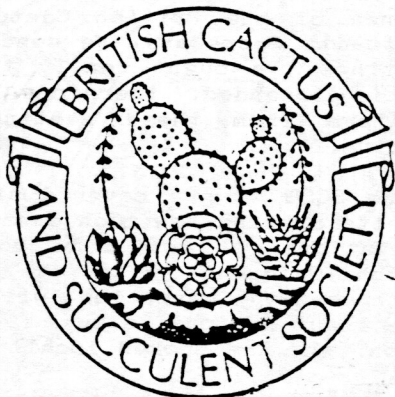


**Manchester  
Branch**



NEWSLETTER

DECEMBER 1988

Editor...Peter Schofield

One year gone! This is issue no.12 of the Newsletter. It hasn't got much better, but it isn't any worse either. Any real improvements will need more contributions (I'm sure I remember Les Percy mentioning that a couple of years ago) and better software for presenting it. Give it time - we're still young! Newsletter apart, it's been a good year. New premises have brought better attendances, much more comfort, and a greater willingness to part with money. A good programme has kept members with us. The coach trip was almost a disaster, but survived in the end. Salford show was a bit of a "curate's egg", but Middleton did us proud. A lot of plants have passed through our hands (leaving occasional scars!), not least the large collection bought & sold in record time. Thanks are most definitely owed to everyone who has supported the Branch, and especially to Geoff & Peter for organising the meetings, Brian the Books, Harry the Raffle, Betty the Urn, John the Showman, Judith the Cashbag (Ouch! - sorry, it wasn't meant to come out like that), Harold the Pots and...and...and. Please remember how much time some people give, and be ready to offer your help as well.

## ATTENTION: FROM THE EXECUTIVE

We are a branch of the British Cactus & Succulent Society; Geoff Bailey is its Secretary. We send representatives to its Executive meetings. We ought really to know more about what goes on. It is intended, therefore, to draw attention to significant items from these meetings, starting with the October Executive.

....Through the BCSS we are covered at meetings and shows up to £500 000 - its amazing how much damage a cactus can do.

....The 1989 National show will be on August 19th at Exeter Hall, Kidlington, Oxford

....A 1990 three-day Convention will be held at Reading University ( without National show )

....Mike Walton, who has spoken locally, has received an Award of Merit

....There is now a Highlands & Islands Branch

....Some progress is being made with the D.of E. concerning detail of regulations governing plant imports.

....The question has been floated as to whether BCSS should become actively involved in conservation through reference Collections and micro-propagation techniques.

....Total BCSS Membership is around 5100, fractionally down on 1987

....Subscription rates are unchanged for 1989, but likely to go up to £8 for 1990. More Covenants would help

....Postal strikes had caused problems with recent Journals; in addition, the Editor had to invent seven pages of copy to fill up spaces - we think we have problems !

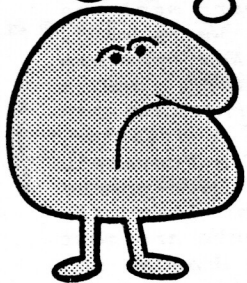
....Peter Bint was one of three members elected to the Shows committee.

### COVENANTING

Less than 30% of BCSS members covenant their subscription. This is throwing away several thousands of pounds a year. All you have to do is to sign a form confirming your intention to pay your sub. for at least four years. It doesn't cost a penny more. If you later decide to cancel your membership there are no problems. There is literally *no more for you to do* than sign the form - the Society does the rest. *Please sign the covenant form when it comes in your newsletter - it's a free-to-you gift to the Society of another pound or two ( assuming you are a tax-payer; if not, don't bother!)*



Grumble  
Grumble



**SUBSCRIPTIONS** Don't forget your BCSS sub., and then find that no more Journals arrive. It's due now. You  
**ARE NOW** can pay cash or cheque direct to BCSS Manchester Branch and the Treasurer will forward a composite payment. If you don't pay a sub., you  
**DUE** are to some extent riding on the back of other members - please pay in January if not before.

PART OF THE  
COLLECTION AT  
ALEXANDRA PARK,  
MANCHESTER



*Manchester Guardian*

FOND MEMORIES...found this in "Cactus & Succulent Plants"  
by H.M.Roan (Kaye, 1956), showing the  
long-lost cactus house at Alexandra Park.  
The contents were moved to Wythenshawe  
Park and the buildings demolished - when ?

#### SALFORD SHOW PROBLEMS

There may not be a Salford show in 1989; certainly it is unlikely to be at the High School. Following the loss of key personnel and increased reluctance by the school to accept the chaos caused, the future of the event is in jeopardy. We need this event as a source of income, so we need your suggestions as to where - and in conjunction with whom - we can hold next summer's show + tombola. It needs to be an indoor venue large enough and likely to attract people

SALES CORNER: Harold has old NCSS ties (£1.50), badges (30p) and stickers (10p); Geoff has new BCSS badges; Philip has spare calendars

MAY WE WISH TO ALL MEMBERS  
AND TO THEIR FAMILIES  
A VERY HAPPY CHRISTMAS AND  
A RICH & FRUITFUL NEW YEAR

## IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

In November we were happy to welcome David Rushforth, standing in for Sonia Barker-Fricker who will visit us in 1989 instead. This was another travelogue, interspersed with a variety of interesting and helpful tips and snippets. The area was Mexico, and the date April - May 1988. The vehicle was Dave Ellis's truck - a brand new Chevrolet for only £10,000 with petrol at 50p a gallon ! The trip started with a 1200 mile drive down to West Texas to meet Steven Brack flying in, noting the very attractive verges filled with wild flowers, often maintained by local organisations. Around the airport in dry limestone were clusters of *Epiphilantha micromeris*, with *ancistrocactus*, *coryphantha*, *Echinocereus pectinatus* and widespread *Echinomastus warnockii*. This last, apparently, thrives in a mixture of sand and gravel with occasional fertiliser. Mention of cuttings provided an opportunity to pass on a tip - high cuttings with much soft tissue root much more easily than the more usual basal cut.

Travelling into the east of Mexico they came across *Fouquieria splendens* in flower - worth trying from seed, flowers at 6"; these are humming-bird pollinated and the seed splits and blows away on the day of ripening. The dates had been chosen to get more plants in flower - in some cases it's the only way to find the plants at all, so well concealed are they. Mind you, they have to be well hidden with guys like these around.

Mind you, it wasn't all one-way traffic: the local market vegetables struck back and left most of the party suffering from "Montezuma's Revenge"! To put it in proportion, only the American members were allowed to take plants out of Mexico, to a maximum of twelve each, with unrestricted cuttings, and in some areas there seemed to be quite extensive regeneration of the native species.

So what else did they actually see ? *Yuccas* with huge flower heads, cut and eaten in salads; *Echinocactus ingens* used for target practice by native marksmen; fields of *opuntia* being grown for their fruit. Very shallow rooted *astrophytums*, suggesting that they might be better cultivated in shallow pans. Extensive clusters of *lophophora*, looking like multi-headed plants but proving to be masses of separate seedlings; like many others these were largely submerged and revealed by their flowers

The tour was concentrated on the Sierra Madre Oriental, down beyond Zaragoza, west to Zacatecas and then north again. Many ariocarpus were photographed; those round San Roberto seemed completely undisturbed since last visited in 1982. *A. agavoides* was one being sought, but was not found because not in flower; further confusion was caused by a number of sheep droppings which seemed to have evolved the art of mimicry! *Stenocactus* included *S. multicostatus* with over a hundred ribs, *S. sulphureus* (of which a cutting has since produced bright yellow flowers) and *S. crispatus* with pink flowers, well disguised among limestone chippings. Fissures in the limestone pavement also held many tiny turbinicarpus - very grey with long roots. In particular the rare *T. pseudopectinatus* was found atop a hill near Zaragoza. *Thelocactus nidulans* and *T. conothele* both showed a wide variation in flower colour in any one spot; surprisingly, colour is one of the least stable of plant characteristics and very susceptible to rapid change. *T. tulensis* had white flowers and very long spines.

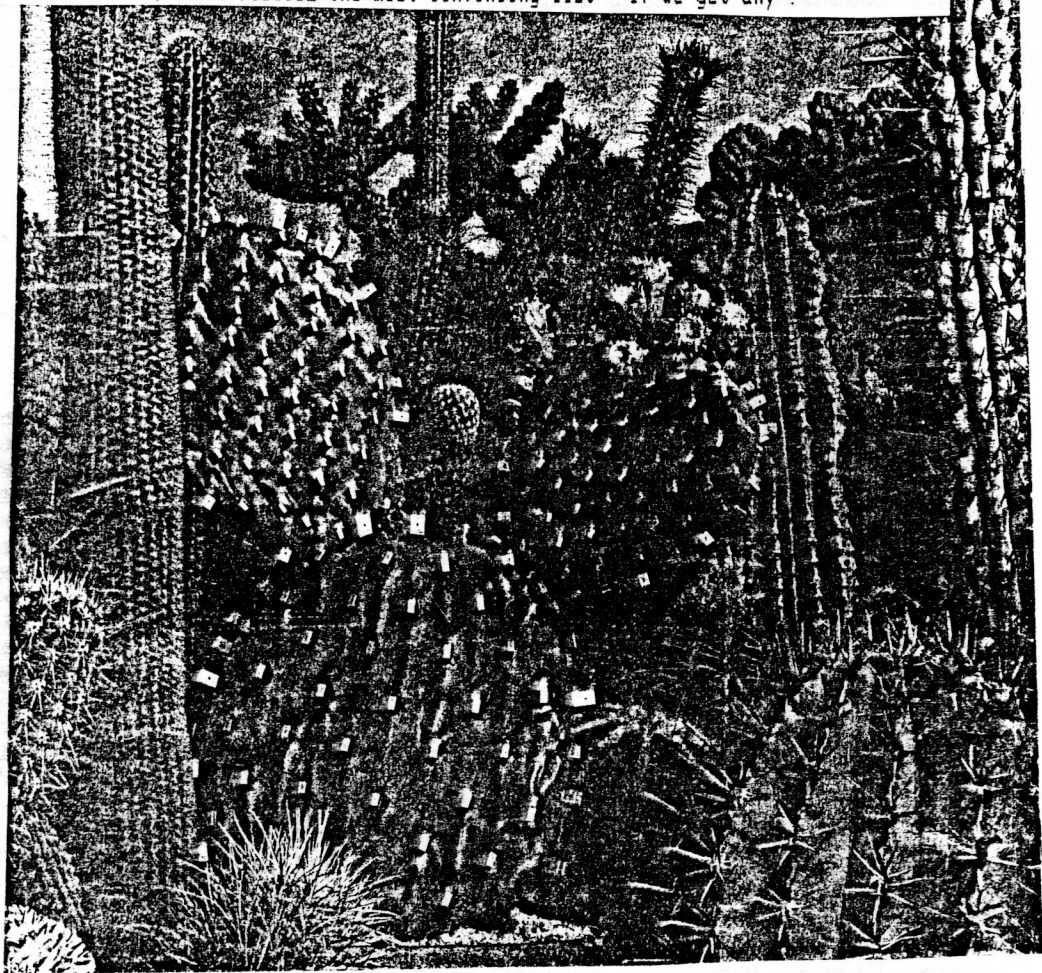
Stand by for mammillaria fix! *M. candida* was in flower as was *M. nana* (yellow); there were 1" *M. unihamata* in a grassy meadow; *M. magnimamma* looked very impressive and there was a clump of *M. microthele*. *M. sinistrohamata* and *M. denudata* were seen on the drive north. Very few *M. bocasana* remained in habitat near the type location at Bocas - it must be the only place where they are rare. A thousand foot climb revealed *M. zacatecasensis* in clefts next to *Steno. zacatecasensis*. We were advised that all the white-spined mamms. are then potted in a limey soil at about pH 8; their heavy spination persists when re-established.

Changing the genus, red-spined *fero. stainesii* made an attractive contrast with the green of *Agave stricta*, with the pure white spines of *O. tunicata* not far away. Other agaves were seen surrounding dasylirion with massive bases. A wide range of opuntias were to be seen, apart from the cultivated ones, including *O. imbricata* with purple flowers and orange-flowered *O. stenopetalla* prostrate and very attractive. *Echinocactus horizontalis* was illustrated; this was recently found growing by Albuquerque, over a thousand miles north of its southernmost limit. It is apparently very difficult to re-establish; Peter B. has one which receives "a smell of water twice a year". Another plant well established in habitat was *Pelecyphora asseliformis* - seen in hundreds, seeding itself happily from magenta flowers.

So, what else can be mentioned? *Myrtillocactus geometrizans* with tiny white flowers - and edible fruit sold at the roadsides. Lots of yellow-spined *coryphantha*, much less inclined than cultivated specimens to exude sugary sap and develop sooty moulds. *Ancistrocactus crassihamatus*, very impressive indeed - slow from seed but most attractive, spines initially yellow with red tips. And lots more in an enjoyable and massively informative evening.

## CACTUS CAN DAMAGE YOUR HEALTH ?

You must all have seen it on the back of Sunday supplements and on hoardings across the nation. But where and how was it filmed, and who would care to list the species present, We'll try to find out the answer to the former - you try the latter. We'll publish the most convincing list - if we get any !



NOW'S YOUR CHANCE...we'd like a members' evening for the 1989 A.G.M.; some of our members most have slides which would not make up a full talk, but which if put together could give us all a good evening and allow their owners to offer a series of short presentations. Give it a thought during the year as you are taking more shots.

*THANKS for the cartoon and cutting opposite, Betty Hinton supplied the cartoon - apparently it's been around a while, origin unknown, The D.T. item came from Annette, having been noticed by several members,*



"So this is what you really get up to in here"

THE DAILY TELEGRAPH, FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 1988

## Blooming shame for coy cactus

By Colin Wright

A GIANT succulent plant weighing five tons survived a world war and 50 British winters only to be run over by a council driver as it was about to flower for the one and only time in its life.

The first creamy yellow petals on the 25ft stem of *Agave Americana* were beginning to emerge when the plant was cut down in its prime by a reversing van at Sheffield City Council's Norton Nurseries.

Gardeners who affectionately knew it as the "cork plant", because they put bottle corks on its sharp spikes to prevent it pricking them, were in mourning for the specimen they had tended with loving care.

Mr Ian Rodgers, nursery manager, said: "When I went out for dinner it was standing at the side of the greenhouse in the sunshine and when I came back the stem had been smashed to bits.

"The lads in the nursery were really upset. When the stem came up in the middle of the plant we knew it was going to flower and everyone was looking forward to it.

"It is a plant that flowers only once in its lifetime and there is no chance of this one flowering now that the stem has been destroyed. Over the years I kept thinking that the weather would get it but it never did. It took one of our drivers to do that."

A spokesman at Kew Gardens said last night that the giant *Agave*, regarded by the uninitiated as a cactus, was known as the century plant because legend had it that it flowered once in every 100 years.

He said the species found the British climate harsh. At home in South America it sometimes flowered every 15 years.

"Once one of these plants flowers when it is kept in this country it never flowers again. When they have flowered at Kew in the past they have had to take a pane out of the top of the glasshouse

## ROUND THE SOCIETIES

EAST CHESHIRE...Monday, 12th Dec., 7.30 for 8.00, Wilmslow  
Public Library: Members' Night; contact Barbara  
McKnight on 061-431 8148  
.....Monday 9th January: A.G.M. & slide show

HESWALL...Monday, 12th Dec., 7.30 for 7.45,  
49 Grove Road, Heswall: A.G.M. &  
Hot Pot supper; contact P. Robson  
on 0244 537393

BOLTON...Tuesday, 13th December, 7.00 for 7.30  
Bolton Town Hall: Harold Gaulton,  
"Travels in the U.S.A."; Table Show -  
winter-growing species, e.g. conophytum;  
contact Philip Barker on 0942 56440  
....Tuesday, 10th January: A.G.M.

WIGAN....Weds. 14th Dec., 7.15 for 7.45,  
Independent Methodist Church, Stopford  
St., Higher Ince: A.G.M. & Social;  
Contact John Harrison on 0942 218465

WARRINGTON...Wednesday, 14th Dec., 7.30 for 8.00,  
Meeting Lane Leisure Centre, Penketh:  
A.G.M. & social evening; contact Barbara  
Beesley on 051-424 9432  
....next meeting Weds. 11th Jan.

PRESTON...Thursdays, 7.00 for 7.30, St. Andrews Church  
Hall, Blackpool Rd., Preston: Details not yet  
available; contact Jean Kendall on 077 478 2957



NEXT MONTH. . . . .

FROM EAST TO WEST \_ THE TIME OF MY LIFE

The President: Mr. Harold Gaulton

Saturday 14th January 1989 7.00 for 7.30  
Sutherland High School Heywood  
Community Centre