

**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, 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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Front Cover Photograph

Purple and cream green spotted flowers of *Disperis oxyglossa* photographed in Drakensberg by Ann Skinner. See Graham Goodfellow’s article on page 120.

Contents

Editorial Note	111
HOS Meeting at Wisley	113
Programme for Wisley	113
HOS Photographic Show 2008	113
2008 Field Trip Reports by David Hughes.....	114
Report of HOS Meeting, Harlow Carr by David Hughes	117
Conservation News by Bill Temple	118
Drakensberg 2007, Part 2 by Graham Goodfellow	120
Cyprus Days by Paul Harcourt Davies	127
A Tour With Wildlife Travel by Jean Stowe	133
Book Review: Robert Bowmer “ <i>British Orchids - A Site Guide</i> ”	136
Naming New Orchid Taxa - A Reply but not an Answer by Les Lewis	138

Editorial Note

The October journal carries an interesting variety of articles, including a continuation of the debate about orchid taxa that featured in the last two issues. It is healthy to see this detailed discussion in *JHOS*, reflecting members’ deep interest in the subject. Also do remember that authors express their own views rather than those of HOS. I made something of an error in the last editorial by mentioning Roger Bowmer’s book without including a formal review. A couple of members raised this

and accordingly I have included a review in this journal. Having failed to get someone with recognised authority to write the review I decided to contribute it myself - possibly appropriate given that I was guilty of not substantiating the comments that I made in the last editorial.



Ophrys sphegodes var. *flavescens*
Photo by David Caals

The field trip schedules from the January 2008 *JHOS* and the field trip reports in this issue mention a couple of *Ophrys* varieties that were sought but not found. This provides the perfect excuse to mention encounters with these interesting orchids. Around about the time that the 2008 field trips began, I received an e-mail from HOS members David and Shireen Caals, together with a photo of an Early Spider Orchid taken at



Ophrys sphegodes var. *flavescens*
Photo by Mike Gasson

confirmed that these are a well known variety - *Ophrys sphegodes* var. *flavescens*. Richard mentioned that it is especially frequent in Sussex, from where he included it in a recent morphometric survey. He also pointed out that the variant is illustrated on pages 186-7 of Turner Ettlenger's 1998 book "*Illustrations of British and Irish Orchids*".



Ophrys apifera var. *bicolor*
Photo by Mike Gasson

Samphire Hoe in Kent. David's e-mail described it thus "It has no H or Pi on its lip, but just the yellow. Perhaps everyone will say we've all seen those before and you will need to save my blushes by deleting it discreetly, but as I see no references to this variant in my books, it might be special after all." It seemed to me to be an example of what Mike Parsons had described in the January 2008 *JHOS* as "albinos" that are known to occur at Samphire Hoe. I had already planned a quick visit to Kent for Early Spider Orchids myself, so tried to locate some more of these interesting variants at Samphire Hoe, having the luck to find some with rather fresher flowers. Checking the identity with Richard Bateman

Later in the year I found myself in the Midlands for a three day science review meeting. A significant bonus was proximity to one of the few relatively reliable sites for *Ophrys apifera* var. *bicolor*, the search for which Norman Heywood describes in his report of the Fontmell Down field trip. Skipping dinner one evening, I made a quick visit to the Midlands site and was fortunate enough to meet a more local HOS member there. This helped to locate a couple of exceptional specimens of this interesting and increasingly rare variety as well as providing something of the history of "*bicolor*" at this site. Looking at these two varieties of Bee and Early Spider Orchid side by side suggests that they share some structural similarities in their departure from the standard morphology of their species.

HOS Meeting at Wisley

The next HOS Meeting, including Photographic Competition, will be held on Sunday, 2nd November 2008, at the Hillside Events Centre, RHS Garden, Wisley, Woking, Surrey, GU23 6QB. A booking form is enclosed, which should be returned to Maren Talbot (Contact details inside the front cover). Please note that the deadline for lunch bookings is 25th October, and 31st October for non-lunch bookings. Members must bring their membership cards to gain entry to Wisley.

Programme for Wisley

- 9.00 Set up trade and members' stands.
- 9.30 Doors open, tea/coffee, Photographic Show entries in by 10.30, sales start.
- 10.30 Chairman's Introduction.
- 10.40 Tony Hughes "Orchids of Corsica".
- 11.30 Short break.
- 11.40 Panel of experts will answer questions from the floor.
- 12.30 5 slides in 5 minutes by Members.
- 13.00 Lunch.
- 14.00 Dr Brian Most FRPS DPAGB with Photographic Competition results and judges comments.
- 14.30 Paul Harcourt Davies "Insider's Italy, A Voyage of Personal Discovery".
- 15.20 Short break.
- 15.30 Peter Sheasby "Orchids and Flowers of Turkey".
- 16.15 Tea/coffee.
- 17.00 Hall to be vacated.

Would the audience please come prepared to ask questions of the Panel. Questions may be on any orchid related topic e.g. culture, taxonomy, conservation and should be notified beforehand to the Chairman David Hughes (contact details are inside front cover). The "5 slide" section is the audience's chance to present their experiences. Please notify the Chairman of "5 slide" contributions in advance of the meeting.

HOS Photographic Show 2008

The Photographic Show will be held again this year at the Wisley meeting. For 2008 the show is being organized by Christine Hughes. The Maren Talbot Photographic Trophy will be awarded for the best picture in show. As in 2007, pictures will be judged by Dr Brian Most FRPS DPAGB, who takes a specific interest in wildlife photography and will give a commentary on the winning pictures and slides after judging. Winning pictures will be published in this journal and on the HOS website.

The classes will be the same as last year; they appear on the HOS website and in the Members' Handbook. Entries must be notified in advance by Wednesday 29th October using e-mail to cchughes1@waitrose.com ensuring that the message is marked "HOS photographic competition" or by post to Christine Hughes at Linmoor Cottage, Highwood, Ringwood, BH243LE. Members who wish to enter but cannot attend the meeting may send their pictures to Christine before 29th October. We are always very pleased for members to stage non-competitive photographic displays.

2008 Field Trip Reports

David Hughes

Another summer is over, if it ever started. Groups of HOS members have scoured the length of England to enjoy our best orchid sites, from Dover with its massed *Ophrys sphegodes* (Mike Parsons) to the *Epipactis* of the Lancashire dunes (Alan Gendle). We saw massed *Cephalanthera longifolia* in Hampshire (Nigel Johnson) and even more dramatic stands of *Orchis mascula* in Derbyshire (Martin Jackson). We enjoyed the varied orchids of the downs of Dorset (Norman Heywood) and the amazing downland flora of Porton Down, courtesy of the MOD. Our thanks to all those who led field trips - they have been superb. Now it is time to think of 2009, so let me know where you would like to go and I would be delighted to have volunteers to lead trips. They are the lifeblood of the society and an excellent way to get to know other members.

Chappett's Copse, Saturday 24th May 2008, led and reported by Nigel Johnson and Rosemary Webb: The signs were good for this visit to the Hampshire Wildlife Trust's reserve. On Thursday before the meeting 3409 flowering plants of Sword-leaved Helleborine (*Cephalanthera longifolia*) were counted. There were also smaller numbers of flowering spikes of other orchids: 231 White Helleborine (*Cephalanthera damasonium*); 31 Bird's-nest Orchid (*Neottia nidus-avis*); 10 Fly Orchid (*Ophrys insectifera*). On the morning of the 24th the two leaders were joined by eleven members of HOS, including the chairman, his wife and the judge of last year's photographic competition. The first flowers of Sword-leaved Helleborine were seen within a few metres of the parked cars. We progressed along the main path into the reserve to the area of especially good plants earmarked for photographers. Many photographs of Sword-leaved Helleborine, Bird's-nest Orchid and Fly Orchid were taken. By the time the photographers had finished and rest of the reserve was visited it was time for lunch, which was taken at the house of one of the leaders. After lunch we visited a small wood near Bishop's Waltham to see two plants of Fly Orchid and many plants of White Helleborine and Bird's-nest Orchid. Many more photographs were taken and orchids admired. Our thanks are due to the volunteer warden for Chappett's Copse, Richard Hedley. In 1996 there were 613 flowering plants of Sword-leaved Helleborine but seed set was poor (*C. longifolia* is entirely dependent on seed for propagation). Richard showed that seed production was bet-

ter in plants growing in open glades and he caught a pollinating bee, *Lasioglossum fulvicorne*, a mining bee of calcareous grassland and open broad leaved woodland. He and his team created glades by scrub bashing and removal of sycamore and Norway maple trees. In the glades that were created, seed production was much improved and the number of flowering plants increased. This year's count was a five and a half times increase over 1996.

Samphire Hoe, 5th June 2008, led by Mike Parsons, report by David Hughes:

A group of HOS members met at this unusual site during the spring heatwave for a field trip kindly led by Mike Parsons. Samphire Hoe was made by dumping waste from digging the channel tunnel in the sea under the white cliffs of Dover east of Folkstone. The large bare area of chalk is being steadily and naturally colonized, the thin coarse grass sheltering a variety of interesting plants. The object of the HOS visit was the huge colony of Early Spider Orchid, *Ophrys sphegodes*. There were approximately 10,000 of them, many tall and in perfect condition. We were also delighted to see a short eared owl flying up to the cliffs and were pleased to meet several other members of the society on their knees with a range of high tech photographic equipment. We were grateful to be allowed to wander round the Hoe and take our many photographs. The friendly and helpful warden of this popular reserve asked us to be aware that although HOS members would be careful not to trample rare plants, their being off the path might tempt less informed members of the public to do the same. During the afternoon the party visited Stockbury Hill wood near Maidstone. Perfect Lady Orchids (*Orchis purpurea*) were scattered through the wood with Early-purple Orchid (*Orchis mascula*), Fly Orchid (*Ophrys insectifera*), Twayblade (*Listera ovata*), Bird's-nest Orchid (*Neottia nidus-avis*), the first Common-spotted Orchid (*Dactylorhiza fuchsii*) and yet to flower Lesser-butterfly Orchid (*Platanthera bifolia*).

Derbyshire Dales, 11th May 2008 led by Martin Jackson, report by David Hughes:

Martin Jackson led a group of HOS members to Lathkill Dale and Cressbrookdale in the Peak District. Here members were treated to stunning vistas of Early Purple Orchid (*Orchis mascula*) and a variety of limestone plants, including Jacob's ladder and three species of saxifrage. The now rare water vole was also seen on the stream.

Fontmell Down, Dorset, 15th June 2008, led and reported by Norman Heywood:

A fine, dry, if not too warm day, started with a short drive to a private car park and a short walk to the adjacent Fontmell Down, a chalk downland escarpment with everything you would expect as an orchid lover, plus the appropriate butterflies. Unlike the previous year, we had a poor showing of Bee Orchids, *Ophrys apifera*, but all the others were there in large numbers. *Dactylorhiza fuchsii* and *Gymnadenia conopsea* both showed off excellent "alba" forms and we saw *Anacamptis pyramidalis*, *Listera ovata* and *Platanthera chlorantha*. We did a little hunt for the Frog Orchid, *Coeloglossum viride*, which used to be on the Downs in quite considerable

numbers but we were unable to find a single plant. We also did a search for what my wife called a “muddy Bee Orchid”. She came upon this form known as “var. *bicolor*” some years ago when botanising with Martin Jenkinson, author of “*Wild Orchids of Dorset*”. *Ophrys apifera* var. *bicolor* had not been seen there for the previous forty years and this time we were unsuccessful. At the end of the afternoon we returned to New Gate Farm, for sustenance and to have a look at the wild flower meadows.

Porton Down, 22nd June 2008, led and reported by David Hughes:

On Sunday 22nd June nearly 30 members of the HOS submitted themselves to MOD security in order to gain entrance to the land belonging to the biological research organisation at Porton Down. This huge area of downland has been in MOD hands since 1916, never cultivated and little grazed. As a result it is home to an exciting variety of now rare wild plants, like *Atropa belladonna* (Deadly Nightshade) and *Monotropa hypopitys* (Dutchman’s Pipe). It hosts the largest colony of stone curlew in the country and, fulfilling our main objective, we found 12 species and subspecies of orchid. Pride of place goes to the newly established *Orchis purpurea* (Lady Orchid), and we look forward to hearing if DNA analysis can help define its origin. We were pleased to see some fine *Dactylorhiza viride* (Frog Orchid) and discussed the merits of protecting Bee Orchids (*Ophrys apifera*) in cages or inviting the military to run over them in tanks. We saw a good range of *Dactylorhiza* and hybrids and particularly admired *D. praetermissa* var. *junialis* (Leopard orchid) with its ring marked leaves. We were delighted to see an unusual epiphytic *D. fuchsii* (Common-spotted Orchid) growing in a hollow bole 8ft up a birch tree. Our thanks go to Stuart Corbett and his team for enabling this visit and for leading us over a perfect area of unspoiled chalk grassland. We hope to run the same trip in two years time, particularly for those who were disappointed this time.

Sefton Coast, 28th June 2008, led and reported by Alan Gendle:

A party of 14 members assembled at 10.00 on a breezy Saturday morning at the Lifeboat Road Car Park, Formby, Lancashire. Our first port of call was the pine woods to the east of the car park. *Epipactis dunensis* and *Epipactis phyllanthes* were our targets and we found plenty under the pine trees but only in bud. Searching the woodland to the south of Lifeboat Road produced a similar result. Natural England had kindly issued a permit for us to visit Cabin Hill NNR. Plenty of *Dactylorhiza incarnata* ssp. *coccinea* were seen but *Dactylorhiza purpurella* and *Dactylorhiza praetermissa*, usually abundant, were thin on the ground. *Epipactis palustris* was coming into flower in the wetter areas and a *Dactylorhiza incarnata* x *purpurella* hybrid was observed. We moved to the lunch stop at Sand Lake, Ainsdale and some of the hardier members of the HOS enjoyed lunch at the picnic tables by the lake. Refreshed we set off into the dunes. The first area proved to be excellent and we saw the following orchid species: *D. purpurella*; *D. praetermissa*; *D. incarnata* subsp. *incarnata*; *D. incarnata* subsp. *coccinea*; *D. fuchsii*; *Anacamptis pyramidalis*; *Neottia ovata*. Several of what were thought to be *D. incarnata* subsp. *coccinea* x

praetermissa hybrids were present in the area. Venturing north into the dunes we came across the odd *Ophrys apifera*. After finding several spikes of *E. dunensis* in bud, we eventually found a spike with a few flowers actually open. We made our way back through the dunes continuing to see lots of *Dactylorhiza* on the way to the Sand Lake. We moved on to the final stop at Birkdale to see the classic *E. palustris* site that supports a colony of many thousands of plants and also the rare white variety “*alba*”. Although there was a good show of *E. palustris* there was not a single “*alba*” plant to be seen. On leaving the area to return to the cars, a *D. fuchsii* x *purpurella* hybrid was observed under some willow trees.

Report of HOS Meeting, Harlow Carr, Harrogate.

David Hughes

The Northern meeting once again was a huge success, the full turn out requiring more chairs to be brought in. The full hall and northern friendliness made this a very pleasurable occasion. Mike Lowe started the programme talking about the orchids of Spain. Living half his life in Spain he was able to take us around this large country showing the varied scenery and range of little known orchids. Mike also shared with us the results of his extensive measurement of *Ophrys* flower parts from which, together with notes on their pollinating insects, he developed his own picture of *Ophrys* taxonomy. Pete Murray, who is a Director of Wildlife Travel, showed us splendid pictures of Orchids of the Gargano. Pete is a teacher of photography and gave very useful tips on how to deal with the difficulties of photographing plants, particularly related to the colour curves of digital cameras. Jackie Murray presented the botanical side of their talk. Then David Nelson took us further north to Gotland, where he led us around this large Swedish island with its huge range of interesting orchids. We followed with concern his quest to find *Orchis spitzelii* and felt relief to see some residual florets on one withered spike.

After lunch Chris Barker led the fast and furious 5 minute presentations with stunning pictures of the pleasure of orchid hunting in the rain. Ann Kitchen took us to the Dolomites and Iain Wright entertained us with the reasons why wasps pollinate helleborines. Jeff Hutchings of Laneside Alpines demonstrated that it is possible to give a stimulating talk without visual aids. He talked on conservation from a grower’s viewpoint, pointing out the problems of buying from Eastern Europe, the USA, China and especially eBay. Lastly Malcolm Brownsword gave an entertaining presentation on the orchids of Wessex, challenging us to spot an orchid that hadn’t been shown during the day; that there were so few was credit to the range of topics covered in the meeting. It is again noteworthy that all visual presentations were of a very high standard, with helpful Powerpoint effects. Don’t let the membership be discouraged though as we still have an excellent slide projector. The meeting was very enjoyable and it was great that we had such a good turn out. We look forward to the future when Harlow Carr will have a larger lecture theatre, probably in 2010.

Conservation News

Bill Temple

I am afraid that I have more bad news this issue - Dark Red Helleborines have been dug up illegally in the Peak District. As yet I have no detailed information other than that provided in a press release from the Peak District National Park Authority. According to this the Dark Red Helleborines were dug up and removed from the Stoney Middleton area between 16th and 23rd July. Please could all members be careful if they give out orchid site locations, particularly over the internet. In the last issue of *JHOS* I forgot to mention one thing about the USA system of orchid “rescue” - there is a problem with some unscrupulous people obtaining a legal licence and then digging up orchids which are not threatened and then selling these as well as the threatened ones.



Epipactis atrorubens
Photo by Peter Smith

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Japanese Hardy Orchids



Amitostigma x enomotoe 'Kou Itten'

This is the new hybrid between *A. keiskei* and *A. kinoshitae*. This small bulbous deciduous orchid is one of the best selections of the cross with a white flower with purple centre.



Bletilla striata 'Soryu'

'Soryu' (Blue Dragon) is a new selection of a form found in Honshu with lavender-blue, widely flared flowers. Propagated from seed but selected to ensure consistency in flower colour.



B. striata 'Tri-Lips'

There are a few examples of 'tri-lip' forms of orchids but this is the only one found in *Bletilla*. Purplish pink with white inside the lips. Vigorous and as easy to grow as the species.

Cremastra appendiculata

Woodland orchid from Japan with 30cm spikes of showy peach/buff-coloured flowers.



Dactylorhiza aristata and D. aristata f. alba

Terrestrial orchid with rose-purple flowers in late spring. The white flower form is very rare.



Eleorchis japonica and E. japonica f. alba

This is a moisture loving bulbous orchid with dark pink flowers, closely related to *Pogonia japonica*. The white flowered form is very rare even in Japan.



Gymnadenia camtschatica f. alba and G. conopsea

Very rare white selection of the species with attractive compact flower spikes.

G. conopsea is similar but with longer spikes of pale pink flowers.

Liparis kumokiri

Widespread Asian species with medium green leaves ruffled at the edges and tall spikes of greenish-white flowers in summer.



Platanthera metabolia

White flowered elegant hardy *Platanthera* species from Northern Japan.



L. makinoamia 'Kuro Suzu'

Spectacular dark flowered dwarf species clone with bright green leaves.



Cypripediums

Cypripedium x columbianum, *C. debile*, *C. montanum*, *C. parviflorum* var. *pubescens*, *C. x ventricosum* 'Pastel', *C. Sebastian*, Frosch Hybrids

Drakensberg 2007, Part 2

Graham Goodfellow

This article continues the account of our visit to Drakensberg that was started in the last journal (*JHOS* 5: 81- 86, 2008). From Cathedral Peak we drove over 200 kilometres to the southern section of the berg, arriving at Himeville where there are many B&Bs. We were happy with our choice of Sani Manor. From here it is a long haul of 40 km to Garden Castle National Park, but preferable to staying in the hideous and unwelcoming hotel complex abutting the park. Unfortunately the only access is through its grounds. The park fees themselves are minimal and are the only source of local staff wages. On entering the park we began to spot new species from



Figure 1: *Satyrium parviflorum*
Photo by Ann Skinner

the car. We set off along the Sleeping Beauty Cave walk and came to a halt almost immediately to examine the orchids. *Habenaria dives* (Figure 2), the death orchid (the ground, dried tubers are used as an evil charm) was common from here on. A white *Habenaria* for a change, but never displaying a spike fully in flower, always some withered or some in bud or all three at the same time. *Brownleea parviflora*, growing among rocks, when in bud closely resembles an albino version of our own fragrant orchid but differs when the flowers open. *Disa fragrans* had almost finished flowering but was identifiable, while another *Disa* confused us. It was almost certainly *Disa brevicornis* (Figure 3) but some plants had a look of *D. basutorum* which occurs at higher altitude. Perhaps there was some degree of hybridisation. *Disperis tysonii* (Figure 4) was common here and in many of the sites we subsequently visited; a slender orchid with small magenta flowers. Higher up the path we found a single *Satyrium parviflorum* (Figure 1), the devil orchid, a sweet scented greenish yellow flowered plant. The weather turned and a thunderstorm drove us to seek shelter below rocks before returning.

The next day we travelled on a dirt road to the much closer Cobham reserve where we took a long level walk along the Pohlela River. Clear skies and unrelenting sun-

Figure 2: *Habenaria dives* Figure 3: *Disa brevicornis*
Figure 4: *Disperis tysonii* Figure 5: *Disperis stenoplectron*
Photos by Ann Skinner



shine more than justified our having borrowed an umbrella to use as a sunshade. Taking a rest break in the shade of a huge rock we noticed some San (bushman) art low on its side. The bushmen were ruthlessly hunted and murdered to the last, primarily by colonists. Treated as less than animals, it was only belatedly that the cultural value and significance of their art was recognised and acknowledged. Nonetheless it has suffered wanton vandalism to such an extent that remaining sites, no matter how degraded, are carefully guarded or kept secret and those open to visit are permitted only under official guidance. Orchids were plentiful, many in seed, dotting the grassland. *Habenaria dives* and *Disperis tysonii* were again common. Some may have been *Disperis concinna* which is rare, described in “*Mountain Flowers*” as having four flowers yet the picture shows a plant with six. There was no doubting the identity of *Disperis stenoplectron* (Figure 5) with far larger flowers. *Hesperantha grandiflora*, a very pretty small member of the Iridaceae, was common in one area growing on rocks alongside the river. *Habenaria laevigata* when in full flower does not appear so, as the labellum remains curled upwards and backwards. Primarily green, the flowers shade through yellow to an orange brick colour. The very sweetly scented *Satyrium neglectum* was common here: with *Satyrium longicauda* (Figure 6) the leaves appear on a separate shoot to the stem.

The Drakensberg is a major water catchment area and due to its National Park status there are no polluting forces so that there is little danger in drinking directly from mountain streams which is convenient when water bottles run out. There are also many pools safe for a quick cooling dip. Beside one of these we found a few *Habenaria falicornis*, a more striking member of the genus; alas most of the flowers had suffered insect or other damage.

Back at Himeville there is a local nature reserve where the grassland contained many orchids in seed, probably *Disa* and *Satyrium* species. Himeville and nearby Underberg are the starting points for one of the major tourist attractions of the whole Drakensberg, the Sani Pass. This is a 4 x 4 only route to the top of the berg and the only access point from this side into Lesotho. The pass carries much additional motor cycle and quad bike traffic and is less than peaceful. Waiting at the S.A. customs station at the foot of the pass provides an opportunity to examine some huge *Satyrium* spikes, in seed on our visit. Most of the tours fill their vehicles for a quick up and down to the Sani top chalet, the highest bar in Southern Africa, but we were fortunate to travel with Johan of Bundhu Expeditions who was knowledgeable and amenable to stops at any point of interest. In addition to orchids previously seen we discovered *Pterygodium cooperi* with a scent accurately described as sharp. Near the

Figure 6: *Satyrium longicauda* Figure 7: *Brownleea macroceras*
 Figure 8: *Corycium dracomontanum* Figure 9: *Disperis cardiophora*
 Photos by Ann Skinner



top of the pass *Brownleea macroceras* (Figure 7) cling to the rock face in the drip zone. *Corycium dracomontanum* (Figure 8), differing from *Corycium nigrescens* by its small green labellum, grew nearby. At a streamside we stopped for a colony of *Satyrium parviflorum*. Raptors were abundant here, particularly the rare lammergeier. Other avian specialities were the orange rockhopper and ground woodpecker. On the plateau the vegetation was dwarf and different, a multicoloured kaleidoscope of rhodohypoxis, helichrysum, felicia, geranium and diascia among many others. We only had a short time to explore before this was curtailed by a sudden sharp rainstorm. The hardy Basotho, in their traditional dress of blanket and wellingtons must lead a bleak and hard life in this harsh environment. We spotted a small distant flock of bald ibis which are very rare and quite localised.

We travelled back to Giant's Castle in the central section of the berg. Within the park there is beautifully sited and well appointed accommodation in self catering lodges as well as a restaurant. It is pricey but the alternative requires a long daily drive in and out. At Main Caves it is possible to view examples of San art but you need to coincide with a guide, supposedly there on the hour to unlock the gates and take your fee. Twice he failed to arrive. The short river walk is rewarding, being level with diverse vegetation. *Habenaria chlorotica* was again seen here along with a very striking *Satyrium cristatum*, a tall plant with blood red flecks on its white flowers. We found it in good numbers walking the Langabilele Pass together with other previously seen species - *Brownleea parviflora*, *Pterygodium cooperi*, *Habenaria dregeana* - and one new one - *Disa dracomontana*.



Figure 10: *Pterygodium hastatum*
Photo by Ann Skinner

Slightly further north in Champagne Valley we stayed at the Drakensberg Sun complex, a hotel targeting golfers rather than hikers yet friendly and sympathetic with the benefit of being close to the mountains. Some walks lead directly from the hotel; the one to the blue grotto has many *Crocasmia aurea* along the path. Large showy butterflies are common and the birdlife diverse. Many of the same shade loving orchids were seen but a new tiny one was hard to identify as again it wasn't in Ms Pooley's book; *Disperis anthoceros*, mainly white but with green veins like our own *Anacamptis morio* and an upcurved spur. In the grasslands higher up were *Pterygodium hastatum* (Figure 10), *Disa patula* and *Disperis tysonii*. The return walk

leads through a depressing area of weedy alien plants – eucalyptus and wattle which exclude native vegetation and are a serious problem in many parts of South Africa.

It is a short drive to Monks Cowl and the park proper. The walk to the Sphinx begins in shady forest and we soon found a good colony of *Huttonia pulchra*, which unfortunately had been partly destroyed on our return through work to upgrade the path. We continued beyond the Sphinx onto the little berg where the magenta flowers of *Hesperantha baurii* became increasingly common. Similar but larger flowered *Tritonia disticha* grew in rock crevices. A long level path towards Blind Man's Corner, with its warning signs of the dangers of suddenly changing weather, brought us new orchids along with some old friends. *Satyrium microrrynchum*, small with dull yellow flowers, was only seen here and is one of the rarest in the genus, being found in small numbers in only six locations. Much more striking *Disperis oxyglossa* (Figure 12 and cover photograph) with large purple and cream green spotted flowers was relatively common in one area, with its companions *D. stenoplectron* and *D. tysonii* plus some suspected hybrids. *Habenaria laevigata* and *Disa (Monadenia) brevicornis* also grew here. This was one of the richest areas for orchids that we visited. Another first sighting was a single plant of *Brownleea galpinii* (Figure 11), an attractive plant with purple spotted white flowers. On the return descent we took a side track to the Sunken Forest and again found *Liparis bowkeri* at the foot of huge shady boulders covered in *Streptocarpus*, *Talbotia* and *Stenoglottis fimbriata*.



Figure 11: *Brownleea galpinii*
Photo by Ann Skinner



Figure 12: *Disperis oxyglossa*
Photo by Ann Skinner

From here, with limited remaining time, we drove a long circuitous route to approach the Royal Natal National Park from the north through Phuthaditjaba. The nature of this city

came as a complete surprise. It was a huge, sprawling and a Bantustan relic of the apartheid era. We were heading for Witzieshoek, accommodation created by a tribal chief in the 1930s and little changed since. At 7,500 ft it has the benefit of a spectacular location but not much else. We arrived with the mountains wreathed in cloud and a fierce wind blowing but early the next morning the sky was clear and the view magnificent. Many of the peaks we'd seen and visited were clearly identifiable as they stretched many miles distant. Walking out to take photographs we found ourselves in flower rich meadows with numerous beautiful yellow *Kniphofia breviflora*. Orchids were frequent with many *Brownleea galpinii*, some *Disa fragrans* and *Disperis stenoplectron*. *Disperis cardiophora* (Figure 9), new to us, had a tight second cluster of flowers. Green flowered *Habenaria lithophila* was similar to *Habenaria dregeana*: *Habenaria dives* was also seen.

A six km drive along a dirt road leads to the car park at the foot of the Sentinel Peak trail, the easiest route to the plateau in the whole range. At this altitude the habitat was reminiscent of European alpine meadows and progress was slowed by regular photographic stops. *Brownleea galpinii* was common here along with the usual *Satyrium* and *Disperis* species; of the latter the rare paler *D. cooperi* was new. For the first time since Sani Pass we found both *Corycium dracomontanum* and *Brownleea macroceras*, again in rocky shade. *Holothrix incurva*, another endemic, grew on a few ledges. Nerine species were abundant on the west facing cliffs, seeming to cling to the rock with little means of support. We saw many clouded yellow and painted lady butterflies, but surely these cannot be the ones which migrate to the UK some 5,000 miles distant? The last part of the climb to the plateau consists of two sets of flexible iron ladders approximately 50 m high and drilled into the rock, a challenge for those of a nervous disposition or fear of heights. From here it is about 1 km to the top of the Thukela waterfall. Many orchids with heavily spotted leaves were passed but all were in seed and remain unidentified. Intrepid climbers spend the night up here which affords the opportunity and time to explore this fascinating area more thoroughly. On our final day we returned to the main section of the Royal Natal National Park. On a short walk up Fairy Glen we found many *Holothrix orthoceras* of which we had only previously seen a single plant, another endemic with pale purple veined flowers and beautifully reticulated leaves. *Hesperantha coccinea* was common on the streamsides.

During our brief visit we saw over 47 of a possible 70 plus orchid species as well as many other attractive plants. A visit in January would probably offer the chance of finding another 20 plus species although it might be too early for some of those we saw in flower. Nonetheless with considerably more orchid species than are to be found in the whole UK and numerous other beautiful flowers in abundance this area is a worthwhile alternative to the cold and dismal late British winter.

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Cyprus Days Paul Harcourt Davies

The Orchid tales begin in earnest in Cyprus though the steps go back to childhood and to Kenfig half a century ago. As a small child those passions were formed when I found a Bee Orchid and, later that year, an orchid that was not in any of my wild flower books. It was not until The Rev Keble-Martin's flora appeared in 1965, and was one of my Christmas presents, that I realised some years earlier I had found *Liparis loeselii*, the Fen Orchid. Orchid photography and taxonomy had become a passion by the early seventies, when research work in Astrophysics was just dribbling along and I had started teaching to earn a crust in a "crammer" - then I saw a job advertised in Cyprus. When we arrived in 1978 it was almost four years to the day after the Turkish invasion. We made many Cypriot friends - one of them was (and is) Dr Andreas Demetropoulos whose passion for the natural world matched mine. Andy D was in charge of the fisheries department and we often went off in the departmental Landrover to places where the only fish had died out several million years earlier, when much of Cyprus lay beneath the waves. We sought and photographed tree frogs, fruit bats and orchids and together set up the Cyprus Biological Society, holding annual exhibitions to try and raise public awareness of the treasure house of species in this island crossroads.

It was with Andy that I found the first signs of *Orchis punctulata*. I had a locality "northwest corner of Cyprus on limestone" given to me by Jeff Wood from a Kew herbarium sheet. For anyone who now knows the Akamas peninsula, this was not GPS precision, but on January 4th 1979 we set out from our hotel, the rough and ready Akamas in Polis. Heading into the Akamas peninsula after the New Year celebrations I saw some "likely looking" friable limestone near Neochorio and got out to wander on a hillside amongst partly hidden Roman tombs. There were some large, glossy-green orchid leaves that were longer and more strap-like than *Barlia* and I had "that feeling".



Advance to late one evening on February 17th 1979 following the roundabout journey from Nicosia that then took about five hours. Light was falling but not so much that it stopped us scrambling up the same slope where the large green leaves were now surmounted by two massive flower spikes of *O. punctulata*. The stems plus inflorescences were about 30cm tall and on one of them the flowers, to all intents and purposes a yellow military orchid in appearance, were beautifully edged in deep chestnut. This was the so-called var. *sepulchralis* but I was shaking far too much to photograph it and left for the Akamas hotel, where local red wine steadied or rather numbed the nerves.

On the following day, we saw over 30 flowering spikes scattered on old terraces with many more not yet mature plants. In many visits since, I have watched the fluctuation in numbers through good seasons and bad. Some years ago, on a foray just before one of our orchid trips, I saw a charred hillside ahead of me and felt sick in the pit of my stomach. This was one of those “accidental” fires that occur spontaneously all over the Mediterranean lands when vandals want to use the land to build: witness Greece in the summer of 2007. Through the blackened stem of brambles and a bed of ash just a few flowering stems of *O. punctulata* grew bravely.

Later in that year of discovery and over the next two, Andy D and I made forays, armed with an extraordinarily colourful geological map, to locate similar limestone areas. We subsequently found good populations of *O. punctulata* near Lefkhara, more plants further up the road from Neochorio at Smygies and then also on the south coast near Pissouri. But most, if not all, of these sites have suffered as environmental pressures in Cyprus are huge and so much good orchid land falls victim to the fast tourist “buck” and the great God concrete. One deep sadness for me over the three decades I have been photographing orchids is the sheer extent to which so many of the coastal orchid sites in Mediterranean Europe have simply disappeared in the name of “development”.

At one time I was opposed to collection, having seen the horrific way some enthusiasts collected tubers, and then waited a season in the UK for them to die. However in the context of habitat loss the rescue of tubers makes sense and skills have moved on and upwards with members of the HOS at the forefront. Like Prof. Richard Bateman, I have generally become an advocate of “information” rather than considering orchid knowledge as some private preserve but I am very careful because this has not been without mishaps and occasional broken trust. There were some very well-known and unscrupulous collectors in the orchid/alpine world and some are doubtless now denuding the flora of the Elysian fields.

Orchis punctulata

Photos by Paul Harcourt Davies



Ophrys kotschyi

Photo by Paul Harcourt Davies

Just weeks after finding *O. punctulata* in that first Cypriot year I found spikes of what, for me, is the most stunning of ophrys, *Ophrys kotschyi*, having already also discovered *Ophrys elegans*, *Ophrys sitenissii* and those numerous “forms” of “*fusca*” which have evolved into “Delforgian” species. The excitement of discovering orchid rosettes in January and wondering what they are becomes almost too much if, like me, you were the kid who could not wait for Christmas. The best populations that we found in the south of the island (*O. kotschyi* is far more frequent in the north) were on the geologically recent limestones close to Nicosia but now swamped by the inexorable advance of the city limits.

Some months later, after spring had sprung and the land was rapidly becoming desiccated

and the land was rapidly becoming desiccated, Andy took me with his sons Simon and Stefi to a torrent bed to look for freshwater crabs. A childhood spent chasing after pond tortoises, snakes and all manner of creatures with their Dad and his wild friend Paul had a lasting effect for Dr Simon Demetropoulos now leads his own trips in Cyprus and is the country’s foremost herpetologist: Stefi has gone for reptiles on a larger scale and warden in the Everglades of Florida.

On that May morning, after a hot clamber over rocks in the stream bed above Kakopetria, we reached a place where the valley opened into a wide rock-strewn stream bed and there, hogging the stream side, were numerous large clumps of *Epipactis veratrifolia* with literally hundreds of flower spikes. Here and there, in wet areas under overhanging rocks, grew other gems such as the pretty endemic butterwort *Pinguicula cypria*. Just as with most terrestrial orchids one has to get close to appreciate the true beauty of the flowers of *E. veratrifolia* and, in this species, the green flowers suffused with maroon are striking. The labellum, as with all *Epipactis*, is hinged to facilitate pollination. The anterior part, the epichile, is white tinged with orange. It is more reminiscent of *Epipactis gigantea*, the north American “Spectacle Orchid”, than of any of the green woodland *Epipactis* species or of *Epipactis palustris*. Sadly, however, the population has dwindled as water has been piped from higher up the stream and used for irrigation in a parched land where no streams now

Epipactis veratrifolia.

Photos by Paul Harcourt Davies



reach the sea. Later that same, year I also found it on the other side of Troodos, near the Caledonia falls, high above Platres, but not in such numbers, nor with such strong clumps. However, the walk to it was worthwhile for plants of another Cypriot gem, the delicately-leaved *Dactylorhiza iberica*, grew on stream banks.

We first tracked down *Epipactis veratrifolia* through a floral bible published in 1904 by Jens Holboe as his PhD thesis. In this soft-bound tome I found reference to many Cyprus endemics and ended up chasing localities some eight decades later and often finding plants still *in situ*. For example, Cyprus has a marvellous bulb flora: its three crocus species are all endemic and there is also *Chionodoxia lochiaie* (named after Lady Lock) that hangs on in a few places and is one of the finest of the genus. Holmboe made reference to *Epipactis veratrifolia* along a stream bed and, given that there were very few, it was a just a question of walking and searching.

Most people visit Cyprus in early spring for the obvious reason that this is when most orchids flower. Spring comes early to the south - I regularly found *Orchis saccata* and *Barlia robertiana* in full flower every January near Larnaca airport at the Tekke. Few ever see the green-flowered *Platanthera holmboei*, by no means uncommon in the middle reaches of the Troodos, and fewer still find stems of *Cephalanthera rubra*, growing under bracken of all things, high on Chionistra. Rarer still are the few plants of *Epipactis condensata* that elude all but the most diligent searchers; you are far more likely to encounter the taxon *Epipactis troodii* scattered under trees of *Pinus nigra* in the Troodos massif. The last of the *Epipactis* I found in Cyprus grows in June under hazel in a few plantations near Agros - *Epipactis microphylla*. I collected a plant of this for the Nicosia herbarium and kept it overnight in a warm room - next morning the air was filled with a strong scent of cloves. It has the same crenulated epichile that *E. atrorubens* possesses and that too is clove-scented.

Writers in the *JHOS* and other volumes have made reference the well-known population of *E. veratrifolia* within the sovereign base area at Episkopi where you stop at your peril on the roadside to see it! This location is far from its other sites in the higher reaches of the Troodos and not on any water source connected to them. Also, in contrast, near Episkopi it grows on limestone on a wet cliff face in early April whilst elsewhere it thrives on stream banks on distinctly volcanic soils in mid to late May. I have read all sorts of erudite (and “not so” views) of just how it got there but not one has dared doubt its “legitimacy”. Indeed, it is now so well established that legitimacy might no longer be a question. But, cynical so and so that I am, I still wonder and with some justification.

When I lived in Cyprus from 1978 - 81, the flowers had their champion in Anne Matthews a delightful person and excellent botanist now sadly dead. Anne had writ-



Cyprus stamps with (clockwise from top left) *Ophrys kotschy*, *Orchis punctulata*, *Epipactis veratrifolia* and *Ophrys elegans*
 Photo by Paul Harcourt Davies

ten “Lilies of the Field”, which was by no means a complete Cyprus flora but a very informative book nonetheless. In an island where few shared the natural history interest she quickly became a friend. We talked about this population and she spoke of someone, a keen amateur, an officer based with the forces in Episkopi, who had first put a clump there in that wet location some years earlier. Oh well, last time I wrote an article doubting the legitimacy of an orchid find it was *Serapias parviflora* in Dorset. I had a bag of indignant letters, even though a few of us knew exactly who had planted it (and spikes of *Ophrys bertolonii* too). People get funny about orchids, ready to believe what they would like to be true but then with so much vanishing on this planet who can blame them, for strange things can and do happen with orchids.

I left Cyprus in 1981 with a very heavy heart. Things had worked far better for me than for my then wife but I was “persuaded” that a

career as a boarding school master would be a good one for a young family and we returned. Ironically, in those final months there seemed to be a sea-change in attitudes towards what we were trying to do with the Cyprus Biological Society and I was approached to provide photographs to be used on an issue of four postage stamps. I did not hesitate in making the choice - *Orchis punctulata* had to be there and so did *Ophrys kotschy*. *Epipactis veratrifolia* and *Ophrys elegans* completed the quartet.

A Tour With Wildlife Travel

Jean Stowe

Gargano is a limestone peninsula forming the spur above the heel of Italy. Acknowledged as one of Europe’s orchid hotspots, it is perhaps better visited as a organised tour. While a popular summer holiday destination for Italians, in spring only a few of the hotels and guest houses are open. Iain and I travelled with Wildlife Travel from 31st March to 7th April in 2007. We were a party of 10 people led by Jackie Murray and Frankie Owens. Gatwick to Bari was a three hour flight. On arrival the luggage arrived within five minutes and minibuses were waiting to trans-

port us to Gargano. This was an easy three hour journey passing through the olive groves of Puglia to our base for the week, the seaside town of Peschici.

Comfortable minibuses were used for the week. A variety of habitats were visited - woodland, seaside marshes and sand dunes, olive groves, open fields with limestone outcrops, quarries and an unprepossessing path, which Jackie described as a scabby track. Just the place for orchids - we found several species including a wonderful stand of *Orchis italica*. The Forest of Umbra was full of interest. In the museum there several of us bought *Orchidee Spontanee nel Parco Nazionale del Gargano* by Rossini and Quitadamo, one of two recent books on local orchids. A morning in Monte S. Angelo at 832m was billed as a cultural visit, but the castle walls supported a rich flora, including *Campanula garganica*. This is one of the first alpinas I grew as a child. *Orchis lactea* was seen on a footpath near the town. Before the tour I had of course read about the endemic *Ophrys* but that was no preparation for the complexity and variation of the populations we saw. These led to great debate and field guides were much consulted. At times Delforge was helpful. Nevertheless as someone who is relatively new to the orchid world I have been interested (and somewhat relieved) to read the findings of Bateman *et al.* and Malmgren and to purchase Pedersen and Faurholdt's book on *Ophrys*.

The itinerary was full but delightfully flexible. One morning we saw four people in a field on their hands and knees and on the way back we stopped to look. The ground was pink with *Orchis papilionacea* and *Anacamptis (Orchis) morio* and possible hybrids. At another place we stopped to look at some *Narcissus poeticus*. There were so many orchids in the vicinity we stayed for three hours. The first day we'd been botanising by the roadside when an Italian stopped his car and joined us. He gave us a detailed lecture on *Ophrys* using playback on his camera to illustrate those he had seen recently.

As a group we had a lot of fun. Noel was always sketching; her beautiful work was a record of each day. She used cartoon form to depict the only mishap of the holiday, when Iain stepped back, falling and becoming tightly wedged in a Bronze Age tomb. David was a keen photographer and computer buff. After the holiday he sent us all a fully indexed CD; 241 plant portraits with notes on location, altitude and references to field guides as well as general views of the places we visited. Jackie looked after the official plant list and Frankie was the birder - 51 species were recorded, with highlights including peregrine falcon, short-toed eagle and Montagu's harrier. Gargano is not overdeveloped. No concrete jungles, no supermarkets. Good food. A second visit is certainly on our wish-list.

Fig. 1: Peschici Fig. 2: Bull in typical landscape Fig. 3: *Ophrys bombyliflora*
 Fig. 4: *Ophrys lutea* Fig. 5: *Orchis lactea* Fig. 6: *Orchis papilionacea*
 Fig. 7: *Orchis anthropophora* Photos by Iain Stowe

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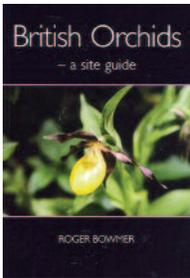


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Book Review: Roger Bowmer "British Orchids - A Site Guide"

Mike Gasson



British Orchids - A Site Guide by Roger Bowmer (2008) The Crowood Press Ltd. Ramsbury, Wiltshire, UK. 128pp. ISBN-13: 978 1 84797 002 2. RRP £12.99.

In his introduction to this book Roger Bowmer explains that it is based on a collection of notes that were made whilst following the challenge to photograph "all of the orchids in the UK". The book starts with some discussion of conservation issues with recommendations on appropriate behaviour ("some basic guidelines") that in part are related to the fact that the book makes a point of disclosing site details - albeit with limited precision in many cases. This advice is all very laudable but it is worrying to think that it needs to include "cut nothing and dig nothing". In this respect there is a curious text box detailing events associated with the protection of the last Yorkshire Lady's Slipper Orchid entitled "A Conservation Scandal!" which details the efforts of amateur naturalists, the collection of an orchid spike by a University lecturer and an apparent establishment cover up. The main part of the book is a classic collection of species entries accompanied by photographs, with each species having a similar set of clearly presented information under the headings: botanical name; flowering; habitat; distribution; Red Data Book status; natural history. The book ends with a glossary and some 16 pages of site information presented against each orchid species.

Reviewing this book is a tricky task and my original view was that the kindest thing would be to avoid doing it. I am quite sure that the book is the culmination of enormous effort over many years by the author but the real issue is its value to those who choose to purchase it. My criticisms are that it is in general a rather old fashioned approach using a species catalogue and it includes very little that has not been presented before. Some effort to acknowledge modern taxonomic changes is made but

the Man Orchid remains in its outdated genus as *Aceras anthropophorum* and furthermore it is presented physically separated from its *Orchis* relatives. If one is content to see site information then the treatment is slightly different from that used by Harrap & Harrap as it is presented against the individual species. These lists do represent a useful guide but the author will be criticised by some for publishing this information. For me one of the biggest problems with Roger Bowmer's book is the poor photographic quality. The majority of images are provided by the author, with a significant number credited to the Royal Botanic Gardens Kew plus a few from other well established nature photographers. With exception of the latter, the material is disappointing by today's standards. The images tend to have an austere, dark quality possibly contributed by the printing but the book does appear to be produced on decent quality paper. What is truly unforgivable is the fact that a significant number of plates are printed upside down which is really bizarre - was the book proof read at all? So where does that leave us? I had a couple of irate e-mails following my unguarded editorial comments in July and one correspondent held the view that the book was good value for its cost and that may well be so. Looking on the Amazon web site I found Harrap & Harrap for just under £21, whereas best price for the Bowmer book was just over £9. So for sure it is much less expensive than what is clearly a massively more useful text with vastly superior photographs.



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Naming New Orchid Taxa - A Reply but not an Answer

Les Lewis

In the July 2008 issue of *JHOS*, an article by Sean Cole asks the question “*Naming New orchid Taxa; What are the Rules?*” However, rather than providing an answer, the article is mainly directed to questioning the taxonomy of orchids referred to in the January 2008 article “*Update on British Orchids*” by C.A.J (Karel) Kreutz (“the January article”) which I assisted in drafting.

***Gymnadenia conopsea* (L) R. Brown var. *friesica* Schlechter**

Sean states that the recognition at Kenfig of *Gymnadenia conopsea* var. *friesica* is “somewhat surprising”. As he says, this is a variant new to the British Isles. However, this is not a new taxon, as implied by the title of his article, but was described by R. Schlechter as far back as 1919. He does not explain why its discovery at Kenfig is surprising. In fact, it is not clear why it should be. As fully explained in the January article, the habitat and orchid flora there are very similar to those on the coastal dunes where *G. conopsea* var. *friesica* grows in Germany and the Netherlands. Indeed, in addition to the orchids mentioned in the January article, *Epipactis helleborine* subsp. *neerlandica*, another speciality of continental North Sea coastal dunes, is also found at Kenfig.

***Epipactis dunensis* (T. & T.A. Stephenson) Godfrery subsp. *sancta* (P. Delforge) Kreutz**

Sean also states that “the subspecific relegation of *Epipactis sancta*” to *E. dunensis*

subsp. *sancta* is also “somewhat surprising” in view of the commentary in Delforge (2006). As the January article was simply reporting the earlier publication of this change of status, it did not state the reasons for it. Instead, it relied on the reference to the original publication (Kreutz 2007) in which the morphological and molecular reasons for the change are fully explained as follows. *E. sancta* differs from *E. dunensis* sensu stricto only in a few morphological respects, namely its greenish-yellow (instead of violet) stem, weakly toothed leaf edges, and downy-haired stalk. As is apparent from Figs. 1 and 2, the flowers of the two taxa are very similar.



Fig. 1: *Epipactis dunensis* subsp. *sancta* (with Common Red Soldier Beetle *Ragonycha fulva*)
Photo by John Spencer

The molecular study of *E. sancta* (as “*E. Lindisfarne*”) reported in the paper by Squirrell *et al.* (2002), to which Sean Cole

refers, is of particular importance. Unfortunately, there appears to be a mistaken belief in some quarters that this study definitively established *sancta* as a distinct species. The actual position is conveniently summarised in a later paper by Bateman and Hollingsworth (2006). The following extract is of particular relevance: “Our studies showed *Epipactis sancta* to differ substantially in genetic content from *Epipactis leptochila* (also from *Epipactis muelleri* and *Epipactis peitzii*) but only slightly from *Epipactis dunensis*. Thus *Epipactis sancta* could have an origin independent of that of *Epipactis dunensis*, both species arising as self-pollinating lines from within the cross-pollinating *E. helleborine*. Alternatively, *Epipactis sancta* could have evolved from within *Epipactis dunensis* and so might arguably be better treated as a subspecies of *Epipactis dunensis*.” (My underlining added for emphasis).



Fig. 2 (left): *Epipactis dunensis* subsp. *sancta* , Lindisfarne, Northumberland, 11th July 2007.

Fig. 3 (right): *Epipactis dunensis* sensu stricto, Slaggyford, Northumberland, 17th July 2007.

Photos by John Spencer

As is apparent, the species status of *E. sancta* (Delforge) is based on the first of these alternatives, whereas *E. dunensis* subsp. *sancta* (Kreutz) is based on the second alternative taking full account of the close morphological similarities.

***Epipactis leptochila* (Godfrey) Godfrey var. *cordata* Brooke**

The bulk of Sean Cole’s article is devoted to what appears to be a criticism of the identification of a colony of unusual *Epipactis* at Princes Risborough as *Epipactis leptochila* var. *cordata*.

As he correctly states, closest in appearance to the Risborough plants is the relatively well-known *E. leptochila* var. *neglecta*. However he then goes on to say: “Kreutz mentioned this variation but dismissed it purely on the basis of its flowering period.” (My underlining for emphasis). This is not so. After mentioning the difference in flowering time, the January article then goes on to explain a much more important difference: “a detailed study has revealed that the flowers have features intermediate between the fully autogamous *E. leptochila* subsp. *neglecta* and the allogamous (cross-pollinating) Broad-leaved Helleborine, *Epipactis helleborine*.”

As this study was rather technical, the January 2008 article only summarized its conclusion. To respond fully a more detailed explanation is needed. As stated in the January article, a picture of a Princes Risborough plant was published as in the book, “*Orchideen Europas mit angrenzenden Gebieten*” by Baumann *et al* (2006) under the name *E. neglecta* (synonyms: *E. leptochila* subsp. *neglecta* and *E. leptochila* var. *neglecta*). Since the flower structure was not entirely typical of *neglecta*, Karel Kreutz decided that we should consult Jürgen Reinhardt who had published detailed studies on the flower structure and pollination of both *E. neglecta* and *E. leptochila* (Reinhardt & Richter 2003; Reinhardt 2004; Reinhardt & Richter 2005).

Jürgen Reinhardt’s advice was that the Princes Risborough plants were not *E. neglecta*. His reasons were given in his e-mail to me dated 31 August 2007, as follows: “You ask why those plants are not typical *E. leptochila* subsp. *neglecta*. Subspecies *neglecta* is a completely autogamous taxon, sometimes with a very rudimentary rostellum. These (Princes Risborough) plants are *facultive allogamous*, that means their rostellum and and viscidium are effective in freshly opened flowers, but no longer so in older flowers during their flowering period. The pollination mode changes from an allogamous to an autogamous status.”

As the January article also states, a photo of the plants had been published previously under the name *Epipactis leptochila* in the book “*Orchids of the British Isles*” by Foley & Clarke (2005). The photo, shown on p. 51, is described as follows: “A potentially confusing *Epipactis leptochila* with labellum slightly broader than normal. Other key features confirm its identity as this species.”

As this book also explains, *E. leptochila* is normally totally autogamous because the rostellum usually dries up and withers as or before the flowers open. However, on rare occasions the rostellum may persist for a short time after flowering during which period the plant is temporarily (i.e. “facultative”) allogamous, just like the Princes Risborough plants. In addition, the pollinia of such freshly opened flowers are in the compact state necessary for cross-fertilising by insects, before becoming crumbly and effective only for self-pollination. An example of *E. leptochila* in this temporary “facultative” allogamous state is illustrated in Fig. 4 which shows one of

the lemon yellow pollinia, and the white viscidium (which is attached to the rostellum but not visible in the photo).



Fig. 4: *Epipactis leptochila* – flower in temporarily allogamous state. Bucklewood, Gloucestershire, 25th July 2008. The one visible pollinium and the viscidium are indicated.

Photo by John Spencer

Despite the caption in Foley & Clarke (2005), it apparent from their lip shape that the Princes Risborough plants are not *E. leptochila* sensu stricto (synonym *E. leptochila* subsp. *leptochila*). However, as explained in the January article, they do fall within the description of *E. leptochila* var. *cordata* by Jocelyn Brooke in “*The Wild Orchids of Britain*” (1950). It is therefore clearly legitimate for the plants to be identified as that previously described – not new - variety. Accordingly, as stated in the January article: “it would appear, at least for the present, convenient to consider them to be that variety rather than to describe them under a new name.” The words “at least for the present” were included in the hope that molecular analysis of the specimens collected by Richard Bateman will soon clarify the position.

Himantoglossum hircinum

Sean Cole finishes by referring to a spike of *Himantoglossum hircinum* from Avon with a “cleft” in the lip deeper than normal as an “example of the challenge we all face” in respect of orchid nomenclature. Although there are undoubtedly many challenges, happily this does not appear to be one of them. This is because the variation he describes does not appear of any practical significance. The depth of the cleft of his plant is not stated but, from its photograph, it would appear to be within - or at least close to - the range of “2-4 (-7) mm” quoted in Delforge (2006). D. M. Turner Ettlinger (1997) similarly refers to the “variation in the degree of bifurcation at the tip”.

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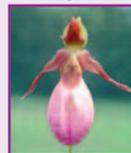


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