

British Cactus & Succulent Society

Southampton & District Branch Newsletter

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Editorial

The winter weather is on the verge of arriving but I must admit I have toughed it out so far. I guess sooner or later we will need to turn the heating on!

Last Month's Meeting

Chairman's Report 2022

This is the final branch meeting of 2022 and unusual in that it is our AGM/Social and our recovery year post-pandemic lockdown with all its attendant consequences. We are now in a new normal. From our perspective one good thing that has occurred is that during increased time for reflection many more people have turned to other leisures such as gardening and succulent growing and collecting. So we are seeing a significant number of new people at our meetings some of whom are experienced succulent and cactus growers. Sadly, we have lost two committee members, Ivor Biddlecombe and Tony Grech and two other members, Bruce Beckerleg and Robin Caddy have had to step down due to ill health and other commitments. Our committee is much reduced but it is encouraging that several people have volunteered to stand for election for 2023.

Our branch meetings commenced in March after a two-year gap and this is our 10th meeting. To arrange these with all the planning, contacting and gentle pushing and shoving is down to the exceptional, persistent effort of our secretary David Neville. He had full support from committee members and several others. It has not been possible to plan our meetings programme in advance so we have had a rolling programme of ten meetings with three outside speakers and seven by our own

local members. These meeting have been well attended although numbers are slightly down on pre-covid numbers but all talks have been enthusiastically received and consistently of high standard and great interest.

I thank David in particular, all members of the branch committee, all of you at our meetings and all others who have supported us. This includes our accountant friends Colin and Lorraine who now live in Spain but nevertheless have continued to audit our annual accounts.

I wish you all the very best of health and happiness for 2023.

Adrian Bailey

Secretary's Report 2022

When the Branch Committee decided to restart our activities following the pandemic and to hold a meeting in March 2022 we were very unsure about how much support there would be from the membership after such a long period of forced inactivity. We were all very pleased and relieved to welcome over 20 people to that meeting, including several new members who had joined the BCSS during the pandemic. At every meeting this year there have been somewhere between 20 and 30 people in attendance - this is a fairly healthy number, but still well below the average numbers that we were achieving pre-pandemic. We have not seen several of our members who had previously been regular attendees at the monthly meetings, but I am still hopeful that more of them might venture out to attend meetings in the coming year.

Those of us who have been active members of the Branch for years have found it difficult that former regular attendees Ivor Biddlecombe and Tony Grech are no longer with us. Both passed away from cancer in the early stages of the pandemic. Ivor had been a member of the Branch Committee since the early 1970s, and rarely missed any meetings over a period of almost 50 years. Tony was not with the Branch for such an extended period of time, but nonetheless his cheery and positive approach to life

had brightened our meetings for around 15 years. Both are sadly missed.

Bruce Beckerleg is sadly forced to retire from Branch activities due to a serious and painful spine condition. Bruce has served on the Committee for decades and has been Plant Sales Manager for longer than most members will be able to remember. He has been unable to look after his collection for the past couple of years and has now disposed of most of his remaining plants. We owe our thanks for his lengthy service and hard work for the Branch, and hope that his health improves soon. Robin Caddy is also standing down from the Committee because of family commitments; we hope that he will still be able to attend most meetings, and that he might be able to rejoin the Committee at some time in the future.

Looking forward, I am hopeful that the Branch will be able to attract growing numbers of people to attend our monthly meetings. There are still many people on our membership list who have never attended a meeting, so I hope that they will consider joining our happy group of cactus and succulent enthusiasts. I am sure that once they come along and discover the friendship and enthusiasm of our members, and are tempted by the good selection of plants for sale that are frequently offered at meetings, they will wonder why they hadn't joined us much earlier.

David Neville

Finance Officers Report 2022

I would like to thank Colin and Lorraine Bielckus for completing our annual accounts very promptly.

We are living in a strange time, but the branch finances remain healthy. We are glad to be able to present our audited annual accounts for financial year ending 2020, 2021 and 2022. As expected there was a small loss in financial year 2020 and 2021.

Thanks to the donation of books and plants by Ivor then their subsequent sale year ending 30th Sep 2022 the branch has made a profit of £377. This and previous reserves will continue to allow us to provide free entry and refreshments to our members and visitors.

I wish you all the best throughout festive season and see you all next year.

Alice Jankovec

Plants and People at the 2022 National Show

Picture 1 showed the cover sheet of the show schedule, detailing some of the key details of the show. The next three pictures showed the venue as it was being set up, with the tables being put out to hold the show plants. The next picture featured Bob and Beryl Potter entering some plants into the show. Next was John Bettley and Costas Papatthanasiou and Costa's wife, Sue. Next was Ray Stevenson, followed by a shot of Gareth Darbon. We saw more plants being put out, including some being transported on a wheelbarrow. This was followed by a couple of shots of Derek Tribble - he is an authority on Adromischus. We also caught a glimpse of Cliff Thompson putting out some plants, followed by a further shot of Costas.

Next was Alice Vanden Bon, who is a fantastic grower of cacti and succulents, she has an amazing collection, specializes in Lithops and Conophytums, and she has spoken to our branch before. The majority of the exhibits were out on the tables by Friday afternoon. There are numerous judges and they judge in pairs - each judge is expected to handle around 20 classes each. The show area is opened up to the public after judging is completed. We saw a view of where the workers were - plant sales area - most of the people arrived there in a 2 hour window. Plant sales allowed from noon. Linda and Bryan Goodey - from Southfields nursery. At the Chelsea flower show they almost always win a gold medal. The person they were talking to is Ralph Norcott from the Cactus Shop down in Devon. Most of the cactus nurserymen have been growing for a long time and most of them get on well with each other. With some society books, we saw Simon Snowden from Sheffield - he is the Membership Secretary. And we saw Greg Bulmer from Sheffield - he is the new Society Chairman. The man on the left was Barry Tibbetts, from Northampton.

Stuart Riley always wears a cactus themed T-shirt. We also saw Gerry Blacoe from Spalding Branch. John Carr is from Leeds and he's an expert on Sulcorebutia. We saw Amelia and Cathryn admiring the plants at Southfields. We saw John Bettley again - he was fortunate and lived just down the road. Vinay looked relieved that setting up was complete. Carlos and Terry Zeferino own Woodside Cacti. We saw another shot of Stuart Riley and his wife Jane - he goes to America every summer and comes back with new cactus t-shirts. Ian Armstrong is a Haworthia seller and he had many choice cultivars for sale. This was the only picture of Hazel Taylor - she was one of the main organisers and standing in

front of Southfields. We saw Amelia's stand - she was selling Crassulaceae and home made pots, cushion covers and other bits and bobs. David managed to surprise Beryl Potter but she smiled when she recognised who it was.

It got pretty busy on Saturday - but there were wide aisles, so it wasn't too bad. Of course there were no plants from overseas nurseries. We saw Carlos pointing at someone and probably talking as well. We saw Roger Ferryman - the UK expert on Chile - he has been going there every year for almost 30 years. Unfortunately he had hurt himself during one of the recent trips and his wife had to mount a rescue mission. Bill Darbon was another of the three main organisers. Roger had brought along plants from Colin Norton who had died a few weeks previously - Colin's collection was one of the best in the UK and he used to support the National Show. But he didn't grow just one of anything - he usually had spares - so Roger had come here to sell off some of Colin's plants and would be selling more at other events later on. In later years he was into Copiapoa and Eriosyce - David said he used to visit ELK and told some of the most awful jokes there. By mid afternoon, Roger had shifted most of the Colin's plants.

John Arnold was on the board of trustees. Martin Lowry was an expert on Lobivias from Bolivia. We saw Bill Darbon again and Amelia again. David Neville and Vinay were taking some money from customers. This stall was behind ours - and this was Joan Withers from Coventry branch. When her husband Warren was alive, he used to organise trips to European nurseries. We saw Ralph Northcott's sales table - he has a nursery in Winkley in Devon. Vinay was chatting to a Cypriot couple - the lady and her husband turn up at most of the cactus events in the southern half of the UK. We saw Carlos and Terry again, and a person from Bradford branch. A cactus pot seller - also goes to bonsai and alpine events.

Bob Potter was selling Euphorbias and Pachypodiums and other unusual plants. These people were friends of Carlos and Terry and they had come here from Portugal - they seemed to be selling various knitted items - the sign said these cacti and succulents needed no watering and were immune to mealy bugs and hand made in Portugal. We saw Ben and Cathryn, and also John Bridgman from Portsmouth branch and also Cliff Thompson in the background. Fosters Cacti and Succulents was a new seller, selling plants grown in clay pots. We saw Ralph Martin and his wife - he has been to speak to us a few years ago. Phil White and his wife - from Weston-super-Mare was a grower of

Haworthias and lots of the rarer Mexican cacti. We saw Stuart taking some more money. Richard spotted this person in a Aeonium t-shirt - it featured many cultivar names. And this was the only picture of Peter Down.

In the 2nd half of the meeting, we started off seeing some of the specialist societies which were at the show. We saw the Sedum Society and they had a few plants on display. The Mammillaria society had information but no plants. The Haworthia society had a few plants and the UK Bonsai Association also had a few plants. The Mesemb society did not have a stand this year. Graham Charles and his wife Elisabeth were chatting to Nigel Jones of Cardiff branch.

Class 1 was Ariocarpus and we saw a view of some of the entries - the longer you are in the hobby - the more attractive they seem to become they are most highly sought and desired. 1st prize was won by *Ariocarpus fissuratus* - this plant was many decades old. 2nd was a two headed *Ariocarpus trigonous* plant. One of the classes consisted of 2 Ariocarpus plants with a 15 cm limit. These belonged to Costas and consisted of *Ariocarpus scaprostus* - one of the most highly rated plants - the plant behind was more common - *Ariocarpus retusus*. Class 3 was the Astrophytum class - the one with the red card had won, and the first four plants were all *Astrophytum ornatum*. These can grow very large, there was a famous plant at Tegelbergs Nursery - it was several feet tall (in the 1970s).

In another class were two Astrophytum cultivars - one was a Super Kabuto clone and the other had a carmine flower (some hybrids can produce plants with unusual flower colours). Some plants are too heavy to go on the benches and have to be left on the floor - this was a Haageocereus. Some of the columnar plants keep the colour from the base to the top of the plant - but there are others where the spines naturally discolour. This was a weird looking cereus - a Coleocephalocereus - it was a very small plant related to Melocactus - and it produces a cephalium and has a bottle shape - it starts off globular then elongates. it was Graham Charles' plant and he was worried about his heating bill this winter. Next was an epiphytic plant - in the Rhipsalis group. There was some concern about the staging tables, some of which were decrepid. The Cyphostemma group has big swollen stem plants. And from the fruit you can see these are in the grape family. This was quite an attractive plant - a member of the TCPs (turnips, carrots, parsnips) and it was *Bombax ellipticum*.

This one was *Cyphostemma elephantopus*, with a warty looking caudex - it has a deciduous green vine like growth.

Now for some agaves - this was *Agave* "Kissho Kan" - it was 12 inches across. It will produce a few offsets and you can pot these up - but they don't produce them for ever - just for a year or two. We also saw a variegated plant of *Agave victoria reginae*. and *Agave toumeyana bella* - this was a really pretty plant in practice - it had a lot of heads on it. Another lovely plant was *Agave parryi* "Tuxedo kamen" - this was a beautiful plant, with variegation in the centre of the leaf rather than on the edge. Another beautiful form had the variegation again in the centre of the leaf. Some of these plants are liable to scorch especially, in the early part of season when the plants haven't started to grow yet. This didn't win a prize but it was a notable specimen of *Agave utahensis eborispina* - it's a very variable plant and on this specimen the tips are elongated and it even has a funny twist on the spine.

Fockea edulis has flat leaves and *Fockea crispa* has wavy leaves - not sure which this one was, but it had a lovely caudex. On *Fockea* the leaves are evergreen. *Crassula tecta* - this was quite a big clump. Just forms short stems, it produces clusters of white flowers in the early part of the year.

Copiapoa only comes from the coastal part of Chile. It is a marvellous place to visit and some of the views are breathtaking. The roads have improved considerably due to all the mining operations that now occur in Chile. This is *Copiapoa solaris* it grows to clumps in Chile but David mentioned that climate change in that country is killing off many of these plants. This was *Copiapoa cinerea* and it was probably 100 years old. This was one of the smaller Copiapoas - *Copipoa barquitenensis* - it grows to only a couple of inches across. There was lots of wool on this plant but the younger offsets didn't have any wool yet. Some of the big plants that are difficult to bring in did seem to have impacted the show. *Ferocactus glaucescens* is from Hidalgo and it has a bluish colouration to the epidermis. *Echinocactus horizontholianus* was mature and capable of flowering - it has purple-pink flowers. *Echinocereus mauritimus* grows in Baja, California, but it is notoriously hard to flower in habitat and the grower has done well here. *Pygmaocereus akersii* with little columnar stems - the silver spined heads are not common in cultivation.

Echeveria tolimanensis is from Toliman canyon in Mexico and the plants are almost inaccessible - you have to be brave to go down there.

Pachyphytum oviferum was Barry Webster's plant - it was quite a popular plant and quite a size although not in the best of condition. *Sedum frutescens* takes a long time to develop to this size - and the specimen was probably many decades old. It features peeling bark. Next we saw *Sedum lavatum* and *Sedum perez delarosae* - David forgot to ask Ray for a cutting of the latter. One can't see the detailed colouring but every leaf has a pink tip. *Aloe erinacea* is from the Richtersveld - normally this would have one head - but perhaps it had been damaged when young. Another unusual plant was *Idria (Fouquieria) columnaris* - the boojum - it only grows in the Sonora desert - this is just a seedling but is probably 30-40 years old. We saw some *Dorstenias*. *Euphorbias* - one of Bob Potter's - was *Euphorbia phillipsiae* and the *Euphorbia* on the left is *Euphorbia stellispina*. *Euphorbia decaryi* is from Madagascar, the plant rarely sees direct sun and the leaves go purple and it stops growing if it is exposed to sun. Some taller *euphorbias* included *Euphorbia poissonii* - from east Africa. We saw another form of *Euphorbia decaryi*. *Euphorbia cap-saintemariensis* and *Euphorbia cylindrifolia v tubifera*. Also *Euphorbia susannae*. In general, the *Euphorbia* classes were well supported. *Gasteria armstrongii* belongs to Jean Forward who has owned the plant for over 40 years. *Gasteria rawlinsonii* is a cliff dweller and prefers to hang down. Cliff Thompson's *Gasteria brachyphyllum* had won 3rd prize, he's had this for 20 years or more. And we saw a giant specimen of *Haworthia truncata*, which was over a foot across and owned by Elisabeth Charles.

One of the most highly rated of all the cacti is *Aztekium ritteri* - it takes 10 years to grow a seedling 10mm across and this plant was one that Tina Wardhow had purchased recently. *Obregonia denegrii* and *Aztekium hintonii* discovered recently, and *Strombocactus disciformis* is a slow growing Mexican plant. This had won first prize in the cristate class - *Ariocarpus retusus* cristate - it's quite possible that it may have been dug up and imported. In the group classes, three slow growing plants looking for mature plants - *Ariocarpus*, *Copiapoa cinerea* and *Astrophytum*. An *Obregonia* was covered in wool - that would disappear if you blowed at the plant. *Copiapoa lauii* clusters and flowers freely - it's a miniature with 2 to 2.5 cm heads. We saw Barry Tibbetts again. We saw some of the choice *Haworthias*. Also saw some some plants with a big caudex - including 2 x *Dioscorea elephantipes*. this plant has been arranged. This plant of *Seyrigia humberitii* had been arranged into a big square.

We saw examples of *Pachypodium namaquanum* - had realised that this plant of Cissus has been pruned and arranged to spell out BCSS on this trellis. *Hoodia gordonii* was in flower. With John Bettley's plant of *Orostachys* a little note had been left by the judge about the specific ID of the plant. *Discocactus hortisii* is a difficult plant to grow well. *Melocactus azureus* from Brazil needs temperatures of 20°C and it has a white cephalium. We saw *Uebelmannia pectinifera* from Brazil as well. We saw *Tephrocactus recurvatus* and *Tephrocactus geometricus*, the latter with spineless joints. We ended with a plant from the Andes - *Tephrocactus malianus* - you get dense woolly spines and deciduous green leaves on the new growth.

Vinay Shah

Next Month's Meeting

Our first meeting of 2023 will be held on January 3rd and will feature Members' Mini Talks - Short Talks by Branch Members. He hope to have between 4 to 6 volunteers – please have a word with David if you have some slide you would like to present to us at that meeting.

Forthcoming Events

Sat 10 th Dec	Isle of Wight	Annual General Meeting followed by American Supper
Tue 3 rd Jan	Southampton	Members' Mini Talks - Short Talks by Branch Members
Sat 16 th Jan	Isle of Wight	Tales of a Christmas Tree Salesman (Richard Ridley)
Sat 23 rd Jan	Portsmouth	Echinocereus (Julian Cooke)

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