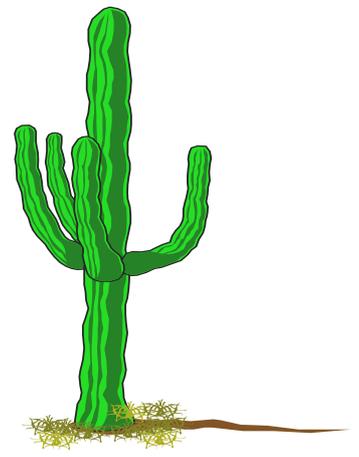


Oxotica

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

December 2006

Volume 11, Number 2



CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Well, a year has passed since I was invited to take over the chairmanship of the Branch from Cathy. As it was one of our 'two show' years it has been quite busy but I am sure we have all got to the end of it with a little bit more knowledge (thanks to the excellent range of speakers we have had this year) a bit more enjoyment from the hobby and a set of new cacti and succulent challenges to tackle next year.

As always, the committee have all worked hard to plan, organise and support the various activities the Branch has undertaken. The two shows were a great success and many of you will have seen the comments, compliments and pictures on the BCSS forum following the October show. I take the liberty to quote from Derek Tribble's post on the forum:
"It was a great show, with as high a standard as I can remember, outside of National Shows.Oxford Branch BCSS do a great job hosting it"

My thanks to everybody in the Branch who contributes to the shows in any way and to those who come from afar to exhibit. Without the plants we wouldn't have a show.

This year the branch has acquired a website thanks to the efforts of David Greenaway and Martin Doorbar. They have put a lot of effort into this and I hope you will reward them with articles, anecdotes and pictures to be posted in the year to come. John Watmough has done

his usual unflagging service as Branch Secretary and major plant seller around the country. However, the high spot for me was his article on the Continental Cactus Crawl in the June edition of Oxotica; it was one of the most amusing things I have read for some time.

The other highlight of the year was the BCSS National Convention at Loughborough. This was the third National Convention I have been to and they seem to get better each time. The speakers were superb, the range of plants for sale was far too tempting, the catering was excellent and the company convivial. I can only say that, if you have never been, do make the effort when the next one comes along.

Could I also thank those members who have found the space to house the plants from the various collections that are rescued each year? Their subsequent efforts in re-potting, re-rooting or propagating the various acquisitions before passing them to good homes or to the Branch plant sales table are much appreciated.

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Whilst on the theme of plant sales, it is not too early to remind you of our plant auction be held at Freeland on April 29th 2007. Please think about whether one or two of your plants seem less interesting than they were several years ago (has that large *Ariocarpus* just got too big to keep?). Would you be prepared to auction them or put them on the sales table? They might be just what somebody else is looking for. Even if you don't feel the need to clear some space in the greenhouse, do come along. There are bound to be some interesting plants in the auction and on the sales table to tempt you.

Finally, a request to give David Kirkbright, the BCSS national treasurer, a little extra Christmas cheer. Please fill in and send back a Gift Aid form if you have not already done so. Overall, it is worth quite a bit of money to the Society and it doesn't cost you anything.

I would like to close by thanking you all for supporting me in my first year in office and wishing you all a Merry Christmas and a successful horticultural 2007.

Steve Williams.

DATE FOR YOUR DIARY

SUNDAY 16TH SEPTEMBER 2007

That's the date for next year's show.

It will be held in conjunction with the Haworthia Society, that section to be judged by Stirling Baker so no excuse for not showing!

In addition we have secured an extra special treat for you - John Lavranos has agreed to speak on the "newer" Aloes so this makes it A DATE NOT TO BE MISSED.



Pseudolithos elensis



Schwantesia ruedebuschii

**BRANCH MEETINGS
JANUARY - JUNE 2007**

(Fourth Thursday in month, 7:30 p.m. for
8:00 p.m.)

Please bring plants for Table Show

Jan 25th. Martin Doorbar - "Thelocactus"

Martin's collection of this genus, recently fortified by documented material provided by Graham Charles, has just been awarded provisional National Collection status. Let us therefore welcome Martin's first succulent talk on these beautiful plants.

**Feb 22nd. Doug Donaldson -
"ISOCS Part 2"**

Doug gave us Part 1 last January and very entertaining it was. This is Part 2 of his experiences with the delightful members of the Indian Society of Cacti and Succulents during his 2005 visit.

Mar 22nd. David Porter - "Socotra"

Our members have requested a talk on the unique succulents of the island of Socotra. David, from Coventry, is a good friend of ours and has a particularly interesting and informative talk, showing plants that are reaching our collections more and more.

Apr 26th. Graham Charles - "The Cacti of Rio Grande do Sul".

Graham says that he doesn't know of any other Englishman who has been to that part of Brazil.

May 24th. Stirling Baker - "Unusual Cacti"

Stirling is so well known for his Haworthias that his depth of knowledge throughout the range of our plants is often overlooked. This is a fairly new talk, and Stirling has been induced to give it in exchange for the promise of a Prawn Ruby Murray cooked by our Secretary.

Jun 28th. Brian Bates - "Bolivia"

Hooray for the Internet! Brian lives in Bolivia, but we have been able to rearrange his talk after it was cancelled last year following a motor accident. Brian sells his services as a tour guide, and seems to know every rock and every cactus plant on his side of the Andes.

John Watmough, Secretary

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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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BRANCH SHOW SUMMER 2006 CACTUS CLASSES

by Trevor Wray

As a newly qualified judge I was pleased to be invited to judge at the Oxford Show. This was to be the first show I judged under BCSS rules though I had been lucky enough previously to judge an American Show - an interesting experience. Incidentally, under US rules most of the Oxford plants would be NAS for their inappropriate flower pots. Just kidding! But they take the container and top dressing very seriously there; it's an important part of the exhibit.

Sunday morning was a glorious day and I set off in plenty of time. On my arrival exhibitors were carrying in their final plants and I was cordially welcomed and tea and bacon rolls offered; this was the life!

I would have liked to look round the Show beforehand but there were so many friends to speak to and sales plants to peruse (the branch table had some real snips!) Then too soon the Judges were called to the Show Secretary's table and we commenced our official duties. I judged with David Hutchings and I don't suppose it was coincidence that I was teamed with such an experienced Judge.

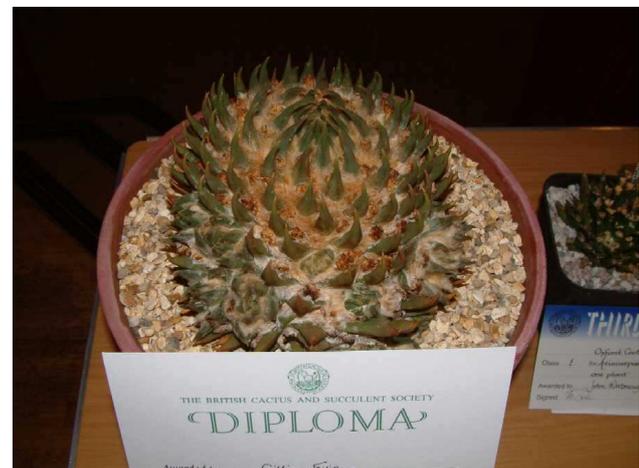
I knew that Oxford had some great growers and several outside exhibitors had entered but I was still stunned by the quality of the plants. Commencing with the Ariocarpus and then the Astrophytum I knew we had some task ahead. At each class we checked carefully that all the exhibits were from the correct group, had the proper number of plants and that all were within the pot limit. This was too important a show to miss any NAS plants, or worse, give them a prize. Two pots were slightly too large, one potential winner by less than a centimetre.

You can guess we measured that one several times! I hope we didn't miss any.

We tried to separate out around the best five but this was difficult with often a dozen good plants in each class. Then it was a close look for imperfections. Sometimes a plant which had immediate impact as a winner had damage or a growth check at the back or down the sides. I wonder why it is always at the back? In a few classes we (rather David) recognised a National winner and it was just a question of seeing if it had suffered any trauma (round the back again?) before giving a first.

There were some plants in the 'limited pot' classes which we discussed. One potential winner (a barrel type) was overhanging the rim of its pot which was right at the limit. It wasn't technically NAS but since it really needed a pot an inch bigger (at least) we reluctantly decided to ignore it.

Eventually we reached the end of the Show and those multi-little-pot classes are a beast to judge. Phew!



Ariocarpus trigonus

Best cactus? 'Well it has to be the Ariocarpus and you are always safe there,' said David. I rather liked the *Lobivia famatimensis* but it was no good being controversial at my first show. We included that among the 'Award of Merit' cards. I was also impressed by Gillian Evison's *Uebelmannia* (labelled *flavissima* but shouldn't that be *flavispina*?) but would never be able to keep it alive for

long. Also from Brazil was my first live plant of *Arrojadoa dinae*, another treasure that would not survive the chill of Northamptonshire. The plant I would most like to take home was a neat little *Opuntia pulchellus* in bud. Now that should be hardy here! It was interesting to see the unfamiliar name *Acharagma* on the plant we used to call *Escobaria roseana*.

So, it was time for a fine lunch with some famous personalities from the Society. They serve the judges interesting wine here and Bill Madams turned out to be a wine boff as well as a Mammillaria connoisseur.

I found some time to look at the Mammillaria Show and was thankful that Bill Keen had judged there. Several times I heard this combined show compared with the National and this was especially so among the Mamms. While the exhibitors were clearing their plants I chatted and learned a lot from Wolter ten Hove who certainly knew his Mexican Mammillarias and gave a most knowledgeable lecture later.

Unfortunately I had to leave the lecture early for work that night, arriving with just five minutes to spare. Luckily I was able to download 200 pictures from the show onto my laptop to pass the night and bring fond memories of judging my first BCSS show.

Thanks Oxford, for inviting me to judge your show.

BRANCH SHOW SUMMER 2006 MAMMILLARIA SOCIETY SECTION

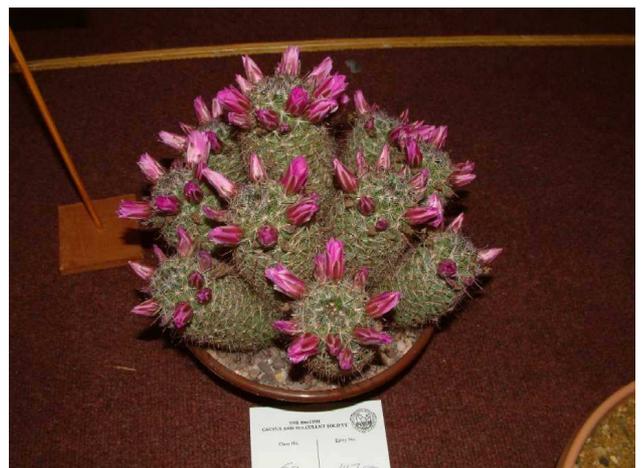
by Bill Keen

One of the 'perks' of being invited to judge a section of a show is the opportunity to inspect the entries at close range. This is infinitely preferable to peering from a distance, perhaps over another visitor's

shoulder. On the downside, the responsibility of judging allows less time to view the rest of the show. When coupled with a request to provide a few comments for the branch newsletter, the necessity of making notes swallows up even more of the available time.

This was the situation on 16th July. As judge of the Mammillaria Society show, I was able to inspect the plants exhibited in that section. Sadly, I was only able to take a quick tour of the other classes and, although greatly impressed by many of the plants displayed, am not in a position to comment on them. Consequently my remarks are confined to the entries in the Mammillaria Society section.

I was very much impressed by the show. The classes were well-supported, in many case with ten or more entries. The plants were in excellent condition and a credit to the cultural skills of their owners. I found no evidence of pests or diseases and there were no NAS entries. I can honestly say that it was a pleasure to judge the section.



Mammillaria microcarpa

Turning to the plants that particularly caught my eye, in the two classes designated for the Coryphantha Group, it was pleasing to see a wide variety of species from several of the constituent genera. *Coryphantha* and *Escobaria* of course, but there were also

specimens of *Acharagma*, *Cumarinia* and *Lepidocoryphantha*. I was greatly impressed by a *Coryphantha greenwoodii*, a species that I have found very slow-growing, but here represented by a large specimen with copious white wool in the apex and in fine condition.



Mammillaria longimmama

The 'open' Mammillaria class presented a good variety of species. The most obviously eye-catching was a large clump labelled *M. centricirrha* with very woolly heads. In the same class were an impressive *M. perbella* and a large clump of *M. lenta* which took second and third places respectively. There were several other entries that were unrewarded but much admired.

The class for *M. plumosa*, *M. schiedeana* and similar species contained some fine specimens with little to choose between them. Surprisingly, no-one had entered a plant of *M. carmenae*, which is sometimes seen as huge clumps. Separating the 'sheep' from the 'goats' among the potential prizewinners was difficult: eventually the plants showing more vigorous growth gained the rewards.

The class for subgenus *Cochemia* was outstanding. Although these plants usually grow well enough, flowering them is a bit 'hit and miss'. Here the bench supported nine entries, with five in flower or carrying

floral remains. How do you do it? Pride of place and an Award of Merit went to a magnificent flowering specimen of *M. setispina*.

In the class for subgenus *Dolichothele*, a very large clump of *M. longimmama* beat a smaller (though to my mind more attractive) specimen of the same species: age before beauty perhaps? Two large plants of *M. surculosa* lost out because they were growing so vigorously that the outermost heads were being squeezed by the pot edge.

The class for multi-headed plants attracted seventeen entries, many being superb specimens. The winning entry, a large clump of *M. fraileana*, took my breath away. This is not an easy species to grow, so the plant was very impressive and thoroughly deserved the BCSS Diploma for the best plant in the section. Second prize was awarded to a clump of *M. microcarpa* in full bloom. Among the superb plants that failed to collect prizecards were a large multi-headed *M. gulzowiana* and a fine *M. setispina*.

In the limited pot-size class a superb specimen of the tricky *M. pottsii* impressed, as did fine examples of *M. albicans*, *M. aureilanata* and *M. zephyranthoides*. Although these latter were not awarded prizes, they were superb specimens and I would willingly have found space for them in my own collection.

Classes for single-headed mammillarias often attract venerable specimens and this was no exception. Huge well-grown plants of *M. gigantea*, *M. chionocephala* and *M. hahniana* shared the honours among the ten entries. In the corresponding pot-size limited class for two plants, a fine specimen of *M. zephyranthoides* paired with *M. mystax*, both showing that they had been flowering profusely, took first place.

The next two classes, for three and four plants in relatively small pots, contained a wealth of superb specimens of smaller-growing species. Among them I was particularly impressed by the several *M. herrerae*, including a multi-headed specimen, a large *M. coahuilensis* with several offsets, a handsome multi-headed *M. magallanii* and a good clump of *M. hernandezii*. As usual, several entries included one outstanding plant and I spent much time comparing the groups before reaching a decision.

The two classes designated for Thelocactus Group contained a good variety of species and some impressive plants. An immaculate *T. rinconensis*, about 23 cm in diameter, narrowly beat a fine multi-headed *T. lloydii* to take first prize and an Award of Merit.

The organisers are to be congratulated for producing a schedule that appealed to potential exhibitors, and the exhibitors for producing such fine plants on the day. I am sure I am not alone in looking forward to the next show.

BRANCH SHOW AUTUMN 2006 MESEMB CLASSES

by *Suzanne Mace*
(judge and commentator)

As is usual, this 'end of the growing season' show was a delight, a feast for the eyes, and although the mesemb classes numbered only 21 out of the 52, they produced the best colour and the sweetest smells.

The most colourful entry in the show was in class 52 (a seed tray of succulent plants), a tray full of conophytums in full flower, so much so that the judges found it difficult to see the plants underneath the blossoms and to check out the condition of the plant bodies. The entry belonged to Rick Marshall, a dedicated Mesemb grower with decades of

experience. There were two other mesemb entries in this class; a tray of beautifully grown and wonderfully marked Lithops which was either second or third, owned by Alice vanden Bon, and the tray full of 2" pots of miniature headed conophytums entered by Derek Tribble which took first prize.

Back to the classes that I actually judged - and what really impressed me in the first class was a beautifully grown plant of *Schwantesia rudebuschii* owned by Alice vanden Bon, it gained first in the class and an Award of Merit. Class 12 and the fantastic ever-enduring and ever-improving (if that's possible) pan of Lithops grown by Eddy Harris, this also gained an Award of Merit.

Class 7 - 2 Conophytums, p.n.e. 13cm - saw Alice vanden Bon gaining first place with *Conophytum ricardianum* and *C. ernestii*, both just showing flower. Class 10, a large entry, had *Glottiphyllum oligocarpum* belonging to Gillian Evison winning, this was a very large bowl full in excellent condition and flowering well.

Class 13 - the single Lithops class - was a little disappointing with just four entries and those not spectacular.



Glottiphyllum oligocarpum

Class 15 gave me the most problems - too many plants which were similar in size and condition - but the eventual winner was

Elisabeth van Trierham of High Wycombe branch. Later in the day I was asked why I had given the first prize to that entry when one plant was unlabelled, one was labelled incorrectly and the third was mis-spelled. I replied that primarily I was judging plants, and that the containers, labelling (as long as the plants were not - "not as scheduled") and overall presentation only really came into play if there was nothing else to separate the entries by. However, when plants are exhibited labelling is important as it shows that you care enough to present your plants in the best possible light; an exhibitor has displayed that they have the skill to grow the plants well, why not round it off by providing the spectator with the best possible overall impression and the ability to go out and buy whatever that plant is if only it was labelled? I am often guilty of not labelling my plants well, tatty old labels which should have been replaced a couple of years ago and indecipherable, faded writing do nothing to enhance the plants and probably only detract from the exhibit. I must do better!

Class 16 and the big guns were brought out by Eddy Harris and others to do battle between the Fenestrarias and Eddy H won. Class 18 had the most enormous (14" across?), *Aloinopsis spathulata*, superbly grown, belonging to Gillian Evison won not only that class but took the Diploma for the Best Exhibit in the Mesemb classes. In the same class but not of the same girth was a truly beautiful *Nananthus aloides* (belonging to Mike Blake?) exhibiting the lines and dots which are normally seen on plants grown in drier climes.

One final comment I would like to make is to thank Oxford branch for inviting me to judge, for allowing the BCSS and MSG to have a sales pitch, but please next time can

the Asclepiad classes be nearer to someone else; we really did need pegs on our noses. Joking aside it was good to see so many well grown Ascpeliads and so many flowers. Thank you Oxford branch for a delightful day.

BRANCH SHOW AUTUMN 2006 OTHER SUCCULENT CLASSES

by Graham Walker

Little did I know when I volunteered to judge the Oxford Branch Autumn Show what a difficult job it would turn out to be, but since I was staying in Oxford with Cathy and Bill Darbon following the BCSS Executive meeting it seemed the right thing to do to volunteer!! I was to judge the Other Succulent classes with David Neville, a new experience for me being paired up to judge, normally you are the only judge!!

There was an excellent entry in most classes, many having over 18 entries, more than most Branch Shows and more than some at National Shows, competitors having travelled many miles to exhibit. All the plants were well grown and most were well presented. A minority could benefit from more care with presentation and top dressing; please try to remove spider's webs from plants before putting them on the bench. Many classes had plants on the bench not commonly seen in cultivation. David and I started by judging alternate classes, however as classes became more difficult to judge we pooled our resources and judged together, then David left this report to me!!

I do not intend to go through every class, but will pick out those plants that caught my eye.

Class 22 Nice to see *Adenia goetzii* in full flower.

Class 23 Some well grown compact forms of Agave, especially *A. Victoria regina compacta*.

- Class 25 Some well grown *Aloe erinacea* and a rarely seen *A. richardsiae*, which forms a bulb and comes from Tanzania.
- Class 27 Some old plants here, especially *Avonia ustulata*.
- Class 32 *Crassula plegmatoides*.
- Class 34 Well grown *Euphorbia francoisii* with superb leaf markings.
- Class 36 Won by 3 well grown and rare plants *Euphorbia cremersii*, *E. gymnocalyciodes*, *E. nambensis*.
- Class 37 Difficult to separate three well grown plants *Gasteria rawlinsonii*, *G. armstrongii*, *G. elliphaea*
- Class 39 2 large *Haworthia truncata*, one of which won 'Best Succulent' in the show.
- Class 40 & 41 Very well supported, difficult to judge with such outstanding plants.
- Class 43 *Pachypodium brevicaule*, *P. horombense*.
- Class 44 *Pelargonium cotyledonis* was a worthy winner, with *P. cortusifolium* a close second.
- Class 45 *Sansevieria*, poorly supported class that lacked quality.
- Class 46 *Pseudolithos dodsonianus*, *Brachystelma mayerianum*.
- Class 47 Superb plants, *Pseudolithos cubiformis*, *P. elensis*.
- Class 48 One succulent plant, difficult to judge. *Dorstenia barnimiana v telekii*, *Avonia quinaria*.
- Class 49 Well supported 2-succulent class. Winner comprised *Haworthia koelmaniorum* & *Dorstenia species*. Another good entry was *Euphorbia decidua* & *Pachypodium baronii v windsorii*.
- Class 50 4 succulents, always difficult to judge, this was no exception!!
- Class 51 Unusual *Ceropegia stapeliformis cristate*.
- Class 52 Another well supported class with 11 trays staged. Winner was a tray of well grown small *Conophytums*. Presentation could be improved in this class.
- Class 53-55 Novice section, disappointingly only one entry in these classes, *Pyrenacantha malvifolia*.

Congratulations are due to Oxford Branch for staging such a well-supported and organised Show. My thanks for having the privilege of judging it.

Next time, David Neville, you can write the report!!



Aloe richardsiae



Gasteria elliphaea

OXFORD BRANCH AUCTION

Freeland Village Hall, Sunday 29th April 2007

The Branch will be holding a Grand Auction and Plant Sale and invites members and friends to supply both auctionable plants and pre-priced plants for sale and to attend the event and to bid for the plants auctioned. The event will be similar to the three auctions that the Branch has previously organised. However, it is likely that a large number of prestige plants will be made available by one of the country's most distinguished specialists. If that happens, the Auction may have to start earlier in the day so as to accommodate the larger number of lots. In that case, setting up will start at 11.00 a.m., viewing and sales at 12.00 noon and the auction proper at 1.00 p.m. with a refreshment break half way through. A lot of manpower will be needed to staff the kitchen, sell plants, assist the auctioneer, and administer the results of the auction.

Supplying plants for auction or sale is subject to the Branch taking 20% commission from the sale price. The auctioneer will be able to accept reserve

prices if requested. Auction lots should be worth (though may not realise) at least £5: they may consist of one plant or a group of plants in a tray. Books and other relevant material are not excluded.

Sales plants should be presented to the standard expected of a reputable nurseryman – good pots, labels and compost, and with a second label showing the price and the owner's identity. Distribution of the proceeds will NOT be possible on the day. The organisers undertake to send the money and return the labels very promptly after the event.

The Branch Secretary will be sending out a Catalogue to everyone who is interested. So would anybody who wants one please let him know. If you have items that you would like to be included in the auction, would you please let him know in the following format:

Plant or Plants	Pot size	Description
<i>Echinocactus ingens</i>	12" tub	Single head, show specimen
6 different <i>Neoporterias</i>	Up to 9 cm in tray	3 y.o. seedlings

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All photographs in this issue of Oxotica are by Martin Doorbar.