

British Cactus & Succulent Society

Southampton & District Branch Newsletter

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Editorial

A month ago we were just recovering from some snowfall and the cold weather continued with a second cold spell shortly afterwards. Just now, over the extended Easter weekend we had 3 days of rain on the 4 days so it really doesn't feel like spring just yet. I haven't given the plants in my conservatory any water since a light watering in February but I guess I will need to start any day soon, as soon as the sun makes an appearance.

Announcements

Next month's meeting is a cultivation evening where as usual we will want the audience to participate in the meeting. Please read David's notes about it, these start on page 7.

Last Month's Meeting

Peru 2017

Ian Woolnough started off his talk by asking the audience how many of them had actually been to Peru. A handful of people put their hands up. Ian mentioned that apart from cacti we would also be seeing some alpinines and orchids, but not too much of the history and culture - it wasn't that sort of trip. His 3 week trip (accompanied by wife Sarda and Cliff Thompson) took place in November 2017, and at that time, the Peruvian football team was playing 2 play off games versus New Zealand for a place in the World Cup finals. So there were quite a few flags on show and shouting and cheering when the games were on. The country is nestled between

Ecuador, Colombia, Brazil, Bolivia and Chile. They flew into the capital Lima and headed up the coast and then inland. There are two mountain ranges running up the coast and these are called the Cordillera Blanca and Cordillera Negra - the former is often snow-capped and the latter, to the west, is not. They then travelled on to the Amazonia area, which as expected had more tropical plants. At the end of the trip, they went south of Lima, to Nazca and saw a few more cacti down there. Ian mentioned he was not an expert on Peruvian plants, and Graham Charles had helped with the naming/identification. In terms of climate, the coastal deserts are similar to the ones in Chile with mists coming in from the sea. Higher up, you get alpine areas.

He likes to take pictures of unusual things and we saw a "llama" gas cylinder weighing 45kg. He wonders how they got the gas from the llamas! Over there, health and safety seems to have a slightly different meaning and we saw a tricycle loaded up with lots of furniture. A petrol station featured a picture of Che Guevara. There were some fantastic paintings decorating some of the trucks. Stickers on the back of a police car showed hooded men with machine guns which looked a bit ominous but they had no trouble in the country at all, although they were stopped a few times by the police - apparently you need to always have your lights on when driving. We also saw a view of one of the hotels they stayed at, named Paradis. It was November - so the rains hadn't started yet, but they were hoping some of the plants would have started to flower.

They landed in Lima in the evening, and picked up their hire car the next morning and headed north up the Pan American highway. The first stop was near the sea and it was very foggy and cloudy. The sandy barren area looked desolate but they found a few things, including *Loxanthocereus pullatus*. There was a chicken feather in the picture - Ian mentioned that on the coastal plains are many chicken farms and the feathers from these blow everywhere, and often stick onto the cacti. The odd plant was in flower and they had tubular pink flowers. There was a small national park here and the landscape was bright green - the clouds get funnelled in and drops more water in certain areas. Unfortunately they

didn't have time to visit. Next was *Haageocereus acranthus*, 6 feet tall. As evidence of moisture, there were lichens growing on it. We could see one of the chicken farms in the distance. There was some wildlife here - we saw the peruvian thick-knee, which is a type of stone curlew. It has a distinctive white ring around its eye and two of these birds were just walking around. They also saw the puna ibis, *Plegadis ridgwayi*. Along the coast there were lots of birds. He also saw a lizard which was 1 foot long. Ian also found a wallet here, with the equivalent of £10 in it. There was no place to hand it in, so it meant free beer that night! As they were heading for Huacho, they saw *Haageocereus pseudomelanstele*, and a lot them were in bud.

Plants of *Armatocereus procerus* were 12-15 feet high and these were in flower. It was quite rocky here. They took pictures of the large flowers, some of which were covered in mealy bug. He wrote an article about this for the BCSS Journal. Honey bees are the pollinator. The plants had fruits and the locals probably eat these. Further up the valley, they saw *Melocactus fortelazensis*, which is considered a form of *M. peruvianus*. *M. peruvianus* is like a weed, it grows all over the place and is not rare at all. These plants were growing in a field which had been previously cultivated. There must have had a fire here at some time, since some of the plants displayed burn marks. There were other cacti such as *Espostoa* and *Corryocactus* also around here. *Loxanthoscereus sulcifer* had beautiful flowers which were 4-5" long - the flowers were shades of red and orange with some purple. The plants however were tatty.

There was nice scenery here, including basalt columns. Local people cultivate the valley floors and the climate is such that they can grow almost anything. If you look through the fruits and vegetables in our supermarkets, you may well find Peruvian produce such as blueberries, apples, pears, asparagus, rice, mangos and potatoes (which originated here). There are also vineyards too. He found *Tillandsias*, but they were difficult to identify. They stopped here to see *Matucana haynei* (*M. elongata*) - it had finished flowering unfortunately, but he did get some seed. Up the valley he found *Austrocylindropuntia subulata* (which should be avoided at all costs) and also *Corryocactus*. He also came across *Peperomias*. The location didn't look like a cactus habitat. There were people around and animals grazing in the hills.

They went up to the altiplano - the altitude here is over 3000m and they found *Austrocylindropuntia floccosa*. A local person talked to them for a while although he probably didn't understand a thing they

were saying and maybe he just wanted a lift somewhere. *Austrocylindropuntia punta-caillan* has less wool on it. The first Oroya they saw was *O. borchesii*, these were lovely golden-spined football sized plants with lots of seed on them. They were just growing on the rocks, in not much soil. It was quite cold and windy up here. A few were in flower - it has yellow flowers. He did collect seed from these and they have just started to germinate. Some of the plants were growing in crevices in between the rocks. An alpine plant was a species of Valerian. We saw a shot of the Cordillera Blanca to the east - people go for walks there. There was some stunning scenery here. We also saw fields of maize. There were also *Opuntias* around, with *O. ficus-indica*, covered in mealy bug. These are cultivated for their fruits, and the pads are fed to animals and can be eaten by humans after being cut into strips.

The locals here wore very colourful clothes but they don't like their picture being taken, so he just had to manage with a few surreptitious shots. In the market we saw a wide variety of fruits and vegetables on sale - there were tomatoes, onions, maize, garlic, beans, pulses, peas - all locally produced. We also saw apples, black corn cobs, star fruit, peppers and potatoes. The ladies like to wear woven felt hats and also leggings, often in bright colours. Getting from A to B in the mountains can take a while with the zig-zag roads. Some of the roads were blind bends and had to be negotiated carefully. They passed a Minas de carbon sign for a coal mine. Some of the cultivated fields were on 60 degree slopes, and some are cultivated from Inca times. With the deeper valleys, light is only available on the slopes, the valley floors have less light. We saw a view of the road they had been up. They were pleased to get up here, to see *Puya raimondii* - the largest bromeliad in the world. None were in flower but there were many plants here. They are a few feet tall, but the flower spike can extend this to 30 feet. There were also Oroyas and Matucanas in the grasses too. One of the Puya plants had an old flower spike. A photo showed how a packet of crisps purchased a couple of days earlier at lower altitude had now inflated like a balloon at the height of 4314 m. You can't run around at this altitude - you'd get dizzy.

Austrocylindropuntia floccosa had a few flowers on it. They saw mound type forms and also a type with much bigger heads, form *crispicrinita*. Some had quite tall heads as well. *Matucana haynei* were quite spiny plants and some were quite big. There were smaller plants too and they seemed to prefer growing along a rocky ridge, whereas Oroyas seemed to be out more in the open. The bar-winged cinclodes is a little bird, the size of a sparrow. They dropped back down to the valley and stayed in

Caras. They saw a hillside of cacti on the way there. *Melocactus peruvianus* was in flower and also had big club-shaped red fruits. *Espostoa melanostele* ssp. *nana* had formed the flowering zones (cephaliums) on the side and it had tubular flowers. Some of the cephaliums were a metre tall. The colour varied between shades of white and brown and this was perhaps age related. The other columnar plant here is *Armatocereus matucansis* which grows like a tree. There were fruits on top and these were almost tennis ball sized. *Loxanthocereus granditessilatus* had buds but unfortunately there were no flowers as yet.

Mila is an anagram of Lima and the plants are endemic here. We saw *Mila caespitosa* ssp. *pugionifera* with yellow flowers. He saw a bumble bee arrive at one of the flowers so that must be one of the pollinators. He also saw a butterfly do the same. There were lots of tillandsias here, so they must have mists here. There were also lots of Opuntias, but it was hard to identify some of them, and some might even be hybrids. A Melocactus was nice and chunky. The next day they visited Cañón del Pato (duck canyon). He hadn't told the others that this was supposedly one of the most dangerous roads in the world - the fatality rate is very high. They visited on a Sunday, and thankfully there wasn't much traffic. It was a stunning drive, with fabulous scenery including waterfalls, gorges and tunnels. A single lane road goes through series of tunnels and blind bends. The Peruvians use their horns and have a different way of driving and don't tend to give way. There were very steep cliffs and gullies and it's an amazing feat of engineering to have built this road. At Huallanca, there is a hydroelectric power station. *Neoraimondia arequipensis* (old name = *N. gigantea*) is a large plant with chunky arms. There were Haageocereus and loads of Melocactus growing here. The views of the hillsides were amazing and filled with colours, which were hard to capture in photographs.

They eventually headed back to the coast. *Haageocereus zehnderi* (*Haageocereus pseudomelanostele* ssp. *peresii*) had fruits the size of ping pong balls. At the base of the plants were Melocactus plants. They saw fields of *Opuntia ficus indica* and crossed a dodgy bridge. There were scree slopes on the hillsides and terraces, and at the bottom, a gorge. At one of the bridges they crossed, they saw the remains of an older bridge which had been swept away by landslides and floods. They stopped at this location - he was looking for *Pygmaeocereus bieblii* - but they found *Mila caespitosa* instead. It was bone dry in this area and there was no real vegetation, just a few Milas and Melocacti. As you get towards the coast, the valley

gets wider. A tent in a field was home to people guarding chillies drying in the sun. The next day they headed into the hills to do some exploring. *Loxanthocereus aptusgensis* has hairy fruits and there is a distinctive pattern on the areoles. We saw some rice paddies. There was quite a lot of Eucalyptus being grown here. There were fields of pineapples, this is the only Bromeliad which has a commercial use. They also saw *Haageocereus pacalaensis*. They climbed up a hill and walked around, and he felt something was watching him - he turned around and saw a group of burrowing owls. *Haageocereus pseudoversicolor* has lovely brown-green spines on the new growth at the top. The cacti don't need much soil to grow in, and seedlings were growing in cracks in rocks. There was evidence of wildlife - he saw a birds nest and also recognised a night jar's egg.

Cajamarca was a place they visited again on their way back. *Borzicactus humboldtii* was quite a long tatty plant - it has long tubular flowers which are hummingbird pollinated. They stayed for a couple of nights in Jaén, which is in the Amazon area. A tree was festooned with tillandsias, bromeliads and orchids. *Browningia microsperma* forms tall straggly trees. This area was heavily grazed by goats but the plants seemed to be doing OK. The plants growing on the very steep slopes were probably safe from man. A red/purple flowered tree was probably a cherry of some sort. The other Melocactus which grows in Peru is *M. belavistensis*, and they came across some gorgeous plants of this. It is squatter, flatter and chunkier than *M. peruvianus* and just looks better. Some were in flower and the cephaliums were beautiful. The best one had a cephalium over a foot tall. The photo was taken late in the day so the lighting wasn't good. There were lots of them around. There were Jatropha type plants and Opuntias growing here so you had to watch your feet. He saw a peperomia. *Proceus uniflorus* ssp. *jalanensis* was a bit of a tatty plant but it forms great big fruits with large flowers. We saw the fruit when ripe and animals or people would probably eat that. *Browningia altissima* had new growth. The undergrowth was quite dense here. *Espostoa lanata* were tall thin slender plants - they had lovely central spines with black and white markings on them. A flowering shrub was a hibiscus or something similar. We saw some bulk container or wine and rather than buying it by the bottle, it's bought by the gallon. Ian mentioned that the Peruvian wine was very nice.

We started the second half of the talk with a change of the projector since some of the images in the first half had seemed washed out when projected on the screen. Ian showed some more examples of possible

concerns with health and safety. A person on a motor bike was transporting 4 gas cylinders, hooked around the rear wheel. A car had one working brake light - well that was better than most, which have no working brake lights! The traffic lights all have counters which count down to the lights going green and most people start revving their engines a few seconds earlier. On convoys of trucks on the roads, the trucks are numbered, which helps you to know how many of them you are going to have to overtake. In one of places they stayed, the shower was right next to the electricity fuses. In wiring, the earth lead is often not connected. And with taps, the tap marked C may actually have hot water (for "caliente") but sometimes both taps might just be cold. We saw a rubbish collection truck overloaded and with the workers on top still loading more rubbish bags on. A truck with a large load of maize would have obstructed the view of anyone behind, but after a few miles most of that would probably have been blown all over the road. A rice harvester was an interesting sight. In England when a truck has a long load you'll often see a red flag or light on the load, over there they just tie a tyre to some poles hanging out of the back of the truck to encourage you to keep your distance. And sometimes they won't bother with the tyre so the poles just scrape on the road, releasing a few sparks! An attempt to disguise a cell phone tower as a palm tree was rather futile since there were no palm trees in the area!

It was time to see some proper vegetation and we started with *Espostoa lanata* ssp. *lanata* (*E. ritteri*). Conditions were hot and sticky here, with almost 100% humidity. A small *Browningia altissima* was 6-8 feet tall. Some opuntias had red flowers. The river here was the Utcubamba River which is quite a big river. They encountered rainfall, one of the few days they had with rain - the start of the rainy season is usually the end of November. We saw a waterfall. In the hillsides they found *Rhipsalis baccifera* and *Hylocereus megalanthus* and also *Hylocereus undatus* whose seed pods are sold as the "dragon fruit". Other plants found in the hillsides included Browningias, bromeliads and orchids. We saw more *Browningia altissima*. Since they were in the Utcubamba river valley the *Espostoa* here is called *E. utcubambensis* - it's quite a tall plant, and they saw specimens 20 feet tall. They went to Chachapoyas but were surprised that the main tarmac road passes the town, and you have to use mud tracks to get into the town. They also encountered a maze of farm tracks when trying to get out of the town. There were colonial style overhangs and they were re-doing the market square, so it was all dug up. They found *Rhipsalis baccifera* growing on the trees. Browningias as well as orchids and tillandsias were growing

epiphytically on tree branches and they saw more bromeliads and also *Tillandsia usneoides* (spanish moss). Growing along the roadside they found plants of *Convolvulus* with various flower colours - blue with purple, pink/red and white with purple. There were also plenty of orchids growing here but not all were in flower. A terrestrial orchid was identified as *Sauroglossum corymbosum* and another orchid had larger flowers. They were quite high up and it was quite overcast and cloudy that day and the hills were covered in fog - moss and grass was growing here. A plant with a patterned leaf was perhaps a pilea. A tree with trumpet flowers was a *Brugmansia*. *Oreocallis grandiflora* was a shrub and it's a member of the Proteaceae. We saw another example of a zig zag road used to climb through a hill and power lines going across the hillside. They made a stop for *Espostoa calva* which was also the only known locality for *Lymanbensonia brevispina* - there's a small patch of woodland where it grows. They also found an aroid there. *Espostoa blossfeldiorum* has a distinctive spiny skirt to the plant - some of them were 10 feet tall. They flower from a pseudocephalium on the side.

The Balsas area can be described as cactus heaven. They saw a road sign which confirmed they were on the right track. They followed the valley and drove along the riverside. There were some fantastic cacti growing here. There were lots of plants of *Matucana formosa* growing besides the road and in full flower. They had deep red / orange tubular flowers which are hummingbird pollinated. Some were growing where a rock had fallen down, creating a little nursery. *Matucana krahni* has longer spines and larger tubercles, and it is more upright and more columnar than *M. formosa*. These weren't in flower. *Opuntia mcbridii* had orangey-red flowers. One of the taller plants here is *Armatocereus rauhii* ssp. *balsasensis* - there are constrictions up the stems, giving the plant a distinctive corrugated effect to the stems. Some were 30 feet tall and they were growing by the road, and easy to see. There was some interesting geology here. *Browningia pilleifera* has a distinctive white top to it - some plants had scaly fruits the size of a chestnut on top. There were some nice examples of *Espostoa mirabilis*. We also saw Melocacti and Matucanas in the background. The *E. mirabilis* had fantastic brown cephaliums on the sides - it's not the sort of thing we can grow to their full potential, it would need a fair amount of heat. It has interesting ribs and spination. There were lizards up here as well. We saw a shot of *Browningia pilleifera*, *Espostoa mirabilis* and *Espostoa blossfeldiorum* all growing close together. The geology was stunning. They stayed the night at a place call San Vincente which was not on any map - even the hostel where they

stayed were surprised they had found it. It only cost them £2.50 for the night. They also found somewhere to get some food and fuel as well - the locals were pouring the petrol using funnels and smoking while doing it! They remembered to tell them they weren't Americans - apparently you get charged less! We saw *Opuntias* growing on a roof as a deterrent to burglars.

They saw *Matucana formosa* again, the plants were quite variable, and he wondered if some were hybrids. It was nice to see them in flower. We saw the fruits of *B. pilleifera*, with moth grubs eating the fruit from the inside. *Peperomia dolabriformis* is the "prayer" peperomia, with leaves which fold in onto themselves. *Borzicactus tenuiserpens erectus* was a tatty looking straggly plant. It used to be in *Cleistocactus* but is in *Borzicactus* now. It is another hummingbird pollinated plant. Back along the river, they saw more stunning scenery. There were *Matucana krahni* plants in the background, and we saw *Espostoa blossfeldiorum* and a small plant *Melocactus bellavistensis* ssp. *onychacanthus*, which is chunkier than *M. peruvianus*. They went back up the hill to check out a location and found a different *Matucana*, *M. weberbaueri flammea* - these were nice plants but not in flower. There were no tracks on some of the hillsides, so there must be more plants out there, awaiting discovery. This is close to the type locality of *Lasiocereus fulvus*, which reminds him of busbee hats. *Espostoa lanata* ssp. *lanata* was there as well. They saw another *M. bellavistensis* ssp. *onychacanthus*, and another *Borzicactus tenuiserpens erectus* with fruits on. The cactus *Calymmanthium substerile* has nice flowers but basically turns into a tree and it's not the sort of thing you'd want to grow. A bromeliad with dark leaves was a beautiful *Vriesea*. They crossed the river and saw a wild cherry with pink flowers. We also saw a close up of a spider.

A large overloaded lorry came by, loaded with three tiers of cargo - people, goods and furniture on top - they just had to give way. They stayed at Cajamarca and then headed south towards San Marcos. The terrain didn't look like cactus habitat but they found *Matucana aurantiaca*. It is quite a variable plant. They found yellower ones and some darker-spined ones. A terrestrial orchid had a yellow flower. *Lasiocereus rupicola* had formed a pseudocephalium, and flowers were forming. *Weberbauerocereus longicomus* was photographed from a distance, with a hummingbird pollinating it - he couldn't get any closer to get a better shot because of a ridge in between him and the plant. *Matucana intertexta* had bright orangey-red flowers on it. There were lots of plants around, growing in the grass. He saw a cutting with a good selection of

plants growing on it, but it was above head height and out of reach. Cajamarca is quite a large city and they stayed there for a couple of nights, and then they headed west to the coast. They went to a location for *Matucana aureiflora* and found the plants growing under *Eucalyptus* trees. These were growing out in the open under the trees. The plants had a typical *M. aureiflora* flower - then they found a double flower which had extra petals. They also found *M. aurantiaca*, but these weren't in flower. These were fairly tatty-looking plants but there were lots of them. We saw some ant's nests, bromeliads and a *Tillandsia* with a purple flower. *Bougainvilleas* were growing here, with their red, orange and purple bracts.

As you head for the coast, the altitude drops. *Espostoa melanostele* was photographed along with a green woodpecker which had landed on it. We saw a massive man-made lake - apparently this region was the centre of crayfish production. Going along the coast, they were heading south and saw policemen lining both sides of the road for several miles - someone important must have died. They looked for *Opuntia pachypus* and seemed to spend several days doing this. They first drove to a sat nav coordinate and didn't find the plant there, so had more attempts at other locations. They did see *Browningias*, *Haageocereus* and *Melocactus peruvianus*. Some of the plants were growing on a crack on a large rock. A blue green lizard remained motionless, allowing him to photograph it. They also saw *Espostoa nana*. Castillo de Tomabal is a large mud fort and it's a very impressive structure. Another picture showed how they fix the roads - a large bulldozer flattens the road and they then spray water behind it. They were still heading south towards Lima and the hillsides were very green. The Pan American highway is a 2 lane road and it was relatively quiet. They saw lots of *Tillandsias*. They stayed in a place and in the garden saw the hummingbird *Amazilia amazilia* feeding at a banana plant. They went to another location east of Lima, to find *Opuntia pachypus*. This was the power station at Calahuanca. They explored the hillsides and found *Espostoas*, and finally found *Opuntia pachypus*. Once these plants flower, you can actually root the flower buds to form new plants. It was their 4th attempt to see the plant and they were quite pleased to finally see them - it's the nicest *Opuntia*, in his opinion. They also saw dragon fruits again, on a plant growing in a garden.

At Pisco, there is a pier there and it was bustling with birds such as pelicans and cormorants and shanks. There were flamingos here as well. We saw the square at Pisco. In 2007 an earthquake did a lot of damage, and the centuries-old church came down,

killing many people who were inside. A new church was built and they saw a ceremony to remember the people who had died in the earthquake. They headed inland and started to see *Browningia candelaris* plants. These have a central stem and then start branching at the top when they get older. As if it wasn't hard enough for these plants to grow here, someone had thrown a large rock into the arms of plant - unfortunately it was too high up for him to remove. The plants are spiny at the base to protect the younger plants from grazing animals and they only grow in the southern part of Peru. They saw *Loxanthocereus hystrix*, with red flowers. *Cumulopuntia sphaerica* is a nuisance when you are walking around. The flower on this start off yellow and they get darker as they age, turning into red/orange shades. It's quite pretty flower. They found *Oreocereus leucotrichus* and some were massive plants, with hundreds of heads. We saw younger plants with lovely twisted spines. These are hummingbird pollinated plants and we also saw the fruit. They also saw *Matucana haynii* v. *hystrix*. Coming back down toward the coast, *Weberbauerocereus rauhii* had lovely multicoloured spines - yellow at the base and with orangey brown shades. In this area, they saw an Andean condor flying around - these birds have a massive wingspan, and distinctive markings, with a white collar and white marks on the black wings. We saw some more chicken farms, along the flat areas near the coast.

Next, they visited Nazca, to see the Líneas de Nazca. The ancient Nazca Indians drew these patterns into the ground around 2000 years ago. You can go up in a plane to see them from the sky, but you can also see them from surrounding hills and ground level. They cover an area of 1000 km² and consist of hundreds of objects, some more obvious than others. The dry, windless climate of the Nazca region has helped to preserve the lines to this day, but erosion due to human activity has increased in recent years. Ian ended the talk with some reminiscences of the images he had shown. We ended with a square town clock which seemed to be showing different times on every face, and finally a Peruvian sunset.

Vinay Shah

Table Show Results

There were 14 entries in the March table show, and 2 entries for "Plants in Flower".

	Cacti – Opuntia	Succulents – Haworthia
Open	(1) I Biddlecombe <i>Tephrocactus geometricus</i>	(1) M Stevenson <i>Haworthia truncata</i>
	(2) B Beckerleg <i>Opuntia invicta</i>	(2) B Beckerleg <i>Haworthia reinwardtii</i>
	(3) -	(3) T Radford <i>Haworthia comptoniana</i>
Intermediate	(1) G Penrose <i>Cumulopuntia subterranea</i>	(1) B Beckerleg <i>Haworthia maughanii</i>
	(2) I Biddlecombe <i>Tephrocactus bonnieae</i>	(2) I Biddlecombe <i>Haworthia</i> cv. <i>kuntzii</i>
	(3) B Beckerleg <i>Opuntia clavata</i>	(3) T Radford <i>Haw. glauca depauperata</i>

Cacti/Succulent in Flower

(1) B Beckerleg <i>Aloe longistyla</i>
(2) M Stevenson <i>Mammillaria carmenae</i>
(3) -

Ivor Biddlecombe

Branch Committee Meeting

A committee meeting was held on 26th March at Chilworth Village Hall. The two new committee members who joined the committee at the AGM in December were welcomed.

Branch finances remain healthy. We have also had an encouraging number of new members join the branch in recent months.

Recent branch meetings were discussed. Our next event will be the Sparsholt Countryside day, in May. For the New Forest Show in July, we will now have to pay full rate for the sales table, this will add almost £50 to our costs. However, it seems like we will still get enough tickets and car passes to make our attendance at the show possible. Topics for the cultivation meeting in May were discussed.

David mentioned that new data privacy laws come into effect soon although the Society has yet to send

out guidance to the branches. For now, if we send out mass emails, we will endeavour to *not* display everyone's email addresses. The society will no longer keep records of people who have not renewed their membership, so the membership lists we receive from the Society will no longer show the names of lapsed members. If members leave and rejoin the BCSS in the future, they will be assigned a new membership number rather than retaining their original number.

Vinay Shah

May Meeting – Cultivation & Propagation Evening

Our May meeting will be one of our special Cultivation & Propagation evenings, with discussions and demonstrations on a range of different topics relating to the hobby. We try to come up with lots of different ideas for topics, and rarely get through them all because once the discussions start time tends to fly!

We will begin with a general chat about how we, our plants and our greenhouses fared through the winter months – how did your heaters cope in the cold weather, did you use a polythene lining to help maintain temperatures, and was your electricity or gas usage much higher this year than in recent winters? Maybe you have a more unusual way of protecting your plants from the cold, or do you not even heat your greenhouse? Do you have any leaks in your greenhouse or conservatory – if any of your plants experienced any unexpected winter watering as a result, how did it affect them?

Do you manage to grow any cacti or succulents outdoors? Which species have you found to be tough enough to withstand not only the cold, but also the long wet British winter? Are any cacti really hardy enough to grow well in the garden? If you have any hardy plants in pots in the garden please bring them in so that they will help illustrate our discussion. Most sempervivums are certainly able to withstand the UK winter, and Ivor will bring along a few and talk about their cultural requirements etc.

Last year we spoke about some newer products on the market, such as Rootgrow and SB Plant Invigorator, along with some newer practical and digital greenhouse accessories. We will have a chat about our experiences with these products and discuss any others that might have appeared in shops and garden centres. If you have tried any new products please bring them along to the meeting and maybe we shall discover a new and effective control for the dreaded mealy-bugs or red spider attacks!

Each year the branch provides everyone with a free plant, which we hope you will grow in to a fine specimen, and that you will bring these plants along to the Cultivation Evening so that we can compare results and learn tips from the most successful growers. Please bring any or all of the plants that we have distributed over the years, and we can discuss the possible reasons for the most or least successful examples. Plants distributed in previous years were *Echeveria lilacina*, *Mammillaria albilanata*, *Mammillaria microhelix* (2013), *Mammillaria glassii v ascensionis* (2014), *Frithia pulchra* (2015) *Euphorbia obesa* (2016) *Echeveria cuspidata var. zaragozae* (2017). During the evening we will also be distributing another free plant for everyone, so that is another good reason to attend!

If you have any plants that you are finding difficult to grow, or which are suffering problems for which you are unable to determine the reason, bring them to the meeting and we will see if we can decide what the problem might be, and how best to resolve it.

Similarly, if you have some plants in your collection that are unnamed, why not bring them along and between us we will hopefully be able to provide you with the correct name, or at least point you in the right direction.

Haworthias are among Bruce Beckerleg's favourite plants, and he will be bringing along a selection of species from his collection to talk about.

Once again we will have a Swap Table at the meeting for exchanging surplus cuttings, leaves and seedlings. Bring along any bits and pieces that are surplus to your requirements and you can swap them with other people. And if you just want to find new free homes for your cuttings and seedlings please bring them along and I am sure that others will be happy to adopt them!

If there are any aspects of our hobby that you would like to talk about, the May meeting will provide that opportunity. Please feel free to bring along anything that you think will add to the interest of the evening, or suggest ideas to David Neville between now and then.

David Neville

Cactus Marts in 2018

Each year there are a number of Cactus Marts, events at which nurseries from around the UK gather in one place to offer cactus and succulent enthusiasts the opportunity to peruse their plant offerings and to add some new species to their collections.

The first Mart of the year takes place on Saturday 7th April at Whitstable in Kent. This looks to be the largest event of the year, with most UK nurseries in attendance. Clearly Whitstable is some distance from Southampton, but it is a lovely town to visit for the weekend, with an attractive harbour and some of the most highly rated seafood restaurants in the country. A short distance away is Margate, a famous and popular beach resort with lots of hotels and B&Bs.

The biennial Havering Cactus Mart, an event that has been running for decades, is on May 12th. Having moved from its original location, it is held in Romford, Essex, and it is organised by Havering Branch BCSS. This is a popular event and most of the main UK nurseries will be in attendance. Unfortunately this year, the event clashes with the Countryside Day at Sparsholt Agricultural College, an event at which our Branch stages a display, so some of the people who usually attend the Havering Mart will be working instead at Sparsholt. This is a lovely event to visit, with lots to see, and if you don't plan to travel to Havering, I recommend that you spend the day at the Countryside Day.

On 30th June the annual South-West Cactus Mart will be held once again in Portishead, a few miles south of Bristol. Although there are not as many nurseries at this event, it is well worth a visit, and this is a nice part of the country in which to spend a day or a weekend.

From 13th to 15th August, the 9th BCSS International Convention will be taking place in Leicester, within the grounds of the University. In addition to a selection of international speakers there will be

numerous plant vendors (both nurseries and private sellers), so if you haven't already book for this event you really should consider it. There will be some members of the Branch attending, and day tickets are also available if you don't want to stay for the entire event.

On 14th October a new end-of-season Cactus Mart will be held in Crockham Hill near Edenbridge. I believe that most UK nurseries will be there, so hopefully this will be a successful day and will become a regular event. It is not too far to travel, so should make a nice day out, and there are lots of attractive villages to pass through and admire if one avoids the trunk roads and takes the scenic route.

Full details of all these events can be found in the Calendar of Events on the main BCSS website, with addresses, opening times etc.

David Neville

Next Month's Meeting

Our next meeting will be held on May 1st and it will be a cultivation evening. Please read the article by David Neville on page 7 for further details!

The May Table Show will consist of **3 Cacti** (cacti) and **3 Succulents** (succulents), along with "plant in flower". Please note that members can submit more than one entry in any of the classes, and that points will be earned for each placed entry.

The table show classes use the classifications from the *Guide to Shows 10th Edition* (contact me if you don't have a copy of this).

Forthcoming Events

Sat 14 th Apr	Isle of Wight	Show & Tell
Sat 21 st Apr	Portsmouth	Bring and Buy Auction
Tue 1 st May	Southampton	Cultivation & Propagation Workshop, with demonstrations and discussions
Sat 12 th May	Isle of Wight	What I Did Last Winter (Paul Klaassen)
Sat 12 th May	Southampton	Display / Plant Sales @ Sparsholt College (Countryside Day)
Sat 19 th May	Portsmouth	How to best show your plants and an insight into judging - Bill Darbon
Sat 2 nd Jun	Portsmouth	Portsmouth Summer Show at Christ Church Hall, Widley, PO7 5AU
Tue 5 th Jun	Southampton	Travels in Ethiopia - Bob Potter
Sat 9 th Jun	Isle of Wight	What I Did Last Winter (Paul Klaassen)
Sat 16 th Jun	Portsmouth	Christmas & Easter Cacti - Schlumbergera, Rhipsalidopsis, Hatiora (Dr Mark Preston)
Sat 30 th Jun	Southampton	Branch visit to South West Cactus Mart, Portishead Youth Centre, Bristol
Tue 3 rd Jul	Southampton	Cultivation of Cacti & Succulents - Terry Smale

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

Facebook : <https://www.facebook.com/southamptonbcsc>