of persistent late snow cover. I would guess that the contours of the ground, and perhaps tree cover, are factors in holding late snow, and hence affect color production. Of course, if the snow is too deep, there is no light at all, and therefore, in time, no heather at all to excite one's curiosity. Light is needed for growth as well as for color production.

I doubt that that the British climate ever allows this phenomenon to occur. Only in some years does late snow persist in the Grampians and on Ben Nevis, but even here it is found in gullies or cornices overlooking the north face of Ben Nevis. It's a long snow climb up the gully, sometimes requiring a tunnel through the cornice to get out. Heather doesn't grow in the gullies and there is relatively little on these mountain tops which, at that elevation, are mostly stony. What heather there is scattered and dwarfed. The heather moors are a thousand feet or more below the stony plateaus.

My conclusion, therefore, is that the Feldberg white heather is a local transient phenomenon governed by local geography and weather conditions, and one which is probably noticeable only in certain years. Even in very snowy years I'd expect a variation in color intensity as the edges of the snow field retreat in warm weather, with increasing loss of color observed in the emerging heather as the season advances. It might not qualify as a "Eureka" moment, but it would be enlightening if not revelatory if one sometimes found bands of white or paler colored heather in Feldberg where the snow lies longest.

From Brita Johansson in Sweden

In the Spring issue I was faced with what I wrote long ago as a comment to David McClintock and Donald MacKay.

I couldn't resist pondering upon the matter. Donald means that long last lasting snow cover shouldn't favour survival of white flowering plants. My guess is that it could.

Long lasting snow means a short vegetation period. The normal flower colour comes from anthocyanin. The production of that pigment must cost

the plants a lot. White is not colour but a lack of pigment, so a white plant should have more resources for coming in flower earlier, which in turn should result in viable seed and more white plants.

I don't think that the snow itself is the crucial point but the cold which limits the vegetation time. Under such conditions plants may not be able to afford to produce anthocyanin and plants which can stop it have a better chance to survive.

There is a clear tendency towards hardiness in white cultivars, although not in all. Cultivars are chosen for different reasons but white plants collected in the wild should, and probably are, particularly hardy. For example the very early 'Mullardoch' which exposes buds already in late May is also extremely hardy.

In Scandinavia white plants are found now and then. Those who spend much time in the wild will sooner or later find a white *Calluna*. We have seen at least ten when walking on the moors.

Plants behaviour never stops surprising me. I have twice tried Kurt Kramer's 'Melanie' and both times the flowers were not white but pale mauve. *The Handy Guide* says that *Erica x williamsii* 'Gold Button' has pink flowers. I have got flowers only once - and they were white!

Bluff Restoration Underway

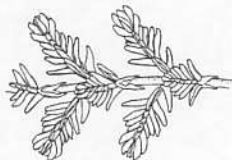
With acknowledgements to the Hereford Times, February 4th 2010

Plans to restore Hay Bluff to its former glory finally took off this week when 100 tonnes of heather came in by helicopter. National park wardens and local graziers braved extreme weather conditions to oversee the arrival of 120 brash bales, as repairs to a large area previously ravaged by wild fires in 1976 began.

The Brecon Beacons National Park Authority, Black Mountains Graziers and Michaelchurch Estate secured Natural England funding to import the heather from Hatterall Hill, so that bare areas of peat and soil can finally flourish again.

Senior ecologist Paul Sinnadurai said: "We are very aware that areas of eroding peat bogs and moorland are contributing to greenhouse gas emissions. "Rejuvenation work of this kind will not only help reverse that trend but will also recover conditions on the hillside, which will see heathland plants and grassland re-colonisation, and improved peat formations processes, get underway."

A 1km section of a popular footpath on the nearby Lord Hereford's Knob [yes, I did check] is also being improved as part of wider plans to return the common as a whole to its original state after a 2003 study found massive areas of erosion.



Horticulturists Warned To Be Tick Aware

As the warmer weather encourages horticulturists out into their gardens, Lyme disease charity BADA-UK (Borreliosis and Associated Diseases Awareness-UK) is warning them to be aware of tick-borne disease whilst outside over the Spring and summer months.

Ticks carrying Borreliosis (also known as Lyme disease) are found throughout the UK, so time spent in their own back garden, or a public park or garden, could be a health risk.

"Many areas with good ground cover and diverse wildlife (such as squirrels, hedgehogs and deer) can pose a potential risk" says Wendy Fox, Chair of BADA-UK, and a Lyme disease sufferer. "Gardeners and horticulturists may be exposed to ticks and should be aware that simple precautions can be taken in terms of protecting themselves and making the environment less habitable for ticks". Tick Prevention Week, organised by BADA-UK, ran from April 12 - April 18 and aims to provide information to help prevent ticks from biting people and pets. It also gives advice on what to do if ticks do attach. This year's theme of 'DO ONE THING to raise awareness' provides lots of ideas and schools, activity clubs and specialist interest groups are encouraged to do their bit to raise awareness. (Leaflets, posters and much more can be found at www.tickpreventionweek.org.) Lyme disease is transmitted via the bite of an infected tick and can lead to serious complications including damage to the nervous system, joints, heart and other tissues.

Figures from the Health Protection Agency (HPA) show a year-on-year increase in cases of Lyme disease, with a marked increase over the past 6 years from 292 in 2003 to 813 in 2008 (the latest figures). However the HPA estimate up to 3,000 cases every year. Figures released by Health Protection Scotland have shown a dramatic rise in infection rates from 28 confirmed cases in 2001 to 285 cases in 2008. (More information about Lyme disease and BADA-UK can be found at www.bada-uk.org.)

Heather Honey Crop hit by Wet Summers

From the Irish Times - August 2009

Beekeepers who produce 'heather honey' from British moorlands are hoping to boost production this year after two summers of bad weather led to shortages in the prized food.

Putting beehives out onto moorland in time for the heather blooms helps the bees, who have few other flowering plants to feed on late in the year, enabling them to lay down reserves for the winter and produce the "unique" honey.

According to beekeepers, it also benefits heather moorland managed for red grouse shooting, as the insects pollinate the heather creating stronger plants with more seeds and green shoots for the birds to feed on.

The honey produced is strong and almost bitter and is to other honeys what Guinness is to beer, beekeeper Tony Jefferson, secretary of Whitby and

District Beekeepers' Association said.

But the hives produced very little honey over the last two years because the wet summers made it hard for the bees to garner up the nectar they need to build up reserves for the winter to keep them strong - and produce excess for making honey.

This year some beekeepers are having to take their hives further afield to make the most of the heather, the last crop of the season, because large areas have been destroyed by the heather beetle.

According to the British Moorland Association, whose members manage heather moorland for red grouse shooting, heather honey sales slumped between 2007 and 2008 by 39 per cent. But with thousands of hives being taken out on to land managed by the Association's members - and with fingers crossed for reasonable weather - beekeepers are hoping to boost production and sales.

Mr. Jefferson, whose family have been keeping bees for a century, said: "Over the last two years we've had some pretty poor weather, so the bees didn't build up stores. Last year we had practically a zero honey crop because of the weather and the bees were not very strong. We were feeding the bees to keep them alive." This year he is having to take his more than 50 hives further afield than normal because the destructive heather beetle has affected swathes of the heather nearby.

Martin Smith, chairman of the British Beekeepers' Association, said: "Bees benefit from the abundant heather flowers found on grouse moors but also improve the set of the heather seed by pollinating it rather than leaving it to the wind. In the process they create the unique and delicious heather honey and with Moorland Association members hosting thousands of hives this summer, we hope to boost production and sales".

Edward Bromet, chairman of the Moorland Association, said honey was one of the additional benefits of landowners' efforts to manage and preserve the heather uplands for the shooting season for red grouse, which begins this Wednesday [August 12].

Moss is dropped from sky to save moorland

With acknowledgements to The Irish Times 12 May 2010

Sent in by Susie Kay

RARE MOSS was being scattered across remote English moorlands from a helicopter yesterday in a bid to help regenerate the moors. The project is attempting to use sphagnum moss, which can hold many times its own weight in water and allows new peat to develop, to restore the peatland moors of the Peak District.

The scheme's organisers said many plant species can stabilise moorland and cover bare peat - which would otherwise be blown or washed away, reducing the amount of carbon and water stored in the soil and polluting rivers. But sphagnum moss maintains the high level of moisture needed to allow new peat to develop as well as enabling other vegetation to flourish and

protect peatlands from erosion. The moss was hit by acid rain from the industrialisation of northern England and is in danger of disappearing from the Peak District.

Scientists have been able to propagate the tiny plant in a laboratory, and it was dropped today by helicopter on to the remote windswept moors in a bid to reintroduce it to the area. Experts have had problems getting the plant to propagate and spread and it is hoped the innovative technique, which involves dropping a small plant in a capsule of solution, will allow the species to establish itself on the moors.

If the trial by the Moors for the Future partnership is successful, the plan is to restore more than 7000 acres of Peak District and Pennine moorland over the next five years.

The partnership - which includes companies, charities, government agencies and local authorities - has been working with Manchester Metropolitan University and Micro Propagation Services on the scheme funded by Natural England and the co-operative. It is hoped that if the project succeeds, the methods used can be applied to degraded peatlands across the UK.

Moors for the Future's conservation works manager Matt Buckler said: "All our works to date have been about stabilising the ground until peat-forming vegetation can develop. Sphagnum is the most important peat-forming plant and the glue that holds the whole blanket bog community together and so this project is probably the most important innovation ever in moorland restoration techniques."

Jon Stewart, from Natural England, said: "England's moorland blanket peatlands are a crucial buffer against climate change, through their role as a carbon store, but have been extensively damaged by centuries of inappropriate management and pollution. "We have to stop the rot and ensure that peatlands are properly looked after as one of our most precious environmental resources." He said the project was about demonstrating how to protect peatlands and restore natural bog-forming plant species in the Peak District, one of the UK's best loved national parks. (PA)

Joan Oliver

Joan Oliver died aged 92 on 8 April 2010. She was the second wife of Des Oliver, the Society's Treasurer from 1978 until 1994. She and Des used to travel to the Conferences in their camper van, which they would park nearby and stay in over the weekend.

Group News

North East

Sadly, our Annual Outing came to nought this year, simply due to lack of support. Our first cancellation in twenty four years!

The next date for the diary is **Saturday September 11th, 2010**, which is the Annual Ponteland Flower Show. Staging, as usual will be from 9.00 am - 11 am,

when judging commences, then it will be open to the public from 1.00pm 4.30pm. Exhibits are to be removed at 4.30pm. Do come and support this event.

Dorothy M Warner

Yorkshire Heather Group

Saturday, 13th March 2010 - sadly only four of the regular members attended this meeting but it was still an excellent event with good fellowship. We watched a historic TV programme on video about heathers and Cape heaths and enjoyed it just as much second time around as the first. We discussed visiting local gardens in Yorkshire during the spring but unfortunately due to other commitments I have not had the spare time to organise this; maybe next year we will get there.

On Saturday, 29th May we looked around the gardens and discussed the many changes that have been made in recent months.

Our third meeting of the year is on **Saturday, 18th September** (*Note change of date*) and will be in Room TS3 in the new building. The details of this event will be arranged at our next meeting.

Jean Julian (now Preston)

Home Counties

It is with regret that I have decided to resign from the Heather Society Council and to relinquish my role as Home Counties Group Organiser. This is due to having had to take on the position of Executive Secretary of another National Society with worldwide membership due to the recent death of my predecessor who had served for 25 years. This year, and especially the Autumn, with a 3 month special exhibition and other activities to organise, I have felt that my Heather Society activities will suffer and this has further influenced my decision.

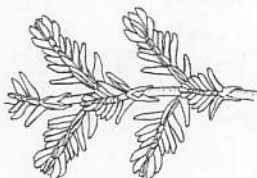
I have been a member of the Heather Society for approximately 14 years and a Council Member for almost the same length of time. It has been a period of my life which has been most enjoyable and I have met some very interesting people who have given me good advice and friendship.

During the last 10 years, as Group Organiser for the Home Counties, I have seen a decline in attendance at our annual Wisley meeting with numbers approaching 15 on average, of which Council Members and their wives have numbered 9 (these included Arnold and Josey Stow who were a great help and were always there). Phil and Lin Joyner were also always in attendance (many thanks for your support over the years) and they are from the South-West area. It may be time for someone new to rethink this part of the Society's activities and bring some fresh ideas to the Group.

I have enjoyed my time serving the Society and as my interest in heathers remains I will continue with my membership.

I had booked the Wisley Lecture Theatre for Saturday 25th September for the annual Home Counties Group meeting but, as it is unlikely that a volunteer will be found to organise this meeting, I have reluctantly cancelled the event.

Derek Millis



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

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