

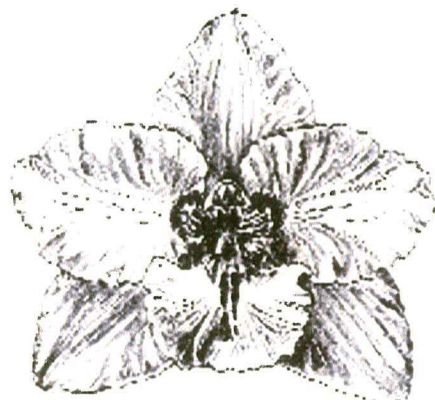
Odontoglossum Alliance Newsletter

Volume 5

November 2012

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Odontoglossum Alliance Meeting Report

The Odontoglossum Alliance meeting opened in the evening of Wednesday 14 November with an elegant dinner at Paley's restaurant in Portland Oregon. Thursday 11/15/2012 was judging day for the Portland Orchid Society orchid show. Several Odont Alliance members being judges showed up on Wednesday in preparation for judging. It was also an AOS trustees meeting the following day. Tom Etheridge and Jim Rassmann (both being judges) organized this lovely dinner at which 24 attended, (the maximum seating capacity). The honored guests were Juan Felipe Posada and his wife Maria Victoria. What an elegant and delicious five course dinner supplemented with a selection of fine wines from the cellars of Tom and Jim. The conversation among the diners was stimulating and active. A great start for our meeting with only more to come.

Thursday a number of our members were wrapped up in the judging process and for the rest of us it was sightseeing day in the Portland area. The weather cooperated with the day being sunny and warm. Jim Rassmann and Tom Etheridge were the organizers of the Odontoglossum Alliance activities at the meeting. They installed a display of OA material in the show with contributions of plant material from Jim McCully of Hawaii, Tom Perlite-Golden Gate Orchids, Bob Hamilton, Tim Brydon, Steve Beckendorf as well as Jim and Tom. Having an onsite presence for organizing and executing the OA activities and events was of tremendous help and the success of the event goes in great measure to them. It was not a time of year when OA material was readily available in significant quantity, but they managed to pull off a fine display which is pictured in this newsletter. The show opened that evening with a preview party and lots of food.

Friday was AOS day with a number of talks. Of particular interest to our group was the talk by Juan Felipe Posada. He detailed the Orchid organization in Medellin, Colombia, SA. They have a vibrant and growing organization that operates with a well financed environment. There was much to be learned from examining their operation. They are supported by being in a population environment in Medellin of 4 million people. They run a Orchids Birds and Flowers show every August that is very well attended and supported. I have been there and it is a wonderful show and great experience.

Saturday was our day for the Odontoglossum Alliance. It kicked off at noon with a talk by Dr. Howard Liebman who described the history of Odontoglossum hybridization from beginning in the late 1800's to the present. It was graphically described with illustrations of flowers by Howard's wonderful recall of many interesting details. I hope to include in a newsletter at some point the Power Point material he used. This was followed by Juan Felipe Posada's talk on the development of hybrids using the Colombian species. This again was beautifully illustrated. Of special interest was the variety of *Odm crispum* species that historically were available and compared to those plants now growing naturally. It was a graphical display of the magnitude of the numbers of *Odm crispum* that were so abundant in the late 1800's when collecting was begun in earnest. The old auction advertisements for auctions in England of imported crispums were in the thousands of plants at many auctions. The selection of crispums from such large populations was daunting and successful. There are continuing to this day discoveries of odontoglossum species by exploration in areas of Colombia. Juan Felipe showed some very striking examples of odontoglossums as well as some *Miltoniopsis* species. He brought three plants of a new color form *Miltoniopsis vexillaria* for our auction that had recently been discovered. They were sold with the highest bids of any the contributed plant material. Attendance at the lectures was in excess of 60 people.

There followed an auction of fine Odontoglossum material along with fine *Pluerothalid* material in a joint auction. This practice of joint operations with the Odontoglossum Alliance and the *Pluerothalid* Alliance that started a few years back has been very successful. There is a good mingling and cross over with the two organizations. The result of the auction for the Odontoglossum Alliance was an addition to our bank account was \$940.00. These auctions allow us to provide enhanced newsletters without increasing our dues. We have been able to keep our dues at \$15.00 per year since the first newsletter in spite of rising costs, due in large part by the generosity of the contributors and buyers at these auctions.

While attendance of members of the Odontoglossum Alliance at the meeting was small in comparison to our total membership, it was a fun and informative meeting. If any member has a suggestion as how to increase attendance at future meetings please let me know at jemiller49@aol.com.

John Miller



Odontoglossum Alliance Display



Golden Gate Orchids Display

NEW SPECIES OF CYRTOCHILUM, or “It never ends...”

Stig Dalström

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A couple of years ago, Wesley Higgins and I decided that it was time for an illustrated field guide to the genus *Cyrtochilum* Kunth. A lot of time had passed since my synopsis of the genus (2001) and many new species have been described, in addition to some corrections of previous misinterpretations of older species and their synonymy. Little did we know, however, about the amount of undescribed cyrtorchilums that still remain to be found throughout the Andes. Thanks to the generosity of Manolo Arias and his family, and the staff of Perúflora,

a team of collaborators evolved that have made great progress in finding some of these un-named *Cyrtochilum* species, together with a plethora of other orchids probably new to science. Some of the new cyrtorchilums are small-flowered and rather insignificant, while others are downright spectacular. Some have recently been described, others have just been submitted for publication, and yet others are still on the work table waiting to receive a scientific identity.

There are also some taxa that belong to the *Cyrtochilum* clade but have been described as *Trigonochilum* species by Königer. Although it may eventually turn out to be possible to delineate this genus from a broader *Cyrtochilum*, I personally doubt it. So far no convincing arguments have been presented and they will therefore be transferred to *Cyrtochilum* with time. Until then we still need to call them by their nomenclatural valid names, as trigonochilums. One such species is *Trigonochilum carinatum* Königer. This pretty little gem comes from an area that for many years was extremely dangerous to visit due to the activities of the Shining Path guerilla in Ayacucho, Peru. Based on observations from a recent visit though, it appears that the worst is over and only smaller factions of once political freedom fighters turned savage terrorists and mercenaries for the drug trade remain scattered among the mountains. *Trigonochilum carinatum* was found in dense cloud forest growing together with two other closely related small-flowered gems; *Cyrtochilum sharoniae* Dalström, and a new species that was submitted for publication in October of this year. These three orchid species grow side by side, flower simultaneously and have pink-lilac columns, a curious circumstance. The plants, however, look very different.

During the filming of the orchid documentary “The Wild Orchid Man in the Mountains of Amazonas”, in April of 2011, a stunning new *Cyrtochilum* was discovered by Saúl Ruíz and the WOM team near the little town of Molinopampa. The large plant was found in a severely deforested area, attached to a branch that had fallen to the ground, and would surely soon have died. A second and smaller plant was found nearby and hopefully seedlings will one day be available through Perúflora’s propagation lab. This showy species was given the specific name *Cyrtochilum xanthocinctum* Dalström & Ruíz Pérez, which refers to the yellow border of the petals.

Saúl Ruíz was also instrumental in the discovery of *Cyrtochilum deburghgraeveanum* Dalström & Ruíz Pérez, together with the lucky man who’s name it bears. The type plant was discovered high up in a large tree near the town of Pomacochas, also in the Amazonas department of Peru. Since our dear Dr. Deburghgraeve has a

center of gravity that makes climbing in high trees pretty precarious, Saúl successfully volunteered to do the deed. This species is closely related to *Cyrtochilum cordatum* (Lindl.) Kraenzl., and *C. minax* (Rchb.f.) Kraenzl., but can be distinguished by differences in color and morphology.

Another striking new species in the *cordatum* complex is *Cyrtochilum ruizii* Dalström & Deburghgraeve. The first plant of this colorful orchid was found in Ecuador many years ago, however, by Ray Thompson who photographed it near the river Zenen close to the town of Saraguro. No plant material ever surfaced though, which made a description impossible. Recently, plants were found in another severely deforested area in northern Peru, first by the eagle-eyed Saúl Ruíz, and later by our collaborative team of orchid rescuers.

Two small-flowered species from Venezuela have finally received their scientific identities. *Cyrtochilum fernandezii* G.Morillo & Dalström, was originally discovered in Mérida by Stalky Dunsterville, in 1962. It was never described and remained as an anonymous illustration in the Kew herbarium for many years. Recently additional plants were collected in Táchira by César Fernández and enough plant material could be secured for a scientific description. The second Venezuelan species included here has a similar history. It was discovered by Dunsterville in Táchira, in 1968, and later also found there by Fernández. *Cyrtochilum dunstervilleorum* G.Morillo & Dalström, is named after Ellinor and Galfrid Clement Keyworth 'Stalky' Dunsterville in honor of their hard work with Venezuelan orchids.

Finally, for now, perhaps the most stunning species of them all was described by the sadly passed away Father Ortiz, an orchid icon in Colombia for many decades. *Cyrtochilum caquetanum* P. Ortiz, L.E. Álvarez & A. Carrillo, was published in *Orquideologo*, suplemento 1, in February 2012, and is named after the area where the type plant was collected. One wonders what kind of crazy hybrids might result from this one?

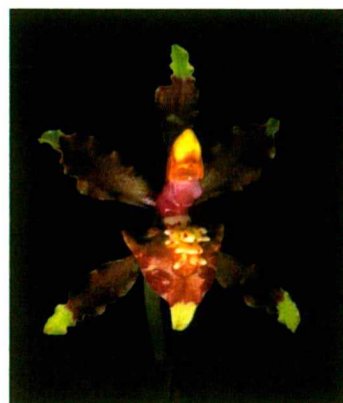
These are just some samples of newly described *Cyrtochilum* species. Many more will soon follow and it will take a while before it is meaningful to write any kind of scientific treatment for this fascinating genus.

Photo List:

- 1: *Trigonochilum* (*Cyrtochilum*) *carinatum*, photo by Stig Dalström
- 2: *Cyrtochilum sharoniae*, photo by Guido Deburghgraeve
- 3: *Cyrtochilum xanthocinctum*, photo by Stig Dalström
- 4: *Cyrtochilum deburghgraeveanum*, photo by Guido Deburghgraeve
- 5: *Cyrtochilum ruizii*, photo by Ray Thompson
- 6: *Cyrtochilum fernandezii*, photo by César Fernández
- 7: *Cyrtochilum dunstervilleorum*, photo by Guido Deburghgraeve
- 8: *Cyrtochilum caquetanum*, photo by Juan Felipe



Trigonochilum carinatum



Cyrtochilum sharoniae



Cyrtorchilum xanthocinctum



Cyrtorchilum deburhgaeveanum



Cyrtorchilum ruizii



Cyrtorchilum fernandezii



Cyrtorchilum dunstervilleorum



CYrtorchilum caquetanum

SOME NOTES ON THE ODONTOGLOSSUM ISSUE

By Stig Dalstrom

There seem to exist some misunderstandings among our members about the importance of DNA sequencing, what it really says and how we can utilize the results. The method of using molecular traits in order to decide what is related to what can be very useful, but can also be very misleading, depending on how we use the results. There are many traps along the way for those who rely on molecular “evidence” in plant taxonomy. One of the first and most obvious questions, of course, is whether the plants that are sequenced also are correctly identified? This is not always the case, as it turns out. It does not take a ‘rocket scientist’ to realize that if the plant is misidentified, then the database will be flawed, and resulting treatments and identification keys will be unreliable.

Another trap is when species that have not been sequenced are transferred to a different genus simply because they were scientifically described as belonging to a particular genus. This is also happening. As an example; several species that clearly belong in *Cyrtochilum* were transferred to *Oncidium* by Mark Chase and others because they were originally described as *Odontoglossum* species. This is easily done when you do not have sufficient experience with these rather tricky orchids, but nevertheless both unfortunate and misleading.

A more subtle trap consists of the different results that we get from sequencing different genes, or parts of genes, or combination of genes. Why do they sometimes differ from each other?

Then we have the option to chose which interpretation we prefer, once we have the DNA based cladograms in front of us. Do we prefer larger genera or smaller genera? We know that Mark Chase and his colleagues have made a choice to create a large *Oncidium* for whatever reasons. Aside from the fact that it is possible, the only real argument that I have heard for doing this is that the authors consider it difficult to separate a few Mexican and Central American species of *Oncidium* from *Odontoglossum* when briefly looking at them. But we need to remember that we do not have to follow this. As Mark Chase pointed out during his Key Note speech at the WOC last year in Singapore; There are other alternative interpretations available! And these alternatives are based on the same scientific results that are behind the choice to make the transfer.

Another argument for transferring *Cochlioda*, *Odontoglossum*, *Sigmatostalix* and *Solenidiopsis* into *Oncidium* has been that we need to create many new names in order to keep *Odontoglossum*. This is not true! By transferring the species of *Cochlioda* and *Solenidiopsis* to *Odontoglossum*, which was executed recently by me in Lankesteriana (and which also removes some generic names), we only need to come up with one single new name. This new name will be used for a small group of former *Oncidium* species, such as *O. boothianum*, *O. chrysomorphum* and *O. tipuloides* that cling to the base of the larger *Odontoglossum* branch in the cladistic tree. There are actually two small and closely related groups but it seems that the support for separating them is weak, and we can therefore unite them into one new genus; ‘Oncidiopsis’ (being the working name). All the other larger monophyletic clades within the remaining *Oncidium* have older names, such as *Vitekorchis* for former *Oncidium excavatum* and its allies, *Heteranthocidium* for *Oncidium abortivum* etc., *Chamaeleorchis* for *Oncidium fuscum* etc., and *Sigmatostalix*, in addition to *Oncidium altissimum* and its allies,

which constitute the type for the genus. It is fully possible to define these different groups based on morphological characteristics in combination with ecological and geographic facts and accept them as separate genera. Some people may be hesitant to use geography as a “taxonomic” feature, but it is practical and allowed if it is consistent and combined with other characteristics as well. Mark Chase defined his larger circumscription of *Gomesa* during the Key Note speech in Singapore by saying that if you have an “*Oncidium*-looking” plant with united lateral sepals, coming from Brazil, then it is a *Gomesa*!

In other words, geography can very well be used in taxonomy! And why not? The monophyletic genus *Odontoglossum*, as circumscribed by me in Lankesteriana, is a South American genus exclusively (Andean and Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta). If you find an *Odontoglossum*-looking plant in Mexico or Costa Rica, it is simply not a known species of *Odontoglossum*. It is most likely an *Oncidium* or belonging to some other Central or Meso-American genera, such as *Cuitlauzina*, *Rhynchostele* or *Rossioglossum*.

The question that currently matters for us as members of the *Odontoglossum* Alliance, as well as for anybody else with an interest in these orchids, is whether we really want to keep *Odontoglossum* as a valid scientific name or not. It is a mistake to believe that we have to accept the transfer just because some scientists wave their flags and claim that their decision is based on “science”, and therefore carved in stone. Nothing could be farther from the truth. It is unfortunate that the Kew Monocot Checklist decided to accept the transfer, but then, there did not seem to exist any “scientific” alternatives at the time. Well, now it does, and the choice is up to us. In the long run, it is the choice that we as growers, scientists and researchers alike make that will matter. It is the names that we use that will last, as long as they are scientifically acceptable. Do we stand up to this unfortunate transfer, which really does not improve anything, or not? Personally, my decision was made a long time ago and I see no reason to change my mind.

A Reminder from Stig Dalstrom

But also, please remind the members of our alliance that it is OKEY to keep using the name *Odontoglossum*. There are different alternatives available, perfectly legal nomenclature-wise, to interpret the DNA cladograms. I made the transfer of *Cochlioda* and *Solenidiopsis* to *Odontoglossum* so that we have one monophyletic genus *Odontoglossum*. These groups are not genetically too closely related despite what Tom Etheridge seems to think. The only (officially) real reason why Mark Chase wants to sink *Odontoglossum* into *Oncidium* is that nobody (but him) can see the difference between an *Oncidium* and an *Odontoglossum*. We know that is not true, and I have spelled it out in my Lankesteriana article, which I attach here as well. We, as members of the *Odontoglossum* Alliance only have to stand united and not cave in to the Chase-Kew nonsense. There are also ways to distinguish the other monophyletic clades in *Oncidium*, and have them stand as distinct genera. It is just that I, for one, have not had time to spell it out how. I’m working on it though, together with Wes Higgins.

Some Observations by Dr. Guido Deburghgraeve

Recently I've been confronted in my greenhouse several times with small flowering *Cyrtochilum* plants, all looking very similar. There's a new term for such species: true 'Stig-plants'. For some reason they all got labeled as *Cyrtochilum contaypacchaense*.

I've always been interested in correct identification however it is not always possible to have access to the correct source of information. At present there is a group of odontoglossum – cyrtochilum enthusiasts, gathered around the famous Stig Dalström, who are very active in exchanging questions, problems, data, drawings, photos and other information on those enigmatic plants. For me, the compiling of photos with anatomical details is an essential part of this identification process.

The first such study was I plant I bought in Germany together with a plant of *Odontoglossum x ludwigianum* from the late Herr Ludwig himself. He found it in Ecuador, however over the years the exact collection data got lost. Studying the plant and comparing it with the determination key, information and drawings by Stig in *Flora of Ecuador* the possibility of it being *Cyrtochilum colobium* arose. And as we are today very fortunate with the opportunity of exchanging ideas, data and other information very quickly and the opinion of Stig together with his conclusions was received almost by return: "you have a *Cyrtochilum colobium*, a plant I've seen only once!" was his reply

A second plant 'contaypacchaense' from Bolivia went through the same exchange process and came out as *Cyrtochilum ferrugineum*.

A third one from Peru seems to be *Cyrtochilum sphinx*.

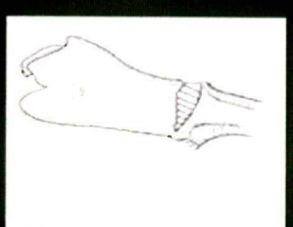
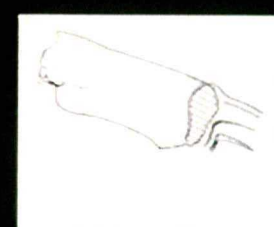
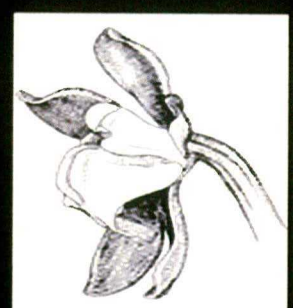
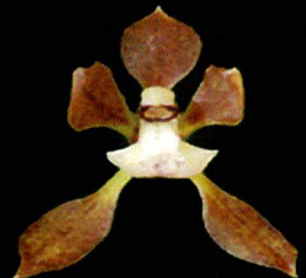
As a result I finished up with 3 different species and no *Cyrtochilum contaypacchaense* at all. In fact, I think I gave away a plant that could be the true contaypacchaense to a friend as these species are all so similar!

I feel sure that I'm not the only person with this Identification problem and I believe that a lot of these plants are dormant in collections as *Cyrtochilum myanthum*. True identification of these plants is 'desk' labour with a flower, drawings and photos at hand.

For this reason I illustrate here in the Newsletter a composition I made of those plants, with my photos together with drawings by Stig, included with the kind permission of him as the artist.

I am only sorry that the true *Cyrtochilum contaypacchaense* is not included since at this moment I have not flowered any plant of that species.

The flowers of those species may be insignificant, however a nice spike full of flowers is nevertheless always an attraction in the greenhouse!



**Cyrtochilum
colobium**

**Cyrtochilum
ferrugineum**

**Cyrtochilum
myanthum**

**Cyrtochilum
sphinx**

Some Pictures from the November Meeting



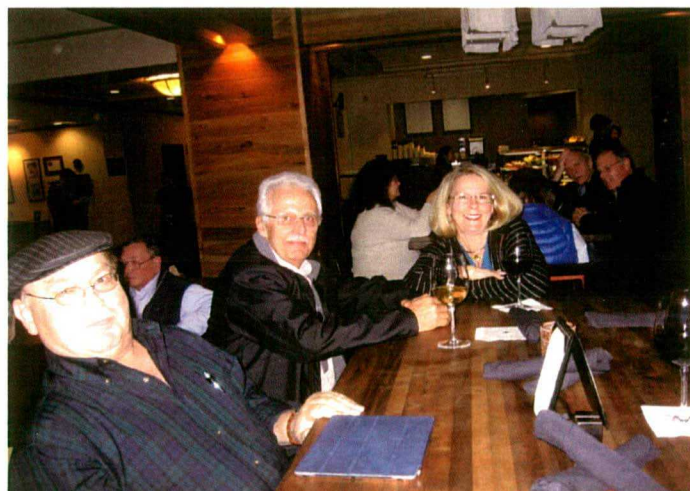
Odontoglossum Alliance Display



L-R Bob Hamilton, John Leathers
Juan Felipe and Maria Victoria Posada



Left Jim Rassmann - John Leathers



L-R Bob Hamilton, Juan Felipe Posada,
Julie Rassmann



Odontoglossum Alliance Display



Golden Gate Orchids Display

Ray Bilton (8 September 1937 – 31 October 2012)

Ray Bilton VMH died on 31 October 2013 at the age of 75, peacefully in the nursing home where he had spent the last year of his life. Until he was afflicted by Alzheimer's syndrome, he was proprietor of Orchid Answers just outside the city of Chichester, England, which he ran with the help of his wife, Veronica. His illness made it impossible for him to continue; the nursery was closed in 2007 and most of his historic hybrids lost.

Born in the coal mining town of Houghton Le Spring, then in County Durham but now a Metropolitan borough of the City of Sunderland, Tyne and Wear, England. He grew his first orchids at the age of 11 in his father's greenhouse upon hearing that orchids were beautiful but the most difficult plants to grow. Heating was no problem as his father was a coal miner so the family received free coal. By the time he was 20 he had 400 plants. He started his professional career in orchids in 1960 looking after the orchids in the late Eric Young's collection in Jersey (which continues to this day as the Eric Young Orchid Foundation). In 1961 he moved to McBean's Orchids in Sussex, becoming its Manager in 1965 and later Managing Director, rebuilding and expanding the business. He is credited with registering over 3,000 hybrids, principally in the *Odontoglossum* Alliance (now *Oncidiinae*) and *Cymbidium*, and was one of the first people in the world to mericlone orchids after a period working with Prof Georges Morel, the French pioneer in the field. In recognition of his hybridising, the orchid nothogenus *Biltonara* (then *Ada* x *Cochlioda* x *Miltonia* x *Odontoglossum*) was named in his honour by George Black in 1994.

While at McBean's he staged over 70 RHS Gold Medal exhibits and won the RHS's Lawrence Medal, Williams Memorial Medal and Westonbirt Medal, a feat which few if any others have accomplished. He supplied the orchids (*Odontoglossum* Royal Wedding and *Odontoglossum* Royal Occasion) for the wedding bouquet of Princess Diana in 1981. Following a substantial redevelopment of the nursery during the late 1980s some difficult times lay ahead for Ray, including the devastation wrought by the hurricane of 1987 and the recession of the early 1990s, culminating in Ray's departure in 1993. In 1996, he started up Orchid Answers with 2,790 sq. metres of computer-controlled glasshouses and a laboratory complex, with the mission of providing high quality orchids from around the world, for breeding and for sale. Before he retired he had won a further 30 Gold Medals from the RHS for his exhibits, and only once had a Silver Gilt medal. His *Phalaenopsis* plants were unsurpassed at this time in the UK and in 2008 the annual Ray Bilton Trophy was inaugurated at the Peterborough International Orchid Show and awarded to the best amateur grower of a *Phalaenopsis* exhibited at that show.

He co-authored *Orchids for Everyone* (1980) and *House Plants Flowering and Foliage Plants, Cacti, Succulents and Orchids* (1996). With Mike Tibbs he published *Orchids: an Illustrated Identifier and Guide to Cultivation* (1990) which was translated into German; and *Growing Classic Orchids* (1998).

He joined the RHS Orchid Committee in 1971, becoming vice-chairman in 1986, and served for nearly 40 years. His expertise in the judging of *Cymbidium* and *Odontoglossum* was invaluable and always respected. He was also a member of the RHS Advisory Panel on Orchid Registration. He was honoured in 1997 with the award of the Gold Veitch Memorial Medal and in 2004 with

the RHS's highest award, the Victoria Medal of Honour, for his services to orchids and their hybridising. He tutored and helped the newcomers to the Committee, and since his death I have received many tributes to his kindness from erstwhile students and colleagues. He was proactive in supporting UK amateur orchid societies both with plants for displays and with lectures, and we all have many reasons to be grateful to him. Further tributes are being published in the *Odontoglossum Alliance Newsletter* in the United States, as well as in this country.

In the words of a contributor to the on-line Orchid Forum 'Ray was one of the last major English orchidists of a Golden Age that stretched from the post-second World War era to the flood of mass market clones. He belonged to that age and indeed exemplified the time when good orchids were rare and sought after'.

We miss him.

Eulogy by Dr Henry Oakeley
Funeral at St Peter's Church, Offham, Nr Lewes, Sussex, UK
on 14 November 2013
Interment at Lewes cemetery

Report on Finances and Membership

The November *Odontoglossum Alliance* meeting auction resulted in a contribution to our bank account of \$940.00. These auctions are what keep us going and able to print so many pages of color. Without the auction payments we would have a much less robust bank account. Right now as of 25 November 2012 before we mail out this newsletter our balance stands at \$3350.50.

The membership renewal resulted in all those who owed dues responded except for two people. We had also gained two new members leaving us with a total membership of 70. We have tried to restrict our free mailings to the various libraries and have been successful with only a couple still holding out.

John Miller Treasurer

Enclosed with this newsletter are two additional documents

1. The *Odontoglossum Alliance* membership list
2. Juan Felipe Posada's power point presentation of his talk on Colombian species.

This is in small print, but readable, to limit the number of pages for printing.