

Awards and presentations to people

PETER BARR MEMORIAL CUP 2016 AWARDED TO JOHNNY WALKERS

John Gibson

The Peter Barr Memorial Cup was awarded to Johnny Walkers in 2016. It was presented to him by RHS Director General Sue Biggs at the annual awards ceremony in the Lindley Hall, London on 25 February. Instituted in 1912, the trophy is awarded annually 'to someone who has done good work of some kind in connection with daffodils.'

Johnny Walkers has spent a lifetime involved with daffodils. His parents were bulb growers who came from Holland in the 1930s, and he learnt a strong work ethic from both of them, at first cleaning bulbs to earn pocket money, or picking flowers. Without really realising it, he took in all there was to know about growing bulbs from his father – invaluable 'drip-feed information'. And while he specialises in daffodils, as quality manager for Taylors Bulbs in Lincolnshire he has a wealth of experience of growing all sorts of bulbs.

After horticultural college, Johnny joined the Lingarden Co-operative in Spalding in 1968, studying the logistics of supply and demand in marketing bulbs. He helped to establish a quality assurance scheme, sharing his experience and technical advice on growing and quality control with member daffodil growers, both in-county and from Cornwall, Somerset, Sussex, Suffolk, Norfolk and Yorkshire. The co-operative was so successful that by the time Johnny left it was exporting over 5,000 tonnes¹ of daffodils per annum to countries all over the world.

In 1986 Johnny set up an independent mail order business specialising in new and unusual daffodils that later become a division of Taylors Bulbs.

Johnny set the highest standard at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show from the word go by winning a gold medal at his first attempt. His 35



Johnny Walkers
(photo Royal
Horticultural
Society)

RHS gold medals include 27 awarded at Chelsea (23 of those consecutively). In 1987 his display at Chelsea was awarded the Williams Memorial Medal. A further 41 gold medals at shows outside the RHS include 31 consecutive awards at the Harrogate Spring Flower Show, where his display was also Best in Show on three occasions. Johnny's superb displays have done much to make keen gardeners aware of the diversity of colour and form available in modern daffodils.

In 2003 Johnny was made a Vice-President of the Daffodil Society in recognition of his work in maintaining daffodil quality standards and promoting the daffodil as a garden plant. As well as donating bulbs for RHS daffodil trials, he has supplied bulbs to the recently expanded RHS Rosemoor Spring Show to encourage local school children to grow and exhibit daffodils.

Johnny has served on the RHS Daffodil and Tulip Committee and its successor the Bulb Committee for 25 years, during which time he has been an outstanding ambassador for the daffodil. He is a most worthy recipient of this prestigious award.

¹ A tonne (1,000 kg) is equivalent to 2,204.6lb i.e. 0.9842067611 of a long (UK) ton.