

LILY GROUP Newsletter

SPRING 2020



**2019 Annual Meeting
and a spotlight on
North hybrids** PAGES 4/5

SUMMER EVENT, SATURDAY 18 JULY
and a chance to see the Lily Trial BACK PAGE

Spring colour in Hampshire

Lily Group outing, Tuesday 21 April DETAILS ON PAGE 3

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Chairman's letter

Jamie Compton

What can one do in a garden on heavy clay to grow lilies successfully in such a wet winter? Answer: to have raised beds in a shady part of our garden with more acidic soil, well drained and full of leaf mould. That has been our project over these last two years and the lilies in those beds have thrived. We also grow lilies in pots which has the great virtue of being

The recent discovery that all six species of *Nomocharis* have been shown by DNA markers and a closer examination of each distinguishing character to belong in *Lilium* came as something of a surprise to me (see *Lilies and Related Plants* 2019–2020: 33–38). To my mind this discovery and in particular that these species form a group in the middle of the *Lilium* family tree which includes the curious species *Lilium nepalense* just adds to the wonders of this remarkable genus. Long live *Lilium* in all its various incarnations!



able to move them around according to light levels and watering requirements. Some such as *Lilium speciosum* var. *gloriosoides* require all year round greenhouse protection. This beauty first collected in central China by Charles Maries for the Veitch nursery in Chelsea was given its name by J G Gilbert Baker in 1880 because the flowers resembled the African climbing lily *Gloriosa superba*.



Déjà vu: *Nomocharis oxypetala* shown with *Lilium nepalense*, and named *Lilium oxypetalum*, in *A monograph of the Genus Lilium*, H J Elwes (1880).



Hillier Gardens magnolia avenue in April

Photograph © Philip Enticknap / Alamy

Spring visit to Hampshire

Duncan Coombs

Tuesday 21 April is the date for your diary this Spring: a chance to meet up with fellow members, and to view two magnificent Hampshire gardens.

We will meet at 10.30 am in the restaurant of the Sir Harold Hillier Gardens visitor pavilion for coffee and spend the morning there. After lunch we move on to Mottisfont Abbey, five miles away on the River Test.

The Hillier grounds are spread over 72 hectares (178 acres). There will be lots to see (over 12,000 varieties of trees and shrubs), whether this year's spring turns out to be late or early. The magnolia avenue is justly famous, and camellias, azaleas and rhododendrons should be coming on stream too. We will have lunch at the gardens, planning to leave at about 2.45 pm so as to get to Mottisfont just after 3 pm (when entry is £3 cheaper). At Hilliers, you might want to make time for a visit to its associated garden centre nearby, which has a tempting range.

Mottisfont Abbey, a National Trust property, is based on a thirteenth-century priory and surrounded by lovely historic gardens including many grand specimen trees. Its partly waterside grounds have drifts of spring bulbs in both formal and informal plantings—crocuses, daffodils, tulips, chionodoxa,

maybe some early snake's-head fritillaries—as well as flowering cherries and magnolias.

Please note that there is an admission charge at the Hillier gardens and (except for NT members) Mottisfont.

TIMETABLE	TUESDAY 21 APRIL
10.30 am	Arrive at Hilliers
10.30 am	Coffee
11.00 am	Tour gardens
1.00 pm	Lunch
2.00 pm	Tour gardens (or visit garden centre)
2.45 pm	Travel to Mottisfont
3.05 pm	Tour gardens
4.00 pm	Tea
5.00 pm	Depart

SIR HAROLD HILLIER GARDENS
 Jermyns Lane, Ampfield, Romsey SO51 0QA
 (Hillier Gardens brown signs from A3090)

MOTTISFONT ABBEY
 Mottisfont Lane, Romsey SO51 0LN
 (Mottisfont brown signs from A3057)

The 2019 AGM and Bulb Auction

Pershore College, Worcestershire

Nuala Sterling

The RHS Lily Group's annual meeting and bulb auction was held at Pershore College, Worcestershire on 20 October 2019. The college is in a delightful garden and the weather was fine.

The meeting, in the elegant old building's light and spacious reception room set as for a classroom, was lively and enjoyable—with chairman Jamie Compton as headmaster, Duncan Coombs in command of the coffee, and George Battle, Tony Dixon and Richard Hyde controlling the bulbs. Nuala and Graham Sterling had made an early visit to M&S in Evesham to collect pre-ordered party food for lunch and cakes for tea.

Jamie welcomed 17 members and visitors and outlined the year's developments, and Nuala, forum chair of the RHS Wisley lily trial, reported that the challenging weather of 2019 meant that plants which had performed well certainly would have earned an AGM award.



Cynthia Young had proposed in 2018 that the society should consider offering a joint family membership, and Tony confirmed that membership does indeed include the whole



The individual North hybrids shown here are 'Ariadne' in the open garden (left), 'Eros' (top), 'Odysseus' (above), and 'Peggy North' (opposite). All were photographed growing at Madeleine Tinson's—and these four were

Below left, Madeleine Tinson at the meeting with the Lyttel Cup, and her husband Michael. Below right, Some of the North hybrids in Madeleine Tinson's greenhouse in Perth, Scotland.



Photograph © Duncan Coombs



Photograph © Alisdair Aird

household. Jamie presented the Lyttel Cup to Madeleine Tinson in recognition of her inspiring lily conservation work. As Nuala described, she has been tireless in tracking down and distributing surviving North hybrids, raised by Chris North at the Scottish Horticultural Research Station between 1969 and 1978. She keeps these as the Mylnefield National Collection, and many other lilies, in splendid condition in her Perth garden.

Duncan then talked us through this coming summer's Lily Group tour of Japan.

Bulb Auction

We then proceeded to the bulb auction, which was ably compered by an enthusiastic Duncan Coombs, supported by Richard Hyde and Tony Dixon.

Madeleine had donated quite a treasure-trove of different North hybrids and other rare lilies including Derek Fox's prized 'Lake Tahoe', while among Richard's specials one new hybrid fetched £40, and there were valued donations from other members including a dozen bags from Cynthia and Terry Young, as well as Nuala's selection of out-of-print plant books at bargain reserve prices. Irene Hopton-Scott tallied the results as £375.50 for the Group's funds—and it was clear that such a fine variety of bulbs would have raised even more than that if more members had been able to join in. The meeting closed with tea and cakes.



Photographs © Alisdair Aird

among the many bulbs that she kindly gave us for the bulb auction. Her Parkhead House garden can be visited through Scotland's Gardens Scheme or the Plant Heritage national collections scheme.

2020 AGM & BULB AUCTION

The place and date will be announced soon on the website, with details in the Autumn Newsletter. Do start planning which bulbs you'll bring or send for the Auction.

Lilies and Related Plants

I hope you've been enjoying the latest issue, packed with interesting articles by writers sharing our passion for lilies.

It's this shared enthusiasm which sparks all the authors—whether they are keen amateurs like you and me, or professionals who generously share with us their decades of both scientific and practical experience. So please do think about what your own experience could bring to the next edition, which I have now started working on.

Perhaps you grow your lilies in a demanding environment and could tell our readers, as Jennifer Kerry did so interestingly, about the ways you have found to overcome the difficulties you face. You might like to tell us about your breeding programme or your own approach to lily growing, as Jurgen Koch and Matthias Knoll did so knowledgeably. Could you write about your lily growing year, or a field trip to see lilies in the wild? If you have a special interest in drawing, painting or

photographing your lilies then I'm sure other members would love to hear about it and, of course, if you are one of our professional members then you might want to tell us about your recent work.

An important aspect of my role as editor is to support new authors—so if you haven't had your writing published before then you needn't worry. I am very happy to support you as much, or as little, as you might want.

Your photographs and experiences can also help build future Species Profiles—keep an eye on the website's Members' Area for this new project's latest developments.

I do look forward to hearing from you. You can email me at: lindmelve@yahoo.co.uk



Mel Herbert

Lily Group website update

George Battle

No website stays the same for long... particularly so in our case where the Lily Group website is still on the young side. We set up our photo galleries over a year ago but they are being added to almost every week.

Identifying a lily can be a formidable challenge, especially with a description based on just one or two collected forms—despite huge diversity in wild populations.

That's why our [Species Lilies](#) gallery sets out to display many different forms. For

instance, a beautiful unspotted orange *Lilium canadense*, a wild form known as 'Ruth Clas', now joins six other forms of that species displayed.

Making sure one species is properly differentiated from another is a key task

One of the recently added forms of *Lilium armenum* which can now be compared on the LG website at: www.rhslilygroup.org/species-lilies-a-z/

of a species gallery. Also recently added is a series of photos of *L. armenum*, *L. kesselringianum* and *L. szovitsianum* showing wild populations in Turkey. The aim here is to show how pollen colour is an important differentiator when looking at these species.

Catering for all from beginner to highly experienced is no easy task but we are working on it! Clicking on the [About Lilies](#) tab brings up just about all the advice a newcomer or moderately experienced gardener would want. Going to the [Links](#) tab brings up [Online Botanical Guides](#), recently updated. Now we are working on an accompanying page [Lily Articles](#) which will provide links to a range of recently published articles. Particularly relevant right now is accommodating *Nomocharis* within the genus *Lilium* and so articles on this topic will be featured here.



Photograph © Assist. Prof Dr Nursel İkinci

There will always be something new to find on the Lily Group website, so be sure to visit www.rhslilygroup.org for regular updates.

RHS Lily Group

Honorary Officers and Committee 2019–20

Jamie Compton, Chairman

Alisdair Aird, Vice Chairman

**Dr Nuala Sterling CBE, Vice Chairman
and a Bulb Committee Vice Chair**

Tony Dixon, Secretary & Pollen co-ordinator

Chris Hind, Treasurer

Irene Hopton-Scott, Membership Secretary

Melvyn Herbert,

Editor *Lilies & Related Plants*

Pat Huff, Seed List Distribution Manager

George Battle, Seed List Compiler

OTHER COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Caroline Boisset

Chris Brickell CBE VMH, Hon. Member

Duncan Coombs, Programme co-ordinator

Harris Howland, Past Chairman

Richard Hyde, Bulb Committee member

Colin Pope, Rose Voelcker, Pontus Wallstén

Conservation of *Lilium nobilissimum*

Lilium nobilissimum had until recently been thought extinct since 1985 in its only natural habitat, the southern Japanese island of Kuchinoshima.

Decades of collection to meet keen international demand for this lovely lily had eliminated it from its native coastal cliffs there.

For the last 50 years or so virtually all plants of *L. nobilissimum* have derived from a highly inbred cultivated strain, with consequent weaknesses—very low seed fertility, a proneness to abnormal flowers, premature leaf loss (possibly a genetic disorder, though thought to be a virus symptom). Against these odds, our member Katsuro Arakawa has worked for years to secure a stronger conservation stock in his private nursery near Sapporo, Japan.

In 2014 Dr Kazuhiko Hayashi of Osaka Gakuin University, after seven years of search, found a small surviving wild population on the island, one in flower, on one cliff ledge. He sent three anthers to Mr Arakawa, who froze them and used the wild pollen the following season on twelve of his own cultivated plants, when these matured to first flowering. The results have



Photograph © Duncan Coombs

Katsuro Arakawa pollinating *Lilium nobilissimum*.

been extremely promising. The seeds yielded were more fertile than those of the inbred cultivated strain, and a higher proportion of the resulting seedlings are growing to maturity. Mr Arakawa hopes to see the first flowers and gather the first seeds of this new polyphyletic strain this summer, with the aim of eventually reintroducing them to their native island.

Lily Group summer visit

RHS Wisley, 18 July 2020

Several Lily Group members have been closely involved throughout the lily trial, in planning, providing some of the bulbs, and taking part in the fortnightly judging forum through the growing and flowering season.

The trial has been a mammoth undertaking, involving over 200 varieties, each in six or more samples. With over a thousand lilies in all, it's a stunning sight at its peak in July.

Saturday 18 July will be a very special day. Lily Group members will be guided round the trial by two people who are particularly well qualified to explain its interesting details: Nuala Sterling

This year will be the culmination of the three-year RHS trial of lily varieties, at Wisley.

has chaired the judging forum throughout, and Duncan Coombs has also been closely involved. Other forum members may be on hand too. Do come if you can! Plenty of inside information, and the wonderful sight of all those lilies, most of them new varieties.

We shall assemble at 11am at the trials ground on Battleston Hill.

IMPORTANT Please email Nuala or Duncan if you plan to come—in case there is any change in the programme: nualasterling@btinternet.com or dcoombs@warwickshire.ac.uk