

Chelsea Revival in 2015

A chance find by Sarah Cook when she was Head Gardener at Sissinghurst led to a passion for the tall bearded irises propagated by Cedric Morris at Benton End in Hadleigh.

For the first time in 60 years up to 25 of the varieties were exhibited at Chelsea in 2015. He is credited with breeding the first 'truly pink' irises, including one called 'Strathmore', shown at Chelsea in 1948. While it has taken some years these old world beauties will now become more widely available again.



Sara Cook



Cedric Morris's grave
Hadleigh Cemetery

Memories of Cedric Morris Exhibition

visits by arrangement

Memories from former students of The East Anglian School of Painting and Drawing Hadleigh, including extracts from the diaries of Lucy Harwood. Also included are memories from gardener Beth Chatto and reflections by award winning Iris enthusiast Sarah Cook.

**Contact: Hadleigh Town Guides
snowdonjane@hotmail.co.uk or call
077 487 10598**

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Cedric Morris

Artist & Plantsman

1889 – 1982



Irises in a Field
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"Cedric's garden was an extension of his palette"

Beth Chatto



Cedric Morris was born in Wales The son of Sir George Lockwood Morris. He took up art seriously shortly before the first World War He joined the art community at Newlyn in Cornwall and studied in Paris and London.

His paintings include landscapes, portraits, townscapes, also birds and many studies of flowers.

He valued technique, had a strong sense of colour and a simple direct approach.

He painted two large flower murals on the liner Queen Mary and posters for Shell and B.P. While today his work is known for its very distinctive primitive post impressionist style. He made visits to warmer climates painting landscapes and collecting plants.

The East Anglian School of Painting and Drawing

Morris moved to Suffolk in the late 1920's and following a fire at the school in Dedham he chose to re-establish the school in 1939 at Benton End, a farmhouse with several acres, in Hadleigh. Here, along with his partner and fellow artist Arthur Lett-Haines, he directed a distinctly non-academic approach, with students, during more than forty years. Lett-Haines taught theory where as Morris taught by example.



Window at 48 Brook St London

Amongst the students were Lucian Freud and Maggi Hambling both of whom felt they benefited greatly from their time at Benton End.

The school closed when Lett-Haines died in 1978, though Morris continued to live at Benton End until his death in 1982.

Gardening shaped his painting and his painting influenced his plant breeding.

His passion for horticulture was soon to result in many new varieties, sold commercially and exhibited at Chelsea Flower Show. He grew about a 1,000 new Iris seedlings with names such as "Benton Cordelia" and "Edward Windsor."

Lett-Haines described Cedric as being born of "phenomenal vitality"



Stoke-by-Nayland Church