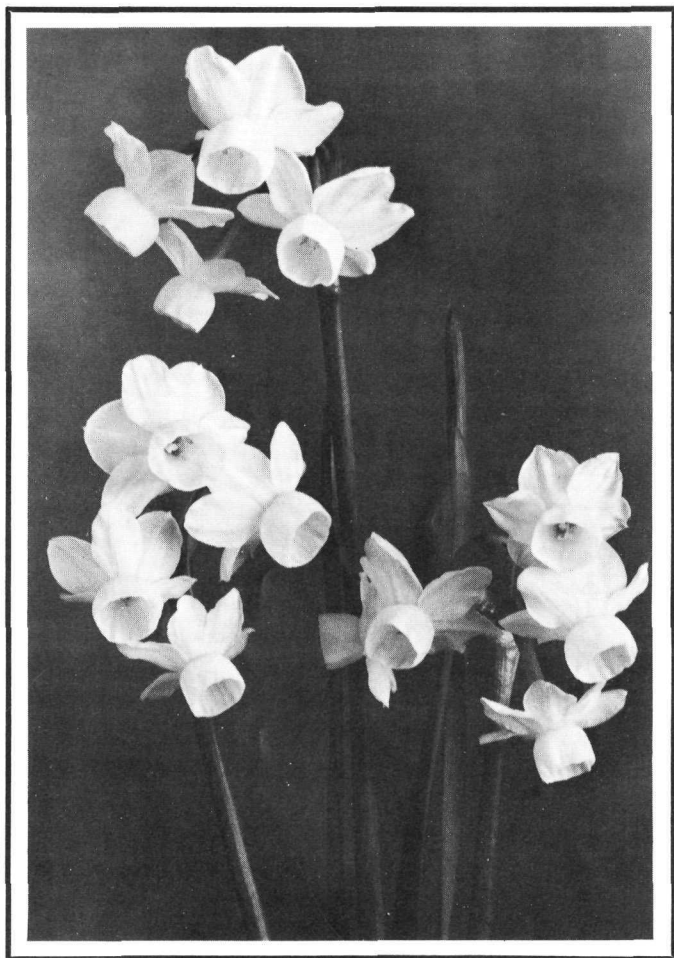


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ENGLAND'S BOURNE CUP – ITS STORY AND ITS WINNERS

By FREDERICK E. BOARD, *Darley Dale, Derbyshire*

Since it was founded in 1898 The Daffodil Society of England has been presented with 17 silver cups for annual competition, and the first to be so presented was the Bourne Challenge Cup.

It carries the name of the Rev. Stephen Eugene Bourne, about whom, regrettably, comparatively little is known.

We do know, however, that he was born in 1846 and that he graduated as a Bachelor of Arts in Trinity College at Dublin University in Ireland, shortly after which he was ordained as a clergyman of the Church of England.

His work as curate and later as vicar in an industrial parish impaired his health, and he sought the living of a country parish at Dunston, which lies some seven miles to the South-East of Lincoln. He went there in 1888, and one surmises that he became interested in the activities of his parishioners and thus in daffodils, as Lincolnshire then, as now, was an important bulb growing area.

In any case it is said that he began growing daffodils in earnest and having contracted the "Yellow Fever" he was soon familiar with over 200 of the best varieties available at that time.

Subject only to the call of his parish duties, he became a well known exhibitor and judge, and indeed it was said of him that he was in his generation by common consent the greatest judge of the flower.

The Daffodil Society (The Midland as it then was) was founded in 1898, and it was the custom in those days when the staging was complete to hold a rather splendid dinner on the night before the opening

FREDERICK E. BOARD

Only a few days after the manuscript for this article was received, word came from England that Mr. Board had died in his sleep October 13 at his home, The Winnatts, at Darley Dale in Derbyshire, England. He was 64 years old, and while he had had a heart ailment, his death was completely unexpected. A partner in a firm of chartered (certified) accountants in Sheffield and London, which he had helped found in the 1920's, Mr. Board was one of England's top amateur daffodil growers and hybridizers.

of the Show. This, attended by the Lord Mayor of Birmingham and other civic notables, provided an opportunity, with so many addicts gathered together, for the reading of papers on the daffodil and cognate matters. On these occasions apparently the Rev. Eugene Bourne was a tower of strength, and his discourses were listened to with respect and doubtless profit. He even ventured in 1900 to read a paper entitled, "Cultivation of the Narcissus in Gardens", before that august body, the Royal Horticultural Society.

He also wrote articles regularly for various gardening periodicals on the technique of exhibiting, and although he admitted to being a cultivator and exhibitor, always denied being a botanist. He was also the author of that little volume now prized by collectors, "The Book of the Daffodil", published in 1903.

He was enthusiastic, and established a Daffodil Day at his vicarage. In spite of his keenness, however, he did not enter into the prevalent craze of hybridising because he felt, regretfully, that this would conflict with the many calls made upon him as a preacher during Lent and at Easter, just when hybridising would have been an unwarranted interference with his parochial duties.

He passed away in 1907 at the early age of 61, and had then been for several years a member of the Narcissus and Tulip Committee of the Royal Horticultural Society. But his main interest had been the Midland Society and his passing created a profound sense of loss. I quote from an anonymous contributor to the *RHS Year Book* 1915, as follows, "After his death, to mark their respect and affection, some of his friends gave the Bourne Memorial Cup to the Midland Society to be annually competed for by its members. It has so far always been given for the best twelve seedlings raised by the exhibitor and it is rightly esteemed to be the blue ribbon of the daffodil world."

Thus the Bourne Cup came into being and has continued to be awarded annually ever since for the twelve best seedlings raised by the exhibitor.

Historic trophies are important things, and the Bourne Cup is in the daffodil world the oldest challenge trophy of all. In England, age above all is revered — a national idiosyncrasy of which, in view of his grey hairs, your contributor hopes to take advantage as time goes by.

A picture which accompanies this article will be better interpreted by means of the following practical details.

It is a solid silver vase with cover, made by Elkington & Co. of Birmingham, who are still operating and doubtless sending their admirable wares into America in the search for all important dollars. It weighs 65½ ounces, is 11½ inches in height and the cylinder has a diameter of 6¼ inches. It is Hall Marked, which my American friends

may know depicts the "prancing British lion with a wagging tail" — the tail so outrageously twisted in recent times. The daffodils are appliquéd on the surface of the cup and the vase top is embellished with a gadroon mount.

There is an old convention over here that if a challenge cup is won by the same person three years in succession, he is entitled to keep the cup for his own.

In order to negative this convention it has become the practice at the time of presentation to use the expression Perpetual Challenge Cup, but one cannot imagine the circumstances in which any daffodil hybridiser would have the temerity to invoke the convention, as he would suffer such an unimaginable odium and ostracism as to make his daffodil life unbearable.

On their visit to my home in Derbyshire this Spring, Mrs. Howard Bloomer and Professor Larry Mains fondled the Bourne Cup and would agree that it was a good idea of the donors to preserve its pristine appearance by having their names inscribed on the base plate, where they would be recorded for posterity but without any other meritorious implication.

The names inscribed were all notable people when great strides were being made towards the daffodil we know today. S. E. Backhouse was the son of the better known William Backhouse, born in Yorkshire in 1807 and becoming a private banker in Durham. Of William it is recorded that there was once a run on his bank, and upon realising that the only thing which would dispel the growing doubts of the depositors would be to produce a cascade of golden sovereigns — he would have had a job on in 1966 — he set out in a stage coach for Darlington where reserves were lying, and filling the boxes set off post haste on the return to Durham. It was snowing and a wheel came off, but William sat guarding his boxes and eventually all was well. The experience no doubt taught him the wisdom of guarding his boxes on the way to shows, when they held not his golden sovereigns, but his golden daffodils.

William Backhouse began hybridising in 1856, and his methods, about which he wrote in the *Gardeners Chronicle* in 1865, are generally speaking the methods practised today. S. E. Backhouse's sister-in-law was the famous Mrs. R. O. Backhouse, and she in turn had a son who raised the first red trumpet, and who on his recent death was shown to have had the kindly forethought of leaving a legacy to The Daffodil Society.

Peter Barr, Copeland, Crossfield, Fanny Currey, Engleheart, Baylor Hartland, Jacob, Billy Milner of Sheffield, Duncan Pearson, Herbert Smith, the first secretary of The Daffodil Society; "Uncle Robert" Sy-

denham, its founder, Wallace, Watts, Walter Ware, the introducer of Fortune; J. C. Williams of Caerhays, Alec Wilson and P. D. Williams, cousin of J. C., high sheriff of Cornwall and owner of a lot of it, all names famous in daffodil history and about whom and their ways one could expatiate to the point of boredom. But for the time being that is enough about the donors of the Bourne Cup.

The donors achieved their niche in history by writing a cheque, whilst the winners enjoyed no such easy passage.

Even the daunting period of some five years before the first results of any crossing could be seen would be a deterrent, for time seemed to pass more slowly than it does today.

The first to register his name on the roll of fame was Percival Dacre Williams, and he repeated this in 1911 and 1915. He exhibited at the Midland Society's first Show in 1899 and became president in 1913.

Way down in Cornwall at the southwest tip of England, the name Williams has a magic sound socially, financially and horticulturally, and "P. D." assumed with natural ease an autocratic air which discouraged any light-hearted joviality. At times, indeed, he was irascible and did not suffer fools gladly, but he was greatly respected and his abilities admired.

He kept no record of pollen parents and dabbed the pollen on to promising flowers from blooms carried in every available button hole.

The renown of "P. D." will be kept freshly in mind by the annual competition for the P. D. Williams Cup at Birmingham, and the P. D. Williams Medal at London.

Although E. M. Crossfield won the Bourne Cup four times, 1909, 1910, 1913 and 1914, and his wife once in 1912 (perhaps a connubial courtesy), the records are curiously silent about him. We know he lived in the delightfully soft countryside of Somerset. One can find no trace of his having competitively staged in London, though his flowers were given awards of merit there. Nevertheless, he clearly dominated the hybridists in the five years prior to the Great War, in spite of its being obvious from the number of groups staged that competition was fierce. P. D. Williams, writing in 1929, said of him, "As an exhibitor of home raised flowers he was far ahead of all competitors. His skill in breeding, in selecting and establishing was supreme."

Walter T. Ware, from Bath in Somerset, famous for its gracious Georgian architecture, made his only successful attempt in 1916. His other claim to fame, and a good deal more rewarding financially, was his introduction of Fortune several years later. Now it is sold by the million in florist shops, and shares with King Alfred the reputation of being the best moneymaker of all time.

Miss Isabel Worsley (1919) was the daughter of Philip J. Worsley,

who lived in an aristocratic suburb of Bristol until his death in 1917 at the age of 83. By then he had been hybridising for 26 years, and one must assume that his spinster daughter's success was a posthumous tribute to her father's work, in which no doubt she helped.

Dr. Nynian Yeo Lower. Four times winner 1921, 1922, 1924 and 1925, lived at Presteigne in Wales and began his contribution to the developments in 1908. His widow gave The Daffodil Society the handsome Dr. Lower Memorial Cup as her tribute to his work, and it is now awarded annually for six yellow trumpets raised by the exhibitor. His most famous flower was Royalist, which Lionel Richardson mated with Crocus, produced Kingscourt, and set the yellow trumpets ablaze.

Sandwiched between Dr. Lower's wins came F. Herbert Chapman, an avowed professional and one who faced the expense of advertising a coloured 2a in the RHS 1914 *Year Book*. True it is that one of the two flowers depicted had seven petals, which gave it a better looking perianth, but on the other hand he may have thought that progress in that direction should not be discouraged. He raised his daffodils in the southeastern County of Sussex.

1927 marked the beginning of an epoch in which Ireland was supreme. My friend, Guy Wilson, with whom I was always and for a long time en rapport, had his first success and he continued the winner for no less than seven successive years.

Lionel Richardson had it for the next three times, gave way to Barr & Sons in 1940, and then resuming after the war won it in 1946 and 1947. Guy counter-attacked, won in 1948 and 1949, Lionel again in 1951, then Guy in 1957. Finally the great dual was over when Lionel last won it in 1958.

Guy won ten times and Lionel seven, and with the seedlings both had in their respective pipelines, it is difficult to see who could have stopped them, unless it was the Great Reaper.

It would be superfluous to extol the merits of these two remarkable Irishmen — one cannot gild the lily. Suffice it to say that they were friends of many and of each other. We were conscious of a great loss when they went to grow, one hopes, their daffodils in the Elysian Fields.

In 1950 a name appeared for the first and last time, Denis B. Milne, a man of independent means and my own daffodil mentor, who made me conscious of really choice things.

He lives in Derbyshire, and we went to this show together, he with one small box containing his Bourne Cup entry, and I with everything I could get a knife through. This was his only entry ever, and was the long planned culmination of some 20 years of careful study and selection. He was overcome when the result was announced, and my wife

had to telephone the good news to his widowed sister, with whom, as a bachelor, he lived. He grew, he staged, he won, and thereafter has grown his lovely flowers just for his own pleasure. I had the greatest possible admiration for his knowledge and judgment of daffodils, and I have always been sad that he withdrew and has become almost recluse.

In 1952 the reign of J. M. de Navarrio began, and he won five times hand running, until as mentioned before, Guy and then Lionel dispossessed him. He was back as winner in 1959 and 1960, and most recently in 1963.

Perhaps influenced by his close friendship with Lionel and his regular visits to Waterford, Mr. de Navarro specialises in red-centered flowers, but is, of course, successful in all the main classifications. Last year he was made a vice-president of The Daffodil Society, which honour marked the members' appreciation of his support over many years. He is an erudite, gentle man, a retired Cambridge Don and an archaeologist of international repute. The son of Mary Anderson, the celebrated Shakesperian actress, he lives in a beautiful residence appropriately at Broadway in the Shakespeare country, overlooking the Cotswold Hills. Although he is regarded as "one of ours", he has remained throughout a citizen of the U. S. A. Winning The Bourne Cup eight times is an achievement which speaks for itself.

J. S. B. Lea won twice in 1961 and 1962. He gardens at Dunley Hall in Stourport, but he is an industrialist with exacting commitments as far afield as Scotland. In the spring, raising new daffodils is almost full-time work, and it is possible that Mr. Lea's full potential has not yet been seen. His best flower so far is probably Canisp, a beautiful trumpet-like 2c already known in America, and he will be sending some more.

So we come to the end of a brief review of the men who by study, patience, wearying work, skill in choice of parents, and judgment in rejection and selection of seedlings have left their mark on the history of the daffodil.

Uninhibited by any undue modesty, but with a proper sense of humility, I feel I must tell you in closing that The Bourne Cup has, for the last three years, had engraved upon it the name of this writer.

HANDBOOKS ARE STILL AVAILABLE

The American Horticultural Society *Daffodil Handbooks* may be purchased from Mrs. William A. Bridges, 10 Othoridge Rd., Luther-ville, Md. 21093. They make excellent Christmas gifts at \$4.50 for the cloth bound and \$3 for the paperback copies.