

# Awards and presentations to people

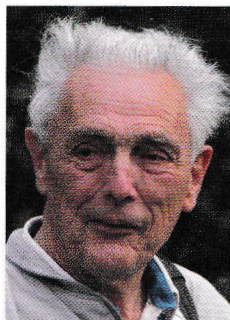
## PETER BARR MEMORIAL CUP 2015 AWARDED TO DR PETER BRANDHAM Malcolm Bradbury

In 2015 Dr Peter Brandham was awarded the Peter Barr Memorial Cup by the Royal Horticultural Society on the recommendation of the Society's Bulb Committee. The award is given annually to 'someone who has done good work of some kind in connection with daffodils.'

Employed in the Cytogenetics Section of the Jodrell Laboratory at the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew from 1967, Peter became Head of Section in 1984, retired in 1997, and now continues work as a part-time volunteer.

Peter has focused on plant chromosomes in the context of the inter-relationships and evolution of groups of species. In particular he has studied the occurrence and significance of polyploidy, in which individuals or species can contain three, four or more sets of chromosomes instead of the ancestral two sets. Peter published descriptions of evolutionary patterns involving the change from two sets (diploid) to four sets (tetraploid) in a number of groups of African *Aloe* species and their relatives and showed that polyploidy normally results in forms that are larger and more vigorous than their diploid ancestors.

Peter then looked for a group of cultivated plants with which to repeat and further develop the work done on wild ones. He soon settled on *Narcissus* as the perfect subject. Most *Narcissus* cultivars are genetically hybrid and hence will come true to type only if propagated vegetatively, making them clonal from the outset. Furthermore, the registration of most of them with the RHS has provided a record of the dates of their origin, making it possible to determine today the key evolutionary chromosome events that have occurred in cultivated daffodils over the past 150



Dr Peter Brandham  
(photo John Wallington)

years or more. Thanks to the generosity of several members of the RHS Daffodil and Tulip Committee who provided bulbs, Peter has been able to obtain chromosome counts for over 1,100 species and cultivars of

*Narcissus*. The results showed that *Narcissus* is a microcosm of plant evolution from diploidy to polyploidy by a selective process that is similar to that occurring naturally in many wild plant groups but has been vastly accelerated by mankind's extensive hybridizing activity. Most large, vigorous, modern daffodils are tetraploid, with the early ones originating in the mid-19th century from diploid species via the appearance of desirable but almost entirely sterile triploid intermediates. It was this work that led to Peter's invitation to join the RHS Daffodil and Tulip Committee in 1996 and to his being made an honorary member of its successor the Bulb Committee in 2014.

Peter has published 24 scientific and popular articles about his work on *Narcissus*. These have made it easier for hybridizers to evaluate the ploidy levels of potential breeding material and Peter has been able to suggest practical ways of improving the chances of success when hybridization programmes involve a low-fertility triploid parent. Peter has also done much to dispel some of the many myths surrounding the inheritance of specific plant characteristics. The well-deserved award recognises this very practical contribution to the work and increasing success of daffodil hybridizers.

## RETIREMENT LUNCH FOR JOHN BLANCHARD

Brian Duncan and Wendy Akers

On 9 September 2014 some of John Blanchard's many friends made their way along the lanes of Dorset. They were headed for The Cricketers, the pub at Shroton not too far from John's home