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GCIRC entrance year: 2004

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I graduated with a degree in biology from Queen Mary College, London University in 1973.

For the next 6 years I worked as a botanist for the British Antarctic Survey on two very different projects: studying the impact of reindeer grazing on the vegetation of the sub-Antarctic island of South Georgia (as a consequence of which I can certainly recommend reindeer meat!) and then a study of the ecology of a terrestrial alga on Signy Island, further south, in the South Orkneys.

In 1979 I started work at the National Institute of Agricultural Botany (NIAB) in Cambridge, first in the Vegetable Trials Department and then in Fodder Crops, principally on maize and the forage brassicas.

Since 1990 I have been the variety specialist for oilseed and pulse crops, with oilseed rape comprising the largest component of the work by far. Traditionally, our main focus has been on variety testing in order to produce data for National List and Recommended List purposes with the ultimate aim of advising farmers and helping them to improve yields. We do this through publications, workshops, conferences and field demonstrations.

Variety testing has offered a continuous series of challenges, including the introduction of hybrids, GM's, varieties with modified oil profiles, semi-dwarf hybrids and, most recently, the Clearfield™ varieties. In each case I have helped to modify trial protocols to accommodate the new types to ensure that they are compared effectively. Over the years I've

made a personal hobby of monitoring the improvement in yield from varieties, which has continued at a fairly constant rate of 2% per annum since the introduction of the 'double lows'. I give updates in our annual Agronomists' Handbook.

I am the main point of contact within our organisation for any external companies requiring commercial trials of oilseed rape varieties in the UK. We always welcome new contacts but for commercial work prefer to work through UK intermediaries to make sure that communications and planning go smoothly.

In 2010 NIAB merged with TAG (The Arable Group). TAG had traditionally been orientated towards agronomy research and this has given us new opportunities to combine our interests and look at variety interactions with management and inputs. In recent seasons I have lead investigations into nitrogen use and time-of-sowing in winter oilseed rape. I am currently working with SRUC and the University of Nottingham, taking a new look at the nutritional value of rapeseed meal in pig and poultry production.

Publications

Kightley S P J, Knight S M, Bingham I J, Lang B and Philpott H L. 2012. The impact of changes to agronomic practice on farm yield trends in oilseed rape. Aspects of Applied Biology **117** Crop Protection in Southern Britain, pp137-144.

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Kightley, S P J (2009) Oilseed rape varieties for sustainability and low input farming. Proceedings of GCIRC Technical Meeting, Manesar, New Delhi

Kightley, S P J, Kerr S P, Philpott, H L, Horwell, A J. (2008) Evaluation systems for cultivars of biomass species. Aspects of Applied Biology **90**

NIAB (2008) Assessing biomass Miscanthus and short rotation coppice willow and poplar varieties – the way forward. Defra project NF0435, Final Report

NIAB (2004) Investigation of Varietal Characteristics Required for Sustainable Agriculture. Defra project VS0128, Final report

Kightley, S P J (2004) Variety characters for sustainable grain pea production. Grain Legumes Magazine. **40** pp 23-24.

Kightley, S P J (2001) Lodging control in winter rape. Int. J. of Plant Varieties and Seeds. **14**, 3.

Kightley S P J (1999) The introduction of oilseed rape hybrids in the United Kingdom. GCIRC Bulletin No 16.

Annual production of NIAB Variety Pocket Guides for oilseed and pulse crops.