

British Cactus & Succulent Society

Southampton & District Branch Newsletter

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Editorial	1
Announcements	1
Last Month's Meeting.....	1
2018 AGM	1
Snippets	3
Llama blood clue to beating all flu	3
Next Month's Meeting	4
Forthcoming Events	4

Editorial

We are into January and I can almost repeat my comments from last month - about how mild the winter has been, so far, anyway. Of course, last year, we had odd weather including snow in March and April, so perhaps it's too early to be glad that winter is half over, but certainly if this weather continues, the plants in our gardens will be thinking it's time to wake up very soon.

Announcements

The **branch programme for 2019** has been prepared and is available from the front table. The branch website has also been updated to show the programme and the Zone11 page shows the meetings for the other branches in our Zone (Portsmouth and Isle of Wight).

Don't forget to **renew your BCSS membership** – this can be done using the form included with the CactusWorld Journals which were sent out to members in December. You can also renew using a Paypal or credit card at the BCSS website, at: <http://society.bcsc.org.uk/index.php/subscriptions.html> (when renewing online you'll need to know your BCSS membership number, this is written on the address label of your Journal – David and I also have a list of membership numbers for current members)

Last Month's Meeting

2018 AGM

Adrian opened the meeting and described the agenda for the evening – we'd review the year, receive the reports of the committee members,

appoint the committee for next year and also award the trophies for the overall winners in the Table Show.

David mentioned we had received apologies from a few people who were away for the December meeting – however all the committee were present. We would hear verbal reports from the main officers of the branch – the other reports were included in the December newsletter.

To get things started, Peter Down, branch president, said a few words. He thanked the committee, especially David. He also thanked the members for supporting the branch, and ended by saying that he had been involved with the branch for 64 years! David said there can't be many branches around the country that have been running as long as we have and who still have the founding member attend every meeting. David mentioned that Peter started the branch in the 1950s by putting an advert in the local newspaper and also knocking on the doors of people who happened to have a cactus on display in their windowsill or porch. Eventually he managed to find enough people who were interested in joining a group and that's when the local branch formed and started to hold meetings.

Our chairman Adrian Bailey spoke next. He mentioned that his written report was in the newsletter, but he wanted to mention a few items in more detail. It's been another successful year and he was said it was a pleasure to be involved with the branch and the committee. He drew attention to the shows we had put on, at Sparsholt, New Forest and Romsey - a lot of work goes into organising those and even winning medals at them. Not only do we have a committee that works well together, but we are also lucky to have a membership which includes judges, international travellers and others who have tremendous expertise, and who all contribute to our monthly meetings. There are ups and downs and as people get older, we do lose members - Jim Roskilly passed away in September - he had been on the committee since the 1970s. The committee consists of 10 people and he thanked them all, along with others who are not on the committee but who also contribute to the running of the branch. Robin and

Jane joined the committee last year and they have fitted in well.

Adrian picked out a couple of committee members for special mention. David does so much for the branch - he is involved with all the meetings and his input and expertise is much appreciated. The other person he wanted to mention was Ivor. Not only does Ivor stage the displays - he bakes the cakes which are sold during the mid-meeting break, and Adrian said he looks forward to eating these - the "date" ones are his favourite (shouts of "ginger" were also heard from the audience!) He appreciates all the effort Ivor puts in at the shows and the number of gold medals we've won are due to Ivor's experience and expertise. Adrian ended by thanking everyone for making it such a stimulating branch.

Our secretary David Neville was next to speak. He mentioned that he had only just returned from a trip to Spain, and the flight back was delayed, meaning he only got back at 4pm on the day of the meeting, rather than the previous day as originally planned. He was therefore sorry that he had not had the time to prepare Christmas cards. He reiterated that we have a branch we can be proud of. Virtually every speaker who comes here mentions how pleased they are to see a large audience. We've probably set some attendance records during the course of the year. Some people only come to meetings of specific interest - but many come to all the meetings because they know they are going to have a pleasant time and it's a friendly atmosphere. This year, we've had new faces at almost every meeting through the year, but not many of those have turned into regular attendees. He reminded everyone to try and speak to anyone who was new to the branch, to make them feel at home.

He then went through the programme for 2019. In January we would have the traditional mini-talks. Actually it's one of the best meetings of the year because of the variety of talks. In February Tom Radford will be showing us pictures of plants he's been growing. In March Richard White would talk about a trip to South Africa. In April we would have Stirling Baker, one of the best growers of Haworthias in the country, speak to us as well as bring along live plants. Stirling had talked to us before but this would be an updated version of his previous talk. May will be a cultivation evening, and he asked members to give some thought to subjects which you would like to have discussed at that meeting, and let a committee member know. In May we normally attend the Sparsholt Countryside Day, but unfortunately this event will not be held this year.

In June Tony Mace from West Sussex would be talking about columnar cacti. In July we will have Derek Tribble. Derek is an expert on South African succulents and he will give us an updated version of his talk on Crassulas - he really is one of the authorities in this country on that genus. In July we will have a branch visit to the Oxford Show, followed by a garden party hosted by Alice and a few days later we'll be at the New Forest Show. In August we will have a plant focus evening, this time covering Aloe and Gymnocalycium. In September we will have a talk by Paul Spraklin who is an expert on growing succulent plants outdoors. We will be at the Romsey Show in September, and in October, Vicky Davies will be giving us a new talk on ex-situ conservation - Miranda has asked him a couple of years ago to try and find a talk about conservation and this was the first time he's found a talk on that topic. In November, Keith and Kathy (from Reading branch and regular attendees at our meetings) have a new talk on Agaves. In December we will have our AGM again. David announced that 2019 would be his last year as branch secretary - he turns 60 soon and he planned to do more travelling, and hence he wouldn't be around for every meeting in the future.

Next was our Treasurer, Alice Jankovec. Alice handed out copies of the accounts and she mentioned that these had been prepared by chartered accountant Colin Bielckus - and both Colin and Lorraine were present at the meeting. Alice thanked Colin and Lorraine for doing the accounts promptly. She mentioned that the accounts had been reviewed by the committee. This year we had made a small loss of £44. Most of our sources of income had gone up, but so had our expenses. The main reason for the loss was additional expenses on speakers - the cost varies from year to year depending on how far they have to travel to come to speak to us, and if coming from a distance, some of them request to stay in a B&B overnight. We are also generous with our speakers in terms of giving them a meal before the meeting and a bottle of wine after their talk - David mentioned there are some branches where you would be lucky to be given just a cup of tea! Although it can be expensive to get certain speakers, it is important for us to try and continue to provide a wide range of talks each year - and we do get a few visitors from other nearby branches.

Alice mentioned that administrative expenses were also higher. This was due to having to print publicity leaflets - these are done in batches, so the expense appears in one year, even if the leaflets are used over a number of years. Alice wondered if we could do a seed and compost pack for children when we put on our displays. Well, as it happens, we did

actually prepare and hand out some of these at the New Forest show, using seed donated by the Society. It's something we can consider funding in the future.

Given that Sparsholt will not happen in 2019, Alice mentioned Ellingham Show as a possibility, it is held soon after the New Forest Show. Richard decided to ask "How will Brexit affect branch finances?" "Let's not go there!" was Alice's response. A vote was held and the accounts were adopted. We also thanked Colin and Lorraine for doing the accounts – David enquired whether they would be willing to do them next year, and they agreed. Colin did mention that the loss for the year wasn't too worrying – overall the branch is in a healthy financial position and we'd be able to survive this level of loss for several decades.

Next it was time to select the Committee for 2019. David mentioned that no new nominations had been received. All existing members were willing to stand for next year so the Committee was re-elected en-masse. David asked if members could think of things the branch could do – such as shows where we could put on displays, or ways of promoting the branch or other things we could do for the members, please suggest these to him. There was a comment from the audience about whether we could do anything to celebrate our 65th Anniversary.

Replacements for Sparsholt were discussed – the Rocky Flower Show and Plant Fair is held in Wimborne in May each year. Jane mentioned the Solent Garden Fayre, which is organised by the Rotary Club – this is held in Wide Lane, Eastleigh. We had enquired about this event before and David said they wanted to charge us a commercial rate for sales tables. Michelle suggested doing events at Garden centres, the local Orchid Society do this. David said he did some of these, 20 years ago at branches of Hilliers and also the Swan Garden Centre. We will discuss these options at the next branch committee meeting.

Next was the award of the trophies for the winners of the Table Show classes in 2018. The trophies are awarded to the person who in amasses the highest total of points in a class over the year. The winner of the Cacti Open class was Bruce Beckerleg and he also won the Succulents Open class. Bruce also won the Cacti Intermediate class. Ivor Biddlecombe won the Succulent Intermediate class. Miranda Stevenson won the Ladies Cup for the highest total of points by a female entrant, and Bruce Beckerleg won the "Plant in flower" class.

This concluded the formalities for the evening. David reminded everyone that the first meeting of 2019 would be on the 8th of January (not the 1st) - and he then invited everyone to help themselves to the food which was laid out on the tables at the side.

Vinay Shah

Snippets

When we have habitat talks about South America, we sometimes see pictures of Llamas in the Andes. Here's an article from the BBC which suggests they might be useful in developing something to fight against flu infections:

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-46078989>

Llama blood clue to beating all flu

Llamas have been used to produce a new antibody therapy that has the potential to work against all types of flu, including new pandemics.

The animals produce incredibly tiny antibodies in comparison to our own. Antibodies are weapons of the immune system and they bind to the proteins that stick out from the surface of a virus. Human antibodies tend to attack the tips of those proteins, but that's the part influenza mutates most readily. Llama antibodies use their size advantage to wriggle a little bit deeper and attack the parts that flu cannot change.

The team at the Scripps Institute in California infected llamas with multiple types of flu to provoke an immune response. They then scoured llama blood for the most potent antibodies that could attack a wide range of flu strains. They picked four, and then set about building their own synthetic antibody that used elements from each. It was tested on mice, which were given deadly doses of influenza.

"It's very effective, there were 60 different viruses that were used in the challenge and only one wasn't neutralised and that's a virus that doesn't infect humans. The goal here is to provide something that would work from season to season, and also protect you from possible pandemics should they emerge."

From BBC Website

Next Month's Meeting

Our next meeting will be held on 5th February and will feature a talk by our own member Tom Radford, titled "A Personal Choice. A brief history of cactus & succulent growing". I assume Tom will be showing us plants from when he first started growing cacti and succulents – and what he likes to grow now.

The February Table Show will consist of the **Eriosyce** group (cacti) and the **Crassulaceae** group (succulents), along with "plant 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 table show classes use the classifications from the *Guide to Shows 10th Edition* (contact me if you don't have a copy of this).

The Eriosyce group includes *Austrocactus*, *Eriosyce*, *Horridocactus*, *Islaya*, *Neochilenia*, *Neoporteria*, *Pyrrhocactus* and *Thelocephala*.

The Crassulaceae group contains subgroups for *Adromischus*, *Aeonium*, *Crassula*, *Echeveria*, *Sedum* and *Sempervivum*. These subgroups cover many species, including *Adromischus*, *Bryophyllum*, *Cotyledon*, *Kalanchoe*, *Tylecodon*, *Aeonium*, *Greenovia*, *Monanthes*, *Crassula*, *Rochea*, *Dudleya*, *Echeveria*, *Graptopetalum*, *Pachyphytum*, *Tacitus*, *Sedum*, *Jovibarba*, *Orostachys*, *Rosularia*, and *Sempervivum*

Forthcoming Events

Sat 12 th Jan	Isle of Wight	no meeting
Sat 19 th Jan	Portsmouth	Thelocactus and their cultivation – Julian Cooke
Tue 5 th Feb	Southampton	A brief history of cactus & succulent growing – Tom Radford
Sat 9 th Feb	Isle of Wight	Your Pictures and Slides
Sat 16 th Feb	Portsmouth	Origin and Evolution of the Cactaceae – Prof. David Martill
Tue 5 th Mar	Southampton	Bulbs & Succulents in the Roggeveld & Knersvlakte - Richard White
Sat 9 th Mar	Isle of Wight	To be confirmed - David Neville
Sat 16 th Mar	Portsmouth	Propagation of Cacti and Succulents - Dr Tony Roberts
Tue 2 nd Apr	Southampton	Interesting Haworthias - Stirling Baker

Branch website: <http://www.southampton.bcsc.org.uk>
 Facebook : <https://www.facebook.com/southamptonbcsc>