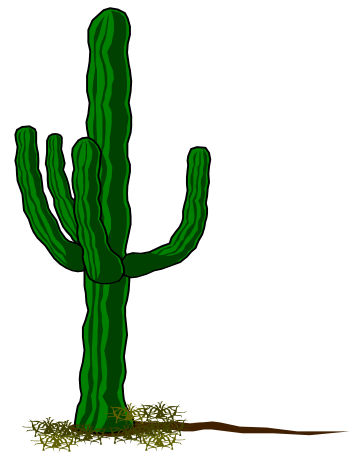


# Oxotica

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

December 2004

Volume 9, Number 2



## CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Well, what a year it has been. I'm just glad of the lull in proceedings before the start of the Christmas festivities. We have had a very full programme this year, and I'm sure all those who attend Branch meetings would agree that the level of speakers has been extremely high. Thank you John for putting together a most interesting and diverse programme, and for organising the plant sales throughout the year, as you will see later it's been a bit of an unknown quantity for 2004.

The year's extra curricular activities began with North Oxford Plant Market at the beginning of May. Maybe it is only a half-day, but we still have to ensure that we have the plants for sale and the people to man it. However, the profit is so little that your Committee has decided to discontinue this one for 2005.

For our sins, we had organised an open collections day for Harrow Branch and others from surrounding branches. I understand that a good time was had by all, but alas I cannot verify this as I was up in Spalding, putting the finishing touches to the National Show with the rest of the Shows Committee, and had to leave our side to Bill and Gareth.



Next, we were looking forward to putting on the Society display at Blenheim when I suddenly had a letter out of the blue from the Organiser, offering us selling space (which we have never been allowed to have in previous years). This meant organising an urgent committee meeting to see if the members were happy to go ahead, and also organise extra plants for sale,

loosening Steve's strong hand on the purse strings. We thought this was the end of it, but not so!! About ten days before the Show John received a phone call from an ex-member saying that he had two greenhouses full of plants, was leaving for Spain on Saturday (this was Wednesday), and if we didn't want them they would be consigned to the dustbin. On the first day John had a speaking engagement, so Brian took the helm and sorted out the best of the plants for sale and dropped six trays off at John's. Bill and I then collected them and replaced the trays with some of ours, and the plants had to sit in our garden (good job the weather stayed reasonable, although they were desperate for water) until we could find time to price them. Luckily we were able to cancel our order for extra plants, so we weren't completely inundated.

The setting up was done, and we had a really good four days. I must thank all those branch members who helped, also Rodney Sims, David Kirkbright and Roger Moreton and his wife. The funds from the donated plants were split 50/50 with the Society's Conservation Fund, and together with money Brian managed to elicit for the specimens that he retrieved from Chelsea, we sent over £200 to the Society Treasurer. I have today checked on the dates for next year's event with Blenheim Palace, as I could not get hold of the organiser, and regrettably have been told that there is **no flower show next year**.

Another month and it's the Branch Show with the Mammillaria Society, but I won't steal Bill's thunder, as a full report follows in this Oxotica.

The National Show was again a fantastic display, in spite of several regular showmen not participating. Our own Gillian Evison won one of the first Grantham silver medals to be issued, for most points in the succulent classes, not to mention a gold medal, and an award of merit. In addition I am pleased to report that 'Mullard's Mammillarias', comprising two Joyce Coccozza originals, came home to roost, as Bill and I won the class for two 10" Mammillarias. They can now be viewed on our dining room wall.

Our display at Florence Park followed, and this was again a great success bringing in more than usual for plant sales, much of it due to our, now overseas, benefactor.

The first weekend of October is always hectic with Saturday being taken up with the Society Executive, and on Sunday the Birmingham Autumn Show. This year we hosted the Executive at Didcot Power Station Sports and Social Club. It all helps branch funds, as we supply the teas, coffees and snacks for the day.

The Autumn Show was last on the agenda, but we needn't have worried. It was again a great success, and Anthony Mitchell's talk was well worth waiting for; a fuller report again follows (in Oxotica).

So that's it for another year. I must shortly get my Shows Committee hat on and order the stationery for the country's show needs in the coming year, and hope I can still get into my spare room to use the computer when all the boxes arrive. I know John has got together a great programme for next year, but as our next meeting is in January, it's left to me to wish you all a Happy Christmas and good growing for 2005.

*Cathy Darbon - Chairman*

## BRANCH MEETINGS JANUARY - JUNE 2005

**January 27<sup>th</sup>. John Watmough "Succulent Compositae"**. It is cheap to engage a local speaker, and long distance travel is not much fun in midwinter. But that is when the Senecios and Othonnas are performing. The real expert on the subject doesn't yet do lectures, so John, who is very keen on this subject, says that the only way he can hear a talk on these fascinating plants is to listen to himself.

**February 24<sup>th</sup>. David Kirkbright "Madagascar 1993"**. David is an oxymoron, being our much-loved National Treasurer, but no moron when it comes to Succulents. Much of Madagascar will have been burnt, eaten by zebus, or eroded since David was there, so we can sit in the warm and marvel at what the island's succulents used to be like.

**March 24<sup>th</sup>. Stan Griffin "Moon Valley and Back"**. Many of us know Stan from his long association with Birmingham Branch and our own Zone. He is now BCSS Marketing Officer. This talk is a description of last September's Birmingham Branch trip to Argentina, so it is brand new. Expect unfamiliar landscapes and familiar Brummie wit.

**April 28<sup>th</sup>. Bill Keen "Magnificent Mammillarias"**. Bill is the President of the BCSS and Editor of "Haworthiad". He still finds time to grow his plants superbly, and he is an expert lecturer. He will be advising us how to present our Mammillarias to the best advantage for our Show on Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> July.

**May 26<sup>th</sup>. Malcolm Pym "How to Photograph your Plants"**. Malcolm's talk on photography is a real class act, and he is coming all the way from Exmouth to show

us how to do it. Malcolm is also Mr Gro-Pots, so if anyone would like to place an order with him before the meeting, he will bring them with him and save postage.

**June 23<sup>rd</sup>. Robin Alabaster "Echinocereus"**. Robin comes from a part of the world where Echinocereus grow superbly, i.e. Essex, where they seem to be a speciality. He has contributed numerous articles to journals and he can be expected to enthuse us with these beautiful cacti. This is his first visit to Oxford and he is very welcome.

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**Also :-**

**April 10<sup>th</sup> at Freeland Village Hall. Zone 8 Auction.** Setting up 12:00, Doors Open 1:00, Auction 2:00. We need your plants to auction, your plants for the sales table, your help and your money. 20% to Zone 8 funds. Restock for the new season!

*John Watmough, Secretary*

## Oxotica

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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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<http://www.cactus-mall.com/clubs/oxford.html>

<http://www.communicate.co.uk/oxford/bcssoxfordbranch/>

## FROM THE SECRETARY

The Branch Committee has decided to seek permission from the Branch at the 2005 Annual General Meeting to make two amendments to the Branch Constitution. These would then give:

§3 (first two sentences). **“An Annual General Meeting will be held once a year, of which due notice will be given. A quorum for this purpose shall be eight members of the Branch of whom three must be branch officers.”**

§5 (first sentence). **“The business of the Branch will be conducted by the committee which will consist of the elected officers (Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer) together with at least five other elected branch members.”**

The reason for reducing the size of the Quorum at the A.G.M. is to ensure that the business of the Branch can be conducted and officers and committee duly appointed even if the number of members attending should fall unprecedentedly. The National Executive Committee of the BCSS has recently made a similar change in order to ensure that Society business could be carried out and that members' journeys would not be wasted.

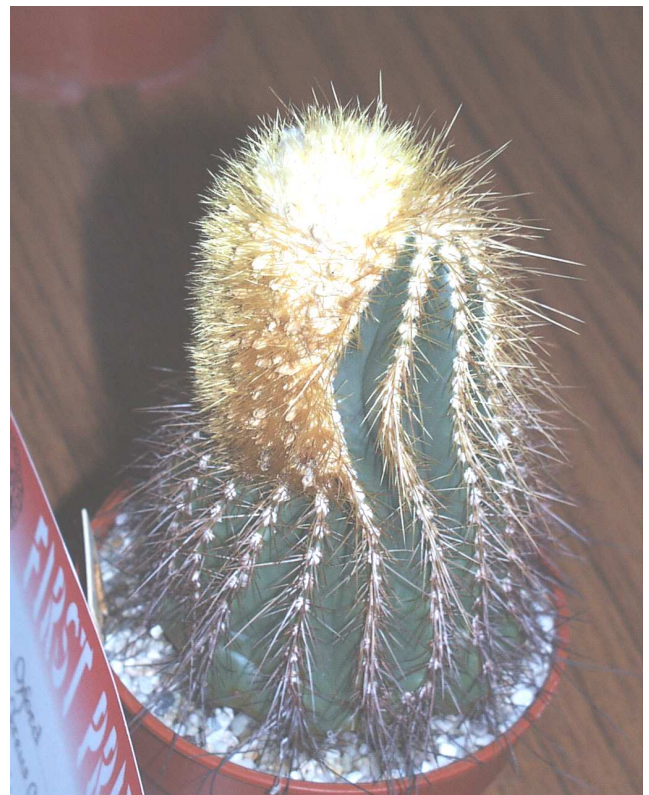
The reason for permitting the Committee to recruit additional members is that the Branch contains a substantial number of enthusiastic people whose expertise and willingness to work needs to be accommodated in the best interests of the Branch and Society. Members who do not regularly attend Branch meetings may not be aware that Oxford Branch, although not large, is the pace-setter in the organisation of Shows, has four national offices held by its members, and three nationally known regular speakers (one indeed international). The Branch therefore feels that it has set

high standards and wishes to maintain them.

Please would members pay their Subscriptions promptly so as to minimise the pressure on our hard-working Membership Secretary.

The Branch maintains excellent relations with a number of specialist societies. These are The Haworthia Society, The International Asclepiad Society, The Mammillaria Society and The Mesemb Study Group. All produce their own publications with seed lists. Details can be found on the Society's website [www.bcsc.org.uk](http://www.bcsc.org.uk) or the Branch Secretary can provide contact information for anyone who is interest in joining any of them.

*John Watmough*



## SHOW SECRETARY'S REPORT

What a Year for Shows!

When planning this year's shows your committee may well have been a little concerned that we had organised two shows for the same year as the National Show, and with the Succulent and Mesemb Show following shortly after the Mesemb Study Group event at Banstead, we may not get the necessary support from our exhibitors.

What can I say! We were not disappointed with the standard of the exhibits at the Cactus (only) Show with the Mammillaria Society. The Show was well supported by most of our regular exhibitors as well as attracting some new visitors. Wolfgang Plein, Secretary of the German Mammillaria Society gave a fascinating talk afterwards based on his study of plants in the North Western states of Mexico and the whole event was a resounding success.

Focus then turned to the all-succulent show, and again we were well pleased with the quality of the exhibits that graced the benches. We even managed to get some pictures in the local press thanks to David Greenaway's continued pestering. The crowning point of the day was that we managed to prise Anthony Mitchell off the Isle of Wight, not a journey he makes that often these days, to enthral us with a talk based on his trips in South Africa. It was a privilege to have him round off a superb day.

A special thank you to Mary and her team in the kitchen, who provided all the visitors with the necessary rations to sustain themselves at both Shows and also at the Executive.

The Committee is convinced that this format has provided the right mix, and would like to take the opportunity of thanking all members both at home and away who

supported our efforts for 2004, and look forward to seeing you all at next year's show on 17<sup>th</sup> July at the same venue.

*Bill Darbon - Show Secretary*

## REPORT OF SUMMER SHOW

This was the best show that I have judged in the last five years - a very high standard of plants.

Plants of note:-

Class 1 - A super offsetting *Ariocarpus trigonus*, which was in the running for best cactus.

Class 2 - Seven plants of *Astrophytum*; the first three of which were of the highest quality and the first prizewinner belonging to Mike Cullen was a really beautiful plant.

Class 4 - The first prize went to a *Copiapoa coquinbarna* - green form from seed and a super clean specimen.

Class 5 - A superb, spotless *Echinocactus grusonii* took the first prize and also an award of merit.

Class 10 - This class was won by a flowering *Denmoza* - a remarkable plant.

Class 11 - Probably the best *Melocactus* class I have ever judged - beautiful plants.

Class 18 - *Aztekium ritteri* was another award of merit plant - but was it grafted!!!!?

Classes 20 & 21 - The cristates were a bit disappointing.

Class 22 - This class contained two superb small *Ariocarpus fissuratus*.

Class 25 - This class was won by a *Copiapoa cinaria* and a beautiful *columnara alba*.

Class 29 - An uncommon plant for this class - an *Arequipa*, won the small *Matucana* class but it was great to see it.

The limited pot size classes were very difficult to judge as there were too many good plants, but my problems were followed by an excellent lunch --TA!

*Tony Morris*

**MAMMILLARIA SOCIETY SHOW  
in conjunction with  
OXFORD BRANCH CACTUS SHOW**

I was happy to accept an invitation to judge the 2004 Mammillaria Society Show held in conjunction with the Oxford Branch Cactus Show in the Langdale Hall, Witney on Sunday, 18<sup>th</sup> July 2004. The hall provided an excellent venue for the show which attracted a good number of entries across twenty classes. The overall standard of the show was high with many of the classes being very competitive, but a minority of classes which one would expect to shine in a specialist show were rather disappointing.

The first class, for one plant in the Coryphantha Group, attracted eight entries, including an extraordinary and perfect hemispherical specimen of a tiny headed form of *Escobaria lauii*, but this was relegated to third place by beautiful old specimens of *Coryphantha andreae* and *Coryphantha bumamma*.

The class for pairs of limited pot size Coryphantha Group plants had six entries dominated by *Escobarias*, a very clean pair of which won ahead of a couple of beautiful single headed Coryphanthas.

The class for a single unlimited pot size Mammillaria Group contained twelve very high quality entries and was the most challenging of the day for a judge. Any one of three or four plants could have won this class, but I finally awarded first prize to a beautiful specimen labelled *Mammillaria parkinsonii*, although I am not convinced its specific name was correct. Second and third prizes went to a large *Cochemia setispina* and a lovely *Mammillaria schiedeana*.

Very disappointing were the classes for single plants of *Mammillaria bombycina* and *Mammillaria geminispina*, which

attracted only one and two entries respectively. Maybe the days when we filled our greenhouses with large specimens of "common" species such as these are gone, but this is a pity as most of the newer and "more desirable" species can still be given a run for their money by the "oldies".

There was also only a single entry for the class for one plant for the species *elongata*, *densispina*, *echinaria*, *microhelia* or *mieheana*, more "oldies". Are they really so ordinary and easy to grow that they are no longer considered worthy of attention even by specialists in the new millennium?

The outstanding plant of four in the class for the species *schiedeana*, *carmenae*, *plumosa*, *dumetorum* and *giselae* was one of the plumose form of *schiedeana*, whilst a beautifully clean *humboldtii* was the best of three entries in the class for the *humboldtii/lauii* group.

The entries in the class for *Cochemias* were of rather disappointing quality, the best being a good sized specimen of *maritima*.

There were only three *Dolicotheles*, headed by a nice specimen of *sphaerica* with a dozen or so heads.

The class for one large multiheaded Mammillaria was well supported with thirteen entries. A nice specimen of *crucigera* and two of *microthele* took the main awards whilst highly commended was a ten headed *nivosa*, a plant which is not seen so often as it justifies, probably because it is difficult to keep it in show condition.

The class for two multiheaded plants in 18cm pots was also well supported and difficult to judge, but was won by another *crucigera* paired with a clean and healthy *guelzowiana*. This class also contained the

most showy plant of the day, a ten headed specimen of microcarpa in full flower.

There were nine entries, mostly good old plants, in the class for a single headed plant in a pot up to 25.5cm in diameter, the best of these being a Mammillaria dixanthocentron about a foot tall.

The class for pairs of single headed Mammillarias in pots up to 18cm in diameter was of only moderate standard and won by a combination of obscura and wagneriana.

Another challenge for the judge was the class for three Mammillarias in pots up to 13cm. The best of nine entries, a combination of two different forms of hutzilopochtli and crucigera just beat a trio of dixanthocentron, heidiaea and lasiacantha.

The class for four plants in pots up to 9cm. produced eight good entries of the usual choice small-growing species and was won by a combination of pectinifera, crucigera, coahuilensis and herrerae.

The best of a moderate set of plants in a limited number of entries in the classes for cristates and Thelocacti was a four headed Thelocactus macdowellii which won the class for one Thelocactus group.

The arranging of such a show of any size involves a considerable amount of hard work, and on behalf of the Mammillaria Society I wish to record our thanks to the Oxford Branch for all their efforts for a day which culminated in a fascinating account by Wolfgang Plein of his detailed observations of some plants from the series Macrothelae in neighbouring valleys in north west Mexico.

*Mike Stansbie*



### AWARD OF MERIT

awarded to Ian Priestley  
Coryphantha Group  
for max. pot size 18cm - two plants  
at Mammillaria Society Show  
on 18 July 2004  
Hon. Secretary *[Signature]*

max. pot size 18cm - two plants

## MESEMBRYANTHEMUM SHOW October 2004

I was somewhat surprised and flattered when Bill Darbon first asked me to judge this show, but this was rapidly followed by a feeling of disappointment that I wouldn't be able to exhibit my own plants! However I decided to take the bull by the horns and have a go.

Class 1 set the standard with a very large and wonderfully grown Psammophora longifolia winning first prize and an Award of Merit. This plant is not the easiest to grow and often becomes rather scruffy with age, the dead leaves being difficult to remove, but this specimen was perfect and a real credit to its owner.

In the Gibbaeum class a magnificent Imitaria muirii (Gibbaeum nebrownii) took first place. This is a plant where a slight slip of the hand with the watering can causes the epidermis to split overnight and render the plant unsightly and useless for showing

until the following year. This was split free and perfect.

In the Cheiridopsis subgroup it was nice to see Mitrophyllums and Monilarias. These plants are rarely seen on the show bench unless the show is late enough in the year for them to be in growth. First prize was awarded to a lovely chunky Mitrophyllum grande and second to Monilaria chyrosoleuca v polita.

In the Conophytum classes there were some beautifully grown plants. The tight, compact appearance of these plants showed excellent plantsmanship from several quarters. A beautiful spectabile took first in Class 6 and kubusanum and luckhoffii took first in Class 7.

One of my own favourite classes is the Conophytum class for 9 plants in 2 inch (5.5cm) pots. The winning plants in this group included a beautiful multi-headed armianum, which was 14 years from seed and a superb specimen of pubicalyx.

Some very good plants featured in the Lithops classes but a really stunning plant of Lithops aucampiae took my eye and also an Award of Merit.



Eddy Harris's Lithops pan, seen earlier in the year at the National, was in all honesty

unchallenged in Class 12 and also received an Award of Merit. One of the exhibitors decided to test the judge by popping a Dinteranthus into their pan of Lithops!

I was surprised by the small number of entries in the Fenestraria or Frithia class. I seem to recall a complete dearth of Frithias. All you growers out there get potting and make this class a real challenge for the judge in 2006.

Class 21, for any two plants of the mesemb group, was won by Conophytum luckhoffiii and albiflorum, both grown hard to obtain small, well-marked heads and tight clumps. These were closely followed in second place by Mestoklema tuberosa and Trichodiadema bulbosum, a splendid pair of plants.

BCSS Diploma for best mesemb in the show was won by Aloinopsis spathulata. An enormous plant, this had also been exhibited at the National. This plant often develops bare patches where old leaves have died but this was amazingly compact and a truly superb specimen.

I thoroughly enjoyed judging this show and would like to express my thanks to all the Oxford Show Committee for a very enjoyable day - and an excellent lunch!

*Alice Vanden Bon*

