

**Sheffield & District  
Orchid Society  
Newsletter  
April 2013**



**April Plant of the Month  
*Eulophia guineensis***

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## Editorial

It isn't too often these days that an editorial appears, but now is the time for one... Just after the last meeting Denise & I ventured up into the dales for our usual April break. I was pleasantly surprised to see our old member John Craven at the hotel - it seems he always goes there just as we do! He looks well, and was asking about us all. hopefully he will get over to Chatsworth. Usually in the dales the early purple orchids are in bloom at this time, but not this year - there were still some leaves to open first prior to the flowers, and these will be around 2-3 weeks late.

A couple of years ago during a summer tidy up in the greenhouse I discovered a couple of small frogs. Apart from wondering just how they got in I wasn't too bothered as they could probably get out again. Since the start of this year I have seen at least 1 large frog (and possibly 2 with different colours) which has had me

wondering if they are the same ones, and if so what have they been eating, and how have they survived slug pellets, insecticides and fertiliser runoffs into their likely under bench habitat. They do get onto the benches, and can leap a yard or so. Should I welcome them as beneficial slug eaters, and an indicator of greenhouse health, or are they the cause of some tissue damage on plants that I generally blame on slugs - even when there are no trails of slime?

## Business

Our upcoming annual show in a few weeks time is the main topic for today. We have been informed that His Grace the Duke will open the show for us, so we have to ensure that we make a good job of the whole thing!!! There are still some minor details regarding the layout to conclude which revolve around the lack of steps (public access) onto the stage, but mainly it is about seeing what the members can assist with. There are the usual requirements for door attendants, some car park directions, and mainly for catering - sandwiches will be made on the day, but please bring cakes etc. If you are undecided what to bake, then contact either Julie or Janet prior to the event. None of this is necessary if we haven't got a show to put on, and to do this we must have plants. If you have orchids in flower (even of a lesser quality) please bring them. **Your Society needs you!** We would like our labels to be uniform rather than a mixture of old and new that we tend to get, so if you think that you will have plants, please let Jeff Bagnall know at the next meeting so that he can get them ready.

Our last display was at Bowburn, which was set up by John Garner. It was a relatively simple display, but we won 4 Highly Commended cards.

There is a new online BOC yearbook to complement the Golden Guide. Being online it will be updated frequently for forthcoming events etc as well as cultural guides etc. It is almost complete now, and ready for use. It can be found at <http://www.orchidworld.me/BOCybk.pdf>. It isn't designed to be printed, more as an online reference, and is pretty good even if I say so myself -Ed..

Our planned speaker for July has had to cancel, so alternatives are being sought. A possible overnight trip to Lawrence Hobbs, McBeans and Wakehurst was suggested...

## The Table Show

Silvia gave this month's commentary and started with an unnamed medium sized white Phal that was quite pleasant. Phal Minho Princess x Taisuco Smile was a larger well formed pink. Zuma Camreal x *aphrodite* was a decent white with 2 spikes of smallish white flowers. Zuma Aussie Delight was another high quality plant with 2 spikes of multiple colours.

Den Ise 'Pearl' was a plant that grows with a pendant habit. The narrow canes had several medium sized white flowers. An unnamed purple Vanda was looking well. This was Charle's Ikea special (it was named Tharab Blue for the previous weekend's show at Bowburn). *Epicyclia* Serena O'Neill looked well with a medium sized spike of white/brown/purple flowers, as well as having a further spike to open. *Rhynchovola* (formerly *Brassia*) David Sander was a tall plant with a single large flower of almost pure white (see back page). Two plants of *Pot. Firedance* 'Patricia' were doing nicely with a burnt orange colour. Two plants of *Catlianthe* Chit Chat were just coming into their best with brilliant orange flowers - sadly one didn't present itself too well. *Rlc.* Mount Hood 'Mary' was an excellent large white. This is an old hybrid that usually lasts for around a month. In the slippers, *Paph. armeniacum* is a lovely yellow species from China, and *delenatii* is pink. *malipoense* is a tall green flower that sometimes has some scent - but not on this occasion. a couple of *villosum* var *boxallii* were still looking OK. *Lyro* Petite Fleur (*barbigerrum* x *primulinum*) is a hybrid cross, producing a decent sized flower of strong yellow colour. The only complex on show today was Skip The Buss 'Almond' - a white spotted with pink that has now been in flower for over 10 weeks. *Phrag.* Grande was a huge plant that had been in flower for a long time, now coming to an end, and had 3 spikes left from the original 6. Several large brownish flowers with long tails make this a fascinating sight.

*Cym.* Strathblane 'Cooksbridge Pinkie' was now starting to fade on 1 of the spikes but still looked very good, as did *Cym.* King Arthur 'Imperial' with its 4 spikes of yellow flowers. Also from the 'Cymbidium' family was *Eulophia guineensis* which had 2 very tall spikes of pink flowers (see front cover). This was judged to be the Plant of the month.

*Aerangis rhodosticta* was a rare plant (compared to *citrata* that we see more often) from central Africa. It is still fairly small with 2 spikes of white flowers with an orange centre. It is a lovely plant and we look forward to seeing it grow over the coming years. *Pleione* Tolima 'Pink' was the colour suggested. These are terrestrial plants grown frost free and dormant over winter. Only start to water them when the leaves and roots start to appear at the point of flowering. The final plant was *Masd. ignea* var *rosea* with just a couple of flowers. It is grown frost free, and has a strong colour with a stripe that has proved useful in hybridisation. Thank you Silvia.

## **In the Footsteps of the Old Orchid Hunters - Chris Squire**

A lecture by Dick Warren at Sheffield a number of years ago proved the catalyst for this trip - organised by Dick to 'his' Rio Atlantic Rainforest Trust project

(RAFT). The trip was originally scheduled for January 2011, but was delayed until October by heavy flooding following freak rainstorms in the area that washed away roads and killed several hundred locals. Arriving by Air France in Rio the 5 members of the tour party were transported for 2 hours on a decent road, transferring to an old minibus for the remaining 2 hours along a potholed road to their destination of Sitio Bacchus on the estate which is the HQ for the tour as well as the project itself. The project was established by Dick and the late David Miller and his wife who purchased the original plots of Forest. Additional land has since been purchased and the estate is now quite large at around 3,000 hectares. It sits around the 1,500M level, and the objective is to restore the forest/jungle to its original form. Large parts of the original forest were cleared by locals to grow sugar, coffee and cocoa as well as some palm oil etc. Once cleared the soils start to wash away in the heavy rains and eventually the plots are abandoned. Sitio Bacchus was built by David to live in whilst the replanting of trees took place. It is quite isolated with no TV reception etc., and David reared a few pheasants and ran a trout farm for some income. The nearest town is Friburgo, about 1 hours walk away, and seriously downhill. Income from 2 books on the area has been ploughed back into the venture. The local region of the Organ Mountains has 229 recorded species of orchids, hence its location for plant hunting back in Victorian times.

The local climate is cool and dry in winter and warm & wet in summer, with variations depending on local altitudes. Generally the days are warm/hot with misty evenings. Annual rainfall is 2.5 metres, which supports a huge range of flora with begonias, fuchsias, philodendrons, mosses and ferns. Bromeliads are common on the trees, and it is estimated that they can hold several tons of water within the canopy at around 700gallons. Travel is hazardous, requiring machetes as well as waterproof clothes and stout boots. A further benefit is to include a dog as they tend to keep the snakes away. A hat and lots of water are also essential. As you might expect this makes travelling difficult, so you have to want to do it.

The initial path from HQ goes up straight into the forest, and it is a long and windy road where you can walk easily and see trees, orchids, and birds as well as hear the sounds of monkeys. Many parrots tend to roost at Sitio Bacchus, so a noise free sleep is almost impossible. As you get a bit higher you are able to see huge panoramas of forest. A nearby ridge has a path cut across it, and this is through the elfin forest - an area of re-growth. If you were to wander from the path then a fall of up to 100 feet is possible. Travel is branch to branch and tree to tree. This can make photography difficult. Often, and thankfully there are some old growth trees within the elfin forest and this helps the twig epiphytes to re-colonise more rapidly. These older trees often collapse under the weight of the bromeliads which help the regeneration from the floor upwards. The detritus from the leaves of old trees help create the ideal orchid habitats.

Whilst out on the trips, there are jobs to do. It isn't simply a holiday. plants need to be pollinated if you see a flowering species that is in short numbers. Seed pods need collecting, and previous tree plantings as well as orchid fixing need checking on. Collecting orchid data and identifying newer tree growth for hosts are also vital work. Sometimes plants from fallen trees need rescuing either for recovery in a nursery, or for immediate fastening to a tree. Many of the species look pale as they are often in direct sunlight, but they get the water, humidity and environment that we simply can't achieve within a greenhouse.

Some of the plants in flower at the time Chris was there were then shown and discussed. *Pabstia jugosa* is a low growing plant with white and purple flowers. *Bifrenaria atropurpurea* grows around the base of the trees or on the ground. It is a short plant that has deep purple clusters of flowers. *Oncidium marshallianum* is a colourful yellow that grows mid tree. *Prostechea vespa* grows as specimens with tall showy spikes of mottles white and brown flowers. *Scuticaria hadwenii* is a terete leaved species that grows on the trunks, and has mainly brown flowers with a white tip. *Pl. sclerophylla* grows on the ridge between 11-1500M, and is heavily scented. *Promeneia xanthina* grows mid tree in damp and dappled places next to large bromeliads. *Milt. cuneata* is quite common, being vigorous and found as specimens. It grows near water between 1000-1500M, and has brown flowers with a large white lip. *Soph. coccinea* seems abundant when in flower with its bright red flowers. It grows in full sun where it looks modest with leathery looking leaves. *Zygo. intermedium* is abundant at the base of trees, as is its close relative *crinitum*. *Malaxis excavata* is a terrestrial plant. A non-native that has established itself is the small tuberous *Ponerorchis graminifolia* from China.

Apart from the obvious danger of falls and snakes, there are plenty of other beasties to keep an eye open for, there are spiders as big as your hand, and furry as well for added scare value!, lizards are abundant, giant caterpillars and stick insects are everywhere. Snails we all know of as being a problem, but there are giant ones here 3-4 " wide. Ants and termites are best avoided as they can have a nasty bite. If you can avoid them then the giant hornets might get you. Pumpkin toads can be seen, and part of the study trip was to count them on behalf of the University of Campos. It isn't all doom and gloom though as the colourful hummingbirds are a source of great entertainment.

After 3 weeks the trip concluded, and with modern aids such as GPS it was relatively easy to get around if you are fairly fit. It is easy to see how the old plant hunters achieved fame and notoriety whilst gathering these exotics, and often paid the price as well. All in all a fascinating trip which Chris would recommend to anyone.

Further information on RAFT is available online at [www.riotrust.org](http://www.riotrust.org)

# Dates for your diary...

## Monthly meetings at Ranmoor – 10am

- May 12th** Andrew Bannister - From flask to flower.  
Andrew runs ABC orchids, and last spoke to us in 2011. Not too many of us are comfortable with de-flasking and growing onwards from seedlings as a flask can be expensive (eg. paphs), and it can take years to get a flower. It doesn't have to be like that...
- June 9th** Steve Clements - Hardy Orchids
- July** TBA

## Other shows

- May 19th** **SDOS annual show at Chatsworth.**  
\*\*\* Plants required \*\*\*
- June 14-16th Malvern International Orchid Show, Worcestershire  
<http://www.malvern-ios.org>
- June 16th NEOS annual show at Tatton Park, Knutsford Cheshire

Society website - [www.sheffieldorchids.org](http://www.sheffieldorchids.org)



Above:- *Aerangis rhodosticta*

Below: - *Rhynchovola David Sander*

