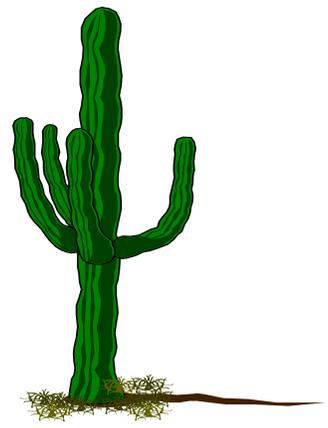


Oxotica

The Newsletter of the Oxford Branch of the British Cactus and Succulent Society

December 2000

Volume 5, Number 2



FROM THE CHAIRMAN

This has been a fantastic year for the Branch. We have held two Shows, each building on the success of earlier occasions. The last one, which is to become a biennial event, reached almost dizzy heights! This was the Mesembryanthemum and other Succulents Show and proved to be very popular, bringing in exhibitors and visitors from far and wide. It went with a real buzz, so if you weren't there, you really missed something!

Next year we are to be joined in our Annual Show by the Asclepiad Society, who will have their own section in the show. They are planning to hold their AGM during the course of the day and are making arrangements to have a world class speaker to address us. This will be a real attraction and you are advised to look out for the notices, which will be in the BCSS Journal, and to book early so as to avoid disappointment.

Those members who do not come to meetings and shows do miss a lot. If you are really interested in succulents there is much to be learned from meeting others with similar interests. Speakers who have visited habitats, and those who have grown plants over many years, can pass on their observations and expertise in cultivation. In addition we have very good plant sales both at our meetings and at Shows, when of course there are specialist nurseries on hand with all their tempting goods as well - surely this should encourage you to come even if nothing else does. Also the Branch owns a considerable library from which you may borrow books.

I would like to encourage everyone when they renew their subscriptions (which I hope they will do promptly because it makes it easier for the Membership Secretary and Treasurer) to add a bit extra to go towards the Conservation Fund. The Society has a Conservation Committee that does sterling work for us. At a time when there is pressure on habitats from building, agriculture, industry and also collectors who should know better, the Committee tries to influence governments and other groups who could put a stop to the further degradation of sites. Working with botanic gardens around the world, they are helping to fund the setting up of conservation areas and the reintroduction of plants where they have been decimated or even lost. In many countries plants are taken straight from the wild to be used in native medicine and often even for superstitious purposes - in such places they are encouraging the education of the local people in cultivation so that they do not have to take the plants from the wild.

The Conservation Committee has been in contact with Kew Gardens to get them to join their efforts to influence the powers-that-be to introduce a more sensible policy on the import of plants; it has tried to encourage countries, where our favourite plants grow, to grow plants for export and thus make it pointless for collectors to steal the plants from

habitat, and they monitor the situation of the most endangered plants. Where money has been given for various projects, they keep a close watch on how it is spent so that it is not wasted. These are just some of the ways in which the Conservation Committee is trying to help in the conservation of succulents. It is important work and should have all the support we can give. Please be generous.

You will be receiving the programme for next year with this newsletter - to make sure you do not overlook any of the meetings or other events, mark them up in your diary, then you will have no excuse for missing anything! We are looking forward to another good year ahead.

The Oxford Committee joins me in wishing you a Happy Christmas and a New Year of great growing!

Mary Stone



AUTUMN SHOW (George Hollis)

The combination of Other Succulents and Mesembs certainly turned out to be a recipe for success (and headaches for the judges!). Too often shows are held to cover as many of the cacti and other succulent classes as stated in the Handbook. This approach has highlighted (perhaps) the need to meet the needs of the plant in our greenhouses and not the needs of a general show. On the whole, cacti are plants demanding an April / early-summer show and during that period a great number of other succulents are still waking up or even going to rest in this period.

Congratulations, Oxford Branch, in taking the plunge - perhaps future

National Show organisations could take note of the need to perhaps hold two shows (smaller in nature) at different times of the year to satisfy the needs of the plants and to show them at their best.

In terms of the show there were many plants to judge and I found it particularly difficult judging the section of the show allocated to me - the Mesembs. Some classes left me with more choices than I normally meet at a show, which is a measure of the advantage of having plants in a show which are fully in growth. Perhaps more difficult for this judge - perhaps more entertaining for the exhibitors knowing the task facing the judge.

There were a great deal of plants worthy of note and I do not wish to comment too deeply as two or three pages more would result. However, I will comment on the best Mesemb in show - the *Conophytum stephanii* - a remarkable plant for its species - so difficult to get to such a size in cultivation and so quickly lost; I hope that the plant will live for many years to come!

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NEXT YEAR'S PROGRAMME

January 25th The Oxford National Show

Some of the more senior members of the Branch may remember the toil and effort that running a National Show entails. Now that Cathy is the National Slide Librarian (however did she get that job?) our own Branch has first hand access to some remarkable records.

February 22nd "India Revisited" by Doug Donaldson.

Doug was one of the big hits last year, judging by the number of members present. The story of how Meena Singh hid a pickaxe in Doug's luggage just before going through the airport scanner is one of the best of many delightful stories. This time it is North India, with visits with or without pickaxe to botanical gardens.

March 22nd "Caudiciforms" by Alan Butler.

Alan is one of our favourites, of course. Not many people know more about the TCP's than he does, and he sells most of them too, from Brookside Nursery. Alan also runs the Asclepiad Society, so we can pick his brains before the Summer Show.

April 26th Members' Plant Forum.

This has become an established part of our yearly cycle. Branch members and regular visitors have proved how very capable they are at presenting and explaining aspects of our hobby that most interest them.

Followed by a question and answer session, it is a sociable occasion.

May 24th "Fifty Years Growing Cacti" by Frank Screen.

Frank is well known to those of us who visit Birmingham Branch or Zone 6 events. He has just realised that he has been pricking his fingers for fifty years, and will be showing us some of his triumphs and maybe the odd failure. Pick the brains of a really experienced grower.

June 28th "Pests and Diseases Continued" by George Hollis.

George provoked so much audience participation when he came in 1998 that he has had to come back and conclude his talk. He will follow it up with a discussion on soil types and the mixing of composts, which no-one who is keen should miss. George is a well-loved former Chairman of the Shows Committee and a brilliant lecturer as well as grower.

John Watmough

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The Branch meets at 7.30 p.m. on the 4th Thursday of each month (except December) at the John Bunyon Baptist Chapel, Cromwell Road, Cowley, Oxford.

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The pan of Lithops shown by Eddy Harris is a very fine example of both presentation and cultivation. A well-balanced range of species and sub-species, arranged so that the eye can readily see them - and so many showing maturity in cultivation.

The smaller pot-restricted class for the Conophytum subgroup was also a battle of good cultivation and the maturity of plants. This added to the headaches of judging: the first and second places split by purely just the need for a little extra clean-up with a camel hair brush - who knows what would have happened if the camel had given up his hairs!

I could go on but feeling kindly to the newsletter editor I shall stop - he has enough problems to read my scribble. So well done Oxford, may you hold many more of these highly successful shows. I am sure the exhibitors are behind you!



AUTUMN SHOW (John Hughes)

The unusual trouble with judging, especially the special classes, is valuing the perfect small plant against the size and hence maturity of larger plants with minor imperfections. Nobody would argue with the winner of the Class 28 *Agave victoria-*

reginae, which got the Best In Section. The *Agave mexicana* gets its second prize solely on condition. The whole class looked spectacular but many plants had minor imperfections.

Class 29: 15 entries but many small plants of large-growing species. Expected to see *Agave nevadensis* and the like. Eventually another *victoria-reginae* was given the nod.

30,31: Both aloe classes well contested and with many plants in excellent condition. The clumpy form of *erinacea* was well presented (remember, two points for presentation), while the *A. kniphofioides* which won class 31 is a difficult plant to grow.

32: The *Anacampseros* group was dominated by excellent plants of *A. alstonii*. I dread to think how many of these plants have been dug up from the wild.

33: 33 entries(!) but surprisingly few outstanding plants. The interesting *Tylecodons* were only just starting to grow. Was very surprised to give the First to a humble *Crassula bicornuta*.

34: I loved the Curly Kale (and *E. katella*); sad it was knocked on the way to the show. In perfect condition I would have rated it! All four winning plants have good levels of farina with little damage. I was pleased to see a reasonable *E. cante* which eventually got H.C. Has anyone still got 'Phyllis Collis', the hybrid of *cante* (when it was called *subrigida*) with *E. affinis*?

35: The small-growing *Dudleya gatesii* eventually pipped a trio of *lauii*, on grounds of maturity.

36: How nice to give the first to a simple green *Aeonium arboreum*. But how beautifully grown it was. The large Hummels Sunset would have given it a

close run for its money if there had not been so much minor leaf damage.

37: This is the classic example of my first comments. The large *Euphorbia aeruginosa* and *meloformis* were demoted on condition. This was not the case for the winning *stellispina* which won on size and condition.

38: Many of the *Euphorbias* were starting to go into rest. No pair was perfect and the winning *poisonii* / *millotii* was arrived at by a process of elimination.

39: The *E. actinoclada* / *E. cylindrifolia tubifera* / *Monadenium magnificum* trio which won the class was outstanding.

40: The various *Gasteria armstrongii* had minor faults or appeared to be going into rest and eventually gave it to a large clean *G. batesiana*.

41: Rather a disappointing entry with the more unusual species being small or damaged. The winning *Euphorbia glomerata* was clean and well-grown.

42: Two outstanding *Haworthia truncata* hold 1st and 2nd amply demonstrating the clonal variation of the thicker-leaved species with compact flower spikes and the finer-leaved second with its long wispy spikes. The *attenuata* v. *striata* which was third was a truly magnificent example of a common plant. I would have liked to have given it an award for cultivation.

43: The winning combination here of *Haworthia viscosa*, *pseudotortuosa* and *poellnitziana rubriflora* perhaps surprised me, as usually *truncata*, *starkiana*, *lockwoodiis* and the like feature, but both were excellently grown and the best overall matched pair.

44: A weak class. 9cm limit with *limifolias*! And each good pair having a very poor

third. The *Haworthia comptoniana*, *mirabilis beukmannii* and *truncata* combination just about shaded it on overall even condition / maturity.

45: Many nice plants, but the *Dioscurea elephantipes* that one was in full flower, had a good sized caudex and disease-free leaves.

46: A very high standard with a *Pachypodium rosulatum* in full leaf and vigor just pipping a lovely *namaquanum* with delightful crinkled leaves.

47: The first and second prize-winners deserve praise; to get *Sarcocaulons herrei* and *burmanii* in growth! Mine only even grew for one year.

48: The *Fockea edulis* was not the biggest on show but was in active growth and with unblemished leaves.

49: Not one of my strongest groups and 20 entries. I did feel that the *Ceropegia strenantha* may not be the most difficult and certainly not the nicest smelling, but was in full flower on the day.

50: A good selection. The *Tylecodon reticulata*, which also won an award of merit, was an old plant, which I suspect had been many years in cultivation.

51: Not a strong class, but the *Pachypodium namaquanum* and *Dorstenia gignens* entry was a clear winner with two of the best plants individually in the class.

52: The last class was a disappointing one and one longed to swap plants within the groups to produce stronger entries. The plant I most coveted in this class was a *Haworthia lockwoodii* in a group which did not feature in the first three.

Next, a seasonal recipe from Brian Conway...



Christmas Fruit Cake Recipe

Ingredients

1 cup water, 2 cups dried fruit, 1 cup brown sugar, 1 cup sugr., 1 tsp salt, 8 oz nuts, 4 large eggs, 1 tsp baking soda, juice of 1 lemon and 1 bottle whisky.

Method

Sample the whisky to check for quality.

Take a large bowl.

Check the whisky again to be sure it is of the highest quality, pour one level cup and drink.

REPEAT

Turn on the electric mixer, beat one cup of butter in a large fluffy bowl.

Add one tsp sugar and beat again.

MAKE SURE WHISKY IS STILL OKAY

Cry another tup

Turn off the mixerer.

Break two eggs and add to the bowl and chunk in the dried fruit

Mix on the turner

If the fried druit gets stuck in the beaterers, pry it loose with a drewscriver.

Sample the whisky to check for tonsistency.

Next sift two cups of salt, or something Who cares.

CHECK THE WHISKY

Now sift the lemon juice and strain the nuts. Add one tablespoon of sugar or something - whatever you can find.

Grease the oven

Turn the cake tin to 350 degrees

Don't forget to beat off the turner.

Throw the bowl out of the window, check the whisky again and go to bed.



DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHY



Islaya copiapoides (now *Eriosyce islayensis*)

Slide presentations are an important part of our annual programme of meetings, and for some people photography is much more than that: it is a significant part of their hobby. A minor revolution is taking place in this area - the emergence of digital systems - so it might be timely to give some experiences of digital still photography.

I bought an Olympus C-1400XL camera this year, the big difference between this camera and most of the other digitals on the market being that it is a single-lens reflex (SLR) model. The through-the-lens (TTL) metering and view-finding, with zoom capability, makes it good for plant photography. The macro mode enables close-ups down to 30 cm, but my (optional) macro lens supplement brings this down to 16cm.

I also bought a 32 Mb card to use instead of the one supplied with the camera, and this stores a nominal 96 'high resolution' pictures, but more can be crammed onto it. These are downloaded to our home PC, and the card cleared for re-use, using the supplied Olympus software. Downloading proved to be a big drain on the (rechargeable) camera batteries, so I bought a mains adaptor, as recommended. Once on the computer, images can have name and comments added, and can be rotated,

resized, trimmed or enhanced (the brightness, contrast or sharpness altered). The 24-bit colour is realistic.

On the computer the pictures can be sorted into electronic 'albums'. Full-screen pictures can be viewed individually or in 'slide-show' mode, or printed out. I have used an Epson 760 ink-jet plotter for indirect-printing via the computer. This has a 4-colour ink system but the Epson Photo 870, for instance, which uses a 6-colour system, produces better photo-realism. Prints can be plotted onto 'ordinary' printer/plotter paper, but look better on the more expensive glossy paper. Replacement ink cartridges are not cheap though, as you may know.

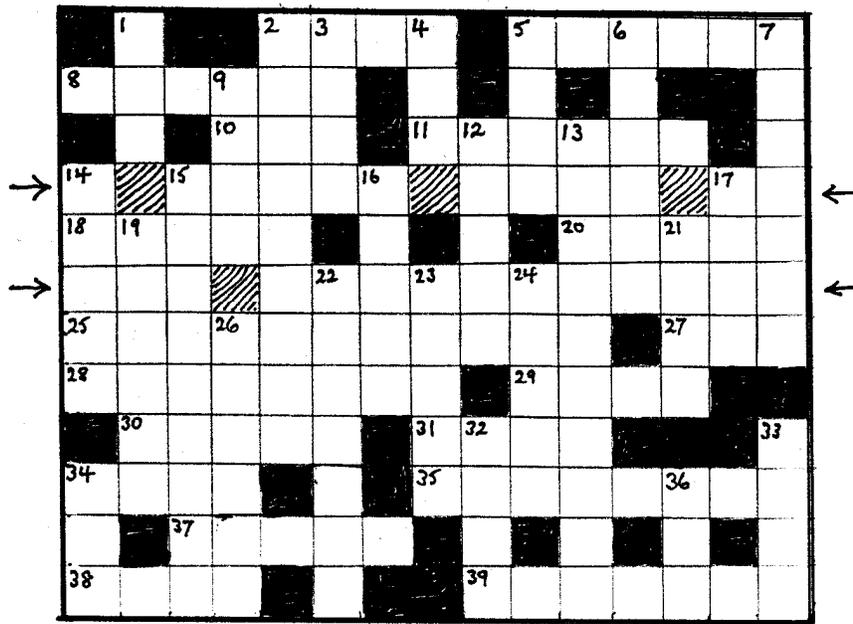
This year there is a new Olympus SLR digital camera, the C-2500L. This can produce even higher resolution images, allows close-up work down to 2cm (!) without supplemental lenses, and has the extra feature of connection to a TV for picture viewing. It is pricey but this will change - I bought my current camera at one third of its launch price of two years ago.

I use Zip disks for long-term storage of images (and back-up in case of hard disk failure) but the technology keeps advancing. CDs have a bigger capacity, and CD writers are becoming more common just now.

Film still reigns supreme when it comes to slide shows in public places, but the digital method is now challenging. I have recently given a talk showing a mixture of my digital photographs and scanned images stored in a Microsoft PowerPoint presentation, with a (borrowed) projector connected to a laptop PC. These projectors are still too expensive for most individuals, but are commonplace now in business.

David Greenaway

... and another John Watmough challenge for the holiday



...

ACROSS

- 2 Type of alpine opuntia (4)
- 5 May be eaten with 29,7 (6)
- 8 Our Seed Distributor (6)
- 10 Doug Donaldson's description of an Englishman's brains? (3)
- 11 An essential in the greenhouse at this time of year (6)
- 18 These won't wish you 14 Across, etc (6)
- 20 Girl's name (5)
- 25 A big fiddle (11)
- 27 Term of endearment (3)
- 28 Philip II's palace and centre of administration near Madrid (8)
- 29,7 Breakfast fare (4,2,5)
- 30 How horses are measured (5)
- 31 Our Journal Technical Editor (4)
- 34 Our Publications Officer (4)
- 35 Effect of a late night lecture about, say, 400 different lobivias (8)
- 37 More accurate (5)
- 38 Platform (4)
- 39 One who is learned, or who aspires to be such (7)

DOWN

- 1 Big hit (3)
- 2 Put on tape before broadcasting (9)
- 3 One who employs peyote ? (4)
- 4 17 Down, or its residue (3)
- 5 It's on the rails (4)
- 6 Breakfast mixture (6)
- 7 See 29 Across
- 9 Is indebted (4)
- 12 Sing the praises of (5)
- 13 The "spy in the cab" (10)
- 14 Raw material for tequila (5)
- 15 These grow cephalia (9)
- 16 Joshua 17 Down, e.g. (5)
- 17 Bill and Yvonne (4)
- 19 Old Testament prophet (6)
- 21 Mountain range (4)
- 22 What is used to make the smell in draghunting (7)
- 23 Narrates (5)
- 24 Guilty or Not Guilty ? (5)
- 26 Hammer's description of conophytum enthusiasts (6)
- 32 Ilford Branch would jelly these (4)
- 33 What's brewing ? (4)
- 34 How non-cactus-lovers may just possibly see us (3)
- 36 3 Down may become so (3)

