

British Cactus & Succulent Society

Southampton & District Branch Newsletter

December 2015



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Editorial

The evenings are drawing in and we've had a few murky days recently. Although the weather is getting cooler, it's still relatively mild – I am not sure whether we've had a proper frost yet. These extended mild autumns do make it difficult to decide when to stop watering your collection!

My attempt to cross-pollinate my 2 haemanthus plants resulted in partial success – I see one berry on one of the plants. Of course I had hoped for more, but the flower structure was a little strange and although the stamens were clearly visible, I couldn't see where the stigmas were. I'll need to pay more attention the next time a flower develops!

Announcements

Our **next meeting** will be held on **5th 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. Please let

David Neville know ASAP if you would like to present.

The **Branch Programme** for **2016** has been prepared and copies are available from the front table.

Committee Reports - 2015

President's Report

Well done everyone at the Southampton and District branch for another successful year. Thanks to our secretary David for arranging a good programme and the committee for doing their jobs well. It shows how popular our meetings are when members from neighbouring branches often visit us. I know the visiting speakers always appreciate a good attendance. To all of you please continue to support the plant sales, the raffle and the refreshments.

Wishing you a Happy Christmas and a successful growing year in 2016.

Peter Down

Chairperson's Report

2015 was, I am glad to report, another successful year for our branch. Our Meetings were well attended, actually peaking at an attendance of forty four members. Talks and presentations were all well received and we will continue to invite speakers while also introducing a number of practical sessions on cultivation. New this year was our first seedling and cutting exchange which seemed to go well, and this feature has been included in next year's programme.

Again we won medals at the New Forest and Romsey shows although it seems our pots were not suitably matching for the tastes of the New Forest judges. The garden party was again successful although unfortunately coincided with a Dorset Monsoon.

Of the outings arranged, the visit to the Oxford branch show was probably the best attended and the display provided by the Oxford Branch members and the Haworthia Society was impressive.

I would like to thank all the members of our committee and all those other members who help at our meetings.

I am looking forward to another successful year and welcoming you to my first open day at my garden in Barton on Sea on 19th June.

Dot England

Secretary's Report

2015 has been another successful year for Southampton & District Branch, during which we have welcomed a range of speakers presenting a good variety of talks. I am delighted that we have maintained a good attendance at all meetings, and as has become a regular occurrence in recent years, visiting speakers have complimented the branch on the number of people present. New members are the lifeblood of the branch, and during the year we have gained a number of new regular attendees; this is particularly encouraging and let us hope that this healthy trend continues and that we are able to welcome more people to our throng during the coming year.

Keeping our activities in the public eye is very important, and thanks particularly to Ivor's efforts as Shows & Displays Manager we have mounted promotional displays at three well-attended events during the year. Vinay's efforts to provide an up-to-date branch website are also a valuable tool for the branch, and ensures that anyone who wants to contact us or attend our meetings can easily find all the information they need.

I have been busy in recent weeks putting together a programme of events for the coming year, and copies of the finished programme will be available at the December branch meeting. In addition to our regular monthly meetings, two of our members will be holding an open day and garden party, providing opportunities to admire their collections and for all of us to spend a few informal hours together.... time to chat is always limited at our regular meetings! We shall also be arranging car-share visits to the biennial Havering Cactus Mart (at which there will approx. 14 nurseries from around the country selling plants), to Lullingstone Castle and gardens near Dartford (where one of the BCSS patrons, Tom Hart-Dyke, has a cactus and succulent collection, along with his world garden and country house), to the Oxford Branch Show (which is one of the very best branch shows in the country, with magnificent plants on display, and with specialist Mammillaria classes organised by the Mammillaria Society), and to the biennial event of the Mesemb Study Group in Banstead, Surrey (where there are

always many impressive plants on display, along with a good selection of sales plants from their members and other sellers).

The major event of 2016 will undoubtedly be the BCSS National Show on August 20th, to be held again at the Wood Green Animal Shelter in Godmanchester (near Huntingdon). National shows are held every four years and are not to be missed! There will be many hundreds of magnificent plants to admire in the show, and a huge selection of nurseries selling a vast range of plants. Among the sellers will be a number of overseas nurseries offering both cacti and succulents, many of which are not freely available for sale in the UK. I know that numerous members of the branch attend National Shows, but many arrange accommodation in the area to avoid driving such a long distance in one day, so arranging car share opportunities to attend the show is not so easy. However, Portsmouth Branch will be arranging a coach to the event, and they have generously offered free seats on the coach to any of our members who would like to join them... all you have to do is get to Portsmouth in time to climb aboard the coach. I will have more details about their planned coach trip in due course.

I am looking forward already to next year's programme of events, but in the meantime would like to wish everyone a very happy Christmas and New Year. See you at our January meeting on Jan 5th, when we will have a number of short talks from members on a range of interesting topics.

David Neville

Treasurer's Report

I would like to thank Colin and Lorraine Bielckus for completing our annual accounts in record time. The branch has managed to make a profit of £45 for the year ending 30 September 2015. This compares to last year's loss of £350.

Income from most of our activities was very similar to the previous year, apart from plants sales and donations which were together up by £90. At the same time as the increase in income, our expenses were lower than in the preceding financial year. We have spent less on speaker expenses, but this does fluctuate from year to year, depending on the programme of talks.

The Branch continues to maintain a very comfortable savings and current account balance of £7,392.

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 - May 16th

Our first show of the year was held in the same position as last year. We were lucky with the weather as it was dry - but it was a bit windy and once we had erected the gazebo we were alright. This year the show was spread over a larger area with most of the refreshments in the field opposite the show entrance. Because the field behind the library only had a few food stalls, we did not get as many visitors to our display as in previous years and plant sales were a bit down. Still, it was a nice show to take part in and we all enjoyed it. My thanks to Ted, Bruce, and Peter for their help.

The New Forest Show - July 28th-30th

All branch members arrived early on Monday to help arrange the display and sale plants. The weather over the four days was dry and apart from a very brief shower on Monday, it was hot and very sunny. I am pleased to say the marquee was cool with a good flow of air. Our display did not do so well this year and we only received a silver gilt prize card. I did not think the display was as good as last year but I think we will have a better display if we can make an effort to have clean pots - the judges mentioned that it was the pots that let us down our display. Next year I will try to bring cleaning materials so we can check and clean the pots before they are put in place. We do not receive any prize money for our display but we should all show pride in the display. Plant sales were good so the event was well worth doing. I would like to thank everyone who helped put up the display and acted as stewards during the show days.

Romsey Show - September 12th

We all arrived at the show on set up day (Friday 11th) to put up the back cloth and arrange the display plants. I was pleased the weather was dry, this made getting to the marquee easy, not like last year when it was very muddy. On Saturday we had to arrive early as no exhibitor cars are allowed in after 8am. Our display was being judged from 9am to 10am so we had a chance to walk around the show - unfortunately it started to drizzle with rain and this lasted until midday. The show was well supported. Our sales were a down a bit, but I think this was due to having another cactus and succulent display in the marquee. We won a gold medal and prize money and this event was well worth doing.

Branch Table Show

The number of people participating during the year went up slightly from 10 to 12, with two new members entering (Mrs M Stevenson and Mr A Mant). The Cacti and Succulent in Flower class had good support. Most of our members grow nice plants, it is a shame they do not bring them along to the meetings where we can see and enjoy them. I hope 2016 will be the year you will support our Table Show

I would like to thank everyone that gave me their support during the year.

Wishing you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year,

Ivor Biddlecombe

Librarian's Report

The borrowing of books was well down this calendar year from 2014.

One new book was purchased for the library on the recommendation of a visiting speaker. This was the paperback book 'Succulent Propagation' by Kapitany and Schulz.

I have continued to write a short column each month for the newsletter. Revenue from lending for the year ending September 2015 was £6.00. Monies from the sale of eight donated books contributed £31.00 to club funds.

Sue Wilson

Plant Sales Officer's Report

The Season started off as usual with a small display at Sparsholt Open Day where we took £208, which is down on last year's takings, which in turn were lower than in previous years.

At the New Forest Show, takings were £1330 which is up on last year. This continues the increase we saw last year which is encouraging as sales had previously been slowly declining at this show.

Our third show was at Romsey where we took £439, which was down on last year but still a good result because we had competition from a nursery for the first time at this show. The good news is that he said he would be unlikely to come next year! We also won £75 in cash for a gold medal.

Sales at branch meetings continue to be buoyant with sales in excess of last year, this is partly because we continue to get lots of people to our meetings but also because we continue to have 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 although there was one month when we had so many attendees that the printed copies ran out. So perhaps a timely reminder that copies of the newsletters are available on our website and can be downloaded in PDF format.

Based on feedback from Dot's questionnaire last year, David has been providing me with summaries of the speakers and monthly meetings, and I tend to put these up on the branch home page a few days before the actual meeting. Hopefully this information gives members a better idea of what to expect at the meeting and it encourages more people to come along.

The supply of "snippets" for inclusion in the newsletter has again been very low. Thanks are due to Sue for providing a regular monthly article which also identifies books from the library if you want to add to your knowledge of the material discussed at the monthly meetings.

During the year, with help from Richard, I developed questions for the Zone 11 Quiz, which the branch hosted in November. In the event we used less than half of the questions so there's plenty left over for the future.

The programme of events for next year has been finalised by David, and our website will soon be updated to show the new branch programme and also the combined Zone 11 programme.

Best wishes to everyone for 2016.

Vinay Shah

Publicity Officer's Report

We have managed to achieve some great publicity over the past year. The Facebook page has been particularly successful and we now have 249 likes and rising. The events receive good exposure on Facebook and visitors to the site always like our photos, particularly those from the New Forest

Show and Romsey Show. We attempted to establish a branch Twitter account this year but unfortunately this was not successful so we have turned our attention elsewhere. We continue to receive coverage in the events listings of local magazines including the Hampshire, Dorset and Wiltshire editions of the *Country Gardener Magazine*.

Contact with the local press has been maintained where possible but it is not proving easy to establish a regular slot with regards to our meetings and events. I'm sure 2016 will prove to be another good year for the branch and we will endeavour to explore new and exciting avenues of publicity.

Ben Turner

Last Month's Meeting

Zone 11 Quiz

At the start of the meeting, David explained that the questions had been set by myself and Richard, and that three teams of three people from each of the branches would compete for the Mealy bug trophy – the audience collectively would also count as a fourth team.

Unfortunately a few of our regular members were absent, so our meeting attendance was lower than it has been for other recent meetings, although it was nice to see several visitors from Portsmouth and the Isle of Wight. Anyway a surprise awaited some of our members who found themselves promoted to the quiz team! The 3 teams were as follows:

Isle of Wight:

Anthony Mitchell, Ron Mitchell, Stephen Woods

Southampton:

David Neville, Ben Turner and Carol Weston

Portsmouth:

Cliff Thompson, Terry Mead, Gordon Arnold

We started off the first half of the quiz by asking the questions in a clockwise direction, with round one asking the names of prominent BCSS officials. Isle of Wight failed to name the secretary, offering David Kirkbright and Southampton got some bonus points by stating that it was Eddy Harris. The others questions were answered successfully, with Alice in the audience being well aware of the name of the BCSS treasurer. The next round consisted of some more questions about the Society, and Isle of Wight correctly named the 2 societies that merged in 1983 to form the current BCSS. Southampton guessed that the number of branches in the country was 85, which was close enough to the correct answer of 80. Portsmouth got the membership fee for associates

correct (£4) and the audience knew the name of the quarterly journal (Cactus World).

In Round 3, the teams were given the second part of the names of 3 species of cacti and asked to name the genus they belonged to. The three branch teams got their answers correct, but the audience failed to realise that *gracilis*, *pilosus* and *robustus* implied *Ferocactus*. Round 4 asked some facts about cacti. When asked about the tallest cactus in existence, Isle of Wight nominated *Carnegiea* but that was wrong and Southampton got more bonus points with *Pachycereus pringlei*. Richard shed some more light on the answer by mentioning that there had once been a larger *Carnegiea* but it had toppled over. The smallest cactus was correctly named as *Blossfeldia liliputana*, and Portsmouth correctly identified that the US state where the Saguaro is protected by law is Arizona. When asked about the state flower of Arizona, no one in the audience seemed to know, so they offered the rather unlikely answer of “daffodil” and Isle of Wight duly got a bonus point.

Round 5 was some general knowledge, and when asked the most common first name in the world, Isle of Wight thought it was either Chang or Mohammed and they chose the former - and were wrong. Southampton got the bonus points by choosing Mohammed and also got their own question about the most common surname correct (Chan/Chang). Portsmouth correctly named abnormally low blood pressure as hypotension. The audience did not know what organ Bright’s disease affected and guessed liver, and so there were again some bonus points for the Isle of Wight who suggested kidneys.

Round 6 was some sporting questions asking where the 1948 Olympics and 2010 Winter Olympics were held. Portsmouth got asked how many players were in an Australian rules football team and this question was passed all the way round the hall, with no one getting close to the correct answer of 18. The audience did correctly answer that the football team Benfica is based in Portugal. After 6 rounds, the scores were audience 3, Portsmouth 5, Isle of Wight 5, and Southampton 9.

Round 7 involved comparing metric and imperial measurements and I am glad to say all 4 questions were answered correctly. Round 8 asked when the TV Soaps Coronation Street, EastEnders, Emmerdale Farm and Neighbours were first broadcast, with answers needing to be within a couple of years of the correct year. The teams did reasonably well, with just one question having to be passed on. The next round was similar, asking when some long standing BBC programmes - The Sky at Night, Match of the Day, Panorama and Blue Peter -

were first broadcast. Some of the teams struggled but Isle of Wight did particularly well, getting 3 answers right out of the four in the round – and this was despite the fact that Anthony doesn’t have a TV set! Round 10 involved definition of botanical terms - dioecious (different sexed flowers on different plants), caespitose (tufted or densely clustered), cleistogamous (flowers self- set seed without opening), zygomorphic (flowers have one plane of symmetry).

Round 11 involved some more definitions of botanical terms - adventitious, androgynous, campanulate, and dichotomous, and Anthony’s knowledge of latin helped Isle of Wight to pick up a bonus. Round 12 involved naming the flower colours of specified cacti, and all the teams answered this correctly. Richard provided an update to the scores - the audience had 9, Portsmouth had 8, Southampton had 14 and the Isle of Wight had surged into the lead with 15. It was now time for the mid-meeting break and to enjoy the food and refreshments that the branch had laid on.

After the break, questions were asked in the anti-clockwise direction. Rounds 13 and 14 asked for the time difference between London and other cities, in Europe and further afield. The teams did reasonably well with Europe and USA, but struggled with cities which were further away, although Isle of Wight again picked up some bonus points. Round 15 asked teams to name which seeds were larger between named pairs of cacti/succulent genera, and all teams answered these correctly. Rounds 16 and 17 probed at the team’s knowledge of the *Guide to Shows*. Which group would you show *Ficus*, *Bulbine*, *Hoya*, *Oxalis/Begonia* in? And similarly which mesemb subgroup would you show *Lapidaria*, *Ophthalmophyllum*, *Pleiospilos*, and *Glottiphyllum* in? Portsmouth and the audience failed to pick up any points in these two rounds. Round 19 asked for the capitals of certain South American countries and all 4 teams answered correctly. Richard provided us with updated scores - Portsmouth had 10 points, the audience had 13, Southampton had 22 and Isle of Wight were still in the lead with 24.

For Round 19, we required the teams to name which country and locality some relatively recent cactus and succulent discoveries (*Agave albopilosa*, *Yavia cryptocarpa*, *Mammillaria leuthyi*, *Geohintonia mexicana*) were found. Round 20 was general knowledge regarding movies/TV, and round 21 asked where certain vegetables originated. Tesco/Aldi/Lidl was immediately offered but of course we were looking for the country or region where the plants were first grown. We learnt that cucumbers come from India, radishes from China,

lettuce from the eastern Med and Egypt, and carrots from Iran and Afghanistan.

Rounds 22 and 23 required the teams to give us the old names for some countries in Africa and Asia - geography was obviously a strong point, with all the teams doing well and getting their answers right for both rounds. Round 24 required the teams to information about the flags of various European countries - they had to provide the colours in the right order and also state whether the stripes were horizontal or vertical. It was a bit of a struggle, but the teams did manage to pick up some points here.

David mentioned that that clock was approaching 10pm and we decided to go through one more round. This was a question about leaf shapes and the definitions of clavate, crenulated, falcate and uncinata. Portsmouth picked up a bonus point here. Richard announced the final scores which proved to be quite interesting. Portsmouth and the Audience were tied on 19 points each and Southampton and the Isle of Wight were also tied on 31 points each. So we decided to have a sudden death question. "Who is 4th in line to the throne?" We received answers of Harry and George, but these were both wrong – the correct answer was the recently born Charlotte. So another tie break was required. "What is the difference - in years - between the reigns of Queen Elizabeth 2nd and Queen Victoria?" - Southampton answered with 0 years – the story about the Queen's reign equalling Queen Victoria's was in the news a couple of months ago – so **Southampton** were declared the **winners!**

The meeting ended with Cliff Thompson thanked Southampton for hosting the event and for the catering, and for making it an enjoyable evening overall. There was also a call for applause for Glenn and Teresa who had provided the food and refreshments for us all.

Vinay Shah

Christmas Story 2015

After last winter's rather embarrassing meeting with Mr Christmas, I decided it was probably better if I avoided walking the dogs in the woods on the run up to Christmas this year. So to increase my chances of a peaceful afternoon dog walk with two lunatic Norwegian elkhounds, I decided to take them to the old wartime air field on the open heathland. After all, what could possibly go wrong with that plan, it was highly unlikely we would encounter any deer out on the heath.

So after a couple of weeks of pretty uneventful dog walks (if you don't count the chasing rabbits around gorse bushes, barking at all the other dogs, prancing round ponies or plain ignoring me) we had an interesting encounter. I had decided to do a spot of Christmas shopping in Lymington after finishing work early and so the light was fading rapidly by the time I had arrived at Beaulieu heath to walk the dogs. Luckily the dogs have got bright white featherings on their rear legs & tail so can still be seen in the gloom of dusk trotting ahead along the track. I was just coming to the conclusion that I soon would not be able to see any more of the huge water filled potholes in the track as the light had almost gone when I became aware of a line of lights bobbing along the track towards us. I called the dogs to me in case it was a group of cyclists intent on running over the ponies, when I heard the sound of singing "Hey ho, hey ho it's off to Beaulieu we go, hey ho hey look out it's a bloody wolf arrrh wolves!" I looked down and sure enough Teal was no longer at my side in fact neither was Rosie...

Honestly elkhounds are not very big so unless they are called pygmy wolves I think calling them wolves is a bit over reacting, until I noticed the height of the man shouting at the dogs. In fact they seemed to be quite a group of men mostly with long beards holding up lanterns and running round in circles with Teal & Rosie bouncing around with them (mostly barking), I managed to count seven. "Sorry we didn't see you coming!" I lied. "Will you call these wolf things off they are giving me a headache and making me dizzy" shouted a particularly grumpy very short man. "Get this one off me, it's trying to eat me and I am allergic to wolves" sneezed another vertically challenged man. I was amazed to see that even I was taller than the group as I approached to drag Rosie out of the sneezing chap's coat pockets and wrestle a mince pie out of her jaws.

"Where are you going?" I asked hoping that we would be going in the opposite direction. "We are going to Beaulieu" yawned a chap with a very

floppy hat, "it is Tuesday today isn't it?" I hesitated as I was pretty sure it wasn't but when someone sounds positive it always makes me think perhaps it's me that has got it wrong not them. He noticed me pause and in a worried voice asked "or perhaps it is Thursday?" Now this got me curious, what was special about Tuesday and Thursday?

Teal was now been hugged round the neck, rather bravely I thought, by a very happy looking chap. "We are meeting Father Christmas at the garden centre!" he said with great excitement. Light dawned, the garden centre did an afternoon tea and "meet Father Christmas" for the local children on Tuesdays and Thursdays. I was now convinced that actually it was Wednesday and was rather unsure if I should admit this bit of information. "I say he has got rather enormous teeth hasn't he" exclaimed a chap who appeared to be extracting a bandage out of his pocket. I glanced at Teal who had decided that he didn't want to wear a hat with bells on the end of it. As I leaned in to grab Teal's collar I told them that actually it was Wednesday.

The grumpy looking chap had a face like thunder "Wednesday! What use is that after we have walked all this way. I tell you what I won't be taking any notice of those silly elves again. Come on let's go home and see if Miss White has got our tea ready yet". As the group picked up their lamps which lay scattered around the track and struggled to re-light the candles we bid farewell and made our way back to the car. It wasn't until the dogs got into the car that I noticed that Rosie seemed to have acquired a hat in her mouth. We made a quick getaway and avoided the garden centre for a quite a while after that.

Sue Wilson

Table Show 2015 – Overall Results

Open Section – Cacti (50th Anniversary Trophy)

I Biddlecombe	33
B Beckerleg	23
G Penrose	4
P Klaassen	4
D England	3
S Wilson	2

Open Section – Succulents (50th Anniversary Trophy)

I Biddlecombe	35
B Beckerleg	27
S Wilson	8
M Stevenson	6
G Penrose	4
D England	2
B Turner	2

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

I Biddlecombe	37
B Beckerleg	19
G Penrose	7
S Wilson	5
A Jankovec	1
A Mant	1

Intermediate Section – Succulents (25th Anniversary Paperweight)

I Biddlecombe	36
B Beckerleg	27
G Penrose	11
S Wilson	6
M Stevenson	4
T Radford	3
D England	2
A Mant	1

Ladies Cup (highest points total/Female entrant)

S Wilson	27
D England	13
M Stevenson	10
A Jankovec	6

Solent Cup (Cactus or Succulent in flower)

B Beckerleg	22 (more 1sts)
G Penrose	22
I Biddlecombe	15
S Wilson	12
D England	8
M Jakins	7
M Stevenson	5
T Radford	2
M Shaw	1
A Jankovec	1

Ivor Biddlecombe

Next Month's Meeting

Our first meeting of 2016 will be held on January 5th. The meeting will feature short talks by branch members, and if you have a subject that you would like to talk about (even if only for a few minutes), please let Daid Neville 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 use the classifications from the *Guide to Shows 10th Edition* (contact me if you don't have a copy of this).

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

Sat	5 th Dec	Portsmouth	Annual General Meeting & Christmas Social
Sat	12 th Dec	Isle of Wight	Annual General Meeting followed by American Supper
Tue	5 th Jan	Southampton	Members' Mini Talks
Sat	9 th Jan	Isle of Wight	No Meeting
Sat	16 th Jan	Portsmouth	Short talks & discussions by Branch Members
Tue	2 nd Feb	Southampton	The 2012 National Show – David Neville
Sat	13 th Feb	Isle of Wight	Plant Auction, Members' Slides
Sat	20 th Feb	Portsmouth	'Mesembs' - Eddy Harris
Tue	1 st Mar	Southampton	Patagonia – Cliff Thompson

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

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