

# British Cactus & Succulent Society

## Southampton & District Branch Newsletter

December 2013



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## Editorial

Well, here we are in December, although it doesn't really feel like it – until you step into a shop and see all the Christmas-themed items for sale. We have had one or two frosty nights and also a couple of chilly days but it's still relatively mild for the time of year – there are still many deciduous trees around which haven't dropped their leaves yet.

The mild weather meant I watered some of my succulent plants last week. This is probably about as late in the year as one would dare to do this. Aloes are continuing to flower, along with Haworthias. Various mesembs have also flowered, including *Glottiphyllum grandiflorum* (which has one of the largest flowers of any mesemb), *Conophytums* and *Fenestraria rhopalophylla*

## Announcements

Our **next meeting** will be held on **7<sup>th</sup> January** and will consist of short talks presented by branch members. We will have access to both conventional and digital projectors and would like members to bring along photos or plants and talk about them for a few minutes. Pictures can be brought along on a CD or memory stick, and should be numbered/prefixed with 001, 002, 003 etc. so that they are shown in the correct order.

The **Branch Programme** for 2014 has been prepared and copies are available from the front table.

The **Zone 11 Quiz** was hosted by Portsmouth on 23<sup>rd</sup> November. Turnout for the event was again on the low side. After a slow start, the Southampton team did well in the middle stages and took the lead, and then just hung on for a narrow win, allowing us to reclaim the Mealy Bug trophy. I'll write up more in the next newsletter.

## Committee Reports - 2013

### President's Report

Congratulations to Southampton and District branch on another very successful year.

Many of our visiting speakers are amazed at the support at our meetings and the distance some of you travel to attend the monthly meets.

In March we celebrate 60 years as a branch. There will be a few extra events next year. I hope you can get to some or all of them. We have had an interesting mixture of meetings this year. Thanks to David and the rest of the committee for all their hard work. Thanks to all the members who support the raffle, plant sales, library and of course the refreshments. Best wishes for 2014.

*Peter Down*

### Chairperson's Report

From the chair this year I have been both struck and impressed how successful a branch we have in Southampton. The commitment by members who come a distance to attend meetings and support the group, the turnout and the medals won at the shows and the contributions of plants and other items made at meetings all underline this success.

A special mention in dispatches for Ivor Biddlecombe who repeated his achievement of last year by winning two gold medals for our displays. And a special mention for David Neville whose sudden incapacity rocked us. There was confusion as we discovered how many things David actually

does, however we soldiered through. Thankfully David is back.

I would like to thank the members of our committee and all those who have given their time to support the branch and events - you know who you are.

The biggest thank you goes to Jim Roskilly who has been our hard working publicity officer for some forty one years. His circumstances have changed and Ben Turner has volunteered to fill the post.

Myself and five others went to ELK in September, which probably marks us out as cacti fundamentalists, however it was an enjoyable experience if bruising on the pocket.

Next year will be the sixtieth anniversary of Peter Down establishing our branch. We are planning special events to celebrate those sixty years and will be contacting you by Email to give details and dates.

*Dot England*

### **Secretary's Report**

As 2013 draws to a close it is satisfying to look back on another successful year for Southampton & District Branch. Attendance at our monthly meetings continues to buck the national trend and virtually every speaker throughout the year has complimented us on the number of people in the audience. We have attracted a small number of new members, and we are pleased to welcome Geoff Penrose to the branch, having transferred to Southampton Branch following his move to the New Forest from Luton.

Despite the fact that we currently mount fewer displays to the public than in recent years, we have nonetheless been able to publicise the hobby to a large number of people and to sell a large number of plants. This brings in revenue which helps to finance branch meetings, which run at a financial loss whenever we welcome a visiting speaker. We prefer to make money from sales to the public rather than having to introduce an attendance fee at meetings; the majority of branches of the BCSS now charge all members and visitors a fee at every meeting in order to finance their activities.

Our Publicity Officer, Jim Roskilly, has suffered some ill health this year and has decided to stand down from the committee after around 40 years on the branch committee. Jim has done a sterling job for many years, ensuring that our activities have regularly been promoted in the Daily Echo and on Radio Solent. We wish Jim a happy retirement from

the committee and hope that he will continue to attend meetings for many years to come.

I too was unwell earlier in the year, and I would particularly like to thank Vinay Shah for the work he did in my absence to ensure that our speakers were sent directions, provided with accommodation etc. He kept me informed of progress via mobile communications and visits to my hospital bedside. I am scheduled for more surgery in 2014 and hope that Vinay will be able to provide cover for my absence in the coming months.

The programme of events for 2014 is complete and will be distributed at the December branch meeting. 2014 is our 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Year, so we have planned some special events to commemorate this anniversary.

I would like to thank everyone who regularly attends our monthly branch meetings for helping to create the friendly and welcoming atmosphere for which Southampton & District Branch has become renowned, and hope that this can be maintained for a successful 2014.

*David Neville*

### **Treasurer's Report**

I would like to thank Colin and Lorraine Bielckus for completing our annual accounts very promptly. The branch has managed to make a small profit of £8 for the year ending 30 Sep 2013. This is less than last year, but the important thing is that it is a profit however small.

We had a number of quality speakers that has cost the branch 70% more than last year. The cost of hall hire has gone up by a third as well. This has been offset by more than three times the profit from shows. Due to reduced costs and the continued support of members and without any price increases, Raffle and Catering profit has increased for the year. The Branch invested £100 in purchasing a considerable number of plants from Ciprian Suta, of which two thirds have been sold to date. These sales have more than recovered the original investment, with profit in excess of £30. The remaining plants will be sold in 2014.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to wish you all the best throughout the festive season and look forward to seeing you all next year.

*Alice Jankovec*

## **Display Manager's Report**

### **Sparsholt Countryside Day - 18 May**

Our first Show for 2013 was at Sparsholt College. It was unfortunate that many of our members had other commitments and were unable to attend, luckily Bruce and I were able to supply enough plants for the display and with Vinay, Geoff and my brother Peter we soon had the gazebo up and the display arranged. The weather was dry and our new gazebo worked very well, but we still don't know whether it's waterproof. The sale of plants was slow so we only made a small profit for branch funds. I think all who came enjoyed the day.

### **New Forest Show 30 July – 1 August**

The New Forest Show was again held at New Park, the regular show ground for the Show. The week before, we had several showers of rain after several weeks of sunny weather but by Monday the 29<sup>th</sup> the weather had turned sunny and we were able to put up our display and bring in our plants in the dry. I wish all of the members that gave their support at the show had managed to bring a few plants for the display as we seem to have the same plants every year and it would be nice to have a few different plants for a change. I was pleased that this year we were given four tickets for each day of the Show, this helped reduce our costs. With plant sales it was well worth doing and we also won a Gold Medal for our display.

### **The Romsey Show 14 September**

On Friday 13<sup>th</sup>, Geoff, Tony, Bruce, Peter and I arrived at Broadlands to rig the display. The weather was fine but overcast. We ended up with more plants than we needed, due to a smaller stand, but this allowed us to have a better selection of plants. On Saturday when we arrived the show ground was muddy at the entrance. A few cars and vans had to be pulled in with tractors but after straw was spread most managed to drive in. The show was well supported, although plant sales seemed slow at times. I am pleased to say our display won a Gold Medal and £70 prize money towards Branch funds.

### **Table Show**

This year entries were a bit better than last year, but only ten members entered, and some for only three times during the year. This is a shame since visitors enjoy seeing the plants and it gives new members a chance to talk about the plants on display.

Please accept my thanks to every one that helped me during the year. Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year,

*Ivor Biddlecombe*

## **Librarian's Report**

The borrowing of books was satisfactorily up for the calendar year of 2013 over 2012. The book most frequently borrowed this year was a joint winner of 'Growing Cactus & Succulents in the garden' (Bell) and 'Lithops – Treasures of the Veld' (Hammer). The total number of different titles borrowed from the library was 21, with a split of 13 (genera), 4 (encyclopaedia), 3 (cultivation) and 1 (habitat).

A large number of books were kindly donated by both Jim Roskilly and Peter Down. Some of these have found their way to both the donation table and the raffle table. Others are awaiting valuation and sale to contribute to club funds. A few should find their way into the library.

I have been writing a short column each month for the newsletter and have further plans to expand this with an additional occasional feature which will involve you dear readers, so beware!!!

Revenue from lending for the year ending September 2013 was £11.60.

Merry Christmas all!

*Sue Wilson*

## **Plant Sales Officer's Report**

The season started off with a small display at Sparsholt where we took £280 which is a bit down on last year.

The New Forest Show was almost £100 up on last year, with takings of £967. This is a welcome change since sales had been steadily declining at this show.

We did the Romsey Show for the fourth time where we took £463, which is 50% up on last year and easily a record for this show - still not clear why. We also got £70 in cash for a gold medal as we have in previous years

Sales at branch meetings continue to be buoyant, partly because we continue to have higher attendances than we used to but also because, as last year, we have a number of new(ish) sellers which has added extra interest to the sales table. I would, once again, like to thank all of you who brought sales plants to branch meetings and other events.

For those of you who do not know, anyone can bring plants for the sales table, just make sure each plant has a price label with your initials on. We

charge a 10% commission at branch meetings and 15% at shows.

*Bruce Beckerleg*

### **Newsletter Editor's Report**

It has been another quiet year as far as producing the newsletter is concerned. I normally print 32 copies each month, and spares are placed in the "previous months" box - so if you missed a meeting and want one of the older copies, do help yourself. The previous issues (for the last 10 years or so) can also be downloaded from our website.

The supply of "snippets" for inclusion in the newsletter has been on the low side this year, but I would like to thank those of you who did provide me with material. And special thanks to our Librarian Sue, for providing a regular update of books related to the monthly talks at the branch.

Our programme for next year has been prepared and I have also received copies of the new Portsmouth and IoW programmes, so I will shortly be updating our website to feature the 2014 schedules.

Best wishes to everyone for 2014.

*Vinay Shah*

## **Last Month's Meeting**

### **Plants of Interest**

Ted had brought along some seedlings that he had grown over the last couple of years. There were a dozen Lithops, including *Lithops dorotheae julii*, *Rebutia heliosa*, *Rebutia oculata*, *Mammillaria microthele* and *Mammillaria aureilanata*. The funny growth on one of the Lithops (the plant had a hollow centre) prompted Ted to ask whether the plant was trying to commit suicide. David Neville suggested it might be due to bad cultivation!

### **Where Do Cape Succulents Grow?**

Terry Smale started his talk by stating that he would using us as guinea-pigs – this was the first time he was giving this presentation, and he welcomed comments from us. He was planning to do something similar, but on just the mesembs, for the National Convention next year. In the presentation, he would be using pictures from habitat, with the occasional image of cultivated plants to show us some of the flowers. What he wanted to do was look at the Western part of South Africa, pick out some geographical areas as one moves from the Western Cape to the Northern Cape and consider the conditions, rainfall, geology and show some of the plants that grow in those areas.

The title slide showed two extremes of the terrain and the type of plants you can find there. The left side was a scene from the Southern areas, where "fynbos" with proteas and heathers dominate. It is relatively wet and you find big shrubs, with succulents mainly growing on the hills. In the North, in areas such as Bushmanland, it is a lot more arid and you find small shrubs on the hillsides and many more succulent plants. A map of the western part of South Africa showed how the Orange River forms a natural border with Namibia along the north. Cape Town was in the bottom left. When growing South African plants, you can run into cultivation problems due to the very different climate systems. Over the main part of South Africa, you have rains during the summer months including thunderstorms, due to high temperatures building over the continent. The winters are relatively dry. On the Western side, you have a Mediterranean climate, with cold fronts from the Atlantic bearing rain – these operate in the winter but not the summer. In the middle of the two areas, the two weather systems interact and you can get rain at anytime of the year, or in some areas, hardly any. We would be looking at the Little Karoo, the Tanqua Karoo and the Western Mountain Karoo as part of the talk. Some of the areas looked at have purely winter rain fall, and others have all round rainfall with a maximum in the summertime.

Overlaid on the map, we saw classifications of types of vegetation. Near Cape Town were regions of **Fynbos** (fine bush) with plants such as proteas. Other regions were the **Succulent Karoos**, covering Namaqualand, the Tanqua Karoo, and Little Karoo. (Karoo means dry place.) Moving across to the summer rainfall side, there was a large region called the **Nama Karoo** which also stretched across to Bushmanland.

We started with the Fynbos biome which is a large region in the vicinity of Cape Town and running into the Cape peninsula. The annual rainfall is 50-100cm and one or two places can get 200cm. 100cm is more rain than we typically get here, and all of that falls in the winter months. So in Cape Town, you have wet winters with a lot of moisture. The geology is Table mountain sandstone which breaks down to grit which is acidic and low in nutrients. You also get occasional granite intrusions through the sandstone and different flora grow on these. This type of wet fynbos burns regularly, with fires started by lightning during thunderstorms, and the plants have a 10-15 year cycle. Proteas after flowering produce cones and the fires open up these cones to release the seeds. The fire spreads and moves very quickly, so at ground level it is not very hot, and plants can regenerate. However, areas have now

been planted with Eucalyptus and this burns at a higher temperature, destroying the native vegetation rather than allowing it to survive the fires. Terry showed a view of a habitat where a fire had occurred a year earlier and new growth was already emerging and re-establishing itself. There are some succulents here, but since they have to compete with the bushes, they have to be shrubby (and not dwarf) to some extent. *Erepsia aspera* has magenta flowers. In the past he has tried to grow it from seed but germination was very poor and he now suspects that like the other fynbos plants, the seeds may require smoke treatment to germinate well. Tylecodons grow right through the area. Most are in the drier areas but one species found here is *Tylecodon grandiflorus*. In the winter it has green fleshy leaves and by the autumn it has short shrubby stems. It produces 3 feet tall flower stalks so that the flowers are held clear of the other vegetation. Tylecodon flowers are usually small, greenish brown in colour and regular in shape, but this species has a big showy red curved flower and that implies the pollinator is a sunbird. In America, species of *Cleistocactus* have tubular red flowers which attract hummingbirds.

The biggest and showiest aloe found here is *Aloe plicatilis* – the growths can reach a height of 8 feet and it can compete with the other vegetation. He hadn't grown it but it's a slow growing plant and the fact that it comes from a high winter rainfall area may offer some clues on cultivation. As you go further north to Bokkeveld and Cederberg and move away from Cape Town, the annual rainfall reduces to 30-40 cm, but this still falls in the winter months. Here there are sandstone hills and mountains, with granite intrusions. The fynbos is drier and the shrubs are smaller, and there's less competition for the succulents. At a river valley near Clanwilliam, we saw a vygie (afrikaans for mesemb) in flower. The terrain is dominated by quite big shrubby mesembs, up to a metre tall and the featured plant was probably a *Lampranthus*. There are a few succulents in the sandy areas, but in the sandstone hills, there are lots of succulents growing, including dwarf succulents. We saw a *Leucadendron* bush, which is closely related to the proteas, but the shrubbery here is generally smaller. We also saw a big *Aloe mitriformis* – the stem was lying on the ground, running along for a couple of metres and at the end were rosettes with showy red inflorescences. Down amongst the sandstone, moss and black lichens develop in grit pans. Conophytums also grow in these. *Cephalophyllum alstonii* is a showy mesemb – most mesembs tend to have yellow or pink/purple flowers, but the bright red colour of its flowers is quite a rare sight.

Taking a look at some of the smaller succulents, we saw *Conophytum minusculum* growing amongst the lichen, in shallow (1cm) pans – in the background one could see a river. Both *Conophytum minusculum* and ssp. *leopoldtii* are really very widespread but each colony tends to look slightly different from one another. *Conophytum comptonii* was quite dried up and growing in acidic accumulated sandstone – it is one of the trickier Conophytums to grow. There were asclepiads around and we saw *Huernia reticulata* in flower, growing in fissures in the sandstone. *Anacampseros comptonii* also grows in the grit pans. It has a caudex underneath and forms a cluster of succulent leaves. The entire plant with 20 leaves was an inch across. It is a beast to grow – very slow growing and difficult to raise from seed, and he hasn't kept it for more than a few years.

The first *Othonna* he found was *Othonna cacalioides*, again growing in the grit pans with lichen. It is a caudiciform plant which produces leaves during the winter and grows groundsel-like yellow flowers. Although some *Othonnas* are not difficult to grow, this one is. The caudexes used to be imported. *Crassula comptonii* was growing in some moss and had yellow flowers. The other plant on the slide was described only a couple of years ago and has similar leaves but white flowers. This was *Crassula fragarioides*, which in good sunshine has red leaves with white dots, making them look like strawberries. In cultivation it is an easy plant but it does not get very red in our light levels. *Euphorbia hallii* is quite uncommon and very restricted in its habitat. It grows in a gorge created by a river where the soil in the river valley is like baked clay. It is named after Harry Hall, who left England after the war and cultivated the succulent plant collection at Kirstenbosch for many years. At one of the granite intrusions, relatively close to the Atlantic, on the seaward side we saw lichen growing thanks to the moist fogs which billow in off the Atlantic. Within the lichen grows *Conophytum albiflorum*. It is only known from three localities and all are granite intrusions.

Moving East to the Succulent Karoo biome, this area receives 15-30cm of rainfall and it contains a mix of summer rainfall and winter rainfall areas, so can get rain at any time of the year, but with maxima in spring and autumn. For plants in his collection from this region, he tries to match this by watering them more in the spring and autumn. The Langeberg mountains run from east to west along here and the cold fronts deposit most of the rain on the mountains, so the Little Karoo is in a rain shadow, with reduced rainfall. The vegetation and geology is very varied. There is shale and quartz,

and the quartz areas are stuffed full of succulent plants. In the picture, the whitish plants were *Gibbaeum pubescens*. When he was there, there was a very light drizzle, almost like a wet fog for most of the day. This condenses around the plants. The gibbaeums are nearly all endemic to the Little Karoo and most grow in the quartz patches. The clumps of *G. pubescens* were a foot across. With *G. cryptopodium* - latin for "hidden stem" - these particular examples were well exposed but others are almost buried in the quartz grit. A classic plant from this area is *Muiria hortenseae*, which has recently been lumped back into *Gibbaeum*. It is known on just 2 adjacent farms. It really is the most reduced succulent mesemb, the leaves are almost fused together and there is just a tiny fissure from which the flower emerges. It can be grown from seed, but he finds it hard to grow well and hasn't flowered it, although some people in the UK have.

*Crassula columnaris* forms solitary heads which take 3-4 years to grow and then it reaches maturity, flowers and dies (being a monocarpic species). A subspecies does produce offsets. *Euphorbia suzannae* was growing in quartz/shale and it is one of the more popular Euphorbias in cultivation. The conophytums in the Little Karoo are all night flowering and *Conophytum minimum* is quite widespread. An ornate form from a colony in Klipfontein was some time ago described as *C. wittebergense* and he lists this as *C. minimum* "wittebergense".

There are some Haworthias in the Little Karoo, and also lots of farms, including game farms. Watch out for ostriches, which can be dangerous. The farming activity has left just small patches of the original Haworthia populations. *Haworthia pumila* grows in flat areas amongst shrubs - it is one of the larger growing members of the genus and he has a specimen a foot tall. Some forms have lovely papillae on the back of the leaves. Showing a picture of a patch of ground near Oudtshoorn which was one foot square, Terry asked how many succulents can you see? There was an *Adromischus*, 2 x *Haworthia truncata*, *Conophytum truncatum*, a *Glottiphyllum*, a shrubby mesemb, an *Asclepiad* and a *Crassula muscosa*. Next was a nice specimen of *Tylecodon orbiculata* in the little Karoo - this species is very widespread.

Moving inland to the Western Mountain Karoo, this whole area is higher in altitude, ranging from 1000 to 1700 metres. The rainfall is at a maximum in the winter, and totals about 25cm annually. The temperatures in the winter can reach -15°C. Nearby is Sutherland which is where South Africa's large telescope is housed because of clear skies - these of

course lead to the low temperatures. In the winter, plants here can be frozen in ice. There is a lot of dolerite rock in this area. 15 km from Sutherland is Komsberg Pass where there are slabs of dolerite. In the background, we could also see sandy areas where shrubs were growing. There were shallow grit pans in the dolerite and the brown splodges were different succulents. *Stomatium villetii* had pronounced papillae. A plant at the front was *Delosperma sphalmanthoides* - this had already flowered when he visited it, but Terry showed an example of the flowers from his plant. It usually flowers in the spring, and the colder the winter, the better it flowers. Steve Hammer can't flower it well, and the seed doesn't germinate well either, so perhaps it has to be treated as an alpine. Terry said he has propagated more of this than any other species - people lose it because they don't give it enough water. *Aloinopsis spathulata* is a high altitude plant - he keeps it in the greenhouse in the summer but it doesn't look happy and it may be too hot for it. Gillian Evison has collected seed of this from Sutherland and grown into a 12 inch specimen - she grows it outside in the summer and in a cold frame in the winter, so her plant is kept cooler than his. Another plant from the same area is *Cheiridopsis cigarettifera* - it is quite widespread, but here it has small leaves under an inch long. This genus doesn't flower well in cultivation - but his plant, grown from seed collected from this region flowers well.

In between the mountains is the Tanqua Karoo - this is very much in the rain shadow and only receives 5-10cm of rain. This area is home to a large number of succulent plants, many which are endemic to the area. We saw some "chert" pavements and there were three mesembs associated with this - *Lithops comptoniae*, *Didymaotus lapidiformis* and *Tanquana prismatica*. The *Didymaotus* produces flowers from leaf axils on both sides of the main growth and hence produces two flowers. It is very difficult in cultivation, where it is green rather than the rich pink/red colours attained in habitat. The *Tanquana* is easier to grow and has a yellow flower. It used to be in *Pleiospilos*, was then moved out to *Tanquana* but DNA studies may move it back to *Pleiospilos*.

Moving on to Namaqualand, the Succulent Karoo includes an area called the Knersvlakte and also a small patch of similar terrain, further north near Riethuis. At one time this was the mouth of the Orange River. It's a low elevation undulating basin and a few diamonds are still found here. The annual rainfall is low at 10-15 cm, but this is supplemented by a fog coming in off the Atlantic which bears a lot of moisture, especially during the winter months.

There are low lying undulating quartz plains and a few granite hills in between. There is also some limestone. A view of Quaggaskop showed the ground covered with quartz pebbles. The lumps of vegetation were shrubby mesembs, and one can find all sorts of succulents and bulbs in the quartz pebbles. *Argyroderma* is endemic and the name translates to silver skin - this blends in very well with the quartz pebbles. There are about a dozen species. *A. delaetii* usually has purple flowers, but you can get yellow flowered ones and also occasionally a red flower. Less common is *Oophytum* - which is a mesemb which grows 2 pairs of leaves each year, and the pairs are different in appearance. Three species are localised in the Knersvlakte. *Oophytum nanum* is one of the small ones. It is growable but is difficult to cultivate well - it remains green and doesn't develop the red coloration seen in the wild. Another endemic is *Dactyloopsis digitata*. There are 2 species which are now lumped into *Phyllobolus*. The species name means hands and fingers in Greek and Latin. It grows in the winter and in the summer dies back to just stumps. The flowers are tiny and produced in gaps between the 2 finger-like leaves. *Conophytum subfenestratum* was found almost buried in the quartz. *Lithops divergens* is only found here in the Knersvlakte in the quartz. It is quite slow growing and not the easiest of the *Lithops* to grow. With *Monilaria peersii*, in the summer the long leaves die back to leave a little smaller rounded leaf pair which takes it through the summer - it eventually develops a chain of the stubby leaves. The flowers are produced in the winter, but hardly ever in cultivation.

Bulbines occur everywhere and the one we saw, *Bulbine wiesei*, is endemic to a farm and the species is named after the owner. Succulent pelargoniums found here include *Pelargonium crithmifolium*. Also at Quaggaskop are limestone reefs, down near the railway line, and plants endemic to this rock type include *Antimima evoluta* and a little *Conophytum uviforme* ssp. *subincanum* - this is the only conophytum he knows which grows on an alkaline substrate - all the others occur in neutral or acidic soil. Riethuis is the enclave to the North West which also has the low lying flat areas. Lots of conophytums grow here, and we saw *Crassula suzannae* growing in a sand grit pan.

In Namaqualand proper, the Hardeveld & Kamiesberg are hills of ancient granite, some 500 million years old, which have metamorphosed to gneiss. In the Northern part there are some quartz intrusions. In between the granite hills there are a lot of sand plains and these tend to isolate one hill from another, causing local forms to appear. Most of the

region is over 1000m in altitude, and some inland areas are higher, so the plants can experience frost. He mentioned he'd been sent pictures of plants in snow in early spring (our September). The aged rocks are rounded and eroded and the flattish areas are good for dwarf succulents, crevices in grit pans. *Aloe dichotoma* is a significant part of the landscape. The closely related *Aloe ramosissima* also grows here - it is shorter and much more branched. Crevices in the granite rocks are typical places for Conophytums, and we saw *C. pellucidum* v. *neohallii* jammed in a rock crevice. There was also red lichen growing on the rocks. *Crassula barkleyi* likes to develop in pans. When the flower develops, that whole growth dies, but it is well branched so it is not the end for the plant. There are lots of *Adromischus* here and we saw one of the *marianiae* forms. There was also a leafy *Anacampseros baeseckii*. In the flat areas you don't get the dwarfs, but shrubby plants such as a *Herrea* (with a thick tap root), *Drosanthemum*, bulbs and a few annuals. Some of the flat areas have been farmed in the past, but in those areas there is now no sign of the shrubby mesembs or bulbs you'd expect - instead the land is just covered with wild flowers, which is popular with tourists who travel up to Namaqualand in the spring to see the annuals, but actually it's a sign of veld that's been severely degraded. In the Khamiesberge mountains, you again find the granite rocks. *Conophytum khamiesbergense* which is one of the few conophytums that flowers in spring is found here. With *Othonna euphorbioides* the flowers dry up to become thorns over the body.

The Richtersveld is a very mountainous area and difficult to get into. The altitude varies from 100m to 1400m, and there is 10cm annual rain, exclusively in the winter, but there is also a lot of fog from the Atlantic thanks to the Humboldt Current. The geology is very varied and a lot of succulents grow in the quartzite. The quartz is pink/brown colour rather than white. It is difficult to travel here and to get to all the mountains, so he expects there are plants here which are yet to be discovered.

A hill called Aughrabies has lots of endemic succulent plants and it is the first hill you encounter coming in from the Atlantic. All this fog over the winter months makes things very luxuriant in that area. The aloe found in the Richtersveld is *Aloe pillansii* - it can grow to 40 feet high, is slow growing and has beautiful patterned bark. You don't see many young plants, so it could be on its way out. *Aloe melanacantha*'s name means black spines but in cultivation it doesn't form the dark spines very well, so it might need the hot temperatures of habitat

to develop properly. *Euphorbia dregeana* is a stick Euphorbia which is common and grows to a couple of metres. It can act as a host to an asclepiad – a *Microlooma* species with very thin stems which clamber up through the Euphorbia stems and flowers with curious red tufted flowers. Near Steinkopf, the patches of shale are called Nama shale and *Cheiridopsis peculiaris* grows here. The leaves in the wild are brown and they match the shale they are growing in, but the yellow flowers are easy to spot. The plants not in flower blend into the shale background. It grows and flowers well in cultivation, but the leaves remain green. In the quartz rock is another Conophytum, *C. herreanthus* ssp. *rex* with pink flowers. *Lithops geyeri* grows in quartz flats and is endemic to this area. Also found in the quartz rocks is *Schwantesia herrei*, a yellow flowering mesemb which grows only in this part of Bushmanland and a few surrounding regions. *Mitrophyllum grande* has two types of leaves - a cone leaf in the summer dry season and then this split opens and new cones grow. When it flowers, the whole single stem erupts and flowers stems emerge. He doesn't know any one who's flowered in the UK and even Steve Hammer had to grow the plant for 20 years before it flowered for him.

*Tylecodon buchholzianus* is very slow growing, producing ¼ inch of growth per year on each stem. Some forms produce leaves on the tips of the stems, but other forms never produce any leaves and just produce stems. A *Crassula* which is endemic is *Crassula alstonii*. It is very slow to grow and propagate and hence a difficult plant to get hold of. There are various *Avonias* and *Adromischus* in the Richtersveld. *Avonia prominens* is recognised by its branched stems - it branches quite a way up the stem. *Adromischus alstonii* had red spots on the leaves. Another daisy relation is *Othonna herrei* – it only grows on a couple of hills in the Knersvlakte. A lot of it has been collected and it is getting rare in habitat. It is very slow growing, just ¼ inch per year on a stem. During the winter it produces large leaves.

Sarcocaulons have now been moved to Monsonia. There are several species in the Knersvlakte. It forms thick stems and the plants can reach a couple of feet across. *Monsonia herrei* is covered in fine leaves and then produces a succession of flowers. He finds them difficult to grow. *S. vanderietiae* is the only one which is relatively easy to grow. *Euphorbia tuberculata* is one of the caput-medusae types with a big central stem and then various branches coming off it. It was growing in deep red sand. The inflorescences at the ends of the stems are quite attractive for a Euphorbia. An asclepiad consisted of a couple of stems which were quite

gnarled and blending in with the shrubs it was growing amongst. This is just found on top of a couple of mountains and there is only one species in the genus - *Notechidnopsis columnaris* - the "not" means South.

The last area to look at was the Nama Karoo which gets quite a lot of summer rain. In the West it also gets a bit of winter rainfall. The rain comes as localised thunderstorms so some parts don't see any rain and the average rainfall is less than 10cm. Most of the terrain is high elevation (900-1200m) and there are a lot of isolated hills (granite with quartz on top). These hills are isolated by sand plains and are called inselbergs (island mountains). The plants get isolated between the mountains leading to a fair degree of endemism on mountain groups. We saw examples of granite at the bottom and the ridges where you get brown quartzite outcroppings. On the sand flats, there were some Euphorbias which were well spread out. He thought initially it was *E. multiceps* but that is from much further south and so this might be a related plant, called *Euphorbia friedrichiae*. The columns were a foot or so tall and the plant had a central stem with lots of branches running off it. These plants are not easy to grow. Hoodias also like the sand plains, and *Hoodia gordonii* is found here. He had seen a lot of them but rarely in flower but found one in particular flowering its socks off. Ian Acton in the audience mentioned they tend to be found further north and Terry confirmed that they occurred right through Bushmanland and also over the river into Namibia. The plant also featured pointed seed horns, these eventually split to release the parachuted seeds.

Some of the inselbergs are flat and covered in quartz, and *Hoodia alstonii* is a small flowered Hoodia (previously called *Trichocaulon alstonii*) which only grows on the tops of these hills. In the quartz, you can also find *Avonias* – we saw *Avonia recurvata* ssp. *minuta* and *Avonia quinaria* ssp. *alstonii* which has white flowers. There's a big caudex under the plants and they can get to 5-6 inches across but those would be very old plants. It is illegal to collect or import this, but plants still seem to make their way to Europe. Endemic to Bushmanland is *Crassula mesembryanthemopsis*. When dry, it pulls itself into the gravel, and emerges when moisture appears – it forms stemless flowers.

There are various Conophytums growing in the quartz. *Conophytum fulleri* is widespread in eastern Bushmanland. It has purple flowers but doesn't come out of its resting sheath until well into Autumn. *Conophytum burgeri* is confined to one depression in between a set of hills. The one or two acres of land belong to a mining company which is



looking for zinc and copper nearby – because of their security, they are in effect protecting this plant. *Conophytum stephanii* and *Conophytum mirabile* are similar looking plants with hairy bodies – the former produces small nocturnal orange flowers, the latter produces large purple flowers in the daytime – it is found on just one hill. Another quartz hill plant is *Lithops dorotheae*, which is found in just one locality. It is one of most attractively marked of all the *Lithops* species but very restricted in the wild.

*Dinteranthus microspermus* ssp. *puberulus* is quite common on the quartz slopes at the base of the hills. He did find some nice clumps. On top of the hills were microwave transmitters. They also found *Lithops olivacea* ssp. *neobrownii* here. The hills either side of the Orange River can harbour stems of *Pachypodium namaquanum* – “halfmen” – which are 6 feet or more tall. All the crowns point in one direction. They are quite numerous and occur in remote places. He’s also seen small plants growing so it seems to be surviving well for now. It is the only *Pachypodium* in this part of the world.

In the Southwestern part of Bushmanland, you again find quartz and this is the habitat of *Stomatium niveum*. You also get some calcrite outcrops. This is an alkaline rock which is quite soft, and plants found here were *Lithops fulleri* and *Titanopsis primosii*. They seem to only like these alkaline areas.

Terry ended by mentioning that a lot of the pictures in the talk were provided to him by Chris Rodgeron and Andy Young - his own pictures were older and had to be scanned. He ended the talk with an Andy Young picture taken in twilight of a wreck of a truck with an *Opuntia* growing near it.

Vinay Shah

## Table Show 2013 – Overall Results

### Open Section – Cacti (50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Trophy)

|                      |           |
|----------------------|-----------|
| <b>I Biddlecombe</b> | <b>31</b> |
| B Beckerleg          | 26        |
| T Smith              | 5         |
| A Sheader            | 4         |

### Open Section – Succulents (50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Trophy)

|                    |           |
|--------------------|-----------|
| <b>B Beckerleg</b> | <b>33</b> |
| I Biddlecombe      | 26        |
| T Radford          | 11        |
| B Turner           | 6         |
| S Wilson           | 3         |
| J Roskilly         | 3         |

### Intermediate Section – Cacti (Peter Down 50<sup>th</sup> Golden Jubilee Trophy)

|                      |           |
|----------------------|-----------|
| <b>I Biddlecombe</b> | <b>30</b> |
| B Beckerleg          | 26        |
| T Smith              | 15        |
| A Jankovec           | 11        |
| D Neville            | 7         |
| J Roskilly           | 4         |
| T Radford            | 4         |

### Intermediate Section – Succulents (25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Paperweight)

|                    |           |
|--------------------|-----------|
| <b>B Beckerleg</b> | <b>28</b> |
| I Biddlecombe      | 28        |
| T Radford          | 24        |
| A Jankovec         | 9         |
| S Wilson           | 4         |
| B Turner           | 1         |

### Ladies Cup (highest points total/Female entrant)

|                   |           |
|-------------------|-----------|
| <b>A Jankovec</b> | <b>20</b> |
| S Wilson          | 7         |

Ivor Biddlecombe

## Next Month's Meeting

Our first meeting of 2014 will be held on January 7<sup>th</sup>. The meeting will feature short talks by branch members. If you have a subject that you would like to talk about (even if only for a few minutes), please let a Committee member know as soon as possible.

We will have access to conventional and digital projectors, so members are welcome to bring along slides, or a CD or memory card or memory stick containing digital pictures. You can also bring along live plants if you want to talk about those!

The January Table Show will consist of the **Echinocactus** group (cacti) and the **Aloe** group (succulents). 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 Aloe group contains *Aloe*, *Bulbine*, *Chamaealoe*, *Guillauminia* and *Lomatophyllum*.

The Echinocactus group includes *Echinocactus*, *Ferocactus*, *Homalocephala*, and *Leuchtenbergia*.

*Best Wishes for a  
happy Christmas and  
a merry New Year!*



## Forthcoming Events

|     |                  |     |               |   |
|-----|------------------|-----|---------------|---|
| Sat | 7 <sup>th</sup>  | Dec | Isle of Wight | Annual General Meeting & Christmas Social   |
| Sat | 14 <sup>th</sup> | Dec | Portsmouth    | Annual General Meeting & American Supper    |
| Tue | 7 <sup>th</sup>  | Jan | Southampton   | Members' Mini Talks                         |
| Sat | 11 <sup>th</sup> | Jan | Isle of Wight | No Meeting                                  |
| Sat | 18 <sup>th</sup> | Jan | Portsmouth    | Short talks & Discussions by Branch Members |
| Tue | 4 <sup>th</sup>  | Feb | Southampton   | Photographing Plants – Tom Radford          |
| Sat | 8 <sup>th</sup>  | Feb | Isle of Wight | Plant Auction, Members' Slides              |
| Sat | 15 <sup>th</sup> | Feb | Portsmouth    | Cliff Thompson, 'Brazil Part 3'             |

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