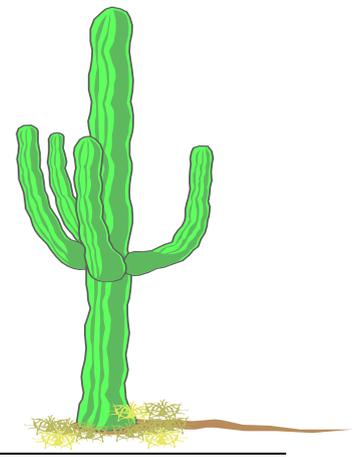


Oxotica

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

June 2011

Volume 16 Number 1



DROOLING SPINES

by John Watmough

THE HIGH WYCOMBE AUCTION

Sadly, after Doug's untimely death in December, Doreen Donaldson has decided to dispose of the collection. What would have been the Open Day on Sunday 10th July has been changed to Auction Day. Bill and Cathy Darbon with David Kirkbright have sorted out a schedule of 400 lots, which is now available on the High Wycombe website. Bill and David, who are both renowned auctioneers, will be presiding. Doug and Doreen were always stalwart supporters of Oxford Branch, so our members are invited to lend their weight to this landmark occasion.

OUR AUCTION

Members will be glad to learn that the event made a profit of nearly £400 on the day. This represents about 18 months' rent on Rose Hill Methodist Church. An amusing thing happened while Bill (who else?) was presiding. A gentleman from another Branch was about to escalate the bidding on a particularly desirable cactus when he suddenly shouted "Yaroo!" "Was that a bid?" asked Bill. No, it wasn't. It was an expression of pain when the gentleman's wife, who wanted a tortoise not a cactus, stamped on his foot.

Swings and roundabouts. Bidders were spurning a rather elderly *Lobivia* until Graham Charles announced that he had been there when Ken Preston-Mafham discovered the plant. Graham described the locality, then extolled the beauty of the flowers, and soon that lot fetched a tidy sum. Thank you, Graham.

YAROO (2)

A member of another Branch relates that as he was passing through Dubai Customs and Immigration, an official jabbed his hand into our man's hand baggage. Naturally there was a cactus in his bag, and a very spiny one at that. Our man laughed so much he thought he was going to be locked up.

PRIORITIES

Coincidentally our Zone Rep, Pete Arthurs, and our soon-to-return-to-Blighty Branch member Martin Doorbar have been house hunting at the same time. It is understood that their main criterion for selecting a property has been that there should be space for a fifty-foot greenhouse. One hopes that their partners won't mind setting up home in a garden shed or a henhouse.

JW

June flower



Maihueniopsis subterranea

David Greenaway

BRANCH MEETINGS JULY - NOVEMBER 2011

4th Thursday in month, 7:30 pm for 8:00 pm

Please bring plants for the Table Show if you can

Once again we have tried to provide a wide range of speakers and subjects for our monthly meetings and hope that there will be something of interest for everyone. Please let the Secretary know if you would like any particular subject or speaker in the future.

July 28th BRIAN THOMSON
Genera of Mexico

What can I say about Brian, whom we first met at Southport Show many years ago. He studied at Cante with Charlie Glass and has visited many special locations that normal people don't see. Tonight he will be talking about some of his favourite plants and bring some of his thoughts about conservation.

August 25th TREVOR WRAY
Fabulous Chic Crassulas

Trevor is a friend from Northampton Branch and editor of their newsletter and website, he is well known for his photography, but tonight he will present something different and has asked for plants to be brought along for his presentation.

September 18th
**ANNUAL BRANCH SHOW WITH THE
HAWORTHIA SOCIETY**

Our annual branch show will be held at our normal venue at the Langdale Hall, Witney this year. We have again asked the Haworthia Society to join us for a joint Exhibition & Show. Full details via web site or from the Show Secretary.

September 22nd DAVID NEVILLE
Continental Nurseries (part 2)

David is well known in the Society from his efforts with the Journal and Cactus File. He had to cut short his talk last year, so we have asked him back again to continue his trip around the

Continental Nurseries. It's that chance to see what superb plants are grown across the channel.

October 27th ALICE VANDEN BON
Travels in South Africa

Alice is now on the production team for the Journal and has visited our branch shows as a Judge and exhibitor. This is her first visit as a speaker and she will be taking us on a field trip in South Africa looking at some of her favourite plants (if you can see them that is).

November 24th BRANCH AGM
Entertainment and Christmas Nibbles

December NO MEETING

Cathy Darbon



Oxotica

Copyright: Oxford Branch of the British Cactus and Succulent Society. Published in June and December.

The Branch meets 7.30pm for 8pm on the 4th Thursday of each month (except December) at the Rose Hill Methodist Church, Rose Hill, Oxford OX4 4JP.

President:	Alan Ilott	01235 519543
Chair:	Gillian Evison	01235 532674
Vice-Chair:	David Greenaway	01235 762761
Secretary:	Cathy Darbon	01993 881926
Treasurer:	John Watmough	01865 772709
Committee:	Brian Conway	01865 765800
	Bill Darbon	01993 881926
	Steve Williams	01367 718944
	Penny Rodgers	01865 862333
	Mary Stone	01865 774268

Editor: David Greenaway
(e-mail: david@phonecoop.coop)

Branch site: <http://www.oxford.bcss.org.uk/>

CSSA SAN DIEGO CONVENTION

by Gillian Evison

Americans en route couldn't believe it but at the end of April we swapped the chance of sitting at home in a darkened room watching the Royal Wedding for sitting in a darkened room listening to cactus talks at the CSSA Convention in San Diego. Oxford member in exile, Martin Doorbar, took time off from packing for his return to the UK to be there so we managed two branch members amongst the small handful of Brits sampling cactophilia American style.



Hotel succulent plantings

The first breakfast was spent admiring the succulent themed plantings around the pool, which we later learned had been specially done for the convention. The hotel staff told us they were hoping to be allowed to take some of the pots home after the convention finished but the sharp reduction in the hotels garden's water bill after the introduction of the succulents had left

them thinking that the management would want the xerophytes to stay.

Nurserymen were heaving flats of fat self-satisfied cacti and succulents across the parking lot into the Rio Vista Pavilion but, unlike at the British Convention, where early birds get the pick of the plants, the American Convention sales area is closed until the official opening at 8.00pm. This allows the Convention organisers to raffle the privilege of Early Bird Shopping and the lucky winners get a chance to stuff their trolleys (forget boxes or trays) with as many purchases as they can before general hordes are let loose.



Queue for the sales pavilion

The quality and range of plants on offer was breathtaking and I had to keep busy with the camera to stop my hands creeping for the purse. Rudy Lime, author of *Bonsai Succulents*, had a stand and if I could have found room in the luggage for his *Bowiea volubilis* cluster or the *Monsonia vanderietiae* grown on the mini rock face I would have done.



Sales area in full swing

After the financial losses of the Tucson Convention, the San Diego conference was a more modest affair with a single track of presentations except for the optional evening of Group Sessions. It's always an excellent opportunity to hear speakers who are unlikely to appear in Europe and I was given plenty to think about. Julian Etter and Mark Kristen, a Swiss couple living in Mexico, gave excellent presentations on trips to the more dangerous parts of the country and introduced me to their wonderful websites on Agaves and Crassulaceae (<http://agavaceae.com> and <http://crassulaceae.com>).



Bowiea volubilis

From Dr. Gideon Smith, author of *Aloes of Southern Africa*, I heard the disturbing news that the spots and stripes we admire on so many species mimic insect damage to persuade pests to choose other plants. I'm not sure I will ever look at the pretty spots in quite the same way again. Debra Lee Baldwin (<http://www.debraleebaldwin.com/>) gave much food for thought as she talked us through designing with succulents. That mystery of our sales table experiences where the Echeverias and Aeoniums go before everything else was finally explained – the general public like succulents that look like flowers!



Sarcocaulon vanderietiae

An eagerly awaited part of the Convention is field trip day and we had opted for the Anza Borrego off-road tour. The instructions mysteriously said we had to be prepared to climb ladders and non-nationals had to bring their passports. The ladders weren't a joke as these were how we climbed into the trucks and we later learned that the passports were in case we were stopped by the border patrol.



Anza Borrego off-road trucks

The Anza Borrego was looking at its best with *Agave deserti*, *Echinocereus engelmannii* and *Ferocactus cylindraceus* all in bloom. The trip turned out to be rather more offroad

than anticipated with the second truck smashing some important underside part on its way to the lunch stop. We were then stranded while the tour leader tried to find a support vehicle by satellite phone, which didn't seem to work too well out in the middle of the Anza Borrego. We were left to admire the *Hesperoyucca whipplei* plants and take pictures of *Dudleya cymosa* rosettes tumbling down the rock faces while braving the evil grass seeds, which got stuck in our walking socks like mini daggers and defied all efforts to pull them out .



Ferocactus cylindraceus in flower in Plum Canyon



Dudleya cymosa in Oriflamme Canyon

Eventually the tour bus that had

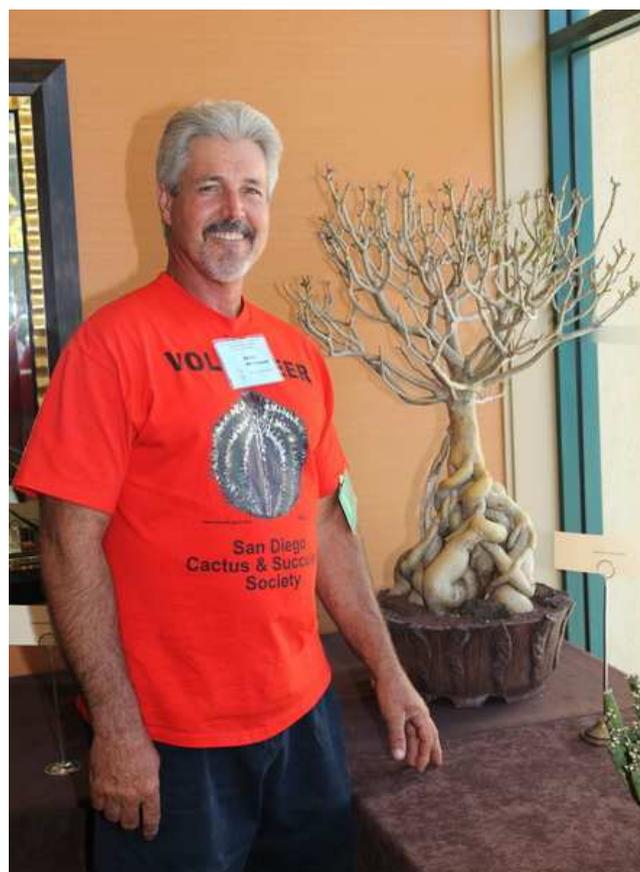
brought us from the Convention hotel was contacted and the injured vehicle was deemed fit enough to limp to the main road to meet it. Our scheduled third stop was cancelled but instead we were let loose on a hillside of Hoffman's cholla and *Cylindropuntia bigelovii*. The jumping cholla lived up to its name and attached itself painfully twice to the same leg as I tried to get shots of the *Mammillaria dioica*. Were the pictures worth huge bruises from the cholla spines? Probably not, but the guides showed us the useful trick of using a broad toothed hair comb for pulling the pads out, which might come in handy for future suicide missions with the camera.



Mammillaria dioica



There was plenty to entertain outside the talks including some of the best caudiciforms I have ever seen grown by local San Diego member Peter Walkowiak. The beautiful plant shapes are the result of quite intensive management and Peter was kind enough to share some of his secrets with me though I'm not sure I'll be mastering his skilful pinching out and pruning techniques any time soon.



Peter Walkowiak with one of his caudiciforms



Peter's Adenia glauca

at least 60cm (2ft) across, would be the perfect US souvenir. Perhaps this was because his wallet was already empty after succumbing to a very large *Dendrosicyos socotrana* in the sales pavilion.



The giant Gymnocalycium saglionis



Cristate Agave titanota which went for \$300



Martin with his new pet

The rare plant auction on Thursday evening brought some fairly serious bidders out with quite a number of plants going for \$300 and more. Martin seemed strangely indifferent to British efforts to persuade him the humungous *Gymnocalycium saglionis*,

All too soon the happy conventioners were heading home with hotel luggage trolleys groaning with plants. Martin returned to his packing while David and I set off for a visit to Huntington and Death Valley, sampling cocktails along the way. The next Convention will be held in Austin, Texas, in 2013 but with a June date the temperatures will be not be for the fainthearted!

WORDS TO CONJURE WITH

by John Watmough

<i>Anisophylly</i>	Having each leaf of a pair different.
<i>Heterophylly</i>	Having different kinds of leaf according to the season.
<i>Caerphilly</i>	How one should drive in Wales.
<i>Cheiropterophily</i>	The state of being pollinated by bats.
<i>Succulentophily</i>	The state of being bats.
<i>Horridoplasty</i>	(medical) Having to repair something when there is nothing much left of it.
<i>Exozoochorous</i>	Having the seed dispersed by adherence to the outside surface (skin, fur, feathers) of an animal.
<i>Poikilohydrous</i>	Able to resurrect after complete desiccation.
<i>Tanniniferous idioblast</i>	Dark spot (as on the leaf of a Mesemb).
<i>Obligate cremnophily</i>	The state of being able to grow only on cliffs.
<i>Obstinate cremnophily</i>	Insistence on botanising dangerous cliffs despite friends' entreaties.
<i>Monophylogenetic</i>	Descended down a single ancestral line.
<i>Polyphylogenetic</i>	Promoting the sale of labels and marker pens.
<i>Polyphilogenetic</i>	Breeding like rabbits e.g. the Victorian poor
<i>Nessiteras rhombopteryx</i>	(Lat. The diamond-winged Ness monster). The Loch Ness Monster. (Anagram of "Monster Hoax by Sir Peter S[cott]").
<i>Hypodermatous acanthostasis</i>	(medical) Cactus Hand.
<i>Taurocoprolalia</i>	The purpose of this kind of vocabulary in books for the general reader.

JW

