

SHEFFIELD & DISTRICT ORCHID SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2012



**JANUARY PLANT OF THE MONTH
COELOGYNE CRISTATA**

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EDITORIAL

In last month's newsletter I omitted to mention that January was nominally our 40th anniversary meeting, and Richard had kindly had a cake made and decorated for that purpose. The event was reported in the Sheffield Telegraph.

This month's speaker presented me with a serious challenge to write up, with so many of the terrestrials going through a renaming process over the last few years, and it has probably been the slowest bit of Orchid writing I've ever done. I hope it was all worthwhile.

BUSINESS

Arrangements for the forthcoming Harrogate OS show at Bramhope were discussed – a short report follows later. The next show will be the NEEOS at Bowburn on 1st April. 'Old Stuff' is still required for our Chatsworth show.

A trip to the BOC at Writhlington School has been roughly priced up, but depends on the numbers travelling. Further discussions needed.

Anyone wanting tickets for PIOS this year need to contact Chris Barker.

Following the meeting we have been informed of a couple of bereavements within the Orchid community. Bob Harris was a Birmingham stonemason who chiselled the two plaques we use for SDOS displays (one for UK shows and one for foreign), and he died on Saturday, Feb 18th. Bob used to be a regular on Ruth Brown's trips to Germany and continued with us when I took over, only giving up when he couldn't walk very well. Peter White was a good friend to him and used to take him to meetings of the Central Orchid Society. The second one is Allan Rowntree who was a member of Cumbria O.S. and always turned up with their displays at shows in the north (including ours) until he too became too ill to continue. He died on the morning of Feb 19th. Our thoughts go to their families. TC

THE TABLE SHOW

John Garner had volunteered for this month's show (mainly as he had brought several plants). He started on the left with a specimen *Coelogyne cristata* – a huge and well grown plant with a mass of flowers. This was the plant of the month. Next was a *cristata* hybrid, a much smaller plant, but still with several drooping spikes of white flowers with different coloured throats. A further *cristata* was the alba form, and it differs from the standard form by having no yellow pigmentation in the throat. It was interesting that this clone had a rhizome that was about 1-2" between bulbs, so was quite straggly.

Pterostylis curta is usually seen at this time of the year. This terrestrial grows rapidly in autumn, producing its hooded green flowers in late winter, and then dies back to be dormant during the summer – which in its Australian home would be very hot. *Lycaste consobrina* is a plant that flowers whilst leafless, and in this case produced 6 short spikes of single yellow flowers of a reasonable size.

Phrag. *Ainsworthii* (syn. *Calurum*) was a modest size with a single pale pink flower. Paph. *insigne* 'Harefield Hall' is a notable clone of this species, and is a little bit bigger and stronger colour than the norm. Paph. *Ferox* x *primulinum* had produced a good strong flower. Crossing complexes onto a small sequential flowering species can produce varied progeny, but this was a strong yellow almost round flower. Paph. Vintage Harvest 'Cheryl' was rounder and taller, and was pale yellow with a white halo. Paph. Moulin de Nicholle is an EYOF hybrid with 2 good growths

and a large round yellow/tan flower that is very pretty. Paph. Hunter's Point 'Terry' is a large but cupped tan flower. Paph. British Concorde 'Chilton' is a lovely smooth tan-red round flower on a tall stem. Two similar whites were Lippefair and Freckles both quite short with modest sized spotted flowers.

Rossioglossum (formerly Onc.) *ampliatum* is a smallish plant with 2 longish spikes of closely spaced yellow flowers with some brown markings. It will look spectacular once it gets bigger. Oncidopsis (formerly Burr.) Stefan Isler 'Lava Flow' had an arching spike of 10 flowers of a strong red with an orange lip. An unnamed hybrid had a tall spike of several yellow flowers with mottled red colouring.

C. Dinard is an old hybrid from Charlesworth that has stood the test of time. It has large pink flowers with a purple veined lip that is very attractive. Slc. Luisa's Love was a pleasant compact form with a deep pink flower. Rcv. David Sander is a spiky leaved plant with a long spike of a single white flower of spiky petals and a large round lip – quite unusual.

Phal Ariadne is an old hybrid with small white flowers on a modest spike. Phal Zuma Camreal was a medium sized white on an arching spike. The final plant was Angraecum Crestwood with 3 large white spiky flowers that last several weeks. These are flowers of some substance and highly glossed. The plant is very healthy and vigorous and will continue to improve as it gets larger.

PLANT OF THE MONTH

COELOGYNE CRISTATA

This plant originally came from the collection of the late Neville Brown so has been in my possession for around 10 years. It was a specimen then, and has just got bigger, moving from a big pot to a larger one, and now to a 'bucket', and weighs almost too much to move unnecessarily.

The plant comes from Northern India at elevations of 5000-8000' so suits cool growing conditions. February/March is the main flowering period, and specimens are frequently seen. Its habit is quite compact (short rhizome) for the genus which make specimens easily possible. For whatever reason this plant didn't flower last year, but has more than made up for it this time around with flowers most of the way around it which are well spaced. **Trevor Turner**

A MEDITERRANEAN ODYSSEY

GIANPIERO FERRARI

Gianpiero is Italian by birth, and calls himself an orchid twitcher. He grows a lot of European terrestrials, and has visited sites across southern Europe from Spain in the west to Turkey in the east. This odyssey has taken over half a lifetime with co-ordinating holidays to fit in with flowering times of particular plants allowing for latitude and altitude. The part covered today is mainly Italy, starting at Monte Carlo moving to Abruzzo, Gargano peninsula, Sardinia, and Corsica.

Depending on the botanists, there are now over 700 species of *Ophrys*, which is too many to be realistic, but if they can be distinguished then they are there to be 'collected'. (NB. Orchidwiz lists 112 species and 337 natural hybrids as well as 113 manmade hybrids).

Monte Carlo in May is more noted for fine sunny weather and Grand Prix, but once you get away from the waterfront and the Grimaldi palace and into the local hillsides you will find a lot of different species of *Ophrys*. *splenda* is common, as is *philippeii* – a species that was once thought extinct. Whilst hunting for orchids it is also important to note the variety of other plant life here. There are aquilegias, crocus, hellebores, gentians and fritillarias on this dryish landscape.

North of Monte Carlo you move into the Alps and can see *Orchis spitzelii* with its plain leaves and purple flowers as well as the early spider orchid.

Abruzzo is a wild and beautiful upland area with wild bears and wolves. In the Valle di Rosa you can see Chamoix jumping around. It is quite different from the Alps. *Orchis pallens* is abundant with its yellow blooms, and in the Sasso valley there are millions of saffron crocuses. *Cyp. calceolus* grows here which is a rarity south of the Alps. The landscape is littered with deserted villages now starting to decay. These used to be the home of the sheep farmers now moved away. What they have left behind is meadows rich in flora as well as insects, and it has become a mecca for butterfly watchers. *Orchis tridentata* with its pink ball like cluster of flowers thrives here as does *Orchis fusciflora* – similar to our own UK early purple orchid. Hybrids between these and others have now produced a range of colours with pink and yellows to the fore. *Cephalanthera* thrive here and there are 4 different types of the lizard orchid as well as the birds nest orchid (named after the roots). *Dact. sambucina* is the most common orchid here – both the red and yellow

forms (yellow is more common), and often it is difficult to cross meadows without stepping on them.

Moving east to the Gargano peninsula you can find over 70 species of orchid. Fields are filled with *Asphodel* – both white and yellow. *Ophrys gargarica* and *tenthredinifera* are common as is *biscutella* (syn. *argolica*) and *urteae* (yellow). *archipelagi* (syn. x *arachnitiformis*) is a plant from Yugoslavia that has crossed the Adriatic Sea. *apulica* (syn. *insectifera*) is a large flowered species, and *bertolonii* is varied, but generally has a darker lip. *Spiranthes romanzoffiana* with its tall white spire of flowers is found here as well. *Orchis quadripunctata* is called the 4 spotted orchid, and *O.* (Syn. *Neotinea*) *lactea* is the milky orchid, and is pale white to pink. The burnt tip orchid can be found here as well as in Derbyshire.

The southern portion of Sardinia is a fairly barren place that supports a lot of Euphorbias and on the coast a lot of Flamingos as well as other birds both local and migrants. You also need to take care as wild boar roam freely. *Ophrys incubacea* (syn. *sphegodes*) - the black spider orchid is common. *O. chestermanii* (syn. *fuciflora*) is endemic to this island. *O. morisii* is unusual in reaching 2' tall with up to 18 flowers. *O. bombylifera* is well named as the small bumblebee orchid. *O. densiflora* (syn. *Neotinea maculata*) is tiny reaching just 3" tall with plain flowers. *Orchis longicruris* (syn. *italica*) has long spurs within attractive purple and white clusters of flowers. *Serapis lingua* can be found around the road verges with its deep red flowers and a 'tongue'. *Dact. cordigera* is a larger plant with heart shaped flowers. *Orchis grandiflora* (syn. *Galearis rotundifolia*) has attractive white flowers with a few purple spots. *Anacamptis papilionacea* is variable, but is generally pink to purple and is eye catching with large clumps with large flowers.

The final stop on the road trip is Sicily which despite its volcano has limestone areas that the Romans used for burials. There are a lot of gently sloping meadows with wildflowers and insects. In Pantolia you will find *Ophrys discors* (syn. *apifera*) - the late spider orchid with its pink petals. *O. calliantha* (syn. *fuciflora*) is also a pink spider form. *O. oxyrrhynchos* (syn. *apifera*) is quite different as it is white/green with a pink spur on the lip. *O. incubacea* is present and the yellow flowered *O. sicula* is common. *O. panormitana* is more easily spotted as it starts to flower in February! *O. archimedeae* (syn. *lutea*) has tiny yellow flowers and only reaches 3-4" tall, so is easily missed, however, its benefit is that it is late flowering (the late spider orchid).

Orchis *brancifortii* is a small flowered pink flower. *O. fusca* (syn. *purpurea*) has around 70 forms which is far too many, but varies from white to purple. *O. militaris* is mainly white but has a long purple tongue. *Dact. markusii* (syn. *romana*) is varied from white to red and yellow. It has short flower spikes, and is endemic within the local sweet chestnut forests which are a mass of cyclamen in April.

This isn't an inexhaustive list of plants, and many of the other European orchids can be found, especially in the genus of Orchis – such as the Man (*O. anthropophora*), Naked Man and monkey (*O. simia*) orchids.

Only a couple of questions were asked at the end, and Gianpiero was rewarded with a hearty round of applause.

HARROGATE OS ANNUAL SHOW

A substantial display was mounted at Bramhope this year, with almost more plants than would reasonably fit on the tables – a highly commendable effort by the members, and thanks to all who lent plants.

We won 3 awards this year as follows –

Lycaste & allied	1 st	Lyc. campbellii	Ted Croot
Phal. hybrids	1 st	Phal. Pink Bonnet	Charles Ford
Paph. Hybrids	AM	Paph. Rocco Tower	John Garner

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY...

MONTHLY MEETINGS AT RANMOOR – 10AM

Mar 11th Steve Manning - James Bateman

Apr 28th Chris Purver, EYOF - Orchid Hybridisation.

Note change of date - Saturday at 14.00

OTHER SHOWS

Mar 16-17th RHS Orchid Show, Westminster

Apr 1st NEEOS show at Bowburn. SDOS exhibiting

Society website - www.sheffieldorchids.org



Above: - *Angraecum Crestwood*

Below: - *Lycaste consobrina*

