

# British Cactus & Succulent Society

## Southampton & District Branch Newsletter

March 2009



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## Editorial

January proved to be a bitterly cold month and that continued into the first week of February, which also saw lots of snow around the country, leading to the decision to cancel February's monthly meeting. Margaret made a point of phoning everyone to let them know, and I hope no one had a wasted journey.

## Announcements

Copies of the **Branch programme** and the **Zone 11 programme** for 2009 are available from the front table.

Our meeting hall will not be available on the first Tuesday in April, so the "April" meeting will be brought forward by a week – meaning we'll have 2 meetings this month.

On checking arrangements for the **Spring Garden Show at Broadlands**, we have learnt that this event will **not** go ahead. This is a bit of a blow since this event was a good form of publicity and quite profitable for us. Please amend your diaries accordingly!

David Kirkbright has sent out a reminder asking members to renew their **subscriptions** for 2009 promptly. This will ensure that they receive their March Journals in the main mail-out, and it also reduces overall costs for the society.

Our branch website ([www.southampton.bcsc.org.uk](http://www.southampton.bcsc.org.uk)) has plenty of space for additional web pages, so if any members want to publish a few pictures or information related to the branch or our hobby, please get in touch with me.

We have had some correspondence from Oxford Branch recently. On 26<sup>th</sup> March, they have Ray Stephenson speaking about succulents in Bulgaria and on 23<sup>rd</sup> April they have Rene Geissler who will be speaking about propagation. In addition, on May 3<sup>rd</sup>, they will be hosting a plant auction – further details of this are available on the front table.

## Last Month's Meeting

Peter thanked members for making it the January meeting, after what had proved to be a very cold weekend.

The meeting featured branch members showing us digital pictures and slides covering a variety of subjects. Thanks are due to Colin and Lorraine for loaning us their digital projector.

**Paul Maddison** started proceedings with a picture of water feature, which was a statue of a girl sitting on a bench in front of a pool of water. He mentioned this had been taken on a visit to Wisley last April.

There were various themes of plants and in one of the plots there was a small greenhouse with a few succulents. Inside this, there were a group of plants including an aloe, growing in a hanging basket. David Neville mentioned this was a tree aloe, so it was amusing to see it planted like that. Next were some bonsai trees, courtesy of Heron's Nursery. We saw a close up of *Ulmus parviflora* which was being grown in a semi-formal Japanese style where you want a thick base and also a curve in the stem, although Paul mentioned that the plant looked like it was a bit neglected.

We then saw some strange cylinders of straw which had been wrapped with polythene covers. A sign near these explained that these were experimental "banana coats", designed to protect sensitive plants which were not frost hardy (such as bananas), with the polythene keeping the rain off.

It was starting to drizzle and there were thunderclouds in the distance, Paul headed inside to the glass houses. We saw scenes of alpines and orchids and various other things being grown here.

A shot featured several alpinines and then we saw a close up of *Pleione bulbocodioides*. There was also a collection of about 30-40 alpinines (Saxifragas and the like), growing in Tufu which is a type of volcanic rock. We saw another group of alpinines including one with very deep blue flowers, perhaps a gentian. It was amazing how well the camera had captured the colour. There were also cyclamens, ferns and grape hyacinths. We saw close-ups of some of the Pleiones, showing their richly marked throats. One of these had yellow outer petals which is a relatively new colour break - the names on the labels suggested these were hybrids.

We then saw a picture of Paul and his wife posing in front of one of the new glass houses. Some small plants had planted out as hedging, and it would be interesting to see how they develop over time. In the desert section, there were a variety of different plants from all over the world, all planted together. We saw examples of *Euphorbia trigona* and *Echeveria* cv. "Ballerina", and clumps of cacti such as Mammillaria and Notocacti planted out in a bed, along with some tall cerei. We also saw plants of *Ferocactus glaucescens* and *Ferocactus macrodiscus*, and some blue bodied stems of *Browningia hertlingiana*. There were also large clumps of Euphorbias and Pachypodiums. Amongst some succulents was *Discorea elephantipes* - despite the name, it looks more like a tortoise than an elephant, and it is quite deep rooted and slow growing. We also saw some orchids (Phalaenopsis and Dendrobiums) in flower.

The next slide was another water feature to complement the first slide - a "Benny Hill" shot of a strategically positioned lad standing in front of a jet of water. This wasn't quite the end of the pictures and Paul showed some pictures taken at a members' visit to Mark and Rebecca Jakins' collection. The quality of plants was very good and we saw some overall views along with closeups of a Mammillaria, a *Thelocactus hexaedrophorus*, a *Mammillaria flavicentra* with a ring of flowers, a Notocactus and another Mammillaria with curly red seed pods.

Next we saw a stag beetle (held in Paul's hand showing how large it was) - probably some 3-4 inches long. Then we saw some alpinines and some field orchids, and some views of alpinines growing in habitat, in Saint Morritz in Switzerland. We saw further views of these growing almost at the summit of mountains. The last photo was a general view, taken near Davos.

Next were some pictures from **Margaret Corina**. Her presentation was titled Tenerife 2008. She mentioned that she first visited the Canaries last year and wished she had known about them earlier. She had gone to the islands with David Neville. The things that make this island different from the others are the extinct volcano "Teide" and also a dragon tree (*Dracaena draco*) which is supposed to be the oldest one around.

The Canary islands have lots of Aeoniums. The other thing you look for is *Euphorbia canieriensis*. They didn't get close enough to get a photograph of them on Gran Canaria, but they did find some on Tenerife. In the corner of the photo there were some Opuntias - unfortunately these are everywhere. The Euphorbias were large, some almost as tall as her, and some were coming into flower. We also saw *Aeonium tabuliforme* which was absolutely flat as a pancake. There was some regeneration of Euphorbias and we saw a young plant a few inches high. A plant with stems growing in the form of pale green segments might have been *Ceropegia fusca*.

There were more pictures the landscape, including rocks which Margaret described as "lovely". Masca is a nice place, although the wind funnels through the gaps between the hills. The roads are narrow and winding, and it is difficult to stop to look at plants - you are literally taking your life in your hands. There are fascinating things growing here, and we saw a close up of a Monanthes. These are succulents which are related to Sempervivums and Aeoniums. These grow in the most amazing places, rooting themselves in some place where it seems they may fall off the hillsides at any moment. Next were some clumps of *Monanthes laxiflora*, these had leaves which were more succulent, and starry orange-red flowers. In some areas, there was more moisture and the plants were lusher. We also saw clumps of Monanthes and Aeonium growing close together. Many more were visible but out of reach.

*Aeonium tabuliforme* was saucer shaped and growing completely flat, some 4-5 inches across. Margaret wondered whether we perhaps we fuss over them too much in cultivation? The Greenovias here had opened up a little more. They spent a day going up to the top of the volcano and down the other side. At the higher altitudes, they found a few shrubby Euphorbias. We also saw a forest and the tree line. They continued to find pretty rocks everywhere, and the lava forms some amazing scenes - although it looked soft, it was actually quite hard. A view over the sea showed two of the other islands, La Gomera

and El Hierro, and another view showed a road cut through the middle of the lava.

We saw more landscapes, and a view of the mountain, showing the wires for the cable car which runs up to the summit. It was very hot and they were glad to find the visitor's centre where there was a cafe where one could get a drink in an air-conditioned room. The scenery was totally alien and the rocks looked vicious in some places. There were various colours to the rocks - reds, plums, greys and black. One thing you find up there is Echiiums - these seem much prettier and are small and furry and deeply coloured whereas in this country they tend to be green and lanky. There were some gorgeous examples. On the way back down they were on the other side of the mountain, and the terrain was different. We saw David Neville overlooking a hill with clouds below them, and Margaret said it was a very strange feeling looking down at the soft white clouds from above.

They found some Greenovias in a small canyon - she had never seen so many and all seemed so healthy. The whole hillside was covered in these plants and many were in bloom, featuring yellow flowered heads. It was unbelievable and there must have been thousands of plants here. They went on to a park where there were some spectacular Echiiums and we saw a close up of the tiny pink flowers growing in between the green leaves. The last shot was taken from their hotel, with a view over the bay, featuring a cliff and deep blue sea - Margaret said there were dolphins swimming in the bay.

**Richard White** presented pictures taken at the National Show back in August last year. The event was held at the Wood Green animal centre - at Godmanchester in Cambridgeshire. We started with some overall views of the hall, showing the Show plants at the far end, and rows of plant sales at the near end. We also saw some of the special interest group stands which were dotted around the hall. Ray Stephenson was at the Sedum Society stand, and we also saw the Tephrocactus Study Group's stand.

Richard mentioned he went round the classes more or less in sequence, taking pictures of whatever he liked the look of. With the first class, Ariocarpus, he had photographed the winning plant as well as the show card so you could see the winner's name - Dr Gillian Evison (who spoke at our branch last year). Class 4 featured some nice Astrophytms. Richard also took some pictures from vertically above the plants, showing their natural geometry and symmetry. Margaret said these overhead shots were easy for him, given his height! He had also taken

shots of some of the cards showing the class sponsors. Bob Wilson from Southend had won the prize for 2 Astrophytums and Peter mentioned that he and Geoff Card had been on overseas trips with Bob.

Richard mentioned that he also took photos of the class labels to remind him of the class of plants on display. He had also photographed the plant labels but had left these slides out, in order to test David Neville's identification skills! We saw the "horse crippler" *Homalocephala texensis* followed by *Echinocactus horizonthalonius* and these were hard to tell apart. There was whole class dedicated to *Echinocereus grusonii*, with different features such as yellow areoles, white areoles, spineless and also a cristate form.

With digital cameras you don't have to worry about running out of "film" since memory is cheap these days - but one still does have to remember to have enough battery power. He had taken some images with and without flash, and mentioned that the cameras tend to choose the colour balance themselves and can sometimes guess wrongly. With some models, you can specify the lighting conditions. We saw large clumps of Mammillaria and Notocactus, and got to class 22 - "2 Mammillarias" - which happened to be one of the classes sponsored by Southampton branch.

We saw an *Arrojadoa*, and *Reicheocactus pseudoreicheanus* with hundreds of heads, some of which were going dichotomous. *Sulcorebutia arenacea* is another plant which tends to do this. An *Echinopsis* was in flower (relatively few plants were in bloom at this time of the year) as was also Tom Jenkins' *Copiapoa humilis* with yellow flowers. Richard said that the classes where there were multiple entries of smaller plants were perhaps more inspiring to us than the classes with huge entries which we might never hope to grow. Another plant of Gillian's which has won a prize was *Uebelmannia pectinatus*. David Neville mentioned most of her plants had red 1st prize cards next to them, and she had gained the highest number of points at the show. We carried on seeing more of Richard's pictures, and going through about a hundred of these, it was time for the mid-meeting tea break.

After the break, we moved on to see some of Ivor Biddlecombe's pictures. Ivor mentioned that some of these picture were intended as hints for members to help at various event we would hold later this year. We started at Hilliers Arboretum and saw a view of the Education Centre, which is where we

put on our displays. The gardens themselves are beautiful and we saw a magnolia and a camellia in flower. We also saw one of Bruce's *Echinopsis* plants which was part of our display in flower, with pink blooms. Looking out through the window, we saw general view of the gardens. Ivor had also included picture showing the inside of the Visitor's centre, which is situated opposite the Education centre and leads to the main entrance to the gardens. In the early years, we did hold our displays in the Visitors Centre, but they prefer to host us in the Education Centre. We saw some pictures of the displays and also a view of Margaret and Jim near the sales table.

We moved on to Romsey where we saw Margaret helping with "Prickly Potting". We also saw a view of the plants in our display. There was one occasion when we held a show on the first day and changed to a display between the Saturday and Sunday. Ivor mentioned that putting on displays or shows at this sort of venue are good since we may get a thousand visitors seeing the plants whereas the most we'd get at a conventional branch show might be fifty or hundred. We saw a view of the marquee and then some views of the display plants and various members (including Richard and myself) helping out.

Next were some pictures from the 2008 National, taken using his new Canon digital SLR camera. We saw *Ariocarpus*, *Notocactus magnificus*, and *Opuntia clavidoidea* - some of these plants were 2 feet across. We also saw the plant which goes under the name of "Fred" with bits of green and yellow and red - this is a monstrose form of *Mammillaria bocasana*. One of his favourite species is *Lithops* and we saw Brian Fern's round tray containing 151 different species, all numbered and identified on an accompanying sheet. This picture was taken in 2004 and Ivor felt that in 2008 the tray did not seem in as good a condition as previously. We also saw some pictures of a *Hoodia* with minute flowers and group displays of various *Haworthias*, variations of *Echinocactus grusonii*, and mixed *Agaves*.

Ivor mentioned he attended the Newbury show, mainly to see some of the woodcarvings, and we saw a few examples of these. There were three different cactus nurseries there, including "Plantlovers". There weren't too many choice plants for sale but there was a good selection for the general public. The one seller who did have choice plants seemed very expensive. He felt Newbury Show was well worth attending, and equal to or better than the New Forest Show.

That linked us to the next set of pictures, which were from the New Forest Show. We saw a display by Garside Cacti and also some Carnivorous plants, followed by our display. This year we were in the main marquee and this was better than our previous spot near the entrance - we had more room and things were generally more comfortable. He thought the black background for our display looked good. We also show shots of some of the prize vegetables on display in the Vegetable Association stands, and a view of Jim looking at some of the displays.

It was time for some animals. Ivor included shots of an Alpaca which apparently spat at someone just moments after he took the picture, and a black ram with 4 fierce horns. We also show a horse jumping over a fence and a nice carving of wild cats. This was around 4 feet across and carved from a single piece of wood, and probably African in origin.

We then saw some pictures from the Portsmouth Autumn show from 2008. They have a nice hall for the show but they just don't get support from the public. He had included a picture of Brian Plunkett who sadly passed away in November. We saw *Ferocactus macrodiscus*, *Mammillaria perez de la rosa* (Jim Roskilly's large specimen died recently) and a *Thelocactus*.

Ivor's final set of slides featured our attendance at the Solent Fuchsia Show. We had a small display, only 6 feet long - and it also happened to be the hottest weekend of the year. We saw a view of the Orchid stall behind us and a semi-bonsai fuchsia with white flowers, along with some other super Fuchsia specimens. There was one massive Fuchsia plant with white and pink flowers which had been arranged in tiers.

The final presenter for the evening was **Peter Down** who showed us some conventional slides. First was *Agave potatorum* var *verschaffeltii* which is a miniature and which threw up a flower spike when around 7-8 inches across. The flower spike grew to 2m (7 ft) tall and we saw it photographed against the background of a blue sky followed by a picture of the individual yellow inflorescences. Some of these set seed, and Peter said these were an amazing design - stacked just like Pringles crisps in the seed capsule.

For the last 20 years or so, he has been going on trips to continental nurseries in Belgium, Germany and Holland and he was going to show us pictures from some of these trips. The first slides featured the De Herdt collection in Belgium, from around 20 years ago. They have plenty of room and had

planted out many items, creating a colours and shapes, which was really fascinating. There were many cereus types, with a few succulents stuck in between. There were also a number of epiphytic cacti. At this point, David Neville mentioned that he had picked out some backup slides to possibly show this evening, and they were of the exact same collection - an amazing coincidence!

We saw a collection of cristates and Peter dated this as taken in 1988. There were also large specimens of *Echinocactus grusonii*. We moved on to see a collection of Uebelmannias at Uhlig, which is situated in the south of Germany, near Stuttgart, which is very far from where they stayed. No space was wasted with plants crammed everywhere. We saw grafts of the relatively newly discovered *Aztekium hintonii*. Peter thought David Neville had seen this in habitat in Mexico, but David assured him that he had not. We also saw a multi-headed *Thelocactus*.

We moved on to Exotica, the nursery run by Ernst Specks, who came to our 50th Anniversary convention. Ernst specialises entirely in succulents and the plants we saw are sometimes referred to as "TCPs" which stands for turnips, carrots, parsnips - a nickname which alludes to the fact that many of these plants have underground storage organs. One of the photos featured Elizabeth Pendleton who used to run the BCSS Round Robins. We also saw Terry Edney and Geoff Card. We saw a large cycad and Peter reckoned that Ernst must have the most amazing collection of succulents anywhere. We also saw *Sarcocaulons*, and *Euphorbia piscidermis* which is rare and expensive, as many of Ernst's plants tend to be. We also saw Geoff bending over a large plant of *Dioscorea (Testudinaria) elephantipes* - Peter mentioned that Margaret has one about half that size.

They then visited a nursery which had thousands of magnificent plants but which wouldn't let them buy any because they had visited on a day when they didn't have any staff to handle plant sales. There were examples of *Melocactus azureus*, *Ferocactus* and *Astrophytum*s which were around 6 inches tall. This was the van den Linden nursery and it is about a mile from Cok Grootsholten, who also runs a good nursery. We saw more plants of *Pachypodium*, a *Ferocactus* with intense red spines and *Pachycereus pringlei*. It really was sickening to be amongst all these plants and yet not be allowed to buy any of them. There were further examples of white coloured *Euphorbias*, another *Pachycereus pringlei* and some woolly *Pilosocereus*.

Next were some plants from a private collection (Hans Biesheuvel, I believe). We saw *Pilosocereus* and large clumps of *Echinocactus grusonii* and also saw some familiar faces in the form of Paul Klaassen and Geoff Card. There was also a nice spineless form of *E. grusonii*. Peter mentioned that at the National Show, he had counted 8 different forms of this species. We saw a *cristate Notocactus leninghausii* and a variegated *Agave potatorum*, and a *Ferocactus* with pointed flower buds.

We also saw a woolly *espostoa lanata* with dead flower remains, a *Melocactus* next to a gourd-like succulent which probably couldn't be identified until it forms leaves and flowers, and an *Agave* with some frills on the leaves which David Neville thought was probably *A. toumeyana* or *A. parviflora*. We saw a large collection of *Uebelmannias* with some white ornamental rock for decoration.

A picture at De Herdt showed people queuing to pay for their purchases - we saw Paul Klaassen, Jan and Peter Collard, Anthony Mitchell, Colin Parker (Southend), and Peter Ridlington. The picture was from 1998. We saw more different coloured *Euphorbias* in shades of green and white, and a lovely blue *Pilosocereus*, and a variegated ornamental *Agave*. Peter said he remembered one of these changing hands for something like £200. Next was a *Clivia*, intended as encouragement for me to continue with my cultivation of those plants. We saw a large *Echinocereus* and a *cereus* showing a nice spiral torsion at a nursery in Belgium and also a crested *cereus*. Finishing off, we saw an *euphorbia* at Ernst Specks and a *Cissus* or *Cyphostema* and an *Adenia* in foreground. We ended with a tired looking Len Evans from Coventry having a rest, and Peter hoped we didn't feel like that after his session.

Vinay Shah

## Branch Committee meeting

A committee meeting was held on 19th January.

Branch funds remain healthy although it seems that we will earn substantially less interest this year. 55 newsletters were posted during the Christmas mail-out, and currently we have 71 members

There was some discussion about a questionnaire sent out by the Society to branch chairmen, asking about their views on the Zone Charter.

Some publicity posters in A4/A5 sizes would be printed to put up in Libraries, etc.

Dot mentioned that since not all the library books are displayed during the meeting, she was thinking of providing a request slip which members can fill in and give to her if they want a particular book reserved.

Arrangements for future events were discussed. Plants would need to be purchased for the Prickly Potting event (due in April) and we would re-check that the event was going ahead before doing so. The Garden Weekend at Whiteley has been moved to 6<sup>th</sup> – 7<sup>th</sup> June, and this date unfortunately clashes with the Portsmouth summer show, so we will not be able to take part.

Vinay Shah

## Next Month's Meeting

The next meeting will be held on March 31<sup>st</sup> (not April 6<sup>th</sup> !) and will feature Eddy Harris. I have no idea what "Round and About" refers to, so it will be as much of a surprise for me as for you!

The next table show will consist of the **Echinocactus** group (cacti) and the **Agave** group (succulents). Please note that you can submit more than one entry in any of the classes.

The Echinocactus group includes *Echinocactus*, *Ferocactus*, *Homalocephala*, and *Leuchtenbergia*.

The Agave group includes *Agave*, *Beaucarnea*, *Beschorneria*, *Calibanus*, *Dasyliirion*, *Dracaena*, *Furcraea*, *Hesperaloe*, *Manfreda*, *Nolina*, *Samuela* and *Yucca*.

A reminder for Committee members that a committee meeting will be held on 16<sup>th</sup> March.

## Forthcoming Events

Tue	3 <sup>rd</sup>	Mar	Southampton	Travels in Southern Patagonia' – Anna & Martin Sheader
Fri	20 <sup>th</sup>	Mar	Isle of Wight	Branch Quiz & Members' slides
Mon	16 <sup>th</sup>	Mar	Southampton	Branch Committee Meeting @ 79 Shirley Avenue
Sat	21 <sup>st</sup>	Mar	Portsmouth	A Visit to Kiel - Tom Radford
Tue	31 <sup>st</sup>	Mar	Southampton	Round and About - Eddy Harris
Sat	11 <sup>th</sup>	Apr	Southampton	<del>Display / Plant Sales @ Spring Garden Show,</del>
Mon	13 <sup>th</sup>	Apr		<del>Broadlands, Romsey - cancelled</del>
Fri	20 <sup>th</sup>	Apr	Isle of Wight	(title to be confirmed) - Cliff Thompson
Sat	18 <sup>th</sup>	Apr	Portsmouth	Bring and Buy Sale
Tue	5 <sup>th</sup>	May	Southampton	Mini Judges Course - Cathy Darbon