

SHEFFIELD & DISTRICT ORCHID SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2011



**MARCH PLANT OF THE MONTH
PAPHIOPEDILUM PLATYCOLOR**

OFFICERS OF THE SOCIETY

President

John Williams
Whitecroft, 170 Watt Lane
Sheffield S10 5QW
0114 230 4568

Vice Presidents

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

Chairman, Treasurer, Membership Secretary & BOC Representative

Richard Baxter
Hall Farm House
Shelton, Newark,
NG23 5JG
01949 850713
sheffieldorchids@tiscali.co.uk

Vice President

Cedric Maunder
BOC Representative
Silvia Maunder
14 Whitechapel Close
Leeds LS8 2PT
0113 273 1347

Librarian

Janet Kirk
Any other member
Jeff Williams
55 Greenwood Avenue
Sheffield S9 4HB
0114 234 0168
Janet.kirk@virgin.net

Editor

John Garner
159 Lightridge Road
Fixby
Huddersfield HD2 2HS
01484 548764
denise.hosker@virgin.net

Programme Secretary, & Vice President

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

Administration Secretary

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

Additional Members

Jeff Bagnall
128, Huddersfield Road,
Meltham,
Holmfirth,
HD9 4AG
01484 318113
jw.bagnall@ntlworld.com

EDITORIAL

At last winter seems to have disappeared (although I will keep my fingers crossed for a while yet), and I've finally had chance to see how things are looking outside with some of the hardy orchids. The Cyps all look OK, but there is no sight yet of life in the *Dactylorhizas*, and 1 of the *Epipactis* (*gigantea*) looks dead. Most surprising however, has been the *Ponerorchis graminifolia* which I hadn't intended to leave out as these aren't quite as hardy as the weather has been. 4 of 16 still had a little corm, which I repotted and put into the warm greenhouse. 3 days later, the first was in leaf, and they are all now growing away successfully.

I usually check out the names of the various plants on the table display, and when looking up *Phal. Spica* I was highly amused to see that there is a hybrid called 'Spica de Devil'...

BUSINESS

The recent show at Bramhope resulted in quite a good display by SDOS - amongst many other fine displays. Charles Ford was our only class winner (in *Dendrobium* hybrids), and Ian Dorman and John Garner both had AMs (for *Paphiopedilum* hybrids). The show was a little over shadowed by the recent death of Martin Brice – a well-known and active member of HOS, and our sympathies go to his family. Our next show is the NEEOS on 27th March.

Plans for the annual show at Chatsworth are now very advanced. Next month is the last meeting prior to the event, and details will be finalised then. Volunteers are required for various activities; please support us as much as you can.

THE TABLE SHOW

This month's talk was given by John Garner, who had quite a thin display to cover. First up was *Holcoglossum amesianum*, a rarely seen member of the vandaceous family. Mounted on a cork slab the plant has spiky, almost round leaves (in section) with a longish spike of a few small white flowers with a pink lip. Unusually for the group, it has no spur. *Sedirea japonica* is another unusual vandaceous plant with tiny flowers only just open. These are white with some pink barring on the petals. This plant appears synonymous with *Aerides japonica* (Kew prefers *Sedirea* - ed).

BLC Pamela Finney 'Pink Beauty' was a large plant with 3 large blousy pink flowers with a yellow blotch on the lip (see back cover). Ctt. Gold Digger 'Fuch's Mandarin' had altogether smaller orange flowers with some spotting inside the trumpet.

Lyc. campbellii is a deciduous member of the genus, and was just starting its annual flowering period. Masses of small yellow flowers on 2-3" spikes are produced from the base of the mature pseudobulbs. When they are all out it looks a real picture. Odm. *Vexativum* was a smallish plant with a decent sized spike of several almost triangular flowers due to the reflexed effect of the petals (see back cover).

Paph. *Platycolor* was a new plant to many of us, and with 3 spikes of 6 delightful flowers was adjudged the plant of the month (see front cover). Paph. *spicerianum* was questioned as to its heritage, as the flower was more of a red colour, and had a more pointed pouch than expected – this despite the natural variation that all species can have. It is likely that this is a primary hybrid, or a primary crossed back to *spicerianum*. Despite this, the flower was a good shape and colour, and well worth having.

Phals have been few in number these last few months, so it was good to see several this month. Phal. Innocence was the first, and had medium/large white flowers (as the name would suggest) with some yellow on the lip. Phal. Medford Star was an even larger white, and Phal Rousserole x (Haussermann's Adam x Spica) had interesting smallish speckled pink flowers. Sara's Gold was well named with several flowers where the top half was gold and the lower half was bright pink. It tends to be a reluctant flowerer, and was the best it has been for several years – well worth the wait. Greenstar was a smallish pale yellow that fades towards green. Dtps. Tomboy was a lovely white with a deep pink lip. Finally Phal. Masterpiece was an impressive colour being a veined brown with some yellow on the lip.

PHRAGMIPEDIUMS

ANDY PHILLIPS

Andy is one of the country's foremost experts on Phrags, and his specialism in the genus developed more by accident than design. Originally he had a mixed collection, but a very cold night one December along with a heating failure caused most plants to die – apart from some Phrag seedlings. Possibly the fact that they prefer damp conditions proved to be their saviour, and as a result the collection was rebuilt with many more of the genus – which is now sufficiently large and varied enough to be termed a 'national collection'. All species are from South America with Peru and Ecuador being the hotbeds.

Phrags are easy to grow and bloom if a few simple rules are followed. Generally flowers are produced in succession, giving a flowering span over many months. Annoyingly the flowers always tend to drop off just prior to a show... Some do have branched spikes, so will have a few open at a time.

Humidity is important, along with air circulation. A moss covered greenhouse support with a drip water tube helps humidity (80% is about right), as well as small fogger units, and a large fan moves the air. Andy prefers to see his plants wafting in the air which helps the plants to grow roots for anchorage. At hot times with doors and vents open, a fan blowing air through wet straw will help achieve both objectives. A pot bellied stove burning wood helps to provide a base temperature, with other heaters topping up to a minimum of 72F. Plants are kept in trays to

provide a wet bottom, and watered daily with a base of reverse osmosis water with added fertiliser. Water is stored in the greenhouse, so is at 'room temperature' when used. The greenhouse was originally aluminium & glass, but has now been rebuilt with wood and polycarbonate for better heat retention. Growlux lighting is used when required to provide 16 hours 'daylight' per day. Plants are surrounded by ferns such as maidenhair which are used as dry indicators, as well as being more attractive to pests. Pots used are generally black plastic which stay warmer than clear ones.

Feed is essential for growth, especially in inert composts such as rockwool cubes. Andy uses a hydroponic feed from Growth Technology which is appropriate to the compost. Growth and Bloom formulas are used as appropriate, together with some Superthrive. Phrags are heavy feeders, and a 'strong' mix is applied. Water quality is monitored and PH up/down applied as required giving a slightly acid measure.

Phrags suffer from the usual pests, and prevention is by the normal cures, with added benefit from a product called Confidor (available on the continent, not the UK) that is stronger than Provado. Alongside the pests is a susceptibility to rot, with a bacterial rot called *Erwinia* the worst. This 'wet' rot can kill a plant in a few days and treatment has to be immediate and severe. All affected portions need to be cut off with a sterile blade, often resulting in a reduction of the entire growth to the rhizome. This then needs dressing with cinnamon which needs changing every few days. Hopefully the new growth should be OK, otherwise careful disposal is required.

Many types of compost are used in Phrag culture. Bark works well after several months when it starts to decompose. Moss is useful for plants with few roots. Grodan (original rockwool mixed with perlite) starts OK, but compacts after a while. Rockwool cubes work best for strong plants, and it is water retentive as well as providing air pockets. It shouldn't be compacted when repotting though.

Phrag species and hybrids had gone along at a steady rate, but were lacking in colour variation up to 1981 when *besseae* was discovered. This is a small plant with a red/orange flower, with shape variations depending on their original habitat. A yellow form was also discovered, and between them they have dominated the last 30 years of hybridisation and reinvigorated interest in the genus.

Whilst *besseae* is towards the smaller end of the genus, *longifolium* can produce a spike up to 8' tall. It is vigorous, but has a slightly dowdy flower. It has been used extensively in hybridisation, with Sorcerer's Apprentice the most notable hybrid. The spike is even taller, and branched to provide several flowers open at the same time. The other parent is *sargentianum*, closely allied to *lindleyanum*. *sargentianum* is a larger flower, a little more colourful (*lindleyanum* has a plain green dorsal), and has some spotting.

pearcei has a short habit of 12-14" in height, and has noticeable eyebrows which are often passed onto its progeny. A rare species is *klotzschianum* which has long petal with no twists. It is quite difficult to grow and hasn't been used much in hybridising.

The *besseae* breeding lines, together with the associated (branched) *dalesandroi* have produced some quality hybrids. Mem. Dick Clements (x *sargentianum*) is a strong tall plant with several red flowers on branches open at the same time. *schlimii* is a small pink and white species, and when crossed to *besseae* produces Hanne Popow, which is small, and has nice pastel pink shades with a golden staminode. Crossing this to *sargentianum* produces Beauport, a colourful flower with curved petals. Crossing *besseae* to *longifolium* gives Eric Young, a good strong plant that has produced many hybrids itself – some stepping stones to future hybrids such as Saint Peter (better colour and substance but poor shape). Don Wimber is Eric Young crossed back to *besseae*, which is variable in shape and colour tones – depending on the colour variants. The yellow clones are very good. Crossing Mem. Dick Clements back to *besseae* gives Jason Fischer. This has become a highly awarded hybrid with several being 4n clones of great shape and very strong red colour.

richteri is a species that adds some different shapes to hybrids. It is a spiky flower with an overall triangular shape. Crossed to *besseae* var. *flavum* (Franz Glanz) gives an interesting colourful flower.

wallisii is another shape altogether with long petals up to 36" long, and has its flowers open together, so a multi-spiked specimen looks a picture. Several species are close to this with different colours and habits – such as *caudatum*; with *lindenii* the most noticeable as it doesn't form a pouch but has a 3rd petal the same length. The reason for this isn't understood, but obviously pollination still takes place. All of its hybrids though do have pouches. Crossing *caudatum* with Eric Young gives Belle Hougue Point a

good pink with longer petals. Bouley bay is similar with Eric young crossed to Grande (*caudatum x longifolium*).

A final mention goes to *kovachii*, one of the most recent finds, and also the most spectacular in size and colour. It is a bright purple flower of a large size, and the fact that it has remained undiscovered until a few years ago is a source of constant amazement. Hybrids using this large size and colour are now taking place at great pace and many exiting results are predicted in both first and second generations.

The lecture can't cover all of the species in detail due to time constraints, but an excellent insight into the genus anyway. The future for Phrags remains promising, and after *kovachii*, who knows what else may be found. A hearty round of applause was given.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY...

MONTHLY MEETINGS AT RANMOOR – 10AM

May NO Meeting due to show at Chatsworth

June 12th Hilary Hobbs – Pests and diseases

July 10th Robin McDonald - Coelogynes

OTHER SHOWS

April 10th Darlington/OSGB show at the Josephine Butler College Durham.

May 8th SDOS Annual Show at the Edensor Institute, Chatsworth
***** Plants and assistance required *****

Apr 30th – May 2nd Raby Castle Orchid Show, Staindrop

June 5th NEOS Annual Show, Tatton Park.

Society website - www.sheffieldorchids.org



Above: - RLC Pamela Finney 'Pink Beauty' HCC/AOS
Below: - Odm. Vexativum

