A small group gathered on the first Members night of 2017 at 7:30pm on February 6th. The evening was very wet and windy and those that brought specimens to discuss and admire were complimented on their great bravery and determination.

Úna Breathnach showed two gems, the first her floriferous *Epidendrum peperomia*, which obliges with two flowering periods per year and the possibility of an odd one or two flowers in between. Her plant, of a squat, mat forming species held 8 large flowers in relation to the size of the plant, which were much admired. The next was *Camaridium cucullatum* (labelled *C. atratum*, and formerly *Maxillaria cucullatum* or *M. atrata*) held a single flower but was as loved for the fact that it was the first time the plant flowered for her. Her specimen spurred the conversation on whether to re-pot or to pot on, the former often involving a lot of disturbance to the root system, while the latter can be done with a minimal amount of damage. Potting on, giving room for another years growth, was decided as the best option in this case.


Epidendrum peperomia


Brasilorchis picta

Todd Harvey brought another of the former *Maxillaria*, the now named *Brasiliorchis picta*. The plant, though small holds a punch in the scent that the flowers provide. Three good sized flowers emerged from a cluster at the base of the pseudobulbs. Though in flower for two weeks, Todd was hoping for another two weeks of heady, morning scent from the plant.

Alexandra Kucharczyk presented the white form of *Coelogyne cristata*, which was much admired for the purity of the flower but more discussed as to the presence of some dried up growths. It was decided that the plant suffered at a critical time from lack of humidity and that the dried outer, papery bracts of the growths had stopped the new shoots from emerging. Growth was then redirected to alternative shoots, which did provide flowers but from bulbs of a smaller size than previous.


Coelogyne cristata

General comments from the audience was to keep *C. cristata* growing in a small tray of water, especially when in growth.

Star status went to Tom Doran's *Cymbidium* hybrid with arching stems of pink flowers with a dark, grooved lip. We saw this plant at the November meeting when Tom explained his method of growing, much based on 'let well enough alone as long as Cymbidiums are getting enough water outdoors', and selecting those to come indoors for flowering. In November the plant did have enough plump shoots to indicate flowers and the results were much appreciated by the audience.

Last contribution came from Mary Bradshaw who encouraged us to read *Where do Camels belong?* by Ken Thomson as an introduction to an article in the *The Telegraph* detailing the presence of a Twayblade (*Neottia ovata*) in his back garden, many miles from the nearest known location. This followed with a discussion on a species preference for soils with a specific pH level. This then led to us discussing how might concrete foundations contribute to changes in surrounding soil pH levels, the acidity levels of water discharge from condensing boilers and our perception of an orchid species preference for habitat based on our local knowledge. I am sure it shall continue at a future meeting.

Cymbidium

From the point of view of a members night, the meeting was a great success. We showed, admired, discussed and learned. There was no telling where the comments might lead but I think it would be difficult to find a member who was present that did not thoroughly enjoy the night. I will end this short report on congratulating Carmel Higgins on winning the raffle for James Donnelly's oil painting of *Laelia tenebrosa* and again thank both John and Mairead for their generosity to the Society.

BRENDAN SAYERS

Where do camels belong? In the Arab world is the obvious answer. But they are relative newcomers there. They evolved and lived for tens of millions of years in North America, while today they retain their greatest diversity in South America and have their only wild populations in Australia. This is a classic example of the problems that underlie the issues of natural and invasive species, a hot issue right now, as the flip side of biodiversity. But do we need to fear invaders? And indeed, can we control them, and do we choose the right targets? *In Where Do Camels Belong?* Ken Thompson puts forward a fascinating array of narratives on invasive and natural plants and animals to explore what he sees as the crucial question — why only a minority of introduced species succeed, and why so few of them go on to cause trouble. He discusses, too, whether fear of invasive species could be getting in the way of conserving biodiversity, and especially of responding to the threat of climate change. This is a timely, instructive and controversial book that delivers unexpected answers.

Where Do Camels Belong?: Why Invasive Species Aren't All Bad by Ken Thompson (ISBN-13: 978-1771640961)