



32

*Narcissus* 'Cherrygardens' From the Noel Burr National Collection

## SUSSEX GROUP

Autumn 2019

Number 98



Roger Parsons is presented with the Brickell Award at RHS Hampton Court

## CONTENTS

Page 2. Welcome to New Members	
Page 3. Chairman's letter	Gary Firth
Page 4. Memories from the 1980's	Maddy Ward
Page 5. Report on the Sussex Collections	Gary Firth
Page 6. British & Irish Botanical to Tasmania, 2018	Stephen Herrington
Page 14. Hampton Court Flower Festival 2019	Steve Harding
Page 16. Plant Heritage AGM and Autumn Lecture	
Page 18. Lathyrus National Plant Collection	Roger Parsons
Page 20. Digging Deeper	Paul Abbott
Page 23. Sussex Apple Varieties	Peter May
Page 26. The Douglas Chalk Hebe Collection	Alex Waterfield
Page 28. Iris- A Technicolour Dreamcoat	Jenny Stewart

### Welcome to New Members

We extend a warm welcome to the following new members. We hope that you will be able to participate in the varied activities offered at local and national level and that some of you may ultimately be able to contribute to extending the range of plant collections within Sussex.

Please make yourself known to a committee member when attending any of the Sussex events:

Miss A Davies	Eastbourne
Mrs L Jones	Pulborough
Mrs M Munday	East Grinstead
Mr L Normand	Crowborough
Mr M Sadler	Hurstpierpoint
Mrs A Vaughan	East Preston
Ms J Watkins	Cuckfield

## PLANT HERITAGE SUSSEX GROUP COMMITTEE MEMBERS

<b>President</b>	Mrs Eleni Stephenson Clarke
<b>Chairman</b>	Dr. Gary Firth; 01444 413626, themyrtleman@gmail.com
<b>Secretary</b>	Dr. Maria Firth; 01444 413626, drmfirth@gmail.com
<b>Events organiser</b>	Dr. Maria Firth
<b>Treasurer</b>	Peter Ward; 01444 242511, peterjward@doctors.org.uk
<b>Newsletter</b>	Gary Firth,
<b>Membership Secretary</b>	Jenny Stewart
<b>Minutes Secretary</b>	Madelaine Ward
<b>Collections Co-ordinators</b>	Drs Gary and Maria Firth
<b>Publicity</b>	Madelaine Ward, 01444 242511, madelaineward@aol.co.uk
<b>Shows Secretary</b>	Madelaine Ward
<b>Committee members</b>	
Andrew Gaunt	Andrew.Gaunt@apha.gsi.gov.uk
Kate Berry	katehod@gmail.com
Jackie Doherty	jacka.doherty1@btopenworld.com
Frances Druce	frances@copyholdhollow.co.uk
Marguerite Wright	
<b>Plant Exchange</b>	
Steve Law	brighton.plants@gmail.com



*Iris Pseudacorus*

Jenny Stewart

This has been yet another busy year for the Sussex Group and especially for Maria and I. Three major activities have kept us on our toes this year;

**May** was when we held the Plant Heritage National Meeting and AGM at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in East Grinstead and where we welcomed delegates from all over the UK. We were invited to hold the meeting quite late in the day and I had barely four weeks to put together a full complement of lectures and garden visits and work with our conference organisers to find a suitable venue before the deadline for publication of the details in the Plant Heritage Autumn Journal. Despite making a small(ish) financial loss the meeting was a great hit with our delegates who were full of praise for the quality of the lectures, the gardens visited and the hotel facilities. Very many thanks to those members of the Sussex Group who helped us with this enterprise. It was a shame that so many other Sussex members were unable to join us at the event, which is unlikely to return to Sussex for very many years.

**June** and the dispersed collection of Noel Burr Narcissus Cultivars is awarded Full National Collection status by the Plant Conservation Committee. The original idea for this interesting collection came from our Sussex member, Irma Williamson. With help from Irma, it took me over two years to source as many cultivars of Noels daffodils as were still available and to recruit a total of twelve members of the Sussex Group to share this collection across a number of sites. We are still hoping that a few more cultivars may still be found in the UK or overseas. It is also interesting to note that this was the first application to the Plant Conservation Committee where the plant list together with full colour images of all cultivars was presented to the committee using the excellent Persephone database, hopefully showing the way forward for the majority of future applications.

**July** and we spend many long days manning the Hebe Society display in the Plant Heritage area of the Floral Marquee at the Hampton Court Flower Festival. This has taken nearly a year of planning with me taking responsibly for all liaison with the RHS, including display design. This could only be done with the help and support of Stephen Harding, Chairman of the Hebe Society and Hebe Collection Holder (see page 26 for more details).

On top of this I have also been busy editing this journal, chairing the South East Regional Plant Conservation Group and attending Persephone Working Group and Plant Conservation meetings. This, in addition to active involvement in three other specialist plant societies.

Sadly however, following recent events, Maria and I have reluctantly come to the conclusion that it is time to cut down slightly on our plant related activity and in particular to concentrate on plant conservation activities rather than (often) less productive committee meetings Hence we shall be relinquishing our roles of Chairman, Secretary and journal editor for the Sussex Group at this years AGM. We are still hopeful that volunteers will come forward from the membership to fill these roles that are essential to the successful running of the group.

Finally, we look forward to welcoming many members and guests to our Autumn Lecture in Haywards Heath Town Hall on the 26<sup>th</sup> October (see centre pages for full details). Stephen Herrington, previously Head Gardener at Nyman's Garden but now Head Gardener at the recently reopened Leonardslee Gardens, will be speaking on the British and Irish Botanical Expedition to Tasmania. His article in this journal gives a flavour of this exciting modern plant hunting trip but you need to attend to hear his full account.

**Memories from the 1980's**  
**Maddy Ward**

I had the opportunity to visit The Honourable Anne Boscawen of 'High Beeches Woodland and Water Gardens', at her home amongst 25 acres in West Sussex. The gardens have been declared 'Outstanding' by English Heritage. She has amazing memories of the 1980's when she first joined Plant Heritage.

She first attended an afternoon meeting in Lewes Town Hall given by Mr Christopher Brickell CBE (Vice President). He was keen on the 'aims' and went considerably over time in his talk. Everyone else had to leave to collect their children from school but Anne stayed on to talk and decided to become a member of the then National Council for the Conservation of Plants & Gardens. She was encouraged to have one of the early national collections (of *Stewartia*).

Anne and her husband, Edward Boscawen bought High Beeches in 1966 after Colonel Giles Harold Loder died. He had designed and planted the gardens, exchanging plants with cousins and friends nearby. They inherited his then gardener, Eric Stockton, who was able to share much knowledge as he had worked there for over fifty years.

Anne clearly recalls the Great Gale of October 1987 especially as a friend just happened to be staying at the time. Some particular tall spruce trees were lost, and mature beech trees also fell. Her greatest sadness was the *Tetracentron* tree grown from seed collected in China by Ernest Wilson in 1904. That area has now been replanted with five Coast Redwoods (*Sequoia sempervirens*) and named after the gardener at the time Martyn Hird. The gardens otherwise had virtually recovered by the Spring of 1988.

A decision was taken to stop grazing the Meadow in the 1980's. It is now a registered 'Site of Nature Conservation Interest', as the best natural, acid, wildflower meadow in West Sussex. Anne remarked it has never been ploughed or cultivated in living memory.

She was proud of the young 18-year-old garden students she had, producing hand written labels and 'Pink cards' with the correct numbers of plants. Although 'paper-work takes time away from the garden' the students were with them for over 5 years.

Another mile-stone in 1981 was the formation of a Charitable Trust the Woodland, Water Gardens and National Collection of *Stewartia*: Their *S. monadelpha*, is one of the tallest in the British Isles.

Anne has dedicated her life to the conservation of this outstanding garden.

In Italian the names for lily and iris are very similar, giglio for lily, giaggiolo for iris.

When the Frankish King Clovis I was cornered by the Goths in Cologne, he noticed irises growing far out in the river Rhine, an indication of shallower water and was able to make his escape. From then it became the flower of chivalry 'with its sword shaped leaves and a lily for its heart'. The fleur-de-lis the name by which the flower was known became the emblem of the Bourbon kings. Louis XI ordered irises to be placed in the royal gardens.

For a time the emblem of the fleur-de-lis appeared in the English royal arms, claimed by Edward III on the death of the Emperor Charles V of France, remaining in situ until the latter days of George III.

In Italian the names for lily and iris are very similar, giglio for lily, giaggiolo for iris. *Iris germanica* and its rarer paler version *Iris florentina* grow profusely along the banks of the Arno near Florence. Until the middle of the 13C the emblem for Florence was a white iris on a red ground. When the Guelph's finally conquered the Ghibellines, the two warring factions in the city, the victors reversed the colours to a red seeded iris on a white ground which remains to this day the arms of the city of Florence and the emblem worn by the local football team ACF Fiorentina.

A purple enamelled iris forms part of the decoration of two gold shoulder clasps; part of the Anglo Saxon treasure found at Sutton Hoo. The dried and powdered rhizome of the iris 'the orris root' with its scent of violets iridione is used in the perfume industry. The seeds make a bitter coffee. The rhizomes of the flag iris produce a black ink and dye.

In the 15C a rare green pigment 'verdalis' was distilled from the leaves/flowers of *Iris germanica*, used by painters and miniaturists. The iris is not just a pretty face, it is indeed a coat of many colours.

## IRIS - A TECHNICOLOUR DREAM COAT

Jenny Stewart

IRIS - A Greek word for the goddess of the rainbow who used it to carry messages from the gods to the people. The flower has almost as many colours. There are over 250 varieties of this genus Iridaceae widespread throughout Europe, North Africa and Asia as Far East as Japan. A flower appearing in both legend and heraldry.

The ancient Egyptians regarded the flower as a symbol of elegance, its three petals forming part of the king's sceptre, representing faith wisdom and valour and even appearing on the brow of the Sphinx. Painted on the walls of the temple of Thutmos III at Karnak. (*I. albicans* or *I. germanica*).

Traditionally Moslem graves were planted with irises so the dead would be well endowed in the next world. A native of Saudi Arabia and the Yemen the iris became naturalised in all countries conquered by the Saracens as far as parts of France and northern Spain.

A medieval monastic legend relates to the death of Jesus when all nature grieved and a deathly silence reigned and only the plants spoke to one another. The Susa iris, *I. susiana* one of the darkest of all the irises and a native of Constantinople said "dark violet will forever be the mourning colour of my flower".

There are two irises native to Britain. The Gladdon Iris. *I. foetidissima* and the Yellow Flag Iris *I. pseudacorus*.

*Iris pseudacorus* has many local names including sword flower, sword lily and segg. Segg is an Anglo-Saxon word for small sword, a reference to the shape of the leaves, and in Northumberland still part of some place names for marshy places. For the French it was the special flower of St John's Eve (23 June). In Ireland bunches were hung outside doorways on the feast of Corpus Christi as a protection. For the same reason irises were planted on rooftops and walls. In Germany irises placed in beehives were supposed to keep the bees from swarming.

The plant had many medicinal properties. Assistance in childbirth, a removal for freckles and a help for healing broken bones and ulcers.

The Elizabethan herbalist Turner named it among others, 'yelowe floure de lyce'.

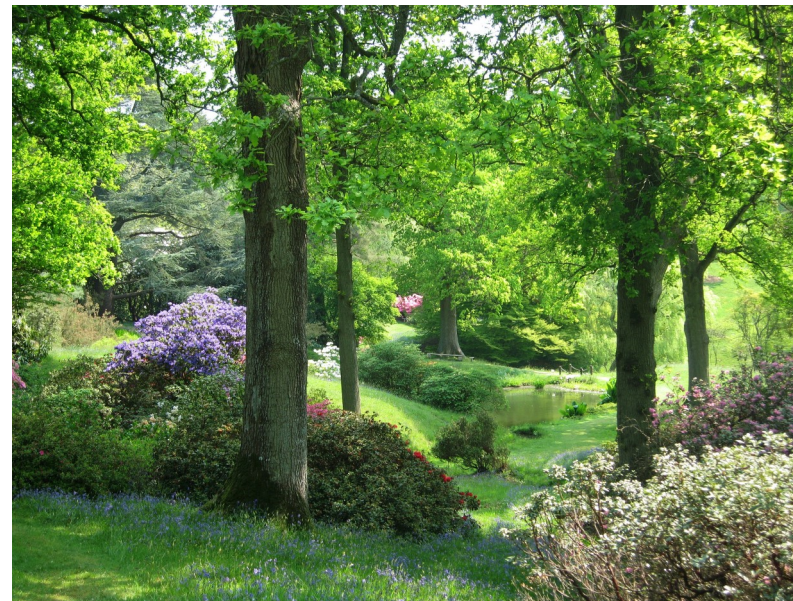
Gerard called it 'Bastard Flower-de-Luce' (lily flower).

## Report on the Sussex Collections

Gary Firth

Very many congratulations to *Lathyrus* National Collection Holder Roger Parsons on his receipt of the Brickell Award which is presented annually. This was presented to him by Chris Brickell, Matt Biggs and Plant Heritage Chair, Cecilia Bufton. This follows the award of Scientific Collection status to his *Lathyrus* collection last year and recognises the contribution that he has made to plant conservation through his research and publications on the genus. Roger began growing *Lathyrus* in Sussex in the 1980's and now has 69 species and 1,400 cultivars in his collection. His monograph on the genus, produced jointly with Greg Kenicer will be published by the RHS next year.

At the meeting of the Plant Conservation Committee in June the Dispersed Collection of Narcissus Cultivars Bred and Introduced by Noel Burr (to give it its full official title) was awarded Full National Collection status. This collection is now held jointly by twelve Plant Heritage members spread across Sussex. By dispersing it in this way it ensures that many more members are actively involved in plant conservation and hopefully ensures the continuation of the collection for many years to come. Watch out for the article on Dispersed Collections in the Spring Edition of the Plant Heritage Journal.



**High Beches Garden**

## **British and Irish Botanical Expedition Tasmania 2018**

**Stephen Herrington Programme Lead**

**London & South East Gardens Programme, National Trust**

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2018 a group of organisations from horticultural/botanical institutions working in partnership with each other left the UK and Ireland to embark on a plant collecting expedition to Tasmania. Known as the British and Irish Botanical Expedition Tasmania 2018 (BIBET), the group consisted of: Stephen Herrington (Expedition Leader), Head Gardener, Nymans Garden, National Trust; Charlie Bancroft, Gardener, also from Nymans; Neil Porteous, Head of Gardens, Mount Stewart, National Trust (Northern Ireland); Piers Lunt, Horticulturist, The National Botanic Garden of Wales; Seamus O'Brien, Curator, National Botanic Gardens of Ireland; and Robert Wilson-Wright, Coolcarrigan House & Gardens. The BIBET team also carried out conservation work for the International Conifer Conservation Programme (ICCP), based at the Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh (RBGE), which works to conserve and protect endangered conifers.



**BIBET Team at Royal Tasmanian Botanic Garden**



**The Douglas Chalk Hebe Collection at Plumpton College**

**The Douglas Chalk Hebe Collection at Plumpton College**  
**Alex Waterfield**  
**Grounds and Gardens Supervisor , Plumpton College**

Situated at the foot of the South Downs, Plumpton College in East Sussex currently holds The Douglas Chalk Hebe Collection. Douglas Chalk was a top student at Plumpton College during the late 1930's and the collection was named after him upon its arrival at Plumpton. He ran a Hebe nursery in the West Country where he originally put the collection together.

The collection contains 23 different species with 90 different taxa. Much of the collection was collected from the wild in New Zealand.

It's been a positive and productive twelve months for the collection. Some of the plants had begun to get older, woody and not looking their best. A 'Hebe Day' was organized with Steve Harding, Chairman of The Hebe Society. He was invited along to work with different groups of students in showing them how to rejuvenate old and woody bushes. The borders were cleared of any other unwanted vegetation and a thick layer of organic matter applied. It didn't look so pretty to start with, but it now looks like a very healthy collection of plants.

Plumpton has a relationship with a similar college in France, where students came and spent their summer working on the grounds and gardens, this included the Hebe collection. With the extra help, work was carried out to improve the landscaping around the plants. The planting space was extended and access improved to the plants with paths widened a new path surface put down. Some of the older plants were removed and replaced with new younger stock that has been produced from cuttings of the existing stock taken by Horticulture students.

Future plans to the collection include an improvement to the labeling of the plants and a new detailed interpretation board to welcome visitors. With the help of Horticulture students, continual propagation of the collection will take place to be able to have a good reserve of healthy plants. Visitors to the College's Open Day this May will have a chance to purchase their own part of the collection, with a sale of young plants produced from cuttings taken last year.

The expedition was in collaboration with the Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens and fieldwork carried out in a number of key locations around the Great Lake Conservation Area and Hartz Mountains National Park was a joint venture with James Wood, Seed Bank Coordinator, and Natalie Tapson, Horticultural Botanist.

The trip partly retraced the steps of an expedition carried out in 1929/1930 by Harold Comber. Born in 1897 at National Trust Nymans in West Sussex, to James Comber, the first Head Gardener of the estate from 1895 to 1953, and his wife Ethel, Harold Comber grew up surrounded by the exotic trees and shrubs for which Nymans was famed, working at the garden for two years before moving to Colesbourne Park where he was made Superintendent of the botanical collections under glass. He then studied horticulture at RBGE, writing a thesis on rhododendrons, before being sponsored by a syndicate of well-known gardeners set up by Lord Aberconwy of Bodnant Gardens, organised by Sir Lionel de Rothschild and including Leonard Messel of Nymans. Comber was to be sent to South America on two separate expeditions in 1925-26 and 1926-27. He spent his time collecting in the Andean provinces of Argentina and Chile, areas specifically chosen for possessing conditions resembling those of Britain. Comber's introductions include *Sophora macrocarpa*, *Asteranthera ovata* and *Desfontainia spinosa* 'Harold Comber'. On his return to Scotland Comber completed his studies and then took the post of Head Gardener at Galloway House; while in this position he undertook another plant hunting expedition in 1929-30, this time to Tasmania. He collected some 147 plants, from a variety of locations around the island, and produced a small book on his return highlighting those species he considered especially worthy of cultivation in the UK. Some of these highlights included *Nothofagus gunnii*, *Billardiera longiflora*, *Correa reflexa*, *Eucryphia lucida* and *Richea pandanifolia*. Later in his career he developed a passion for lily breeding and moved to the US to take up a position with the Oregon Bulb Farm. He died in Oregon in 1969.



**Harold Comber**

Many of Comber's original collections have contributed to private collections now in public view across National Trust and botanic gardens across the country. His Tasmanian expedition was pioneering and many of the species he collected being ephemeral have been lost to cultivation; this trip has now reintroduced a number of those lost collections back into British and Irish horticulture. The BIBET expedition collected 252 accessions now distributed to participating institutes; many have been sown or are in storage awaiting appropriate conditions. Some of the focus of the expedition was to look at key collection sites visited by Comber, including Arthur-Pieman Conservation Area, Mount Field National Park, Mt Wellington and the area around Queenstown.

The BIBET expedition started out from Hobart and moved around the island for three and a half weeks. En route we collected viable seed, herbarium material (sets now reside at Kew, Edinburgh and Glasnevin Botanic Gardens) and DNA of each collection (stored at the National Botanic Garden of Wales). All work carried out with the Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens was covered under their permits and any other collections came under our own permits presented by the Australian Government.

Other varieties have historical associations. The large, handsome red streaked *Coronation* celebrates the coronation of Edward VII in 1902, while the name *Forge* reflects the presence of old iron workings in the area where the tree was commonly grown near East Grinstead.

The Sussex variety with the longest history in cultivation is *Golden Pippin* which has been grown since at least 1629. It is claimed that it arose at Parham Park, but as Joan Morgan writes its origin seems uncertain. The variety is also the smallest Sussex apple and with its lemony tang it was poached whole or used to make sweetmeats, jelly, tarts and cider.

Until a few years ago many of the Sussex varieties were very rare, so part of the work of Brighton Permaculture Trust working in partnership with other local organisations, has been to plant them in small orchards in schools and community sites throughout the county, which will ensure their future and allow them to be more widely known and appreciated. The trees have also been monitored to discover which varieties are disease resistant and grow well under organic conditions and on the local chalk soils. A second National Collection is being planted near Petworth on deeper soils at the base of the South Downs, so it will be interesting to see if there are variations in growth of the trees and colour and shape of the fruit.

Brighton Permaculture Trust promotes greener lifestyles and sustainable development through design. It also runs courses and events and applies permaculture principles to their projects.

Permaculture design encourages, amongst many other things, the use of perennial crops, biodiversity, and co-operating with the local ecology. Brighton Permaculture Trust is a charitable company registered in England and Wales. <https://brightonpermaculture.org.uk>

Brighton Permaculture Trust was formed in 2000 as an ethical not-for-profit organisation operating in Brighton and Sussex and became a registered charity in 2013. It is a member of the national Permaculture Association (Britain). Brighton Permaculture Trust is run by an experienced team of volunteers and permaculturists, supported by a management group and trustees and is resourced through course/event fees, grants and donations.





Stanmer Park Apple Day 2018



Images by Sarah Agnew

Conservation tasks were carried out on a number of key conifers in the genus *Athrotaxis* which are endangered or vulnerable as part of the ICCP. Collections were focused on areas relating to core conservation work being carried out in participating institutions; these include collecting from high altitude areas to ensure specimens were hardy in the UK and Ireland.

From Hobart the expedition team headed up to the Central Lake Plateau which was an area that Comber had collected in; we spent five days in this area covering a wide area and collecting various species including *Leptospermum rupestre*, both trailing and upright forms; *Bellendena montana*; *Pentachondra pumila*; *Leptorhynchus squamatus* var. *alpinus*; *Astelia alpina*; *Baloskion australe*; *Grevillea australis*; *Baekea gunniana*; *Heirochloe redolens*; *Ozothamnus hookeri*.



*Leptospermum rupestre*

*Eucalyptus pauciflora*



The next part of the expedition took us west to the Central Highlands and The Walls of Jerusalem National Park where the group trekked across this beautiful but harsh landscape for three days. The main habitats for this area are alpine and scrubland with small stands of *Athrotaxis cupressoides* growing next to water. Other highlights in this area included *Melaleuca squamea* which grows in wet conditions and has small pink flowers and swathes of the pincushion *Dracophyllum minimum*.

From here we travelled to Cradle Mountain, giving us a chance to make many important collections around the edge of the lake. We spotted for the first time the flower of *Blandfordia punicea*, a bulbous plant in the family Blandfordiaceae, and collected a herbarium sample of this species for future research.



*Blandfordia punicea*

## Sussex Apple Varieties

Peter May

The collection of Sussex apple varieties at Stammer Park has been developed over a number of years by Brighton Permaculture Trust and was formally recognised as a National Collection in May 2013 by Plant Heritage.

The collection contains 30 varieties of apple which are closely linked to the towns and villages of Sussex. Some of the varieties like *Bossom* were at one time exceptionally rare, and the collection contains 24 cultivars which have been identified as threatened by the Plant Heritage Plants Project. The collection is planted out in 3 orchards at Stanmer Park with the aim of having several of every variety. The orchards are accessible to the public throughout the year and are part of the Apple Day at Stanmer Park, which attracts around 8,000 visitors. All the orchards are used for training courses in fruit growing and are visited by primary and secondary schools.

Sussex apple varieties vary in colour and size from the dark reds and green of *First and Last* to the pale yellow of *Eastbourne Pippin*. There is also a lot of variation in the month in which they ripen. The vivid red *Ashdown Seedling* is ready to be picked in mid August, while *Saltcote Pippin* is an October apple. Some of the varieties like *Crawley Beauty* and *Mareda* can be stored until after Christmas, while *First and Last* is said to store for over a year.

Many of the names of the apples link them to a particular place. *Hawkridge*, a sweet apple with red and crimson stripes comes from Hawkridge Farm near Hellingly, while *Wadhurst Pippin* grows in the heavy clay soils in the north of the county. Some names however can be misleading. *Alfriston*, a brisk cooking apple, was raised during the late 1700s' in Uckfield by Mr Shepherd and named *Shepherd's Pippin*. In 1819 it was sent to the London Horticultural Society and renamed *Alfriston* by Mr Booker who lived in the village.

Other varieties have descriptive names or are named after well known apple experts. The russet skin of the curious *Knobby Russet* that was first shown at the London Horticultural Society by Haslar Capron in 1820 is often covered in knobs, warts and bumps. *Tinsley Quince* by contrast is much more subtle, with its name describing the quince like smell that develops as the fruit ripens.

*Dr Hogg*, a large ribbed cooking apple was named in honour of Doctor Robert Hogg who worked to clarify and rationalise the identity of the many different apple varieties grown in England in the 1870s.

The story of *Galanthus gracilis* on the battlefields of the Crimea is a far cry from the well to do life of Henry John Elwess. With its curved, glaucous leaves and olive green ovary *G.gracilis* is probably my favourite snowdrop. We are lucky at Highdown that it grows in abundance in the chalky conditions. It is a delight when on a bright morning the light shines through it. Who would have thought that during the Crimean War of the 1850s British soldiers saw battlefields covered with it and many soldiers took bulbs home with them. This sight seems a juxtaposition to the cruel realities of war. A reminder of this time remains in its common name, the Crimean Snowdrop. These stories of just two Snowdrops show how intrinsically plants are both part of our history and our lives today. I can't wait to see what I find out next time a plant at Highdown puts on a particularly good show and catches my eye for the first time. I am sure there are many more fascinating stories for me to discover and share with our visitors.



*Galanthus gracilis*

We then moved across to the area around Queens Town and to the Mount Field National Park. In the National Park we hiked up to Tarn Shelf and an area called Twilight Tarn where Comber had collected plants in 1929. The below images show the Ski Hut in 1929 and our own photograph from 2018. It was inspirational to follow in the exact footsteps that Harold had taken 89 years earlier.



**Ski Hut on Twilight Tarn, on the left in 1929 and on the right 2018**



In the National Park we also visited Russel Falls where large collections of *Dicksonia antarctica* could be seen growing next to the waterfalls with *Eucalyptus regans*; these reached impressive heights of 4m with fronds up to 3m in length.

**Slide image of *Dicksonia antarctica* at Russel Falls, taken in 1930**

The next day the group headed down to the Tasman Peninsula which is about 100km from Hobart to the South East. The area is a long stretch of land jutting out to the sea connected to the mainland by a slither of land called the Eagle Neck. The day was spent driving along an off-road track called the Pirates Road recommended to us by James and Natalie as an area in which we might find interesting plants. We came across a number of key species in this area including *Billardia longifolia* climbing to a height of 2m in full fruit and *Eucalyptus globulus* reaching a height of 15m. We collected our 200<sup>th</sup> accession that day which was a *Pimelea sericea*, with collection notes as follows: ‘on road to look out in full aspect, 1.5m tall medium size population, sandy soil, exposed site, Euc forest, 400m alt’.

The final area the expedition covered was the Hartz Mountains National Park; situated in the south of the island, the National Park is the gateway to the southwest wilderness. The majority of the Park is over 600 metres and within its mountain ranges is Hartz Peak - the highest point at 1255 metres. As with much of Tasmania the underlying rock is dolerite which has been shaped through glaciation.



*Banksia marginata*

Recently we held a one off winter Sunday opening at Highdown as part of the National Garden Scheme Snowdrop Festival. Whilst looking into some of the plants to be included in the Snowdrop Day tours, I uncovered a couple of intriguing and surprising stories of their history. One particularly well known and popular Snowdrop is *Galanthus elwessii*. With its wide glaucous leaves and large flowers, it puts on an eye catching display. I wonder though how many people know the tale of its discovery and how it got its name? In 1874 the naturalist Henry John Elwess was on a plant hunting trip to Turkey and whilst high in the mountains near Smyrna, (modern Izmir), a large snowdrop caught his eye. Before leaving Turkey Elwess arranged for some of the bulbs to be collected, (the first of millions to be exported ever since). In his honour the plant was given the name *Galanthus elwessii*.



*Galanthus elwessii*

## Digging deeper; a gardener reflects on appreciating the history of cultivated plants

(Written by Paul Abbott, Senior Gardener at Highdown Gardens. Photos credit: Shaun Blower, Apprentice Gardener at Highdown)

As a professional gardener I have often found myself contemplating how to get the best display from plants. It is very satisfying when one that was at first tricky to grow, after treating it differently, or some other fluke, it suddenly grows more abundantly than before. However, a further aspect which I cannot help but be fascinated by is the history of cultivated plants many of which we may take for granted in gardens today. Four years ago and ready for a new challenge I became Senior Gardener at Highdown, tending to plants in an environment to which I was not accustomed; a garden built out of an old chalk pit on the edge of the South Downs, a mile from the sea.

Sir Frederick Stern and his wife Sybil developed the garden over 50 years as an experiment to see how well different plants grew on chalk. When Stern purchased the Highdown Estate in 1909, a local nurseryman told him not to bother trying to establish a garden as the range of plants that would grow in alkaline conditions was very limited. Stern was however very determined. With wealth made from Stern Brothers Bank and a lucky racehorse win, he began creating a garden and sponsored many expeditions, mainly in China, of the great plant hunters such as E.H Wilson and Farrer. He grew the plant material he received back at Highdown. In his book 'A Chalk Garden' he documented how successfully the things he tried to grow grew in the chalky conditions. By 1967, (when a year after his death the garden was passed on to Worthing Borough Council), he had proved that a far wider range of plants could be grown on chalk than previously thought. His legacy lives on in our National Collection of plants grown by Stern held at Highdown and also in the range of chalk tolerating plants now available to gardeners in nurseries and through plant exchanges.

Comber made observations on the difficulty of traversing through the forest and one such plant he mentions is *Anodopetalum biglandulosum*, commonly known as horizontal scrub for its habit of growing vertically, falling over and then growing vertically again. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century travellers would carry ropes to help those that fell through the matrix of *Anodopetalum*, sometimes falling metres below. Due to the level of forestry throughout the island tracks have made areas accessible that previously would have been difficult to reach. One of the major highlights of this area was seeing three species of *Eucryphia* growing in close proximity to each other - *E. lucida*, *E. milliganii* and the hybrid between the two, *E. x hybrida*, which was described by Comber.



*Eucryphia lucida*

The Tasmanian expedition yielded 254 seeds, herbarium specimens and DNA samples. These are now distributed across Britain and Ireland, and, alongside seeds received from the Royal Tasmanian Botanical Garden's seed bank they are now in the process of being germinated and grown in National Trust Nymans, Kilmacurragh, Coolcarrigan, National Trust Mount Stewart, and the National Botanic Gardens of Wales, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew and RBGE.

## Hampton Court Flower Festival 2019 Steve Harding

In July this year, the Hebe Society, being a corporate member of Plant Heritage, exhibited at Hampton Court Flower Festival for the first time ever. In fact, it was the first time in the society's history that we had taken part in a major show.

We had a circular display with a raised centre in the Plant Heritage Zone of the floral marquee. The display comprised of twelve troughs arranged like the spokes of a cart wheel radiating from the centre. In each trough were six different Hebes which had been selected to offer different colours, foliage, size and flower colour. The plants were dressed with bark to hide the pots and black labels were stapled to the sides of each trough to identify each plant.

The centre of the display featured a range of New Zealand native plants, other than Hebe. The Hebe Society not only promotes and conserves Hebes but all NZ flora.

In between the twelve troughs we displayed alpine pots of small Hebes along with information boards giving everything you could ever want to know about Hebes and NZ and also focussing on the three National Collections of Hebe,

Gary Firth and myself set up the display on the friday with a couple of society members helping to dress the pots and give the whole display a final clean. Imagine our surprise when we were awarded a Silver Gilt medal for our efforts being only one point away from a Gold.

Our display was officially opened by our society President, Chris Brickell after he had awarded Roger Parsons with his much deserved Brickell Award for his outstanding work in the field of sweet peas. Well done Roger.

The rest of the week at the show was a constant stream of questions about pruning, watering and general gardening questions along with interviews, posing for photographs and taking part in live podcasts. Visitors to the stand were amazed at the range of Hebe on display with everything from large leaved monsters down to the conifer looking Hebe ochracea James Stirling. Many plants were sold and we even signed up some new members. Over 500 plants for sale had been donated by members.



## Lathyrus National Plant Collection Roger Parsons

We were honoured and delighted when, in September 2018, the Sussex *Lathyrus* collection was awarded Scientific status. The collection consists of some 70 species and 1300 cultivars, most of the latter being *L. odoratus* (Sweet Peas). These, and most other species, are self-pollinating which enables cultivars to be grown close together. Seed appears to last indefinitely when stored frozen in an air-tight container.

Perennial *Lathyrus* come from a wide range of habitats and many of these are familiar:

The Everlasting Pea, *L. latifolius*, is a tall climber, very popular and widely grown. Several flower colours are found;

The Two-flowered Pea, *L. grandiflorus*, is sometimes confused with *L. latifolius* and has the largest flowers of the genus. It rarely sets seed but spreads by underground stolons;

The Spring Pea, *L. vernus*, produces early flowers on dwarf, self-supporting plants. Again, several colours are found and varieties with narrower leaflets are preferred. There are many other garden-worthy perennials in the genus, varying in height, flower colour and season.

Annual *Lathyrus* host a very wide range of colours, including some not found in Sweet Peas. They are very easy to grow and are dainty but lack the fragrance of *L. odoratus*. Many have leaves which are more attractive than Sweet Peas:

Climbers as tall as Sweet Peas include *L. tingitanus*, *L. clymenum* and *L. chloranthus*;

Shorter climbers to 1.2m (4ft) include *L. sativus*, *L. annuus*, *L. belinensis*, *L. chrysanthus* and *L. hirsutus*.

These are also suitable grown as lax species in a meadow garden.

Sweet Peas are found in a very wide range of flower colours, heights and season. Most familiar are the Spencer cultivars with up to 4 large florets on a long raceme (flower stem) but Multiflora cultivars with up to 15 florets have a longer vase life. Early Multiflora cultivars, which flower on shorter daylength, are the most popular with commercial cut flower growers and in countries where Summer is too hot. Dwarf Sweet Peas, up to 0.4m high, are better grown in containers. Semi-dwarf cultivars, up to 1.2m high, usually produce many basal shoots which make them better for garden decoration. Old-fashioned cultivars have a similar habit and are popular for their daintiness and strong fragrance. Modern cultivars include many which are intermediate between the Old-fashioned and Spencer types and some have even stronger fragrance than Old-fashioned ones.

Interspecific hybrids are very rare but cultivars derived from *L. x hammettii* are starting to find their way into commerce. They are morphologically identical to pure *L. odoratus*.

For more information on this collection, please see: [www.rpsweetpeas.com](http://www.rpsweetpeas.com)

Many leaflets, postcards and cultivation notes were given out and on the last day, the whole display was sold off in probably the most frantic twenty minutes of my life. The most popular varieties of Hebe on the display were H. Nicola's Blush and H. Garden Beauty White. We also displayed two brand new varieties which were then yet to be released to garden centres.

So I say to all of the Sussex National Collection holders, go for it. Put on a display at a major show. Gill in head office can give you all the information you need and I cannot thank her enough for the support she gave us during the show. The Hebe Society enjoyed the event so much that we are thinking of doing it again next year and I hope to see many of you there.



Gary Firth with Hebe Society display and RHS award at Hampton Court

## PLANT HERITAGE, SUSSEX GROUP

AUTUMN LECTURE & THE 37th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

WILL BE HELD ON SATURDAY 26th October 2019  
COMMENCING AT 2.00PM

AT HAYWARDS HEATH TOWN HALL  
40 Boltro Road, Haywards Heath  
West Sussex, RH16 1BA

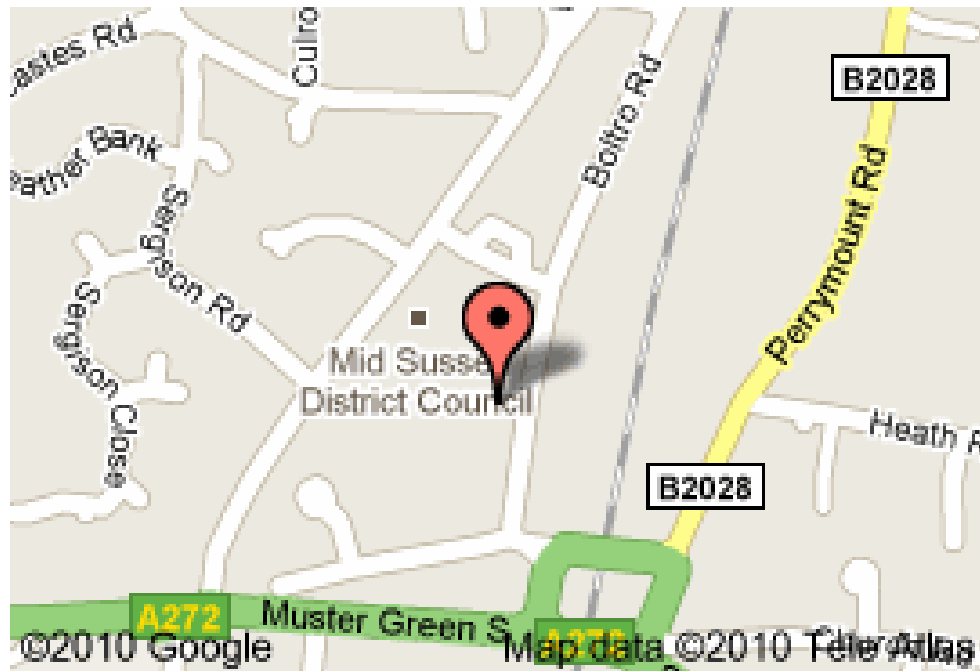
LECTURE: 'THE BRITISH AND IRISH BOTANICAL  
EXPEDITION TO TASMANIA 2018'

BY STEPHEN HERRINGTON, Head Gardener, Leonardslee Garden

TEAS

PLANT SALES

RAFFLE



## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 37th Annual General Meeting of the Sussex Group of Plant  
Heritage will take place at Haywards Heath Town Hall on Saturday  
26th October 2019  
commencing at 3.30pm.

### AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Minutes of the 36th AGM 2018
3. Matters Arising
4. Chairman's Annual Report
5. Treasurer's Report and Accounts 2019
6. Report from Sussex Plant Co-ordinators
7. Committee comments on the past year
8. Election of Officers and Committee 2019/20
9. Any Other Business

### COMMITTEE

#### URGENT NEED TO FILL VACANT POSTS

As mentioned in the Chairman's letter on page 3 of this journal, the posts of Sussex Group Chairman, Secretary and Journal Editor will all become vacant at this AGM. It is essential that these roles are filled in order to allow the group to continue to meet its commitments to its members.

If you feel that you would like to get involved but would like more information please contact Gary Firth at [themyrtleman@gmail.com](mailto:themyrtleman@gmail.com) or by phone.

Nominations for these posts are invited and should be submitted to him in writing, signed by the Proposer and Seconder by the 13th October at the latest.

We are very grateful to Steve Law who has very kindly offered to take on the full role of Plant Exchange organiser. You should be hearing from him soon regarding your plant offers and requirements for next years Plant Exchange