

HISTORY OF THE BANKSTOWN ORCHID SOCIETY INC.

by Jess Brown

The History of Bankstown Orchid Society has been compiled by Jess Brown, a member of our club since 1954. Her untiring effort and memory of our club has provided all members the opportunity to look back at how this great club came about. Thank you so much Jess for your time.

This club has been built on an edict of hardwork, vision and energy. It is a credit to all members over the last 54 years who have contributed to the great success and vitality that has made Bankstown Orchid Society the largest in Australia.

David Lee

Here are some of the highlights of Bankstown Orchid Society in the 60 years since its inaugural meeting.

It is important to record that Mr Des Langdale, who at the time owned an orchid nursery in Yagoona, got together a group of orchid enthusiasts by advertising a meeting in the local paper. The inaugural meeting of the Yagoona and District Orchid Society was held on Monday 9th November 1953 at 8pm in the Co-operative Hall (now Breasley Place) Yagoona.

The names of all 22 foundation members have not been recorded in the minutes but include Mesdames Bell, Kemp, Millar, Weinert and Messrs Austin, Kemp, Langdale, Leedon, Platrier, Millar, McCoy, Webber, Wragg and Young. Mr Des Langdale was elected President, Mr L Platrier Hon Secretary, Mr Kemp Treasurer.

It was passed at this meeting that the Society be named "Yagoona and District Orchid Society" and that it be affiliated with NSW Orchid Society and that the annual subscription be 10 shillings. Mr John Bissett, a well-known orchid grower, was invited to the inaugural meeting and gave an address on "several subjects suited to beginners". He was invited to become our first Patron at this meeting. The following meeting in December saw the Constitution drawn up and adopted.

At the January 1954 meeting Mr Frank Slattery was guest speaker and showed slides and answered questions. Thus began his long association and later that of his wife Jean with this Society. Also at this meeting, it was decided to hold the society's "First Annual Orchid Exhibition" in the Friendly Societies Hall Meredith St Bankstown on 9th October 1954. Keen weren't we!
Some early members of the society were Mr and Mrs Franks, Mr and Mrs Bushell, Mr M Spice and Mr Jim and Mrs Jess Brown, all joining in 1954.

At the February meeting in 1962, it was proposed that all members be sent a notice of motion to change the name from Yagoona and District Orchid Society to Bankstown Orchid Society. On 27th March 1962 the motion to change the name of the society was carried and so we became Bankstown Orchid Society.

In 1962 Bankstown Council held a Floral Festival and parade through the streets. Our society entered a float containing orchids.

In 1967 we were privileged to have the Governor of NSW, Sir Roden Cutler, open our Spring Show at the Capital Ballroom, Chapel Road. One of our members made some pumpkin scones for afternoon tea, which he enjoyed greatly, not having eaten any since boyhood.

The Sixth World Orchid Conference was held in Sydney in 1969. Our society exhibited a Native Orchid Display, with many members contributing their plants and Monty Spice as Show Marshall. The Conference was to be held in the new Australia Square Building which unfortunately was not completely built! An alternative had to be found quickly. Older members remember visiting the displays and the competition entries in Sydney's Botanical Gardens under canvas! The trophies, which had already been made, depicted Australia Square in the background.

Our first "Bulletin" was issued in 1970, the editor was Eric Nethery. The president at the time, Mr Jim Brown, wrote an article in it about the first meeting of this society. In the same year we held our Winter Show in Boyded's Car Showroom in Bankstown.

About this time some members can remember Bankstown Council asking orchid growers to donate plants for the Sylvan Grove Native Reserve. Many specimen plants of Dendrobium Speciosum and other

orchids donated by members of this society make a splendid display every Spring.

According to the minutes in 1972, "It was suggested we try Bankstown Square for our shows - but this venue is not open Saturday afternoon or Sundays." How times and shopping have changed!

In 1974 our Spring Show was held at Sutton Motors Chullora, who not only paid all expenses but also provided \$600 prize money. Suttons said they would erect 2 banners across the Hume Highway.

In 1976 David Lee joined the club followed by Stephen.

The Scottish Hall, Weigand Avenue, Bankstown was the venue for the "Mini Orchid Workshop" on the 20th March 1982. The Chairman was Mr Tom Cooper, the President of our Society at the time, and the introduction of the workshop was made by Mr Walter Upton, the President of the Orchid Society of NSW. The speakers were Mr Ray Dean on "Cattleyas", Mr John Bisset on "Species", Mr Bert Cardwell on "Oncidiums", Mr George Colthup on "Odontoglossum Alliance", Mr Bert Schwartz on "Phalaenopsis", Mr Gordon Hansen on "Soft Cane Dendrobiums", Mr Athol Bell on "Paphiopedilums", Mr John Mata on "Cymbidium Growing for the Showbench", Mr Ken Organ on "Natives".

In February 1983, David Lee was elected our youngest President ever. 25 years later he is still doing the job admirably. Also in 1983 our first Mother's Day stall was held in Chester Hill raising \$1166. This was to become an annual event and many charities benefited. No sooner was Mother's Day over, than we were leaving goods at the Lee's homes for next year.

In 1984 our first Spring Show was held in a Shopping Centre, Bass Hill Plaza, and was called "Orchid Spectacular". The tall cymbidiums on the stage at Bass Hill Plaza were certainly a "spectacular" sight. This was also the venue for our 1985 and 1986 shows.

The "Waratah Court" in Bankstown Square was the place to go and see our first Spring Show there. The year was 1987. This was to be the first of many shows outside "Kmart".

At the Royal Easter Show of 1988, the Society won "The City of Sydney Horticultural Award" for the Best Display. The photo shows the model of the "Tom Thumb" Boat of Bass and Flinders surrounded by orchids. The boat was loaned to us by Bankstown Council.

On 23rd April 1990 the first Day Meeting was held in the Scottish Hall, Bankstown at 10:30am. Our President David Lee welcomed 182 members and 41 visitors to this first Day Meeting. There were 180 plants benched. These meetings have become very popular and are eagerly looked forward to by those who are unable to get to night meetings. Day meetings are usually held in March, May and October and for some members it's a second chance to display their plants in these months.

In January 1995 our first "Species" night was held, the auctioneer was David Lee. This was to become a very successful innovation. Who can remember the Stanhopeas in buckets, the very many Brassia verucosa and the unusual collector's items? Some members even shorten their holidays for the "Species" night.

The Year 2000 was noted for holding of the Olympic Games in Sydney. A time to be proud of our athletes. When they retire from their chosen sport, we hope they will start growing orchids as we need young growers.

In 2001 the Management of Chullora Shopping Centre asked us to put on a show and donated \$1000 for prizes. The show was held in September and was successful for us and the Centre. With both our Winter and Spring Shows being held in Bankstown Square in 2001, this was a busy year.

Bankstown Square was the venue for our Winter Show in 2002 followed by our Spring Show at Bass Hill Plaza. Once again we were showing our plants at Chullora Shopping Centre in September.

Each year since 1954, this society has held Spring and Winter shows. We have participated in some N.S.W. Orchid Society shows and some of our members have won special awards for their orchids. New categories of orchids have been introduced in our shows and our prize winners have always been highly regarded by the judges and the orchid loving public of N.S.W.

In May 2003, our first Auction of orchid plants was held in the Scottish Hall at Bankstown. Many

outstanding specie orchids were offered for sale to the highest bidder. Our President, David Lee, was auctioneer. At the November 2003 meeting, we celebrated the 50th Birthday of Bankstown Orchid Society. Every month since November 1953 a meeting of orchid lovers has been held in Bankstown. What an outstanding achievement! What dedication of the past and present executives in keeping the Bankstown Orchid Society alive, interesting and prosperous! The beautiful orchid birthday cake decorated by Val Bernoth was cut by Jess Brown and Monty Spice who joined in early 1954. Our Winter Show was at Bankstown Square, Spring shows at Bass Hill Plaza and Chullora.

On Christmas meeting night 2003, amidst other celebrations, David Lee Snr. received a Cultural Certificate for his beautiful Dendrobium Mousmee.

January 2004 saw the introduction of the new format of the Bulletin edited by Judith Bowen who volunteered for the job. Thanks go to Brian and Leslie Wilkinson who produced the bulletin for the previous 7 years. On 5th January a "much looked for" evening took place - the species night. Time to stock up on the species we haven't got.

On 2nd February a presentation of an 80th Birthday cake was made to Ludwig Mista (of raffle fame). He now joins the "80's club", members who already have received their birthday cakes on reaching 80. At the March meeting, David Lee announced that he had been our President for the past 21 years.

Our first day meeting for 2004 was held on 15th March. A record number of new members joined our Society - 31 in fact. Most of them decided to join after David had given a lecture on orchids at Revesby Garden Club.

At the May meeting, lucky mothers scored a beautiful cyclamen. On Saturday 22nd May the second Plant Auction, mostly species, was held at the Scottish Hall. David Lee was again the auctioneer and many exotic orchids were sold to the highest bidder. As it was a very cold day, the sausage sizzle and cups of tea provided by the canteen ladies were very much appreciated. In the May/June issue of the Bulletin, the paragraph "From Where I Stand" appeared for the first time. Written by Veronica Clowes, it will highlight the little interesting happenings of the Society. As usual the Winter Show was held at Bankstown Square in June. Oh for the days when we had the whole floor space outside Kmart! However a fine show was held in spite of the unusual weather pattern.

In August a very successful Spring Show was held at Bass Hill Plaza. The advantage of the stage at the Plaza, enhances the display of the champion cymbidiums. The natives, paphs, miscellaneous, novice and junior displays, all added to the 50th Anniversary Spring Show. Our own Spring Championship night in September was a huge success. 300 beautiful orchid plants were displayed, which if not, is close to a record.

I would like to pay tribute to David Lee who has been the President and the mainstay of this Society for the past 25 years. He starts the meetings on time and keeps them flowing with interesting and informative topics. He enjoys a good laugh, sometime with an instant quip from the audience. David has many friends in the orchid world and he encourages them to lecture at our meetings. He is energetic, enthusiastic and a great organiser. He always has a great group of committee members. New happenings have been instigated by David such as: Day Meetings, Street Stall at Chester Hill, selling everything and anything (except clothes), Mother's Day plants, Father's Day scratchies, 80th Birthday cakes and auctioning of plants. Over the years, many enjoyable bus and coach trips have been arranged by David. Here are some of them: Lightning Ridge, Mudgee/Gulgong, Taree (Tinonee), Hunter Wineries, Young, Barrington Tops, Toowoomba/Brisbane, Floriade/Canberra, Nelson Bay, Blue Mountains, Botany Bay, Bathurst, A Fishing Trip Off the Heads, Bowral, Bundanoon, Mt Penang, Gosford and Mingara Club. Thank you David for your untiring efforts and commitment for the Bankstown Orchid Society. As the printer is waiting, I will close these highlights of the Bankstown Orchid Society of the past 54 years since the inaugural meeting.

I wish to thank: Judith Bowen, who willingly put my typing on the computer. Doris Scott who carried at least 22 folders of minutes and put them in my car, Teresa Bursle, Phil Langdale and Beverly Bowen for encouragement, and last but not least members who supplied photos and memorabilia.

Now for my favourite saying: GROWING ORCHIDS is not a matter of LIFE or DEATH, it's more serious than that. ANOS Macarthur.