

**Sheffield & District
Orchid Society
Newsletter
January 2014**



**January Plant of the Month
*Coelogyne trinervis***

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Business

Brian began the meeting by wishing all our members a happy new year.

Last year we had Mike Armstrong as a speaker, and his theme was on photographing orchids. One of the reasons for this was as a prelude to a proposed photographic competition. We weren't able to launch the competition at that point, but are now doing so. See later in the newsletter for details.

The 2014 programme cards contained a slight error in that we are in fact mounting a display at the Dawlish weekend in October

The Table Show

Ted Croot gave the first table commentary of the year and was greeted by quite a decent show. Starting on the left the first plant was Cym. Ray Bilton 'Lewes'. This was a compact type with strong mainly pink flowers. This Dutch bred hybrid was registered by Brian Woodward in 2011 in honour of Ray, who despite a long career in orchids had nothing in his name - and deserved to have! (Cym. Memoria Ray

Bilton is another cross in his honour, registered by McBeans in 2013 - Ed.) Cym. Strathbane 'Cooksbridge Pinkie' is another pink hybrid, and a consistent flowerer, usually with multiple spikes. Den Hibiki had a small cluster of cerise flowers - see back cover. It wasn't quite at its best as the best growing conditions were unknown - would it be better warmer or cooler, drier or wetter? (Orchidwiz suggests that both parents are from PNG area, so may grow warm, and with good light - Ed.). An unnamed *Dendrobium* (similar to Emma White) had nice white flowers. This small plant should look better as a mature plant in a few years time.

Zygo. Ladybird was a strongly growing plant with 2 spikes of purple brown flowers. Zygo. Jumping Jack had 3 spikes with flowers a much deeper purple colour. It is a strong growing plant, and may possibly be a tetraploid. Pths. *truncata* 'Silvine' had very interesting tiny orange ball shaped flowers that contrasted well with the foliage. Masd. Maddy Jack is a harlequin type hybrid with smallish pink flowers bred by Ellis Eyre.

Onc. *sotoanum* (formerly *ornithorhyncum*) is now a large plant with lots of flower spikes with tiny pink flowers. Ros. *ampliatum* had 3 spikes of small yellow flowers with some brown spots. The relatively stiff leaves indicate that it is a drier grower. The flowers will look at their best next month. Bratonia (formerley Miltassia) Royal Robe 'Diplomat' was a smallish plant with just a couple of flowers remaining. With some good growing it can become a large specimen plant. *Jumellia sagittata* is a species not seen on the bench for a long time, and is a member of the *Angraecum* group with a fan of long leaves and single small white flowers. Usually several are produced together.

It the slippers, a plant labelled Paph. Moustache clearly wasn't a multifloral. It was more likely to be a fairrieatum hybrid, and was a pleasing shape non-the less. Hung Sheng Red was a decent deep red mottled flower with some warts. Hung Sheng Venus was a nice plant with several growths and a modest flower. *tranlienianum* was an 'interesting' species that only a slipper connoisseur could appreciate. Nitens is a primary hybrid with 2 flowers that isn't as good as either parent (*insigne* x *villosum*).

Coelogyne *trinervis* was a specimen sized plant with many flower spikes, including one that had forced its way through the mesh within the basket. It was judged to be the plant of the month (see front cover), and below. Phal Sara Gold was in good growing condition with a medium spike of golden flowers freckled with red in the centre - quite attractive. Everspring was a good mottled pale pink. *amabilis* is a white species with modest sized flowers that is in the lineage of almost all white hybrids.

Laelia gouldiana had a very tall spike with 4 attractive deep pink flowers. There has been some debate as to whether it is a species, or actually a natural hybrid. Either way, it is a good starter plant for the *Cattleya* group. C. Eagle Eye was a large white flowered type with a yellow centre. Rlc. Stan Hutto (C. Lorraine Shirai x Rlc. Dickie Brooks) was a good orange large flower. Finally Rsc. Mahina Yahiro 'Ulii' was another large flowered type, with a couple of pink flowers with a yellow centre. Thank You Ted.

Coelogyne *trinervis*

This *Coelogyne* species is native to Malaysia – e.g. Thailand, Burma, Vietnam, Sumatra etc. and is described as cool to hot growing. However, this particular plant originated in Glasgow.

Members may remember, perhaps four or so years ago, we had a talk by David Menzies on the collection at Glasgow Botanic Gardens where he was Deputy Curator. During that talk he referred to the very large *Coel. trinervis* which was part of their collection. Shortly afterwards he accepted a donation of a quantity of plants (*Stanhopea*) which I wasn't growing very well (I claimed lack of adequate headroom) and which I wanted to go to a more suitable home. In return, David asked if there was anything I would like in return and all I could think of from his talk was this *Coel. trinervis* and said I would appreciate a division. The upshot was that he gave me four pieces of which I still have three. They are grown in different locations for comparison purposes but all potted in the same standard bark mix. One is grown on the bench in the same greenhouse but in shadier conditions. A second plant is grown is being grown in a large rectangular pond basket, on the bench in a different greenhouse. It is the largest of the three but it recently had only five shortish spikes – maybe it is a combination of mid-summer repotting and moving to a different location.

This plant is grown in what is basically an intermediate greenhouse but, being suspended near the roof, it benefits from slightly higher than intermediate temperature and is by far the most floriferous of the three. It gets the routine water and feed regime – no feed in winter – BUT is sprayed daily which in my case is six times per week (I am not at home on one day weekly). One thing about this flowering which particularly interested me was, as I mentioned at the meeting, the way flower spikes had forced their way through the quite strong mesh material I had used to line the basket. Just shows how tough some of these plants are and yet we cosset and mollycoddle them! Is there a lesson in that?

Normally, like most of us, I mutter and mumble at our Editor when he asks for a write-up. Not this time. I mentioned earlier that I still had three pieces of the four which I was given. So – I hear you ask – what happened to the fourth? Well, I gave it to a friend and Society colleague, a far more accomplished grower than me. What happened to it? It went to the great orchid nursery in the sky. Can you see the smug smile of satisfaction on my face as I do this write-up?

The name *trinervis* refers to the 3 'nerves' on the lip. **Brian Woodward.**

The Confusing Australian Dendrobiums **Charles Ford**

Charles needs no introduction having been a member of the society for more years than he probably cares to remember. Recent lifestyle changes have led to spending a lot of time in Sydney, Australia alongside wife JJ who is currently working down

under. It's a hard life, but someone has to do it... Being retired, once he has done the housework, he is able to take in the local flora, both in Sydney and the surrounding areas. Lots of orchids are native to Australia, but not necessarily around Sydney. Many are native to other areas of the country, and have been introduced and flourished, but it is the native *Dendrobiums* that are the focus of this lecture. This isn't a scientific review, more an attempt to clarify some things.

The *Dendrobiums* of Australia are confined to the east coast, and more so in the north east as well as the western side of Cape York. *kingianum* is one of the most common species, and is definitely one where confusion reigns, and has done so for a very long time. Many believe that it may be a natural hybrid, and that this is supported by size variants. *speciosum* grows to a huge size around Sydney, but smaller elsewhere. Perhaps trying to understand just what a species is, what is a subspecies/variety, and where does the role of evolution actually fit in.

Australia is a huge country that has undergone huge vegetative changes over the last million years. It is currently a mainly dry country with a green coast. The eastern coast is warmer and wetter, and therefore greener with the Great Dividing Range generating varying degrees of forest. The last ice age, and transition to the current climate has provided the current range of/within species. It is quite probable that up to 90% of species were lost during the ice age, and we may have lost many wonderful species. Evidence of this can be seen with isolated groups of Cycads, and the Wollemi pine that survived in an isolated canyon, but couldn't re-establish countrywide as it was locked in by miles of desert.

Many orchid species come from an isolated or relatively few habitats, and as such are standard, and consistent in reproduction. *kingianum* is a multi-sited species along the whole of the east coast. It is bigger in the north, and smaller in the south, as dictated by the climatic differences. It is therefore a species complex. The same is true of *speciosum* where *Ssp. pendunculatum* is quite small to *Ssp. speciosum* is huge.

They are mainly epiphytes, but will also grow on rocks. The choice of trees is quite noticeable. Eucalyptus is the noted Australian tree, but won't support orchids due to its habit of shedding its bark. Figs and ironbarks are the favourite, with figs especially having many nooks and crannies for the roots to cling to. They are quite adaptable, and can be seen growing in cinder block walls

In Sydney *speciosum ssp. speciosum* is known as the Sydney Rock Lily, and is often seen as a lithophyte. Flowers are white to yellow. *Ssp. hillii* is found to the north of Sydney in the rainforest – all 3 tiers of it. It grows over 1m tall. It grows into large clumps – both size and weight, and will break off and survive on the floor. Flowers are white to ivory. *Ssp. grandiflorum* is further north in the Blackdown hills, and has stunning fragrant yellow flowers up to 4" across with pseudobulbs of 1m. *Ssp. capricornicum* has become isolated from the other subspecies growing on the eastern slopes of a volcanic plug which is the more moist side. *Ssp. pendunculatum* is the more northerly and grows in a drier climate. The vegetation is quite sparse, almost desert with grass trees. Small is the key to survival, and the pseudobulbs are 2-3", with fairly long pendant spikes.

There are several subspecies of *kingianum*, with most varying in size north to south, with various colour forms from red to white. *kingianum* *ssp. carnarvonense* comes from the Carnarvon Gorge, and is isolated from the remaining species by miles of desert, but is still similar.

A close relative to the Dendrobiums are the Dockrillas. They vary mainly in having narrowly terete leaves and a narrow flexible stem that doesn't really support the plant. They grow up in the canopy of fig trees, and have very fleshy thick roots.

The Australians tend to be splitters rather than lumpers, and jump at the chance to define new species, subspecies or variants, even when they share the same DNA. A step too far! At the start Charles said that these are confusing species, and that confusion breeds more confusion. We are now a little clearer – aren't we? Thank You Charles.

PHOTOGRAPHIC COMPETITION Rules

- The photograph must have an orchid content – plant, flower, display etc.
- The photograph must be the work of the entrant.
- The subject matter need not belong to the entrant.
- Entries are limited to four per person.
- Quality of subject matter is irrelevant – quality of photograph will be judged.
- Entries to be submitted at any time but by September meeting at latest.
- Entries should be submitted to Ian Wilson at ian@boatsails.com who will prepare them for display.
- Ian is very willing to help / advise anyone who has difficulty in sending pictures via Email. and can bring equipment to help so please talk to him. He will be able to receive photos at meetings direct from cameras or memory cards.
- For “non-digital” users, prints of any size may be submitted. Prints can be given to Ian at any time and he will scan them for inclusion in the presentation.
- Entries will be numbered, shown or projected at October meeting with a secret ballot to choose a winner.

The winner will be announced at the AGM.

ORCHIDS – A CASE FOR PATIENCE

When I began growing orchids in the mid – to late nineties (the NINETEEN nineties) one of the very first plants to attract my attention was *Brassavola digbyana* - now *Rhyncholaelia digbyana*. Both the flower form and colour appealed to me so – like one does – I bought one. And – like one does – I lost it. So – like one does – I bought another and true to form lost that as well. Over the next few years I tried one

or two more but always with the same results. Enough is enough I thought and heard my credit card heave a sigh of relief.

Then, one day, I re-read the story of the old Scotsman Robert the Bruce and his spider. If he could persist in his tiny cave, I thought, surely I could do the same in my thirteen by ten greenhouse. With fresh determination in the summer of 2012 I bought (yet) another. Lo and behold on Thursday, 17th January 2014 – a date to go down in orchid history – it flowered. So, fellow members, when you are feeling discouraged remember the old boy in his lonely cave and TRY, TRY and TRY again. (See back cover for picture)

Alternatively you could of course pack it in altogether! **Brian W.**

Dates for your diary...

Monthly meetings at Ranmoor – 10am

Feb 9th **Mel Stephen** - Dendrobiums and allied. A good look at the whole genus.

March 9th David Menzies - Orchids of and in New Zealand.

shows/exhibits/conferences etc

Feb 23rd Harrogate OS annual Show, Britannia Hotel, Bramhope. ** SDOS exhibiting**

April 6th NEEOS Annual Show, Bowburn. ** SDOS exhibiting**

April 11-12th RHS London Orchid Show

May 11th SDOS Annual show at Chatsworth



Above:- *Dendrobium hibiki*
Below: - *Brassavola digbyana*.

