Sheffield & District Orchid Society Newsletter June 2015

Coelogyne *pandurata*
June Plant of the month

Business

Thanks were due to all who helped out at Chatsworth, with many named for outstanding efforts. At the end of the day we made a small loss of £80 with fewer attendees.

We have been informed that Jeff Bagnall is seriously ill and in intensive care. We wish him well for a speedy recovery.

NB. Our October meeting will be the photograph competition, and following a number of recent shows members are encouraged to send their best ones in to Ian Wilson prior to the event.

The Natural History Museum is conducting an online survey on UK orchids and want online pictures of plants in situ. Members receiving the electronic newsletter should have a flyer attached which they can open to find links etc.

The Table Show

This month's table commentary was given by John Garner, who started on the left with a small group of Vandas. In the first 2 one was a metre tall *coerulea* with huge flowers, and the other was the almost miniature (form. Neofinetia) *falcata* 'Kibana'. It is hard to compare the 2 from a size point of view, and it is the botanists who have analysed the DNA that led to the genus combination. The *coerulea* was very well grown with leaves all the way down the stem indicating its good health, and the flowers were very large tessellated blue and well spaced. The *falcata* is a yellow form. The *falcatas* come from Japan where they are highly prized, especially the variegated forms, as well as the non whites. Strangely for the vandaceous plants this will grow in a cold house, however it has the narrow leaves typical of those species that grow close to the equator. *coerulea* has quite wide and flattish leaves, as it can be less tropical from the eastern Himalayas, and acreoss into Thailand. It is best grown in intermediate conditions. The third 'Vanda' was Papilionanda Little Blossom (Papilionanthe Miss Joaquim x V. falcata) (see back cover). Miss Joaquim is a very well known flower in Singapore where it is the national flower. It is a primary hybrid of Ple. *hookeriana* and Ple. *teres*, both of which have almost round leaves (they start off as a standard V shape, then curl around to minimise exposure to the sun as they grow almost on the equator. It is used often as a hedging plant locally (far more attractive than privet) where it gets trimmed regularly and rooted bits can simply get thrown away. The flower is medium sized and pink. When crossed to *falcata* as in this case it becomes more of a manageable size, with slightly smaller flowers, and with a long deep spur. NB. *coerulea* along with any other Vandas have no spur.

Galeandra *batemanii* is an annual visitor to the table with a cluster of smallish bell shaped pink flowers. It is a deciduous member of the Cymbidium tribe that has a lengthy dry rest period. Thunia Gattonensis is now a relatively common plant that can sometimes be found in Garden Centres (although it is a primary hybrid you almost never see either parent). It has great vigour and grows thick fleshy canes with a cluster of mainly white flowers at the top with a coloured lip. After flowering the leaves will drop off and after a 3-4 month rest it will start the cycle again. Sobralia *lucasiana* is quite a compact species at a metre tall compared to some of the others like the *macrantha* that we saw at Chatsworth. It had a single colourful flower (pale pink & yellow) that lasts for a few days then is followed by another 2-3 after a week or so. Each stem can last in flower up to a month. Maxillariella *procurrens* is an interesting variation on the Maxillarias. Usually these have squat bulbs on a short rhizome with flowers around the edge of the pot. This one has a long and upright rhizome of several inches, and now after just a few years growth the plant is about 20" tall. It has only previously produced a single flower, but this year it has gone into overdrive with flowers coming from most of the backbulbs as well as the current growths. The reddish flowers were described as uninteresting by the (very honest) grower, but on checking the Orchidwiz database there are some clones that have some decent shapes and paler colours. Dact. *fuschii* is one of the UK hardy orchids that has been outside all winter, and these seem to be a bit late this year. It has flowered a paler shade of pink as well. Another near hardy is Disa Kewensis although frost is best avoided for this South African hybrid. It has a good number of medium sized orange flowers rather than the usual red shades we tend to see.

C. Memoria Paul T. Yamada 'Corpus Christi' AM/AOS x Old Whitey 'Mount Empress' AM/AOS is a large white of good substance that is now in its tenth week. It is white with some yellow on the throat. The famous white C. Bow Bells is a grandparent on both sides. A more compact Cattleya is Ctt. Suksan's Fancy with 2 medium sized flowers of pink and white. It has been grown from the flask and is extremely vigorous. It already has 2 new growths so has great hopes of becoming a floriferous specimen. C. Walkerinter is an album form from C. *walkeriana* x C. *intermedia*. Sadly it isn't quite open fully but should be perfect for the July meeting. Gcy. Kyoguchi was a very slender plant with dainty small orange flowers. It will get a bit bigger in due course, but is quite nice as it is. Ctyh. Newberry Butterscotch (C. *purpurata* x Ctyh. Westconnett Gold) is another compact grower with a single tall spike with 2 open flowers and 3 buds. The orange flowers are modest in size (compared to *purpurata*) but have a perfect 'Laelia' shape and colour.

In the slippers Paph. *niveum* was a just opened line bred species reared in Taiwan. It had a good shape and white colour with very fine freckling. Ferox x primulinum is a mix of a large round yellow with a smaller sequential yellow species. It had a single flower that is just what would be expected. Phrag. Memoria Dick Clements is a young plant that has been well grown and is now starting to produce some good shaped flowers of a scarlet shade.
Masd. *coccinea* f. alba is quite a tall plant with the flowers just getting past their best (see back cover). It is an impressive species with a fine purple example almost stealing the show at Malvern last weekend. Masd. Shuttryana is a hybrid from coccinea (but not the white form) and *caudata*. It is a pointed triangular shaped pink flowered hybrid. Stelis hutchisonii is a small and tidy pleuro with a lot of very tiny pale yellow flowers 1mm in size that need a magnifying glass to see in any detail.
The final group of plants were 3 Coelogynes. Mooreana was the first and this is a large growing plant with a vigorous habit that rapidly forms specimen sized plants. There is a shortish upright spike of white flowers. Burfordiense is an oft seen large flowered Coelogyne. This was increasing at a rapid rate and although there was only a single spike this year there are likely to be more than 4 next year. The long pendant spike had many yellow flowers with black markings on the lip. Finally was *pandurata* which is a parent of Burfordiense. This was an even larger plant with long arching spikes of yellow flowers with black markings on the lip. It had 3 spikes in bloom with at least 1 more to follow, and was adjudged to be the Plant of the Month (see front cover). It is virtually indistinguishable from Burfordiense, the only noticeable difference being shorter leaves.

June plant of the Month
Coelogyne pandurata

The plant was found for me about four years ago by Chantelle's brother in Taiwan and sent over in one of his consignments to her. He often has a "search and find" list for me but is struggling with my latest request. This plant was quite a good size at the time by has just grown and grown ever since – so much so that it is now too large and heavy to be suspended as it initially was. Bench level temperature is probably rather lower than in the hanging, roof position but, so far, has not had any adverse effect. This year it has three good, multi-flowered spikes and a fourth about to flower in the immediate future. It grows under intermediate conditions (I go down

to about 55F overnight min.). Feeding is normal but it does not "go short" of water being a large plant in the latest bark which can dry out a little.
It is one of the parents of Coel. Burfordiense which was adjacent to it on the Table Show and remarkably similar in appearance. I have the other parent – Coel. *asperata* - currently in spike so it will be interesting to look and compare. **Brian Woodward**.

Unpredictable Pleurothallids

Steve Manning is a well known UK grower of the miniature 'New World Orchids'. This covers an area from the Caribbean in the east, through Central America and down to Columbia and Ecuador in the south. Generally most are found in the mountains of the northern part of South America, with very few down towards sea level. Most are therefore cool growing, but some do tolerate warmer conditions. The climate tends to make the Pacific coast cooler, with the Atlantic coast and Caribbean being warmer. Over the years Steve has built up a huge collection of plants and is now considered an expert in the subject and has recently written a huge book on the topic. The collection became a National Collection some years ago, and due to its size is now held at Chester Zoo.
Pleurothallids have been known since at least 1731 when they first appeared as line drawings. They are characterised by not having any psuedobulbs, but have a short rhizome that produces single leaves that can each produce the flower(s). It is a huge and varied range of species totalling around 3,500, and is consequently impossible to cover in such a small amount of time. It is also hard to know just where to begin, and where to end, and the middle could be just as difficult! The talk was punctuated by a number of old fashioned line drawings of humans in situations. The first was on 'discovering a bad smell' as 2 of the smelliest species were shown. These are Masd. *fragrans* and Masd. *caesia* stinks like rotting flesh. Interestingly for the genus neither of these is hirsute. Masd. *glandulosa* however is pleasantly scented and hairy. Many however are hairy and have no scent or are scented and not hairy. Both the Stelis and Dracula genuses are very hairy.
Stelis *cypripedioides* is interesting as it has more of a pouch than a lip, as does Stelis *pilosa*. Both use the pouch in the same saw as a slipper to trap the tiny pollinating insect with inward facing hairs, other than at the rear where they point upwards to aid escape through the pollinia and stamen. Stelis *rodrigoi* has a hinged lip that attracts the pollinator, and then tilts them towards the reproductive organs, where it either collects or deposits pollen prior to escape. It has to be the right pollinator otherwise the 'trap' doesn't work and the

insect is free to leave. Restrepia *pandurata* (meaning Violin) has tiny thin petals with globules at the end that emit pheromones to attract pollinators. Masdevallia *wurdackii* has a delicate hinged lip to attract and 'trap' insects.

The Zootrophions are an odd genus with hooded flowers. Frequently the flowers never look as if they open, but tend to have slits down the sides that allow the pollinators to crawl in. This can even include slugs that have been found in the flowers. Often the slits are interpetal gaps (eg. *hirtzii*) with the tips being fused. Masd. *lucernula* and *notosibirica* have long tubular flower that possibly uses a hummingbird to pollinate.

Many Masdevallias produce single flowers; however there can be great variations such as *ovaavis* that has a cluster of almost hooded flowers. *brachyantha* tends to have 2 flowers as does *tovarensis*. *biflora* (obviously) has 2 flowers. Sometimes species can be described as having 2 flowers on all spikes in one flowering, only for it to produce single flowers the following year. It is thought that it is a chemical imbalance that causes this.

Speklinia (formerly Pths.) *grobyi* will produce long flower spikes with well spaced flowers whereas Platystele *examen-culicum* can resemble a swarm of mosquitos despite most of the Platysteles tending to produce umbels. Stelis *yungasensis* (syn. *purpurata*) is just about the smallest plant in the group - you need to be careful not to mislay it.

Lepanthes are an interesting genus as they tend to have variegated foliage - *calodictyon* is a good example. *caloura* is more bizarre as it has plain leaves with one side green and the other brown, then they swap colours. Dryadella *paranensis* (syn. *lilliputiana*) has small flowers on a small but fleshy leaved plant.

The Masdevallias and Dryadellas produce their flowers from the base of the leaf, but Pleurothallis species produce theirs from the leaf joint - such as *titan*. This section, formerly Acronia have smallish but simple single flowers. *dilemma* is worth its name as the leaf is elongated and forked at the end resembling horns. Acianthera *johnsonii* is unique in that it produced flowers from both the base and the leaf axils. Acianthera *pectinata* has a short axil raceme with flowers that alternate along its length. Acianthera *sicaria* produces its flowers more towards the centre of the leaf. Stelis *cocornaensis* produces lots of small dark brown flowers at the rear of the leaf! Pleurothallis *nuda* has a very variable lip, with over 7 variations, and it may or not produce nectar. It may be that there are a variety of pollinators for this species - perhaps it is one for the 'Splitters' to look at (Steve is happy as a 'Lumper'). Myoxanthus *punctatus* is a larger brown flower with petals resembling antenna that produce pheromones to attract pollinators. Octomeria *densiflora*

(syn. *crassifolia*) produces a mass of tiny flowers that each has 8 pollinia, only 2 of which are viable.
The spike of Stelis *kefersteiniana* is very delicate, and need the support of the leaf to prevent it snapping off. This leads nicely to Stelis *immersa* which has a similar problem, but has developed a solution by immersing it in a groove up the leaf. This is where it develops prior to flowering, and it can be teased out by a small knife to prove the point (best to wait until after it has finished flowering. Pleurothallis *scoparum* has gone one stage further whereby the flowers are almost at the end of the leaf. Pleurothallis *silverstonei* produces the first of its flowers as soon as the leaf splits apart, and then will produce many more over a period of years. Most Pleurothallis species will produce multiple flowerings on each leaves. Don't be drawn into thinking that a leaf is looking pale and chop it off as it may well flower again.
Wow, what variety within a wide range of species and genuses, and it is wise to know what you are buying and how it will produce flowers etc. (avoiding the unpredictability). This was just an overview and can't possibly cover many of the 'common' species. There aren't very many hybrids within this group, apart from in the Masdevallias which have undergone a widespread development. Several questions were asked followed by a hearty round of applause. Many thanks Steve.

Dates for your diary...

Monthly meetings at Ranmoor – 10am

July 12th — **Francis Quesada-Pallares: Phalaenopsis.** Francis (or FQP) spoke last year, which turned out to be a change to the advertised programme. He had planned to tell us of the delights of the Phals, but had the wrong memory stick for his computer. He can't possibly do the same again this year...

Society website - **www.sheffieldorchids.org**

Above - Masdevallia *tovarensis* f. alba
Below - Papilionanda Little Blossom