

British Cactus & Succulent Society

Southampton & District Branch Newsletter

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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
vvshah@clara.co.uk
(023) 80261989

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Editorial

We entered British summer time a few days ago and the temperatures do seem to be improving. However the lack of sunny days in March means that my daffodils are opening later than normal - half have only just opened, and the other half are still a week or two away. Anyway it's time to start watering your collections and preparing for the start of a new growing season.

Announcements

At a committee meeting in February, it was decided to increase the price of refreshments at our meetings from 30p to 40p, to help cover increase in hall rent and speakers' travel costs. This change went into effect at the March meeting.

A small group of members will be going to the Zone 9 Convention in Hardwicke, Gloucestershire on Sunday 19th April – there may be a seat for one more passenger, so if you are interested, have a word with Peter Down today.

Next month's meeting is a cultivation & propagation workshop – there are more details about this event on Page 5 of this newsletter.

Last Month's Meeting

Dot started the meeting by mentioning that John Pilbeam, had recently been awarded (the Veitch Memorial Medal) by the Royal Horticultural Society, for outstanding contribution to the advancement of the science and practice of horticulture is his area of expertise.

Plants of Interest

Alice had brought in some plants of hers which had started to flower early in the year. Three of the plants were Mammillarias – *albilanata*, *microhelix* and *glassii* v. *ascensionis* – these were the plants handed out by the branch to members in recent years. Her main interest is in succulents so she doesn't do anything special for the cacti, apart from giving them good light in her greenhouse. She had also brought in a *Stenocactus* which was also flowering and which had come up in a batch of mixed seed. The final plant was *Neoporteria napina*, which was originally part of Ciprian Suta's collection.

World Collections and Nurseries

For some reason my digital recorder did not capture any recording for the first half of Ian Woolnough's talk – therefore part of this report is based on some minimal hand written notes!

We started in May 2006 with some pictures from Ian's back garden, showing his greenhouses. These were decent sizes at 20 x 10 and 10 x 8 feet. He decided to replace some of the glass panels with plastic, but the clips were designed for glass and didn't really hold the plastic panels properly. He learnt this in November, when windy weather knocked out many of the panes, with some landing 3 neighbours away! He now has extra struts and wires in place to prevent the panels from flying off.

Next were some pictures from a visit to Richard and Wendy Edginton, who grow plants for sale and have 4 large (20 metre long) greenhouses. These are situated in a field and on couple of occasions, choice and large plants have been stolen from their collection. The plants that were taken suggest the thieves knew exactly which plants were valuable. It must be quite heart breaking to grow plants for 20 years or more and have them taken like this! Ian mentioned that the police had managed to recover some of the plants, but most have not been seen again. We saw good examples of *Homocephala texensis* and a *Matucana*. In order to have a good stock of sale plants, the Edgintons also grow a lot of plants from seed.

Mike Harvey had a cedar wood greenhouse. Rick Bryant in Norfolk used bubble wrap to establish a warm area inside his greenhouse. We saw Blossfeldia, Turbinicarpus in 3-4" pots, and Ariocarpus plants. *Maihuenia poeppigii* has long roots and was being grown in a drain pipe!

David Rushforth from Scunthorpe has a very good collection, including some unusual rarities and we saw fine examples of *Tephrocactus geometricans*, Ariocarpus, a monstrose *Ariocarpus retusus*, a cristate *Obregonia denegrii*, a cristate *Ariocarpus trigonus*, a red form of *Ariocarpus fissuratus* and some choice *Astrophytums*.

At John Miller's in Warrington, we saw a cross between *Strombocactus disciformis* and *Turbinicarpus alonsoi*. We also saw a *Pereskia* in flower – a rare event, according to Ian. John also had a big collection of *Sclerocactus* and had other scarce plants such as *Pediocactus paradinei* and a cristate *Copiapoa laui*.

John Henshaw runs Croston Cacti, and in his collection we saw *Discocactus* (including a crested *Discocactus horstii*), *Pediocactus* on grafts, *Sclerocactus*, a large cristate *Lophophora*, and some rare *Astrophytums*.

The late Doug Donaldson used to live in High Wycombe, and he had started with a B&Q plastic greenhouse. We saw examples of *Eulychnia*, crested *Opuntias*, *Astrophytums*, *Mammillarias*, and a crested *Sclerocactus*. We also saw *Euphorbia abdelkuri*. Doug used bubble wrap for insulation all year round.

Derek Packer from Newton Abbot has an unusual T-shaped greenhouse, labelled "Cactorium" – after walking in, you had the option to go either left or right. There were several choice *Ariocarpus* in his collection. Bryan Thomas from South Wales was notable for repotting his collection every year.

Going across to Europe, Van Linden is a wholesale cactus nursery, and you could see plants being grown here in huge quantities. At Edel Cactus, there were lots of grafted hibotan (coloured gymnos) and yellow peanut cactus plants. Some of you may know Leo van der Hoeven - his brother owns nurseries in Holland. We also saw plants at the Belgian nursery, De Herdt.

Next were visits to a couple of Czech growers. At Otakar Potyka's we saw plants of *Pediocactus*, a massive *Ariocarpus* and a greenhouse dedicated to *Tephrocactus*. Some of the plants were being grown on the garage roof. Another grower specialised in

Adeniums and also had *Astrophytum digitostigma* – which was very rare when these pictures were taken. We also saw a purple form of *Euphorbia abdelkuri*. We saw pictures of plants at the gardens in Lanzarote and this garden also featured cactus sculptures, and ended the first half of the talk with some pictures of a cactus-themed bar.

In the second half of the talk, Ian covered the rest of the world. We started at Belen in New Mexico, USA, where Steven Brack's Mesa Gardens nursery is located. These "greenhouses" were different – there was no glass – just shade netting instead. If you wander out on the mesa, you can find plants such as *Toumeyia papyranchantha* in this area. And when Steven needs potting soil, he just goes to the back yard and digs up the ground - a lot of his plants are grown in that. He has a bit of heating since it can get cold in the winters. The shading keeps the sun and dust out, and also keeps insects out – this is important since Steven produces lots of seed and he needs to control how the flowers are pollinated, from known parents. There were around 8 of these shade houses. The plants were either on the floor or on low benches made of wood. There were little paint brushes everywhere to allow the plants to be pollinated easily. Steve sells plants but his main business is to sell seeds. The bottom greenhouse was rather overgrown, there were some large aloes and some had rooted into the ground. There were lots of interesting plants here. He saw *Ariocarpus fissuratus* – these were habitat plants which had been rescued from roadbuilding projects or from private ranches. He was using them for seed production. A large bulbous red fruit was that of a *Peniocereus* – the thin stems are hard to spot otherwise.

Next was the Rainbow Gardens book store (it was operated by Chuck Everson, between 1980–2005, but Chuck now runs a different online bookstore). There were some interesting metal cactus sculptures. Ian mentioned that Americans like their garden art and fancy pots. Only books were sold here but there were some interesting plants in the gardens.

In Tucson, he visited Miles Anderson, who has several long poly tunnel type greenhouses. Around his property there were native plants such as saguaros and *Opuntias* growing in the open and in some of the photos you could see these in the background. Being in the middle of the desert meant that he had good conditions for growing cacti! There were around 6 of these tunnel greenhouses with different levels of shade to accommodate different plants. Paul Klaassen mentioned that Miles does problems getting enough suitable water for watering. There were fans fitted to move the air

around, and most of the greenhouses had low staging for the plants. All plants for sale apart from some which were part of his collection. Miles is a nice and friendly person to visit and he had some fantastic plants. He was also quite generous and gave him a piece of *Echinocereus viridiflorus* ssp. *canus*. There was an Ariocarpus with offsets and Miles broke off some heads off for him. We saw some nice Copiapos – there were quite a few of those. We also saw a monstrose *Leuchtenbergia principis*, where every areole produces a new head. This was slightly different to the monstrose plant which Cok Grootsholten has in Holland. There were a fair number of plants on grafts but also many things on their own roots. Because of the conditions, he has problems growing some cacti we find easy such as Rebutia and Notocacti, which like lower temperatures.

There were a few oddities in the collection – he had a variegated Ariocarpus, a *Echinocactus grusonii* with short spines, and a chimera between a Cereus and a coloured Gymno. There was a nice Erioseye and a big Discocactus, which was grafted and several inches across. These pictures were taken in 2009, and Ian mentioned that between visits a few years apart, quite a lot of the collection had changed. David Neville mentioned that Miles lost a lot of plants recently after a severe frost.

A multi-headed *Obregonia denegrii* was for sale but it would command a telephone number price and Ian mentioned there were several other plants which would command high prices. There were again Ariocarpus plants which had rescued from habitat. Miles uses a lot of his plants for seed production and he is very good at growing Ariocarpus – they are almost treated as weeds! He brought back a small pot 50 plants of *A. agavoides* seedlings which cost just \$5. There was a cristate *A. trigonus* and a weird variegated Echinopsis, and also a cristate Turbinicarpus.

Bach's nursery is also situated in Tucson – it is more like a garden centre. It was strange to see strange to see plants like *Astrophytum* or a Peanut cactus being sold for \$9 whereas a Melocactus about to form a cephalium was only \$6. This is all down to the relative ease with which these different plants could be grown in the Arizona climate. A large Melocactus was only \$10. There was a collection of Mammillarias, with shade netting to keep the sun off. As he wandered around the different greenhouse, he was told to watch out for snakes – since sometimes they wandered into the greenhouses to get out of the heat. There were polythene covered benches being used to raise large quantities of seedlings.

Someone was doing grafting for them but wasn't there that day. Paul Klaassen mentioned that Miles Anderson used to work there as a grafter, and may still do. Paul mentioned another famous grafting expert who specialised in Brazilian cacti was James Pickering, who was still working into his 80s, and used to post on online forums until recently. When it came to purchasing a plant, the staff were surprised to see Ian picking out a small plant rather than a large one – but it was all to do with how easy it would be to pack the plant and take it back home. Outside there was a pond with some fish and also a decent selection of larger plants for landscaping.

Arid Lands is another nursery in Tucson. There was a big greenhouse with lots and lots of different succulents. Welwitschias were on sale for \$30 – you don't often see them for sale. There were Adeniums as far as you can see, with different coloured flowers. Other plants of interest included cristate Euphorbias, Avonia and a large clump of the bromeliad *Abromeitiella* – somewhere under the mound there was a 6 inch pot. There were also some nice pots for sale.

In order to visit the Huntington Botanical Garden, he asked Eunice Thompson the best day to go and was told they were closed on Tuesdays – but that was also the best day to go, because she could arrange for special permission to enter on that day. They saw John Trager and also Karen Zimmerman who has produced many new Aloe hybrids. The staff were rather busy since they were preparing for a big CSSA weekend – but a mention of David Neville's name was enough to get them some more attention. There was no public around so they could walk around without being disturbed. The ISI plants which Harry Mayes sells come from here. They also saw some of the Epiphyllums being cultivated here and Karen's Aloe hybrids. Ian's companion Andy weakened and bought some of these and carried around three aloes for the rest of the trip. These days the popular Aloe hybrids are grown by micropropagation and are quite common and affordable.

Ian mentioned that that since his visit, there had been a big storm which caused extensive damage, so the external plantings have changed now. There were lots of plants bedded out and growing well, including plenty of *E. grusonii*. The white spined Mammillarias looked good against the dark volcanic rock top dressing. We saw *Machaerocereus eruca*, crawling across the ground. There were also big agaves and hesperaloes and yuccas, and quite a few hummingbirds flying around too.

Now to Chile, to visit Ricardo Keim. This was in 2003 where Ricardo and his partner Ingrid (who works at a local university) were just starting to establish the nursery. They were having problems getting hold of pots so all sorts of food containers were being put to good use. There were lots of plants which had been rescued from habitat, including plants such as Copiapoas and Neopterias. He was also growing non-native plants such as Astrophytums which would sell well. The altitude is quite high so they do get cold spells. Outside there was more stuff bedded out, including Pyrrhocactus and Eriocyce – some of these were in a covered area to keep the worst of the rain off. Tonnes and tonnes of gravel had been brought in to prepare the grounds and it was nice to wander around and view the plants.

At Pichidangui, on the coast of Chile, we saw some pictures from the garden of Juan Johow. The climate here allows one to grow Norfolk Island Pine trees! At Chilecito, there is a cactus garden and nursery called Chirau Mitaplans with plants bedded out – it is more like a tourist attraction. There was a nice Trichocereus in full flower, and lots of Argentinian plants, including *Gymnocalycium spegazzini* and Pyrrhocactus.

Back to Europe, Dominant (?) was a very good grower of Chilean plants. He was unwell and had a operation on a brain tumour operation a few years ago. His collection was fantastic and immaculate, and almost everything is grafted – we saw some fine Copiapoas and Eriocyce plants. He seemed to grow plants very quickly, and he grafts seedlings at frequent intervals (every few months) to maintain fast growth – despite this – the plants looked fairly natural and weren't bloated. In that part of Belgium, people must work in the aluminium industry because he saw many examples of bespoke staging built to order.

Another good grower from Belgium was Franz Perald (?) - his wife said he goes out into the greenhouse each morning and spends all day in there! He had a stunning collection, and just about every plant was capable of winning a prize at a show. Space was limited so a lot of plants were crammed in. A variegated Astrophytum looked like a Haworthia. There were also variegated Astrophytums and a cristate Ariocarpus. He had nice staging and there wasn't a speck of dirt anywhere. A big heater took care of the winter. In his kitchen area, he had established a propagating area with special lighting and he was growing seedlings here.

Another grower called Patrick had a nice Japanese-themed garden, with bamboos and other shrubs growing. The greenhouse had bubble wrap inside and extra plastic insulation outside. There were some fantastic things here, like Astrophytum crosses. He doesn't normally let people see his collection. There was a weird form of *Ferocactus texensis*. He had a lot of things Ian had not seen before. He grows a lot of things from seed and has the unusual practice of grafting both the top and the bottom part of the seedlings to get more plants. "Godzilla" was a new Ariocarpus cultivar at the time, and "Keiko" was an *Astrophytum asterias* clone. There was a variegated Ferobergia (*Ferocactus* x *Leuchtenbergia*), and an orange Ariocarpus. Overall it was a fantastic collection.

Ian ended the talk with some variegated *Cintia knizei* plants which were almost a sunset colour. He had been given these to graft onto stock but had managed to get them to root by themselves.

Vinay Shah

Table Show Results

There were 19 entries in the March table show, and 5 entries for "Plants in Flower".

	Cacti – Opuntia	Succulents – Haworthia
Open	(1) I Biddlecombe <i>Opuntia glomerata</i>	(1) B Beckerleg <i>Haworthia parksiana</i>
	(2) B Beckerleg <i>Opuntia invicta</i>	(2) S Wilson <i>Haworthia cymbiformis</i>
	(3)	(3) M Stevenson <i>Haworthia turgida</i>
Intermediate	(1) I Biddlecombe <i>Opuntia geometricus</i>	(1) G Penrose <i>Haworthia badia</i>
	(2) G Penrose <i>Puna bonniae</i>	(2) B Beckerleg <i>Haworthia maughanii</i>
	(3) B Beckerleg <i>Opuntia clavata</i>	(3) G Penrose <i>Haworthia bayeri</i>

Cacti/Succulent in Flower
(1) B Beckerleg <i>Crassula</i> sp.
(2) A Jankovic <i>Huernia saudi arabica</i>
(3) B Beckerleg <i>Crassula</i> cv "Celia"

Ivor Biddlecombe

Cultivation and Propagation Workshop

The May branch meeting will be our annual 'Cultivation and Propagation Workshop' evening, with a range of demonstrations and discussions on various topics. The branch committee has come up with a selection of subjects to be covered during the evening, to include:

Cactus Kitsch - there are a wide range of cactus and succulent novelty items around, many of which are gaudy, tasteless and tacky, but nonetheless entertaining. Please bring along any novelty cactus kitsch items that you may have, so that we can assemble them together and marvel at their ridiculousness!

Growing cacti and succulents outdoors - we will have a discussion about our successes and failures of attempting to grow our favourite plants outdoors, either bedded out or growing in pots or containers. If you have any plants that have been grown outside that are portable enough to bring to the meeting please do so.

Seed production and seed raising - Setting seeds on our plants is not always straightforward, so we will have a chat about this. We will also have a chat about seed raising, and hopefully have some examples of people's efforts. If you have sown some seed this year and are able to bring along a selection of pots and trays we would be delighted to see them. Treatment of seedlings after they have germinated will also be covered, including when to prick them out or transplant them, when to pot them, etc.

Plants staging, trays, saucers and linings - Some people grow their plants on the staging, some stand each pot in a saucer, others in trays. Some people use various types of capillary matting, others line containers with polythene. We will discuss the various options, and hear about each other's experiences. If you have any novelty ideas please bring them along to show everyone else.

Natural, organic and biological pest control - There is an increasing range of natural, organic and biological pest control products on the market, so we will discuss our experiences with these products, and will all hopefully learn how to eradicate the most common pests from our greenhouses!

Identification - If you have any unnamed plants that you would like us to try to identify please bring them along to the meeting. Remember to bring a pen and some labels too!

Cultivation problems - If you have any plants that are not growing as they should please bring them along and we will see if we can identify what the problems are and hopefully provide some suggestions to improve the plants health.

Plant growing comparisons - In recent years the branch has given members a number of free plants, so that we can bring them back to the meetings occasionally to compare our results in growing them, and to learn from one another the best cultivation methods. This is not a competition, and the owners of the plants will not be identified (unless they wish to be known). Please remember to mark your own pots or labels in some way so you can recognise them from all the others when it is time to take them home again! The plants handed out so far have been *Mammillaria albilanata*, *Echeveria lilacina*, *Mammillaria microhelia*, *Mammillaria glassii v. ascensionis* - please bring yours along so that we can have our now regular discussion about our growing results and achievements.

As mentioned in the March Newsletter, we shall also be introducing for the first time a 'Spare Plants Exchange' table. We would like everyone to bring along **seedlings, cuttings and offsets** for which they would like to find new homes. Everyone participating can arrange swaps of their plants with other people who have bought along plant material, or can offer their items for sale to everyone at the meeting, we suggest a nominal price of 50p. Please do make sure your trays/plants are labelled clearly, so that people can identify what the plants are. Ideally participants won't need to hand over any money, because they will be able to arrange plant swaps with other people. The 'Spare Plants Exchange' table will be quite separate from the regular plant sales tables. If it proves to be successful we will consider organising further opportunities to do the same thing in the future.

Note that if you have mature plants for sale, these may be more suited for the auction event later in the year - or alternatively you can sell your plants on the monthly sales table - contact Bruce Beckerleg for further details.

David Neville

(I was unable to attend the referenced committee meeting so the following is written from minutes provided by Adrian Bailey)

Branch Committee Meeting

A branch committee meeting was held at Dot's on 25th February.

The Branch Accounts for the year to September are still with the auditors and have not been finalised as yet.

Our financial position is satisfactory, given that we had some extra expenditures in 2015 for the Anniversary year. However the costs of the hall rental and speaker's travel costs have gone up, and it was decided that the price of refreshments at Branch meetings would be increased to 40p from the March meeting.

It was agreed to buy the books "Agaves - Living Sculptures for Landscapes and Containers" and "Succulents Propagation" for the branch library.

Arrangements for the Cultivation/Propagation workshop in May were discussed. It is still hoped to arrange a trip to Lullingstone Castle and John Pilbeam / Doug Sizmur's nursery later in the year, but we have not been able to find a suitable date yet.

The next committee meeting will be held on 17th June.

Vinay Shah

Bookworm Corner

The recent wild and windy weather luckily left our greenhouses intact and minimal damage to the fence panels with just one partly blown out. It was rather nerve racking however, as last Tuesday was a lovely sunny day so I had to open up the greenhouse to prevent cacti frying, without the whole thing getting blown across to the island!

The plants in the garden are definitely getting moving, in both the vegetable patch and flower beds. The spring planted garlic are showing their noses, but still waiting for the onion sets to appear. We have planted the potatoes in both the veggie patch and pots in the cold greenhouse. Also in the greenhouse we have lettuce that has germinated but still waiting for other veg to appear. The flower beds are now looking colourful with sweet violets, an assortment of daffodils, hyacinths, grape hyacinths, camellias and lungwort. On the downside is the number of weed seedlings also popping up!

The cacti house has suddenly come into its own with flowers appearing left right and centre! Our annual 'who has got the most cacti and succulent flowering at the moment/throughout the season' is underway! At last count I am pleased to report than I am in the lead (as of 21st March)!!!! I am confident I will maintain the lead for a while yet as my *Turbinicarpus* are doing me proud at the moment with an extra one coming into flower practically daily! As predicted Mark has started potting in earnest while I am still at the 'good intentions but haven't quite got round to it' stage....

And finally young crazy Rosie had a successful time at Crufts getting a second and a reserve in her strongly contested classes, her rosette has pride of place on the mantelpiece.

Do come and have a look at the **Books For Sale** down in the library corner.

'ENJOYED THE LECTURE? THEN ENJOY THE BOOK!'

March

Ian Woolnough from Exeter branch gave a presentation on '**World Collections & Nurseries**'. Not an easy subject to find books for so I suggested '**The New Cactus Lexicon**' (Hunt), which is a weighty set of books but well worth the effort as it has great pictures and text for every (hopefully) cacti Ian came across. Also '**The Cactus Family**' (Anderson F), quite a chunky book which helpfully has a list of worldwide botanic gardens with significant collections of cacti at the back which you might like to include on your holiday plans this year. However it is an old book, (2001) so do check first! Finally '**The Complete Book of Cacti and Succulents**' (Hewitt T.) which covers potting and propagation as well as discussing various species which may be useful for expanding your own collection of plants from around the world. These books can be found in **Featured Book Corner**.

April

Our regular visitor from Portsmouth branch, Paul Klaassen is giving a presentation on '**Mexico 2014**'. A wide variety of cacti species are found in Mexico and luckily we have some suitable books in the library. '**Mammillaria**' (Pilbeam J.) is a good book to study with the majority of this genus occurring in Mexico. The book covers the distribution of species, cultivation and happily lists all the recorded cristates (which of course I need to track down!). Each species has a distribution map, photograph (sometimes including a habitat shot), description and recorded locations. Another book well worth a read, which I also include on my wanted list, is

'**Ariocarpus et cetera**' (Pilbeam J. & Weightman B.). This book also briefly covers cultivation before covering 17 genera in more detail, all of which include plenty of photographs with species in cultivation and in habitat. Some of the genera, in addition to *ariocarpus*, include *astrophytum*, *leuchtenbergia*, *lophophora*, *stenocactus* and *turbinicarpus*. These books can be found in **Featured Book Corner**.

Don't forget that May is the annual cultivation and propagation workshop so do come over and have a look through the books to inspire you into action before next month!

Sue Wilson

Next Month's Meeting

The next meeting will be held on 5th May and will be our Cultivation and Propagation workshop. Further details of this event are contained on page 5 of this newsletter.

The May Table Show will consist of the **3 Cacti** and **3 Succulent** classes. 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. In addition there is a class for any flowering cactus or succulent plant.

From this year, the table show classes will now use the classifications from the *Guide to Shows 10th Edition*. (contact me if you need a copy of this)

Forthcoming Events

Sat 11 th Apr	Isle of Wight	Tony Roberts – title TBC
Sat 18 st Apr	Portsmouth	Bring and Buy Auction
Tue 5 th May	Southampton	Cultivation & Propagation Workshop (with demos and discussions)
Sat 9 th May	Isle of Wight	Mexico: Spring & Autumn in the Sierra Madre Orientale (Cliff Thompson)
Sat 16 th May	Portsmouth	Practical Demo on Grafting Cacti (Cliff Thompson)
Sat 16 th May	Southampton	Display / Plant Sales @ Sparsholt College (Countryside Day)
Tue 2 nd Jun	Southampton	Namibia - Plants & Animals (Chris Eyers)
Sat 6 th Jun	Portsmouth	Summer Show at St. Colman's Church Hall, Cosham, PO6 2JJ
Sun 7 th Jun	Southampton	Branch visit to RHS Wisley & Mammillaria Society Event
Sat 13 th Jun	Isle of Wight	Big Bend (David Minnion)
Wed 17 th Jun	Southampton	Branch Committee Meeting
Sat 20 th Jun	Portsmouth	Baja California (David Minnion)
Sat 27 th Jun	Southampton	Branch visit to Bristol Cactus Mart, Portishead, Bristol

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