



*Journal*  
of the  
**HARDY ORCHID SOCIETY**

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### The Hardy Orchid Society

Our aim is to promote interest in the study of Native European Orchids and those from similar temperate climates throughout the world. We cover such varied aspects as field study, cultivation and propagation, photography, taxonomy and systematics, and practical conservation. We welcome articles relating to any of these subjects, which will be considered for publication by the editorial committee. Please send your submissions to the Editor, and please structure your text according to the “Advice to Authors” (see website [www.hardyorchidsociety.org.uk](http://www.hardyorchidsociety.org.uk), January 2004 Journal, Members’ Handbook or contact the Editor). Views expressed in journal articles are those of their author(s) and may not reflect those of HOS.

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### Cover Photographs

**Front & Back Covers:** A favourite photograph by Tony Hughes featuring a population of Southern Marsh-orchids, Common Spotted-orchids and their hybrids on Malvern Common. See Celia Wright’s article “Remembering Tony Hughes” on page 5.

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### Editorial Note

This first *JHOS* of 2016 is dedicated to our former chairman Tony Hughes, who sadly died late last year. As well as a wrap around cover featuring one of his favourite photographs, Celia Wright has contributed a commemorative article celebrating Tony’s role within the Hardy Orchid Society. Much of this issue has features in which Tony Hughes would have been especially interested – the photographic competition, field trips and foreign holidays in search of orchids. Hilary Pickersgill’s article on her trip to Sardinia with Steve and Graham Giles is especially appropriate as it is a place that Tony visited and reported on both for *JHOS* and as a talk at a HOS meeting.

Many thanks to several members who responded to my plea for more journal articles. This has resulted in a much healthier situation and they will appear in the coming issues. Despite this upturn in the supply of articles, there is still a need to keep material coming in, so please do think about contributing to your journal!

### Chairman’s Note

#### John Wallington

As I write this piece, just before Christmas, the weather forecast for tomorrow, in the South East at least, is for temperatures up to 16°C (61°F in old money). The newspapers are full of images of daffodils in bloom and other signs of spring before we have experienced a proper winter. Other parts of the country have experienced devastating storms, record rainfall and serious flooding. An immediate cause of these

phenomena seems to be the wandering of the Jet Stream but behind all this I believe must be the almost out of control climate change the whole world is experiencing. This leads me to wonder what effect these unusual weather patterns will have on the orchids that we will all set out to find as 2016 progresses. Will we see the Early Spider Orchids and the Early Purple Orchids signalling the onset of spring in March – or even February? Will some species not flower at all as they have not experienced the requisite period of dormancy? How will we know when to book those trips to the Mediterranean to wonder at the beauty and variety of the massed ranks of *Ophrys*? Who can tell?

Looking more locally, this edition of the Journal contains information on the field trips currently planned for 2016. Please join as many of these as possible as they are a wonderful way to experience our native orchids and also to meet other members of the Society. Remember though that these trips are for members only, so spouses/partners must also be members. If you are a single member remember it only costs £3 to upgrade to a family membership and this can be paid to the field trip organiser on the day if you wish. Please do take care, when examining orchids with a hand lens or when taking photographs, that you do not damage other plants in the vicinity. As members of a conservation minded society we must accept a responsibility for treating all plants, and the environment in which they grow, with respect.

Continuing the conservation theme, Bill Temple and John Temporal have produced two important documents. The first is the “HOS Orchid Conservation Briefing Note” which has been sent to appropriate people within local authorities etc. to ensure that they are aware of the importance of conserving orchid populations. This document is available from the Forum under “Files” and can be used by members to inform those who are in a position to ensure the protection, or prevent the destruction, of orchid populations. The second document, relating to the mowing of verges and the ways in which this can be accomplished without damage to the orchid populations, should soon also be available on the Forum. It only remains for me to wish you all a rather belated happy and prosperous New Year with plenty of “Orchid Moments” to come.

### **HOS Meetings 2016**

#### **Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> April**

Spring Meeting, AGM & Plant Show at Kidlington

#### **Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> August**

Seed Sowing Workshop (contact Alan Leck [alanleck@alanleck.plus.com](mailto:alanleck@alanleck.plus.com))

#### **Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> September**

Northern Meeting at St. Chad's, Leeds

#### **Sunday 20<sup>th</sup> November**

Southern Meeting & Photographic Show at Kidlington

## **Remembering Tony Hughes Celia Wright**

When Tony Hughes died on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2015, HOS lost a staunch and active supporter and many of us (myself included) lost a valued friend. Tony and Diana joined HOS in the early days, only a couple of years after it was founded. His wish to be involved in the organisation came to the fore early in 1997 when he volunteered for the role of Show Secretary, organised the Plant Show for the first time and became a member of the committee. At the AGM that year, a suggestion from the floor led to a decision that there would be a Photographic Competition at the autumn meeting, so Tony took on the role of organising that as well, continuing with both tasks until 2001. Ever willing to use his skills for the organisation, around this time he also developed the original HOS website, acting as Webmaster for three years and building a library of orchid photographs, many of which he took himself.

He was back on the committee a year later at the 2002 AGM when he was elected as Vice Chairman and went on to become Chairman from 2004 to 2007. Not one to shirk tasks that needed to be done, while Chairman he also ran the Northern meeting, including provision of catering. He and Diana would go to the supermarket at 8am to get all the food for lunch for the 60 attendees, then help to sort it out before chairing the meeting. In addition, he gave several full-length talks at meetings where he also took the Chair. He ran the meetings superbly, with efficiency and good humour, while making sure that all his speakers kept to time. He always had a perceptive question ready after each talk, and as our President remembers, continued to ask astute questions from the floor, particularly about the more scientific information presented.

During his time with HOS Tony lost no opportunity to spread his knowledge to other members, writing for the Newsletter (later the Journal) and giving talks at Society meetings. He was clearly already well bitten by the orchid bug in autumn 1999 when he wrote a short note for the HOS Newsletter on “Who needs agar?” about the hardy orchids growing in his lawn following sprinkling of seed. This was followed by many other articles on his travels, on orchid photography and well researched observations of the species and hybrids he saw in the wild. His articles were informative, written with his distinctive dry humour and always with perfect grammar and punctuation. He even got HOS a mention on a Radio 4 programme on Citizen Science where he, Bill Temple and Colin Clay demonstrated their monitoring of Musk Orchids.

Tony's skill as a photographer was evident in his *JHOS* articles and the talks he gave, but nowhere better than in the annual HOS Photographic Competition. He won firsts in one or more classes in 12 of the last 15 years, including the Best in Show in 2004 for his close-up of *Dactylorhiza markusii*. He triumphed again in 2010 when he took

the Maren Talbot Trophy for Best in Show with his photograph of a whole plant of *Serapias cordigera* and won the accolade of Best Projected Picture in 2013 for his photograph of *Orchis purpurea* in a beautiful rural background. Success followed on a wider stage when this Lady Orchid picture was submitted to the British Orchid Council as one of the 2013 HOS entries and won 1<sup>st</sup> prize.

Iain and I went to see Tony a couple of times when he was in hospital during his last illness. We chatted for an hour or so and managed to laugh quite a bit. I remember discussing proof reading of *JHOS*, something Tony and I both did while Chairs of HOS. We had much common ground as sticklers for correct punctuation and grammar. It was then that I learned that while working, Tony had vetted documents leaving his department and made much use of his red pen. All this was done with great courtesy and clearly appreciated by his colleagues. When he retired from life as a physicist he was given a trophy, decorated with a gold apostrophe and the Latin phrase “Cacoethes carpendi”, translated by Tony as “inveterate nitpicker”. It amused him greatly and adorns their mantelpiece still.

He is also remembered fondly by members who wrote to me after his death with comments such as “Tony always encouraged me in all that I did”. In 2006, Iain and I joined the HOS committee, Iain as Treasurer while I became Membership Secretary. It was hard to organise everything that had to be done at the beginning of a membership year at the start of the job, but Tony was gently encouraging and helpful to us both. I knew I’d got something right when he came up to me at the first HOS meeting where I’d made the badges to thank me for the large size font I’d used for the names, so that he no longer needed to peer at ladies’ bosoms to see who he was talking to. This was accompanied, of course, by a twinkle in his eye and a delightful smile.

I was not the only HOS member who felt it especially sad that Tony had left us so soon, with so many holidays and photographs still to be taken. In April 2015, he and Diana enjoyed a visit to Rhodes, and he had already offered to give a talk on their findings to a future meeting. I suspect he had already started to prepare it, a process that both he and Diana always enjoyed as they sifted through photographs and shared memories of the great fun they had enjoyed on the trip.

The first full length article Tony wrote for the HOS Newsletter in October 2000 entitled “A glorious day out in the rain” was jointly authored with Diana, and it is to Diana I turn for the wonderful literary picture she painted in *JHOS* in 2007 of Tony, orchid hunter and all round enthusiast. Entitled “Three steps behind an orchid anorak”, it describes Tony to a T. Do read it (it’s online on our website: Vol. 4, No 3, page 88) and laugh as you remember a wonderful man, our friend Tony Hughes. He will surely be laughing with you.

## HOS Field Trips 2016

These Field Trips are for Members Only. Accompanying spouses/partners must also be members; it only costs £3 to upgrade to family membership. You may be asked to show your membership card so please take it with you.

### Saturday 23<sup>rd</sup> April: Purbeck, Dorset led by David Hughes

e-mail: [davidcchughes@talktalk.net](mailto:davidcchughes@talktalk.net)

A large number of Early Spider Orchids, (*Ophrys sphegodes*) and a group of multicoloured Green-winged Orchids, (*Anacamptis morio*). All this in a cliff top setting overlooking the sea, where on the last field trip we saw puffins and dolphins. Note that this trip does involve fairly energetic walking.

### Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> April: Saphire Hoe, Dover led by Mike Parsons

e-mail: [mikeparsons30@talktalk.net](mailto:mikeparsons30@talktalk.net)

To see the display of Early Spider Orchids (*Ophrys sphegodes*).

### Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> May: Muston Meadows NNR, between Grantham and Nottingham led by John and Judy Kingston

e-mail: [judy\\_kingston@hotmail.com](mailto:judy_kingston@hotmail.com)

These meadows are home to Green-winged Orchids in shades from white to deep purple, with many bi-coloured ones. The 2015 count found 26,081 flowering spikes!

### Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> May: Kent led by Alan Blackman

e-mail: [alanophrys@aol.com](mailto:alanophrys@aol.com)

The orchids that may be seen are Lady Orchid, Monkey Orchid, Fly Orchid, Greater Butterfly-orchid and White Helleborine.

### Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> May: Gait Barrows, Lancashire co-ordinated by Alan Bousfield

e-mail: [alan.bousfield@ukgateway.net](mailto:alan.bousfield@ukgateway.net)

Gait Barrows has been chosen as one of the primary planting sites in the species recovery programme for the Lady’s Slipper Orchid (*Cypripedium calceolus*).

### Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> June: Chafford Gorge, Essex. Leader: Mike Parsons

e-mail: [mikeparsons30@talktalk.net](mailto:mikeparsons30@talktalk.net)

A fine display of Man Orchids.

### Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> June: Darwin’s Kent led by Alan Bousfield

e-mail: [alan.bousfield@ukgateway.net](mailto:alan.bousfield@ukgateway.net)

Walk in Darwin’s footsteps and visit the places that inspired him when writing Origin of Species. A guided tour round Down House & Gardens (English Heritage, so cost involved if not a member) and in the afternoon a visit to two locations where he made a detailed study of the pollination of *Anacamptis pyramidalis* by butterflies and moths. Depending on the flowering season, there is the possibility of seeing Bee Orchid, Fly Orchid, Man Orchid, Fragrant-orchid, Bird’s-nest Orchid, Common Spotted-orchid, Greater Butterfly-orchid, Pyramidal Orchid and White Helleborine.

**Sunday 12th June: Aston Clinton Ragpits, Buckinghamshire led by Malcolm Brownsword** e-mail: [malcolm.brownsword@tesco.net](mailto:malcolm.brownsword@tesco.net)

Morning visit to Aston Clinton Rag Pits and after lunch we would then walk about half a mile to Grangelands and then to the nearby Pulpit Hill. Species in flower should include literally thousands of Chalk Fragrant-orchid, Common Spotted-orchid, Pyramidal Orchid, up to 300 Greater Butterfly-orchids, a few thousand Twayblades (there was a variegated one two years ago) and possibly Chalk Fragrant-orchid/Common Spotted-orchid hybrids. The area covered has a good general flora (e.g. Houndstongue and Alkanet) and there are plenty of butterflies, including Dark Green Fritillary last year, and also slow-worms and Roman snails.

**Sunday 19th June: Folkestone, Kent led by Mike Parsons**e-mail: [mikeparsons30@talktalk.net](mailto:mikeparsons30@talktalk.net)

Dependent on the growing season a chance to see Late Spider Orchids (*Ophrys fuciflora*)

**Saturday 25th June: Buckinghamshire led by Richard & Geraldine Hogg**e-mail: [Geraldine\\_dick@hoggie49.plus.com](mailto:Geraldine_dick@hoggie49.plus.com)

The visit will be to College Lake, Pitstone Fen and Aston Clinton Ragpits. The orchids that may be seen (but not necessarily in flower) are: Common Spotted-orchid, Southern Marsh-orchid, Pyramidal Orchid, Twayblade, Bee Orchid, including var. *belgarum*, White Helleborine, Green-flowered Helleborine, Broad-leaved Helleborine, Marsh Helleborine, Greater Butterfly-orchid, Chalk Fragrant-orchid. Plus hybrids including *Dactylorhiza* × *grandis* and × *Dactyloдения st-quintinii*.

**Sunday 10th July: Ainsdale, Liverpool led by Keith Hall**e-mail: [keith.hall2009@googlemail.com](mailto:keith.hall2009@googlemail.com)

North of the National Nature Reserve to see Dune, Green-flowered and Marsh Helleborine and both Southern & Northern Marsh-orchids and possibly Pyramidal Orchids.

**August (date to be confirmed later): Buckinghamshire led by John Wallington**e-mail: [jrwallington@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:jrwallington@blueyonder.co.uk)

Field trip for the Violet Helleborine.

**Wild Orchid Tour in Bosnia & Herzegovina, 7-14 June 2016**

This corner of southeastern Europe is a little explored wild land where orchids grow in great abundance. This includes one highlight of the tour, the endemic *Dactylorhiza cordigera* subsp. *bosniaca*. Be prepared to be wowed by beautiful and rare orchids, warm hospitality, as well as good food, history and culture which is a wonderful blend of East and West. Led by an English speaking orchid specialist with unique knowledge of local area and customs.

E-mail: [dinoh@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:dinoh@blueyonder.co.uk) Telephone: 0117 970 2573**Newly Examined Specimen Sheet Confirms Earlier Historical Presence of Red Helleborine (*Cephalanthera rubra*) in the Buckinghamshire Chilterns**  
**Mike Waller**

Since beginning work at the Angela Marmont Centre for UK Biodiversity here at the Natural History Museum, I've been able to indulge myself freely in perusing the entire British and Irish herbarium which is situated behind my desk. My particular interests, of course, lie in orchids and so after work I spent many hours over several weeks simply casting my eye over the thick folders of specimens, some of which date back to the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century.

Naturally I started out with the rarer species, noting that, presumably, what must be nearly the entire former population of Lady's-slipper orchid (*Cypripedium calceolus*) from Castle Eden Dene (County Durham) now rests in one single folder – a testament to the rampant Victorian collecting that was also responsible for completely extirpating the Summer Lady's-tresses (*Spiranthes aestivalis*) from the New Forest and Channel Islands. This clearly obsessive collecting has, however, resulted in a rich resource of reference material from which to carry out further research.

When looking through the Red Helleborine (*Cephalanthera rubra*) folder, I came across a specimen sheet that caught my eye. It showed 5 specimens with the data label reading: 'Early appearance in bud. Woods: Great Marlow, Buckinghamshire June, 1891'. The broad lanceolate leaves and bracted flowers were unmistakable, ruling out the more common related species, Sword-leaved Helleborine (*Cephalanthera longifolia*) and White Helleborine (*Cephalanthera damasonium*). I knew immediately that this was a previously unknown record since the current Buckinghamshire colony was first discovered in 1955 (Harrap & Harrap, 2005). This puts the presence of this species in the Chilterns back by at least 64 years.

Where exactly this population was located within the complex of woods that also harbour other equally rare British orchid species is hard to say. It is quite conceivable that the colony was destroyed shortly after the specimens were collected, as to date, no other specimens have been officially recorded from this particular area. However, I would urge anyone who finds themselves in the woods near Marlow around June and July to keep an eye out just in case!

**Reference**

Harrap, A. & Harrap, S. (2005) *Orchids of Britain and Ireland: A Field and Site Guide*. A&C Black Publishers Ltd.

## Results of Photographic Competition 2015

**Class 1. A wide area view (landscape or habitat) showing orchids in their natural environment, print size up to 7x5 inches (14 entries)**

- 1st Barry Taylor – *Orchis mascula*
- 2nd Alan Blackman – *Orchis purpurea*
- 3rd Hilary Pickersgill – *Gymnadenia conopsea*

**Class 2. A group of at least three orchid plants. These can be all the same species/hybrids or a mixed group, print size up to 7x5 inches (16 entries)**

- 1st David Pearce – *Spiranthes spiralis*
- 2nd Gillian Elsom – *Cypripedium calceolus*
- 3rd John Wallington – *Orchis militaris*

**Class 3. A single orchid plant, usually the single stem arising from one tuber, print size up to 7x5 inches (15 entries)**

- 1st John Wallington – *Pseudorchis albida*
- 2nd Gillian Elsom – *Platanthera bifolia*
- 3rd Sandra Clements – *Orchis italica*

**Class 4. A close-up of an orchid, print size up to 7x5 inches (19 entries)**

- 1st Richard Hogg – *Anacamptis morio* (Best Print)
- 2nd Ken Elsom – *Orchis italica*
- 3rd David Pearce – *Serapias vomeracea*

**Class 5. A wide area view (landscape or habitat) showing orchids in their natural environment, print size up to A4 (15 entries)**

- 1st Stephen Clements – *Dactylorhiza fuchsii*
- 2nd Hilary Pickersgill – *Gymnadenia conopsea*
- 3rd Eric Gendle – *Orchis quadripunctata*

**Class 6. A group of at least three orchid plants. These can be all the same species/hybrids or a mixed group, print size up to A4 (20 entries)**

- 1st Richard Laurence – *Orchis purpurea*
- 2nd Richard Hogg – *Dactylorhiza fuchsii*
- 3rd Ken Elsom – *Orchis mascula*

**Class 7. A single orchid plant, usually the single stem arising from one tuber, print size up to A4 (see Rule 9) (19 entries)**

- 1st Richard Hogg – *Orchis militaris*
- 2nd Eric Gendle – *Neotinea lactea*
- 3rd Hilary Pickersgill – *Epipogium aphyllum*

**Class 8. A close-up of an orchid, print size up to A4 (20 entries)**

- 1st Ken Elsom – *Anacamptis syriaca*
- 2nd Stephen Clements – *Ophrys umbilicata*
- 3rd Alan Blackman – *Dactylorhiza sambucina*

Ivar Edvinsen's photograph of *Himantoglossum comperianum* in Class 12 which won the Maren Talbot Photographic Trophy.

**Class 9. A wide area view (landscape or habitat) showing orchids in their natural environment in jpeg form (25 entries)**

- 1st Graham Giles – *Cypripedium flavum* and *C. tibeticum*
- 2nd Alan Parfitt – *Anacamptis morio*
- 3rd Tony Hughes – *Gymnadenia conopsea*

**Class 10. A group of at least three orchid plants. These can be all the same species/hybrids or a mixed group in jpeg form (30 entries)**

- 1st Michael Waller – *Corallorhiza trifida*
- 2nd Gillian Elsom – *Pseudorchis albida*
- 3rd Ivar Edvinsen – *Ophrys bucephala*

**Class 11. A single orchid plant, usually the single stem arising from one tuber in jpeg form (27 entries)**

- 1st Michael Waller – *Epipactis purpurata*
- 2nd Karen Gregory – *Cypripedium calceolus*
- 3rd Richard Bateman – *Cephalanthera longifolia*

**Class 12. A close-up of an orchid (see Rule 8) in jpeg form (33 entries)**

- 1st Ivar Edvinsen – *Himantoglossum comperianum* (Maren Talbot Trophy)
- 2nd Ken Elsom – *Ophrys morio*
- 3rd Jeff Hodgson – *Spiranthes spiralis*

**Class 13. Novice Class, any hardy orchid print, size up to A4 (6 entries)**

- 1st Gillian Elsom – *Orchis militaris*
- 2nd Sandra Clements – *Orchis italica*
- 3rd Eric Gendle – *Ophrys apifera*

**Class 14. A hardy orchid subject that has been manipulated creatively using any advanced software technique to create an artistic image. Print maximum size A4 (5 entries)**

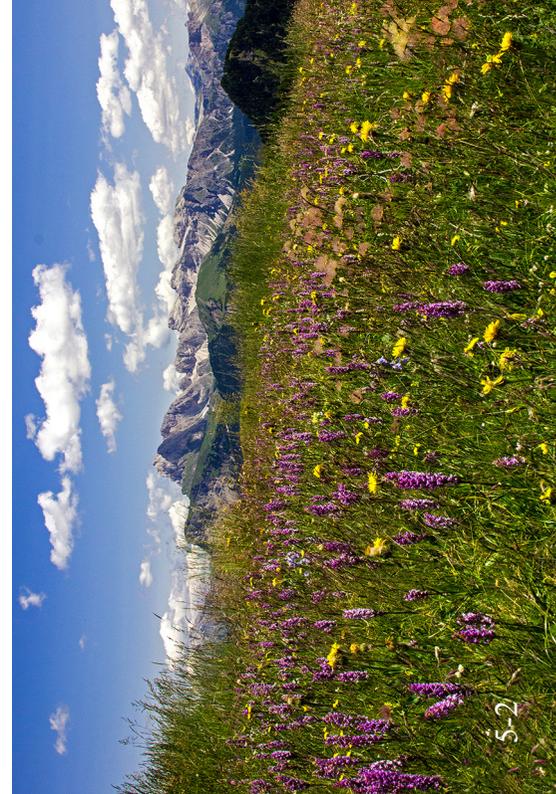
- 1st Alan Blackman – *Anacamptis morio*
- 2nd Ken Elsom – *Anacamptis syriaca*
- 3rd Gillian Elsom – *Cypripedium calceolus*

**Maren Talbot Photographic Trophy:** Ivar Edvinsen for his photograph of *Himantoglossum comperianum* in Class 12

**Best Print:** Richard Hogg for his photograph of *Anacamptis morio* in Class 4

**Our thanks to the Competition Judge:** Jon Evans

The following three pages include a selection of winning images from the 2016 HOS Photographic Competition. Figure numbers indicate the Class followed by the position (e.g. 5-2 is second place in Class 5). All winning photographs are on the HOS website and more may be included in the next *JHOS*.



14-1



4-1



2-1



3-1



8-1



5-1



10-1



11-1



## Field Trip Reports

### 4<sup>th</sup> May to Samphire Hoe led by Alan Bousfield

On a nice sunny May Bank Holiday six members made it to Samphire Hoe, near Dover to see the display of Early Spider Orchids (*Ophrys sphegodes*). Last year, on the same day we were a bit late in the growing season but this year we were a couple of weeks early – that’s the British climate for you! However, we did have the pleasure of admiring and photographing some of the thousands of Early Spider Orchids of various sizes that were flowering around the reserve. I visited the site again on the 13<sup>th</sup> May and met the Warden who was doing their annual count, and it is looking like the numbers are down to about a quarter of last year’s number for some unknown reason.

### 25<sup>th</sup> May to Folkestone led by Alan Bousfield

Another sunny Spring Bank Holiday and the hunt for the Late Spider Orchids (*Ophrys fuciflora*) was on. Last year this field trip had to be cancelled due to lack of numbers, so it was decided to try again in 2015. The initial response was good with eight members showing an interest, but unfortunately only two were able to make it on the day. Due to the later season this year in Kent, there were only six Late Spider Orchids in flower, but at least we managed to see them along with two groups of Man Orchid (*Orchis anthropophora*).

### 12<sup>th</sup> June 2015 to New Forest led by David Hughes

A good group of HOS members met near Wooton Bridge in the New Forest to research the orchids and other flowers of acid bog. Here we enjoyed the numerous Heath Spotted-orchids (*Dactylorhiza maculata*), some with pure white flower spikes. We moved on to some experimental bog hopping, jumping on *Deschampsia* tussocks, to find the scattered pink Early Marsh-orchids (*Dactylorhiza incarnata* ssp. *pulchella*). The occasional white forms were absent on this visit. Back on dry land amongst the bracken we found some perfect stands of Lesser Butterfly-orchid (*Platanthera bifolia*). Moving across the heath to another forest mire below Boundway Hill we found Southern Marsh-orchid (*Dactylorhiza praetermissa*) amongst the alder carr. The bog here is notable for its formation into numerous small sphagnum mounds with several species of sundew (*Drosera*). On these mounds growing with the ubiquitous *Dactylorhiza maculata* were more *Platanthera bifolia* and a good number of Heath Fragrant-orchid (*Gymnadenia borealis*). Also, scattered around this area were plants of Marsh Helleborine (*Epipactis palustris*) which flowered well for a return visit a month later. The Group learned that these bogs are really quite treacherous, several visitors needed rescuing by one gallant member.



Fig. 1: Fen Orchid in Norfolk      Figs. 2 & 3: Marsh Orchids in Norfolk  
Photos by John Wallington

**14<sup>th</sup> June for Fen Orchids in Norfolk arranged by Mike Gasson**

This was a repeat of the 2015 Open Day organised by RSPB on one of their prime fenland sites that is normally not accessible. We were hosted by the site manager Richard Mason and the RSPB area manager Ian Robinson, who is also a member of HOS. The event was very well organised and attracted some 40 HOS Members. The weather was rather dull but with less wind than last year, giving good conditions to photograph the Fen Orchids. An interesting array of Marsh-orchids was also present providing ample subjects for debate about their true identities. Some lovely pure white examples attracted a lot of attention! We were hoping to encounter the Swallowtail butterflies that are another highlight of this site but the lack of sun kept them out of sight in the main. Fortunately, a resting Swallowtail was found and provided some good photographic opportunities. Several of us were also treated to a feeding Hummingbird Hawkmoth. Thanks once again to RSPB for giving HOS members the opportunity to experience this very special site and for making our visitors so welcome.

**13<sup>th</sup> June to South Bedfordshire led by Richard & Geraldine Hogg**

On a rainy June day a total of fourteen people explored four sites in South Bedfordshire. The day started with a visit to Cowslip Meadow (CWS), Luton. This is a large wet-grassland site by the A6 with most of the orchids in a chalky area called “The Scrape” which has less vegetation. For the two years previously the Scrape has been very wet and was flooded during the winter and early-spring. This year the Scrape has been dryer than usual and we were treated to many more Common Spotted-orchids (*Dactylorhiza fuchsii*), Southern Marsh-orchids (*Dactylorhiza praetermissa*) and their many hybrids (*Dactylorhiza* ×*grandis*) than on last year’s trip. Five Bee Orchids with flowers were also found in this area. The second site was near the village of Streatley, north of Luton, where there were a number of newly-emerged Green-flowered Helleborines beneath beech trees. The helleborines here are *Epipactis phyllanthes* var. *vectensis*, still a few weeks from flowering. The last visit of the morning was to Sundon Extension Graveyard where there were hundreds of Bee Orchids, some of which were just coming into flower. The afternoon was taken up with a visit to Knocking Hoe NNR, accessed by a path along the edge of a wood along which were hundreds of White Helleborines (*Cephalanthera damasonium*), some still flowering. The first orchids seen on the reserve itself, by the pond, were



Fig. 4: Early flowering variety of the Burnt Orchid (*Neotinea ustulata* var. *ustulata*) at Knocking Hoe, Bedfordshire.

Fig. 5: Marsh Orchid in Norfolk fenland.

Fig. 6: Hybrid of the Common Spotted and Southern Marsh-orchid (*Dactylorhiza* ×*grandis*), at Cowslip Meadow, Luton

Fig. 7: Bee Orchids (*Ophrys apifera*) at Sundon, Bedfordshire.

Photos by Richard Hogg (4 & 6), John Wallington (5), Geraldine Hogg (7)

Common Spotted-orchids which seem to be on the increase. Some of the Chalk Fragrant-orchids were flowering but most were still in bud. The early Burnt Orchids (*Neotinea ustulata* var. *ustulata*) were seen on the side of the hill at the north-west end of the reserve. Most were protected by a fenced area that keeps the rabbits out and the dozens in full flower gave very good photographic opportunities. Other orchids seen on the reserve included a few Pyramidal Orchids and Common Twayblades.

**28<sup>th</sup> June to Little Ballo & Lochindores in the Sidlaw Hills & Woodside near Forfar, led by Martin Robinson**

The morning started dull and damp, but soon the sun came out and shone for the rest of the day, making a great day even more perfect. A happy group of nine of us first visited the SSSI at Little Ballo, a mire noted for the Early Marsh-orchid (*Dactylorhiza incarnata* ssp. *incarnata*) that has eye-catching pink/red flowers. Owing to the late season, the site was still in perfect condition. It was carpeted with numerous flowers of the Heath Spotted-orchid mixed with a substantial sprinkling of the flowers of Northern and Early Marsh-orchids, as well as some outstanding hybrids – all in perfect condition. The group had to be dragged away to a nearby site, Lochindores, where the speciality is a flush with what can only be described as the *pulchella* subspecies of Early Marsh-orchid that has purple flowers. Lunch was at Newmill where the group explored a meadow with eight orchid species, all grown from seed that had been spread ‘on the wind’ by Dave Trudgill. Common Spotted-orchid and Northern Marsh-orchid were abundant and many Lesser Butterfly-orchids and a few Greater Butterfly-orchids were found. Marsh Helleborine was also present, but was not yet in flower whereas Early-purple Orchid had finished flowering. This site will be remembered for the plastic bottles, with their bottoms cut off that covered more than 300 plants in an attempt to control the spread of *Dactylorhiza* blight/black-death. After lunch we drove to Woodside near Forfar, a scrubby area of rough, undrained grassland. Again, there were huge numbers of Heath Spotted-orchids and many Northern Marsh-orchids with a sprinkling of Lesser Butterfly-orchids and, in one part, of Heath Fragrant-orchids. Again, the many impressive hybrids caught our attention and engendered debate as to their parentage, some favouring the involvement of Early Marsh-orchid even though it does not now occur at the site (did it ever?). A very enjoyable day amongst knowledgeable and agreeable company was summed up when someone said ‘we must do this more often’.



Fig. 8: HOS members enjoying Martin Robinson’s field trip in Scotland

Fig. 9: Greater Butterfly-orchid (*Platanthera chlorantha*)

Fig. 10: Early Marsh-orchid (*Dactylorhiza incarnata* ssp. *incarnata*)

Photos by Dave Trudgill

**29<sup>th</sup> June to Somerset led by Richard Mielcarek**

This trip had to be postponed from its original date as all the orchids were still in bud and only two of the original participants could make the reorganised date. At the first site on the Mendips we were able to see the range of variation in a Bee orchid (*Ophrys apifera*) population, including an example of var. *badensis* (the form with large sepaloid petals and the normal shape and patterning of the lip), a few that had much smaller petals than normal and a mutant that completely lacked petals, having just three sepals and a lip. At the second site we were able to see the range of variation in a small colony of Southern Marsh-orchids (*Dactylorhiza praetermissa*), including a couple of examples of var. *junialis*, as well as a range of lip patterning from well-marked and colourful to plain unmarked pink. We ended up amongst a mass of toadlets studying a stand of presumed *Dactylorhiza* × *grandis* hybrids.



*Ophrys apifera* var. *badensis* (left) and *Dactylorhiza praetermissa* with a plain unmarked lip (right) in Somerset.  
Photos by Richard Mielcarek

**14<sup>th</sup> July to Cumbria led by Alan Gendle**

When I went around the sites to look at *Epipactis* species across Cumbria it was quite apparent that nothing was in flower. This followed the general trend for the orchids in Cumbria this year, all about two to three weeks late. I emailed every one booked on the trip and cancelled it. I ran an unofficial trip for the people who headed north regardless so as not to disappoint them.



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## Orchid Safari to Sardinia Spring 2015

Hilary Pickersgill

In April 2015 Graham Giles, Steve and I travelled to Sardinia for a two week orchid safari. Armed with plenty of site information from HOS members and other friends, we planned our stay based at three centres, Sassari, Dorgali and Gonnessa. April can be very wet in Sardinia but we were lucky and enjoyed good weather most of the time.

Journeying north from the airport we detoured to a woodland site where we hoped to see *Gennaria diphylla*. The state of the flowers would give some idea how the season was progressing. Unfortunately, the flowers were mostly over but some spikes had a few good flowers at the stem tip. We explored many similar sites near the coast in the north west and the pattern was generally the same, a good number of species were present but often the number of plants of each type was small, sometimes only one or two. One site was significantly different from the rest and will stay in our memories. There we saw enormous numbers of *G. diphylla* which had mostly gone to seed but formed artistically arranged groups under the trees. There were huge groups of the Sardinian endemic *Ophrys subfusca* ssp. *liveranii*, a striking plant, usually very tall with brown and yellow flowers with the lip at approximately 90° to the stem. A large population of *Himantoglossum robertianum* had gone over, as we expected in April, but *Neotinea maculata* were in good flower. We were struck by the pale colour of most of the flowers. We found just two *Ophrys neglecta* plants, one standing completely alone, a very striking plant already nearly 40cm with more flowers to come. The flowers are very similar to *Ophrys tenthredinifera* but the hairiness of the lip margin and the tuft of hair just above the appendage are different and striking. We continued to find this species in northern and central Sardinia, usually just a few plants at a site.

Road side banks proved to be rich orchid territory, for the number of plants or the number of species or both. One bank deserved star quality status for its population of *Ophrys eleonora*. This orchid, named after the Sardinian princess Eleonora, ruler of Arborea, is a slender version of *Ophrys iricolor*. A handsome plant, the group on the bank was an impressive sight.

Old olive groves were rich orchid areas. Two that we explored yielded thirteen species between them. It was the first place we found *Neotinea lactea*. *Orchis anthropophora*, clearly at home in this environment, were present in enormous numbers in full flower.



Fig. 1: *Gennaria diphylla*      Fig. 2: *Ophrys subfusca* ssp. *liveranii*  
Fig. 3: *Ophrys eleonora*      Fig. 4: *Ophrys panormitana* ssp. *praecox*  
Photos by Hilary Pickersgill (1 & 3) and Steve Pickersgill (2 & 4)



Fig. 5: *Ophrys annae*  
Photo by Steve Pickersgill

We found many *Ophrys* species including *Op. annae*, *Op. apifera*, *Op. bombyliflora*, *Op. panormitana* ssp. *praecox*, *Op. corsica*, and *Op. speculum*. *Op. annae* is endemic to Sardinia and Corsica. It looks like *Op. fuciflora* but is thinner with smaller flowers. The sepals are white, pink or green with a green vein. The lip has a densely hairy margin and a prominent appendage. *Op. corsica* has characteristics somewhere between *Ophrys lutea* and *Ophrys phryganae*. We were pleased to find *Op. panormitana* ssp. *praecox*. This endemic of Sardinia and Corsica is local and rare and we were at the end of its flowering time. The plants we found were mostly over but two had one reasonably fresh flower at the top of the stem which we could identify with a degree of confidence. One of the olive groves supported a colony of *Anacamptis pyramidalis* which were just coming into flower and this was the only place we saw them.

There were two specimens of *Orchis purpurea* in good flower and we found more at one other site. There were many *Serapias parviflora* at both sites.

Our last full day in the north west ended with a visit to a grassy hillside above Lake Bidighinzu, a wonderful site for *Orchis provincialis* which stood out as they were backlit by the low evening sunshine. In other areas the field was bright with *A. papilionacea*, *Op. corsica* and *N. lactea* with the Sardinian and Corsican endemic *Ophrys zonata* hiding in the grass. *Op. zonata* is similar to *Ophrys sulcata* but the colour in the lip is divided into more distinct zones as the name suggests.



Fig. 6: *Ophrys zonata*  
Photo by Hilary Pickersgill

From Sassari we moved to Dorgali near the east coast. En route we stopped at two sandy pine woodland sites at Arborea marina. The first site was disappointing. We found *Limodorum abortivum* but little else. Initially the second site looked equally bereft of orchids but a thorough search yielded a large population of *Serapias lingua* in a remarkable range of colours enjoying the more moist conditions on the edge of adjacent marshland. Set slightly apart from the group one plant looked different. It was a much more robust plant with one flower just opening but it was possible to make out a brick-red lip with a grey margin. It looked like *Serapias nurrica* but we could only find one plant.

For this part of our holiday we stayed at the Hotel Cedrino, a traditional hotel just outside Dorgali. We were very comfortable, the food was excellent and so was the service. We do not speak Italian, they did not speak English but it was not a problem. The view from this hotel was super and we took far too many photographs across the lake to the mountains as the light changed from morning to night.

Our first full day began with a meeting with friends to explore sites for the Sardinian endemic *Ophrys panattensis*. This tall, slender orchid was growing amongst shrubs on a bank above the road. The flowers are quite large with a dark brown lip with a lighter brown hairy margin. The sepals range in colour from light pink to dark pink and the petals are quite large, perhaps half the length of the sepals and a similar colour. Other flowers on the bank included more *N. maculata*, *Ophrys lupercalis* and another new orchid to add to the list, *Orchis brancifortii*. That afternoon we went to another site where a walk along the road yielded more *Op. panattensis* and *O. brancifortii*, several *Op. morisii* and a range of the more common orchids that we had seen before.

The following day we headed for a coastal site at Capo Comino in search of *Serapias*. As we approached the coast we spotted a large colony of *A. laxiflora* on the verge. A little further on we were looking at a broad verge covered with *Serapias*. *S. lingua* and *S. parviflora* as we had seen before, but also large groups of *Serapias cordigera* with its showy heart-shaped lip, the colour of liver. Amongst the *S. parvifloras* we were delighted to find five chlorotic plants but the find of the day was twenty-two plants of *S. nurrica* in fine flower. We spent the rest of the day visiting sites along the SS125. The first was another fine *Serapias* site with many more chlorotic forms of *parviflora* but otherwise we saw nothing of special interest.

Monte Albo is a calcareous massif some 20km long. It is a botanist's paradise. It seemed that wherever we stopped there was an orchid garden to be explored and enjoyed. We logged twenty species of orchid, most of which we had seen before. However, on a very grim day for weather some bright splashes of colour against the grey of the rocks caught our attention. The Sardinian endemic *Orchis ichnusae* is a



blousier, shaggy version of *Orchis mascula* with unspotted leaves. The colour of the flowers ranges from pink to dark purple and stood out against the rocks making them easier to spot. Pure white individuals do occur but we did not see any. Another new orchid for the log was *Ophrys funerea*. It is very similar to *Op. zonata* but the plant is more spindly with a darker lip lacking the clear zoning.

While we were on Monte Albo we had frequent showers and as the day wore on the showers became thunderstorms. The bonus at the end of the afternoon came in the form of rainbows and extraordinary cloud formations. We were hoping for a run of better weather to travel further afield for some specialities but it was not to be and our first foray south was accompanied by more showers and a ferocious wind, not ideal for orchid photography.

As we travelled into the mountains in the centre of the island we drove back into a winter scene with few leaves on the trees and few flowers on the roadsides. However, we did spot a steep hillside studded with creamy spikes that looked very promising. The hillside was a mixture of grassland with light oak woodland and scrub. It soon became clear that this site was covered with *Orchis provincialis* in full flower and *Dactylorhiza insularis* just coming into flower, but the vast majority of the plants seemed to be hybrids with characteristics somewhere between the two. Photographing these very wet flowers was made difficult by the strong wind. We continued on our way and at lower levels drifts of *O. provincialis* coloured the road verges. We found *D. insularis* in good numbers in a woodland site where there were no *O. provincialis* to muddy the water. The flowers were mostly in bud but we found some with open flowers to confirm identification. Walking though the woodland we emerged onto a grassy hillside with shrubs. There were different orchids here but in very small numbers. The stars on this hillside were groups of blousy pink *Paeonia mascula*. Battered by the wind and rain they were not at their best but were impressive, none-the-less. Our final stop for the day was a considerable distance further south but the friends who showed us the *Op. panattensis* had given us details of a site where we could see Limodores, (including *L. trabutianum* if it had come into flower,) and *Ophrys chestermanii*. The weather was improving and our driver (Steve) had the bit between his teeth so off we went. The tall spikes of *Limodorum* were immediately obvious in a very public area but most were still in tight bud. We found a few *L. abortivum* with first flowers open. The more slender plants looked right for *L. trabutianum* but all plants were in tight bud. We followed our directions to a different area in search of *Ophrys*. Our first encounter was with a group of *Ophrys apifera*, a rare treat as we had only seen the odd one at two sites up to this point.

Fig. 7: *Ophrys panattensis*

Fig. 8: *Ophrys morisii*

Fig. 9: *Serapias nurrica*

Fig. 10: *Orchis brancifortii*

Photos by Steve Pickersgill

Further on the track opened out into a small abandoned, heavily wooded quarry but on the edge of the trees in the grassland there were many *Ophrys* and we had our first encounter with *Op. chestermanii*. This is a stunning member of the *Ophrys* group with pale whitish to pink sepals with a central green vein and a large dark brown velvety lip with a hairy margin. It was certainly worth the long detour.

Encouraged by the arrival of good weather and the temptation of another endemic *Ophrys* we undertook another long journey south. En route we stopped when Steve spotted some *Cephalanthera longifolia* growing under the Armco. He was able to pull up off the road a little further on to find another treat as the grass on the inside of the bend was ablaze with *A. papilionacea* and *A. longicornu* and hybrids of the two. We walked along the road and found more of these orchids with *C. longifolia* along the line of the Armco and on the other side a steep bank was home to many fine specimens of *Op. neglecta*. The site we were aiming for was a field accessed via a track. In fact the track was at least as interesting as the field and our species count for the patch was twenty. *Ophrys ortuabis* is an extremely rare endemic of Sardinia confined to a few sites covering a small area in the Ortuabis locality of Sarcidano. It is a spindly *fusca* type with a brown lip edged yellow. An early flowerer, we were concerned that we may have missed it. As soon as we entered the field we realised that we had a challenge as the field was littered with brown and yellow *Ophrys* plants that were clearly not our quarry but may have hybridised with it making our task even more difficult. Steve did find a plant that seemed to fit the description and had just one good flower at the top of the stem. There were many different types of *Ophrys* in the field and along the track. Nothing new to add to the list but the flowers were in excellent condition and a full range of colours. On the trackside some of the *A. papilionacea* plants bore large flowers with wide lips matching those described by Delforge as variety *vexillifera*. Perfect spires of *H. robertianum* benefitted from the shelter of a wall. We spent many hours here and there is always the temptation of finding similar sites in the area but our time here had come to an end and we returned to Dorgali to pack and prepare for an early start the next day when we would head for the Domusnovas area.

We broke our journey near the coast at S. Ena Arrubia and watched flamingos as we ate lunch. In grassland on the other side of the road we found a population of *A. laxiflora* and *Op neglecta* and thousands of *Serapias* but we would hesitate to put a name to them. There were a few that were clearly *S. parviflora* and at first glance others looked like *S. lingua* but closer inspection led us to believe that this was probably a hybrid swarm.

11



12



13



14



Fig. 11: *Serapias parviflora chlorotic*      Fig. 12: *Serapias cordigera*  
 Fig. 13: *Orchis ichnusae*                  Fig. 14: *Dactylorhiza insularis*  
 Photos by Hilary Pickersgill

We had budgeted two days for Domusnovas and booked our hotel accordingly but some time later received more site information and realised we would be hard pressed to visit all the sites on our list. To fit everything in we decided to explore the eastern side of the area on our journey down, the central part the next afternoon and the western area on our last full day, with a trip to Sant' Antioco in between. The day we moved was a public holiday. In Italy this usually means that everybody heads out into the countryside for gatherings of family and friends and when we drove into Domusnovas the road verges in the woodland were seething with large groups of people. Steve drove to the point where the groups of people thinned and we were able to park and explore. Under the trees we found *L. abortivum* and *L. trabutianum* and this time there was one plant of *L. trabutianum* with an open flower. It was not the best specimen but at least we could be sure of the identity. Among ruined buildings was a veritable forest of dense heads of *O. anthropophora*. Looking further from the track a large number of *Ophrys* plants stood out in a shaft of sunlight. Closer examination confirmed another Sardinian endemic, *Ophrys normanii*. It is somewhere between *Op. neglecta* and *Op. chestermanii* in its characteristics. The large lip has a dark brown velvety centre with a broad hairy margin which may be very pale greenish yellow through muddy pink to bright yellow. The sepals are usually greenish or pink with a hint of green. The petals are usually similarly coloured but may be a darker hue. Other *Ophrys* in the woodland included *Op. chestermanii*, *Op. neglecta* and *Op. morisii*.

Our penultimate day was spent at two areas. We had information that the road to the Botanical Garden was worth exploring. On this occasion we only found more *Epipactis* uncurling tightly budded heads but we did add *Cephalanthera damasonium* to our list, the only place we saw it. Our morning had been spent at Sant' Antioco where we hoped to find *Ophrys conradiae* but we were being optimistic as this is a much later flowering species. We did see some very impressive groups of *Op. annae* and another new species for our list, *Anacamptis coriophora* ssp. *fragrans*.

On our last day we worked our way along another road heading into the Domusnovas area from the west. The road ran through farmland and open grassland with patches of woodland and we walked until we reached dense woodland. Once again, while we found nothing new, the range of orchids along the road was astonishing. We stopped many times for colourful groups of *Ophrys* and while we were able to identify examples of *Op. apifera*, *Op. chestermanii*, *Op. morisii* and *Op. normanii* we felt that a large proportion of them were probably hybrids.



Fig. 15: *Ophrys normanii*      Fig. 16: *Anacamptis coriophora* ssp. *fragrans*  
 Fig. 17: *Ophrys ortuabis*      Fig. 18: *Ophrys chestermanii*  
 Photos by Hilary Pickersgill (16) and Steve Pickersgill (15, 17 & 18)

On our journey to the airport we detoured to coastal lagoons where we saw more flamingos and, much to our surprise, a field of ostriches! We had enjoyed a very busy two weeks visiting more than fifty sites and recording more than fifty species, sub-species and varieties. We suspected the real work was about to begin as we faced the task of going through several thousand images. We would like to thank members of HOS and other friends who generously shared site information with us and helped to make this trip so rewarding.

### Growing Marsh Helleborines in a Garden

Bill Temple

The name tells you some of what you need to know about *Epipactis palustris* – it does not like to dry out at any time. This species is said to be the easiest wild orchid to grow in a garden. Like the Bee Orchid it likes a lime rich soil which is moisture retentive, but never water logged and stagnant. This plant has very attractive, though rather small, flowers. When the shoots come through in late April/early May, they may be a very striking purple colour before they become green.

The Marsh Helleborine does not form tubers like most of our common orchids, but has fleshy roots. The orchid is also unusual in that it multiplies both by seed and vegetatively – it won't take many years to fill a pot if it is happy. The Marsh Helleborine can be a challenge to germinate *in vitro* – the seed must absorb water and then endure a period of cold before it will germinate.

My first attempt at growing this species was to take a 3 gallon builder's bucket, drill some 6 mm diameter drainage holes in the sides about 2 inches (5 cm) above the base, put some 2 inch pots in the bottom of the bucket and then a solid shelf of twin walled plastic on top of them such that it was just above the drainage holes. This was then buried in the ground up to the rim. A wick of cloth going through this shelf and to the bottom of the bucket ensured that the reservoir would continue to supply water even as the water level fell. A mix of potting compost and grit was added on top of the shelf then a layer of 4 mm grit on top to help cut down the evaporation rate and ensure that it was not necessary to water the pot more than once every few weeks in summer, even when there was no rain. This worked as the plant had 4 shoots at the end of the first year, then 11 at the end of the next and over 30 the next year. At this point it was clear that a larger container was needed so a 50 x 100 cm raised bed was planned. It was then discovered that when it rained the water level reached the top of the bucket. Investigation showed that the plant roots were at the bottom of the grit layer, rather than in the compost, that the drainage holes were blocked and that the compost did not smell too good. If you use this growing method I would advise that 12 mm diameter drainage holes work fine, particularly if well drained compost surrounds the bucket, but that 6 mm diameter holes block up.

The planned raised bed was then constructed to prevent these problems. The construction was limestone and the drainage holes were 12 mm diameter rather than 6 mm. The compost was diluted with grit and Vermiculite in the top 25 cm of the bed. The orchids were replanted and multiplied rapidly. This time the roots were 20 –25 cm below the surface, but as the compost aged and compressed in subsequent years they came nearer to the surface again. I stopped counting at 300 flowering spikes in the 1m x 0.5 m bed and found it very difficult to separate the orchids out as there were so many roots – it was like a very well established clump of couch grass. Now I divide them up every 2 or 3 years to avoid the problem of the root mat which required two persons to lift it out.

This orchid responds well to fertilizer, unlike *Cypripediums* which are reputed to dislike anything other than the merest hint of fertilizer. It is easy to grow and cheap to buy and I could recommend it to anyone. Fens are alkaline and represent one of the natural habitats of *E. palustris*, the other habitat is dune slacks. Bogs, which are acidic, are not a suitable habitat. *Epipactis gigantea* is very similar to *E. palustris*, however *E. gigantea* tends to occur beside clear alkaline streams or seeps rather than dune slacks. Differences between *E. palustris* and *E. gigantea* are that the latter is less tolerant of high total dissolved solids or fertiliser so be careful if using permanently hard water to water them. Higher total dissolved solids can result in very short plants of *E. gigantea* with few flowers.



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