

# British Cactus & Succulent Society

## Southampton & District Branch Newsletter

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## Editorial

Happy New Year to everyone! December seemed to go by very quickly, perhaps aided by all the gusts of wind that we have had to endure recently! We have also had a tremendous amount of rain in the past couple of weeks, and thanks to leaks in my conservatory some plants are getting watered when they shouldn't. Hopefully things will quieten down for the remainder of the month.

## Announcements

Copies of the **Branch Programme** for 2014 are available from the front table.

If you haven't already done so, do **renew your BCSS membership**. You should have received renewal forms with the Journal (in December) or you can also pay online via the BCSS website – visit <http://www.bcss.org.uk/fees.php> for further details.

We are pleased to welcome another **new member** to our ranks. Peter Bircher from Bishops Waltham joined the BCSS in December, and we hope that he will be able to come along and enjoy our monthly meetings.

David Neville mentioned he had seen a reference to a video on Namaqualand in the BCSS forums – this can be viewed at :  
<http://www.viewster.com/movie/1189-15371-000/namaqualand>

## Last Month's Meeting

Our President, Peter Down, started off proceedings at the AGM. He mentioned this was the 59<sup>th</sup> AGM held by the branch, - and he had been to all of them,

apart from the 1<sup>st</sup> one, when he was serving in the army. At the start of the AGM, nobody is officially on the committee – so he was going to ask Dot to be chairperson and thankfully she had accepted.

This coming 60<sup>th</sup> year would be extra special and the branch had planned extra events. It is difficult to get enough numbers for a minibus or coach – but if people are going to the events, hopefully lifts can be arranged. Peter congratulated the branch on a very successful 2013 - the visiting speakers are amazed at the support we get at meetings, and also the distance some people travel to get to the meetings. He wished everyone best wishes for the future.

Our Chairperson Dot England mentioned how successful the branch is, and how committed the members are. There is a nice, warm and friendly atmosphere at our branch meetings. She gave a special mention to Ivor Biddlecombe for winning us 2 gold medals – it was amazing how he was able to take an assortment of plants and make a lovely display from them. She also gave a special mention to David Neville who was suddenly taken ill during the year – she was glad he was back. She also thanked Sue Wilson for revamping the library and writing a column in the newsletter every month, and thanked Rose and Tony Grech for hosting an open day. The biggest thank you was to Jim - who had been publicity officer for 41 years. This was amazing and deserved a round of applause for this lifetime's commitment. Jim's circumstances have changed and Ben Turner has agreed to fill the post and he'll be looking into things like Facebook and Twitter.

Dot mentioned the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and thanked Peter for establishing the branch and actually being here for the 60<sup>th</sup> year. For the various outings we are planning this year, if we have cars going, we will hopefully be able to give lifts to others. Do provide your email address to David Neville so that we can email around if we have extra seats for the events.

David Neville mentioned that his full report was in the newsletter. We are lucky to have a strong and healthy and vibrant branch - he made a special note this year and every single speaker who visited us in 2013 had commented on the number of people in the

audience. The fact that we have a good attendance allows us to generate a reasonable level of income towards the cost of the monthly meetings. The fact that we don't charge an attendance fee and produce a monthly newsletter and provide a nice warm welcome at the meetings is something we can be proud of. He thanked Jim for being the Publicity Officer - it was efforts such as Jim's which got us mentions in the local newspapers and on the local BBC radio. Jim took a moment to thank all those who helped at the displays. David mentioned the 2014 programme was available on the front table. He had tried to put together a varied selection of visiting speakers throughout the year. It is difficult to find people who can travel midweek and talk to the branch, but he had arranged for a couple of new speakers: Trevor Wray from Northampton and Tony Irons from Bristol.

We were having the Cultivation Workshop again since it seems to be popular with members. We would also have a mini-show in May to explain judging of plants at shows. We had included various events such as the Bristol and Havering Cactus Marts, a visit to Wisley when the Mammillaria society hold a event, a visit to Tony and Suzanne Mace, and also a visit to the Mesemb Study Group event in Banstead. As we approach these events, he will put out sheets so that people can put their names down if they would like to attend and we'll then try and organize car sharing, with people paying towards petrol costs. The 2014 Quiz will be hosted by the Isle of Wight. Last month, at Portsmouth, the Branch managed to win the 2013 Quiz by a narrow margin.

David ended by thanking everybody for covering during his absence, (including me for covering for some of his secretarial duties) and he hoped people would assist again next year when he was due to have more major surgery.

Next was the Treasurer's report and Alice Jankovec handed out some copies of the annual accounts. Alice mentioned her report was also in the newsletter. She wanted to thank our auditors Colin and Lorraine Bielckus, unfortunately they were otherwise occupied this evening and couldn't be here. We had just about broken even for the year, with a small profit of £8 for the year. Speakers had cost quite a bit more than the previous year, and the hall rent had also gone up. We managed to cover these increased costs without increasing the price of refreshments or raffle tickets or anything else. She thanked all members who by buying something during the meetings support the branch. During the year, we invested some money in buying Ciprian's plants and we had recovered those costs. The

accounts were duly signed off and David confirmed that he had checked and our auditors were willing to stand again next year.

Voting was held to re-elect the committee. There were three changes and these were dealt with first. Adrian Bailey would take over from Ben Turner as Vice-chairman, Ben Turner would take over from Jim Roskilly as Publicity Officer and Richard White would join the committee after a ten year break. These three changes were all voted through. After this, all other members of the committee were also re-elected en-masse.

Ivor Biddlecombe mentioned that for 2014, we would be introducing a new Table Show class at the monthly meetings – a cactus or succulent plant in flower. Last year there was good interest in the table show early in the year but interest fell away later in the year - he hoped people would make a greater effort in 2014.

With the raffle, David mentioned that because we did not have volunteers to run this, he often found himself selling the raffle tickets when he should really be doing other things at the monthly meeting. We really do need members to help with this task.

It was time to award trophies for the overall winners of the 2013 Table Show. Bruce had won the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Trophy for Succulents and the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Paperweight for Succulents. Alice had won the Ladies Cup, and Ivor won the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Trophy for Cacti and the Golden Jubilee Trophy for Cacti.

Peter stood up again to pay a tribute to Jim Roskilly. Jim had been a member for over 40 years, joining after he left the Navy. He started off by stewarding at shows and he learnt from the judges which were the best plants to grow. Eventually he won prize cards himself. He volunteered to become the publicity officer, and visited the shops, libraries and nurseries, putting up information on the branch. He had done us proud and it was only due to ill health that he had to give up his post. As a token of our appreciation for the years of service to the branch, he was given an orchid plant.

Peter, thinking about Glenn's efforts in the kitchen, asked the audience for one final round of applause to thank the Committee for making this such a good branch.

*Vinay Shah*

## Bookworm Corner

**H**appy New Year! Well I hope you all survived the Christmas break and have not yet broken all those fantastic 'it seemed a good idea at the time' New Year's resolutions. I got round that one a few years ago by vowing not to make any New Year's resolutions, which is so much better!

The weather has been terrible with all this stormy weather. The flooding both along the coast and throughout the New Forest has been quite spectacular but I will be pleased when the spring arrives. We have suffered greenhouse glass blow-out of two skylight panes in the 10'x12' cold house and three front panes been blown in and shattered in the 15'x6' cacti house which resulted in the unexpected watering of a good number of cacti, including some of my lovely 'white woollies'. This is the first time we have ever had damage to the greenhouses despite living in such an exposed coastal spot, fence panes being blown out is a common problem which we more or less seem to have got round by having lower fences topped with trellis. However one small panel did blow out that adjoins our neighbours who keep chickens and young Rosie elkhound took advantage of this before we knew the panel was down, but that is another story...

The rest of the cacti are all tucked up for the winter in the greenhouses, some of the more fussy ones either in the hotbox or cluttering up the house. It only seems five minutes since the devils went out in the sunshine in the garden. The mesembs are still flowering in dribs and drabs, adding a welcome little splash of yellow, pink and white.

### 'ENJOYED THE LECTURE? THEN ENJOY THE BOOK!'

#### November

Our last talk was back in November when we welcomed Terry Smale who used us as guinea pigs on his new lecture 'Where do Cape Succulents Grow?' Books worth consulting on the subject include '**Flora of Southern Africa**' (Court D.) and '**Lithops-Treasures of the Veld**' (Hammer S.A.) and '**Mesembs of the World**' (Smith G.F. et al.). These books will be in '**Featured Book Corner**' at the January meeting.

#### January

As this month is the member's evening, I have not got any more books from this article to recommend. However, hopefully an additional 'Bookworm

Corner' article will appear in this newsletter which if you like is a sister column to this! It is the new '**Desert Island Books**' and the books David Neville will be taking along with him can be borrowed by yourselves from **Featured Book Corner**!

I would like to thank everyone who has borrowed books in 2013 and do let me know if there are any new books that you would particularly like to see and I will put these requests forward at committee meetings. And finally have a **Happy and Successful New Growing Year!**

*Sue Wilson*

## Desert Island Cacti Books!

Everyone has heard of the Radio Four programme 'Desert Island Discs' so I thought it would be interesting to have a little play about with this concept and do a book version especially for the Southampton BCSS!

Our very first castaway to a lovely warm tropical island is our very own David Neville, so take no notice if he tells you he is off to hospital again, it isn't true, he is off to a desert island!

### **How old where you when you first started collecting cacti/succulents?**

My first cactus plant was a *Chamaecereus silvestrii* (nowadays known as *Echinopsis chamaecereus*), won in a tombola at my primary school summer fete when I was 10 years old. I grew the plant on my bedroom windowsill, with little interest, until the following spring when it produced a small number of beautiful scarlet red flowers which really sparked my interest. My parents had an old *Echinopsis oxygona* in one of their greenhouses, which I then took interest in, and once I saw the amazing flowers on this plant I was really hooked on cacti and I began to acquire more plants.

### **What do you prefer, cacti or succulents and why?**

It's hard to choose, because I have always grown a mixed collection. I think if I had to choose, it would be cacti because of the flowers.

### **How many greenhouses do you have?**

I have 3 greenhouses at home, a 6x6ft, a 12x8ft and a 16x10ft. The smaller one is unheated, while the other two are heated with electric fan heaters during the winter months.

**Do you share your house with any of the cacti/succulents?**

No, there is not a single succulent plant in my house.

**What cacti/succulent book is currently on your bedside table, and if the answer is none, then why not?**

None. I never read in bed because it gives me neck ache.

**If you could ask Father Christmas for any cacti/succulent book (in or out of print or even one not written yet) what would it be or at least what would the subject matter be about?**

I don't believe in Father Christmas! For many years I have bought most cactus and succulent books when they are published.... I learned from an early hesitation that many of these books are printed in small numbers, and once they go out of print the price soars. I can't think of a book that I would add to a Christmas list, because I buy most of them when they are first published.

**Is there a specific book that you would recommend all newcomers to the hobby read?**

The book I would recommend for newcomers is, without any doubt, The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Succulents by Gordon Rowley. It was first published in 1978, and I ordered a copy in advance of publication from W H Smith. This is one of the few books on cacti and succulents that I have read from cover to cover. It contains such a broad range of information that it is a treasure box for anyone interested in our favourite group of plants.

**What is your favourite cacti/succulent book?**

My favourite cactus book is Mammillaria – The Cactus File Handbook by John Pilbeam, and my favourite succulent book is The genus Echeveria by John Pilbeam. I was editor of both of these publications, and did all the layout and production work. I realise that this makes me biased, but each of them are unquestionably the best books ever published on each of these genera, and I am pleased and proud to have been involved in their production.

**Do you ever use the branch library and is there a specific book you would like to see included?**

I don't use the branch library, but only because, as already mentioned, I tend to buy most books as soon as they are published.

**If you could only have one cacti family to take with you to the desert island what would it be?**

If I could take only one genus with me to the desert island I would pick Mammillaria, because it is one of the larger genera and I would be able to have a large collection.

**And succulents to go with you would be?**

I think I would pick Euphorbia, again because it is one of the larger genera, containing a huge range of plants from tiny miniatures to giant tree-like species.

**If you could only have one cacti/succulent book to take with you to the desert island, what would it be?**

This is not an easy choice because there is no book that contains a broad selection of both cacti and succulents. I would probably choose The New Cactus Lexicon, published by dh Books, because it covers all of the Cactaceae, and it has 100s of colour illustrations. It's a two volume work... is that cheating?

**What would be your favourite music album to take to the desert island?**

Probably Bridge over Troubled Water by Simon and Garfunkel.

**And finally, what would your luxury item be, to take with you to look after your cacti and succulent collection on the island?**

A pallet, loaded with bags of John Innes, Levington compost, grit and perlite!

*Thank you for your time and enjoy the warm and sunny tropical island!*

*Sue Wilson*

## BCSS Branch of the Year Nominations

Eagle-eyed members may have noted that in the September BCSS Journal, there was mention of a new annual award, introduced by the Board of Trustees. Each year they will choose a *Branch of the Year*, selected from branches that have been formally nominated with details of their activities, achievements etc. The award will be accompanied by £100 prize money.

I am delighted to report that Southampton & District Branch has been formally nominated for the 2103 award by one of the visiting speakers who entertained us last year. Among the many positive things listed in the nomination are: the pre-meeting meal; the largest audience out of the 30 branches that he visited in 2013; the warm welcome to speakers and members; well-organised meetings; the extensive library; the BEST newsletter in the country; and a gift to the speaker after the talk.

It is very gratifying to know that our efforts to build and maintain a strong and healthy branch have not gone unnoticed, and we can all be very proud to have been nominated. I have no idea how many other branches might have been nominated, or how we might fare, but I am looking forward to hearing the final decision in due course.

*David Neville*

## Next Month's Meeting

Our meeting in February will feature one of our own members, Tom Radford, and he will be giving a talk on photographing plants. Digital cameras are very affordable these days and come with features to suit every pocket - hopefully Tom will give us some hints on how to get the best from whatever device you own.

The February Table Show will consist of the **Neoporteria and Copiapoa** groups (cacti) and the **Adromischus** subgroup (succulents). In addition, there will also be the new class of "any cactus or succulent in flower". Please note that members can submit more than one entry in any of the classes, and that points will be earned for each placed entry.

The Neoporteria group includes *Neoporteria*, *Austrocactus*, *Chileorebutia*, *Eriosyce*, *Horridocactus*, *Islaya*, *Neochilenia*, *Pyrrhocactus*, *Rodentiophila* and *Thelocephala*. The Copiapoa group includes *Copiopoa* and *Pilocopiopoa*.

The Adromischus subgroup includes *Adromischus*, *Brophyllum*, *Cotyledon*, *Crassula*, *Kalanchoe*, *Kitchingia*, *Rochea*, *Tillaea*, *Tylecodon*, and *Vauanthes*

### Forthcoming Events

Sat	11 <sup>th</sup>	Jan	Isle of Wight	No Meeting
Sat	18 <sup>th</sup>	Jan	Portsmouth	Short talks & Discussions by Branch Members
Tue	4 <sup>th</sup>	Feb	Southampton	Photographing Plants – Tom Radford
Sat	8 <sup>th</sup>	Feb	Isle of Wight	Plant Auction, Members' Slides
Sat	15 <sup>th</sup>	Feb	Portsmouth	Cliff Thompson, 'Brazil Part 3'
Tue	4 <sup>th</sup>	Mar	Southampton	Our Collection (Suzanne & Tony Mace)
Sat	8 <sup>th</sup>	Mar	Isle of Wight	Branch Quiz & Members' Talks
Sat	15 <sup>th</sup>	Mar	Portsmouth	Plants in my Greenhouse (Stirling Baker)

Branch website: <http://www.southampton.bcsc.org.uk>

Facebook : <https://www.facebook.com/southamptonbcsc>