

SHEFFIELD & DISTRICT ORCHID SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 2010



**AUGUST PLANT OF THE MONTH
AERANGIS CITRATA**

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BUSINESS

A small exhibit was made at the church 'show' the previous weekend. Thanks are due to all who provided plants (mainly Charles).

There are 2 shows coming up soon – CANWOS on 19/9/10 and EMOS on 26/9/10, and details will be finalised at the next meeting, however, anyone not attending the show(s) can leave plants at the September meeting.

We have been offered an Orchid day at Dobbie's Garden Centre in Balborough on 21st August. After some debate it was felt that this was the wrong time of the year, and a later slot (nearer Christmas) would be better. A near flowering sized plant of Phrag. La Vingtaine (*kovachii* x Mem. Dick Clements) has been donated to the Society by this month's speaker John Gay. This will be auctioned at next month's meeting. Any member who can't attend but wants to bid should contact Ted Croot with an 'upper level' bid. We will be unable to accept phone bids during the auction.

TABLE SHOW

With no other volunteers Ted Croot decided to enlighten us with this month's commentary. He started by saying that for August this was quite a decent show. Vasco. Thai Queen x Ascda. Sennezauber was a smallish plant with a good root system, and a short spike containing several small burnt orange flowers that were pretty – if not slightly dull (compared to many of the more showy flowers of this group). Next was an unnamed Ascocenda with an excellent spike of numerous vivid red flowers of medium size. V. Siam Ink had lovely purple and white flowers on a fairly short spike.

Phal. *equestris* was a small plant with small pink flowers and a keiki. This is the genus opposite to the large bloomed type to follow. Phal. Happy Birthday is a lovely medium sized pale pink that will get even better in future years. Phal. Pebble Beach had a decent branched spike of spotted white flowers that are very pretty. Phal. Bijou Pearl is a tall white with 3 spikes of large white flowers (*see back cover*). Phal. Brother Golden Embers had 2 spikes of pale yellow flowers that is obviously growing well. Phal. Pink lady is a tall pink, with some buds still to open. This is a plant that once had 4 spikes but reacted badly to being repotted, and is now recovering well. We look forward to seeing it with multiple spikes in the future. Phal. Planet Whiteout was an aptly named large standard white.

Guaricyclia Kyoguchi was still in flower (*see last month's back page*) and is doing well. Rlc. Laura Bush was a strong grower with splash petalled flowers of mainly pale pink with purple edges. *C. loddigessii* is a tall plant with thin canes that is growing well with a single spike in flower of an attractive pink with pale yellow centres. Enc. *tampensis* is a small plant from Florida that is strongly scented in the mornings. The flowers are quite small of yellow brown and a purple splashed white lip. This should form a good specimen plant in a few years.

Macroclinium *manabinum* is a tiny plant of the Oncidiinae subtribe, and had 5 spikes of miniature pink flowers that need a magnifying glass to fully appreciate. Miltassia Royal Robe 'Diplomat' is a super plant with 7 spikes that is growing rapidly and has impressive flowers of strong colours (*see back cover*).

Catasetum *fimbriata x macrocarpum* had a good sized pendant spike with several yellow and brown flowers that had now been open for a fortnight.

It also had another spike yet to develop. Paph. Magic Lantern was a first flowering plant that had been cajoled along since deflasking 8 years ago. This pink flowered plant should get even better in future flowerings. An unnamed Maxillaria species from Peru had deep red flowers. An unknown Pleurothallis species had tiny deep red flowers in the base of the leaf, and was growing well on a 6" square cork bark base. Finally, but by no means least was the August Plant of the Month – *Aerangis citrata* (see front cover) with 8 spikes of white flowers. Almost all were open, and the overall effect was near perfection. Thank you Ted. JG

PLANT OF THE MONTH

AERANGIS CITRATA

Aerangis citrata is found in the humid coastal forests of eastern Madagascar, which indicates its requirements in culture

They can be grown on a bark slab, a mini log or like mine in a net pot with an open bark Compost. It requires some shade, intermediate temperature and plenty of air movement, with humidity medium to high. Roots should be allowed to just about dry between watering.

I obtained my plant from the late Nev. Brown's collection as a small 2 growth plant. I obviously didn't give it the right conditions as it sat on the bench doing nothing, it did once try to flower with about 7 flowers on a very small spike.

I then decided to repot it and split the two growths; one I sold to an SDOS member (can't remember who!).

My greenhouse is a small lean-to on a purpose built wall facing North/very slightly northeast. My plant was moved from the bench to a shelf on the back wall, about two feet below the top of the greenhouse, with two fans, one each end of the shelf blowing continuously, in summer the roof is heavily shaded.

This seems to have ticked all the boxes and the plant has again reached 2 growths in better condition and has 8 flower spikes with 133 flowers.

Derek Jackson

A PERUVIAN EXPERIENCE BY JOHN GAY

This is a new talk by John which he completed just the evening before, so we were as he put it the guinea pigs for it! Peru is a fantastic country with great people, and is a safe country to visit. John has been there twice now in the past few years, mainly for the orchid experience, but has included a little tourism as well – it would be wrong not to see Machu Pichu if you were reasonably close. Peru is a huge country (of only 20m population) the size of the UK, France and Spain put together, and has a coastline of 1400 miles which is semi arid. The northern tip almost touches the equator, while the southern bit ends at Lake Titicaca, and it is bordered by Ecuador, Columbia, Brazil, Bolivia and Chile. The Andes pass continuously south through the country with an average peak height of 3000m, and 6000m at the highest. This range forms part of the watershed for the Amazon basin. Whilst the peaks are high, the valleys are steep and there are gorges twice as deep as the Grand Canyon in the USA. As the Andes rise up the land becomes more fertile and forested. 60% of the country is classed as virgin forest, although land clearance is taking place at an increasing rate. The geography makes it difficult to get around easily – there are virtually no railway lines, so aeroplanes are the commonest long distance method, and buses for the more local journeys. As you would expect with a country of this size the climate varies enormously, and encompasses 84 life zones (that's about 2/3rds of those described throughout the world). There are about 4000 species of orchids, and similar numbers of butterfly species, and around 2000 species of fish.

There are 3 separate areas visited covered by the talk – the northern highlands, Cuzco, and Oxapampa. The tour was accompanied by a guide from Peruflora who knew where to go to find specific species.

All journeys in Peru start from Lima on the coast, and a flight was taken to the north. The highlands is where Phrag. *kovachii* was found, and this was one of the main reasons for the journey. These mountains are mainly limestone, susceptible to landslips. The plant is found between 1600-1900m, with minimum temperatures around 16C and a maximum of 25C. It rains every day, and therefore travelling is difficult, and walking off the beaten track requires wellingtons. The track to *kovachii* is perilous, and takes about 3.5 hours from the road. The track is full of mud, and rises

and falls steeply in most places as streams are encountered. Along the way, thousands of different orchids can be seen – a lot of which are new species yet to be described. These include *Pleuros*, *Stelis*, & *Maxillarias*. It is a wonder why *kovachii* took so long to be discovered as it has the largest flower of any orchid, and is a bright purple/red colour. It grows on thin soils on steep slopes in full sun, and flowers around November/December. The initial site had been almost cleared out, with just immature or inaccessible plants left.

They had a choice of another site a further 2 hours away, however, the treacherous walk had left John with painful blisters that rendered even the 3 hour walk back to a virtual impossibility. Thankfully there was a rustic farm not too far away, where the pleasant peasant farmer was able to provide a mule to carry him back to the road. This was to prove another shocking journey with the swaying and undulating terrain proving endless terror as a slip could mean a fall of several hundred feet.

Other orchids in the area included *Odm. cruentum*, *Odm epidendriodes*, *Phrag. caudatum* & *wallisii*, – growing in full sun, *Helcia brevis*, *Cochlioda vulcanica*, various *Cyrtochilums*, *Masdavellias*, *Adas* and other miniatures. A nearby roadside nursery demonstrated how easy plants grow – there are no greenhouses, just benches, and plants in small pots are watered naturally every day, developing a mossy covering. These cost next to nothing, and often bare rooted roadside plants are as much as 30p! The next leg of the journey was to the south, via Cuzco, and then a 4 hour drive to Ollantaytambo which is literally the end of the road, and the start of the Inca Trail. This is uphill from Cuzco which is at 10,000 feet, so the air is thin, and unless you are young and fit (and without blisters) then you take either the bus or tourist train to Machu Pichu, and then there's still a huge uphill walk. Machu Pichu is an amazing place that has to be seen to be fully appreciated. They walked back downhill to study any orchids, and found *Ida fimbriata*, lots of *Masdavellias* and *Odontoglossums*. Whilst at base in Ollantaytambo, they crossed over the high pass of Abra Malaga at 4316m in the snowfields into the next valley of Santa Maria. Here there are *Sobralia* growing like reeds next to the road. *Bletias* were also in profusion.

The final part of the tour was to Oxapampa, which is in the central part of Peru in the Pasco region, and is an area of high forest. It is a 9 hour drive from Lima, and is at 1800m. The drive there, and beyond contain several of the *Peruflora* nurseries – all at different altitudes to match the needs of

different genera etc. All the nurseries are roofless, and rely on natural watering – apart from the main nursery and centre in Lima. The nursery at 800m is mainly Cattleyas, and the area around supports many *C. maxima*. It also hosts a breeding program for *kovachii* breeding, with crosses raised with most available parents. There were hundreds of near flowering sized Fritz Schomburg (*kovachii* x *dalessandroi*). In the locality there are 30' spiked *Cyrtorchilums*, *Stanhopeas* & *Phrag. richteri*. The *Odontoglossum* nursery is at 2800m, and was an essential visit for John as it is his specialist subject. Around here deforestation was taking place to grow sweetcorn, but they found *Odm. praestens* and *Telepogon ariasii*. A bit higher up the forest thins and becomes more pasture with llamas & alpacas. The nursery at Oxapampa is intermediate and has more *Phrag.* hybrids, although wellies are required.

The best nursery is actually at Lima. It never rains (no wellies), there is just a light mist and good light, so is perfect for Cattleyas.

After a few questions a hearty round of applause was given. JG

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY...

MONTHLY MEETINGS AT RANMOOR – 2PM

Sept 12th Chris Squire – Orchids my way.

Oct 10th Chris & Jean Barker – more on Taiwan

OTHER SHOWS

Sept 19th CANWOS annual Show. * SDOS exhibiting. *

Sept 26th EMOS show at Bottesford. * SDOS exhibiting. *

Society website - www.sheffieldorchids.org



Above; Miltassia Royal Robe 'Diplomat'
Below; Phal. Bijou Pearl

