



Berkhamsted and District Branch

www.berkhamsted.bcsc.org.uk

Volume 6, Issue 3

November 2014

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Programme

December 2014 to May 2015

- | | |
|--------|---|
| 13 Dec | Christmas Get-together |
| 10 Jan | Derek Tribble
Better Plant Photography |
| 14 Feb | Annual General Meeting and
Members' slides |
| 14 Mar | Rodney Sims
Off-The-Beaten-Track—Part 3 |
| 09 May | Paul Klaassen
What I saw in Bolivia
Where I saw Pterocactus
What I saw in Cuba
Where I saw Austrocactus |

Zone 6 Convention

Saturday 21 March 2015

Speakers: Giuseppe Orlando and Roger Ferryman

Nursery: Tony Irons

Book Sales: Keith Larkin Books

British Cactus and Succulent Society

Editor's Comments

Welcome to the November 2014 Branch newsletter. It has been another mixed year for weather: sunshine, rain, lower than usual temperatures in August. This year our peas and sweet peas had a poor year. The dwarf beans and runner beans have done extremely well, we had the best crops of both for a number of years. Potatoes also did quite well. We grow them in potato bags, three tubers to a bag.

The Branch continues to be represented at National, Zone and local events. This reflects well on the Branch and shows our commitment to nearby branches and the Society as a whole.

We held the 2014 Branch Mini-Show, in August this year, judged by David Kirkbright. A number of speakers made welcome return visits to the Branch, including Alice Vanden Bon, John Watmough, Trevor Wray and Terry Smale. The September speaker, Maurice Williams, cancelled his talk due to ill-health. Hazel Taylor kindly volunteered to give us a talk entitled 'Cacti of Northwest Argentina'.

We have the Christmas meeting to look forward to, followed in January by Derek Tribble on 'Better Plant Photography'. The AGM, followed by members' slides will now take place in February, due to the tight time schedule we had in the past to get the accounts finalised.

My thanks to Rodney and Linda for their articles. Articles for the newsletter from branch members will be more than welcome.

Attendances have been variable once again, between nine and 14 this year. Overall, the average attendance to November has been 10.6 (10.8 last year) per meeting.

I hope all your plants are safely and warmly tucked up in the greenhouse or wherever they are kept. Gill and I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at the Christmas Get-Together again this year and at our meetings in 2015. Finally, may I take this opportunity to wish yourself and your family all the best for the festive season and a Happy New Year.

David



Recollections of Cathy Darbon



Photo David Wilson

On the 3rd of August Oxford Branch held their annual show. This year the show was dedicated to the memory of Cathy Darbon. It was well supported, with over 600 class entries on the day, a **great tribute to Cathy's memory.**



Photo David Wilson

We were deeply saddened by the death in 2013 of Cathy Darbon. Cathy was a well liked, respected and active member of the BCSS. Some Branch members will remember Cathy for her excellent Mini Judges Course talk/



Photo David Wilson

demonstration at our meeting in April 2002. Cathy was well known for her encouragement for people to become judges.

Cathy's interest in cacti and succulents was fostered by a friend of her father's (Sid King). Long time Branch members will remember Sid and Phyllis, his wife. Sid introduced Cathy to the hobby when she was 12. Cathy met and married Bill and they started a joint collection, joining what was then the National Cactus and Succulent Society (NCSS) in 1976.

Cathy was soon elected to the Oxford Branch Committee and became their Treasurer the following year. She also served as Secretary and Chairman of the Branch. She was a major contributor to Oxford Branch events, especially shows, auctions and public displays.

In 1988 Cathy qualified as a judge and regularly judged shows around the country. Cathy and Bill often judged together, they judged the 2002 Zone 6 Show (hosted by Berkhamsted at the Wendover Memorial Hall). Apart from being a judge for the National Show she was also one of the scribes at the last five shows.

In 1998 Cathy was elected to the Shows Committee, taking on responsibility for Show Stationery in 2003.

In the past, Oxford Branch hosted the National Show and the Southern Area Show, which Cathy was instrumental in bringing to Oxford.

She served as Secretary to Zone 8 for a number of years, during which time she witnessed the tenures of four Zone Representatives. Between 2001 and 2003 she **administered the Society's Slide Library.**



Photo David Wilson

Between October 1998 and October 2006 she served on the Finance and General Purposes Committee (F&GP), now the Board of Trustees (BoT). After which she served another year as the Shows Committee Representative.

Cathy's contributions to Oxford Branch, Zone 8 and the National Society were recognised by an Award of Merit in 1986, the Shows Award and a Robert Holt Meritorious Award in 2012.



Photo David Wilson

Recollections of a great weekend—BCSS International Convention

By Rodney Sims

On July 11th this year, a warm sunny day, I packed fourteen trays of plants into my car and prepared to travel. It had taken more than nine months to propagate the plants to sell at the BCSS International Convention in Leicester. It was about 11.30 when I got into the car for the journey. I wanted plenty of time to allow me to be more cautious than usual with my precious cargo.



Photo Linda Fuller

At Watford Gap I stopped for a comfort and sandwich break. Traffic was not too bad so I thought I could ease off the accelerator a bit. Junction 21 came quickly and I was on the road that crossed the south of Leicester to the venue. It was a dual carriageway but there were too many traffic lights for my liking.

Direction signs appeared and made finding the hall easy. I parked and went to register, meeting old friends at every step. Duly registered I returned to the car to unload my cargo. Good job I had brought my trolley with me as I was parked a few hundred yards from the entrance to the hall. The surface of the road was not smooth and I rattled along taking great care.

Hordes were beginning to appear so the sooner I set up my stall the better. Many other attendees had to carry their offerings so I lent out the trolley.

Time went quickly and soon enough it was time to find my room and unpack the few clothes I needed. I had to prepare for the evening events.

The convention opened at four o'clock with some announcements quickly followed by the first major talk.

Ernst van Jaarsfeld told of his adventures looking for chasmophytes (cliff dwelling plants), a group of succulents which has taken up residence in the rock cracks of ravines and similar natural structures. The rivers which made the chasms often were treacherous and difficult to navigate leading to many dangerous situations. In fact, it was by luck only that one member of his expeditions survived being thrown out the boat in rapids.

He was followed by Guillermo Rivera exploring in northern Argentina. Lots of lovely *Gymnocalycium*s illustrated the great variability of these taxa. Beautiful scenery and geology were shown and we learnt much about the history and culture of Argentina.

After a good meal, Olwen Grace (a worker from Kew) explained why we have to change our labels in the *Aloe* group. She almost convinced me. We heard more about the DNA and its use.

Saturday dawned after a healthy breakfast and the business started with a couple of short talks. First

was Terry Smale who showed us some South African habitats, with expert commentary. It brought back a longing to return. He was followed by Olwen Grace telling us of the uses of *Aloes*. Native medicine makes extensive use of them even to arrow poison!

Coffee and great biscuits fortified us for Roger Ferryman on South Africa – something I would never have contemplated. A cactus man through and through, Roger had been forced to spend time in SA. You cannot ignore the local flora and I think I detected a weakening in his cactus armour despite his protestations to the contrary.



Photo Linda Fuller

Guillermo took us to Peru after lunch. This is a time-slot known as the "dead zone" when many snores might be heard. This is not the case when Guillermo is talking. He presented a magnificent picture of the country and its plants.



Photo Linda Fuller

Tea and a good selection of cakes filled up any spaces left after lunch and we returned to delight in Ernst's pictures of the Richtersveldt. This extraordinary area has everything you could wish for - great plants, impressive scenery, outstanding geology and dangers. Have you ever lost your car in the local carpark? How much worse for the same thing in the desolate uninhabited mountainous Richtersveldt!

Woody Minich entered the arena with the Great American South West. Here was a raconteur of great skill, entertaining the assembly with many fascinating anecdotes.

A short talk by Pete Arthurs was about digital photography. Unfortunately I missed this as I had to tend the plants and dress up for the special dinner

later.

The special dinner was served at tables for us to speed the process and leave more time for the big Auction of donated plants. There was much frivolity during the auction but not as much parting with money as I had expected. After all is said and done, ALL proceeds went to the research and Conservation Fund. Nevertheless over £2000 was raised.

The final day meant we had to vacate our rooms soon after breakfast. All done we gathered in the hall for Colin Walker to update us on what he termed the Name Game. More DNA excuses and comment were forthcoming in the nicest possible way. Our president is a professional botanist and plays the game well.

Gillian Evison disclosed her secrets of how to grow those large rare difficult plants she puts on the showbench. We learnt a lot, but is it enough? Only time will tell.

Refreshed by coffee, we listened to the highlights of his many expeditions to South America from Roger, accompanied by many side remarks about succulents. The audience reacted well to the banter.

The final talk followed lunch. Woody talked about the many amateurs who have contributed to the knowledge of our special plants. Many names were put forward from both side of the pond which those longer in the tooth recognised and applauded. Inevitably some were omitted but that is unavoidable when one sticks ones head over the parapet. It was a good way to close the convention paying tribute to those we admire and envy.

After the closing remarks and farewells, a nice tea send us on our way fortified for the journey home wishing that we did not have to wait four years for the next convention.

BCSS International Convention from a newby's perspective

By Linda Fuller



Photo Linda Fuller

I had never been to an event like **this before so I didn't know** quite what to expect. Hours listening to boring talks perhaps or feeling left on my own. Not at all!

From the moment I arrived I felt like **'one of the gang'**. Everyone was so friendly with stories to tell. I could sit next to anyone at **mealtimes and it was as if they'd** known me forever. Some of the elderly members were particularly interesting to talk to and had spent most of their lives growing cacti and succulents and supporting the B.C.S.S.

When we arrived on the Friday we **all received a 'welcome bag' with a few 'goodies' in it and were** then shown to our rooms. It was a hot weekend so I was glad that my room was in a very cool ground-floor spot. It was so quiet **I didn't see anyone else in my 'apartment' all weekend.**

I needed the sleep as there were

so many fascinating talks to concentrate on over the three days. Most were uplifting with lovely photography, at times they were sad with some bad news about the plants but all were informative and often made us laugh.

Dr Colin Walker caused groans from members when he gave his talk **'the name game updated'**. Apparently, some plants are being moved into new groups and some have been transferred back to where they were in the first place (causing 'oh no' from the audience!).

I managed to speak to Olwen Grace after her talk and Gillian Evison one lunchtime. Both were so friendly and approachable it was lovely to have met them. Gillian's advice about wearing glasses has since proved to be invaluable!!



Photo Linda Fuller

I adored the plant sales. Julian promised that if I bought

any he would take them back home in his van so consequently I bought lots! (Including some **agaves I'd been looking for!**)

Rodney faithfully manned our stall for hours and I was glad to see Jamie there (another friendly face from our group).

So, what was the best thing about the Convention? The food? Plant sales? Talks? Auction? For me it has to be talking to members from all over the country and realizing that I am far from alone in my obsession!

Many thanks to everyone who organized the weekend especially David Kirkbright whose voice I can still hear in my head saying **"five minutes to go", "only two minutes left"** ushering us in to every talk with gusto!!

Review of Branch Mini-Show 2014 (Photos David Wilson)



The annual Branch Mini-Show took place in August, in the larger meeting room at Christ Church, The Nap, Kings Langley. Our judge for the occasion was the Society Treasurer David Kirkbright, who was tested by an interesting and well supported show.



The Show offered a relaxed atmosphere and allowed members to enjoy the plants on the tables and the opportunity to have a chat.



David Kirkbright led a general discussion about the plants and his judging.

The awards at the Show went to: -

Trophy/Award	Exhibitor
Most points in Section A—Cacti	David Latham
Most points in Section B—Other Succulents	David and Gill Wilson
Most points in the Show	David and Gill Wilson

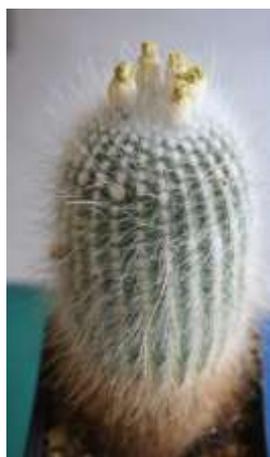


Best Cactus in Show: Ian Sharpe's
Ariocarpus trigonus

Photo David Wilson

Best Succulent in Show: Ian Sharpe's
Euphorbia meloformis

Photo David Wilson



Christmas Get-Together

The final meeting of the year will be the annual Christmas Get-Together where we celebrate the forthcoming festive season and enjoy a more relaxed and different type of meeting.

As usual there will be Xmas cake and other nibbles available on the day.

Don't forget to bring along a glass (to toast the festive season) and your donated prize for the Grand Raffle.



Wishing you a
Merry Christmas and
a
Happy New Year

Photo Gallery



Photo David Wilson



Photo David Wilson

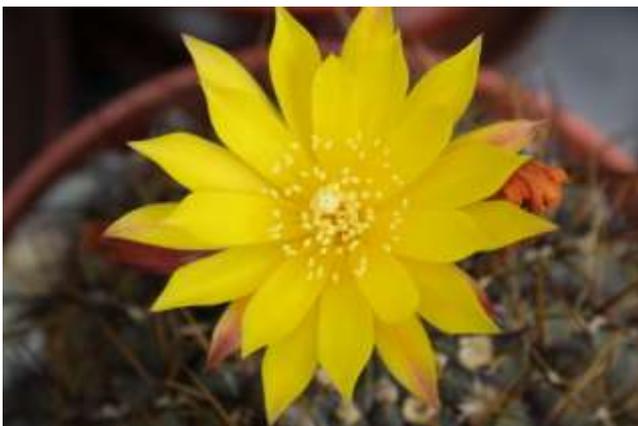


Photo David Wilson



Photo David Wilson



Annual General Meeting

Notice is hereby given that the Annual General Meeting of the Berkhamsted and District Branch of the British Cactus and Succulent Society will be held on Saturday 14th February 2015 at Lower Hall, Christ Church, The Nap, Kings Langley, Hertfordshire WD4 8ET at 3 pm.



A G E N D A

1. Apologies for Absence.
2. Minutes of the Last A. G. M. (11 January 2014).
3. Matters Arising.
4. **Treasurer's Report.**
5. **Secretary's Report.**
6. **Chairman's Remarks.**
7. Programme 2015/2016.
8. Election of Officers.
9. Election of Committee.
10. Election of Auditors.
11. Any Other Business.



Nominations for Elections

<i>Position</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Signature</i>
Chairman		
Vice-Chairman		
Treasurer		
Secretary		
Show Secretary		
Sales Manager		
Visitors' Host		