

British Cactus & Succulent Society

Southampton & District Branch Newsletter

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Editorial

The start of last month was a busy time for the branch, with only a few days between our regular monthly meeting and the 50th Anniversary Convention. The latter was well supported and proved to be a great success, and there are some reports on the event later in this newsletter. If you look at the list of *Forthcoming Events*, you'll see that there's still a large list of up and coming activities over the next couple of months.

We are supposed to have entered British Summer Time at the weekend, but the weather doesn't seem to know - it feels colder than it should for this time of the year! After having seen some daffodils in flower in January, it's surprising that some others are just coming into flower now. In the conservatory, I have watered my plants a couple of times but have held off recently since the cold nights are a bit of a worry. A few things are in flower (mainly Echeverias and Haworthias) but there are other signs of life and flower buds are starting to form on some of the cacti.

Announcements

The 50th Anniversary Convention was held on 7th March, and everything went very smoothly. Margaret Corina has written an account of the

events leading up to the convention and the day itself, and this appears in the *Snippets* section.

At the convention, **Peter Down** was presented with the society's Robert Holt Meritorious Award for his 50 years of service to the succulent hobby.

The **Branch dinner** will take place on the evening of Friday, 7th May, and the venue will be the Clump Inn at Chilworth. We have already made a provisional booking, but more members would be welcome. Please let a member of the committee know if you would like to attend.

At recent branch meetings, the **car park** immediately in front of the meeting hall has become full. If when you arrive there's no space to park, then please head eastwards (towards junction 7 of the M27), and take the next turning on the left, and then left again into the main church car park. There is a walkway from that car park back to our meeting hall.

Mark and Rebecca Jakins will be opening their plant collection to branch members by hosting an **Open Day** on Sunday 23rd May. They live at 35 Richlans Road, Hedge End. Visitors will be welcome between 2pm and 5pm, and tea and cakes will be provided!

The **Spring Garden Show** will be held at Broadlands, Romsey this coming weekend - on Easter Sunday and Monday - in the last newsletter I think I had the dates correct but had mistakenly labelled it as Saturday / Sunday. Apart from staging a display and plant sales, we have also been asked to handle Prickly Potting sessions for up to 500 youngsters! This will occupy several of the branch members on both days, so we really do need help and support from other branch members with answering general questions from the public and helping man the plant sales table. Staging will probably take place on Saturday afternoon - please contact Ivor Biddlecombe for further details.

Last Month's Meeting

The meeting started with a cake-cutting ceremony to celebrate our 50th birthday. We were reminded that a bigger cake awaited us at the convention!

Plants of Interest

Derek Prior and Glenn Finn had brought in some items for the *Plants of Interest* table.

Derek had brought along several species and hybrids of *Lachenalia*. These originate from South Africa and the plants form small underground bulbs. They produce brightly coloured flower spikes in January through to March, a welcome sight when few other plants are in flower.

The first plant was *L. regliana*, which was around 25 years old and had pale yellow flowers with a greenish/bronze tip. Derek said his plant was not very floriferous – it only produces one flower stem each year.

Next was a modern tetraploid hybrid whose name I did not catch. The pale yellow flowers had a pleasant smell and the foliage was slightly mottled. Derek mentioned that his best plant had produced over 60 flowers.

L. cv 'Robin' had managed to put out 2 spikes of red flowers. Derek wasn't certain of the name since he seemed to have the same plant under various different names. He had owned this particular plant for 12 years.

L. cv 'Rupert' had flowers with a mauve colour which Derek referred to as "blue". As in cacti and orchids, it's not possible to get a true blue colour, so lavenders and mauves are the best that one can hope for. These flowers were perfumed, and the plant's leaves were spotted. In addition, the flowering stems were freckled.

The next pot contained 2 plants; the tall one was *L. pearsonii* and the shorter one was *L. aurea*. Both had flowers which were predominantly yellow.

Next was a plant with deep yellow flowers with a purple tip. There were three different labels in the pot, so Derek wasn't sure what its correct name was!

The next plant was 63 years old – or at least, the original was. Derek had bought it as a birthday present for his mother, and the plant had survived through to this day. The plant was unnamed, but he thought it might be *L. tricolor* because the flowers were a combination of green yellow and orange. The plant had robust mottled leaves.

Crassula cv 'Morgan's Beauty' is a hybrid between *C. falcata* and *C. mesembryanthemopsis* and it has greyish green leaves and small pink flowers. *Crassula nemerosa* is supposed to be deciduous, but his plant had never lost its leaves. The plant has tubers under the ground and can be considered a perennial. Derek said that he placed his plant in the north end of his greenhouse without any special protection.

Echeveria derenbergii had three rosettes and was about to produce yellow/pink flowers. Derek stated that nearly all of his *Echeverias* were throwing up flower stalks at the moment.

Finally, there was a plant which belonged to the genus *Chirita*, which is a gesneriad. This genus produces more flowers than the related *Streptocarpus*. In Derek's opinion, some of the species were quite succulent, although David Neville remarked that since the genus is not listed in our *Guide to Shows*, it would not be considered a valid entry in any of our shows!

Glenn then took over from Derek. He mentioned that there's not a lot of colour in his greenhouse in the winter, especially amongst cacti. But he had picked out some plants which had caught his eye at this time of the year.

Echeveria pulvinata cv 'Ruby' had green leaves with contrasting red markings, and it was starting to produce flower buds.

Notocactus leninghausii was in a 5 inch pot and Glenn thought it looked stunning throughout the year. The plant had 11 heads, and the growing point at the top of each stem always has a characteristic slant rather than being level as in most other plants. It would bear yellow flowers later in the year.

Ferocactus macrodiscus was 4" in diameter. This is a slow growing plant which keeps its spines cleaner from fungus than most other ferocacti. The plant had spines marked in red and white, and Glenn mentioned that the flowers are pink with a deeper mid-stripe.

Next were two plants of *Mammillaria carmenae*. The yellow spined form tends to have white flowers, and the white spined form has pink flowers. This plant looks lovely in the summer. Peter mentioned there was a red spined form available as well.

Next was the form of *Weingartia trollii* which bears orange flowers. Glenn said he had also brought along the yellow flowered version, but that plant was entered in the table show. This species originates from Bolivia and Argentina.

The final plant was *Parodia penicillata*. There were 20 or so flower remains on the plant body. The plant bears deep red flowers which contrast well against the dark green body and gold spines. There is also a form with white spines.

Glenn mentioned that most of the plants he had brought in were starting to touch the sides of the pot, and there was going to be plenty of repotting for him this year!

Thanks are due to David Corina for providing the following notes on last month's talk.

Halfmens and Others – A South African Miscellany

Anthony's talk was somewhat different from our usual presentations in that he discussed a much smaller number of plants, but in greater detail, than is usual by our speakers. Anthony revealed that he had spent 1/9 of his life (a total of 7 years) in Cape Province, with some of that time at Kirstenbosch Botanic garden near Cape Town.

A first general comment was made about the harshness of the conditions under which South African succulents grow, for instance *Lithops truncata* probably has a much shorter lifespan, and doesn't grow as big in the wild, as it does in captivity – nature keeps it 'in bounds' although the potential for larger clumps is present. As many of us now appreciate, it is probably much better to go and see and photograph the more difficult-to-cultivate species in habitat (if you can spot them!-Ed.) than to struggle under less than ideal conditions.

The northern Cape regions were visited first, those around the Orange River and south to the Richtersveld. Perhaps more of an honorary succulent, *Commiphora capensis* was the first plant shown, a pachycaul type growing on

limestone at what is probably its southern limit. A plant in fruit provided some seeds, and although the seeds germinated readily, none survived beyond infancy! Around Augas (?) there were lots of young *Commiphoras* (so nature can do it) and inland were many larger plants, some in fruit. Anthony tried to establish one plant in captivity, but failed, possibly due to its easily damaged, very fine, fragile roots.

Also colourful when in flower is the non-succulent shrub *Hermannia stricta*, lots of red flowers unexpectedly brightening up a very dry area in the northern Richtersveld. Very much the opposite of succulent plants, as an aside, we were shown large colonies of colourful lichens covering the rocks of the Swartberg Pass (somewhat to the southeast of the Richtersveld!).

On to the meat of the evening, the 'halfmens', *Pachypodium namaquanum*, which he had wanted to see in habitat after successfully germinating seed. His first plant was spotted in a garden in Pofadder, before finding his first 'wild' ones in the Goodhouse area. *P. namaquanum* seems to prefer very rocky slopes, and consequently is locally common over a wide area ranging from Springbok northwards. Normally a single stem (apical dominance) supported only by sap pressure, with a rosette of leaves at the top. The flowers (which are not impressive by *Pachypodium* standards) are pinkish tubes at the stem tips. Seed pods ripen after the leaves have fallen, and the seed is rapidly shed when ripe, so one has to time it right if you want to collect any! Seed set was better in bad dry years (same for *Hoodia*, apparently). There seemed to be reasonable regeneration, as seedlings abounded in cracks and crevices, suggesting that the plants appreciate coolness at the roots.

Having said that it is normally single-stemmed (although some natural branching may occur), various 'accidents' could contribute to the loss of the growing point – and Anthony showed some of the unusual forms resulting from the subsequent rebranching. The rosette of leaves always faces north (towards the sun), hence local names of 'noordpole' and 'noordboom', while 'halfmens' is generally regarded as a translation of the local Nama name. The species is a winter grower, even in the UK, becoming dormant for a while in the hotter months when it should be kept dry; despite its bad reputation when first introduced into cultivation, it is not difficult to grow given the right conditions!

In the second half, Anthony briefly showed some scenery around Springbok and drew attention to the other visually dominant plant of the area, namely *Aloe dichotoma*. This forms a small many-branched ‘tree’, and as they are the only large plants around, have lots of local uses, from ‘just about’ supporting large communal weaver bird nests to providing the raw materials for the construction of ‘native’ huts. We then travelled to the southern limit of *A. dichotoma* in the Matzikama (lower Knersvlakte), around Van Rhynsdorp, where he noticed *Euphorbia avis-montana*. We then made a big jump eastward to Graaff-Reinet and the nearby Valley of Desolation, where, apparently, Bolus was ‘converted’ to botany. Here groweth a *Cussonia* and a cushion *Euphorbia* ‘of some sort’.

Springbok was obviously his favourite area as we were then back there again looking for *Dioscorea* (*Testudinaria*), which is well-hidden in the scrub, the annual scrambling vine like growth merging with the local vegetation. Most of us are now familiar with their sculpted caudices that in time can grow quite large, and some ancient, magnificent, examples were shown.

Monty Python style – and now for something completely different (but still around Springbok)! *Othonna euphorbioides* is quite common in Namaqualand, growing in crevices on hills, and is reckoned by Anthony to be a ‘tough’ plant. Another species in the area is *Othonna herrei*, rarer in cultivation until recently, and found around Lekkersing, usually in shade. Anthony spent some time trying to artificially set seed on plants in the Goegap (then Hester Malan) reserve. I cannot remember if he claimed success.

To round off the evening, Anthony brought along a tray of *O. euphorbioides* seedlings and invited the members of the branch to help themselves.

[There are a few of these still available, David & Margaret are looking after them – ask!]

David Corina

Table Show – March

There were 12 entries in the March table show.

	Cacti – Rebutia Group	Succulents – Echeveria Subgroup
Open	(1) I Biddlecombe <i>Mediolobivia pectinata</i>	(1) B Beckerleg <i>Echeveria lilacina</i>
	(2) P Clemow <i>Sulcorebutia arenacea</i>	(2) I Biddlecombe <i>Echeveria tolimanensis</i>
	(3) B Beckerleg <i>Rebutia</i> sp.	(3) J Roskilly <i>Echeveria</i> sp.
Intermediate	(1) G Finn <i>Weingartia trollii</i>	(1) B Beckerleg <i>Echeveria lowellii</i>
	(2) P Clemow <i>Weingartia erinaceae</i>	(2) P Clemow <i>Echeveria shaviana</i>
	(3) B Beckerleg <i>Weingartia riograndensis</i>	(3) I Biddlecombe <i>Echeveria</i> sp.

Ivor Biddlecombe

50th Anniversary Convention

Peter started off the proceedings by pointing out that the Convention had attracted visitors from all over the country and indeed the world! Representatives from Littlehampton, Waltham Forest, Reading, Portsmouth, Isle of Wight, Dartford, Oxford Cardiff, Exeter, Whitstable, Guildford, Harrow, Surbiton, Essex, North Wiltshire, Holland and even California (via Oxford) were present in the hall and there were probably many other branches represented.

Plants sales tables had been set up by Terry Smale (Xerophytes and Geophytes), Ernst Specks (Exotica) Graham Charles, Stuart Riley (Plantlife), John Pilbeam and Malcolm Pym.

Peter became a member of the NCSS in 1953 after seeing a couple of displays by Kenneth Harle. Ken lived in Lower Basildon, just north of Reading, and Peter had an aunt who lived nearby, so when he visited her, he used to cycle to Ken’s nursery. He recounted how he once came away with a shoe box of Mammillarias for £1 10shs. His aunt took in a lodger who eventually bought the house in 1968 and converted it to Cactusville; that person being none other than Gordon Rowley! With this, Peter handed over the floor to Gordon.

Gordon stated that when the Southampton branch was incorporated in 1954, things were very different for the cactus and succulent grower in those days. Vera Higgins was president of the society at the time. Nurseries were being established after the war, and the South coast was a hot spot of activity. There was Edgar Lamb at Worthing, and also Kenneth Harle, and later on, Clive Innes at Ashington. In those days, plants were imported from habitat and people used to rush to the nurseries as soon as word spread of the arrival of a new shipment.

After that, people started to travel to the habitats; places such as the Canary isles, South West USA, South Africa and South America. At that time, it was considered acceptable to collect plants on these trips. Looking back, he still had a feeling of guilt about those days.

Since then, succulent plants have been found in new places such as Madagascar and Socotra, Even in a tropical area such as East Africa, Kenya has 380 succulent species in 21 families.

Books have also graduated - from the translated version of Jacobsen's Succulent Plants to Anderson's Cactaceae, the 6 volume Lexicon of Succulent plants and various monographs. Indeed there is plenty of literature to occupy us. He remembered how Backeberg stated in the 195's that his life's work was now finished - all habitats have been explored!

Recently we have found new things like Geohintonia. Despite all the restrictions, we have a wonderful selection of plants to grow. And no one has said that growing cacti or succulents is unhealthy or politically incorrect. We are actually very fortunate in this country. In Australia and New Zealand, there is a ban on growing certain plants and of course in USA, Lopophora can't be grown. For orchid growers, the rules are much stricter!

Now back to Southampton Branch's history. The branch does have a high place within the society. He had a received a summary of the branch's history and this was subjected to various tests by his colleague Hugo. The tensile strength, chemical properties and legibility of type on the said document were all tested. What's more, it's a most exceptional branch because there was no record of anyone ever killing a plant! The branch also has a long-running newsletter and he had copies of this publication dating back from 1965. It's a magnificent newsletter today and it

spawned the Journal editor as one of the contributors.

Gordon then mentioned names of some of the members who have helped to lead the branch to the present day; people such as Elsie Margetson, Ivor Biddlecombe, Doris Meager, Dave Philips, and Margaret and David Corina.

There was one person he hadn't mentioned yet - Chairman Peter Down. Peter was one of the founder members and he hardly ever misses a meeting. He organised the initial meetings and has held a raft of offices within the branch since then. There's also a strange personal bond via the house Gordon had bought in Reading from Mrs Broomsfield. Peter is an inspiration to many and long may he continue. The Society is aware of these good deeds and therefore offers Peter the Robert Holt Meritorious Medal for his 50 years of service to the succulent hobby.

Peter then asked Gordon to cut the Birthday cake. Gordon said he hated doing this since the cake was so beautiful. We all got to sample the cake later in the day.

Peter then introduced the first speaker of the day, Graham Charles. Peter had first met him in the 1980's as a result of having joined the Chileans, which is the collective name for society of enthusiasts who specialise in growing South American cacti.

We had two more talks later in the day (one from Ernst Specks and a second talk from Graham. The final business of the day was to present Gordon with a cake covered in lots of icing – something he likes a lot!

[Ed - now follows a write-up of the first of the talks given at the Convention.]

Gymnocalyciums in Habitat & Culture

Graham mentioned that he had been on trips to Brazil, Argentina, Chile, and Peru several times. He joined the society in 1962. Talking about cacti is a bit odd, and he thought it would nice to be amongst a group of people who had similar interests!

As far as reading material goes, there's a society handbook on Gymnocalycium and also a book by John Pilbeam. Members of the Austrian Society have also produced a useful A4 folder.

The latest thinking is that there are five groups within the genus, as determined by seed type. This segregation corresponds with geographic distribution and some of the plant characteristics. However, when different species are found in the same habitat, they are often from different seed groups. The classification is to be used in a new two-volume "Cactus Lexicon" which is due to be published later in 2004.

The five groups are called:

- Ovatisemineum,
- Macrosemineum,
- Microsemineum,
- Trichosemineum, and
- Muscosemineum.

Of these, the first group is also called *Gymnocalycium* since it contains the type species, *G. gibbosum*.

On the table at the front of the hall, Graham had arranged plants of many of the species, arranged into the 5 groups. As he talked about each group and species, he pointed out an example of the plant being discussed.

Starting with the Ovatisemineum group, the plant known as *G. reductum* in the South is known as *G. leeanum* in the North. *G. strigianum* looks very black but he assured us that the plant was alive. It's found near Mendoza. *G. baldianum* is well known for its striking red flowers.

Graham mentioned that in common with most South American cacti, *Gymnocalyciums* preferred acidic soil – they do well with a pH of 6. *G. bruchii* produces clumps of small heads. He said that *Gymnocalyciums* tend to grow in areas with shallow soil, where grasses can't compete. *G. schroederianum* was a relatively new discovery and *G. tanningaense* is a miniature.

In the Macrosemineum group, *G. denudatum* is found in Southern Brazil and Uruguay. *G. horstii* ssp. *bueneckeri* is a nice plant with pink flowers, which often does well on the show bench. In the new classification, *G. uruguayense* is referred to under the older name of *G. hyptiacanthum*. The plant often grows in male and female forms, the latter having flowers with no pollen on the stamens. DNA analysis confirms that *G. paraguayense* is the same as *G. fleischerianum*.

The Microsemineum group is the largest of the groupings. *G. hossei* encompasses three different species but these all tend to flower together,

illustrating their affinity. Graham stated that plants of the same species tend to flower together, almost to the same day and this indicates that the plants are very closely related, if not identical.

G. glaucum grows in exposed areas, in pure mineral soil. *G. nigriareolatum* is named because of a black fungus infection. But this only occurs in habitat, so plants grown in cultivation look quite different! *G. pediophilum* has been distributed by the ISI and has white flowers - it comes from Paraguay.

G. saglionis is one of the larger bodied plants, and he'd seen plants with heads over a foot across. *G. pflanzii* hails from Northern Argentina and Bolivia. It has a big tuberous root. Both of these species flower nicely.

G. spegazzinii grows at high altitudes and although he's seen them at a foot across, his 4" diameter plant was around 15-20 years old, so it's extremely slow growing. Plants from a high altitude have heavy spination, and those from lower areas have fewer spines.

Trichosemineum is a small grouping. The seeds have little protuberances on the seeds. And the plants are often flat-bodied and brown. The group includes *G. quehlianum*, *G. bodenbenderianum*, and *G. ochoteranae*. *G. ragonesei* is a miniature, arguably the smallest of all the gymnos.

Finally to the Muscosemineum group. *G. marsoneri* is flat growing, and it can get quite large. The group also includes *G. eurypleurum*, and from the north, *G. schickendantzii*.

Graham went on to say that *Gymnocalyciums* in general are not under threat of extinction because they are easy to grow from seed. However, their habitat in Argentina is under constant threat from the expansion of people and also grazing by goats (which eat everything they can find). The building of new dams can also degrade the natural habitat.

Graham then went on to illustrate the plants in habitat and flower using slides. Graham pointed out that in the Southern hemisphere, it is spring in October, and that's a good time to look for plants in flower.

G. andreae has the best yellow flower and *G. baldianum* has red flowers. *G. berchtii* has a grey

epidermis and the featured plant had managed to produce a white flower in a 2.5" pot. We saw *G. bruchii* in Cordoba. It grows in small amounts of soil or in rocky outcrops. He showed a photo of hundreds of forms of *bruchii*, all with white/pink flowers.

G. erianceum has white flowers. The example of *G. gibbosum* in a 3.5" pot was a small one, but nevertheless it was about to come into flower. *G. kieslingii* has a white flower, and *G. kroenleinii* is a new species named after the curator of the Jardin Exotique in Monaco, Dr. Marcel Kroenlein.

G. neuhuberi has pink flowers and is rather like *G. monvillei* ssp. *horridispinum*. We saw *G. strigianum* in habitat and then a seedling grown from seeds collected from that plant.

Graham mentioned that DNA analysis suggests that discocacti & gymnocacti are closely related. Perhaps in the future, another round of renaming might be necessary!

On to Macrosemineum, *G. denudatum* and *G. horstii* ssp. *bueneckeri* had pink flowers. The fruits are very large. We also saw *G. hyptiacanthum* ssp. *uruguayense*, *G. roseiflorum* and a female version with the anthers visible, but showing no pollen. *G. rauschii* is a synonym.

G. mesopotamicum was 2.5" in diameter but had managed to produce a 3" white flower. *G. paraguayense* also has white flowers.

We moved on to the microsemineum group. *G. bayrianum* may be related to *G. castellanosii*. *G. chiquitanum* comes from Bolivia and has pink flowers. *G. glaucum* has blue fruits and likes full exposure to the sun. Graham mentioned Omar Ferrari who lives south of Buenos Aires and who is a fantastic grower of some of these plants. *G. hossei* has long spines in habitat, and bears white flowers with a red throat. *G. monvillei* (*G. schuetzianum*) had pink flowers. *G. monvillei* ssp. *horridispinum* has pink or white – all three species come from Cordoba.

G. mostii (*G. bicolor*) grows amongst rocks. It was known previously as *G. valnicekianum*. *G. nigriareolatum* has black areoles due to a fungus, and it bears white flowers. At Catamarca, *G. oenanthemum* (*G. carminanthum*, *G. tillianum*) has red flowers

We saw a picture of *G. pflanzii* bearing fruits with seeds bursting out from a split in the side of the fruit. The seeds are distributed by ants which are attracted by the pulp surrounding the seeds. Indeed ants' nests are sometimes covered in *Gymnocalycium* plants! When planting seeds of this species, do soak them in water and clean them well before sowing, to prevent fungus on the seedlings. We also saw *G. Ritterianum* and *G. saglionis*, and the highland form of *G. spegazzini*.

Then onto the Trichomosemineum group. *G. bodenbenderinum* has a brown body and dirty pink flowers. We saw *G. ochoteranae* in habitat, and also *G. vatteri*. Some of these specimens had a single spine, but the majority were three spined. However, it's the one-spined form which has been cultivated more.

There are a lot of species growing in the Cordoba area, and we saw *G. quehlianum* (*G. stellatum*), and *G. ragonesei* – a tiny plant, which flowers early in the season.

Moving onto the final group (Muscosemineum) *G. marsoneri* (*G. hamatum*) had lots of spines and comes from Paraguay. The flowers have grey pollen and reflexed petals. *G. mihanovichii* (*G. stenogonum*) is found in northern Argentina and southern Paraguay.

The Los Colorados region in North West Argentina has red soil. *G. schickendantzii* in the north grows in a flat form, and can reach a foot across. It produces flowers peripherally. *G. friedrichii* (*G. stenopleurum*) has pink/white flowers.

Graham's talk got the Convention off to a good start. His enthusiasm was obvious and it was nice to see a mix of photos showing the plants in habitat and also what the same species looks like in cultivation.

Vinay Shah

Snippets

Margaret's Musings

Looking on my computer I feel ashamed. It is nearly a year since I last wrote anything for the newsletter. It is obviously something I only do at moments of extreme exhaustion! My last contribution was after the 2003 Easter Broadlands Show when we had just had record sales and potted about 350 plants for children.

I am totally exhausted - but it was for a good cause. I have to report that the Branch had a fantastic 50th birthday party. We have had lots of nice comments. Graham Charles said that it was the largest audience he had spoken to in the UK. Gordon Rowley said the plants were wonderful, and the cake was quite nice too. Stuart Riley and John Pilbeam said it was the best ever organised event they had been to. Terry and Jennifer Smale said they had a wonderful day and sold lots of their plants. The other comment from everyone was how nice it was to have free tea and coffee.

I found out ten days before the event that the heating boiler at the hall had broken. The caretaker said it was so old it would have to be replaced. I was praying that it would be done by the 7th. It was. Considering the inclement weather, Gordon Rowley would have had a much harder time warming up the audience if it had not been replaced in time.

I have thanked the individuals concerned who did a lot for the event, so I am not going to repeat myself now. I must just say how great our new Catering Manager is. He brought the whole family along to back him up and provide the workforce necessary. It was an amazing example of team working. We are all very grateful to the Finn family.

We were well supported by our friends and neighbours in the zone. Cliff Thompson was appointed photographer and shot zealously all day. I have a CD of the pictures he took and some of them have gone to the Echo office and will hopefully grace an article about Peter Down and the event. Lots of other people took photographs. I shall try and get copies of them all and produce a CD for anyone who would like one. I need to be taught how to operate the software on my computer to do that, but I am sure Vinay will take an evening out and show me what to do. It does mean that anyone who wants

can have their own photograph album of the event.

I took my camera and never had time to take any pictures. I have got lots of mental snapshots though. I can see Peter Down's face when Gordon Rowley presented him with his Robert Holt award. That has been the Committee's best kept secret for about six months! The look on everyone's face when Peter banged the gavel at 10.55 with a '5 minute warning'. Emily Finn and Penny Bielckus going round with Sonia Bryant selling raffle tickets, with both little girls looking up at people appealingly. I am sure that is why the raffle sold so many tickets. The other picture is Sonia sitting on a table with the girls folding all the counterfoils during Gordon's opening address. Dave Neville looking slightly apprehensive, as though he thought something terrible was about to happen - it didn't. Then his face at the end of the day with a big grin, saying 'brilliant'. Graham Charles's face when the heavens opened and the rain thundered down on the ventilators in the roof and the noise nearly drowned him out. I could go on and on, but you should have been there!

The lectures and lecturers were great, the plant sales had something for everyone, there was too much food (but that is better than too little) and everything ran pretty well to time. I think the Branch can congratulate itself on a prestigious event. Just don't ask me to plan another for a few years!

I ought to add a few facts and figures. We sold 99 tickets, and there were 112 people in the building. I have only down a very rough balance (I haven't had much time — we have the Easter Prickly Potting to organise) but it looks as though we have made a small profit on the event. The main thing was that everybody enjoyed the day and that it was a great success for the branch.

Margaret Corina

Next Month's Meeting

The May meeting will consist of a practical evening, where the principles of Showing and Judging will be discussed. The meeting will also include a Mini-Show (with 10 classes), where after a short tutorial, everyone will have a chance to practice their judging skills by picking the best 3 plants from each class. In the second half, an expert will explain how they would have ranked the plants.

Members are invited to bring along any plants which they wish to enter in the show classes (listed opposite). You can enter one plant per class.

Due to the Mini-Show, there will be no table show at the May Meeting.

May Mini Show

Rules

Classes in the show are open to anyone attending the meetings of BCSS Southampton & District Branch.

There is no charge to exhibit, and no prize money will be paid.

Entries are limited to one entry per class per exhibitor.

Classes will be judged according to the BCSS Handbook of Shows (9th Edition)

Class Descriptions

Class 1. Mammillaria Group

Two plants in pots not exceeding 4"

Class 2. Parodia Group

Two plants in pots not exceeding 4"

Class 3. Gymnocalycium Group

Two plants in pots not exceeding 5"

Class 4. Rebutia Group

One plant in a pot not exceeding 6¼"

Class 5. Echinopsis Group

One plant in a pot not exceeding 5"

Class 6. Any cactus

One plant with no pot size limit

Class 7. Crassula Group

One plant in a pot not exceeding 6¼"

Class 8. Haworthia Group

Two plants in pots not exceeding 4"

Class 9. Euphorbia Group

One plant in a pot not exceeding 5"

Class 10. Any succulent

One plant with no pot size limit

Forthcoming Events

Sun 11 th	Apr -	Southampton	Spring Garden and Flower Show, Broadlands, Romsey
Mon 12 th			
Fri 16 th	Apr	Isle of Wight	"Asclepiadaceae" – T W Radford
Sat 17 th	Apr	Portsmouth	Bring & Buy Sale
Tue 4 th	May	Southampton	Members' Mini-show (schedule published in April)
Fri 7 th	May	Southampton	Branch Dinner (The Clump Inn, Chilworth)
Sun 9 th	May	Littledown, Dorset	Branch Display @ Bonsai Show, Littledown Sports Centre
Sat 15 th	May	Portsmouth	"A to Z" – Bill Morris
Mon 17 th	May	Southampton	Committee Meeting (@ 79 Shirley Avenue)
Fri 21 st	May	Isle of Wight	Pre-show preparations (@ Peter Collard's)
Sun 23 rd	May	Southampton	Open Day (2-5pm) @ Mark & Rebecca Jakins, Hedge End
Sat 29 th	May	Isle of Wight	Isle of Wight Branch Annual Show - Church Hall, Town Lane, Newport
Tue 1 st	Jun	Southampton	"Ferocactus" – John Pilbeam
Sat 5 th	Jun	Portsmouth	Portsmouth & District Summer Show - Wickham Community Hall, Dairy Moor, Wickham
Fri 18 th	Jun	Isle of Wight	"South African Bulbs" – Terry Smale
Sat 19 th	Jun	Portsmouth	"Around the Four Corners" – Terry Smale

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