

BOB NICHOL

What a lovely chap Bob Nichol was. Sadly he died some years ago but he remains one of my all-time favourite people. He lived in Birmingham with his wife Jean and was a member of the West and Midlands Group (British Iris Society - BIS) specialising in hybridising tall bearded irises. He had a penchant in naming all his irises after Poldark characters from the TV series of that name. They were beauties, my favourite being 'Elizabeth Poldark', a lovely ruffled white self, yellow in the throat and with a yellow beard, tipped white, that grew to 38 inches tall. He introduced this variety in 1987 and followed with several others including 'Caroline Penvenon', registered in 1989, an ice-blue and violet. I mention this beauty as it is one of the parents of a cross I made with 'Silverado' and named 'Cliff Baughen' which is now on trial at Wisley (Royal Horticultural Society - RHS).

The Kent Group (Iris Society) made a visit to Bob's allotments in Handsworth where he grew most of his irises. It was two and a half allotments that he decided he was planning to close down and invited us to pick out any variety we would like to have. Alice spotted a rather nice shaded biscuit with pale lemon edges on the falls, tall bearded seedling H4/6 with a slight fragrance, she fancied would be good in a flower arrangement and I examined it more closely and was impressed with its form and excellent bud count. Bob promptly dug it up for us and I was delighted to grow it on. If it had not been selected Bob said it was going on the compost heap! Two years later I entered this seedling in the BIS Summer Show at Wisley and it won first prize and was selected for trial at Wisley. Bob happened to be present at the Show and when I drew his attention to his seedling he agreed "It wasn't too bad after all". Shortly after Bob died and Jean decided to name it 'Garlanda'.

'Garlanda' went on to win the RHS Award of Garden Merit. If you want a good dark buttercup yellow self try 'Bob Nichol', it's a lovely reminder of a wonderful character.

Berney Baughen

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