

The International Odontoglossum Alliance Newsletter

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DO NOT LOSE YOUR HEAD OVER ORCHIDS!

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The first part of this article has been published before but needs to be told again in order to set the stage for the second part.

I laid eyes on a plant of *Odontoglossum helgae* for the first time in 1984 when visiting Mario Portilla who worked as a curator for the orchid collection at Hostería Uzhupud near Gualaceo in Ecuador. I immediately recognized the orchid as an *Odontoglossum* and most likely new to science. The flowers were similar to *Odontoglossum harryanum* but yet quite different, primarily in the column structure. Mario told me that he was the lucky discoverer but that the plant was not for sale since it did not belong



Photo by Stig Dalström

Was the mischievous Mario Portilla telling the truth about the habitat and fate of *Odontoglossum helgae*?

to him and was part of the Hostería collection. I was allowed to take some photos though and pickle a few flowers in alcohol for later analysis. According to Mario, he collected the plant during a trip to the Cordillera de Cutucu, a lower mountain range that runs parallel on the eastern side of the main Andean cordillera. The plant had supposedly been discovered somewhere near the summit, which would be around 1800-2000 meters elevation. This area is controlled and protected by some fierce Shuar tribes who do not think kindly of trespassing foreigners, regardless if they have proper permits or not.

Some years after my first experience with Mario's plant, I made a second attempt to buy it. Mario Portilla was still working for Hostería Uzhuphud but the *Odontoglossum* plant was no longer there. It was assumed dead by its discoverer, which I found a little curious, or perhaps "suspicious" is a better word here. An additional few years later, in 1997, Willibald König described *Odontoglossum helgae* based on a plant supposedly collected in the Pichincha region on the western slopes of the Ecuadorian Andes. I immediately recognized it as the same species as what Mario had collected in the Cutucu mountains, on the eastern side of the Andes. The different collecting locale, from opposite sides of the Andes, seemed very strange and uncharacteristic for the genus. Years went by when nothing else was heard about this intriguing orchid. In 2008, however, it was finally time to learn more about the natural whereabouts of *Odm. helgae*. I had visited some remote areas in northern Peru together with Jan Sönnemark and Saúl Ruíz of Perúflora when we stopped at a local plant collector's house, just to say hello, have a cup of coffee and see what he had in his backyard. My eyes popped wide open when I saw a healthy plant of *Odm. helgae* in bloom, hanging in a basket from a rickety construction. This time I was able to purchase the plant and asked the former owner if he had any more of the same species. *Odontoglossums* are notoriously difficult to propagate from self-pollinated flowers so it was crucial to find a second clone and I was not going to miss this opportunity.



Photo by Stig Dalström

You never know what you can find in a place like this.

I am not a good business person and hate to negotiate over prices for things that are dirt-cheap anyway, and particularly with poor people. But it's sort of part of the culture here so I went along with the charade. The man in front of me hesitated. He knew a "sucker" when he saw one, so he slowly said that he may have a second plant at his other nursery, which was quite a ways off into the forest... he frankly wasn't sure. I grabbed a handful of soles bills from my wallet and waved them casually under his nose. Seconds later his wife was up



Photo by Stig Dalström

Hard working orchid business people know "suckers" when they see them.

on a rusty bicycle and on her way. We were told to come back the next day to pick up the plant. We did so and were able to purchase a healthy looking second plant that fortunately had not been divided



Photo by Stig Dalström

The elusive *Odontoglossum helgae* in cultivation by Perúflora.



Photo by Stig Dalström

Cordillera de Cutucu, tempting but dangerous to visit.

Oregon, Lou Jost from Baños and Ivan Acaro from Gualaceo in Ecuador to accompany me in an attempt to collect some plants of *Odontoglossum*

from the first plant. Thanks to the laboratory staff of Perúflora, artificially propagated plants are now available to everyone who would like to grow this beautiful orchid.

This is the successful part of the rediscovery and conservation of a rare and possibly endangered *Odontoglossum* species. What has not been told before is how difficult and sometimes eventful it can be to search for these forest jewels. The following part of this article deals with one earlier attempt to visit the alleged natural habitat of *Odontoglossum helgae*. I had invited Rick Burian from Portland,

helgae in the Cutucu mountains. This took place before we were able to secure the two plants from Peru, and here it goes:

The man in front of me is a Shuar tribesman, a “former” headhunter from southeastern Ecuador and he hates me. All I want to do is to spend a few days in the Cutucu mountains but all he wants to do is to cut me into little pieces and have my head as a trophy. From my point of view a compromise is not an option. I explain that a very rare orchid was discovered here fifteen years ago. Unfortunately the unique plant disappeared and was assumed lost until it (or a second plant) turned up in Germany, supposedly collected on the other side of the Andes, and I need a site confirmation for a floristic project. The man shouts angry unintelligible words and waves his machete in response.

This is the third “battle” in a week and our expedition is sagging. I cannot really blame him because his hatred consists of fear and frustration for not controlling his life anymore. It belongs to some distant and corrupted politicians. Gone are the good old days when they poured melted gold into the throats of captured Spaniards and shrunk enemy (outsiders) heads into the size of tennis balls. They are not allowed to do this



Photo by Guido Deburghgraeve

A well cultivated plant of *Odontoglossum helgae*

anymore because it gives the area a bad reputation. The Cutucu mountains are very rich in plants but poorly known scientifically and still protected by fierce Shuars. There just has to be a way around this...

We decide to make a detour and sneak in from behind instead. At the end of a long and winding road we face another obstacle. Before we can reach the forest we have to cross a roaring river in a suspicious looking iron gismo, suspended from a rusty steel cable and by pulling a rope with more knots than I care to think about. Despite dark visions of the River Styx, we get across safely and are about to enter the forest when two men appear, dragging a miserable looking cow through the rainforest. The cow is blissfully unaware that her life will go down-river from here. One man enters the gismo with a rope tied around the neck of the cow, while the other man kicks the astonished animal into the water. The cow turns into a manatee and immediately disappears in the strong current. We see three pairs of terrified eyeballs and quickly run down the slope to assist, and with united efforts we can eventually pull the panic stricken animal across. By now everybody is exhausted, the cow half-drenched and half-strangled and our hands are full of blisters, but



Photo by Stig Dalström

Ivan Acaro admiring the strange flowers of *Teuscheria wagneriana*.

reasonable idea. Finally, in late afternoon we can look around for plants. This is the only known location for the strange *Masdevallia bicornis*. We also find some *Sievekingia*, *Huntleya*, *Teuscheria*, and other unusual orchids in the extremely lush forest as we climb up and down a ridge and having a great time. The altitude is too low for odontoglossums but at least we beat the Shuars. A *Lepanthes* species is probably new and Lou asks what we shall call it. I suggest “decapitata” (beheaded) but he does not think that is funny. Lou is very serious about scientific accuracy.

After safely returning across the river but due to the late hour we prepare to spend the night by our car. Suddenly hostile people surround us. Where did they come from? Lou and Ivan agree to explain



Photo by Stig Dalström

Rick Burian successfully crossing River Styx.

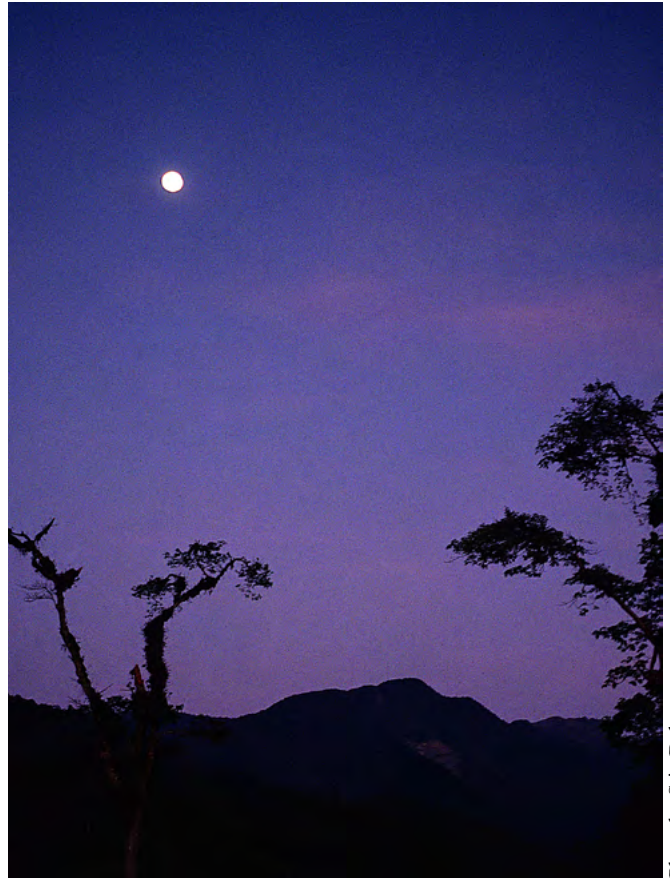
the creature is alive and the young men are happy. When we turn around another little man is glaring at us. He has materialized from nowhere and claims that we need to pay to trespass on his land. I look at his wooden spear and agree that it sounds like a



The flowers of *Teuscheria wagneriana* cannot compete with those of *Odontoglossum helgae*, but are nice anyway.

to their chief who we are and what we are doing there. “Don’t we realize how extremely dangerous it is here? Had we crossed the river and gone up the ridge we would have been shot, no questions asked!” Rick and I just look at each other. Several hours later Lou and Ivan return with their heads intact, saying that we can spend the night here in reasonable safety. We just have to leave before seven o’clock next morning when a bus arrives with about twenty angry Shuar chiefs, on their way to a major meeting somewhere in the jungle where the topic for the day is how to get rid of foreigners. As the twilight zone settles in we try to make it as comfortable as we can. Ivan and our driver will sleep inside the pick-up truck, Rick and I in the back directly on the metal, and Lou in a tiny one-man tent. I clasp my machete as I lie down on the unforgiving metal, imagining fire hardened chonta spears flying out of the darkness.

I don’t think anybody slept at all during that night and we left really early and just in time to meet the bus on our way back.



With wary minds and deep behind the enemy line we watch the twilight zone arrive



Fortunately, head-hunting is no longer permitted in Ecuador.

Ramblings of an Odont Enthusiast

By Russ Vernon

I have been a fan of *Odontoglossums* and their relatives for over 50 years now. This interest has moved into breeding and selling divisions and seedlings of some of the members of this group.

I would like to try to offer some insight and comments on articles that occur in the Newsletter as well as pass on some of my experiences with breeding and growing these plants.

First of all some comments/reflections on Andy Easton's fine article in the recent issue of the Newsletter. All of his past articles have been of great interest to me especially regarding the results of various breeding efforts.

Regarding *Odm cirrhosum*, Bob Hamilton gave me a plant of *Odm Moonshine* 'Sonata' (*cirrhosum* x *Andersonianum*). Bob told me that he had intended to name the cross Moon Light but someone beat him to the registration. He apparently stuck with the clone name in spite of the less appropriate grex name.



Odm Moonshine'Sonata'

Andersonianum, the hybrid, is listed as *crispum* x *gloriosum* while the purported natural hybrid x *andersonianum* is *crispum* x *odoratum*. It would appear that *gloriosum* = *odoratum* and it is quite fragrant. It is reported that *Andersonianum* is as well and I can say that *Moonshine* has the fragrance of sweet straw. The pictures I've seen of *Anderson-*

ianum have a soft yellow background with darker brown marks. With the addition of *crispum*, *Moonshine* is a clear white with *cirrhosum* marks as you can see in the pictures. Please note the branching habit of the inflorescence.



Odm Moonshine'Sonata' - spike habit

Andy mentioned *Oda Keighleyensis* which is a bright red color and a *cirrhosum* progeny. (*cirrhosum* x *Cda noezliana*) It is also fragrant, similar to *Moonshine*. A pod is currently hanging on *Moonshine* but doesn't look promising. Another pod on this plant that does look good is a hybrid from the Eric Young Foundation (EYOF), *Oda* (Portinfer x La Forge) 'Deep Vision'. I made the cross to get



Oda (Portinfer x La Forge) 'Deep Vision'

light purple to dark purple spider flowers with some dark burgundy marks. I remember seeing a cross of Venilia with possibly Gorey Castle that produced a much branched inflorescence of semi full white flowers having very dark burgundy marks. It was quite a show.



Oda Eric Young 'Alan's Moon' HCC-infl

One concept that I have been interested in is how xanthic *Odonts* behave as parents. Xanthic *Odonts* have no anthocyanthic pigments thus they are either white with egg yolk colored marks or are clear yellow with darker egg yolk marks.



Oda Eric's Parade 'Mario's Magic'

Do xanthics act as albinos? Are they color enhancers or suppressers? They do seem to have albino like properties: Xanthic x xanthic results in xanthic progeny. Xanthic x non xanthic results in non xanthic offspring. Xanthic x non xanthic parent that has xanthic in its background results in a small percentage of xanthic offspring.

A cross made by Larry Sanford gave a hint at a xanthic's roll in its influence on color. Larry crossed Joe's Drum with a white xanthic Quennevais and the result was a soft color.

I wonder what a similar cross using a yellow xanthic would do? Red *Odont* segments have a yellow interior overlaid with purple.

Andy mentioned Oda Star Trek being in the cirrhosum line. I unfortunately lost my plant of 'Tiffany' but before I did, I put pollen of an awarded *Oncidium leucochilum* on it. The pollen was provided by Helmut Rohrl. I understood that *leucochilum* was a color enhancer so I was interested to see what would result. Here are two examples of the results:



Oda (Joe's Drum x Quennevais)



Wils (Oda Star Trek x *Onc leucochilum*)
'Fantastic Vision' AM/AOS



Wils (Star Trek x *Onc leucochilum*)
'Fantastic Vision' AM/AOS



Oda (Black Diamond x Bogong)



Oda (Black Diamond x Bogong)

The four that have bloomed so far have been very consistent in color intensity. Vigor has been great and flower production takes after *leucochilum*. The plant on the left is blooming for the third time now and has produced an inflorescence with seven branches and 32 flowers. Only the pattern of the marks has varied from seedling to seedling and there is some variation of the intensity of the background color. I intend to register the cross in honor of the late Helmut Rohrl.

One cultural comment: I grow Odonts in East Central Indiana and have consistent success. I constantly hear, "I can't grow *Odontoglossums* (etc.) because they are cool growing." I actually find they are very tolerant of warm temperatures (85-87) during the day, but suffer with night temperatures greater than 70 F.

They look unhappy but as soon as temperatures drop below 70 at night, they recover fast. I do have evaporative cooling but on 70+ nights and 80%+ humidity, there is little cooling. I've been growing *Odonts* in this area for over 20 years including *crispum* and other *Odontoglossum* species with good results. For those of you who know about *Phalaenopsis* and the three ice cubes "joke," I suggest for *Odonts*, use four.

I look forward to further opportunities to share observations and make comments. Keep on growing *Odonts*, and *Oncidiums* if you have to.....

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CHARLES VUYLSTEKE AND THE FIRST ODONTOGLOSSUM ALLIANCE INTERGENERIC HYBRID

by Andy Easton

It has been very interesting to study the orchid achievements of this gentleman. He was born into a Belgian nursery family and he lived to only the bare “three score and ten” but certainly left a giant footprint on the *Odontoglossum* world of his day and beyond. He was far more than just an orchidist but clearly, orchids and particularly the *Odontoglossum* Alliance were special for him.



Charles Vuylsteke

I enjoyed the book published by his grandson but my enjoyment is largely limited to the wonderful plates as it is all in Belgian so I may have missed many of the reminiscences and tidbits therein. For this short article, I will try to imagine the competition between Vuylsteke and Charlesworth and explore their seminal hybrids from what was truly a Golden Age of the *Odontoglossum* Alliance.

Anyone who knows me is well aware that I have made a cause of ensuring that the Intergeneric

named for Charles Vuylsteke, the Vuylstekeara, continues with that name as long as *Odont*s are grown. I will never use that stupid taxidiot concoction, “*Oncidopsis*”, not now, not ever! However, I did smile a sardonic smile whilst doing research for this piece when I realized that Vuylsteke himself never hybridized one Vuylstekeara! The great orchid writer Rolfe named the trigeneric in Vuylsteke’s honor when Jules Hye, also from Belgium, sent in the combination of *Cda. noezliana* X *Odtna* Lairesseae. Horror of horrors, that *Odtna* was in fact



Period illustration of *Odontioda* Vuylstekeae

a *Milt. warszewiczii* (now renamed *Onc. fuscatum*) hybrid so not a true Vuylstekeara at all! It was not until another famous Belgian orchid grower, Firmin Lambeau, registered a “real” Vuylstekeara from the crossing of *Mps* *Bleuana* X *Oda* *Charlesworthii* in 1914 that the real McCoy had arrived.

Joseph Charlesworth started his business life as a wool broker and established an orchid nursery

around 1887 when he was in his late thirties. The location of the nursery in Yorkshire was Heaton, a name fondly remembered by some of us in the grex *Oda Heatonensis*. One might think that Charlesworth saw something special in this Intergeneric hybrid between *Odm. cirrhosum* and

belt of Hayward's Heath in Sussex in 1908, *Odonts* became the predominant group in his greenhouses. Think for a moment the sensational debut of Vuylsteke's great Intergeneric *Oda Vuylstekeae* (*Cda. noezliana* X *Odm. pescatoreii* in 1904 when it gained an FCC/RHS and was the sensation of the

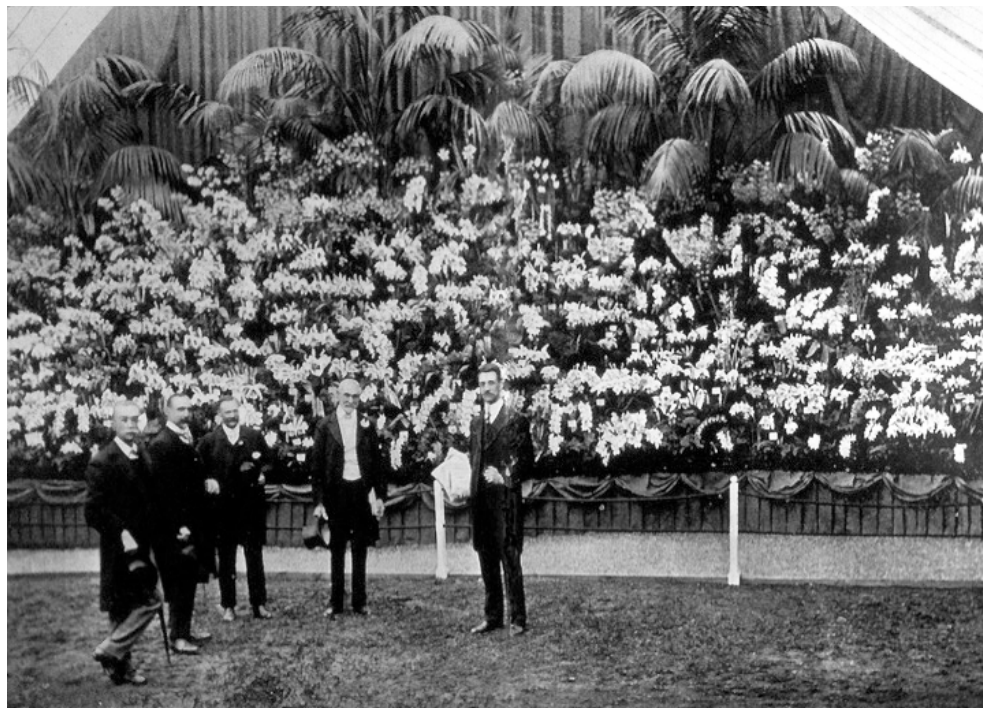


Photo: Sir George Holford's 1904 Temple Show exhibit, Westonbert Orchids, grower H. G. Alexander. Some comments about that show:

The Gardener's Chronicle, June 1904 *Continental Novelties* "M. Chas. Vuylsteke continues to be the best supporter of Continental interests at the Royal Horticultural Society's shows. This year he staged at the Temple Show a number of very pretty hybrid *Odontoglossums*, several of which obtained awards, and with them x *Odontioda Vuylstekeas* (*O. Pescatorei* x *Cochliodia Noezliana*), one of the most remarkable and beautifully-coloured hybrids ever raised."

From *The Garden*, #1698, vol. LXV, June 4 1904, about the London, May 1904 Temple Show, held along the banks of the Thames, "Odontoida Vuylstekeae, a cross between *Odontoglossum pescatorie* and *Cochliodia noezliana* was the most remarkable hybrid among the orchids.

Cda. sanguinea registered in 1906 but his company produced nothing of note from it and it was left to Keith Andrew to revive the line with his wonderful *Oda Shelley* (*Odm pescatoreii* X *Oda Heatonensis*), first registered in 1980.

Vuylsteke produced hybrids in other genera such as *Paphiopedilum* but never to the extent that Charlesworth did. Think for a moment that Charlesworth registered *Paph Maudiae*, *Bc Cliftonii* and *Slc Anzac*, enough in those three surely to ensure him an honored place in orchid history. However especially once Charlesworth relocated to the banana

world of Hayward's Heath in Sussex in 1908, *Odonts* became the predominant group in his greenhouses. Think for a moment the sensational debut of Vuylsteke's great Intergeneric *Oda Vuylstekeae* (*Cda. noezliana* X *Odm. pescatoreii* in 1904 when it gained an FCC/RHS and was the sensation of the orchid world. This was an era when many affluent English grew quantities of *Odonts*, largely in private collections with growers doing the work. I do not know but can presume that Charlesworth was very aware of Vuylsteke's work and vice-versa. Vuylsteke was a very regular visitor to the RHS showing off his creations as was Charlesworth. If comments were made in 1859 that Dominy's eponymous hybrid would drive the botanists mad (short drive!), *Oda Vuylstekeae* certainly fired up the horticulturalists.

This revisiting of *Oda Vuylstekeae* is stimulated by the blooming of Bob Hamilton's remake currently flowering in Pacifica, California. As far as I know the remake is

an unaltered diploid but the various seedlings are very handsome with that aura of class that only the good hybrids evince. The first Intergeneric *Odont* only won the race by a nose! In 1906, *Oda Heatonensis* would debut for Charlesworth followed by *Odtna Elwoodii* (*Mps. roezlii* X *Odm. cirrhosum*) in 1907, *Oda Bradshawiae* (*Cda. noezliana* X *Odm. crispum*) in the same year with *Oda Charlesworthii* (*Cda. noezliana* X *Odm. harryanum*) and *Oda Keighleyensis* (*Cda. noezliana* X *Odm. cirrhosum*), both in 1908. *Odtna Vuylstekei* (*Mps. vexillaria* X *Odm Amabile*) registered by Vuylsteke would follow in 1910. If you find some confusion in these

only slightly distinct names, join the club! Rolfe, the Editor of the *Orchid Review* only committed to establishing some nomenclatural order in 1904 so we have to be careful to distinguish *Oda Vuylstekeae* from *Odtna Vuylstekei* with *Odm Vuylstekei* (*Odm Harvengtense* X *Wilckeanum*) 1902 and *Odm Vuylstekeae* (*Crispo-Harryanum* X *Vuylstekei*) 1905 thrown in for a good measure of further confusion! As I say almost daily, thank God for OrchidWiz.

Even a cursory perusal of registration dates suggests that these hybridizers were pretty damn good growers. I don't know about Vuylsteke but Charlesworth's collaboration with mycologists J. Ramsbottom and Hans Burgeff certainly assisted him in keeping generational spans very tight. Thinking of



Odontioda Vuylstekeae #1

this makes me smile because in the sad latter days of Charlesworth when those two awful Greatwood brothers were in charge, it was not uncommon to buy *Odont* seedlings from small pots with seven or eight bulbs, none of which had bloomed. It was said that you needed a flashlight to take photos in their greenhouses on a sunny day..... layer upon layer of whitewash on the glass.

Let's run through some of the great *Odont* hybrids tracing back to both of these famous nurseries. Vuylsteke will always be remembered for *Odm Ardentissimum* (*crispum* X *pescatoreii*) and *Odm Eximium*, the backcross of *Ardentissimum* to *Odm. crispum*. His strain of *Odm Rolfeae* was superb as were his plants of *Odm Crispo-Harryanum*. Many



Odontioda Vuylstekeae #2

of us still enjoy plants of *Oda Queen Mary* (*Vuylstekeae* X *Odm Eximium*) though like a lot of the royals, it is not a useful parent!

Charlesworth continued in full swing in the second decade of the 20th century with gems like *Oda*



Odontioda Vuylstekeae #3

Brewii (*Charlesworthii* X *Odm. harryanum*) that would then be crossed to produce *Vuyls Brewii*, famous as a parent of *Vuyls Lutetia* and the grandpar-

ent of the greatest *Vuyls* of all time, Cambria. I'm pretty sure they also selected *Oda* "Georgius Rex" which entered the hybrid lists as a hybrid ignota in 1913 and was to prove a legendary parent. They produced *Vuyls* Edna in 1921, *Mps* Lycaena in 1925



Odontoglossum Georgius Rex (reproduced from The Orchid World, Volume VI, page 210)

(Lord Lambourne X Princess Margaret) and then a steady stream of quality *Odont*s such as *Odm* Quistrum, *Odm* Opheon, *Oda* Lautrix, *Odm* Pescalo, *Oda* Ingera who in turn bred famous named plants such as *Odm* Stropheon, *Oda* Elpheon, *Oda* Trixon, *Oda* Ray Buckman, *Oda* Actrix, *Oda* Aloette, *Oda* Flocalo, *Oda* Ray Buckman, *Oda* Stroperry, *Oda* Brocade and on and on. As the breeding lines were dispersed other hybridizers like David Stead would breed *Oda* Red Rum (Brocade X Ingera), Keith Andrew produced *Oda* Star Trek (Phoenix X Shelley) and *Oda* Janis Andrew (Brocade X Stiriana). Among the last of the famous name *Odont*s from Charlesworth would be *Odm* Moselle (Elise X Mimosa), bred on by Bob Dugger to give the wonderful *Odm* Somelle and *Oda* Pacific Gold that when crossed with *Odm* Rialto produced Golden Rialto and some wonderful alba lines culminating in the much underrated *Oda* George McMahon that is well known in California.

Vuykste dropped off the orchid radar from 1922 onwards yet he lived till 1937. I wonder why? Did he lose interest in orchids or did he have health issues? Did his family prefer another branch of horticulture? Whatever the reason, he certainly left a



Odontioda George McMahon

huge void in continental European *Odont* hybridizing that has never been filled.

Joseph Charlesworth died in 1920 yet his company lived on another six decades. While they were far from their glory years, they still exhibited regularly at English orchid events and maintained a strong reputation for their breeding stock if not for their *Odont* culture. I have a little diagnostic for determining when a company is losing its way and that is when they start registering with boring, composite names! No more *Odmna* Duchess of York or *Oda* Lautrix, just names like Trixon, Actrix, Flocalo, totally lacking in zing or pizzazz. There was one Canadian *Odont* lover who could never really accept that Charlesworth was no more, even when the key stock had been relocated to Jersey and McBeans had inherited the leavings. The sad reality was that since the late 1950's, a great English nursery had limped along in a slow but ultimately terminal decline. The good plants that got out of England have been treasured by their owners and many are still extant. Sadly, for many and varied reasons, many of the remainder are now kaput.

Andy Easton - April 2017

My Orchid Story: The Cultivation of a Conservation Mission

by Luke Callaghan

I have been growing orchids for nearly twenty-four years. My first introduction to these plants was at the age of nine during a visit to the 14th World Orchid Conference in Glasgow. I was immediately captivated by slipper orchids and coveted a *Paphiopedilum rothschildianum*, but as a child, in the mid-90s, I did not have the funds for such an extravagant purchase.

My first interaction with *Odontoglossum* was at the Glasgow Orchid Fair, where I encountered plants



Paph rothschildianum

exhibited by both Mansell & Hatcher and McBean's Orchids. At this point, I was around fourteen years old and my orchid-growing skills were limited. Inexperienced though I was, I could tell that the shapes and colours exhibited by this genus were

phenomenal. I therefore purchased a few plants with the hope that they would reflower. Sadly, this was not the case and the new growths were limp and small. Although I loved the flowers, this initial sting of disappointment stayed with me. Periodically, I purchased a new *Odontoglossum* with hopes for a different outcome. Unfortunately, I continued to have very little success with the genus and I turned my attention to *Paphiopedilum*. Although I collected many *rothschildianum* and *sandrianum* species and hybrids, my desire to grow *Odontoglossum* was always there. Around five years ago I revisited this genus. By this point in my orchid story, I had nearly twenty years of growing experience and a slightly thicker wallet; I was confident that I would be successful. Sure enough, my plants grew well and reflowered. This success reignited the enthusiasm I had first felt as a wee boy. My impulsive nature and driven attitude did the rest.



Odonts growing under lights in grow tents

After many years of trial and error, I began to realise that my success was dependant on light intensity and drops in temperature. Due to my living in a flat in Aberdeen, I have no access to a garden. I grow all my plants under artificial lights in grow tents. These tents are located in my unheated spare room which is annexed from the rest of the flat and can be accessed by a small door in my living room. The environment is far from ideal but I have worked hard to develop a growing technique to allow my orchids to prosper. To grow a spray of flowers, I begin by developing good strong roots. In order to observe



Healthy leaves and fat bulbs

root development I grow in clear pots. This not only enables me to monitor root growth, but also to see and address any root damage or dehydration in the media. My growing media is, in equal parts, a combination of medium grade bark, perlite, horticultural foam, and long strand sphagnum moss. This mixture provides a good airy media which is also moisture retentive. When I first dabbled in growing *Odontoglossum*, I was frustrated that my new roots were being eaten away. The growths were be-

ing weakened to an extent which ultimately led to the plants' death; a problem which I now know was the result of the presence of tiny snails in the growing media. I now always remove old media and I find that my orchids are boosted by the introduction of fresh soil. I am equally excited by a full pot of actively growing green and white roots as I am by a fresh new growth.

Once I have taken care of the roots, my attention turns to the leaves and bulbs. Healthy leaves and fat bulbs equate to large flower spikes. By growing under lights I am able to control the amount of light to which my plants are exposed. I position the lights around 30cm above the top of the leaves. I find that this gives some of the leaves a slight reddish tinge which the plants seem to like. Last year, I grew my plants pretty cold; the temperature dropped to 7°C. Although I knew that my *Odontoglossum* would cope in these conditions, I was surprised to find that my *Paphiopedilum*, such as my *sanderianum*, did



A line bred *Odm. crispum*

not seem fussed by these cold temperatures (what was the min/max swing?). This makes me wonder

why the literature suggests that *Paphiopedilum sanderianum* is a hot-growing plant. I find that the colder temperatures not only initiate flower spikes but also concentrate colour in the flower. With the lights on, the temperature in my grow tents rises to approximately 23°C. Temperatures can rise as high as 30°C but this is very rare.

As I gained more competence in the processes of growing and flowering this group of plants, my attention turned to supply. In the UK, McBean's Orchids was the only nursery which grew *Odontoglossum*. Sadly, McBean's has very recently closed after more than one-hundred-and-twenty years of trading. Luckily, I currently own some of their plants, a few of which are awarded. A couple of years ago, I came to the realisation that *Odontoglossum* cultivation was reaching a state of peril. In my opinion, this is not only due to a lack of supply,



Odm. Nicky Strauss

but also, and perhaps more importantly, a lack of interest. This is an undeniable tragedy because *Odontoglossum* knock the socks off any shop-bought *Phalaenopsis*. I think that *Odontoglossum* are a victim of ignorance. Arguably, Hunter S. Thomson's position that "you can't miss what you never had" explains why so many people neither know nor care about *Odontoglossum*. Unfortunately, this



Oda. McBeans Imogen

genus simply does not lend itself to mass production like *Phalaenopsis* and therefore its exposure to the public is severely limited. The irony is that, in the UK at least, small producers of specialist items such as craft beer are experiencing something of a renaissance. I believe that *Odontoglossum* would fit this mould perfectly.

In my quest to find *Odontoglossum cirrhosum*, I sent an email to Bob Hamilton. Thankfully, he replied and after a couple of years of his passing on invaluable knowledge to me via email, I find myself



Oda. Woodstir



Oda. Glyndebourne Nabucco 'Plum'. A rare color and extraordinary quality orange Odontioda.

writing this article. Bob has been kind enough to supply me with plants from which, going forward, I hope to breed. For me, growing orchids began as a childhood hobby. As time progressed and I grew up, this hobby developed into an obsession. Now, at the age of thirty-three, my love for these plants has underpinned a new interest in orchid conservation. I am the youngest *Odontoglossum* grower that I know by about thirty-five years (sadly, I have to say the same). I hope and aim to spark in others an interest in this wonderful genus in as many ways as possible. I thoroughly enjoy posting photographs of my orchids on Instagram and Facebook. I show customers these photographs when I am at work and my staff are used to seeing my plants in my office and showroom. My younger cousin is now growing *Odontoglossum*...so that's one down, only the rest of the world to go!

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President's Message

by Bob Hamilton

Take note, the International Odontoglossum Alliance is changing, as is our newsletter. For the present, we will continue to send the newsletter both as a pdf email attachment, for free as well as a printed edition for the cost of reproduction and postage. For mailed editions postage will vary slightly from country-to-country and by the number of pages being sent. The advantage of receiving the newsletter as an emailed pdf is a speedy delivery as well as the high quality of images. It takes additional effort to publish hard copies, address and then mail them.

There's another change. After consulting with our IOS Secretary, John Miller we are postponing dues solicitations; the future of having dues yet to be decided.

The success of our newsletter depends on content. Given this May 2017 newsletter and our previous edition John Leathers' publication skills shine. The IOA Newsletter will soon equal or exceed the quality of publications from other orchid specialty groups.

We are moving from a periodical (calendar-based) newsletter to a newsletter whose publication date is determined when there's sufficient content. Members are strongly encouraged to write articles, share their stories and send captioned photos to IOA Newsletter Editor John Leathers: jjleathers@comcast.net for inclusion in future editions.

Sometime after the summer of 2017 we hope to have a website up and running where IOA members can share photos and retrieve past newsletters. Managing web content can be fraught with issues; however, invoking a cliché, pictures tell a thousand words. Initially content will be limited to captioned photos, announcements and notes about odontoglossum culture.

I'll close with a Chinese proverb and conundrum plagiarized from a physics journal, "Unless we change direction, we are likely to wind up where we are headed". IOS Members who ask, "When will we get there"? Well we are closer than we used to be.

Hybridizing Notes

by Andy Easton

Odm Roy Wittwer, triploid and hexaploid.

Firstly one has to remake Odm Venilia (Odm cirrhosum X Odm. pescatoreii), a hybrid that was extinct since the 1920's. Then it was crossed to a tetraploid modern day Odm Jim Mintsiveris to make Odm Roy Wittwer, registered by a former Odont aficionado, Tom Etheridge in 2003. Fortunately Bob Hamilton treated the seed with colchicine and a mixture of triploids and hexaploids duly bloomed out. Now even triploids seem to have some fertility in the Odont Alliance but the hexaploids are invaluable as they can be used with diploids to create a tetraploid F1 line that grows well and is perfectly fertile. We learned this from work in Odonts and now see wonderful results in the genus Cymbidium using exactly the same tactics. I believe the crossing works either way, use the diploid onto a hexaploid if you want to intensify the hexaploid's influence as we have done with several hexaploid Vuls Nova selections or use pollen off the hexaploid onto a diploid if you want to diminish the already powerful 3:1 hexaploid genetic dominance. Looking at these two flowers you can see a dramatic fullness of shape in the hexaploid iteration. Others may prefer the more open, spidery form of the triploids. Eitherway, this is a very showy and vigorous hybrid line that should be taken in many directions.

Andy Easton
April 2017



Odm. Roy Wittwer (3n)



Odm. Roy Wittwer (6n)