British Cactus & Succulent Society

Southampton & District Branch Newsletter

March 2016

Branch Secretary
David Neville
6 Parkville Road
Swaythling
Southampton
Hampshire
SO16 2JA
davnev@btopenworld.com
(023) 80551173 or
07974 191354

Newsletter Editor
Vinay Shah
29 Heathlands Road
Eastleigh
Hampshire
SO53 1GU
sotonbcss@gmail.com
(023) 80261989

Editorial

There's still some cold weather around, but there are some signs of spring around, with a few daffodils opening. Of course there is still a risk of frost but overall we seem to have escaped with a very mild winter. March is usually the month when I start watering plants but I'll hold off for a few more days until we get a warm spell.

Announcements

If you haven't done so already, 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 - or you can renew from the BCSS website, at: http://www.bcss.org.uk/paypal.php

Martin and Anna-Liisa Sheader have kindly donated a copy of the new book on Austrocactus to the Branch Library.

Last Month's Meeting

The 2012 National Show

A year ago we cancelled our meeting because of the weather in January and February – and decided it would be good to have pictures from the National Show. David didn't have any photographs at all because he was judging and selling at the show, so he asked the committee - and the pictures he would show were from Sue Wilson, Ben Turner and Vinay Shah and Ivor Biddlecombe. The Pictures vary in the subject matter – there were not too many of the sales and general show, but still a lovely mixture of plants to look at. Altogether he had 800 pictures to choose from, but the people must have been in the bar, because less than half the pictures were in sharp focus. The hall is quite dark - and the shutter speeds may have been slow. He asked for people in the audience to put their hands up if they had been to a National Show and something like 80-90% responded. It is held every 4 years, and is always in an Olympics year. We have had 2 shows at the current venue, which is the Wood Green Animal Shelter in Huntingdon. It's a huge venue carpeted out for events and exhibitions and shows. All in one big hall, split 50-50 between plant sales (vendors from all over the UK and also Europe) and the exhibits in the other half. It's only a one day show and busy, with around a 1000 visitors usually. In the morning judging is performed (using 16 pairs of Judges) and it's manic in the plant sales areas. In the afternoon, people can view the show plants and it's a bit easier. The one in 2012 was held on the warmest day of the summer and conditions were absolutely stifling.

We started with pictures taken from a small balcony that overlooks part of the hall, which showed a view of the sales area. This was one of Ivor's pictures, so if you believe the time stamp, this was taken at 12:15, just shortly after the show area was open to the public, at 12pm. Most of the UK nurseries are there, and the number of sellers far exceeds other events such as Havering Cactus Mart, and they come from all over the UK. And there's also a good number of European sellers, from Netherlands, Germany and Czech Republic. And this year there will even more sellers from Czech Republic. David used to be on the National Shows Committee which organises the event and in the past it attracted an attendance of around 1000 people. Another of Ivor's pictures showed Cliff Thomson to the right (although Cliff swore it wasn't him!), and Anthony Mitchell. Vinay Shah, Peter Down, Richard White were in the sales area, helping out on David's stand. Near the front was David Rushforth - he lives in Merseyside and he organises the British visitors to the ELK event. Other people you might recognise as previous visitors to our branch were Bob and Beryl Potter, from Toobees Nursery in Woking in Surrey.

A general shot of one of the Dutch sellers showed a good mix of plants, including Adeniums in flower. The next picture was a general shot of the sales area

- this was taken by someone else and David remarked there was a huge difference in colour cast between the pictures taken by different cameras. Before the show opens, it gets really congested in the sales area. Jaroslav Šnicer from the Czech Republic is a fantastic grower of rare/choice/slow Mexican plants. He told David that he had been to Mexico 34 times, and when he worked out how much he had spent on these trips, he could probably have bought a huge estate somewhere in the Czech Republic with the money! Another view showed the sales area, and the barrier between the sales area and the show plants. The hall is much larger than the picture conveys, and we saw Cliff Thompson and Paul Klaassen, and also Tony Morris from Leicester and his wife - he handles the BCSS membership and renewals. We also saw our members, Martin and Anna-Liisa Sheader. Looking at the number of people around the plants, it looked quiet and easy to move around but even this area got quite packed at times, particularly if you were trying to take photographs or taking a close a look at the plants.

Now for the plants. David said he had arranged the slides in alphabetical order, and would alternate between cacti and succulents. We started with a nice *Agave parrasana* with some variegation on the edges of the leaves. It was in a 15 inch pan. This is quite an easy and strong growing plant. Agaves tend to be strong rooted and vigorous and if you pot them on, they will grow fast - the more root room you give them, the bigger and the better plants you will produce. He doesn't grow too many agaves now – it's a problem to overwinter them. In the audience, Keith and Kathy Flanagan have a large collection of Agaves and it must be a lot of effort to put some of those in the greenhouse over winter. *Agave horrida* is often offered as young plants, and this plant had nice teeth on the leaf edges - these were brown on the new leaves and they turn white on the older parts of the plant. The teeth are packed along the leaf edge, and it's quite an attractive plant. It will cluster and get big over time. A beautiful plant which appears in considerable numbers on the show bench in recent years was labelled as Agave echinoides - this is not a valid name and he thinks they're just a form of Agave stricta. It's a handsome plant which had produced more of a rounded ball of the leaves than the typical A. stricta. It was in an 8 and 9 inch pot and it must have packed well during transit, to avoid damage to the overhanging leaves. This is a problem with all plants - when in crates, plants can hurt each other leading to broken leaves or stems, or punctures. This was a lovely plant, with perfect symmetry and the tips of the leaves were an attractive burgundy colour.

Agave romanii is a hybrid between *A. celsii* and *A. filifera* - he didn't know how large it grows but it is an attractive coloration with red leaf margins. *Agave victoriae reginae* is one of the most popular of the smaller intermediate agaves. It is slow growing from seed, and it takes 3-4 years before seedlings make a nice rosette. This group of 9 plants seemed to be from Derek Bowdery who is agave mad and he had put together a collection of some different forms and variations of just this one species. You can see how much they vary in the amount of white markings on the leaves, the shade of green, and the thickness and length of the leaves. The ones that are most attractive tend to be the ones with the good white markings and he would have selected the one in the centre of the group, others in the audience might prefer something else. When buying seedlings, he goes for plants with the best markings, because these almost invariably become the best specimen plants when they get older. The next picture was also *Agave victoriae reginae* and it was a variegated plant which you'd not see for sale in the UK. The only place he's seen any of these is when he visited Miles Anderson's collection in Arizona. Miles had quite a number of these in his collection and he was probably propagating offsets. This is not one he's seen offered for sale, and it's not one of the tissue culture clones that Stuart Riley has brought back from the States. Paul Klaassen said that Eunice Thompson in the States had one, she had paid a silly price ($3000) for it in an auction. David said that Stuart Riley had told him that agaves with yellow in the other edge of the leaves are much harder to propagate than the ones with yellow in the centre of the leaf.

An *Agave potatorum* had subtle variegation. These cultivars are often given fancy names, often by the Japanese. Another similar looking plant was labelled "Kissho kan". It stays fairly small and will offset eventually, the plant had a couple of baby offsets forming. David said that the offsets aren't produced forever and if you keep removing them, they will eventually stop. This is different from plants like Echeverias which will form new growths indefinitely. Seeing big clumps of these is rare since a single rosette looks more imposing. The plants can become distorted and ugly with the offsets, so some people take them off and sell them on. Next was another of Derek's plants, a hybrid which he grew several seedlings of. One of the parents is *A. victoriae reginae*. Keith Flanagan had one as well. Another plant which might also be Derek's was *A. utahensis var eborispina.* This is a sought after plant. It is a very variable species and has really exaggerated enhanced/extended leaf tips. This is a wonderful form, with amazing leaf tips. Some plants of this have a tip with a corkscrew/spiral tip. Derek

had grown a whole bunch of these 20 years ago and would have been able to pick out the best ones to grow on. This had been entered in the last few National shows.

Another example of the same species was a paler cream colour compared to the previous plant, and you could see the bone-like tip to the leaves. Next was an Agave hybrid - crossed with Manfreda - a genus which has now been moved into Agave. Manfredas have deciduous leaves and this hybrid is called *Mangave* cv *"Bloodspot"*. It was grown by tissue culture in the States and Stuart Riley has brought these and sold them here. The plant was in a 6 inch diameter pot, and all the purple blotches on the leaves come from the Manfreda parent, *Manfreda maculosa* which has spotted leaves. *Manfreda singuliflora* has an ISI number so it must have been distributed by the ISI at some time. David said he had only grown *M. maculosa* and *M. maculata* and both lost all their foliage in the winter, didn't know if all the Manfredas did this, it is not very popular in UK collections. Tom Radford asked how they survived if they lost all their leaves. Apparently, they have a swollen trunk underground. *Calibanus hookeri* is an Agave relative and it was in flower. It's a Mexican plant, forms a big swollen caudex base which looks like a rock. It had been discovered in the19th century and then lost to cultivation. Charlie Glass and Robert Foster were determined to find it in habitat, and came across it in San Luis Potosi in Mexico. When they found it they thought were in tall grass, but they were actually standing on giant caudices and Charlie reported that some were the size of Volkswagen beetle cars. So this specimen is a young plant! You can get male or female plants - and neither are that spectacular. It has now been moved into another genus.

Most of the classes are for 1 or 2 plants in a specified or unlimited pot size, but there are a few classes at the end of the schedule for groups of plants - the display classes. Here in the class for "a collection of cacti or succulent from any one group in 610mm x 610mm", we saw a group of Astrophytums. This is a display of 29 plants by Barry Hancock (North Devon branch) who is very keen on Astrophytums and Arioocarpus. He had put together a selection of various types and forms and hybrids of Astrophytum. One with chins is "Kikko" and there was also a "Super Kabuto" with dense felty scales, and others with less dense markings.

Astrophytum ornatum is a common plant - but it is beautiful and variable, so you could have a collection of several of these. *A. ornatum* is the largest of the Astrophytums and it grows faster and stronger than the others and there's always been speculation that this is an ancient hybrid between *A. myriostigma* and a Ferocactus. This might explain the strong spines, which the other Astrophytums don't possess. We saw a pretty form with fine flecking and yellowish spines, another one had stronger spines and sparser markings. These will grow up to 3-4 feet in habitat and occasionally in collections you'll see tall plants, but it's rare to see plants over 15 inches in the UK. Ultimately it is columnar, which may also point towards a Ferocactus parentage. This one was strongly spined but with hardly any flecking. One of things that happens with Astrophtums as they age is that the epidermis turns purplish brown at the base and this creeps up. It doesn't harm the plant but it makes them less attractive. A plant was labelled *A. myriostigma* but it seems to have some ornatum in it. It had short spines on the newer growth and the spines were shed on the older growth. A really nice form of *A. myriostigma* with densely packed woolly areoles on the ribs. These myrios are much slower growing than the ornatum, and getting a plant to 6 inches tall may take 20 years. Even slower is *A. capricorne* – it's much more of a challenge to grow it well long term. It is more weakly rooted and sensitive to over watering, and needs a gritty compost and care and attention. It will eventually become columnar and get to 2 feet tall, but it's very rare to see that size in UK collections. It remains solitary through its life (unless the growing point is damaged). If you like a challenge, *Astrophytum asterias* is the one to try - it is not difficult as a young plant for the first 3-4 years, but once it reaches 3 inches diameter or more, it seems to lose its seedling vigour and large plants of 4" or more are rare. In habitat there were reports of plants reaching 9" or more, although now it is endangered. It is very susceptible to overwatering, needs gritty free draining compost and is still a challenge. It likes it a bit warmer than the other Astrophytums.

Digitostigma caput medusae was found in 2002 and subsequently moved into Astrophytum - the stems are elongated and covered in fine white flecking and an areole near the tip from which it produces an Astrophytum like yellow flower with Astrophytum seed pods and seeds. It is very difficult and very slow from seed. It produces a thick finger shaped tuberous root. The plant is difficult in cultivation and all the big plants he's seen are grafted. Paul has been out to try and find it in habitat (twice). There is speculation that during periods of drought the tubercles are shed and it survives thanks to the swollen root. Paul said it grows with 6 inch layer of cylindropuntia and is very hard to find. There are also tarantulas and snakes and scorpions in the vicinity. He had spent 6 hours on two occasions and had found it. David said he thought it was very dull

and he's never bothered to acquire it. A couple of people in the audience had grown it.

We saw some more Astrophytums - of various shapes and sizes with a pot size limit of around 4 inches. One of the prize cards said Vanden Bon, which must be Alice from Reading. There were also two of the "Super Kabuto" related hybrids - these are slow and difficult so it was not surprising to see them awarded a prize card.

Avonia is a genus created 20 or so years ago by Gorden Rowley, for Anacampseros with white scales on the stems. The name was widely accepted and used, and *Anacampseros alstonii* became *Avonia quinaria*. However the genus has abandoned and the plants are now back in Anacampseros.

Ariocarpus is a popular genus and you'll see good examples at the National and almost all the Shows. For beginners, they're really not attractive to the eye, but the longer you are in the hobby, the more attractive they seem to become, because they are a challenge and members of the "aristocacti" - the aristocrats of the cactus family. They are quite a challenge in cultivation for most people and are very slow and yet very common in habitat - you can see thousands of them covering the ground. *A. retusus* had nice long slightly downward pointing tubercles. Another form had broader, more typical tubercles and lots of lovely and wool in the crown. When these plants are growing well, they always produces lots of copious white wool in the growing point. However there was some oxalis growing in the pot, you would have thought it would have been removed! It was offsetting too, and may be on a graft. Next was a slightly unusual form with tubercle on the tip of the leaf. Another nice one was a double header, with lots of wool and signs of flowering in previous years. It was a lovely healthy plant. A dual entry featured *A. retusus* (*A. furfuraceus*) and *A. fissuratus,* the latter is very common in the Big Bend area of Texas. *Ariocarpus kotschubeyanus* and *A. scapharostrus* are both smaller growing members of the genus, and incredibly slow growing, so to be able to present a 4" or 5" pot full of one of these you are looking at a lot of years of growth - so judges will be swayed by them. This *A. kotschubeyanus* had 7 offsets around the main head and said seed 1980 - so it was 32 years old when the picture was taken, and still in a 3.5 or 4 inch pot. It is sometimes interesting to see the notes on the label, but they shouldn't influence the judge. This one says *A. agavoides* ex DD, which is almost certainly a reference to the late Doug Donaldson (who spoke to our branch) and he used to trade plants. A lovely *A. fissuratus* had lots of wool in the crown. And a plant was labelled *A. bravoanus* ssp *hintonii,* but *A. bravoanus* is much rarer than *A. hintonii*. This plant seemed to have raised ribs, it was handsome and healthy plant with healthy green tubercles and lots of wool. Kathy mentioned some of them seem to grow in a spiral pattern - but it's not the normal growth form for a hintonii.

Adromischus are members of the Crassulaceae, from South Africa. A plant of *A. bicolor* was a slow growing form with chunky big leaves - it takes a long time to form a nice clump. Adromischus is quite a big genus with a lot of species and there are really only handful that are really worth growing - a lot become sprawly as they get bigger. *A. bicolor* stays fairly compact. Next was another of the nicer species - a silver grey form of *Adromischus schuldtianus*. There are many forms of these - some have purple spotted leaves, other have green leaves, some have crinkled edges others have flat edges and there are all sorts of forms. It does always make a handsome compact specimen. One of the finest species, which is incredibly variable - with lots of different forms and varieties and geographical variations - is *Adromischus marianae*. *A. marianae* "Antidorcatum" has leaves spotted in red. Basically, anything with marianae in the name is worth growing. It is slow growing and will usually make a nice compact plant, and one that the judges are looking out for in the Adromischus or Crassulaceae classes. This class looked like Adromishcus subgroup, since we had entries of Adromischus and Crassula side by side.

A picture of Aloe - probably taken by Ben - was of a variegated form of *Aloe ferox,* labelled as "Darley Mist". It's from Abbey Brook and a note beside the label claimed it was one plant found in a batch of 20000 seedlings. *Aloe ferox* is solitary so will not be able to propagate from it, and may never see it for sale. *Aloe pearsonii* - grows in Hellskloof in the Richtersveld on the border between South Africa and Namibia. It is exceedingly rare in cultivation and he's never seen seedlings of it for sale, during his 40 years in the hobby. It looks impressive from a distance but the old leaves remain on the plant so it's not so nice in close up. *Aloe peckii* has striped markings on the leaves and *Aloe ramosissima* is one of the branching plants - like a mini *Aloe dichotoma* - with fairly slender stems, and it had already formed a nice shrub in a 9-10" pot. *Aloe deltoideodonta* has lots of different forms and usually stays stemless and compact - this one was a bit leggy and needs pruning and perhaps starting off again. *Aloe descoingsii* is one of the higher rated miniatures from Madagascar. *Aloe erinacea* is very popular now but 20 years ago there were only 3-4 plants in the country and it was unobtainable, and then suddenly seedlings became available and now

it's in most of our collections. It is still rare on the sales tables. *Aloe calcairophila* from Madagascar is a small growing species which is highly rated - it grows on rocks and forms small rosettes with opposite pairs of leaves. From northern South Africa and Namibia, *Aloe sladeniana* is related to *Aloe variegata* but it is much more difficult to grow successfully - it is another highly related miniature.

Resuming after the break, we saw a large bowl of golden spined cacti. We used to know this as Escobaria then Gymnocactus, but it's now *Acharagma roseana*. The plant filled a 10"-12" pot and it was grown by Alain Sutton from Bromley. Another Acharagma was *A. galeanense*, which has not been in cultivation long. It soon makes a dense caespitose clump. We moved onto Copiapoa (and David remarked there were lots of Copiapoas in the table show today.) and saw *Copiapoa humilis*, followed by *C. krainziana.* The best ones have soft hairlike spines and it can make lovely clumps. This is closely related to *C. cinerea* which rarely flowers in the UK. We saw several forms of *C. cinerea* which is a very widespread and variable plant. A plant of *C. haseltoniana* must have been decades old and it had orange wool and it was a Cinerea form of some sort. This had short rounded heads and more dense tubercles than the haseltoniana form and it belonged to Ian Robinson, a sheep farmer from Wales - apparently he always wears a red NCSS jumper. Another variation of *C. cinerea* had golden wool and the central head was perhaps going cristate? One of the smaller growing ones – *C. hypogaea* or *C. barquitensis* had dark epidermis and was covered in dense wool - the remains of one flower were poking through the wool. David mentioned that although the plants formed wool in cultivation, they were naked in habitat due to the wind and rain washing it away. Another plant with over 25 heads was probably *C. hypogaea*. In habitat would be flat to the ground with just a few heads - in cultivation it forms nice big mounds. The young heads have no wool, as they mature and reach flowering size, the wool develops in the centre of the plant. Another plant from Ian Robinson was *C. (Pilocopiapoa) solaris* - the one that everyone wants to get. If plants appear on Ebay, they go for £40-£50 for a seeding just an inch across. This is a slow growing plant, found in just one limited locality.

Next we saw a rather fabulous *Cotyledon orbiculata* (oophylla form). This forms a dense clump, no more than 6 inches tall, and the plant had lovely white leaves and nice attractive red flowers, which are always on short flower stems. It is a true miniature, and well worth looking out for. In a Crassula class, we saw a wrinkled leaf form of *Adromishchus marianae* v. *herrei*, and *Tylecodon reticulata*. These are beautiful winter growing plants. Another form of *Adromischus schuldtianus* had reddish leaves and *Crassula alstonii* is one of the choicest of the miniature crassulas. It is virtually unobtainable - apart from Bruce who manages to propagate it well. A hybrid between *Crassula mesembryanthemopsis* and *Crassula susannae* is called *Crassula* cv Celia. A plant of this with flowers on it was on sale at the back of the meeting hall. In the next picture, in the foreground we saw *Crassula mesembryanthemopsis*, which is one of the two very choicest of all the Crassulas, the other being *Crassula susannae*. Another class featured a 6.25" pan of *Crassula mesembryanthemopsis* - he had seen this in the wild, where it forms tiny little plants, just 20mm across and growing flat to the ground - whereas in cultivation it makes a rounded mound, and frequently divides into separate plants.

Now for some cristates - *Echinopsis* "Darley Sunset" was one grown by Brian Fearn at Abbey Brook. A cristate Mammillaria was *M. spinosissima* ssp. *pilcayensensis.* Another *Mammillaria* was either *lanata* or *geminispina.* When cristates really get going, they can grow really fast and double in size in a year, due to having so many growing points. *Copiapoa tenuissima* was cristate but a couple of normal growths had appeared. These need to be removed because they can overtake the plant. This plant belonged to Doris Sharp from Reading. A cristate Cleistocactus was over a foot tall. A *Lophopohra williamsii* cristate got 2nd price despite being scorched. A sensational plant of *Strombocactus disciformis* grown by Philip White from Weston Super Mare only got a third prize, which David thought was bonkers. Clearly in a class for cristate or monstrose plants was a monstrose *Echinocactus grusonii* - not sure if it was on a graft or not, but it had developed a columnar habit, which is strange for a grusonii. A *cristate Pachypodium lameri* had a few small leaves but David said in August, it should have been in full growth and should have covered in leaves, so something was wrong. A cristate *Alluaudia procera* was unusual, he had not seen it before. *Euphorbia obesa* is slow when growing as a cristate and this is usually grown on a graft.

An example of *Dioscorea elephantipes* with enhanced tubercles, looked like it was carved out of rock. A Dudleya featured small rosettes and seemed to be a clustering species. *Dorstenia gigas* from Socotra makes a fantastic specimen, it is not difficult to grow, but needs to be kept warm - if your heater fails on a cold winter night, it will probably die. *Dorstenia ellenbeckiana* is a little caudiciform species from the horn of Africa. It sends out a flower structure called a hypanthodium before the

leaves form. Tom Radford said his plant flowers twice a year. *Decarya madagascariensis* forms a criss-crossing mass of branches - he wasn't sure what the attraction of growing this is. *Idria/Fouquieria columnaris* is the Boojum Tree of Cirio, Baja California. In habitat it goes on to form a giant plant - but it is incredibly slow growing. This example was a couple of feet tall and was probably already 30 years old. Denmoza is a genus from Argentina and is like a big growing matucana - it has tubular flowers. A large plant of *Echinocactus grusonii* had no spines - it had felty ribs with the woolly groove getting wider, and a huge felty top - it had got a 1st prize. The difficulty is in keeping plants like this unblemished and in good condition through their life.

Echinocactus ingens (now *platyacanthus*) is much slower growing and can grow to 6 feet tall and 4 feet across, forming an absolutely giant barrel. This plant was 7-8 inches across and was probably at least 15 years old. It is very slow and nowhere near flowering. One of the smaller growing plants is *Echinocactus horizonthalonius* - judging by the pot, it seemed to be Stirling Baker's - it is slow growing and difficult. It was grapefruit sized and already had flowered.

Echeveria difractens is a challenge to keep in one piece - you just have to touch it and the leaves seem to fall off. *Echeveria agavoides* is one of the larger growing Echeverias and we saw a cristate form - it is quite easy to grow and is robust. If you are only going to grow one Echeveria, then *Echeveria lauii* is the one to grow - this example was virtually unblemished, with no marks on the leaves. *Echeveria tolimanensis* had won "Best Succulent" in the show and it was quite a large multi-headed plant of a very rare, choice and difficult species from Toliman Canyon in central Mexico - this was Gillian Evison's plant. Moving to Epithelantha, a strongly clustering plant was probably *E. micromeris* v. *unguispina*. It develops quite strong centrals on the mature heads. Some of the heads were flowering size, but the others were too young. This grows and clusters more rapidly than the typical *E. micromeris.* We did see a more *typical E. micromeris* which was smaller. Next was a nice form of *Euphorbia horrida (polygona),* with stripes on the bodies. *E. stellata* is a South African species with a nice caudex, it makes a handsome plant. *E. pachypodioides* is from Madagascar - it needs more warmth, but even if you provide this, it's still a pig to grow and difficult and challenging. Behind it is the tall growing *Euphorbia unispina* - it comes from tropical Africa (Nigeria) and needs more warmth and humidity. By the end of the season, the plants have formed large leaves but these are shed, so it's neat in the following spring. One of the rarest in cultivation of the Madagascan Euphorbias and virtually impossible to grow is *E. guillauminiana* - it grows on sheer rock faces by the coast in one part of Madagascar. This must be a habitat plant and it's probably perished by now, although it had won a 1st prize for Tina Wardhaugh from Northampton. Another Madagascan species formed a caudex with upright stems. Another very distinctive plant - Dave Philips had one - *Euphorbia micracantha* is a bit like *E. stellata* – it has a caudex at the base and then thin radiating stems. Another rare plant you'd rarely see is *Euphobia gymnocalycioidies* - from the horn of Africa (Somalia or Ethiopia) - it is a miniature slow growing plant. In habitat it would be level to the ground or sunken in the ground and usually a greyish slate colour, but cultivated in the UK it's green. An Euphorbia with attractive red/green colouring on the stems was probably related to *E. actinoclada* which is from Somalia or Ethiopia - not from Madagascar, as stated on the label.

The name Eriosyce is now applied to all the different plants in the Neoporteria group - but it used to refer to the big barrel forms from Chile. They are notoriously challenging in cultivation and the seeds are impossible to germinate. This plant was from Hamish McKelvie, from Glasgow. As they get bigger this is what they can do, and we saw John Arnold's plant which had formed a nice big barrel and which must have been in a 12-15" pan. They never offset and just form these large barrels. They are very handsome in the UK and unbelievably beautiful in habitat where the spines are much stronger. With Echinofossulocactus (Stenocactus) he has never managed to grow a nice specimen from this genus, and he wouldn't use names for any of them because the genus is very confused as to how many and which species are valid. A plant labelled *Stenocactus multicostatus* was nice looking but David thought some of the old flower remains could have been picked off with some tweezers. We saw a couple more examples with marvellous spination - and curly spination too, and there was a pink base to the new spines. This is the most distinctive and it does not have the wavy ribs - *E. coptonogonus* - it has wide ribs and strong upcurving spination. It eventually forms purplish flowers and is slow growing, and one of the choicest of all the Stenocacti.

Next was a Ferobergia, which is a cross between Ferocactus and Leuchtenbergia. There are quite a few around because Leuchtenbergia will hybridise with virtually any Ferocactus species. A Gymnocalycium plant looked slightly anaemic, but the main feature was big ripe pink fruits which were just beginning to split. A rather handsome

Haageocereus longispinus had dark spines on the older growth. It is not grown commonly in the UK, but it will make handsome plants, especially if you get ones that grow upright rather than with a decumbent growth habit.

Haworthias are very popular these days and they have their own Society and shows. A pale leaved form of *H. truncata* (possibly cv "Down Under") had markings across the windows - the common forms just have a plain window to the leaf, but the choicer forms have enhanced patterns and markings on the leaf tips and these are not your run-of-the mill truncatas - they are selected clones and hybrids. Plants of a retuse leaved species were marked *H. bayeri* and there was also *H. sordida* - judging from the pots, these may be Stirling's plants again. There was beautiful colouring and texturing and tiny teeth on the leaf edges of a Japanese cultivar called H. cv "Hakuma". *H. arachnoidea gigas* - may also be called *H. settata gigas*. There are 3-4 self-proclaimed experts around the world and they tend to use different names, so it is sometimes difficult to know which one to use. There were also collections of Haworthias - these are Stirling's as well and he got both 2nd prize and 1st price for his exhibits.

A pan of Lithops with about 20 different plants had little IDs of dymo labels to indicate what was what - and another picture of the same tray using flash showed even more detail. A beautiful *Faucaria tigrina* didn't win a prize because it's easy and common - but it was a fantastic deep red colouration due to being grown in an exposed position in the greenhouse. A small pan of *Conophytum stephanii* must have contained over 300 heads - it is one of small tiny headed / hairy bodied Conophytums. We saw *Gasteria armstrongii* and *Gasteria batesiana variegata* – it's unusual to see a variegated plant of this species. G*asteria rawlinsonii* has a rather different habit - it's a cliff dweller and it grows in a gorge on the sheer vertical edges of cliffs, so it's difficult to grow a nice plant in a pot, since it wants to lean over.

Leuchtenbergia principis forms a tuberous stem just under the ground. It is difficult to grow well, the tubercles always have some die back, but it does have fabulous flowers. *Lophophora williamsii caespitosa* offsets profusely. Another *L. williamsii* was a nice plant with pronounced tufts on the areoles. It was being growing in a bell shaped pot and David said this was all very well and the plant looked fine, but the pot will probably need to be broken to get the plant out for repotting. *Another L. williamsii* was nice and woolly and in flower. These plants are terribly prone to damage from red spider and thrips. If you get a nice form, you can get some lovely fluffy plants and we saw another example, which was probably Doris Sharp's. A marvellous Melocactus had formed a dial headed cepahlium - this was one of the smaller more difficult ones. With Melocacti, once they produce the cephalium, the main body stops growing and only the cephalium grows. With other species such as Discocactus, the main body continues growing even after the cephalium forms. *Matucana weberbaueri* has attractive golden yellow spines. *Matucana madisoniorum* is usually a red flowered species, but there is also a white flowered sport and this specimen looked like it was the latter, based on the appearance of the flower buds. It is worth looking out for - it is a free flowering plant and has lovely snow white flowers.

It was time for some Mammillarias - *M. bombycina* and *M. plumosa* were decent sized specimens and you'd probably see examples of these species feature in every show. A different form of *M. plumosa* was crying out for a new pot, the offsets were growing right up against the edge. A plant of *M. klissingiana* had formed 10 heads. In the classes with limited pot size, you are looking for the smaller growing species, and plants which are more or less mature in the given pot size. Examples of species would be *M. humboldtii, lasiacantha, hernandezii/goldii* - are good choices. Things like *pottsii, laui subducta, guelzowiana, senilis* are less suited because they will become bigger and are not mature in the small pot sizes. We saw some more of the choicer plants - *M. hernandezii, magallanii, crucigera,* form of *huitzilopochtli*- all suited for the limited pot sizes.

Notocactus magnificus (*Parodia magnifica*) can form impressive clumps. *N. warasii is* rarely seen in cultivation these days, but it also makes a big imposing clump. Pat Hollies' *Notocactus scopa ramosus* looked like it had flowered well, but another plant of the same species didn't look like it had flowered at all! *Operculicarya decaryi* is a plant from Madagascar which forms impressive shrubs. The plant that won the best cactus award was *Opuntia (maihueniopsis / puna) clavarioides*. You see big ones of these in most shows, but this was a whopper in almost perfect condition. There was lots of new growth and signs of flowering. Now for some small Tephrocacti. *Tephrocactus geometricus* is really a short spined form of *Tephrocactus alexanderi* - but it is highly sought after, slow growing and difficult to propagate. These are two of choicest of the Opuntias - *Opuntia/maihueniopsis mandragora* produces a big underground root and never gets very big, and *M. subterranea* in habitat is a small growing plant which produces a large underground root. *Ortegocactus macdougallii* is an

incredible plant, different to anything else - comes from Oaxaca in southern Mexico. It is very distinctive, flowers unlike anything else and quite a challenge to grow successfully. Obregonia is a beautiful aristocratic cacti - the plants are quite variable with their spination, and we saw bristly spines and finer shorter spines producing wool in the crown, and another with longer spines, this was older but a less well grown plant with some colouring round the base.

Another one producing lots of wool and flowering well in the crown. David said the best one he had ever seen was at Oxford Show, where it looked like a pot with a snowball in it - it was just a mass of white wool. One of these was paired with *Strombocactus disciformis* which is even slower growing. A large Obregonia which had got first prize - he thinks it belongs to Cliff - despite being quite scarred and offsetting which was unusual. It was a grafted plant and he's known it for many years. Another strombocactus was growing well on its own roots and it was very spiny - it was paired with a fantastic *Aztekium hintonii* which was absolutely immaculate and beautiful in a 3.5 inch pot. Another pairing featured *Geohintonia mexicana* and *Aztekium hintonii* - these two plants were discovered growing alongside each other 20 years ago. Both are very slow from seed and these are as big as you'll see them as UK seed grown plants on their own roots. *Pelecyphora aselliformis* is very slow - it must have been damaged in the centre and there were several offsets which had now got to a decent size. We also saw a couple of examples of Turbinicarpus.

Looking at some of the classes which allow groups of plants, these are often some of the most highly contested classes. For 9 plants in 3.5" pots, plants such as. *Aztekium ritteri, Turbinicarpus alonsoi, Encephalocarpus strobiliformis, Strombocactus disciformis* were the sort of things you are looking for to be mature in this pot size. Some of the other plants we saw are weaker - *Tephrocactus, Lophophora, Escobaria laui* will all get bigger, and they are not the sort of thing that will win these classes. Blossfeldia is one of the miniatures of the cacti world - you rarely see them on their own roots. They come from Argentina and Bolivia. He's never been able to grown one successfully on its own roots. *Ariocarpus kotchoubeyanus* is another good one for this class, *Ariocarpus scapharostrus* is good, *Aztekium ritteri* is brilliant. Pediocactus are minature plants and also good. *Geohintonia mexicana* is very slow. *Discocactus horstii* is the most highly sought miniature in the genus *Discocactus. Pelecyphora strobiliformis* and *Uebelmannia buiningii* is a rare Brazillian plant. Pygmaeocereus is one of the unusual miniature cerei.

David ended his talk by hoping everybody enjoyed seeing these plants, and he hoped people would be encouraged to attend the National Show in August.

Vinay Shah

Table Show Results

There were 27 entries in the February table show, and 1 entry for "Plants in Flower".

	Cacti – Eriosyce & Copiapoa	**Succulents – Crassulaceae**
Open	(1) G Penrose Copiapoa ahremephiana	(1) B Beckerleg Dudleya brittonii
	(2) I Biddlecombe Copiapoa cinerea	(2) B Turner Echeveria sp.
	(3) B Turner Copiapoa longistaminea	(3) I Biddlecombe Crassula ausensis ssp. giessii
Intermediate	(1) B Beckerleg Copiapoa cinerea	(1) B Beckerleg Crassula sp.
	(2) G Penrose Copiapoa hypogaea	(2) B Beckerleg Echeveria lauii
	(3) T Smith Copiapoa lauii	(3) G Penrose Echeveria lauii

Cacti/Succulent in Flower
(1) B Beckerleg Aloe longispina (?)
(2) -
(3) -

Ivor Biddlecombe

Tom Jenkins - RIP

Those of our members who have belonged to the BCSS for some years will remember Tom Jenkins, former joint proprietor of Jumanery Cacti, which he ran with his wife June. I am sorry to report that Tom passed away on February 14th after a long period of poor health.

Jumanery Cacti was first started by Tom's wife June, in the Medway area of Kent, in collaboration with her friend Mary. Tom and June later moved to the Spadling area, and continued to run the nursery

from there, where Jumanery grew to be one of the best nurseries in the UK. They offered a wide range of both cacti and succulents, probably the best available anywhere in the country, including imported and habitat collected plants from various sources and countries. During the 1970s, 80s and 90s, many of the rarest and choicest of plants were offered for sale by Jumanery.

I well remember visiting the nursery each year in early September during the 1980s, when a group of us including Dave Phillips (former Secretary of our Branch), Ivor Biddlecombe, Eric Greenaway (former Southampton Branch member), Roger and Linda Labbett, Cliff Thompson (Portsmouth Branch) and occasional others made an early morning start to be able to drive up to Jumanery Cacti situated in a small village near Spalding. After visiting the nursery we would head back south to Northampton to attend the National Judges Course. In addition to enjoying time spent browsing the wide range of sales plants, another attraction was the chance to view Tom's superb collection of cacti and succulents, which contained many rare and magnificent specimens that I had never seen anywhere else. Tom was a very skilled grower of plants, and his collection was renowned as one of the best in the country

In addition to being a marvellous grower and propagator of plants, Tom was also admired as one of the best speakers in the country, offering a wide range of talks on various subjects. I am not sure how often he spoke to Southampton Branch, but can well remember him visiting us on at least a couple of occasions in our old meeting hall in Bangor Road in Millbrook, Southampton, and that he brought numerous trays of his tempting sales plants along with him. I also remember parts of the talk he gave us after visiting South Africa and Namibia with John Lavranos, where he was able to travel not only into parts of the Richtersveld but also in to the restricted Diamond Area where he showed plants that I had not seen before. Tom also made a trip to Chile to see the magnificent copiapoas growing there, in the days before many UK collectors were fortunate enough to be able to travel to that part of the world, and he gave a very good account of the plants seen there in the talk that he later gave around the country.

I got to know Tom quite well over many years, and served with him on the Finance & General Purposes Committee of the BCSS for a year as Vice-Chairman while he was Chairman, and for a period of years while I was Editor of the BCSS Journal. He was a friendly and amenable character, well-liked by everyone.

Upon their retirement Tom and June closed Jumanery Cacti and moved to Bourne in Lincolnshire. Tom then worked for a number of years at nearby Southfield Nurseries, run by Brian Goodey.

Tom had not been active in the hobby for some years because of poor health, but his death has come as a shock to everyone who knew him. He will long be remembered for his massive contribution to the hobby, and our thoughts are with June and her family.

David Neville

Cactus hunting on the Costa del Sol

Back in mid January I spent a relaxing and enjoyable week in Torremolinos on the Spanish Costa del Sol. Never having been to mainland Spain, the offer of cheap flights to Malaga from Southampton Airport, and the chance to escape a week of the English winter, combined with attractive off-season hotel prices, led me to this popular holiday resort. Needless to say, before I left home I did a little research online to find out whether there were any nurseries, gardens or parks within a reasonable travelling distance where I might be able to see some cacti and succulents. I came up with a short list of just three possible locations to visit during the trip.

Top of the list was a garden that just happened to have been featured in an article in CactusWorld in 2014 – Jardin Botanico de Cactus y otras Suculentas de Casarabonela. The Andalusian village of Casarabonela lies around 50km north-west of Torremolinos, in the foothills of the Sierra de las Nieves. With no public transport to that area, my only option was to hire a car for the day, so I set off from the densely populated coastal resort towards the hills and mountains of rural Andalusia. Within a few short miles of the hustle and bustle of the tourist resort the landscape changed and the rolling hills were densely planted with orange and olive groves, with occasional vineyards too. In less than an hour I was approaching the picturesque village of Casarabonela, nestled in the lower hills of the Sierra; the white-painted houses of this ancient Moorish community dwarfed by the higher peaks of the mountain range beyond.

The gardens are situated on the main road into the village, with plenty of room for parking. Entry costs just 3 Euros. For full information about the gardens I would recommend that you re-read the article in CactusWorld, but the basic layout comprises a shop

and cafe near the entrance, winding paths among dense outdoor beds and plantings of cacti and succulents, with a large glasshouse at the top of the gardens, containing a large selection of plants bedded out according to their country of origin. The outdoor plantings contain many impressive specimens, the most striking of which were the agaves, aloes and opuntias; it was certainly the larger and faster growing species that were growing best here, and it was noticeable that some of the smaller growing cacti were particularly struggling, with some not growing at all well outdoors. Temperatures here never fall to anywhere near freezing, although snow can sometimes be seen on the high peaks of the Sierra, but it may be the fact that the highest rainfall of the area occurs during the winter months, when these plants are dormant and would receive little or no rain in their natural habitat, that means they are not excelling. However, in the glasshouse many of the plants are growing very well, probably because they are protected from the vagaries of the local climate and their growing conditions can be controlled and regulated. There are many interesting and impressive specimens to be seen in the indoor plantings, including both cacti and succulents from many different parts of the world.

Labelling is an issue throughout the gardens because many of the original handwritten labels have faded and are now unreadable, although there is an ongoing project to replace them with much better computer printed labels, but this still has a long way to go before completion.

The selection of plants for sale was quite limited at the time of my visit, but of course I was there at a time when most of the plants are dormant and visitor numbers to the general area and the gardens are lower than during the summer months.

If at any time you visit Andalusia I would certainly recommend that you make a point of going to the gardens at Casarabonela because there are many interesting and impressive plants to be seen.

The second possible venue for seeing cacti and succulents in the area seemed to be the Torremolinos Botanic Garden, a small establishment lying just north of the town, and only a couple of miles from my hotel. I set off on foot after breakfast one morning and with the help of a local tourist map found my way to the gardens, and paid my entry fee of just 2 Euros. It was almost immediately apparent that I was unlikely to find succulents here in any great number because the gardens are dominated by large numbers of mature palm trees, creating a beautiful tropical oasis-like atmosphere, but the leafy, shaded environment would clearly not be suitable for desert plants. During my visit I learned that these gardens are home to a large and varied specialist collection of palms, but I know little about this plant group so was unable to appreciate it fully. There are ornate water channels flowing around the gardens, all leading eventually to a large pool and ornate fountain at the centre of the establishment. I did see a handful of cacti and succulent plants dotted around, but none were performing particularly well because of the shaded growing conditions. I spent a couple of hours wandering around and enjoying the plantings, and imagined how nice it must be to visit these gardens during the scorching hot months of summer, when the dappled shade of the palms, combined with the sounds of trickling water all around, would provide a very relaxing and tranquil place to escape the fiery Andalusian sun.

The third place I had determined to visit was in the neighbouring town (to the west of Torremolinos) of Benalmedena. Slap bang in the middle of suburbia, and just 300 metres or so from the sea, lies Parque de la Paloma, or as it is known in English, Paloma Park. This large public park is free to enter and is open every day, providing a magnificent and very enjoyable place for people to take a stroll, walk children and dogs (on leads), sunbathe, refresh themselves at either of the cafes, or to enjoy the various plantings. In addition to numerous formal and informal themed plantings the park contains large lawns, wild grassy areas, mature trees, a duck pond and a very large lake. An added attraction for families is the large number of chickens, ducks, peacocks and rabbits which are wandering everywhere.

I followed the signs towards the cactus gardens, and was very impressed as I turned a corner to see an array of large, mature cacti and succulents covering a considerable area in one corner of the park. Some of these plants look as if they have been here for a lifetime, but the park was only created in the 1990s, opening to the public in 1995 – I can only assume that some of the specimens here were already of considerable size when first planted 20 years ago. Large specimens of Pachycereus and Carnegiea were very imposing, along with tree euphorbias, dracaenas, massive aloes, agaves, opuntias and many others result in a very impressive and eye catching display that must attract many visitors and hopefully will result in more people growing a few cacti and succulents at home. Among the many common species were all sorts of more interesting and unusual plants, and I spent at least a couple of hours wandering around taking photographs and trying to ensure that I hadn't missed seeing anything. Alluaudias and pachypodiums from Madagascar

were growing well here, alongside large cyphostemmas from Namibia, fouquerias from Mexico, and some of the Canary Island euphorbias were in as good a condition as I have seen them growing in their homeland.

You can probably tell that I was very impressed with the cactus garden at Paloma Park, and I would heartily recommend a visit if you should ever be holidaying anywhere on the Costa del Sol or within reasonable travelling distance.

If time permits at our January 2017 meeting, when members traditionally give a number of short talks, I will show some of the photographs that I took during the trip.

I restricted my cactus hunting travels on this trip to a fairly limited area around Torremolinos, but with many other towns and cities in Andalusia I am sure that there must be other places where outdoor plantings of cacti and succulents can be found. If you have visited any gardens or parks in southern Spain where good numbers of our plants can be seen I would be very interested to hear about them.

David Neville

Next Month's Meeting

Our next meeting will be held on the 5th of April and will feature Stuart Riley who will talk about "What's New". I expect this will be an updated version of the talk he gave at our branch a few years ago, with updates for some of the new plants which are available in the hobby. Stuart always brings a good selection of sales plantsThis is an interesting and beautiful part of South America and hopefully we'll get to see some of that scenery.

The April Table Show will consist of the **Rebutia** group (cacti) and the **Gasteria** group (succulents). 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 Rebutia group include *Aylostera, Cintia, Cylindrorebutia, Digitorebutia, Mediolobivia, Neorebutia, Rebutia, Setirebutia, Spegazzinia, Sulcorebutia* and *Weingartia.*

The Gasteria group includes only *Gasteria.*

For committee members, a reminder that a committee meeting is due to be held on 9th March.

Forthcoming Events

Wed 9th Mar	Southampton	Branch Committee Meeting
Sat 12th Mar	Isle of Wight	Branch Quiz & Members' Talks
Sat 19th Mar	Portsmouth	South Africa Part 1 (Tony Roberts)
Tue 5th Apr	Southampton	What's New (Stuart Riley)
Sat 9th Apr	Isle of Wight	Succulent Survivors in my Greenhouse (David Traish)
Sat 16th Apr	Portsmouth	Bring and Buy Auction
Tue 3rd May	Southampton	Succulents other than Mesembs (Suzanne Mace)
Sat 14th May	Isle of Wight	Mexico: Autumn in the Sierra Madre Orientale (Cliff Thompson)
Sat 14th May	Southampton	Branch visit to Havering Cactus Mart, Romford, Essex RM5 3QJ
Sat 21st May	Portsmouth	Ariocarpus (Paul Klaassen)
Sat 21st May	Southampton	Display / Plant Sales @ Sparsholt College (Countryside Day)
Tue 4th Jun	Portsmouth	Summer Show at St. Colman's Church Hall, Cosham, PO6 2JJ
Tue 7th Jun	Southampton	Branch Mini Show & Judging Explained

Branch website: http://www.southampton.bcss.org.uk
Facebook : https://www.facebook.com/southamptonbcss