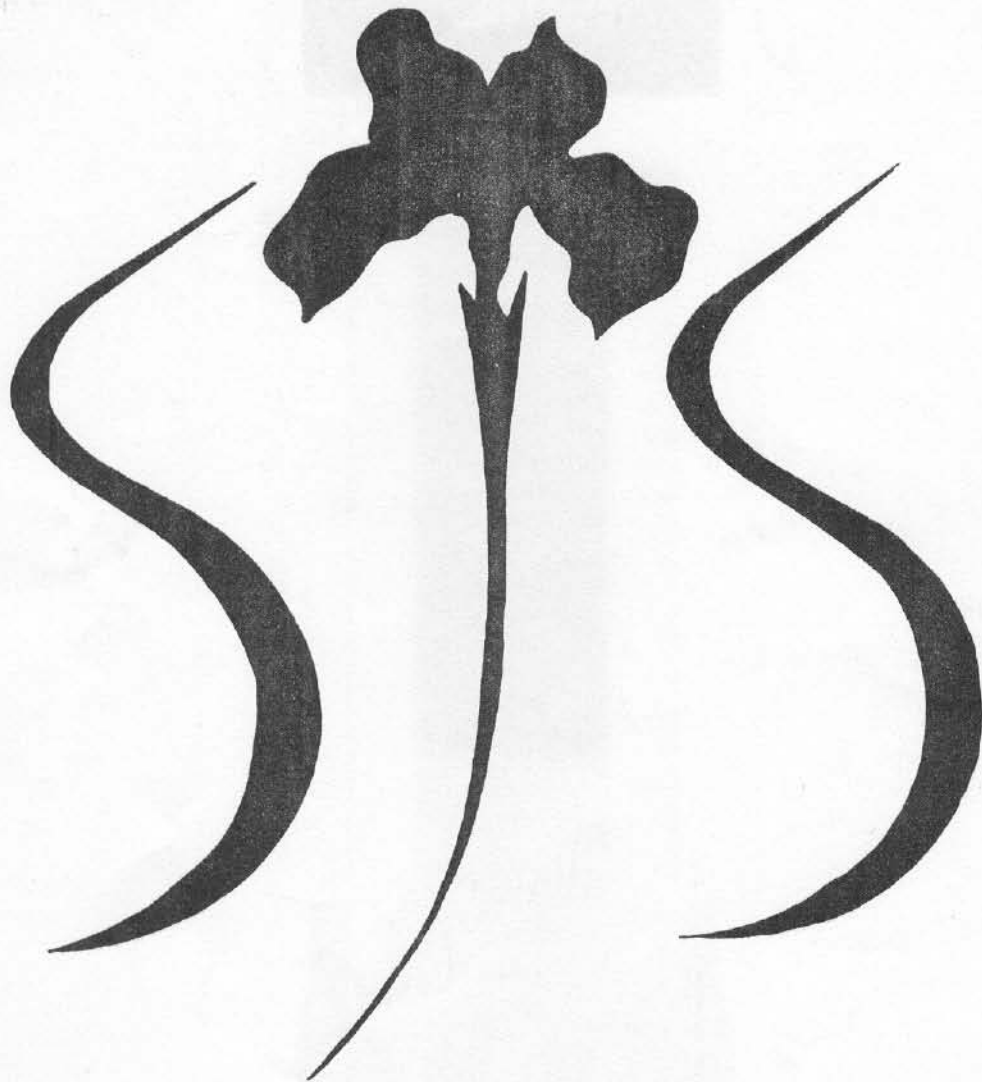


# NEWSLETTER



OF THE  
SIBERIAN SPURIA AND JAPANESE GROUP  
(INCLUDING PACIFICAS AND WATER IRIS)

B.I.S.

THE SIBERIAN, SPURIA & JAPANESE IRIS GROUP, (including PACIFICAS & WATER  
IRISES) of the BRITISH IRIS SOCIETY.

Newsletter no 35

July 1994

IN MEMORIAM

We very much regret to have to tell you that Joan Trevithick has finally lost her long-running battle with cancer and that she died on the 9th of July.

Adrian Whittaker writes: The sad passing of Joan Trevithick closes a long chapter in the history of the S.S. & J. Group.

Joan came forward to take on the duties of secretary and treasurer in 1978. Through her efforts, despite failing health, the Group steadily increased in stature and viability. Almost every spare moment was spent in fund raising and publicity. Seed and plant sales, correspondence with members in the U.K. and abroad, coupled with the production of the bi-annual newsletter which was entirely hers, occupied a huge slice of every week.

Aware of rising costs and inflation, her capability for tight budgeting enabled subscriptions to be held at a very low level year after year.

Joan was a natural gardener and lover of plants, her interest extending much further than the irises into alpenines and beyond. She read widely and applied this knowledge thoughtfully. In the years of my association with her, as Group chairman, I have rarely found her short of the correct name for any plant.

Her death has removed the central pillar from the Group and the B.I.S. has lost one of its unsung ambassadors. Her richly deserved Pilkington Award in 1991, for services to the B.I.S., represents a triumph over adversity.

Many iris people have benefited from her dedication and will be much saddened by her departure. Our sympathy goes to her son David and her family.

Jennifer Hewitt writes: There will be many words written about Joan and the way in which she has been the mainspring of the Group for over 15 years and made it the flourishing entity it is today. I would like to make this small contribution because of being in at the start and knowing how nearly Alex Back's foundation came to grief at a very young age. That it survived is almost entirely due to Joan.

To lose Alex, the founder and inspiration of the Group and the person who was keen to do all the hard work, less than three months after the inaugural meeting in June 1976 was a blow for which Doris Hansford, the Treasurer, and I, as Chairman, were ill equipped to cope. We had rather lightheartedly agreed to take on these jobs because we knew that Alex was the real power. The Group drifted, and though we could see that positive action was needed, neither of us had the time to initiate it, or ideas as to the form it should take. The first ray of light appeared in 1977 when Joan, who had been encouraging and supportive, offered to become newsletter editor. With her first issue it became clear that the Group had a focus. A year or so later Doris said she wished to retire and Joan, rather diffidently, added the jobs of secretary and treasurer to that of editor.

The rest, as they say, is history: the evidence is there in the newsletters and the story they tell. It might have been very different. It is our good fortune that someone with vision and the energy to realise it came forward at the crucial time. Joan may not have arrived on a white horse, but she rode to the rescue and rose to the challenge. If Alex could see what the Group has become because of her I am sure he would feel that his hopes have been realised.

### The Aims and Object of the Group:

1. Communications between members in Great Britain and Overseas
2. A means of exchanging ideas, plants and seeds etc.
- 3 To assist beginners in growing irises and to help with problems
- 4 To report on hybridisation.

\* \* \* \* \*

### The Group's Officers:

**Chairman:** Mr Adrian Whittaker, 'Chestnuts', Hilden Way, LITTLETON, Winchester Hants. SO2 26QH.

**Vice-Chairman:** Mrs Hilda Goodwin, Corner Cottage, School Road, GREAT BARTON, Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk IP31 2HT.

**Acting Sec.:** Mrs Anne Blanco White, 72 South Hill Park, LONDON NW3 2SN.

**Acting Treas:** Mr Philip Allery, 190 Walsall Road, ALDRIDGE, nr Walsall, West Midlands WS9 0BE.

**Acting Seed Distb'n Officer:** Mrs Blanco White, as above.

**Hon. Librarian:** Mrs Jennifer Hewitt, 'Haygarth', Cleeton St. Mary, CLEOBURY MORTIMER, Kidderminster, DY14 0QU.

**Japanese Iris Specialist:** Mrs Blanco White

**Pacificas Specialist :** Mr Ray Wilson, 'Daleshead', 100 Blackburn road, CHORLEY, Lancs. PR6 8TJ.

**Sibirica Specialist:** Mrs Jennifer Hewitt, as above.

\* \* \* \* \*

### Regional Representatives:

**Eastern Area:** Mrs Shirley Ryder, 'Toadshole Cottage', Old Road, FEERING, Colchester, Essex CO5 9RN.

**London Area:** Mrs Blanco White, as above.

**North Western Area:** Mr Ray Wilson, as above.

**Southern Area:** Mr Adrian Whittaker, as above.

**West & Midlands Area:** Dr. John Beal, 'Ashleogh', Barnsley Road, SCAWSBY, Doncaster DN5 8QE.

\* \* \* \* \*

### SUBSCRIPTIONS 1994/5

Anyone with a guilty conscience or in the least doubt about having paid should send £2.00 to Philip Allery as soon as possible. His address is on page 2.

\* \* \* \* \*

Articles and copy for the February Newsletter must be received by Anne Blanco White by 14 January 1995.

\* \* \* \* \*

**SEED LIST:** I'm sorry there is no seed list included with this N.L., but there really hasn't been time to prepare it. Do consult the list in the February 1994 edition and see if there is anything in which you are still interested and then, if you write me, I will see if they are still available. Don't waste time on anything in short supply - it has been sold already. And don't worry that the seed may be stale because most iris seed had an indefinite shelf life.

If you have seeds to offer, do send them to me and I will put them in the next list.

David Trevithick. You will have seen that David has resigned from the posts of Treasurer and Seed Distribution Officer. After all the years of working so closely with his mother, he did not wish to carry on any longer and we can only sympathise with him. We are immensely grateful for what he has done and send him our very best wishes for his future happiness and success.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### HAS THIS GROUP A FUTURE ?

We urgently need a new Secretary and Treasurer to run the Group and its Newsletter: I cannot take the work on permanently. This is not a time for saying that it would be impossible to follow Joan. As Secretary and driving force she was unique and knew exactly what she wanted done and by whom. But Joan knew better than anyone that she wouldn't last forever and that when someone else took over from her there would naturally be changes.

It isn't even necessary to combine the posts - there could perfectly well be a Secretary and a Treasurer and a Newsletter Editor and a Seed Distributor; in these days of very fancy typewriters and word processors, organising a newsletter is not so very difficult. Joan has left a network of contacts at home and abroad.

If no one is willing to take on this work, then the only sensible thing to do is to close the Group down at this time next year, 1995, when the present subscriptions run out. This would be a very great shame since it has been an effective and well run group for so many years, but it would be worse to let it run down gradually and messily.

The best memorial we could offer for Joan is to keep the Group running, even on slightly different lines. So volunteers come forward, please: some of you must have thought occasionally of changes you would like to see. There are several months in which to organise for the next Newsletter in the spring of 1995.

All those interested in rallying round should get in touch with me at the above address as soon as possible. Best to write I am afraid, at least for the next month; after that you can try 071 - 435 2700.

Afterthoughts: One thing that occurred to me is that it isn't necessary to have all these groups of irises in one collection. They could perfectly well be split up into separate groups for sibiricas, spurias and so on, if individual members would like to take a single such group in hand. Possibly these might work best as Round Robins, though a newsletter is a much more efficient way of handling things. When Alex first founded the Group he was concerned that non-bearded cultivars weren't getting a fair chance against the entrenched masses of Tall Bearded although Mrs Brummitt's pacific coast hybrids were doing well. Since those days, there has been a great improvement in that we do have trials at Wisley for sibirica, spuria, ensata and pacifica cultivars and things may improve more if the R.H.S. develops the uses of the various gardens it has recently been given, but that is very much for the future.

It has even been suggested that the S.S. & J. should try amalgamating with the Species Group though I see a difficulty there because the S.S. & J. is mainly cultivar oriented while the Species Group takes a more basic attitude.



It is odd in a way that the American S.I.G.N.A. is widening its scope to encompass both the true species and the beardless cultivars because they feel that the beardless irises need a better chance especially with all the new inter-specific hybrids being produced. Again, I would be interested to have anyone's thoughts on this matter (the Species Group has not been approached) in time to publish them in the next N.L.

\* \* \* \* \*

**VERICOLORS FOR SALE:** A limited number of pieces of named forms of *I. versicolor* are available at £3.00 each including postage. Please write, enclosing a stamped, addressed envelope, with a list of those you would like and when you have my reply telling you whether I can supply them, send a cheque made payable to me. All money, except for postage costs will be passed to the S.S. & J Group funds.

Mrs Jennifer Hewitt, Hayqarth, Cleeton St. Mary, Cleobury Mortimer,  
Kidderminster DY14 0QU.

Most of the irises were described in the Newsletter for February 1993, but brief notes may help to remind you:

'Mysterious Monique' dark red/near black and white

'Party Line' violet-pink and white

'Pink Peaks' pink, standards with sharp peaks

'Silvinton' pale blue (to be registered in 1994)

'Regal Surprise' (Ellis) a pseudacorus x versicolor hybrid with purple falls and yellow standards is also available for sale at £5.00 a plant. This does seem to be a very good garden plant even in the herbaceous border provided it has plenty of water up to flowering time. Payment, please, to Anne Blanco White. Postage included and balance to the Group funds.

\* \* \* \* \*

**Gardening with Iris Species.** The Species Group of North America in conjunction with the Missouri Botanical Garden, the Greater St. Louis Iris Society and the Gateway Chapter of the American Rock Garden Society is holding an International Symposium from March 24 - 26, 1995. If anyone would like a copy of the leaflet with details, please send an S.A.E. to Anne Blanco White. And be quick about it because late applicants have to pay more. This should be a very exciting affair; speakers will include Brian Mathew and Jim Waddick. Overseas members should write direct to Riley Probst, Registrar, 418 North Van Buren, St. Louis, MO 63122, U.S.A.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### News from overseas:

In late March, Mark A. Cook of Lexington wrote to ask about spring flowers in England and to say that they were getting over the worst winter since 1977 and 1978. "It started with 4.4" of snow on Christmas Day, followed by snows of 7.2" on 28 December and 7.2" again on 4 January. The weather stayed quiet for two weeks, but then a strong cold front brought 1.3" snow followed by -15°F.

This is when things really got interesting. Late on the night of 16 January, rain with thunder developed although the temperature was 4° below

freezing. During the predawn hours on 17 January, colder air moved in. This further destabilised the atmosphere causing a blizzard with vivid lightening and thunder. So, on top of one inch of ice, we got 18.5 inches of snow. Once the snow stopped the temperature started falling rapidly. It dropped to  $-4^{\circ}\text{F}$  late in the day and kept falling through the day on 18th January. Late on the 18th, it had dropped to  $-37^{\circ}$ . This destroyed the previous record low of  $-31^{\circ}$ . The temperature finally bottomed out at  $-41^{\circ}$  on the 19th.

The weather then moderated with rain and  $43^{\circ}$  -  $53^{\circ}$  temperatures from 24th 28th January. This melted the snow and caused some flooding. On 9 February a snow of 3.1" fell. On the 11th, 3" of freezing rain fell on the snow. This ice storm destroyed 10% of Lexington's trees. 97% of the surviving trees suffered damage.

On 9th March, we had an ice storm that was even worse. This time ice accumulations were 5.3" thick. This event destroyed 20% of Lexington's remaining trees. It has been said that no tree in the city escaped damage this time. Property damage in Kentucky is estimated at \$55 million.

On a statewide basis only Black Wednesday was worse. (That) is the name given to the Tornado outbreak of 3 April 1974 .....27" of rain in 18 hours.... two 4.0 earthquakes. I hope we don't have any more of that kind of stuff.

It is going to be interesting to see what survived the winter. All of my irises are putting up new growth. Most of my perennials are beginning to emerge. .... One of my dogwoods is so badly damaged that it will probably die. Since two families of Purple Finches are nesting in what is left of the dogwood, I will delay cutting it down.

.....Soon the irises will be blooming. None of the plants are hurting for water. Rainfall has amounted to 25" (including 44" of melted snow) this year. Rainfall in March alone has been 12.5".

(So much for a continental climate. We just hope your bloom display made it all worth while.)

Life was different, but not a lot better in the Antipodes:

Hec Collins writes "We have had a very hot summer this year with temperatures up to mid thirties in some parts. In Tauranga here we had a very dry 1993 with only about 60% of our usual rainfall. This affected the bloom season in October/November: the stems being shorter or not so many blooms. January was very dry, but February made up for it when we got 80mm in one night. Our total annual rainfall is usually 1300mm. We have a somewhat humid climate and this suits Siberians and Louisianas very well and Spurias do well, but are slow settling in and blooming." Frances Love follows on "We are in midwinter and it is a wet, cold one at that. Next month should see an improvement."

And then at home:

**South of Watford.** Perhaps I should start with an awful warning for those whose gardens are in this zone: muntjac deer have been seen as far south as Horsham. And let's be quite clear that horticulturally speaking the only good deer is in the stewpot.

The winter and spring were cold, dark and wet. Growth in all our groups of plants was very poor and if they did grow in a warmish spell, then the young leaves were damaged by vicious, frosty wind afterwards. As a result, a large number of plants never bothered to flower at all and many others either produced much shortened stems or a wide range of lengths. As slight consolation, the cold nights since the Whitsun warm-up have contributed to long

lasting flowers both in the garden and on the show bench. The P.C.I. trials were very patchy and are due for replanting this year. Incidentally, 'Golden Waves' (Witt), a calisib, was in full flower when we looked at it on June 29th long after all competitors were over. That vivid yellow makes a good splash of colour late in the season. The spurias, too, are due for replanting and do not really do the group justice. A number of plants had suffered from direct competition with a large tree in their previous site. Effectively this meant that they were starved of water at the critical growing period and the rhizomes failed to recover in the new site; in fact they deteriorated even further. The moral of that is that if you have spuria rhizomes which have been severely stressed they must go into intensive care or be replaced by new stock. This finally leaves us with the Ensata Trial and I can only say 'oh dear'. Our friendly neighbourhood thrips are back with a vengeance though the plants are not in as bad a state as when the thrips were first diagnosed. The sudden very hot summer may have a lot to do with it after the horrid spring. Some plants are doing well - notably 'Rose Queen', ensata variegata and 'Katy Mendez'. 'The Great Mogul' which ought to check in at around 5' tall is about 2', but possibly an unidentified plant down in the new stream zone which was very tall by ensata standards and had splendid branching is the same cultivar.

A Japanese nurseryman sent a collection of plants to Wisley some 18 months ago and most of them have been planted beside the long water at the foot of the rock garden with a few scattered around the new stream beds. In general the plants, which include the dwarf 'Akatsuki shibori', are doing well and so far show no signs of thrips. They did attract a lot of attention.

\* \* \* \* \*

**Publications:** past issues of all newsletters for 1988, '90, '91, '92, '93 and '94 are available. Best to check your collection and fill any gaps while the going is good - all at 75p including postage.

And the B.I.S. carries stocks of Irises for the Water Garden, 2nd edition; A Guide to Pacific Coast Irises - Vic Cohen; Currier McEwen's - The Japanese Iris and many other items. Please write to Neville Watkins, 31 Larkfield Road, Farnham, Surrey GU9 7DB with an s.a.e for details.

\* \* \* \* \*

*Iris typhifolia* has featured at several shows in various shades of blue and with slight variations in appearance, but this year saw Jennifer Hewitt exhibit for the first time in Britain a hybrids of this new species with *I. 'Dreaming Yellow'*. The actual cross was made by Bob Wise, but Jennifer did the cultivation. Two spikes in different shades of blue with paler styles and two buds to the spike. It will be very interesting to see how the plants fare in the next few years and what further variations appear on this theme. We congratulate her on a very interesting exhibit.

\* \* \* \* \*

So, I wish you all a good replanting autumn for a magnificent season next year. And remember that I would like to hear from as many of you as possible so that the next N.L. will be worth sending out and reading.