THE NEWSLETTER of

the SIBERIAN, SPURIA and JAPANESE IRIS GROUP.

of the British Iris Society.

No. 11.

July 1982.

THE OBJECTS OF THE GROUP.

- I. Communication between Members in Great Britain and Overseas.
- 2. A means of exchanging ideas, plants, seeds etc.
- 3. To assist beginners im growing Iris and to offer help with problems.
- 4. To report on Hybridisation.

EDITORIAL

I think our founder the late Alex Back would have been very pleased to see the first Stand ever promoted by the Group, at the June Show, this Year. Perhaps evem more pleased with the excellent results, including the recruitment of 9 new Members.

A very big thank you, must go to our Chairman Hilda Goodwin and her

husband Dom, for their untiring work and support on both days. Many thanks also to the Members who helped and domated the beautiful flowers... the magnificent Spurias were very much admired. 'Cass' with his beloved 'Shelford Giant'. Adrian's arresting seedlings. Hilda's new Hybrid, which possesses a most haumting beauty. We really must devote the February NewsLetter to the Spurias again.

Our sincere congratulations to Jennifer Hewitt on her successes in the Show.... 'The Spender Challenge Trophy', 'The German Iris Plaque', 'The Twim Trophy', 'The William Herbert Bowl' and other Prizes... I

worder if this is a record ???

A suggestion has been put forward that we sbruld start a list of Plants for Sale, with the profits being domatted to Group Funds. David is prepared to add it to his Seed Distribution duties, (Eric has decided not to continue), with the proviso that he is able to cope with the work.

While Eric was the Distribution Officer, I have been 'buying in' seeds, which we considered had been stored long enough, as a result I now have a few seedlings available, you will find a list under the Seed Distribution, we will have to see if there is a meed for this. Unfortunately, because of regulations, this cannot apply to Overseas Members, but they will still have the Seed Distribution, which I hope they will continue to support.

A warm welcome is extended to the following New Members:-

Mr. W. Christopher Mrs. E. Frenkiel Mrs. F. Love (New Zealand) Mrs. M. Owem Mrs. W. Tallack Mrs. P. Warburg Mr. I. Smith Mrs. M. Tubbs

Mrs. E. Wise

also Mrs. R. Piggin who has journed locally. We hope you will all emjoy belonging to the Group, and will take part by telling us, in due course, of the Iris you grow in your own

As I am writing this there is a Rail Strike om, material for the NewsLetter is being clayed, as I expect delivery will be, when I despatch them. Very sorry... beyond my comtrol....

Meanwhile Good Gardening J.T.

CHAIRMAN'S LETTER

Dear Fellow Members.

The proposed Group Exhibit and 'get together' at the B.I.S. Show, did, indeed materialize and you will find a report of same elsewhere in this NewsLetter. I will just say how grateful I am to those Members who helped to set up the Stand. To David for providing a very appropriate background for the fire selection of Spurias and Sibiricas on show. To Bryan Dodsworth our President, for kindly carrying our

equipment so safely for us.
Thanks also to those Members who helped to 'mam the Stand' on both days ... As one Member put it ... ' it has been a real Group Effort! I personally thought it was all very worth-while. We had many enquiries from the General Public, showing great imterest. We also brought the Group to the notice of many Members of the B.I.S. who, surprisingly, since we are celebrating our 6th Hirthday, seemed not to know of it's existence. This resulted im a number of New Members being recruited.

We also received a Bronze Medal Card from the British Iris

Very best wishes to you all Hilda Goodwim. MY IRISES

Dr. Mariom Wood.

Twenty years ago I moved to my present garden, here in Harlow, from a sandy, leafy loam on the edge of Windsor Park. I brought with me my collection of Rhododendroms and Irises, grown from Wisley seed. Om this windswept, builder-compacted clay, sometimes too wet and sometimes too dry, with the second hardest water in Britaim, I lost all my plants, so I abandoned Irises in favour of cultivating a family.

After a while I dug a chrim of ponds to drain the garden and planted a Hornbeam hedge to check the wind. Every scrap of Household wasto, newspaper and sewage sludge available was composted and dug in. Now, at last the soil is more or less tractable in dry or wet weather.

The back of the house faces obliquely down the garden and southwards, so 3 forms of I.Stylosa, I.Japonica Variegata and I.Confusa do well, the foot of the wall. On the East side is a greenhouse and frame, where seedlings are raised, also tender Louisianas ... I.Decora and I. Munzii are overwintered.

The first third of the garden is dominated by a Weeping Willow and Island Bods of shrubs and herbaceous plants, including a few Dwarf

Boarded, 6 species of Sisyrinchium and 2 of Gladiolus.

The middle third contains the ponds with a steep drop of about 3 feet to the lowest level. These banks are supported with rocks and comtain I. Reticulata and Alpinos. Seweral forms of Pacific Coast crosses and Californian Species grow well under a group of Birches, along with I.Milesii, I.Ruthenica, I.Graminea, I.Clarkii and forms of I.Sctosa. One dwarf plant, bought as I.Sctosa has six horizontal paddle-shaped falls and no stamens, any suggestioms???

The shallow water edges of the ponds are host to I.Pseudacorus forms, I.Shrevii, I.Wersicolor forms, I.Lacvigata. 'Holden Clough' and I.Versicolor X Pseudacorus. So far some Louisiamas have survived

but have not flowered.

The beds around the upper pond can be flooded at will, so here I grow 'Diploid' and Tetraploid', I.Simirica and I.Sanguinea seedlings. Around the edges are I.Forrestii, I.Chrysographes and a very unhappy I.Dolavayii.

The rest of the gardem is taken over by fruit trees, but I manage to squeeze rows of new seedlings im betweem. They seem to like

the rich soil, as many flower in the first year.

The range of plants shown, also slides of new ones being bred, at Canningtom this Summer, has made me think hard about what I want to

do with Irises. I ams little satiated by the many excellent large Sibiricas available and would like to breed some reliable Remomtants of the 'Wiolett Repeat' type. Also the 'monkey' in me would like to cross the 28's and 40's with the P.C.I's and 'double' for possible breeding. So far, all that I have found out is that 'Bumble Bees' are quicker and more successful at pollinating tham I am.

My best crosses have been I.Sctosa x 28 and I.Clarkii x28 carried out om pot plants in the greenhouse. All my crosses using I. Forrestii have failed, but I will try again mext year, as I find

the size and patterming of the 40 section ... fascinating.

Last Spring I tried Dr. McEwen's colchicime methods on a range of seedlings and plants, after 3 months the massive 'dying off' has just occurred and I am now 'growing on' the survivors... hoping for a few 'Chimeras'.

That is all I have done so far ... I think I will settle for Remorrtants, small plants and patterns, as that may mean I will not have to dig up any more lawm for new plants ... perhaps

TREVOR NOTTLE'S LETTER FROM AUSTRALIA.

I found Bryam's letter very interesting indeed. I must agree with his assessment that the 'bigger', 'brighter' and therefore 'better' syndrome is becoming the accepted 'norm' for all groups of Iris, following the patterm of T.B's, Medians and Dwarfs.

This trend may perhaps be more accurately described as the

'selective breeding' of flowers which are circular in outline', 'held erect! and 'face to face' with the viewer. All of these features can, I believe, be traced back directly to the Exhibition and Improvement Standards of the early 19th Century Florists of Paisley, the Potteries and the Weaving Towns.

The same Standards which they once applied to Pansies, Pinks, Tulips, Auriculas and Primroses, are now applied to Day Lilies (Hemerocallis), Liliums, Daffodils, Iris and just about every other

flower.

These Groups or Associations, being interested in exhibiting the flowers only, and not really having gardens large enough to worry about 'visual EFFECTS', as the earliest Amateur Breeders, did not bother themselves with the overall aspects of 'balance', 'grace', 'proportiom', 'stature' or 'poise', let alone 'hardiness', 'resistance to bad weather', 'floriferousness' and 'length of flowering period'. Sad to say these factors, so important to-day, did not bother the Leaders of the Gardenesque as they wandered from seasonal border to seasonal border in the 1900's. So now, present day gardeners are faced with a long-established tradition of 'Breeding for Exhibition' flowers.

Our problem is, how cam we bring about a change towards more

consideration of 'aspects of a plant', other tham 'flowers'.

When you remember that most people use Flower Shows as their major reference when sellecting new plants, it is not hard to understand how 'exhibition' type blooms have become the main focus for Commercial Breeders, who must make sales, im order to stay im business.

Comparatively few people are able to see flowering plants growing in a gardem setting, so that their selections cam be based on the overall aspects of balance, proportion, poise etc....

There are several ways around this Shows could include sections for the entire stems and foliage (suitably trimmed of dead bits). This would meed a new approach to display etc., but would be valuable, especially if 'multiple stems' were encouraged. Also 'floor displays' so that plants could be compared.

Slide Programmes of entire plants in gardems, can be helpful indicators, but the 'scale' and 'relative size' can sometimes be distorted.

Classes could be set up in Shows to allow for bhooms which are distinctive, but as this could be incrpreted in many ugly and freakish ways, am even better solution would be for the various Groups to submit a fairly concise summary of what the desirable features of each Class are, for inclusion in the Official Show Standards.

A last necessary step would be to improve the appreciation of Judges of the differing qualities of each group, by stronger imputs at Judges Schools. At present, I suspect they apply the well established ideals for T.H's to all other groups... no matter what.

So some intensive propaganda is indicated !!!!

The breeders and growers who are keem to preserve the unique qualities of each group or class, must stick to their guns (or Iris) and keep on showing their blooms with pride, and continue talking about them to all gardeners... even those who grow.... only for Exhibition.

PAUL RICHARDSON'S LETTER FROM NEW ZEALAND.

Unfortunately Paul has been ill, we send him our best wishes for a speedy recovery and hops to hear from him later in the Year. Ed.

REPORTS ON IRIS 'MIRZA CITRONELLA'. Am under-taking for the 'Species Group'

Jennifer Hewitt's findings:About 8 years ago I obtained from the B.I.S. Seed Exchange seed
labelled I.Mirza Citronella and I.Mirza dark form. Unfortumately, in
the making of a new gardem, the seedlings were mixed, the results
were 4 different flowers from the group.

1. A small-flowered yellow which appears to be identical to I. Forrestii

or at least closely related to it.

2. A tall, dark blue-purple with a yellow signal, veimed with the colour of the rest of the flower. About 30" tall, stout stems and

 Pale blue standards and style arms, falls very pale yellow, much streaked with pale and slightly deeper blue streaks, palest near the hafts and edge, deepest in the centre of the falls. About 24" tall.

4. Almost identical with No. 3 but the falls have a more noticeably yellow haft and signal, round which is a ring of deep blue spots. Blue streaks as above but slightly but slightly deeper in tone. Same height.

I have not tried growing plants from the seed, which are copiously produced (bee pods). I would, however, like to try to repeat the cross suggested by Laurence Weel in his note to Alex Back, a copy of which is enclosed. Efforts so far have not been successful, due to bad

weather and other hazards.

It may be of interest to Members, that I have a group of seedlings from seed labelled 'Yellow Hybrids' (B.I.S.seed exchange), in which it would appear that the known parent was yellow in colour. Some of these are yellow I.Forrestii-type. One is fairly tall, dark blue-purple, and not unlike the very dark Mirza Citromella seedling, except that it has little or no signal.

The rest are very tall and they come in varying shades of reddishpurple with yellow signals: some have blue-purple streaking on a pale yellow ground. All are much larger flowers than the Mirza Citronella seedlings, several are branched, some with 2 branches and up to 6 buds. There looks to be a strong I.Delaveyi content in them, because of the colour, size and shape.

The Mirza Citromella seedlings bear a closer resemblance to I. Forrestii in shape and size and the blue colour is similar to that in

a group of I. Bulleyana seedlings.

Oh! what a tangled web 'even if no deception is intended. P.S. Since writing the above i have typed out the copy of the Laurence Feel letter and also read a remark of his in the I954 Year Book. It occure to me to mention that whilst in many of the 'yellow hybrids', referred to above, the long fall of I.Delavayi appears, at least 3 out of the 10 plants do not have it. Two, as I have said resembling I. Forrestii in shape and the third having...slightly flaring falls of about the same length as I. Chrysographes.

Also a group of seedlings from a cross of Mirza Citromella x I. Chrysographes Dark Form, gave seedlings all closely resembling Mirza Citromella. I am not sure if this proves anything... it is possible that my controlled cross was not as contolled as I intended it to be ...

Copy of a letter from Laurence Neel to Alex Back.

'Iris Mirza is supposed to have been raised by George Yeld in 1925, with one parent given as I.Delavayi, from this I presume that it was a chance seedling from Delavayi.

Mirza Citromella is said to have been raised by Wallace around

1943, but no parentage has ever been given.

I have grown it from seed and most of the seedlings were of a yellowish range, but there were also a number of deep and medium purples among them. They were all heavily striped or reticulated.

Mrs. Hamsfords' Bulleyama crosses are mearly identical to those I have had from Mirza Citromella seedlings.

I have always queried the Delawayi content of Mirza, because certainly Mirza Citromella shows none of the long fall so typical of

Delavayi.

My guess, for what it is worth, is that I.Mirza Citromella has, as one parent, either I. Wilsomii or I. Forrestii, probably the latter, because of the markings, and the original Mirza as the other, and that Mirza might have been Delavayi (because I think Yeld kept pretty good records). But ... more likely he came unstuck with this one ... and it was Hulleyama, which would give results such as Mrs Hansford is getting.

Certainly both Mirza and Mirza Citronella were raised in Emgland. Unfortunately, there is no way of checking up on the parentage of cither... What went into them is more or less intelligent guesswork!... This letter was quoted by Alex in the Intermational Siberian

Robin in 1976 in response to a query of mine, about the status of I.Mirza Citromella. In the 1954 B.I.S. Year Book, Mr. Neel opines that it's parentage could be I.Forrestii and I.Chrysographes. My own cross of I.Chrysographes (Dark Form)x I.Forrestii, whilst not all the same colour as Mirza Citromella, certainly gave flowers of the same shape and size as plants of similar habit, and though the colours were different, the markings were very similar in their kind and distributiom. It seems possible that the 'blue' I. Chrysographes and I. forrestii could produce flowers resembling Mirza Citronella, and it would be interesting to make the cross and see the results. J.E.

Trevor Nottles' findings.

Trevor wrote in August 1981 about his I.Mirza Citronella, telling of how he grew them from seed which he had planted several years ago, and that they had flowered im 1980. In the main they were im pale yellow shades overlaid with a heavy network of lavender-purple veins in a range of intensity. The overall effect was of greyish blooms. They are all held at the same level as the arching tops of the leaf blade, so they are not very evident, until 'looked for'.

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The clumps were planted in wet ground, they multiplied repidly, building up from 1 to 30 fans in one year, before flowering, and not

all the fams produced blooms.

Sadly the plants died, as rapidly as they had grown... with but setting seed. In fact out of 20 or so seedlings planted, only 2 clumps remain. I rather think they prefer a site which is wet during Summer and Spring, then dry when the flowering has ceased, in order to ripen the rhizomes. I have planted a few in a drier spot, but they have not bloomed yet.

One of the seedlings was markedly different from it's siblings. It was deep purple-blue with a white aprom, heavily spotted with black. Perhaps it was plaim I.Mirza... I do not know if it will

survive Hope this will help im your research ...

I have grown I. Mirza Citronella myself, some years ago, from seedlings given to me by Jennifer. As I remember they were palish blue with the white streaks, slightly tinged with yellow at the base of the falls. Alas they did not survive, but I now have seedlings coming along, which I will report upon, as soon as they flower. I do hope those Members who are growing them, will do the same please, it will help to establish it's identity.

Joam. To.

GROUP PARTICIPATION IN THE B.I.S. SHOW June 15th & 16th

I was only able to attend on the first day of this Main British Iris Society Show, held in the R.H.S. Hall, but the beardless Iris

were probably at their very best on this day.

After a session of Judging, mainly of the T.B's, I contacted our Chairman Hilda Goodwin, who provided me with the S.S&J's Reporters Badge, complete with name and designation. This, no doubt to satisfy the curiosity of B.I.S. Members, who must have wondered why, I, a known T.B. enthusiast, was spending so much time, taking notes in a section devoted to Reardless Iris. However that may have appeared, it seems that badges of authority are not always read... as I was to learn later, when I was lurking in the vicinity of the Trade Stands... I was approached with enquiries for plant orders...

Back to my Reporting duties. I started at our S. S & J. Stand, erected by Members and dedicated to the Memory of our Founder Member, the late Alex Back. This had been nicely arranged, showing pictures of various Beardless Iris, leaflets, NewsLetters and some of the original letters written by Alex in connection with the formation of the Group in 1976. Vases of Spurias on one side and various Sibirica, Chrysographes, Kaempferi and Species on the other. Altogether the impression was, like Alex himself, not estentatious, but quietly impressive and it deserved the Bronze Medal awarded by the B.I.S.

The standard of Iris in the Beardless Classes open to our Members was generally good, if not outstanding, but the variable weather has to be considered. There were entries in every Class of Division 5, we could, however have done with more in the Sibirica

Classes.

Im Class25, the 'Spender Challenge Trophy' was won by Jennifer Hewitt, showing 4 vases of Sibiricas... 'Purple Mere', 'Limcheart',

'Orvillo Fay' (Tetraploid) and 'Cambridge'.

The 'Germam Iris Plaque' was also won by Jennifer with 5 spikes of Sibiricas, namely 'Navy Brass' a striking deep blue Tetraploid with a large brassy yellow signal. 'Dreaming Spires', still

ome of the best two-tomed light and dark bluc ... that is if you can grow it, and the impeccable 'White Swirl'. Two seedlings in this group were M.A. 2/2 as wime-red similar to 'Polly Dodge', and a a white seedling flushed pale orchid pink, a rere colour, which does not come as easily as one might imagine. Crossing wime-reds with white usually produces .. blue!

In Class 27 for the 40 Chromosome series, the Twin Trophy was worr by Jennifer with 5 Chrysographes seedlings. At present, these small, dainty flowers have to be seem at close quarters to be really

appreciated.

A First was worr by 'Cass' for his Spuria Hybrids in Class 28, the names are: - 'A.W. Tait' blue-violet with yellow on the falls. 'White Heron' white with some yellow on the falls, and 'Elixir' a golden yellow.

'Cass' also achieved a 2md with 'White Heron', 'Morging Tide' and ther white and 'Academus' (Fothergill 54) lavender and yellow.

Helena Butcher gained a 3rd with 'Ticehurst' lavender and yellow. 'Lydia Jame' yellow edged white and 'Golden Lady'. (Helena's Mother also won a 2nd for her Spurias, in a later Class) In this Class I particularly liked Sidney Linnegar's spike of 'Connoisseur' (Hager 65) an interesting light tan-brown, with orchid tinged yellow styles, falls deepening to coppery-brown.
Im Class 31 Jennifer Hewitt's fine collection of Chrysographes

(Hybrids) won the 'William Herbert Bowl'.

Although outside my brief, I feel I must mention other outstanding exhibits shown by Members The bowl of superb Louisianas 'Clyde Redmond' which won an Award of Merit for Sidney Linnegar. Hilda Goodwin's vase of 6 Louisianas 'Brevicaulis', excellently arranged, wom the 'Angela Marchant' Trophy in Class 33. In the same class Helena Butcher gained the 2nd Prize with her 'Orientalis' (Ochraleuca). It was pleasing to see the unmistakable black stems and fine flowers of 'Gerald Derby', which wom a 1st Prize Certificate for Ray Jeffs. The same wariety won a 2nd Prize for Mary Tubbs, one of the Group's latest recruits.

As usual, a number of spikes of Spuria 'Shelford Giant' were shown, a sure sign of the presence of 'Cass' ... one of his favourites,

I believe ...

A small, but striking seedling grown from 'Rodiomenko' seed, commanded a lot of attention. I noticed one on the Group's Stand. It has ruby-garmet standards and shining garmet-brown falls with yellow

reining.

A seedling that impressed me was a spike grown by Adrian Whittaker. The only flower open was medium-large with thick substance and broad horizontal flaring falls. The colour was deep golden-orange, the falls seeming to have a tam cast, due to very fine weining. I would like to see this flower again with more 'open' flowers on the stem.

Finally a word about the attractive Trade Stand staged by Mr.V.H. Humphrey of Nottinghan, containing a selection of Spurias and P.C.I's. The Spurias being of good garden varieties such as 'Belise' (Simonet 64) blue-wiolet, the large flowered deep violet 'Protoge' (Hager 66) and 'Media Luz' (Hager 67) a qurious, but attractive bi-colour, with grey standards and prominently veined yellow falls. Altogether the Stand was a fine sample of simplicity creating the right effect.

Overall it was a good B.I.S. Show in which our Stand and the Beardless Hybrid Exhibits played a significant part, thanks to the

combined efforts of our Members

THE SEED DISTRIBUTION

All packets are priced at 5p. Please enclose a stamped addressed enwelope when applying to :-

Mr. David Trevithick, 86a, Granthan Road

Radcliffe-on-Trent Nottingham.

Section Laevigatae

I.Laewigata (Blue) I.Pseudacorus (Deep Yellow).

I.Pseudacorus Bastardii (Pale Yellow).

Series Sibirica

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PLANT LIST

Price to Members 20p plus p&p.

I. Sibirica 'Alba'

I. Sctosa 'Savilly Garden Forn'

I. Wilsomii

THE GROUP LIBRARY

Copies of the following American publications are obtainable from the Hom. Librariam,

Mrs. J. Howitt, 'Haygarth', Cleetom St, Mary,

Cleobury Mortimer Kidderminster

NewsLetter of the Spuria Iris Society

Reviews of the Society for Japanese Trises

Journals of the Siberian Iris

The Genus Iris ... subsection Sibiricae .. B.I.S.

Alphabetical Table and Cultivation Guide to the Species. B.I.S

Please include postage when requesting items.

THE GROUP'S OFFICERS

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Hom. N/L Editor ... --- as above ----

Hom. Seed Dist.

Officer Mr. D. Trevithick, 86a Granthan Rd.

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TREASURER'S REPORT

Subscriptions 75p. per Year are now due please ...

There are still one or two Subscriptions outstanding A reminder that after the 3rd notification, you will not receive your next NewsLetter.

We have for sale some duplicate copies of Alex Back's original NewsLetter, printed in 1976. In it Alex tells of his ideas and incommetion concerning the Group. The cost is 20p. plus 12pp. postage.

There are also one or two back copies of the Feb/82 and July/81 price 30p plus 12ap.

These offers are open to Members only.

LIST OF MEMBERS

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MISSING ITEMS.

Reports on early Shows and 'Canningtom', have not arrived, due, I expect to the Strike, I understand that 'Cannington' was very successful and was very enjoyable. Dur friend Currier McEwen fron the U.S.A. paid a visit, to everyones'delight. It would have been interesting to hear Helena's account, perhaps we can carry it over to the February NewsLetter. Currier has written a book om'Siberian Irises', which explains, im detail his work in this field.

If you wish to obtain a copy the address is:-Mr. Julius Wadekenper, 10078 154 th Avenue, Elk River, MN 55330. U.S.A.

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