



British Orchid Council

....promoting orchid growing...

Hi everyone -

Its been a few weeks now since the last news letter and events both Nationally and in the Orchid World have moved on since then.

We are currently facing further restrictions again on social gatherings and this will doubtless affect many society meetings and any shows that might still have been planned for early next year. If the news is correct the current restrictions may last for up to six months which will take us up to March/April by my reckoning. Not a good prognosis for any shows within that time frame, and we don't know if they will be lifted even then.

So what can we do to keep Societies functioning and people involved?

In the short term I would encourage all Societies to do the following -

1. Get in touch with EVERY member—REGULARLY!! To say 'How are you?' "We've missed seeing you!" and to generally have a chat for a few minutes.

2. Use every method you can to do this—Telephone, letter, email, Facebook, WhatsApp

There really is no excuse and I expect that you can come up with other ways as well.

3. And if you can't meet up, why not try out Zoom meetings??

*Perhaps if you don't know how, now might be a good time to learn?? There will be someone in your Society who **does** know and who could teach everyone else—if you make the effort to talk to each other.*

If everyone does not try harder to keep in touch with their orchid friends by the time we can meet up we might all find that the interest in societies has vanished and many societies will close as a result.

SUE LANE

It is with great sadness that I have to include the news that Sue Lane of Devon Orchid Society passed away two weeks ago.

She will be greatly missed by everyone who knew her and she leaves a huge hole in the orchid world.

For anyone who did not know her, she was a previous Chair and Vice President of BOC, member of the RHS Orchid Committee and a BOC judge. Not to mention one of the most talented and dedicated growers in the UK.

The funeral is at 3.15 on Monday, 28th September and obviously attendance to the actual funeral is restricted. However, we have sent this newsletter out as soon as we knew the details above so that you will be able to think about her at 3.15 on Monday and remember her in your own way.

The next newsletter will be dedicated to Sue and any contributions and memories will be very welcome.



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*I have left the headings there for a reason
as they relate to the article this time.*

JOHN STEELE

Was one of the founders of BOC and he has contributed the following article and insight into the formation of BOC and the establishment of the judging scheme.

Now, living in Australia he keeps in touch regularly with everyone over here and you can find him on Facebook if you want to catch up with him. Or get in touch with Trish from Central Orchid Society who will pass on any messages. Use the her secretary email address: secretary@british-orchid-council.info

**John Steele, taken
in Australia..**

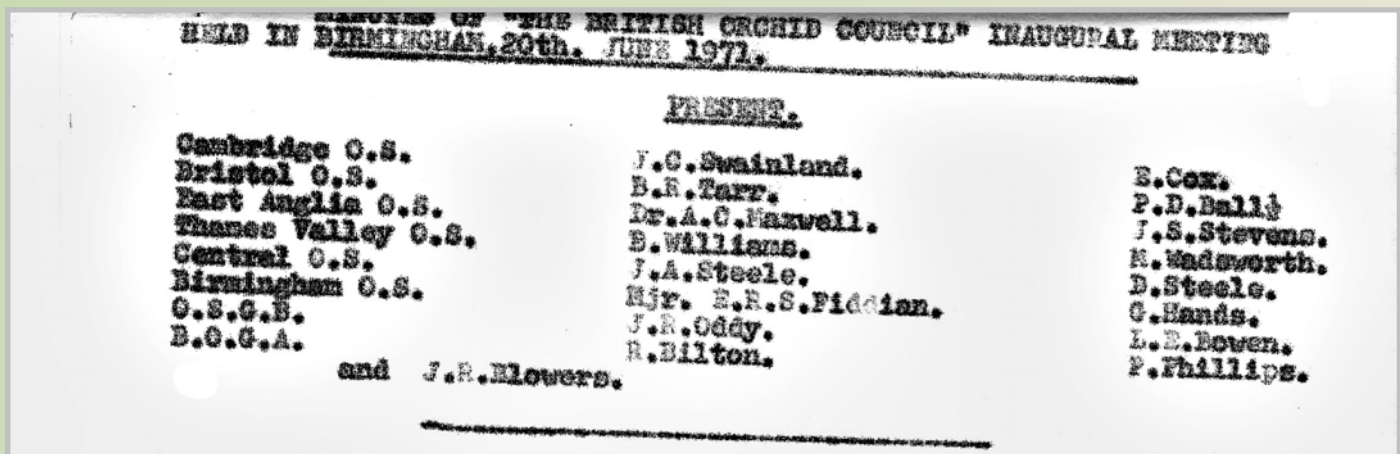


He is still active in orchids, exhibiting regularly, growing beautiful plants and is still an overseas member of Central Orchid Society. He also won a couple of awards in our Covid Congress



THE EARLY HISTORY OF THE BRITISH ORCHID COUNCIL

At the 1971 annual show of the Central Orchid Society (COS) a discussion took place in the lounge at Compton Grange between some of our members, John Blowers, a former editor of the Orchid Review then managing Wyld Court Orchids and Ray Bilton of McBean's Orchids Ltd. on the possibility of forming an organisation to represent orchid interests in Britain. John Blowers promised to write to the societies and as a result the inaugural meeting of the British Orchid Council (BOC) was held in Birmingham later that year. The idea of a National Orchid Society had been put forward ten years earlier by Laurie Humphreys of Armstrong and Brown at that time chairman of the British Orchid Growers' Association, but it had foundered because the individual societies had feared the loss of their independence.



Names of people attending the very first meeting of the British Orchid Council and the Societies they represented

My father (at the time COS President) and I (Honorary Secretary) had been present at these early meetings, and continued to represent the society on the BOC for many years. It was decided at the outset that the BOC would study and make recommendations on all aspects of judging orchids.

A sub-committee was set up for this purpose, and the first Judging Symposium for the training of judges was held at the nurseries of R & E Ratcliffe (Orchids) Ltd.¹ and Wyld Court Orchids in March, 1972.

Although some thought that the BOC should issue its own awards, it was decided that a new system of judging should be developed, to concentrate on achieving uniform criteria for show bench judging at shows and society meetings. It was thought appropriate that recognition should be given to the standard of culture of the plants, as well as the quality of an individual bloom. This approach had the advantage that the BOC was not setting up in opposition to the RHS Orchid Committee. which was the world-recognised awarding body, and the co-operation of its members could be sought in training BOC judges.

¹ For details of this event see the previous bulletin and also the photo on the last page, which also includes all the underlined names. Some of you may be able to connect some of these names and faces. Thank you to everyone who has helped with the identification.



BOC Judges Badge

These became much sought after and treasured possessions. They were also much in demand as rare collectors' items for badge collectors as they could not be easily obtained, no BOC judge would part with them, possibly as they had been told they would not be allowed a replacement!

In 1993 at the WOC in Glasgow, John Jones from Central OS turned down an offer of £300 for his badge!

He was so cross about some 'American' trying to buy it from him!!

Helen

I became a trainee judge at the outset, and joined the Judging Sub-Committee in September, 1978, replacing Brian Williams, who was the orchid grower to Sir Robert and Lady Sainsbury and the editor of the Orchid Review. Two years later, I became the convenor of the sub-committee when Gloria Cotton withdrew, and continued in that role until 1985. In recognition of this work, I was the proud recipient of the Lionel Dunning Trophy from the BOC in March, 1986. I'm not sure exactly when I qualified as a BOC judge myself, but I know it was in time for me to take part in the judging at World Orchid Conferences in Miami in 1984, Tokyo in 1987 and Auckland in 1990, in addition to the British Orchid Congresses. The experience of being part of a judging team with members from all over the world was a fascinating one, and taught me a lot about both orchids and people.

In March 1973, the BOC organised the Third European Orchid Congress at Syon Park, which was probably the most prestigious orchid event in Britain since the Third World Orchid Conference in London in 1960. I seem to remember that the show was held in the spectacular setting of a large conservatory, and the lecture programme included many well-known international speakers. The success of this event encouraged the BOC to embark on a series of British Orchid Congresses, the first of which was held at the St. John's Hotel, Solihull in February, 1974. The organising sub-committee was made up of two representatives of each of our local orchid societies, together with a representative of BOGA, and was chaired by my father, Doug Steele. I was the treasurer and Peter Janes (Solihull) was the show manager.

The BOC had very few funds at this early stage in its existence, so the first problem was how to finance the congress. Doug Steele came up with the idea of obtaining guarantees for specific maximum amounts from companies and private individuals, sufficient to cover any possible financial loss on the congress. In the event, a profit was made and no guarantors were called upon. However, the event was not without its problems, as it was a time of crisis for the country, with the miners' strike and petrol and power shortages. Once we had set the scene, congresses were hosted by societies up and down the country at roughly eighteen-month intervals, to allow plants flowering in both spring and autumn to be exhibited.

In addition to organising the congresses, the BOC instigated the production of a Judging Handbook, oversaw the co-ordination of orchid events to prevent date clashes, and assisted societies by producing a Lecturers' List and a Slide Library. To my mind, the most valuable function of the BOC has been to bring together the amateur societies and the trade, and encourage communication and co-operation between them.

John Steele

I have had this article for a while now, and it has made very revealing reading about the origins of BOC and its judging scheme. In some ways things have not changed—and many of the problems that the BOC faced then are still the same.

No one could have foreseen Covid though, and the potentially damaging effect it will have on society activities for the coming months and well into next year.

So stay well, and do keep in contact with each other—Helen

If anyone needs help using Zoom for virtual meetings, our secretary Trish has offered to help. She is very willing to teach anyone and give any guidance on using it.

So please if you need to, do take her up on the offer—it is so important that we stay in touch with each other.

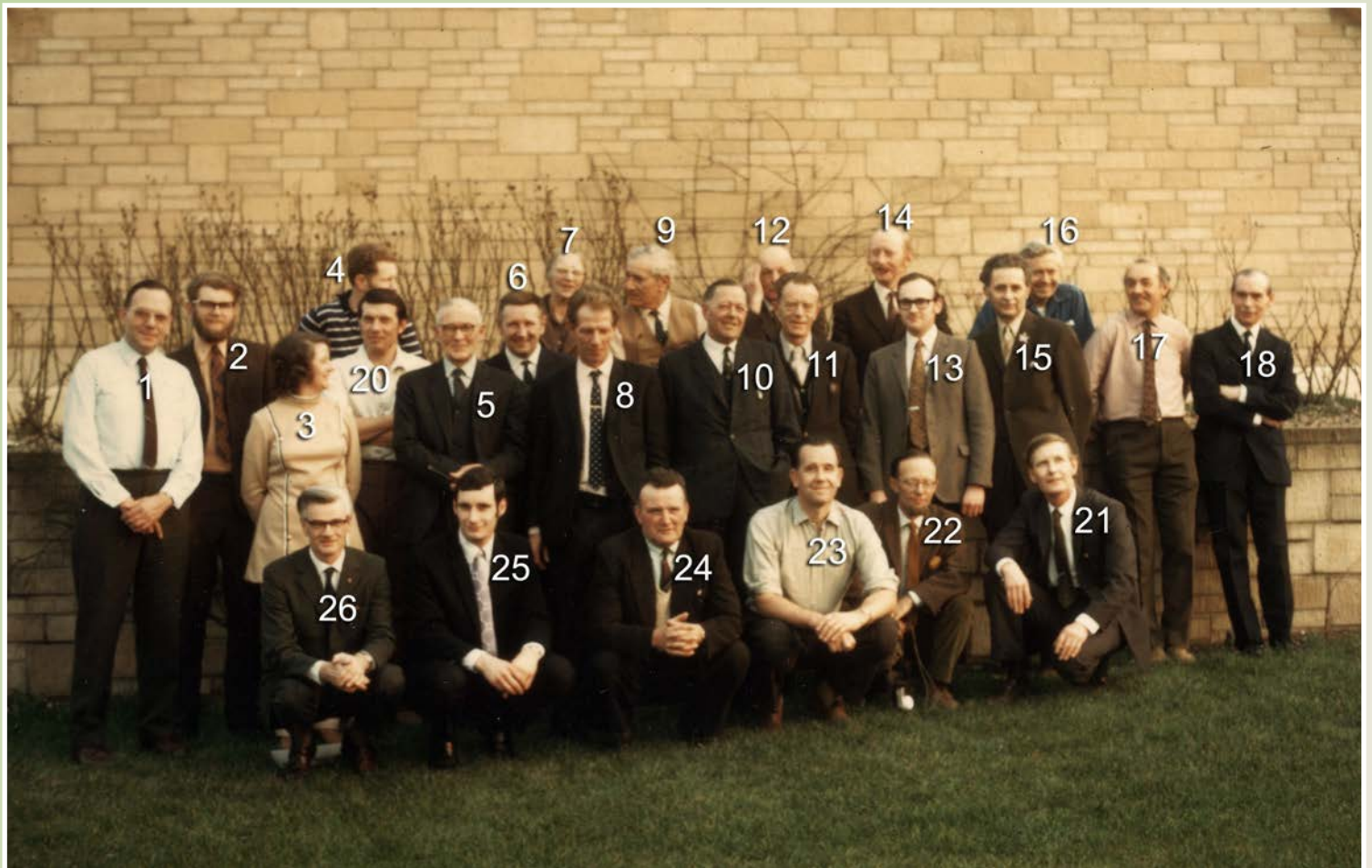
I, for one, really don't want to lose touch with all the orchid friends I have made over the years and who I really look forward to meeting and talking to at shows around the country.

To end on a different note—times are really serious in our house!! I am not joking—really.

Dave is actually going round the house and has been heard on several occasions to moan about the lack of orchid shows!! Things must be getting serious!!

Love to everyone

Helen



Many thanks to the people who contacted me with names for individuals in the above photo.

Clare Hermans was able to track down the original handwritten list of names and numbers from the original photo. So barring any mistakes by me in transcribing these data the list on the right hand side is accurate.

Thanks Clare!!

What is also interesting are the societies, nurseries and other organisations represented.

I hope some of you will spot either people you knew or simply people you may have heard of (or not!!) in your society.

1. Arthur Lacey, Central
2. PD Janes, Solihull
3. Mrs. SA Janes, Solihull
4. B Williams, Thames Valley
5. LW Brummitt, RHS
6. WA Tombs, Solihull
7. Dr. A Maxwell, OSEA
8. EH Hinsley Solihull
9. DF Sander, RHS
10. JL Humphreys, RHS/A&B
11. R Belstein, Bristol
12. BRW Tarr, Bristol
13. John Steele, Central
14. PD Ball, Bristol
15. Hall (?)
16. Wilson, USA
17. T Robinson, RHS
18. GT Hutton, OSGB
19. S Consden, Australia
20. Paul Phillips, Ratcliffs/RHS
21. I Maries, Stonehurst
22. G Rodway, Glasgow
23. JM Wadsworth, Thames Valley
24. Bob Harris, Solihull
25. David Stead, Mansell and Hatcher
26. F Lawton, Birmingham