

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@bopenworld.com
(023) 80551173 or
07974 191354

Newsletter Editor

Vinay Shah
29 Heathlands Road
Eastleigh
Hampshire
SO53 1GU

sotonbcss@gmail.com
(023) 80261989

Editorial	1
Announcements	1
Last Month's Meeting.....	2
Plants of Interest	2
Succulent Senecios	2
Table Show Results	6
Next Month's Meeting	6
Forthcoming Events.....	6

Editorial

Compared to earlier in the year, September was relatively normal, with a mix of sunshine and rain. There were actually some pretty nice summer days to be enjoyed. Of course the days are getting shorter and there's a chill in the air on some days.

My conservatory should get rebuilt later this month and that will involve moving all the plants out into the garden and then waiting 2-3 days for the builders to do their work. I am hoping that there won't any severe weather or cold spells during that time!

Announcements

I am sad to report that **Jim Roskilly** passed away four days after our September meeting – he had been unwell and was in hospital. Jim joined the branch in the 1970s and hence was a member for over 40 years - he also served on the Branch committee for over 30 years. He supported our shows, grew many fine plants and I remember visiting his collection when he held open days. More recently, ill health made him give up his collection and prevented him from attending our meetings, but thanks to Ivor he did manage to attend a couple of times during the last 2 years.

Last month, the Branch put on a display and plant sales at **Romsey Show**. Ivor, Bruce, Dot, Ben and Alice attended and it proved to be a successful event, with good weather and keen interest from the public and apparently plant sales were good. Our display also won a Gold Medal.

There are a number of events being held over the next three weekends:

Portsmouth Branch's Autumn Show will be held this coming Saturday (6th October) at Widley. Details are on their website and David Neville can email a pdf of the show schedule on request.

The **Autumn South East Cactus Mart** will be held at the Village Hall, Church Lane, Crockham Hill, Edenbridge TN8 6RP on Sunday October 14th, between 10am and 3pm. Entry to the event will cost £2. There will be plant sales (over a dozen sellers) and an auction will be held around lunchtime, where anyone can sell anything related to the hobby, such as plants, books or pots. No commission will be charged, but sellers will be required to pay a fee of £1 per auction entry. Buyers will need to pay in cash after each auction.

Oxford Branch are holding a special 60th Anniversary Celebration **Symposium** on Sunday 21st October, with plant sales and 4 speakers : Colin Walker, Martin Lowry, Paul Hoxey and Ian Woolnough. £15 covers the cost of entry and a buffet lunch and refreshments, details are available at: <https://tinyurl.com/OxfordSymp>

The **Branch Annual dinner** will be held at 7:30pm on the evening of Friday 12th October, at the usual venue – the Luzborough - which is situated between North Baddesley and Romsey. Please let Robin Caddy know if you would like to attend. A map is available on the front table.

The BCSS had a problem with the distribution of the **September Journal** - a large number of members were missed from the mailing, and copies were sent to ex-members or to old addresses. A substantial number of Journals had to be reprinted and members who have not yet received their copy should expect to receive them by October 9th.

September 30th marks the end of the Branch's financial year. Please let Alice have details of any bills payable or funds received during the year. Also, as mentioned previously, the **library's fee** for borrowing books increases to 30p/month from this month onwards.

Last Month's Meeting

Plants of Interest

Miranda Stevenson mentioned that she had been experimenting with growing various plants outdoors and she had brought along some pictures of these plants. At the end of her garden she has a scree bed which consists of soil and grit on top of an air raid shelter, and this was well drained and suitable for growing plants. The plants she had tried included Yuccas, Agaves and a Dasyliirion.

We saw *Yucca linearifolia* in flower in 2016. The main crown had continued to grow after flowering, and a side crown has also appeared. *Nolina longifolia* flowered this year and she wasn't sure what it will do next, but it shouldn't die after flowering. *Agave montana* is a plant she has been growing for a number of years. She covers it in gauze during the winter months, using fleece is too humid. It was now ½ metre across. With tree Yuccas, she also puts some gauze around those.

Fascicularia bicolor is a bromeliad and we saw a picture of it in flower taken last year – it also flowered this year. The centre of the plant becomes red when it flowers. It seems to be pretty hardy. With *Fascicularia pitcarnifolia*, she lost that, so now she keeps that in a pot which can be put out in the summer but brought in for the winter. *Yucca gloriosa* is quite hardy but it does die after flowering, so she will take off the offsets which form and grow those on for a couple of years. There was also a Dasyliirion at the back of the picture.

Plants of *Agave americana* were newly planted out for this year in a raised bed. They had grown very well, and she will protect them with gauze over the winter.

Succulent Senecios

Richard White introduced John Foster, who was the chairman of Gloucester Branch and also the Zone 9 representative. John said it was wonderful to see such a large audience assembled for the talk. He was going to talk about the succulent Senecios and had brought along a large selection of plants which were arranged at the front, to illustrate the main members of the genus. Senecio belongs in the Asteraceae family, which is also known as the Compositae. It is one of the largest families of flowering plants. Most are non-succulent and you probably have some growing in your gardens. Lettuce, chicory, artichoke, chamomile and tarragon are examples, and in the flower garden this extends to marigold,

dahlia, chrysanthemum, zinnia, sunflower, daisy and dandelion.

All these diverse plants are united by their flower structure. The flower is a composite flower head made up of lots of tiny flower heads or florets. These are of two types - disc florets, and ray florets which look like petals. Some flowers only have disc florets and these are common for Senecio. Others have a combination of disc and ray florets, for example with daisy or sunflower. Others only have ray florets – for example, dandelion. The composite flower head lead to the name Compositae, although Asteraceae is the more current name these days.

Moving on to books, John showed us the “bible” - Gordon Rowley's book titled *Succulent Compositae*. Gordon covered two genera - Senecio and Othonna - and did not distinguish any other genera. Kleinia is sometimes considered a different genus from Senecio, but the book *Noteworthy Species of Kleinia* by P Halliday notes just very minor differences in the flower – this book contains some line drawings of the plants. Unfortunately modern DNA research has come up with a few new distinctions, so Kleinia has re-appeared as a good genus, along with other genera such as Curio and Caputia. The trend seems to be to move all the succulent Senecios out to other genera, so perhaps in a few years, John might have nothing to talk about! He said he wasn't going to talk about the Othonnas - these are mainly winter growers, and mainly caudiciforms or geophytes. They tend to be expensive and rare, and not many people grow them.

Senecios are very varied - some are winter growers, some are summer growers and some will grow at any time. John asked how many people grow “10 or more?” I'm not sure any hands went up. Next he asked “5 or more?” A couple of hands went up. A few more hands went up when he asked “1 or more?”. He pointed out *Senecio articulatus*, which is quite a popular species to grow and one that Ben had brought in at the sales table, and said he hoped that by the end of the evening, we would all want to grow more of them. A person in the audience asked “Where can we buy them?” He would talk about that later.

There are 1500-2000 species of Senecio, and they grow everywhere except the Antarctic. *Senecio vulgaris* is the type species and he mentioned he actually saw this growing in the churchyard earlier that evening! There are around 50-80 succulent ones, and these come mainly from Southern Africa, also Madagascar, East Africa, Arabia, Morocco, India, and the Canaries. There are also some semi-succulent tree Senecios from Mexico. Overall, there

are very diverse forms and some plants have succulent leaves or succulent stems, and lots have succulent roots or caudexes. They range from being weed-like easy to grow to almost impossible. The growing and flowering times vary considerably. The plants also feature wonderful colours, with blue, grey and purple on the stems. Identification of the species isn't easy - plant names are not that reliable and also not that much research has been done on them. Also the plants in habitat and cultivation often look quite different. Without flowers, you can't even be sure it's a *Senecio* - he has been sold plants which were labelled as *Senecio* but were actually *Adromischus*, *Cotyledon*, *Crassula*, or *Kalanchoe*. He has also judged at shows where *Senecios* were masquerading as *Kalanchoe* and *Echeveria/Dudleya*.

Moving on to the plants, he had grouped them according to the areas they grew in - everywhere, The Canaries, Southern Africa, Eastern Africa / Arabia, Madagascar, India, Mexico and finally some hybrids. John also mentioned that for the plants on display, he had brought along small specimens, for ease of transport - most will grow larger. He started with *Senecio longiflorus* - it grows almost everywhere. The flower remains stay on the plant for a long time. It has upright stems and is found in tropical Africa, the Cape, Madagascar, Socotra and Abd al Kuri (Yemen). It is allegedly a snake deterrent and he's never seen a snake in his greenhouse so that might be correct!

Moving on to the Canaries, there is only one species - *Senecio kleinia* (*Kleinia neriifolia*). It gets a lot larger than the plant he had brought along, and it seems to vary across the different islands. This was from Las Palmas and it had a dark stem, normally it's greener. Tom Radford said he had got a cutting of this from La Gomera and he cuts it down when it gets too large. John said one of his cuttings took a year a root, but Tom said he can reroot his without any trouble. It can be used as a grafting stock. John used to own a cristate version, but not any longer.

Now on to the South African species. *Senecio macroglossus* is a trailing plant with ivy-shaped leaves but it has *Senecio* flowers with ray florets. This plant was variegated and John said he's never seen the pure green form but Ernst van Jaarsveld told him that's all they see in South Africa. It doesn't climb so it has to be trained. *Senecio oxyriifolius* and *S. oxyriifolius* ssp. *oxyriifolius* have tuberous roots. He likes this plant due to the shape of the shape of the leaves, the purple edges to the leaves and the purple stems. It forms annual top growth. You can raise the tuber to create a caudex above the ground, but it doesn't like growing that way. *S. oxyriifolius* ssp. *tropaefolius* has leaves

which look like a nasturtium. There is another one called ssp. *milanjanus* but he's never grown it. The tubers of *S. oxyriifolius* are hardy in this country, and if you bury it 6 inches under the ground, it should survive and put out the top growth each year. Gordon Rowley used to grow these in his front garden, and they survived the bad winter of 2010. *Senecio ruwenzoriensis* is from Zimbabwe and it's very similar to the previous plant. *Senecio mairii* has nice veins on the leaves, especially when the sun shines through the leaves. It has perennial growth and is best pruned regularly to keep it neat. *Senecio aloides* puts out aerial roots so is easy to propagate but it gets untidy. *S. bulbinifolius* had not done much for him but it was developing a rootstock and might go on to develop a caudex. The leaves are like a bulbine. *Senecio corymbiferus* is a winter grower, and so had only just come into leaf - it resembles a *Tylecodon*.

Now for the hanging plants. All these plants have been recently been reclassified under the genus *Curio*, although he would refer to the old names. *Senecio rowleyanus* is named after Gordon Rowley. It has spherical windowed leaves which grow along a thin trailing stem so it resembles a string of beads - it is called the rosary bead plant in the USA. *S. radicans* is very similar, but the leaves are not round. *S. abbreviatus* has ray florets on the flowers, unlike the other bead plants. *S. herrianius* is also similar but it has stripes on the leaves. *S. hallianus* will trail everywhere - it has sticky stems. It flowers well, but the flower remains can stick to the stems and make it look really messy. It has tuberous roots. *Senecio citrifolius* has lemon shaped leaves - it can be kept neater, since it stays more compact. *S. ovoideus* is quite a choice species and it remains compact if grown hard and in good light. It is hard to find. Moving to one that's easier to find, *Senecio articulatus* is probably many people's first *Senecio* and it was his first. It can grow compact or quite long, depending on the culture. Give it more light and less water to keep it compact. It's also a winter grower. Ben had brought in some for sale and he said they had started coming into leaf just a few days earlier. There is a nice variegated form *f. variegatus* which has pink and cream coloured leaves, the colouring can sometimes extend to the stem - it's a really pretty plant.

S. sulcicalyx is another one worth growing hard to keep it compact. The name means "with a grooved calyx" but it actually has a grooved phyllary. *Senecio klinghardtianus* is a synonym but seems to be a bigger-growing form. *S. pinguifolius* means fat-leaved but in his experience they aren't that fat. With *S. toxotis* (used to be called *S. archeri*) - the leaves are vertical. *Senecio crassulifolius* has leaves

which look like a *Crassula*. *S. serpens* or *Curio repens* used to be very common plant which you saw everywhere. This was a cristate form. Sometimes normal growths emerge on this plant and turn cristate later, as it grows. *Senecio ficoides* resembles a mesemb. It is good as a grafting stock. He used to think it was cold hardy until those cold winters a few years ago. *Senecio* "Mount Everest" might just be a form of *ficoides* – the Dutch growers tend to think up fancy names sometimes and they have several *Senecios* named after mountains. Next was *S. morrisonensis* – well, he had bought it in Morrisons. He thought it was a strong growing form of *S. serpens* but it might be a form of *S. ficoides*. *S. talinoides* is noted for its blue-hued leaves, although *S. talinoides* ssp. *chordifolius* is the only *talinoides* with green leaves. They can have very long leaves. *Senecio talinoides* ssp. *mandraliscae* is another form. *Senecio talinoides cylindricus* had been cut down, it can grow quite tall. And he had a cristate form, which keeps trying to go non-cristate.

Next were some more plants from South Africa which remained in *Senecio* or *Kleinia*. *S. galpinii* has nice large orange flowers as disc florets. It is a good flowerer and it was a popular plant in Victorian times. Similar is *S. fulgens* which has red flowers. It forms a big caudex eventually. It can look quite good in a large bowl. It is one of the better ones if you want a plant with a nice caudex. *S. cephalophorus* is one of the choice species which you'll see on the show bench. It has large yellow flowers. *S. barbertonicus* can make an impressive plant – it has bright green leaves with purple stems and has yellow flowers. *S. stapeliiformis* ssp. *stapeliiformis* looks like a *Stapelia*. It puts out stolons so stems can appear at a distance from the main stem or also from a hole in the bottom of the pot. It has big red flowers. The next 2 plants just had John Lavranos collection numbers – the first had small white flowers, and the second had not yet flowered but should have purple flowers.

Finally from South Africa were plants which were now placed in *Caputia* (which means "comes from the Cape"). We saw *Senecio haworthii* (*Caputia tomentosa*) with its silvery white leaves. There are a couple of cultivars which grow better than the species – these are called "Cass's Variety" – a stouter plant which holds on to the leaves better and "Hans Herre" which has bigger leaves, which are slightly flattened at the ends. All *Caputias* have the hairy silver white coating on the leaves, although it wasn't too obvious on his plant of *S. pyramidatus*, where it seemed to have worn off. You could see it on the newer leaves of *S. medley-woodii*. This plant will get very tall, so needs to be cut down from time to time. It has yellow flowers. He had once grown it

under a drip in the greenhouse – the plant grew more quickly but the leaves were just a glossy green. Another nice plant is *S. scaposus* which is stemless (or near-stemless) with silvery leaves. The leaf shape varies and there are some varieties of it. *Senecio scaposus* v. *caulescens* does have a stem. *Senecio scaposus* v. *addoensis* has leaves which are flat and shaped like a spade at the end. There also seems to be everything in between, and he did have a much better *addoensis* in the past. The plants do occasionally lose the silvery white coating on the leaves. A plant might get marked down in a show if the whole plant has lost the white coating.

After the break, we continued looking at more plants, including those from East Africa and Arabia. These are from warmer countries and more tender. *Senecio anteuphorbium* v. *anteuphorbium* is from Morocco and *Senecio anteuphorbium* v. *odorus* is from Northern-East Africa, Arabia and Oman. The name suggests it's an antidote to euphorbia sap. He wasn't sure which of the two forms his plant was, so he was going to send a sample to Ricarda Riina from Venezuela. She was at the BCSS National Convention and was doing research into Euphorbias and comparing ones from the Canaries with those from East Africa, and she was also doing the same for species of *Kleinia* and *Senecio*.

Next was an un-named plant which was provided by Rodney Sims and which came from Somalia / Ethiopia. *Senecio deflersii* (*Kleinia obesa*) is a plant you will probably have seen, with very succulent stems. It can get a lot bigger and is extremely succulent. It goes triangular in the dry season. This one was badly marked. He has seen them growing up to 3 feet tall in cultivation, and it comes from Yemen. *Senecio mweruensis* ssp. *leptophyllus* has nice markings on the leaves and it forms a caudex. On this particular plant, the caudex had half rotted away but John said it can heal itself over time. It comes from Arabia, Ethiopia and Kenya, and has pink flowers. *Senecio mweruensis* ssp. *saginitus* is one of his favourites. It has the crows feet / arrowhead markings on the stem and was just coming into leaf. *S. butleri* is named after Alan Butler. It is very similar to the *saginitus* – but has longer stem segments. There are nice markings on the stems and it has large red flowers. *Senecio mweruensis* f. *schwartzii* also had red flowers and comes from Kenya. It develops a caudex. *Senecio pendulus* has nice markings on stem, pendulous means it prefers to hang down. It is called the inchworm plant. The stems are very brittle and it has big red flowers (1" diameter).

Senecio picticaulis has nice stem markings and is also very brittle. It has purple flowers. *S.*

stapeliiformis ssp. *minor* is also known as *Senecio gregorii* or *Kleinia gregorii*. It has nice marking on the stem and red flowers. *S. sempervivus* ssp. *grantii* (*Senecio coccineiflorus*) has bright red flowers and forms knobbly little caudices. *S. sempervivus* ssp. *sempervivus* has mauve flowers and it is less common. It comes from Ethiopia, Somalia, Kenya and Tanzania as opposed to Yemen for ssp. *grantii*.

Senecio nyikensis (*K. abyssinica*) comes from central and East Africa – it has bright red flowers which look good against the blue leaves. Also from central and East Africa is *Senecio nyikensis* var. *hildebrandtii* which is a smaller plant. *S. jacobsenii* is named after Hermann Jacobsen. It can make a good hanging plant. In good light the leaves dry up and scorch and it would perhaps grow better in shade, but then it won't flower. It has orange flowers and comes from Kenya/Tanzania. He also had the variegated form of it.

Senecio amaniensis comes from Tanzania and has orange flowers. The next two plants just had Specks numbers and also came from Tanzania – they have tuberous roots / caudexes. *Senecio ballyi* is from Kenya and has orange flowers. John said it would get a lot bigger. *S. margaritae* was also from Kenya. The yellow flowers should have raised petals and disc florets. *Kleinia lunulata* is a relatively new discovery from Ethiopia, with orange flowers. It has not been described as a *Senecio*.

Next we covered the Madagascan *Senecios*. John said that in general these aren't as tender as the East African ones, which come from warmer climates. *Senecio crassissimus* has laterally compressed leaves. It can get large, and become almost tree like. The flowers are yellow and have ray florets which are not equally spaced around the flower. Two similar plants with laterally compressed leaves are *S. cedrorum* (which is smaller and greyer) and *S. meuselii* which has thinner longer greener leaves. These also have yellow disc and ray floret flowers. There are more conventional leaves on *S. decaryi* which also turns into a tree. It also has yellow disc and ray flowers. *Senecio antandroi* is a sprawling plant, and the ends of leaves curl round like tendrils so it can climb up things. It has yellow flowers.

S. hebdingii is quite similar to *S. longiflorus*. *Senecio descoingsii* is a bigger form of *S. hebdingii*. They have yellow and white flowers. *Senecio madagascariensis* is quite similar but larger, it has nice marking on stems. It has a greenish white flower. Next was *S. barorum* - is it even a succulent? It has yellow flowers and lovely dark green foliage. *S. mesembryanthemoides* is a fairly new discovery and was not known when Gordon

wrote his book. The base has started to swell. It has yellow flowers with ray and disc florets.

Next was a plant from India - there are quite a lot of large tree-like *Senecios* which grow there but he only had this example. It was a cutting from a plant which Doug Donaldson had brought back from India. It needs a lot of warmth and he hasn't flowered it yet. Now for plants from Mexico – where a few of the Tree *Senecios* grow. They are grouped in *Pittocaulon*. The one he had brought along wasn't looking too happy. It may want repotting. He mentioned he had also got a 6 foot version of it at home. He has one other species *Senecio velatus* (*Pittocaulon velatum*) but it was looking sorer than this one. The fresh growth of leaves on *S. velatus* have a felty coating similar to the *Caputias*. He has flowered *S. velatus* before. *Senecio praecox* is deciduous and it flowers before the leaves appear on the plant, so the locals call it "palo loco" or "crazy tree". It needs a lot of water when growing, and none when dormant.

It was now time to discuss some hybrids. A cross between *S. galpinii* and *S. cephalophorus* had quite an interesting leaf on it and also a nice stem. The plant has orange flowers and he obtained it from Stuart Riley a few years ago. Another hybrid from Stuart was called "Sphinx" – he wasn't sure of the parentage. A cross between *S. longiflorus* x *S. stapeliiformis* had nice markings on the stem and was growing well. This also occurs in the nature. Next was a cross between *S. articulatus* and *S. haudeanus*. It has nice shaped leaves but it is a bit fragile and falls apart easily. Another unusual cross. S "Hippogriff" and it's a cross between *S. articulatus* and *S. rowleyanus*. The final plant he showed was *Senecio kleiniiformis*, a plant with glaucous blue leaves which is thought to be a hybrid between *S. articulatus* and some unknown plant.

Now for some cultivation tips. Light is the most important factor - especially for the winter growers. Knowing the plant's growing season helps. Many of them do better if they are pruned. As for propagation, it is difficult to get viable seed in this country, so taking cuttings from stems or roots is probably the only option - generally, leaves won't root. With regard to pests, the only one seems to be mealy bug. As for plants, Stuart Riley has some sometimes, John Watmough and Ian Robinson may also have a few. In Europe, Cok Grootsholten and Specks used to sell some, but neither are trading now. David asked where did he get all his plants from? John Watmough got him some from Europe and he also bought Warren Withers' plants when Warren passed away. For soil, he recommended his regular mix which was 50% John Innes and 50%

grit and he rarely feeds the plants since they don't require it.

Vinay Shah

Table Show Results

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

	Cacti – Mammillaria	Succulents – Mesembs
Open	(1) I Biddlecombe Mammillaria perbella	(1) T Radford Conophytum bilobum
	(2) B Beckerleg Mammillaria lenta	(2) T Radford Glottiphyllum nelii
	(3) T Radford Mammillaria spinosissima	(3) I Biddlecombe Trichodiadema bulbosum
Intermediate	(1) T Radford Mammillaria albilanata	(1) T Radford Trichodiadema bulbosum
	(2) B Beckerleg M. perez dela rosae	(2) T Radford Conophytum wiggettae
	(3) I Biddlecombe Mammillaria schiedeana	(3) T Radford Conophytum flavum

Cacti/Succulent in Flower
(1) B Beckerleg Astrophytum sp.
(2) M Stevenson Euphorbia platycephala
(3) B Beckerleg Mammillaria theresae

Ivor Biddlecombe

Next Month's Meeting

Our next meeting will be held on November 6th and it will feature a talk "Around the Collection" by Stuart Riley. Stuart is a regular speaker at our branch and he usually brings along an extensive selection of plants for sale. He visits the USA every year and brings back a suitcase or two of plants from there so I am sure we will get to see some new and interesting plants.

The November Table Show will consist of **Copiapoa Group** (cacti) and **Echeveria Subgroup** (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).

The *Copiapoa* group includes *Copiapoa* and *Pilocopiapoa*.

The *Echeveria* subgroup includes *Dudleya*, *Echeveria*, *Graptopetalum*, *Pachyphytumb* and *Tacitus*.

A reminder for the committee that a **Branch Committee Meeting** will be held on Tuesday 16th October.

Forthcoming Events

Sat 6 th Oct	Portsmouth	Portsmouth Autumn Show, Christ Church Hall, Widley, PO7 5AU
Fri 12 th Oct	Southampton	Branch Dinner @ The Luzborough, SO51 9AA
Sat 13 th Oct	Isle of Wight	To be confirmed
Tue 16 th Oct	Southampton	Branch Committee Meeting
Sat 20 st Oct	Portsmouth	Thelocactus - The Forgotten Genus (Martin Doorbar)
Tue 6 th Nov	Southampton	Around The Collection (Stuart Riley)
Sat 10 th Nov	Isle of Wight	Eastern Cape (Rodney Sims)
Sat 17 th Nov	Portsmouth	Aloe! Aloe! (Rodney Sims)
Sat 1 st Dec	Portsmouth	Annual General Meeting & Christmas Social
Tue 4 th Dec	Southampton	Annual General Meeting, followed by Christmas Social
Sat 8 th Dec	Isle of Wight	Annual General Meeting followed by American Supper

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

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