

British Cactus & Succulent Society

Southampton & District Branch Newsletter

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Editorial

We're into February with a cold spell to match. However, so far, the winter hasn't been that bad, although perhaps it's too early to make that assessment. I haven't stepped into the conservatory for over a month but the things I can see through the kitchen window seem to be doing OK. I guess there are a few winter growers which might need some water so I'll have to and find a warm/sunny day in the next week or so.

Announcements

Copies of the **Branch Programme for 2018** are available from the front table.

Notes from our secretary David :

2018 has certainly got off to a very strong start, with notification received from the BCSS Membership Secretary of **4 new members** joining us during the month of January! I would like to welcome Joanne Cull, David Jackson, Karen Housby and Jonathan Brock to Southampton Branch, and I hope very much that they will all join us at our monthly meetings. I have sent them each a welcoming email and a copy of our programme; so if you see some new faces appearing at our meetings please make a special effort to greet them and make them feel welcome.

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 in December. You can also renew using a Paypal or credit card payment from the BCSS website, at:

<http://society.bcss.org.uk/index.php/subscriptions.html>

(when renewing online you'll need to know your BCSS membership number, this is written on the address label of your Journal – David and I also have a list of membership numbers for current members).

Those of you who have been members of the BCSS for a few years may have known **Derek Bowdery** - he used to run Eau Brink Nursery (Kings Lynn) and sell plants at events such as Havering and the National Show. Sadly, he passed away on 13th January. His health had deteriorated last year and he was diagnosed with leukaemia. He was a close friend of John Pilbeam's and David Neville knew him well. At the last branch meeting David mentioned that he had visited Derek just before Christmas, and it was apparent at that time that it was unlikely he'd be able to recover his health. I think everyone who had dealings with him will remember him as a genuinely nice person.

Last Month's Meeting

Members' Mini-Talks

Tom Radford started the series of talks for the evening. He apologised for his voice being hoarse. His talk would show some pictures from Argentina, but before that he wanted to show us 2-3 plants of interest. The first was an Ariocarpus which he had for over 30 years. We saw a picture of it flowering in 2015, something which it did every year. It looked a little sad, with brown leaves at the bottom and he decided to pot it on. It had never grown a lot of root but he chose a slightly bigger pot which was twice as deep as the previous one. He broke off the brown pieces and in the 2 years since then, it has undergone quite a transformation - it has puffed out and really grown. The plant must be around 50 years old in total, and it is amazing how a little bit of repotting has made it come to life.

Next was a plant given to him by Dot in the summer, *Tylecodon singularis*. It was a single leaf in a pot. A few weeks afterwards, the leaf had looked sickly and died off. He thought he had killed the plant, but left the pot under the bench, rather than throwing it out. In September / October last year, he

was surprised to see it throw up a shoot. He took a picture of it a week ago and it was three times the size of the original leaf.

Next was a picture which he had taken with a new camera which he had bought to principally to take pictures of birds. The camera – a Panasonic Lumix FZ82 – had a couple of innovative features - you can extract individual pictures from a video taken on the camera, and also it has a focus stacking function which enables users to take multiple images of the same frame with different areas in focus, then combine the selected focus areas into one image – or you can change the focus point of a previously taken picture. The photo stacking feature means it is really good for taking close ups where you also want good depth of field. Photo stacking is something that can also be done using software but it's often difficult to use, and having it all contained within the camera is very convenient. The camera has an RRP of £329 but I found Amazon selling it for £299. Bristol Cameras are also selling it for the same price and purchases now can get a free SD card and warranty extension to 5 years.

Tom said he uses the camera for taking bird pictures because it has a 1200mm focal length. The picture he had taken was of *Massonia jasminiflora* - which is a South African bulb which forms squat flowers which sit atop the wide leaves. A close up of the flowers with the new camera showed amazing amounts of detail, and you could clearly see the anthers which were around 2mm in size. The camera allows huge magnification and yet keeps sharp focus and we could see the shiny surface of the anther stems.

Now it was time for some pictures from Argentina. He went there 6 years ago, on a bird watching trip - there were 8 people in the group. They went to the north of the country initially and there were lots of cacti around (Trichocereus types), fine specimens as far as the eye could see and you could also see them growing along the tops of the hills. Later they went to Southern Argentina, and it's very windy there so the plants tend to be short and ground hugging.

North of Buenos Aires, he found an orchid, *Sacoila lanceolata*. There were quite a few of them around, and they had pink flowers. They were at a salt marsh and in the distance was a lake. Some of the plants on the ground looked like heathers. A quite rare spider occurs here, and a bird *Salinas monjita* which eats those spiders is only found here. We saw a picture of the bird, taken from a distance of 80m. *Opuntia quimilo* has orange flowers, and it is unusual in that many of the flowers grow from areoles in the centre of the pad rather than along the edge of the pad.

There were quite a few of these plants here and they do grow to a gigantic size. We also saw columnar cacti with holes in them, bored by woodpeckers - there aren't many trees here. *Opuntia sulphurea* has yellow flowers - these were nice plants with tremendous spination.

Further down the coast, he saw nest holes in the cliffside and these had been created by burrowing parrots. He saw the parrots later on, many had gathered on a bush, and they were tearing seeds off and jumping up and down on the plant. We also saw a large hairy armadillo, which was just wandering along the side of the road. Further down the country, you enter the region of Patagonia. It was spring/early summer and there were vast numbers of flowers in the wild, with patches of yellow. There were also various bushes growing on the side of the hills. One of these bushes is the "mother in law" bush, *Mulinum spinosum*. It's a spiny plant with lots of small yellow flowers.

Further along, they were looking for a bush dwelling owl, but didn't find it despite looking for two hours. They did however find *Maihueiniopsis darwinii*. It is related to the Opuntias and is quite a compact plant, strongly spined and with well coloured orange flowers. There were quite a few of these plants here. In another area, they found lots of *Calceolaria uniflora* plants coming into flower. It was difficult to photograph the flowers properly since there was a constant 40mph wind and the flowers were fluttering around. We saw some guanacos - these are camelids. Llamas and Alpacas are domesticated animals but the Guanacos are wild and not farmed. They are quite widespread in Argentina. Mara is the Patagonian cavy, which is a large rodent. It didn't look very happy, probably due to the wind. The winds are probably why a lot of the plants there have a humped shape and stick close to the ground and are solid. *Azorella compacta* is such a plant - they are very hard bodied and you can jump up and down on them without damaging the growths. At this time of the year, there were lots of flowers. Another Azorella was a different species and it had much larger flowers and the body was more open.

We saw a baby plant of the Mulinum, where the spines could be seen more clearly. *Junellia micrantha* is from the verbena family. Tom said it's possible to place the camera on the ground and then use an iPhone to check the image and activate the camera. Doing this also gets a better depth of field. Another Junellia, *J. tonini* had mixtures of white and pink flowers. We saw the conventional picture taken from above and another shot taken from the side with the camera on the ground. *Adesmia salicornioides* has yellow flowers and is from the

pea family, and this plant was photographed while he was at the airport. Having checked in his baggage, he had around 3 hours to kill and decided to explore outside the airport and he found the plants growing there. We again saw a ground shot. A bright yellow splodge was the flower of *Alstroemeria patagonica* - this also grows very close to the ground. We also saw a Magellanic woodpecker, with its black body and red head. People sometimes go to Southern Patagonia to see them, and they saw 5 in half an hour so they did very well. We end with a picture of Tom posing at the border, with Chile in the background and Argentina in the foreground.

Peter Bircher was next. He said that this was supposed to be an introduction to the world of cacti and to himself. He's been a member of the branch for a couple of years but had been growing cacti since his early school years. The first slide wasn't his collection - but a display of plants by Southfields Nurseries, at RHS Malvern. One of the first plants he got was *Cereus peruvianus*. As it grew and offset, it got split and repotted and many of friends were given the offsets. When he left home, he left the plant in the care of his mother. 20 years ago he took possession of the plant and he still has cuttings from that original plant which would now be aged around 65! He considers himself a cactus collector with an academic interest in plants and he studies things like growth patterns.

The cacti he collects depends on what he notices at displays or at places like hawering or oxford show. The space he has available for doing this is very limited, after he moved to Bishops Waltham. He is not allowed any cacti in the house and his wife uses up any space indoors for her orchid collection. He does have a small 4' x 8' lean-to, and we saw it, wrapped up in bubble wrap for the winter period. He keeps the bubble wrap in place all year round and only removes it from the front section, in the summer months. Inside this greenhouse, we saw a selection of plants which he was growing. An *Epiphyllum* hybrid was named as "Jersey Beauty". There was an assortment of other plants including *Notocaci* and *Euphorbias*. He's a fan of using beds to plant out the plants - but he can't really do this in the limited space available, although he did mention that some of the plants are planted into the soil and he's been studying the root development. A lot of his earlier plants died off from overwatering. He considers that plants do grow better in open soil versus in pots - this is probably a subject for a talk of its own - but generally speaking, the plants develop better root systems in beds.

One of his *Ferocacti* is now 4 feet tall and it's getting too large, he thinks he will shortly have to get rid of it. The next picture should carry a health and safety warning - it's one of the images which can be found on the internet under collections of people having a bad day - it was a person covered in about 20 opuntia pads! We saw the temperature controller in his greenhouse - it was his own system. The fan heater is left permanently on and the temperature is controlled by some electronics he built himself. He can control it to half a degree. We also saw the box with relays in, which switch the fan heater on and off. He can maintain 7°C at a height of 4 feet during the winter. His plants get through most winters without any problems. We saw a better shot of the bed. A *Carnegiea* in the corner puts on just a few millimetres each year - it will probably outlast him!

He has also built a few shelves, to allow him to house some extra plants. If the plants get too tall, he chops the tops off and when the offsets get too numerous, he cuts them off as well. The greenhouse faces west. If it's going to be particularly cold he does put some bubble wrap on the back wall for extra insulation. Now we saw a plant he had bought from David Neville and which he had brought along to one of our cultivation meetings last year. It was *Melocactus matanzanus* and it had grown what appeared to be offsets in the cephalium of the plant. He has collected several offsets from the cephalium and potted them up, and 3-4 of them seem to be fattening up.

He ended by mentioning that throughout the whole of the period he's been growing the plants, he's never been a member of the society, until the point when he joined up a couple of years ago - we were really the first club he's joined. He found it all very interesting, and he said he'd like to hear more about members and their specialisations - there was clearly a lot of expertise in the room.

Robin Caddy was our next speaker. He mentioned that he started coming to our meetings from August last year, having joined the society just before then. He had been growing cacti since the age of 15. His talk would be about a visit to Southfields Nursery (also known as Cactusland) in Lincolnshire last July. David mentioned that the nursery previously used to be up in Humberside. Robin said it was quite easy to miss the place when you drive up - apparently they have been told they can't have any signage on the main road. You go up a driveway, past a house and then see the large greenhouse. It's a 3-4 hr journey from here. They close at lunchtime and there's no food/drink on sale there, so you should plan accordingly. It also takes at least a

couple of hours to walk around the sales area. He went in July and was told this was completely the wrong time - you should go in May or June, when a lot more of the plants will be in flower. The layout consists of 4 distinct areas and three of these are out of bounds but you can freely walk around the main sales area. He had taken his camera with him, but it had unfortunately switched itself on in his car's glovebox, and hence the battery was flat when he got there! Therefore all his pictures had to be taken on his mobile phone.

The first area you go in is the sales area and there are plants everywhere. Southfields also do a lot of mail order as well. There was an area set aside for larger plants, other than that, plants were laid out with similar plants next to each other. We saw an overall shot of everything. There were lots of plants up high and other plants on window rails. There was some sort of pattern to the tables - younger plants were on one side and then older plants / larger pots further along. You can walk up and down the aisles. If you're tall, watch out not to walk into the trailing plants. We saw some of the plants he brought home - *Rebutia donaldiana* and *muscula*, and *Mammillaria schumannii*. The latter was a small plant but it had beautiful magenta flowers. *Gymnocalycium cordobense quilino* had formed a large bud. Echinopsis hybrids "Lincoln Rainbow" and "Bourne Dash" were pretty spectacular. These have short lived but spectacular flowers. We saw some general plants around the greenhouses. It's a glorious place to spend 2 hours. He has a thing for the plants with showy flowers. He mentioned he had been given a spiny plant on his birthday - *Echinocactus grusonii*, and mentioned that he will probably need some help when it comes to repotting it otherwise it might rip him to shreds.

David mentioned that everything is grown from seed. The owner, Bryan Goodey is in his 60s and he and his wife Linda run the nursery. Considering he went at the wrong time of the year, it was still pretty remarkable to see all the plants. There's not much in the way of succulents. We saw some of the "rats tails", ready to pounce on him. Each bench is really large so there are tongs to grab plants from the middle. In the out-of-bounds areas, he could see large plants which had just finished flowering. David said this is the only nursery in the UK where you can get locally grown show quality plants. At some of their displays, they sell off their display plants at the end of the shows, and they have so much stock they can put on another display the week after even after doing that. The only sign of anything being to control insects was some blue flypaper - David said this is used to catch western flower thrips, which can damage certain types of

cacti and they seem to be attracted to the colour blue. Robin said if you get a chance to plan a trip up there, you will enjoy it. He will go again in May or June.

His final 5 slides were inspired by last year's talk on close up photography. We saw the spines of incredible - *Turbincarpus schwarzii* var. *rubriflorus* - the tiny plants have incredible barbs. We also saw a *Gymnocalycium* flowering with a white-brown-pink flower. and more close ups of the centre of the flower. There was also a close up of a bud poking through a forest of spines.

After the mid meeting break, Paul Klaassen talked about his favourite spot to visit - the town of Pichidangui in Chile. We started with some Google Map views and zoomed in. It's on the coast and the PanAmerican highway passes nearby. The coloured segment of the map was the area he would focus on. It's right on the coast and he's been there 18 times since 2001. Ritter visited this spot and called it a *Neoporteria* paradise. It's just a wonderful and logical place to stop if you are travelling north from Santiago, which is 200km (120m) away - after a 12 hour flight it's just the right distance to cover before you stop and stretch your legs. The Quilimari valley is nearby. There are sandy beaches here, making it a popular tourist spot these days. We saw a map with his "stop" numbers - the places where they explored, going as far inland as the cacti do - after that you encounter the coastal mountains. Many of the properties here are tourist houses and summer houses.

Three different species of *Eriosyce* are found here and they have their own zones. The group of conservationists who have worked here include Roger Ferryman and the local Adriana Hoffmann. A problem in Chile is the development of properties along the coastline, from Valparaiso all the way up to Antofagasta. Some of these include huge hotel complexes. We saw a cactus in the foreground - these were spiny plants of *Eulychnia castanea*. In the background was the Pacific Ocean. Paul mentioned that Angie likes to take pictures of the waves crashing onto the rocks - his preference is to avoid them! There's a little chapel in the middle of the rocky coastal line. They found *Calandrinia grandiflora*, which is a member of the *Portulacaceae*. The flowers were a deep pink colour, difficult to capture properly on camera. We also saw plants of *Carpobrotus aequilaterus*. This is not a native plant - Paul mentioned that many of the plants was escapees from local gardens which had found the conditions to their liking. *Oxalis bulbocastanum* is a native and it can be sometimes found as a weed in plants bought from Holly Gate.

Other plants that were growing there included Bryophyllum and Agave. Some of these non-native plants were overwhelming the *Eriosyce* that grows there. We saw a little cove to the north of Pichidangui - they had visited this in 2001 and 2003, but now it's fenced off community and you can no longer explore there.

In 2015 in Pichidangui, they came across a sign which had been put up just a few weeks earlier - it was the result of a project sponsored by the BCSS, with pictures of a dozen endemic plants found in the area and encouraging the locals to look after them. There had also been some clearing-out of the non-native plants which were overwhelming the native plants. We saw another view of the sign from a distance. Paul commented that in the 1980s there were lots of articles being written about conservation but it's not talked about as much today. We saw view of the habitat that had been cleared out of the "weeds" and the areas containing plants marked out by rows of rocks. This type of endeavour only works if the local people get involved and understand the importance of protecting their local plants.

We saw *Eriosyce curvispina* ssp. *mutabilis* - this was previously classified as a *Horridocactus*. It is a low growing plant with a huge tap root, which pulls it into the ground when it gets dry. The *Carpobrotus* plants just overwhelm it. We saw a view of the river Quilimari - and the valley. Another *Eriosyce* featured the yellow flower of a nearby *Oxalis*. *Alstromerias* also grow here. Also found here is *Eriosyce subgibbosa* - it is a very variable plant and it occurs over a huge range. It is hard to distinguish from *E. chilensis* when not in flower, but the flower is quite distinct, bright pink in colour and with reflexed petals. It can get quite large. These pictures were taken in the area that is now fenced off. The plants were surrounded by quite a few seedlings - each *Eriosyce* in flower will produce lots of fruit, these seeds fall into cracks in the ground and some will eventually germinate. We saw a view though a gap in the rocks showing a dozen young plants, and they were able to move one of the rocks, to allow a full view of the young plants, taken from the side. Their bodies had etiolated (elongated) as the young plants attempted to reach towards the top of the crack.

Also growing on the *Eriosyce* plants was a parasitic plant called *Tristerix aphyllus* - it's a type of mistletoe with bright red flowers which is supposed to grow on *Trichocereus* plants but he had also seen it growing on other cacti such as *Eulychnia* and *Eriosyce*. They met Juan Carlos Johow, a local conservationist. He had a house there which was on

offer for £20,000 - Paul was quite tempted. Paul's idea of a group photo was to show Angie, Cliff Thomson, Ian Woolnough and himself each climbing through a fence, trying to avoid getting caught on the barbed wire! The final plant he wanted to show us was *Eriosyce chilensis* and we saw several views of this - the flowers are a pale pink colour with some yellow in the centre. What Paul found upsetting was the IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature) classification for this plant. IUCN produces a "red list" of endangered species of fauna and flora, and this plant features on their lists as one of the 100 most endangered cacti in the world. Paul thought this was wrong, there are a dozen other cacti in Chile which are rarer, and this plant can't be considered rare - looking around the locality there were quite a few of these plants here, and probably more at other nearby localities as well. He realises the difficulty of verifying plant populations, but if the information published by these organisations is suspect, then people will stop paying attention to their classifications.

Next it was David Neville's turn - he was going to show us some of his holiday snaps of unusual plants encountered in various places during his travels in Europe. The first pictures were taken at the Amalfi coast, south of Napoli in Italy. He had noticed a palm tree growing there and spotted that some other plant was growing on the trunk of the palm. This was *Sedum dasyphyllum*. Also growing there was a more unusual plant - a Baobab, *Adansonia digitata*. It was 6 feet high and in great condition. The temperatures there were sub zero in the evenings but the plant seemed to be unaffected by this. These plants grow very slowly, so it must have been quite old. At Sorrento, in the bay of Naples, he saw a hotel with plants of *Sedum morganianum* hanging down from balconies at various levels. The sedums had grown really well and they were also decorated with electric lights which presumably came on in the evenings. This is also how they grow on the steep walls of the canyons where they grow in Mexico. In a bed in front of the hotel, there was also a *Yucca* and a tree aloe, *Aloe bainesii* (*Aloidendron barberae*). Ben Turner said he had taken a picture of the same Aloe at the same hotel!

Next was a street in Torremolinos, on the Costa del sol. Flights to there were just £25 from Southampton Airport, and the hotels are cheap in February. The weather is quite pleasant out there. The street was lined with plants of *Ceiba* (kapok). David said the young plants are very prone to red spider, but these were large mature plants with a lovely bottle trunk. In Malaga, he had taken a picture of a *Furcraea*. These look like Agaves, but they come from Central America and they are more

temperature sensitive. The plant was 8 feet across. It grows a single rosette and then throws up a thick flower spike which also forms bulbils which then drop everywhere around the plant.

You don't often see cactus graffiti, but he had photographed an *Opuntia*-type cactus painted on the side of a water or electric meter box in a park. There was also a large Kapok tree (from Brazil) with large fruits growing right at the top of the plant. It is dormant in the winter, but they are spectacular when they flower. The trees can be as big as English oak trees and are covered in showy flowers. While photographing the city gates he captured a decorated tourist bus going past. Outside the church was a magnificent *Nolina (beaucarnea) recurvata* plant in full flower. It must have been 20 feet tall, judging by the people standing near it. It's a pity these plants can't be grown outside in this country. Next were some pictures he had taken when he judged a cactus show in Cornwall last May. The featured picture showed a 2 feet x 2 feet board with 16 *Epiphyllum* flowers mounted on it - it looked quite spectacular. The names of the *Epiphyllum* hybrids were written on an accompanying sheet. His final pictures were taken at Southfields Nursery, which he visited in April. They featured mixed *Rebutia* hybrids, and there was a wonderful mix of bright flower colours - he uses one of the pictures as the wallpaper on his mobile phone.

Our final speaker was Richard White. He started off with a couple of stories. He was away for the September meeting since he was on a trip to South Africa, and on his return, David asked if he would be willing to give a talk in January. He said yes, thinking it was a long time away and he had plenty of time to prepare. The second story was that he had got the date mixed up with 2019 (when our January meeting will be held a week later than normal) so he hadn't sorted out his pictures until he saw an exchange of emails earlier in the day. So it turned into a rush job!

He was in South Africa to attend an IBSA (Indigenous Bulb Association of South Africa) convention. The meeting was held near Worcester, around 100 miles inland from Cape Town. The meeting involved one day of talks followed by a couple of days going around by coach, looking at plants in the company of with experts. He also chose to extend his trip by a few days to do some exploring on his own. During the coach trip, half the people travelled in a convoy of cars up to Middelpos and stayed at the hotel there.

The first plants we saw were *Gladiolus* and *Babiana* - these have fan shaped leaves. We also saw another

Babiana. There were masses of daisies all over the place. This was the end of August / beginning of September. Next was a *Lachenalia* - these bulbous plants are in the hyacinth family. *Nolitia*(?) is a garden plant in this country, and was followed by a *Gladiolus*. A lot of these plants grow in areas which are burnt by fires, and when the vegetation on top is cleared away by the fire, these plants suddenly get more light and can thrive before the other stuff grows back. We saw another *Babiana*. If he sees an animal, it takes priority over the plants - and we saw a rather hairy caterpillar climbing up a plant leaf. *Pelargonium triste* has pink flowers - it is one of the geophytes that dries down to a corm in the dry season. A bulb called *Spiloxene* had unusual blue/green coloured 6-petaled flowers. A butterfly was stationary long enough to be pictured. A picture of their tour bus showed no number plate on the bus and also a dent - this was due to a minor accident the previous day.

We saw a sundew with a white flower. An unidentified *Crassula* had quite thin leaves. There were *Oxalis* plants everywhere. The ground was very sandy and there was a fern in the background. There were some terrestrial orchids around, there are supposed to be a couple of species in the area and he wasn't sure if the featured pink-flowered plant was one of them or a hybrid. We saw another *Babiana* - some of the flowers were being pollinated by a monkey beetle, with its head stuck inside the flower. We saw an overall view of the landscape from head height, and we saw members of their party looking for plants. A *Morea* is a member of the iris family. *Ferraria* is also part of that family and it has wonderful flowers with wrinkly edges and subtle colours - he wasn't sure what attracts the pollinators. We saw *Gladiolus*, *Oxalis* and *Lachenalia* clumps all growing together - it was hard to tell which leaves belong to which flower.

An amaryllis caterpillar was a striking combination of brown and orange colour on a white body. A *Gladiolus* had elongated petals. We saw the amaryllis moth caterpillar shedding its skin while sitting on a mesemb. Mesembs are hard to identify at the best of times, but the plant had glistening leaves, like the livingstone daisy / ice plant types. Some of the pink flowered mesembs were growing in a clump of daisies, allowing you to see the differences in flower structure. *Monsonia* is a member of the *pelargonium* family. A click beetle was on a mesemb flower - they flick themselves into the air to move around. Another *Ferraria* had yellow flowers. A mesemb with pink flowers had seed pods as did a *Cheridopsis* - perhaps *C. candidissima*. A *Senecio* had a yellow flower. A small weevil had climbed onto some of the stems. A *Romulea* had

yellow flowers - some of the species go all the way up Africa upto the Mediterranean. A lot of South African bulbs which are unrelated have spiral or curly leaves, and Richard thought it was maybe an adaptation to conserve water - Bulbines, *Albuca* and *Romulea* do it. A grasshopper nymph was really well camouflaged - it had short wings so perhaps it wasn't ready to fly as yet. *Aloinopsis acuta* is a plant which had not been seen for many years, but it has recently been re-discovered. A question from the audience asked how they were able to find these plants - the answer was that in many cases, they were taken to see them.

We saw a shot of the Middelpoort hotel – there's no other hotel within 60-70 miles. We saw another grasshopper, and fields of flowers. It was a second year of drought which meant that the flowers were not as good as they could be. A *Romulea* had pink flowers. A plant with hairy leaves seemed to be a gesneriad. We saw plants of *Iris*, *Morea* and *Romulea* lined up neatly. Beetles were eating a red flower's petals. We saw a shot of the Tankwa karoo. A cotyledon was dried up, and there were various shrubby mesembs. *Tylecodon wallichii* had tall flower stems. A *Titanopsis* had yellow flowers. We saw the sign for the Tankwa National Park. In the distance - what looked like medium sized plants on the edge of the hill were actually baboons. A plant called *Androcymbium latifolium* had red flowers sitting on wide leaves - molecular biologists have moved this in the Colchicum family which seems strange since the structure of the plant looks quite different. Richard had more pictures to show, but we had gone past the 10pm deadline and it was time to end the meeting.

Vinay Shah

Books and things

New books in the library

There is one new book in our library so far in 2018, as mentioned in last month's newsletter, which is:

“*Succulents of Southern Africa*” by Robin Frandsen (2017), published by Honeyguide Publications, Somerset West, South Africa. This is not a field guide, unless you have very large pockets. There are over 500 pages which include, according to the blurb inside the dust-jacket, over 2,700 colour photographs of 1,117 species, subspecies and varieties, in 133 genera. There are also some interesting statistics in the introduction: apparently there are over 5,000 species of succulent plants in the area covered (South Africa, Namibia, Botswana, Lesotho, Swaziland, Zimbabwe and southern Mozambique), which is twice as many as there are

species of cacti in the Americas, and nearly half of all the succulent species “on the planet”, as it is fashionable to say nowadays.

After a brief introduction to succulent plants and their cultivation, there are quite a few pages about the pioneering plant explorers who, from the eighteenth century to the present, have found these plants and brought them to our attention. This section is very nice because it includes photographs or portraits of many of them, from Linnaeus to modern students such as Ernst van Jaarsveld and Steven Hammer. Despite these extras, there are still 474 pages of descriptions of plants. These have colour photos on the right-hand pages, with the corresponding text opposite, which hopefully will make the book very convenient when attempting to name some of the photographs I took last year! In order to include the maximum possible number and size of illustrations, the photos are arranged differently on every page, and printed right up to the margins, in defiance of conventional book-design wisdom. Some of the photos have sneaked across on to the left-hand pages, but there is still room for a decent paragraph of text and a second paragraph describing the distribution of every species – again a feature to make identification easier.

List of books in the library

As I mentioned in the November 2017 newsletter, I have updated our list of the books in the branch library. There are copies of the list on the front table for you to take away. Vinay has also updated the list on our web-site at :

<http://www.southampton.bcss.org.uk/library.html>

Read All About It!

Our speaker for today's meeting is Cliff Thompson from Portsmouth branch, who will be speaking on “Brazil - The Land of the Uebelmannia”. If you would like to read more on Brazilian cacti, we have many general books on cacti in our library which will include Brazilian species, but unfortunately we have no books on Brazilian genera. This might be because there are few such books. One that I know of is “Cacti of Eastern Brazil” by Taylor and Zappi (2004). We do have in our library “Small Opuntias” by Pilbeam J & Partridge (2016), which I expect will contain a number of species from Brazil.

However, there are some web sites dedicated to Brazilian cacti, including “The Brazilian Cacti Project” <http://www.brcactaceae.org> which is being constructed by Marlon Machado.

PS, since you ask, or even if you didn't, my *Cleistocactus colademononis* (which comes from

central Bolivia, not very close to Brazil) is not in flower at present.

Richard White

Next Month's Meeting

Our next meeting will be held on March 6th and will feature Ian Woolnough, talking about a trip which he made to Peru in 2017. We've had talks from Ian before and this part of South America contains a number of plants from different families, so it will be interesting to see what he shows us.

The March Table Show will consist of the **Opuntia** group (cacti) and the **Haworthia** 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 Opuntia group includes *Austrocylindropuntia*, *Cylindropuntia*, *Grusonia*, *Maihuenia*, *Maihueniopsis*, *Nopalea*, *Opuntia*, *Pereskia*, *Pterocactus*, *Puna*, *Tacinga*, *Tephrocactus* and *Tunilla*

The Haworthia group includes *Astroloba*, *Haworthia*, and *Poellnitzia*.

Forthcoming Events

Sat 10 th Feb	Isle of Wight	Sweet Peas - Keith Brewer
Sat 17 th Feb	Portsmouth	Gymnocalycium – Graham Evans
Tue 6 th Mar	Southampton	Peru 2017 – Ian Woolnough
Sat 10 th Mar	Isle of Wight	Nature in Close-up #5 - Colin Haygarth
Sat 17 th Mar	Portsmouth	Lithops - In Captivity East to West - Dr Jonathan Clark
Tue 3 rd Apr	Southampton	What I Saw Last Winter - Mexico & Madagascar - Paul Klaassen
Sat 14 th Apr	Isle of Wight	Show & Tell
Sat 21 st Apr	Portsmouth	Bring and Buy Auction
Tue 6 th May	Southampton	Cultivation & Propagation Workshop, with demonstrations and discussions

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

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