



Freelance Archivist – Historic Iris Research Archive

Project: Historic Iris Research Archive

Organisation: Plant Heritage

Location: Suffolk (on-site, due to the nature of materials)

Contract: Freelance project – approx 15 days' work (budget of £3,750 incl expenses)

How to Apply

Please send your CV and a short expression of interest to comms@plantheritage.org.uk by **noon on Monday 16 March**, including:

- Your relevant experience
- Your proposed approach to the project
- Your day rate and proposed schedule

If you would like an informal conversation about the role, you are very welcome to contact Lucy Pitman by emailing collections@plantheritage.org.uk

About Plant Heritage

Plant Heritage is a national plant conservation charity and home to the National Plant Collections® and the Plant Guardian® scheme. Since 1978, we've been dedicated to protecting the incredible diversity of garden plants across the UK and Ireland. With thousands of passionate members and volunteers, we safeguard around 100,000 plants and run events, workshops and educational activities that help connect people with the rich world of horticulture.

About the Project

This special project focuses on cataloguing and digitally archiving the lifetime research of **Sarah Cook VMH**, who created the National Plant Collection of irises bred by artist and plantsman **Sir Cedric Morris**. Over many years, Sarah has rediscovered cultivars once thought lost, building an archive full of horticultural and cultural significance. Sarah has now been diagnosed with mild cognitive impairment, so it is especially important to complete this project this year.

You will be working closely with Sarah and her husband, Jim Marshall VMH, to help organise and prepare her research papers, correspondence, plant lists, photographs and other materials for long-term preservation and eventually for public access. Digitisation support will be provided by a Plant Heritage volunteer, and final materials will sit within our database and be accessible online. The project is kindly funded by the Finnis Scott Foundation and the Alfred Williams Charitable Trust. You will be contracted to and paid by Plant Heritage.

Role Purpose

As our Freelance Archivist, you will lead the appraisal, organisation and cataloguing of this unique collection - central to the story of cultivated Iris breeding in the UK. Your work will

help ensure the archive is preserved, well-structured and ready for researchers, gardeners, historians and anyone interested in this fascinating heritage.

Key Responsibilities

- Work closely with Sarah and Jim to understand the background, context and significance of the materials.
- Appraise and evaluate a wide variety of historic items including research notes, letters, photographs, plant lists and publications.
- Organise, catalogue and cross-reference materials so they align with Plant Heritage's existing records.
- Create and document procedures for safe, long-term storage of all archival materials.
- Collaborate with a volunteer responsible for scanning and digitisation, ensuring a smooth workflow.
- Help shape a structure that will allow future users to easily access the archive online, including by providing summaries of key documents.
- Assist in maintaining accurate record-keeping in our IT systems and share regular progress updates.

Person Specification

Essential

- Strong professional experience with appraising, cataloguing and organising historic archives.
- Ability to create effective archival storage and preservation procedures.
- Excellent organisational skills and confidence working independently.
- Experience with accurate record-keeping, including digital records.
- Strong communication skills and a collaborative, friendly approach.
- High attention to detail when handling historic and fragile materials.

Desirable

- Experience or interest in horticulture, conservation or environmental heritage.
- Familiarity with National Plant Collections®, conservation archives or historic plant research.
- Experience supporting or working alongside digitisation projects or volunteers.

Personal Attributes

You will be respectful, careful and thoughtful when working with fragile or unique records. A methodical, curious approach will help you get the most from this rich archive. Because you'll be working closely with Sarah and Jim, kindness and understanding will be essential they are entrusting you with a body of work that represents a personal and important legacy.

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