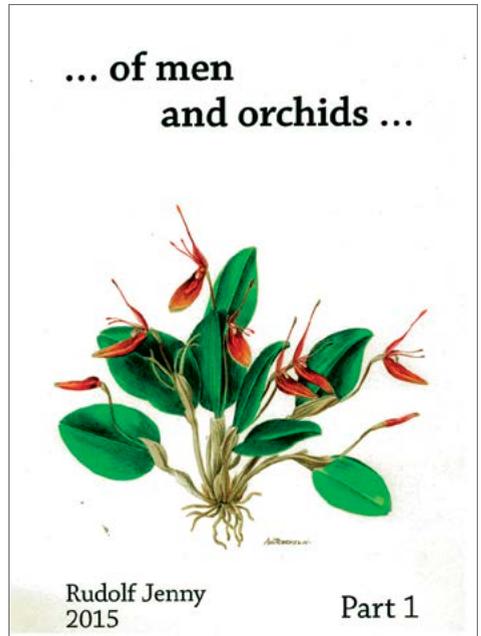


Book review

...of men and orchids... Part 1

by Rudolf Jenny, 302pp, many colour photographs and other illustrations, hardback, 280 x 228mm, ISBN: 978-9942-21-232-0. Published in 2015 by the author and printed in Quito by Imprenta Mariscal. Cost US\$140 + postage and available from RJOrchid@gmx.ch

Many orchid enthusiasts must have wondered at times about people who are commemorated in a plant's name. Who, for example, was Monsieur Chaubard, and what was his connection to *Chaubardiella*? Sometimes the name relates to the person who found the plant, sometimes to the grower who first flowered it. Occasionally a



The genus *Chaubardiella* (*Chaubardiella subquadrata* pictured) was named after Monsieur Chaubard (photo by Henry Oakeley)

species is dedicated to someone whom the botanist naming it wishes to commemorate, even though he or she has no connection to that particular plant.

Rudolf Jenny has written numerous articles discussing the background of many orchid species, their taxonomic history and the life histories of those who discovered them, introduced them to cultivation and named them, so a book on the subject seems a logical progression. Most of the 37 chapters deal with the taxonomy of one species or genus with biographies of those whose names are linked to a particular firm or family, such as 'The house of Loddiges' and 'The Wendland dynasty and a famous orchid collection'. Many of those whose often fascinating life stories are related here are likely to be unfamiliar to the majority of British and American readers, as they came from continental Europe and the literature about them is often in German.

The chapters vary in length, from three to ten pages, which reflects both that little is known about some of the early collectors and enthusiasts, and that some species have a much more complicated taxonomic history than others.

The information is very detailed and the reader will learn a lot. I particularly enjoyed the illustrations. The author has managed to unearth portraits of most of the people he writes about, and there is a good combination of beautiful old prints, often several of the same plant depicted in

different journals under different names, and excellent present-day photographs showing the relevant species growing in cultivation or in its natural habitat.

There are some inconsistencies. The spellings Brazil and Brasil are both used, sometimes on the same page. Professor Smith, the leader of a disastrous expedition to the Congo (see *Lockhartia bennettii*) is said to have died on 22 March 1816, the same date as that given for the day the expedition set off from Falmouth. Rudolf Jenny is Swiss and although he has written the book in English (an impressive feat) he has retained the German custom of writing surnames entirely in capital letters, which reads slightly oddly.

Like a collection of short stories, this is a book to dip into. However, even though the intention might be just to read and digest one chapter, it is easy to continue to the next – and perhaps the next.

This is a high quality production, I like the layout, and the photographs are very well reproduced. Anyone with an interest in the history of orchid-growing will appreciate it and look forward to the publication of Part 2 (whose publication is expected in two to three years time).

Isobyl la Croix

Ed: A complete list of titles in the OSGB Library can be viewed online at www.osgb.org.uk