



MANCHESTER  
BRANCH  
NEWSLETTER  
JANUARY  
1999

## EDITORIAL

First and foremost, a Happy new Year to each and every one of you. If you suffered from a surfeit of Christmas food and spirit, here's hoping it has long since faded into the distance. In a mirror image of last Christmas and New Year the weather continues in an unseasonable fashion. Whilst this is good for the heating bills and the pocket one has to ask, "Does it benefit the plants?" Perhaps only time will tell.

The AGM has passed, the committee was re-elected and great things are planned for the last year for 19-something. We begin with a change to the schedule as shown in your 1998 card. Brian Bates returns to talk to the Branch. More later to explain the reason for the change. With some apology to the members who have a leaning towards the Other Succulents, the programme does lean towards the Cactophile, with two neutral evenings interspersed.

Following last year's double visits success, three are planned for this year. The additional new site is at Ray Alcock's collection. Anybody who has been to see Ray's collection will tell you that it is a gem of a collection to see. He has a keen interest in succulent plants and has many a gem over which to browse.

Last year also saw a very successful laying of foundations in the realms of show/display sight. Daisy Nook Garden Centre have offered us two

dates this year, one in late June and a second in September. As a result of this generosity we will be holding both a show and a display. Further details will be forthcoming.

In addition, Philip Barker has found a Garden Centre in the Worsley area which would be more than happy to have us display the hobby and Society. This offer looks as though it will be taken up in August.

In the present days of many counter interests we must go out and **SELL** ourselves. The hobby depends on each and every interested member, not just the committee people, so come on and let's get people interested in growing these plants.

In the previous Editorial I asked for short articles from Branch members and even gave a fairly comprehensive list of ideas. Let's make it a New Year's resolution to stop debasing our ability to offer something useful for others to know about. If we stand talking to one another we can find plenty to say. What's wrong with turning that into the written word?

## JANUARY'S SPEAKER

As stated earlier, a change has been made for the January meeting. Martin Lowry is now coming to us in August. Instead we are taking the opportunity to send Brian Bates off with a flourish. Brian has long been interested in Bolivian cacti, visited the country on occasions and is now preparing to make it his permanent home. In that venture we wish him well.

Today he is to regale us with his most recent foray into the Bolivian Andes. Though Brian has a deep interest in the genus *Sulcorebutia*, he has a deep understanding of all the genera to be found in this vast country. It will be no surprise to me if at some future date we read an article in the Journal of some newly discovered species as a result of Brian's meanderings. There is nothing to beat living in

a country to enable you to delve into the lesser known zones.

I'm sure Brian's mother will relish the freedom of her own house again now that Brian has relinquished the role of Society librarian. She will be able to see the kitchen again and the stairs will not be an obstacle course. Probably the house foundations will also be heaving a great sigh of relief as the mighty weight of books that comprise the Society library are moved to new quarters. As a point of interest what do you personally believe would be the best way to use the Library?

On a more sombre note, good luck, Brian, and make sure plenty of seed wings its way back into the country. It would be excellent to have seed of known provenance.

## ALOES

Are you really interested in the above genus? I am sure some of you really are. An exciting new book has appeared, published by Briza Publications of Pretoria in South Africa. The authorship comes in triplicate in the forms of:  
FRITS VAN OUDTSHOORN  
BEN-ERIK VAN WYK and  
GIDEON SMITH.

Many other well known writers, explorers, photographers have contributed towards this excellent volume which is entitled:

### **"Guide to the Aloes of South Africa".**

Short descriptions and clear photographs of the 125 species which occur within the boundaries of the country are included. For those so interested, there are distribution maps of the various species for the first time. The authors have decided to group the plants in a slightly new way. They have erected 10 groups:

1. TREE ALOES

2. SINGLE-STEMMED ALOES
3. MULTISTEMMED ALOES
4. RAMBLING ALOES
5. CREEPING ALOES
6. STEMLESS ALOES
7. SPECKLED ALOES
8. SPOTTED ALOES
9. DWARF ALOES
10. GRASS ALOES.

Although purists may not like the groupings it works very well for the amateur.

There is also a short section about other Aloe-like plants, explaining the differences in simple terms. Medicinal uses, cosmetic uses, conservation and cultivation are all given an airing. Pests and diseases are treated from the point of view of the South African grower. We are very unlikely to encounter the snout beetle which, through the auspices of its larva, is a formidable pest. Some of the more successful hybrids are also mentioned.

It is a splendid addition to any library and provides the reader with easy to read information. It can be obtained through the Cactus File people who are still very much in existence even though that Journal ceased publication.

## CACTI IN THE COLD NORTH

This is a reproduction of an article written 20 years ago. Did you know there was/is a Leningrad Cactus Club? Manchester is 53.5 degrees north of the equator, Moscow is 56 degrees north and Leningrad (St Petersburg) is 60 degrees north---on a par with the Shetland Islands. The very first cactus club in Russia was founded in 1953, followed by the Leningrad club in 1959 with 15 members. By the end of the 1970's it had an increased membership of almost 20 times. In 1974 appeared the most northerly club in Kolsky peninsular at latitude 69 degrees. I have not been able to find this location but it is further north than Iceland and inside the Arctic Circle. One thing you can be sure is it's darned cold in winter. And we think our sunlight hours are short at this time of the year.

To return to Leningrad, which mirrors all 100 plus clubs in the country, they meet twice a month from September to June each year. They are run by a Society Board, similar to our committee to all appearances.

Space precludes further information; more next month.