

**Journal
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HARDY ORCHID SOCIETY**



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Front Cover Photograph

Blue Mountains Pencil Orchid (*Dockrillia fairfaxii*; inflorescence length 7cm), Tomah, Blue Mountains, NSW, Australia, photographed by Colin Scrutton. See article on page 14.

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 Members' Handbook, website www.hardyorchidsociety.org.uk, 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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Editorial Note

Mike Gasson

Colin & Angela Scrutton, have contributed a rather different orchid article this time, exploring epiphytes and lithophytes found 'down under'. Elsewhere there is a varied group of interesting articles from both established and new contributors. Results from the 2020 Photographic Competition are included, with a good selection from the winning images. All winners were previewed within 'Kidlington Online 2020' but it is still good to see some of these in a printed form. The photographic online event stimulated a lively Forum discussion about the merits or otherwise of print classes and that extended to the ins and outs of a digital version of *JHOS*. Although most of this has been discussed previously by the HOS Committee it will get revisited. With respect to *JHOS*, I should point out that we use one of the most eco-aware printers available – take a look if you have great angst about the environmental impact of our journal at <http://www.angliaprint.co.uk>!

Chairman's Note**Carol Armstrong**

Greetings to you all. I hope you are keeping safe and well as we begin a New Year that hasn't gone back to normal or even settled into a "new normal". In 2020 we adapted our society's programme of events in accordance with guidelines on Covid-safe practice and produced two successful online presentation events to replace the cancelled meetings in September and November – with their associated competition/show activities. The availability of the presentations over an extended period of time, in November, was greatly appreciated. Many thanks to the committee members, judges and contributors who made this possible.

The March 21st 2021 Kidlington Spring Meeting, which hosts our AGM and our Plant Show is now cancelled. However the Committee is preparing an online alternative, password protected for members only. We are also inviting members who enjoy growing to exhibit virtually *via* photographs. See the facing page for more details and the instructions/rules and entry timescale. As usual, non-competitive entries are also very welcome. I hope that the vaccine will give us the opportunity to meet again in this year, but for now I ask you to share the enjoyment of hardy orchids with each other through the Journal, Online Meetings, Website and Forum.

HOS Meetings 2021

Due to ongoing uncertainty about Covid restrictions the usual Southern Spring Meeting at Kidlington has been replaced with a password protected digital event.

Southern Spring Meeting: 'Spring Online 2021'

HOS website from Sunday 21st March 2021

PASSWORD: serapias2021

Northern Meeting, St. Chad's, Leeds

Saturday 4th September 2021

Southern Autumn Meeting, Kidlington

Sunday 14th November 2021

Seed Sowing Workshop

Sunday 22nd August 2021

Hagbourne Village Hall, East Hagbourne, OX11 9LR

This one-day workshop will cover all aspects of seed sowing and aftercare of both summer and winter-green orchids. The tutor will be John Haggard, renowned for his skill at hardy orchid seed propagation. A booking form and more details are on the HOS website: www.hardyorchidsociety.org.uk

Any queries? Contact: moira.tarrant@outlook.com

Field Trips 2021**Richard Kulczycki**

We intend to run a similar program of 12 to 15 field trips as were planned for 2020. In view of the uncertainty about Covid risks, the programme will be finalised later in the Spring. It is likely that some regular leaders will accept much more limited numbers on their trips in 2021. This means we would love to hear from you if you are able to take a small group of members to a favourite orchid site. This would give many more of us the opportunity to join a trip. A field trip can be short and visit just one site, or may be longer and include more locations. Please contact the Field Trip Co-ordinator if you have any questions and might consider leading a local trip. We have guidance notes to help you.

Plant Show Online 2021

With the cancellation of the Southern Spring Meeting planned for Kidlington we are unable to hold the usual Plant Show in 2021. However, we are able to organise an online event as follows:

- Any HOS member can enter as many classes as they wish but only one entry is allowed per member per class except for the non-competitive class where the maximum is 3 entries.
- Classes will remain the same as for a normal HOS Plant Show as will the rules for which plants can be shown and how this should be done (details on website).
- Entries will consist of a pair of photographs of the plant – one of the whole plant including at least part of the containing pot and one a close up of a single flower or small group of flowers.
- Photographs must have been taken between 1st January and 20th March 2021.
- A full list of instructions, including details of how the photographs should be labelled, will be available on the website from late January.
- Email entries to Colin Rainbow (car.northaston@btopenworld.com) by 11pm on Saturday March 20th at the latest (earlier much preferred). Use WeTransfer (<http://www.hardyorchidsociety.org.uk/virtual-meetings/WeTransfer.pdf>) if files are large.
- The entries and results will be posted on the website in the password protected 'Spring Online 2021' area one week after the date when all the talks have been posted.
- The results will be posted on the website in the password protected 'Spring Online' 2021 area one week after the date when all the talks have been posted.

Results of Photographic Competition 2020

Class 1. A view of an area (landscape or habitat) showing orchids in their natural environment, print size up to 7×5 inches. (2 entries)

- 1st Patrick Marks – *Orchis italica*
 2nd Alan Gendle – *Dactylorhiza ×venusta*

Class 2. A group of orchids containing at least three flower spikes. These can be all the same species/hybrid or a mixed group, print size up to 7×5 inches. (5 entries)

- 1st Gillian Elsom – *Neottia nidus-avis*
 2nd David Pearce – *Pterostylis curta*
 3rd Andrew Daw – *Corallorhiza trifida*

Class 3. A single orchid spike, print size up to 7×5 inches. (5 entries)

- 1st Patrick Marks – *Orchis anatolica*
 2nd Ken Elsom – *Cephalanthera longifolia*
 3rd Gillian Elsom – *Cephalanthera longifolia*

Class 4. A close-up of an orchid, showing one or more entire inflorescence(s), print size up to 7×5 inches. (8 entries)

- 1st Andrew Daw – *Ophrys sphegodes*
 2nd Gillian Elsom – *Cephalanthera damasonium*
 3rd David Pearce – *Dactylorhiza fuchsii*

Class 5. A close-up of an orchid showing part of an inflorescence, print size up to A4. (4 entries)

- 1st Gillian Elsom – *Cephalanthera damasonium*
 2nd Ken Elsom – *Ophrys fuciflora*
 3rd Andrew Daw – *Orchis militaris*

Class 6. A view of an area (landscape or habitat) showing orchids in their natural environment, print size up to A4. (5 entries)

- 1st Jane Daw – *Himantoglossum hircinum*
 2nd Patrick Marks – *Gymnadenia borealis*
 3rd Ken Elsom – *Cephalanthera longifolia*

Class 7. A group of orchids containing at least three flower spikes. These can be all the same species/hybrid or a mixed group, print size up to A4. (4 entries)

- 1st David Pearce – *Orchis mascula*
 2nd Patrick Marks – *Dactylorhiza purpurella*
 3rd Gillian Elsom – *Cephalanthera longifolia*

Class 8. A single orchid spike, print size up to A4. (4 entries)

- 1st Ken Elsom – *Neottia nidus-avis*
 2nd Andrew Daw – *Anacamptis morio*
 3rd Gillian Elsom – *Orchis purpurea*

Class 9. A close-up of an orchid, showing one or more entire inflorescence(s), print size up to A4. (6 entries)

- 1st Gillian Elsom – *Orchis purpurea* (Best Print)
 2nd Ken Elsom – *Neottia ovata*
 3rd Andrew Daw – *Orchis anthropophora*

Class 10. A close-up of an orchid showing part of an inflorescence, print size up to A4. (6 entries)

- 1st Ken Elsom – *Epipactis helleborine*
 2nd Gillian Elsom – *Ophrys fuciflora*
 3rd Andrew Daw – *Ophrys insectifera*

Class 11. A view of an area (landscape or habitat) showing orchids in their natural environment, in jpeg form. (18 entries)

- 1st Hilary Pickersgill – *Orchis purpurea*
 2nd Mike Waller – *Orchis mascula*
 3rd Ivar Edvinsen – *Orchis mascula*

Class 12. A group of orchids containing at least three flower spikes. These can be all the same species/hybrids or a mixed group, in jpeg form. (21 entries)

- 1st Phil Smith – *Dactylorhiza ×venusta*
 2nd Karen Gregory – *Neottia nidus-avis*
 3rd Gillian Elsom – *Epipactis helleborine*

Class 13. A single orchid spike, in jpeg form. (21 entries)

- 1st Terry Swainbank – *Orchis mascula*
 2nd Duncan Dine – *Pseudorchis albida*
 3rd Gillian Elsom – *Ophrys fuciflora*

Class 14. A close-up of an orchid, showing one or more entire inflorescence(s), in jpeg form. (24 entries)

- 1st Phil Smith – *Dactylorhiza fuchsii*
 2nd Christopher Hoskin – *Epipactis purpurata*
 3rd Neville Roberts – *Disa kewensis*

Class 15. A close-up of an orchid showing part of an inflorescence, in jpeg form. (22 entries)

- 1st Hilary Pickersgill – *Ophrys apifera* (Maren Talbot Trophy)
 2nd Gillian Elsom – *Orchis simia*
 3rd Ian Hadingham – *Ophrys insectifera*

Class 16. Novice Class, any hardy orchid print, size up to A4. (6 entries)

- 1st Janet Hails – *Dactylorhiza fuchsii*
- 2nd Andrew Daw – *Neottia ovata*
- 3rd Simon Melville – *Himantoglossum robertianum*

Class 17. Novice Class, any hardy orchid in jpeg form. (25 entries)

- 1st Neville Roberts – *Bletilla striata* (Best Novice Image)
- 2nd Pamela Crawford – *Ophrys tenthredinifera*
- 3rd Ian Howarth – *Neotinia ustulata*

Class 18. A hardy orchid subject that has been manipulated creatively using any advanced software technique to create an artistic image, print size up to A4. (3 entries)

- 1st Gillian Elsom – *Orchis anthropophora* & *Ophrys fuciflora*
- 2nd David Pearce – From small beginnings
- 3rd Ben Jacob – *Anacamptis pyramidalis*

Class 19. A hardy orchid subject that has been manipulated creatively using any advanced software technique to create an artistic image, in jpeg form. (2 entries)

- 1st Richard Upton – *Dactylorhiza viridis*
- 2nd Ben Jacob – *Gymnadenia densiflora*



Maren Talbot Photographic Trophy:
Hilary Pickersgill for *Ophrys apifera* in Class 15

Best Print:
Gillian Elsom for *Orchis purpurea* in Class 9

Best Novice Image
Neville Roberts for *Bletilla striata* in Class 17

Our thanks to the Competition Judge:
Jon Evans

The following pages feature a selection of winning images from the 2020 HOS Photographic Competition. Figure numbers indicate the Class followed by the position (e.g. 11-2 is second place in Class 11). All of the winning photographs are now on the HOS website.



9-3



2-1



5-1



14-1



3-1



7-1



4-2



4-1



17-1



10-2



6-2



11-2



15-3



15-2



1-2



1-1



Australian Epiphytes and Lithophytes Colin & Angela Scrutton

Australian epiphytes and lithophytes are virtually restricted to New South Wales (60 species) and Queensland (208 species.). There are none in South Australia and in Western Australia south of the Kimberlies. Victoria has four species and Tasmania two, Northern Territories seven, and the northern extremities of Western Australia three species. This present article is based on a small selection of epiphytes and lithophytes found in New South Wales and southern Queensland, south of the Tropic of Capricorn. On most of our trips we have been travelling around with our Sydney friends, John Pickett and Ross Donald, joined by Alan Stephenson in the Shoalhaven. John and Ross had a property at Tomah, near Bilpin, in the Blue Mountains until recently where several of the epiphytes illustrated here were growing. We describe below species of eight common genera, plus one terrestrial orchid with epiphytic pretensions.



Figs. 1-3: Sydney Rock Orchid (*Thelychiton speciosus*) NSW Tomah, Blue Mountains (Figs. 1 & 2) & Colymea, Shoalhaven area (Fig.3).
All scales 1 cm. All photographs in this article by Colin Scrutton.

The genus *Thelychiton*, recently segregated from *Dendrobium*, has around 34 species in Queensland, New South Wales, Lord Howe Island and Norfolk Island (Jones 2006). The Sydney Rock Orchid (*Thelychiton speciosus*), which flowers August to October, is widespread and common in New South Wales and extends into Victoria. Flowers, white to cream, 5.5 × 4.5 cm, are densely packed along lateral racemes (Figs. 1-2). Dorsal and lateral sepals dominate, with thin curved lateral petals and a small, triangular, slightly cupped labellum which is marked with purple spots and streaks. The leaves are thick, leathery and shiny dark green. It can form spectacular masses of flowers in some places and Fig. 3 shows multiple plants cascading down a steep rock face in the Shoalhaven.

The Yellow Cane Orchid (*Thelychiton howeanus*) is restricted to Lord Howe Island, 800 km NE of Sydney out in the Tasman Sea. The flowers, 1.5 × 1.5 cm, are notably fleshy and have pinky-red blotches on the labellum (Fig. 5). It grows on rocks (Fig. 4) or trees, in July to September, and is quite common on this beautiful island.



Figs. 4 & 5: Yellow Cane Orchid (*Thelychiton howeanus*) Lord Howe Island.
Fig. 6: Pink Rock Orchid (*Thelychiton kingianus*) Canberra Botanical Gardens, ACT.

The Pink Rock Orchid (*Thelychiton kingianus*) is very variable in flower colour but usually shaded pink with dark reddish pink markings on the labellum (Fig. 6). The flowers are 1.5 – 2.0 cm across. It is another common epiphyte in NSW, extending into Queensland, and usually found on higher ground, flowering August to September. Both species have long, narrow, green leaves.



Figs. 7 & 8: Beech Orchid (*Thelychiton falcorostrus*)
Tomah, Blue Mountains, NSW. (Fig. 7) &
Canberra Botanical Gardens, ACT. (Fig. 8).

The Beech Orchid (*Thelychiton falcorostrus*) is usually found growing on Antarctic Beech trees (*Nothofagus moorei*), again normally on higher ground in August to October (Fig. 7). The leaves are thick dark green, lanceolate and with a pronounced central groove. There is a pendant cluster of flowers, each 3.3 × 3.5 cm in size with pure white sepals and petals, a prominent orange anther cap and a small labellum with dark markings towards the interior (Fig. 8).

The genus *Dockrillia* is common in NSW and Queensland, present in Victoria and Tasmania as well as some other islands in the western Pacific. All four species described here grow on either trees or rock surfaces. The Dagger Orchid (*Dockrillia pugioniformis*) grows from thin wiry much-branched stems, here on trees, with scattered flowers, 1.8 × 2.0 cm, in various orientations (Fig. 9). The leaves are lanceolate, dark green and fleshy. The sepals and petals are shades of green whilst the labellum is coiled, with white frilled edges and purple markings flanking the axis (Figs. 10-11). It is widespread in NSW and Queensland and flowers from September to November.

The Thumbnail Orchid (*Dockrillia linguiformis linguiformis*) has a similar

distribution and is pictured here growing on rocks. It flowers somewhat earlier in June to September. The leaves are distinctive, thick, oval and with several parallel grooves (Fig. 12). The flowers form dense clusters. Sepals and petals are white, thin, elongate and curved, about 2.2 cm long, with a small coiled orange-yellow labellum bearing three parallel ridges (Figs. 13-14).



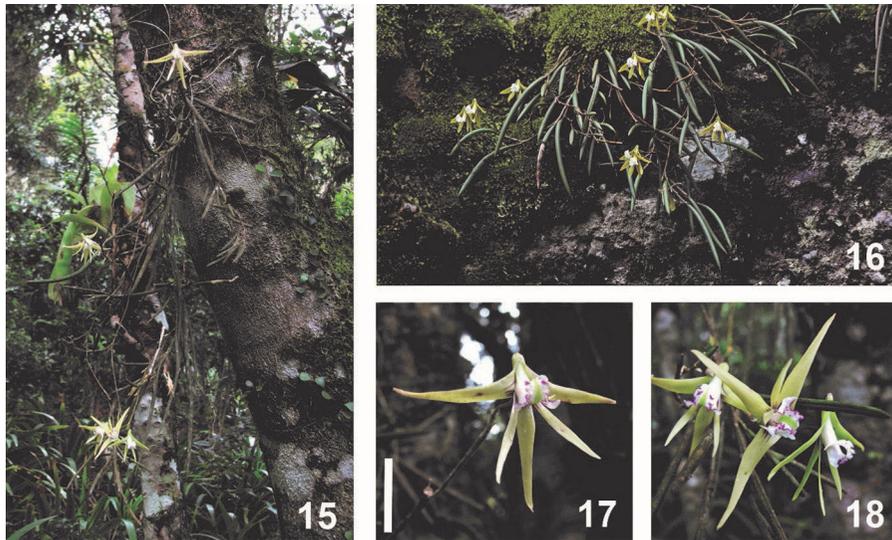
Figs. 9-11: Dagger Orchid (*Dockrillia pugioniformis*)
Tomah, Blue Mountains, NSW.



Figs. 12-14: Thumbnail Orchid (*Dockrillia linguiformis linguiformis*)
Bobbin Head, N. Sydney, NSW.

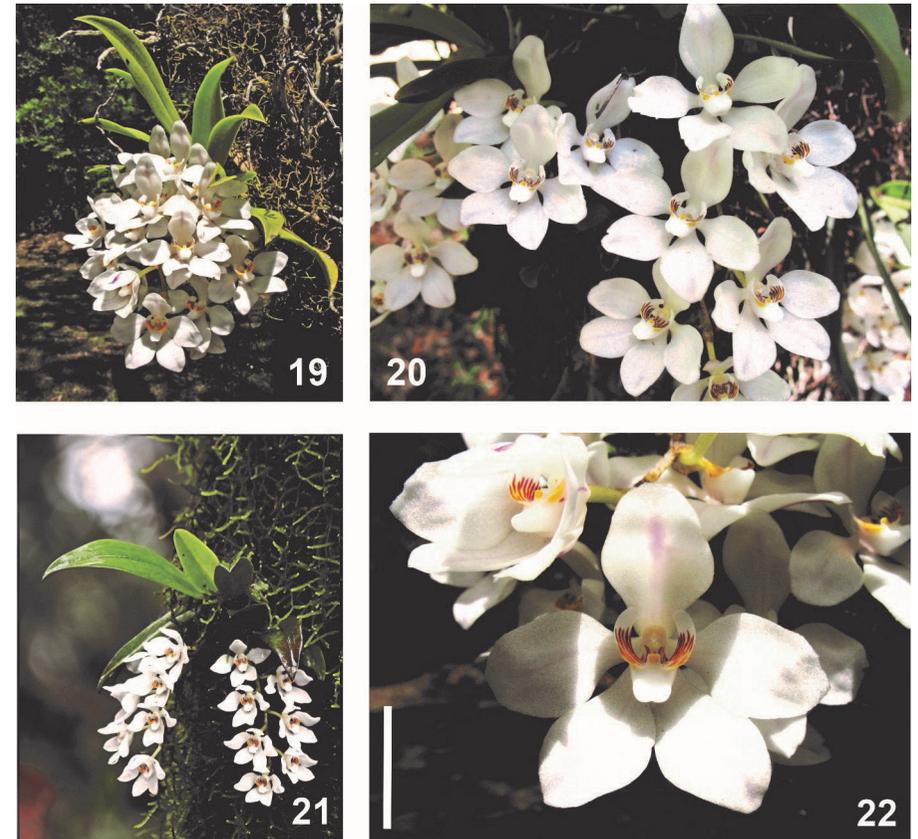
The Blue Mountains Pencil Orchid (*Dockrillia fairfaxii*) (front cover), is restricted to a relatively small area in eastern New South Wales and is usually found on trees, rarely on rocks. The leaves are dark green, long, narrow, terete and tapering. Flower clusters are scattered and pendulous from thick rhizomes. Sepals and petals, around 3.5cm long, are narrow and tapering with distinctive markings at their inner ends. The labellum is small, curled, with frilled margins and axial ridges, the latter with reddish-brown crests.

Finally, the Common Pencil Orchid (*Dockrillia schoenina*) forms straggly colonies on trees and somewhat denser clusters on rocks where the long, narrow, dark green leaves can be clearly seen (Figs. 15-16). The flowers are quite large, up to 2.5 × 3.0 cm. The sepals and petals are pale green, long and narrowly tapering, whilst the pale coiled labellum has a narrow green axial stripe and purple markings on the frilled margins (Figs. 17-18). It grows in NSW and Queensland and flowers in August to November.



Figs. 15 -18: Common Pencil Orchid (*Dockrillia schoenina*)
O'Reilly's, Lamington National Park, Queensland (Figs. 15, 17 & 18)
Colynea, Shoalhaven, NSW. (Fig. 16)

The beautiful Orange-blossom Orchid (*Sarcochilus falcatus*) is widespread across New South Wales, extending into Queensland to the north and Victoria to the south. It usually grows on trees, rarely rocks, and flowers from June to October. The leaves are leathery green and slightly curved, with pendant racemes of bright white flowers 2–3 cm across (Figs. 19-21). The labellum is cupped with reddish-orange internal markings and an unmarked white lip (Fig. 22).



Figs 19-22: Orange-blossom Orchid (*Sarcochilus falcatus*)
Tomah, Blue Mountains, NSW. (Fig. 19, 20 & 22)
Red Rocks Nature Reserve, Beaumont, NSW. (Fig. 21)

The Common Tangle Orchid (*Plectorrhiza tridentata*) has a similar range to the Orange-blossom Orchid and also favours trees. It flowers from September to January. It is anchored by a tangle of thin, whitish roots, some growing free. The leaves are long, thin with pointed tips, with a cluster of flowers hanging below (Fig. 23). The flowers are very small, 0.6 × 0.8 cm, with spreading brown sepals and petals and a white labellum with orange-yellow markings and small, hooked side lobes. There is a prominent, blunt-ended spur, the distal tip shaded orange (Fig. 24).

By contrast, the Green Rock Orchid (*Rimacola elliptica*) is rare and highly localised, growing in wet rock crevices often near waterfalls between the Blue Mountains and the Shoalhaven in New South Wales in November to December. The stalk has several stem-clasping, light to mid-green lanceolate leaves rapidly reducing in size towards

the terminal inflorescence (Fig. 25). The flowers, 1.8 × 2.0 cm, have long, green, tapering lateral sepals and lateral petals that curve downwards. The dorsal sepal, broader and tapering, curves over the labellum, which is elongate, trough-shaped and with internal and external parallel dark reddish markings (Figs. 26-27).



Figs. 23-24: Common Tangle Orchid (*Plectorrhiza tridentata*)
Bomaderry Park, Shoalhaven, NSW.

The Pineapple Orchid (*Adelopetalum elisae*) grows on trees or rock faces and is widespread and fairly common in Queensland and NSW. The leaves are stiff, pale green, elongate oval with a central groove. The flowers hang from a raceme, up to 7 in specimens we have seen, the proximal buds opening first (Fig. 28). The lateral sepals are longest and very narrow, up to 1.8 cm long (Fig. 30). The dorsal sepal is short, triangular, the lateral petals just slightly longer. The labellum is curved with a very dark purple tip (Fig. 29).

The orchid with the smallest flowers in this selection is the Wheat-leaf Rope Orchid (*Oxysepala shepherdii*). They are 5 mm in their maximum dimension. The sepals are a dull cream with more yellowy tips. The lateral petals are short and difficult to distinguish between the proximal ends of the sepals. The labellum stands out, tongue shaped and pinky-red (Fig. 33). The orchid figured is growing on a vertical rock face, although it may also grow on trees, widespread and common in rain forest in Queensland and NSW. There is a jumbled mass of leaves which are green, narrow

and tapering, fleshy with a prominent axial groove. The scattered flowers are so small as to be difficult to pick out among the leaves (Figs. 31-32).



Figs. 25-27: Green Rock Orchid (*Rimacola elliptica*)
Wentworth Falls, Blue Mountains, NSW.



Figs. 28-30: Pineapple Orchid (*Adelopetalum elisae*)
Gara River Blue Hole, nr Armidale, NSW.



Figs. 31-33: Wheat-leaf Rope Orchid (*Oxysepala shepherdii*).
Bomaderry Creek, Shoalhaven, NSW.



Figs. 34-35: Grassy Boat-lipped Orchid (*Cymbidium suave*)
Kurrajong Heights, Blue Mountains, NSW.

The Grassy Boat-lipped Orchid (*Cymbidium suave*) grows on decaying wood, here an old tree stump (Fig. 34), but also on logs or trees with decaying heartwood. Large plants may have over 1,000 flowers. The abundant leaves are long, narrow and green with an axial groove, upright, arching to pendulous from top to bottom of the plant. The flowers, 1.7 cm across, are open with the lateral petals and labellum a creamy colour and the sepals a yellowy green. The labellum is trough-shaped with a blackish floor, weak side-lobes and a terminal triangular lip (Fig. 35). It is common in Queensland and NSW.



Figs. 36-38: Black Bootlace Orchid (*Erythrorchis cassythoides*).
Stanthorpe, Queensland.

The final orchid in this selection is not strictly an epiphyte. However, the Black Bootlace Orchid (*Erythrorchis cassythoides*), although with a subterranean root system, only grows on old decaying wood to which it is attached by short unbranched roots. It is a leafless mycophyte, widespread and common in Queensland and New South Wales. The flowers are up to 3.0 cm across and have spreading sepals and

lateral petals and an almost tubular labellum with a frilled terminal margin. The floral elements are a yellowish-brown, the labellum white internally (Figs. 37-38). The inflorescence illustrated here is dense in patches on an old tree stump (Fig. 36).

Finally, a comment on the literature. Jones (2006) is an outstanding book covering the whole of the Australian orchid flora at the time of writing. The illustrations are good, both photographs and line drawings, and the text is comprehensive. Although there is some dispute about generic assignments (not affecting any of the orchids in this account), this is an essential guide to the Australian orchid flora and we have relied on it extensively for all our visits to Australia.

Reference

Jones, D.L. (2006) *A complete guide to Native Orchids of Australia, including the island territories*. Reed, New Holland, Sydney.

The First Summer of a Novice Orchidian
Nick Morgan

I have been a birdwatcher for many years and, like many other birders, I have often turned to butterflies and dragonflies in the quiet summer months. However, this year, having just read Peter Marren’s *“In Search of the Ghost”*, an offer from a botanist friend to look for orchids at a local reserve was too good to miss. The site consisted of a single ‘unimproved’ meadow which was thick with Cowslips but also large

numbers of Green-winged Orchids. When I found, amongst the scores of spikes, this one striking white-flowered example I was immediately hooked. Reinforced just a few moments later by stumbling across a small, beautiful group of Burnt Orchids.

Membership of the HOS soon followed although the first read of the journal was a bit of a shock. I’m comfortable with lesser coverts and emarginated primaries but what on earth were rostellum and pollinia? I even managed my first HOS field trip thanks to a late drop-out. This reinforced my impression (so far!) that orchidophiles are universally nice people, helpful and willing to share their knowledge and experience, even with a complete novice like me.



Green-winged Orchid
 Photo by Nick Morgan

Now as this was my first orchid summer I have been in full-on ‘twitching’ mode and I have so far seen around half of the UK species, the majority within a relatively short drive from my North Yorkshire home. And that has been one of the surprises, how unaware I’ve been of the riches on my doorstep. It has taken me to some beautiful places (with the odd exception - Hartlepool Power Station anyone?!) and already given me some memorable experiences. Like the host of Greater Butterflies against a stunning backdrop of Swaledale or the Arkengarthdale meadow full of Heath-spotted, Fragrant and Small-white Orchids. Discovering seven species of orchid at my local bird reserve, including a veritable swarm of bees, where looking up meant I had missed what was at my feet. Perhaps best of all, stumbling across the glowing white of Creeping Lady’s-tresses in the great cathedral space of a northern pinewood. I’m also finding my favourites, the Helleborines. If you’ll forgive a birding analogy they are the warblers of the orchid world – subtly beautiful and satisfyingly challenging.

So this new convert is already looking forward to next summer – revisiting local sites armed with a little more knowledge, hopefully some HOS field trips and perhaps even an excursion to Kent (wherever that is!).



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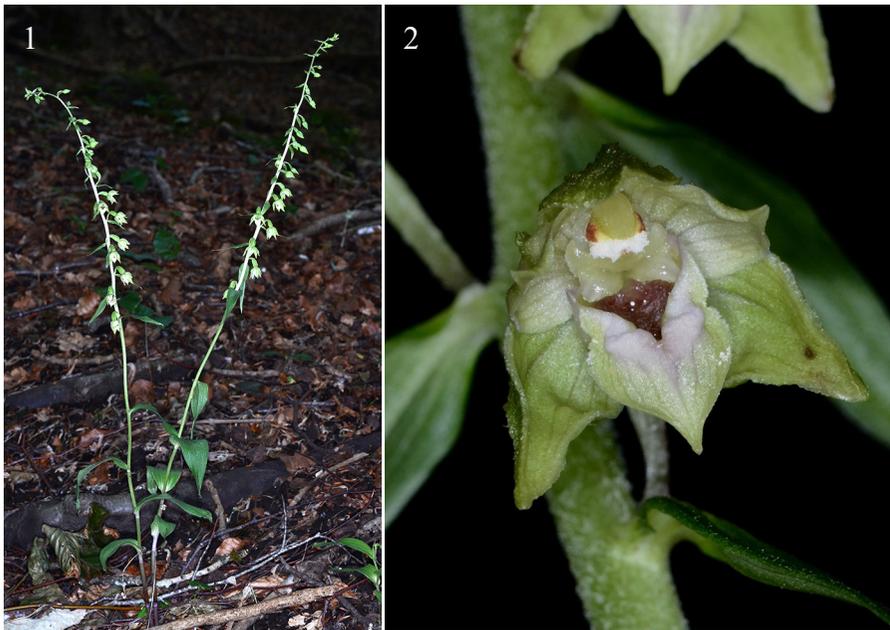
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Epipactis leptochila var. *cordata*

Mike Clark

Whilst surveying a new Beechwood site for Narrow-lipped Helleborine, *Epipactis leptochila*, in South Wales, I became increasingly aware of around ten plants with a broader, relatively short cordate labellum compared with the nominate species, so thinking it to be var. *cordata* (Figs. 1-4). Although when seeing an *Epipactis* which looks different one thinks of a possible hybrid which brought *E. helleborine* × *leptochila* (*Epipactis* × *stephensonii*) into the equation. In fact most of the *E. leptochila* were the nominate species (Fig. 5) of which I counted 72 plants in 2020, double the number from the previous year. On inspection the plants showed the leaves longer than wide and well-spaced. The plants are uniform light green and they show a little colour around the bosses which is normal and no viscidium as observed in the photos. So I believe the plants to be *E. leptochila* var. *cordata*, but without genetic analysis it is not possible to be certain. *Epipactis leptochila* var. *cordata* was named by Brooke on page 123 in his 1950 book “*The Wild Orchids of Britain*”. The description of var. *cordata* is having a cordate labellum i.e. heart-shaped. I would like to thank Les Lewis for proof reading & Julian Woodman for the site location.



Figs. 1-4: *Epipactis leptochila* var. *cordata*

Fig. 5: The normal plant of the site

Photos by Mike Clark

**A Rare ‘Green’ Lizard Orchid, *Himantoglossum hircinum*,
Appears at Sandwich Bay, Kent
David Johnson**

The Lizard Orchid, *Himantoglossum hircinum*, is one of Britain’s most charismatic orchid species. It is robust and visually striking with shaggy purplish-green flowers festooning a stem that may be a metre or more in height. It remains rare in the UK, despite a recent population explosion thought to be linked to global warming, and although the latest data assessment is of a species with a conservation risk of ‘Least Concern’ (Stroh *et al.*, 2014), this orchid still engenders great interest and excitement when it makes one of its legendary sudden appearances, particularly when in urban situations.



Normal and ‘green’ Lizard Orchid, *Himantoglossum hircinum*, in Kent.
Photos by Liam Rooney (left) & Steffan Walton (right).

In Britain the Lizard Orchid appears to be a reasonably constant species, especially in colouration, and the literature mentions only minor variations in the colour of the flowers. Ettliger (1997) remarked that the intensity of purple spotting in the centre of the labellum may be variable, and the ‘lizard tails’, which are usually purplish-brown, may be green. An illustration in Harrap & Harrap (2009 p.353) showed a very pale plant, low in anthocyanin pigment, which displayed the green ‘tails’ mentioned by Ettliger. Bateman *et al.* (2013) also illustrated and commented on the colour variations previously mentioned by Ettliger.

It was, therefore, an exciting discovery when Steffan Walton found an entirely green Lizard Orchid at Sandwich Bay in Kent with florets which lacked any anthocyanin pigment. Steffan is the warden for Sandwich Bay Bird Observatory Trust and routinely monitors the Lizard Orchids on the Sandwich Bay Estate. The area which Steffan warden has an annual population of several hundred flowering Lizard Orchids and is part of a much more extensive area of coastal duneland and golf courses around Sandwich well known for holding, by far, the largest population of Lizard Orchids in Britain (estimated a few years ago to be in excess of 6,000 flowering plants). Steffan came upon the ‘green’ plant whilst doing his rounds on 24th June 2020 and recorded that it was of moderate stature, and growing on dry rough grassland close to a number of ‘normal’ Lizard Orchids.

Depending upon how liberal your views are on naming, this anthocyanin-deficient Lizard Orchid might be termed *Himantoglossum hircinum* f. *albiflora*, and appears to be a very unusual find. It was the first record of such a variant that had come to my notice, but after Steffan posted his picture on social media, it transpired that there have been other instances. Jon Dunn had a recollection of finding a similar plant at Sandwich sometime during the period 2001-2003, but had no photographs. However, two ‘green’ plants were recorded and photographed near Lytchett Minster, Dorset in 1999 and, oddly enough, in 2020 a small ‘green’ Lizard Orchid flowered in Leicestershire. It will be interesting to see if the 2020 plants recur in future years. There may well be other records of course which it would be interesting to hear about, but I have been unable to find anything more in the literature.

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Lockdown
Rosemary Webb

The problems we have faced this year from the epidemic of coronavirus reminded me of another ‘lockdown’ exactly 10 years ago in 2010. We had been enjoying a lovely holiday in Crete. It was one of those years when Spring had come very early and the weather had been hot and sunny throughout. The early and mid-April orchids were fading fast and one had to travel to the higher sites to find many of them in reasonable flower. At lower levels, the orchids that one does not find in flower so easily at this time were appearing everywhere such as *Anacamptis coriophora* ssp. *fragrans* and in some of the pine woods *Limodorum abortivum* was just reaching a beautiful condition, *Serapias cordigera* ssp. *cretica* was reaching its peak and proving more widespread than I had been led to believe. There was still a good supply of other orchids and *Ophrys candica* and *Ophrys apifera* were appearing in places which in an earlier year one would never have known were present.

Feeling very satisfied with the holiday, we returned to pack. We were to leave first thing the following morning, the 23rd April. As we walked into the hotel, we were greeted by the landlady who announced that all flights throughout Europe were grounded and no one was going anywhere. The volcano Eyjafjallajokull in Iceland had a massive eruption and the debris and ash cloud were making it unsafe for aircraft to fly. I was shocked and worried but being on an island, if we could not leave no one else could come so the hotel rooms were safe, we could continue to stay. I was still apprehensive. The next morning my priority was to try to find out how long the grounding of aircraft was likely to be. We were lucky enough to get seats on a flight back to Gatwick exactly a week later. My next priority was to retain the car for that further week – again, no problem. We were now all set to enjoy another week of orchid hunting. Things were not so bad after all, all my worries had faded away.

On one of the days we met a fellow orchid hunter in the woods above the Kourtaliotis Gorge. He told us that *Orchis spitzelii* ssp. *nitidifolia* syn *Orchis prisca* was in flower, in the woods above the Xiloskalo on the south side of the Omalos Plateau. This was one of the Cretan orchids we had never seen and it is a rare Cretan endemic which made it a priority. Being a late flowering species, I have never been able to be in Crete at its usual flowering time. We were staying in Agia Galini and it is a long drive to the Omalos but with the prospect of finding this orchid, there were no second thoughts.

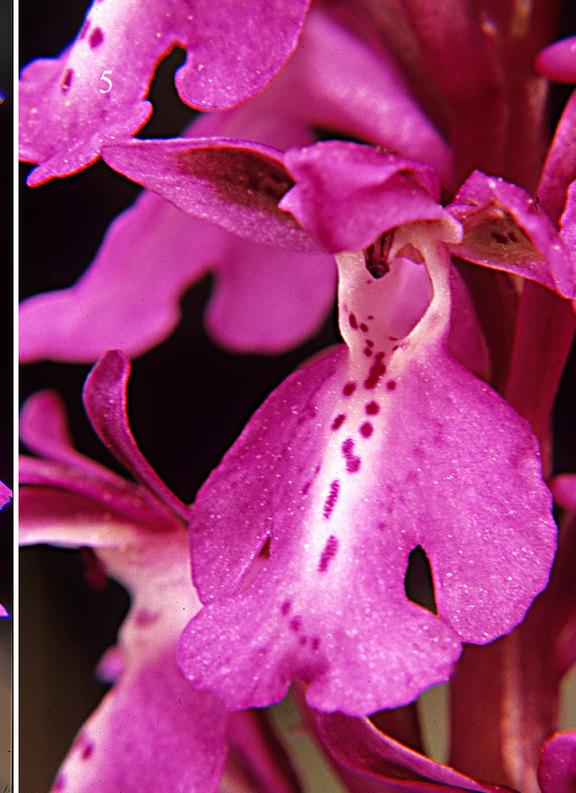


Fig. 1: *Limodorum abortivum*
Fig. 2: *Orchis pauciflora* Fig. 3: *Neotinea tridentata*
Photos by Rosemary Webb

Fortunately the roads are reasonable and there is not too much traffic, one can maintain a steady pace. I took the main road to Rethymnon and joined the National Road heading west, eventually reaching Chania. Just past Chania I took the turning off and headed south for Omalos. At first one travels through a certain amount of urban sprawl and then through acres of orange orchards. The road then starts to rise. It is kilometres of hairpin bends, very scenic and hugging the flanks of one of the mountains. Eventually one arrives at the picturesque village of Lakki situated on the edge of a deep bowl-shaped valley. The mountainside is covered in trees and at this time of day is in the shade, making them look very black and mysterious. The road continues round the edge of the valley and the bends begin again. They seem to go on forever but we were steadily rising. A journey always seems longer the first time. Eventually, after one last bend, the road reaches a gap and the Omalos Plain opens up before one with the high peaks of the White Mountains on the far side. The plain is divided into many small enclosed fields which are, I am told, full of purple *Tulipa bakeri*. In this warm early Spring they are long since over as were many of the other plants for which the Omalos is famous. It all looked rather barren. We headed south, across the plain, making for the Xiloskalo which is where the entrance to the Samaria Gorge begins. Here there are a few tourist facilities, a place to park and a wonderful view across the Gorge to the mountains the other side. One can look down the beginning of the track down into the Gorge but this is not open to the public until May. We are surrounded by phrygana-covered hillsides and woods of oak, maple and cypress. Most people arrive and stay for a short time. They come for the view and a few walk up the path which eventually meets the track up to the Kallergi mountain refuge hut.

There are flowers everywhere here. There are quantities of *Orchis pauciflora* clearly visible and the small, few-flowered Cretan form of *Neotinea tridentata* seems to be everywhere. It was in this area that we had been told that *Orchis spitzelii* ssp. *nitidifolia* (*prisca*) was in flower. I scanned the area through binoculars and I could see something! Up on the hillside, on a ledge, under the trees! We made our way towards it, the ground hard, stoney and unforgiving. Rounding a particularly thorny bush and ducking under a low branch, we came out to a clearing with a magnificent view and there it was! A beautiful, large spike of *Orchis prisca* just in time, every flower was out. No more buds to come. This is one of Crete's rarities and it was as good a specimen as I think one could expect to find. It was time to explore! I walked along a track into the phrygana, heading north and to my delight, I found two more plants in flower. Their spikes were caught up in the thorny bush through which they were growing. I looked closely at the flowers as the light was so good on them at this time. The lateral sepals have a coppery-green patch in the middle with small red spots which are glowing like jewels in the sun. I concentrated on a large,

Figs. 4-7: *Orchis prisca*
Photos by Rosemary Webb





Orchis prisca
Photo by Rosemary Webb

beautiful, single flower. I just had to spend some time photographing it in close-up. It was impossible to photograph any other aspect of this plant as it was in the middle of an impenetrable shrub. Cretan thorny plants are very unforgiving.

I returned to the first lovely specimen, as it deserved time and consideration. It could be photographed as a whole plant with a view. One can't have everything but I did so wish the mountains on the other side of the Samaria Gorge had their snow caps as they usually would have had at this time – that would have been fantastic! This hot year, there was no snow on the Cretan mountains but there was wonderful clear air and the views were superb nonetheless. What joy! This lockdown had its advantages one could say. We would not have been here otherwise.

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Wales' Irish Lady's-tresses Re-visited

Sue Parker

The essential cancellation of all the HOS walks and field trips in 2020 was keenly felt by us all, but nowhere were there more regrets than here in Wales, where we had something truly special to celebrate. The finding, by Justin Lyons (Dyfi NNR Reserve Manager), of *Spiranthes romanzoffiana* in a field in the Borth Bog (Cors Fochno) part of the reserve could have offered us all the chance to visit and photograph one of the UK's rarest orchids. Alas, Covid-19 struck and all visits had to be cancelled.



Spiranthes romanzoffiana
Photo by Sue Parker

Although it eventually became possible for members of the public to access the site, a greater problem was having enough staff present for visits for what is now clearly an extremely sensitive location. At Justin's request, we abandoned various plans we had to attempt to get people to the site in small numbers. In any event the restrictions on car-sharing and a lack of parking close to the plants rendered them all infeasible. Natural Resources Wales (NRW) was grateful for our forbearance in the difficult circumstances. The good news is that the plants are still there and thriving. During 2020 the area where the plants grow was fenced off to prevent the grazing animals, used for scrub management in the reserve, from demolishing them. As a result many more plants appeared and, for now at least, the colony seems viable although, given how little we know about

this enigmatic orchid and the history of this particular colony, complacency is not a luxury we can afford to indulge in.

As I write this (2nd November 2020), Wales is again in the grip of a Covid-19 lockdown, and we are about to hear about the next tranche of restrictions coming our way – just as England goes into what looks as if it will be a prolonged regime of strict limitations possibly stretching into 2021. I am, however, hopeful that a vaccine offering a degree of protection will be available to some of us in early 2021, although I suspect it will not mean the end of restrictions altogether. With luck we will be able to reinstate the proposed HOS visit to the site at Borth, and others in Wales, later this year.



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