

SHEFFIELD & DISTRICT ORCHID SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

OCTOBER 2012



**SEPTEMBER PLANT OF THE MONTH
*PAPHIOPEDILUM FAIRRIEANUM***

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BUSINESS

The Treasurer would like to remind members that their subs are now due, and he will gratefully accept them. The December meeting will be the AGM, and a buffet will follow the official part of the meeting – more details next month. It is thought that we now have nominations for the positions that Richard Baxter is retiring from. The notice of the AGM is included.

Since the last meeting a display has been mounted at the EMOS show. Sadly we were a little light on plants, but managed a couple of awards nonetheless. The next display is at the BOC later this month, and details were finalised (the show has now taken place).

The Programme Secretary would like to know of any subjects that members would like covering in the forthcoming year(s) so that he can try and find someone to do a talk.

We have had some fliers for the next Mae Tang orchid tour in Thailand next March (details at www.theorchidman.com).

Since the meeting we have learned of the sad death of Ray Bilton. He is a great loss of knowledge within the orchid world as well as a fantastic grower of Phals.

THE TABLE SHOW

John Garner volunteered for this month's talk and started with Phal. Chih Shang's Stripes, an aptly named medium sized pink flower with deeper veins. Interestingly the only picture on Orchidwiz for this hybrid has striped foliage. Brother Golden Jaguar was an interesting pale pink tending towards deeper pink at the edges. Sylvia's Dream was quite a pleasant pink.

Bct. Golden Mul 'Orient' was a beautiful colour being primarily orange, with spots on the trumpet (see back cover). Brassia Orange Delight had very starry shaped orange flowers with some brown blotches. It was thought to be an *aurantiaca* offspring, but appears not to be the case...

It is now the start of the slipper season, and several species and hybrids were on show. *purpuratum* was a small plant on its first flowering – still in a compot. *insigne* 'Maulie' is one of the best known cultivars, and can create large specimens. *charlesworthii* is a small plant with a large pink dorsal, useful in breeding pink flowers. *barbigerum* is a tiny plant with a small open flower. *braemi* is a small variant of *tonsun*. *fairrieianum* was an impressive plant with 3 stately flowers. This coloratum form is certainly one of the prettiest of all orchids, and was adjudged to be the plant of the month. Clair de Lune 'EVB' is nowadays common but still impressive. White Lightning was mainly pale green with a well reflexed dorsal showing its heritage from *spicerianum*. Sophistic 'Ice Cap' was the last paph, and is a hybrid from *fairrieianum*, but the effect is fairly lost on a round complex white. Phrag. Pink Panther is one of the smallest of the hybrids with a single small pink flower.

Masd. *veitchiana* was a super tall plant with large orange triangular flowers. *Restrepia trichoglossa* (syn. *lankesteri*) is a true miniature mounted on cork; the tiny flowers are quite intricate in both shape and colour, being mainly purple brown stripes. Rest. *contorta* is quite similar, but with slightly larger flowers that are a bit more speckled.

Rossioglossum *grande* was a specimen sized plant with several clusters of flowers which are large and brightly coloured yellow and brown. It well deserves its nickname of the clown orchid (see back cover). *Coelogyne tomentosa* (syn. *massangeana*) was a large plant in need of dividing. It has flowered several times this year but only with a single spike. If they had all come out together then the pendant spikes of 20 pale brown flowers or so would be quite impressive.

OCTOBER PLANT OF THE MONTH

PAPHIOPEDILUM *FAIRRIEANUM*

Paph. *fairrieanum* is the only member of subgenus Paphiopedilum section Ceratopetalum, however there are about twelve varieties (var.) / forms (forma.) that have been described; I suppose that accounts for the variation that can be found when we buy a *farrieanum* for our collections.

It was first described by John Lindley in 1857 as *Cypripedium fairrieanum* (note the double rr which is the correct spelling).

It is found in Sikkim and south Bhutan and grows in a variety of habitats, like grassy west facing slopes over limestone, among rocks in oak forests and in dolomite gravel on ledges above streams; all at around 2250 mtrs.

Mine has to live in my 6x8 lean-to at intermediate temperatures with a mixed collection of Paphs and Phrags, where it enjoys a humidity of 80 – 90%. It also seems to enjoy being potted in a small pot and in a small bark mix with sponge rock and a little charcoal added. Originally this plant was purchased by David Binks from Ratcliffe's as a seedling, I think it is one of their own breeding lines; I purchased it when David's plants were sold.

If you can borrow the book "The Genus Paphiopedilum" by Dr. Guido J. Braem, Volume 2, the pages on *fairrieanum* make very interesting reading.

I particularly liked the note written by Micholitz; Frederick Sander's collector to Sander himself "I deeply deplore the unfortunate turn the *fairrieanum* affair has taken, because there can be no doubt that the plant will be collected by a lot of people, and nobody will make anything out of it (meaning that the large number of plants he anticipated to be collected would cause the sales price to fall into oblivion). Permit me to say that to a great extent you have only yourself to thank for it, after loudly proclaiming to the whole world you would pay £1000 for the plant, which I am fully convinced you are no more intending to pay than to jump from London Bridge". I can't imagine anyone sending a note like this to their employer.

Derek Jackson

ORCHID HUNTING IN MALAYSIA

CHRIS BARKER

This is the tale of a couple of visits to Malaysia, initially in Feb 2010 – when the weather wasn't at its best, nor was it the best flowering season. The opportunity arose for a second visit following the WOC in Singapore last November when more plants were in flower, but still not the peak season. Perhaps a well timed third trip might be required..... Both trips were organised by Michael and Ben Ooi who run a couple of nurseries there, and are well known visitors to the UK. They run a large nursery in the lowlands where plants are cultivated just under shade cloth (how annoying to us in the UK) with open sides. Humidity is incredibly high as are the temperatures giving ideal growing conditions for many of the warm growing plants that come to the UK. Many plants are hung above the ground to prevent their roots from establishing firm bases, and every now and then these have to be trimmed to prevent the baskets becoming a solid mesh. Even the flasks are outside! Another nursery up in the hills provides 'cooler' conditions for those plants that won't grow/flower in the heat.

The nursery is the base for Michael's collection of hot growing *Bulbophyllums*, which contain many variations of the species such as *appendiculatum* and *parryae*. The rare purple Phal. *violacea* was discovered by Michael in a swamp, and rescued as the swamp was subsequently dried out and is now a town. He has done a lot of breeding with this varied species, as well as hybridising, particularly with the closely related *bellina*. Phal. Penang Ruby is a particularly good hybrid.

The tour(s) was split into 4 different areas of interest.

The first was the islands of Langkawi, which are a nature reserve. It is an unusual sight with islands rising straight out of the sea with orchids just a few feet above sea level where they can be sprayed with salt water, and often grow in full sun. This includes *Paph. niveum* which you can touch from the boat (but can't collect, thankfully). *Cym. finlaysonianum* is another that grows here which

is unusual in that the flower spikes are pendant so can nearly touch the sea – not to mention that it is normally found on trees. *Trichoglottis fasciata* (syn. *Staurochilus fasciatus*) was the final one shown, and is a vandaceous plant with barred brown and yellow flowers. On the shore the cotton tree (Kapok) grows to a huge size creating a shady environment. On the return trip after the WOC it was very rainy, but the plants were still there, and with pods as well. Close by the reserve the mountains rise straight from the mangrove swamps to a great height, and a cable car will take you there to see the Macaque monkeys and a tour of the tree tops on a walkway – which was curtailed by the weather, but would be brilliant on a good day.

The second area was Gunung Jerai which is a mountainous area near the coast, and is still mainly a rainforest. The floor is strewn with the jewel orchids with many of the species to be found here, and some are very intricate. *Paph. callosum* and *Bulb. apodum* (one of the smaller ones, yellow) are both common as are *Den. linguella* (pink), *Trichotosia* (syn. *Eria*) *velutina* (hairy & various colours). *Podochilus muricatus* was unusual and had tiny white flowers. *Spathoglottis plicata* is a common terrestrial with bright pink flowers, and *Den. tobaense* can only be described as spectacular with starry flowers of mainly green with an orange lip that ends in a white spear!

The Ooi's have a nursery here to grow their 'cooler' species and hybrids. Many of the above are here in cultivation.

The third area was the Penang Hills, where *Bulbophyllums* grow in abundance. This particular group are one of Michael's favourites, and he grows many of them as well as producing hybrids. *Bulb. auratum* 'White' was gorgeous with a lot of umbels of white flowers. *medusa* is another spectacular white with long tails. *membranifolium* is quite different with smaller orange blotch flowers. (These are all difficult to describe without a photo – ed.) *Ansellia africana* is unexpected in this part of the world, but grows well! *Coel. rochussenii* can become a massive plant with long pendulous pale yellow flowers. Lots of other dendrobates and *Erias* grow everywhere – it is difficult not to see a mixture of orchids.

The final area is the Cameron Highlands. This is a noted tea plantation area, but the uncultivated parts are full of orchids. *Arundina graminifolia* (the bamboo orchid) is common here and grows like weeds at the roadsides. The flowers are smallish pink ones at the top of the canes. Slightly higher up was an area called the mossy forest (another national park), but sadly due to the wet weather was unreachable, but contains many cooler growing species. Altogether a great trip (or two), and worth going to appreciate how well these species grow in the wild. The flowering season is the best time to go, and one that Chris & Jean may well make a return journey to revisit.

After an odd question or two a hearty round of applause was given.

DATES FOR YOUR DIARY...

MONTHLY MEETINGS AT RANMOOR – 10AM

Nov 11th **John Garner – Nomenclature, Taxonomy and Terminology.** This is usually the realm of botanists and scientists – not some half wit like John, so it may be interesting and erratic, but not a disaster.

NB. This is Armistice Sunday, so there will be a minutes silence at 11.

Dec 9th **AGM**, followed by a buffet

OTHER SHOWS

Nov 24th **BOGA Pre-Christmas fair**, Knowle, Birmingham



Above: - Brassocatanthe Golden Mul 'Orient'

Below: - Rossioglossum grande – the clown orchid

