

British Cactus & Succulent Society

Southampton & District Branch Newsletter

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Editorial

I shall keep the editorial short this month since there's quite a lot to fit into the newsletter this month. Have you started watering your plants yet? I gave selected plants a drink a couple of weeks ago, and will probably start to water everything this coming weekend. A *Mammillaria* and some *Aloes* are in flower at present and I expect to see signs of buds on some of the cacti fairly soon!

Announcements

The **2008 Branch programme** and the **2008 Zone Programme** are available from the front table. Please make note of a couple of minor corrections. Firstly, our Branch will not be taking part at Whiteley's Garden Event since the organisers have changed the date when they wish to hold the event. And for the Spring Garden and Flower Show at Broadlands, set-up will be on the 21st, but the event itself runs from 22nd to 24th March.

Talking about the **Spring Flower and Garden Show**, at Broadlands, Romsey, we would greatly appreciate assistance from members for this 3 day event which is held over the Easter Weekend. (Now only a couple of weeks away!) We are likely to have our hands full with Prickly Potting (letting young children pick out a plant and then help them pot it), plant sales and just talking to the public. Remember,

if you help in our marquee then you are entitled to free entry to the event – just use the back entrance (@ Romsey Rapids) and follow the signs for exhibitor car parking. If you are going to be able to help, please let Margaret Corina know.

We are sad to report that one of our members, Thelma Unwin from Bishopstoke, passed away last month.

Zone 9 will be holding a **Convention** on Sunday 20th April, at Hardwicke Village Hall, near Gloucester. Speakers include Martin Lowry (Rebut's Jewels of the Andes), Petr Pavelka (Plant Hunting in Madagascar) and John Miller (Turbinicarpus in Habitat and Cultivation). There will be plant sales and tickets are again £12, including lunch and tea.

Reading Branch have reminded us they hold meetings not that far away from us, so from now on, I will list their meetings in our newsletter. They meet on the third Saturday of each month, at Woodley in Reading.

We have received a thank you letter from the National Society for sponsoring two classes at the **National Show**, which is due to be held in August (at Godmanchester, in Cambridgeshire).

Last Month's Meeting

Plants of Interest

Tom Radford had brought along some *Plants of Interest* and he mentioned they were mostly South African bulbs.

First was *Veltheimia capensis* which he had grown from seed. This particular plant was three years old, and it was getting ready to flower – in this country it tends to flower in late winter. Tom had also brought along some photographs showing us what the pink flowers looked like. The plant is deciduous and the leaves start growing in the Autumn after which the flowers emerge through the growth. David Neville mentioned that he has a *Veltheimia* whose leaves do not die down.

Next was *Haemanthus coccineus* which was starting

to die down. It starts off by flowering late in the summer and then grows leaves afterwards once flowering finishes. This particular plant hadn't flowered yet but it had just about reached flowering size. The flower is a striking orange colour and consists of many smaller florets, so has a bristle brush effect.

Tom had also brought along a couple of plants of *Haemanthus albiflos*. After flowering, the plants produce berries which can be planted and which grow quite readily. These are in the form of a little bulb which first sends a shoot into the ground and then grows some leaves and eventually forms a plant. There was a 9 month old seedling in a 3" pot. Another *H. albiflos* was a slightly bigger plant, and was around three years old. *H. albiflos* forms a white bristle brush flower.

Another haemanthus was a new species from Namibia. Some Haemanthus are evergreen but this one dies down in the summer. Another smaller haemanthus – *H. hirsutus* was also starting to die back. *H. deformis* was a 2 year old seedling. It has white flower spikes and unusual flat leaves.

[Ed – those who have an interest in Haemanthus may want to download some useful RHS notes :

<http://www.rhs.org.uk/publications/plantsman/1205/Haemanthus.pdf>]

Now follow descriptions of the various Members' Talks which were given at the February meeting.

A Personal View of South Africa

Margaret Corina started her talk by mentioning that she wanted to show us some scenery from her trip to South Africa (accompanied by the two Davids) from three years ago. There would be a few plants as well, but her intention was to illustrate the incredible variation in the terrain in the Cape and the Western region of South Africa.

The title slide showed her posing next to a tree aloe. The first slide proper showed part of the flower market in Cape Town. There were many items for sale, including proteas, roses and daisies. If you do go to Cape Town, don't miss it.

Next, we saw a typical dirt road (one of the better ones!) on the way to Clanwilliam. They had taken a detour and we could see the mountains of Gifberg in the background. On to Packhuis Pass, we saw some views showing the varied colours of the rocks and plants. In this region, there are a large number of different plant species, possibly more than anywhere else in the world. Further on down the pass the scenery changed. In a pan, they found conophytums,

ornithogalums and crassulas and they spent 2-3 hours here.

On to Matzikamaberg, we had another scenic view and Margaret apologised for telephone wires in the picture, prompting some in the audience to ask what wires? In fact, they were right in the corner and barely visible. She mentioned that these are a reassuring sight since if you see them in the middle of nowhere, you know there must be people nearby. In the next scene Margaret mentioned that the green grassy plants in the background were rooibos (*Aspalathus linearis*) which is used to make a red bush tea. Wherever you go in South Africa, you tend to be offered either tea, coffee or rooibos.

Some more views showed the different shades of colours of the terrain and the plants. The shrubby vegetation is termed fynbos which is Afrikaans for "fine bush". We also saw a strange arrangement of several rocks balanced on each other, which she called "Alligator Rock". Next we saw a view of a field with a large expanse of yellow flowered plants - this was probably cultivated land being used to grow daisies, since the wild areas tend to contain a mixture of plants and colours.

While driving along, they came across some aloes and yellow flowered acacias. Further on down, there was a little stream and there were more plants growing in this vicinity. One of the pictures showed a red weaver bird and its nest in one of the shrubs. Following on round some rocks, they found that the source of the stream was a small river, and eventually they came across a gorgeous waterfall.

Growing on the side of the road, they saw lots of white flowers of Ornithogalum (Chincherinchee). On to the Knersvlakte, it was again reassuring to see telegraph poles and signs of civilisation – they were not totally lost! The land here is a mish- mash of grit and quartz, and although the plants do like some quartz, you don't find anything growing in the areas which are pure quartz. There was a nice view from Stugers Pass Road, and near here they found mesembs with white flowers and a cotyledon with yellow flowers on the end of tall spikes - perhaps this was *C. orbiculata*. Margaret mentioned you also find some wildlife, and we saw an orange and red beetle feeding from some yellow flowers. There was a view of lots and lots of *Cheiridopsis denticulata* growing in reddish soil – not much chance of this plant being endangered! Nearby, growing in granite rocks and sandstone were more Aloes.

On their way to Kliprand, they were lost for a while but came across a really nice aloe bearing orange red flowers. We could tell it was quite a size from

the next shot which showed David Neville photographing it. By Garies Graveyard, they encountered purple flowers of mesembs and also the yellow flowers of a bulbine (or bulbinella). These had narrow leaves so were probably not *B. aloides*. They also found a fantastic *Avonia quinaria* (formerly *Anacampseros alstonii*) with pink flower buds – the plant was some 7 to 8 inches across!

In the next scene there was an electricity pylon in the shot and Margaret noted that this was made of wood. We also saw views looking up at Areb Hill and a view down from the top which featured some *Ceraria* bushes. It was here that a jack rabbit popped up out of nowhere and almost gave her a heart attack. A surprise like that is not something you need when you're standing on a steep hillside! Margaret also found three bushes of *Pelargonium spinosum* along with seed capsules. It was not a plant she had ever expected to come across. As they moved away from the coast and went inland, the soil suddenly became very sandy and orangey/yellow in colour, while in the background, the hills were a contrasting black. Near here, in a quartz patch, they found *Lapidaria margaretae*. Initially, these were very hard to notice, but once you got your eye in you could see lots of them.

They left behind a rainy Springbok and went to Bushmanland in search of halfmens (*Pachypodium namaquanum*). They started to see some of these high up on the hillsides. According to Margaret, to get closer required a "bummer of a climb" due to her short legs. Shouts of "Come on, what are you going sideways for?" from the others weren't making things any easier. At the top, quite a few of the plants had been damaged, perhaps by animals or by fire. We saw some views down from the hill, and saw their car in the distance, along with a wind-powered water pump and some cattle. We saw a picture of Margaret holding on to one of the pachypodiums - the lower parts of the stem are not covered in any spines so they are huggable! All the plants were taller than David Neville and many were in flower.

Next, we saw the ultimate in accommodation – a communal weaver bird nest with a penthouse. The structure was so large that its weight was causing it to separate. These nests are a problem since their weight can bring telegraph wires down. At McDougalls Bay, just south of Port Nolloth, we saw a glimpse of the Atlantic Ocean. Here they found *Fenestraria* – only the leaf tips were visible in the sand so it would have been very hard to find these plants were it not for their flowers. Near the border with Namibia, we also saw the Orange River, near

the border with Namibia. It was very hot at the Richtersveldt National Park, with temperatures approaching 37°C (99°F).

Heading back to Vanrhynsdorp and Matzikamaberg, they saw a different view of some of the mountains they had seen earlier. At the little Karoo, they came across more aloes in flower, and two rosettes of *Haworthia lockwoodii* growing next to each other. At Seven Weeks Pass, they found some non-succulent *Pelargoniums*. We saw David Corina bent over staring at the ground looking at some mesembs - Margaret mentioned that hours of that every day did cause backache.

Calitzdorp is known for its Ostrich farms and at one of these, the farmer willingly took them out to look at some of the succulent plants growing on his land. However, he had not warned them about the ostriches which were wandering around and these can be quite aggressive. They did find the dark green leaf tips of *Haworthia maughanii*. The plants varied in size, having 2 to 9 leaves. The group were quite nervous about the ostriches and were glad to get out of there - David Neville admitted it was the first time that he'd felt threatened by a bird! Margaret showed us a close up of one of the ostriches only a few feet away but did explain that this time there was a fence between her and the bird.

The next picture showed a church situated at the top of a hill, along with a road zigzagging up the hill. In the Karoo, "Bonnet mountain" looked like a hat and on one of the hills, a windswept tree looked like a poodle. We saw some more pictures of rocky terrain and then a nice clump of *Euphorbia suzannae*. They also found *Muiria hortense* here. Towards the end of their journey, we saw a shot of David Neville looking at Table Mountain, and the Corinas posing in front of a huge cyphostemma with golden bark – it must have been around 9 feet tall. Margaret's talk ended with a view of a sunset over the Atlantic.

Sempervivum CD

After the break we had a look at one of several CDs which Ivor had brought along. This particular disc was a catalogue on CD-ROM from Fernwood Nursery (based in Davon) who hold the UK national collections of *Sempervivum*, *Jovibarba* and *Rosularia*. They grow hundreds of *Sempervivums* in a wide range of colours and combinations and the CD is designed to allow you view images of these plants. The CD costs £6.50 including P&P and contains 1700 images of *Sempervivum* and *Jovibarba* species and cultivars. The CD also contains other reference information and other material, including some pictures showing how

Fernwood grow their plants in the open air.

Broadlands 2007

The next speaker was David Neville, who showed us some pictures he had taken at the Spring Flower and Garden Show at Broadlands, in 2007. We saw some scenes of crowds of people milling around the sales tables and various members performing their duties at the event. There were photos of David Corina, Vinay, Peter Down and Glenn helping the children with their Prickly Potting - some kids seemed more interested than others! Bruce, Derek Prior, and Geoff Card were helping with plant sales. We also saw Merilyn handing out the potting packs (and making a strange gesture to the camera) and Ivor in full flow describing how to grow plants from cuttings.

Home and Away

Next, we saw some pictures from Paul Maddison. The first view showed his daughter posing in front of some kniphofias, followed by a view of some more kniphofias and redskin dahlias. This was followed by a shot of him standing in a nicely kept cottage garden. We were getting all ready to acknowledge his gardening skills when he admitted that the pictures were all taken at the Sissinghurst Castle Garden. Next, there were several views taken from the tower, allowing us to view different parts of the gardens, including the maze.

Back at Paul's house, we saw a picture of a deer in his garden (later on he also showed a picture of three young roe deer), and some discs of fungi growing on a tree stump. A close-up of these showed fascinating bands of intricate circular growth patterns. We then saw a couple of his cacti – a young *Cephalocereus senilis* and a grafted (yellow) *Chamaecereus*. Next was a picture of a baby Great Woodpecker – he heard a noise outside and managed to photograph it. We then saw the orangey-red flowers of *Cotyledon undulata*, followed by the plant itself, which had greyish leaves and was quite leggy. Finally we saw Paul holding a fairly large pumpkin, and then a shot of some super-sized pumpkins at the Netley Pumpkin Festival. Some of these weigh over a thousand pounds! After the competition, the pumpkins are hollowed out and used for a sailing race in Lymington.

Gran Canaria

The final speaker was David Neville, who showed us some pictures taken on a trip to Gran Canaria which he and Margaret Corina undertook in October 2007. First, we saw *Beaucarnea recurvata* growing in the hotel where they were staying. The plants

were 8 to 9 feet tall and in flower. David mentioned they grow quickly and were probably less than 10 years old. Next was a palm (possibly *Washingtonia*) with beautiful blue-green leaves which were 8 feet across. This was followed by a *Plumeria* (frangipani) with wonderful scented pink flowers. This comes from the same family (and has the same flower structure) as *Pachypodium*.

A scene from the hills in the centre of Gran Canaria looking out towards Tenerife showed that the islands are quite a dry and barren place, but there were some shrubs and patches of green on the hills. *Aeonium simsii* has reddish leaves in the dry period and the plant was waiting for a wet spell to start growing again. Most of the succulents grow at lower altitudes but there are a few at higher places.

We saw a couple of plants of *Pachypodium lameri* planted in a garden. The two plants were growing side by side and both were about 5 feet tall, but one was thin and slender and the other was about three times the diameter and had a nice bottle shape. A *Jatropha multifida* shrub was about 5 or 6 feet tall and it was bearing fruits and purple flower remains. David mentioned that the leaf shape was reminiscent of cannabis leaves, leading to a discussion between those in the audience familiar with this subject!

We saw a church with a large *Phoenix canariensis* palm and *Dracaena draco* (both native to the Canaries) growing in the foreground. Both of these plants are grown widely on the islands. David mentioned that the islands are quite small, but it was fun to drive in the hilly terrain. Back in the wild, they found the endemic *Senecio kleinia* with flowers and seed heads. These vary in form on the different islands. It is quite tricky to stop and take pictures of things because the roads are not very wide and there isn't much off-road parking in these areas. They also came across *Euphorbia decidua* and *Euphorbia balsamifera* – the latter has stems covered in a sticky resin.

At Las Palmas, they headed up into the hills. There were pine needles on the ground, and they found plenty of *Aeoniums* growing here. The rosettes were 2-4 inches across but it was hard to identify the species. There was an Eucalyptus tree and we also saw 2-3 stems of *Aeonium undulatum* which forms arching single-stemmed rosettes – this plant never branches. The stems were just coming into growth.

A view looking across from the top of one of the hills revealed lush green valleys in the centre of the island. This land must be irrigated since the hillsides were quite barren. They found opuntias everywhere

and crassulas growing by the roadside. We also saw the vibrant purple / pink flowers of an Ipomoea (morning glory). There was a large *Euphorbia aphylla* (a native plant) which was ½ metre high and wide, and David mentioned that the hillsides were covered with various Euphorbias. There was a little cove with a building built into the base of the rock. In one section of the town, all the buildings in the main street were painted in blue and white. We also saw a front view of the Hotel Santa Catalina.

The final set of pictures were taken at the Botanic Gardens, which are situated in a canyon. We saw the Dragon tree (*Dracaena draco*) with fruit-laden flower spikes, and an aeonium with around a dozen heads. We saw Echinocereus in flower and *Euphorbia canariensis*, and in the background a multi-headed yucca growing into a nice tree, and the pale stems of a stick ceropegia (probably *C. dichotoma*) with maroon flowers. *Opuntia galapageia* has upright stems and chain-like growths and it goes on to form a truck with huge great areoles with massive spines. This is a unique form of growth and we saw a close up of the heavily-spined trunk which indeed looked vicious.

There were mature stems of Cephalocereus with a cephalium atop the stem and to the right, Espostoa which forms a cephalium when much younger. *Ferocactus robustus* had formed a large low growing clump and featured the occasional flower bud and numerous yellow seed pods. There was a magnificent *Dracaena cinnabari* - the main trunk was 15-18 inches thick and it was 5 feet across. *Agave attenuata* was rampant, and there were some stems of Trichocereus in flower, even though it was the middle of the day. There was a clump of Abromeitiella rosettes – these look like a haworthia but it is actually a bromeliad. There was a nice agave 6-8" across – someone in the audience asked whether it was *A. parryi* but David mentioned he thought it was something else. We saw Margaret posing in front of a Furcraea (related to Agave) which was covered in cobwebs. There were some nice specimens of *Echinocereus grusonii*, and 2 fantastic *Ferocactus glaucescens*. We saw a close up of the yellow flowers of *E. grusonii* – these are tiny in relation to the size of the plant. There was an aloe with wonderful deep red leaves. David ended with some shots of a hillside containing many agaves and clumps of golden yellow flowers which were aeoniums coming into flower. The final slide featured an aeonium in flower – the stems looked like *A. undulata* but it was a different species since the plant had branching stems.

Vinay Shah

Table Show Results

There were 20 entries in the table show at the February meeting.

| | Cacti – Copiapoa Group | Succulents – Crassula Group |
|--------------|---|---|
| Open | (1) B Beckerleg Copiapoa longistaminea | (1) B Beckerleg Crassula susannae |
| | (2) T Grech Copiapoa sp. | (2) J Roskilly Crassula hottentot |
| | (3) – | (3) J Roskilly Adromischus halesowensis |
| Intermediate | (1) J Roskilly Copiapoa humilis | (1) J Roskilly Crassula ausensis ssp. titanopsis |
| | (2) J Roskilly Neoporteria occulta | (2) J Roskilly Tylecodon minima |
| | (3) P Clemow Neoporteria multicolor | (3) P Down Crassula rosularis |

Ivor Biddlecombe

Snippets

Plant Names a la G. Rowley

It was good to see Gordon Rowley's article on the naming of plants in the December journal.

Good common sense as usual. Over the winter I have been reading through some of the early journals (the first 10 years) of the N.C.S.S. (National C.S.S.) when I came across Gordon's contribution to the 'who ha' going on in the journal about Curt Backeberg and his habit of giving every variation of a species a new name. That was over 50 years ago.

In the past, plant hunters named too many plants as new species when the plant was often a different form of a known species.

People who collect and grow cacti especially 'specialists' are usually interested in every variation and flower colour form available and need some form of identification to separate the various forms.

I congratulate John Pilbeam and David Hunt on their recent book a Sulco. Gallery where the variations are clearly illustrated, the different forms identified by collectors numbers (e.g. HS 100).

Sadly *Sulcorebutias* seem to be one of the few genera where collectors numbers are available for nearly every plant.

Read Gordon's article again, it is very wise, I think. Incidentally weren't we lucky to have had him as our president for so many years, he has contributed learned articles and some very funny (humorous) ones for over 50 years.

Peter Down

The following article from *The Telegraph* was submitted by Jim Roskilly :

Medicinal plants at risk of extinction

Hundreds of plants used to make medicines are facing extinction, botanists warn.

A report by Botanical Gardens Conservation International, which represents botanic gardens from 120 countries, claims that as many as 400 species are at risk from over-collection and deforestation.

More than 50 per cent of drugs prescribed by doctors are derived from chemicals first identified in plants. Experts fear that potential cures for diseases such as cancer and HIV may be lost before they can be discovered.

Plants at risk include yew trees, the bark of which is used in the cancer drug paclitaxel; hoodia, which is being used to develop weight-loss treatments; and autumn crocus, a natural treatment for gout which is also being developed to fight leukaemia.

Half of the world's species of magnolias, which contain the chemical honokiol, used in traditional Chinese medicine to treat cancers and heart disease,

were also identified as being at risk.

The report expresses concern for the five billion people worldwide who still rely on traditional plant-based medicine rather than the chemical substitutes used by much of the developed world.

The secretary-general of the BGCI, Sara Oldfield, said: "Medicinal plants harvested from the wild remain of immense importance for the wellbeing of millions of people around the world. Over 70,000 plant species are thought to be medicinal."

The Daily Telegraph. 20 January 2008

Next Month's Meeting

The next meeting will be held on the 1st of April and will feature a talk on Mesembryanthemums by Terry Smale.

The April Table Show will consist of the **Rebutia** group (cacti) and the **Echeveria** subgroup (succulents). Please note that you can submit more than one entry in any of the classes.

The **Rebutia** group contains 9 genera : *Rebutia*, *Aylosteria*, *Cylindrorebutia*, *Digitorebutia*, *Mediolobivia*, *Neorebutia*, *Setirebutia*, *Sulcorebutia* and *Weingartia*..

The **Echeveria** subgroup contains 11 genera, including *Echeveria*, *Dudleya*, *Graptopetalum*, *Pachyphytum*, and *Tacitus*.

A reminder for the Committee that the next Committee meeting will be held on the 17th of March.

Forthcoming Events

| | | | |
|----------------------|------|---------------|---|
| Fri 14 th | Mar | Isle of Wight | Society Slides "Dudleya" - Photographs by the late Sonia Barker-Fricker |
| Sat 15 th | Mar | Portsmouth | "Basic Botany for Cactophiles" – Mal Weobley |
| Sat 15 th | Mar | Reading | "Variations – Mammillaria and Coryphantha" – Chris Davies |
| Mon 17 th | Mar | Southampton | Branch Committee Meeting |
| Sat 22 nd | Mar- | Romsey | Display & Plant Sales + Prickly Potting @ Spring Garden and |
| Mon 24 th | Mar | | Flower Show, Broadlands, Romsey |
| Tue 1 st | Apr | Southampton | "Mesembryanthemums" – Terry Smale |
| Fri 18 st | Apr | Isle of Wight | "Argentina – Part 2" – Cliff Thompson |
| Sat 19 th | Apr | Portsmouth | Bring and Buy Sale |
| Sat 19 th | Apr | Reading | "Socotra 2007" – Bob Potter |
| Tue 6 th | May | Southampton | "Grafting – Practical and Slides" – Stuart Riley |

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