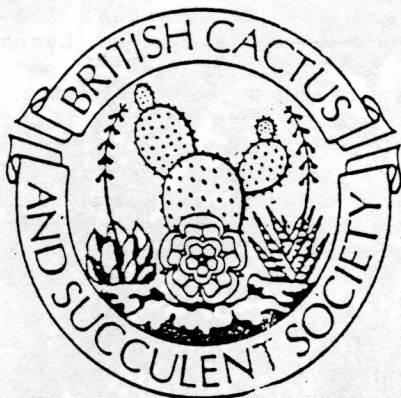


**Manchester  
Branch**



NEWSLETTER

JULY 1988

Editor...Peter Schofield

*Profuse apologies to any readers who may have suffered injury as a result of the regrettable inversion of last month's centre spread. This tends to happen as a result of printing it an hour before the meeting - up to the minute, but upside down! At least one enterprising member has a copy with all pages the same way up - this is not a valuable and unique misprint, but a sneaky and fraudulent photocopy. Surprisingly, no-one has yet pointed out the other "deliberate mistake": the combined weight of your treasurer and editor is not 102 kg. Anyone believing that will believe anything. It should have read 202 kg ! It is steadily diminishing.*

After consulting our list of addresses for not-too-distant Branches, we wrote away for some Annual Show dates. In the letter we received from Joan Taylor of Lytham Branch was a show schedule. "It's not too far away", we thought, "let's enter some of the Open classes". On Saturday, June 11th at 8 a.m. we set off, car loaded with plants. Staging was between 9.45 and 10.30 in Lowther Gardens Pavilion; it is a lovely setting, in the Gardens themselves facing the sea, a medium sized hall with a high ceiling. We made ourselves known to Mrs. Taylor, a nice lady who seems to spend most of her time in a wheelchair. We were made to feel very welcome by everyone and were given coffee almost as soon as we arrived.

After staging our plants we went for a walk with Gladys and Charlie Brunt (Charlie grows his plants in a tiny lean-to), a lovely couple who took us to a small cafe where we all ate fish & chips and home-made apple pie. They had to get back to the pavilion to take up their duties, so Jim and I went to look around Lytham and sit in the park. Later we went back to the show to see how we had fared, and were very pleased to see prize cards against nine of our entries. About 4.30 p.m. we started to pack up the car with our exhibits, plus some plants bought from Norman Wilbraham; with the grand total of £2.50 in our pocket we said our gook-byes to a really great bunch of people. If you are ever thinking of entering a show - don't just think about it: *do it!*

SALES - A REMINDER. Not all members may be certain of the arrangements for selling plants at meetings. Any member is welcome to bring plants for sale on the understanding that 10% of income is donated to the Society. This is entirely on a basis of mutual trust - some of you pay on the night, others leave it, say, until the end of a season. Do make use of the facility, now we have an increased regular membership to buy them.

### NEXT MONTH . . . . .

The speaker - Graham Charles... the subject - Miniature Plants  
 The Table Show - Lobivia/Echinopsis and Succulents other than  
 Echeveria, Pachyphytum, Crassula, Gasteria, Euphorbia,  
 Mesembs, Aloe, Haworthia or Caudiciforms (pew)

Saturday 13th August 7.00 for 7.30  
 Sutherland High School Heywood

## OUT & ABOUT

Not a lot to report this month - not been out or about much. Passing through Gordon Rigg's at Walsden yesterday we noticed a washing up bowl occupied by *Helianthocereus Vatter*: an 18-inch clump with 27 heads, generally lots of healthy new growth, but a little scarring on older stems. Asking price was £52, which seemed uppish. Interesting to wonder where it came from. Otherwise everything was as usual. Some members may wish to know that 25kg. bags of granite chippings for top-dressing,  $\frac{1}{2}$ " or  $\frac{3}{4}$ ", cost 90p there (+ VAT), which is a sight cheaper than at many garden centres. 75 litres of Levington sells for £5.22.

In the greenhouse we were delighted to see this week the first flowering of a small *Borzicactus aureispinus*: one single, delicate salmon pink bloom. We have been puzzled over recent years to watch one of the *Mammillaria magnimamma*; a few years ago it appeared to be developing a small patch of dense wool. This has gradually developed into a sizeable clump of - presumably - monstrose growth not unlike the *M. gracilis* sport which Brian Bates showed at the last meeting with its double ration of spines per areole. It is steadily taking over one side of the plant completely.

Whilst talking about oddments of the collection, and in the absence of anything better to discuss, let's make it a question corner. In the Oak Dene sale a couple of years ago we picked up what has grown into a very normal looking *M. Bocasana* but with one difference - its flowers are a clear pale yellow. Is this within the normal colour range of *bocasana* (we already have *f. rubra* with magenta flowers), or is it a different animal entirely? Conversely a plant obtained from Cruck Cottage as *M. guelzowiana* disappointed us greatly when it flowered - it was manifestly a common or garden *bocasana*! I believe we could now sue them: wouldn't actually dream of it, but perhaps we all ought to watch our labels - better no label or one with a "?" rather than an aggrieved customer. Lastly for this month, we have an *Astrophytum myriostigma* which must have been damaged at some time; it is now offsetting enthusiastically. This is not something we've noticed before; is it a common event?

Complete change of subject: one of my former colleagues has now gone to teach for a couple of years in Zimbabwe. to be precise in Chimanimani (no, I don't know either). I'm due to write to her soon and it occurred to me to wonder whether she and her students could be usefully occupied in collecting seed of anything. I know the schools there are desperately hard up; I wouldn't suggest anything on the Alfred Lau scale - he is surely unique - but perhaps there is a useful idea in there somewhere. Let me know if you have any suggestions or if you would be interested in buying seed.

## IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

The June meeting was in the capable hands of Harold, the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Secretary all being otherwise occupied. So too were other members, attendance being down to around 34. Harold took the opportunity to express to Mavis the "official" thanks of the Society for all her years as Treasurer.

Speaker was Brian Bates, describing in slides his visit to Zurich & Heidelberg as part of a European tour in spring of 1986. It emerged halfway through that his mode of transport had been by cycle; I'm surprised he's back yet! It was a comparatively low-key presentation of a selection of highlights; the problem with tours like this is, surely, the difficulty of spending enough time in any one place to gain a clear picture of its total context.

Zurich has a municipal botanical collection, owned and financed by the City. This may be why it closes for three hours over lunch! The half-dozen gardeners seem to see it just as another job. Plants obviously arrive in enormous numbers from donors, and remain as received in the absence of the time to process them. Some, for example, have been grafted for no apparent reason and remain so. Labels are often dubious, as with "Sulco HS50 1984" on a very evident lobivia. Most of the cactus are grown in cold frames - sixteen of them, each around 40 ft. by 4-5 ft. - which are opened every morning, although some newly collected plants are to be found in glass cases within greenhouses. Almost all are in clay pots. Apparently the Curator is willing to exchange plants, which is encouraging for a municipal operation. Many of the plants have HS collection numbers, evidence of the habitat-stripping activities of Swoboda as he brought literally thousands of plants back from Bolivia.

The speaker concentrated on the cacti at Zurich, and dwelt particularly on his speciality, the Sulcorebutias. He showed us *mentosa*, which "grows like dandelions" in the wild, a "re-discovered" *pulchra* HS78 with genuine magenta flowers (unlike the red cultivated forms), a large healthy cluster of *steinbachii* - a Rausch plant - a red-flowered *alba* and many others. he commented on the extremes whereby the "splitters" assign a new species to every hilltop whilst the "clumpers" reduce the whole genus to only seven species. There were various Lobivias: the very yellow flowers of *aureae*, red-flowered *longispina*, *pseudocajensis*, *sanguineflora*. Serried ranks of *Gymnocalycium* included pale yellow *andreae* and red *goldiana*. Among *Echinocereus* were the dark-throated magenta flowers of *melanocentra*. *Opuntia pentlandi* showed its yellow blooms; high light intensities and cold winters may well help in flowering such as these. A couple of rebutias were real show specimens - a 12" cluster of *R. costata* and an aptly named *R. prolifera*. *Arrajadoa aureispina* had 7 or 8 pink flowers, there were three attractive *matucanas*, and some *cleistocactus* were flowering at a surprisingly small size



Arriving (sodden) at the University Botanic Garden at Heidelberg, Brian attached himself mainly to the other succulents; he couldn't find the sulcos anyway!. This meant, in practice, a steady procession of entirely different plants all claiming to be euphorbias. There was *abdelkuri* used as grafting stock, the large caudex of *decidua*, *pachypodioides* reaching to the roof, a clump of *fruticosa* going cristate in the middle, and many many more. There were here evidences of much more purposeful activity; in particular there was active propagation with grafted 'mother' plants for seed production. All the pots here seem to be plastic. Not everything was a euphorbia: a good selection of monadeniums included *canarii*, issued as I.S.I.1985, *reflexum* and *spinescens* labelled "Huntingdon Bot.Gdns. \$17.50" A *Portulacara afra* had reached gigantic proportions, *Dideria madagascarensis* was clambering across the roof, and the caudiciform *Oxalis carnosa* trailed its yellow flowers all over.

To finish off, Brian showed some slides of an expedition by car, with three Yorkshire members, in which they covered 2500 miles and visited 20 Swiss/Austrian collections in one week with the aid of Swiss guides. Memories were of idyllic settings, almost embarrassing hospitality, Helmut Nider's 6000 echinopsis seedlings set up to study variation, and everyone's custom-built greenhouses and sheltered outside areas. Apparently there are no decent pots in Austria - they all come over here for BEF pots. Or at least they used to. There are in that area quite a number of highly specialist collectors - thelocactus, sulcos, gymnos, copiapoa to name a few.

With that, Brian closed and set off back across the Pennines. Not, we hope, on his bike.

SALFORD SHOW

SALFORD SHOW

AUGUST 20th/21st 1988

BUILE HILL HIGH SCHOOL, SALFORD

The Big One! This is the event for making money, for making contacts and for making new members. It's two days of hard work manning the display, the sales stalls and the Tombola. It can also get very lonely! If you can possibly spare an hour or two on either day it will give someone else the chance to relax and get refreshment, or it will enable someone to spend longer talking to a prospective member. Some of us have organised our holidays round this weekend - come and lend your support. Please also remember that we need as many TOMBOLA PRIZES as possible; the more we can scrounge, the less we have to buy. Bring them to the August meeting if possible. Thanks!

*Some members support Alfred Lau's remarkable work among Mexican native children by subscribing in response to a regular letter. We take the liberty of reproducing much of the latest one: because of its intrinsic interest, but also to convey its "flavour" and encourage others to subscribe.*

Alfred E. Lau  
Apartado 98  
Cordoba, Ver. 94500  
MEXICO

June 1988

Dear Cactus and Succulent Friends,

It is always a moment of suspension when on a certain day a newly discovered plant unfolds its petals in mid-morning, and months, maybe even years of speculation are converted into facts, and yet, when visiting botanical student Jonas Luetthy from Solothurn, Switzerland, now working on his doctor's thesis, burst into a remote corner of the garden, announcing that the tiny jewel from the Atacama desert was finally in full bloom, there was a rush into the greenhouse, only to be even more puzzled. We all had taken it as a fact that this plant which I found 20 years ago but collected only after the IOS Congress in Salta, Argentina in 1986, would be a *Neochilenia*. The naked tube, however, discarded beyond doubt that we had to think of another genus. Mrs. Adriana Hoffmann of the University of Santiago de Chile, whom I sent to the habitat to get her own opinion, suggested Islaya. However, the fruit which will be ripe in a few days, is oval shaped and dark olive-brown, much too far protruding from the convergence to suggest another little sensation like *Copiapoa laui*. Still, this genus would be closest to any suggestion, as *Horridocactus* has to be discarded. A new genus? Only the seed under the electronic microscope will give the definite answer. It is a very beautiful plant, covered with white wool, but there are differences of the size of the flower. Otherwise it is yellowish-green with reddish-tipped and curved sepals.

And another puzzle drew our attention. Never having been at the Sierra Obscura during the time of flowering, I collected years ago *Echinocereus scheeri*-like plants which resulted to be clones of various colours. One is of a unique reddish to purple, very different from the original *E. scheeri*. When once many years ago we arrived in the beginning of July, we saw a late bloomer with a large flower, but of a yellow center and light-red petals, simply a beautiful colour-combination. This last one I had planned to publish this year under the name of *Echinocereus scheeri* v. *obscuriensis*. I am very grateful to Dr. Frank in Germany who told me about a very important observation. The flowers stay open all day like those of *Echinocereus salm-dyckianus*. Again comparing the plants, I was struck by another similarity, and this is that the stems are shorter, rounder and thicker, just like many *E. salm-dyckianus* forms. As soon as I shall have the photos of the seeds under magnification, I will come to my conclusion and describe the plant, which has borne my collection number of L 091. Then, as one by one of the Sierra Obscura material blossomed, one clone had large, purple flowers, something that we would have never expected on a *scheeri* body. There is, of course, a very remote chance that during a strong south wind the label flew away and one of the boys stuck it to the wrong plant. The only real way to find out would be to give the sacrifice and visit the Sierra Obscura of Chihuahua in April next year. The body looks exactly like *E. scheeri*, as you gather from the enclosed photo. Any comments?



When Marciano brought me an *Echinocereus* from the mountains close to his home, we were wondering what this could be, although from the beginning my guess was *E. salm-dyckianus*. It was proved

when during Easter week, visiting Marciano's home and area, we took photos of a blooming plant. So this question has been settled. What is then *Echinocereus nicholensis*? The Sierra Huichol is as large as Great Britain, with myriads of canyons and cliffs. It would take a life-time to explore the whole region, especially because of the absence of roads. According to the original description, it is a very small plant, the stems pencil-thick. It could have been just one plant which was still in juvenile stage. There has never been a description of the flower. I will continue to search. According to what we know it is definitely not *Echinocereus spinigemmatu*s. These are large plants with thick stems and long spines.

One of the new lads is Mazateco Indian Benito. I found him fishing in Temascal Lake in Oaxaca, full of scabies, scratching violently and the whole body bleeding. We gave him medication, also for lice and intestinal disease. He looks like a new boy, but he also developed a very important gift to spot new plants. In May he collected many seeds, but he also found not far from Marciano's home a new *Mammillaria*, later a new *Tillandsia* in a remote region of the lowland of Durango. To top it all, he saw in a high jungle tree in Oaxaca a *Vriesea* which we had never expected in Mexico, with large yellow flowers and red bracts. Alfred jr, the expert in Bromeliads, sent a specimen immediately to California for identification. In January I collected seeds of rare palms for friends in Thailand. This was in Belize, formerly British Honduras. During the search close to the Guatemalan border I came to know a Mayan family that was most helpful and intelligent to help me find jungle plants, also some extraordinary orchids. They were desperately poor, and I brought father and son Marcelo to our home in Fortín de las Flores. The father has since returned, and we try to get the boy enrolled in the Mexican School curriculum as he speaks English, Spanish, Mopan and Quechi, the latter Mayan dialects. Thank you again for remembering us through the instrumentality of Tony Holloway. ~~\_\_\_\_\_~~ sends us the donations. Yours sincerely,

## ROUND THE SOCIETIES

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- WIGAN.... Weds. 13th July, 7.15 for 7.45, Independent Methodist Church, Stopford St., Higher Ince: Tom Jenkins on "*Cacti at Jummanery*"; Table show - any cactus. Contact John Harrison on 0942 218465
- PRESTON... Thursday, 4th August, 7.00 for 7.30, St. Andrews Church Hall, Blackpool Rd., Preston: Jim Bolton, "*Cactus cultivation for everyone*"; contact Jean Kendall on 077 478 2957
- HESWALL... Monday, 25th July: visit to 20 Beta Close, New Ferry, with *Plant Auction*; contact P. Robson on 0244 537393
- WARRINGTON... Wednesday, 13th July: visit to John Henshaw's nursery; Wednesday, 10th August, 7.30 for 8.00, Meeting Lane Leisure Centre, Penketh: Mr. P. Slade of York, "*They don't have to be rare*"; contact Barbara Beesley on 051-424 9432.
- EAST CHESHIRE... Monday, 11th July, 7.30 for 8.00, Wilmslow Public Library: "*Meet the Show Plants*" Monday, 8th August: David Rushforth on "*New Mexico '83*"; Table show - Melocactus, Cotyledon contact Barbara McKnight on 061-431 8148
- BOLTON... Tuesday, 12th July, 7.00 for 7.30, Bolton Town Hall: Tom Jenkins on "*Cactus Brazil '77*"; Table show - *Astrophytum/Gymnocalycium*, *Agave/Aloe* Tuesday, 9th August: Geoff Bailey on "*South American Cacti*"; Table show - (?) *Parodia/Notocactus*, *Euphorbia*; contact Philip Barker on 0942 56440

ON SHOW \_\_\_\_\_ ON SHOW

A reminder of the shows which are in the offing;  
please give whatever support you can

Sunday July 10th - E. CHESHIRE - Wilmslow Show

Saturday July 16th - LEEDS - Centenary House

And various others further afield - if you're on holiday, look up the Journal to find any shows or meetings which are within striking distance

ON SHOW \_\_\_\_\_ ON SHOW