

# British Cactus & Succulent Society

## Southampton & District Branch Newsletter

January 2023



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## Editorial

The first part of December was quite cold, but the temperatures did improve just around Christmas and into the new year. I can see a few signs of life in the spring bulbs.

## Last Month's Meeting

### *Annual General Meeting*

As the AGM meeting started, David asked everyone to ensure that they had helped themselves to something from the selection of drinks on offer. The food that everyone had brought in had also been laid out on the tables, but we would need to work through the AGM agenda before we got a chance to start eating. Adrian explained the process we would be following. David also asked if everyone had received the branch accounts which he had emailed out to all the members.

The branch committee usually meets 2 or 3 times a year although since covid happened, we have not held those meetings and just corresponded by email. Right now we only have 6 committee members who are willing to continue serving - a couple of committee members had unfortunately passed away over the last two years (Ivor Biddlecombe and Tony Grech) and a couple of other committee members had asked to step down from their current posts on the committee, due to ill health and other commitments (Bruce Beckerleg and Robin Caddy). David mentioned that we do have some nominations for new members to join the committee, and Adrian named Ben Turner, Amelia Herbert, Cathryn Quick and we could also potentially appoint others.

There were apologies for absence from Richard White, Robin Caddy, Tom Radford, Ted Smith and Mark and Rebecca Jakins. Peter Down would have come with Richard, but he must have only found out

today that Richard wasn't attending so we can assume he would have sent us an apology as well. As president, Peter does sometimes send in a report for inclusion in the newsletter but we didn't have one this year. The December newsletter did include written reports from the chairman, secretary and treasurer.

Adrian said his report was in the December newsletter. This is the final meeting of 2022 and we have held 10 meetings this year, with the first having been held in March. We had been out of action for 2 years. The positives are that in general people have increased their interest in cacti and succulents, so when we did restart holding meetings, we did see a number of new members, and many of these have proven to be quite keen and have attended multiple meetings. As a negative side to things, we've lost Ivor Biddlecombe and Tony Grech from the committee and sadly Bruce Beckerleg has had bad back problems all year, and not only had he not been able to attend meetings this year, he is also selling off all his plants. Robin has to step down for personal reasons but hopes he might re-join the committee in the future – this means we are reduced to just 6 committee members at present, so we do need to appoint some new members to handle some important tasks. Adrian mentioned that out of the 10 meetings we had held, 3 were covered by external speakers – but the rest were handled by our own members and this indicates we do have a fair amount of expertise within the branch membership. Adrian thanked everyone who comes along to the meetings and for making suggestions to improve how we run the branch. Let's all hope for a better year next year.

The second report in the newsletter was by the secretary, and David mentioned he really didn't have much more to add because Adrian had covered the main points that his report had mentioned. We started holding meetings in March because covid was still active, and at the time some people were isolating. Some other branches started holding meetings from January but we decided to wait until we felt it was safe. And with speakers it was difficult to book people too far in advance because at that time, we didn't know the situation with covid. Although a few individuals had encountered

covid during the year and caused those people to miss some meetings, it doesn't appear to have caused anyone any serious issues recently. Peter Down is in his late 80's but he has had all his jabs and although he did catch covid last month, he had indicated that it hadn't affected him much – he's mentioned he has had colds that had been worse. One of our lapsed members Martin Sheader ended up on a ventilator during the first of the covid lockdowns and he took a long time to recover - he is also a member of the Alpine Garden Society. David said that normally at this meeting we would hand out a printed programme of meetings for the following year, however this hasn't completed as yet - one or two speakers have curtailed their activities – and for others it's quite a challenge for them to venture out on a Tuesday and drive back late in the evening. The other reason for the delay is that we normally include details of the table show classes for each month in the programme – and some work is needed to finalise this. We will have completed this early next year and a printed programme will be handed out soon. David repeated the comments about the people we had lost from the committee.

Alice Jankovec handles our accounts and with the end of September being our year end, this is the busiest time of the year for her. And she has also had to deal with the fact that our accountants - who used to live locally - have moved to Spain. She has maintained communication with them and they have prepared our accounts for us for each of the last three years. We have a long-term savings account and also maintain a balance of around a thousand pounds in our current account. Our accounts also contain some funds which are owned by Zone 11 (Peter Down was the signatory for the funds) so that money isn't really ours and we need to maintain records of that and in due course decide what to do about those funds. Although Portsmouth is financially healthy, Isle of Wight is in a worse position because they face much higher costs whenever they have visiting speakers due to the cost of the ferry. Due to guidance from the Society, this year we have stopped charging for refreshments - we also don't charge an entry fee and we also don't charge a commission on plant sales or any fees for borrowing books from the library. We had quite a substantial financial contribution from the sale of Ivor's books and plants and other donations, and this year's expenses have also been lower due to the limited use of external speakers.

In terms of overall funds, in 2019 we had a total of £8627, this changed to £8421 in 2020, £8366 in 2021 and £8743 in 2022. The charities commission feels that many branches have too much money in

their reserves, and they should really only have enough money to support running the branch for around three to four years – so our reserves are well in excess of that. Alice asked if anyone had any queries about the accounts? There was a question about the amount of interest that the branch earned. The current account does not earn anything and the savings account had earned £28, £1 and £31 in the last three years.

The branch has supported garden parties in the past and the branch would consider supporting that again. With the last show that we held, only the committee members entered plants and hardly any of the membership attended, and this is why Ivor decided that the shows were not worthwhile. This is something we must try and change in the future. A vote was held about the accounts and they were adopted.

Adrian invited comments from any of the other committee members. Glenn said he was happy. Ben Turner has been standing in for Bruce and he was thanked for doing this, and Ben mentioned that plant sales have been healthy and well supported. David said we need to include details in the newsletter of how plants for sale need to be labelled. Basically each pot needs to have 2 labels - one label needs to include the name of the plant and the other label needs to include the sale price and the initials of the seller - this is retained when the plant is sold and is then used to calculate what needs to be paid out to the sellers.

I mentioned that the newsletter content currently is almost solely created by me, so if anyone wants to provide articles of interest (snippets) for the newsletter - they would be most welcome. Just provide these to me either written out or by email and I will look after the formatting and check spellings etc. With regard to the library, we actually hold many more books than are put out on the library trolley, and there is a list on our website of all the books that the branch has available for borrowing. Jane agreed to take on one of Richard's extra duties (vice chairman) and Ben Turner, Cathryn Quick, Amelia Herbert and Lennie Kwan were all appointed and voted onto the committee. A vote was held for each of the officers.

Chairman	: Adrian Baily
Vice Chairman	: Jane Williams
Secretary	: David Neville
Treasurer	: Alice Jankovec
Newsletter / Website	: Vinay Shah
Librarian	: Richard White
Catering	: Glenn Finn
Plant Sales	: Ben Turner

General Member : Cathryn Quick  
 Publicity : Amelia Herbert  
 General Member : Lennie Kwan

Funding for leaflets to promote the branch and hand out at events was discussed. The branch did use to have a leaflet that we handed out at external events and the BCSS main society has also helped towards the costs of producing a coloured leaflet. We could consider re-doing some of these leaflets based on our needs going forwards. Lennie is a graphic designer and he could design something suitable for us.

As for the auditors for 2023 - Colin and Lorraine Bielckus already have a template for doing our accounts and they have indicated they are willing to do our accounts for next year.

David had mentioned that we do need to consider getting a thank you momento for Bruce Beckerleg given all the years of service he has provided to the branch. Apart from handling plant sales at meetings and events, he has also provided many of the plants for the displays we put on. Perhaps something like an engraved glass would be nice, and we will also get a card and get all the members to sign it.

At branch meetings, Peter Bircher had previously acted as our raffle ticket seller but he has not been able to attend this year. Is there someone else who wants to do this job? Jane said she can carry on for now. (but she won't be here for the February meeting).

The classes for the table show would be discussed between Cathryn and David and published as part of the 2023 programme.

Ben asked about our participation at the New Forest and Romsey shows – the problem we now have is with the provision of display plants – in the past Ivor and Bruce had provided most of the large plants and these were the ones that made most impact. The branch has also put on displays at garden centres in the past and that is another possibility.

Amelia would handle publicity and take over ownership of our Facebook page.

The January meeting would consist of talks by our members, and David said he had some ideas from Tom Radford, himself, Ben and Cathryn but he would like to get a couple more candidates to provide a wider choice of topics.

*Vinay Shah*

## Next Month's Meeting

Our next meeting will be held on Tuesday February 7<sup>th</sup> and it will feature a talk by our own David Neville entitled "Highlights of Arizona and Utah" – I believe this will feature pictures from a trip that David and I made out to Arizona and Utah several years ago. These two states contain dozens of natural attractions and it is also possible to find and interesting variety of plants out in habitat.

## Forthcoming Events

Sat 14 <sup>th</sup> Jan	Isle of Wight	First Meeting of the Year. Planning the year ahead.
Sat 21 <sup>st</sup> Jan	Portsmouth	Echinocereus (Julian Cooke)
Tue 7 <sup>th</sup> Feb	Southampton	Highlights of Arizona and Utah (David Neville)
Sat 11 <sup>th</sup> Feb	Isle of Wight	Show and Tell. Bring along a plant and tell us all about it.
Sat 18 <sup>th</sup> Feb	Portsmouth	Totally Potty About Succulents (Amelia Herbert)

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