



Newsletter



JUNE 2020

A bit more freedom, at last perhaps!

I feel certain that the recent relaxation of restrictions on our movements, enabling most of us to leave our home to travel a reasonable distance, to meet up with friends and more importantly for some, seeing families and loved ones again for the first time in weeks have lifted most members' spirit and hearts.

The wonderful and record breaking hours of sunshine and higher than seasonal temperatures during May and up until the beginning of June has surely also help to make us all feel more like human again since the partial lockdown all those weeks ago. Although I understand that the higher than normal temperatures has also caused problems for those with greenhouses, so the cooler weather and trickle of rainfalls of the past weeks have also been very welcoming for the gardeners amongst us.

I for one, am glad that there is some relief as the fairways on the golf course I play on are starting to turn brown just a few weeks into the re-opening.

Our moods and well-beings will be further

boosted when we can all return to the "new normal" as the government cautiously and gradually allow non-essential shops and business to open.

Being able to have some "retail therapy", albeit having to stand in line in a big queue is something to look forward to by some and of course more will eagerly wait for pubs, bars and restaurants to be allowed to serve customers again.

So there is much to look forward to in the months ahead but we all still need to be careful.

We have all done extremely well to stay healthy so far and it will be most unfortunate to fall foul of Covid-19 in the weeks and months ahead as the situation improves and measures begin to ease.

Please remember to social distance in all that you do, mask up if you can't avoid crowds, exercise common sense whenever you go and continue to stay healthy. A sobering thought for you all - Places are opening because of the economy, not because it is safe, keep that in mind!!

July meeting and August coach trip

Although we are allowed some flexibility in freedom of movements, the need to keep social distancing at the present 2 meters will make having a meeting in an enclosed place very challenging if not, almost impossible. We understand that the hall at St George & Teresa will remain closed until at least September, this obviously means that in common with many other Societies, our July meeting will not go ahead. Traditionally we don't hold a meeting in August because of the Annual coach day trip. Depending on further developments, including whether social distancing could be reduced from the present 2 metres, our next meeting may be the AGM in September.

It would be preferable if our first meeting and AGM can be attended by as many members as possible (we had over 30 last year) but that will depend on whether there is an appetite and confidence from members to want to attend the meeting. Having an AGM with just a handful of members would be miserable therefore it would be extremely useful if members can share their views about holding the September meeting if the current situation continues to improve and the government does not discourage gathering of small group. Your views and opinions will be important and give a steer to the Committee regarding future meetings. Please share your views with me at tjinong3103@gmail.com

The Committee has also decided that the August coach day trip to Harlow Carr need to be cancelled, again mainly for social distancing reason. We are not certain at this stage whether Johnson, the coach company will be operating in August but given that the coach we have hired only sits a maximum of 30 people, social distancing means at best we can have 8 - 10 passengers making the whole trip financially unviable. It is unfortunate that we have had to cancel especially after the work put in by David Wray and Malcolm Moodie but on the plus side, at least we already have a venue for next year; one less event to worry about!!



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



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Annual Spring show - New venue from 2021

Members may remember we reported in the November issue of the Newsletter that Arden School, where we held our annual Spring show for many years decided to review the charges for hiring out its hall and facilities and eventually took the decision in Sept. with immediate effect, to almost double the level of fees that we have previously paid. The Society has by then committed to holding the 2020 Spring show at the School as invitations have been extended to displaying societies and traders, resources and time have also been spent on producing posters and publicity materials.

Although the School reviewed its decision to implement the increase with immediate effect and made a one off concession for us in view of the short notice given, the Committee came to a decision that future cost increase means that as a Society, we can no longer afford to continue to use Arden School to host our Spring show after April 2020. As it happened, the 2020 Spring show was cancelled as a result of outbreak of Covid 19 and 2019 turned out to be the last time we use Arden School as a venue.

The decision by the school has forced an issue for us; it was felt for a number of years that whilst Arden School has served us well in the past, the hall has really become too large for our purpose and a lot of spaces were wasted and not fully utilised. Members may also remember that there were talks about the school being demolished and rebuilt and therefore the school hall would not be available during the reconstruction.

Two members of the Committee were tasked with searching for a new venue to replace the school with the brief of remaining close to the Knowle area.

A number of options were considered but were all deemed unsuitable at the time. Even with the widening of areas outside Knowle, it would appear that there just wasn't a venue that would be suitable to accommodate 4 visiting displaying societies and 4 to 5 traders, the format we have traditionally used.

We then found out of a delay in the school reconstruction project and with no immediate danger of losing the venue, the search for a replacement was put on the backburners.

Unbeknown to us at the time, one of the possible venue that was rejected for being not quite large enough turned out to be the one where the Committee has decided to use from 2021 onwards. In our renewed search for a replacement venue in October 2019, the Committee came to a view that some changes needed to be made in order to "fit in" with whatever potential venue are available. It was agreed that we need to drop one visiting displaying society and invite a maximum of 3 traders.

One name cropped up a number of times in our discussions of potential venues and that was Bentley Heath Community Centre.

One late afternoon on the 25th October I made an appointment with the letting secretary of the Community Centre for a first viewing. My first impression was favourable, the hall area, also with a stage, was nowhere as spacious as the one in Arden School but that was considered too large for our needs. The decision to have fewer visiting society and traders would make the available space work for future shows.

The Community Centre is a stone's throw away from our monthly meeting venue of St George & Teresa and also from old Arden School venue. The new location would provide familiarity for our past visitors and hopefully easy to find for new comers. There are ample parking spaces in the front and side of the Community Centre, with an added bonus of a few more parking spaces at the small park next door.

There is also a fairly newly refurbished and fully equipped kitchen that we are allowed to use and this is a significant improvement over the catering facility provided by Arden School. We were in the past, unable to provide hot food items as there was no proper kitchen facilities and we were limited to providing only cold items such as pork pies, sandwiches and filled rolls.

It is the experience of other Orchid Societies that hot food items such as bacon/sausage baps, hot sausage rolls, hot toast etc. are real winners as far as visitors are concerned and represents a significant income stream on the day.

I reported my initial and positive findings back to the November Committee and it was decided we should have a second viewing in the company of a few additional committee members, this time fully equipped with measuring tapes etc. Peter White, Ken and Monica Johnson and I returned in mid-November. After some careful measuring of the dimensions of the hall and the stage, examined the logistics of tables/trestles and chairs and the opening of cupboards in the kitchen and testing of the cooking range, much to the scream of delights from Monica, we all came to a unanimous view that the Bentley Heath Community Centre would serve us very well as a venue for our future Spring Show from April 2021 onwards. The decision was made.

I am however saving the best bit of relocating to the new venue till last. I was very pleasantly surprised when the letting secretary advised me of the fees for hiring the centre for a day, the rate turned out to be extremely reasonable; less than what we were paying at Arden before the increase and significantly less than the new fee that it would have charge in 2021.

We are indeed fortunate that Arden School's decision has done us a great favour, finding a venue that ticks all the boxes and at a price we can afford, what's not to like and as the saying goes, "as one door closes and another opens". Life can be full of other

opportunities.... It is now up to all of us to ensure we make full use of the new facilities offered by Bentley Heath Community Centre and make our future Spring Shows a great success.

Our Spring show date for 2021 will be on the 17th April and the venue address is:

Bentley Heath Community Centre
Widney Road
Bentley Heath
Solihull
B93 9BQ

We look forward to seeing and welcoming as many of you there as possible in April 2021.



Our Lockdown Pictures



KEITH
BATES



MALCOLM MOODIE

1. *Pleione formosana*,
2. *Paph. Fumi's Delight*,
3. *Paph. Mint Chocolate*,
4. *Paph. In Charm Mystique*,
5. *Paph. villosum*,
6. *Paph. fairrieanum Matrix x Ice Galaxy*

Our Lockdown Pictures



KEN JOHNSON

1. *Cattleya skinneri Lynn*
2. *Cattleya skinneri Lynn flower*
3. *Cambria hybrid*
4. *Cat skinneri var oculata Alaine AM AOS*



GRAHAM JONES

Flowering in our window. The purple Vanda has put in an appearance although it normally flowers earlier in the year for us. The Cattleya "24 Karat" which has a lovely perfume and two more Miltonia's. The smaller one was given to Graham in a very sorry state by his sister last August and surprisingly has flowered. It must really want to live!

Our

Lockdown Pictures



JANET JAMES

1 & 2. Heath Spotted Orchids growing wild at Earlswood.
8. Oerstedella centradenia, I think this has had a name change.
7. Masdevallia coccinea 'dwarf pink', 6. Dendrobium fleckeri, 5. Disa Unilangley, 4. Ponerorchis graminifolia
3. A selection of my Dactylorrhiza, mostly hybrids

MARTIN BALL

I cannot claim them. My wife Carol flowers more than I do, and a Poor Man's Orchid also!

Please keep sending your orchid pictures and greenhouse photographs to Tjin or Martin during lockdown for inclusion in the monthly newsletter
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My Greenhouse

Monica Johnson

Going back about 26 years, as a keen gardener, I had always admired orchids and we did have a greenhouse. At this period a lot of you will remember at weekends we always seemed to get a lot of freebie papers, advertising everything and anything. One weekend I saw an advert for cymbidiums for sale, down at Shipston on Stour. Ken and I set off having telephoned the lady who had recently lost her husband, to purchase one or two Cymbids. We were taken into the greenhouse and I selected two (or as I thought) - however the lady said "Oh no I want you to take them all". As you can imagine they were in very poor condition. There must have been about fifteen, however I think we paid her about £50.00 and came home with the lot.

Then began our friendship with Ziggie Urdzins, Ziggie took us the following weekend to Bromsgrove to an Orchid Show where we purchased the necessary bark for re-potting and I bought my first orchid book, "Orchids for Everyone". Ziggie came to our home, we

set up the decorating table in the garage and I was taught how to repot cymbidiums.

Ken and I joined Solihull Orchid Society, where we met a lot of lovely, helpful and friendly people.

We also went with Ziggie to Birmingham Orchid Society meetings and soon joined their Society. Like so many other first time growers I was greedy, and would buy anything that took my fancy at Orchid Nurseries, shows and auctions etc. Learning very quickly that that was not the way forward.

During this period Ken had a friend in Leamington who owned a double glazing business; he told Ken he had a lot of windows, and doors, which had been ordered incorrectly and were scrap, and if he wanted them to build a new greenhouse he was welcome. Ken duly set about building, it would be correct to say he built the greenhouse to fit the windows. The Size is 14ft x 10ft and 9ft high with a polycarbonate seven cell flat roof.

About the year 2000 Fred and Joan Smith rejoined our Society. At our monthly meetings they would bring along these flamboyant Cattleyas and Phalaenopsis. We visited Fred and Joan's home quite often, this was the time I realized that Cattleyas were for me. Fred became a great Mentor for me,

ready to pass on tips and knowledge. Over the years we became great friends. When he died I was able to purchase quite a lot of Fred's plants. Joan is remarkable, when we talk on the phone and I tell her so and so plant is in flower, she remembers each plant.

As you can see from one of the photographs, we live on top of a hill, and have a line of trees behind the south facing greenhouse. These give adequate shading on top during the summer, with reflective shading along the front and side. Ken originally fitted the greenhouse with a gas boiler and radiators which were super cheap to run. Last year the boiler was condemned and the replacement was so expensive we decided to go over to electric. We purchased a pair of 2 kw fan heaters, controlled by Simply Controls thermostats. Last winter, being mild, one heater was enough to keep the temperature up to requirements. The other heater was set a few degrees lower as backup.

Temperature & Humidity

- The temperature I now like to maintain is 20degrees centigrade dropping to 14 at night. In summer the temperature can rise considerably and the humidifier stops the orchids from drying out.

- Humidity is raised by a Simply Control humidifier fed by filtered and softened mains water. This keeps the humidity to 75 per cent which is the optimum for cattleyas.

Water

Water is collected from our garage, conservatory and greenhouse roofs and fed into an 1100litre (250) gallons plastic tank. The tank is set 18 inches into the ground, lined with insulation. Water is pumped from the tank through a filter system, into a 50 litre

holding container in the greenhouse. We leave it overnight to rise to greenhouse temperature. This container feeds an electric high pressure mist spray that Ken bought on Ebay. Although it is high pressure (150 psi) it gives a fine, gentle mist.

I have other genus such as Dendrochilums, Oncidiums, Ceolognes, Catasetums and quite a few mounted plants, hanging from a window and the roof, at the cooler end of the greenhouse by the door. My Phalaenopsis are kept at the intermediate end on a lower level, less bright light which seems to suit them well.

Fertiliser and compost

I use Rainmix every feed at this time of year. Compost - I love Peter's Orchiate bark, also Peter's sphagnum moss. I'm a great believer in charcoal (as a sweetener) and use it

in all my mixes.

Air movement

We have a fan fitted in the roof which runs 24/7/365.



Aerial section



Cool section



Cattleyas



Phals