

British Cactus & Succulent Society

Southampton & District Branch Newsletter

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Editorial

The year seems to have raced by, and the mild autumn makes it easy to forget that we are now into the winter season. I've seen fuschias, roses and azaleas in flower in the past few weeks! I stopped watering my plants a month ago and am wondering whether that was too early. Cold spells are due to arrive any day now, so I think it would be unwise to apply any water now. In the conservatory, there's not too much in flower right now – just some haworthias, conophytums, and a couple of other mesembs.

Announcements

Our **next meeting** will be held on 6th **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 2015 has been prepared and is available from the front table.

The **Zone 11 Quiz** was hosted by the Isle of Wight on the 8th of November. A team of 3 of our members took part and competed against similar numbers from the Isle of Wight and Portsmouth branches. At half time, the Isle of Wight held a sizeable lead, but Southampton were able to overturn this and emerge as eventual winners - requiring the Mealy Bug trophy to be smuggled back to the mainland! I'll write up more in the next newsletter.

A reminder that the **Table Show** in 2015 will use the classifications in the "*BCSS Guide to Shows, 10th Edition*". We have been handing out copies of the Guide to members during our anniversary year, if you haven't yet got a copy and would like one, let me know.

Committee Reports - 2014

President's Report

I hope that all members have enjoyed this year, the 60th since the start of Southampton and District Branch of the BCCS (NCCS until 1983). I joined the NCSS as a teenager in 1953 and never expected so many opportunities and to meet so many interesting people as a result.

There have been some extra visits organized for this special year and those who are keen have been able to enjoy them.

Thanks to the branch committee for all they have done for us and continue to do, especially David (good to see him back to good health!) We have had some good speakers.

Thanks also for our branch members who regularly attend and those from Portsmouth and Basingstoke who often come along. We had some people from Somerset at one meeting. We often have 6 or 7 different nationalities at meetings. May our branch continue to flourish for many years to come.

Best wishes for Christmas and the New Year.

Peter Down

Chairperson's Report

Our sixtieth year as a branch has come and almost gone. At the beginning of this year we were tasked with suitably marking the anniversary. It was decided to have a special celebratory meeting in March led by Peter Down, the founder of the branch. A cake, snacks and drinks were served and we toasted the continuing success of the branch.

To further mark this special year, and also to enable more involvement by branch members, we organised five outings to markets, collections and events. In July Alice Jankovec hosted a very successful garden party at her West Moors home.

The branch was again represented at Sparsholt College, New Forest and Romsey shows. This was not only an opportunity for plant sales but of course raises the profile of the branch in the local area. When Peter Down established this branch it was by pedalling round on his bike spotting potential members who grew cacti. Today we still need to continue to recruit and nurture new members to ensure our future.

At our meeting in October we asked those attending to complete a survey form. These forms have now been collated and the information provided will be useful in planning our next year and future events. On first analysis it would seem the majority of members are happy to continue with our present format for meetings and funding. There was however some encouragement for our committee to continue to develop a programme of outings and events.

I would like to thank all the members who support the branch by attending meetings and the members of our committee who invest their time organising and supporting all aspects of the branch.

Dot England

Secretary's Report

Our 60th Anniversary Year proved to be another successful one for the branch, with good attendance at all meetings and a number of successful events and trips. I think we have all become accustomed now to being congratulated by visiting speakers on the number of people at our meetings, and I think that we all deserve a pat on the back for jointly creating the friendly and enjoyable atmosphere at meetings that must surely play a major part in the success of our branch. Most branches of the BCSS are suffering from ever diminishing numbers, but somehow we seem to have bucked the trend in

recent years and continue to attract way above attendance numbers at all of our meetings.

I hope that the programme I have compiled for 2015 will provide something of interest for everyone, and that you will all manage to attend most of the meetings in the coming year. A printed version of the programme will be available at the December AGM, and I will send a PDF version by email to everyone for whom I have an email address.

Most of the other aspects of branch activities should be covered elsewhere in the newsletter in the reports from our various branch officers, so I won't discuss them here.

Let us hope that the forthcoming winter is kind to us; before we know it the spring will arrive and our plants will be bursting into growth and flower once more.

With all good wishes for 2015

David Neville

Treasurer's Report

I would like to thank Colin and Lorraine Bielckus for providing us with draft annual accounts in such a short time. Year 2014 was our 60th Anniversary year. The branch program consisted of a number of special meetings where members were not charged for refreshments and this has been reflected in the accounts.

The branch has made an expected exceptional loss of £316. The good news is that that we have already managed to cover 20% of the exceptional anniversary cost. Most items in the accounts such as raffle, plant sales or show income and expense have been very similar to last year's revenues - some a few pounds up, others a few pounds down. The main difference was the cost of speakers which were down by £115 compared to previous year. The remainder of Ciprian's plants have now been sold.

The Branch continues to maintain a very comfortable savings and current account balance of £7,724.

This report is based on draft annual accounts and may therefore be subject to change. Final accounts will be made available to members early in the New Year. If anyone has any questions I have a copy of draft accounts you can have a look at.

Finally, I hope that everyone has enjoyed the 60th Anniversary year and 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 (May 17th)

The first display for 2014 was at Sparsholt College. We had our usual position between the greenhouses at the horticultural section. Unfortunately this year the village fete was held in a different part of the showground and we did not get as many visitors to our display as usual, due to the changed layout. I think all who came to the event enjoyed it

New Forest Show (July 29-31st)

The Show was held at the usual place at New Park. The weather was very good over the period and we had one of our best years for plant sales. Our display won a silver gilt medal, which is not as good as last year – since we do not know what plants we will have for the display, it's a last minute decision on how to lay out the stand. Several people liked our stand, saying it was less informal than some. For plant sales, one thing I thought would be better is to have the smaller plants together and not all mixed as buyers would find it easier to see the plants. If anyone can think of ways we could improve our stand and let me know.

Romsey Show (September 13th)

This year we thought we were going to have a problem with parking as we were told we may have to use an outside car park. But as it turned out, we were able to park at the back of the tent. Our display was a bit smaller than the New forest Show but I am pleased to say we won a Gold Medal, and a good level of plant sales helped our branch funds.

During the year, the Table Show was not very well supported which is a shame as for some members it is the only chance they get to see a variety of plants. I hope next year everyone will try to enter a few plants.

Please accept my thanks to all who helped me this year. I hope you all have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Ivor Biddlecombe

Librarian's Report

The borrowing of books was slightly down this calendar year from 2013.

A number of books donated by both Jim Roskilly and Peter Down in 2013 were included into the library this year. These are 'Lithops – flowering

stones' (Cole, D.; 1988), 'Anacamperos, Avonia, Grahamia, a Grower's Handbook' (Rowley, G.; 1995), 'Growing cacti & other succulents in the conservatory & indoors' (Bell, S.; 2001). David Neville kindly donated 'A Gallery of Agaves, including variegates' (Pilbeam, J.; 2013). Other donated books are awaiting valuation and sale to contribute to club funds.

I have continued to write a short column each month for the newsletter. Revenue from lending for the year ending September 2014 was £9.90. Monies from book sales contributed £35.00 to club funds.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year all!

Sue Wilson

Plant Sales Officer's Report

The Season started off as usual with a small display at Sparsholt where we took £260 which is a bit down on previous years - probably because they moved the catering stalls so that we had less passing trade.

At the New Forest Show, takings were £1120 which is up on recent years. This is encouraging since sales had been steadily declining at this show.

We did the Romsey Show for the fifth time where we took £555, which is well up on last year which in itself was a record for this event. This show just keeps getting better and better! We also won £80 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 had a number of different 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

Newsletter production has been uneventful (apart from printers breaking down at the last minute!) For those who can't make it to every meeting, copies of the newsletters are available on our website to download in PDF format.

I will also shortly be putting up a page on our website to document some of our 60th Anniversary events, so if you have photographs taken during the year which you would like to share, please send them to me. As a matter of interest, our website is visited about 5000 times each year, although I don't know how many of those are real people or a search bot. And the various newsletters are viewed over a 100 times each month.

The supply of "snippets" for inclusion in the newsletter has been very low this year. Thanks again to Sue for providing a regular update related to the monthly talks at the branch.

The programme for next year has been prepared and once I received copies of the new Portsmouth and IoW programmes, I will update our website to feature the 2015 schedules.

Best wishes to everyone for 2015.

Vinay Shah

Publicity Officer's Report

Publicity for the Southampton and District branch has expanded into social media over the last year with the creation of an increasingly popular Facebook page. So far we have 58 likes and countless views from people all over the world, including the Southampton area! We have had messages from people asking questions about the branch along with requests for plant identification and advice. Thanks to the success of the Facebook page next year we plan to delve into Twitter as 'tweeting' seems to be an effective means of promotion for clubs and societies.

Just when you thought we'd left the past behind I am pleased to say that we have not given up on printed publications and details of our meetings can be found advertised in the *Hampshire Country Gardener* magazine. We continue to liaise with the local papers, local radio and other publications in order to advertise events and meetings but attempts to highlight the 60th Anniversary of the branch through the local papers earlier this year were not met with as much enthusiasm as we desired. If anyone has any contacts in the local media or would like to share ideas regarding future branch publicity, please do let me know.

Ben Turner

Last Month's Meeting

David started by showing some images of a new plant which was discovered in Mexico earlier this year and which had been described in the German

journal a few months ago. It has since been included in Graham Charles' Cactus Explorers internet magazine. The picture showed a grey rosette and he asked is it a cactus or a succulent? David thought it looked like the rosulate violas from Patagonia and Argentina, and Richard suggested it looked like a cone from a monkey puzzle tree. David showed more photographs of the plant from habitat. The heads were only 2-3 cm across. The person who found it in Oaxaca, Mexico had no idea what it was until they found some in flower. The plant has been named *Mammillaria bertholdii* (it was found by Andreas Berthold), and it is perhaps related to the *M. saboe* group because it's long tubed magenta flowers have a similar structure, however the body and spination are very different, with long upward pointing tubercles and a soft spine cluster on the tip. Some of the Czechs have managed to get hold of the plant and they will hopefully propagate it and we may see some around in 2-3 years.

Highlights of South Africa and Namibia

David's talk was titled "Highlights of South Africa and Namibia". The trip was made 2 years ago and he's now been there 3 times now, not quite as many as Ian Acton who is planning to go there for a 15th time! The trip was planned to be 6 weeks long, but there was a mix up when booking flights, meaning the trip was extended to 9 weeks. This was problematic, but once booked, economy flights can't be changed without great expense! So 9 weeks is what he ended up doing – it's a long time to spend in anyone's company!

The title slide featured *Hoodia gordonii* - it was actually a horrible plant, suffering terribly in a dry area but it was covered in lots of eye catching flowers. They spotted it growing some 60 feet from the roadside. The fences were 4 foot high with chicken wire at bottom and some barbed wire at top, and even he and Paul Klaassen had trouble climbing over - it was even worse for Cliff Thompson!

They arrived in Cape Town on 20th September. The weather was terrible, with pouring rain. It was still poor the next day, but they went to the Kirstenbosch Botanic Gardens where he photographed the flower of a king protea. From Cape Town, one main road (the N7) runs north and up into Namibia. After an hour or two of driving northwards you start to encounter some interesting succulent plants. There are a few plants in and around Cape Town but there's plenty more in the arid areas further north. They were to travel to Clanwilliam where they would spend the night. We saw Paul Klaassen with 2 of his 5 Nikons photographing a shrub in flower. The wonderful thing about South Africa is that apart

from the succulents, there are so many other plants and shrubs and bulbs to admire. In the next shot we saw Cliff Thompson, who always wears T-shirts and shorts, and Eunice Thompson, an American from California who sometimes travels with them. The vegetation is described as fynbos and includes members of the protaceae and ericaceae. *Pelargonium triste* was in flower and had feathery leaves. A plant with a vertical flower spike that looked like a *Lachenalia* was actually an orchid, *Corycium orobanchoides*. It was drizzling and there was strong wind so it was quite miserable. Paul Klaassen had a bad cold which got progressively worse and he couldn't remember much about the first ten days, but he still took photographs. We saw *Adromischus hemisphaericus* tucked in amongst the rocks - it was nice and colourful even on a grey day, and we could see the drops of moisture on the leaves. Next was a small growing bulb, a species of *Babiana* species.

Stick euphorbias grow everywhere and we saw *Euphorbia mauritanica*. Although you sometimes see it in cultivation, it does eventually grows to 6-8 feet tall and across. It produces a lot of seed. *Cotyledon orbiculata* occurs everywhere and we saw the flower stems held aloft of other vegetation. Richard mentioned the ted flowers meant it was probably pollinated by sunbirds. We also saw a species of *Ferraria*. Alice Vanden bon grows these but has never managed to flower it. It was in flower here and growing like weeds, along the roadside. *Euphorbia tuberculata* grows in this area as well - it is another plant offered on seed lists. It has an attractive inflorescence and can get to a metre across eventually. Every flower had been pollinated and was developing into the 3 celled seed pods. Another *Euphorbia* growing here is *E. loricata* which has numerous burgundy red thorns and looks very attractive. The foliage is deciduous and develops with nice lush green colours once into growth.

Wherever there are rocks, you can look for Conophytums, which occur virtually everywhere you go. Moss and lichens also form if the climate is suitable. For a large part of the year, the Conophytums are covered in sheaths, so identification is difficult, but Conophytum buffs know which species grow where and can identify them. A *Conophytum minusculum* with over 30 heads was only 3cm across. In the same area in some bedrock, a sprawling aloe was nicely coloured. This was *Aloe perfoliata (mitriformis)*. The individual stems radiate from the base and grow 5-6 feet long. If you grow the same plants in cultivation, you won't get the rich colours you see out in habitat.

A very common plant which is very striking is the butterboom, *Tylecodon paniculata*. In cultivation in the UK, they grow in the same months as in habitat, which is unusual. The plants out there are chunkier due to the better light. Another common plant is *Tylecodon wallichii* which has tuberculate stems because when shed, the leaves leave a blunt tubercle. This gives the plants a nice character. If growing these in this country, you need to put them somewhere bright in the winter since they are growing in that season. One of the colourful wild flowers was some form of daisy, perhaps an *Osteospermum*. Another plant had blue flowers and this was a *Felicia* - you now see it in our garden centres being sold as spring bedding and for hanging baskets. Ian said he's seen it under a different name (*Asterosperma*?) many years ago. There are also many groundcover sprawling mesembs around, but they are hard to identify - an example of this was a small plant with cylindrical crystalline leaves and mesemb-type pink flowers on it. David mentioned that mesembs are more popular in the UK than almost any other country apart from South Africa.

After a few hours drive north to Nieuwoudtville, everything was dominated by the flat topped mountain the Matsikamaberg and to the right, Gifberg. Afrikaans is very strange and many words are not pronounced as how their spelling would suggest. They encountered *Aloe krapohliana* in the low foothills, this was a small growing clustering species. The dirt roads they were using here got progressively worse as you wandered off the main roads. They drove up to the top of the Gifberg, where there are some farms. He was really relieved to get to the top - the narrow road carved into the mountain side is only wide enough for one car so things become interesting if you meet a car going the other way, since there's a steep drop over the edge. A picture showed the path they took up.

On the plain, they saw more conophytums, and the rocks were covered in 1000s of them, and unlike other localities where plants were growing in some shelter, these were growing in full sun. A plant he didn't know was *Crassula dichotoma* which is a striking annual, and the flower colour varies from yellow and orange to red. These particular flowers were red with yellow centres, and there were some unusual black spots on the purplish leaves. It was growing on the edge of the rocks. Derek Tribble has grown it and you see seed occasionally. We saw *Gazania*s with rich orange flowers, this was quite widespread. He noticed they were being watched by a lizard which was 7 inches long. Ian Acton mentioned it was an Agama. There were lots of *Crassula*s dotted around and *Crassula tomentosa* was growing with tightly packed leaves and the

hairs seem to be stronger. At the top of the Gifberg, there is no housing but there are a few farms with cattle and sheep. They spent 3-4 hours wandering around - the terrain is shallow soil with rock underneath. It was lovely day, with clear blue sky. They found *Crassula sericea* which had red colouring as opposed to the silver seen in cultivation. An orange flowered bulb was a miniature gladiolus. There were also sundew – *Drosera capensis* - plants growing here. We think of these as moisture loving plants but here they were on top of a mountain where the weather is usually hot and dry. Another Gladiolus was a plant which Ben thought might be *G. elatus*. On the bedrock there are gravel pans which contain fine quartz gravel. Growing here was an oxalis, and *Crassula columnaris* - the buttons vary in size depending on where you find them, but they were tiny here, only a couple of centimetres across. These are terminal flowering so within 2-3-4 years they'll flower and then die, hopefully producing many seeds as they do so. There were some small seedlings there, but generally the plants were growing in quite a harsh environment. Also growing here was the caudiciform *Othonna cacalioides*. These were 2-4 cm across, growing in shallow soil and exposed conditions, they can grow larger, up to tennis ball size in other regions.

David mentioned that he used a compact Fuji camera for his pictures – this was much easier to handle while climbing up and down hills than Paul's SLR cameras. The next day, and Paul was still sick and Eunice also went down with a bug. They drove out but had to go back to the hotel to drop her off. They found the Kokerboom or Quiver tree forest. There were fantastic plants of *Aloe dichotoma* (now called *Aloidendron dichotomum* - Olwen Grace from Kew and others have come up with the new genera names. Haworthia has also been split up recently.) *A. dichotoma* is an iconic plant and it is very slow growing, so seedlings can be grown in cultivation since it will take some time to form a tree. These were pretty big plants, 15 feet tall in some cases. They were growing on gravel slopes, ledges and also on top. On their way back to the hotel they found a little angulate tortoise (Chersina) on the road. After moving him to safety they had to wait several minutes for his head to re-appear. Near Kliprand, looking over a fence they saw Cheiridopsis plants - they didn't appear to be nibbled by whatever animals were farmed here. There were thousands and thousands of them. There had been rain so the seed pods were open, exposing the seeds. According to Derek Tribble this would be *Cheiridopsis denticulata*, based on the location being Kliprand. Also here was another plant that has changed names - *Anacampseros alstonii* is now

Avonia quinaria. This is a choice plant, incredibly slow growing and not easy to grow. There were plants here the size of dinner plates. Underneath the soil is one fattened caudex with masses of short silvery stems on top. The more elongated stems are going to form flowers. Derek thought this was the red-flowered variant. The stems were shorter and were more compact than in cultivation. *Aptosimum indivisum* was a plant with a spectacular blue flower which were unfortunately only 1cm across. Also came across the red coloured flowering head of a parasitic plant Hyobanche – you just see them amongst the grey areas of the desert.

Sarcocaulons are now called Monsonia. They grow virtually everywhere, usually in flat rock areas. Although they are common and widespread in habitat, they are difficult in cultivation and you don't see plants as nice as those in the wild. *Sarcocaulon crassicaule* had white flowers. Near the roadside, some scattered white dots caught their eye - these were *Moraea*, a member of the Iris family. A bit further on, it was again pouring down with rain and across the stream he could see plants on the other side. This was *Othonna euphorbioides* - and he managed to take some pictures. No one could be bothered to get out of the car due to the weather! These were 15-18 inches tall and they have annual deciduous leaves. They decided to head north to escape the poor weather. Just north of Steinkopf which is north of Springbok, the temperatures in their motel room the previous night were 4°C and they needed to run the heaters all night. Out here it was teeming down with rain and the sky was grey and Eunice didn't get out of the car. It was raining much of the time and there were strong winds.

They came across a quartz outcrop, and where there's quartz, there are plants. After walking around slowly your eyes adjust and you'll see signs of life eventually. They found *Anacampseros (Avonia) papyracea*. There were conophytums dotted around, with *Conophytum wettsteinii* being recognisable. An *Anacampseros* with small stems the size of your little finger was perhaps *A. tomentosa* or *A. rufescens*. There was a fabulous chunky form of *Crassula deceptor* - like *C. cornuta* but with denser bodies, as hard as stone. There were more Cheiridopsis, similar to the ones they had seen before. *Ihlenfeldtia excavata* looks like a mini short-leaved Cheiridopsis. Also growing from an underground caudex was an *Othonna*, perhaps *O. clavifolia*. In the quartz gravel they found *Anacampseros alstonii* – it was growing in a large chunk of quartz so was perhaps safe from being dug up. They found a stapeliad – a *Tridentea*, recognised from the flower remains, and more Sarcocaulons. *Stomatium alboroseum* is a groundcover mesemb

plant which is not that exciting in cultivation or in habitat. We saw another nice *Adromischus*, one could never achieve that colouring in this country. They also found *Aloe krapohlina* and their first Lithops - this was *Lithops marmorata*. There were several plants here with notable differences in the markings, despite growing within inches of each other. The new bodies were starting to show, even though the old leaves hadn't really shrivelled yet. There were seed pods here as well. The seed pods wear out and no longer open once they age but by then the seed has dispersed. Growing under the shade of a bush was an 11 headed Lithops. This was one of the biggest they saw. In the wild, Lithops never make big clumps like the ones we can grow in cultivation.

Just a day after when they were being blown around and freezing to death, they had clear blue skies and temperatures in the 80s. They continued straight up the N7 into Namibia via the crossing at Vioolsdrif which is in the AI-AIS national park. It was quite a laborious and long winded process. Ian Acton suggested that perhaps a bribe might have got faster service! There is nowhere to stay near the border and they would have to drive 100s of kilometres to get to their first destination. On arrival, it was already dark. They had not booked anywhere to stay and went into the local bar which was also full, but they were able to find space at a farmer's guest house. They visited the AI-AIS National Park and Fish River canyon and would later set off for a 500km drive north, to Windhoek. Fish River Canyon is on the edge of the Richtersveld Park and it is very impressive - a picture of the canyon can't convey the sight. There were a few succulents around. *Lithops karasmontana* v. *aiasisensis* occurs here. On the edge of the banks, *Aloe gariensis* had curving leaves which protect the crown and *Euphorbia virosa* is a large growing plant which ultimately becomes too big for cultivation. They saw an Oryx, a species of antelope, in the distance. At the Canon Roadhouse there were some amusing relics of old cars decorating the front garden. There was also a German tour bus in the car park - organised tours stop off here. Some red flowered spikes standing up in the grass were inflorescences of *Aloe khamiesbergensis*. It was a late evening photograph, so the colours were not quite right.

There were some large Weaver bird nests growing on tree Aloes and also on telegraph poles. Teams of people go round knocking these down because they can affect communication. They headed on inwards into Namibia proper and it was nice to have some hot weather. They found Commiphora which are large thick stemmed pachycaul plants, and one was twice as tall as Eunice. It was very dry and baking

hot in this valley. They found more fabulous plants, including *Sesamothamnus guerichii*, which reminded him about the late Keith Grantham raving about a *Sesamothamnus lugardii*. The plant forms a lovely thick trunk and has white flowers, but grow to a very large size. They also found one of the iconic plants of Namibia, *Welwitschia mirabilis*, near Khorixas. However, these were comparative youngsters - there are larger specimens at other sites. The plants form a long taproot and in cultivation, do not like being transplanted.

They had wanted to see *Pachypodium lealii* ssp. *lealii* and could see one or two on the hillsides. It was difficult to gauge the size, but they looked very large. As they were climbing to get a closer look, a lorry carrying local school children passed by, with the children initially singing African songs and then waving at them. They found some plants in bud but only one white flower was open. Another one was over 15 feet tall. They found the same plant on a flat bedrock area and it looked like it had been bonsai'd - instead of growing upright it had formed a huge base. Further on, they found *Cyphostemmas* and saw their first *Cyphostemma uter*, which was fairly small but coming into bud. Round the corner was an impressive group of *Pachypodium lealii* on a rocky hillside, all in full flower. Moving on to Grootberg Pass there were steep hillsides. None of the *Cyphostemmas* here are easily accessible, so one needs to walk and climb a bit or admire plants in the distance. They found *Cyphostemma currori* and some were taller than them. A picture showed the biggest one they reached - it might have been 2 plants growing side by side. They produce flowers before coming into growth. Another picture showed the overall scene of the area.

They saw some giraffes near the roadside. These are naturally inquisitive animals - most animals run away when they spot you, but these actually come towards you, so you can get better and better pictures. Driving towards the old German town of Luderitz, they passed a sign saying sand and 60km/h - it wasn't clear whether this was a speed limit or the speed of the strong cross winds! You had to concentrate hard to keep the car on the road. Luderitz is also a windy place - it is superficially attractive but David described it as a dump. It used to be a busy fishing port but is now dilapidated, although you can still get some good fish suppers. The wind carries fine sand everywhere. All the plants growing here are low growing with short stems, anything else would get blasted. They found *Sarcocaulon patersonii*. *Psammophora modesta* has sticky leaves (even in cultivation) and grit and sand stick to it. There were 4-5 inch clumps of *Crassula elegans* ssp. *namibensis*. *Pelargonium crassicaule* is

a small growing pelargonium, with thick waxy leaves. It loses stems in the harsh environment but is able to survive. A small desert cricket was nymph, it had not formed wings yet.

Luderitz is the locality for *Lithops optica* and they found this. *Lithops optica* cv. *rubra* also occurs somewhere in this area. The plants were small but were looking nice. They also saw the stemless leaves of *Tylecodon schaeferianus* - this has a caudex underground. It has wonderful colours and markings in habitat. A no trespassing sign warned them that all around here is the Sperrgebiet, the Diamond area, which is mostly owned by De Beers.

Heading back to Aus, they came across a small plant - *Crassula mesembryanthemopsis*. It grows flat to the ground and has really tiny 15-20mm heads. It can get to a 5-6 inch clump in cultivation. They headed south, back to the Orange River. They saw *Aloe* (*Aloidendron*) *ramosissima* and a *Hoodia* with seed horns. Round the corner, they found more *Hoodias* and he thought this was *H. gordonii* based on flowers he had seen at this locality before. South of Rosh Rinah, they re-entered the Richtersveld Park, which is combined with the AI-AIS Park. They crossed back into South Africa at Sendelingsdrif. This is a rural and much easier crossing - there are no queues and they were offered cups of coffee, much nicer than the crossing on the N7. A little chain ferry carries you over the river. They headed to Port Nolloth - the only other town in between is Alexander Bay, but this is a private town owned by De Beers and there's no accommodation there. The following morning, they drove a mile or two down the coast to McDougalls Bay where there are sand roads. *Fenestraria rhopalophylla* ssp. *aurantiaca* is found here. The first time he found them was on a trip with Margaret and David Corina, and at that time, the flowers gave the plants away, but this time there were no signs of the flowers. However the plants were still here and visible in large numbers.

To go to the Richtersveld, they arranged to go with Conrad Mouton, a guide from a local tour company, since the terrain needs a 4x4 vehicle. They went back over some of the roads they had used and saw *Larryleachia cactiforme* - these were beautiful plants. At Cornell's Kop, they found another tree aloe which is taller and more slender than *dichotoma* - this was *Aloe pillansii* which is endangered. They didn't see any young plants and the population seemed to be in decline here. Some were in flower. Also near here is *Aloe karasbergensis* - the leaves had beautiful colours and striations and a picture of one with Eunice showed it was 2 feet across. It is related to *Aloe*

striata and some other species. *Hoodia alstonii* used to be classified under *Trichocaulon*. *Pachypodium namaquanum* occurs in a few localities inside and outside the Richtersveld. Some of the plants were in flower and the flowers were tubular and green and dark red, unlike the white scented ones on *P. lealii*. They saw more *Larryleachias* on the rocks and a huge *Hoodia alstonii* with yellow flowers.

David mentioned often the difficult part is not climbing up the hills, but climbing down without losing your footing. Without Conrad and the 4x4, they would not have made it to some of these locations. They found *Stapelia hirsuta* in flower. *Orbea namaquensis* is similar to *Orbea* (*Stapelia*) *variegata*. They found *Aloe pearsonii* at Hellskloof, it only grows in one or two locations in the Richtersveld. The plants were looking a bit stressed but there were 1000's of plants here. It's slow growing and rare in cultivation. Amongst scrub, they found a little *Stapeliad* with small star shaped flowers - this was *Richtersveldia* (*Notechidnopsis*) *columnaris*.

Next they went to a locality for which Chris Rodgers had given him GPS co-ordinates. This was in order to find *Crassula susannae* near a small place called Reithuis. They went there and the GPS guided them to an area 6 feet by 6 feet but they couldn't see anything. He got on his hands and knees and eventually saw some brown flower spikes an inch tall and these led him to the plants. They are extremely limited in distribution, and are only known from this area. In 2 hours of looking, they didn't find any other examples of these plants.

Much further east near the town of Graaff-Reinet, a nursery man took them to the owners of land (Kendrew Estates) where *Euphorbia obesa* is found - the location is protected behind electric fences. There are just 2-3 known locations for *Euphorbia obesa* and several years ago this location had been raided and every plant had been removed. So these plants were just ones that had regenerated from seed. They almost always grow under nurse bushes. It was really exciting to see these in the wild.

Next was one of the highlights of their entire trip. They went to a undisclosed location which had been provided confidentially - and you also have to ask the site owner if you can visit. The species in question only grows in 2-3 locations on this farm. It was the very rare mesemb - *Muiria hortense*. The bodies were the size of a bantam's egg and it divides slowly, forming clumps eventually. It is notoriously difficult in cultivation, so whenever he germinated any seed, he sold them as quickly as he could! Where it grows there are huge numbers of the

plants, and when in good condition, they are really beautiful, with small velvety hairs on the green bodies. Also in the same place was *Gibbaeum album* with white bodies and pink flowers, and there is also a white flowered variant in this area. Another species, *Gibbaeum petrense* is easier to grow in cultivation. Growing under a bush, Cliff found *Euphorbia suzannae*. Just the tips of the heads were showing - when we grow it, it forms a mound.

Next was a visit to Springbokvlakte farm near the small town of Kleinport, where *Haworthia springbokvlakensis* comes from. On the way they found a *Boophane disticha* in leaf - this is a bulb which produces a large pink inflorescence, and he had only seen dormant plants before. Also in the reddish clay, was a nice looking *Scilla/Ledebouria* species. Heading on to Springbokvlakte, they saw Euphorbias sticking up along the roadside - this was *Euphorbia polygona/horrida* - and there were plenty of them, some with seed pods, some without so the species might feature male and female plants. In the grass there were some caput-mesdusae types which were covered in seed pods. There were hundreds of plants here. One plant had lots of seed pods and the air was full of a tapping sound due to the seed capsules exploding. If you held your hand over the plants, seeds would hit your hand every minute. They also found *Astroloba foliolosa* (related to haworthia).

When they eventually found the farm, they realised that it had existed 20-30 years ago, but when the owner died, the farm was split up and some parts were sold off. They randomly knocked on the door of a house at a junction and it turned out to be the daughter of the original owner. Her husband said the original haworthias were in a part of land that was sold off, but he had found some on his land and was willing to take them to see these. After a rather uncomfortable 20 minute drive in the back of a pickup truck, they reached the location. They couldn't see anything but the farmer pulled aside some shrubs and found *Haworthia springbokvlakensis*. These were dark leaved plants with flat leaves of the retuse type - the colouring varied depending on the amount of sun the plants had received. There were dozens of plants here, varying in size and up to 3-4-5 inches across. They were thrilled to see them and would never have found them without the farmer's help. Wandering around, they came across *Glottiphyllum oligocarpum* - there was a sea of them in one patch. He was also delighted to see *Aloinopsis schoonesii* - a low growing mesemb, these clumps were only a couple of inches across. They also found *Euphorbia stellata*, with a few small stems above the ground and a large caudex under the ground. In other

locations it tends to be big and leafy. They also saw *Crassula tecta*, which is quite a common plant, and more colourful Adromischus plants. Also growing here was *Euphorbia inermis* ssp. *huttoniae* - with white flowers. It was within 10 miles of ones they had seen earlier which had not been in flower.

The last locality he showed was near Oudtshoorn. They had been given GPS locality data which led them to within a few feet of their target. It was an unlikely scrubby area but they found a few plants of *Haworthia truncata* growing in the open, and then were delighted as they looked around and found bigger ones and bigger ones. Numerous plants were covering the ground in huge swathes and in one spot, there were perhaps 20 plants packed solid in an 18 by 18 inch area. He had never expected to see such big clumps there. David ended his talk with a Tree Aloe against a sunset. Overall in 60 days he had taken 20,000 pictures and he hoped that everyone had enjoyed the tiny selection he had presented.

Vinay Shah

Table Show Results

There were 11 entries in the November table show.

	Cacti – Echinocereus	Succulents – Lithops
Open	(1) I Biddlecombe Melocactus sp, Mammillaria perbella, Mammillaria densispina	(1) B Beckerleg Crassula "Celia", Haworthia parkinsonii, Aloe haworthiodes
	(2) T Smith 3 Rebutias	(2) T Smith Echeveria lilacina, Agave x leopoldii, Stapelia hirsuta
	(3) B Beckerleg Mammillaria sp. Turbinicarpus kranzianus Sulcorebutia canigueralii	(3) I Biddlecombe Pachyphytum sp. Lithops olivacea, Haworthia bolusii
Intermediate	(1) I Biddlecombe Mammillaria albiflora, Astrophytum myriostigma, Gymnocactus viereckii	(1) B Beckerleg Haworthia maughanii, Euphorbia mosaica, Sarcocaulon peniculinum
	(2) I B Beckerleg Copiapoa kranziana, Copiapoa cineria, Astrophy. crassispinoides	(2) I Biddlecombe Gasteria batesiana, Lithops bromfieldii, Euphorbia susannae
	(3) -	(3) -

Ivor Biddlecombe

Here's a short story from Sue:

An Encounter with Mr Christmas

As this evening is the Christmas 'do' perhaps we should be thinking about those poor hardworking folk who are getting ready for Christmas Eve, the busiest night of the year. Of course I mean Mr & Mrs Christmas, lots of elves, fairies and deer.

As luck would have it I bumped into Mr Christmas the other day whilst walking the dogs in the woods. After persuading the suspicious dogs that it is quite normal to meet a large bearded man alone in the woods at dusk, wearing at first glance a red dressing gown and wellies, all went well. It turned out that Mr Christmas was out to meet and interview any deer that had expressed an interest in pulling the sleigh this year. I did comment, as any normal person would, that I thought that this job was reserved for reindeer. This tradition has apparently been overturned by the EU and now any deer can pull/fly the sleigh. So Mr Christmas was meeting up with a group of fallow, red, sika, roe and muntjac deer to see if any of them fancied a chance of working with a couple of reindeer. I was just about to point out that using muntjac deer, which to be honest look like a cross between a fat labrador and a pig, not really having that cute Christmas card appeal maybe would be an unwise decision, when all hell let loose. Yes my trusty elkhounds (Teal and Rosie) had spotted a group of deer of all shapes and sizes and decided they had better go and see if there was an elk amongst them as "you never know!" shouted Rosie.

So after an embarrassing silence Mr Christmas coughed and said that maybe he might stick to just reindeer this year and bid me goodbye just as the dogs returned. Teal told Mr Christmas that actually two of the fallow stags flew along really well and had shouted to him that they would see Teal and Rosie get some stuffing or something like that for Christmas. So who knows you might see reindeer and fallow deer clattering around on your roof on Christmas Eve this year!

Sue Wilson

Table Show 2014 – Overall Results

Open Section – Cacti (50th Anniversary Trophy)

I Biddlecombe	36
B Beckerleg	26
T Smith	10
S Wilson	6
D Neville	4

Open Section – Succulents (50th Anniversary Trophy)

B Beckerleg	27
I Biddlecombe	26
M Shaw	6
B Turner	3
S Wilson	3

Intermediate Section – Cacti (Peter Down 50th Golden Jubilee Trophy)

I Biddlecombe	37
B Beckerleg	30
T Smith	12
M Jakins	2
T Radford	1

Intermediate Section – Succulents (25th Anniversary Paperweight)

B Beckerleg	34
I Biddlecombe	34
S Wilson	15
T Smith	10
A Jankovec	10
M Jakins	10

Ladies Cup (highest points total/Female entrant)

S Wilson	24
A Jankovec	10

Solent Cup (Cactus or Succulent in flower)

I Biddlecombe	20
A Jankovec	14
T Smith	3
S Wilson	2

Ivor Biddlecombe

Next Month's Meeting

Our first meeting of 2015 will be held on January 6th. 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 table show classes will now use the classifications from the *Guide to Shows 10th Edition*.

The Aloe group contains *Aloe*, *Aloiampelos*, *Aloidendron*, *Bulbine*, *Chamaealoe*, *Kumara* and *Lomatophyllum*.

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

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



Forthcoming Events

Tue	6 th	Jan	Southampton	Members' Mini Talks
Sat	10 th	Jan	Isle of Wight	No Meeting
Sat	17 th	Jan	Portsmouth	Members talks
Tue	3 rd	Feb	Southampton	Spring in South Africa – Alice Vanden Bon
Sat	14 th	Feb	Isle of Wight	Plant Auction, Members' Slides
Sat	21 st	Feb	Portsmouth	New cactus and succulent hybrids – Stuart Riley
Tue	3 rd	Mar	Southampton	World Collections & Nurseries – Ian Woolnough

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

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