



Volume 8, number 1.

Spring 2014

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# Bulletin of The Heather Society

## volume 8 number 1

Bulletin Editor: Daphne Everett



charity registered in England & Wales no. 261407

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### DIARY 2014

19 February	Council meeting, London
8 March	Yorkshire Group, meet at RHS Gardens Harlow Carr
15 May	Closing date for Summer <i>Bulletin</i>
17 May	Yorkshire Group, meet at RHS Gardens Harlow Carr
18 June	Council meeting, London
2–7 July	Field-trip in northwest Spain (see p. 6)
8–13 July	RHS Hampton Court Palace Flower Show
12–15 September	Annual Gathering, Llanberis, North Wales
15 September	Closing date for Autumn <i>Bulletin</i>
27 September	Yorkshire Group, meet at RHS Gardens Harlow Carr
30 September	Closing date for submitting photographs of 2014 CD
22 October	Council meeting, London
31 October	Closing date the <i>Heathers 12</i> (2015 yearbook).

For contact details of the Society's Officers, Editors, Group Organizers, and Administrator, see inside back cover.

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### Bannut forewords

*Considering how mild the winter has been so far (the end of January, as I write this), I find it surprising that the winter/spring heathers are only just beginning to put on their colourful display. Admittedly, some plants of Erica × darleyensis were showing colour before Christmas, as they usually are, but even they seem to have come to a halt in recent weeks. In contrast, earlier than usual for us in Herefordshire, the snowdrops are fully out, the hellebores are about to open and we have had a camellia in flower for a week or more. Could it be that the heathers have been more badly affected by the grey skies and incessant rain than some other plants?*

Daphne Everett

### Chairman's piece

Whilst we endure what must be one of the wettest winters on record I look out of the window on the earliest *Erica carnea* struggling to show some colour in the dreariest of Decembers.

In November last, we spent ten days in France, again visiting the Arboretum des Grandes Bruyères. Bernard and Bridgitte made us very welcome and we toured their extensive heather planting, consisting mainly of *Calluna* and winter-flowering varieties. Perhaps one day we will manage to visit in the season when the garden is in full bloom.

Heather Society members are always most welcome there.

Following on from the successful display at the RHS Hampton Court Palace Flower Show last year (for a report see the 2014 *Yearbook*), The Heather Society have been granted a stand for this year's show, 8–13 July, and, hopefully, we can again attain lots of publicity to promote the benefits of heathers and the Society.

I note that the trade body of garden centres and growers, The Horticultural Trades Association, will be promoting heathers as **Plant of the month** during February in garden centres and nurseries. David Lindo, the "Urban Birder", is the chosen personality and, along with posters, will highlight the plants. Retailers will be encouraged to have good displays of heathers in their centres to kick off the spring season.

The Treasurer is grateful for those who have renewed their subscriptions and for the kind donations some have made to the Society. But he is concerned at the numbers who have not changed their standing orders, so have not paid the full subscription, now £20, and/or have made the payment to the old Bank of Scotland bank account. This has been superseded by our new account with Lloyds Bank, as mentioned in the Autumn 2013 *Bulletin*. UK members were sent a updated standing order mandate with the details of our new account by the Administrator. If you have not changed your standing order



details, please use that mandate, as the Bank of Scotland account is to be closed in the next few months. The Administrator will be sending a reminder to those who have not paid the new rate, to pay the balance.

David Edge

## Society news & events

**Annual Gathering 2014**  
**Royal Victoria Hotel, Llanberis**  
**12–15 September 2014**

Preparations are well advanced for our get-together in September in Snowdonia with its wonderful scenery. Hopefully, we will enjoy some sunny weather.

Visits will include Plas Brondanw, Plas Cadnant and Bodnant gardens. To afford attendees a view of Snowdonia we shall be taking a train from Porthmadog to Caernarfon on the Saturday afternoon. Our speakers include a member of the Snowdonia Society and Mrs Bettina Harden MBE (owner of Nanhoran Park & Gardens).

The AGM will be on Sunday evening and will be followed by the ever-popular 'Open Forum' which allows for discussion of all matters to do with heather. The Council welcomes topics for consideration by the assembled members.

The cost for the whole weekend is £260. This includes dinner, bed and breakfast for three nights, coach and

train travel, lunches, entrances to gardens and all tips. There is an option to attend as a day visitor and the price for this can be arranged by contacting Susie Kay at susiek@gofree.indigo.ie or by phone to 00353 95 43575. For people who have already made their booking **the full amount of £260 per person is payable by 30 June 2014 (please make cheque out to The Heather Society and send to the Administrator who will issue a receipt)**. Please remember, we do not send out individual invoices and the responsibility for paying by the due date is up to those who have booked.

If you have a rare heather or one that you know is no longer available to the general public, **please, please** take some cuttings soon, and bring the resulting plants to our gathering for the annual plant sale. Let us hope that with your support we shall all enjoy our 43<sup>rd</sup> Gathering.

Susie Kay

## Groups' & Members' news

### North East Group

Unfortunately, nothing to report except to wish all our fellow members good gardening in 2014. Did you see the five minute slot devoted to a heather garden, in Monty Don's "Gardeners' World" late last year? Wonders never cease! Maybe we are turning the corner.

Dorothy Warner

### Yorkshire Group

The Sunley Room at RHS Harlow Carr has been booked for 2.30pm on Saturday afternoons, 8 March, 17 May and 27 September. Programmes to be decided.

Jean Preston

### Home Counties Group Visit to RHS Wisley Garden and John Hall Plants

A meeting of the Home Counties Group took place on Saturday 28 September. The event was in two parts; a visit to the National Heather Collection at RHS Wisley then a visit to John Hall's nursery at Headley Down, Bordon, Hampshire.

We met at the café at Wisley, our usual meeting place, at 10.30am. It was good to see a number of members: 11 in total. We were joined by Andy Collins of Wisley. After coffee, we set off for the garden. It was a pleasant day, dry with some sun.

We inspected the various beds. The dry summer of 2013 had clearly affected some beds, particularly those with *Calluna* and there were bare patches. Some plants were flourishing. I noted *Erica ciliaris* 'Bretagne' and *Daboecia cantabrica* 'Waley's Red'. We gathered at the north end of the garden for a group photo in front of a display of *E. manipuliflora* 'Heaven Scent', or was it? The plant has raised some discussion on previous visits but the strong honey scent, flower colour and form suggested that it was. After

our visit to the garden we made our way to the restaurant for lunch.

At 2pm we assembled outside the café again and set off for John Hall's nursery. John had kindly invited the Home Counties Group to visit his nursery as he was having an open weekend to attract members of the public there and of course explain to them why having a heather garden not only provides colour at all times of the year but is labour saving, requiring only a small amount of maintenance and helps to keep down weeds too.

John welcomed us to the large marquee that had been erected. It was a pleasure to meet our vice-president Pamela Lee who had joined us for the visit. Two of Andy's colleagues from Wisley also joined us. John's wife and family members treated us to some lovely cakes and tea whilst he gave us a history of the nursery, which has been established for about 30 years. He also told us about Richard Ide's heathers (see the article in the 2014 *Yearbook*). One of Dick Ide's introductions, *Calluna vulgaris* 'Trinklet', was on display.\*\* John showed us around the nursery and there was an opportunity for members to purchase some of the many heather cultivars that he propagates. It was a fitting end to a memorable day thanks to John Hall and his family.

Barry Sellers

\*\* This plant was subsequently moved to the RHS Garden Wisley for propagation.

**New members**

We welcome the following members who have joined since October 2013.

Janice Leinwebber; Canby, OR, USA  
 Marina Prinz; Vancouver, Canada  
 Ana Laura Kuppler; Bonn, Germany  
 Allan Turner; Pontefract, Yorkshire  
 Pam Fenner; Rumburgh, Suffolk  
 Jennifer Anne Yates; Windermere, Cumbria<sup>1</sup>  
 Heather Montgomery; Windermere, Cumbria<sup>2</sup>  
 Alison Walker; Grasmere, Cumbria<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Erica carnea* 'Jennifer Anne'

<sup>2</sup> *Daboecia cantabrica* 'Heather Yates'

<sup>3</sup> *Calluna vulgaris* 'Alison Yates'

**Heather cuttings services**

Julian Fitz-Earle (Spring Park Nursery The Gatehouse, Moniaive, Thornhill DG3 4HZ, Scotland) is offering large (3cm) heather plugs via his website [www.springparknursery.co.uk](http://www.springparknursery.co.uk). He has *Calluna* and *Erica* in mixed 50s (5 of each variety) for £50, or 100 mixed (10 of each variety) for £100 (price includes UK post & packing). Members can email him at [info@springparknursery.co.uk](mailto:info@springparknursery.co.uk), or telephone 01848-200472 for a current availability list.

Heather Society members will receive an extra 10% if they advise him when ordering. Order while stocks last, as they are quite rare heathers!

He has also added some varieties to the list for the Society's Cuttings

Swap initiative organised by Brian Burling ([brian\\_b51@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:brian_b51@hotmail.co.uk)).

✂

**Eric Davis**

Eric Davis, who sadly passed away last year, joined the Society in 1977 and was a life member. He had a great interest in heathers and grew many in his garden in Kent.

In an article he wrote for *Heathers* 3 (2006), Eric told how he decided to plant out a collection of the Society's "100 Best Heathers" his own garden, because he had been disappointed not to find anywhere where he could easily compare different heather species and cultivars. A photograph of his beautifully laid out heather collection can be seen on the front cover of this *Bulletin*.

Eric remained concerned that there was nowhere in the public domain where interested members could go to view such a collection and asked the Society if they could find a suitable venue, so a similar collection was set up at The Bannut in Herefordshire.

Since this time, a revised list of the "100 Best Heathers" has been produced and, sadly, the Bannut collection is now no more. Eric would be disappointed to know that there is still no collection anywhere on public display which can be viewed by interested members.

**Daphne Everett**

## Tippitiwitchet Log Charles Nelson

**Giftaid**

The Society is entitled to claim giftaid on the subscription of any member who is resident in the UK and who pays sufficient UK income tax to cover the amount of the giftaid – basically that means you need to have paid a minimum of £5 in the last tax year (although if you have giftaided other donations or subscription to other charities, the amount of income tax needs to cover all these giftaided).

Enclosed with this *Bulletin* is a new giftaid form and a pre-addressed envelope; we urge every tax-paying UK members to complete it and return it, *please*. **NB** the person who completes and signs the form must be a tax-payer; couples cannot sign the form "jointly".

**Yearbook 2014 & subscriptions**

*Heathers* 11 should be enclosed with this *Bulletin* – if the yearbook has **not** been sent, your subscription has not been renewed or the wrong subscription has been paid (probably because a standing order has not been amended (see Chairman's piece)). Instead, a reminder is included.

*For UK residents*, please note that standing orders should be paid to Lloyds Bank, and not to Bank of Scotland: *please cancel any existing standing order to Bank of Scotland*.

*For all other members*, not resident in the UK, other instructions were provided in the reminder sent last October. An **indirect** PayPal facility is also possible: please contact The Administrator for details.

**E-mail addresses; yet again, please!**

Many members have personal email addresses – *but* does the Society have it, or have the correct one? For many reasons email addresses change, but we do not often remember to let others know! *Please*, will EVERY MEMBER with an email address, but *who has not been in contact by email in the past 6 months*, respond by sending an email to

**[theheathersociety@phonecoop.coop](mailto:theheathersociety@phonecoop.coop)** to enable us to update our database.

Thank you – please do it NOW!

**Digitizing back-issues**

Making our *Yearbook* back-issues available on the internet via the superb site *Biodiversity Heritage Library* [www.biodiversitylibrary.org](http://www.biodiversitylibrary.org) has now reached the stage where all the back issues are being scanned at the Natural History Museum, London, using the set held by the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew. When available they will take their place on a website which also hold all the works of Charles Darwin and thousands of other significant and not-so-significant scientists. Anyone with internet access will be able to browse the issue up to 2007.

## Field-trip to northern Spain

This trip is eagerly awaited as an opportunity to find a large number of native European *Erica* species within one area. Dr Jaimé Fagúndez has put together a programme that will allow for seeing many species of heather, as well as seeing the scenery and sights of the area around Santiago de Compostela and the whole of Galicia.

To see the whole programme go to: <http://www.dmcgalicia.es/en/heather> where you can also book your place. The cost is €569 which covers hotel accommodation, meals, coach travel and any entrance fees. Attendees are responsible for their own travel to Santiago de Compostela.

If you are considering joining this field trip, please contact me or Jaimé ([susiek@gofree.indigo.ie](mailto:susiek@gofree.indigo.ie) or [jaimed.fagundez@gmail.com](mailto:jaimed.fagundez@gmail.com)).

Time is of the essence and this could be your only chance of viewing at least thirteen different species of heather in one area. An opportunity not to be missed!

Susie Kay

## Mediawatch

In the last few months there has been a bumper crop of heather "mentions", both in the press and on TV.

Last September, heathers were given a three-page article in *Plant heritage* magazine. Entitled "Five favourite ways to use heathers": those ways were (1) in containers, (2) to brighten spring beds (with a picture of some painted heathers!), (3) In a gravel garden, (4) vertical planting, (5) in a wildlife garden. There was a plea for people to "help heather" by buying *named* plants from nurseries or garden centres. There was also a mention of The Heather Society and Forest Edge Nurseries.

On BBC's "Gardeners' World" (11 October), there was an interview between Carol Klein and Matthew Pottage (Garden Manager), in the heather garden at RHS Wisley. As our Mediawatcher, David Plumridge, put it "When you expect the worst, Carol Klein was wonderful. "Heathers – a bright future!" I can scarcely believe that either. I had to 'rewind' to make sure I wasn't hearing things! Sadly, Monty went on to demonstrate his lack of basic horticultural knowledge, so I have felt obliged to email Gardener's World. My dilemma is: "Why does such an apparently knowledgeable gardener as Monty not know that winter heathers – *Erica* will grow quite happily in his neutral soil and give a wonderful long lasting colourful display?"

October's *Which gardening* had an article on planting winter-flowering pots, in which heathers were given their rightful place. One container had

as a centre-piece *Pinus sylvestris* 'Chantry Blue', surrounded by *Erica* × *darleyensis* 'Bing' and 'Kramer's Rote', with an edging of *Sempervivum* 'Blood Tip'. David Plumridge comments: "It's pleasing to note that *Which* now gets it right about winter heathers being lime tolerant".

John Hall (of John Hall Plants) spotted an article in the November edition of *Homes and gardens* – "How to make the most of heathers in your garden". It gave ideas for planting, a variety of uses (living walls, hedges, knot gardens, etc.) and advice on maintaining and pruning. Several 'key' plants were mentioned, with details of where to obtain them. Also pictured were the knot garden and an 'Arthur Johnson' hedge at The Bannut.

In the January 2014 issue of *The garden* there was an article on the Winter Garden in Cambridge University Botanic Gardens, with a double-page spread showing (among other plants) some attractive drifts of pink and white winter heathers. This looked promising! Or perhaps not! A search among the various topics covered in the article revealed not a single mention of heathers – until right at the end when, under the heading "Evergreen leaves for winter lustre", was listed *Erica arborea* var. *alpina* f. *aureifolia* 'Albert's Gold'!

However, in the same issue, Jim Gardiner, in an item on "Winter plants in RHS gardens", did better. In his report on RHS Harlow Carr he wrote

"The renewed heather plantings at the garden entrance should be displaying their winter colours, especially from the many underrated, reliable cultivars of winter-flowering *Erica carnea*, which provide sheets of long-lasting blooms that are virtually impervious to the weather."

Lastly, in the Spring 2014 edition of the RSPB magazine, came a tiny mention in an article about a wildlife garden in Surrey, by Adrian Thomas. In it, garden owner, Jeremy Early says that he "bought a heather plant in 1969, [species not specified]. It is still flourishing today, attracting many species of solitary bee". 35 years old and still going strong – not bad!

## A modest collection of Cape heaths Phil Joyner

As a follow-up to a couple of photographs I provided for the most recent Heather Society CD I have been asked, by Daphne, to introduce my modest collection of South African *Ericas*, better known as Cape heaths. I hope it will encourage more interest within the membership, on the growing of these fascinating plants. However the article does not go into lengthy detail on the methods of cultivation or propagation but mentions the methods briefly.



When Lin and I married it was necessary to keep the garden tidy, if only to retain marital bliss, so I grew a few bedding plants and a small collection of tender perennials, mainly dahlias and fuchsias and also tended a less than pristine lawn, more akin to a wild flower meadow. As time passed necessity for garden tidiness began to turn into an interest in gardening and plants in general and as a consequence of that interest I was given plants from gardening-minded friends. On one occasion I was given a couple of plants of *Erica* × *darleyensis*, a hardy heath. Coincidentally, at a similar time I obtained Terry Underhill's book *Heaths and heathers* through a gardening book club. I can't remember which started my interest in heathers, *E.* × *darleyensis* or the book, or perhaps both, but interested I became, and, to further that interest, I joined the Heather Society in the early 1970s. Just after I joined I came across some plants in a local florist which looked like heathers but with larger and tubular flowers so I made some enquiries with the Society as to whether the reference and photograph of *E. hyemalis* (more correctly *E.* × *hiemalis* [although our Registrar reminds me we should not use this Latin name for any known heather]), in Underhill's book, was a plant similar to those from the florist. The enquiry to the Society resulted in my being invited to the Cape Heath party at the late Dr Violet Gray's house and garden in Surrey and thereafter I

was hooked on Cape heaths. Shortly afterwards I obtained Baker and Oliver's book *Ericas in Southern Africa* to further my interest.

There are other THS members who have, or have had, larger collections of Cape heaths than I currently have and, as far as the UK and Ireland are concerned, at least one member, namely Susie Kay, grows her collection outdoors. That comment is a hint that the Cape heaths are generally not for growing outside, especially in the winter months in conditions that exist in most parts of the UK, where the frost, combined with the wet, will harm the plants irreversibly. The numbers of Cape heaths in my collection have waxed and waned over the years but during that time I have enjoyed the beauty and variation of the Cape heath flowers and their habits of growth. My current collection includes only four species and two hybrids, not a vast collection by any means, but enough plants which, with some of their offspring, occupy a good portion of my glasshouse. My other interest is *Cyclamen* species which take up the rest of the glasshouse leaving little room for over-wintering other tender plants.

The Cape species I grow are *Erica canaliculata* with small white flowers; *E. speciosa* (Front cover) with curved tubular red flowers with a yellow tinge at the tip; *E. ventricosa* with pink bulbous flowers opening out at the ends; and *E. verticillata* with straight

pink tubes. The two hybrids are 'African Showgirl' with slightly curved pink tubes tipped with white, and an unnamed one with curved pink-tipped tubes. All bloom in the winter months, with *E. speciosa* flowering sporadically throughout the year. All the plants will grow tall if given the opportunity with *E. canaliculata* being the plant that will reach for the sky. *E. canaliculata*, *E. speciosa* and *E. ventricosa* from my collection were featured on the recent Heather Society CD. If you wish to play that CD, then have a look.

As a brief introduction to the propagation and cultivation of Cape heaths then, if growing plants are not available they are best grown from seed. There have been references, within Heather Society literature, describing the best way to germinate seed, quite often with the addition of a smoke extract which attempts to mimic the effect of fire which encourages seed germination. Cape heaths can also be propagated by cuttings although some of them are difficult to propagate by this method. As previously mentioned, the plants need winter protection, and as a consequence, mine are grown in pots in an ericaceous compost, so that they may stand outside during the summer, and then, when frosts threaten, be brought into my light, airy and frost-free glasshouse. The compost must be kept moist, not sodden, at all times, even during the winter months as drying out can be fatal.

Well, there we are: a brief introduction to my modest Cape heath collection and I hope that it inspires those members who don't already dabble in Cape heaths to investigate further. If you are interested, the Society's chairman, David Edge, has a small number of plants available for sale and, if contacted, would be pleased to describe the species or hybrids he has available. Contact details for David are elsewhere in this *Bulletin* (inside back cover).

Happy heather growing, whether your plants be European or South African in origin!

### One-upmanship – in Yeovil John Plowman

A near-neighbour of mine has, in recent years, been somewhat smug when he has passed my winter display, street-side. This year I discovered why! In very early November 2013, he had a magnificent display of colour, and had the temerity to tease me about it, for I had nothing to show at this time.

On the defence at once, although I had my suspicions, I summoned as much grace as I could muster, and asked if he would name the variety. With tongue in cheek or not, the owner admitted he could neither name the variety, nor recall where they were purchased.

Back home, a quick glance in Anne and David Small's "Bible" confirmed my suspicions – it was *Erica carnea* 'Jennifer Anne'. Now the search began. With all the local nurseries quickly dismissed, it was a call to our gallant Chairman, but of no avail. I learned that it was a very old variety, at one time also stocked by Diane Jones at Otter's Court, but no longer. A disheartening ring around the country produced negative results, the nearest to success being Rumsey Gardens, Waterlooville, who revealed that the National Trust had recently visited, and taken their entire stock.

In the end, hearing of my desperation, my neighbour offered me cuttings, should I wish to take them, but bearing in mind I am 90 this year, I am hoping to buy some plants, rather more mature.

My appeal goes out to anyone growing this variety who would be prepared to help me. A mere half dozen would suffice. You can contact me via telephone 01935 86201, or email johnplowman@g3ast.fsnet.co.uk.

### Perth's new heather collection Barbara McDonald

A growing and flourishing partnership between Beautiful Perth (formerly named Perth in Bloom) and Perth & Kinross Council is driving forward an

exciting horticultural project to plant a new collection of heathers in the city following the closure of Perth's much-loved Cherrybank Heather Garden.

The Beautiful Perth charity – a voluntary group with an impressive horticultural track record – has worked tirelessly since its formation in 1993 to make the city of Perth a more beautiful place to visit and in which to live and work. Over the years the campaign has won a string of awards in the RHS "Britain in Bloom", "Entente Florale", "Communities in Bloom" and "Beautiful Scotland" competitions, so it came as no surprise, when their expertise, together with officers from Perth & Kinross Council Community Green-space team, married up to establish a new heather collection in a key Perth location. The site chosen was Riverside Park, a well-established and familiar open, public, green space on the east bank of the River Tay within easy walking distance to the city centre. The Park combines three distinct areas – Norie Miller a peaceful and attractive area with tiered water features; Rodney Garden, full of blossoming shrubs, herbaceous and annual bedding; and Bellwood, a wide, open space ideal for family picnics and events. Adjacent to Bellwood is the historic Kinnoull graveyard where Effie Gray, wife of the Pre-Raphaelite painter John Everett Millais, is buried. Historically, the Bellwood area was once the site of

a famous plant nursery where records show the Scots rose was first hybridized.

To date, progress by the partnership on the heather design and planting has been steady – in 2012, 141 varieties were planted; in 2013, 128 varieties, and in 2014 it is planned to add at least another 50 varieties. The ultimate project aim is for a collection of 950 – a challenging target – not for the faint hearted!

Adjacent to the heathers, another project – a long forgotten small roundhouse, uncovered by a team of young people – has been repaired, and its surrounds have been landscaped, thanks to support from the Queen Elizabeth II funding Challenge. Progress work on both projects can be found [www.beautifulperth.org](http://www.beautifulperth.org).

The River Tay, which borders Riverside Park, makes the whole area attractive and photogenic both for residents and the many visitors to the city. However, the open, sloping river banks also make it an attractive area for rabbit burrows, so the new plantings have had to be protected by netting. Riverside Park Heathers is a long-term project, its progress can be easily viewed and accessed by visitors and locals for both pleasure and information. The Park and its surrounds are steeped in the history of Perth, so, combined with the past, Beautiful Perth and Perth & Kinross Council are hoping to build for the

future with an exciting new heather collection for the Fair City.

If any members of The Heather Society are interested in supplying and/or donating plants for the collection, please get in touch with Sue Allen, Perth and Kinross Council, Landscape Architect; her email address is [sueallen@pkc.gov.uk](mailto:sueallen@pkc.gov.uk). (See also Sue's report in our Summer 2013 *Bulletin*, p. 12.)

### RHS and Affiliated Plant Societies meeting Barry Sellers

Richard Canovan and I attended the annual meeting of the RHS's Affiliated Plant Societies held at the Hillside Centre, RHS Garden Wisley, on 13 November 2013. Around 80 members of the various societies attended.

The event is useful to understand and occasionally get involved in the work of the RHS, as well as meeting members of other societies which share similar problems to THS, particularly on declining membership.

The chairman, Jim Marshall, welcomed us and made introductions. Jim Gardiner (Director of Horticulture) talked about the RHS's new structure, its investment priorities, horticultural trials and initiatives and opportunities. These included the Lindley Library and Lawrence Hall as well as improvements at Wisley including a new science building. The Wisley Show attracted a record attendance in 2013.

There was a brief discussion of the trials carried out in 2013 and Plant Society

Events at Wisley. In 2014 and beyond, 35 AGM trials will take place, involving six of the seven Plant Committees. Heathers will be included in future trials.

Bill Simpson and Roy Lancaster talked about the RHS Bursaries. Each year the RHS spends around £95,000 funding around 80 projects. These cover horticultural research, education and historic value. In 2013 Plant Heritage applied for financial support for their Threatened Plant Project and Plant Guardian Scheme.

Mercy Morris talked about National Collections and conserving and sharing plants. She discussed the definition of a National Collection which entails the stewardship of a clearly defined set of cultivated plants that represent part of our national heritage. There are three categories of collection: historic, horticultural and reference. The emphasis will be on conservation. The requirement that a collection holds 75% of *RHS Plant Finder* plants of the species is being dropped. The Plant Conservation Committee is also changing: collections will be seen at the proposal stage.

Collections will be complemented by Plant Guardians, a new scheme for plants that are defined as threatened in Plant Heritage's Threatened Plants Project, or threatened species. This scheme will act as a backup for National Collections, and as a refuge for partial collections. Plant Heritage members will be able to conserve and record single plants and make them available to all via its website. A threatened plant is one which is available from not more than two nurseries in the UK. According to these criteria a significant number of heather cultivars and species would be eligible, as, according to the *RHS Plant Finder*, many now have no suppliers.

Plant Guardians will be required to have at least three back-up plants of each

cultivar or species that they are responsible for. They would also be required to make available material to other members, which is always advisable to ensure many more people are growing the plants. Details will be recorded in a database. This could be useful for those heathers which are threatened as there would be a list of who is keeping what. The Heather Society could encourage members to register their plants for guardianship, as long as they are certain of the plant's origin and authenticity. More details can be found on <http://www.nccpg.com/Plant-Guardians.aspx>

The afternoon session commenced with the RHS Award of Garden Merit. The 2012 list contained fewer plants with AGMs due to reduced availability. AGMs are awarded for proven, consistently excellent, garden performance. Seventy-six heather cultivars (*Calluna*, *Daboecia* and *Erica*) are included in the revised AGM list.

#### AGM criteria

Excellent for ordinary use in appropriate conditions  
Available in the trade at some level  
Of good constitution  
Essentially stable in form and colour  
Reasonably resistant to pests and disease  
Distinct and true to name

Round-table reviews will bring together experts to assess groups of similar plants for an award. A case can be made for those plants that had an AGM removed on grounds of availability but which have been re-introduced and are available again.

The final talk was about "Plants for the future" which was mainly aimed at breeders, showcasing work and developing networks with trade.

In discussion it was proposed that each society have a couple of minutes to highlight what they are doing.

<b>Chairman</b>	Mr David Edge Forest Edge Nursery, Verwood Road, Woodlands, Wimborne, BH21 8LJ. tel: 01202 824387; fax: 01202 829564; email <a href="mailto:davidedge@tinyworld.co.uk">davidedge@tinyworld.co.uk</a>
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<b>Group Organizers</b>	<i>Everyone is very welcome at any local meeting or visit</i>
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**Front [clockwise from upper left]** Cape heath, *Erica speciosa*, November 2012 (P. Joyner); the late Eric Davis's collection of 100 "recommended" heathers (2005); seedlings of *E. carnea* 'Vivellii' (K. Kramer); *Calluna* at John Hall's nursery, September 2013 (Audrey Sprague); Snowdrops with *E. carnea* 'Spring Cottage Crimson', January 2014 (P. Joyner).

**Back [clockwise from upper left]** *Calluna vulgaris* 'Lisbeth' (Johannes van Leuven); Home Counties Group in RHS Garden, Wisley, September 2013 (B. Sellers); part of the new planting of heathers at Bellwood, Riverside Park, Perth, summer 2013 (Barbara McDonald).



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