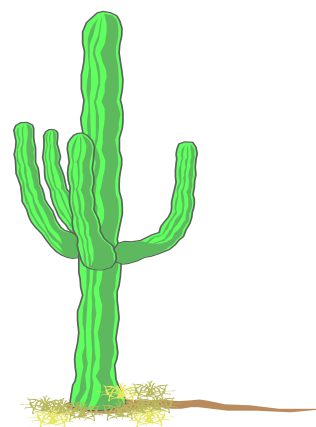


Oxotica

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

December 2008

Volume 13, Number 2



CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Well the highlight of this year to me, and I expect to many of you, must have been the National Show held at Godmanchester in August. I think the new venue was an improvement and the siting of the nursery sales tables in the same hall was a great idea. Very many of the plants in the Show were superb. I left wishing I could grow Haworthias to something near the standard of those entered. Several members of the Branch were there working in a variety of roles and I wish to thank them for their contribution to a successful event. Congratulations to Gillian for her success in picking up some of the silverware against strong competition.



Ian Robinson takes a quiet cup of tea before judging the Mammillaria Society section and looks over the plants with John Foster, while Bill Darbon makes sure all is in order on the benches before judging starts. GE

On the local front we have had two shows this year at Witney. Both were again up to the good standard that has been established over recent years. As usual, members of

the Branch have also been out and about selling plants, setting up displays and giving talks. My thanks to everybody who has contributed to these events. This year we appear to have been successful in enticing a few more people into the hobby.

With deepening recession many of us might be entertaining thoughts of turning the thermostat in the greenhouse down a further notch this winter. While browsing through some old issues of the American Cactus and Succulent Journal I came across an article from June 1939 entitled 'Growing Cacti and Succulents in an All-Electric Greenhouse'. The author cites a cost of \$8.75 to heat his 9'x24' greenhouse at 50°F from the beginning of November to the end of March. This could be equivalent to about £100 today. I think this is somewhat less than it costs me to heat my 6'x8' greenhouse over the winter. However, the author was considering reducing the temperature to 40°F the following winter so perhaps the cost of heating has always been a topic of interest.

Those of you with an aptitude for mathematics, or a better memory than me for dates, will have realised that I have now come to the end of my tenure as Branch Chairman. The job has been made easy by the hard work of the committee members during the last three years and your Branch remains healthy due to their efforts. So, my personal thanks to all of them. Mary Stone has had to stand down from the Branch committee this year. Mary has quietly made a big contribution to the running of

both the Branch and the Shows over the years in ways that many of us had not realised until we came to fill in the gaps. On behalf of the Branch, thank you Mary for all your efforts.

I would like to close in a similar manner to last year – thank you for supporting the Branch over the last twelve months and I wish you all a Merry Christmas and further horticultural joys in 2009.

Steve Williams



Avonia quinaria



Echeveria tolimensis

(These two pictures from the Oxford Branch autumn show, and all the others in this edition of *Oxotica*, are by Gillian Evison.)

THE AUCTION 2009

The April Auction will be held on **Sunday May 3rd** (!) at Freeland Village Hall. Arrangements will be the same as for our previous very successful auctions. Please would anyone wishing to submit plants instruct John Watmough in the following form:

Example:

Ariocarpus retusus
Tray of Tylecodon

6" pot 2 heads, needs repotting
6 different species, rooted cuttings

The Branch will accept reserve prices if requested.

Contributions to the Sales Table are also invited; pots must contain a second label indicating the price and identifying the owner. The Branch will take a 20% commission on both auction and table sales plants.

I should like to start assembling the Auction Catalogue as soon as possible after Christmas, so I should be grateful if you could communicate your submissions as soon as possible.

John Watmough

**BRANCH MEETINGS
JANUARY - JUNE 2009**

**(4th Thursday in month, 7:30 pm for 8:00 pm)
Please bring plants for Table Show - Feb. to
Oct.**

**January 22nd JOHN WATMOUGH -
Pollination Syndromes and Seed Dispersal**

Our very own Branch Treasurer will give you one of his newer talks. John is also a judge, and judged at the recent National. He would normally bring plants for sale, but this will depend on the weather at the time.

**February 26th DOUG DONALDSON - In
Search of Bogataensis**

You will all know Doug, Secretary of High Wycombe Branch, who with his wife Doreen, often sells at our shows. Doug and Doreen are also well known for their Open Day in July.

**March 26th RAY STEPHENSON -
Fireplace of Endemism (Succulents of
S.W.Bulgaria)**

Ray has visited the Branch on several occasions in the past all the way from Northumbria. He is well known for his tome 'Sedums and Cultivated Stonecrops', and many other writings. He is a judge, and also considered one of the best speakers in the UK. He often speaks to us on the Judges' Course and we look forward to hearing him again.

April 23rd RENE GEISSLER - Propagation

Most of you will know Rene from his nursery at Slimbridge, a very good day's outing as he is on the same lane as the Slimbridge Bird Sanctuary. He was a judge for many years, and also Zone 9 Representative. In recent years he has brought his

nursery to our show on several occasions.

May 28th BOB POTTER - Socotra

Again Bob is well known to the Branch through his lectures, and also Toobees Nursery at the Branch Show. He is a judge and has visited many parts of the succulent world, this talk will retrace his recent trip. He is sure to bring plants, so bring your cheque book.

**June 25th GRAHAM CHARLES -
Matucana**

Probably one of the most respected speakers in the UK, and even in America. He is a judge and judged at this year's National. He is probably best known for his books, particularly his participation with David Hunt and others in co-writing the New Cactus Lexicon.

Cathy Darbon, Branch Secretary

Oxotica

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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.

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MAMMILLARIA SOCIETY CLASSES Oxford Show, July 2008

by Ian Robinson

(No commentary on the Coryphantha Group classes 44 and 45. - Ed)

Class 46 Mammillaria Group (excluding classes 47).

1st Very well grown/old/tidy/crucigera - 22 heads, also awarded Best Mammillaria;
2nd a nearly-as-old microthele - 30 heads, excellent; 3rd multi-headed centricirra in flower;
HC very nice charensis.

Class 47 Mammillaria bombycina or geminispina. Only 2 entries.

1st 2-foot bowl of geminispina - excellent: given Award of Merit; 2nd geminispina nice but in need of repot.

Class 48 Mammillaria elongata, densispina, echinaria, microhelia or mieheana. Only 2 entries.

1st Multi headed densispina; 2nd 15-inch pan of elongata.

Class 49 Mammillaria schiedeana, carmenae, plumosa, dumetorum or giselae.

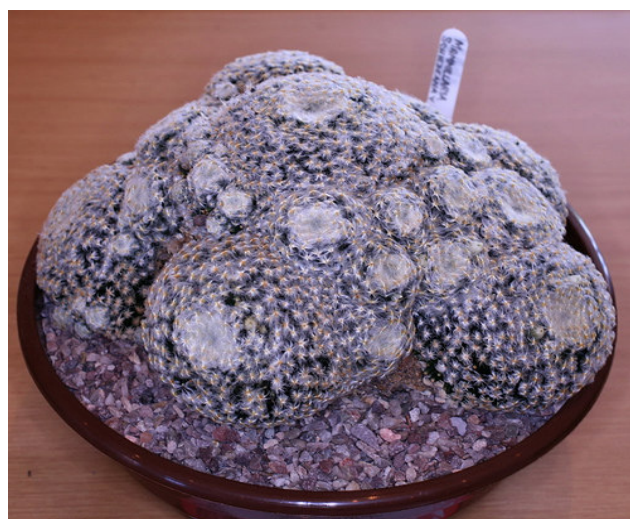
1st schiedeana v plumosa - worthy of an Award of Merit. 2nd nice golf ball plumosa, 12 inch pan; 3rd 5 headed schiedeana; HC to a well grown giselae, as yet too young.

Class 50 Mammillaria humboldtii, lauii, dasyacantha or subducta.

Three different Mammillaria humboldtii took 1st, 2nd and HC;
3rd went to a '14 inch' clump of lauii v subducta



Mammillaria crucigera



Mammillaria schiedeana v plumosa

Class 51 Mammillaria (Sub Species Cochemia) pondii, maritima, setispina, halei or posegeri.

1st C-setispina despite need of re pot and presentation; 2nd larger but less show worthy setispina; 3rd maritima, less mature.

Class 52 Mammillaria (Sub Species Dolichothele) baumii, carretii, logimamma, melaleuca, sphaerica or surculosa. Both baumii.

1st went to a nice plant; 2nd needed potting on.

Class 53 Mammillaria Group (multi-headed plant) excluding plants eligible for Class 47.

Amazingly high standard needed pointing to make decision.

Mamm fraileana clear winner but 6 plants tied for 2nd place with more only 1 point behind: small differences of presentation and pot size relative to plant ultimately resulting in 2nd going to an ancient microthele with about 60 heads; 3rd to nice pennispinosa.
HC theresae filling 8inch pan and Mamm perbella with 17 heads.

3 other plants might have taken a first at many shows but I was limited to awards of HC cards.

Class 54 Mammillaria Group (multi-headed plant) max pot size 18cm. Two plants.

1st was clearly a grahami v grahami in very good condition; nice tidy clean plants 2nd & HC; the large zephyranthoides and aureilanata in 3rd place let down by presentation.

Class 55 Mammillaria Group (single-growing head only)

1st outstanding chionocephala - 8inches tall; high standard for 2nd & 3rd.

Class 56 Mammillaria Group (single-growing head only) max pot size 18cm. Two plants.

The places sealed themselves almost by weight alone.

Class 57 Mammillaria Group, max pot size 14cm. Three plants.

Clear first theresae, zephyranthoides and crucigera; 2nd M herrerae, theresae and crucigera; 3rd would have benefited by making use of the full pot size allowance, and HC ditto.



Mammillaria fraileana



Mammillaria chionocephala

Class 58 Mammillaria Group, max pot size 10cm. Four plants.

Excellent 1st M mainiae, theresae, pectinifera and albiarmata.

The remaining entries were marginally spoiled by 1 plant immature or need of bigger pot.

Class 59 Mammillaria Group, cristate or monstrose.

A little disappointing - only 2 entries.

1st M spinosissima.

Class 60 Thelocactus Group.

Class 61 Thelocactus Group, max pot size 16cm. Two plants.

High standard in both classes.

1st large macdowellii dominant; large rinconensis forced into 3rd due to need of re-potting.

MAMMILLARIA LECTURE
(Wolfgang Plein, 13th July 2008)

by Mark Masterson

The Mammillaria lecture was held on the 13th July at the end of the BCSS Oxford Branch Show and was given by Wolfgang Plein, Editor of the German Mammillaria Society (AfM). It was a review of the field work undertaken by himself, Helmut Rogozinski, and others, over the last five years on members of the series Mammillaria that grow on the northwest side of Mexico in the states of Sonora, Sinaloa, Chihuahua and Durango.

The presence of some members of the series in the south of Baja California and on some of the islands in the Gulf of California is an indication that the Baja peninsula could have been attached to the mainland and possibly broke away about 4 million years ago. It is believed that the split north to south was in fact a main river and the Ríos (rivers) flowed down out of the mountains in to this main river and then down into the sea.

There were many excellent photographs of the plants they have studied, refound and described, all of which can be found in the various journals of the German Mammillaria Society. A specific plant complex is to be found in each specific river system. Each plant complex is very variable in all aspects of growth, spination, amount of wool, etc. Most groups have both yellow and red flowering plants which grow in different locations, but there is one habitat where these two colours grow together at El Divisadero in the Barranca de Cobre and plants with orange flowers and shades in between can be found there. Herr Plein also showed a clump of yellow flowering **M. canelensis** where one head in the clump had an orange flower.

The lecture was finished off with pictures of the rediscovered **M. xanthina** from Durango. Although Plein has yet to see the plant in habitat

he believes it to be a member of the **canelensis / lindsayi / marksiana** complex but cannot say how it has come to be so far away from the others.

At the moment the only thing I would disagree with is where the plant groups have originated from. Plein believes they have travelled from the coastal low lands UP the river systems. This would mean that there would be a common ancestor growing along the coastal low lands from which **M. bocensis** would have evolved. **M. lindsayi** would have evolved up the Río Fuerte also from this common ancestor. **M. canelensis** has therefore evolved from **M. lindsayi** up the Río Chinipas. The plants in what I call the **M. craigii** complex which grow in the Barranca de Cobre / Barranca Sinforosa would therefore have also evolved from **M. lindsayi** at the same time.

I believe that the various plant complexes / groups have evolved up river and have travelled down the river systems to the coastal plains. If this is the case, then, using the example above, **M. lindsayi** could be of hybrid origin between **M. canelensis** coming down the Río Chinipas and the **M. craigii** group meeting at the mouth of the Río Fuerte. But of course this would have happened so long ago that we might never know for sure, and it would be interesting to see what information DNA testing could throw on the subject.

It was great to meet Wolfgang Plein and the lecture was excellent. I would certainly recommend the talk should anyone have the opportunity to hear it and I would like to thank Herr Plein for being willing to come over to the UK, the Mammillaria Society for arranging the talk and BCSS Oxford branch for hosting the show.

Mark Masterson,
mark.mccormac@btconnect.com

Mr George Wheeler

It is with sadness that we learnt of the death of George Wheeler, suddenly, on 20th May 2008. He served as Secretary of the Branch for a long period until November 1994, and in his prime was well known as a first-rate grower and showman. He had been living in sheltered accommodation in Brill. Our condolences go to his family.

John Watmough

It was through meeting George at the '92 National that I joined Oxford Branch; I had joined the BCSS a couple of years earlier and was quite happy not doing anything about the Branch. At the show we noticed that some Oxford people, including Wheeler, had got firsts, and we spotted him collecting his big *Mammillaria bombycina* at the end of the show. Even then, it took Jean to go over to speak to him and bring him across to meet me. I went to the next branch meeting because I now knew someone there. The rest is history, as they say.

David Greenaway



Matucana weberbaueri



Faucaria hooleae



Gasteria armstrongii



Copiapoa columna-alba

SPINE FEVER

National Mammillaria Collection

Mammillaria Society members will know that a good friend of our Branch, Mark Masterson, is assembling a National Collection of Mammillarias on the Island of Bute. If anyone has any spare seedlings or duplicate plants with habitat details, or could sacrifice a cutting, could you please contact John Watmough, who will ask Mark if he could use such a plant or plants. Habitat details will usually take the form of a collector's number or an SB number (Steven Brack of Mesa Gardens, Belen, New Mexico.)

Martin Doorbar

Martin will be moving back to this country in the middle part of 2009. He is currently working in cactus-free Pennsylvania, so he will be glad to get back to his collection in Cholsey.

Oh Deer!

Suzanne and Tony Mace got up one morning to find a fallow deer in their smaller (40 foot!) greenhouse. Fortunately there is a door at each end, so they were able to open both doors and shoo it out without damage.

But a lady on the Kent/Sussex border was not so lucky. She found geese in her greenhouse and they were eating her Lithops collection.

John Watmough once had a fox that used his greenhouse as a latrine. Recently having a repeat of the horrible smell, he searched in vain for the offending deposit. The flies directed him to *Piarranthus foetidus*.

- At the time of writing, a roe deer and her fawn have taken up residence in Rose Hill Cemetery, a stone's throw from our meeting hall.

Plant Sales

The amazing sum of £470.70 accrued to the Branch in the 2008 financial year through plant sales. The bulk of this was raised from plants donated to the Branch by Branch members, members of other branches, and "friends of the Branch". We are most grateful for their generous support.

Boasting

Someone (I don't think it was a member of our Branch) pointed out that while the National Show had 1100 entries, our two shows combined had something like 1000 entries. This indicates how important our Shows have become in the succulent life of the nation.

John Watmough

Feng Shui

Under the title "Throw out that Cactus now!" one of our local newspapers reports on the use of Feng Shui in offices. Amongst the advice for businesses, a Feng Shui consultant includes the item:

Avoid cacti or sharp-looking points in the office as their small, sharp leaves cause "shar chi". As the air passes through the plants it will become fierce and sharp, affecting office harmony".

Well, I don't know about that point (!), though I think that I am OK with her other points – managers to sit in the 'Command Position' (a corner furthest away from the door); letting sunlight into the office; keeping desks organized and uncluttered; ensuring wires are untangled and hidden.

I am not so sure about another point about avoiding mirrors, which 'reflect negative energy around'. Anyway, now you know – our greenhouses are absolutely stuffed with shar chi, so do take extra care.

David Greenaway

