

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, 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

Anacamptis coriophora subsp. *fragrans* in Corfu (see article on page 20)

Photo by Robert Thompson



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Contents

Editorial Note	3
HOS Meetings 2010	4
Programme for Kidlington, Sunday 28 th March 2010	5
Photographic Competition Winners 2009	5
Comments on the Digital Photography Competition by Pete Murray	11
Report on the 2009 Wisley Meeting	12
Plant Show, Sunday 28 th March 2010	12
Field Trips 2010 by David Hughes	13
Ghost Orchid Rediscovered in Britain After 23 Years by Mark Jannink and Tim Rich	14
Ghost Tales by Paul Harcourt Davies	15
Corfu Revisited by Mike Parsons	20
Update on UK Orchids in 2009 by Sean Cole	29
Book Review: Orchidee d'Italia – The Orchids of Italy by Paul Harcourt Davies.....	33

Editorial Note

As you can see from the logos at the top of this page, we are pleased to have won funding from the OPAL grant scheme to enhance our outreach activities, communication and conservation work. Full details will be presented at the Kidlington Meeting and reported in the next *JHOS*. The recent, big orchid story has been the discovery of a flowering plant of the Ghost Orchid at the end of September. Given the level of interest in this and the absence of clear information, I am delighted that two of those involved in this important event, Mark Jannink and Tim Rich, agreed to contribute a guest article describing their discovery. Continuing the focus on *Epipogium*, Paul Harcourt Davies kindly brought forward a planned article on “ghost hunting” in continental Europe with some reminiscences of the “ghost scene” of the 1980s. Personally, I shared Paul’s frustrating experience of going out to see a recently discovered Buckinghamshire plant only to find that it had been removed – in my case it was in August 1980. Following recent requests for more on the status of UK orchids, Sean Cole has kindly provided an overview of the 2009 season for some of the rarer species and is happy to make this a regular feature. I am still hoping to get some cultivation articles in *JHOS* during 2010 and would especially welcome contributions from our expert growers and “seed germinators”!

HOS Meetings 2010

Sunday 28th March: Spring Meeting, including AGM and Plant Show, at Exeter Hall, Kidlington. Contact Betty Barber.

Saturday 11th September: Northern Meeting at Field Studies Centre, Harlow Carr, Harrogate. Contact David Hughes.

Sunday 31st October: Autumn Meeting, including Photographic Competition, at RHS Wisley. Contact Betty Barber.



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Programme for Kidlington, Sunday March 28th 2010

- 09.00 Hall opens – Plant Show, exhibits and entries to be staged by 10.00
10.00 Tea / Coffee
10.30 AGM
11.00 Prof. Michael Hutchings – Conserving British Orchids: a case study of the Early Spider Orchid, *Ophrys sphegodes*
12.00 Geoff Brunt – Restoration of the East Polden's grassland
13.00 Lunch & Tea / Coffee
14.00 Judges comments on the Plant Show
14.30 Chris Bailes (Curator of RHS Rosemoor) – A retrospective view of the history of orchid growing outdoors
15.00 Phil Seaton – *Cypripedium micranthos* from seed to flower
16.00 Tea / Coffee
17.00 Vacate the hall

Photographic Competition Winners 2009

Class 1. An orchidaceous landscape, print size up to 7x5 inches (10 entries)

- 1st Alan Blackman - *Gymnadenia conopsea* (Andorra)
2nd Alan Gendle - *Orchis italica* (Sicily)
3rd Karen Gregory - *Gymnadenia odoratissima* (Dolomites)

Class 2. A group of orchid plants, print size up to 7x5 inches (9 entries)

- 1st David Pearce - *Neotinea (Orchis) ustulata* (East Sussex)
2nd Ron Harrison - *Dactylorhiza purpurella* (Cumbria)
3rd Alan Blackman - *Dactylorhiza alpestris* (Andorra)

Class 3. A single orchid plant, print size up to 7x5 inches (9 entries)

- 1st Ron Harrison - *Himantoglossum hircinium* (France)
2nd Sheila Hackett - *Dactylorhiza sambucina* (Pyrenees)
3rd Karen Gregory - *Ophrys tenthredinifera* (Sicily)

Class 4. A close-up, print size up to 7x5 inches (11 entries)

- 1st David Pearce - *Ophrys sphegodes* (East Sussex)
2nd Tom Turner - *Listera (Neottia) ovata* (Surrey)
3rd Tony Hughes - *Ophrys regis-fernandii* (Turkey)

Class 5. An orchidaceous landscape, print size up to A4 (12 entries)

- 1st Mike Gasson - *Orchis mascula* (Norfolk)
2nd Diana Hughes - *Dactylorhiza masculata* (Andorra)
3rd Patrick Marks - *Dactylorhiza sambucina* (Vercors)

Class 6. A group of orchid plants, print size up to A4 (12 entries)

- 1st Nigel Johnson - *Orchis pauciflora* (Crete)
2nd David Hughes - *Cypripedium tibeticum* (China)
3rd Ron Harrison - *Serapias parviflora* (Crete)

Class 7. A single orchid plant, print size up to A4 (11 entries)

- 1st Alan Blackman - *Ophrys delphorpii* (France)
2nd Tom Turner - *Orchis mascula* (Surrey)
3rd Diana Hughes - *Anacamptis papilionacea* (Turkey)

Class 8. A close-up, print size up to A4 (11 entries)

- 1st Tony Hughes - *Serapias cordigera* (Turkey)
2nd Tom Turner - *Platanthera bifolia* (Cumbria)
3rd David Hughes - *Cypripedium tibeticum* (China)

Class 9. An orchidaceous landscape, 35 mm colour slide (2 entries)

- 1st Nigel Johnson - *Orchis mascula* (Buster Hill)

Class 10. A group of orchid plants, 35 mm colour slide (3 entries)

- 1st Nigel Johnson - *Dactylorhiza fuchsii* (Winchester)

Class 11. A single orchid plant, 35 mm colour slide (3 entries)

- 1st Rosemary Webb - *Dactylorhiza alpestris* (Switzerland)

Class 12. A close-up, 35 mm colour slide (3 entries)

- 1st Nigel Johnson - *Orchis quadripunctata x pauciflora* (Crete)

Class 13. Novice Class: a hardy orchid picture, print size up to A4 (7 entries)

- 1st Sheila Hackett - *Dactylorhiza fuchsii* with Six Spot Burnet Moth (Worcs.)
2nd Glenn Alder - *Ophrys lutea* (Algarve)
3rd David Pearce - *Ophrys sphegodes* (East Sussex)

Class 14 Orchidaceous landscape, digital image (15 entries)

- 1st Simon Andrew - *Orchis mascula* (Somerset)
2nd John Temporal - *Orchis italica* (Crete)
3rd Patrick Marks - *Orchis mascula* (Vercors, France)

Class 15 Group of Orchids, digital image (15 entries)

- 1st Mike Gasson - *Orchis mascula* (Norfolk)
2nd David Hughes - *Cypripedium tibeticum* (China)
3rd Alan Gendle - *Anacamptis papilionacea* (Sicily)

Class 16 Single Orchid Plant, digital image (14 entries)

- 1st David Hughes - *Cypripedium margeritaceum* (China)
2nd Tony Heys - *Dactylorhiza praetermissa* (Surrey)
3rd Mike Gasson - *Ophrys fuciflora* (Kent)

Class 17 Close-up, digital image (18 entries)

- 1st Ann Kitchen - *Himantoglossum hircinium* (Saintes, France)
2nd David Hughes - *Cypripedium tibeticum* (China)
3rd Mike Gasson - *Anacamptis (Orchis) morio* (Kent)

Winner of The Maren Talbot Award for Photography

David Pearce - *Neotinea (Orchis) ustulata* (East Sussex)

The first place winning photographs are shown on the following pages, with the Class 17 winner included with the judges comments to preserve its shape. The images are identified by a number that is equivalent to the Class.

1-1



2-1



3-1



4-1





15-1



12-1



8-1



13-1





Comments on the Digital Photography Competition

Pete Murray

It is a myth that a poor image can be transformed into a winner “in the computer”. Computer correcting and editing of images needs care. Cropping an image may improve the composition but it is best to compose the picture in the field rather than crop it afterwards. Digital images are affected by excessive contrast, and by light quality caused by time of day or sunny, shady or cloudy shooting conditions. Bright, sunny days can mean loss of fine detail in the flowers and colour changes are big problems in digital plant photography. Low light may give “noisy” (grainy) images, and use of flash can give a very artificial flat picture, a major difficulty in photographing woodland orchids or plants in the shade of trees. It is possible to correct some features such as colour balance, contrast and brightness in a computer but it is a very skilled job. Projection and printing may further change the colour balance and contrast. Sharpening of images needs to be done with care as over sharpening makes an image look very artificial and can even degrade the image. Similarly, beware of over-creative computer editing and artistic effects without good reason.

The winners of Class 14 (Orchidaceous Landscape) show a combination of capturing many orchids and the place where they live. More credit was given for inclusion of landscape photography elements. The winning image from Simon Andrew shows effective use of a low viewpoint for the orchids and their habitat, including their association with other plants. A classic landscape style and very orchidaceous!

In Class 15 (Group of Orchids), the most successful images were of a group of several plants, using a tight but balanced composition together with careful balance of camera position and zoom to bring the plant away from any distracting background.

Class 16 (Single Orchid Plant) produced some lovely subjects but on photographic criteria, three images had the edge on the others. It is worth spending time to find a photographic subject in the right place and good condition, and then balance camera position and zoom to produce what is essentially a plant portrait. The winning *Cypripedium* photograph from David Hughes is sharp, well composed and correctly exposed in dappled light below trees amidst pine needle litter. An excellent image, taken in a demanding location.



Himantoglossum hircinium
Ann Kitchen's winner in Class 17

Class 17 (Close-Up) attracted the largest entry, yet close up photography is one of the most challenging. Not only does the photographer have to think about the subject and composition, but the background, focal point and how much to have in focus are very important. Exposure is also difficult to get right, particularly for very pale and very dark flowers. Camera shake causing “soft” images is another difficulty in close-up work. Interestingly, close-up is a style of photograph that digital compacts do very well. Ann Kitchen’s winning photograph is an excellent low-viewpoint, close-up image of a Lizard Orchid that shows flower detail against the sky.

Report on the 2009 Wisley Meeting

David Hughes

As ever, we met in a packed hall. In his introduction, the Chairman reminded the membership that the Discussion Group is now running successfully thanks to Vikki Batten. Richard Bateman, our President, asked that the society support two independent research projects on the Bee Orchid and on old records of the Ghost Orchid. The first speaker of the day was Tony Hughes who took us back to Corsica and his talk will be recorded in a future article. John Haggard gave us a detailed account of how he grows orchids from seed. He took great pains to distinguish the different needs of the summer green and winter green genera and explained symbiotic and asymbiotic techniques. John finished with a detailed assessment of transplantation and growth media. To end the morning, Pietro Roseo gave a fascinating account of his travels in Iran, showing lovely pictures of the orchids and many other mouth watering plants he found there. Lunch was outstanding and I would like to thank Betty Barber who organised this and the whole meeting. Afterwards, the photographic competition was presented, including the new digital projected image classes. My thanks go to Christine Hughes for organising the whole event as well as to Pete Murray of Wildlife Travel for judging the digital classes and particularly to Ann Kitchen who managed them. Maren Talbot gave an overview of the classification and cultivation of *Cypripedium*. Finally, Peter Mottishead told us of the orchids he had found in his travels across Europe. It is noteworthy that Peter chose to use English names for his plants, reminding us that many in the audience are not so familiar with Latin. It was a day of stimulating talks and excellent pictures, with many members going home laden with pots from the plant stands.

Plant Show Sunday 28th March 2010

For those members on e-mail, entries for the Plant Show should be e-mailed by copying the entry form from the HOS website (www.hardyorchidsociety.org.uk) and then pasting it into a new document. This should be edited and sent as an attachment to malcolm.brownsword@tesco.net by 27th March 2010. Alternatively, telephone 01235-850668 and the show secretary will send an entry form. To maximise entries, members are encouraged to enter the non-competitive class, which was particularly well-supported last year.

Field Trips 2010

David Hughes

Once again we have a wonderful season of field meetings that are spread across the country. Full details will be recorded and updated on the website so do watch this for new meetings and to see if trips are full. Field trips are organised and led by volunteers to whom we are very grateful. Only HOS members are eligible and they have responsibility for their own safety and must ensure they are suitably equipped for the conditions to be encountered. Packed lunches are usually required. The leader may change plans before or during a meeting and will restrict numbers as dictated by the sensitivity of the site. Members must ensure that they tread with care when on a society field trip. There may be a small charge, usually £3 per member, as a donation to a host reserve. For details and booking, contact the nominated leader and book early because places fill rapidly. If you are disappointed perhaps you could lead a trip – great skill is not required, merely an enjoyment in finding hardy orchids in the wild and pleasure in sharing this with others. For any questions about the field trips or volunteers contact David Hughes – davidcchughes@talktalk.net.

25th April; Purbeck for Early Spider Orchid and Green Winged Orchid
Contact Norman Heywood – nandaatngf@tiscali.co.uk

3rd May; Samphire Hoe, Dover for Early Spider Orchid
30th May; Folkstone for Late Spider Orchid
Contact (for both) Mike Parsons – mike_parsons30@talktalk.net

23rd May; Warwickshire for Sword Leaved Helleborine and Man Orchid
Contact Brian Laney – brian.laney@gmail.com

23rd May; Silverdale, Lancashire for limestone pavement flora
Contact Anne Kitchen – knak@kenak.plus.com

19th & 20th June; Cambridgeshire for nine species of orchid
Contact Jean Stowe – 01778 346779 or jean.stowe@abelgratis.com

20th June; Sandwich, Kent for Lizard Orchid, other orchids and rare flowers
Contact Alan Blackman – alanophrys@aol.com

18th July; Tynedale and Holy Island, Northumberland for various Helleborines and other orchids
Contact Colin Scrutton – Colin.Scrutton@dunelm.org.uk

31st July; Kenfig, South Wales for *Epipactis helleborine* var. *neerlandica* and *Epipactis phyllanthes*
Led by Mike Clark but contact David Hughes – davidcchughes@talktalk.net

Ghost Orchid Rediscovered in Britain After 23 Years

Mark Jannink and Tim Rich

The Ghost Orchid (*Epipogium aphyllum*), last officially recorded in Britain in 1986 (Farrell 1999), was rediscovered in Herefordshire in 2009. In order to protect the plant and its habitat, exact details of the site are not being released except on a need-to-know basis. The rediscovery was the result of numerous repeated visits to ten sites, both old and new, from June 2009 onwards by Mark Jannink. The searches were conducted following the cold winter of 2008/2009, the first for many years, which it was hoped might stimulate flowering as this species has a continental distribution in Europe.

The solitary *Epipogium* plant found was about 5 cm tall and had one flower. When the plant was first found on 20th September the flower was not quite open, but it had opened on the second visit on 22nd September. By 26th September, the plant was leaning over to one side and a small hole had been eaten in the spur. On 1st October the stem had been eaten through by slugs and the plant was lying on the ground. The browning remains were collected and dried and have been deposited with photographs in the herbarium at the National Museum of Wales (NMW); full details are held separately in the NMW archives.

The plant was found in heavily shaded conditions in a woodland which included *Quercus robur* and *Corylus avellana*, and a few associated understory plants nearby including *Blechnum spicant*, *Lonicera periclymenum*, *Luzula sylvatica*, *Rubus fruticosus*, *Sorbus torminalis* and *Vaccinium myrtillus*. It grew on relatively bare, silty-sandy soil of pH 4.5 (determined on fresh soil mixed 50:50 with distilled water with a pHep2 Hanna pocket-sized pH meter), indicating a surprisingly acidic soil, and not in leaf litter.

Epipogium has been reported from perhaps 11 sites in Britain in Buckinghamshire, Herefordshire, Oxfordshire and Shropshire. The exact number of sites is difficult to



Epipogium aphyllum in Herefordshire, 26th September 2009. Side view; note the hole in the spur.

Photo by Tim Rich

determine, partly because of the secrecy surrounding the exact location of sites and partly because of doubt about the identification of plants historically (it has reputedly been confused with *Neottia* and *Ophrys*). It is also remarkably sporadic and unpredictable in appearance in Britain, sometimes with long gaps between records for the same sites. There are unconfirmed reports of *Epipogium* sightings in the Chilterns from 1987, 1994, 1998 and 1999 (e.g. Foley 2005). Its IUCN (2001) Threat Status classification as “Extinct” by Cheffings & Farrell (2005) can now be revised to “Critically Endangered”.



Epipogium aphyllum in Herefordshire, 26th September 2009. Front view; the picture is upright but the plant is leaning over.

Photo by Tim Rich

To ensure its conservation in Britain, further studies and data are required. T. Rich will act as an independent witness for new records and will archive data in NMW so that it can be made available for *bona fide* researchers.

References

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Ghost Tales Paul Harcourt Davies

Introduction

Way back in the mid 1960s I was able to choose a book as a school biology prize and, having no idea of what it would eventually mean in my life, I chose Summerhayes' classic “*Wild Orchids of Britain*”. Although there was much between its covers to fascinate an embryonic “orchidomane”, it was hard not to be specially intrigued by *Epipogium aphyllum*, the Ghost Orchid, with its rarity and the sheer unpredictability of flowering.

Never in its evolutionary history can one imagine that the Ghost Orchid has been anything other than extremely uncommon at best: there were never woodland glades filled with this orchid growing like bluebells. Flowering is unpredictable in all its known localities throughout Europe into Asia and, though the pollination mechanism is effective, little seed is reputedly set. With the recent rediscovery by Mark Jannink and Tim Rich of this taxon in the UK, I thought it worthwhile to record some personal experiences and results of informal and continuing researches in Europe since I first started searching for it seriously in 1976. It is particularly heartening to hear of the discovery this year when my four visits to two known sites (both involving lengthy hikes into the Apennines) have revealed no flowering plants. At least last year we found two.

The search begins

In 1976 I was living in Wendover, Buckinghamshire and that memorably hot summer did not augur well for discovering the Ghost Orchid. It is generally accepted that sufficient rain in spring and early summer is essential since moisture stored in the rhizome stimulates the creation of the buds that will result in aerial stems. If conditions are too dry the rhizome continues to grow but buds (and even flowering stems) are aborted. The following year things looked better and I made weekly pilgrimages to a certain far-too-well known beech wood near the town of Marlow. My trustworthiness had been tested and established by the powers that ran BBONT (The Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Naturalists trust, now the Wildlife Trust BBOWT) through conservation work I had done. Eventually, I was entrusted with chapter and verse as to previous known beechwood locations.

Each time I went there I noticed at least one other person present and we played that essentially British botanical game where each nonchalantly pretends not to notice the other (although they know quite well why they are there). What struck me then and since is that this (and other locales) was an open secret and, however well-meaning, people going to look for it could well have been (and I would suggest still are) the biggest threat to its survival as they shuffled in the beech mast. The underground system with its rhizomes and stolons is not deep and it cannot be aided by general trampling. I found nothing in 1976 or 1977, despite making weekly visits from July to late September.

A telephone call in August 1978 alerted me to the discovery of a flowering stem. That very day and the next, armed with precise coordinates, I was in the wood. Even then it was too late: there were no flowering stems but suspicious signs of the removal of a plant. To say I was angry would be an understatement! I made careful enquiries and a "professional" name kept being mentioned but without concrete proof. The general feeling was that, if proof of the theft were to be forthcoming, there could well be another much larger hole in the beech wood – this time filled in!

In September 1978 we left for a new life in Cyprus and in 1979 we received a postcard to say that another spike had appeared and even that had been removed. To those who would criticize Mark Jannink and Tim Rich about excessive secrecy you can have no idea of how driven some people are about rare orchids, butterflies and bird's eggs. For normal folk it is hard to countenance the self-ish obsessiveness of the very few. They are probably mentally ill. I have been involved in conservation for a long time and have had direct experience of some of these people and the steps to which they will go, even to the point of impersonation.



A group of flowering stems under pines in Germany. Note light levels are high enough for the growth of grass, albeit sparse.

Photo by Paul Harcourt Davies

The timeline in my tale shifts to 1985, though in the interim I had found a few orchids and written a book. But now, back in Britain, I received a telephone call from Germany where a close friend told me that, in its classic site in the southern Black Forest there was an incredible flowering. Such things are impossible to resist and that afternoon I took the first of several trains, then a ferry to Ostend and an overnight train to Stuttgart where at 6 am I was greeted with a mug of hot coffee and German friends Ralf and Karin Berndt-Hansen. By 9 am I was shaking with excitement – surrounded (well almost) by flowering stems of the Ghost Orchid.

I know that some people feel a certain degree of “nationalism” when it comes to orchids and feel they must see these things in Britain. I have long taken the attitude that I do not want to add my weight to the numbers going to see these orchids where they are endangered, thus helping to ensure their demise. There, in Germany in an ancient pinewood, a wonderful colony of these exquisite orchids survived (and still does). Locals know the site well and the fact that across the road in another part of the wood grow large numbers of the Lady's Slipper Orchid flowering a couple of months earlier. There is great local pride taken in its protection.

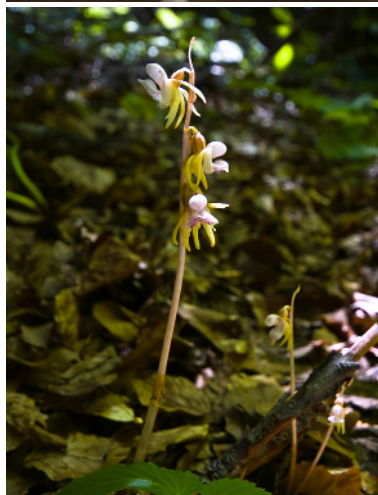
Some observations

In Germany I had the rare opportunity to study the orchids at close quarters and at leisure, noting the distinctive scent I had read about. It has been alternately described

as sweet or foetid and resembling fermenting pineapples. This shows the unreliability of olfactory descriptions – to me it was distinctly sweet: I could not swear to either honey or pineapple tones. It may be worth pointing out that, although the German wood is of ancient pine, it is not gloomy everywhere within. All the continental plants I have found either growing in beech wood / mixed broadleaf or under pine were growing in lighter conditions, even at woodland edges where sparse grass was able to grow. In every case the host woods have been long-established and the orchid plants have always been where there is water close by in winter – a wet area in a wood, a ditch and so on. The substrate has always been calcareous but a plant's immediate environment slightly acidic from the decaying leaf material. As a pure saprophyte, any need for light would be questionable, especially since there are records of flowers being produced underground. This is accidental (probably an aborted spike) since the pollinators do not burrow, unlike two Australian species in the genus *Rhizanthella* that always flower underground.



Although I have not been back to the German site, I have happened by chance upon plants several times since and always in mountain regions of Europe. You get a “feel” for the kind of wood – the pinewoods have plenty of moss, the beech an abundance of leaf litter with woodland species such as the wintergreens (*Pyrolas*) and other orchid taxa such as various *Epipactis* and, by flowering time, seed-bearing stems of Bird's Nest Orchid (*Neottia nidus-avis*). I can recall one site in northern Greece, an ancient beech wood where I explored in late July, and then several finds in ancient pine and mixed woods in the Dolomites.



Epipogium aphyllum at around 1600 m in an Apennine site in the Amatrice region of Italy during the first week of August 2008.

Photos by Paul Harcourt-Davies

To the present day

Whilst living in Italy I have (for the last three years in succession) visited several known

sites with Italian friends who, themselves, have been searching for decades. It does not matter where this orchid grows, its capriciousness seems universal. I never start off a day's hike with anything more than mild hope which is just as well, since I have found it only once. With climatic conditions everywhere in Europe now highly unpredictable, the chances of a wet spring are slim but even when there is rain at what you might tentatively think was the right time, flowering is, to say the least, uncertain.

There is one superb location in the Apennines some 2.5 hours journey from where we live. To get there demands hauling whatever photographic equipment you have for a good 90 minutes uphill in the heat. But when you get to a beechwood where a stream runs across the path in winter, fatigue evaporates as in the dappled light you glimpse the prize. Last year, we made the journey once and were rewarded but this year we did it three times and found nothing. What was particularly worrying was the apparent level of activity from wild boar which in Italy seem to have a love of orchid roots and tubers, irrespective of rarity, and pose a major threat to their survival. At this site, the plants grew in the shelter of a fallen branch under moderate beech cover where, in spring, there had clearly been water sitting or flowing in the stream. Other orchids found included remains of *Neottia nidus-avis* and flowering *Epipactis helleborine*. There were occasional stems of the saprophyte *Monotropa hypopitys* that, from a distance, can look deceptively like *Epipogium*. Next year I shall take some time to check out the sites in the Apennines and also further north in the Dolomites with the help of various Italian friends. Maybe we shall succeed but it never really matters because the locations are superb.

The future

In continental Europe, sites can be threatened by logging and ultimately by climate change. It is almost impossible to tell the extent of this given the known irregularity of flowering. There are numerous recorded instances of it appearing after long absences, most likely from underground parts that have persisted. *Epipogium aphyllum* is not an easy orchid to find for it blends well with leaf litter on the woodland floor where there is dappled light. The difficulty in ever knowing with any degree of accuracy the distribution of a species like this is that numerous visits have to be made over a potentially lengthy flowering period in successive years. Mark Jannink did that and was justly rewarded. Serendipity is a great friend of orchid lovers!

The new website of Paul Harcourt Davies (www.paulharcourtdavies.com) is finally up and running. Tours and courses are listed for 2010 and there are plenty of orchid pictures. Paul is now involved in a joint blog with top UK wildlife photographers Niall Benvie and Andrew Parkinson who share his passion for nature and care about its future (<http://niallbenvie.churchilljohnson.co.uk/blog/>). There are snippets on orchids and there will be much more in the season to come. It's a varied and opinionated read!

Corfu Revisited Mike Parsons

Corfu from 11th to 22nd April 2009 was the choice for our annual orchid holiday. With my friends Robert Thompson and John Spencer, I flew to Corfu Town from Gatwick with Easyjet, arriving mid-morning. After picking up our car, we headed north in search of a suitable hotel that was within easy reach of several key areas we planned to visit. Surprisingly, hotel accommodation was a problem throughout much of the island; few are open before the Greek Orthodox Easter. After much searching we were fortunate to find a pleasant family run hotel called “Telesilla” at Kontokali, north of Corfu town. Its central location gave us good access to all parts of the island. Also, we were able to negotiate a favorable rate on the basis that we would stay for the duration of our trip.

Regrettably, Corfu seems to have lost most of its appeal as an early holiday destination, largely due to wider consumer choice, low-cost airline travel and the lack of regular flights outside peak holiday periods. Consequently, the island’s economy has suffered, which was clearly evident in the decline of some well-known towns and villages. Corfu enjoyed more prosperous times when direct flights were easier to obtain during the late 1980s. It was then a popular holiday destination throughout much of the year for holidaymakers and botanists alike. We had all been to Corfu before; for me it had been a family holiday, for Robert and John earlier botanical trips in the early 1980s. We had a collection of fairly comprehensive notes from previous visits, although many were now somewhat dated. Even so, we were optimistic that some larger sites would still exist in some shape or form. With fond memories of previous trips we were eager to explore the island.

Corfu, the second-largest island of the Ionian chain, is around 40 miles north to south and approximately 10 miles at its widest point in the north. Its winters are generally mild and the summer months are often humid. April, being the best month to visit for orchids, is often mixed, with sunshine and showers. Its higher level of rainfall means it is well vegetated compared to other Greek islands. Our weather was fairly good and we were fortunate to have only two days of rain, despite the fact that the island has the reputation of being the wettest place in Greece. We were able to go orchiding every, day with only a little disruption to our timetable.

The island is largely mountainous. Pantokrator, situated in the north, is the highest mountain at 914 m. Much of the habitat in this region had changed little. The main

Figure 1: Lagoon of Antionioti
Figures 2 and 3: *Ophrys ferrum-equinum*
Photos by Robert Thompson



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roads are now quite reasonable, probably as a result of EU support. Many of the smaller roads, however, still abound with potholes and care is needed when driving on minor roads inland, especially in the mountains and in particular through small villages. They are more than capable of testing the driving skills of even the most experienced driver.

First impressions of the island seemed to indicate that little had changed since my last visit, especially in the countryside. However, during the coming days it was clearly evident in a number of locations that the use of ground netting to retrieve fallen olives had increased dramatically and regrettably seemed common practice throughout most of the island. Often the black mesh had been put in place after the ground had been treated with herbicides, rendering it useless for orchids. Some of the coastal resorts, which expanded greatly in the 1980s, showed signs of disrepair – clear evidence of a declining economy. Ipsos seemed particularly shabby and graffiti was a problem in many popular resorts. The best orchid sites remained off-road, mainly near paths and tracks.

We started with the north of the island and parked outside a church at Portas. We knew from our notes that the site had a reasonably good species list. However, after some diligent searching we could only manage to find an attractive group of *Orchis provincialis* and some *Platanthera chlorantha* still in bud along a small woodland path. We returned later in the week to add *Ophrys ferrum-equinum* and *Anacamptis papilionacea* to our short list.

Our next location was the lagoon of Antionioti in the far north. This was a more rewarding site; after crossing over a small bridge into a reedy, grassy area not far from the beach, we started to find lots of orchids. Here was the best place to see *A. papilionacea* and *Neotinea lactea*, which was just going over. There were *Serapias lingua* and *Ophrys bombyliflora* everywhere, which were plentiful at most sites that we visited. However, the highlight of the day was John's discovery of the rare *Serapias ionica*, which had evaded me on an earlier visit I made to Cephalonia. The solitary plant was just coming into bloom, with two flowers already open. Nearby, I found a good hybrid between *Serapias cordigera* and *Serapias vomeracea*. We decided to return the following week when the plant would be at its optimum photographically. However, on our return we were very upset to find that the orchid had been dug up together with the hybrid. Our only consolation was some *Serapias cordigera* and *S. vomeracea* in bloom, confirming the hybrid, plus *O. ferrum-equinum*, *Ophrys attica*, and an emerging *Ophrys cornutula*.

Figure 4: *Orchis lactea* and *Anacamptis papilionacea*

Figure 5: *Serapias ionica*

Figure 6: *Serapias cordigera* x *Serapis vomeracea*

Figure 7: *Ophrys bombyliflora*

Photos by Robert Thompson

Our trips to the centre of the island proved worthwhile, especially around Sgombou and Gouvia. This area still has Cypress trees set in grassland. Here we found masses of *A. pyramidalis*, *Anacamptis morio*, *Anacamptis laxiflora* and *Ophrys sicula*, which we encountered almost everywhere. Our target species was *Ophrys helenae*, which evaded us at all sites, but Gouvia was the only place we found *Ophrys gottfriediana*. *Anacamptis fragrans* began to appear widely during our stay, along with another late species, *Ophrys cornutula*, a small type of “*scolopax*” with long horns.

During the course of our stay we made three visits to the mountains in the north of the island. Although our prime target was orchids, we could not fail to be impressed by the massed Geraniums and *Anthemis*, turning the fields near Strinilas purple and white. Near the summit of Mt Pantokrator we discovered excellent sites showing *Orchis pauciflora* with its usual partner *Orchis quadripunctata*, both emerging and illuminating the hillside with yellow and red hues. This was the only site where we found a good population of *Ophrys leucadica*. Just beside the road I found two very nice *Ophrys reinholdii* and nearby a large rosette that could have been a future *Himantoglossum caprinum*. This was a welcome change from the usual run-of-the-mill orchids.

Our journey continued on towards Lafki and, with the help of some very old notes from the late Derek Turner-Ettinger, we found a good path off the main road, which led us to some fine examples of *Orchis simia* and *Orchis anthropophora* growing



together happily. Surprisingly, there were no hybrids between them. Here too there were some really good examples of *Neotinea maculata* with very heavily spotted leaves. It was pleasing at Lafki to actually rediscover one of the old sites. All too often the habitats we had hoped to see simply no longer existed. Alongside the road leading to the top of the mountain, we found the best examples of *Himantoglossum robertianum*, still fresh and with different colours ranging from white to green to brown. This was quite a common orchid but most of the plants we saw were going over. *Ophrys sicula* was also abundant along with the occasional *Ophrys melena*, and with *Neotinea tridentata* in bud.

Figure 8 (above): *Neotinea maculata*

- Figure 9: *Serapias lingua* Figure 10: *Ophrys attica*
 Figure 11: *Orchis pauciflora* Figure 12: *Ophrys reinholdii*
 Photos by Robert Thompson

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On our way back to base, we passed by an area with steep banks, just before the precarious single-track road, which zig-zags down to the coast near Zigos. Here we found a few *A. morio* which resembled *Anacamptis albanica*. Our German friends had reported this area to us and we had to agree that these plants looked very different by the size of spots on the labellum and the curious elongated raceme. On most occasions we bumped into the *Ophrys speghodes* family, although it was in the mountains that we saw the best plants. We felt that most of them looked like a type of *Ophrys pseudomamosa* and were *Ophrys herae* subsp. *janrenzii*. However, we also feel that we saw *Ophrys grammica*. In my opinion, some plants we encountered resembled *Ophrys cephalonica*, although I accept that the putative *Ophrys montenegroina* near Zigos was more dubious. Some of the *O. speghodes* proved very difficult to tell apart, even after reference to Delforge. Another six types of *O. speghodes* have been reported but only *O. speghodes* subsp. *oodicheila* and *Ophrys epirotica* have been seen in the last 10 years.

Our trips to the south of the island, where large areas of rough grazing still survive, proved to be enjoyable. Many of the sites we visited were south of Lefkimmi, the second largest town on Corfu. Here there were *Serapias* in abundance, especially *S. lingua*, but it was not uncommon to see *S. parviflora* and *S. politisii*. The latter is very like *S. bergonii* but with a much slimmer lip. I did wonder if there were any true *S. bergonii* on the island since the only ones that we found to fit the species description could easily have been hybrids. *Ophrys sicula* was everywhere often with the larger *Ophrys lutea* and the occasional *Ophrys phryganae*. There were so many *Ophrys bombyliflora*, *Ophrys herae*, *Orchis italica*, *A. pyramidalis* and *A. morio* plants that we were bound to find something unusual. When it did finally happen it came in the form of a peloric *A. morio* with three lips (and three spurs), which stood out as being something very different and proved challenging photographically. Admittedly, the lateral lips were smaller than the main lip but it was the sort of find that can reward the assiduous orchid hunter after a long day in the field. The surrounding area also produced our first *Ophrys tenthredinifera*; little did we know that this was one of only two plants that we would see on this trip. It was a similar story with *Ophrys attica* which we found on only three occasions, either in ones or twos.

The north-east of the island was also productive, especially around Avliotes and Agios Georgios. On the way we were delighted to see thousands of *Anacamptis laxiflora* providing a wonderful display of colour in the damp fields in the plain of Ropa. *O. ferrum-equinum* was again evident in good numbers, with *A. pyramidalis* in white and red forms, along with *A. fragrans* and the usual array of orchids. We

Figure 13: *Ophrys conutula* Figure 14: *Orchis simia*
 Figure 15: *Anacamptis (Orchis) morio* subsp. *picta* (peloric plant)
 Figure 16: *Himantoglossum robertianum* var. *album*
 Photos by Robert Thompson

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also found *Ophrys apifera* in bud; possibly rare on Corfu, or perhaps we were just too early. Before leaving, we made the customary pilgrimage to the British cemetery in Corfu Town. We were pleasantly surprised to see that George Psaila (a long-term caretaker of the cemetery) was still looking after the old British and Commonwealth war graves in such a way that benefits both the wild and more orthodox plants. George is an orchid fanatic, passionate about his orchids, and manages the cemetery with their welfare in mind. The number of orchids was astonishing and we were pleased that he showed us around.



The British cemetery in Corfu Town
Photo by Robert Thompson

Corfu has a checklist of over 70 orchid species, according to our notes, but we believe that many of these were misidentified, or recorded under more than one name. However, I am confident that we did correctly identify over 40 species. Ten of these were commonly recorded from most sites. In terms of species, Corfu did not disappoint but many of the island's rarities proved elusive and were difficult to find or, in some cases, not found at all. We were all hoping to see *Ophrys helenae* but, despite having seven locations, we were unsuccessful, even though it often occurs with *O. ferrum-equinum*, which we did find at many sites. Corfu was not the most rewarding of our orchid trips to date. Recent changes in agriculture and harvesting methods for olives have no doubt impacted upon the wild orchid population. However, diligent searching and a keen eye for suitable habitat will prove rewarding, particularly in the mountainous north and the flatter regions in the south of the island. It would be unwise to rely on old notes, as many of these sites have regrettably disappeared. Recent site information would be important to anyone planning an orchid trip to the island. It would also be prudent to pre-book your accommoda-

tion to avoid the hassle of trying to locate a hotel upon arrival, especially if your trip precedes the Greek Orthodox Easter.

I would like to thank Michael Lowe, Gabi & Uli Muller, Monica Hirth, Ferdinand Hummes and Burkhard Biel for their notes and for some wonderful old notes from the late Derek Turner-Ettlinger and AHO (Arbeitskreis Heimische Orchideen).

Update on UK Orchids in 2009 **Sean Cole**

In response to recent requests in *JHOS*, I have attempted to summarise the 2009 season for a selection of orchid species in the UK. I have avoided giving site details, except where a location is already clearly in the public domain.

Cypripedium calceolus

At its only native site, where visitors are not encouraged, the single plant produced six flowers, which flowered from the first few days of June. Other plants have been introduced here, propagated from the original plant as well as from Austrian ones. There is a particularly spectacular plant of this kind close to the native one. Access to this site is debated by the *Cypripedium* Society every year, but given the success of introductions elsewhere (see below), it is felt that the sole surviving native plant is better left undisturbed. Potential future visitors should be aware that the site is away from public footpaths and in an inaccessible enclosure which is wardened 24 hours a day during the flowering season. The plant is visible from a distance of around 10 m at its nearest, so is not suitable for photography. Under no circumstances is access allowed to admirers.

A good number of introduced plants are now flowering annually at other sites, including one at an SSSI near to the native site in Yorkshire and at several reserves in Lancashire. In all cases, these plants flower earlier than the Yorkshire one and the best time to visit them is the last few days of May. A well-known plant near Silverdale in Lancashire produced seven flowers this year – a great success given that it was partly dug up and nearly lost in 2004. Unfortunately, one of the flowers was removed in early June, despite the site being wardened.



Cypripedium calceolus with all seven flowers still present – Silverdale, 26th May 2009

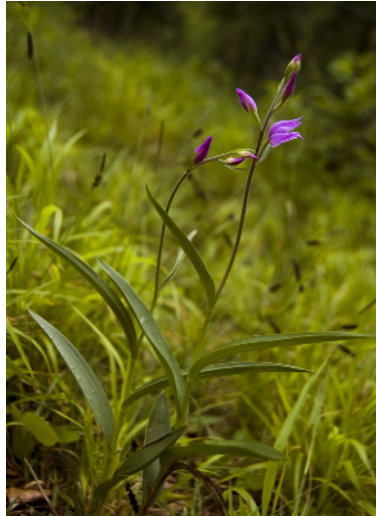
Photo by Sean Cole

Cephalanthera rubra

There are three extant sites:

Hampshire: The site is now managed by Hampshire County Council. Unfortunately, plants have not flowered here for several years, and in 2009 no rosettes were found by the warden. It is thought that earlier management work carried out to allow light into the overgrowing site might have removed the mycorrhizal host that the plants rely on. Time will tell if this is true.

Buckinghamshire: At the Chilterns site, the plants are protected by a double enclosure, but there is a flowering plant outside this which is protected by a chicken-wire "hat". The site is private, away from footpaths and very difficult to find, even if you have been before. Access can be arranged by contacting BBOWT. In 2009, five plants flowered inside the enclosure, including two that may have arisen from the same rootstock. The plant outside the enclosure was eaten to the ground by slugs. Unfortunately, on either 23rd or 24th June, four of the plants were vandalised, being snapped off at the stem and left on the ground or hanging from the plant. The copper rings used to protect them from slugs had been removed and cast aside, and the cages used to protect them from animal predation had also been removed and piled up in the corner. This damage was caused by humans, but by whom and for what reason is difficult to fathom. Increased protection has been prepared for the site during 2010.



Cephalanthera rubra a few days before the plants were wilfully damaged – Buckinghamshire, 17th June 2009

Photo by Sean Cole

Gloucestershire: This site is protected by a large chain-link fence to which there is no access for visitors. This, plus selected clearance, appears to have been successful. At least two flowering plants were visible from outside the enclosure this year, together with more non-flowering individuals. The plants stopped flowering at this site for several years at the start of this century.

Cephalanthera longifolia

As previously reported in *JHOS*, this species had a good year at its largest site in Hampshire. At another, in Gloucestershire, numbers were about twice those of 2007.

Epipactis sancta

This endemic helleborine had a mediocre season, with numbers down on 2008.

Orchis militaris

There are three extant sites – one in Suffolk and the other two in the Chilterns. 2009 was a good year for this species, with several hundred flowering plants at the Suffolk site, and large numbers at both Chilterns sites. At the well-known public access site near Marlow, plants are flowering outside the main area in new spots in the meadow near the car park. At the private Chilterns site there were at least twice as many plants as three years ago. Wet weather conditions seem to have helped this species.



Orchis militaris – a good year for this species in Britain – Buckinghamshire, 13th May 2009

Photo by Sean Cole

Orchis simia

There are two extant native sites, one public access in Oxfordshire and the other a private site in Kent. A third site, Park Gate Down, holds a good population which was introduced via seed from the native Kent site in 1958. Numbers of flowering plants there were lower than average this year. The number of flowering spikes was lower at Hartslock in Oxfordshire this year but the total number of plants was up again (see table below, taken from the website – <http://hartslock.org.uk>). The number of hybrid plants was well up but only 27 were flowering. Two were lost to snails at the end of May. The increasing number of hybrids may not necessarily be a good thing, as we surely don't want the pure Monkeys back-crossing.

	2006	2007	2008	2009
Lady Orchid (<i>O. purpurea</i>)	5	7	7	7*
Hybrid (<i>O. purpurea</i> x <i>simia</i>)	23	29	72	130*
Monkey Orchid (<i>O. simia</i>)	383	360	398	410*
TOTALS	411	396	477	547*

(*provisional figures for 2009)

Neottia nidus-avis

For me, this is a good indicator species for the possible reappearance of *Epipogium* in the UK, so I was keen to see what numbers were like this year after two wet summers in 2007 and 2008. I wasn't disappointed, with all sites visited having very good numbers. One site in Kent had over 100 plants in flower. The most productive *Epipogium* site in Buckinghamshire and another nearby had numbers that were three to four times those of 2007 and 2008.

Corallorhiza trifida

At possibly the two largest sites in England, Sandscale Haws and one near Newcastle, numbers were very high compared to recent years. At the former, over 250 were found in May, and at the latter, several hundred – the warden lost count, and was finding them in new areas of the reserve. It seems that water levels were just right earlier in the spring, a major factor that influences flowering numbers.

Liparis loeselii

As previously reported in *JHOS*, numbers were lower at Kenfig this year. At one of the Norfolk sites there were only six flowering plants, compared with 26 in 2007.

Serapias parviflora

For those of you, who like me, consider this a genuine native, this year was a disaster for the species. In 2007 and 2008, two plants flowered at the only site, in East Cornwall. The first year they were unprotected and one had been virtually chewed off by rabbits. In 2008 they were caged and set seed. In 2009, the field had clearly been grazed by cattle just prior to the flowering period, as when I visited on 30th May the ground was churned up at exactly the spot where the plants flower. This may have uprooted the tubers and mean that they will not reappear in future years. Attempts to elicit a response from the site managers failed.

Ophrys fuciflora

Only seven plants flowered at the best part of the main Wye Downs site this year, compared with over 100 in some years. Whilst numbers do vary from year to year, it seems that this species needs a dry summer for optimal flowering conditions.

Epipogium aphyllum

As reported elsewhere in this issue, the big news for British orchidologists this year was the flowering of a single Ghost Orchid for the first time in 22 years (including a genuine but unsubmitted record for 1987). Those of us who search for this species annually felt that this really was the year for a reappearance, following a very wet period during the late summer of 2007 and a constantly wet summer in 2008. The spring weather this year was sporadically wet also, but I suspect an increase in soil moisture levels due to the two previous summers' weather was more relevant. As an aside I visited the famous Black Forest site for Ghost again in July and numbers were quite low there – we counted 250 plants, compared with counts of over 1000 in past years. Numbers of *Neottia nidus-avis* were extremely high there though, so maybe conditions suitable for that species do not mirror those for *Epipogium*.

I would welcome updates from HOS members to make my records more comprehensive (especially for Scotland) – I always respect site secrecy. Of course, any corrections to this report are also welcomed.

**Book Review: *Orchidee d'Italia – The Orchids of Italy*
Paul Harcourt Davies**



Orchidee d'Italia – The Orchids of Italy by GIROS
Scientific direction by Paulo Grünanger
Authored and illustrated by numerous contributors.
Hardback, 303 pp. ISBN 978-88-8039-891-2
Published by Il Castello (www.ilcastelloeditore.it)
Price € 24 (available directly from GIROS)

“*Orchidee d'Italia*” is a comprehensive work and remarkable in that it is the product of joint efforts by members of GIROS (Gruppa Italiano per La Ricerca sulle Orchidee Sponatee) – literally “The Italian Group for Research on Wild Orchids”. Some 33 authors and 44 photographers (many belonging to both lists) have been involved. The appearance of a book of such a comprehensive nature and generally high quality is a major achievement and a testament to the coordination of the project by Paulo Grünanger. The book measures 24.5 by 17.6 cm and so is not pocketable but it is easily carried in a rucksack. Its pages are profusely illustrated in colour, including small maps that serve to show the distribution by province in Italy. The text is in Italian and there is currently no version available in English or in any other European language. Do not let that put you off: the text is well laid out, consistent and most essential botanical terms are Latinate derivatives of Greek and so differ from English only in endings! It is the only single source where you will find the complete Italian orchid flora illustrated with many of the known hybrids.

The first 48 pages are taken up with more general text concerning orchids. The biological chapters are particularly well conceived, thorough in scope and crafted by internationally acknowledged authorities. There are comprehensive illustrations, including close-ups of flower structures and photomicrographs of mycorrhiza. By far the largest part of the book is the species description section, followed by a chapter on hybridisation. Authorship of each species description has been farmed out to GIROS members who have personal knowledge of that species; they have written to a pattern and each entry has been tightly edited to make sure that information of the same nature appears in the same order in each entry.

GIROS naturally has its “splitters” and “lumpers” but there has not been the proliferation of species in “controversial” genera such as *Ophrys*. In fact, Paulo Grünanger has adopted the more logical scientific approach of utilising subspecies (consistent with the work of Pederson and Faurholdt 2007) and earlier authors such as Buttler (1991) and yours truly (P.H. Davies 1983). There is a proliferation of species within the genus *Epipactis* that would not be convincing to many and also

the retention of “species” such as *Limodorum brulloi* from Calabria that in Italy has been separated from *L. abortivum* and *L. trabutianum* for the past few years on the basis of spur length. Fortunately, items such as *Ophrys murgia* – clearly just *Ophrys sphegodes* subsp. *sipontensis* – have been suppressed. Ultimately, there is no “perfect” system for classifying such capricious plants as orchids, given the inherent problems of imposing a binomial system of classification universally in nature. DNA analysis does not yet (if it ever will) distinguish at the level that would be required. It is always a question of personal interpretation and clearly Paulo Grünanger and his associates have striven hard to be consistent – I am told that, where some members of the “*sphogodes*” group are listed as subspecies and others (such as *Ophrys araneola*) are not, this has to do with an editorial decision over whether names had already been legitimately published or not.

I have thought long and hard about critical comments to make because this is, first and foremost, a remarkable work both in the scope and the concept of a joint project. However, such high contemporary standards have been set by illustrated volumes such as those from C. A. J. Kreutz that our expectations are almost unreasonably high for illustrated European orchid works. The book retails at €24.00 and, like all such books, it is destined to have a limited appeal to a general market. I feel that a few euros more on the cover price could have ensured that extra quality. For example, a slightly heavier paper would have produced both a better “feel” and improved the general quality of colour reproduction.

As someone who has been heavily involved with the writing and production of books for the best part of three decades I know what is achievable and what not. Unfortunately, it is in the supply of illustrations by “too many cooks” that the broth may well be slightly spoiled. The bottom line has to be that in a book such as this, there can be no compromise on picture quality. That is what people see and want and I am afraid that any editor has to be a martinet and go for the very best shots, irrespective of “ruffled feelings”. Some of the whole-plant shots showing the environment are distinctly blurred and some *Ophrys* close-ups very dark. You can do a lot at the preparatory stage to optimise files but there is a limit to the magic that can be woven with inferior material. Substitutes would have been so easy to find, for there are some very able Italian photographers (all GIROS members) working with digital media who could have raised the level of illustration. They produce work of the very highest quality and I have seen a lot of it. I have chatted with several GIROS members who have voiced their disappointment that the handful of photographers who ultimately dominated the supply of pictures did not deliver the quality anticipated. This is nothing to do with sour grapes; it is fact. Several photographers who wrote descriptions found that their contribution was illustrated by someone else's inferior photographs. This aside, it is basically a very good book, well worth its list price, but for just that little more it could have sat up there with the best.

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