

THE PETER BARR MEMORIAL CUP AWARDED TO JAMES S WELLS

BRIAN DUNCAN

James S Wells, is this year's worthy recipient of the Peter Barr Memorial Cup. The cup is presented each year by the Royal Horticultural Society, on the recommendation of the Daffodil and Tulip Committee to someone who has made a significant contribution to daffodils on a national or international scale.

James (Jim) Wells (see Fig. 23) was born in England and spent many years as a nurseryman specialising in rhododendrons. He attended a meeting in 1951 of what subsequently became the International Plant Propagators Society and was its first president. Jim expanded the society nation-wide in the USA and subsequently in the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand. The society has now become truly

international with a number of active regions in many parts of the world. A keystone of this work was his development of a new technique for the propagation of rhododendrons.

In his youth, Jim Wells had been introduced to the cultivation of daffodils in the early 1920s. However, it was not until his retirement some 20 years ago that he was able to develop this interest. Since then, he has focussed particularly on miniature daffodils, of which he assembled a comprehensive collection and has made a detailed study. Special interests include species in Section *Bulbocodium* and trying to resolve the ongoing confusion about the correct identity of many miniature daffodils in all divisions. In this work he developed a world wide correspondence with experts and himself became a recognised authority. Having in 1955 written an excellent book *Plant Propagation Practices*; The Nurseryman Publishing Co. Chicago 1955 (revised 1985), which is still in print, it is not surprising that he should later feel the urge to share his deep theoretical and practical knowledge of miniature daffodils by writing about them. *Modern Miniature Daffodils Species and Hybrids* was published in 1989 by the Timber Press (Portland) and in the United Kingdom by B T Batsford Ltd. This readable and well illustrated book is a worthy update and successor to the late Alec Gray's *Miniature Daffodils*; W H and L Collingridge London 1955. It is probably fair to say that Jim's book is the most complete guide to the identification and culture of miniature daffodils available and that it has contributed significantly to the growing popularity of miniature daffodils.

Jim Wells has two sons who are both associated with horticulture. His eldest son Roger is a land planner and uses his expertise and skill to guide large developments. His younger son Jeremy continues to run and expand the family business of growing hybrid rhododendrons which he distributes over the whole of the eastern half of the USA. It can be said that this is a truly horticultural family.

I had the pleasure of meeting Jim Wells at

Daffodil and Tulip Yearbook 1999-2000

the American Daffodil Society Convention at Calloway Gardens, Georgia in 1990 and was greatly impressed by his great good humour and enthusiasm. I was therefore saddened that he was unable to be present at the 1999 Convention in Pittsburgh to receive in person the framed picture of the cup and the plaudits of the audience of about 275 people. Instead, he arranged for Delia Bankhead to accept on his behalf and to express his appreciation.