



*Iris unguicularis* 'Mary Barnard' by the late Michael Castle

# West & Midlands Iris Group *Spring Bulletin* April 2025

Welcome to the 2025 *Spring Bulletin* bringing you the minutes of the AGM, the 2024 accounts, reports of recent events and reminders about those still to come — or not. It has recently been announced that the Shrewsbury Flower Show, where we had a successful stand last year, has been cancelled for 2025 due to rising costs. This highlights the difficulties that many societies and shows are experiencing. We do need to get our message out there so please let Jeremy know of any local opportunities for us to do so.

## SUE BEDWELL



Tragically, as many of you will already have heard, we have lost a stalwart member of our Group, Sue Bedwell. She died after a very short illness at the end of last year.

Sue joined the Group in 2005 and helped in so many ways, hosting meetings in her delightful garden, serving on the committee, helping at Malvern and of course at our shows. So very sadly missed. We will be publishing a full celebration of her life in our Newsletter.

One of Sue's last wishes was that her beloved plants went to her friends in the plant world.

Christine Duke, a long term friend of Sue's, has been beavering away to make sure this has happened. For the irises, she and Jeremy dug up many of the bearded; they have been potted and will be available to members at our Annual Show on Sunday 25 May. We will be making a minimal charge as we hope to donate any monies raised from this sale and also from the raffle on the day to Macmillan Cancer Research.

*Photo:* Sue Bedwell (centre), with Christine Duke (left) and Fern Harden (right) at a BIS Show © Jill Whitehead

## MICHAEL CASTLE

We are very sad to report the death of Michael Castle. Although not a current member due to being unable to drive, he was an active member for many years, first joining the Group in 2004. Michael had many talents: an accomplished botanical artist, a florist and an impressive cake maker. In 2010 he treated us to a display of some of his botanical paintings, including a watercolour of *Iris unguicularis* (See cover page) and on several occasions he gave demonstrations of flower arranging to our members. Often, on show days, he would be found following Ian, our Show Secretary, around, filling in the award cards with his impeccable handwriting. So many of us have very fond memories of this very talented gentleman.



## The West and Midlands Iris Group AGM,

5 April 2025 11.00am

Education Centre, Batsford Arboretum, Batsford, GL56 9AT

**Present:** Jackie Bostock, Judi Deakin, Christine Duke, Caroline Fish, Lyn Foden, Fern & Rex Harden, Jeremy (Chairman) & Sheila Handy, Tony Isaacs, Chris & Toby Jarvis, Sue & Adrian Manning, Anne & John Milner, Colin & Verena Olle, Ann Payne, Hugh Robinson, Jill & Alun Whitehead.

**Apologies:** Sue Bramall, Densie Hacker, Brenda Nickels, Judy & David Pollitt, Ian Powell, Judy Rhymes, Jane Stephenson Ingram & Patrick Ingram, James Watson.

**The Chairman welcomed everyone to the meeting.**

**2024 AGM Minutes:** These were included in the 2024 Spring News Bulletin.

Proposer: Anne Milner, Seconder: Fern Harden and agreed unanimously with no matters arising.

### Officers' reports:

#### Chairman's Report:

As you all know, last year was our Golden Anniversary and we did all we could to make the year a little bit special. We had some really interesting garden visits and for some of these members were invited to meet for a pub lunch after, which brought a celebratory feel to our days out. It is something we hope to continue as long as members want it. Although one garden visit had to be cancelled due to lack of interest most were well supported. It does take a lot of time to arrange these visits so please support where possible.

Our Show was again well supported with some fine exhibits. Many thanks to those who did manage to exhibit. We do encourage members to have a go; help is always available if needed.

You will all have had a questionnaire last year to see what members want from the group. From those who replied it was clear that more basic information was needed, especially for new members or beginners. We have taken that on board and at this year's AGM we are having a short demonstration on staging for shows for new exhibitors. It is just the start of our plans for the future.

Hopefully within the year we will also have some foundational information on growing irises. It is easy to forget that we were new members once and needed advice and help. We are looking at other areas where we can go back to basics.

Our virtual show was also really well supported by members with some fine photos, allowing us to have a glimpse into members gardens and collections. Many thanks to all those who took the time to take pictures and enter.

The committee has decided that we need to be more visible in order to attract more members. We already have our display at Malvern and 2024 was a good show for us. We managed to get a Silver Award and had a lot of good feedback from the public. Malvern is our local shop window where we can blow our trumpet. Our volunteers were absolutely fantastic and interacted with the public really well. I think all enjoyed themselves; there was lots of laughter and I thank all of them for giving up their time. This year we have been restricted to a smaller display, due to lack of room in the marquee, but we will still need volunteers so please speak to me if you want to be part of the show.

In addition, we applied to Shrewsbury Flower Show for a place in their Floral Marquee. We did this as a joint operation with the BIS. I must say that it was a great show, not just in the marquee but overall. Once again volunteers turned out to help, so thanks to those. We have applied again for this year on our own, and again, may need volunteers.

Last year we were also asked to take a display to the Alpine Garden Society show at Pershore. We enjoyed being there and the AGS appreciated us so much that we were invited back this year, where we were awarded another Silver Award and gained 2 new members. This year they have also invited us to the AGS show at Malvern on 12 April. We need to take all the opportunities we can to encourage membership of our Group. It is becoming clear that groups like ours need to form links with other groups/societies to ensure our future at a time when most people prefer digital interactions to face to face hobbies.

The Talk and Lunch was a successful event with an excellent talk on *Crocus* by Tony Goode. We were very lucky to have two fantastic volunteers to serve the catered buffet which allowed all members to enjoy the day. I would like to express my sincere thanks to them for helping making it such a lovely event.

We are only able to cover the costs of putting on special events by the hard work of volunteers at the Shows and those who donate plants for sale. We also benefitted from sales of the Moorcroft collection that was kindly designed by Moorcroft for our anniversary. The ceramics were quite stunning and were admired by members of the public at the events where they were displayed. We owe Moorcroft a great debt of gratitude. With plant sales throughout the year and the Moorcroft donations we are in a healthy financial situation. At this time I would like to express thanks to Rex, who is stepping down this year, for all his work as Treasurer/Membership Secretary. (At this point the members showed their appreciation to Rex in the usual way.)

As part of our anniversary celebrations, we hosted the BIS AGM at Holton Village Hall. This included a very interesting talk on *Crocasmias* and *Gladioli* by Paul Lewis followed by a buffet lunch. In the afternoon we continued the day with a visit to Waterperry Gardens. It was a very enjoyable day and the weekend was concluded on the Sunday with an optional visit to the Grange at Chalgrove, an absolutely stunning garden.

Although a very special year it was somewhat marred by the loss of our own Sue Bedwell. Sue was so full of knowledge and a great friend to not only to myself but to many of our members. She was a valuable member of the committee and will be greatly missed. Sue was instrumental in organising the Waterperry visit and finding the speaker. Several of us attended her funeral and it was no great surprise that the crematorium was packed. I am sure more will be said about Sue in our next *Newsletter*.

We are still looking for new members on the committee so that some may step aside. We are happy to welcome Jackie Bostock to the committee where she will be a great asset.

I would just like to end with a big thank you to all our members for staying with us and to those on the committee for all their hard work and to Jill for all the work she does to maintain the smooth running of the Group.

2025 already has a full programme of events which we hope you will try to attend.

Judi Deakin was thanked for her considerable efforts and dedication in producing such a stunning, informative *Golden Newsletter*.

#### Hon Treasurer's report:

At the end of 2024 the Group had 62 members which included 2 new members. So far this year 2025 we have 6 new members (4 from the Alpine show at Pershore and 2 re-joiners).

At the time of writing this report (3rd April) we have 58 'paid up' and 7 unpaid members, who I am actively chasing for responses! There has been 1 resignation so far this year. I am pleased to inform you that the slight increase in membership is most welcome, but I would like to see even more new members this year.

There were more opportunities to swell the bank account in the year. We had a stand at the Alpine Garden Society Show at Pershore which made a small surplus of £27.00. The Malvern Show, thanks to the hard work and generosity of the 'Malvern Team' and some members, raised an amazing total of £978.60 which included a Silver Award from the RHS. Our annual show proved very popular as usual and raised an income of £257.69.

For the first time we had a shared stand with the BIS at the Shrewsbury Flower Show, which is the "oldest flower show" in England. The show was well attended and we achieved a Gold Award. The surplus from this show was shared with the BIS, but increased the account by £686.42. This year was the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Group. Our annual Tea & Talk event became a Talk and Lunch. Fern Harding, with her food background and catering experience, took responsibility for the lunch and produced a magnificent feast which was enjoyed by everybody.

As members, you will know that at several of the events last year we have been able to display the superb collection of Moorcroft vases made specially for the Group to celebrate our 50th anniversary. You may not be aware that the Group receives a commission payment from Moorcroft of the sales of the "Irresistible Irises". This figure for 2024 amounted to over £1200.00. Moorcroft continue the sales of collections for a 12-month period so I am hopeful for a further payment to cover the first quarter of this current year.

Financially we ended the year in a good position, with a balance of £5991.02. This is an increase of £1119.46 over 2023.

As I mentioned at last year's AGM, I wished to retire from the position of Treasurer of the Group. I'm pleased to tell you that the new treasurer Sue Bramall will be taking up the position after this year's Malvern show. I would like to wish Sue every success in the role.

There are copies of the P&L and summary sheet for 2024 and I will be happy to answer any questions.

I have brought copies of the Summer Show and Talk and Lunch poster. I would like everybody here today to take a couple of large and several smaller posters away with them and display the poster prominently. The poster is double sided, so make sure you put the show side out first!

Finally, upon my retirement from the position as Treasurer of the Group, it has been a privilege to assist the committee for the last 13 years and I would like to thank all the committee members both past and present for their help and guidance.

#### Annual Show Report:

Our Golden Show was a tremendous success with Ian being kept busy with all the various records that need to be kept. Most Points in the Show went to Jeremy Handy, with Alun Whitehead winning the Special Golden Class with his exhibit of *Iris* 'Cloud over Clee', which appropriately was bred by Jennifer Hewitt. We had a good number of visitors which certainly helped the plant sales and it was good to see that many stopped and enjoyed a cuppa and of course the cake! Our thanks go to Sheila Handy, who did a marvellous job in the kitchen and to all those who helped at the show in any way.

We also enjoyed a bumper Virtual Show with more entries, 177 in fact, and a number of new exhibitors. Best in Show went to Alun Whitehead for his exhibit of *Iris* 'Hoar Edge' and the Special Golden Class was

won by James Watson with his exhibit of *Crocus* 'Romance'. The full results of both Shows have been circulated to members, but again our thanks go to all our exhibitors.

The 2025 Group Show will be held on Sunday 25 May, at Highnam Community Centre and entries for the Virtual Show can be submitted between 1st-14th August. All members are encouraged to contribute and show schedules are on our website.

Proposer: Tony Isaacs, Seconder: Toby Jarvis and agreed unanimously.

### **Election of Officers:**

Chairman: Jeremy Handy

Treasurer: Rex Harden/Sue Bramall

Secretary and Membership Secretary: Jill Whitehead

Show Secretary: Ian Powell

Newsletter and Spring Bulletin Editor: Judi Deakin

Winter Bulletin Editor: Brenda Nickels

Committee: Chairman, Treasurer, Secretary/Membership Secretary, Show Secretary and Jackie Bostock, Fern Harden, Tony Isaacs, Anne Milner, Brenda Nickels, James Watson

Proposer: Christine Jarvis, Seconder: Ann Payne and agreed unanimously

**Hewitt Award:** For outstanding service to the group. This was awarded to Gill Eyre for her many years of service to the Group.

**2025 Events:** A full programme has already been circulated and further details of the various visits will also be included in the *Spring Bulletin*. Details of the next members' meeting were given.

RHS Malvern Spring Festival 8th-11th May. The RHS have allocated us a stand in the Floral Marquee, but it will be much reduced in size as the Floral Marque is over subscribed. Therefore it will be an information type stand. New information boards have been purchased to enhance the display. Volunteers are still needed to man the stand, especially to cover the weekend. Iris and Iridaceae plants sales was discussed and it was agreed to keep to the current 50/50 split between the grower and the group. Pot sizes are standardised as either 1L or 2L square or square/rounds. All members were encouraged to contribute and the normal double label system would operate with the price of the plants being set as either £5 or £10 depending on pot size.

Shrewsbury Flower Show 8 & 9 August An application has been made for this show, but this year it would be a stand alone event for the Group. The Malvern information type stand would be repeated and again Volunteers to help over the two days were needed. Iris and Iridaceae plants would also be needed for this show and further information for both events would be included in the Spring Bulletin. *[nb This show has now been cancelled—Ed ]*

### **Any Other Business:**

1. Judi Deakin requested contributions for the *Spring Bulletin*, including details of members' open gardens and other iris related events of interest to our members. She would also appreciate contributions for the *Newsletter*; new authors would be especially welcome as would images.

2. Anne Milner informed members that they would be welcome to visit, by prior appointment, to see her two National Collections.

3. Rex Harden made the suggestion that our *Newsletter* should be re-branded with the following suggestions being offered: Year Book, Review and Annual Review. Further discussion would be needed before a change was made.

The Chairman thanked all for attending our AGM

After the AGM, we enjoyed a practical demonstration on showing, with many hints and tips kindly shared by Jeremy Handy. The afternoon was spent exploring Batsford Arboretum, with its beautiful spring foliage.



With the BIS Show season in full swing and our own Annual Show not so far off, here are a few Handy Hints from Jeremy's talk:

Vases, moss and newspaper are provided at the Show. Be careful to choose the right size of vase for your exhibit.

If showing a plant in a pot, make sure everything is tidy. Clean the pot, remove any dead or dying foliage and cut the brown bits from the end of leaves in an inverted V shape, mimicking the natural line of the leaf.

Judges don't touch the exhibits so position yours to show off its best side

If showing stem(s) put a small amount of water in the bottom of the vase and secure the stem in place with screwed up newspaper, taking care that this doesn't touch the water (otherwise there's a lot of mess left at the end!). Cover the newspaper with moss or green tissue.

Beardless exhibits are usually displayed in 3s or 5s. Present the stems at different heights—eg two tall and one shorter.

Before the Show: check the schedule (in the Autumn/Winter Bulletin or on the website) carefully for the class requirements. Label your stems as you pick them but remove these labels before showing; Ian, our Show Secretary, will have cards for you to display on the bench. Garden Velcro can be used to wrap the buds before the Show, in the hope that they will open when the Velcro is removed. If they don't, blowing gently on them may do the trick.

Oasis (soaked) may be used to secure blooms if you have it.

There are Novice classes on the Schedule and help is always available on the day so have a go.

Following Jeremy's demonstration, Jill treated us to a slideshow taking us through the various Show classes, illustrating her presentation with displays from past Shows and successful exhibits.

Our thanks to Jeremy and Jill and my apologies for not having any photos to go with this report. I somehow managed to delete them from the SD card instead of transferring them! I do however have a few from our afternoon stroll in lovely sunshine. (Ed)







My favourite spot was definitely Simon Verity's statue of Daphne surrounded by *Leucojum aestivum* and *Fritillaria meleagris*.



But the big frits were pretty spectacular too:





## Meanwhile Anne Milner claims to have found something very exciting:

Today, on a our visit to Batsford Arboretum following our AGM, we discovered a new iris. How exciting is that?

It was remarkably tall, and VERY floriferous, flowing in early April, but clearly not a dwarf iris, and a very delicate shade of magnolia pink. Perhaps you could send in suggestions for a name!



My suggestion was *Iris* 'April Fool' but sadly that already exists and is an SDB (Hager, 1976), a maroon/amber tan colour so nothing like this. What's yours?



# The West and Midlands Very Educational and Informative Visit to the Melcourt Establishment

Written by Brenda Nickels from Malvern

On arrival we were greeted with hot drinks and biscuits by our hostess Vicky. She then took us pictorially, through the stages of the process in the manufacturing of their products. Wood bark from soft wood conifers and spruce is their main ingredient. Every part of the tree that was once discarded, after taking the main wooden tree trunk, is now used in their processes, from the bark to the dust on the forest floor.

After Vicky's presentation, she took us out to show the workings of the facility.

She first took us to what she called her store or ingredients room: she referred, tongue in cheek, to this being her 'Big Kitchen' holding all the ingredients for the various mixes that were put together in the factory. The store was a sequence of huge bays which held all the necessary ingredients to make up the various bags of growing media.



The business began in 1983 on this disused WW2 airfield. The factory, with its enormous machines, is housed in an aeroplane hangar. Inside this vast space we watched machines mix, measure and bag up the composts without a human hand to help them. It was quite fascinating and mesmerising to watch it all happen in such a slick manner.

Vicky showed us the plastic bag store, which held an array of printed plastic like huge bolts of cloth. The thickness of the bags had to be strong enough to be handled by storekeepers and, eventually, gardeners without falling apart.

Outside, in the vast yard, she encouraged us to handle and smell the various ingredients each having different properties and a different scent.

The yard itself was very busy, with huge lorries coming onto the weighbridge and then distributing their loads into the appropriate bays. There were also huge tractors with buckets on the front scooping up loads, from the same bays, and distributing them into specific hoppers which fed the machines inside the factory so that nothing stopped the bag filling.

We were shepherded carefully around the yard and factory in high visibility jackets so that we didn't end up in the mix. The quality control seemed to be of a very high standard.

It was a thoroughly enjoyable experience. We said a big thank you to Vicky for being so informative and patient with our questions and another big thank you to Jill for organising the tour.





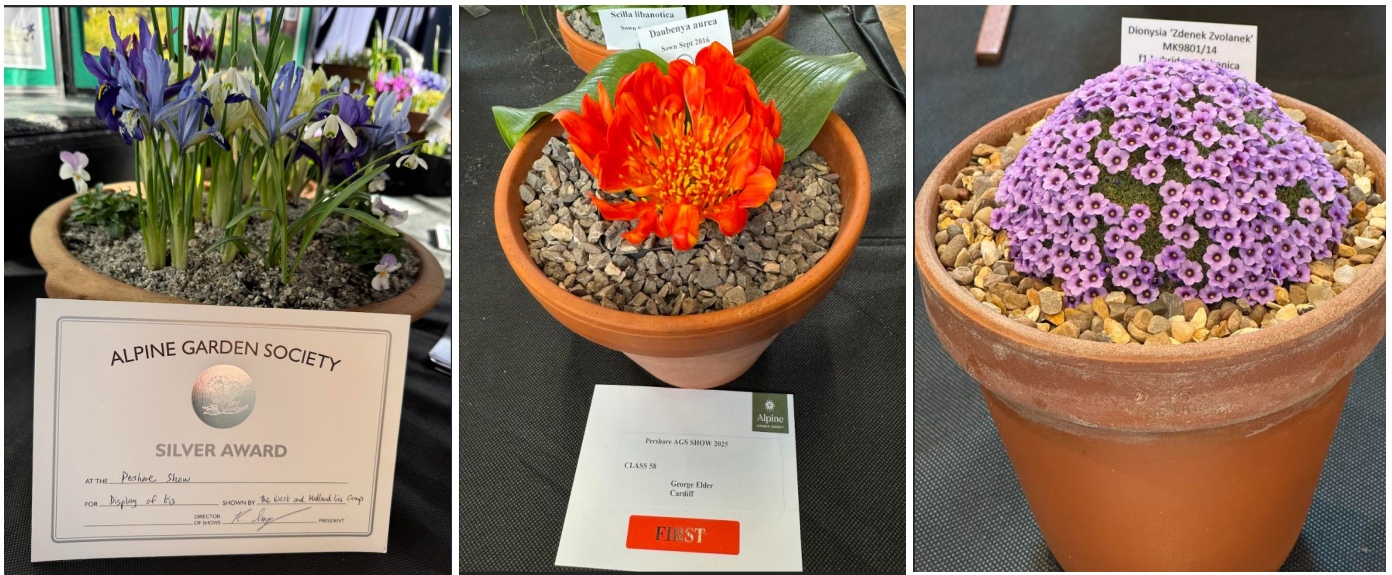
## AGS Pershore Show - March 13th 2025

Jackie Bostock

Well here we are again with our exhibition stand at the Pershore Alpine Garden Society show, although when I say again I can't include myself as this in my first time at this show, being a relative newbie to the wonderful W&MIG.

Whilst the Iris is my first love, it has to be said that this is a truly fabulous alpine show, a veritable sweetie shop of eye catching specimens from the wonderful cushion like *Dionysia* bursting with the most delicate flowers to the *Daubinya aurea* which appears like a stray flower head accompanied by two leathery leaves. Looking down the long tables of pristine specimens there are plenty of familiar faces too, from snowdrops to our very own reticulate irises.

Along with the exhibits are a few specialist nurseries if you wish to diversify from the iris family. There is a real buzz in the rooms and some lovely conversations as I wind my way back to our beautiful display that has won a silver medal - well done team. Back at our stand I'm listening to visitors relaying their love of iris and asking various questions. What a pleasure and the perfect distraction from the crazy world we seem to now live in.



And we were also invited to join the AGS at their Malvern Show—which attracted 3 new members to our midst - welcome all!





**And for our Next Visit.....**

**Wednesday 21 May - The Walled Garden at The Museum in the Park, Stroud GL5 4AF**

The Walled Garden volunteers are looking forward to welcoming the West and Midlands Iris Group to Stroud. Hopefully the iris beds in front of the Mansion will be in bloom when you arrive. Maybe you'll spot a few more irises in the courtyard, as you approach the museum entrance, then into the garden itself with its colour themed beds featuring our Cedric Morris and Newnham College irises, plus so much more.

If you go to the Walled Garden Volunteers Blog, on the museum's website, you can see how some of the irises looked last year and what we've been up to this year so far, but of course there is nothing like checking things out for yourself, in real life.

We invite you to meet in the pavilion at 10.30 with refreshments and a short talk from Ann Taylor about the restoration of the garden. It was originally created in the 1700s, but lay abandoned from the late 1970s until 2009. Ann was involved with the garden's renovation from the beginning and now she leads the garden volunteers with boundless energy and enthusiasm. Next year we'll be celebrating 10 years of it being open to the public.

We hope you'll explore every corner of the garden: the display in our auricula theatre, the wild flower meadow with its heritage fruit trees and beehive, the dipping pond, the raised vegetable beds, dye garden, herbs and so much more.

Fingers crossed for a sunny day!

Sue Manning



There is no charge for members but non-members would be most welcome to join us – cost £5.

For those wishing to extend the day the Group are meeting for a Pub lunch at 1.00pm at The Old Lodge, Minchinhampton Common, Stroud, Gloucestershire GL6 9AQ. The menu can be found online:

see <https://www.food-club.com/pubs/the-old-lodge/>

If you are planning to come please let Jill know on:

info@westandmidlandsirigroup.org.uk or 01568 720129 by **9th May**.

## More dates for your diary:

### Thursday 8 May - Sunday 11 May:

**RHS Malvern Spring Festival**, Three Counties Showground, Malvern WR13 6NW.

This is one of the regular events in our calendar that allows us to promote the Group and the plants we all enjoy to a wider audience. If you are able to help on the stand at any time during the Show, please get in touch with Jeremy. He'd love to hear from you. You'll have plenty of time to explore the Show too.

### Sunday 25 May

**W&MIG Annual Show**, Highnam Community Centre, Newent Rd, Highnam, Gloucester GL2 8DG.

Exhibits to be staged	10.30am—12.30pm
Judging	12.30pm—1.30pm
Show open to the public	1.30pm—4.30pm
Prizes awarded	4.15pm

One of the highlights of the W&MIG year and a chance to show off your blooms. If you've never exhibited before, don't be shy. There's lots of help available and even a special class and trophy for those who've never won a first prize at the show. There are also classes that don't require live plants! The full schedule was in the *Autumn Bulletin* and can be found on the W&MIG website. It's a friendly, social occasion with plants for sale and refreshments available, so even if you can't be persuaded to exhibit come along and have fun.

### Saturday 28 June— Two gardens and optional lunch

**10.30am: Aulden Farm**, Aulden, Leominster, HR6 0JT. Tea/coffee and cake. If you haven't been to our Secretary's garden before then this is a must and, if you have, surely it is a must-go-again! Alun and Jill have created a wonderful, quirky garden over a 3 acre rural site, planted with wild life in mind. Irises abound, of course, with an emphasis on the beardless but there are many wonderful and unusual plants to be found and planting combinations to go home and emulate. There is no charge for members; visitors would be very welcome to join us, the cost for them is £5.

**12 noon Lunch at The Cattle Shed, Penrhos Court**, Kington (self-funded)

**Afternoon: Rhodds Farm**, Lyonshall, Kington HR5 3LW. Entrance is £8.00. Developed by the current owners, Richard and Cary Goode, over the last 20 years, the garden comprises over two acres with a further extensive area of woodland. The garden design uses the borrowed landscape with views of both the Malvern Hills and the Black Mountains. Specific features are the Dovecot, which forms a distinctive feature in a more formal area; the wildlife pond, surrounded with moisture loving plants; a gravel garden in front of the Tea Pavilion and a number of sculptures. Cary trained at the English Garden School so expect spectacular planting. The managed woodland is mainly broadleaf native trees, but the edges and transitional areas have been planted and include a small arboretum with some interesting and unusual trees and shrubs and an avenue of white stemmed birch.



### Friday 1 August – Thursday 14 August

Entries for the **Virtual Show** would be very welcome! If you haven't already done so, start taking your pictures now! Schedule and full details are on the website. This a great opportunity not only for those unable to attend the live show but also for all of us to share and show off our irises that aren't in flower at the end of May. Entries to Jill via [info@westandmidlandsirigroup.org.uk](mailto:info@westandmidlandsirigroup.org.uk)



### **Tuesday 19 August 2pm:**

**Ridgeway Barn**, Evesham Rd, Cookhill, Alcester, B49 5LJ. Jon and Jane Segar do not usually open their garden to the public but have kindly offered to give us a guided tour around their 3 acre site.

When they acquired Ridgeway Barn in 1995 it was a farmyard with no trees, flowers or garden. Two years after moving in they acquired the adjacent 2 acre field and thus the creation of their present garden began. This is a sloping site which faces the distant Malvern Hills. After 29 years they have created 3 small courtyard gardens, a large pond, and planted over 1000 trees as a windbreak under which they have planted a woodland garden. During the Covid lockdown they established some prairie style planting. Also to be seen are raised beds on the potager, a small orchard and a collection of sculptures collected over many years. This is a garden that is rarely open to the public so do take advantage of this opportunity. The cost is £10 per head and will include refreshments – all proceeds go to the charity Perennial.



### **Sunday 14th September 2.30pm**

**The Rhydd Gardens**, Worcester Road, Hanley Castle, Worcester, WR8 0AB (gates 200m N of layby on B4211).

Two walled gardens and a 60 ft greenhouse from the early 1800s set in six acres with wonderful views of the entire length of the Malvern ridge. One walled garden is designed with formal paths and colourful borders bounded by box hedging and there are fruit trees in espaliers and cordons as they would have been when the garden was first set out. Other features include a nature area with walks and some woodland. The garden is mostly level with easy access. Cost £12 to include tea and cake. All monies to NGS

### **Sunday 19 October:**

**Talk & Lunch** Highnam Community Centre, Newent Rd, Highnam, Gloucester GL2 8DG.

10.30 Coffee & Biscuits

11.00 Talk: Claire Austin "Some of my Favourite Irises and How I Grow Them" followed by a practical demonstration on "How to Grow From Seed" by Jeremy Handy

This will be followed by a soup & pud lunch. There is no charge for members. Visitors would be very welcome to join us, the cost for them is £5 for the talk or £10 for the lunch and talk.

Booking for all these gatherings, is via Jill Whitehead, either email:[info@westandmidlandsirigroup.org.uk](mailto:info@westandmidlandsirigroup.org.uk) or phone 01568 720129

Jill will be sending out a group email before each event but please get these dates in your diary now and don't forget to book!

### **Also 2026:**

**Annual Show** on Sunday, 24 May and the **Talk and Lunch** on Sunday 18 October, both at Highnam as per usual.

### **Finally a reminder of some BIS dates:**

**Sunday 27 April - Late Spring Show**, Plumley Village Hall, Nr Knutsford, WA16 0TR 10am– 5pm

**Sat/Sun 31 May/1 Jun - Summer Show**, The Garden Room, Hilltop, RHS Wisley 10-5pm

**Sat/Sun 20/21 September - Autumn Weekend & AGM**, RHS Hyde Hall, Chelmsford, Essex. Main Speaker: James Horner, Head Gardener at Benton End. Sunday morning private visit to Ulting Wick Garden

**October 14th:** final date for entries to the **BIS Virtual Show**

## A PLEA FOR PLANTS

This year we are having to have a smaller display at the Malvern Spring Festival due to there being more nurseries attending, but the floral marquee should be exciting with new exhibitors.

We would be grateful for any plants for our plant sales. We try to get plants in 1 litre and 2 litre (preferably square) pots to allow for easy pricing. We give 50% of sales revenue back to the members donating good plants. Please use one label with the name of the plant and a second label with your name. Plants can be dropped off at various locations, brought with you if volunteering on the display or collected if local. Please message Jeremy (jhandy@virginmedia.com) if you have surplus plants for donation.

The monies raised from plant sales help to cover the cost of the display at Malvern and any surplus helps with the cost of events like the Lunch and Talk and AGM.

## AND A FEW MEMBERS' AND FRIENDS' GARDENS TO VISIT

Anne Milner's **National Collections of Arthur Bliss and John Taylor Irises**, Baunton, nr Cirencester. Contact Anne to arrange a suitable time to visit: anne.milner@btinternet.com or 01285 643731.

NB: There are 21 Plant Heritage National Collections of Iris in locations as far apart as Fife and Devon. If the Collection is not held in a garden open to the public you should be able to visit by arrangement. Details on the Plant Heritage website.

Ruth Plant's **National Collection of Dierama Species** in Staffordshire –open days on Thursdays 3rd, 10th & 17th and Sunday 20th July. Ruth and Clive also open their garden for the NGS <https://findagarden.ngs.org.uk/garden/16145/yew-tree-cottage>

Other members' gardens open for NGS include those of:

Brian Skeys: <https://findagarden.ngs.org.uk/garden/32333/19-winnington-gardens> and

Fiona Horwath: <https://findagarden.ngs.org.uk/garden/19475/23-st-johns-road>

## Committee Contacts

<b>Chair</b>	Jeremy Handy	jhandy@virginmedia.com	01527 893710
<b>Hon. Sec &amp; Membership</b>	Jill Whitehead	info@westandmidlandsirigroup.org.uk	
	Aulden Farm, Aulden, Leominster, HR6 0JT		01568 720129
<b>Treasurer</b> (to mid-May)	Rex Harden	rexharden44@gmail.com	01452 712042
	56 Pirton Lane, Churchdown, Glos GL3 2SJ		
<b>Treasurer</b> (from Mid-May)	Sue Bramall	sue.bramall@bernersmarketing.com	
<b>Show Sec.</b>	Ian Powell	ianderekpowell@gmail.com	01873 890133
<b>Members</b>	Jackie Bostock	jbostock88@hotmail.co.uk	
	Fern Harden	fern.harden@icloud.com	01452 712042
	Tony Isaacs	isaacstony@hotmail.com	
	Anne Milner	anne.milner@btinternet.com	01285 643731
<b>Seed Officer</b>	James Watson	james.watson2479@gmail.com	01902 657376
<b>Autumn Bulletin</b>	Brenda Nickels	brendanickels1147@gmail.com	07387 199698
<b>Newsletter &amp; Spring Bulletin</b>	Judi Deakin	wmig.editor@gmail.com	07927 006710