

Gaultonia
Newsletter of the
Manchester Branch
of the
British Cactus and Succulent Society
Winter 2006.



Members Present at the December 2005 Annual General Meeting

Left to right - Standing: Ivor Crook, Harry Mak, Trevor Shannon, Muhammad Anwar, David Dyson, John Foley, Peter Schofield, Peter Bint, Brian Darnell.

Sitting: Philip Barker, Beryl Leahiff, Geraldine Dyson, Judith Schofield, Alasdair Glen (Speaker) and Ken Ballard.

Photo: Muhammad Anwar.

Diary Dates 2006.

Warrington 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.

Abbey Brook Cactus Nursery, Matlock

Spring Event

Saturday 11th – Sunday 12th March

Bradford Branch Show

Saturday 3rd June

Branch Visit to Mr Alan Hart,

Hartford, Northwich, Cheshire

Sunday 11th or 18th June (to be confirmed at a later date)

Bradford Branch Open Day

Sunday 25th June

Sheffield Branch Show

8-9th July

Bridlington Branch Open Day

Sunday 23rd July

Hull Branch Open day

Sunday 6th August

York Branch Open Day

Sunday 13th August

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, England, or e-mail at

Oakdene Nursery (Gordon Foster) Open Day

Sunday 27th August

For details of all Branch Open days see Peter.

THE CACTUS AND SUCCULENT JOURNAL OF AMERICA

Part 2

By Peter Bint

Moving into the March/April of 1966, two articles catch the eye. The first is about the Wonderful garden in Monaco. The article is written by L. Vatrican, who was the Director of the garden at that time. He opens by saying:

"The Principality of Monaco, a tiny independent state nestled on the French Riviera near the Italian border, can be quite proud of possessing the most unique garden in the world. At any rate it possesses the most important collection of succulent plants in Europe grown in the open throughout the year. When one stops to realise that the latitude of this garden is 40 degrees, more or less the same as Halifax (in Nova Scotia), Portland (in Maine) and Minneapolis (in Minnesota)" *[all of which receive considerable snow fall and sub zero temperatures in winter]* "and that cactus plants 25 feet tall, cactus like Euphorbias 35 feet tall flower and fruit there, one begins to understand that it is truly exceptional."

I doubt that statement would be any different if written today, some 40 years later other than many of the plants are even taller. The proximity to the Mediterranean undoubtedly has an enormous effect on the local climate with snow, frost and ice being rarely seen there. However from time to time they do suffer atypical winter weather which leaves its mark.

He goes on further to write:

"Add to this that it was built entirely on the side of a cliff with a mean slope of 45 degrees, between 90 and 130 metres high, that on these rocks there was no soil to speak of and no water; that it was necessary to construct a principal walk and secondary paths to permit the circulation of several thousand visitors daily; and you will realise that this garden is not just a passing fancy."

I have not had the good fortune to visit this succulent paradise personally, but have had the joy of viewing it through the eyes of others when we have had talks about the garden. It is indeed an absolutely splendid monument to the loving care which has been lavished upon it. Some of the plants are truly huge both in height and girth, monstrous specimens of *Echinocactus grusonii*, huge columns of *Neobuxbaumia polylopha* or *Trichocereus pasacana*. It is like being in Mexico or South America.

The garden is still a long way off its centenary having been set up in 1933. Its official inauguration by His Majesty Prince Louis II took place on February 7th 1933 and owes its existence to the Prince's august father, the scientist Prince Albert I. Succulent plants had been cultivated in the area from as far back as 1897 by the chief gardener M. A. Gastaud. Whilst supervising the construction of his Museum of Oceanography the Prince noticed the plants and became deeply interested in them. He even helped devise the landscape for the gardens.

The garden is situated ideally with regard to sun, sea and wind protection. Facing south towards the Mediterranean it captures daily sun from morning to evening and enjoys great protection from any cold winds because of the tall mountains which shield it north, east and west. The Mistral wind, which can

cause havoc, especially in winter, is nullified by this protection. The 45 degree slope of the terrain means the sun's rays will strike the ground in an almost perpendicular fashion allowing the plants to enjoy optimum light and warmth during the shorter hours of winter's days. Winter is a dry period preventing the roots or plant bodies from rotting in unfavourable conditions. Spring and autumn see ample rain mimicking the plants' habitats. The close proximity of the sea means that evaporated moisture will condense on the slopes of the garden. Mobile shelters are available to protect the tenderest plants in the extremely rare event of frost. It is no surprise that the plants grow so well.

Should you be lucky enough to be in a position to visit this garden you will find it open all year round. Take your camera and/or video camera and bring us back some memorable pictures.

The second article is about Curt Backeberg, a giant amongst the men of cactus literature. Sadly he suffered a massive heart attack and died on 14th January 1966. In the journal he is pictured in the front garden of our erstwhile President, Gordon Rowley. Besides these two, there are Cyril Parr, Secretary and Editor of the African Succulent Plants Society, and Len Newton, then the Editor of the Journal of the Cactus and Succulent Society of Great Britain (a formidable quartet). His two mighty works, *Die Cactaceae* (in 6 volumes) and *Das Kakteenlexikon* were immensely important in the world of cacti and were unsurpassed for many years.

He was born in Luneberg (not far from Hamburg) in Germany on 2nd August 1894. He had his own export business in Central and South America and enjoyed growing and studying cacti. In 1929, when recession was just beginning to rear its ugly head, he began to take the study of the plants much more seriously. Through his acquaintance with Alvin Berger (another important name in the world of cacti) he began to study the cacti of Venezuela. Gradually he spread his net wider and wider until he had visited the countries of the region building up a superb collection of plants. He spread his journeys into Mexico and brought home to Hamburg some massive columnar cacti and two huge Echinocactus weighing a reputed ton each. He met many of the celebrated people of the cactus world, including Walther Haage, Victor Morawetz, Scott Haselton, Charles Glass, Julien Marnier-Lapostolle (President of the French Cactus Society) and Professor Werdermann to name but a few.

As his own collection became too difficult for him to manage he donated it to Monaco's Exotic Garden. He also assisted Senor F. Riviere de Caralt for 6 years in the systematic and geographic arrangement of his *Opuntia* garden, at that time the greatest collection of that genus in the world.

Curt Backeberg has done more than most to popularise the hobby and we all owe him tremendous thanks for our enjoyment of the plants we grow.

Finally there is the continuation of E. Yale Dawson accounts of his childhood travels in Baja California, "El Brazo Descanardo", the Fleshless Arm of

Mexico, as it was known then. You can feel his excitement as he describes the travel along wheel tracked apologies for roads in their little '29 model Chevrolet panel delivery car. He tells us, "When we crossed the frontier into Mexico on a Sunday morning the little car was riding low on its springs under a maximum loading of canned provisions, water and gasoline. We were as nearly self sufficient as possible (for supplies and especially fuel, were rarely and scantily available)." They made many stops to look at plants that cactus enthusiasts in the future would gaze at so admiringly, Agave, Bergerocactus, Ferocactus, Mammillaria, Dudleya and Machaerocactus. Ensenada was their destination that Sunday afternoon and the last hot prepared meal for many days as they wound their way south using the occasional enamelled sign posts which had been erected several years before by the Automobile Club of Southern California on a pioneering road mapping expedition in 1929. They would travel for a whole day at a time seeing only flora and fauna in this sparsely inhabited cactus fairyland.

Committee Notes

The latest branch committee meeting took place on Wednesday 18th January at Brian's. Thanks go to his wife Eunice for the hospitality.

After much arm twisting (no, not really) Ken Ballard and Beryl Leahiff have accepted an invitation to join the committee this year. Their input has already been greatly appreciated and their comments were highly informative in helping to plan the April Members Evening meeting with David Rushforth. The theme for the evening will be propagation, with seed raising, leaf cutting and grafting all receiving our attention on the night.

Branch trips for the forthcoming warmer months were discussed. Peter has already been able to arrange a trip to Alan Hart's collection in Hartford but this trip will be limited to eight people due to space restrictions at Alan's. So, be sure to sign up early for this trip. There will be a form on the notice board in the meeting hall or see Peter as soon as possible.

The 'Diary Dates' page includes a list of Branch Open Days and Shows over the Summer months. Almost certainly some members will be travelling to the Hull Branch Open Day. If you would like to attend any of the open days or shows please see Peter. If enough people want to go to a particular event it is likely we may be able to offer assistance with transport arrangements.

Don't forget, if you have an idea for a branch trip not listed please don't hesitate to speak to any member of the committee about your ideas.

The Ones That Got Away.

Reminders of the distant Summer of 2006 that were not previously printed due to lack of space.



A secluded, green corner at the Branch Open day



Peter contemplates the plants.



Two of Harry's wide array of stunning plants



Frank inspecting cacti