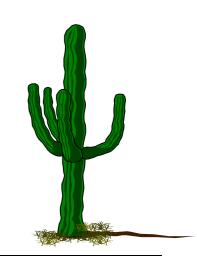
Oxotica

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

December 2002

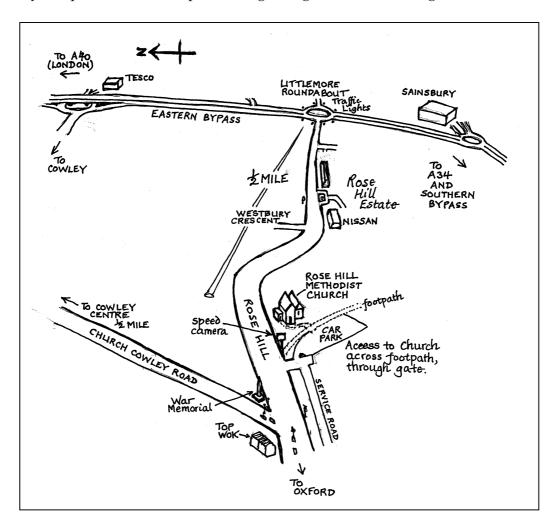
Volume 7, Number 2



WE ARE MOVING!

After 40 years at the John Bunyan Baptist Chapel in Crowell Road we have lost our parking spaces, and for this and other reasons we feel the need to hold our monthly meetings in a new place. However, we will be moving only a very short distance. As from January 2003, Branch meetings will be held in the **Rose Hill Methodist Church**, Rose Hill, Oxford.

There is ample parking behind the church, as shown on the map. Please note that the turn into the car park is very sharp indeed. As you go down Rose Hill you will see a speed camera on the left. Turn IMMEDIATELY left after the camera into the service road, then left again back on yourself. This is a very sharp turn. There is a path through the gate that leads straight to the church.



FROM OUR CHAIRMAN

My term of office as your Chairman is coming to an end and I am glad to say that I am handing over at a time when everything is going well for the Branch. This happy state of affairs is due entirely to my committee who have worked tirelessly to keep things going and to bring in innovations that have improved the way we do things.

We now hold two separate shows in one year, and one in the next. We have recently been joined by specialist societies and have an outstanding speaker to give a lecture after the show. This arrangement has brought an increased attendance, with more and better exhibits. It has been good to welcome members who may have had to travel considerable distances from their branches and who have thought it was worth their while. Our special thanks go to Bill Darbon who is an exemplary Shows Secretary and always lays on a show that runs without a hitch, and still finds time to give a hand in the kitchen!

We have also done our usual round of displays and in particular this year at the Blenheim Garden Show. With the help of members from Birmingham Branch and Rodney Sims from Berkhampsted, we spent five days publicising the Society and managed to recruit several new members, some of whom will come to our Branch. We also displayed and showed at the Oxford RHS Show in Florence Park, which is local to our meeting place – we hope that will encourage attendance from people who live nearby.

At the end of our Summer Show we had the pleasure of the presentation of an Award of Merit to John Warwick. He has been a member since the formation of the BCSS and before that, of the National Society. He is well known for the quality of the plants he shows and he has always been a loyal and dependable member. The award is well deserved. Aptly at about that time there was an article in the Journal, which he wrote about his Great-grandfather, Justus Corderoy, who

is commemorated in the names of several succulent plants.

Our speakers have been outstanding this year. We were very glad that Marlon Machado was able speak to us and that we were able to fit him into our schedule. Following on a talk by David Tribble about their trip to Chile, it was complementary to hear about Brazil and made a very enjoyable evening. We will be having good speakers again next year and we hope to have an increased attendance at our meetings. It has become necessary to change our meeting place to the Rose Hill Methodist Church, which I think you will find comfortable – it has the added advantage of a large car park! You will be receiving a map to help you find your way there (and see p.1).

We all have a common interest in succulent plants and should be doing all we can to raise awareness of their beauty and the part they play in the botanical world. We are often told that the destruction of the rainforests may deprive us of plants that could be of benefit to man, and the same is true of succulents. Their habitats are often under threat and it is up to us to grow plants from seed so that there is no temptation for the unscrupulous to ravage them in the wild. The Society has a Conservation Committee that is dedicated to helping in the preservation of plants and habitats; this is a worth while project and I urge you to add a little to your subscription to go for this purpose.

I thank everyone who has supported me as Chairman and I offer my best wishes to my successor. I hope you will all give him, or her, as much help as I have received so that we can continue to enjoy together the friendship which the participation in a Branch and Society like ours confers.

Mary Stone

FORTHCOMING MEETINGS

January – June 2003 (To be held at Rose Hill Methodist Church)

Jan 23rd. RODNEY SIMS will be presenting his highly recommended talk on "The Little Karoo". This talk features many of our favourite South African succulents and puts them into the context of the local geography, geology, climate and non-succulent vegetation.

Feb 27th. DOUG DONALDSON, another old friend, is giving "Sea to Sierra", a description of a journey from the Pacific Ocean across the Mexican Uplands. Doug's talks are always good fun, and he will be bringing plants for sale from his nursery.

Mar 27th. ELIZABETH PENDLETON will be best known to most members as the former Robins organiser for the BCSS. Dr Pendleton has not visited Oxford before, so we shall hope to give her a warm welcome. Her talk is on "The Chiricahuas", which are a range of mountains in South East Arizona with interesting cacti.

April 24th. GARETH DARBON had the enterprise to sign up as a teaching assistant in Kenya last summer, and from his experiences he has compiled a presentation called "Help Me Sweet". Please come and support our own member in what promises to be excellent entertainment.

May 22nd. DAVID PORTER from Coventry Branch is a good friend of Oxford Branch and is well-known as a grower of the more difficult choice succulents. He will be speaking today on "Mesembs", with the talk illustrated partly by live plants. He usually has a range of interesting plants for sale.

June 26th. CATHY DARBON will be giving her "Mini Judges' Course" to help us prepare for our big Show on 20th July. Cathy is on the BCSS Shows Committee and is one of a small elite who are qualified to judge National Shows. This is a special opportunity to handle live plants and to learn about how to present one's own plants to the best effect.

John Watmough Secretary

OTHER EVENTS

13th April (Sunday). (In preparation). PLANT AUCTION. John Watmough is reducing his cactus collection to make room for more Weeds. There will be all manner of plants for sale, not only John's, in addition to the Auction, and it is hoped that Branch funds will be significantly augmented.

8th June (Sunday). (In preparation). ZONE 8 OPEN DAY, hosted by Oxford Branch members. Visit collections at your own pace, meet friends from other Branches, and no doubt eat loads of cake.

19th to 22nd June (Thursday to Sunday). BLENHEIM GARDEN EXHIBITION. Oxford Branch will be representing the BCSS as in 2002, and we shall be glad of help to man our stall over the four-day period. Last year we made a lot of useful contacts to the benefit of both Branch and Society.

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The Branch meets at 7.30 p.m. on the 4th Thursday of each month (except December) at the Rose Hill Methodist Church, Rose Hill, Oxford OX4 4JP.

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SHOW SECRETARY'S REPORT

OXFORD BRANCH SHOWS 2002

The Branch's concept of holding two different shows this year to separate Cacti from the Other Succulents proved to be very successful and was well received by those who attended both events.

In July we shared the show with the Tephrocactus Study Group, and although entries in the specialist section were a little disappointing, the recent illness of Rene Geissler contributing to most of the shortfall, there were still some good examples of those prickly things that grab hold of you at every opportunity. 27 exhibitors staged 450 entries, the standard of the plants in the other classes of the show was outstanding and even up to National Show standard as the report from one of the Judges testifies. The lecture after the show by Franz Kuhhas had some superb photography of plants in the wild, some of which have never see before.

Best Cactus	John Betteley	Mammillaria saboae var. haudeana
Best Opuntia	Bill Jackson	Opuntia zehnderi
Ginns Medal	John Warwick	Most points in show
Awards of Merit	Dr Gillian Evison	Ariocarpus furfuraceus
	Dave Porter	Austrocactus patagonicus
	Dr Gillian Evison	Escobaria leei
	Dr Gillian Evison	Neolloydia grandiflora
	David Neville	Puna subterranea
	David Neville	Thematic Exhibit (Ariocarpus)

We had just drawn breath and along comes our 2nd Autumn Mesemb. and Other Succulent Show. Well, if we thought that the standard of plants would be any the less we were pleasantly surprised. 32 Exhibitors brought along 580 entries to swell the benches. The general standard was very high with some superb individual plants.

Those who stayed after the show to hear the lecture by Uwe, Beyer on the *Impact of generic diversity of succulent plants* were given some interesting aspects of how our plants adapt to a different environment from their natural habitat, and the lecture provoked thought on how we treat our own plants in the greenhouses.

Best Mesemb	Dr Gillian Evison	Alionopsis spathulatus
Best Succulent	Dr Gillian Evison	Pseudolithos cubiformis
Ginns Medal	Alice Davies	Most points in show
Award of Merit	Dr Terry Smale	Conophytumi pellucidum
		Conophytum luckoffi
		9 Conophytums in 2" pots
	Mike Blake	Fenestra auranticatum
	David Neville	Haworthia lockwoodi
		Haworthia springbokvlakensis
	Dr Gillian Evison	Pseudolithos caputmedusae
		Dudleya traskiae
	Doug Willis	Haworthia truncata

Any show relies on the exhibitors and I am grateful to all those that came to support us from Coventry, Leicester, North Wilts, Birmingham, Swindon, Brighton, Derby, Bristol, Southampton, Sheffield, Gloucester, Reading and Basingstoke. Thanks also go to an ex- Branch member from Lincoln, the former Chairman from Swindon, and Mike Blake and his wife now living near York.

The ladies in the kitchen worked extremely hard to provide the usual Bacon Rolls and an excellent lunch. The branch plant stall was a hive of activity and the visiting nurseries did a good trade. We were extremely pleased to welcome Bill Greenaway in July all the way from Cornwall, and even more so when he asked when he could return.

We feel that combining the show with a specialist group having a lecture after was definitely the way forward, and hope that we will be able to continue having speakers who are not normally seen on the British circuit. We are now planning for 2003, again with the IAS, and for July 2004 with the Mammillaria Society.

Watch this space.

Bill Darbon

SHOW JUDGES' REPORTS

JOHN BETTELEY - July 2002

The Tephrocactus Study Group (TSG) show had 21 classes, of which 19 were supported.

Class 46 contained several good examples of the hairy floccosa group, including a fine lagopus var. aureopenicillata.

Class 47 was won by a 6-inch pan full of Austrocylindropuntia verschafeltii var. longispina.

Class 48 was won by the best plant in the whole show section - a perfect multiheaded O. zehnderi.

Class 49 was dominated by six entries of O. rossianus var. fauxianus.

A fine flowering example of O. nigrispina won Class 51.

The only award of merit in the show section was given to a clean multiheaded Puna subterraneus.

O. articulatus and papyracantha dominated Class 53. These can be difficult to transport to shows, being so fragile.

There were three entries in the Arampoa / Tunilla section. The winning O. multiareolata showed plenty of flower remains.

Classes 57 and 58 contained a variety of the tuberous-rooted Pterocacti.

Class 62 (four plants in 3 ½ inch pots) was the most competitive in the show, with seven entries. Grafted plants were down-pointed as the difficulty and maturity of the examples were somewhat undermined.

Classes 63 and 64 contained examples of South American Opuntias. The O. invictas showed some damage to individual stems.

Overall, the show was reasonably well supported, but with over 60 UK members of the TSG, entries in some classes were fairly weak.

<u>JOHN EDE</u> – July 2002

I left home at 8 o'clock, a happy bunny under the impression that I was judging the 26 classes of Tephrocactus, which I hoped would consist of 4 - 5 entries per class. i.e. after about 40 minutes nice and easy judging, then sit down and watch poor John Betteley work his rocks off judging all the other classes. OH NO! The first person I see is Betteley, who joyfully informs me he is judging the Tephros' and yours truly has all the rest.

The first class consisted of four absolutely spanking Ariocarpus, which I thought looked better than National Show entries. Then to a dozen superb Astrophytums, and from then to class 45 it got no easier!! Apart from one or two plants with cobwebs and one with the

ubiquitous carrot rooted oxalis, all the plants were clean and tidy and most having readable labels. Quite a few of the entries with 3 or 4 plants in the entry, were spoiled by having one tatty plant and two or three very nice plants, which in some instances cost a First Prize card. Even sorting out Awards of Merit was difficult because of the high standard of the entries, but the Best Plant in the show spoke for itself a large pot of Mammillaria saboae var. haudeana.

Having judged positively and I hope competently for a couple of hours, I guess I had the last laugh on Mr Betteley by judging John Warwick's plants, 2 points better than his in the contest for the Ron Ginns Medal. In my opinion it has been the best show I have attended for a good few years and the branch and its members are to be congratulated. I even got my enthusiasm for judging back.

EDDY HARRIS - October 2002

Once again this, the second such show, turned out to be another great success with lots of entries from many parts of the country, all of an excellent standard and in a number of cases quite difficult to judge. Whereas for the first show I had just brought my plants along and staged them, this time I had been asked to judge the Mesemb. classes, and therefore was a little dismayed on arrival to be told by several other qualified judges who were exhibiting, that they didn't envy me my task.

The first few classes were relatively simple to judge and did not give me too many problems, but I was soon in difficulties when I reached the *Conophytum* sub–group classes. There were four of these, one for a single plant in unlimited pot size, one for two plants in pots up to 13cms, one for three plants in pots up to 9cms and one for nine plants in pots up to 5.5cms. Each of these was very well supported especially the last two.

The first slowed me down slightly as there were quite a number of extremely good plants on the bench but I finally chose a beautiful plant of *Conophytum pellucidum* which filled a 13cm pot, had more heads than one could count and was in perfect condition. This also received an Award of Merit.

The next for two plants was slightly easier to judge and I quickly chose a perfect pair of plants one of which was a 13cm pot of *Conophytum luckhoffii*. This plant also received an individual Award of Merit.

The next class was a real swine to judge and caused me also sorts of problems for the standard was so high and there were so many excellently grown plants. The first was relatively easy to decide as it comprised plants of *Conophytums albiflorum, comptonii and minutum,* each one filling the pot and in pristine condition. It was harder to pick the other two places and I eventually awarded two Highly Commended cards to cover the best entries. The winner also received an Award of Merit for the entry

The fourth *Conophytum* class was the one that gave me the worse problem for it was easier to pick out the one or two entries that were not in the running, the rest were all excellent. I spent a very long time making my decision and eventually chose an entry which included beautifully grown examples of *Conophytums arthofalgo*, *brunneum*, *comptonii*, *depressum*, *pellucidum ssp. cupreatum*, *reconditum* and *rugosum*. Again I awarded this entry an Award of Merit and again I gave two Highly Commended cards as well. I felt that I could have gone back later and judged it with totally different results, the entries were that close.

The remaining classes were relatively easier to judge and the winners were quickly chosen. The best Mesemb. in the show was a giant plant of *Aloinopsis spathulata* which filled a 33cm. bowl and was some 27cm in diameter without a mark on it.

There were some disappointing classes, such as the one for a plant in the *Gibbaeum* sub–group that was poorly supported and contained what I felt were not well grown plants, and the class for a bowl of *Lithops* which had only two entries. However, despite the problems I enjoyed the experience and thank the Oxford members for inviting me to help judge such an excellent show.

Overall the show was of a very high standard with a lot of the prize winners certainly being able to compete for major honours at national level.

There were, to my surprise, a few classes where the quality of the plants was fairly poor, the small Crassula Group, Echeveria Sub-group, is an example. On the other hand the unlimited group was very well represented with some beautiful plants. The unlimited Gasteria group was also good. However, I felt that in the smaller Haworthia groups although the quantity was very good, there were not sufficient plants of a high standard.

It was not difficult to find the best succulent in show. It was just a matter of which of the Pseudolithos would get this attribute. Both specimens were superb, my congratulations to the grower.

SUCCULENT TRIP TO SOUTH AFRICA

I have just returned from a trip to South Africa which was led by Gerhard Marx and Kotie Retief. Most of the group were really Haworthia fans, but thanks to Gerhard's special interest we also found plenty to interest a Euphorbia addict.

We started from Port Elizabeth after a very wet night and drove to Coega. In no time we were well muddied, but the plants looked beautiful after the rain. We found Euphorbia meloformis, E. gorgonis and the very pretty miniature E. stellata which was in flower – this has always been a favourite plant of mine, so I was thrilled to find it growing as it should in the wild. We expected to find E. clava but throughout the trip we found neither that nor E. bubalina. Over Alexandria to Ghio Bridge and we saw the tree E. triangularis and E. grandidens; other plants of interest to us on that first day were E. pugniformis and E. globosa. We spent two nights in

Grahamstown staying at the Hermitage Guest House, which was a place of considerable character and history, and where we were received with great hospitality. Our accommodation was at all times of the best and much enjoyed by us all.

Visits in the area included Glen Craig where we found more E. meloformis which showed quite a variety of markings and more E. gorgonis. Those of you who have followed Gerhard's writings will know that many of the E. gorgonis are deemed by him to be something else, and I have come home with many pictures carrying a question mark. He is now living back in South Africa and hoping to carry on his research into this aspect of the medusoids. We drove over the Ecca Pass where we found E. bothae, E. squarrosa, E. pentagona, E. meloformis falsa and masses of E. tridentata – this clumping plant was coming up over large patches and were presumably all one plant. At Hell's Poort we saw E. polygona and at Willow Fountain E. inconstantia and E. polygona with Viscum minimum growing on it. Around Grahamstown we saw E. bupleurifolium in flower, E. silenifolia and more E. gorgonis, and there were also plenty of very healthy E. pugniformis in one area of the town itself. On the trip across to Addo over the Zuurberg Pass, we saw more still E. gorgonis, E. squarrosa and E. fimbriata.

A stop at Kleinspoort found E.valida, which has now been almost wiped out by porcupines, which is sad as two years ago there were more to be seen. We were lucky to be able visit the area where E. jansenvillensis grows, as the farm has changed hands and the new owner is not too keen on visitors! Nearby we found E. ferox, E. pollinifera and some very large specimens of E. esculenta. The next night was spent at Jeffrey's Bay and near the Gamtoos River Gerhard showed us a E.

gorgonis which he thought was actually the true one! Next morning we went up to Hankey where we were excited to find another medusoid Euphorbia similar to E. gorgonis but with persistent peduncles. We drove through the 100km. long Baviaanskloof which is spectacular; it was not easy to stop, but we did find a couple of places where there was space for another vehicle to pass and where we could scramble up to search for plants. This seemed to be an area of more interest to the Haworthia people, but we found some more E. silenifolia. I was surprised how widely these plants are to be found, but I must confess that I find them difficult to pick out amongst the grass.

South of Willowmore, there was a medusoid Euphorbia growing on the roadside, which Gerhard considers undoubtedly to be a new variety and which he is studying further with a view to publishing it.

In the Calitzdorp area, there were E. colliculina and a E. mammillaris, which was beautifully purple coloured. We saw a tiny Euphorbia about two inches high which is thought to be a miniature E. silenifolia, this is a plant which one could be forgiven for missing unless it were in flower! E. atrispina was looking very bright and well, as was E. gamkensis. Over the Rooiberg Pass, we came to a healthy population of E. pillansii, which

made me realise just how differently plants in the wild grow, compared with those in the greenhouse. East of Albertinia while the others were looking for Haworthias, Kotie and I found a good population of what seemed to be E. pugniformis, most of which were coloured quite a bright red and purple, unlike those at Grahamstown which were much more green. This site turned out to be a previously unknown site for them, which was interesting.

Our trip was nearing its end but there were still some treasures to see. Near Riversdale we saw E. ecklonii, both male and female flowers, E. tridentata which were a long way from the first we saw at the Ecca Pass, and some very healthy looking E. clandestina, covered with seed heads. North of Bredasdorp there were some beautiful E. pseudoglobosa, which were the last Euphorbias of a very enjoyable trip.

There is a hope that there will be a Euphorbia Convention next year at Calitzdorp. I would suggest that you keep a look out for the notices and go if you can. There is so much of interest to learn from such an occasion and there will also be the opportunity to visit Euphorbia sites with an expert and in the company of others who love the plants.

Mary Stone