

**Sheffield & District
Orchid Society
Newsletter
August 2015**



**August Plant of the Month
*Renanthera storei***

Officers of the Society

President

Brian Woodward
23, School Lane,
Stainton, Maltby,
Rotherham S66 7QX
01709 790427
Woodward.d@sky.com

Chairman

Carolyn McQueen
3, Milton Court,
Swinton,
South Yorkshire,
S64 8RE
01709 587208
carolyn.m.mcqueen@gmail.com

Treasurer & Membership Secretary

Norman Jenkins
Acorns, 24, St Erics Road,
Doncaster
DN4 6NG
01302 534900
norm@normanjenkins.plus.com

Programme Secretary, & Vice President

Ted Croot
11 Marsh House Road,
Sheffield S11 9SP
0114 236 2283
annette.ted@talktalk.net

Vice President

Julie Binks
254 Abbey Lane
Sheffield S8 0BW
0114 236 1900

Vice President & BOC Representative

Silvia Maunder
14 Whitechapel Close
Leeds LS8 2PT
0113 273 1347
whitechapel@waitrose.com

Editor and Publicity

John Garner
Dike Royd,
Dick Edge Lane,
Cumberworth
Huddersfield
HD8 8YE
01484 687605
Johngarner546@btinternet.com

Any other member

Peter Battle
Jim Charlesworth
John Lamb

Secretary

Vacancy

Librarian

Suspended

Editorial

When I write up the notes from the monthly meeting, and then start to assemble the newsletter I can quickly work out if I need to increase or shrink the text size so that it all fits properly. Usually the newsletter is 8 pages, and on occasion 12, and the relevant adjustments are made to make it all fit. This month the 'once a flood event' happened, and I had 10 pages exactly - which is neither one nor the other. If I shrink the text then it will be too small for 8 pages, and if I need to make the text bigger to fit 12 pages then it looks too big! I know - ~~some waffle~~ an Editorial will help pad it all out - so here's an update on how things are going at home.

Many of you know that I had a new orchid conservatory built earlier this year. It had to be stronger than a greenhouse as it would blow away in a storm where I now live. It is double walled up to 4' high, with heavy duty triple glazed glass on the walls and the roof. This is all in an effort to save on heating costs. The walls and floor are left just as concrete and breezeblock to help hold water for humidity. This first year is to help get

the plants back on their feet, and to get a feel for how well (or badly) certain genera will grow. Some things by necessity have to be different. Previously I have used green internal shading in Spring and Autumn, with another external layer of green shading in Summer. This meant that the light was greatly diminished, which was OK for my complex Paphs, but not quite good enough for the multiflorals, or other genera such as Cattleyas or Vandas. The new conservatory has no wood in it, so is difficult to hang the heavy shading inside, and there is no way to securely fasten anything outside. It would have to be a bit of trial and error to see what I could do. I had decided early on that I would try without the dark and heavy shade, and go for something light instead. My local garden centre had some very fine white insect screen (plastic) that I thought I would try. It is probably about 5-10% shade, and still allows the sun to create a shadow. My attempts to tape this to the plastic of the roof failed miserably, and I had to concoct a wooden framework to fasten it to. This was just after Easter, so the sun wasn't just at its peak yet. I split the plants up into the shade loving Paphs which went furthest away from the sun, and the more light tolerant plants such as Phals, Cattleyas and Vandaceous ones closer to the sun. This then allowed me to put another layer of shade up over the Paphs at the start of June, and this time I used a layer of horticultural fleece, which makes it probably 30% shaded, with no shadows. No external shading has been used.

After growing under lights and less than optimal temperatures for over 12 months I knew that few plants had grown any new roots, and many had raised the white flag that grants them a place in orchid heaven (away from my plant hell). The first plants to show recovery were the Cattleyas which responded to the increased light, as well as temperatures that go up to 30C during the day. The more robust plants (the intergeneric Cattlianthes) suddenly started to send out roots in abundance, and then an additional growth. None of these have ever grown more than a single growth before in 15-20 years. The less robust ones started root growth more slowly, but are now going well, and may start to get back to their best next year. The Phals and Vandas were next to start to send out new roots, and the Phals are now starting to come back into flower, with taller spikes and more flowers. Even the Dendrobiums are doing better with the light.

The Paphs are recovering more slowly as they have no obvious method of showing good growth by fatter bulbs etc. They are growing new roots, but I still have quite a few plants in the sick bay. Most I have left undisturbed

to recover if they can, but I now think that I will report them which will either kill or cure them.

Despite the earlier heat wave the temperature only got an odd degree above 30C, and this is achieved naturally most sunny days, and is usually above 20 on all the others. The triple glazing keeps a decent night time minimum, so I'm not expecting any winter nightmares unless the electric goes off. I haven't had any leaf burn or scorching, but some of the Phal leaves are growing more of a darker shade.

There's usually something that doesn't fit, and my cooler growing plants such as Oncidiums don't like it, and a Coelogyne has already gone into the raffle. By and large, it is working well, probably a bit above my expectations. Seeing how it gets through the winter is of course the next checkpoint, and then I will know more of what I can fill in the existing gaps.

Business

With no committee meeting this month there is little to pass on to members. There will however be a meeting next month, with the main topic concerning Chatsworth in 2016, and how best to publicise it. There is a general consensus that the publicising/advertising didn't meet requirements (some of this was deliberate in order to save cost). All members will no doubt have some views on this – good or bad, and in advance of the committee meeting please can you all have a think, and write down your thoughts on an email to any of the committee members. The 2016 annual show has now been booked and confirmed as Sunday 29th May.

Jeff Bagnall is now out of hospital and back home to continue back on the road to recovery. He has been out of the house for a bit of exercise and we hope that he has been able to catch some of his colourful Disas still in bloom.

The next show that we will exhibit at will be at EMOS on Oct 11th (which is why the date for the October meeting has changed). Details of who, what, when, where etc will be given next month, but in advance of that, if you have plants that you think will be in bloom at that time, and you require labels printing for, then please can you let John Garner know as he will be printing the labels. A simple email will suffice.

The annual photographic ‘competition’ will be held in October. Several entries have already been received, and many more are encouraged. It is mainly a bit of fun, and plants can belong to anyone! Entries should go to Ian Wilson at Ian@boatsails.com. He has also set up a small website at wilsonsdm.com with details etc. - NB this is still 'under construction', but will be completed soon.

The Table Show

This month’s commentary was given by Ted Croot who being in a mischievous mood started at the right hand end of the table (this is a nuisance to the editor as his notes etc are made in the interval, always going from right to left, then enhanced with relevant data as the commentary progresses. I’ll have to write his journal upwards and right to left to get my own back then – Ed.)

First up was *Renanthera storei*, a magnificent plant approaching 5’ tall. The height is achieved with growth over many years, and the fact that it has leaves all the way down to the base indicates that it is in very good health. It has roots all the way down the stem, and these are sprayed every day. It had a single flower spike close to the top and this had several branches of perfect scarlet flowers, with several buds still to open. Scoring 25 points this was the plant of the month (see front cover). Adjacent to this plant was the equally tall *Vanda coerulea*. This is also in very good health with lots of leaves down to the base and plenty of roots. This is grown in intermediate conditions with a daily misting as well. The single flower spike went upwards at the top of the plant and had a strong cluster of large blue flowers of a deeper shade than normal. Although it hasn’t flowered for a couple of years it has obviously found the right spot in the greenhouse as a further spike is also developing. A final *Vanda* completed this group, and this wasn’t quite as tall, but still well over a yard tall. This was *Bangsai Queen* which we saw earlier in the year (February). The health of the plant was the same as the previous 2, and it had grown 2 large flower spikes with large scarlet flowers of good form and shape. If there was a fault to be seen then it is possibly that the flowers are quite closely spaced...

Epipactis palustris is a UK hardy orchid that can be seen growing in sand dunes, and a pot full of them made quite a nice show. They tend to be in flower at this midsummer time of the year. This is later than the more common *gigantea* that is taller and more colourful – “a bit drab, boring

and insignificant in comparison” was the owner’s verdict. “If you didn’t stop to look at it, you wouldn’t tell that it was actually an orchid, and even then it isn’t obvious” he added. *Coelogyne asperata* was a strongly grown plant with the final spike out of 4 now in full flower. The spike was arching with a lot of medium sized pretty flowers of pale yellow with an attractive lip of white and brown. It is a tall growing plant with large leaves. It is a parent of *Burfordiense* that we saw a couple of months ago, but is difficult to see where it had an effect on the flower. *Coel. tomentosa* (syn. *massangeana*) is another large plant, with 2 very long flower spikes that are very soft and droop rather than arch. It is seen at its best when hanging up, but the tall leaves often make it difficult. The flowers are smallish, and are a dull yellow shade of brown with a bit of white on the lip. It is enhanced by having a slight sweet scent.

Catasetum Fanfair (expansum x saccatum) (see back cover) was a very well grown plant with 3 strong and long arching spikes containing lots of colourful male flowers (the female ones are quite drab by comparison). These are mainly yellow with red markings, and unfortunately face downwards, so don’t show themselves off to their best. The pollinia are notably very sticky, and attach easily to birds, bats or insects, and it is somewhat of a mystery on how these are then transferred to the female flowers. If the pollen isn’t collected within the time window then the flower will eject them with force hopefully to land in just the right place (it may never have been successful!). *Catasetum Brazilian Spring ‘Bella Vista’ (fimbriatum x macrocarpum)* was also well grown with just a single spike with a slightly shorter arching spike with smaller flowers. These are yellow with red bars and blotches that also face downwards.

Paph. godefroyae was a very nice example with an open flower of a good shape and markings (*godefroyae* has spots on the pouch unlike *leucochilum* that we saw last month which is spotless). *Oncidium McBean's Leila* is a smallish plant that was sporting 2 decent spikes of well spaced purple flowers with a mainly white lip (see back cover). It was previously a *Wilsonara*, but has the classic looks of an *Odontoglossum*. *Phal. Golden Jaguar* is a very nice pale yellow with decent shape and spacing - just right for any collection. *Phal. (formerly Doritis) pulcherrima* had 2 spikes of quite small flowers of an intense purple. *Pulcherrima* means ‘very beautiful’, and it is an apt description for this clone. It can be variable in both shape and colour. The final plant was *Rlc. Magic Meadow ‘Napolean’* which was still in the process of opening. It will have 2 large flowers of pale yellow with some white and red on the

lip. Hopefully it may still be in flower for next month, we will need to keep our fingers crossed! Many thanks Ted.

August Plant of the Month

Renanthera storei

storei is said to be the largest of approx. fifteen species which comprise the genus. It is native to the Far East, the Philippines in particular. If it continues to thrive and grows to anything like the height claimed for it, it will become a problem at some time in the future. The best thing therefore is to enjoy it whilst I can. This is the second flowering, and it is already much taller - so we shall see. It had been in flower for four weeks at the time of the meeting – a welcome splash of bright colour.

This plant was given me about five years ago by Hope Sun and Howard of Water Orchids, Taiwan as appreciation for help I was able to give them with a visa – (passport visa NOT credit card) applications. My immediate impulse was to decline as being unnecessary and too much for so little. It was whispered in my ear that refusing a gift might give offence so I gratefully accepted.

It grows under intermediate conditions with the best light I can give it being sited on the south facing side of the greenhouse. Despite that it has, fortunately, not suffered from leaf burn perhaps helped by permanent bubble lining and summer aluminium shading.

Whilst watering and feeding are basically normal the exception is that it is sprayed daily particularly the aerial roots. The plant is situated close to my Angraecum collection which is sprayed daily thus becoming a simple routine. **Brian Woodward**

Selected Cattleyas - Mike Armstrong

Mike has spoken to us about Cattleyas before - partially in August 2013 (with the accent on photography), and a full review in April 2009. He is a member of the East Midlands OS, and has been growing orchids for over 30 years. He set up Mikandra Orchids in 1989, and after 20 years in the trade he has returned to the ranks of the amateur grower. His hopes of having a national plant collection of Cattleyas have now come to fruition

although he has some serious doubts on whether it is worth it! Mike grows in 2 newly built houses to try and provide the different environments that the species require. He has lectured on orchids for many years, even after he retired from the professional ranks. He has other interests outside of Cattleyas, and is now winding down his speaking commitments prior to being removed from the BOC list of speakers. He has 2 main reasons for this. First is purely down to the time it can take, although he may continue with a few talks within his 'local' catchment area. Secondly his talks are all on old fashioned slides which take time to put together rather than the more current media of digital projection - as a former professional photographer quality is a serious consideration and he has thousands of slides to scan, convert and then correct.

As an Amateur Mike has cleared out a lot of the old plants to concentrate on the species, and the better clones within them that he can get hold of - subject to cost of course. He won't pay 'silly money'. Many of the finer clones are sourced through Germany, and 2 nurseries in particular. These are Lucke (www.orchideen-lucke.de) and Elsener (www.elsner-orchideen.de) who are quite reasonable through their ability to import in bulk - mainly from Aranda in Brazil (www.aranda.com.br cannot be verified - Ed.) who are probably the largest Cattleya species breeder in the world.

Cattleyas were introduced into cultivation in 1818 by William Swainson with *Epi. labiata*. Epidendrum was split up later, with a new group being Cattleya, named after the famous William Cattley. Some species are easy to grow, and others are difficult. They come from South America from sea level up to 5,000 feet, so encompass cool-warm growing with a range of humidity, usually high light levels, lots of water, and rest periods.

Since his last talk the number of Cattleya species has increased from 56 to around 140, and this makes a full review impossible within the available time. This is down to the botanists, scientists and nomenclaturists who have carried out a full DNA analysis, and moved species around the genres. As a result Mike now covered a few notable species.

intermedia is a species from South Brazil, where it grows in warm conditions during the daytime and coolish at night. It is one of the bifoliate, and needs higher humidity. It isn't a species that needs a rest, but tends to grow all year around. Generally it is whitish with some red to the lip, but it can be highly variable with spots or speckling a common feature on a base from white to pink, and coerulea. Notable forms include 'flamia/flamea' which has matching pink tips to the petals, and 'aquinii'

which has the petal colours but more in the shape of the lip (a type of pelorism). It usually produces a cluster of several medium large flowers.

skinneri is now in the genus Guarianthe rather than Cattleya, and is also a bifoliate. The clone 'Casa Luna' is very vigorous and produces large clusters of medium sized flowers. In a 20" pot it gets very heavy, so when Mike says that you can't over water it especially in Summer it removes the need for lifting to gauge whether water is required. It is also a heavy feeder. Generally it is pink, but variable in shade and shape. There are forms of albanism with a clean white trumpet or red in the centre. 'Vera' is a good clone. Coerulean forms also vary. Good light is essential.

aurantiaca is also now in Guarianthe. It carries up to a dozen smallish orange flowers, sometimes with some spotting. The colour will vary and yellow or alba forms are available. Mike says there are 2 very good clones in the orange range as well as the lemon colour. The smaller size and bright colours make it very useful in hybridising. It grows best in an intermediate-warm house.

Guarianthe **Guatemalensis** is a natural (and manmade) hybrid between *skinneri* and *aurantiaca*, and is the national flower of Guatemala. It is naturally variable in shape and colour depending on parental clones used. Most of the available clones are very nice.

guttata comes from the deep south of Brazil close to Argentina where it can be found growing in sand dunes in full sun. It has a pleasant perfume. It will take lots of water as naturally it gets frequent and very heavy rain. In cultivation it benefits from daily misting. As it grows close to the sea it is a bit cooler, and if treated properly is an easy grower. It is quite variable in colour in the medium sized flowers. Often the base colour is green with brown speckling, often densely. The lip will be white-pink with a pink tip. The alba form is plain green with a white lip, whereas the coerulea form has some freckling with a blue tint to the lip.

labiata was the first of the Cattleyas as mentioned above, and as with all the others is quite variable in form and colour. After its discovery by Swainson it was lost in the wild, especially after Swainson mysteriously disappeared. It wasn't rediscovered for a further 70 years until seen close to Rio de Janeiro. Some shapes are disappointing as are some colours. Some clones are very showy, and all have a slightly frilly lip. Generally they are shades of pink, but also appear as peach, alba & coerulea. They tend to be best when started in growth in January and develop their sheaths by early summer when they naturally pause. They then flower in autumn. It is a relatively easy grower and good for the first time species grower.

aureum and *dowiana* are very closely related and frequently confused. *aurea* is the yellow colour with heavy markings, whereas *dowiana* is more of a lemon shade with less intense markings - it is more obvious when seen together. *dowiana* needs to be warmer, wetter & more humid. *aurea* is much easier to grow, so if you see one at a show it is likely to be this species. Both are of course a bit variable, and can be peach or pink on the petals.

gaskelliana comes from Columbia & Venezuela where it grows at altitudes of 2,000-3,500'. At these latitudes it is a bit cooler during the day, and a lot cooler at night. It gets good light, and is quite an easy plant to grow. It is generally pink with yellow & purple markings on the lip, but varies from albanistic to almost blue with various lip colourations.

schroederae (closely related to *warneri*) flowers from late spring to summer so is quite useful for providing some colour at what is usually a quiet time for flowers. The flowers are slightly perfumed, and are variable in light shades of pink to white, with a pale blue coerulea as well. As a species it likes a rest over winter with less water than usual.

Whilst the talk is mainly about species, Mike does have a favourite hybrid, and this is Bow Bells. It was made by Black & Flory and registered in 1945. There is a story around this in that the hybrid was made, and several seedlings were exported to America. With some concerns over the UK being invaded during the war, many of the stud plants were shipped to the US, but were sadly lost when the cargo ship was torpedoed. This included the parents of Bow Bells, and once the hybrid became famous all attempts to recreate it were impossible. There are many famous clones, and the hybrid has gone on to become the most awarded of all the Cattleyas (49 in the USA alone) - all from the original '200 seedling tray' exported early on. It is a flower that is perfect in shape and colour, and is also easy to grow. "If you don't have one then attempt to get one!" It has been used for further hybridisation, and is in the background of many famous whites including Bob Betts (x *mossiae*) with almost as many awards.

Some questions were asked on supplementary lighting in winter. Mike doesn't think it is worth it as high intensity lights need to be run for the whole day and not just at the start and end. As most will benefit from a bit of a rest then it is easy to leave as they are. He also uses a paint shade (Redenheat) during the summer (from May) which has gold flecks in it. It is expensive, but when measured on a dull day it was brighter inside the greenhouse than outside. A further tip on maintaining light is to paint the benches white, and his floor is grey.

Further information is available on the internet with several sites offering hints, tips, growing information and importantly photos - though sometimes these may not be as correct as they may seem. www.orchidspecies.com has over 18,000 pictures. www.chadwickorchids.com - Art Chadwick & son breed Cattleyas in the USA and have divisions for sale. They are famous for their 'First Lady' hybrids that are named after US President's wives. www.orquideasnoape.com.br is the website of Mauro Rosim in Brazil (mainly in Portuguese). www.ecuagenera.com is the website of Ecuagenera (allegedly the largest orchid nursery in South America) who often sell plants in the UK. www.orchidsperuflora.com is the website of Peruflora, another of the largest orchid nurseries in South America. www.carterandholmes.com is the website of another USA breeder of mainly hybrids.

Dates for your diary...

Monthly meetings at Ranmoor – 10am

Sept 13th **John Garner** will show the highlights of the EOC which took place earlier this year (Easter) at the RHS Halls in London.

Oct 18th Photography competition.
NB. note the changed date

shows/exhibits/conferences etc

Sep 6th BOGA & Darlington show, Josephine Butler College, Durham.

Oct 11th East Midlands OS – Radcliffe on Trent
*** SDOS Exhibiting ***

Society website - www.sheffieldorchids.org



Above - *Catasetum Fanfair*

Below - *Oncidium McBean's Leila*

