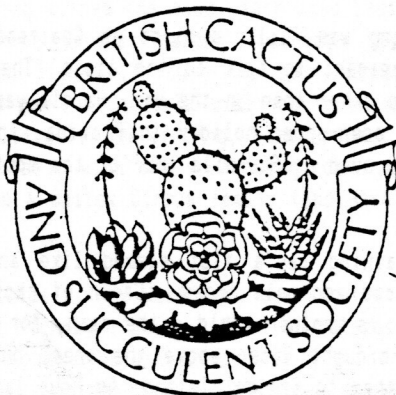


**Manchester
Branch**



NEWSLETTER

MARCH 1988

Editor...Peter Schofield

This will be a weedy edition, Last month's used up all our available copy, We haven't been able to invent more ourselves, We weren't at the last meeting, so no-one has told us anything, Not a cactus or succulent has appeared in the papers, No-one has written to us and it's all lonely ! Seriously, pressure of examinations and meetings has reduced this to bare essentials; we hope to do better next month, Feel free to help,

As a user group of this Community centre, we are entitled to make use of a new 17-seater Sherpa minibus when it is delivered later this year, This opens up all sorts of interesting possibilities - any suggestions ?

The January meeting was Philip's first as Chairman, and it fell to him to introduce our President to talk to the title "The time of my life". Never having been abroad other than in the war, Harold was invited by former member Les Nyman for an open-ended holiday in Florida. In the event he stayed for seven weeks and enjoyed a 4660-mile tour of the southern states, as well as a few day trips !

The complex containing Les's flat seemed like another world; turtles and muscovy ducks, ficus and palm trees, 'Crown of thorns' hedges, heated pools. But then, Florida *is* another world - the rain, for instance; at 6 a.m. a few minutes downpour brought water above the wheel hubs and saw off the coach expected to take them to Sanibel Island. An hour later there was no sign that rain had ever been. They went by car instead, to see a Shell Show; amazing "floral displays" made up of thousands of shells, shell scenes, busts, display cases.

To Fort Lauderdale and Miami; sand-binding planting on the Miami beaches, a full-scale mock-up of H.M.S. Bounty, driverless "people movers" on an overhead railway in downtown Miami, Fort Everglades and the warm water outflow from the Florida Power & Light power station, encouraging 3-foot blue/green iridescent tropical fish and the strange seal-like manatees; no predators here but speedboats. The National Park itself, with its sea of grass concealing alligators, exotic diving birds having feathers without oil, so they hold them outstretched until dry. North to Cape Canaveral with its forest of giant rockets, topped by tiny third stages, lunar vehicles, engines, return capsules. The Assembly Hall, decorated with the Stars & Stripes - the stars being six feet across.

Now the grand tour begins. West to New Orleans; street cars and river boats, wrought iron balustrades, evocative old buildings in the garden district, massive 'live oak' trees and magnolia bushes. West again into Texas, to Houston and its skyscrapers, one blue, with older buildings interspersed. To San Antonio and the Alamo, facade of the original mission - one of several guarding the San Antonio river like tiny walled towns. A Mexican market, aromatic and filled with food - including Opuntia pads without spines or glochids, \$2.60 a pound, cook and eat ! San Antonio itself, riverside cafes, floating restaurants, rich merchant houses, the battleship Texas moored in the park. To del Rio and the mighty Rio Grande; a mock-up garden around "Judge Roy Bean's", with unrepresentative plants. Verges coloured by 'Mexican Bluebonnets', annuals of the lupin family. Big Bend National Park, scrubland with some echinocereus and agave, dasyliirion wheeleri covering the hillside. A fine clump of Echinocereus stramineus, 'strawberry cactus'. Yuccas in flower everywhere, and literally thousands of Echinocactus horizontalonus. None of these may be picked, but they all seem to be set in a concrete-like earth anyway. Interesting was Harold's comment about the overnight frost in this region: still warm at 11 p.m., frosty by 5 a.m., cleared by 5.00

Another spectacular canyon on the Mexican/Texan border; a mock-up cowboy town with board walks, Foucqueria growing out of solid rock, bog cypress in the lakes and coypu strolling across the road. Back into Louisiana, and the state capital Baton Rouge with another garden district; this time a 'magnolia trail', people asked to plant all round the town. Beautiful gardens on the Gulf of Mexico donated by the CocaCola millionaire, with wisteria trees and bamboo that you can literally see growing. Finally back into Florida and to Sarasota on the west coast, with the enormous gardens which serve as winter quarters for the Barnum & Bailey Circus family (and Harold's first shot of a greenhouse !)

And a few more trips locally; Key West, the most southerly point of mainland U.S.A., reached by the highway linking a line of islands and incorporating a seven-mile bridge. One house completely enfolded by euphorbias and agaves. The Fairchild gardens, just outside Miami, with giant ficus trees whose aerial roots have themselves become trunks, Beaucarnia recurvata 90 years old and 30 feet high. Almost every known Ficus species, a bursera over 50 feet high. Last of all, Palm Beach with its avenue of Royal Palms, and the city of Lake Worth with Bougainvillea rampant everywhere - and an awful lot of money.

Not many succulents at all, but a mouth-watering presentation; we hardly blame Harold when he said he would be returning this year; in fact, he may be there already !

NEXT MONTH

**CACTI & OTHER SUCCULENTS
OF THE RIO GRANDE**

by Sonia Barker-Fricker

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

TABLE SHOW: REBUTIA & CRASSULA

PERSONALIA

Congratulations first to member Lesley Bratkowski who has become Lesley Higginbottom. Marrying Geoff was a small price to pay for improved spellability. They were actually married on the day of the last meeting - that's where the Editor and Treasurer were. Lesley can't always get to meetings; baby Katie is a little young to expose to such delights and baby-sitters aren't always available. I'm sure that we all wish them every possible happiness.

On a less happy note, all members will certainly wish our Chairman, Philip Barker, to be aware of our sympathy and understanding following the recent death of his Mother, in hospital but unexpectedly.

ROUND THE SOCIETIES

EAST CHESHIRE...Monday, 13th March, 7.30 for 8.00,
Wilmslow Public Library; Ralph Tomlinson
on "Echeverias"; table show Echeveria and
Rebutia; contact Barbara McKnight on
061-431 8148

BOLTON,...Tuesday, 14th March, 7.00 for 7.30
Bolton Town Hall; David Rushforth's
"Mexican Travelogue"; contact Philip
Barker on 0942 56440

WIGAN.....Weds, 15th March, 7.15 for 7.45, Manley Street
Community Centre, Lower Ince; "Seed Raising" with
John Henshaw; contact Jim Harrison, 0942 218465

WARRINGTON,..Wednesday, 12th April, 7.15 for 7.45, Meeting
Lane Leisure Centre, Penketh; Alan Hart on a
subject not yet notified; contact Barbara Beesley
on 051-424 9432

PRESTON,..Thursday, 6th April, 7.00 for 7.30, St. Andrews
Church Hall, Blackpool Rd., Preston; Graham
Walker discussing "The Sex Life of a Cactus
Flower"; contact Jean Kendall on 077 478 2957

*We regularly list these meetings in case any readers find one
of particular interest and are encouraged to visit.*

*I'm sure there is a lot to be gained from increased contacts,
and would be glad to publish brief reports from anyone who gets
to any of the meetings listed. At least it will alert us to good
speakers we could use (or warn us about others !). If you think
there are other Societies which should be included above, please
let us know, with details if possible*