

British Cactus & Succulent Society

Southampton & District Branch Newsletter

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Editorial

The clocks went back this weekend and it's nice to still see some light as the evenings close in. The weather was a little chilly last week but the temperatures have improved over the past couple of days and there's been some nice sunshine to enjoy.

Earlier in the month, some of the plants were looking a little dry so I gave them some water – the spring sun is low in the sky, but it can inflict some scorch damage to plants if they are dried out from the winter rest. If the current spell of sunny days persists I really need to water some more. Several of my Echeverias are in flower but I don't think any cacti have managed it so far.

Announcements

For next month's meeting, we will be running a **Minishow**, with 10 classes. If you didn't pick up the leaflet from the front table, advising of the classes, please do so this month. We want people to bring in plants and enter the show, and then everyone will have a go at judging the plants. In the second half of the meeting, a judge will tell us what he would have selected as the best plants.

There are **sheets on the front table to fill in your name** if you are interested in going to the Havering Cactus Mart in May, or to other events in June. Please do remember to fill these in since we need to assess how many people want to go and this will help us to organise travel / lifts to the events.

Last Month's Meeting

Dot asked our president, Peter Down to open the meeting. Peter mentioned that he was the only

member here from when the branch was formed 60 years ago. He had written up an account in the March newsletter. In 1950 he did an exchange with a French penpal - and that got him interested. He spent a couple of weeks out there, and they took 2-3 trips into Paris, and alongside the Seine there were market stalls who sold cacti. He came back with about 20 plants and cuttings. He was hooked, and in the next year or two, if he saw a plant in someone's window he'd ask if they were interested in forming a local club. About a dozen people said yes. A neighbour put an advert in the Echo and exactly 60 years ago they held their first meeting. A committee was formed and the branch started.

They met in a back room of a pub just off the Avenue - the Royal Arms in Padwell Road. They then went to a St John's Ambulance hall committee room, in Kings Park Road. It was very narrow, and once assembled for the meeting, they couldn't move around. Then they used a Spiritualist Church Hall – the church was before the hall, and there were occasions when members wandered into a Church meeting by mistake – Ivor admitted to doing this. Ian Acton came down from Newcastle and soon got involved. They moved locations to the Southampton Allotment Garden Hall in Bangor Road, Freemantle, but eventually in 2001 we moved to the current location. The membership was usually in the 60-70s and even reached 100 at one point. Right now we are one of the healthiest branches in the Society, and people come from other branches and some of our own members also travel quite a distance.

Peter proceeded to name some of the early members. Bert Thompson lived near him and was the first Secretary. Elsie Margetson was the 22nd chairman – she was a teacher from Winchester and according to her, she was the person who encouraged David Hunt, of fame at Kew, to take up botany. Some of the Chairmen included George Meager, Ken Halstead, Doris Meager, Roger Labbett, and some of the Secretaries included Ken Thornton, Ian Acton, Dave Philips and Richard White.

We are proud to have had David Neville since he was a teenager. Ivor Biddlecombe has been our Show Manager for 40 years. The branch's strength

comes from the loyal members - the core members who have put their heart and souls into the club. It is thanks to them that we are a successful branch. Of course, we also need people to come along to the meetings – to buy plants and refreshments and to socialise. Please continue as you are – be welcoming, exchange your knowledge and extend your plant collections.

With this, drinks were handed out and a toast was made to the branch. Glasses were raised and Southampton and District was congratulated on reaching 60 years and people offered their best wishes for the future. Afterwards, during the break, there were some snacks to eat and Sue had also baked a birthday cake, which Peter cut.

Our Collection

Dot introduced Suzanne and Tony and reminded the audience that the branch will have an outing to see their collection on 22nd June. Suzanne said they were quite honoured to be here on our 60th Anniversary – there are not that many branches who can say they've been around that long.

The first slide of “Our Collection” featured a paperweight. Suzanne said that at 16 she started with cacti and succulents and she bought her first paperweight in the late 1960s, from Eastbourne. She now has over 500. The slide featured a modern millefiori piece, by Peter Holmes who used to work for Caithness Glass. Caithness has gone through many reorganisations and buyouts and now they have just a skeleton crew of workers. Suzanne said she liked the features on this one because the millefiori stands proud of the base. This weight was completely made from glass - the millefiori is made first and then placed on a base and the main glass body is added.

After this they started their real talk for the evening. They now live at Ansty, which is near Haywards Heath and Gatwick. Before this, they were in Brighton. They have two Eden greenhouses, one of which was featured in the photograph. It was 36 feet by 8 feet, and had suffered a bit during the winter. They had changed all the glass for twinwall polycarbonate – but the high winds meant that a number of the panels blew out. The Eden was not designed to take polycarbonate panels, and the clips were too malleable. They now have obtained some better clips so hopefully things will be better in the future. The bigger greenhouse was 50 feet by 20 feet. The stack at one end was due to a Calor gas heater. In the centre was a cut out for some tall Cerei. The plants had burst through the roof, and Leo van der Hoeven had helped tidy them up. The

tall plants were a *Trichocereus* and a blue cereus, *C. chalibaeus* and perhaps some other plant too. They kept saying they should do something about the tall plants and eventually a couple of people from Harrow branch offered to take it down. The work took a day and they filled an entire skip. The *Trichocereus* had started to rot so had it been alone, it could have been a disaster. They first took down the plants in front, and then any shoots from the big plants. They then chamfered the main body with a chainsaw to cut the spines off and then proceeded to take it down in slivers. They were drenched with the moisture from the sap. Anyway they were really glad they didn't have the hole in the roof this winter – the rain this year would have been a big problem.

Next we saw a shot of Tony's original collection from 1960. Tony started when he was 10, almost 60 years ago. This particular picture was taken by a friend of his father's in 1960. He had a greenhouse in the back garden and grew chiefly cacti. Everything was in clay pots - plastic pots didn't exist back then. They had to move into a flat, fortunately this was downstairs and they had the use of a garden and he now had a 5 x 7 Oakworth greenhouse. The staging was only on one side but he used tiered staging to house more plants – this was an idea from Dennis O'Neill of Eastbourne. It was a good way of displaying the plants. You could now see some plastic pots. He eventually moved to all plastic since the pots are lighter and don't dry out as quickly. When Suzanne first saw his collection, she was surprised that there was no gangway into the greenhouse, so how did he get in there to water? Well, all the plants on the front rows were on trolleys and could be pushed under the benching as you went in and then pulled out when you came out.

After another house move, to Mill Rise in Brighton, he was living with his parents and put up the Oakworth greenhouse as well as extending it, so it was now 20 feet long. It was made from oak which didn't need to be very thick and the rest of the framework was steel coated in zinc. He was still all cacti. At one point in the mid 70s he did have cacti and succulents but he sold the succulents and was left with just the cacti, and three agaves.

It was around this time that the two of them met, and in 1975 they got married. Suzanne left behind (with her mother) her 14 foot greenhouse – the bones of a collection, and her plants became her mothers. By the time her mother gave up her collection, there was no space left – she really liked them. Tony mentioned these early slides were taken with primitive cameras – a Kodak instamatic.

Back to the Oakworth – Tony was buying lots of plants from Hollygate, where Clive Innes was importing plants from Mexico and South America. The reason Tony gave up growing succulents was linked to a couple of expensive plants from Clive - *Melocactus broadwayi* and *Pachypodium namaquanum*. The Melo was kept in a propagator – and it did very well. He got some more and planted those in the propagator too. However the *Pachypodium* died and it was an expensive failure. It might have been an imported plant which just didn't settle down.

Things moved on, and in the year they got married, they put up a new greenhouse (36 x 8) next to the existing 24 x 8 Eden. This picture must have been taken sometime later since the roof had twinwall polycarbonate. There were 3 sections inside, with succulents on the left. The centre was kept warmest for the Cerei, and these were in a sandy bed with heating cable. The greenhouse height was extended on one side to accommodate taller plants, Steve Hammer helped with that. Succulents included various Aloes and Euphorbias. The picture featured *Aloe dhufarensis* which she obtained in the 1980s, and there was also *Aloe dichotoma*.

In the other greenhouse, there were 2 sections. heated by mains gas. They had one or two disasters along the way, including one length of staging - 24 feet long - collapsing (the staging was joined together in sections). The legs were hollow and had rusted from the inside out. This happened in November and Suzanne learnt about it at 8:30 am when their cat alerted her. She didn't want to ruin Tony's day so called on a whole bunch of people that she knew and they helped to get the plants out from the greenhouse. By the time Tony came home there was some semblance of order. The incident resulted in about 5 million *Opuntia* cuttings - *Opuntia platypus* got decapitated and lots of the small *Tephrocactus* fell apart. They built a new room on the bungalow to make it larger by getting a conservatory put up. It had a stainless steel frame with a white coating but this proved to be a bad idea - the sea air cracked the coating after a short while – it might have been better to just go with the steel finish.

With a *Eulychnia*, last year was the first year they flowered it. Only a handful of this species have ever been flowered in Europe. Theirs was 12 feet tall. It was *Eulychnia saint-pieana* - a handsome plant and not fast growing, theirs is 21 years old and still some way off the roof. It is nice and white and woolly in cultivation, but this is not the case in habitat where Angie said they look dirty and much less hairy.

Tony proceeded to explain how his love for Cerei started. He and Michael Martin made a trip to Europe in 1970, to visit continental nurseries, including Uebelmann's. Tony was interested in *Notocacti*, and Uebelmann was the main source of imported cacti from Brazil. When they got there, he saw all these top cuttings of Cerei and he didn't buy any at the time, but at the end of the week, he still had money left and so they went back and he bought a lot of top cuttings. Ever since then, he has been keen on the columnar cacti.

Cephalocereus senilis is a classic and they have quite a few in their collection. Some were from Suzanne's stint at Fresh Acres nursery - the owner used to grow them from seed and didn't always sell them so they acquired quite a few from there. If you work for a wholesale nursery one of the advantages is that you can pick out some nice cristates. We saw a nice crested plant (on its own roots) of *Cephalocereus senilis* but the crest had forced itself out of the soil, so you could see daylight through the middle. *Echinocereus* is another classic and over recent years they have acquired a few collections and now have quite a large collection of them. The Lau form of *E. pectinatus* has a beautiful flower and lovely coloured spines, but it is bad for attracting mealy bug. *Melocactus* is another group of plants that are mealy prone - they get in around the base of the cephalium. He did grow quite a few from seed and also acquired a collection from a grower in Woking, but after struggles maintaining sufficient temperatures in the greenhouse, he has lost a lot of them.

Mammillaria is another group where they have not specialised but have acquired many plants over the years. *Mammillaria campotricha Marnier-Lapostollei* has long curly spines and it makes a nice big clump. They had a very red spined *M. spinosissima* - when Suzanne joined Fresh Acres, there had been a large importation from C&J of California and they had received a nice red form. They always top dress their plants these days – it improves light in the greenhouse, keeps weeds down, and makes the plants appear more attractive. *M. guelzowiana* is a hard plant to grow - you can grow it very well for a few years and it has lovely flowers then suddenly it all collapses – the longest they have kept it is 6-7 years. *M. eriacantha* is a tropical species and it doesn't like to get cold in the winter. If it forms seed pods, take them off before they go mouldy. *M. theresae* is another plant they have had battles with over the years. The featured plant was very good and they had kept it for many years. Other clones he's tried have not survived long and tend to die off in the winter. Tom Radford mentioned that for this species, the seeds are formed

inside the plant body, which does indicate that the body does rot off in habitat. *M. longimamma* (*M. dolicothele*) has lovely yellow flowers and a beautiful scent – this plant was in a 7" BEF square pot, a size which is no longer available.

A nice Ferocactus seemed to be a *Ferocactus rectispinus*, although the spines suggested it could possibly be a hybrid. It flowers well, and this plant has glands where the flower appears so it can get mould. They went through a phase 6-7 years ago where they put their trickier plants into clay pots - but as they get older and weaker, it became very difficult to move the plants, so they have gone back to plastic pots and now have a lot of spare pots. *Ferocactus macrodiscus* is perhaps the link between Ferocactus and Stenocereus. The plant has nice purple flowers and was in a 7 or 8 inch pot. It had been bought from someone in Waterlooville who grew great plants but had never joined the society. We saw a few Ferocacti and Ariocarpi as well.

Suzanne's interest in succulents came about due to many influences. Douglas Huth from Brighton Branch used to raise plants from seed and bring them along for sale – she remembered buying nice plants of *Dinteranthus* for 25p. Her collection burgeoned, and she got lots of Lithops and then the Mesemb Study Group started, with people such as Steve Hammer and Hazel Hodgson. We saw *Lithops meyeri hammeruby* – she was growing two different clones in the same pot, in the hope that they would flower together and she could set seed. *Lithops otzeniana* cv. "Aquamarine" is really not that colour. She mentioned that in her view, the longer you grow these colour variations, the less vibrant they seem to be – it's as if they lose the will to retain their different colour. *L. karasmontana* v. **summitatum** has a red top – it has been bred from the signalberg form. The fuscus form of *L. fulleri* is attractive. Some mesembs make an appearance in garden centres these days and *Delosperma sutherlandii* is one of them. It does have a thick root underneath - so be careful when you water. It is supposedly hardy - but Suzanne wouldn't trust it, although Ivor said he had grown it outside for 5 years. *Aridaria noctiflora* looks like a twig and flowers late afternoon, not night as the name might suggest. It is rather nice and flowers in March when not much else is open. *Cephalophyllum* has flowers on short stalks. *Erepsia lacera* has leaf edges which are saw-like. It has a 2 inch flower, and the 1st time it flowered in February, but subsequently it has flowered in February but then subsequently in May. We ended this part with a *Lampranthus*.

Next we saw a succulent bed, which they no longer have. We also saw a large *Cereus chalibaeus* - if

you want a cutting from it let them know. *Selenicereus hamatus* seemed to have grown for hundreds of yards. They seem to have had quite a few *Cleistocacti* in their time and we saw a slender one. Her favourite *Gymnocalycium* was *G. horridaspina*. *Notocactus acutus* has yellow flowers. We also saw the flower of *C. chalibaeus* and *Seicereus icosagonus*, and the variegated form of *Kalanchoe thyrsiflora*. *Crassula coccinea* has really scarlet flowers, but a white flowered form also exists. *Weingartia trollii* has very variable flower colours, ranging from yellow through to red. *Mammillaria wilcoxii* has nice flowers and we saw a nice *Chamaecereus* hybrid with chunky stems. *Echinopsis frankii* has lovely flowers. *Opuntia basilaris* is variable, and they didn't find it easy to flower. *Escobaria nelliae* has flowers as big as the plant.

We saw a hybrid *Echinopsis*, and another possible hybrid with a *Lobivia winteriana*. *Lobivia calorubra* seems to vary in flower colour. A hybrid cereus, between a *Espositoa* and *Cleistocactus straussii* might be a bit confused since the parents were a mix of day and night flowering plants. *Selenicereus testudo* has long trailing stems. *Aztekium ritteri* was from the collection of Pat Stacy in from the 1960s. *Echinomastus laui* was bought at ELK from one of the Czech growers. *Echinopsis* "Barber Pole" has very attractive striped flowers. A very old plant of *Islaya* – it forms multiple flowers from one areole. We saw *Echeveria agavoides*, the old fashioned *E. derenbergii* and the flowers of *Echeveria longissima* which has the largest flowers in *Echeveria*. *Aeonium zwartkop* has black heads. *Pachyhytum oviferum* is the sugared almond plant – it gets naked stems but shoots form and cover these eventually.

A pictured showed some "wonderful" weather in November with frost and fog. They bought a nice 2-headed *Ariocarpus* from a plant action at a good price because no one wanted it. The reason was it couldn't be shown because it was two different species in one pot. An *Ariocarpus retusus* was purchased from the person in Waterlooville when it was put up on Ebay for £25 – it had been grown from seed. We saw *Astrophytum capricorne* and *Astrophytum asterias* – these had been obtained from a Czech nursery. A *Neoporteria nigrihorrida* did not have black spines but it was correctly labelled. *Mammillaria surculosa* clumps and has yellow flowers. A *Lobivia maximiliana* had very long spines – it forms nice bicoloured flowers. A *Neoporteria* had gorgeous flowers, and we also saw the blooms on a *Neobinghamia* which is a cross between *Haageocereus* and *Espositoa*. A *Weberocereus* which flowered for them grew to a height of 15 feet. *Vatricania guntheri* also flowered

for them. A bed of plants got into a mess with Opuntias growing into each other. Slowly, the central bed was replaced with benching. At the end of the 36 foot greenhouse, seedlings were on the left, conophytums were on the right. The fans run 24 x 7. A *Carnegiea gigantea* bought at a bring and buy sale died, but they got another from Doug Donaldson. We also saw a grafted Epithelantha with mostly cristate heads which was also from Doug.

On their premises they have a swimming pool which they don't use. They grew plants floating on the surface and have now put a floor over the pool, and it is now their sales house. Walking on it is a bit like a trampoline. There were benches along the side and many Lithops and Conophytums on this. The water in the pool stabilises the temperature but they have put a fan heater in there. They also house the Monillaria Institute – Suzanne acquired it from an ex-member of theirs. The blue cerei were *C. chalibaeus*. More recent pictures of the greenhouses showed the polycarbonate in place. They still get good colouring on the plants. We saw Parodias in the sales section. A nice Obregonia was obtained from a Hungarian dealer on Ebay. They got a large collection of Copiapos 3 years from the late Tony Johnson from Scunthorpe and we saw a couple of *C. krainziana* forms, *C. grandiflora* and *C. solaris*. One plant that they had briefly from Pat Stacy's collection was sold to someone in Italy to raise £300 for his widow. A Lophophora was received from Liz Tookey in 1974.

They also acquired some grafted North American cacti - Sclerocactus/Pediocactus on *Echinocereus floranthus* were doing extremely well – the grafts seem to match their growth pattern. They put them in bonsai pots to make them look better. *Pediocactus winkleri* is a very rare and tricky plant. They also got some gorgeous Toumeyas. When it came in the post it was flattened, but it fluffed up quickly. *Sclerocactus spinosior* var *blainei* has feathery spines. A *Toumeyia paprycantha* from a different area was also nice. *Ancistrocactus (Sclerocactus) scheeri* has greeny flowers. We saw some nice "Super Kabuto"s and other crosses, and Suzanne mentioned some of these would likely be for sale at the Mesemb event in September. We also saw *Crassula* "Brides Bouquet" which has pink/white flowers. With *Crassula nemorosa*, when it dies down, don't throw it away, it will regrow. *Aloe plicatilis* flowers early in the year. A large *Echinocactus grusonii* was so heavy that its weight started buckling the bench. We also saw a nice *Strombocactus disciformis*, *Euphorbia stellata*, some lovely astrophytums and *Mamilopsis senilis*. *Escobaria leei* had grown one large stem in the middle of regular heads and they had two plants

growing like this! *Astrophytum ornatum* was 2 feet tall. *Mammillaria schiedeana* had reached 2 feet across. We saw another *Mamilopsis senilis* – had aimed to resell this but it ended up in his collection. It used to used to flower regularly in Brighton but wasn't doing so well in Ansty. Four conifers have been taken down recently so the light might be better in the future. We saw *M. zeilmanniana* and *Ferocactus glaucescens*. They ended by saying that they haven't started watering anything yet.

Vinay Shah

Table Show Results

There were 20 entries in the March table show.

	Cacti – Opuntia	Succulents – Haworthia & Gasteria
Open	(1) I Biddlecombe <i>Maihuenopsis glomerata</i>	(1) B Beckerleg <i>Haworthia parksiana</i>
	(2) B Beckerleg <i>Opuntia invicta</i>	(2) I Biddlecombe <i>Astroloboa aspera</i>
	(3)	(3) I Biddlecombe <i>Haworthia bolusii</i>
Intermediate	(1) I Biddlecombe <i>Opuntia geometricus</i>	(1) B Beckerleg <i>Haworthia maughanii</i>
	(2) B Beckerleg <i>Opuntia invicta</i>	(2) S. Wilson <i>Haworthia marginata</i>
	(3) B Beckerleg <i>Opuntia clavata</i>	(3) S. Wilson <i>Haworthia coarctata</i>

Ivor Biddlecombe

Bookwork Corner

We had our second count of flowering cacti and succulents in our background heated greenhouse on 23rd March. We both had echeverias in flower, with *E. gigantea* impressively in flower since the New Year. Mark had a couple of aloe and mammillaria but was piped to the post by 20 plants for me and 15 for him by my euphorbias and turbinicarpus!

I am very pleased to have 4 different species of sansevieria in flower or bud at the moment as I rarely get them to flower. They are *Sansevieria parva*, *S. stuckyi*, *S. francisii* and *S. trifasciata* 'Midnight Star'. The first 2 are Margaret Corina plants.

As usual towards the end of winter the reed buntings and pied wagtails have started to come into the garden to feed. The male reed bunting with his striking black and white head pattern is so lovely to see. The female having a brown head is not so impressive.

Spring is defiantly here with the abundance of willow in flower, hazel and hawthorn leaves unfurling and splashes of yellow on the road verges with lesser celandine, primroses and dandelion in flower. If you can, try and get out and enjoy a walk in the spring sunshine. Look out for the migrant birds that have returned including swallow, house martin and wheatear.

Hope you all enjoyed last month's 60th Anniversary evening, wine and dined, bought lots of plants and books and enjoyed the presentation by Suzanne and Tony Mace. Here's to another sixty years of Southampton BCSS Group, congratulations to Peter Down for bringing the group into existence!

'ENJOYED THE LECTURE? THEN ENJOY THE BOOK!'

April

Well the annual cultivation and propagation workshop has come around again. So I expect a rush on the library as everyone is inspired by our home grown team of speakers on the mysteries of cacti and succulent cultivation.

Some books which should inspire you include '**The New Haworthia Handbook**' (Bayer M.B.), this should be invaluable for anyone already growing haworthias or inspired by Bruce to do so. The two titles by John Pilbeam, although now quite dated, are still a valuable read for newcomers in particular. These are '**How to care for your cacti**' and '**How to care for your succulents**'. Both have a very user friendly format with general cultivation and easy to use two page spreads on different plants, with specific cultivation and common problems highlighted with potential solutions.

Other books worth looking at include '**The Complete book of cacti and succulents**' (Hewitt T.) which covers potting and propagation as well as discussing various species. '**Cactus and succulents in the garden**' (Bell S.A.) includes planting them in the garden such as in combination with other garden plants, in containers and used as bedding. At the back of the book is a list of frost resistant plants. All these books can be found in **the Featured Book Corner**, so do come over and have a look!

Sue Wilson

Next Month's Meeting

Our next meeting will be on 6th May and will take the form of a mini-show. During the first half of the meeting, members will get a chance to judge 1st/2nd/3rd places across 10 classes of plants. In the second half of the meeting, a judge will tell us what he would have placed and people will get a chance to compare that with their choices. There is a form detailing the 10 classes, so please do consider bring some entries for the show.

Because of the Mini-Show, there will no table show in May.

A reminder for committee members that a Branch Committee meeting is due to be held on 15th April. The date for this will be confirmed at the April meeting.

Forthcoming Events

Sat 12 th	Apr	Isle of Wight	Nature in Close-Up 3 (Colin Haygarth)
Tue 15 th	Apr	Southampton	Branch Committee Meeting (TBC)
Sat 19 th	Apr	Portsmouth	Bring and Buy Auction
Tue 6 th	May	Southampton	Branch Mini Show, & Judging Explained
Sat 10 th	May	Isle of Wight	Talk from Cliff Thompson
Sat 10 th	May	Southampton	Branch visit to Havering Cactus Mart, Romford, Essex
Sat 17 th	May	Portsmouth	Plants & Animals of Madagascar (Hazel Taylor)
Sat 17 th	May	Southampton	Display / Plant Sales @ Sparsholt College (Countryside Day)
Tue 3 rd	Jun	Southampton	New Cactus & Succulent Hybrids (Stuart Riley)
Sat 14 th	Jun	Isle of Wight	Epiphyllums (Carl Bullock)
Sun 15 th	Jun	Southampton	Branch visit to RHS Wisley & Mammillaria Society Event
Sat 21 st	Jun	Portsmouth	Echinocereus (John Pilbeam)
Sun 22 nd	Jun	Southampton	Branch visit to Suzanne & Tony Mace's Collection
Sat 28 th	Jun	Southampton	Branch visit to Bristol Cactus Mart, Portishead, Bristol

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