

SHEFFIELD & DISTRICT ORCHID SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

APRIL 2010



Sophronitis jongheana – formerly a *Laelia*, this is one of the shorter spiked species. This beautiful flower was on the Harrogate OS display at Bowburn

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EDITORIAL

Sadly I missed the April meeting as I had volunteered to put on the Bowburn display along with Charles & JJ. It was a good day, and we did quite well. A report follows later. My thanks to Ted & Carolyn for doing the notes and write ups.

Denise and I have just had a few days away up in the Dales – as we are prone to do. The recent good weather held, and they really need a decent shower or 2. The ground dries out quite quickly, and the rivers are quite low. Whilst we were there, we took in a walk at Ingleton, and passed a fenced off area with a few ‘protected’ orchids supplied by Kew, and planted by English Nature. The inner cages had recently been hand weeded and you can see the plants growing away nicely for the time of year. There’s nothing to say just what they are, although logic dictates they are possibly *Cyp. calceolus*. They may be real, or possibly decoys – they appear a bit shinier than the (European) plant that I have. They look to be large enough to flower this year, so it might be worth a return trip in a month or so. There’s a photo on the back page of them.

BUSINESS

The upcoming annual show at Bakewell is at the forefront of our minds. With it being our first at the new venue, we should all endeavour to make it as good as we possibly can – to encourage return visits in 2011 and beyond. So far it looks like being a good show, and all we need is plenty of plants for our own display. Setting up will commence on Saturday afternoon, and it would be appreciated if plants can be available for around 14.00 for staging. If you can't get there on Saturday, then we can make a few additions before 09.00 Sunday, but not any major architectural changes. Requests for plant labels should be with John Williams by Thursday 6th June. Car park passes will be available at unloading time.

THE TABLE SHOW

There was a good display with plenty of colour. Ted kindly gave the talk and started with *Dracula psitticina*. The plant is eleven years old and has been divided once. It started its journey to Ranmoor with 45 flowers but lost 12 en route, they were evenly spaced all around the plant with some in the centre. As Ted said - a superb thing! It is grown cool with lots of shade. Next was a delicate *Leptotes bicolor* this had 11 flowers. In the past it had produced up to 30 when grown under warm conditions. A two year spell in cool conditions produced no flowers now it is back in the warm it is flowering again. *Dendrobium aphyllum* had 6 pale mauve flowers circling the top of a 15cm cane. This plant likes to be cool at night and warm during the day. *Dendrobium Polar Fire* was very pretty and flowering well. It is growing in intermediate conditions with no winter rest. *Goodaleara* (formerly *Beallara*) *Eurostar* was just starting to flower on the first of two spikes. It was being cool grown.

Guarianthe skinneri was flowering really well and was most attractive. The sheaths on this had been cut open, peeled back and removed to assist flowering as previous flowers had rotted due to condensation inside the sheath. This strategy had obviously worked very well. There were two *Zygopetalums*. *Louisendorf* being the more delicately scented of the two and *Z. Arthur Elle* the more strongly scented.

A nice selection of *Paphs* included *Paphiopedilum tortipetalum* which has proved difficult to keep growing as the old growth starts to die as the new growth forms. A dwarf form of *P. callosum* had two flowers, and it prefers the warm side of intermediate. It is difficult to distinguish this plant from form *P. sublaeve*. *P. hirsutissimum* has a flower whose colour fades with time. The sepals are flat when they open but within 48 hours they start to twist. *P. stonei* had two flowers

on a single spike. Last of the Paphs an unidentified seedling from a new plant found in Laos. It was thought that this might be a natural hybrid as it was proving difficult to identify. It was flowering for the second time.

Some pretty Pleiones included *P. formosana* 'Oriental Splendour' this had two mauve flowers with a white lip. *P. Hekla* was all mauve; *P. Rakata* 'Shot Silk' had large attractive flower with pink petals and sepals with a yellow lip. *P. grandiflora* had large white flowers.

Catasetum tenebrosa had two spikes of dark maroon male flowers. The flowers die when the pollen has been released. The pollen has terrific adhesive powers and can be very difficult to remove if it sticks to you or to other plants. If the pollen hasn't been released before the flower starts to die, it is forcibly released then.

There were two baskets each containing a mixture of very nice and well flowered Phalaenopsis. The fact that they were grouped together had made it difficult to judge them. Ted took this opportunity to explain how plants were entered for judging. A novice who hasn't won a trophy has to own the plant for 6 months. The plant can then be entered for judging either in the novice class or in the class for the appropriate genus. Once a trophy has been won a plant has to be owned for 12 months before it can be entered in the appropriate class.

Masdevallia ignea in its pink form had quite deeply coloured flowers although they are paler than those of the original *M. ignea*. It is cool growing as is *Poroglossum dreisei* 'Eva May' a small plant with long delicate flower stems bearing interesting, unusual flowers. This plant likes 70 – 80% humidity. There were two plants of *Masd. regina*. The flowers were 20 cm long on 40cm stems. One plant had attractive orangey flowers with red dots. The other plant had dark claret coloured flowers also with red dots. However last year this plant had flowers the same colour as the first plant. The leaves are pale and naturally slightly yellow.

The final plant was *Vanda tricolour*. It looked very nice with two spikes which had developed and flowered in 4 weeks. It was the first time that the 5 year old plant had flowered. It has been grown in a basket which stands in a pot with water in the base. It had kept all its lower leaves and was well staked and tied up.

Carolyn McQueen

ARTHUR DEAKIN - 30 YEARS AN ORCHID GROWER — WHAT HAVE I LEARNT?

The answer being obviously a great deal.

Arthur holds the National Collection of Phragmipedium species. There are about 30 of these. He also has hybrids of which there are many. He has a mixed collection of plants numbering around 600, many of these are Cattleyas.

Arthur started in 1975 when newly married and living in Littleborough he and his wife visited the local garden centre to purchase plants for their new garden. It was here that his wife saw a white flowered Cymbidium which Arthur promised to buy for her birthday the following month, should it still be there. It was and he did. The plant lived in the lounge receiving lots of attention and lots of water. It soon objected and almost died. Arthur returned to the nursery. He was sent to see the owner's brother, John Rigg of the North of England Society, this led to a visit to Mansell and Hatchers. The result was the purchase of several plants especially an Oncidium which nurtured in a bedroom produced a beautiful spike and won a rosette when entered in a show. Arthur was hooked.

A move to Wakefield resulted in the sale of all Arthur's plants. A further move to Nottingham and two greenhouses signalled a new beginning. A further move to Halam has resulted in a magnificent purpose built greenhouse. More of which later.

Arthur's top tips for successful growing include a large amount of common sense which it is easy to either forget or ignore when tempted by yet another a beautiful plant. The amount of TLC you give your plants pays dividends, you can't afford to let up as the effects soon become evident. Aim to grow only plants that suit what you can do. (How difficult is this?) Try to specialise as anything else is a compromise. People are always willing to give advice, but be careful what you accept. Change gradually and try out new ideas on a few plants at a time. (So you don't kill them all). Resist the temptation to buy new plants all the time. This leads to overcrowding and possible pest and disease problems. Endeavour to get rid of some plants each year. (I don't find this is a problem, they go to the big compost heap in the sky). The social side of orchid growing is also important. I think we all appreciate this.

Arthur's current greenhouse is splendid. 25ft by 10ft built of cedar wood. Ground level louvered vents need to be covered, but in conjunction with the 6ft high ridge give excellent air movement. Automatic ventilation is used in each of the three temperature zones. Rain water is collected inside the glasshouse for watering. A gas boiler and hot water pipes supply the heat, supplemented by fan heaters. Mechanical rather than electrical thermostats are used so that power cuts have no effect. A wooden rail across the front of the bench stops plants jumping off and a 4' wide path helps to stop them being knocked off. The benching is at three different heights, enabling the tall Phrags to flower without banging their heads. Compost is down to personal preference. Bark which is currently available is of variable quality. Arthur is not too fond of rockwool and prefers to disturb plants as little as possible. He uses three temperature sensors in the greenhouse. He also

uses meters for pH, dissolved salts concentration and humidity. Too high and fungi like it, too low and the red spiders do. Arthur grows plants in clear pots so that he can monitor root growth, but stands these in black pots to prevent algal growth. He uses small adhesive coloured discs on each label, colour coded to show the year that each plant was last repotted. Each plant is lifted to gauge whether or not it needs watering and if necessary watered using a lance with a submersible pump system.

Arthur's recommended twelve plants to grow are:-

Phrag. species e.g. *caudatum*
hybrids e.g. Jason Fisher
Pleione Shantung e.g. Ducat
Cattleya hybrids e.g. Bob Betts, Virtue
species e.g. *purpurata*
Lc. Puppy Love
Coelogyne *pandurata*
Paph. species e.g. *appletonianum*
hybrids e.g. Alma Gaevert
Oncidium *tigrinum*
Dracula *bella*.
Phal. species e.g. *lueddemanniana*

The future of orchid growing as a hobby is changing. Plant breeding in this country has almost ceased commercially. Fuel costs and CITES charges are proving to be a vast burden. Maybe growth rooms with artificial lighting which is better than daylight are the way forward. Arthur is trialling the use of LED lighting sited four inches or so above seedlings. He is using 50% red 50% blue whilst a friend is using 2/3 red and 1/3 blue.

Pests are controlled using a systemic insecticide twice a year and diseases using Physan twice a year, until his supply runs out. The best thing is to water plants individually so that you are constantly on the lookout for pests and diseases rearing their ugly heads. **TC & CM**

NEEOS ANNUAL SHOW

BOWBURN 11TH APRIL

We mounted quite a good display (given the clash with the monthly Sheffield meeting) with just over 50 plants (plus foliage) of various genera, and won 5 medals. It was a fine sunny day, and public visitor numbers looked quite good.

The displays were all of a high standard – from EMOS, Cumbria, Harrogate and ourselves, together with the trade – Phoenix, Lawrence Hobbs and Dave Parkinson.

For me, the best plant was a *Cyp. fasciculatum* on Harrogate with 5 large yellow flowers on fairly short plants. The best hybrid was *Guarianthe Guatemalensis*, which was a huge plant with several spikes of light purple flowers.

Our medal winners were;

1 st	Phal. Stuartiana	Ian Dorman
1 st	Restrepia striata ‘Orange’	Hilary Hobbs
1 st	Renanthera Kileaua	Charles Ford
1 st	Odm. crispum	Ian Dorman
2 nd	Pleione Vesuvius ‘Phoenix’	Charles Ford

My thanks to Charles & JJ for setting up and taking down, as well as Ian, Hilary and Carolyn for plants.

NB. They are looking at a new venue for their 2011 show, which is likely to be held in conjunction with the Durham Botanic Gardens at the adjacent university halls. The date is likely to be brought forward to March 27th to avoid clashes elsewhere.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY...

MONTHLY MEETINGS AT RANMOOR – 2PM

May No meeting due to the show at Bakewell.

June 13th Road trip to visit John Garner’s greenhouse (and contents).
(NB. Not at Ranmoor)

OTHER SHOWS

May 1st – 3rd Raby Castle orchid show, Staindrop.

May 9th SDOS annual show at Bakewell

May 16th Cumbria OS Annual show, Carlisle



Above; Part of the SDOS display at Bowburn

Below; unknown terrestrials in the dales..., with a copper ring to repel slugs.

