



Newsletter



JULY 2020

We are where we are!

It is hoped that as more restrictions are lifted and public places, bars, restaurants, hairdressers/barbers, non-essential shops gradually open up, our confidence to resume and settle into our new normal life and routine will return and improve.

However, with the recent media discussions that there may be more carriers of Covid 19 who do not show the known symptoms than first thought, the World Health Organisation and some scientists acknowledges that there is evidence that the virus may be spread by tiny airborne particles, we all need to continue to be vigilant to keep the pandemic, which globally is at its height, at bay in the UK.

We all need to accept that we cannot wait until every one of us can get tested at any time we need, with timely results and to wait for an effective vaccine to be found and made widely available in order for us to return to normal life.

More than likely, Covid 19 will become something we will have to live with in the future, just like we have learnt to live with the potential that we might catch the flu each year. I have so far not taken to wearing a face mask as a matter of course as I go about my daily life but it came home to me when recently, I was refused entry to a Chinese grocery shop in Birmingham because I wasn't wearing one.

Since that experience and the latest acknowledgement by WHO, I now have a small stock of masks which I used selectively when I am out but hope that in time, I will feel responsible and comfortable enough to want to wear a mask whenever I am out amongst a crowd of people, outdoor or indoor. It is an easy way to keep myself and others safe and I really shouldn't think twice about wearing one.

I have been in contact recently with some members of our society and also that of Central and Hinckley OS and as far as I can established, everyone is well and no one is aware of any members who have contracted the virus. That is great news.

Talking about my contact with members of Central, this was done via a Zoom meeting at the invitation of Trish King. I was very pleasantly surprised how easy it was to organise and attend a meeting by Zoom, one doesn't even have to pre download the software to participate on the appointed day and time.

We are not aware of any Orchid Societies which are planning a meeting within the next couple of months, however we do know that a few have kept some of their members connected and in touch via regular Zoom meetings. All one need for a Zoom meeting is an on line connection via laptop, desktop, a mobile or tablet! Until we all find the confidence to have a physical meeting,

Zoom may be one way that that we can re-connect with other members.



It will not replace monthly meeting but it would allow some of us to at least see each other again, albeit on the screen. Perhaps we can consider arranging a Zoom meet before July is out and if successful, a more regular session until we can meet physically.

Let me know your thoughts!

We can all have a go!

During the lockdown I have been involved with weekly family quiz nights, club meetings, and recently got invited by Trish to join in a COS Zoom meeting. It really is easy and cost nothing, so come on Solihull, let's give it a go, you will be surprised how easy it is! If anyone wants to have a try let me know by email, I will simply send you a Zoom email invite with a link in it to join the meeting, click the link and you are in. We could have a practice beforehand, and arrange a date and time for a society meeting. ballm1@mac.com



You can follow Solihull & District Orchid Society on Facebook and Twitter



Secretary: Tjin Ong
07711 568848

If you have any pictures or information you would like to put on our website please email: tjinong3103@gmail.com or copy and pictures for newsletter: ballm1@mac.com
Society email address: www.solihullorchidsociety.co.uk

Back to Malvern- but not as you know it!

One of the activities I enjoyed doing during the summer months is driving out to the countryside looking for pick your own fruit farms. Summer fruits, at this time of the year is plentiful and most fruit farms are crying out for the public to help pick their crops which would otherwise go to waste. PYO has come a long way since the 1970's and 80's when I can remember spending back breaking hours bending, to pick strawberries. Soft fruit farming have developed more effective and productive ways of growing summer fruits grown under poly-tunnels. Apart from helping with the yield, enabling earlier picking, sometimes in late Spring to longer and sustained season where one can still pick until mid-September, growing under poly-tunnels makes for more easier and comfortable picking as all the strawberries and most of the raspberries can be picked at eye level.



The long spells of sunshine, warmth and some rain we had over late April and May were the perfect environment for our summer fruits and farmers predicted a glut of strawberries and raspberries. I was fretting in early June at the thought of not being able to go PYO this year due to the restriction on movements and the uncertainty over how farms will organise themselves to cope with Covid 19.

The announcement of some lifting of restriction on movements in the 3rd week of June coincided with news from some farms that they are opening their doors to the public for PYO, with strict social distancing arrangements in place was the best news I was eagerly waiting for.



On the hottest day of the year 25th June, I set off to Clive's fruit Farm, just outside Upton Upon Severn and very close to the Malvern County show ground hoping to pick strawberries, raspberries and cherries. The time between 0900 and 0100 was reserved for seniors and there were not too many people when I arrived. However, there was a sign upon entry to the farm advising that due to heavy pickings the previous few days, there were insufficient ripen strawberries and raspberries for picking but the good news is that there was plentiful of cherries available.

My disappointment of not being able to pick strawberries and raspberries was soon forgotten when I saw the cherry orchards with a mixture of hundreds of mature and younger trees, all heavily laden with bright red to liver red coloured cherries. This was the first time I have been to a cherry farm and my immediate reaction was how easily accessible the fruits are; the cherries on the younger trees are no higher than eye level with most around waist and knee high, making for very easy picking, even for the very vertically challenged. Some of the cherries on the more mature trees are slightly higher, 6-8 ft. above the ground but with branches still within

reach.

Once I got over the excitement of seeing all the cherries and more importantly, tasting them, the serious task of finding the best, biggest, firmest, juiciest fruits began. Plastic containers that will hold about 1 kg of fruits were available free of charge. Over the course of over an hour, moving from tree to tree, without effort and without realising, it was amazing how quickly I picked and filled 7 containers. Don't ask how many I tasted along the way!



I was somewhat surprised that there were not as many people as I had expected at the cherry orchard and felt quite sad at the thought that the majority of the cherries will remain unpicked and just rot on the trees. I wonder how much of it is due to the fact that whilst most people are

aware of PYO strawberries and raspberries, fewer people are aware of PYO cherries and how easily they can be picked. I was certainly under the false impression before I visited the orchard that it would be a fiddly exercise to pick the cherries but they are as easy as picking strawberries and raspberries.



What did I do with over 7 kg of cherries? Some I gave away, some I ate and I made jam with the rest. Like most summer fruits and stoned fruits, cherries contain very little natural pectin, an agent

necessary to enable the jam to set thus avoiding ending up with soupe de fruits! Using the belt and braces approach, I used both pectin powder and lemon juice and managed to set the jam sufficiently to spread over toast for the next few months. Something to look forward to.

There is still plenty of time left in the summer for repeat visits to PYO fruit farms and I fully intended to make a few more trips, blackberries, black and red currants, plums, pears, apples etc. More jars of jam or even fruit pies....

My greenhouse series

We have had an article on my greenhouse over the last couple of issues of Newsletter and I for one enjoyed them and found the stories behind each greenhouse interesting and I hope members feel the same.

However, unless I receive offer of further articles for the future issues, the article this month by Keith Bates will be the last in the series which I had hope would run for a few more months. Let's hope there will be more but if not, my thanks go to Malcolm, Monica and Keith for their contributions and support.

Lockdown Pictures

BOC Covid 19 Congress competition results

Members will have seen the results of the BOC Covid 19 Congress competition which was announced on the 27th June. The event, which was unique and grew out of the cancelled BOC Congress at Southport due to the Covid 19 lockdown was very well organised, supported and highly successful. The BOC received over 400 entries from 86 growers representing 27 societies, including entries from Australia and a few non society members. Over 40 BOC judges, both qualified and trainees were involved in the judging, it must said that the judging must be made the more difficult without physically seeing the plants. So well done to the BOC and its judges for creating what is hopefully a one off event and that the next major orchid show and competition will be live, with as many orchid enthusiasts as possible

As far as I am aware, only one member entered to represent Solihull and many congratulations to Malcolm who won 1st prize in Class 13 - Hardy Orchids with his



Dactylorhiza fuchsia 'Andrea' CCC/RHS and 2nd prize in Class 2 – Phragmipedium with his Phragmipedium Paul Eugene Conroy.

There were some stunning entries

as the photographs of the entries and results which are on the email sent out by Martin Ball and also on the BOC website will testify. This clearly shows that despite the inconvenience of Covid 19, growers and member societies are very much alive and kicking and keen to show off their skills and expertise.



Malcolm Moodie

1. *Stenoglottis woodii*, 2. *Oncidium naevium*, 3. *Phrag. Grande La Tuilerie*, 4. *Paph. Pinocchio*, 5. *Encyclia vitelina*, 6. *Paph. Pinocchio*, 7. *Epidendrum stamfordianum*, 8. *Bulbophyllum claptonense*



Lockdown Pictures



STAN TAYLOR

1. *Vanda falcata*
2. *Bulbophyllum erberhardtii*
3. *Promenaea exanthina*
4. *Bulbophyllum bicolor*
5. Self-seeded orchids in with Hostas

MONICA JOHNSON

Mounted orchids out in the rain!



Lockdown Pictures



JANET JAMES

1. Disa Bramley Pink
2. Disa Kewdior
3. Lycaste deppie
4. Disa Colette x Foam



The cat is Scallywag, who past away recently aged 17 years old, enjoying her last Christmas. She belonged to one of our founder members, Bob Harris, and before he died, 12 years ago, Janet promised Bob she would look after his cat for him. A man who many of our members will fondly remember.

2021 speakers

One of the keenly anticipated activities at our monthly meeting, apart from the tea break, is the talk from our invited speakers.

We have been very lucky in the past in having some very interesting, both in house and external speakers who were able to share their passions, interests and expertise in growing orchids with us.

The subjects of the talks were varied and they ranged from specialist knowledge of specific genera, with tips, advice and the do's and don'ts which help us to understand how we can better grow the genera.

Other talks included historical and locational orchid interests and international travel experiences to all parts of the globe in search of orchids in their natural environments.

Monica Johnson, who has done a sterling

job as our programme secretary and responsible for finding speakers whom we have found interesting is planning her programme for 2021 and needs your help.

She is asking for feedback from members as to who, from past speakers, they would like to welcome back and if members know of any new knowledgeable speakers they would like to invite.

She would also like to know if there are any genera of plants that hasn't been the subject of a talk and in which members would like to find out more about.

Now is your chance to help shape the choice of speakers in the future, please contact Monica on kenneth.johnson99@ntlworld.com with your views and requests.

In my

Greenhouse

by Keith Bates

Welcome to my greenhouses, for those who don't know me, I have been a member of the Solihull Orchid Society for some years. But most of you know me as the Secretary of Hinckley & District Orchid Society.

My interest in orchids was by pure chance when on a visit to Kew Gardens in 1979. In those days, it was a very rundown garden, not the place it is today. On this visit, I was with my friend David and quite by



accident, we came across a group of old wooden greenhouses. To be honest they were in a state, tied together with string and wire. When we finally found our way in, it was just some structure looking like giant cacti plant with some very dried up plants attached to them, not much here I thought but going through to the second part, it was a very different story. On these strange structures were the most beautiful pure white flowers with some reddish brown spots and around them were others of yellow and red etc. I thought if they can grow plants



like that surely I can too, so I discovered they were Odont orchids. Next stop Hinckley library, they hadn't any orchid books but they were good enough to find me two from

Leicester's main library. Both of the books were written by Brian and Wilma Rittershausen. My next problem was to find a supplier, Burnham Nurseries was advertising in the Garden News, a collection of mixed plants (£28) arrived in March.

I had a lean-to greenhouse in which they grew quite happily for two years then in Feb 1983 a snow storm collapsed the lean to and froze the plants solid. Time to get a real



greenhouse. In June 1988, I moved to a bungalow and ordered a new greenhouse which arrived two months later. The only other greenhouse was a 8x6ft, left by the previous owners of the property. I did lose quite a few plants in that period of time.

Now I have a mix of different size greenhouses. Three are joined together to make a 24ft unit and also an 8 x 6ft and a 10 x 6ft, this houses an assortment of cymbidiums which most have been given to

me by members of our local garden club, some I have bought.

In my main greenhouse, I have a mixed collection of cool growing orchids and a seedling cabinet where I try to raise a few flasks, that's just a challenge.

This year was the first time I have had one flower, an Ancepts seed sown by Kidderminster school.

The larger end of the large greenhouse is my mixture of plants - Dendrobiums, Coelogynes and Oncidium group.



The smaller end of the large greenhouse contains my small Phaphs. and Phrags. collections and a few other special Odonts that I have had for many years. The other unit houses my Phalaenopsis and my Cattleyas. I have reduced my Cattleyas to make way for the Phalaenopsis. All the greenhouses are heated by fan heaters on electronic thermostats. Fans in all the greenhouse's and two have under staging sprinklers.

I feed with Rain Mix which I find very good, I also use various additives. I try to use rain water when I can, I store around 250 gallons but in hot weather I supplement the watering with tap water. I



have to watch the parts per million of feed that I add to it, the tap water which reads around 320 parts per million so I can get away with it. I tend to feed a lot more in the summer months and water every 4 to 6 days and

spray each morning. My greenhouses run from East to West I have to shade the south side with two layers of shade material

I do have failures from time to time mainly I think it is because I have a mixed collection of orchids and the conditions vary.

My compost is mainly different grades of bark and spagmoss and if I can get it, horticultural foam if not, perlite or grow stone, I find them all very adequate for my needs.

One problem I have, I don't use insecticides as I have a severe reaction which reduces my red blood cells, so please be careful. All I can use is mentholated sprits for any pest control as well as soapy water and olive oil mix.

