



# Solihull & District Orchid Society

*As you all already know Brian Cope passed away soon after the Malvern International Orchid Show. His funeral service was on Tuesday 11th July at Redditch Crematorium. Besides myself, Janet and Martin & Ken and Monica represented the orchid society at which I was asked to give a tribute to Brian. It is copied below.*

## A Tribute to Brian Cope 24th August 1929 – 19th June 2017

All of you who knew Brian well will also know that he was very stubborn. In fact, I think he became more stubborn as the years went by. However, this stubborn streak was the driver that made him want to excel in anything and everything that he did. Indeed, not just to excel but to be the best in the country and this was especially true of his two hobbies of Bird Keeping and Orchids.

Brian was one of the UK's leading bird judges with a particular speciality in Peach Faced Lovebirds. He judged at many of the National Finals especially at the NEC in Birmingham but it was not just Peach Faced Lovebirds. He was interested in many types of birds some of which may not have been entirely to June's taste – I think that the Senegal Parrot might have been a step too far. Anyway, it was quite clear that if you visited his bird room you could see from the quality of the birds that Brian was no ordinary breeder but somebody who took great care and who had an immense level of knowledge.



Besides birds Brian was also a very keen grower of orchids and was a member of the Birmingham & Midland Orchid Society, the Orchid Society of Great Britain and over a very long time the Solihull & District Orchid Society. Whenever he brought plants to our display table it was nearly always a specimen that would amaze the members with the plants quality and quantity of flowers.



Brian was always keen to have his plants judged by the RHS Orchid Committee and any award received could be regarded as the highest in the world. His first award was a Cultural Commendation Certificate for a *Promeneia xanthina* which had over 100

sweetly scented yellow flowers. (A Cultural Commendation Certificate is awarded for a plant that is considered as grown to the highest possible standard. The RHS Orchid Committee has over 100 years of documented awards so for Brian to have attained this level is an enormous achievement.)

Over the years Brian's interest moved to the genus *Sarcochilus* which comes from Australia and is not seen a great deal but he was determined to grow these plants to specimen size. When he first brought them up before the RHS Orchid Committee they were amazed at their quality. Over the years he received 3 more Cultural Commendation Certificates all for specimens of *Sarcochilus*. Of late he decided that they were too heavy to move around and were sold to a European Orchid Nursery except for one small plant.

He was still not finished as he managed to grow this small plant into another specimen and this year at the Malvern International Orchid Show it was displayed on the Orchid Society of Great Britain's stand. Again it was presented to the RHS Orchid Committee and you've guessed it – it was awarded another Cultural Commendation Certificate.

Unfortunately, on Sunday 18th June when he came to collect his plant he was taken ill and as history now tells this was to be Brian's last orchid show.

The plant has been donated to the Eric Young Orchid Foundation in Jersey who are one of the most important breeders and growers in the world. And so Brian's last awarded plant *Sarcochilus hartmanii* "Fiona" will be displayed in their show house for the public to see for years to come.

I am sure Brian would be delighted that his beloved plant will be cared for by professionals who take the same care as he did. An accolade indeed.

Malcolm Moodie



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**Chairman: Malcolm Moodie  
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If you have any pictures or information you would like to put on our website please email: [caroline.reid1@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:caroline.reid1@blueyonder.co.uk) or copy and pictures for newsletter: [ballm1@mac.com](mailto:ballm1@mac.com)

## Next meeting

This will be on Saturday 9th September (*Please note not the first Saturday but second Saturday in the month*)

The Hall will be open by 1.00. So please ensure you have your plants booked in for sale by 1.45pm so that the AGM can start at 2.00 pm.

All plants should be bug free with 10% of the sale price going to the Society.

This is a great chance to acquire plants grown by society members and so if you have any plants that are surplus to requirements please bring them along - other members will be eager to buy them.

It is always a fun afternoon so look forward to seeing you.

## Visit to Chester Zoo

For those who have booked on the Trip to Chester Zoo I will be sending out, by email, pick up times and location shortly.

Look forward to a lovely day out.

## Name that Hybrid

Don't forget that next month is the last chance to buy tickets for naming the Hybrid. The cost is only £1 per ticket with the winner to be chosen at the end of September's Meeting.

What a great opportunity – not to be missed.

See Heike.

# Orchid Pollination – Peter White

Today, many orchids are pollinated by humans in the greenhouse but not very long ago pollination was totally dependent upon an insect, bird, bat or other animal to perform this in the wild. There are so many different shapes and structures of orchid flowers plus so many different scents that a vast number of different creatures are required to perform the critical act of pollination.

Most orchids achieve pollination through the fragrance they produce although sometimes this fragrance is not always pleasant to the human nose with a number smelling quite foul. Some only give off this scent at a certain time of the day - for example, most white strong smelling orchid flowers are pollinated by moths and release their strongest fragrance at dusk or late in the evening.

Many of the strongest scents are released at midday when the morning dew is gone and a large number of insects are flying. Most orchid fragrances are difficult to describe with some smelling of freshly baked chocolate cake and others stinking of rotten meat but this fragrance is what determines the type of pollinator the flower will attract.

Almost every genus in the orchid family has some fragrant species for example:



*Bulbophyllum phalaenopsis* – a hairy, pinkish-red flower from New Guinea which smells like dead, rotting mice.

*Clowesia rosea* - a pale pink flower with a greenish frilled hairy lip that smells like a cinnamon bun.

*Maxillaria tanuifolia* - smells like coconut oil.

Those orchids that do not produce scent have adapted to have very showy intricate shaped flowers to attract pollinators.

Bright colours with a suitable hairy lip for landing attracts a huge variety of insects (beetles, moths, butterflies) and in some species hummingbirds. Some of these orchids do reward their pollinators with nectar and in some cases, flowers with longer spurs at the back such as *Angraecum sesquipedale* with a spur of up to 45 cm long which was described by Darwin who postulated that there must be an insect with an extremely long tongue. Most people thought this a fantasy until many years later a moth was seen pollinating this plant with a 45 cm long tongue.

Some orchids have a very intricate lip design that resembles a female insect which then attracts the male. A good example of this is a terrestrial orchid - *Ophrys apifera*, the bee orchid. Other orchids just simply go the extra mile and are designed to shoot their pollen at anyone or anything that approaches them, for example *Spiculaea ciliata* (the duck orchid) has a hinged lip which catapults the pollen at the pollinator when a certain part of the flower is moved. Some Australian *Thelmytria* (most of them are blue in colour) orchids are only pollinated in full sunlight and after bush fires – they are the only thing that is visible on the ground.

There are many different shapes and sizes of pollinia, most of them come in twos but some orchids produce 4 in one flower, such as *Laelia purpurata*. When the pollen is removed from the flower and taken to the stigma of another flower, the pollination process starts within 24 hours with visible changes - the flower collapses, the stigma closes and the column swells, eventually turning into a seed pod.

If you are planning to pollinate your own plants the best time to achieve this is 1 week after the flowers have opened because at this time the stigmatic surface is at its most sticky and the pollen is fully developed. It is important to check species compatibility before you try to cross your plants as usually, species with different/odd chromosome counts rarely pollinate successfully. If you are looking to achieve some specific qualities it is a good idea to check orchids for parent plant chromosome numbers. For example, if you cross 2 diploid (2n) plants you get a tetraploid (4n) which gives bigger and longer lasting flowers. In most species, the chromosome counts can be checked on the internet before commencing the pollination process.

There are many myths when it comes to pollinating and growing orchids from seed. Mostly this is achieved in a laboratory environment but it can be easily done at home taking some precautions into account. Peter prefers to sow his seed when it is still green, as then there is less risk of contamination and as there is less seed there is less handling involved. Some orchid species like *Disa*, are very easy to propagate from seed as they don't need any agar and can germinate in the same pot with a parent plant simply on sphagnum moss. Although some orchids are notoriously hard and take a long time to germinate. For example, *Odontoglossum (Oncidium) grande* can take 5 years to germinate which is why this species is not often seen in cultivation.

Peter encouraged everyone who grows orchids to attempt pollination, even a windowsill *Phalaenopsis*, as it is easy and very rewarding to see the seedpod develop.

Lina Smalinske

# July Table show



**Paph sukakulii 26ps  
(Malcolm Moodie)**



**Paph lowii 29pts (Malcolm Moodie)**



**Vanda - NON  
COMPETITIVE  
(Graham Jones)**



**Dendrobium thrysiflorum  
30pts (Stan Taylor)**



**Lc Yuki Gota 30pts  
(Monica Johnson)**



**Miltonia hybrid 27pts (Graham Jones)**



**Catasetum tenebrosum  
28pts (Monica Johnson)**



**Paph. barbatum 27pts (Malcolm Moodie)**



**Paph Armeni White 32pts (Malcolm Moodie)**

**Photos: Ken  
Johnson**