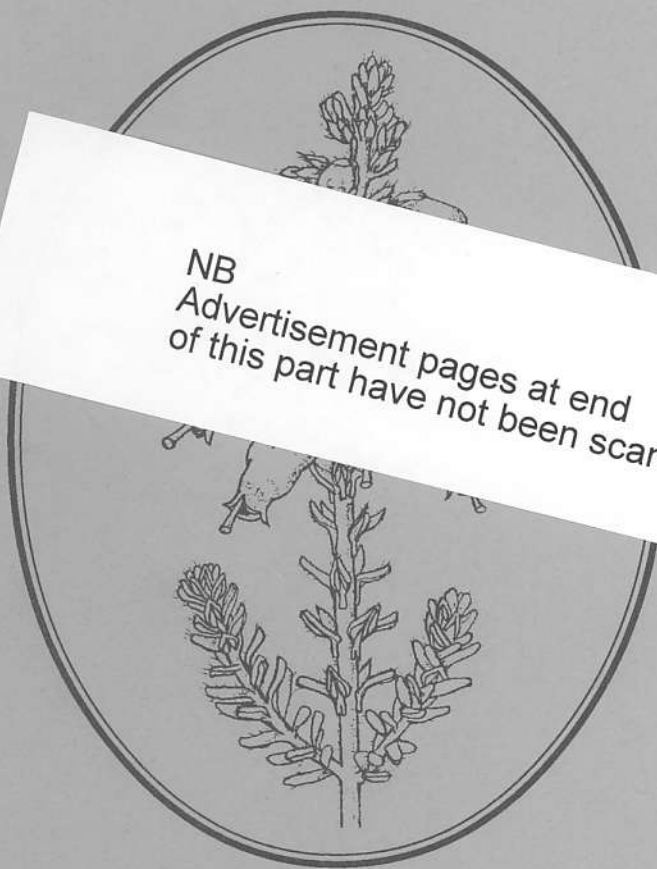


Bulletin of The Heather Society



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



Vol. 7 No. 4

Summer 2008

DIARY OF EVENTS

2008

August Yorkshire Visit to Skipwith Common

September 6 South West Hillier Gardens, near Romsey

September 15 CLOSING DATE FOR AUTUMN BULLETIN

September 20 Home Counties RHS Gardens, Wisley,

September 27 Annual General Meeting Harlow Carr.

September 27& 28 Mini Conference Harrogate



A Registered Charity No. 261407

Editor: Daphne Everett, The Bannut, Bringsty, Herefordshire, WR6 5TA.
Telephone/Fax: 01885 482206 e-mail: everettbannut@zetnet.co.uk

Cover illustration *Erica ciliaris* by Brita Johannson

What a strange Spring it was this year – for a few days in May it was suddenly Summer, and then it was back to Winter frosts again. But our heathers seemed to thrive on it (as has everything else in the garden). We were very fortunate at The Bannut that we didn't suffer the frost damage that David Plumridge reports in his 'Rose Cottage Ramblings'. Our garden is on the side of a hill and the frosts often flow down past us to our friends in the valley.

Annual Gathering & A.G.M - Harrogate 27th - 28th September 2008

As we have the International Conference on Vancouver Island, Canada, this year, our weekend together is later and shorter than usual.

The main events will be held at R.H.S. Harlow Carr, where there have been changes and improvements.

Programme:

Saturday 27th September

2:00 p.m. Talk by Jean Julian on -"The History of Harlow Carr".

3:45 p.m. A.G.M.

Slide Presentation of the International Conference.

Dinner at Swallow St. George.

Sunday 28th September

10:00 A.M. Leisurely walk around Harlow Carr Gardens, led by Dean Peckett, Garden Supervisor.

All of the rooms at the Swallow St. George in Harrogate have now been taken.

I hope you have all filled in the form that came with the spring issue of the Bulletin and sent it to Dr. Charles Nelson along with your remittance.

There is unlimited room for day guests and for the dinner in the evening at Swallow St. George.

A conference fee of £5 is payable for each attendee and dinner is £20 per person. Please send your payments to Dr. E.C. Nelson by 1st August.

As usual, letters will be sent towards the end of August to each member

who is attending, with relevant maps and information.

Your Council looks forward to meeting all of you on 27th September and hearing yours news and views on all matters ericaceous.

Susie Kay, Lettergesh East, Renvyle, Co Galway, Ireland

Tippitiwitchet Corner: The Administrator's Log Number 5

New Members

The following new members are welcomed to the Society:

Barbara Allison, Crescent City, California, USA.

Mrs V. A. Ambler, Cleakheaton, W. Yorkshire.

Dr Jeremy Broughton, Sandhurst, Berkshire.

Brian Burling, Sutton Coldfield, West Midlands.

Daryl Kent, Weaverville, North Carolina, USA.

John & Sarah Priestley, Watford, Hertfordshire.

Anton van der Laan, Ciboure, France.

John Wetwood, Stoke-on-Trent, Staffordshire.

Mr & Mrs R. S. Young, Mersham, Kent.

Members' News

Professor Peter Bannister

With regret we note that Peter Bannister, Emeritus Professor of Botany, University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand, died of cancer on 26 February 2008. Peter had a particular interest in the frost-tolerance of heaths and heathers (see *Yearbook 1996*) and published many papers on the ecology of heathers. He also contributed important biological floras of *Erica ciliaris*, *E. cinerea* and *E. tetralix* to the *Journal of ecology*.

Mrs Anna Dobson MBE

We also note with regret Mrs Dobson's death, also from cancer, on 31 December 2007. Mrs Dobson and her husband, Bill (who died in 2006), had been members since October 1975. There was an appreciation of Mrs Dobson in *The Midlothian advertiser* noting that she had "worked tirelessly for the community in Midlothian for almost three decades in an entirely voluntary capacity ...". She was awarded an MBE for her voluntary work in 1997.

Miss Janette Dobson has generously donated books that her aunt owned to the Society and it is intended to auction these or sell them to members; a list of these is available on request.

Heathers 5

The 2008 yearbook, *Heathers 5*, was distributed to members in March. Since the mailing, I have noticed a few copies in which p. 13 and several other pages are blank. So far no member has reported that they have received copies with this defect, but if you have such a copy please let me know and a replacement will be sent. There is no need to return the defective copy.

Heathers 6

Articles, long and short, are now being sought for the 2009 yearbook. It might be particularly interesting to have some accounts of heathers used in public spaces by local authorities or similar bodies, but articles on any topic related to heaths and heathers will be very welcome. As ever, accounts of heathers in members' own gardens are greatly appreciated.

*Charles Nelson
Administrator.*

Heather Collections under Threat Cherrybank Gardens

The following letter, from one of the staff at Cherrybank Gardens, was received in February of this year.

Dear Sirs

I am sure you are already aware of the imminent sale of Cherrybank Gardens in Perth. The sale in itself is of no great significance as properties do change hands from time to time. However, what is of enormous interest is the fact that these gardens are in imminent danger of destruction. They were "Gifted" to Scotland's Garden Trust in 2002 by Diageo as the first part of the proposed "Calyx" project which was to have been Scotland's National Garden. The failure in the Lottery Funding Bid seems to have brought "The Walls of Jericho Tumbling Down".

This garden was created around the year 1987 by Arthur Bell & Co as a shop window for the company, particularly aimed at overseas visitors, it has however, over the years taken on a much more significant role in the horticultural heritage of not only Perth but of Scotland as a whole.

Initially it was subsidised by the various whisky companies who owned it at any given time. Arthur Bell & Co., followed by Guinness and finally by Diageo, who then handed it over to the Trust in 2002. Not only is this a wonderful example of what can be done with heathers in terms of one's garden, it is also a peaceful haven for young and old which is still close to the city centre. We are also blessed with a Kaleidoscope of colour for 12 months of the year.

Since 2002 the garden has been starved of Marketing and PR monies, nevertheless, the visitor footfall has increased considerably, from c16,000 in 2005 to nearly 30,000 in 2007. Considering the dreadful weather we experienced during the summer of 2007 this was no mean feat.

I have no axe to grind as far as losing my part time job at the garden, as I have retired and work there because of a sentimental attachment, but it is in the best interests of Horticulture in Perth & Scotland for this garden to be saved. We are trying everything in our power to persuade Perth & Kinross Council to take possession and run it through the Parks & Leisure Department. That body has not just a little knowledge of horticulture having won Britain in Bloom on a few occasions. Were they to take on the running of this beautiful

garden and put in some Marketing & PR budgets I am sure we could treble the footfall, become financially viable, and not be a burden on the hard pressed rate payers.

I would urge you to lobby both Scotland's Garden Trust and the local council not to let this Horticultural Gem be ploughed up and turned into another Dear Green Place

Kind Regards

Dennis Marmion

Following this letter, Charles Nelson went on to Perth & Kinross Council internet site and found a Council statement (updated 14/03/2008) which said:

Following an unsuccessful lottery bid for the Calyx project, the Leadership of Perth & Kinross Council today expressed its support for the continued use of Cherrybank gardens as a valued local amenity for the people of Perth & Kinross.

Leader of the Council Ian Miller said: "The gardens are an important asset for Perth and contribute significantly to the quality of the environment in the city. We understand how valued they are, both by local people and visitors.

"I would like to reassure everyone in Perth and Kinross that we are doing everything we can to ensure that the Cherrybank Garden is retained. Everyone in the Council would be greatly saddened if Scotland's Garden Trust attempted to sell the land for development."

The site was gifted to Scotland's Garden Trust by Diageo and the Arthur Bell Trust on the condition that, should the Calyx be unsuccessful, the land would be passed onto Perth & Kinross Leisure to be maintained as a reminder to the hugely important role that Bells played in the city's past.

Perth and Kinross Leisure is an independent 'not for profit' company which manages leisure facilities for all of the population throughout Perth and Kinross.

Councillor Miller continued: "Given the importance of the gardens we would fully support Perth and Kinross Leisure in exploring all options for preserving them for the people of Perth and Kinross."

Cherrybank Gardens in Perth, home to a National Collection of Ericas and an RHS Recommended Garden, was closed on 31 March.

The decision to shut the garden, with the loss of 14 jobs, has angered locals, but its owners, Scotland's Garden Trust (SGT), said it did what it could to keep it open.

SGT not only looks after Cherrybank Gardens, but is also behind the project, on the same land, to develop Scotland's National Garden called The Calyx.

An unsuccessful attempt at the end of 2007 to gain £25million of lottery funding forced SGT to look for an alternative site for *The Calyx*. This, in turn, has led to the closure of Cherrybank, which on its own is not self-sustaining. 'We worked hard to make Cherrybank a viable proposition, but we are a registered charity and have to justify the supporting of a loss-making venture. We could do this because Cherrybank makes sense as part of the bigger

picture with *The Calyx*", said Stan Green, Deputy Chairman of SGT.

Local people got together a 3000-signature petition in a bid to save the garden and Ian Miller, Leader of Perth and Kinross Council, said it was not aware that the future of Cherrybank was dependent on *The Calyx*. 'The gardens are an important asset for Perth and contribute significantly to the quality of the environment in the city,' he said. 'We are working to retain Cherrybank as per the original agreement with Diageo and the Authur Bell Trust that, should the Caylx bid be unsuccessful, the land would be passed onto Perth & Kinross Leisure to be maintained for the good of the people of Perth', he added.

Talks about Cherrybank's future have now taken place between Perth and Kinross Leisure and SGT but details of the rescue package have yet to be revealed. In the meantime, SGT has said it will maintain the garden and heather collection.

Cherrybank Garden, is the home of the 2.4ha Bell's National Heather Collection of more than 50,000 plants of 900 cultivars – thought to be the largest such collection in the UK. Planting was carried out between 1988 and 1991 and formed part of the then Diageo Bells office complex. It is one of just two *Erica* collections in the country recognised by the NCCPG – the other is at RHS Garden Wisley. Cherrybank was gifted to Scotland's Garden Trust from Diageo in 2003.

A Letter from the Chairman of the Heather Society, Arnold Stow, 9 May:

I was most distressed to learn from a Cherrybank volunteer Dennis Marmion that these magnificent gardens were to close on the 31st March and the land would be sold to a developer.

Despite approaching Perth Council members and the local Scottish MP by several of our members both in the UK and America it appears that our pleas were to no avail.

It seems inconceivable to me that these gardens, situated in the heart of Scotland, the Land of the Ling, should be closed. I was first introduced to Cherrybank during the Dundee Conference in 1988, I have returned several times since, the last being during the International Conference in 2004.

In the May edition of the RHS publication *The Garden*, there is a report on the setback due to lack of lottery funding . Interesting though is that on the next page the Welsh Assembly is providing funds to the National Botanic Garden of Wales saying that these gardens, which were visited by Conference members last year, were a national institution.

I understand from Dennis Marion that for the time being general maintenance work is being carried out by Perth Council gardeners so there is hope yet.

If Wales can provide funds surely Scotland can follow.

And - Harlow Carr

On April 4th Jean Julian (Council Member and Friend to Harlow Carr) wrote:

I went to a meeting with the garden supervisor at Harlow Carr recently.

To say the least, it was interesting and not unexpected.

1. They have put quite a few winter heathers in the Winter Walk. I know they like them, personally I do not think they have put sufficient in but that is personal taste. I doubt if they will put many more in at present as they are being eaten by rabbits and they have had to wire-net the beds. Surprise, surprise, I could have told them that if they had asked.

2. The RHS has a new Chairman, Director of Gardens etc. They started last year and are now stamping their imprint on the society. So each of the four gardens has a new master plan for the next ten years. This means that within the next six months all the heathers will be removed from Harlow Carr gardens except for the few recently planted. The plans are in draft stage at present but completion is expected soon. I do not have access to the plans for Wisley, Hyde Hall or Rosemoor.

3. As Harlow Carr is alkaline/neutral pH clay only winter plus certain summer flowering heathers will grow, except in south field, which is where the *Calluna* collection was. It is planned to put a "trees for life" - environmental project in south field as herbaceous plants will not grow there.

4. A grand new alpine house is to be built starting this year, a £3.5 million environmentally friendly learning centre is to be built starting in 2009, a productive garden (vegetables) is to go in.

5. The library will expand from 3,000 to 8,000 books.

6. Harlow Carr had 44,000 visitors, with the RHS this had increased to 215,000 visitors in 2007. Staff has increased from 5 to 53 with 125 volunteers, but the RHS needs to recruit 46,000 members per year to stand still as many do not renew their membership. Currently they have 360,000 members.

I hope this information is useful to you. I don't know what we can do about the loss of heathers. I feel I have taken two knocks this month with the loss of Cherrybank.

On April 15th, Jean reported:

When I spoke to Dean Peckett, the Gardens Supervisor, at Harlow Carr a couple of weeks ago he informed me about the new landscape plan and the fact that the entrance bed of winter heathers is to be removed. I had the opportunity of a talk with Matthew

Wilson, the Curator at Harlow Carr last Friday evening. He tells me that the heathers will be coming out, as, under the new plan the entrance bed will be turned round and much larger. This is to remove the geometric look to the entrance. The path does run at right angles to the steps, which are new and have been extended.

However he assures me that the bed will have mixed planting. I expected that but I have also been assured that there will be winter heathers in amongst this planting as he will want some colour at the entrance in winter. So we are doing a little better, not a bed of heathers but two large beds each with some heathers in them amongst lots of other plants.

In response - Member, Professor John Griffiths wrote:

I was shocked to hear that they are going to remove the heathers from Harlow Carr (I presume this also means the superb displays near the

entrance?). Surely such a drastic break with tradition calls for a petition of some sort - after all, fee paying members ought to have some say. There must be several members of the Heather Society who are also members of the RHS, so a collective petition must carry some weight? (I would seriously have to look at my RHS subscription if this is carried through. There would certainly be little point in visiting the gardens between November and March if there were no Winter flowering heathers present in abundance).

On April 17th , Jean replied:

In order to meet the Disabled Act, part III it was necessary to put automatic sliding doors in the Gardens Entrance at RHS Harlow Carr and a ramp down into the garden. This however has made the staff suffer because the doors open and close very regularly and the ones from the car park are exactly opposite the ones into the garden.

So how to protect them? We have built a conservatory so visitors now go into the garden through this glass area and exit at the side. The entrance is no longer a wind tunnel. From here you can proceed along the ramp or down the steps and the only problem is that the entrance area now has a geometric landscape, which is not what garden designers would choose.

How do we resolve this? RHS Harlow Carr has decided to alter the entrance beds from their rectangular shape to a curve, in fact a massive curved bed. This involves removing the winter heathers, which have made up this rectangular bed for the past thirty years or more (not the same plants). The bed will then be given a mixed planting, which seems to be the style for the 21st century including some winter heathers. The newly planted winter walk has a mixed planting also with some winter heathers.

Matthew Wilson, the Curator, believes single genera plantings for societies should be on the perimeter of a garden, as the members will be willing to walk to see them. The main part of a Royal Horticultural Society garden must entice the general public in, as finance is needed and visitors want to see what they can put in their own small garden. Therefore each large bed should be able to stand alone.

It makes me very sad to see the loss of all this winter colour. I am equally sad that we no longer have a *Calluna* collection but the Emmerdale pigs have completely destroyed it and it was ready to go after thirty years. It is to be replaced with an environmental "Trees for Life" project.

Regrettably there is nowhere at the perimeter of these gardens, which will take another summer flowering collection, as the ground is wet clay and of neutral pH. The famous Harlow Carr trials were held in the nursery ground, which is light and acid but this area is used for compost and recycling on a massive scale.

There have been suggestions that we fight these changes. Does the Society have sufficient manpower with energy and funding to do so? The new carbon neutral education building, which will be started this Autumn is costing in excess of £3 million so we are up against a big organisation.

I had hoped that the heathers would remain until after the Annual Meeting at Harrogate in September but no such luck. With the new steps built and waiting to be opened, time is pressing so we must get on. My hope now is for

heathers to come back into fashion as they are in the USA, then the TV gardeners will promote them and nurserymen will grow them.

We can only await developments on these two important gardens Ed.

Rose Cottage Ramblings – No. 3

David Plumridge

Truly, global warming works in mysterious ways! Another relatively mild winter gave way to a long and rather cool spring. This was good for our heather garden for it meant the *carneas* gave us an even longer and wonderful display. A few days of warm sunshine in early May got things moving with, for example, our summer favourites – the *cinereas* – at last going nice and green. So much for the good news, then in mid May the frosts came! The evening forecast didn't indicate anything of great severity, but the next morning we could not help but notice the change to Rita's dwarf rhododendron bed. Some of the flowers had been badly frosted. Frost was again forecast so I ran out some fleece that evening to give protection. It must have been a pretty hard frost for despite the covering, more blooms were damaged.

Later that day I visited an old pal who lives on the other side of the village. He had been poorly, so after quickly enquiring about his health I took a peep at his collection of dwarf rhodies. They were all fine with the flowers in pristine condition. After 26 years I now realise that we live in a much worse frost pocket than I had imagined. Although at 700ft ASL, Rose Cottage lies in a valley in the hills. This fact is used by RAF fighters and army helicopters roaring over our garden as they hug the lowest possible ground in practice flight. Last year, one helicopter came within feet of my 60ft amateur radio mast, as did a hot air balloon, but that's another story! My friend lives on a fairly steep slope, the cooling night air kindly flows past his garden to settle several hundred feet down in the Derwent valley. This is much to the chagrin of ex HS council member, Roy Nichols. He occasionally suffers from this effect despite normally enjoying a balmier climate than we do on the edge of the heather moors.

We weren't too devastated by the loss of flower on the rhodies, as there was more to come. What is very disappointing is the damage to the new growth on our heathers. We have never before seen anything like it in our heather garden. With the undoubted change in the climate could this become the norm? Many of the *cinereas*, which we rely upon for glorious summer display, have been damaged as have *Daboecias*, *vagans*, *tetralix* and even *carneas*. Good old 'Foxhollow' has lost almost all its gorgeous yellow to be replaced by a sad brown. As I type this on 2nd June, this is the dominant colour in the heather garden. The *Calluna* all escaped, but we don't have many as we find that most flower rather late in the year with us. An exception is 'Caerketton White' which is already showing colour. Rita is optimistic that the frosted plants will recover, but I fear our summer display will be badly delayed. If we don't get a good recovery and this aspect of global 'warming' continues, then maybe we will have to replant in future with *Callunas*? Hopefully they would flower earlier for us in the warmer summers?

All is not lost in the garden however. The eye is taken from the browned plants to the superb tree heath display. Rita's suggestion (order?) a while ago to grub out the line of conifers on the back border and replace them with *Erica arborea*, *australis* and rhododendrons has made for a great improvement. While the rhodies give a spectacular but ephemeral display, the tree heaths have year-round interest, particularly 'Albert's Gold'. The 'Estrella Gold' shrubs are putting on a good show, but my current favourites are 'Riverslea' and 'Holehird' – both looking much the same. We have an elderly 'Riverslea' – over 20 years old – which is looking good despite ignoring the warning in the 'Handy Guide' to prune well. Rita has just planted the recently introduced *E. australis* 'Trisha'. It's only a foot high at present, but looks promising. Why these wonderful shrubs aren't widely planted is beyond me, but I guess it's partly the acid requirement problem. This is the usual answer I get when I query heather popularity with garden writers.

The taller rhodies missed being frosted and are either well budded or flowering well. It seems my experiment not to dead head seems to have paid off. However, I must admit to taking off one or two of the more obvious ones! We are now looking forward to the paeonias to give a splash of colour to follow the rhododendrons. Regarding heather companion planting, Rita has pointed out that the hardy, low growing *Hebe pinguifolia* 'Pagei', can be recommended. When we were developing the garden, I planted the border along the drive with many of the recommended ground cover plants (not heather!) Only the *Hebe* remains as the rest were found lacking in weed suppression and long term impact. They were replaced, of course by heathers. Do members have other suggestions for companion planting? Apart from grasses, that is!

Another disappointment in Heather Land is that David Small has decided not to produce a CD this year due to the low number of submissions. I was hoping to include some pictures of the spring heather display at Harlow Carr where Jean Julian has done a marvellous job. When we visited in March for the Yorkshire Group meeting this planting by the main steps provided by far the best colour in the whole of the garden! Sadly, I gather this area is to be 'improved'... The meeting was, as usual, well worth the drive down from Durham. I would remind members within striking distance of Harlow Carr that they will be given a warm welcome at these meetings. With their interest in heather growing, they will always hear something of interest as well as being able to get expert advice from a famous hybridiser! Whatever time of year, the garden is always worth a visit, but be prepared to bring a picnic unless you enjoy paying Betty's ridiculous prices. (The famous Betty's Harrogate tea rooms have the obviously not inexpensive franchise from the RHS)

I'm also pleased to report that our local group while running down is not yet defunct. On May 4th we enjoyed yet another excellent outing organised by Dorothy and Geoff Warner. This time to Hutton in the Forest, near Penrith. A most interesting garden and intriguing house, well worth a visit by anyone holidaying in the Lake District. It would be a good venue to escape the weekend summer crowds – although Holehird must not be missed! Hopefully you will also be blessed with similarly good weather – our organisers pulled it off yet again. It rained back home in the North East but we stayed dry!

Another well produced and colourful *Yearbook* received – thanks to Charles and the contributors. Our North American friends manage to get colour into their ‘bulletins’. In the case of the *NAHS Heather News* I understand a benefactor helps to meet the additional cost. Any benefactors out there so I can show off our tree heaths in full colour? At least they seem immune to ‘Global Warming’!

Coloured pictures would be wonderful, but, I think I am right in saying that, as well as having a benefactor, the NHS only have the one quarterly publication to pay for – they don’t produce a colourful Yearbook as well. Ed.

Questions and Answers

Two similar enquiries came in April via e-mail.

Q from Mrs Isa Hall (Morpeth, Northumberland). Could you advise me about how to treat some elderly tree heaths recently battered by



24 year-old *Erica arborea* “Alpina”, one year after hard pruning.

the weather? There are several *Erica mediterranea* [*E. erigena*], an *E. australis*, and possibly one or two *E. arborea*, all 30+ years old, and until this spring in reasonable to good condition but now having (some of them), some dead, brittle stems, and in the case of the 8ft *E. australis*, lying at a drunken angle, supported by a neighbouring *Rhododendron racemosum* and a dwarf conifer. I hope it may be possible to save the *E. australis*, as I doubt if I have enough years left to me to grow a new one to a decent height.

A about *Erica arborea* (tree heather).

– *Erica arborea* you can cut to the ground with no problems. *David Small*

– I have cut back *Erica arborea* of some 30 years with excellent results. *Bryon Roberts*

– *Ericas* normally respond to pruning. *E arborea* can be cut right down and will grow again vigorously. *Allen Hall*

– I have hard-pruned several 25-year old *Erica arborea* ‘Alpina’, also an ‘Estrella Gold’, and most of the hybrids, and they have all come back well. *Daphne Everett*

– *E. arborea* can be cut right down and it will recover and this spring I may well try the same trick with a large plant of *E. x veitchii* ‘Gold Tips’. *Phil Joyner*

– Nothing to add ... except ... that tree heathers, however old, shoot again. There was a 12ft diameter stump in the original Wisley heather bed which had shoots about 2ft high quite quickly after pollarding. *Arnold Stow*

About *Erica australis* (southern heath).

- I would certainly attempt to straighten the *E. australis* and support it on a pole; but I would cut away the top hamper as well.
Allen Hall

- *Erica australis* also came back [after hard-pruning], but it was not so old. If it is cut back I should think there is a good chance that new shoots will grow upright from the drunken stem.
Daphne Everett



24 year-old *Erica arborea* "Estrella Gold", two years after hard pruning.

About *Erica erigena* (*E. mediterranea*, Irish heath).

- *Erica erigena* (*mediterranea*) I have found to be not so accommodating. I think it needs pruning progressively over a few years – not too much at a time.
Daphne Everett

- *Erica erigena* you cut back to 6 inches from the ground. Again [see below] not a frequent operation. David Small

Q from Ann Ottley. I have inherited a heather bed but it is very overgrown. I gave it a light trim last year but it really needs radical pruning. If I prune into dead wood will it grow back next year? I don't know the names of the heathers but they are all flowering now [April] and have been for a while. Not sure about the soil but there are rhododendrons and camellias next door. The heathers are quite leggy with flowers only on top 6" to 9", some are pink and some white. Thank you.

(The heathers in this bed are assumed to be *Erica carnea* (winter heath) and/or *E. x darleyensis* (Darley Dale heath).)

A from David Small:
- My experiences over the years has been you can prune *Erica carnea* to about 3 inches from the ground and they will regenerate but only once (well, perhaps, years apart will be OK). *E. erigena* you can do the same but 6 inches from the ground. Again not a frequent operation. Just for the record you can treat *Erica vagans*, *E. manipuliiflora* and *E. x griffithsii* in the same way as *E. erigena*.

Other answers were various, and Phil Joyner's remarks prompted a follow-up comment from Allen Hall.

- from Bryon Roberts: Probably the best advice is to start again but if there are any irreplaceable treasures then I would resort to the following procedure: loosen the soil around the plant, then bury the leafless stem in the soil and pin down with U-shaped pieces of plastic wire up to the green leaves. The plant can then be given a mulch of composted bark. You will then get as many plants as there are branches. This usually works for me.

- from Phil Joyner: In answer to both pruning queries: I wouldn't dare

prune *Erica carnea*, *E. erigena*, *E. x darleyensis* or *E. australis* below green leaves and when inadvertently I have then success has been nil. My general advice, given at my talks, has always been to cut into wood with green leaves. I understand that *E. vagans* will recover when cut below green leaves but I have yet to be convinced of that one.

– to which *Allen Hall* responded: I am intrigued by Phil's reply. Years ago, at our last house, we had a border between our drive and our neighbour's drive. I had planted heathers in it but one night our neighbour's son drove his car across the border crushing a fine *E. erigena* 'W. T. Rackliff'. I cut the poor thing right down and it recovered well and quickly. I almost never prune *E. carnea* or *E. x darleyensis*, but given Phil's comment I shall look out for a suitable opportunity to experiment.

– *Jean Julian* also responded: I agree with Phil. These heathers will not recover if you cut into the hard wood. The only success I have had is with *Daboecia*, and some *Erica manipuliflora*, *E. x griffithsii*, etc.

A on the same topic, *Allen Hall* added:
 – Two main stems (out of about 6) of my *Erica x veitchii* 'Westbourne Grove' died in February/March – I can only think that it was frost damage though there were no obvious signs. Anyway, I noted that new shoots were already growing from the base. I cut out the two dead branches where they joined at the base and measured the cut – it was 2.625 inches across. The rest of the plant is in glorious flower. 'Westbourne Grove' flowers about six weeks before *E. arborea* 'Alpina' but later than *E. x veitchii* 'Exeter'.

Q from *Jane Evison*. My daughter and boyfriend are getting married in July of this year and as they are keen mountaineers, they would like heather in their flower arrangements and button holes. Can you recommend a white Summer-flowering heather and a stockist other than the top of a mountain!!

A If you are based in Britain, then the Lambie family's Speyside Heather Centre (you will find it via google) offers a service including button holes and floral arrangements.

Otherwise, you could make your own by obtaining plants of a white-flowered clone of various heathers.

Note that even in the mildest parts of Britain, ling (the traditional white heather) is not reliably in bloom until August or September, so while *Calluna vulgaris* 'My Dream' or other whites would be idea, you may have to resort to bell heather (*Erica cinerea*- such as 'Hookstone White').

Diamond Anniversary

Beryl & David Mayne from Yorkshire celebrated their 60th Wedding Anniversary on May 15th this year.

David was a member of Council for many years and, until his recent illness, he and Beryl were regular attendees at all the *Heather Society* Conferences.

We wish them heath and happiness.

Letters

Two pieces of helpful advice from Brita Johansson in Sweden

Heather Problems in the Shetlands

Frank Odie told us in the Yearbook (*Heathers* 5) about his partly failing efforts as to heather growing in the Shetland Isles, a fascinating article which encouraged me to THINK.

Could he have managed better with *Calluna*? Cold is obviously no problem, but the wind is. Nothing is said about rainfall, but I would think is enough, maybe more than enough.

I have no experience of conditions like that, but have long experience of heather growing in a climate with a short growing season and cold winters, with an unreliable snow cover – obviously quite different conditions. Yet I think that one could be able to draw some conclusions about the cultivars of *Calluna* which should have the best chances to survive and please their owner in the Shetland Isles.

The first to come up in my mind are the St Kilda plants. They are used to hard winds and lots of rain. They are low growing, some, almost creeping. Maybe not the most showy plants but good. I regard 'Soay' as the best one, with its changing foliage colour and neat habit.

The next are the hairy plants. I am not surprised that 'Oxshott Common' and 'Velvet Fascination' belong to the survivors. The last one is one of the most reliable of all the *Calluna* cultivars. Hairy plants hold a layer of air between the hairs which protect them from the cold and wind. I think that Frank Odie should also test 'Silver Knight'.

Most of the *Calluna* cultivars mentioned in the article are what I regard as weak plants. I have grown them all and none, except for 'Beoley Gold' is still in our garden. Only a few have died, but they didn't grow well and were discarded as they were no pleasure.

Low growing, sturdy plants should be the most suitable for the Shetland Isles. Reading my long list of cultivars, which have been grown our garden, I was disappointed to find only a few which fit the demands. I think the following would be worth trying.

White: 'Caerketten White', 'Mullardoch', 'Martha Hermann'.

Pink: 'Red Favorit'.

Coloured foliage: 'Peggy', 'Cairnwell' and 'Hillbrook Orange' – the last one not so low, but robust.

Sadly, not all are easily available. It is possible that some can be purchased via *The Heather Society* plant ordering service.

How to pronounce *Calluna vulgaris* 'Kerstin'

David Plumridge has written about his trouble with the name 'Kerstin' (sadly, I can't remember where).

Start with the same sound as in 'Challenger'. I think you would come right

if I spelt it Chashtin. The problem for English speaking people is probably the accent. It is a heavy accent on the first syllable, thus Kèrstin, not Kérstin. Anyway, if the sounds are right it is good enough. Thank you.

(Calluna vulgaris 'Kerstin' is named after Brita's daughter, so the right pronunciation is particularly important. Ed.)

Plant-Ordering Service

Following my successful first year of running the Plant-Ordering Service I am pleased to advise Members that the scheme will be extended to run on a 'Mail order' basis, year round, with plants imported from Holland from a list of over 1000 cultivars. However, regrettably due to the increase in the cost of plants and the strength of the Euro against sterling, the plants will now cost £1.85 each - but this figure will be an 'all in' figure which will include the cost of obtaining the plants by post from Holland .

I hope that members will continue to support the scheme throughout 2008, and beyond, thus enabling them to have access to an extensive range of cultivars many of which could otherwise be lost to cultivation.

Allison Fitz-Earle

A Thank You from the Counting House

As many members will know a plant ordering service has been advertised through the Society's publications for several years. The difference in buying through this service as opposed to buying through nurseries or plant centres is that many of the heath and heather cultivars, familiar in Society publications but not available in the trade, have been made available to members.

The service, from its concept, was run by David and Anne Small and was geared towards providing the plants in the spring to satisfy orders made some months previously. In the last two years Allison Fitz-Earle has taken on the service, retaining the original purpose of making plants available to members in the spring. However Allison, as you will note elsewhere in this *Bulletin*, is now extending this service to be all the year around and open to the public at large as well as Society members. The running of this service has been very hard work and has taken up much of David, Anne and Allison's "spare time" so through this note I would like to thank them for all their efforts and also for the generous donations they have been able to make to Society funds from the proceeds of the service.

I hope that members will continue to support the plant ordering service, which you will find, advertised elsewhere in this *Bulletin*.

Phil Joyner-Hon.Treasurer

Gardening with Hardy Heathers

David Small and Ella May T. Wulff

The sight of a wild landscape covered with heathers in full bloom is breathtaking so it is little surprise that people have found ways of introducing these rewarding plants into their gardens. In the domestic context they excel, offering colour in the drabest months and a huge diversity of height, habit, and

other valuable characteristics in return for modest cultural demands.

The scope of this comprehensive and highly informative account encompasses the heaths and heathers of the closely related genera *Calluna*, *Daboecia*, and *Erica* whose shared characteristics and similar cultural requirements make them broadly compatible in a variety of garden situations. These plants have enhanced people's lives for millennia and a full discussion of their naming and uses is explored in detail.

With more than 700 cultivated varieties of *Calluna* alone, selecting the right heather for the right place can be daunting. The selection described in Chapter 7 provides an indispensable tool providing gardeners with the best garden performers

while further lists allow them to search for heathers for specific qualities such as heat tolerance, ground cover, or early summer blooming. Design options for displaying heathers at their best in the garden are provided along with advice on spacing, pruning, propagation, pests, and diseases. In this fascinating and beautifully illustrated work, classic wild-collected cultivars are described alongside the latest introductions to produce an invaluable reference that will inspire heather enthusiasts and gardeners for generations to come.

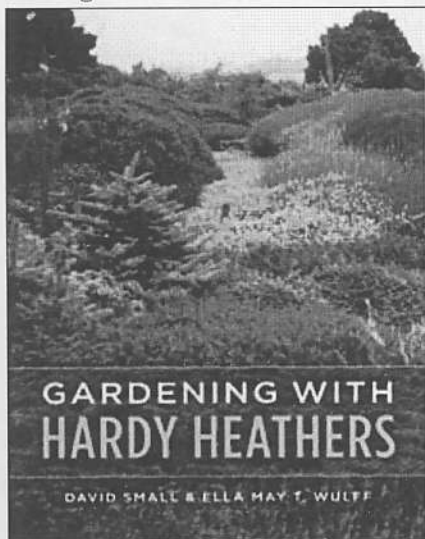
DAVID SMALL is very well known to all members of *The Heather Society*. He is our current President, and has been advising growers and gardeners alike about heathers for the past 30 years.

ELLA MAY WULFF is also a staunch member of *The Heather Society*, and has served a term (2001—2004) as President of the North American Heather Society. She writes often for the North American Heather Society's *Heather News* quarterly.

Gardening with hardy heathers is due for publication in August 2008 and will be priced at £30. By special arrangement with Timber Press (UK), The Heather Society will be able to offer copies to members **with addresses in UK and Europe** for £25 (post & packing included); **payment must be received with the order.**

For all details, please see the order form inserted in the *Summer Bulletin*.

***** This special offer closes on 30 September 2008.**



Group News

Yorkshire

The Yorkshire Heather Group held their last meeting in the Study Centre at Harlow Carr on Saturday, 15th March 2008. Despite being widely advertised only 8 people attended to hear *How to grow Heathers*. For the benefit of the visitors, Jean Julian gave a detailed talk on the best methods of growing both winter and summer flowering heathers. Questions were answered by the speaker, the Chairman, Prof. John Griffiths, Bryon Roberts and David & Rita Plumridge. The talk was followed by viewing a few slides of heathers and heather beds and tea was enjoyed by all.

An outing will take place, probably in August to Skipwith Common, a lowland heath between York and Selby and the third indoor meeting will be the Annual General meeting on Saturday, 27th September, again at Harlow Carr.

Jean Julian

North East

On Sunday 4 May, thirty nine people, made up of *Heather Society* members, plus some from the Local History Society, attended the Group's annual outing to Hutton in the Forest, near Penrith. The house was very interesting and the garden was beautiful. With dry and reasonably warm weather as a bonus, everyone had a splendid day.

At the present time there are no other meetings planned. Watch *The Bulletin* for further news.

Dorothy Warner

Dorothy's relayed her Group News to me by phone as, three days into a holiday in Turkey, she had a bad fall which culminated in a broken wrist and a broken nose. So, although Dorothy sounded remarkably cheerful about the whole thing on the phone, she is unable to use her writing hand at the moment. I am sure that everyone joins me in wishing her a speedy recovery.
Ed

Home Counties

The next meeting of the Group will be held at **RHS Garden, Wisley, on Saturday 20th September**. We will meet outside the shop at 11.00 for our customary tour of the Heather Garden.

The afternoon meeting will be at 14.00 in the Garden Meeting Room of the Hillside Events Centre with speaker Colin Crosbie (RHS Wisley) whose subject will be 'Wisley Through the Seasons' (this room is at the rear of the Garden Hall in which we have previously met).

Please let me know by 13th September if you will be attending (tel: 01442 254880 or email derek.millis@care4free.net). There will of course be the usual table show, please do have a go at this, you have a very good chance of winning - the categories are:-

1. Best flower arrangement in which heathers predominate (The Turpin

Trophy).

2. Best vase of hardy heather in flower, single variety.

3. Best vase of heather chosen for foliage.

I wish you good gardening weather for the summer and look forward to seeing many friends at Wisley on 20th September.

Derek Millis

South West Area News

On Saturday, May 10th, a small group of Heather Society members visited Exbury Gardens, within the New Forest National Park. The visit coincided with the peak flowering time for the majority of the rhododendrons and the azaleas and we were treated to a superb colour spectacle. The weather was slightly overcast but warm and many visitors were in the grounds. In the heather garden the display of heathers was all but over with just a little colour remaining, however there were several examples of *Erica arborea* interspersed amongst the rhododendrons and these were in full flower and making a fine show. The afternoon was rounded off with a cup of tea and a wander in the Plant Centre for those that wished to do so.

For those members who wish to join Lin and me on a late summer garden walk then we will be visiting the **Hillier Gardens, near Romsey in Hampshire, on Saturday September 6th**. We will be in the vicinity of the entrance from 1.45pm and will be entering the gardens at about 2.00pm. There is a heather garden in the grounds and there should still be a good display from the summer flowering *Ericas* and the *Callunas*. Lunch time refreshments are available from the restaurant near the main car park and afternoon tea is available from the same location. There is also a well stocked garden centre and a gift shop. At the time of writing the entrance fee is £7.50 (£6.50 concessions) but I do have a couple of "two for the price of one" tickets that a couple of the members could make use of so if you intend coming then please enquire with me (023 8086 4336) on the availability of those tickets. As for location of the garden then it is adequately signposted from major routes and is easily found on maps of the area.

As usual I will remind members that the date and time of any get together in the South West area will only be announced via *The Bulletin*. However if you wish to send a SAE then I will return a map and directions to help you locate any proposed venue. Visits to gardens will not be pre-arranged and will take the form of an informal stroll. Any advertised group rates for garden entry will not apply and no guided tours will be arranged. The gardens will not necessarily be heather gardens as the purpose of any get together is to exchange information on topics of heather culture and to meet old friends and make new ones. There is no need to let me know if you are coming beforehand but if you wish to give me a ring (023 8086 4336) then please feel free to do so.

Phil Joyner

USEFUL ADDRESSES

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

- Chairman & Steering Committee** *Policy matters, major events etc.*
Mr. A. J. Stow, Widmour, Limmer Lane, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire, HP12 4QR. *e-mail:* Stow.limmer@btinternet.com *Tel:* (01494) 449397
- Treasurer** Mr. P.L. Joyner, 84 Kinross Road, Rushington, Totton, Southampton, Hampshire, SO40 9BN. *e-mail:* pjoyner@supanet.com *Tel:* (02380) 864336
- Secretary & Slide Librarian** *Council Matters/Hire of slides*
Mrs. J. Julian, "Matchams", Main Street, Askham Richard, York, YO23 3PT. *e-mail:* jeanjulian@btinternet.com *Tel:* (01904) 707316
- Yearbook Editor & Registrar** *Articles for the Yearbook / Naming of Heathers*
Dr. E.C. Nelson
For details - see back cover
- Bulletin Editor** *Notes, articles for the Bulletin*
Mrs. D. Everett, The Bannut, Bringsty, Herefordshire, WR6 5TA. *e-mail:* everettbannut@zetnet.co.uk
Tel: (01885) 482206 *FAX:* (01885) 482206
- Advertising** *Adverts, advertising rates etc. for the Bulletin*
Mr. D. Small - details as Website
- Administrator** *Subscriptions, Orders for publications etc.*
Dr. E.C. Nelson
For details - see back cover
- Conference Manager** Mrs. S. Kay, Lettergesh East, Renvyle, Co. Galway, Republic of Ireland
e-mail: susiek@gofree.indigo.ie *Tel:* 00353 95 43575
- Website** Mr. D. Small, Denbeigh, All Saints Road, Creeting St. Mary, Ipswich, Suffolk, IP6 8PJ.
e-mail: heathers@zetnet.co.uk
Tel: (01449) 711220 *FAX:* (01449) 711220
- Plant Sales** Mrs. A. Fitz-Earle, 78, Woodland Way, West Wickham, Kent BR4 9LR.
e-mail: allisonfitzearle@yahoo.co.uk
Tel: 020 8777 5161 (Home) 0790 582 5818 (Mobile)
- Group Organisers** *(Remember, you will be very welcome at any local meeting or visit!)*
- East Midlands** Mr. A. Hall, 10, Upper Green, Nanpantan, Loughborough, Leics. LE11 3SG.
e-mail: halla32@tiscali.co.uk *Tel:* 01509 238923
- North East** Mrs. D. M. Warner, Littlecroft, Click-em-in, Ponteland, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, NE20 9BQ.
Tel: (01661) 823299
- Home Counties** Mr. D. Millis, 18, The Horseshoe, Leverstock Green, Hemel Hempstead, Herts HP3 8QW
e-mail: Derek.Millis@care4free.net *Tel:* (01442) 254880
- South West** Mr. P.L. Joyner, 84 Kinross Road, Rushington, Totton, Southampton, Hampshire, SO40 9BN. *e-mail:* pjoyner@supanet.com *Tel:* (02380) 864336
- Yorkshire** Dr. J. Griffiths, 9, Ashlea Close, Leeds, West Yorkshire. LS25 1JX.
Tel: (01132) 863349