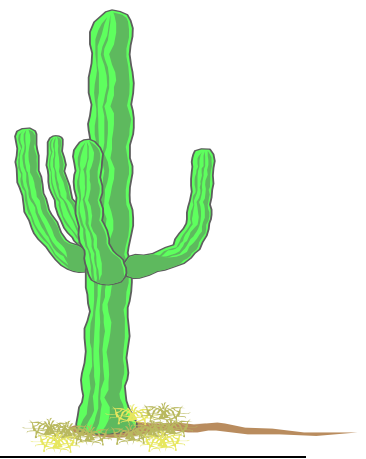


Oxotica

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

June 2015

Volume 20, Number 1



CHAIRMAN'S CHAT

Hi well it's now six months since I was elected as Chairman of the Branch. Looking back in the records it is some time ago since I was last in this elevated position and things have moved on quite considerably since then. The development of the technological age with new devices: - I-phones, tablets, facebook and twitter etc. We have all had to move with the times, even dinosaurs like me can now send messages through the ether, but I wonder if we may have lost something in the art of conversation. I am not sure whether it's good to look back too far, as it brings back memories of those friends who are no longer with us, but as I look around the greenhouses there are some plants that I have now that bring smiles from days gone by and happy reminiscences.

The focus of the Committee in the coming months is on The Branch Show in August at our new venue at Grove; you should all have had a copy of the schedule, so do try and support the Show even if you can not bring plants to enter, it is a great social occasion and we hope that it will be a great success.

Although the numbers of attendees at branch meeting no longer reaches the halcyon days of the past there is a core of stalwarts who turn out every 4th Thursday for which I am very grateful. We may be low on numbers but very high in enthusiasm and continue to provide as varied a programme as possible. The Branch Committee is always open to any suggestions and we try to represent our hobby as much as possible at events locally to advertise our presence in Oxfordshire. I am grateful to David Greenaway who constantly updates the branch web page and this now gets visited by people throughout the world. What did we do without computers!!!

Good Growing.

Bill Darbon

OXFORD BRANCH SILVER GILT AWARD

Members of the Branch have just recovered from exhibiting at The Blenheim Palace Flower Show (19th - 21st June). This year the organisers allowed us to put up a stand in The Floral Marquee along with all the professional growers. I am pleased to report that we managed to hold our own with the big boys and were awarded a Silver Gilt Award and had favourable comments from the judges for our effort (ourown critique fell in line with theirs).

We were also able to sell some plants which will please the Hon Treasurer. Let's hope we may be allowed back and hopefully be able to improve on our efforts. The new Society Display Boards were unveiled for the first time and provided a colourful backdrop to the stand.

Bill Darbon



Martin Doorbar

**BRANCH MEETINGS
JULY - NOVEMBER 2015**

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

Please bring plants for the Table Show if you can - each of these meetings except November

We are always open to suggestions for the programme so if there is someone or something that you would like us to arrange please speak to one of the committee.

July 23 BOB POTTER
Ethiopia

Bob and Beryl run Toobees Exotics, Bob is well known in the succulent world and grows many of the unusual plants, which he offers for sale on his website and at many of the Shows throughout the year. He has travelled to many parts of the world, but not many have been to Ethiopia, so I am sure we are in for an insight into this vast country.

1 August

**BRANCH SHOW
WITH THE HAWORTHIA SOCIETY
Old Mill Hall, Grove, Wantage OX12 7LB
10.30 – 15.30**

Lecture at 4.30 by Alan Rollason on
"An experience with Gerhard Marx"

August 27 PAUL KLAASSON
What I did last winter

Paul like many sensible birds flies south in the winter, he has travelled widely in both South and North America. You never know quite what he will come up with, I am sure we will see some old friends of his plant explorations, but I am sure we will all enjoy his presentation as he always seems to find something new.

September 24 PAUL HOXEY
Peru

Paul comes from the light blue of Cambridge. He has visited South America on a number of occasions and has recently had the honour of having one of his discoveries named after him. He has published articles in the Journal about his trips and finds, so we will be treated to finding out about his travels in the flesh.

October 22 CHRIS DAVIES
Mammillarias

Chris as Chairman of The Mammillaria Society has been involved with us in our joint shows. He is a member of our neighbours at High Wycombe, tonight he will tell us about this varied genus of plants of which he has a wonderful knowledge having visited habitat on a number of occasions, so hopefully he will be able to pass on some of his expertise.

November 26 BRANCH AGM
Plus, Christmas social with fish & chip supper

Bill Darbon

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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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BRANCH OPEN DAY (Bill's half of the day) 10TH MAY



Martin Doorbar

I am glad that I decided to open the collection as it gave me a good chance to smarten up up the greenhouses, and I was fortunate that Gareth came down to help me tidy up on Friday and Saturday. Although plants could be seen on the top of the staging easily, I did not realise what I had packed away underneath. He was like a whirling dervish once we started sorting out and I was struggling to keep up with him. We moved the Agaves and a few other plants outside (as is normal for the summer) which gave plenty of room to re-sort the rest of the sales and propagation material. Of course I put some of the sales plants out to hopefully to tempt the visitors; I was even left with some space on the top of the staging.

We were blessed with a fine day although a little overcast. It was nice to welcome visitors from our neighbours at High Wycombe and Reading. Martin very kindly took some pictures which will hopefully be featured on the Branch events programme in due course. A good day with friends, talking about our favourite hobby.

Bill Darbon

(John Watmough hosted the morning visit – Ed.)



TRIP TO LA PALMA, CANARY ISLANDS
by Mary Stone

I have recently returned from a walking holiday in La Palma. This is a volcanic island and as much of the walking was in the higher areas it was quite hard going. I had hoped to see lots of succulents, but unfortunately most of the succulents grow around the coast. I often saw *Aeoniums* growing on cliffs bordering the roads as we drove to the start or from the finish of the walks, but of course was unable to study or photograph them. The island is very pleasant and not overrun with tourism, so I would recommend a visit to anyone who could hire a car and get around to likely habitats.

Most of the plants I saw were growing just behind the hotel and there was a good variety in the garden. Much favoured in gardens were Aloes and in particular *Aloe attenuata*. There were hillsides covered with *Euphorbia*

canariensis and *Euphorbia lamarkii*, ssp. *broussettii* (which is the species that grows there), but the *Aeoniums* dominated. They were spectacular growing in the walls and spreading across neglected patches which had once been gardens, also over rooftops!

Colin Walker has very kindly given his opinion on the identification of the *Aeoniums*, and unfortunately this has brought them down to only two varieties. We were not walking in the right areas to see *A. nobile* or *A. sedifolium*; I had hoped I had found *A. calderense* but Colin gave a good reason why I was wrong! One day I did see an *Aichryson*, but didn't photograph it as I thought I might find some better ones – a bad mistake! It was disappointing not to find other plants, but that was the nature of the holiday.

MS



Aeonium davidbramwellii



Aeonium davidbramwellii



Aeonium holochrysum



Dracenia draco



Euphorbia balsamifera



Aloe attenuata



Euphorbia canariense



Various plants

THE MOVE PART 2, SEPTEMBER – NOVEMBER 2013
by Martin Doorbar

Like all good movies there needs to be a sequel so having perfected moving a large collection once about 150 miles, moving it a second time only 16 must be easy right ? Well like the movies the sequels not always better. This time it was 2 into 1 just like before but the greenhouses were all a little larger, a 10 ft by 20ft and an 8ft by 12ft into one 20ft by 50ft greenhouse.

I think I wrote last time the best thing I decided to do was to hire a load of large plastic crates and a large van to do it all in one go. Well this second time I did neither of those despite my own words of wisdom ! Instead as I was paying for this myself as opposed to a work funded relocation I did it on the cheap. As I already had about 10 of the black plastic plant crates as used by the nursery trade I decided to just buy a few more of those (about £50 vs rental of around £500) and move them myself in our SUV car as it was ONLY 16 miles (thinking a few round trips and the diesel cost vs about £200 for a van will work out ok).

I was just about to start the move when a local friend offered us their works minivan at weekends as its not used then, this was a godsend in the end as if I had gone down the one car at a time road I think I would still be moving them now. The van was just the right size as all my plant crates stacked up in the back and just about filled it and filling them with plants and unloading one load took about 6 hours' work. Well after 2 trips I had made very little impact on the greenhouse and decided and I needed more help. So the following weekend I had reinforcements from John Watmough and his car as well as the van. This got the bulk of the remaining collection moved needing only one more trip by myself a few weeks later to finish it. Unfortunately in the intervening couple of weeks I had a back problem (not sure if the plant moving was the cause) which put me out of action for about a month and unable to drive for the best part of 3 weeks interrupting not just the plant move but forcing me to cancel two talks to BCSS branches I was due to give during that period (sorry again to the folks affected by that!).

So it was into mid November 2013 that all the plants were finally in the new greenhouse and all ready for the impending winter weather with heating systems working and insulation in place, which was lucky as just over a week later we had the first frost. The resulting winter of 2013-14 was of course very mild from a temperature view but was very wet and windy to which I am glad to say the new greenhouse bore very well.



So whats the conclusions this time around having erected my 5th greenhouse and completed my second significant move of a large collection?

Well from the greenhouse side no matter how well you plan it and think you have thought of everything there will always be something you wish you had done different. For me this time around it was the insulation I put into the floor. I had not appreciated how high the local water table was which combined by not listening closely to the local builder who did the base work and the very high level of rain this past winter has resulted in the insulation layer in the floor being too far down under the hard-core stones and effectively under water all winter (the time you want it to act as a thermal barrier its in effect useless due to the water above it), the plant move just re affirmed what I already knew, get some help and move them in study crates to protect the plants (and people!) and a good sized vehicle to minimise round trips. The actual distance of the move is not that relevant in some ways as the majority of the work involved is in the packing and unpacking of all the plants and crates into and out of the vehicle which is the same if its 2 miles or 200 !

Oddly a similar end result has occurred to that of the last relocation of the collection, I was expecting plenty of space around the plants with acres of empty benches but no! Having increased the available space 5 fold (200 sq ft to 1000 sq ft) even accounting for the tomatoes at the end this summer why is it looking full already!

So I am sure a 20ft extension will fit in as soon as I can remove the kids play frame! so be warned the greenhouse is never big enough !

THE AUCTION OF RENÉ GEISSLER'S PLANTS BY OXFORD BRANCH

Photographs by David Greenaway

