

Gaultonia

Newsletter of the
Manchester Branch
of the
British Cactus and Succulent Society

Autumn 2005.



The National Haworthia Collection held by Manchester Branch Member Harry Mak taken during the Manchester Branch Open Day 2005.

Photograph: Philip Barker.

CACTUS & SUCCULENT JOURNAL OF AMERICA

By Peter Bint

This is a look at volume 38 of the Journal of the American Cactus & Succulent Society's Journal, the year 1966. Unlike our Journal they produce six copies per year, quite an undertaking to keep on time and full of interesting articles. They produced many documentary/travelogue articles both from the Americas and the African area of the world. It was a time of fast increase in the area of new discoveries and the Journal was at the forefront of publishing these new plants, a real coup for the editorial team. They also had regular articles such as:

Cacti and Succulents for the Amateur.

Spine chats.

Spotlight on Round Robins.

On opening the first issue my eye was caught by an advert stating, "This is the last chance to buy Vols, 1 to 30 for \$65." What a bargain! 180 issues at less than 40 cents apiece.

In Cacti and Succulents for the amateur are photos and short paragraphs about:

1. *Notocactus scopae*: an easy but very attractive small plant for beginners that will tolerate low temperatures in winter and enjoys good watering in spring and summer. *Scopa* means 'broom' or 'brush', an apt name considering its bristly appearance. 'Noto' means 'southern' so cactus from the south is very apt for a plant from Uruguay and southern Brazil.
2. *Brasilicactus (Notocactus) haselbergii*: one of the earliest to flower in many greenhouses, it is aptly nicknamed 'the Scarlet Ball'. It will delight the eye for at least three weeks in late winter/early spring with its rich red flowers shown off against the dazzling white background of shiny white spines.
3. *Echinocereus papillosus*: 'an interesting plant with sensational flowers' states the opening sentence. Silvery-yellow flowers, deep red at the throat, at least 3 inches in diameter, a bright green stigma reaching out of the colourful depths. This is a low growing, clumping plant.
4. *Frithia pulchra*: known by the epithet 'Baby Toes', it is a diminutive plant that is almost hidden from view by the sand in which it grows in its native South Africa. Only the windowed ends are visible to sunlight. Deep purplish red flowers appear from between the leaves. Care is needed with water even in the height of the growing season.
5. *Piранthus pillansii v. inconstans*: *Piранthus* means 'fat flower', an apt name considering the plump, five petalled flower. Though names in the *Stapeliae* nowadays and it may not be available under its original listing I am willing to bet no-one has a specimen in their collection. Stems are the size of a finger joint and give the appearance of a pile of tiny potatoes.
6. *Sedum multiceps*: a diminutive plant that likes a summer rest, this *Sedum* hails from Algeria. It resembles a tiny pine tree in appearance,

2005 – Photo Album



It wasn't all cacti. There was plenty of time to rest, reflect and enjoy the view.



Harry's long-standing interest in variegated plants is well known.



Talking to old friends and new. The day attracted enthusiasts from as far afield as Liverpool, Bradford, Leeds and Sheffield.



Part of the National Haworthia Collection immaculately maintained by Harry.



Ivor's Greenhouse-before the crowds descended!

Photographs: Philip Barker



Harry (right) on hand to answer questions as people enjoy the outdoor plants

seldom growing taller than 3 inches. Flowers are bright yellow and typically 5 petalled as with all Sedums.

A new species of Echeveria, namely *E. globulosa*, is described. It is a small growing, neatly petalled, readily clumping plant from the hills north of Oaxaca in southern Mexico.

An article spanning many issues, entitled 'The Time of my Life' about a young E. Yale Dawson, relates this lucky child's journeys through the enjoyment of growing cacti in southern California. His father had decided to grant the wish of Yale's grandmother "that she wished only to go somewhere to sit in the warm to pass her last days." Thus the whole family moved from bitter winters of an Illinois farm to the ideal growing climate of California. Yale states, "From there the genes led me inexorably along a path marked 'adventure in Mexico'". This is a long article that deserves greater airing in a future issue of the Newsletter. Suffice to say travelling on the uncharted tracks of Baja California in the late 1920's and early 1930's was hardly easy.

Further travelogues deal with:

Adenium in tropical Arabia and Soqatra, all forms of *A. obesum* that grow in different forms in different habitats, reaching massive dimensions with age.

Cacti and Succulents on Cerro Guiencola, Mexico. Plants encountered include *Neodawsonia apicicephalum*, a cactus producing pale pink, nocturnal flowers from a cephalium at the top of the stem, *Agave guiengolensis*, a plant of no commercial value because it does not produce Mescal (a comment passed by the owners of a local distillery), *Mammillaria guiengolensis* (the same as *M. beneckeii*), a notoriously difficult plant to grow successfully.

An article about Cristation shows *Ferocactus wislizenii* with a 4 foot crest in Phoenix Desert Botanical Garden, a crested *Echinocereus* in the same garden, a 4.5 foot wide crest atop a 24 feet tall *Carnegiea gigantea* in Arizona and *Opuntia fulgida* which is almost totally crested except for one stem.

The final article tells how the well known Scott E. Haselton introduced the American Journal to the waiting public in 1929. In the article he states, "We are in desperate need of a larger Journal to contain the wealth of material that continues to be contributed voluntarily. In 37 years we have never had to beg for articles. Without our many loyal contributors the Journal could not have survived wars and depressions." This was his swan song as he was due to retire at the end of 1966 and another 'great', Charlie Glass, was to take on the mantle.

**Manchester Branch Open Day
2005 – Photo Album (continued)**



There is a growing trend to try more and more plants outside for the summer months.



Good fun and a great day out was had by one and all.



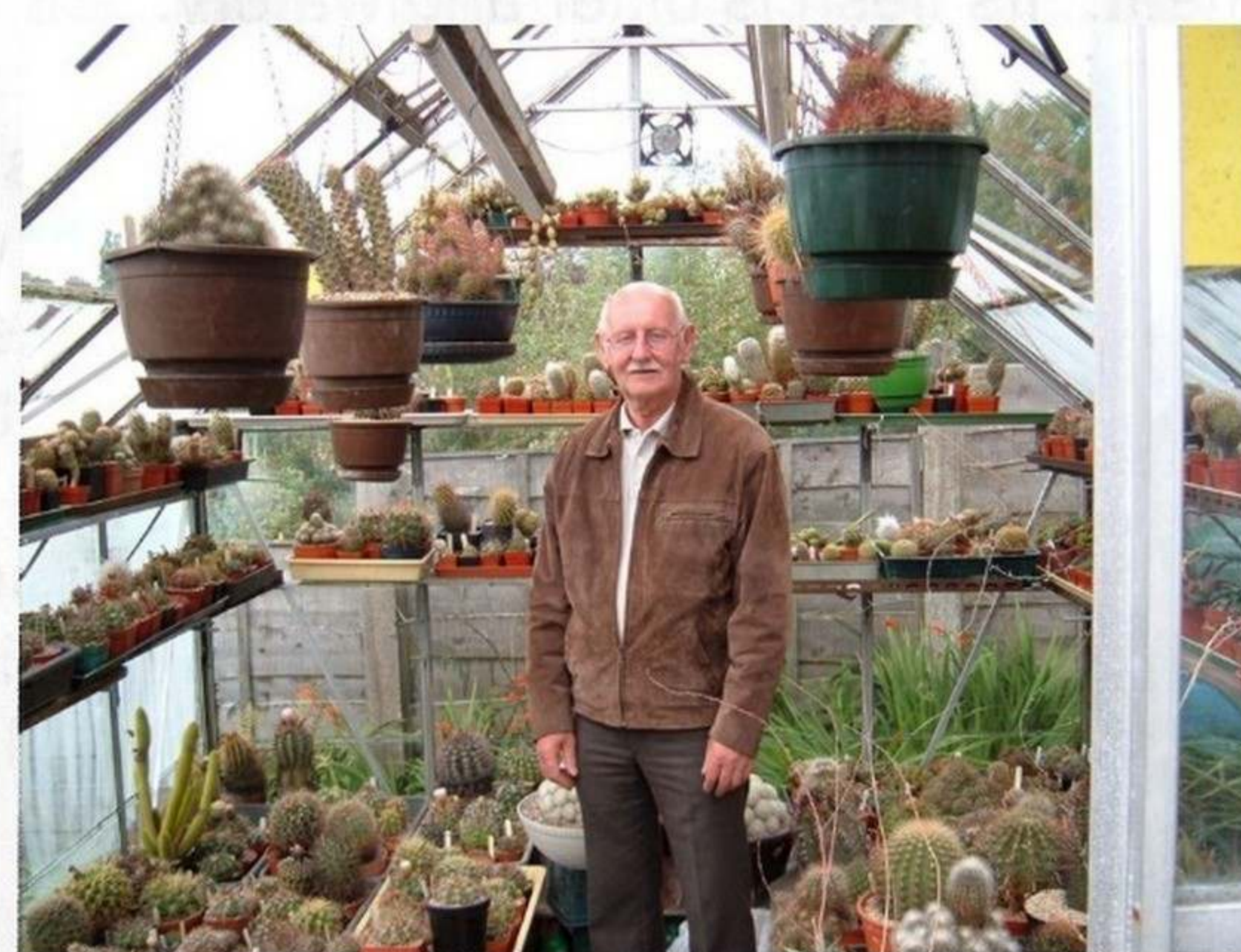
Not many of us devote an entire glasshouse to one genus. Part of Peter's Lithops collection.



Last but not least, the day ended at the gardens of our branch chairman, Brian.



Peter demonstrates the correct technique to defend one's greenhouse from a brace of Yorkshiremen.



It wasn't all Yorkshiremen, many branch members enjoyed the day too.

Photo: Frank

SLIM PICKINGS

By Peter Bint

Found growing in Angola, Namibia and the Cape district of South Africa is the genus Hoodia, a member of the Asclepiadaceae. The stems can reach a height of 80cm (about 2feet 8inches) and are uniformly grey green in colour, covered by many thorn like protuberances. The flowers are round with 5 small points, yellowish or brownish red in colour and variable regarding their hairiness. They need warmth all year round to maintain good health as they would not normally experience any frost at all. Hermann Jacobsen lists 19 different varieties in his Lexicon of Succulent Plants though I doubt they are all valid as one species merges into the next. Back in the 1980's they were popular and plentiful but the only names you saw were H. bainii, H. juttiae and H. gordonii. I haven't seen any in collections for many years now and haven't had any specimens myself for over 15 years.

Obesity is a modern disease that affects every industrialised country in the world. Hoodia contains a substance now being heralded as the ultimate appetite suppressant which is both natural and ancient. Deep in the southern African bush on the borders of Angola, Botswana, Namibia and South Africa live the San people. They have been around for 40,000 years and their genetic origins have been traced back to the first Homo Sapiens. Primitive hunter-gatherers, they have been forced to occupy some of the most arid and hottest places on earth. But needing to live off the land, they became expert botanists. An intimate knowledge of the sparse flora and fauna of the desert was their only hope of survival, and it may now be their salvation.

Hoodia gordonii, which is reckoned to be even more primitive than cacti, thrives in the southern range of the San peoples' territory. It grows in excessively hot temperatures (50 degrees Celsius is not unusual). It sprouts tentacles the size of a cucumber and produces flowers that smell of decaying meat. Its flesh is bitter and watery.

But these unappealing characteristics were no deterrent where food was always scarce. The Khomani San, who live in and around the Kalahari Desert, ate it because alternatives were few. What they discovered was that munching a chunk or two would satisfy their hunger for hours afterwards.

"Our people did not go hungry. The men could go out and hunt for days and return with plenty of food for their families because the Hoodia gave them the stamina to keep going. They didn't feel hungry or thirsty." These words come from Colin Louw, a San Tribe member and Secretary of its Council, set up in 2001 to protect the rights and traditions of the tribe.

Whether Hoodia might be a stimulant, an appetite suppressant or a rich calorie nugget did not concern the hunters, whose only motivation was survival. From their use of the plant has sprung a major medical discovery, a compound now known as p57. This compound affects the part of the brain that influences appetite, sleep, libido and temperature. When food is

consumed messages are sent to this area of the brain; the stronger the message the more one's sense of hunger is quelled. Some foods send a stronger signal than others. Sugar acts faster than fat for example. Hoodia extract has been found to transmit a signal 10,000 times more powerful than sugar. Work to produce a viable substance for human consumption has been spasmodically ongoing for 70 years now. Various problems and wrangling have ensued, Hoodia plantations have been set up and processing factories built. In the limited trials no side effects have been noticed, either in animals or humans. It may be many years before any commercial products are available. The San people use the plants for stomach aches, kidney problems, allergies, fever, flu and asthma in addition to helping with hunting expeditions.

Perhaps we should not become too excited at a possible solution to our sedentary ways; perhaps if we, like the San, partook of plenty of exercise we would not need to worry about obesity.

The moral of this story? Do not grow Hoodia for any reason other than to enjoy its unique visual qualities just as we do with the rest of our plants.



Added interest to the Open Day was an auction of plants at Peter's.
Photo: Frank

Manchester Branch Open Day

Diary Dates

North West Cactus Mart

Saturday 1st April 2006, Woolston

Leisure Centre, Warrington, 10.00am - 3.00pm, Admission £1.00

This is the only annual cactus mart in the North West and this early notice serves to advertise the event through all branches and also to offer the chance to anyone who would like to sell plants to take a trading stand.

Spaces are £10 per 6 foot table (or equivalent) - further details from Philip Barker, phone , email

A detailed map of the location, close to the M6 motorway, is available via email.

British C&SS International Convention

August 17 - 20, 2006 at Loughborough University in England. Speakers from Argentina, Australia, South Africa and the USA already confirmed. For further details contact David Kirkbright,

Teeside Branch

Teeside branch have announced a symposium for March 2006. Details of date and speakers to follow.

Rhipsalis Update

By Ivor Crook.

Two issues ago I reported on the early stages of growing rhipsalis in orchid compost. This is an open mixture of sphagnum moss, tree bark and some activated charcoal. Many of you were able to see the results as several plants were hanging from trees at the branch open day.

I am pleased to report that the plants have enjoyed their best ever years growth and autumn flowering with this treatment. Whether this was due to the compost, or the climatic conditions of the summer, or the shade from the trees, or the increase air-flow being outdoors I am unsure. One unforeseen consequence however, was attack from squirrels. These furry beasts uprooted a couple of plants in their baskets requiring them to be repotted. They also had a nasty habit of digging labels out whilst burying peanuts in the pots. Several mornings I awoke to find 2 or 3 labels on the ground under pots. Becoming worried plants that labels would become separated and I would be unable to rematch them back together a solution for this dilemma was rapidly required. Fortunately Philip's labels have a small hole at the pointed end, ideal to accept a loop of wire (the wire in sandwich bag boxes that never gets used in our house) which can then be wrapped around the plant.