

British Cactus & Succulent Society

Southampton & District Branch Newsletter

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Branch Secretary

David Neville
6 Parkville Road
Swaythling
Southampton
Hampshire
SO16 2JA

davnev@bopenworld.com
(023) 80551173 or
07974 191354

Newsletter Editor

Vinay Shah
29 Heathlands Road
Eastleigh
Hampshire
SO53 1GU

sotonbcss@gmail.com
(023) 80261989

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Editorial

December passed by very quickly – and it's time to say *Happy New Year* to everyone! Apart from a couple of cold days, it's been relatively mild. We did however have some very foggy days, including a couple where you could only see a few dozen feet in front of you – driving through that was as difficult as I can ever remember. It looks like the new year will be welcomed with some heavy frosts.

Plants-wise, not much has changed since last month - a few conophytums bloomed in December and some haworthias and aloes continue to flower. I ordered some seeds from the Haworthia Society's distribution in November but have not planted them yet. Hopefully some of you took advantage of the BCSS seed list, which was sent out with the December journal?

Announcements

Copies of the Branch Programme for 2017 are available from the front table. Our branch website has also been updated to show the 2017 programme, and the programme of events for the other Zone 11 branches.

Don't forget to renew your BCSS membership – this can be done using the form included with the CactusWorld Journals which were sent out to members just before Christmas - or you can also renew from the BCSS website, at:
<http://society.bcsc.org.uk/index.php/subscriptions.html>

Last Month's Meeting

2016 AGM

We had a good turnout of members for the AGM meeting, but did have apologies from Adrian, Ben, Alice, Keith & Kathy Flanagan and Paul Klassen & Angie Money. Ivor mentioned that Jim Roskilly had sent his regards and hoped to visit some meetings in 2017.

Dot started off the meeting by mentioning that her report was in the December newsletter. She thanked everyone for coming to the meetings and also those who helped at the meetings, including people not on the committee such as Ted Smith helping with setting up and Alec Mant bringing along cakes. She also thanked Richard White for taking over the library at short notice, and Colin and Lorraine Bielckus for doing the accounts. She mentioned that the branch has arranged a good programme of events for next year. We are lucky to have good speakers visit us, and we also have planned a couple of cultivation and propagation workshops. She wished everyone a merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

David Neville was next to speak and he mentioned that he had assembled the programme of events for 2017, and would be emailing everyone on his distribution list an electronic copy. It is always difficult to know who to book and what subjects to cover. He had received requests for talks on two topics, and one of these was *Sempervivum*. Unfortunately the only good speaker on this genus is in Northumberland, which is too far to come down and speak to us. He had also been asked to arrange a talk on conservation of cacti and succulents. Although the BCSS does have a conservation committee, all the speakers are amateur speakers who are not involved in conservation projects, but he'll continue looking for a potential speaker.

In January, we would have members' mini talks, and we have a few topics lined up. In February Martin Sheader would talk about Peru. In March Julie Carey, who is secretary of Crawley Branch will speak to us – her main interests are Asclepiads and hybrid *Echinopsis*. Ben Turner had recently

been to California and in April he would be showing us pictures from the Huntington Gardens and the LA County Arboretum. In May, we would hold a cultivation workshop, including the plant swap. In June, Chris Ayers from Croydon would speak about South Africa – on his previous visit to the branch, he gave us a talk on Namibia. The South West Cactus Mart will also take place in June. In July, Graham Evans from St. Leonards-on-Sea would talk about Gymnocalyciums – he is a fantastic grower and will be bringing along live plants for the talk. In July, Alice will host the annual Garden Party. If anyone else wants to host an open day during the year, do let David know. July will end with the New Forest Show. We will have a 2nd cultivation evening in August, with the topics likely to be composts, repotting and watering. August will also see the Oxford Branch Show, which will also feature a show by the Haworthia Society, and a new event in Sevenoaks consisting of a show and cactus mart. In September, David Traish will speak to us – he is secretary of North Surrey Branch and is also affiliated to the Royal Photographic Society. September will also see us featuring at the Romsey Show. In October, Hazel Taylor will speak to us – she attends the US National Conventions and field trips, and she will speak about the plants of the Big Bend area. In November, Mark Preston will speak on Epiphytic cacti - a topic which has not been covered at our meetings in dozens of years. And in December, we will have the AGM and social again!

David also mentioned the Zone 11 Quiz, which was hosted by Portsmouth in November, and which Southampton won, for the third or fourth year in succession. As a result, the Mealy Bug trophy returned home, since it was Ivor who had built it. The Zone Quiz has been going for 20 years or more, but attendances have been getting lower and lower, and some years it is a struggle to even get teams together. So it has been decided that this would be the last quiz for the foreseeable future, and we'll try and have some other events where members across the zone can participate. In the past we have held shows and conventions, and perhaps we can have an open day or a special meeting when a visiting speaker is in the country. Dot suggest a coach outing somewhere, and David mentioned that Portsmouth Branch used to do these, but interest there had waned to the point where they become unviable.

David also provided an update on the Branch accounts for the year. The financial data had been given to Colin and Lorraine after our last meeting and Colin had prepared the accounts, but hadn't had a chance to check them as yet, and neither did Alice. It did appear that we had made a small profit for the year. Once the accounts have been checked and

finalised, we should have them ready to hand out and should be able to adopt them in the new year.

Ivor Biddlecombe mentioned that all the displays we put on during the year had been a success. Romsey was the best, thanks to the prize money we received. Unfortunately, the Sparsholt Countryside Day was spoilt by rain throughout the day. The Table Show was OK, but could do with more entries. He also mentioned that he would like people to continue bringing in plants for use at the public displays.

Richard White mentioned that library borrowings had increased slightly over the past couple of years, perhaps due to the new books we had added, or maybe people wanted to avoid reading about Brexit or Trump (although David mentioned that someone has just named an Echinopsis hybrid "Brexit"!). The new books were mentioned in the November newsletter and we'll also update the listing of books on our website.

For an update on the newsletter and website, I didn't have much to say, but mentioned that our website seems to have an average of 50 visitors per day, although some of these are likely to be automated search engines which index the Internet on a regular basis. It also looks like we have visits from 80 different countries each month! It's been a while since I put new images on the site, and so I will put up some pictures from recent shows when I have some free time.

David mentioned that we had no new nominations for the Committee, but the current officers were all willing to continue, so they were re-elected. Our ex-members – Mark Larter and Sue Wilson - went over to the Isle of Wight at the start of 2016. David said they have not yet started to attend the Isle of Wight meetings as they still have too many things to sort out after their move. A bottle of wine was presented to Pauline and Alec Mant as gratitude for their monthly donation of cakes for sale as refreshments at the branch meetings.

Peter Down was asked to award the trophies for the Table Show. Bruce won the trophies for Open Succulents, Intermediate Cacti and Intermediate Succulents. Ivor won the trophy for Open Cacti. Alec Mant won the Novice Trophy and Miranda Richardson won the Ladies Cup for most points won by a female.

Following the award of the trophies, it was time for everyone to help themselves to the food and drink!

Vinay Shah

Zone 11 Quiz

The Zone 11 Quiz for 2016 was held on 19th November, and it was hosted by Portsmouth Branch.

Maggie Maddock started by explaining that following discussions with the other secretaries in Zone 11, this would probably be the last Quiz that the Zone would be holding - the event seemed to have had its day, and it no longer attracted as many people as it once used to. However, the Zone would still like to hold some sort of event that would involve all three of the local branches, so if anyone had ideas or suggestions for events that all three branches could participate in – like mini-conventions or garden parties, please contact David Neville.

The question master for the Quiz would be Cliff Thompson, with Carrie Hands keeping tab of the scores. The three teams were composed as follows:

Portsmouth :

Del McColl-McWha, Lesley Akhurst, Paul Klassen

Southampton :

Bruce Beckerleg, Richard White, Vinay Shah

Isle of Wight :

Stephen Woods, Ron Mitchell, Antony Mitchell

There were 6 overall rounds of questions, and each round contained 7 sets of questions, so in total there were 42 questions to be answered by each team. If a team got an answer wrong, it was passed on to the next team, as appropriate. Questions were passed on to the audience if none of the teams were able to answer, but the audience would not get any points (not that any of them wanted the Mealy Bug trophy!). Peter Down was in the audience, lending support to the Southampton team.

Round 1 consisted of some general knowledge questions. All the teams got off to a good start, with just one point being dropped out of the 21 on offer.

Round 2 was again general knowledge, but this time with a focus on Geography. Southampton got all their answers right and also picked up a couple of bonus points, and the round ended with Southampton on 16 points, Isle of Wight on 13 and Portsmouth on 12.

Round 3 involved questions on cacti and succulents and general horticulture. We learnt that the only cactus to occur outside the Americas is *Rhipsalis baccifera*. And the answer to “What is floristically peculiar about Mammillaria” was that they don’t

flower from the areole. The answer to “of the 100s of species of bromeliads, what is peculiar about the pineapple?” was that it was the only member of this family which is grown commercially. Southampton managed to get a couple more bonus points and increased their lead.

Round 4 involved questions about the human body and medicine. Did you know that the largest organ of the human body is the skin? And that the smallest bone in the human body is in the ear? Southampton again won some bonus points and we ended the round with Southampton on 32 points, Isle of Wight on 24 and Portsmouth also on 24.

The questions in Round 5 were about Science. We learnt that name of the first Soviet artificial satellite was Sputnik and its name means “space traveler” in Russian – and that garlic and onions get their pungent flavour due to compounds of Sulphur. Southampton got one question wrong, allowing the other teams to catch up a little – but would it be enough?

The final round involved questions about food. Richard’s botanical knowledge game into play and he was able to answer the question “To which plant family does lettuce belong” with the correct answer of Asteraceae. And I was able to answer “from what is vanilla obtained” – it’s from the seed pod of the vanilla orchid. The round ended with the final scores as Southampton 45 points, Isle of Wight 38.5 and Portsmouth 37.

Both visiting teams thanked Portsmouth for their hospitality in hosting the event and for the refreshments which were provided for everyone during the mid-meeting break. The Mealy trophy was duly presented to the Southampton team and ended up being given a ride back to Southampton!

Vinay Shah

Next Month's Meeting

Our next meeting will be held on February 7th and will feature a talk on Peru by our own member, Martin Sheader. We are sure to see some of the cacti and other plants which can be found there

The February Table Show will consist of the **Eriosyce** group (cacti) and the **Crassulaceae** group (succulents), along with "plant in flower". 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 Eriosyce group includes *Austrocactus*, *Eriosyce*, *Horridocactus*, *Islaya*, *Neochilenia*, *Neoporteria*, *Pyrrhocactus* and *Thelocephala*.

The Crassulaceae group contains subgroups for *Adromischus*, *Aeonium*, *Crassula*, *Echeveria*, *Sedum* and *Sempervivum*. These subgroups cover many species, including *Adromischus*, *Bryophyllum*, *Cotyledon*, *Kalanchoe*, *Tylecodon*, *Aeonium*, *Greenovia*, *Monanthes*, *Crassula*, *Rochea*, *Dudleya*, *Echeveria*, *Graptopetalum*, *Pachyphytum*, *Tacitus*, *Sedum*, *Jovibarba*, *Orostachys*, *Rosularia*, and *Sempervivum*

Forthcoming Events

Sat 14 th Jan	Isle of Wight	No Meeting
Sat 21 st Jan	Portsmouth	Members talks - Paul Klaassen & Angie Money
Tue 7 th Feb	Southampton	Peru - Arequipa to Ancash – Martin Sheader
Sat 11 th Feb	Isle of Wight	Branch Quiz (questions by Ron Mitchell)
Sat 18 th Feb	Portsmouth	Large Flowered Mammillarias – Chris Davies
Tue 7 th Mar	Southampton	Plants from my Collection – Julie Carey
Sat 11 th Mar	Isle of Wight	Slide Show – SW USA #1 - by Keith Grantham
Mon 13 th Mar	Southampton	Branch Committee Meeting
Sat 18 th Mar	Portsmouth	Cacti & Succulents - 5 short Videos - Tony Mace
Tue 4 th Apr	Southampton	The Huntington Desert Garden & LA County Arboretum - Ben Turner

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