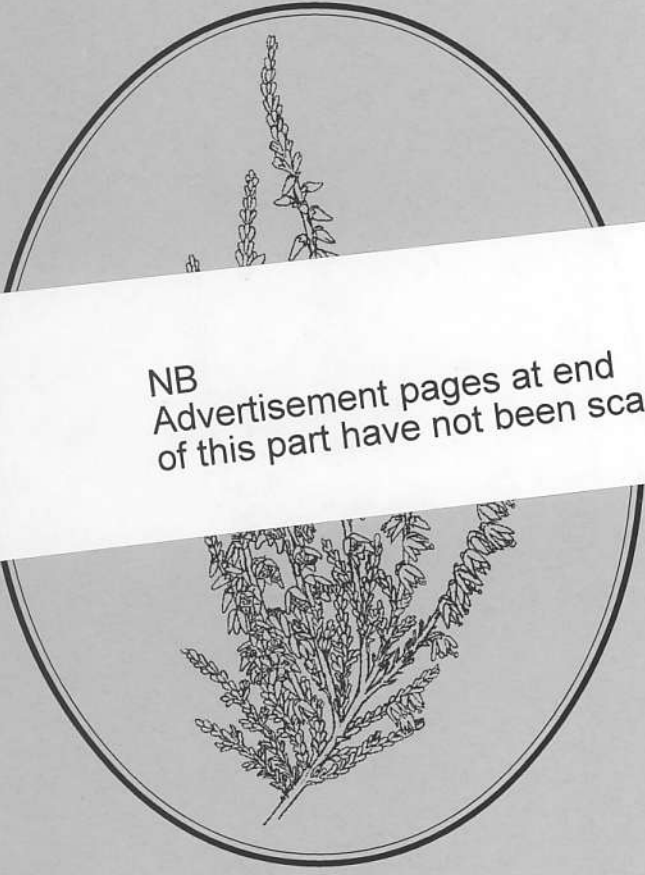


Bulletin of The Heather Society



NB
Advertisement pages at end
of this part have not been scanned

Vol. 7 No. 17

Autumn 2012

DIARY OF EVENTS

2012

31 October Closing date for articles for *Heathers* 10

2013

20 January Closing date for Spring *Bulletin*

A Gift of Membership for 2013

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 2013! Fill out an application form (we enclosed one with the Autumn 2010 *Bulletin*) 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 2013 is sent with very best wishes by ...* — for you to personalize and give to, or send on to, the intended recipient. Soon afterwards, or at any time you specify, we will send the recipient a letter of welcome, a complimentary colour chart and badge with *Heathers* 9, the Spring *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.



Charity Registered in England and Wales No. 261407

Editor: Daphne Everett, The Bannut, Bringsty, Herefordshire, WR6 5TA.
Telephone: 01885 482206 e-mail: everett@bannut.co.uk

Cover illustration *Calluna Vulgaris* by Brita Johansson

Another Conference has come and gone - it is rather like the annual get-together of a large friendly family. Congratulations to Susie and Alan for providing us with such an interesting and happy weekend once again, and the weather was wonderful too. With visitors from Germany, Norway, Spain, South Africa and the USA, it was quite an international gathering, so it is very sad to think that, if the Society continues to shrink in size, there may not be many more to come. We badly need another Adrian Bloom to get everyone thinking 'heathers'!

Chairman's Piece

David Edge

An eventful year for me, having attended the NAHS conference and tour in Canada during August of this year, followed by THS conference in Falmouth.

In Canada it was an enjoyable occasion to meet our counterparts, chat face to face, tour nurseries and gardens, and ascertain my aptitude for driving on the other side of the road - from the passenger seat side! Having survived that, it was off to a well organised HS conference at Falmouth, where members had the rare opportunity to meet, and listen to, our distinguished guest from South Africa, Dr Ted Oliver of Cape heather fame and also Dr Jaime Fagúndez from Spain. The breathtaking beauty of the Cape heathers is another world, where diversity of habit, foliage, flower type and colour need to be seen to be believed.

Council members will be meeting in October, in London. Items on the agenda will include the next Conference at Thirsk in 2013, National Heather Collections, membership, subscriptions and finances, amongst others. Whilst some changes are necessary, high priority will be given to reducing the Society's expenditure, whilst endeavouring to maintain the contact and service provided to members. Your continued support for the Society and its activities is highly valued and enables it to continue its function and service to all.

Nurseryman members belonging to the British Heather Growers Association are to join under the wing of the Horticultural Trades Association where the opportunity and expertise exists for the wider publicity and the staging of promotional events featuring heathers. Hopefully this will lead to improved displays quality and range in the garden centres.

Back to Society activities! The Heather Society displayed a stand at the RHS Plant Societies event in the Hillside Centre at RHS Wisley on the 5th October, where visitors had the opportunity to view a wide range of heather species and new varieties. My thanks to Barry Sellers, Richard Canovan and Phil Joyner for their assistance - and for providing advice to visitors.

Tributes to Phil Joyner

The Heather Society has been fortunate to have Phil Joyner as its Treasurer for the past 8 years. Looking back through *Bulletins* I trace Phil's commencement in the post from 2004 and, thinking further back, I recall Phil's friendship, involvement and leadership in the South West Local Group, from when we were both in our younger days!

Since I have been elevated to the post of Chairman, it has been an immense reassurance to have Phil's presence at Council meetings, as a more than competent Treasurer, dealing each year with Auditors, our annual accounts and bringing these into the modern world of computing. No mean task there! At each Council meeting the accounts have been meticulously presented with the members' knowledge that behind the scenes there has undoubtedly been hours of painstaking effort involved. His intimate knowledge, not only of the accounts, but also of the Society's past activities, and his recollection of members, has been invaluable, and regularly drawn upon at meetings.

I, along with Council members in particular, and members of the Heather Society, convey our gratitude for his involvement in this position over the past years.

David Edge (Chairman)

Whilst there was no presentation or serious comments about Phil Joyner leaving office this year, hopefully there will be next time in Thirsk. Phil has wanted to stand down from office for the past year, having given in his notice when I did. However it is not easy to replace a Treasurer. We all know how complicated the Society's accounts are. Of course they are much easier to deal with in computerised form but then how many of us are significantly computer literate to cope with them.

Richard Canovan has been shadowing Phil for this past year and Phil will remain on Council for a further year in order to continue to help him. We wish him well in his new post and trust he will cope with the accounts equally as well as he has coped with the Society's investments.

We must all now thank Phil for the dedicated work he has done for the Society. He joined the Society on 8th July 1972 and was well entrenched in Society life when I became a member in the eighties, busy running the South West Group. I think he became a member of Council in 1989, joining the Publications Committee. He followed this in 1996 by taking on the organisation of Conferences, an arduous task which he continued to work at until 2003 and he only left the job because he took on the post of Treasurer. When one considers that he has put this effort in for the Society whilst coping with post

office and newsagent jobs, it is no wonder he complains he never has time to look to the heathers in his garden

He has earned a holiday from Society work and we all wish him well with his future career, be it in the Post Office or in the garden. Phil - from all of us a hearty thank you very much for a job well done.

With best wishes

Jean (Preston)

(Here Here! Ed)

Conferences Past and in the Future

Susie Kay - Conference Organiser

Falmouth is finished and we were blessed with good weather and lucky to have Ted Oliver, Keith Spurgin, Steve Yandall and Jaime Fagúndez to talk to us. But perhaps the best thing was the heather people who attended. It is not the few phone calls or searching on the internet that makes a conference happen, but the happy faces and willingness of the people who come that make the event such a special occasion. Alan and I therefore, thank all who came to Falmouth and made it into a special weekend.

Now we move on to 2013. As you will see from the flyer enclosed with this *Bulletin*, we are going to visit Thirsk in North Yorkshire. Next year is a special year for The Heather Society as we will be celebrating 50 years since the formation of the Society.

It wasn't until sometime after I had booked the hotel that I realised I couldn't have done better for a Golden Anniversary. We are going to stay at The Golden Fleece in the middle of Thirsk, and hope that every moment of the weekend will be golden and if you attend, you will come away with gilded memories.

Our programme is not yet finalised, but Friday evening should see a talk about the botanical heritage of North Yorkshire. On Saturday a visit is planned to Newby Hall, both house and gardens, with an open forum in the evening. On Sunday, after the AGM, we hope to drive across heather clad moors followed by a special time at Harlow Carr,

The Golden Fleece Hotel is a small establishment and the number of rooms available is limited. The weekend of our gathering is going to be busy in Thirsk as there is a horse race meeting on the Saturday. Therefore all the accommodation in the area is likely to be booked. I strongly advise you that if you are considering attending, you should make a booking immediately. Please use the form on the enclosed brochure.

We also welcome day-visitors for all or any part of the weekend, with appropriate rates available from the Conference Organiser, Susie Kay; address on back panel of *Bulletin*.

The dates are 6th – 9th September 2013 and Council hopes to see you there again to celebrate a special year for The Heather Society.

Report on the 41st Annual Conference

Ella May Wulff

The 2012 conference, 7–10 September, was a smashing success. Conference organiser Susie Kay had worked her weather magic again, and we arrived in Falmouth, Cornwall on a balmy day, with lots of sunshine that lasted well into Saturday. I was among those lucky attendees – there were a surprising number of us – who arrived on Thursday and made good use of our free day on Friday to visit the Lizard peninsula.

At Kynance Cove, the National Trust nature reserve on the west side of the peninsula, the *Callunas* were in full bloom. Many plants of *Erica vagans* still had about a third of their flowers left, so we could get a good idea of their colours. Although we didn't see any plants with flowers as dark as those of 'Birch Glow' or 'Mrs D. F. Maxwell', there were some very lovely variations on the prevailing lighter pink of the species, which is abundant here. It would be difficult to find a more congenial spot for a heather enthusiast, but in case one tired of botanizing, there was much of zoological interest, as well. Several species of butterfly fluttered from flower to flower, little birds sang among the heathers, and, in the turquoise water below the nearby sea cliffs, the local seals were putting on quite a performance. A glorious day, indeed!

The Conference officially began late Friday afternoon, with registration and time to chat with old friends or make new ones, before sitting down to an excellent dinner at the Falmouth Hotel, the Conference headquarters. (Great choice, Susie!) Our after-dinner speakers did not disappoint. Both have a long familiarity with the heathers of Cornwall.

Botanist Keith Spurgin had prepared an excellent introduction to Cornwall and its heathers. His presentation included a brief history of the Cornish mining industry, which influenced not only the economy but also the environment of Cornwall, determining where heathers and other plants can and cannot grow even to this day, when most of the mines have been abandoned.

Keith provided fascinating information about the heather species native to Cornwall, their discovery – or at least the first published record of their occurrence in Cornwall, and brief biographies (not your usual biography) of the people who had discovered them. Some of the illustrations for this presentation were definitely out of the ordinary. Keith obviously has mastered the intricacies of PhotoShop™.

Keith's presentation was followed by one from Steve Yandall on an entirely different subject, plant breeding. Steve has been interested for many years in 'improving' many kinds of plant through selective breeding and has achieved some real breakthroughs, as well as heartbreaks. Along the way, he encountered the harsh realities of commerce.

In one example that Steve shared with us, he had worked for years at considerable expense to produce a much-improved version of an unusual shrub but then had been unable to find a viable market for the plant. (Sound familiar?) Another line of breeding involved his working with black forms of *Ophiopogon planiscapus*. Steve developed a cultivar that is both sturdier and

more ornamental than others on the market, including the widely sold 'Nigrescens'. This cultivar is proving very popular with gardeners; but for the breeder, there's a catch. After successfully introducing *Ophiopogon* 'Black Beard' ('Yapard'), Steve continued to work with this line of breeding and has produced an even better cultivar. Unfortunately, he has to hold this superior cultivar back from the market until the people who invested in the mass production of 'Black Beard' have recouped their investments.

Steve's current project of particular interest to heather lovers is a promising new *Erica arborea* with orange spring tips. It currently is being trialled for hardiness in Denmark after passing UK and Brittany hardiness trials with flying colours. Because it is a seedling, not a sport, it does not throw green reversions. I hope that if Steve decides to market this cultivar, he'll give The Heather Society first notice of its introduction.

On Saturday, we boarded a chartered motor coach to begin two days of horticultural exploration. Keith and Steve met our coach at Towan Cross on Saturday morning to guide us on a walk through a mine spoil area dotted with the picturesque ruins of mine engine houses. Heathers are among the few plants that can survive on these heavily acidic soils, that are contaminated with heavy metals, toxic to most plants. It was a fascinating environment, indeed, with a mixture of *Calluna* and *Erica cinerea*, some very stunted, but still attractive, growing throughout much of the spoil pile heathland here. *Erica vagans* was not nearly as abundant at Towan Cross as it had been at Kynance Cove but appeared to be concentrated in a few areas - probably as a result of varying soil conditions. Our guides pointed out a colony of *E. ciliaris* - mostly finished flowering. On the way back to the coach, Barry Sellers discovered a few plants of *E. tetralix* growing among the more numerous plants of *E. ciliaris*. Perhaps there is *E. x watsonii* potential here, but nobody found any on this visit.

From the wildlands, it was on to the more civilized environment of Trewidden (not Trewithin) Garden, but first we were treated to a little excitement, courtesy of the satellite navigation system on our motor coach. It seems that our bus driver had been given the address for the house of the garden's owner, not for the garden's public entrance, which has a different postal code. The sat-nav, which operates by postal code, directed the bus down a very narrow lane that turned out to have two sharp bends that would preclude traverse by a long coach. We consequently had to back all the way out of that lane. Our hearts were in our mouths, but the driver's skills were up to the challenge and we exited the lane safely.

Trewidden proved worth the effort to get there. An old, established garden near Penzance, planted in the late 19th century and still under the ownership of the founding family, Trewidden boasts several British, or at least Cornish, champion trees. The head gardener was at pains to point out that most of these are champions only in diameter, because the strong prevailing winds shear off the tops of any that venture to get too tall. The specimen *Metasequoia glyptostroboides* at Trewidden had the most interesting, wide, and intricately gnarled trunk of any others of this species that I've seen, though many have been taller.

The highlight of this garden was the sunken pit that is home to a colony of *Dicksonia antarctica*. I've seen these growing in their native Australia, but the success of these tree ferns (they are multiplying) so far from home is a triumph of horticulture. They had been planted in just the right sheltered environment for them to prosper, well out of reach of those winds that keep so many other trees at Trewidden from being champions in height as well as in width.

Saturday evening brought the long-anticipated presentation that was undoubtedly the reason why the 2012 conference had the highest attendance in years (38). 'Mr Erica', Ted Oliver, had travelled all the way from South Africa for the Conference and brought us up to date on the latest DNA research results concerning *Erica* species relationships. Gratifyingly, some of the DNA research has confirmed earlier taxonomic work (much of it by Ted) based upon morphology, in particular his decision to sink some of the 'minor genera', such as *Philippia*, back into *Erica*. The family tree research has also confirmed that Europe, not Africa, is the ancestral homeland of heathers. The multitude of glorious Cape heaths has resulted from (relatively) rapid speciation centred in the Cape Province, driven by the diverse climatic and geomorphological conditions there, as well as parallel evolution with pollinators – in some cases restricted to a single pollinator per *Erica* species, or vice-versa.

As a special treat, Ted had brought with him CDs of the new identification guide produced by the Botanical Society of South Africa. These were for sale at Sunday's auction. No luck for us Mac owners, though. They are PC-compatible only.

Following Ted's presentation, Jaime Fagúndez offered a tantalizing glimpse of the beauties of Galicia, Spain. Jaime, a botanist based at the University of A Coruña, has been studying the Iberian heathlands. He proposes to lead a THS field trip to Galicia in early summer of 2013, to see many of the heather species native to that part of Spain. His presentation generated considerable interest, and I suspect that he will have no trouble finding THS members who would like to take part in the proposed expedition.

I don't know how she did it, but somehow Susie had ordered up a fitting finale to our splendid Saturday. After dinner, you could watch a fireworks display from the comfort of your bedroom if said room was on the right side of the hotel.

Following the Sunday morning AGM, we boarded our motor coach for more garden visiting, this time under overcast conditions perfect for photography. In contrast to the ancient trees of Trewidden were the much younger trees of Pinetum Park and Pine Lodge Gardens in St. Austell, planted in 1993.

From the standpoint of garden design, this expansive meadow of widely spaced trees – one of each kind surrounded by mown grass – is a visual travesty, but if the goal is an understanding of exactly how each tree species/cultivar grows when given as much space as it needs, the setting is splendid. Here the comparative height, width, and form of the trees are readily apparent, making the task of choosing the perfect tree for a particular garden setting simple, indeed.

The pinetum is the heart of this property, but I found the varied, intimate smaller gardens of Pine Lodge more to my taste. These contain many interesting and in some cases uncommon trees, shrubs and herbaceous perennials in unusual settings, and with interesting artistic touches. The artwork includes at least two tree stumps that have been carved into giant mushrooms so well detailed that a mycologist could easily identify the genus depicted in wood. There are many small bodies of water in these gardens, which add greatly to their appeal.

Heathers are to be found primarily in the winter garden, where a spirited discussion took place among various THS members as to the correct name for an *Erica carnea* cultivar with yellow foliage. My immediate reaction upon seeing one planting (there are two – for symmetry) of this cultivar was that it was 'Golden Starlet', but the plants were tall enough to make me question this identification and wonder if, perhaps, it were not *E. carnea* but *E. x darleyensis*. Others, too, were puzzled by it, for the foliage was not burned even though the plants were growing in a full sun exposure. Puzzled, that is, until one of our two garden guides confirmed that it was, indeed, 'Golden Starlet' and they figured out that 'full sun' in Cornwall is quite different than 'full sun' in other parts of the world. We had, after all, been informed during our visit to Trewidden Garden that we had arrived there on only the third consecutive sunny day they'd had that summer – and this was September!

Tippitiwitchet log 16

Charles Nelson

2012 CD

Thanks to everyone who sent photographs for the new CD which is enclosed with this *Bulletin*. I received more than 400! There is a very interesting mixture and as next year is the Society's golden anniversary I have also included a few old pictures scanned from various sources.

2013 subscriptions

Included with this issue of the *Bulletin* are reminders for payment of your subscription for 2013. If there is no such reminder, your subscription is either paid by standing order (UK members) or you have a 3-years subscription.

New members

We welcome the following as members since June 2012:

Jessie & Huw Davies, St Andrews, New Brunswick, Canada

William J. James, Kea, Truro, Cornwall

Bernard Sorrell, Walsall

Adrian Thorne, Ely

Kingsbrae Horticultural Gardens Inc., St Andrews, New Brunswick, Canada

2013 yearbook, Heather 10

You still have time to send in articles for the Golden Jubilee yearbook. There will be a section of reminiscences; if you would like to contribute please send your text to me as soon as possible.

Website visitors

The number of people who have visited the Society's website since it was revamped in 2011 topped twenty thousand on 22 September 2012 - that is an average of 35 visitors every day.

Sweat-shirts

There are 6 (3 green and 3 maroon) 'large' sweat-shirts still available for sale: this could solve your Christmas-present dilemma! See *Summer Bulletin* for more details, or contact the Administrator (see inside back cover).

North York Moors

Our 2013 annual gathering is being held in Thirsk, close to the North York Moors National Park (see the enclosed leaflet). We are most grateful to David Richardson (a member of the Kirbymoorside Camera Club for permission to use his evocative photograph of Egdon Moor in full bloom. This photograph was among the best selected for publication in *The Guardian's* 'National parks landscape' photo competition - some of the others can be viewed at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/environment/gallery/2012/may/17/national-parks-landscape-competition-in-pictures>

... and finally, a new trademark spotted

An enquiry from a nursery-member John Hall (John Hall Plants Ltd) alerted us to a new trademark that is being used to market heathers. In recent years this device, which is not about the names of the plants, but about slick marketing has become more common. Trademarks used for heathers include Gardengirls™ and Beauty ladies™ which are competing trademarks for *Calluna* 'bud-bloomers' raised on the continent by Kurt Kramer and Henk Hoekert respectively. "Nature's best *Calluna*" is the slogan used by Beauty ladies™. The most recent trademark is Irish Princess™ used to market St Dabeoc's heath - to repeat, this is not a cultivar name. We do not yet know which cultivars are being marketed using this trademark.

If you want to waste 6 minutes and have access to YouTube, there is an English-language promo for Beauty ladies which tells their history; it looks like a trailer for the most sugary-pink Barbara Cartland movie. I was mesmerized by it. Go to <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DN8XW9TtLvA>. Only 167 people (including me, twice!) have watched it up to 23 September, and only 1 person (not me!) 'likes' it! (You can also access it from Europlants Canders website.) (YouTube also has other unwatchable heather videos: maybe we should start a review column on them? Any volunteers?)

Annual General Meeting

The 41st Annual General Meeting, held at Richardson's Hotel, Falmouth, on 9 September 2012, began by the Chairman, David Edge, welcoming everyone. He also thanked Susie Kay, our Conference Manager, for arranging a weekend of interest and enjoyment.

The Chairman then referred to the Society's declining membership and consequential falling income and reserves. The Society must face its demise within the next decade given the limited results of recent membership recruitment activities. However, he stated the positive development of the Society website and the continuing presence of the national heather collections at Perth and Wisley. He concluded with his thanks for the endeavours and attendances of the Society officers at Council meetings and other functions.

The Society's annual report and accounts were presented to the meeting, and the accounts were adopted.

The meeting agreed to the appointment of Professor John Griffiths as President. Daphne Everett, Allen Hall, Alice Knight, Pamela Lee and the presidents, ex officio, of Gesellschaft der Heidefreunde and the North American Heather Society, were re-elected as Vice-Presidents.

The officers nominated by Council for 2012-2013 are: Chairman: David Edge; Honorary Treasurer: Richard Canovan; Honorary Secretary: Richard Bowater. Councillors elected were Ian Duncan Grant, Phil Joyner and Susie Kay.

There was a brief debate initiated from the floor, with thanks for the present arrangements for the 2012 Gathering and those proposed for 2013. Richard Canovan thanked Phil Joyner for the smooth transfer of the Treasurer's duties.

The 2013 Annual Gathering will be held at the Golden Fleece Hotel at Thirsk in Yorkshire, from 6th to 9th September.

Proposed visit to Kurt Kramer's Nursery

Diane Jones is interested in organising a short visit to Kurt Kramer's nursery in Germany in March 2013 (date to be arranged). The timing of this visit is in order to see the *Erica carnea* on the nursery at its best. The journey would involve an overnight ferry journey from Harwich and a car drive to the nursery.

This is a wonderful opportunity to visit a top class heather nursery, run by a top class nurseryman. If you are interested, please phone Diane on 01935 850285.

Rose Cottage Ramblings - 7 **David Plumridge**

Our "ramblings" recently took us to our Society's Annual Gathering at Falmouth. It was yet another Susie and Alan triumph, in a well chosen venue with great talks and visits, plus the camaraderie with friends old and new

from near and far. We were so lucky to have kind weather after that appalling summer. There was added excitement from a fiendish quiz devised by the sensibly absent Charles Nelson. We thrilled to a reverse coach drive down a narrow Cornish country lane. Fortunately the approaching huge tractor and trailer was going in our direction! One regular feature we did miss was the fine singing voice of Egil Saele. We do hope he will be able to make it to our Gathering next year. More sadly, the ravages of Anno Domini have meant the absence of several old friends. They are not forgotten.

As it was our first visit to Cornwall for many a long year, we extended our stay. If only we had been able to make it longer! Apart from the fabulous coastline there are so many gardens to visit. We did, however, manage to take in Trebah, The Lost Gardens of Heligan and the Eden Project. National Trust, Glendurgan was on our list, but we chose the day in the week when it was closed, as has often happened to us. Are we the only ones who forget to check the Handbook? The well hyped Heligan and Eden, maybe because of this, were somewhat disappointing.

We loved Trebah, but were saddened by the memory of the sailing from its beach in 1944 of 7,500 GI's for their horrendous part in the D Day invasion. A redeeming feature of the Eden Project was the mass planting of winter/spring heather beside the paths to the entrance. It gave great ground cover and must look fabulous in bloom. Does anyone have pictures? In retrospect, it was frustrating to have driven past the Brown Signs pointing to other Cornish gardens en route to Eden and Heligan. Ah well, maybe another time?

The extra days allowed the achievement of a couple of ambitions. My radio interest led me to Poldhu. This was where Marconi sent the first ever radio signals across the Atlantic. The museum was closed, as is my luck, but it was interesting to study the memorial and view the site of this epic event. Rita surprisingly showed little interest, staying in the car listening to the car radio. What would the Great Man make of today's hand held devices allowing affordable worldwide communication? The second ambition was to see the Cornish Heath growing in the wild. We wandered further down the Lizard Peninsular from Poldhu and realised my dream near the Predannack NT car park. I didn't have far to ramble before I came across a group of *Erica vagans* mingling with *cinerea* and some painfully prickly gorse. The *vagans* had striking red anthers. I have not noticed their like on our gardens varieties. Hopefully Charles will include my picture on his CD.

It's quite a drive to Falmouth from Co. Durham, 460 miles, so we broke the journey just south of Bristol. This gave us time to visit Hestercombe Garden near Taunton the next day. This is an estate with extensive woodland walks and lakes plus a noted Lutyens and Jekyll garden. We were pleasantly surprised to see winter heather plantings in the woodland areas, but even more so to see it in the formal garden. Did Gertrude use heather in her designs? Googling didn't come up with anything, but it would be wonderful to know if she did. Again, a request for pictures of Hestercombe heather in bloom.

We returned home with over 100 heathers in the boot and the luggage precariously perched on the back seat of the car. After giving the remaining

winter-damaged heathers the final benefit of the doubt, there are several patches waiting to be replanted. In saying that, we were delighted to see the garden at its summer best on our return. It seems a few warm days had made all the difference and encouraged the vagans to open up. The *Daboecias* being particularly delightful, we wonder why they are not widely grown as hardy, attractive long flowering perennials. A recent German visitor said she knew them as 'Pearl Heathers', a most appropriate epithet?

The pronunciation of "*Daboecia*" was briefly raised by Ted Oliver in his talk at the Gathering. What has come to be the standard Heather Society's 'Dabeesha' has always rankled a little. If it is named after St Dabeoc, then maybe it should end with a hard "c" or as in the Scottish "loch"? However, that useful little black book, *Plant Names Simplified*, tells me it's 'Da-bo-e-se-a'. Maybe it doesn't matter as it's clear what we are talking about?

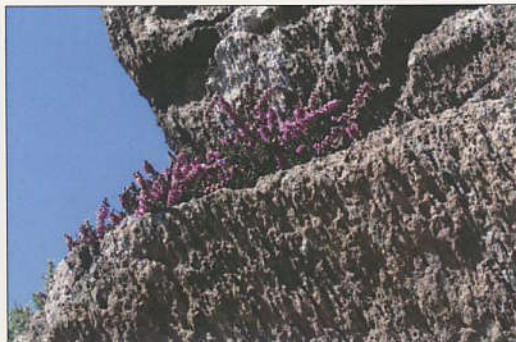
We are very grateful to David Edge for filling our boot with the excellent selection of well grown heathers from Forest Edge Nursery. Planting them will keep Rita busy for a while. I am hoping not to hear too many moans about backache! In an email, Renate and Ingo Harringer told me that they visited the nursery on their way back to Hamburg. They were understandably very impressed with the variety and quality of the plants and said they now have nothing as good in Germany. They couldn't resist taking some home.

Apart from seeing the Cornish Heath, other wild heathers have been a highlight for us this year. The most amazing and unexpected was when we took a day trip during our January holiday in Tenerife to the nearby La Gomera. As far as we knew, this was the small mountainous island famed for the 'whistling' communication from one almost inaccessible valley to another. As soon as our tour bus reached the higher parts we spotted heather. Heather not like any we had seen before! We were driving through an avenue of *Erica arborea* over 20 feet tall. A stop at the visitor centre allowed a closer inspection, and of course photographs of the *Erica* forest. This visit allowed me to be absolutely certain of the answer to one of Charles' questions in the quiz. The accompanying picture of David McClintock measuring the girth of one of the *Ericas* clinched it. We thought it would be wonderful to see the forest in bloom in the spring but sadly it seems we will have to wait three decades before it regains its former glory. This follows a devastating fire of this World Heritage Site in August. At our age there is no chance – but, please, has anyone photos to help us dream of what might have been?

Our next 'Heather Highlight' was our March visit to Harlow Carr for the Yorkshire Group meeting. Were it not for the *Ericas*, the garden would have been almost devoid of colour. A great advert for heather. We wonder if the plant centre benefited from the superb display? Back home at Rose Cottage the spring display was almost as pleasing as ever with only some of the tree heaths – the *Erica australis* – showing the effects of the previous two hard winters.

We were met with another pleasant heathery surprise in June. When our plane landed at Porto, I glanced out of the window and saw what looked like *Erica cinerea* beside the runway. On our tour of Northern Portugal we saw it

continued on page 14



Calluna blooms from a rock crevice above a trail at Kynance Cove.

The picturesque ruins of mine engine houses provide a fitting backdrop for the stunted heathers that survive on mine spoil soils.



Keith Spurgin at Towan Cross



Richard Morton- Head Gardener at Trewidden



*Jaime Fagúndez examines a golden larch (*Pseudolarix*) at Pinetum Park.*



The stumps of dead trees are turned into garden sculpture at Pine Lodge Gardens.



Steve Yandall with Rita & David Plumridge at Towan Cross



Tree ferns in sunken pit at Trewidden Gardens

from page 11

everywhere. A visit to the Peneda-Geres National Park showed *E. ciliaris*, *umbellata* and *Daboecia cantabrica* as well as *E. cinerea* in profusion. Sadly it was 'back on the coach' before I could really explore. We went over the border into Spain for a visit to Santiago de Compostela. This is the home town of Jamie Fagundez who gave an interesting talk on Spanish Heathland. Had we realised, we could have maybe met up for an introduction to his native heathers, instead of the visit to the famous Cathedral? However, he is planning a heather tour in Northern Spain, next year so we are hoping to join in and see the plants in several choice locations.

I was astounded to flick through a plant catalogue kindly sent unsolicited by Thompson and Morgan to find Alan Titchmarsh, no less, promoting HEATHER! Never having seen such a plant mentioned in any of his multitudinous TV appearances, can I believe that he has at last seen the light? The plant promoted is *Erica x darleyensis* 'Lucy'. I note on the T&M web site that 'Katia' has now been added. I wonder how much time Alan spent researching this addition? If you hurry you can make a massive saving of £18.99. You can acquire 2 x 9cm plants for just £6.99 instead of £25.98!!!

On the rather more economical heather sales front, my favourite grocers (not Rita's!) Lidl and Aldi are selling German imports for about 80p each. The bud bloomers sold by Lidl must be OK as Rita bought half a dozen! They looked very similar to ones costing £3 each the plant sales section of one of the Cornish Gardens we visited. Sadly, staff training at my grocers doesn't seem to include plant watering, so you've got to get in quick to get that bargain. It is pleasing to see that our local authority must now see heathers as bargain plants. There are now more beds being planted with them. It remains to be seen if their staff training includes pruning!

Back at Rose Cottage the wettest summer in 100 years has not fazed the heathers, but some large conifers are dying off, perhaps because of this? The *Chamaecyparis lawsoniana* provide a backdrop to the west side of the heather garden and 'windows' when walking along the path. It could, however, be a blessing. It is quite clear that much winter damage has been due to wind 'funneling' through these gaps rather than temperature alone. For example, *Erica erigena* 'Thing Nee' was suffering badly because of this. Rita moved her to a sheltered spot a couple of years ago and now she is thriving. Thank you Barry for a lovely plant! As we walk round the garden we remember other friends - Valerie and John Griffiths for example, and Kurt Kramer is everywhere! One poignant memento is a plant I have named 'Mayne's Gold'. It's a dwarf golden yew given by David Mayne from a seedling found in his garden. We are watching a flowering yellow sport on a *Daboecia*, but don't hold your breath!

'Climate Change' - no longer called 'Global Warming' - is undoubtedly upon us, so what will the forthcoming winter bring? If I'm still typing these Ramblings next year, it would be lovely to report a mild, dry winter up here in the North Pennines. We shall see!

"There is more than one way to skin a rabbit"!

Daphne Everett

Whilst looking recently through an accumulated pile of HNQ (the newsletter of the North American Heather Society), I was struck by the number of articles that had been written on the subject of heather cuttings, and by the many and diverse methods devised by heather enthusiasts in order to get them to root.

Of course, some of the articles went into the subject quite deeply. David Small's serious contribution to the 1995 Heather Society *Yearbook*, was reprinted in HNQ, Fall 1996). As to be expected, David gave details of a suitable rooting medium, the best age and condition of the plants to be used, the optimum time for taking cuttings from the various heather species, the type and size of the cuttings to be taken and, of course, the important aftercare. Following his detailed instructions, success should be guaranteed. But, many others, especially, our American cousins it seems, have taken a much more inventive approach to the subject - with varying degrees of success.

Homer Ferguson, writing in the 1990 Fall edition of HNQ seemed to have found quite a successful method of rooting cuttings: He wrote: "I would like to say that the following idea was completely mine but the truth is I saw this method explained as a way to start seeds in a leading horticultural magazine. (Not how to start seeds in a leading horticultural magazine, but the method was in the magazine.)"

"Start with a plastic bottle that has a reinforcing cup attached to the bottom. Mark the bottle at the point where the top of the cup meets the bottle. Next, place the bottom of the bottle in some very hot water until the glue holding the two pieces together softens and you can separate the two. Now cut the plastic bottle bottom off with a sharp knife, at least $\frac{1}{2}$ " below the line you have marked. The bottom cup will have some holes but more will be needed in the very center.

Fill the cup with $\frac{1}{2}$ sponge rock [I am not sure what this is, but would guess it is Perlite] and $\frac{1}{2}$ peat moss. Place your cuttings in this medium after dipping in Rootone, [rooting medium] water well but carefully, and place the bottle top so it pushes down inside the cup. Put in a cool place with lots of light (not direct sun) and leave alone for 60 to 90 days. Never water as there is enough moisture in the mix to keep it wet. Two more items, (1) be sure to replace the screw top on the bottle and (2) have the peat moss wet before using. I have found that some heathers root very well in 60 days but others take 90 days".

There was more on cuttings in HNQ Summer 1991 - this time from Rick Salter.

His method, with the use of mist propagation, achieved 100% rooting (much to his own surprise it appeared). This in itself isn't very newsworthy, being a method that many professional growers use, including David Small when he ran his nursery. In fact David ingeniously set up a mobile misting system in the back of his car when he and others went heather hunting in

Spain and some of the cuttings had rooted before they arrived home three weeks later. However, although most of the constituents in Rick's rooting medium are fairly usual – peat, Perlite and coarse sand – here's an unusual one – cat litter (or as he calls it, kitty litter).

Just to prove that heather propagation is not an exact science, Rick says (this was transcribed from a taped conversation): "Now, that is four ingredients. You're going to ask me the proportions. Well I really can't tell you exactly. With heather I use predominantly peat moss, I was going to say a mix of 2:1:1:1, peat moss, Perlite, kitty litter, coarse sand. But just see how it feels, see how you like it. I don't think you can go far wrong with that for heather, and a lot of other ericaceous plants for that matter".

Brita Johansson from Sweden can be relied upon to have an interesting view on most things, and she contributed some thoughts on the subject in HNQ Summer 1993. She noticed that if she took *Calluna* cuttings in April and put them in a frame or in the greenhouse they rooted almost 100%, whereas if she put them under polythene on a window sill, they started growing immediately and consumed their nutrients without developing roots. "They look happy for about three weeks and then they die in a couple of days". So there is a lesson there! Sadly, even Brita wasn't able to provide the reason for this phenomenon. She didn't think it was darker conditions of the house or a difference in temperature, but wondered if the biological clock was disturbed by keeping the cuttings at the same temperature night and day.

In his article 'Cuttings Made Easy' (HNQ Summer 1997), Donald Mackay, who was for many years the very erudite Editor of *Heather News*, reported on his experiments with rooting cuttings in a jam jar. His method was to wet a paper towel, lay the cuttings on it, fold the towel over the bottom of the cuttings, roll up the paper sandwich, wrap in plastic and pop the roll into a jam jar. He refined that method by wrapping the bottom half of the rolled sandwich with aluminium foil, "creating the necessary shading effect, leading to auxin build-up and the initiation of adventitious roots". Once the roll of cuttings had been inserted into the jar, it was sealed inside a plastic bag and placed somewhere out of the sun until rooted. Donald seems to have had some success with this unorthodox method.

In a previous article on the same subject some years earlier, Donald observed that *Calluna* cuttings could stay alive for six months or more without forming any roots and *Erica tetralix* was equally unpredictable. He concluded that the time of the year the cutting was taken was the key to rooting (but didn't say when he thought this was). *Erica x darleyensis* were apparently fairly easy to root in this way.

Ever one for experimenting, Donald decided to find out which rooted best, the large cuttings favoured by American heather growers, or the much smaller ones which more usual in the UK. He wrote up his findings in HNQ Summer 1998.

Using a lidded cell tray, he inserted small cuttings in one end, middle sized ones in the middle and larger ones at the other end. Some of the small fragments that were left after stripping the stems of the larger cuttings happened to fall on the few cells that were left vacant. After four weeks, many

of the small ones had rooted, the middle sized ones, not nearly as well, and the large ones, not at all. But, says Donald, "As you might have guessed the best rooting by far was seen among the stripped off fragments that had been allowed to fall on the soil". However, he did point out that the cells were covered with "a biologically active soil akin to the soil taken from underneath heathers", and he wondered if this was the reason the tiny snippets rooted so well. Maybe sterilised compost is not always good?

Meanwhile, members in the UK were also bitten by the jam jar bug. Mr J R Tyson in Ambleside, decided to try rooting cuttings in the open ground. After a few false starts, he says: "In November a bunch of mature cuttings, graded for length, were cut, a hole with a large dibber was made as deep as two-thirds the length of the cuttings, sand was pushed in, and with a few stabs of a smaller dibber the cuttings were firm. A glass jam-jar was clapped over the lot and pushed a little into the soil. The following March, when new growth had begun, the jar was eased up to allow air to enter and about ten days later removed entirely on a damp day. By the fall [I suspect that Mr Tyson had his own roots in the USA] these cuttings had made robust plants, without a single casualty". He must have had a light sandy soil I think.

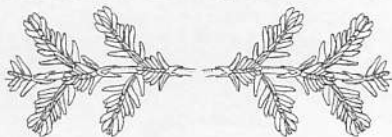
Bert Jones from Somerset, who was *Yearbook* Editor for many years, as well as running a heather nursery with his wife, Diane, wrote a very detailed article on the subject in the 1975 *Year Book*. Bert used a variation on the jam jar theme, he struck all his cuttings in flower pots of silver sand, which were then stood on the ground in a shady position and covered with plastic propagating domes.

A method I read about somewhere, and tried when I first started propagating heathers over fifty years ago, was to fill a seed tray with peat and sand, insert the cuttings, then lay a sheet of glass directly on to the cuttings, pressing them on to the compost. The trays were then put on to a greenhouse bench and covered with newspapers until signs of growth could be seen. Unfortunately I don't remember the success rate – but I know it wasn't a disaster.

When we had our own nursery we used plastic covered mini-tunnels inside larger polytunnels, with a timed misting system inside the mini-tunnels to keep the atmosphere humid. We found this worked very well and we still use this system (on a much smaller scale) today.

Plants seem to want to root, given the right conditions. We always laugh about the time one of our nursery employees inserted some *Daboecia* cuttings into a tray upside down. The roots grew out of the tops (which were actually the base of the cuttings) and down into the compost.

So many people seem to think that heather propagation is difficult that I hope this article will maybe persuade them to have a go one way or another – as you see, there are plenty of methods to choose from. As my old Dad would have said – "There is more than one way to skin a rabbit"!



Danish Postcards

E. C. Nelson

Among the various items received from the late Jack Platt, was an unused postcard captioned "Fra den jyske Hede" ("From the moors of Jutland"), reproduced here. I decided to try to work out where it came from and via the internet found that it was one of a "series". This one shows a man with a barrow and fork working with turf. They were issued around 1920, it seems, or perhaps later. In some cards with this title, accessible on various internet sites, a man has charge of a bullock team and four-wheeled cart, evidently for transporting the cut turf to where it is to be stacked for use. In another of the "series" (at least judging by the printed title), which is dated 1948 on a postcard auction website, two women are depicted. They each have a large container and one is bending down evidently gathering something, perhaps cranberries.



Des Perry 1922 - 2012



As announced in the Summer Bulletin Des Perry, aged 89, passed away on 24th May, 2012 and at that time I promised a few words on Des for this, the Autumn Bulletin.

Des and his late wife Sybil were stalwart supporters of the Society and the South West Local Group and attended the majority of the Local Group meetings during its existence, also attending many of the Society Conferences. When Des and Sybil joined the Society they were living in Market Lavington in Wiltshire and on several occasions invited members of the SW Local Group to view their garden and to take refreshment. In the early days of the Society, and when the Society used to put up a stand at the RHS Halls in Westminster, Des involved himself in helping out and extolling the virtues of growing heathers to the public. When Des retired from the position of a director of a local electrical company he and Sybil moved to Farnham to be with their son James and his family. In 2003 Des and Sybil moved back west, to Paulton in Somerset, again to be close to their son James and his family, but by then their difficulty with mobility prevented either of them attending local meetings and conferences. Sybil passed away, age 90, on 6th November 2010 but Des carried on his interest in the affairs of the Society and was still able to do some gardening.

Apart from his love of heathers and gardening in general Des was active in the church with a particular interest in church choirs, being choirmaster of the Market Lavington, St. Mary's church choir for many years. He was also very much the sportsman, having played both cricket and football in his earlier years. Des, like Sybil, will always be remembered as a friend to all the members of the Society he encountered and I extend the Society's condolences to James and his family.

Phil Joyner

Jean Henvest 1927 - 2012



I regret to inform members, especially those of the former South West Local Group of the Society, of the passing away of Jean Henvest on 1st July, 2012.

Jean and her late husband Roy were loyal supporters of the Society and in particular, the South West Local Group, attending the majority of the Local Group meetings over the many years of the Group's existence. Jean was often seen helping out with the afternoon refreshments at the annual Local Group get together when we were entertained

by a speaker and held a table show. When Jean and Roy joined the Society they were living on the edge of the New Forest near the outskirts of Totton on the west side of Southampton Water. In later years Jean and Roy moved into Totton and created an attractive heather plot in their front garden for all to see.

Jean was very active in the church and local charities, including one of the local WI groups to whom she was the treasurer and the local branch of the Royal British Legion. Jean will be remembered as a kind and generous person, a friend to many and always interested in the affairs of the Society and I extend the Society's condolences to her son David and her daughter Val and their respective families.

Phil Joyner

30 Years Ago - from the 1982 Yearbook

A double form of *Daboecia cantabrica*

David McClintock, Platt, Kent

There was no record of any double St Dabeoc's Heath until 1978. On 8th April that year, our member Dr Charles Nelson, the taxonomist at the National Botanic Gardens at Glasnevin, Dublin, was heather hunting on the moors south-east of Carna in Connemara, not far from the area where the eglandular *Erica mackaiana* grows and its cultivar 'Maura' was found. He saw a St. Dabeoc's Heath whose flowers looked distinctly globular, in contrast to the usual more elongated shape, and closer inspection showed to his astonishment that the flowers were double. On 13th August 1980, he took Major Walter Magor and myself to try to refind it and after a while, refind it he did, up against a stone wall.

Daboecias root easily, and by the next summer the cuttings we took had flowered at Glasnevin, with Major Gen. Turpin and with me. Samples were shown to the RHS Scientific Committee on 6th October, to the Wild Flower Society on 24th October, the Botanical Society of the British Isles at their Exhibition Meeting on 28th November, and there are vouchers at Dublin from both Dr. Nelson's visits.

Dr. Nelson and Gen. Turpin have each closely examined the flowers and found that there is variation in doubling even on the same raceme, much as happens with *E. mackaiana* 'Maura', which has a duplicated corolla. Dr. Nelson made a most elegant and skilful dissection of one flower, sticking each of its parts, whorl by whorl and annotated on the sheet, which is now a treasure in the Society's herbarium. This shows how the doubling comes from the filaments of the antherless stamens broadening into petal-like structures, and the proliferation of whorls. Its flowers are the same colour as the usual wild plant but have the drawback from the garden point of view that the corollas stay on the plant, brown, instead of dropping off as those of the single flowers do.

Dr. Nelson has been very actively working on Irish heathers; his first published paper on them was in 1974. This, and the fact that it was he who spotted this hitherto unknown and interesting form, well justifies its being called *Daboecia cantabrica* 'Charles Nelson' - a name cordially endorsed by Gen. Turpin and other members. Cuttings of it are being made available to worthy nurseries and other growers.

Group News

North East

Although 2012 was the wettest summer on record, the weather couldn't have been more perfect for the Ponteland Flower Show than on Saturday, September 8th. The whole week leading up to the Saturday had seen temperatures in the mid twenties with wall to wall sunshine every day, but the following week was a different story!

Although the show benches were down on quantity over previous years, the quality was still maintained, particularly for the gladioli and roses. The Heather Classes were no exception and there were some really good exhibits which resulted in our ex -member, John Turner, winning the Bobby Thompson Memorial Trophy for the Best Heather in Show and Dorothy Wild taking the Bill Crow Memorial Trophy for the most points in the Heather Classes. They were both worthy winners and we congratulate them.

So, ever hopeful, we now look forward to a kind winter and a 'proper' summer next year. Hope springs eternal!

Dorothy M. Warner.

Yorkshire

The Yorkshire Heather Group met on 26th May at RHS Harlow Carr to view the CDs of heather pictures translated by Charles Nelson, our administrator, into JPEGs format from their original Kodak PCD format.

These were slides from the slide library, which we converted to digital in the early 1990s at David Small's request. The majority of them have labels in the picture, the rest we did our best to name but had some difficulties with about twenty of them. We had hoped that the conference members would help us to name the missing ones but there was no spare time, as our organisers had filled it to capacity. Hopefully we will be able to complete this exercise in 2013 instead of having a quiz.

Then, on 3rd August the group visited Burnby Hall Gardens in Pocklington to view the national collection of water lilies. Even though 2012 has not been a good summer they were looking pretty well and the rest of the gardens were superb. These gardens do have quite a large collection of heathers but they are all winter ones due to the soil being unsuitable for *Calluna*.

We last met on 6th October at RHS Harlow Carr when heathers were the major topic of discussion.

There are plans going ahead for four meetings next year, one in March, one in May and one in September, with a visit in either July or August. The dates will be posted on the website,

Jean Preston

Home Counties

See the report on The Heather Society stand at RHS Garden, Wisley, on 5th October, in the Chairman's Piece.

USEFUL ADDRESSES

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

- | | |
|--|--|
| Chairman & Steering Committee | <i>Policy matters, major events etc.</i>
Mr. D. Edge, Forest Edge Nursery, Verwood Road, Woodlands, Wimborne, BH21 8LJ. <i>Tel: (01202) 824387</i> <i>Fax: (01202) 829564</i> |
| Treasurer | Mr. P.L. Joyner, 84 Kinross Road, Rushington, Totton, Southampton, Hampshire, SO40 9BN. <i>e-mail: philjoyner@btinternet.com</i> <i>Tel: (02380) 864336</i> |
| Secretary | <i>Council Matters</i>
Mr. R. Bowater, 16, Hamilton Drive, Ratcliffe on Trent, Nottingham NG12 1AG. <i>e-mail: richard.bowater1@btinternet.com</i> |
| Slide Librarian | <i>Photographic Archive & Hire of slides</i>
Mrs J. Preston, 21, Church Street, Dunnington, York YO19 5PP. <i>Tel: (01904) 489624</i> |
| Yearbook Editor & Registrar | <i>Articles for the Yearbook / Naming of Heathers</i>
Dr. E.C. Nelson
For details - see back cover |
| Bulletin Editor | <i>Notes, articles for the Bulletin</i>
Mrs. D. Everett, The Bannut, Bringsty, Herefordshire, WR6 5TA. <i>e-mail: everett@bannut.co.uk</i> <i>Tel: (01885) 482206</i> |
| Administrator | <i>Subscriptions, Orders for publications etc.</i>
Dr. E.C. Nelson
For details - see back cover |
| Conference Manager | Mrs. S. Kay, Lettergesh East, Renvyle, Co. Galway, Republic of Ireland <i>e-mail: susiek@gofree.indigo.ie</i> <i>Tel: (00353 95) 43575</i> |
| Group Organisers (<i>Remember, you will be very welcome at any local meeting or visit!</i>) | |
| East Midlands | Mr. A. Hall, 10, Upper Green, Nanpantan, Loughborough, Leics. LE11 3SG. <i>e-mail: halla32@tiscali.co.uk</i> <i>Tel: (01509) 238923</i> |
| North East | Mrs. D. M. Warner, Littlecroft, Click-em-in, Ponteland, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE20 9BQ. <i>Tel: (01661) 823299</i> |
| Home Counties | Mr. B. Sellers, 8 Croft Road, Norbury, London SW16 3NF. <i>e-mail: sellersbarry@aol.com</i> |
| South West | Mr. P.L. Joyner, 84 Kinross Road, Rushington, Totton, Southampton, Hampshire, SO40 9BN. <i>e-mail: philjoyner@btinternet.com</i> <i>Tel: (02380) 864336</i> |
| Yorkshire | Dr. J. Griffiths, Preston Lodge, 60 Hall Road, Little Preston., Leeds. LS26 8UR <i>Tel: (01132) 863349</i> |