

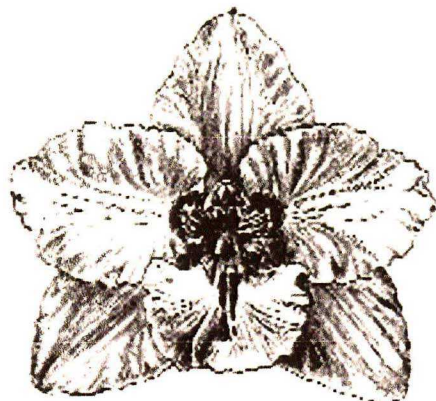
Odontoglossum Alliance Newsletter

Volume 5

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26-28 February 2016



ODONTOGLOSSUM CRUENTUM VERSUS ODONTOGLOSSUM JUNINENSE AND ODONTOGLOSSUM PORTMANNII

Stig Dalström

2304 Ringling Boulevard, unit 119, Sarasota FL 34237, USA

Research Associate:

Lankester Botanical Garden, University of Costa Rica, Cartago, Costa Rica

National Biodiversity Centre, Serbithang, Thimphu, Bhutan

stigdalstrom@gmail.com; www.wildorchidman.com

Odontoglossum cruentum was considered rare by Heinrich Gustav Reichenbach, who described it in *Xenia Orchidacea* in 1873. Perhaps he referred to the fact that he only had a drawing of the plant, labeled "419. 1 Ex. Wallis", and a single flower to base the description on? The material had been sent by Gustav Wallis and the plant was supposedly collected by him near the little town of Chiquiribamba in southern Ecuador, just due west of the city of Loja. The drawing (and a copy of it) can be found on sheet 47996 (W). A single dried flower is also mounted on the same sheet and is labeled "Loxa Dr. Krause Typus *Odontoglossum cruentum* Rchb.f." The question is then whether Hermann Krause or Gustav Wallis collected the plant that was illustrated by Wallis? And does the flower come from the illustrated plant or is it a separate Krause collection? Or did Wallis get the plant from Krause so that he could illustrate it and send a flower to Reichenbach? Or was there once another flower from Wallis that since have disappeared? These are some of the questions that keep taxonomists intrigued and sleepless but may have no interest to anybody else whatsoever.

In any case, since the only evidence of the existence of *Odontoglossum cruentum* consisted of a single flower and a drawing, Reichenbach did not recognize the species when he saw it again 15 years later. A plant had flowered in the collection of Baron Hruby von Gelenyi, of Peckau near Kolin, Bohemia [Czech Republic] and a dried inflorescence labeled "61" was sent to Reichenbach for identification. Reichenbach described *Odontoglossum hrubyanum* based on this specimen in honor of the Baron. The dried inflorescence together

with a drawing of the flower that was prepared by a Mr. V. Fans can be seen on sheet 47998 (W). According to Fans, who apparently was an enthusiastic and skillful grower and assumedly worked for Baron Hruby von Gelenyi, the plant was originally collected in Peru by Anton Hübsch and imported to England by Frederick Sander in 1883 (Reichenbach 1888). This specimen displays typical features of *Odm. cruentum* and is therefore considered synonymous by me.

Another plant of *Odm. cruentum* was sent to the botanical garden of St. Petersburg, Russia, by Friederich Lehmann, and was described by Eduard Regel as "*Odm. cristatum* var. *lehmannii*" in *Gartenflora*, 1890. Plate 1315 shows a front view of the flower in color, and two additional ink or pencil drawings show the lip and the column. The rather stout column and almost rectangular-elliptic lip with rather blunt callus keels and short apical lobes are typical features for *Odm. cruentum*.

So far the taxonomic history of *Odm. cruentum* is rather clear. Unfortunately, it takes a twist when Leonore Bockemühl describes *Odontoglossum portmannii* in *Die Orchidee* (1988). The story begins with a plant collected near "Huacapamba" (Huancabamba in Peru, or more likely Guacabamba near Loja in Ecuador?) in January 1883 by the Belgian collector Hugo Poortmann who worked for the Frenchman Édouard André for a while. André apparently was commissioned by the French government to make a general scientific survey of the Northern Andes. Since André was not reimbursed for the expenses of the expedition, he was forced to recoup by selling his specimens to the Royal Botanical Garden, Kew, where they can be examined today.

Poortmann's *Odontoglossum* specimen from "Huacapamba" is labeled "498" and is deposited at Kew. A close analysis of the flower reveals that it is identical with *Odm. cruentum*. Bockemühl believed this was an undescribed species, however, and decided to honor Poortmann by describing *Odontoglossum portmannii* for him (Bockemühl, 1988). Had Bockemühl based the description on the Poortmann specimen it would have simplified the subsequent confusion and *Odm. "portmannii"* would have become a synonym of *Odm. cruentum*. Instead, a plant apparently collected by Bockemühl at 2300 m elevation along the road between the villages of Yangana and Valladolid (probably south of Nudo de Sabanilla) in southern Ecuador became the holotype. Photos of the flowers, together with an illustration can be seen in the original description as well as in her monographic treatment of the genus (1989). These photos show a species that is different from the Poortmann 498 collection. What thickens the plot is that the real *Odm. cruentum* is not uncommon in the area where the type of *Odm. portmannii* supposedly originated. On the other hand, plants of *Odm. portmannii* are commonly found farther to the north and throughout the eastern slopes of the Andes in Ecuador and southern Colombia, but it is unknown how far north. The more slender column, the more angular and pointed callus and the much wider frontlobes of the lip distinguish this taxon from *Odm. cruentum*. Bockemühl also believed that the plant described by Regel as "*Odm. cristatum* var. *lehmannii*" is the same as her *Odm. portmannii*, when in fact the former shows typical features of *Odm. cruentum*.

Odontoglossum juninense was described by Rudolf Schlechter based on a collection by August Weberbauer in 1903, somewhere in the steep cloud forests along Rio Yanango, east of the little village of Huacapistana in central Peru. A single specimen appears to have been prepared, which was lost during the WW2. A drawing of a flower was made by Schlechter and published in 1929 by Rudolf Mansfeld, after Schlechter's death in 1925. This species seems to have been lost since then and has been virtually unknown in cultivation, at least under its correct name. Very recently, plants that correlate with the description and drawing of *Odontoglossum juninense* were discovered in a restricted area in central Peru, usually at the altitude of 2800 – 3000 m. The original locale along Rio Yanango has been visited by a 'search team', but without finding any plants of *Odm. juninense*. Little forest remains in the area which makes a search difficult. It is also physically strenuous since climbing steep deforested mountain sides is the only option to reach any original vegetation. Other *Odontoglossum* and *Cyrtorchilum* species have been found in the area though, so it seems likely that some plants of *Odm. juninense* may also still survive there. Plants of this species have been found near the village of Huasahuasi, just north of the original locality, however, as well as several locations in the Huanuco

region and have been introduced to cultivation.

Leonore Bockemühl includes *Odontoglossum juninense* in her treatment (1989) but the photos show flowers of *Odm. cruentum*, and in one case (page 115), something that looks like a hybrid between *Odm. cruentum* and an unknown parent. It is very difficult to distinguish the real *Odm. juninense* from the slightly larger *Odm. portmannii* and it is understandable that Bockemühl did not make this observation because no genuine material of *Odm. juninense* was available at the time of the publication of her treatment. The problem remains, however, how to treat these and other closely related geographic forms of this complex; as one variable 'superspecies', or split up as several very difficult to define 'subspecies'? I prefer a broader species concept in this particular case and therefore consider *Odm. portmannii* as a synonym of *Odm. juninense*.

““As Mr. Baker expresses it, “splitting” up plants of variable character into a large number of species goes a long way towards discouraging all who try to follow the “splitter””. (The Garden 25: 156, 1884)

Literature cited

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Reichenbach, H. G. 1888. *Odontoglossum hrubyanum*. New or Noteworthy Plants Gard. Chron. 3(4): 234.

Photo list

Fig. A: Not much forest remains in the original habitat for *Odontoglossum cruentum* in southern Ecuador.
Photo by Stig Dalström

Fig. B: *Odontoglossum cruentum*, from the original habitat of *Odm. portmannii*. Photo by Stig Dalström.

Fig. C: Typical form of *Odm. cruentum*. Photo by Jan Sönnemark.

Fig. D: *Odontoglossum cruentum* from Yambrasbamba area in northern Peru. Photo by Jan Sönnemark.

Fig. E: *Odontoglossum cruentum* from Molinopampa, northern Peru. Photo by Stig Dalström.

Fig. F: Original habitat of the type of *Odm. portmannii*, near Valladolid, Ecuador. Photo by Stig Dalström.

Fig. G: Habitat of *Odm. juninense* (*portmannii* form) in eastern Ecuador. Photo by Stig Dalström.

Fig. H: A very large specimen of *Odm. juninense* (*portmannii* form), from Limon, eastern Ecuador. Here together with Manfred Lindström.

Fig. I: Close-up of a flower from the large *Odm. juninense* (*portmannii* form) specimen on Fig. H. Photo by Stig Dalström.

Fig. J: Flower of *Odm. juninense* (*portmannii* form) from Chiguinda, eastern Ecuador. Photo by Stig Dalström.

Fig. K: *Odontoglossum juninense* (*portmannii* form) from La Bonita in northern Ecuador and southern Colombia. Photo by Stig Dalström.

Fig. L: The deforested type habitat of *Odm. juninense* in central Peru.

Fig. M: *Odontoglossum juninense* habitat in the Huanuco region, central Peru. Photo by Stig Dalström.

Fig. N: *Odontoglossum juninense* near Monobamba, Huanuco, central Peru. Photo by Stig Dalström.

Fig. O: Flower of *Odm. juninense* from Monobamba, Huanuco region in central Peru. Photo by Stig Dalström.

Fig. P: Flower of *Odm. juninense* from the Carpish ridge, the Huanuco region in Central Peru. Photo by Stig Dalström.

Fig. Q: Distribution map of *Odm. cruentum*. From Google map.

Fig. R: Distribution map of *Odm. juninense*, including the *portmannii* form. From Google map



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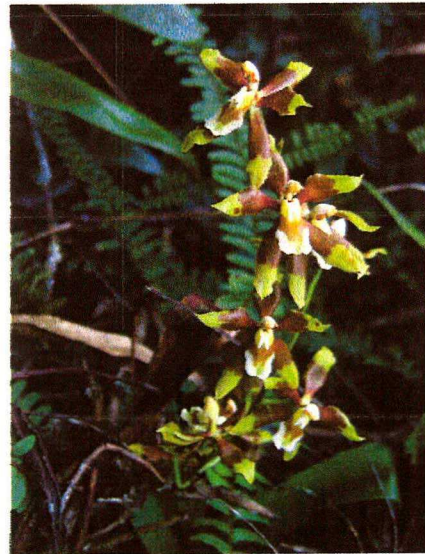


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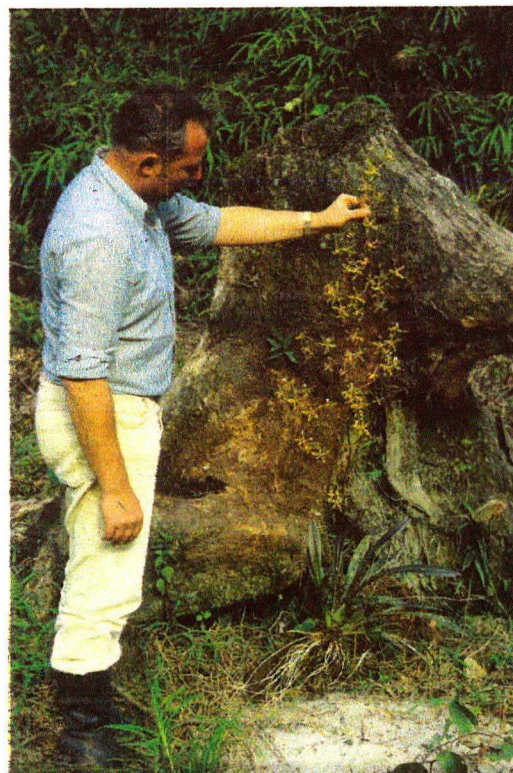


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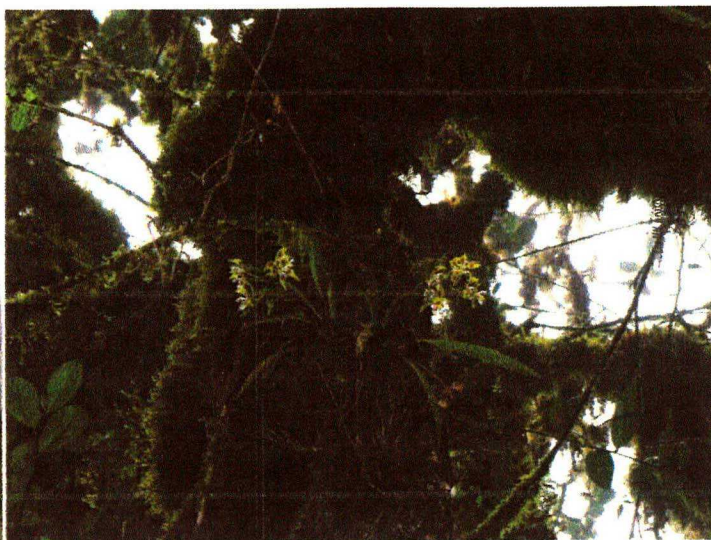


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As the year 2015 draws to a close I asked John Miller, our International Odontoglossum Alliance Newsletter Editor and Treasurer, to leave space in the November newsletter for a note from me. I am currently serving as President of the International Odontoglossum Alliance, a mostly perfunctory role that meets the needs of our bylaws. As current IOA President and exclusively an Odont grower I'll take an opportunity and share some thoughts with colleagues. At the outset I am writing from the West Coast of California. Our membership is worldwide. Therefore, I apologize if my perspective seems narrow; it is constrained by geography. Next year, I will broaden my scope with plans to revisit to Medellin Colombia, England and make a first visit to New Zealand.

Bob Dylan's 1964 ballad, The Times They Are a Changin' seems an appropriate beginning. The avocation of orchid raising has dramatically changed in my four decades of growing. I remain an avid enthusiast and there's a lot happening in my greenhouse; however, there's less excitement in the world outside of the greenhouse. Local societies, once vibrant, have waned. This is part of a general trend seen more broadly in a decline in people pursuing avocations. The Internet siphons away many fulfilling their passions in new ways. One need only go out on the town for dinner to see the mobile phones pop out and conversation interrupted. It's no coincidence that movies about zombies have regained popularity.

Orchid growers face an increasing number of obstacles. It is hard to avoid this gorilla in the room. The appended paragraphs encapsulate observations.

Orchid trade was blanketed under CITES in the mid 1980's (the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora). CITES, applied to orchids has definitely had good effect at reducing the devastating pillage of wild populations of orchids. Regrettably, CITES rules make it nearly impossible for orchid enthusiasts to exchange plants between countries. There's a wide difference country-to-country on how CITES rules are applied. The United Kingdom is amongst the most draconian. The bureaucracy supporting CITES and the ever-increasing cost of phytosanitary inspection and certification makes the cost of shipping a modest number of plants prohibitive. Such costs are inconsequential for commercial importers; however, CITES certification is not practical for smaller operations or for gifting plants. It leaves our option; send nothing or smuggle. One becomes a criminal sharing plants raised from stocks, some of which date back more than 100 years. Typically I think of myself as an honest person.

More recently, the United States Department of Agriculture - Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS), pressured by Congress to compromise regulations for foreign plant producers, streamlined the way for massive, cheap, mericloned importations. This clobbered domestic orchid nurseries. In California, the only successful nurseries I know of are those that have large operations who take advantage of an undocumented work force, whose benefits are then covered by taxpayers. Overall, the plant quality of these imports is good; they meet the demand for blooming orchid plants. Regrettably, most are "virused" and, although accurate tests are readily available to detect this, no testing is required by APHIS to assure virus-free plants. I have a presentation I give titled "Endangered Hybrids" in which I quote movie producer Samuel Goldwyn, "It's better than great, it's mediocre". Needless to say these are not plants I grow.

Past models for advancing propagated orchids, both hybrids and species involved selling plants at several pricing tiers. Less spectacular plants ended up in flower shops while the crème de la crème went to specialists, often with deep pockets. Cheap imports undercut this model which has curtailed orchid improvements. Improving orchids requires breeding large numbers of plants, selecting from the best for further development and being able to sell the more pedestrian plants to a commercial market. To quote a savvy Australian, "Cross the best with the best and hope for the best". Orchid breeding has fallen on bad times.

Municipalities and building codes are yet another obstacle. The city I was born in and continue to live, Berkeley, California has an interest in collecting more and more tax revenue and fees for development. A permit to build a greenhouse is more difficult to obtain than a permit to wreck an historic neighborhood with in-fill housing. To make these developments more palpable they have been termed "vitalization", a euphemism for high-density urban development. Recently, a doctor-friend living in the adjacent city of Oakland was denied a permit for a modest wood greenhouse proposed for his spacious backyard. It is easier to tear down a block of homes than build a greenhouse.

A very recent addition to the list of concerns about orchid greenhouse space is the possible 2016 legalization of marijuana cultivation for recreational purposes in the state of California. If this occurs, we will certainly see some greenhouse space currently producing orchids converted to a new and probably more lucrative horticultural crop. I know of at least three orchid growers who have already been displaced by intending marijuana-growing operations. I suppose there's more than one reason for the slang "weed".

Yet another obstacle is current economics requires two working family members to reasonably meet expenses. In urban areas this means two cars on the road, each likely experiencing long commute times. For example, a Sunday morning trip from my home to Pacifica, California where we rent and share a greenhouse takes about 30 minutes. On a weekday, during a commute, it can take two hours and sometimes more. Sundays are thus my day at the greenhouse. As for availability I've told my family, when planning events, Never on Sunday.

My interest in orchids was fueled by plants and by fellowship. Meetings at our local orchid societies used to be thrilling. Staging the annual shows was a great way to meet people and rub elbows. A huge hit occurred in the late 80's to the Orchid Society of San Francisco. The AIDS epidemic claimed a lot of young, enthusiastic growers, growers many of which had two incomes and no kids. This accounted for about a third of that society's membership. Many were avid and vibrant contributors.

There's the closing of local firms such as the Rod McLellan Company, a premier orchid nursery whose property was sold for housing development and a new rapid transit station. Another example was Frank Fordyce, once a principal at McLellans who made seminal contributions for *Cattleya*-intergeneric hybrids. Frank set up operations in the Livermore Valley, an area East of San Francisco. Eventually, Fordyce Orchids also became a housing development. Across the Atlantic and going back further, my understanding is the United Kingdom's Charlesworth & Co., Haywards Heath Nursery was sold in the mid 70's for housing development - Charlesworth being the foremost hybridizers of the *Odontoglossum* alliance whose achievements have never been bested. Ever-increasing urbanization adversely impacts growing space.

In the USA, the American Orchid Society (AOS) has seen a significant loss of membership. As it shrinks it loses stature - cart/horse or horse/cart? One reason for this is the AOS failed to embrace computing and the Internet. Another reason is its publication, Orchids became pap. To make matters worse it has failed to meet the needs of its constituency. The result is a membership that continues to plummet. Recently, there are indications that this precipitous drop is slowing. A failure at governance relegates the AOS to less importance and likely to never regain its glory. The folks running the AOS just don't get it!

Perhaps the worst blow for *Odontoglossums* comes as the result of a change in taxonomy, results drawn by a few, from the sequencing of sections of the *Odontoglossum* genome. *Odontoglossum* has been obviated and become part of the "hyper-genus", *Oncidium*. This adoption remains under contention; not everyone seeks a big genus. Taxonomy is a field in constant flux, sometimes guided by science and sometimes by fallacy. On a practical basis merging *Odontoglossum* to *Oncidium* destroys the functionality of a century-old record system (database) begun by the firm of Sanders Orchids and placed in the mid sixties in the stewardship of the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS). Regrettably, the RHS has bought into this taxon change. Then, three principals at the AOS rubber-stamped it without consulting the IOA, its first specialty orchid group and a model for many that followed. This naming change eliminates honors given to many great orchid pioneers. For example it eliminates the man-made genera named in honor of giants. Examples are *Charlesworthara*, *Colemanara*, *Wilsonara*, *Vuylstekeara*, etc. etc. etc. As a founding member of the IOA, the AOS' failure to consult the IOA with known experts in genetics and taxonomy was unforgivable. I no longer register orchids with "The International Registrar of Orchids". I am no longer a member of the AOS.

About now, one might think me a pessimist. Not so! There are ways around obstacles. For instance, I've found an

increasing number of young growers dropping in (sometimes just wandering in as we are along a popular hiking path) to look over the greenhouse. In addition, with a few dozen new crosses and hundreds of new seedlings about to bloom there will be new things to see in 2016. There are the occasional visits of world-class growers and the accompanying repartee – always a “shot in the arm”. Our greenhouse is also a clubhouse.

In addition to growers and hybridizers the IOA has extremely active members trekking in Central and South America, searching habitats and finding lost treasures as well as making new discoveries and new species. They give us compelling stories from the “can do” adventures. There are also advances in in-vitro propagation techniques, amongst these the ability to easily manipulate ploidy, i.e. the chromosome numbers of plants. This opens up new breeding pathways. Examples are plants with increased vigor and greater tolerance for growing conditions – typically an obstacle for Odonts.

Let me conclude by committing to a more active role in keeping the IOA newsletter current, topical and interesting. I'll submit photos of what's blooming in the several collections and a greenhouse visited. I encourage other IOA members to submit articles, notes and photos. As specialty growers our collections represent a preserve for the genome of a beautiful and wonderful group of orchids. Without us this genome will surely disappear like the neo-tropical forests they sprang from. There's a century of hybridizing that captured genes from extraordinary plants whose qualities can no longer be found in nature. That's the stuff that created the beauties we grow.

Happy New Year,
Bob Hamilton
bob@eecs.berkeley.edu

Odontoglossum Alliance Meeting to be Held in San Francisco 26-28 February 2016

The next meeting of the Odontoglossum Alliance will be held in San Francisco at the time of the San Francisco Orchid Show 26-28 February 2016. Economic conditions have shortened this show to 3 days with the Preview Party on Thursday night, 25 February 201. We are having a joint dinner and meeting with the Pluerothalid Alliance on Saturday 27 February.

The meeting will be held at the Fort Mason Center. I have included some material on the location in this newsletter. Featured wines will be served with dinner following. The menu will include choices of roast beef, turkey and vegetarian lasagna. Members of both Alliances living in the area will contribute by providing a variety of specialty dishes. All in recognition of the economic climate to make it as attractive as possible for members to attend. A talk is planned: Bob Hamilton. He will discuss current directions in hybridizing and illustrate it with recent accomplishments. As usual there will be an auction of fine material from both alliances. I expect to see some premium Odont divisions available in the auction.

On Saturday and Sunday, Bob Hamilton's greenhouse will be open for viewing some of the things he describes in his talk. For times and directions you can call Bob at 510-644-3329 or 510-325-7557. It is hoped this decision will be attractive to many of our members and that we will have a good turnout.

Tickets to the Preview Party and the show can be obtained over the internet. The address for the web site where these can be ordered is found is:

<http://www.orchidsanfrancisco.org/poe.html>

We expect the cost of the dinner at the meeting to be very reasonable. In the February 201 newsletter we will have firmed up on those costs. In addition we will have information on how to make a reservation.

We look forward to a good crowd. In this November newsletter are some details on the meeting. This includes suggestions as to hotel locations close to the show. More details on the meeting will be in the February newsletter.

The San Francisco Orchid Show is the best show in North America to see *Odontoglossum* alliance material in the show. The sales area is huge with many opportunities to acquire high quality material.

A good web site to look for hotels is: www.sfttravel.com. The specific page is <http://www.sanfranciscovisitor.com/bgt.html>. A selection of hotels picked from the web site follows.

Travelodge by the Bay (415) 673-0691

1450 Lombard St. San Francisco, CA 94123

Lombard Motor Inn (415) 441-6000

1475 Lombard St.

Francisco Bay Motel (415) 474-3030

1501 Lombard St.

Redwood Inn (415) 776-3800

1530 Lombard St.

Town House Motel (415) 885-5163

1650 Lombard St.

Star Motel (415) 346-8250

1727 Lombard St.

Cow Hollow Motor Inn* (415)-921-5800

Lombard Street

S F Motor Inn (415) 921-1842

1750 Lombard St.

Coventry Motor Inn (415) 567-1200

1901 Lombard St.

Ramada Limited (415) 775-8116

1940 Lombard St.

Fig. B: *Odontoglossum cruentum*, from the original habitat of *Odm. portmannii*. Photo by Stig Dalström.

Buena Vista Motor Inn* (415) 923-9600

PO Box 475517 San Francisco, CA 94147

Chelsea Motor Inn (415) 563-5600

2095 Lombard St San Francisco, CA 94123

Motel Capri (415) 346-4667

2015 Greenwich St.

Hotel Del Sol (415) 921-5520

3100 Webster St.

These hotels are within a couple of blocks of Fort Mason. These appear to be clean and comfortable, but not elegant. The web site offers reviews of the hotels. The ones marked with an * I have stayed at for previous meetings and shows. They are clean, neat, not elegant, reasonably priced and with parking. I often walked to the show from these hotels.

The meeting to be held on Saturday evening starting at 6:00 PM adjacent to the show in the Fort Mason Complex. The address is:

Fort Mason Center
San Francisco, CA 94123