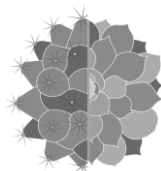


British Cactus & Succulent Society

Southampton & District Branch Newsletter

July 2023



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Editorial	1
Last Month's Meeting.....	1
Highlights of South Africa & Namibia.....	1
Hampshire Succulents and Cacti Plant Fair 6	
Forthcoming Events.....	6
Next Month's Meeting	6

Editorial

Time has moved on very quickly, and the longest day is already behind us. June was a very hot month and we have also had a shortage of rain so garden plants are looking a bit sorry. Hopefully things are better with the cacti and succulents you are growing.

Last Month's Meeting

Lennie and other members from the branch are planning to hold a plant fair event Winchester on 8th July, and a number of people that you know will be selling plants at the event – more details are contained later in the newsletter.

There wasn't much to announce from the last meeting except to say that we are thankful David Neville stepped in at the last minute to give us a talk on South Africa and Namibia. The speaker that was due to speak last month (Trevor Jackman) was ill but we did see him at the Oxford Show and so are expecting to hear his talk today.

If you have visited the branch website, you might have seen details of the branch badge which was designed some 15 years ago. I will bring along some today in case anyone would like to buy one (£2 each).

Highlights of South Africa & Namibia

David said his trip was to South Africa and Namibia, and it happened in 2012. The trip was supposed to be for 4 weeks, but due to a flight booking error, it ended up needing to be extended to 5 weeks - fortunately they were able to adjust their plans accordingly.

It would be a flexible road trip and they would be just travelling around to whichever areas they felt like visiting. They had done research up front, the miniature plants were the ones to look forward to seeing, and you need to know where these grow, since you won't find them just by chance or accident.

On the first slide - the featured plant was a Hoodia in flower - the open flowers resembled small disc antenna all over the plant. They flew into Cape Town and one place to visit there is the Kirstenbosch Botanical Garden. David said he would only show one picture from the gardens and it was the spectacular bloom of a king protea in flower. The flowers are the largest in the genus and can be several inches in diameter. Most flights from London to Cape Town are overnight and it's difficult to get some sleep on the flight, so they recuperated on the first day and also picked up their hire car. They visited Kirstenbosch first and then headed due north on the N1. Within 3-4 hours you will start to see lots of plants growing in the wild.

David mentioned that Paul Klaassen was into Nikon cameras and he had 3 large SLRs with him - David preferred to use a compact camera which was much easier to carry around. We haven't seen Paul visit our branch for a while - sadly he has Alzheimer's and other health issues and so he is not allowed to drive. We did however see him at Oxford Show this past weekend and he looked well. His partner Angie Money is also someone who used to come to our meetings, she sadly has also developed Alzheimer's and she is in a care home at present.

David said that apart from Paul Klaassen, the others on this trip were Cliff Thompson (from Portsmouth) and Eunice Thompson (no relation, from Los Angeles in the USA). As they were driving along, they came to Clanwilliam which is around 150 miles north of Cape Town and here they found *Pelargonium triste*. It develops an underground tuber and the leaves are deciduous. Their trip was in September / October time which is spring time in the Southern hemisphere. This plant had lots of flower stems so there must be a good corm underneath.

Nearby was an orchid - *Corycium orobanchoides* which had a spike of flowers. They checked into their hotel which had a dozen rooms or so - Eunice wanted to know where the elevators and the bell boy was - of course there was no such thing and they had to remind her that this was Africa and not the USA! After checking in they wandered around and it was cold and drizzly, but the camera had brightened the scenes somewhat.

They followed a sandy dirt track and came across a beautiful *Adromischus hemisphaericus*. They realised that whenever you see rocks, it's usually a good place to find plants, which will be growing in nearby grit pans or receive some protection from the sun. The *Adromischus* had nicely coloured leaves similar to *A. festivus* or *A. trigynus*. It was very nice to see this. They also spotted a *Babiana* which is a member of the Iris family - it was a miniature, the leaves were only 6 inches tall and it had a 4 inch flower. There were a few of these dotted around. There were also bushes of pencil stemmed *Euphorbias*, which resembled some of the Canary Island species - these had yellow flowers and it was *Euphorbia mauritanica* which grows too big for our greenhouses. Along the roadside were orange daisies, and they also found *Cotyledon orbiculata*, a plant which grows over a very wide range and which holds its flower stems aloft from the other vegetation to allow pollination - it has elegant downward pointing bell shaped flowers. Another little bulb was *Ferraria* - you see these in collections, but they are hard to flower in the UK - David and Margaret Corina used to grow them but didn't flower them. Here in habitat they seemed to produce quite a few flowers, and more than the *Babianas*.

Another *Euphorbia* which looked like a *Monadenium* was *Euphorbia tuberculata* - it was over a metre wide and had stems 40-50 cm tall - all the stems radiated from the base. It was covered in the unusual inflorescences. In close up these are quite intricate and interesting and we could see examples of the typical 3 lobed seed pods. With many *Euphorbias*, the seeds are normally ejected forcefully when they ripen and it's quite hard to collect the seeds on plants you have in your greenhouse. A plant he has never seen in cultivation, but common in South Africa was *Euphorbia loricata*. Asked why you don't see it in collections, David said it was a plant best left in habitat - it doesn't do well when cultivated. The plant is quite attractive and has wonderful ruby red coloured petioles - so a handsome looking plant - but it has deciduous leaves so will look different in the winter. On some flat rocks, they found a brightly coloured *Conophytum minusculum*, with moss and lichen growing nearby and perhaps this is how the seeds

can germinate. They also found a beautifully coloured *Aloe perfoliata* growing amongst boulders and rock and pockets with soil and debris - the *Aloe* was sprawling from a base - and had some aged dried leaves and a beautiful rosette at the tip - it had several stems, and the main rosette was sizeable, some 15 inches across. The more they wandered around - the more succulents they found - this is the advantage of being in a group and having multiple eyes looking for things. The smaller things are obviously harder to spot. Next was a *Tylecodon paniculata* - a member of the crassulaceae - it makes great big fat succulent bonsai-like stems with peeling bark - although the plants were impressive, they are loathed by the cattle farmers since the plants are toxic to livestock, if a farmer sees these plants they will be kicked over.

Tylecodon wallichii had beautifully tuberculate stems with leaves at the top. The leaves are deciduous and the tubercles are remnants of where the old leaves attached to the plant - new leaves were present and more will eventually form. In the UK, *Tylecodons* are winter growers and they don't adapt to the UK seasons, so they come into leaf in the autumn and grow through the winter and then drop leaves in spring and summer. One of the problems in the UK is the lack of light in the winter months - you need to move them to the brightest point in your greenhouse. Just keep them frost free and also provide some water in the winter.

A daisy looked like an *Osteospermum*, but the leaves were different. A *Felicia* - these are now found in our garden centres - had blue daisy like flowers. They came across a shrubby ground cover mesemb but it was hard to identify - there are lots of these, and they are difficult to identify without more clues. The main plants we tend to grow in cultivation are the stemless mesembs - like *Lithops*, *Conophytum*, *Pleiospilos*, *Gibbaeums* and many other genera but not the carpet forming shrubby plants. They headed north, they were staying in a town called Steinkopf. and further north, would go to Niewoudtville. This is an area which is renowned at certain times of the year for the flowering of South African bulbs.

One of highlights of the landscape is the magnificent monolith which is the Matsikamaberg - it's a big mountain with steep slopes and vertical edges and a flat top. Nearby is the similar Gifberg mountains which does have a winding road to the top where there are some farms and also wild areas to explore. They found *Aloe krapohlina* as they climbed up the road - it is a nice miniature in cultivation and forms large clumps in habitat. The road is quite steep and there are sharp bends, it is

wider than one car but not as wide as two cars, so things can be quite tricky when you meet an oncoming car or go round a bend. It was a much nicer day with blue skies the next day. Part of the road was tarmaced since lorries use it. They reached the top of the Gifberg and found lots of areas where there were rocks and bedrock and plants growing in these. They found masses of *Conophytum minusculum*, tinged in red due to the sun. Another sensational little plant was an annual crassula with red flowers and yellow centres - Derek Tribble did bring some seed back and managed to grow it for a few years but it died out eventually. It seemed to be an orange-red form of *Crassula dichotoma*.

The Gazanias were in bloom and Ian Acton thought they might be *Gazania splendens*. They were being watched by a lizard with a long tail - it was some 6 inches long - it was probably an agama according to the audience - the males have more vibrant colouring. A little *Crassula tomentosa* was growing in the lovely fine gravel in the grit pans - sometimes you also see quartz pieces in the pans. Its roots are only in something like 1cm of material at most and the colours were quite intense due to the stress it was under. It was a big area up on top of the Gifberg. On the edge of some rock, they found *Crassula sericea* - it would be olive green here in cultivation but here it had a lovely red colouring on the leaves and was very compact. There was a natural garden and the flowers proved to be sundews, perhaps *Drosera alba* - they are dormant in the summer and are opportunistic plants, germinating and flowering when conditions are right. Orange flowers were growing on small species of gladiolus - this was *G. elatus* - it was a miniature with 6-8 inch leaves and orange and yellow flowers.

One of the tiniest plants they found was *Crassula columnaris* - they look like little buttons - largest ones were 2cm across and these are solitary plants. It flowers and sets seed and then dies. They have a shallow root system. The most exciting plant found by Paul Klaassen was announced as a "potato" - it was *Othonna cacalioides* with a shiny caudex 3-4cm across. The roots go into the soil and it forms yellow daisy flowers. It is rare in cultivation. Many were imported but very few established themselves. They saw it in a few localities during the trip but here they were dwarf due to the heat and the lack of moisture.

They left the Gifberg - a Kokerboom forest was supposed to be nearby and they went there - they didn't see any initially and then suddenly they started appearing - then they saw a sign about the Kokerboom Forest and saw some stunning plants between Niewoudtville and Loerisfontein. The

plants develop an umbrella shape and have beautiful peeling bark. The plant is called *Aloe dichotoma* because of its growth habit of dividing into two at each node. These are really photogenic plants and growing on crumbly shale hillsides along natural terracing. Cliff is 6 feet in height so a picture of him standing near these plants suggested some were 15 feet tall. There were hundreds of them in this area. They found a tortoise - it's called a angulate tortoise and they are quite shy. Heading further north, near Kliprand they turned off the main road and onto some dirt roads - there were fences everywhere to keep livestock in, but no houses that they could see. It was a cloudy sky and drizzling in the morning - they found Cheiridopsis with clusters of finger like stems - it would be a sea of yellow if in flower and you could see the fat succulent seed pods developing on some of the plants, as well as raindrops on the leaves. Nearby was a plant they wanted to see - Derek Tribble had given him a habitat location, and they found a rocky brow with a small area about twice the size of our meeting room and they found *Anacampseros alstonii* here. It is a caudiciform succulent with tiny little stems, and is very slow growing, so one the size of a teaplate is as big as you'd ever hope to see - each of the stems would flower in due course. We saw Cliff's hand for scale, and you could see the plant was a good handful. It was time for the mid-meeting break and we finished with some gentian blue flowers on a really tiny plant - this was the Karoo Violet (*Aptosimum procumbens*).

As they were driving around, the other three occupants of the car would be on the lookout, surveying if anything interesting warranted a stop. David spotted something red in the distance which was bright red - was it a coke can? It turned out to be a Hyobanche, which is a parasitic plant which grows on the roots of other plants and produces red flowers. Two other red objects nearby were indeed coca cola cans!

At Witwater, they found *Sarcocaulon crassicaule* - these were stunning plants with dark green foliage - they are winter growers and very slow growing, and difficult to grow well in the UK due to lack of winter light. They are called the bushman's candle since the plants have a waxy skin covering and can be used as a candle. A sprinkling of white flowers amongst the boulders was a *Moraea* sp. (Iridaceae), another of the Iris relatives. In what was now driving rain, across a stream which they could not cross they spotted *Othonna euphorbioides* - he had to use the zoom facility on his camera. Each thorn is bifurcated, which is quite unique. By now they were getting miffed with the weather since it was so cold and miserable and they decided to change their

schedule and headed north to Namibia a week earlier than they had originally planned.

This was a site he had been to before, with Margaret and David Corina – the ground is strewn with white quartz and it is very rich in miniature succulents – there was a very strong wind blowing at the time and Cliff was wearing gloves and Eunice decided to stay in the car - it really was very cold. They found little clumps of plants all over the place. There were tiny *Anacampseros papyracea* on the ground – and the rounded bodies of *Conophytum flavum*. Another *Anacampseros* was akin to *A. baeseckeii*. They came across a beautiful *Crassula deceptor* - more Cheiridopsis and then *Ihlenfeldtia excavata* which was formerly a member of the Cheiridopsis. There were *Othonna* leaves here so that must mean a caudex – the leaf cluster was only an inch across. Tiny *Anacampseros alstonii* seedlings were just 3 cm across, and there were lots of stems on them already – they were big enough to start flowering. In cultivation these would be 5-10 years old from seed – it is very slow growing. They found a larger plant which might be the parent of the smaller plants.

A *Tridentea* was a *Stapeliad* – these produce windborn seeds so the young plants can grow quite a distance from its parent. With mesembs, the seeds of the young plants are quite near the parent. They found more *Sarcocaulons* in flower. A *Stomatium alboroseum* was a ground hugging mesemb and a beautiful *Adromischus* had lovely colouring. They found *Aloe krapohliana* again but here it had a blue and pink hue – it was a very attractive form. They found *Lithops marmorata* which were shedding their leaves and also getting water on them. We could see the natural variation in two different forms growing a couple of feet apart – they were quite different in appearance despite being the same species. There were seed pods on them too. There was a big clump of lithops with big bloated leaves due to the rain and new heads coming through, and this had a dozen heads so was probably as big a clump as you'd ever see in habitat

They headed further north and found the sign for the AI-AIS national park (this used to be called the Richtersveld national park). This is a huge barren area with lots of choice plants but very little infrastructure and access to some areas is difficult unless you have a 4x4. They were at the Fish River Canyon side of the park – and we saw the river at the bottom of the canyon. *Aloe gariopensis* was very red and there was a large *Euphorbia virosa*. The leaves on the Aloe were incurving, trying to protect the crown of the plant from the sun.

They were being watched by an Oryx. David said they did see lots of antelope – but as soon as they see you, they move away as quick as anything. On the way out of the Fish River Canyon, they came across a roadhouse with a motel and restaurant - and this place also has a good library, according to Ian Acton. There were old cars dotted around the place and being used as garden ornaments. There is a lithops that grows here but David only learnt about it after he got back from the trip. There was a big bus parked here with people on a safari tour.

Aloe flowers were held above the grass and they found *Aloe khamibergensis*, with the evening sun casting a nice red colour on it. We saw a weaver bird nest on a telegraph pole and men are employed full time to knock these nests off the poles since otherwise it will bring the lines down. The weaver birds also build nests in the quiver trees and we saw an example of this. They headed further north into Namibia – it was very dry and the terrain looked good but they didn't find much in some areas they investigated. *Commiphora* is a succulent shrub – it is rather attractive with orange peeling bark – but if grown in pots you have to prune them to keep a bonsai shape. Robin asked what did they do about booking accommodation and stays at hotels - David said they never needed to plan ahead - they did have some idea of which towns had potential places to stay at and that was enough – they never failed to find a bed for the night.

They came across these weird looking fat stemmed succulents *Sesamothamnus guerichii* – they looked like hedging material, and they do get quite big – reaching 12-15 foot high eventually. Further on, they came across *Welwitschia mirabilis* – these were in flower and there were some seeds to collect. These have to be grown in a drainpipe since they have deep roots and don't like their roots being disturbed. They found *Pachypodium lealii* growing on stony hillsides near Palmwag – it's not seen very often. Something must have damaged one of the plants which was distorted, Cliff was rather fond of one of them and was photographed hugging it. They heard a sound and saw a lorryload of school kids waving and singing – they seemed to be on their way from school. Cliff said they were shouting that the "hillside was full of snakes" which he found hilarious. They found some flowers on some of the *P. lealii* plants. They also started to find *Cyphostemma uter* which is related to the grape family. They were going through the Grootberg Pass and found another stunning *P. lealii* in flower. They also found *Cyphostemma currori* which gets really huge – this might have been two plants growing together but it was really impressive.

They saw some giraffes late one afternoon and the group consisted of mature animals and younger ones. They headed up to Luderitz which is an old German colonial town but there does not seem to be much going on these days. There was loads of sand blowing on the roads and the roadsweepers need to come out every day to keep the roads clear. Luderitz was a nice town – but it seemed a bit eerie since just a few people are living here now.

With the wind and the sand blowing everywhere it made life difficult walking around the town since the sand got everywhere. They found some nice and different plants including *Sarcocaulon patersonii*, and *Psammophora modesta* which is a strange mesemb with sticky leaves - the sand sticks to the leaves and helps to protect the plants. *Crassula elegans* ssp. *namibensis* had a really nice peach colour due to the sun - in this country it would just be green. *Pelargonium crassicaule* had crinkled grey leaves and almost black stems. A desert cricket nymph displayed marvellous mimicry - it was very hard to see it against the brown colour of the terrain. *Conophytum saxetanum* is the most northerly occurring of the Conophytums according to the late Terry Smale.

They also found some nice examples of *Lithops optica* - the pink version (*L. optica rubra*) is also found around here. On the edge of the Sperrgebiet - the diamond mining area – you wander on this land at your peril - the normal *L. optica* were doing fine. They saw the succulent leaves of a *Tylecodon schaeferianus* with amazing intricate patterns - underneath is a succulent stem. The Sperrgebiet is an area bought up by De Beers – and there was lots of diamond collecting and smuggling in the past but it is all supposed to be prohibited now. Heading south at a place called Aus, they found a choice plant hiding in the grit – this was *Crassula mesembryanthemopsis* – you only tend to see it after brushing the grit away. David said he had seen it here some years ago, David Corina had amazingly spotted some in the grit many years ago and they were still growing in the same area. *Aloe ramosissima* has the same habit as *A. dichotoma* - but it is faster growing and more slender. It can grow in a pot.

Hoodia produces seed horns which are packed with winged seeds - and when these ripen the seed would be distributed over a wide area. They were now in a different part of the Richtersveld - in a place called Rosh Pinah – which is a mining town. There is a crossing at Sendelingsdrif with a flat chain ferry crossing. They headed out through the edge of the park, towards a town called Port Nolloth and headed a mile or two down the coast to Mcdougals Bay

where you can see the Atlantic Ocean. In the sand are some succulents – *Fenestraria rhopalophylla*. They are hard to find since the tops of their leaves are level with the sand but some were in flower and you could see the yellow flowers. You could also see the remains of the seed pods.

They chose to employ Conrad Mouton who runs a company called Richtersveld Tours to take them into the Richtersveld with his 4x4. He is interested in succulent plants and knows the habitat well. They saw *Larryleechia* (used to be *Trichocaulon*) - close to Alexander Bay and he took them to Cornell's Kop, where you can find *Aloe pillansii*, the rarest of the tree Aloes. There was a lovely population here and lots of flowers but no young plants to be seen at all. Here they saw one of the most beautiful plants they found on the whole trip - *Aloe karasbergensis* - it is in the Saponaria group of Aloes and was found by Eunice – it was stunning and looked like a painting with striated lines and various shades of grey and pink, and it was over 2 feet across.

They saw some more little Hoodias including *Hoodia alstonii* – Bruce Beckerleg used to grow this very well. The most famous plant from the Richtersveld is the “half men” *Pachypodium namaquanum* - the leaves were starting to go yellow and there were a few late flowers on some of them – it has burgundy coloured flowers. The plants were stunning. *Larryleachia cactiforme* was growing in a crack in the rock and they saw tall stems of *Hoodia alstonii*. The road they were on was quite bumpy and they sat in the shade of a tree until they were covered in midges and moved on. Some more Stapeliads were growing in full sun – they saw *Stapelia hirsuta* and *Orbea namaquensis* (which has a larger flower than *O. variegata*).

Another famous plant which only grows here at Hellskloof is *Aloe pearsonii* – it is not known from any other locality. The tops of the stems were fine but the lower part of the stems were dying off. There were thousands of stems of it, but there were no young plants to be seen. It was a lovely red colour.

They found a rare Stapeliad growing amongst the other plants – this was *Richtersveldia (Notechidnopsis) columnaris*. This was the locality (Reithuis) that Chris Rodgers had given him for a *Crassula* - it took them half an hour to find it after spotting the signs of their flowers. The plant was *Crassula susannae* and these were tiny plants with 6-7 mm flower heads. They went and knocked on the door of a place called Kendrew Estates and had to have tea and lemonade and sandwiches – the owners are so friendly and live in the middle of nowhere - they were there to see *Euphorbia obesa*

growing in the wild near Graaff-Reinet. There were far fewer plants now because the area had been raided a few years ago – but we got to see the male and female flowers on the plants. Now near Calitzdorp, we saw one of the rarest of the mesembs - *Muiria hortenseae* which has rounded bodies the size of a bantams egg. It is very difficult to grow and hardly ever seen successfully cultivated. There were a few *Gibbaeums* here too.

Vinay Shah

Here are some details of the Plant Fair that some members will be holding on July 8th:

Hampshire Succulents and Cacti Plant Fair

St Barnabas Church Hall,
Fromond Road, Winchester, SO22 6EF

8th July Saturday, 10.30am to 3.30pm. Free entry

Sellers:

- Benjamin Turner - a large range of mostly small succulents.
- Lennie - Small succulents and aeoniums
- Paul - Agave and Cacti
- Misfits Plants - Succulents
- The Mammillaria Society display and sale plants
- Totally Potty About Succulents - a small scale succulent and cement plant pot
- business based in Bournemouth
- Sarah Morrish - Botanical illustrations

Join our facebook group for updates
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/243392311247612>

Branch members are most welcome to sell. £12 pitch with table, £10 if you bring your own table. Please get in touch with Lennie Kwan (kwanjc@gmail.com)

Lennie Kwan

Next Month's Meeting

Our next meeting will be held on Tuesday August 1st. Here are some notes from David:

Next month we will hold another of our *Plant Focus* evenings, where we select a genus of cacti and a genus of other succulents which we will examine in detail, using the plants that everybody brings along to show the selection and diversity available. The chosen genera this time are **Rebutia** (including *Sulcorebutia* and *Weingartia*) and **Echeveria** (including hybrids that have *Echeveria* as at least one of the parents).

The success of these meetings depends entirely upon members bringing along examples of these two genera from their collections, so that we have plenty of material to talk about. So please make a special effort to bring along as many plants as you can - they don't have to be large show quality specimen plants, just bring along any examples that you have in your greenhouse.

We will talk about the various species, about which are the easiest, or slowest, or most difficult, highlighting the most cherished and highly sought species. We will discuss cultivation requirements, best sources of plants and seeds, the best books available etc.

This type of meeting has proven very popular in the past, and we hope that everyone will bring along plants from their collection to help make the August meeting as successful as our previous meetings in this format. Without plants, there will be little to talk about.....

Forthcoming Events

Tue	4 th	Jul	Southampton	Past and Mostly Present (Trevor Jackman)
Sat	8 th	Jul	Winchester	Hampshire Succulents and Cacti Plant Fair @ St Barnabas Church Hall
Sat	8 th	Jul	Isle of Wight	to be notified
Sat	15 th	Jul	Portsmouth	Coping with Copiapoa (Jonathan Clark)
Tue	1 st	Aug	Southampton	Plant Focus Evening - Rebutia & Sulcorebutia; Echeveria
Sat	12 th	Aug	Isle of Wight	Open House Meeting - members only
Sat	19 th	Aug	Portsmouth	No meeting

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