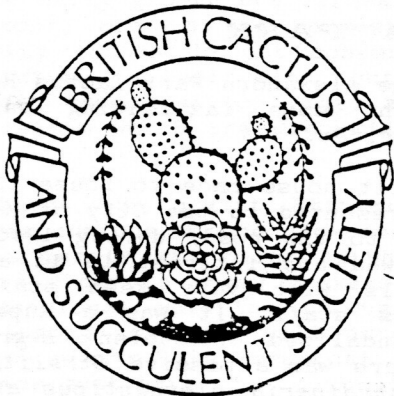


**Manchester
Branch**



NEWSLETTER

JAN/FEB 1983

Editor...Peter Schofield

This is fine start to the new year. Members clamouring at the Library stand, bursting into tears, beating their breasts, threatening mass suicides, putting unused tenpences back into their pockets. And why? No newsletter. The January edition was lost with all hands when the editorial wordy processor went sick at a vital stage in the proceedings. Extreme apologies! To be strictly honest, I'm not sure if anyone really noticed; the Branch still seems to be intact.

Things are coming to life. A small Reichsteinaria from Brookside suddenly sprouted stem, leaves and a couple of red bell-flowers while we weren't looking a week ago. A chocolate spined M.elongata now has a crop of pale lemon flowers. A hybrid Kalanchoe "Wendy" thinks it's time to perform - and another season begins.

ALEXANDRA PARK

Our picture of the Alexandra Park Cactus House in the December newsletter brought some fascinating snippets from Harold Gaulton. Harold writes:

" The purpose-built house made to house the Darrah collection which had been presented to the City of Manchester was in the park, very close to the road, during 1946 - 1968. Manchester Branch never showed any interest in it and gave no support; there were spells with very keen staff and spells with couldn't-care-less staff. It was a super collection which gradually got vandalised or stolen. *E.grusonii* had initials carved on it. There was a massive *Strelitzia reginae* (Bird of Paradise), a *Testudinaria elephantipes* about 3ft. across, a good reference collection of *Echeverias* in lovely condition. In later years some of the plants were moved to a new aluminium greenhouse further away from the road; plants were very sparse in there, arranged like rows of soldiers. The only good looking specimen was a large Agave with light silver-grey leaves. After a few years they were moved again to Wythenshawe"

26 December 1945: First excursion of the National Society was when "15 members & friends visited the Darrah Collection at Alexandra Park"

February 1946: Mr. T. Cheek, Superintendent of Alexandra Park, gave a talk to the Bradford Branch "Some experiences as guardian of a Municipal Cactus House"

June 1946: Volume 1 No.2 of the Yorkshire Cactus Journal (fore-runner of the N.C.S.S. itself) - article by Harry Hall, Curator of the Succulent House:

"Manchester has had a collection of cacti and other succulents for some 40 years. From records, miscellaneous references in horticultural papers and photographs in the catalogue, the collection includes some of the finest and rarest species ever to be imported into the British Isles.

Forty years of atmospheric pollution, an ever-growing city which gradually surrounded the Park, and a climate which has often been the subject of coarse jokes, have taken their toll and inevitably the finest and most rare plants no longer survive to interest visitors or students.

The former owner specialised mainly in the cacti, other succulents being less well represented. During the intervening years more and more species of other succulents like *Euphorbias*, *Aloes* and *Mesembryanthemums* found their way here and now the collection comprises over a thousand different kinds, a comprehensive mixture of most forms of semi-desert plant life

At the time of writing, mid-March, the only members of the cacti showing signs of early growth are Pereskias which, being more tropical than most, are in the warmest house. To the uninitiated these spiny bushes do not conform to the usual standards they may picture in their mind, but their rosy red flowers establish their true position. They are beginning to produce their green leaves which are discarded in the autumn with us.

In the same compartment the quaint Rhipsalis species are beginning to open their curious minute flowers. These also are members of the cactus family and being epiphytes, like many ferns and orchids, are grown in mossy baskets or on old tree trunks. They need occasional watering throughout the winter and benefit from syringing for they will not endure the dry winter conditions which plants like Ferocacti, Mammillaria and the succulent Euphorbias must have. "

It's a sad story, but I think it raises important questions. Re-read Harold's comments: "Manchester Branch never showed any interest...". Do we show any interest at all in the Wythenshawe Park collection, encourage them, offer ideas, suggest how it could educate and interest more people in the hobby? We might gain as a Branch, and make a valuable contribution to the community. Or are we only really interested in our own collections. Maybe we haven't time. How about the Haigh Hall collection (if it still survives)? It has become increasingly derelict; do Wigan Branch keep a watching brief? Should they? Does anyone keep in contact with the people at Cliffe Castle? How many more municipal collections are at the mercy of individual whim at a time of cutbacks in council budgets? As we remarked in a recent issue, Glasgow Branch are setting a fine example with their involvement in the People's Palace project. Shouldn't other branches be doing the same sort of thing? Comments would be very welcome.

A FINE EXAMPLE

This heading introduced a splendid letter in the September 1950 issue of the N.C.S.S. Journal:

I became a member of the N.C.S.S. at the beginning of this year and only wish I had known about the society before. I thoroughly enjoy Branch meetings held at the RHS hall each month and wish to enrol as many new members as possible. I have shown some of my plants to the members of my office and the head of the firm wishes to become a member of the society

Comics

The Miami Herald

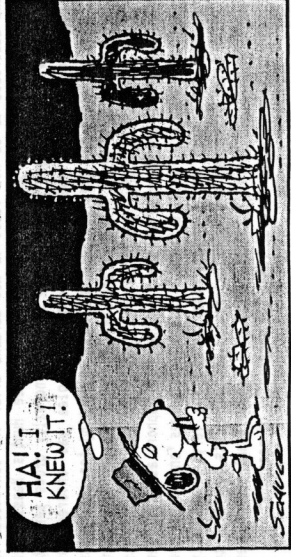
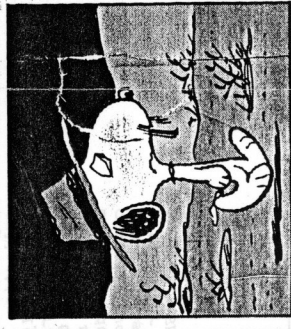
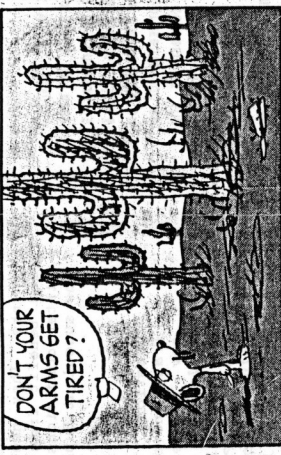


PUZZLES ON PAGE 3

SUNDAY, JUNE 7, 1987

PEANUTS®

BY CHARLES SCHULZ



THANKS TO HAROLD GALTON FOR THE ABOVE

LOOK OUT FOR...
 Safers pesticides from Phostrogen - to be introduced later this year, for the treatment of mealy bug, red spider mite etc. These are based on potassium soaps and are fully biodegradable; no harmful residues build up in the soil. Harold has received advance publicity material, but no detailed literature yet.

GET YOUR COMPOST HERE...
 Philip Barker will supply Levington Multipurpose Compost - the new white bags with geraniums on - at £3.95 (40l.) or £5.25 (80l.). Order each month for collection next month. Philip also has a large stockpile of Fowlers mealy bug brew.

IN THE SHIRT-STICKING HEAT of south Florida I joined two men on a treasure hunt. Pushing through thick mangrove, knocking down spiderwebs that made the skin crawl, we sought a prize that could be more precious than gold.

"There!" Biologist Mark Robertson pointed triumphantly at jade spires eight feet tall, thick as my forearm and bristling with spines. "Found in only four other locations in the United States," he added.

Key tree cactuses, *Cereus robinii*, they rose slim and straight from the leaf litter like exclamation points, punctuating their near extinction. "They're great!" shouted John Cook, a man experienced in real estate. "Let's go after them!"

Going after them meant finding a way to make sure the prickly plants remained undisturbed. The chances for preservation of this clump were not good. A few hundred yards back we had passed several large-earth-moving machines, poised to devour this section of coral and sand to use elsewhere as landfill.

Little studied, probably never tested for its possible benefit to mankind, the Key tree cactus could hold some herbal clue to the adaptability of plants to arid regions. We noted that it reproduced by cloning, new plants rising out of previous ones downed by wind. Perhaps its sap held a cure for victims of some dread disease. At the very least, it was an eye-catching sculpture that captivated the three of us, yet stood in danger of disappearing forever.

Preventing that was foremost in the minds of my two companions, workers in the Nature Conservancy (TNC). One of the youngest, least known, and most successful environmental groups in this country, it combines talents in biology and business to save any species or biotic community from extinction.

With the clump of rare cactus found and identified, the Conservancy might try to buy the land to establish a preserve or resell it to a federal or state agency that would protect it. If the owner would not sell, it might seek a conservation easement—a legal agreement that in exchange for tax benefits no activity would ever be undertaken there that would harm the endangered plant.



BUTTON-SIZE ROSETTES bloom on a patch of Knowlton's cactus, a plant so rare that collectors pay \$100 for a single seed. To protect it, the Conservancy will not disclose the location of its habitat.

Annette's been reading again; this time in the National Geographic Magazine, December issue. The style is different! Any ideas as to the identity of "Knowlton's Cactus" will be well received - as would a packet of seed! And what do we know about the Nature Conservancy, please?

MISTAKEN IDENTITY

The cartoon last time was not from Betty Hinton, but from Harry Ormerod. Yes, I can tell the difference without my glasses! As a penance we are publishing Harry's recipe for Elephant Stew:

1 elephant...2 rabbits...brown gravy...a great deal of salt

Cut elephant into bite sized pieces (allow about two months); add enough brown gravy to cover. Cook over an open fire untill tender. If more people are expected add the two rabbits (Only do this if necessary as many people don't like hares in their soup). Allow 8 weeks preparation and 4 weeks cooking time.

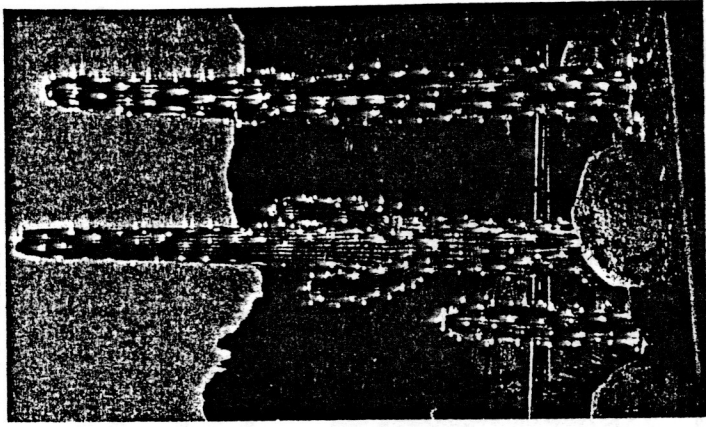
This recipe is ideal for after Christmas when everyone is fed up of cold turkey and pork.

PROBLEMS, PROBLEMS, PROBLEMS

As foreshadowed last time, the Salford Show will not take place this year. We are trying hard to find some alternative event into which we can instate ourselves in a money-making and plant-showing capacity.

Even worse, it seems possible that this years Middleton Show could be the last indoor one, following a change of management and of philosophy. The lure of the great outdoors is upon them! We are keeping a very close eye 'cause we aren't right keen on setting up the Branch Show in a marquee.

The Annual Trip is still causing problems. Our first suggestion of Brookside at their new hold premises founded when we discovered you can only reach them on a narrow donkey. We are now booked for Tom Jenkins at Jummamery, but most of the other nurseries in the area are now "mail order only". Why we know not, but we will find someone who wants us sooner or later.



Christmas in the desert, where even the cacti sprout fairy lights.

↑ ANOTHER FROM THE
WANDERING HAROLD!

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

The December meeting was, of course, the A.G.M., which may account for the slight fall in attendance. The business was completed briskly - in fact it was virtually concluded by the time your scribe arrived. The Treasurer reported a deficit over the year of £35, but pointed out that £170 of the year's expenditure had actually been incurred in the previous year. However the 1989 expenses would be higher following a Committee decision to reimburse officers who hosted meetings or gave overnight accomodation to speakers, up to £10 in either case.

Philip Barker was elected Chairman, in succession to Peter Bint whose faithful service has been invaluable and who will continue to help informally in many ways. Brian Darnell is the new Vice-Chairman. Geoff Bailey agreed to continue as Secretary, but will need considerable support because of other commitments. Jim & Annette Black have left the Committee, but not before winning the Table Show in both cactus and other succulents. Ethel Marshall received a small presentation as she retired from active tea-making. Finally, Harold expressed concern at the fall-off in pot sales; he has some 700 of each size in stock, and can't keep bringing them all to meetings!

The business complete, Philip retired full of flu; Peter Bint stood in as speaker, and described to us his visit to Kew Gardens after the Convention 18 months ago. First to the non-public areas, mainly to see Hunt's *Mammillaria* collection. We saw *M. pilcayensis* potted upside down; it normally grows pendant, and soon bends over in cultivation. A photographic plea was entered for *M. bocasana*, much neglected but very variable and worth collecting for its fruits and its many hairy forms. A newly arrived *Caralluma* adorned the top of a column, its flower scent pungent and fishy. One of several *Haworthias*, *H. planifolia*, was grown as a rounded ball and watered by spray. Among many *Euphorbias* was a new species, *E. omariana* discovered by Mike Gilbert, and *E. dideriodes* "one of the few accurately named". Some such as *E. monadenioides* were being very successfully proagated. Peter later expressed the view that Kew is not using its potential to benefit growers in general; there is concentration on a few personal preferences (e.g. *euphorbia*!), aggravated by lack of funds and especially of personnel.

we moved now into the recently opened Princess Uiana House with its ten distinct climatic zones. In the Desert Areas, aloe abounded, including *A. marlothii* and a hybrid between this and *A. daveyana*. "Golden Glow" was a cultivar of *A. ferox* x *arborescens*, whilst a cross between *A. aristata* and *G. lutzii* looked like the *Gasteria* but with a much smaller habit. The succulents in this group were housed behind thick glass and hardly photogenic. Paradoxically a couple of very choice cyclostemmas were completely unprotected and far too accessible. Another such was *Adenium obesum* very close to the walkway. The monadeniums were coming into flower; some such as *M. guntheri* were obviously thriving and rooting down wherever they touched the ground.

What next ? A fockea rejoicing in a tuberous root over a foot across; a magnificent and very rare *Dorstenia didax* completely open to the public; *Alloardia ascendens* justifying its name by wandering into the roof, whilst the uncommon *A.humbertii* remained prostrate; a pleiospilos just opening its peach coloured flower, Many beautiful slides of genres I confess I've never heard of and can't spell - and I can't always read what I tried to write down in the dark ! A nice little clump of *Conophytum elongatum*, a nice leafy crassula (? *C.streyii*) which Judith says she wants, a clump of argyrodema, the very spiny *Pereskia saccharosa*, a few echeverias, a couple of dyckia, and another euphorbia, All in all a visual delight, and a reminder that Kew really deserves a very extended visit, Anyone interested in a two-day trip when the school gets its new minibus ?

THE TABLE SHOW

THE TABLE SHOW BEGINS AGAIN IN MARCH

Mammillarias, Echeveria & Pachphytum at the March meeting

POT SIZE LIMIT 4"

Never mind about winning, just give others the pleasure of seeing your favourite plants, Give it a try !

FROM ALFRED LAU

From the November letter,..."Who would think that in a very limited area three completely different *Turbincarpus* would occur...There are , of course, *T. schmiedeckianus* v.*gracilis* and *T. dickinsoniae* almost a stones throw away from each other, The new plant grows in pure gypsum, resembling at first glance a *Strombocactus*, We only know the fruit and seeds which confirm the genus, What will the flower be like in March ?I then will describe it as *Turbincarpus hoferi*, Some seedlings are already growing well,

BRANCH HISTORY...40 years on

- August 1949 : Branch exhibits for publicity purposes in Lewis's Show, Sale Show
- September '49: Our first Branch Show - 3 classes, 51 entries, 90 members and friends attended

ROUND THE SOCIETIES



EAST CHESHIRE...Monday, 13th Feb., 7.30 for 8.00,
Wilmslow Public Library: "Salta Safari
Part II" by Norman Wilbraham; contact
Barbara McKnight on 061-431 8148

BOLTON...Tuesday, 14th Feb. 7.00 for 7.30
Bolton Town Hall: Julia Harrison's
"Darwin's Galapagos 1987"; contact
Philip Barker on 0942 56440

WIGAN....Weds. 15th Feb., 7.15 for 7.45, Manley Street
Community Centre, Lower Ince (NEW VENUE)
Ralph Tomlinson on "Echeverias"; Contact Jim
Harrison on 0942 218465

WARRINGTON...Wednesday, 8th March, 7.15 for 7.45, Meeting
Lane Leisure Centre, Penketh: "Jim's Mamms" by
Jim Harrison from Wigan Branch; contact Barbara
Beesley on 051-424 9432

PRESTON...Thursday, 2nd March, 7.00 for 7.30, St. Andrews
Church Hall, Blackpool Rd., Preston: Daphne
Pritchard on "Zimbabwe 1988"; contact Jean
Kendall on 077 478 2957

*One increasing problem, noticeable in the listings on this page,
is the difficulty of finding new speakers or new talks. There
is always some reluctance to have too many unknwn quantities
in any year, and a feeling that "the devil you know...", but
the experience of "deja vu" must be common for those who attend
more than one of the societies regularly.*

NEXT MONTH.

CAPE TO NAMAQUALAND

with Alan Hart

Saturday 11th March 1989 7.00 for 7.30
Sutherland High School Heywood
Community Centre

CHANGE OF PROGRAMME:

June 10: Bill Maddams: "Some succulent gardens in Spain"

July 8 :Derek Bowdery: "Mexican cerei"

Derek Tribble will now visit us in 1990; please amend your programme cards