



MANCHESTER
BRANCH
NEWSLETTER
SPRING 2015



NORTH WEST CACTUS MART

OPEN FROM
10:30 AM TO
2:30 PM

SATURDAY

MAY 2ND

Hundreds of
attractive plants

Plenty of food

Free entry



On our Travels

Saturday 21st March was the day the cactus calendar opened to herald a new year of growing. The venue was in west Leicester and the event was hosted for zone 6 by Leicester Branch. Three hardy Mancunian cactophiles set out on this journey at about 7.00am. Christine joined Peter at his house having left her home at about 6.30am and the pair of them began the journey south with a minor detour to collect Ivor in Ashton near the motorway. The journey south was uneventful apart from a 20+ mile long set of motorway modernisation works where a 50mph speed limit kept us in a steady line of traffic. The weather was cool and eventually became slightly sunny but never warm. After a journey of 2 hours and 15 minutes we arrived in the rural setting on the outskirts of Leicester. Several people were already at the venue as we pulled up. The hall was set out with many rows of seats and three sets of sellers already in position. A fourth group would soon join them. The tables were soon raided by people armed with trays as they sought to purchase new acquisitions for the greenhouses. There was a wonderful array of plants to be bought and prices were sensible.

It was not long before I was able to meet one of the speakers who would be speaking at our zone 19 symposium, Giuseppe Orlando. He was quite a diminutive person but abounding with enthusiasm. As would be proved by the talks he gave, he was a knowledgeable and entertaining speaker. Make sure you don't miss him speaking at our function in June. We had an hour to look round, talk to well known acquaintances, have a drink, and generally settle in to the rhythm of the day. As 11am approached we were encouraged to take our seats ready to listen to Giuseppe deliver his first talk. It was a trip to a country that I have visited, by pictures, many times before, Madagascar.



A view of many of the assembled company awaiting the start of one of the talks.

There are a couple of people there that you should recognise with the photographer being the third member of the group.

The talk was mainly about the Aloes that grow in this wonderful country, many that ordinary growers like ourselves had ever heard of. There were small plants, tree aloes, aloes hanging from sheer cliffs, but not only aloes. Other plant inhabitants of the country sneaked into the pictures in the way humans do when they see the opportunity to say 'Hi mum' through the media channels. There were even some Euphorbias that had the screen to themselves, those desirable forms that need a little extra warmth in Winter. Animals were not shy either and we were treated to lemurs, lizards and birds. We travelled the length of the country from north to south but more towards the eastern part of the country in the mountainous areas. Sadly Madagascar is being decimated of its floral wealth as mankind seeks out the material wealth that lies in the land through farming of non native crops and below it as mining continues. Many habitats will disappear in a relatively short time and plants and animals will become extinct.

In no time at all it was dinner time and we were treated to customary zone 6 fare of baked potato, various spicy meat concoctions and salad. There were also a variety of sweets and copious tea and coffee. Mind you a few people said they would have preferred our traditional buffet instead. Dinner was soon demolished and Christine continued her photographic spree. She had already bought those plants 'she wasn't going to buy'. Ivor was also busy circulating and catching up on old times with the people he knew. Later in the afternoon we would witness the presentation of the Robert Holt Meritorious Award to Jeff Capel and his wife for their services to the Society. Jeff has been the seed distributor for many years. This presentation was made by Alasdair Glen in his capacity of Chairman of the Society



A couple of people you might recognise in the background. John Watmough at his stall talking to Philip Gresswell who comes to our meetings and other events on occasion.

Philip was also at the event selling his pots and sundries but he was put in a side room to give him the space to show his wares.

Once dinner was done it was back to the business of the day. The other speaker was another person who has visited Manchester to give talks, namely Roger Ferryman. Roger is well known for his travels to Chile and Argentina and for many years he would not consider setting foot in any other country. Work, however, changed that pattern and for three years he was 'exiled' to South Africa where he actually came to recognize that some succulents can be attractive. At the end of that three year stint his company required him to move to the USA. He agreed to go provided they gave him a 4x4 vehicle and a considerable holiday package. He was quite surprised when they agreed to his conditions. So it was that Houston became his new home. His talk was about the American half of the Chihuahuan Desert, home to the Grand Canyon and other interesting sites. He was happier to be among cacti again and soon came to appreciate the many and varied cacti that inhabit the area. Echinocerei, Mammillarias, Sclerocacti, Thelocactus, Ariocarpus, Coryphantha, Escobaria, Ferocacti, as well as Agaves, Yuccas, Fouquierias all grow in this region. Because he was permanently settled in the area he was able to visit plants at different times of the years so we were treated to plants both in and out of flower. Again the time sped by and it was soon time for the mid afternoon break with yet more tea and coffee and also some of the sweets not eaten at dinner. Also it was the final opportunity to raid the sales tables before they packed up the remainder of the plants.



It was this big, Peter tells Giuseppe, as he is watched by Craig Barber and his dad.

In no time we were urged to retake our seats as we were to hear the final presentation of the day. Giuseppe was back centre stage to deliver his second talk of the day, this time about a country few of us know anything about, Yemen. It is not the safest of countries to visit because of the unrest caused by the different factions who live there as they battle for supremacy. That aside, the views of the countryside in the hills, the plants that grow there, the architecture of the buildings were all fascinating. We were not sure what plants we would see growing there but we were not disappointed. There were many fascinating Stapeliad species, all sporting their current names and resplendent in flower. Surely there is no other group of plants that has such different flower structures, painted with such unusual colours and patterns. They were ultimately enchanting and eye catching. If they were not so attractive to mealy bug I would willingly grow them in large numbers. We will be treated to more of them in June when he gives his talk about 'the Horn Of Africa'. Also on show were many Euphorbias, superb specimens of Adenium obesum, some of vast age, Aloes, Sanseveria, the Dragon Tree, and Yemen is also the home of Dorstenias, particularly huge specimens of Dorstenia gigas. So ended the talks, all highly interesting and absorbing.

Two of us were successful with the raffle as well, each coming away with a bottle containing an interesting liquid. All that remained to do was bid farewell to assembled friends, load the car safely with purchases and make the return trip to Manchester. This was not quite as easy as the morning travel as there were many more vehicles on the road. Again we had to endure the roadworks and that other curse of the motorway, the breakdowns and accidents. One such event was a transit van embedded in the central barrier with its front wheel at a strange angle. But we made it home safely and the new season has begun.



Another well known face at his stall, Tony Irons. He will be at the Cactus Mart on May 2nd

BRANCH OUTING

SATURDAY JUNE 6TH

**Rob Stevenson's
National Collection
of Turbinicarpus
and the rest of his collection**

**plus two other
nurseries**

one an alpine nursery the other a cactus and succulent nursery

**Full details have yet to be worked out and will be
made available in due course.**

**To this end it is imperative that you inform Peter if
you wish to participate in this day out no later than
the May meeting.**

Zone 19 Symposium

SATURDAY

JUNE 20TH

Cost of the day including the buffet dinner and tea/coffee is £15 payable by cash or cheque made out to BCSS Zone 19. Finish time is 5pm. See Peter for tickets.



Doors open at 9am. First Talk: 10.15am

Small Andean Opuntias & Thelocactus - Graham Charles
Stapeliads in captivity and in the wild - Wiebe Bosma
Succulents from the Horn Of Africa - Giuseppe Orlando

***Plant sales by Graham Charles,
Wiebe Bosma and Craig Barber***