

A Surfeit of *Sarcochilus*

Text and photographs Roslyn Capell

Surfeit is not really the right word since it means overabundance, and I don't believe there can ever be too many *Sarcochilus*, but I was set on sibilance and surfeit was the best I could do. Early last year I decided I was overdue for a trip to Sydney to see some *Sarcochilus* shows. There had been significant changes in the sarc world since I stopped travelling to Sydney regularly, and I needed to catch up. I was particularly keen to see Neville Roper's recent hybrids, so I arranged to visit and be part of the AOC judging panel for the Revesby Workers' Australian Native Orchid Club Show at Panania on 17th October 2015. In the week before the trip I learned that the ANOS Sydney Group *Sarcochilus* Show was on same day, so I could go there too, but the real bonus was that Barrita Orchids' Open Day would be held on the 18th. That opportunity was too good to miss, so I changed my travel plans to allow for the detour to Kulnura.

Revesby Workers Show

This was judged early Saturday morning. I was hoping to see some of Neville Roper's yellow *Sarcochilus* hybrids such as *S. Coolendel*, *S. Sunny*, and *S. Amber*, which I had only seen in photos. I remember when the first "poached egg" *Sarcochilus* hybrids – now believed to be albinistic progeny of *S. hartmannii* 'Red Snow' – first appeared and I am enamoured with those clear, vibrant yellows. Neville Roper and David Butler both pursued this line of breeding, but also introduced some of the epiphytic Australian *Aeridinae* (formerly *Sarcanthinae*) species such as *S. spathulatus*, *S. dilatatus*, *S. hirticalcar*, and *Plectorrhiza tridentata* to increase the range of colours and colour combinations. Those epiphytes can add a different yellow, and also rust, ginger and green.

When I left Sydney in 2005, the line of *S. hirticalcar*-influenced reds was well established, and some of the yellows and greens and art shades from the twig epiphytes were being seen in first-flowering seedlings. We are now seeing the results of further advances with reds, and the original seedlings with the twig epiphytes are

being benched as mature plants with multiple inflorescences. The whites, pinks and pinky-reds from past decades have been joined by solid-colour vibrant yellow, apricot, peach, rusty red, clear blood-red, pale cream, soft yellows and greens – some delicately spotted, some heavily blotched – as well as multi-coloured flowers in combinations of art shades.

When Ira Butler commenced his *Sarcochilus* hybridising program in the late 1950s, his stated goal was to produce hardy plants of easy culture, similar to the larger flowered *Sarcochilus* such as *S. hartmannii*, with flowers of different colours. If he could have seen the shows I visited last October, he would have been well pleased with the achievements of his successors.

At the Revesby Workers' show I saw what I think is the epitome of rich, velvety, blood-red, in a plant of *S. Bewitch* (*S. Duno Nicky's Twin* x *S. Karla*), a cross registered by Neville Roper in 2014. The main species in its' background are *S. hartmannii* and *S. fitzgeraldii* in roughly equal parts, with about 13% *S. hirticalcar* to enrich and "redden" the red, plus a dash of *S. ceciliae*. Absolutely stunning! There was also a very fine mature plant of *S. Magic* 'Macros' benched by Lloyd Edwards, and it received an Award of Merit from the AOC panel. *Sarcochilus Magic* is *S. Duno Nicky's Twin* x *S. Zoe*, and contains the same species as *S. Bewitch* in roughly the same proportions. *Sarcochilus Magic* produced many good reds and Neville Roper received an Award of Special Recognition for it from the Australian Orchid Council in 2009.

There were a number of other AOC awards granted, including another Award of Special Recognition to Neville Roper for a *S. hartmannii* cross. Three of those plants of *S. hartmannii* were granted quality awards at the show. My favourite was *S. hartmannii* 'White Bull' which received an Award of Merit. It has round, filled in shape and flat segments, with a sprinkle of clearly defined red dots at the centre.

There was a lovely golden yellow plant benched –



Sarcophilus Myola



Sarcophilus Space Race 'Yellow 2014'



Sarcophilus Kulnura Lemon



Sarcophilus Soft Touch



Sarcophilus Kulnura Wild 'Rust'

S. Xanthia (*S. Gail* x *S. Roberta*), another Neville Roper registration from 2014 comprising only *S. hartmannii*, *S. fitzgeraldii*, and a tiny bit of *S. falcatus*, but coloured pure yellow – scrambled eggs rather than poached eggs. I also saw the finest *S. Fitzhart* I have seen – *S. Fitzhart* ‘Rusty Bucket Freddie’ AM/AOC 2012 (NSW).

The plant that made the most impact on me was *S. Kulnura Wild* ‘Rust’, one of Scott Barrie’s crosses for Barrita Orchids, registered in 2013. *Sarcochilus Kulnura Wild* is *S. Rebecca* x *S. Fitzhart*, and primarily *S. hartmannii* and *S. fitzgeraldii*, with just a dash of *S. olivaceous*, but the colour is an extraordinary shade of what I would call tangerine rather than rust. A mouth-watering gem!

Neville Roper passed away on 6th November 2015. According to my count, Neville registered 126 Australian *Aeridinae* crosses of which he was the originator, the vast majority being *Sarcochilus* but there were also a few *Plectochilus*, a *Rhinochilus*, and even a *Sarcoschistotylus*. His orchids received 72 quality awards and 18 Awards of Distinction for his *Sarcochilus* and *Plectochilus* from the AOC, as well as two Awards of Special Recognition. Neville’s achievements are perpetuated in the ongoing hybridising work of breeders such as David Butler, Scott Barrie, Kevin Western and Lloyd Edwards.

Sydney Group Show

I managed the trip from Panania to Sydney Group’s show at West Pennant Hills with only one wrong turn. I was greeted by a fine display of *Sarcochilus*, this time with emphasis on David Butler’s breeding, but also plants of Neville’s crosses. There was a luminous rich yellow first-flowering seedling of *S. Myola* (*S. Gail* x *S. Cliona*, registered 2013), which was obviously a product of albinistic *S. hartmannii* breeding, and a fine mature exhibit of *S. Amber*.

If I am mainly discussing the yellows and art shades, that is only because they are the ones I was particularly keen to see. There were lovely hybrids in all colours on display at both shows. At Sydney Group there was a strikingly fluorescent cerise-coloured *S. Heidi* ‘DW Best Pink’. I wouldn’t be

surprised if this turned out to be *S. Heidi* ‘Best Pink’ HCC/AOC 2008 (NSW), as it looked very much like the award photos and the owner of the awarded plant had the initials “DW” (Dennis Wood). It is amazing how a solid-colour deep pink like that can result from using two species which have white flowers with red centres.

Four plants from David Butler’s breeding caught my particular attention. *Sarcochilus Space Race* ‘Yellow 2014’ is a sparkling pale yellow with a red centre and comprises 87.5% *S. hartmannii* with the balance equal amounts of *S. hirticalcar* and *S. dilatatus*. This is an example of what can happen when someone has the imagination to foresee the potential benefits of introducing a colourful but poorly shaped or small flowered epiphytic species, and then crossing the results onto *S. hartmannii* for a few generations to improve shape. *Sarcochilus Space Race* is *S. Galaxy* x *S. hartmannii*, registered by David in 2015. *Sarcochilus Galaxy* is *S. Misty* x *S. hartmannii*, (David Butler, 2008). *Sarcochilus Misty* is *S. Aussie Dawn* x *S. Riverdene* (David Butler, 2001). *Sarcochilus Aussie Dawn* is *S. hartmannii* x *S. dilatatus* (Phil Spence, 1987). *Sarcochilus Riverdene* is *S. hartmannii* x *S. hirticalcar* (V. & N. Jupp, 1976).

Sarcochilus Misty’s Twin was another of David Butler’s plants that caught my eye. It has obvious *S. hirticalcar* influence in its colour and the shape of the labellum, but with broader segments and rounder overall shape. It was registered by David in 2011. It is *S. Misty* x *S. Duno Nicky’s Twin*. *Sarcochilus Duno Nicky’s Twin* is *S. Nicky* x *S. Fitzhart* (DUNO, 1998), *S. Nicky* is *S. fitzgeraldii* x *S. hirticalcar* (D. Cannon, 1982). *Sarcochilus Fitzhart* was registered by Ira Butler in 1963.

The third plant was *S. Soft Touch*, registered by David Butler in 2012. This was a mature plant with five, maybe more, inflorescences, and large, flat, round white flowers with a broad ring of concentric ginger-brown bars around the centre. It is *S. Velvet* x *S. hartmannii*. *Sarcochilus Velvet* is *S. Nicky* x *S. Riverdene* (N. Finch, 1998). Very appealing in a more traditional style but having that unusual ginger-brown, and with the *S. hirticalcar* influence it might flower at other times of the year, or for a longer period.

The fourth plant was a first-flowering seedling, *S. Evening Star* (*S. Galaxy* x *S. Duno Nicky's Twin*), registered in 2015. This little gem comprises 50% *S. hartmannii*, 25% *S. fitzgeraldii*, and roughly 18% *S. hirticalcar* and 6% *S. dilatatus*. The influence of the last two is obvious in the colour, which is a base of yellow heavily overlaid by shades of rich, rusty, ginger.

ANOS Sydney Group shows always have a lot of fine species exhibits and this one was no exception. As well as the usual benching of high quality *S. hartmannii*, I noticed a very nice mounted plant of one of the late-flowering forms of *S. falcatus*, and a particularly well-flowered *S. serrulatus*. I have since found out that the ANOS panel that judged the show granted an Award of Merit to the *S. falcatus*, and it is now *S. falcatus* 'Big White #1' AM/ANOS, owned by David Butler. The panel also granted an AM/ANOS to David's *S. hartmannii* 'Baby Blue BS #2', HCC/ANOS to *S. Serenade* 'Lots of White', and AM/ANOS to Michael Harrison's *Dendrobium malbrownii* 'Bella'.

Barrita Orchids

Sunday morning I drove to Kulnura to Barrita's open day. I was blown away by the display! It reminded me of the District Exhibits at the Sydney Royal Easter Show, but instead of sections of apples and lemons, there were sections filled with different coloured *Sarcophilus*. Rusty oranges, then yellows, then reds, whites, pinks, then more reds but a different shade, whites with red centres, different reds and dark pinks, then whites with yellow centres, and finally more pinks. There were hundreds of plants in an incredible display which I have never seen before and will not soon forget.

Where to start? I saw *S. Kulnura Kaleidescope* 'Blazing Gold' AD/AOC 2014 (NSW), the mango-coloured beauty with a sparkling texture that was the judged to be the AOC Award of Distinction of the Year for 2014. The main species in its breeding is *S. hartmannii* (about 70%) plus about 22% *S. fitzgeraldii*, a little *S. hirticalcar* and a tiny bit of *S. falcatus*. Also *S. Val* 'Sprite' HCC/AOC 2014 (NSW), which is an example of modern *S. hartmannii* & *S. fitzgeraldii* breeding.

It is a good solid white with red markings, but the markings are a deep pinky red, and in the form of well-defined large dots rather than the more solid-coloured or barred red centres often seen in earlier breeding of this type. Barrita Orchids received an ASR for the *S. Val* cross (which is *S. Sweetheart* x *S. Heidi*) in 2014.

Scott has succeeded in breeding some very well-shaped, floriferous pinks that have even and consistent markings on the flowers, without much variation in the amount of colour per flower down the inflorescence. That inconsistency and variation was a major issue with many of the earlier pinks. *Sarcophilus* Kulnura Emotion 'Allover' x *S. Kulnura Dazzel* 'Clear Dots' seems very promising, and there were a number of plants of that cross in flower. I particularly liked a couple of the plants of *S. Kulnura Dazzel* 'Clear Dots' x *S. Rosella* 'Spotty', which had very well-defined vibrant pink spots on clear white backgrounds.

At Barrita I saw round flowers with broad segments throughout the entire range of colours. In the white & yellow category, a seedling of *S. Parma* 'Lemon' x *S. Roberta* 'Good Yellow' caught my attention. It was white with yellow markings in the centre and a yellow picotee edge on the petals and sepals. *Sarcophilus* Parma has a little *S. spathulatus* in its background, but other than that both parents are comprised only of *S. hartmannii* and *S. fitzgeraldii*. This seems to be another plant from Neville Roper's *S. hartmannii* 'Red Snow' - "When Red Becomes Yellow" - breeding. In the "something different" category, my eye was caught by a group of reds with yellow peloric markings on the petals, particularly *S. Kulnura Vibrance* '7' x *S. Rebecca* 'Red Beauty'.

The plant I want to see when it grows up is the seedling of *S. Bonanza* 'Big Pat' x *S. Sweetheart* 'Speckles', benched at the Revesby Workers' Show. It is one of Scott Barrie's crosses. It was a young plant but the flowers had full round shape with broad petals overlapping the sepals, and lateral sepals that almost touched. It had a very attractive colour combination of a well-defined band of deep rose pink at the edges of the segments, then a white halo and a broad band of red bars around the centre, and the colour was consistent from flower to flower. I envy the owner

of that plant!

My trip to Sydney was time and money well spent, and my craving for *Sarcophilus* sated for the time being.

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Sarcophilus (Kulnura Dazzel 'Clear Dots' x Rosella 'Spotty')



Sarcophilus Val 'Sprite' HCC-ASR/AOC 2014

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