

OBITUARIES



SIR FRANK HARRISON M.B.E., Q.C., D.L.

As part of the symposium on division 9 that was published in *The Daffodil, Snowdrop and Tulip Yearbook 2002-3*, Nial Watson wrote a brief note about "Sir Frank Harrison's Raisings". A post-script by the editor went on say that sadly, after the note was written and just as the *Yearbook* was going to press, Sir Frank Harrison (Fig. 25) had died on 13 August 2002 aged 92.

Before the Second World War Frank and Patricia Harrison worked about 40 hectares (100 acres) of arable and grazing land from their farm "Ballydorn" at Killinchy near Newtonards in County Down. Frank had been practising as an advocate in the Northern Ireland Courts since 1937. When war broke out Frank was accepted as a volunteer by the Army and in his absence it was Patricia who ran the farm. With the end of hostilities in sight Frank faced the dismal prospect that after such a long absence his income as a barrister was likely to be very low for several years. So it was that in 1944, after consulting Guy L Wilson and Lionel Richardson, the decision was made to grow bulbs for the cut flower trade. As priority had been given to producing food during the war insufficient bulbs were available in the United Kingdom. Importing bulbs from Southern Ireland required a government licence and after some difficult negotiations permission was given to import bulbs- 1,000 'Porthilly' 2Y-O, 500 'Fortune' 2Y-O and 500 'Alight' 3Y-O so as to create a new post-war trade in cut flowers in Northern Ireland.

Trade flourished and by 1949 thousands of dozens of cut daffodils were being flown to Edinburgh and Glasgow, as prices were higher there. Surplus bulbs made it possible for Ballydorn to issue their first bulb catalogue in 1948. By the early 1960's almost two hectares (five acres) of bulbs were being grown annually,

bulbs were being sold in both the wholesale and retail markets and hybridizing to raise early and late flowering cultivars for sale when cut flower prices were highest was underway. Between 1968 and 1972 joint trade stands with Carncairn Daffodils Ltd were undertaken at the RHS Shows. In 1972 Frank's public duties caused a change of priorities, the cut flower trade was run down, the cattle disposed of and the decision was made to focus daffodil hybridizing on raising cultivars for the retail bulb trade. Nial Watson discusses the results of Frank's hybridizing on page 36.

Frank exhibited widely until the mid 1980s and attended several American Daffodil Society (ADS) annual conventions where he was a popular after dinner speaker. He was also one of the founders of the Northern Ireland Daffodil Group. Frank was knighted in 1974 for his work on re-organizing electoral boundaries in Northern Ireland. In 1993 Sir Frank was awarded the Gold Medal of the ADS for work on hybridizing and in 1998 the RHS awarded Sir Frank the Peter Barr Memorial Cup in recognition of his outstanding work in connection with the cultivation, breeding and promotion of daffodils.

Sir Frank Harrison was a modest man, widely respected for his wit and wisdom. In my discussions with him about potential candidates for the Daffodil Society's *Approved List of Intermediate Daffodils* he showed a clear grasp of the issues and was unfailingly helpful and ruthlessly honest about his own seedlings. Whenever daffodil honours came his way, Sir Frank stressed the major contribution made by his wife in what he regarded as a joint venture. He never really recovered from Patricia's death three years ago, though he threw himself into daily tasks, including the supportive follow up to his earlier sale of his bulb business to Ringhaddy Daffodils. He will be greatly missed by his many friends and by his twin daughters Mrs A McMillan and Mrs R Gordon.

Malcolm Bradbury