



West and Midlands Iris Group

Spring Bulletin

A Warm Welcome to Our New Chairman

Tony Isaacs

Tony was elected to the Chair of the W&MIG at the recent AGM. Here he introduces himself and tells us a little about what he hopes for the future of the Group.

As some of you know I have been given the honour of becoming Chairman of the group. My first task is to thank Jeremy for all the hard work he has done to get the group to where we are today, including many long hours setting up and manning the stand at the events. Also a big "Thank You" to Jill who, for many years, has been our Secretary. She has been outstanding in organizing most of our events, and keeping track of the many things that are important to the Group and she has kindly agreed to stay on the Committee.

I have been growing Bearded Iris for over 40 years, but only since retiring have I had the time to get involved with the BIS and W&MIG. I have found the groups to be of great help in gaining the knowledge to start hybridising, which I find really interesting, as you never know what may come of a cross. Last year I started to cross some of the historic Dwarfs with some of the new varieties I have from the USA; also, some TBs with Dwarfs which I hope will produce a nice IB or two. If anyone is interested in trying hybridising they are welcome to ask for advice at any time.

My hope for the Group's future is that we can attract more new members as I feel it is important to keep numbers up and encourage a younger age group to join. To that end we are planning to attend more events this year. Fern and I are attending two Rare Plant Fairs to test how viable they are and, should they prove a success, we will look at attending more next year. We are also attending Spetchley Plant Fair and Blenheim Palace Flower Show as well as Malvern Spring Garden Show. If anyone feels that they would like to join in and help at any of the events please contact us. I would like to remind everyone that if they have spare plants they would like to sell through the group please let us know.

I'm very much looking forward to seeing you all at the up-coming events.

Best wishes

Tony Isaacs

Visit to The Lyndalls

Jill Whitehead

What a visit! Okay, so it was a bit damp but the joy of the garden made up for any drizzle! It was outstanding in so many ways, the different varieties of snowdrops meant that even the most ardent galanthophile, spotted something new! What also impressed many was the size of some of the drifts of snowdrops, mixing so well into the borders, with winter green ferns adding another element. Shrubs, many of them beautifully fragrant, also added to the mix and gave a good structure to the garden, as did some clipped evergreens.



It was good to see the early flowering apricot which I think was *Prunus mume* 'Benichidori', but I could be wrong!

The whole garden is just so inspiring and is enhanced by being settled in the valley, amidst the rolling hills of the Woolhope Dome. Of course, the house in itself is interesting, with parts dating back to the C16, it anchors the garden, sitting proudly overlooking you, and you wonder what changes have occurred over the centuries. The steps leading up to the back door were surrounded by little gems, cyclamen shone out, especially the very silver leaf forms and there were other smaller delights to follow. The ducks entertained us, waddling around and Stuart was on hand to answer any questions. We finished the visit in the time-honoured way with tea and cake but it is not often that we have that upstairs in a listed granary that was built in 1710!



So thank you to all our members who ventured out on a damp day, braving the narrow lanes; what was even more remarkable is that nobody got lost!

Of course many thanks go to Stuart for allowing us to visit. I only had to twist his arm a little, as we were the test run before he had a larger group of some 49 gardeners visiting. But I reckon we were very happy to be 'guinea pigs'!

The West and Midlands Iris Group AGM
21 March 2026
Lammas Room, Hill Close Gardens, Warwick CV34 6HF
11.30 am

Present:, Jackie Bostock, Sue Bramall, Judi Deakin, Christine Duke, Fern & Rex Harden, Tony Isaacs, Sue & Adrian Manning, Anne & John Milner, Brenda Nickels, Colin & Verena Olle, Judy & David Pollitt, Jane Stephenson Ingram & Patrick Ingram, James Watson, Jill & Alun Whitehead.

Apologies: Jeremy (Chairman) & Sheila Handy, Suzie Belsham & Richard Lovett, Cathy Fewlass, Jane Lacey, Robert Fish & Caroline Saunders, Chris & Toby Jarvis, Ann Payne, Judy Rhymes, Sue Sanderson.

In the absence of our Chairman, who sadly was in hospital, the Secretary welcomed everyone to the meeting and our best wishes were sent to Jeremy for a speedy recovery.

2025 AGM Minutes: These were included in the *Spring Bulletin*.

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

Constitution

Our Constitution was last revised in 2014 and times have changed since then, so the committee felt it was time to re-visit the document. A draft Constitution has been circulated and one comment had been received re the wording on the Finance section. It was agreed to alter the format of the wording. A copy is included with these minutes.

Proposer: Judi Deakin Seconder: Christine Duke and agreed unanimously with no other matters arising.

Changes in subscription:

The proposed changes had been circulated to members, these were briefly discussed and then agreed, to take effect from January 2027

Individual membership: £12

Joint membership: £15

Corporate/Group membership: £20 (2 *Newsletters*: 4 Invitations to the Talk & Lunch and up to 4 entries allowed per class in our shows).

Proposer: Sue Bramall Seconder: Tony Isaacs and agreed unanimously

Officers' reports:

Chairman's report:

Firstly, can I say welcome to any new members that have joined this past year. We hope you will find the group welcoming and informative. There is so much horticultural knowledge relating to irises and Iridaceae within this group which our members are always willing to share. It is not one of those groups where knowledge and tips relating to our hobby is secret.

What can I say about this past year? Through the hard work of the committee and volunteers, we managed to put on an array of events. I have to thank all committee members, officers and volunteers for the effort they have put in, especially Jill for all the work she has done in making things happen. I sincerely hope that you have managed to attend at least some of the events and have enjoyed them.

So what has been really good this past year; meeting up at a pub for a winter's meal and a chance to have a good chat with one another provided a nice day out for members. We have already started planning for another pub lunch get together. We felt it was a great way of doing something positive during those grey winter days when we have a gap in our programme.

We had some interesting garden visits, most of which unfortunately I was unable to attend, but I'm told that they were very good.

Once again we put on a display at Malvern where we were awarded a Silver Gilt Medal and Best Plant Society exhibit. Malvern is where we really advertise ourselves and I strongly believe that we would be

missed if we couldn't attend. I have always said that to thrive we need to be seen and Malvern is a good place to be seen. Over the years we have done extremely well at Malvern and it has been instrumental in us becoming financially stable. My thanks goes to all those who volunteer on our display and help make it so successful. I have to say, Malvern is an area where W&MIG excels. We are second to none when it comes to promoting the iris as a garden plant and there is never a moment on the display when we aren't talking to the public. Our volunteers are so passionate when conversing with the general public. We should be proud of our achievements there.

We held our Annual Show and again we had a really good amount of exhibits. As many of you will know, Tony and myself, along with Jake Croft, visited America last year where we were invited to one of their regional shows. In my mind our Show is as good if not better than the one we attended there. So that should be seen as a real positive achievement. Thank you to all who helped at the Show and most importantly to all who exhibited. But we mustn't stop there; it could be even better if we can encourage more new exhibitors. Exhibiting is not as daunting as it might seem and there is always help for first time exhibitors.

Our Virtual Show again produced some interesting pictures. It has become a real part of our annual programme. Keep taking those pictures. Thanks to Jill and Alun for organising and sorting the pictures.

Our Talk and Lunch was another success story. We owe a big thanks to those who supplied the food which, as usual, was well received. We were lucky to have Claire Austin giving a talk on bearded iris and I managed a poor attempt with a talk on growing from seed. The iris world needs more people growing from seed and producing new British bred plants and we need to make sure that W&MIG plays a big part in it.

We have already started 2026 with a display at the AGS show at Pershore where we were given a gold award. Thanks for this achievement has to go to Fern, Rex and Tony who set it all up and manned it all day. We had 1 new member and chatted to lots of interested people. We have built up a good relationship with the AGS over the past few years and it is a relationship that we need to ensure continues.

You will see in our programme of events that we will be attending some of the plant fairs. It is a new venture which we hope might attract some new members. Again, thanks must go to Tony, Rex and Fern for getting these going. Please support these events if you can.

I have now been chairman for 6 years and, for the most part, it has been a privilege. It has been good to share in our successes. For me Malvern has been one of the most enjoyable parts of being a W&MIG member as it is mainly focused on irises. However, this past year has not been a good one for me personally. As many of you will already know, I suffered a stroke last July which has meant I am not allowed to drive at present and unless someone takes me to events I cannot attend. Not an ideal situation and extremely frustrating.

Alongside this, sadly, there have been elements within the Group that has added to that frustration. Although last year we were relieved to welcome Jackie Bostock and Sue Brammall to the committee and as said we appreciate all the help we get at Malvern, we still need more committee members to allow others to stand down after they have done years and years of valuable service. W&MIG is only surviving because of the commitment of this committee and it is not right that they continue to carry the burden of the Groups' long term survival. The Group needs new committee members with new ideas. Although I have publicised this fact over the past few years the ever increasing frustration of not being able to attract new committee members from our membership has only added to my personal frustration levels. It is my view that without new committee members we cannot continue to run such a successful group for much longer.

As chairman my plan was to push for more events in our programme especially ones that dealt more with basic instructions on growing irises which has been asked for by newer member; after all we are supposed to be an iris group. But we cannot ask the existing committee to take on more work. I also asked the membership what they wanted from the group in a questionnaire to help guide us in planning for the future, to which, disappointingly, only 30% of the membership responded. Again this was frustrating and to be honest, it makes me wonder if all the effort we put in is worth it. But at the same time, none of us on the committee would want to see the Group stop what we do. Without the support we need it is

virtually impossible to implement any new ideas. I feel as if I have failed in achieving my aims, and therefore I think we have not been able to give the Group what it needs to prosper. Also in return I am no longer getting what I need from the Group. Obviously life and time has become more precious to me now and I have so many other things I want to achieve with my irises. So, due to the ever increasing frustration, I have decided to step down as chairman at this AGM so that I can concentrate on my other roles within the iris world. In addition to this, at last year's AGM, Jill said she would be stepping down as Secretary at this AGM as she felt she had done enough. We owe Jill a great debt for all she has done for the Group. That means we also need someone to take over the Secretary position.

I do hope that the membership will support the committee and whoever takes over from Jill and myself to take the group into the future.

Jeremy Handy

Treasurer and Membership Secretary report for the year ending 31 December 2025

THANK YOU

I would like to start by saying 'thank you' to Rex for all his help in handing over the finances and Jill for passing over the membership information, and to both for being so supportive as I learn the ropes. My thanks also to Jeremy and to Jackie Bostock who reviewed the accounts.

MEMBERSHIP NUMBERS

HOUSEHOLDS	2025		2026	
Honorary members	4		4	
Renewals	42		47	
New members	13	(1) January (2) February - AGS (3) April (7) May – Annual show	4	(2) Talk & lunch (Oct25) (2) Alpine Garden Show (Feb 26)
Total (62 in 2024)	59		55	
Cancellations			5	
No response			4	

CORPORATE MEMBERSHIP		
Stroud Museum in the Park	1+4	<i>Joined in Feb 2026.</i>

TREASURY REPORT

Accounts to 31 December 2025

£6,523.63 – NatWest Bank

£186.00 Cash

£6,709.63 Total funds (£5,991.02 on 31 December 2024)

See attachment 1.

Commentary

The group is in the fortunate position of having a very healthy bank balance, with a net growth of £718.61 over 2024.

Income from events in 2025 was

£968.53 Net profit at Malvern Show

£425.00 Silver gilt prize at Malvern Show.

£436.64 Commission on sales of Moorcroft Pottery

£ 66.00 Raffle at Talk & Lunch.

One of the things that we have looked at in the past few months is the extent to which the costs of running the group are covered by the membership fees – and this revealed that membership fees were being subsidised by the plant sales and other income.

This may be good news for most members, but that burden falls on a small number of people who are prepared to travel to events to sell plants. This may not always be possible, and as a general principle we should ensure that our membership costs are covered by the membership fees – and hopefully the proposed subscription fees for 2027 will be agreed as:

£12.00 for individual membership

£15.00 for joint membership

£20.00 for corporate membership.

Business Savings Account

A NatWest interest-bearing 35-day notice account has now been opened and £3,000 will be transferred to this account.

Guidance on reimbursement of expenses

The committee has agreed new guidance for volunteers or committee members providing food and covering approved expenses concerning a W&MIG event. See attachment 2.

Guidance on trading arrangements in 2026

All members are welcome to bring plants for sale at events with plant sales.

We now have different 'trading arrangements' for various events, and to provide clarity these have been set out in new guidance. See attachment 3.

Note: attached to these minutes are copies of the Expenses Policy and Trading arrangements.

Thank you Sue and I think we should thank Rex, who handed over to Sue in May of this year. He has been a very conscientious Treasurer and Membership Secretary and has been more than happy to help Sue in her new role. So thanks to them both for keeping us on track with our finances.

Annual Show Report:

Our shows, both Group and Virtual, were very successful with Fred Raines winning the Best in Show at Highnam and Karen Saunders taking that honour in our Virtual Show. The full results of both Shows have been circulated to members. Thanks must go to all who helped to make the Shows successful, from exhibitors to those who work 'behind the scenes'; both are important in different ways! Especial thanks are due to Ian Powell, our Show Secretary and to Alun Whitehead for adding the Virtual Show entries to our website. The 2026 Group Show will be held on Sunday 24 May, at Highnam Community Centre and entries for the Virtual Show can be submitted between 1-14 August. All members are encouraged to contribute and show schedules are on our website.

Comments on the reports:

Thanks were expressed to Jeremy Handy for being our hard working Chairman. At this point it was announced that the **Hewitt Award**, which is given for outstanding service to the Group was to be awarded to Jeremy. This met with unanimous approval.

Judi Deakin raised the issue of our incoming and outgoing monies. It was noted that Moorcroft was a one-off income and that our attendance at RHS Malvern is dependent on the RHS policy towards groups and societies. Our expenses may well increase eg cost of postage and speaker costs etc. The Committee would be discussing this further but the suggestion of having a reserves policy was duly noted.

Proposer: Anne Milner Seconder: Judi Deakin and agreed unanimously.

Election of Officers:

Jeremy has decided to stand down as Chairman, having been in the role since 2020. We have thanked Jeremy but again we should note the dedicated commitment that he has given to the Group since that time and before then, when he was an active committee member. However, we have a new nomination

for the role, Tony Isaacs. He has been on the committee since 2023, so he does know what he is letting himself in for! Jeremy has kindly agreed to remain on the committee, if all are happy with that.

There are a couple of other changes as I am also standing down. I have been secretary since 2015 and feel it is time for new blood and fresh ideas. Since I took on the role and even before that I have tried to contribute to the group, but I would like to thank all the committee members both past and present for their help and more importantly our members, without who we would not be here today. I am pleased to say that Jackie Bostock has agreed to take on part of the role. Thank you Jackie! I am happy to remain as a committee member to continue to help in any way I can.

Other changes are Brenda Nickels and James Watson are both standing down and we thank them both for their contributions to the smooth running of our group over several years. However, they are still happy to help, with running the raffle and seed for Malvern.

Sue Manning has offered to join the committee, thank you Sue!

Committee:

Chairman: Tony Isaacs

Treasurer and Membership Secretary: Sue Bramall

Secretary: Jackie Bostock

Members: Fern Harden, Jeremy Handy, Sue Manning, Anne Milner, Jill Whitehead

Officers:

Show Secretary: Ian Powell

Editor: Judi Deakin

Proposer: Rex Harden Seconder: Colin Olle and agreed unanimously

2026 Events:

A full programme has already been circulated and further details of the various visits will also be included in the *Spring Bulletin*.

Any other business:

1. A new Show Award was announced: The Pollitt Trophy (right). It takes the form of a glass roundel depicting two bearded irises and was given to the group by Judy and David Pollitt. It will be awarded in Class 3 'Two bearded irises of different varieties'. Judy and David were thanked for their generosity in the usual way.

2. 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.

3. David Pollitt noted that the Group were taking part in the Spetchley Plant Fair; it was noted that the aim of attending several plant fairs and the AGS Pershore Show is to increase public awareness of the group, it is not necessarily about financial gain.

4. Tony mentioned the proposed rhizome sale and it was noted that further details on how this would work would be circulated once the rhizomes had been received in the Summer. It was estimated that the cost would be in the region of £10/£12 depending on customs duties etc.

5. Thanks were expressed to **all** the committee.



The Secretary thanked all for attending the AGM and for their constructive suggestions.

We followed the meeting with a short but informative Gardener's Question Time. Time to explore the historic garden then followed and we enjoyed a Ploughman's lunch to conclude the day.



WEST AND MIDLANDS IRIS GROUP CONSTITUTION

The Group. The Group shall be called "The West and Midlands Iris Group" and is an affiliated Group of the British Iris Society

The Aim of the Group is to promote the growing and development of Iridaceae and to provide a forum for interested people to meet and expand their knowledge.

Membership of the Group is open to all persons interested in the genus Iris.

Management. The Group shall be managed by a committee elected at the AGM comprised of the following: Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer and at least one other. A quorum shall be four. The committee may co-opt new members who must then be elected at the next AGM. Officers may be elected at the AGM or appointed by the committee. Officers and committee members shall normally hold office for a minimum of 3 years or such period as may be determined at the AGM.

Nominations for Office Nominations shall normally be sent to the Secretary seven days before the AGM, but may, at the Chairman's discretion, be accepted at the AGM.

Voting All current/paid up members shall be entitled to vote at the AGM.

Finance: The Treasurer shall:

- (i) present voluntary audited accounts of the Group's finances at the AGM.
- (ii) be authorised to sign cheques up to a value of one hundred pounds (£100) or such sum as may from time to time be determined by members voting at an AGM; thereafter cheques should be countersigned by the Chairman or other authorised signatory.
- (iii) act as Membership Secretary

The Treasurer, as primary holder of the bank account is authorised to use the facilities of internet banking for bill payments, subscription collection and general maintenance of the account. At least three bank signatories should be elected at the AGM to facilitate dual authorisation via online banking.

Subscription The annual subscription shall be determined by a resolution carried at the AGM, the intention to increase the subscription having been notified at the previous AGM or in the *Newsletter*.

Meetings The Chairman shall conduct the meetings by the conventional rules for public societies.

The Show. All members are entitled to exhibit in the classes of the Annual Show and Virtual Show, subject to such restrictions as the Committee may impose. Trophies awarded will be held by the member for one year and must be returned to the Show Secretary on or before the day of the Show.

The Group shall maintain a **privacy policy** at all times.

Amendments to the Constitution The Constitution can only be amended by a resolution carried at the AGM, the resolution having been notified at the previous AGM, or in the case of an Extraordinary General Meeting, 8 weeks before the due date.

Disbanding the Group. This can only be carried out at an EGM when the proposal has been notified eight weeks before the date of the EGM. The resolution, to be carried, must be supported by two-thirds of the members present. At the same meeting a resolution shall be presented concerning the disbursement of the Group's funds and to be carried, this resolution must be supported by two-thirds of the members present.

Agreed at the AGM March 2026

Appendices to the Treasurer's Report

1. FINANCIAL SUMMARY

W&M Iris Group - Financial Summary Sheet 2025																				
NATWEST BANK ACCOUNT										* m'croft										
Month	balance				INCOME						Expenditure									
	B/F	25 Subs	26 subs	Events	sales	Refund	TOTAL	Venue	Events	Events '26	Speaker	Donation	Exhib	Post	Print	Office	AGM	Insure	TOTAL	
				advert	Prize/Raffle			Hire	Costs		Visit	Plant cost	sales	copy	costs		Sundry			
Jan-25	5,991.02	206.00			436.64		642.64		403.82					100.99	90.40	17.60		10.00	622.81	Income - Moorcroft
Feb-25	6,010.85	40.00		78.65	33.00		151.65		124.50					4.20	67.26				195.96	Income - Badges
Mar-25	5,966.54	40.00				25.00	65.00	41.50	934.27			12.00		3.50	21.60			76.00	1,088.87	Income - donation
Apr-25	4,942.67			165.49			165.49	15.00	289.03			34.16		22.71	45.00		165.89	52.00	603.79	
May-25	4,504.37	70.00		2,211.00	2,161.23	120.00	4,562.23		330.79									120.00	450.79	
Jun-25	8,615.81			32.00		425.00	457.00						1,856.00	46.24					1,982.24	Income - Silver Gift Prize
Sue starts as Treasurer																				
Jul-25	7,170.57			20.00			20.00		122.00										122.00	
Aug-25	7,068.57		10.00	80.00			90.00	50.00						30.00					80.00	AGM/Seed booklets
Sep-25	7,078.57			5.00			5.00		100.00										100.00	
Oct-25	6,983.57		10.00	40.00			50.00		12.75										12.75	
Nov-25	7,020.82						-	94.50	128.35										222.85	
Dec-26	6,797.97		190.00				190.00		215.00					126.86	122.48				464.34	
	6,523.63																			Bank account balanced - Sue Bramall 2.1.2026
Jan-25																				
		356.00	210.00	2,632.14	2,630.87	570.00	6,399.01	201.00	2,425.51	215.00	-	46.16	1,856.00	258.26	422.98	17.60	165.89	258.00	5,866.40	
CASH IN CASH BOX																				
30.12.25	90.00		20.00		10.00	66.00	186.00													
	6,709.63	356.00	230.00	2,632.14	2,640.87	636.00	6,495.01													628.61

2. GUIDANCE ON REIMBURSEMENT OF EXPENSES

Purpose

The committee is very grateful to all volunteers and wants volunteers to feel well supported. These guidance notes apply to volunteers or committee members providing food and covering approved expenses concerning a W&MIG event.

What catering expenses can be claimed?

- All itemised shopping for event catering can be claimed if accompanied by a receipt.
- A flat rate would be payable for homemade items such as a cake or quiche, where store cupboard items have been used. This would be agreed annually by the committee.

What other expenses can be claimed?

- Most expenses arising from an event (eg room hire etc) will be agreed in advance by the committee and communicated to the Treasurer who will pay the invoice directly.
- Other incidental out-of-pocket expenses incurred in running an event may be claimed, provided they have been approved by the member of the committee responsible for the event. Examples may include flowers or vouchers for a guest speaker, display materials etc.

How and when to claim

Claims must be made promptly; no later than one month after the expense was incurred. Expense claims may be emailed to the Treasurer at sue.bramall@bernersmarketing.com with a copy of the invoice or receipt (not just an order or a screenshot) and a copy of the relevant proforma. The event organiser should keep the original supporting receipts attached to the proforma and pass these to the Treasurer or Secretary when they next see each other at an event.

When will claims be paid?

Claims will usually be paid within the month in which the emailed receipts are received.

Approved by Committee February 2026

Trading Arrangements 2026

If you have looked at our Programme for this year, you will have seen that we have a number of events other than our 'garden visits'. Most of these events provide an opportunity for members to sell their irises, eg at our Annual Show and the various Plants Fairs we are attending. The arrangements for these do vary according to the event and to make life a little simpler we have set out the details below. Of course, it goes without saying that we would be very pleased to have members contributing to these sales, as they all help our funds and allow us to spread the word about our favourite flower. They also give you a few extra 'pennies' to spend on more irises!

Please do get in touch if you would like further information.

The following 'trading' activities are proposed in 2026 with the share of proceeds from plant sales allocated as follows:

21 February – Alpine Garden Society Show Pershore

25% Alpine Garden Society
25% W&MIG
50% grower

12 April – Rare Plant Fair – Quennington (Year 1 only)

10% W&MIG
90% grower

26 April – Spetchley Park Estate Plant Fair (Year 1 only)

10% W&MIG
90% grower

7-10 May – RHS Malvern Show

50% W&MIG
50% grower

24 May W&MIG Annual Show, Highnam

50% W&MIG
50% grower

19-21 June – Blenheim Palace Flower Show

50% W&MIG
50% grower

20 September – Rare Plant Fair – Abergavenny (Year 1 only)

10% W&MIG
90% grower

Date TBC – Rhizome Sale – to include rhizomes from Suttons

All profits to W&MIG on rhizomes from Suttons (USA)
50:50 W&MIG and other rhizomes from growers

18 October – Talk & Lunch

50% W&MIG
50% grower.



PLANT SALES

POT SIZES & PRICING

Please use 1litre or 2litre square-to-round pots only and peat free compost.

Minimum £5.00 for 1 litre pot

Minimum £10 for 2 litre pot

LABELS & TAGS

One label with name of Iris (for customer)

One label with your initials and price (for treasurer)

UNSOLD PLANTS

Please ensure you take your unsold plants home at the end of the day.

THE AGM Q & A

Q. How should you treat bearded iris seedlings after germination?

A. Sow seed in 1 litre pot and leave the seedlings in the pot until they have achieved substantial growth, say 3-5" in height. Pot on any time from July to September/October. Improve the drainage and stability of peat free general purpose compost by adding grit and something like topsoil, although the latter may lead to extra weed growth. It is possible to buy peat free compost with added John Innes. Don't be tempted to throw the potting medium in the original pot away, there may be still be seeds in there yet to germinate.

Q. What are you looking for when choosing plants for hybridising?

A. You need to look at both the quality of the plants and their heritage. Look for a good bud count, nice branching and sturdy stems on at least one parent. When crossing plants do so both ways as some plants make better pod parents and vice versa.

Q. Can you give some advice for growing ensatas? I have bought several for a pond but have read that they don't like being in water over winter.

A. One suggestion is to grow them in pots with the bottom holes sealed but holes made further up the sides. Fill the bottom with gravel so that there is always water available but the upper layer of compost can drain through the side holes.

It was noted that at Wakefield ensatas are displayed in running water.

Members are also growing ensatas successfully in the bog garden and in open flower beds.

It was noted that plants differ—and don't read the books! Try what you want and see what happens.

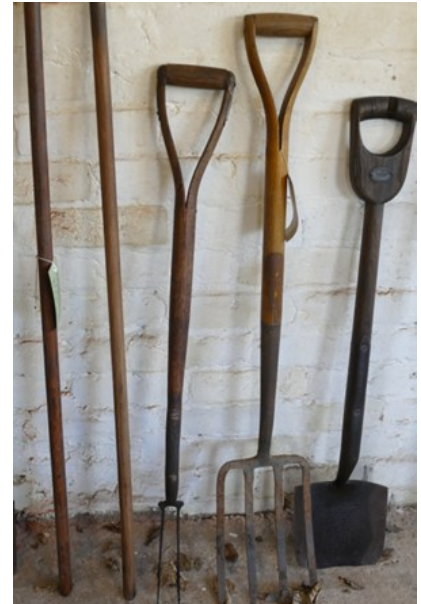
Q. What effect is climate change having on iris cultivation?

Summer heat is good for many irises, leading to better flowering the following year. The main problem is that the wetter winters can cause more rot in the rhizomes of bearded irises. After removing the rot, treat the wound with cinnamon powder which is a natural antiseptic, effective against several bacteria.

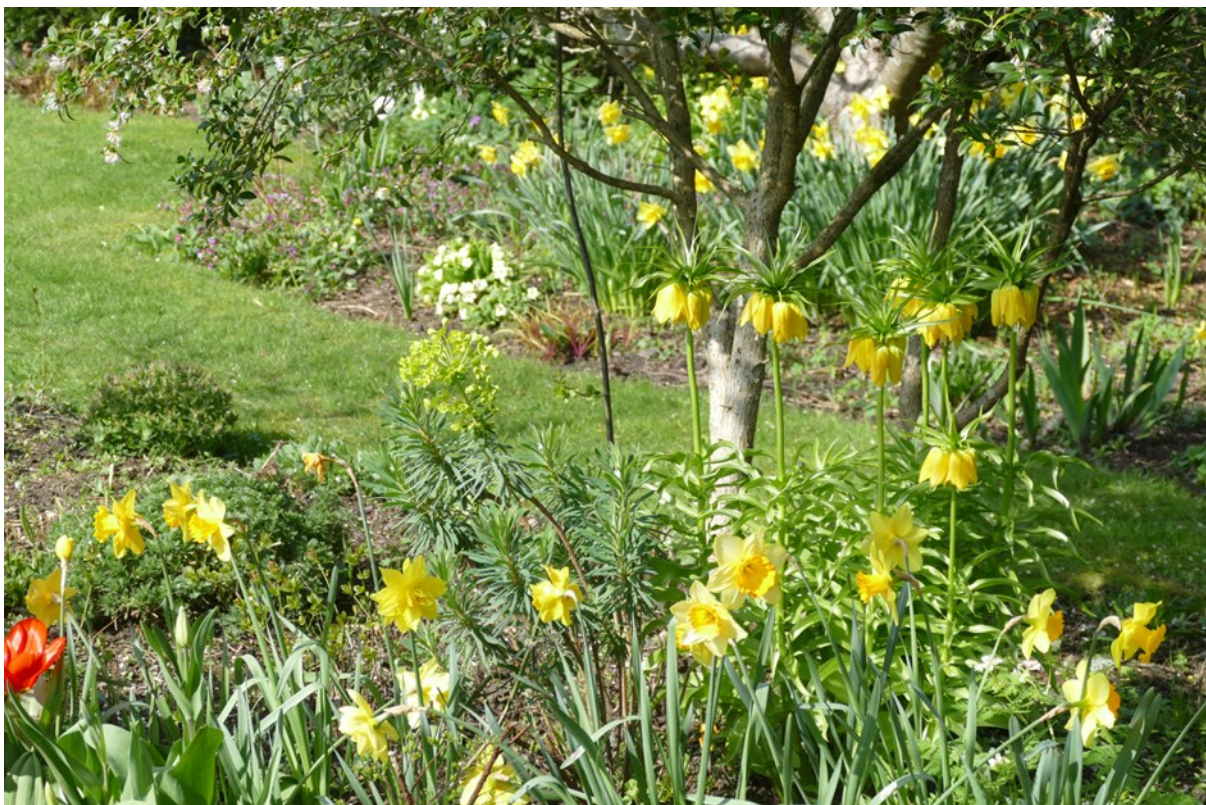
Our Venue - Hill Close Gardens



The gardens date back to the 1840's when the landowner divided the site into 32 plots which were let, then sold, to local townspeople as leisure gardens. Encroachment of housing onto the site began in the early 1900s; by the 1990s only half the plots remained, abandoned and derelict. These 16 gardens, adjacent to Warwick Racecourse, were preserved from further development and restored by a dedicated team of volunteers and are now a Grade 2* listed site. Several gardens contain sheds or summerhouses which are now used as mini museums, giving a fascinating insight into how they were used over the century or so that they were in private cultivation. The collection of old tools sparked much discussion as to the use of some of the more unusual items.



Some gardens were a riot of spring colour:



Others, including that housing part of the National Collection of Hardy Chrysanthemums, were more barren but clearly well tended and showing much promise of things to come.

All in all, a lovely day and many thanks must go to Jill, Jeremy, Fern and the rest of the committee and helpers for their hard work to make things so enjoyable for the rest of us.

2026 Programme—Everyone Welcome

Please note that there are slight changes from the Programme that was published in the *Newsletter*. If you hope to come to any of these gatherings, please let Jill, our secretary, know either by phone 01568 720129 or email info@westandmidlandsirisgroup.org.uk.

Events marked * are selling opportunities for members (for further information see the 'Trading Arrangements 2026' on page 10)

Saturday 17 January 1pm 'Cheer up January' lunch at The Plough & Harrow, Guarlford, Malvern WR13 6NY. This is a self-funded lunch and all are welcome!

Tuesday 10 February 2pm The Lyndalls, Sollers Hope, Herefordshire HR1 4RL Cost: £8 which will be donated to the local church. Refreshments to be advised.

***Saturday 21 February: AGS Pershore Show** 11-3.30pm Refreshments available. Pershore High School, Station Road, Pershore WR10 2BX.

Saturday 21 March 11.30am AGM Hill Close Gardens, Bread and Meat Close, Warwick CV34 6HF. Coffee & biscuits available from 11am with a Ploughman's Lunch to follow the AGM. There is no charge for members and £5 for non-members.

***Thursday 7 May - Sunday 10 May: RHS Malvern Spring Festival**, Three Counties Showground, Malvern WR13 6NW. Offers of help to 'man' the stand would be much appreciated - see next page.

***Sunday 24 May 1 - 4pm: W&MIG Annual Show**. Highnam Community Centre, Newent Rd, Highnam, Gloucester GL2 8DG. Plants for sale and refreshments available. The Schedule was published in the Autumn Bulletin and can also be found on the website.

Saturday 6 June: Jeremy Handy has invited us to view his new iris field: Arden Irises, Southerly Park, Alcester CV37 9TX. Further details in due course.

***Friday 19- Sunday 21 June, Blenheim Palace Flower Show**, Blenheim, Oxfordshire OX20 1UL

Wednesday 22 July 11.00: The Stables, Hyde Lane, Swindon Village, nr Cheltenham GL51 9QN Cost: £5 to members and £10 for visitors; this includes tea & cake. All monies will go to charity.

Saturday 1 August – Friday 14 August: Entries for the **Virtual Show** would be very welcome!

Sunday 16 August 11.00am. Yew Trees, Whitley Eaves, Eccleshall, Staffordshire ST21 6HR Cost: £10 to include coffee & cake, all monies will go to the NGS. We will then travel onto Sue Bramall's for lunch. Church View Farmhouse, Slindon, Eccleshall, Staffordshire ST21 6LX. Some of us may also want to visit the Dorothy Clive Garden, which is just 7 miles away from Sue: see <https://dorothyclivegarden.co.uk>

Saturday 12 September pm. Hawkley Cottage, Eastcombe, Stroud GL6 7DQ. Cost: £10 to include coffee and cake. We will meet at 12noon for lunch, at The Lamb Inn, Eastcombe, Stroud GL6 7DN. Cars will need to be left here as parking at Hawkley Cottage is very limited

***Sunday 18 October: Talk & Lunch** Highnam Community Centre, Highnam, Gloucester GL2 8DG. 10.30 Coffee & Biscuits 11.00 Talk - 'Irises of Oregon' by Jake Croft. This will be followed by lunch. There is no charge for members and visitors would be very welcome to join us, the cost for them is £5 for the talk or £10 for the lunch and talk.

Saturday 7 November 1pm: Lunch at The Plough & Harrow, Guarlford, Malvern WR13 6NY. This is a self-funded lunch and all are welcome!

We are also participating in the following Plant Fairs:

* **Sunday 12 April Rare Plant Fair** - The Old Rectory, Quenington, Nr Cirencester, Glos GL7 5BN

* **Sunday 26 April. Spetchley Plant Fair**, Spetchley Park Gardens, Worcester WR5 1RS

* **Sunday 20 September Rare Plant Fair**, Llanover House, Nr Abergavenny, NP7 9EF

An Opportunity to enjoy a visit to the Malvern Spring Festival
Thursday 7 th to Sunday 10 th May

As you will be aware W&MIG has a stand at Malvern to promote the Group and irises in general. We are looking for a few more volunteers to help man the stand. We run a rota system, where you get to help on the stand for the morning or afternoon, and have access to the rest of the show for the remainder of the day. There will always be someone with experience on the stand with you so, if it's your first time, you will have plenty of support. At the time of writing we're not sure how many tickets we will receive for each day.

Please let Anne Milner: anne.milner@btinternet.com know if you are able to help on any specific day, and we will let you know.

Member's Open Garden

19 Winnington Gardens, Hanley Swan, Malvern, WR8 0DJ

W&MIG member, Brian Skeys, will be opening his garden for the National Garden Scheme on Sunday, May 17th from 1-5pm and again on Sunday October 4th. Cost £5.

Brian's is also one of 6 gardens that can be visited in the Hanley Swan Group opening on Saturday 13th June, 1-5pm. £7.50 nets you entry to all six!

So please, if you're in the area get yourselves to Hanley Swan to support Brian and the wonderful work that the NGS do for so many Nursing charities.

IRISES

**by Lily Florence Waring
(1877—1966)**

Oil on Canvas

**By kind permission of
Warrington Museum and
Art Gallery**

Judi Deakin



I came across this painting in my local museum recently. The photograph doesn't really do it justice. The artist, Lily Waring, was not only an accomplished painter in both oils and watercolour but also a writer and poet, an academic specialising in Serbian Studies and a political activist!! She was a prominent member of the Women's Suffrage Society and was appointed their National Organiser in 1911. No wonder then that nothing I have read describes her as a gardener—no time—and yet she has captured the beauty of these irises, with what I can only feel must have been a loving eye.

I hope you have enjoyed reading this *Spring Bulletin*. If you have any contributions for the *Newsletter* - large or small - please send them to me at any time: wmig.editor@gmail.com

W&MIG Committee/Officers March 2026

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Thank you to Judy and David Pollitt for sharing this picture of their beautiful *Iris unguicularis* 'Peloponnese Snow'. Judy reports that "the plant is about 3 years old. It bloomed in its 2nd year with about 16 flowers. This year it has been amazing with masses of flowers from the end of November to mid March."