

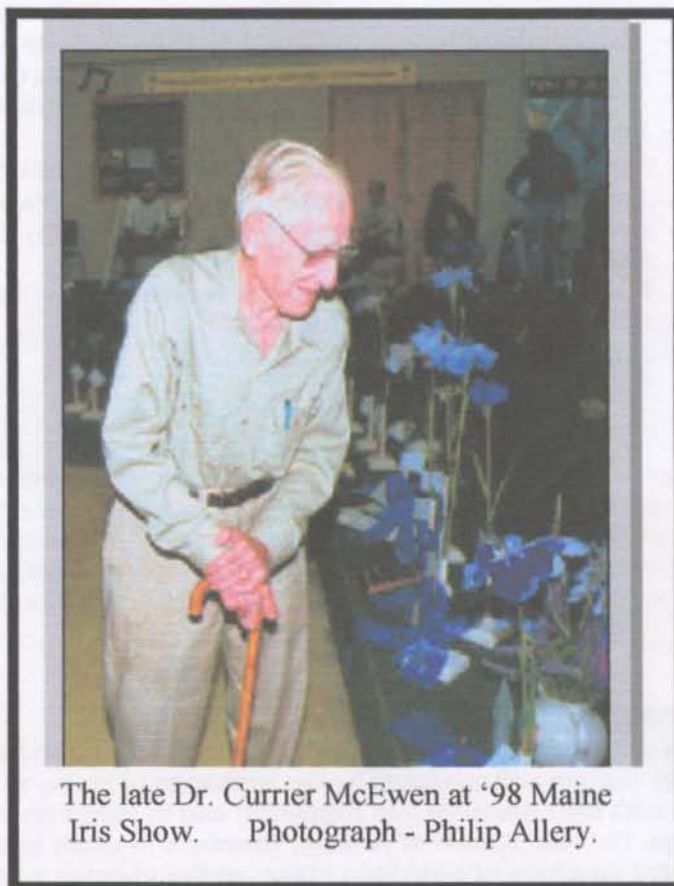


The Group for BEARDLESS IRISES of the British Iris Society

ANNUAL
REVIEW
2002
NEWSLETTER

No.
47

Autumn 2003



The late Dr. Currier McEwen at '98 Maine
Iris Show. Photograph - Philip Allery.



I. Ensata hybrid—"Southern Son "
at Wisley Trials.

Photograph—Mrs. Jennifer Hewitt.

**The Group for Beardless Irises of the British Iris Society
Annual Review – 2002. Newsletter No. 47 - Autumn 2003.**

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Acknowledgments -The publication and dispatch of this newsletter would not have been possible without considerable help from Anne and Alun, to whom I express my sincere thanks. Thanks also to Jennifer Hewitt for allowing use of her photograph of "Southern Son" at Wisley when it became desirable to change the format of the front cover.
My best wishes to all members. Happy Christmas and a successful New Year! Philip Allery

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES -

The Group's aims and objectives are to foster communication between members in Great Britain, Europe and overseas by the exchange of ideas, seeds and plants; to help newcomers with their interests and problems; and to report on new work in hybridisation. The recruitment of younger members is vitally important. Recruit a friend to share your love of beardless irises; and/or sponsor a young person who shows interest in irises.

The Group for Beardless Irises is a section of the British Iris Society. Membership of the Society is not a pre-requisite for membership of this Group, but it is fully recommended by all officers of the Group. The Society's Year Book, published annually, is an additional source of material on the cultivation of beardless irises, and contains articles by eminent irisarians on a wealth of interesting subjects. The B.I.S. Year Book also contains reports on trials of beardless irises that have taken place at the R.H.S. Garden, Wisley, during the year. B.I.S. Membership application forms are available from the Enrolment Secretary, Mr. E.H. Furnival, 15 Parkwood Drive, Rawtenstall, Lancs.BB4 6RP. At £12.00 for 2004, this membership is really good value.

The Group for Beardless Irises of the British Iris Society
Annual Review – 2002. Newsletter No. 47- Autumn 2003.

The Group's Officers

- Chairman Raymond Bomford, The Hills, Tanhouse Lane, REDDITCH, Worcs. B98 9AB
- Secretary Mrs. Anne Blanco White, 72 South Hill Park, LONDON. NW3 2SN
- Membership Secy./Treasurer Alun C. Whitehead, Aulden Farm, Aulden, Leominster, HR6 0JT
- Newsletter Editor/Librarian Philip Allery, 199 Walsall Road, ALDRIDGE, Walsall, W. Mids. WS9 0BE
- Seed Distribution Mrs. M.V.Criddle, 5 Storeys Lane, Burgh-le-Marsh, SKEGNESS, Lincs. PE24 5LR

Regional Representatives

- London Area Mrs. Anne Blanco White - as above
- Midlands Area Philip Allery - as above
- North Eastern Area Miss Clare Dodsworth, 42 Middleham Road, DARLINGTON, DL1 3DJ.
- South Eastern Area Mrs. Olga Wells, 24 Westwood Road, MAIDSTONE, Kent ME15 6BG
- South Western Area Tim Loe, Landreyne Manor, Coads Green, Launceston, Cornwall, PL15 7LZ.
- Scotland Mrs. Brita Carson, 15 Kellyburn Park, Dollar, Clackmannanshire, FK14 7AD.
- South Wales Mrs. C. L. Derbyshire, 876 Newport Road, Rumney, Cardiff. CF3 4LJ.

Specialist Help/Correspondents

- Japanese Irises Mrs Anne Blanco White - as above.
- Laevigata Irises Mrs Galen Carter, Rowden Gardens, Brentor, Nr. Tavistock, PL19 0NG.
- Louisiana Irises Mrs. Ada Godfrey, Hermit Medlar's Walk, 3 Pierce St. (Rte 140), Foxborough MA, 02035 U.S.A.
- Pacificas Revd.Fr.Philip Jones, 49 Sutton Road, Erdington, BIRMINGHAM. B23 6QJ
- Sibiricas Mrs. Jennifer Hewitt, "Haygarth", Cleeton St Mary, CLEOBURY MORTIMER, Kidderminster, Worcs. DY14 0QU

Overseas Contacts - U.S.A.

- Japanese Irises - Rita Gormley, Editor, The Review for the Society for Japanese Irises, 6717 Martha Drive, Cedar Hill, MO 63016, U.S.A.
- Pacificas- Terri Hudson, Secretary/Treasurer, S.P.C.N.I., 33450 Little Valley Road, Fort Bragg, C.A. 95437, U.S.A.
- Sibiricas - Lynda Love, Secretary, The Society for Siberian Irises, 4900 E. Dartmouth Ave, Denver, CO 80222-7333, U.S.A.
- Spurias - Joanne Lee Miller, Editor, Spuria Iris Society Newsletter, 14221 S. Stagecoach Rd. Tucson, AZ 85736, U.S.A.

CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE - All members should be very concerned that a younger age group is very slow to appear and, as yet, we have not received any offer to relieve Philip, our Editor, of his editorial duties. As an interim measure I have agreed that the Group will attempt to publish an Annual Review in place of newsletters as it is at this time of year that our gardens do not make such heavy demands on our time. You are invited, indeed urged, to send articles and write telling Anne and myself what you plan to do to ensure that our Group does not founder. Do let us have your views on this important matter! I apologise for the late appearance of this Newsletter. This is due to a large degree to the increasing ill health and deteriorating eye-sight of our Editor Philip Allery. Quite recently his doctor has advised that he should resign or risk the onset of another stroke.

So we are at some sort of crossroads. We either soldier on in some sort of ancient regime or find a fresh, younger, and forward thinking (as far as iris growing is concerned) person to strike out in a new direction. I must say at the outset that I favour the latter option. Failing that I would prefer the Review and newsletter to fold and any relevant news to appear in the B.I.S. Year Book. If the growing of Iris is your main concern and you are not a B.I.S. member, please consider seriously the benefit to be obtained by seeking membership as well as joining the Species Group which may become a life-line for the genus as a whole. The Group's Hon. Secretary is Mrs. T.A. Blanco White, *Hon. Secretary* (address details above).

Regional Groups continue to arrange interesting annual programmes and opportunities for members to meet. Their contacts are – **Kent Group** – Mrs. Thelma Naylor, *Chairman*, 4 Amherst Close, Maidstone, Kent, ME16 0JB.

West and Midlands Group – *Hon. Secretary*: Mrs. C.L. Derbyshire, 876 Newport Road, Rumney, Cardiff, CF3 4LJ.

Best wishes, Raymond Bomford

SECRETARY'S REPORT – The state of this Group is now critical and it seems extremely probable that it will have to close down next year because Philip's health and irreversible deterioration of his sight is such that it will not be possible for him to continue as Newsletter Editor. This is a very great shame in the light of all the work put in over the years by Joan Trevithick, Sue Pierce and Philip himself, but it follows from Philip's retirement that we must either have a new editor or shut up the shop. Obviously we would prefer the first option and there is still an opportunity for a member to come forward and offer to take over. Granted that the old format has done us very well for many years, this is a splendid opportunity for an enthusiast to reorganise matters. Philip had intended to make considerable changes amongst which he proposed to move to an annual publication and include more colour pages. If anyone is willing to take over, please would they get in touch with me, Anne Blanco White, as soon as possible.

This is not the happiest publication we have produced. We have to record that Dr. Currier McEwen died at the end of June after having celebrated his hundredth birthday – and we do mean celebrated – on 1st April, 2002. And our start to the Year 2002 had been saddened by the death on the 24th November 2001, of our Vice-Chairman, Mrs. Hilda Goodwin, shortly before her 95th birthday. A generous supporter of the Group, she would attend B.I.S. or Kent Group functions whenever her health allowed and was a keen observer at their Iris Shows. Our Chairman sent a letter of condolence to her son Trevor.

And it is all the more regrettable in that we had just welcomed Mrs Ada Godfrey of the American Louisiana Society to help us with problems in growing these gorgeous plants over here. Global warming aside, some forms are a lot more tolerant of our climate than you have been led to expect. After all, *li. fulva*, *fulvala* and *brevicaulis* have been grown here for well over a century now. And the best way to get reliable cultivars is to grow what you can lay your hands on and try for seeds which you can grow on again for yet more tolerant cultivars.

2004 EDITION OF THE NEWSLETTER - Please will all Philip's regular contributors accept this as an indication that we intend to issue another edition and so they should assemble their material for 31st December and send it to me. I will be writing to you all to explain in greater detail precisely what will be going to happen.

Articles for publication are needed urgently so that if we go out, it is with a bang and not a whimper. Prints or slides of photographs of special beardless irises would be welcomed.

THE GROUP'S CONSTITUTION AND YOU, THE MEMBERS

PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING CAREFULLY – IT REALLY IS IMPORTANT.

Long and long ago we had a constitution. I found the relevant minute recording that it had been proposed and accepted at an Annual General Meeting soon after the Group was founded. But, sadly, there are very few of the original members left and none of us can raise a copy. The Group is in a parlous state and if we are to wind it up respectably we must have a Constitution laying down the necessary conditions in order to keep our bankers happy. So here is a draft for your consideration. We need to hear from you before 31st December 2003 especially if you wish to suggest any amendment. Of course, we will be happy to hear from you if you approve and if we do not hear, we shall assume you have no objections. It should then be possible to publish the final, accepted Constitution and Rules in the next edition of the Newsletter together with an account of the votes.

Suggested Constitution and Rules for the Group for Beardless Irises.

- 1 **The Title** shall be 'The Group for Beardless Irises'
- 2 **The Object** of the Group, as a section of The British Iris Society, is to foster interest in these plants around the world by the exchange of ideas, seeds and plants and to help growers with their problems.
- 3 **Membership** of the group shall be open to all people over the age of 18 years interested in the genus *Iris* and who have paid the annual subscription. Such Members shall be encouraged to join the British Iris Society. Other categories of membership may be proposed by the Committee and will be subject to approval by the membership, but will not necessarily have the right to vote. Similarly, Honorary Membership may be granted to outstanding persons after consultation with the Membership and will not necessarily confer voting rights.

Since most members live in the British Isles, there shall be no objection to meetings of members being arranged if a convenient opportunity permits and the proceedings are reported in the following newsletter.

- 4 **Administration** shall be by a Committee of officers approved by members of the Group: a chairperson, a secretary, a treasurer, a membership secretary, a newsletter editor and such other officers as may be deemed necessary for special purposes. There shall be no objection in principle to one person holding more than one office. When it is necessary to appoint a new officer the vacancy must be advertised to the members in the next newsletter and a request made for nominations or volunteers. In default of such persons coming forward, or an urgent time limit, the committee may nominate a candidate and shall publicise that nomination in the next edition of the newsletter.

Three committee members shall constitute a quorum to take decisions.

- 5 **The yearly newsletter/review** is the way that the Group communications are at present conducted so all changes should, if possible, be published in the preceding edition and 28 days allowed for protests or suggestions from members.
- 6 **Finance.** The Treasurer shall present audited accounts annually which shall be published in the subsequent newsletter/review; shall be sole signatory of cheques up to £50.00 or such greater sum as shall be authorised by the members; cheques for larger sums must be countersigned by the chairperson or secretary. Subscriptions should be fully sufficient to meet payments for the newsletter publication and necessary expenses incurred by officers.
- 7 **Subscriptions** shall be determined by the Committee and proposed to members in a newsletter with a time limit sufficient to allow of objections. The subscription year shall run from 1 January to 31 December and payments should be made before the 31 January.
- 8 **Objections** by the membership to proposals from the Committee may be dealt with by direct mail outside of a normal newsletter/review mailing. Similarly, proposals from the membership requiring urgent attention may also be dealt with by direct mail. Only fully paid up Members are entitled to vote.
- 9 **Amendments** to the Constitution must be published in a newsletter/review and sufficient time allowed for amendments and suggestions to be incorporated in the following edition or by direct communication.
- 10 **Winding up of the Group.** The proposal for this must be published in a newsletter 12 months before the proposed date of closure which shall require a majority of 60% of the members responding excluding the Committee members.
- 11 **Disposal of assets.** Financial: any monies remaining after all debts have been settled shall be passed to The British Iris Society to be used at their discretion, but with a request that they be held for a period of time to permit of a new and similar group being formed to which the monies could be transferred. The library shall be offered to the BIS librarian. Such material as is not of use there shall be offered for sale to members of the Group and the BIS and after that shall be disposed of as the librarian sees fit with any monies arising from such sales being added to the original Group monies.

TREASURER'S REPORT - Finance - I took over as Treasurer of the Group during 2003. As the Group has had little activity during this period, the balance held at the bank has increased slightly. For convenience, this is now held at HSBC and was £857.82 on the last statement (Sept 2003). Postage and editorial costs of the February 2002 Newsletter and a few other sundries are still to be paid. These are about £250 (a detailed account is awaited from Philip).

The Group's failure to maintain two publications annually in recent years, due to the Philip's ill health, has had the effect of increasing the Group's financial commitment to those of us who were paid-up members in those years. This would have taken some time to work out; a winter job! Instead our Chairman and our Secretary agreed that a flat rate credit of £2.50 should be applied to all U.K. and European members and £3.00 to all other overseas members concerned. This has been done and an up-dated membership list has been prepared.

This newsletter, postage and incidental expenditure, is estimated to cost approximately £250 so it seems that our balances should be sufficient to meet the cost of introducing a colour page into each future issue for the next two years but not paying for a web-site host. It would however be prudent to increase the membership subscription. To publish a comprehensive review for all the hybrids within the ambit of the Group and provide adequate illustrations and photographs Philip estimates that an annual subscription of £5.00 may become necessary. What are your views? Please let us know whether you would be prepared to pay an increased subscription rate from 1st January 2005. Donations, in whatever form, already generously made by some members, would allow the Group to increase the colour page content above their current level. **Articles for publication are needed urgently by Anne.** Prints or slides of photographs of beardless irises would be welcomed, with permission to include them with articles in future newsletters.

The Group has earlier issues of the newsletters available at a cost, inclusive of postage, of £1.50 each (U.K. & Europe) or £2.00 for overseas members. Requests for back copies of newsletters, with payment, to Philip please. The Group has an extensive library of books, newsletters and publications from the B.I.S. and Societies overseas. Current catalogues from several American Iris Nurseries are available to members in the U.K. and Europe on payment of postage.

EDITORIAL – The late Dr. Currier McEwen - Pride of place in this Editorial was planned to be an account of celebrations following Currier's 100th birthday on 1st April 2002, accompanied by photographs kindly sent to me by e-mail by Sharon Hayes Whitney. Celebrations included the presentation of a birthday cake and a slide show based on a poster showing 100 of his introductions, at the Portland Flower Show, with members of the Maine Iris Society present. Subsequently Governor Angus King proclaimed 22nd June 2002 "Currier McEwen Day". In conjunction with the Maine Iris Society on that day the Harpswell Garden Club hosted a celebratory party at Centennial Hall, the garden club's home. Here with members of his family, friends and colleagues present the Governor's Proclamation was read; cake and punch shared and the garden club's "The Currier McEwen Centennial Garden" dedicated. Our Chairman generously agreed to sponsor the colour pages but problems with copyright arose.

Sadly my report on this happy event is overshadowed by his death on 23rd June this year and the front cover of this newsletter has been substituted with more suitable photographs. Our Chairman, on behalf of the Group, conveyed our condolences to Elisabeth and members of Currier's family. They were much appreciated.

On a personal note, a chance meeting with Currier and Elisabeth after registration at the Cannington 1987 International Iris Convention, organised by the British Iris Society, led to my current interest in and work with Japanese Irises under the mantle of the S.S. & J Group, now the Group for Beardless Irises. Until that date my main interest in irises had been with the bearded cultivars to which I had been introduced by the late Mrs. Win. Tallack in 1975. Beardless irises had been used only as a colourful foil for garden pool surrounds in water gardening. This meeting was a turning point in my gardening life which was quickly followed by a generous offer from Currier of plants and seeds. These gave me valuable help, saving years in time in a small hybridising programme which I had started a few years earlier with the gift of seeds from a leading J.I. hybridiser in Kanagawa, Japan, the late Dr. Shuichi. Hirao.

In the twenty-five years which followed our meeting I developed an affectionate respect for this doyen of the iris world, who was so willing to help a relative novice. As our friendship grew, both in correspondence and telephone conversations, Currier would go to great lengths to explain his ideas, procedures and plans; and in subsequent visits I was able to view at first hand his painstaking attention to detail. With his little red diary in hand he would escort me round his gardens at "Seaways", evaluating plants; removing selected pollen-bearing anthers for use or storage and making notes of potential crosses. Currier would have already discussed with Sharon Whitney Hayes, his business partner, possible hybridising aims. If the selected plant was not quite ready, Currier would tie up the falls with blades of grass to prevent accidental pollination by insects. In evaluation of plants he was quite ruthless and I was fascinated to note his use of coloured ribbons during evaluation, to signify his intentions when a particular aspect of the plant's growth caught his eye and met approval, or disapproval.

"Open Days" at Seaways were an eye-opener. Never before have I met such an eminent person who delighted in meeting visitors and gave them such a friendly and courteous welcome. Invariably Currier would make time in a busy schedule to explain or demonstrate to the enthusiastic beginner the principles and processes of cross-pollination or demonstrate the use of his microscope to carry out a quick check on pollen grains to establish whether they were from diploid or tetraploid plants, or possibly a chimera which might in time revert to the diploid state. Currier always attracted an engrossed crowd, who delighted in the friendliness and sense of fun which accompanied these demonstrations.

Although most members will know of Dr. McEwen for his valued contribution to the world of irises and generosity to the British Iris Society, I was privileged to see other aspects of his life and interests. First and foremost he was a family man, and that aspect will be better documented by those who knew him far better than I did. In repeating this expression of my condolences to members of Currier's family may I take this opportunity to convey to them and those of his many friends whom I met on my visits my deep and sincere appreciation of the friendly welcomes I received. My 78th birthday coincided with one of my visits and I shall always remember the birthday party arranged for me by Anne and Kathy, two of his daughters, and Nancy, his niece. This kind gesture led to a happy and memorable occasion, particularly appreciated as I was still attempting to adjust to the life of a widower.

Another aspect of Currier's life was particularly remarkable. Although he had retired from his practice in rheumatology in 1984 it was not uncommon for his past patients to telephone for advice or to up-date him on their family affairs. He always gave them his full attention, with evident compassion.

Currier's memory will always live on here in my home as there are his books and correspondence to read and re-read; and plant introductions to use in the years ahead. With over 100 articles on irises and 160 iris introductions to his credit Dr. Currier McEwen left the iris world a wonderful and lasting legacy. Philip

As Mrs. Jennifer Hewitt had known Currier, Elisabeth and family over a longer period I was delighted when she agreed to prepare a memoir for this publication. Here it is –

Currier McEwen: one of a kind - There can be very few members of this Group who grow Siberians and don't have one, or more, raised by Currier McEwen. Indeed the success of 'Silver Edge', 'Butter and Sugar', 'Ruffled Velvet' and others in Britain is reflected in the number of nurseries other than specialist iris ones which now sell them, because they have proved to be such good growers in a range of conditions and have flowers which readily 'sell' the plants. So gardeners and nursery owners have much to thank him for, and so do hybridisers, for I would guess that the majority of Siberian irises being raised nowadays have McEwen originations in their ancestry. Often these, or seeds, were gifts from Currier himself for he was the most generous of men, giving time, help, advice and encouragement to anyone interested in growing and hybridising Siberians. All this is equally true of his work with Japanese irises and his attitude towards people interested in them; if I tend to put more emphasis on Siberians it is because I have so much to thank him for in that area.

It was the chance delivery of an iris catalogue to his home in New York, as he has told, that sparked his interest in irises. At the time he was pursuing a very distinguished career in medicine. He became Dean of New York University School of Medicine at the age of 35, the youngest ever Dean, and his speciality was rheumatology, including arthritis and gout. His first irises were tall bearded but he also grew *hemerocallis* (daylilies) and learned of Orville Fay's work with them, using colchicine to convert diploids into tetraploids. Colchicine was familiar to him as it was used in the treatment of his speciality. After visiting Fay, he began experimenting, but as TBs were already tetraploid, Currier chose to work with Siberians and Japanese where no natural tetraploids had occurred. In 1970 he introduced 'Orville Fay', his first tet Siberian from a cross of two converted plants. Conversions themselves can be unstable but with 'Orville Fay', 'Fourfold White' and later generations he had produced a race which bred true. Tets, as we know, are not markedly different in size from diploids but they can be more vigorous and easier to grow in some places, and lead to new colour combinations.

Not that he neglected the diploids - far from it, for 'Butter and Sugar' which led the way to non-fading yellow 28-chromosome Siberians is a diploid and other notable ones are 'Shirley Pope' and 'Ruffled Velvet'. Raising a good yellow tet was a goal Currier pursued to the end of his life but by no means the only one; achieving one goal was a stage in reaching a farther one. Another of his interests was remontancy in both Siberians and Japanese and he raised successful diploids and tetraploids which, rather than reblooming in autumn when conditions can be discouraging, produced repeat bloom a few weeks after their first season.

Many awards came his way, well deserved; five Morgan-Wood Medals for Siberians and the same number of Payne Medals for Japanese. Also from the American Iris Society he received their Hybridizer's Medal and in 1999 their highest award, the Gold Medal, while the American Horticultural Society gave him their top honour, the Luther Burbank Award, in 1995. Numerous of his irises gained RHS awards after trial at Wisley and the BIS recognised his achievements in advancing the genus *Iris* with the Foster Memorial Plaque in 1978.

He wrote many articles in the BIS Year Book and elsewhere, all well worth reading and re-reading for they are practical and full of good information. So are his two books, on Siberian and Japanese Irises (both in the GBI library). All his writing is enjoyable to read too, and gives a flavour of his unique personality. Above all Currier was human and full of humanity; you couldn't be in his company, as I was privileged to be on several occasions, without learning from him but, especially, enjoying his humour and love of life which took in a lot more than medicine and irises. Born on April 1st (a date which always amused him) 1902, he celebrated his 100th birthday in 2002 with a host of friends and family, and those of us who couldn't be there in person were very much so in spirit. His death on June 23rd 2003 leaves a huge gap for all who knew and loved him, most of all for Elisabeth and his family who have our deepest sympathy. At least we all have our memories and his irises. Jennifer Hewitt

Generally - When your Secretary told you in the last Newsletter that it had been "a seriously interesting year" I gave little thought to what might follow. With an earthquake measuring 4.6 on the Richter scale in my immediate locality, gale-force winds and my garden flooding from storm water on several occasions, 2002 provided some classic extremes. The brief spell of dry sunny weather for the Malvern Show served only as a taunting reminder of what could have been. It also upset my Japanese irises!

My plans to join members at the B.I.S. Convention in May 2002 were disrupted by a severe chest infection which brought my visit to an abrupt end after the very interesting lectures on the first day. Within the week I was admitted to hospital. Since then, with deteriorating health and sight and a warning that I am now at risk of a further stroke, a temporary alternative to publish an annual review in substitution for the two newsletters annually, is preferable to completely disbanding the Group. I can contribute a few articles in the future but to undertake to do more than that would be misleading you all. I had become increasingly reliant on articles from members who have many other commitments, commercial or otherwise, during the period March to September. To ask them to give time during this busy period to write informed articles for the newsletter is unfair. The demands of my own garden over the past two years have increased and the day-to-day duties have been quite onerous. I was quite happy to hand over this editorial work when a successor could be found, or bow out when I no longer made a positive contribution. That time has now arrived as I consider the current situation quite unsatisfactory and unfair to you the members. My hope for a permanent editorial team to share the publication load has not materialised, and to those who sent in articles over the past years I send my best thanks. Please send your reports on the 2003 season to Anne. I treasure the friendships I have made and hope they will continue. They are very much appreciated. Philip.

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY'S REPORT -

New Members – We congratulate Mr. & Mrs. Tim Loe on the birth of another daughter. We also welcome the following new members recruited during the year 2002. – Mr. B. Carruthers, Binny Plants, Binny Estate, Ecclesmachan, West Lothian EH52 6NL. (See Brita Carson's report for the Scottish region.); and Mr. Pascal Sharp, 45 Moberly Avenue, Toronto, Ontario, Canada M4C 4A9.

Subscriptions - Subscription rates for existing members have been waived during 2003 and 2004 as newsletter publications fell below two (i.e. Spring and Autumn) annually in 2001 and 2002. Subscriptions have been adjusted accordingly. A statement will be issued with the next Newsletter showing any amounts outstanding or balances prepaid. Current membership at 1st January 2004 will be listed as an appendix to the next newsletter. If there are any changes or corrections of address in the meantime please advise me. Alun.

OUR WEBSITE – Since the last Newsletter, our website (www.gbi.org.uk) has undergone an overhaul. The old website was tacked onto part of the space used by the Aulden Farm site and was simply an information page. Whilst this received a few hits, the fact that it did not run in its own webspace meant that the search engines which people use to find particular websites did not index our site satisfactorily. Thanks to the kind sponsorship of our Editor, the website ran under in its own webspace for 2 years. This, together with the expansion of information on the site, led to it receiving in May between 2 & 8 hits per day though this had reduced a bit by July once the main iris season had passed.

For those without access to the internet I shall try and describe the website. It is split into several pages. Initially there is a home page in which we try to raise people's interest in Beardless Iris. From there people can explore other pages:-

About the GBI - explaining a bit about the Group and membership.

Beardless Iris - a brief tour through the various types.

Gallery - a page of photos, again to whet the appetite.

Seed Available – a page giving people the chance to buy a few packets of seed donated by members.

Sample Articles – This page contains a few articles chosen almost at random from past Newsletters to give anyone interested a feel for the type of article in the Newsletter.

Links – a page still to be completed.

The final page (since deleted) gave details of the 2002 BIS Convention. (Some details of the next BIS Convention in 2007 are given on the new BIS website www.britisshirisociety.org.uk)

The main purpose of the website is to raise awareness of the Group and our favourite plants. The website is efficient in this respect as it costs next to nothing to publish pictures of irises on the site and pictures are our best advertisement. We were hoping that this publicity would be self-funding by sale of the seed through the site, but to date this has proved a failure.

I would like to see the site further developed. At present we are using only a small percentage of the webspace available to us. This means that *many* more photos can be incorporated. Dr Tamberg kindly gave us permission to use the photos from his website (<http://home.t-online.de/home/Dr.T.U.C.Tamberg>). If other members have photos which they think suitable I would be pleased to receive them. They can be sent by email or if you send me prints, I can scan them and then return. Photos of individual cultivars would be welcome, as well as pictures of irises used in a garden setting. But feel free to submit anything you think appropriate.

Another aspect to be developed is the Links page. I have procrastinated over this as it will be an important aspect of the site. A comprehensive and useful links page should encourage people to use the site and bring people to it. In accordance with internet practice the links will be set up on a reciprocal basis and I would like to thank Hollybush Nurseries and Croftway Nursery for already linking to our site. I will put links in place to them and to any other members who are happy with this arrangement. Alun Whitehead.

REGIONAL REPORTS -

Eastern Region – Beardless irises are becoming available at nurseries in this region, on which there will be a report in the next newsletter. Following his talk to the West and Midlands Iris Group referred to in Philip's report on P.C. Irises I persuaded Julian Browse of Seagate Irises to add hybrid Japanese Iris cultivars to those irises he offers for sale to those members of the public who visit his nursery. The sale of Louisiana iris cultivars in this region is also being investigated. Ed.

London Region – Anne's report is included under "Beardless Irises on which Members have reported".

Midlands Region – The West & Midlands Group had an enjoyable season of varied activities; visits and displays. Its main activity in 2002 was the planning and management of the main Society's 80th Birthday Celebrations and Convention at Bristol in May last. A donation of £1500 was made to the B.I.S. from the proceeds. Reports in the 2002 Iris Year Book cover this event and it is gratifying to note that despite earlier concerns of reduced attendance the Convention was a great success.

Visits to members' gardens and Pershore took place throughout the year, and these coupled with an exhibition stand at Malvern and a Group Show at Cleeton St. Mary as well as planned Convention visits demonstrated that it is possible to achieve a high standard of cultivation of many different beardless irises in this region. That our weather was not ideal is an understatement but it seems that earlier bloom seasons will become the norm. Bloom on beardless irises was generally good, but inclement and un-seasonal weather caused quite marked variations in the quality and quantity of bloom and setting and growth of seedpods. Philip Allery

The Year at Alden - This year was one of the unexpected. *Hemerocallis* trying to flower in April! Yes the weather proved a good topic of discussion all year - 80mph winds are forecast for this Spring weekend. The dry April meant that the *ensatas* which we grow in the normal border without watering flowered a bit lower this year (pleased to hear the same happened at the Wisely trials) and the early warm period produced an earlier season here. It was also in April that I noticed about three *ensata* clumps had sunk down in the ground and their growth was not so vigorous as their 'soil mates'. On closer inspection, each of these clumps could be easily lifted clear of the ground because they had absolutely no roots. Their undersides looked like gnawed bones (their sap is red and colours the damaged rhizomes). After reflection, we put the blame on a few short-tailed voles. And we have to thank them, for propagating purposes the plants were ideal - no need to dig up or wash the roots. After splitting into smaller pieces, all plants grew away happily. Isn't nature wonderful!

In early spring, some sickly yellow leaves were of interest in our field. These were some Louisianas which we obtained from Sue Pearce's offer last year. These were planted in the open ground last autumn and the winter cold had killed the chlorophyll in the leaves and hence their appearance. As soon as the weather turned milder, the leaves turned green and we were pleased to see flowers in mid-June on Dixie Deb (yellow with a greenish throat), Vodoo Song (purple with lighter style arms) and *x fulvala*. As I write, the plants still seem healthy and hopefully are not too taxed after the recent dry spell. Louisianas have a reputation for needing it warmer to flower well. By next year the clumps should be well established and it will be interesting to see if they can put on a better show in our open exposed field.

We were pleased with a selection of PCIs which we planted under some old apple trees. Some of the varieties we enjoyed were Blue Ballerina, Goring Sunrise, Mission Santa Cruz (a dark burgundy beauty). Our visitors generally picked out Pasaro Dunes with its rich colour combination.

One notable failure this year was our trial of a few English Irises (from Spain/Portugal!). These are similar to Dutch Iris, but the leaves only appear in spring and the plants have a reputation of being able to cope with heavier soils even in some shade. However, the fine floppy leaves were not an asset to the plant. Perhaps, we did something wrong?

The *ensatas* which are still our main interest can produce very puzzling behaviour. A plant of Dino last year flowered, but its leaves remained a sickly yellow all year despite being watered several times with miracid. It returned this year bigger and better, the leaves remaining green all year without any acid feed and flowered well. For those not familiar with Dino, it is a particularly tall and impressive introduction; rich lavender with darker veins and style arms (6f).

Of our own seedlings flowering for the first time this year, we were surprised to find that a seed of bee pollinated Fortune had produced an Oriental Eyes look alike. I imagine this was probably from a self-pollination. Of more use from our viewpoint was a 6 falls version of our Darling (pale lavender), and hopefully this will do well in the field over the next couple of years. Plum colours are quite popular amongst gardeners at present, so we were pleased to see a couple of plum coloured seedlings flowering.

Taking time out in July we managed a hurried visit to Wakehurst Place and their *ensata* area. This seems to be from plants kindly donated to them by Kamo in Japan. Naturally, Japanese cultivars predominate. This area is a reasonable size dell crammed full of *Iris ensata* in many varieties. There is a pond area in the middle and a slightly raised wooden deck path allows the visitor to look down on irises as they walk through. An overall view of the irises can be gained from a path higher up which runs around the back of the dell. This must be one of the most important plantings of *ensata* in the UK, if not the most. We had been to Wisley earlier in the day and this allowed a comparison. Kamo also donated the Wisley irises, but at Wisley the plants are spread out over a larger area. Overall the plants at Wakehurst were more impressive. This was not only due to their concentration in one area, but Wakehurst also gains from the more recent planting in an area which has been well manured and has been specially irrigated.

As I finish writing, the winds forecast for the weekend have now gone and so have a couple of our apple trees. We were thinking of moving the *ensatas* into the field because of the competition for light and moisture from these trees. Oh well, another job saved! Alun Whitehead.

North East Region - Clare Dodsworth -

The question of what to write about for this report has been a bit of a tricky issue. Last winter was yet again very wet, however not as wet as in the past couple of years thankfully. We had some extremely windy weather that blew down a few fence panels but fortunately no plants or trees were damaged. We also had some late snow but it didn't seem to set any of my irises back. The summer was not particularly sunny and whilst a couple of my older irises didn't perform very well, my spuriae seedlings flowered for the first time after four years of waiting.

Last year a couple of my irises grown from seed flowered for the first time, along with another few this year. Unfortunately the labels went missing (I know I should have kept better records!) so I'm not sure what their parents are.

My thoughts have now turned to what I would like to achieve next year. I have decided rather than growing a large number of seeds, to concentrate mainly on obtaining some good plants to possibly have a first attempt at hybridising in the few years. I have also decided so grow some more of the older cultivars and species and have already obtained *I. forestii* } *I. sibirica* } White Swirl and Limeheart. I prefer the simpler, diploid flowers rather than the large, ruffled flowers that many people seem to like so I find many of the older cultivars very pleasing.

The nursery I visited also suggested that a mulch of pine needles is very effective at keeping slugs off precious plants. They use them to protect their Hostas so they must be fairly good. I find that most of my beardless irises are only damaged slightly and once they get going in the spring they soon overcome any minor damage they may have received. The most irritating problem is when it rains during bloom and snails crawl up and eat a chunk out of the new buds. I would be interested to know what other people find useful?

(Editorial Note: Clare sent photographs of her P.C. seedlings and detailed possible identities, asking whether these would give any indication of the parent plants. I sought advice from Revd. Fr. Philip Jones who pointed out that the plant's stem and leaves would also have to be considered. He, in turn, took further advice and the response was— "that the brothers and sisters of the plants Clare has are likely to be very different from each other. I am suggesting to Clare that the correspondence and photographs should be referred to Alun as this query could make good material for the web-site. To protect Hostas from snails I use cocoa shell as a ground cover, which also has a feed element. I have seen ornamental bark used to good effect. If grown in pots, do not allow hosta plant leaves to touch adjoining plants and place ½" depth of horticultural grit both in the saucer and on the surface of the compost. Other solutions are invited – Philip.

Scotland – Seasonal Report from The Scottish Group.

It isn't many years ago that I wrote an article on the virtues of *Phlomis*, a genus that I'm very keen on. Love the colours and farina on the leaves and love the smell but it doesn't always love me irritating my eyes and nose when I work near it. Somehow, somewhere I got the impression that we, in Scotland, were in for some long, hot, dry summers. This would be so unusual that many gardeners would have trouble coping with the situation and I thought, here is a plant that loves these conditions. Could I have been any further from reality? The fields around here could have produced a good crop of rice this summer and the dog will soon have webbed feet. However some *Phlomis* are very tolerant of the way I grow them, given a bit of extra drainage, that bit of 'true grit' for growing up here. What an attractive foil it makes to back or intersect large clumps of blue and purple sibiricas. You can have flowers with classic contrasting yellows or shades of pink, all with soft grey-green felted leaves.

In the autumn, I had a very enjoyable sortie down to Aulden Farm Nursery to collect an order of ensatas and where the dog gave the cat a bit of an Olympic challenge about equal to the one of fitting her and the pots of plants in the boot of the car. A dry riverbed planted up with ensatas must look absolutely stunning in summer, it was tantalising enough without flowers. The whole garden begs another visit earlier in the year just for the pleasure of the irises. The hemerocallis were also too tempting, so I'm hedging my bets now with sun lovers who will tolerate dry conditions to ensatas who will hopefully tolerate this dull weather we get. I have found a Scottish soul mate, Billy Carruthers, who is just as daft on irises as I am and we are hoping to go off to Germany at the appropriate time this summer to see the irises that Tomas Tamberg grows. Billy runs his own nursery near Edinburgh and has a large variety of plants of all kinds but he is building up a great collection of irises and has planted out a large area with sibiricas and ensatas. This will be a really interesting garden for iris lovers and should get lots of new members. I'll enjoy following his progress with the garden.

I can't say that any iris I've seen this year has been particularly floriferous but the colours have been good or is that because I was so desperate to see them. In my case it is either a lack of feeding or dividing which has caused such poor performance although the lack of sunshine before flowering didn't help. Would that wonderful late summer sunshine perk up the rhizomes as much as it did me? I'll report on both of us next year.

So far our resident rabbit doesn't seem too interested in my irises but I'll keep my eye on him. The other rabbits have almost disappeared from the fields, but this one is large and mean looking and survives cars, dogs and buzzards. The squirrel hasn't been around for a week or two but I don't think the dog can take credit for that. In fact she just uses him for racing practice but seldom goes in the same direction! An old guinea pig hutch with a six-foot run covered in strong wire netting is just great for keeping all my pots of *reticulatas* safe from the squirrel. The guinea pigs prefer more comfortable quarters inside.

No sign of any flowers coming on any of the *unguiculars* or *lazicas* but they are new plants and haven't settled in yet. Last year at this time the pot of *I. danfordiae* was just about to come into flower and it filled the dining room with its strong perfume all over the festive season. This year they are hardly showing green

so yet another resolution to add to my many others. I must try harder to do jobs at the right time and not weeks later. Now where did I put those seeds?

South East Region - Olga Wells

The season was very early in the South East with a very warm sunny April with no rain for weeks. Followed by a cool, rainy, windy May; the weather continuing like this into the early part of June. The unguicularis flowered spasmodically over the autumn/winter period with several members commenting on lots of bloom. My own plants flowered more sparsely – still building themselves up after their move. Most prolific was Mary Barnard for me, though I know other people had wonderful clumps of *I.ung.alba* and *I.cretica*. The reticulatas came and went before the date of the BIS Reticulata Show at Westminster, resulting in no competitive entries and, later at the Chelsea Show, none of the professional nurserymen had managed to put on a display of these little irises.

I have no comment to make on the Evansias as they will not grow for me and even a sizeable pot of *wittii* x *wattii* decided not to flower, even though it was kept under cover away from cold winds.

The PCI flowers quickly went over in the dry heat and the Dutch iris looked a bit skimpy, though others in Kent managed to produce magnificent blooms for the early shows.

I.typhifolia bloomed on the allotment on 25th April, and Sibiricas 'Mabel Coday', 'Soft Blue' and 'Mrs. Rowe' were opening their blooms by 10th May. Once the windy, rainy weather set in, not many pods were set – from either deliberate or bee crosses. This looks quite strange as one of the things I normally enjoy about the sibiricas is their elegant seed heads.

The spurias have, mostly, done well in the garden and on the allotment; particularly *li.crocea*, *monnieri* and *orientalis*. However, some of the cultivars have not flowered well; notably 'Destination' and 'Janice Chesnik' – neither have put up a single flower stem. On the trial grounds at Wisley many, though not all, of the spurias are suffering badly and investigations are being made to ascertain what ails them. Likewise the ensatas on trial. My own ensatas and water-loving iris have performed well both in pots at home and in the ground on the allotment, obviously having enjoyed the wetter weather. My particular favourite these past two seasons has been 'Mysterious Monique' – easy, and prolific of those exciting dark flowers.

In late December the weather, apart from one or two heavy frosts, was extremely mild, with temperature up in the fifties Fahrenheit. *I.ung.* 'Mary Barnard' flowered once again and her blooms were remarkably free of slug damage. Alongside her, some *C.sieberi* 'Firefly' were convinced it was spring and struggled into bloom. Elsewhere, different types of *Schizostylis* were convinced it was still autumn.

There are some pots of crocus, reticulatas and *I.danfordiae* sitting out in the open. I hope these may provide some entries for the BIS Reticulata Show, but will it again be a case of too early a season? Once more, I am making encouraging noises to two pots of evansias in unheated rooms in the hope I might eventually get some wonderful stems of *I.wittii* x *I.wattii* and blue *confusa* (Martin Rix). I was also given two pots of seedling *Dietes bicolor* earlier this year. I am hedging my bets with these – one on a window sill in a cool room, the other out in the cold frame. Will these warmer British winters mean we might eventually be able to grow these less than hardy plants out in the open?

The bearded iris are looking particularly miserable after so much rain but the spurias young shoots are looking smart and the best looking plants in the garden are the new PCIs – a wonderful deep, dark, healthy-looking green. Some two and three year old PCI seedlings are beginning to look less than happy: one or two flowered for the first time this year and later died – the result of the dry April? I do not know. I hope the same will not happen to the new crop.

South Wales - Our new regional representative, Caroline Derbyshire, wrote to me in April last giving me an up-date on the irises in her garden. Another early season had become evident. *Chrysographes* and *Setosa* seedlings were in bloom and several Sibiricas, including Mrs. Rowe, had well formed buds and were expected to bloom within two to three weeks. Signs of flowers were noticeable on *I.fulvala* and her Louisiana hybrids. Caroline tells me that South Wales enjoyed a good iris season, with the right mix of warmth and moisture. This has encouraged good periods of bloom in ensatas and sibiricas, and with early warmth so essential to louisianas, these too have responded. Unfortunately Caroline and her daughter were unwell with a flu-like virus infection for an unusually long spell and her end of year report was delayed.

Caroline advises on garden planning and development; having an extensive stock of species and beardless irises. I share Caroline's conviction that this area is ideal for the cultivation of many beardless irises and welcome her enthusiastic approach and creative drive, seeking to recruit new members.

South West Region – The Group is fortunate in having Tim Loe, a new member, willing to act as a representative for this region. We look forward to his future reports.

BEARDLESS IRISES ON WHICH MEMBERS HAVE REPORTED –

Ensata Report. (Anne Blanco White) - Goodness knows, there had been enough rain over the autumn of 2001 and into 2002 proper. They should have done splendidly. They didn't. Of course, the early part of the year was very dark with heavy cloud cover and all too many other plants took a dim view of it too. The

occasional frosts at night over the early growing period probably did little damage though they did slow things down and plants were rather undersized in that leaves and spikes were shorter than would have been expected. But the oddest thing was the total disappearance of some plants which may have been due to chafers or something else with a taste for root systems.

What seems to have done the worst damage was a sudden drought in late spring which lasted for about a fortnight and from which none of the *ensatas* really recovered. It caught the plants just as they should have been stretching themselves upwards and produced the oddest results. Leaves tended to appear very chlorotic and kept the yellowish shade until the end while late leaves came through in the proper shades. The good pink 'Izumi-no-umi' was dreadful with the odd flower on 4" (10 cm) stems. Other cultivars offered variations in shapes and sizes particularly the whites which had the most subtle of rather horrid variations. On other plants there would be one spike up to standard and another substandard; in general the bud count was abysmal. All in all a very odd year.

However, some plants did very well in the circumstances: 'Katy Mendez', 'Ol' Man River', 'Flying Tiger', 'Hue and Cry', 'Summer Storm', 'Vintage Festival', 'Caprician Butterfly', 'Aldridge Snow Maiden', 'Flashing Koi', 'Returning Tide', 'The Great Mogul'. 'Chance Beauty' grew so well that it rather overwhelmed its neighbours, but the flowers were undersized and it seems clear that this, among the first of the pseudatas, needs much more water all to itself to show at its best. Seriously disappointing in Currier McEwen's centennial year was that his 'Southern Son' did not stand out from the also-rans and it is normally a splendid plant. 'The Great Mogul' was represented, apparently, by a very distant and low grade relative.

So the last of *Ensata* Trials came to a less impressive end than we had hoped for. A number of plants will go forward to the new trials and a much more varied collection of hybrids will be added. Two very old friends have been evicted: 'Rose Queen' and *Ensata* variegata. Both have done well, but are so well known and widely distributed that it was felt that their space could be better used. Now we hope for better luck all round through the next three years.

And for serious visiting there is a charming little dell around a small stream at Wakehurst in Kent (which is, of course, Kew's country estate) where large collection of Japanese irises - in both senses of the word - have been planted. They are well worth a visit at flowering time because they do cover most of the shapes and sizes these plants can achieve together with a very wide selection of colour forms and combinations.

The dell seems to be fairly well sheltered for winter and is very well watered during the summer. At the time I was there it was being hand-weeded and although the plants had suffered somewhat from this year's meteorological peculiarities the results were not as bad as at Wisley. Wakehurst, like Kew and Wisley, is always worth a visit and can be recommended to anyone who happens to be visiting that part of Kent especially at iris time and the plants are labelled.

By the way, for any of you interested in the *Ensata* species, you might try Hiroshi Shimizu's website: <http://www.kamoltd.co.jp/kyokai/English/wild.iris.html>. The text is in English, very interesting and so are his photographs.

TRIAL CHANGES at WISLEY

You probably all know by now that the long running, and mainly successful, Japanese iris Trial at Wisley is indulging in a sea change. There are many new hybrid combinations which we are anxious to show to the gardening public and the RHS Council has agreed that the scope of the Trial shall be widened to include some of these plants as well. Some of the recent Canadian imports will be included. Our only regret that is that it wasn't possible to have any more space. The Trials alternate between the beds available so that the soils are rested in between plantings.

The last year of the *Ensata* Trial was disappointing. There was a sudden warm very dry spell at a crucial time in the spring and it seems likely that it badly affected the growth of the exhibits. All were rather undersized and short of flowering spikes; even the flowers themselves were substandard in many cases. Leaves were distinctly chlorotic and some actual plants failed to survive at all.

Many old friends have been retained for the new Trial as well as new wetland irises and it will be very interesting to see how they all compare. Anne

Sale of *Iris Ensata* from the Wisley Trials

Due to the kindness of Philip Allery, our editor, and the late Dr. Currier McEwen, the following *Iris ensata* from the trial beds at RHS, Wisley have been split and are offered for sale to members. They will cost £2.50 each and postage will be charged at cost.

Aldridge Snowmaiden; Aldridge Visitor; Benitsubaki; Flying Tiger; Katy Mendez; Lasting Pleasure; Magic Opal; Ol' Man River; and Returning Tide.

Please do not send any money now, but let me know of your interest (by email [alun@auldenfarm.co.uk], phone [01568 720129] or letter [Aulden Farm, Leominster, HR6 0JT]) and I will contact you shortly before the plants are sent out. This will probably be in the spring when the plants are starting back into growth. As always, the offer is subject to availability and the usual annoying acts of God. Alun Whitehead.

Foetidissima Report – There are at least three members interested in seed colour variations and there is no doubt that they cause considerable interest at a time when autumn's approach is confirmed. Tim Loe was good enough to send me a few seeds from a white-seeded form and I hope the seedlings will be available to those members. P.A.

Sadly, although occasional seeds of the white-seeded form do breed true deliberate growing on is likely to be disappointing with conventional red-seeded plants. If you have enough space in the garden to let these plants seed and grow on you may be lucky. After all, they are fairly easy to weed out at that stage.

Incidentally, I complained that in 2000 the local voles did a great deal of damage to my foets by cutting through the leaves at the bottoms where they are pale coloured and relatively tender. I powdered the plants with 'Gromore', mulched them generously and then left them to their own devices. Later in the autumn new leaves appeared and grew on, but, of course, the rhizomes had been deprived of a good deal of nourishment and so no flowers appeared in 2001, but a few spikes were provided in 2002. ABW

Laevigata Report – The good news is that Mrs. Galen Carter of Rowden Gardens, Aquatic and Rare Plant Specialists and Consultants of Brentor, Nr. Tavistock has offered to become a "Specialist Adviser". Husband John and Galen now have the National Collection of "Water Iris" for the N.C.C.P.G., (*fulva*, *laevigata*, *pseudacorus*, *versicolor* and *virginica*). Galen has undertaken most of the research work on these plants and offers an advisory service throughout the year. Galen would also welcome and be grateful for any information from other growers. Written enquiries, with S.A.E. please, would be preferred at this stage. I have seen a list of the extensive range of *I. laevigata* cultivars available for sale and a descriptive catalogue of these and other cultivars is available from Rowden Gardens for 6 x 1st class stamps, including postage. Ed

Louisiana Report – Ada Godfrey's advice on how to prepare beds to hold water-loving irises was given in the last newsletter. I had told Ada that I am using an aril house to grow half my stock in an attempt to promote early Spring warmth and now wonder whether this is the right thing to do. We shall see!" Ada's answer was that it was probably not a bad idea. Ada also attached some LA pictures which were mentioned in the article and offered to print some sheets for circulation with the newsletter. Thank you Ada! The size and definition of the pictures is the problem and this may be better printed in future newsletters, six to an A4 page with details, or alternatively in the Website with a link.

A welcome addition to our knowledge can be gained from the newly published 2nd edition of the book on Louisiana Irises "The taming of the wild Louisiana Iris". This book has been produced by the Society for Louisiana Irises and is available from the usual specialist book sources or the web. It is excellent reading and I recommend its purchase. *The Louisiana Iris*. 2nd Edition. The Society for Louisiana Irises, Timber Press. ISBN 0 88192 477 6. (Timber Press distribute in Britain so your local bookshop should have no trouble getting it for you.)

PACIFIC COAST IRISES – Report Spring/Summer 2002 – Rev. Fr. Philip Jones

Last year I managed to raise seedlings from seed sent to me by the American PCI society. This was seed gathered in the wild. These have not yet flowered. The main forms are *I. douglasiana*, *I. innominata*, and *I. tenax*. I think I have two plants of *I. chrysophilla*.

I have lost a number of plants that I have been growing for some years. Two years ago I replanted most of my irises. My garden is rather small and the irises had increased considerably and were taking up too much space. I singled out smallish plants with narrow leaves and replanted them in the garden. But I kept aside one plant of everything that I had been growing and planted them all in a narrow plot by the garage. They have not survived. An over zealous worker who had been asked to tidy up decided to weed what he thought was a patch of waste ground. I came back from a holiday last month to discover they had all been dug up, put in the bin and taken away.

Even some irises replanted in the garden have not survived. This is probably due to dividing them too much. The clumps were not big enough. In the last few weeks I have made contact with various people with whom I had shared the irises. Those who had wet ground and flooding last year had lost them all. But one experienced gardener had even some of my skinniest offerings flowering within the year. And two people who know little about gardening have had success. Not realising that I was giving them many different plants that were supposed to be planted separately they took the short, less laborious, route and planted them in two big holes. Being all planted together may have helped them to survive. Unfortunately I have lost a very nice golden form - my favourite plant. I am hoping next May and June to make a few visits and see what I can rediscover of my original stock.

Some of the members at the B.I.S. Convention (Bristol, May 2002) gave me great advice and encouragement. I discovered it was important to find irises that had flower stems that reach for the sky rather than creep along the ground. I have a dark plum coloured iris that is first to flower and last to finish.

But I am afraid it does tend to creep. Still it does have some possibilities. During our West Midland meeting in October our guest speaker – Julian Browse of Seagate Irises – was not over impressed with the requirements and rules laid down for exhibiting irises. He suggested that what works in a garden may be something different, accommodating a wider viewpoint. However, even in the garden I feel that reaching for the skies is better than crawling along the ground. My dark plum iris does both; it creeps and reaches. A truly versatile plant!

One final point concerning growing PCIs. In the 1997 Iris Year Book there is an important article by Phil Phillips entitled *In search of Pacific Coast Native Irises*. He finishes with this remark. "Shade is our main problem as, with the exception of *I. douglasiana* and possibly *I. tenax*, the majority are found in partial shade in the wild." In the light of this statement it may be worth discussing whether the wide open spaces of the Wisley trial grounds are ideal for evaluating the merits of Pacific Coast Irises.

Editorial note – Alun Whitehead grows PCIs under apple trees, and P.C.I.'s only do well on the shadier side of my garden, which lends support to our representative's comment.

SIBIRICAS - Jennifer Hewitt, our Sibirica specialist tells me that the past (2002) season was disappointing with less and smaller bloom than usual. It is obvious that Jennifer's pre-occupation with the secretarial work of the B.I.S. Convention would give her little time for her own garden without problems caused by unseasonable weather. Jennifer has been busy collaborating with co-author Sidney Linnegar on Irises which will bring information from their previous RHS handbook up to date and have more colour illustrations. For the good news see the "Stop Press". Ed.

SPURIAS – The Group has yet to hear of a volunteer "specialist" or "Correspondent" for the Group to fill the existing vacancy. As reported in the last newsletter, during a search of the websites for the various North American Iris Groups I came across a very interesting web site facility for sorting out cultural problems. If a member has a problem it is published on the web site and comments are invited. It works! If any member of G.B.I. has a problem with spurias do let me know and I'll publish the question and answer(s) in the next newsletter.

Now a comment from Margaret Criddle, our enthusiastic B.I.S. and G.B.I. Hon. Seeds Officer - "About 8 or so years ago a large amount of spuria seed (from Dr. Charles Jenkins) was returned to me and I set a terrific amount, selling some of the seedlings. One of those seedlings bloomed last year. At the time I was told they would be between 4 and 6 ft high, this one is around 6 ft, and in this its first blooming it is already a lovely strong plant with a cinnamon /bronze with rich butter yellow throat" Margaret asks "Does this sound like Cinnamon Stick?"

(Anne, our Secretary says that it may sound like 'Cinnamon Stick' but it should not be called by that name since it is known to be a seedling. The word 'cinnamon' can be used in any other combination if it seems appropriate to the raiser.)

Editorial note - This is the type of question that could be published on the Spuria Society's web site and is being referred to Alun. Quite recently I received a newsletter from the Spuria Iris Society of North America and was interested to read an article from Clive Russell describing the spuria trials at Wisley and the candidates for A.G.M. There is little doubt that Spurias deserve and will repay more attention in this country.

SEEDS – EXPORTING TO U.S.A. – In the last Newsletter I drew attention to recently introduced U.S. regulations requiring the issue of a phytosanitary certificate prior to the export of seeds to the U.S.A. In advising the U.S. Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) of the Group's concern, the Chairman also expressed the fear that this requirement would inhibit the free exchange of seed between our two countries. I will keep you informed. Ed.

Stop press!

Shop early for Christmas! – As mentioned earlier in this Review and Newsletter, Jennifer Hewitt has been busy collaborating with co-author Sidney Linnegar on producing an enlarged Wisley Handbook on Irises which brings information from their previous RHS handbook up to date and has more colour illustrations. It has now been published; the cost £7.99. (Postage and packing cost U.K. £1.00; Europe £1.50.)

On her own, Jennifer has also written a booklet on the same topic for the Hardy Plant Society. Now available at a cost of £3.00 (£2.50 to H.P.S. members); this booklet could not have colour illustrations but delightful line drawings have been done by Gillian Ingram, known to HPS members for her work in other booklets. Olga Wells' help with supplying irises for Gillian to draw has been invaluable. Postage and packing costs are U.K. 75p; and Europe £1.00 for this booklet. Postage on both booklets is U.K. £1.50 and Europe £2.00.

Overseas members in Zones 1 or 2 should write to Jennifer specifying the booklet(s) and type of postal delivery required, i.e. air-mail, letter rate or printed paper rate; and she will advise.

Editorial comment and up-date (September 2003) – The B.I.S. has recently elected as its President Berney Baughen, of Kent Group. Berney is undertaking a reprint and update of "A Guide to the Pacific Coast Irises" to replace V. Cohen's original booklet, published in 1967 and now out of stock. The reprint is expected to be published in Spring 2004.

Seeds – There will be a special report on this subject in the next newsletter. In the meantime members with seed to spare are asked to send it to Margaret Criddle, specifying your intention, i.e. that the contents of your packet are for distribution to B.I.S. or to G.B.I. members; or both. A recent B.I.S. Executive Committee decision prohibits the circulation of the B.I.S. Seed List to non-B.I.S. group members, which I had suggested as a means of boosting membership of our main body. Consequently this makes seed distribution difficult unless donors specify their intention. Please help Group funds and contact Margaret telling her of your requirements. P.A.