

British Cactus & Succulent Society

Southampton & District Branch Newsletter

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Editorial

The last week has seen some snow and cold weather reach us, although fortunately the really low temperatures were only present for a couple of days. Will this be the last of winter? Somehow I doubt it, especially if last year is anything to go by. Despite temperatures reaching -5°C outside, in my conservatory it remained a few degrees above zero.

Announcements

The **branch programme for 2019** has been prepared and is available from the front table.

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 at the BCSS website, at: <http://society.bcsc.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)

Last Month's Meeting

Members' Mini-Talks

Paul Klaassen was our first speaker. He mentioned that he spent 11th November to 11th December in Brazil, a country he has now visited 4 times. There were 6 of them in the party and the trip was led by Marlon Machado. A few years ago, Portsmouth Branch donated £5000 to the BCSS Conservation Fund and this money was used to save the habitat of *Melocactus conoideus* in Brazil. Paul said he had been to see the habitat in 2009 and they visited it

again last year. A Google Earth picture showed the location they were visiting, the Serra do Periperi near the city of Vitória da Conquista in the state of Bahia. There were some pictures from 1999, which were taken in 35mm film and subsequently scanned. At that time Nigel Taylor had written an article saying that they had found just 6 plants on 2 days. At the time, the material where the plants grew was ideal for making concrete and people were digging up the gravel without any regard for the plants.

A team of local people (attorney, dentist, GP) were concerned to read that the plants were threatened with extinction, and they went to the town council and got permission to declare the area as a nature reserve and build a fence around the area. The money from the BCSS was used to replace the wooden fence (which kept burning down when lightning hit the mountain) with something more permanent. In 1999 the town had 10,000 people and now the number is 300,000 so one can imagine the pressure on habitats.

We saw some pictures from 2009, when Cliff Thompson was also present. The cacti population had increased and they could see thousands of plants on that occasion. We also saw plants of *Kalanchoe daigremontiana* (*Bryophyllum daigremontianum*) – this is not a native and these must have escaped from cultivation.

This time there were lots of youngsters hanging around and now the conservation area has guards and guard dogs. They were accompanied by 2 heavily police with automatic weapons. The site now had even more plants, such that every time you take a step, you end up standing on the plants or a seedling – so overall, it's been an absolute success.

We saw a picture of Marlon Machado, Marylan Coelho and Alvado Soares Filho and a cactus in the middle was *Arrojadoa marylanae* – discovered in 2003 and named after Marylan. It was a 45 minute walk from a car parking spot to a hill where the plant grew, and this was the only location where it had been found. We saw pictures of the tall stems growing on the rocks. Marylan sat on the edge of a rock overlooking a huge drop and Cliff gave her the nickname "Crazy Woman". The plant forms ring

cephalia around the stem from where it produces the magenta flowers, and the distance from each ring to the next shows the amount of growth each year. The plant produces a lot of fruit which is good news for survival of the plant. However, the hill has been bought by a mineral company which has bought it to mine quartz, used in steel production and they will level the hill over the next 6 years. *Espostoopsis dybowskii* is also found here - it forms a pseudo cephalium down one side of the plant. They went down a tunnel - it was pitch dark and Paul lit his lighter and found they were surrounded by boxes of dynamite – so they made a hasty exit!

In 2018, you can now drive up to the base of the mountain. A botanist has been appointed by the mining company to rescue as many plants as possible – a part of hill has been reserved for this and plants will be transplanted there. We saw other plants which grow here, including *Tacinga palmadora* and *Melocactus bahiensis* as well as a *Coleocephalocereus*. The rock was extremely wobbly but Marylan posed for another photo. For the time being, the population of the *Arrojadoa* remains healthy. The plant is pollinated by hummingbirds and Paul managed to take pictures of the birds visiting the flowers. Marlon took them to another location which was half a day away - to get herbarium specimens of a new *Arrojadoa* which he will describe soon – this was again growing on a huge hill. They also found a new population of *Espostoopsis dybowskii*. Paul mentioned he had brought along a young plant (2-3 years old) of *Arrojadoa marylanae*.

Next was **Ben Turner**, who described a trip made by him and Dot England and Peter Down to Lullingstone Castle in Kent, in November 2016. Lullingstone is the home of Tom Hart Dyke who has set up his World Garden of plants there. Ben had a lot of large plants to rehome (a columnar cereus, *Ephiphyllums*) and he was passing them on to Tom. A tree in the garden was a pendulous weeping form of the giant redwood, which is quite a rare find. They had gone there to look at the cacti and succulents plants in particular. Tom is one of the two patrons of the BCSS and he's an incredible character – Ben described him as a living legend and a hardcore plant hunter, the last of a dying breed. Tom made national news in 2001 when he was held hostage by a Columbian guerrilla group who captured him while he was hunting orchids in Panama and Columbia. He along with another explorer was held for 9 months but eventually let go - they went off and promptly got lost, so they had to go back to the captors to ask for directions!

Tom has an interesting collection of cacti and succulents. The outdoor section bit is covered by a large polytunnel – the plants do need some protection in the winter months. We saw a *Dasyliirion*, *Echeveria elegans*, and some *Opuntias*. Another tree was the Montezuma Pine from Mexico. There were some wonderful Agaves, including *Agave filifera* and *Agave montana*. The latter grows at altitude in Mexico and is quite hardy. Corks had been stuck onto the ends of some sharp *Yucca* leaves, to avoid them poking people. Ben mentioned that later in the year, there will be a Mexican Celebration Weekend (21st and 22nd September) at Lullingstone - a special event for cacti and succulent lovers and reduced entry price for BCSS members. There was nice ribbing on a *Yucca* and a *Hesperoyucca* was safely tucked away for winter. In the main cactus and succulent glasshouse we saw *Aloe* “Hercules” which is a hybrid between *A. barberae* and *A. dichotoma*. He couldn't believe how it had grown to a height of several feet in just 2 years. We also saw *Aloe dichotoma*, the quiver tree – this grows all over Namaqualand and the Northern Cape. A poster advertised the BCSS society. *Aloe ferox* had a nice stem, and judging from the size, it must be pretty old. A *Cussonia* (cabbage tree) is not really a succulent. There was an old lean-to in the garden and there were columnar cacti growing along the back wall. Ben mentioned if you ever get a chance to hear Tom's story about Columbia, it's well worth listening to. Interestingly, his cousin is the TV comedienne Miranda Hart. *Euphorbia ingens* was also against the back wall and we saw *Espostoa lanata*. There were a number of Puyas, grown from seed.

We saw *Aloe nobilis* (*brevifolia* x *mitriformis* x *distans*) and which can be quite variable. There was also a variegated *Aloe arborescens* “Goldrush” - he got one from Harry Mays and it wasn't anything as good - David said it can vary depending on light and growing conditions. We saw *Agave* (*Manfreda*) *maculosa* which has spotted leaves. Ben mentioned he has a good form called “Chocolate Chip” and may have offsets for sale later in the year. There was an open form of *Agave titanota* and we also saw *Agave americana striata*. He got a little pup of this from Wisley and it threw out new pups with different variegation. We also saw the cacti *Pachycereus pringlei* and *Echinocactus grusonii*. Although modest in size, the glass house was crammed with plants. *Aloe suprafoliata* is the “book” aloe – it has parallel leaves when immature. We also saw *Aloe brevifolia*. In the orchid house was a *Coelogyne* orchid which he had given Tom previously – it was growing really well. There was a really good collection of orchids. We saw parasols used for shading. Spanish moss (*Tillandsia*

usneoides was growing here and there was also an example of a *Myrmecodia* (the Australian ant plant) in the orchid house. They had a look round a greenhouse which was not open to the public and which contained *Proteas*, *Salvias*, and *Aeoniums* which are moved out into the main gardens in the summer months. Ben ended with a view of the Baobab sculpture which is a key feature in the gardens.

The third talk was given by Paul Maddison. He started with some images from the BBC Show "Have I Got News For You" – they feature a guest publication each episode and on one occasion they had actually featured the BCSS's Cactusworld Journal. Moving on to the main segment of his talk, last June he went on holiday to the Isle of Wight. The first pictures we saw from there were of a garlic farm with plots growing different strains – he brought some of these back to grow in his allotment plot. In the car park of the Ventnor Botanic Garden, there was a tremendous display of colour, with border plants in flower. The steps to the main garden and walkways were filled with different plants. Mixed in with all the mesembs and succulent were other plants. Previously the gardens had been planted out by geographical area but due to some neglect some of the plants have spread and taken over parts of the garden. Some people like this style, others may prefer it to be more formal. There was a Japanese themed area with a red bridge, but the lake had been drained and there wasn't much of an oriental feel – one would expect a few sculptures and some maples as well. Some yellow gazanias were a cheerful sight. There were plenty of mesemb plants which had got into crevices and established themselves. *Aloe polyphylla* was growing really well – due to the microclimate, they can grow things which might not survive outdoors on the mainland.

A Puya had turquoise flowers, and we saw a picture of Paul standing next to the plant for scale – it was around 8 feet tall. Another Puya had lemony yellow/green flowers and it was 50% larger than the previous Puya. The agaves which were plant out were in reasonable good condition, and we saw *Agave salmiana*. There were some cacti planted out as well. The lower section of some columnar cactus had some damage but the top section seemed to be growing well. Paul showed a couple of pictures of a small lizard wandering on the rocks. *Opuntia ficus-indica* was growing well and there was plenty of fruit on the plant, and *Opuntia polyacantha* had yellow flowers – a shot showed black beetles in amongst the flowers. They used to have a magnificent collection in the glasshouse but the plants growing in there now were hard to identify. A tree was identified by Ben as a hybrid form of the

Indian bee tree. There were *Yuccas* with large inflorescences and Ben also identified as *Beschorneria yuccoides*. There were *Echiums* (from the Canary Islands) and Foxgloves in flower.

Large wooden barriers kept people away from the edge of the cliffs but he saw some naturalised orchids growing behind the barriers. At Ryde, they saw some formal plantings of marigolds – but more worryingly, there were some brown objects stuck on the wall behind which he identified as huge snails. He warned that when you plant something, think of how it might grow in the future. Thanks to a large tree, a sign saying "The Essex Godshill Restaurant & Free House" was converted into the "The Sex Hill Rant House" when viewed from a certain angle! We ended with a picture taken at the Isle of Wight Bus Museum in Ryde – one of the buses housed there was labelled "Paul's Tours"!

After the break, it was **Robin Caddy's** turn. He mentioned he had not been anywhere far-fetched – everything was in his front porch. He wanted to show us some of the things you can do on the Internet with a Facebook or Instagram or Twitter account. Robin looks after our branch Facebook page and we currently have about 800 followers. One of the good things about Instagram is that it is picture based. You use "hash tags" to describe your images and then people will tend to follow tags of interest to them. We started with a picture of *Turbinicarpus schwarzii* v. *rubriflorus* in flower – this was a plant that he got sometime last year. He mentioned that all his pictures were taken with his phone and posted online after some minor editing. He has published around 30 photos and videos so far. His photos tend to follow the same plants over the course of the year and he tries to highlight interesting things happening. *Mammillaria elongata* had been obtained in 2017 and featured white flowers. A macro photo of a *Gymnocalycium* showed a flower bud amongst the spines. Back to the *Turbinicarpus*, a shot emphasized the darkness of the spines as buds were forming, in April 2018, followed soon after by open flowers.

Next was a picture of *Mammillaria spinosissima* cv. 'Un Pico'. This has long spines and pink flowers which open in a ring around the head of the plant. Part of it had been eaten by a slug but it had survived that ordeal. *Rebutia heliosa* x *albiflora* has flowers with pink and orange colouring. At the autumn show at Portsmouth (from 2017) he had been overwhelmed by the appearance of a plant of *Opuntia clavarioides* it is quite unlike anything else. Ben mentioned there had been a plant of this at the National Show in 2012 which was considerably larger. Next was a plant which he had won in the

raffle and which was forming buds – it was *Gymnocalycium damsii*. By mid-May, the *Mammillaria* ‘Un Pico’ had opened a ring of over 10 flowers. Next was the *Turbiniacarpus* again – less flowers this time, but still doing well. An *Astrophytum* was forming a large bud. An Aloe had a colourful flower with shades of red, yellow and green. The *Astrophytum* flowered a couple of days later, closely followed by an *Echinopsis* hybrid from Cactusland called “Bourne Prince”. The *Gymnocalycium damsii* opened 4 white flowers. *Mammillaria tezontle* is a small plant but it produced seven flowers. The *Turbiniacarpus* flowered for a 5th time. At the start of June, the *Gymnocalycium damsii* was still going strong and the *Astrophytum* flower was now fully open. An *Echinopsis* from Cactusland had 4 large pink flowers open in June and this won best plant in flower at our meeting – it just happened to flower on the right day!

At the Portsmouth Summer Show, he had taken a picture of a *Stapeliad* with grey-brown stems which he posted as “bowloftwiglets”. *Mammillaria shumannii* in flower attracted a lot of “likes”. He posted pictures of the class of 6 plants from the Portsmouth Summer show, followed by some random pictures of plants to show what you might see on Instagram. We ended with a couple of videos which he found on the Internet. The first featured an amazing show of flowers on a cactus plant with 100s of stems and 1000s of white flowers. The second video was a timelapse sequence showing various *Echinopsis* hybrids flowering. Titled “Amazing freaky flowers” it was produced by a user called “Echinopsis Freak” – and all the hybrids were named at the end of the sequence. It was certainly an amazing piece of work.

Next was **Tom Radford** and he said he was going to show some odds and ends which he had found during the last year and which might be of interest. He went up to Cambridge earlier in the year and the secretary there had a couple of greenhouses. One was a regular greenhouse, but the second contained a lot of plastic boxes. It turns out that these were being used to grow difficult plants like *Pseudolithos* under controlled conditions. The plants were grown under light and temperature and humidity were accurately controlled – the plants are very sensitive to that.

He himself came across an LED light containing red and blue LEDs – these wavelengths are the ones that plants utilise the most – and he decided to try some experiments of his own. The light was fixed about a foot above the plant and he mentioned that the light was turned on at mid-afternoon for 12 hours. He

tried it with winter growing *Conophytums* and he thought the bodies were larger than they would have been without the light. An *Aloinopsis* bought in October was also larger when grown from November to January under light and it formed three flower buds – it is also a winter grower. We saw *Conophytum ornatum* in September and again in January. With *Massonia depressa* he grew it under light and found that the leaves were growing flat to the ground and the leaves quite a bit larger, and the difference was visible in just a week. He also tried *Massonia pustulata* and got good results with that as well.

Now for some things in the garden. We saw *Eucomis comosa* ‘Reubens’ being grown at Kirstenbosch. He’s been trying to grow these here, they are stunning plants which grow and flower for quite a while. *Eucomis autumnalis* was also shown at Kirstenbosch. Birds are one of his interests and we saw a Southern carmine bee-eater. We saw more *Eucomis*, including a miniature in his garden and *Eucomis vandermerwei*. He had also grown *Eucomis pole-evansii* from seed. In 4 years it had reached a height of over 5 feet. Next was a shot of a pink tailed finch from China – this is quite a rarity.

Last year Tom had given us a talk which explained the technique of photostacking, whereby a camera takes multiple images of an object using different focal lengths and these images are then combined into one image where both the foreground and background can be in focus. Some cameras can do all this work automatically and the camera he mentioned last year was the Panasonic Lumix FZ82. He showed standard and photostacked images of pictures of an *Echinopsis* in flower, *Fockea augustifolia*, *Cynachum*, and the flower of *Crassula rupestris*. A close up of *Notocactus erinacea* seed showed a significant amount of detail despite the high magnification. In Australia *Ptilotus manglesii* is called the pom pom flower – it has feathery flowers. We saw pictures of this taken at ground level. We ended with a picture of a kagou bird, which is found in New Caledonia.

The final talk of the evening was given by me (**Vinay**) and it described a trip that several branch members made in June 2014, to see Tony and Suzanne Mace’s collection. This was one of a series of events that we had scheduled that year, to celebrate the 60th anniversary of the branch. One of the memorable things about the visit was the cakes and biscuits that Suzanne had made for us!

They have 3 different greenhouses – a large glass greenhouse to house all the large plants including some that are bedded out, a polycarbonate house for

succulents and mesembs also some of their cacti, and finally a third building to house their sale plants.

There were some large plants housed outside (notably an Agave) and also they had prepared some large cactus cuttings for anyone to take away in case they wanted to try growing something large! Tony specialises in Cacti and Succulents in the mesembs, but they are both very knowledgeable in most aspects of the hobby. They hold open days for their Branch (Sussex) and occasionally invite members from other branches too.

I showed one of the cacti which had been bedded out – more on this later. Borzicactus are an interesting range of plants and some prefer to be grown in a hanging basket. *Notocactus roseiflorus* had nice glossy pink flowers. Other shots showed the range of colours in the greenhouse, thanks to the good light inside the greenhouse. We saw *Gymnocalycium*, *Copiapoa*, *Ferocactus*, and the red spined *Mammillaria carmenae*. The plants were not grouped by genus, so they were just being grown as a mix. A nicely spined plant was a *Denmoza*. There were some *Cerei* in the background and we may get to see some of these later in the year when Tony gives us a talk. Amongst the succulents, we saw Aloes hybrids and *Gasterias*. A large *Astrophytum* had a funny curve but was now growing well. Succulents had taken on rich leaf nice colouring. We saw various *Melocacti* with cephalia and in flower. A *Notocactus scopula* was in flower. Going back to the bedded plant I had shown earlier – it had managed to lean over the small brick wall and I had ended up backing into this plant while I was taking photographs! There was a nice *Notocactus magnificus* next to it. Once plants have a free root run they can grow quite large.

We saw *Echinocereus subinermis* in flower with the characteristic yellow flowers. A tray between some pots showed seeds which had been harvested. *Astrophytums* germinate quite quickly. An *Alluardia* stem featured funny shaped leaves and there was a large *Euphorbia*. We saw some *ferocacti* seedlings with vivid red spines and a couple of *Aroiocarpus*. A general view of the plants in the centre showed some of them were 10-15 feet tall. A *Leuchtenbergia principis* was in good condition.

In the second house, I showed an initial picture along the benches show a nice array of pots all neatly laid out and properly labelled. A *Frithia pulchra* was in flower. *Mitriformis grandis* looked like the leaf had been eaten by something, probably a snail. We saw *Argyrodermas*, and different *Lithops* cultivars, including *Lithops optica* cv

“*Rubra*” which is a pink bodied variant. *Pleiospilos* “*Royal flush*” has a purple shade to the plant body and also the flower. We saw a tray of *Lithops* seedlings. They grow a lot of *Conophytums*. June wasn't the best time to be looking at these, but there was one in flower. I showed some trays of seedlings – this is the beauty of growing plants from seed – you often get different plants come up with different patterning or flecking and you can then choose the best ones to keep. Some more *Astrophytum asterias* were almost white with the dense flecking. We saw mixtures of succulents with the different colours. *Haworthia tessellata* had windowed leaves and we also saw three different forms of *Haworthia limifolia* all growing next to each other. There was intense colouring on the leaves of the *Crassulas*. There were some *Opuntias* all growing together. In this greenhouse. With *Faucarias*, there was one with really nice marking on the leaves. I ended with a couple of pictures of the plants growing outside – these were *Agaves* and *Sempervivums*. The latter are available in a range of colours and they are also fully hardy in our winters.

Vinay Shah

Table Show Results

At the January meeting, there were 12 entries in the table show, and 2 entries for “Plants in Flower”.

	Cacti – Echinocactus	Succulents – Aloe
Open	(1) P Klaassen Homalocephala texensis	(1) B Beckerleg Aloe haworthioides
	(2) P Klaassen Echinocactus parryi	(2) B Turner Aloe somaliensis
	(3) M Stevenson Ferocactus stainesii	(3) I Biddlecombe Aloe variegata
Intermediate	(1) B Beckerleg Echino. horizontalonius	(1) B Beckerleg Aloe longistyla
	(2) M Stevenson Leuchtenbergia principis	(2) I Biddlecombe Aloe jucunda
	(3) -	(3) I Biddlecombe Aloe variegata

Cacti/Succulent in Flower
(1) B Beckerleg Stapelia asterias
(2) M Stevenson Crassula hemisphaerica
(3) -

Ivor Biddlecombe

Next Month's Meeting

Our next meeting will be held on 5th March and will feature a talk by our own member Richard White. Richard visited South Africa in 2017 and took the opportunity to go and see some plants in habitat, so we should see a good selection of pictures of succulents and bulbs – two of his favourite groups of plants.

The March Table Show will consist of the **Opuntia** group (cacti) and the **Gasteria** 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 Gasteria group includes only *Gasteria*.

Forthcoming Events

Sat 9 th Feb	Isle of Wight	Your Pictures and Slides
Sat 16 th Feb	Portsmouth	Origin and Evolution of the Cactaceae – Prof. David Martill
Tue 5 th Mar	Southampton	Bulbs & Succulents in the Roggeveld & Knersvlakte - Richard White
Sat 9 th Mar	Isle of Wight	To be confirmed - David Neville
Sat 16 th Mar	Portsmouth	Propagation of Cacti and Succulents - Dr Tony Roberts
Tue 2 nd Apr	Southampton	Interesting Haworthias - Stirling Baker
Sat 13 th Apr	Isle of Wight	To be confirmed
Sat 20 th Apr	Portsmouth	Plant Auction
Tue 7 th May	Southampton	Cultivation & Propagation Workshop

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

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