

# A visit to the Eric Young Orchid Foundation

CLARE and JOHAN HERMANS report on the RHS Orchid Committee's Study Day at the Foundation in Jersey



Sarah Forsyth



Chris Foweraker



Sarah Forsyth

**Left** *Calanthe* hybrids in the Display House  
**Above** A new *Vuylstekeara*, *V. Val de la Mare* (*Miltoniopsis* Avranches x *Odontioda* Val du Bec)  
**Top** *Paphiopedilum rothschildianum* 'Mont Millais' was awarded Grand Champion plant at the Glasgow World Orchid Conference in 1993





*Calanthe Mont Sejour* (C. Mont Pinel x C. Five Oaks) flowering magnificently in the Display House

**I**N MID-JANUARY this year the RHS Orchid Committee left mainland UK for the first time, for a meeting and study visit at the Eric Young Orchid Foundation in Jersey. This enabled Committee members to directly experience some of the Foundation's new directions in hybridising and learn more about their excellent growing techniques. The Foundation has gained almost 450 RHS awards so it was considered appropriate that the Committee visit the home of such excellence.

Alan Moon, past curator of the Foundation, joined the Committee meeting. As usual he enlightened the Committee with his knowledge and wit. Chris Purver, the present curator, and his fellow Committee member John Valin, and the rest of their team made the visit uniquely informative and interesting. A good number of awards were recommended for plants, including some Certificates of Preliminary Commendation.



These reflect the new, high quality, first-year-flowering seedlings that were presented for judging. For full details of all the awards given, see p108.

**The display house**

The first stop on any visit to the Foundation must be the magnificent display house. This had been arranged especially for the visit because the

Foundation is closed to the public in January, when the majority of the plants are housed in the growing houses. When the Foundation is open to visitors most plants are changed every three weeks but cymbidiums can last a full six weeks. Temperatures in the display house are kept at 16°C, but increase to 21°C in the warmer areas. Higher up, 2.5m above ground, the warmer conditions are utilised for warmer-growing plants, established on a permanent tree structure. A splendid specimen of *Angraecum sesquipedale* had eight flower spikes; other specimens included several *Bulbophyllum* and *Maxillaria* plants and much more.

**Cymbidiums on display**

The cymbidiums in the display house showed a broad range of colours, especially in the yellows and greens. The Foundation has been taking great steps in broadening the colour range especially in the copper tones,



The RHS Orchid Committee in the Display House (l-r) David Ridgeway, Vice Chair Henry Oakeley, John Gay, Lucinda Lachelin, Phillip Cribb, Chairman Johan Hermans, Peter Furniss, Curator of the EYOF Chris Purver, Clare Hermans, Vice Chair Liz Johnson, Plant Committee Secretary Jill Ottway, Peter White, Peter Sander, Roy White, Orchid Committee Secretary David McLaughlin, *The Orchid Review* editor Sarah Forsyth, Orchid Trainee at RHS Garden Wisley Lauren Tyler, John Valin, Paul Phillips, David Menzies, past Curator of the EYOF Alan Moon





*Angraecum sesquipedale*  
plants in the Display House



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*Cymbidium*  
Marmotier



*Cymbidium*  
Mont Pretre

Johan Hermans

Johan Hermans



*Cymbidium*  
National Trust  
Jersey



*Cymbidium*  
Mont des Louannes

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while retaining good flower size and shape. *Cymbidium* Ichu Tower has been used extensively, it is one of the Foundation's best yellows and has gained numerous awards over the years. *Cymbidium* Victor Hugo has also been used, with superior progeny such as *Cymbidium* Mont Pretre 'Saint Helier' gaining an Award of Merit at this meeting (p116). Cultivars of *Cymbidium* Mont Isaac also came from this breeding line, with the awarded cultivar 'Saint Clement' showing its pink range (p116).

**Plants in the collection**

The orchid collection is in excellent health and filling the growing houses rapidly, therefore there is a strict policy on the plants that are kept long-term. Historically useful hybrids are retained especially those that are important stepping stones in breeding, plants of high quality plus awarded cultivars and species that may be useful for hybridising are also kept. Around 100 to 150 viable hybrid grexes are produced annually but about double the number of crosses are made to achieve this amount. Seventy five seedlings on average are kept for each cross. Viability of the pods varies greatly, with third generation *Phragmipedium* hybrids sometimes only producing ten to fifteen seedlings or fewer. An example of this is the awarded cultivar *Phragmipedium* Du Motier 'Victoria Village', which gained the George Moore Medal for 2010 (*Orch. Rev.* 118: p240).

Of the eight production houses, two are dedicated to cymbidiums, one to phragmipediums and one to odontoglossums/odontiodas. The remainder are split between various genera, key ones being *Paphiopedilum*, *Miltoniopsis*, *Calanthe* and *Lycaste/Angulocaste*. A healthy collection of interesting bulbophyllums and other oddments are also treasured.

Names of the twelve Jersey parishes,



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A group of *Calanthe* Five Oaks selfings in one of the growing houses



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Above *Rhyncholaeliocattleya* Mikawa Craypas (formerly *Potinara* Mikawa Craypas)



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Above The alba form of *Psychopsis* Mariposa has dark yellow markings in place of the usual maroon



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**Above** A plant of *Dendrobium cuthbertsonii* thriving in a moss-covered, terracotta pot

St Helier, St Saviour, St Brelade, St Lawrence, Grouville, St Clement, Trinity, St Martin, St Ouen, St John, St Peter and St Mary, are often used

as cultivar names. The Foundation also use Jersey place names as grex names. Another well-known cultivar name is 'Mont Millais', which was the original location of Eric Young's nursery on the outskirts of St Helier.

A meticulous photographic and data record is now kept of all the parents and hybrids that are made including the sometimes less desirable progeny. This is an ongoing progress but a great advance from the hand written ledgers of the 1980s.

**Origins of the Foundation**

The Foundation was set up shortly after Eric Young passed away. It's purpose is to continue to maintain and develop the orchid collection, with a particular emphasis on the development of new hybrids. It is therefore not a static collection and is constantly being improved.

It is the continuation of Eric's private orchid collection, his main hobby, albeit on a grand scale. Part of its remit is to provide a collection that can be admired and studied by all, to inspire others to take up orchid growing as a hobby, and also to act as a tourist attraction for the island. The Foundation is not a commercial nursery so does not produce plants specifically for sale. However, some of the surplus stock is occasionally released to selected UK nurseries for sale to the hobbyist, but these are in extremely limited numbers.

The Foundation has seven full time and five part-time staff. Of these twelve, half are involved in growing and maintaining the living orchid collection, the others, in a wide range of tasks including running the laboratory, maintaining the library and archive, and running the tourist attraction.



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The pale yellow-apricot form of *Phragmipedium* Don Wimber, bred using P. Eric Young and the yellow form of *P. besseae*

### ***Phragmipedium* and *Paphiopedilum* breeding work**

So far the Foundation has crossed five *Phragmipedium* species, and umpteen hybrids with *P. kovachii*, many of which have yet to flower. To date, *P. kovachii* has not provided the outstanding hybrids that many people predicted, but it is still early days and the second and third generation are most likely to provide the award winners. That said, one of the best *P. kovachii* hybrids bred by the Foundation is *P. La Vingtaine*, with the cultivar 'Victoria Village' receiving an Award of Merit (p115). This grex has shown little variation, all plants being of a high standard. Many of the hybrids being made have been treated with colchicine in order to create tetraploid forms of both *P. kovachii* itself and it's hybrids.

Breeding work is also continuing to create new complex *Paphiopedilum* hybrids. These lines of breeding have in excess of 100 years of hybridising history behind them. Large and rounded *Paphiopedilum* hybrids may not currently be in fashion but some interesting work is still developing at the Foundation. A recent awarded superior grex for this group was *Paphiopedilum* La Garenne 'Saint John' given an Award of Merit in 2009 (*Orch. Rev.* 117: p112).

One of the most famous paphiopedilums associated with EYOF is *Paphiopedilum rothschildianum* 'Mont Millais', which was Grand Champion plant at the Glasgow World Orchid Conference in 1993. It has been the parent of a number of awarded grexes, such as remakes of Prince Edward of York, Saint Swithin and Lady Isabel. It is also in the background of an even greater number of award-winning hybrids such as *P. Angel Hair* 'Roche d'Or' FCC/RHS (*P. Saint Swithin* x *P. sanderianum*), winner of the George Moore Medal in 2005, and also the 2010 George Moore Medal winner,



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*Phragmipedium* La Vingtaine (*P. Memoria Dick Clements* x *P. kovachii*) in the growing houses





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**Above** *Vuykstekeara* La Robeline in the Display House (*V. Saint Aubin* x *Odontioda* Mont a L'Abbe)  
**Left** A new *Vuykstekeara*, *V. Val de la Mare* (*Miltoniopsis* Avranches x *Odontioda* Val du Bec) flowering in the growing houses  
**Below** *Vuykstekeara* Saint Aubin 'Grosnez Castle' gained an Award of Merit in October 2008



David Ridgway

*P. Du Motier* 'Victoria Village' AM/ RHS (*P. Gloria Naugle* x *P. vietnamense*). Work with *P. rothschildianum* 'Mont Millais' is also still being carried forward.

***Vuykstekeara***

Recently, the Foundation has been using the hybrid genus *Vuykstekeara* in its breeding programme, particularly the tetraploid form of *V. Saint Aubin*. The success of this line of breeding is illustrated by the cultivars 'Elizabeth Castle' and 'Grosnez Castle', which gained Awards of Merit in 2005 and 2008 respectively (*Orch. Rev.* 114: p56; 117: p3, 52). *Vuykstekeara* Saint Aubin has shown to be an excellent parent, it holds seed and germinates well. The resulting hybrids tend to be compact plants, strong growers and produce flowers with good substance. Eventually they could be suitable for the pot plant trade and the

RHS Award of Garden Merit.

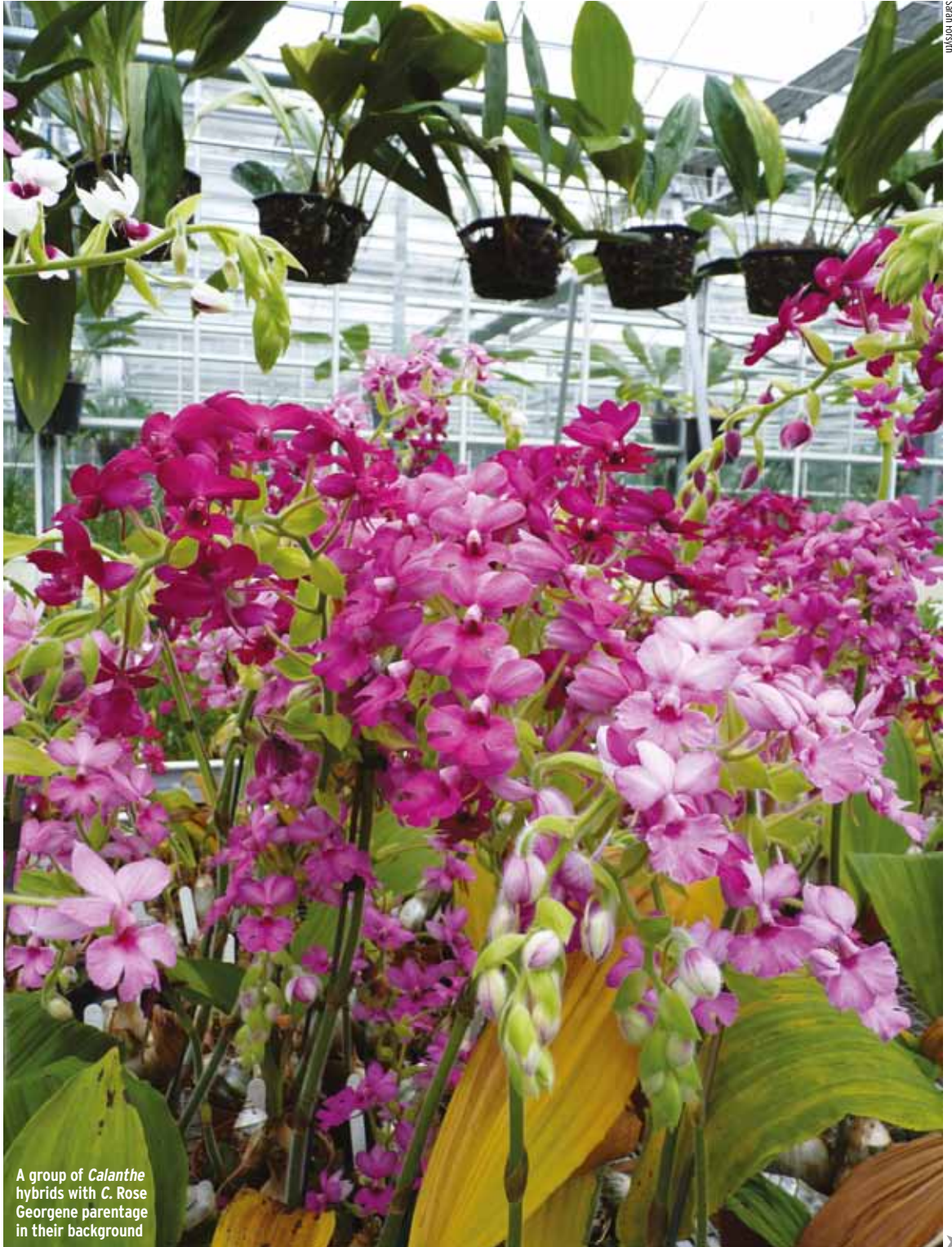
The Foundation is also now trying to introduce more colour variation and a superior lip shape. This line of breeding takes three to four years to flowering, and the first flowering seedlings are starting to gain awards. These include the recent Preliminary Certificates for *V. La Marquanderie* cultivars 'Victoria Village' and 'Saint Ouens Village', *V. Mont des Louannes* 'Grouville Village' (p118–119), and the Award of Merit for *V. Mont de la Rocque* 'Gorey Village' (p114–115). These inter-generic hybrids seem to grow more quickly and easily than plants of either generic parent, *Miltonia* and *Odontoglossum*.

***Calanthe* hybrids**

Some impressive breeding work has been done at the Foundation with deciduous *Calanthes*. Interestingly,

the first hybrid orchid ever recorded was a *Calanthe*, *C. Domini*, registered in 1858, was a cross of *C. sylvatica* and *C. triplicata*. The Foundation started its breeding programme with these plants in the 1980s when Don Wimber was working with them. There was a further rush of new hybrids in 2008. This has resulted in twenty-three Awards of Merit, with eight in the last eight months.

*Calanthe* Beresford has been used as a major building block. It is a cross of *C. Brandy Wine* and *C. Mont Pinel*. Another building block is *C. Rose Georgene*, which has a good dose of *C. rosea* in its parentage. The aim has been to extend the range of pink colours. Recent awards have included *C. Mont Nicholle* 'Saint Saviour,' *C. Mont Ube* 'Saint Martin' and *C. Mont Mado* 'Saint Mary' (*Orch. Rev.* March 2011, p48–9, 53). The



A group of *Calanthe* hybrids with *C. Rose Georgene* parentage in their background





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**Above** A deep red *Calanthe* Mont Pretre (*C. Five Oaks* x *C. Portelet*) flowering in the growing houses

spikes are becoming shorter under the influence of *C. rosea*, while the flower colour, size, shape and number have been greatly improved by the introduction of other good quality parents.

Another major influence has been *Calanthe* Five Oaks, a tetraploid that gained five Awards of Merit in the 1990's. Its white centre and colour intensity make it a favoured parent. *Calanthe* Grouville and *C. Saint Aubin* are diploid so can be used back onto crosses. Unfortunately flowers of the classic *C. Baron Schröder* fade and this extends into its progeny so it has not been used so much recently.

The visit to the Eric Young Orchid Foundation was exceptionally instructive and interesting for members of the Orchid Committee. It showed the breadth of breeding taking place, and also highlighted the expertise of the Foundation staff making all this possible. Study days at other location will hopefully follow, soon. ■

**CLARE HERMANS** is an orchid grower, author and member of the RHS Orchid Committee

**JOHAN HERMANS** is an orchid grower, photographer, author and Chairman of the RHS Orchid Committee



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*Calanthe* Mont Cochon (*C. Five Oaks* x *C. Beresford*) in the growing houses



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*Calanthe* Mont Mado (*C. Baron Schröder* x *C. Beresford*) in the Display House



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*Calanthe* Mont Perrine (*C. Beresford* x *C. Brandywine*) in the growing houses