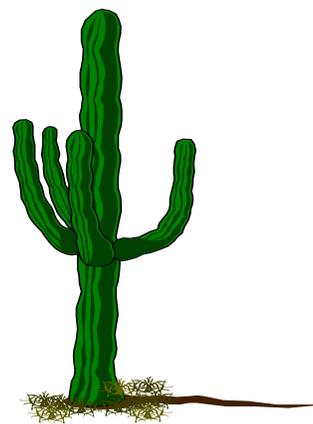


Oxotica

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

June 2000

Volume 5, Number 1



THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE BRANCH

David Slade has just provided the Secretary with the up-to-date Branch Membership list. Readers might like to know what sort of members the Branch consists of. To begin with, we have 33 members who pay the full subscription; 11 Senior Members; 1 Associate Member; and 2 Junior Members, making 47 members in all. There are in addition 10 on the list who have not yet rejoined the Society. Some of these will probably do so in due course.

So, who are these 47? What do we know of them? The Branch Committee numbers a very solid 8, and these will be well known to anyone who attends Branch Meetings. And how many attend Branch Meetings? The minimum this year was, alas, 9, and the maximum has been 17, though not all come from Oxford Branch. We make a point, also, of welcoming non-members, so, if you have friends who are dabbling in the hobby, see if you can persuade them to come.

We are privileged to have at National level Cathy Darbon on both the F&GP and the Show Committee. You will see Cathy looking extremely busy at Spalding, because she is on the panel of Judges for the National Show. Oxford Branch is in Zone 8, and the Zone Rep (i.e. Chairman of the Zone Committee, who is answerable to the National Vice-Chairman) is your own Secretary, John Watmough. The Branch is represented on the Zone Committee by your Chairman, Mary Stone.

Three members of the Branch are qualified Show Judges. (The Judges' Course, which is held every September, is great fun even if you don't pass the tests.) There are three members who regularly give talks around the Branches, and we hope that this number is set to increase. We have at least four members who belong to the Mesembryanthemum Study Group. Also represented in the Branch are the Euphorbia Study Group and the Haworthia Society, while we know of members who subscribe to the Dutch and South African Journals and the Chileans.

There are some really good general collections in our area, as visitors to our Show can deduce. There are to be found specialist collections of Conophytums, Euphorbias, Echeverias, and various categories of Cacti. Our Branch Members are certainly an interesting group of people.

For historical or perhaps sentimental reasons, a number of overseas members have maintained their registration with our Branch. There is one in Germany, one in France, and one in the Netherlands. A big hello to you all, and also to our good friend in Lincolnshire.

Finally, if you know of a young person who is showing an interest in our plants, why don't you take out a subscription on their behalf as a Christmas or Birthday present? The Junior Subscription is only £9, and new members now get a Welcome Pack, which is beautifully put together and contains all sorts of really useful information.

John Watmough

SHOW OR NOT TO SHOW - THAT IS THE QUESTION

Hopefully when reading this we have had another successful show; it's always a little uncertain in the National year just how much support a show will get. That's one of the reasons why your committee made a decision to try a new venture for our branch - an autumn Succulent and Mesemb show in October this year. Our friends from Bristol branch have run a similar show biennially and we thought that it was a good idea to run a show alternatively with them. So here's an appeal for your support.

We are trying to encourage as many of you as possible to come along. Yes, I know there are no cacti, just succulent plants, but there should be a wide diversity of plants to see. The Mesemb Study Group has promised its support for the show, and hopefully this will give for a wider audience. We are also hoping to invite one of the leading specialists to come and sell plants, as well as members doing so. So I am sure there will be something to find even for the avid grower as well as the beginner.

The show will be held in our normal venue at Langdale Hall, Witney on 15th October, so ensure the date is in the diary.

Now, how many are contemplating attending The National Show in Spalding in August, all of you, I hope? Your society officials work extremely hard to arrange the show with local support, once every four years. Nearly every nursery which sells the plants we grow will be in attendance, possibly even ones from abroad. So it's a must for all - an expedition to find that plant you have always wanted, not to mention a chance to view the superb plants that will be on display. Spalding is not that far and the area offers many attractions. Do try and come along and support your society.

Bill Darbon, Show Secretary

ZONE 8 QUIZ

On Sunday 16th July Swindon Branch are hosting a Zone Quiz at Moredon Community Centre, Swindon. There will be a team of four from each of the four Branches in the Zone, and it is hoped that they will be accompanied by as many supporters as possible. At the time of writing, Oxford Branch are in the process of bullying four likely persons into championing our cause. Keith Grantham is going to be the Question Master, so it should be good fun.

If you need a map or further details, please ring John Watmough.

THE 33RD NORTHERN WEEKEND.

Held over Fri-Sun 3-5 March 2000. First the lonely trip to Halesowen to meet up with Stan Griffin and Vic Knight. Lunch at a Midlands nursery (a different one each year) - pick up Vicky - then away up the M6. Arriving at Alston Hall to meet old friends and new faces from all the northern counties and Scotland too. Just time to settle in before dinner, then down to business. John Lavranos starts us off with 'New impressions of Socotra', whetting our appetites with slides of *Dorstenia gigas* 10ft high, various pachycauls and tree-like curcurbits, *Adenia socatrens* up to 20ft, some new *Echidnopsis*: *millerii*, *socotrens* and *insularis*, *Arbusculas* (*Frankinsense* Trees) and some impressive Dragon Trees (*Draceneas*), all growing on a range of limestone capped mountainsides. On the granite of the Eastern slopes John shows us *Angolluma socotra* with its brilliant red flowers (and foul stench), *Kalanchoe farinosa*, shrubby *Euphorbias*, and *Jatropha* trees, all encompassed

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FORTHCOMING BRANCH MEETINGS

27TH July **Derek Tribble**

C.A.T.'s

Derek is a favourite on the lecture circuit because of his engaging, friendly manner and his profound knowledge of South African succulents. Mesemb specialists will travel a long way to hear him, but for us he is going to talk about Cotyledons, Adromischus and Tylecodons, using information gained from many expeditions to their habitat.

24th Aug. **Alan Pocock & Brian Thomson**

THE NEED FOR PROPAGATION.

Two local experts on propagation (remember Alan's hands-on instruction on grafting?) will tell us the whys and the wherefores. We all have opinions about the conservation aspects of our hobby. Here is an opportunity to get involved, and to learn some technical skills into the bargain.

28th September **Colin Walker**

BOOKS ON SUCCULENTS.

Dr Walker works for the Department of Biology at the Open University. He is the newly-appointed successor to Gordon Rowley as Editor of Bradleya. Some of us deliberately collect books; others accidentally seem to fill our houses with them. But we all need to know where the information is that we want to get hold of. This is a new topic for the Branch and should be very interesting.

15TH October

MESEMBRYANTHEMUM AND OTHER SUCCULENT SHOW

Langdale Hall, Witney. 10.00 start. Helpers required.

This is one of the three big Mesemb Events of the year. Visitors will be coming from far and wide. **DON'T MISS IT !**

26th October

Terry Smale

THE GENUS CONOPHYTUM.

Terry has specimens of all the new discoveries since Steve Hammer's *Conograph* was published, and he has promised to show us them. This year he has been in South Africa looking for the long-lost *Conophytum semivestitum*, for which he keeps a labelled pot ready in his greenhouse.

We shall certainly be seeing some newly-discovered plants tonight.

23rd November

A.G.M.

Naturally all members will want to make their presence felt tonight. But just to persuade you to come anyway, Keith Grantham will be laying on one of his famous quizzes for us before the tea interval.

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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 33RD NORTHERN WEEKEND.*Continued from page 2*

within areas of amazing scenery. But for how long, now that Russia has closed its naval bases? There is a steady invasion of Yemenis with their goats and camels grazing, stripping of all wood for burning and cooking, and the increased building coupled with tourism. Destruction of the more accessible areas is rapidly taking place.

Saturday, breakfast over, we go 'Succulent hunting in Zimbabwe' with Susan Carter-Holmes. Down the Zambesi River from Victoria Falls we are shown two forms of *Euphorbia griseola*, and tree-like forms of *E. decidua*, with its dead radial branches. Moving on we see the massive *E. ingens* and *candalabra*(?) along with non-succulent *E. matabalensis*. Among the rocks there is *Aloe cooperi* in the grasslands, *A. greatheadii*, shrubby *A. cameronii* with almost purple leaves and scarlet spikes growing on the 'Dvallas' (small scattered hillocks) along with *Euphorbia memorialis* whose sap is used like bird lime.

Swiftly on and up into the chromic hillsides to see *Aloe ortholopii*, with its secund (upward facing) flowers on horizontal racemes, and *Crassula swazensis* v. *argofolia* with colour intensified by the presence of chrome. Then on again to the Eastern Highlands - to see tree ferns? - no, it's to see swathes of *Euphorbia citrina*, the *Aloe* of high altitudes, *Aloe arborescens* and *A. greatheadii* fma. *capitata* with its long pink curling flower tubes. Down on the ground are found *Huernias oculata*, *bueckerii* and *hyslopia*, also *Stapelia hirsuta*. Next it's the Chimahimahi mountains and succulent *Peperomas* among the *Proteas*. No time to pause, we're back down to the grasslands - the 'bus stop tree' - a huge baobab. Hollow with internal seating and external shelving for bee-hives! Well-named 'sausage trees'

shrubby *Jatrophas* and tree-like *Euphorbias*, *Monadeniums*, clumps of *Aloe globulagenima*, *Adenia karibensis*, *Euphorbia schintzii*, *Adenium multiflorum*, small in form and flower. The intense blue leaves of *Kalanchoe lucii*, *Pachypodium saundersii* on bare humpbacks of rock with beautiful *Aloe excelsa* up to 14ft tall. Phew! - what a trip, time for a coffee break.

Pierre Braun leads on an expedition into the Panatal Mato Grossense to see 'Crocodiles & cacti'. Passing through the area that Pierre took us only two years ago, all those new discoveries totally wiped out by slash and burn, herbicides and pesticides indiscriminately used in the name of horticulture or mineral extraction; goats and mules had also been introduced. Moving on we see *Cleistocactus horstii*, *Gymnocalycium melogens* and *Echinopsis*, *Discocactus boliviensis*, the only *Discocactus* outside Brazil, alligators three metres plus in length and *Monvilleas* trailing up over the shrubs. Next it's *Arthrocerei*, *Discocactus crassispinus* with huge white flowers, *Pilosocereus lindanus* with orange stripes and cephalum, also *Discocactus lindanus* and *D. prominente* - all new discoveries along with *Dyckias* and orchids. Now it's lunch and plant sales by two nurseries and individuals, including Harry Mays' propagations of ISI plants.

After tea we're taken on another trip with John Lavranos to see 'Succulents of Somalia and Djiboti'. *Caralluma somaliensis*, its round apical balls of yellow flowers smelling of honey, *Jatropha paradoxa*, *Euphorbia cartro* - named for Susan Carter-Holmes - *Ceropegias* and *Adenium somalensis crispum*, thin leaved and with bright red flowers. On to *Euphorbia Johanis* (named after John), *Cyphostemmas*, *Euphorbia turbiniformis*, crested forms as well. More *Carallumas*, *Anacampseros*, *Pseudolithos caputviperae* and *Euphorbia horwoodii* too. Next come

Whitesloania, an Echidnopsis with long tube-like flowers, Aloe bella, Cyclamen somalense, Huernia lavronii, Aloe greysii(?) - nice & neat, and Euphorbia gypsophila to finish off a fast, exhausting show in time for dinner.

Back for more with Pierre Braun showing 'The diversity of Brazilian cactus habits', a geographic round trip of San Francisco valley, Brazil, showing many new Pilocerei, Coleocephalocerei, Melocactus and bromeliads, whilst at the same time voicing many reasons as to why the sites will have disappeared in 5-10 years at most. In particular one limestone massif, itself as large as Socotra (100x40kms approx) with more new Cerei, Jatrophas, Bromeliads, Arrojadoas and Discocacti, as well as orchids. The whole surrounding area treated with herbicides and pesticides. Pierre said that even ants haven't survived; it is all so that Japanese companies can grow soya beans. Housing for workers and machinery was already being erected on the limestone rocks, destroying Arrojadoas and Harrisias that will never be published. With these thoughts we retire to the bar and thence to bed.

After a full breakfast we're off again: 'Adventures in central Brazil - Tocatis 1998'. New Melocacti at 9000ft, occurring in small rocky clearings in coastal jungle around Recife. Bromeliads, Melocactus robustior and miles of sugar cane in an area where Pierre and friends had discovered many small Euphorbia which are now extinct. Moving on to the Bahia district, Pierre illustrates granite outcrops each with its own (or rarely repeat) ecology. Again we see many new species, with little hope of being properly botanised or even being officially described. A high proportion of these are choice small Cephalocerei and Melocacti - completely new species of distinct varieties. Pierre's photos may well be the only record of them. We were

shown many wonderful landscapes that included many granitic 'Sugarloaf' hills/mountains but Pierre concluded the trip at the Sugarloaf, Rio de Janiero, which too has its own special flora.

After a quick coffee, Susan Carter-Holmes starts us off on 'A trip down memory lane, or Sudan rediscovered'. Landing at port Sudan (nearest to the original port), Susan followed the route taken in the late 1800's when the first succulent-based studies were made in N.E.Africa. We learned, through repetition, two new botanic(?) phrases 'goated' and 'as yet ungoated'. Whilst most old plants were found they were few and far between, though rarely any in good condition. This was equally true of the roads and habitation. When staying at hotels the party did their own cooking - outside. This whole episode was a tale of woe, and we were almost relieved to break for lunch.

The final session, taken by John Lavranos, was 'From Table Mountain through Western Cape'. This was a trip with a difference, few succulents were shown, and seeing clumps of Conophytums in resting state whilst completely submerged became the norm. The main interest this time were the other flowering plants, in particular the bulbs and corms. These are John's second main interest and many are grown in his own garden. We are shown Babianae, Muriae, Haemanthus, Arisemiae, Crinums, Gladioli, Boophane, Lachenalia, Tulbaghia, and Ornithagalum amongst many others, including terrestrial orchids. The colours and shapes of the whole range are fantastic - almost unbelievable.

Farewells are made over tea and biscuits. A short trip to John Henshaw's nursery. After a leisurely inspection of his plants we make our long drive home.

Brian Conway

ZONE DIARY 2000

July	12	Swindon	Stan Griffin	Cultivation
	12	High Wycombe	Members evening	To be advised
	15	Swindon	ZONE 8 INTERBRANCH QUIZ	
	18	Birmingham	John Watmough	Succulent humour
	27	Oxford	Derek Tribble	C.A.T.s (Cotyledons, Adromischus & Tylecodons)
August	9	Swindon	Ms L Porteus	Introduction to garden design
	9	High Wycombe	Eddie Harris	Return to the wild side
	15	Birmingham	Terry Smales	Conophytums
	19	Springfields, Spalding	NATIONAL SHOW	
	24	Oxford	Alan Pocock & Brian Thomson	The need for propagation
September	13	Swindon	Society Slides	Mexico - Part 1
	13	High Wycombe	Doug Donaldson	India-na-Doug
	15	Brooksby Hall	JUDGES COURSE	
	-17			
	19	Birmingham	John Horobin	Epiphytes
28	Oxford	Colin Walker	Books on succulents	
October	7	Birmingham	Society Executive	
	8	Birmingham	AUTUMN SHOW	
	11	Swindon	John Henshaw	North West Mexico
	11	High Wycombe	Rodney Sims	A trip to S. Africa
	15	Oxford	Biennial SUCCULENT & MESEMB SHOW	
	17	Birmingham	Daphne Pritchard	Transvaal & Eastern Cape
	26	Oxford	Terry Smale	The genus Conophytum
November	8	Swindon	AGM & members slides	
	8	High Wycombe	Jeremy Bishop	Agaves
	21	Birmingham	Barrie Glover	USA National Parks
	23	Oxford	AGM & Keith Grantham	Quiz
December	12	Birmingham	AGM & Social	
	13	Swindon	No meeting	
	13	High Wycombe	AGM	& Something Different
	13	Oxford	No meeting	

WESTERN CAPE TOUR, AUGUST 1998

Part 2 (final) - Calvinia to Cape Town, via the Little Karoo.

We stayed overnight in Calvinia, and had dinner and breakfast in Die Dorphus, a national monument and shop-cum-museum-cum-restaurant, and one of the strangest places I have ever eaten in. Next day we went nearly due south through the semi-desert basin of the Tankwa Karoo, with stops to find *Sarcocaulon gumeri*, which had white flowers out, and *Aloe falcata*. In the near-barren Karoo lives the vyggie *Tanquana prismatica* (I collected seed), *Didymaotus lapidiformis* and *Eurystigma clavatum*. On the southern part we found *Euphorbia multiceps*, *Tylecodon pearsonii* and *cactifolia*, *Crassula deceptor* and *Lithops comptonii* (more seed). Driver Philip then cut across towards Matjiesfontein, and on some shale outcrops NW of town the were growing *Crassula peculiaris* and *muscosa*, and *Haworthia arachnoidia*. A long day with no loos - a problem for the ladies especially.

Overnight at the Hotel "Lord Milner" at Matjiesfontein. Built in 1899 as an army hospital for British troops injured in the Boer War, it became a hotel the following year. The only other buildings there, including the railway station, were built to serve the hotel. The first floor balcony at the front was very wide so that the beds could be pushed out onto it. Jean and I ordered gins and tonic and sat out on the balcony and watched the Blue Train bound for Jo'burg and Pretoria loading up (it stops there for one hour, just three times a week) and pretended for a moment that we were back in the colonial days.

The next day we crossed the Witteberg Mountains and so into the Little Karoo, a Mecca for succulent enthusiasts. At our

stops I noted, in order, *Crassula rupestris*, *Gibbaeum dispar*, two *Anacampseros*, an *Astrobia*, and *Aloe comptonii*. This latter flowers in Jun/Jul - later than the *Aloe mitrifomis* further north, and some consider them just to be forms. On the way down to Ladysmith we found *Aloe striata*, *Euphorbia mauritanica* and *Lampranthus hoerleinianus* with big purple flowers out. Between Ladysmith and Warmwaterberg there was *Huernia glottiphyllum*, *Senecio rowleyanus*, and a *Gibbeum* that James didn't know, but apparently goes under the popular name of "baby's bottoms".

James then got Phillip to drive a few kilometers down a side road, where he showed us some green blobs - *Muiria hortenseae*. Jim then wandered off, as always, and called out 'Hey, you guys - all the plants are over here!'. We followed him to the foot of a hillock slope completely covered in plants of blue *Gibbeum album*, a wonderful sight. We picked our way to the top and wow!, there was nothing but *Muiria hortenseae* on the other side, hundreds of plants in a single patch some metres square, and so close together you could not (dare not!) step between them. Apparently this is their only site.

We finished up at Barrydale for the night, where we were the first guests of the season at a family-run hotel, and it got quite chilly after dark. From here we crossed the Langeboerg mountains via the scenic Tradouws Pass, with stops to have a look at the Mountain Fynbos vegetation. There was *Aloe arborescens* and *A. pumila*, *Bulbine mesembryanthoides*, *Haworthia retusa* and *Leucosperma aurea*. A *Protea nana* covered in yellow flowers made a nice photograph; James said that its pollinator was a little mouse.

Last day. Stopped just east of Swellendam, where *Aloe ferox* plants made a fine

photograph with the Breede River behind them. In Robertson we visited the Sheilam cactus (yes, cactus) nursery. Afterwards, at a shale outcrop on the outskirts of town we found *Haworthia maraisii*, *Conophytum ficiforme*, *Aloe microstigma* and species of *Gasteria*, *Euphorbia* and *Quaqua*. New homes had been built close by, and youngsters were riding motorbikes around - these were endangered plants! On the road to Worcester we stopped and saw *Gasteria disticha* and a *Brunvigia*, another geophyte.

We called in, of course, at the Karoo National Botanical Garden at Worcester, which is devoted solely to succulent plants; we were to be back there the next week, as a Congress day trip out. To say the Garden was impressive would be an understatement, but they badly needed

rain as it had been even drier than usual for many months. We had certainly been very lucky with the weather for the whole of our field trip week - the days were mainly hot and sunny and we met no rain at all.

After the IOS congress at Kirstenbosch we hired a car for a week and visited nearly all of the wine areas. My main memories of our three weeks in the Cape regions are of the astounding diversity of all the flora, both succulent and otherwise, the unexpectedly superb mountain scenery, the excellent food we found everywhere and the very low cost of everything by our present-day standards. We would like to go again one day, to see more of South Africa. A great country, and with a great potential still.

David Greenaway

Aloe ferox at Swellendam

