

LILY GROUP Newsletter

SPRING 2022

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2021 AGM Report
and update
see page 4

Lily Group tour to Greece 2023
Full details and itinerary SEE PAGES 6/7

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Chairman's letter

Jamie Compton

As winter recedes and those delicate spears start to nose their way through the soil we hope for milder weather and not the catastrophic frosts that damaged those buds last year in April.

The Lily Group has been busy behind the scenes organising future events in the hope that Covid-19, in the form now of omicron, will start to recede. Our aims are to put together a visit to see the Fire Lilies (*Lilium bulbiferum*) of northern Europe and the lilies of northern Greece. Both trips are in the hope that Covid-19 eases so may well be postponed for another year. However, plans are being made.

Once again, our bulb auction was extremely successful online this time, raising £1,026, and we must thank the tireless work of George Battle and Mel Herbert for organising it. No mean feat with the collection of the items, putting them all online, collecting the funds and dispatching the sold items. Once again, we owe a great deal to the time and effort Pat Huff and George Battle have put into yet another excellent Seed List.

Following the success organised by Committee member Madeleine Tinson at our AGM in October 2021, we are also looking at expanding

our programme of lectures and discussions on various aspects of lily cultivation. This, together with our ever-evolving website are exciting prospects for sharing and disseminating information about our events and knowledge on lilies in general.

We also hope to forge a lily growing partnership with The Savill Garden under the keen eye of the Keeper of the Gardens, John Anderson. It just leaves me to say that I hope everyone will have a successful lily growing year.



Dr Peter Waister 1931–2022

RHS Lily Group member for 38 years

A tribute by Madeleine Tinson



free of diseases and distribute them. This appealed to Peter and so, having taken early retirement, Balruddery Lilies became a mail order business in 1989.

The 1989 Order Form states that he sourced his original stock in the Netherlands including Orientals, Asiatics, and a small quantity of species, 'They were all being grown under the healthy conditions of Eastern Scotland, where virus spread is at a minimum'. It also says they were building up stocks of the beautiful 'North Hybrids bred at the nearby Scottish Crop Research Institute. These are magnificent garden plants and

It is with great sadness that I write of the death of Peter (1 March 1931 – 13 January 2022). Much of the information written here was gleaned from the many papers Peter gave me. I met Peter after a friend mentioned his association with the growing of Mylnefield Lilies, best known as North Hybrids in 2010.

Fortunately, when I met Peter he still had a few Norths, many that I would never have been able to find elsewhere. With others, I had managed to source, his bulbs enabled me to later apply for the National Collection.

Peter had been a colleague of Dr Chris North at the Scottish Crop Research Institute near Invergowrie, where the lilies had been developed. The Lily Group became involved with the North Hybrids and they were looking for someone to propagate them, keep them



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Holding our AGM online— our silver lining?

George Battle

The clouds of the global pandemic are yet to clear, but if it weren't for Covid-19, would we have even considered hosting our AGM remotely?

Unlikely. And it'd be a fair guess we'd have carried on with our usual modest gathering at Pershore. Instead, courtesy of Zoom, we found ourselves in October 2021 playing host to members from Australia, Austria, Canada, Denmark, Hungary, The Netherlands, New Zealand and the USA, as well as those from the UK. We were delighted to see them all and to make face-to-face contact, often for the first time.

Sometimes events need a shake up, so holding a Zoom AGM made us think of providing something fresh. Luckily, we have some talented people to turn to and both Madeleine Tinson and Tony Dixon rose to the challenge of planning a new format. Madeleine excelled in the role of 'host', introducing speakers and keeping things flowing while Tony did a masterful job of managing the technical side.

Lily Group Constitution

Yes, we had formal business to attend to: not least, to have our new Constitution formally adopted. Being able to involve our international members in this process was a major advantage. Details of our Constitution can be found on our website, using this link:

<https://rhslilygroup.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/RHS-Lily-Group-Constitution.pdf>

From now on, committee members will serve

for a period of three years before needing to stand for re-election. On this occasion Alisdair Aird, George Battle and Pat Huff were re-elected whilst Chris Clennett and Madeleine Tinson were voted on as new members. Irene Hopton-Scott was able to report that our accounts had been externally reviewed and found to be in good order.

Award of the Lyttel Cup 2021

A highlight of the meeting was the presentation of the Lyttel Cup to Martin Toon, joining us from New Zealand. Martin has done fantastic work with the New Zealand Lily Society and has been a great supporter of our work and contributor to the seed exchange. He had recorded a wonderful video showing us his state-of-the-art greenhouse and giving a virtual tour of the habitats where he grows lilies in his extensive garden. Martin's video can be viewed here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m4XZn8vUX2s>

It was a pleasure to be able to ask Martin questions and thank him in person after watching the video. So impressed was Chuck Robinson that he wrote 'I have put Martin Toon's lily operation in Christchurch on my list of places to visit'.

Guest speaker

Another major opportunity Zoom offered us



Sometimes events need a shake up, so holding a Zoom AGM made us think of providing something fresh...

was to have a speaker address us on a topic of current interest. Jim Marshall, Vice Chair of Plant Heritage in the UK, is an expert on peat-free growing media and he gave a challenging talk on possible alternatives to peat. Again, this led to a lively discussion session with participants bringing their range of experiences. In several countries peat is on the verge of being phased out, but in others this seems a distant prospect.

Members' suggestions and ideas

The diverse experience of our members is a huge strength. Janos Agoston from Hungary brought his reflections of large-scale horticulture whilst Matthias Knoll provided

a scientific dimension. Peggy Nerdahl helps run The North Star Lily Society in Minnesota and invited Lily Group members to a talk by Patrick Brown on lily hybridising.

So where next? Peter Coombs suggested Zoom question-and-answer sessions on cultivating and caring for lilies. Declan Whelan in Ontario commented 'I'd love to see how people in the UK grow and propagate the European lilies and western North Americans'. Video tours of people's gardens was a popular request. Janos Agoston suggested regular events 'so people can hear lectures and learn from each other'.

We're taking on board your suggestions: planning videos of UK members' gardens and collections as well as videos on lily cultivation to be shown at stand-alone events, not just at future AGMs. Ruth Plant told us 'It [the AGM] was a super meeting... I learned a lot and it was great to see faces to go with the names'

So, will we do it again? You bet.



Opposite, *Lilium carniolicum* and below, *Lilium candidum*.
Photographs © Chris Gardner

TOUR DETAILS & BOOKING

ACCOMMODATION

Smaller boutique hotels. For anyone arriving earlier than 23 June, Chris Gardner can recommend a hotel near the airport.

TRANSPORT

9-seater minibuses (larger vehicles are not suitable for the narrow roads).

COSTS

1925 euros per person (twin share)
350 euros (single supplement)

DEPOSITS

Non-refundable 15% deposit with booking

WHAT'S INCLUDED?

Accommodation, transport within Greece, guides and entry fees, meals and water.

WHAT'S NOT INCLUDED?

International flights, travel insurance, additional drinks/snacks other than those provided at meal times.

BOOKING FORM AVAILABLE HERE:
[rhslilygroup.org/about-us-activities/](https://www.rhslilygroup.org/about-us-activities/)



HOLIDAY EXTENSIONS

Stay a bit longer and visit the impressive monasteries of Meteora and travel on to Parnassós where there is a strong population of *Lilium chalcedonicum* and some great alpine plants. Options to add extra days to your trip are available to everyone.

For more details contact Chris Gardner via email: info@viranatura.com

Chris Gardner of Vira Natura Tours has put together a one-week holiday in Greece especially for members of the Lily Group. There will be excellent opportunities to see many of the best colonies of species lilies and a wide variety of other early-summer flowers. The holiday begins and ends in Thessaloniki, allowing each of you to book your own flights from the airport of your choice.

TOUR ITINERARY

23 June Arrival at Thessaloniki midday/early afternoon and transfer to Drama in the foothills of the Rhodope Mountains.
24 June Meet with park staff and go in search of *Lilium rhodopeum* in a national park characterised by lush beech forests with grassy clearings. Overnight Drama.
25 June Mount Falakron to look for *Lilium martagon cattaniae* in pine forests; we hope to see *Gladiolus palustris* and *Anthericum lilago*. Mounds of *Globularia cordifolia*, lilac-pink *Acinos alpinus*, *Teucrium montanum* and

low-growing *Campanula orphanidea* colour the rocky alpine turf. Overnight Drama.
26 June Transfer to Agios Germanos via the historical site of Pela, travelling over thickly forested foothills where roadside banks have pretty masses of *Linaria dalmatica*, *Digitalis lanata*, *Lathyrus grandiflorus* and dainty pinks.
27 June Mount Vournos – excellent *Lilium af albanicum* population. There is pleasant walking across the undulating green hills to see more lilies and lots of other flowers too.
28 June Drive to Papigo (3½ to 4 hours) and spend the afternoon visiting a *Lilium candidum* site and a *L. martagon* site near the superb Vikos Gorge in the afternoon. Other nice cultural sites too. Overnight Papigo
29 June To Mount Flega to see a relict population of *Lilium af albanicum*. From the summit there are commanding views of the spectacular surrounds of the Pindos Mountains. Impressive lizard orchids grow nearby too and plentiful marsh orchids in the verges. Overnight Papigo.
30 June Transfer to Thessaloniki for flights.

RHS Lily Group		Honorary Officers and Committee 2021–22	
Jamie Compton, Chairman		Chris Clennett, Newsletter Editor	
George Battle, Vice Chairman, Seed List Compiler and Website Editor		Duncan Coombs, Programme coordinator	
Dr Nuala Sterling CBE, Vice Chairman and member of the Bulb Committee		Pat Huff, Seed List Distribution Manager	
Tony Dixon, Secretary & Pollen coordinator		EMERITUS	
Irene Hopton-Scott, Membership Secretary and Treasurer		Chris Brickell CBE VMH,	
		Harris Howland (Past Chairman), Rose Voelcker	
		CORRESPONDING MEMBERS	
		Keith Baldie, Walter Erhardt, Axel Hintze,	
		Jürgen Koch, Alan Mitchell	
Melvyn Herbert, Editor <i>Lilies & Related Plants</i>		OTHER COMMITTEE MEMBERS	
		Alisdair Aird, Caroline Boisset, Madeleine Tinson	



Lilium 'Achilles' (left) is from the first Series of Norths. Parent plants (*lancifolium* var. *flaviflorum* × 'Destiny') × *wilsonii* var. *flavum*. It was developed for the commercial market for florists and supermarkets, but Dutch varieties were cheaper, so it went out of favour. The picture is taken of one flowering in August in a large pot in Madeleine Tinson's greenhouse in Perth, Scotland.

Photograph © Madeleine Tinson

customers ordering bulbs from the current list will be given priority when the first of these new lilies are available for sale in 1990.'

The plant list for 1990 includes five North Hybrids, but the numbers were limited. By 1992 he had added another five and now also had 'a moderate supply of species'. I am not sure how long his Nursery continued to trade, but I do not have any other order forms after 1992.

Peter gave talks, amongst which is one given to the Cumbernauld Gardening Club in November 1997 entitled '*My Life with lilies*'. He stated he had only become interested in lilies 10 years ago, and until that time had only grown one type of lily in his garden. Then went on to say the more he grew, the more he wanted to grow. He added 'So you could say I was led on by them, and a better title for this talk might have been "*My affair with lilies*".' He then gave the audience a worldwide lily-hopping expedition, starting in the United States and Canada, moving right around the globe to Taiwan and China, telling of the lilies grown in these areas, with interesting information and slides of all the varieties.

He went on to tell of his trek with alpine plant

enthusiasts, in Himachal Pradesh, Northern India. In thick coniferous forest he saw his only lily growing in the wild, *Lilium polyphyllum*, a turkscap rather similar to *lankongense*, but ranging in colour from light to deep pink.

I looked into some of my past *Lilies and Related Plants* and found Peter had written Reviews of the Lily Literature from 1988 to 2004 over five editions. In these, he scanned the abstracts of the world literatures on lilies. Dealing with everything from the strictly practical business of growing lilies commercially, through to esoteric studies on chemistry, physiology and genetics.

I have a paper of his, entitled '*Lilies for Scottish Gardens*' and maybe it gives us a clue to the lilies he grew. Listed were *bansonii*, *martagon*, *davidii*, *pardalinum*, *superbum*, *pyrenaicum*, *chalcedonicum*, *monodelphum*, *szovitsianum*, *wardii* and *duchatrei*.

Peter went on to add a second list he considered, given the appropriate treatment and a bit of luck, would grow in Scotland: *henryi*, *lankongense*, *regale*, *pomponium*, *tigrinum* (*lancifolium*) and × *testaceum*.

I will miss him dearly.