

British Cactus & Succulent Society

Southampton & District Branch Newsletter

September 2013



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Editorial	1
Announcements	1
Last Month's Meeting.....	1
Plants of Interest	1
Aloes Through the Ages	2
Table Show Results	7
Branch Committee Meeting	7
Bookworm Corner	7
Forthcoming Events	8
Next Month's Meeting	8

Editorial

The last month seems to have gone by very quickly. The weather has been quite pleasant, warm without being too hot on most days. It does feel a little strange to have only had to cut the grass a couple of times through the entire summer months, but I'm not complaining!

A few aloes have flowered recently along with the odd cactus here and there, but overall my collection is looking a little tired. Lack of feed / repotting is probably to blame here! This coming weekend, a number of us will be heading to ELK so I'm been trying to memorise what plants I've already got, to avoid picking up too many duplicates.

Announcements

The branch will be putting on a display and will have a sales table at the **Romsey Show** on 14th September. Setup will be on the preceding Friday, contact Ivor Biddlecombe for more details.

Ben Turner has created a **Facebook** page for our branch, and this can be found at:
www.facebook.com/southamptonbcss

The date for the **annual branch dinner** has been chosen as Friday 11th October, and the venue will again be the Luzborough House, which is situated between Romsey and North Baddesley. Please let David Neville know if you would like to attend.

Portsmouth Branch's **Autumn Show** will be held at the end of this month.

Charlie Hayter mentioned to me that he is on the lookout for a greenhouse electric heater, such as a Parwin – if anyone has one they are willing to part company with, please let me/him know.

Ivor is running low on stocks of **seeds** (which we sell at various events) so if you have harvested seed from your plants this year, please pass on your spares to him.

Last Month's Meeting

Plants of Interest

Ivor mentioned that sometimes you get a Lithops which has produced a three-sectioned plant instead of the usual 2 sections per head. When this happens, the plant usually reverts to normal after a year. However, he had one example that had retained the three heads through a whole year. He had also brought in *Lithops pseudotruncatella*. The bright yellow flower was fully open when he picked it out but unfortunately the flower had now closed up!

He showed his attempts at growing *Epithelantha micromeris* – the plants usually deteriorate over time. One plant however was grafted and it was growing exceptionally well, with dozens of offsets – it was attractive but looked a little bloated. A cristate form of *Epithelantha* (ssp. *unguispina*) was Ted Smith's plant and this seemed to be doing well on its own roots.

Next were some *Sempervivums* and *Jovibarbas*. You can occasionally get cristate *Sempervivums*, but most revert. *S. grandifolium* is one that doesn't. It has scented leaves which are also sticky so is unusual in a number of respects. *Jovibarbas* are more difficult to grow than *Sempervivums* - they have a tuberous root and offset around it. The best known species is *J. heuffelii* which has bronze to greeny bronze leaves. The cultivar "Be Mine" is dark purple and "Bronze Ingot" has lighter leaves. If you want to grow *Sempervivums* but don't want them to spread, then *Jovibarbas* are a good choice. The other difference is that *Sempervivums* have star shaped flowers (often pink) whereas *Jovibarbas* make tubular flowers which are yellow. Ivor ended

with *Sempervivum* "Oddity" which has outer leaves which curve around into tubes.

Aloes Through the Ages

Colin thanked the branch for inviting him back - he talked to us 2 years ago on Agaves, and this would be a similarly structured talk, covering Aloe history, Aloes in art, uses and abuses and then Aloe habitats and cultivation and also a look into the future. He mentioned that up to January, life was fine, but things have gone pear shaped because DNA analysis has suggested some new groupings and name changes may be necessary.

The story starts in South Africa where the Dutch were principal colonisers and had formed a colony at the Cape. One of the earliest commanders there was Simon van der Stel and he was interested in natural history and in the economical development of the Cape. In 1685, he set up a large expedition to go north to Namaqualand, to find a copper mine. He wanted to look at plants and animals too, and took along Hendrik Claudius who was an illustrator. They found the copper mine near the present day town of Springbok, and on route they found four aloes which were drawn by Claudius. The illustrated plants appear to be *Aloe dichotoma*, *Aloe khamiesensis*, *Aloe variegata* and *Aloe melanacantha*. This collection of paintings disappeared, but a diary of the expedition and the paintings turned up in 1922, in Trinity College, Dublin! No one knows how it got there and the Claudius paintings were eventually published in 1932. The paintings included other succulents (*Orbea variegata*) and animals too. Plagiarism was rife in those days and copies of the 4 Aloes originally drawn by Claudius were published (without credit) by Leonard Plukenet, physician to the King and Queen of England, in 1691. So somehow, he must have seen the original drawings and ended up usurping Claudius' priority.

The Dutch continued their explorations and sent back plants to the Hortus Medicus botanic gardens in Amsterdam, which were managed by uncle and nephew Jan and Casper Commelin. Between 1697 and 1706 they published 4 books and employed skilled artists to paint the plants. At this time, the names used for plant were polynomial descriptive names, so "Aloe africana arborescens montana non spinosa folio longissimo plicatili flore rubro" was the description for a shrubby mountainous African aloe with long non-spiny pleated leaves and red flowers. Thank goodness for Linnaeus who invented the binomial system which we use today - where the name assigned to the plant in 1768 became *Aloe plicatilis*. The illustrations were good quality

engravings. A large collection of these paintings were produced in Amsterdam. After the plants were painted, an engraving was produced, and the latter was used for printing - as a result the print would be a mirror image of the original painting. Another illustration featured *Aloe variegata* - this was painted sometime between 1686-1702 and it appeared in the 3rd book in 1703, and the picture was republished when it flowered in 1706, with the flower spike added to the original illustration.

Now to Arabia. A Royal Danish expedition to modern day Yemen was made in 1761 -1763, and the natural historian on this was Pehr Forsskål. He was a pupil of Linnaeus. He was the only botanist in the expedition, which also included a mathematician, Carsten Niebuhr. It was an ill fated expedition - most did not return, including Forsskål who died of the plague in 1763. Niebuhr did return and he took back the accumulated plants and notes. Niebuhr did the best he could with the material and in 1775, the first "Flora of Arabia" was published. It included 7 aloes. In 1962-1964 John Lavranos studied Arabian aloes and discovered 6 new species, and named one of them *Aloe niebuhriana*. One of the plants found by Forsskål was *Aloe pendens*. This was lost for over 200 years but rediscovered in 1975 by John Wood / Tom McCoy. It is a cliff dwelling aloe which likes growing in a hanging basket. It likes shade and goes red in the sun. It forms an unbranched flower spike and has yellow flowers.

Back to South Africa, and by now the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew had been established. Francis Masson was sent out as the first botanic collector from Kew. He went on 4 expeditions and in 1776 he did a travelogue in which he wrote "We found a new species of aloe here called by the Dutch Koker Boom, of which the Hottentots make quivers to hold their arrows... These trees were about 12 feet high..." Here we have the first description of *Aloe dichotoma*, by Masson in 1776. He was a botanical artist as well as an explorer and was more famous for his work on Stapeliads. In 1797 he published *Stapeliae Novae* which contained 41 painted illustrations of Stapelias in habitat. Unfortunately, he never painted *Aloe dichotoma*. William Paterson was sent to the Cape by the Countess of Strathmore to collect plants for her collection. He followed in Masson's footsteps and undertook four journeys between 1777 and 1779, and published a narrative of these journeys in 1789. There were 19 plates in that book, four of which were the 1st detailed illustrations of *A. dichotoma*.

Pierre-Joseph Redouté was a painter and botanical illustrator in Paris and he collaborated with the Swiss botanist Augustin De Candolle to produce

Histoire Naturelle des Plantes Grasses. This was a beautiful folio of succulent plants and it contained a few aloes. *Aloe marginalis* (now *A. purpurea*) was described in 1800 and had fleshy berries for fruits. In 1811 this was reclassified as a Lomatophyllum by the German botanist von Willdenow, who decided that Aloes with a berry (as opposed to a dried fruit capsule) should belong to a different genus.

Back in South Africa, Thomas Baines was an artist and international explorer who conducted an expedition to SW Africa. In 1866 he produced the first painting of the whole plant of *Aloe dichotoma*, with an ostrich added for additional impact! He is also famous as the co-discoverer of *Welwitschia* - the first name suggested for this monotypic genus was *Tumboa bainesii* - but eventually *Welwitschia mirabilis* was adopted. He also discovered a tree aloe in Natal, and by coincidence, Mary Elizabeth Barber was in the same area and both Baines and Barber sent material back to Kew. In 1874 William Dyer produced an article on the *Tree Aloes of Natal*, and suggested that *Aloe bainsii* and *Aloe barberae* were the same, but this got overlooked and it was finally in 1994 that *Aloe bainsii* became *Aloe barberae*.

Now in tropical East Africa, John Kirk was the consular general of an area called Zanzibar, which in those days was a large Arab sultanate spread between Tanzania and Kenya. He was interested in botany and went on expeditions and sent material back to Kew - *Huernia kirkii* and *Aloe kirkii* are named after him. He found *Aloe concinna* (now *Aloe squarrosa*) - but this does not occur natively in Kenya, it comes from Socotra, so somehow a plant had got to East Africa on the trade routes. A plate on *A. concinna* was published in *Curtis's Botanical Magazine* - this very famous publication was established by William Curtis in 1787 and is still in print today, so it is the world's longest running botanical magazine. It is published in parts and well over 11000 colour plates have been published to date. In the early days they were hand coloured. *Aloe plicatilis* appeared in 1799 and *Aloe variegata* in 1832. *Aloe distans* appeared in 1811 and the Socotran *Aloe perryi* in 1881 - the latter is medically important. In all, about 200 aloes have appeared. One of the problems with hand colouring is that each copy was slightly different. In 1948 because of a shortage of painters and production costs, Curtis switched to colour printing.

Prince Salm-Dyck had a large collection of succulent plants in Germany. He was particularly interested in cacti but was also interested in Aloes and Mesembs. Between 1836-1863 he produced a monograph of Aloes and Mesembs with 353 plates.

Some of the aloes were Gasterias and Haworthias. He was very wealthy and was a good botanical artist. Quite a lot of the species he described are no longer recognised, but one from 1849 is still valid - *Aloe ecklonis*, which is a grass-type aloe.

Moving to Sicily (Italy), Agostino Todaro was the director/curator of the gardens in Palermo, Sicily. In 1876-1886 he published *Hortus Botanicus Panormitanus*, which contained 40 plates, with 10 featuring Aloes and we saw *A. elegans* and *A. macrocarpa*. These, along with *A. percrassa* were collected by Schimper in Ethiopia. These were beautiful pieces of artwork - produced by chromolithography, an early form of colour printing.

Still in Italy, Alwin Berger was the curator of Sir Thomas Hanbury's gardens, La Mortola, for a 20 year period. He was fortunate since these gardens were on the Mediterranean coast and this was an ideal climate for growing succulents outdoors - the Aloes and Agaves thrived. He produced books on succulents, cacti, euphorbias, mesembs and so on, and in 1908 he produced monographs of the Aloe group. We saw *Aloe aethiopica* (now *A. elegans*) and *Aloe somaliensis*. Berger's work was a significant monograph.

Back in South Africa, in an attempt to emulate the Curtis Botanical Journal, in 1921 a journal called the *Flowering Plants of South Africa* was established. In 1945 the name was changed to *the Flowering Plants of Africa*. It is still in print today and over 2000 illustrations have been produced, including a couple of hundred aloes. One Aloe featured on the cover was *Aloe dumetorum* (= *A. ellenbeckii*) which is a lovely small growing Aloe from northern Kenya and southern Ethiopia. Another featured plant was *Aloe bulbicaulis* which produces a bulb. This plant can shrivel up and the leaves can disappear completely - he has one in his collection - but it will regenerate thanks to the bulb. It can form a rosette with 2 feet long leaves.

Madagascar is home to many aloes and in 1926 Perrier de la Bathie produced a monograph of Aloes and Lomatophyllums of Madagascar. He included 25 existing species of Aloe and added 13 new species, and described 6 Lomatophyllums. Unfortunately, there are not many illustrations in the book.

Moving to the modern age, Gilbert Reynolds started studying Aloes in 1930, and for the next 36 years studied them intensely, travelling 150,000 miles in the process. In 1950 he published *Aloes of South Africa* and in 1966 *Aloes of Tropical Africa and Madagascar*. He recognised 339 species in 1966,

and since that time to now, another 200 species have described. He named 86 new species, and many of those are still recognised today. He wore himself out and died in 1967. Reynolds did not work alone - he had collaborators, one of the important ones being Peter Bally who was based in Nairobi. Bally went on expeditions to Somalia and they published 12 species jointly. Peter Bally is more famous for his work on Euphorbias and also produced a monograph on Monadeniums. In 1993 Len Newton started a journal called Ballya to commemorate his work.

Colin mentioned that a lot of books and articles and papers on Aloe have been published since 1966, with titles such *The Aloes of Malawi*, *Aloes of Namibia* etc. Gideon Smith's *Guide to the Aloes of South Africa* is very nicely illustrated. In 2005, Charles Craib produced a book *Grass Aloes of the South African Veld* where he recorded 27 species. He died recently but *Aloe craibii* which was published in *Bradleya* in 2003 commemorates him. In 2010 the French-authored *Les Aloe de Madagascar* listed 120 species, so Madagascar is a hot bed of evolution and discovery, having moved from 35 species in 1926 to the present number. *Aloes - the Definitive Guide* was published in 2011 by 4 authors (including Colin himself) and it lists 519 species of Aloe in the main section and another 20 in the appendix. Currently the species total stands at 560. We saw a photo of the book signing event at Gordon Rowley's 90th birthday convention in Reading. A distribution map showed how many Aloe species are found in each county. Of course, South Africa dominates, but about a quarter of the Aloes come from Madagascar.

After the break we resumed on a new topic - Aloes in art. The oldest known art form is a wall painting from Pompeii, which dates from 79AD. In South Africa, cave paintings have been found, close to the border with Swaziland. These are dates as about 200-300 years old. African cave paintings don't generally feature plants. The images suggested they were perhaps *Aloe ferox* and *Aloe broomii* which occur near the caves.

Back to Europe and in Germany Prince Bishop of Eichstätt had an amazing garden and wanted the plants in it illustrated. He commissioned Basilius Besler to produce a book which had 450 illustrations and no words. The book *Hortus Eystettensis* is a famous book, with the 1st edition produced in 1612 and only 18 copies in existence. The last time one came up for sale, it went for £1m. We saw an illustration of *Aloe vera*. These were hand coloured illustrations. In Holland, Abraham Munting was a botanist and his books were valued for their extravagant artwork, featuring fancy pots and

scrolls. He produced a little booklet *Aloidarium* featuring 3 Aloes in 1680 and these illustrations reappeared in a later book in 1696. We saw *Aloe vera* and *Aloe maculata*. The pictures are interesting but not of any botanical significance.

In Pisa in 1723, Tilli produced a catalogue of the plants at the Pisa Botanic Gardens, called *Catalogue Plantarum Horti Pisani*. 7 aloes were illustrated, and we saw *Aloe maculata* and *Aloe variegata*, the latter featuring a gasteria or haworthia flower spike! Marianne North was a Victorian English lady who was quite wealthy and she travelled the world after her father died, painting plants from different countries. She visited SA, Mexico, California, the Canaries, India, Australia and New Zealand, so she was well travelled. In total she painted 832 different plants, all in oil. In 1882 she paid for a gallery at Kew to house her paintings. These have recently been recently restored. Quite a few succulents were featured and we saw the large tree aloe, *A. barberae* and *A. vera* naturalised on Tenerife.

The Dutch painter Van Laren produced a series of cards that could be bought at grocers and stuck in a collector's book (like cigarette/tea cards). This was published in 1931 - and in 1934, this was translated to English by Abbey Gardens Press, and the English edition was produced with all the pictures in place. The cover of the English edition featured *Aloe arborescens* and a total of 12 aloes were featured, including *Aloe plicatilis* and *Aloe striata*.

Gerhard Marx is interested in Haworthias and Euphorbias, but in 1984 he published 4 Aloe paintings. Two of these featured *Aloe peglerae*, *Aloe longistyla*. He is a very talented botanical artist. Another artist in South Africa is Auriol Batten - her book *Flowers of South Africa* (1988) included pictures of *Aloe variegata* and *Aloe arborescens*. She had the interesting style of using water colour paintings in foreground, with pencil sketches of the habitat in the background. Dorothy Byer is a Californian artist and we saw her painting of *Aloe bella* from 1995 - some of her paintings have featured on the cover of the American journal.

Moving to pottery, Portmerion's Botanic Garden series features 2 succulents - one was a cactus (*Selenicereus grandiflora*) and the other was *Aloe barbadensis* (= *Aloe vera*). The illustration had been copied from a herbal publication, *Green's The Universal Herbal of 1816-1820*, and even that might have been copied from an earlier work from the 1750s. Now for Aloes in metalwork. At the Pretoria National Botanic gardens (opened 1973) the GW Reynolds Gate features Hans Brugger metal work to

celebrate the contributions of Reynolds - the series of three gates features several different species.

Next to Japan and silk embroidery by Masako Sugiyama. We saw two pieces and were told that Gordon uses one of them to cover his TV set! Lots of stamps have featured succulents and Aloes in particular. We saw a set of stamps on a first day cover from South West Africa from 1981. The stamps showed 4 different species all found in Namibia and the cover itself featured *Aloe karabergensis*.

Now for uses and abuses. *Aloe vera* appears to have been used in various forms. In early works of botany such as the Dioscorides herbal, the medicinal uses were featured. The Codex Juliana Aniciae is a Greek Herbal from 512AD in the form of an illuminated manuscript and it is held in the national museum in Vienna. These days *Aloe vera* is a basis of a multi-billion dollar industry. Various books on its uses have been written but interestingly, no one knows where it comes from, it could even be a hybrid. There are no known natural populations, but its closest relatives are in Arabia. *Aloe vera* is grown commercially in Mexico, East Africa, the Canary islands. Half a dozen species of Aloe are exploited. *Aloe ferox* is not cultivated but natural populations are harvested sustainably - there are millions of trees in nature, and each plant is cropped every 3-4 years. The leaves are collected then stacked and pressed. The juice is collected and boiled then dried.

We saw a picture of dozens of products made from *Aloe vera*. Medicinally it is dubious how effective *Aloe vera* is. It does have an effect for skin conditions and burns - the juice stimulates repairs to damaged skin and there are also antibiotics in the juice. But whether it is beneficial when impregnated in tissues or loo rolls or shampoo is another matter. *Aloe ferox* products exist on a smaller scale and *Aloe arborescens* and *Aloe perryi* are also used. Colin mentioned he bought some *Aloe vera* juice from Holland and Barratt and thought it was the most disgusting thing he'd tasted - it was only later that he learnt he was supposed to have diluted it and drunk it mixed with fruit juice! *Aloe vera* is also used in veterinary practice for skin conditions and we saw the cover of a book *Aloe Vera - Nature's Gift* with an illustration of a dozen different animals perched in an *Aloe vera* bush! The juice from Aloes has been examined and the substances extracted and named, such as Aloesone and 7-o-Methylaloesone. These are unique components to aloes. Some have active components which are antibiotic.

In Kenya we saw *Aloe kedongensis* being used as a hedge. Not all aloes are to be consumed - there are

three Kenyan aloes which are poisonous and we saw a newscipping of a case where a person had died after eating aloe. We quickly skipped over some illustrations from the Ethiopian highlands suggesting procreation involving Aloes.

Now for some Aloe biology. A study of East African aloes was done at Kew. The leaf surfaces are very diverse and they display an amazing architecture when magnified. We saw the stomata (breathing pores) and individual cells. Pictures of two different East African species looked quite different when magnified. There is a wax coating on the leaves to prevent loss of water. The chromosomes are very large - there are 7 pairs, consisting of 4 large sets and 3 small sets. More recently, DNA analysis has turned taxonomy on its head.

Now for some pictures of Aloes. The first Aloe he encountered in the wild was *Aloe davyana* var. *greathheadii*. It had finished flowering but he was able to bring some seeds back. Young aloes start off looking like Gasterias before their true form becomes apparent. *Aloe tomentosa* is spotted when young, but mature plants lose the spots. This might be to assist camouflage when the plants are young.

Aloe plicatilis is now supposed to be called *Kumara plicatilis*. He found it between Cape Town and Worcester. *Aloe succotrina* is found on Table Mountain. Despite the name, it is endemic to South Africa. It grows with mosses and ferns in moist conditions. The stems can be up to 6 feet tall. *Aloe microstigma* is now *Aloe perfoliata*, the leaves are patterned with small spots. Next was a photo taken by a colleague who went to the Namib desert - there was just one plant in the lunar-like landscape - *Aloe asperifolia*. It grows in circles - the rosette branches and then the centre dies out. The leaves have a sandpaper-like surface. Seeds were collected for him. *Aloe claviflora* is more widespread and has a similar growth habit and a horizontal inflorescence. *Aloe lateritia graminicola* is found in East Africa and it had brick red flowers and grows amongst grass. *Aloe ngongensis* is found in the Ngong hills and has glossy scarlet flowers. *Aloe purpurea* is from Mauritius and has purple teeth on the leaf edges. *Aloe tormentorii* is named after a bay on an island in Mauritius.

Aloe littoralis is another species found in Namibia and it can form a 12 foot high tree eventually. It occurs in Angola, Namibia and many places in South Africa and also Mozambique. *Aloe marlothii* is a widespread plant with dark spines all over the leaves - the example we saw was from KwaZulu-Natal.

Colin showed a couple of journals covers - *Aloe - the Journal of the South Africa Aloe & Succulent Society* featuring the endangered *Aloe pillansii*, and *Excelsa, Journal of the Aloe, Cactus & Succulent Society of Rhodesia*.

Next it was time to see some Aloes in cultivation. We saw the succulent gardens at Kirstenbosch Botanic Gardens with Aloe plants framing Table Mountain, followed by *Aloe ferox* bearing fruits – these architectural plants can make stunning additions to any garden. Aloe diversity was shown by the leaf forms of *Aloe dinteri*, *Aloe congolensis*, *Aloe immaculata*, and *Aloe cooperi*. *Aloe prinslooii* is a spotted plant related to *A. maculata*. *Aloe dorotheae* is from Tanzania and the leaves turns a stunning deep red colour in the winter when resting. *Aloe hemmingii* is similar to *A. somaliensis*. *Aloe jucunda* can form large clumps. *Aloe parvidens* is a recently discovered plant from East Africa / Ethiopia. *Aloe zebrina* grows from Angola/Namibia to Mozambique - it has small leaves in bands. *Aloe vanbalenii* has well spotted deeply channelled leaves - when damaged, these produce a musty cinnamony scent. It is not that attractive a plant but is unique. *Aloe aculeata* is similar to *A. marlothii* but without the stem - it has more spines on the underside of the leaf than the top.

Aloe polyphylla comes from Lesotho and is called the “spiral aloe” because of its form when mature. It was photographed growing in New Zealand which offers a near ideal climate - it likes cool damp conditions. It can be grown outside in this country if given some protection. It starts off with 5 spirals then changes to 8 - this is a Fibonacci progression. *Aloe ciliaris* is a scrambler and can form stems 20 feet long. It is not that attractive but is nice when it flowers.

In January this year, a group of seven climbing Aloes was split off from Aloe, and *Aloe ciliaris* became *Aloiampelos ciliaris*. This is the type of the new genus. *Aloiampelos juddii* is named after Eric Judd, a South African botanical artist. The tree aloes have also been given their own genus and *A. dichotoma* is now *Aloidendron dichotomum*. It is a very distinctive aloe. Its close relative is *Aloidendron ramosissimum* - a slide showed both next to each other and they are considered distinct species, with *ramosissimum* being multi branched. *Aloe pillansii* is now *Aloidendron pillansii*. It is very endangered, with 2000 plants left. *Aloidendron barberae* is the biggest Aloe species, and can grow 20 metres high – an example in Kirstenbosch planted in 1922 is already 15m tall. We also saw a picture of him on the front page of the “Nelson Mail” – a newspaper from New Zealand.

Aloe castanea is one of the big shrubby South African species. Castanea means chestnut and the flowers and nectar of this species are a red-brown colour. *Aloe rupestris* grows in rocky places and *Aloe speciosa* means “showy”. In the latter species, the tips of the stems always tilt. *Aloe hardyi* is a cliff dweller.

Aloe erinacea and *Aloe pearsonii* are two Namibian Aloes - the former is a dense rosette of bluish leaves and dark spines and the latter is a slow growing plant which is tricky to cultivate, with cuttings being hard to root. *Aloe mitriformis* ssp. *comptonii* has longer leaves than ssp. *distans*. Two aloes with long leaves are *Aloe albiflora* from Madagascar and *Aloe hazeliana* var. *howmanii* from Zimbabwe & Mozambique. *Aloe bowiea* is a grass-like aloe which is easy to grow.

Aloes have mainly yellow, orange or red flowers and these are pollinated by birds such as sunbirds. Six species have white flowers and *Aloe albida* is one of these - it has white/green haworthia-like flowers and is bee pollinated. We saw the fruits of *Aloe longistyla* - this plant has big flowers and this leads to large fruits which can be 2 inches long. *Aloe citrea* has berries and was placed in Lomataphyllum although it is now back in Aloe. Aloe fruit capsules normally split by themselves, but the berries do not. We saw a section through the fruit of *A. purpurea*, and saw that it did not contain that many seeds. The berry contains a fleshy covering around the seeds.

Aloe suzannae is from Madagascar and one of the most threatened, with very few trees left in habitat, although a new population has just been discovered. It has nocturnal fragrant flowers which may be pollinated by moths or bats or possibly lemurs. *Aloe helenae* was shown growing in the Princess of Wales conservatory and was in flower. The stems can grow to 12 feet so it needs a lot of room.

One way to propagate and hence conserve threatened and endangered plants is by micropropagation - you can obtain a large number of plants from a small amount of source material. Rob Wellens has been doing work on this.

Now a glance at the future. We saw a cross between *Aloe ferox* and *Aloe arborescens*, both of which are fairly big shrubby plants and the result was also a big plant - fine if you have space to grow things like this outdoors. In the USA, Kelly Griffin, and John Trager of the Huntington Gardens, have produced a series of attractive plants by crossing plants such as *A. rauhii* and *A. somaliensis*, the resultant Aloe *somaliensis* x *rauhii* was an attractive plant with 3

heads in a 3 inch pot. Many of their selected crosses have been given cultivar names.

The other work that is being done is to select clones - for example, Ernst van Jaarsveld has cultivated selected plants of *Aloe arborescens* and named these after former directors and curators of Kirstenbosch. Another example is *Aloe rauhii* "Snowflake" which is a particularly pale coloured form of *A. rauhii*. There are not many variegated Aloes around, but we did see one from Joyce Hochtritt's nursery in the USA.

The current species total 560. Colin finished by showing a new shrubby Aloe from northern Namibia which Ernst van Jaarsveld has described as *A. huntleyana* in Bradleya. And hot off the press was a new plant discovered in June this year by Jean-Bernard Castillon, in the central highlands of Madagascar. A close up of the leaves showed there were spines in all directions, making it resemble a bramble! This plant is likely to be called *Aloe delicatifolia*.

Colin ended with a quick reprise showing some of the images we had seen, and a final slide thanking all the people who had helped him put together his presentation.

Vinay Shah

Table Show Results

There were 12 entries in the August table show.

	Cacti – Mammillaria	Succulents – Euphorbia
Open	(1) I Biddlecombe Mammillaria plumosa	(1) B Beckerleg Euphorbia horrida
	(2) B Beckerleg Mammillaria lewisiana	(2) I Biddlecombe Euphorbia obesa
	(3)	(3)
Intermediate	(1) I Biddlecombe Mammillaria albilanata ssp oaxacana	(1) B Beckerleg Euphorbia mosaica
	(2) I Biddlecombe Mammillaria albilanata ssp tegelbergiana	(2) I Biddlecombe Euphorbia suzannae
	(3) T Smith Mammillaria supertexta	(3) I Biddlecombe Euphorbia obesa

Ivor Biddlecombe

Branch Committee Meeting

A branch committee meeting was held at Dot's on 20th August.

Alice stated that branch finances were stable – it will soon be time for our year end! David Neville mentioned two new members had joined recently.

Our monthly meetings were sometimes overrunning and an effort would be made to start them at 7:50pm, giving the speaker 2 x 45 minute sessions and hopefully ending by 10pm. Support for the table show was waning and there was a suggestion to include a new class - "any plant in flower".

Due to a minor printing error, replacement copies of the new Agave book would be sent to purchasers, and David Neville said he would donate his original copy to the branch library.

The Branch won a medal at the New Forest Show and the show went well. Preparations for the Romsey Show in September were discussed. The Branch Dinner was also discussed and 11th October was chosen as the possible date.

Discussions were held on how to celebrate the Branch's 60th anniversary. Some local halls had been approached to obtain an idea of costs. David felt that we would be unlikely to attract the number of visitors we had in 2004 and that a convention wouldn't be viable. Other ideas such as a special "souped up" meeting, a garden party, or trips to places such as Kew/Wisley or even ELK were discussed and we would consider a combination of these, allowing members to participate in a variety of events next year.

Ideas for speakers and topics for next year's branch programme were also discussed.

Vinay Shah

Bookworm Corner

Well its official, it's the end of the summer already! We have had flocks of 60 to 120+ swallows passing through having a last feed up before making the big push off to Africa. It's an amazing sight when suddenly the sky fills up with a swirling mass of swallows calling and then chattering on the telephone lines, a mix of adults and youngsters.

Curlews are back on the coast, grey plovers (actually black and white at the moment) stopping

off in numbers on passage and lots (which is notable) of spotted flycatchers down from the north and feeding up before the long sub-Saharan trek.

And as for butterflies, there goes another clouded yellow...brilliant!

'ENJOYED THE LECTURE? THEN ENJOY THE BOOK!'

August

Once more we had another accomplished and talented speaker, Colin Walker co-author of the weighty tome '**Aloes – The Definitive Guide**' (Carter S.; Lavranos J.J.; Newton L.E.& Walker C.C.). This book is a great follow up for the evenings talk on 'Aloes through the ages' as he wrote the extensive chapter on aloe history! The book is beautifully laid out with aloes grouped into different forms or growth habitats with many habitat photographs.

Other aloe books include '**The Aloes of Tropical Africa and Madagascar**' (Reynolds G.) and '**Aloes for the greenhouse and indoor cultivation**' (Noble W.C). General books to take a look at include '**Lexicon of Succulent Plants**' (Jacobsen H.H.). .

September

Tonight's talk by John Hughes on 'Alpines and Cacti of Merida, Venezuela' has provided me with bit more of a challenge to find books to recommend to you from our library! I can safely say that we do not have any books on alpines but this popular group should have plenty of books about them in your local public library.

As to the cacti of Venezuela the following book should be of interest, '**The Genus Matucana**' (Bergman R) with general books including '**The**

New Cactus Lexicon' (Hunt D.) and '**Cacti –the Illustrated Dictionary**' (Preston-Mafham R. & K).

All these books can be found in the '**Featured Book Corner**'

Sue Wilson

Next Month's Meeting

The next branch meeting will be held on October 1st and will feature a talk by Martin Doorbar. Martin spent some time working in the USA, and as a result, he was able to visit several different cacti habitats so no doubt we will get to hear about some of these.

The October Table Show will consist of **3 Cacti** and **3 Succulents**. Please note that members are allowed to submit more than one entry in any of the classes, and that points will be earned for each placed entry.

Forthcoming Events

Sat 14 th Sep	Southampton	Display / Plant Sales @ Romsey Show (Broadlands)
Sat 14 th Sep	Isle of Wight	Fuchsia (Gerry Smith)
Sat 21 st Sep	Portsmouth	Macaronesian Memories (Colin Walker)
Sat 28 th Sep	Portsmouth	Portsmouth Autumn Show @ Christ Church Hall, Widley, Waterlooville
Tue 1 st Oct	Southampton	5 Star American Habitats (Martin Doorbar)
Fri 11 th Oct	Southampton	Branch Dinner @ Luzborough House (to be confirmed)
Sat 12 th Oct	Isle of Wight	Off The Beaton Track 1 (Rodney Sims)
Sat 19 th Oct	Portsmouth	European Collections (Ian Woolnough)
Tue 5 th Nov	Southampton	Where do Cape Succulents Grow? (Terry Smale)

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