

Bulletin of The Heather Society



Vol. 7 No. 14

Autumn 2011

DIARY OF EVENTS

2012

Date to be announced North East Social Gathering

20 January CLOSING DATE FOR SPRING BULLETIN

March (date to be announced) Yorkshire Harlow Carr

20 May CLOSING DATE FOR SUMMER BULLETIN

May (date to be announced) Yorkshire Harlow Carr

September (date to be announced) Yorkshire Harlow Carr

A Gift of Membership for 2012

The Society is keen to encourage new members to join. Every existing member could assist by giving a year's membership as a gift. Remember, it is a gift that will last until the close of 2012! Fill out an application form (one is enclosed for you to use) for a family member or a friend, someone keen on gardening and the outdoors, and leave the rest to us.

For each gift membership we will send you a beautiful bell-heather card with a printed message inside — A full year's membership of The Heather Society for 2012 is sent with very best wishes by ... — for you to personalize and give to, or send on to, the intended recipient.

Shortly before the New Year, we will send the recipient a letter of welcome, a complimentary colour chart and badge, with a copy of this Bulletin ... and so on.

For only £15 for UK addresses, or £18 for Europe, or £21 anywhere else, you can solve your gift "problem" and give a whole year's pleasure.

If you want this for a Christmas gift please make sure your request is received by the Administrator before the end of November. Applications received after that may mean the card does not reach you on time.



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Cover illustration *Calluna Vulgaris* by Brita Johansson



On a visit to Holker Hall during our Annual Gathering in the Lake District, we were told by the guide that the labyrinth in the grounds had the reputation of causing people who walked round it to become pregnant. Well - I believe it implicitly. Just look at the effect it had on my husband - and he only looked at it!

Chairman's Piece **David Edge**

Having now returned from the Lake District after the Heather Society Conference I think back to the few days of enjoyable respite away from nursery life. It is one of the few occasions when one can chat to like minded people on the subject of heathers, without the other person making an excuse to get away quickly! Now we look forward and plan for next year's Falmouth Conference for our annual get together.

As with all chairman of societies, the presence on hand of a knowledgeable and capable secretary is an essential ingredient to the smooth running of meetings. The departure of Jean Preston from the post is a great loss and we are more than appreciative of the time that she has dedicated over many years to the Society's well being. We welcome Richard Bowater as a capable replacement to the position.

Many plant societies are currently seeing a decline in their membership numbers and the Heather Society is not immune to the same trend, however our finances remain on a firm, although slowly declining basis. The enthusiasm and dedication of our membership encourages us to continue hopefully for many years to come but we must continue with our efforts to raise the profile of heathers and the Society.

There are faint glimmers that heathers are showing signs of a revival in their fortunes; the recent harsh winters have meant a move away from the purchase of semi-hardy tropical plants, to tried and trusted hardy garden stalwarts, that include such plants as our heathers. Perhaps we can win over the garden media presenters to be appreciative and popularise a hardy, low maintenance, long flowering and environmentally friendly plant. The BHGA

are proud to announce that their garden "**Heathers in Harmony**" was presented with a **Gold Award**, was judged to be **Best Small Garden** and also **Most Creative Garden** at the RHS Hampton Court Palace Flower Show 2011. The garden was featured on BBC2's Hampton Court Palace Flower Show programme on Thursday 7th July, presented by Monty Don, Alys Fowler and Chris Beardshaw, who had the following to say:

Monty Don (in conversation with Alys Fowler, while sitting in the "Heathers in Harmony" garden - transcript from BBC2 tv): "I was walking past here the other day, and stopped in my tracks on this garden. I thought: That's lovely, because, I thought - it's heathers - I don't really like heathers. And I had to reassess, sort of in a second, my whole world view of a whole order of plants and how they could be used, And, d'you know, that's a gift: you cannot ask for more than that when you go and see a show."

Chris Beardshaw (also as he was in the "Heathers in Harmony" garden - transcript from BBC2 tv): "Heathers in a garden may be slightly unusual sight here at Hampton Court. They have been out of fashion for many years, and that is why this green wall of winter-flowering heathers is such a wonderful sight. These are plants which are very adventurous. They don't mind tumbling over rock-faces and in scree, and so they are perfect candidates for this style of gardening. If vertical gardening is set to revolutionize winter-flowering heathers, then the subtle use of the *Daboecia* as an edging plant in place of plants like the rosemary, the lavender and the thyme - as long as you have an acid soil rich in organic matter - then why not employ these wonderful candidates to tickle your ankles as you walk through the garden path."

Annual Gathering - 7th - 10th September 2012

Susie Kay

Thank you to everybody who attended our gathering at the Damson Dene in the Lake District. We were a goodly number and welcomed new faces and also welcomed back members who had not attended for some years. Everybody made a contribution to the enjoyment and learning curve of the weekend. Preparations are underway for our 41st Annual Gathering in 2012 and brochure with booking form is enclosed with this Bulletin.

The Date - 7th - 10th September 2012

The Venue - Richardson's Falmouth Hotel, Falmouth, Cornwall

Our Speakers

Keith Spurgeon will be addressing us on a heathery subject. Keith has spoken to the Society before and will once again deliver an amusing presentation.

Dr. E.G.H. Oliver, perhaps better known as Ted, will tell us about ongoing work on D.N.A. being carried out on the genus *Erica* using DNA studies, and its implications for the future.

Dr. Oliver is the current president of The Botanical Society of South Africa and also an honorary member of our own Society. He has been involved with the genus *Erica* for many years, especially with regard to Cape Heaths. He is responsible for describing many new species and has written more than one

hundred papers and books on the subject. Although now retired he continues his work in the botanical field not only with *Erica* but also with orchids. A mine of information on all matters botanical not only of South African species but European as well.

Steve Yandall, who is also a Heather Society member, has a nursery in Cornwall and will talk about his work with Cornish heathers. He will, hopefully, take us on a short walk to view wild plants

The Programme

We shall be visiting two nurseries which specialise in Cape Heaths and Restios, and in this busy programme there will also be time to visit two gardens.

With Ted Oliver attending, there will be an emphasis on Cape Heaths, which we all know encompass some stunning plants.

The Cost

Council expects this to be in the region of £320, but it could be a little higher or even a bit lower. This covers all entrance fees, speakers, lunches and tips, and of course dinner, bed & breakfast.

As usual, I have made reservations for 10 single rooms and 10 double rooms at the hotel and therefore urge you to make an early booking on the enclosed flyer. A non-returnable deposit of £5 per person attending is required to secure a booking. This should be sent to the Administrator as indicated on the form.

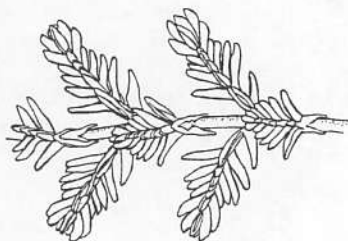
For anyone who wishes to attend on a daily basis, please phone me on 00353 95 43575 or email susiek@gofree.indigo.ie. You should also complete the booking form and send the £5 deposit.

AGM

At the Annual General Meeting, our Chairman, David Edge, welcomed members to the 40th annual Conference, especially those who had travelled from the United States and Norway to be with us. He asked everyone to remember those who lost their lives in the 9/11 attack just ten years ago. A one minute's silence followed, in memory of our past President, David Small.

Membership has fallen slightly in the last year, but the new website has been instrumental in recruiting twenty two new members.

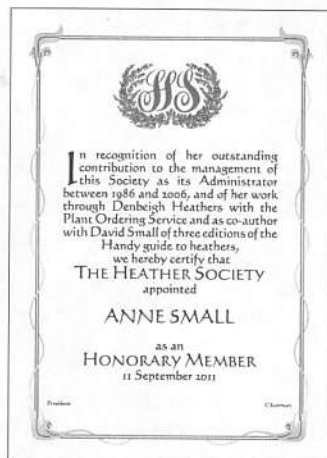
Richard Bowater was elected as the new Hon. Secretary upon the retirement of Jean Preston. The position of Hon. Treasurer remained vacant at the AGM, but is expected to be filled shortly.



Honorary Member – Anne Small

At the end of the meeting, Anne was presented with a certificate appointing her an **Honorary Member** of the Society in recognition of her great contribution to the Society.

Anne spent twenty years working quietly in the background as the Society's Administrator. She and her husband, David were responsible for producing the invaluable *Handy Guide to Heathers*, as well as running the Plant Ordering Service.



Retirement of the Hon. Secretary – Jean Preston

After ten years, Jean Preston, the Society's efficient and hard-working Secretary decided it was time to hang up her pen.

On behalf of the Society she was presented with a very pretty heather paperweight and some garden vouchers to spend on the new garden she now shares with her husband, Mike. Her letter of thanks is printed below.

Dear Heather Friend,

Please may I, on behalf of Mike and I thank you for the paperweight and generous donation of garden vouchers. We very much appreciate them. I will now have to study which garden centre near here accepts them and which one has the best heathers. Although if Mike has his way some of the funds will go towards a couple of fruit trees.



The paperweight will adorn my desk I can assure you.

I have enjoyed being secretary these past ten years and attending conferences for the past twenty years or more. Hopefully we shall continue to attend a few more and I look forward to Cornwall in 2012.

I shall try to improve the library of pictures in 2012 by requesting what I need through the bulletin. If members send me photos by email I can put them on to the "Picture Library memory Stick" but first I need to sort out my new home and review the CDs of previous years.

I shall of course be happy to put in my "pennyworth" with any discussions. Once again, many thanks for your gift but especially for your friendship.

Kindest regards

Jean & Mike Preston

I apologise to Anne and Jean that there are no photographs of the presentations. Sad to say, I didn't take my camera to the meetings.

Profile of the Society's new Hon. Secretary - Richard Bowater

Walking and cycling as a schoolboy along and across the Dales of my native Yorkshire and as a young man motoring with my girlfriend, now wife, across the magnificent north Yorkshire moors left a lasting impression of the colours of the heathers especially in the autumn.

But it was not until my retirement in 2006, after working and living in the East Midlands since 1973 managing the disposal of property taxation appeals, that I "discovered" and joined the Heather Society. I volunteered for the then soon to be vacant office of honorary secretary of the Society at a chance visit to a Yorkshire branch meeting earlier this year.

Attending the recent annual conference in Cumbria confirmed my superficial knowledge of heathers and the impressive knowledge of others especially the scholarship of those members compiling the list of 100 recommended heathers. Whilst I cannot pretend that I will ever be able to match or even begin to approach this level of expertise, I believe that my employment background including being elected to run as Honorary Secretary of a trade union branch and also of a small professional society, will stand me in good stead for my administrative duties as Honorary Secretary of the Heather Society.

I have been married to Barbara for forty-six years. We have a daughter, Sarah, and two granddaughters, Scarlett and Amelia. It would greatly assist my relationship with my eldest granddaughter if a member would quickly hybridise a cultivar and name it "Scarlett" to accompany *Daboecia cantabrica* 'Amelie' and 'Sarah' already part of my small suburban heather collection.

I am very much impressed by the global reach of the Society and look forward to meeting members at the annual conference and at regional meetings. I can be contacted at: richard.bowater1@btinternet.com. But please don't expect an instant response or any answers to questions of a technical nature which should properly be addressed to those much more knowledgeable than am I.

Heather Society Annual Conference Lake District Barry Sellers

Our Chairman David Edge opened the 40th Annual Gathering, held at the Damson Dene Hotel, Crosthwaite, Cumbria. He gave a special welcome to our overseas heather enthusiasts, Dee Daneri from USA and Eileen Petterssen and Egil Sæle from Norway.

Our first speaker was Peter Hoggarth from Holehird Gardens near Windermere. Holehird Gardens is the home of the Lakeland Horticultural Society. The Gardens now extend to 17 acres and are leased from the Holehird Trust. The members of the Lakeland Horticultural Society mainly provide the

workforce to maintain the gardens. Besides maintaining the gardens, the Society is active in running educational lectures and courses, photography, journals, newsletters and a garden guide. The Society initiated three National Plant Collections, *Astilbe*, *Hydrangea* and *Polystichum*.

Recently the Society has acquired additional land on the hillside which sweeps down to a small lake, and which was used by local fishermen. Peter showed us a number of images of the gardens. Our members were most interested in the heather garden, which many of us recalled from our previous visit 14 years ago in 1997. Peter showed us images of *Erica australis* 'Holehird White', a sport from 'Holehird'. Peter was asked whether the Society were keen to establish a National heather collection there. Peter politely replied that they would welcome the idea but at present they could not take on board such an onerous responsibility. We thanked Peter for his knowledgeable talk and looked forward impatiently to our visit the following day.

Saturday arrived and after a full breakfast at 8 am we assembled outside the hotel for our coach trip. Our coach driver gave us a guided tour on the way with suitable anecdotes about the area's people and its culture. We were welcomed at Holehird by Cynthia Kelsall who gave a brief introductory talk on the gardens before we eagerly made our way up to the heather garden ably assisted by guides Pat Murphy and Val Jeffries. The setting for the garden on the side of a hill with natural rock outcrops gave a three-dimensional character to the garden. Our President, John Griffiths, with his wife Valerie, were photographed standing next to *Erica x griffithsii* 'Valerie Griffiths'. Slightly further up the hillside was *Erica australis* 'Holehird White' and 'Holehird', which gave rise to the sport. We were kindly taken to the propagation area where there was a lively exchange on techniques for taking and rooting cuttings, as well as to the trials area. Nearby were two smaller beds of heathers, which had recently been planted. These were in an otherwise grassed area, which clearly had potential for expansion. More heathers do I hear you say! Our thanks must also go to Kate and Peter Sudlow who organised the whole visit and provided us with refreshing cups of tea and coffee on the day.

After a short visit to look at the hydrangea collection on our walk back to the coach, we were soon en route to Newby Bridge Hotel, where we had lunch. The owner of this hotel, Jonathan Denby was also the owner of the Damson Dene Hotel. To the rear of the hotel, the garden that he and Philippa Pearson had designed for the 2010 Chelsea Show, had been reconstructed. After lunch we made our way by coach to Yewbarrow House Gardens, Grange-over-Sands. Yewbarrow House is the home of Jonathan Denby and his wife Margaret, who bought the property in 1999. The property lies on a steep hillside overlooking Grange-over-Sands, with the gardens climbing up in terraces to the rear of the house. Jonathan pointed out that the gardens extend to 4.5 acres. He mentioned that, because of the unique climate - being sheltered from cold northerly and easterly winds - and the proximity to the sea, the gardens could grow plants considered too tender for areas nearby. Although the last winter had been an exceptional one (as we can all testify to) and had damaged many plants, notably the tree ferns in the sunken garden,

the first point in our tour. We climbed up the terraces to the Italian Garden, past a lovely specimen tree, *Albizia julibrissin* (Persian acacia). Jonathan pointed out the tree Dahlias (*Dahlia imperialis*) and the banana plants. To the east were stands of bamboo and above were *Echium pininina*, which grew up to 3 metres. Although affected by frost it had set seedlings around its base, which had carefully been safeguarded. Beyond was a stone tower with a bronze statue of one of his daughters on top from where we could stand to take in the panoramic views across Morecombe Bay. Further west we glimpsed inside the Palm House, which housed a swimming pool as an added attraction, and on to the cutting garden, where flowers were grown for the hotels. Next to this was Prospect tower, which again offered panoramic views. We then descended to the Japanese garden, with its pool and pavilion. The garden was truly a cornucopia of exotic plants full of interest at every turn. After an afternoon tea of scones with jam and cream, David Edge presented Jonathan with two new exotic additions, Cape Heaths. Jonathan was pleased to receive these to add to his collection of tender plants.

On our return to the Damson Dene Hotel we readied ourselves for Daphne Everett's talk on 'The Society and its People: a trip through the archives'. Certainly this was a trip down memory lane for many recalling photographs of annual gatherings over the past 30 years. These included former Presidents, Pat Turpin, David McClintock and David Small, and Constance MacLeod, our former Secretary. There were also a number of group photographs taken at annual gatherings and were we all keen to recollect individuals in the Heather Society who had contributed so much to its development and the social occasions.

Daphne's talk was followed by an open forum. Respects were paid to our past President David Small. Anne Small was presented with an Honorary Life Membership of the Society. David Plumridge talked about the extreme cold of last winter and frost tolerance of heathers and other members shared their experiences. We also discussed the work being done to revise the list of 100 recommended heathers and members expressed their views on some of their favourite cultivars.

After another sumptuous meal, whilst many relaxed in the bar, others participated in a Technical Committee to finalise the revisions to the list of 100 recommended heathers taking on board comments received including those from Ella May Wulff in Oregon, whose experience at growing heathers in that part of the USA was much appreciated.

Sunday began with a full English breakfast followed by the Society's Annual General Meeting, where the reports from our Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer were duly received and agreed. Mention was made of the Society's contribution to the Hampton Court Flower Show in June. In conjunction with the British Heather Grower's Association the heather garden designed by William Quarmby gained a prestigious Gold Award. Members of the Society gave up their time to staff the garden and give advice to the public about growing heathers. The heather wall had attracted a good deal of attention. After a coffee break we boarded the coach and stopped briefly at Cath's Garden Plants at Levens to satisfy our search for intriguing

plant acquisitions before arriving at Holker Hall, Grange-over-Sands. Holker Hall is the home of Lord and Lady Cavendish. We first ate lunch then assembled for a garden tour. Fortunately the rain was very light and did not detract from our enjoyment of the 25 acre garden with manicured hedges to the formal gardens and interesting collections of trees and shrubs beyond. Of enormous interest was the Great Holker Lime. This awe-inspiring tree measures 7.9 metres in girth. It was probably planted as part of a formal garden in the early 17th century. Today its huge trunk stands in a cavern of overhanging branches. In 2002 Holker's Great Lime was awarded the distinction of being one of Britain's 50 Great Trees, in honour of Her Majesty's Golden Jubilee. The gardens are home to National Collections for the plant family of Styracaceae, which also includes genera such as *Halesia*, *Styrax*, and *Pterostyrax*. The gardens are also home to a number of rare plants including *Rhododendron mallotum* and *Magnolia macrophylla*.

Afterwards we had an opportunity to tour the main house, which dates back to 1610, when the Preston family made it their home. The west wing of the house had to be re-built after a fire in 1871. The architects were Paley and Austin. It was described by Sir Nicholas Pevsner as 'the grandest of its date in Lancashire, and built in an Elizabethan Style in red sandstone.

We returned to the hotel after an enthralling day. After dinner we were entertained by Alan in his inimitable style as the auctioneer of heather books kindly donated by Geoff Yates, and plants. This was followed by a short talk by Alan on the important duties of an 'under-gardener' and Dee entertained us with images she recorded of us enjoying our Annual Gathering. Our thanks go Susie for all the hard work put in to making all the arrangements and for her help and guidance on the day ably assisted by her husband Alan.

Tippitiwitchet Corner: Administrator's log no. 13

Email: theheathersociety@phonecoop.coop

New members since June 2011

We welcome these members:

Donald NOTT: Syd-Koster, Sweden
 Keith H. BENNETTO: Kelty, Scotland
 David BROWN: Ringwood, England
 Malcolm GLOVER: Lichfield, England
 P. R. K. EDWARDS: Holywell, Wales
 Hilary HEYS: Ulverston, England

2012 yearbook, *Heathers* 9

There is still a little time to contribute an article to the next yearbook. We welcome contributions from members. Indeed, it is your yearbook and members' articles are its mainstay. You can write about anything relating to heathers: your own garden; your favourite heathers (or your least favourite!); history...

Subscriptions 2012

Subscriptions are renewed each year in January. If you are a UK member and have set up a standing order the payment will happen automatically. Other UK members will find a renewal notice in this issue. Renewal reminders are also included for members elsewhere who have not paid a three-year subscription, or whose 3-year subscription has run out.

Plantfinder 2011-2012

The new edition of the *RHS plantfinder 2011-2012* was issued recently. Our catalogue of heather cultivars on the new website is based on the plants listed in this book as available commercially in the UK and Ireland. I need assistance from members to cross-check the website listings with the *Plantfinder* listings. I can supply photocopies from the *Plantfinder* and, if necessary, hard-copy (printed version) of the website lists. It's a big job for one person, or an evening's occupation for a band of helpers, each person tackling a different part of the list! Volunteers please contact me.

Thanks.

Hardy heathers of the northern hemisphere (Kew monograph)

I have received information of the production of this book in the form of the anticipated production schedule. This indicates that the book will go to the printers on 27 October, and that copies will be delivered to the distribution agent on 23 November. Thus, those who have already ordered a copy, or who order one in the next month or so, should receive the book before Christmas. I quote from the message I received on 27 September from Kew Publications: "The aim of the schedule is to have printed books delivered in time to allow the possibility for important pre-Christmas sales (who wouldn't want a copy in their stocking?)."

New list of 100 recommended heathers

The Technical Committee, chaired by Barry Sellers, has produced a revised list of 100 recommended heathers (it does have 100 this time: I have counted them several times!). The full list of names is published on the Society's website - go to <http://www.heathersociety.org/recommended-heathers>. It is also printed in this *Bulletin* on page 17, and, space permitting, we will include an expanded "descriptive" version in the 2012 yearbook.

If anyone has good close-up photographs of any of these heathers and would be willing to allow the Society to use them, please contact us. It would be especially good to use these plants as subjects for the "Heather of the month" page on the website.

Website visitors

To 22 October 2011, there have been 8150 hits on the Society's home-page.

... and finally

'W. T. Rackliff' put on a splendid display, as usual, in the spring, and oddly there has been a sprinkling of solitary flowers during August. *Erica terminalis* bloomed profusely in August but is now over. Meanwhile, *E. x ardensiana* 'Charwood Pink' (which survived the winter and the drought) has new shoots and several clusters of buds; indeed it is actually in flower. *E. x oldenburgensis* 'Ammerland' is covered with buds some of which are close to "opening". *E. manipuliflora* 'Bert Jones' has been in bloom for several weeks already – it has graceful, long, slightly serpentine spikes that wave about in the breeze, defying those who say that heathers are stiff and static. My other manip, from Crete, did not like the drought but did not pass away, and has short, stubby spikes this year; as I write the buds have begun to colour but are not yet open. As well as the painted heathers whose demise I announced in the Summer *Bulletin*, I did lose 'Lucy Gena' from the drought, not the cold.

More Memories of David Small

Richard Canovan

You will all have read *Heathers* 8 2011, a memorial edition for our former Chairman and President, David Small, who did so much to develop the Society and sadly did not live to see its 50th anniversary.

Reflecting the worldwide extent of his contribution, the North American Heather Society devoted two editions of its *Heather News Quarterly* (HNQ) to articles about David and his work, and especially to people's memories of him and not forgetting Anne's contribution. These were edited by Ella May T Wulff who made two contributions of her own, offering some unique insights into David's and Anne's work over the years.

Members may like these to accompany their *Yearbook*. Those of us who are also members of the NAHS will have received email copies but the NAHS has kindly offered to make available for only £5.50, including postage, hard copy of these two memorial editions of HNQ to all THS members. Rather like the *Bulletin*, HNQ has a centrefold of colour photographs with other black and white photographs.

If you would like to purchase these, please send me a cheque for £5.50 by 30 November 2011, made payable to me, with your latest address so I can send Ella May a single dollar cheque and a list of people wanting these. She will then post directly a copy of each to everybody who has paid.

Send to: Richard Canovan, 10 Queensborough, Toothill, Swindon, Wiltshire SN5 8DU.

'King George the Fifth'

Mieczyslaw Brzeski (Blackburn)

Eight years ago Arnold Stow asked about observations etc. on heathers, so I replied mentioning my plants of *Erica carnea* 'King George' which start

to bloom at the end of October – one year mid-October – and continue to April (May sometimes). Incidentally, these never suffered after the 2010/11 winter. They were planted in the mid-1990s.

If I may continue with my observations, my sole *Erica x darleyensis* 'A. T. Johnson' (planted 1978) kept looking young all these years but after the 2009/10 winter looked under stress. After the past winter (2010/11) it just disintegrated: what a way to go?

My batch of 2002 *Erica vagans* 'Birch Glow' hardly noticed the 2010/11 winter. These I prefer for a flowering display. As for *E. vagans* 'Mrs D. F. Maxwell', a batch planted in 2000 were partly defoliated in 2009/10, and further defoliated in 2010/11, yet the very tops were still green and they are now (mid August) in flower.

For many years I exchanged letters with Arnold Stow, mentioning my *Erica cinerea* 'Stephen Davis' (2002). I was worried about them going straggly. Mr Stow told me these were short-lived. All the same, these plants eventually filled out and greened nicely. They never again looked a bit like they did in their first few years. But, after the 2010/11 winter they looked so unsightly that I have removed four, although two are still reasonably good now.

Lastly, as The Heather Society is going on a visit to the Lake District I will follow in spirit. I am quite familiar with Holehird gardens. Years ago, walking at the top of the garden, I saw some healthy little trees with *Erica carnea*-like flowers. Never have I found out what they were as I could not find them on my last visit. Did anyone see them?

Last bit – all these fancy new improved (?) heathers come nowhere near to the timing of 'King George the Fifth'!

'King George V': 100 years old and still going strong!

Charles Nelson

Mieczyslaw's remarks on this plant prompt me to mark its centenary. He is indeed perfectly correct to add "the Fifth" to the name because it was originally named 'King George V' in the James Backhouse & Son, Ltd. special 1911 catalogue which was illustrated with colour photographs (an expensive and innovative thing to do).

The catalogue was composed as follows. There was a close-up (actually "natural size") photo of each heather and a further photo of the whole plant in bloom. A brief description was included. For 'King George V' this read: "Madder Carmine or Purple suffused Carmine, dark brown tips" (the tips were the protruding anthers).

The heathers in this catalogue were all "Richard Potter's selection" and customers were advised that "Orders now booked for delivery in the Autumn 1912 will be executed strictly in rotation as received, subject to stocks being unsold." A single plant cost three shillings; a dozen were thirty shillings. The introduction to the catalogue was as follows:

continued on page 14



Heathers at Holehird



Val Jeffreys - our 'heather' guide



Valerie and John Griffiths in front of a planting of Erica x griffithsii 'Valerie Griffiths'



Ornamental pond with cascade and ducks



A beautiful display of Hydrangeas



The colourful Walled Garden



Jonathan Denby, owner of Yewbarrow House,
(R) talking to members in his lovely garden



Erica tetralix 'Ken Underwood' (See item)

from page 11

ERICA CARNEA RICHARD POTTER'S SELECTION

Winter and Spring Flowering Varieties, selected by our Mr. Richard Potter during his Continental botanical rambles.

This Heath (unlike our native heather) will grow and thrive in almost any soil. It is absolutely hardy, and commences to bloom in the cold wintery month of December, when it is almost impossible to find the bloom of any other plant in the open ground.

This group of *Ericas* is admirably suited to withstand the cutting winds and biting frost, blooming with cheery brightness through all the dark months of winter to the genial days of May. By long and careful cultivation we have now a large and unique collection, which affords us pleasure to offer for the first time.

To attempt any description of their charming distinctive features would simply be a failure, therefore we leave to the photographic reproductions given in this booklet the task of bringing before our readers their exquisite beauty.

I am grateful to Jean Preston for access to a copy of this catalogue and there will be more about it in the 2012 yearbook.

Jos Flecken (1943–2011)

It was sad to learn that Jos had lost his long battle with cancer and passed away on 7 July 2011. He was not just editor of *Ericultura*, the quarterly issued by our sister society in Holland, but a stalwart of that society and of our own, and a very knowledgeable enthusiast.

Jos Flecken taught French in Kerkrade, but his hobby was his garden which he wrote about in the 2009 issue of *Heathers*. He collected heathers, other members of the Ericaceae especially azaleas and rhododendrons, and conifers. His enthusiasm led him to join *Ericultura* in 1981, and he soon became a leading member, appointed in 1986 to a special "trials" committee established to assess cultivars of *Erica* and *Calluna*. The following year, Jos joined the editorial team of *Ericultura*: Herman Blum, Jan Dekker and Dr Onno Wijnands were his colleagues then. That was issue no. 65, and the last issue Jos edited, as sole editor, was no. 161: 97 quarterly issues! (Sadly *Ericultura* itself will cease to exist at the end of this year.)

Jos joined The Heather Society in January 1992 and was of immense help when we were working on the *International register of heather names*. He "kept an eye" on new introductions from Dutch and German nurseries, in particular, and was a regular email correspondent until (as it happens) about six weeks before his death. Jos admitting "sniffing around" for unusual heathers in nurseries and while on holiday when the whole family joined in so that, for example, in Brittany in 1980 Marina found the white flowered bell heather that was named after her. Other finds followed – we will list Jos's cultivars in *Heathers* 9.

We extend our sympathy to Jos's wife, Mary, and to all his family. An appreciation will be printed in *Heathers* 9, based on Dick de Bruin's tribute published in *Ericultura* no. 162 (September 2011). As Dick says, we have lost a heather friend. "Jos we missen je. Adieu!"

Charles Nelson

Rose Cottage Ramblings - 6

David Plumridge

The darker and cooler evenings presage the onset of winter with the inevitable thought – “what will the next one be like?” The last Bulletin majored on the effects of last winter. It was surprising that despite our harsh climate here on the edge of the grouse moors, we didn’t seem to suffer very much worse than our friends from relatively balmy climes. Surprisingly, our *Erica erigena* ‘W.T. Rackliff’ specimens, both on exposed beds, suffered little whereas others ‘down south’ were in a bad way. However, three large plantings of ‘Valerie Griffiths’ were devastated together with damage to several other cultivars. The cause was clearly due to the wind.

The same ones in shelter were fine, despite being subject to prolonged sub-zero temperatures. The winds, mainly from a westerly direction are cooled on their path over the Pennines and then whistle through our “windows”. These are gaps between large conifers on that side of the garden which give a changing view of the heathers when walking along the drive. Filling the gaps with *leylandii* would not be countenanced, so what is the answer? Fleecing would do it, but the head gardener would insist on it only used if the forecast was bad and lifting it immediately thereafter. Quite a chore! Maybe dyeing the fleece some subtle shade....?

After the usually delightful spring display we looked on the garden with trepidation. We need not have worried as much. Here, in September, the garden isn’t looking too bad – but from a distance. Closer inspection reveals open patches reminding us of our winter heritage. These gaps are now being filled.

David Edge kindly delivered a supply of replacements to us at the Annual Gathering. Several were in one litre pots. These will ensure a speedier fill-in. These are mainly *cinerea* replacements. It is a little frustrating to observe that the natives on the moors have just shrugged off the hard winter. Maybe they had better snow cover? However, when in the Lake District recently, I noted flowering *cinerea* growing in a crack in an almost vertical rock face which must have been fully exposed. While on the fells, I overheard several people remark on the beautiful heather. If only more would follow up this admiration, grow it and join the Heather Society!

We were soon to return to the Lake District for the Annual Gathering. It was as well organised as ever by Susie and Alan, with interesting talks and discussions and excellent garden visits, in not too bad weather. The “As seen on TV” hotel was fine and fortunately did not live up to the couple of adverse comments noted on “Trip Advisor”. There will be a full write-up elsewhere, but for Rita and myself, it was a joy to meet old friends and make new ones.

Eileen Petterssen, from Norway, proved herself to be wrong when she said at the Harrogate Gathering that it would be her last appearance. We must thank Jean McCrindle for twisting her arm! Dee Daneri came all the way from California without any coercion. It may come as a surprise to some that it is one of the best heather growing areas in the world – the cooler, damp, northern part, that is!

We were lucky enough to be able to join the tour and heather conference Dee organised in 1996. The *Calluna* there had to be seen to be believed! I must also single out Egil Saele for his unique contribution – he has the most wonderful voice and has entertained us over the years with Norwegian and British folk songs.

In the short 'business' session we were greatly relieved to learn that, despite the dire warning from the Chairman, the Society would continue thanks to Phil agreeing to carry on as treasurer for a little longer. We are also fortunate to have Richard Bowater, blessed with relevant experience, offer his services as secretary. This will give Jean time to plant heathers at her new house! The next Gathering to Cornwall is a must – we have been promising ourselves long overdue visit to that part of the world, including, we hope, the Scillies.

It is frustrating that the Gathering once again coincided with the Ponteland Flower Show. This gives us the opportunity to fly the flag for heather gardening, it being a popular event in our area. Fortunately Dorothy and Geoff Warner always put on a good display and are rewarded by a cup or two!

The Cumbrian Gathering was soon followed by the Yorkshire Heather Group meeting at RHS Harlow Carr. It was a small, but highly elite group including our president, the retiring secretary and the new secretary, Richard Bowater. A pleasant afternoon was spent in the splendid new study centre. We discussed new varieties and Jean Preston talked about heathers at Harlow Carr, and the problems associated with the inconsiderate RHS ban on the use of peat.

Once we got the enormous video screen to cooperate, we enjoyed a pictorial reminder of the Gathering. John Griffiths then showed pictures of his new plantings. Coping with incredibly stony ground, he has, since May, created the foundation of an excellent heather garden. Motivated by a picture of a blue *Calluna* shown at the Gathering, he showed pictures of blue flowered *Erica cinerea* from his garden. These had been cunningly contrived with assistance from ammonia. Now, at Rose Cottage, we have inadvertently discovered another method of creating this unusual colour. Rita was complaining about moss in a planting of *cinerea*. I attacked this with a dilute solution of sulphate of iron as this works well on lawns. The next day she reported that several of the flowers had turned blue. The puzzling find earlier this year of blue flowers on 'Cindy' could now be explained by a drift of lawn sand even though I was sure none had been applied in that area.

Following a disastrous cuttings failure, my ears pricked up when John mentioned Don Richard's Dew Point Propagator. Could this be the answer? An internet search provided information. The "Two Wests" reckoned it to be the answer to any propagation problem and would kindly let me have one for only £555. Sadly, I knew without asking, that the financial controller would turn that down - but cheerily - John thought one could be built for £40. That looked promising, but I had vague recollections that I had seen one at "The Bannut" some years ago. Daphne confirmed they had not been impressed. However, she said Eileen Petterssen also had one. Eileen's comment was that it rooted heathers very quickly. Now I don't know what to do, so could any readers with experience of this novel propagator please help?

Our "low maintenance" heather garden has now become just the opposite. Rita is cutting out the dead stems, mixing new soil and replanting furiously to allow the new heathers to bed in for the winter. Will "global warming", sorry – it's now called "climate change" - make this an annual event....? Hopefully next spring's *Bulletin* will be happily reporting a lovely mild winter with lots of delightful early growth!

The Heather Society's 100 Recommended heathers

After much cogitation, deliberation and discussion, we have produced a revised list of 100 Recommended Heathers. Many of the old cultivars survive but with a sprinkling of the best of the new.

Calluna vulgaris

'Alicia'	'Amilto'
'Annemarie'	'Anthony Davis'
'Athene'	'Con Brio'
'County Wicklow'	'Darkness'
'Elsie Purnell'	'Firefly'
'Kerstin'	'Peter Sparkes'
'Red Beauty'	'Red Favorit'
'Robert Chapman'	'Silver Queen'
'Silver Rose'	'Sister Anne'
'Spring Cream'	'Tib'
'Velvet Fascination'	'White Coral'
'Wickwar Flame'	'Yvette's Gold'

Daboecia cantabrica

'Blueless'	'Cinderella'
'Charles Nelson'	'Hookstone Purple'
'Waley's Red'	

Daboecia x scotica

'Katherine's Choice'	'William Buchanan'
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Erica arborea

'Albert's Gold'	'Estrella Gold'
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Erica australis

'Riverslea'

Erica carnea

'Adrienne Duncan'	'Ann Sparkes'
'Eva'	'Foxhollow'
'Golden Starlet'	'Hilletje'

'Isabell'
'Loughrigg'
'Myretoun Ruby'
'Rosalie'
'Springwood White'
'Winter Snow'

'King George'
'March Seedling'
'Pink Spangles'
'Rotes Juwel'
'Westwood Yellow'
'Wintersonne'

'Corfe Castle'
'Ram'

Erica ciliaris

'David McClintock'

'Alba Minor'
'C. D. Eason'
'Lime Soda'
'Rosita'
'Velvet Knight'

Erica cinerea

'Celebration'
'Eden Valley'
'Pentreath'
'Stephen Davis'

'Arthur Johnson'
'Furzey'
'J. W. Porter'
'Lucie'
'Silberschmelze'
'White Perfection'

Erica x darleyensis

'Eva Gold'
'Jenny Porter'
'Kramers Rote'
'Moonshine'
'Spring Surprise'

'Irish Dusk'
'W. T. Rackliff'

Erica erigena

'Thing Nee'

'Jacqueline'

Erica x griffithsii

'Valerie Griffiths'

Erica lusitanica

'Galicia'

Erica mackayana

'Shining Light'

'Ammerland'

Erica x oldenburgensis

'Irish Lemon'

Erica x stuartii

'Thelma Woolner'

Erica terminalis

	<i>Erica tetralix</i>
'Alba Mollis'	'Pink Star'
'Rico'	

	<i>Erica vagans</i>
'Birch Glow'	'Fiddlestone'
'Golden Triumph'	'Kevernesis Alba'
'Mrs D. F. Maxwell'	'Yellow John'

	<i>Erica x veitchii</i>
'Exeter'	'Gold Tips'

	<i>Erica x watsonii</i>
'Pink Pacific'	

	<i>Erica x williamsii</i>
'Claire Elise'	'Ken Wilson'

A Thought from Dr Colin Rogers

Colin invites members to imagine that, for whatever reason, they are downsizing their dwelling, and in future will have room for only one heather. Which would they choose, and why?

Your thoughts on the subject will be very welcome – especially now that the updated list of 100 Recommended Heathers has recently been decided upon. He sets the ball rolling with:

My favourite heather – 1

***Erica cinerea* 'Eden Valley'**

It was love at first sight – and so unexpected. She had been in a small, miscellaneous pack bought from a garden centre with no warning of how beautiful she would be when she flowered. My pleasant surprise was reinforced when I saw Plate 57 in Brian & Valerie Proudley's *Heathers in colour*. I had to have more, and finally obtained the last nine plants from a nursery in Leek, Staffs, which has since closed.

Why do I think of this cultivar as female? The 'Handy Guide' describes the colour as 'lavender (H3) shading to white at the base of the corolla'. To me, it is far more like Pink (H8), the pink and white bicolour effect being unmistakably female. Furthermore, her first appearance can never be taken for granted! I've made a note of the date when any flowers on the ten plants first open, and they vary from 27 May to 10 July; how long the display lasts is also a bit of a tease – they have disappeared anywhere between the third week in August to the third week in October.

There are other characteristics which single out this plant. The appearance of its twin colours is very obvious, and to me marks the start of summer. The proportion of pink to white varies from corolla to corolla even on the same plant, but the amount of white increases as the end of its season approaches, before they turn brown. Above all, however, this is a plant which cries out, 'Don't put me in a crowd - I want to stand out and be admired'. Seen at a distance in a bed of 'Eden Valley' the effect is almost lost. This is a 'stand alone' cultivar par excellence.

The story of its discovery in 1926, and of its discoverer, Gertrude Waterer, has been told many times, and may be found in several books on heather growing.

Footnote

There is a very useful background article in the Heather Society's *Yearbook* for 1985 by Mrs B. Garratt and David McClintock, which has photos of Miss Waterer, of Percy her father, and of 'Eden Valley', the house where she lived. Since that was written, the internet has thrown up some more biographical detail about Miss Waterer's origins.

Her father Percy was born in 1855, and in 1876 married Mary Easterbrook, a woman seven years older who had been born in Burton Upon Trent. Mary Betha Gertrude Waterer was their only child, born at Epsom, Surrey on 4 December 1882 - Percy called her Mary rather than Gertrude at the time of the censuses. Her mother died when she was only 7 years old, from which time she was mothered until at least 1901 by Mary's younger sister Jane, who was Percy's junior by some nine years and unmarried. A Jane Easterfield died in Penzance in 1908.

Thus it seems that Gertrude Waterer never had more than two adults, and no siblings, in her household.

***Erica tetralix* 'Ken Underwood'**

Daphne Everett

There seems to be some confusion regarding the true *Erica tetralix* 'Ken Underwood', which, when I was growing it (from the late 1960s until 1997, when we closed the nursery) was quite unmistakeable. It was always the darkest of all the *tetralix* and nearest to H9 (Beetroot) in the Heather Society's colour chart - the foliage was distinctly grey. The ones around at the moment are somewhere between H5 (ruby) and H14 (magenta), and seem to be indistinguishable from *E. tetralix* 'Con Underwood'.

I have been in touch with several growers who were selling this plant at the same time that I was, and they are all in agreement with me as to its true colour. The picture of 'Ken Underwood' on the centre pages (taken by Albert Julian in California) is a very good representation and we are trying to trace where it was taken.

Does anyone have an original 'Ken Underwood' still growing in their garden? If so, I would be very grateful if they would be kind enough to send me a few cuttings. It would be very nice to get the **real** 'Ken' going again, and give him back his proper place in the Underwood family.

My address is inside the back cover of the *Bulletin*.

From the 1982 Yearbook
Black Polythene Mulches
T A. Julian, Whaley Bridge, Derbyshire

For many years gardeners have known of the virtues of black plastic sheet used as a mulch to suppress weeds and to inhibit moisture evaporation. Recently there has been an upsurge in interest in its use in horticulture, and in Norway, for instance, black polythene sheet has for long been used to mulch strawberry plantations.

The impervious nature of the sheet prevents evaporation of moisture from the soil that it covers, and, being black, light cannot pass through to the soil to stimulate the germination of weed seeds. The absorption of the sun's radiated heat by the black sheet and its re-radiation into the plants when the sun is obscured, is thought to have a significantly beneficial effect on growth also. It is these benefits which make the use of polythene, in this way, so attractive as an aid to growing heathers.

More than twenty years ago I first used black plastic sheet in my garden. It was a means of avoiding the chore of earthing up potatoes. Twenty-four inch wide material was laid along the rows and the potatoes were planted at the usual intervals through slits in the sheet. The results were outstandingly good and considerable time and effort had been saved. Unfortunately a large number of small black field slugs were encouraged to colonise by the protective polythene cover and most of the potatoes were attacked. The soil was mainly sand and very sharply drained, and the plants had responded to the increased moisture content.

It was not until 1976 that I had occasion to use the black sheet again as a mulch. This time the suppression of weeds was the objective. The weeding team at Harlow Car [site of the Society's heather trials at the time] had been unsuccessful in coping with the numerous weeds on the heather trial plot by conventional hoeing and hand weeding and it became apparent that, with so few helpers, a less labour intensive method had to be found. Two trials were instituted; the application of a persistent soil herbicide - Casoron G, and a mulch consisting of 12-inch strips of black polythene sheet laid along each side of a row of heathers that had been planted during the previous year. At the end of the season each had proved successful in suppressing the germination and growth of weeds. For reasons of cost and convenience it was decided to use Casoron on the whole plot the following year. 1976 was a year of severe drought, but despite this the mulched plants grew normally when others of the same batch, that had been planted nearby, at the same time, showed signs of acute distress. The mulch was left in position and in the following years comparisons of mulched and un-mulched plants dramatically demonstrated the benefits of black polythene mulching. The Weed Research Organisation in their booklet *Chemical Weed Control in Your Garden* comment on the effects of polythene mulching other than on weeds as follows: - "There appear to be beneficial effects, not yet fully evaluated, all of which encourage vigorous growth and more reliable establishment of transplanted stock".

A polythene sheet laid on the surface, between the plants, is unsightly and subject to disturbance by wind, but if covered with a thin layer of soil these disadvantages disappear. This year I polythene-mulched a kidney-shaped heather bed in my garden. In it were 65 three-year old *Calluna* plants of coloured foliage cultivars. A layer of soil of not more than one inch thickness was removed from the surface between the plants, taking care not to take it from the roots, the perennial weeds were dealt with, and strips and rectangles of polythene were laid between and around the plants, each piece overlapping the adjacent piece. The soil was replaced evenly over the polythene which was obscured completely. One could not detect a difference between "before" and "after". The bed rises towards the centre and in consequence subsequent heavy rains uncovered some high spots of polythene which, however, were not objectionable.

So far, no weeds have appeared but it is expected that a *few* seeds will germinate. They are unlikely to develop, as the moisture will evaporate from the thin layer of soil after a few days without rain. From my short experience with this experimental bed it is apparent that polythene mulching will look untidy on sloping land but achieves its object unobtrusively on the flat.

Group News

North East

Remember us? The North East Group? Yes, It's a while since I wrote in the *Bulletin*, simply because there was nothing to report. However, Ponteland held its Annual Flower Show on Saturday September 10th, and three Heather Society members and one non-member entered a total of twenty three exhibits. Surprisingly, they were all of good standard in spite of the difficult summer we have all experienced. Geoff and I won the Bill Crow Memorial Trophy for the Most Points in Show and also the Bobby Thompson Memorial Trophy for the Best Exhibit.

We no longer have an Annual Outing by coach, but are still hoping to have a social gathering this year **IF** the weather decides to give us a few days of dry, sunny weather later in September. Our few members will be notified by telephone when this will take place. This last weekend we have experienced the tail end of the American Hurricane. Not nice!

Dorothy M. Warner

Yorkshire Heather Group

Eight members attended the Yorkshire Heather Group meeting on Saturday, 17th September 2011 to discuss various topics. They were welcomed to RHS Harlow Carr by the new Education Officer who requested the Heather Society's assistance with posters about the society and its groups and also cut-outs of heather flowers to use when educating children about plants. Is anyone willing to make some cut-outs of the various heather species flowers that they can use?

We looked at photographs of the Lake District conference held the week before, photographs of President John Griffiths' new garden at Little Preston

and photographs of blue heathers he had produced by chemical treatment.

The subject of blue heathers first raised its head at the conference when a picture of a blue looking heather was shown in some pictures sent by Borje Sorensson. Our President thought he knew a little about this as his special subject is colour chemistry. He believed it to be an effect on the anthocyanins.

We also spoke about the new cultivars we had seen at the conference and in particular the spectacular *Calluna vulgaris* 'Jana'*. The meeting as usual concluded with tea and fruit cake.

Jean Preston will once again organise meetings at RHS Harlow Carr on a Saturday in March, May and September in 2012 which all members are welcome to attend.

Jean Preston

** Note by Registrar: this has been around for more than a decade having been submitted (as CLL115) for plant breeders' rights as long ago as 1998, but withdrawn in 1999. It has been taken up again by Krebs and claimed as "new" in 2006. It was a sport on 'Miriam'*

Home Counties

Please meet outside the cafe at 10.30 for a walk around the Heather Garden, and at 2 pm at the Hillside Events centre for an afternoon about bees and honey.

We will arrange a date for September/October 2012 at Wisley.

Barry Sellers

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