

## Book Review

Dr David Willis

### Yellow Fever: A prospect of the history and culture of daffodils

To the casual gardener the term “yellow fever” probably conjures up a vision of the deadly African malady but to the daffodil *aficianado* it has a less lethal connection. Indeed, if not life threatening, more life enhancing, because once having succumbed to the narcissistic version, it becomes more an addiction than an affliction. David Willis, in the above named superbly voluminous book of over four hundred pages has covered, in an eminently readable style, every aspect of the genus.

His diligent research which formed the basis of his doctoral thesis, is a history lesson in itself whereby he recites the beginnings in Greece and which subsequently involved the lands of Egypt, India and China before the Romans, with their great influential empire were probably responsible for the northern spread of the species. He details with great erudition how down the centuries the daffodil developed, particularly in the northern hemisphere where it is endemic, to the Victorians who, with their diligent creativity were mainly responsible for the vast industry we know today.

Daffodil classification and the showbench also receive comprehensive cover and a list of relatively modern cultivars is included, which is often poorly represented in many publications. But by far the largest segment of the tome is given over to the coverage of daffodils by colour delineation using the Throckmorton system ranging from the yellow, whites, bi-colours, ‘pinks’ to doubles and even the still maligned split-coronas.

Chapters ranging from hybridisation, propagation and growing methods are also featured extensively with many fine coloured plates, photographs and line diagrams to supplement the text. Due acknowledgement is given to the many who assisted in the production of what is a truly outstanding work. He recognises too the part played by our archivist, Jan Dalton, and the ability of our records to furnish him with answers to his many queries, thus reinforcing the need to keep them flourishing.

Unfortunately the ‘book’ is available only as a download from the Internet but Dr. Willis has generously given each of us the opportunity to do just that. As has been previously alluded to, what a superb addition it would be to the world of daffodil literature if some enterprising publisher was to produce a hardback version of it.

**Ahren (Reg Nicholl)**