



**THE
2021**



**IRIS
YEAR
BOOK**

BRITISH DYKES MEDAL WINNERS SINCE 1971

CAMBRIDGE	M Brummitt	1971
SHEPHERD'S DELIGHT	H Fothergill	1972
MURIEL NEVILLE	H Fothergill	1973
Not Awarded		1974
TYRIAN ROBE	C Hall	1975
NO NAME	M Brummitt	1976
ANNABEL JANE	B Dodsworth	1977
COTSGOLD	J D Taylor	1978
ANNIVERSARY	M Brummitt	1979
KILDONAN	B Dodsworth	1980
JILL ROSALIND	B Dodsworth	1981
BIBURY	J D Taylor	1982
DOVEDALE	B Dodsworth	1983
BEWICK SWAN	B Dodsworth	1984
ROMAN EMPEROR	B Dodsworth	1985
Not Awarded		1986
BUCKDEN PIKE	B Dodsworth	1987
WENSLEYDALE	B Dodsworth	1988
EARLY LIGHT	N Scopes	1989
HIGH PEAK	B Dodsworth	1990
WHARFEDALE	B Dodsworth	1991
Not Awarded		1992
Not Awarded		1993
ORINOCO FLOW	C E C Bartlett	1994
Not Awarded		1995
Not Awarded		1996
WHOOPEE SWAN	B Dodsworth	1997
Not Awarded		1998
BERLIN RUFFLES	T Tamberg	1999
PERFECT VISION	C E C Bartlett	2000
DARLEY DALE	Bryan Dodsworth	2001
Not Awarded		2002
Not Awarded		2003
Not Awarded		2004
Not Awarded		2005
ALEXIA	Cy Bartlett	2006
Not Awarded		2007
PETER HEWITT	Jennifer Hewitt	2008
Not Awarded		2009
Not Awarded		2010
STEPHEN WILCOX	Jennifer Hewitt	2011
Not Awarded		2012
Not Awarded		2013
ICENI SUNSET	Barry Emmerson	2014
Not Awarded		2015
Not Awarded		2016
CLOUD OVER CLEE	Jennifer Hewitt	2017
Not Awarded		2018
HEVER CASTLE	Olga Wells	2019
Not Awarded		2020
SPIRIT OF KENT	Olga Wells	2021

BIS



The 2021
IRIS
YEAR BOOK

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www.britishirissociety.org.uk



British Iris Society



@BritishIrisSoc



Iris ensata 'Rowden Begum' © Tor Garden Plants (see pp 46-7)

Acknowledgements:

The Editors gratefully acknowledge the contributions of all the authors and photographers in the production of this edition of the *BIS Year Book*. All photographs are © the authors unless otherwise stated.

Our thanks also go to Jill and Alun Whitehead for proofreading, arranging printing and their assistance in so many other ways.

Front Cover: **left** *Iris* 'Scrambled' MTB © Barbara-Jean Jackson
 middle *Iris foetidissima* var *citrina* © Sue Bedwell
 top right *Iris versicolor* © Julie Scott
 bottom right *Iris* 'Pennywhistle' (sib) © Fern Harden

Back Cover: *Iris* 'Radiant' TB (Salbach, 1936) © Anthony Chu

2020 Year Book erratum: the photograph on p51 is of 'Quaker Lady' not 'Gypsy Queen'.

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PRESIDENT'S LETTER

When researching the details of various Iris/BIS personalities for an article I am preparing for the 2022 Centennial volume, I was impressed yet again by the vast amount of information held on the Web. In the early part of my career in the Herbarium at Kew there were no computers, not even a photocopier, so if you wanted to find out 'things' you located an appropriate article, checked the References section at the end and hopefully this led on to others....and so on. Quite a lengthy process but it could be totally absorbing checking through old and rare items of literature with their evocative aromas of leather and dust! Now many of these tomes are available online and can be viewed or downloaded, often free of charge. Admittedly there are many dangers associated with the internet but I would find it laborious to return to 'the old days' when, to get a copy of the description of a species published aeons ago, one got out pen and paper! The old tomes are still there in the Library and available for those who really must see and touch the original.

This preamble brings me to the point: our wonderful BIS website! These things do not just happen, some members need to have the technical know-how, others have to work out the content and layout, others supply the large amounts of information, photographs, etc. The result is very impressive and my thanks go to all of those who have been involved in setting it up. The details supplied for viewing by anyone indicates an active society undeterred by COVID lockdowns and is tantalising enough to make them want to explore further by becoming a member. Then, by entering the Members' Area of the site, a Pandora's box of information is revealed and an increasing resource of photographs of Iris as the results of the shows, real and virtual, are added. I have found the downloadable *Bulletins* and *Year Books* from 1924 onwards of enormous value. Although there is a set upstairs in a bookcase this searchable archive gives instant access instead of my having to sit on the floor thumbing through the various issues, although I do enjoy that as well. This facility enables reference to each year's list of contents so it's very easy to trace articles about particular topics – and what a wealth of information is contained in those thousands of pages!

The pandemic has been to the detriment of our normal BIS activities; the officers have done well to offset this with online meetings and shows. The latter have been a real tonic and are available for all to see on the website. The successful 'live' AGM indicates a great step towards normality and the events list for our 100th year looks very promising; one can imagine the excitement in getting together at the first show on 5th February. This time we will miss seeing Mary Rawitzer in her familiar position behind the sales table which she has managed with great enthusiasm over the years, but she will, we hope, still be much in evidence. However, before that event we have the Virtual Winter Show; these online shows are a great addition to our programme so our thanks go to those who have made these such a success; they have sustained us through the lockdowns.

We now look forward to the centenary year when all of the Executive Committee's meticulous planning comes to fruition and demonstrates to the wider gardening community that after 100 years our Society is flourishing.

Brian Mathew

Officers and Committees 2022

President: Brian Mathew VMH, MBE

Chairman: John Milner, Meadow House, Baunton, Cirencester, GL7 7BB
Tel: 01285 643 731 Email: john.milner@btinternet.com

Honorary Members: Cy Bartlett, Brita Carson, Sheila Ecklin, Jennifer Hewitt, Sidney Linnegar, Brian Price, Chris Towers, Olga Wells

Secretary: Jill Whitehead, Aulden Farm, Aulden, Leominster, HR6 0JT
Tel: 01568 720129 Email: jill@auldenfarm.co.uk

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Registrar: Rachel Wilcox, 10 Highfield Close, Amersham, Bucks HP6 6HG
Email: registrations@britishirissociety.org.uk

Show Sales: Currently vacant

Social Media: Currently vacant

Website Coordinators: John Milner, Alun Whitehead

Newsletter Editor: Rachel Wilcox, 10 Highfield Close, Amersham, Bucks HP6 6HG

Year Book Formatting Editor: Judi Deakin, Derwen, Brynwood Drive, SY16 2EG
Email: bisyb21@gmail.com

Year Book Commissioning Editors: The Executive Committee
Email: info@britishirissociety.org.uk

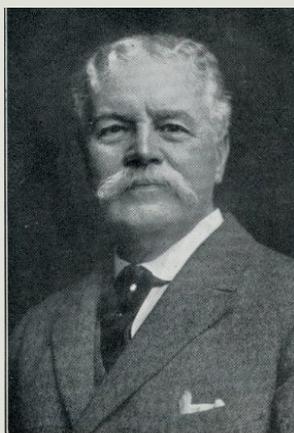
Executive Committee: Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer and the following Committee Members: Steve Baker, Jake Croft, Claire Dawson, Jeremy Handy, Clare Waight Keller, Alun Whitehead, Rachel Wilcox

Trials Committee: Chris Towers (Chairman), BIS Chairman (ex officio), Clare Kneen (Trials Secretary), Jake Croft, Jeremy Handy, Sidney Linnegar, Sharon Evans

Trials Secretary and Recorder: Clare Kneen, Slade Cottage, Petts Lane, Little Walden, Essex CB10 1XH Email: trials@britishirissociety.org.uk

OUR CENTENARY AND CHELSEA 2022

As you can imagine we are very excited about both our centenary year and also our exhibit at Chelsea. The Chelsea team hope they have created a design that will give the public information and yet also delight and pique their curiosity about our Society. The design is based on the history of the Society, the members behind that history and the development of irises over that period. Art is also included, as many of our members have been passionate artists and some Dykes medal winning irises will be displayed. We have been extremely fortunate in the help we have received, not only by members but also various companies. **Moorcroft** as you can see opposite are joining us in our celebration and their specially created BIS collection will be displayed on our stand.



G P & J Baker have also been generous and their contribution is particularly significant as George Percival Baker was not only the founder of that company but one of our founder members. He supported the Society in so many ways, as our 2nd President but also generously donated the original paintings by Frank Round for *The Genus Iris* (Dykes). Some of these will form part of the display as will some of the fabrics created by Baker and his company.

www.gpjbaker.com

Other companies include **The Cotswold Planters Company**, a group of friends who bring together a diverse range of skills to create a classical range of planters which are all hand made in the Cotswolds. They are also passionate about using ecologically friendly materials.

www.cotswoldplanter.com

John Moss, who is based in Herefordshire is creating one of his unusual titanium iris flower heads for use on our stand. Titanium is iridescent and when mixed with copper and/or stainless steel a unique sculpture is created.

www.mossart.co.uk

The irises are being grown by **Claire Austin** and with her extensive experience in growing for Chelsea, they couldn't be in better hands.

www.claireaustin-hardyplants.co.uk

So exciting times ahead!

MOORCROFT

A Potted History of the Moorcroft Iris

The love affair between the iris and Moorcroft design started over a century ago when William Moorcroft created a style of slip-trailed design infused with gloriously bright metallic oxides to celebrate botanical art in the ceramic idiom. An Art Nouveau **Florian Iris** design soon saw the arrival of gold medals from across the Atlantic in St Louis in 1908 to Europe, including a gold medal at the Paris Exhibition in 1925, making Moorcroft a world-wide phenomenon.

The iris was resurrected by Moorcroft's senior designer, Rachel Bishop, in **Iris**, a Collectors Club jug of 1997. Yet, it was not until the post millennium glaze colour palette fully developed, that Moorcroft could properly explore stunning hybrid mixes of colour, with a redolent iris design, **Antheia**, designed by Nicola Slaney to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the Moorcroft Collectors Club in 2009, raising eyebrows. A flurry of iris designs followed, including a design featuring the **Lady Beatrix Stanley** iris in a collection named after this horticultural trailblazer created in conjunction with Moorcroft's longstanding licensing partner, the Royal Horticultural Society.



This year, a **Flag Iris , pictured left, is one bloom in Moorcroft's current collection of miniature vases from Moorcroft designer, Kerry Goodwin, which BIS members can buy for **£78** at www.moorcroft.com/flag98-2 (Usual price **£148**) using checkout code **BIS**. This offer will close at 11am GMT 28/02/22**

For 2022, the year in which Moorcroft celebrate the 150th Anniversary of the birth of their founding father, William Moorcroft, they will host a special BIS event at their Heritage Visitor Centre in late July 2022, complete with a talk by a BIS expert. Moorcroft is also currently working with BIS to create a BIS Centenary Collection as the two great names converge in their landmark year of 2022. Diary dates should also be noted for a BIS tour of Moorcroft's working Arts and Crafts factory in autumn 2022. To register your interest in these events, please email

enquires@moorcroft.com or call +44 (0)1782 820500 and Moorcroft will contact you with further information.

www.moorcroft.com

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

As I write this it seems hopeful that, at long last, we may look forward to a return to more normal activities. Already we have been able to hold a number of group events and the AGM of the Society. The latter took place in Kent where we celebrated the Group's 75th anniversary. We continue to use email and social media to keep in touch and we have decided to run a virtual show in winter as long as there is sufficient interest and support.

It seems that our position in relation to the EU for plant exchange is now very similar to that we face with the USA, with a need for careful preparation of plants as well as phytosanitary certificates and customs documentation. Advice is available on the DEFRA website and the EC can put members in contact with people who have experience where help is needed.

This year Sue and Harry Marshall decided to stand down from the EC; we thank them for their long service to the Society and wish them well in their continuing iris cultivation activities. Clare Waight Keller and Jake Croft have joined the Committee and we welcome them and look forward to involving them in our work.

Awards have been announced at the AGM and, as you will see elsewhere in this *Year Book*, recipients are international. That reflects a desire to reinforce our international links as well as to recognise outstanding contributions closer to home.

We continue to encourage and support the Groups. The Historic Group, a new venture for the Society, goes from strength to strength on-line. We hope that, after its start up was curtailed by the pandemic, we may be able to progress the Eastern Group in the coming year.

Plans are well advanced for the coming Centenary Year and the calendar includes events at Wisley, a Celebration Weekend and AGM at Stratford in September, and a stand at Chelsea with some exciting partners, details of which will be announced over the coming months.

Volunteers are always needed and if you would like to be involved with the work of the Society, especially on communications and events please contact any EC member. If you'd like to be involved in the centenary events please email centenary@britishirissociety.org.uk

I have informed the Society that this will be my final year as Chairman and so a successor is urgently needed. A vacancy exists on the EC, so my successor does not need to be a current EC member but can be co-opted and "learn the ropes" before being elected next September. If you are interested please contact me, my details are in the *Year Book*.

Finally I'd like to record my thanks to all those who through committee work, administration and editing, show and event planning and in myriad other ways support the work of the Society.

All good wishes

John Milner

BRITISH IRIS SOCIETY ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2021

The ninety-eighth Annual General Meeting of the British Iris Society was held at Otford Methodist Church Hall on Saturday 18th September at 11.30am with the Chairman John Milner presiding.

The Chairman welcomed members to the meeting.

Apologies were received from Steve Baker, Sue Bedwell, Helena Butcher, Brita & Tom Carson, Jeremy Handy, Jennifer Hewitt, Chris & Toby Jarvis, Clare Kneen, Sidney Linnegar, Brian Mathew, John Mullen, Wendy & Dick Payne, Mary Rawitzer, Clare Waight Keller and Olga Wells.

The Minutes of the previous AGM held via Zoom on Saturday 19th September 2020, having been printed in the 2020 *Year Book*, were taken as read and as a true record of the proceedings, a copy of which has since been signed by the Chairman.

Matters arising: None

Reports from Officers

a. The Chairman read the following report:

2021 like 2020 has been anything but a normal year. Your officers and other volunteers have worked hard to seek ways to help members and other interested parties engage with the family iridaceae and with others who share interests. This is not a trivial undertaking as we're mostly amateurs when it comes to using tools like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Zoom etc. Nonetheless I think we can claim some modest success.

In particular we owe a great debt of gratitude to those who organised and took part in our virtual shows.

This AGM in Kent will be the first physical gathering for many for all but 2 years, though a few garden visits have already been undertaken recently and it is a great joy to see members "in the flesh" once more. It's also a pleasure to celebrate 75 years of the work of the Kent Group.

I am pleased to report that your Society remains on a stable footing and I am delighted to be able to welcome a number of new members once again this year.

Plans for 2022, your Society's centenary, are now top of the agenda and I urge all members to support the events that are being planned and that are hopefully now in your diaries as a result of information in *Newsletters* etc. If you'd like to contribute in any way or seek information there's a dedicated email address: centenary@britishirissociety.org.uk

The AGM agenda and the Secretary's report highlight that changes are happening on the EC and I firmly believe that such change is essential to

provide new ideas and energy to keep your Society vibrant and inclusive. I make this point not least because I am today completing year 5 as your Chairman and I will not serve more than one more year. A successor is urgently needed and we will leave one co-option post unfilled on the EC to provide an opportunity for someone to step forward and shadow me through my final year even if not currently a member of, or familiar with, the EC.

As I have noted in earlier reports, the Society is critically dependent on volunteers to fill a number of roles and we are grateful to the Members of the Executive Committee who also act as Trustees for the Society's status as a registered charity. We have been delighted to welcome Clare Waight Keller onto the EC and we will be co-opting Jake Croft who has become the latest of our trials garden hosts.

We are keen to recruit more trials garden hosts and trainee judges to support our hybridiser members and it is pleasing to note that younger members are now beginning to breed new irises. We are also grateful to the other officers of the Society, Membership Secretary Rex Harden, Librarian Anne Milner, *Newsletter* Editor and Registrar Rachel Wilcox, Show Secretary Sharon Evans, Seed Officer Christine Jarvis and the judges and trials committee members. We also recognise the regular contributions from other members who support our activities at shows and events.

More volunteers are urgently needed especially to support the *Year Book*, *Newsletter* and events so please get in touch if you'd like to be more involved in the running of your Society, we will ensure that proper support is available from those already involved to ensure that you can enjoy the experience and work as part of a team.

I shan't duplicate the Secretary's report, except to record my thanks to Mary Rawitzer who has been a stalwart at shows and events for many years and is now planning a well-earned rest.

I am pleased to say that most of the plans and ideas for 2021 that I reported on last year came to fruition, thanks to dedication and hard work from a number of people to whom the Society owes a deep debt of gratitude and it is my earnest hope that our centenary celebration in the coming year will be equally successful.

Finally, I would like to thank one and all for your continuing interest and commitment to the Society as we come to terms with the impact of the pandemic and start to look forward.

b. The Hon. Secretary read the following report:

I could start this report by saying where has the year gone to? It certainly does not seem a year ago that we had our zoom AGM; perhaps time is going faster these days!

But the important thing is it has been a successful year for the Society; different from past years, without a doubt, but interesting none the less.

There have been no 'real' meetings or get-togethers for the Executive Committee but I think our zoom meeting skills have improved by leaps and bounds. Mine certainly have and we have still met and conducted the business throughout the year. In many ways it has made it easier to have more meetings as no travel is involved. We said goodbye to Harry Marshall during the year and thanked him for his input and enthusiasm over the past years. We welcomed Clare Waight Keller onto the EC as a co-opted member. More changes are afoot as Sue Marshall will be standing down at this meeting. Again, our thanks are due, not only for her willingness to share her expertise over the past years but also for her contribution to the smooth running of our Society. Of course, our sincere thanks also are due, as she is responsible for the organisation of today's meeting and Kent Group 75th Celebration; this is not the first AGM meeting that she has organised for us, so she is an experienced hand!

Our virtual shows have been an outstanding success. The Winter and Summer Shows both allowed members from around the UK to contribute, in fact from abroad as well. Although it involved me with a good number of very late nights, I was very grateful for the opportunity to 'meet' new exhibitors and I am pleased that they were prepared to share their enthusiasm. We are also grateful to our member nurseries, Claire Austin, Iris of Sissinghurst, Seagate, Woottens of Wenhaston and Yorkshire Irises, who donated prizes for the Summer Show. Our next show is the Virtual Winter Show 2021 and entries are beginning to trickle in for that but more would be appreciated! There will be a prize for the 'Best in Show' exhibit, so even more reason to take part! In 2022 our shows will take a slightly different format as they will be part of our centenary celebrations. The Early Spring Show will take place at RHS Wisley in the Clore Learning Centre on February 5th. It will certainly seem strange to have a real show and Sharon Evans, our Show Secretary will need to dust off the show vases! We are combining the Late Spring and Summer Show as an Early Summer Show and it will form part of the centenary display weekend at the Hillside Centre at RHS Wisley. This is taking place over the weekend of 7 & 8th May and will be our chance to celebrate our history and to look forward to whatever the next years bring. It will be a mix of talks, demonstrations, art and of course iris chat, a chance to meet 'old' friends and hopefully to make new ones. However, several members have requested that we still have a virtual Summer Show, so that will remain a feature and it would be good to have a bumper number of exhibits for all three shows to mark a very special year in our history. As usual, more information and show schedules will be on the website and details will be circulated to all members.

Other centenary events are in place including a celebration weekend based near Stratford upon Avon on the 17th & 18th September, where we hope many of you will join us, as how many chances do you get to celebrate a 100th birthday! There will also be members' open gardens to visit, group events in different guises and a centenary publication which will be launched at the celebration weekend in September. Then of course there is our exhibit at the

RHS Chelsea Flower Show, when we hope to present irises past and present as well as art from our members.

Groups of the BIS have had a bit of a curate's egg type year, some being able to meet more than others. It was unfortunate that the Eastern Group was launched just before the pandemic and therefore meetings have not taken place as they had hoped. The sheer geographical spread of the group has also complicated the situation, but plans are afoot and we hope that the group can now move forward. During the year the Historic Iris Group was launched and is now finding its feet and gaining momentum. Other groups have continued with their events; meetings where appropriate and their own publications. These groups are vital to the BIS and we should thank all those who contribute to their running in anyway. But I am sure I can speak for all the groups and say that any new members would be very welcome! And don't forget that the groups all hope to contribute to the centenary in one way or another, so a good time to join.

Our thanks also go to Brita Carson for editing and formatting another well received *Year Book*, accomplished with her usual enthusiasm and dedication which she has shown over nine *Year Books*, spanning the past eleven years. Although, she has now relinquished this role, she is still using her considerable skills by contributing to the centenary publication. We welcome Judi Deakin as our new Formatting Editor and for this year the EC are acting as Commissioning Editors.

Our bi-annual *Newsletters* have continued to keep us all in touch and our thanks go to Rachel Wilcox for her skills and time in collating these. The 'newsy' emails which John Milner has been collating have also helped greatly and allow us to keep in further contact with our members. Please do remember that if you have items of news or possible articles, then we will always be pleased to hear from you.

Rex Harden has been kept busy as Membership Secretary and as always, our sincere thanks go to him. Our membership figures are now 295 UK and 59 Overseas with 61 new members joining us this year. We welcome all our new members and hope that they continue to enjoy being part of our Society.

All our officers have done a grand job this past year but there is one who we feel deserves a special thank you, Mary Rawitzer. Mary has decided to hang up her boots as our Show Sales Officer, a role she has been doing since 2010. At every show she has been there, not only selling our publications and other merchandise but chatting and encouraging the public to share our passion for irises. She has been an excellent ambassador for the Society and we wish her well, but hope that she will still 'lend a hand' as and when she can!

Of course, no society functions without 'bods' who get on with jobs, who volunteer and help as and when needed and we thank them all. I would especially like to thank all the Executive Committee members for their continued support, and for coping with my rather idiosyncratic use of words.

Finally, publicity; the BBC approached us earlier in the year for suggestions of gardens where they could film. So, emails were exchanged and the result was that on two occasions irises have been featured on Gardeners' World programmes which has resulted in spreading the word a little further. It is hoped that further programmes might follow for 2022, which certainly would be very fitting in our centenary year.

c. The Hon. Treasurer read the following report:

I am pleased to report that for the third year running our accounts for 2020 show a profit and we ended the year with £2,982 more than we started.

Again, Christine Jarvis did well with seed sales and plant sales were good in view of our being able to hold fewer shows.

Our investment income amounted to £760, a considerable sum. However, as you will no doubt be aware, this source of income will be minimal in 2021, and probably for some years to come.

During the lockdown Rex Harden and I managed to get the details together to make a Gift Aid claim for the two previous years. I would, as usual, like to ask all members who can to fill in the Gift Aid form so that the Society can claim this back.

Finally, I would like to thank Rex for his dedicated work in maintaining our membership records so efficiently.

Iris Clarke proposed the adoption of the reports. This was seconded by Rachel Wilcox and was agreed unanimously.

Election of the Chairman

The Secretary reported that there had been no new nominations for Chairman. John Milner was willing to stand as Acting Chairman, he was elected unanimously by the meeting.

Election of Executive Committee Members

The following members, indicated their willingness to continue as committee members: Steve Baker, Claire Dawson, Jeremy Handy, Clare Waight Keller, Alun Whitehead and Rachel Wilcox. The EC would also like to co-opt Jake Croft onto the Executive Committee. The Chairman invited the meeting to elect the EC en bloc. This was proposed by Judi Deakin and seconded by Chris Scott and agreed unanimously by the meeting.

Election of Independent Examiner

Having confirmed her willingness to continue in this role, members agreed unanimously to elect Mrs R Cracknell as Independent Examiner for 2022.

Awards for 2021

The Chairman announced the following awards and reminded those present that this information is also available in the members' section of the website.

The Foster Memorial Plaque to Peter Goldblatt.

The Hybridisers Award to Keith Keppel

An Award of Garden Commendation (AGC) to Loïc Tasquier for his IB 'Hymke'

The Souvenir de M. Lémon to Loïc Tasquier for his BB 'Kénavo'

The Dykes Medal to Olga Wells for her TB 'Spirit of Kent'

Any Other Business:

1. Disappointment was expressed re the lack of variety in the proposed centenary irises; the chairman noted that the Trials Committee had a limited selection of entries to choose from.

2. The issue of regulations regarding seed to our overseas members was raised. The Chairman explained that Brexit had not included any specific arrangements for plants and seeds and the UK was now a third country as far as the EU is concerned. We think that this implies that exchanges with EU (and EEA) will be similar to those with the USA and we are seeking further clarification via the RHS who are working with DEFRA.

There being no other business, the Chairman thanked members for attending and the meeting closed at 12 noon.

Notes to the Accounts (see over)

Accounts are on a receipts and payments basis.

The value of stocks of Publications, Emblemata and Showcards and Equipment has been written down by 10% to reflect an appropriate valuation in the Accounts. In addition, the value of trophies has also been written down by 10%.

At 31 December 2020 1069.97 shares were held in COIF Account No. 2 at a valuation of 17.97 pence per share giving a total value of £19,223.

J. MILNER, *Chairman*

C. L. TOWERS, *Hon. Treasurer*

Independent Examiner's Report

In connection with my examination, no matter has come to my attention which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respects the requirements to keep accounting records in accordance with Section 14 of the Charities Act and to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and to comply with the accounting requirements of the Act have not been met.

Signed by: Rosemary V. Cracknell

British Iris Society
Income and Expenditure Account

Statement of Accounts

for the Year ended 31 December 2020

2019		2020
£	Income	
4,210	Subscriptions	3,907
3	Donations	42
326	Profit on Seeds	189
206	Profit on Sales of Plants	262
35	Profit on Sales of Publications	(54)
137	Profit on Sales of Sundries	(20)
977	Investment Income	760
-	Gift Aid	352
5	Registrations	76
697	West & Midlands	-
6,596		5,514
	Expenditure	
1,156	Postage and Telephone	754
183	Printing and Stationery	43
2,177	Cost of Year Book	1,255
57	Newsletters	-
1,616	Medals and Trophies	1,691
75	Insurance	75
194	Website	183
152	Show Expenses	-
222	Meetings	-
188	Misc./Bank Charges	134
236	AGM	-
-	Dodsworth Lecture	-
100	Audit Fees	-
6,357		4,135
	239 Excess of Income over Expenditure	1,379
2,743	Revaluation of Shares	1,161
2,982	Balance	2,540

British Iris Society
Balance Sheet as at 31 December 2019

Statement of Accounts

2019

£

9,553
5,000
 14,553

Fixed Assets
 Trophies
 Library at Valuation

14,553

20
 0
 105
866

Current Assets
 Stock of Publications and Year Books
 Stock of Sundries
 Showcards and Equipment
 Unissued Medals in hand

991

7,000
 50,000
18,072

Investments
 National Savings and Income Bonds
 COIF Deposit No. 1
 COIF Deposit No. 2

75,072

4,811
 1,082
 464
6,357

Balances at Bank
 Barclays Bank Community Account
 Barclays Bank US\$ Account= 1,428
 Converted at \$1.32 = £1
 PayPal Account

96,973

1,047
504

5,038
 1,047
504

6,589

99,635

Less:

Current Liabilities

Creditors

1,663 Subscriptions in Advance for 2020

1,725

760 Subscriptions in Advance post 2020

815

2,423

2,540

British Iris Society Subscriptions for 2022

Subscriptions are due on January 1. The year runs from January 1 to December 31.

Gift Aid is a great benefit to the Society and can be arranged by those paying via the website by simple checkbox. We would be grateful if others would agree by emailing the Membership Secretary or including a note to that effect with any cheques.

The 3 year membership will no longer be available once existing ones have expired.

UK Members

£15 plus £5 for any number of additional members in the same household. Each member of the household will have full membership rights (or junior membership if appropriate) but each household will receive one *Yearbook* and one *Newsletter* copy.

European Members

£15 plus £5 for any number of additional members in the same household. Each member of the household will have full membership rights (or junior membership if appropriate) but each household will receive one *Yearbook* and one *Newsletter* copy. To be paid in sterling or through PayPal.– Please contact the Membership Secretary (address below)

International Membership

£18 plus £5 for any number of additional members in the same household. Each member of the household will have full membership rights (or junior membership if appropriate) but each household will receive one *Yearbook* and one *Newsletter* copy. To be paid in sterling or through PayPal. Please contact the Membership Secretary (address below)

e-membership

Members who are willing to have all their interaction with the Society by electronic means, including downloading the *Year Book* may pay an annual fee of **£10** via PayPal. Please contact the Membership Secretary (address below)

Commercial Organisations

Commercial organisations are welcome to join the Society for an annual fee of **£21** and may send a representative to meetings and events.

Academic Institutions and Charitable Bodies

May join the Society and send a representative to meetings and events for an annual fee of **£15**

Cheques made payable to The British Iris Society should be sent to the Membership Secretary :

**Rex Harden, 56 Pirton Lane, Churchdown, Gloucester GL3 2SJ, UK
Email: rexharden.bis.members@gmail.com**

The Society's bank details are: Sort code 20-41-12 account 40367842

IBAN: GB20BARC 2042 1240 3678 42

For reference please use: your SURNAME and subs.

NB. Membership cards are available in the members' area of the website.

AWARD WINNERS 2021

British Iris Society Dykes Medal Winner

It has to be a very special plant to win a Dykes Medal and this year the award goes to 'Spirit of Kent' bred by Olga Wells. It was registered in 2015, as a mid-season plant with a height of 42" (107cm). It is quite an unusual colour having copper bronze gold standards and copper bronze gold falls which are adorned with a beautiful mauve flush below a bright orange beard.

The trials assess if a plant performs to a high enough standard to be considered for an award and 'Spirit of Kent' certainly grew well for me over the 3 year trial period. During the last 2 years of the trials we have had extreme weather conditions, very wet winters, icy winds and drought-like springs. Throughout all of this 'Spirit of Kent' performed very well producing good sized clumps and a wonderful show of blooms which were tough enough to be unaffected by the rain and winds we had at flowering time in its final year. It is a plant worthy of a place in anybody's garden and was much admired by visitors to my allotment.

Congratulations to Olga on winning another well deserved Dykes medal. Her first was in 2019 for 'Hever Castle'.

Jeremy Handy



'Spirit of Kent' © Matt Wells

The Hybridisers Award : Keith Keppel

The Hybridisers Award was instigated in 2011 in memory of Margaret Hall, who gave a legacy to be used to 'promote research into the growing and or breeding of iris'. This year it was awarded to Keith Keppel from the USA. Keith was awarded the Foster Memorial Plaque in 1993 and has gained nine American Dykes medals, the first in 1972 for his TB 'Babbling Brook' and the most recent this year for 'Reckless Abandon'. In 1990, his TB 'Skyblaze' won the Premio Firenze in Florence. Keith made his first crosses in 1954 and joined the BIS in 1959 as a Life Member. His registrations cover quite a range including MTBs, SDBs and IBs, but his overwhelming number of introductions is with TBs.



Over the years Keith has been more than willing to share his vast expertise and experiences through articles in our *Year Books* and his work with the American Iris Society. In our 1988 *Year Book*, he wrote an article about his breeding work ending with the following: -

‘Be an iris breeder; how else could you be an explorer, artist, scientist and gambler without leaving your own back yard’

Surely these words are enough to encourage us all to start on the iris breeding road?

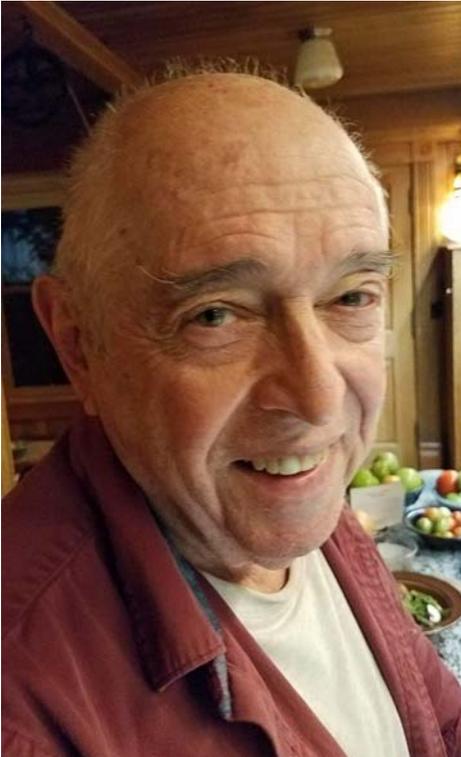
Our sincere congratulations to Keith, with many thanks for all his work over the years and for his company as a BIS member.

Jill Whitehead

The Foster Memorial Plaque

Peter Goldblatt

This year the BIS Foster Memorial Plaque has been awarded to Dr Peter Goldblatt, a leading authority on the Iridaceae and in particular the African representatives of the family. His early career was based in South African universities before moving to the U.S. as a researcher at the Missouri Botanical Gardens, becoming Senior Curator in 1990. There is increasing interest in genera other than *Iris* among BIS members, with a class for 'Other Iridaceae' at the shows and occasional articles in our publications, so it is appropriate that our award acknowledges a researcher who has studied the family for over 60 years. Peter Goldblatt has made his work available to a wide audience in the plant world through an array of monographs and research papers. The monographs are impressively comprehensive, taking in not just details of the plants' morphology but including genetics, pollination mechanisms, history, habitat and conservation status. It is clear in his publications that he knows many of these plants in their living state and enjoys the fieldwork associated with their study. He has described an extraordinary number of previously unrecognised species in a wide range of families; taking just one genus, *Moraea*, as an example I counted over 70 Goldblatt 'species nova'!



Peter Goldblatt's published works include: *The Genus Watsonia* (1989, 1995), *The Moraeas of Southern Africa* (1996), *Gladiolus in Tropical Africa* (1996, 2003), *Gladiolus in Southern Africa* [with J.C. Manning] (1998), *Crocsmia and Chasmanthe*, [with J.C. Manning] (2004), *The Iris Family: Natural History and Classification* (2008). More general works include *Wildflowers of the Fairest Cape* (2000) and the invaluable *Complete Color Encyclopedia of Cape Bulbs* [with J.C. Manning] (2002). In addition, there are many other research papers. Those with a love of the family Iridaceae are indebted to Peter Goldblatt for making his studies available to all.

Brian Mathew

Photograph of Peter Goldblatt courtesy of and © Len Porter

Souvenir de M. Lémon Trophy

This year the award goes to 'Kénavo', a Border Bearded iris bred by Loïc Tasquier, registered in 2017 as an early to mid-season plant with a height of 25½ inches (65cm). Blooms are described as having light pink orange standards and flaring falls of green white in centre, veined green, blending into light orange rim, orange shoulders; each fall is adorned by an orange beard.



'Kénavo'
(Midsummer's Eve x Romantic Evening) x Coral Capers
© Loïc Tasquier

This is a plant that really stands out in the garden, it multiplies well and produces a good number of spikes with good branching bearing many fine blooms. It has a long flowering period and stands up to poor weather extremely well. 'Kénavo' has a very strong reblooming habit and rebloomed for me in 2 of the 3 years that it was on trial. In the second year it actually bloomed 4 times, May/June, Sept/Oct, December and again in January. After all of this it managed to produce another good show of blooms the following spring, enough to be awarded an AGC and the Souvenir de M. Lémon Trophy; a useful plant for those hybridisers interested in breeding rebloomers.

An AGC was also given to 'Hymke' an IB bred by Loïc.

Congratulations Loïc.

Jeremy Handy

THE MOVING HOUSE GAME

We asked several members to play this game with us:

“Imagine yourself about to move home. You can choose to go anywhere in the world, selecting the terrain and climate (or microclimate) for your new garden. The catch is that you can only plant one iris there. Which would it be – and why?”

NB Photographs are the copyright of the contributor unless otherwise stated.

Helen Cullens

If I could go anywhere in the world with one favourite iris, my first choice would be an impracticable one. I love oncocyclis iris and grew *I. gatesii* in a greenhouse for some years. However I would not like to live in Eastern Turkey where I saw it in the wild, so I must make a sensible choice.

My choice is *Iris* 'Edale' (*right*). It is a good-tempered iris with cream flowers of good substance and a yellow beard. I have grown it here in Hertfordshire since the nineties. It was hybridised by Bryan Dodsworth. I would stay in Hertfordshire.



Elena Igonina (Moscow)

Standards of *Iris* 'Gracchus' (Thomas S. Ware, R. 1884) (*left*) form a light yellow egg-shaped dome. Its flowers look like Easter eggs or like a delicate meadow plant globeflower. They look great in a group. These cute flowers make my heart melt!

Joe Dalleywater

The location would be a desert island, the iris would be *Iris* 'Shoot the Moon' (Monty Byers R.1985). If I was to bother collecting iris of a single breeder I'd choose Monty Byers, whose breeding work predominantly focused on space-agers and rebloomers.



'Shoot the Moon' © Chailey Iris

Although maybe not as well known as Monty's Dykes Medal winning masterpieces 'Thornbird', 'Conjuration' and 'Mesmeriser', there's one very good reason I should have it with me on the desert island. Whenever I'm walking past, weeding or removing finished flower spikes from this iris, I can't help but start singing the Tom Waits song 'I'll shoot the moon'. At least on a desert island no one will have to suffer my vocal talents (or lack of).

Christine Jarvis

'Midnight Caller' : Many people might think that this is an odd choice for a 'desert island' iris as it is not rare or difficult but it reliably reblooms for me and when I see such dark velvety iris flowers so surprisingly late in the year it makes me feel particularly happy. This year my plant has put up a flower spike in August, followed by another that is blooming now as I write this towards the end of September and is already showing a third to flower next month.

I first noticed this iris on an autumn visit to RHS Wisley a good number of years ago when it was flowering in the grass border outside the old library building. On that occasion I just thought that it was a bit confused as very occasionally one of my bearded irises would put up a flower spike later in the year. However, on a visit the following year at a similar time, there it was again, with several flower spikes, looking magnificent. This time I thought that was unusual so made a note of the name and looked it up once we had returned home. This is how I found out about remontant irises. I was



amazed to find out that there are many bearded irises that flower twice in the year and could not understand why these were not more widely publicised.

I was concerned that that particular plant might have been lost when the grass border at Wisley was removed to make way for the new Visitor Centre although the visitor information said that the plants that had been removed had been relocated elsewhere within the garden. Most of the grasses were moved up to the heather garden but I was pleased to find this iris in a prominent position in the glasshouse borders having spotted it when it was in flower. This year it seems to have been in flower every time that we have visited the garden.

Although this iris with its deep purple velvety petals would merit a place in my garden in its own right, the bonus of seeing such flowers so unexpectedly later in the year is what makes it my choice.

Sidney Linnegar

My favourite iris, the one I would take with me if I was moving house is *Iris* 'Iris King'. I have had this iris since my early days of being interested in the genus and it has never failed me, flowering over a long period in my garden. My original plant came from Oxford Botanic Garden sometime in the 1960s. It dates from 1907 and was bred by Max Goos & August Koenemann (G & K). It was originally registered as a TB but by the 1939 *Checklist* it had changed to an IB and that seems more the right classification to me. It is also unusual in that it is one of the few bearded iris that has seven synonyms, including *Iris* 'Iris Koening', *I.* 'King of Iris', *I.* 'Roi des Iris' and *I.* 'Remedes'.



'Iris King' © Eleanor Hutchison, AIS

Early on, I got interested in collecting plants with iris in the name, including *Phlox* 'Iris' and I was thrilled when I obtained *Dierama* 'Iris' from the Slieve Donard nursery in Ireland. This year it has been spectacular in flower. 'Iris' is the result of a cross between *D. dracomontanum* x *pulcherrimum*. If I am allowed to sneak in another iris it would be *Iris* 'Patricia Elizabeth Linnegar' which is named after my late wife and was bred by Graeme Grosvenor in Australia. I had the joy of selecting a seedling, and it took me five years to find one that I thought was suitable.

Jill Whitehead

Last time we moved, some 25 years ago, we brought several large van loads of plants with us, so choosing one iris is a tad difficult! However, my choice would be *Iris* 'Kingfisher', a siberian iris. My new home would be in the western part of England and the garden would have a lovely moist area by a natural stream. Ferns would be plentiful and I feel that a siberian iris would feel very much at home! My choice is based on that and also for several other reasons. Firstly, because the iris would give me a long season of interest, good foliage early on, distinctive red buds that snake up through the foliage, beautifully marked abundant flowers, followed by good decorative seed heads.



Of course, it also has a history which I find interesting. 'Kingfisher' was raised and named by Dykes in 1923 and it has grown and flourished in many gardens since that time, so it has a good pedigree. Minimal maintenance might also be a benefit as I would hope to be able to sit and enjoy my new garden and listen to the bird song. Perhaps I might also see kingfishers enjoying the stream? Now that would be bliss!

Jane Stephenson Ingram

The introduction to a 1950s catalogue for the Orpington Nurseries reads; 'You can have a complete garden with irises alone, but you cannot have a complete garden without them.' I've always subscribed to this philosophy, and I'm a fan of historic TBs, so it seems appropriate to choose one hybridized by Orpington Nurseries owner, Olive Murrell.

I first came across 'Cleo Murrell' (*Murrell 1941*) shortly after moving to the West Country in the days when the Kelways iris catalogue was still a box of delights. The description read 'Large satiny flowers of chartreuse green which are deliciously scented'. Irresistible. But the reality is even better – the palest lemon-green with subtle grey-mauve shading and flecking on the falls. The

blooms shimmer, with or without the sunlight. The form is elegant and strong, with standards held quite wide and a delicate central nick in the edge of each petal. It flowers generously for much of the TB season. I also know, to my shame, that it can withstand a lot of neglect, as it languished unattended in a pot behind the greenhouse for a number of years when horticulture had to take second place to some other very active 'hardy perennials'. When it returned to a more favourable spot and flowered again for the first time in many years I felt the same delight that I had when it first arrived some 25 years earlier. If you can have a complete garden with one iris alone, 'Cleo Murrell' might be the one.



Gordon Link

It is far too difficult to choose just one iris as my favourite, but I really like this Siberian, 'Cape Cod Boys', a 2009 introduction by Marty Schafer and Jan Sacks.



'Cape Cod Boys' has violet blue falls and standards with darker veining and gold yellow signals; it also has a slight fragrance.

It is not one we get asked for often on the nursery, maybe because it is quite tall at over 70 centimetres, but we find it a vigorous grower with strong stems, fairly large blooms and quite floriferous with a long flowering period and occasional reblooming. What more could you ask for?

NB 'Cape Cod Boys' is the 2021 winner of the Morgan-Wood Award for Siberian Irises. (Ed)

Michael Barnes

President and Dykes Medal Co-ordinator of The Iris Society of Australia

Deciding which one iris to keep is very much like nominating a favourite child - although last I checked, I'm not responsible for 1100 children, as I am for the 1100 tall bearded iris cultivars I grow!

So what are my priorities when selecting a good garden iris (which does not necessarily correlate with the best show bench cultivar)?

Hardiness, vigour and foliage quality have to top the list- there's 11 months of foliage to consider and only one of bloom. Given the short period that an iris is really looking spectacular, I don't want weather to compromise the flowering, so I'm chasing prolific strong stems with blooms that look delicate but actually have great substance. The blooms need to be strikingly displayed above the foliage, and each spike must have at least ten blooms from four or five bloom positions, opening sequentially and well enough branched not to hit each other or the stem.

Only after all this will I consider the colour and pattern of the flower.

So the favourite? 'New Year's Kiss' bred by my fellow Australian, John Charles Taylor.



Iris 'New Year's Kiss' © John Taylor

The picture doesn't do it justice, but it offers everything I'm after, with a striking silvery blue flower. I'm not usually a fan of rebloomers, feeling that the spring flowers are often compromised, but 'New Year's Kiss' has rebloomed very impressively for me in late summer in recent years, only adding to its appeal.

'New Year's Kiss' won the Australian Dykes Medal for John in 2020, proving that it performs well in a variety of garden conditions across the diverse environment that Australia offers and that it impressed the other judges too.

Jackie Nowak

Out of all the different types in the iris family, my passion is for the tall bearded ones of which I have around forty different varieties, some in my garden at home, the others on my allotment. But, if I were to move house and could only take one variety with me, which one would it be! Gosh, that would be an extremely difficult choice to make. I suppose Suffolk or Norfolk would be a good choice of area (I don't think I would be happy living abroad) as it is not generally too wet there, although maybe a little windy if too near the coast. Only one iris though, hmm.

My first thought was of 'Starship Enterprise', an extremely beautiful and striking iris, but I also really like 'Chasing Rainbows', a lovely shade of pink apricot and orchid-violet. I first set eyes on 'Chasing Rainbows' on a visit to one of Claire Austin's iris field open days when she lived in Shropshire. I think it was a new one for Claire, possibly from America, I'm not too sure, but I never got round to ordering it.

Some years later, I and my long suffering husband, who has accompanied me on several open days to different growers, visited Claire for another iris open day at her new location in Sarn on the Welsh borders.

Some potted irises were for sale on the day and as I looked through them I found just the one pot of 'Chasing Rainbows'. It had obviously been there for a while and was the most miserable looking little rhizome, some of it shrivelled. With some other plants to purchase I took it along to pay. Claire's husband Ric was serving and took one look and said I could have it for free and he couldn't possibly charge anything for it - such a nice guy. I planted it back home not expecting it to do too much, but it grew and multiplied really well. 2021 is its fourth year and it will need dividing but it had 14 flowering stems this year and looked fantastic. So there you are, 'Chasing Rainbows' would have to be the one I would take to my new garden for it is not only beautiful but robust too.



Maybe I would give the others to friends so that they could then gradually, over time, give them back to me.

Julie Scott

What an opportunity! Anywhere in the world taking one of my favourite irises with me! I thought about all of the wonderful parts of the world, and the UK, that I have visited, and the ones still on my bucket list, but I had recurring memories of my childhood, such a happy time, growing up with my brothers and sister in Scunthorpe in North Lincolnshire. I decided my new home would be my old home. I'm going back to my roots (pun intended), to the house where I was born, a three bedroomed semi on the Riddings estate in sunny Sunny.

Standing on an escarpment overlooking the Trent Valley on the western side of the Lincoln Edge, Scunthorpe is an industrial town famous, or infamous, for its steel works. The house is situated at the top of the hill and the back garden is west facing with a good view over the Trent Valley and South Yorkshire. In fact, there is nothing between us and Doncaster to protect the garden from the prevailing westerly winds. The soil is a mixed bag of heavy yellow clay and lighter sandier soil; the pH is neutral.

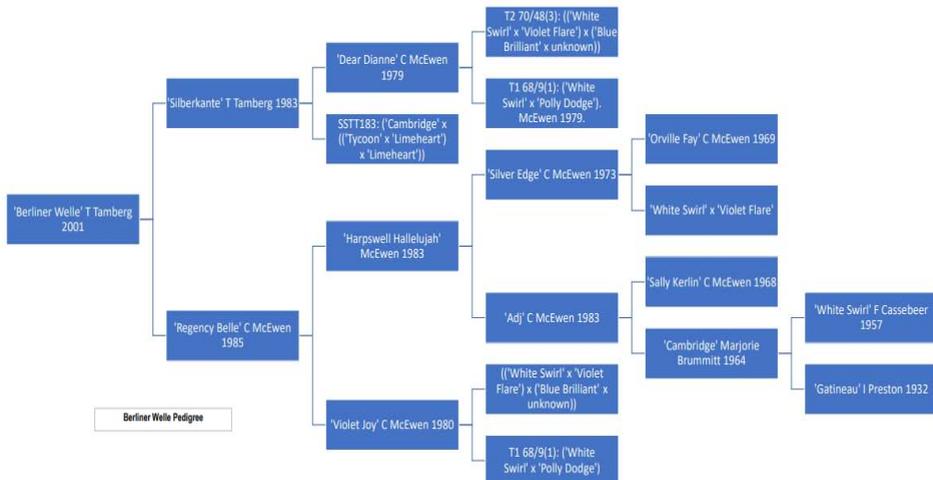
In 2018 the WHO named Scunthorpe as the second most air polluted town in Britain. Fortunately, my garden will have been thoughtfully planted by the previous tenant with several rather lovely Hawthorn Trees, *Crataegus* 'Prunifolia Splendens', *C. persimillis* 'Prunifolia' and good old *C. laevigata* 'Pauls Scarlet', which grow wonderfully well in this area and will help reduce those pesky air pollutants.

Given this environment the iris I take with me is going to have to be a survivor and a 'good doer'. Fortunately those terms fit one of my all time favourites. The iris that I will be taking is *Iris* 'Berliner Welle' (sib) (Tomas Tamberg 2001).



I suppose I should now wax lyrical about its beauty and aesthetic appeal which it has in buckets, with its modern flat form, ruffling, light to medium blue colouring and distinctive white edging and flecking. I do however want rather more than its undoubted good looks. I want an iris that brings a lot to the garden. I believe Siberian iris do just that with their gorgeous delicate looking flowers and graceful vertical foliage that belie the fact that they are as tough as old boots. They don't need frequent

division to keep them flowering and established clumps can be left for years; they just get better! The foliage looks fabulous from early spring to late autumn... who needs ornamental grasses when you've got Siberians in the garden. For winter interest the seed heads dusted with morning frost take some beating. In choosing the actual cultivar to take I have applied the same principles as if the iris was a horse (my other lifelong passion) and followed the lineage.



The 'Berliner Welle' pedigree can be traced back to some of the early great Siberian hybridisers. 'Gatineau' 1932 is one of the first documented crosses of *Iris sibirica* and *I. sanguinea* resulting from Isabella Preston's cross of 'Sibirica maxima' with 'Snow Queen'. Carrying the recessive white gene from 'Snow Queen', 'Gatineau' became an important tool for the Siberian hybridiser.

'White Swirl' (1951 Cassebeer) is, perhaps, one of the most important Siberian cultivars in terms of its use and influence on the modern Siberian; with its wider and flatter appearance and ruffled fall petals, it quickly became the 'go to' iris for many breeders. It can be seen in both 'Berliner Welle's' parents' lines. Another cultivar that appears in both lines is 'Cambridge' 1964, the result of a cross between 'White Swirl' and 'Gatineau' by British hybridiser Marjorie Brummitt, which won her the British Dykes Medal in 1971. Both 'Cambridge' and another Brummitt iris, 'Limeheart', can be seen in Tomas Tamberg's SSTT183 seedling parentage. Currier McEwen iris are also much in evidence on both lines and, given his extensive work in the breeding and development of the Siberian iris, this completes a rather good pedigree.

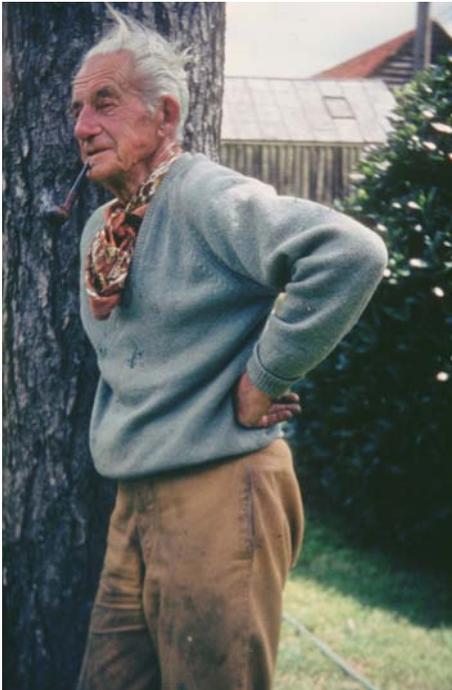
In recent years I have started experimenting with some of my own crosses. As 'Berliner Welle' is fertile both ways, it promises to be the perfect foundation for new Siberian iris. Perhaps we could call them the 'Riddings Strain'!

THE REVIVAL OF BENTON END

LUCY SKELLORN



Benton End courtesy of Benton End House and Garden Trust



Sir Cedric Morris (1889-1982)
courtesy of Sarah Cook

On the outskirts of Hadleigh in Suffolk, Benton End is set for a revival, having been acquired by the Garden Museum in London. It was once home to the celebrated artist, plantsman and award-winning breeder of bearded irises, Sir Cedric Morris (1889–1982).

Morris resided there for over 40 years with his lifelong partner, artist Arthur Lett-Haines. Together they ran the East Anglian School of Painting and Drawing – a sanctuary for a diverse range of influential artists, writers, musicians, and botanists of the 20th century. Lucian Freud and Maggi Hambling were among their students. Vita Sackville-West, Beth Chatto, Paul and John Nash, Elizabeth David, Constance Spry and Benjamin Britten all frequented the house.

In November 2021 the Garden Museum and the Pinchbeck Charitable Trust jointly announced plans to revive and restore Benton End as a new centre of gardening, art, and creativity. The Pinchbeck Charitable Trust acquired the property, a private home since Morris’ death in 1982, and have now transferred ownership to the Garden Museum. The revived Benton End aims to support and inspire artists and gardeners of all ages and to encourage freedom of invention, enthusiasm, and enjoyment, in the spirit of the original ethos of Morris and Haines.



Trustees Philip Mould, Rob and Bridget Pinchbeck and Sarah Cook
 Courtesy of
 Benton End House and Garden Trust

Bridget Pinchbeck says: “The robust and exciting partnership between the Pinchbeck Charitable Trust and the Garden Museum will underpin the future development of Benton End, ensuring that the enchanting story of the house and the characters who inhabited it will not be lost. The aim is for Benton End to be a place of inclusivity and enthusiasm. It was Ronald Blythe, author and friend of Cedric and Lett who best summed up the experience of Benton End when he wrote, “The atmosphere was one of intellectual freedom. Everything was discussed. It was Bohemian in the best sense... The whole atmosphere was exciting and liberating...”, adding that, “The greatest crime at Benton End was to be boring!” We are thrilled that this collaboration has come about and look forward with great anticipation to the next stages unfolding.....”

Cedric Morris famously bred tall bearded irises, naming 90 cultivars, many of which carry the ‘Benton’ prefix. He won the Foster Plaque for Iris breeding in 1949 and in 1955 gained the highest accolade, the Dykes Medal, for his *Iris* ‘Benton Cordelia’ (right © Claire Dawson).

These irises have enjoyed a revival in recent years not least through the dedication of one particular individual - the former head gardener of Sissinghurst Castle, Sarah Cook. She has tracked down over 36 cultivars and holds the National collection. A Chelsea Gold for her display in 2015 catapulted these historic irises to the fore of the



gardening world, becoming widely available in nurseries and a must for any enthusiast.

Morris made a garden as influential in its day as Sissinghurst; it became one of the first modern gardens of naturalistic design, revered by botanists and gardeners alike, developed as it was for the study of the unusual plants he found, chosen with a keen artist's eye. An avid plant hunter, Morris collected many specimens whilst visiting the continent on his winter painting retreats.

During the last 12 months Head Gardener of the Garden Museum, Matt Collins, has been tending to the garden at Benton End and recording 'Cedric's Ghost', a term coined by Sarah Cook to describe the plants that remain in the garden - relics from Morris' reign.



Medlar and Corydalis ©Matt Collins

As is well-known, Morris was fairly unique in appointing a plant executor (friend and horticultural comrade Jenny Robinson) to dig up and disperse the majority of his garden after his death – parcelled away in the spirit of his generosity to friends and plant collectors across the country. Following a recent appeal, their descendants – divisions, seeds, cuttings and seedlings – are beginning to trickle back to the house. From Frances Mount, who assisted Morris in the garden at Benton End through its latter years, we now have plants including dainty *Anemonella thalictroides*, *Geranium malviflorum* and *Iris foetidissima* var. *citrina*. Fiona Bonny, who also gardened with Morris, has kindly donated, among others, divisions of pretty *Asphodelus lutea* and an intriguing giant hogweed. From further afield arriving by post - beautifully packaged bulbs of *Narcissus* 'Cedric Morris' and the two snowdrops born of Benton: *Galanthus* 'Benton Magnet' and *G.* 'Cedric's Prolific'. These were sent by Jane Rowlinson of fantastic bulb specialists, 'Morlas Plants' in Shropshire, suppliers of rare snowdrops and erythroniums, predominantly.

Though the intention is not to return the garden to its former incarnation, or to attempt to mimic a time and a certain energy that cannot be recreated, these plants form part of the story of this plantsman's garden in Suffolk and it's enlivening to see some of Benton End's floral residents repatriated.

The Garden Museum plans to begin work renewing Morris' garden in 2022. Redeveloping the house will be a longer-term project, aiming to restore

Benton End's post-war bohemian glamour and atmosphere, to build an exhibition gallery and spaces for learning dedicated to the art of the garden, and to make the building more accessible. Garden Museum Director Christopher Woodward says: "This would not be a rural outpost of the Garden Museum. The new Trust will be a hybrid of the Garden Museum and the heritage of Benton End and its neighbourhood. It will not be a museum, but once again a house where things happen."



Cedric Morris *Irises and Tulips* 1935 courtesy of Philip Mould & Co.
Cedric Morris Estate

Work to preserve the house and garden is ongoing, ensuring that the rich history of Benton End is not forgotten and that the house and garden can be open to the public in future years. To support the project please sign up to regular newsletters at www.bentonend.co.uk and follow @bentonend on instagram.

CULTIVATION OF BEARDED IRISES

CLARE KNEEN

As a small child I lived in a Victorian house with an established garden. In fact, some parts of the garden would have benefitted from rejuvenation, such as the rather congested iris borders. Two irises, one purple and one brown, had clearly been growing in the same borders for many years and the ground was solid with rhizomes. Despite the congestion the irises continued to flower every year and I loved them.

Once I had grown up and had my own home, I started gardening. This naturally involved buying plants to enhance my garden, and, of course, that included irises. I bought several different cultivars and took them with me from house to house in my early married years.

When I moved to Slade Cottage 35 years ago, I planted them in the garden and watched them grow and bought some more. Eventually, as they grew, they needed division. I dug and split them, and always had more than I could fit back in the space where they had grown. I started by giving them away to friends. Then as the irises grew and I bought more, I started selling them, giving all my takings to various charities. After several years of charity sales and plant stalls I chose to swap my full time job for a diploma course in horticulture and at the end of that course I started selling plants for myself.

Bearded irises like to grow in sunny positions, preferably in well drained soil, but always with their rhizomes in the sun. I garden on clay soil over chalk, and although this isn't ideal for bearded irises it doesn't mean that the irises won't grow well; it does mean that boggy parts of the garden should be avoided. It also doesn't mean that the only place for bearded irises is in a south facing border, but they will flower better if they get quite a bit of sun on their rhizomes through the summer to build up flowering potential for the following year. Iris rhizomes need to be planted on the surface of the soil, slightly higher in clay soil and slightly lower in sandy soil. As the rhizomes need sun for the plants to flower well, in a mixed border it is important that the plants around the irises don't shade the iris rhizomes.

Inevitably, some iris cultivars are more vigorous than others and the plants will grow at various rates but will need to be divided between 3 and 5 years after planting. The point at which the plants need to be lifted, split and replanted can be decided by noting how well they are flowering. They should flower better from year to year and when they flower less well than the previous year it is time to dig them up and split them. If the reduction in flowering isn't obvious the plants can be left until they are clearly flowering less well than previous years.



This photo shows a clump of 'Holidaze'. The portion to the right was replanted the previous year, the area to the left of the photo was not. The part of the clump to the right (replanted) is growing better and flowering better than the portion to the left, which is congested.

Once you have decided the irises need to be split, you should wait until after the plants have flowered; any time between the end of flowering and September will generally be alright for this task. The dwarf bearded irises will flower first, and can be divided first. It is easiest to dig the plant up and split it when the weather is dry, just because the soil will be dry and the process won't involve getting covered in mud. On the other hand, it will involve minimal watering if the weather is wet after replanting. Obviously British weather is rather variable and this job may need to be done in weather conditions which aren't ideal. Dig the whole plant out if you can, or at least a large chunk.



Dig up a whole plant—or as much as you can



The rhizomes will have growing portions, with fans of leaves, new shoots and roots growing from the rhizome. Older pieces of rhizome will have dead roots, or these roots will have decomposed entirely. Older portions of rhizomes which have no leaves, shoots or roots can be cut off cleanly with secateurs and discarded.

The growing end of the rhizome should have shoots, roots and at least one fan of leaves. At this stage the leaves may be vastly larger than the rhizome and roots, and will need to be trimmed to avoid 'windrock' once the iris has been replanted.

Left: Rhizome with growing shoots and roots

I generally make a short fan shape, which is aesthetically pleasing. If the roots are overly long they can be trimmed to a manageable length at this stage too.



Pieces of rhizome ready to be replanted



Newly replanted rhizomes

Once the iris has been divided and trimmed it is ready to replant. A position where the soil will be reasonably well drained and where the rhizome will get sun for at least some of the day without being shaded by other plants is required. If the soil is very light, sandy soil then the iris should be planted deeper into the soil, partly covering the rhizome. If the soil contains clay then the rhizome should be planted a bit higher in the soil. If I am planting in a garden border, I would plant rhizomes of tall bearded irises about 30cm apart, but on my allotment I plant a bit closer within the same clump and leave extra space between clumps so that each cultivar remains separate. Vigorous irises can extend their rhizomes considerably each year and essentially it is ideal to leave enough space for each rhizome to have space for 3 or 4 years growth, which will need experience to judge.

If rain is not expected shortly after planting, then the irises will benefit from watering in. After watering in, and if the weather includes some rain, bearded irises generally don't need to be watered. Even though I live in dry East Anglia I don't water any established bearded irises.

I also find that the irises don't need feeding, but if any irises are not flowering then feeding might be helpful. A high potassium fertiliser, such as a tomato food, is appropriate, and should be used in early spring after the irises start into growth. If I have any wood ash, I use that to feed my irises, sprinkling it over the soil surface and lightly digging in. I find irises generally trouble free, partly because I live in dry East Anglia and only in very wet summers do I get a problem with fungal spotting on the leaves. The rabbits and deer leave them alone, although just after replanting the wildlife can tug them out of the ground before deciding they are inedible.

If you grow remountant bearded irises, then there is a bit of extra work involved. I find on my allotment that I get reblooming irises coming into flower whether I pamper them or not. If you have irises which are not remountant they won't rebloom whatever you do. To have the best chance of

flowers from remnant irises wait for a couple of weeks after the main season of blooming, and then feed (with a tomato food) and water them. And then hope that they will rebloom before the frosts damage the buds.



Within the bearded irises there is considerable variation, with dwarf irises beginning to flower here in mid-April most years (dependent on the weather), up to the tall bearded irises which flower into mid June, and then remnant forms reblooming up to November. Bearded irises can be one of the most rewarding plants to grow, and a little care when planting will be repaid with fabulous blooms each summer. This year I have had one of the best years' flowers, and one of the best rebloom seasons ever, probably due to suitable weather conditions in this part of the country, rather than any extra work on my part. I like to think I give the irises a good start when I plant them, and then I get to appreciate a fabulous display which lasts for nearly two-thirds of the year.

Above: The remnant TBs started to rebloom in August this year

Below: The allotment in the main flowering season



Iris rutherfordii Mart. Rodr., P. Vargas, Carine & Jury

Stephen L. Jury

The University of Reading has long held an interest in the flora of Morocco and a joint expedition with the Natural History Museum took place in 1974 with a view to starting the production of the first complete Flora of the country [capital F = the book, lower case f = vegetation]. The North African region had been allocated to the NHM with Tropical Africa to the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew under Lord Morton's Agreement carving up the world between the two neighbouring London institutions. However, this project was not to be, for though the British had a good reputation for Flora production, the French objected, even though they had given up their military occupation in 1956 and handed back Morocco for King Mohamed V to return from exile and unite the country with former Spanish territories; it looked as if any possible grants would not be forthcoming. This changed after a Moroccan student, Mohamed Rejdali, had graduated from Reading University with an MSc in plant taxonomy and later a PhD and had become a professor and head of the Département d'écologie, Institut Agronomique et Vétérinaire Hassan II, Rabat. Subsequently, a collaboration started including two Darwin Initiative awards and a European Union grant 1992–1996, the last also involving the University of Seville and the Botanic Garden and Institute in Barcelona, to produce a plant checklist with keys of Northern Morocco (Valdés *et al.*, 2002). In June 2004, immediately after the University's examinations had been dealt with and before graduation, I finally got to organise a University of Reading/Natural History Museum botanical expedition to Northern Morocco. This was with Mr Ronald Rutherford (working with me in the Reading Herbarium), plus Dr Mark Carine and Dr Fred Rumsey, both NHM botanical staff and Reading Plant Sciences graduates, and in collaboration with staff at the Institut Agronomique et Vétérinaire Hassan II, Rabat who provided a vehicle, driver and Mohamed Ait Lafkih, a technician renowned for his botanical knowledge, that of the country and his language skills.

On 14th June, the party discovered a blue *Iris* at 93m altitude in Nador Province, NE Morocco, 'Gareb' area on Michelin maps, 13 km from Kariat-Arkmane on the coast road N16 to Ras-El-Maa, a remote part due south-east of the Spanish enclave of Melilla and north of the Kbdana Mountains. It was in grassy fields and pastures on conglomerates. Three herbarium specimens were collected, one for each of the three participating institutions. Back in the Reading University Herbarium, Ronald Rutherford and I realised that this was not *Iris serotina*, an *Iris* species that I had encountered flowering in August in Spain in the mountains of Jaén Province on an earlier plant-hunting trip. *Iris serotina* has been recorded in Morocco but I have not seen any convincing herbarium specimens.

I knew that Jorge Martínez was studying for a PhD on the Xiphium irises at the Real Jardín Botánico, Madrid and so loaned our specimen, number 334, for a definitive identification. Jorge Martínez's research was in preparation for the account of *Iris* being made for *Flora iberica* (covering Spain, Portugal, Andora and Gibraltar) by Professor Manuel Crespo of the University of Alicante (Crespo, 2013) who had already undertaken a considerable amount of molecular and other studies on the genus.

They undertook a visit with Spanish botanists to the area in June 2006, found our *Iris* and obtained further material and so enabled subsequent detailed morphological, phylogenetic and karyological research. They cultivated both this *Iris* and the Spanish *I. serotina* in their greenhouse (our expedition collected no suitable living material) and showed the differences were well maintained. This was supported by different ecological requirements and phenology.



Iris rutherfordii photographed in Morocco when originally collected on 14th June 2004

They confirmed that our *Iris* was new to science, and we named it after Mr Ronald Rutherford, who had been a member of the expedition, and published it in the journal *Candollea* of the Jardín Botanique de la Ville de Genève (Martínez Redríguez *et al.*, 2009) where a key to species in *Iris* subgenus *Xiphium* is also given. Madrid employs an outstanding botanical artist, Juan Castillo, who illustrated *Iris rutherfordii* in our paper and later *Iris serotina* (as *Xiphion serotina*) in *Flora iberica* as well.

However, the story does not quite end there for significant additional fieldwork in Morocco and molecular research has led not only to the genus *Xiphion* of Miller being recognised in *Flora iberica* (Crespo, 2013) but another species being described from the Tangier

peninsula, *X. heracleantum* by Martínez Redríguez & Crespo (2013) based on an old collection of 1802 by Schousboe from Djebel Kebir, Tangier (*Schousboe 138* with specimens and thus types in the herbaria of the Natural History Museum London, Kew, Nice and Paris). The name refers to the nearby Pillars of Hercules. They also made the transfer of *Iris rutherfordii* to the genus *Xiphion*.

This paper was followed up by another one, well-illustrated in colour and published in 2014 (Crespo, Ángeles Alonso, Martínez-Azorín, Vicente, Villar & Chambouleyron, 2014) which reported extra localities (Djebel Bouhachem) for *X. heracleantum* and showed it more related to *I. junceum* (both have yellow flowers) and that *I. junceum* did not occur in Morocco and was "restricted to Algeria, Tunisia and Libya, with some localities in Sicily and northern Italy where probably is not native and has apparently not been collected in the last decades; former citations from Morocco and southern Spain are to be disregarded" (Crespo *et al.*, 2014).

When I first looked at specimens of these Xiphiums, I found them impossible to identify with certainty for they were not well preserved. It is good that with molecular research we are now getting to understand them so well.

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MY ARIL IRIS BREEDING

LARS HØPFNER

Lars started The Aril Society International Seed Exchange some 17 years ago and is now their Seed Exchange and Advertising Manager. He has also been President of the Danish Iris and Lily Society. Lars' aim, which he achieves most years, is to have iris in flower outdoors at his home in Denmark during every month.

For novice iris enthusiasts like myself, Lars has kindly included an appendix explaining some of the terms and abbreviations used in his main article. JD

How it all started

I have been growing iris from seed since 1980, but in Spring 1995 I visited a friend, Budde Christensen (Gardener and Seed Exchange Manager in The Universities Botanical Garden, Copenhagen at that time). Budde showed me a treasure in a glass showcase, *Iris auranitica* in flower – I was hooked at once.

Soon after, I became a member of The Aril Society International (ASI) and in contact with Geoff Wilson, UK and Adam Fikso, USA as my mentors.

My hobby is and has always been to see how new things grow from seed without any protection at my place in Denmark. We get lots of rain year-round (+400 mm in average per year) and often have bare frost in the Winter. Last Winter I registered down to -17 degrees C without any snow cover.

I am not using a greenhouse to grow my seedlings, but a cover (plastic tunnel). Here they are kept in their first dry season or two in the middle of our Summer and then from October to the beginning of March so that they



I. auranitica © Rafael Diez Dominguez, SIGNA



stay dry and get no rain water. They are all growing outdoors and are moved from their pots to the garden when they have been in flower for their first time. They are transplanted in the Summer dormant period. It normally takes me 1-3 years to get a seed into flower.

2021 seedlings © Lars Høpfner



11-18 OGB ©Lars Høpfner

Survival of the fittest: The less aril 'blood' content the easier the iris is to grow. This is not a hard or fast rule, but a good rule of thumb. Also, in general, the more Regelia content the easier to grow; the less Oncocyclus content the easier to grow.

I grow all kinds of pure arils and arilbreds in fine unwashed hill grit. The only Aril related hybrids I am able to grow without any protection outdoors year-round are some of my own OGB+,

OGB, OGB-, RB+, RB, RB- hybrids + three OGB, one RH and one RC hybrids I have got from other breeders. I am of course losing some newly planted-out seedlings every year, but I have at least seen them in flower and have been able to use their pollen on plants that are surviving in the garden.

All the pure arils O, OH, R, RH, OG and RC are kept in pots always, until they have developed to a large clump – large enough to be divided into smaller pieces, so there is enough to make a test in the open garden. The rest is still kept in a pot to ensure survival.

Here at my place in Denmark I am not able to grow pure arils, OGB+ and RB+ in the open garden without Summer (July and August) and Winter (from when the frosts start November/December, January and February) protection (dry covered). But there are no rules without exceptions. I also have a few that in Winter 2021 survived -17 degrees C bare frost without any protection!



I. sari form CSCN 6692 © Lars Høpfner

Aril and Arilbred Terms and Abbreviations



© Lars Høpfner

An Aril is the white/cream appendix on the seed of an Aril iris (photograph left). There are two Hexapogon subsections involved in this – Oncocyclus and Regelia iris. Both belong to the bearded iris, but they occur naturally where it is very hot, so the rhizomes should be kept under the ground, at least 2-3 cms deep.

All these irises are also crossed together with other kinds of bearded iris. These are often referred to by the following abbreviations:

The Aril Classifications

only recommended for experienced growers.

O = Oncocyclus – aril species – generally from desert environments.

R = Regelia – aril species – generally from dry mountainous environments

OH = Onco hybrid – cross involving only oncocyclus irises.

RH = Regelia hybrid – cross involving only regelia irises.

RC = Regeliacyclus – cross involving only regelia and oncocyclus iris with a regelia phenotype.

OG = Oncogelia – cross involving only oncocyclus and regelia iris with an oncocyclus phenotype.



I. stolonifera (Regalia)
© Lars Høpfner



OGB 'Burning Love' (Høpfner 2021)
© Lars Høpfner

The Arilbred Classifications are irises with both aril and non-aril bearded (eupogon) iris heritage.

OB = Oncobred – a hybrid containing both and only oncocyclus and eupogon irises (No Regelia 'blood').

RB = Regeliabred – a hybrid containing both and only regelia and eupogon irises (no Oncocyclus 'blood')

OGB = Oncogeliabred – a hybrid containing a combination of oncocyclus and regelia and eupogon irises. OGBs are the most commonly grown Arilbred iris!

How much ARIL BLOOD is in an Arilbred will generally indicate how easy they are to grow. There is a designator in the description that tells this:

- | | |
|--|------------------|
| Less than 1/2 Aril – indicated by a minus sign | OGB-, OB- or RB- |
| 1/2 Aril – indicated by no sign | OGB, OB or RB |
| Over 1/2 Aril – indicated by a plus sign | OGB+, OB+ or RB+ |

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NEW NATIONAL COLLECTIONS OF IRIS

This year we have been fortunate to see three new National Collections of Iris approved by Plant Heritage. In Suffolk, Steve Baker holds the National Collection of Suffolk Irises pre-1985 (including Morris, Long and Chadburn introductions). Viewing is by appointment and details are on the Plant Heritage website.

The other two collections are both in Devon and both celebrate the work of John and Galen Carter. The Rowden Collection is at RHS Rosemoor and the Rowden Nursery Plants National Collection at Tor Garden Plants, previously the Rowden Nursery.

ROWDEN NURSERY PLANTS

EMMA ROBERTSON

It's been a whirlwind couple of years for us since opening Tor Garden Plants. The nursery was created by John and Galen Carter over 35 years ago and once held a National Collection of water iris. When John and Galen came to retirement we were fortunate enough to have the opportunity of taking on the nursery, reopening under a new name in 2019.

We are now 3 years in and what a rollercoaster it has been, mainly starting a new business during a pandemic. Whilst it has at times been difficult, it has also been incredibly rewarding and we are so excited to have been recently awarded National Collection status for the Rowden Nursery Collection. With 115 taxa, the collection includes plants that were bred at the nursery and carry the Rowden name. The majority comprises a fantastic collection of iris including Rowden cultivars of *I. laevigata*, *I. pseudacorus*, *I. versicolor* and *I. ensata*, with 94 Rowden named iris in total. There are still a few we don't have yet and we are working on tracking them down.

Our long term aim is to bulk up all of these plants, making them available to our customers to enjoy in their own gardens. There is no better way to conserve a collection than to make sure the plants are thriving in as many places as possible. We are very excited that the history of the nursery and the plants associated with it are now being conserved in their original home. Moving forward we want to continue the tradition of breeding new iris at the nursery with particular focus on the water iris. In comparison with tall bearded iris or *Iris ensata* for example, there is still a reasonably small selection of water iris cultivars available.

A growing part of our business is undertaking pond design and planting plans. It is useful to have a good palette of iris to choose from to suit different pond styles and settings. Height, form, colour and longevity of flowering are key in choosing which iris to use. Some are suitable for large pond and lake plantings, like *Iris pseudacorus* cultivars, whilst others are perfect for small garden ponds, like *Iris versicolor*, which are floriferous whilst not invasive.

The one positive that came from the lockdowns was that it allowed us to spend more time with the iris when they were in flower. From studying the collection closely, really getting to know the plants and seeing their individual qualities it allowed us to choose some parent plants that we wanted to work with and to collect the seed pods after flowering. Personally I am attracted to the delicate colour and subtle veining of *I. versicolor* 'Rowden Madrigal' whereas my husband, Tom, loves the vibrancy of *I. versicolor* 'Rowden Jingle' and would like to enhance the red colouring.



'Rowden Madrigal'



'Rowden Jingle'

Many other seeds we collected at random from both *versicolor* and *laevigata*, just to see what exciting things might pop up. Our first lot of seedlings are coming through strong and we are eagerly anticipating the first flowers.

After the water iris have finished flowering throughout the 8 nursery ponds, the next display comes from the *Iris ensata*. These are happiest in our big flower beds created from filling in one of the ponds with sixteen tonnes of clay top soil and a load of manure mixed in. My favourites from the Rowden Collection include *I. ensata* 'Rowden King' and *I. ensata* 'Rowden Begum'. Both have a real elegance and look great when planted en masse.



'Rowden King'

I must admit I prefer my *I. ensata* with quite a simple form, not too far removed from the species. I think the Rowden *ensatas* are a special collection with large blooms, intricate detail and have a simple elegance that I admire.

We hope to conserve this collection for years to come and hopefully add to it over time.

Open Day: Sunday 5th June 2022 10-4

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Pictures from a Visit to Rowden Gardens with the Cornwall Garden Society 2013

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***Iris* from Curtis's Botanical Magazine Part 4**

Brian Mathew

A more detailed introduction to this series of articles, giving historical details of the *Botanical Magazine*, appeared in the 2018 *Year Book*.

William Curtis's famous journal made its debut on the 1st of February 1787 and has continued in an unbroken series ever since. It is probably the oldest botanical periodical still being published and is thought to be the world's longest surviving magazine in colour. *Iris* has been a popular subject with the *Bot. Mag.* over the years with about 150 species featured to date. It would be impossible to cover these in one article for the *Year Book* so they have been divided into their subgenera and series and they will be reviewed here in these taxonomic groupings. The first three articles looked at the *Bot. Mag.* illustrations of *Iris* species of subgenus *Hermodactyloides* (the Reticulatas) [Part 1], those of the series *Sibiricae* and *Spuriae* [Part 2] and those of Section *Iris* (the 'Pogons') [Part 3]. The articles provide extracts from the original texts combined with comments based on more recent knowledge. In Part 4 we explore the *Bot. Mag.* coverage of the species of section *Lophiris* (the 'Evansias'). Grateful thanks go to Tim Loe who has sourced good copies of many of these illustrations for reproduction here.

Part 4. *Iris* from Curtis's Botanical Magazine: section *Lophiris*

Chronological order of publication:

1. *I. japonica* [publ. as *I. chinensis*] Plate 373 (1797) by Sydenham Edwards
2. *I. cristata* Plate 412 (1798) by Sydenham Edwards
3. *I. tectorum* Plate 6118 (1874) by Walter Hood Fitch
4. *I. milesii* Plate 6889 (1886) by Matilda Smith
5. *I. gracilipes* Plate 7926 (1903) by Matilda Smith
6. *I. wattii* Plate 9590 (1939) by Stella Ross-Craig

1. ***Iris japonica*** Thunb., Trans. Linn. Soc. London 2: 327 (1794).

Bot. Mag. plate 373 (1797) [as *I. chinensis*]. Artist: Sydenham Edwards. Engraver: Sydenham Edwards or Francis Sansom. Text: William Curtis.

This, the most well-known of the Asiatic species of *Lophiris*, was described as a new species, *I. chinensis*, by Curtis in 1797 as seen here in Plate 373, so this illustration is in effect a representation of the type specimen. However, unknown to or overlooked by Curtis, Thunberg had three years earlier named it *I. japonica* so that name takes priority. These two geographical epithets raise the obvious question: is it Chinese or Japanese? The revised edition of Jisaburo Ohwi's *Flora of Japan* (1953) states: 'Wooded hills; Honshu, Shikoku, Kyushu; common. China.' This gives no hint as to whether it was an introduction from China into Japan whereas the next, *I. tectorum*, is noted as being a 'Chinese plant but long-cultivated in Japan'. *Iris japonica* is certainly native in China and widespread according to the English edition of

Flora of China Vol. 24 (2000), occurring in at least 18 of the provinces. As all those gardeners who have cultivated the species will know, it is very vigorous in its rate of vegetative increase and is thus very easy to propagate and pass on from one person to another; it quite possibly reached Japan in early times along with other ornamental plants from China and well ahead of Carl Peter Thunberg who collected plant specimens there during his stay of 1775-6.



Iris japonica

The material used for the *Bot. Mag.* illustration was apparently derived from a collection made in China. Curtis noted that “The public are indebted to Mr. Evans of the India-House for the introduction of this plant from China, where it is a native.” This was Thomas Evans (1751-1814), an employee of the East India Company, who had a keen interest in gardening and used his contacts to acquire exotic plants which he cultivated in Stepney, London; some of his contacts were in Guangzhou (Canton), China. Curtis further noted that “It flowered last year [1796], at different periods, for the first time, in many collections near London.....Mr. Thomson, Nurseryman of Mile-End, at the close of the year, had it growing very luxuriantly in the open ground; but the severe winter of 1796-1797, in which the thermometer at Brompton [i.e. where Curtis had his Botanic Garden] was three degrees below 0 [i.e. minus 19.4C], destroyed it”. 1796 weather records show that in London minus 21C was recorded on Christmas Eve and the R. Thames was frozen.

The plant used for this plate may well have been grown at the Brompton Garden although it is said to have been in cultivation several years earlier; the 2nd Edition of Aiton’s *Hortus Kewensis* (1814) records its ‘first trace in the English gardens’ as 1792.

Evans introduced several well-known plants and he is remembered in the names of some of them including *Begonia evansiana*; the British botanist Richard Anthony Salisbury described a genus for him in 1812, renaming Curtis’s *Iris chinensis* as *Evansia chinensis*; this was subsequently used as the name for a subgenus or subsection of *Iris* and they are still popularly known as ‘the Evansias’.

The illustration by Sydenham Edwards captures all the distinctive features of *I. japonica* including the stoloniferous method of spreading; as Curtis says: “it differs from all other known Iris’s, in having a root perfectly of the creeping kind... by which it is rendered very easy of propagation”.

2. ***Iris cristata*** Aiton, Hort. Kew. 1: 70 (1789).

Bot. Mag. Plate 412 (1797). Artist: Sydenham Edwards. Engraver: Sydenham Edwards or Francis Sansom. Text: William Curtis.

The beautiful dwarf North American *Iris cristata* had been in cultivation for over 30 years when featured in the *Bot. Mag.* It was described in detail by William Aiton in 1789 in the catalogue of plants cultivated at Kew, the *Index Kewensis*, and reported to have been introduced in 1756 by Peter Collinson (1694-1768). Collinson was a wool merchant with a love of gardening whose London-based firm traded with North America and this enabled him to acquire plants and seeds through his business associates. The family garden at Peckham and later his own at Mill Hill (now part of Mill Hill School) were noted for their rich collections and it was said that there was no garden in the whole of Europe that could match his collection of rare plants from around the world. He was friendly with a wide range of botanists and other scientists including John Bartram who started the first botanical garden in North America, in Philadelphia. He collected many plants for Collinson who in turn was generous in distributing them to others in Britain. Bartram was also highly regarded as a botanist by Linnaeus, another of Collinson’s botanical contacts, who named the genus *Collinsonia* (Lamiaceae or Labiatae) in his honour.

The painting by Sydenham Edwards captures the plant’s characteristics perfectly and shows a feature that Curtis stresses, that ‘it appears to increase much in the same way as most others of the genus with this difference, that when it grows luxuriantly it throws out longer shoots’. On the matter of cultivation Curtis notes that *I. cristata* would not succeed at all in a dry soil and needed a moist situation with the protection of a glass cover in severe weather. It does appear that winter wet can be one of the main problems (and molluscs!) with cultivation in the UK but given well-drained soil and light shade it is a delightful species in all its various colour forms, including white.



Iris cristata

3. *Iris tectorum* Maxim., Bull. Acad. Imp. Sci. Saint-Pétersbourg xv: 380 (1871).

Bot. Mag. Plate 6118 (1874). Artist and Engraver: Walter Hood Fitch. Text: Joseph Dalton Hooker.

As with *I. japonica* it is questionable whether *I. tectorum* is a native Chinese or Japanese plant. It is very widely cultivated in both countries; however J. Ohwi's *Flora of Japan* (1953 ed.) states that it is a 'Chinese plant long cultivated in Japan, frequently grown on the roof of straw-thatched houses'.



Iris tectorum

It is worth quoting Hooker's account of the material used by Fitch for this plate: 'Although the plant here figured came from Whampoa [probably a district of Shanghai] in China, where it was cultivated by Dr. Hance, Her Britannic Majesty's Vice-Consul at that port, there can be no question but that it is the Japanese *Iris tectorum* of Maximovicz, which grows in fields about Yokohama in Japan, and is likewise cultivated by the Japanese.' Henry Fletcher Hance (1827-1886) was a British diplomat whose interest was the study of Chinese plants; he served in Hong Kong, Canton and Xiamen as Consul over many years so would have had plenty of opportunity for his explorations. Although professionally a diplomat, Hance was also a knowledgeable and respected botanist who named and described many new species including *I. speculatrix*, published by him in the

Journal of Botany in 1875. Interestingly he thought that some of the examples of *I. tectorum* were distinct enough to be named as a separate species which he called *I. tomiolopha*, an unfamiliar epithet meaning *cut (i.e. dissected) crest*. Hooker, however, comments on the variability of the species so this name is reduced to synonymy. As a mark of respect for his work the genus *Hancea* (Euphorbiaceae) was named in his honour in 1875 by Seeman.

The plant from which Fitch prepared the painting was attributed to a Mr. Bull [probably William Bull a botanist/nurseryman in King's Road, Chelsea] "which was raised from seeds sent by Dr. Hance from his garden in Whampoa, and which flowered in April, 1874". Unusually for *Bot. Mag.*

nothing is said about its cultivation but it is not a difficult plant in the open border and is very frost-hardy. On a personal note, I (BM) can vouch for this. In Beijing *I. tectorum* is often to be seen planted in parks and in roadside beds. In winter the ground is frozen to a considerable depth and as hard as iron so I was surprised to see the rhizomes apparently unharmed by this; but they were totally dry as there is almost no rainfall in Beijing at this time of year and a relative humidity of around 40% (London 70-90%). Any lack of success in the UK could well be due to winter wet.

4. ***I. milesii*** Baker ex Foster in Gard. Chron. n.s. 20: 231 (1883).
Bot. Mag. Plate 6889 (1886). Artist: Matilda Smith. Engraver: J.N. Fitch.
Text: J.G. Baker.

The specimen from which Plate 6889 was prepared was sent in May 1886 by Mr Richard Irwin Lynch who was the Curator at Cambridge Botanic Garden. Lynch had been a student at RBG Kew, where he had excelled, then became Foreman of two separate departments before being recommended by Sir Joseph Hooker for the post at Cambridge. In *Iris* circles he is known for his work *The Book of the Iris* (1904) which is both botanically valuable and full of horticultural information for the gardener. He sent a considerable number of plants to Hooker for inclusion in *Bot. Mag.* and Vol. 143 (1917) was dedicated to him. The RHS recognised his talent by bestowing on him the Veitch Memorial Medal and their highest award the Victoria Medal of Honour; the Kew Guild elected him as their President.

As to the subject of the illustration, this was named for George Frederick Miles (known as Frank) who was an artist and gardener, although his paintings did not involve plants but portraits of stylish females of the late 19th century; the quality of these paintings earned him the Turner Prize in 1880. It was Sir Michael Foster who first named and described it as *I. milesii* in the *Gardener's Chronicle* of 1883. Foster was a botanist and keen gardener and communicated with many of the influential horticulturists, nurserymen and botanists of the day. He specialised in *Iris* and often commemorated his acquaintances when naming new species and so we have, for example, *Iris willmottiana* (after the famous gardener Ellen Willmott) and *I. warleyensis* (after her garden, Warley, in Essex), *I. bakeriana* (J.G Baker, botanist



Iris milesii

of Kew Gardens), *I. tubergeniana* (C.G. van Tubergen, nurseryman) and *I. ewbankiana* (after Rev. Henry Ewbank, enthusiastic gardener and botanist on the Isle of Wight).

The first collection of *I. milesii* was made in the Himachal Pradesh in 1876 by Sir Dietrich Brandis, a German-British botanist of great renown specialising in the forestry of India. In his text Baker states that ‘This interesting new Iris was received in seed by Mr Frank Miles from the Kulu and Parbutta valleys of the North-Western Himalayas, and first flowered in this country in the summer of 1883’.

Iris milesii is a successful garden plant requiring a position that will not dry out excessively in summer. Its main drawback is the fleeting nature of the flowers although the inflorescence is branched and several flowers are produced in succession over a period of weeks from each set of bracts. The Plate does give a good indication of the habit and of the dull lilac/pinkish shade of the flowers; it is not a showy species!

5. ***I. gracilipes*** A. Gray, Mem. Amer. Acad. Arts ser. 2, 6(2): 412 (1858). Bot. Mag. Plate 7926 (1903). Artist: Matilda Smith. Engraver: J.N. Fitch. Text: W.B. Hemsley.

In the text accompanying the illustration of *I. gracilipes* W.B. Hemsley draws attention to the “distinct crest on the lower part of the blade and claw of the outer segments” although unfortunately this is not apparent in the painting. However there is no doubt that this is the species under review here as there is no other quite like it and its describer Hemsley was an experienced botanist. William Botting Hemsley (1843-1924) started working at RBG Kew as an improver and worked in various roles until becoming Keeper of the Herbarium and Library. He described and named many new species and was awarded a VMH by the RHS.

The epithet *gracilipes* means ‘slender foot’ – in this case the peduncles or flower stalks but really the whole plant has a slender appearance with narrow leaves and small delicate flowers.



Iris gracilipes

The plant depicted here was cultivated at Kew, having been “procured from Mr. Max Leichtlin in September, 1902, and it flowered in pots in a cold frame, and also in an open bed during last spring. Mr. R. I. Lynch (referred to under *I. milesii*, see above) sent flowering specimens from Cambridge in April”.

Iris gracilipes is not a difficult species to cultivate, given a slightly shaded position in leafmould-rich soil and not allowed to dry out excessively in summer. It also makes a good subject for the alpine house.

6. *I. wattii* Baker ex Hook. f., Fl. Brit. India 6: 273 (1892).

Bot. Mag. Plate 9590 (1939). Artist: Stella Ross-Craig. Engraver: Lilian Snelling. Text: J.R. Sealy.

It was Kew botanist John Gilbert Baker who first suggested the name *I. wattii* based on a specimen collected by George Watt in the Indian state of Manipur; the name was subsequently validly published by Joseph Dalton Hooker in the multi-volume *Flora of British India*, hence the citation Baker ex Hooker. The text for this illustration was provided by Kew botanist Joseph Robert Sealy who was married to the artist Stella Ross-Craig whose botanical illustration appears here; they were both great supporters of *Curtis's Bot. Mag.* and this was recognized in Volume 182 which was dedicated to them.

Sealy writes that “This beautiful and remarkable iris was introduced into cultivation by Major Lawrence Johnston as a result of his journey to China with the late George Forrest in 1931. Major Johnston found plants growing near an irrigation channel on the way to the sulphur springs in the neighbourhood of Tengyueh [now Tengchong* in Yunnan], and dug up rhizomes which he subsequently planted in his garden near Mentone, France. From Mentone the species has been sent to gardens in this country, and it is to Lord Aberconway of Bodnant, Tal-y-Cafn, N. Wales, that we are indebted for the material figured here”. He further comments that at Bodnant the plant reaches six feet in height. This is due to the stout aerial leafless stems produced by this species, looking more like bamboo stems, crowned by a fan of leaves and the inflorescence. The *Bot. Mag.* illustration here by Stella Ross-Craig shows off the habit perfectly. As Sealy says, the stemmed habit distinguishes this *Iris* from all others except *I. confusa*, a related species described by him in the *Gardeners Chronicle* in 1937. The latter is however altogether less stout with narrower leaves and much smaller, paler flowers but it can still reach four feet when growing well. Both are tender over most of the UK but do well in the milder areas of the West and South-West. A humus-rich soil in semi shade seems to offer the best method of cultivation, or a slightly heated glasshouse or conservatory.

*The climate in Tengchong is described as being mild, dry and sunny while summers are warm, rainy and usually overcast. This may assist would-be cultivators to assess their chances.



Iris wattii

George Watt (1851-1930) was a Scottish physician-botanist who specialized in studies of the economic botany of India; the results were published in his multi-volume *Dictionary of Economic Products of India* (1893), perhaps the most significant work to have been compiled about natural commercial products. He was also employed in 1881 as Medical Officer to the Burma-Manipur Boundary Commission during which he had the brief to collect botanical specimens, presumably including the future *I. wattii*. Various plants were named for him including *Primula wattii*, *Aster wattii*, *Oreosolen wattii*, *Begonia wattii* and many others.

1940 AND ALL THAT

JOHN MULLEN

It is summer 2020. For days now Spitfires and Hurricanes have flown overhead here in north Kent to mark the Battle of Britain eighty years ago. 1940 was also a memorable year in nearby Orpington, home to Olive Murrell and her famous Iris Nursery, when that summer she was awarded the Dykes Medal for her iris 'White City'.

The war would never be far away. Pilots were scrambled night and day from nearby Biggin Hill airfield to combat the Luftwaffe attacks. London and the docklands were key targets but Orpington and other residential suburbs were also targets to sever the vital road and rail routes leading to the coast. The Orpington Nursery survived some close calls; abroad, however, the renowned nursery of Goes & Koenemann, given over to war-time food production, was destroyed in the closing assault on the Rhine.

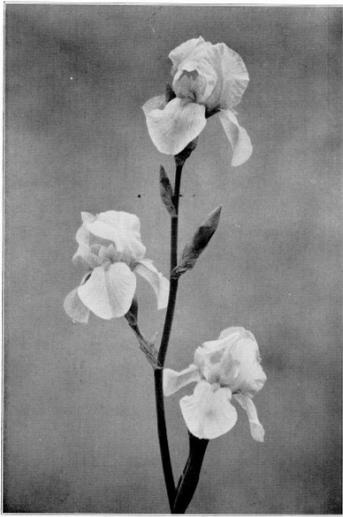
Coincidentally, in the very same month of Murrell's award, June 1940, the war would bring some passing fame for the leafy residential suburbs nearby, when a young family arrived overnight. A tall young man, deep in thought, would be seen pacing the garden by evening and was collected by car in the morning. He had just addressed his nation from the BBC in London and as General de Gaulle would lead the struggle to liberate France. The rental agreement advised the tenant 'to keep the garden in good order', not a problem for Madame de Gaulle, a keen gardener wherever she went.



De Gaulle, 1940 ©Alamy Ltd



Olive Murrell and her iris nursery were already well known by 1940, her connections and interests ranging worldwide since the Twenties, particularly in France and America, ever exchanging ideas and importing new varieties, bringing the best of both to her nursery from abroad. She regularly visited French nurseries, particularly the Cayeux nursery, as did her contemporaries, until the outbreak of war.



IRIS "WHITE CITY"

Photo by N. R. Gould,
by kind permission of the R.H.S.

From the 1940 Year Book

By 1940 'White City' had been in the making for some time. The original cross was made in 1932 from 'Pageant' and 'Pervaneh'. Ideally she sought a taller 'Pervaneh' to carry the large bloom already achieved. Seed from the cross had germinated by 1934 and, following the upheaval of moving the nursery, digging up clumps of iris seedlings and barrowing them the short distance to the new site, 'White City' was to flower in 1937.

Although it bloomed quite early, thankfully Olive had one last good spike left to exhibit at the 1937 Show where it won a Silver Medal. At first sight, many presumed that it must have been bred from American stock; the blooms so big and the stems so tall and robust? A child

of the mighty 'Purissima', surely, enquired Geoffrey Pilkington at the Show. No, no, there was not a drop of American blood in its veins, she proudly confirmed.

Some years later, iris hybridizing and pedigree were the subject of an educational display of some note put on by the, then recently formed, Kent Iris Group at the Iris Show. For some time their members had felt that the public wandered around the big shows, bewildered by the array of beautiful blooms, but not necessarily aware of how irises past and present had developed. They therefore decided to select a Dykes medal winner and gather the family together on stage. 'White City' was their choice, naturally.

Members had anxious moments getting the relatives together, if still around, were they? In the end some were kindly provided by donors and one grandparent, 'Aphrodite' no less, was rushed into the hall only shortly before the judges got going. The generations, now finally assembled, all in correct formation and linked with attractive ribbon, impressed the judges who thought it the best 'amateur' exhibit at the 1949 Show and the Kent Group lifted the Runciman Challenge Cup.

Some twenty years earlier this trophy had also been awarded for a somewhat similar educational display of as much interest to the public as to the amateur hybridizer, when a Mr. Long demonstrated the amazing results of various crosses, including quite visible evidence that 'a seedling may go back many generations for its most pronounced characteristics and appear to ignore largely those of its immediate progenitors.'

Uncharacteristically, Olive seemed to struggle to describe the iris to her own satisfaction. Having read through her descriptive notes for the *Year Book*, she thought she had not done ‘this lovely iris’ justice, sounding somewhat exasperated, when finally declaring that ‘although it is termed ‘white’, it is not white, nor is it blue – it is quite distinct, and to be fully appreciated must be seen and studied in the flesh.’

Many were happy to do so, not least one observer, who admittedly venerated white varieties as a class utterly apart and declared that ‘the sight of a large clump of ‘White City’, standing tall and straight, with no hint of support, with cool, clean, perfectly distributed flowers, no frills, no fripperies, completely self-reliant, imperious and serene is the highlight of any garden.’

We have some decent clumps of ‘White City’ on our village allotment gardens but who else might grow it round this way? Time to look around. First stop a fine local Victorian house in the village thought to have some irises. Two were growing by the stone steps to the entrance. They turn out to be ‘White City’ and the other the dark ‘Sable’, a close contemporary, growing old together and both happened to receive their awards in 1940. The occupants of today, a barrister and his wife, were grateful to be now informed of this legacy.

At a Produce Show in a nearby village, a fellow vegetable grower had earlier told me ‘White City’ grew on a little allotment garden down in the valley below: ‘I don’t grow irises myself but I remember the name because my father and I used to go to the dog races in the White City stadium in London’. I did find it there next summer, all alone by the rhubarb and, promisingly enough, rhizome cuttings were neatly planted nearby. As I cycled home, I passed a memorial to a young New Zealand pilot. His Spitfire had come down in the field nearby in September 1940.

And in Orpington itself? The Kent Iris Group in its heyday helped plant many irises in the local Priory Gardens, a large public space, including varieties originally bought long ago from the Orpington Nursery and then passed on, many



Under the trees at Priory Gardens 2021
© John Mullen

by then having lost their labels admittedly. Today the remnants of that large planting in 1996 have long been moved into a small box-hedged bed.

It is now largely untended and, but for two other surviving old varieties, 'White City' was flowering there alone under a tree the day I visited. The two other irises were in bud. When I cycled past a week later they were now in flower and looked to be old varieties as well, one a bright yellow, the other a light blue. The local authority is hard pressed to manage all the local parks and play areas of this large London borough but with some voluntary help and advice these few remaining irises, a suitably nice mix of colours, might well be refreshed and propagated.

In the meantime, Olive Murrell's 'Whitehall' has now come my way and should flower next year. I must find another variety to make a tidy trio of her irises, be happy with that, growing and giving them away.



'White City' towering above our allotments at Crockenhill © John Mullen

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Celebrating the 75th Anniversary of the Kent Group

The Society's First Group

BY MINA NORMAN

THREE Iris Society Members living in Kent (Mrs. Murrell, Mr. James Birrell and Mr. Anthony Drewett) had long felt the need for some local association which would enable enthusiasts to pursue the interest and pleasure of irises more comprehensively, not only in the flowering season, but during the long winter months as well. So in the autumn of 1946 they met and decided that their idea might appeal to others. They obtained the blessing of The Iris Society, and a letter was sent to its members in Kent suggesting that they should meet, form a Regional Group, and draw up a programme.

The response was good, a preliminary meeting was held in December, 1946, and two further meetings were held during the winter at members' houses, at each of which over twenty people were able to meet each other, to enjoy discussions, and to exchange ideas in an informal and friendly atmosphere. To one of these Mrs. Anley brought her collection of lantern slides, and these, with the talk she gave, brought a reflection of summer into the icy mid-winter afternoon.

A visit was made in spring to Mr. G. P. Baker's noted garden at Sevenoaks where iris species, among them *vicaria*, *orchioides* and *unguicularis* were in bloom.

At the Iris Show at Westminster the Group staged an educational exhibit of about two hundred spikes, and in the competitive classes awards were made to Mrs. Murrell (Katherine Dykes Memorial Bowl), Mr. G. P. Baker, and the Rev. Dudley Benbow.

A week later the Group held its own seedling show at Orpington, and Mrs. Anley and Mr. N. Leslie Cave judged the exhibits and awarded the first prize, a silver cup presented by Capt. Lipscomb, to Mr. E. C. Goulton of Swanley for a very fine lavender-blue self.

Visits to the gardens of Mrs. Anley and Mr. H. J. Randall completed the season's activities.

During the year the Kent Group has shown a steady increase in membership, a small library has been formed, and six News-Letters have been published. The Iris Society made a foundation grant of £5 and presented a copy of the A.I.S. *Check List* to this, the first of its Regional Groups.

Members have found the meetings of the Group stimulating, and the beginners all agree that their knowledge has been increased and their ambition fired by this contact with others who share their love of the iris and who award her pride of place among the many beauties that grace the "Garden of England".

Celebrating the 75th Anniversary of the Kent Group



Founder member James Birrell



Ernie and Thelma Naylor, 1985



Thelma's plates, Early Spring Show 2008
©Alun & Jill Whitehead



Anne Oakley and Mary Tubbs
Florence 1991



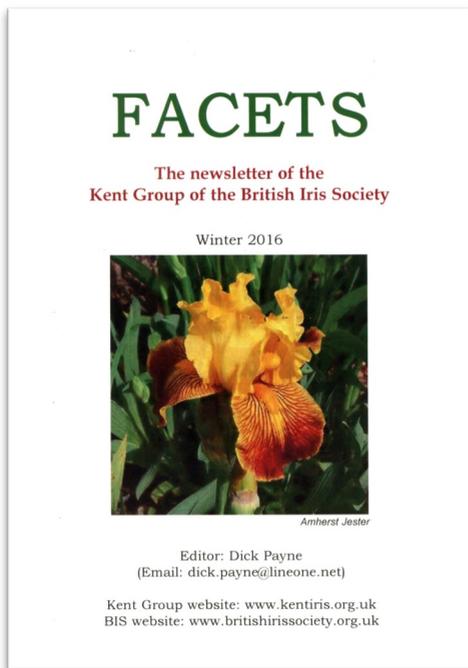
Kent Group Members at the 2006
American Iris Society Convention,
Oregon

Celebrating the 75th Anniversary of the Kent Group



The Kent Group Display for the BIS 90th Birthday Celebrations

© Alun & Jill Whitehead



At the BIS Iris Convention 2007



Helena Butcher BIS 90th 2012



CENTENARY SHOWS AND CELEBRATIONS

Our centenary year will start with our **Early Spring Show** which will be held from 10.30—3.30 on Saturday, February 5th 2022 at the Clore Learning Centre, RHS Wisley, GU23 6QB. This is where you have the chance to show off your early flowering iris and other Iridaceae. At 12 noon members will be able to tour the alpine yard, not normally open to the public.



© Alun & Jill Whitehead

On Saturday 7th and Sunday 8th May 2022 we will be in the new Hilltop Building at Wisley for our first **Centenary Celebration Weekend**. Open 10—5.30, this will be a chance to interact with the public and promote the BIS as a society.

We hope very many of you will take part in the **Centenary Show**, combining the Late Spring and Early Summer shows. There will also be talks, demonstrations and many informative displays, including from the BIS groups. Come along and explore, chat with other members and make a day of it by looking around the Wisley gardens.



The Well-Being Garden © Alun & Jill Whitehead

Show schedules are on the BIS website. BIS members will be able to gain free entry to RHS Wisley for these show days on production of a valid BIS membership card. The concession will apply to the member only; any accompanying non-members will have to pay the usual Wisley admission fee.

Our **Exhibition at RHS Chelsea**, May 24th-28th, promises to be really exciting, showcasing the history of both the genus and the Society alongside displays from some very special partner companies.

On Tuesday afternoon, 26th July the West and Midlands Group is hosting a **Garden Party** at Birtsmorton Court, near Malvern, Worcs WR13 6JS. This medieval, moated manor house and garden has a rich history and seems a very fitting place to celebrate this special BIS birthday. The £10 price tag, includes entry and afternoon tea. Everyone welcome.



Three days later on Friday 29th July, we are invited to the **Moorcroft Heritage Visitor Centre**, Burslem, Stoke-on-Trent, ST6 2DQ for a talk by



BIS EC member, Jake Croft on the History and Culture of the Tall Bearded Iris. In October, at 10.30 on Tuesday 18th, you can learn more about how the pottery is made with a **Tour of the Moorcroft Factory**. We will also be able to meet the designer of the special BIS Centenary Collection that Moorcroft will be launching at Chelsea.

The final BIS event of our centenary year will be our **Second Centenary Celebration Weekend**, this time at Stratford Manor Hotel, Stratford upon

Avon on Saturday 17th and Sunday 18th September 2022. Saturday's programme will start with our AGM and will be followed by a series of four talks. These will include topics on historic irises and some of the developments that have occurred in iris breeding over the past 100 years. We will be launching the **Centenary Book** and the day will end with an



optional **Centenary Gala Dinner**. Sunday's programme will feature a visit to the gardens at Admington Hall as a finale to the weekend. Further information on talks, costs and options will follow in due course. Stratford has been chosen as a central location to give the wider membership a chance to attend and will be a real opportunity to hear from some interesting speakers and meet like minded people.



Admington Hall, Shipston-on-Stour



Details for booking will be sent out in good time. It should be noted that all events will be subject to any COVID restrictions that may be in place.

If you would like to help with any of the Centenary Celebrations please contact:

centenary@britishirissociety.org.uk



CENTENARY BOOK

With the centenary of the BIS falling in 2022 – as you cannot fail to have noticed! – many people have been beavering away to make it a very special year for all our members.

One project, which we hope will be a lasting tribute to the Society and to all those who have contributed to its success over the last hundred years, is a Centenary Book, which we plan to launch at the September weekend. This will include articles from some of the leading irisarians on both the history and the future of the genus, a comprehensive look back over all the winners of the UK Dykes Medal, and biographies of the key figures over the years. The geographical and special interest groups, both existing and those sadly no longer operating, will also be featured, along with many other contributions on all aspects of our subject.

This really will be a must-have in the library of anyone interested in irises. BIS members will receive a complimentary copy to round off our celebrations.

GARDENING IN A CHANGING CLIMATE

JEREMY HANDY

Very few people can now dispute that the planet's climate is changing due to human intervention and associated pollution. At the time of writing, there have been fires in Greece, record high temperatures in the northwest USA and floods in Germany. The predicted outcome of climate change is not looking good. According to the Climate Change Committee, although weather patterns will still be subject to natural cycles, meaning that some years the weather might seem quite normal, the general outcome of climate change will be one of winters getting wetter and summers getting hotter and drier.

Here in the UK, if we look at the details of weather analysis by the Met Office for the last few years, we can see that average temperatures, rainfall and sunny days are all increasing gently compared to 1981 - 2010 averages and there are clear signs of changing weather patterns with more periods of both intense heat and extremely heavy rainfall.

There has been a noticeable change in the weather pattern in my location. I will try to set out some of my observations and the measures that I am going to test to help mitigate the issues that are now occurring, to get the best results from my irises. There are also continuing questions about the effects of climate change. Obviously, my situation may be quite different to those living in other parts of the UK and completely different to those living in other countries.

I have been growing irises, mainly bearded of all varieties along with a small collection of Siberians, for over 20 years. I have two sites, my home garden and my allotments. The bulk of my irises are grown on my allotments which are on a sloping, exposed, windy site on the Warwickshire/Worcestershire border looking out towards the Malvern hills. The ground is made up of a fair topsoil on a bed of clay.

The first observation regarding changing weather patterns has, as predicted, been the warmer and wetter winter periods. Initially work could be done over the winter period on the allotments, such as digging, weeding etc. but in recent years this has been virtually impossible due to the very wet conditions from periods of intense rain - not ideal conditions for growing bearded iris. In the UK we have always had some cold, frosty but sunny days to offset the wet winter. These have been lacking in recent years, meaning that the soil never dries out and is now usually wet all winter long.

The result of the wetter winters has been that a lot of the nutrients in the soil have been washed out by the end of the winter period and come spring there is very little left to get plants growing. This problem has in the last few years been exacerbated by drought-like springs where any added artificial feed has been of no use because, ironically, there has been a lack of spring rain to

dissolve and wash in the feed. With these extremes it is becoming more difficult to keep the soil healthy and productive. 'Risks to soil health from increased flooding and drought' is one of 8 points made by the Climate Change Committee, which considered a catalogue of risks and opportunities affecting every aspect of life in the UK. The winter of 2019/20 was so bad here and the soil became so poor that the plants were quite yellow and never really got growing until much later in the season, well after flowering time. The lack of nutrients and the slow start to growth has also resulted in poor sized rhizomes compared to those from only a few years ago.

In these warmer, wetter winters there has been an increase in cases of rhizome rot here. My allotments are naturally quite damp in winter months due to the clay base but rot has never really been an issue until recent years. I put this increase in rot down to a number of weather related issues. I have observed that during late autumn/winter, the gale force winds, which are predicted to get more common and stronger as climate change takes hold, can rock the fans violently if the leaves are still tall and can cause bruising at the junction between the fan and the rhizome. Water is also held between the leaves which, in the warmer wetter conditions, never dry out. Both contribute to the onset of rot. This dampness between the leaves also becomes a haven for slugs, which normally would be sheltering underground from the cold and which are causing damage to the fans at the base, making a wound, which is also an ideal starting point for rot.



While the wetter winters are causing problems in their own right, the following dry springs and summers have done nothing to help growing situations. Even though there is some rain during these periods the overall picture has been one of dryness with periods of intense heat. This year (August 2021) we have installed some land drains to help with the winter wet. The soil from the trenches we dug was almost completely dry to a depth of 3 feet (900mm). This seems almost impossible when during the winter months the ground was totally saturated.

My Siberian collection has suffered quite badly from this summer dryness. While they all stand up well to the wet winters, the diploid sibs are not doing very well at all in the summer months and losses are very high even though they have been well mulched to keep in any moisture. In contrast, the tetraploids once established are not affected. They stand up much better to the drier conditions and they are still doing extremely well with no losses. It is such a shame as I particularly like the diploid Schafer/Sacks varieties. Unfortunately, irrigation is not really an option on the allotments; watering is only allowed by a watering can to get plants started.

To try to improve conditions, ground preparation will be more important than ever. Well-rotted manure is always dug into the ground prior to replanting, which happens here every three years, and blood, fish and bone fertiliser is applied every year. Replacing lost nutrients from wet winters is going to be so important and I am going to experiment with applying a more balanced (slightly higher nitrogen) fertilizer on some areas and try digging in some extra well-rotted manure every year in between the rows in other areas and monitor the results. Digging in the manure will also be beneficial by breaking up any compaction of the soil caused by the wet winters. This should in turn improve drainage.

As already mentioned, high winds are predicted to be more common and stronger. My allotments are exposed on the top of a ridge so are quite windy normally, which does occasionally cause problems. However, over recent years a pattern has emerged of high, almost gale force, winds at peak flowering time. This has caused extensive damage to blooms to the point that I now have to routinely stake most of my TBs both on the allotments and at home. The high winds in the spring of 2020 wiped out a vast proportion of flowering spikes. I have now installed permanent windbreaks to help reduce the force of the wind on two of the allotments. This should give at least some protection at flowering time and there is little else I can do at present.



In response to the warmer, wetter conditions and the high autumn/winter winds I have been experimenting with cutting down the foliage on half of my plants in late autumn ready for winter.

While I totally agree that the plant continues to benefit from those last days of photosynthesis, it is a process that I am going to continue and expand for the following reason; those I have cut back don't get bruised by the high winds, the air can get around the base of the plant keeping it much drier, especially between leaves where there is now very little space for slugs to hide and cause damage. Without all the foliage it allows for more moisture evaporation from



the ground surface helping reduce the soggy conditions. There has been a marked reduction of rot in the plants which have been cut back in this way. Another interesting observation in this process is that those cut back in the autumn have consistently flowered a little later the following year than those uncut. This may be slightly detrimental in a naturally late season when trying to find blooms for the annual shows but the benefits are worth it.

When dividing plants or buying in new rhizomes, especially later in the season, I now choose to root them in pots as I have found that they don't get going very well in the ground with little offshoot growth and no flowers in the first year. This loss of a year's growth is frustrating especially if I have purchased a plant for hybridising purposes. While the ground and atmosphere is still warm at this time of year, I am assuming that the onset of wet weather and resulting wet soil is preventing rhizomes from rooting properly. Plants are now overwintered in their pots and planted out in the spring as soon as the weather permits when they seem to do much better, with many of them now flowering in their first season.

As the climate changes even further, in some areas of the UK it may be beneficial to grow TBs that are on the shorter end of the height scale because of the increasing wind damage. Many of the modern cultivars just grow too tall on my site for the high winds that are occurring. Some grow well over 4' and don't stand a chance without being well staked. It is strange that *Iris pallida*, which I also grow, can reach the same height here without needing staking. Is this because the large flowers of the modern TBs make a larger sail that catches the wind or in creating the modern TB perhaps we haven't strengthened the junction between spike and rhizome in line with the improvements to the spike itself? Would smaller flowered TBs be more advantageous in the future?

In light of this I have started building up a collection of the smaller types of bearded irises such as Miniature Tall Bearded and Border Bearded irises. These appear to stand up to the changing UK weather better and I rarely lose a spike in bad conditions. These little gems are not as common in the UK as they are in the USA but I hope gardeners will see the benefits of these varieties in the future and they will become increasingly popular. In addition to standing up to poor weather, Miniature Tall Bearded Iris are really good for pollinators. On a sunny day I regularly see bees and a variety of other insects visiting my MTB collection, which, although it can play havoc with any hybridising efforts, I see as a positive point when all insects are in decline. Who doesn't get bee pods off MTB's?

Part of my iris hobby (or obsession as my wife would call it) is hybridising. I'm only an amateur at it but I enjoy the process of planning a cross then planting the seed and waiting for that first bloom. Like many hybridisers, I usually plant seeds in trays and leave them out for the winter stratification. Spring hopefully brings forth many seedlings with a few more emerging later in the year usually around September/October. In the last few years fewer seedlings are appearing in the spring and a greater quantity are emerging the following autumn when temperatures start to fall from the summer heights. Germination has then continued throughout the following winter. I know that I am not alone in this as I have had other UK growers tell me that they are experiencing the same outcome and not only in bearded varieties. Could this be a result of the warmer winters interfering with the stratification process or are the extremes in weather patterns causing seasonal confusion even within the seeds?

While it would be easy for some to give up growing many types of plants because of adverse conditions, gardeners are naturally resilient folk and for me, gardening is set to become more interesting, fruitful and enjoyable, whatever plants are grown. Adapting growing methods for a different set of weather conditions means it will be all the more satisfying getting blooms to the shows. The changing conditions that I am observing may not be the same as other growers due to different soil types, local weather conditions etc. but we are all probably going to have to adapt our gardening methods. As part of doing our bit in combating climate change, we are all having to go peat free very soon and this year I am trialing different mixes for potting up rhizomes, sowing seeds and growing on seedlings. I hope to see some preliminary results from these trials next year.

Climate change will be affecting our hobby more and more as conditions continue to change. But every spring, seeing the first iris burst into flower, like an artist's canvas with a picture emerging full of colour, until the full masterpiece reveals itself for another season, makes all the changes and hard work worth it.

TWO NEW IRIS OF SERIES *CHINENSES*

BRIAN MATHEW

In recent years there have been introductions into the UK of living material of an *Iris* under the name *I. henryi*, offered by a Chinese ‘nursery’ and of unstated wild source. Although still rather uncommon in cultivation these have settled in and are around in some specialist collections. At the same time there has been considerable interest in these small irises of the *Chinenses* Series in the U.S. with several wild collections introduced legitimately by Darrell Probst. These have stimulated taxonomic research into the group and a study of Darrell’s plants has led to a recent paper by Carol A. Wilson, published in the journal *Phytokeys* 161: 41-60 (2020) where two new species related to but distinct from *I. henryi* are described. From this it is clear that one of the plants referred to above, that is being cultivated in Britain as *I. henryi*, should now take the name *I. dabashanensis* C.A.Wilson, one of the newly described species. This dwarf iris has proved to be an excellent plant in our Surrey garden, soon forming dense clumps and flowering freely. The other new one has been named *I. probstii* C.A.Wilson after its collector who has done much work to propagate and distribute them and other members of the *Chinenses*. Darrell is a prominent specialist horticulturist, nurseryman and plant hunter notable for breeding and development work in other plant groups particularly *Epimedium* and *Coreopsis* as well as *Iris*. *Iris dabashanensis* is named after the Daba Mountains in the Chinese provinces of Sichuan and Hubei where it inhabits rocky slopes on calcareous soils. *Iris probstii* occurs in Guizhou Province at about 800-1000m on ‘open slopes along edges of rice paddies or under low pine woods in grassy sites associated with rocky, karst soils’.

In addition to describing the two new species the study looked more widely at the *Chinenses* and there is a useful key to the species that are considered to constitute this section, namely *I. koreana*, *I. odaesanensis*, *I. rossii*, *I. proantha*, *I. minutoaurea*, *I. henryi*, *I. probstii* and *I. dabashanensis*. The morphological characters used to distinguish them include flower colour, leaf width, length of perianth tube and details of the crests on the falls. Phylogenetic (molecular) studies confirmed the relationship between the two new species and the Korean *I. odaesanensis* and showed strong support for this group of small Asiatic irises to be recognised as a distinct unit within *Iris*. *Iris speculatrix* and two others which may be distinct from it, *I. grijsii* and *I. cavaleri*, are excluded as they are considered not to be part of section *Chinenses*; the latter two may be variants of *I. speculatrix* and require further study. The paper includes very good photographs and drawings of the newly described species. The author acknowledges the assistance of Jan Sacks and Marty Schafer who provided additional information.

As mentioned above I am growing *I. dabashanensis* both in pots under glass and planted out in the garden. Our clay soil needs improvement by the addition of organic matter or it becomes waterlogged in winter and baked hard in summer; the pH is just on the acid side of neutral but although in the wild it is reported as occurring on calcareous soils the conditions here seem to be tolerable.



Iris dabashanensis © Brian Mathew

Two clumps of this Iris are in a slightly raised bed, only c. 4-6" above the surroundings in a partially shaded situation. Due to the north-facing aspect and clay soil the garden does not warm quickly in spring; the lowest temperature I have experienced in recent years is -10°C but the evergreen leaves of this species remain undamaged.

Thanks to Darrell Probst I also have *I. probstii* but to date this has only been tried in a sandy/gritty potting medium, planted into a semi-shaded cold frame along with various other collections of his *Chinenses* irises and others from Jan Sacks and Marty Schafer. Both of these new species flowered in 2021 and photos are included here. Although diminutive they are delightful additions to the collection and deserve to be more widely known among Iris species enthusiasts and alpine gardeners.



Iris probstii © Brian Mathew

VIRTUAL SHOW WINTER 2020/21

Following the Virtual Summer Show 2020 that proved to be popular, we decided to hold another one, this time in the winter since we would be unable to hold our usual Early Spring Show in February, and everyone could do with a bit of cheering up. What better than to look at a wide variety of irises?

We expanded the number of classes to eight, plus a non-judged decorative class. Many of the latter were irises that did not fit into the other classes; it was good to see them. In all, we had 110 entries.

Our judges were asked to judge the entries for the quality of the plant, rather than photographic excellence, so that the competition could be as near as possible to a live performance. For this reason, for Siberian and Tall Bearded entries in particular, we asked for two images of the same plant, one of the flower and another of the whole plant. This was so that we could take into consideration such important matters as branching and the spacing of flowers and buds. Judges are trained to look for these as the ideal iris has open flowers plus buds coming to extend the flowering life rather than all buds opening together. Also, the individual flowers are less likely to press each other out of shape if this is the case. Some entries may have been marked down if the photos did not show these features.

One interesting outcome of having our show on-line is that for the first time we have been able to hold a re-bloomer competition. Since they flower at any time from July to the first frost, photos are the only practical way of comparing them. We have introduced a trophy for this class as a result.

I was pleased to see a number of lovely irises I have not seen recently. 'Shelford Giant' was one. I remember seeing an old black and white picture of this spuria, introduced by Sir Michael Foster in 1913, with a gardener standing next to the clump and having to look up to admire the flowers! 'Ma Mie', a bearded iris from 1906 looked lovely. *Iris unguicularis* 'Kilbroney Marble' reminded me of an amazing clump in Berney Baughen's garden that featured on the cover of a *Year Book*. *Iris cycloglossa* makes me wonder why we hybridise when nature has provided such perfect gems!

Chris Towers

NB In addition to the 'official' judging, members were invited to vote for their own favourites. There are therefore two sets of results for each class. Where an entry features in both, the photograph has only been reproduced once. (Ed)

Class 1 Bearded Re-bloomer Judges' Choice

Joint 1st

Karen Saunders
'Hi Ho Silver'



Joint 1st

Fred Raines
'Belgian Princess'



3rd

Jeremy Handy
Seedling



Class 2 Beardless Iris Judges' Choice

Right:

1st

Bob Hollingworth
*Iris 'Neptune's
Gold'*



Below:

3rd

Bob Hollingworth
Iris 'Judy, Judy, Judy'



Left:

2nd

Jennifer Hewitt
Iris cycloglossa



Class 3 Historic Iris (pre-1950) Judges' Choice

1st

Jane Stephenson
Ingram
'Cleo Murrell' 1941

2nd

Jane Stephenson
Ingram
'Ambassadeur' 1920

Joint 3rd

Ben Lawn
'Seraphita'
1946

Joint 3rd

Jane Stephenson
Ingram
'Ma Mie' 1906



Class 4 A Garden Scene Judges' Choice

1st

Julie Scott

Joint 2nd

Jill Whitehead and

Jane Stephenson

Ingram



Class 5 Creative Judges' Choice

1st Julie Scott

2nd Fern Harden

3rd Fern Harden



Class 6 Floral Display Judges' Choice



1st Fern Harden



2nd India Hurst



3rd Jill Whitehead

Class 7 Reticulate Iris Judges' Choice

1st Christine Jarvis
'Palm Springs'

2nd Jennifer Hewitt
'Blue Note' (possibly)

3rd Jill Whitehead
'Finola'



Class 8 Crocus Judges' Choice

1st Christine Jarvis *Crocus banaticus* (see p.79)



2nd Christine Jarvis
'Oxonian' (left)

3rd John Mullen
'Ard Schenk' (right)



Results by Members' Vote

Class 1

1st Jeremy Handy
Seedling

2nd Ben Lawn
'Autumn Twilight'



3rd Karen Saunders
'Hi Ho Silver'

Class 2

1st Julie Scott
'Lincolnshire Grace'



2nd Bob Hollingworth
'Judy, Judy, Judy'

Class 3

1st Jane Stephenson
Ingram

2nd Jackie Nowak
'Rajah' 1942



Class 4

1st Jane Stephenson
Ingram

Joint 2nd Jackie
Nowak



Jill Whitehead and
Julie Scott

Class 5

Joint 1st Robert Frith



Joint 1st
Karen Saunders



Joint 1st Chris Towers



Class 6

1st Jill Whitehead

2nd Fern Harden



Class 7

Joint 1st

Christine Jarvis

'George'



Joint 1st

John Mullen

'Pixie'



Class 8

1st Christine Jarvis
Crocus banaticus

2nd Christine Jarvis
'Oxonian'

BEST IN SHOW

Christine Jarvis *Crocus banaticus*



EILEEN WISE

After a two year struggle with Alzheimer's disease Eileen passed away peacefully on Friday 15th October at the age of 97. She spent most of that two years being cared for in her own home but latterly had to move into a care home where she spent only ten days.

Eileen's husband, Bob, raised the Pinewood strain of Californian Irises; one of her sayings was "Bob looks after the irises and I look after the people". Eileen was the centre of the Mercia Group whose members lived in the counties around the northern side of London. Eileen would often book a speaker and hire a local hall for afternoon meetings then invite friends and neighbours in the hope that they would join the British Iris Society .

When the Royal National Rose Society invited the British Iris Society to build an Iris Garden in its grounds at Chiswell Green, the BIS committee asked Mercia Group to take on the project. With Eileen's enthusiasm she persuaded some BIS members to donate irises. These were planted in holding beds as the Rose Society had not agreed the garden design. Eileen led a small group of members who worked on the project over a period of some ten years until the demise of the Rose Society.

Although Eileen looked after the people most were iris people who looked after irises.

Fred Webbing



I only met Eileen a few times and that was some years ago, but the one thing I do remember is her sense of humour. She was one of those people who always see the funny side of any event, that is not to say that she didn't take things seriously, she certainly did.

I also recall my first meeting at a BIS AGM, it was Eileen who came over to say hello and to make sure we were welcomed into the group. At another AGM, she brought brightly coloured pencils for those attending to cheer us up whilst we made notes; I still have mine and often think of her when I use it.

Of course, if you were to read many of the old Mercia group *Newsletters*, you would often find a little poem by Eileen – just to make you smile!

Jill Whitehead

Not exactly a poem but an example of Eileen's capacity for humour and entertainment from the Mercia Group *Newsletter*, 2000.10

Instead of a learned literary item to begin this work, my friends who watch me getting wider and wider will be pleased to see that I have found a diet to combat my weight problems and reduce the stress which may well arise whilst preparing this newsletter.

Diet menu to combat stress and its rules

This is a specially formulated diet designed to help cope with the stress that builds up during the day.

Breakfast

1x grapefruit
1x slice wholemeal toast
1x cup skimmed milk

Afternoon Tea

The rest of the biscuits in the packet
1x tub Haagen Dazs ice-cream with choc-chip topping
1x family packet of Jaffa cakes

Lunch

Small portion lean, steamed
chicken with a cup of spinach
1x cup of herbal tea
1x chocolate Hob Nob

Dinner

4x bottle of wine (red or white)
2x loaves of garlic bread
1x family size pizza
3x Snickers bars

Late Night Snack

Whole frozen Sara Lee Cheesecake (eaten directly from the freezer)

Diet Rules

- 1 If no-one sees you eat something it has no calories
- 2 When drinking a Diet Coke with a chocolate bar the Diet Coke cancels out the sugar in the chocolate
- 3 When you eat with someone else, calories don't count if you do not eat more than they do
- 4 Food used for medical purposes does not count (eg hot chocolate, toast, cheesecake and vodka)
- 5 If you fatten up the people round you, you will look thinner
- 6 Cinema related foods have a zero calorie count as they are part of the entertainment package
- 7 Foods licked from utensils have no fat if you are in the process of cooking
- 8 Remember that STRESSED spelt backwards is DESSERT

AROUND THE GROUPS

GROUP FOR BEARDLESS IRISES

After the worry of 2020, this year has allowed the Group to continue to tick along. *The Review*, edited by Brita Carson, covered the sad loss of our Chair, Anne Blanco White. Articles in *The Review* related to the beardless irises from the Pacific Coast of America, PCIs, the Japanese irises, ensatas and the spurias.

We had planned for a Beardless Day in June, but with Covid, it was more of a last-minute day in July. We are grateful for the kind generosity of Gordon and Chris Link of the Gobbett Nurseries for being such good hosts and for sharing their Japanese iris beds with us. It was good to see such a reasonable turnout so soon after restrictions had been lifted. The skies opened when we first gathered round the irises, but that was the only cloud on the horizon, because sunshine swiftly followed and gave us a chance to view the extensive nursery and Japanese irises at leisure. The different varieties of hens on the farm were also a fascinating distraction.



For 2022 we had planned another Beardless Day to celebrate the BIS centenary. Unfortunately, events have conspired against us and at the time of writing, plans are back on the drawing board. As a Group, we would dearly like to join in the BIS Celebrations, so please watch for details on our website.

As part of the Centenary, members will be opening their gardens. Aulden Farm will be opening under the National Garden Scheme on April 30 and May 1, hopefully to coincide with their Pacific Coast Iris flowering: <https://ngs.org.uk/view-garden/19040>.

Of course, our publications remain on line www.beardlessiris.org and our seed scheme continues to operate throughout the year thanks to Janet Miller's dedication.

Alun Whitehead, GBI admin

admin@beardlessiris.org

WEST & MIDLANDS IRIS GROUP

The West & Midlands Iris Group members have had a busy year with a mixture of real and virtual events. Our AGM was held via zoom and all went according to plan; there was a rumour saying that some even enjoyed it, whatever next! We also held our annual show as a virtual show, which was a tremendous success, over 190 entries and it allowed several members who have never exhibited before to show their talents and even to win a first prize. Other events were visits to gardens, a vineyard and even an allotment chock-full of irises – what a treat!



Jeremy Handy's allotment © Jill Whitehead

As well as enjoying the irises, we were also treated to a super tea; Sheila, our chairman's wife, did us proud. So much so, that we now have a reputation of being a cake eating group. We never like to let our hosts down on that front!

The vineyard with a garden was another new venture for us. The sun shone, well until we had tasted the wine and sampled the cake, then the heavens opened. Sometimes we are lucky as was the case with our August visit which was a steep hillside garden, rain as we arrived then sun and everything was freshly watered just for us! Our last event was our annual members' lunch and Tea & Talk. The lunch is always popular and choosing your pud was the hardest part of the day, the choice being: lemon cheesecake, bread & butter pudding, raspberry & white chocolate torte, almond meringues and home-made ice cream in two flavours! This was followed by a very informative and interesting talk by one of our members, Sue Bedwell. We were all impressed at the sheer variety of the Iridaceae family that she grows in her Oxfordshire garden.

Thanks to Sue and to all our hosts for such enjoyable and calorie free visits. Next year's programme is now in place, including a Summer Garden Party to celebrate the BIS centenary. The venue is a medieval moated manor house, so why not come and join us – you would be very welcome. Details of our 2022 events are on our website:

www.westandmidlandsirisgroup.org.uk

Jill Whitehead, Secretary

SPECIES GROUP

The Species Group has been dormant for the last 18+ months and it needs no explanation as to why.

Our major presence has always been through displays at the BIS shows and our authoritative bulletins and newsletters. These activities have of course been on hold during this plague.

However, with luck, 2022 should see shows emerge from the gloom and us with them.

Our Bulletin Editor has been busy compiling an edition for issue very soon.

Hopefully we can put 2020 and 2021 behind us and begin afresh next year.

David Stephens, Secretary

HISTORIC GROUP

At the time of writing this we have just reached our one year anniversary as a group – only 99 behind the Society itself. While it has been a steady start due to obvious limitations, it has also been a successful one. The Facebook page for the group has over 340 members with interest coming from across the globe, which has led to many good conversations and photos of historic irises being shared. Early on we established our own set of criteria for historic irises to try and best represent the different stages of iris development, with particular relevance to the UK. The classifications we use are 'Ancient Historic – pre 1910', 'Historic – 1911-1959', 'Classic historic – 1960 to 30 years since registration' and lastly 'Modern British at risk – registered less than 30 years ago'. This gives good representation to the range of ages within iris breeding and, importantly, also acknowledges the need to take care of more recent introductions ensuring that these are preserved into the future. We hope to introduce our iris register to members very soon (if not done already) which will help to identify the most at risk historic irises currently in the UK. With this identification the aim is to promote the importance of these rare historic irises and when possible encourage them to be shared to help ensure they have a safe future being grown in gardens across the nation.

With the centenary of the Society in 2022, the group is planning to attend the Wisley centenary event in May to promote the importance of preserving historic irises. This will be the first time the group will have a chance to directly engage with members and the public and we hope to see as many of you as possible. We are always looking for more people to be involved with the group and to do this you simply need to be a member of the BIS and to express an interest in the group by emailing:

Historicirises@britishirissociety.org.uk.

Steve Baker

KENT GROUP

This year has been a non-active year for the group inasmuch as we've not met. Our *Newsletter* hopefully keeps us in touch with each other.

The main event of the year was the BIS AGM on 18th September at Otford Church Hall which also celebrated the 75 years of the Kent Group's existence. After the meeting, greeting and business in the morning a lunch was organised by Sue Marshall. There were some nice touches; for example the meal tables had pretty flower arrangements and there were balloons displaying the number 75. Then a splendid cake was cut and enjoyed.



Following lunch, the afternoon was given over to an illustrated presentation by Sophie Leathart relating some stories about people associated with irises in one way or another in Kent.

In the evening a group of BIS members had a meal together at The Rose and Crown, Dunton Green.

We look forward to having some meetings next year, possibly at open gardens, and to holding a show.

Wendy Payne

Photos © Rachel Wilcox

EASTERN GROUP

It is now two years since we declared the launch of the Eastern Region Group, not the greatest time to launch anything as we now all know. With all planned visits cancelled in the first year and the re-scheduled inaugural event, the Spring Show at RHS Hyde Hall, also a casualty, the Group has never really got started. Hopefully 2022 will be the year we finally get a few events together and actually meet up face to face, complementing but not clashing with the BIS centenary events!

The 'East' is a huge geographical region and no one person is likely to know of everything iris related going on between Yorkshire and Essex. If anyone would like to help out with more localised visits or events, please contact me at the Eastern Region email address.

The area has 3 National Collections, Steve Baker's pre 1985 Suffolk introductions, Sarah Cook's Cedric Morris collection and Lucy Skellorn's collection of Foster irises. Hopefully we will get round to viewing them all in the next few years.



It would be nice to think that some of the iris from these National Collections make it into the BIS centenary display at Chelsea during 2022 and perhaps even the arilbred 'Amanda Jane' bred by the late Geoffrey Wilson in Lincolnshire. Rhizomes of 'Amanda Jane' have been grown on by BIS members in the region and donated to the nursery growing the plants for the show; let's hope she flowers on time.

Watch out for emails detailing planned events through the year and do get in touch if you would like to be involved.

Chris Scott

Iris 'Amanda Jane' AB © Julie Scott

easterngroup@britishirissociety.org.uk

VIRTUAL SHOW SUMMER 2021

Following the success of the previous Virtual Shows, we decided to hold the usual Summer Show on-line for the second year, since COVID restrictions would not allow us the pleasure of meeting together in person. I must say that I missed seeing all the spikes lined up and, particularly, smelling the perfume. However, this format allows a number of our members abroad or living too far away to get to shows to enter.

Again, I asked for two pictures of each entry, a flower and a spike, so that our judges could use the same criteria as they employ at a 'live' show.

I am grateful for the trouble the judges took in their marking; several gave a written explanation of their choices which is very helpful. There were 129 entries in all, which is a good response.

In the 'Bearded excluding T.B.s' class we had a number of arilbreds, which were good to see. 'Scrambled', the winner, is an interesting MDB with irregular violet striations on the falls; *Iris attica* was attractive, as was 'Calligrapher' which had nice branching.

The TBs were a popular class as usual. The Yellow Seedling had good form and branching with flowers nicely spaced on the spike. I also liked 'Darley Dale', a white with good branching. 'Tel Arlequin' also had good branching, but it is a pity the picture was taken looking down as this does not help the appearance. A lot of other good entries made this a challenge for the judges.

The Beardless Class was won by 'Weinkoenigin', a well-shaped siberica; good images helped too, although we are really looking at the plant not the quality of the photo. I also liked *Iris* 'Dinner Plate Blueberry Pie', an ensata and 'Clara Ellen', a spuria. It was nice to see some iris types that do not usually get seen at shows due to their late or early flowering.

In the Historic Class, 'Benton Olive' had good branching and a well-shaped flower. 'Benton Old Madrid' also looked good in its pastel blue colour.

The Species Class is always a difficult class to judge as they vary so much and some are far more difficult to grow. *Iris variegata* var. *reginae* was a lovely bloom, with the spike showing that more were to come. I also particularly liked *I. paradoxa* x *I. acutiloba* ssp *lineolata*.

It was good to have some lovely irises to admire in the Display Only Class.

Our thanks to all those who entered and to both our judges and the members who sent in their votes.

Chris Towers

NB: In this Summer Virtual Show the winners of each class were decided by a panel of BIS Judges, with members' choosing one favourite from the whole show.

Class 1 - Any Bearded Iris Except Tall Bearded

Below and below right:
1st
 Barbara-Jean Jackson
Iris 'Scrambled' MTB



Left: 2nd
 Christine Jarvis
Iris attica

Below: 3rd
 Jill Whitehead
Iris
'Calligrapher' IB



Class 2 - Any Tall Bearded Iris



Left: 1st
 Barry Emmerson
 Yellow Seedling

Right: 2nd
 Karen Saunders
Iris 'Daughter of Stars'



Far left: Joint 3rd
 John Mullen
Iris 'Darley Dale'

Left: Joint 3rd
 Clare Waight Keller
Iris 'Draco'



Class 3 Any Type of Beardless Iris

Right:

1st

Julie Scott

Iris 'Weinkoenigin' (Sib)



Below:

3rd

Christine Jarvis

Iris 'Clara Ellen'
(Spuria)



Left:

2nd

Fern Harden

Iris ensata 'Dinner Plate
Blueberry Pie'

Class 4 A Seedling Iris That You Have Bred Yourself

1st

Julie Scott

Iris 'Lincolnshire Grace' (Sib)

2nd

Anthony Chu

Seedling 2



3rd

Julie Scott

TB Seedling



Class 5 Any Historic Iris (Pre-1959)



1st
Julie Scott
Iris 'Benton Olive'
(Morris, 1949)



2nd
Julie Scott
Iris 'Benton Old Madrid'
(Morris 1946)



3rd
Sue Griffith
Iris 'Rajah'
(Smith, 1942)

Class 6 Any Species Iris or Other Iridaceae



*Right and below
right*
2nd Judi Deakin
Iris milesii

Below : 3rd
Brenda Nickels
Iris schachtii



Above :
1st
Barbara-Jean Jackson
Iris variegata var. reginae



Virtual Summer Show People's Choice



Above:

1st

John Mullen

Iris 'Annabel Jane' (TB)



Above right:

2nd

Sue Griffith

Iris 'Rajah' (Historic TB)

Chairman's Award

Judi Deakin

Iris paradoxa x *Iris acutiloba* ssp *lineolata*



Above:

People's Choice **3rd**
Barbara-Jean Jackson
Iris variegata var.
reginae

The British Iris Society Trials 2021

Clare Kneen, Trials Secretary and Recorder

The Trial for Award of Garden Commendation (AGC)

This year there were 2 irises to be judged in the trial for the Award of Garden Commendation, both submitted by Loïc Tasquier. These were *Iris* 'Hymke' (IB) and *I.* 'Kénavo' (BB). Both of these irises were considered to be worthy of the Award of Garden Commendation and will proceed to the Dykes Medal Trial. In addition, *Iris* 'Kénavo' was awarded the Souvenir de M. Lémon Trophy, which is awarded each year to the best of the irises which have been awarded the AGC.

The Dykes Medal Trial

There were 6 irises in the Dykes Medal Trial to be judged this year, *Iris* 'Margaret Gillian' (sib), *Iris* 'Westwood' (IB), *Iris* 'Spirit of Kent' (TB), *Iris* 'Winkin' (SDB), *Iris* 'Mise en Scene' (TB), and *Iris* 'Oda Mae' (SDB).

Some of the gardens had poor flowering for all their irises this year due to some unsuitable weather conditions. However, other gardens had spectacular flowering and most hosts had already previously judged these irises for the Award of Garden Merit. There were several plants flowering extremely well this year and there was some discussion among the hosts but taking the results from all the gardens it was agreed that the Dykes medal should be awarded to the tall bearded iris, 'Spirit of Kent', bred by Olga Wells.

Anyone wanting to submit irises for either of these trials can find rules on the BIS website or contact Clare Kneen, at trials@britishirissociety.org.uk

British Iris Society Judges 2022

Judges

Helena Butcher
Sheila Ecklin
Barry Emmerson
Sharon Evans
Clare Kneen
Sidney Linnegar
Chris Towers
Olga Wells
Alun Whitehead

Emeritus Judges

Cy Bartlett
Jennifer Hewitt
Brian Mathew
Brian Price

Associate Judges

Milan Blazek
Tomas Tamberg
Richard Cayeux

Judges in training

Sue Bedwell
Jake Croft
Jeremy Handy
John Mullen
Jill Whitehead

Trial Gardens 2022

Jake Croft, North Lodge, Mill Lane, Adlington, Macclesfield, Cheshire SK10 4LF
Sharon Evans, The Stock Yard, Bushy Park, Hampton Court Road, TW12 2EJ
Clare Kneen, Slade Cottage, Petts Lane, Little Walden, Essex CB10 1XH
Jeremy Handy, 59 Foregate Street, Astwood Bank, Redditch, Worcs, B96 6AJ
Chris Towers, 40 Willow Park, Otford, Sevenoaks, Kent TN14 5NF

REGISTRARS IN CONVERSATION

Rachel Wilcox and Jennifer Hewitt

The post of Honorary Registrar for the BIS is first recorded in the 1938 *Year Book*, with F Wynn Hellings as the first holder of the post. 83 years on, the BIS still has a Registrar, who liaises with the American Iris Society (who are the international authority) over the naming of British-bred irises. The current postholder, and her immediate predecessor, share some thoughts about the system and its history.

Rachel Wilcox: How did you become Registrar?

Jennifer Hewitt: In 1979 the first of my Siberian seedlings to be accepted for trial deserved, I thought, a name, and I chose 'Clee Hills'.

I contacted the Registrar, Joan Peirson, who provided the form, helped with filling it in and then forwarded it to the AIS for acceptance and registration. Later I helped her by typing up the entries for the *Year Book*, a job which her husband Eric had done until his death. This gave me more insight into what seemed an interesting job. When Joan died suddenly in 1991 I was almost at the end of my spell as *YB* editor so I volunteered to succeed her.

R: I know when something has won an award it has to be formally named, but is it necessary for irises that are accepted for trials also to have names?

J: No, not necessarily; they can stay under their seedling numbers. But to get into the trials the seedling has to go before the judges or be nominated. All BIS members can nominate one bearded and one beardless seedling of their own per year (though once you have won some awards, you can nominate more). I personally think that's a bit narrow – it could be encouraging to allow two nominations, both bearded, both beardless or one of each. But we mustn't put too big a demand on the host judges.

R: I guess it stops the trials being inundated.

J: It's interesting actually that our Registrars (and I haven't checked but they go back to the point that it was decided there should be Associate Registrars in major hybridising countries – France, Australia, New Zealand, UK, Germany... Japan have mostly gone their own way) have nearly always held the job for quite a long while. Joan did the job from 1974 – 91 and only finished with her death, and before that Lawrence Neel did it for a good number of years.

R: You of course did 27 years?

J: I had intended to stop after 25, but...

R: Circumstances did not permit!

J: Yes – someone was interested but already holding a major post and so not free to take it up.

R: And that's really where I came in, and looked at it and thought, actually there's quite a lot of detailed administration, which is something I can do well, but I don't actually need to know as much about the details of the irises as for some of the other jobs – I don't need to know about growing irises.

J: What you do need to know, but you have the tools to do it, is which names might be acceptable or have been used before, but you have the checklists, and the *International Code for Nomenclature of Cultivated Plants*.

R: ... the AIS Iris wiki encyclopaedia... there is lots of online help, and being computer savvy these days is pretty much essential.

J: It was becoming obvious that we were beginning to go along the electronic route and that this was going to be beyond me.

R: It's been a useful place to hand over, but it has been hugely helpful to be able to pick your brains about things like descriptions, if they have come through with more ambiguity.

J: How to look out for possible errors, omissions – misspellings!

R: Ways of slightly refining the wordings to make things clearer than they might start. It helps to have run, in a previous (paid) job, a big mail order operation – handwriting has no fears for me, and nothing that I've received here is close to the worst I have seen!

J: Of course that is helped by doing things online. While the UK Registrar may get to know individual handwritings, the AIS one may not, and you sometimes have to tidy up the paper forms for them.

R: Even with the clearest handwriting, or typing, there can still be ambiguities that need to be sorted out. Over time, the form has been gradually redesigned to ask for more information, so there is more information to sort through. Getting photos electronically at the same time is a big help in clarifying details, and it's also lovely to see what breeders are producing.

J: Emailing of forms has helped a lot – it's so much quicker to check up on queries, and ensure the form is as clear as possible. But I would have found it hard to move to an online form.

R: It is a natural progression – as you redesigned the form, the AIS has gone along one electronic route, but we've tried something else with a web form. A copy goes to the registrant as well as to me. If you get a new iris I'll make you do the online form so that you can comment on it!

J: That may well be a few years yet!

R: We've now had someone test the form, following a first try and a lot of tinkering to get things right. I'm grateful to the people who have tried it, including last year when it was not so good – it's very helpful to know what doesn't work! – and this year, when we were able to send the output straight to the AIS. I must thank John Jones for being willing to attempt to use this.

The other thing that's been interesting has been working on the checklist of

British bred irises. Looking back through the *YBs* and seeing things like groups of irises with common prefixes –

J: Someone like John Taylor with local place names.

R: And Galen and John Carter, with the Rowden prefix and then the musical names for one classification, and the aristocratic ones for another... and the popularity of personal names. It's clear that iris people like to name seedlings after family and friends. And the person is extra pleased if 'their' iris gets an award: I know my husband Stephen was, and is, very happy that 'Stephen Wilcox' won the Dykes Medal.

J: There's also the fact that we occasionally get requests from non-members who wish to propose a name for an iris, and we have to find a hybridiser who has got a 'spare' and is willing to register it with the desired name.

R: It's also clear that some people aren't quite so comfortable with the procedure and lean on friends and colleagues to do it for them. So Anne Blanco White registered a number on behalf of others, as did you.

J: Almost all of Jack Ellis' were done by her. It's usually to save the hybridiser time, at a busy time of year.

R: And then there are people like Jean Nichol who carried on registering Bob's irises after his death – he'd done all the work.

J: Yes – they had to be attributed to him, but the actual registrant was Jean. Kelways took a lot, and those were the ones that were named. We'd still like to find more of his breeding.

R: And that comes back to a key driver of allocating a name in the first place, which is commercialisation – it's much easier to sell something which has a name.

J: Yes – and I would think it would help if it were a pleasant name. There's an American iris – a Border Bearded – called 'Baboon Bottom' and I'm not sure I'd necessarily want to buy something with that name!

R: That's perfectly according to the ICNCP rules and the AIS interpretation of those. The rules say that names should not be offensive – but what is felt to be so changes over time. We've come across things in the far history, particularly in parentages, where some elements of names are things we'd think twice about in the 21st Century. And then there is the rule about not using 'The' even when it's part of a proper name.

J: Yes – I had a long, and ultimately unsuccessful, battle with the AIS over naming an iris 'The Wrekin' – which is the name of that Shropshire hill, it's not 'Wrekin Hill' – but they were adamant. There are several other specific prohibitions, such as not using 'latinised' names and not using titles such as Mr or Mrs, Lord or Lady. And one key one is not using the actual word 'iris'.

R: You got round that once?

J: We were asked to register an iris named after someone called Iris Clara Garland, but that fell foul of the rules. So we registered the name as 'Clara

Garland’ – so when it’s written out in full, it comes out as *Iris* ‘Clara Garland’ so all the right words were there for her name.

R: And then there are the fun names. Coming across ‘Nutfield Kitten’ in the list – which is a lovely name in itself, but then the back story of one of the parents being ‘Brannigan’ which was named, by John Taylor, after Ray and Ileene Jeffs’ cat. Obviously with the parent being a cat, the progeny ought to be a kitten – it just makes sense! It’s so much a matter of taste. Going through the lists over so much time there are some rather twee names. But it is up to the registrant.

J: Place names are nearly always popular. Olga Wells has used lots of names of Kent castles and other places, such as for her Dykes winner ‘Hever Castle’. You have to hope nobody else will do the same – there’s an American hybridiser who also uses place names from Kent, from happy memories of a visit there, and neither we nor the AIS can restrict the use of a theme like that. The Brummitts, Leonard and Marjorie, both used ‘Banbury’ as a prefix but ‘Banbury Ruffles’ is American. It can get confusing!

R: I think we’d probably look askance at some of the more famous prefixes being used – for example, an iris registered as ‘Benton’ which had no connection back to Cedric Morris irises - but it couldn’t be refused, and it might be something completely off in a different direction.

J: George Cassidy registered ‘Benton Farewell’ but that was a Morris seedling.

R: If you look through the e-register for names involving a colour, the range of additions to the colour word that have built up over time are a testament to the ingenuity of registrants. Having been going for so long, you do have to think very widely to find something unique.

J: Though it’s sometimes surprising what hasn’t been used too. Many classical names have been used – most of the gods and goddesses except of course *Iris* herself!

R: Another nice story came up at the 2021 AGM. Mary Tubbs brought a Siberian seedling to a show, but at some point the bloom got knocked off the only good spike. So rather than give up on her entry, Mary re-attached it with Blu-tak. It got into a trial, and – because it had been beheaded – ended up being named ‘Catherine Howard’.

J: It’s worth remembering that you should always get permission to use a personal name – though of course something historic like that doesn’t need it. The rule is that if the person has been dead for more than 10 years, it’s not necessary, but otherwise the person, or their next of kin, should agree to the naming.

R: Another area where permission is necessary is trademarks, isn’t it? They are legally protected so can only be used with express permission.

J: That's right. We nearly got into trouble once, quite innocently wanting to pay tribute to a famous product, and both I and the then AIS Registrar should have recognised and refused it. Luckily an apology and a change of name were accepted. And it made me more cautious later.

R: The registration process doesn't in itself confer any legal protection, does it?

J: No. Breeders can use Plant Variety Rights to gain a legal protection. It's an expensive process, so only really worthwhile if you expect sales in the thousands, and sadly irises aren't likely to sell that well. That process is separate from registration, and we don't have to handle it, but we have to know it's there. We also don't have to deal with new species of iris – botanical names come under a different set of rules. So if you discover something new in the wild, and new species are still being found, that's another authority again.

R: I think we agree that, while there are hoops to be jumped through, being Registrar is a fascinating job, and very rewarding thanks to the cooperation of the AIS Registrar and the UK hybridisers. We're very grateful for all your help.

BIS REGISTRATIONS 2021

Key: (a) number of branches including terminal; (b) number of buds
(c) height x width of flowers

AU BONHEUR DES DAMES (Michèle Bersillon) Sdlg. 1518BB. TB, 35½in (90cm), ML. S. light salmon pink (RHS 27D); style arms salmon pink, darker than S. (19B), lavender stigmatic lip; F. grey-violet, ground grey (N200C) overlaid with violet (N77D), becoming darker violet near edges, falls marked overall with brownish veins; beards base lavender, 2/3 of hairs sandy gold (168D). (a) 3, (b) 10, (c) 2¾in (7cm) x 5½in (14cm). . Slight sweet fragrance. 'Haunted Heart' x 1138C: ('H. C. Stetson x 0908G: ('Crazy for You' x 0629H: (0412M: ('Rosy Cloud' x BF-306) x 'Behind Closed Doors')))).

BASIL BROWN (Barry Emmerson) Sdlg. B29-14-18. TB, 36in (91cm), M-L. S. brown suffused with red and purple tones; style arms brown suffused with red and purple tones; F. large white area under beards bleeding into brown maroon with a black sheen; beards yellow. (a) 4, (b) 8, (c) 5in (13cm) x 5¾in (14.5cm). Ruffled. Slight fragrance. 'Severn Side' x 'Connection'.



BURNING LOVE (Lars Høpfner) Sdlg. LH35/19. AB, 32in (80cm), E-M. S. purple-violet (RHS 82A) with lots of fine veins; style arms yellow-orange (23A); F. deep orange-brown, orange around signal; beards orange-yellow, heavy; signal dark brown/red with lots of orange/yellow veins. (a) 1, (b) 3, (c) 6in (15cm) x 6in (15cm). Spicy fragrance. ('Zerzura' x 'Luella Dee') x 'Kiosk'.



CENTURY GOLD (BIS for Barry Emmerson) Sdlg. BIS2. TB, 36in (91cm), M-L. S. butter yellow; style arms yellow; F. yellow, deeper at hafts; beards orange-yellow, yellow at tip. (a) 4, (b) 7, (c) 5³/₄in (14.5cm) x 5¹/₄in (13.5cm). Ruffled. Slight fragrance. 'Sun Dragon' x 'Early Light'.



CENTURY PINK (BIS for Simon Dodsworth) TB, 32in (80cm), L. S. pale pink; style arms pale pink; F. pale pink with central white zone on blade; beards orange at base, white at end. (a) 3, (b) 7, (c) 3³/₄in (9.5cm) x 4¹/₂in (11.5cm). Ruffled. Slight fragrance. Parentage unknown (unregistered seedling of Bryan Dodsworth).



COSMIC CRESCENT (Barry Emmerson) Sdlg. A3-19. TB, 37¹/₂in (95cm), M-L. S. light purple; style arms light purple; F. light purple deepening towards the end, lighter veining all over, white crescent below beards; beards light blue at end, orange in throat, tapering. (a) 4, (b) 8, (c) 4³/₄in (12cm) x 5¹/₄in (13.5cm). Ruffled. Slight fragrance. 'Cannington Bluebird' x 'Mind Reader'.



DAZZLING RESURRECTION (Gary Middleton) Sdlg. 11/VTG#2. TB, 38in (97cm), M. S. intense vibrant golden-yellow, between RHS12A and 14A; style arms intense deep golden-yellow; F. deeper golden-yellow (close to 14A), faint bronze markings on freshly opened flowers, which fade with age; beards tangerine, deepening to orange in throat. (a) 3-4, (b) 6-7, (c) 4in (10cm) x 6³/₄in (17cm). Flaring and ruffled. Slight sweet citrus fragrance. 'Vibrant' x 'Tut's Gold'.



ICELANDIC SUNSET (Gary Middleton) Sdlg. 18/EMHL#1. TB, 35 $\frac{1}{2}$ in (90cm), E-M. S. pastel raspberry sorbet pink, close to RHS 56A; style arms apricot flushed rose; F. pastel lavatera pink, between RHS 62C and 75C in centres, blending to beige-gold at hafts; beards deep vermilion-red (between 33A and 33B). (a) 4, (b) 7-9, (c) 4 $\frac{1}{2}$ in (11.5cm) x 6in (15cm). Ruffled. Slight musky fragrance. 'Enid Middleton' x 'Hope of Love'.

LAVENDER DAYBREAK (Gary Middleton) Sdlg. 14/EMSS#2. TB, 40in (102cm), EM. S. pale dusky blue-lilac, close to RHS 85C; style arms parchment, with lilac-blue centres and tips; F. blended lilac (RHS 85A in centre blending to 85C at edge); beards tangerine orange. (a) 4-5, (b) 7-9, (c) 4 $\frac{3}{4}$ in (12cm) x 6 $\frac{1}{4}$ in (15.5cm). Ruffled. Sweet fragrance. 'Enid Middleton' x 'Spires of Sapphire'.



LONDON RECRUITS (Barry Emmerson) Sdlg. B12-1-28. TB, 36in (91cm), M. S. black; style arms black, yellow centre stripe; F. black; beards dark purple, some hairs tipped yellow. (a) 4, (b) 7, (c) 4 $\frac{3}{4}$ in (12cm) x 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ in (14cm). Ruffled. Slight fragrance. 'Consider the Rain' x 'Anvil of Darkness'.



LOVE'S WINE (Gary Middleton) Sdlg. 17/ELCP#4. TB, 38in (97cm), M-L. S. light magenta purple blended lilac (RHS N78B & C); style arms buff yellow with violet central band; F. vibrant magenta purple (RHS N80A) blending to crimson-purple-bronze at edges and hafts; beards marmalade orange. (a) 4-5, (b) 9-10, (c) 4in (10cm) x 5 $\frac{3}{4}$ in (14.5cm). Ruffled. Spicy fragrance. 'Everlasting Life' x 'City of Paradise'.

MY WIFE (Lars Høpfner) Sdlg. LH30/18. AB, 35in (88cm), E-M. S. white ground with many fine purple (RHS 76A) veins; style arms white; F. white ground with many fine purple (76A) veins fading to yellow orange (19C); beards creamy yellow/white; large dark violet (deeper than 79A) signal. (a) 2, (b) 3, (c) 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ in (9cm) x 6in (15cm). Musky fragrance. 'Noble Warrior' x 'Fire in the Hole'.



OBSCURED BY CLOUDS (Barry Emmerson) Sdlg. B24-5-16. TB, 36in (91cm), M-L. S. white, veined light yellow; style arms light yellow; F. white, yellow at hafts, veined greenish-yellow; beards deep yellow, orange in throat. (a) 4, (b) 7, (c) 4³/₄in (12cm) x 5¹/₂in (14cm). Heavily ruffled. Slight fragrance. 'Shaun Emmerson' x 'Iceland Gull'.



ORANGE STARBURST (Gary Middleton) Sdlg. 11/ASFC#2. TB, 37in (94cm), M-L. S. orange (between RHS 23A and 23B); style arms blood-orange (close to 24A); F. orange (between 21A and 21C, deepening to 22A) at hafts, with small yellow blaze below beards; beards deep orange. (a) 4-5, (b) 7-9, (c) 4¹/₂in (11.5cm) x 6¹/₂in (16.5cm). Ruffled. Slight musky fragrance. 'Avalon Sunset' x 'Feu du Ciel'.

QUELQUE CHOSE DE TENNESSEE (Michèle Bersillon) Sdlg. 1518Z. TB, 35¹/₂in (90cm), ML. S. pure white (RHS N999D); style arms white; F. warm white (N155B) very slightly tinted with pink; beards butter yellow (7D), white on end. (a) 3, (b) 10, (c) 3³/₄in (9.5cm) x 6in (15cm). . Pronounced sweet musky fragrance. 'Haunted Heart' x 1138C: ('H. C. Stetson x 0908G: ('Crazy for You' x 0629H: (0412M: ('Rosy Cloud' x BF-306) x 'Behind Closed Doors'))).

REDWALD (Barry Emmerson) Sdlg. B6-14-11. TB, 40in (102cm), M-L. S. red with an area of brass at the base of the midrib; style arms red; F. deep red with a small yellow streak at the end of the beard, velvet texture; beards golden yellow. (a) 5, (b) 10, (c) 4⁵/₈in (12.5cm) x 5³/₄in (14.5cm). Ruffled. Slight sweet fragrance. 'Red Kite' x 'Garnet Glory'.



SHO HEEN (Barry Emmerson) Sdlg. B21-8-17. TB, 37in (94cm), M-L. S. white; style arms white; F. white; beards white, orange in throat. (a) 4, (b) 7, (c) 4³/₄in (12cm) x 5¹/₂in (14cm). Ruffled. Slight sweet fragrance. 'Jean Wall' x 'Darley Dale'.

WARMING FLAME (Barry Emmerson)
Sdlg. B5-5-27. TB, 36½in (93cm), M-L. S. amber base washed purplish pink, purple veins; style arms amber, brownish red crest; F. a suffusion of yellow, brownish red and purple, with purple-white flash in centre; beards dark yellow. (a) 4, (b) 8, (c) 4⅝in (12.5cm) x 5¼in (13.5cm). Ruffled. Slight fragrance. 'Suliman' x 'Quito'.



Note from the Registrar

Rachel Wilcox

Application forms to register irises can be downloaded from the BIS website - visit <https://www.britisshirisociety.org.uk/registering-a-new-iris/>. This page also contains useful information about choosing names, and guidance on completing the form. If you are unable to download the form, please contact the Registrar, whose address is given in the list of Officers, for a hard copy or copies to be sent. There is also an option to complete the registration information online on the same page: this is a new option, so if you use it and find errors, please inform the Registrar so that it can be corrected and improved. The registration fee remains £10 per application for 2022.

THE 2021 AUSTRALIAN DYKES MEDAL WINNER



'MARKET ORDER' TB bred by JOHN TAYLOR

AMERICAN IRIS SOCIETY AWARDS 2021

THE DYKES MEDAL

All iris classes, originated in US or Canada

DARING DECEPTION - TB iris
(Thomas Johnson)



© Breezeway Iris Garden

RECKLESS ABANDON - TB iris
(Keith Keppel)



© Keith Keppel Irises

THE JOHN C. WISTER MEDAL

Tall Bearded irises

FOOTBALL HERO (Lynda Miller)

DON'T DOUBT DALTON (Tom Burseen)

BELLE FILLE (Marky Smith)

VOLCANIC GLOW (Keith Keppel)

BLUEBIRD OF HAPPINESS

(Paul Black)

DON'T STOP BELIEVING

(Thomas Johnson)

THE KNOWLTON MEDAL

Border Bearded irises

BANDED ROSE (J. T. Aitken)

GRAPENUT (Michael Sutton)

THE HANS and JACOB SASS MEDAL

Intermediate Bearded irises

BACKLIT BEAUTY (Richard Tasco)

CODE OF HONOR (Thomas Johnson)

THE WILLIAMSON-WHITE MEDAL

Miniature Tall Bearded irises

MOOSE TRACKS (Lynda Miller)

HOOSIER BELLE (Charles Bunnell)

THE COOK-DOUGLAS MEDAL

Standard Dwarf Bearded irises

STOP AND STARE (Thomas

Johnson)

PORTLAND PINK (Paul Black)

THE CAPARNE-WELCH MEDAL

Miniature Dwarf Bearded irises

ELF ESTEEM (Paul Black)

FAIRY FIREFLY (Terry Aitken)

THE CLARENCE G. WHITE MEDAL

Aril irises and arilbred irises with at
least 50% aril content

RARE BREED (Richard Tasco)

DRAGON'S EYE (Richard Tasco)

SHAMAN'S MAGIC (Richard Tasco)

THE WILLIAM MOHR MEDAL
Arilbred irises with less than 50% but
at least 25% aril content

HEART OF HEARTS (Paul Black)
PARABLE (Thomas Johnson)

**THE FOUNDERS OF SIGNA
MEDAL**
Species irises

BLUE RIVULETS (Chad Harris)
SUSHI (Jill Copeland)

THE RANDOLPH PERRY MEDAL
Inter-species hybrid (SPEC-X) irises

RYUGAN
(Hiroshi Shimizu by Carol Warner)
YARAI
(Hiroshi Shimizu by Carol Warner)

**THE SYDNEY B. MITCHELL
MEDAL**
Pacific Coast Native irises

LINE DRAWING (Joseph Ghio)
CORRALITOS CREEK
(Joseph Ghio)

**THE MARY SWORDS
DEBAILLON MEDAL**

Louisiana irises
WHEN PIGS FLY
(Patrick O'Connor)
ROOSTER (Ron Betzer)

THE MORGAN-WOOD MEDAL
Siberian irises
CAPE COD BOYS
(Marty Schafer/Jan Sacks)
NEPTUNE'S GOLD
(R. Hollingworth)

THE ERIC NIES MEDAL
Spuria irises
IBEX IBIS (Brad Kasperek)
STEELY DON (J. T Aitken)

THE PAYNE MEDAL
Japanese irises
COLUMBIA DEEP WATER (Chad
Harris)
DALLE WHITEWATER (Chad Harris)

**FRED & BARBARA WALTHER
CUP**
(Most HM votes in any category)
ALABAMA BLUE FIN - SPEC-X iris -
(Jill Copeland)



Greetings from the American Iris Society

All AIS overseas membership rates have been revised to match domestic rates - which have remained the same.

Print Membership	\$30.00/year
E-membership	\$15.00/year
Full Membership (Print & E)	\$45.00/year

For a complete list of Membership Options and Rates
www.irises.org/aismembers

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Best Wishes and Happy Gardening to all.

Pam Messer, AIS Membership Secretary
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INTERNATIONAL IRIS COMPETITION FLORENCE 2021

TALL BEARDED

1st Premio Firenze (Gold Florin) offered by ALTER.NATIVA Society in memory of Queen Mother Helen of Romania:

BELLE FILLE (Marky Smith - USA)

2nd Tuscany Region Prize: **MIMMAMARIA** (Simone Luconi - Italy)

3rd Confindustria of Florence Prize: **CLOUD DWELLER** (Schreiner's Iris Gardens - USA)

4th Italian Iris Society Medal 'Piero Bargellini': **EZIOALDO** (Simone Luconi - Italy)

Honourable Mentions

5th : **KALSIFER** (Simone Luconi - Italy);

6th: **JACHITROPAN** (Pia Altenhöfer - Germany);

7th : **ROSSO ROMAGNOLO** (Mauro Bertuzzi - Italy);

8th: **PISSENTI** (Amedeo Fadda - Italy);

9th **HENIO** (Robert Piatek - Poland);

10th: **JUST THE TICKET** (Schreiner's Iris Gardens - USA)

SPECIAL PRIZES

Comune di Firenze Prize for the Best Red Variety: **ROSSO ROMAGNOLO** (Mauro Bertuzzi - Italy)

Chamber of Commerce Prize for the Best Commercial Variety: **BELLE FILLE** (Marky Smith - USA)



Iris 'Belle Fille' © Italian Iris Society Photo Archive

Amici dei Fiori Prize for the Best Italian Variety: **MIMMAMARIA** (Simone Luconi - Italy)

Louise Branch Prize for the Best Branched Variety: **MIMMAMARIA** (Simone Luconi - Italy)

Florence Garden Club Prize for the Most Original Colour: **HUMPOGROLL** (Pia Altenhöfer - Germany)

Perugia Garden Club Prize for the Best Scented Variety: **BELLE FILLE** (Marky Smith - USA)

Rora and Luciano Bausi Prize for the Best Blue Variety: **SKY TWO WORLDS** (Robert Piatek - Poland)

Giorgio Saviane Prize for the Best Early Variety: **EZIOALDO** (Simone Luconi - Italy)

Antonio Del Campana Prize for the Best Late Variety: **MODERATA SODDISFAZIONE** (Mauro Bertuzzi - Italy)

Prize offered by Maurizio Marrami for the Best Violet Variety: **GUARDA L'OCEANO** (Angelo Bolchi - Italy)

Laura Tancredi Prize for the Best Pink Variety: **PINK PERCEPTION** (Bruce Filardi - USA)

BORDER BEARDED:

Società Toscana di Oricoltura Prize for the Best Border Bearded Variety: **PICARO** (Marky Smith - USA)

AMERICAN DYKES MEDAL WINNERS SINCE 1971

DEBBY RAIRDON	L Kuntz	1971
BABBLING BROOK	K Keppel	1972
NEW MOON	N Sexton	1973
SHIPSHAPE	S Babson	1974
PINK TAFFETA	N Rudolph	1975
KILT LILT	J Gibson	1976
DREAM LOVER	E Tams	1977
BRIDE'S HALO	H Mohr	1978
MARY FRANCES	L Gaulter	1979
MYSTIQUE	J Ghio	1980
BROWN LASSO	Buckles/Niswonger	1981
VANITY	B Hager	1982
RUFFLED BALLET	E Roderick	1983
VICTORIA FALLS	Schreiner's	1984
BEVERLY SILLS	B Hager	1985
SONG OF NORWAY	W Luihn	1986
Not Awarded		1987
TITAN'S GLORY	Schreiner's	1988
Not Awarded		1989
JESSE'S SONG	B Williamson	1990
EVERYTHING PLUS	D Niswonger	1991
DUSKY CHALLENGER	Schreiner's	1992
EDITH WOLFORD	B Hager	1993
SILVERADO	Schreiner's	1994
HONKYTONK BLUES	Schreiner's	1995
BEFORE THE STORM	S Innerst	1996
THORNBIRD	M Byers	1997
CONJURATION	M Byers	1998
HELLO DARKNESS	Schreiner's	1999
STAIRWAY TO HEAVEN	L Lauer	2000
YAQUINA BLUE	Schreiner's	2001
MESMERIZER	Monty Byers	2002
CELEBRATION SONG	Schreiner's	2003
CROWNED HEADS	Keith Keppel	2004
SPLASHACATA	Richard Tasco	2005
SEA POWER	Keith Keppel	2006
QUEEN'S CIRCLE	Frederick Kerr	2007
STARWOMAN	Marky Smith	2008
GOLDEN PANTHER	Richard Tasco	2009
PAUL BLACK	Tom Johnson	2010
DRAMA QUEEN	Keith Keppel	2011
FLORENTINE SILK	Keith Keppel	2012
THAT'S ALL FOLKS	William Maryott	2013
DIVIDING LINE	Charles Bunnell	2014
GYPSY LORD	Keith Keppel	2015
SWANS IN FLIGHT	Robert Hollingworth	2016
MONTMARTRE	Keith Keppel	2017
HAUNTED HEART	Keith Keppel	2018
BOTTLE ROCKET	Michael Sutton	2019
Not Awarded		2020
DARING DECEPTION	Thomas Johnson	2021
RECKLESS ABANDON	Keith Keppel	2021



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